

REMARKS ON ROMAN POTTERY, CHIEFLY DISCOVERED IN
CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND ESSEX.

PRESERVED IN THE MUSEUM AT AUDLEY END.

By THE HON. RICHARD C. NEVILLE, F.S.A.

THE fine embossed and glazed red pottery, more familiarly known as "Samian" ware, is of such universal occurrence on sites occupied by the Romans, throughout Great Britain, as also in France, Germany, and other parts of Europe, that it has become intimately associated in the minds of antiquaries with the vestigia of that people. Several years' experience, during my excavations in different parts of Cambridgeshire and Essex, have afforded me ample opportunity of observing the extensive distribution of this sort of ware under different circumstances. Some of these, with a resumé of the various other kinds of fictilia, which have come



Samian Bowl found at Chesterford
Height, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; Diameter, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$.

under my notice, may be found useful in facilitating comparison with remains of a similar character from other localities.

The "Samian" ware, from the superiority of its manu-

facture, and the value set upon it by its ancient possessors, is fairly entitled to precedence; but my own experience tends to establish for it a more legitimate claim to priority, as being of higher antiquity. I have invariably found that wherever it appears in abundance, as in the vicinity of Ickleton and Chesterford, and on the borders of Cambridgeshire and Essex, the accompanying coins, fibulæ, and other relics, are of earlier date and better workmanship, and, to use an expression of my labourers, everything is "more regular Roman;" they term it, in consequence, significantly, "the best" ware.¹ The above-mentioned localities, extensively occupied in the time of the Romans, teem with every description of their earthenware, but they are more especially rich in fragments of plain dishes and embossed bowls of this finer material. They are the only sites, indeed, which I have examined, with the exception, perhaps, of Bartlow and Hadstock, producing relics, nine-tenths of which are Roman; but at the two latter places the broken portions of "Samian" ware, though of good character, are far from abundant. On every other site which I have examined, at Ashdon, Arkesden, Debden, Heydon, Langley, Saffron Walden, and Wenden, in Essex, Abington, Fleam Dyke, Hildersham, Linton, and Wilbraham, in Cambridgeshire, specimens of both plain and ornamental pottery of this sort have been occasionally turned up; but where the surrounding remains were rudest, as in Romano-British tumuli and sites of comparatively later occupation, these were of much rarer occurrence. A curious but most satisfactory evidence of the value set upon this pottery by the Romans, is furnished by the discovery of portions of broken vessels which had been formerly mended with rivets of lead; these have occurred in two instances, to my knowledge, at Chesterford, and almost induce one to imagine that this ware could not have been plentiful, even in the early time of its fabrication. Had it been abundantly supplied, the Romans would never have bestowed so much pains in repairing the fractures. The fact proves, at least, that they did value it, and the universality of its dispersion in after ages shows that it was equally appreciated by their successors. But this does not establish that there was a continued manufacture, at least available to this country.

¹ See the Memoir on Roman remains at Ickleton and Chesterford, discovered by the Hon. R. C. Neville, *Archæol. Journal*, vol. vi. p. 14.

Whatever may have been the cause, whether communication with the more civilised districts ceased entirely, or, as is most probable, the departure of the Roman legions from this island cut off communication with the sources whence the supplies of this ware were derived, it certainly seems to have become more scarce, as far as I have had an opportunity of judging. It is clear that had there been a constant supply at hand, a material, so highly prized, would be found more thickly interspersed with the innumerable débris of coarse pottery with which ancient stations are strewn. Upon spots which have been uninterruptedly tenanted by successive races since the first Roman settlement, a vast amount of all kinds of fictilia must naturally have accumulated, and it is not surprising if the "Samian" ware in such places, though comparatively plentiful, bears the same proportion to the ruder pottery, that the latter does to the former, at Chesterford and other sites occupied more particularly by the Romans.

The paste of the "Samian" is for the most part finer and harder than that of any common pottery; the superiority of manufacture, therefore, will alone be sufficient to account for its durability and its continuance through the Romano-British period, even as late as the cemeteries of the Anglo-Saxons. Portions of this material occurred in tumuli, opened by myself in 1847, near Triplog, and at Abington, Cambridgeshire, in 1848, which were decidedly of the former class; as well as in the burying-grounds at Little Wilbraham, in 1851, and Linton, in the same county, in the spring of the present year. In the barrows near Triplog, traces of "Samian" were found in the shape of several small circular tesserae, cut out of a flat dish of the finest plain ware; in the other places, fragments of thick embossed bowls were discovered, especially among the Saxon graves. That it should have appeared in the latter at all, and yet in such limited quantity, furnishes one of the strongest arguments against the existence of any manufactory of this pottery within reach, in later times, since the sepulchres of the Saxon period, so lavishly supplied with ornaments of a superior description, abound also in rude fictilia, which present a striking contrast to the richness of the deposits they accompany. Though rude, they were, doubtless, of the best wares then procurable.

The "Samian" ware discovered upon the Chesterford

station very nearly resembles that obtained from other Roman sites, in the close grain, the forms, and the general features of the embossed ornament. This uniformity seems to be universally the case in Great Britain, as well as on the continent, and may be considered as an additional evidence of its wholesale importation into this country. As compared with the finest specimens from London, those which I have discovered, are, perhaps, less thick, and the relief of the figures not so high. In the plain ware I have observed no difference, the forms in the examples of this description are confined to basins, and flat dishes with and without turned-over edges, while those that are embossed appear always in the form of circular bowls. Both varieties have almost invariably the name of the potter stamped upon the bottoms of the former, and the sides of the latter, between the rim and the pattern. This peculiarity is noticed at Aldborough, in the "*Reliquiæ Isurianæ.*" The designs upon their surface comprehend an immense variety of subjects. They are usually



Samian Bowl, in the Hon. Richard Neville's Museum, found at Hadstock.

Height, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; Diameter, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$.

surmounted with the festoon and tassel, or scroll border, below which, hunting scenes, gods, and goddesses, cupids, or genii, combats of men with each other and with beasts, animals, birds, dolphins, fruit, and flowers are delineated with wonderful spirit and precision. These are frequently subdivided into compartments, or contained in beaded medallions. Of subjects, the chase is certainly the favourite, but I must not omit to add to those I have enumerated, a very

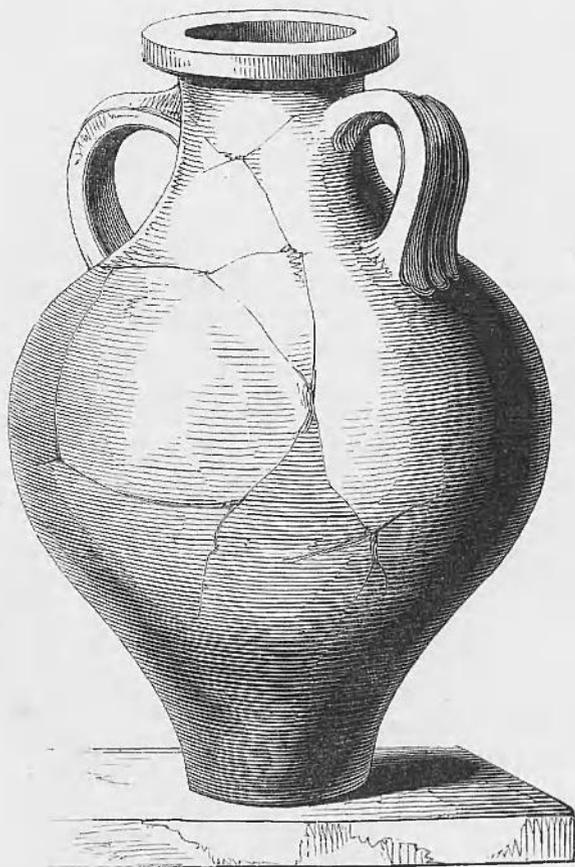
beautiful one from Chesterford, the Caryatides supporting the arches of an arcade.

It is worthy of remark, that while pateræ of the plain red ware frequently occurred whole, or in sufficient fragments to be restored, in no instance have I discovered an ornamented bowl complete. The only perfect example from Chesterford, in my possession, was found some years since, opposite the Crown Inn (see woodcut) ; three parts of one found also at Chesterford, and another at Hadstock, in 1846, are the most I have succeeded in restoring. The colour of the last had been affected by the action of the soil in which it was imbedded, whence it has acquired a brownish hue. Instances of this effect upon Roman pottery are not rare ; a small basin and flat saucer from Mr. Bramston's estate, near Chelmsford, in my collection, have entirely lost their glaze, assuming the appearance of red lead, which comes off upon the finger. A few small patches upon the surface, here and there, alone indicate the original polish. Perhaps, these may have been intended as imitations of the "Samian" manufacture, but they fully equal the real ware in thickness, whilst the only other fragments with glaze, which appear to be fictitious, are of too slight a material to be mistaken. They have, moreover, no attempt at a potter's stamp. The only peculiarity remaining to be noticed is, that the inside face of this fine ware is occasionally thickly engrained with small white pebbles. Although of frequent occurrence on fragments of mortaria and other coarse pottery, in my experience I have only met with one or two instances of this description.

The majority of potters' stamps are the same as those found at other Roman stations.² Of the annexed list of such marks upon specimens in my collection, one is from London, one from Bartlow, two from Welwyn in Hertfordshire, and the remainder mostly from Chesterford : there are a few other stamps from the last place which are illegible. I should here observe that I have never met with any of the marks on mortaria and the handles of large amphoræ, which occur at other places ; several of the last-named fictilia, of similar shape and material to those found elsewhere, turned up at

² An extensive list of marks on Samian ware, on examples found in London, is given by Mr. C. Roach Smith, in his *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. i. p. 150. A list

of marks noticed by Mr. Wellbeloved, at York, may be found in his *Eburacum*, p. 128, and *Journal Arch. Assoc.*, vol. iii. p. 124.



Lagena with two handles, found at Chesterford.

(Height, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; *greatest circumference*, 3 feet 6 inches.)

Chesterford, have been quite plain. The thick stone-coloured ware of which they are made has appeared everywhere in fragments of large jars and ollæ, one fine specimen a *lagena*, (see cut) being perfect. The fine manufacture, which has obtained the name of "Castor ware," from the potteries in which it was made, excavated by the late Mr. Artis, at that place, the supposed *Durobrivæ*, in Northamptonshire, occurred in profusion in a burying-ground at Chesterford, in 1848, and constantly in other places. It may have been intended as a substitute for Samian ware; it is coated with a very fine glaze, and the surface is equally ornamented with designs in relief; of these, hares, hounds, and deer are likewise the prevailing subjects, but it differs from its prototype, in the fabric being slight, and though hard, it is exceedingly brittle. The vessels made of this composition are usually the

tall narrow *popula* with sides indented to afford a firm grasp. I have never seen it in the shape of a bowl or *patera*; the colour is oftenest black or red, but occasionally it is grey, and the surface presents a glaze of a copper hue. Some remarkable examples have been figured in the *Journal*, vol. vi. p. 19. To attempt in this notice a minute description of the numerous shapes and varieties of wares of which specimens were brought to light would be impossible. Suffice it to say,

that amphoræ, diotæ, ollæ, *pateræ*, and *popula* have been found in almost equal numbers, but if preference be given to any, the two last were rather the most common.³ A specimen of the large globular vessel, or *dolium*, the fashion of which

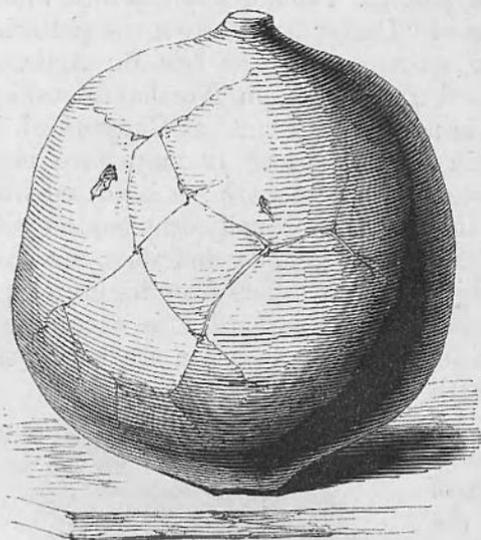


Poculum of Castor ware found at Chesterford.
Height, 6 inches, diameter, 3.

³ Representations of an *olla* of black ware, a small cup found enclosed within it, and a Samian *patera*, which served as

the cover, are given in the *Journal*, vol. vii., p. 140.

was possibly derived from the *uter*, or wine-skin, was brought to light at Chesterford—(see woodcut.) These vessels have been repeatedly found in England, as also in France, and occa-



Dolium, Chesterford.

Height, 2 ft., circumference, 6 in., diameter, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$, depth, 22 $\frac{1}{2}$.

sionally were used as receptacles for a large glass cinerary urn and other sepulchral deposits. Such a globular *obruendarium* was found at Lincoln some years since, and may still be seen in the Cathedral Library; another found at Bedford Purlieu, Northamptonshire, is preserved at Woburn; and a third, now in the British Museum, was found at Southfleet, Kent, in 1799.⁵

Amphoræ and diotæ are chiefly of coarse red, or stone coloured ware, while black and red predominate among the pateræ and pocula. Some samples of the black pottery with glaze, of the ware supposed to have been fabricated at Upchurch, Kent, also occurred.⁶ The only perfect specimen of painted fictilia, a small red amphora, was discovered by the railway labourers at Chesterford, in 1845, having a series of white strokes upon the exterior. A great many fragments, however, with patterns in white, red, and yellow, upon different coloured grounds, have been collected from various sites, but especially from Hadstock, whence one specimen, with a raised white pattern, deserves especial notice. Most of the above wares are exceedingly well burnt, and the vessels are generally engine-turned, and these two peculiarities were, in my experience, the distinguishing characteristics of pure Roman earthenware. Vessels composed of unburnt pottery, and moulded by the hand, occurred constantly in the Romano-British tumuli, near

⁴ *Archæologia*, vol. xxxi. p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. xiv. pl. 6. p. 37.

⁶ See an account of this pottery, *Journal Arch. Assoc.*, vol. ii., p. 133.

Fleam Dyke and Abington, and were often rudely ornamented with a stick, or other blunt instrument.⁷ The whole of the numerous cinerary urns found in the Saxon graves at Wilbraham were formed by the hand, these last being also burnt. A similar style of ornamentation prevails through them all, and consists of a number of circles punched in clusters, divided by lines scored horizontally and perpendicularly around, and down their sides, which are likewise frequently surmounted with projecting ribs from the shoulder downwards. With one fragmentary exception of red, their colour was uniformly black, the ware universally of moderate thickness, and the shapes approaching to the globular, and certainly inelegant. In these notices of fictilia, urns and relics, discovered in the course of my explorations in Cambridgeshire and Essex, some highly curious objects of terra-cotta must be mentioned, one of them found at Arkesden, in the county last-mentioned, unique, as I believe, amongst Roman remains in England, being a small female figure, 3 in. in height, represented as seated in a high-backed chair, and holding two infants at her breast.⁸ This figure is probably a symbol of plenty or fecundity, and a similar subject appears on the reverse of coins of Theodora Flavia, wife of Constantius, with the legend — SALVS REIPUBLICÆ. A similar figure was found at Rennes, and is represented by M. Toulmouche, in his "Histoire Archéologique de l'Époque Gallo-Romaine de la Ville de Rennes," (pl. xvii., p. 299), and by De Caumont.⁹ Another example has been given by Montfauçon. Another fictile relic alluded to, is a singular little vessel, supposed to be a *thuribulum*, for burning perfumes, in the form of a globular basin, upon a base, formed of four short columns, with a round-headed arch on each side. It was found at Chesterford, with Roman coins and pottery, and is represented in my "Antiqua Explorata." The resemblance in form to that of early baptismal fonts is very remarkable. I must also notice a small vase, precisely resembling a miniature barrel, with two holes pierced in the head. It was found in a shaft, or Roman well, (?) at Chesterford. (Sep. Expos., p. 76.)

⁷ Archæological Journal, vol. ix., p. 228.

⁸ A representation of this curious figure is given in Mr. Neville's "Sepulchra Exposita," p. 41.

⁹ "Cours d'Antiquités Monumentales, Ére Gallo-Romaine," p. 220, pl. xxx. See also Rever, "Description des Figurines découvertes dans la forêt d'Evreux en 1825."

I take also this opportunity of describing some curious objects, which, though not strictly to be classed with pottery, are fairly entitled to notice with the fictilia, as being composed of baked clay. These are thick rings of coarse material and of large dimensions, of which two perfect examples found at Bourne Bridge, Cambridgeshire, in 1848, and one on Byrd's Farm, near Saffron Walden, are in my collection. Halves of three others were also found at the same time at the former place, and part of one at the last-mentioned farm. In dimensions they vary from $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. to $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter outside, and that of the perforation from 1 in. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. The material is very solid, the girth of the largest being 6 in., and that of the smallest $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. Some of them bear deep impressed marks at intervals along the circumference, like the massive similar ring found at Castor, which had been impressed with three holes at regular distances; it is figured in Mr. Artis's work on Roman remains found on that site.¹ No other remains were discovered with the specimens from Bourne Bridge, but on Byrd's Farm a quantity of fragments of Roman pottery occurred around them. Two more from Chesterford, without holes, were shown me by Mr. Green of that place, some years since, and a similar object of like dimensions, found in the churchyard at Hurst Pierpoint, Sussex, was exhibited in the Museum, formed during the meeting of the Institute at Chichester.² The example from Castor is designated by Mr. Artis as a weight, and it is difficult to offer any better conjecture respecting it, though the use of the small holes is not clear, unless they were intended to increase the gravity by being stuffed with lead, or iron plugs. Those from Chesterford were much blackened by fire, an appearance which led me to imagine they might be appendages to the kitchens or furnaces. I merely mention the circumstance in order to induce other persons to express an opinion as to the intention of these curious relics, and to record, as I have done, their own experience in these matters.

R. C. NEVILLE.

¹ Durobrivæ, by E. T. Artis, plate xxix. fig. 6. This example measured about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, the central perforation rather more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch, the thickness of the ring about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch.

² This relic was sent by the Rev. C. Borrer, of Hurst Pierpoint, who states that Roman remains have been found in the churchyard at that place. Similar rings were found in Whittlebury Forest.

LIST OF POTTERS' MARKS ON THE WARE, TERMED "SAMIAN."

FROM EXAMPLES DISCOVERED AT CHESTERFORD, COMPRISING ALSO SOME FOUND IN OTHER LOCALITIES, AND NOW PRESERVED IN THE HON. RICHARD NEVILLE'S MUSEUM.

AC::: MEA

I. *Adn. Adgeni*

ALBVCI

ALBVCIANI

AND::: N IM

* A.POLAVSTI

F. AVRICI::: F

BANOLVCCI

? *Anderni manu.*

The first two letters imperfect. BANOLVCCI occurs on Samian found in London.

BELINICCI·M

This mark occurs in France. Grivaud, *Ant. Gaul. et Rom.*, p. 160.

BONOXUS·F

CASSVSCA

CELSIA::: M

? *Celsiani manu.* CELSIANI·F has been found in London.

CINTVSMVS·F

On ware with ornaments in relief.

CINTVSM or CINIVSM ?

Found at York. Mr. Wellbeloved gives CINTIVSM. and CINIVSM. in his list.

CIN·T·VSSA

CO::: NERTI·M.

? *Cobnerti manu.* COBNERTI·M and COBNERTVS occur on Samian found in London. On a mould for fabricating embossed Samian, found in France, is stamped the name *Cobnertus*. C. R. Smith, *Coll. Ant.*, vol. i, p. 161.

* CONSERTI·M.

* CVCALI·M.

CVNO::: CI or CL.

The latter part very indistinct. Small patera from Arkesden, Essex. Sep. Expos. p. 41.

* DESTER·F.

DIVICATVS

DRIPPINI:::

G·E·N·I·T·O·R·F

GIINI:::

GRAATVS

HABILIS·M

IVSI::: I·MA

The latter part broken.

Found at Bartlow. ? *Genius* or *Gemini*.

? *Justi manu.* London: the name is found also in France. Grivaud.

LVPINI M

MANNA

Indistinct. OF·MANNA has been found in London.

* MARTI·M

* MICCIO·F.

MINVLI·M

? *Of Monti*; found at Welwyn. OF MONTI and OF MONTO have been found in London.

MVXTVLLI

NAMILIANI

On embossed ware.

The second and third letters combined.

- NASS·F
 NASS·I·S·F
 * OF· NERT
 * IVL· NV·MIDI
 OSBIMACA
 OSBV : : :
 PATRICI
 PRIMANI
 QVINTI : : : IANI M ? *Quintiliani manu.*
 RIIGALIS·O ? *Regalis Officinâ.*
 * RIIGVLI·M.
 ROPPV·S FE Found at Hadstock. Arch. Journ., viii. p. 34.
 * ROTTLAI·M.
 SABINI·M.
 SACRILI·M
 SACROT·M·S
 SAVRNINI·OF
 Also at Castor, Artis, pl. 46.
 The second letter has a top stroke, as if
 representing A and T. ? *Saturnini.*
 Compare Grivaud, Ant. Gaul. et Rom. p. 149.
 SECVNDINI
 SENII·M or SENI A·M
 SIIVIIRI F ? *Severi.* Artis, pl. 46. Grivaud, p. 148.
 SOLINI·OF In France SOLINI·OFI. Grivaud, p. 150.
 * OF· SVLPICI.
 * TALLINI
 TAVRICI F TAVRICVS F. has been found in London.
 OF· TERT Found in London.
 VICARVS·F
 VICTORI M
 Two examples thus marked.
 Compare a mark found at Caerleon—IVVIII
 —Lee, Roman Building, pl. 2, fig. 5.



: : VNIS



The first letter or letters defaced.
 The termination—*unus* appears to be of great
 rarity, if not unique in these marks.

On a specimen of Samian found at Foxcote,
 Bucks. From the Stowe collection. A
 similar mark appears on a specimen found
 in Kent in the late Dr. Faussett's collection.

The marks in the foregoing list, to which an asterisk is prefixed, are those given by Mr. Roach as found at Chesterford. See Journal of Archaeol. Assoc., vol. iv. p. 375. They are not in Mr. Neville's Museum.