

The Archaeological Journal.

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NOTICES OF CERTAIN SHAFTS, CONTAINING REMAINS OF
THE ROMAN PERIOD, DISCOVERED AT THE ROMAN
STATION AT CHESTERFORD, ESSEX.

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SOON after the commencement of my excavations at Chesterford, in 1845, I became acquainted with a remarkable feature in the vestiges of Roman occupation, to which my attention was especially directed by the discovery of its existence in another part of the country about the same time. I allude to the deep pits or shafts from which Dr. Diamond obtained pottery of various kinds and other Roman remains, in the vicinity of Ewell, in Surrey.¹ Though frequent mention has been made by antiquaries of large holes filled with black mould and débris, on various ancient sites, they have usually been indiscriminately termed rubbish pits ; but I am not aware that, with the exception of the investigation by the gentleman above named, any steps have been taken to elucidate the penitralia of these mysterious repositories. From their close contiguity to each other, their shape, diameter, depth, and the nature of their contents, they are certainly not to be included in any such general designation, whatever their appropriation may have been. With the hope of establishing this, though scarcely of assigning to them their proper purpose, I shall enumerate the various peculiarities which have come under my observation, leaving to others to form their opinion from the evidence

¹ See Dr. Diamond's account of this discovery, which occurred about November, 1847. *Archæologia*, vol. xxxii. p. 451.

I may lay before them. In the course of my labours, I have examined more than forty of these holes, and I therefore approach the subject with some degree of confidence.

In order to enable my readers to understand more clearly the meaning of the term circular shafts or holes, in my acceptation of it, I shall, before entering further into the subject, briefly define their character according to my experience. Their existence is easily ascertained in trenching the ground, by the particular looseness of the soil in them, which too, on being struck at the surface with the wooden handle of the mattock, emits a hollow sound in proportion as the shaft below is more or less deep. In shape they are generally round, if not completely cylindrical, and from the moment they begin to descend their form becomes distinct, for at the mouth it is sometimes irregular. Their course is easily followed through the undisturbed natural soil which, when of chalk or gravel as at Chesterford, serves the same purpose as the steaning of a well, and affords security to the workman in clearing them out. Their diameter varies from 4 to 7 feet, the major part average 4 feet, continuing the same size as they descend, but some contract gradually towards the bottom; they have terminated almost in a point in one or two instances; and in as many their diameter all the way down has not exceeded a yard. Their depth is more capricious in the higher parts of the Borough, as it is termed at Chesterford, for although some there, as well as in the lower ground, do not run down lower than 5, 7, 10, or 11 feet, many reach more than 12 feet, and they have been dug as deep as 16, 18, 22, and 28 feet. In the lower parts 11 feet is the maximum they have attained, in fact they could not exceed it without reaching the water, and they range from 6 to 8 feet. Four feet is the minimum in any site. In only two instances, once in the higher, and once in the lower ground, have they terminated in water. Their bottoms are usually dry. These holes are confined to no particular portion of the Station, having occurred as often without as inside the walls, and very frequently within a few feet of one another. Groups of three or four together are not uncommon, and in the rectory grounds, in December, 1853, and in the spring of the present year, so many as fifteen were excavated in less than half an acre of ground. When they are more than 12 feet, a rope and basket, such as well-diggers use, are

required to empty them ; their examination is therefore attended with considerable labour, and is often a tedious operation. I mention this in order to account for the difficulty experienced in getting out vessels of glass or pottery without injury, lying as they do in such a confined space and immediately beneath the feet of the workman. At Ewell, if I recollect rightly, a railway cutting afforded the opportunity of obtaining a vertical section of the shafts, exposing their contents to view *in situ*, and their course was distinctly marked by the contrast of the dark soil in them with the chalk of the locality. At Chesterford a similar advantage was offered only in the gravel pit belonging to the parish, where the gravel, which is very near the surface, runs deep, and presents a sort of cliff as it recedes before the stone-diggers ; in this the black veins stand out in equally strong relief with those in Surrey. Two or three of them in this locality I shall have to notice especially, when I review the objects discovered in these holes. These relics are the next and most important part of the subject under consideration, and they are so numerous and vary so much as to baffle all rules in describing. Pottery entire, as well as broken, bones of animals, chiefly of bullocks, and oyster-shells, are the most general features of their contents, while some holes have been found destitute of any such remains. I shall therefore commence with the most remarkable shafts I first examined, including those in the parish work which have come under my notice, and proceed in order of time, specifying the dimensions, contents, and their position in the ground as my notes serve me, while of those last excavated I have kept a regular journal during the progress of the labourers.

By this arrangement I revert to the autumn of 1845, when I first began to dig at Chesterford, in a field within the station walls, and next to the parish gravel-pit. The first of the circular holes I opened here did not run deep, but it contained the curious terra-cotta *thuribulum* engraved in my "Antiqua Explorata," and in the fifth volume of this Journal, page 236. When found it was in pieces which all lay together ; from the same hole a second brass coin of Vespasian, an iron stylus, and a bone pin were taken. The two next were also shallow, the deepest being ten feet ; in it was found a large stone-coloured *olla*, which, together

with a large fine red *amphora* from the third hole, is figured in both the works referred to. These vessels were both in fragments, and had to be restored ; the bones of fowls were found in the *olla* for the first time in these pits, and those of bullocks occurred in all three. The next deep hole contained, near the bottom, a bone knife-handle—a carved figure of Hercules with his club. Of this a representation is here given. A deeper shaft excavated soon after reached 22 feet, proving the most prolific of those hitherto examined. Many bones of oxen and four fictile vessels were found in it ; a large black saucer, a red basin of fine ware, not Samian, with



Bone knife-handle
found at Chesterford,
Essex.

a pair of tall black *cylices* or drinking cups, with indented sides. All four vessels were entire when discovered, but the basin and one of the cups were slightly injured by the pick ; the saucer lay highest in the hole, the basin near the middle, the cups at the bottom. About this time a small basin of plain red Samian ware, with a potter's name, VICTORI M, was brought to me by a parish workman from one of these shafts in the gravel pit. Later in the same year, in a small enclosure behind some cottages, still within the Borough walls, I examined two more round pits ; of these I have no particular record beyond the fact, that a pair of bronze tweezers with an ear-pick was taken from one, and a silver denarius of Saloninus from the other, but I remember many fragments of pottery and animals' bones in both. After an interval of a year and a half, I again met with similar shafts, and on the 9th of July, 1847, a very deep one was opened in a field rather more than a

quarter of a mile outside the walls ; down to 8 feet, two small brass coins of Claudius Gothicus, some bullocks' bones, limpet and oyster shells, were all that were found ; at that depth, however, appeared a fine bronze comb with a double row of teeth (an object of very rare occurrence, formed of metal) ; from 8 to 18 feet, only pottery in fragments, parts of a human skull, a bronze pin, and a plated denarius of Constantine ; but at 20 feet lay a bronze patera, or ladle, with traces of gilding upon it ; of the comb and ladle repre-

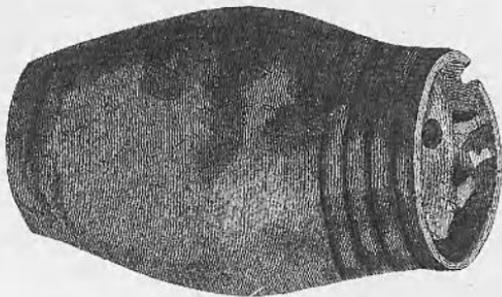
sentations are given (see woodcuts, next page).² Between 20 and 28 feet, at the bottom of the hole, broken pottery and bones of animals were plentiful, and at last water appeared; I must observe that it is probable the anxiety of my labourers to fathom the real depth, caused them to penetrate beyond it and strike a spring. Three vessels, a miniature tun,³ (see woodcut) a basin of black glazed ware, resembling that found near Upchurch, in Kent, and a common vase, were restored from the broken pieces in this shaft. In the September following, I explored several more pits just within the wall of the station and close to one another. The deepest did not exceed 18 feet, but they averaged from 12 to 15 feet. Bones of bullocks were found in all, one contained the heads of two ravens and a cock, some the bones of dogs, some, oyster-shells; from one, a roof coping tile, without any traces of mortar on it, was taken; this again occurred subsequently in another place. In one were found three perfect drinking cups with indented sides; in another, a bottle of pottery and a small basin of plain Samian ware; these, with a second bone knife-handle curiously carved, are the principal objects of interest from the holes on this site. Later in the same autumn I was summoned to inspect a deep shaft in the parish gravel-pit, from which two vessels of fictile ware had been obtained, and along with them, near the bottom, the debris of a beautiful green glass vase. I took away the fragments, which have been skilfully restored, and may now be seen in my collection in the shape of a modern claret jug (See the accompanying representation from a drawing by Mr. Youngman).⁴ The other two vessels were, I think, presented by the Rev. C. Sparkes, then curate of Chesterford, to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. In the spring of 1848, a

² See "Sepulchra Exposita," by the Hon. R. C. Neville, pp. 73, 74.

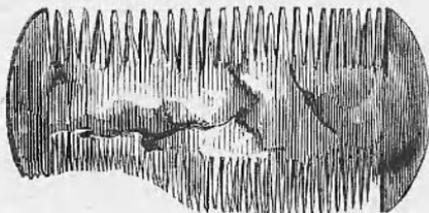
³ A diminutive tun of fictile ware occurred amongst the numerous reliques of Roman pottery found in the *Ustrinum* at Litlington, and now at Clare Hall, Cambridge. *Archæologia*, vol. xxvi. pl. 45. There is another in the British Museum. The Abbe Cochet has discovered numerous *barillets* of glass in Roman tombs in France. See his *Normandie Souterraine*, pp. 82, 93, &c., 2nd Edit. A curious Memoir by Dr. Braun on the cask or tun,

as connected with ancient sepulchral remains, is given in the *Jahrbücher des Vereins von Alterthumsfreunden im Rheinlande*, No. XVIII. p. 145. Bonn, 1852.

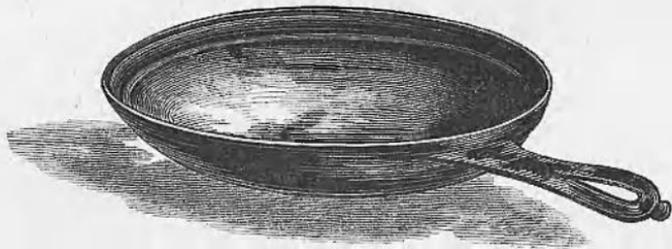
⁴ Vessels of glass, of this description, have very rarely been found amongst Roman remains in this country. Compare one discovered in one of the Bartlow Barrows, *Archæologia*, vol. xxv. pl. 2, and another found at Shefford, Bedfordshire; *Journal of Brit. Arch. Assoc.* vol. i. p. 52.



Length of the original, 4 in., diam. 2½ in.



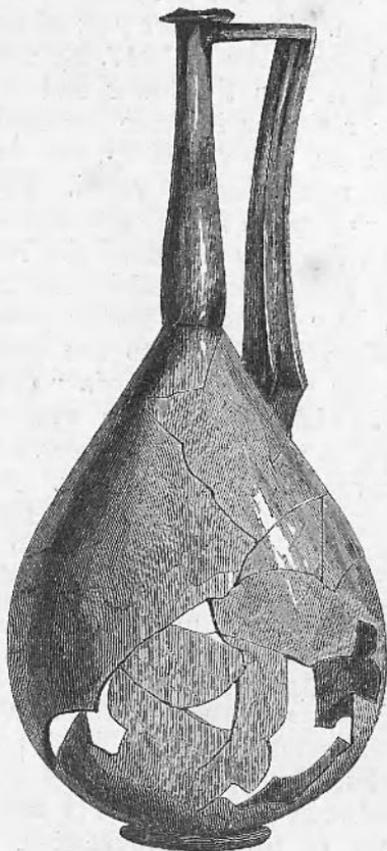
Length of the original, 4½ in., breadth, 2 in.



Small Tun of Red Ware, Bronze Comb, and Patella,

Found in a shaft excavated by the Hon. R. C. Neville, in 1847. Now preserved in his Museum at Audley End.

ROMAN ANTIQUITIES, DISCOVERED AT CHESTERFORD, ESSEX.



Ampulla, or Bottle, of Green Glass.

Found in excavations made by the Hon. R. C. Neville, in September, 1847, now preserved in his Museum at Audley End.

Height of the original, 13 inches.

hole was excavated at the north end of the interior of the wall; this was only 10 feet deep, and is remarkable as having contained a flat Samian ware dish, in fragments, of which the first pieces were found just beneath the surface, and more appeared at intervals, until the entire dish was put together at the edge of the pit, except one piece which lay quite at the bottom. The greater part of the small Samian basin found with the bottle in 1847, lay near the top, while a moiety was taken from the lower end of the shaft, which was a deep one; a similar instance occurred in 1853, when there was again an interval of several feet between one fragment and the remainder of a vessel. These appear to be significant facts as regards the purpose and formation of the circular pits, to which may be added the remark that many of their contents, bones, and especially iron and coins, when they are found, bear marks of having passed through the fire. In November, 1848, close to the Roman building at Chesterford, on the site of Stukeley's "Templi Umbra," as many as three Samian ware vessels were taken from one hole; while, besides pottery from others, two bronze finger rings were discovered in the same pit. Both these have been set with blue paste, and are figured in the sixth volume of this Journal, page 18, together with one of the Samian dishes, which has an ivy-leaf pattern, page 16; it bears therefore, as usual in embossed ware of this kind, no potter's mark.

A period of five years, during which little was done at Chesterford, brings me down to November, 1853, when my excavations were renewed, by the kind permission of the Rev. Lord Charles Hervey, in the rectory grounds. The site examined lies between the west wall of the churchyard and the southern one of the Roman station. The following catalogue will best show the number of holes opened here, and the interesting nature of their contents, which, in more than one instance, would constitute a remarkable find in themselves.

December 21, 1853. Shaft 1. Depth, 9 feet 6 inches. Contents:—Fragments of all kinds of fictilia in abundance, amongst them the bottom of a Samian ware vessel, with a potter's mark, DVOCIS. About 8 feet deep, a perfect *cylix* of black ware, with indented sides; this was broken by the pick, but has been restored, except the rim. At 2 feet from

the surface, a silver denarius of Septimius Severus was found, with the reverse—INDULGENTIA AUGG IN CARTH; Cybele seated on a lion. This type is the subject of a fine intaglio on cornelian found by the late M. Honneger, Consul at Tunis, in his excavations, and now in my Dactylotheca, reset in a ring. *December 23.* Shaft 2. Depth, 7 feet. Contents:—Many bones of bullocks and broken vases. Two coping roof tiles, as in a former hole; at 4 feet, a perfect black *cylix*, with indented sides, lying horizontally in the side of the shaft; at the same depth, a short and very thick bone pin, with round head; at 5 feet the soil changed from a black mould to a light grey, apparently ashes of wood; at the bottom, a second bone pin, the fac-simile of the first, with a quantity of bones of fowls, and two of their legs apparently mummied and perfectly preserved. In its descent through the natural soil, the sides of this pit had been clearly defined and solid; at its termination, the workmen broke through in one corner into another shaft of a similar nature, which, upon examination, was found to have been sunk within a yard of the mouth, and run down parallel to, but deeper than its neighbour. *December 27.* Shaft 3. Depth, 10 feet. Contents:—Bones of bullocks and oyster-shells in abundance at 8 feet; about the same depth, a bone needle; a perfect small vessel of light-coloured ware, resembling those found with the bones of infants, and figured in the tenth volume of this Journal, page 21, lay at the bottom. This hole was so close to the preceding one, that when emptied of their contents, they presented the singular appearance of two open wells, side by side, but distinct in their shafts excepting at their bottoms, which were both dry. *December 29.* Shaft 4, near to the two last. Depth, 10 feet. Contents:—Animals' bones and shards of pottery, amongst them half the bottom and several pieces of a fine embossed Samian ware bowl.

January 9, 1854. Shaft 5. Depth, 5 feet 6 inches. Contents:—More than ninety implements, tires of wheels and objects of iron altogether. These are so numerous, in such good preservation, and they comprehend so many objects novel and of interest, that any attempt to describe them would far exceed the limits of a paper not exclusively devoted to the subject, while it interrupted the one before us. I hope, therefore, in a future number of the Journal, to do justice to this remarkable discovery, when the beautiful

drawings made by Mr. Youngman, of Saffron Walden, will facilitate the illustration of the most curious articles.

January 12. Shaft 6. Depth, 14 feet. Contents :—Bones of bullocks and of one dog ; at 11 feet a perfect pottery bottle, similar in shape to that from another of these shafts in 1847. Soon after, all the pieces of a Samian dish, old fractures, since restored. It has the potter's name, ALBVCI. M. Portions of embossed Samian bowls, oyster-shells ; at 12 feet, a perfect black urn, of good ware ; at 13 feet, two dishes of plain Samian ware, one entire, the other broken by the pick, since restored ; both have makers' names ; at 14 feet, two black basins, one of them not quite whole, making in all seven vessels of fictile ware from one shaft.

January 16. Shaft 7. Depth, 12 feet. Contents :—Fragments of thick black ware, embossed, and plain Samian ; at 6 feet, a second brass coin of Trajan, in good condition, injured slightly by fire ; at 9 feet 6 inches, all the fragments of a black basin, since restored ; and at 12 feet, nearly all those of a plain Samian ware dish, with potter's stamp.

January 18. Shaft 8 (this was within 8 feet of the preceding one). Depth, 8 feet 6 inches. Contents :—At 3 feet, a bronze *ligula*, similar to those from the Roman houses at Ashdon and Bartlow (see Volume X. of this Journal, page 16). Nothing more was found in this hole.

January 20. Shaft 9. Depth 12 feet. Contents :—At 11 feet, two plain Samian ware saucers, one entire, the other in fragments, old fractures since restored ; the first has a potter's stamp—SILVANI. O., the second has the ivy-leaf pattern on the rim, and, as is usually the case, there is no name impressed on the ware ; at 12 feet, three vessels of dark ware, two of them black basins, perfect when found, the third in pieces, all of which were obtained and reunited, making in all five vessels of pottery from this shaft.

January 24. Shaft 10. Depth, 16 feet. Contents :—Fragments of pottery ; at 15 feet, a perfect urn of the glossy black ware, like those found at Upchurch, as in a former instance in one of these pits.

January 27. Shaft 11. Depth, 6 feet 11 inches. Contents.—Broken vessels and bones of animals, among them three very large bones of a horse, one being a deformed tibia. At 10 feet, the lower half of a dark urn of thin ware containing a quantity of bones of some small bird. The

upper half of this vessel had been broken of old, but none of the fragments were to be found in the shaft.

February 2. Shaft 12. Depth, 8 feet 10 inches. This is the first pit on the site which has been entirely unproductive; not even a bit of pottery appeared in the soil. *February* 15. Shaft 13. Depth, 7 feet. Contents:—Half a saucer of light-coloured ware with a flat bottom. This hole was in the shrubbery of the Rectory, on the north of the ground containing the others, bordering on the Cambridge high road. *February* 23. Shaft 14. Depth, 8 feet. Close outside the churchyard wall, and almost under a large elm: the roots had struck down in the loose soil of the shaft, and so impeded the pick of the workmen that three vessels, which were lying perfect at a depth of 5 feet, were much broken. They are all of Castor ware, and on being restored prove to be two *cylices* with indented sides; one red, one of slate colour, while the third is a black and red *poculum*. This as also the red *cylix* has a pattern on it, one in relief, the other in white paint. Great numbers of oyster-shells and bullocks' bones were found at 6 feet, as well as a miniature axe head of iron, 3 inches long, with a portion of the handle, which is slight and also of iron, broken in the socket. In the 2 feet below nothing more occurred. *February* 27. Shaft 15. Depth, 18 feet. Very near the preceding one. The excavation of this occupied three days. Contents:—At 5 feet a quantity of fragments of pottery began to appear; at 6 feet a small Samian basin of plain ware lay broken of old, but since restored; it has a potter's stamp—SACHR. F.; a piece of a fine embossed bowl, and numerous bits of vessels with bronze pins, and two of bone with a round hole through each, occurred at 10 feet: a little lower, oyster-shells, bullocks' bones, and red mortar formed with pounded tile. Between 14 and 15 feet no pottery was found, and the soil changed from a dark mould to fine sifted sand, but the black earth reappeared soon with a few shards of fictilia, and continued to 18 feet, when the water rose from the gravel bottom. This is the second instance in which these pits have reached the water. There were also taken from this pit a black urn, which had been deposited horizontally in the side of the shaft, entire, but was fractured by the pick, and another broken Samian vessel which was restored: the fractures old.

March 3. Shaft 16. Depth, 4 feet. Contents:—A very

few pieces of pottery. Possibly only the commencement of a pit. *March* 4. Shaft 17. Depth, 5 feet. Contents :—The same as its neighbour. This was the last of the shafts discovered in the Rectory grounds. *March* 7. Shaft 18. In a field, the property of R. Fisher, Esq., about 100 yards outside the northern face of the Borough walls, the foundations of which are still to be traced crossing the enclosure from east to west parallel to the Borough ditch. Depth, 5 feet 4 inches. Contents :—Fragments of black, and some embossed Samian ware. At 4 feet, all the pieces of a plain Samian basin, except one, which lay at the bottom : it has been restored, and has a potter's stamp—ACAPA. F. At the same depth the bones of a dog. *March* 24. Shaft 19. In the same field. Depth, 11 feet. Contents :—At 4 feet, a perfect black urn : at 9 feet, all the bones of a dog, but no more pottery.

August 26. Shaft 20. Excavations recommenced on the same site. Depth, 5 feet 4 inches. Contents :—All the fragments of a black dish, of old fracture, since restored ; and a piece of a fine embossed Samian bowl.

October 3. Shaft 21. On the same site. Depth, 7 feet 9 inches. Contents :—Broken pottery of no importance. *October* 5. Shaft 22. Depth, 8 feet. Contents :—At 4 feet 6 inches, an elegant black pitcher in fragments, since restored : many bones of bullocks and bits of vases ; and at 7 feet a bottle of dark ware, the handle lost ; this was in halves when found. *October* 9. Shaft 23. Depth, 7 feet. Contents :—Near the top, a silver denarius of Elagabalus, much burnt ; at 2 feet 5 inches, plated coins of Allectus, one of Carausius and one of Maximianus with an incuse reverse, all in good preservation ; a large square iron nail $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches long. At 5 feet, a square green glass bottle with a reeded handle, nearly entire when found, but broken by the pick : almost all is restored. At the bottom a bone pin and a large brass coin of Trajan, a little burnt. *October* 9. Shaft 24. Depth, 8 feet. Contents :—At 4 feet 4 inches, all the fragments of a red Castor ware *cylix* with indented sides ; an old fracture. *October* 10. Shaft 25. Depth, 8 feet. Contents :—A third brass coin of Constantius, near the top ; fragments of embossed and other pottery, and a silver denarius of Faustina Senior, near the bottom. *October* 11. Shaft 26. Depth, 8 feet. Contents :—A piece of iron chain

12½ inches long, with 26 links ; an iron knife at 6 feet 6 inches, and a fragment of the upper part of a black basin, apparently of Upchurch ware, inscribed in capitals scratched below the rim—*VARRIATVS*. *October* 13. Shaft 27. Depth, 6 feet. Contents :—Bones of a dog. The greater part of a cup of red Castor ware, and some other fragments, at 4 feet. This pit was larger than ordinary, being between 6 and 7 feet in diameter. Shaft 28. Depth, 5 feet 7 inches. Contents :—Some bits of fictilia. *October* 14. Shaft 29. Depth, 6 feet 6 inches. Contents :—Bones of bullocks and broken vases. *October* 17. Shaft 30. Depth, 5 feet 6 inches. Contents :—A bronze stylus only, with circular flat top for erasing. *October* 18. Shaft 31. Depth, 4 feet. Contents :—Bones of bullocks. *October* 20. Shaft 32. Depth, 6 feet 6 inches. Contents :—At 1 foot 6 inches, a long metal pin strongly plated : a few fragments of pottery.

November 18. Shaft 33. Depth, 5 feet. Contents :—At 3 feet, many pieces of two *pocula* of Castor ware. This hole was on a different site, being under the lawn in front of the house formerly the Crown Inn at Chesterford, on the north side of the Cambridge road, but still within the Borough walls. Its diameter being only 3 feet it was with difficulty cleared. *November* 28. Shaft 34. Depth, 8 feet 8 inches. Contents :—An iron *falx*, or small pruning knife, with socket for a handle. On the same site, as are all that follow. *November* 29. Shaft 35. Depth, 5 feet 6 inches. Contents :—2 bone pins, a pair of bronze tweezers, and a swallow-tailed picker, fitting between them, attached to a bronze-hinged loop for fitting on a ring.

December 22. Shaft 36. Depth, 5 feet 6 inches. Contents :—Many fragments of pottery ; a large black basin of thick smooth ware, entire when found, but broken by the pick : since restored. Shaft 37. Depth, 5 feet 4 inches. Contents :—Broken pottery, and from near the bottom a slight bronze stylus with circular flat top for erasing. *December* 23. Shaft 38. Depth, 10 feet. Contents :—At 6 feet, two short thick bone pins, many pieces of a Castor ware *cyliax*, a *tessera*, as it appears, of some marble, 1¾ inch long by 1 inch across, and ⅙ of an inch thick, without any traces of mortar. At the bottom, the greatest

part of a black *cylix*, with indented sides, in pieces. *December* 30. Shaft 38. Depth, 17 feet 3 inches. Contents :—Many bones of dogs and some of bullocks ; parts of the same animal appeared at 11, and again, at 14 feet ; several bits of a plain Samian ware basin entirely blackened by fire, a few pieces of thick black pottery, and two of a dish with ivy-leaf pattern at between 11 and 14 feet ; at 13 feet 6 inches, four fragments of a fine embossed Samian bowl, which, united, made three parts of the vessel, and at 16 feet 2 inches, the missing portion in one large piece, enabling me to restore a perfect and beautiful specimen of these rare fictilia. When complete it measures 9 inches diameter at top, and 5 inches in height. The subject upon the ware is a series of lions large and small in two rows ; they are at full speed, and here and there a hare is represented squatting singly among them ; the smaller lions are on the lower row *dos-à-dos* in pairs, and run opposite ways. There is no trace of the potter's name in the pattern or any other part of the basin. Full 2 feet 6 inches of soil intervened between the first 4 pieces and the last ; at the bottom of the hole were the fragments of a large black urn : two bone pins occurred at 10 feet, some oyster-shells, and eight or ten large pebble paving stones were found singly at intervals. The excavation of this hole occupied three days.

January 3, 1855. Shaft 39. Less than 10 feet from No. 38. Depth, 13 feet. Contents :—Nothing entire or complete ; full three parts of a plain Samian dish near the bottom ; bones of animals very numerous, with marks of burning ; as in the other holes there were many of dogs, which were sacred to Proserpine.⁵ *January* 5. Shaft 40. Four feet from 39. Depth, 20 feet 2 inches. Contents :—A good many pieces of pottery, chiefly black ware ; bones of animals in profusion, among them two very large jaw bones of an ox ; all the bones much burnt and the soil full of ash ; at 18 feet 6 inches, a perfect small black urn without any contents. *January* 8. Shaft 41. Depth, 12 feet 8 inches. Contents :—A bone pin, bones of bullocks, broken pottery, a potter's name—CEREALIS. M. ; at 10 feet, a dark coloured urn fractured by the pick. *January* 9. Shaft 42. Depth, 5 feet 4 inches. Contents :—Broken pottery and

⁵ Visæque canes ululare per umbras
Adventante Dea.

bullocks' bones. Another hole was found 9 inches from the margin. *January* 11. Shaft 43. Depth, 21 feet 3 inches. Contents:—Pottery in fragments, dark and plain Samian ware, bones of bullocks and dogs, the skull of one of the latter, a large square lump of tufa; at 15 feet, a small white *mortarium*, and a black urn; the last was broken by the pick; at 16 and 19 feet, a black basin in pieces; at 20 and 21, three large and entire urns of smooth black ware; and quite at the bottom, a small plain Samian ware basin with potter's name—MACCIVS. F. Some mussel shells occurred, and the bones of oxen were scattered in fragments all through this shaft; scarcely six inches of soil without some bits of them. *January* 13. Shaft 44. Depth, 16 feet. Contents:—Bones of bullocks, and a very few pieces of pottery. At 6 feet 6 inches a large brass coin, so much burnt as to be illegible, apparently a Commodus; among the bits of pottery two makers' names, one,—CARETI. M., the other—MINAIT. *January* 16. Shaft 45. Depth, 10 feet 9 inches. Contents:—At 3 feet, a very perfect iron *falx*, semicircular, but without handle; at 8 feet 9 inches, a large white saucer of thick ware; at 10 feet 7 inches, a perfect black urn.

The close of this catalogue affords an opportunity of introducing the following account, which seems to relate to these pits, and is taken from Cole's manuscripts in the British Museum. He says:—"Mr. Ashby, fellow of St. John's, calling on me this morning, December 18, 1769, gave me the following account of some antiquities lately discovered at Chesterford, digging away the old Roman fortifications in order to mend the highway with the materials. He told me he received the information from Mr. Shepherd, an intelligent farmer of the same town. A fine red dish of very bright red earth, exceedingly smooth; and within a circle was wrote ARILIS. F., and was very fine ware. This was found with many other broken pieces, with sheep's bones, at the bottom of a well 10 feet deep. A skeleton lay across the top of the well."

Since the subject is a novel one, I trust the above details may not be found too minute or tedious, but I cannot take leave of it without reviewing the principal features apparent in them.

These pits were made designedly, with care, and are not the results of a gradual accumulation of the soil, as in Roman London, for they have been excavated at Chesterford through

the gravel, and at Ewell through the chalk, the natural strata of the localities, and their shape is nearly uniform. The presence of so many vessels of pottery in the shafts, deposited entire at intervals, is a strong evidence against their having been used merely as rubbish holes; a still stronger argument is furnished by many of them having been sunk so near together, but clearly distinct from one another, as also by their regular cylindrical form and depth. As receptacles for debris an equally large surface of ground would have been more easily obtained, and the necessity of going so deep obviated by throwing them all into one. As in only two instances, out of so many, the water has been reached in these shafts, if they were ever intended for wells we must suppose the Romans to have been perpetually commencing, and abandoning fresh wells unfinished; but the river Cam, which runs within a hundred yards of the west face of the Borough walls, and less than a quarter of a mile from nearly all these pits, renders the supposition at least most improbable. The discovery of the numerous iron articles in shaft No. 5, seems to favour the idea in Hewitt's History of the Hundred of Compton in Berkshire, where speaking of many round black holes in that neighbourhood, he suggests they may have been intended for granaries or storehouses,⁶ but the position of their contents in the earth at Chesterford, with the exception of one above indicated, sufficiently demonstrates this purpose not to have been their general purpose. There is another use, (that of Cloacæ) which has been considered probable for some holes in another locality, and which, although impossible from the diameter and depth of those under consideration, I notice, in order to state that I have never been able to detect anything, or any appearance in the soil from them, which could justify such a suspicion.

All the above explanations seem to be negatived by the internal evidence of these pits. The only suggestion as yet offered regarding their use, with any degree of probability, is that they were in some manner connected with funeral or sacrificial rites, and although the facts which have been noticed may point to none in particular, many circumstances will be found on considering them, to denote that they were so. The universal prevalence of bones of animals with

⁶ This supposition had likewise been suggested in regard to some shafts found at Woodcote, Surrey, in the neighbourhood

of Ewell, in 1811. Manning and Bray, Hist. of Surrey, vol. iii. App. p. xlviij.

marks of burning, especially bones of bullocks, is alone sufficient to give rise to such an idea, nor is the fact of those of dogs, horses, and sheep being intermingled, calculated to refute it, since all these creatures were sacrificed commonly. The bones of the fowl in many of these holes, a bird especially sacred, and frequently offered to Æsculapius, together with the raven's head found in one pit, point to the same purpose. Coins also, whenever they have been found, and iron fragments appear to have passed through the flames. Fire we know to have been an integral part of sacrifice, and sacrifice an inseparable accompaniment of Roman funeral obsequies, so that the same arguments apply equally to both. Perhaps no conclusive evidence can be derived from two solitary instances of portions of the human frame found in these holes, one mentioned by Mr. Cole in 1769, the other in my own experience, July, 1847.⁷ The number of household vessels, utensils, and articles of personal use in them, are in accordance with the customs of Latin burials. Certainly many of the former are in fragments, but may it not be supposed that having once been hallowed by such a use, they were considered too sacred to be employed again, and even if they had only been formerly for service in the temples, without any reference to funerals. Whether these mysterious penetralia were devoted to celebrating the obsequies of persons dying on the site, or as it has been suggested, of those who dying at a distance could not be burnt; or whether they were simply depositories of consecrated articles which had become unfit for use, of the same nature as the *favissæ*, cavities constructed under a temple, as we learn from Varro, there is no proof positive.⁸ In order as much as possible to facilitate coming to some conclusion on the subject, I have been desirous to place on record the results of my experience, and I trust not without success.⁹

R. C. NEVILLE.

⁷ In the pits at Ewell Dr. Diamond noticed portions of burnt human bones, the animal bones all being unburnt. *Archæologia*, vol. xxxii. p. 452.

⁸ Three of these pits were found under a temple at Fiesole, filled with broken musical instruments, implements, utensils, lamps, damaged fictilia, &c. See Rich's

Companion to the Latin Dictionary, *v. Favissæ*.

⁹ Since the above was written, twelve more holes have been excavated at Chesterford; the results of their examination, which are inserted in their order in the catalogue, are strongly corroborative of some of the observations I have made above.

NOTE ON THE SHAFTS DISCOVERED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF GREAT BRITAIN AT SITES OF ROMAN OCCUPATION.

To those readers who may take an interest in prosecuting investigation of the subject brought before the Institute by Mr. Neville in the foregoing memoir, the following references to other discoveries of a similar nature may prove acceptable. It is remarkable that, so far as we are at present informed, no depositories of this description have been noticed at Roman stations or towns on the continent, with the exception only of the *favissæ*, formed, as we learn from Festus and Varro, underneath or near temples, to receive objects connected with sacred rites, which had become unfit for use. Such places existed, as it is supposed, in the Capitol, and have been discovered in recent times under a ruined temple at Fiesole. There appears, however, to be no conclusive evidence to connect any of the pits found near Roman stations in England with a place of heathen worship. Amongst discoveries of pits of the same description as those made known to us through the indefatigable zeal and intelligence of Mr. Neville, the following may be noticed. Such shafts have been found in London, and were described by the late Mr. Kempe, in *Gent. Mag.*, Dec., 1838; a pit of large size, opened in digging the foundations for the new Royal Exchange, is described by Mr. C. Roach Smith as containing, amongst refuse of all kinds, modelling tools and implements of steel in most perfect preservation. Mr. Roach Smith states that similar pits have occurred at Springhead, near Gravesend, and he has noticed those found at Richborough, in his *Antiquities of that place*, p. 55. An account also of certain shafts found in the Isle of Thanet, is given in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, vol. i. p. 328. They have occurred near Winchester, as described, *Gent. Mag.*, Oct., 1838; at Ewell, Surrey, as stated in Mr. Neville's *Memoir*; and at Stone, Buckinghamshire, described in this *Journal*, vol. viii. p. 95, and by Mr. Akerman, in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxxiv. p. 21. A considerable number of these remarkable cavities have been excavated by Mr. Trollope, in the stone quarries near the North Gate at Lincoln, and numerous fragments of Roman pottery, &c., with animal remains and debris of all kinds, were found. In Scotland several curious shafts of the like nature were noticed near Perth by Pennant, who describes them as cylindrical pits sunk as places of sepulture. *Tour in Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 109. More recently, railway operations have brought to light, near Newstead, Roxburghshire, several remarkable shafts, two of which were built round with stones. They contained, amidst black soil and animal remains, pottery, shells, bones of deer and oxen, a human skeleton erect with a spear at its side, accompanied by Roman fictilia, and other reliques of the same age. See Dr. Wilson's *Prehistoric Annals*, p. 382. Mr. Wright, in *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon*, p. 179, adverts to the discoveries of such "Rubbish Pits" near Roman towns, and considers them to be *cloacæ* which had become common depositories for refuse of every description. Dr. Diamond and Mr. Akerman concur in the opinion adopted by Pennant and other writers, that they are to be considered as sepulchral. Mr. Akerman, in his *Memoir* on the discovery at Stone, near Aylesbury, suggests, with much probability, that such pits may be regarded as the *puticuli*, depositories for the ashes of the humblest classes in Roman times, thus described by a writer of the fourth century, Aggenus Urbicus,—*"Sunt in suburbanis loca publica, inopum destinata funeribus, quæ loca culinas appellat."*