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PROCEEDINGS OF THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LII

JANUARY 1958 TO DECEMBER 1958

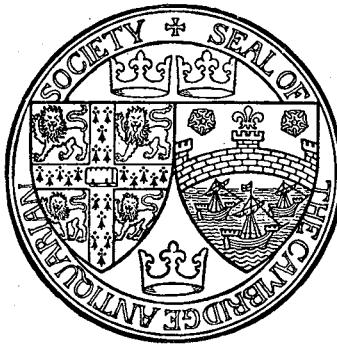
CAMBRIDGE
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A GROUP OF ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY WITH AN OWNER'S MARK

B. R. HARTLEY AND E. STANDEN

FOR several seasons the second writer has been investigating a Romano-British site on the edge of the Fens at Horsey Toll, Stanground, Hunts (Nat. Grid ref. 52/234954). As yet, insufficient work has been done to make a general account of the site profitable, but one most interesting group of pottery merits consideration. This comes from a linear ditch 6-7 ft. wide and 4-5 ft. deep which has now been traced for a distance of 600 yards. This ditch is either a major component of a field-system or else, conceivably, an estate boundary.

The pottery now in question is a series of sherds from ten different vessels, all bearing the same owner's mark—an N or reversed N incised after firing. There is, therefore, a strong presumption that the group is a compact one chronologically, falling within the lifetime of one individual. The character of the vessels that are immediately datable bears out this presumption. The vessels are:

- (a) Samian form 33, East Gaulish, late Antonine. Owner's mark inside base. Not illustrated.
- (b) Samian form 33, Central Gaulish, Antonine. Owner's mark on outside of the lower wall. Not illustrated.
- (c) Samian form 31 (Sb), Central Gaulish, Antonine, with the stamp of an illiterate potter (Fig. 1, 1 and 1a).
- (d) Base of a colour-coated beaker of Nene Valley type. This no doubt had barbotine decoration, but the wall does not survive high enough to preserve any (Fig. 1, 2).
- (e) Chamfered base from a grey ware dish or bowl. The fabric is typical of the coarse pottery of the Nene Valley kilns. Owner's mark on the underside of the base. Not illustrated.
- (f) Wide-mouthed jar in grey fabric with burnished surface. The fabric is again typical of Nene Valley products (Fig. 1, 3).
- (g) A similar jar in sandy grey fabric (Fig. 1, 4).
- (h) A small jar in the same fabric as (f) (Fig. 1, 5).
- (i) and (j). Bases from two jars of the same general type as (f) and (g). Of these (c), (d) and (h) have an N as owner's mark, the rest have a reversed N.

The coarse ware can only be dated by its association with the Samian and the colour-coated beaker. The Samian is consistently Antonine and to be dated about A.D. 160-200: the colour-coated vessel could equally well belong to the late second century or to the early years of the third century. It seems certain, therefore, that the wide-mouthed jars belong to the late second century. The type is known to have been made in the Nene Valley, where it has been found in kiln deposits dating between about A.D. 230 and the mid-fourth century. The Horsey Toll evidence now allows us to say that the type had already emerged in the late second century and it

may well go back to the foundation of the Nene Valley industry.¹ It is clear that the type was the standard cooking-pot of the Fenland and its immediate surroundings and that it entirely excluded from the area the black-burnished jars which were the normal cooking-pots of the Midlands and the north.² There is considerable variation in the precise form even in a contemporary group (cf. Fig. 1, 3-5) and it is difficult at present to isolate features which may have chronological significance.

In the Midlands and north the jars are invariably accompanied by dishes and bowls in the same fabric, almost always with lattice decoration.³ These, too, are absent from the Fenland area, where their place is taken by dishes and bowls of the same general form, though with an emphasis on a rim of triangular or rounded section, in grey

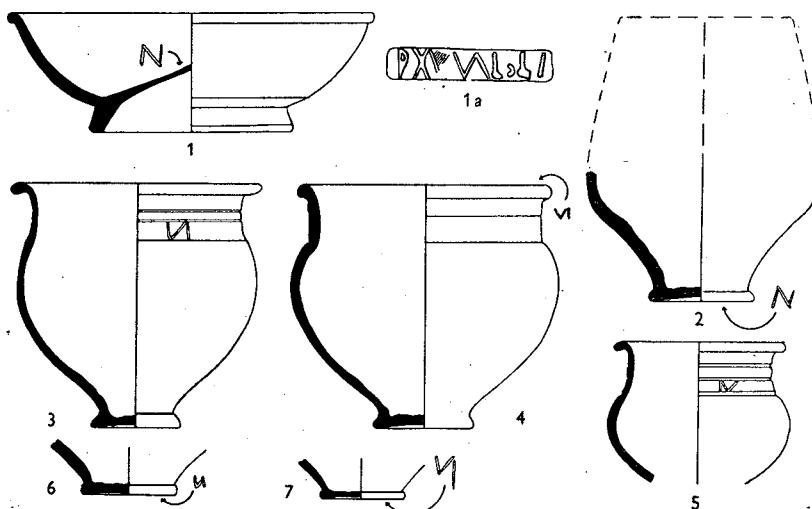


Fig. 1.

fabric without lattice decoration. Like the jars, these were being made in the Nene Valley in the third and fourth centuries and they are represented at Horsey Toll by one dish base (*e*). It seems unlikely that there is an internal typology in the series analogous to that found in the black-burnished one. The Nene Valley types, for instance, almost invariably have a chamfer at the junction of the base and wall, whatever their date. Nor does the type appear to develop into the straight-sided flanged bowl which is so prominent in the black-burnished series.⁴ In the north these had begun to appear by the mid-third century and by the end of the century they were very common indeed, largely replacing the flat-rimmed or rolled-rimmed type. But in the Fenland the flanged bowl in grey ware is comparatively uncommon and it is clear that the flat- or triangular-rimmed type was in use well into the fourth century, and that almost all the flanged bowls were in colour-coated ware.

¹ The date commonly accepted for the foundation of the industry in the Nene Valley is about A.D. 170-80 (cf. K. Kenyon, *Excavations at the Jewry Wall Site, Leicester*, p. 120).

² Gillam, 'Types of Roman Coarse Pottery in the North of Britain', in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th series, vol. xxxv, type 120, etc.

³ Gillam, *loc. cit.* type 220, etc.

⁴ Gillam, *loc. cit.* types 226, 227.

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