

ART. XVIII.—*Notes on Samian Ware.* BY F. HAVERFIELD  
M.A., F.S.A.

THE red glazed ware which English writers call 'Samian,' and foreign writers 'terra sigillata,' is, comparatively speaking, not so abundant near the Roman Wall as in the south of England, and our excavations during the last few years have yielded few and unimportant fragments. The present year has been slightly more productive, perhaps because (as I conjecture) the 'civil settlement' of Birdoswald was on the east side of the fort, where we were trenching for Vallum and Turf Wall, and though the fragments found were in no way important in themselves, they may serve as pegs on which to hang a few notes on Samian pottery. In Germany various archæologists, notably Hettner, Koenen, and Dragendorff, have attempted to classify chronologically the various sorts of Samian by examination of shape, ornament, and general technique. The attempt has aroused little attention or imitation in England, and in the following notes I wish to make what, however scanty and inconclusive, will at least be a beginning of the enquiry in Britain.

The kind of Samian most abundantly represented in our and in all mural excavations is a moderate sized bowl, with almost completely curving sides, so that the whole bowl, less a shallow foot-rim, resembles half a flattened sphere. The decoration of the outside consists of horizontal rings, first a plain belt, then a thin band of the so-called 'egg and tongue' ornament (fig. 1) and then, occupying the rest of the surface, ornament in relief running continuously round, either foliation, or animals, or medallions, or figures of men or gods. This kind of bowl  
occurs

occurs all over the Roman world where Samian was in use, and appears to belong principally to the second and third centuries. It can first be traced in the latter part

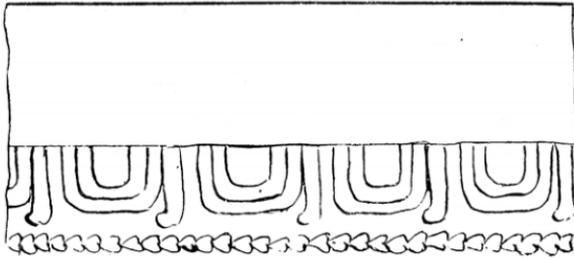


FIG. 1.—EGG AND TONGUE ORNAMENT.

of the first century in Germany. The earliest example known to me as having been found in Britain under circumstances allowing us to date it, is a bowl found in Warwickshire, with a coin of Nerva, and described by the late Mr. C. Roach Smith in his *Collectanea Antiqua* (I. 35). It is, so far as I have observed, common on almost every Romano-British site: its interest, with respect to the Wall, is that it is one of a very few types of large Samian which occur in the north. On Plate VII it is represented by figs. 5 and 6.

It has been found not only along the Wall, but at

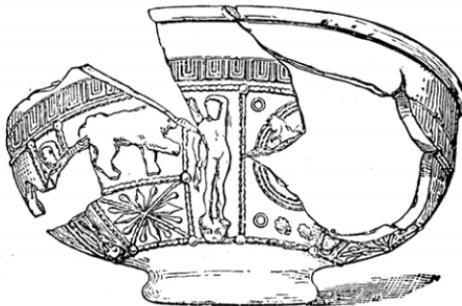
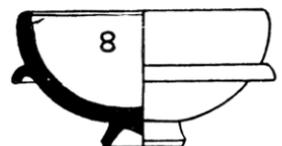
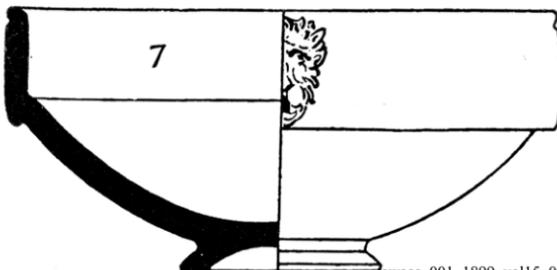
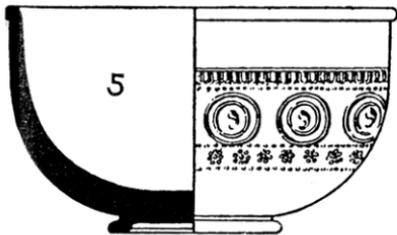
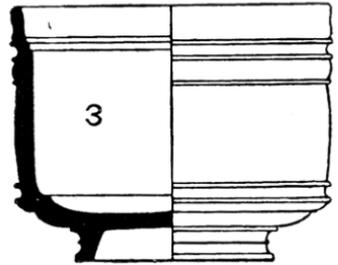
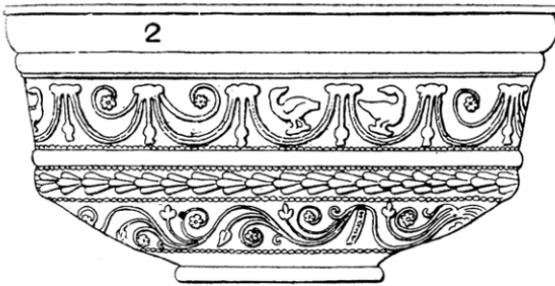
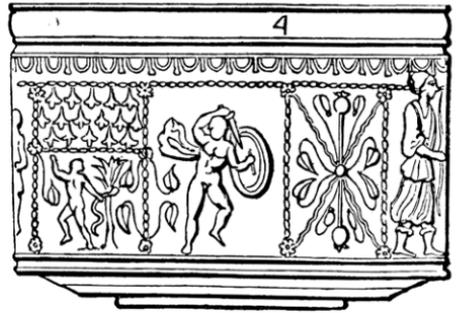
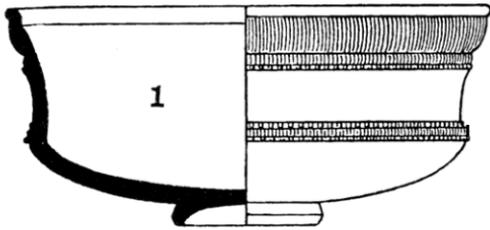


FIG. 2a.

South Shields (see figs. 2a & 2b) reproduced by leave from  
*Archæologia*



*Archæologia Aeliana*, x, 268. It has been found, further, at Birrens, which seems to have been occupied only for a comparatively short period in the second half of the second century (see fig. 3) reproduced by permission from



FIG. 3.

the *Proceedings of the Scotch Society of Antiquaries*, vol. xxx, Feb. 10, 1896. It has been found, further, at Newstead near Melrose, which appears to have been occupied only about the middle of the second century.

A second kind of large Samian which is common on the Wall and is well exemplified, *e.g.*, in the Chesters Museum, is a rather wider and shallower type, approximating to a *pelvis* internally. The outside is noticeable for a vertical band, generally ornamented with a lion's head or similar object; this band projects beyond the general curve of the bowl, with which at top it forms a tangent in many cases. This type appears also to belong to the second and third centuries, and to occur nowhere where an earlier date would be probable, so far as Germany is concerned. (Plate VII, fig. 7.)

A third kind is a rather smaller and deeper bowl, usually plain on the outside, which curves like a half-sphere, but is distinguished by a rim which projects and curves downwards. This type is not specially common

on

on the Wall, but I have seen it at South Shields, and at several sites in Yorkshire (Ilkley, Aldborough, &c.), and I may add, it is imitated in wares which can hardly be called Samian at Silchester, as also at Strée, a second or third century cemetery in Belgium. It occurs in Germany along with remains of the second century and later. (Plate VII, fig. 8.)

In these cases the Samian pottery of the Wall shows exclusively second century types (to describe it shortly). On the other hand the types of larger bowls which occur in Germany along with remains of the first century before about A.D. 70, do not occur on the Wall. Such are the bowls with more or less vertical sides, either cylindrical, or cylindrical above and curved below (Plate VII, figs. 1-4.) The ornamentation of these bowls is to some extent like that of the first type noticed above; the 'egg and tongue' pattern occurs occasionally, but the difference in shape and often in technique, is clear. So far as I have been able to notice, such bowls are absent on and near the Wall, but are fairly common in the south, at London or Colchester for example. I have, however, noticed two pieces in the rather scanty collection of the Grosvenor Museum at Chester. Chester appears to have been occupied as early as A.D. 50, and it is therefore a site where such pieces would not surprise us.

Specimens have also been found at the following places :—

London : C. R. Smith, *Roman London*, Plates xxv-xxviii.

Richborough : C. R. Smith, *Richborough, etc.*, Plate iii. Silchester : Reading Museum.

Bath : H. M. Scarth, *Aquæ Solis*, Plate xliii.

Charterhouse on Mendip : Taunton Museum.

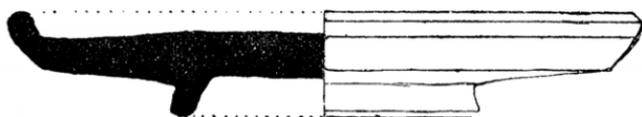
Caerleon-on-Usk : J. E. Lee, *Isca Silurum*, Plate xii.

York : C. Wellbeloved, *Eburacum*, Plate xvi.

All these sites were certainly occupied by the Romans  
before

before about A.D. 85, and almost all were probably occupied as early as A.D. 50. York was occupied sometime between A.D. 70 and A.D. 80, and Silchester, as I have suggested elsewhere, may have been founded or rather refounded by Agricola about A.D. 80. It is, of course, credible that this style of Samian lasted longer than A.D. 85. Its varieties are numerous enough to shew a development demanding time. For instance the unornamented band which runs round the top of almost every specimen seems to have been at first comparatively narrow and more or less moulded and afterwards to have grown into something broader, plainer, vertical. But the fact that no specimens of this type occur further north than York, so far as I have been able to discover, suggests that it vanished from Britain much about the same time that it vanished from Germany, that is, shortly before the end of the first century of our era.

Another of our Birdoswald finds was a flat 'plate' represented in the annexed cut. Such plates, in various



*two-thirds of natural size.*

FIG. 4.

forms, are common in all periods of Samian ware, and are hard to date. Our specimen resembles most closely a variety found in Germany (according to Koenen) from about A.D. 60-120, but it is thicker, coarser, and presumably later than that. So far as I can judge, such flat plates are much harder to date, even conjecturally, than the bowls described above. A fragment similar to the Birdoswald one is at South Shields, inscribed inside MARTI M.

I do not profess, in these notes, to have done more than indicate a few fairly certain and indeed fairly obvious points as to dates of the various types of Samian. I shall be glad if my remarks lead to some one with more leisure and experience than myself, to continue the subject. The figures on Plate VII. are adapted partly from Dragendorff's illustrations, partly from the plates to Mr. C. R. Smith's *Roman London*.

Potters marks. Only one bit of inscribed Samian was found, GENIALIS FECI, a stamp found elsewhere on the Wall (CIL. vii. 1336, 483): the fragment was too small to allow any guess as to the shape of the vessel. On a lip of a *pelvis* are the letters LRIGE.

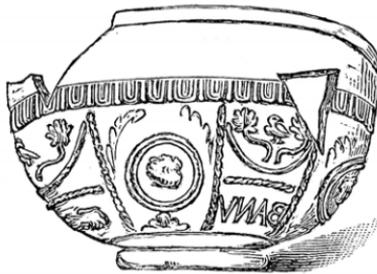


FIG. 2b.

SAMIAN WARE FOUND AT SOUTH SHIELDS,  
SEE P. 192.