

ART. VII.—*An Anglo-Saxon cremation-urn at Netherhall.* By Miss K. S. HODGSON, F.S.A.

Read at Carlisle, March 24th, 1956.

THE most unexpected piece of non-Roman pottery in the Netherhall collection is an Anglo-Saxon cremation-urn. It is a typical piece, and in excellent preservation; it stands 23 cm. high and is decidedly lop-sided, as is so often the case with such urns. Its colour is dark grey, except where it has been altered by burning; its surface has a curious leathery appearance, which again is characteristic, as is the hard, fine fabric showing in the fractures—dark grey, with very fine grit, giving a stone-like appearance.¹ The body of the pot has been built up in rings which are still perceptible under the smoothing of the surface.

I submitted a drawing and a photograph of the urn to Mr J. N. L. Myres, F.S.A., who kindly allows me to quote his answering letter:

"I think there can be no doubt that it is an Anglo-Saxon cremation-urn. The type is quite a common one, and most cemeteries from which many urns are preserved can show more or less close parallels. Among those which have been published there are, for example:

"(a) *South Ellerington*, Lincs, nos. 30 and 67 (*Arch. Journ.* cviii, 1952, pp. 28, 35 and 39). Of these, no. 30 is the same size as yours but with rather a more pronounced shoulder.

"(b) *Lackford*, Suffolk, nos. 50.127 and 50.45 (T. C. Lethbridge, *A Cemetery at Lackford*, 1951, pp. 18 f., 36 and 42). Of these, no. 50.127 is rather narrower in the mouth than yours: it contained a mid 6th-century cruciform brooch; no. 50.45 has again a rather more pronounced shoulder: it apparently belongs to a group datable to the second half of the sixth century.

"(c) *Little Wilbraham*, Cambridge (R. C. Neville, *Saxon Obsequies*, 1852, pl. 32, bottom left, and pl. 33, centre). The former is about the same size, the latter a little smaller.

¹ It may be worth while to point out that sherds of such pottery, if in bad condition, could easily be mistaken for Roman coarse ware.



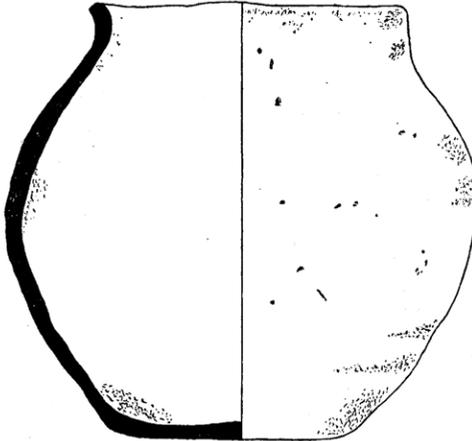
The Netherhall urn.

facing p. 70

“There are also a number of similar pots, perhaps seven or eight, among the large collection from the unpublished cemetery at *Caistor-by-Norwich*, Norfolk. Of these, the closest are F2 and Y20, of which the former is $8\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, the latter rather smaller. In general it can be said that your urn is on the large size for this type: most of them are between 6 and 8 in. high.

“As to date, the absence of decoration makes it very difficult to speak with confidence, but the form is quite consistent with the evidence from the Lackford examples, that such pots were still being made in the second half of the sixth century.

“I wish one could be quite certain that your urn was found at Maryport. Unfortunately, Anglo-Saxon urns did circulate a good deal as collectors’ pieces in the 18th and early 19th centuries. I wonder if the Senhouse family had any antiquarian friends in the eastern counties from whom it might have come?”



Netherall Saxon Pot.

I also took the pot to Mr Brian Hope-Taylor, F.S.A., for comparison with one which he found at Yeavering, Northumberland, in 1955,² and which in his own phrase is its blood-brother. That enables us to cite a Northumbrian parallel to the Netherhall urn; and it will be remembered that the old name of the place now known as Maryport was Ellenborough, one of the Anglian place-

² Unpublished: Mr Hope-Taylor kindly allows me to cite it.

names of Cumberland.³ There is nothing intrinsically improbable, therefore, in the assumption that the urn is in fact a local find, and not a present to some 18th century Senhouse from an antiquarian friend in the eastern counties; in any case, it was certainly in the Netherhall collection when Hutchinson's artist drew it, as one of "the remains which have been lately discovered at this place".⁴

Since this article was written I have received the following communication from the Curator of the Central Museum, Northampton, which makes it reasonably certain that this pot does not come from Cumberland but from the Senhouse property in Northamptonshire.

Dear Miss Hodgson,

25th September, 1956.

Miss Wake has passed on to me your letter and enquiry about the provenance of the Saxon urn in the Netherhall collections. I think that she has already told you that the Senhouses owned land in the Welton and Ashby St. Ledgers area of Northamptonshire in the late eighteenth century.

In view of this it seems almost certain that the urn in question comes from the Saxon cemetery at Welton which is located fairly reliably within the triangle of roads whose western boundary is the Daventry Kilsby road, i.e. about a half-mile to the west of Welton village.

According to Baker, burials with finds were made there in 1778 and it is now possible to trace these in the Northampton Museum. Baker does state, however, that earlier burials were found and it is possible that the Netherhall urn belongs to one of these—or it may be one of the 1778 finds which did not come here.

I hope that this has been of some help to you.

Yours sincerely,

ALAN WARHURST.

To

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³ EPNS, *Place-names of Cumberland*, ed. Armstrong & others, ii 284 f., citing *Alneburg* and many other forms of the name.

⁴ Hutchinson, *Cumberland (1794)* ii, pl. iv no. 66 (facing p. 284); cf. also Art. I, above.