

ART. IV.—*Further Roman finds in the Beckfoot cemetery area.* By R. L. BELLHOUSE, B.Sc., and IAN MOFFAT.

*Read at Penrith, April 19th, 1958.*

(a) *Introduction.* By R. L. BELLHOUSE.

IT is a great pleasure to introduce a young member of our Society, Mr Ian Moffat, whose enthusiasm for Roman archæology has led to his discovery of a very interesting urn-burial in the cliff a little south of Beckfoot (fig. 1). I first met him in the summer of 1956, when my small party was investigating the Roman signal-tower 15a,<sup>1</sup> and his keen interest in our work was apparent; I therefore suggested that he might like to keep his eye on the cliff-section just to the north of the measured position of mile-fortlet 15, for there was a risk that anything might turn up there — and be missed — as the cliff tumbled away, unless it could be watched regularly. I have myself noted at least nine separate traces of cremations in the Roman level at that point, but it remained for him to find an actual urn-burial, on which he has furnished the following report.

(b) *The urn-burial.* By IAN MOFFAT.

I went to Beckfoot for a few days during the Easter holidays, 1957, with the purpose of examining one or more of the cremation-pyres which lie a few yards north of the estimated position of mile-fortlet 15. As I walked along the cliff I occasionally scraped it with my trowel, wherever I saw a slight darkening in the sand. It was not long before I found a promising part, where the winter's tides had exposed a long black line in the bank; and as I trowelled further into the black layer it began to yield

<sup>1</sup> CW2 lvii 18 f.

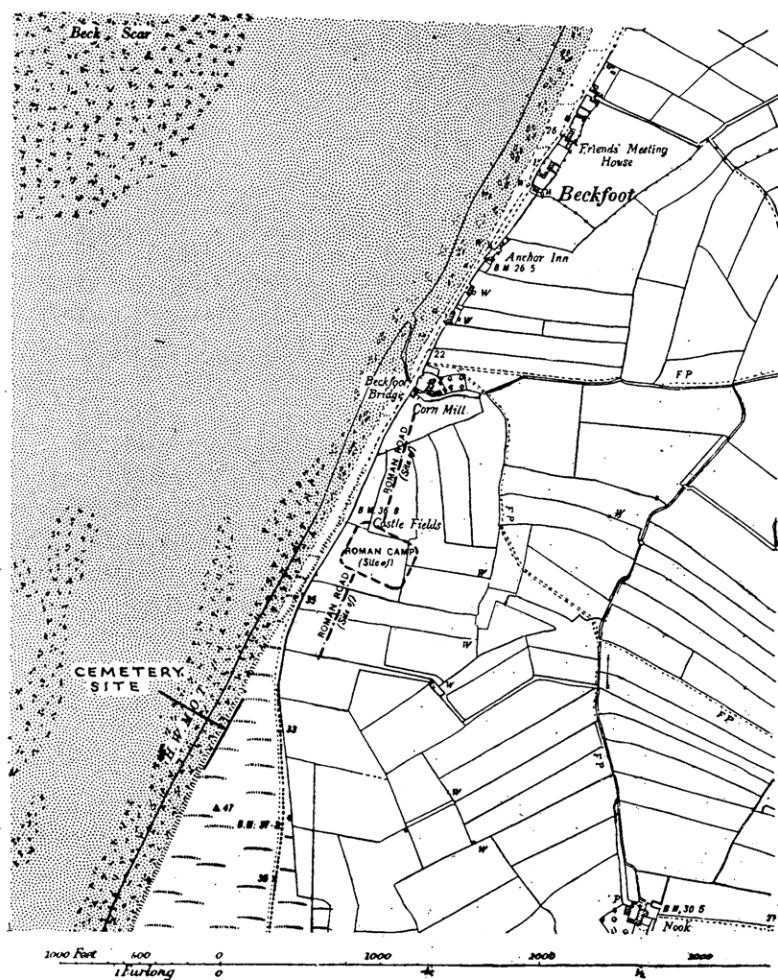


FIG. 1. Beckfoot Roman fort and cemetery. (Reproduced from the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office, and printed by Titus Wilson & Son, Limited, 28, Highgate, Kendal).

sizeable pieces of charcoal and calcined bones, presumably human. When I had progressed several inches into the deposit, a small chunk of earth broke away from the surrounding soil, exposing part of a decorated samian bowl; I was naturally very excited, particularly because I was not aware that anything of the kind had been found in this cemetery before. Careful trowelling soon showed that under and around the bowl there were numerous pieces of bone; and resting on its rim, as though it had been used as a lid and had subsequently slipped away, was a partly broken platter.

When I had taken the sherds from the pyre, I found that only a small part of the samian bowl was missing, that it was half-full of calcined bones, and that it bore amongst its decoration the stamp of the potter CINNAMVS. It had been repaired by rivetting in several places.<sup>2</sup> Approximately a quarter of the platter was missing; and though I worked carefully through the remainder of the cremation-debris, in the hopes of finding the missing parts, all I found were part of a badly warped cooking-pot and some pieces of oxidized iron, which appeared to be nails. I collected the finds, including the bones and the nails, into boxes and reported my discovery to Mr Bellhouse, who kindly undertook to arrange for specialists' reports on the pottery, here reproduced:

(i) *The figured samian bowl* (fig. 2). By ERIC BIRLEY.

It is a cylindrical bowl of Dragendorff's form 30, in the unmistakable style of the Lezoux potter CINNAMVS, most of whose medium-sized retrograde stamp survives, impressed downwards in the left-hand panel in Mr Wilfred Dodds's drawing, fig. 2. The scheme of panel-decoration and the decorative details, with one exception, are so characteristic of this potter (the most prolific of all the 2nd-century Central Gaulish manufacturers) that they do not require discussion; but it may be noted that the Beckfoot bowl at last gives us the *small sphinx to r.* which had not previously been attested on signed work of his, though

<sup>2</sup> For the technical process involved, cf. Mr Bellhouse's note, CW2 lvii 25 f.

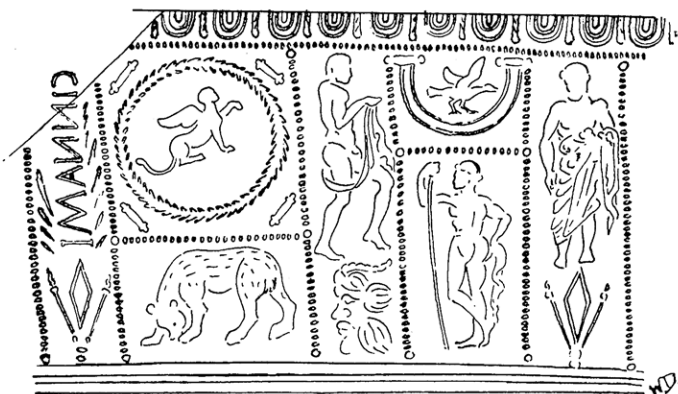


FIG. 2.—The Dr. 30 by CINNAMVS. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

it has already been found on a piece attributable to him. For his various decorative styles and characteristic ornaments it will be sufficient now to refer to Stanfield & Simpson, *Central Gaulish Potters* (1958), pp. 263-271 and plates 157-163; his period of production is assessed as A.D. 150-190, his products occurring at Corstopitum in both of the Antonine levels (which are subdivided by the structural alterations assignable to the governorship of Calpurnius Agricola, circa A.D. 163).

(ii) *The coarse-ware dish* (fig. 3). By J. P. GILLAM.

One large and eight small conjoined fragments make up an almost complete dish, or platter, only a small piece of the rim and wall being absent. The dish was made in burnished black fumed ware, for patches on the rim and base retain the original colour; but most of the interior surface is now a matt pinkish-fawn colour, and of the exterior and base, brick-red. The largest base-fragment has been cracked and slightly distorted in antiquity, and the vessel has obviously been subjected to intense heat.

The sides are decorated with a coarse but neatly executed cross-hatching, lightly scored on the burnished surface, while there is a pattern of similarly executed loops and curves on the base.

The rim is flat and very slightly down-turned. The dish rocks on its base, which sags in a curve and is one-fifth of an inch deeper at the centre than at the edges. Such bases are due to the clay literally sagging while still soft; they are not uncommon

in vessels of wide diameter, and they are a feature of medieval as well as of Roman vessels of various dates: cf. *Corbridge 1954*, no. 30a.<sup>3</sup> This feature is quite distinct from the carination of Hadrianic and earlier bowls, and from the chamfer of later-Antonine dishes and bowls. The present dish is un-chamfered and it does not differ essentially from the Hadrianic dish, no. 27, from mile-fortlet 5 (CW2 xlvii 113), which does not sag — while it resembles the contemporary dish, no. 72, from Birdoswald (CW2 xxx 197), which does.

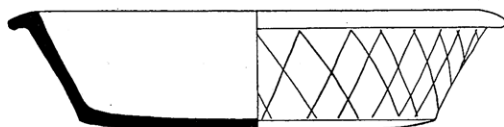


FIG. 3.—The dish. (4).

The type of vessel is without doubt of Hadrianic to early-Antonine date, though vessels of the same type not infrequently survived until later in the 2nd century, and the association of this dish with an Antonine samian bowl is not therefore surprising.

(c) *Other discoveries.* By R. L. BELLHOUSE.

Two further discoveries of interest remain to be recorded from the Roman levels in this area, in addition to some small finds of 2nd and 4th-century pottery. First, in 1956 a well-made mortice and tenon joint in oak, quite possibly from a Roman bed (cf. Mr Hogg's paper, with an appendix contributed by Professor Birley, CW2 xlix 32-37); the wood was completely carbonized, but identifiable without question as oak. The tenon measured  $2\frac{1}{4}$  in. by 1 in. in section; its length could not be determined, but the two distinct pieces so joined showed very good workmanship. Second, in 1957 a stone-lined grave, orientated east and west; it appeared end on, below the Roman levels in the cliff-face, as two courses of dressed red sandstone set in clay. I investigated it as far as I could, finding four walls enclosing a space about 5 ft.

<sup>3</sup> AA4 xxxiii 249.

by 2 ft. 6 in.; there were no certain traces of human remains and neither grave-goods nor covering-slab. The delve in which the structure lay was quite clear: the dark Roman levels were interrupted immediately above it, but not the post-Roman levels — indeed, the depth from the modern surface rules out the possibility of its being comparatively recent. It doubtless belongs to the latter part of the Roman period, when cremation had been almost universally replaced by inhumation; and (as Professor Birley points out to me) the orientation of the grave, and the lack of grave-goods, might well be taken to suggest a Christian rather than a pagan interment. I visited the site again a little later, only to find that someone had dug out all the stones and had carted them away.

Finally, in August 1957 the measured position of mile-fortlet 13, apparently securely pin-pointed between the two proved towers, 12b and 13a (CW2 lvii 18 f.), was systematically examined by more than 60 trial-pits: each was taken down to clean beach gravel, but not one yielded the least trace of anything Roman.