

ART. III.—*A cemetery at High Nook, Nether Denton.*

By H. G. WELFARE.

Read at Carlisle, September 27th, 1974.

IN 1965 Mr J. Steel found rather less than half of a rustic ware jar while he was burying a pig on his farm of High Nook, Nether Denton: the find spot (NY 589644), 600 metres West of the site of the fort at Nether Denton Church, is shown in Fig. 1.

The jar (Fig. 2) is wheel-turned in a dark grey fabric visible in the break between a light grey "sandwich": the surface is not uniformly reduced, varying from dark grey to a sandy orange. The zone of broad linear rustication is delimited by a groove on the shoulder; the remainder of the surface, above the groove and below the carination, was burnished after the application of the rustication. Portions of the central and lower zones are sandy yellow in colour, considerably lighter than the adjacent reduced areas; this is due to a second, more liquid, slip having been splashed over the surface prior to burnishing. Although the vessel cannot be very closely dated, the rustication is fairly bold and thus may in general terms betoken a Flavian-Trajanic rather than a Trajanic-Hadrianic date.¹

Two facts render it most likely that the jar contained a cremation. Amongst the sherds as they reached the writer in 1973 was one fragment of calcined bone, 3 cms. long, which appears to be from a tibia shaft. In addition, three other cinerary urns have been found at High Nook, two in 1861 (one of which was still in the Black Gate Museum in Newcastle in 1913 although

¹ F. H. Thompson, "A Romano-British Pottery Kiln at North Hykeham, Lincolnshire: with an Appendix on the Typology, Dating and Distribution of 'Rustic' Ware in Great Britain." *Antiquaries Journal*, 38 (1958) 26.

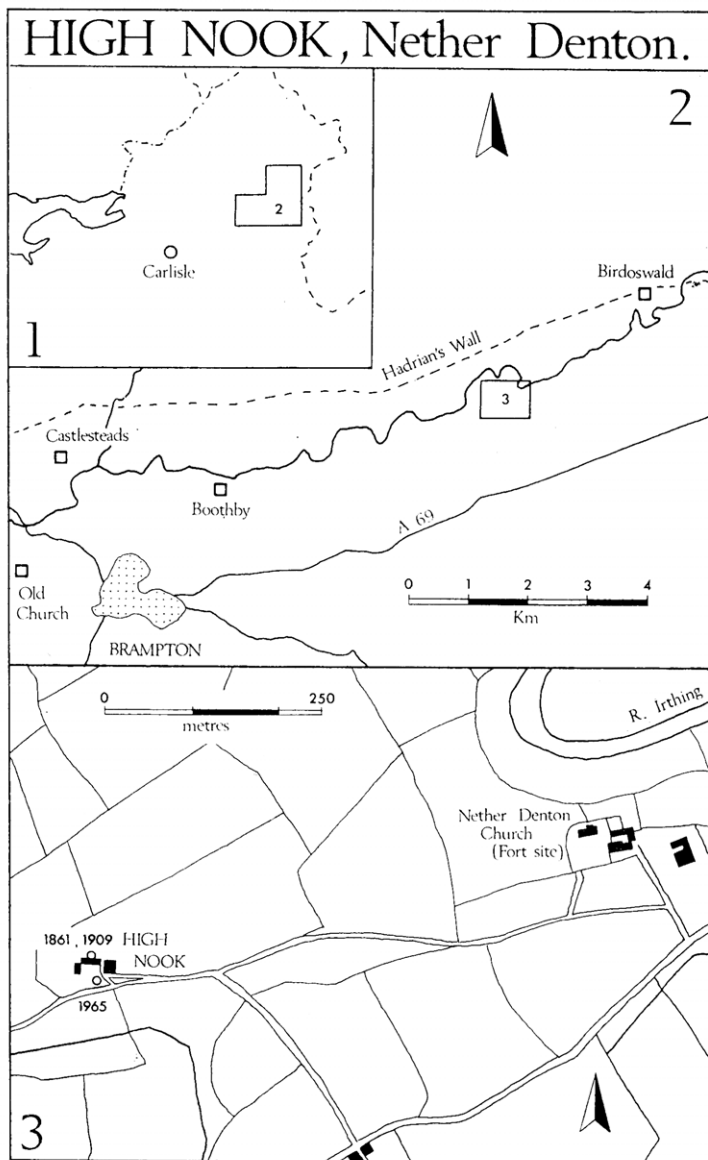


FIG. 1.

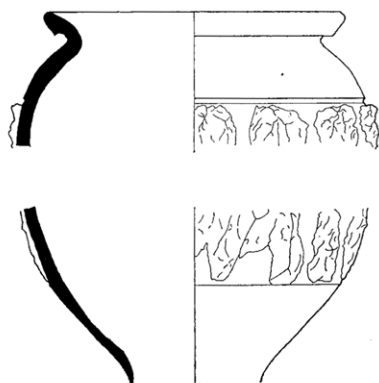


FIG. 2.—1.

there is no record of its accession: both are now lost without any details having been recorded), and a third, discovered in 1909, the present location of which is also unknown.² Simpson described the latter, with the utmost brevity, as being of "grey clay", but a section of the vessel was published,³ from which it can be identified as a wide-mouthed jar made in the Nene Valley, the standard cooking-pot of that area.⁴ The Nene Valley potteries started making colour-coated wares, including this type of jar, in the second half of the second century, the date suggested being about A.D. 170-80,⁵ but it is not known when production of these jars without colour-coating was initiated.

Although the precise provenance of only the last of these four finds is known, they do appear to have been close enough together to be thought of as part of a cemetery, the symbol for which was transposed on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey Map of Hadrian's Wall to High Broom Hill, one kilometre

² F. G. Simpson, "Excavations on the line of the Roman Wall in Cumberland during the years 1909-12." CW2 xiii (1913) 385-386.

³ *Ibid.*, Plate XXVI, N.D.2.

⁴ c.f. B. R. Hartley, *Notes on the Roman Pottery Industry in the Nene Valley*. Peterborough Museum Society Occasional Papers, No. 2 (Peterborough, 1960), 25, fig. 3, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

to the South West. This mistake was acknowledged in correspondence.⁶ If the presence of the cemetery does give any useful indication of the direction taken by the Stanegate West of the fort, then it may be that a course close to the river is the most likely.⁷ However, the southern side of the valley at this point is by no means conducive to road-building and the problem will only be resolved by further fieldwork and excavation.

I am grateful to Mr J. Steel and Dr K. F. A. Ross for bringing the find to my notice, and to Mr J. P. Gillam and Dr S. G. H. Cruickshank for their confirmatory comments.

⁶ E. W. Sockett, "The Stanegate (Nether Denton to Boothby), Cumberland." *Archaeological Bulletin for C.B.A. Regional Group 3*, V (September 1973) 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.