

ART. VIII – *Further notes on Carlisle Cathedral Excavations 1953.*

By GRACE SIMPSON, D.Phil., F.S.A.

THE original report in the *Transactions* by F. Gerald Simpson<sup>1</sup> was given to the Society two months after the work was completed:

“The purpose of the excavation was to test an area which was presumably within the defences of the earliest Roman fort and where there was a possibility of finding good stratification preserved.”

Twenty years later Dorothy Charlesworth began excavations<sup>2</sup> which led to her discovery of an Agricolan fort on a different location, different also from the discovery under Tullie House in 1892 of a great timber platform.<sup>3</sup> The shaft excavated by my father contained three massive timbers resting on the subsoil, and these lay at right angles to the Tullie House platform. Recent excavations by the Carlisle Archaeological Unit<sup>4</sup> located similarly early timber buildings fronting the south side of Blackfriars Street. This modern street overlies a Roman road and, if its straight line is prolonged, it passes over the shaft excavated by my father and, if prolonged again, it reaches the gateway of the Roman fort.

Further excavations alongside the foundations of the Norman nave are in prospect and the shaft ought to be located and its stratification, hopefully, can be related to this larger investigation. Fig. 1 shows the position of the shaft which was 6 ft 6 ins square,

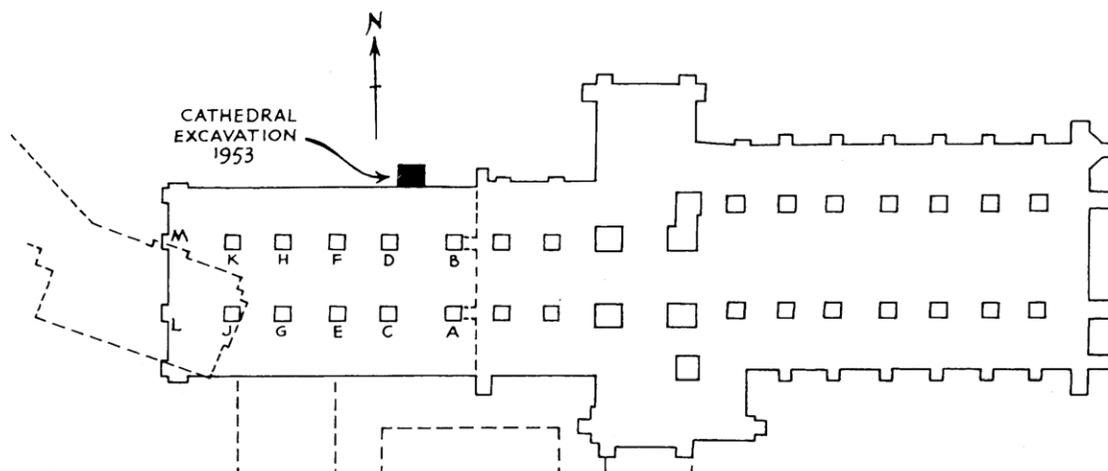


FIG. 1 – Position of shaft.

and as close to the nave foundations as possible. Whether the nave was ever completed is a matter for argument.

The stratification was as follows: below the present grass surface was 1 ft 7 in. of humus. Then 6 in. of a seventeenth century brick boundary wall between citizen graves to the north and ecclesiastical ones to the south of it. Next came the very shallow nave

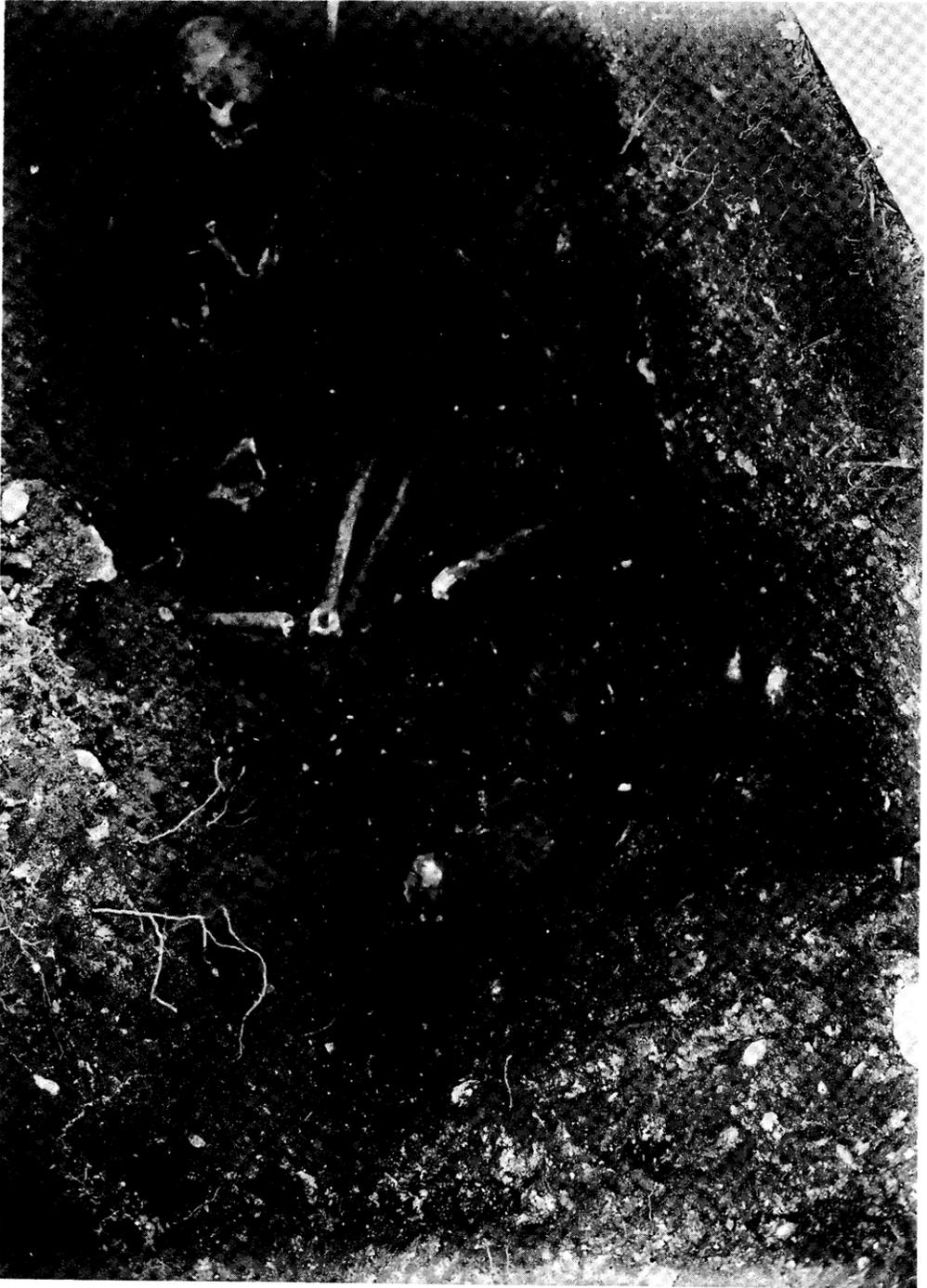


PLATE I. - The Human Bones.

foundations with some rubble below, and then about 10 in. of a course of masonry set in herringbone formation. Alongside lay 3 ft of human remains (Plate 1). These were not the remains of a Danish massacre, as the local newspapers supposed, but were bones collected from burial elsewhere and probably after that placed in a charnel-house until buried beside the cathedral.

This is clear from Dr Boyd's report, see below. Whether the people had lived before or after the Norman conquest is uncertain, and this problem may be solved in the forthcoming excavations. At a depth of 7 ft was the core of what had been a massive wall, robbed of its facing stones, and built with hard white mortar; this was at level 4, and a child's frontal bone seemed to be at this level. Level 5A was a cobbled street, and 5B was one yard to the north, 9 ft deep, and consisted of some laid stonework (see Plate 2). From 10 ft 7 ins down there was a 3 in. layer of red puddled clay. Level 8 was from below the red puddled clay down to 10 ft 10 ins from the modern grass surface. It was at this depth that water suddenly came into the shaft during the excavations on the 11 May 1953.

I remember that my father wanted to pump out the water, but there was anxiety that he might undermine the cathedral and he had to wait until, on the 27th May, the water drained away and work re-started. The stratification below the puddled clay consisted of about 5 ins of black occupation material, then about a foot of sandy make-up, another 4 or 5 ins of black occupation material, and a 4 in. deep gravel spread. This was Level 9, and below it was the timber level, no. 10, at a depth of 14 ft. The timbers were 1 ft thick, and rested on the red laminated clay subsoil, which was reached at 15 ft, and examined for 6 in., making a total depth for the excavation of 15 ft 6 ins.

The three wooden beams were not moved, as the shaft was too small and deep for them to be examined, except to note, as already mentioned above, that they lay at right angles to the great timber platform under Tullie House.

### **The Human Bones**

By Dr G. I. BOYD.

(Report written in July, 1953)

Department of Anatomy, University of Leeds.

In the small area excavated were found the remains of 15, perhaps 16 adults, as judged from the number of left thigh bones. There was a corresponding number of right thigh bones. Unfortunately few of these were intact. One pair showed evidence of disease and were symmetrically affected. Another femur showed a localized swelling probably the site of localized periostitis. The pair already mentioned showed generalized thickening of the entire shaft due to Paget's disease and there was marked arthritic change. The lower portion of a radius showing similar arthritic change probably belonged to the same skeleton. One of the femora, along with the radial fragment, has been mounted in the University of Leeds Pathology Department Museum. One cranium showed a localized osteoma over the right frontal eminence. The young adult female cranium (no. 4 below) is of special interest on account of the peculiar shape of the margin of the orbit.



PLATE 2. - Roman Levels 5a and b at 9ft deep.

(1) Male cranium and mandible, middle-aged. Coronal and lambdoid sutures present; sagittal suture present externally only near the bregma.

Length 201 mm                      *Cranial index* 73.1  
 Breadth 147 mm

Most of the maxillary teeth including the last molars were present in life.

(2) Male cranium, lacking facial portion; probably young, adult male. Sagittal suture complete, right mastoid process well marked. Sphenoid sinuses extensively laid open.

Length 184 mm                      *Cranium index* 85.8  
 Breadth 158 mm

An incomplete mandible, with a well-marked left ramus, and probably that of a young, adult male, might have fitted this skull. All the mandibular teeth were present and show little wear, but there was no sign that the third molars had ever erupted.

(3) Female cranium, age 18-20. Complete sagittal and metopic sutures. Spheno-occipital suture just closing. Maxillary teeth complete and unworn. Third molars had not erupted and there is no sign of them.

Length 181 mm                      *Cranial index* 76.2  
 Breadth 138 mm

(4) Female cranium, young adult. Badly damaged – in four large pieces. A mandible, lacking left ramus, might have belonged to this skull. Sutures of the vault are open, but the spheno-occipital joint is closed. The frontal bone with the face was separated from the rest of the skull at the coronal suture. This cranium was interesting in that the orbital index was above unity. The breadth measured at the dacryon was 39 mm, and the height at the middle of the orbital margin 40 mm.

Length 185 mm                      *Cranial index* 83.2  
 Breadth 154 mm

(5) Male calvaria elderly. No sutures visible. Portion of base from sphenoid sinuses to the foramen magnum is missing.

A portion of a mandible which carried among other teeth a well worn first molar may have belonged to this skull. Both rami were missing, so that jaw could not be fitted.

Length 188 mm                      *Cranial index* 82.4  
 Breadth 155 mm

The remains of one or two additional adult skulls were found, part of the base (occipito-sphenoid), piece of parietal, piece of frontal. Also a portion of human cranial vault was visible in the section of the bone layer of the excavation; these fragments may have belonged to it. The presence of two separate mandibular fragments indicate, however, that there were at least two adult skulls in addition to the five which have been described in detail. These mandibular fragments probably belonged to elderly individuals.

#### *Remains of young skulls*

Portions of five mandibles were found, one belonging to a child aged seven years, two to children whose milk teeth were fully erupted and two to children whose milk incisors

only were erupted. With the mandibular fragment of the oldest child was a complete cranium to which hairs were adherent, neck vertebrae and fragments of limb bones. A frontal bone and part of an occipital bone probably belonged with one of the infant mandibles.

*Cranium of child aged seven*

Length 174 mm

Breadth 130 mm

*Cranial index* 74.7

*Long Bones*

There was a miscellaneous collection of postcranial bones, mostly fragments, among which thigh bones were most numerous. Fifteen, perhaps sixteen, adult femora of the left side were counted, of which four were intact, measuring 477, 450, 426 and 397 mm. There was a similar number of right femora, but only one intact measuring 492 mm. There were no fibulae. There were 12 to 14 radii of the right side, but only a few of the left side.

On the basis of the adult femora and the child mandibles, the total number of men, women and children represented by the bones found in the excavated area must have been twenty, or possibly a few more. (Note by G. S. – Except for two mentioned above, these bones were reburied in the cathedral graveyard.)

### Painted Window Glass

By JILL KERR, M.A., Secretary,  
The Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi, Great Britain.

Found in Layer 2, possibly medieval, or the A.D. 1645 destruction level of the nave was a fragment of clear glass painted with a perspective design (see Fig. 2). Dimensions: height 3.9 mm, width 2.6 mm, thickness 0.2 mm. In good condition. Still translucent and glassy. Paint intact. Two grozed edges, the other two edges broken before burial. No lead shadow. Very slight exterior weathering. Interior surface scuffed. Grozing is the medieval method of shaping glass by means of a metal tool with a hooked end which



FIG. 2 – Window glass fragment.

makes a characteristic “bitten” edge. Since the late 16th century diamonds have been used to cut glass.

Colour and technique: Clear with red-tone paint for the lines painted on and a lighter tone of the same base colour for the wash. No backpainting. No yellow stain.

The design is too fragmentary for reconstruction or stylistic comparison. It may have been part of an architectural device, a canopy, or a side-shaft, etc.

On the basis of the lack of weathering, the paint colour, thinness of the glass, and the design, a 15th century date is assigned.

Dr P. A. Newton and Mr D. E. O'Connor confirmed this assessment.

### A Reckoning Counter

by R. H. DOLLEY, Assistant Keeper,  
British Museum Department of Coins and Medals.

Found in Layer 2 was a Nuremberg counter, in good condition. The obverse legend is unintelligible, but the reverse legend is clearly HANS.SCHVLTES.Rech. c. A.D. 1550-1575. To facilitate the reckoning of accounts, metal discs were used in conjunction with a counting-board or cloth divided into squares like a chequer-board, the procedure being similar to that used with the abacus. Such foreign counters were imported into England in large numbers and are frequently found today in old ecclesiastical buildings.

### The Pottery<sup>5</sup>

By GRACE SIMPSON.

*Level 3:* from upper part of stratum containing broken human skeletons: Medieval green-glazed sherd, grey/red fabric, thirteenth or fourteenth century.

*Level 4:* at seven feet down, robbed wall core, very hard white mortar holding together what had been a massive wall. A child's frontal bone in this level:

1. Jug neck with one handle, red ware, see Gillam 13, early second century.
2. Tazza wall sherd in hard red ware, probably second century.
3. Central Gaulish samian, one sherd each from a Dr.31R, 33 and the flange from a 38.
4. Lid, coarse red ware, with a hemispherical beaded edge. A similar lid was found in Blackfriars Street, Jeffrey Taylor informs me.
5. Lid, hard grey ware with an edge like Gillam 339, and a sherd of hard grey cooking-pot ware.
6. Cooking-pot rim, flaring, like Gillam 143, 144, hard grey ware. Late second to early third centuries. (See Fig. 3)
7. Trier fine-ware sherd with two rouletted bands. Dark metallic surfaces. First half of third century.
8. Grey ware wall sherd with a brown core. J. P. Gillam dated it to the fourth century.
9. Calcite-gritted cooking-pot closest to Gillam 161, early fourth century.

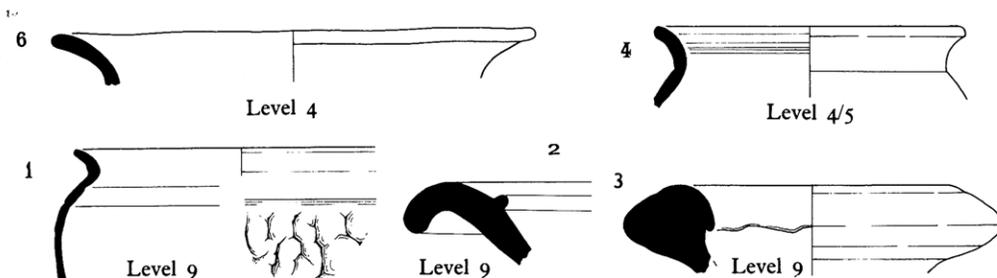


FIG 3. - Coarse Pottery from Levels 4, 4/5 and 9, by Carlisle Cathedral.

10. Tall pedestal foot in Nene Valley ware, dark outer coating, and grey/brown body. Fourth century.

*Levels 4-5:* above the cobbled street, and to the north-east.

1. Central Gaulish "Rhenish type" base from a cup. The fine micaceous red fabric is possibly from Lezoux. Late second century. Identified by Dr Robin Symonds.
2. Central Gaulish samian, two sherds, Dr. 18/31R and 37 rim. Second century.
3. Flanged bowl of early type, BBI ware. Late second or early third century.
4. Upstanding black rim with dark grey core. Second century (see Fig. 3).
5. Narrow-mouthed jar, grey, burnished, cf. Gillam 33, dated A.D. 250-320.
6. Narrow-mouthed jar, pale grey, cf. Gillam 30. Second to early third centuries.

*Level 5A:* cobbled street, or just under cobbles. All finds could be later second century.

1. Upstanding rim sherd from a hard grey jar.
2. Wall sherds from a hard grey jar.
3. Two fragments from a square glass bottle.

*Level 6:* Thick layer of occupation material, containing burnt material, below cobbled street and down to layer of puddled red clay.

1. Basal sherd in very hard dark grey "pimply" fabric from a jar or cooking-pot. Thin sectioned by Dr D. F. Williams, University of Southampton, who commented on the frequent inclusions of quartz grains protruding through the surfaces, up to 1.20 mm across. The colour is Munsell 2.5Y N4/ to N3/, with a slight lustre on some parts. Dr Williams noted that the sherd is quite distinctive but the ubiquity of quartz makes it impossible to suggest likely origins. Dr M. Fulford and Mrs Joanna Bird examined the sherd and stated that it is not Mayen ware.
2. Shallow bead-rim bowl with right-angled hatching, BBI gritty fabric, cf. Gillam 318, A.D. 160-200 as at Poltross Burn MC 48.
3. Brown/red cooking-pot rim, micaceous, second century.
4. Four wall sherds, grey fabric with grey/black surfaces.
5. Six wall sherds from a smooth orange ware globular jar. A sherd from level ten is very similar.
6. Two-layered sherd, white outside and dark grey inside. Second century.

*Level 8:* from below layer of puddled red clay, to 10 ft 10 ins. below the turf, which is where water came in on 11 May 1953.

1. Jug rim and neck, red/pink body and white wash, Gillam 2. Late first or early second centuries.

2. Rough-cast beaker, bag-shape type, dated by Mrs Anne Anderson from c. A.D. 80-135. Red fabric with brown core.
3. Flaring rim cooking-pot BB1. Antonine.
4. Base from a small bowl with footring, black outside, grey fabric, light grey inside, cf. Gillam 195, 200. Antonine.
5. Six cooking-pot bases, BB1 wares.
6. Lump of clinker.
7. Cooking-pot base, BB1.
8. Beaker rim in BB1. Early to middle second century.

*Level 9:* below water-level at 10 ft. 10 ins., down to 10, timber level.

1. Rusticated cooking-pot rim, turned outwards. Black, with dark grey core. Flavian (see Fig. 3).
2. Mortarium rim with low bead. Red local fabric (see Fig. 3). Mrs K. F. Hartley has compared it with the mortaria from Blackfriars Street, but found nothing exactly similar in form. Trajanic.
3. Amphora rim in micaceous pink/brown fabric, Dressel type 20, made in the Guadalquivir region of Spain, between Seville and Cordoba. Not an easy type to date as it has a long period of production (see Fig. 3).
4. Wall fragments from an early type of jug in buff-coloured fabric, and late first to early second centuries.
5. Wall sherd in grey fabric.
6. Angular fragment from a tile in hard-fired grey ware.

*Level 10:* at and below the level of the timbers. Down to subsoil at 15 ft 6 ins.

1. Reeded-rim bowl with two outer grooves on the wall, c. A.D. 80-125. Two sherds join.
2. Rusticated cooking-pot rim, Gillam 98, black surfaces, grey fabric. Flavian-Trajanic.

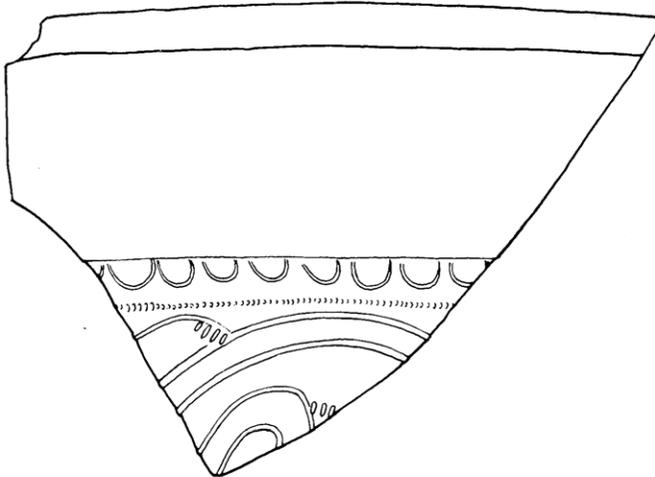


FIG. 4. - Dr. 37 sherd.

3. Similarly shaped rim to no. 2, but in light brown fabric.
4. Dr. 37 sherd which was found touching one of the great timbers. In the "Donnaucus" style, see Stanfield and Simpson, pls. 45, 528 and 46, 533. Dense red fabric of Les Martres de Veyre, with a good red gloss. Small plain rings take the place of an ovolo, and the borders are of the finest kind. Trajanic (see Fig. 4).
5. Very smooth orange-coloured ware, like sherds in Level 6, no. 5 above.
6. Buff-coloured wall sherd from a bowl or flagon. Flavian-Trajanic.

### Acknowledgements

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Thanks are due to the Dean and Chapter for permitting excavation so close to the foundations of the nave. Robert Hogg, Esq., B.Sc., for much help during the work is also warmly thanked.

Messrs. John Laing and Sons voluntarily provided the labour for the work. All the small finds are now in Tullie House Museum.

### References

- <sup>1</sup> CW2, liii, 233-4.
- <sup>2</sup> D. Charlesworth, "The south Gate of a Flavian Fort at Carlisle", *Roman Frontier Studies 1979 Brit. Arch. Reports* (International Series 71, 1980), 201-10.
- <sup>3</sup> See CW2, xxiv, 95-109; CW2, lxiv, 13-64; M. R. McCarthy and J. A. Dacre, "Roman Timber Buildings at Castle Street, Carlisle", *Antiq. Jl.* 63 (1983), 124-130; I. Caruana, "Carlisle", *Current Archaeology* 101 (1986), 172-7.
- <sup>4</sup> M. R. McCarthy, "Roman Carlisle", *Settlement and Society in the Roman North* (Bradford, 1984), 65-74.
- <sup>5</sup> See J. P. Gillam, "Types of Roman Coarse Pottery Vessels in Northern Britain", *AA4*, xxxv, 180-251 and J. A. Stanfield and G. Simpson, *Central Gaulish Potters* (Oxford, 1958).