

A PRE-ROMAN AND ROMANO-BRITISH SITE AT CHARTERHOUSE, GODALMING

BY

E. E. HARRISON

THE site is situated in the Charterhouse grounds at the south-east corner of a promontory overlooking the valley of the River Wey.¹ It was discovered in 1903 by some workmen who unearthened pottery while planting a tree. Inspired by this discovery, a group of boys from the school carried out a dig early in the following year and found several groups of vessels. The fact that some of these contained burnt bones suggests that this was a cemetery. No plan or detailed record of the dig exists, but the pottery has been kept in the school museum and has recently been published by Mr. J. Holmes.² There is also in the school museum a rotary quern which was found near the site.

The present excavation, which was started in 1955, was carried out by the writer with the help of members of the Charterhouse Archaeological Group. The siting of the trenches was determined by the necessity of avoiding ground occupied by tennis courts and a garden under cultivation. The writer is particularly grateful to Dr. J. F. Nichols, F.S.A., for advice and encouragement. A selection of the finds will eventually be deposited in the Charterhouse Museum.

Summary

Evidence was found for Iron A and Second B, followed by Romano-British occupation, which came to an end at about the end of the first century A.D. The structural finds consisted of a pit which had been filled in and subsequently cut into by a ditch. The pit was bell-shaped and of Iron A type, and contained only hand-made pottery. The ditch contained Romano-British pottery of the first century A.D.

The dating of the site depends upon the coarse pottery, which does not, in general, permit of very close dating.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The promontory on which the site is situated is a shelf of Lower Greensand, capped with Bargate stone. The ground falls sharply away a few yards to the south to the alluvial valley of the River Wey and at a similar distance to the east to the floor of a re-entrant

¹ Fig. 1, no. 1; Nat. Grid Ref. SU(41)/966 448.

² *Sy.A.C.*, LI, 1-28.

At the bottom of the pit there was a layer of very black earth which contained much charcoal; and in one place there was a piece of carbonized wood lying flat on top of layer 5 at the bottom of the pit. The pottery found in the filling of the pit was all hand-made (nos. 18-21). It was not possible to cut a complete section across the pit in one plane, but the complete profile was established and is shown on the inset to Fig. 3.

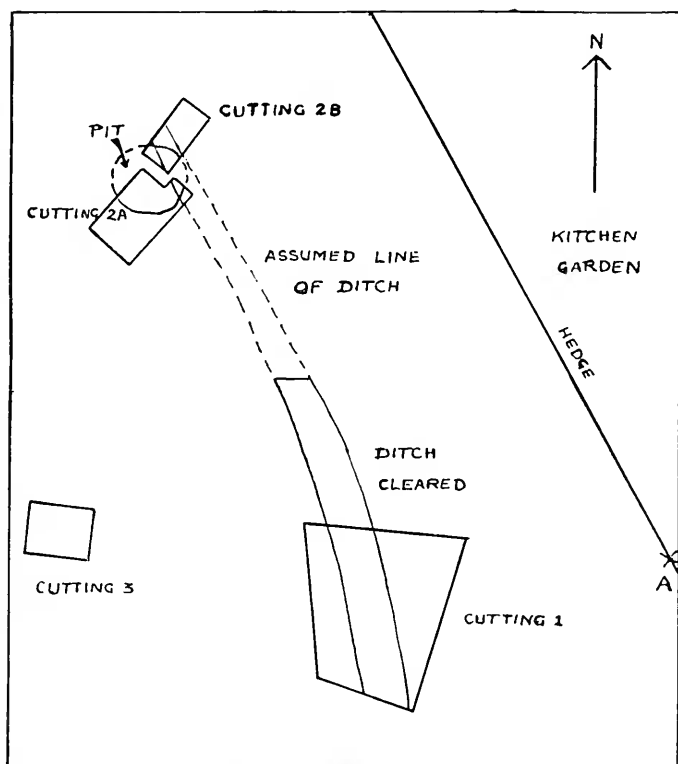


FIG. 2.—PLAN OF SITE. THE POINT MARKED A IS 13 FT. FROM THE SOUTH-EAST END OF THE HEDGE. SCALE: 1 INCH=14 FEET.

DISCUSSION

The Pit. The stratification shows that the pit antedates the ditch. The fact that wheel-made Romano-British pottery was absent from the filling of the pit, although abundant in the ditch, leads to the conclusion that an appreciable period elapsed between the filling-in of the former and the digging of the latter some time before about A.D. 50 (see below). Positive dating-evidence from the pit itself is meagre. A few hand-made sherds were found (Fig. 4,

nos. 18–21), one of which, no. 20, may be part of a foot-ring bowl of the Wealden (Iron Second B) culture, although it is not strictly characteristic and cannot be used with much confidence for dating. However, it provides some evidence, tentative though it is, for a date in the first century B.C. or early first century A.D., the period in which the Wealden culture flourished.³

The pit is the only structural find of the pre-Roman period, but the scatter of hand-made pottery from the ditch and the cultivation layer (Fig. 4, nos. 1–15) gives evidence of Iron A and Second B occupation and provides a context for the pit.

The Ditch. No dating evidence came from the primary silting of the ditch. The pottery from the filling gives the date at which the ditch ceased to fulfil its original purpose and became a rubbish tip. The earliest pottery which can be dated with any precision is the large two-handled flagon (no. 49). This is a native rendering of an imported Gallo-Belgic form and is dated to about A.D. 50. The butt-beaker (no. 39) and the wide-bellied flask with narrow neck (no. 42) are probably also of about this date. The latest vessel is probably the storage vessel with out-turned rim (no. 41), a parallel to which at Ashted is dated about A.D. 100. Thus, all that can be said about the date of construction of the ditch is that it falls after the pit was filled in and before the accumulation of filling in the second half of the first century A.D.

The Settlement. We must now consider the general character of the settlement. The importance of the pit is that it points to the existence on the Lower Greensand belt in Surrey of a farmstead of Iron A type. The site was occupied until the end of the first century A.D. It is not possible, on the available evidence, to decide whether the occupation by Romano-British peasants, using the wheel-made pottery illustrated in Figs. 5, 6, 7, was an unbroken continuation of that of the Iron Age, or the resettlement of a deserted site. The wheel-made pottery is in the Belgic tradition, but is of post-conquest date. The expansion of Belgic culture from the eastern and western centres of settlement during the last phase of the Iron Age was probably one of the main factors in the development of the common first century Romano-British pottery forms of West Surrey (i.e. bead rim jars, cordoned vessels with high shoulder and upright neck, bowls with shouldered side). The effect of the Roman Conquest, on the other hand, was to be felt later in the centralization of production and the improvement of technique. Whether the Romano-British peasants here were Belgicized descendants of the earlier Iron Age inhabitants or were Belgic immigrants, the nature of their settlement seems to have been similar to that of their predecessors. Firm evidence of a corn-growing economy in the latest phase, in continuation of that indicated for the earliest phase by the storage

³ *Archæologia*, xc, 154; *Sx.A.C.*, Lxxx, 237 ff.; Institute of Archæology, *Eighth Annual Report*, 57 ff.

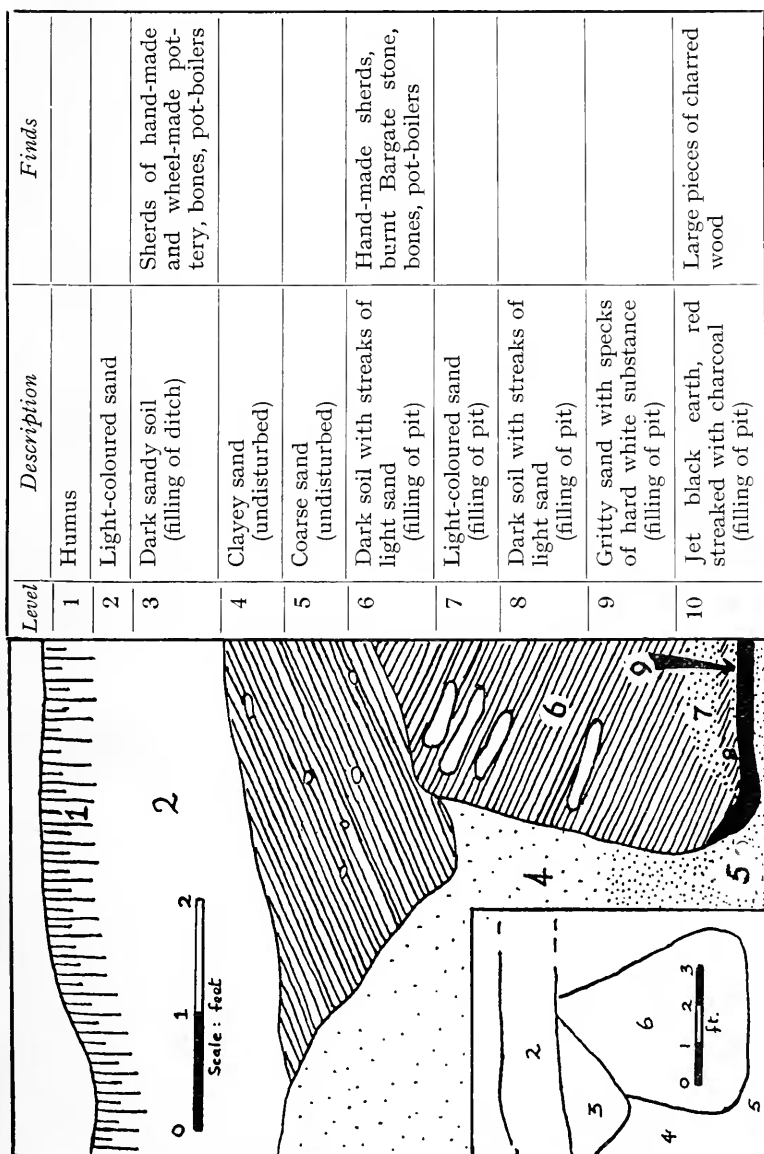


FIG. 3.—SECTION THROUGH DITCH AND PIT. INSET: COMPOSITE SECTION THROUGH PIT.

pit, is provided by the rotary quern, found nearby (above p. 21), which is almost certainly to be associated with this settlement. The bones found in the ditch show that sheep, pig and ox were reared. Thus, we see a rural economy here on the Surrey Greensand similar to that typified on the chalk by the Little Woodbury site.⁴

While none of the Romano-British pottery is later than the end of the first century A.D., it must be remembered that only a small area has been excavated, and that this upper date-limit may not apply to the whole settlement. Mr. Holmes' conclusion that the occupation of the Charterhouse site did not begin until the Claudian

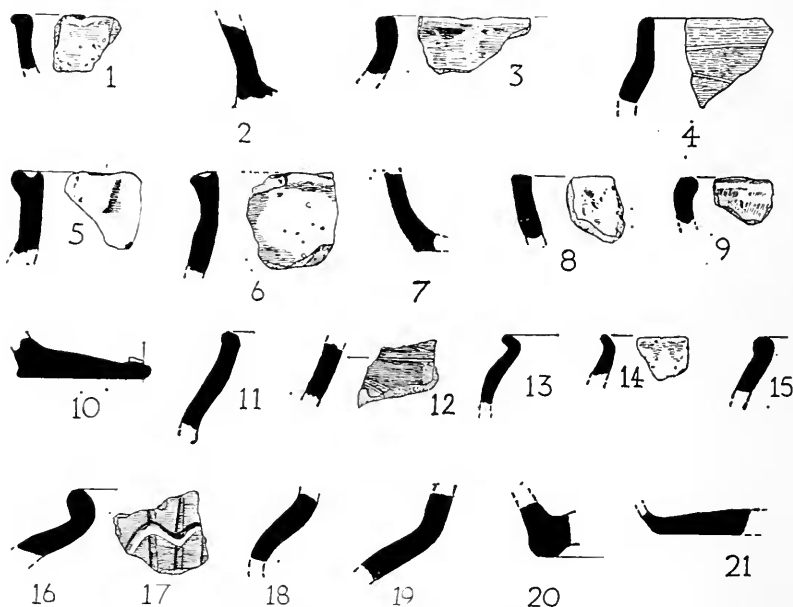


FIG. 4.—HAND-MADE POTTERY. (½)

conquest⁵ is no longer tenable in the light of the new evidence. No attempt has been made here to place the settlement in the broader picture of the region in the last century B.C. and the first century A.D. The very thorough study by Mr. A. J. Clark and Dr. J. F. Nichols⁶ of the region south of the Hog's Back, bounded on the south and east by the River Wey and on the west by the Folkestone Beds, during the Roman Occupation makes this unnecessary for the post-conquest period, but a corresponding study for the pre-conquest period, possibly extending the region as far south as the Weald, is badly needed.

⁴ *P.P.S.*, vi (1940), 30-111.

⁵ *Sy.A.C.*, LI, 26.

⁶ *Sy.A.C.*, LVII, 42-71.

Mention must, however, be made of the discovery of first-century Romano-British pottery, including part of a bead-rim pot and of a cordoned jar with upright neck (cf. no 28 *et seqq.*) in the garden of Northbrook House (Site 3, Fig. 1),⁷ by the gardener, and of the excavation at Binscombe⁸ by Dr. J. F. Nichols, in which first and early second-century pottery was found.⁹ Both of these sites are contemporary with the latest stage of ours. Evidence of later occupation in the immediate neighbourhood is a coin of Hadrian (2nd brass) now in the Charterhouse museum, which was found about half a mile north of our site in "Seventeen Acre Field,"¹⁰ and some second and third-century sherds found by the writer in molehills at Site 2, Fig. 1.¹¹

There is so little evidence from controlled excavation in this region that the present site has an importance out of proportion to its size. Some chance finds, hitherto unpublished, from the neighbourhood are described in the Appendix.

THE POTTERY

(a) *Hand-made Pottery*

The hand-made pottery was found in the pit and the ditch and in the cultivation layer (layer 2). It was all fragmentary. The following main types of ware were distinguished:

- type A*: grey or brown, with flint grits,
- type B*: brown to black, badly fired,
lumpy texture,
- type C*: hard, well-fired, containing
quartzite grains or flint grits,
- type D*: well-fired, sandy.

A large number of sherds of *type A* ware without distinguishable form were found; the quality ranged from a very coarse ware with large grits to a fine ware with small grits and a smooth, dark surface. The typical Iron Age situlate jars, nos. 3-6, were made of *type B* ware. *Type C* ware was used also for wheel-made vessels.

Description of the Sherds in Fig. 4

1. *Type A* ware with few small grits; piecrust decoration on top of rim; diam. c. 3 in. Unstratified.
2. *Type A* ware; base with thumb pressure marks. Ditch.
3. *Type B* ware; reddish surface; diam. c. 8 in. Unstratified.
4. *Type B* ware; smooth surface marked with faint impressed lines. Unstratified.
- 5, 6. *Type B* ware containing bright red fragments of iron oxide; rims with finger-tip markings on top. Ditch.

⁷ Nat. Grid Ref. SU(41)/958 453.

⁸ Nat. Grid Ref. SU(41)/972 456.

⁹ *Sy. A.C.*, LVII, 42-71.

¹⁰ Nat. Grid Ref. SU(41)/960 458.

¹¹ Nat. Grid Ref. SU(41)/960 451.

7. *Type B* ware; diam. *c.* 5 in. Unstratified.
 8. *Type B* ware; smooth internal surface. Ditch.
 9. *Type B* ware; smooth external surface. Ditch.
 10. *Type B* ware; reddish surface; diam. 4 in. Ditch.
 11. *Type A* ware; smooth internal surface; diam. *c.* 9 in. Unstratified.
 12. *Type B* ware; burnished surface decorated with linear pattern made with blunt point. Ditch.
 13. Sandy brown ware, small flint grits; diam. *c.* 4 in. Ditch. This may be wheel-made.
 14. *Type A* ware with few small flint grits. Ditch.
 15. *Type B* ware with soapy light brown external surface; diam. *c.* 5 in. Unstratified. This vessel with its slight beading of the rim, can be paralleled at Clandon, Surrey,¹² where it is regarded as Second B.
 16. *Type C* ware with dark body and black burnished surface; diam. *c.* 6 in. This may have been finished on the wheel or turntable. Ditch.
 17. *Type C* ware with black surface decorated with broad shallow burnished lines. Ditch.
- The following sherds were obtained from the filling of the pit.
18. *Type D* ware, smooth external surface.
 19. Corky greyish ware with fragments of ironstone, brown surface, smooth but slightly pitted.
 20. Similar ware to no. 19, but without ironstone fragments but with pitting of the surface; diam. *c.* 3 in. This is possibly part of a foot-ring bowl of the Wealden culture,¹³ but the vessel must have been rather narrower in the girth than is normal.
 21. *Type D* ware, smooth surface; diam. *c.* 4 in.

(b) *Wheel-made Pottery* (Figs. 5, 6, 7)

The wheel-made pottery was found in the ditch and the cultivation layer, but was absent from the pit. The bulk of the ware has a distinctly native appearance, being rather dirty and under-fired. Decoration is common and the modes used are (a) horizontal burnished zones and (b) burnished or shallow impressed lines forming chevrons and wavy patterns on a matt surface. The modes of decoration of nos. 42 and 55 are exceptional on this site.

The larger part of this group of pottery consists of types of common local occurrence (i.e. bead-rim jars, cordoned vessels with high shoulder and upright neck, bowls with shouldered side, storage vessels with out-turned rim); in general, parallels from other sites are not given for these. For the remaining types parallels have in some cases been cited as it is by these that the earlier dating limit for the group is fixed.

¹² *Arch. J.*, CI, 54, Fig. 4.

¹³ *Archæologia*, xc, 142-54.

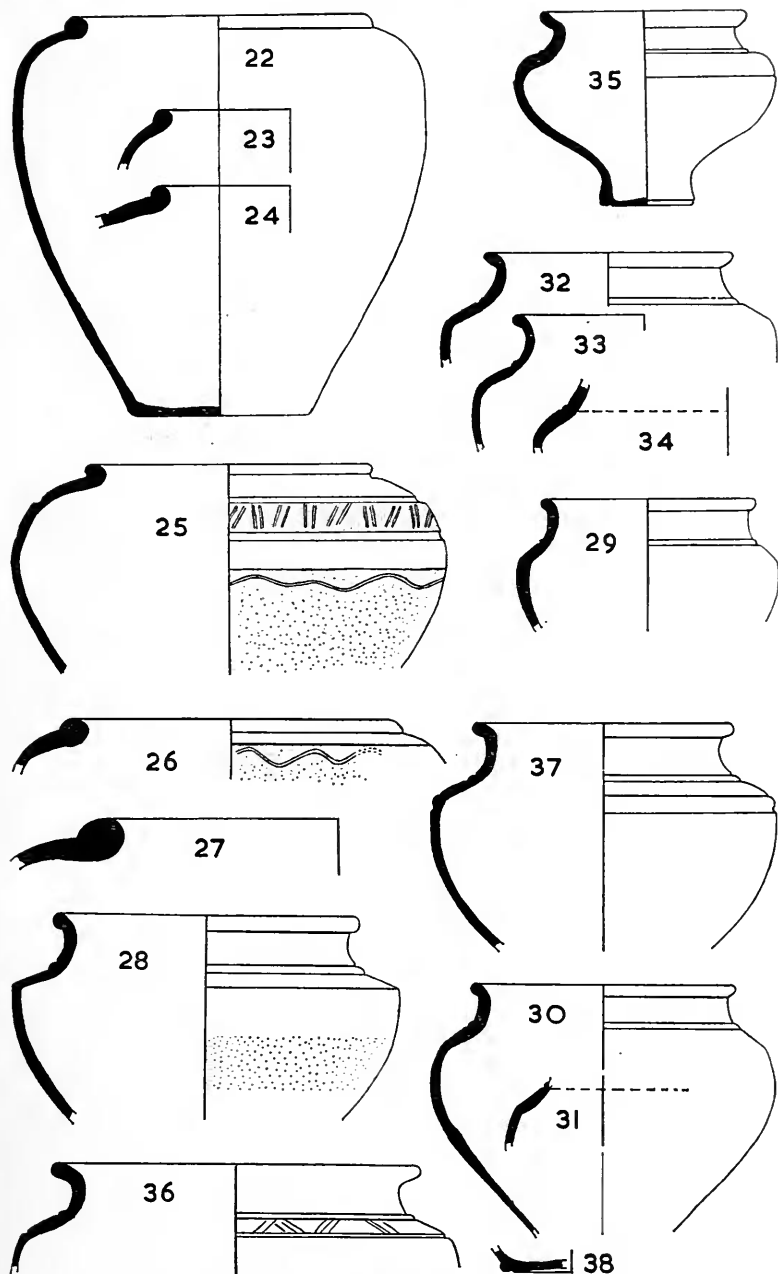


FIG. 5.—ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY. (4)

*Bead Rim Vessels (Holmes, type 18)*¹⁴

22. Grey sandy ware with brown surface, smoothed zone just below rim. Ditch. Rim fragments of three other similar vessels were found.
23. Grey sandy ware with quartzite grains, dark brown surface. Unstratified.
24. Hard grey sandy ware, smooth surface; broad shallow groove on shoulder. Unstratified.
25. Sandy brown ware, black surface with burnished and matt zones, the latter decorated with burnished lines. Ditch. A similar vessel is among the unpublished pottery (in the Haslemere museum) from the Beech Road, Haslemere, site.
26. Grey sandy ware with black surface; burnished rim and zone on shoulder, the rest matt, but decorated with burnished wavy line. Ditch. Fragments of two other similar vessels were found.
27. Fragment of large storage vessel. Hard yellow ware with quartzite grains; surface smoothed on rim and shoulder. Ditch. Another sherd, which is probably from the body of this vessel, is decorated with a burnished wavy line. A similar rim in grey ware was found.

*Cordoned Vessels with High Shoulder and Upright Neck (Holmes, types 19–21)*¹⁵

28. Grey ware with smooth black surface; matt zone below shoulder. Ditch. Cf. Holmes, type 20.¹⁶
29. Coarse brown ware. Ditch.
30. Hard grey ware. Ditch. No. 38 (below) is probably the missing base.
31. Grey ware with smooth black surface. Ditch.
32. Grey ware with brown surface. Ditch.
33. Grey ware with smooth black surface; Ditch.
34. Red ware with brown external and grey internal surface. Ditch.
35. Grey ware with dark grey surface; slight offset on shoulder, circular groove on underside of base. Ditch.
36. Brown ware with black surface; carefully smoothed on rim, neck and upper part of side, shoulder matt and decorated with burnished chevrons consisting of sets of three lines. Ditch.
37. Hard grey ware with grey surface. Ditch.
38. Hard grey ware with grey surface; shallow circular groove on underside of foot. Ditch.

¹⁴ *Sy.A.C.*, LI, 1–28.¹⁵ *Ibid.*¹⁶ *Ibid.*

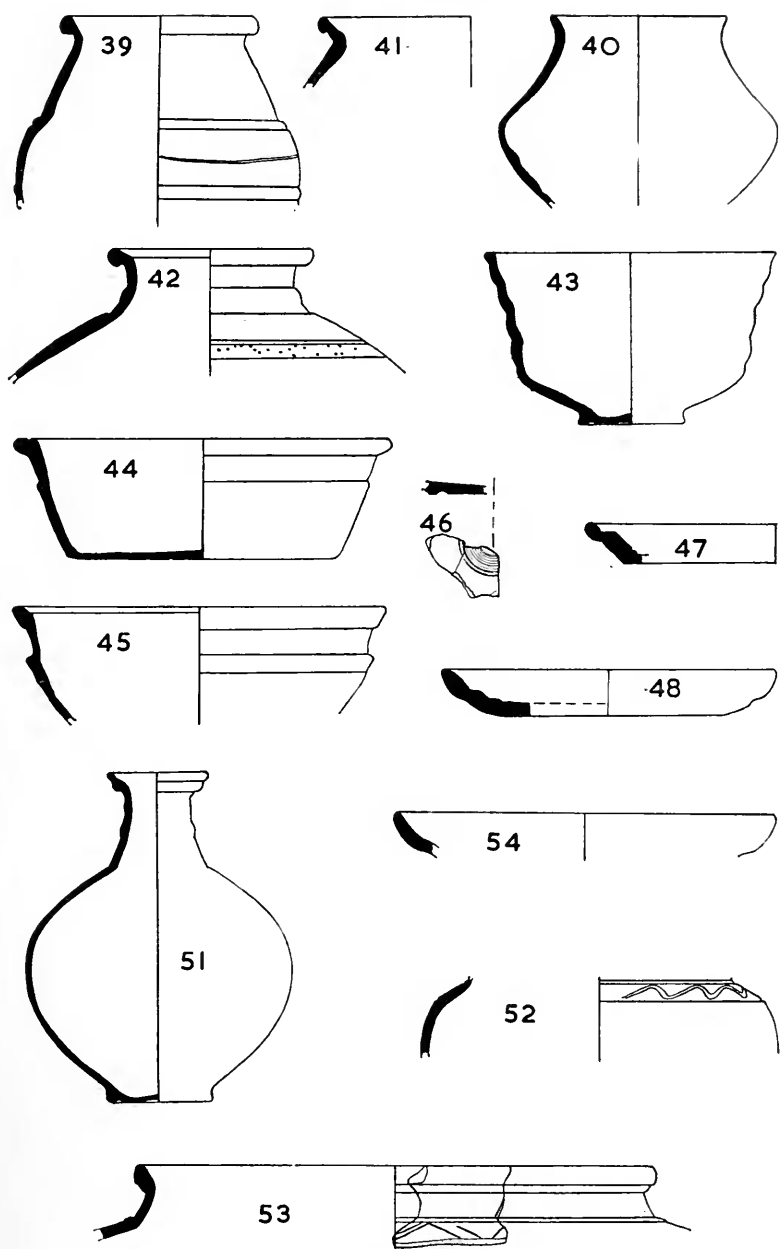


FIG. 6.—ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY. (¼)

Other Types

39. Butt-beaker, sandy grey ware with smooth surface; decorated with faint wavy line between the two cordons. Ditch. Cf. *Camulodunum*, type 119,¹⁷ there dated A.D. 43-65.

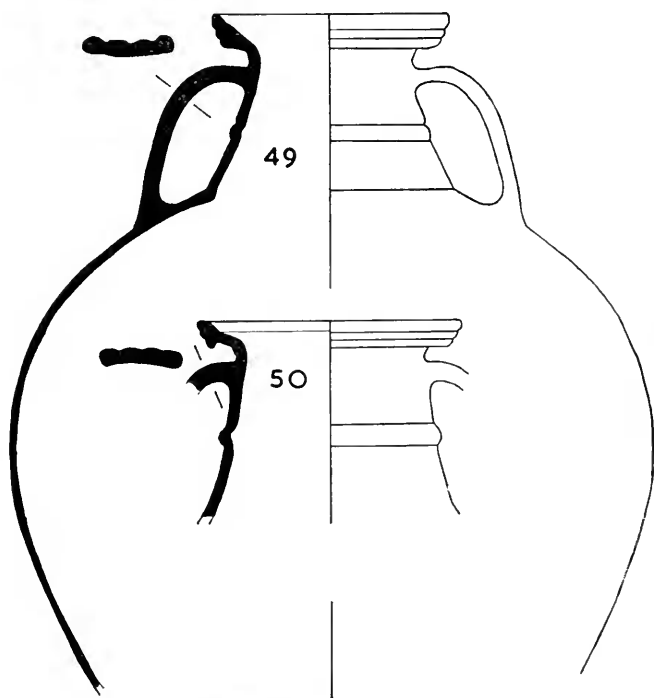


FIG. 7.—ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY. ($\frac{1}{4}$)

40. Carinated Beaker, brown ware with grey core, dark brown "fumed" surface. Ditch. Cf. Holmes, type 23; *Silchester*,¹⁸ Plate LXXVIII, 1.
41. Storage Vessel with out-turned rim, hard grey ware with brown surface; two closely spaced thin grooves on shoulder. Ditch. Cf. *Sy.A.C.*, XXXVIII, 142, Fig. 3, 2. c. A.D. 100.
42. Wide-bellied Flask with narrow neck, hard grey ware; decorated on shoulder with three fine grooves and stab marks made with a sharp point. Ditch. Cf. *Camulodunum*, type 231. Claudian.
43. Bowl with pedestal base and corrugated side, soft red ware, smooth surface with faint horizontal striations; rim carefully flattened, foot ring. Ditch.

¹⁷ Hawkes, C. F. C., and Hull, M. R., *Camulodunum* (1947).

¹⁸ May, T., *The Pottery found at Silchester* (1916).

44. Bowl with shouldered side (Holmes, type 22), sandy brown rather soft ware, burnished black external surface; groove on top of rim and two closely spaced concentric circular shallow grooves on underside of base. Ditch.
45. Soft brown ware with burnished black external surface. Ditch.
46. Fragment of base of bowl, or possibly of platter. Hard grey ware with smooth surface; upper surface has thin incised concentric circular lines, underside has deep circular concentric grooves. Ditch.
47. Plate with moulded side, light-coloured, sandy ware with smoothed grey surface. Ditch. Cf. *Camulodunum*, type 24. Mid-first century A.D.
48. Lid or Plate with Curved Side, grey ware with smooth dark grey surface. Ditch. Possibly a crude version of no. 47.
49. Large two-handled Flagon, light grey sandy ware with dark grey surface, carefully smoothed, the neck tooled vertically; heavy reeded rim, cordon on neck, four-ribbed handle. Ditch. Cf. *Camulodunum*, type 163; *Silchester*, Plate LX, 106 and 108. Native imitation of an imported Gallo-Belgic form. c. A.D. 10-60.
50. Similar in ware and form to no. 49. Ditch.
51. Small Flagon, pinkish-grey smooth ware with dark specks, and with dark rubbery external surface; an ill-defined cordon on neck. If there was a handle it must have sprung lower than half-way down the neck. Ditch.
52. Hard light grey ware with darker surface; faintly impressed wavy line on shoulder. Ditch.
53. Sandy grey ware with smooth black external surface; pattern of pairs of parallel impressed lines on shoulder. Ditch.
54. Grey sandy ware with smooth black surface. Ditch.
55. Sherd decorated with combing (not illustrated): fragment of side of large vessel. Hard grey ware with black surface; decorated externally with faintly impressed parallel lines suggesting use of comb; inner surface irregular as if hand-made, but the vessel was finished externally on the wheel. Unstratified.

APPENDIX

Pottery from Shackleford, Surrey (Fig. 8)

The pottery described here is in the school museum at Charterhouse. The group from Hurtmore Holt (Nat. Grid Ref. 31/945452) was found in about the year 1895 and was presented to the museum by Major Fairtlough. The other pot (S.1.) was found by Mr. George Webb in a field at Shackleford in 1895, but the exact find spot was not recorded.

H.1. Sandy grey ware with quartzite grains. Cf. *Sy.A.C.* LI, 9, Fig. 2, IV; *Richborough*,¹⁹ III, Pl. xxxvii, 270. c. A.D. 100.

¹⁹ Bushe-Fox, J. P., *Third Report on the Excavations of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent* (1932).

- H.2. Hard grey sandy ware with dark grey surface, possibly with slip; broad cordon produced by two V-shaped grooves, burnished lines in sets of three above. Possibly from a high-shouldered jar with upright neck and out-turned rim. Cf. *Alice Holt Forest*²⁰, 41 and Fig. 3; Holmes, type 19: first or early second century A.D.
- H.3. Light grey ware with quartzite grains, dark grey external surface much worn on top of rim, slight indication of groove on top of rim. Cf. *Sy.A.C.*, XXXVIII, 142, Fig. 3, no. 1; *Preh. Farnh.* 246, R86A, A.D. 100–150, but the groove on top of the rim would suggest a later date.

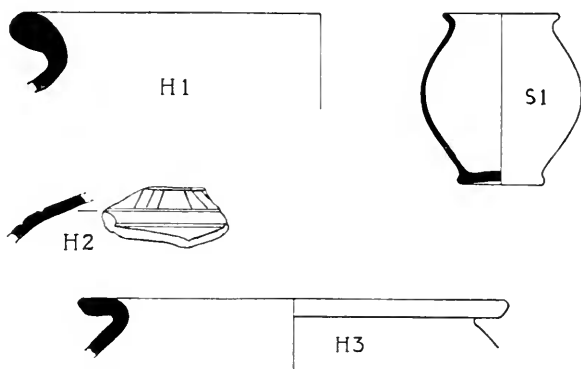


FIG. 8.—POTTERY FROM SHACKLEFORD. (4)

It is not certain that these sherds were found together, but the probable date for them as a group is the first half of the second century A.D.

- S.1 Beaker of greyish brown sandy ware, external surface showing marks caused by smoothing, possibly not on a wheel; shallow circular groove on underside of base. Complete except for part of rim and base. This pot might be regarded as a late rendering of a Wealden footring bowl, or as a native imitation of a butt-beaker.

²⁰ Wade, A. G., and Lowther, A. W. G., *Alice Holt Forest* (1949).