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An elaborately repaired flagon and other pottery from Roman cremation burials at Farley Heath

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A small group of cremation urns was recovered from Foxholes, near Farley Heath, in the early 1930s and has never been fully published. Further cremation urns found in the Farley Heath area may also come from the same site. Apart from a samian cup left as a grave offering, all but one of the urns is in greyware; some are clearly products of the Alice Holt/Farnham industry, others may be more local wares in the same style. A large flagon in a cream/buff ware is probably a British copy of a Gallo-Belgic form; it has an exceptional repair, consisting of a lead plate stapled to the exterior over and around the base.

A group of Roman cremation urns was found at Foxholes, Farley Green, Albury in the early 1930s (Heath 1932). The site lies approximately 1km north-east of the Romano-British temple enclosure at Farley Heath, and an old excavation trench at the top of a steep natural slope within Foxholes Wood was identified by A W G Lowther as the site of the burials (TQ 056 458; Surrey Historic Environment Record (HER), no 366). It is the only firmly located burial site in the vicinity of the temple, and Lewis suggested that it may have served the temple staff (1966, 135); however, it forms one of a line of probable cremation burials that runs roughly to the north-west, perhaps indicating the line of a road (Bird 2004, 138), and so may not be directly connected with the temple complex. The surviving pottery indicates a date range for the cemetery from the middle of the 1st century AD into the early decades of the 3rd century.

The only publication of the finds is a brief note in the *Collections* by O M Heath: 'Portions of five Roman burial urns and one small Samian bowl have been found in a garden on the edge of Farley Heath, Albury [...] The Samian bowl is complete and is marked with the potter's name. Of the other five, one is of a light buff colour and four of coarse blue grey pottery. They were all found within a few feet of each other [...] The finds are the property of Mr. R. Stephenson of Foxholes, Farley Green [...] who has […] allowed members of the Society to make further investigations in his grounds' (Heath 1932). Of the pottery recorded by Heath, the samian cup and the light buff pot (fig 1) can be identified with vessels in Guildford Museum (nos 1 and 2 below), but the collection now includes at least ten greyware jars donated by Heath and recorded as coming from the Foxholes site (nos 4–9 and 12–16). The additional jars were probably recovered during the 'further investigations' by O M Heath and A W G Lowther, unpublished but recorded in the county HER, as noted above. Apart from a fragment of Roman tile (Guildford Museum acc no AS 10213) no other finds were recorded.

In addition to the Heath donation, sherds of three other greyware jars (nos 3, 10 and 11) and some eighteen fragments of calcined bone (Guildford Museum AS 6432) were donated by D Tovey in 1936. The accompanying letter, dated 29 April 1936, states that the pottery 'was dug up on Farley Heath some years ago by a man who sold it to Mr Barber, Antique Dealer, of Woking, from whom I purchased it recently. The fragments [...] appear to comprise parts of more than one vessel, and include part of a bead-rim, and sherds showing lattice decoration. A few small fragments of bone, found with it, are contained in the match-box' (Atkins 1983, section 4, para 73). The jars are very close in form and fabric, as well as in their fragmentary state, to those recovered from Foxholes, and the association with the pieces of burnt bone would certainly suggest a funerary context. The entries in the accessions register at Guildford Museum state that the three jars and the bone fragments were casual finds recovered together on the temple site, and bought before 1934; the name

'Foxholes' has been added later. It is possible that these jars also came from Foxholes Wood, but clearly the precise provenance was not known to Tovey, and cannot now be retrieved. It should be noted too that among the material recorded from M Tupper's 1839–48 excavation of the temple site were 'burnt bones, supposed to be human' and 'many small fragments of funereal urns' (Nightingale 1847–8, 144); in the absence of any further evidence, it must remain a possibility that Tupper uncovered the remains of cremation burials (Atkins 1983, section 4, para 76).

Tovey's donation also included pieces of two decorated samian bowls; the accessions register entries for these record that they came from S E Winbolt's excavation of the temple site at Farley Heath in 1926, though both entries also have the name 'Foxholes' added in a different hand (Guildford Museum AS 10206, AS 10207; Winbolt 1927). The bowls are included in the recent catalogue of pottery from Winbolt's excavation (Bird 2007b, 87, nos 38 and 39). Two sherds come from a bowl in the style of Cinnamus ii of Lezoux, *c* AD 145–75, and include figures of Minerva and her owl and of Vulcan; a larger sherd in the style of the anonymous Werkstatt II of Trier, active *c* AD 140–65, shows a stag and hounds, animals that appear on the Farley Heath sceptre-binding. Both may have been perceived as appropriate offerings at the temple site (cf Bird 2013, 329–30; for the sceptre-binding see Bird 2007a, figs 19–20, and for the decoration on the Trier bowl Huld-Zetsche 1993, F140). Pottery and tile, which probably came from Winbolt's Farley Heath excavation, is now in Kingston Museum (Bird 2007b, 78), and it is clear from the report on his work at Alfoldean that material from his excavations could be dispersed to a variety of locations (Winbolt 1924, 157). This might explain how Tovey was ultimately able to acquire the samian from the Woking dealer.

The most interesting of the vessels recovered from Foxholes is the 'buff coloured jug, or urn' recorded by Heath. This is a large pear-shaped flagon (fig 1), incomplete and very

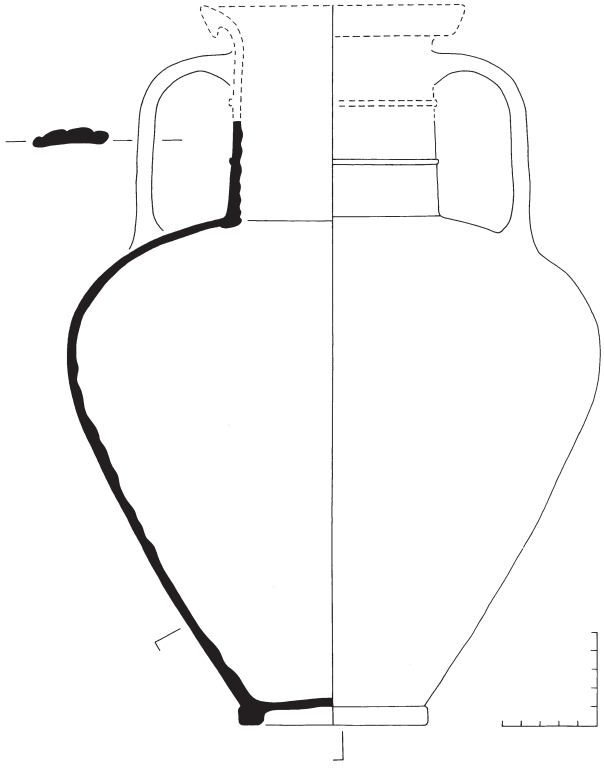


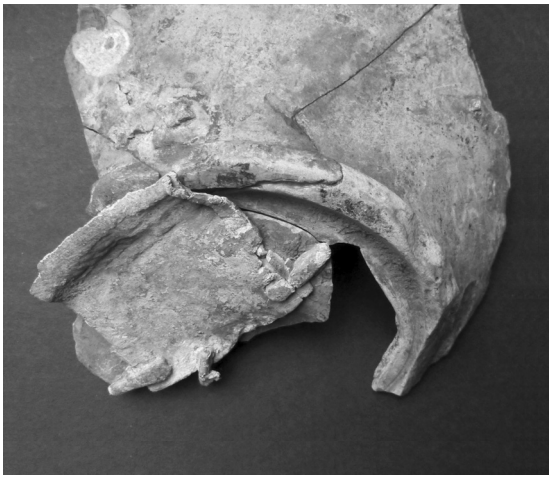
Fig 1 Reconstruction of the cream/buff ware flagon from Foxholes, Farley Green (catalogue no 2). The brackets mark the known extent of the lead plate. Scale in cm. (Drawing: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

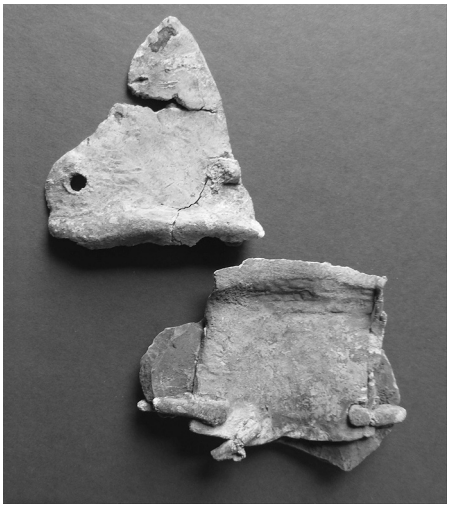
fragmented; for a discussion of its typology, fabric and date, see no 2 below. Flagons were regularly placed with burials as part of the suite of offerings, rather than serving as containers for cremations (Tuffreau-Libre 1992, 116–17), though the size of this one would not rule out use as a funerary urn. It is remarkable for the exceptionally elaborate ancient repair to the base and lower body, for which no parallel has been found; this was described by Heath as 'a curious patch of metal rivetted on to the outside in one place where there was a bad break' (1932).

The repair consisted originally of a lead plate fixed to the exterior, and there are indications of a second plate on the interior (figs 2, 3, 6, 7). The lead is now in several abraded pieces, of which the two largest and best preserved, a roughly square piece now measuring a maximum of 52 x 54mm and a triangular piece now 57 x 60mm, are the most informative. The outer faces of both are quite crudely worked, and the inner faces are roughly finished; their thickness varies between 1.5 and 5mm (figs 4 and 5). The triangular piece has a thickening at one side, probably to fit into a flake out of the surface of the flagon (fig 5), and white traces of oxidised lead indicate that other large flakes were also carefully filled (fig 8). The square piece is shaped to fit over the footring and is still attached to three base sherds that join the foot (figs 2, 4, 5, 9); the edge that crosses the base is uneven but is probably original. The triangular piece does not join it, but continues the profile over the footring and on to the lower part of the body (figs 3–5); at least one side edge seems to be original, and it is possible that the external plate was cut into triangles to clasp the base of the pot. The known extent of the repair is marked by brackets on figure 1. The plate was attached using staples made by threading lead wire through pairs of holes, bored through the plate and drilled through the body of the pot (figs 2–10). Traces of lead around the remains of a staple on the interior match those on the exterior, and suggest that a further plate was used on the interior for additional support (figs 6 and 7).

The use of lead wire threaded through holes in adjacent sherds was a common method of repairing pottery, and was probably also used here beyond the area covered by the plate. On this pot, there is at least one pair of holes in an unbroken portion of the flagon, and these were probably drilled specifically to secure the plate (fig 8). Where complete staples survive, they show the usual profile: two parallel strips, with two short cross-pieces that passed through the holes close to each end; the extensions beyond the holes suggest that the lead was worked further to ensure a close fit after threading (fig 9). The surviving sherds carry 34 drilled holes measuring *c* 3mm in diameter, mostly with traces of lead wire, and include the remains of eight complete staples; five of these measure between 18 and 22mm in length, with two shorter ones, *c* 13mm, attaching the square piece of plate inside the footring, and one longer one measuring 35mm. The triangular piece of plate has a hole 5mm in diameter and part of a staple (figs 3–5). The remaining fragments of plate have five further staples, including a complete one 24mm long; the staples on the plate appear narrower and shallower than those on the pot itself (fig 10).

While repairs to pottery are well known, the addition of reinforcing plates seems to be exceptional. The most usual repair is the ancillary one described above – lead wire threaded through a pair of holes drilled in adjacent sherds. A second method, certainly recorded on samian ware, consists of swallowtail cuts on the edges of adjacent sherds into which cross-shaped cleats were placed and then worked to make the fit secure (Marsh 1981, 227). The malleability of lead, and its ability to become soft when only mild heat is applied so avoiding further damage to the vessel itself, probably account for its popularity for mending pottery. Discussions of pottery repair have tended to concentrate on its use for samian, suggesting that this perhaps reflects the relative value of the ware to its owners; it is now becoming clear, however, that other wares were also mended with greater frequency than has previously been recognised. Pottery repairs from the Cotswold Water Park sites were identified both on the pottery itself and as surviving lead staples in the metalwork assemblages. Apart from samian, the pottery mended ranged from Oxfordshire colour-coat wares and mortaria to black-burnished and other coarse wares (Cool 2007, 347, 350). At South Shields a greyware





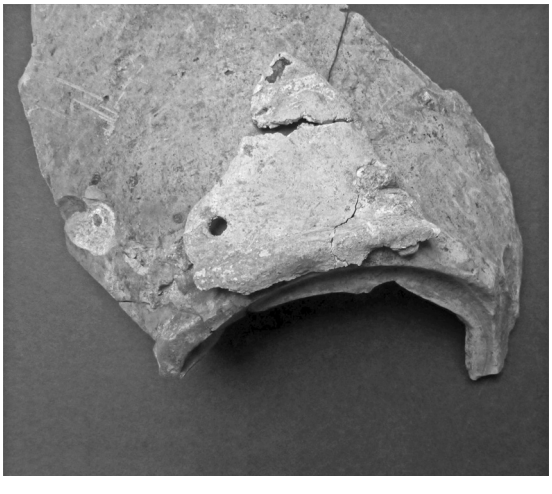


Fig 2 (above left) Foxholes flagon: the square lead plate, with attached sherds which join the footring. See text for dimensions. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

Fig 3 (left) Foxholes flagon: the triangular lead plate, showing its position relative to the lower body and footring; the place where the plate actually fitted is now missing. See text for dimensions. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

Fig 4 (above) Foxholes flagon: the exterior of the two main pieces of the lead plate, showing the shaping over the footring. See text for dimensions. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

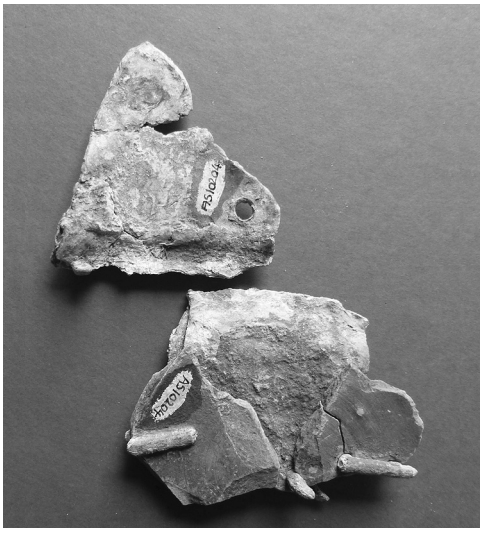


Fig 5 (left) Foxholes flagon: the interior of the two main pieces of the lead plate, showing the shaping over the footring and the attached base sherds. See text for dimensions. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

Fig 6 (above) Foxholes flagon: exterior view of a sherd from the lower portion of the vessel, with the remains of the lead plate round a staple. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

Fig 7 Foxholes flagon: interior view close to the base, showing traces of a probable inner lead plate round a staple. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

Fig 8 Foxholes flagon: exterior view showing the remains of a staple set in an unbroken part of the vessel, close to the base; there is part of a second staple above, and both are surrounded by white traces of oxidised lead. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

Fig 9 Foxholes flagon: view of the base sherds (above) and joining piece of plate (as figs 2, 4, 5), showing a near-complete staple in profile. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

Fig 10 Foxholes flagon: the smaller pieces of lead plate, with several wire staples. (Photograph: author, courtesy of Guildford Museum)

jar had been repaired with rather untidy lead staples (Allason-Jones 2011, 5 & pl 1), and other lead staples that had probably been used to mend pottery were recorded among the metalwork (Allason-Jones & Miket 1984, nos 8.74 and 8.85–91).

Iron wire could be used in a similar way to lead, and repairs to coarseware vessels using iron staples are recorded, for example, from Wales (Marsh 1981, 227) and Gaul (Tuffreau-Libre 1992, 119). A greyware bowl or dish from Staines was unusually repaired with a copper-alloy staple, and in this case an adhesive of a black pitch- or resin-like substance was noted on the broken edge (McKinley 2004, 31). The presence of a similar dark material, without the addition of staples, has been noted on the broken edges of coarseware pots from a number of sites and identified as a probable adhesive, though no systematic assessment of this evidence has apparently been carried out (see Postscript). Analysis of the substance found on the edges of an Alice Holt/Farnham ware jar from excavations at Manor Farm,

Guildford showed that it was an adhesive composed of birch resin mixed with clay and also contained traces of fats, probably of animal origin (English 2005).

Repaired pots are regularly found accompanying burials (eg Tuffreau-Libre 1992, 119), rather than serving as containers for the cremated remains, and might be simply explained as vessels that had a special value for the deceased, or as old pots that were considered adequate for funerary use. However, the evidence suggests that a deeper significance may lie behind their presence. Burials, like ritual deposits, frequently include vessels that have been broken or damaged, a form of dedicating them to the spirit world, and it is possible that a repaired pot could carry this symbolism further, as an offering to the gods of the Underworld that might also embrace concepts of regeneration. In discussing the presence of lead-rivetted samian in otherwise richly furnished graves, Cool & Leary (2012, 315) note that lead was associated with ill-health and death; it was regularly used for curse tablets, and may have been perceived as a particularly suitable material for the dead and the chthonic deities . Lead was also used later for the manufacture of coffins, its relative softness allowing the addition of appropriate moulded relief decoration (eg Bird 2004, fig 66).

The samian cup (no 1 below) would have been an additional offering in a grave. The remaining vessels are all greyware jars, typical of the sort of cremation urns found throughout Roman Britain. Like the flagon, most of them, including those donated by Tovey, are now broken into numerous fragments, probably through the activity of foxes; many fox-earths were noted around the Foxholes excavation trench, and may account for the original discovery of the pottery there, as well as for the dispersal of any surviving bone or smaller items (HER no 366). The jars form an internally consistent group, ranging in date from the mid-1st century and through the 2nd, with one (no 10) dating into the 3rd century. Actual bone fragments were apparently only found in association with nos 3, 10 and 11. The forms and surface treatment are characteristic of vessels produced by the Alice Holt/Farnham potteries, but it is not certain that any but nos 3 and 7 are actual Alice Holt/Farnham products. The remainder show a relatively poor quality of finish and, particularly, of fabric, which is very friable and frequently shows fine cracks across the surface, indicating incomplete control of the firing process. There is evidence for pottery production at Farley Heath (Bird 2007b, 79), and it may be that these jars are local products in the Alice Holt/Farnham style. Alternatively they may have been Alice Holt/Farnham seconds or rejects, pots that were of a lower standard than usual, sold off cheaply for use as funerary urns (Biddulph 2005, 37), or pots of inferior quality deliberately made for the purpose (Millett & Graham 1986, 61).

Catalogue of the pottery

SAMIAN CUP

1 Complete cup, form Dragendorff 27g (Heath 1932, pl 23). The internal stamp reads IMOM, ie MOMI retrograde; it comes from a broken die, Ψ2, of Mommo of La Graufesenque, dated *c* AD 60–85 (Hartley & Dickinson 2010, 145, where an old museum accession number is given). (Guildford Museum AG 254)

CREAM/BUFF FLAGON

2 (fig 1) Large pear-shaped flagon, with a tall neck, decorated with at least one narrow cordon, a broad four-ribbed handle (probably one of a pair), and a well-defined foot. The rim is missing, and despite the large number of sherds (143) only the lower part of the vessel can actually be restored. The fabric is finely sandy, light buff in colour shading to cream at the surfaces. There are occasional red and brownish-black iron-rich inclusions, sparse pale chalk-like inclusions up to 0.5mm, and occasional flakes of silver mica; most of these are small, but the red fragments measure up to 2mm in diameter and have smeared where they appear on the surface, while one of the dark grits is 0.5mm in diameter and one in the handle measures 4 x 0.5mm. The interior of the base is untidily finished, probably due to the vessel's size and relatively narrow neck, and there are some fine grit lines on the exterior.

While the cordon and handle closely reflect the original Gallo-Belgic form, the quality of the potting on the interior, the relatively large inclusions, and the grit lines on the exterior all indicate that the Foxholes flagon is a British copy rather than an import. The fabric is close

to one used at Wiggonholt for the manufacture of mortaria, though Tomber & Dore note the difficulty of distinguishing this Wiggonholt White ware from North Gaulish White ware 4 and from Colchester White ware (1998, 75–6, 133–4, 187). The size of some of the inclusions matches similarly-sized fragments in the fabric of the mural-crowned jars attributed to Wiggonholt/Pulborough (Bird 2002, figs 6 & 9), and while there is no certain evidence for pottery production at Wiggonholt itself before the early 2nd century (cf Evans 1974, 105–7), a source in that area is a strong possibility.

The flagon belongs to a type that originated in Belgic Gaul, where it was made in hard white pipeclay and other fine pale fabrics (eg Delor-Ahü 2010, fig 11, centre top), and imported examples are found on early sites in Britain (eg Hawkes & Hull 1947, pls 63–65; Stead & Rigby 1986, fig 121, no 202). British copies are recorded in various wares: a yellow/buff fabric with grey core and a pale orange fabric with drab white slip at Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986, fig 123, no 224, unusually with only one handle, and fig 124, no 229, with grooves instead of cordons on the neck); a red fabric with white slip at Camulodunum (Hawkes & Hull 1947, pl 63, form 165); a cream-slipped reddish-brown fabric with grey core from the Gatesbury earthwork near Braughing (Partridge 1981, fig 128, with a distinctive footring), and a sandy grey fabric with smooth black exterior from Silchester (May 1916, pl 60, nos 105–6). Hawkes & Hull note further that their forms 163 and 165 were copied in coarse 'native' grey wares (1947, 248). Copies were also made in Alice Holt/Farnham grey ware (Lyne & Jefferies 1979, types 8.1–8.3), and single examples were recovered from Burials 2 and 3 at Neatham (Millett & Graham 1986, tables 14 & 15, figs 43 & 44). The illustrated vessel from Neatham, fig 66, no 111, has diagonal burnishing on the neck and a narrow band of diagonal lines on the shoulder, decoration which is characteristic of the Alice Holt/Farnham potteries.

At Baldock, Stead & Rigby (1986, 304, 307) date both the imported flagon and the copies to the pre-Flavian period and a similar, pre-Flavian, date is likely for the Foxholes flagon, making it probably the earliest vessel from the site. It had been heavily and elaborately repaired in antiquity, as described above (figs 2–10). An attempt has been made to identify and glue joining sherds, and virtually all the identifiable joins are marked in pencil, probably, to judge from the writing, by A W G Lowther. (Guildford Museum AS 10204, AS 10208 (handle sherd))

GREYWARE JARS

Where enough of the vessel survives, parallels for the jars described below can be found in two typologies: Lyne & Jefferies 1979, abbreviated to L&J, and Marsh & Tyers 1978, abbreviated to M&T. For this reason, and because most of them are now broken into many fragments, the individual pots have not been illustrated.

3 Bead rim jar with a pair of shallow cordons on the shoulder. The rim is close to L&J type 4.2, while the overall shape of the vessel is similar to M&T type IIA12. Sandy grey Alice Holt/Farnham fabric. Forty-four sherds. Mid-1st to mid-2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 6429)

4 Cordoned jar, as M&T type IID1, with a cordon below the neck, an offset below the shoulder, and grooves defining the foot. Rim diameter 215mm. There are traces of burnished diagonal lines decorating the shoulder, the central part of the body carries roughly burnished streaks with one or two wavy lines burnished across them, and the lower part of the body is burnished overall. Sandy dark grey/brown fabric with grey core; dark grey surfaces with drab light brown blotches on the lower half. The lower half shows signs of inferior potting, especially in the base. One hundred and eight sherds. Mid-1st to 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 10203)

5 Jar, similar in form to the cordoned jars of L&J class 1, with a groove at the top of the body and a near-vertical neck; the rim has broken off. Sandy grey/brown fabric, grey surfaces. Three sherds, probably all one vessel. Mid-1st to 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 6421)

6 Jar, with a cordon at the base of the neck; probably a cordoned jar of L&J class 1. Sandy dark grey/brown fabric, vesicular dark grey surfaces. One sherd. Mid-1st to 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 6422)

7 Flat-rimmed jar; cf L&J type 3A.10. Sandy grey Alice Holt/Farnham fabric. One sherd. Mid-1st to 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 6425)

8 Jar, the lower half of a large ovoid vessel with a plain base. Base diameter 85mm. For the form, cf the early examples of L&J class 3A, which also have plain bases. Sandy dark grey/brown fabric, the surfaces fired partly mid-grey, partly drab light brown; approximately the lower third is burnished overall, but above that a lot of grit lines and small vesicles are visible on the exterior. Sixty-nine sherds. Mid-1st to 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 6417)

9 Flat-rimmed jar with short upright neck, lacking the lower body and base. Rim diameter 185mm. The shoulder is carinated without an offset, though the shape of the body otherwise conforms

to the early examples of L&J class 3A. Sandy orange/grey fabric, drab light brown surfaces; the exterior has been roughly smoothed but is now very vesicular, with large inclusions of quartz sand up to 4mm across. Eighteen sherds. Mid-1st to 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 10205)

10 Everted-rim jar, lacking the base; decorated across the middle with a coarse lattice composed of groups of three and four thick burnished lines. Cf L&J type 3B.9. Sandy dark grey/brown to brown fabric, dark grey surfaces. 3B.9 is dated *c* AD 200–300; in view of the date of the other pottery here, a date in the early decades of the 3rd century seems more likely. Sixteen sherds, probably all one vessel. (Guildford Museum AS 6431)

11 Jar with upright neck, flattish shoulder and ovoid body. Hard sandy grey fabric with darker core, grey/brown surfaces; the surfaces are rough, with grit lines and relatively large inclusions. There are indications – a dimple in the surface, etc – of careless potting or firing. Sixteen sherds, probably all one vessel. Probably 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 6430)

12 Jar with ovoid body, decorated with a band of streaky burnishing between two plain bands with overlapping burnished wavy lines; the lower part is burnished overall. Similar decoration occurs on much larger jars made in hard grey sandy wares, such as L&J types 1C.4 and 4.44. Sandy dark grey/brown fabric, blotchy grey and drab grey/brown surfaces. Forty-three sherds. Probably mid-1st to 2nd century. (Guildford Museum AS 6419)

13 Jar base, slightly hollowed, with grooves defining the foot. Sandy brown fabric with grey/brown core, dark grey surfaces. Fifty-four sherds, probably all one vessel. (Guildford Museum AS 6418)

14 Jar, lower part of the body, with a band of overall burnishing. Sandy dark grey/brown fabric, blotchy dark grey and drab grey/brown surfaces; untidily potted interior. Forty-eight sherds, mainly but perhaps not all from one vessel. (Guildford Museum AS 6420)

15 Jar or bowl, an offset shoulder with a burnished band below and then a plain band with a burnished wavy line. Dark grey/brown fabric, blotchy dark grey and drab grey/brown surfaces. Four sherds. (Guildford Museum AS 6424 (part))

16 Six jar sherds, two of them cordoned or offset at the shoulder, and two of them from the same vessel. All are in the sandy dark grey/brown wares described above. (Guildford Museum AS 6423 (two sherds), AS 6424 (part; three sherds), AS 10212)

POSTSCRIPT

Since this paper was completed a new discussion of the use of glue to repair pottery vessels from Romano-British sites has been published: K Marter Brown & R Seager Smith, What did the apocrypha know? Glued pottery vessels from Springhead and other Romano-British sites in south and eastern England, in B Jervis & A Kyle (eds), *Make-do and mend: archaeologies of compromise, repair and reuse*, BAR Internat Ser, **2408** (2012), 5–11.

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