

THE ANCIENT POTTERIES OF THE NEW FOREST,
HAMPSHIRE.

By the Rev. J. PEMBERTON BARTLETT.

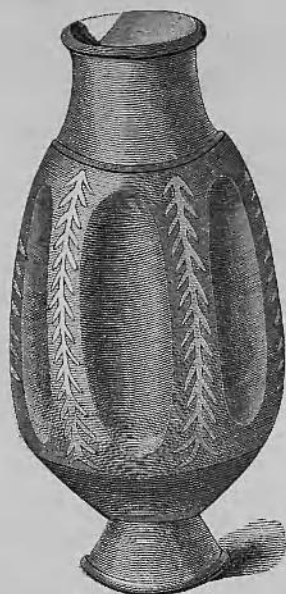
THE remains of Romano-British potters' kilns have from time to time been discovered in various parts of Great Britain—at Castor in Northamptonshire, in London, on the banks of the Medway, at Ewell in Surrey, at Warrington, and at Shepton Mallet. A rude kind of pottery was made at Holt Forest, in this county, and I was some years since the fortunate discoverer of sites of several potteries in the New Forest. It was a bright and beautiful day in early spring, when in rambling in the Forest I happened to light on a piece of coarse-looking pottery that had been unearthed by a rabbit in making its subterranean home. On carefully examining it, I conjectured it to be of Roman origin. On going some little distance further, I found men busy draining—tall, long-backed, long-limbed West-Saxon-looking peasants, but withal civil and intelligent. Upon enquiring if they ever found fragments similar to the piece I had found, one man, with evident surprise at my interest in such a common-looking shard, told me that on a hill a short distance off I could get a barrowfull. Upon going to the spot described, which was in the then finely-wooded part of the Forest, I discovered what at first sight appeared to be three large depressed barrows. On searching among the grass and ferns with which they were covered, I found several mole casts, which consisted of small pieces of pottery mingled with a fine black ash-like mould. Upon digging into the apex of one of the mounds, the spade brought to light numerous fragments of different kinds of pottery, which led me instantly to conclude I had discovered the site of a potter's kiln.

I found from the workman that the hill was called "Crockkle," which struck me at once as a corruption of

Crock Hill, or even more probably of *Crock Kiln*. I returned home with my pockets filled with those interesting fragments, and my mind filled with those feelings of pleasure at the discovery which an antiquary only can thoroughly enter into. It may be perhaps that there are some who, like Wordsworth's peasant when looking on the primrose at the river's brim, would look upon these interesting and classically shaped vessels before me as only broken pots and pans, "and nothing more." But it is not so. They speak of a race that has passed away—of a conquered country—and bring before us the very articles of domestic use in those early times.

The circumference of the mounds at "Crockkle" varied considerably, the largest being rather more than 100 yards, the second between 70 and 80, while the third, which consisted chiefly of ashes and small fragments of pottery, and which bore no traces of a kiln, was about 50 yards in circumference, and was more depressed than the others. Having obtained permission from the proper authority to explore the kilns, I set to work by opening a trench about 3 feet wide at the base; the workmen then proceeded to undermine the artificial soil of which the mound was composed, then driving strong stakes into about two feet of ground, they were pushed forward, and the mass fell gently into the trench in a sufficient body to prevent any vessels contained in it from breaking. By these means the specimens now brought before us in the accompanying illustrations, and the collection which is in the British Museum, were from time to time brought to light, I hoped we might have found the masonry of the kilns intact, as Mr. Artis found in his researches among the potters' kilns of Northamptonshire, but in this we were disappointed, as the only traces were a mass of crumbling red brick soil, among which we found a few rough bricks, probably moulded by the hand. Around this mass of decayed bricks in two of the kilns a circle of large sandstone boulders was discovered.

From the decayed state of the bricks, the general coarseness of the pottery, and from the fact that among the great quantity of fragments dug out not a specimen was found with any figures or potter's name, it would seem probable that our forest kilns are of an earlier date than those of Northamptonshire. The only ornaments were circles, dots,



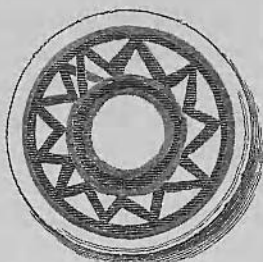
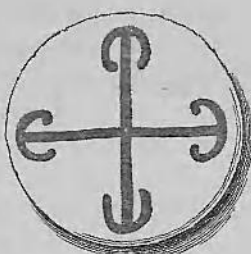
5½ inches high. Brown, with white pattern.



Light Brown. 4½ inches high.



Brown Ware. 4½ inches high.



Red patterns on bases of fawn-coloured pottery. Diameters, 4 inches.

Examples of Pottery found in the New Forest, Hampshire.

lines, and zig-zags, indented with some tool, or burnt in with a white or red pigment ; all were done with considerable neatness and taste.

The fragments and more perfect vessels consisted of the remains of differently shaped vases, *pateræ*, *mortaria*, *colanders*, and what appeared to have been candlesticks, the most perfect example of which is now in the museum of the Hartley Institute at Southampton. The most frequently recurring form, both in a perfect and fragmentary state, was a vase similar to many found at Castor by Mr. Artis.

Although the New Forest pottery is of a somewhat inferior kind, yet it possesses the elegance of form so characteristic of Roman art.

The ornaments of this pottery, though simple, are very diversified ; sometimes formed of bands of semicircles or circles, made probably with compasses, sometimes by themselves, and sometimes with lines drawn from the half-circles to the bottoms of the vessels. Some are ornamented with wavy intersections and zig-zag lines, while on others the ornament is formed by raised points encircling the vessels in bands, or grouped into circles, squares, or diamond patterns. In other examples the ornament was more simple, consisting merely of parallel or crossed lines. Lines crossed diamond-wise, like net-work, were also commonly found.

The vessels were of various sizes from 9 in. to 2 in. in height, holding from a quart to less than a gill in measure. They are chiefly made of a hard dark slate-coloured ware, which, when exposed to the action of fire, snaps and flies out, probably from the clay being mixed with a large quantity of silicious matter. Some, however, were of a red porous pottery, and some of a coarse white kind. The indentures at the sides of many specimens were probably formed upon them by the thumb of the potter when unbaked ; in others of the same class, but more neatly finished, the indentations appear to have been made by some instrument ; a smooth polished pebble found in one of the kilns, and which fitted some of the hollows, was probably used for this purpose.

Some Roman coins were dug up at Cadnam, in the Forest, which one of the workmen informed me were contained in just such "a thumb pot," as he called it ; a similar one was dug up at Winchester. I also find in the volume of the

Proceedings of the Archæological Institute recording the Salisbury Meeting,¹ a drawing of a vessel found in a barrow, almost precisely similar to some found among the New Forest Pottery. Now it happens, curiously enough, that I have an almost exactly similar vessel, a well burnt urn of thin red pottery, in height $4\frac{1}{4}$ in., while its largest diameter is $2\frac{3}{4}$ in., a very trifling variation from the size of the one found in the barrow near Beckhampton. I find too on one of the plates of drawings (V.) illustrating the results of the examination of barrows, &c., by the Very Rev. Dr. Merewether, late Dean of Hereford, given in the same Volume, the drawing of a fragment of a small *ampulla* of somewhat coarse pottery found in a barrow near Silbury Hill, which is precisely the same shape as several specimens found in the New Forest kilns.

A small vessel full of silver Roman coins was dug up at Amberwood (about half-a-mile from the site now under consideration), which one of the workmen informed me was exactly the shape of a vase, of which he found several nearly perfect examples. One of the coins I know to have been of Valens, and one of Julian the Apostate, as they were exhibited before the Society of Antiquaries.

From these coincidences we may infer the probability of these vessels being manufactured at the Forest potteries. I was disappointed in my hope of finding any tools used by the workmen. About a pound of corroded sheet lead, and a lump of iron (about half a pound in weight), but so corroded as to render it impossible to form an opinion as to its use, were all that we discovered. The only coins found were two pieces of Hadrian in large brass, and three small brass coins of the lower empire, one of which crumbled to pieces on being exposed to the air; the other two were of Victorinus, who reigned in Gaul, and probably in Britain, from A.D. 265 to A.D. 267; but as all the coins bore traces of having been long in circulation, they were probably lost at the kilns as late as the end of the third century. How

¹ P. 108. List of "Antiquities found near Avebury." Sketches representing objects found in the neighbourhood, "which for the most part are still retained and highly prized by those on whose property they were discovered."

"No. 1. A well burnt urn of thin red pottery, found in a barrow on the south

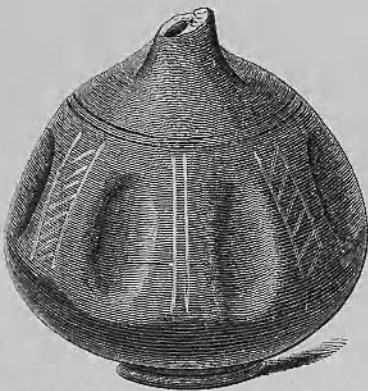
of Beckhampton, towards Tan Hill, at the head of a skeleton, lying at full length; round it were nail-heads as if of a coffin; a few feet from this was a smaller skeleton doubled up. The height of this urn was $4\frac{1}{8}$ in., largest diameter $2\frac{3}{8}$ in."



Red with white pattern. Height $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches.



Dark brown. $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches high.



$4\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter.



Diameter, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Examples of Pottery found in the New Forest, Hampshire

long these potteries continued in use after this period must be left to conjecture, but they probably were worked till the Romans abandoned Britain, and it is not impossible they might have been carried on by the inhabitants after that event.

In one of the potteries we found a mass of clay apparently ready mixed and ground together for use. The district of the Forest where these potteries are situated is where the lower Bagshot Sands with their clays crop out, probably part of the same bed which is still used by the potters at Aldershott, and Verwood, on the other side of the Avon. Upon comparing the present style of pottery made there at this time with the specimens found in the Forest, we are struck with the great superiority of the ancient over the modern, both in design and hardness.

Potteries probably extended at intervals for miles throughout the Forest, and, no doubt, more remain to be discovered. Besides those at "Crock Hill" and "Island of Thorns," I found traces of kilns at Anderwood, Sloden, and Pitt's Inclosure, from all of which specimens have been obtained of various degrees of fineness and perfection.

Traces of potteries have also been more recently found by Mr. Wise, in Oakley Inclosure, Lower Hat, Ashley rails, and near Linwood. He also explored a mound in Pitt's Inclosure which I had not examined, and which he describes as "remarkable for the number of kilns placed close together. There were five ranged in a semicircle, and paved with sandstone." Close to the Westernmost kiln were found only the necks of various unguent bottles, while the Easternmost oven seemed to have been used only for baking a coarse red panchion, on which a cover with a knob for a handle was fixed; of these were found an enormous quantity. Mr. Wise also found there "two heaps of white and fawn coloured clay, and red earth placed ready for mixing, and another heap of the two clays mixed for the immediate use of the potter."

Mr. Wise found also a kiln with more perfect bricks than I had discovered, on some of which the finger-marks of the workmen's hands could plainly be traced. I also found the handle of a vessel (which is now in the Hartley Museum, Southampton) on which the graining of the skin of the workman's thumb can plainly be seen. Mr. Wise also found a

strainer or colander, a funnel, some fragments of mock Samian ware, part of a lamp, and some beads of Kimmeridge clay, which help to prove the Roman origin of the kilns; the iron tools of the workmen had dropped into the furnace, and were much melted; he also found the plank upon which the clay had been tempered, the wood of which, he supposes, owed its preservation to the quantity of iron in the soil, and was in a semi-fossilized state.

There are few who now ascribe these and the other potteries mentioned, to any other period than the Romano-British, and I believe Mr. Roach Smith was the first to deny the so-called "Samian" a British or Italian parentage, and to assign it to the Gaul. If we may assume that the vase previously noticed as found with the skeleton at Beckhampton was made at the potteries of this district, it favours the supposition that they were in operation at least as late as the end of the fourth century; the interment at Beckhampton being of the Roman period, and subsequent to the days of Constantine, when the Pagan rite of cremation fell into disuse.