

Romano-British Derbyshire Ware.

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ON a number of occasions recently cooking-pots of the type here considered have been discovered at or near Roman sites, and have been taken for medieval by the finders. In the present paper,¹ besides giving drawings of sufficient rims to show the range of variety in the main type, I have collected the evidence for the distribution and date of Derbyshire ware, first distinguished by Professor Collingwood,² though it will appear presently that it is to be given a considerably shorter period than he suggested. It is hoped that this will make it easier for the ware to be recognized as Roman in the future.

Derbyshire ware is so described because a survey of its distribution (fig. 1) shows that it was probably made in the south of Derbyshire; its distinguishing features are the rim-type and the fabric. (1) *The rim-type*: A section of a complete vessel is given as type 74 by Professor Collingwood³; the peculiar characteristic is the rim, which curves inwards and forms a bell-mouth, with an internal ridge or ledge on which a lid might rest. At its widest point the rim is not so wide as the bulge of the jar; the

¹ The following abbreviations are employed : *D.A.J.* = *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*; *J.R.S.* = *Journal of Roman Studies*; *Y.A.J.* = *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*.

² *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, p. 235.

³ *Op. cit.*, fig. 57.

diameter at the rim is usually about two-thirds the height of the vessel. Although the rim-section varies very considerably in detail, as a glance at figs. 2-4 will show, its general features are always the same. (2) *The fabric*: This has been mistaken for medieval at least four times recently, and even those who have recognized its true period have described it as medieval rather than Roman in appearance; it, too, varies a good deal, but has constant features. The usual thickness is about a quarter of an inch, but the base, which is flat and narrow, is sometimes much thicker, and very roughly finished inside. The material is hard and gritty, and the surface is like goose flesh petrified; the colour varies between grey, light brown, and red, but a typical piece is dark grey on the outer surface and brick-red on the inner surface and in fracture.

This ware has turned up on at least twenty-one Romano-British sites (see the distribution-map, fig. 1), as follows:

- In Derbyshire*:
1. Little Chester, Derby
 2. Deepdale Cave, Buxton.
 3. Duffield.
 4. Rainster Rocks, Brassington.
 5. Silverlands, Buxton.
 6. Robin Hood's Stride, Alport.
 7. Brough.
 8. Harborough Rocks, Brassington.
 9. Rain's Cave, Brassington.
 10. Old Woman's House, Taddington Dale.
 11. Ravencliffe Cave, Cressbrook Dale.
- [Since added:
Horsley Castle.
Kirk Langley.]
- Elsewhere*:
12. Bewcastle, Cumberland.
 13. Housesteads, Northumberland.
 14. Chesterholm, Northumberland.

15. Corbridge, Northumberland.
16. Watercrock, Westmorland.
17. Slack, Yorkshire.
18. Ilkley, Yorkshire.
19. Stancil, Yorkshire.
20. Templebrough, Yorkshire.
21. Margidunum, Nottinghamshire.

The evidence relating to the above sites is considered in detail in the following paragraphs:

1. *Little Chester*, on the northern outskirts of Derby, was an auxiliary fort; in 1924 an excavation in the bath-house, 150 yards south of the fort, revealed large quantities of pottery, including Derbyshire ware,¹ and in 1926 an excavation in the civil settlement north of the fort produced more of it.² Of the rims illustrated in fig. 2, nos. 1, 2, 11, and 12 may be taken as typical, and the remainder are introduced to show the amount of variation in shape, diameter and thickness. The colour varies as much as the shape, but the goose-flesh fabric and basic form of the rim are constant. No. 7 is exceptional in its great size as well as in its shape. The occupation at Little Chester was a long one, pottery and coins lasting from the beginning of the Flavian period until at least the middle of the fourth century.

2. *Deepdale Cave* is three miles east of Buxton; it was inhabited both in pre-Roman and in Roman times. The excavations of 1889 and 1890 produced Roman metal objects and pottery, most of which is Derbyshire ware: the examples illustrated in fig. 3 all display the essential characteristics of the ware, in spite of variations in detail. The coins and other datable finds from this cave show occupation from the middle of the second century until the second half of the fourth.³

¹ *D.A.J.* n.s. i, 256.

² *J.R.S.* xvi, 222.

³ *D.A.J.* xii, 228 and xiii, 194.

3. *Duffield* is five miles north of Derby; no structural remains of the Roman period have yet been found there

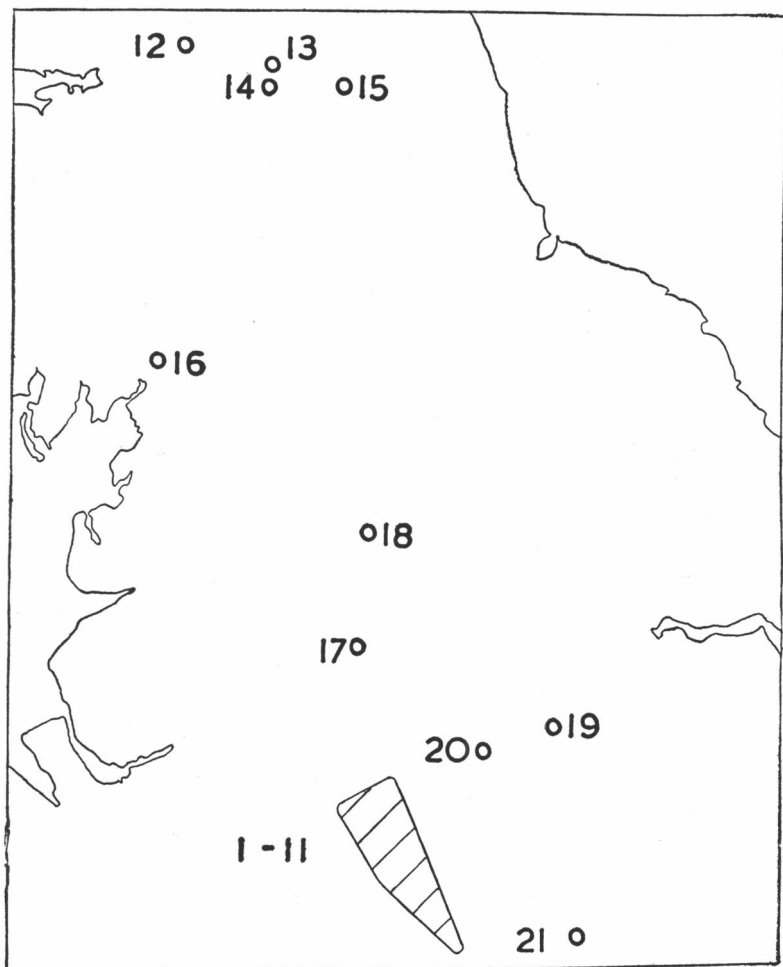


FIG. 1. Distribution-map of Derbyshire ware.

but there is evidence for a Roman road of some kind having crossed the Chevin Hill at Duffield. In 1886 Roman pottery was found at various places on the Castle Hill,

especially on the west side of the keep,¹ and in 1931 further Roman pottery turned up 230 feet west of the

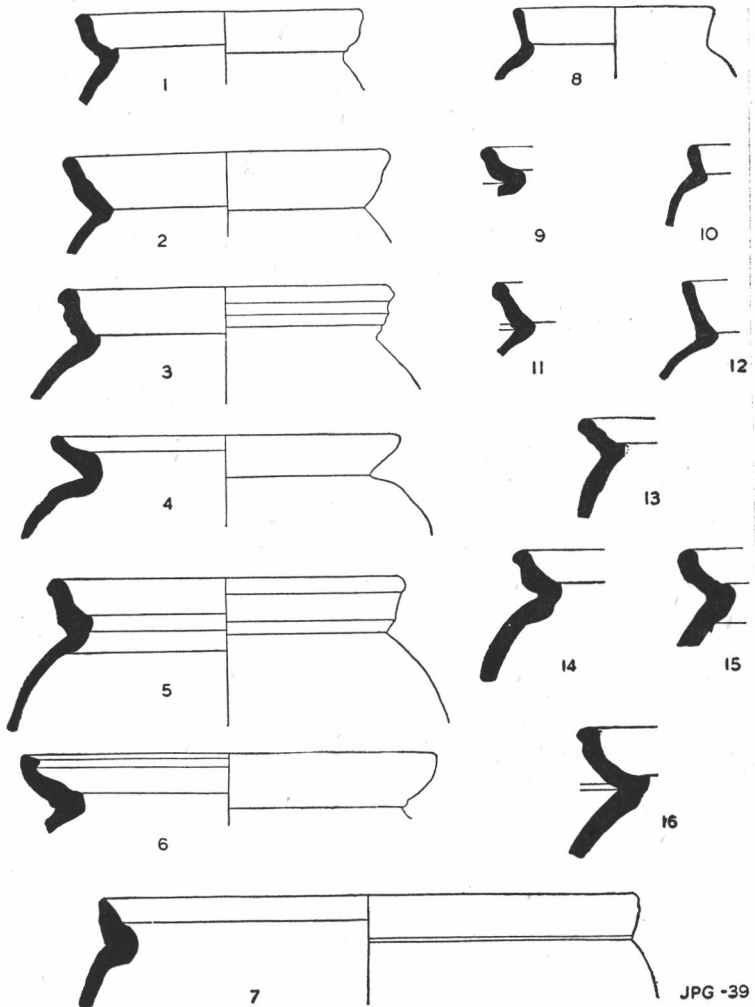


FIG. 2. Derbyshire ware from Little Chester (4).

keep,² Derbyshire ware being present in each case; and more of it has turned up since 1931, in different parts of

¹ *D.A.J.* v, 118.

² *Ibid.*, N.S. v, 107.

the town. Some distance from the castle 'a great quantity of Roman distorts and throw-outs' has been found. Three typical sections, selected from the large number of rims found in 1931, were figured by Mr. John Charlton,¹ and fig. 4, no. 7, illustrates one of the subsequent finds. The only evidence for dating is provided by the pottery of other types found on the site; some pieces seem assignable to the latter part of the third century, while the dating of the rest is uncertain.

4. *Rainster Rocks* is a village site near Brassington, about one and a half miles south of Minning Low, where the known stretch of Roman road from Buxton towards Derby ends. A number of pieces of Derbyshire ware were dug up here in 1907²; the other objects found were assigned, so far as they could be dated, to the close of the third century.

5. *Silverlands* is a site in Buxton, where there may have been an auxiliary fort; in 1903 Derbyshire ware and other Roman pottery was found there, including fig. 4, no. 1. Most of the associated finds belong to the period Vespasian—Hadrian, but there is evidence for occupation continuing until the end of the third century.³

6. *Robin Hood's Stride* is a village site four miles south of Bakewell; several hundred fragments of pottery have been found there, most of them being Derbyshire ware, including fig. 4, nos. 3-6, 9, and 10. The associated finds belong to the latter part of the third century.

7. *Brough*, ten miles north-east from Buxton, is the site of an auxiliary fort; an excavation there by the writer in 1937 produced large quantities of Derbyshire ware, including fig. 4, no. 8. The occupation of the site began in the Flavian period, while pottery and a coin found in 1937 carry it up to the beginning of the fourth century.

¹ *D.A.J.*, n.s. vi, 102.

² *D.A.J.* xxxii, 125, where a section and a drawing are given.

³ *Reliquary*, 1904, 54.

8. *Harborough Rocks*, one mile north-east of Brassington, is a cave and village site, where Derbyshire ware was found in 1890 and 1907; the only datable material has

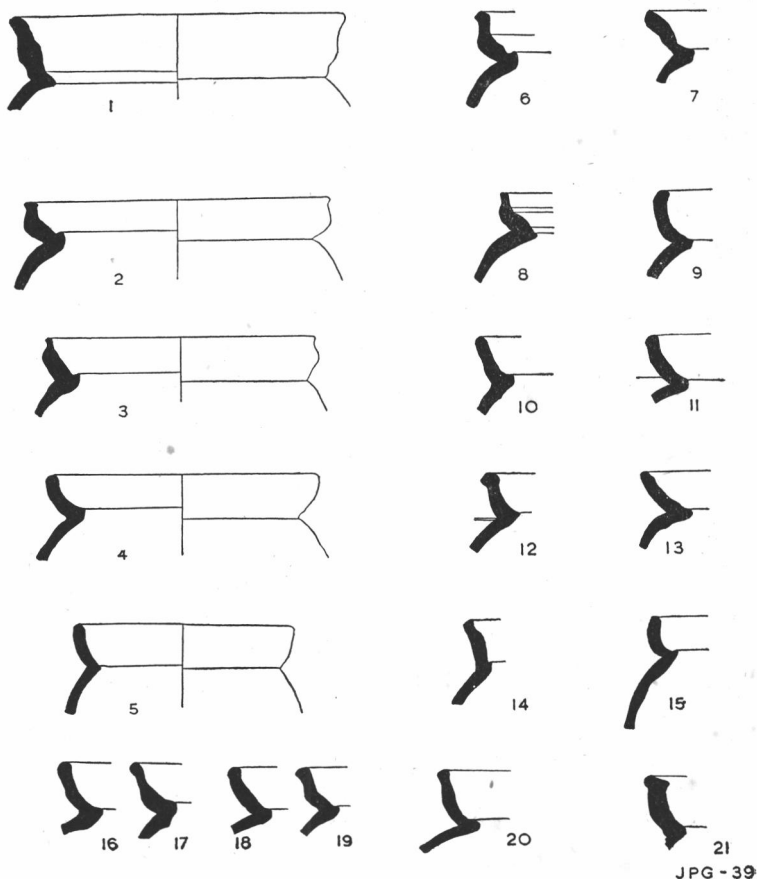


FIG. 3. Derbyshire ware from Deepdale Cave (4).

been assigned to the end of the first century and the beginning of the second.¹

9. *Rain's Cave, Longcliffe*, is a mile north of Brassington; some Derbyshire ware was found there towards the

¹ *D.A.J.* xxxii, 125 and cf. xii, 108 and xxxi, 97.

end of the nineteenth century, but otherwise the cave has produced no Roman material.¹

10. *Old Woman's House* is a cave in Taddington Dale, one mile east of Taddington, where Derbyshire ware was found in 1909; the associated finds included brooches assigned to the first and second centuries.²

11. *Ravencliffe Cave* is in Cressbrook Dale, a few miles north of Taddington. Derbyshire ware was found there

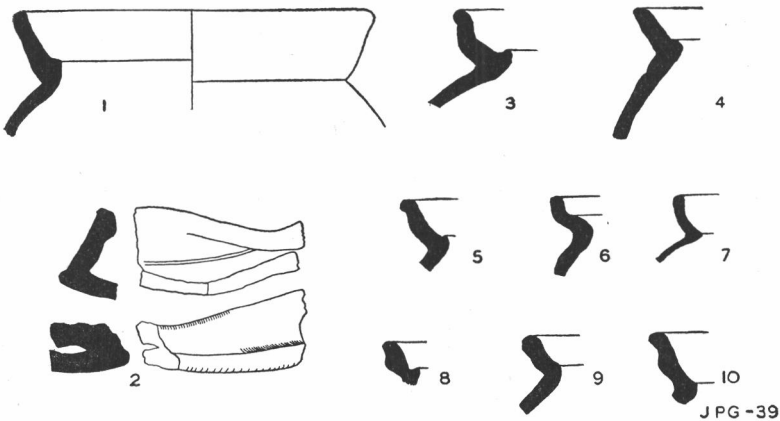


FIG. 4. Derbyshire ware from Brough (no. 8), Duffield (nos. 2, 7), Robin Hood's Stride (no. 3—6, 9, 10) and Silverlands (no. 1) (½).

between 1902 and 1908; the dating evidence here too provided only by brooches, suggested the latter part of the second century.³

12. *Bewcastle* is an outpost fort of Hadrian's Wall, north of Birdoswald in Cumberland; Mr. Charlton reports that there are pieces of Derbyshire ware included among the medieval pottery from the excavations at Bewcastle in 1937, which was sent to him for examination; there is no record of its stratification, but the site was occupied from the time of Hadrian until A.D. 367.

¹ *Ibid.*, xi, 31; xiv, 228; and xv, 161.

² *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 115.

³ *D.A.J.* xxxii, 141; xxxiv, 55; and n.s. iii, 71.

13. The Derbyshire ware from *Housesteads* on Hadrian's Wall comes from the settlement outside the fort; one vessel, illustrated by Mr. Charlton in the note already referred to,¹ comes from a sealed deposit assignable within a year or two to A.D. 300, while there are several unstratified examples.

14. *Chesterholm* was a fort *per lineam Valli*, though a mile south of Hadrian's Wall; its periods of occupation were approximately A.D. 80-120 and A.D. 160-400; some pieces of Derbyshire ware from that fort, not yet published, have been communicated to me by Mr. Eric Birley.

15. *Corbridge*, Northumberland, was occupied from the Flavian period to the end of the fourth century, with a break of a few years in the time of Hadrian; a fair amount of Derbyshire ware has been found there, but none of it in stratified deposits.

16. *Watercrock*, near Kendal, in Westmorland, was occupied at least from the time of Hadrian to A.D. 367²; Mr. Charlton has figured a rim fragment from Watercrock.

17. *Slack* in Yorkshire has road-connexions with the forts in Derbyshire; a piece of Derbyshire ware found there in 1921 is described in the report³ as 'perhaps a stray fragment of early medieval pottery, as it closely resembles in fabric examples of that period found at Ilkley in 1919.' The occupation of Slack lasted from the Flavian period to the time of Hadrian or Pius, but Mr. Birley points out to me that there are also one or two pieces of pottery certainly assignable to the beginning of the fourth century included in the collection of pottery from Slack in the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield.

18. *Ilkley* has produced four fragments of Derbyshire ware⁴; the site can be shown to have been occupied from the Flavian period until the close of the fourth century.

¹ *Ibid.*, n.s. vi, 102.

² *Cumb. and Westm. Trans.*, n.s. xxxiv, 38.

³ *Y.A.J.* xxvi, 64; cf. pl. xxxiii, 40.

⁴ *Ibid.* xxviii, pl. xxxiii, fig. 42, no. 5, and pl. xxxiv, fig. 28.

19. *Stancil*, near Doncaster in the West Riding of Yorkshire, is the site of a villa recently discovered and excavated by Professor C. E. Whiting, F.S.A.; occupation there seems to have begun, and to have been most intensive, in the third century, but continued into the fourth. Among the pottery found there during excavations in 1939 was some Derbyshire ware.

20. A fragment from Templebrough is illustrated in May's book on that site,¹ where, however, the reconstruction suggested makes the vessel far too squat. The site was occupied intermittently, from Flavian times or earlier, until the close of the fourth century.

21. *Margidunum* in Nottinghamshire has produced a large number of fragments; two of them are illustrated by Dr. F. Oswald, F.S.A., in his account of the third-century well which he excavated there.² The larger piece was found at a depth of three feet, with coins of Carausius and Tetricus and late-third-century pottery; the other came from the bottom of the well, whose life was estimated by Dr. Oswald at eighty years, *circa* A.D. 220-300; the type is described as 'not infrequent in the late layer at Margidunum.'

The distribution of this ware, in large quantities in the villages and caves of Derbyshire, and outside Derbyshire on military sites, seems to justify looking in Derbyshire for its place of manufacture. Two sites have been suggested for its manufacture or distribution: distorted fragments have been found at Robin Hood's Stride and at Duffield. The great quantity of 'wasters' from Duffield, its position near a road junction, and the presence there of suitable clay, combine to suggest that it was the source of Derbyshire ware, though no kilns have been found there as yet. As for Robin Hood's Stride, the poor quality of the objects found there suggests that it is not

¹ *The Roman Forts at Templebrough*, p. 114, no. 212, and pl. xxxiii A.

² *J.R.S.* xvi, 40 and pl. vi, 21 d and 32.

'wasters' but 'seconds,' purchased cheaply by people unable to pay for better cooking-pots, that are represented by the distorted fragments in question. One 'waster' from Duffield is illustrated as fig. 4, no. 2.

The review of site-datings suggests the latter part of the third century and the beginning of the fourth for the production of Derbyshire ware. Professor Collingwood, indeed, suggested a much wider dating, from the time of Claudius till the fourth century; but his earlier limit depends merely on the occurrence in a Claudian well at Margidunum of a jar with a somewhat similar rim-section. That jar, however, does not resemble Derbyshire ware in any other particular, except for the narrowness of its base; it has a sharp, angular junction of the shoulder with the body, and has flutings both on the shoulder and on the body right down to the base; the rim, also, is as wide as the vessel is high.¹ The idea that the ware was produced in the late first and second centuries is tenable in view of its discovery at Buxton, Slack, Ilkley and Templebrough, but in no case has it been found stratified in association with pottery of earlier than late-third-century date. Hence it is more likely to indicate a later rather than an early occupation, in spite of its occurrence with exclusively early wares. It has been found so often in association with late-third-century coins in Derbyshire that the absence of finds of this period in some of the caves, which in some cases have produced very little datable material of any kind, is no obstacle to the dating suggested above.

The ware is not explicitly described in some of the reports to which reference has been made, but it may be seen in the collections of objects from the sites in question in various museums or private collections; the pieces from Harborough, Old Woman's House, and Ravencliffe Cave are in the British Museum; some pieces from

¹ *J.R.S.* xiii, 121, and pls. x, 1, and xiii, 1.

Harborough are in the possession of Mr. J. P. Heathcote, of Birchover Post Office; the finds from Robin Hood's Stride are partly in the possession of Mr. Heathcote, and partly in the collection of Major Hillyard, of St. Anselm's, Bakewell. The pieces from the bath-house at Little Chester are in Derby School, and those from the civil settlement are in the Derby Museum; those from Deepdale Cave and Silverlands are in the Buxton Museum; those from Templebrough are in Rotherham Museum. The material from Duffield is partly in Derby Museum, and partly in the collections of Mr. C. E. Stephenson and Mr. A. P. Westnidge, Duffield; and the stratified example from Housesteads may be seen in the Housesteads Museum.