

LITTLE CHESTER, DERBY: THE 1926 EXCAVATIONS

By M. BRASSINGTON

INTRODUCTION

The largest archaeological excavation ever to take place at Little Chester occurred during the late summer and autumn of 1926 (Knight, 1927); its results were, however, never published. The following represents an attempt to prevent the disappearance from memory of an enterprise, the object of which was to generate an interest in local history and further the study of Roman Britain. The project was beset with problems. Even by the standards of the day, the methods of excavation used were primitive, since the workforce consisted of navvies who were mystified by the whole procedure, and resentful of a divisive manoeuvre concerning pay. However, many interesting and significant discoveries were made; and this more detailed account of the 1926 excavations complements other recent publications (e.g. Brassington, 1981; Birss and Wheeler, 1985: fig. 2). (Italicised text indicates, where appropriate, the current state of research.)

THE EXCAVATIONS

The excavation was mainly at the instigation of Charles Bakewell Sherwin, a senior assistant to



Plate 1 Little Chester, 1926: Charles Bakewell Sherwin (1878-1950).

the Borough Surveyor (Plate 1). It was Sherwin who had recognised that the foundation of the building found on the Derby School playing-field in 1924 was of Roman construction (Brassington, 1982). He quickly realised that further discoveries of a similar nature would probably be made when the public works planned to take place in the vicinity of Little Chester commenced.

These discoveries apparently began when a valve was inserted in the water main at the junction of Rectory Lane and Moor Road in Breadsall village. The following extract was printed in the *Derbyshire Advertiser* of 28 August 1926:

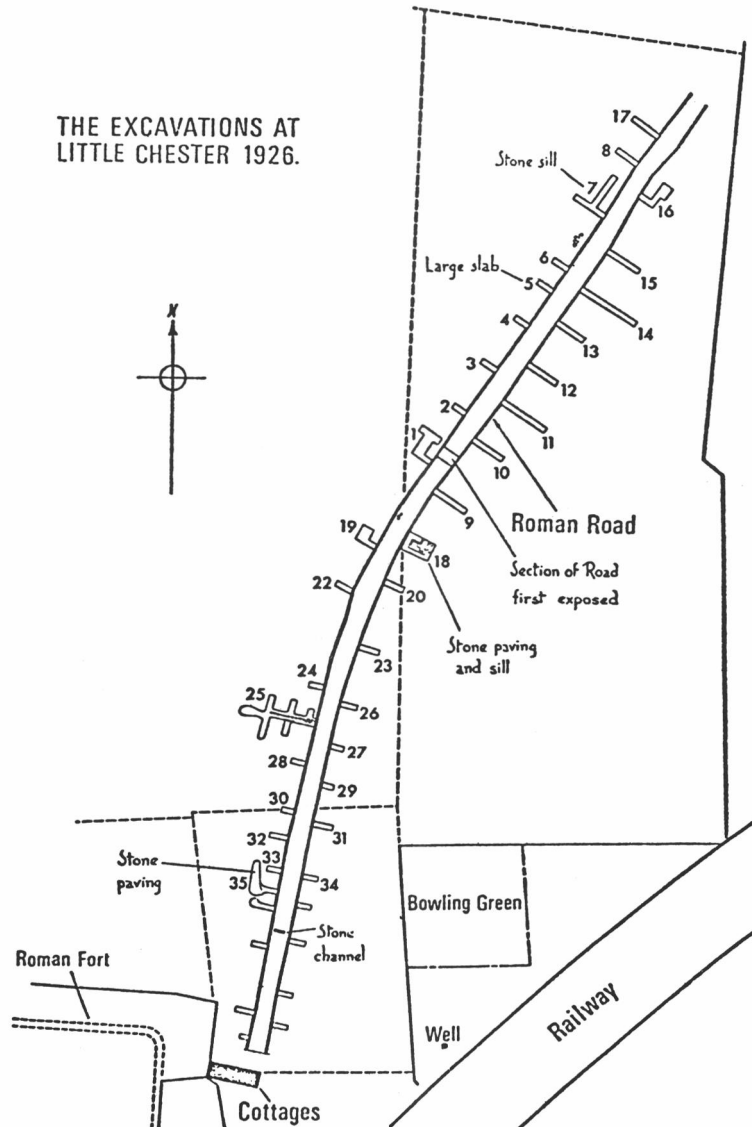


Fig. 1 Little Chester, 1926: Rykniel Street (Sherwin's plan).

The Derby Borough Surveyor (Mr. C. A. Clews) has recently fixed a large automatic water valve at Breadsall, just below the church, on the greensward in the centre of three roads. In excavating for this valve he came across the remains of what is undoubtedly a Roman road, being a continuation of Rykneld St., which runs immediately to the north-west of the church. The road is composed of about two feet of large quartzite boulders, lying directly upon the natural clay, and on top of these boulders a layer of gritstone, about nine inches thick, covered in ordinary gravel.

On 25 July 1967, some forty-one years after it was installed, the valve was removed; this enabled the strata to be re-examined. The earlier identification of these layers as a Roman road was found to be not entirely convincing. However, whatever its origins, the site must be very close to Rykneld Street. On the basis of this discovery, Sherwin assumed that the Roman road ran down to the corner of Breadsall Wood, close to the junction of Croft Lane and Alfreton Road, and from that point took a straight line directly to the Roman fort at Little Chester (cf. Brassington, 1981: fig. 3).

Rykneld Street was indeed encountered again to the north of Little Chester by council workmen who were levelling 48 acres of farmland to create a recreation ground. Sherwin and others urged that the opportunity to make more discoveries should not be missed. A scheme was devised that would achieve this object and at the same time alleviate unemployment. To forestall criticism that the scheme would be an unnecessary expense in a time of economic depression it was pointed out that money being paid, without return, to the unemployed could be used as wages for those same men if they were employed on the excavations; no cost would fall on the town and a great amount of knowledge could be gained. The work was to be carried out under the direction of the Borough Surveyor, and Sherwin was appointed to supervise the work in the field.

At the point where Rykneld Street was discovered in the playing-fields, Sherwin cut a three foot wide trench across it (Fig. 1). He described its construction in an article published in the *Derby Mercury* of 3 September 1926:

The road was faced with a bed of gravel some 12 inches deep on a thick bed of hand pitching consisting of large boulders of gritstone which must have been brought from the Little Eaton district. Beneath the pitching was another layer of hard gravel mostly of cement which causes it to set something like brown coloured chocolate. (Fig. 2)

Sherwin set his workmen the task of clearing the road of the overlying soil and tracing its course towards Little Chester. The road was eventually totally cleared for a distance of a quarter of a mile (Fig. 1, Plate 2; cf. Birss and Wheeler, 1985: figs 1, 2). Its width varied from twenty to thirty feet, and it appeared to be leading to the north gate of the fort. However, a bend was encountered and the alignment beyond this point suggested that it entered the fort by the east gate (the *porta principalis dextra*). The excavation was terminated about twenty feet from some old cottages near to the north-east corner of the fort (Fig. 1). *These cottages have since been demolished and it is now known that the road does not enter the fort but turns in a southerly direction to run parallel to the defences. This section of the road now lies in an eastern extension to the nursery garden.*

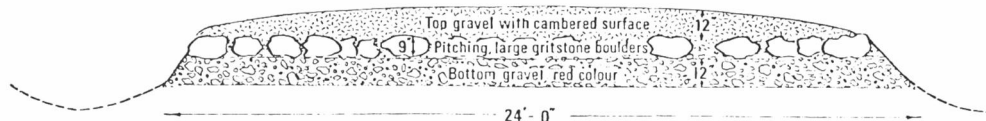


Fig. 2 Little Chester, 1926: Rykneld Street, section.



Plate 2. Little Chester, 1926: Ryknield Street, general view of the excavations.

The visit of R. G. Collingwood

R. G. Collingwood, at that time a leading authority on Roman Britain, made a visit to Little Chester and viewed the excavations. He examined the site in detail, including the Roman well situated in the front garden of the vicarage. *This well had been found by the Rev. Samuel Brasher in 1874, and remained open until filled in by the Rev. W. N. Hull soon after he moved into the new vicarage in 1963. It was re-opened in April 1981 for well-dressing purposes. It is not to be confused with the well which was discovered in 1929 in the former vicarage vegetable garden (cf. Brassington, 1969).*

Collingwood also inspected the dressed stones incorporated in farm walls. He thought that many of these were re-used Roman stones, and considered that they may have derived from large and handsome buildings in the area. Many of these stones were removed when Manor House Farm was demolished in 1964, but others remain forming a retaining wall at the northern boundary of the hard tennis courts. Recent excavations at the site have confirmed Collingwood's hypothesis. Collingwood found the pottery to be of great interest for there were two types he had not encountered before (Collingwood and Taylor, 1926). The first had a hard pimple fabric (now known as Derbyshire ware) which he correctly assumed to be a local product. The second was calcite ware of a soapy texture, which but for its association he would have confidently described as pre-Roman.

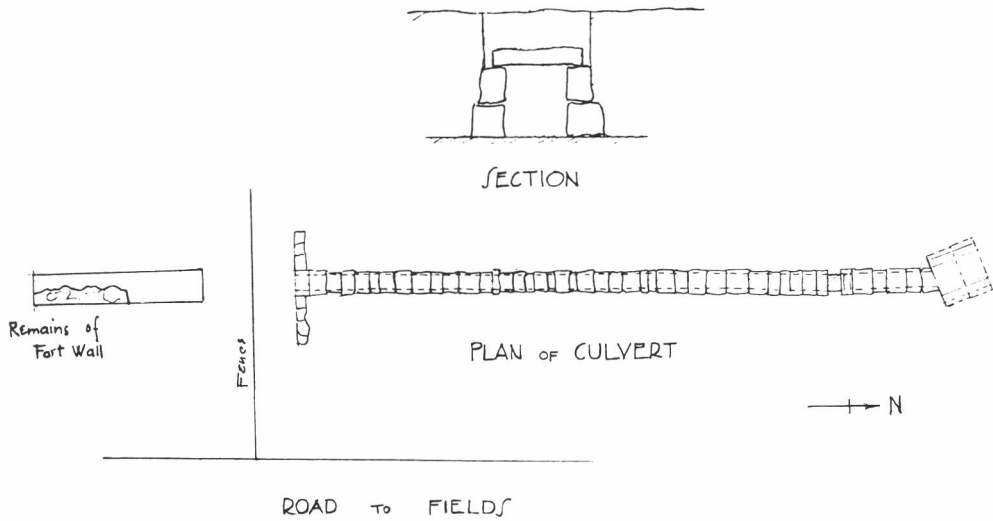


Fig. 3 Little Chester, 1926: culvert, plan and section (Sherwin's plan).



Plate. 3. Little Chester, 1926: culvert.

The culvert

At the same time as they located Ryknield Street, the council workmen also discovered a large stone culvert some ninety feet long, running parallel to the river (Figs 3, 5; Plate 3). *It now lies buried a few feet to the west of the path leading across the Park, adjacent to the east boundary of the tennis courts.* It comprised two lines of roughly worked gritstone blocks, two courses deep and some two feet apart, bridged over with slabs three feet long, one and a half feet wide and six inches thick, some showing signs of re-use. At the northern end was a massive stone-built sump, set twenty degrees askew to the culvert, and roofed over by two large gritstone slabs lying side-by-side, each over seven feet long and ten inches thick with a total width (for the two) of six feet. The fall of the culvert was southwards, where it emptied into a defensive ditch surrounding the fort. Collingwood was greatly puzzled by this culvert, as he knew of any number of Roman culverts similar in construction, but not one that drained into a defensive ditch; for it was not the practice of the Romans to fill these ditches with water.

In December 1926 a trench was dug on the site of the fort wall to the south of the culvert (Fig. 5). The rough stonework of the wall-core was discovered at a depth of three feet, and its northern edge was found to be 21' 6" from the southern end of the culvert.

The south wall of the fort

Trenches were dug in the north-east corner of the Derby School playing field, immediately to the south of 102 City Road, on a site adjacent to the assumed position of the south gate (the *porta praetoria*; cf. Birss and Wheeler, 1985: fig. 2). No stonework of the defensive wall remained, presumably the result of stone-robbing in the eighteenth century. At the suggestion of



Plate 4 Little Chester, 1926: site of the south wall of the fort, looking west.

Collingwood, another trench was dug at right angles to the site of the wall to ascertain the position of the defensive ditch. No plans of this excavation survive, if indeed any were ever made; the only existing record is a single photograph and that a general view taken from City Road (Plate 4). A coin of Trajan was found in the area (Knight, 1927).

The visit of Donald Atkinson

Donald Atkinson visited the site on Saturday, 13 September 1926. He was then Reader in Ancient History at the University of Manchester, and the superintendent of excavations at Wroxeter. The following is a letter, dated 16 September 1926, addressed to Clews, which was published in the Derby *Daily Telegraph* of 21 September 1926, and in which Atkinson refers to the 'hypocaust' building discovered in 1924 on the Derby School playing-field (Brassington, 1982; cf. Birss and Wheeler, 1985: fig. 1):

It seems to me most desirable that the Hypocaust building should be further examined. Its position relative to the enclosure (i.e. the fort: MB) suggests that if this is military — as its plan and dimensions rather suggest — that it may at some time have been the baths which form a usual adjunct to the forts both in Britain and Abroad. If this were the case it would be a matter of great interest to ascertain its plan and the period during which it was occupied.

There is however another possibility. At other sites on main Roman roads, such as at Mancetta [*sic*] on the Watling Street [and] Margidumun [*sic*] near Newark on the Foss Way are similar rectangular enclosures. In the case of Mancetta its position in the country make it very probable what has actually been proved by excavation at Margidumun — namely, that these places were military posts during the early years of the Roman occupation and later became small civil settlements connected no doubt with the Government Posting system. It would be well worth while trying to find evidence pointing in the same direction in the case of the Derby site. The first operation for such a purpose would naturally be a section or a series of sections across the ditch if such really exists round the enclosure. Its profile alone might provide a valuable clue and dateable material might quite well be found in it — as has been the case at Margidumun and numerous forts in the North of England.

In any case it would be a definite and valuable addition to our knowledge of Roman Britain if the period and nature of the occupation of the enclosure could be found out — it would largely alter common conceptions of the completeness of the conquest if a military force continued to garrison the place till the end of the second century A.D.

It seems to me clear that investigations of the enclosure or of the hypocaust building which must have a close connection with it should with good fortune lead to results of considerable interest.

The section of the road north of the enclosure seems to me unusually interesting and well preserved, and if at any rate a well preserved piece of it could be left exposed it would be very useful. Such things are not easily accessible as [*sic*: MB] the site of a good specimen such as this would be most helpful to anyone who proposed to investigate Roman Roads in other parts of the country. The indications of occupation on both sides of the road should also certainly be followed up if possible.

The shallowness of the surface soil makes that comparatively easy and as considerable buildings are unlikely outside the enclosure on the north the shallowness has not the disadvantages here which sometime attach to it. What the character of the occupation was seems to me still uncertain but further work should solve the problem, and if as the position suggests a part of the site was occupied by a cemetery the historical value of the discoveries which would follow its uncovering might be very considerable throwing light on the history of the site itself, and by providing associated finds increasing our equipment for dealing with historical problems in other places.

You will forgive this effusion of an enthusiast who is perhaps inclined to over emphasise the importance of the studies in which he is interested, but if these studies have a value there is a fair chance of their being furthered by investigations such as you have begun to make and I very much hope you will find it possible to continue them.

I need not say that if I can give you any help at any time I shall only be very glad to do so.

Civilian occupation

Following Atkinson's suggestion that the traces of occupation alongside the road should be further examined, Sherwin cut a series of trenches, forty-two in number, on either side and at right angles to the excavated portion of Rykniel Street (Fig. 1; Plate 2). *Note that there is no Trench 21.* The remains of buildings were found but, according to Sherwin, they proved to be of the 'humble kind and devoid of architectural features'. Only brief descriptions of the finds from the first twenty of these exploratory trenches were entered in his notebook, and these are unsatisfactory, for only two or three of the items can now be identified with certainty. The following is an expanded transcription of these notes:

- Section 1: Near to the first trench (section) opened out, where portions of three vases were found. A complete vase found under a stone. What appears to be a baker's hearth with very red earth and charcoal. Two coins.
- Sections 2-4: Pottery only.
- Section 5: A large stone slab 44" x 32" x 5" found at a depth of about 12" below ground level and set at right-angles to the road.
- Section 6: Pottery only.
- Section 7: A decorated samian bowl (Dr. 37) three-quarters complete (Fig. 6:13). Portions of two vases, half complete. A coin and a brooch found, also the neck and handle of a 'red bottle' (Oxfordshire ware jug?: MB). Stone sill as Section 18.
- Section 8: Pottery and a brooch.
- Section 9: An iron spear head, a coin and some pottery.
- Sections 10-12: Pottery only.
- Section 13: Skull; large stones mingled with pottery.
- Section 14: A brooch, a coin, some pottery and two millstones, each 21" in diameter.
- Section 15: Pottery only.
- Section 16: A red pot practically complete and three parts of a black pot. Three coins.
- Section 17: Pottery only.
- Section 18: Paved area with stone sills (Fig. 4, Plate 5). Three coins, a brooch, pottery and links of chain.
- Section 19: Mortarium with potter's mark (G. ATTIVS MARINVS): AD 100-130. Two millstones 18" and 19" in diameter, a fragment of another 36" in diameter. Small pot containing a coin. Two coins.
- Section 20: Pottery only.

The 'baker's shop'

At Section 18 a paved floor was encountered and an area around it cleared, revealing the foundation of a building (Plate 5). Sherwin's dimensioned sketch and a surviving photograph have enabled the plan of this building to be recovered (Fig. 4). The rebates cut in the stone sills (section A-A) are no doubt the seating for wooden shutters and indicate that the building was probably a shop which opened onto the street. Rejected quern stones found in the vicinity, and also used as paving for the floor, obviously suggest milling activity and that the likely function of the building was that of a baker's shop selling grain, flour and bread.

Trench material

The material recovered from thirty-five of the trenches was placed in separate bags, each labelled with the appropriate trench number. A further eight trenches, however, remained unnumbered,

and the material from these was mixed together in a single bag. The whole of the material, from all forty-two trenches, was deposited in the Derby Museum. Later, when the material was sorted, only the most 'interesting' pieces were retained and placed on display. No trench number was recorded on any sherd.

Coins

Coins were treated differently, and the workmen were instructed to place any found in a jar of weak acid (vinegar?: MB). Evidently not all of them did so: many coins and artefacts must have been exchanged in public bars for the price of a drink. *In 1951, Mr Lakin, a publican, who at the time of the excavations kept the Pelican Inn, Abbey Street, donated to the Derby Museum a complete Derbyshire ware jar. He had redeemed it for fifty shillings after one of his customers, a labourer working on the site, had pawned it for beer money. A coin of Victorinus (AD 269-71), said to have been found in this jar, was handed in some three years later.*

On 17 November 1926, Sherwin passed forty-nine coins to the Rev. A. Clifton Knight, headmaster of Derby School, who published them, amongst others, in this journal (Knight, 1927). The coins found along Rykniel Street and in the immediate vicinity of the Little Chester fort appear to have run from the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96) to that of Gratian (AD 367- 83).

The principia

Within the fort Sherwin had two long trenches dug (Fig. 5). The one to the east ran parallel to and six feet to the west of the eastern boundary of the present car park; *it is now represented by a row of iron stanchions* (Brassington, 1967: 41, fig. 2). It uncovered a number of stone footings



Plate 5 Little Chester, 1926: Rykniel Street, Section 18, foundations of the 'baker's shop'.

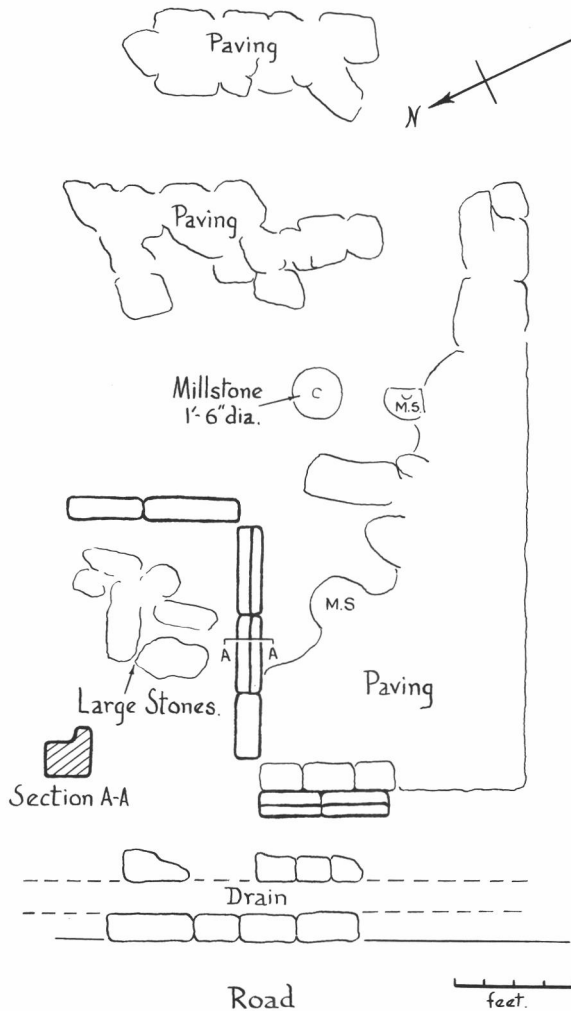


Fig. 4 Little Chester, 1926: Section 18, 'baker's shop', plan.

which, from Sherwin's notes, can be interpreted as follows. A three foot thick wall nearest to and parallel with Old Chester Road (Fig. 5:1) could represent the outer wall of the headquarters building (the *principia*), and the gravel to the north of it the metalling of the courtyard. If this is so, the next three foot thick wall (Fig. 5:2) could be that of the cross-hall. Further north, the ten foot wide masonry (Fig. 5:3) was probably the remains of the tribunal, the dais in the cross-hall from which the commanding officer addressed the assembled troops. At this point Sherwin's trench turned north-north-west under what are now tennis courts; the next wall encountered probably formed the rear wall of the *principia* (Fig. 5:4). Beyond this building were two areas of gravel, presumably the metalling of roads (the *via quintana* and the *via decumana*), across which the trench cut obliquely.

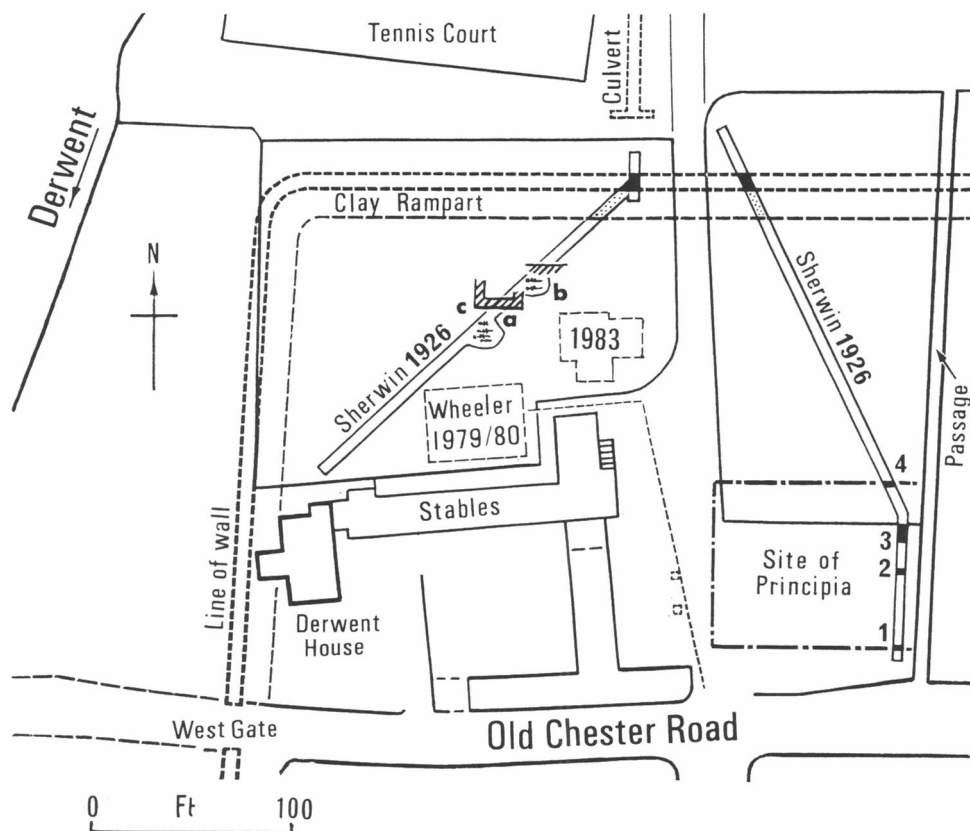


Fig. 5 Little Chester, 1926: trenching within the fort.

The post-Roman cemetery

Sherwin's second trench commenced on the site of the north wall, immediately south of the culvert. It was 3' 6" wide and ran in a south-westerly direction diagonally across what was until recently a tree nursery, towards Derwent House. A note in this journal (Clews, 1927) gives the information that:

five human skeletons were discovered. They lay about 2 ft 6 ins below the present surface of the ground inside the camp and close to the west wall. All showed signs of regular burial and all were placed with the feet to the east . . .

Clews had written to Collingwood and Atkinson regarding the skeletons found in the north-west quarter of the fort. They both suggested that the bones be sent to Sir Arthur Keith of the Royal College of Surgeons. This was arranged, and on 28 September 1927 Keith replied to Clews, identifying the remains as those of '3 men, 1 woman and a child of 6 years', and stating that he was 'convinced these people were buried at a post-Roman date — sometime between the 5th cent. A.D. and 13th century'.

From Sherwin's notes and photographs it is evident that six skeletons were uncovered, closer to the northern wall than the western. They had not been buried in coffins. A man, a crippled woman and a child some six years old had been buried side-by-side in close proximity to a stone

footing (Fig. 5:c). Only the lower half of the child remained, and two feet to the north lay the upper portion of a fourth skeleton (Fig. 5:a). Twenty-eight feet to the north-east, also close to a stone footing, lay two adult males interred side-by-side (Fig. 5:b). The bodies had been laid directly in the earth, the arms of the adults folded across their chests. No grave goods were found which, together with the orientation, suggest Christian burial, certainly post-Roman and probably medieval.

The interment of a family group may suggest the dead were victims of an epidemic. Although there is no documentary or archaeological evidence that a church was ever established at Little Chester, an extensive cemetery certainly existed in this north-west quarter of the fort. There were at one time seven prebendal farms within the township of Little Chester and this ecclesiastical connection may have been sufficient for burials to be made there during a visitation of the plague. Human bones have been found in this area since the eighteenth century. In the 1950s when the stables, which were being utilised as changing rooms, were re-floored, burials were encountered, and in December 1969 others were unearthed during tree planting. In 1982-3 a community centre was built on part of this site.

As noted above, Sherwin partly uncovered the stone foundation of a Roman building orientated east-west (Fig. 5:c), and this was encountered again during the winter of 1979-80 when a series of trenches were cut mechanically to facilitate the planting of trees.

The termination of the excavations

Sherwin apparently ceased digging in December 1926. However, it was on 19 April 1927 that the labourer pawned the Roman jar redeemed by Mr Lakin, which suggests that excavations may have recommenced early in the following year. This new work was certainly on a much reduced scale, and must soon have given way to back-filling. Nothing further was recorded by Sherwin, whose enthusiasm had waned, possibly because everything that he did or wrote was accredited to Clews. This was probably also the reason why no report was produced. Sherwin kept the site plans in his possession for some years, before passing them on to Mr J. W. Allen, who placed them in the care of the Local History Library (BA 913.12719).

Just before he retired, Clews produced his booklet, *Notes on Derby* (1929), in which he made a brief reference to the Little Chester excavations:

Outside the fort to the north, on each side of the Ryknield St., was erected a fairly large settlement, the foundations of the various buildings being of stone. A very curious thing was that this splendidly constructed road, where it ran through the settlement, had been abandoned by subsequent inhabitants and a new road constructed only a few hundred yards away. Fear of ghosts is held to account for this.

This 'new road' can only be the Saxon predecessor of Alfreton Road. Clews could not understand why a well-constructed Roman road was discarded for what would have been little more than a trackway. He mentioned this fact to Sir Arthur Keith in a letter dated 27 September 1927, giving the information that:

Mr. Collingwood's and Mr. Atkinson's explanation of this latter fact, is that the Saxons were so afraid of the ghosts of the Romans, that they kept clear of anything belonging to them, whether they were roads or buildings.

The south wall, the culvert and most of the road were covered over. A man who worked on the excavations remembers that a section of the road was left open as Atkinson had suggested, but this too was eventually reburied. Within a decade the whole episode was virtually forgotten. W. H. Hanbury referred to it and published two photographs in his 'Short history of Derby' (his

contribution to the booklet *Education Week*, Derby 1937). R. W. P. Cockerton, when writing a series of articles on the 'Roman streets of Derbyshire' for the magazine *Derbyshire Countryside*, completely overlooked it. Sherwin reminded him of it and supplied a sketch plan which appeared in the July 1939 edition. Apart from these two publications nothing further was reported.

THE FINDS

The artefacts from the 1926 excavations were deposited in the Derby Museum on 10 January 1927, and given the accession number 1927-39. Some of these finds are now missing. A comparison of the surviving material with a photograph of the finds from the excavation reveals that at least four brooches have been mislaid, or have disintegrated. To make matters worse, other material found later or from other sites has been added to the Little Chester 1926 collection, and given the number 33'27 — a number also assigned to some of the artefacts found in 1926.

Samian ware (Figs 6, 7).

(Nos 1, 15 and 23 are not from the 1926 excavations, but are included here because they derive from the Little Chester area.)

1. Form 29 South Gaulish, c. AD 60-75. (Handed in to the Museum by T. W. Mottram on 28 June 1926, and presumably found in his garden, at 75 Old Chester Road).
2. Form 37 South Gaulish, c. AD 70-90; grape picker O.597, Victory O.808B.
3. Form 29 South Gaulish, c. AD 75-85; wolf with Romulus and Remus O.849.
4. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 120-135; style of the 'D' potter (cf. No. 15).
5. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 120-150; leaf used by Quintilianus and Lactucissa, Stanfield and Simpson, 1958: fig. 28. Rare figure of little lizard.
6. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 120-140; detail of Geminus, Stanfield and Simpson, 1958: fig. 15:8.
7. Form 37 Central Gaulish; leaf similar to that of Paternus, Stanfield and Simpson, 1958: fig. 30:22.
8. Form 37 South Gaulish, c. AD 80-100; grape picker O.597.
9. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 140-180; style of Pugnus. Eagle O.2169, Stanfield and Simpson, 1958: pl. 155, no. 20.
10. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 145-170; style of Cinnamus. Running man O.204.
11. Form 37 Central Gaulish fragment; caryatid O.1207.
12. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 140-170; style of Albucius. Stanfield and Simpson, 1958: pl. 121:11, 13.
13. Form 37 Three quarters of a Central Gaulish bowl from Section 7, adjacent to Rykniel Street. In the style of Cinnamus; c. AD 145-170. In the medalion: panther O.1573D and nude man O.688. Caryatid O.278, draped man O.905 and Venus O.278.
14. Form 37 Central Gaulish; free style bowl.
15. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 120-135; style of the 'D' potter, Stanfield and Simpson, 1958: pl.30:364. (DM.557-15; found at Little Chester in 1895; cf. No. 4)
16. Form 37 Central Gaulish fragment, Antonine; Apollo O.83.
17. Form 37 Central Gaulish, Antonine; putti O.461.
18. Form 37 Central Gaulish, Antonine; similar to the style of Mercator II.
19. Form 37 Central Gaulish fragment, Antonine.

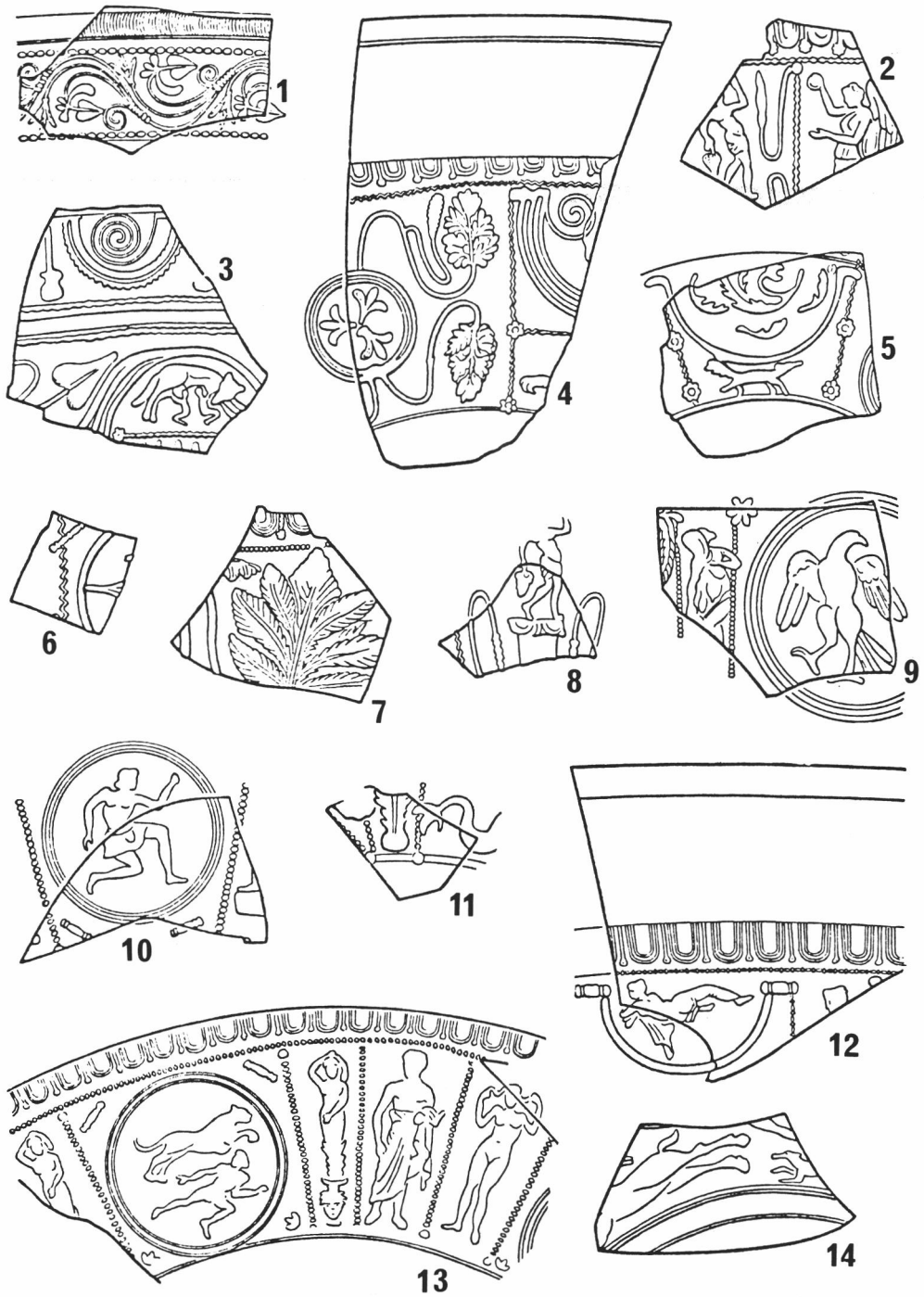


Fig. 6 Little Chester, 1926: samian ware (Nos 1-14). Scale 1:2

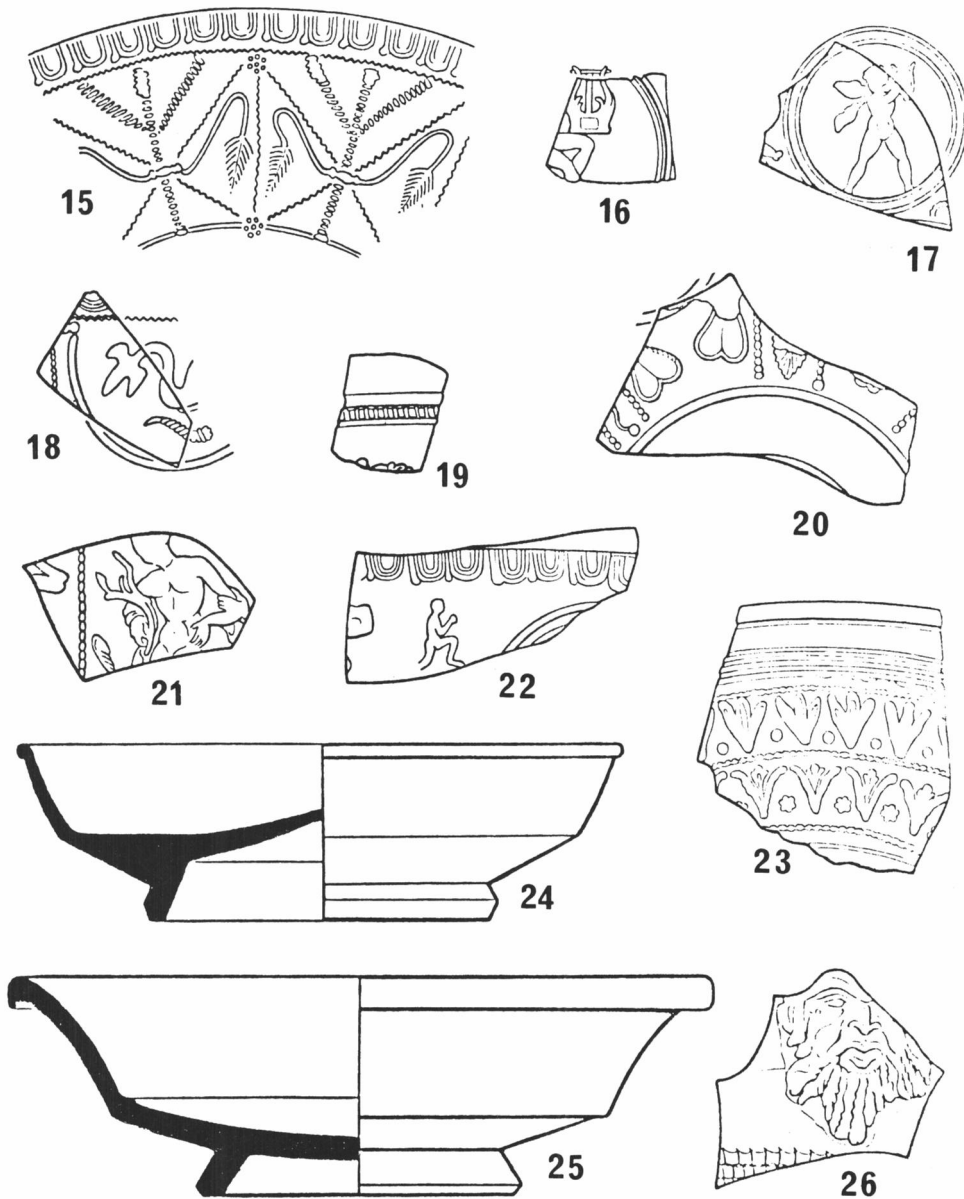


Fig. 7 Little Chester, 1926: samian ware (Nos 15-26). *Scale 1:2*

20. Form 37 Central Gaulish, c. AD 160-180; style of Casurius. Stanfield and Simpson, 1958: pl. 135:35; details fig. 40:6, 9.
21. Form 37 Central Gaulish fragment; Apollo O.93.
22. Form 37 East Gaulish, Rheinzabern, late second century.
23. Form 37 Style of Biragillus (Knorr, 1919: Taf. 16, detail 13). All four details used by Passenus (Knorr, 1919: Taf. 62, details 12 and 29 for the leaves). (Found

- at Little Chester in 1941.)
24. Form 18/31 Dish.
25. Mid-Antonine dish (cf. Curle, 1911: 15).
26. Fragment of a black-coated jar made at Lezoux, with appliqué mask of Silenus. A version of Déchelette's appliqué type 109.

Not illustrated

Three samian bases of form 18/31 that appear on a photograph of finds recovered in 1926. One has a complete potter's stamp which unfortunately cannot be read. The others are half bases with broken stamps. These read COM... (possibly Comprinnus) and VEST...

Coarse ware (Figs 8, 9)

The coarse ware that was excavated by Sherwin ranged in date from the late first to the fourth century. Owing to the haphazard methods used during the excavation and later by the museum, all that now remains of the great mass of material recovered must be regarded as unstratified. Little purpose would now be served by illustrating more than a few pieces. Derbyshire ware was

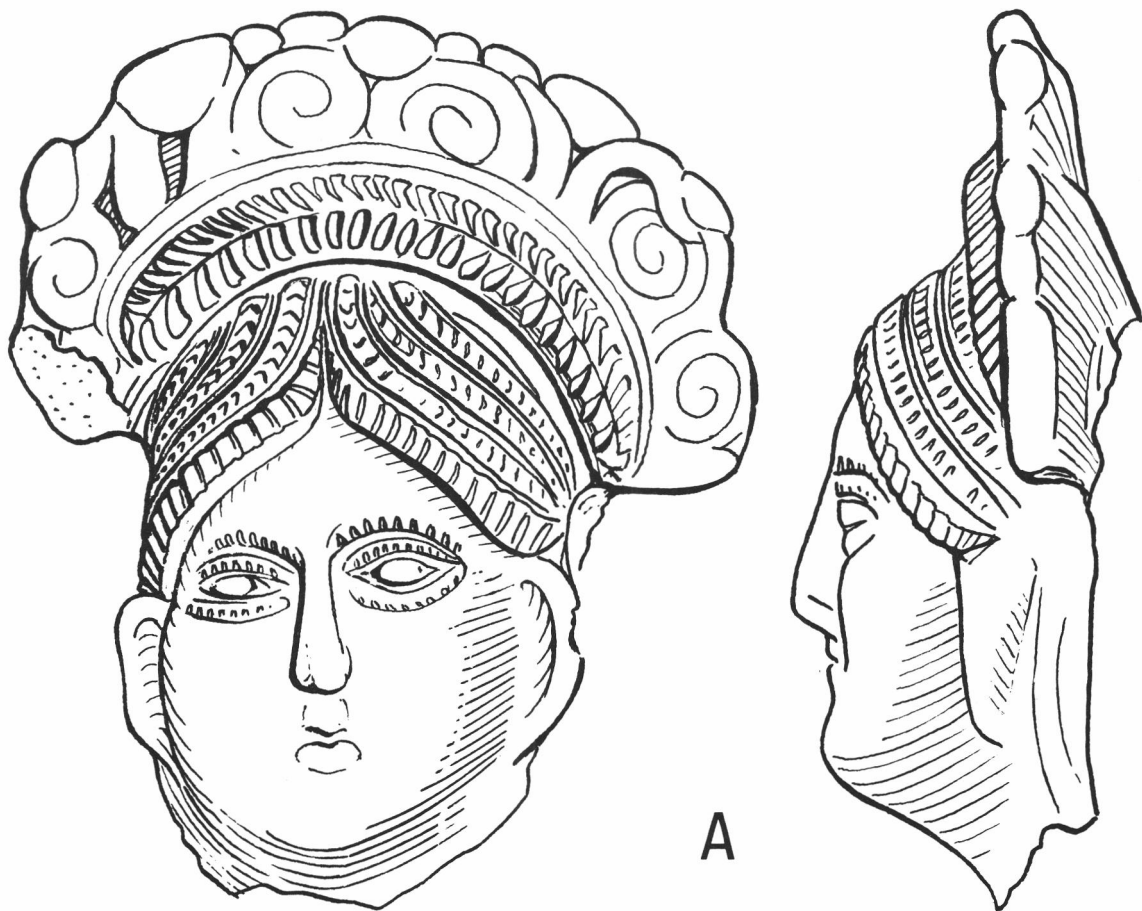


Fig. 8 Little Chester, 1926: modelled flagon spout (A). *Scale 1:2*

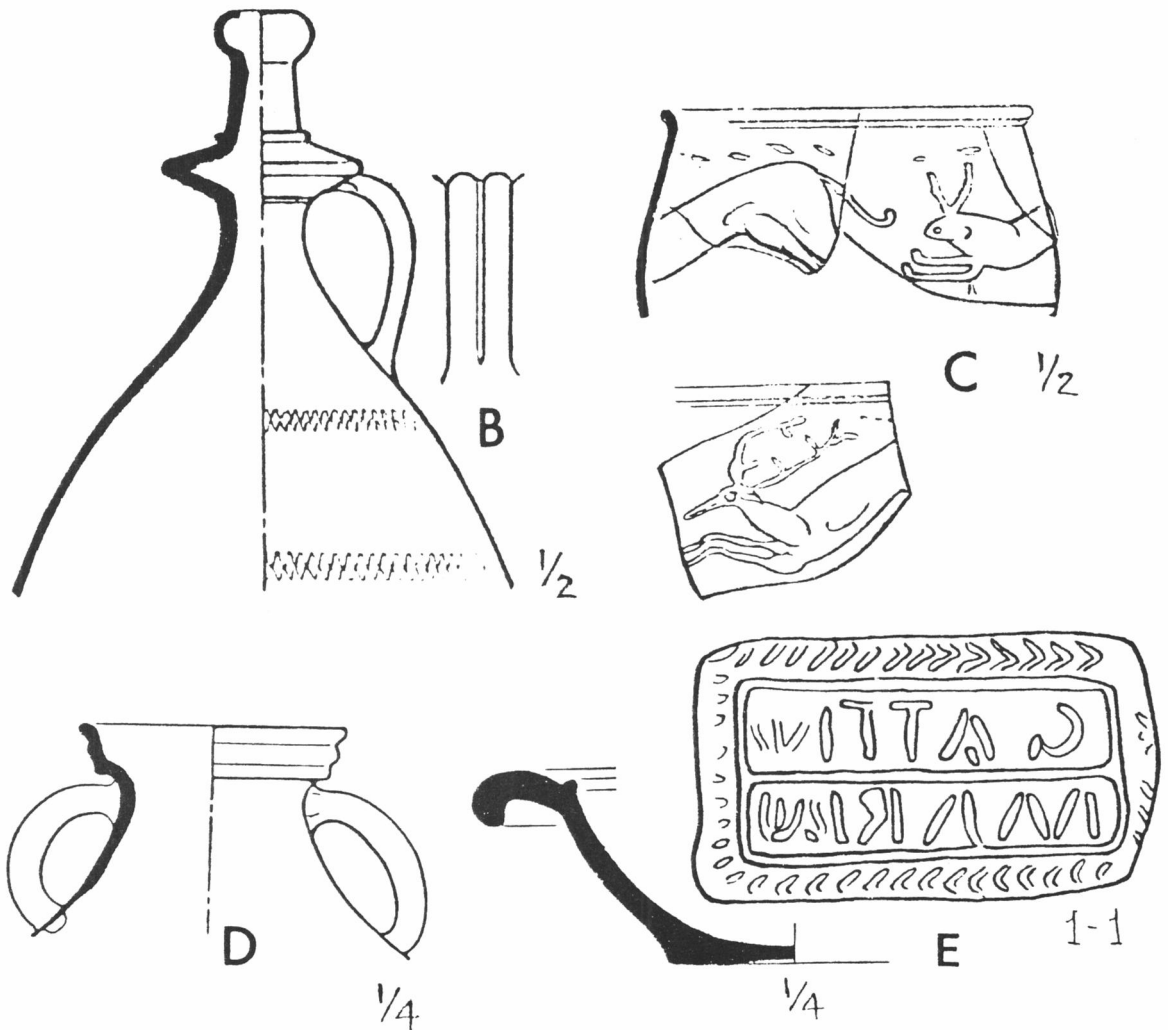


Fig. 9 Little Chester, 1926: coarse ware. Scales various, as indicated

found in quantity, also jars and bowls of the second century. The colour-coated wares of the third and fourth centuries indicate that the occupation of the civil settlement continued to a late date in the Roman period.

- A. Modelled flagon spout, in a discoloured coarse grey fabric, depicting the head of a woman wearing an elaborate 'serpent' headdress. Neither Sherwin nor Hanbury mentions this piece in their notes. Possibly it was already in the museum collection and was not found during the excavations. (Llewellynn Jewitt's 1852 description of the exhibits in the Town and Country Museum (later the Derby Museum) noted 'a finely formed female head with a head covering of peculiar form'.) If the head represents a goddess the vessel may have been used for ritual purposes.
- B. Oxfordshire ware jug with coral coloured slip. Possibly the 'red' bottle from Section 7. Fourth century.

- C. 'Hunt cup'. Brown colour-coated beaker with a cornice rim and barbotine stag and hare decoration, *c.* AD 120-200.
- D. Double-handled jar with lid-seating rim. Soft cream fabric with a pink core. Second century.
- E. Mortarium, 13" (33 cms) in diameter, carrying the stamp of the potter G. Attius Marinus (retrograde). Found in Section 19. Dated to the potter's period of production in the midlands, *c.* AD 100-130 (see Hartley, 1972: 373; and Wheeler, 1985a: fig. 48:1).

Bronze objects (Figs 10, 11)

Of the bronze objects illustrated here, Nos 12-14 are earlier finds from Little Chester, included for the sake of completeness. The remainder are all from the 1926 excavation, with the possible exceptions of Nos 4, 6, 8, 10 and 15, which do not appear on a photograph of the finds taken in 1926. Precisely where on the site any of these objects was found is now unknown.

1. 'Dolphin' type brooch, badly pitted by corrosion, *c.* AD 100-150. The ends of the semi-cylindrical side wings are pierced to accommodate a spindle.
2. Disc brooch with a raised central boss and six plain lugs round the rim. Second century. A similar, but smaller brooch has also been found at Little Chester. Four others have also been found in North Derbyshire, three from Deepdale and one from Poole's Cavern. See Cox, 1891: 197 (cf. Jackson and Ambrose, 1978: fig. 57:6), and Bramwell *et al.*, 1983: fig. 4:9.
3. 'Head-stud' type brooch. The bow has a latticed panel, the lozenge-shaped depressions of which contain a dark blue enamel. The triangular depressions originally held red enamel. The circular sockets at the head and foot are mountings for studs which are now missing. A coiled spring was not utilised; latching was effected when the pin was sprung under tension into the catchplate recess.
4. Ring suspension, presumably one of two from a bronze vessel, possibly an oil jar. The inner profile of the attachment suggests a neck diameter of some 2" (5 cms). (Cf. British Museum, 1908: fig. 98.)
5. A small length of chain from Section 18. Drawn from a photograph.
6. Button and loop fastener with cast decoration; cf. Wild, 1970: fig. 2:VIa-c.
7. Domed stud (now missing). Drawn from a photograph.
8. Folding spoon with a lyre-shaped bowl and cranked hinge mounting. Sherlock (1976: fig. 2) type B4. The missing handle would have been in the shape of the elongated body of a lion or leopard, with the front legs extended forwards, the paws forming the trunions for the cranked hinge. At the rear of the handle there would have been two hinged attachments, one for a knife blade, which folded under the handle like a modern pocket knife, the other presumably for a spike (since the handles on non-folding spoons usually tapered to a point) which in this case folded alongside the blade. These multi-purpose spoons were possibly designed for the convenience of travellers. They are not common; two more-complete examples have been found in third or fourth century contexts at Traprain Law (East Lothian) and Hockwold-cum-Wilton (Norfolk).
9. Spoon-spatula, broken at one end. Used for mixing and spreading pigments.
10. Terret ring of bronze, slightly smaller than is usual. The projecting decorative studs are of bronze and the type is a copy of an earlier Celtic form where these studs were filled with enamel. Cf. Robertson, 1964: pl. 12; Curle, 1911: pl. lxxv:2; Hawkes and Hull,

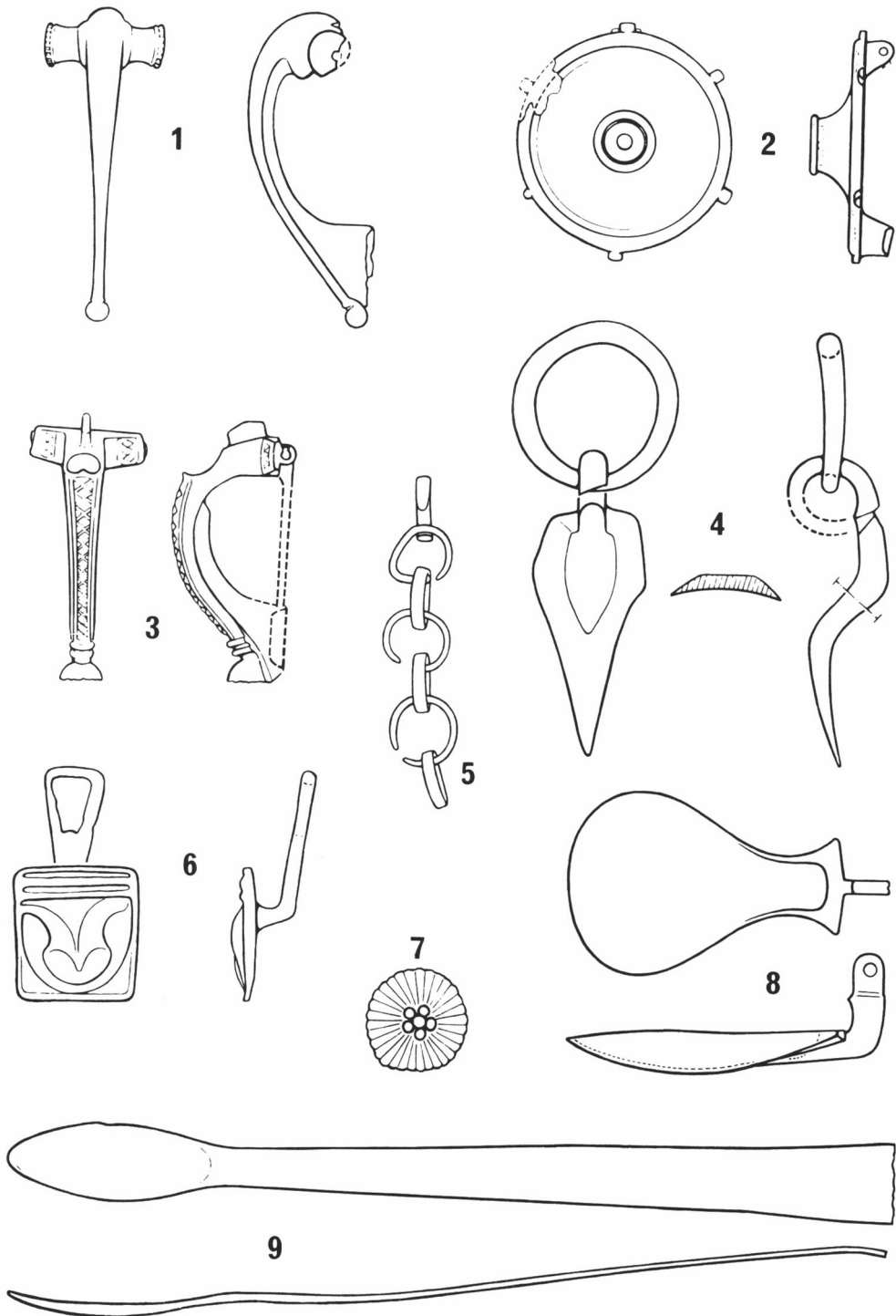


Fig. 10 Little Chester, 1926: bronze small finds (Nos 1-9). Scale 1:1

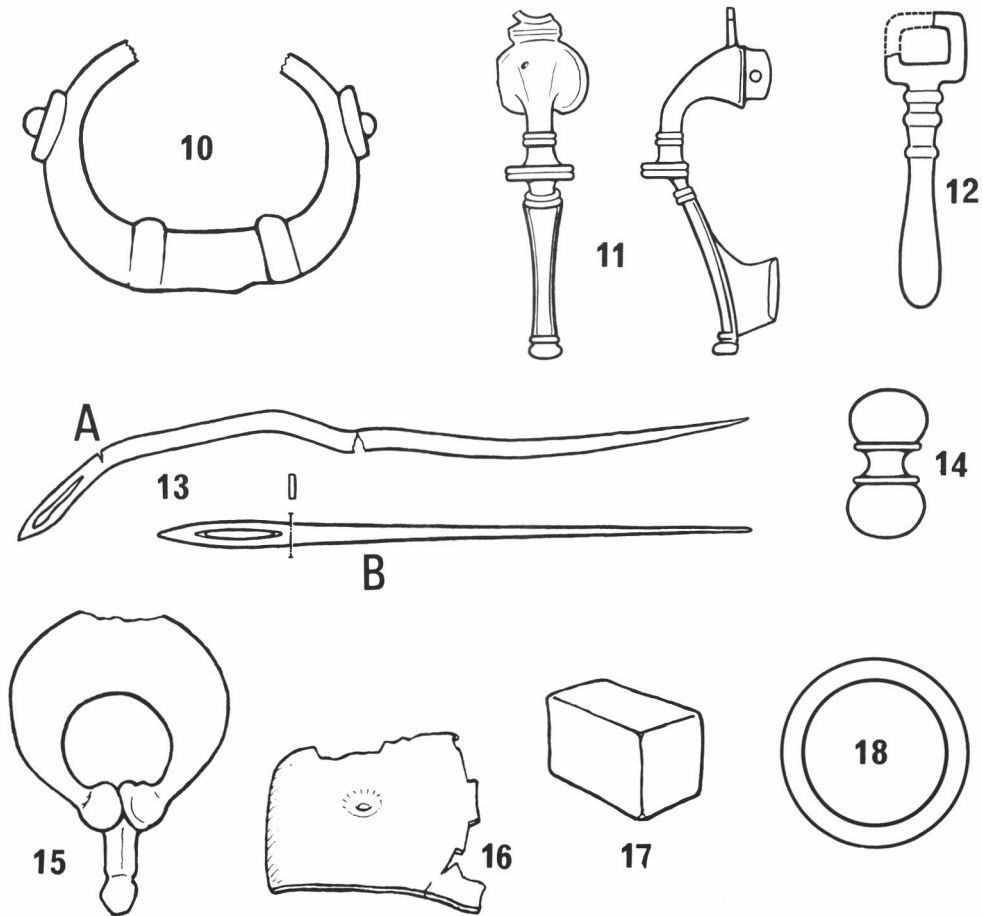


Fig. 11 Little Chester, 1926: bronze small finds (Nos 10-17); bone ring (No. 18). *Scale 1:1*

- 1947: pl. xcix:3 — an earlier type with enamel; and Birley, 1970: fig. 1:8.
11. Trumpet type brooch. The spindle survives but the pin is missing. Only the lower portion of the cast head-loop remains. This brooch is grouped with the material excavated in 1926-7 but the number 18-1929 painted in white on the catch plate is not a Derby Museum accession number and the brooch may not be from Little Chester. Nos 12-14 are redrawn from the mid-nineteenth century manuscript notes by Llewellynn Jewitt, which are lodged in the Derby Local History Library.
12. Strap-end. Cf. Simpson, 1909: fig. 16:9; a similar fitting was found in grave 220 on the Derby racecourse: Wheeler, 1985b: figs 120, 121:6.
13. Needle (a). For comparison also included is a bronze needle (b) found in 1965 (Brassington, 1967: fig. 11:4).
14. Fastener, 'duffle-coat button'. Similar fasteners have been found at Corbridge.
15. Lunate pendant with phallic terminal and a stud for fastening on to the end of a leather strap. There is a similar pendant from Caistor-by-Norwich in the Norwich Museum (accession number B.75.152, 929).

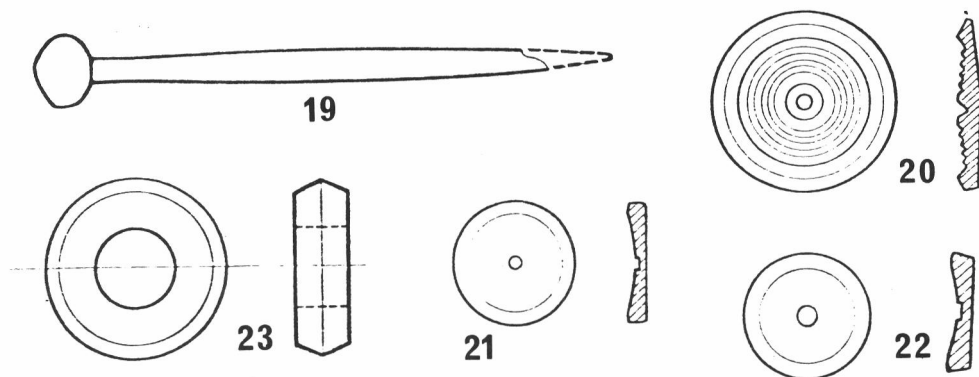


Fig. 12 Little Chester, 1926: non-metallic artefacts (Nos 19-22). Scale 1:1

16. A bronze mount with a punched hole in the middle for fastening to wood. Probably a fastener or band from a box or piece of furniture, with the edge turned over on the edge of the object.
17. Lead weight, 0.5" (12 mm) square section, 0.67" (17 mm) long, 25.4 gms.

Non-metallic objects (Figs 11, 12).

18. Bone ring, 0.95" (24 mm) outside diameter.
19. Bone pin with a broken tip. Not illustrated was the shank of a second pin, 2.25" (58 mm) long.
- 20-22. Bone lathe-turned gaming counters. No. 20 has an 'X' scratched on the back and No. 22 is highly polished.
23. A lathe-turned disc, brown in colour, with a smooth surface. One of four. The material, which has not been identified, resembles bakelite and may be a natural resin. It has a density of 1.195 g/cc and is not jet or Kimmeridge shale.

Glass (Fig. 13)

24. Green glass perfume bottle, square in section.
25. Moulded broad-ribbed beaker rim. Poor quality greenish glass.

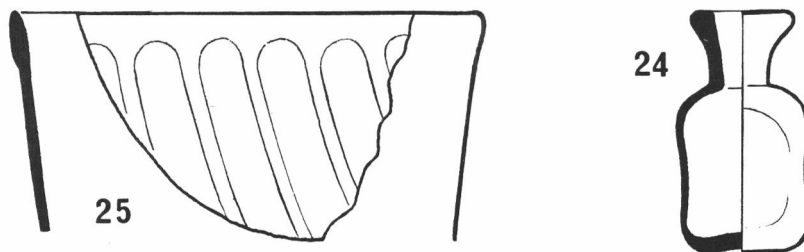


Fig. 13 Little Chester, 1926: glass (Nos 24-25). Scale 1:1

Iron objects (Fig. 14).

26. Badly corroded dagger blade. The remains of a tang indicate that it is a dagger and not a spear head. A possible profile is shown on the drawing, which if correct would suggest the blade of a *pugio*.
27. Spear-head, 5" (13 cms) long with a hollow shank which has a nail through it. No

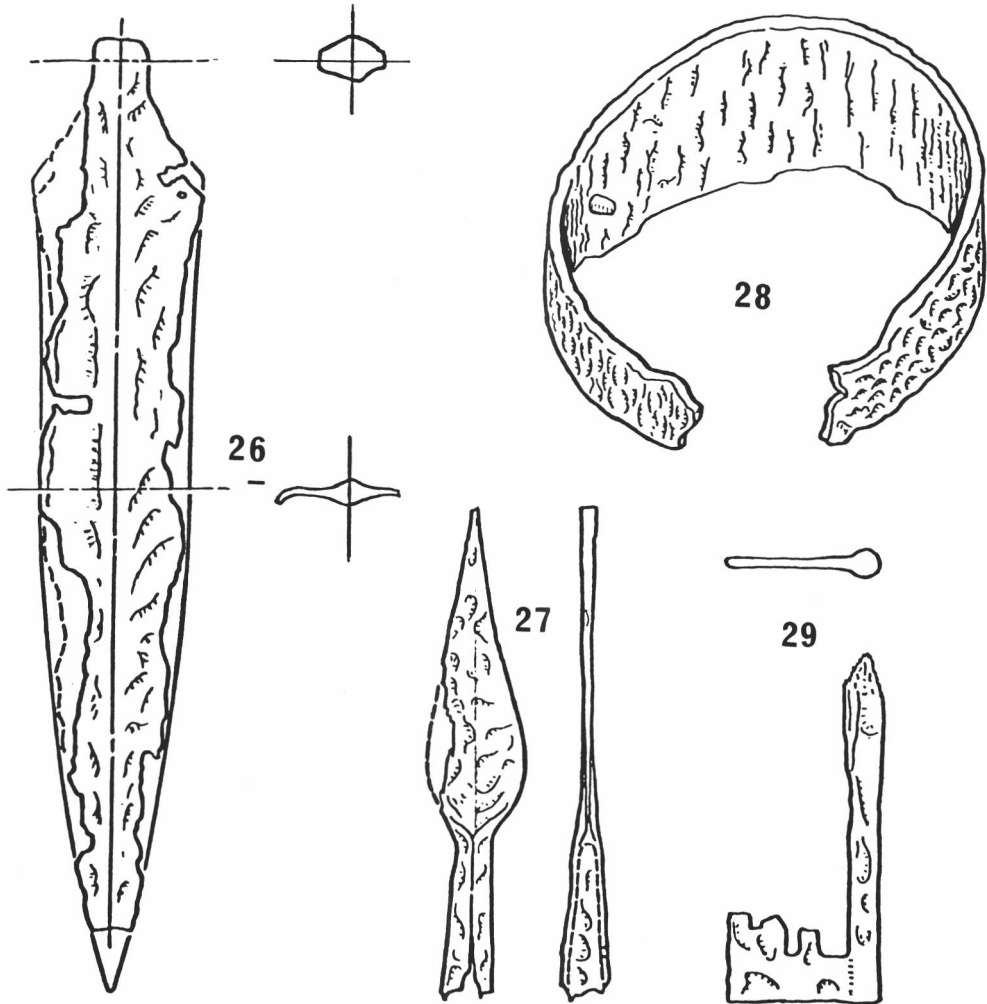


Fig. 14 Little Chester, 1926: iron (Nos 26-29). Scale 1:2

attempt had been made to sharpen the point and therefore it is unlikely to have been intended for hand-to-hand fighting. It would, however, have been a suitable military projectile.

28. An iron collar, 4 to 4.5" (10-11.5 cms) in diameter. Found on the surface of Ryknield Street in 1926. The 0.125" (3.2 mm) thick wall varies in width from 0.75 to 2.0" (19-51 mm). These iron bands are usually described as water pipe collars used to join two lengths of wooden pipe together. A nail, to retain the collar in place, is still *in situ*.
29. An L-shaped lift-key with a broken stem. A common type.

Not illustrated

A builder's T-staple. This is now missing, but appears on a photograph of items found in 1926. The stem was 7.25" (18.4 cms) long, and the cross-piece 3" (7.6 cms) in width. Similar to Manning, 1976: fig. 25:161. A form commonly found on many sites.

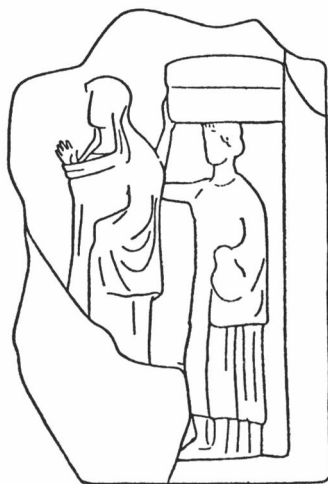


Fig. 15 Little Chester, 1926: Greek votive relief.

Greek votive relief (Fig. 15).

The bottom right-hand corner of a white marble slab, which was believed to have been found at Little Chester, was entered in the Derby Museum stock book in April 1915. This was when the collection was first catalogued and the piece was given the accession number DM 614-1915. It was entered again in the stock book in October 1926 and given the accession number DM 27-1926.

The marble slab, 15.3" x 9.8" (39 cms x 25 cms), depicts two female figures carved in relief, both badly eroded. The principal figure has her head covered and a hand raised in a gesture of adoration. A slave girl stands behind her carrying votive offerings. They presumably stand before a deity that would have been depicted on the missing left-hand portion of the slab. The carving has been identified as a Greek votive relief of the fourth century B.C., and similar to many found in Attica. It is extremely unlikely that it was found at Little Chester. Presumably it was a family curio, imported into this country in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, possibly as a trophy from a grand tour, and then donated to the museum. Its provenance was subsequently forgotten, and it was assumed to have been of local Romano-British origin.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITY

The visit of J. P. Gillam

John P. Gillam, who later became a well-known specialist on Roman coarse pottery, visited Little Chester just before the outbreak of the Second World War when writing a thesis on the distribution of Derbyshire ware (Gillam, 1940). He found in the cricket pavilion three tea chests full of Romano-British pottery; from these chests he picked out several examples of the pimply ware, which he described as similar in texture to petrified goose flesh. Like Collingwood, he came to the conclusion that it was made in South Derbyshire and suggested that it be named after the county. He also noted that most of the first century coins had been found at Strutts Park on the western side of the Derwent opposite Little Chester and was the first to suggest that Roman occupation commenced in that area.

The war years

The only excavations to take place at Little Chester during the war years had nothing to do with

archaeology. Posts were set in the ground and old cars placed about the Darley playing fields, and a series of deep trenches were dug, east to west, to prevent enemy aircraft landing. Ryknield Street was cut through in several places, but only one piece of samian pottery was handed in to the museum during this period (Fig. 7:23).

REFERENCES

- Birley, R. (1970) Excavations at Chesterholm, Vindolanda, 1967-69. *Archaeologia Aeliana* 48: 97-55.
- Birss, R. and Wheeler, H. (1985) Roman Derby: excavations 1968-83. Introduction. *DAJ* 105: 7-14.
- Bramwell, D. *et al.* (1983) Excavations at Poole's Cavern, Buxton: an interim report. *DAJ* 103: 47-74.
- Brassington, M. (1967) Roman material recovered from Little Chester, Derby, 1965. *DAJ* 87: 39-69.
- Brassington, M. (1969) Roman wells at Little Chester. *DAJ* 89: 115-19.
- Brassington, M. (1981) Roman roads of Derby. *DAJ* 101: 88-92.
- Brassington, M. (1982) The excavation of the hypocaust on Parker's Piece, Little Chester, Derby, 1924-26. *DAJ* 102: 84-86.
- British Museum (1908) *Greek and Roman Life*. London.
- Clews, C. A. (1927) Human remains, Little Chester. *DAJ* 49: 376-77.
- Clews, C. A. (1929) *Notes on Derby* (Derby Local History Library 9107). Derby.
- Collingwood, R. G. and Taylor, M. V. (1926) Roman Britain. *Journal of Roman Studies* 16: 222.
- Cox, J. C. (1891) Some further finds in Deepdale Cave, Buxton. *DAJ* 13: 197.
- Curle, J. (1911) *A Roman Fort and Its People: Newstead*. Glasgow.
- Déchelette, J. (1904) *Les vases céramiques ornés de la Gaule romaine, t. i.* Paris.
- Gillam, J. P. (1940) Romano-British Derbyshire ware. *DAJ* 61: 26-37.
- Hartley, K. F. (1972) Mortarium stamps. In Frere, S. (ed.), *Verulamium Excavations, vol. 1*, 371. Oxford.
- Hawkes, C. F. C. and Hull, M. R. (1947) *Camulodunum*. Oxford.
- Jackson, D. A. and Ambrose, T. M. (1978) Excavations at Wakerley, Northants, 1972-75. *Britannia* 9: 115-242.
- Knight, A. C. (1927) Roman coins from Little Chester. *DAJ* 49: 353-63.
- Knorr, R. (1919) *Töpfer und Fabriken verzierter Terra-Sigillata des 1. Jhs.* Stuttgart.
- Manning, W. H. (1976) *Romano-British Ironwork in the Museum of Antiquaries, Newcastle-upon-Tyne*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- Oswald, F. (1936-7) *Index of Figure-Types on Terra Sigillata*. Liverpool.
- Robertson, A. (1964) *The Roman Fort at Castledyke*. Edinburgh.
- Sherlock, D. (1976) Roman folding spoons. *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 27: 250-55.
- Simpson, F. G. (1909) Windshields milecastle. Published in G. Simpson (ed.), *Watermills and Military Works on Hadrian's Wall, 1907-1913*. Kendal, 1976.
- Stanfield, J. A. and Simpson, G. (1958) *Central Gaulish Potters*. London.
- Wheeler, H. M. (1985a) North-west sector excavations 1979-80. *DAJ* 105: 38-153.
- Wheeler, H. M. (1985b) The racecourse cemetery. *DAJ* 105: 222-80.
- Wild, J. P. (1970) Button and loop fasteners in the Roman provinces. *Britannia* 1: 137-55.