

A ROMANO-BRITISH OCCUPATION SITE AT PORTFIELD GRAVEL PIT, CHICHESTER

BY E. CECIL CURWEN, F.S.A., AND
SHEPPARD FRERE, F.S.A.

DURING the summer of 1945 a quantity of Roman pottery was discovered by the men quarrying gravel in Portfield gravel pit at a point about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles east-north-east of Chichester Cross. The top soil here is about 4 ft. deep, but as a mechanical excavator was employed to lay bare the surface of the underlying gravel, no stratification of Roman remains was recorded, though it was observed that there appeared to be one or more pits going down into the underlying gravel. No certain traces of masonry structure were encountered.

Our thanks are due to Messrs. A. D. Heaver for allowing us to preserve the pottery, and to the pit manager, Mr. G. F. Hipkin, for his lively interest and practical help in the matter.

THE FINDS

The finds indicate occupation during the first two and a half centuries A.D. Besides Samian and other imported wares dating from the earliest years of the Occupation, there is present some native 'Western Belgic' ware, and also coarse Romano-British pottery of the first, second, and third centuries. Some typical examples are figured.

A. *Imported Wares*

Apart from an amphora fragment, possibly of second-century type, and the rim of a plain curving Gallo-Belgic *terra-nigra* platter similar to that figured in *S.A.C.* LXXVI. 141, No. 2, the imported ware consisted of Samian. The following forms have been identified:—

1. Rim fragment of form 30 with ovolo and continuous scroll decoration; probably Neronian.
2. Two examples of Ritterling Type 12; period, Claudius–Nero.
3. Form 16, a somewhat uncommon Claudian dish.

4. Ritterling Type 8, probably Claudius–Nero.
5. Two examples of form 24–25, Claudius–Nero.
6. Form 18–31 with damaged stamp. Perhaps early second century.
7. Form 23, a Claudius–Neronian dish.
8. Form 27, of the same period. Also a base probably of this form with the stamp OF PRI (the potter Primus of Montans and La Graufesenque, period Claudius–Vespasian).
9. Ludowici Type Sh (?).
10. Form 36, Lezoux ware, second century A.D.

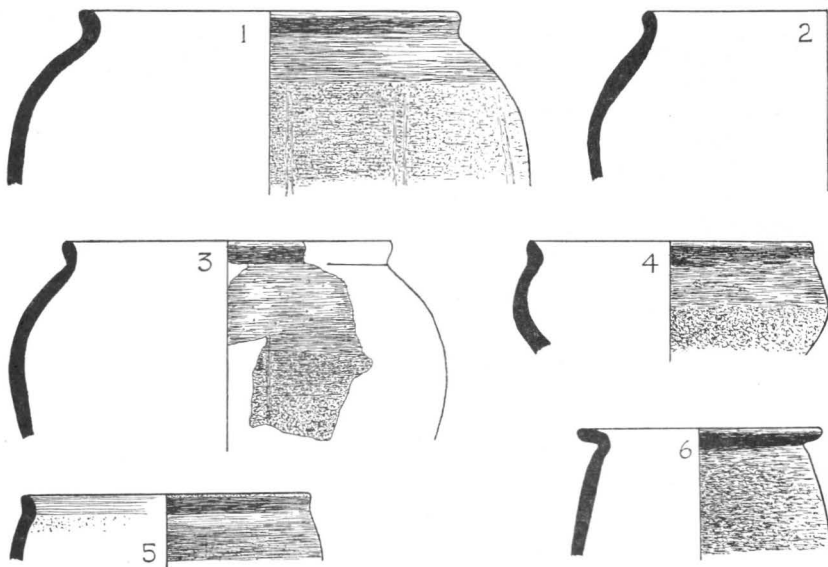


FIG. 1. WESTERN BELGIC POTTERY. (¼)

B. *Western Belgic Ware* (Fig. 1)

These vessels are characterized by a sandy, rather granulated black ware. Nos. 4, 5, and 6 are slightly cruder than the others and may well be pre-Conquest; but Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are rather more Romanized.

C. *Romano-British Wares* (Fig. 2)

Nos. 7 and 8 are small beakers of light brown ware; No. 7 bears traces of a white slip on its neck and shoulder as far as the offset, and is perhaps Claudian; No. 8 may once have been coated with gold mica dust, and is a Flavian shape.

No. 16 imitates a common Gallo-Belgic imported platter, and there are present flat fragments of soft fawn-coloured ware with a red pigmented surface which perhaps imitate a *terra-rubra* platter of the same kind. No. 14, with a flaking black surface and brick-coloured

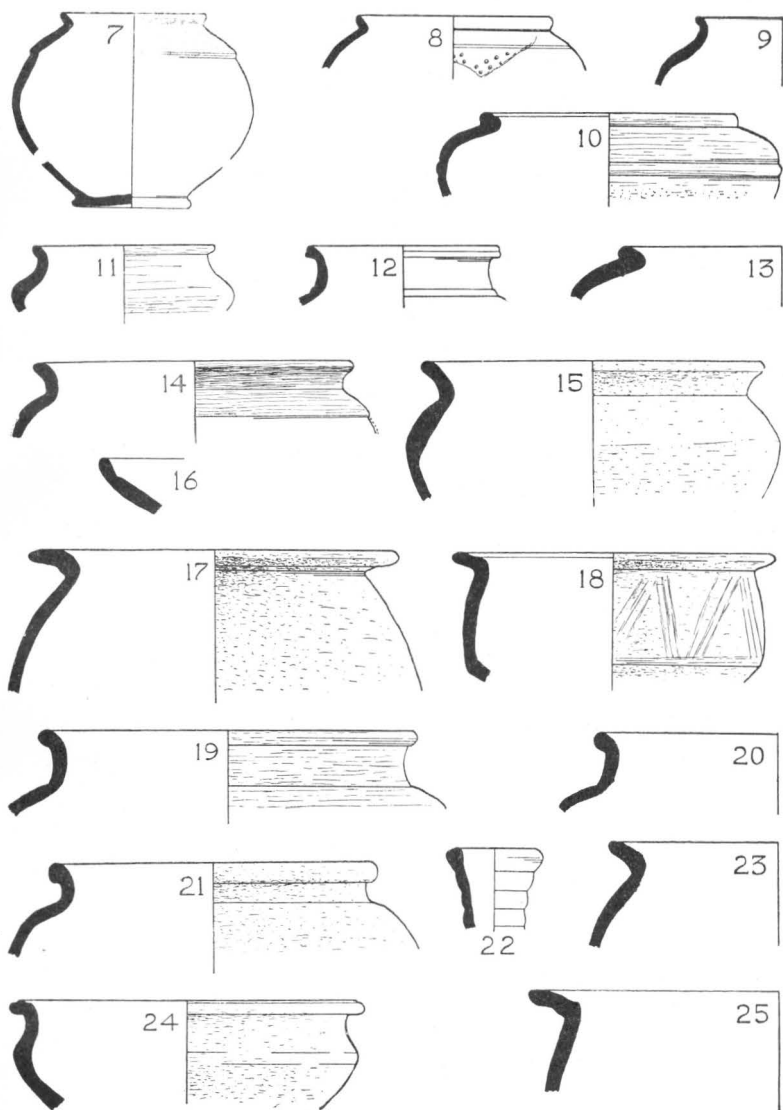


FIG. 2. COARSE ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY. (¼)

paste, is also of Claudian type. Nos. 9-13, in grey ware, are all first-century types.

Of the later coarse pottery illustrated on Fig. 2 Nos. 19 and 20 should belong to the reigns of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius, and the flagon neck No. 22 should also belong to the first half of the century. No. 17 is a later form of jar, perhaps Antonine, and No. 25 is a third-century type.

The Chronological range. It has been seen that a date a few years before A.D. 43 would suit some of the vessels of native Western Belgic character, and on general grounds there is no reason why occupation should not have begun on such a site before the Conquest. However this may be, the arrival of the Romans saw a great increase in the prosperity of the site, evidenced by the large amount of Claudian Samian and other imported ware. The settlement lasted throughout the second century, and it becomes a question when it ended. Here there is not much to guide us, for a coarse jar like No. 25 could easily occur in the fourth century. But assuming that the collection is representative, the absence of colour-coated wares and even of Castor ware would militate against a date so late, and it is probable that, on the evidence available, the settlement came to an end soon after the middle of the third century, a date quite suitable for No. 25 and also for an unfigured sherd with internal clawed markings of a type well known in Surrey and Sussex and described by one of the writers in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, XLVIII. 51-2, Fig. 6.¹ If this were confirmed it would throw interesting light upon conditions prevailing in the Chichester area, where Haverfield seems to have pictured a decline after A.D. 270.²

¹ For a local illustration see *S.A.C.* LXXX. 75, Fig. IX, 7, from Highdown.

² *Arch. Rev.* I, 1888, 436; *Arch. Journ.* XLVI, 1889, 67-8.