

X.—EXCAVATIONS AT CHESTERHOLM- VINDOLANDA, 1931.

By ERIC BIRLEY.

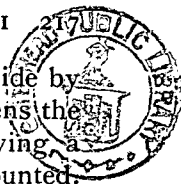
[Read on 24th February, 1932.]

During the season under review, work at Chesterholm was confined to site B, the area in the *vicus* where a ditch containing first century pottery was found in 1930, and the north-west angle of the existing fort. Two men only were employed, and the work, never very extensive, was considerably hampered by bad weather. In the present paper I propose to give a brief account of the main discoveries, and to discuss in detail such of the objects found as deserve early publication.

THE NORTH-WEST ANGLE (SITE D) (PLATE XXVII, FIG. 1)

At the north-west angle a structure was found in the position normally occupied by a tower; but it can hardly have been a tower. For one thing, it had neither a doorway nor any trace of an occupation layer inside it; on the contrary, its interior had been systematically filled with rubble and clay, to a depth of more than 5 feet. Its side walls were not bonded in with the fort wall, but originally butted against it; at present, the fort wall heels considerably outwards, so that at the highest surviving point its inner face is more than a foot away from the side walls of the angle-structure.

Of the purpose of this structure there can, I think, be little doubt. At this point the fort wall is 6 feet thick;



the overall dimensions of the structure are 12 feet wide by 7 feet from front to back, so that, in effect, it thickens the fort wall to 13 feet for a distance of 12 feet, giving a platform large enough for a heavy catapult to be mounted. The absence of bonding appears to support this interpretation: for the mass of clay and rubble, with a masonry revetment, would provide just such resiliency as was essential to take the recoil of such a catapult; had the revetment been bonded in, or the structure composed of solid masonry, the recoil might easily have shattered it.

Though there was no bonding, it was clear that fort-wall and angle-structure were contemporary; the masonry was similar, the mortar identical, and the mortar itself gave an answer to one of the previous year's problems; it was heavily charged with shale, and suggested that the shale in which the masonry at the north and east gates was found to have been laid, represents the same mortar, the lime of which had disintegrated as a result of its exposure by Anthony Hedley a century ago.

The rampart mound to the west of the gun-platform was examined with some care, and yielded interesting results; but the publication of them is held over for a later report.

Immediately to the east of the gun-platform was a building, of which the west end only has been uncovered as yet, similar to that found on site C in 1930: close up to the fort wall, and built at a high level over the rampart-backing. The roughness of the masonry of its walls was surpassed by that of its flagged floor; it yielded coins of Trajan, Severus Alexander, the younger Tetricus (a barbarous imitation), and Magnentius, together with some indeterminate scraps of pottery; but there can be little doubt that, like the building on site C, it belongs to the last phase in the occupation of the fort.

SITE B

The early ditch found on this site in 1930 was reopened at the point where it was crossed by the stone

water-channel that led to the bath-house from a spring to the west of the camp field. Plate xxviii, figs. 1 and 2, show how the heavy blocks of the channel had sunk over the east side of the ditch (to the west, the blocks have been robbed for a considerable distance); and plate xxvii, fig. 2 shows the relationship between the channel and the earlier occupation level to which reference is made below.

It was found that the ditch (ditch A) was of the common military type, in which the sides become vertical at the bottom, leaving a straight-sided channel 1 foot deep by 2 feet wide. Further early pottery occurred in the bottom of this channel, including two more pieces of the samian bowl, no. 1 in the report for 1930. A few feet north of the point where the water-channel crossed ditch A, a second ditch (B), without the straight-sided channel at the bottom, was found to join the first from the south-west. The new ditch was traced for more than fifty feet, but heavy rain, that finally brought all work on this site to an end, prevented further investigation of it; it produced equally early pottery.

Inside ditch A (that is to say, to the east of it) there was a layer of puddled clay, some 12 feet wide, and inside that again a roadway of hard rammed gravel, some 3 feet below the present surface. The clay was scored by a number of sleeper tracks, and in the inner edge of it were several post-holes (marked by pegs in plate xxvii, fig. 2) with the points of posts still in them; but in the small area opened up there was insufficient order discernible for the purpose of sleepers or post-holes to be deduced. The clay presumably marks the position of the rampart, round the corner of which ditch A is curving; and it might be expected that a wooden angle tower would occur at this point, with which the sleeper tracks might be connected. In one of them was found a large piece of Dr. 37 in the style of MERCATO.

The layer of gravel was covered by a deposit, varying from 1 to 2 inches in thickness, of dark peaty matter; Dr. Blackburn was good enough to examine this material, and

informed me that it appeared to come from the bottom of a pond. This was something of a puzzle, as the surface of the ground at present slopes uniformly down towards the south-east, and it seemed as though such a deposit could hardly have formed here. Early in June, however, a sharp thunder-shower converted the excavation into a pond, that was still full of water in October, when it was necessary to fill it in again. Clearly, at this point there was a depression in the original surface, where water accumulated after the early site was abandoned.

Before the water-channel was laid, the ditches had been filled in, and the whole area levelled up with material, presumably from the rampart of the early fort, if fort it was; that will explain why only the tips of the posts remained in the post-holes; the greater part of them had been shaved away, together with the bulk of the rampart itself. For the date of this levelling, there is no evidence as yet; the only finds of any note from above it were a *denarius* of Vespasian, in good condition, and a number of pieces of a Rheinzabern bowl, Dr. 37, in the later style of the potter IANVS—presumably dating from the time of Antoninus Pius at earliest.

THE FINDS

1. *Inscriptions, etc.*

(a) Fragment of an upper millstone of Andernach lava, with the inscription (apparently complete):

O AD "Century of Ad . . ."

Another millstone with an inscription on it, found at Aesica in 1895 (EE ix, 1197), is now in the Black Gate museum; in that instance, the name of the centurion is followed by MOLA VII["millstone no. 7 (or 8 or 9)"; our example can hardly have had such a continuation, unless the spacing was considerably wider. Unstratified.

(b) (Site D: on rampart.) The greater part of a samian mortarium, Dr. 45, with part of the owner's name scratched on the curve of the outside: **F O F**

There does not appear to be any name of the Roman period

beginning Fof-, but there may be dialect involved. The mortarium is Lezoux ware, and presumably dates to about A.D. 200.

(c) Potters' stamps on samian vessels:

(1) (FS 30: site C, unstratified.) **ADVOCISI** on Dr. 37, below the decoration, of which little survives. Mid-second century Lezoux ware; cf. Oswald, *Index*, pp. 5 and 423.

(2) (FS 43: site B, unstratified.) **BAI** retrograde on a splinter of Dr. 37. For Banuus of Lezoux, cf. Oswald, *Index*, pp. 38 and 357. An example of this potter's work, found at South Shields, has figured several times as a tail-piece in past volumes of *Proceedings*.

(3) (St. 4: site B, unstratified.) **MICCI** on a splinter from the base of a platter. To judge by the fabric, this is the East Gaulish Miccio; cf. Oswald, *Index*, pp. 205 and 406.

(4) (St. 2: site B, ditch B.) **OF SILVINI** on Dr. 27; the ILV are badly blurred. Silvius worked at La Graufesenque into the Flavian period; cf. Oswald, *Index*, pp. 302 and 420. The stamp has also been noted at Carlisle and Corbridge.

(5) (St. 3: site B, ditch B.) **[L]TER SECYND** on Dr. 18. This potter worked at Montans in the Flavian period; cf. Oswald, *Index*, p. 290. The stamp has also been noted at Chesters, Corbridge, and at Castlecary on the Scottish Wall, where it can be dated to within a year or two of A.D. 80.

2. *Figured samian* (plates XXIX and XXX).

(a) (FS 1: site B, ditch A.) Another two pieces of this vessel¹ were found, so that a more complete reconstruction of its decoration is now possible; the attribution to M.CRESTIO is confirmed by the occurrence of an ovolo used only by that potter and CRVCVRO.

(b) (British Museum: from the Bank of England.) This piece, with the stamp of M.CRESTIO, bears a close general resemblance to FS 1; though it is typologically rather later, since the two zones of decoration (reminiscent of Dr. 29) have given place to one: moreover, the stamp of the *bear* appears to be rather more worn, as is also the case with the *leaf* in the four corners of the main panel. I have to thank Mr. Reginald A. Smith, F.S.A., Keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities in the British Museum, for permission to publish this piece, which finally confirms the attribution of FS 1 to M.CRESTIO.

(c) (Binchester: in the possession of Mr. James McIntyre.) This piece is a further example of the work of M.CRESTIO, while it provides additional evidence for the Flavian occupation of Binchester. The small *dog* to r. (D. 920) occurs on a Dr. 37 by the same potter in the British Museum (M 554).

¹ Cf. AA 4, VIII, p. 204, no. 1.

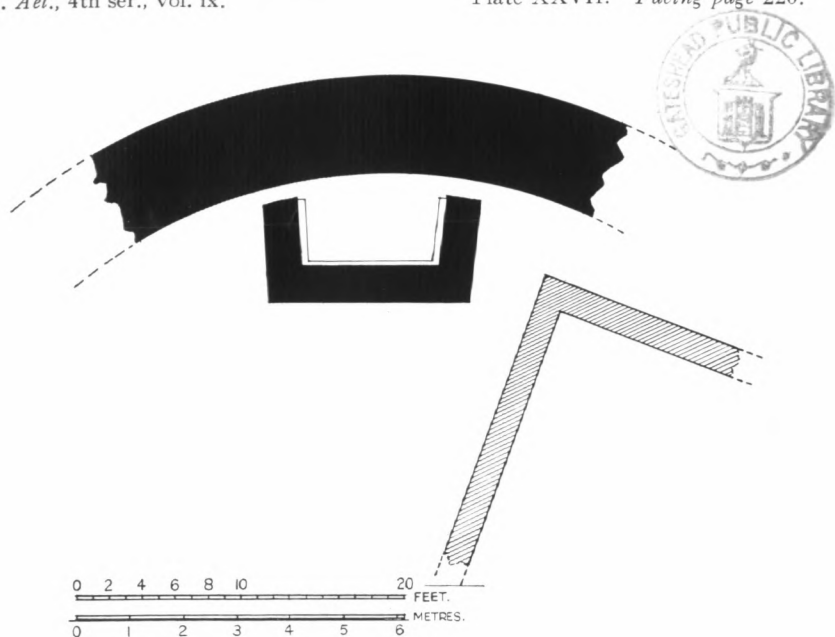


FIG. 1—SKETCH-PLAN OF THE NORTH-WEST ANGLE (SITE D).



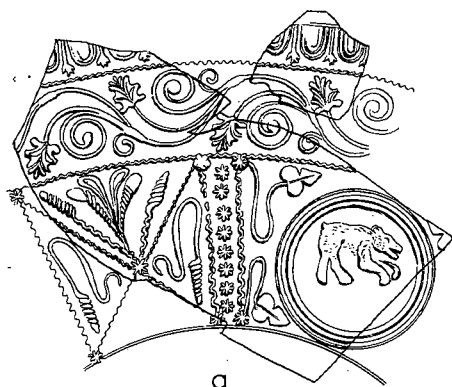
FIG. 2—WATER-CHANNEL OVERLYING EARLY OCCUPATION LEVEL.



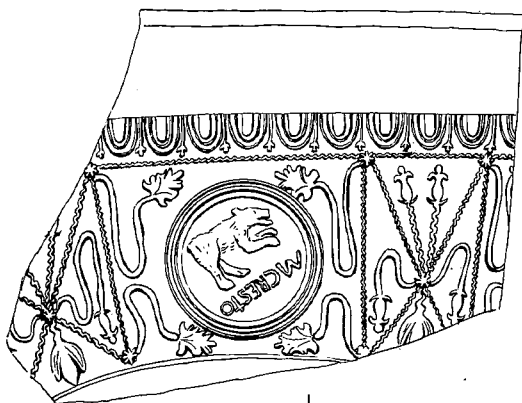
FIG. 1—DITCH A AND LATER WATER-CHANNEL.



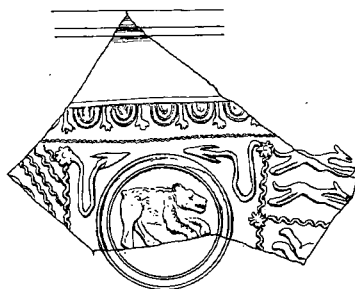
FIG. 2—DITCHES A AND B FROM THE NORTH.



a

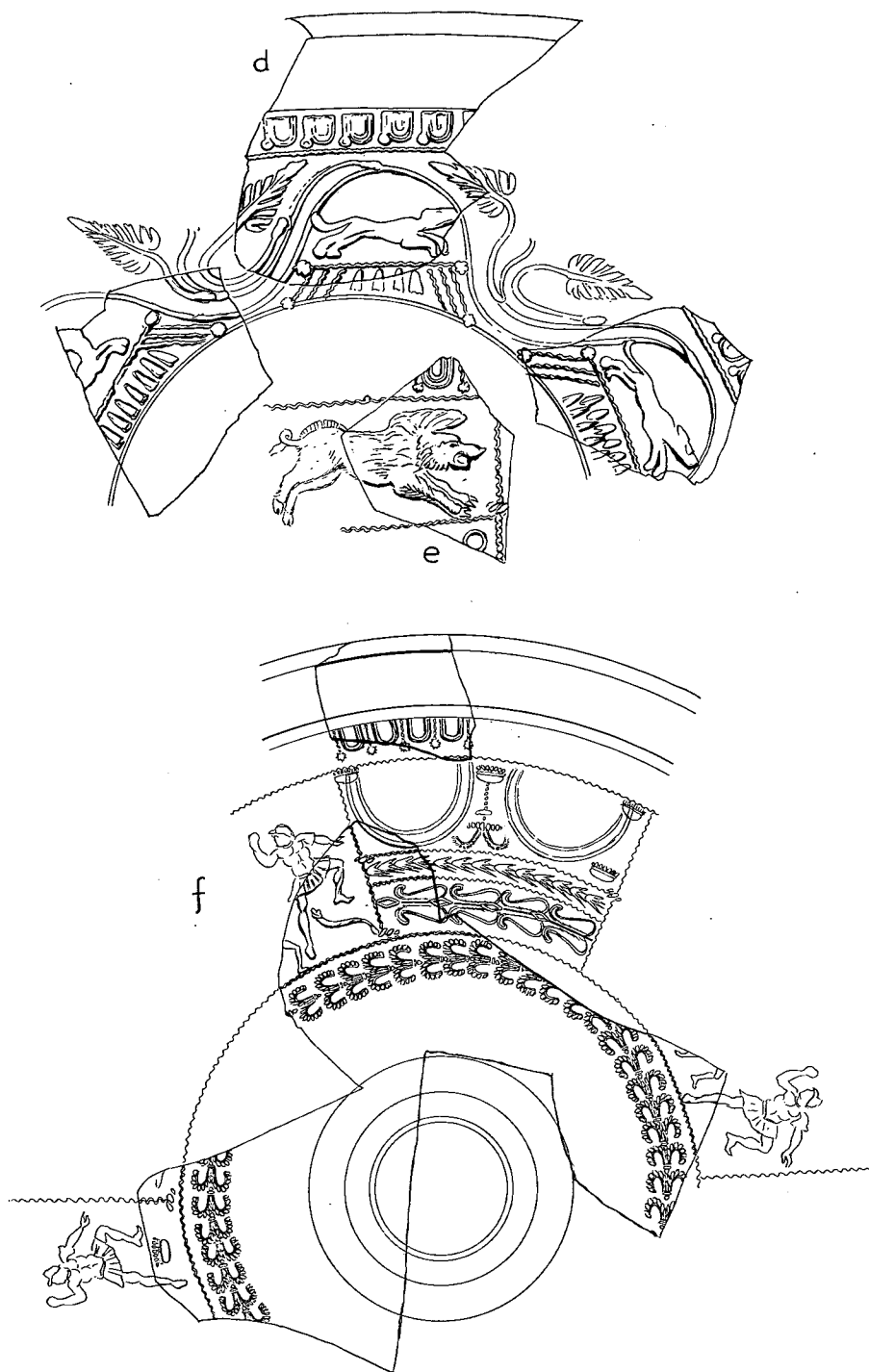


b



c

J. A. STANFIELD.



SAMIAN FROM BINCHESTER.

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(*d-f*) By the kindness of Mr. McIntyre I am able to figure three further pieces from Binchester that came from a single rubbish pit: *d* is a typical late Flavian South Gaulish vessel, with coarse wavy line, winding scroll, and "arrow-head" ornaments (probably made with the tip of a large leaf stamp); *e* is central Gaulish, with the fine wavy line, a characteristic ovolo, and the *boar* (D. 826) that was later used by CINNAMVS; while *f* belongs to the most characteristic of the group of potters that appear to have worked at Vichy, with the "ram's horn" wreath, corded ovolo, fine wavy line, and well-cut decorative details that make their ware so attractive. I am again indebted to Mr. J. A. Stanfield for the drawings, and for the partial restoration of *f* from a fragment in the London Museum; Mr. Stanfield is at present engaged in a special study of the "Vichy group" of potters, which may be expected to be of great value for the excavator of early second-century sites.

This little group from Binchester is of especial interest as an example of the types of figured samian that may be expected to occur in association on a site occupied in the first twenty years of the second century; the absence from Scotland of pieces with the decoration of this period (which, as *f* shows, is very distinctive, and quite unlike the south Gaulish products that it supplied the place of) makes it extremely difficult to suppose that the Agricolaan occupation of the country north of Cheviot continued into the second century; but such decoration occurs at Corbridge, Chesters, Chesterholm, Nether Denton and Carlisle—all, as it seems, forts belonging to an earlier stage of the frontier than Vallum or Wall; here we have it from Binchester as well, and indeed there seems to be no military site in Britain, whose occupation can be shown to extend from the end of the first century into the principate of Hadrian, where such decoration, or other types used by the potters of Vichy and Lezoux in this period, have not been noted.