

XIII.—HOUSESTEADS CIVIL SETTLEMENT, 1960.

BY R. E. BIRLEY.

Note: Frequent attention will be called to previous reports in *Archæologia Aeliana* dealing with the civil settlement at Housesteads, namely R. C. Bosanquet's study in AA2 xxv 193-300 and (for the excavations of 1931-34) AA4 ix 222-237, x 82-96, xi 185-205 and xii 204-258 (particularly its plans, plates xxii and xxiii).

In December 1883 John Clayton read a paper to this Society, entitled, "On the discovery of Roman inscribed altars, etc., at Housesteads in November 1883". The inscription recording Mars Thincsus and the Alaisiagae (now in the Chesters Museum) aroused great interest, particularly in German academic circles, and there was much debate on the identity and nature of the "two Alaisiagae, Beda and Fimmilena".¹ This was revived in 1920 on the discovery by Mr. Thomas Thompson of a further inscription referring to two Alaisiagae, this time named as Baudihillia and Friagabis (now in the Housesteads Museum).² Neither in 1883 nor in 1920 was the temple, from which these stones must be presumed to have come, located and excavated. This was the primary task which the present excavators set themselves in 1960, though it was realized that at the same time further valuable information might be recovered, to throw light upon the civil settlement as a whole.

Clayton's descriptions of his work in 1883, and of further digging in 1884, gave only vague clues to its precise location; and the late Thomas Thompson, who had been the original finder of the earlier stones as well as that of 1920, unfortunately was unable to provide any more detailed account; he

¹ AA2 x 148-172.

² AA3 xix 185-197.

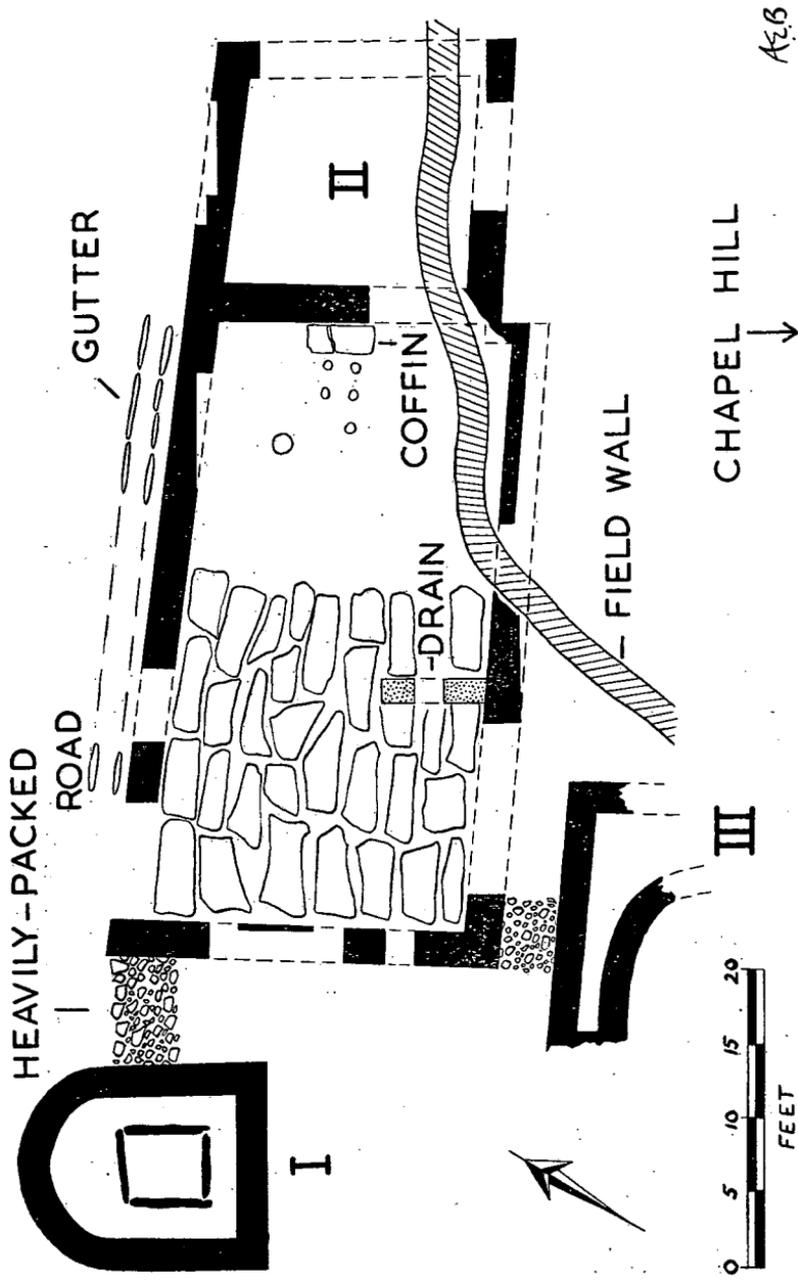


Fig. 1

FIG. 1. HOUSESTEADS CIVIL SETTLEMENT—1960.

did indeed tell R. C. Bosanquet after finding the altar in 1920, that the previous stones had lain further east, but that conflicts with what Clayton records, and must therefore be regarded as mistaken. In his first report,³ Clayton states that they were at the base of the northern slope of Chapel Hill, and in his second report⁴ that "the excavators next came across a Roman well filled to the brim . . ."; while Bruce, in the second edition of his *Handbook* (1884, p. 142), mentions that "the spring is just north of the spot where the altars were found". The spring referred to is now the source of Housesteads farm's water-supply, and can be seen as one enters the field below the fort, lying some 100 yards west of the wicket-gate, surrounded by an iron fence. Clayton apparently found two uninscribed altars inside the small stone building, presumably a shrine, from which the spring issues: see the plan, Site I (fig. 1).

Before proceeding with an account of the 1960 excavation, it will be worth referring again to Clayton's second report:

"On opening out the grass-grown ruins of the Temple of Mars, it was found that our utilitarian predecessors of the middle ages had removed for building purposes a large proportion of the building stones, leaving behind them some of the latter and a large heap of rubbish. The remaining stones were removed and the rubbish examined, without meeting with other objects. Several exploratory trenches were cut in various parts of Chapel-hill, but no buildings could be found 'in situ', and the very foundation stones had been taken up and removed."

In view of the discoveries which we made in 1960, it can only be assumed that Clayton's supervision of the digging must have been very casual, for the area abounds in buildings, and his excavators had clearly partially exhumed one of them. Moreover, we believe that the "large heap of rubbish" left by the "utilitarian medieval predecessors" was in fact the internal apse of the true temple of Mars Thincsus.

Immediately to the south of the well there is a pro-

³ AA2 x 149.

⁴ AA2 x 171.

nounced depression, followed by a large paved cattle-trough, and over the field-wall the slope of Chapel Hill soon rises sharply. We sank our first trench into the eastern bank of the depression, twelve feet south-east of the well, and this at once revealed a wall of poorly finished masonry standing to a height of three feet (fig. 1, Site II). This proved to be the western wall of a very large hall, attached to which, at its eastern end, was a room fifteen feet square, constructed of good small masonry and standing in many places nine courses high (see plate XXVI, fig. 1). The shape of the building is very similar to those of the structures found outside the south gate of the fort in the 1930s (cf. AA4 xii, pl. xxii); in view of the fact that this area is very wet, with the subsoil between 5 ft. 6 in. and 6 ft. below the modern surface, we could not contemplate uncovering the entire building: instead, we confined our efforts to obtaining an accurate plan of the external walls, together with three sample probes into the interior. The position of the aged field-wall rendered the planning of the southern walls a delicate task, which was not lightened by the fact that there had been extensive robbing in this portion alone—the wettest part of the whole site.

There was no positive indication of what Site II had been, though the presence of considerable occupation-material, and in particular quantities of amphora and, in some places, food-bones, argues that it might have been a house of refreshment for temple-worshippers; but further work in this area may supply a clue. The hall was surrounded by a wall of irregular masonry, heavily packed with puddled clay in the damp southern section. It differed from the construction of other buildings in the civil settlement in that the walls, in spite of their poor masonry, were of a solid and strong design, probably intended to support a timber superstructure. During the first period of occupation, there had been a heavy flagged floor at the western end, bearing signs of considerable usage, whilst the eastern half had been floored with wooden planks resting upon rows of oak posts driven into the subsoil; two rows, with four posts in each, were discovered in position



FIG. 1. SITE II, INNER ROOM, LOOKING NORTH-WEST; NOTE THE GOOD MASONRY.



FIG. 2. SITE III, APSE OF THE TEMPLE TURNING TO THE SOUTH.

Photos. R. E. Birley.

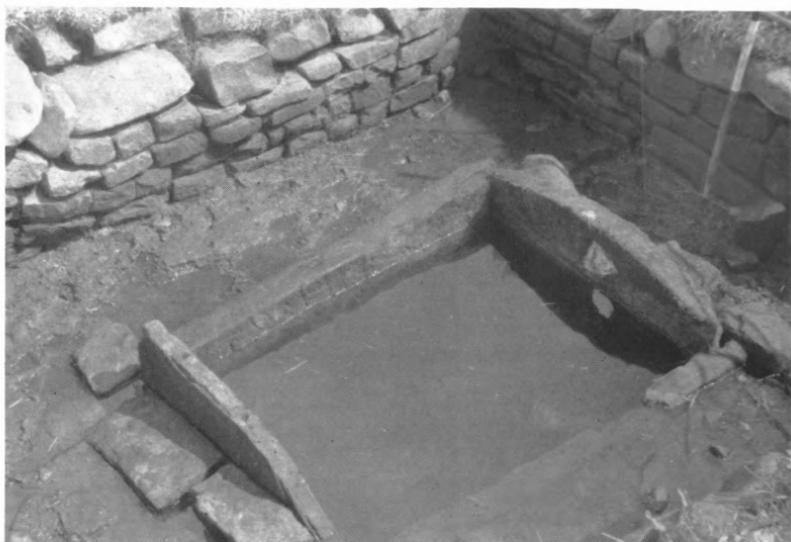


FIG. 1. INTERIOR OF THE WELL, LOOKING SOUTH-SOUTH-EAST; THE LOWER COURSES OF THE TEMPLE WALL ARE ROMAN.



FIG. 2. SITE II, THE BURIAL, LOOKING EAST.

Photos. R. E. Birley.

near the door into the inner room. It would therefore seem probable that at this stage there was a wooden partition across the hall, though there was no sign of it in the small area we excavated. At some later period, and presumably on account of a rising water-table, the floor-level had been raised between 9 in. and 1 ft. by packing broken stone and gravel on top of the original floor and laying another flagged floor above—this time, covering the whole hall. At this stage, there was clearly no permanent partition. The rubble packing effectively sealed the earlier floor-level and gave us excellent stratification which, judging entirely from the pottery (for there were no coins), points to a date contemporary with or very soon after the building of the Hadrianic fort. The significance of this fact will be commented on later in the report.

There was a particularly wide door (8 ft.) in the north-west corner of the hall, another door led into the inner room, and a third had been added in the south-west corner during the second structural period. The discovery of a large post-hole, 6 in. in diameter, just off centre in the eastern portion of the hall suggested that there may have been two rows of roof-supports, though a single row ought to have been sufficient. The only sign of a hearth that we recovered was against the north wall of the hall, but in view of its position it may well represent merely a temporary—and one would have thought, disastrous—fire.

The inner room was constructed of much better stone. Indeed, the only buildings in the civil settlement which have exhibited such good workmanship are those on Sites VII, XVI and V, close to the fort.⁵ Only a small portion of the room was uncovered, but it was clear that the structural changes which at some period had been effected in the hall had not been matched here. There was only one floor-level, at the same depth as the earlier one in the hall, and the floor itself was of packed clay and rubble, which bore signs of heavy burning.

⁵ AA4 xii, pl. xxii.

Outside the northern wall there were two upright lines of stones forming a rough gutter against the wall (as with Site XIX, higher up the hill), and beyond it were traces of a road, presumably running east and west (see fig. 1).

One further feature of this building deserves special mention. Sunk into the hall, near the door to the inner room, was a wooden coffin, surrounded by rough stone flags and on a north-south alignment (see plate XXVII, fig. 2). Apart from a few fragments of perished bone and one tooth there was nothing to indicate either the identity or the date of the burial, but it was certainly Roman and presumably of the late third or fourth century.

As Bosanquet had led us to expect, in the light of his exploratory trench to the west of the well in 1898,⁶ there was a great quantity of pottery (especially samian), glass, bone, leather and wood on the site, well preserved in the damp soil. There were very few third- or fourth-century types, and the mass of unstratified pottery included little that need be dated later than the end of the second century. Among the stratified pottery there were pieces of a South Gaulish Dr. 37 (which Professor Birley cannot date any later than A.D. 90), numerous pieces of Hadrianic pottery, and a fine fragment of Dr. 37 bearing the stamp SACER.F. It therefore seems probable that the excavators of the 1930s were justified in voicing the suspicion that an earlier settlement might be found south of the Vallum.⁷ Admittedly, we have only one early building to offer as yet, but it seems certain that the range of buildings that Bosanquet tested in 1898, to the west of the well, must be of the same period. Site II, however, is of a higher standard of workmanship than the majority of the buildings explored outside the south gate of the fort; it must have been erected by a comparatively Romanized person, either a retired soldier or a civilized trader. We found no pottery here that could be called native; it will be interesting to see whether any of the buildings in the vicinity,

⁶ AA2 xxv 242.

⁷ AA4 xii 240.

if they are of second-century origin, do produce examples of native ware. Perhaps the local population in that century made no attempt to fraternize; but anyone who has had experience of military service in the desert of Libya will no doubt remember how the most barbarous of peoples will overcome their fear of soldiers very quickly, when the opportunity for trading presents itself.

Site III.

What we have so far reported has little bearing upon the temple of Mars Thincsus, or upon our last four days' work. It was while we were cleaning the south-western corner of Site II for a photograph that we made our most significant find. There lay another wall, of good masonry, running parallel to the southern wall of Site II and three feet from it. This wall had clearly been exposed comparatively recently, for the earth fell away from it—and it was clean earth; there was also rotted foliage clinging to the cracks in the wall, which argued that it had been left exposed for a season or more. This was what we had expected to find if we came across the site of Clayton's excavation of 1883-4, but which had so far eluded us. We had very little time left to excavate, but we uncovered enough of the building to convince ourselves, at any rate, that this was the temple of Mars Thincsus. The inside of the wall had been cleaned down to floor-level, in this case heavy flags, but just inside the northern wall we struck a large and seemingly circular pile of rubble. At first we assumed that this was Clayton's medieval pile of rubbish, but careful cleaning of a small portion of it showed that it was in fact part of an internal apse, covered in debris and standing to a height of 2 ft. 8 in. It was clear that it had not been touched by the previous excavators, for it contained a quantity of pottery, whereas the path of Clayton's men had been swept clean of all but amphora fragments. As one can see from the plan (fig. 1), it promises to be a building of unusual design, and there is

every indication that the eastern half of it, at any rate, should stand in a fair state of preservation; the paved cattle-trough may well have removed the western part if, as one must assume, the temple contained more than the small internal apse. The building will in any case repay further excavation another year, though it would be necessary to remove a stretch of the modern field-wall—which continues on its obstructive way across the heart of the building.

Site I (the well).

Before closing this report with notes on the most interesting pottery and on the coins, something further must be said about the well. In 1884 Clayton attempted to pump it out, "but the force of the water drove us back". With the kind permission of Mr. Thomas Carr, and with the aid of a powerful modern pump, we spent a couple of hours one morning with complete success. A considerable amount of material was recovered, not all of it Roman—for it appears that many visitors to Housesteads had thrown unwanted lemonade bottles, combs, mouth-organs and the like into what is, after all, the farm's drinking-water; they also deposited, at various times between 1912 and 1959, the sum of 11½d. in coppers, which we considered inadequate payment for our chilly labours.

The well was constructed of heavy stone slabs set on end, and was not deep: bottom was found on a sloping floor of clay and gravel only 4 ft. 6 in. below the top of the slabs. There was an inlet passage in the centre of the northern slab, though today the water enters by a crack in the north-eastern corner. It is clearly fed by a very strong spring, for in spite of supplying the farm above with water, much spills out and flows into the cattle-trough. It cannot yet be determined whether the well was contained within a temple larger than the small shrine, with apsidal northern end, of which a plan is now given for the first time (fig. 1). Clayton, as we have seen, records that two blank altars were found inside the shrine, but there is hardly room for more than half a dozen

people in it; it might be profitable to examine the ground immediately to the south, to see whether the building stretched further that way (but here, too, the paved cattle-trough will prove tiresome to deal with).

Roman finds from the well comprised about a bucketful of pottery, eight coins, a forger's coin-mould (the second to be recovered from the Housesteads settlement), bone pins, beads, wood and a bucket-handle. The latest of the coins was a follis of Constantine I, datable A.D. 316/317, and there were also fragments of fourth-century pottery, and it would appear that the well remained in use longer than the building on Site II near by.

Finally, it is a pleasant duty to thank those who made this excavation possible: in particular, Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, O.M., for permission to excavate on his land in 1960 as in 1931-1934, and to the Durham University Excavation Committee for their generous grant towards the cost of the work, and for the loan of many tools. We have to thank Mr. Thomas Carr, Dr. Trevelyan's park-keeper, for tolerating our spoil-heaps and trenches; Mr. William Thompson, the Ministry of Works custodian of Housesteads, who gave us much assistance, and was able to show us the exact spot from which he helped his grandfather to remove the 1920 altar (its findspot is recorded incorrectly on the 1922 O.S. plan); Mr. Charles Anderson and his staff, of the Ministry of Works, for fencing off the site securely; Professor Eric Birley, who paid many visits to the excavation and gave us much valuable advice; Mr. John Wilkes, who frequently spared time from his own excavation in the fort to visit us; Messrs. Gow and Birnie, of Strathallan School, for ten days' hard work; and finally those who lived for five weeks under canvas, working hours that would have made good Union men blench: Mr. R. G. Hall, Mr. A. R. Birley and my wife—the latter combining the duties of digging with cooking and the drawing of plans and all the pottery included with this report.

THE FINDS.

The Pottery.

I must acknowledge the kind assistance of Professor Birley and Mr. Dodds in the identification of the pottery; the drawings are the work of my wife, who has also described the figured samian.

(a) *Coarse pottery*: References are given, wherever possible, to Mr. Gillam's type-series in AA4 xxxv; the pieces selected for report are all illustrated in fig. 2. Unstratified pieces are marked with an asterisk.

1. Flagon neck and handle; hard, light buff ware, cream washed, with vestigial rings on the neck. Closest to Gillam type 8; cf. also *Wroxeter* 1912, p. 69, no. 2: "c. A.D. 80-120". Site II, stratified above upper flags.

2.* Small flagon neck and handle; hard grey ware, with dark grey slip. Nothing like it in Gillam's series.

3. Small flask; hard reddish buff, with traces of a whitish slip. Cf. Gillam types 37 and 39 (though they are not very close parallels). Site II, above upper flags.

4. Rough-cast mug; purple-brown fabric, as with the common roughcast beakers, Gillam types 72 and 73, like which this should be Hadrianic at latest. No parallels have been found in this fabric, but for the type cf. Oelmann, *Niederbieber* (1914), p. 42, type 35, where it is noted that it is essentially derived from a wooden cask, copied in glass in the first century, and thereafter in a variety of pottery fabrics, including samian. Stratified below the wooden floor of Site II.

5.* Jar neck and shoulder; reddish-bronze fabric, with a pattern of wedge-shaped impressions, done individually with a punch and matched by slight bulges on the inside. No exact parallels have been noted, but there is the upper part of a grey jar, with similar impressions though in that case inverted, from an unpublished pre-Hadrianic deposit at Brough under Stainmore, Westmorland.

6. Bowl with beaded rim; grey ware, with faint lattice pattern on the wall. Cf. Gillam types 233 and 234, possibly Hadrianic, but more likely Antonine. Site II, stratified above lower flags.

7.* Deep bowl, black fumed ware, with firm cross-hatching; rim as Gillam type 221.

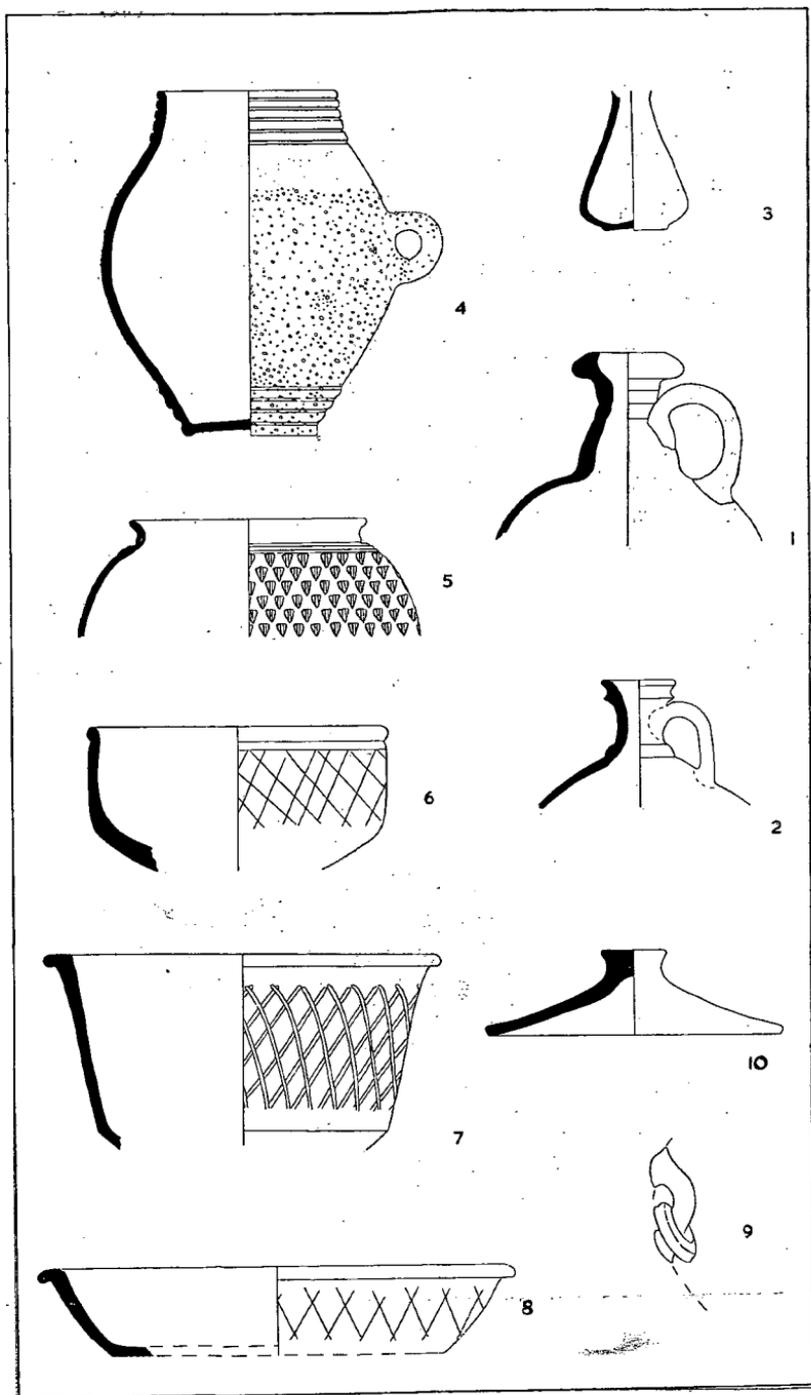


FIG. 2. (1/4).

8. Bowl; fine black fumed ware, lattice pattern on the wall; no chamfer, rim closest to Gillam type 221. Site II, above lower flags.

9.* Jar handle with loose ring round it; smooth light grey fabric. Cf. Gillam type 174 for a similar use of a ring.

10.* Complete lid; rough-surfaced grey ware. Cf. Gillam type 340.

(b) *Figured samian*: The standard references are made, where necessary, to CGP = Stanfield and Simpson, *Central Gaulish Potters* and to O. = Oswald's figure-types. It has been thought proper to include two interesting pieces from an excavation in the civil settlement at Chesterholm in 1959 (fig. 5, nos. 12 and 13).

Fig. 3:

Large piece of a South Gaulish Dr. 37, in the style of MERCATO or a closely associated potter; Professor Birley notes

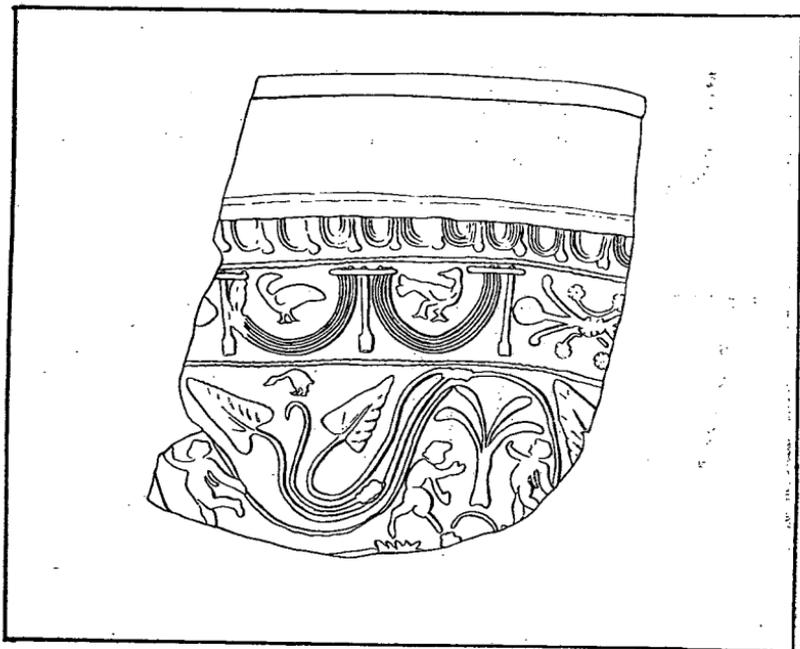


FIG. 3. (1/2).

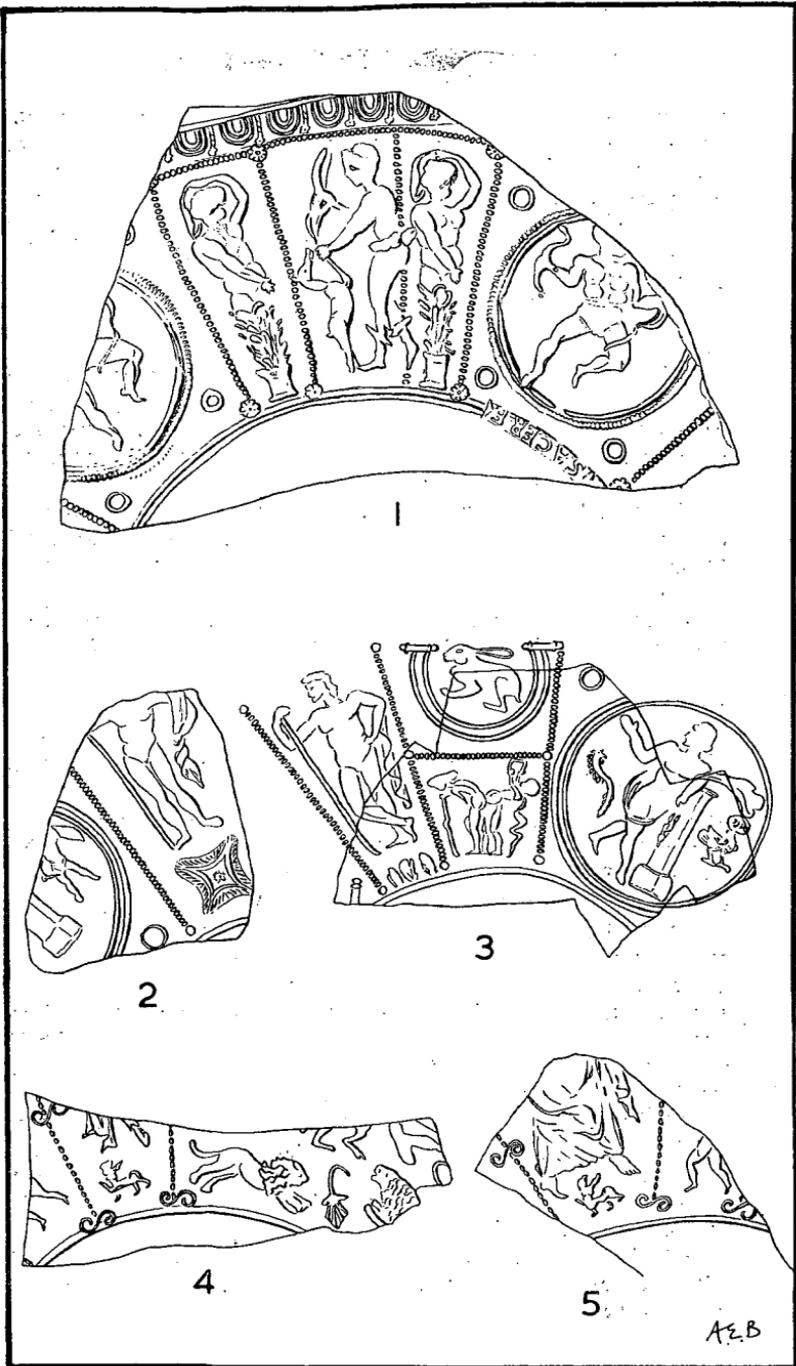


FIG. 4. (†).

that its date of manufacture can hardly have been later than A.D. 90, if so late. It seems best to treat it as a survival, however, rather than as evidence for a Flavian occupation of the site: cf. the pieces of a bowl attributable to the contemporary South Gaulish potter BIRAGILLVS which Mr. R. C. Shaw found in excavating Willowford bridge in 1923 (CW2 xxvi 449f.). Site II, upon the wooden floor at the east end of the hall.

Fig. 4:

1. Much of a Dr. 37 with the stamp SACER.F, impressed upside down at the bottom of the decoration. Cf. CGP, pl. 84, not necessarily by the same potter as the bowls stamped OFISACRI or signed SACRIO. "Circa A.D. 125-150" (E. B.). Site II, upon the wooden floor.

2* and 3.* Several pieces of a Dr. 37 evidently attributable to CINNAMVS: cf. CGP, plates 157, 6; 162, 59; &c. The small fringed cushion on no. 2 seems to be exclusive to that potter. C. A.D. 150-190.

4* and 5.* Two pieces from a Dr. 37 clearly the work of the "Small S Potter"—cf. CGP, plates 141-144. A.D. 160-195.

Fig. 5:

6. Part of a Dr. 37, from a rather worn mould, showing affinities with a piece attributed to PVGNVS in CGP, pl. 153, 6, though with a large rosette terminal not recorded on that potter's work. One figure type is unknown to Oswald, namely the *scarf-dancer to l.* whose scarf has been broken or trimmed off; but Professor Birley notes that the same type has been used on one of two pieces from the same bowl, in the Corstopitum collection, which also shows clearer impressions of what seem to be the same large rosette and the same ovolo and wavy lines, both horizontal and vertical. He adds that Stanfield was inclined to attribute the Corstopitum pieces to the potter SISSVS, whose products seem best assigned to the period A.D. 125-150. Site II, above the lower flags. Mr. Dodds has kindly drawn the Corstopitum pieces, inserted here as fig. 6.

7.* Dr. 37, a fragment demonstrably assignable to "Potter X-6": cf. CGP, pl. 75, 15. A.D. 125-150.

8. Dr. 30, with ram's horn decoration, small rosettes and bead-rows indicating CENSORINVS as its maker: cf. CGP, pl. 102, 15. A.D. 150-180. Site II, above upper flags.

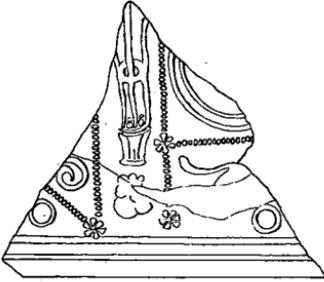
9.* Dr. 37 with winding scroll decoration; the animal to l. within a lower concavity has not been identified; the piece is badly worn.



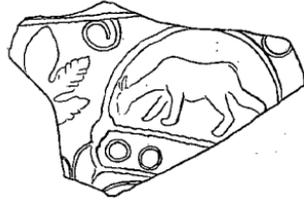
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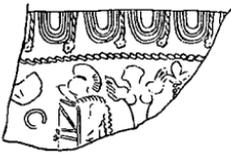
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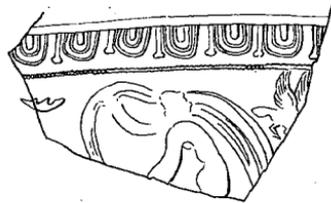
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9



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11



12



13

A.F.B.

FIG. 5. NOS. 12 AND 13 COME FROM CHESTERHOLM. (½).

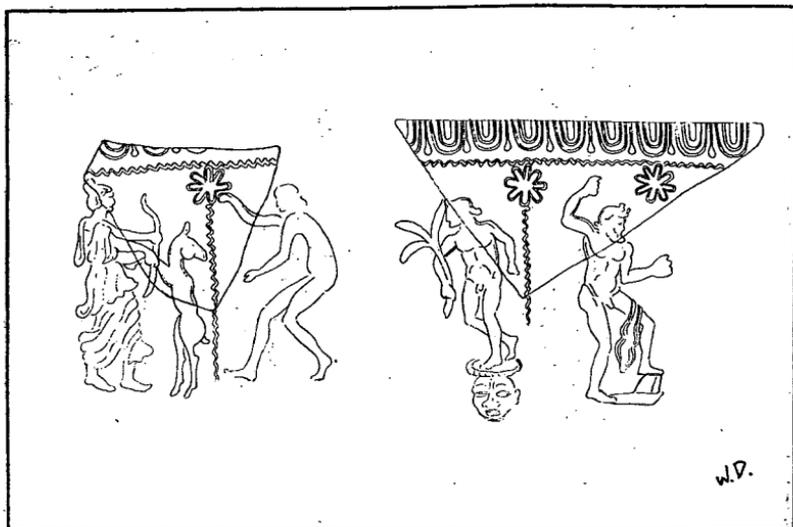


FIG. 6. CORSTOPITUM PIECES. (4).

10. Dr. 37; the ovolo is not unlike CGP, fig. 47, 2 (the ovolo used by CINNAMVS on many of his smaller bowls), but a somewhat earlier potter seems in question. A.D. 125-150 (?). Site II, above lower flags.

11.* Dr. 37, assignable to LAXIVCISSA: note the leaf in the field, and the characteristic hammer-tongued ovolo with associated horizontal bead-row, and cf. CGP, pl. 99, 21 and 22, also using his favourite version of the scarf-dancer. A.D. 150-180.

12. (Chesterholm settlement, 1959, unstratified.) "Dr. 37, assignable by its general style (ovolo, coarse wavy line, leaves and tendrils and the characteristic small *lion* to r.) to a Flavian South Gaulish potter, probably one of the successors of GERMANVS; but I can find no exact parallel to the elegantly relaxed figure-type, and none to the disproportionately large urn in the field." (E. B.)

13. (Same provenance as no. 12.) "Dr. 37, assignable by its style and fabric to Rheinzabern. The figure-type, O. 614 or 615, was used by at least 20 different Rheinzabern potters; but the ovolo and bifid leaves in series to subdivide the field point to IANV(arius) I, though there is no very close parallel in Ricken's *Tafelband* (1948)=Ludowici, *Katalog VI*." (E. B.)

THE COINS. BY A. R. BIRLEY.

Thanks are due to Dr. J. P. C. Kent of the British Museum for assistance in describing some of the coins. Those found in the course of the work fall into two groups: group A consists of five coins found separately in different parts of the building complex, all unstratified, while group B consists of eight coins and a terracotta coin-mould found in the well. Apart from the denarius of M. Antonius, the coins cover the period A.D. 165-317.

(i) Group A.

1. M. Antonius. Denarius. 43-31 B.C.

Obv. Illegible.

Rev. [] III VIR RPC
Praetorian galley, l.

2. Clodius Albinus. As. A.D. 193-195.

Obv. IMP CAE[S D CLO] SEP ALB AVG

Head of Albinus, laureate, r.

Rev. FORTVN[AE REDVCI COS] II

Fortuna seated l., holding rudder on globe and cornucopia. RIC 64. (Mint of Lugdunum). Dr. Kent observes that the single specimen of this coin at the British Museum is now authenticated by the Housesteads find.

3. Clodius Albinus. Sestertius. A.D. 193-197.

Obv. [] SEP[]

Head of Albinus, laureate, r.

Rev. Illegible.

4. Illegible. Sestertius. ? Severan.

5. Illegible. As.

(ii) Group B.

6. Faustina II. As. A.D. 161-175.

Obv. [] NA A[]

Bust of Faustina, r.

Rev. [] S SC

Female figure (? Fecunditas), standing r., both hands raised. Cf. RIC 1639.

7. Commodus. Denarius. A.D. 186/187.

Obv. M COMM ANT P FEL AVG BR[IT]

Head of Commodus, laureate, r.

Rev. [A]VCT PIET PM TR P XII IMP VIII COS V PP

Pietas, standing l., sacrificing over altar, with incense from patera, and holding box. RIC 146.

8. Severus. Sestertius. A.D. 193-211.

Obv. Illegible. Head of Severus, laureate, r.

Rev. []SC

Victory, hastening r., holding wreath and palm. Cf. RIC 667 and 672.

9. Geta. Denarius. Circa A.D. 200-202.

Obv. P SEPT GETA CAES PONT

Bust of Geta, draped, head bare, r.

Rev. PRINC IVVENTVIS

Geta standing l., holding branch and spear; behind, trophy. RIC 18.

10. Traianus Decius. Double denarius. A.D. 249 (?).

Obv. IMP TRAIANVS DECIVS AVG

Bust of Decius, radiate, r.

Rev. ADVENTVS AVG

Decius, on horse pacing l., raising r. hand and holding sceptre. RIC 1(b).

11. Claudius II. Double denarius. A.D. 268-270.

Obv. IMP C CLAVDIVS AVG

Bust of Claudius, radiate, r.

Rev. MARS VLTOR

Mars walking r., with spear. Mint-mark H. (Rome, eighth *officina*). RIC 66.

12. Claudius II. Double denarius. A.D. 268-270.

Obv. I[MP] CL[AVD]IVS [PF] AVG

Bust of Claudius, radiate, r.

Rev. VICTO[RIA AVG]

Victory, running r., holding wreath and palm. RIC. 171.

13. Constantine I. Follis. A.D. 316/317.

Obv. Illegible. Head of Constantine, r.

Rev. [SOLI INVIC]TO COMITI

Sol radiate, standing l.

13a. Terracotta coin-mould, for casting denarii. Diameter 1 in., depth $\frac{1}{8}$ in.

Obv. (in reverse) ANTONINVS PIVS AVG Head (very worn).

Rev. (in reverse) CONCORDIA AVGG Figure of Concordia, l., holding spear and patera.

For a forger's crucible and a specimen mould used therein, cf. the *British Museum Guide to Antiquities of Roman Britain* (1951), p. 78 and fig. 39. For a description of the mould found in the Housesteads settlement in 1932 cf. Mr. W. Percy Hedley's observations in AA4 x 94ff., with some general remarks on the topic: the types of the present mould are of the early third century, which as Mr. Hedley observed was a period of intensive activity by coin-casters. For the *obverse* type cf. RIC vol. IV, pt. i, pl. xii 9; for the *reverse* type, *ibid.*, pl. xiii 11 (Caracalla under Severus and Plautilla).

