

XIV.—MUSEUM NOTES, 1969¹

D. A. Robson, John Tait and D. J. Smith

1. A NOTE ON THE GEOLOGY OF THE ROMAN INSCRIBED AND SCULPTURED STONES ON EXHIBITION IN THE MUSEUM.

One is not infrequently asked about the sources of the stone used for inscriptions and sculptures of the Roman period. I referred this question to Dr. D. A. Robson, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, who kindly inspected the stones on exhibition in the Museum and prepared a summary report, stone by stone, which is now deposited in the Museum library. The report is too long to reproduce here, but with his consent I print his conclusions. (D.J.S.)

“Without exception, the pieces have been fashioned from sandstone, of which there are abundant quarries and natural outcrops in N.E. England. In each case the sandstone is thick-bedded, with little or no mica, and well cemented. Where mica occurs in more than minute proportions (it is never abundant) reference is made to this in the description. Variation in colour of the sandstone depends on the degree of staining which the rock has undergone since its formation. The mineral generally responsible for brown or yellow staining is limonite; red staining—through the conversion of limonite to hematite—is rare in the sandstones outcropping east of the Pennines; but it could be produced by artificial heating of the stone.

“The source of some of the sandstones could no doubt be traced, especially if it is likely that they were all obtained

¹ Prepared for the press by Dr. D. J. Smith. Thanks are recorded to Dr. Robson and Mr. Tait for their respective contributions, and to Mr. Tait and Miss Mary M. Hurrell for the drawings used as illustrations.

locally. Indeed, every sandstone has its own peculiar features, but it would be a laborious job to record all the features and to compare them with museum specimens."

D. A. ROBSON

2. A CIST BURIAL OF THE EARLY BRONZE AGE AT BOWSDEN WEST FARM. Fig. 1.

While ploughing on Bowsden West Farm, Lowick, in 1963, Mr. J. Wilson, the son of the farmer, encountered a large stone. As stones were at the time being used in reconstruction work on the farm he decided to remove it and in so doing a cist of early Bronze Age form was revealed.

The site (NT 984414), on a sandstone ridge on the 300 feet contour line, was visited the day after the discovery by Mr. L. Rutherford of Wooler to whom I am grateful for the notes and measurements he then made.

The cist, measuring 4 ft. long by 3 ft. wide and 3 ft. deep, was well constructed of sandstone slabs with a small amount of packing in one corner. The capstone, the top of which was marked only by old plough scars, was 5 ft. by 4 ft. with an estimated weight of about two tons.

When first seen the cist was more or less empty except for a little clay soil and fragments of pottery lying in the S.E. corner. Although a careful search was made in the cist and amongst the soil for evidence of the burial, whether by inhumation or cremation, nothing else was found.

The pottery fragments numbered some seventy odd and when examined it was found that they represented two separate Food Vessels with about two thirds of each vessel remaining. The fact that neither was complete is not surprising as water tends to collect in the bottom of some cists with the result that the pottery softens and the less well fired parts disintegrate.

The smaller of the two pots, Fig. 1, no. 1 (Mus. Accn. no. 1964.7.1) has a light brown surface with dark core containing large grits. The diameter at the rim is 14 cms. and

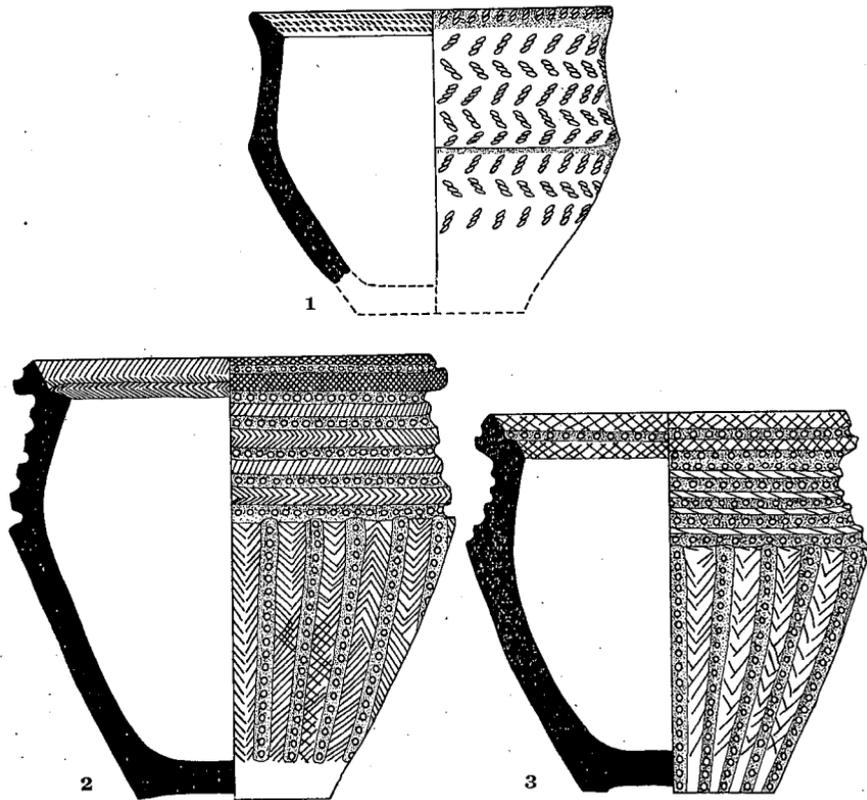


FIG. 1. FOOD VESSELS FROM BOWSDEN WEST FARM (1, 2) AND BOLTON HOUSE (3).
SCALE 1:3. DRAWN BY JOHN TAIT. SEE NOTE 2.

although the whole of the base is missing it would not have been less than 11.5 cms. tall. The decoration has been made with a short length of twisted cord probably held over the thumb and impressed on the pot in a chevron pattern which covers about two thirds of the vessel. On the inside of the rim are three lines of finer cord impressions.

The larger vessel from the cist, Fig. 1, no. 2 (Mus. Accn. no. 1964.7.2) is 17 cms. tall with a diameter of 16 cms. at the rim. It is dark brown in colour with a dark core and contains finer and less grit than the other vessel. The fabric is fairly hard and is in fact better fired than that of the majority of Food Vessels.

The decoration has been neatly and carefully executed in fine incisions and small circular impressions probably made by the cut end of a reed or straw. There is a groove on the outside of the rim and a further five grooves on the neck between the rim and the shoulder. All the grooves contain circular impressions but those in the rim groove are slightly smaller than the others. On the body of the vessel are semi-circular vertical grooves also containing circular impressions which give the vessel a fluted appearance. The incised decoration on the ribs between the grooves takes the form of chevrons, diagonal strokes and cross-hatching.

In Alnwick Castle Museum there is a very similar Food Vessel which is so close, both in form and method of decoration, that it has been included here for comparison; see Fig. 1, no. 3. Little is known about the actual find except that it was unearthed near Bolton House adjacent to Beanly Moor, to the N.W. of Alnwick, and presented to the museum on September 26th, 1856.²

The Bolton House vessel, though smaller, being 14.5 cms. tall and 14 cms. in diameter at the rim, also has a groove on the outside of the rim, the same number of grooves on the neck, and the body is fluted. All the grooves have small circu-

² *Catalogue of Antiquities at Alnwick Castle* (1880), 9, no. 7, Pl. VII, left. Here illustrated again with acknowledgments to H. G. the Duke of Northumberland.

lar impressions in them as with the example from Bowsden. Even the decoration between the grooves is similar in the use of incised strokes in the form of chevrons, diagonal strokes and cross-hatching. The only major difference is that it has a groove with circular impressions on the inside of the rim which the Bowsden vessel lacks.

Although these two vessels from Bowsden West Farm and Bolton House were found some twenty miles apart it is perhaps better not to envisage them as a new type of fluted Food Vessel, but rather as the creation of one person who might easily have moved from one area to another. It is unfortunate that in neither case was there any real evidence of the type of burial, although they are both likely to have been by inhumation. If any remains had survived the age and sex might have given us a little insight into the personal life and grief of someone who lived in the early Bronze Age.

It is by no means exceptional to find more than one Food Vessel in a cist with a presumed single burial and this may well be related to a similar custom within the Beaker period.³ Examples are known from East Lothian and Lanarkshire in Scotland with three vessels in each cist and from Derbyshire and Cumberland with two vessels in each cist. The present find brings the known examples from Northumberland to four. At Crag Hall, Jesmond, two cists were discovered containing four vessels,⁴ and a more recent find is one from Longridge Towers, four miles north of Bowsden West Farm.⁵ There are also other undated burials with multiple vessels from Yorkshire and Lanarkshire and as with the burials in cists the funerary rites include both inhumation and cremation.

The two Food Vessels were kindly given to the Museum by Mr. G. Wilson.

JOHN TAIT

³ J. Tait, *Beakers from Northumberland* (1965), 28-29.

⁴ *A.A.*³ i (1904), 16.

⁵ *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, New Series 1 (1969), 108.

3. TWO PRICKS OF ROMAN SPURS FROM SOUTH SHIELDS.
Fig. 2, upper.

In 1964 I published two unrecorded Roman brass or bronze spurs, presumably from South Shields.⁶ In both the prick is lacking. Recently Dr. J. D. Cowen drew my attention to the existence in the collections of two brass or bronze pricks of Roman spurs from South Shields, both hitherto unpublished.⁷ One or other may perhaps have belonged to one or other of the spurs. Like the latter they are of different patterns. One (Fig. 2, upper, left) can be described as bi-conical, with one cone truncated where it gives way to the tang or rivet by means of which the prick was inserted into the hole made for it in the spur. The overall length of this prick is 1.7 cm., the length of the tang 3 mm. The other (Fig. 2, upper, right) is longer and more slender, but otherwise similar to the first except that the truncated cone here gives way to a pronounced collar with angular edges; then comes the tang or rivet. The overall length of this prick is 2.05 cm., the length of the tang 5 mm.

D. J. SMITH

4. THE FORGOTTEN WHITFIELD HOARD OF BRONZE VESSELS.
Figs. 2-5.

In 1951 Professor Hawkes published a classic survey of the bronze-working industry in Iron Age and Roman Britain, as represented especially by the production of cauldrons and buckets and their attachments.⁸ Shortly afterwards this was followed by Professor Piggott's detailed analysis and catalogue of "Three metal-work hoards of the

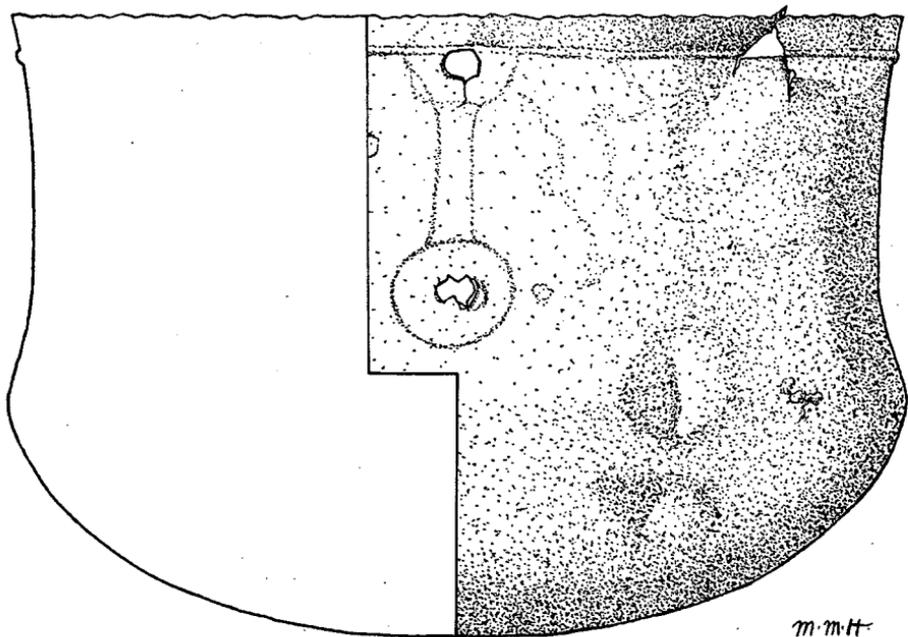
⁶ "Museum Notes, 1964", *AA*⁴ xlii (1964), 288-90, Fig. 2, A, B. See also the *Corrigenda* noted in *AA*⁴ xliii (1965), 315.

⁷ Like the spurs these have never been individually registered in the Society's Donations Book.

⁸ C. F. C. Hawkes, "Bronze-workers, cauldrons, and bucket-animals in Iron Age and Roman Britain", chap. XI in *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond* (ed. W. F. Grimes, 1951).



m.m.H.



m.m.H.

FIG. 2. UPPER: PRICKS OF ROMAN SPURS FROM SOUTH SHIELDS (1/1). SEE NOTE 3.
LOWER: WHITFIELD HOARD—SMALLEST CAULDRON (1/2). SEE NOTE 4.
DRAWINGS BY MARY M. HURRELL

Roman period from southern Scotland",⁹ which had been directly occasioned by the late Sir Cyril Fox's celebrated account of the hoard of Llyn Cerrig Bach in Anglesey.¹⁰ Perusal of the studies of Hawkes and Piggott, and in particular of Piggott's catalogue and the numerous references and parallels cited therein, suggests that an important hoard from Northumberland has hitherto been overlooked. This is the hoard of three bronze cauldrons and a Roman bronze strainer found on Whitfield Moor, in the south-western tip of the county, at least as long ago as 1848.¹¹ Of the precise location and circumstances of discovery there is no record, but it may perhaps be surmised that, like certain other hoards of comparable character, it was unearthed during drainage operations and had been deposited as a votive offering in a pool which eventually dried up.¹² That this hoard should subsequently have escaped notice is not surprising, for no account of it has ever been published and, for reasons which it is unnecessary to recapitulate, the strainer was displayed separately from the cauldrons in the Black Gate, while the latter were exhibited where they could easily be missed by a visitor studying the contents of the cases. All except the largest cauldron, which is too fragile to exhibit, are now re-united in the Museum of Antiquities.

The cauldrons are of three different sizes. All are of bronze, now very thin and fragile. The smallest (Fig. 2) stands 16 cm. high and its diameter at the rim averages 23 cm. From the rim downwards its profile is first slightly concave, then swells, giving the vessel a maximum diameter of 23.3 cm., before re-curving convexly to form a rounded bottom. In short, this is a version of the 'Santon' type of cauldron,

⁹ *PSAS* lxxxvii (1955), 1-50.

¹⁰ Cyril Fox, *A Find of the Early Iron Age from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey* (1946).

¹¹ The hoard is registered in the Society's Donations Book as accession nos. 15-18 in the year 1848 and simply described as having been "found in a moss [bog] near Whitfield Hall"; hence *AA*¹ iv (1855), Donations, p. 12.

¹² See the preceding note; cf. Piggott, 5-8. The Rev. John Hodgson especially noted drainage operations in the parish of Whitfield a few years earlier; *Hist. of Northumberland* III, part ii (1840), 105.

already represented in northern England and southern Scotland by larger vessels from Bewcastle (Cumberland) and Carlingwark Loch (Kirkcudbrightshire).¹³ Like these the Whitfield cauldron had been much used and had been patched and re-patched in at least ten places before its deposition. Technologically, however, it differs from them in having been fashioned not from two parts separately made and riveted together but from a single sheet of metal. It was, in fact, as a small central hole (still plugged) in the bottom shows, formed by the much more advanced technique of spinning on a lathe.¹⁴ This accounts for the thinness of the metal, which, as the distortion of the slightly everted rim of the vessel betrays, necessitated reinforcement of the rim by an additional band of metal.¹⁵ This served not only to protect the rim from damage but also to take the strain when the vessel was lifted by its handle. The latter was not unlike the handle of a modern pail and similarly was attached by means of specially made mounts which themselves have a long and fascinating history of development.¹⁶ But neither the handle nor the reinforcing rim-band of the Whitfield cauldron have survived, and it can be assumed that the metal of which they were made was the more perishable, though stronger, iron. The attachments or 'handle-loops' also have not survived, and were most probably likewise of iron.¹⁷ But two large rivet-holes 5 cm. apart on one side of the cauldron, the uppermost 9 mm. below the rim, and a corresponding pair which can be discerned despite damage on the opposite side, show where they were fastened, whilst their shape is still faintly outlined by a slight lightening of the patina of the surrounding metal. From this it seems that they were of the figure-of-eight form already found elsewhere, though with a notable elongation of the 'waist' between the loops.¹⁸

¹³ For discussion and references see Hawkes, 179-83 and notes, Fig. 47, a, and Piggott, *passim*, Fig. 7 (C. 1).

¹⁴ Hawkes, 184-5, 186-8; Piggott, 40.

¹⁵ Hawkes, 182, 184; Piggott, 28, 40, 42 (item B. 14).

¹⁶ Hawkes, 190-9.

¹⁷ Cf. Piggott, 32 (items C. 11, C. 12).

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, Fig. 8, C. 11, C. 12.

The cauldron of intermediate size—the best preserved (Fig. 3)—is of the same type. Its height is 26.6 cm., diameter at the rim 36.5 cm., and diameter of the body at the carination 36.4 cm. The iron rim-binding has disappeared, leaving only the characteristic crinkling of the rim. In this vessel, however, the holes for the rivets by means of which the 'handle-loops' were attached are 8 cm. apart and the uppermost is 1 cm. below the rim. The shape of the attachments has been similar to those of the smaller cauldron but their outline is here almost imperceptible. Slightly more perceptible is the horizontal faceting from the carination downwards which results from the technique of manufacture on a lathe.¹⁹ The small central hole with its plug in the bottom of the vessel, which is another result of the employment of this technique, can also be seen, despite repairs. In fact, this cauldron is altogether a most instructive specimen of its type.

The third and largest cauldron has unfortunately suffered severely from the ravages of time and use (Fig. 4). In its present state it is a large, entirely convex vessel 26 cm. deep and with an average diameter of 62.15 cm. Around the rim, 1 cm. below it, runs a row of very small holes about 2 cm. apart. These cannot be explained as for rivets holding in place a reinforcing rim band, for such a row of holes around the rim is not present in other cauldrons and the characteristically crinkled rim is absent here. Nor can one see the rivet-holes as marking the line of junction in a cauldron formed of two or more separately made parts fastened together, since in such cauldrons the junction of upper and lower parts is made well above the carination. It is therefore difficult to say, at first sight, whether this particular cauldron was of the 'Santon' or

¹⁹ For another cauldron showing this feature and generally very similar to this Whitfield vessel, found since the studies of Hawkes and Piggott, see Joan Liversidge, "A bronze bowl and other vessels from Icklingham, Suffolk", *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.* lv (1962), 6-7, Pl. 1, c. There is no trace of anchor-shaped bronze mounts on the Whitfield cauldrons.

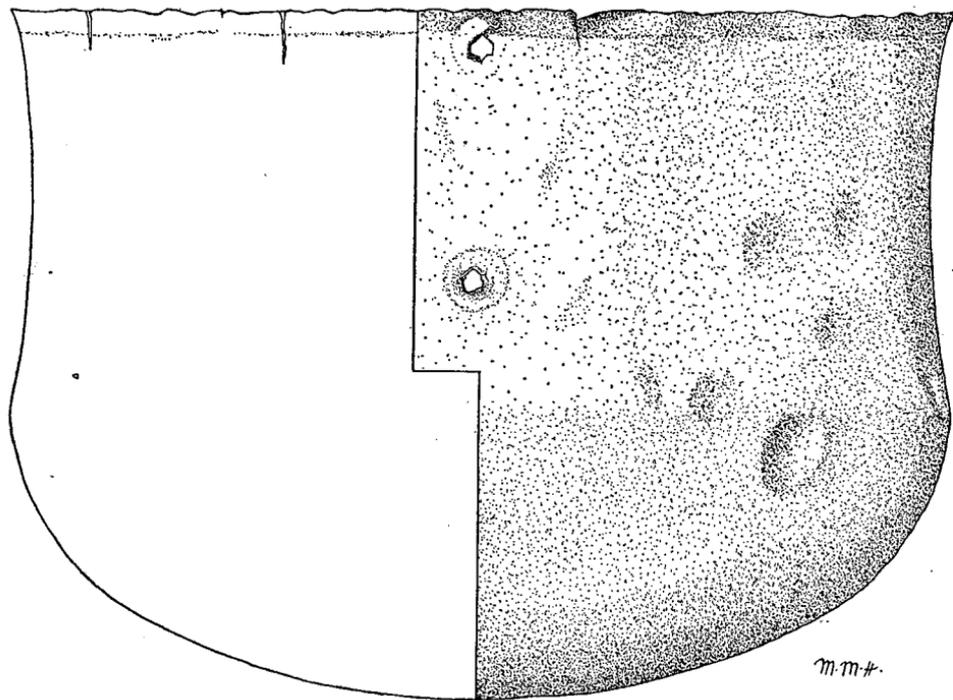


FIG. 3. WHITFIELD HOARD—CAULDRON OF INTERMEDIATE SIZE (1/3).
DRAWN BY MARY M. HURRELL. SEE NOTE 4

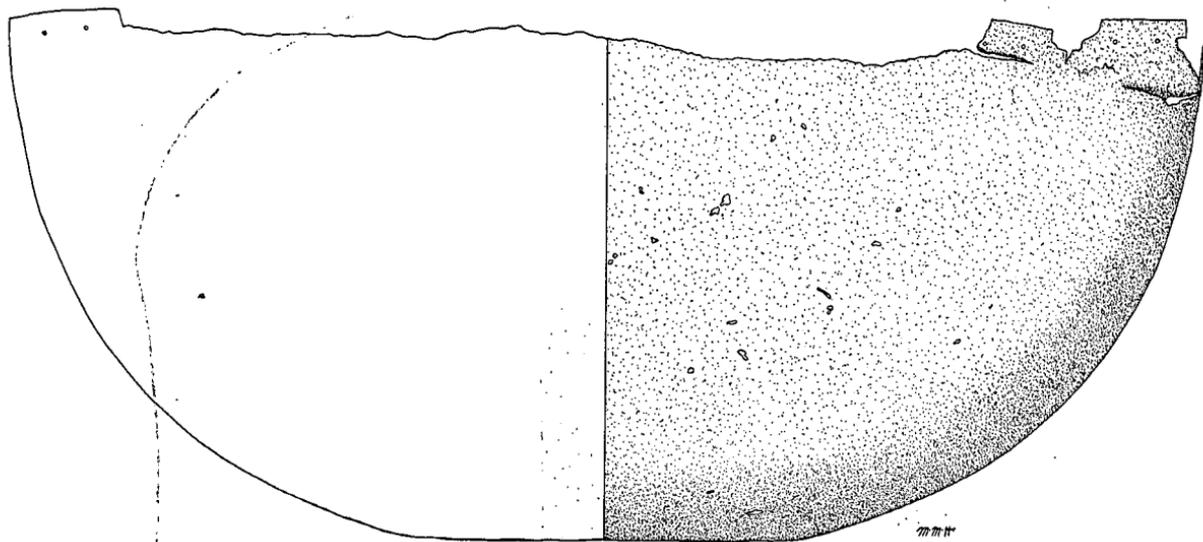


FIG. 4. WHITFIELD HOARD—LARGEST CAULDRON (1/4).
DRAWN BY MARY M. HURRELL, SEE NOTE 4.

the 'Battersea' type.²⁰ But from its association with two of the former, and the fact that it has likewise been fashioned by spinning and not by beating, it is not unreasonable to assume that this also was originally a cauldron of the 'Santon' type which, having split apart around the carination—a tendency observable in at least one other of this type²¹—was made serviceable again by riveting the two parts together. A possible objection to this is the spacing of the rivet-holes around the 'rim', which is double that of the rivets securing patches, but such an explanation would also account for the absence of any rivet-holes for 'handle-loops' as well as for the apparent trimming of the 'rim'.

The fourth item of the Whitfield hoard is a perfectly preserved bronze strainer of a well known Roman type (Fig. 5). This has recently been noted and illustrated, though without mention of the cauldrons associated with it, in a detailed and wide-ranging survey of Roman bronze paterae and related vessels in Britain.²² The diameter and depth of the perforated bowl are 12.2 cm. and 6.3 cm. respectively. The perforations form a central pattern, resembling the head of a simple flower with radiating petals rounded at the end, separated by a scalloped line from an encircling, highly schematic rendering of a guilloche. The handle is 16 cm. long; it has been bevelled at the end as if to produce a cutting edge.

On typological grounds the strainer is datable to the second-third century;²³ but the form of the two relatively

²⁰ For the latter see Fox, *op. cit.*, 88, Hawkes, 179, Piggott, 40 (items B. 1, B. 2), Fig. 7 (B1, B2). A beaten cauldron of 'Battersea' type from Ewarty Shank, Alnham, Northumberland, is in the Museum.

²¹ i.e. that from Carlingwark Loch; Piggott, 28, Fig. 7 (C1).

²² H. J. Eggers, "Römische Bronzegefäße in Britannien", *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz* 13 (1966), 108, no. 63, Fig. 63. For similar strainers with handles similar to that from Whitfield *cf. ibid.*, Fig. 10, nos. 59; c, d (Greatchesters), Fig. 36, no. 38 (Chesterford), Fig. 58, no. 34 (Great Wackering), and Fig. 64, no. 85 (Glenshee). But it must be noted that handles of this pattern do not always belong to strainers: *cf. ibid.*, Fig. 14, no. 64 (Rudchester), Fig. 50, no. 1, h (London). The Whitfield strainer has evidently been cleaned at some time and, *pace* Eggers, now bears no trace of 'Möörpatina'.

²³ For a contemporary strainer, at Trier, virtually identical with that from Whitfield, see W. Schleiermacher, *Der Römische Limes in Deutschland (Der Limesführer)*; 2nd rev. ed., 1961), Fig. 7c.

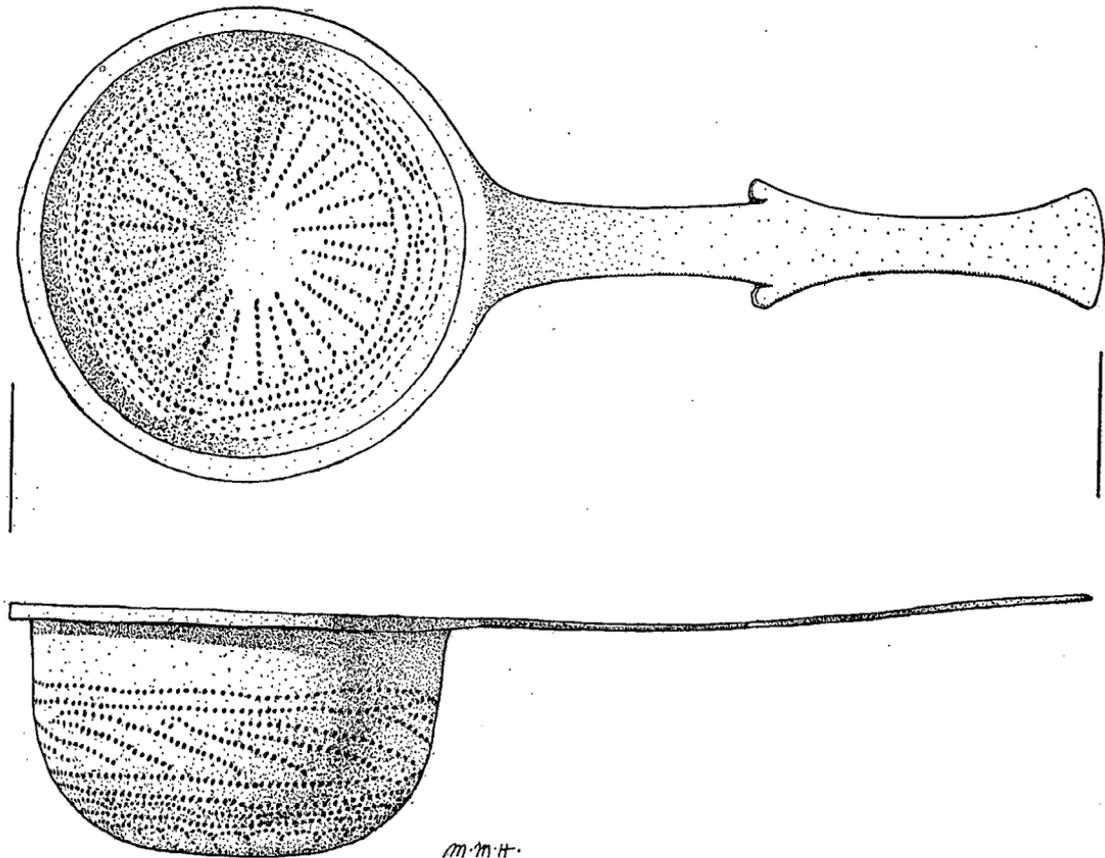


FIG. 5. WHITFIELD HOARD—BRONZE STRAINER (1/2).
DRAWN BY MARY M. HUBBELL. SEE NOTE C.

intact cauldrons and their fabrication from single sheets of metal by the technique of spinning enable these to be dated to the later third century.²⁴ How long any of the vessels were in use before being assembled together and deposited as a hoard must be, of course, conjectural. But the battered and patched—and still sooty—condition of the cauldrons suggests a lengthy period of service which might have extended into the fourth century. In striking contrast the strainer appears brand new and must have been a treasured heirloom, little if ever used. In this respect, as in its representation of the Roman taste for wine, it is here the odd man out, the cauldrons being demonstrably native products and perhaps to be associated with the British tribesman's preference for his own home-brewed beer.²⁵

D. J. SMITH

²⁴ Hawkes, 184-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 177; Piggott (after Curle), 4.

