

VII.—SEVERN VALLEY WARE ON HADRIAN'S WALL¹

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Among the vast quantities of pottery reaching the Hadrian's Wall area was a small quantity of the ware now generally known as Severn Valley Ware.² This is an oxidised fabric³ varying in colour between light-buff and red-buff and generally extensively burnished, although soil conditions often remove this surface treatment. The ware has been distinguished not only by its fabric but also by the fairly standard set of forms in which it occurs. Of these the handled tankard is the most extensively distributed, being found throughout the Severn Basin and also in the Hadrian's Wall area. It is also extensively imitated in non-Severn Valley fabrics in areas bordering the Severn Basin (see Fig. 1).

The examination of deposits which contained or seemed likely to contain Severn Valley tankards was undertaken by the author as part of a more general study of the ware. As well as the tankards, it revealed a few vessels in other Severn Valley forms and almost certainly in Severn Valley fabric. The study also showed a very limited distribution

¹ This article is based upon part of a thesis awarded the degree of M.Phil. by the University of London. I should like to acknowledge financial help towards the collection of the material from the Department of Education and Science and the University of London, Central Research Fund. I am also grateful to the following for help in collecting material and the benefit of discussion: Miss D. Charlesworth, C. M. Daniels, Prof. S. S. Frere, J. P. Gillam, R. Hogg, Dr. M. G. Jarrett, Dr. Grace Simpson, Prof. Donald Strong, the late J. Tait and Dr. G. Webster and also the staff of the various Wall Museums for sundry help.

² cf. *AJ*, 125 (1968) pp. 223-4 (No. 114) also P. V. Webster, *Severn Valley Ware: A Preliminary Study* (forthcoming).

³ Reduced fabric does occasionally occur. The only examples from the area under discussion are a vessel from Milecastle 40 (Fig. 2. C) and one from Carlisle (*CW*, 17 (1917) p. 165 No. 162).

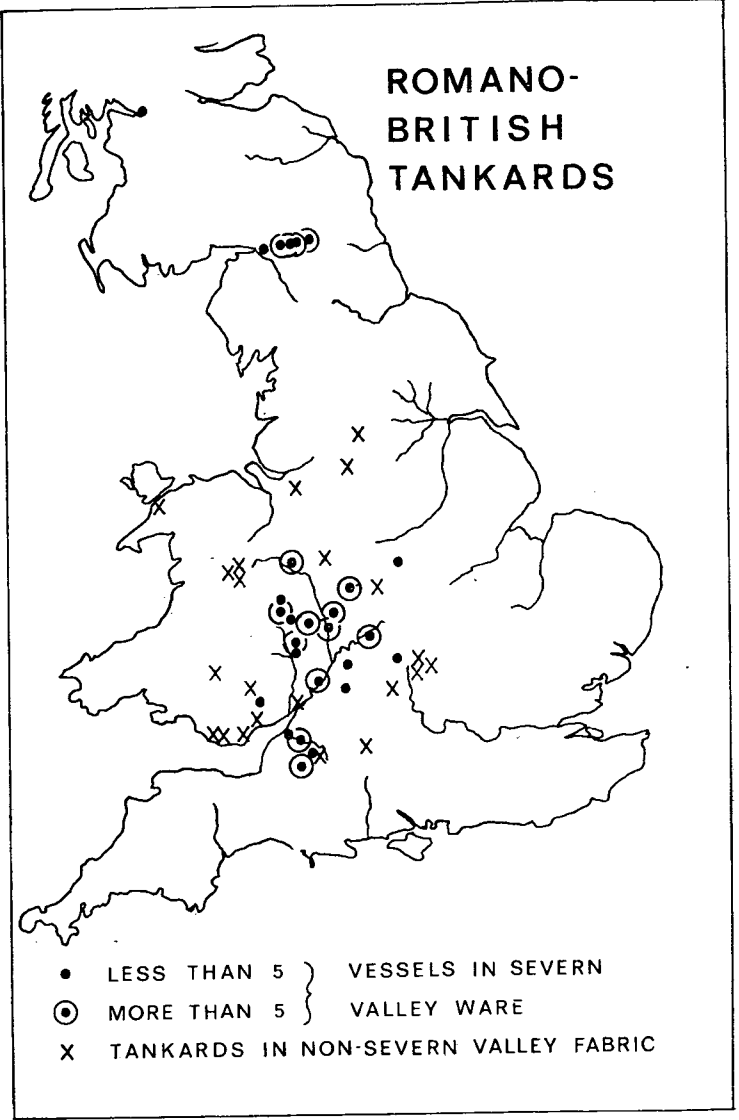


FIG. 1

of the ware on Hadrian's Wall, not only chronologically and geographically but also in terms of the type of installation in which the ware is found. It is the purpose of this article to outline this distribution pattern and to draw out the wider implications in terms of the method of supply to garrisons on the Wall.

In a study such as this, negative evidence often plays an important part. I, therefore, examined as much as possible of the extant pottery from Wall deposits and where this proved impossible or impractical, relied upon published material and/or evidence kindly supplied by excavators. Details of the material examined will be found in the Appendix. Unless otherwise stated, the information is the result of personal examination of the pottery.

The Severn Valley forms represented in the area are basically those represented by Gillam in his tankard series (*Gillam* types 180-184); the only other tankard represented by Gillam (type 179) is a form totally unrepresented in the Severn Valley and its origin is, therefore, doubtful. I have reproduced Gillam's type drawings 180-183 in Fig. 2. I have omitted a drawing of *Gillam* type 184. This is partly because the type drawing in question represents a vessel from the Antonine rather than the Hadrianic Wall (it is in fact the only published Severn Valley Ware vessel from the Antonine Wall). In addition Mrs. Felicity Wild who has seen and handled the vessel in question informs me that the original drawing by Miller, on which Gillam's is based, omits a band of lattice decoration. The only possible example of the type from Hadrian's Wall is not large enough to allow a meaningful type drawing.

A few other Severn Valley Forms are represented on the Wall. Of these, the only certain examples with rim sections extant come from Turret 39a and Milecastle 40⁴ (Fig. 2. A & C). These are both wide-mouthed jars belonging to a type

⁴ Now in the Museum at Chesters. I am most grateful to Dr. Grace Simpson for discussion on the vessels and to the Trustees of Chesters Museum for permission to publish drawings.

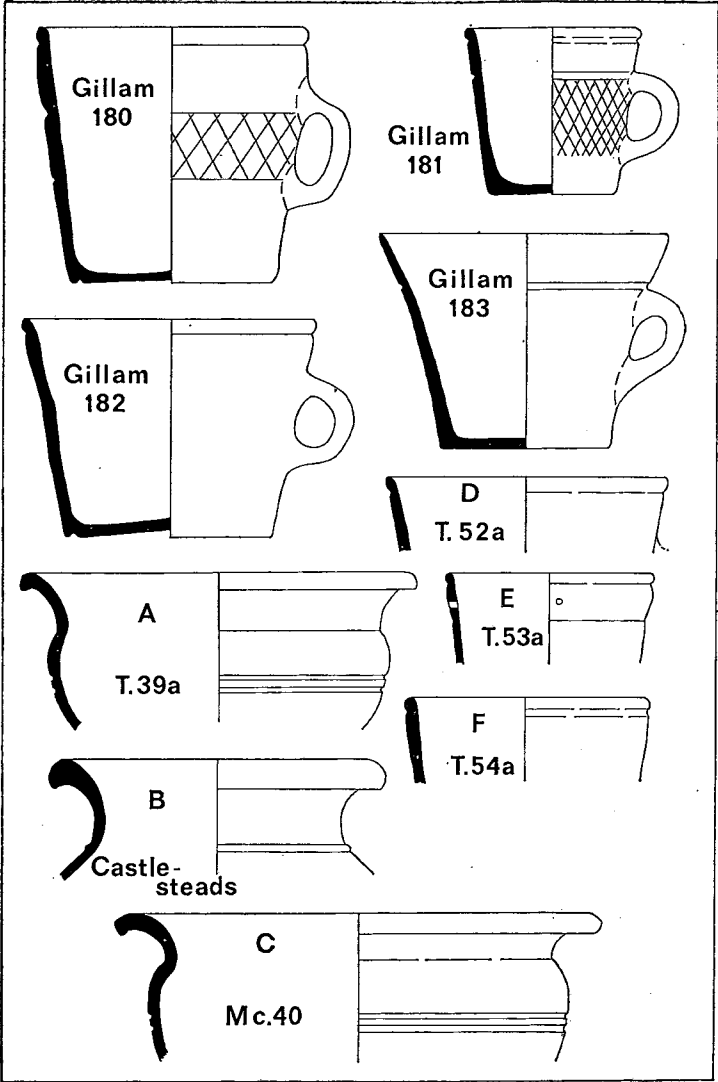


FIG. 2

current in the Severn Valley in the later 2nd and early 3rd centuries (cf. *Astley I*, 49, early 2nd-early 3rd century; there are also examples from the Wroxeter Piscina Deposit.⁵) The Turret 39a fragment is one of two probably from the same vessel and both from Period Ib. Bases in a fabric which appears to be Severn Valley Ware occur at a number of sites—a bowl or wide-mouthed jar base from Milecastle 50TW and storage jar fragments from Milecastle 48 and Turrets 49b and 50b. There is also a Storage Jar rim from Castlesteads (Fig. 2. B) but I am far from certain of the fabric of this example as it is somewhat lighter than other examples of Severn Valley Ware found in Northern Britain. Also, although the form does occur in Severn Valley Ware (e.g. *Sutton Walls*, Fig. 21, 4) it cannot be taken as diagnostic, being a common Storage Jar form in many fabrics.

A glance at the information obtained (which has been rendered in Map form in Fig. 3) shows that the distribution of Severn Valley Ware is restricted to the area between Turret 35a (Sewingshields) and Carlisle with a concentration East of Turret 54a, although this latter may be due to a lack of excavation immediately East of Carlisle. The absence of the ware West of Carlisle and from the Cumberland Coast installations⁶ and also East of Turret 35a, and, therefore, in the latter two cases from areas where excavation has sampled a fair number of structures, would seem to be more significant and will be discussed below.

Within the area indicated, vessels in Severn Valley Ware are not, as might be expected, evenly distributed between all Wall installations. Indeed, one would expect the forts, which produce considerably more pottery than other installations, to have produced most examples of the ware, but the very reverse is true. Almost all the examples of the ware are from Milecastles and Turrets. The only exceptions

⁵ This is a homogeneous group of pottery of late 2nd to early 3rd century date. I am most grateful to Dr. Graham Webster who kindly allowed me to study this group prior to publication.

⁶ cf. *CW*, 70 (1970) pp. 9-47. I am grateful to Mr. Bellhouse for information given verbally on the Fortlets and Towers.

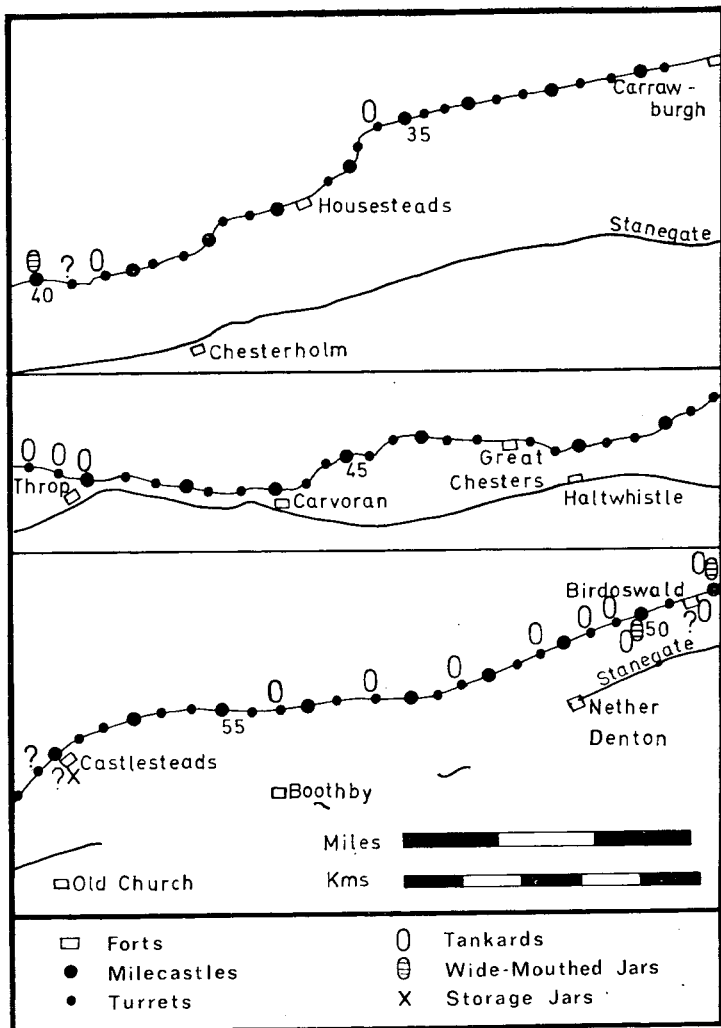


FIG. 3

are the Storage Jar from Castlesteads (Fig. 2. B) which as has already been stated is not certainly of Severn Valley Ware and a Tankard from a probably civilian context at Carlisle.⁷ Although there are a comparatively small number of Severn Valley Ware vessels involved, the low overall total of vessels produced by Milecastles and Turrets in comparison with Forts makes this odd distribution pattern significant.

With only two exceptions (vessels which are quite likely to be rubbish survivals in "Period I or II" levels at Milecastle 48 and Period II at Turret 48b) all examples of Severn Valley Ware from Wall structures can be assigned to Hadrian's Wall Period I. Gillam would date his types 180 and 181 to Period Ia only (he dates both A.D. 120-150) but apparently on typological grounds only, as none of his examples are from indisputably Ia levels. As vessels of this type occur in later 2nd century contexts in the Severn Valley⁸ it would seem reasonable now to suppose that both types could have reached the Wall area any time within Period I.

Discussion

The distribution pattern of Severn Valley Ware vessels on Hadrian's Wall seems to suggest a small contract held for a short length of time; the vessels supplied under this contract were destined for distribution within a very small area. The most likely route for Severn Valley products travelling to the Wall would be via the River Dee and the Lancashire and Cumberland coastal waters. The point of entry into the Wall Zone might have been the probable port at Kirkbride⁹ but in view of the absence of the ware from Cumberland Coast and Solway installations, Carlisle

⁷ *CW*, 17 (1917) p. 165, No. 162. The vessel is from Friars Garden, Carlisle.

⁸ e.g. *Sutton Walls*, Fig. 16, 4. From a pit containing mainly late 2nd century material.

⁹ cf. *CW*, 63 (1963) pp. 126-139. I am also grateful to Mr. Bellhouse for information given verbally.

seems more likely.¹⁰ The implication of the distribution pattern within the Wall Zone would seem to be that the distribution of pottery to troops manning the Period I patrol points (i.e. Milecastles and Turrets) was separate from that to fort garrisons. Unless we envisage that the pottery requirements of the two types of troops were different (which is improbable) it would seem that the stores supplying the patrolling garrison was the only one to have a contract with the Severn Valley potters (principally for handled tankards one assumes). Other stores apparently issued, not the Severn Valley Handled tankard, but the handled beaker in Black-burnished ware (*Gillam* types 64-66). The fact that the patrol and the fort garrisons received their supplies from separate stores is further evidence of the separate nature of these two types of troop as has long been surmised.¹¹

The restricted geographical area within which Severn Valley Ware occurs suggests a division of supply zones within the Wall area itself. The evidence suggests that the patrolling garrison was divided into three roughly equal parts for the purpose of supply—the central sector between approximately Sewingshields and Carlisle, which is attested by the Severn Valley Ware evidence, the area East of Sewingshields which would logically be supplied from the East through South Shields and/or Corbridge and the Solway/Cumberland Coast area which might well have been supplied through Kirkbride. As the Severn Valley Ware evidence would suggest this type of arrangement for the supply of the patrolling garrison, some similar arrangement might well have existed for the Fort garrisons. It hardly seems reasonable to supply from only one point a frontier which consists of (a) about 50 miles of coastal installation and (b) about 70 miles consisting of two coastal strips separated by an area of upland.

One possible alternative to a Severn Valley Ware con-

¹⁰ Mr. R. Hogg informs me that navigation up to Carlisle was possible for coastal vessels until comparatively recent times.

¹¹ cf. *AA*⁴, 9 (1932) pp. 205-215; also E. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961) pp. 270-1.

tract deserving consideration is that the ware was in fact carried to the Wall Zone by a unit employed in patrol work. This can, however, be discounted both because the length of Wall involved is surely too long to be divided up between the men of just one unit and more especially because the evidence suggests use of the tankards in both Period Ia and Period Ib, too long a time for such vessels to have survived. In all, it is simplest to take the evidence at its face value as implying a definite contract for supply of Severn Valley Ware vessels to the patrolling garrison of the Wall.

To summarise, the study of Severn Valley Ware on Hadrian's Wall suggests a minor contract for supply of the ware (and particularly tankards) to one particular area of the Wall Zone and to one particular class of installation. This contract lasted for only a limited period (most or all of Hadrian's Wall Period I) and was subsequently lost.¹² The evidence shows (a) that the patrolling and the fort garrisons were supplied from separate sources and are likely, therefore, to have been separate units and (b) that the patrolling garrison itself was divided into geographical zones for supply purposes; this implies a fragmentation of supply organisation which had not hitherto been suspected.

No one can pretend that the contract for the supply of Severn Valley Ware to Hadrian's Wall was other than a very minor one. This study suggests, however, that the very smallness of such contracts may have its use for the Archaeologist. The Severn Valley contract is unlikely to have been the only one so small that it was distributed through only one of the several stores supplying troops on the Wall. It may be that the pursuit of other "minority wares" on Hadrian's Wall or elsewhere in the military zone might serve to elucidate further the system of contracts and

¹² Mr. J. P. Gillam has pointed out to me that no deposit contains both Black-burnished ware Category 2 and Tankards, although both are present in small numbers in Period Ib deposits. This may suggest that the contract was lost before the end of Period Ib. It would seem that the rise of larger producers such as those making Black-burnished Category 2 drove the Severn Valley potters out of the Northern Market.

supply of pottery to the Roman army in Britain.

APPENDIX

Below are details of the deposits examined and the Severn Valley Ware located in the Hadrian's Wall area. As the *absence* of the ware is as important for the argument advanced above as its presence, all deposits examined are listed. Unless otherwise stated identification is the result of examination of both the published evidence and the finds themselves. Vessels which are possibly of Severn Valley Ware but of which I was uncertain are marked —?.

<i>Site</i>	<i>Severn Valley Ware Vessels identified</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Publication details if any</i>
South Shields	None		
Wallsend	None		
Newcastle	None		
Benwell	None		
Turret 7b	None		
Milecastle 9	None		
Milecastle 10	None		
Turret 12a	None		
Turret 13a	None		
Rudchester	None		
Turret 18b	None published		
Turret 19b	None		
Halton Chesters	None		
Corbridge	None ¹³		
Milecastle 23	None		
Turret 25b	None		
Turret 26a	None published		
Chesters	None		
Turret 29a	No pottery		
Turret 29b	None		
Carrawburgh	None		
Milecastle 33	None		
Turret 34a	None ¹⁴		
Turret 35a	c. 6 Tankards	Ia	AA ⁴ 43 (1965) p. 151ff. Nos. 14 & 15 and other
Housesteads	None		
Chesterholm	None published		tankard sherds.

<i>Site</i>	<i>Severn Valley Ware Vessels identified</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Publication details if any</i>
Turret 39a	Wide-mouthed jar	Ib	cf. Fig. 2. A. above.
Turret 39b	? base	Ia	
Milecastle 40	Wide-mouthed jar in grey—probably "reduced" Severn Valley Ware		cf. Fig. 2. C. above.
Haltwhistle Burn	None		
Great Chesters	None		
Turret 43a	None		
Turret 44b	None		
Turret 45a	None published		
Milecastle 48	Tankards	I	<i>CW</i> , 11 (1911) p. 390ff. Pl. III, 9 & 10.
Throp	None		
Turret 48a	Tankard	Ib	<i>CW</i> , 26 (1926) p. 429ff. Fig. 4, 10.
Turret 48b	Tankard	II	<i>CW</i> , 26 (1926) p. 429ff. Fig. 3, 19.
Willowford Bridge	None published		
Birdoswald	None ¹⁵		
Turret 49b	2 Tankards Jar-base	I	<i>CW</i> , 13 (1913) p. 346ff. No. 5.
Milecastle 50	None published		
Turret 50a	Tankard		
Turret 50b	2 ? fragments base	Ib	
Milecastle 50TW	Tankard ? jar fragment	Ia	<i>CW</i> , 52 (1952) p. 33ff. No. 31.
Nether Denton	None		
Turret 51a	2 tankards		
Turret 51b	None published		
Milecastle 52	None		
Turret 52a	Tankard 1 base	I	cf. Fig. 2. D. above.
Turret 53a	1 ? fragment Tankard 1 ? fragment		cf. Fig. 2. E. above.

Site	Severn Valley Ware Vessels identified	Period	Publication details if any
Turret 53b	None		
Milecastle 54	None		
Turret 54a	Tankard		cf. Fig. 2. F. above.
Castlesteads	? Storage Jar		cf. Fig. 2. B. above.
Turret 57a	? fragment		
Carlisle	Tankard		Not in <i>CW</i> , 17 (1917) military p. 114ff. No. 162. context
Drumburgh	None		
Milecastle 71	None published		
Milecastle 72	None published		
Milecastle 79	None		
Bowness	None		
Milefortlet 5	None		
Milefortlet 12	None ¹⁶		
Tower 12a	None		
Tower 12b	None		
Tower 13a	None		
Milefortlet 15	None		
Tower 15a	None		
Milefortlet 16	None		
Tower 16a	None		
Tower 16b	None		
Milefortlet 20	None		
Milefortlet 22	None		

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Astley I Ian Walker, "Excavations on a Romano-British site at Astley. 1956-8", *Trans. Worcs. Arch. Soc.*, 35 (1958) pp. 29-57.

¹³ I am grateful to Mr. J. Gillam for information provided verbally on the Corbridge pottery.

¹⁴ All the pottery from this turret was not examined.

¹⁵ *CW*, 30 (1930) pp. 193-4, 55a is described as a tankard in the report but neither the fabric nor the form are in agreement with this being a Severn Valley Tankard.

¹⁶ Information on the Milefortlets and Towers are largely dependent upon published descriptions of finds and also on information given verbally by Mr. R. L. Bellhouse to whom I am most grateful.

- Gillam* J. P. Gillam, *Types of Roman Coarse Pottery Vessels in Northern Britain*, 2nd Edition, Newcastle 1968.
- Sutton Walls* K. M. Kenyon, "Excavations at Sutton Walls, Herefordshire 1948-51". *AJ*, 110 (1953) pp. 1-87.

