

VIII.—CORBRIDGE: ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE STUDY OF RHENISH WARE

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The genesis of this paper lay in a study of the so-called Rhenish ware from the Roman site at Corbridge, Northumberland. In its production I am happy to acknowledge my indebtedness to two friends long associated with the excavations held annually at Corstopitum: to Harold Bowes who first guided me in the paths of coarse pot, and to John Gillam who has been unstinting of time and expert advice and has made his drawings available to me.

The vessels grouped under the term "Rhenish ware" in the Corbridge collection are few and generally fragmentary. But they appear to be representative and allow conclusions that suggest associations between certain forms, fabrics and decoration, and certain areas of production that have not hitherto been stated. The vessels fall into four groups and will be so treated.

Beakers

The beaker is the most common Rhenish form, either indented or plain, with the indented vessels in the majority. At Corbridge the only plain forms that can be recognized are the motto beakers; the only beaker forms that can be restored are indented:¹

(a) Large, narrow-mouthed, round-bellied beaker with

¹ Corbridge Museum contains one plain form. This is very heavily restored and, for Rhenish, of an atypical form. It is likely that its identification as Rhenish is incorrect.

a number of narrow indentations, flutings, delimited by bands of rouletting.² This is Gillam form 44³ dated 220-240, (fig. 1, no. 1, and plate XVIII, 1).

(b) Small, narrow-mouthed beaker. This is a smaller version of Gillam 44 with the same numerous indentations. It is Gillam 45 dated 190-250, (fig. 1, no. 3).

(c) A version of Gillam 45 with round indentations, usually four or five in number.⁴

(d) Large, narrow-mouthed beaker, the indentations are fewer than on Gillam 44, but are deeper and larger. This is Gillam 46 dated 240-280, (fig. 1, no. 2).

These vessels are found in a variety of surfaces and fabrics: (i) Ware that is fine, hard and red with a black metallic tinge or a greenish bronze surface;⁵ (ii) Ware that is fine, hard, rather leathery, glossy surfaced but not necessarily metallic, and often with the fracture showing a grey-red-grey sandwich; (iii) Ware comparable to (i) but for a completely grey fracture, the surface is dark and glossy but the fracture is dark grey; (iv) Ware with fine red fabric, dark glossy coat but no metallic sheen and no evidence of a sandwich, there is however a distinct borderline between the fine brown coat and the red fabric as seen in fracture.

The differences in fabric exist, but it is unlikely that they are of any great significance. Due to the varieties of sandwich that can occur on one small sherd, and the basic similarity of form, it is clear that these differences are due to the methods of firing. This also explains the differences in surface treatment whether these were accidentally or deliberately achieved by the potter.

² While the theoretical differences between rouletting and stuttering are known, in practice their recognition is a matter of controversy. Thus, as here used, the term rouletting does not exclude stuttering.

³ J. P. Gillam, "Types of Roman Coarse Pottery Vessels in Northern Britain", *Arch. Ael.*, 4th series, 35 (1957), 180-251; ed. 2, 1968. The dating for types 44 and 46 there given was amended in a lecture July 25th 1968.

⁴ The "thumb-pot" is epitomized by the beaker from Coventina's Well, Carrawburgh, now in Chesters Museum.

⁵ This is a version of the definition of Rhenish ware given in the Council for British Archaeology's Research Report No. 6, *Romano-British Coarse Pottery: A Student's Guide*, no date.

The so-called motto beakers have long been held as typical of Rhenish ware. They are found either plain or indented. Although there are no restorable examples from Corbridge, there are three small sherds from the site that bear parts of white "iced" letters on a glossy brown surface, and additional decoration of blobs and dashes. The fabric is pink and falls within the classification given above. These motto beakers can be taken as importations from the Rhineland as is generally suggested in the references to the comparable material found widely throughout Britain: Chesters,⁶ York,⁷ Colchester,⁸ Lullingstone,⁹ Silchester,¹⁰ Verulamium,¹¹ and London.¹²

The vessels in this group may be considered as true Rhenish ware imported from the Rhineland. The observed differences in surface and fabric are such as can be explained by the variables of ancient methods of manufacture: temperature, the penetration of gases, firing in a reducing or oxidizing atmosphere. A new description of true Rhenish can thus be attempted: the fabric is always fine and hard, red or grey, or with a red and grey sandwich; the surface is glossy and dark, also black, grey or greenish bronze metallic. The ware is restricted, at least in Britain, to the beaker form, generally indented, and usually with rouletted decoration. There is a sub-class decorated with white barbo-

⁶ Chesters: fragments in Chesters Museum.

⁷ York: R.C.H.M., *Eboracum: Roman York*, 1962, 135a-b, pl. 35. Of the vessels here illustrated one, H34b, is classed as Castor ware. This appears unjustified and Gillam is of the opinion that there are no British made motto beakers.

⁸ Colchester: Beaker with "VINCO TE" see: the Colchester and Essex Museum's colour slide; J. Ward, *The Roman Era in Britain*, 1911, fig. 41; and R. J. Charleston, *Roman Pottery*, 1955, pl. 72, who considers it Castor ware. For the beaker with "PIE" see T. May, *Catalogue of the Roman Pottery in the Colchester and Essex Museum*, 1930, pl. 43, no. 166.

⁹ Lullingstone: For the beaker with "SVAVIS" see G. W. Meates, *Lullingstone Roman Villa*, 1955, pl. 38.

¹⁰ Silchester: For the beaker with "VITAM TIBI" see T. May, *The Pottery Found at Silchester*, 1916, pl. 40, c.

¹¹ Verulamium: For the beaker with "DA MERVM" see J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 1962, cat. no. 154, pl. 192. For the beaker with "BIBE" see the Verulamium Museum post card.

¹² London: Beaker with "PIE" in the Guildhall Museum.

time put on over the brown colour coat—the motto beakers. The ware is generally dated to the late 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Two-Handled Cups

Corbridge produces two distinctive sherds from vessels that may with confidence be restored as two-handled, barbotine-decorated, pedestal-based cups. These are:

(a) Handle, rim and part of the body of a cup with barbotine scroll decoration on the side and the handle. There is a groove below the rim; the base and the lower part of the vessel are missing. The diameter at the rim is 4.0 ins., at the fracture 4.6 ins. The fabric is pink with a dull brown colour coat, red brown over the barbotine, (fig. 1, no. 7).

(b) Handle and part of the lower body of a cup with barbotine scroll decoration on handle and body. The diameter is 4.0 ins. at the junction of the upper and lower body, base and rim are missing. Pink fabric, dull brown colour coat, (fig. 1, no. 8).

The identification of these two sherds, from two different vessels, as parts of two-handled, pedestal-based cups would seem to be certain. The form does not appear in Gillam but is of wide, if infrequent, distribution with parallels being found at Bath,¹³ Wroxeter,¹⁴ Pudding Pan Rock,¹⁵ Old Ford in Essex,¹⁶ York,¹⁷ Hoo St. Werburgh in Kent,¹⁸ and an example in the National Museum of Wales.¹⁹ There is

¹³ Bath: J. Ward, *ibid.*, 173, fig. 50, no. 5; and H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Roman Pottery in the British Museum*, 1908, 392, fig. 239.

¹⁴ Wroxeter: J. P. Bushe-Fox, *Excavations on the Site of the Roman Town of Wroxeter, Shropshire, in 1912, 1913, 15-16*, fig. 5.

¹⁵ Pudding Pan Rock: *Proc. Soc. Ant. Lond.*, ser. 2, 21, (1907), 273, fig. 1.

¹⁶ Old Ford: *Trans. Lond. & Middx. Arch. Soc.*, 3, (1870), 207, pl. VII, fig. 4, 13.

¹⁷ York: unpublished.

¹⁸ Hoo St. Werburgh: unpublished.

¹⁹ National Museum of Wales: this, according to Wheeler (R. E. M. Wheeler, *London in Roman Times*, 1930, 144) "has no history but, from its appearance, may have come from the Pan Rock".



(1)



(2)

Rhenish Ware Indented Beakers: (1) Gillam form 44; (2) Gillam form 46, variant.

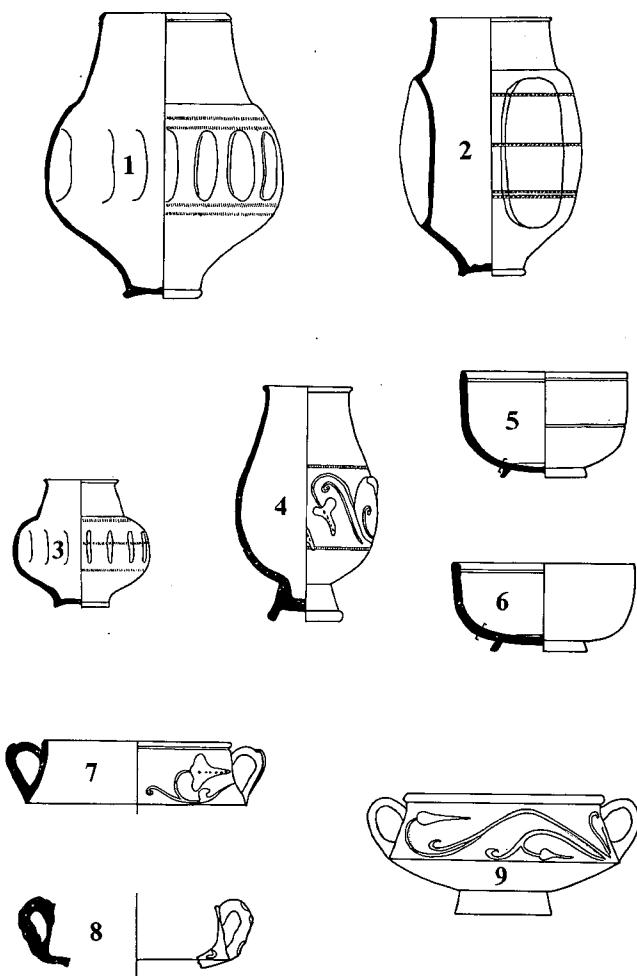


FIG. 1. "RHENISH" WARE TYPES: 1-3 RHENISH; 4, 7-9 "LEZOUX" WARE; 5-6 DOUBIFUL. (4)

a cup similar in form now in the London Museum,²⁰ but it has a black gloss surface and the barbotine decoration is of blobs and dashes rather than scrolls. Dated to the early 3rd century, this is closer to the true Rhenish surface and must be considered atypical.

The two Corbridge sherds demonstrate clearly that the fabric is not Rhenish as defined for the indented beakers. The most instructive of the above parallels is that from the Pudding Pan Rock, (this is exactly comparable to the vessel from Bath in fig. 1, no. 9). The vessel is thus associated with a centre of samian production, Lezoux, and is given a dating to the late Antonine period.²¹ This would be an early dating for true Rhenish. The Wroxeter cup, according to Wheeler,²² was found with pottery not earlier than 200.

Thus it may be suggested that the two-handled cups from Corbridge and elsewhere, while bearing a superficial resemblance to Rhenish, are in fact the products of kilns in Central Gaul, most probably Lezoux, and seem to pre-date the floruit of Rhenish, at least in Northern England, where it is usually assigned to the very end of the 2nd century and the first half of the 3rd.²³

Barbotine-Decorated Beakers

This third group of vessels comprises the narrow-mouthed, barbotine-decorated beakers of Gillam form 48, (fig. 1, no. 4). The type specimen, now in Corbridge Museum, is white in fracture with a shiny black surface, and is dated to 220-240.²⁴ The barbotine decoration is strongly reminiscent of that on the two-handled cups. Gillam ascribes this beaker to Lezoux and sherds from similar vessels in the

²⁰ London Museum: R. E. M. Wheeler, *ibid.*, 144, no. 7, fig. 54.

²¹ B. W. Cunliffe (ed.), *Fifth Report on the Excavations of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent*, 1968, 126ff.

²² R. E. M. Wheeler, *ibid.*, 144.

²³ J. P. Gillam, *ibid.*, types 44, 45 and 46.

²⁴ This revised dating of form 48 was given by J. P. Gillam in a lecture, July 25th 1968.

reserve collection at Corbridge underline the parallelism between cups and beakers.

The most important piece is the base and part of the body of a beaker of Gillam form 48. The decoration is of barbotine scrolls delimited by bands of rouletting, the surface a metallic grey, showing orange over the barbotine. The fracture is pink, not the deep red of the Rhenish beakers, but a pink identical to that of the two-handled cups.

The remaining sherds with barbotine decoration are comparable, pink or buff in fracture, with surfaces metallic grey to a dark glossy brown or black. All may be considered of Gillam form 48 and the differences of fabric and surface are to be expected under the conditions of manufacture then applying.

It would seem that the two-handled cups and the barbotine decorated beakers form a distinct group: the fabric is pink to white, the surface grey metallic through brown to black, and they share a common style of scroll decoration. The beakers are generally considered to be imitating Dragendorff 52. Gillam's conclusions regarding form 48, and the Pudding Pan Rock associations of at least one of the cups, indicates that the origin of this group lies at Lezoux. This gains some support from the parallels in form and decoration with the samian, and the resemblance in quality, if not in colour, of the "Lezoux" and samian fabrics. Attention has also been drawn to the similarity of "Lezoux" ware and the so-called black samian, and the latter's association with Rhenish and Castor wares.

If cups and beakers form one group then some correlation can be sought in the dating evidence. This evidence is very slight. The Lezoux kilns were operating 40-260,²⁵ although the main period of trade with Britain has been given as some time before 104 to the end of the 2nd

²⁵ Lezoux production: F. Oswald and T. D. Pryce, *An Introduction to the Study of Terra Sigillata*, 1920, 11.

century.²⁶ The two-handled cups are dated late Antonine (Pudding Pan Rock) and not earlier than 200 (Wroxeter). The beakers are dated 220-240 (Gillam at Corbridge), early 3rd century (Gillam at Trentholme Drive²⁷), and there was an example at Chester-le-Street. This last was a sherd "with barbotine decoration of conventionalized corn stalks similar to that on a vessel from Richborough".²⁸ The Chester-le-Street sherd was found with a dish of Gillam form 318 dated 160-200, but is compared with Richborough form 134,²⁹ said to imitate Dragendorff 52 and dated to the 3rd century.

With so few specimens involved no very definite conclusions can be drawn. However there is nothing to suggest that the two-handled cups and the beakers of Gillam form 48 are not contemporary and both fall within the life span of Lezoux. Further, and more significantly, they do not appear to have survived Lezoux.

Bowl-Shaped Cups

There are two examples of this form from Corbridge. Both are incomplete, the bases being restored after Gillam form 210 which is clearly of the same basic form.

(a) Gillam 210 from Lancaster. A bowl-shaped cup 3.0 ins. in diameter with a girth groove and a foot ring. It is in dark red fabric with a lustrous black coating. Dated 200-260.

(b) Corbridge I (fig. 1, no. 5). A bowl-shaped cup 3.4 ins. in diameter with an external girth groove, and internal and external grooves below the rim. Buff fabric, glossy brown surface.

²⁶ Lezoux exports: B. R. Hartley in R. G. Collingwood and I. A. Richmond, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, ed. 2, 1969, 238.

²⁷ Trentholme Drive: J. P. Gillam in L. P. Wenham, *The Romano-British Cemetery at Trentholme Drive, York*, 1968, 82, no. 202, fig. 30, no. 27. This is an exact parallel to Gillam 48, here described as Rhenish.

²⁸ Chester-le-Street: J. P. Gillam and J. Tait, "The Roman Fort at Chester-le-Street", *Arch. Ael.*, 4th series, 46, (1968), 75-96.

²⁹ Richborough: J. P. Bushe-Fox, *The First Report on the Excavation of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent*, 1926, no. 134.

(c) Corbridge II (fig. 1, no. 6). A bowl-shaped cup 3·8 ins. in diameter with an internal groove below the rim but no other decoration. The fabric is red with a brown metallic coating both inside and out.

Corbridge I is not Rhenish. Its general appearance recalls both the barbotine beakers and the two-handled cups, rather more the latter than the former. However this is scarcely sufficient to allow an attribution of this cup to Lezoux. It may be Gaulish, otherwise its origin is unknown.

Corbridge II is closer to Gillam 210. From Gillam's description 210 could be true Rhenish, as could Corbridge II. In this case it would be necessary to extend the definition of true Rhenish in Britain, at present restricted to beakers, to include cups.

A continental origin has been postulated for many of the vessels considered in the foregoing; consequently it is now appropriate to seek some Gallic or Rhenish parallels. For this the most valuable work is by Erich Gose,³⁰ a series of dated vessels found in the Rhineland.

The beakers fall into four sub-groupings: fluted (Gillam 44 and 45), round indented (the Coventina's Well type), folded (Gillam 46), and motto either plain or indented. A fifth group, the plain non-indented beakers, are not represented at Corbridge in a recognizable form, nor are the more exotic Rhineland forms.

(a) Gillam 44. The distinctive feature of this vessel, and of Gillam 45 which is basically a smaller version, is the narrow fluting of the belly. This is found in Britain at Corbridge, York³¹ and Silchester but nowhere occurs in Gose. There is a smaller version of Gillam 44 from Pannonia,³² but it is not dated and its significance can be questioned. Direct parallels are found in the Ludwig Mark

³⁰ Erich Gose, *Gefasstypen der Römischen Keramik im Rheinland*, 1950.

³¹ York: R.C.H.M., *ibid.*, 74b, no. H2196, and 90b, no. J93, 1035.

³² Pannonia: E. v. Bonis, *Die Kaiserzeitliche Keramik Von Pannonien, I. Die Materialien Der Frühen Kaiserzeit*, 1942, taf. XVII, 25.

collection in Mainz; Behn's catalogue numbers 325 and 326³³ have the same form and flutings as Gillam 44 but again there is no dating.

(b) The round indented beaker of the Coventina's Well type is comparable to Gose form 209, from Niederbieber, dated end of the 2nd century to the first half of the 3rd.

(c) Gillam 46, the classic faltenbecher, is the most common form appearing in a number of variations, (for one such variation found at Corbridge see plate XVIII, 2). It is paralleled at Mainz, Behn's 327, and in Gose form 205, from Trier, dated to the end of the 2nd century. There are dated examples from two British sites: Trentholme Drive, York,³⁴ dated late 2nd to mid 3rd century, and Catherine Street, Exeter,³⁵ dated late 2nd to early 3rd century.

(d) Vessels bearing white mottos are in Gose restricted to the 3rd century or later and occur in forms other than beakers.³⁶ The beaker, Gose form 203, closely resembles that from Silchester in form and decoration. This, from Trier, is dated to the 3rd century.

The Gallic origin of the two-handled cups has already been demonstrated by the Pudding Pan Rock example; but the search for continental parallels has been singularly disappointing. There is a wide variety of such vessels from Pannonia but the only one that is remotely comparable to the British examples, from Laibach,³⁷ is more reminiscent of the London cup than that from Pudding Pan Rock, and the fabric resembles neither. Similarly, although the Pudding Pan Rock cup would appear to have originated in the Lezoux potteries, there are no samian parallels in

³³ Friedrich Behn, *Kataloge West- und Sueddeutscher Altertumssammlungen: II Sammlung Ludwig Mark in Mainz*, 1913.

³⁴ Trentholme Drive: J. P. Gillam in L. P. Wenham, *ibid.*, 82, no. 203, fig. 30, no. 28.

³⁵ Exeter: A. Fox, *Roman Exeter*, 1952, 89, fig. 18, no. 41.

³⁶ Erich Gose, *ibid.*, flask forms 213 and 214; jug form 215; cylindrical bowl form 217.

³⁷ E. v. Bonis, *ibid.*, taf. XIX, 36.

Oswald and Pryce, unless the plain form, Dragendorff 34, is considered as a prototype.³⁸

There is a two-handled cup at Richborough dated probably to the 3rd century,³⁹ but this is a form intermediate between cups and barbotine-decorated beakers. On the fabric and surface treatment and the style of decoration, the vessels epitomized by Gillam 48 have been assigned to the Lezoux kilns. A vessel of this form from Silchester with a decoration of a cock, recalls the samian Ludovici Type VMg, an example from Rheinzabern, Gose form 165, dated 200-250. Thus the evidence tends to confirm a Gallic origin for the barbotine-decorated vessels, and Gose has no vessels of the type of Gillam 48 under his heading of "gefirnisste ware". In conclusion, there may be mentioned the base of a barbotine-decorated beaker from Colchester,⁴⁰ in pale yellow buff ware with glittering black glaze, since this is of local manufacture.

The bowl-shaped cups from Corbridge (fig. 1, nos. 5 and 6) and Lancaster are not paralleled in Gose. However their origin seems to lie in such samian forms as Ritterling 8 (an example from Hofheim, Gose 26, assigned to the Claudian period), and Dragendorff 40 (an example from Trier, Gose 27, assigned to the beginning of the 2nd century).

A number of conclusions may be drawn:

True Rhenish has a fabric that is always fine and hard, red or grey, or with a red and grey sandwich; the surface is glossy and dark, also black, grey or greenish bronze metallic. The fabric is restricted to the beaker form in Britain, rouletted and indented; the only non-indented forms that are at all common are the motto beakers. The ware is generally dated to the late 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The two-handled cups and the barbotine-decorated beakers form a single group made at the same site, probably

³⁸ F. Oswald and T. D. Pryce, *ibid.*, pl. LII, no. 5.

³⁹ Richborough: J. P. Bushe-Fox, *The Third Report on the Excavation of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent*, 1932, no. 365.

⁴⁰ Colchester: M. R. Hull, *The Roman Potters' Kilns of Colchester*, 1963, 169, no. 5, fig. 97.

Lezoux. The dating evidence is not extensive but these vessels span a period running from the late Antonine to the mid 3rd century.

The two bowl-shaped cups from Corbridge are very different. One bears a similarity to the Lezoux ware but cannot be confidently assigned. The second resembles Gillam 210 in form and fabric and has some pretensions to being true Rhenish ware. Gillam 210 is dated 200-260.

What little evidence there is can be taken to suggest that the Rhenish fabrics are later than the Lezoux. This is as one would expect. It would seem also that some of the Lezoux, or comparable, products were copied in Rhenish, or a like, ware, e.g. the two-handled cup in the London Museum and Gillam 210.

This suggests that the convenient term "Rhenish" should be employed more circumspectly and that much of the material previously so described is now capable of more precise classification.