

III

THE HOSPITAL, HOUSESTEADS

Dorothy Charlesworth

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The excavation was conducted on behalf of the Department of the Environment with the help of its permanent staff and of numerous volunteers, all of whom I wish to thank. I am also indebted to colleagues for contributions to this report, Mr. P. E. Curnow, the coins, Mr. D. S. Neal, the plan, and with Mr. J. Thorn, the reconstruction, Mr. H. Pengelly, the samian. Dr. R. W. Davies has very kindly given me much information.

PREVIOUS HISTORY

The site of the hospital appears to have been occupied by a T-shaped farmhouse in the early 18th century. This is shown in Stukeley's sketch (1725) conveniently reproduced by E. Birley in *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961) p. ix. It is building IX on R. C. Bosanquet's plan, still the standard plan for the site, first published in *Archaeologia Aeliana*² xxv (1904). Bosanquet described it as "more completely destroyed than any other of the central buildings... It yielded only one object of interest—an intaglio of glass paste, engraved with the figure of Victory". He did not, however, recover the Hadrianic plan in full.

EXCAVATION 1969-73

Unfortunately Bosanquet's description proved all too accurate, but a fuller plan of the building has been obtained showing that this is a hospital of normal military type, built round a courtyard. In the first period the rooms opened into the adjacent room or onto a verandah which ran round the central court, later the verandah was removed and the area of open court extended (fig. 1).

The method of construction is similar to that of the commandant's house (AA⁵ iii p. 17). The outer walls were built first and then the internal partition walls were put in. Only one internal wall is bonded with the outer wall, that is the buried wall, 1 m inside the south wall of the building, which is bonded with the east wall. The change of build at this point from the typical square facing stones with a rubble core between, average width 0.65 m, to the alternating courses of large headers, all

HOUSESTEADS Plan of Hospital

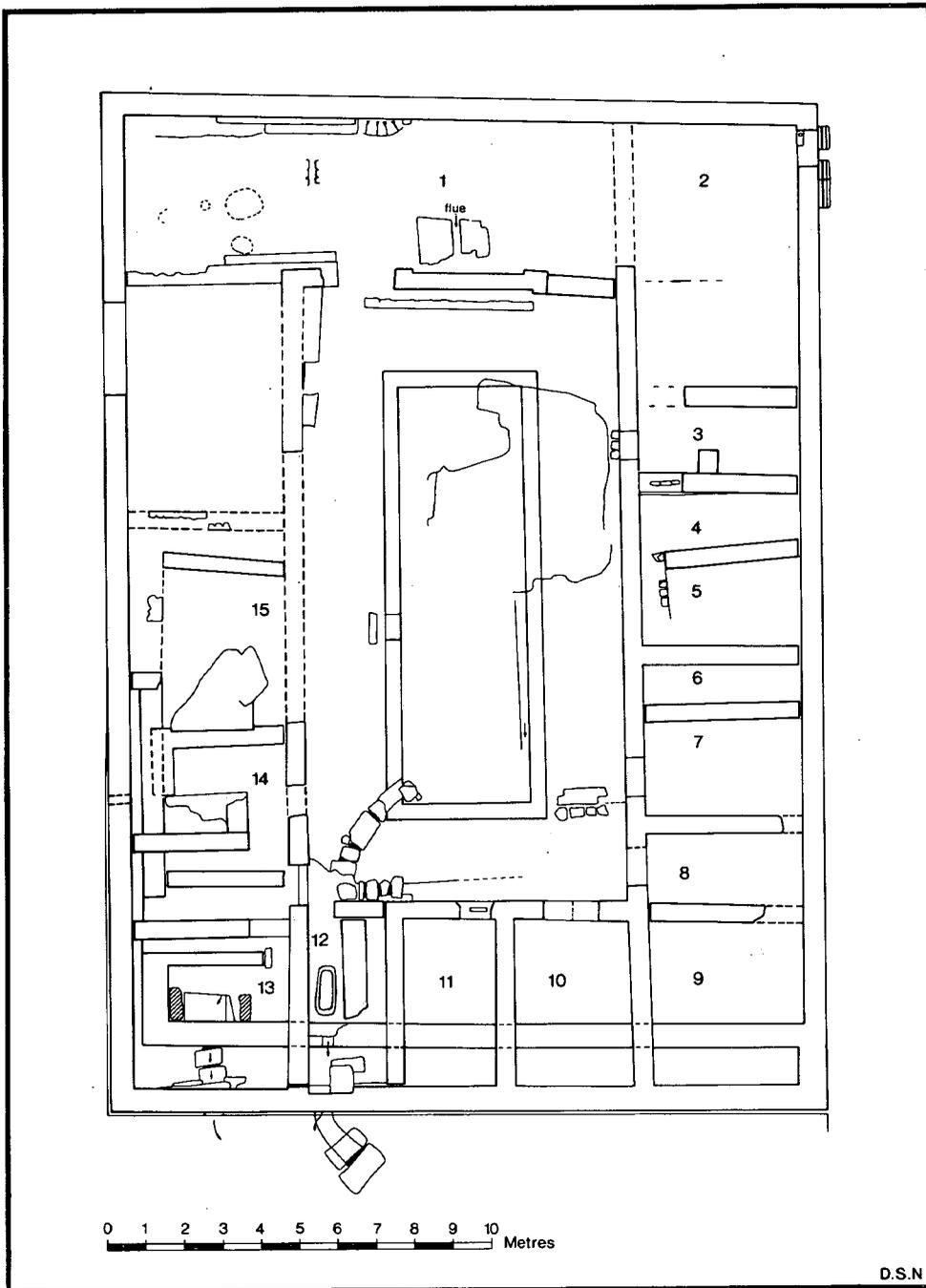


Fig. 1.

through-stones, and stretchers, as in the south wall of the commandant's house, gives the impression that the outer wall is an addition and the buried wall the original south end of the hospital. The west end, however, makes it clear that this is not the case and this is presumably a retaining wall to hold the fill of whin blocks and clay used to level up for the floors. The gap between the two walls does not seem to have been intended as a drain. There is not the necessary fall of ground to the exit point at the west and the partition walls of the rooms of the south range are carried down to ground level between the two walls. Only the three lowest courses of the outer south wall, 0.75 m thick, were of massive masonry, the upper courses of square facing stones and a rubble core. The south-west corner appears to have been rebuilt (pl. III, 1) and there is a patch of heavy burning near it on the south wall, apparently above Roman ground level. The main drain, below ground level runs out near the south-west corner and a second drain was later inserted in the third course. The use of a flat, grooved stone in the lowest course near this secondary drain indicates drastic rebuilding here, or else the slab, apparently cut for use as a side of a water tank, was faulty. On the west wall an offset course at ground level 6 m from the south corner runs through to the corner but is not continued along the south wall. A coil of Trajan (p. 30) was found in the south wall.

THE ENTRANCE

This is near the north end of the west wall, a gap in the masonry, with nothing to indicate the width of the doorway as the wall here was built directly onto the whin outcrop and so has no foundation. The rock itself is worn at the threshold and forms part of the floor of the entrance lobby, levelled up with clay where necessary. An amphora rim with VIII scratched on it before firing (fig. 3, 12) was found in this room and in the scanty remains of its south wall, obviously representing a period after the wall had been reduced and underlay the floor of the later room which extended further south, a coin 300-5 (p. 30 no. 11).

THE NORTH RANGE

It is possible that this was the original surgical ward. When excavated in 1971/2 it appeared to be a long room, but Bosanquet indicates two short lengths of walling attached to its north wall, apparently partitioning off a room near the centre and in the Hadrianic lay-out the north-east corner had formed a separate room. Two entrances, the east one later blocked, led onto the north verandah. Part at least of the outer wall had been rebuilt in the 4th century for a mortarium rim was found wedged under its lowest course (p. 25). The remaining floor was in places below the lowest course of masonry and was extremely uneven, mainly of mortar but with patches of clay more-or-less filling the hollows in the surface of the whin. At the east end (the original room 2) there were two periods of flagging, the later, heavier



1. The hospital, Housesteads: south-west corner



2. The hospital, Housesteads: north-east corner, rooms 1, 2 and 3 on extreme right, courtyard in foreground

flags being laid from the late door in the north-east corner (pl. III, 2). What dateable material there was, was 3rd and 4th century and the presence of hearths, some with intense burning, suggested metal-working, possibly a repair workshop at this period. The remains of a drain only 3 stones on either side ran across some heavy burning. Further east a flue had been constructed. As all this was more-or-less directly on the whin, it seems probable that the area had been levelled down and that the earlier floor of its days as a hospital had been suspended wooden floor. It would not otherwise be possible to keep it clean and dry for there is some seepage off the whin, although less persistent here than in similar circumstances in the commandant's house, room 5. In that case there would be a step down to the verandah floor level. This part of the hospital, the north range and the north-end of the west range was the most seriously damaged, no doubt by one of the later house-steads.

THE EAST RANGE

Room 2 in the north-east corner has already been mentioned as, except in the Hadrianic period, it was part of the long north room. Three facing stones *in situ* seemed to mark its original south wall (pl. III, 2) showing that, like room 9, it occupied exactly the junction between the two ranges and provided 9 rooms on this side of the building. Later the number was reduced. Part of the wall between room 2 and the courtyard (the verandah being done away with by this time) was rebuilt in the 4th century for a coin (p. 30 no. 15) was found in cleaning it. The original narrow room 3, which had at all periods an entrance from the east verandah was joined to 2, perhaps in the Severan period. The communicating door of the Hadrianic plan between 3 and 4 was later blocked. Room 3 had a cobbled floor in its first period, containing a coin of Hadrian (p. 30 no. 3). Later this was levelled up with clay and rubble and a hearthstone put in against the south wall. This was a late 2nd or early 3rd century alteration, an indication of date being given by the samian ware (p. 27). In room 7 a coin of Hadrian (p. 30 no. 4) was found below the level of the offset and in 5 a coin of Antoninus Pius (p. 30 no. 5) over the original floor and below the level of the bench, built against the west wall of the room, an alteration which blocked the communicating door with room 4 and then the two rooms were amalgamated. In the rubble and clay over the wall late 2nd century samian was found and, although no intervening floor level was noted, a fragment of late 3rd/4th century mortarium. Rooms 6 and 7 were also joined into one presumably at the same time. Gaming counters were found in this room. Rooms 8 and 9 were badly damaged. Part of the destruction is shown by the gaps in Bosanquet's plan. Someone had quarried in from the south-east corner but traces of a floor of heavy blocks with a threshold of similar stones on the partition wall, remained. On analogy with the north-west corner of the commandant's house, rooms 6 and 7 (AA⁵ iii, pl. IV, 2) these must belong to the last phase of occupation. Elsewhere in the east range the upper levels had already been removed. What little evidence there is implies a Severan date for the main re-organization of its rooms.



1. The hospital, Housesteads: east range looking north, room 9 in foreground



2. The hospital, Housesteads: south-east corner

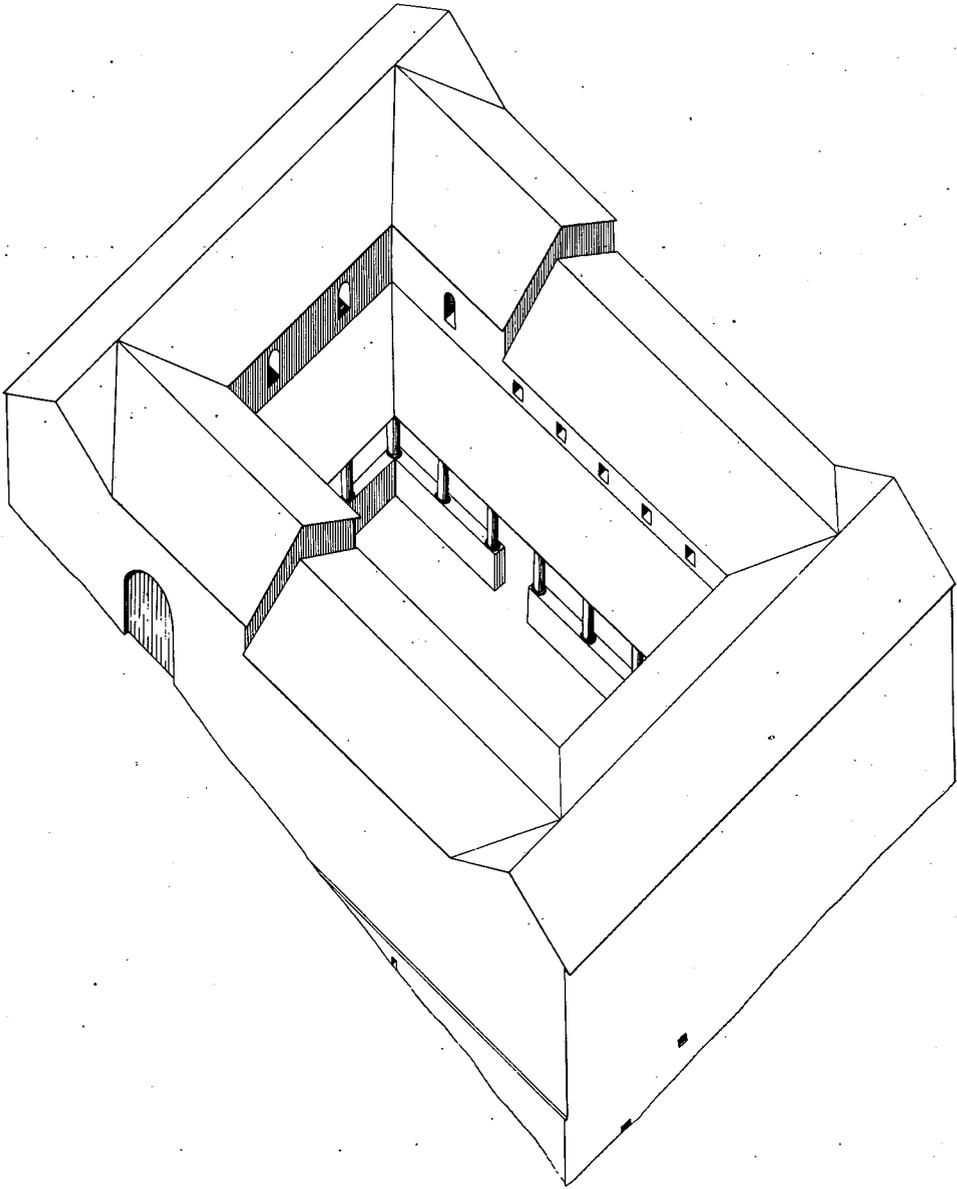


Fig. 2.

SOUTH RANGE

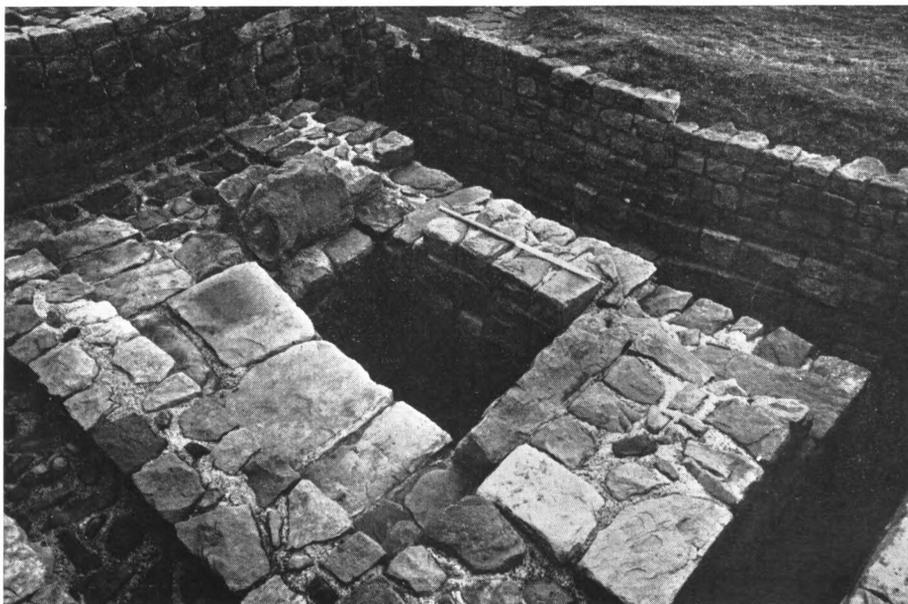
There is no evidence of communication between the rooms in this range. 10-12 open onto the verandah, later directly into the courtyard, the east corner room 9, already discussed, opens into 8 and 13 in the west corner into 14. The partition walls dividing 9-10, 10-11 and 11-12 are all bonded at the north end with the north wall of the range and two also with the outer wall. All these rooms are built on a fill of about 1 m.

Room 10 had the remains of three floor levels in it and some stratified pottery. A fragment of mortarium of early 2nd-century type was found in the levelling up material under the earliest floor, but the pottery from the cleaning of the third floor level was also of 2nd-century date, Hadrianic/Antonine samian, a lid and a pink-ware jar. This must be residual material. Antonine samian was also found in the verandah, below the level of the threshold of the door into 10. Room 11 had two flagged floor levels, neither complete. Room 12 was more complex as it had been altered to serve as a latrine. The drain from the courtyard which originally ran into room 13 was diverted through 12, cut through the retaining wall and the main south wall. It is here that the grooved flag, thought to be cut for use as part of a water tank, is in the wall. The drain is taken through the wall in the 3rd course. Immediately to the east of it two of the headers in the second course project from the line of the wall and it might be thought that they were intended to support a drain cover, possibly of wood, but there is no corresponding feature on the west of the drain. The other pair of projecting headers, in the same course, is 6 m to the west of them. At first the drain had run down the east side of the room but then it had been filled with blue clay and a new drain opened up down the west side. This also had gone out of use. Several layers of flags had been put on top of it and the lower ones collapsed into it. Finally a stone trough, now outside the museum, was stood on it. This seems to be connected with the later farmstead, not with the Roman occupation, although the trough itself is Roman similar to these in the latrine at the south-east corner of the fort.

Room 13, the south-west corner room originally contained a sunk tank, its top at floor level, 1.20 m deep with a slab at its base sloping from north to south and 1.40 m east-west by 0.7 m north-south (pl. V, 2). The water came from the drain through the courtyard entering near the north-east corner of the tank and flowing out from the centre of the south side. The change in ground level gives a rapid fall on the drain. A deep drain ran down the west side of the room from room 15 and had been blocked at some stage, when the room was given a solid flagged floor. This seems to have been the original latrine drain, at least in room 13 but in 14 there is a butt end on what should be the east side of the drain.



1. The hospital, Housesteads: partition wall, south range, south wall on left, buried retaining wall on right



2. The hospital, Housesteads: room 13 looking south-east

WEST RANGE

This is in very poor condition, even room 14 where there are several courses of wall standing had been dug into at various times, though not apparently by Bosanquet.

Room 14 must be considered in its first phase with room 13 as the wall dividing them is a secondary feature the threshold in it level with the solid flagged floor of 13. The remains of an east-west wall to the north of it seems to be the original partition, butting on the wall at the east side of the drain which itself must initially have carried through to room 13 without a break, although later its east side was given a neatly finished end. The drain was later diverted out of the west wall of the hospital. 14, like 13, has a feature sunk below floor level, apparently not so deep as the tank in 13. There is no sign that either of these rooms was heated and no indication of water running into or out of the sunk feature in room 14. Both rooms might in the Hadrianic period be used in some way for water treatments, or merely ablutions. The principal finds in the west range gave no indication of hospital use. In every room there was a scattering of hobnails and a coin of 330-5 (p. 30 no. 14) below some late flagging in 13 was the only secure indication of date.

THE COURTYARD

Much of the pottery was found here, as though less trouble had been taken to keep it clean. Its two flagged surfaces were in very poor condition. The flagging of the Hadrianic period was smaller and thinner than the later and badly broken up. The low wall of the verandah, which had an entrance to the open court at its west side was buried under the later flagging in places. On the south side Bosanquet missed it and so planned only three sides which made this look like a large ward in the centre of the hospital. A drain was traced under the south-west corner of the verandah through in to room 13, later in to 12. It can only have collected surface water in the courtyard and from eaves drips, at the south end of the courtyard. At the north end a possible drain appeared, but this proved to be a natural groove in the whin, with no entry or exit point.

DISCUSSION

Housesteads hospital is comparable, though on a smaller scale and simplified plan, with the hospitals of the 1st- and early 2nd-century legionary fortresses, a courtyard building with small wards and a large ward thought to be an operating theatre.¹ It has its own latrine, possibly also a plunge bath, but no heated rooms and no kitchen. The hospital at Benwell, only partly excavated, is the only other one known so far

¹ *Saalburg Jahrbuch* xxvii (1970) p. 84 f. R. W. Davies, *The Roman Military Medical Service*, particularly 94-7.

on Hadrian's Wall but one can be expected at Chesters and Stanwix, the one cavalry as Benwell, the other milliary. At many auxiliary forts, notably Fendoch, the hospital lacks the central court and the wards open onto a central corridor. These 10 small wards, one for each century of the milliary unit accommodated 4 beds apiece.² At Künzing and Oberstimm³ similar hospitals were provided, but the number of rooms does not correspond with the number of centuries and at Oberstimm, as at Housesteads, there are some extremely narrow rooms between some of the wards, but not the regular alternation that there is in the Housesteads east range. The early timber forts at Corbridge probably also have hospitals on this corridor plan and a similar plan of the timber-built hospital at Pen Llystyn, a fort for two quingenary cohorts, was recovered. The absence of small finds relating to medical services in these buildings leaves some slight uncertainty as to their use but they all have sufficient common features linking them to examples certainly identified for even the corridor type of building to be described as "hospital" rather than "store-building" or "unknown use".

The Housesteads hospital was wholly stone-built and possibly roofed with tiles, but some pieces of stone roofing flag also were found in the excavations. The fragments of box flue-tile must have been re-deposited as there was no trace of a hypocaust in the building. In the reconstruction the courtyard is shown in its first phase with a low wall and stone pillars. An abundant supply of stone pillars lies on the site, others are built into late structures, enough to supply commandant's house, hospital and barrack blocks in the Hadrianic period. The roof line is based on the assumption that the building would be symmetrical, the two shorter ends having an unbroken roof-line with gable ends on the west front, the entrance front. It should be said that Mr. Neal was of the opinion that the south front should be gabled as this end faces the main direction of entry to the fort and the hospital roof-line would be seen over the roof of the commandant's house, which lies to the south of it. In this case it would be the east and west wings which would have the long ridge and the south ridge be hipped into them.

The history of the building remains obscure. It is evident from inscriptions (*RIB* 1612, *JRS* lii (1962) p. 194 no. 16 and *JRS* lvii (1967) p. 205 no. 17) that there was a major re-building programme in the fort during the governorship of L Alfenus Senecio and it may be at this time that the courtyard was altered, the surrounding verandah being removed. As the fort was still at that time occupied by a regular unit, the First Cohort of Tungrians, the hospital would still serve its original function, but some modifications were made, notably the reduction of the number of rooms in the east range by removing some partition walls to create a larger ward in the place of 2 small rooms, in the late 2nd century. The change over to other uses, clearly indicated in the north range was probably made in 4th century, but there is not enough stratified material to provide a date.

² R. G. Collingwood and I. A. Richmond *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (1969) p. 31.

³ See note 1 p. 98 plan 14. *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* xxxvii (1972) H. Schonberger, Das Romerkastell Oberstimm.

THE COARSE POTTERY

Most of the pottery found was 4th century and unstratified. In all periods there was a high proportion of mortaria fragments and many pieces of coarse pottery, as of samian, were heavily worn and probably residual material. The only vessel anywhere near complete was the mug, of which several fragments amounting to more than half the vessel remained, found scattered in the courtyard. Some of the earliest pottery came off one of the later floors in room 11.

In the rubble supporting the re-built north wall

1. Mortarium, white ware with some black grit, but mainly leached out. Gillam type 282 (290–370) fig. 3, 4.
2. Cooking pot with soot-blackened exterior, dark-grey core and pink inner surface. Gillam type 156, 3rd century.

In the entrance lobby

3. Amphora rim with VIII scratched on the rim before firing. Fig. 3, 12.

East Range

4. Mortarium buff/white ware with black grit and some soot-blackening. Gillam type 281 3/4th century. Room 4/5. Fig. 3, 7.
5. Found with 4, reeded rim bowl, coarse pink ware with some soot-blackening on rim.
6. Grey pie-dish. Room 8. Fig. 3, 8.
7. Mortarium, white ware with red grit. Room 6/7. Fig. 3, 10.
8. Segmental bowl, white ware decorated with red paint. In rubble fill of post-Roman hole. Room 8/9 line of partition wall. 4th century. Fig. 3, 9.
9. Fine buff-ware colour-coated, worn, c. 160–260. Room 10. Fig. 3, 11.

South Range

10. Mortarium, pink ware with white wash. In material for levelling up for early floor. 2nd century. Fig. 3, 2.
11. Lid, buff ware with some soot-blackening at edge. Gillam type 339. 90–140. Room 10 on latest floor. Fig. 3, 18.
12. Jar rim fragment, pink with brown gritting, as 11.
13. Narrow-mouthed jar, grey ware, 4th century. Room 13 under latest surviving floor. Fig. 3, 14.

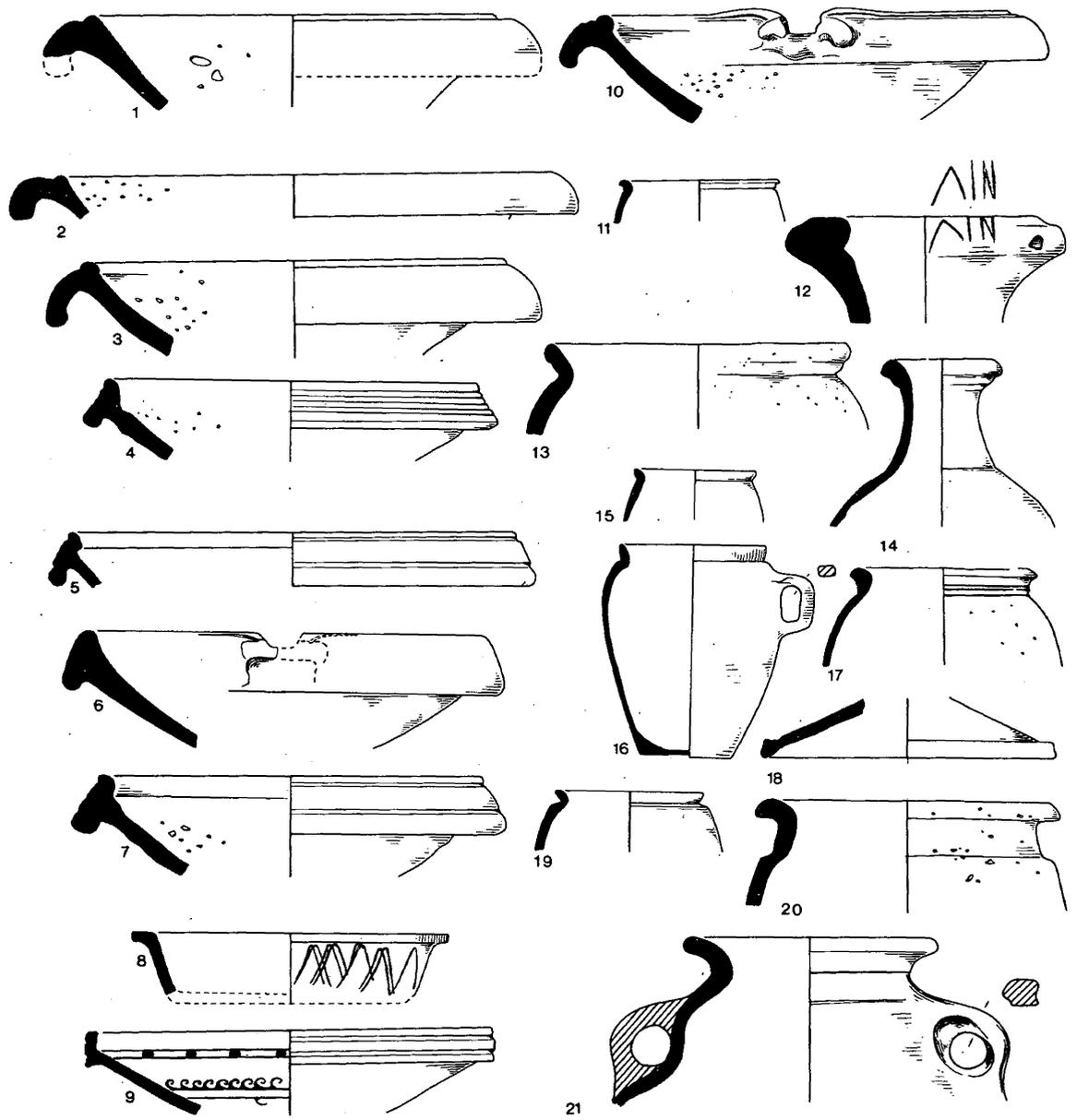


Fig. 3.

West Range

14. Mortarium, buff ware with pink inner surface with large red pebble grit, very worn. Room 14. Fig. 3, 1.
15. Mortarium, buff ware with black grit. Room 14. Fig. 3, 3.

Courtyard

16. Mug, grey ware. Gillam type 66 180–250. Fig. 3, 16.
17. Mortarium, pink ware with sparse white quartz grit. Fig. 3, 6.
18. Small beaker abraded reddish ware may have been colour-coated, or rough-cast. Fig. 3, 15.
19. Grey ware rim, possibly of a mug. Fig. 3, 19.
20. Calcite-gritted ware, grey core black surface. Fig. 3, 20.
21. Handled jar, grey ware. Gillam type 40. 4th century. Fig. 3, 21.
22. Mortarium pinkish-buff ware, abraded. In the east verandah. Fig. 3, 5.

SAMIAN WARE

Hedley Pengelly

The bulk of the samian ware in this collection, has suffered badly from erosion. Many pieces have lost their surface glaze completely and some of the detail on the decorated ware has become unrecognizable. This contrasts strongly with the samian from the commandant's house (AA⁵, III (1975), pp. 30–7), most of which, is in a relatively good, and in some cases, excellent state of preservation.

DECORATED WARE

1. Form 37, East Gaulish. Two pieces, one of base and footring, of a large, thick-walled bowl with one of the more common *ovolos* used by potters working at Rheinzabern in the late second-century and early third-century (cf. H. Ricken, *Die Bilderschusseln der Römischen Topfer von Rheinzabern*, Textband (1963), E17). Probably c. A.D. 160–200, rather than later. Room 6/7 joined, fragments under clay floor.
2. Form 37, Central Gaulish, with a bold winding leaf-scroll of the type used by Paternus II of Lezoux (cf. *S. & S.*, pls. 107–8). c. A.D. 160–90. Room 6/7.
3. Twelve small pieces, some joining, of an enclosed, thin-walled jar, East Gaulish, with some vegetation *en barbotine*. Probably late-Antonine. Room 6/7.
4. Twelve pieces, all probably from the same central Gaulish bowl, form 37, with leaf-scroll. Not assignable to a particular potter, but probably Antonine. South range, room 11, sealed by late floor.
5. Form 37 rim. Central Gaulish, probably Antonine. Room 15.
6. Form 37, Central Gaulish. This is standard work of Cinnamus of Lezoux with the familiar large advertisement stamp, reading [CINN] AMI retrograde. A scheme of panels includes the following: (i) a large double-medallion with lion (D. 736, O. 1378), (ii) the advertisement stamp, next to which stands Bacchus (D. 331, O. 581) over a leaf motif (R. L11),

- (iiia) a double-festoon and (iiib) the partial impression of a stag (D. 852, O. 1720) springing from some leaf-tips or simulated blades of grass. *c.* A.D. 150–75. In clay floor on whin outcrop, entrance lobby.
7. Form 37 rim. Central Gaulish, Antonine. South corridor, west end between two levels of flagging.
 8. Three abraded fragments, all probably from the same Central Gaulish bowl, form 37, with free-style decoration in the manner of Albucius of Lezoux (cf. *S. & S.*, pl. 123). The identified figures are: horseman (D. 157, O. 246) and dog (close to O. 1977), and the poorly-impressed astragalus (R. R61). *c.* A.D. 145–75. West range, room 15, under level of flagging but not sealed in.
 9. Form 37, Central Gaulish, with the same ovolo as the last, but this time on what looks like one of Paternus II's scroll-bowls with rosettes in the field (cf. *S. & S.*, pl. 107). *c.* A.D. 160–90. As 8.
 10. A fragment of form 37, Central Gaulish, depicting part of a saltire. This piece has the bold moulding and large flattened bead-rows characteristic of Do(u)eccus I of Lezoux; who also used the "almond" motif (R. U161) and the triple motif with ribbed arms (R. G68). For a different saltire in his work, cf. *S. & S.*, pl. 149, 33 from Silchester. *c.* A.D. 160–200. West range, room 14.

PLAIN WARE

With the exception of a South Gaulish cup, form 27, Flavian-Trajanic, below the floor of the east corridor, two Central Gaulish cups, form 27, Hadrianic-Antonine or Antonine, from Room 6/7, two Central Gaulish dishes of forms 18/31 or 31, Hadrianic or Antonine and 18/31R or 31R, Hadrianic-Antonine or Antonine, from the drain in courtyard and Room 14, the assemblage of plain ware from this site, can be treated as one group, since it is firmly Antonine in date, with a strong inclination towards the middle and (especially) latter parts of the range. The group comprises the following: C.G., five abraded sherds and forms 31 (six, one burnt), 31R (five), 38 (two, one burnt), 33 (one) and 79 (one). E.G., form 31 (two).

ABBREVIATIONS

- D. Figure-type in J. Dechelette, *Les vases ceramiques ornes de la Gaule romaine*, tome ii (1904).
- O. Figure-type in F. Oswald, *Index of Figure-Types on Terra Sigillata*, (1936–7).
- R. Motif in G. B. Rogers, *Poteries sigillees de la Gaule centrale*, tome i—Les motifs non figures, *Gallia Supplement XXVII* (1974).
- S. & S. J. A. Stanfield and M. G. Simpson, *Central Gaulish Potters* (1958).

SMALL FINDS

1. Bronze spoon, unusual in being beaten not cast, hollow handle connecting with bowl. West range room 14.
2. Bronze ring found in room 13 in low north-south wall at west side of tank.

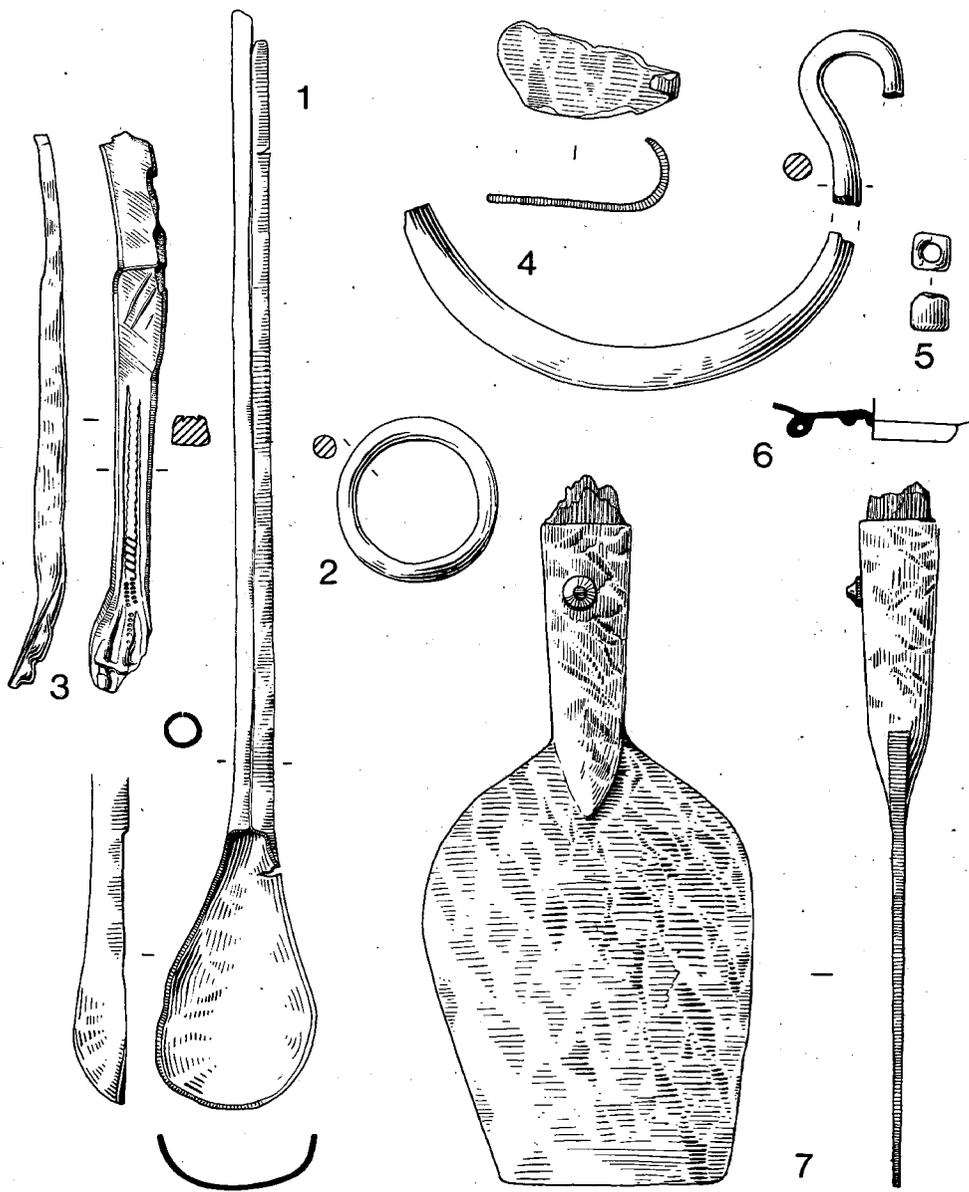


Fig. 4.

3. Bronze unidentified object. Unstratified.
4. Two bronze hooks. Room 6/7.
5. Small blue glass bead, square in section.
6. Base of glass beaker Hadrianic/Antonine.
7. Iron object, flat shovel-shaped with a solid shank riveted to it. In Room 14.

COINS

	Obverse	Date	Denom. and Ref. (R.I.C.)		Condition
1	Titus (Vespasian)	69-79	As (? A.D. 77-8)	cf. 788	Worn
2	Trajan	98-117	Sest.	illegible	V. Worn
3-4	Hadrian	117-38	Den. 268 (A.D. 134-8),	Sest. 759 (A.D. 134-8)	Good, Worn— V. Worn
5	Antoninus Pius	138-61	Sest. 546/646 (A.D. 139-144)		Worn—V. Worn
6	Irregular Antoninus Pius	138+	Dup. R/Libertas		Worn—fair
7	Julia Maesa (Elagabalus)	218-22	Den. 268		Good—some wear
8	Gallienus	259-68	Ant. 181, I		Good—some wear
9-10	Tetricus I	270-3	Ant. R/uncertain (2) (1 ? irregular)	XI	Worn, worn

	Reverse	Date	Mint	Obverse	Ref. (R.I.C. & L.R.B.C. I-II)	Condition
11	GENIO POPVLI ROMANI	300-5	London	Maximian	R.I.C. VI London b.b.	Fair—worn
12	VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP	319	Trier	Constantine I	R.I.C. VII Trier 213	Worn
13	PROVIDENTIAE CAESS	324-30	Trier	Constantine II	L.R.B.C. I 39.p.	Good—little wear
14	Victory on Prow	330-5	Lyons	Constantinopolis	L.R.B.C. I 201.p.	Good—some wear
15	SALVS DD NN AVGETCAE	351-3	Trier	Magnentius	L.R.B.C. II 66.p.	Good

LOCATIONS

1. South range unstratified.
2. South wall.
3. East range, room 3 in cobble floor.
4. East range, below level of offset course room 7.
5. East range, room 5, below level of bench but not sealed by floor.
6. Topsoil west end of south range.
7. Room 12 in drain.
8. East range unstratified.
- 9-10. Unstratified.
11. West range, in the south wall of entrance lobby.
12. West range, topsoil.
13. Outside west wall.
14. West range, room 13, south end under latest surviving "floor".
15. In west wall, room 2.