



"Lamp chimneys" or "Lantern-towers", left, from Ashtead; right, from Verulamium.

THE ROMAN "CHIMNEY-POTS"
FROM ASHTEAD
and parallel examples from other sites.

BY

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THE Roman site on Ashtead Common, excavated 1926-28 (S.A.C., XXXVIII, 6) yielded the fragments of some three or four terra-cotta objects which, following the description applied to similar objects in the York Museum, I then termed "chimney-pots." Now, in the light of a recent find at Verulamium as well as that of a previously published article,¹ just brought to my notice, relating to similar objects found on the Continent, it seems probable that I was wrong. They seem to have been used as objects to which some religious significance was attached, *viz.* as "Votive Lamps," or "Lamp-chimneys," and associated both with burials and temple worship.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Mortimer Wheeler, I am able to reproduce a photograph (Plate XII) of the Verulamium example (right) taken beside one of those found at Ashtead (left), the only one from the latter site of which it has been possible to make a complete reconstruction. Fig. 1 shows the upper part of two other examples from Ashtead, here reproduced for the first time. All the Ashtead specimens are made of red brick, in which respect they differ from the Verulamium one which is of buff-coloured pottery, similar to that chiefly employed for mortaria. Thus, while the Ashtead examples are the products of a brickworks (probably the one at this site) and the ornamentation is of a fairly coarse technique, due to the limitations of the material, the

¹ "Lanterne und Lichthauschen," by Siegfried Loeschke, in *Bonner Jahrbücher*, no. 118, p. 405 on.

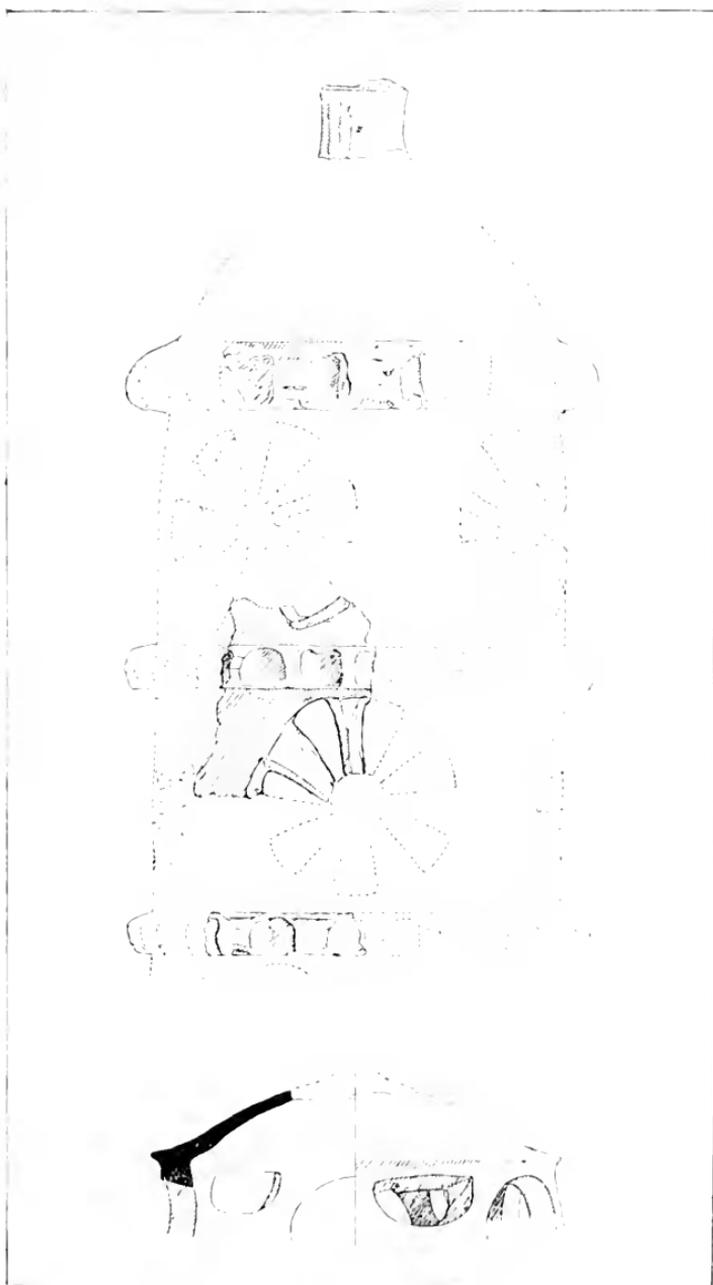


FIG. 1.—UPPER FRAGMENTS OF TWO EXAMPLES FROM ASHTEAD.

$\frac{1}{4}$ actual size.

Verulamium one, the product of a pottery-works, shows a better technique and more careful execution. The potter, using a finer material, would naturally be more expert at turning out a work of this nature, and so the openings while less ambitious, are cut with a greater precision and symmetry. The raised bands separating the rows of openings, are ornamented with neat diagonal slashing in place of the "thumb and forefinger" frilling employed on the brick examples. The top is open instead of having the usual pointed roof finishing in a spike; this is not a material difference, apparently, as several of the continental examples have openings cut in the roof as well as round the sides. All the cylindrical examples were first turned on a wheel and then the openings cut and the decoration applied.

Let us first consider the various examples described by Loeschke (*op. cit.*) Fig. 2, copied from the illustration with his account, shows five of the eight which he describes. These he has shown, fall into two types, square and round; the former apparently of third to fourth-century date and found in the Lower Danube region, the latter, of second-century date, from various places on the Rhine and Upper Danube. Three of those figured are of the square, and two of the round type. All are made of red or yellowish brick.

Nos. 3, 4 and 5, from sites near Budapest (Aquincum, Potaissa and Intercissa respectively) are of this square type and do not concern us except that, as Loeschke points out, they were essentially intended for the same purpose as those of a cylindrical shape.

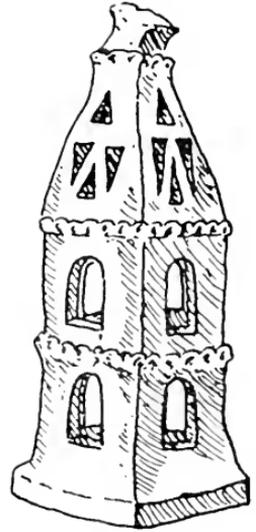
No. 2 (the top restored conjecturally) is from Bonn, where part of another, of the same form, has also been found. Its triangular openings are similar to those on the more complete of the Ashtead specimens and on the one from Leigh Sinton, Worcestershire.

No. 1, from Xanten, is one of the most interesting from the circumstances of its discovery, which is described thus:

"On June 19th, 1821, Houben discovered, near the low hedge at no. 19 on the plan, an area of burnt material, at a depth of 4 ft., associated with pieces of sigillata and other wares. Nearby stood this red brick tower, and, grouped round it in rings, were about 40 small pots, all of them carefully set in the ground."



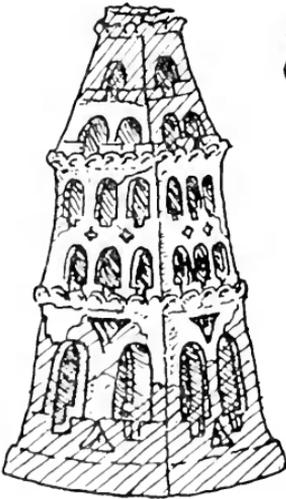
2.



3.



1.



4.



5.

10 0 10 20 30 40 50 cms.

FIG. 2.—“LANTERN-TOWERS” FROM THE RHINE AND DANUBE DISTRICTS.
After Siegfried Loeschke.

Loeschcke adds that he considers it to have been a cremation burial.

In another part of his account, he attempts to show that these terra-cotta objects are derived from two separate sources; the square ones, from the terra-cotta lamp-holders found with burials in Egypt of the Græco-Roman period, and which are generally modelled in the form of buildings, with door and window openings; the round ones, from the early Roman cylindrical lantern of a type found in Italy and also shown on sculptured reliefs. Whether this is so or not, all the examples so far recorded for this country are of the round type, and the dating (at any rate for the ones from Ashtead and Verulamium) agrees with his second-century date for this type.

Turning to those from this country, the most important is that from Verulamium. It was found in the Open Court of the Temple (Insula VII) excavated in 1933, and comes from a "sealed" second-century level. It was lying, in fragments, on the original gravel floor of this court, near the brick altar base, and was covered by a third-century floor. In association with it were the pieces of "incense-burners" (mostly of the usual tazza form, with frilled bands by way of ornamentation) and one or two ritual vessels of unusual type. The overlying floor produced a number of small pots similar to those found grouped round the Xanten terra-cotta (Fig. 2, no. 1).

The one found at Sandlin Farm, Leigh Sinton, Worcestershire is described (with photograph) in Vol. V of the *Antiquaries Journal*, p. 287. It is 13½ inches tall, having only one band of openings, and is apparently a "waster," being over-burnt and much distorted. It was found with other wasters, mainly of roof tiles, indicating the presence of tile kilns near this spot and so putting it in the same category as the specimens from Ashtead.

Two fragments are recorded from Caerleon (*Report on the Excavations in the Prysg Field, 1927-29, Part II, Fig. 14*). One shows part of a frilled band and the openings above and below it; the other has a plain raised band separating the openings. Both were found in layers of débris and one is dated c. A.D. 200-300, the other c. A.D. 105-200.

Of the two examples from Ashtead shown on Fig. 1, the most elaborate, is tentatively reconstructed from the six pieces of it which were found. It had rosette-shaped openings for at least two of the zones, separated by frilled bands and with a domed top, finishing in a spike. The other, represented by part of the top, is plainer and has a flatter roof than is usual. A top-spike, similar to that surmounting the one on Plate XII, was found near by and may belong to this specimen. All those from this site are not later than c. A.D. 200, and are probably early second-century, as other finds from here showed this to be the main period of occupation.

In conclusion, the evidence from finds in this country (with the possible exception of the pieces from Caerleon) supports Loeschke's contention that these objects had a Votive or Religious purpose and are not to be regarded as Ventilation Cows or Chimney-pots. Had they been used for the latter purpose they would surely have been found in far greater numbers and, like box flue tiles, definitely associated with hypocausts in buildings throughout the country. Moreover, those from Verulamium and Xanten both, by their association, indicate their religious significance. Also against their having been fixed on buildings, is the fact that many of them have the openings and decoration carried down too low to allow of this being done. Some, it is true, have a plain band at the bottom that would make this possible, but most of them, like the one from Verulamium, can only have been stood in position and cannot have had any mortar to hold them in place as would be necessary if they were to serve as Chimney-pots.