

POTTERY FROM NICHOLAS LANE, E.C.

BY

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TOWARD the end of October, 1924, the writer noticed material containing bones and oyster shells, as well as fragments of pottery and glass being carted away from an excavation for a new sewer in Nicholas Lane, E.C. The waste material came from a depth varying from $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet to $15\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the present road level..

Having found a few months previous similar fragments of pottery and a boar's tusk in the material coming from $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet below the surface of Sherborne Lane, the difference in depth of the Roman London strata so short a distance away, was interesting.

Spread over the few weeks the excavation was in progress a considerable number of fragments of pottery came to light and when these had been sorted over pieces that fitted were cemented together. It was not found possible to reconstruct any vessel entirely, and this fact, with the finding of but a few pieces of glass, some animal bones, and horns, seemed to indicate that a waste pit had been reached similar to those pits recently excavated on the old General Post Office site.

It is one thing to have an amateur recognition of Roman pottery, but quite another to possess the particular and expert knowledge to group and date the various types of vessels which fuller knowledge has of late thrown so much more light on the period of occupation of Roman sites.

In this case it is particularly fortunate that such an authority as Mr. A. G. K. Hayter, M.A., F.S.A., with his wide knowledge and experience, willingly gave his services to group, very fully describe and date the fragments.

His description of the separate groups and drawings of the more important pieces, kindly made by Mr. R. Pearsall, follow these notes.

Of the so-called Samian Ware some of the pieces are decorated (Group A, Nos. 1 to 5 in the description following) and portions of the large bowl A, 1 turned up on different days. Pieced together they give a good idea of the fine shape and decoration.

In the undecorated Samian, Group B, Nos. 1 to 7, one base has the potter's stamp MATTI-M. and another a portion of a stamp SV.

A few pieces of buff or cream-coloured egg-shell ware, Group C, stood the rough handling better than would be expected.

Of the fragments of amphoræ, Group D, two out of seven portions of handles bear stamps. viz:— - - PAHSCAG and PRIMIGEN, and it is noteworthy that the former, from Mr. Hayter's description, has not hitherto been recorded.

Another stamped piece is in Group E. Mortaria, where on the portion of a rim radially placed is P.PR. with the label similar to that found on tiles.

One piece only of the so-called Castor Ware, Group F. 1, came to light, but there were many fragments of Grey Ware, Group H, the greater number having very varied forms of lattice pattern decoration, others having ornamentation of dots in applied barbotine arranged in rows or circles.

Amongst the miscellaneous items there is a light red, mica dusted, leg or handle of a vessel, Group I, 1, and two pieces of glass, a portion of the hollow rim of a wide mouthed bowl and a well moulded and decorated handle.

The animal remains recovered include a ram's horn, two or three jaw and other bones of birds and beasts.

There are traces of corroded bronze on the inside of one of the grey ware jars, the jar having apparently some article of this metal left in it.

Some interesting questions arise when taking into consider-

ation that there was nothing unusual, as far as could be learned, in the material coming from the higher levels in sinking the shaft and the fact emerging from Mr. Hayter's prefatory note "there is probably nothing later than the middle of the 2nd. Century" showing the pottery to be of earlier date than the Roman Wall. Was the waste pit filled and subsequently obliterated by natural accumulation on the surface, a fresh pit being made for the later broken pottery etc., or did some violent cause suddenly determine the occupation of the site until much later times?
