

REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS AT BROCKLEY HILL, MIDDX.

August 1953 and 1954

By

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THE SITE (Fig. 1).

The failure of previous excavations to identify the 'decayed buildings' and 'foundations' mentioned by Stukeley and other writers¹ led the Committee in 1953 to explore a further site in the grounds of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. A fortnight's work was done in August of that year, and the excavation completed by a second campaign in the following season. The work was carried out almost entirely by members of the Constituent and Affiliated societies under the direction of the writer.²

The site comprised the narrow strip of ground immediately to the north of Brockley Hill House, bounded on the west side by the nurses' tennis courts and on the east by Watling Street. The area lies just below the crest of the hill, with the ground sloping away gently to the west. A series of trenches was cut along the old carriage way which leads to the rear of Brockley Hill House, and further cuttings made in the plantation which screens the Hospital from the road. This ground was believed to have escaped disturbance during the 18th and 19th centuries; and here, if anywhere, traces of buildings might be expected to have survived which would provide a clearer picture of the nature of the settlement. In brief, the Committee's aim was to discover whether Sulloniaca could be termed a town in the sense of possessing public buildings and a street plan of regular pattern, or whether it represented no more than a group of roadside kilns producing pottery on an unusually extensive scale. At the same time it was hoped to gain information which would help to decide the context in which the Moxom Collection had been discovered some half a century ago.³

THE CLAYPIT

The main feature which the excavation revealed was an unusually large Romano-British claypit. Less than half appeared to remain, the major portion having been removed when the ground was dug away for the construction of the tennis courts in 1909. As far as could be judged, it was oval in shape, but its complete outline may well have been as

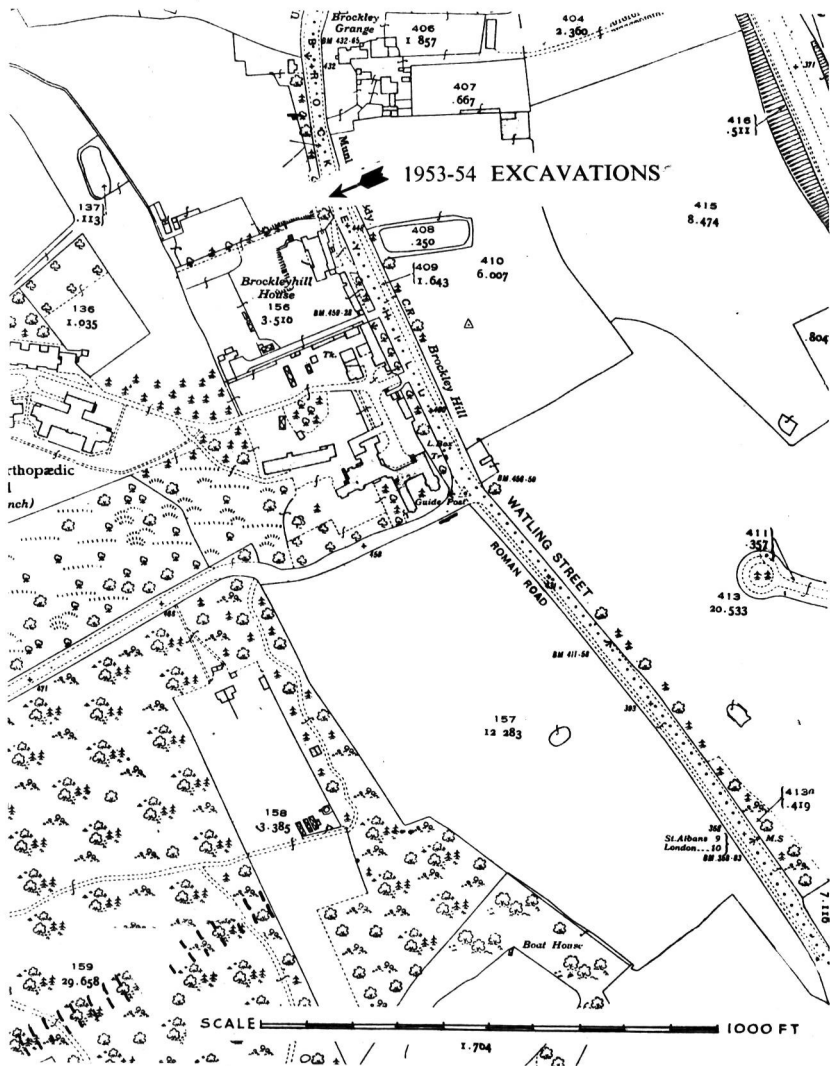
irregular as those of the pits found behind the café in 1952. Its greatest width was about 70 ft., and it was evidently a much more ambitious undertaking than any of those found in previous years. In depth it varied from less than 3 ft. to more than 7 ft., these measurements being taken from the old ground surface. Its sides appeared to have been scraped down to an angle of about 40 degrees. The bottom contained black ashy soil to a depth of about 2 ft., the north end of which yielded a truly astonishing variety of material. Besides the usual abundance of kiln rejects, a remarkable quantity of Samian ware occurred in both plain and decorated forms, together with fragments of plain and multicoloured glass, several bronze brooches and pins, yellow glazed St. Rémy ware, micaceous and black imported pottery, an intaglio from a ring (Plate (A) and (B)), a corroded *as* of Nero and many fragments of iron. The Samian ware ranged from the Flavian period to the middle of the 2nd century, with emphasis upon the period 100-120 A.D.

This deposit was covered by about 6-9 ins. of brown soil, over which lay a substantial spread of gravel cobbling. Towards the centre of the pit two further layers of cobbling were superimposed, each separated by a thin build-up of brownish soil. A further layer of light brown soil, about 1 ft. in depth, lay between the topmost gravel and the humus. Nothing was found to date the cobbling closely; a fragment of folded beaker below the gravel shows that it cannot be earlier than the end of the 2nd century. Coarse pottery and mortaria of late form in the upper layers suggest that the cobbling was in position by the 4th century A.D.

Apart from its size, the claypit closely resembled those found on Brockley Hill in previous years. The kiln which it served had doubtless been destroyed when the tennis courts were made, but its products date it to the latter end of the 1st century A.D. After the kiln had gone out of use, the pit continued to be used during the succeeding century as a rubbish dump. Appreciably later, perhaps as late as the beginning of the 4th century, a spread of cobbling was laid down to level and consolidate the surface. The middle of the pit, however, showed a tendency to sag, and to remedy this extra gravel had to be put down on more than one occasion. The resulting surface was exceptionally firm and could have borne the weight, if necessary, of wheeled traffic. Whether this was the reason for putting down the metalling it is impossible to say, but certainly when the cobbling was first encountered it presented all the appearances of a substantial road.

THE HUT (Plate (D))

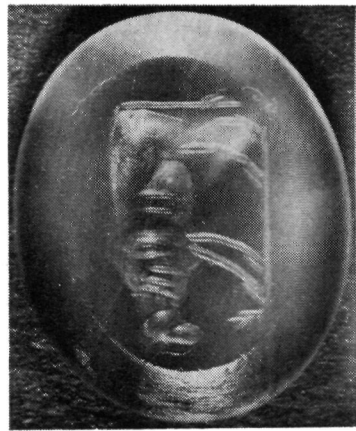
Towards the close of the excavation the corner of a hut was found at the south end of the pit. Its construction was rough in the extreme.



(Reproduced from the O.S. 25" Sheet Middlesex V.12 with the Sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office)

Fig. 1

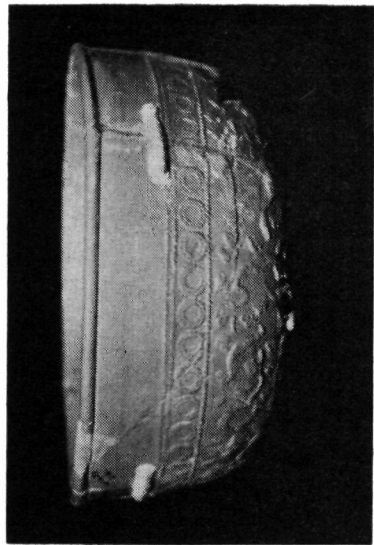
BROCKLEY HILL, SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE SITE



A



B



C



D

(Photographs by J. C. BURT & G. F. COLE)

The walls consisted merely of slabs of clay strengthened by potsherds and broken tile. A large posthole to the south may have been associated with the structure. Both inside and outside the hut lay a thick spread of clean clay, distinguishable from the natural only by the presence in it of occasional sherds and flecks of ash. Below the spread was found the major portion of a mortarium of Bruccius (Fig. 2, M11). Nothing closely datable was found in the fabric of the walls; but the fragments of coarse-ware, as mentioned above, indicated a date towards the end of the 1st century. Lack of evidence makes it impossible to say for what purpose the hut was used. Possibly it sheltered the potter at his work, though the greater depth of the clay spread outside the structure rather suggests that he worked outside. One may guess, perhaps, that it served as a drying shed in which the vessels were hardened before being fired. Judging from the amount of ash in this area, the kiln cannot have been far away. Its construction was no doubt similar to those found in previous years, and being below ground level the heat from the furnace would have spread to the shed and kept it at a suitable temperature. The practice of carrying out the three operations of throwing, drying and firing pottery within a pit, whilst not apparently so far recorded in Britain, seems to have been common enough in Gaul.⁴

THE ROAD DITCH

In order to establish the relationship between the claypit and the Roman road, a cutting was made at right angles to the carriage way and taken across the plantation up to the hedge boundary of Watling Street. Tree roots and a line of ornamental bushes caused breaks in the section, which fortunately did not affect the result. As elsewhere, the road ditch was found to have been scoured in recent times and subsequently filled with rubble. A thin tail of silting was, however, found representing the slide from the upcast, and in this layer occurred a piece of New Forest ware—the only find. The upcast from the ditch can be traced as the brown layer mixed with yellow clay above the cobbling of the pit, showing that the ditch in its present form is a later feature. But whether this 4th century activity represents the digging of a completely new ditch (necessitated perhaps by a realignment of the course of the road) or merely the recutting of an earlier one whose spoil heap is not now apparent, cannot on the evidence be decided. Indeed the New Forest sherd merely provides a *terminus a quo*, and it may well be that the recutting in question took place much later than the 4th century—perhaps in the 18th—although this is less likely in view of the depth of humus above the upcast.

CONCLUSIONS

It may now be said without hesitation that the settlement of Sulloniaca shows no signs of conscious planning. Certainly it did not possess a street plan of formal type. Buildings must obviously have existed in connection with the kilns, but one may doubt whether any private dwellings of consequence stood in this area. The nearness of the kilns to the road and the flimsy nature of the huts found in 1950 behind them suggest rather a picture of industrial squalor. It may perhaps be that important buildings await discovery elsewhere, for example on the south side of the hill where excavations for a sewer in April, 1955, in the field to the north of Green Lane brought to light cremation burials and signs of occupation:⁵ as has been shown at Verulamium, 'ribbon development' along a main road was a feature of Roman as well as modern times. But in trying to form an idea of the size of the settlement, two points should be borne in mind; first, that pottery making was often only a seasonal occupation, and secondly that the inclusion of the name of a place in the Antonine Itinerary offers no guide as to its size or importance.

In default of structural evidence, there is little that can be said, except by way of conjecture, to account for the exotic material found in the claypit. Samian ware is not often found on small kiln sites, and luxury objects such as millefiore glass even more rarely. On the other hand, the number of kilns at Sulloniaca seems to have been considerable⁶, and the potters probably lived at no great distance from their work. On even quite humble occupation sites, such as one imagines Sulloniaca to have been, the presence of Samian pottery would not be unusual, and the fact that the claypit was used as a rubbish dump might be thought sufficient reason for the exceptional quantity found in it. But the large number of pieces belonging to the period 100-120 A.D. all from the workshops at Lezoux, amongst which may be mentioned two identical cups of Form 27 bearing the stamp of Donnaucus, and the unworn condition of the sherds, makes one doubt whether this explanation is entirely adequate. One wonders if perhaps this material does not represent the wreckage of unused vessels, destined for some roadside shop but broken in transit and thrown away on arrival. Such roadside shops were a regular feature in Gaul, where sites comparable to Sulloniaca have been examined in detail.⁷ These shops displayed a variety of goods, including both local and imported pottery, for customers from the surrounding neighbourhood. It must, of course, be emphasised that this view rests entirely on the writer's interpretation of the amount and condition of the Samian ware found, which seems to be greater than might be expected if it were merely occupation rubbish, of which the riveted bowl shown

in Plate (C) is typical. Little again can be said regarding the iron objects which were as usual hopelessly corroded. It seems unlikely that they were used in the making of pottery. They may represent broken implements from the nearby huts, or (in view of their quantity) they may even derive from the smithy which a settlement of this kind undoubtedly possessed. The smithy was an important establishment, not merely for shoeing horses and carrying out casual repairs for travellers, but also for keeping agricultural equipment in working order. As for the inn, which appears to have been the third focal building in communities of this kind, substantial numbers of amphora and flagon fragments have certainly been found. But these vessels must have had many uses in pottery making, and one would not be justified in supposing that they had served any purpose other than satisfying the everyday needs of the workers at the kilns.

The excavation described above represents the conclusion of the investigations initiated in 1947. The Reports on the various excavations, necessarily brief and technical, have not attempted to record all that is known about the site. Each year's work has added a wealth of detail to the picture. A general description of the settlement and its place against the social and economic background of Roman Britain is now clearly desirable, and an account on these lines is being prepared for publication in the near future.

THE FINDS (Figs. 2 & 3)

The list of finds is selective. Considerations of space have made it necessary to exclude the Samian ware and other extraneous material, which in any case is familiar enough from other sites. An exception has been made in the case of one vessel (C1), which rarely, if ever, survives in a complete condition. A full inventory of the material has been drawn up and may be consulted at the Central Library, Hendon, where the finds are deposited.

Unless otherwise stated, all the pottery is of local make and occurred in the black deposit in the pit.

A. BOWLS AND JARS

N1 & 2. Wide mouthed jars in the native tradition. Brownish black surface, the fabric being harder fired and sandier than in similar vessels of pre Roman date.

N3. Massive roll rim storage jar. Handmade. 'Soapy' fabric containing large particles of grit; brownish grey surface. Decorated with a combed pattern of wavy lines around the shoulder and obliquely down the sides. A well known Belgic type (see *Verulamium*, Fig. 18, no. 60a, p. 166). Perhaps used as a water jar by the potter.

C1. Black polished beaker with incised decoration of concentric arcs and vertical lines. An uncommon form, since the thinness of its walls made it fragile and, once broken, liable to disintegrate into small pieces. This ware occurs with some frequency in the south of Britain and has already been found at Brockley Hill (1951 *Report*, Fig. 5, p. 187, nos. VI-3). It was imported probably from Belgium.

C2. A more Romanised version of N1 & 2. Hard sandy orange buff surface, burnt and cracked down one side.

C3. Incense bowl. Buff surface with frilling and stabbed decoration characteristic of the 2nd century. Cf. *Magna*, Pl. 42, no. 6. For an account of the development and presumed use of these vessels see *Y Cymmrodor*, XXXVII (1926), *The Roman Fort near Brecon*, pp. 226-7. Found in the disturbed filling of the road ditch.

C4. Diminutive lid in orange buff.

C5. Miniature bowl with flat reeded rim; fine fabric with off white surface.

C6. Carinated bowl with girth grooves and flat expanding rim. Dirty buff.

C7. Reed rimmed bowl in buff. Supplementary to the series already published.

C8. Rough 'dog bowl'. Flat, thickened rim. Drab, burnt.

C9. Handled platter or shallow dish in yellow buff. The general type is figured in *Caerleon, Prys Field*, III, Fig. 62, nos. 442-3.

C10. Bowl with sharply angled downbent flange. One of a small number of fragments of flanged bowls of 2nd century date. Buff with orange slip.

C11. A descendant of the reed rimmed class of bowls. Dirty off white surface with traces of brown colour coat. Brown layer above cobbles. Probably 4th century.

B. MORTARIA.

An important series was obtained which, together with the material found in previous years, it is hoped to use as the basis for a study of these vessels in the south of Britain. For the moment discussion of their dating and significance has been avoided; the pieces are merely listed and described. Judging by their condition and fabric, all appear to be of local make, with the exception perhaps of the sherds of Marinus.

M1. $\widehat{\text{AMTVGE}}$. A variant of the stamp found in 1952 (*Report*, Fig. 6, no. 1). The impression seems complete. Two examples in creamy white, one with rim flaked during firing. Rim sections similar to 1952.

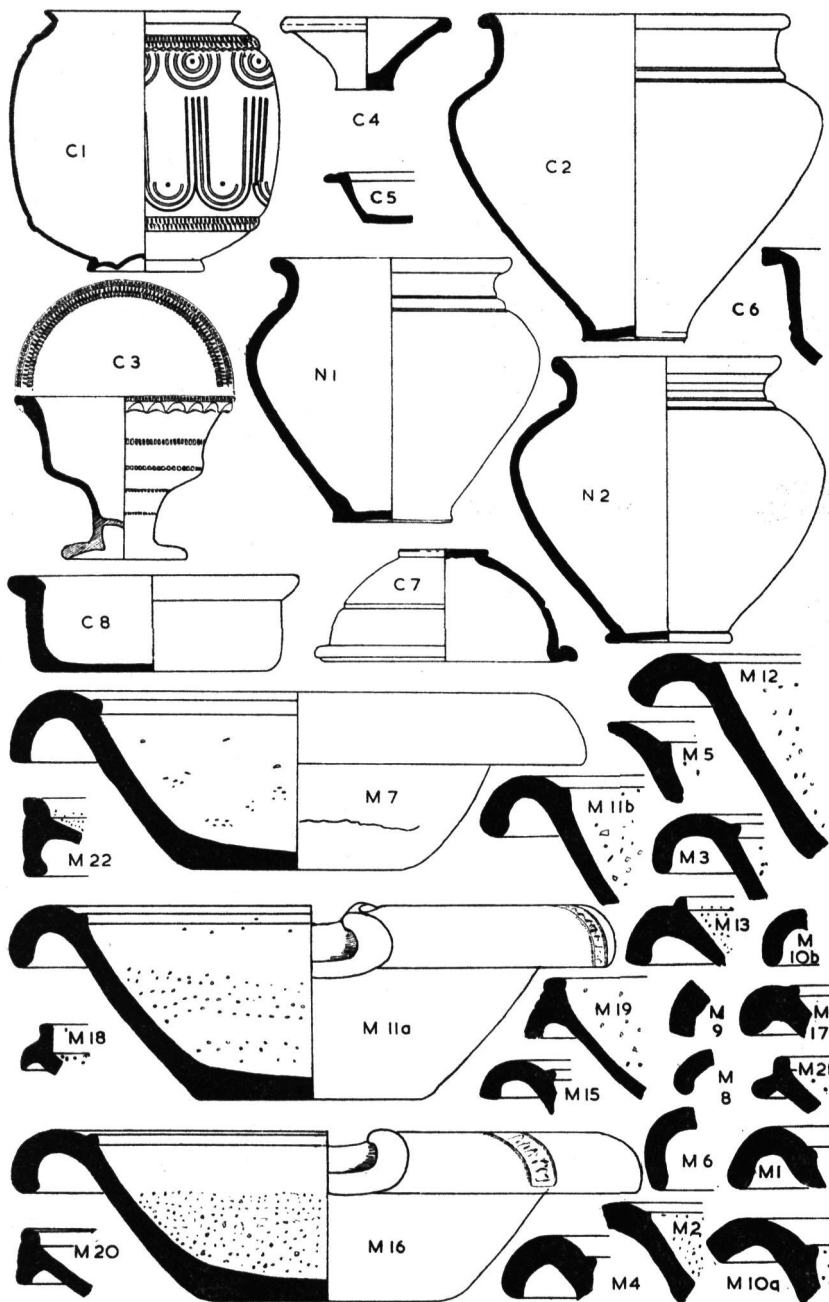


Fig. 2

COARSE POTTERY (Scale $\frac{1}{2}$)

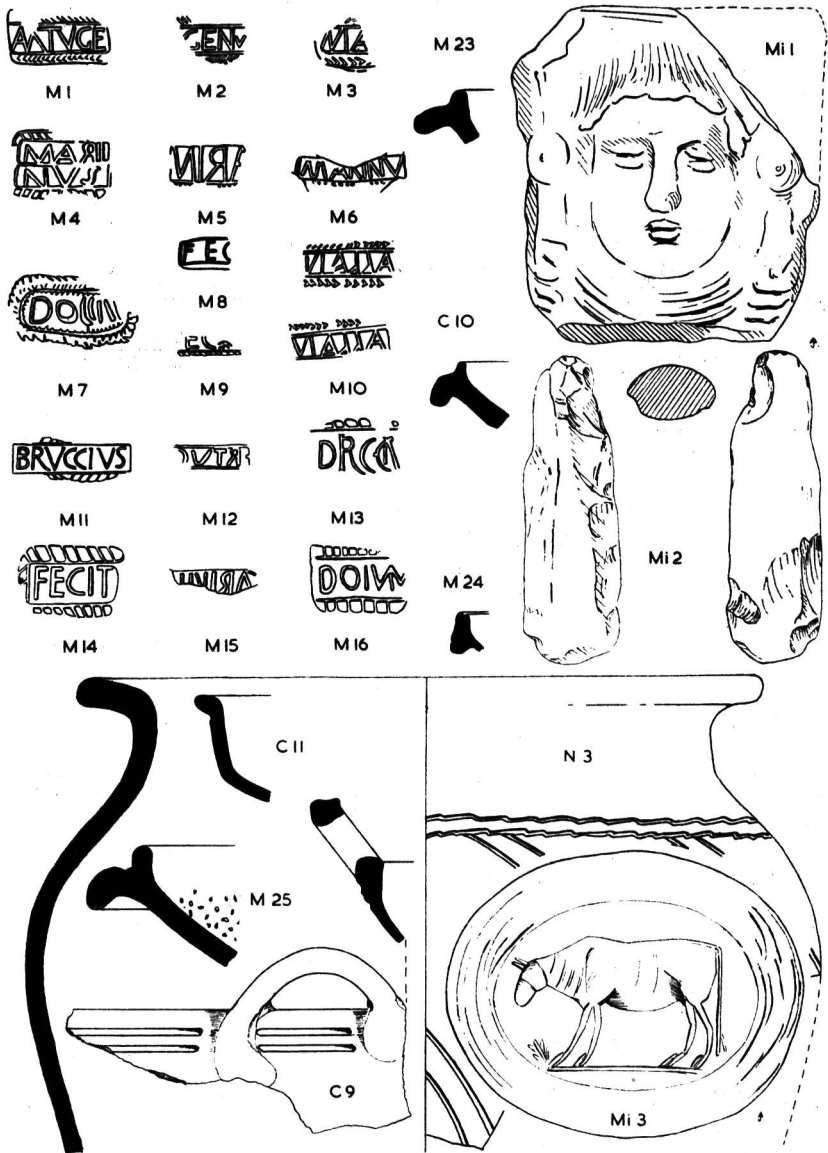


Fig. 3

COARSE POTTERY AND MORTARIUM STAMPS (Scale $\frac{1}{2}$)

MISCELLANEOUS (Mi 1 and 2, Scale $\frac{1}{2}$, Mi 3, Scale $7/2$)

M2. GENv. Four fragments from the same die, representing perhaps two vessels. Two rims burnt grey brown, the others buff with orange slip. Rim sections all similar.

M3. MA. A variant of a stamp of Matugenus found in 1947 (*Report*, p. 21, no. 5) with closely similar rim section. Two examples.

M4. MARI/NVS. Buff with cream slip. For the various dies of Marinus see *Isca*, p. 42, tab. 23, no. 1; *Arch. Camb.*, III (1856), Fig. 6, p. 77; *Elslack*, p. 163; *Melandra*, Pl. 4, no. 1a; *Templebrough*, p. 120, no. 1, in addition to the references given in the 1950 *Report*, p. 217.

M5. ARIN retrograde. Greyish white, burnt.

M6. MARINV. Hard tile red. Cf. *Wroxeter* I, Fig. 16, No. 6, type 38, where the stamp shows the final S. In *Chester Museum the counterstamp* (L)VGVDV EECI occurs. Compare also *Newstead*, p. 266, no. 17; Walters, M2783-5 and *Guildhall Cat.*, p. 102, no. 624. Examples of this stamp found in 1950 and 1951 show comparable rim sections, but the fabric is different.

M7. DOCCIV. Three examples with similar profiles, two in pinkish buff, the third in cream. Cf. *Richborough* IV, p. 249, no. 24, dated Domitian-Trajan. Compare Walters M2780. Stamps have been found on other sites reading DOCCAS and DOCILIS which have the same border design and lettering. All appear to show inspiration from a common original.

M8. FEC. A counterstamp either of Marinus (cf. 1947 *Report*, p. 20, no. 3, or of Matugenus (cf. *Richborough* III, no. 17a, p. 164). Creamy buff.

M9. Counterstamp with fir leaf termination, perhaps of Saturninus. Buff.

M10. ()IALLA, or ALLAIV retrograde. Stamp impressed twice. Cream surface burnt grey. Cf. 1952 *Report*, Fig. 6, no. 10.

M10b. Similar stamp on lighter flange. Creamy buff.

M11a & b. BRVCCIVS. Six examples in various shades of creamy buff, all with similar rims except b. Compare 1951 *Report*, Fig. 4, M1.

M12. ERTVO or ERTVI retrograde. Stamp incompletely impressed. The name Ertius occurs on Samian ware; but it is possible that a letter such as M has dropped out at the beginning. Sandy buff.

M13. DRICCIV or DIRCCIV. Two similar examples in soft tile red, one with surface burnt grey, the other underfired. A similar stamp in buff also occurred. This name does not seem to have been previously

recorded. The stamp has also been noted recently on a surface find at Aldenham near Elstree.

M14. FECIT. Distinctive counterstamp of Matugenus. Rim section as in 1947 (*Report*, Fig. 12, no. 96). Creamy buff. Five other counterstamps of Matugenus were also found of the type shown in the 1952 *Report*, Fig. 6, no. 7a. Two were overfired purplish grey.

M15. MARINV retrograde. See the references cited above. Pinky buff.

M16. DOINVI or DOINVS. The complete stamp is shown in the 1952 *Report*, Fig. 6, no. 14. Four examples, two in pinky buff, the remainder in off white. Three with the profile shown, one on a lighter flange.

M17. SATVRNINVS. Stamp as in the 1952 *Report*, Fig. 6, no. 12a. Three examples, one as figured, the remainder on smaller, more sharply curved rims. Pinky buff, one burnt black and surface flaked, the others drab white, also flaked.

M18. A later type with raised bead and meagre, sharply angled downbent flange. Brown soil below cobbles. Dirty buff. Hard surface.

M19. High square bead and downward sloping ridged flange. Brown soil below cobbles, but the pinky buff fabric and 'feel' of the surface denote it as a local product. Probably late 2nd century.

M20. Wall sided mortarium. Pinky buff. Several examples in the black soil in the pit. Kiln ware.

M21. High bead and small depressed flange. Soft tile red body with cream slip. This is a characteristic local fabric and, in view of the position of the sherd in the black deposit, the type would seem to date from the late 2nd century.

M22. Flange bent vertically downwards, approaching the wall-sided type. Pinky buff. Kiln ware. Black deposit.

M23. Similar to M21 in general form. Dirty buff, hard fired. Probably late. Above cobbles.

M24. Hard pinkish body, coated with white slip. Below topsoil. Late.

M25. Creamy buff, heavily gritted. Appears to be local, but the fabric is harder fired than the usual kiln ware. Below topsoil.

The mortaria described above include a number of pieces (e.g. C11, M18, M23, M24, M25) which are to be ascribed either on grounds of form or position to the 3rd or 4th centuries, though their fabric shows

similarities to the kiln ware of earlier date. This is perhaps not unexpected, since after the end of large scale production some pottery making must obviously have continued to meet the reduced needs of the local population.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mi1. Female head in terracotta. Hard red fabric burnt grey in places. The back is slightly concave, but shows no trace of plaster. Either an antefix from a small shrine or the trial piece for the mould for such an antefix, which might have rested against a slightly convex boss or the end of a ridge pole. Fillets or the drapery of a headdress on either side of the face; at the temples two rosettes or knots. The 'horn-like' feature above the left hand rosette is too indistinct to identify for certain; perhaps it may have been intended to represent a diadem. Below the chin, the folds of a tunic closely fastened at the neck. A similar antefix, though of superior workmanship and slightly larger in size (12cm. high), exists in the Archaeological Museum at Madrid (*Catalogue de Terres Cuites* (1921), Pl. CXXVI, no. 3).

Mi2. Bronze Age polished flint 'fabricator'. The butt end bruised and abraded, the 'chisel' end unworked. This type of implement is usually considered to have been used in the pressure flaking of tools. The flint seems to have come from the chalk, outcrops of which exist in the neighbourhood (e.g. at Pinner and Bushey).

The presence of this tool is interesting. Flint blades and points have been found in some quantity in the Roman levels during previous excavations. A selection (tentatively ascribed to the Belgic period) is figured in the 1951 *Report*, Fig. 6. But the present find, taken in conjunction with the implements just mentioned and odd surface finds, notably a fragment of a bucket urn found during trenching at the bottom of the hill in 1950, seem to point to an earlier occupation of the hill reaching back possibly to the Early Bronze Age.⁸

Mi3. Transparent paste intaglio. A cow standing in a conventional field. 'Classical' Greek in style. Bevelled edge characteristic of the 1st century A.D. What appears to be an identical copy in blue-grey paste is illustrated in the Xanten Museum *Catalogue* (1911), Pl. XIV, no. 169. The original stone must have been very finely engraved. The present intaglio, a mass produced copy, would have been mounted in a cheap bronze or silver ring and affords no proof of wealth amongst the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Imported from the Rhine. Black deposit in the pit.

APPENDIX

List of mortarium stamps found at Brockley Hill since 1947. Doubtful stamps and counterstamps are not included.

E=East side of Watling Street.

W=West side of Watling Street.

	1947		1950	1951	1952	1953-4	Total No. of Stamps
	E	W	W	E	W		
ALBINVS	1	—	2	—	—	—	3
ANDILVS	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
BRVCCIVS	—	3	1	—	6	—	10
CASTVS	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
DOCCIVS	—	—	—	—	—	3	3
DOINVS	—	—	—	—	3	4	7
DRICCIVS	—	—	—	—	—	3	3
ERTV(VS)	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
MARINVS	1	1	1	—	4	—	7
MATVGENVS	2	—	—	—	10	7	19
MELVS	4	—	—	—	14	—	18
MERTVMARVS	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
MIALLA (?ALLAIVS)	—	—	—	—	1	2	3
RIPANVS	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
SATVRNINVS	—	—	—	—	2	3	5
SECVNDVS	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
SOLLVS	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
VITALIS	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Number of names: 18.						Total Stamps ...	89

NOTES

1. Stukeley, *Itin Cur.* (ed. 1770, p. 118), who speaks in the same sentence of 'arched vaults of flint and brick under the trees', doubtless the remains of kiln flues. Norden, *Speculum Britanniae* (Description of Hertfordshire), ed. 1723, p. 23, mentions on the east side of Watling Street 'some fragments of the situation of some decayed buildings, where sundry pieces of Romish coin have been taken up.'
2. Particular thanks are due to Major High, House Governor of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, for permission to dig; Mr. L. A. Probert for helping with general arrangements and filling in; Mr. H. W. Prior and Miss Leslie Boatwright who prepared the plan of the site and drew the sections; Miss Ann James who drew the antefix, flint and intaglio; and to Mr. J. C. Burt and Mr. G. F. Cole for photography.
I am also grateful to Professor J. M. C. Toynbee for reporting on the antefix, and to Sir John Forsdyke for information regarding the intaglio. Mr. W. F. Grimes visited the site and has kindly read the report.
3. Published in the Society's *Transactions*, Vol. XVIII, part I (1955), pp. 60-64.
4. J. Déchelette, *Les Vases Céramiques Ornés de la Gaule Romaine*, II, p. 339.
5. To be published shortly.

6. London provided the chief market for their products. The city museums contain an appreciable amount of pottery which can be identified as having come from Sulloniacae, betokening a steady trade. Further proof is afforded by the nature of the debris on the site. Many of the pieces do not appear to be wasters and may be assumed to represent breakages incurred during handling and loading *en route* for London.

Brockley Hill pottery is conspicuously absent from other sites in the neighbourhood (e.g., Park Street, Moor Park, Hamper Mill, etc.). This is hardly surprising, since other potteries are known to have existed nearby, for example at Radlett, Elstree and Aldenham, and villas were often supplied by kilns attached to the estate. As a general rule it may be assumed that during the period in question coarse pottery did not in the south of Britain travel far from its place of manufacture, apart from certain specialised forms such as mortaria. London was an exceptional case, since a large and stable market existed and Brockley Hill afforded one of the nearest sources of clay, fuel and water. At the same time, there is evidence that Sulloniacae was only one of a number of similar establishments. The city seems to have drawn its supplies from several sources and it is not impossible that other large potteries on the scale of Sulloniacae still await discovery elsewhere.

7. A. Grenier *Manuel d'Archéologie Gallo-Romaine*, VI(1), p. 202.
The stock of a shop of this kind, discovered at Tongres (Belgium) is described in *Rev. Arch.*⁶, VI (1935), pp. 180-81.
8. Stukeley, *loc. cit.*, also mentions 'a barrow by the roadside lately dug away.'