

The ditch and pit were filled with dark deposits containing the usual debris of ash, charcoal, food, bones, and potsherds. The period of occupation would appear to be during the third and second century BC. Although large pottery sherds were found, all were from vessel bodies, and are not very diagnostic, and have not been drawn.

The gravel workings have now moved away from the area of intensive settlement, and no further discoveries seem likely in the immediate future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 'Radwell excavations 1974-1975 : the Bronze Age ring ditches' David Hall and Peter Woodward, *Beds. Arch. J.*, 12 (1977) 1-16.
- 2 'Rescue excavations at Radwell gravel pits 1972', D.N. Hall, *Beds. Arch. J.*, 8 (1973) 67-91.
- 3 Hall, *loc. cit.*, f.n.2.

Romano-Saxon Pottery: a critical note

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In an article in 1956, J.N.L. Myres suggested that a group of pottery in typical Roman fabrics but with decoration possibly suggesting a Germanic influence on its production, could usefully be regarded as indicative of a cultural influence by Germanic settlers in Britain on the highly-specialised pottery industry of the province.¹ Since then, the thesis has been made more elaborate to the extent that one scholar has suggested that this pottery, termed by Myres 'Romano-Saxon Pottery', forms part of an evolving craft from late Roman to early Saxon.²

It is easy to see how pots with dimples arranged in patterns suggestive of pottery of a date anything up to a century beyond that of the wares under consideration might be regarded as precursors of the finger-tip ornament found on Saxon pots. It is tempting to suggest a relationship between Roman pots with a band of diagonal grooves and similar decoration found on Saxon pots. The presence of stamps and bosses on Roman pots could be construed as a continuum which precedes their occurrence on Saxon pots. Yet one problem of these Roman pots lies in their fabric.³

There seems to be no suspicion of the adoption of other than good Romano-British fabrics, often of the best quality. There is no hint even that these products use the friable fabrics of the native pots which are found on Roman sites. And irrespective of their date, the stamps and the bosses which are found on these pots seem far removed from these found on Saxon pots.

Late Roman stamped wares in Britain are as yet imperfectly understood; yet it seems evident that there is as great a range here as from continental sites on the borders of the Roman Empire.

There is another more considerable objection to regarding these wares as implying a Saxon connection. Probably more than five thousand Saxon cremation urns have been excavated and preserved, yet not one single sherd of this material has so far been published from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery.⁴ Roman pots are used as cremation containers by fifth and sixth century Saxons; but these are pots of the second or even the first century.⁵

In this context, it is perhaps significant that the objections hitherto raised to the concept of 'Romano-Saxon' pottery have been made by scholars whose experience lies equally with Roman wares as with Saxon.⁶

From the viewpoint of the future settlers rather than that of the contemporary consumers 'Romano-Saxon' pottery is an unhelpful concept. For the pottery of the earliest English, as J.M. Kemble discerned more than a century ago,⁷ a very respectable ancestry on the north European littoral can be seen and it did not require the use of the potter's wheel. There is a technological chasm between wheel-thrown pottery and that which is hand-made. The so called 'Romano-Saxon' pottery is wheel-made; its decoration exhibits a regularity possible only when placed on fast-rotating drum. Even the bosses are regularly done on what will

doubtless turn out to be one of several different styles of late Romano-British stamped wares. Their recognition has been long foreshadowed.⁸

NOTES

- 1 J.N.L. Myres, 'Romano-Saxon Pottery', in D.B. Harden (ed.), *Dark-Age Britain: Studies presented to E.T. Leeds*, (Oxford, 1956), 16-39. See also J.N.L. Myres, 'Anglo-Saxon Pottery of the Pagan Period', *Med. Arch.*, 3 (1959), 8-13.
- 2 W. Rodwell, 'Some Romano-Saxon pottery from Essex', *Ant. J.*, 50 (1970), 262-276.
- 3 Myres, 1956, illustrates the supposed relationships.
- 4 The vessel from Caistor St. Edmund, Norfolk, may be discounted; it is from the Roman town of Venta Icenorum not from the Saxon cemetery. Myres, 1956, 20, and pl. 4 a.

- 5 One of the third century was even found as an accessory vessel at Kempston; British Museum, 1891, 6-24, 35.
- 6 M. Todd, *The Coritani*, (London, 1973), 125 with esp. n.66; P.D.C. Brown, 'Problems of Continuity', in T. Rowley (ed), *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape* (Oxford, 1974), 16-19. An earlier attempt to meet these criticisms is L. Alcock 'Roman Britons and Pagan Saxons: an archaeological appraisal', *Welsh Hist. Rev.*, 3 (1967), 229-249, esp. 245.
- 7 His paper in *Archaeologia*, 1856, is reprinted in *Horae Ferales* (1863).
- 8 D. Charlesworth, 'Three sherds of stamped ware from Aldborough (Isturius Brigantum)', in M.G. Jarrett and B. Dobson (eds), *Britain and Rome*; (Kendal, n.d. but 1965), 41-45; see also a sherd from Ruxox Farm, Maulden, *Beds. Arch. J.*, 7 (1972), 93 and pl. 8.

The Earliest Male Grave at Kempston

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INTRODUCTION

The Kempston cemetery has long been recognised as one of the largest and most important Anglo-Saxon sites. It has been described as "a remarkable cemetery from which there an extensive series of relics is exhibited in the British Museum" and as "one of the critical Anglo-Saxon sites".¹ Assessments of its importance, however, have long been based on partial accounts, deriving ultimately from a portion rather than the whole of the surviving material.² A total re-evaluation of the cemetery's finds is in progress, a re-assessment which itself derives from an attempt in the late 1960s to collect together all the surviving material remains and to collate these to the several, differing contemporary accounts of the discovery of the cemetery.³ As the ultimate form of the republication of the Kempston cemetery has yet to be decided and as this is unlikely to be ready for submission to an editor much before the late 1980s, the present author has embarked on a series of papers designed to draw attention to the most significant of the reconstructable grave groups. As part of that series of studies, this present paper is offered.

It is well-known that the Kempston cemetery includes three of the earliest Anglo-Saxon brooches in England. In the material in the British Museum are unassociated examples of a stuzarmfibul⁴ and an equal-armed brooch.⁵ Bedford Museum have an unassociated early cruciform brooch.⁶ Each of

these has been figured on more than one occasion. None of these items is thought to date to much beyond the middle decades of the fifth century A.D. The deposition of any one could belong to the first quarter of that century.

The present paper seeks to draw attention to a male grave contemporary with these better-known female objects.

KEMPSTON GRAVE 14

Original Record

The primary literary record for the Kempston cemetery is a printed diary of discoveries kept by the local curate, the Rev. S.E. Fitch. This begins early in June 1863 and continues until 8 July 1864, but there is a long gap in the record between 15 June and 20 October 1863.⁷

Among the several graves recorded by Fitch under 15 June 1863 is one noted as:

Grave II. Portions of a knife. Two pieces of bronze, tubular in form, enclosing woody fibre resembling yew; 4½ and 3½ in. long. One showed a rivet-hole. Two pieces of thin bronze, 1¾ in. long, rounded at one end, squared at the other, where was a rivet-hole. A bronze ring with a lipped upper edge : attached to this a piece of flattened bronze, with rivet-hole, as if it had once fastened the same to some leathern article, and the ring acted as a means of uniting it to another end.