

BELGIC POTTERY FROM POYLE FARM  
BRICKWORKS, near BURNHAM, BUCKS

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THE SITE

In 1936 Mr. G. W. Almond, Lent Rise, Burnham, showed me fragments of pottery and animal bones found at his brickworks at Poyle (Pile) Farm, just under the 200ft. contour,  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile north by west of Burnham village and  $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile south-east of Rosehill House (O.S. map, 6in. to the mile, Sh. Bucks, L.II S.E.).

A few sherds obviously belonged to a small pedestal beaker (No. 18). Its character and that of the ware pointed to the possible existence of a Belgic site at Poyle Farm. This view was confirmed by Mr. C. F. C. Hawkes, British Museum, to whom I submitted samples and the small vessel after I had had it reconstructed. I was therefore able to demonstrate the importance of the discoveries to Mr. Almond, who instructed his men to collect anything of possible interest that might turn up as they dug the brick-earth and prepared it for the ovens. Such is the method of preparing the paste from the brickearth that little could escape the workmen once they were advised to put aside new finds. Although numbers of potsherds were thus collected the supply was soon exhausted, but not before I was able to visit Poyle Farm brickworks and learn something of the site.

When the whole assemblage was sorted out it appeared that many vessels were represented by fragments of rims, bodies and bases. The most remarkable piece consists of a large sooted brick-red fragment of an openwork pot-stand, shaped and built up by hand in rolls of paste, for supporting a cooking vessel over the fire. Clearly, the group comprises nothing but domestic utensils, which indicates that the relics came from a habitation-site. Observations at the brickworks confirm this.

The ovens and sheds are situated within the brick-earth pit whose long axis lies approximately north

and south. The brickearth attains a thickness of 10-12ft., and rests upon an uneven floor of chalk. Excavation is pushed steadily northward. Joseph King, the foreman, told me that when the brickearth was first being removed just north of the moulding-shed the men found odd pieces of pottery and even an almost complete vessel. Eventually, the digging revealed a long trench about 5ft. wide and deep, narrowing concavely at the bottom. It was filled with a deposit apparently not different from the underlying brickearth. Besides sherds, burnt flints, charcoal and animal bones were found. King stated that here and there small pyramids of stones, about 3ft. wide and high, lay in the bottom.

By the time I visited the brickworks the trench was all but destroyed. Still, enough remained to support King's statement. Of course, I could not check his estimate of 100ft. for the length of the trench which he said ran north and south, and described an arc of wide radius. However, I determined that the infilling matter was of the nature of an argillaceous hillwash, proving a considerable accumulation since the abandonment of the site. This is particularly interesting, because on a land surface at the present ground level close to the eastern face of the pit near the sheds I found pieces of coal, crockery, nails and bolts. These belonged to installations of the 1914-18 war-period and were overlaid by 2 to 3ft. of hillwash. Even in these days of efficient field-draining and well engineered roads, heavy rains washing down the slopes from the high ground north of Poyle Farm have provided a geological phenomenon which carries its own emphatic warning.

The animal bones are not informative. Miss Margery I. Platt, Royal Scottish Museum, to whom they were submitted, very kindly reports<sup>1</sup> that two species of wild animals are represented, namely, a young red deer (*Cervus elaphus scoticus*, Lonnberg), and an old badger (*Meles m. meles* L.).

A.D.L.

<sup>1</sup> Dated Edinburgh, 24th December, 1937.

## THE POTTERY

The group of potsherds and the clay pot-stand, that form the subject of this report, are with one exception, that of the buff two-handled flagon, of native Belgic fabric, and all are of a date prior to the Roman Conquest. They represent the debris from a habitation-site, and consist of cooking-pots and jars, one jug and one large storage-jar. The fact that the type of cook-pot in general use was the bead-rim pot, rather than the jar with everted rim and roughened furrowed sides that was normal at the Catuvellaunian sites of Wheathampstead, Prae Wood and Lockleys, Welwyn, suggests that the settlement lay in the territory of the Atrebatas and looked to Calleva as its centre rather than to Verulamium, for such bead-rim jars as nos. 7-16, were manufactured at Silchester during the first half of the 1st cent. A.D.<sup>2</sup> Of the other jars found here the distribution was widespread in the Belgic area, and parallels may be sought both at Silchester and Verulamium.

In the present state of our knowledge of pre-Roman Belgic pottery to date the group closely is not easy. The absence of such imported types as the butt-beaker and the *terra nigra* plate might suggest a date prior to 10 B.C., if the group were large enough to warrant such a deduction from negative evidence. But insufficient is known of the equipment of poor native settlements to make such a conclusion valid. The one imported vessel in the group, the buff flagon (no. 19), may belong to the early 1st century A.D., though a rather later date is not excluded by its form and fabric.

Parallels for many of the other vessels have been quoted from Prae Wood (A.D. 10-40) and from Welwyn (A.D. 20-60), and the considerable time-lag that has been postulated by Mr. Ward-Perkins in the adoption of imported types at Welwyn might lead to the suggestion of a Claudian date for the group. No. 6 for example, though native in fabric is Claudian Roman in form. But we are not dealing with a strati-

<sup>2</sup> *Silchester*, pl. LXXVIII, 8.

fied group, and it is possible that the collection represents breakages over a considerable period. The whole would seem to lie between *c* 10, B.C. and *c* 40 A.D.

#### JARS

1. Jar with hand-made body in hard black gritty ware, charged with calcitic grit. Red-brown outside, but black inside. An irregular groove at the junction of neck and shoulder was not made on the wheel on which the rim may have been finished. Rim diam.  $5\frac{3}{4}$  in. This form of jar occurred somewhat infrequently at Belgic Verulamium<sup>3</sup> with wares dated A.D. 10-40.

2. Jar with everted lip, short neck separated by a cordon from the bulging shoulder. Smooth hard wheel-turned grey ware, with "soapy" exterior, but pinkish-brown inside. Rim diam  $5\frac{3}{4}$  in.

3. Similar jar in soft reddish-brown ware with dark grey "soapy" surface, rather perished. The shoulder has the characteristic thickening, and the sherd is broken off at the sharp incurve of the side at the point of maximum girth. Rim diam.  $6\frac{1}{4}$  in. This is a well-known Belgic form. cf. Wheat-hampstead, Type 10<sup>4</sup>, dated before 10 B.C., and a cinerary urn from a burial group at Great Wakering, Essex, dated A.D. 1-50<sup>5</sup>, while similar pots were found recently in a pre-Claudian group at St. Albans<sup>6</sup> and at Lockleys, Welwyn<sup>7</sup> dated A.D. 20-60.

4. Smooth brown to dark grey ware, with some calcitic grit. The slightly outbent rim shows the grooves formed by finishing on the wheel, but the body is hand-made. Rim diam.  $6\frac{1}{4}$  in. Such a jar was exceptional at Belgic Verulamium<sup>8</sup> in a group dated A.D. 10-40, but it occurs at Lockleys, Welwyn<sup>9</sup> at about the same time.

5. Sherd from the side of a cordoned urn in reddish-brown ware with smooth black surface, flaked off in places. Diam. about  $5\frac{1}{4}$  in. This resembles Belgic Verulamium type 51, though it is smaller and less acutely carinated. It also occurs at Colchester in the early 1st cent. A.D.

20. Dark grey ware with smoothed black surface. Rim flattened internally for the seating of a lid. Diam. uncertain. Belgic Verulamium type 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Verulamium*, fig. 20, 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Verulamium*, pl. XLIX.

<sup>5</sup> *Colchester Mus. Rep.*, 1922, pl. II.

<sup>6</sup> *Antiq. Journ.* XXI, 239.

<sup>7</sup> *Antiq. Journ.* XVIII, fig. 8, 37.

<sup>8</sup> *loc. cit.* fig. 21, 70.

<sup>9</sup> *loc. cit.* fig. 8, 42.

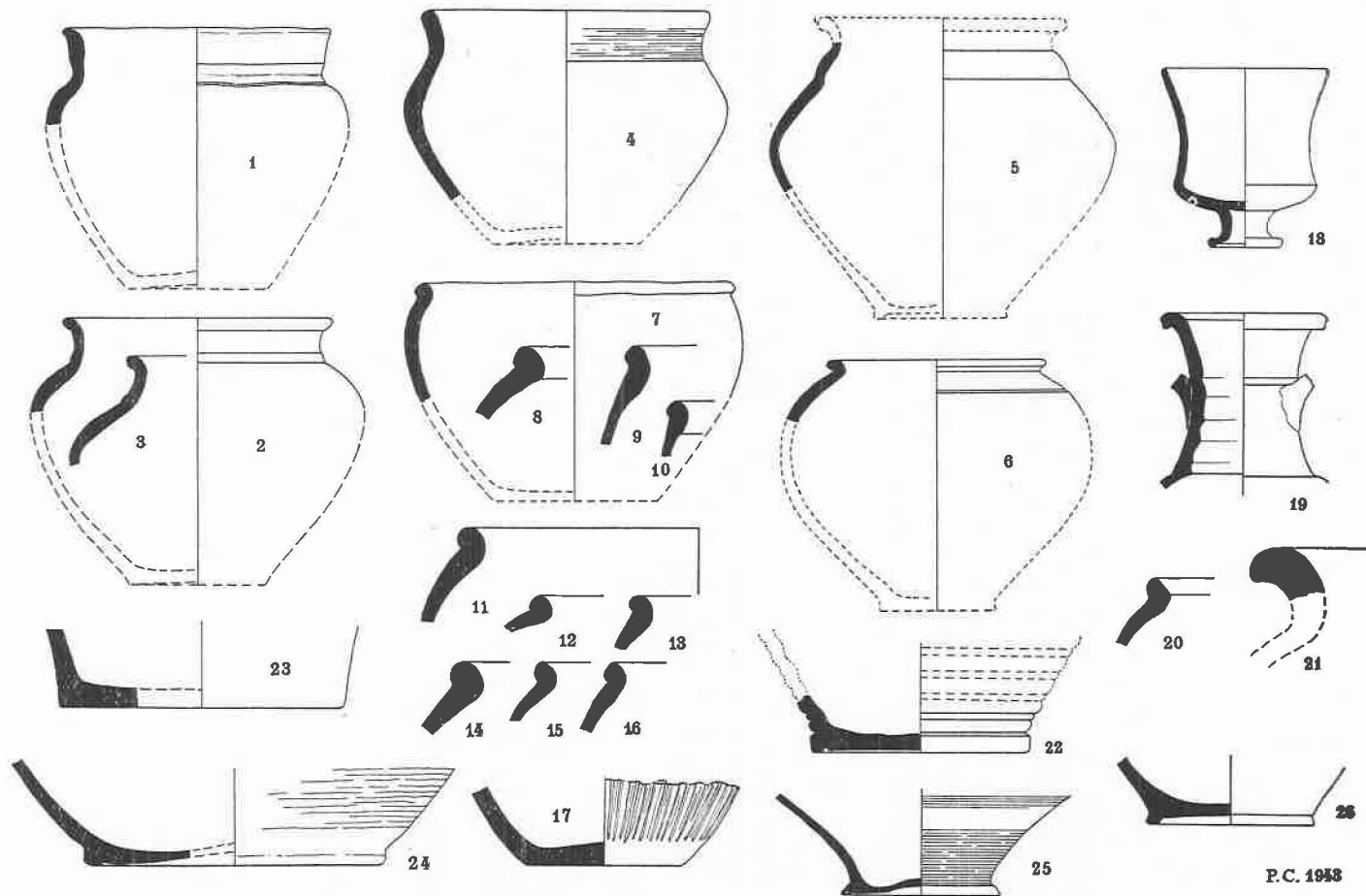


Fig. i. Belgian Pottery found near Burnham ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ).

## BEAD-RIM JARS

The commonest form of jar is the bead-rim, of which ten examples are illustrated. All are in native Belgic fabric, varying from coarse hand-made ware charged with particles of sand, flint or chalk (Nos. 7, 8, 17), to the better-finished black bitumen-coated ware (Nos. 10, 12, 15). They also range from the hand-made to the wheel-finished, some apparently having only their rims finished on the wheel. None of the rim-fragments illustrated shows evidence of the usual furrowed or combed technique, but one base (No. 17) from a jar of this type does bear vertical furrows, scored probably with the end of a sheep's metatarsal. This is the only sherd of furrowed ware in the collection, and it is evident that plain bead-rim pots were in use for cooking here, rather than the furrowed jars with everted rims, which formed the common type of cooking pot at Wheathampstead<sup>10</sup> (Types 15-20), Verulamium<sup>11</sup> (Type 61), and Lockleys, Welwyn<sup>12</sup>, no example of which was found.

7. Wide-mouthed pot in hard hand-made ware charged with calcitic grit. Dark red inside, but brown or black outside. Diam. 6¾in.

8. Hard gritty grey, charged with crystalline sandy particles. Hand-made body with roughly wheel-finished rim. Diam 8¾in.

9. Hard gritty brown to black ware, perhaps finished on the wheel, but with very uneven rim, which has the characteristic thickening on the inside. Diam. 7in.

10. Similar, but smaller. Hard black ware coated with bitumen and polished externally. Sooted from use. Diam. uncertain.

11. Rim of large pot in pale orange-brown ware, reddish inside, heavily charged with particles of flint. Mainly hand-made. Diam. about 10½in.

12. Hard red-brown ware, with polished bitumen-coated exterior. Charged with particles of flint and chalk. Diam. uncertain.

13. Gritty black ware with "soapy" pinkish-brown exterior. Diam 7¼in.

14. Hard gritty grey. Diam. uncertain. Another, very similar, not illustrated, is in reddish-brown ware, with "soapy" surface.

15. Gritty black ware, smoothed externally. Diam. 6½in. The bead shows development into a lip.

<sup>10</sup> *Verulamium*, pls. L, LI.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, figs. 19 and 20.

<sup>12</sup> *Antiq. Journ.* XVIII, fig. 7, 21, 30, 31.

16. Similar ware, the bead still further developed. Diam.  $7\frac{1}{2}$ in.

17. Flat base in coarse dark grey copiously charged with sand and flint particles. Vertical furrows on the body.

#### STORE JAR

21. Fragment of the heavy roll-rim of a very large jar in dense pinkish-brown ware charged with grit. Smoothed and slightly "soapy" external surface. Rim diam. uncertain, but probably 16 or 17in. This type of very large storage jar was in universal use in the Belgic area (Wheathampstead, type 25; Belgic Verulamium, type 60; Lockleys, Welwyn<sup>13</sup>; St. Albans<sup>14</sup>) and lasted with little change until the third quarter of the first century A.D. It is of such common occurrence that the finding of only one sherd is remarkable.

#### BEAKERS

6. Globular beaker with everted lip in coarse wheel-turned native grey ware, smoothed on the shoulder above a groove. Rim diam.  $4\frac{3}{4}$ in. In form this resembles the Roman beakers of Claudian and Flavian period, and is a Roman and not a Belgic form. Our example may be considered as a development of the bead rim under Roman influence, and can hardly be dated earlier than the Claudian period.

18. An imitation in native fabric of a Gallo-Belgic beaker. Gritty orange-brown ware. The small well-formed pedestal base renders the vessel rather top-heavy.

No beaker of exactly this form occurred at Belgic Verulamium, though a larger beaker with less well-formed pedestal appears in Group D<sup>15</sup> and was dated to the eve of the Claudian invasion<sup>16</sup>. The type occurs, however, on the Sheepen site at Colchester in *terra rubra*<sup>17</sup>, with early 1st century wares, and resembles Colchester, type 73 (unpublished). Our vessel is clearly later in the series than the beaker of the late 1st cent. B.C. from Lexden<sup>18</sup>.

#### JUG

The only imported vessel in the collection is a two-handled jug (No. 19) in hard sandy buff ware. The moulded lip is undercut, and the cylindrical neck tapers both ways to a sharply-defined cordon halfway down. The handles were broad and flat (about  $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide), and probably ribbed.

<sup>13</sup> *loc. cit.* fig. 7, 28, 29.

<sup>14</sup> *Antiq. Journ.* XXI, p. 239, no. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *loc. cit.* fig. 23, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. also *Silchester*, pl. LXXIII, 179.

<sup>17</sup> *Col. Mus. Rep.*, 1928, VII, 6110. 27.

<sup>18</sup> *Col. Mus. Rep.*, 1913, VI, 4.

Such jugs appear at first at Augustan Haltern<sup>19</sup> (type 53) and are typical of the reign of Tiberius. Those from Claudian Hofheim<sup>20</sup> (type 58) have less undercutting of the rim and the necks tend to expand downwards, while handles are less angular in profile and less flat. According to Ritterling<sup>21</sup> the type does not survive the middle of the first century. Our example has more in common with the earlier group and was probably imported at the beginning of the first century A.D.

## BASES

Two exceptional vessels are represented by their bases only:—

25. Very hard thin brown ware, smoothed dark grey outside. The base is reminiscent of the pedestal, the vessel standing on a narrow flat ring around the outer edge of the base, which is raised in a thin dome or omphalos in the centre, tooled smooth on the underside. The whole is finely made on the wheel, the thin sides bearing zones of tooling.

22. Heavy sandy brown-grey ware. The vessel stands on the outer foot-ring, the well-turned bottom being dead flat on the underside. Unfortunately less than an inch of the side of the vessel remains, but this shows two well-formed cordons,  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. wide, separated by a narrower cordon. It is possible that this sherd formed the base of a cordoned bucket-shaped urn of a type rare in Britain. Swarling type 11, from Group 18<sup>22</sup>, has 7 well-defined corrugations forming the entire side of the vessel, which is in the form of an inverted truncated cone. A similar urn from Aylesford<sup>23</sup> has 8 corrugations which, like those of the Swarling urn, affect the interior of the vessel, the whole side being waved. These, with a small cup from Allington, Kent, in the Maidstone Museum<sup>24</sup> are the only recorded examples of this type of urn in Britain. An example from Bellozanne cemetery (in Rouen Museum) is figured by Dunning and Hawkes<sup>25</sup>, who date it to the end of the second century B.C., and suggest a local origin for the type in Normandy. The Swarling group is dated by Bushe-Fox 50-1 B.C.<sup>26</sup> They are clearly copies in clay of the late Halstatt bronze bucket.

But our base differs in certain respects from this group, being without the pronounced omphalos. It may owe something to such tall conical urns as Swarling type 10, prototypes

<sup>19</sup> *Mitteilungen der Altertums-Kommission für Westfalen*, V (Keramische Funde in Haltern, S. Loeschke, Abb. 28B.

<sup>20</sup> *Das Frühromische Lager bei Hofheim im Taunus*, Abb. 66.

<sup>21</sup> *Hofheim*, p. 289.

<sup>22</sup> *Swarling*, pl. VIII, 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Archaeol.* LII, pl. VIII, 7, and p. 332.

<sup>24</sup> *Swarling*, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> *Arch. Journ.* LXXXVII, fig. 15, 43 and pp. 208—10.

<sup>26</sup> *Swarling*, p. 25.



of which are illustrated by Hawkes and Dunning from Alizay<sup>27</sup> Notre-Dame-de-Vaudreuil<sup>28</sup> and Moulineaux<sup>29</sup>, all of the first century B.C.

Three other bases have been selected for illustration:—

23. Hard gritty pale-brown ware, burnt dark-grey in patches. The base is flat and the sides of the pot almost vertical, showing Iron Age "A" influence.

24. Hard gritty ware, brick-red inside and brown on the outside, which is smoothed and "soapy" to the touch. The base is raised, the pot standing on its outer ring.

25. Reddish-brown gritty ware, wheel-turned and smoothed outside. The pot stands on its outer foot-ring.

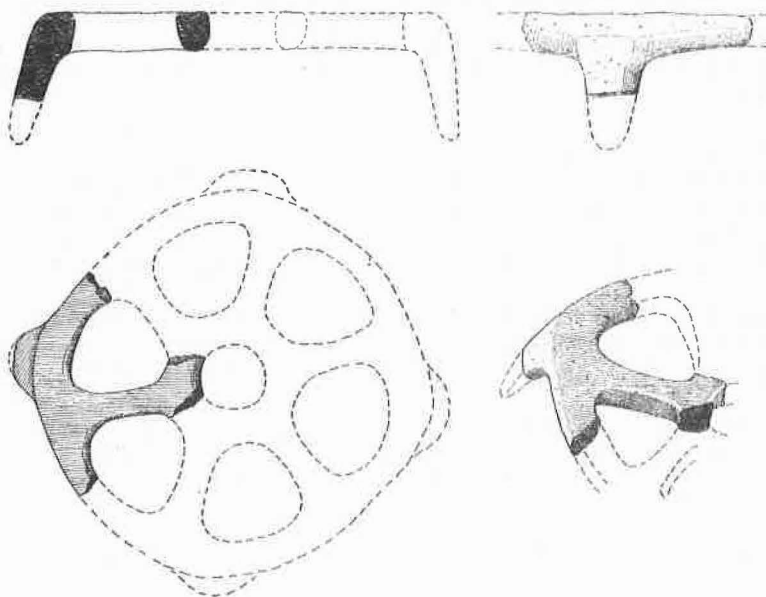


Fig. 2. Clay Pot-Stand (‡).

#### CLAY POT-STAND

Clay object, which formed part of a grid or pot-stand in the form of a spoked wheel with feet at right angles to its plane. The clay varies from reddish-brown to black, is charged with white calcitic particles and has a smooth "soapy" surface, like that of several of the pots. The under part of the "wheel" and the surviving foot are orange-red, but the upper surface of the stand and the "spoke" are black

<sup>27</sup> *Arch. Journ.* LXXXVII, fig. 12, 16,

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* fig. 14, 29.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* fig. 16, 53.

and sooted. The complete form suggested by this curious fragment is illustrated in the accompanying drawing (fig. 2). It has been shown as not quite circular, the "wheel" about 8in. in diameter having six spokes and a central opening, 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. in diameter, and four feet, though in view of the smallness of the fragment this reconstruction is conjectural. It may be interpreted as a poor man's home-made substitute for a metal grid, used for placing in the glowing embers of a fire, to support a cooking-pot. In general form it resembles a modern gas-ring. I have not encountered a parallel.

P.C.