

# The Archæologist in the Field

(Part II)

## A. An introduction to the study of Romano - British Coarse Pottery

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## B. The Technique of Barrow Excavation

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### A.

THE excavator on a Roman site in Britain is usually blessed with an abundance of datable material. On a large scale project the very quantity is likely to cause grave difficulties in washing, repairing, sorting, drawing and publishing unless the excavator has willing and able helpers. The bulk of this material will be pottery and it is essential that all students of the archaeology of this period should familiarise themselves with this material.

Coarse ware is defined as any pottery found on Romano-British sites other than the red-glazed Samian ware. The name Samian is derived from a remark by the Elder Pliny that a red-glazed pottery was made on the Isle of Samos. Early antiquaries concluded that similar pottery, found in Britain, came from the same source. German antiquaries rejecting this false belief coined the term *Terra Sigillata* or "figured ware." As most of this pottery is not decorated this term is also incorrect and in Britain the name Samian has become so widely used and it is so unlikely that any mistaken idea as to the production centre will arise, that it continues in favour. Unfortunately the difficulties in the way of this study are considerable. This is due to several factors. Firstly the variety of type, shape and fabric of the vessels is so great that no synthesis has so far been attempted. The chapter by Collingwood in his book "The Archaeology of Roman Britain" has since proved to be much over simplified. Studies of the subject within recent years have shown that there are far greater local variations in production than has been hitherto realised and parallels should always be sought from the nearest excavated site.

A great quantity of pottery has been published in excavation reports but much of this information is useless as the material is not stratified and only complete or unusual vessels are illustrated. The most useful groups of pottery one can study are those from pottery kilns. Here one has a contemporary group covering probably a period of at most five to ten years if the kiln is an isolated one, but a cautionary note must be added. The potsherds found on these sites are wasters, i.e. pots which have broken or cracked in the kiln during firing and which the potter has rejected. Their shapes may be distorted and the sherds over-fired by their

contact with the hot ashes. In this condition the fragments may bear little resemblance to the finished product.

When the Romans conquered Britain they found that the quality of native pottery varied from the elegant wheel-turned products of the Belgic areas of the south-east to the crude hand-made wares of the less civilised parts some of which in the mountainous areas still maintained late Bronze Age culture. The position is complicated by the introduction of imported wares such as Arretine from northern Italy and Samian from southern Gaul in the course of trade before the invasion. These vessels as well as glass and metal ware are found in quantity in the south-east and a small quantity penetrated into the north and midlands.

The quantity and quality of native pottery was not sufficient to satisfy the Roman military needs. The legions set up their own depots and made reasonably good imitations of Samian ware and Terra Rubra and Nigra. This industry continued to the beginning of the second century. The native pottery industry with the probable introduction of Gallic craftsmen had developed by the time of Hadrian to the point when the supply of coarse wares was sufficient for the needs of the permanent garrison as well as those of the civilian population. A policy seems to have been initiated about this time of buying from these private concerns and the military depots ceased making pottery.

The position in the second half of the first century can be summarised as follows:

- (a) There was a greatly increased importation from Gaul not only of Samian but of mortars and probably many other wares;
- (b) distinctive legionary pottery made near the fortresses imitating Belgic and Gallic wares;
- (c) the native potters attempted as quickly as possible to adapt Roman provincial styles into which they grafted their own traditional forms.
- (d) Gallic potters of coarse wares, migrated to Britain to take full advantage of the new market and cut transport costs.

The result is a queer mixture of the fine products of South Gaul nestling with coarse black gritty pre-historic looking wares of native manufacture. By the end of the century these differences were being smoothed out and the second century sees a ubiquity of fabric and styles. Mass production gradually lowered the standards of the Samian pottery and at the same time the native and immigrant potters improved the quality of coarse wares. The styles and fabrics became uniform over the whole of the province and between say 80 and 160 A.D. one can use some types for dating wherever they are found in Britain, but there were many types which are only found in localised areas even in this period.

One of the most important developments was the introduction of black burnished wares with looped and latticed decoration.

In the form of dishes and cooking-pots they rapidly superseded the earlier wares in brown, red and grey fabrics and have become one of the main keys for the dating of second-century sites.

After the troubles at the end of the Antonine period and the *Pax Romana* seemed to be a fading reality, the position changed. Continental imports appear to diminish and almost cease. Towards the end of the 2nd century Britain endured several serious wars on the frontier culminating in A.D. 196 with the vain attempt of Albinus to gain the purple in the process towards which he stripped the province of troops. These difficulties may have had a serious effect on trade and caused the drying up of pottery imports but it might equally well have been a new fiscal policy introduced by Severus in his civil reorganisation of the province. It is doubtful if we will ever know: what is certain is that Britain in the 3rd century was forced to use home products. Under this stimulus the British potters and Rhenish immigrants rose to the occasion. It was natural that they should imitate the most up-to-date continental styles. By the middle of the 2nd century the red glazed Samian had become very coarse and barbarised and it is not to be wondered that it went out of favour. In the Rhineland round Neiderbieber and Trier there had developed a pottery technique of a different type, producing smaller vessels with thin walls with a dense metallic lustre decorated with white paint or a thick strip applied *en barbotine*, i.e. squeezed through a funnel like the decoration on iced cakes. This gave a greater freedom to the craftsmen than the applied reliefs or stamped decoration at that time used by the Samian potters. These Rhenish wares came first into Britain at the end of the 2nd century although they were being made in Germany much earlier and it is these vessels which the native potters set about imitating. The result was the so-called Castor ware. While there is no doubt that a considerable pottery industry existed in the Nene valley near the Romano-British town of *Durobrivae*, similar pottery was produced at other centres on the east side of the country. The distribution of this pottery has yet to be viewed critically but at present it does not seem to be very even and it demonstrates a process which had already become well established, the distribution was becoming localised. While examples appear on the northern frontier, few are found in Wales or Chester and it may eventually be discovered that the main use of this ware was confined to the Lower Province.

The early vessels in this ware are very fine, consisting usually of floral scrolls applied in a free style, but animals are also common and the hunting scenes show an aesthetic lithe vigour which is very satisfying (Pl. 4a). Attempts were made at human figures, in the form of gladiators but these are usually of clumsy execution.

The sudden, and apparently inexplicable appearance of these vessels has given rise to the theory of a Celtic Renaissance. The hunt cup and scrolls certainly show freedom of style greatly removed from the highly formalised classical motifs used by the

Samian potters but it is due entirely to the introduction of the barbotine technique in the hands of competent craftsmen inspired, maybe, with the prospect of an expanding market.

Second century developments can be summarised as follows:—

- (1) The legionary depots ceased production.
- (2) Many shapes and fabrics became ubiquitous over the whole country.
- (3) Burnished black fabric in cooking-pots and dishes introduced about the time of Hadrian.
- (4) Imported wares by the end of the century diminished in quantity and the quality deteriorated.
- (5) Fine thin-walled Rhenish beakers with a high metallic lustre were imported after c. 180 A.D.; at the same time, colour-coated wares with barbotine decoration were being made in the Castor region and probably elsewhere.

The production of fine Castor wares did not continue for very long, the absence of continental competition probably made the craftsmen slipshod and careless. The story of the industry of the third century like everything else of that period is obscure but it seems as if barbotine work gave place to paint as the only decorative feature (Pl. 4b). The technique of colour-coating the surface of vessels persisted and those wares with an almost metallic lustre in browns, chocolate and purple surfaces contrast strongly with those of the earlier centuries.

Apart from a perceptible thickening and coarsening of vessels there is little change in the products of the late fourth from those of the late third century. While there are no new types, except the heavy calcite-gritted cooking-pots which appear during the course of the fourth century, some forms tend to disappear. A tendency appeared for bowls and mortars to develop fantastic rim-formations and a heavy use of paint on internal surfaces.

The main centres of production appear to be such wastes as the desolate Yorkshire Moors and the New Forest where groups of potters worked together perhaps for safety, each family peddling their wares as far as their pack animals would take them. In these last centuries the regional characteristics became most marked and are apt to confuse a worker unused to the area. The New Forest products did not penetrate far north of the Thames and those of the Yorkshire kilns south of the Humber. There are probably other considerable groups in other parts of the country waiting discovery and until much work is done, it is difficult to gain a comprehensive view of the industry and its products.

Third century development can be summarised as follows:—

- (1) Continental imports cease almost entirely.
- (2) All wares tended to become thicker, coarser and were harder baked.
- (3) Paint and rouletting gradually replaced barbotine as a decorative feature.

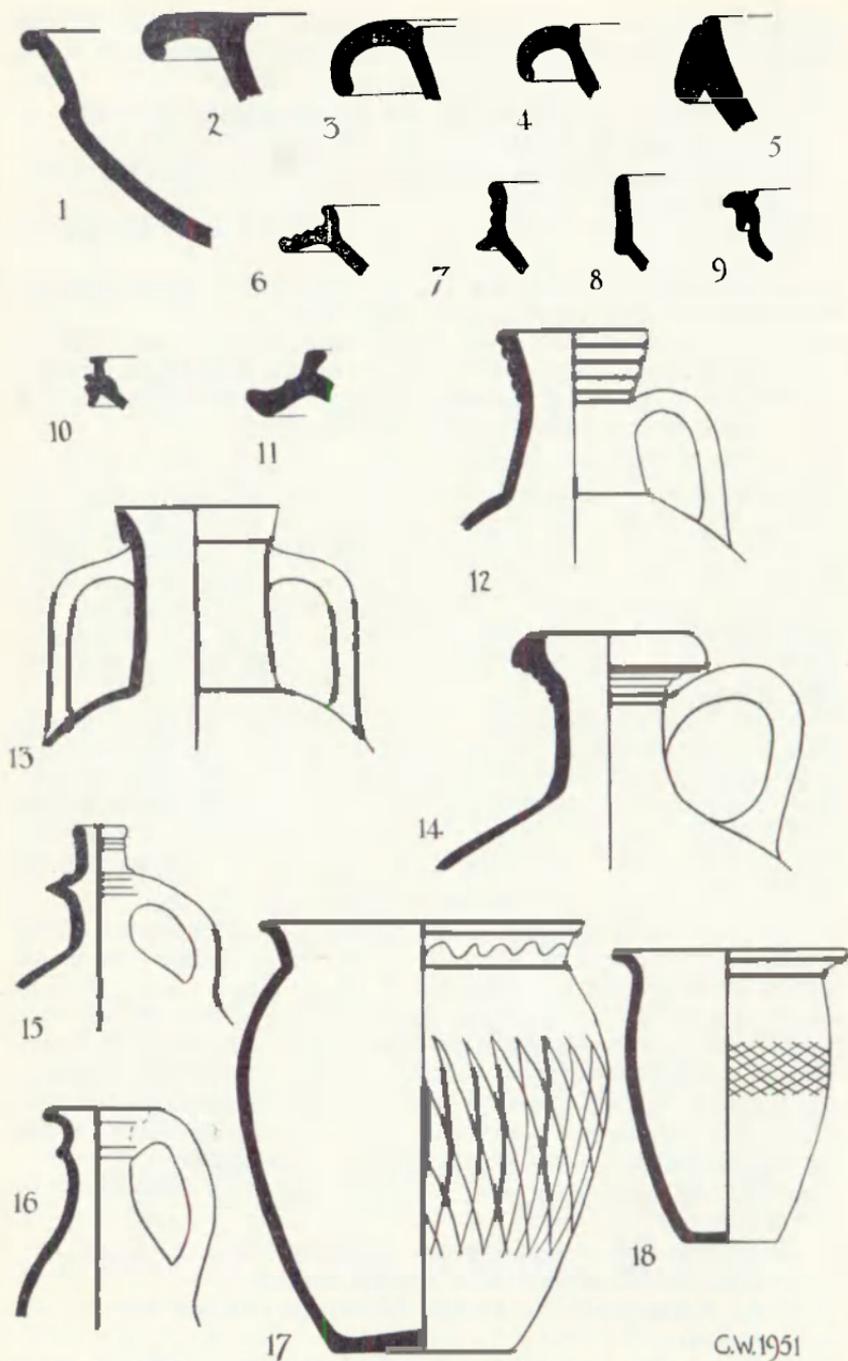


Fig. 1.

- (4) The counter-sunk handle and ring-neck flagon appear towards the close of the century.
- (5) Industries became established in the New Forest and in Yorkshire, supplying neighbouring areas and causing greater local variations in shape and decorative style.

The only way the archaeologist can come to know pottery types and fabrics sufficiently well to be able to date them, is by handling large quantities and studying the changes in form throughout the period. Published accounts give only the shape of vessels; fabric and surface texture and decoration are equally important. Visits to local museums are essential to see and if possible handle specimens, especially complete vessels for most excavations yield only sherds which cannot be identified unless the whole shape of the vessel is known.

Better still the beginner should undertake a small scale excavation and make himself responsible for publishing the results. In this way he will have to handle the pottery, draw it and find parallels. The best kind of excavation is undoubtedly that of a pottery kiln as this will give him an intimate knowledge of the local products at a particular period and also add to the sum of general knowledge, an important factor in our present state of ignorance.

## APPENDIX A.

*Notes on some types of Romano-British coarse ware. (Fig. 1).*

**T**HE *Mortar*, a heavy bowl used for pulverising food with the fingers and cheese making, was used throughout the occupation and undergoes a change of shape. It was thought at one time that these changes could be used within narrow limits for dating purposes. (*Wroxeter*, I and *Margidunum Ant. J.*, xxiv, 45). Unfortunately these early hopes have not been realised and it becomes increasingly clear that some types survived a long time after new forms had come into existence and the later vessels bear local characteristics. This short summary can serve only as an introductory guide to these complexities and perhaps illustrate the dangers for the unwary.

The first type illustrated (No. 1) was in use in the middle, but tends to die out before the end, of the first century. (*Camulodunum* Type 191 and *Corfe Kiln Ant. J.*, xv, 47). Contemporary with this is the hooked rim type which remained popular until the end of the second century. Some of the early varieties have a flat-topped rim (No. 2 from *Wroxeter*) and there is a general tendency in the second century for the bead to become more prominent (Nos. 3, from *Wroxeter* and 4 from *Balmuildy*). The Claudian—Neronian examples can sometimes be distinguished by the absence of grit on the inner surface which, instead, is roughened by horizontal rilling. At the end of the second century a new type of flattened hook with a predominant bead rim appears (No. 5 S. Carlton Kiln *Ant. J.*, xxiv, 139) a forerunner of the

fourth century wall-side type, but the hook rim was by no means finished. At some time in the 3rd century the rim tended to stiffen and it was decorated with corrugations to form the well-known hammer-head type which persisted to the end of the occupation (Nos. 6 and 7 from the same kiln — Swanpool *Ant. J.*, xxvii, 65). It is not difficult to see how these tendencies gave shape to the wall-side mortar of the fourth century (No. 8, *Lydney Park*) but there were also degenerate and perverse developments of the flange into angular forms which vary with the locality (No. 9 Yorkshire *Arch. J.*, lxxxix, 235; No. 10, *New Forest*, Pl. xa; No. 11, *Gt. Casterton* 1951, Fig. 9). A feature of these late mortars, wherever they are found in Britain, is the decorative use of paint in lines and splashes over the flange.

*Flagons.* A narrow-necked vessel for holding liquids also had extensive use during the occupation but there were several different types and the changes are not so clear. Several tendencies can be noted, for example, the so-called screw-necked type in the first century had a number of equal sized rings (No. 12 from *Camulodunum*) but by the middle of the second century the top ring became predominant (No. 14 from *Balmuildy*) and the others reduced to mere grooves. Some of the mid-first century vessels also tend to be pear-shaped, whereas later examples are usually globular in shape. Late third and fourth century examples show clear distinctions. Almost all flagons are in this period colour-coated, whereas the earlier vessels were in cream or red wares. There is also a tendency to decorate the body with floral scrolls in white paint (Pl. 4b). Vessels tend to become thinner in the neck (No. 16 from *Gt. Casterton*) and the ring-necked flagon appears for the first time (No. 15 from *Gt. Casterton* 1951). The shapes of some of these vessels are much akin to the pewter types of the period. The handles, which in the first century are more angular in form (No. 13), become curved by the second century (No. 14) and the fourth century types are often fixed to the top of the rim (No. 16) but this characteristic has first century predecessors (Holt 116, *Y Cymmrodor* XLI and *C.A.J.* 38, fig. 10. No. 10).

One of the most valuable dating guides is the cooking-pot with trellis decoration. Although vessels of this shape appear in Flavian deposits, the decorative feature does not appear to have been used until the beginning of the second century. The early types are on grey and red fabrics but by the middle of the century, the pots had a dense black burnish. In the valuable deposit dated to the end of the second century from *Corbridge* (*A.A.A.*, xxviii, 186) it is stated that the wavy line on the neck and dense black fabric are characteristic only of cooking-pots of the second and third quarters of the second century (No. 17 from *Wroxeter* is a post-Hadrianic context). The vessels underwent a change in the third century, the rim became more everted and its diameter exceeded that of the girth and the angle of the



(a)



(b)

THE WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM, BIRKENHEAD.

Reproduced by kind permission of Mr. G. Stratton, A.L.A., Curator.



(a) THE WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY & MUSEUM, BIRKENHEAD.  
Photo by kind permission of Mr. G. Stratton.



(b) EXCAVATION OF THE PRIMARY BURIAL PIT AT  
YSCEIFLOG BARROW, FLINTSHIRE.  
By kind permission of The Editor of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*



EXCAVATION OF A TWO-PERIOD BARROW NEAR ODOORN, HOLLAND.

By kind permission of Prof. Van Giffen and the *Nieuwedrentsche Volksalmanak*.



(a) A FRAGMENT OF A CASTOR WARE WITH A HUNTING SCENE  
*en Barbotine* FROM RICHBOROUGH.

By kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries, London.



(b) A LATE THIRD CENTURY VESSEL  
WITH PAINTED SCROLLWORK.

By kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries, London.

trellising was flattened (No. 18 from *Wroxeter*). These late types are not so common as those of the second century and the trellising tends to vanish by the middle of the fourth century, although the form persists (*Lydney Park*, Fig. 26).

## APPENDIX B.

As emphasised in the main article, it is important that comparative material should always be sought from the nearest sites and pottery from distant parts of the country used with discretion. For the benefit of the beginner wishing to make a preliminary study of the subject, the following are a few references to dated pottery groups.

Some large scale excavations have produced pottery of several periods. Among the most useful of these are the Research Reports published by the Society of Antiquaries (obtainable from Bernard Quaritch, 11, Grafton Street, New Bond Street, London, W.1.), especially *Richborough* I, II, III and IV, *Wroxeter* I, II and III and *Leicester*, this last report is rich in illustrated pottery.

### SPECIAL GROUPS.

CLAUDIAN—NERONIAN (c.40-70 A.D.)

*Camulodunum* (Research Report No. XIV, 1947) Corfe Kiln. *Ant. J.*, xv, 42.

Belgic and early pottery at N. Ferriby, *Yorks. Ant. J.*, xviii, 262.

Claudian Well at Margidunum, *J.R.S.*, xiii, 114.

The origin of the Coritani, *Ant. J.*, xxi, 323.

FLAVIAN (c. 70-100 A.D.) Caerleon (mostly legionary wares).

*Arch. Camb.*, lxxxvii, 265.

Chester (including Holt fabrics) *Liverpool Annals*, xviii, 113 and xxiii, pls. xiv, xv, xvi.

Caerhyn, *Arch. Camb.*, 1934, 37.

Holt legionary depot, *Y Cymmrodor*, xli.

TRAJAN—HADRIAN (c. 100—140 A.D.)

Brecon, *Y Cymmrodor*, xxxvii.

*Gellygaer*, by J. Ward, 1901.

ANTONINE (c. 140—190 A.D.)

*The Roman Fort at Balmuildy* (1922) by S. N. Miller.

*The Roman Fort at Cadder* (1933) by J. Clarke.

*The Roman Fort at Old Kilpatrick* (1928) by S. N. Miller.

S. Carlton Kiln, *Lincs. Ant. J.*, xxiv, 129.

Corbridge, *A.A.3.*, viii, 174.

Verulamium (Research Report No. XI) and *Ant. J.*, xxi, 271.

SEVERAN (c. 190—220).

Corbridge, *A.A.4.*, xxviii.

*Lincoln Race Course Kiln 1950* published by the University of Nottingham.

Birdoswald, *C. and W.A.A.* n.s. xxx.

LATE THIRD CENTURY.

Verulamium, *Arch.* lxxxiv, 213.

Lockleys, Welwyn, *Ant. J.*, xviii, 339.

EARLY FOURTH CENTURY.

Swanpool Kiln, Lincoln. *Ant. J.*, xxvii, 61.

Margidunum, *J.R.S.*, xvi.

*The Roman pottery at Norton, E. Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 7\*).

*New Forest Potteries*, by Heywood Sumner, 1927.

LATE FOURTH CENTURY.

Yorkshire Signal Stations. *Arch. J.*, lxxxix, 203.

*Crambeck, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 1\*) and *Ant. J.*, xvii, 392.

*Throlam, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 3\*).

*Langton Villa, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 4\*).

*Malton, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 2\*).

*Gt. Casterton, Rutland*, 1951. published by the University of Nottingham.

*Lydney Park* (Research Report No. 9).

\*These Reports are obtainable from the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 10, Park Place, Leeds.

B.

**A**MONG the most striking prehistoric remains in the country are the burial mounds of the Bronze Age (c. 1800-500 B.C.) known as tumuli or barrows. Although we are confronted with an almost complete absence of the dwelling sites of this period, the distribution of its interments is extensive, and the map (Fig. 2) shows the many examples in Cheshire.

The form of these barrows varies with the locality, and with the ritual of the people who built them. The most common type is known as a bowl barrow; this is a circular mound of earth bounded by a ditch, and usually has a diameter of about forty feet, though this varies considerably. The primary burial is near the middle, often in a pit dug into the subsoil, but sometimes directly on the old soil surface. It may be enclosed in a cist of stone slabs or of timber, and covered with a pan of hard clay. In the earlier barrows (1800-1600 B.C.) the burial is usually by inhumation, but afterwards cremation becomes more prevalent.

Fortunately for dating purposes, the burials are usually accompanied by various objects, no doubt for use in future life. These take the form of pottery and personal ornaments, such as brooches. The pottery, in particular, forms a typological series datable with some accuracy, ranging from the well-fired beakers of the early Bronze Age to the crude cinerary urns which contained the cremations of the Middle Bronze Age. One of these urns, found recently at Kelsall, was illustrated on page 27 of the first number of the "CHESHIRE HISTORIAN."

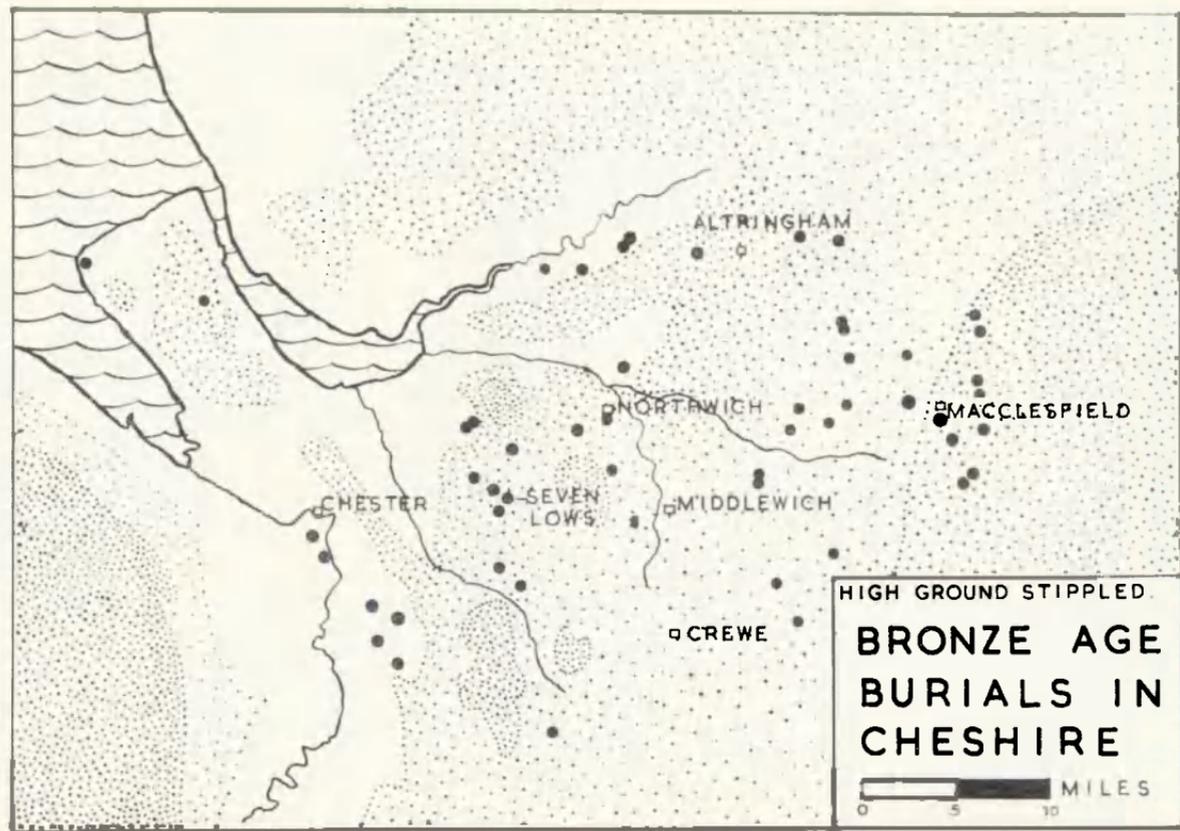


Fig. 2.

One variant of the burial mound is the bell barrow. This is identified by a distinct berm or bank between the mound itself and the ditch. Another type, the disc barrow, comprises a circular ditch with a low bank on the outside, enclosing a flat area with a small mound in the middle. This is usually found to contain a cremation.

*With the growth of interest in antiquities in the late 18th century it was natural that barrows should receive much attention. Those whose mounds had not been ploughed away were easily visible. Many lay in groups convenient for digging, such as those at Winterbourne Stoke near Stonehenge in Wiltshire, and the "Seven Barrows" at Lambourn in Berkshire (a group which numbers over thirty).*

The early barrow diggers used no finesse. Their whole effort was directed to the purpose of extracting the burial and its accompanying deposits from the middle of the mound, and they did this by sinking a vertical shaft from the top. This method was quick but inefficient, because it uncovered only a small area of the original subsoil, and often missed the primary burial by a few feet. Sometimes the burial that was recovered was a later insertion, with no relation to the actual building of the barrow. Often the directors would not appear on the site until the actual burial was reached, by which time the workmen might have shattered all the pottery. Grinsell, in "The Ancient Burial Mounds of England," describes the orgies of 18th century excavation, and quotes an account of Faussett's excavations on a site in Kent in 1759: "At the next stroke or two, part of a skull and a few vertebrae of the neck (all much decayed) were indiscriminately with the soil cast down into the pit, without the least care or search after anything. That concern, they said, they left to me and my servant at the bottom, who were nearly blinded with the sand falling on us, and in no small danger of being knocked on the head, if not absolutely buried, by the too zealous impetuosity of my honest labourers." Even at this early stage, however, Dr. Stukeley occasionally recorded the stratification of the mound. But not until the excavations of Canon Greenwell in the second half of the 19th century do we find a minute and careful record of work on barrows, and long before this the devastation was widespread. In many of our surviving barrows a cup-shaped depression in the top is evidence of the acquisitive operations of earlier diggers. Occasionally the mound was dug by driving in a tunnel from the side. This method was justifiably used on Silbury Hill, Wiltshire, which, standing 130 feet high and covering an area of five acres, is the largest prehistoric artificial mound in Europe.

With the elaboration of excavation technique in the present century, a careful method of barrow excavation has been evolved. Attention is directed not merely to the burial but to the entire mound. The aim is to expose the ground plan, while obtaining

as many sections across the mound as possible, for only these can show clearly the various stages of its construction. The ideal objective is to dig away the entire tumulus, as Sir Cyril Fox did at Ysceifiog, Flintshire, in 1925. The method he employed was to lay out two parallel lines, on either side of the barrow, marked with pegs at intervals of a foot. The pegs on one side were then joined by string with the corresponding pegs on the other, thus dividing up the barrow into slices of a foot in width. The first strip was then dug carefully down to the natural subsoil, maintaining a vertical face in front and throwing the soil behind. When this was finished the section was advanced, a foot at a time, until the primary burial pit in the middle was reached. The section near the pit was then worked forward a few feet so that the whole of the burial cist appeared in plan before it was dug out (Plate 2b). The advantage of this method was that a section was visible throughout the work, and the depth and position of finds was easily recorded.

Often, however, limitation of resources or the size of the site preclude such a complete treatment, and we have now to consider

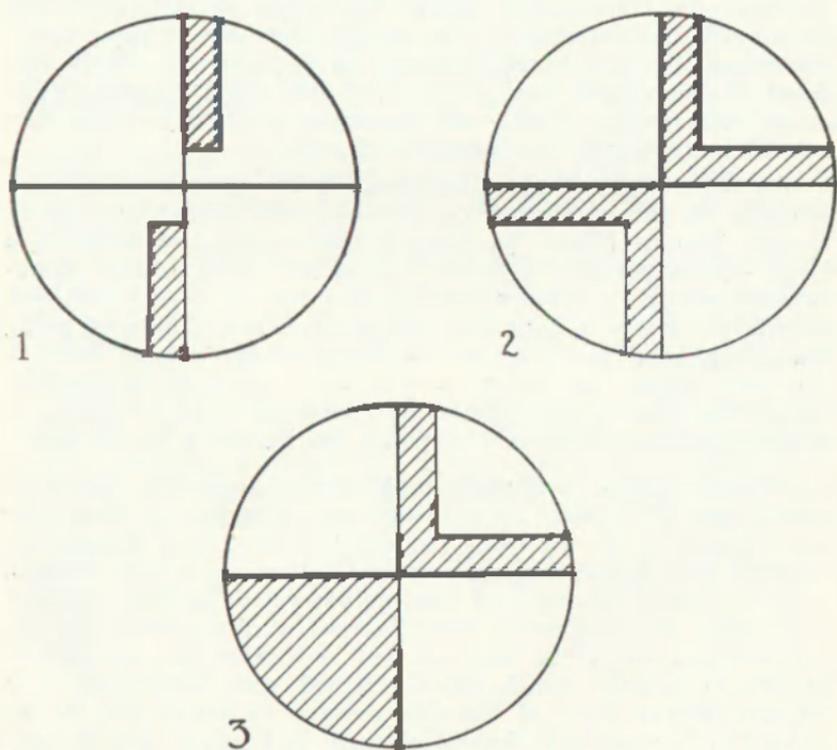


Fig. 3.

a method of excavation which gives the maximum information in a shorter time. There are several questions which the excavator must try to answer. For instance, does the barrow represent more than one period of building? Was the mound constructed as soon as the burial had been made, or after an interval? Were any secondary burials accompanied by an enlarging of the barrow, or were they simply dug into the original mound? Finally, is there any trace of timber or stone structure in the burial pit, a concentric ring of posts, or a palisade in the barrow ditch?

The minimum requirements to provide this information are at least one complete section through the middle of the mound, and the excavation of one quadrant. The first stage is to lay out two lines at right angles, intersecting at the presumed centre of the barrow. Trenches, about four feet wide, are then dug down to the subsoil on alternate sides of one line, to within a few feet of the intersection (Fig. 3i). These are then advanced slowly until they meet in the middle, by which time some part of the primary burial should be visible. The next stage is to dig similar trenches at right angles to the first pair. There will now be two complete sections across the middle of the barrow (Fig. 3ii) and the various stages of its construction should be visible, the old turf lines showing as dark streaks in the section. The area of the primary burial can then be cleared, and one quadrant of the barrow dug down to the old soil level (Fig. 3iii) to find any traces of post or or palisade settings. Finally at least one of the trenches should be extended out across the barrow ditch.

An interesting technique was used by Professor Van Giffen of Holland in the excavation of a two-period barrow at Eppie's Bergje, Odoorn (Plate 3). Having cleared the top levels of a large earth barrow, he found underneath it an earlier stone-covered mound. He continued digging down to the old soil level, leaving the stones in their original positions, on columns of earth. By this method he preserved the shape of the mound while at the same time elucidating its plan and removing the primary burial from the centre. The same procedure can be followed to retain secondary interments dug into the barrow from the top.

Modern barrow excavation is, by earlier standards, extremely meticulous. This leads to a disquieting thought; we should be over-complacent in regarding modern technique as definitive. For example soil analysis and radio-carbon dating are in their infancy, while the study of cremated remains has yet to be fully explored. Meanwhile the number of intact barrows is diminishing, and the archaeologist might be well advised to confine his excavations chiefly to mounds which are threatened with destruction from various sources. Most of the sites recently excavated did in fact belong to this category. Several of them in England and Holland were destroyed during the construction of airfields in the last war, and were previously excavated. The latest barrow group to

be dug in this country, at Stanton Harcourt in Oxfordshire, is at present threatened by gravel quarrying operations. With the extension of housing schemes and other public works, many more barrows may have to be destroyed. In such cases it devolves on the archaeologist to reach for his trowel and ensure that they do not go unrecorded.

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## Excavations 1951—Chester

THE excavations organised by the Chester Archaeological Society have this year been curtailed by the serious labour shortage in the city. The two sites investigated, have been the work of volunteers under the direction of Mr. Graham Webster, the Curator of the Grosvenor Museum.

Early in the year attention was directed at the S.E. corner of the legionary fortress. The discovery of the Agricolan turf rampart on the west side, in the Linenhall Street excavation of 1948, had made it imperative to test the presence of this feature elsewhere on the known circuit of the Roman defences. Sections were cut both inside and outside the internal angle tower and the base of the turfwork was found in position. This defined the position of the Agricolan defences, as being coincident with those of Trajan at this point and it became clear that it is probable that the initial legionary fortress occupies the same area as that of the first stone period of Trajan. This has yet to be proved for the North Wall and as soon as labour is available, this outstanding point can be cleared.

It was possible to study in detail the relationship between the turfwork and the stone wall at the south east angle. Conclusions were reached that the stone wall had been inserted in the front of the turfwork but the front line of the defences had been preserved.

The second excavation was directed at the Infirmary field where it was hoped to find a Roman burial. The area investigated on the southern boundary of the field produced the foundations of a substantial Roman building, probably a military store house, but to date, there are no indications of burials in the ground explored.