

## EXCAVATIONS AT RICHBOROUGH IN 1887.

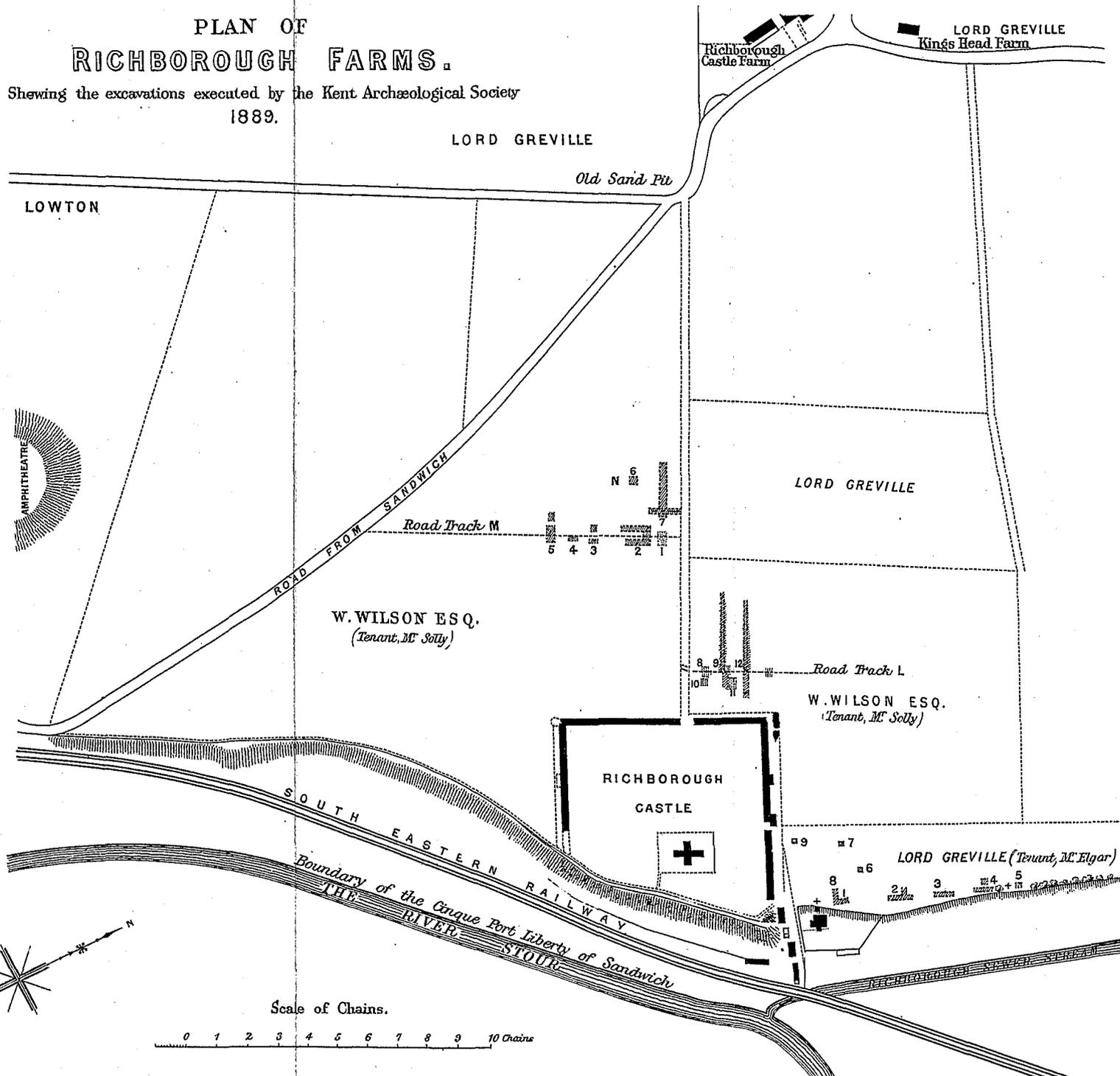
BY GEORGE DOWKER, F.G.S.

IN accordance with a resolution of the Council of the Kent Archæological Society (voting £26 towards excavating the ground outside the walls of Richborough Castrum), a committee, consisting of Messrs. C. Roach Smith, F.S.A., George Payne, F.S.A., George Hannam, J.P., George Dowker, F.G.S., Thomas Dorman, J.P., and the Honorary Secretary, met on the first day of September 1887. The committee determined that the excavations should be directed, in the first instance, towards ascertaining the nature of the trackways shewn in the corn by dry seasons, and indicated on a plan of Mr. Boys's, in Mr. Roach Smith's *Antiquities of Richborough, Reculver, and Lympne*, p. 44; and the work was immediately commenced.

It was found that the trackway M (see Plan) was distant 428 feet from the Castrum wall, and consisted of a roadway, at right angles to the road to the Castrum, composed of pebbles laid upon the earth, and cemented together with soil without mortar, about 23 feet wide, and about 12 inches below the surface of the field. It led towards the amphitheatre, and was traced a distance of 4 chains 40 links by trenching across it. Trenches were also made on either side of this road, reaching the maiden soil at a depth of about 3 feet towards the north, and of rather more to the south. A considerable quantity of dark earth was met with, containing numerous ox and other bones, broken Roman pottery, and Samian ware. As indicated by the corn, this road extends nearly to the highway that crosses from Sandwich to Richborough. Other trenches were made at right angles to this road or street, to ascertain if any remains of walls or indications of buildings might be found. These trenches extended only a very short way from the road, as the ground was very

# PLAN OF RICHBOROUGH FARMS.

Shewing the excavations executed by the Kent Archæological Society  
1889.



difficult to excavate, and the pick was constantly required to break up the subsoil.

Search was then made for a track, marked N in Mr. Roach Smith's Plan. Trench No. 6 (see Plan) was opened at the reported distances at which this street should be met with; but it was not found.

Meantime an examination was made, on the other side of the roadway to the Castrum, for the trackway L (see Plan). This is 1 chain 71 links, or 112 feet, west of the Castrum wall. It was cut down to, at a distance of 62 links from the road, and was found to consist of a bed of pebbles laid at right angles to the road, and exactly similar in composition to the trackway on the other side of the road, to the south. It was traced about 158 feet, towards the north, and terminated rather abruptly, nearly opposite the north wall of the Castrum.

Digging down on the east side of this track, 16 paces from the road to the Castrum, a rubbish pit was met with extending 1 chain 45 links from the west wall of the Castrum, and containing an immense quantity of broken pottery, nearly all of which was white ware. It appears, from Mr. Boys's description, to have been what he had mistaken for the foundations of the road (L). He says: "At a distance of 37 yards from the west wall, when the corn is growing, is constantly to be observed a track (L) leading from the cartway (B) to the north, towards the marshes. *I have dug across it, and found about 2 feet under the surface a great quantity of fragments of broken vessels, some of fine ornamental pottery and others of a coarser kind, flint-stone, and pieces of tiles.*" Hence Mr. Boys concluded it could not have been the foundation of a road. We have now proved, I think, that Mr. Boys had missed the road, and had dug into this heap to the east of it.

Several pits were opened, at distances apart, in a line with this street (L), right across the field towards the north, without finding any trace of foundations.

Two trenches at right angles to the street (L), towards the west, were extended respectively 132 feet and 199 feet. The maiden soil was reached in these trenches at the depth

of about 3 feet from the surface. Over it a large quantity of burnt earth, like the remains of a brick-kiln, was found in both trenches, with a layer of soil above, containing fragments of Roman pottery and other debris. In the most northerly trench, remains of a cross wall were found, at 44 links west of the street, but these remains were not continuous, they consisted of tufa and large flints laid on the earth. In the same trench, in the substratum of burnt earth and charcoal, fragments of a large amphora were discovered, and a layer of burnt wheat was found within the vessel. Both these trenches shew traces of buildings destroyed by fire, the debris of which had been extensively strewn in the neighbourhood. Fragments of Samian ware in the debris had evidently been subjected to the fire, and blackened by it.

Mr. Solly, the tenant of the farm, being anxious that we should fill in the trenches towards the south, we did so to enable him to plough the field, and we commenced another trench (No. 7 on the Plan) parallel with the road to the Castrum and half a chain south of it. In this trench rude foundations of walls were met with, crossing the first trench at right angles, and lying north and south; a cross trench was afterwards made to trace these. The walls or foundations of them consisted of a bottom stratum of large flint stones, with occasional masses of white or rag-stone, 2 or 3 feet wide, laid on the soil without any cement or mortar, and 3 feet from the surface of the field. At the intersection of these trenches an interesting relic was met with; it was a hollow bronze thumb, supposed by Mr. Roach Smith to be a Roman votive offering. Near the south end of this cross trench, the wall turned at right angles towards the east, then all traces of it were lost; its total extent was 38 feet. In the western end of this trench burnt earth was again met with, and a few building materials and portions of glass vessels. These trenches having been filled in, we recommenced work in the other field to the north.

Trenches Nos. 9 and 12 were extended eastward towards the Castrum. A small wall foundation had been met with in the side of the street, in trench No. 9, and this was now

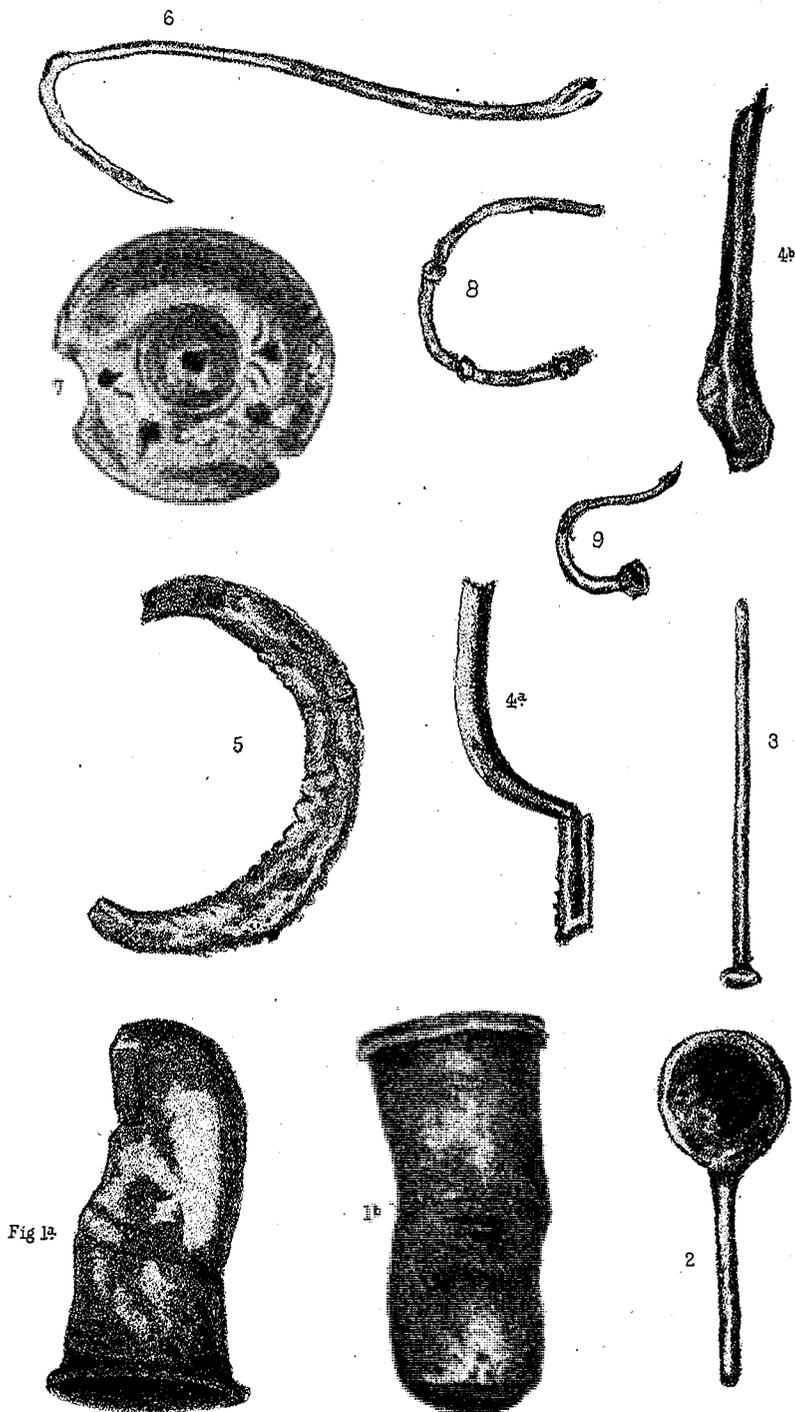


Fig 12

Geo. Dawker, del.

Roman relics of Bronze found at Richborough.

- 1a, 1b, Hollow Thumb; 2, Spoon; 3, Hairpin; 4a, 4b, parts of Strigils.  
 5, Handle of Vessel, 6, Long Needle; 7, 8, 9, Fragments.

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traced eastward, resulting in the discovery of a floor of Roman tile-tesseræ, laid in mortar on a pebble bed, and having a projecting cornice of mortar mixed with pounded tile; the whole rested on pebbles over flint stones. The surface of this floor was broken up at places, and, generally, was in a fragmentary state. The position of the floor is 1 chain 27 links north of the road to the Castrum, and 1 chain west of the Castrum wall. It was traced over an area about 12 feet square, and was only 9 inches from the surface, though it does not appear to have been traced by discoloration of the growing corn.

In the next trench, north of the last, a great quantity of mortar and burnt earth was met with; the mortar was in a friable state, and had a facing of red paint, as if it had formed part of a wall, covered with stucco or plaster.

All these trenches had to be filled in hastily, to make way for the tenant's plough; and we therefore commenced some trenches on the adjoining property, in the occupation of Mr. Elgar, and north of the Castrum.

Our new trenches were begun in a line parallel with the bank skirting the arable field of Mr. Elgar's farm, commencing from the rear of the cottages, and terminating 6 chains 82 links, or 450 feet, to the north, next the bank. It was near this bank that Mr. Boys had met with foundations which he supposed to be a landing-place (see his *History of Sandwich*, p. 868). Mr. Elgar, the tenant of the farm, informed me that the corn was often dried up in places towards the brow of the hill in this direction, and the shepherd had struck some hard foundation in setting a sheepfold close to the hedge. Trial holes, made in the direction indicated, failed to find anything but the natural soil of the field. A set of trenches were then commenced (see Plan, No. 1) at the back of the cottage garden, and the maiden soil was not met with after cutting down 5 feet deep, but here a pebble stratum in mortar was found resting on sand (this pebble stratum may be seen, in section, in the bank in the cottage garden). In the next cutting (No. 2), at a similar depth, much dark earth was found, resting on a stratum of burnt clay and charcoal, and beneath this, rest-

ing on a flat bed of sand, was a stratum of carbonized wheat extending for a considerable distance. This has the appearance of having been a very good sample of cleaned wheat, exactly similar to that grown at the present day. In the next cutting (No. 3) the maiden soil was met with at a less depth, and overlaid by earth, much disturbed, in which was found a millstone of the ordinary pattern, having a diameter of about 20 inches, a thickness of 2 inches, and a central hole in it. It was composed of Kentish rag-stone, and was about 3 feet from the surface of the soil.

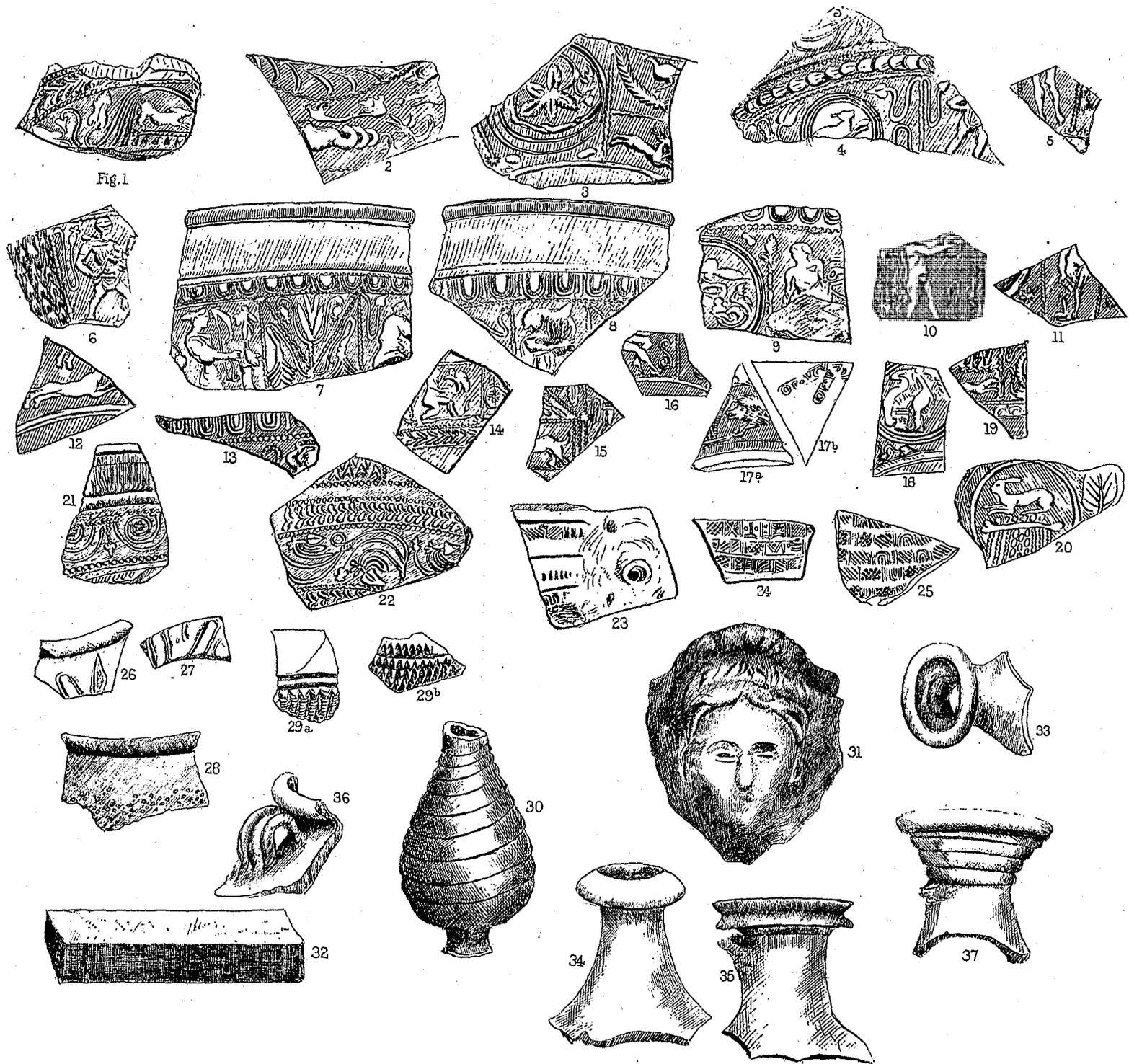
Trenches were opened at right angles to Nos. 2 and 3. Into the second trench, the burnt earth was found to extend, as well as the wheat stratum, and a piece of burnt rope was with the wheat. At the depth of 3 feet, several large stones were met with, as if they had formed portions of some wall; a piece of lead was found also.

In the trench at right angles to No. 1, the same sort of pebble floor was found, at 5 feet deep, but it was soon broken up, and more to the west was replaced by burnt earth. In the latter, was found a small terra-cotta mask of a female head, about 3 inches in length, having apparently ornamented the handle of some vessel; it had been covered with white paint or cement, part of which had been scraped off and the face distorted, but this was not done by our workmen, for I was there when it was found.

Several trial holes were now made, in different parts of this field, as indicated on the Plan. They shewed that the maiden earth was in most cases overlaid by less than 3 feet of soil containing Roman remains, and we found Roman fragments less frequently than in the other fields. The soil was evidently less rich in animal matter, and I should think the plough had gradually accumulated the soil towards the point down the hill where our other trenches were opened.

Our funds were now exhausted, the season was getting late, and agricultural operations interfered with further research; so we paid off the men and discontinued the work.

In proof of the richness of the site about the Castrum in



Geo. Dowker, Del.

C. F. KELL, PHOTO-LITHO. & FURNIVAL ST HOLBORN, E.C.

Roman Fictile Vessels, and Fragments found at Richborough in 1887.

Roman remains, I may mention that large quantities of pottery, and debris of Roman manufacture, have been met with in all these excavations. I have made drawings in my note-book of 73 of the best fragments.\* We preserved 384

\* DESCRIPTION OF FRAGMENTS OF FICTILE VESSELS, found at RICHBOROUGH during the excavations made in 1887, and shewn on the annexed Plate.

Fig.

SAMIAN WARE.

1. Red Samian of the ordinary type, with the figure of a dog (?).
2. Light-coloured thick pottery, with dragons.
3. Thick; dark red; with stag in strong relief.
4. Thick; dark red; with fawn.
5. Fragments, with human hand and legs; badly impressed.
6. Fragment of unusually dark ware (the surface rubbed), with an impression on it of a gladiator.
7. Faintly impressed fragment of Diana with a bow, and some animal held by the leg.
8. Probably a piece of the same vessel, with Orpheus; the face is smudged.
9. Fragment, with female figure; badly impressed.
10. Fragment, with female figure, partly draped, playing with a timbrel.
11. Fragment, with a female; a bad impression.
12. Fragment, with leopard or dog.
13. Fragment.
14. Fragment, with figure.
15. Fragment, with a dog.
16. Fragment, with human legs.
17. Fragment of superior ware, rather light coloured and clearly impressed, being part of the bottom of a vessel with potter's mark twice impressed. On the reverse side is a figure of a boar, of the same design as is represented in Mr. Roach Smith's *Antiquities of Richborough*, p. 66.
18. Fragment, with badly impressed figure; perhaps intended for a woman and a bird (?).
19. Fragment, with a dog.
20. Fragment, with impression of a hare.
21. Thin Samian ware of superior make and pattern.
22. Thin ware ornamented with scroll and tassel pattern.

WARE NOT SAMIAN.

23. Thick, red (Salopian?) vessel like a pan, perforated near the bottom, having siliceous particles imbedded in it like the *mortaria*.
- 24, 25. Imitation of red Samian ware, probably of British manufacture (these were the only specimens found).
- 26, 27. Fragments of very thin white ware, externally coloured orange, with impressions in high relief (probably Durobrivian or Castor ware).
28. Thin white ware, coloured externally a chocolate brown, having imbedded white sandy grains on the external surface for ornamentation. Two similar pieces (one a bottom probably of the same vessel) were found. These may be Durobrivian.
- 29, *a* and *b*. Thin ware of a yellowish colour, externally chocolate brown in colour, shewing orange in the relief portions.
30. Red vessel of coarse pottery and peculiar shape.
31. Portion of a *terra-cotta* vessel (probably a handle), ornamented with a female head, which had originally been covered with white paint, that had been afterwards scraped off the face, which was consequently disfigured.
32. Red brick, or tile,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length,  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch in width,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an inch deep. Several of these were met with; they had no stamp or impression, and were probably employed by the Romans for cutting tesserae.
- 33—37. Coarse white or yellow ware, handles, tops of bottles, and vessels for domestic use, of which a great many fragments were found.

pieces of Samian ware, 20 parts of handles of amphoræ, with bottoms and tops of the same, 21 pieces of mortaria, 41 of Upchurch ware, 51 pieces of iron, 1 piece of lead, 7 stags' horns, together with sundry pieces of bronze, and 8 coins. Some fragments of glass vessels were found, but nothing so perfect as to be worth preservation. The coins were mostly *minimi*, and others in a bad state of preservation and almost illegible; they are pronounced by Mr. Roach Smith to be:—

1. One coin, small brass. Constantinopolis. Rev., Victory. Treves Mintage. Temp. Constantine, A.D. 307—337, probably of the latter date. (Trench L.)

2. One coin, small brass. Constans, A.D. 337—350. Found at a depth of 3 feet, in Trench 1 in Mr. Elgar's field, above the level of burnt earth.

3. Valens, small brass. Gloria Romanorum, A.D. 364—378.

4. Valens, small brass. *SECVRITAS REIPVBLICÆ*.

5. Claudius Gothicus, A.D. 268—270. One small brass, much worn.

6. Five small brass coins of the Constantine Family.

7. Four small brass coins, of the Tetrici.

8. One second brass, *Domitian*. Rev., *MONETA AVGVSTI*.

9. Second brass, probably the same as the last, A.D. 69—96. The two latter came from the rubbish heap, and were probably thrown out of the camp.

The total result of these excavations seems to prove that north of the Castrum the ground had been occupied by granaries, and buildings of like nature, which had been totally destroyed by fire. Near the edge of the cliff, there had probably been stores of corn for shipment, as the burnt cordage seems to imply. At what period this destruction took place we have no evidence. One coin, found in the deep trench not far above the burnt stratum, was of late Roman date, but there is no evidence of any stratum containing Roman debris, below the burnt earth. The street running north (marked L) may have been a way to the corn stores; it terminates, however, abruptly, either because it originally extended only a short distance, or because the other portions have been

destroyed. The great heap of pottery rubbish was probably the pit for the rubbish taken out of the Castrum. There is nothing to lead to the supposition that this part of the ground had ever been occupied by a Roman town.

South of the road to the Castrum, the way marked M was probably a road to the amphitheatre, but the excavations have not determined the nature of the space on either side, further than to shew that fire had destroyed much that once existed. The remains of walls may have been of Saxon date, if not later, though no mediæval remains have been met with.

It must be remembered that comparatively a very small portion of the ground has been touched by this exploration. The large area, over which coins and Roman remains have been scattered, points to extensive occupation south of the Castrum wall; the section shewn in the sand-pit is full of black earth and Roman debris, from which a large quantity of coins and objects of interest have been derived. South of the amphitheatre, towards Lowton, we may expect to find other evidences of Roman occupation, but a considerable sum of money would be required for a thorough and exhaustive exploration there. We have endeavoured to solve as much of the problem as the season and the funds would allow.

In the year 1865 I made a map of the Richborough Island, indicating those places where the stunted growth of corn suggested that foundations might lie in the subsoil. At one of these places, on the left-hand side of the road, near the junction of the road leading to Sandwich with the road to the Castrum, we dug down and found a bed of natural pebble gravel. It is likely therefore that we may be mistaken in other places in attributing to Roman foundations the stunted growth of the corn, and its yellowness in dry seasons. This pebble gravel seems to have been utilized by the Romans in forming the streets we have explored.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging the very great assistance we have received during the excavations from Mr. J. F. Murrell, who kindly undertook to assist me in looking after the men. Without his aid my task would

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have been one of extreme labour and great anxiety. He took up his residence at Richborough most of the time, and we are indebted to him for not only getting a very considerable amount of excavation done for our money, but also for the careful preservation of what was found during the work.

Mr. Solly, like his landlord Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Elgar, the tenant of Lord Greville, kindly gave every facility for the excavations upon their farms, and deserve our best thanks.