

ON "ROMANO-BRITISH" FICTILE VESSELS  
FROM PRESTON NEAR WINGHAM.

BY G. DOWKER.

IN 1889 the late Mr. Charles Roach Smith wrote to me, "What evil genius hinders you from having engraved for your account of the Preston kiln the whole of the figures of the pottery, which should be given in clear outline?" Since that account was printed, a number of Roman fictile vessels have at various times been found in the gravel pits in Preston parish. A notice of the Preston kiln appeared in 1872 in the twelfth volume of *Archæologia Cantiana*.\* I think it will be interesting to give a more detailed account of the chief vessels found, and also of the neighbourhood in which they were so plentifully dispersed.

Dearson Farm lies half a mile to the north-west of the parish road from Wingham to Preston, and about half a mile south-west from Preston Church. The gravel pit, wherein most of the pottery was found, is situated on a ridge of gravel bank that skirts the eastern valleys of the Lesser Stour, and near to a ford which crossed that river. Traces of the road may still be seen in dry seasons, crossing the marsh towards Ickham. At present the only roads near this gravel pit, or near the Preston Court gravel pit, are two narrow cart-ways, one from Dearson to the Preston and Wingham highway in the south by Heart's Delight, and another from Preston Court by Preston Church to the north at right angles to the parish road. A footpath, nearly parallel to the parish road from Wingham to Preston, skirts the gravel ridge on which the pottery has been found, and it probably marks the site of the Roman way. Part of this from Dearson to Wenderton is still highway. I have been thus particular in describing this road, as not only at Dearson, where the first discovery of pottery was made, but at almost all intermediate

\* Some relics from Dearson are noted in *Archæologia*, xxxvi., 181.



spots between Dearson and Preston Church (nearly half a mile in length) there have been found, in the gravel, traces of Romano-British interments. At Preston Court, close to Preston Church, is a large gravel pit, in which quantities of broken pottery have been met with. At an exhibition of miscellaneous curiosities, held in the Preston schoolroom a twelvemonth ago, I found some Samian pottery which was exhibited by labourers who had worked in this pit, and had preserved them as mantelpiece ornaments. I learned from these labourers that pottery had also frequently turned up in gravel excavated at Preston Forstal, at least a quarter of a mile north of Preston Court pit; so that upwards of three-quarters of a mile (in length) is marked by the discovery of Roman pottery.

It would seem then that the Dearson Cemetery was not a mere isolated one, but that the burials had been spread out along a considerable length of road. Near Ickham\* other Roman vessels have been found beside this road. So we cannot regard the Dearson burial-ground as the cemetery of Roman Wingham. Of the fictile vessels I have figured, it will be noted that the most perfect and interesting specimens were found in the Dearson gravel pit; this, however, is partly owing to the care there taken to preserve the specimens entire when met with. I interested Mr. Goodson (the owner of the property), and he informed me whenever the disturbed state of the gravel, or traces of charcoal and fire, suggested the probability of a Roman interment having taken place at any spot.

In the Preston Court gravel pit I have found a Roman Quern, traces of trenches in the gravel, and quantities of pottery generally in a broken condition. In one case burnt bones were found imbedded in an oval mass of partly burnt clay, probably a rude imitation of a funeral urn. In most cases the pottery has been of a rude or common description, of blue smoulder kiln-baked, but all of good design, and comparable with most of the Upchurch pottery. Some of the Samian vessels, from long exposure in the porous, damp gravel, had their red enamel so injured as to crumble away on exposure, and their potters' marks obliterated. The pit at Dearson, which lies nearer to Wingham than the other pits, has yielded the greater number of the best specimens of fictile vessels.

Mr. Roach Smith, in a note added to my paper in *Archæologia Cantiana*, vol. xii., p. 58, suggested that what I described as a Roman kiln at Dearson was probably a baked clay tomb, and referred

\* A Roman red clay bottle like No. 5, found by Mr. Minter, now in my collection.

to some examples he gave in *Archæologia Cantiana*, vol. xi., p. 115. Be this as it may, there appear to have been (nearer Preston Church) some rather curious cases in which a number of vessels were found close together; in one grave seven or eight had been put with one interment, in a gravel pit near Dearson Wood (about a quarter of a mile distant). The pottery described as Upchurch ware, found here, is all of a coarse kind. I have several specimens of a much better article found in Kent. Mr. F. G. Hilton Price described in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vol. v., p. 301, "a Romano-British" cemetery at Seaford in Sussex, where similar pottery was found. Mr. Price remarks, "In some instances black patches were observed in which fragments of burnt pottery, flints, pieces of charcoal, and charred bones were found; most of these patches contained one or more iron nails, and these patches marked the spots where interments had been made." Mr. Price suggests that after the body had been burnt on the funeral pyre, the ashes were collected and placed on a cloth or in a napkin, and fastened with iron nails, as he supposes, marking the interments of the poorer class, whose friends were not in a position to afford the expense of a funeral urn. In several places in the Preston gravel pits I have met with somewhat similar instances, and it seems probable that interments had been made near the dwellings, and not collected in one cemetery; if this is so, it may account for the interments having been scattered over so large an area.

The examples I have figured are taken from the best preserved specimens, and only one example is given of each character. I have found in addition many duplicate specimens, and a great many fragments of others. In 1872, I made water-colour drawings of many of the best specimens from Mr. Goodson's gravel pit, and they are now in the possession of Mrs. Goodson of Cleve Court in the Isle of Thanet. That lady has the terra-cotta rabbit, and she had also a nice specimen of an entire glass vessel, about six inches in height, which I have not been able to figure; it was of the usual square moulded form, with truncated neck, a small mouth, and small handle; it would hold about one pint. Several pieces of iron, probably nails, and a bronze piece of a spur (or something very like one) were found in the Dearson pit.

I will now describe the drawings which are all made to one scale:—

1. A fine oval blue vessel found in the Dearson pit; it contained burnt bones.

2. A tall upright urn ornamented, and containing burnt bones; the colour was blue and the texture fine. Dearson 1.

3. A large urn ornamented with cross lines below the centre and arched lines above, it likewise contained calcined human bones. D. 1.

4. An elegant vessel of blue Upchurch ware. D. 1.

5. A bottle of red ware. D. 1.

6. Urn of coarse blue ware; several like vessels were met with in the Dearson Cemetery, No. 1. D. 1.

7. Small urn nearly black. D. 1.

8. Small vessel nearly black. D. 1.

9. Samian cup, red ware with leaf ornamentation, found with several others in one interment in Dearson Cemetery, No. 1.

10. A somewhat similar vessel. D. 1.

11. Samian patera. D. 1.

12. Cup-shaped Samian patera. D. 1.

13. Small glass unguent vessel of green glass from a large urn. D. 1.

14. Urn of brown colour with lid, containing bones; in Preston Court pit similar lids appear to have been used to cover wide-mouthed urns, but most of them had been broken.

15. One of the largest urns met with, of rather coarse material and red. D. 1.

16. This vessel, the only one of the sort met with, is unique not only in material but in ornamentation; it is of rather thick clay of a brown-blue colour, containing small angular fragments of flint, which calcined white in the burning. I found a fragment of a thick urn of precisely the same material in the Saxon Cemetery at Wickham-breux. The ornaments on this vessel consist of some rude forms, intended perhaps to represent geese, which seem to have been stuck on while the clay was soft; these are on opposite sides of the vessel; between them is the representation of a man having a sort of striped tunic over his shoulders, and with his arms brought across his stomach in a rather indecent way, the feet are turned in, while the modelling of the whole is very rude. The head was broken off with the upper part of the urn. D. 1.

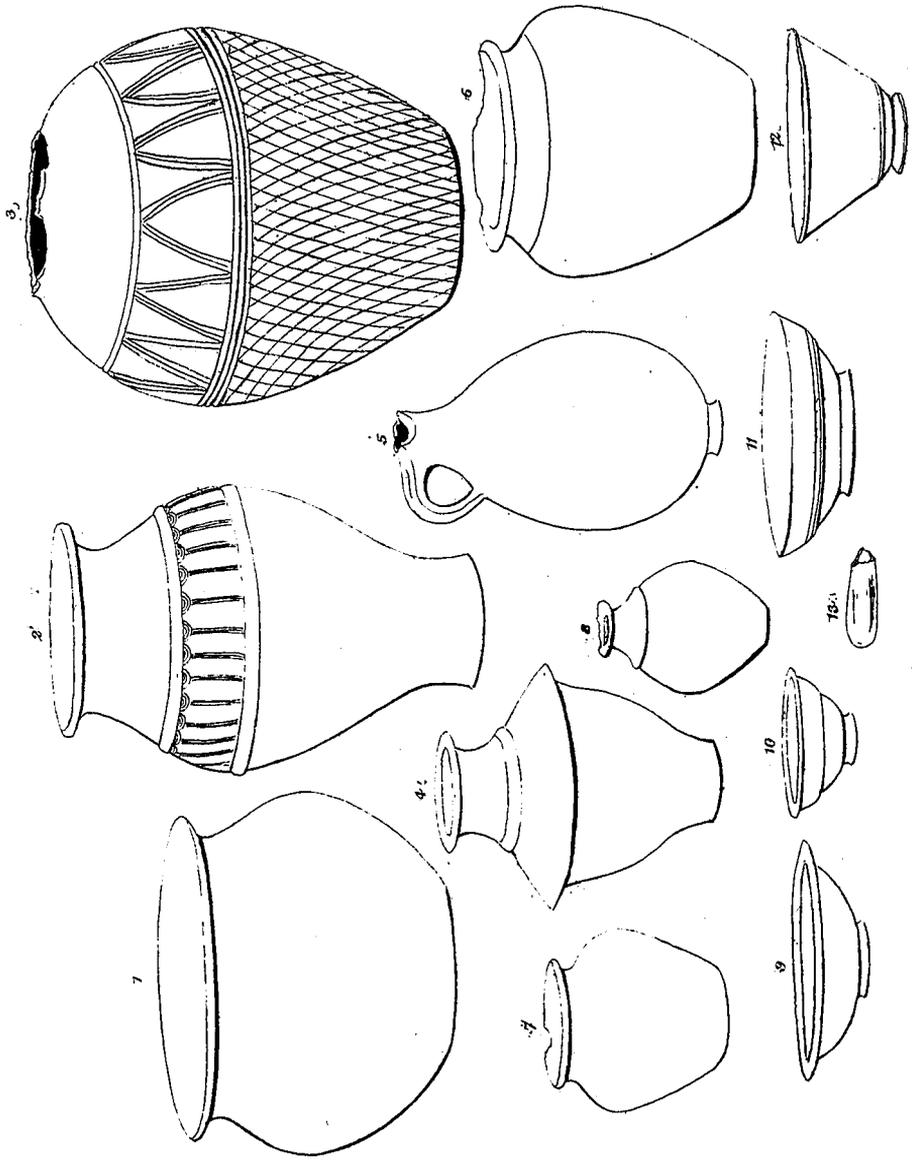
17. A brown-blue patera. Preston Court.

18. Upchurch ware. D. 1.

19. Red ware earthen bottle. A similar but larger one was found at Preston Court and Wickham. D.

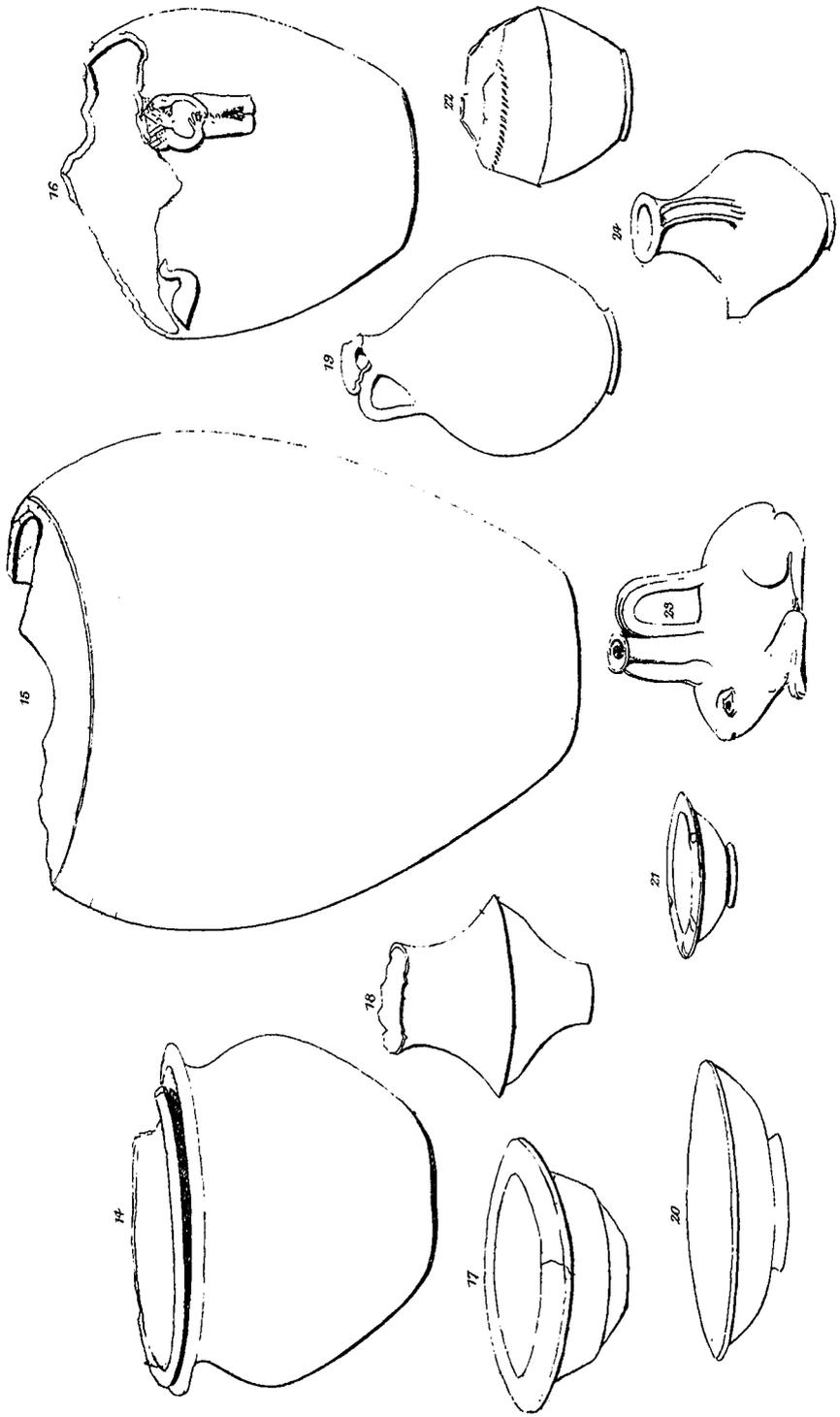
20. Red Samian patera. Preston.

21. Small Samian patera. D.



GEO. DOWKER DEL.

ROMAN POTTERY, FOUND IN PRESTON BY WINGHAM.



SCALE OF INCHES  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ROMAN POTTERY, FOUND IN PRESTON BY WINGHAM.

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22. A yellow, thin vessel, probably Durobrivian ware. Dearson.

23. A terra-cotta yellow vessel in the form of a rabbit, the ears are elevated, and form a support to a neck, which is perforated down to the hollow body; this neck forms the front part of the handle of the vessel. The mouth of the rabbit is likewise perforated, the whole body forming a sort of jug. What could be the use of this singular Roman relic? I would venture on the opinion that it was an infant's feeding-bottle; it certainly would serve admirably for such a purpose. When filled with milk, if the thumb were placed over the neck of the vessel, it would very effectually stop its running out at the mouth; while if the infant was sucking at the mouth of the vessel, and the upper part were left open, it would freely flow.

24. A red terra-cotta vessel like a small teapot, probably likewise a feeding-bottle.

It may be noted by referring to the map, opposite, that these "Romano-British" cemeteries lie scattered along a way that must have been thickly populated in Roman times, and occupy an area adjoining the parish church, far from the village population, which now lives more to the north-east—"Preston Street."

The Roman way must have continued past the church to the "Forstal," where pottery has been met with. The church has no feature I believe older than the thirteenth century, but just beyond its present churchyard "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

Since this paper was written, a fresh batch of pottery has been met with in the Preston Court gravel pit, one item being a large red cemetery urn.