

THE ROMAN SITE AT OTFORD.

(*Second Article.*)

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IN Volume XXXIX of *Archæologia Cantiana* there appeared a brief account of the excavations carried out on the Roman site at Otford in the spring and autumn of 1927. The present article gives a history of what was found in 1928 and the final conclusions arrived at.

THE VILLA.

A glance at the plan shows that no further rooms can be proved to have existed, but there were probably more. The puzzling holes (*a*)—(*f*) in the line of or under the walls were probably post holes, the fact that several are at the corners of rooms confirming this theory. It was not found possible adequately to protect the coloured plaster on the walls of the corridor, and the frosts of the winter of 1927 stripped it off completely. This revealed that the western end of the wall was built almost entirely of ironstone slabs, while the other end was of flint.

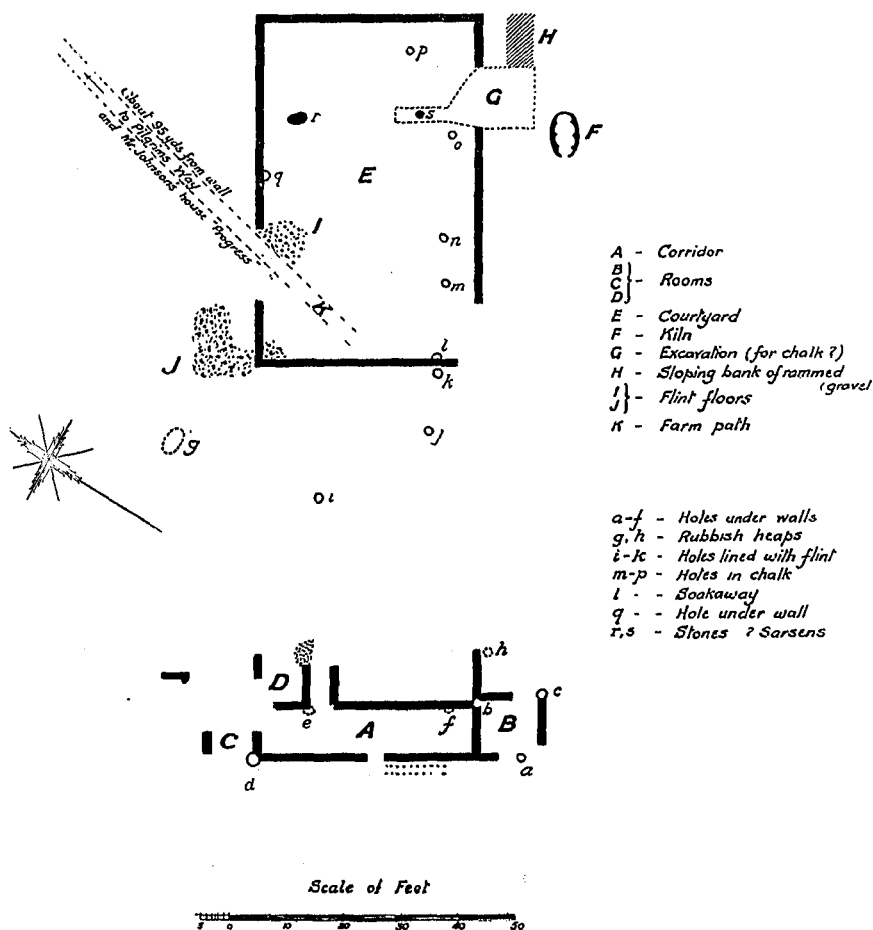
THE COURTYARD.

The next discovery of importance was, that behind the Villa was a courtyard (*E*) 64 ft. by 40 ft., having its longer walls each in the same line as one wall of the Villa. The walls were mostly in a good state of preservation, and the upper wall was particularly well built. On native chalk was a layer of about 8 in. of chalk rubble, on this five rows of large flints, the two lower projecting beyond the others. There is no definite evidence as to where the entrance was, but breaks in the S.E. wall suggest that it was there. The floor was at least partly paved with flints as at (*I*), and there is another flint floor (*J*) outside. If any buildings ever

existed, there is no sign of them except, possibly, a few broken tiles. (*m*)—(*p*) are holes in the chalk, mostly filled with blackened earth. In one of them there was some charred wheat. (*q*) is partly under a wall and contained the Upchurch ware beaker (*D10*). (*r*) is an irregular stone 3 ft. 5 in. by 2 ft. 8 in. roughly. It is rounded by the action of the weather and resembles a Sarsen stone. It rests on flints which may have been part of the floor. Close to the lower wall was a soakaway (*l*) made of tiles and just opposite, outside, there is a cylindrical hole (*k*), beautifully lined with flints of which only one was displaced. It was 1 ft. 10 in. in diameter and 2 ft. 5 in. deep. It contained a piece of fourth century ware, charcoal, bones, etc. Two other similar holes (*i*, *j*) were also explored but both of these were much disturbed. No satisfactory explanation of the purpose of these has yet been given.

Eleven feet from the top, the right hand wall is interrupted by an excavation (*G*) 10 feet wide and of considerable depth, extending outside the courtyard, as can be seen on the plan. From the inside floor a narrow passage leads down to the bottom of this—a sort of stairway with three steps one of which is the stone (*s*). Perhaps the excavation is the remains of a low pitched cellar. At the bottom were found four coins of Magnentius, the coins of latest date found on the site. This excavation was probably filled in from the east side as the earth filling lay in strata sloping up in that direction. At the bottom was virgin chalk, then broken chalk, then a sloping layer of very black earth; next, a parallel layer of broken chalk and from that to the surface black earth with small pieces of flint, chalk and tile. The Magnentius coins must have lain at the bottom when the excavation was filled in, or if thrown in with the rubbish, must have been on the surface outside. This suggests that in either case the courtyard was not in use during the latter part of the fourth century. When the courtyard was built, the sloping ground was levelled to a certain extent by digging into the chalk more deeply at the top than lower down. This left a bank of chalk which 'on the south-east

OTFORD ROMAN VILLA



side was bevelled off and formed a sloping bank (*H*) 4 ft. wide, which was faced with rammed gravel. It may have edged a road leading down to a kiln, of which, more anon. How far it extended is not clear, for it is cut off short just opposite to where the big excavation (*G*) cuts through the wall. On the slope were found two pieces of figured Samian ware, plain Samian, Castor, black coarse ware with lattice markings, an iron ring, part of the blade of a saw, a coin of Constantine II and a delightful little silver ring.

The coins found, about fifty, range from an Agrippa, A.D. 37, to the Magnentius coins, A.D. 350-353, already referred to. In the same way the pottery covers nearly the whole period of the Roman occupation, the greater part being of the third and fourth centuries. The usual large quantities of oyster shells were found, also bones of red and roe deer, swine, and other animals. There were many "thunder bolts" and "pharisee's loaves," *i.e.* nodules of iron pyrites and tests of sea-urchins. Of the metal objects the most interesting is a fibula of La Tène I-II period, which must have been kept by the owner of the villa as an heirloom or else lost on the bare down centuries before the villa was built.

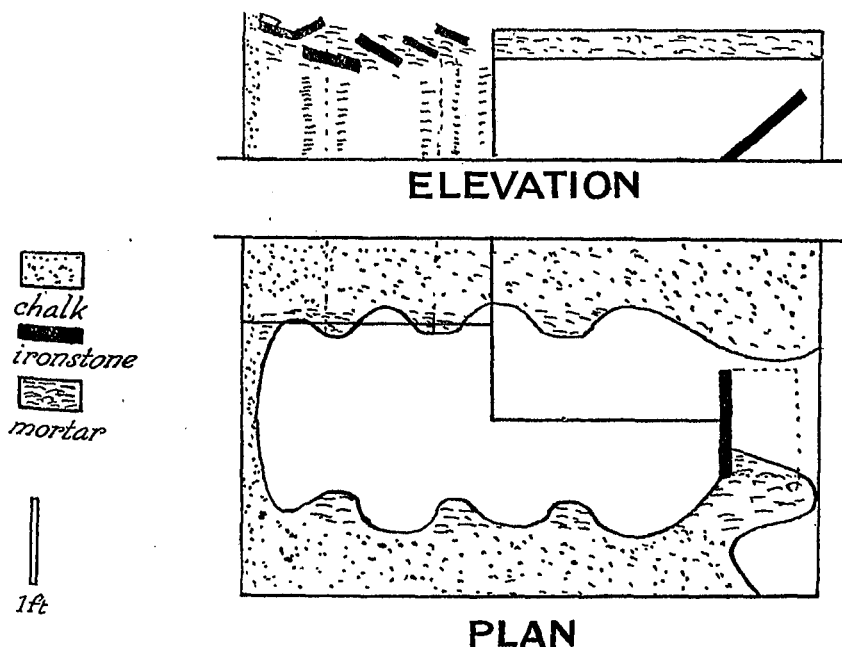
THE KILN.

In this part of the site the most interesting discovery is certainly the kiln (*F*). A trench seems to have been cut in the chalk and pillars of mortar and ironstone built up to hold a roof of the same materials. About a half of this roof is still left. This should be the diaphragm on which the pottery was placed for firing, but there is no sign of holes communicating with the flue below, nor are there any remains of the dome which usually covered the whole. The front, on the left, is partly blocked by a large slab of ironstone set at an angle of something less than 45°, while the open right hand side formed the flue. The pillars of mortar give the inside the appearance of having four little recesses on either side. When the kiln was cleared out, it had in one of these a flagon (*K1*) about 7½ in. high, upside down, quite complete



THE KILN.

except that one handle, broken off, lay by its side; two others nearly complete, and fragments of many more. I counted over two dozen necks of this type. The flagons are of red clay, changing even in the same vessel to yellow or brown. They are roughly made, though only one "waster" was found. The kiln contained in addition some interesting pottery of other kinds. There was some yellowish soft ware



THE KILN.

of British make, c. A.D. 50, with a roughly traced lattice pattern, also some hard grey and red, gritty ware. One of each of these kinds has been restored. Of the latter kind, the fragments of several small bowls were found which must have been of a particularly attractive shape. One of the flagons, 15 in. high, has been completed and is now in the British Museum, but there was also one, c. 16½ in., which with several others was restored by Col. North, D.S.O., F.S.A.

The evidence accumulated suggests that the villa and the courtyard were built at the same time, somewhere about the middle of the first century A.D., the kiln a little later. For some reason or other the kiln was abandoned at the end of this period and was filled up from the heaps of broken pottery, charcoal, etc., lying near, and the site levelled. Then towards the end of the second century the villa was burnt down and never rebuilt, but the courtyard was still used as a refuge for cattle, and there may have been wooden erections inside, of which, however, there are no certain traces.

In conclusion I wish to offer my warmest thanks to all who have helped to make the excavation of the Otford site a success; to the members of the Sevenoaks Society which has carried out the work; to Col. North for his restoration of the flagons; to Mr. H. Mattingley and Mr. Reginald A. Smith of the British Museum for help with the coins and other objects found; to the Curators of the County Museum at Maidstone; and to my colleagues at Christ's Hospital, Messrs. H. A. Rigby and R. H. Marlow, for their drawings of pottery and small objects for the illustration of this article.

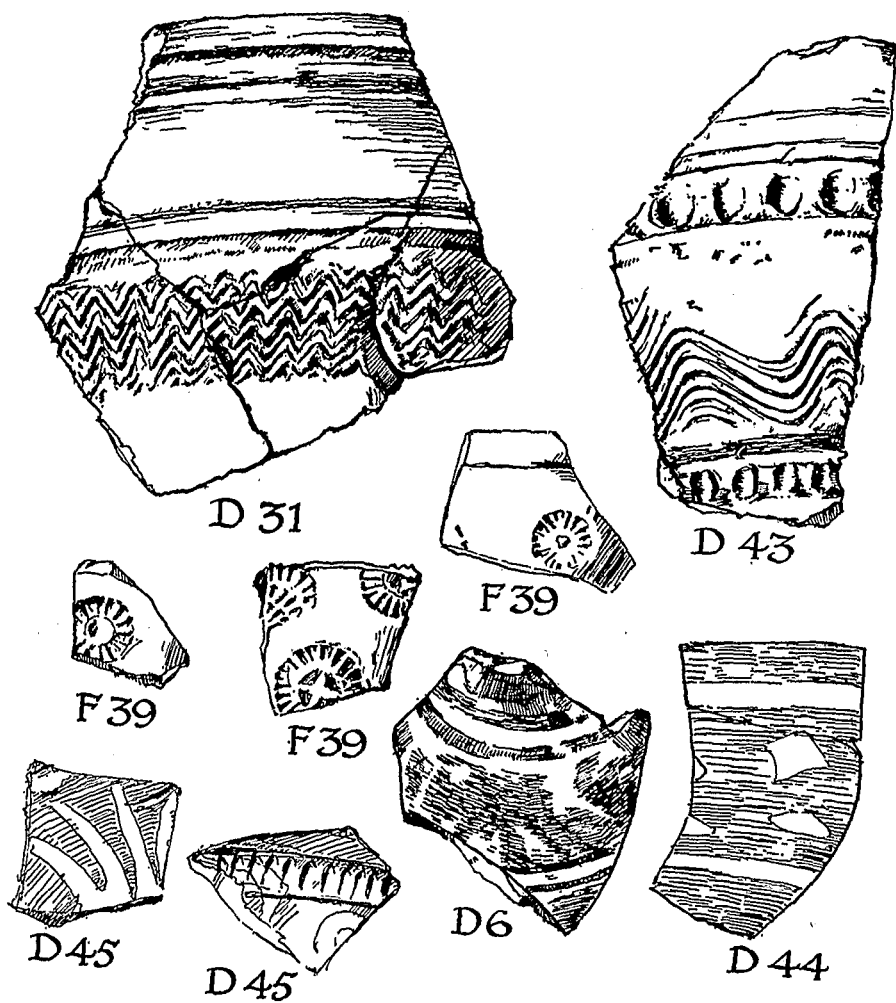
POTTERY.

N.B.—The letters and numbers attached to each item are those given to it in the original catalogue.

SAMIAN WARE.

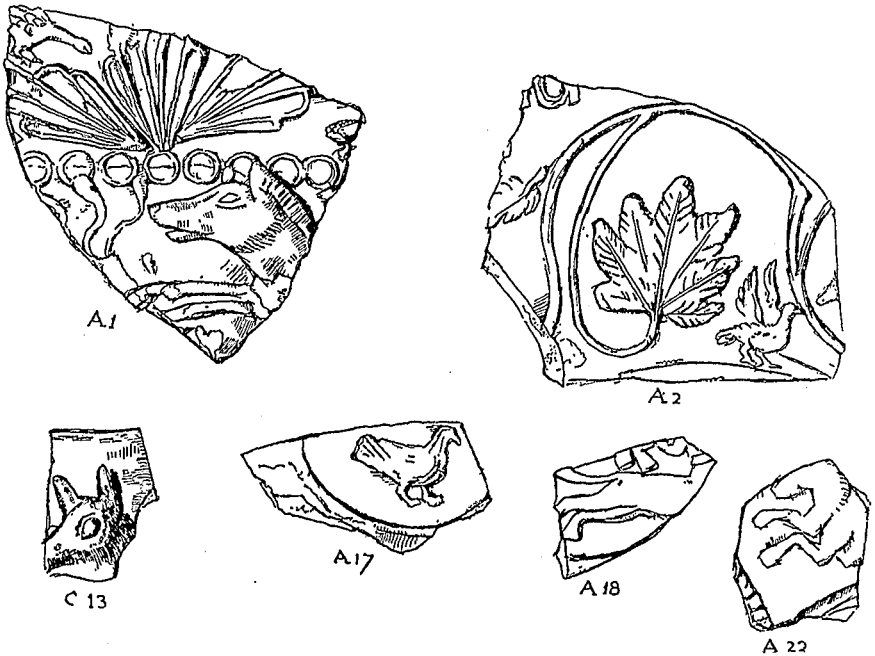
A. DECORATED.

- A1. A triangular fragment of a transition bowl F29/37 Drag. Above neck and feet of duck (Dech. 1014), shrub (Dech. 1151), separated by a row of large rings from (below) head and fore feet of boar running l. Dech. 889. Part of tree. Flavian, Lezoux. (Villa.)
- A2. Form 37 Drag. Large scroll with leaf of vine or sycamore (Dech. 1168). To right a pigeon r. preparing to take flight (Dech. 1011). Trajan-Hadrian. (Tip g.)
- A12. Fragment showing rouletting.



COARSE WARE—4TH CENTURY.

- A13. Small fragment with head in a medallion.
 A14. Worn fragment with rivet hole.
 A17. Form 37. Figure of a pigeon (Dech. 1037) in large medallion, 2nd century.
 A18. Tail and hinder parts of an animal running r.
 A19. Winding scroll—2 flowers with buds.
 A22. Fore part of horse galloping r. (gravel bank).



SAMIAN AND CASTOR WARE.

B. PLAIN.

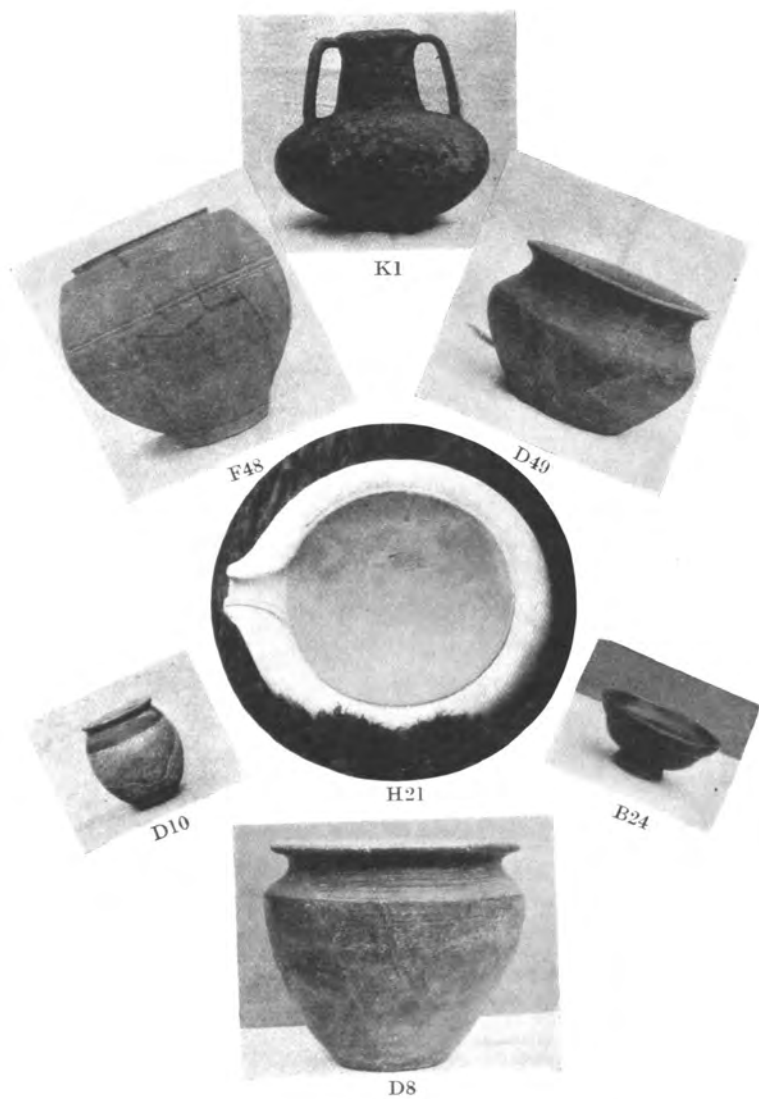
There is much plain Samian for so small a villa but only one piece was worth restoring.

- B24. Form 27 Drag. Potter's mark incomplete O. . . .
 Height 6-8".

Forms 24/25, 18 and 27 were found, but more of the later forms 31 and 33. Other forms 38, 35 or 36, 32 and a mortar F. 43.

CASTOR.

- C1. Large piece of cup with scroll work in barbotine.
 C13. Fragment with head of bull.



VESSELS COMPLETE AND RESTORED.

COARSE POTTERY.

FOUND IN OR AROUND THE KILN.

- K1. Found complete. Two handles fixed to bottom of rim. Height=7.1", bulge=7.5", foot=2.64".
- K2. Two handles fixed to neck below rim. Lip flattened with groove. Height=8.8".
- K7. One handle, collar.
- K10. Neck with lip pinched in to form a spout.
- K12. Two handles; sloping lip: complete.
- K14. One handle, neck with 5 steps. Height 15". Restored. Presented to the British Museum.

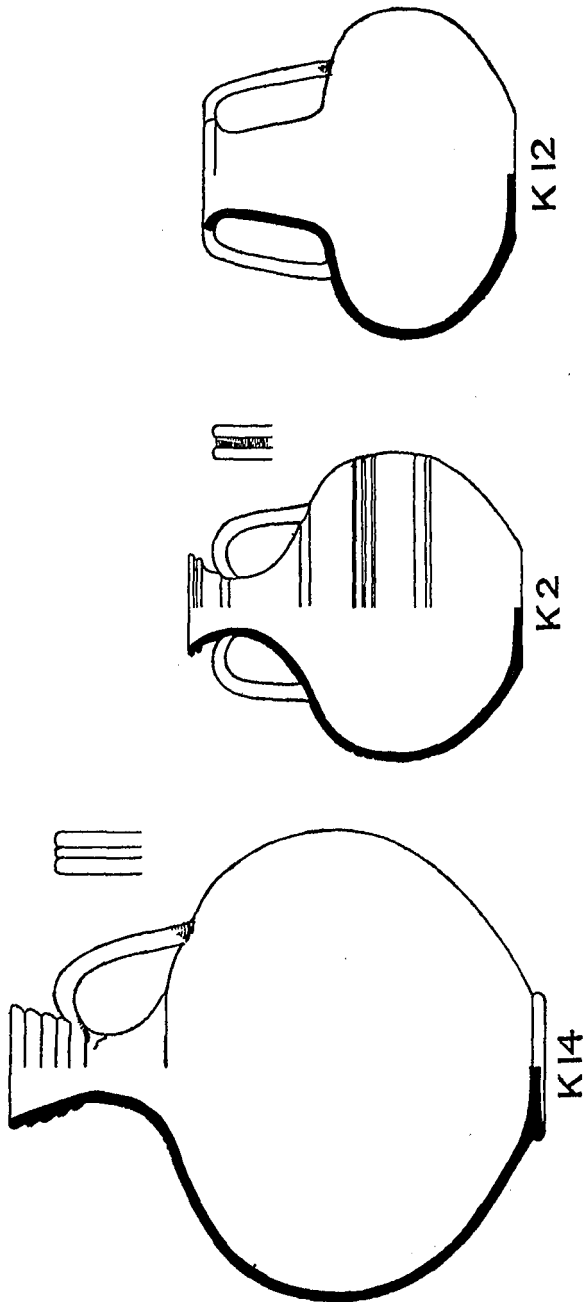
Two others of about this size, and one 16½" have also been restored. Fragments of another have a sort of neck frill of rustic decoration.

- D49. Restored. A British bowl of soft yellow clay with lattice pattern. Height=5.4", bulge=8", rim=7.2", base=4.1". Date c. A.D. 50. Fragments of others were also found.
- F48. Restored. A bowl of greyish gritty clay, narrow everted lip, shoulder nearly horizontal. Height=7.75". bulge=8.27", rim=5.4", foot=3.3". Late first century.

From the other coarse pottery two vessels have been completed.

- D10. A dark grey beaker of Upchurch ware with lattice decoration. Height 3.6". Found in hole (q); second century.
- D8. Grey olla with lattice pattern 8.4" high, bulge=9.5", rim=9", base=4.3". Found in courtyard. Late first or second century.

Large quantities of the usual broken pottery of all types and dates were found. There were some interesting pieces of New Forest ware, colour-coated imitations of the Samian forms 27, 38 and others, rosetted ware, bowls with geometrical designs on the inside and much with a stick marked ornamental design just below the rim. One bowl had VII on its rim, one R and another X scratched on its side.

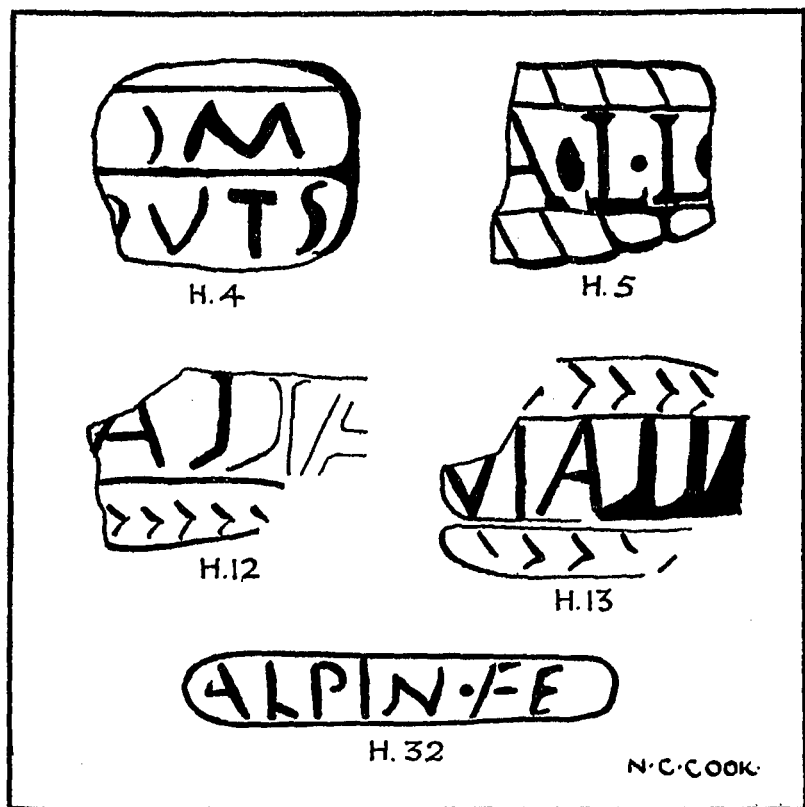


FLAGONS FOUND IN KIEN.

MORTARIA, ETC.

It will have been noticed that the Samian ware gave us no complete potter's mark, but the Mortaria provided three of great interest. List of Mortaria :—

- H1. Large piece of red mortar : beneath, 6 semicircular grooves, third century.
- H4. Part of rim, buff, with potter's mark $\begin{matrix} M \\ SVTS \end{matrix}$, perhaps by Modestus, a third century Rheinzabern potter.
- H5. Bluish white, potter's mark . . ALL . . (See H21.)
- H12. Buff, potter's mark . . Aλλ . . (See H21.)
- H15. Rim with mark V . . . (See H21.)



POTTERS' MARKS ON MORTARIA.

- H21. Many pieces of mortar now restored, white with bead and roll rim and potter's mark VIAΛΛA. (See May, Silchester Pl. LXXXIII, A3.) Tip (g).
- H32. Part of rim of a peculiar soft rich red clay with potter's mark ALPIN.FE. An Alpinus made pottery at Trèves, c.200 A.D.
- H32. Another similar piece with ALPIN F. . .

COINS.

- P18. Agrippa. As, circa A.D. 37. Rev. incuse. Cohen Agr. 3.
- P44. Claudius I. As, A.D. 41 Cohen 84. Found on floor I.
- P19. Domitian. A.D. 81-96. Dupondius. Radiate head.
- P1. Antoninus Pius. A.D. 140-144. Rev. Minerva. Cohen 746.
- P39. Severus Alexander. A.D. 222-235. Rev. LAETITIA . .
Perforated. Floor J.
- P5. Victorinus. A.D. 265-8. Rev. PAX AVG. Cohen 79.
- P6. Claudius Gothicus. A.D. 269. Rev. LIBERT AVG.
Cohen 151 et seq.
- P9. Claudius Gothicus. Imitation. CONSECRATIO altar type.
- P11. Claudius Gothicus. Rev. Eagle, CONSECRATIO. Bar-
barous ?
- P4. Tetricus I. A.D. 270-273. Rev. SPES AVG.
- P8. Tetricus I. Rev. PAX AVG. Overstruck.
Four other Tetricus I.
- P29. Carausius. A.D. 287-293. Rev. PAX AVG. Cohen 208.
- P7. Constantine I. Rev. Trophy of shields and breastplate
with captives at foot. Cohen 690.
- P42. Constantine I. Rev. SOLI INVICTO COMITI. Mint
mark \overline{PLN} . Cohen 506.
- P30. Constantine II. c. A.D. 324. Rev. Camp Gate with
 $\overline{PROVIDENTIAE CAESS}$. Mint mark \overline{PRT} ☺
- P31. Constantine II. c. A.D. 330-335. Rev. two soldiers with
spears and standards. GLORIA EXERCITVS.
- P2 and two others. Constantius II. A.D. 337-361. Rev. two
victories meeting.

P36 and three others. Constantius II. Legionary spearing fallen horseman. FEL TEMP. REPARATIO.

P20 and two others. Constantius II. Rev. Phoenix on rock. FEL TEMP. REPARATIO.

P25-28. Magnentius. A.D. 350-353. Rev. two Victories holding a wreath: within it VOTA V MVLTA. Mint mark TRS.

Ten indecipherable.

SMALL FINDS.

M41. Bronze fibula La Tène II, third century B.C. with a perforated circular plate for a coral setting.

M6. Bronze fibula, first century.

M5. Bronze gilt bust of a woman, probably head of a pin.

M8, 9. Two bronze ear picks.

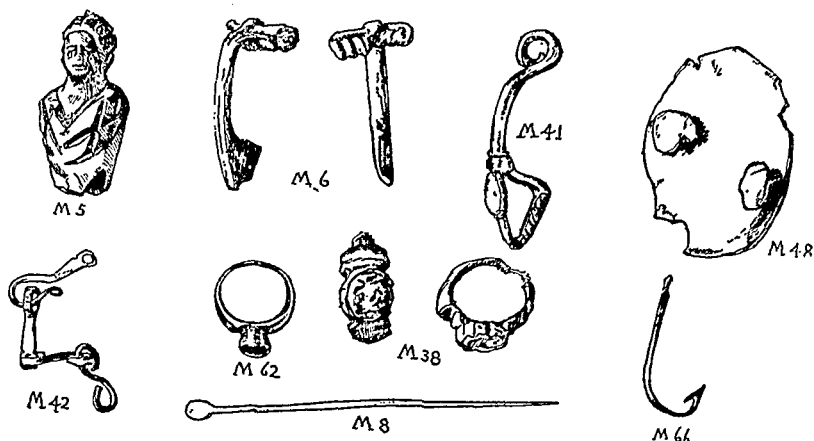
M38. Bronze signet ring with glass seal, ? sitting figure, third century.

M62. Silver signet ring, no stone.

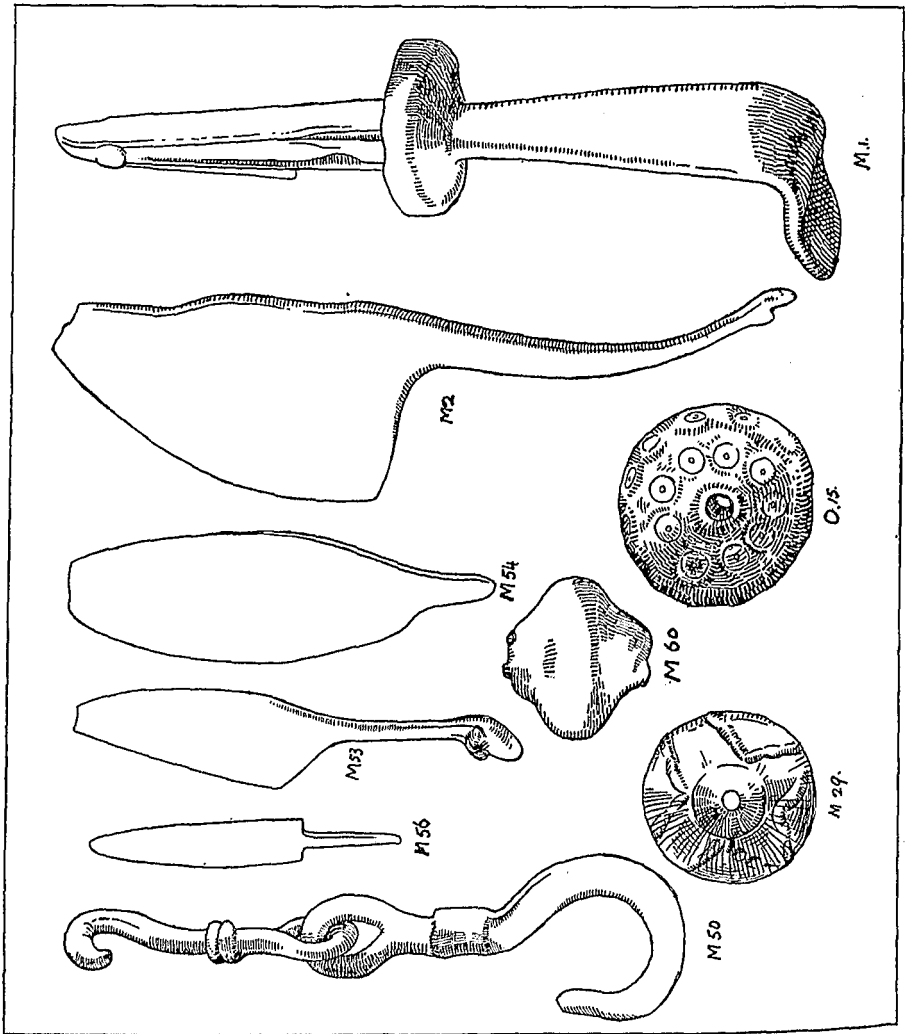
M39. Bronze flat bracelet engraved on outside.

M40. Bronze wire bracelet.

M42. Bronze hook and eye and two links of a chain.



BRONZE OBJECTS.



OBJECTS IN IRON. LEAD. ETC.

- M48. Circular clasp 1.85" for belt or horse harness. Two studs underneath.
- M66. Bronze fish hook.
- M1. Spring part of an iron barrel padlock.
- M2 etc. Seven knives.
- M50. Two iron hooks, looped together : part of a steelyard.
- M64. Part of the blade of an iron saw.
- M29. Conical lead weight, base 1.1", perforated, with moulded chain ornament on upper surface.
- M60. Bi-conical lead steelyard weight or plummet, originally with iron hook.
- O15. Pottery spindle whorl, ornamented with rosettes on rim and face.
- O1. Part of a melon bead.
- O8. Dark blue glass bead.
- O9. Flat oval jet bead, top rounded, two longitudinal perforations.
- O13. Disc of pottery used as a counter.
- N5. Bone counter.
- N1 etc. Several bone hair pins. One has a hatchet shaped head, another a flat head, nearly square, with a circular perforation.
- O17. Lower half of a quern of conglomerate, hemi-spherical, diameter 11".

The majority of these are in the County Museum at Maidstone.

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