

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

By BRIAN J. PHILIP

### INTRODUCTION

OF the Roman Fort of REGVLBIVM, situated when built perhaps a mile inland from the Thames estuary, barely half remains today; the rest and the land to the north having been washed away by the sea during many centuries. This constant erosion has also been responsible for revealing, both in the past and at present, large numbers of antiquities in the debris of the destroyed cliffs.

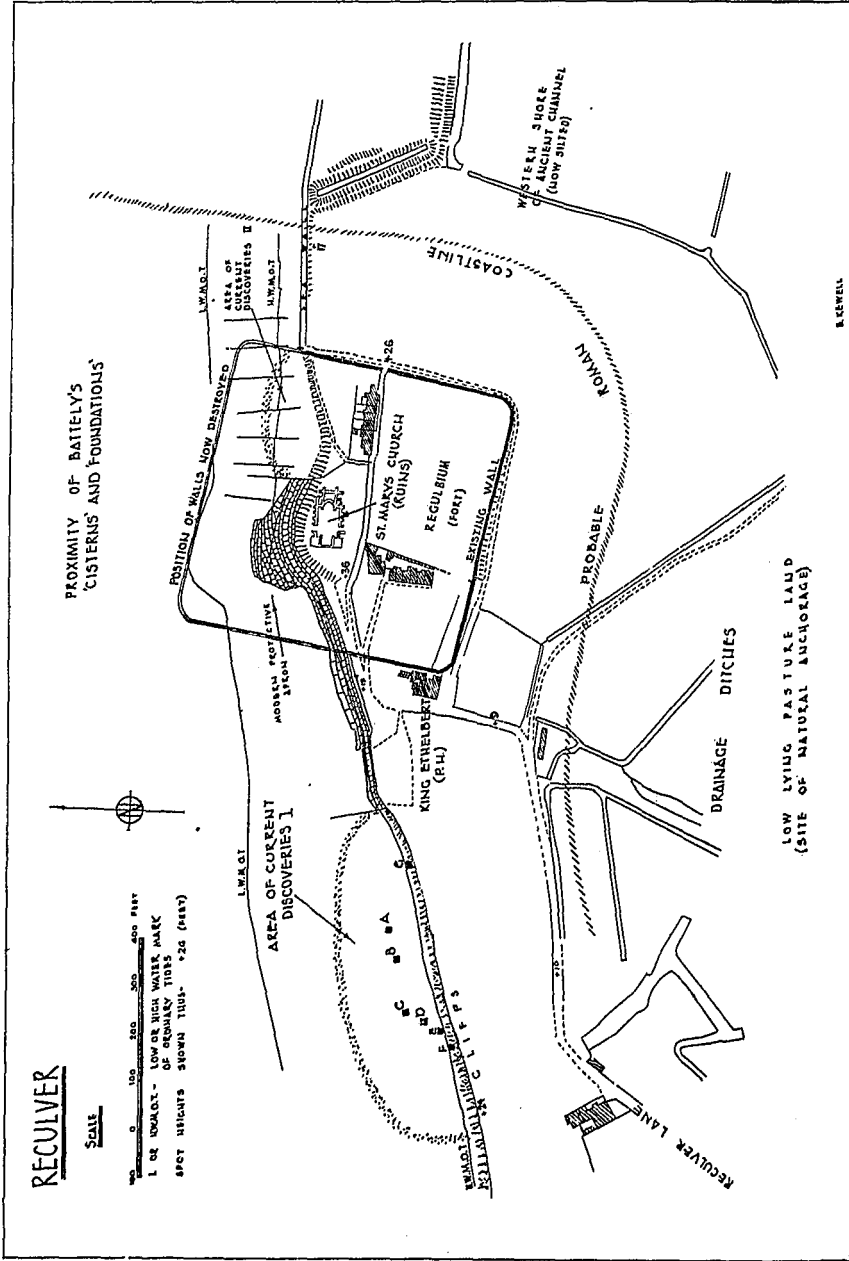
Work of a rescue nature carried out by the author between April, 1952, and December, 1954, resulted in the recovery of much such material and the gleaning of useful information, the recording of which forms the subject of this report. As the finds were not restricted to the vicinity of the fort the work has, for simplicity, been divided into two parts, each dealing with specific areas. A careful study of the plan (p. 168) should provide readers with a useful guide.

The writer wishes to extend his sincere thanks to the staff of the Guildhall Museum, London, for many generous services: in particular to the Keeper, Mr. N. C. Cook, for his invaluable help with the preparation of the report, for the note on the pre-historic finds and for numerous kindnesses and privileges about the Museum; to Mr. R. Merrifield, for his able work of cleaning and dating the coin finds, and to Mr. and Mrs. Noel Hume for much valuable help and encouragement. Thanks are also due to my friends Mr. D. Mould of Keston and Mr. D. Hicks, Ministry of Works Custodian at the Reculver Ancient Monument, for their help on various occasions.

### SUMMARY OF RECORDED FACTS

From the *Notitia Dignitatum* we learn that the Fort formed part of a system of coastal defences known as the *Litus Saxonicum* (Saxon Shore). The system incorporated at least nine shore-forts in Britain and was founded late in the third century A.D. to thwart Saxon pirate raids on the mainland. The fort at Reculver was constructed on a low hill guarding the northern mouth of a narrow channel which in Roman times flowed between the present-day Isle of Thanet and the mainland. Another fort, Richborough, was constructed at the channel's southern entrance for a similar purpose.

RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER



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Ground-plan of Reculver, Kent, showing location of discoveries 1952-54

Of finds in the locality coins representing almost the entire Roman occupation of Britain and a small number of Republican and Ancient British coins have been recorded. Pottery evidence affords us a somewhat closer dating. The Rev. J. Battely, writing late in the seventeenth century (*Antiquitates Rutupinae*) records large quantities of relics being uncovered to the north of the fort. He mentions in particular pottery of second and third century date being recovered from rectangular sumps or, as he knew them, "cisterns." Mention is also made of "foundations of great bulk" being revealed complete with hypocaust system, and probably representing the remains of a bath-house or villa. The impression given by his work, and further confirmed by material evidence, is that a fixed form of settlement had existed to the north of the fort, in the second and third centuries A.D.

Since Battely's time not a few attempts have been made to establish the early history of Reculver,<sup>1</sup> yet significant results were not forthcoming until 1951, when Mr. F. H. Thompson, working on behalf of the Ministry of Works, cut a section through the surviving south wall of the fort. In his summary of results<sup>2</sup> he reports finding slight yet distinct traces of a native population under direct Belgic influence and with lingering Iron Age A traditions. An unknown length of time had then elapsed before the construction of the fort, indicated in his section by a mortar-mixing floor. The upper layers had contained a few insignificant potsherds of shore-fort date.

#### THE AREA WEST OF THE FORT

The local geological formation consisting of sedimentary rocks has a covering stratum of Thanet sand.

The secondary layer is sandstone; the coastal portion of this constitutes a wave-cut platform when the less resistant layer above is removed by sea erosion. This platform is itself being steadily denuded (Fig. 1).

It was whilst examining this particular part of the foreshore (roughly 300 to 900 feet from the fort) that the writer noticed a number of neatly cut rectangular pits (Fig. 1, Stage 2). It was apparent that these represented the lower portions of wells, the upper sections of which had been removed by erosion, and whose original depth would have been in the region of 14 to 18 feet (Fig. 1, Stage 1). Each had originally been sunk to penetrate the sandstone layer thus tapping the water-table. The depths of these remaining portions vary according to their position

<sup>1</sup> For useful summaries see Mr. R. F. Jessup's paper in *Antiquity* for June, 1936; and *V.C.H., Kent*, Vol. 3, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, LXVI, 52.

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

in relation to M.H.W.M.<sup>1</sup> Of the six examined<sup>2</sup> all were lined at the bottom with a layer of clay; presumably deposited as an extra precaution against any percolation which might occur. Five contained, or had contained, a filling of a tacky vegetable matter and four an accumulation of pottery and other refuse. This silting indicates, and is confirmed by the pottery evidence, that the wells had remained open for some considerable period. The same five had remained in a water-

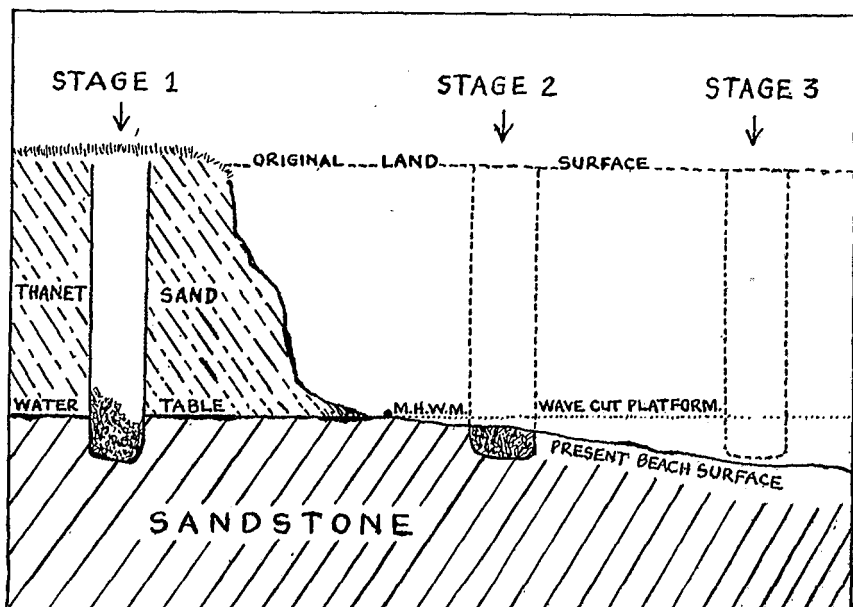


Fig. 1. Diagrammatical Section through the cliffs west of the Roman Fort at Reculver, showing effects of sea erosion.

logged condition since their final filling and it is this which accounts for the remarkable preservation of certain organic materials such as leather, wood and bone.

The analysis of the pottery finds show at least three wells were in use during the latter part of the second century, and a fourth at a slightly later date. Of these, one had been filled towards the end of the second century, whilst the other two were still open in the fourth. It was not possible to date the remaining wells with any accuracy.

It is important to note that the majority of the pottery finds from these wells belong to the later Antonine period and early third century.

<sup>1</sup> Mean High Water Mark.

<sup>2</sup> Other wells are known to have existed in this area.

THE WELLS<sup>1</sup>

*Wells A and B.* Situated 580 and 630 feet respectively west of the fort and in alignment with each other and C. Each was approximately 40 feet below M.H.W.M. and some 70 feet from the actual cliff face. They were rectangular in shape, measuring 3 by 4 feet; both contained traces of the clay lining and thick vegetable silt, indicating a prolonged period of use. No finds recorded, owing to their washed condition. Both totally erased by beach-surface erosion by August, 1954 (Fig. 1, Stage 3).

*Well C.* Position 740 feet from the fort, and measuring 3 by 3 feet. Depth 10 inches. The only find recorded was a single sherd of late second-third century Castor ware found adhering to its side.

*Well D.* This well, about 810 feet west of the fort, and 15 feet below M.H.W.M., formed a perfect 5-foot square (horizontally). When excavated in December, 1953, its over-all depth was 26 inches, but when re-opened in the May of the following year it was barely 18 inches deep, giving an indication of the rapid rate of beach-surface erosion. Excavation, although hampered by tide and subsequent shingle movements, secured a quantity of interesting material. The large pottery deposit, dating from the mid-second century and including some third and fourth century types, could be chiefly assigned to the second half of the second century. Other finds include leatherwork (parts of a sole and belt) and numerous animal bones.

*Well E.* Situated 840 feet west of the fort. Two feet above M.H.W.M. and 24 feet from the cliff. It measured 3 feet 6 inches by 4 feet, and was 42 inches deep. The clay lining was again present, but the silting so characteristic of the others was missing. This suggests that the well was only open for a short period before its final filling. The only datable find was a complete, though badly worn, Samian bowl, Form 31, of late second-century date.<sup>2</sup>

*Well F.* 880 feet from the fort and 16 feet above M.H.W.M. It was rectangular in shape, measuring 4 feet 6 inches by 5 feet; the clay lining and vegetable deposit were again present. Its depth was just 5 feet. The pottery from it could be dated from late Antonine times, whilst third- and fourth-century types were again present.

There can be little doubt that these wells are analogous with the "cisterns" described by Battely as being to the north of the fort, some 400 or 500 feet from the proximity of the current finds.

A seventh well (*Well G*) was discovered late in 1954, its outline being easily traced in the exposed cliff face. Situated some 470 feet from the fort, it differed markedly from the uniformity of the others.

<sup>1</sup> Measurements taken midsummer, 1954. Distances given are approximate.

<sup>2</sup> This well was emptied by my friend Mr. A. W. Jan of the London Numismatic Club in whose safe keeping the Samian bowl now rests.

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

It had been dug roughly circular with a diameter of 3 feet, and measured 13 feet (from the present surface) in depth, just failing to penetrate the hard sandstone layer. There were no indications of lining or peat-like silt. The upper 11 feet of the filling, consisting of a sandy-brown deposit, contained but two potsherds of Antonine date, and indicates that the well had soon fallen into disuse and was then deliberately filled in. The bottom two feet contained a mixed deposit of tile, iron, animal-bone (including two crushed oxen skulls), an unidentifiable coin and a large accumulation of pottery. This deposit has been dated A.D. 140-180.

Further indications that this area was extensively used is shown by the number of rubbish-pits, of irregular size and shape, that have been revealed by the subsidence of the cliffs. Unfortunately many of these were destroyed by the action of the sea and their contents scattered. A sherd of early second century Samian was, however, recovered from one (Pit 1), whilst another (Pit 2) produced a small amount of Antonine pottery and corroded iron. From the remaining portion of a third (Pit 3) came material of late first-early second century date. It was in such a pit along this same stretch of shore that the clay figurine of a hooded dwarf was discovered in 1949.<sup>1</sup>

At another point some 750 feet from the fort, a complete coarse ware vessel (Fig. 5, No. 29) was exposed in the cliff face. Located at a depth of 2 feet 6 inches, it could not be placed in association with any regular pit or gully. It was standing in an upright position and contained a deposit showing signs of calcination which suggests that it had formed part of a cremation burial. It can be dated with confidence to the mid-second century A.D., when parallel types were being produced at kilns near Gravesend. Other complete vessels recovered from this part of the beach in recent years may represent burials of a similar nature.

It is significant that no foundations have been revealed in this area, although tile and other debris, including pottery, mostly Roman, is to be found liberally strewn around in the top soil. A shallow hearth, devoid of finds, was however noticed.

With the constant erosion of the land it is not unnatural that the majority of the finds are listed in the unstratified category; much material from this source has, however, been badly defaced by weathering and the action of the sea, and cannot be identified. The floods of January, 1953, were responsible for the bodily removal of many feet of the Reculver cliffs, and it was during the following weeks in particular that many objects were recovered from the foreshore.

The finds include some 64 coins; many others known to have been found by visitors and casual collectors go unrecorded. As will be noted

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, LXVI, 86.

RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

from the appended list (Fig. 2). the coins represent nearly three centuries of the Roman occupation of Britain. It reveals, however, an almost complete lack of first-century coins. Similarly the late fourth century is poorly represented, particularly when considering the numbers found at the Saxon shore fort at Richborough. The greatest incidence lies perhaps in the second half of the second and early third centuries, but insufficient numbers have been found to make this conclusive.

Coins recovered by the Author		Others		Coins recovered by the Author		Others	
	A.D.				A.D.		
Ancient British ..	—	—	1	Claudius II .. ..	268-70	2	—
Vespasian or Titus ..	69-81	1	—	Victorinus .. ..	268-70	1	—
Trajan .. ..	98-117	1	—	Tetricus I .. ..	270-73	4	—
Hadrian .. ..	117-38	2	—	Carausius .. ..	287-93	1	—
Antoninus Pius ..	138-61	1	1	Unassigned late 3rd century .. ..	—	2	1
Faustina II .. ..	141-75	2	—	Constantine I ..	306-37	3	1
Marcus Aurelius ..	161-80	3	1	House of Constantine	337-61	4	1
Julia Domna .. ..	193-211	3	—	House of Valentinian	364-92	2	—
Septimus Severus ..	193-211	1	1	Unassigned 4th cent.	—	3	—
Unassigned 2nd cent.	—	4	2	Indeterminate Roman	—	4	1
Caraculla .. ..	211-17	1	—	Saxon Seceatta ..	c. 600	1	—
Severus Alexander ..	222-35	2	—	Nuremberg Jetton ..	c. 1580	1	1
Philip I .. ..	244-47	1	—				
Gallienus .. ..	253-68	2	1	Totals .. ..		52	12

FIG. 2. Analysis of coin finds from the Foreshore at Reculver.

The unstratified pottery deposits provide somewhat similar evidence to that of the coins ; a complete lack of first-century material being again apparent, whilst the Antonine-early third century is again well represented. Comparatively little pottery of the late third and fourth centuries has been recovered from this source, perhaps as it is not so readily seen as the bright Samian ware<sup>1</sup> of which the earlier deposit was predominantly composed.

THE FORT

The highest point of the hill upon which the fort stands is now crowned by the picturesque ruins of Reculver church, which is some 35 feet above the present beach. The land to the westward drops suddenly (in the region of the wells) before gradually rising again in the direction of Herne Bay. To the east lie the marshes, once a wide tidal channel.

Barely half (about four acres) of the original area enclosed by the

<sup>1</sup> Three potters' marks are recorded on this ware.

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

walls<sup>1</sup> of the fort survives today, despite protection from breakwaters and solid concrete aprons. Of the 200 yards of the fort's interior thus exposed, in section, only about 180 feet now remain unprotected ; this being the portion nearest the east wall of the fort.

Here, too, the heavy storms of early 1953 caused large portions of the cliff to collapse on to the beach. Similarly, investigation amid the debris revealed a number of important finds. From the remnants of a

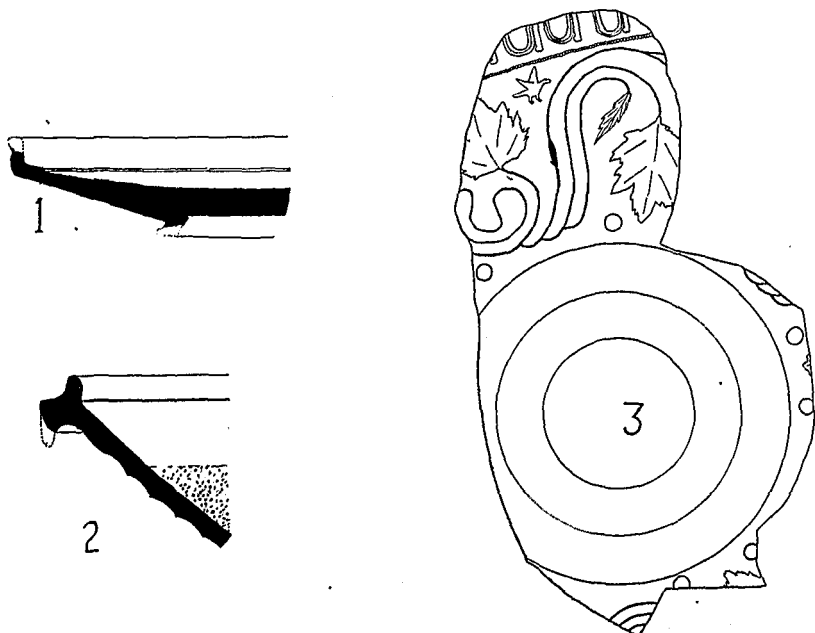


Fig. 3. Samian Ware ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ).

shallow pit or gully (Pit 5) came a deposit of Antonine material. This included Samian pottery Forms 33 and 37, the latter in the characteristic style of the Lezoux potter CINNAMVS (Fig. 3, No. 3) ; coarse pottery of the shallow pie-dish variety ; an undamaged bone-needle ; some pieces of bronze ; animal bone and, significantly, tile and a fragment of daub bearing the key impression for the adhesion of plaster. The deposit indicates that the site was definitely in use during the Antonine period, whilst the presence of building materials suggests a fixed form of settlement hereabouts at that date.

<sup>1</sup> It is unnecessary to include here a detailed account of the wall's construction as previous observations are adequate. Cf. Dowker, *Arch. Cant.*, XII, 1 ; Home, *Arch. Jour.*, LXXXVI, 260.



## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

From the unstratified deposits came small amounts of pottery of both second and fourth century date.

It is noticeable that very few foundations are visible in the exposed section of the cliff, presumably accounted for by the exploits of later builders. The remains of a small hut with a tile floor (bearing considerable signs of burning) buried beneath its fallen clay walls, was revealed. Similar remains have been located at other shore fort sites such as Richborough, Pevensey and Brancaster.

Hard by the eastern wall of the fort and beneath the internal earth-bank a small substructure was noticed. It was composed of hewn blocks forming a narrow floor three feet wide and with low retaining walls about 20 inches high, and probably represented the external corridor of a building (perhaps wooden) later destroyed.

Being situated below the earth-bank, and assuming the wall and bank to be contemporary, it would appear that some form of structure existed here before the foundations of the fort were laid.

Yet another small pit (Pit 4), some 14 inches in depth and 28 inches in length, was located in a large cliff-fall shortly after the 1953 floods. It underlay the clearly visible Roman occupation layers by between 10 and 12 inches. From its compact filling of daub came fragments of four or five separate vessels of pre-historic manufacture.

This group has kindly been examined by Mr. N. C. Cook, B.A., F.S.A., and is dated by him to the Early Iron Age. The fine carinated beaker in particular shows very close affinities<sup>1</sup> to the so-called *Halstatt* pottery introduced by the first Iron Age settlers and which is known from a number of sites in south-eastern England.

The other sherds are clearly of native manufacture, being particularly coarse and ill-made; these in turn bear a relationship to the beakers of earlier cultures.

The finding of daub in association with this pottery suggests that a fixed form of settlement had existed here during the fifth century B.C.

We have here, then, ample evidence to support the inference of "a native population with lingering Iron Age 'A' traditions."

<sup>1</sup> Compare with C. Curwen, *Archaeology of Sussex*, 2nd ed., 1954, Pl. XXV, Nos. 2 and 4.

## APPENDIX I

## THE SAMIAN POTTERY

*From the area west of the fort :*

## WELL D

1. Form 33. Orange glaze. External median groove. Height of wall 52 mm. Cf. *O. & P.*, LI, 17. Late second century.

2. Form 79 (Fig. 3, No. 1). Glaze fair. A circle of coarse striations appears on the interior base and concentric circles on the exterior. The shallow fluting below the rim, a characteristic of the true forms prototype, Ritterling 1, denotes this platter to be an intermediate example between the two forms. Probably mid-second century. Others : Forms 21, 31 (3), 37, 45 (2). Antonine—early third century.

## WELL E

3. Form 31. Badly worn ; not stamped. Later second century.

## WELL F

4. Form 31. (Sb.) Large ; as *O. & P.*, XLVII, 6, but without internal ridge. End second century, perhaps later.

5. Form 37. Free style decoration. Poor glaze ; too imperfect for identification. Probably early third century.

Others : Forms 31 (3), 44. Latter part of the second century.

## WELL G

6. Form 18/31. Fair glaze. Undercut rim. Cf. *T.S. of M.*, XXXVIII, 10. Hadrian-Antonine. Depth 11-12 feet.

7. Form 18/31. Worn. Pronounced rim. Cf. *T.S. of M.*, XLV, 2. Antonine. Depth 10 feet 6 inches.

8. Form 27. Dull glaze. Thickened rim and wall: Wide groove delimiting lip internally. Clearly of second-century manufacture. Perhaps Hadrianic. Depth 12-13 feet.

9. Form 33. Large. As *O. & P.*, LI, 11, but with external groove. Hadrian-early Antonine. Unstratified.

10. Form 37. Orangy glaze. Metope type decoration. Insufficient for exact identification. Hadrian-Antonine. Depth 12-13 feet.

11. Form 43. Mortarium (Fig. 3, No. 2). Good condition ; fine quartz gritting. At least five horizontal flutings are visible on the exterior. c. A.D. 140-170. Others : Forms 31 (3), 45 (2).

## PIT 1

12. Form 18/31. Dull glaze. Internal offset. Cf. *T.S. of M.*, XXXI, 1. Trajanic.

UNSTRATIFIED

13. Form 31, base. Stamped )ATRICIANVS, by PATRICIANVS of Rheinzabern. Cf. *Silchester*, p. 246. Antonine.

14. Form 33. Base. Stamped MATVN, by MATTVNVS of Lavoye, as on a Form 32 from Rheinzabern. c. A.D. 120-140.

15. Mortarium 43. Unusual form. Described and dated *Arch. Cant.*, LXVIII, 205, by Dr. F. Oswald, B.A., D.Sc., F.S.A., Domitian-Trajan.

16. Form 79. Rim wanting. Stamped ALBVCI . OF, by ALBVCIVS of Lezoux. An enclosed rouletted band appears on the exterior base whilst a number of concentric circles are moulded on the exterior. Late Antonine.

17. Lid. Badly worn. Stamped D). Second century.

*From the fort :*

PIT 5

18. Form 33. Rim section. Internal demarcation of the rim. Antonine.

19. Form 37 (Fig. 3, No. 3). Clearly the work of the Lezoux potter CINNAMVS. His ovolo, bird (O. 2315) and tendril-binding. The vine scroll being particularly characteristic of his later work. c. A.D. 140-160.

UNSTRATIFIED

Forms : 31 (2), 37, 45, 67, 79. Antonine.

APPENDIX II

THE COARSE POTTERY

*From the area west of the fort :*

WELL E

1. Fragment of Castor ware decorated En barbotine. Late second-third century.

WELL D

2. Boldly bulging olla with moulded under-cut rim and rising base. Brick red clay blackened by continual use. Three horizontal grooves create a simple form of decoration near the base. Recovered in extremely fragmentary condition.

3. Olla of sandy grey ware. Outcurved rim and cordon on lower part of neck. A vessel slightly smaller but otherwise identical to No. 3 was also found.

RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

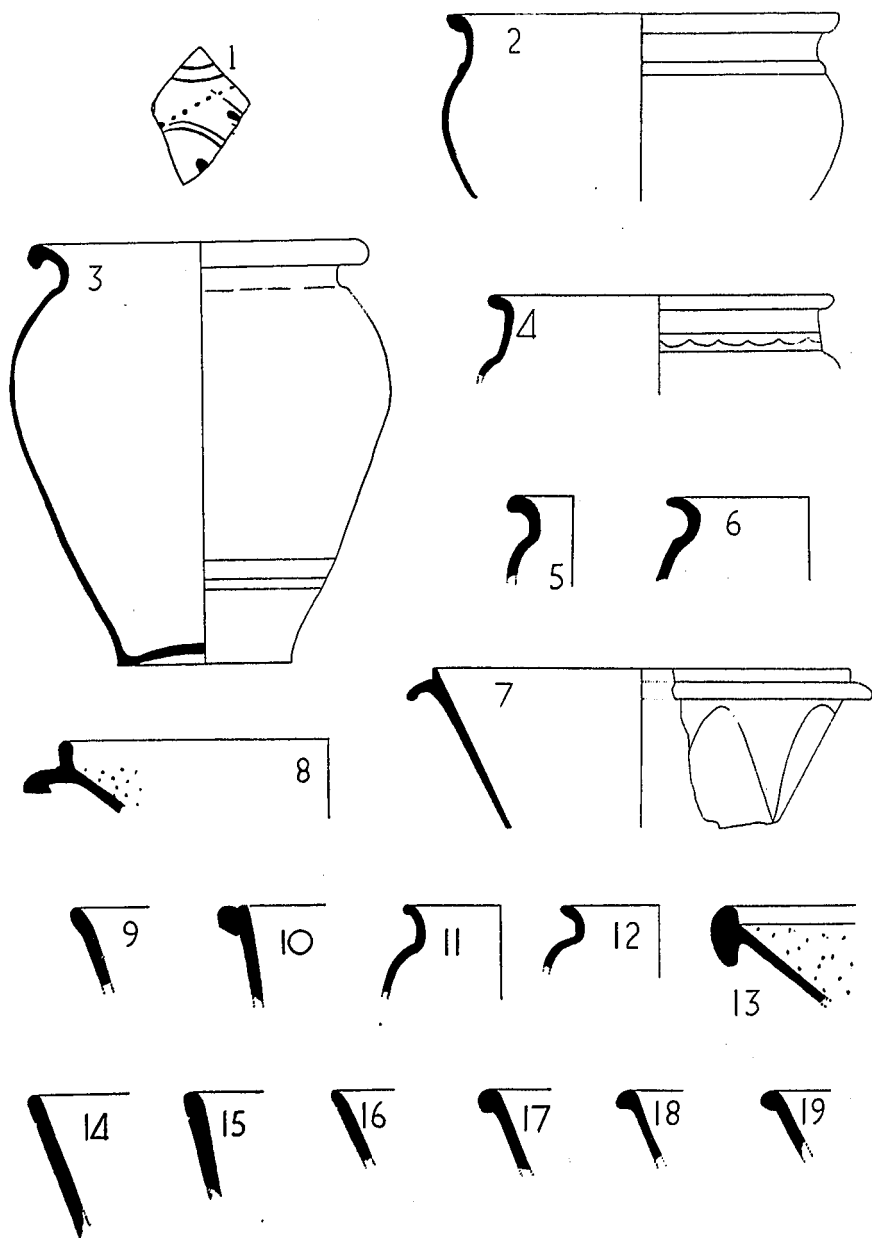


Fig. 4. Coarse Pottery ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

Types similar to Nos. 2 and 3 have been recovered in numbers from the *Ospringe* (Kent) cemetery where they are generally dated from the mid-second to third centuries.

4. Vessel of hard grey ware, polished on the exterior and with incised decoration between cordons. Not altogether dissimilar from *Arch. Cant.*, LXVIII, 176, 14, from Joydens wood. Late second century.

5. Rim section of cooking pot in grey ware. Pitted surface. Probably Antonine.

6. Rim sherd of cooking vessel in white ware. Cavetto type rim. Late third-fourth century.

7. Dish of gritty grey ware with curved rim. An incised inter-lacing pattern appears on the polished exterior surface. A common fourth-century type.

The sherds not illustrated include : three different examples of Antonine pie-dish ; a Rhenish sherd with black-brown slip over reddish clay, third century ; and the base of a late third-fourth century Castor beaker.

### WELL F

8. Mortarium. Dirty white ware with flange and upstanding rim. A very similar example appears in *Arch. Cant.*, LXVI, 136, from Lullingstone, where it is tentatively dated to the late third century.

9. Shallow dish with thickened rim. Reddish brown ware, Antonine.

10. Dish of polished black ware with slight grooving defining rim from thickened bead. This is probably a later example of the Antonine pie-dish and is likely to be of third-century date.

11. Rim sherd of coarse grey ware specked with small white flint chips and burnished on shoulder. Similar types were recovered elsewhere on the site in Antonine deposits.

12. Small jar with everted rim. Grey ware burnished on shoulder.

The other finds include : three different examples of the Well D type No. 10, one of which lacks the curve on the flange ; the base of a late Castor beaker ; the lower portion of a bulbous vessel of thin hard grey ware with black and brown slips. Cf. *Canterbury*, V, 61 ; and a further example of a common second-century dish.

### WELL G (c. A.D. 140-180)

13. Mortarium. Sandy white ware. Unstratified.

Group of shallow dishes, generally grey ware, but fired to varying degrees.

14-16. Without bead.

17-19. Distinct bead.

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

20. Beaker of hard grey ware. Black slip on exterior and band of light vertical scoring on bulge.

21. Vessel of sandy grey ware with upright rim and bulging body.

22. Large olla type vessel, outcurved rim, well fired. Furnished with brownish slip.

23. Olla of well-fired grey clay and outcurved rim.

24. Rim sherd of brick red platter. These types usually occur in first century deposits ; this, therefore, must be regarded as a survival.

25. Cooking pot of sandy grey ware, flattened outcurved rim. Cf. *Verulamium*, p. 184, 17.

The sherds not illustrated include : two fragments of Rhenish beakers, one decorated En barbotine and the other with two rows of fine rouletting forming an upper and lower border. Both have the characteristic black slip and metallic lustre whilst the quality of the paste of each rivals that of contemporary Sigillata. Also recovered were potsherds of other rouletted ware and types similar to No. 11.

### PIT 2

This deposit is too fragmentary to illustrate but consists of : two rimless dishes of Antonine date ; a cooking vessel similar to No. 25 and sherds of black rouletted ware.

### PIT 3

26. Mortarium in buff ware. Wide spout. Cf. *Richborough*, III, 359. A.D. 90-140.

27. Black coated dish with pronounced rim and lattice pattern on exterior. Cf. *Richborough*, III, 339. A.D. 80-120.

28. Olla of fumed grey clay. Lines of scoring on polished neck. Cf. *Richborough*, III, 256, but here likely to be of a slightly later date.

### CREMATION BURIAL (?)

29. Olla, reddish orange ware. Outcurved rim but no bead. A number of horizontal and vertical lines have been crudely scored on the exterior. Cf. Gravesend, *Arch. Cant.*, LXVIII, 153, 4. Mid-second century.

### From the fort :

### PIT 5

Group of shallow pie-dishes. Various slips. Antonine.

30-32. Without bead.

33-35. Distinct bead.

36. Beaker of thin reddish clay with dark coating. A wide zone of rouletting appears on the upper section.

Also recovered, sherds of other rouletted ware, poppy-head beakers and types similar to No. 11.

RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

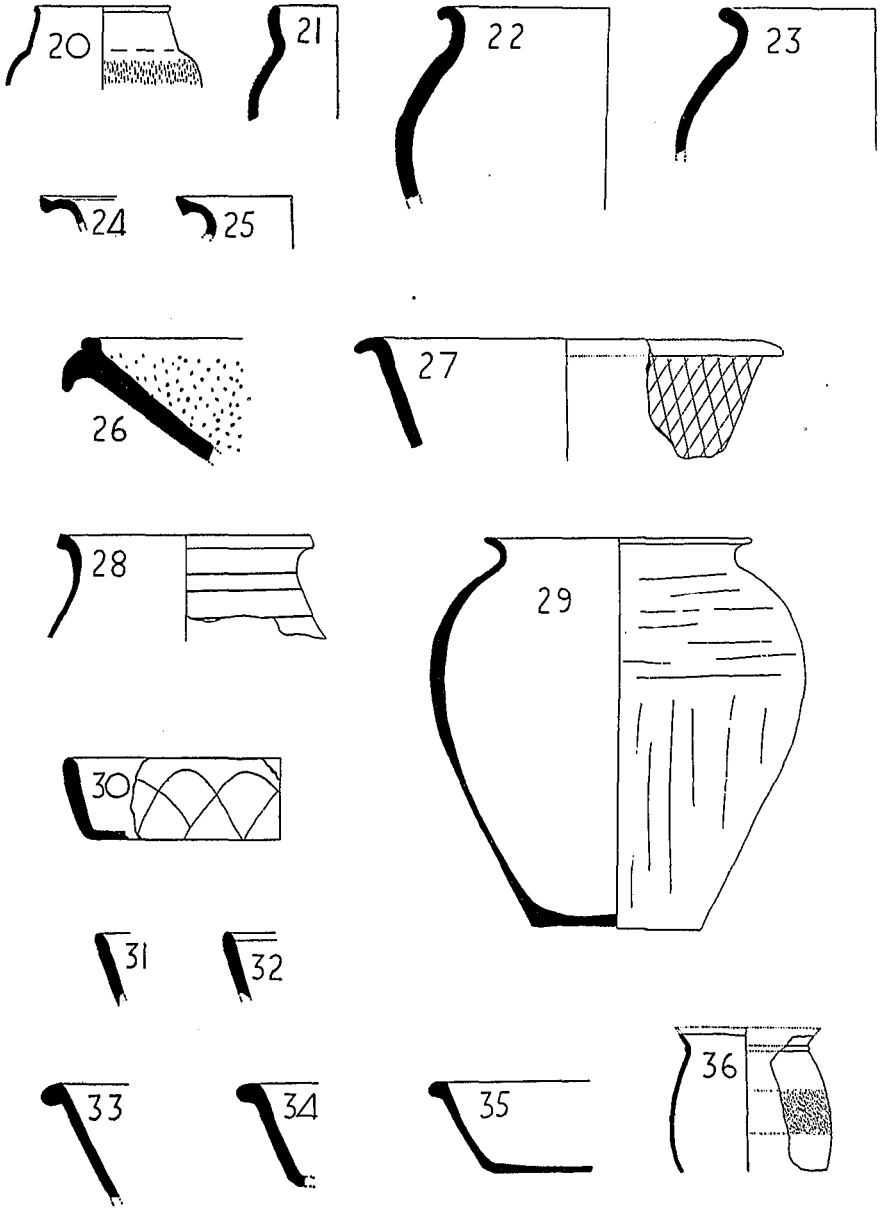


Fig. 5. Coarse Pottery ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ).

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

### APPENDIX III

#### PRE-HISTORIC POTTERY

1. Well-fired vessel (base wanting) of black ware containing minute flakes of flint and with a colourful coating of haematite. Shoulder carinated and incised with a continuous groove.
2. Rim and wall of coarse, hand-made pot poorly fired and containing large flint chips.
3. Rim of vessel similar to No. 2.
4. Base of vessel ; part of or similar to Nos. 2 and 3 above. The actual base of the pot being affixed, on completion of the walls, by pressure, the thumb marks being clearly detectable.
5. Fragment of pot as Nos. 2-4 but slightly better fired.
6. Piece of Daub bearing impressions.

#### SUMMARY

The Early Iron Age finds, the earliest evidence of occupation so far recorded at Reculver, indicate the primary settlement of the site about the fifth century B.C.

The finding, in 1951, of pottery inferring a native population (under direct Belgic influence) with lingering Iron Age "A" traditions, may well prove continuity of occupation here throughout the Iron Age. The earlier finds of Republican and Ancient British coins tie up with the Belgic period of dominance.

The almost complete lack of first century A.D. material of Roman origin suggests that the native settlement at Reculver failed to survive the invasion.

It appears that the site was re-inhabited at the commencement of the second century when the advantages of its sheltered anchorage (to the south) became fully appreciated at a time when the trade routes were playing an important part in the Romanization of Britain. By the later Antonine period, a fixed form of settlement had probably been established on the hill, whilst the area to its west was extensively used, as the wells, pits and numerous other finds of that date indicate. Remains of much the same nature and date were located by Battely to the north of the fort and provide a similar picture for the area now lost to the sea. It would appear, therefore, that the settlement followed the line of the Channel shore keeping to the higher ground, although the lowland to the west was in constant use.

The wells were situated below the hill where water would be encountered at a short distance below the surface ; some of these appear to have fallen into rapid disuse, save for the convenient disposal of rubbish.



## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECVLVER

The period of most intense activity, judging from the finds, occurs during the second half of the second century, whilst finds of the third and fourth centuries were not so abundant despite the occupation during the shore fort period.

The apparent lessening of settlement in the third century may well be attributable to the menace presented by Saxon pirates who would force traders to seek safer routes ; and thus the civil settlement dependent on its marine associations would rapidly dwindle.

Thus it is fairly certain that the fort was erected by an already existing but dwindling settlement. The advantages of the natural (and sheltered) anchorage, factors essential to the shore defence system, determined the site of the fort, causing it to partially overlap the southern portion of the civil area. The substructure noticed below the earth-bank provides evidence of this, as does the lack of pre-fort material in cuttings made by previous observers close to the southern wall of the fort.

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### RECVLVER, 1957

Watch was again<sup>1</sup> kept at Reculver, during the 1957 season, with a view to salvaging any archæological material which might be endangered by sea erosion.

Early in the year portions of two more wells were discovered and

<sup>1</sup> Report of earlier findings pending publication.

## RECENT DISCOVERIES AT RECULVER

excavated despite unfavourable conditions. This brings the total of wells noted since 1952 to eleven. A few shallow rubbish pits were again noticed in the cliff, whilst the beach yielded its usual mass of unstratified material. The finds, all Roman, generally confirm the second to fourth century A.D. occupation of the site as previously established.

The extension of existing sea defences to the west of the fort during 1957 is likely to preclude further discoveries in this area.

The unprotected section of the Roman fort at Reculver has for long been threatened by spring tides and winter storms. Thus the writer's application to the Ministry of Works,<sup>1</sup> to be allowed to clean down the exposed section within the fort, was readily granted. For this purpose a small team has been formed; this includes Mr. Brian Kewell as draughtsman, Messrs. Derek Garrod and Michael Kellaway, both of whom are well-known diggers on the Lullingstone Roman Villa site.

The work was scheduled for a week in October (1957), when it was hoped to confirm the Early Iron Age, Belgic and second-century Roman occupation of the site upon which the fort stands. Evidence to supply a date for the fort's construction may also have been forthcoming. A report on the findings will be prepared in due course.

<sup>1</sup> As guardians of the Ancient Monument.