



Colchester Archaeological Group

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PART 1 MARCH 1958

In presenting our first Bulletin we feel that some introduction and explanation is necessary. Colchester Archaeological Group was formed by members of a second year Workers' Educational Association course on Archaeology sponsored by the University of Cambridge. The first year course began in September 1955; the second followed a year later with some field work during the summer months. In the third year the course developed into a study and discussion group. Throughout Dr John Morris, M.A. has been our tutor, joined in our final year by Mr M.R. Hull, M.A., F.S.A., and during the summer of 1957 various members have carried out exploratory work on selected sites under the direction of Mr Hull.

Our aim is to produce a Bulletin of interest to local people and, possibly, to similar groups elsewhere. We hope by this means to increase interest in the subject and to encourage sufficient awareness in the district so that no sites of significance may go unexplored. We also hope to help and encourage people who think they have made a discovery worthy of investigation.

Our activities during our first summer of field work as a group have been varied and have served to show how wide are the prospects which lie before us when we have gained more experience and enlisted more members. We feel that the Colchester Archaeological Group consisting, as it does, chiefly of part-time amateur Archaeologists, can make a really useful contribution to local archaeological knowledge.

This Bulletin deals with our work during the last summer with notes and illustrations of our findings. We began the season by looking for traces of an early Roman camp or fort to the west of the town. On another occasion we made a series of recordings on a "Wheatstone Bridge" - (described below) and plotted the results. We followed this up with experiments using an auger in places where the graph showed unexpected variations. We then tested an area where a kiln was thought to be, situated just within the limits of the well known Camulodunum excavations. At the very end of the season we explored an opening in the Roman wall in Vineyard Street which gives every indication of being an original Roman drain, made when the wall was built.

We need keen and active amateurs to join us and any enquiries may be addressed to Mrs K. de Brisay, 89, Maldon Road, Colchester.

SEARCH FOR AN EARLY ROMAN FORT OR CAMP

We began our 1957 season on 29th April. We accompanied Mr Hull when he inspected various sites awaiting excavation where existing evidence suggested the lines of the ditches of a possible camp. It was agreed that a trial trench should be made across a vacant allotment to the west of the junction of Park Road and Norman Way (Grid No. TL 976247). The object was to establish whether the long narrow piece of ground in which the allotments lay occupied the site of the ditch of an early Roman camp or fort. A military ditch was found near this point in 1938 and this seemed a possible continuation of it. Work went on here for two or three weeks; the dark top soil was found to be only 9 inches deep, then there were 24 inches of dirty sand and gravel, and finally, at a uniform depth of 33 inches we found the flat top of the undisturbed gravel so we had to recognize the fact that there had never been a ditch here.

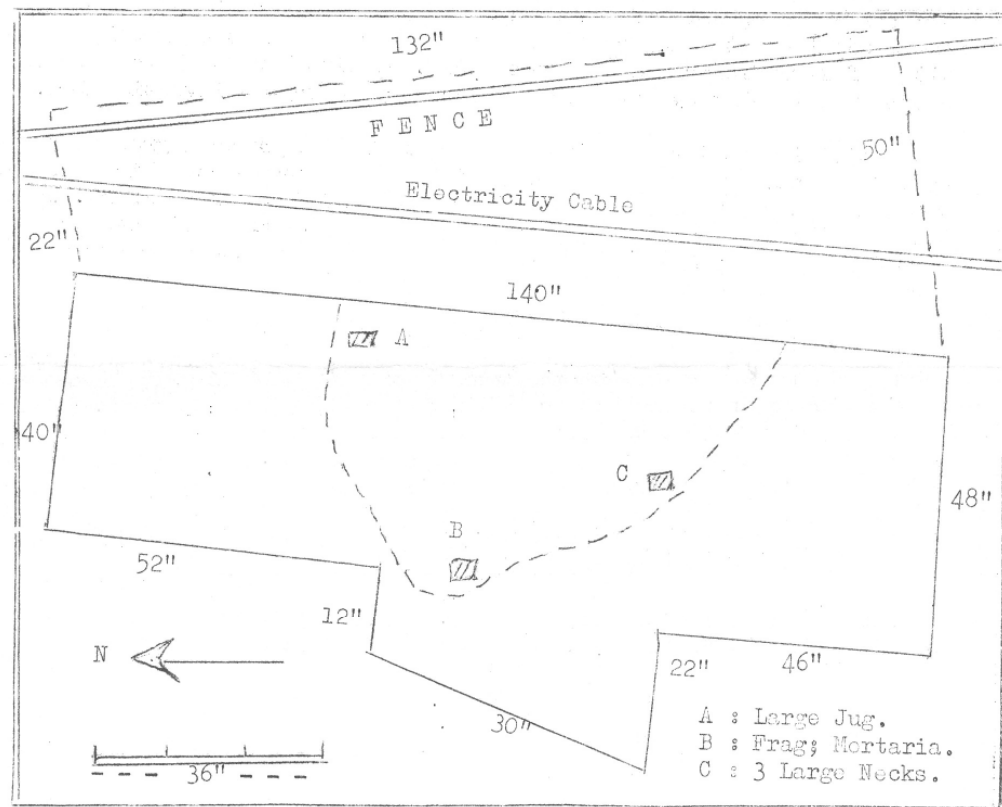
POSSIBLE KILN SITE

During the operations described above it was reported to Mr Hull that a quantity of pottery had been found by workmen laying an electricity cable at the new Technical College building in Sheepen Lane. The site lies to the north of the gap between the two new buildings, about forty yards from Sheepen Lane (Grid No. TL 987257). At the time it was traversed by a wire fence and this with the electricity cable, prevented access to most of it. The part which was accessible, however, lay immediately on the west side of the fence and seven yards from the

"Mare and Foal" statue.

This places it in the area D of the Camulodunum excavations but in the east part approaching an area which had not been excavated. In the small area available for excavation a quantity of broken pottery was found, details of which are given below. The density of this increased until 34" depth was reached and gradually petered out below this level. The pattern of this tightly packed patch of broken pottery is indicated by the dotted line on the plan given below, but it was impossible to deduce with any accuracy what the site may have been. However, the absence of any definite indication of a building and the presence of undoubted 'wasters' seem to show that it was a kiln site.

PLAN OF NEW TECHNICAL COLLEGE SITE. JUNE 1957



DESCRIPTION OF THE POTTERY

PLATE ONE

la. The most remarkable sherd found comes from the shoulder of a globular flagon or jug of soft red buff ware with a barbotine representation of a stag upon it. Barbotine has been recorded in the Claudian period. Several examples are known on the Continent - e.g. at Hoffheim (p.253 Fig. 54) It was also recorded at Newstead (p 255.) . The Hoffheim example is almost exactly similar to the bowl Camulodunum 62 and the beaker Camulodunum 94, We are not aware that any Barbotine decoration has been found on flagons at this early period. The style of this work is quite different from that well-known at Caister and other patterns of the late 2nd Century.

lb. Two fragments of flagon neck in soft pink buff ware. Not to be found in Camulodunum, the nearest approach being 136.a and b, the neck being shorter and the handle having four ribs instead of three. It does, however, resemble very closely a vessel found in Grave 840 at St Matthias Cemetery at Trier; this cemetery is in Tiberia - Claudian. The illustration used for the body does not fit on and may or may not belong to the neck. Certainly it is not of the usual type for it has no foot ring and all the others have. The base rises strongly beneath and is

cracked in the middle - an undoubted waster.

2. Flagon necks in soft pink buff ware, very similar to lb, and closely resembles Cam: 140c and 142. P1, LXI(11) fig.51,
3. Flagon neck and handle, soft grey buff ware, like Form 140b(5) Cam: P1 . LXL with usual four ribbed handle.
4. Flagon neck in soft grey buff ware, see Form 140r. Cam: Pl. LXI (6 & 7).
5. Flagon neck and shoulders with three ribbed handle in pinkish buff ware, approaching: Cam: 140b. This already beginning to have a definite cupping on the halve of the rim but this characteristic is more marked in a later example.
6. Flagon neck in pink buff ware. The rim is centrally grooved and strongly offset at the neck. This groove, which did not appear at Camulodunum, did appear quite commonly at the Endsleigh second kiln in 1955. There is a cordon round the base and the handle has four ribs. For a similar type see Richborough Third Report No 187 but here the handle is grooved only.
7. Flagon neck in soft grey buff ware. This begins a series of necks with a pronounced hollow inside the rim - cf. Cam: 140D which, however, is only illustrated by the native copy in Pl. LXI No 2. There are two other fragments of rim like this. The cupping of the rim is very deep and it is very sharply offset. Although very different in this way from the next two items, relationship to them is well illustrated by the two grooves on the neck which occurs in all three. Four ribbed handle.
8. Flagon neck in pinkish buff ware. The rim is flat with shallow cupping inside. Three ribbed handle.
9. Flagon neck similar to No 8 but larger with four ribbed handle. There are five other fragments similar to Nos 8 and 9.
10. Flagon neck in buff ware with four ribbed handle. The neck has a flat upward curve and is slightly conical. The mouthpiece is straight and gently everted with five rings - the lowest ring being sharply offset. Cf. Cam: Form 154 Pl.LXII. Fragments of three other ring mouthed flagons of this largo size were disc found.
11. Similar to No.10 but smaller, with three ribbed handle.

PLATE ONE

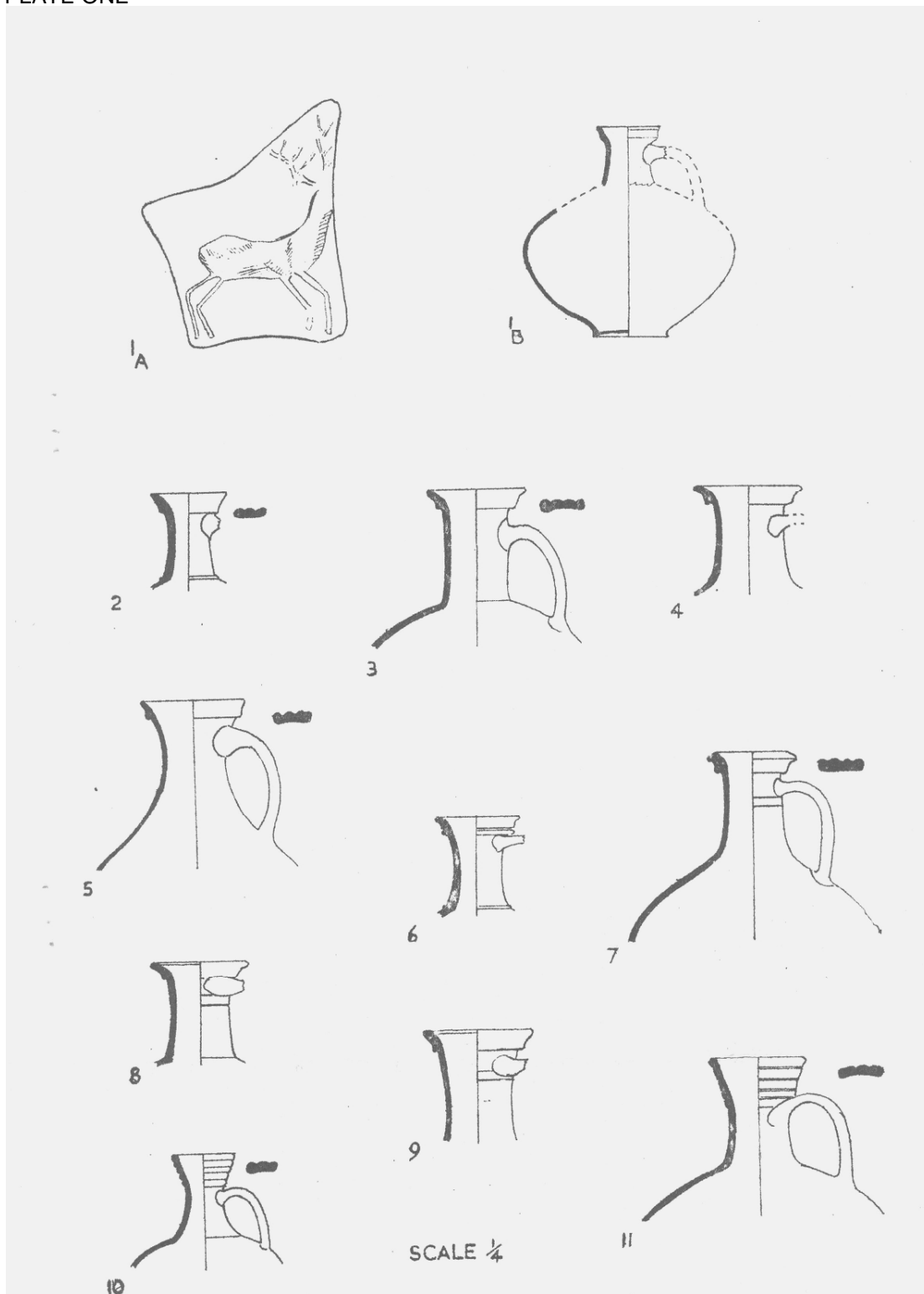


PLATE TWO

The next three necks belong to double handled jugs; very conical in shape and strongly horizontally corrugated. The rim, on the outside, takes the form of Cam: 140, and on the inside, is hollowed out like our Nos. 7 and 9. No. 12 in addition, is strongly grooved on the outside. The handles may be four or three ribbed. Two are reddish buff and the third, the more normal, light buff.

12. Small part of a heavy jug neck in red buff ware with pair of very broad four ribbed handles. The rim compares with our N. 6.

13. Jug neck in red buff ware, very similar to the last but the handle is only three ribbed. Handle restored.

14. Again similar to the last but in light buff ware. The handle is three ribbed. Nothing quite like those three jugs appeared at Camulodunum but they must be related to Cam: Form 163.

15. Fragments of neck of two handled jug in grey buff ware. A heavy variety of Cam: Form 170. Number of ribs in handle uncertain.

Apart from the pieces of jugs which could be illustrated, there was a large number of fragments among which we note examples of large sized handles, two inches or more wide with four ribs which must have come from necks at least six inches tall. These are probably Cam: Form 140. There are in all thirty two examples of this type. The fourteen small handles are mostly four ribbed but often three ribbed and one cannot say to what form they belong.

The bases all have foot rings, twenty eight of which may be attributed to Form 154, having a tall or low foot ring which may be of a sharply squared all-rounded section with a very broad groove or fluting - full 1/2" wide inside.

The other bases differ in being almost perfectly flat within the foot ring but sometimes with a kick in the centre. These may be attributed to Cam: Form 140.

BEAKERS.

A few fragments represent the local copies of Cam: Form 94 poorly made and in very soft buff ware but dusted over the outside with grit as in the original. In no case could the original red coating be discerned.

16. The largest rim fragment of this type found.

BOWLS

Only two or three very small fragments were found; in a very soft and thin buff ware. Our fig. 17, shows the rim of one and the base of another. The Form is Cam: 62 and, again, there is no trace of the red coating which they should have.

MORTARIA.

Most of the few represented have a sloping flange and an inner lip which rises above it. In our fig. 18 this inner lip projects strongly inwards - compare Cam: Form 192, fig. 53/22, and Form 193b. Eight similar rims were found and, in all, the clay varies from reddish to pinkish buff, the large flange drooping and undercut. In the one base found the workmanship is rough, very thick and the grit, which is mixed black and white, appears to be of flint. Of the two spouts found, one is solid and square with an even width and square end. The other is smaller and tapers slightly. The main point of interest is that all these examples have a pronounced inner protruding rim, some more than others, and this feature does not appear in any mortarium from Camulodunum. They all seem, however, to fall into the same period, that is, the first half of the first Century.

Also Cf. Richborough CXV fig, 495.

19. Several fragments of a mortarium. This is quite unusual with a small round everted rim and the inner rim scarcely marked off at all. The material is buff ware with large mixed black and white grit. Again, nothing quite like this was found at Camulodunum; perhaps the nearest is pl. LXXII 193Aa

There remains to mention a mortarium spout in buff ware with a thick rather horizontal rim like Cam: Form 192a and a very square spout such as those shown on pl. LXXII Forms 192 & 193. Grit black and white mixed.

GREY WARE This was very scarce and only two fragments could be illustrated.

20. Two fragments of grey blackware with horizontal rim. Compare Cam: Form 244. The body seems to have been very much more rounded than usual locally and, indeed, Cam: 244 was never common and was nearly always red ware. It is Claudian date

21. Finally we have part of a small lid with grey core, reddish rind and grey surface. A common known type. Compare Cam: pl LXXXV 6 & 8.

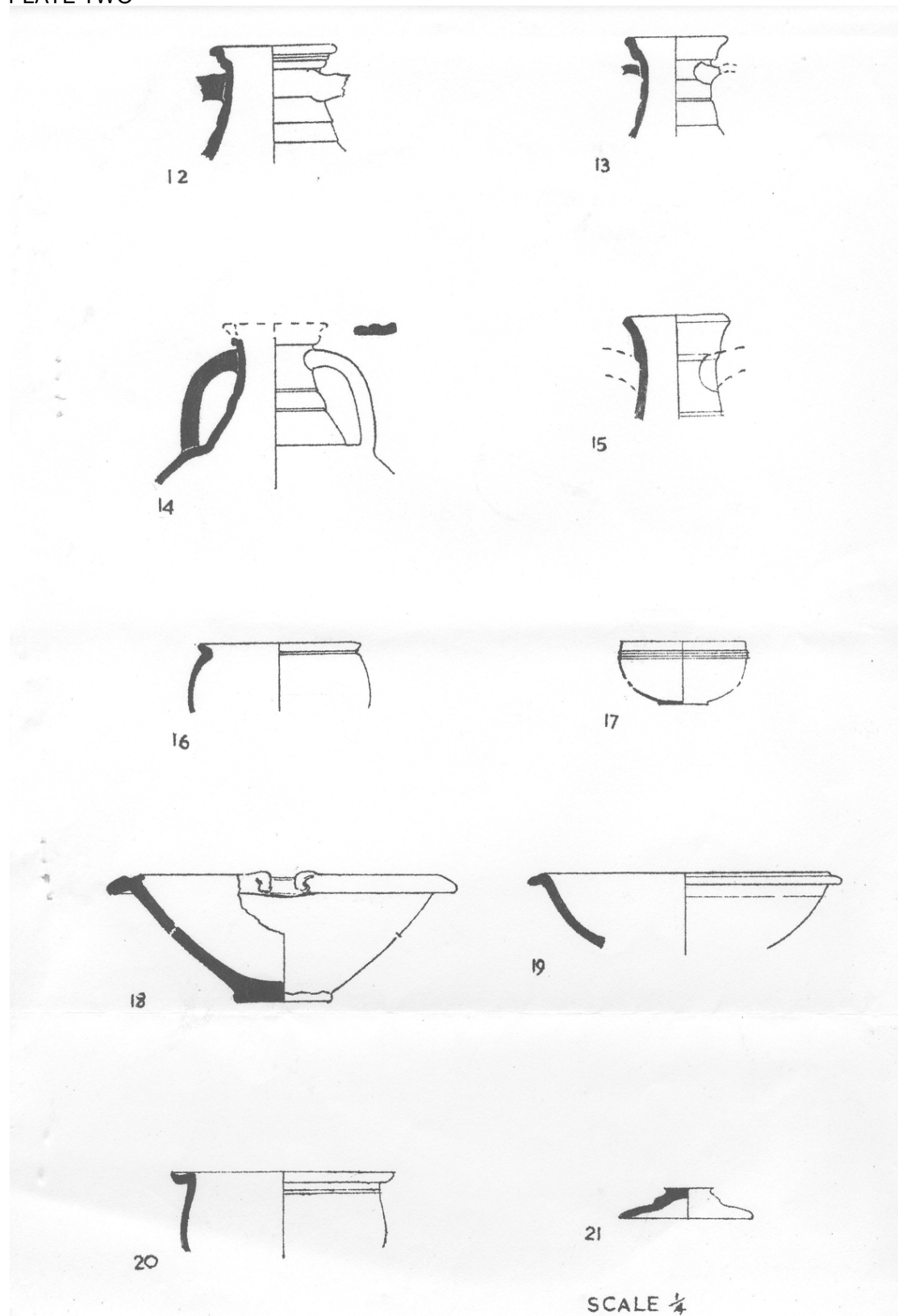
The dating of this kiln has to be done from this pottery, no small objects having been found. The pottery can mostly be paralleled in the pages of Camulodunum and those which cannot be paralleled on any later British site. It is therefore either of the same Claudius - Nero date or possibly a little later, we have no evidence to judge by how much, if this is so. The following fragments which were also found, certainly emphasize the Claudius - Nero date.

(a) A small fragment of the rim of a flagon Form Dragendorf 15/17. Very much worn.

(b) A small rim fragment of a beaker in terra rubra 3- such as Cam: Form 76a or 78.

This last was certainly Claudian. It is only fair to add that the site lies in an area heavily occupied in the Claudian period so that these two sherds could be accidental but, as we have said, the earth all round the deposit was remarkably clear and the position is not far removed from the site of the kiln found in 1938 and described in Camulodunum pages 105 and 106, which seems certainly to have been destroyed in the year 61 A.D. This kiln was making much the same material as ours.

PLATE TWO



SUPPOSED DRAIN IN VINEYARD STREET

The demolition of some houses in Vineyard Street and the subsequent removal in the late summer of 1957, of the outbuildings belonging to them, cleared part of the outer southern side of the Roman wall where it runs parallel to Vineyard Street. Immediately to the rear of No. 19 Vineyard Street an arched opening about two feet square was revealed. This discovery was reported to Mr Hull and, at his request, some of our members began an investigation.

It became obvious that the arch was the opening of a small tunnel which appeared to be practically full of rubble and rubbish and we began to clear this as quickly as possible. We soon realised that the existing face was not original and, indeed, it is well known that this stretch of wall was extensively repaired in the time of Richard II. At this point the wall is about twenty feet high and is surmounted by the buildings standing on the south side of Eld Lane. The floor of the tunnel is three to four feet above the present ground level and the height is just over two feet. It will be appreciated that we cleared it out with a certain amount of care because of the considerable amount of unknown material which lay over our heads with a two storey, house and shop on top.

The content of the filling was varied but presented no true picture as to date, being completely unstratified. It was very apparent that the cavity had been used as a refuse tip for many years. We found so many skeletons of what appeared to be cats that we wondered if their deaths had been natural. Of the objects found, it is only necessary to mention the rim of a jar in Roman greyware and a fragment of the neck of a cordoned vessel with scored decoration in black Roman ware, both apparently 1st Century. There was an assortment of sherds of Victorian domestic pottery; various pieces of glass and a chemist's drug pot in white glazed earthenware (height 2.5", diameter at top 3.25" and at base 2"). Among the many pieces of metal was a conical beer muller, over 12" in height with a handle and a spout. One item for which there appeared to be no explanation was a small rectangular shaped piece of oolitic limestone, the size of a cake of soap. Several land snails' shells (*Helix aspersa*) were also found.

We cleared the tunnel as far as the roof vaulting remained unbroken, a distance of just over ten feet. Matches burned freely at this point, indicating a draught, the source of which we could not discover. The walls were made of level courses of flat bricks - 11.5" X 17" X 175", which merged into the vaulting of the roof. The floor was of flat smooth stones. Beyond ten feet the roof had collapsed but, as far as we could discover, the walls and floor went on for at least another 10" without any apparent end. There were traces of the Roman arch inside the existing opening. Taking into account the position, the materials used and the construction, together with the absence of silt, it is probable that only surface water ran through this tunnel and that it was a drain built at the same time as the original wall. Indeed there are other similar examples known. The coping of one can still be seen immediately south of East Gate and William Wyre (d.1857) records in his diary that one was found a short distance east of Scheregate. All three appear to have been very similar and it therefore seems quite possible that other drains may yet be found. So far as we know, no other examples exist of small drains built through a wall of this type.

DETECTING SITES OF DITCHES ETC. WITH A 'WHEATSTONE BRIDGE'.

The instrument we used was designed by Mr Gardner of Coggeshall and kindly loaned by him to the Group for experimental purposes.

The principle concerned is that the electrical resistance of a given length of disturbed ground, such as the site of ditch, is normally less than that of undisturbed ground; due to the respective moisture content. This resistance can be measured by a Wheatstone Bridge. We experimented on sites of various kinds using a distance of six feet between measuring points. The first was alongside the new Girls' High School in Norman Way, where the Clerk of the Works had noticed traces of old ditches. We tried to plot the line of these ditches but the presence of public utility trenches caused the readings to be unintelligible. We then marked

out a six foot grid in the field to the south of the school. It seemed possible that the ditches may have run on this line but our readings were too erratic to be useful. This may have been due to the presence of the roots of some large trees but it is only fair to add that both these experiments took place during a period of marked drought. Our third attempt was in a field to the west of the school. We knew that an archaeological trench had been dug here the previous year and subsequently filled in. The field had recently been ploughed presenting a uniform surface and we were delighted to find the ditch showing itself in a series of low readings. At a later date readings were taken at the site of the old rampart at Berechurch. On the first occasion it was just after rain and the ditches showed up clearly; later after drought, there was little variation.

It is clear that the Wheatstone Bridge provides a form of indication of differences in the subsoil. Ditches and buried masonry can be detected but a marked variation in readings is more readily obtainable after wet weather.

PART 2 JUNE 1958

In introducing the second issue of our Bulletin, we wish to thank all those who have given us their support and encouragement. We are grateful for the suggestions we have received and one which we readily agreed to accept was that the bulletin should be issued in Quarto size, making it easier to file.

Colchester Archaeological Group now numbers 13 individual members and we hope more will join us - the subscription is 5/- a year which includes the Bulletin. We need people to help with drawing and research and especially active enthusiasts who will come down into the trench with us and dig. The Bulletin consists mainly of contributions from Group members and includes an account by Mr. Erith of Ardleigh, of his finds in a Bronze Age Urn-Field on his farm; a dig by Mr. Calver on Mrs. Reid's field; also articles by Mr. Edwards and Mr. Gant.

At the present time we are investigating a roman road the line of which runs from King Coel's Kitchen in a north-westerly direction. There was some difficulty in finding this in a place where it was possible to put down a trench but our latest one is showing favourable developments. We hope to publish details in our next Bulletin.

In July we hope to excavate the site of what is thought to be a Bronze Age barrow near Dedham but we have to arrange our dig to fit in with the crops.

SUMMER SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE - H.J. Edwards

Have you ever tried an Archaeological holiday? No? Well, you might do worse.

Last year I applied and was accepted for the Archaeological Course at the W.E.A. Summer School at Cambridge in the last fortnight of July. We lived in King's College and that in itself was an experience for those of us who had only a tourist view of Cambridge before. The School provided courses in a number of different subjects and we Archaeologists were looked upon by the other students as slightly eccentric, not only for what we did but for the time we spent doing it; for make no mistake, we really did work. Our normal day was from 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., on the site; lunch; digging again from 2 p.m. to 6.30p.m.; dinner; and then we finished with a talk or perhaps pottery sorting, for an hour.

Of course we did occasionally relax the bow. There was the Vice-Chancellor's Garden Party one afternoon and, at the other end of the scale, our punting, outings and picnics on the banks of the Cam. One afternoon we combined business with pleasure with a trip to Grimes Graves at Brandon. For those socially inclined there were dances and socials arranged and some students burned the candle at both ends by attending these functions and getting up for a swim before breakfast.

Our class consisted of about a dozen - it varied a little in the two weeks - and the tutor was Mr. John Alexander M.A. Home addresses varied from Yorkshire to Wales and occupations