

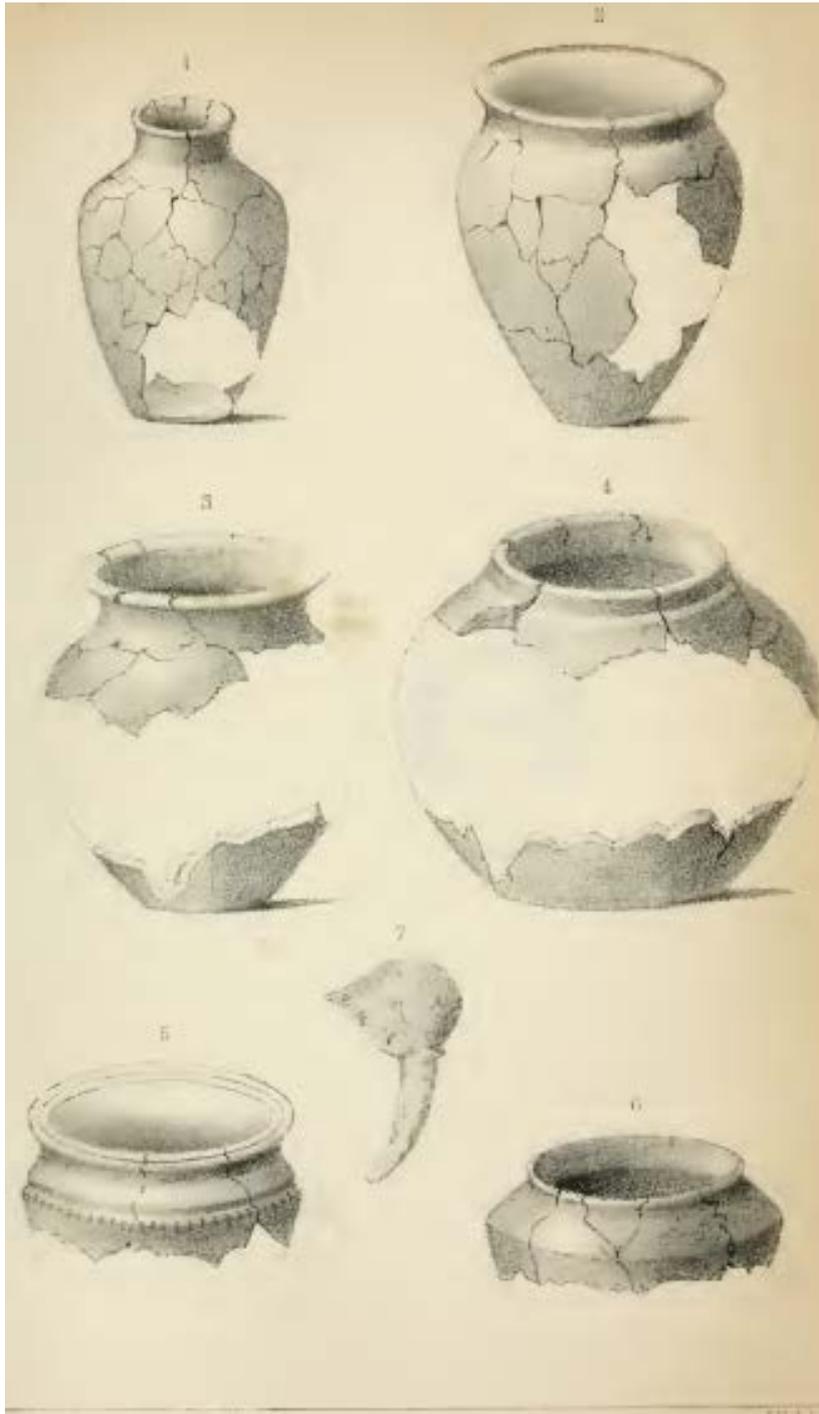
**ACCOUNT OF A ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY AT BARNES, NEAR  
BRIXTON, ISLE OF WIGHT. BY THE REV. EDMUND KELL, M.A., F.S.A.  
A Victorian Report.**

Notwithstanding the almost universal opinion of the historians of the Isle of Wight, that few or no vestiges of occupation by the Romans are to be found in it, I believe recent researches to have proved beyond doubt that abundant evidence exists of their lengthened sojourn in that lovely and salubrious spot. " Here, on the border of the running brook, With moss and herbage finely overspread, The Roman might espy, in many a nook, Primrose and violet as sweetly shed As now, and hyacinth with bended head. "In addition to the considerable number of Roman coins mentioned in this Journal as having been found in the island^ (to which, indeed, various recent additions, if necessary, might be recorded), I would call especial attention to a Romano-British pottery in the parish of Brixton, situated about one hundred and fifty yards east of Barnes' Chine, and three hundred yards south of Barnes. In conjunction with Ernest Wilkins, esq., I excavated its site, for a length of about sixty feet, to the undisturbed stratum beneath, on the top of the cliff, until all traces of pottery were lost. By a comparison of the pottery with the subjacent clay, the latter appeared to have been the ^ Peel's Fair Island, canto 6, v. 31.= Sec British Arch. Assoc. Journal, vol. viii, p. 329; vol. xi, p. 191. material from which it was made.

The clay is highly tenacious, and of good quality, and was observed by the late sir John Barrington many years since, though without a knowledge of its previous use. Sir John, indeed, contemplated the establishment of a modern pottery on this locality ; influenced, no doubt, by the same reasons that induced our ancestors to fix upon it, viz. the goodness of the raw material, and the capabilities of sea carriage. Many of the urns found in the barrows and cemeteries of the Isle of Wight correspond in form and material with those discovered by us, and I believe most of them were actually manufactured at this pottery : at all events there is nothing inconsistent with such a supposition, but, on the contrary, everything in support of it.

The urns, for the most part, were fragmentary, as if the refuse of the kilns. They were also much decayed ; no doubt from the land in this neighbourhood being thoroughly infiltrated by sea water, which, at certain seasons, is condensed in abundance from the sea fogs so well known on these shores, coupled with the circumstance of the water so condensed lying on the top of impermeable clay. The pottery lies upon the clay, and is covered with a bed of peaty mould about two feet thick, so that the water has a free downward passage; and the further sinking of the water being arrested by the clay, the pottery is thereby exposed to a constant soak,—and hence its decayed condition, for we can all understand the highly corrosive property of sea water. The urns discovered were in no instance perfect, although a few specimens almost entire were observed: they, however, fell to pieces on removal. Some, by the ingenuity and perseverance of Mr. Ernest Wilkins, have been put together, and exhibit great varieties of shape. Of these, six examples have been drawn by Mr.Grifiiths, artist, of Newport. (See pi.16.) The most interesting feature of this collection of pottery appears to me to be its variety, pertaining to different historical eras. The earliest is a coarse, slightly baked pottery, similar to the rude, early British urn, of large size, deposited in the Newport museum.^ This variety is in the worst state of preservation, from its being of rude manufacture and porous.

Engraved in the British Arch. Assoc. Journ. for 1855, p. 187, pi. 12, fig. 12,



The two most illustrative fragments represent a portion of the bottom and the shoulders of a large urn, the latter being marked with an ornamentation similar to the specimen in the Newport museum.

A second variety from Barnes exhibits specimens of Samian ware differing in no respect from that found elsewhere, save in not being as well preserved as usual. The third variety differs in no respect from the urns which have been found in some of the barrows of the island, as seen in a small urn in the Hyde museum, obtained by excavations of the Ryde society at Asheby ; several urns, in the Newport museum, obtained by excavations by the Museum Society in a cemetery on Bowcombe Down; urns discovered in the cemetery of Chessell Down, by the late Mr. John Dennett, some years since, and, at a later period, by other explorers,—all of which have been recorded in our Journal. Other specimens, differing from the above urns, were also obtained, which I hesitate to classify with them, although they mostly have the character and appearance of Roman vessels: some differing little from Samian, others having a greyish or blueish tint. These fragments are of a thin substance, and evidently belonged to vessels of a fine artistic form. One vessel, remarkably delicate, when exposed was nearly perfect, but fell to pieces on attempts at its removal. Its colour is a fine red tint and its substance very thin,—too thin to permit restoration. It appears to have been a drinking utensil, and is similar to the one engraved in our Journal ix, pi.9,fig.12.

A few of tile fragments only, present any indication of ornamentation. Among them is one marked with dots, as if by a pointed instrument. Fig. 5, in the accompanying plate, is the rim and shoulder of a vessel of fine texture, and black colour: the shoulder is ornamented with a series of notches, surmounted by a groove; the rim also has a groove upon it. We found an iron tool, which the artist has drawn of its natural size (see fig. 7). The upper end corresponds to the grooves on No. 5, and possibly may have been used in making them : the lower end is pointed, and appears to have been in a handle, which decay has destroyed.

Among other fragments is the rim of a coarse vessel, worked with the impress of the ball of the thumb. It corresponds with some pottery, in the Newport museum, obtained by me from the Ilomano-British pottery at Crockle in the New Forest. Several fragments of paterae were found. They are of a black, fine material, resembling those figured in our Journal, vi, 62, and vii, 109. To convey an idea of the various shapes of vessels discovered, I may state that I have counted upwards of two dozen varieties of rims. In one of the fragments I observed a circular aperture about an inch below the rim, as though a string had been run through it to facilitate its conveyance. With the collection of pottery were found several fragments of bitumen, possibly used in some way in its manufacture. Most of the collection has been turned in a lathe, or on a rotatory table, which may be seen employed in some of the modern potteries. Little doubt can be entertained that this pottery has been of considerable extent.

Our excavation was on the edge of a precipitous cliff, on a part of the island where the sea has long been making and continues to make inroads, to the extent of acres within our memory. Its site was discovered some years ago by Mr. Dyer of Newport, who found fragments of pottery lying on the sea-shore beneath, and even now fragments may be found scattered along the face of the crumbling cliff". We consider this spot to be merely the edge of a widely extended pottery, the remainder, with the kilns, having been removed with the cliff' by the continued agency of the undermining

waves of the British Channel. The discovery of this pottery, and the neighbouring extensive one of Crockle, in the year 1852, must materially modify the opinion expressed in relation to the extent to which the Upchurch potteries in Kent supplied the west and south of Roman Britain.

This district of England, at all events, may have mainly supplied itself, even if we suppose that no other Roman potteries remain undiscovered. Greatly it is to be regretted that this pottery had not been explored ere the great bulk of its contents had perished in the sea. All the specimens found at Barnes have been deposited in the museum at Newport, and constitute a highly interesting group for the further observation of antiquaries.

In conclusion, Mr. Wilkins and myself would embrace this opportunity of urging upon the residents of the Isle of Wight the necessity of storing up in their local museums all antiquarian relics they may be so fortunate as to discover. The proprietors of estates in particular are solicited to regard this; for these matters, although in themselves individually often insignificant, may in after ages help to fill in links of historical importance. In making these remarks, we participate in the regret, now so very generally expressed, at the loss lately sustained in the removal from their proper depository—the island itself—of a large collection of Anglo-Saxon remains, recently taken from the cemetery in Chessell Down, discovered by Mr. Dennett about forty years ago. We fear the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight may consider them entirely lost to them, at least during the present generation.

See *Archmologia*, vol. 35, p. 91.

The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon, by T. Wright, p. 210.