

EXCAVATIONS AT ARMSLEY.

BY H. S. W. EDWARDES.

Armsley is on the left bank of the Avon, about a mile below Breamore mill, and comprises the south-western slopes of Castle Hill. The local name of Armsley is probably derived from Ulmarsley, as Domesday Book refers to land held by Ulmar of Breamore Manor, being in the King's Forest. The land is bounded on the north by the River Avon; W. and S.W. by Millersford Brook; S.E. by a little forest stream; and E. by a big bank, which goes right across the hill to the Avon, and may be a defensive work.

It was a ploughed field till 1919, and the steep edges to all the lower slopes suggest that it has been plough land for a very long period. An average depth of about 18in. of soil covers a subsoil of sand or gravel, except in the S.E. corner, where there is clay, and nothing has been found.

In 1921 the digging of holes for apple trees in the upper portion revealed large numbers of pot sherds, etc., scattered over about an acre, and two floors of burnt clay. One of these floors was cleared, and found to be about 7ft. in diameter. A tile, 18in. $\times$ 15in., on the south edge, was left *in situ*. It may have marked the threshold where unprotected earth floors rapidly wear out, as I have noticed in African huts. Nails, quern stones, and sherds were found here. The second floor has only been half cleared as yet, but has produced a bone-handled knife and sundry bones.

An undefined area, just east of the house at present existing, when cut through by a trench for water pipes, showed black soil, rich in coopers and sherds of crude hand-made ware. Quantities of saucer-shaped lumps of slag have been found widely scattered. These resemble slag lumps produced to-day by the natives of Nigeria from iron smelting, and the Museum of Geology found that this slag was in fact the product of primitive smeltings. There is a vein of iron-stone, about 6 inches thick, at a depth of 3 feet in the orchard, and chunks of this stone are fairly common, but no fused bellows—cones, or other furnace remains have been found yet.

One piece of urn, with finger-tip markings on a raised band just below the rim, has been classed as Bronze Age. It was found on the surface of the area east of the house. Many sherds of hand-made, coarse, British ware, with flint particles intermixed in their bodies, and two or three bead-rims, have been found, but no stratification was observed. No saddle stones have turned up. All the quern stones are rotary.



WOODEN HEAD FROM ARMSLEY, P. 57. REDUCED TO HALF SIZE.

[To face page 57.]

In 1925, during a dry June, I noticed a damp patch in the vegetable garden, and dug there for water. At a depth of 1ft. 6in. I came on black earth with pottery, and at 3ft. on water. Excavation has revealed a well-defined, nearly circular pond, about 14ft. in diameter, with a maximum depth of 7ft. It is on a south slope, and the upper side is very steep, whereas the lower side is a gentle slope. The original well, marked with stakes and large blocks of heath stone, is at the foot of the steep upper side.

The digging out of the black or grey mud below the top 18 inches of soil was made difficult by water, and, to reach the bottom, it was emptied by a siphon, the action of which rather mystified local folk. It was not easy to spot objects coated with mud, and no doubt many small items have been missed, but almost every spadeful produced something. All the relics found in and about this well belong to the Roman period of occupation. At a depth of 4ft. 6in. a well-marked layer of greenish caked stuff, about 2 inches thick, was met with, and below that stiff, dark chocolate mud, full of sticks. This dark mud contained few sherds, but many bones, the two best preserved thumb pots, the wooden head, and the carpentered wood. At 5ft. 6in. the top edge of a stout board and of stakes, and large blocks of heath stone, marked the circle of the well, about 30 inches diameter. Within this circle was the same stiff mud with sticks, and it yielded the horse's skull, bulbous vase, eyed end of a strap, and fragments of a sandal. At 7 feet the flat, hard bottom of gravel was reached, and work ended. Cookers were numerous on the slope down to the well.

In winter the water rises in this pond to the level of the lower edge—about 2 feet lower than the upper edge, and even in dry summer weather the old well top is submerged a foot. This may indicate a rise in the water level in the hill, or, more probably, a gradual puddling of the lower side of the hole.

The profusion of finds in this well (including much ornamented pottery) seems to indicate a fairly well-to-do Roman habitation near by. This has not yet been located, and it may well be that hundreds of years of ploughing have completely eradicated all traces, save these cast away relics.

Castle Hill, of which Armsley forms a part, is, I think, the only strong defensive position on the banks of the Avon between Sarum and the sea, so that it is not surprising to find that this site has been occupied from early British times to late in the Roman period. Armsley was evidently a farmed clearing at the time of the Norman invasion, and Mr. Heywood Sumner has shown in his "Earthworks of the New Forest" that the only Norman keep in the Forest occupied the summit of the hill, where it would command the navigation of the Avon.

FINDS.

- COINS : One Vespasian, 69-79.
 One Trojan, 98-117.
 One Hadrian, 117-138.
 One Diocletian, 295-305.
 Four 3rd brasses not identified.
- METAL : A piece of melted lead.
 A fragment of bronze.
 A pair of iron shears.
 A knife with bone handle.
 A tanged tool.
 Quantity of nails.
 Various small tools, etc.
 Slag.
- STONE : Broken quern stones.
 Stone weight, 10lbs., with traces of iron ring set in lead.
 Hones or whetstones.
 Squared heath stones.
 Heath stones burnt wine red.
 Two small pieces of coal.
 Lumps of fine white clay or slip.
 Burnt flints and cookers.
 A whorl of Kimmerage shale.
- WOOD : A carved head, perhaps a finial. 8in.
 Four pieces of sawn and planed oak.
 A sawn coulter-shaped piece of oak.
 A large plank and sundry stakes left *in situ*.
- BONE : A pointed tool.
 Skull of a horse.
 Horn cores.
 Antler bases.
 Teeth.
 A total of 146 bone fragments.
- LEATHER : Fragments of a studded sandal.
 Eyed end of a strap.
- POTTERY : One rim with finger-tip markings on raised band.
 Two bead-rims.
 Fragments—Samian 21
 With slip ornament 22
 Painted ... 8
 Stamped ... 30
 New Forest—Fine ware rims 196
 bases 85
 Black ware rims 520
 bases 242
 Mortaria rims 22
 Pieces of flue tiles.
 Pieces of floor tiles.

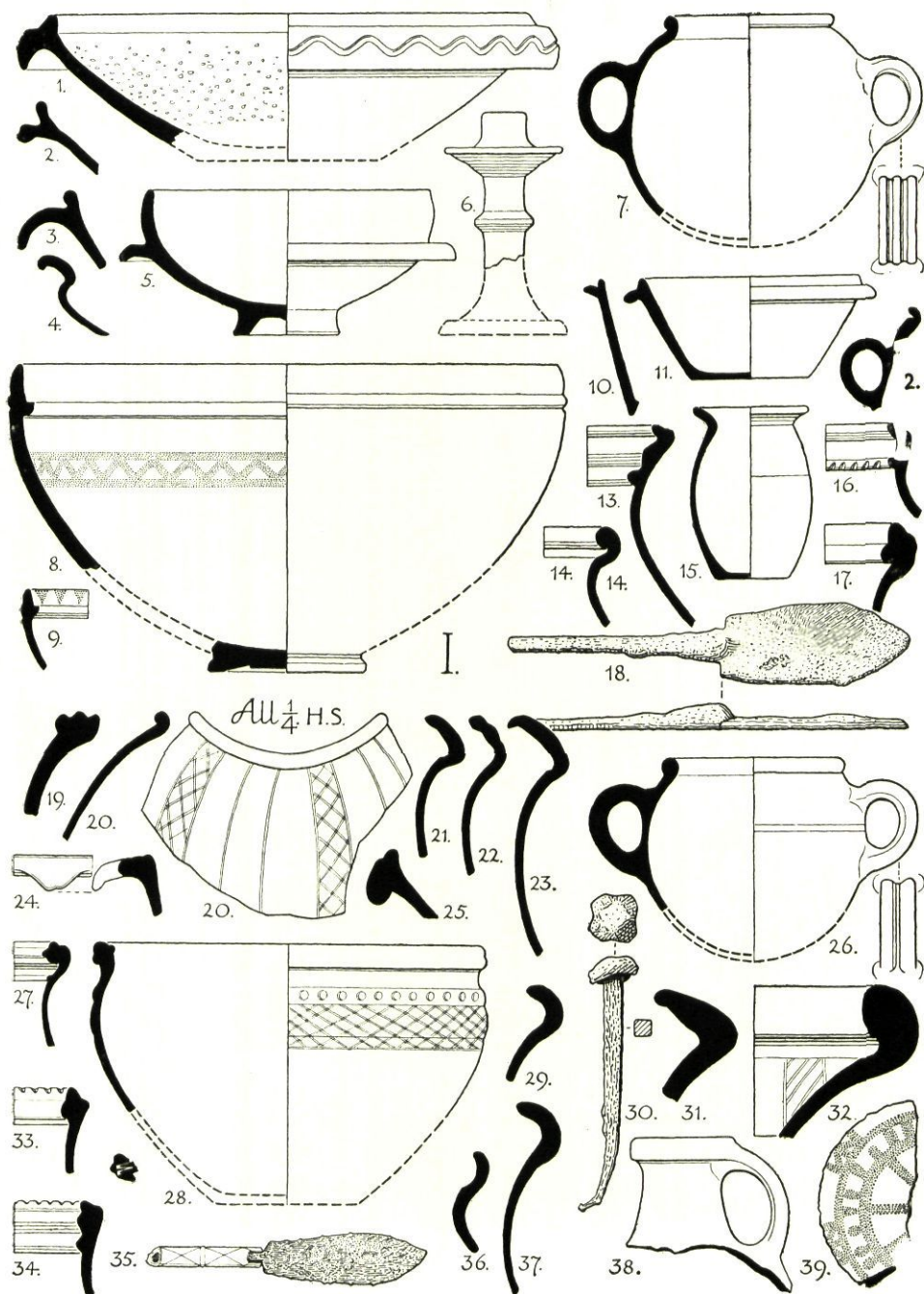


PLATE I.

ROMAN POTTERY AND IRON RELICS
FOUND AT ARMSLEY, NEAR BREAMORE.

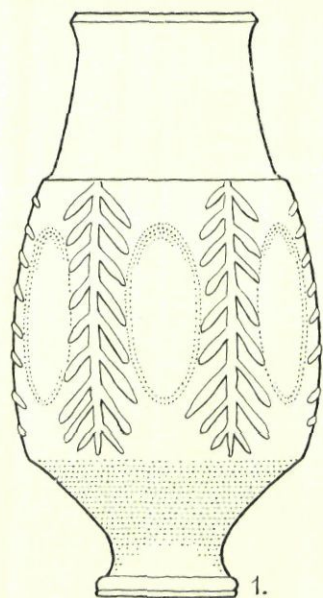
1. Mortarium; white body and surface; very hard; 10 inches diam. 2. Mortarium; buff body, coated with brown wash; hard; $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam. 3. Buff body, coated with red slip; hard; 5 inches diam.; flanged form 38 type. 4. White body, coated with worn red slip; hard; $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam.; form 36 type. 5. Red body and surface; very hard; 6 inches diam.; form 38. 6. Candlestick; white body, coated with white wash; very hard. 7. Grey body, coated with white wash on rim and outside; very hard. I have never found this globular form of bowl in any of my New Forest kiln-sites diggings. 7, 12, 20 and 26 may belong to the "bead-rim" period of pottery, circa B.C. 50 to A.D. 50. 8. Wide-mouthed bowl with inside flange; grey body, coated with white wash; very hard; 12 inches diam.; red paint ornament on the inside. 9. Small bowl of same type; white body and surface; very hard; $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam.; red paint ornament. 10. Grey body, coated with red wash; very hard; $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches diam. 11. Grey body, coated with black slip; very hard; $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam.; both 10 and 11 belong to a common Roman type of straight-sided cooking pots; many rim sherds of this type were found here. 12. Grey body, coated with black slip; very hard; $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches diam., cf. 7. 13. Grey body, coated with black slip, inside, and on the rim, with lattice lines scored on the inside; $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam.; this form has a profile that suggests "bead-rim" period; I do not think that it is New Forest ware. 14. Grey body, coated with black slip; hard; 7 inches diam. 15. Grey body, coated with black slip, and burnished on rim and shoulder; very hard; $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches diam. 16. Grey body, coated with black slip inside; hard; 6 inches diam. This type of knob-rimmed bowl, with notched ornament, cf. 33 and 34, was made in quantity at Linwood, New Forest. 17. Grey body, coated black wash inside and on the rim; very hard; 10 inches diam. 18. Iron tool. 19. Grey body, coated with black wash; very hard; $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam. 20. Grey body, coated with black slip on rim and outside; ornamented with scored upright panels, occasionally filled in with scored lattice ornament; hard; $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches diam.; cf. 7. 21. Grey body, coated with black slip from rim to bulge; very hard; 5 inches diam. 22. Grey body and surface; very hard; $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam. 23. Grey body, coated with black slip on rim and down to shoulder bulge; very hard; $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam. 24. Grey-black body, coated with black slip; very hard; 8 inches diam. This type of bowl, with occasional projecting lug handles round the rim, is unusual in New Forest ware. I have only found one other example—at Sloden. 25. Pink-white body, coated with black wash; very hard; 8 inches diam. The vessel to which this

rim belonged appears to be a mortarium in form, but has no flint particles on its inner surface. This sherd does not seem to be New Forest ware. 26. Grey body, coated with black slip on rim and outside; very hard; 4 inches diam.; cf. 7. 27. Grey body, coated with black wash; very hard; 9 inches diam. 28. Grey body, coated with black slip inside and outside to the bottom of the scored lattice ornament; hard; $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam. 29. Grey body with flint particles, coated with black wash on rim and shoulder; hard; 5 inches diam. 30. Large iron nail, with clinched point. 31. Rim of large storage pot. Grey body, coated with black slip; very hard; 8 inches diam. 32. The same; 9 inches diam; ornamented with scored upright panels. 33 and 34. Grey body, coated with black wash; very hard; 7 inches diam. 35. Iron knife with long tang socketed in bone handle, ornamented with incised lines. 36. Brown body, coated with buff wash; very hard; 4 inches diam. 37. Grey body, coated inside and out with dark brown wash; very hard; $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam. 38. Neck of a flagon, broken, as usual, at the luting join; grey body, coated with white wash; hard. 39. Part of the inside bottom of a wide-mouthed bowl with inside flange; cream-coloured body, coated with white wash. These bowls are usually ornamented with painted lines and wave patterns below the inside flange, and with painted centre decoration on the inside bottom of the vessel. This form is the only one in New Forest ware decorated with free-hand painted ornament.

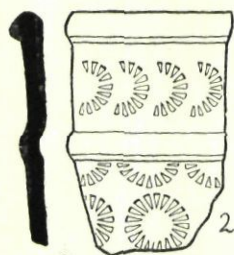
Excepting 7, 12, 20, 25; and 26, all the pottery figured in Plate I compares with figures of New Forest ware contained in "The Roman Pottery made at Ashley Rails," and "Roman Pottery Sites at Sloden and Linwood," by the writer. *Chiswick Press, Tooks Court, London, E.C.*

PLATE II.

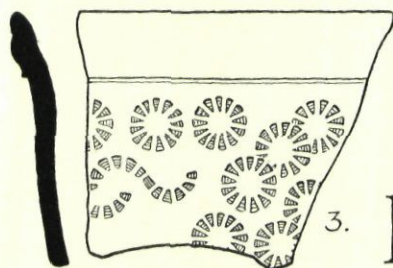
1. Vase of red-purple "thumb-pot" gloss ware; ornamented with foliated stalks, upside down, in white slip; very hard; perfect. 2. Bowl, cream-coloured body, coated with red slip; ornamented with whole and half-stamped rosettes; medium hard; 7 inches diam. 3. Bowl, reddish yellow body, coated with red wash; very hard, heavier than usual Ashley Rails stamped ware; ornamented with rosettes and s; 9 inches diam. Similar ware to this was made at Ashley Rails, Crock Hill, and Islands Thorns, for flagons without handles, but I have not hitherto found it used for stamped ware. 4. Bowl, cream body, coated with red slip; ornamented with whole and half-stamped rosettes; medium hard; 6 inches diam. 5. Reddish yellow body, coated with red slip; ornamented with roulette stamping; hard. 6. Small bowl, cream body, coated with red slip; ornamented with whole and half-stamped rosettes; medium hard; 6 inches diam. 7. Small bowl,



1.

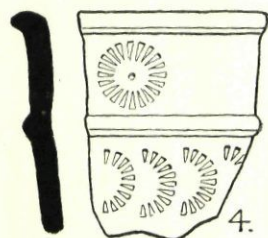


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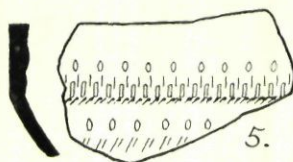


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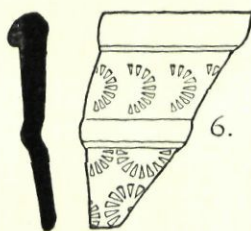
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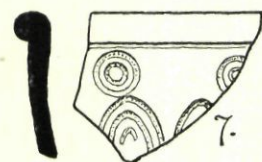
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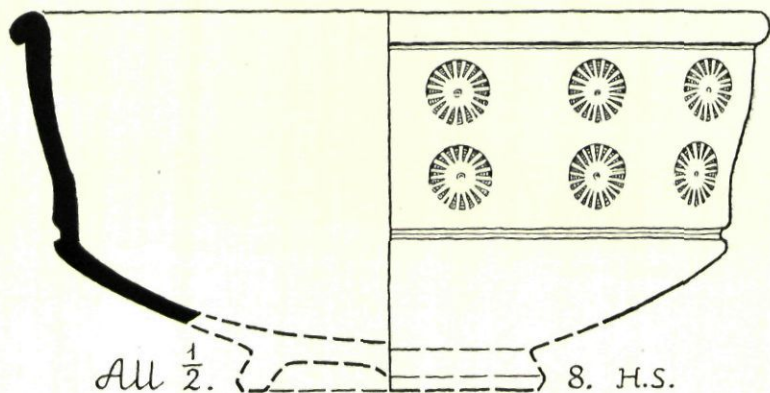
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6.



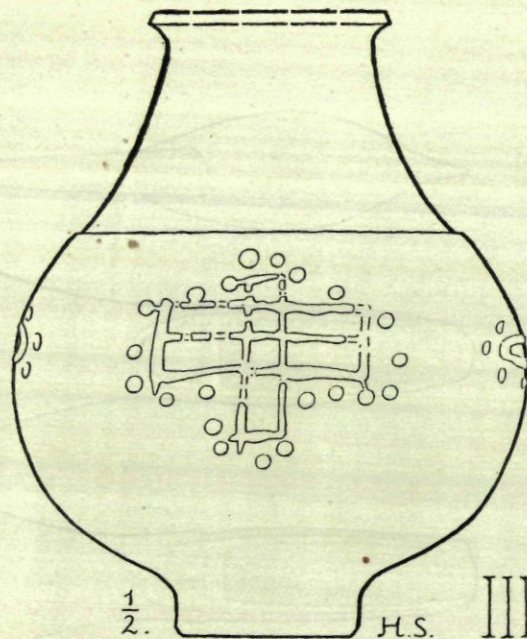
7.



8. H.S.

All $\frac{1}{2}$.

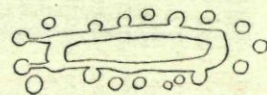
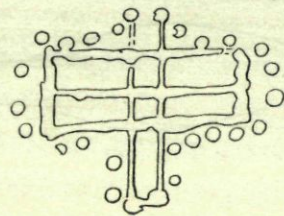
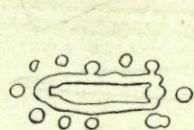
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$\frac{1}{2}$.

H.S.

III.



cream body, coated with red slip; ornamented with stamped concentric circles and "multiple arch"; rather soft; 5 inches diam. 8. Bowl, cream body, coated with red slip; ornamented with stamped rosettes; form 29/37; medium hard; 7 inches diam.

The above compare with figures of stamped ware contained in *op. cit.* "Ashley Rails."

PLATE III.

Vase of burnished red ware, ornamented with white slip decoration of very unusual design; hard; perfect, excepting the rim. The irregular disposition and execution of these units of decoration around the bulge are shown below the figure of the vase. New Forest imitation of Rhenish bulbous vase; *cf.* "Roman Pottery in the British Museum," Plate XVIII, M. 142, and *op. cit.* "Ashley Rails," Plate III, Figs. 4 and 6.

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

November, 1926.

