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**Lead Vessels Bourton on the Water**

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NOTES

(PLATES I–IV, see p. 384)

EXCAVATIONS AT BOURTON ON THE WATER

Miss H. E. Donovan writes:—

In consequence of finding the lead vessels described below I was able to carry out an excavation of the site.

In the limited space available, three walls of a paved courtyard, 18 feet wide, were uncovered, containing a well of dry stone walling, 8 feet deep. Nearby, a water gutter was found sunk in the paving, by means of which rain water from the roof percolated into the well through a deposit of gravel placed under the paving. (Plate 1).

Portions of the walls, the paving of the courtyard and the surround of the well had been badly robbed so that in some places only the lowest course of the foundations of the walls could be traced.

The courtyard was filled to a depth of 12 to 18 inches with débris of fallen masonry, roofing slates of Cotswold stone, broken pottery, animal bones, nails and coins. The pottery was largely of 4th century types.

Forty-five coins were found: excepting three of 3rd century all were 4th century date. This indicates a late occupation of the site.

It is hoped to publish a more complete report when the excavation of the site is completed.

LEAD VESSELS, BOURTON ON THE WATER

Miss Donovan kindly permits me to publish a report on the lead vessels (Plates II–III) mentioned above.

On 9 February 1934, workmen cutting trenches for the drains of a new bungalow at Lansdown, Bourton on the Water, discovered two crumpled and flattened pieces of lead, on a building site, previously an orchard, belonging
LEAD VESSELS, LANSDOWN, BOURTON ON THE WATER CONDITION WHEN FOUND.  (See p. 377)

ph. W. J. Butt
LEAD VESSELS, LANSDOWN, BOURTON ON THE WATER

(See pp. 377–81)

photogr. Lt.-Col. J. D. Blyth, O.B.E.
to Mr R. G. Lawrence. They lay at a depth of about 1 foot 9 inches. It will be seen by the illustrations that the vessels are cylindrical or tub-like in appearance, each having apparently been made in three pieces: the bottom in one piece; the sides cast flat in two parts and bent round to the required circular form; the edges of the side pieces being joined and held by heavy thickening at the joints, in customary Roman style.

The diameter of vessel no. 1 at the bottom inside is 2 feet 6 inches to 2 feet 7 inches; diameter at top, inside rim, 2 feet 8 inches to 2 feet 10 inches; height of side, 13 1/2 inches to 14 inches; thickness of lead approximately 3/8 inch; weight, 2 cwt. 23 1/2 lbs.; approximate capacity, 40 gallons.

On this vessel there are five raised discs or blobs in the form of a letter T, and above these are marks in relief. Immediately underneath the top horizontal line of rope decoration, there is a suggestion of lettering in low relief, now very much obliterated. This may be part of the signature of the maker, written in cursive letters on the mould. It is known that this method of cursive signature was commonly practised on terra sigillata (the so-called Samian ware), the potter writing his name with a stylus in the clay of his mould before baking his pot in the kiln. These signatures are reversed on the vases formed in the moulds, and need therefore to be transposed to be read,* and this practice of the potter may also have been used by the Roman lead-founders.

The sides may be regarded as divided into two by the thickened welding at the two vertical joints. On each side there are four panels or reserves consisting of cruciform raised cord-design, as used in Roman times on coffins and cinerary urns.

Around what may be called the rim are evidences of pierced holes, irregularly spaced, which suggest that this leaden vessel is the remains of a bath or basin which was originally lined with timber secured to the outer leaden shell by rivets.

Another feature of interest are holes pierced through the upper portion of the weldings, well shown in the illustration. These may have held ornamental rings.

The bottom has been repaired in three or four places by wipings.

Vessel no. 2 is much less perfect, having been robbed during the intervening centuries. Enough of it remains however, to indicate its similar construction, and that panels of cruciform ropework pattern, of somewhat higher relief than that of no. 1, decorate the remaining portion of one side. In addition to the large cruciform panels, there is a frieze, 4 inches deep, around the rim of the vessel, and this in turn is decorated with a proportionately smaller, though similar, cruciform ropework pattern. On this frieze will be noticed six raised discs or blobs, in the form of an inverted T.

The dimensions are as follows:—Diameter at bottom inside, 3 feet 1 inch; diameter top rim (assuming that the slope of the sides was similar to that of no. 1), 3 feet 3 inches; height of sides, 16 inches; thickness of bottom, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch; thickness of sides, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch; capacity of vessel, approximately 65 gallons.

Mr. Christopher Hawkes, F.S.A., Assistant Keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities in the British Museum, writes with regard to these vessels as follows:—

' I have been looking for parallels and consulting with others likely to throw some light on them in
London. I fear I can report no positive success. I should agree with you that the vessels can hardly be sepulchral, and in the absence of any ascertainable parallels am inclined to adopt your suggestion that they had a purely ornamental purpose. They are of course of Roman date, but in view of the extreme abundance of Roman coins of the period A.D. 388–95 on sites with any trace of occupation in those years at all, I do not think that the presence of those noted does anything much to make it probable that the lead vessels are also of that date. There could, I think, be no objection to suggesting a date for them somewhere in the 4th century, but I do not know why they should not be earlier.'

Mr E. J. Forseyke, F.S.A., Keeper of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum, after examining a photograph, writes as follows:—

'Thin sheet lead decorated like your examples was certainly used in Roman times for coffins and cinerary urns, and I know of no other use of it. But coffins and cinerary urns are certainly not the shape and size of your vessels... They may of course be Roman water-tanks, but there is no evidence, so far as I know, for things like this.'

Various suggestions have been made as to the original purpose for which these cisterns—apparently very rare, if not of unique occurrence—were made. An ornamental use, probably on a pedestal, is indicated by the pannelled, shallow cord-moulding; an industrial purpose, such as in dyeing, may be dismissed as improbable; while any connexion with the well found on the same site is also unlikely. A religious or cult significance has occurred to one archaeologist. And yet another question remains unsolved as to the meaning of the five discs on no. 1, and
the six discs on no. 2. As five is to six, so are the diameters of the two vessels in relation to each other.

At the suggestion of Miss Helen E. Donovan, who keeps a watchful eye on the antiquities of her district, Mr R. G. Lawrence generously presented the two objects to the Cheltenham Municipal Museum, where they have been restored and placed on public exhibition.

D. W. HERDMAN, Curator, Cheltenham Museum

PREHISTORIC VESSEL FROM HAWLING

This crudely shaped pot (plate IV) was found in January 1933 by a quarryman, Jesse Stephens, of Lower Guiting, employed by Mr Frank Strickland in the Slade quarry on the Slade farm which is owned and occupied by Mr A. H. Harding.

This important find is interesting both as a type of rare occurrence on the Cotswolds, and on account of its association with a very ancient line of traffic.

The quarry, from which slates, crazy paving, walling stones and road material are obtained, is in the Downs Field on Slade farm at Salperton, Hawling, about 9½ miles east of Cheltenham on the right-hand side and immediately adjoining the Cheltenham—Stow road, 1½ miles southeast of Hawling, in lat. 51° 53′ N, long 1° 53′ W.

The quarry is on an escarpment which dips to the southwest to the Sherborne Brook, two springs being nearby, one in juxtaposition. The site is immediately on the 800 foot contour line at the junction of O.S. 6 inch sheets 27 SE, 28 SW. About 1 mile 7 furlongs to the east is Notgrove long barrow.

The pot was found 3 feet down in oolitic marl in almost perfect condition, but it was unfortunately broken by the quarryman's pick before being extracted. It was