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## **The Roman Site at Tewkesbury Park**

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## THE ROMAN SITE AT TEWKESBURY PARK

The house of Tewkesbury Park or Tewkesbury Lodge,<sup>1</sup> SO 88213116, stands in a commanding position on a small hill above the ferry-crossing of the Severn at Lower Lode. The grounds extend to the north to the slight rise of Holme Hill, thought to be the site of the medieval castle<sup>2</sup> and to include some of the area over which the battle of Tewkesbury was fought.<sup>3</sup> The discovery of Roman pottery in the town<sup>4</sup> and burials at the Vineyards<sup>5</sup> to the south of the Abbey makes the assessment of the Roman material from the Park overdue, the site on the hill being only about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles from the centre of Tewkesbury.

In 1968 Mrs V. L. Salmon of Tewkesbury Park gave to Tewkesbury Museum a box containing an assortment of objects of archaeological interest which had been collected or dug up on the estate.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of this note is to report on the Roman material which is believed to be the subject of a footnote in the report on Witcombe Villa (Clifford, *Trans. BGAS*, LXXIII, (1954), 36) in which C. Green states "... this pottery, which, together with fragments of tiles and brick tesserae, was turned up in 1945 near Tewkesbury Park House, when a wooden pylon was installed". Mrs H. E. O'Neil confirms the presence of a Roman site in the immediate vicinity of the big house at the top of the hill.

The contents of the box are:—

Roman pottery.

Parts of clay roof tiles, most of which are Roman.

Fragments of glass vessels.

Animal bones.

One piece of a medieval jug handle.

Several large pieces of pottery and glass of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

None of these objects is labelled and it is only the first two items whose provenance is reasonably certain. There were also some Roman coins which were supposed to come from the site. However, those

<sup>1</sup> *Victoria County History of Gloucestershire*, VIII, 133.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Maner Place in Theokesbyri Park with the Parke was lette by Henry the 7 to the abbot of Theokesbyri yn Fee Ferme with the Holme wher the Castel was'. Leland's Itinerary.

<sup>3</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, LXXX (1961), 99-120.

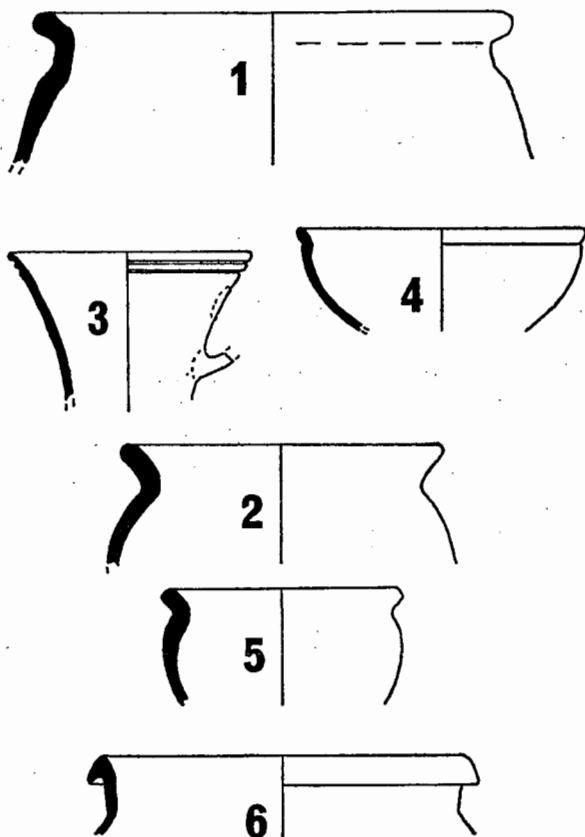
<sup>4</sup> *Glevensis* 6 (1971).

<sup>5</sup> *V.C.H. Glos.*, VIII, 110, footnote.

<sup>6</sup> I wish to thank the Trustees of Tewkesbury Museum for making this material available for study.

given to the Museum are obviously a mixed collection and must be discounted. The tesserae mentioned by Green are absent.

The presence of roof tiles indicates the site of a Roman building and the pottery is evidence for a period of occupation. The Roman pottery consists of 55 sherds, a selection of which follows:



1. Wide-mouthed jar, pale orange with grey core. Severn Valley type<sup>7</sup> of the middle Roman period.
2. Jar or cooking pot. Light grey with slightly darker surface. Very hard ware, unevenly finished and heavily gritted. The black and white particles are angular and vary in size up to 2 mm across. This strong pale grey fabric is used for large storage jars made in the first century (*Bagendon* Form 174).

<sup>7</sup> The 'Severn Valley' type in this collection is similar to that found in the Malvern district and at Tredington Rise. (cf. *Trans. BGAS*, xc (1971), 28-32).

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3. Handled mug. Narrow at the base with wall curving outwards. Orange-red. Severn Valley type. Second half of the second century.
4. Unusual shape for a bowl. Possibly used as a cover. Pale buff-grey ware with smooth matt surface. Another, slightly different, with double groove below rim, in pale red ware.
5. Small jar. Black ware with polished shiny surface. Filled with small white stone grains, probably ooliths. Vessels in pre-Roman form and fabric were made throughout the Roman period and cannot be closely dated.
6. Jar with overhanging triangular-shaped rim on upright collar. Grey core with deep orange-red burnished surface. Typical Severn Valley fabric. The great variety of these rim forms makes dating difficult but this one appears to be common in the third century.

### *Not Illustrated.*

7. Bowl with plain triangular flanged-rim about 230 mm diameter. Pale orange. Severn Valley type.
8. Jar with narrow neck and outplayed rim of about 125 mm diameter. Similar ware to 7.
9. Straight-sided mug or beaker. Small bead rim, about 100 mm diameter, body about 5 mm thick. Similar ware to 7 and 8. First half of second century.
10. Black-burnished ware jar. *Gillam* form 122 is probably the nearest. A.D. 120-180.
11. Plain rim dish with irregular lattice decoration in black-burnished ware. Probably second century.
12. Samian. Form *Walters* 79. A dish of the second half of the second century.
13. Samian. Conical cup form *Drag.* 33, Central Gaulish. Slight groove halfway down external wall. Mid second century.

Most of the above pottery can be placed between the dates of A.D. 150 and 300. There are no sherds that can be stated to be definite first or fourth century types. On the present evidence it can be said that a building with a tiled roof was likely to have been in use for a period in the second to third centuries.

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