

POTTERY FROM THE GRIMESCAR KILN SITE, HUDDERSFIELD

The Reverend E. S. Pickup

Foreword by Peter Davey

Edward Stanley Pickup was educated at Keble College, Oxford (BA 1932; MA 1935) and Lincoln Theological College (graduated 1936). He was ordained deacon in 1939 and priest in 1940. He served in the parishes of St Mary the Virgin, Darwen from 1939 to 1942 and St Paul's Blackburn from 1942 to 1943. In 1943 he took an emergency commission as chaplain in the forces where he served until 1946. On returning to Lancashire he became Vicar of Holy Trinity, Darwen until 1950 and of St Annes-on-Sea until 1968. From 1968 till his retirement in 1973 he was Vicar of Garstang.

In addition to these incumbencies, he was the Bishop of Blackburn's examining chaplain for twenty years, from 1952 to 1972 and Rural Dean of Fylde from 1963 to 1968.

In 1973 he joined the Certificate in Practical Archaeology Course in Preston under the auspices of the Institute of Extension Studies of the University of Liverpool. He was a kind, generous man, highly intelligent and full of humour who made a major contribution to the success of this course which was the first of its kind ever to be undertaken in the north of England. Lecturing to him could be daunting: as a new tutor I felt sympathy for the many young curates who had felt the power of his gaze and the acuteness of his observation. Nothing muddled, ambiguous or inaccurate was allowed to pass muster. On the other hand he was ever ready to offer helpful ideas and remarks and to assist in quelling unrest among his fellow students.

As part of the course, he prepared an 'artifact study' of a small pottery kiln group from Grimescar near Huddersfield. When the course ended in 1976 and his Certificate had been gained, Edward kindly agreed to edit a number of the studies and surveys which the students has prepared and to help produce a short monograph to publish them. Unfortunately, he died suddenly before this project had been able to progress very far and the various papers have resided in files in the University ever since. It is a great pleasure to record this note of appreciation and to thank the Merseyside Archaeological Society for agreeing to publish this brief, but very useful paper, as a tribute to its author.

INTRODUCTION

This is an examination of six small boxes of sherds recovered from the kiln site at Grimescar, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, in 1955. All are coarse Roman pottery and are derived from 115 different vessels. Many more similar sherds exist, lodged in the Tolson Memorial

Museum at Huddersfield; a few of these have been published. It is suggested that Grimescar was a tiliary serving the neighbouring fort of Slack and to a lesser degree Castleshaw, and that the presence of the local clay and of the kiln prompted the manufacture of a limited number of types of coarse pottery for use at Slack. In the Tolson Museum are many examples of pottery types covering the whole range of vessels likely to be found on such a site as Slack; a few of these have been published.

The complete absence of certain types of pottery from excavation at Grimescar seem to indicate that there was no habitation there, but that it was simply a work place served locally. It is also suggested that the pottery made here went exclusively to Slack and consequently that this particular fabric is unique, to be found only at Grimescar and Slack; and that resemblances may be sought and comparisons made, with pottery from other sites only on grounds of style.

The Sites

The Grimescar kiln site (SE 121191) is situated at a height of some 160m OD nearly five kilometres east of the fort at Slack (SE 0817) and 1.5km south of the road running eastward from Slack. The fort, which is now overlaid by the M62 motorway, was planted by Agricola on the road from Chester to York, replacing a track crossing the Pennines further south. This road in turn was later replaced by another running further north.

The history of Slack, and therefore, of its dependent kiln site, depends on the use of these roads. It can be reliably dated. The first fort was built about AD 80 by Agricola to guard the new lateral road; it was for a quingenary cohort, with defences of timber and earth, and buildings of timber and thatch. In about AD 100 some buildings, including the bath house, were re-erected in stone with tile roofs. It was occupied by the fourth cohort of Breuci, originating in Pannonia. Tiles stamped COHIIIBRE are common at Slack and Grimescar, and one has been found at Castleshaw (SD 9909), a smaller fort some 11km south west of Slack on the road to Chester. In about AD 125 the garrison was reduced to about 100 men and a stone barrack block and cookhouses were built. About AD 140 the garrison was withdrawn and the fort abandoned (Richmond 1925). Activity at Grimescar may confidently be confined within the limits of AD 80 to 140.

Excavation and Reports

The Grimescar kiln site was discovered in 1590 AD, and is reported in the Dodsworth MSS in the Bodleian

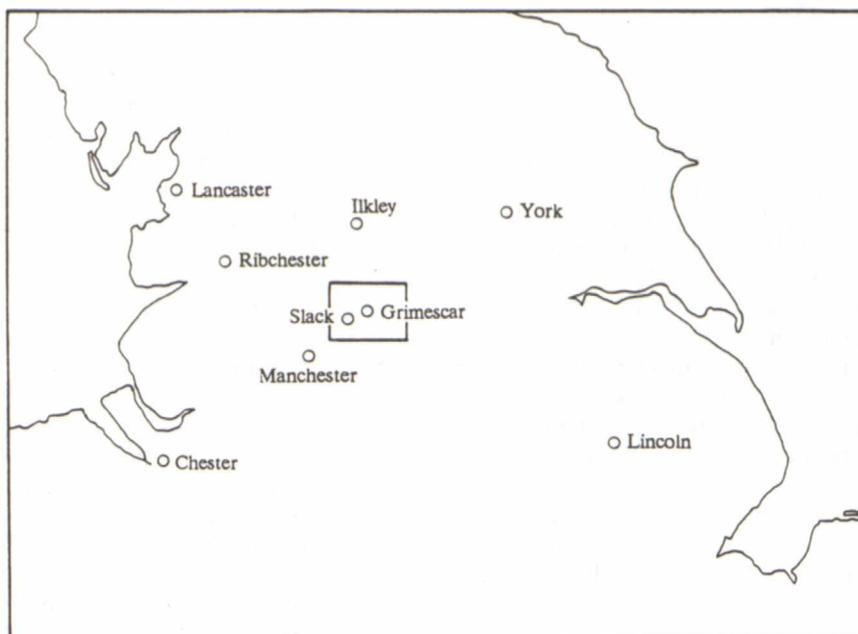


Figure 1: Map showing Roman sites c. AD 100 and the area of Fig. 2.

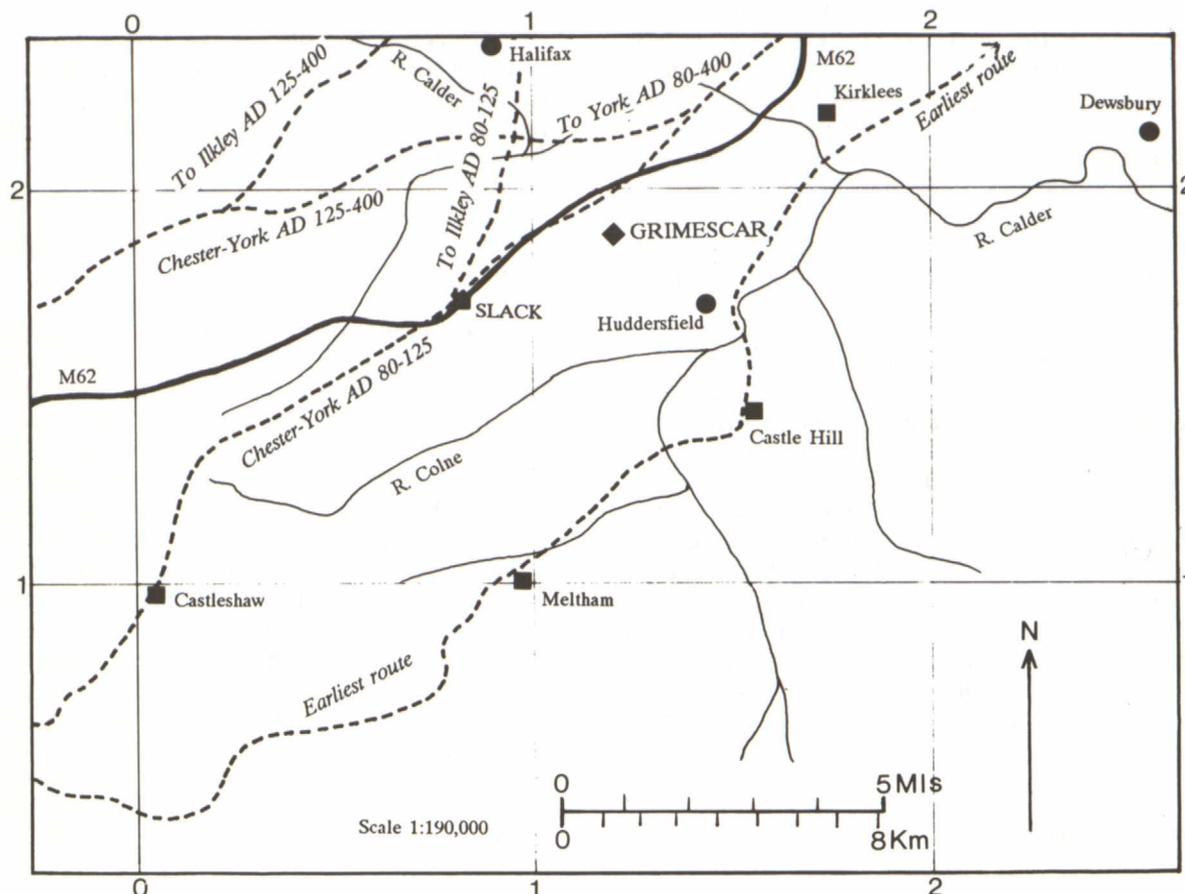


Figure 2: Location map showing ancient and modern trans-Pennine route systems.
Key: ● Modern towns, ■ Sites in Roman times, ◆ Grimescar kiln site --- Ancient trans-Pennine routes.

Library at Oxford (Richmond 1925, 57). Purdy (1973), reporting on excavations in 1964, refers to previous work in 1954 and 1955, attributing the work in 1955 to Miss A. M. Maltby (Mrs Hallam), and making reference to Hallam (1965). This last report has not been seen, but it is likely that the pottery reviewed in this paper is derived from the excavations in 1955. Purdy (1973) goes on to confirm that tile making at Grimescar coincides with the building periods at Slack; its information on pottery made there will be included in the Discussion section of this paper. Illustrations of forty-six items of coarse Roman pottery are included.

Richmond (1925, 109), gives references to early excavations at Slack, including Leland's Itineraries and Camden, and mentioning work in 1866 and 1869-70. A report on excavations at Slack in 1913-15 (Dodds and Woodward 1922) has not been seen by the author but some of its findings are mentioned in Purdy (1973). The latest work is reported in Hunter (1970); forty-five items of coarse Roman pottery are illustrated. Richmond (1925) illustrates forty-four such items.

Descriptions of Objects and Comparisons (Figures 1-5)

Some of the objects can confidently be assigned to one type of vessel, but others are doubtful; with a rim only, it is impossible to distinguish between dishes and bowls, for instance. It has been thought best to retain the classification used in the original of the sherds in six boxes; two boxes containing sherds in the same category. The five categories then are:

- A. Flat rims with straight walls
- B. Flat rims with curved walls
- C. Everted rims
- D. Bases
- E. Lids

The objects, however, are not numbered within these categories, but consecutively from 1 to 115. All the drawings (Figs. 3-6) have been reduced to one third of life size.

The first entry after each number gives the inked entry on each sherd or group of sherds belonging to the same vessel; presumably it refers to the find spot at Grimescar of the objects. Because of the restricted distribution of Grimescar products, comparisons for fabric and shape can properly be made only with the wasters from Grimescar and the finished product from Slack. Comparisons for shape have been made; occasionally the very common decoration used at Grimescar, by reeding or grooving, has been neglected in making such comparisons. The following abbreviations are used in this section:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| R | = Richmond 1923 |
| V (for Vindolanda) | = Hird 1977 |
| N (for Northwich) | = Jones 1972 |

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| G | = Gillam 1968 |
| Grim | = Purdy 1973 |
| W (for Wilderspool) | = Hartley 1973 |
| P (for Pen Llystyn) | = Hogg 1969 |
| A (for Amphitheatre) | = Thompson 1976 |
| S (for Slack) | = Hunter 1970 |

It is to be noted that all these references apart from Richmond (1925), are later than Gillam 1968. All comparisons are with objects dated between AD 80-140.

A. Flat Rims with straight walls.

1. GS B5. Dish in pinkish red fabric; fairly coarse, fairly soft. Crumbs have dropped out from the fabric. R73, no. 83, V no. 71.
2. GS B5. Dish/bowl in sandy brown fabric; coarse and soft.
3. GS 55. Dish/bowl in light brown fabric. Smooth and soft. R73, no. 82.
4. GS 14. Dish/bowl in orange brown fabric. Coarse, badly cracked (over fired?). V no. 373.
5. GS D11. Dish/bowl in light brown fabric. Coarse, soft, cracking.
6. GS F2. Dish/bowl in sandy brown fabric. Coarse, soft. Marking on outside but no decipherable pattern. V no. 225.
7. GS F2. Dish/bowl in sandy brown fabric. Coarse, soft.
8. GS 56. Dish bowl in sandy brown fabric. Coarse, hard (overfired?). V no. 81.
9. GS 55. Dish/bowl in reddish fabric. Coarse, hard. Cracked (overfired?). R 46 no. 81. V no. 489 and no. 72. N 68, No. 15.
10. GS 55. Dish/bowl in light brown fabric. Smooth, hard.
11. GS F2. Dish/bowl in pinkish red fabric. Coarse, soft. V no. 89 and no. 489. N 68 no. 15. no. 9 *supra*.
12. GS 56. Dish bowl in sandy brown fabric. Coarse, hard. Cracked.
13. -- --. Rim of dish/bowl in light brown fabric. Coarse, soft. V no. 225. no. 6 *supra*.
14. GS A3?. Dish/bowl in pinkish red fabric. Fairly coarse, fairly hard, with some fine insertions.
15. GS F1. Dish/bowl in orange brown fabric, with darker patches on fractures. This has, exceptionally a beaded rather than a flat rim. G no. 216.
16. GS 55. Dish/bowl in reddish brown fabric. Coarse, hard. Cracked (overfired?). S 90, no. 1, no. 303, V no. 163 and no. 223. N 73 and no. 57.

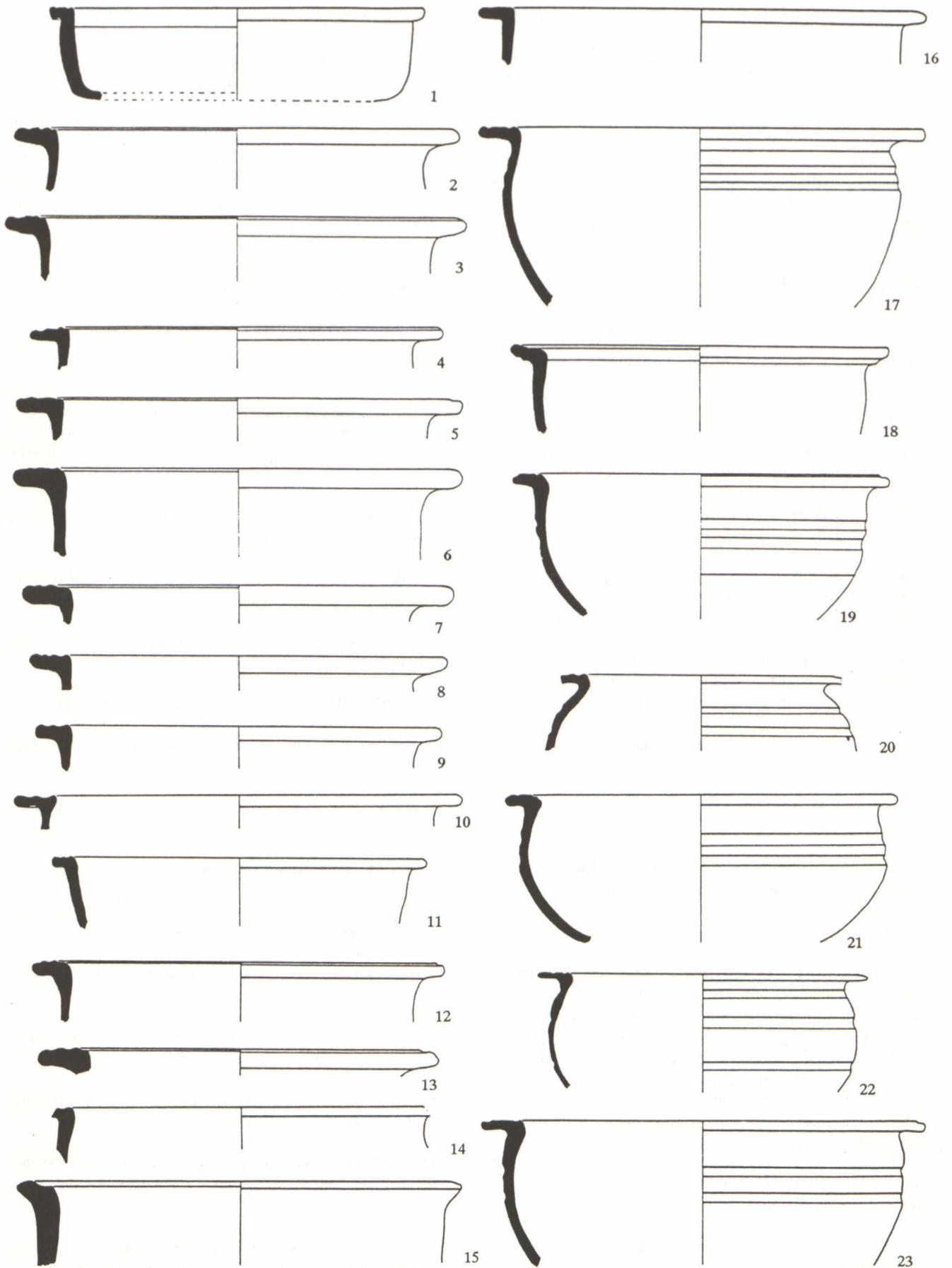


Figure 3: Pottery illustrations: Flat rims with straight walls, nos. 1-16; Flat rims with curved walls, nos. 17-23. Scale $\frac{1}{3}$

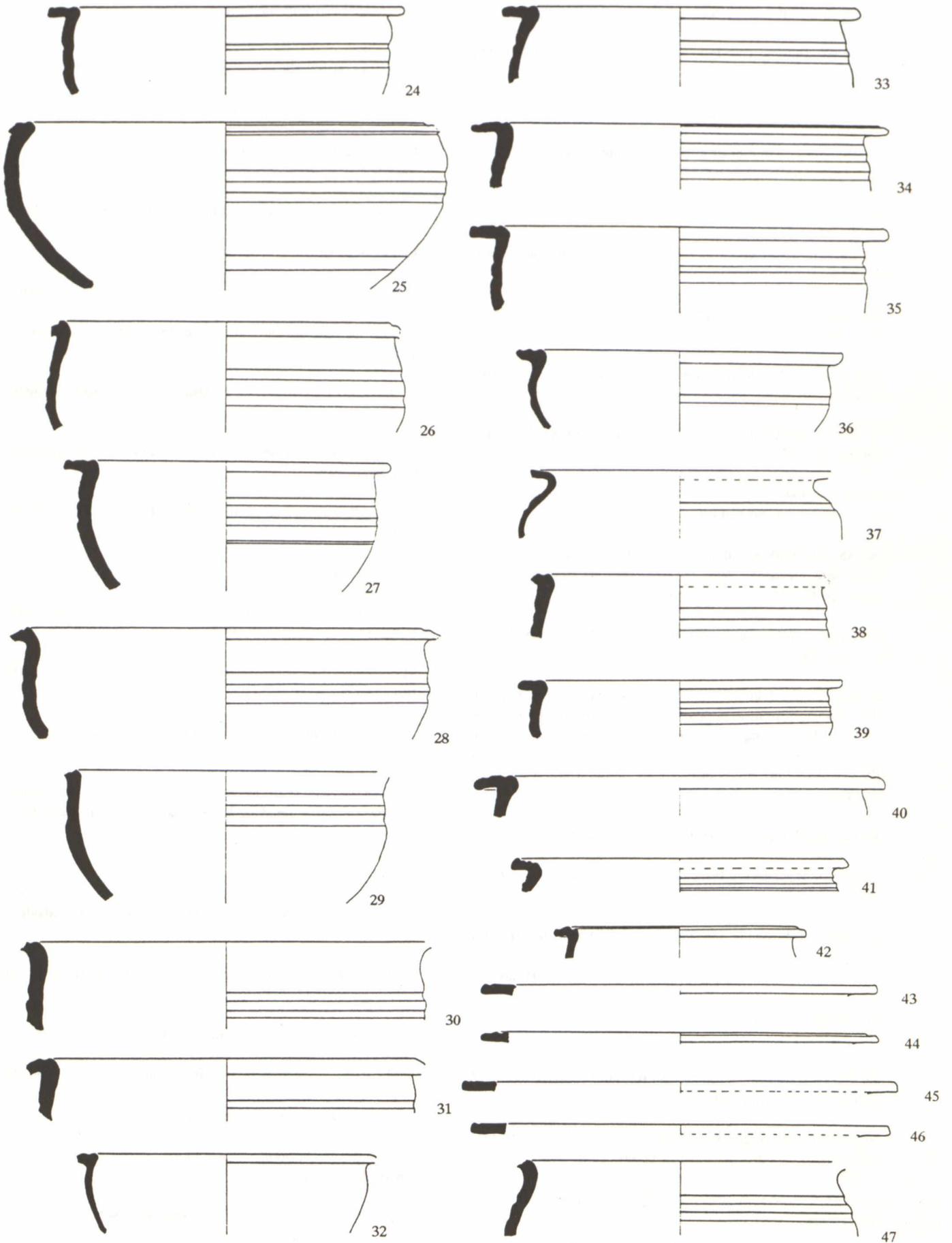


Figure 4: Pottery illustrations: Flat rims with curved walls, nos. 24-47. Scale 1/3

B. Flat rims with curved walls.

17. GS A8. Bowl in pale red fabric. Fairly smooth, hard. N 68, no. 15.
18. GS --. Bowl in sandy pink fabric. Fairly smooth, soft.
19. GS A8. Carinated bowl in pale pink fabric. Fairly fine, fairly hard. Grim 104. no. 11.
20. GS G9. Bowl in yellowish fabric. Fairly smooth, hard.
21. GS A8. Carinated bowl in buff fabric. Fairly rough, soft. Grim 104, no. 12.
22. GS G4. Bowl in light brown fabric. Rough; flaking (overfired?).
23. GS A8. Bowl in pinkish brown fabric. Fairly hard. Grim 104, no. 11. no. 19 *supra*.
24. GS A5. Bowl/dish in sandy pink fabric. Fairly hard. V no. 224 and no. 165.
25. GS K3. Bowl in light brown fabric with reddish tinges. Fairly hard, edge of rim broken off.
26. GS A6. Bowl in dull red fabric, darkened inside and out. Hard, with inclusions. Was the rim, with its steep downward angle, spoiled in the course of firing?
27. GS A8. Bowl in sandy pink fabric. Fairly hard. Grim 104, no. 9. V no. 224.
28. GS A8. Bowl in dull red fabric, darkened inside and out. Hard with inclusions and pits. Rim mis-shaped so it had to be corrected for drawing. Grim 104, no. 7. W, no. 48. no. 26 *supra*.
29. GS A8. Bowl in reddish brown fabric. Hard, with some inclusions.
30. GS A8. Bowl/dish in reddish brown fabric. Soft.
31. GS A8. Bowl/dish in brownish red fabric. Hard, rough. G no. 215.
32. GS 21. Dish/bowl in light fabric. Rough, flaking (overfired?).
33. GS A8. Bowl in light brown fabric. Soft. Grim 104, no. 11.
34. GS A8. Bowl in pink fabric. Fine, very hard. Grim 104, no. 8.
35. GS D14. Bowl in dull brownish red fabric. Rough and hard, with inclusions. Grim 104, no. 9. no. 27 *supra*.
36. GS G4. Dish in greyish brown fabric, grey black on surface. Soft. Bits of clay dropped on rim before firing. V no. 165.
37. GS G9. Bowl with edge of rim broken, in pale brown fabric. Fairly hard.
38. GS A8. Bowl with rim broken off in pale brown fabric. Fairly hard.
39. GS A8. Bowl/dish in pinky brown fabric. Soft.
40. GS G6. Bowl/dish in light brown fabric. Soft.
41. GS G12. Bowl in pinky brown fabric. Fairly hard. Rim slopes inward.
42. GS A8. Bowl in pinkish red fabric. Fairly smooth, fairly hard.
43. GS A8. Flat rim only in pale red fabric. Smooth, fairly hard.
44. GS A8. Flat rim only in pale red fabric. Smooth, fairly hard.
45. GS A8. Flat rim only in dull reddish brown fabric. Rough, hard.
46. GS A8. Flat rim only in pinkish buff fabric. Soft. Diameter doubtful.
47. GS A8. Wall and vestigial rim of bowl in reddish pink fabric. Soft, badly worn.
48. GS A9. Wall and vestigial rim of bowl in pinky brown fabric. Soft.
49. GS A8. Wall of dish/bowl in pale brown fabric. Soft.
50. GS A8. Wall and vestigial foot of wide vessel in red fabric, darkened on outside only. Hard.
51. GS A8. Wall sherd of wide vessel in darkish buff fabric. Rough, soft.
52. -- --. Wall sherd of wide vessel in sandy pink fabric. Rough, soft.
53. GS G14. Wall sherd in pinkish brown fabric, sandy brown on outside. Very soft, cracking badly. Diameter not measurable.

C. Everted rims.

54. GS A1. Jar in brownish red fabric, darkened on outside. Hard. R 74, no. 60.
55. GS GL4. Jar in sandy brown fabric. Fairly soft. R 74, no. 56. V no. 290.
56. GS GL3. Jar in sandy brown fabric. Fairly soft.
57. GS B11. Jar in light brown fabric. Fairly hard. R 74, no. 44.
58. GS B8. Jar in pale brown fabric. Hard.
59. GS B8. Jar in orange brown fabric. Very soft. R 74, no. 15 (in rustic ware) for shape.
60. GS 55. Jar in pinkish brown fabric. Very soft.

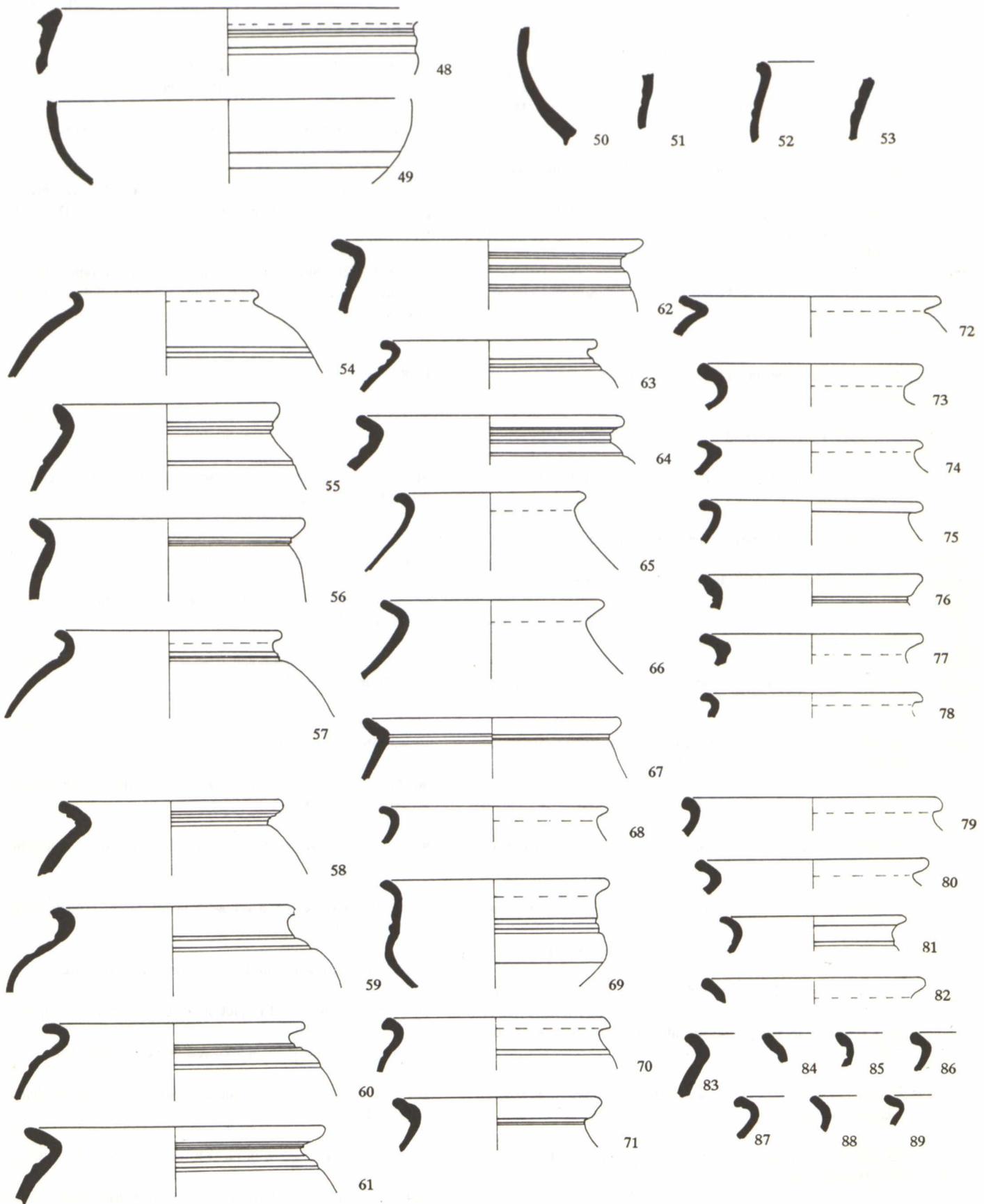


Figure 5: Pottery illustrations: Flat rims with curved walls, nos. 48-53; Everted rims, nos. 54-89. Scale 1/3

61. GS 55. Jar in red fabric. Fairly hard. P 174, no. 27.
62. GS 55. Jar in dull red fabric. Soft.
63. GS G9. Jar in pale brown fabric. Fairly hard. Adhesion of clay crumb forms blemish on rim. G no. 102. R 74, no. 44. no. 57, *supra*.
64. GS A8. Jar in reddish pink fabric. Soft, very badly worn.
65. GS G1. Jar in dark sandy brown fabric. Very soft, abraded. Some darker inclusions and some pits. R 73, no. 3 and R 74, no. 61.
66. GS B-. Jar in reddish brown fabric. Hard. Some inclusions.
67. GS GL3. Jar in sandy brown fabric. Fairly soft.
68. GS A8. Jar/bowl in sandy brown fabric (*cf.* no. 55 *supra*). Fairly soft.
69. GS A8. Carinated bowl in sandy brown fabric. Fairly soft.
70. GS A2. Jar in sandy brown fabric. Fairly soft. P 174, no. 18. A 208, no. 6.
71. GS GL4. Jar in sandy brown fabric. Fairly soft.
72. GS M1. Jar in reddish brown fabric. Hard, some inclusions.
73. GS G14. Jar in light brown fabric. Soft, crumbling; cracks and lines. P 174, no. 28. A 208, no. 7.
74. GS G14. Jar in light brown fabric. Soft, crumbling; bad cracks and lines.
75. GS A5. Jar in reddish brown fabric. Hard, some inclusions. R 74, no. 29.
76. GS GL3. Jar in light brown fabric. Fairly soft.
77. GS F2. Jar in light brown fabric (*cf.* no. 73 *supra*). Soft, badly worn.
78. GS A8. Jar in reddish brown fabric. Hard, some inclusions.
79. GS A8. Jar in pinkish brown fabric (*cf.* no. 60 *supra*). Soft.
80. GS G6. Jar in pinkish brown fabric (*cf.* no. 60 *supra*). Soft.
81. GS 55. Jar in pinkish brown fabric (*cf.* no. 60). Soft. G no. 110.
82. GS L4. Rim only of jar in sandy brown fabric. Fairly soft. Diameter doubtful.
83. GS GL3. Rim and neck of jar in light brown fabric. Fairly soft. Diameter unknown.
84. GS 55. Rim of jar in pinkish brown fabric, brown grey outside, brown buff inside. Soft. Diameter unknown.
85. GS 55. Rim and neck of jar in dull red fabric. Soft; edge of rim abraded. Diameter unknown.
86. GS A5. Rim and neck of jar in bright pink fabric. Very soft crumbling. Diameter unknown. P 174, no. 23.
87. GS A8. Rim and neck of jar in reddish pink fabric. Soft, badly worn. Diameter unknown.
88. GS G4. Rim and neck of jar in pinkish red fabric, brown grey outside, brown buff inside (*cf.* no. 84 *supra*). Soft. Diameter unknown.
89. GS 55. Rim and neck of jar in pinkish brown fabric, brown grey inside, brown buff outside (*cf.* no. 84 *supra*). Soft. Diameter unknown
- D. Bases.**
90. GS D10. Flat-bottomed base in pinkish brown fabric. Fairly rough; soft. G no. 110 (from Slack).
91. GS D10. Flat-bottomed base, with omphalos, in pinkish brown fabric. Rough, hard.
92. GS A8. Hollow-bottomed base in sandy-brown fabric. Coarse, hard. Very narrow foot-ring. G. no. 109.
93. --, 10 Hollow-bottomed base, with omphalos in sandy brown fabric. Smooth, hard. V no. 324.
94. GS A8. Hollow-bottomed base in dull red fabric. Smooth, hard. Grim 104, no. 3.
95. GS D11. Hollow-bottomed base, with omphalos, in reddish brown fabric. Coarse, soft.
96. GS F2. Hollow-bottomed base, with omphalos, in pinkish brown fabric. Fairly smooth, very soft.
97. GS A5. Hollow-bottomed base with omphalos, in bright pink fabric. Very soft. V no. 205.
98. GS A8. Base sherd in yellowish brown fabric. Rough; fairly hard. V no. 152.
99. GS A8. Base sherd in dull red fabric. Smooth, hard.
100. GS A8. Base sherd in pinkish yellow fabric. Rough, hard.
101. GS B13. Base sherd in dull red fabric. Smooth, hard.
102. GS B8. Base sherd in pinkish brown fabric. Smooth, hard. Grim 104, no. 3.
103. GS A1-. Base sherd in pinkish red fabric. Rough; soft.
104. GS A8. Base sherd in yellowish brown fabric. Rough, fairly hard.
105. GS A8. Base in dull red fabric. Smooth, hard. V no. 12.

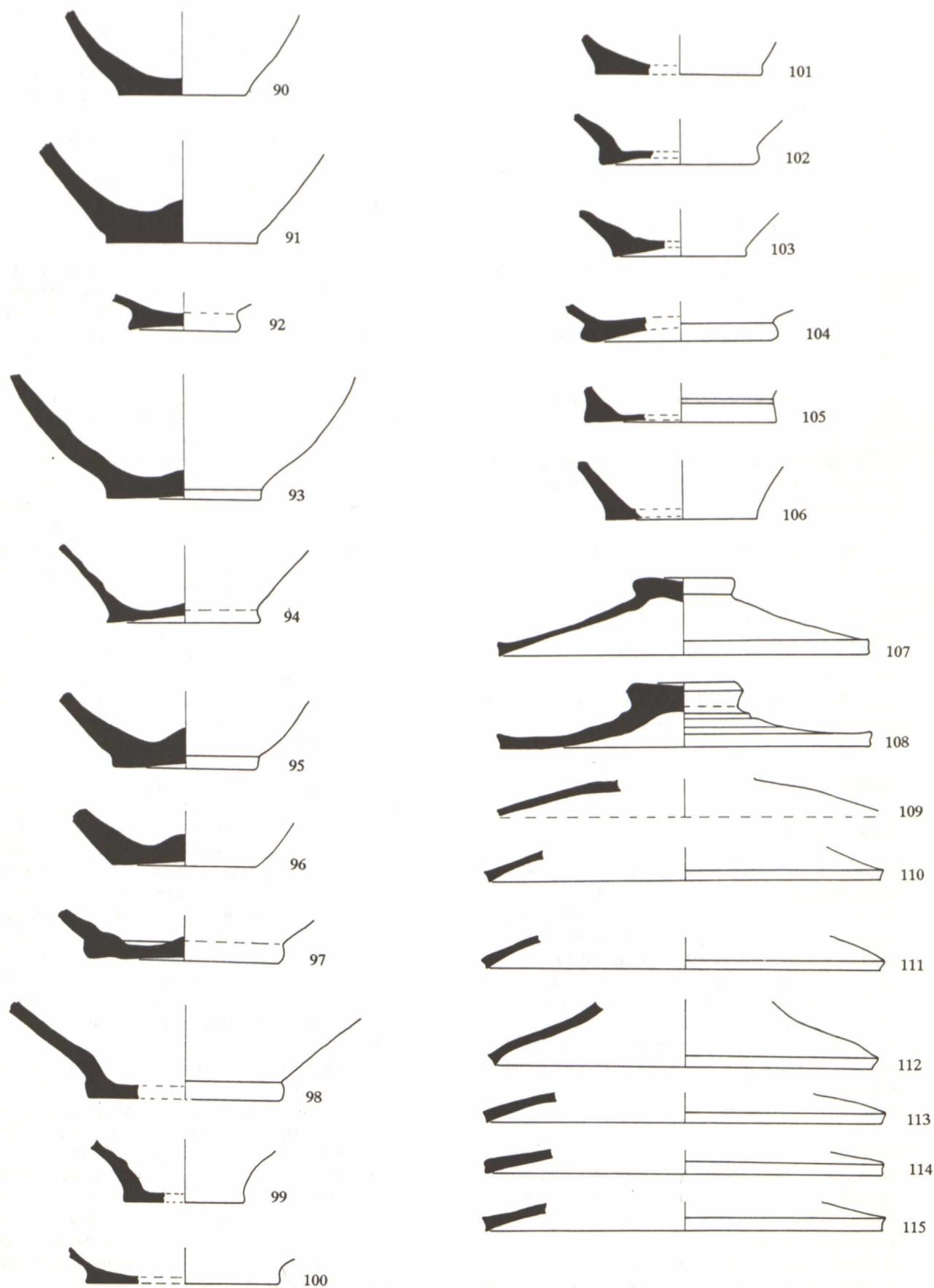


Figure 6: Pottery illustrations: Bases, nos. 90-106; Lids, nos. 107-115. Scale $\frac{1}{3}$

106. GS -4. Base sherd in pinkish red fabric. Smooth, hard. Cracks.

E. Lids

107. GS B-. Lid in reddish brown fabric. Fairly hard. Badly warped, accurate drawing is difficult. R 68, figure 42 (photograph). Grim 105, no. 32. V no. 256.

108. GS F2. Lid in pale brown fabric. Hard.

109. GS D11. Wall and vestigial handle of lid in reddish brown fabric. Fairly hard. V no. 471.

110. GS D11. Wall and rim of lid in reddish brown fabric. Fairly hard.

111. GS D11. Wall and rim of lid in reddish brown fabric. Fairly hard.

112. GS A8. Wall and rim of lid in reddish brown fabric (*cf.* no. 107 *supra*). S 91 no. 19. Fairly hard. One of the three sherds is discoloured.

113. GS K3. Wall and rim of lid in dull pink fabric. Fairly hard. V no. 155.

114. GS A8. Wall and rim of lid in pinkish brown fabric. Fairly hard.

115. GS A8. Wall and rim of lid in light brown fabric, with purple tinge on outside. Hard. Rim badly mis-shaped, difficult to estimate.

DISCUSSION

Date and Range of Pottery

Activity at Grimescar is firmly dated by the association of its products with the established dates of the fort at Slack. Coins, samian ware, coarse pottery and dates of reconstruction all correspond with military activities and road construction in Northern England date the fort at Slack closely to between 80 and 140 AD (Richmond 1925). Later coarse pottery found at Slack is connected only with civilian occupation of the site, and none of it is from Grimescar. Apart from the association with finds at Slack the only indication of dates is a statement in Purdy (1973) that the kiln had lasted long enough to have its roof repaired.

Probably the reason for the kiln's existence was the need for building material such as tiles and hypocaust elements, which make up the bulk of the finds (Purdy 1973). Obviously in a place so remote from other known ceramic activity, and so far from the sea, it was desirable that a local source be found for the manufacture of these heavy articles. Even at Ravenglass it was thought expedient to establish a tiliary at Muncaster; here, however, there was no pottery made

at any of the three kilns (Bellhouse 1960; 1961). But at Grimescar certain types of pottery were made. These types were for use exclusively at Slack, and they included only the coarser and less elegant types. There was obviously no possibility of establishing an export market from so remote a place and for such types. Indeed, Slack itself, by no means patronised Grimescar with any enthusiasm. Purdy (1973) states that the pottery in the fabrics produced at Grimescar forms one eighth of the pottery from Slack.

This pottery is in the same ware as that from which the tiles were made -- red and cream fabrics (Purdy, 1973). Other wares are plentiful at Slack, and are either completely absent or very sparsely represented at Grimescar. Figured and plain samian, much 'grey ware' (so labelled in the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield), black burnished ware and rusticated ware are not at Grimescar. Similarly, the more ambitious or delicate types of vessel are missing, mortaria, amphorae, beakers, and flagons. Purdy (1975) among forty-six illustrations of pottery from Slack has nine reeded rimmed bowls, seven cooking pots, seven flagon sherds, two beakers, five lids, two jars untypical of Grimescar, perhaps a mortarium rim, two shouldered jars, six sherds of dark grey or rusticated ware, and a 'kiln prop'. But these show the whole range of pottery and do not represent the proportions of its constituent types; and it is clear from examining the Grimescar pottery in the Tolson Museum that the types catalogued in his paper make up the staple products of Grimescar. The others were either carried into Grimescar by workmen or soldiers, or represent an abortive attempt at something at something other than coarse bowls, dishes, jars and lids.

These products are far from attractive even when they were well enough made to be transported to Slack. They are even less attractive when collected together as finds from Grimescar; for apart from accidental breakage, the pottery catalogued and drawn here consists of 'wasters' or failures, defective in fabric and shape, spoilt by poor mixing, building or firing. It is interesting to ask about each piece, and sometimes easy to answer, the question, 'Why was this rejected?' But it is not always certain what was the intention of the potter; sometimes perhaps he has produced a shape like no other type, and broken it as a failure.

Comparisons present difficulty. The Grimescar fabric is coarse, and is probably used for pottery because nothing else is available; and incompetent firing gives a wide variety of fabric and colour. As for shapes, it is not very profitable to find parallels between Grimescar and one-eighth of the pottery from Slack, because identity is already established. It is useless to look for Grimescar products elsewhere. All that is possible is to try and see how far Grimescar types correspond with the general development of pottery in a military establishment between AD 80 and 140, or are affected by the shape of types imported into Slack from other sources. There must, of course, be many resemblances which are

coincidental or are inherent in the type of vessel being made.

In one thing Grimescar pottery is outstanding. The only decoration favoured by the potter, or the only one he was competent to attempt, was the groove or reed. Given a flat rim, he reeds it; a wall or curve is grooved. This makes exact correspondences more difficult to find. Resemblances outside Slack, then, are elusive, first because the range is limited to bowls, dishes, jars and lids; secondly, because of Grimescar's over-indulgence in grooves; and finally because imitation is one-way only. Grimescar might learn from the world in general, but outside Slack no one will be able, or indeed have any desire, to learn from Grimescar.

A. Flat rims with straight walls

One vessel is certainly a dish; perhaps most of the others are dishes, but the wall of each sherd is too small to give any certainty. The rim shapes apart from nos. 15 and 16, have a general resemblance to each other. There are no exact parallels in shape and fabric in Gillam (1968) unless the Grimescar grooves are overlooked. The rims are wide, and the number of groovings vary with the width; five rims of width between 29 and 25mm have three grooves; of seven between 23 and 20mm, four have three grooves and three have two; two of between 13 and 11mm have two.

No. 15 is outside this flat rimmed category; it has a beaded rim. What there is of it resembles Gillam (1968) no. 216; but this latter has a carination of which there is no indication in no. 15.

B. Flat rims with curved walls

There is a general resemblance within the group of rims and grooved walls. It is doubtful whether no. 18 has the rim shape for which it was designed; no. 22 looks too fragile in its rim shape; the outward slope of nos. 26, 28 and 31 at the rim could well be a mistake in stacking. No. 21, and, less convincingly, no. 19 might be carinated bowls. If so they might belong to Gillam, 1968, no. 215. Purdy (1973) rather bewilderingly, claims that Gillam's 215 deals with hemispherical bowls. Perhaps for both no. 19 and 21 the 'carinated' ought to be deleted, and 'hemispherical' substituted.

C. Everted rims

In this group most of the vessels are described as jars. It is uncertain whether they are jars or cooking pots. If the Grimescar pieces are all wasters, any cooking pots would be destroyed before coming into contact with a cooking fire and being blackened thereby. The comparisons with Vindolanda vessels are on shape only.

D. Bases

This is difficult; there seems to be no established

typology of bases. These bases have a family resemblance in that they all have a heel, and none has an angle in the inside where the wall curves up from the foot. None has a genuine properly shaped footring. It is strange that the only resemblance to no. 91, which combines a flat bottom with an omphalos is in Collingwood 1976, 283 A; and this in Derbyshire ware, too late for Grimescar; this must be an accident of publication.

E. Lids

Two things are striking about these lids. The first is that the proportion of nine lids (11 sherds) out of 115 pieces seems high when compared with all other sites except Vindolanda, which has an even higher proportion. Did the cooking methods of the Breuci demand more lids or were the lids more difficult to make and had a high proportion of failures or were other materials used for lids? The second is the Grimescar groove showing predominantly even on a lid in no. 108.

FURTHER STUDY

More work on Grimescar might be profitable. There is much unpublished pottery from Grimescar and Slack at the Tolson Memorial Museum in Huddersfield. A statistical analysis of its different types might yield information on the important subject of the relations between a Roman fort and its subsidiary pottery kiln. Holt is not a proper analogy, since it is attached to a legionary fortress, nor is Muncaster, since it is a tilerly only. Something may be learnt if information about Quernmore and its relation to Lancaster is published. Finally, it might be interesting to look for pottery used by the other cohorts of the Breuci in Britain and for that used by the Fourth Cohort on being transferred from Slack to Ebchester. Would lids and grooves again show up prominently?

Acknowledgements

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AN INSCRIPTION AT THURSTASTON

John Evans

Thurstaston Common is situated on the mid Wirral sandstone ridge. The area comprises about one square kilometre of natural woodland, scrub and sandstone outcrops. From the summit plateau at 90m above sea level, the southern boundary is defined by a steep escarpment falling away to meet the A540 road between Heswall and Caldy. It was on these slopes that a member of the Wirral Group noticed an inscription carved into an outcrop (Fig. 1).

The inscription, which is cut into a smooth fault-free section of bedrock, is rectangular in shape and measures 1m x 0.4m. The section slopes at 30°, dipping into the soil along one short side, whilst the longer edges are bounded by a slightly overhanging cliff and a short vertical drop into the soil on the opposite side. Cut some 2mm deep, the marks are in good condition with the exception of one small area where erosion is almost complete.

The inscription appears to be of some antiquity and the survival of the marks in such good condition may be attributed to several factors. Situated in a relatively remote and unfrequented part of the common, the section has escaped the attention of subsequent 'engravers' and vandals, whilst erosion has been minimised by the hardness of the rock. The presence of this hard rock was noted by T.A. Jones (Hon. Sec. Liverpool Geographic Society), who, when referring to the soft Wirral sandstone, said, 'in the Thurstaston area a hard inconstant band is present' (Beazley 1924). Protection from the elements is provided by the previously mentioned overhanging rock and generous tree cover, whilst the inscription is close to ground level and may have been covered periodically by a layer of turf. The turf factor would account for the irregular erosion pattern and may explain why the inscription is not mentioned by any of the noted Wirral antiquarians (Beazley 1924, 201; Brownbill 1928; Picton 1913 *et al.*).

To the writer's knowledge there is no precedent for an inscription of this kind and it was thought that the best approach to a postulated solution would be to select groups of symbols within the inscription which have a similar format and consider them in isolation. If parallels to these could be found from other sources then by association, some context, dating and interpretation might be inferred.

The inscription was therefore divided into three groups, comprising those symbols in the first line, the second and third lines, and those in the fourth line.

The figures in the first line appear to have some common structural characteristics with symbols occasionally appearing in church registers, from earliest entries to the latter half of the 17th century. These