

The " Halsmede " Site

BY VYVYAN F. REES.

DR. DAVEY'S report in the last issue of the TRANSACTIONS described the investigations carried out in the Roman cemetery around King Harry Lane up to the end of 1935. During 1936 it has been possible to undertake further work in the garden at " Halsmede." This has brought to light twenty-six more burial groups. The ground uncovered lay adjacent to that excavated under the supervision of Dr. Davey and, as was only to be expected, the groups in their essential characteristics of form and date differ hardly, if at all, from those already described by him. If anything, the apparent lack of order in their placing is even more marked, indicating that as the burials receded from the frontage on to what is now King Harry Lane, their importance declined. Of the twenty-six groups eleven consisted of the solitary vessel containing the ashes. The smaller vessels accompanying the others provide in several cases interesting types, and among them are three lamps, one stamped with the name of " Fortis," its maker, and another so small as to be almost a miniature; but it is evident from the charring on it that it had been used. In the black ash surrounding one burial were fragments of a " tear bottle." When pieced together it was obvious that the bottle had been subjected, before being broken, to severe heat because the glass had become distorted by fusion.

One urn found intact is a particularly fine specimen standing eleven inches high with a girth around its widest circumference of thirty-six inches. One coin was found, an " as " of Domitian (A.D. 72-96).

Apart from its association with the Roman cemetery the " Halsmede " site has yielded a diversity of finds, including a quantity of worked flints, fragments of painted mediaeval tiles, Nuremburg counters, a spur of approximately A.D. 1400, an Elizabethan silver half groat and copper coins of the Stuart Kings.

The more perfect pieces of the Roman finds have been loaned to the Institute of Archaeology at St. John's Lodge, Regent's Park, and the whole collection will be offered on loan to the Verulamium Museum when it is built.

THE ^{1<} BRESCIA " SITE.

Through the kindness of Mr. Hill, of " Brescia," St. Stephens, trial trenches were dug during 1936 in a field lying between " Brescia " and the South Gate of Verulamium. The surface of Watling Street was found lying in a direct line between the South Gate and the point where the present Watling Street ends at its junction with the St. Albans-Watford Road. Another trench revealed what appears to be the ditch on the east side of this road. It contained a number of sherds, many of which are clearly Belgic in type. It was not possible to make a complete examination at this point, but with Mr. Hill's permission it is hoped that this will be done during 1937.

INVENTORY OF BURIAL GROUPS FOUND IN THE
HALSMEDE SITE DURING 1936.

N.B.—Unless otherwise stated, every group was from eighteen inches to two feet below ground surface, measuring" from the ground surface to the rim of the cinerary vessel.

GROUP XCV.

Found on 11th January, 1936.

- No. 260. Buff carinated urn with lid.
No. 261. Lamp of red ware. Traces of grey slip coating.

GROUP XCVI.

Found on 11th January, 1936.

- No. 262. Red urn. "
No. 263. ⁴⁴ Fortis " lamp, black slip on white.
No. 264. Buff dish.
No. 265. Black beaker with raised dot decoration.
(Nos. 263, 264, "265 -were-found inside the urn.

GROUP XCVII.

Found on 11th January, 1936.

- No. 266. Fragmentary.
No. 267. Fragmentary.

GROUP XCVIIL

Found on 11th January, 1936.

- No. 268. Fragmentary. Red urn. Base of another urn used possibly as a lid.

GROUP XCIX.

Found on 12th January, 1936.

- No. 269. Small open bowl containing bone ashes.

GROUP C.

Found on 12th January, 1936.

- No. 270. Fragmentary.
No. 271. Fragmentary.

GROUP CI.

Found on 12th January, 1936.

- No. 272. Buff urn.

GROUP CII.

Found on 19th January, 1936.

- No. 273. Buff urn.

GROUP CIII.

Found on 28th January, 1936.

- No. 274. Black urn.
No. 275. Jug, top half missing, placed inside urn.
No. 276. Cup of coarse red ware, ins. high, rim diameter 1J ins. Girth diameter at widest point 2J ins. Corrugated to within 1 in. of base.

GROUP CIV.

Found on 28th January, 1936.

- No. '277. Buff urn.
No. 278. Cup of coarse red ware—pedestal base. Height 3J ins., rim diameter 2 ins., widest girth 2f ins.—corrugated.
No. 279. Buff jug—early type.

GROUP CV.

Found on 28th January, 1936.

- No. 280. Buff urn, grey slip at base; lid; fragmentary.

GROUP CVI.

Found on 28th January, 1936.

- No. 281. Black urn.

GROUP CVII.

Found on 28th January, 1936.

- No. 282. Buff urn, fragmentary, unusual neck.

GROUP CVIII.

Found on 28th January, 1936.

- No. 283. Red urn with lid.

GROUP CIX.

Found on 28th January, 1936.

- No. 284. Buff urn.
 No. 285. Jug, red ware.
 No. 286. Small red lamp.
 No. 287. Dish, coarse buff ware.
 (Nos. 286 and 287 were inside 284, 287 lying upside down.)

GROUP CX.

Found on 2nd February, 1936.

- No. 288. Small urn containing ashes black ware with grey slip, dot decoration in rows of 10.
 No. 289. Buff jug—traces of grey slip.
 No. 290. Small cup—coarse red ware.

GROUP CXI.

Found on 5th April, 1936.

- No. 291. Buff urn—2 ft. 6 ins. below surface.

GROUP CXII.

Found on 9th April, 1936.

- No. 292. Base of grey urn.
 No. 293. Base of " Tear Bottle."
 No. 294. Neck of ⁴⁴ Tear Bottle."
 (This group was barely eighteen inches below ground surface. The top part had been ploughed away. No trace of rim was found. The base of 293 when pieced together showed that the bottle had been broken in the fire ; owing to the action of the heat on the glass the fragments would not in one place fit perfectly together. The fragments were taken from the wood ash in the grave.)

GROUP CXIII.

Found on 9th April, 1936.

- No. 295. Rim of cup.
 No. 296. 'Rim of cup.
 (This burial again had been ploughed away. There were considerable traces of burning and a quantity of nails, also fragments of a bronze ring and a small bronze nail in two pieces.)

GROUP CXIV.

Found on 9th April, 1936.

A shallow depression in the subsoil filled with black ash containing two nails and fragments of burnt bone, also an " as " of Domitian 18 ins. below surface.

N.B.—The area embracing burials CXI/CXIV was divided by three ditches, two 2 ft. 6 ins. deep and one 2 ft.

GROUP CXV.

Found on 25th April, 1936.

- No. 297. Black urn, native ware 1 ins. high, lattice decoration on shoulder.

GROUP CXVI.

Found on 24th April, 1936.

- No. 298. Large black poppy-head type urn containing knife blade among ashes.
 No. 299. Carinated black bowl, rim treble ribbed.
 No. 300. Beaker of black ware—potsherd in position as lid.

GROUP CXVII.

Fragmentary burial on brink of ditch.

- No. 301. Buff urn, rim and side only.

GROUP CXVIII.

Found on 4th October, 1936.

- No. 302. Large biscuit ware urn.

GROUPS CXIX, CXX.

Found on 4th August, 1936.

- No. 303. ^ Double burial. Fragmentary.
 No. 304./ 2 ft. and 2 ft. 9 ins. deep—CXIX on top of CXX.