June 3 - 1896

WHATCOMBE,
BLANDFORD.

My dear General Pitt Rivers

On my return home last week among a pile of letters & parcels I found your very kind remembrance of me & the gift of the Golf-Stick. How industrious you must have been, for it was not more than 9 months ago I met the expert at his work on his first visit to view the ground. The work shows how successful he has been in selecting the ground. Please accept my best thanks. I had been trying to arrange a day to come over & see you but the recent death of my sister in law (George's widow) which has

just reached us with upon
a long postponement I
was anxious to see your
friendly face & to ask you
to look through my paper
on the Bagber Kiln in
connection. I had a most
delightful time in the
Eastern [illegible] and am
reading up the Geological
history of the Province by
[illegible]. I hope you are
enjoying this beautiful
Summer and fairly well
With my very kind regards
to Mrs Pitt-Rivers

I remain most truly
Yours
J. C. Mansel-Pleydell
Saturday

My hand shakes as it is a cold
is deadly cold today!

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ROMANO-BRITISH BRICK KILN.

In the year 1841 the late Mr. Charles Warne discovered the site of a British-Roman kiln on Bagber Farm, in the parish of Milton Abbas. It contained an innumerable mass of broken pottery of various qualities, the largest proportion being of a smooth close-grained kind of a dark colour, approaching black. Mr. Warne's description so closely corresponded with the pottery found in the Romano-British villages of Woodcastle and Rotherby that General Pitt-Rivers suspected it must have been made at the Bagber Kiln, and asked me to find the site if possible. I felt at first that my chance of success was very slight, for the 50 years which had elapsed since Mr. Warne's time had obliterated all the traces of his work ; but taking into consideration the geological conditions of the neighbourhood, and that the limitation of clay over the chalk districts of the neighbourhood is restricted to the summits and upper slopes of the hills and does not extend down to the level of the valleys, together with the help of the "oldest inhabitant," I tapped the spot. These clay beds are derived from the Lower Tertiaries after removal by denudation, and usually repose upon a bed of clay with flints, resulting from the dissolution of the chalk by atmospheric agencies, and the removal of the atoms in solution with the carbonated water through the cracks and fissures of the underlying rock. The unworn condition of the flints shows that they have not been transported from any distance ; in fact, that they are in situ, deprived of the chalk with which they were originally associated. There is a remarkable bed of pure flint without clay or chalk originating from the same cause, with no previous covering of Tertiary clay. There is a third deposit of brick-earth about a mile south of Delcombe Head, on the highway to Winterbourne Whitechurch, which maintained a brickkiln for some years, but was ultimately abandoned on account of the exhaustion of the clay suitable for bricks. Mr. Warne describes the Bagber Kiln as a rectangular building 44ft. by 25ft., in which was a large amount of fragmentary ware, and with only a few other objects of any interest or value. I have been unable to find any traces of masonry. The three chambers were excavated from the solid chalk. The first, which was circular, was about 6ft. in diameter and cased with a coating of clay nine inches thick, and had been subjected to intense heat. It was empty with the exception of the upper part of a quern and the two halves of a septaria for a use unknown ; they were brought from a distance. In the centre of the middle chamber, which was also circular and communicated with the first, was an undetached solid block of chalk 3ft. long, 2ft. broad, and 3ft. high ; it supported a flatstone of greensand. C. H. Read, Esq., found a table of black clay in a Roman brickkiln at Shoebury, Essex, resting upon it a circular table 3ft. 6in. in diameter, upon which the pottery was placed and piled up to the domed roof to be dried previous to being removed to the kiln. There is evidence of an outside fireplace communicating with an aperture in the wall of the kiln for the admission of heated air. The third chamber, which was the largest, stood eight inches lower level than the other two, and was entered by a step. The walls were rough and showed the marks of the workman's tools. Among the relics was a section of a circular piece of Kimmeridge shale, similar to the one described by Mr. Warne, and was probably a portion of a revolving wheel, to which the potter's table was attached. There were also several triangular, thin, and finely-grained concretionary stones from the Bagshot beds, probably used to knead the clay in preparation for the potter ; and several sorts of clay from the neighbouring Woolwich and Reading beds to mix probably with the local clay for making a finer quality of pottery. Only one piece of Kimmeridge coal-money was found in the kiln, of the type usually found in the district, with three shallow holes on the upper surface and one on the lower—the marks of the bites of the lathe to keep the shale in its place. The only Roman coin was that of Vespasian. Among the few pieces of red Samian ware is a fragment through which a hole is drilled near the edge to receive a leaden rivet to connect it with the opposite fractured edge. This is lost, but its original place is shown by the protruding empty rivet. Another fragment of red Samian ware bears the maker's name Ofnaris, which is stamped on a narrow rectangular label, a name found on Samian ware labels at Colchester. Several Romano-British potteries and kilns have been found in England. The most important are those on the river Ness in Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, which are computed to have covered an area of more than 20 miles. The discovery is due to the late Mr. Artes in 1844. The pottery of these kilns bears a striking resemblance to the New Forest ware. The remains of Romano-British pottery have also been found at Upchurch in Kent, enormous quantities of which are distributed over the county. The archæologist is able to assign peculiar classes of pottery found at considerable distances from each other to the manufactory of Upchurch. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Bagber kilns supplied the district far and wide. Extensive Romano-British potteries have been found in various parts of the New Forest, for instance, Crode Hill (a suggestive name), which the club examined on July 20th, 1892. The enormous number of Roman potteries need not cause surprise when it is taken into consideration the large amount of earthenware used in daily life by the Romans. The New Forest ware differs from that on the Ness, Upchurch, and elsewhere, and can be recognised without difficulty. The abundance of timber and proximity to an inexhaustible supply of clay are the chief causes of the various potteries in the New Forest. Hutchins mentions a pottery at Hinton for all kinds of earthenware. Mr. Artes had the good fortune to find another pottery at Castor, in Northamptonshire, which proved to be of superior quality to the Upchurch pottery. He ascertained their mode of making the bricks of which the kilns were built. The clay of which they were made, after being previously mixed with about one-third of rye in the chaff, was consumed by fire, and left cavities in the room of the grain. Mr. Artes was able to trace these potteries over an area of more than 20 miles.

BAGBER BRITISH BARROW.

The Bagber Barrow stands on the boundary hedge which divides Milborne St. Andrew from Milton Abbas. It is 60ft. long and 8ft. high, but it must have been considerably higher originally than at the present time ; encroachments, levellings by the plough, and atmospheric agencies have done much to diminish its height and breadth, giving it the appearance of a long-barrow, which the interments show not to be the case. That is to say, it is not palæolithic. Mr. Warne describes a circular barrow in the adjoining parish of Dewlish in the "Celtic Antiquities of Dorset," which is so peculiar that it is worthy of notice. "Diameter 82 feet ; the primary interment was an urn let into a cist cut in the chalk sub-soil and covered with flints. The cist was filled with chalk-rubble and covered with a layer of mould, upon which was an interment ; another layer of chalk-rubble succeeded, 2ft. deep, in which was a cist and an interment. Over this was a layer of chalk between two of mould, on each of which was an interment. The Bagber Barrow contained no less than 15 urns, and more were left to be recovered some future day. They were rudely made without the aid of a potter's wheel, and contained calcined bones. Two were inverted ; the mouths of the rest were protected, some with a sarsen stone, others with large heavy flints. The small cup was like the rest filled with calcined bones, probably those of an infant. All were manufactured from local clay, but so imperfectly burnt that they fell to pieces as soon as the surrounding mould was removed. It was thought at one time the urns were sun-baked, but in these islands where the rays of the sun can scarcely penetrate our murky atmosphere this would be impossible, and could only occur in the tropics. The urns were probably moulded on the spot immediately before the interments and semi-baked by a temporary fire. The barrow urns are divided into cinerary urns, food vessels, drinking cups and the so-called incense cups. The cinerary urn usually contains calcined bones ; it is usually only slightly ornamented, but more so than the smaller vessels, except the drinking cups. The food vessels are supposed to have contained offerings of food, and are only found in interments by cremation. Incense cups are so all and only found with burnt bones, with which they are usually filled—children's bones possibly ! The cinerary urn varies considerably in size, form, and ornamentation. The pottery of the barrow and that of the Romano-British possess scarcely anything in common ; the difference is well marked. To avoid the danger of cracks and flaws the Dorset British potter moulded his clay with small pieces of chalk or flint. The earliest decorations appear to have been produced by twisted reed or rush round the urn or pot before being placed in the kiln, and when in a soft plastic state. It is remarkable that no instance occurs of any attempt to delineate a natural object—leaf, flower, or animal. Neolithic man appears to have had no initiative capacity. The ornamentations he delineated were imitative, and in this respect he differed from his palæolithic predecessor, whose artistic powers are exhibited in delineations of the wild animals with which he was associated, on the implements of chase, &c. The ornamentations on the pottery of neolithic man mainly consist of combinations of straight lines in every variety, perpendicular, parallel, crossing each other in every direction. Occasionally these are dotted markings of different shapes made apparently by finger nails. It is a question whether the barrow urns were especially made for sepulchral use only. Mr. Greenwall thinks the balance of evidence is in favour of that view. Their extreme fragility and porousness would make them incapable of holding any liquid ; they could not, I think, have served for any other purpose than a temporary one. It seems more than probable that the barrow urn had no connection with the contemporary domestic ware, but there might be occasional exceptions, when, for instance, the sepulchral urn was not at hand and a domestic vessel was substituted for it. The barrows frequently contain a quantity of fragmentary pottery similar to that found in British dwellings—relics of domestic vessels. The broken sherd taken from the house of the deceased might have had a fetish character in the estimation of superstitious relatives, and great sanctity attached to them. The flints so frequently found mixed up with the burnt bones might have had a value in the mind of the Briton in connection with fire, which was held in veneration and awe, and is so now among barbarous natives. Sepulchral pottery is often the only conclusive evidence to enable the anthropologist to distinguish between the intruding conqueror and the aboriginal occupant, and is sometimes the only evidence of the limits of ancient empires. The boundaries of Roman dominion have been traced by the red Samian and other distinguishing fictile wares. None more conclusively establishes the traces of the Roman period than their pottery. The depth at which potsherds have been discovered in the alluvium of the Nile has been the basis of speculations on the antiquity of civilisation. We owe much of our knowledge of the races of mankind to the grave-mounds and their contents. Although the British barrows do not define the limits of a prehistoric period, they distinguish the Palæolithic from the Neolithic Age. In as far as is yet ascertained, pottery is not associated with prehistoric man until after the Palæolithic age. The later Neolithic Age of Great Britain lapped over the period of the Roman occupation, at least the earlier part of it. It has been questioned which of the two arts, brick-making or pottery, has the precedence in time. Both are generally admitted to be the earliest effort of human ingenuity, as is also the potter's wheel. The Egyptians possessed the art of brick-making in a high state of perfection at a period contemporary with the Neolithic Age of the West. Bricks for building purposes were introduced into England from Northern Germany. The art of making them had been lost since the departure of the Romans. A *breke kylne* is mentioned in 1442 in connection with Eton College, which Henry VI. was then founding. In the vast tracts of alluvial soil where quarries are not within reach, clay is everywhere found. Babylon was built of brick on the banks of the Tigris ; its lofty terraces have mouldered away into heaps of their original dust. On the banks of the Nile by the side of temples of imperishable granite are pyramids of brick, the sharp angles of which have been long effaced. No large rivers flowed in Greece to form an alluvial soil. In its stead nature furnished an inexhaustible supply of stone, of which the Greek took advantage, and of which there is abundant evidence in every direction. The later Roman preferred the volcanic products, peperino and travertine, which were to be sought farther off than the clay-deposits of the Tiber. But in early times stone was only used throughout in their largest public buildings ; ordinarily the buildings were constructed of baked clay, the facings only being of stone or marble. Flat-baked brick formed the outside walls of many edifices cemented together in layers. In the Christian era, St. Paolo and other Roman churches were built of this material. But above all in the alluvial plains of the valley of the Po, although many of the earlier buildings were constructed entirely of stone from the distant quarry, those of later date, except the shafts of the pillars, which required to be delicate and detached, were built of brick and stone intermixed. We see in many of the ecclesiastical buildings at Parma, Venice, Verona, Milan, and Mantua a rich embroidery of marble on a body of brick. In modern Rome great use, until very late periods, was made of brick. The famous Farnese Palace, which was begun by Bramante and finished by Michael Angelo, has plain surfaces of brick, so fine in texture and so neat in its joints, that by the superficial observer it is generally taken for stone