

**YCCCART 2016 /Y4  
North Somerset / HER 015-023**

**Congresbury Romano - British Pottery Project  
Extent of pottery kilns**

**YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM AND CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**

*General Editor: Vince Russett*



Cat paw print on a piece of Congresbury Ware

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## **Abstract**

*Gradiometry surveys undertaken by YCCCART have considerably extended the area of possible Romano British kilns in Congresbury.*

## **Acknowledgements**

A Heritage Lottery Grant enabled the purchase, by YCCCART of a Bartington Gradiometer 601 and Geoscan RM15 Resistance Meter without which these surveys could not have been undertaken.

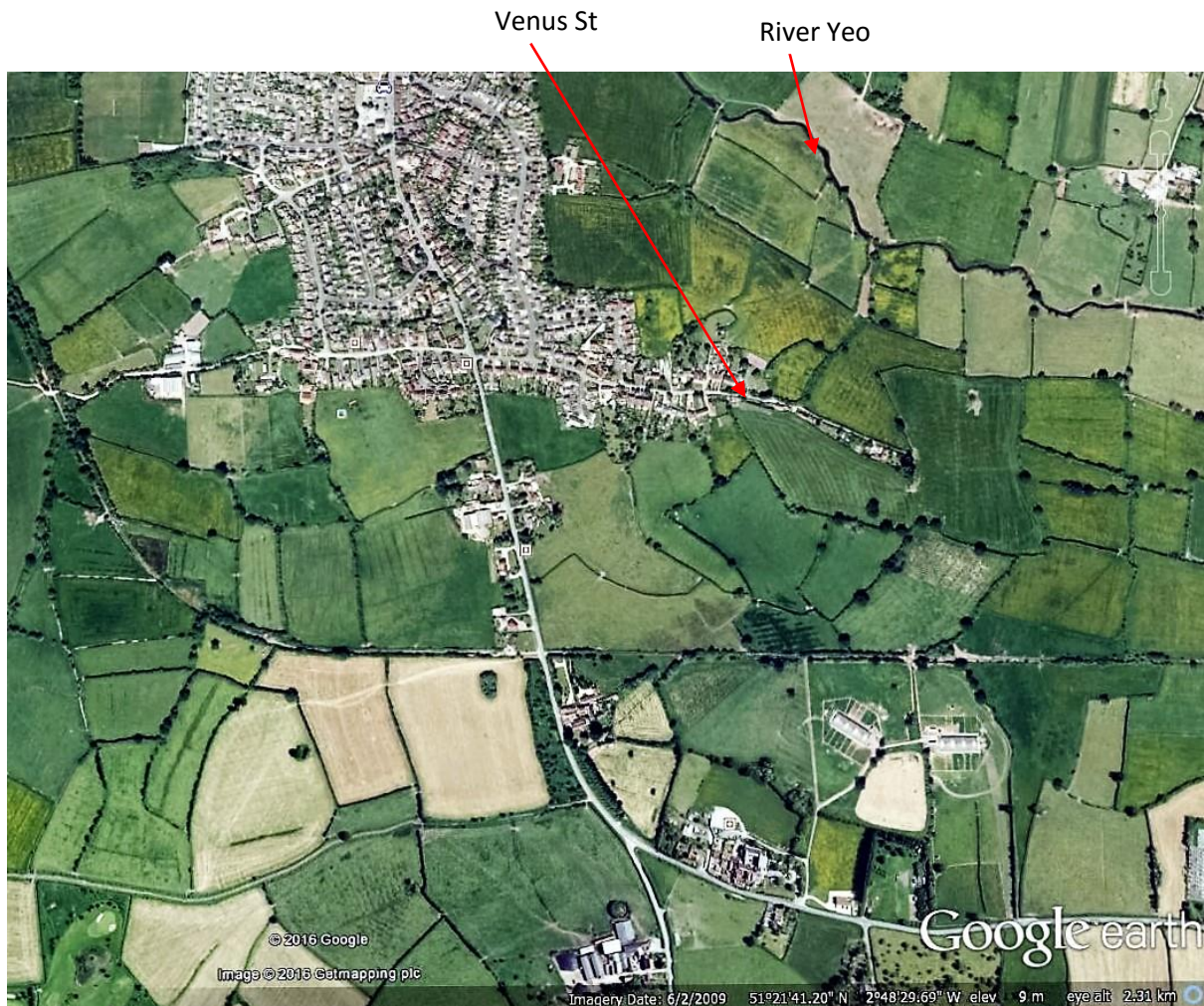
These Surveys would also not have been carried out without the willing permission of the landowners.

The authors are grateful for the hard work by the members of YCCCART in performing the surveys and Vince Russett for editing this report.

## **Introduction**

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) is one of a number of Community Archaeology teams across northern Somerset, originally supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team. The objective of the teams is to carry out archaeological fieldwork, for the purpose of recording, and better understanding and management, of the heritage of northern Somerset.

## Site locations



*Fig 1: Area covered by surveys.*

The surveys were undertaken to the south of the river Yeo in Congresbury and mainly to the north and south of Venus Street.

## Land Use and Geology

Please see the individual reports for the surveys listed below on the web site <http://www.yccart.co.uk>

## Historical and Archaeological Context

### North of Venus St (Collins 1 field)

A preliminary report dated March 1964 is reproduced at Appendix X and includes the following.

*"Thanks to information provided by the Rev A. S. Cran of Congresbury the North Somerset Archaeological Research Group were able in the summer of 1963 to locate the site of what would appear to be a large pottery kiln site, dated by Mr P. A. Rahtz as of the 4<sup>th</sup> century".*

This field has been the subject of archaeological investigations over a number of years.



*Fig 2: Sketch plan of kiln sites previously known*

Close to the site indicated by 2 in the illustration above (HER 00398, at ST44746297), excavations were undertaken by

- 1) North Somerset Archaeological Research Group reported in 1964
- 2) Antony J Scammell who undertook a private excavation in 1969/1970.
- 3) Richard Broomhead who carried out an excavation in 1986 (Unpublished)

Site 3a in the illustration above is another kiln site found by North Somerset Archaeological Research Group in 1966, and may not be accurately positioned.

## **South of Venus St**

### **1) Mrs Rossiter Paddock**

According to the few notes so far found regarding this site ((North Somerset Museum, MS files, per Jane Hill), the site was discovered by Mr Rex Rossiter of Yew Tree Farm, in early summer 1966 while digging a post-hole.

The site seems to have been subsequently excavated by North Somerset Archaeological Research Group, when two Roman pottery kilns were dated as '4th century AD', on the advice of the late Mr (now Prof) Philip Rahtz (North Somerset Mercury, 8 Oct 1966).

The surviving records provided by Mr Derek Lilly (NSARG) and Mrs Valerie Rossiter, comprise a series of four photographs, a plan and sections of the kilns, and some notes prepared for a display in the early 1980s.

The kilns can be understood as Swan Type C, with central pedestals and no oven floor (Swan 1984). According to this source, other kilns have been noted, but no records survive of these, although there are two sketch maps in North Somerset Museum, of unknown date and authorship, which give some details which are mostly unhelpful. It has not proved possible to trace finds from the excavation.

### **2) Mrs Meaker field 1**

In the winter of 1987 a member of Congresbury History Group discovered large quantities of pottery in a collapse bank and drainage ditch to the west of the field. Under the guidance of Woodspring Museum a small excavation was carried out.

## **Banwell Group**

In May 1976 Banwell Archaeological Society searched a ploughed field at and found over a thousand sherds of Roman and Medieval pottery The site is at ST 4330 6300.

## **Survey Objectives**

Surveys were undertaken to establish the extent of the Congresbury Romano-British kiln industry.

## **Methodology**

The survey of the fields was undertaken during the period 2009 to 2015 by teams from YCCCART using a Geoscan RM 15 resistance meter and a Bartington 601 gradiometer

The completed survey was downloaded to a ArchaeoSurveyor and TerraSurveyor programmes and the resultant composite adjusted using the following filters:

### Gradiometer

Colour - Red Blue Green 2

Band weight equaliser

Grad shade

Destriped

Despiked

Clip SD2

### Resistivity

Band weight equaliser

Grad shade

Despiked

Clip SD2

High Pass filter

The reports were written in Microsoft Word 2003 & 2016.

Photographs were taken by members of YCCCART, and remain the copyright of YCCCART.

## **Results**

Are detailed in the following pages.



### Fields Surveyed

*Fig 3:*

*Fields surveyed which link to summary of reports on next page*



**Summary of results against each survey report.**

<b>Map No</b>	<b>YCCART Report Ref</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Abstract from report.</b> <i>NB. All surveys with gradiometer unless stated.</i>
	<i>2010</i>		
1	Y1	Mrs Rossiter's Paddock	A number of potential kilns have been identified within the paddock.
2	Y2	Mrs Meaker's field	A number of potential kilns have been identified within the field.
3	Y3	Mr Collin's field	A number of potential kilns have been identified within the field.
4	Y4	Mr Stokoe's Paddock	Potential kilns have been identified within the field.
5	Y5	Mrs Craggs Field	A number of potential kilns have been identified within the field.
6	Y6	Mr Tutton No 1 field	Two potential new kilns have been identified,
7	Y9	Mr Tutton No 2 field & Tutton 2 supplement RM 15 survey	A number of potential kilns have been identified.
8	Y11	Mr Tutton 3	Potential kilns have been identified.
9	Y12	Mr Tutton 4	A circular feature has been identified within the field.
10	Y24	Mrs D Edwards 1	No obvious feature was revealed but a Roman pottery kiln has been identified as a scatter of pottery wasters in an adjoining field (North Somerset HER 00383)
	<i>2011</i>		
11	Y4	Mrs Meaker 2	This survey has revealed the potential sites of previously unknown Roman pottery kilns. In addition, there are

			signs of a possible building/s and two parallel ditches of unknown date.
12	Y16	Mrs Meaker 2 – RM15	A resistivity survey has revealed the existence of a possible rectangular structure as well as a square anomaly and several circular features.
	<i>2012</i>		
13	Y4	Mrs Meaker's Paddock	The survey suggests that there are no significant features within the surveyed area.
	<i>2014</i>		
14	Y6	Meaker 3	A survey has revealed possible previously unknown kilns.
15	Y7	Tutton 5	Survey has revealed, what appears to be, previously unknown kilns
16	Y8	D Edwards 2	Survey has revealed what appear to be previously unknown kilns.
17	Y9	N Edwards 1	Survey has revealed what appear to be previously unknown kilns.
18	Y12	Mrs Meaker 3 RM 15	A resistivity survey has revealed possible structures as well as enigmatic circular and linear features.
	<i>2015</i>		
20	Y5	J Edwards 1	A survey south of Silverstone Way, Congresbury, has revealed 3 parallel, enigmatic lines.
21	Y6	J Edwards 2	A survey in a field south of Silverstone Way, Congresbury, has revealed no archaeological features.

22	Y7	P Edwards 1	A survey has revealed a possible kiln.
23	Y8	P Edwards 2 601 & RM15	A survey has revealed a possible enclosure, trackway and what may be the results of trench digging. A resistivity survey revealed no significant archaeological features to confirm this
	Y11	RM 15 Survey on King George V Playing Field, Congresbury	The resistivity survey revealed a rectangular high resistance anomaly worthy of future investigation
	Y1 2016	601 survey of Congresbury cricket pitch	Several service pipes were identified together with two high level responses which could indicate potential archaeology



Fig 4: Colour image of ArchaeoSurveyor /TerraSurveyor results overlaid on map.

Fig 5. Location of kilns/potential kilns



### Index

Large circles are excavated examples.

Next size are very probable kilns from geophysics.

Smallest size are potential kilns from geophysics.

Stars are known waster spreads.

## Recommendations

Excavation of a potential new kiln.

## References

1966 excavation by North Somerset Archaeological Research Group	<i>Weston-super-Mare MS files, per Jane Hill</i>
Swan, V. 1984	<i>The pottery kilns of Roman Britain HMSO</i>
Broomhead, Richard, 1986	<i>Unpublished excavation</i>
Congresbury History Group, 1987	<i>Unpublished excavation</i>
North Somerset Archaeological Research Group Report, 1964	<i>Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society 108 1963-4 (172-174)</i>
Anthony J Scammell, 1969/70 report	<i>Copy held by North Somerset Museum</i>
Congresbury Moor by Marie Clark	<i>Journal of Banwell Society of Archaeology No. 13</i>

## **Appendix 1**

### **1964 North Somerset Archaeological Research Group Report**

*Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society 108 1963-4 (172-174)*

#### NOTES

A Romano-British pottery kiln site at Venus Street, Congresbury

Preliminary report, March 1964

Thanks to information provided by the Rev A. S. Cran of Congresbury the North Somerset Archaeological Research Group were able in the summer of 1963 to locate the site of what would appear to be a large pottery kiln site, dated by Mr P. A. Rahtz as of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The site lies in a large field to the N. of Venus Street, Congresbury (ST 447629), within 300 yards of the present course of the river Yeo. The field is bordered on the NW, by the ancient 'Somerset Lane' now abandoned, but by local report once the old 'wagon road' to Bristol and the Cotswolds.

There is, however, a strong possibility that 'Somerset Lane' follows the line of a Roman period road. This possibility is in course of investigation.

Garden surveys in the area of the site have established a heavy scatter of the kiln ware over an area extending W. for a distance of ½ a mile.

#### PROCEDURE IN 1963

Following their usual procedure the Group confined their excavations to the minimum sufficient to establish the nature of the site.

A waster heap already disturbed by the cutting of a ditch some 120 years ago was selected for investigation and an area of 150 square feet excavated to a maximum depth of 2 feet to undisturbed subsoil.

During this very short investigation some 5½ cwt of shards were recovered, and these included, exclusive of 'wasters', 1,657 vessel rims.

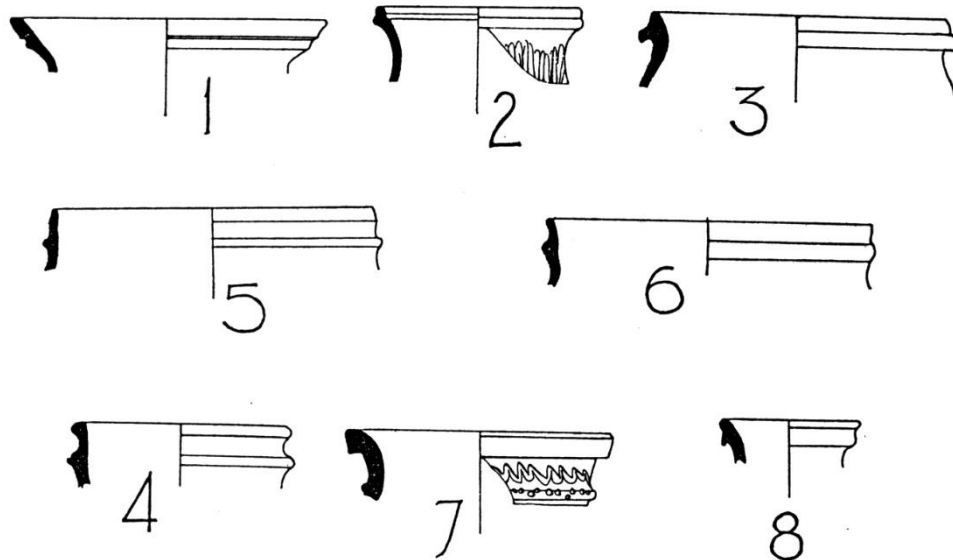
These have now been separated into six type forms bearing the identification letters from A to F.

The Congresbury Ware is of high quality, predominantly blue-grey in colour and varying in texture from a very hard fabric to extremely soft, doubtless due to variations in kiln temperatures.

This report being a preliminary one, Type A only will be dealt with here; the other types with certain variations will be the subject of a more extensive and detailed report at a later date. Which will, it is hoped, contain information as to the distribution of Congresbury Ware in Somerset.

At present it has been identified by Mr Rahtz at both Pagan's Hill and occurs generally on sites between Clevedon and Congresbury

## CONGRESBURY WARE TYPE A



Necked jars with double-beaded rims. Sub divisions:

- 1 Lower bead of less diameter than upper. Upper bead flattened. Sandy grey
- 2 Small beading. Rough vertical burnishing on neck. Hard dark grey.
- 3 Lower bead projecting beyond upper. Burnished outside and over inside top of rim. Light grey.
- 4 Beads wide spaced. Light burnishing of outer surface. Dark grey.
- 5 Lower bead only. Smooth grey.
- 6 Upper bead flattened. Lower bead projecting. Burnished outside and over inside top part of rim. Hard dark grey.
- 7 Necked jar with cordon at junction of neck and shoulder. Decorated with deep stabs. Neck ornamented with an incised 'wavy line'. Hard grey.
- 8 Vessel with narrow diameter. Both beads well moulded. Hard dark grey.

In all there are 293 Type A rims accounting for 17% of the total rims recovered. The predominant Type A rims are from vessels with mouth diameters of 3½, 4 and 5 inches.



Type C, an upright necked vessel and semi-cavetto, is represented by 848 rims.

The Group would like to take this opportunity of thanking Mr H. G. Collins of Iwood Farm, Wroughton who gave permission for the investigation of one of his fields and erected temporary fencing; to Mr P. A. Rahtz of Birmingham University and Mr Barry Cunliffe of Bristol University for their advice and assistance.

GRAY USHER, *Director, NSARG*

D. LILLY, *Recorder*

## Appendix 2 Scammell Report

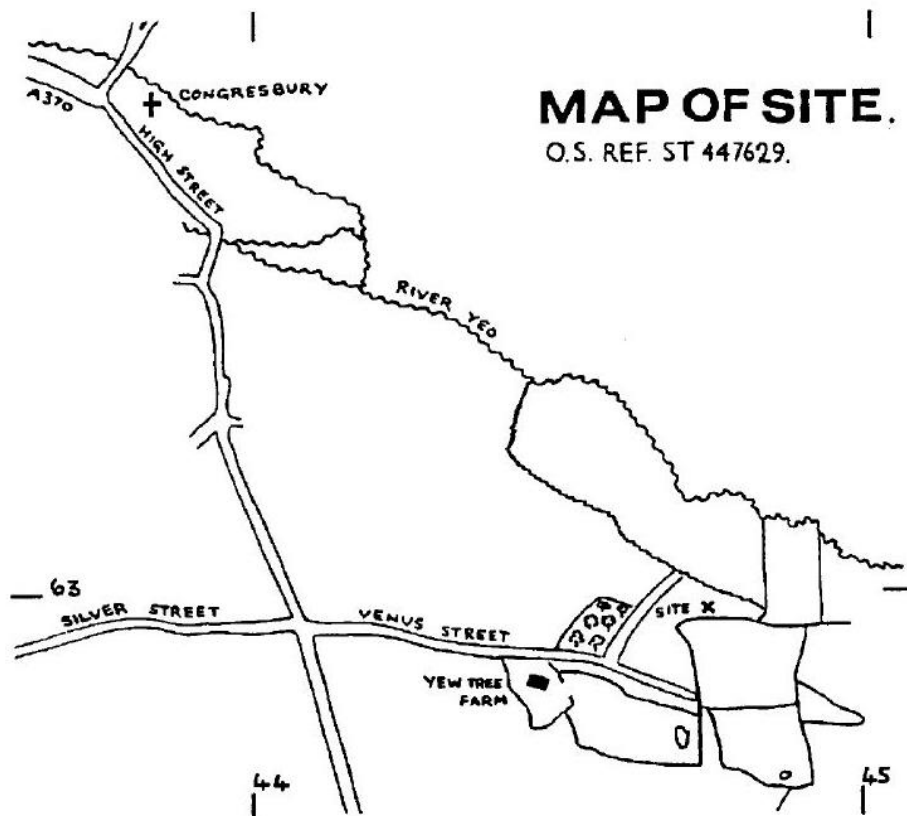
### Congresbury Excavations 1969/70. Antony J Scammell

#### HISTORY.

Excavations were first carried out near this location in 1961 following the discovery during pipe-laying of Roman pottery waste dumps. A brief note was published in SNHAS 1962. Further investigations were made at nearby Yew Tree Farm by members of SNHAS in 1967 / 9, but to date no details of the R.B. kilns found there appear to have been published.

#### THE SITE.

This report concerns excavations carried out privately by the author during the autumn and winter of 1969 / 70 in the large field to the north of the track at the east end of Venus Street, Congresbury (O.S. Ref ST447629). The field forms part of Iwood Farm, owned at the time by Mr. H. Collins, to whom I am greatly indebted for permission to excavate.



Viewed from the bank of the rhine bordering the field to the north, the hedge line along the southern boundary clearly "humps" over the widely spread pottery waste which occupies a total area within the field of approximately sixty feet by eighteen. Trial probes were made in and around the mound which revealed that the main core of refuse lies nearer the hedge line than surface scatters suggest. The hedge and ditch bisect the dump which continues beyond into the adjacent ten acre field.

## **THE TRENCH**

One of the test holes revealed the very edge of what transpired to be a shallow Roman period trench. This was fully excavated despite atrocious weather conditions. The field is virtually at water-table level, much of it being permanently waterlogged during winter months. Any excavation is immediately subject to seepage and requires constant baling.

The trench was oriented NE to SW and dug to a depth of 1ft 9ins below the original Roman surface for a length of a little over 9 feet. The southerly face was sheer while the northern face was stepped, suggesting it had been dug from that side, probably to two Roman spade depths. The trench intruded into an underlying dull red-orange clay seam and the spoil was banked along its sides.

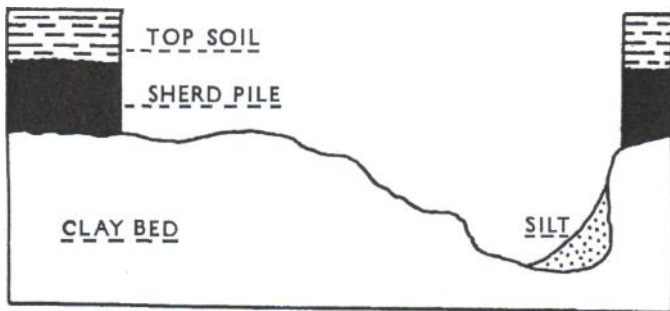
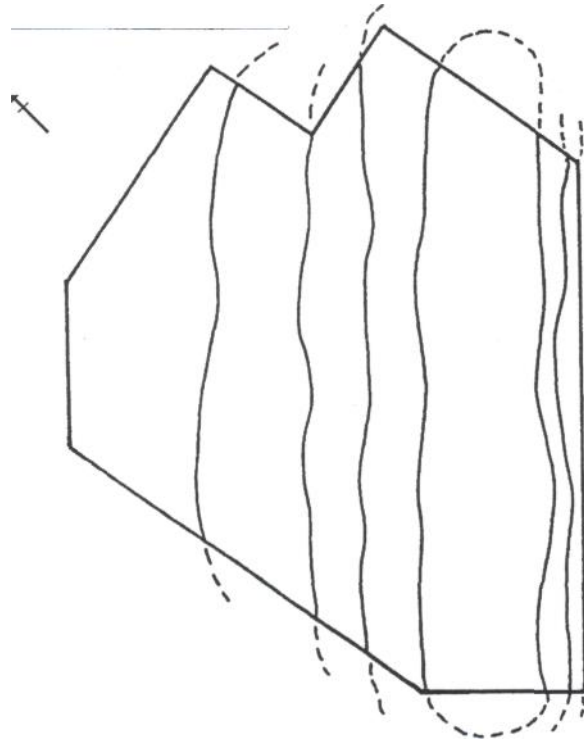
The purpose of the trench may well have been to seek the underlying clay. There was no evidence to suggest it formed a draught shaft for a kiln, although the orientation corresponds exactly with prevailing winds. Neither was it a settling pit for liquid clay as the clay content of the subsequent products was of an entirely different constitution and was not represented in the trench.

During the Roman era the proximity of the nearby River Yeo was perhaps more significant. Among the infill many small gravel stones were mingled with sherds, some in such a manner as to suggest deliberate breakage of jettisoned kiln spoils. During washing of excavated material the incidence of fine gravel and sand was far greater than could be accounted for by normal loss from pottery surfaces. In antiquity the trench had partially silted with dark mud slightly prior to the dumping of waste products.

In the infill charcoal, twigs, animal teeth and other artifacts were found. As unwashed sherds dried, leaf detritus was released providing evidence of adjacent hawthorn growth. This implies the dumping occurred during autumn when the leaves were falling.

*Plan of Trench*

SCALE ONE CM./ONE FT



Section

## THE FINDS

(A) Animal Remains. The teeth recovered were identified by Mr. P.F. Bird, Curator of Natural History at Bristol Museum. They comprised sheep, goat or deer and were mainly unerupted, evidence of culinary activity therefore.

(B) Botanical Remains. These were analysed by Carole Keepax at the Dept. of Environment laboratories in London ( Ref. Environmental 88175 ). Represented were large fragments of oak and smaller rounds of hazel. All were carbonized, and almost certainly represented unconsumed kiln materials. In addition, as mentioned, hawthorn leaves were present.

(C) Metal Objects. All were recovered from the lower levels of the trench in proximity to the teeth deposits and may represent further evidence of culinary activity; the fragments suggest a crude knife, perhaps the potter's trimming knife. (See Appendix for illustration).

(D) Extraneous Pottery. Among the upper levels of ditch infill several fragments of a common fourth-century type Oxfordshire mortarium were found. The rim and pouring lip are illustrated. The fabric is of pale buff colour with traces of white slip on the outer surface and multi-coloured grit in the bowl. Elsewhere, both in the ditch and in nearby surface deposits, sherds of Oxfordshire orange ware were found, also illustrated. These items transpired to be the sole dating evidence for the site but all correspond exactly to materials recovered by the author from the metallurgical site at Whitchurch, Avon, firmly dateable to the mid-fourth century on coin evidence. The Congresbury potteries are, however, generally recognized as of this period.

(E) Kiln Debris. At all levels in the ditch evidence of kiln furniture occur]

in the form of crude clay "sausages", notched at each end. Two whole specimens were recovered and are illustrated. The remainder, of varying sizes, w fragmentary and some, underfired, had corroded beyond salvation.

(F) Ceramic Vessels. The general infill of waster material comprised thousands of body, rim and base sherds from a great variety of utensils. However, along bed of the trench, a number of ollae and other larger vessels were found, more less complete in profile and capable of reconstruction. One olla, of typical blue-grey Congresbury fabric, was wholly intact, with only a mud-pressure crack one side. These generally lay against the steeper trench side, protected from subsequent debris tipping by a silt deposit created from re-entry of the extracted topsoil.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE CONGRESBURY POTTERY TYPES.

(A) Manufactures.

The Congresbury kilns produced a full range of domestic and cullinary coarse-ware, from small ollae to large storage / cooking pots, jars, jugs, basins, straining collanders, bowls and flat trenchers. All these were represented in a range of sizes. There were also remains of

some very large vessels with a body thickness of at least half an inch and heavy rolled rims of up to 20 inch diameter.

A number of reconstructable ollae of various sizes were recovered whose proportions appear to conform to a pre-determined scale. In the table given below only the reconstituted vessels are compared, although they may not of course represent the full range in the projection. Ollae Nos. 74 and 75 seem to be attempts to represent the same factor but both have been rejected and it seems likely what was intended was a mean with a capacity of 300 ccs.

In the light of the apparent relationship in the sizes, a test was carried with dry sand to ascertain if size bore any relationship to capacity, as the vessels could represent storage measures. Each olla was filled with sand to a level across the base of the rim collar. The results tend to support the belief that they were capable of use as measures, either for storage or use, on a similar basis, example, to modern half and one pint pots. The same relationship may or may exist between the larger vessels and cauldrons, but insufficient numbers were recovered to draw any firm conclusions, although the sherd evidence clearly indicates a wide range of sizes (viz. Base 69 to Survival 81).

Scale Key	Vessel No. Illustrated	Height (cms)	Rim Diam. (cms)	Capacity (ccs)	Note.
A	73	10	7	200	
B	74/75	10.6/ 11	7.4/8	240/265	11.5 x 8 intend
C	76	13	9	400	
D	77	14	10	600	
E	--	15	11	800	Theoretical insert
F	78	16	12	1000	

### **(B) Fabric Varieties.**

These can be classified into the following:

1. Blue-grey, hard, smooth surfaced, distinctive.
2. Black, hard, smooth surfaced, probably same product subjected to greater kiln reduction.
3. Mid-grey, hard, rough gritty surfaced.
4. Pale grey, soft, smooth surfaced.
5. Brown, rough or smooth surfaced, soft or hard, misfires and/or oxidised types 3 and 4.

Generally the hardwares have single or multiple orange-brown "sandwich" centre cores whilst the softwares tend to remain uniformly grey throughout thickness. The ratio of sherds shows an overall preponderance in favour of type 1, a bulk approximately equalled by the combined residues of types 3 and 4. Types 2 and 5 are basically side products of the main manufacturers.

The sum total of deposits indicates a reduced kiln working method although the 1963/4 PSANHS report suggests the types differ as a result of temperature variations, it is this author's view that this is not the case. The fabrics of types 1 and 2 differ chemically from the remainder, both in the clay and the grog mix. The Congresbury potteries were producing a variety of types just as their Nene Valley contemporaries employed separate kilns for coloured greywares (CBA Report No. 10, pp 135-7)

### **(C) Decoration Techniques.** (Illustrated below)

Applied after vessels initially hardened, the decorative motif consisted solely of the ancient water symbol - a horizontal zig-zag. This was applied mainly to jugs and pitchers, in larger

strokes around the shoulder but more delicately around the neck. The motif applied in a number of ways -but almost always within, or in conjunction with a band formed variously from,

- (i) impressed grooves (Sherd A)
- (ii) wiped lines (Sherd E)
- (iii) solid black applied charcoal or soot slurry (Sherd I)

On the hard fabrics a blunt stick or sherd edge was employed to lightly rub on the design so as to produce a slightly burnished effect against the leathery surface. As jug remains reveal, decoration was the final process before firing, since the designs were frequently carried into the handle mounts them selves. Double banked bands of zig-zags were sometimes applied around the upper body shoulders with an impressed or wiped line dividing them (Sherd B).

Black soot banding was used in two ways. On the hard blue-grey products the band and decoration was applied before firing and became an integral part of the fabric (Sherd H), whereas on the soft smooth greywares it appears to have to have been painted on after firing and could be rubbed off even after sherds had fully died. In both instances the zig-zag design was rarely impressed into the fabric but merely pierced the soot to throw into contrast the natural body colour of the vessel be Some examples were merely painted with multiple plain black banding (Sherd J)

Slightly more sophistication appears on a few sherds of the hard blue-grey type where a thin pale-grey clay slip was applied over the darker fabric to create greater contrast in the banding lines. In some cases larger solid areas of this light slip were applied around the shoulder and neck and carried up to and over the rim. The zig-zag motif was then impressed on the body below the slip area (Sherd K), or, as in the case of one cauldron (No. 62 illustrated), upon the treated area itself. On this particular vessel, well defined banding grooves had also been impressed before the slip was applied.

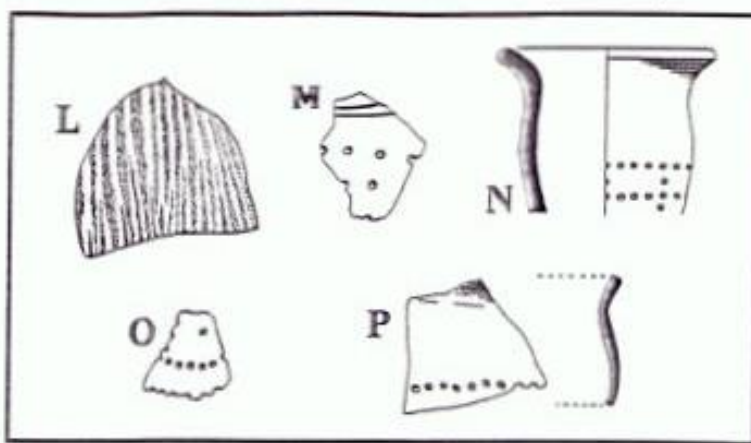
### **Description of Decorative Sherd Fabrics (A-P illustrated over.)**

- A. Hard smooth charcoal grey - core uniform red-brown - well defined impressed grooving, burnished decoration.
- B. Hard smooth blue-grey - uniform grey core - light banding, burnished decor.
- C. Identical fabric and core - lightly burnished decoration.
- D. Hard rough gritty mid grey - uniform pale grey core - unburnished, lightly impressed decoration.
- E. Hard smooth blue-grey - grey core with thin dark brown sandwich filling - lightly burnished decoration.
- F. Same fabric - uniform red-brown core - well burnished decoration.
- G. Soft gritty mid-grey, surface well dusted with mica - uniform pale grey core - lightly impressed decoration.
- H. Hard smooth blue-grey, thick lumpy fabric - uniform pale grey core - fired soot banding - lightly impressed and slightly burnished decoration.



- I. Soft smooth mid-grey - grey core, red-brown sandwich filling - erasible soot banding - lightly impressed decoration.
- J. Soft smooth pale grey - uniform pale grey core - erasible soot banding
- K. Hard gritty pale blue-grey - uniform pale grey core - lighter grey slip banding, lightly impressed unburnished decoration between.
- L. Hard smooth blue-grey - grey core with red-brown sandwich fill - burnished decoration on jar or jug shoulder.
- M. Hard rough gritty pale-grey - grey core, pink sandwich fill - perforations made inward from outer surface with bronze or bone pin.
- N. Hard smooth blue-grey - uniform blue-grey core - perforations as for M but probably on one side only of the vessel.
- O. Hard rough gritty pale-grey - core as M above - perforations as for M above.
- P. Soft smooth pale-grey - uniform grey core - perforations as for M above.

**CONGRESBURY DECORATION (CONT).**



### **Description of Extraneous Pottery Finds - Illustrated Over).**

- A. Oxfordshire Mortarium First half fourth century. Smooth, hard buff fabric - outer surfaces trace of whitish slip - inner surface impregnated with multi-coloured grit. Core, uniform buff.
- B. Oxfordshire Bowl. Fourth century type. Soft, gritty fabric - traces of red colour coat. Core, pale grey sandwich.
- C. Olla. Hard biscuit-like, pale orange fabric, extremely thin in parts possibly due to surface erosion. Core, pale grey sandwich. Distinctive wide shoulder chamfer below everted rim.
- D. Oxfordshire Bowl. Soft, smooth bright orange fabric - both inner and out surfaces well dusted with silica/mica - smear banding on outer. Core, mid-grey sandwich.

### **ITEMS NOT ILLUSTRATED.**

- E. Cauldron. Soft, smooth pale grey fabric, coated inside and out with burnished black slip, smear banding on outer surface. Core, uniform pale grey.
- F. "Shepton Mallet" Basin. Hard, close textured gritty charcoal grey fabric coated in and out with black burnished slip. Core uniform charcoal grey. Slight everted bead rim.
- G. "Shepton Mallet" Cauldron. Fabric as F above. Wide everted rim type.

If stacking vessels of an unpredictable clay upon each other created wholesale losses, an alternative method of stacking had to be found. Some kind vertical shelving structure, perhaps with additional clay pads and wedges may have been devised. The supported shelves could be raised one on the other, with larger cauldrons stacked at the bottom, tapering to the smaller ollae and bowls the top. To enable heat to permeate through the stack the shelves would have had to comprise some kind of grill, which could easily have been constructed from lengths of small branches. By the time the grill sticks sintered through heat, the fabric of the pottery would have hardened sufficiently to support the weight of the stack. Such a conjectured arrangement would certainly account for the grooving on the ends of the vertical props and the remains in the trench of small round-section carbonised timbers.

### **(D) Manufacturing Faults.**

Among the pale grey-wares failures mainly resulted from partial misfire with oxidation of part or whole of the fabric. A few examples were completely underfired.

The nature of the clay, or its inadequate preparation, produced a multitude of problems in the hard blue-grey wares. The grog contained a higher proportion of grit which may indicate a recognized requirement for clay re-reinforcement. The wedging operation was poorly performed, leaving much air trapped in the mix, with fatal results.

Many examples occurred of distorted and collapsed vessels which could not withstand the weight of smaller ollae loaded on them in the kiln. The fabric appears either to have been underdried prior to loading the kiln or, more probably to have re-humidified once the kiln began to heat up. In this moist state, the trapped air produced extensive bubbling of

surfaces. Such distortion was in some cases very severe, and clearly there had even been minor explosions where air has been trapped below hardened surfaces.

Crude temperature control on occasion allowed kilns to heat too rapidly giving rise to grit expansion. Where the grit approached vessel surfaces, both inner or outer, severe flaking resulted.

The sum total of evidence suggests the pottery field was operated under pressure, using improvised methods and clays the properties of which may not have been fully accommodated. There were, however, indications that some very high quality pottery was also being produced. This would infer that one or two skilled potters may have been supplemented by less skilled labour to achieve a high output in a relatively short period of time.

One peculiarity noted among the materials recovered, and in particular the reconstructable vessels, was that their defective parts were not present. Conversely, of the many defective products, no regular portions were present. The implication, if not a stretch of the imagination, is that the defective products were ritually broken at the seat of dissatisfaction, perhaps to expiate the evil which had manifested during the firings.

That such beliefs pervaded the minds of ancient potters is evidenced in ; rhapsody on the wanderings of Homer in Samos, preserved in "Vitae Homeri et Hesiodi" - Wilamowitz (Bonn 1916 Edition pp 17-18). The rhapsody, which name individual "devils" and their tricks, is partially reproduced in the Appendix.

## **SUMMARY.**

Many questions concerning the Congresbury potteries remain unanswered some of which can only be approached in a wider context.

The period of production was relatively brief but intense, ending, like so much else in the area, in the middle of the fourth century. There is no evidence for a prolonged development as with the Nene Valley or Oxfordshire fields, Although no distribution study has yet been attempted, the author has observed sherds of the blue-grey types as far away as Shaftesbury Museum, Dorset, (Allard's Quarry Excavation 1965/6). Sites all over north Somerset and in and around Bristol, all yield examples in abundance, almost always intermingled Oxfordshire red slip-wares and Shepton Mallet black-wares.

In his article "A Deep Water Inlet at Highbridge" (SANHS Vol. 117 – 1973) Sam Nash enumerates a number of sites around the Burnham levels from which he recovered RB pottery sherds. Amongst his collected materials Congresbury ware can readily be identified. It is possible the blue-grey clay seams of that area supplied raw materials to the Congresbury potters.

Further east, the author has also recovered many examples of Congresbury sherds from the Huntspill dumps, which, with pottery from Shepton Mallet kilns constitutes virtually all the deposits represented in the dumps. The Clevedon Archaeological Group discovered a number of intact Congresbury vessels in and on Kenn Moor. The jugs and pitchers recovered from the Chew Valley excavation and now displayed in Bristol Museum are, in the author's view largely, if not entirely, Congresbury products.

This intensive local output should not be viewed in isolation, however. Whilst Congresbury production was at its peak, equally prodigious kilns were operating at Shepton Mallet, manufacturing a corresponding range of domestic coarse-wares. The Shepton Mallet wares were, however, markedly in Durotrigian tradition, with some affinities perhaps to the earlier blackware centres of Dorset.

In his article on the Dorset centres (CBA Report No. 10) the contributor proposed that their outputs were primarily for use by the Northern garrisons. However, such cannot be true of the North Somerset centres. Their wares supplied local needs as evidenced by the mass of archaeological deposits. The only similarity lay in the necessity to produce large quantities of wares in a short period for an area previously barren of such concentrated economic activity. No other potteries operating after a 1st/2nd century date have been discovered in the area concerned.

The life span of these 4th century Somerset potteries coincides with the post Carausian economic upsurge in Britain in which the villa sites and settlements in the area came back to life after a desultory, if not derelict, preceding century more. The inference seems clear. The sudden outpourings of the potteries catered for the influx of a civilian population previously absent. The clue to who some of those people were may lie solely with the Congresbury products themselves, because of their non-Durotrigian affinities. Some wider ranging comparison study, perhaps as far afield as Gaul or the Rhine, might reveal their origins.

To conclude, it is the author's view that a further spoil trench lies near the hedge line a little to the west of the one excavated. Attention should also be drawn to the higher ground to the East of Yew Tree Farm, bordering the southern flank of Venus Street. There is every indication that the abundance of mounds or "bumps" in that large field conceal more kilns and perhaps workshop areas.

It seems logical to suspect that these mounds, and many others spread over a considerable area, may well have inspired the Saxon name for the village. Literally, Congresbury means "heaped up place" but being in a flat valley there is no physical feature other than the waste heaps to which such a name could have been applied.

## **DESCRIPTION OF CONGRESBURY WARES ILLUSTRATED**

### **BASINS**

1. Pale grey, hard, rough fabric - charcoal grey surface mottling. Traces of fine mica dust over both inner and outer surfaces. Core, uniform pale grey throughout.
2. Similar fabric - evidence of larger grit particles in surface. Traces of oxydisation at rim.
3. Hard, mid-grey, smooth fabric - larger grit particles in grog - some mica dust over surfaces. Core uniform mid-grey.
4. Fabric as 1 and 2 above. Outer surface oxydised to light brown. Core, uniform grey, paler than surface.
5. Smoother, softer grey fabric than 1, 2 or 4. Inner surface mottled with pale sepia patches. Core, brown and grey sandwich.

6. Hard, rough, mid-grey fabric - outer surface similar to 3 above - inner to 1 and 2. Core, uniform mid-grey.

#### **BOWLS.**

7. Fabric as 3 above but no large grit. Inner and outer surfaces charcoal grey. Core, uniform mid-grey.
8. Similar fabric to 7 - mid-grey surfaces and core.
9. Similar to 8 - slightly paler grey surfaces. Core uniform brown-grey.
10. Soft pale-grey inner and outer surfaces. Core brown/grey double sandwich.
11. Similar to 10. Some oxydisation of lower outer surface and base.
12. Similar to 7 - slightly paler grey. Core, uniform brown-grey.
13. Soft, smooth, pale-grey - a little surface mica dust - light sepia surface patches - core uniform pale-grey.

Harder, smooth, mid-grey - liberal mica dust on surfaces. Core, uniform pale-grey.

Hard, rough, pale-grey - dark-grey mottling on inner surface. Core, uniform pale-grey.

#### **JUGS.**

Note. Basically the handles are all of flattened section, tooled or moulded along the outer surface with from two to five ribs. Shaping off occurred mainly, although not universally, along the right edge of the handle as gripped. The majority of jug necks recovered conform to type 16 in section.

#### **HANDLES.**

16. Hard, smooth, charcoal-grey fabric. Core, uniform dull-brown.
17. Hard blue-grey. Core varies from blue-grey to dull-brown in parts.
18. Soft, smooth pale-grey. Core, uniform, same.
19. As for 16 above.
20. Hard, smooth pale-grey. Core, uniform, same.
21. Soft, warm-grey/brown oxydised. Core, pale-brown.
22. Soft, pale-grey, gritty surfaces. Core, uniform pale-pink.
23. As 16 above - warmer grey tone.
24. As 20 above. Groove right along centre of underface.
25. Hard, gritty, pale-grey. Core, dull-brown sandwich.
26. Soft, gritty, pale-grey. Core, uniform, same.
27. Hard, blue-grey. Core, dull-brown sandwich.

#### **NECKS.**

28. Hard, blue-grey. Core, varies from uniform dark-grey to grey sandwich.

29. Soft gritty pale grey. Core, uniform, same.
30. Soft, smooth, pale-grey. Core, dark-grey/pale-grey sandwich.
31. Hard, smooth, warm grey-brown. Core, uniform banding horizontally around neck.  
dark-grey.
32. Hard, smooth blue-grey. Core, uniform dull-brown
33. Soft, gritty, pale-grey. Core, uniform, same.
34. Hard, smooth, blue-grey. Core, dull-brown/blue-grey sandwich
35. Hard, smooth, mid-grey. Core, dull orange-brown.

#### **JARS.**

36. Hard, smooth, blue-grey fabric. Core, uniform grey.
37. As for 36 above.
38. Fabric as 36. Core, pale grey sandwich.
39. Hard, smooth, mid-grey. Core generally grey but red-brown sandwich in parts. On neck inner surface some blue-grey wiped banding.
40. Hard, smooth, pale blue-grey. Core, uniform grey.
41. Hard, gritty, mid-grey. Core uniform.
42. Hard, gritty, pale-grey. Core, uniform close textured.
43. Hard, smooth, charcoal-grey. Core, uniform - some dull-brown sections
44. Hard, smooth, blue-grey. Core, uniform.
45. As for 44 above.
46. Hard, smooth, mid-grey. Core, uniform grey.
47. Hard, smooth, warm-grey, wiped banding around outer neck. Core brown/grey sandwich.

#### **SMALL OLLAE.**

48. Soft, rough, pale-grey. Core, uniform.
49. Hard, smooth, mid-grey. Core uniform.
50. Soft, rough, pale grey, sepia blotches over inner and outer surfaces. faint traces of dull orange sandwich.
51. Soft, smooth, pale-grey, mica dust on outer surface. Core uniform.
52. Soft, rough, pale-grey. Core, uniform.
53. Hard, smooth, blue-grey. Core generally grey but in parts brick-red.
54. Hard, smooth, blue-grey, some wiped banding in pale-grey on inner rim. Core, uniform.

( NOTE ) The rim profile of types 53 and 54 predominates among the ollae and various sizes of cauldron.

55. Hard, smooth, charcoal-grey, slightly raised ridge on upper inner edge (catchment for lid?). Core, uniform.

### **CAULDRONS.**

56. Hard, smooth, mid-grey. Core, uniform, same.

57. Hard, smooth, pale blue-grey, inner surface below rim, rougher pale grey (clay slip wash?). Core, uniform.

58. Hard, rough, pale-grey. Core, uniform.

59. Hard, smooth, blue-grey. Core uniform brick-red.

60. As for 60 above. Core, brick-red/grey sandwich.

61. Soft, smooth, pale-grey. Core, uniform.

62. Hard, smooth, mid-grey with pale-grey slip coating applied over outer surfaces, upon which a band of decoration applied with a blunt tool within the limits of the upper and lower grooves - lid ridge on inner rim. Core uniform.

63. As 63 above but core uniform.

64. Soft, gritty, pale-grey. Core uniform.

65. Hard, gritty, pale-grey. Core shows traces of pink/grey sandwich.

66. Hard, smooth, pale-grey with traces of mica dust. Core, orange/brown sandwich.

67. Hard, rough, gritty grey. Core, uniform.

### **BASES.**

68. Hard, smooth, blue-grey. Core, uniform. (*This base is typical of ollae recovered.*)

69. Soft, smooth, pale-grey, partly oxidised brown - small jug or cauldron' uniform.

70. Hard, gritty grey. Core, uniform. (*This was the only example of a pad-base type recovered*)

71. Hard, smooth, blue-grey - base of bottle? Core, uniform

72. Soft, smooth, pale-grey. Core uniform. (*Cauldron base typical of all specimens recovered*).

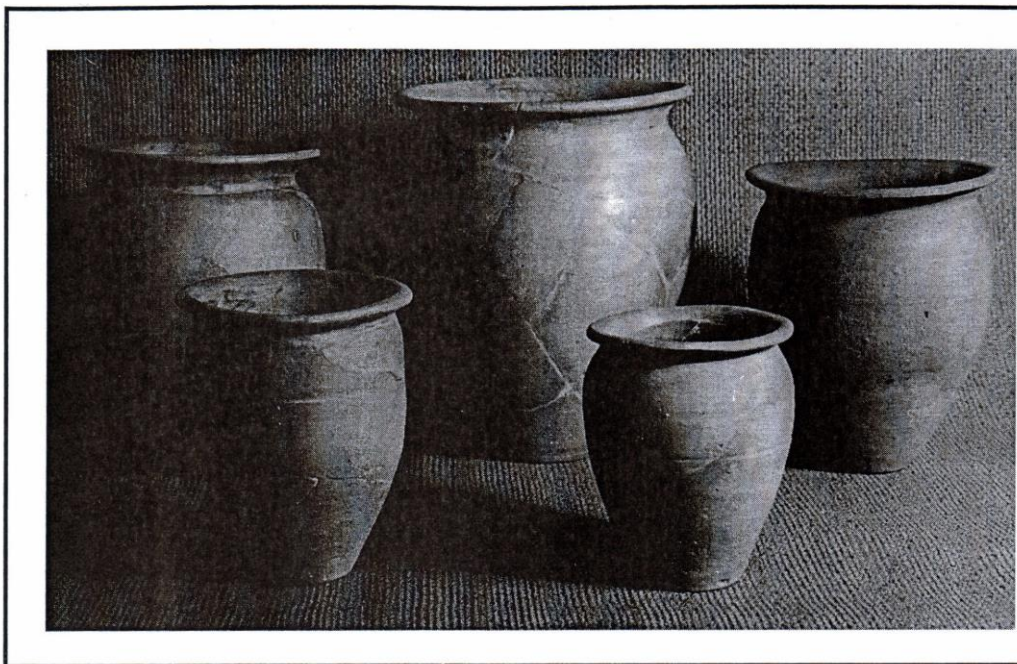
### **SURVIVALS.**

73. Soft, smooth, pale-grey with sepia blotches over outer body. Core, uniform.

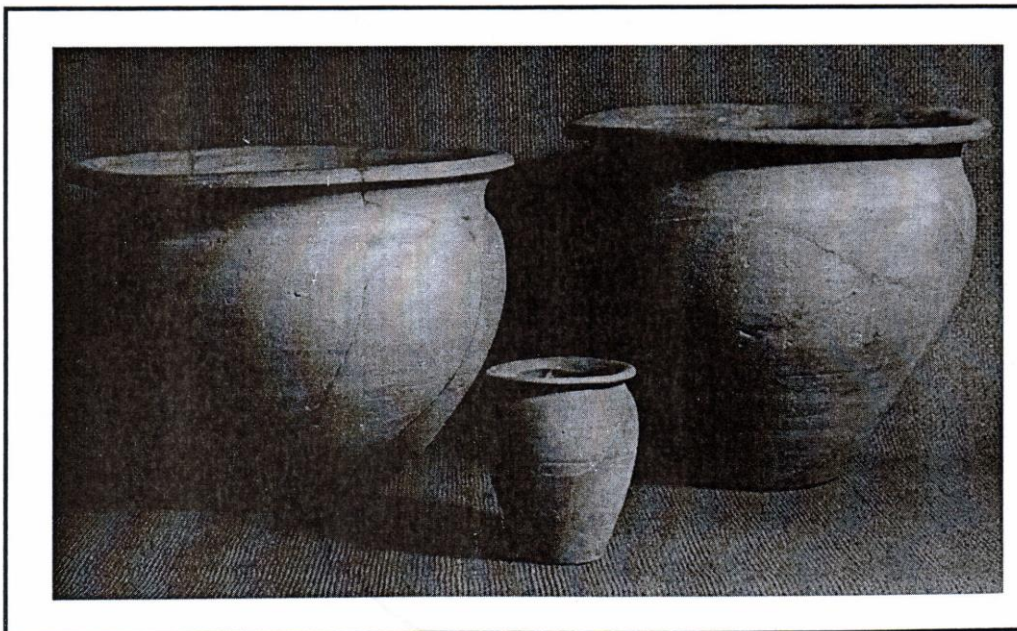




**Illustrations from report (Selection only)**

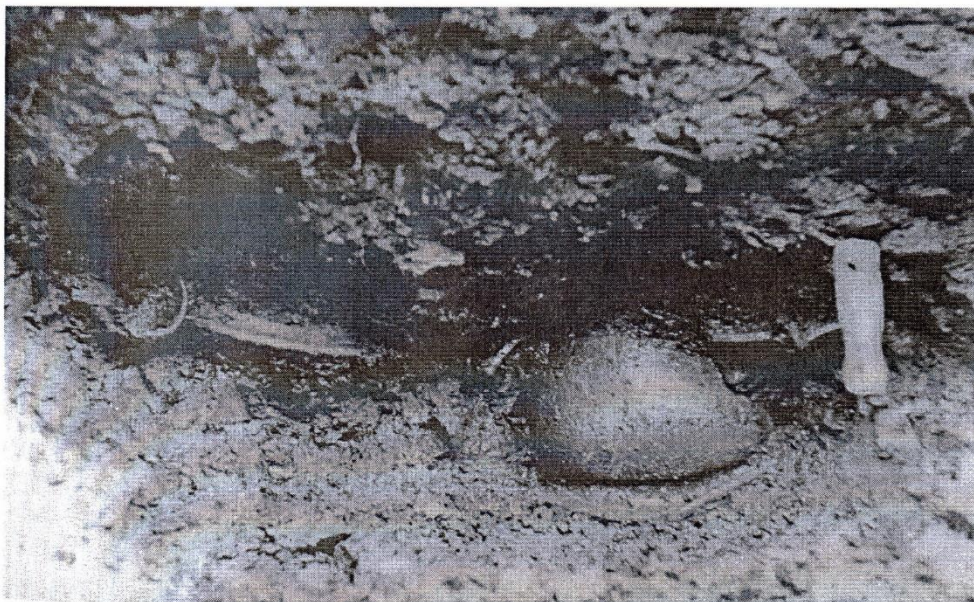


**Reconstructed Congresburyware**





The Roman trench, N.E. end, with debris arched over



Trench floor, S.W. end, with cauldron No. 80 beneath debris wall.

## Appendix 3

### CONGRESBURY MOOR

*from Journal of Banwell Society of Archaeology No. 13*

DURING MAY 1976, A SEARCH OF A PLOUGHED FIELD AT CONGRESBURY, (ST4330 6300) REVEALED ALMOST A THOUSAND SHERDS OF ROMAN AND MEDIEVAL POTTERY. THE FIELD IN WHICH IT WAS DISCOVERED IS BOUNDED ON THE NORTHEAST BY THE DISUSED BLAGDON TO CONGRESBURY BRANCH RAILWAY LINE, AND TO THE SOUTH BY A DROVE WHICH IS A CONTINUATION OF SILVER STREET\* THE SITE IS SITUATED BELOW THE 25FT CONTOUR AND IS ON THE EDGE OF A SPUR OF RED MARL RISING SLIGHTLY ABOVE THE GENERAL LEVEL OF THE SURROUNDING ALLUVIAL MOORS. THE POTTERY WAS MOST CONCENTRATED OVER ABOUT ONE THIRD OF THE FIELD IN RAISED AREAS OF THE RED MARL AND DIMINISHING TO THE NORTH, WHERE IT GRADES TO THE ALLUVIUM.

IN AN EXPOSED SECTION OF THE RAILWAY CUTTING SIX SHERDS OF ROMAN POTTERY OCCURRED AT A DEPTH OF ABOUT ONE FOOT. WHEN EXCAVATED, THE MATERIAL FROM THE CUTTING WOULD HAVE BEEN NEEDED TO FORM BALLAST FURTHER ALONG THE LINE TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF THE TRACK. IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN DEPOSITED ON THE FIELD WHERE THE POTTERY WAS DISCOVERED, WHICH LIES TO THE WEST AND ADJACENT TO THE CUTTING. TO THE EAST OF THE RAILWAY LINE AND PARALLEL TO IT IS AN ANCIENT HOLLOW WAY, PERHAPS MEDIEVAL IN ORIGIN, WHERE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN CONVENIENT TO THROW THE SPOIL, IF NECESSARY.,

THE DROVE WHICH IS THE CONTINUATION OF SILVER STREET AND EXTENDS IN A SOUTH-WESTERLY DIRECTION, COULD HAVE COME INTO EXISTENCE DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY ENCLOSURE ACTS OR EVEN EARLIER. THE NAME "SILVER" IS THE SAXON CORRUPTION OF THE LATIN "SILVA," A WOOD, AND STREET IS THE LATIN "STRATA," THEREFORE SILVER STREET SHOULD BE SILVA STRATA, OR "THE ROAD TO THE WOOD."\*\* HOWEVER THIS DROVE EXTENDS ACROSS CONGRESBURY MOOR IN THE DIRECTION OF PUXTON TO THE WEST AND CAN BE FOLLOWED TO THE VICINITY OF "MEER WALL". THIS GREEN DROVE, THE "MEER WALL," MARKS THE CONGRESBURY PARISH BOUNDARY WITH PUXTON. ALTHOUGH THE SILVER STREET DROVE IS PARTLY OBLITERATED NEAR "MEER WALL", IT IS STILL DISCERNABLE BY THE REMAINS OF A HEDGE BEFORE FINALLY DISAPPEARING WHERE IT HAS BEEN INCORPORATED INTO THE PRESENT FIELD PATTERN.

IT IS NOTABLE THAT OF THE VAST QUANTITY OF POTTERY CONCENTRATED ON THIS SITE CLOSE TO SILVER STREET, NOT ONE SHERD OF SAMIAN WAS FOUND AND ONLY ONE FRAGMENT OF COLOUR COATED WARE. THERE WAS NO MATERIAL PRESENT WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN USED FOR BUILDING, AND OF THE 114 ASSORTED GREY RIMS ONLY ONE WAS OF THE "CONGRESBURY" TYPE PECULIAR TO THE KILNS AT VENUS STREET. THERE APPEARS TO BE NO LATTICE DECORATION ON ANY SHERD, BUT THIS IS PROBABLY DUE TO THE VERY POOR CONDITION OF THE POTTERY, ANY DESIGNS HAVING BEEN OBLITERATED. BY FAR THE MOST NUMEROUS WERE THE GREY WARES AND OF THESE LESS THAN 50 SHERDS WERE IN GOOD CONDITION. THERE WERE LESS THAN 50 SHERDS OF BLACK COOKING POT AND LIKE THE REMAINDER OF THE POTTERY WAS EXTREMELY ABRADED, DUE TO CONTINUAL PLOUGHING. OTHER FINDS INCLUDED 12 MEDIEVAL SHERDS, SOME OF WHICH WERE GREEN GLAZED AND THREE SHERDS WITH A "STAB" DECORATION, POSSIBLY FROM THE SAME POT, AN OLD RED SANDSTONE OBJECT, SIMILAR TO A COUNTER AND AN OYSTER SHELL. FINALLY, THE ABSENCE OF BUILDING STONE IS NOT SIGNIFICANT AS THE LOWERING OF THE PLOUGH DEPTH, THE CUTTING OF DRAINAGE TRENCHES OR CLEARING OF RHYNES COULD EXPOSE FURTHER EVIDENCE.

MARIE CLARKE