

THE ROMAN BURIAL FROM CRABWOOD, SPARSHOLT, HANTS

By JOHN COLLIS

THE Crab Wood burial has been quoted a number of times in the archaeological literature, but has itself never been definitively published. The main interest lies in the local grey ware bowls which are of a distinctive type also found in the second period of the Roman town defences at Winchester (Cunliffe 1962, fig. 12, 2; fig. 15, 5-6, Collis 1977a, fig. 94, 31 and 43).

The pottery group was discovered in about 1899 by the grandparents of Mr D. G. Greener of Winchester. He recalls that the pots were collected at one time, and that there were fragments of bone as well. The only find spot given is somewhere in Crab Wood, which is centred on SU 4329, in Sparsholt parish 4 km west of Winchester. After the discovery the pottery was dispersed among the various members of the family. In 1951 Mr. Greener collected together the pots, excepting two which were retained by his brother in London to decorate an aquarium. Mr. Greener considered that there were only 20 vessels in all, of which the City Museum was able to purchase 18 in 1951 for 20 guineas. Attempts to contact Mr. Greener in 1976 to discover the whereabouts of the other two vessels, a samian bowl and cup, proved unsuccessful, and they must be considered as lost. A third vessel has also been lost, as it disappeared from the museum some time between 1968 and 1972. The remaining 17 vessels retained by the City Museum under the site code number 262 are published here.

THE FINDS (Figs. 1-2)

1. Samian dish, form 18. South Gaulish, stamped OFSEVERI, Severus i 7g, who is known from other stamps at La Graufesenque. This stamp is recorded from Gross Gerau and Saalburg, and is probably Domitianic in date (262.00.1/1).
2. Samian dish, form 18. South Gaulish, stamped ?] ER SECVND, L.Ter(tius?) Secundus, probably of La Graufesenque. This is known from Butzbach, Cannstatt, and Saalburg, and can scarcely be earlier than AD 80 (262.00.1/2).
3. Samian dish, form 18, stamped as 1 (262.00.1/3).
4. Samian dish, form 35/36. South Gaulish, Flavian (262.00.1/4).
5. Samian bowl, form 35/36. Flavian, Martres-de-Veyre? (262.00.1/5).
6. Samian bowl, form 35/36. Flavian, South Gaulish (262.00.1/6).
7. Samian bowl, form 42. Probably Flavian, South Gaulish (262.00.1/7).
- 8-10. Samian cups, form 27. South Gaulish, stamped SEVERI, Severus i 7t, La Graufesenque. This is recorded from many Flavian foundations, the latest being Corbridge (not before AD 85) (262.00.1/8-10).
- 11-17. Dishes in hard, light grey sandy ware. They are decorated with burnished lines on the interior. On vessel 15 the interior and external hollow have also been burnished (262.00.1/11-17).

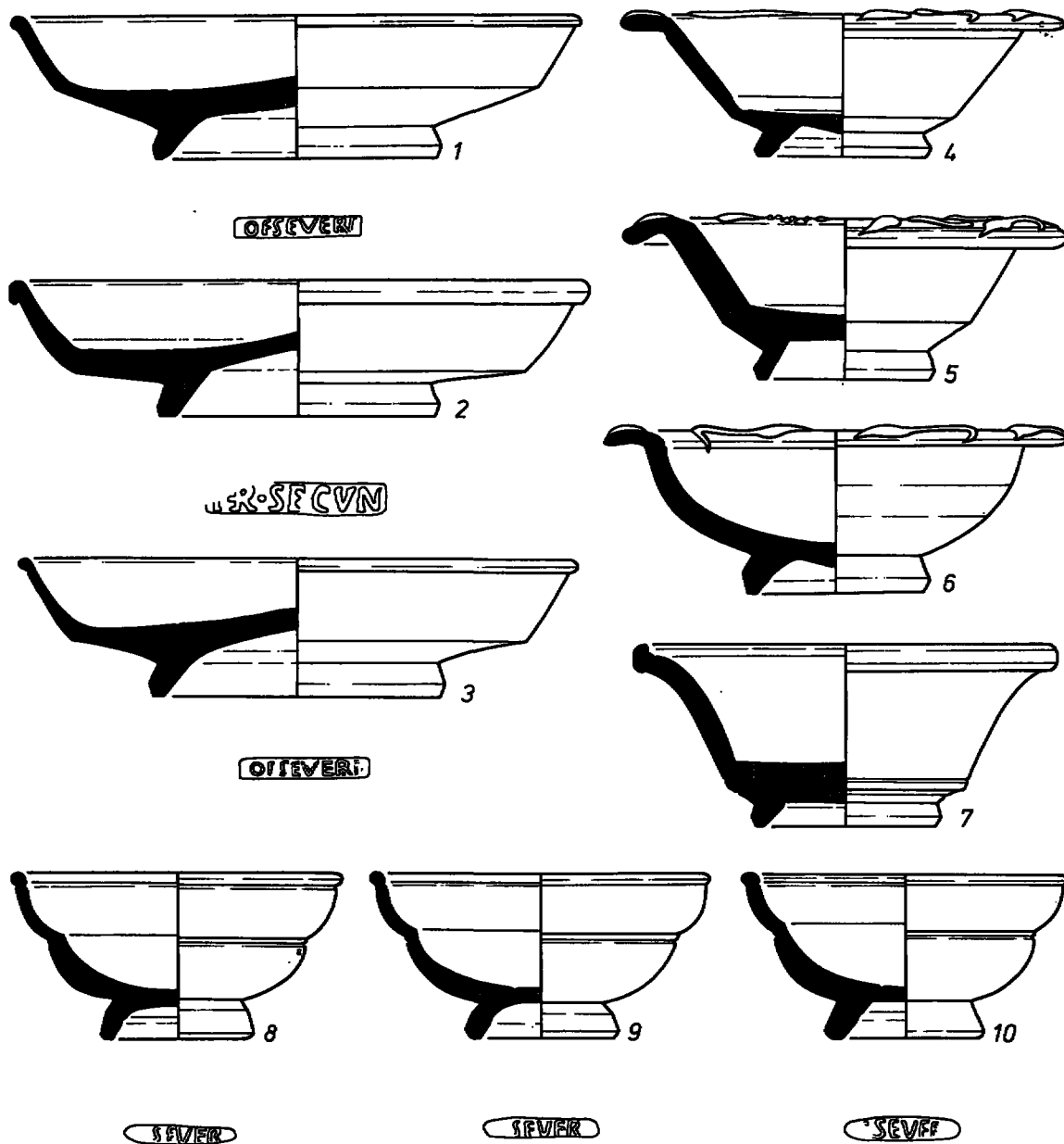


Fig. 1. Samian from Roman burial. Crab Wood, Sparsholt. Scale $\frac{1}{2}$.

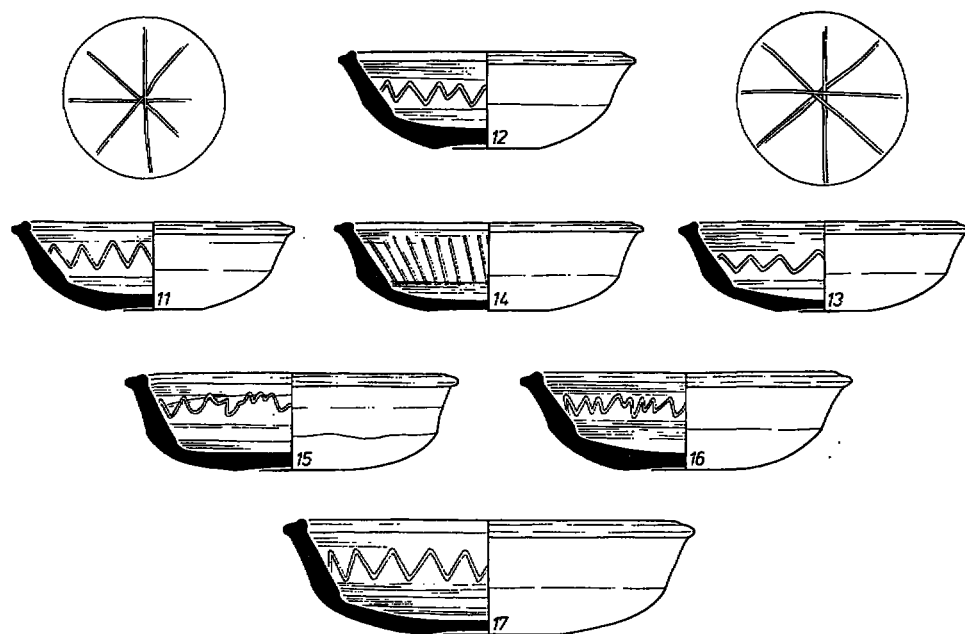


Fig. 2. Bowls from Roman burial, Crab Wood, Sparsholt. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Not illustrated

18. Samian cup, form 27 stamped IAIΛ. This illiterate stamp is unique, and can only be dated from its context and the form. The latter suggests an origin at La Graufesenque in the Flavian period. This vessel was mislaid between 1968 and 1972 (262.00.1/18).

19. Samian dish, form 18. With Mr. Greener's brother.

20. Samian cup, form 27. With Mr. Greener's brother.

DISCUSSION

The samian vessels are all consistent with a date of AD 80–100. None have worn foot-rings and they were all obviously new when they were buried as were the grey-ware bowls. The homogeneous nature of the finds certainly implies that they were found with a burial, but its exact location may never be known. This area was extensively settled in

the late Iron Age and the Roman periods. The well-known sites of Farley Mount, Teg Down, and the Sparsholt Roman villa lie within two to three kilometres of Crab Wood, but no other finds are recorded from Crab Wood itself.

We may perhaps assume that the burial was a cremation, the normal burial rite in the area in the early Roman period. The lack of a vessel suitable to contain the cremated bones implies that the cremation was scattered in the pit, the normal rite at Owslebury at this period (Collis 1970 and 1977b). The quantity of samian vessels is directly comparable with other burials in the Winchester area, as at Highcliffe and Milland (V. Jones in Collis 1977a), and there is a further link with Highcliffe in the occurrence of identical samian stamps of Severus. These burials are however poorer than the contemporary burial at Grange Road (Biddle 1967), but richer than any at Owslebury.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Geoff Dannell who provided the report on the samian, and Brian Hartley who commented on the stamps. Nick

Griffiths drew the pottery and Adrian Rance made available to me the documents relating to the find. These are stored in the Winchester Museum in the history file for July 1951.

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