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Roman Material from Dorn, Gloucestershire

by A. Oswald
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Roman Material from Dorn, Gloucestershire

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THE village of Dorn is situated one mile north of Moreton-in-Marsh. The Roman site is marked on the O/S Sheet 144 (338205) and lies about 200 yards west of the Foss Way. The excavations here reported were made by the late Lt.-Col. R. K. Morcom between 1937 and 1939.

Dr St Joseph has secured recently an air photograph, as did Colonel Morcom, showing a rectangular enclosure of about 10 acres with a rectangular street plan just west of the Foss Way. He gives a plan, summarizes the finds and mentions a coin range from Antoninus Pius to the House of Valentinian.¹ There are further references to the site in *VCH Worcs.*, vol. 1 (1901), p. 221.

Two sepulchral stones figured in *Soden's History of Blockley* have been published separately by Miss M. V. Taylor, C.B.E.,² and further references will be published by H. E. M. Iceley in a forthcoming history of Blockley.³ He has kindly authorized me to publish here the following extract from a letter of Erasmus Saunders, Vicar of Blockley 1705-24.

For Mr Edward Lhuyd Keeper
of the Ashmolean Laboratory
in Oxford

Morton Dec. the 17th '95.

Worthy Sir

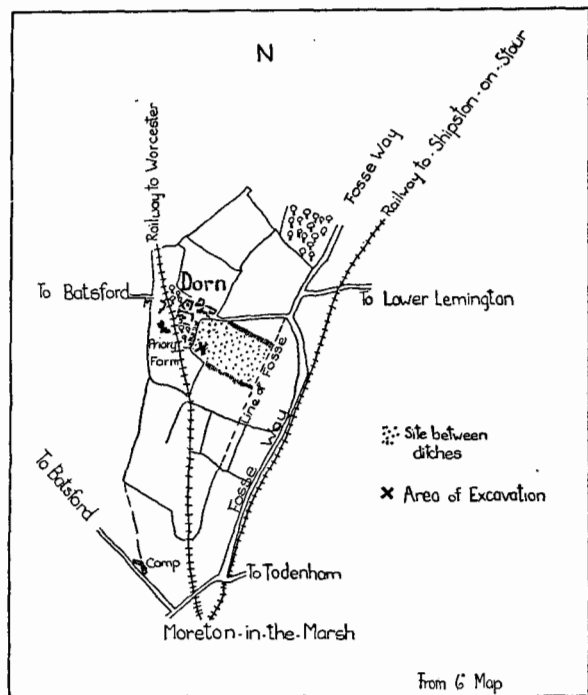
. . . Since I came hither last I have had a recruit of 10 or 11 more Roman Coins found at Dorn and I also had a Roman Brick w^{ch} I was the more inclin'd to take because it is filleted about with a sparkling substance about a halfe inch thick w^{ch} perhaps is an adhesion of ashes vitrify'd in the furnacing of them, but however it was occasioned it binds them so firmly that they are difficultly broken. Many of them are there ordinarily dugg by the Gardener^s.

(Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1817 A)

¹ *JRS*, LI (1961), pp. 132 and 133, pl. xi, fig. 6.

² *Trans. BGAS*, LXXXI, p. 194.

³ I am greatly indebted to Mr Iceley for providing me with much of the past history of Roman Dorn.



Position of Dorn based on the Ordnance Survey Map.

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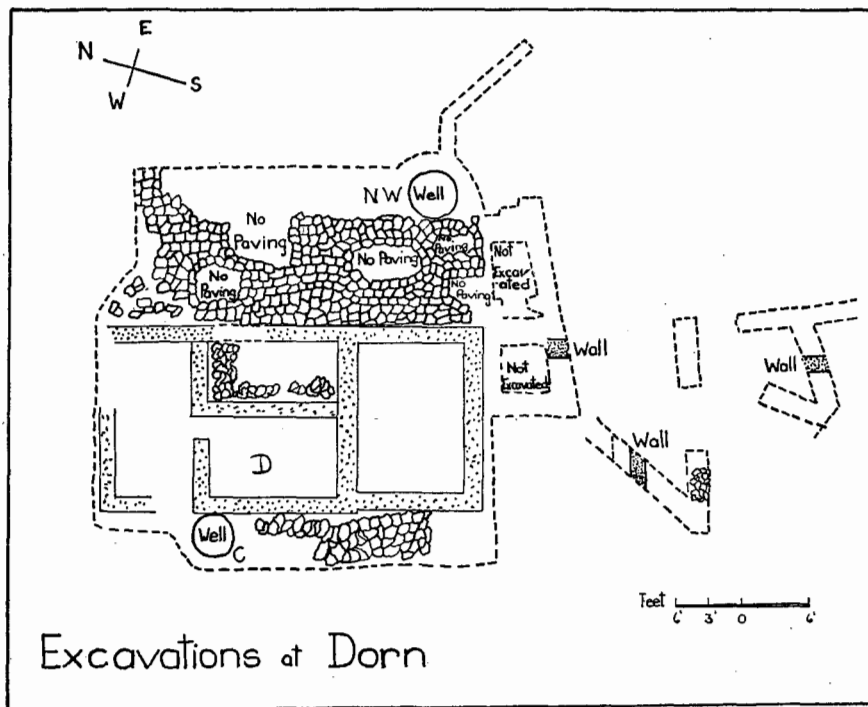


Fig. 1. Plan of Col. Morcom's Excavations

Colonel Morcom's excavation in the south-west corner of the town produced the plan of a building (FIG. 1) and a quantity of material. None of this has been previously published. In his notes Colonel Morcom makes clear that the building, consisting of diagonal stone footings, was of late date. It was floored by rough stones, had a tiled roof and plastered walls. Some coarse tesserae indicated the presence of a pavement. North of this building was a courtyard or possible street. The pottery from these upper levels belonged to the late 4th century and included stamped ware and it will be seen that the coins enter the 5th century. I quote from Colonel Morcom's notes:

'Foundations of walls showed a long corridor building with several rooms, along the E. side of which ran a well paved roadway or courtyard. No-where, however, was any part of the building left above floor level, but at several places and particularly in the room (D) considerable quantities of coloured plaster are found indicating decorated rooms. At one point at the North end of the site a small primitive kiln was found, its walls of Cotswold stone had been burned bright red and in it was a small roughly made vessel.

The stones pierced into the paving of the yard or roadway in many cases show signs of having been used for masonry.

The sherds and coins obviously associated with these walls and floors are late'.

These late levels rested on 2 feet of yellow soil below which was another floor of clay and gravel covered with a layer of pink ash. Material from this level appears to date mainly to the 2nd century and just enters the 3rd. It was on this floor level that a major find of two iron steelyards, 4 feet long, and an ornamental iron turnspit, 2 feet long, was made. These objects were presented to the British Museum and are now on loan to Birmingham Museum. Two wells also belonged to the 2nd-century period.

I quote from Colonel Morcom's notes:

'Almost everywhere below the paving and below the floor level of this late period are very plentiful(?) layers of wood ash suggesting an earlier occupation by a wooden structure destroyed by fire. On and below this layer are very abundant sherds of earlier type and coins of the 2nd century. At two points of this earlier occupation site wells were found. In both cases the later construction was built over these showing that they had been filled up in the interim. The well C was 5 feet 6 inches diameter and 14 feet deep cut down the rough red gravelly sand. Apparently this well was not lined. At the 7-foot level large quantities of charcoal are found then dark colour earth and then at the 3-foot level a band of pinkish(?) ash showing apparently two fires in its history.

ROMAN MATERIAL FROM DORN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE .

The other well, north-west, was more carefully made being well lined with stone for about 3 feet at the bottom. Above the stone walling were clear signs of decayed wood covered by a whitish clay, probably perished cement. In this well also were signs of two inundating(?) periods. This well yielded the best pottery, several vessels being complete and also glass of good quality.

The most interesting find was made when cutting through the later stone floor and through the first layer of pinkish ash; a couple of steelyards of large size and in good condition and an ornate pothook or turnspit from oven lying close together. Apparently as there were further signs of burning in the soil below them they belong to the 2nd occupation period'.¹

There was, however, some 1st-century occupation instanced by a bead rim butt beaker, other bead rim pottery and fragments of Samian ware Forms 29 and 18.

Small finds included quantities of pottery dating mainly from the 2nd to 4th century with considerable Samian ware, a quantity of glass, some iron objects mainly agricultural including a plain snaffle bit, bronzes, including two brooches and spoons and fragments of an octagonal pewter dish (FIG. 2).

The whole collection has been presented to the City of Birmingham Museum by Dr A. R. Morcom.

POTTERS' STAMPS

SAMIAN

Form 37	CENSORINI	A.D. c. 110-140
„ 37	AL]BVCI	A.D. c. 140-160
„ 33	SOSIMI MAN	A.D. c. 180-200
„ 33	MAMILIANI	A.D. c. 140
„ 33	AVCELLA	A.D. c. 150-200
„ 33	MERC[V [SSA	A.D. c. 120-150
„ 31	ALBVCIANI	A.D. c. 150-180
„ 31	QVINT] ILLANVS	A.D. c. 120-160
I 18/31	LVPI [M	A.D. c. 60- 80
MORTARIA	FIGOBATEVS	A.D. c. 140-160

¹ Parallels occur at Gt Chesterford, Essex (*Arch. J.*, xiii, pp. 1-13) where other parallels from Ickleton and Bartlow are quoted. There is another example at Cirencester (see Fox, *Pattern and Purpose*, p. 110). For the origins and distribution of these hooks see Professor S. Piggott, *PSA Scot.*, LXXXVII, (1952-53). Photographs of both steelyards and hook were published in the *Engineer* for January/February, 1938.

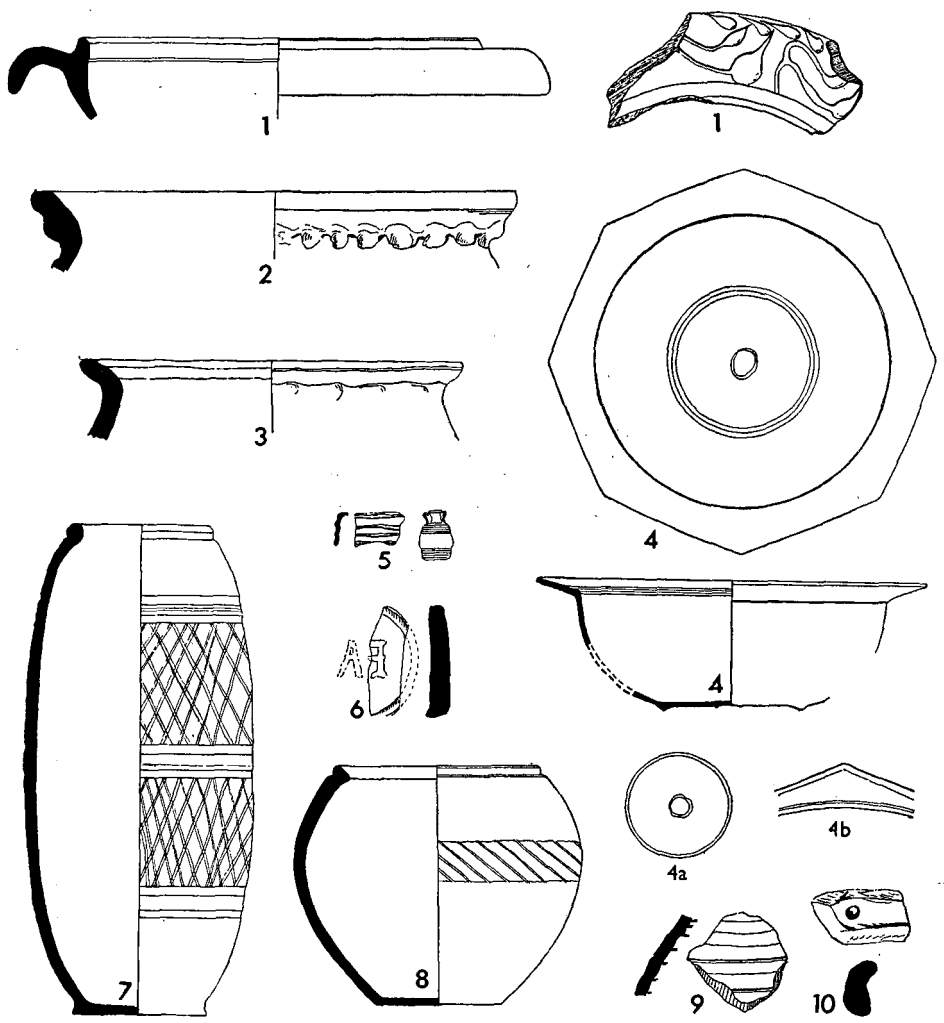


Fig. 2. Small Finds

ROMAN MATERIAL FROM DORN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

COINS

By M. M. ARCHIBALD, M.A.

<i>HADRIAN</i> A.D. 117-138	
Sestertius	illegible
<i>SABINA</i> d. A.D. 137	
Sestertius	R.I.C. Hadrian, 1029c
<i>MARCUS AURELIUS</i> as Caesar A.D. 140-144	
As	R.I.C. Antoninus Pius, 1240a
<i>FAUSTINA JUNIOR</i> d. A.D. 175	
Sestertius	R.I.C. Marcus Aurelius, 1672 (This reference mentions As only)
<i>COMMODUS</i> A.D. 180-192	
Sestertius	illegible
? <i>CRISPINA</i> before A.D. 183	
As	illegible
<i>VOLUSIAN</i> A.D. 252-254	
Double denarius	R.I.C. Volusian, 168
<i>GALLIENUS</i> A.D. 253-268	
Double denarius	R.I.C. Gallienus. Sole reign, 176
Double denarius	R.I.C. Gallienus. Sole reign, 179
Double denarius	R.I.C. Gallienus. Sole reign, 214
<i>VICTORINUS</i> A.D. 265-270	
Double denarius	R.I.C. Victorinus, 114
<i>CLAUDIUS GOTHICUS</i> A.D. 268-270	
Double denarius	R.I.C. Claudius Gothicus, 18
Double denarius	R.I.C. Claudius Gothicus, 48
<i>TETRICUS I</i> A.D. 270-273	
Double denarius	R.I.C. Tetricus I, 127
<i>TETRICUS II</i> A.D. 270-273	
Double denarius	R.I.C. Tetricus II, 272
<i>CONSTANTINE I</i> A.D. 308-337	
AE 3	KENT 212
<i>CONSTANTINE II</i> as Caesar A.D. 317-320	
AE 3	KENT 83
<i>CONSTANS</i> A.D. 337-350	
AE 3	L.R.B.C. II, 195
<i>VALENS</i> A.D. 364-378	
AE 3	L.R.B.C. II, 526
<i>GRATIAN</i> A.D. 367-383	
AE 3	L.R.B.C. II, 529
<i>VALENTINIAN II</i> A.D. 383-392	
AE 4	L.R.B.C. II, 789
<i>EMPEROR ILLEGIBLE</i>	
AE 4 Salus Reipublicae	Period A.D. 388-395
AE 4 Salus Reipublicae	Period A.D. 388-408
AE 4 Salus Reipublicae	Period A.D. 388-408
<i>BARBAROUS</i>	
AE 3 Constantinopolis	Copy of L.R.B.C. I, 225

TRANSACTIONS FOR THE YEAR 1963

REFERENCES

- R.I.C.: Mattingly and Sydenham (ed.): *The Roman Imperial Coinage*.
 KENT: J. P. C. Kent: 'The Pattern of Bronze Coinage under Constantine I',
The Numismatic Chronicle (1957), 16.
 L.R.B.C.: Carson, Hill and Kent: *Late Roman Bronze Coinage*. Parts I and II.

SMALL FINDS

1. Hard red body with thin white slip dappled over surface giving a marbled effect; cp. *Richborough IV*, nos. 409 and 411 for ware and relief but different shape, dated there as pre-Flavian probably Claudian. It resembles marbled ware from Margidunum (*Terra Sigillata of Margidunum*, pl. v, 7) given as Claudian, but it is a clear copy of Samian ware type Curle II, closely resembling an example dated c. 100-120 from York. Similar fabric in shape and decoration from Caerleon, *Prysg Field*, nos. 132-6, Trajan Antonine. Its probable date would seem to be the turn of the 1st century.
2. and 3. Calcite gritted ware with heavy shell content. There was a quantity of this from the top levels. Other types have been illustrated in the report on Whittington Court Roman Villa (*Trans. BGAS*, LXXI, figs. 1-11). The ware has a slightly soapy feel and varies in colour from red to black. It is not unlike the Saxo-Norman St Neot's ware and the slight finger pressings on no. 3 are reminiscent of early Mediaeval coarse wares. Late 4th century.
4. Pewter octagonal bowl much crushed and corroded. Octagonal bowls are known from Cornwall, Ely, Icklingham. For a discussion and list see W. J. Wedlake, *Excavations at Camerton, Somerset*, p. 87 *et seq.*
 - 4a. Outside of base.
 - 4b. Detail of rim.
5. Fragment of barrel-shaped glass jug. See D. B. Harden, *Arch. J.*, cii (1947), 71, for parallel from Park Street Villa, St Albans. Harden states 'these cannot be earlier than the late 3rd century and most are 4th century'.
6. Base of prismatic bottle. Dr D. B. Harden states 'this reads (I believe) A F retrograde. Cp. *Guildhall Museum Cat.* (1903 edition), p. 76. I suspect they both come from the same mould. There are A F inscriptions, not retrograde, on two examples from Corbridge (1911 excavation Site XI). There is another, not retrograde, on a base from Chesterford, in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.'
7. Well fired medium grey ware. A derived butt beaker type unusually narrow. I can find no exact parallel but this can hardly be later than Flavian. However, compare *Jewry Wall, Leicester*, fig. 39, no. 20. Date—A.D. 35-50.
8. Bead rim beaker of black polished ware. Charlton type bead rim. A derived native type surviving occasionally into the 3rd century.
9. Fragment of pitcher made of stone (a micaceous schist) lathe turned.
10. Amulet of walrus ivory with large hole on interior which turns to a pinpoint on exterior.