

#### IV.

### A ROMAN "VOTIVE LANTERN" FROM NEWSTEAD.

By A. W. G. LOWTHER, F.S.A.

An interesting class of objects of the Roman period, about which much is still to be learnt, is represented among the material found by Mr Curle at Newstead, and which I had the pleasure of seeing during a recent visit to the National Museum. The Newstead example (fig. 2) is represented by a fragment, but sufficient remains to show its original form and that it conforms to type in every way.

These objects, best described perhaps as "Votive Lanterns," have a wide distribution, extending in fact from Budapest to Scotland.

I have discussed them in a brief note in the *Surrey Archaeological Collections* (vol. xlii.), since when a few more examples have come to light, including the present fragment.

In *Bonner Jahrbücher*, No. 118, Siegfried Loeschke has written on some Continental examples, one of which, found at Xanten in 1821, throws considerable light on their "votive" aspect.

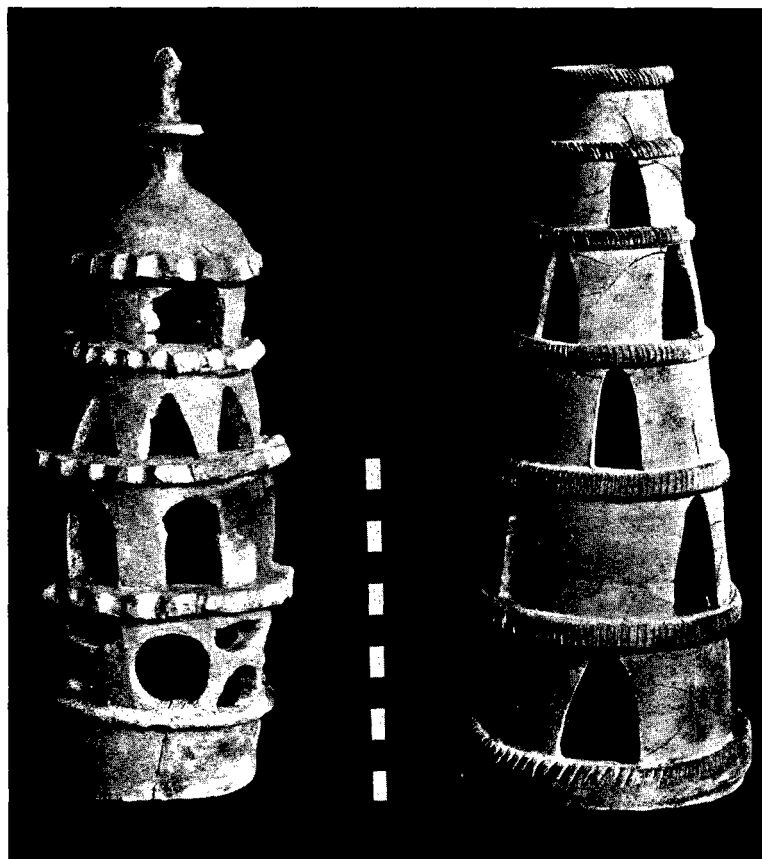
I shall begin by describing their general characteristics.

They are hollow, cylindrical<sup>1</sup> objects, made generally of red brick, but also, sometimes, of thick pottery. They average 2 feet in height, and have a basal diameter of about 9 inches. Usually, they have a domed top, ending in an ornamental spike (reminiscent of the modern spiked helmet), but they are also sometimes open at the top, as was one found at Verulamium in 1933. The outer surface is divided into horizontal zones by projecting bands, the latter being ordinarily about 3 inches apart, and are either plain or decorated. The ornament consists either of "frilling," done with thumb and forefinger, or else of diagonal slashing, formed with a knife.

The intervening zones are perforated with a series of openings which may vary considerably in shape, but are most often triangular or semi-elliptical.

<sup>1</sup> The three examples from Hungary are square, but similar in other respects.

The Newstead fragment retains part of two zones and the intervening raised band. The upper zone has the lower part of several triangular openings, while the lower zone retains only the upper angles of a row of



*(By courtesy of the Surrey Archaeological Society.)*

Fig. 1. Votive Lanterns.

similar openings. The intermediate raised band is ornamented with roughly executed diagonal slashing.

It is made of red brick, wheel turned, the bands being applied independently, and the openings cut, while the clay was still soft, before firing in a kiln.

Now as regards the evidence for a votive significance attaching to these objects and their probable date:

The Xanten example, a complete specimen (now, unfortunately, lost), was found standing upright over what was apparently a cremation burial (Loeschke, *op. cit.*). It had some forty small pots, with pointed bases, stuck in the ground and grouped in rings round its base. All these small pots had traces of burning inside them, suggesting that they had been used as lamps. The lantern itself bore no signs of smoke-blackening on its inner surface. Presumably the overlying soil in which the group was buried had originally been in the form of a raised mound or barrow.

The specimen found at Verulamium (fig. 1, right) was lying on the

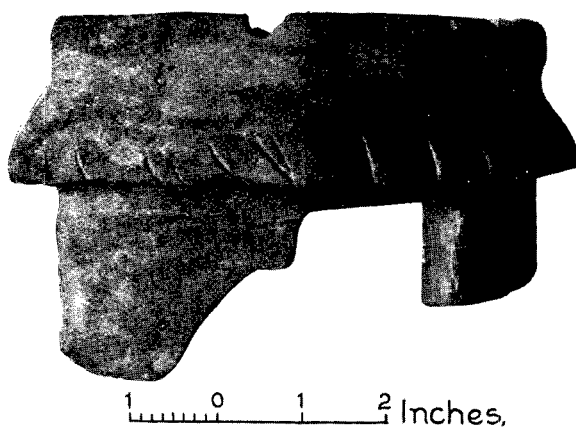


Fig. 2. Fragment of Votive Lantern from Newstead.

second-century gravel floor of the open inner courtyard of the Temple in INSULA VII. It was close beside the base of a brick-built altar of this period, and with it were fragments of several "incense-burners" of the usual tazza form.

It is made of pale buff-coloured pottery, carefully formed, the slashing on the raised bands being neatly executed.

At Ashted, in Surrey, buildings connected with a second-century brickworks, which I excavated during 1926-8, produced the fragments of several of these objects (*S.A.C.*, vols. xxxviii. and xlii.). They were all made of red brick, and the most elaborate had rosette- or cartwheel-shaped openings. The intervening bands were frilled and the tops were furnished with spikes. A restored example is shown on fig. 1, left.

I have not ascertained whether the Newstead fragment was found in

any stratified level of a dated period, nor in which part of the site it was found. It would be interesting to know whether it can be linked definitely with any one of the superimposed forts, or was associated with any particular structure as, for instance, the Sacellum of the Principia.

A very interesting fragment of another votive lantern in the National Museum (fig. 3), has been identified, and brought to my notice, by Dr Callander. It was found in the Roman Fort at Camelon during the



Fig. 3. Fragment of Votive Lantern from Camelon. (†.)

excavation carried out there by the Society in 1900. This piece consists of part of the domed top and the upper frilled flange. It is made of light red brick ware and measures  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch in thickness, the external diameter of the flange having been about 6 inches. In making the flange the clay has been folded back towards the inside, suggesting that (as appears to have been the case with the Ashtead examples) the top was made separately from the remainder of the object, and united, while the clay was still wet, before being dried or baked. It has the word 'FECIT' incised on the dome above the flange.

Votive Lanterns have been found in Britain at the following places:—

1. *Ashtead, Surrey*. Roman brickworks (*S.A.C., op. cit.*).
2. *Leigh Sinton, Worcestershire*. Roman brickworks (*Ant. Journ.*, vol. v. p. 287).

3. *Caerleon, Monmouthshire*. Inside the fortress (*Report on Excavations*, vol. ii., fig. 14).
4. *Cirencester, Gloucestershire*. Unpublished example in a private collection.
5. *York*. Two examples in the Museum.
6. *Verulamium, Hertfordshire*. Temple, INSULA VII (*Report on Excavations*, pp. 119, 190-1, and pl. lviii.).
7. *London*. Part of the spike, with frilled ornamentation, from one example in the collection at the Guildhall Museum (*Ant. Journ.*, vol. xvi., p. 204).
8. *Newstead*, and 9. *Camelon*. The fragments, described here, now in the National Museum of Antiquities.

Loeschcke draws a distinction between the square, tower-like objects of this group, which are found in the eastern frontier provinces of the Roman Empire, and the cylindrical type of its western counterpart. For the former, he attempts to find a source of origin in the terracotta lamps (generally shaped to represent buildings) which have been found in Romano-Egyptian tombs. The latter, the cylindrical type of the west, he derives from an early Roman cylindrical form of lantern. He also suggests an earlier dating for the cylindrical, as against the square, type.

So far, the evidence of the British finds shows that the cylindrical form prevailed over here; that Loeschcke was probably correct in attributing a "votive" significance to them, and that they were being manufactured and used here during the first half of the second century and possibly earlier.

There may be other examples of these objects remaining unnoticed among collections from Roman sites throughout the country; possibly, also, from Continental sites. It is hoped that this note may assist in their identification, and cause them to be brought to light.