

PART TWO

A TYPE SERIES FOR 'BELGIC POTTERY'

While the indiscriminate use of shape alone as the criterion of classification is an incomplete approach, since fabric is at least as important, the type series of Birchall (1965) and Hawkes and Hull (1947) have been the chief means of dealing with 'Belgic' pottery. Birchall concerned herself only with cemetery vessels and attempted to extend her typing into a chronological sequence: the restricted number of examples makes her division into types useful only in a very general sense. She did attempt to provide examples of each type from the whole area covered by the flat cremation graves, and included some continental parallels; but the small sample used, and the great amount of new material made available since 1962, make her general divisions invalid.

Camulodunum also has certain major disadvantages. The type series was based on the large amount of settlement material from Sheepen, although vessels from burials in the area were considered in the notes on the types. But there was no inherent reason to suppose that the Sheepen series is fully comprehensive, whether locally or further afield". Another major drawback is the generalisation of the examples: some contexts are given, but no groups or relationships between vessels. Further comments on the Camulodunum system are to be found in the notes on types below. The other main source of evidence for settlement wares is that of Verulamium (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936). The Prae Wood pottery was published in a chronological sequence, purporting to illustrate actual groups of vessels; and it provides a sequence that might be expected to illustrate regional differences from the Essex series. But Prae Wood as published is not as useful as it might be. The illustrated vessels are often not individually described; their precise sources are not given; and while they are described as 'illustrating the range of types present' this is decidedly not so. The discovery of a substantial amount of Prae Wood and Wheathampstead pottery in the Institute of Archaeology and Verulamium Museum prompted a re-assessment of the material. Prae Wood provides a useful parallel to the Camulodunum series, illustrating with many examples the forms and fashions of central Hertfordshire.

The area covered is that of the use of grog-tempering; it is larger than that covered by the types of Camulodunum and Verulamium. A truly representative series must include vessels from the whole area, with attention to fabric: it includes examples that are within the area but not grog-tempered, and this has been the rule for all forms except those in the C, G and S sections. Only then can basic similarities, and local variations, be discovered and described; and only with a thorough knowledge of the whole area can one attempt to supply such a type series with any chronological validity. It is essential to use a large enough sample.

Since there is a type series of some length provided by Camulodunum, it was used as a starting point. Forms 1-199

comprise continental types, both Gallo-Belgic and Roman in inspiration, and their native imitations. These types have clear individual characteristics, and are well represented at Sheepen. Types 201-275 are the 'native' types, and these are not always so easily defined. Certain categories are obvious, such as pedestal urns; the mass of coarse wares are less well treated, since the ranges of possible variations, even amongst the Sheepen forms, are not illustrated, and the basic group divisions are not always well chosen. The 'native' sequence is also confused by some essentially Roman bowl forms.

Birchall's type list also suffers from an imbalance of easily defined 'special' types and the less easily defined coarser types, as 'coarse ware' forms do occur in burials. And while her type V recognises a category left out of the Camulodunum series, her types VI and VII represent native copies of Gallo-Belgic imports; yet this difference is not acknowledged, while it is fundamental to the Camulodunum series.

It might be thought that the incomplete condition of most material from settlements could hamper their division into types, but this was found not to be so. Much useful settlement pottery has appeared recently, but there has for a long time been a good quantity to consider: but since, for instance, Wheeler only published a small proportion of the Prae Wood pottery, and certainly not a representative selection, it is only now that sufficient attention is being paid to settlement material.

The procedure was as follows: copies of all published 'Belgic' pottery from Essex, Hertfordshire and Kent were stuck on file cards, together with relevant material from the fringes of this area, wherever grog occurs. Where possible the pottery itself was examined, the fabric noted, and compared with the published description. A substantial amount of unpublished material found in museums was drawn; these drawings were reduced to 1:4 and copies of these also stuck on cards. Thus a collection of well over 4000 drawings was accumulated.

Each of these was compared with the Camulodunum type series, and where the vessel fell into one of these categories the form number was noted on the card. This procedure showed up the major gaps in the Camulodunum series, for not only were the regional non-Essex variations untyped, but certain more basic categories, especially globular jar forms, are absent or only poorly represented. The series presented below is the result of continued re-shuffling of the cards as more pottery was examined and additions made of published and unpublished drawings. It is not always strictly logical, since it has developed organically and not theoretically; but I have some confidence in its usefulness, for that very reason. The objects classified here are not the product of strict logic; they are not even factory products as was so much Roman pottery, but craft potting with a good deal of individual expression and experiment. However one strives to make them conform to rules, there is always an element of overlapping.

On the principle that two examples constitute a form, there is also room for oddities; but many of the basic forms have infinite

variations, often illustrating local differences, yet difficult to divide usefully. In such cases the attempt to divide has not been made, and the whole range of variation is kept together to demonstrate these local fashions. For this reason the illustrated examples within each form are in strict geographical order, as the numbering of sites on each distribution map shows. The order is the same throughout: Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Hertfordshire, and the area to the NW across the Chilterns.

The basic divisions are:

- A Pedestal urns.
- B Jars, 'finer wares'.
- C Jars, 'coarse wares'.
- D Bowls.
- E Cups.
- F Pedestalled bowls, cups, etc.
- G Copies of Gallo-Belgic, samian, and Roman forms.
- L Lids.
- S Special miscellaneous forms.

Each of these sections has introductory notes and a list of the forms within it. Categories are provided for rims as well as for more complete specimens, so that as many settlement contexts as possible could be included.