



LINCOLN CITY AND COUNTY MUSEUM  
PUBLICATIONS, No. 5.

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# Roman Antiquities,

IN THE

CITY & COUNTY MUSEUM, LINCOLN.

*(PART 2.)*

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OCTOBER, 1908.

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*PRICE ONE PENNY.*

SOLD AT THE MUSEUM.



## ROMAN ANTIQUITIES

The lengthy period of occupation of this City by the Romans has resulted in the discovery of a large quantity of pottery being found during the many excavations made in and near Lincoln, as well as in more distant parts of the county.

In most cases this consists of large numbers of fragments, but where care has been taken vessels have been secured in a most perfect condition.

Various donors have most kindly presented nice examples, which are placed on exhibition in the City and County Museum, and it is hoped that specimens still in the possession of others will be deposited there under conditions where they will be most highly appreciated by the numerous visitors to this Institution.

As several fine examples of Cinerary Urns are in the collection this publication will be devoted to that class of pottery.

By way of introduction, it may be of interest to call attention to the mode of interment, also to the probable form of ceremony that attended the disposal of the dead in Roman times.

In a previous publication\* the two principal forms of disposal referred to, were the interment in coffins and by cremation, though in some cases the remains were simply laid in the earth without further covering than the usual dress. Among the Roman antiquities in the Museum there are three forms of coffin or sarcophagus, one of lead, another hewn out of solid stone, and part of one that was evidently built up of slabs. In other parts of the country coffins of wood, baked clay, and in rare instances, tombs made up of tiles have been found.

\*See Museum Publication No. 3.



Cremation, however, was very much in evidence, and the custom has been very lucidly described by Mr T. Wright, M.A., F.S.A., who took a deep interest in the manners and customs of the Roman and other periods. From his researches he describes the ceremony as follows:—"The last duty to the dying man was to close his eyes, which was usually performed by his children, or by his nearest relatives, who, after he had breathed his last, caused the body to be washed in warm water, and afterwards to be anointed. The corpse was afterwards dressed, and placed on a litter in the hall, with its feet to the entrance door, where it was to remain seven days. It is said that the object of this ceremony was to show that the deceased had died a natural death, and that he had not been murdered.

In accordance with the popular superstition, a small piece of money was placed in the mouth, which it was supposed would be required to pay the boatman Charon for the passage over the Styx.

In the case of persons of substance, incense was burnt in the hall, which was often decked with cypress, and a keeper was appointed who did not quit the body until the funeral was completed. The public having been invited by proclamation to attend the funeral, the body was carried out on the seventh day and borne in procession, attended by the relatives, friends, and whoever chose to attend, accompanied by musicians, and sometimes dancers, mountebanks, and performers of various descriptions.

With rich people the images of their ancestors were carried in the procession, which always passed through the Forum on its way to the place of burial, and sometimes a friend mounted the rostrum and pronounced the funeral oration.

In earlier times the burial always took place by night, and was attended with persons carrying lamps and torches, but this practice seems to have been afterwards neglected; yet the lamps still continued to be carried in the procession.

Women were employed not only to howl their lamentations over the deceased and chant his praises, but to cry also; and their tears, it appears, were collected into small vessels of glass; and this circumstance is termed, in some of the inscriptions found on the Continent, as being 'buried with tears;' and the tomb is spoken of as being 'full of tears.'

The next ceremony was that of burning the body. In the earlier ages of their history the Romans are said to have buried the bodies of their dead entire, without burning; and there seems to be no doubt that, at all events, the two practices, burying the body and cremation, existed at the same time; but the latter appears to have become gradually more fashionable, until few but paupers were buried otherwise.

In the age of the Antonines the practice of cremation was finally abolished in Italy; but the imperial ordinances appear to have had but little effect in the distant provinces, where the two manners of burial continued to exist simultaneously. Both are accordingly found in the Roman cemeteries in Britain in interments which were undoubtedly not those of Christians.

The funeral pile was built of the most inflammable woods, to which pitch was added, and other things, which often rendered this part of the ceremony very expensive. An inscription, preserved by Grüter, speaks of some persons whose property was only sufficient to pay for the funeral pile and the pitch to burn their bodies.

It had been ordered by a law of the Twelve Tables that the funeral pile must be formed of timber which was rough and untouched by the axe, but this rule was perhaps not very closely adhered to in later times. When the body was placed on the pile the latter was sprinkled with wine and other liquors, and incense and various unguents and odoriferous spices were thrown upon it. It was now, according to some accounts, that the coin for the passage over the Styx was placed in the mouth of the corpse, and, at the same time, the eyes were opened.



Fire was applied to the pile by the nearest relatives of the deceased, who, in doing this, turned their faces from it while it was burning. The relatives and friends often threw into the fire various objects, such as personal ornaments, and even favourite animals and birds.

When the whole was reduced to ashes these were sprinkled with wine, and sometimes milk.

The next proceeding, indeed, was to collect what remained of the bones from the ashes, which was the duty of the mother of the deceased, or if the parents were not living, of the children, and was followed by a new offering of tears. Some of the old writers speak of the difficulty of separating the remains of the burnt bones from the wood ashes, and we accordingly find them usually mixed together.

When collected, the bones were deposited in an urn, which was made of various materials. Bronze, and in some instances silver is mentioned, and even gold, as well as of marble; and those found in Britain are often of glass, but the more common material was earthenware. One of the performers in the ceremony, whose duty this was, then purified the attendants by sprinkling them with water with an olive branch if procurable, and pronounced the word signifying "you may go."

The mourners addressed a farewell to the manes of the dead and departed."

Mr. Wright has written much more on the disposal of the dead, but the foregoing will give a fair idea of the ceremony that probably took place in Roman times.

The urns were placed by the relatives, under various conditions, some in a tomb, some in a receptacle of carved stone, with a cover, and in most cases buried in the earth.

In all localities occupied by the Romans a number of these urns have been found, and in Lincoln several good examples are preserved.



Reference to the plate will give an exact impression of their shapes, and the originals may be seen in the Archæological Room of the City and County Museum, Lincoln.

#### CINERARY URNS.

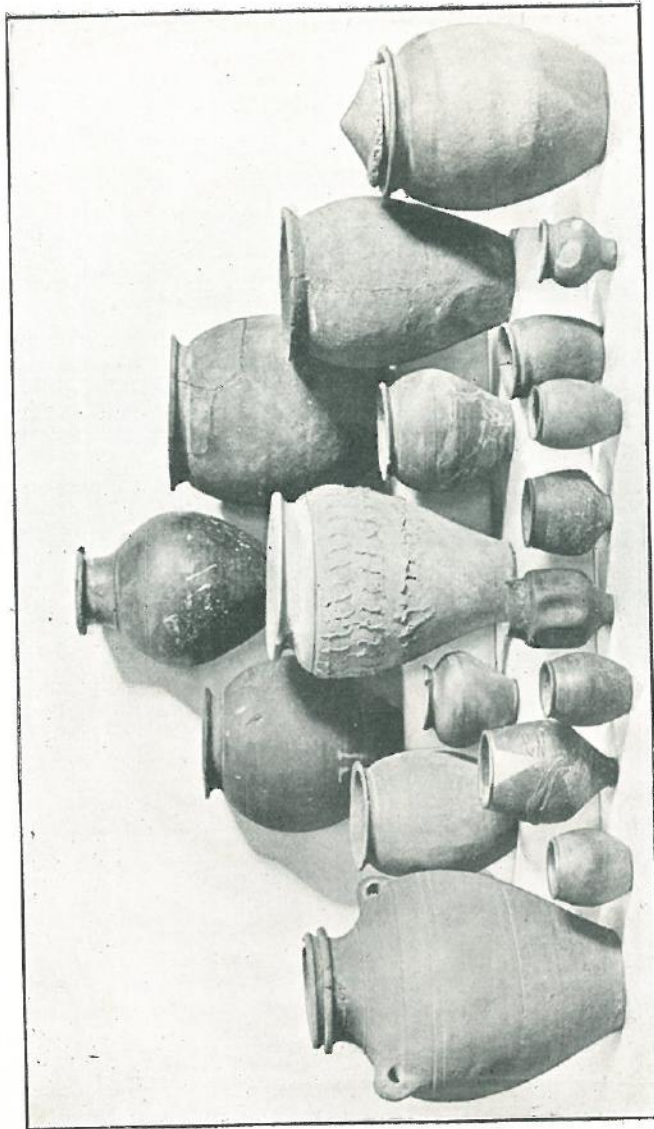
The largest specimen in the Museum is figured at the left of the plate, and is a fine local example. It was presented by the late Mr. John Swan, and was found several years ago in his garden at "Stonefield," Lincoln, and was filled with burnt bones which were re-buried.

The urn is of greyish-black ware, and has two small handles. The decoration is very simple. Some lines are tooled round the vessel, and a waved line encircles the urn on the level of the handles. It is thirteen inches in height, and has a saucer shaped cover.

On the opposite side of the plate another urn is figured, made of similar clay, and decorated round the thicker part with a trellis pattern. This urn is also provided with a cover of interesting form, and was found in an excavation in the City and placed in the Museum by Mr. R. A. Macbrair, City Surveyor. Height, ten and a half inches.

The upper central urn in this group is of different form from any other in the collections, having a smaller opening than is usual. It was found at Washingborough, and was presented by Mr. W. Homer. The decoration is quite of the usual simple type, narrow bands worked round the vessel, a waved line and a scribbled marking below.

The urns at each side of the above with the one on the left of the middle row are deposited here by the Dean and Chapter, brought from the Cathedral, where for many years they had been preserved. They were discovered during excavations in the City at various times. They are of globular form, and with the exception of a faint trellis pattern, are devoid of ornamentation. One of them still holds the remains of the cremated dead. The smallest urn on the middle row is not quite complete, and is a graceful little vessel, simply made



JOHN H. REYNOLDS.

CINERARY URNS.

The originals are in the collection of the City and County Museum, Lincoln.

Photograph by



and relieved by smooth bands, worked on the somewhat rougher surface of the ware. It was found in High Street, Lincoln, and presented by Mr. A. Furness.

A similar vessel is also figured in the same row, rather larger, but similarly decorated. This specimen was recently found in excavating foundations for the new portion of the Co-operative Society's buildings in Silver Street.

The urn was badly smashed, but has been fairly restored in the Museum, and is the gift of the above Society.

The small urn at the right of the bottom row is of interesting form, and is deposited in the Museum by Dr. Cant, and was found in a cist at Firsby.

At the opposite end of the same row is another small urn of simple form found in Monson Street, presented by Mr. A. G. Webster, who thinks that this was the site of a Roman Cemetery, as so many urns were found near this locality when that part of the City was developed. It is quite probable that such was the case, being outside of the City walls, and at the side of the High road, a favourite place for depositing the remains of the dead.

The rest of the specimens in this group are the gift of Miss O'Neill, who was the first to contribute to the Museum examples of pottery of this period. They were collected by the late Dr. O'Neill, who was so much interested in watching the excavations in and near the City, and who preserved many specimens in his collections, several of which are here.

The large Urn at the right of the middle row is a somewhat coarsely made vessel with no decoration. The colour and texture of the material suggests it being of local make from the sandy clay of the ironstone workings at Greetwell, where it was found. Another Urn exhibited in the case of Roman pottery, though not figured here, was found in Newport, Lincoln, broken, and with it the cremated ashes as when found.

The central figure of the group illustrated is a fine example of light-grey ware, eleven inches in height, and still containing

the bones of the deceased Roman. This vessel is not of a common type. It may be said to be pear-shaped, the upper portion being thicker, and tapering to the base. The decoration is very interesting just below the neck, an indented band is worked round whilst on the wheel. Then the urn seems to have been treated as follows: a puddle of clay made, into which the hand of the potter was thrust, then allowing the liquid to drain, the clay adhering between the fingers was pressed on to the vessel. This appears to have been done in three rows, giving the urn an unusual yet graceful form of decoration.

Three small urns were found with the above near the site of John o Gaunt's house, High Street, Lincoln, in 1904, being part of the site referred to in the case of Mr. Webster's specimens. These three urns are figured in the bottom row of the plate, being the third, fifth, and seventh, counting from left to right.

The first of these is a plain little vessel three and a half inches high, the next, a graceful little specimen, three and three-quarter inches in height, with a small base. The colour is a deep warm red; under the rim a dark smooth band is seen, and the rest of the vessel is decorated by sprinkling on fine grit or sand. The larger of these three is four-and-a-quarter inches high, of rather coarse ware, with rough trellis decoration.

Figured in the lower row will be seen a still more interesting specimen. It is a nice example of Castor ware found in Eastgate in 1884. It is of the usual form of this class of pottery, finely made and with the favourite form of base. The decoration shows two greyhounds in full chase after a hare, showing that coursing was well known in Roman times.

Hunting scenes have been a favourite form of decoration, and examples found in many parts of the country. The vessels of this ware are well made, and of graceful form, after turning



the body of the urn into shape the potter then "slipped" on the design as his imagination and experience suggested suitable figures.

Another vessel of the same ware is treated in quite a different way. This specimen appears to have been turned in a globular form and then pressed inwards, by this means giving the urn a fluted or indented appearance, and a gracefully light form.

The remaining urn figured is a three and five-eighth inch vase of very fine ware quite plain, and was found on the site of the Technical School, Monk's Road, among a quantity of other pottery of the period.

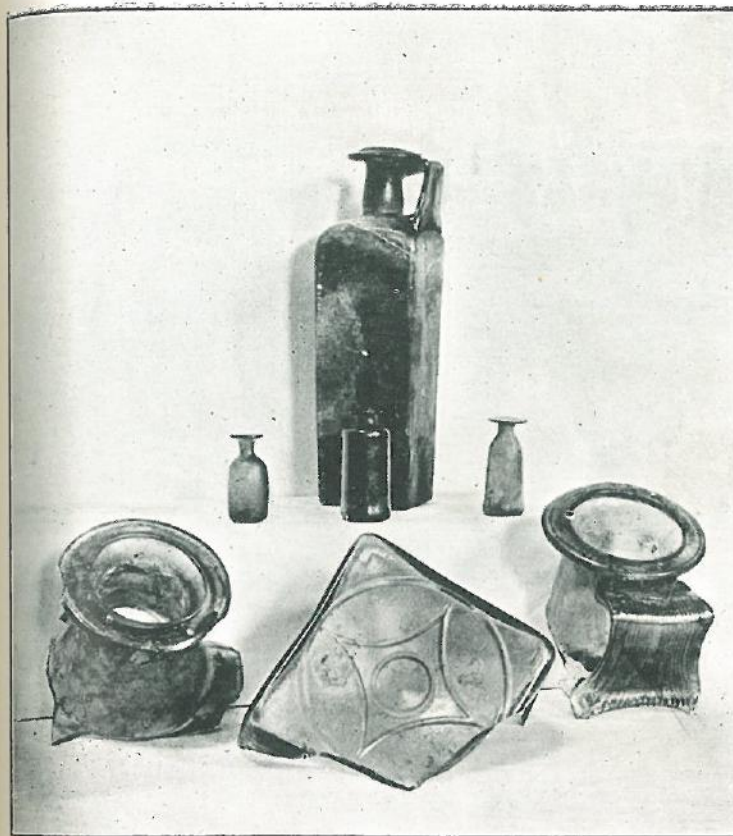
The specimens mentioned in the foregoing are such as will assist to illustrate the various forms of cinerary vessels found in and near Lincoln. In the Museum collections are several others, and fragments of many forms of interesting decoration. A rim of one is shown in which the decoration is formed by placing narrow strips on the vessel and indenting it with thumb or finger. Other examples of the period are exhibited, each labelled and with the donor's name.

A large quantity of portions of vessels found in various excavations in the City are stored. At some future time these will be worked out to display variation of design and decoration.

#### GLASS VESSELS.

It has been said that in some cases glass vessels were used in which to deposit the remains of the cremated dead. Some examples are shown; these are deposited by the Dean and Chapter, having been found in the upper part of the City, and until recently preserved in the Cathedral Library.

One is a square bottle almost intact, and is nine-and-a-half inches high. Portions of other larger vessels are with it. All of these are pale green in colour, and two of them have the drawn glass handles peculiar to this form of glass ware of the period.



Photograph by

JOHN H. REYNOLDS.

#### CINERARY VESSELS OF GLASS.

In the City and County Museum, Lincoln.

*The upper vessel is 9½ inches in height.*