

A Letter from Dr. Lister of YORK, containing an account of several curious Observations made by him about Antiquities, &c.

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IN turning over my Papers, I found Notes of something I formerly writ to Mr. *Oldenburg*, and which I believed was lost; it being sent much about the time of his death: They relate to certain Antiquities, which have for ought I know, escaped the more curious *Antiquaries* of this and the last Age, when that Study was much more in credit: But we shall treat of them here only in the relation they may have to the advancement of Natural Philosophy and Arts.

1. *Roman Urnes* are found in very many places throughout the whole Kingdom; but the different workmanship of these Vessels, their composition, and places where they made them, have been little that I know of taken notice of by any. I have observed what follows of these matters:

Here then are found at *York*, in the road or *Roman-street* without *Midselgate*; and likewise by the River side, where the Brick Kilns now are, Urnes of three different tempers. *viz.*

1. Of a bluish grey colour, having a great quantity of coarse Sand wrought in with the Clay.

2. Others of the same colour, having either a very fine sand mixt with it full of *Mica*, or Catilver, or made of clay naturally sandy.

3. Red Urnes of fine Clay, with little or no Sand in it. These Pots are quite throughout of a Red colour like fine Bole. Also many of those red pots are elegantly adorned with Figures in

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Basso Relievo, and usually the Workmans name, which I think others have mistaken [*Burtons C. Ant. It. p. 183, 230.*] for the persons name buried there upon the bottom or cover ; as *Januarius* and such like ; but that very name I have seen upon several red Pots , found both here and at *Aldbrough*. After all, these are glazed inside and outside with a kind of Varnish of a bright Coral colour.

The composition of the first sort of Pots, did first give me occasion to discover the places where they were made : The one about the midway betwixt *Wilber-fosse* and *Barnbie* on the *More*, Six miles from *Tork* in the Sand Hills, or rising grounds, where now the Warren is. The other Roman Pottery on the Sand-Hills at *Santon*, not far off *Brieg* in *Lincolnshire*. In the first place I have found widely up and down broken pieces of Urns, Slagg, and Cinders. At the latter place there are yet remaining, (though it is a moveable Sand, and hurried every way by the Wind, and has by that means covered the place all over) some of the very Furnaces, whose ruins I take to be some of those *meta* or sandy Hillocks. Besides here are many pieces of Pots and Urns of different shapes, and much Slagg and Cinders ; This Potterie having taken up much Ground, as to one that shall diligently view the place, it will appear. 'Tis remarkable, that both the above mentioned Potteries are within less than a mile of the *Roman Road*, or *Military-high-way*. Nothing is remembred in either of those places, of any Pottery that was known in those parts, nor indeed could I learn where any good clay for that purpose was to be had near those Sands : which yet our modern Potteries chiefly seek after, which has made them to be forgotten and disused ; The materials of our modern Pots being much altered, and consequently the places.

The *Roman* Urns above described differ in these particulars, from what Pots are now usually made amongst us. (1) That they are without all manner of glazing with lead, which perhaps is a Modern invention, (2.) That a far greater quantity of Sand is used than clay, which thing alone made it worth their while, to bring their clay to the *Sand-Hills*. (3.) That they

they were baked either with more leisure after long and through drying, or inclosed within certain Coffins to defend them from the immoderate contact of the Flames : which I am induced to believe, because there seem to be fragments of such things to be found. 'Tis certain the natural colour of the Clay is not altered by burning : So that both the degrees of heat and manner of burning might be different. And one of these Potterds as I have heard, baked over again in our Ovens, will become red. As to the two last kind of Urns, it is likely the first of them with their particles of *Mica* in it, were made of a sandy blue Clay, of which nature there is good plenty among the Western Mountains of *Yorkshire*, and particularly at *Carlston*, not far off *Ickley* a *Röman* station. The red Urns seem to have been their Master-piece, wherein they shewed the greatest Art, and seemed to glory most, and to eternize their names on them. I have seen great varieties of Embossed work on them. And lastly for the elegant manner of glazing, it is far nearer indeed, and more durable than our modern way of Leading, which is apt to crack and craze, both with wet and heat : and at the fire is certainly unwholsome, by reason of the fumes Lead usually emits, being a quick vaporable Metal. This ancient glazing seems to have been done by the Brush, or dipping ; for both inside as well as outside of the Urn are glazed, and that before the Baking. And something of the Materials of it seems to be remembered by *Pliny*, *Lib. 36. C. 19. Fictilia ex bitumine Inscripta non delentur.* The Painting of Pots with bitumen is indelible, And again, *Tingi solidas ex bitumine Statuas, Lib. 35. c. 15.* The bitumen he sayes sinks into the very Stones and Pots, which is something more than glazing.

The great plenty of these Urns found in many parts of *England*, seems to argue them also of *English* Manufacture, but where I cannot guess, unless wrought at the Bole Mines, of which Clay alone they seem to be made in *Cleveland*, for that the barren tract of Land called *Blackmoor* was well known to the *Römans*, the Jet Rings taken up with these Urns doth sufficiently testifie. Now Jet and Bole are no where that I

know of to be found with us in *England* but in that Tract ; being Fossils peculiar to those Mountains. Of these Jet Rings some are plain, and others wrought, but all of them of an extraordinary bigness, being at least three Inches diameter, and yet the inward bore is not above an inch and an half, which makes them too little for the Wrists of any Man, as they are much too big for the Fingers, so that probably they were never worn either as *Armillæ* or *Anuli*. One of each sort I have by me, which I carefully redeemed of the Workman, besides many others which were broken, found about a sort of Urns in *Tork* fields. And since we are upon the subject of Plasticks, or the *Roman* Clay-work, we cannot but take notice of the opinion of *Cambden*; Who will have the Obelisks at *Burrow-Briggs* in this County Artificial, when in truth they are nothing less, being made of one of the most common sort of Stone, viz. of a coarse Rag, or Millstone-grit ; but without doubt, the bigness of the Stone surprized him, either not thinking them portable, or perhaps not any *English* rock, fit to yield natural Stones of that magnitude: But *Roman* Monuments I suppose none does doubt them, because pitched here by a very remarkable and known *Roman* station, *Isurium*.

And then consider what trifles these are, compared with the least obelisks at *Rome*. And as to the Rocks whence they might be hewn, there are many of that Stone near the River *Nid* and upon the Forest of *Scarsbourg* ; and a little above *Ickly*, (a, nother *Roman* station) within sixteen miles of *Burrow-Briggs* there is one solid Bed of this very Stone, whose perpendicular depth only will yield obelisks, at least thirty foot long. And yet at *Rudstone* near *Burlington* in the *Torkshire* Woods, full forty miles wide of these Quarries is an obelisk of the very same Stone, shape and magnitude of these before mentioned. But we cannot let this pass without noting, That almost all the Monuments of the *Romans* with us were of this sort of Stone ; As the ancient walls of this City, as appears by what remains of the ancient Gates, and the great quantities of it that is wrought up in most of the Churches, and is still daily

daily dug out of Foundations: But a most undeniable instance is, a vast *Roman* head, perhaps of some of the Emperors, upon a neck or square pedestal of one solid Stone, with the point of the square to the eye, of as coarse a grit as that of the Obelisks above mentioned. This Stone is now in Mr. *Hilliars* Garden, and was dug out of the Foundations of some Houses thereabouts. The only remaining Inscription that I could find at *Burrow-briggs*, yet imperfect as well as odd, is upon this sort of Stone in the Street Wall of Sir *William Taukers* House.



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Also two *Roman* Altars I have seen of this Stone; one the original of that at *Ickley* mentioned in *Cambden*; Another in the possession of that ingenious Antiquary Mr. *Thirsbylate* of *Leeds*.

And this I think sufficient to disprove that mistake of *Cambden*, That the Stones at *Burrow-briggs* are artificial. There is but one only instance that I ever yet met with of the *Romans* ever having used in these parts of *England* any other sort of Stone; yet is not the common lime-stone, but a certain Stone had from the Quarries about *Malton*, because of the *Lapides Judaici*, by me formerly described to be seen in the texture of it. It is a small but elegant Altar with Figures in *Basso Relievo*, of Sacrificing instruments, &c. It has suffered an unlucky accident

cident by the stupid ignorance of the Malons, who were ordered by the late Lord Fairfax to place it upon a Pedestal in the Court of his House at YORK. Yet the Inscription which they had miserably defaced, was by chance preserved.

