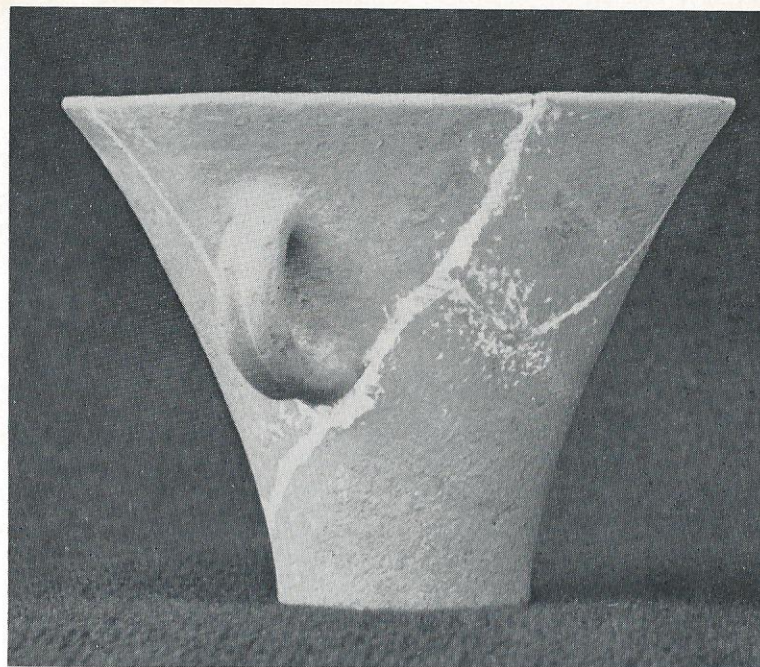


## The Collections

The Vale of Evesham, a fertile basin drained by the Avon and its tributaries, was much favoured by early man. Dense prehistoric settlement on the gravel terraces bordering the Avon has been revealed by aerial photography and confirmed by excavation, and the neighbouring clays, too, were inhabited before the coming of the Romans. From neolithic times the Vale was traversed from north to south by an important trade route, the Warwickshire–Worcestershire ridgeway, linking the Birmingham Plateau with the Vale of Gloucester. The museum has a small collection of prehistoric pottery and implements from local sites and two rare iron currency bars found at Offenham (near Evesham). There are also some spindle whorls—pebbles with a hole bored in them used by women in prehistoric times (and still used in remote parts of the world) to weight the spindle in spinning wool by hand.

The Vale continued to be densely peopled in the Roman period and was probably a grain-growing area for the armies and towns of Roman Britain. Ryknild Street, an important Roman road, passed from north to south over the eastern side of the Vale, and branches from it probably served the Vale itself. One such branch at Cleeve Prior was investigated and sectioned by the Vale of Evesham Historical Society in 1959. Cleeve Prior, a few miles north east of Evesham, has proved remarkably rich in late Roman remains. The largest hoard of Roman coins discovered in Britain was found there in 1811. It was immediately broken up and sold and nothing of it can be seen in the museum. The museum does, however, have two rare examples of late Roman pottery from Cleeve Prior: a 'tankard' and a 'tazza' (probably a domestic ritual vessel) which were found in the hands of a skeleton unearthed there in 1935. No villa has ever been discovered in the Vale, but the grain-drying room of a moderately prosperous Romano-British farm, perhaps typical of the Vale, was excavated by the Vale of Evesham Historical Society in 1967 and 1968 at Wickhamford (near Evesham). Small finds suggestive of the



Roman vessels found at Cleeve Prior in 1935. Height 12 cm