

## THE EVIDENCE OF SETTLEMENT AT PLAXTOL IN THE LATE IRON AGE AND ROMANO-BRITISH PERIODS

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The modern village of Plaxtol, situated between Sevenoaks and Maidstone on the river Bourne, lies at the east end of the Vale of Kent and the lands around the village are characterised by fruit farms and nut orchards. Two thousand years ago, long before the village came into existence, the main topographical features surrounding the area were the chalk hills to the north and the Forest of Anderida to the south and these two major features had the effect of isolating the Plaxtol area from outside influence. As a consequence, the key to our understanding of the development of the Plaxtol area during the Late Iron Age and Romano-British period hangs on the Iron Age routes in existence in the locality at that time.

### *Iron Age Evidence*

Particularly relevant is the north-south Iron Age track, identified by Margary, which ran over the North Downs, a mile or so to the west of Plaxtol and thence southwards through Shipbourne to Tonbridge. The strategic importance of this track is highlighted by the three Iron Age camps along its route at Saxonbury, Tonbridge and Oldbury, the largest in the South-East, located about two miles north-west of Plaxtol. Sample excavations at Oldbury camp favoured a construction date about the middle of the first century BC, possibly as a response to a perceived threat from Caesar's incursions. For our purposes, Oldbury is important for two reasons. It gives us clear evidence of the existence of a large, organised, late Iron Age community in the vicinity of Plaxtol and it demonstrates the importance that the local community attached to this Iron Age track from the north, which allowed access to the Thames basin via the Darent valley (**Fig. 1**).

Writing of this Iron Age track, Margary says,

leaving the North Downs a mile or two west of Wrotham, two tracks led southwards, one through Ightham village due south to Ivy Hatch, the other

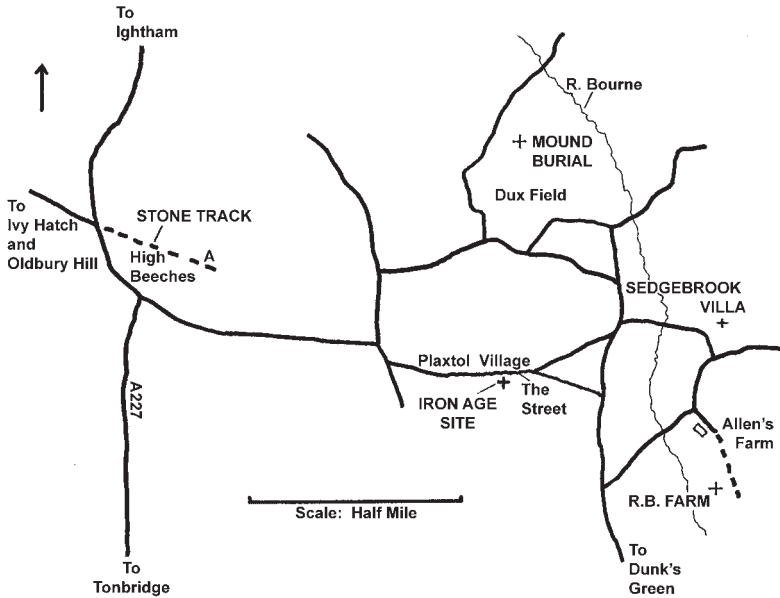


Fig. 1 Iron Age and Romano-British Sites at Plaxtol.

along the ridge through Oldbury camp and thence to Ivy Hatch. Roman remains have been found at Plaxtol, just to the east of Ivy Hatch, where these tracks converge.

Margary clearly sees High Beeches, sited on the A227 between Ivy Hatch and Plaxtol, as the T-junction where the two tracks converged to become a single track heading southwards.

However, in view of the existence today of a stone-laid track which runs eastwards towards Plaxtol exactly on the other side of the junction from the road to Ivy Hatch, it seems more likely that High Beeches was not a T-junction for the Iron Age tracks but a crossing point between a north-south track and an east-west track which followed the line of 'The Street' in Plaxtol and forded the Bourne before proceeding eastwards along the line of a sunken lane. To test this theory, the track from High Beeches was plotted with a resistivity survey beyond the point where it disappears from sight into a copse, about 400m east of the High Beeches junction. Present day maps, including the O.S. first edition, show a footpath deviating to the north around the copse but resistivity surveying and an exposed section taken at point 'A' clearly show that the track, made of laid ragstone, about 1.5-2m wide, continued in a straight line towards Plaxtol High Street. It

was not possible to trace this track further eastwards beyond the copse as it appeared to have been ploughed out in the open fields.

However, the existence of a laid stone track exactly aligned with Margary's Iron Age track to Ivy Hatch and 'The Street' in Plaxtol gives strong support to the idea of an east-west Iron Age track linking the Plaxtol area to the important north-south track a mile to the west of the village. Concrete evidence of local Iron Age settlement at Plaxtol came to light at a site on private land on the south side of the main street. In 1956 the curator of Maidstone Museum came across a group of sarsens to the rear and slightly uphill of the *Papermakers Arms* (TQ 6051 5336). Sherds of Iron Age pottery were scattered among the large stones. Almost immediately afterwards, students of Tonbridge School carried out a dig and further exposed the stones. No report was made but pottery sherds were sent to the British Museum and it was confirmed that these were all Belgic ware, i.e. Late Iron Age. The site was re-examined in 2003 and was composed of a group of sandstone blocks laid out in the form of a semi-circle, with gaps between the sarsens wedged with smaller stones (**Fig. 2** and **Plate I**). The site faced south and had been cut into the top of a slope overlooking a stream, which flowed down the valley below.

The presence of Belgic ware among the sarsens is important for dating

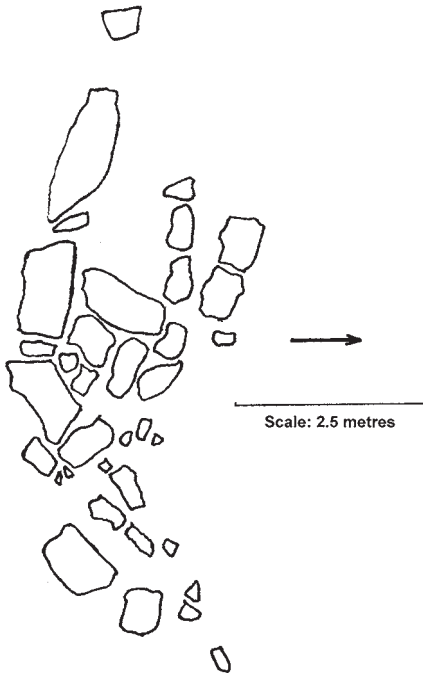


Fig. 2 Sketch of Sarsen Stone spread at Plaxtol.



Looking north at the outer perimeter of the sarsens

purposes but what is perhaps more significant is the absence of any local Patchgrove ware or early Romano-British ware (mid first to late second century), making it virtually certain that this is a pre-Conquest, Iron Age site. It seems clear that what we have here is the bare foundations of an Iron Age round house, which had been cut into the slope on the brow of the hill. The construction of the semi-circle of stones on the south side of the site would have served as a flat base for the sloping thatched roof to rest upon, as this was the side which was unsupported by the horseshoe of high ground to the north, west and east. It was not uncommon for Iron Age houses to be cut into a slope and the site remains at Plaxtol, a rough semi-circle of laid stones and a scatter of Iron Age pottery, are typical of the archaeological evidence we have of Iron Age round houses .

#### Romano-British occupation

The evidence for later Romano-British occupation at Plaxtol is a good deal more widespread and there are no less than three separate sites that have been located within half a mile of the village. Between the years 1999-2006 these three sites were examined and the remainder of the article is a summary of that work. Prior to this point in time, the discoveries came

from two sources. In 1858 Luard excavated a Romano-British building at Allens Farm, only later identified as a Roman bath house and in the same year excavated a Romano-British mound burial at Dux Field, about half a mile to the north of Plaxtol village. He described the burial as being sited within an enclosed cemetery (Luard 1859). Another major discovery was made in the 1980s when a Roman villa was excavated in Sedgebrook Field, 600m north of the bath house which Luard had found (Bédoyère 1991).

*The Romano-British Site at Allens Farm*

We began work at Allens Farm in 1999. Extensive geophysical surveying carried out over the grasslands and nut orchards on the present day farm enabled us to pinpoint structures which later excavation proved to be the bath house site, a tile kiln and a Romano-British farm house with enclosure. The site where the clay was extracted for the tile kiln and where discarded Romano-British pottery and tile sherds were later dumped, was also located (Fig. 3).

Very little remains of the original *bath house* recorded by Luard as the farmer sold the stone for road-making in the 1850s and the site was re-dug

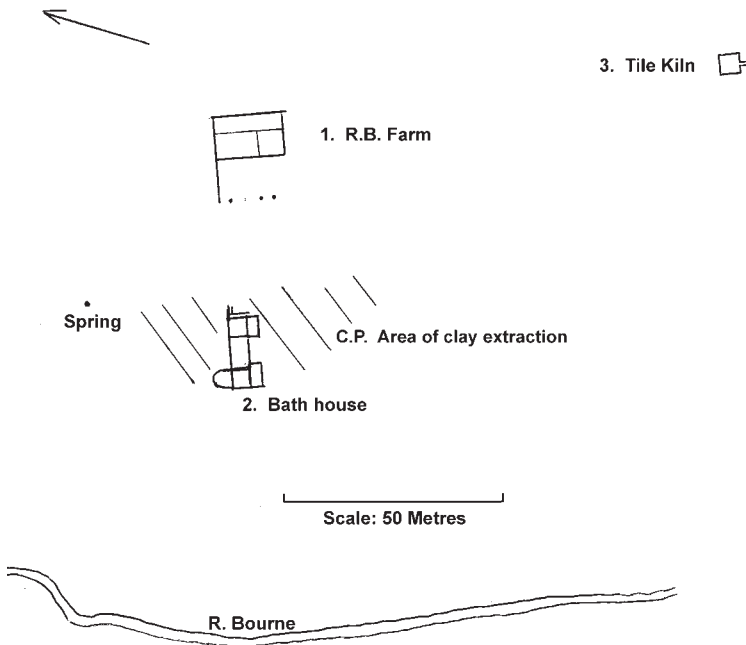


Fig. 3 Romano-British Buildings at Allens Farm Plaxtol.

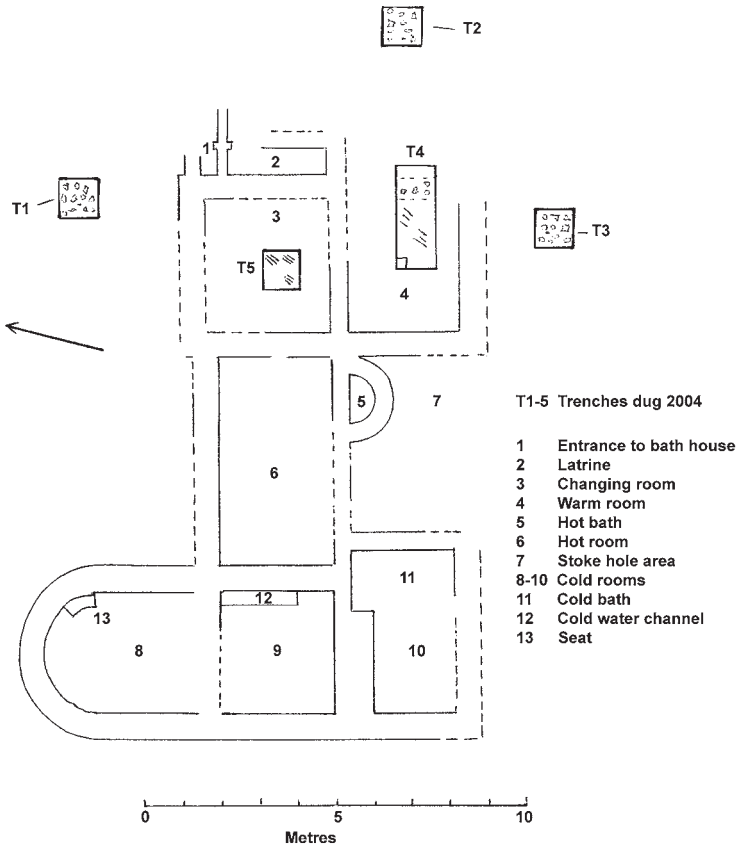


Fig. 4 Roman Bath House Plan, based on Luard's drawing.

by Tonbridge School in 1956. However, sample excavation and study of Luard's very detailed drawing allow us to draw a clear picture of the layout of the building (Fig. 4). The passageway (1) was the entrance to the bath house and room 2 has the characteristically narrow rectangular shape of a latrine, conveniently close to the entrance. Room 3 was the changing room with a solid floor, composed of four layers of tile and this room was heated by a brazier in the north-west corner of the room, where burnt wood and charcoal were noted by Luard. Room 4 was the warm room with underfloor heating carried from the stoke hole (7) adjacent to this room. Evidence of hypocaust *pila* bases and metal wall spacers were found here in 2004. Room 6 was the hot room, heated from the same stoke hole. Luard noted evidence of hypocaust heating and a flue linking this room to the heated bath (5).

The suite of cold rooms (8, 9 and 10) at the lower end of the bath house would have been the setting for the last stage of the bathing sequence. The small tiled seat (13) in room 8., which Luard noted, would have been where the bather sat, to be sluiced with cold water, before walking through the cold rooms (9 and 10) and stepping down into the cold bath (11). This bath would have been filled with water via the channel recorded by Luard in room 9. The bath house measured 18m in length and stood at the top of a slope leading down to the river Bourne. That this bath house was used for recreation was confirmed by the discovery during our sample excavations of a pottery game counter in the warm room. An important find on the bath house site was part of a voussoir tile, roller-inscribed by the tile maker Cabriabanus (Davies 2004).

The bath house was situated on a flat plateau which had been cut into the sloping hillside. This plateau extends for about 50m along the slope and was clearly the area where the clay was extracted for the tile kiln. The construction of the bath house therefore post-dated the tile kiln.

Resistivity surveying, carried out in a grassed field about 130m south-east of the bath house, highlighted a feature, which on being stripped of soil, proved to be the foundations of an updraught Roman *tile kiln* of a type which was widespread in the western empire during the first and second century. There was clear posthole and post pad (see **Plate II**) evidence of some roofing structure (**Fig. 5**). Archaeomagnetic dating of the kiln

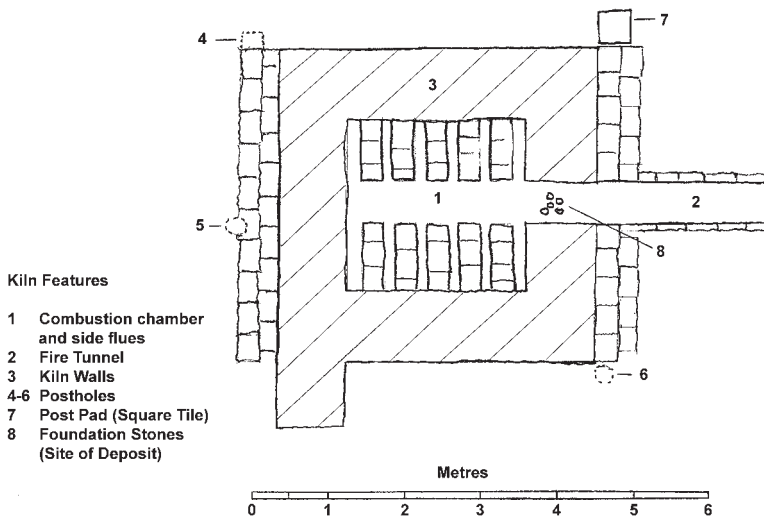


Fig. 5 Scale Plan of Plaxtol Tile Kiln.



Post Pad at south-east corner of kiln. Looking north. The post pad lies outside the tile floor laid south of the kiln chamber. The furthest tip of the scale rod is adjacent to the south-east corner of the kiln wall foundations

indicated that it had last been fired between 120-165 AD (with 95 per cent probability). This was the kiln used to make tiles for some second-century work at the villa at Sedgebrook, where a Cabriabanus tile was found, the bath house at Allens Farm and, as it later transpired, for a second-century redevelopment of the Romano-British farm building at Allens Farm. It was also the kiln used by Cabriabanus to make voussoir tiles for the Darenth Roman villa and for a Roman building in Bishopsgate, London.





The two miniature pots deposited later in the kiln foundations. The Oxford pot, on the left, has had its base deliberately chipped away prior to deposition

During the final excavation of the tile kiln, two small pottery vessels were uncovered in the entrance to the combustion chamber. The pots were dated to not earlier than 300, long after the last firing of the kiln (**Plate III**). Details of the kiln construction and the later deposition are given in **Appendix 1**.

Resistivity surveying had established the likelihood of a substantial *farm building* in the middle of a nut orchard and, in view of the physical restrictions, it was decided to limit excavation to following the walls, where possible, in order to determine the size and character of the building, but to dig one trench inside a room in order to get detail of the stratigraphy of the building (**Fig. 6**). The building proved to be 21.5m long and 11.1m wide which included a corridor parallel to the eastern wall of the building. The building overlooked the bath house which lay 25m or so downslope. There was no evidence of any wings to the building but about 6m west of the building, a number of postholes suggested an enclosed area or garden. To the north, east and south of the building, areas of ragstone had been put down, probably to firm up wetter areas. The presence of two parallel wall foundations within a few feet of each other along the eastern side indicated a major redevelopment at some stage. The range of artefacts uncovered from the building included coins, pottery, glass fragments,

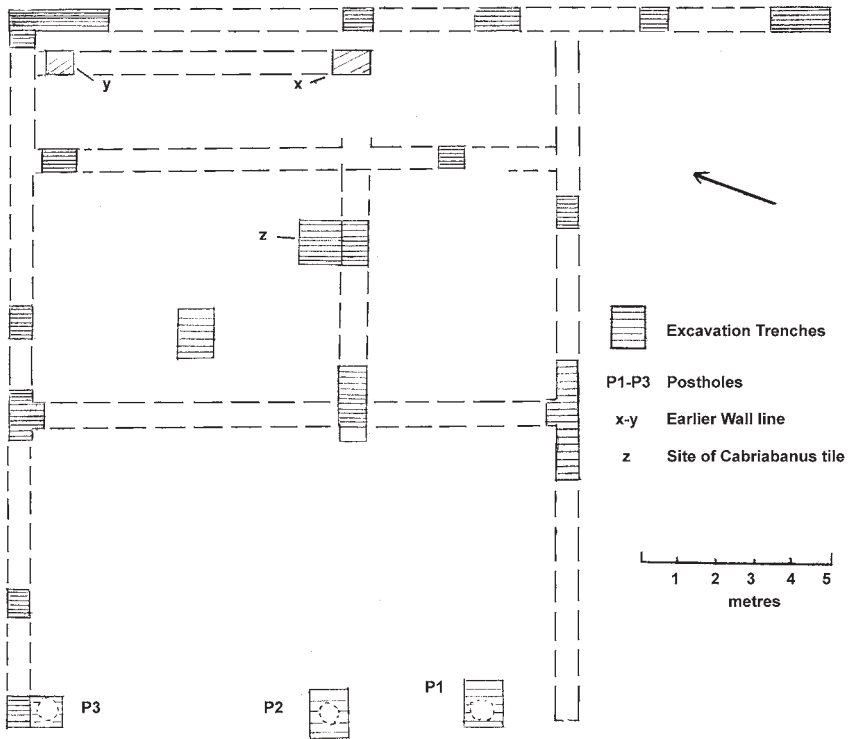


Fig. 6 Plan of Excavation of Roman Villa, Allens Farm.

tiles (including voussoir tile inscribed by Cabriabanus) and animal bones and all these finds were submitted for analysis (see **Appendix 2**).

The pottery and coin evidence indicated that the building had been occupied from the middle of the first century to the end of the fourth century with indications of at least one major redevelopment after the middle of the second century and the building of the tile kiln and the bath house. Apart from the existence of two parallel outer walls mentioned above, the dating evidence for a second/third century redevelopment was based on the presence of some sherds of *used* Cabriabanus tile in floor foundations stratified between earlier first-century pottery and the much later roof tile fall. In the future it may be possible, when circumstances allow, to draw more definite conclusions about the history of the building by a complete excavation.

The building was comparable in size with the bath house (21m x 11m

compared with a bath house of 18m x 12m) and was characterised by an absence of any tessellated flooring or underfloor heating system. There was evidence of home crafts such as weaving (loom weights) and bone and horn working. The animal bone evidence indicated that the farm occupants kept sheep, cattle, chickens and geese and hunted red and roe deer and, all in all, followed a form of livelihood that differed very little from their Iron Age ancestors.

#### *The Winged-Corridor Villa at Sedgebrook Field*

This building was completely excavated by the KAS between 1986-9. Information regarding this villa site was obtained from a written description and plan by de la Bédoyère, and information from E. Connell and KAS newsletters. The villa is sited 600m north of the Allens farm building and is similarly positioned above and to the east of the river Bourne. Dating evidence was sparse as the site had been carefully cleared but first-century pottery, the presence of a Cabriabanus sherd (120-165), late second-century Samian pottery in the cellar and a single early fourth-century coin indicate occupation between the first and fourth centuries. At the villa's south end there was evidence of a heating channel and some fragments of tessellated floor (pers. comm., E. Connell). The villa measured 25 x 10m compared with the 21.5 x 11m dimensions of the farm building at Allens Farm (**Fig. 7**). Among the few finds of note were a silver spoon inscribed 'Avril' and a Samian bowl stamped by Cinnamus (Lezoux - AD 155-175). Resistivity work carried out in 2004 on this site confirmed that no other stone foundations lay around this winged-corridor villa.

#### *The Romano-British Burial Site in Dux Field, Plaxtol*

In 1857 Luard excavated a truncated Romano-British mound burial in Dux Field, about half a mile to the north-west of the Sedgebrook villa. In the centre of the barrow, about 30ft in diameter, was a skeleton. Depositions around the body included bronze fibulae, bronze fittings from a wooden box, a glass dish, a coarse pottery flask, a poppyhead beaker and two other beakers, a first-century flagon and second-century Samian cups and dishes (Luard 1859). Finding some buried stone work in the vicinity and having been told of a buried road running north-east across the field, Luard paced out an area about 100 yards square and concluded that the burial lay within an enclosed cemetery. It is not clear what he was pacing out but it may have been old hedge or field boundaries.

Luard's excavation of a Romano-British mound burial at Dux Field is clearly a matter of established fact but his conclusion that it was sited within an enclosed cemetery is open to serious doubt on two grounds.

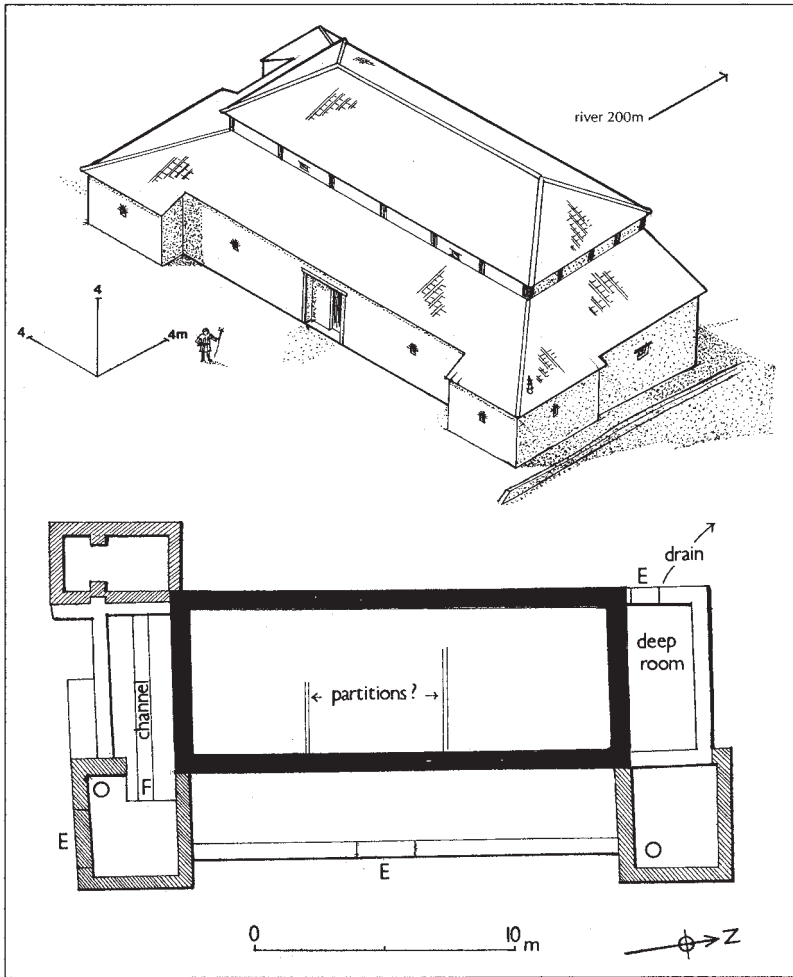


Fig. 7 Plan and Reconstruction of the Sedgebrook Roman Villa, Plaxtol. The illustration shows the house as it may have appeared in its final stage of development (after de la Bédoyère).

Firstly, it was not based on any excavation but on hearsay evidence and his own conjecture. Secondly, enclosed cemeteries and mound burials have their origins in two very different cultural traditions. The enclosed cemetery in Britain is only found in highly Romanised, wealthy and active areas of the South-East, like Springhead on Watling Street in north Kent.

That type of cemetery was part of the Roman tradition. The Romano-British barrow, on the other hand, had no cultural origins in Rome but was a direct descendant of the prehistoric tradition, which was native to Britain and Gaul. The mound burial site at Dux Field is sited far from the highly Romanised part of Kent and would have been unique in combining both traditions, if we accept Luard's hypothesis of a walled cemetery.

In view of the above, it was decided to re-examine this site in 2003 initially by carrying out a resistivity survey in the northern half of this 50-acre field. The results showed many patches of high resistivity in the field, which trial trenching proved to be no more than outcrops of natural ragstone. There was no geophysical evidence of any large rectangular wall base, such as one might have expected from the presence of an enclosed cemetery. (In contrast, the stone foundations at the Springhead enclosed cemetery were several feet in depth, clearly laid down to support a high stone wall and the foundations there registered strongly as a resistivity feature – Davies 2001). However, a single linear feature was identified in the northern half of the field running almost exactly north-south and passing within 30m or so to the west of the grid reference TQ 6079 5440, cited by Jessup as the likely position of the mound burial when he visited the site in 1953 (Jessup 1959).

Sample cross sections excavated along the length of this linear feature indicated that it was composed of two parts. Starting from the northern end, the initial stretch from the sunken lane to the north of the field followed the contours, avoiding the steep drop at the northern end of the field and then ran south for about 70m in a roughly straight north-south line. The whole of this length was no more than trodden-down natural rag outcrop about 3m wide and lying about 30cm below the present day soil surface. It was characterised by a few sherds of first/second-century Romano-British pottery. It was concluded that this stretch of natural ragstone stood out as a resistivity feature because the areas immediately bordering the track had been dug out and used for the second section. This second section of this linear feature was different in kind and was composed of laid ragstone. The length of this laid ragstone feature was about 45m and about 3m in width. Excavation confirmed the resistivity findings that this laid stone platform terminated as shown in **Fig. 8**.

Effort was concentrated on exposing this second section and its surrounds during 2005-6 and the following features were identified. On the east side of this laid platform of stones (see **Plate IV**), a raised bank of compacted clay about 25cm high ran parallel to the stones for about 12m and outside this bank was a shallow silted ditch containing a quantity of large sherds of Romano-British pottery. The main ragstone platform was about 3m in width and the laid stones followed the contours of the field which slopes down from west to east. On the western edge of the platform lay a horizontal layer of small stones on clay, about 0.5m wide. Outside

- 1. Ragstone track
- 2. Laid Stone Platform
- 3. Site of Mound Burial

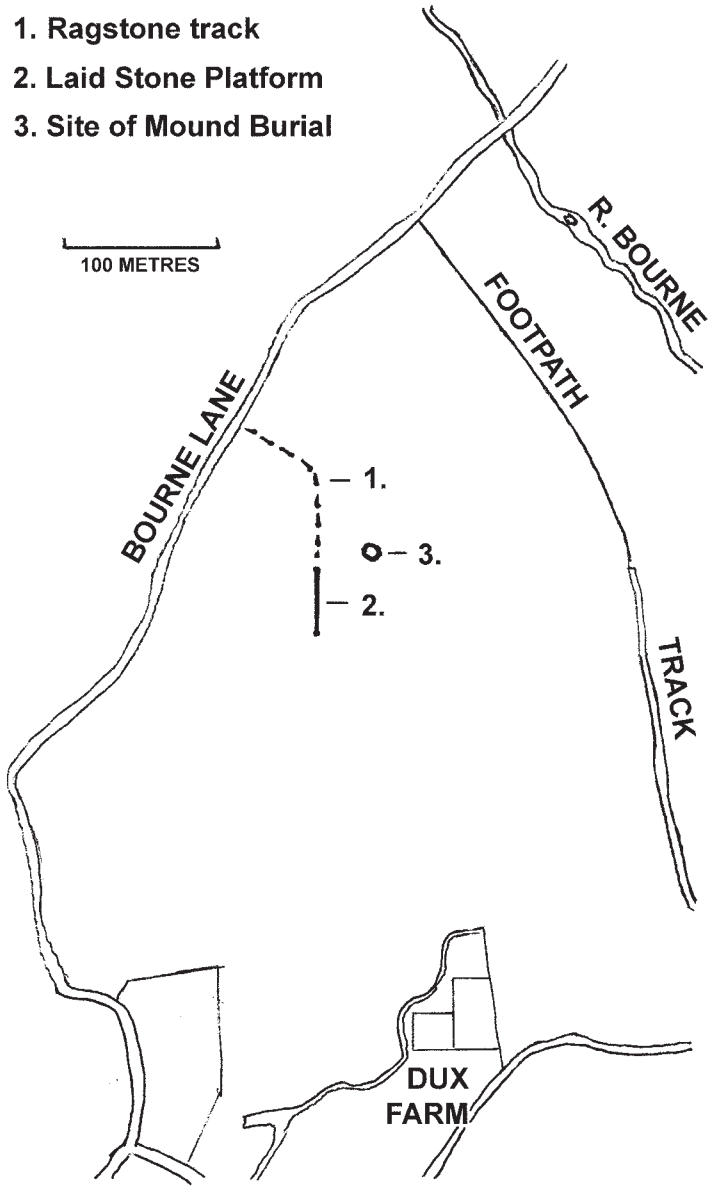


Fig. 8 Romano-British Remains at Dux Field, Plaxtol.



The stone platform at Dux Field, Plaxtol, looking south-west. The west bank is visible on the far side of the platform. The eastern bank is just visible at the bottom left of the photograph. The possible outline of a walled room can be seen in the centre

this small stone band was a narrow silty strip of dark soil about 6.5m in length and about 10cm in width. This narrow strip of silty soil lay parallel with the stone platform. To the west of this feature lay undisturbed, reddish subsoil. Of the 1,100 or so sherds of Romano-British domestic pottery found on the site, 95 per cent were found over an area about 8 x 5m in this central area, either in the eastern ditch, or on the east bank but the majority were located in the soil about an inch or so above the stone platform surface or integrated between the stones of the platform. Mixed with the pottery were over a hundred square-shanked, Roman-type nails. A single Antonine bronze coin, much abraded, was located on the platform surface and a broken bronze pin was also found on this feature. About 30-40m to the east of the platform of stones, a lead spindleworl was found, close to the probable site of the mound burial.

The heavy concentration of Romano-British domestic pottery and iron nails over an area perhaps 8m x 4m indicates that this was the bare remains of a small, rectangular structure, probably with an earthen floor over a ragstone base. Close examination showed that the top of the two banks were about the same height with the eastern bank built up so that it

matched the height of the western bank. It was concluded that these two banks had been built to take wooden sill beams which would have formed the base for the building's mud-and-daub walls. The absence of any roof tiles suggested that the building had almost certainly been thatched. The parallel line of silty soil that ran outside the west bank was quite shallow and was interpreted as a roof-drip gully. Scrutiny of the stone surface of the platform showed variations which could be interpreted as differentiating between wall areas and room interiors but the evidence was indicative rather than conclusive (**Fig. 9**). If we take the length of the drip gully on the west side and the area of great pottery density as

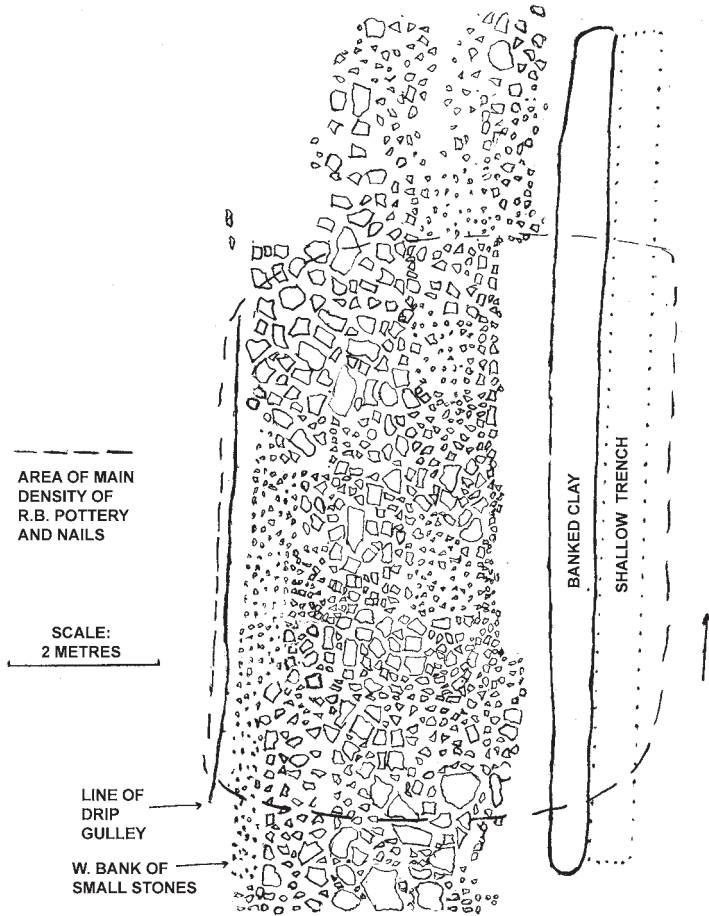


Fig. 9 Remains of the Romano-British Building at Dux Field, Plaxtol.



indications of the length of the building, it suggests a building roughly 3.5m x 7m.

An analysis of the pottery showed many of the pottery types of the first and second century, which were also found at the Allens Farm site (early, grog-tempered ware, Patchgrove, Upchurch and Samian ware), but there was a complete absence of the pottery types characteristic of the third and fourth centuries, i.e. Nene Valley ware, Oxford White ware, Alice Holt ware and the late imports, all of which were a feature of the farm building at Allens Farm. It appears, therefore, that this site was in use in the first and second centuries but there is no evidence that this continued much beyond the end of the second century.

In conclusion, what we have at Dux Field is an approach track of natural ragstone which led to a laid platform of ragstone. Placed centrally on this stone platform was a rectangular structure about 7m x 3m. About 30m to the east of this feature was a Romano-British mound burial. Looking at the Dux Field dating evidence, it is clear from examining the Samian pottery and glass recovered by Luard from the mound burial that this was constructed no earlier than the second half of the second century. However, the abundance of first- and second-century pottery on the stone platform indicates that this feature was constructed no later than the last half of the first century, at a time when the Sedgebrook villa and the Romano-British farm building were in existence.

The most likely interpretation is that Dux Field was the site of a small Romano-British cemetery constructed in the first century and in use until the end of the second century. Any shallow burials would probably not have survived the farming activities of the last four hundred years. The only reason the mound burial survived to the nineteenth century was because of the protection the mound provided against the plough while the stone platform survived, despite being scored by the plough, because of its solid construction. Luard's hypothesis that a Romano-British *walled* cemetery was sited in Dux Field proved to be unfounded.

The simple building on the stone platform probably served some function in relation to burial procedures and, in view of the large quantity of domestic-type pottery found on the site, may well have been used for funeral commemoration. It is surely relevant that, seen from the Sedgebrook villa, the mound burial and the stone platform would have been in clear view. The siting of the mound, above the villa and on the skyline, when viewed from the villa, is strongly reminiscent of an earlier native tradition when burial barrows were positioned on the brow of the hill, in view of the inhabitants in the valley below.

To summarise the evidence of the Romano-British settlement at Plaxtol, it is clear that both the winged-corridor villa, the farm house at Allens Farm and the burial site at Dux Field all had their origins in the second half of

the first century. There is also evidence of a considerable redevelopment on all three sites in the second half of the second century, which included the construction of the mound burial at Dux Field and the kiln and bath house at Allens Farm and redevelopment work at the Sedgebrook villa. During the third century, however, there is evidence of decline when both the bath house at Allens Farm and the burial site at Dux Field appear to fall into disuse. Only the winged villa and the farm building show signs of habitation beyond this point and both these buildings continued to be in use until the end of the fourth century.

It seems highly likely that all these Romano-British buildings were part of one farm estate with the original farm owners living in the Sedgebrook winged-corridor villa, overlooking the Bourne valley, and the estate workers or extended family housed at the simple farm building at Allens Farm. The farm lands clearly extended on either side of the river Bourne and the mound burial, sited on the least arable land on the west side of the river possibly marked the northern boundary of the estate, encircled by the sunken Bourne Lane. This Romano-British estate was linked to the wider Roman world by an east-west track that met an Iron Age track west of Plaxtol which, in its turn, led to Watling Street. As such, the estate presents a fascinating picture of the fusion of two cultural traditions. The Roman coinage, the materials and design of the buildings, the bath house embodying Roman cultural values, the pottery and Minerva statuette imported from Gaul, all these and the presence of a second-century craftsman on site who chose to roller-imprint his tiles with a Latin text, strongly reflect Roman influence and ideas. But the way of life reflected by the bone and artefacts found at Allens Farm indicate close continuity with the farming/hunting life style of their Iron Age antecedents while the mound burial at Dux Field and the ritual deposits in the tile kiln suggest that, despite Roman colonial influence, the old beliefs had not been forgotten.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people helped the writer during the seven seasons that he worked at Plaxtol between 1999 and 2007. Most of the fieldwork was shared by Derek Say, Robin Grimes and Donald Forbes. Of the many landowners who cooperated wholeheartedly, he is particularly indebted to Mr and Mrs Webb of Allens Farm and to Mrs Kedge who owns Dux Field. The team also received great practical support from Mike Rogers who farmed Dux Field. The management of the Fairlawn Estate were also very helpful, as was Mrs Young who owns the land where the Iron Age round house is situated.

## APPENDIX 1

## The Structure of the Tile Kiln at Allens Farm

The tile kiln, sited about 130m south-east of the bath house, was a Roman updraught kiln with stoke hole, furnace tunnel and combustion chamber with side flues, a type of kiln which was widespread in the western empire during the first and second centuries. The kiln functioned by drawing a steady draught of hot air from the stoke hole into the central combustion chamber and from there into the side vents where the hot air was drawn upward through the perforated floor of the oven and out through the exit holes above the oven (Fig. 5).

Unusually, the Plaxtol kiln's combustion chamber was sited above the ground. Normally the combustion chamber is below ground where the soil would support the kiln walls against the destructive effects of repeated high temperatures. This suggests the Plaxtol kiln was built for a specific purpose and not as a long term facility. The kiln foundations were well preserved so that an accurate picture of the kiln could be drawn up. The kiln walls measured 4.2 x 4.2m on the outside and were made of layered tile interspersed with daub clay. The width of the kiln walls were about 90cm. The fire tunnel extended about 2.5m outside the kiln to the stoke hole. The width of the fire tunnel was 60cm and this narrowed to 50cm where it passed through the kiln wall. The floor of the tunnel was made of tiles which had become degraded with heat. The point where the fire tunnel passed through the kiln wall was marked by foundation stones, coinciding with a small step up into the combustion chamber. On either side of the combustion chamber were six side flues which sloped downward to the central flue. These side flues were 14cm wide and separated by 5 cross walls made of tile, 29cm in width. At the rear of the kiln a line of large flat tiles measuring 30 x 45cm had been laid alongside the north wall of the kiln.

Around the kiln there was evidence of 3 postholes and a post pad. The latter was sited exactly outside the south-east corner of the kiln. It was a flat tile 45 cms square, depressed in the centre with radial cracks running out from the centre of the tile. From the position of the postholes and post pad, it is clear that the kiln was covered with some roofing. There are two other recorded Roman tile kiln sites in Britain where similar posthole evidence has been uncovered, at Crookhorn Farm (Northumberland) and at Canterbury (McWhirr 1979).

## A Deposit of Pottery Vessels in the Kiln

During the excavation of the fire tunnel, two small pots were discovered resting on heat-degraded stone foundations, where the tunnel passed

through the wall of the combustion chamber at the entry to the kiln (Plate III). Both pots lay on their side with pot A immediately above pot B. It was assumed, wrongly as it turned out, that the pots had been placed there as a good luck offering when the kiln was laid down in the second century.

The pots were examined by R.P. Symonds of the Museum of London and J. Willson of the Kent Archaeological Trust. Vessel A was about 95mm high and was a near-complete squat beaker or jar with a globular body and curving everted rim in a sandy grey fabric, decorated with a single horizontal groove to the body. The vessel had a chipped rim and three lens-shaped chips missing from its side and was actually holed through at one point. For this type of vessel, Willson cites a close parallel from the Ospringe Cemetery excavation (Ospringe grave group CLVI No. 499) which was found in association with New Forest ware and can be safely dated to the late second/mid third centuries.

Vessel B, on which vessel A rested, was a necked globular beaker about 120mm tall and was an example of Oxfordshire red-brown colour-coated ware. The base of this vessel had been deliberately chipped away. Both the shape and fabric of this vessel indicate a date no earlier than AD 300 (R.P. Symonds).

As the two vessels were virtually touching each other, it could be safely assumed that they had been deposited at the same time – at least 140 years after the last firing of the kiln.

In interpreting the dating and purpose of this deposit, consideration was given to the following. Both the pots were small, almost miniature vessels and both had been damaged, one at least deliberately so, prior to deposition. The vessels were sited precisely at the threshold to the combustion chamber. The deposition had taken place long after the active life of the kiln. There was absolutely no evidence of calcined bone fragments in or around the vessels. The only likely event in the history of the kiln after its working life was over would have been as a useful source of tiles until, no doubt, the kiln was eventually stripped down to its foundations level. The pots had almost certainly been deposited when the bare foundations were exposed.

It seems, on this basis, that the pots were to mark the final end of the kiln before returning the site to its original state. Merrifield has pointed out that the idea of a commencement or foundation offering is a well-known concept and that the threshold was frequently selected as the appropriate place for such a ritual offering. Less well known, he continues, is the practice of a termination offering associated with demolition, but for which there is considerable evidence. ‘The use of objects as pairs in ritual offerings, especially to earth deities, occurs too often to be coincidental’. Amongst other examples, he quotes that of a pair of cooking pots which had been deposited, lying on their side, in a filled-in ditch at Orpington

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(Merrifield 1987). Deliberate damage to votive objects prior to deposition is also a well-known phenomenon and demonstrated the irreversible change in the status of the vessel from personal possession to votive object.

APPENDIX 2

The Artefacts and Animal Bone from Allens Farm Site

*Pottery*

Fabric Type	Period	No. of Sherds
Aylesford/Swarling ware	1st BC to 1st AD	29
Shell Tempered ware	1st BC to early 2nd AD	10
Flint Tempered ware	ditto	1
Patch Grove ware	Mid 1st AD to end of 2nd	264
Early grog-tempered ware	Mid 1st to mid 2nd AD	184
Samian ware	Late 1st to mid 3rd AD	18
N. Kent Fine ware	Mid 1st to end of 3rd AD	76
Coarse Sandy ware	Late 1st to 4th AD	875
Imported colour-coated ware	Late 1st to middle 3rd AD	5
Nene Valley Castor ware	130 to 200 AD	4
Nene Valley Colour-coated	3rd to 4th AD	7
Later Alice Holt ware	Late 3rd to 4th AD	16
Oxford colour coated and white ware	240 to 400+ AD	17
Rhineland Mayen ware	4th to 5th AD	2
Late grog-tempered ware	Late 3rd to early 5th AD	36
Total		1,544

*Coins*

	Date (AD)
First/early second century bronze (Unidentifiable)	-
Hadrianic dupondius	117-138
Antoninus Pius bronze	154-5
Marcus Aurelius bronze	161-180
Philip I Bronze as	244-9
Gallienus radiate (minted at Rome)	255-268
Victorinus silver-bronzed radiate	269-70
Tetricus II radiate	273-4
Constantine bronze	320-4
Constantine copy	330-5

*Glass*

	Date (AD)
Beaker fragments	one, 3rd/4th-century
Bottle fragments (2)	late 1st/2nd-century - late 3rd/4th century
Bowl fragment	late 1st century
Window glass fragments (6)	5 matt-glossy, 1 cast glass

*Box and Voussoir tile*

The great majority of box and voussoir tile uncovered at Allens Farm had been scored with a comb and about 35 different comb patterns were identified. Seven sherds of roller-patterned Cabriabanus tile were found in the farm building foundations (probably waste) and 1 fragment was found on the bath house site (all die 31). One piece of roller-patterned tile from die 16 was found on the bath house site, similar to that found at the Eccles villa site.

*Analysis of Animal Bone found at Allens Farm Site*

Species	No.	% of Total	Butchery marks	Worked marks	Dog-gnawed
Ox	74	50	17	1	4
Pig	44	30	3		1
Sheep/goat	17	11	2		
Red deer	7	5		3 (antler)	
Roe deer	2			1 (antler)	
Chicken	2				

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