

INVESTIGATIONS AND EXCAVATIONS DURING THE YEAR

I. REPORTS ON EXCAVATIONS SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIETY

Interim Report by Mr. F. H. Thompson, M.C., M.A., F.S.A., on the Excavations at Bigberry.

A second season of excavation was carried out at the Bigberry hillfort, near Canterbury, from 14th July to 3rd August, 1979, in an effort to determine the date of the bivallate defences of the annexe and its functional relationship to the main enclosure, the point selected being approximately 190 ft. (58 m.) north of the western junction of the annexe defences with those of the main enclosure. A fairly intensive gradiometer scan of the western half of the annexe was also undertaken by Mr. A. J. Clark as a guide to sample excavations in the interior, and thirteen anomalies were located. In the process, Mr. Clark noted an unrecorded linear feature running north-south inside the annexe to cease south of the annexe entrance; it could be detected in a degraded form in the woodland on the hilltop, but was not apparent on the downhill slope on the south side of the earthwork, where gravel-digging and plough action may have removed it. It was provisionally interpreted as a cross-ridge dyke predating the hillfort, and it was agreed that it should be sectioned if time permitted.

The Excavation

The section through the annexe defences was set out with an overall length of 80 ft. (24 m.) and showed that the inner bank survived to a height of a mere 18 in. (0.45 m.), with a width of probably not more than 10 ft. (3 m.) The associated ditch lay at the foot of a natural slope and was very slight, no more than 10 ft. (3 m.) wide and 1 ft. (0.30 m.) deep. The filling was 6 in. (0.15 m.) of sterile silts, above which came a further 6 in. (0.15 m.) of dirty gravel, presumably eroded from the bank and containing one featureless sherd of Iron Age pottery. It seems certain that there was a bivallate intention in the minds of the builders,

since there are clearly two banks on the north side of the annexe, where the ground is relatively level.

The linear earthwork within the annexe was sectioned approximately 130 ft. (39.60 m.) north of the main hillfort defences and was defined as a bank c. 20 ft. (6.10 m.) wide and 3 ft. (0.90 m.) high, associated with a ditch c. 10 ft. (3 m.) wide and 3 ft. (0.09 m.) deep. The dump-construction bank was composed of clean material with no finds, but the ditch fill contained a fair quantity of pottery in the lower levels and fragments of iron slag. The pottery awaits detailed assessment, but at first sight the absence of Belgic combed sherds, the presence of S-profile rims and one sherd with curvilinear dotted ornament, and less heavily flint-gritted shreds, all suggest a Wealden culture context of, say, a second-century B.C. date. It would be quite reasonable to expect a cross-ridge dyke, since that is what the earthwork seems to be, to pre-date the hillfort proper.

Seven of the thirteen anomalies were investigated; they extended widely over the hillside. The results were not particularly informative as regards any occupation of the annexe, but two, in close proximity to each other and towards the bottom of the hill slope, were of greater interest: the first produced an occupation layer of brown loam, with pottery and charcoal, beneath a thick layer of hill-wash and, finally, set in the natural clay, a small iron anvil; the second revealed the curving gully, the stake-holes, of a circular hut, to which the anvil was clearly related. The occupation was neither intense nor prolonged and the presence of a hut at this point, in contrast to the generally unoccupied impression of the annexe, may be connected with proximity to the annexe and access to water, necessary for a smithy. The pottery, a mixture of Belgic and 'Native' wares, was reminiscent of the hillfort-occupation defined by the pottery found in 1978, and so helps to associate the annexe (to which the hut surely belonged) chronologically with the hillfort.

Conclusions

On the basis of two years' work at Bigberry, it is possible to formulate certain conclusions about the Iron Age occupation of this sand-and-gravel ridge. The pre-war excavations produced pottery of Iron Age A type, and in 1978 a small group of sherds from the old ground surface beneath the rampart of the main enclosure included a rim of similar type. But rather than suggest a continuing Iron Age A tradition into the hillfort period, it seems preferable to postulate a much earlier, possibly undefended, settlement on the hill, material from which was incorporated with the debris left by the hillfort builders. The next episode, possibly 2-3 centuries later, was the

building of a cross-ridge dyke crossing the hillfort from north to south; the bank and ditch were west-facing as if erected by a people whose territory extended eastward into the valley of the Stour where Canterbury now lies. This was followed, probably at no great interval, by the building of the univallate hillfort which seems to have been a centre of occupation as well as refuge, to judge from the prolific finds of metal-work in the nineteenth century and the structural evidence recovered in 1978. Its builders, on pottery evidence, may have been an indigenous population under Belgic leadership and construction may be linked with those invaders who, as Caesar says, came as raiders and stayed as farmers, an event perhaps to be placed from around 100 B.C. onwards. The next structural event seems to have been the addition of the annexe to the north as an additional defended area, with the possible intention, never fully realised, of adding a second bank to the main earthwork; it would be quite appropriate to link this stage with Caesar's landings of 55 and 54 B.C., and to accept the traditional identification of Bigberry as the first obstacle to Caesar's advance to the Thames in 54 B.C.

If this is so, it would be natural to suppose that the inhabitants then abandoned Bigberry under Roman compulsion and began to settle on either side of the Stour, where Canterbury now lies. The difficulty is that the earliest Belgic occupation beneath Roman Canterbury appears to start about the beginning of our era, which leaves a gap of something like half a century to be filled. It is always possible, of course, that the inhabitants of Bigberry returned to their hillfort after Caesar's departure resolved to maintain their hostility to Roman rule.

This completes the limited investigation of the hillfort as such, but one small operation may be undertaken in 1980. The water-hole located inside the main northern defences and only partly excavated in 1978 was particularly productive of finds and has also provided a radiocarbon date. It would be useful to extract the full contents, together with any environmental evidence, and the possibility of further work will be kept in mind.

II. REPORTS FROM LOCAL SECRETARIES AND GROUPS

Benenden. Mrs. M. C. Lebon, M.A., reports:

Careful study of lod estate plans and pictures has led to locating, beneath the lawns outside Benenden School hall, the foundations of Hemsted, the original manor house which, greatly enlarged and surrounded by a moat, became an elaborate Tudor mansion, seat of the Guldeford family. In the eighteenth century, its wings and moat

were removed and the main block was converted into a Georgian-styled residence with a back court for domestic offices and a separate yard at the side for stabling and a full complement of farm buildings. Almost the entire complex was demolished in 1860 when the site was landscaped to create a garden for a new mansion (now part of Benenden School) built a short distance apart.

The use of a resistivity meter and probing have shown that a network of foundations remains buried below the turf, most of it not available for excavation. But in a large shrubbery bed, part of the house wall, in brick masonry 1.30 m. thick, has been exposed together with the base of a Tudor chimney projecting on the outside of the wall and incorporating a remaining fireplace.

London Borough of Bexley. Mr. P. J. Tester, F.S.A., reports:

The well known 'candle-snuffer' spire of St. Mary's church in Bexley village has recently been repaired and reshingled. This curious feature, the purpose of which has been the subject of dispute, is matched by the spire of Upchurch and is similar to the campanile at Brookland.

In Bexley High Street, nos. 57-59, comprising a very fine seventeenth-century brick house, has now been restored and used for commercial purposes after a long period of neglect during which fears were felt for its preservation. The date 1676 has been observed incised on the external brickwork and may be taken as the date of construction. The repointing of the exterior has been done in a manner which does not meet with universal approval, and a lead fire insurance plaque over the front door was stolen during the repairs.

Bexleyheath is undergoing extensive redevelopment and this will greatly change the character of the central part of the town. As the settlement of the former Heath only commenced after the Enclosure Act of 1814, nothing of archaeological or historic significance will be destroyed by this upheaval, but efforts are being made to preserve the early-nineteenth-century market house built at the cost of £1,000 by Oswald Smith, of Blendon Hall in the parish of Bexley. His daughter, Frances Dora, married Lt. Claude Bowes-Lyon of the Scots family of Strathmore, in Bexley church on 28th September, 1854. This couple eventually became Earl and Countess of Strathmore and were the grandparents of the Queen Mother, former consort of George VI, and therefore the great-grandparents of our present Queen, Elizabeth II. It is hoped that this royal association may be of influence in persuading the local authority to rescue the market house from its present dilapidated condition and restore it to some useful purpose as part of the new town-centre plan.

Dartford District Archaeological Group. Mr. R. Walsh reports :

The Group has continued its researches into the area's past. Excavations have included the important areas to the north of Dartford High Street prior to the construction of the new northern link road. The work has revealed the foundations of two medieval buildings and several chalk-based trackways including an interesting chalk raft fronting what was previously a widened section of the river Darent. It has been established that for the most part of the region north of the High Street was swamp land until the end of the medieval period. Much deliberate tipping of material to reclaim land was carried out in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. The foundations of a substantial mortared flint building of the fourteenth century discovered to the north of 38 High Street are provisionally interpreted as an annexe or stable outbuilding to one of the many inns fronting the High Street at this time and probably built to cater for the increasing trade as Dartford became popular as a stop-over town of journeys between London and the coast.

We were fortunate in finding out that the old Mill House at Hawley was to be demolished just in time to arrange for photography prior to the event and recording whilst demolition took place. The original part of the standing building dates mainly to the late-sixteenth or early-seventeenth century, but traces of earlier foundations together with fourteenth century pottery indicate the antiquity of this site.

The location of further graves at Darent Park Hospital and the finding and careful recording of the fifth century moulded glass Darent Bowl have been invaluable in establishing the national importance of this early Saxon cemetery currently threatened by a planning appeal by A.P.C.M. for chalk extraction. The Group has requested the Department of the Environment to schedule this important site.

Assistance has been given to neighbouring groups and training continues at the Research Centre every Monday evening. This year has seen the Research Centre established as the Dartford Branch of the K.A.S. and we have been delighted to welcome many K.A.S. members to our meetings. To date thirty-four sites have been excavated and recorded in the five years the Group has been in existence and several reports are close to being ready for publication.

Deal. Mr. N. E. Tomaszewski reports :

Palaeolithic

From the back garden of 39 Manor Road (N.G.R. TR 365516) was unearthed a Palaeolithic hand-axe, the first, it is believed, from the

Deal area. The implement is a diminutive (98 × 56 × 22 mm.) pointed hand-axe, which can be typologically assigned to the late middle Acheulian. Weighing 96 gr., it is of grey flint covered with an even, shallow ochraceous, brown patina. It is bifacially worked, the working continuing around the butt end. The pointed end was broken in antiquity. No original cortex is present and several small flakes have been removed from the original surface. On one edge there is an area where flint has been removed either as a result of fashioning as a scraper or from a chopping action at this point.

Early Iron Age

Worthy of note and to the writer's knowledge hitherto unrecorded is a large fragment of an early Iron Age quern built into the wall of the front elevation of 1 Quern Road, Mill Hill, Deal (N.G.R. TR 363511). The quern was placed there during the 1930s when the house was constructed. Subsequent owners of the property were of the opinion that it was merely a chunk of masonry used to fill a gap between the brickwork. The quern came from the excavations of the Early Iron Age fortified enclosure at the summit of Mill Hill which was opened up by the late Mr. W. P. D. Stebbing in 1928 and 1934. The present owner will donate the quern to a responsible body should the wall be rendered over in the future.

In January 1977 the writer was called to the Deal Cemetery in Hamilton Road where the interest of workmen had been aroused whilst digging a new vault. Sixty sherds of pottery and a collection of animal bones (sheep) had been unearthed. The Superintendent stated that these finds were not unusual as sherds of a similar kind were often coming to light. The pottery and bones were found at a depth of 3½ feet at grave site IRC 6042. Some restoration was possible and the sherds were found to represent six vessels, finely gritted, of varying ware and hue. Three rim sherds pieced together and finger indentations were visible on these. Four of the vessels were of a reddish-brown colour, one red and another of a smooth, black ware. Lines scribed by a comb decorated one of the reddish-brown pots.

The manufacture of the pottery can be placed within the third to second century B.C. and the find spot lies half mile due east of the Early Iron Age site at the summit of Mill Hill.

Romano-British

From the garden of Court Lodge, Middle Deal (N.G.R. TR 369525) the oldest inhabited house in Deal (built c. 1540) came a small vessel of a cream coarse ware., of Romano-British date. The owners of the

property, Mr. and Mrs. Lead, also permitted the writer to examine the several hundred sherds of pottery which have been unearthed from the grounds of the property. It is hoped that excavations may proceed within the near future.

Of the small vessel Dr. Frank Jenkins, M.A., F.S.A., writes: 'Body of a small jug or flagon. It is impossible to say what type or form as the neck and lip are missing. The thickening of the fracture scar at one point suggests that the handle was attached to the base of the neck which could have been tall and tubular or short.'

The fabric seems to be late first/second century A.D., but lacking the neck etc., it is not possible to closely date the jug.'

Medieval

During the severe floods of January 1978 a check was maintained on drainage trenches in the Sandhills area of North Deal as a result of which many sherds of Tyler Hill pottery were found including three good rims. Restoration of the vessels was not possible and the sherds were found over a wide area. Shortly before, a fine Edward I, long cross silver penny was found at the same site (N.G.R. TR 368558). The local museum holds a quantity of Tyler Hill and Saintonge¹ ware recently removed from the same site, which lies approximately two hundred yards to the north of the Chequers Inn at Sandown, adjacent to the ancient highway between Deal and Sandwich. The theory has been advanced that here may have stood an embryo boat station, c. 1300 A.D., long before the present town of Lower Deal came into existence. The continuing finds of pottery and the coin go some way to supporting this.

Isle of Oxney. Mrs. M. C. Lebon, M.A., reports:

In 1979 the Tenterden Area Archaeological Group, under the direction of Mr. A. Miles, made a survey of the derelict Chapel Bank graveyard, near Appledore. Here is the site of old Ebony Church which was removed in 1858 and rebuilt at the bottom of Reading Street Hill. The Streatfeild illustration of it (see K. Gravett, *Timber & Brick Buildings in Kent*) and evidence on the site suggest that the rebuilding did not produce such a faithful copy as local people think. Moreover, the nineteenth-century hill-top church was a mean and simple replacement of a much larger medieval one which had been struck by lightning and burnt down in the sixteenth century.

1. G. C. Dunning, 'Medieval Pottery and Stone Mortars imported to Aardenburg from England and France', *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek*, Jaargang 15-16, 1965/66, 203.

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A survey of the unusual hexagonal graveyard revealed a space among the graves which easily fitted the approximate dimensions of the church demolished in 1858. A 15m.-long trench was dug north – south across this area; and, under much demolition débris, massive sandstone foundations (1.5 m. wide) were found. They seem to be part of a north wall, later confirmed by other trenches. Parallel to this wall at a distance of eight metres south were traces of a much poorer, rubble wall, probably belonging to the small, later church. Four metres further south again, a strong, squarish platform of masonry appeared which may be a pillar base, possibly indicating a medieval south aisle. Another trench, of east–west alignment, was extended east beyond the grave-free area associated with the post-medieval building. It exposed a substantial wall which seems to represent the east end of the medieval church. Work will be continued here in 1980.

A number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century tiles have been found, including a few laid together at a level interpreted as that of the later church floor and so in re-use until 1858. Along with seventeenth-century window glass, a few fragments of medieval, painted glass were found, and several sherds of medieval pottery. A tiny silver coin has been identified as a contemporary forgery (one-third weight) of a fifteenth-century penny, the design copying the York mint type.

Kent Manorial and Moated Sites Group. Mr. Tim Tatton-Brown, B.A., reports:

The following sites can be added to the lists given in *Arch. Cant.*, xciii (1977), 219–222 and xciv (1978), 282, bringing the total number of moated sites in Kent now known to at least 125.

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>N.G.R.</i>
Ash (by Sandwich)	Brooke House ¹	TR 301593
Brabourne	Hampton	TR 075439
Charing	Tramhatch ²	TQ 923475
Elmstone	Elmstone Court	TR 259604
Lympne	Bellavue ³	TR 110352

An undergraduate thesis on ‘Five moated Sites in the Parish of Headcorn’ by Miss R. Payne was presented in January 1979 (copy in Durham University Library).

¹Alias Mote Farm, Hasted, ix, 192.

²Moat partly filled October 1979.

³Now Lympne Airport but recorded in Hasted, viii, 291, as moated.