

EXCAVATIONS IN JOYDENS WOOD, BEXLEY

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THE medieval site in Joydens Wood, Bexley, the excavation of which is here recorded, was discovered in 1938 by the then tenant when planting a tree. A considerable part of the foundations was subsequently destroyed as a result of unauthorized digging but, with the kind permission of the owner, Mr. Brinkworth, the remainder was excavated during the following year by members of the Dartford Antiquarian Society.¹

The site is within the square earthwork which has recently been planned and described by Mr. A. H. A. Hogg in *Archæologia Cantiana*, LIV (1941), Figs. 2 and 3. The foundations uncovered lie on the inner bank QR, immediately north-east of its junction with the transverse bank shown in Fig. 3. They are poorly constructed of flint and chalk rubble and form a small rectangular structure 32 feet long and 15 feet 6 inches wide over all, lying north-east and south-west along the bank. There are some further foundations of a similar character immediately to the north-east, but these are in a fragmentary condition. They are, however, of some interest in that they lie in part on the bank and in part within the enclosure to the west, thus indicating that at the time when the building was erected, the bank must, as now, have been of very slight elevation. Similar foundations formerly existed on the bank at a point immediately to the south-east of the site excavated, where a chalk floor and flint foundations have been destroyed, and there are believed to be others within the enclosure NPQR in addition to those shown in Mr. Hogg's plan.

The structure whose foundations were excavated, whether farm-building or cottage, was of the humblest character, and its superstructure was probably of timber, as there was no sign of fallen building material. There was no indication of a fireplace, or of the original floor-level. A quantity of pottery was found in the area excavated, particularly in the south-west part of the foundations, which was unfortunately that most disturbed by the previous diggers.² There was no stratification, but in general the pottery was overlaid by a layer

¹ Those principally concerned were Mr. R. Pharaoh, Mr. R. Clark, Mr. H. F. Burton, and the writer.

² Much of the pottery then discovered was fortunately rescued by Mr. S. Priest, F.G.S., and is now in the Dartford Museum. A quantity of pottery fragments found in Joydens Wood in 1933 by Mr. F. J. Epps, F.G.S., is now in the Plumstead and Dartford Museums. It was all found on the surface, some within the earthworks, but much from an orchard some distance to the north. It includes some "Upchurch" ware, but the greater part was dated at the London Museum to the fifteenth century, some being identified as Portuguese ware of that or the following century.

of broken unglazed roofing tiles from the fallen roof. A perfect specimen measured $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 6 inches and was approximately half-an-inch in thickness: it had been secured to the battens by two iron nails. Similar tiles had been used in the construction of the foundations.

The greater part of the pottery is medieval, but it includes a handful of Roman sherds, found for the most part among the exiguous foundations north-east of the main structure. Among these are five sherds of Samian ware, three of which Dr. R. E. M. Wheeler has kindly identified as follows:—

(a) A small rim fragment (late first century).

(b) Form 27 (early second century).

(c) Form 37 (early second century).

Of "Upchurch" ware there are five sherds datable to the late second century, and there is also a coarse erected-rim fragment, of a buff colour, which may be dated to the mid or late first century.

These represent the first authentic record of Roman pottery discovered within the earthworks in Joydens Wood, though as long ago as 1881 F. C. J. Spurrell claimed to have found "coarse Romano-British pottery of various kinds within the enclosure."¹ It cannot, however, be pretended that, in the context in which they were found, these fragments of Roman pottery do anything to elucidate the history of the Joydens Wood earthworks, or that they conflict with Mr. Hogg's interpretation of the square earthwork as a medieval farm-enclosure.

The medieval pottery is of greater intrinsic interest, and belongs to a type found at other sites in the near vicinity excavated by Mr. E. Greenfield and as yet unpublished.² The predominant type is a hard, gritty, wheel-turned, unglazed ware, buff to grey in the fracture and sometimes on the surface, but more often of a dull black appearance both inside and out. There is also a coarser ware containing fragments of crushed shell, with a reddish brown surface and a dark grey fracture. Identical rim-forms have been found in both wares at St. Paul's Cray, and at Joydens Wood both bear the same finger-printed strip-decoration³ so that they are clearly contemporary. Glazed ware is confined to half-a-dozen unimportant fragments, two of which have a line decoration in yellow slip. The flanged rim-sections of the cooking pots are paralleled at Bungay Castle, Suffolk, in a layer dated *circa* 1294⁴, and Mr. G. C. Dunning, F.S.A., who has kindly examined specimens of the pottery, considers it to be all of late thirteenth century date.

The pottery has been placed in the Dartford Museum, together with a plan of the site.

¹ F. C. J. Spurrell, "Dartford Antiquities," *Arch. Cant.*, XVIII (1889), p. 307.

² At a moated site in St. Paul's Cray, a medieval chapel at Charton, Farningham, and beneath the floor of a destroyed cottage at Eynsford.

³ Similar to that on the thirteenth century storage jars published by Mr. G. C. Dunning in *Antiquaries Journal*, XIX (1939), pp. 305-12.

⁴ *Proc. Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, XXII (1934-6), pp. 334-5.