

DARENT VALLEY ARCHÆOLOGICAL RESEARCH

SCHEDULE OF NEW DISCOVERIES IN DARENT VALLEY
1947-48

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ROMAN DITCH SYSTEM.

PROBABLE camp connected with the Claudian Invasion.

OLIVER CRESCENT, FARNINGHAM. Adjoins villa site dug by Dartford Antiquarian Society in 1925. O.S. Kent 6 inch sheet, XVII, N.W. Long. 0 13' 28". Lat. 51 22' 39".

Phase I. Excavation completed.

Phase II. Search for entrance and return, deferred to 1949 season.

Building operations revealed a thick spread of Romano-British debris. This was examined by grid system down to the underlying Coombe deposit which here is of a yellowish, mortar-like consistency, wherein were observed depressions of varying size, one set forming an oval of 7 feet, long axis. This lay inside a ditch system subsequently discovered and examined in great detail.

Two ditches, 30 feet apart, form the N.E. boundary of the enclosure, one ditch forms the S.W. boundary, the interior width of the enclosure being 120 feet. All ditches are parallel, but so far no entrance or return has been found. The enclosure is probably rectangular in plan.

In section the ditches are V-shaped with a tendency to steepen 12 inches from the bottom, which is about 12 inches in width. As the ditches are dug in the flood-plain gravel which covers the Coombe deposit, anything approaching a vertical drop is out of the question. They average 6 feet across top filling and 3 feet depth in centre, and all lie with top filling some 20 inches below turf level. Slight primary silting in all cases, but devoid of exactly datable artefacts.

One ditch shows abundant evidence of first to second century occupation: (objects of bronze and bone, large pottery sherds in the layer immediately above a make-up upon the primary silting, with evidence of bronze smelting).

A gully of later date connects all three ditches.

Analysis of discoveries proceeding.

ROMAN VILLA.

Tripartite corridor type with projecting wings.

MANOR HOUSE, FARNINGHAM. O.S. Kent 6 inch Sheet, XVII, N.W. Long. 0 13' 12". Lat. 51 22' 42".

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Excavation began August 4th, 1948.

Minute quantities of pottery and tile were reported; probing found walls, and tests revealed a large building, since found to be approximately 160 feet long and 45 feet wide, with a projecting wing at each end of the S.E. front.

The long axis of the villa is approximately 33 degrees True North.

The walls are of flint and chalk 24 inches wide and run about 16 inches below the turf level. The rooms are in some cases provided with floors of brick tesserae and pebble concrete of varying quality, and the range of plaster decorated in fresco is wide in its variation of colours. Several mosaic cubes of chalk and marble have been noted, but no mosaic floor has yet appeared.

Datable finds, which are few up to the present (August, 1948), tend to indicate an early date for the building, and later rebuilding is evident.

The river Darent has cut through the S.W. corner of the villa and signs of outbuildings appear upon its opposite bank.

POSSIBLE ROUND BARROW. STUMBLEBURY (OR OTFORD MOUNT).

O.S. Kent 6 inch Sheet, XXIX, S.W. Long. 0 12' 29". Lat. 51 18' 54".

Lies in middle of a possible promontory camp. Not yet examined.

TRAVELLING EARTHWORK. HILLYDEAL WOOD. O.S. Kent 6 inch. Sheet, XXIX, S.W. Long 0 12' 42". Lat. 51 18' 59". to Long. 0 12' 50'. Lat. 51 18' 57".

A slightly curving rampart, much ploughed out, which forms the landward defence of a possible promontory camp.

ROMAN BUILDING.

Hypocaust of probable villa.

SHOREHAM. O.S. Kent, 6 inch Sheet, XXIX, N.W. Long. 0 11' 6". Lat. 51 20' 20".

Much hypocaust tile, red tesserae and mortar. Flint and chalk foundation nearby cut into by river Darent and much pottery from beneath water-level at this point.

Probing indicates walls and floors of the probable main building, 120 feet long and averaging 2 to 4 feet below turf level.

A close watch is being kept pending future excavation.

ROMAN BUILDING.

Type unidentified.

FRANKS. O.S. Kent 6 inch Sheet, XVII, N.E. Long 0 14' 3". Lat. 51 23' 4".

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Bulldozer revealed roughly square area of side approximately 25 yards comprising great quantities of brick, tile, imbrex tiles, mortar, pottery and part of a Roman horseshoe.

Building lies beside an old course of the river Darent which has cut through it ; exact extent unknown.

A close watch is being kept pending excavation in near future.

Possible ROMAN CAMP. GILLS WOOD. O.S. Kent 6 inch Sheet, XVII, N.E. Long. 0 16' 48". Lat. 51 24' 6". Air Photo No. 4062, CPE UK 2065 May 14th, 1947, 16,400 feet (6 inch scale).

Discovered by examination of air photograph.

Double banks and ditches, straight sides, one corner clearly rounded. Traces of a curved ditch beneath, possibly pre-Roman. Parish boundary follows S.E. side and delimits the earthworks where the air photograph fails to show them. Earthworks are visible on the ground (Gills Wood recently grubbed up), but no Roman artefacts found as yet, though many flint flakes.

This angular earthwork lies on a chalk corridor (between Thanet Sand to N. and Clay-with-Flints to S.) stretching from neighbourhood of Rochester to river Darent about Horton Kirby.

ROMAN BUILDING.

HULBERY. O.S. Kent 6 inch Sheet, XVII, S.W. Long 0 11' 28". Lat. 51 21' 58".

Small area of thinly scattered tile, pottery and calcined flints, indicating a small hutment.

Thickly planted orchards will prevent satisfactory excavation.

ROMAN BUILDING.

GREENHILL OTFORD. O.S. Kent 6 inch Sheet XXIX, N.W. Long. 0 12' 32". Lat. 51 19' 13".

Tiles and pottery, including Samian and Castor wares, dug up over a period of twenty-five years in small quantities over a small area.

The indication is a small settlement, some boundary banks of which still show. May be some connection with the Roman villa at Progress down on the Pilgrims Way nearby.

Possible BELGIC HILL FORT. LULLINGSTONE PARK. O.S. Kent 6 inch Sheet, XVII, S.W. Centred on Long. 0 11' 00". Lat. 51 21' 33".

The central spur is crowned by a system of lynchets and by ramparts, the latter suggesting a hill fort measuring some 2,200 feet long and 1,000 feet wide.

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The ramparts are triple on S. side and E. end, single and double at W. end and N. side, with possible entrances at W. end and on S. side. These ramparts have been much ploughed down, but their existing height indicates their former size to have been great.

Very extensive lynchets and field systems in association with a number of pottery sites, Belgic on high ground, and with admixture of Romano-British on sites near the river.

Great quantities of flint flakes and implements scattered over the plateau.

The lynchets are traceable as far N. as Farningham and as far S. as Shoreham.

Plotting of earthworks in progress. Excavation of this great site will prove costly and probably beyond the power of local resources.

BELGIC SETTLEMENT.

STONE, DARTFORD. OS. Kent 6 inch Sheet, IX, N.E. Long 0 15' 43". Lat. 51 26' 26".

Laying of water mains at a new housing estate revealed three pits containing quantities of large pottery fragments of Belgic type, with portions of loom weights, wattle and calcined flints.

The indication is a settlement, and excavation of the pits will probably result in collection of fragments of complete vessels.