

SPRINGHEAD—MAP OF DISCOVERIES

By W. S. PENN, B.Sc.

INTRODUCTION

THE site of a Roman settlement at Springhead has been known or suspected for at least 170 years, an alleged milestone being reported then by Hasted.¹ From that time until 1950, there was much speculation and some sporadic digging, much of it summarized by Dunkin² up to 1848 and by the Victoria County History³ up to the 1930's. The latter work gives many of the earlier references to the subject.

Since 1950, members of the Gravesend Historical Society have been excavating the site scientifically and have made many discoveries, all of which have been or will be reported. Unfortunately, during the past two years, much of the work has been of an emergency nature, due to the unwelcome use of earth removers by the road builders, many discoveries have been made which, by the sheer volume of the finds, can only be reported in full over many years. A summary of these finds has been made.⁴

All of the discoveries make up a formidable list and an impressive settlement. It has therefore been thought appropriate to publish a map recording the position of all the finds, where they are known. The exact positions of many of the finds made before World War II are not known but, where possible, an estimate has been made based on a study of extant documents and present knowledge of the site.

The map therefore serves three main purposes: (a) it indicates the extent of the township as at present known and indicates what an important place it must have been; (b) it records all finds in a permanent way and (c) it will be possible to indicate the exact positions of finds in future reports, not only for the discoveries already made but not reported, but for finds yet to be made, by using the named roads as reference points.

It may be noted with some satisfaction that this is the first accurate map of a Roman township yet published in Kent and one of the few for the country. This has been made possible by the fact that the site has not been occupied since the Roman period.

¹ E. Hasted, *History of Kent*, Vols. 1, 2 and 3, 1797.

² A. J. Dunkin, *Memoranda of Springhead*, 1848.

³ V.C.H. Vol. 3, p. 90.

⁴ W. S. Penn, *Arch. Cant.* LXXIX, lvi., 1964.

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Various reference letters and numbers are used on the map. The single letters A and B are to locate National Grid Reference Numbers 618725 and 620724 respectively. Other modern features are also shown (letter Reference M) to indicate the position of the township with relation to them.

Roman discoveries are described under roads (letter reference R), buildings (letter Reference B) and miscellaneous features (F).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed to the Springhead saga from Hasted in the eighteenth century to my present colleagues (see acknowledgements under Ref. ⁴). It would be impossible to list them all, although most of them since 1950 are named in various reports on Springhead in *Arch. Cant.* ^{4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9}. No attempt will be made to compile such a list, but the author offers his sincere thanks to them all. They have helped to build a picture of one of the most important smaller towns of Roman Britain.

Most of the modern excavations were carried out by permission of the farmers, Messrs. J. Bartholomew & Sons, although the ownership has now changed. We are grateful to the farmers for accepting the inconvenience for so long. Excavation has been carried out by the Excavations Committee of the Gravesend Historical Society and we are grateful to the Society for assistance and encouragement. Permission to excavate the scheduled site has been given by the Ministry of Public Building and Works who have been of considerable help from time to time.

The author would like to thank E. W. Tilley, W. Gee and P. Connolly with whom he has been associated almost from the start and who have dealt with the small finds, drawings (including help with the map) and photographs respectively. Brian Philp was also of great assistance during the emergency period of 1964/65. Other excavators who have helped regularly over many years include S. Harker, F. L. Turner, E. Ellet, M. Groombridge and G. M. Burles.

THE MODERN FEATURES

M. 1 The Watling Street. This is the original A.2 constructed in 1921/1922 when a few features (F.6, F.34, F.35) were found.

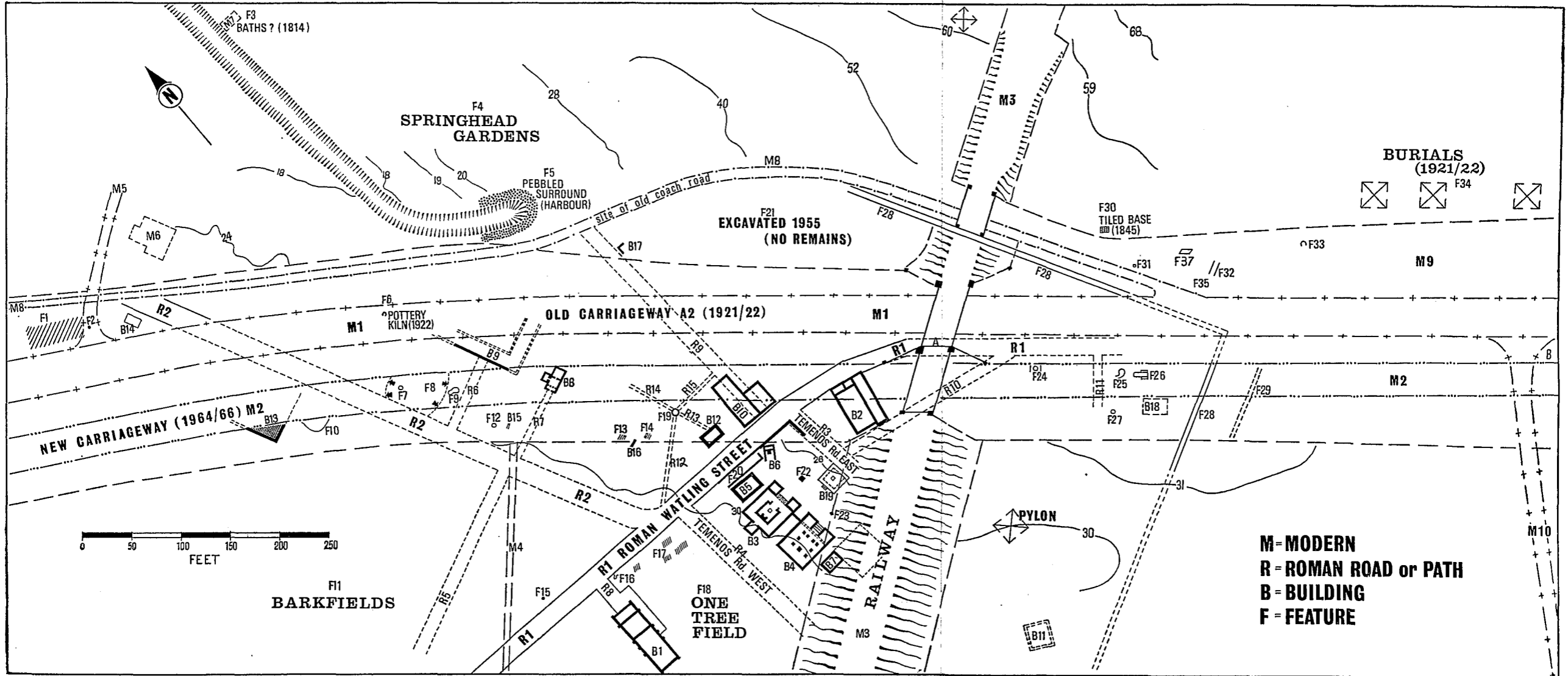
⁵ W. S. Penn, *Arch. Cant.* LXXII (1958), 77.

⁶ W. S. Penn, *Arch. Cant.* LXXI (1957), 53.

⁷ W. S. Penn, *Arch. Cant.* LXXIII (1959), 1.

⁸ W. S. Penn, *Arch. Cant.* LXXVII (1962), 110.

⁹ W. S. Penn, *Arch. Cant.* LXXIV (1960), 113.



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- M.2* The Watling Street. The second carriageway to the A.2 constructed 1964/66 responsible for the discovery of many new features (*B.13, B.18, F.10, F.12, B.15, F.13, F.14, B.12*, part of *B.2, F.24, F.27, F.28, F.29, F.31, F.32, F.33, B.16*).
- M.3* Railway. This embankment was constructed in 1886 and covers part of Temple V (*B.7*) and possibly other buildings.
- M.4* Path. A farm track between Barkfields and One Tree Field, which once continued to the original A.2 (*M.1*). The northern part of it has now been ploughed out.
- M.5* Path. A path from the A.2 (*M.1*) to the present Springhead Nurseries.
- M.6* Farmhouse. A relatively modern building belonging to Springhead Nurseries. There are probably Roman remains in the grounds of this building and in the nurseries.
- M.7* Cottage. A derelict farmhouse or cottage. Possibly over the remains of the Roman baths discovered in 1814 (*F.3*).
- M.8* Road. This is the old coach road, used before the construction of the A.2 (*M.1*). It has now been re-metalled (1965).
- M.9* Embankment. This is the embankment below the Electricity Sub-Station and above the A.2, where the *M.8* has now been extended. When this was being constructed *F.31, F.32* and *F.33* were discovered.
- M.10* Road. This is the road to Southfleet, merely included as a reference point.

THE ROMAN ROADS

- R.1* This is the main Roman Watling Street which is very substantial in the settlement.⁵ Note the major re-alignment by building *B.2* from that of the A.2 to an E-W direction across the fields.
- R.2* This is the main branch road which appears to be flanked by massive buildings (*B.13* and *B.9*). It is a wide (25-27 ft.) road of substantial thickness and appears to be heading in the direction of Swanscombe. It is interesting to note that although neither *R.1* nor *R.2* follow the A.2 after the railway bridge, the A.2 follows a boundary which existed before its construction (Ordnance Survey Map of 1869) and this often means the line of a Roman Road, so that a third main road may exist.
- R.3* The Temenos Road East,⁵ one of the roads bordering the temenos.
- R.4* The Temenos Road West. The extent of the Temenos roads in a southerly direction has not yet been determined.

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- R.5* A branch road at right angles to *R.2*. It is only known from crop marks, and trial surveys have failed to locate it. Presumably it has been ploughed out and can only be seen by aerial photography through slight remains of the agger.
- R.6* A small path (seven feet wide) from *R.2* to building *B.9*.
- R.7* A small path (four feet wide) from *R.2* to the bath building *B.8*.
- R.8* A short road of substantial dimensions from *R.1* to the bakery *B.1*.⁶
- R.9* A well made road built in the early second century over the first century building *B.10*. It connects the harbour *F.5* with the main road *R.1*.
- R.10* A curiously positioned road of substantial dimensions connecting *R.3* and *R.1*, presumably designed to cut off the corner of the re-alignment of *R.1*. There may well be other buildings in the area between *R.1*, *R.10* and *R.3* as building *B.2*.
- R.11* A narrow path (five feet) connecting *R.1* to various kilns and a Samian shop *B.18*.
- R.12, 13, 14, 15.* Paths from the well *F.19* to various points in the settlement. These were probably necessary because of the marshy nature of the sub-soil.

There are many roads in the township which hardly follow the usual grid. Roads are at right angles to each other where possible, the main deviations having been caused by the re-alignment of the Watling Street. Many other roads probably exist and perhaps a more regular pattern will ultimately appear. It is clear, however, that the settlement was well provided with roads and paths, reflecting its vital position as a religious centre and a junction of the main trunk road and a creek as well as with branch roads to the interior.

THE BUILDINGS

When work began at Springhead it was not possible to anticipate the extent of the buildings. It is quite clear that an important complex exists including many flint built buildings, but also probably many wooden buildings, some of which have already been identified. There are probably many wooden buildings in One Tree Field, between road *R.4* and building *B.1*.

The settlement is dominated by the temple complex, there being at least nine features in the temenos area. The first building excavated, however, was the bakery (*B.1*),⁶ the other buildings being discovered in approximately the order of the identification numbers up to the present time (*B.19*).

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- B.1* The Bakery.⁶ Note approach road or loading platform (*R.8*).
- B.2* The Shop.⁵ Partly excavated in 1957, and partly during emergency work in 1964. The latter work is still to be reported in detail.
- B.3* Temple I.⁷
- B.4* Temple II.⁸
- B.5* Temple III.⁹
- B.6* Temple IV.⁹
- B.7* Temple V.⁸
- B.8* Hypocaust. An isolated bath house (flint and brick), probably of Antonine date, and never completed. Perhaps associated with the large building *B.9*. Still to be reported in detail.
- B.9* Unknown building. A large flint building with corridor discovered during gas trench digging. It may be a concentric square and therefore a temple but there is no evidence for this. Only the corridor has been examined as the remainder is under the A.2. However, it is known that the centre part has a tessellated floor composed of one square inch tesserae on a nine inch cement base. Still to be reported in detail.
- B.10* Unknown building. Discovered during emergency work in 1963/64. Of first century date, made of flint and subsequently partly covered over with road *R.9*. It contained a crude mausoleum with child burials and a simple corn drying kiln. Still to be reported in detail.
- B.11* Unknown building. A rectangular flint building discovered during exploratory trenches. It is still to be excavated. It may be associated with other flint and wooden buildings in the south corner of the area inside the ditch. This aspect will be investigated in due course.
- B.12* Unknown building. This flint building was only discovered during drainage trench digging in 1964 when much of it was destroyed. The main interest of this building is that the coin hoard (still with the British Museum) was discovered just outside the south wall. Quite clearly, the individual who buried it intended to return to retrieve the hoard and identified the burial site by means of the Watling Street (*R.1*) and the building. He chose well and would recognise the spot even today. The hoard contained approximately 450 silver and three gold coins. Still to be reported in detail.
- B.13* Unknown building. A flint building with plain red tessellated floor. It was discovered during road building operations and, unfortunately, most of it was destroyed before it was realised that a building was there. An associated pit contained part of a bone statuette of Cucullatus which suggests that the

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building could have been another temple, but there is no other evidence. That such temples outside the main temenos did exist, however, is certain, since Temple EM.1 was discovered about half a mile south of the site (typical concentric square type) outside the range of the present map.

It may be noted that buildings *B.9* and *B.13* are on either side of the main branch road *R.2* and there may well be other buildings, particularly between *B.13* and *R.5*. A search will be made for these. Still to be reported in detail.

- B.14* Unknown building. A presumed wooden building with chalk floor. Briefly seen during trench digging operations. Few details available but will be reported.
- B.15* Unknown building. Only part of a flint wall has been observed during drainage trench digging operations. It will be investigated in due course.
- B.16* Unknown building. As for building *B.15*.
- B.17* Unknown building. As for building *B.15*. This building may be for storage of goods unloaded at the harbour.
- B.18* Shop. This is a wattle and daub building with baked clay floor discovered during drainage trench digging operations. It was partly burnt down and is notable for the considerable amount of Samian ware found over the floor. This suggests that it may have been a Samian ware shop. It is conveniently situated near the Watling Street *R.1* for this purpose. Still to be reported in detail.
- B.19* Gateway or Temple. This is a substantial building inside the temenos which is probably a monumental gateway into the temenos but this is not yet certain as excavations still continue. However, the robbed walls are three to four feet thick and steps lead down into the temple courtyard. There is a centrally placed altar or statue base in front of which a votive pit contained two animal burials and 25 coins.

THE OTHER FEATURES

All other finds are covered under this heading. They include burials, ovens, floors which may belong to buildings and other features. In some cases only approximate positions are known and this is indicated where necessary.

- F.1* Courtyard. This feature and the next one were found during gas trench digging operations. It appears to be a flint and chalk courtyard, associated with the well *F.2*. About 40 yards west of here were found two inhumation burials (off map).

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- F.2* Well. A flint lined well containing pottery and rubbish. There was little opportunity to examine the feature. It was 41 ins. wide and of unknown depth. The pottery will be reported.
- F.3* Baths.¹⁰ The remains of some baths were alleged to have been discovered in 1814. They were 'beside stream, but covered by cottage . . .' The position is assumed from reproduction of a cottage in old prints and a present derelict house, probably on the site of, or incorporating the cottage.
- F.4* Springhead Gardens. This area was devoted to the cultivation of watercress and pleasure gardens for the whole of the nineteenth century. The most famous proprietor was named Silvester who had tea gardens and a museum on the site, the latter containing a considerable amount of pottery, hundreds of coins and other finds from the gardens and surrounding fields. A full report on these gardens will be made in *Archæologia Cantiana*. It should be recorded, however, that a gold coin was found there (probably 1851—*The Kent Guardian*, September, 1851) of which the following details were given:

Obverse: PL VALENTINIANVS PF AUG.

Reverse: RESTITVTOR REI PUBLICAE.

Exergue TS

- F.5* Harbour. This is the site of the actual spring head where springs were flowing just prior to World War II. They were diverted by a cement company to allow them to work lower down the estuary. The diversion was achieved by pouring a considerable amount of cement into the basin after clearing it of all ancient deposits. Consequently, when it was excavated in 1964 nothing was left of the Roman period which is disappointing since there may well have been votive deposits. However, it was discovered that the sides were revetted with flints and the basin was surrounded on all sides by a metalled road of Roman origin. There can be little doubt that this represented the Roman harbour and that road *R.9* led to it. The creek was navigable in 1939 and would have been quite deep in the Roman era, as indicated by the considerable amount of silting.
- F.6* Kiln. A 'smother kiln' was found in 1922 and was destroyed. It was said to have been 3 ft. 8 in. in diameter and clay and straw lined, the walls remaining to a height of 13 ins.

¹⁰ *Dunkin, p. 128*

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- F.7* Burial. A cremation burial in a first century pot with lid.
and This was let into a surrounding chalk floor *F.8*. To be reported.
F.8
F.9 Clay base. A very thick clay base which had been subjected to considerable heat. It may have well been the site of cremations. The whole feature was first century and outside the then settlement, as would be expected. It went out of use in the second century when buildings *B.9* and *B.13* were erected.
- F.10* Raft. The edge of a chalk raft or seal discovered during road building operations in 1964. There was a pit underneath. It will be reported in detail in due course.
- F.11* Barkfields. An alternative spelling is 'Barque-Lands' the names being used indiscriminately in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many finds are recorded as being found in this area by Hasted and Dunkin, etc., as well as the V.C.H. The latter incorrectly calls this area 'Sole Field' in which the alleged walled cemetery was found (described by Dunkin in detail). Proof of the position is given by the following quotations:

- (i) 'On the remains of this road (i.e. the Watling Street), about half a mile westward of Wingfield bank, near adjoining to Springhead, in the land now called Barkfields, in this parish, some years ago, a stone was discovered . . .'
This reference is to the discovery of the milestone.¹¹
The significance of the description is obvious.
- (ii) '. . . in the pronunciation of Barque-fields, as the lands in the parish of Southfleet, are indiscriminately termed to this day . . .'
This proves the position of the fields to be south of the Watling Street.¹²
- (iii) '. . . in the bank immediately above the now dried up springs which supplied the baths, on the north eastern side of the Barque lands . . .'
This means that Barkfields must have been *west* of the springs.¹³

Since many finds are recorded as being found in this field, it could only refer to the area shown, since this is where the majority of finds are made. Sole Field is in the N.W. corner bounding the A.2 and the road to Southfleet (via Scadbury Manor). The latter road has now been

¹¹ Hasted, Vol. 2, p. 422/3.

¹² Dunkin, p. 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

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extinguished (1965) but it is given on Kent Sheet X.S.W., Ordnance Survey, Revision of 1938.

- F.12* Pit or Well. This feature was discovered during drainage trench digging operations and could not be examined in detail. It was a pit or unlined well ten feet deep and just over three feet wide. It contained pottery, domestic rubbish and was probably associated with building *B.15*. To be reported.
- F.13* Bronze workings. There was a thin chalk floor at this point on which were found considerable quantities of corroded bronze 'blobs.' These appear to have been from a bronze working establishment although no signs of a furnace or mould were discovered.
- F.14* Flint floor. An extensive deposit of flints was found here perhaps associated with building *B.16*. This will be excavated in due course.
- F.15* Milestone.¹¹ In the late eighteenth century, a stone with an X on it was discovered in Barkfields (see Item *F.11*) in a position which may be approximately the one given. It should be stressed, however, that the position is only a personal estimate based on (a) the known position of the Roman Watling Street; (b) the reference to its position by Hasted (see Item *F.11*) and (c) the reference (Dunkin, p. 134) to it being found in a field 'where the coins were found . . .' The position shown fits all the circumstances well and, in fact, is nearly ten Roman miles from Rochester. The stone is at present kept in Maidstone Museum.
- F.16* Oven. A small clay/chalk oven, probably used for cooking purposes.
- F.17* Flint Floors. These are considerable remains of flint floors perhaps belonging to wooden buildings. They give extensive crop marks and have yet to be excavated.
- F.18* One Tree Field. This is the present name of the field in which all the major finds have been made. It is called after one tree in the field which is extant but south-west of the excavations outside the area of the map. No discoveries have been made near it.
- F.19* Well. This was a well preserved flint lined well, fifteen feet deep and wooden lined at the base. It mainly contained pottery which was recovered in a reasonably well stratified manner—considering the difficult muddy conditions. It will be reported in due course. There were four paths emanating from it, these being necessary due to the marshy nature of the subsoil.

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- F.20* Oven and burial area.⁴ This is the lean-to against the temenos wall by the side of the Watling Street. It contained a number of ovens and later burials.
- F.21* Excavations. This area was extensively trenched and no remains of any kind were discovered. It is almost certain that a bank existed at this point in the Roman era which was removed in the nineteenth century when road *M.8* was constructed. Presumably some Roman material was lost at this time.
- F.22* The Column Pedestal.⁵
- F.23* Altar Base.⁸
- F.24* Pit. A small rubbish pit containing first century pottery discovered during road making operations. To be reported.
- F.25* Kiln. A kiln of unknown purpose discovered during emergency excavations. Probably for pottery or tiles, although no wasters were found. It may have been associated with the corn drying kiln, *F.26*, but there was no obvious indication of this. To be reported.
- F.26* Kiln. Probably a small corn drying kiln with chalk footings. It was surrounded by a chalk floor which may have extended to the Watling Street *R.1*. To be reported.
- F.27* Pit or well. This is a pit or unlined well discovered during trench digging operations. It is at least 10 feet deep and three feet wide. To be reported.
- F.28* Ditch. This is a substantial ditch approximately 10 feet across and nine feet deep. It is certainly of first century date and may be early but much more evidence is required from the primary silt before the exact date can be confirmed. However, its first century date suggests a military ditch rather than a town defensive ditch which would be expected to be of late second century date. This feature will be thoroughly examined in due course to see if a palisade and wooden buildings are associated with it. So far, it has been observed at five points which establish the corner given and it probably makes a right angle turn just past building *B.11*. It would thus make a square approximately 420 feet square. This ditch may be associated with ditch *F.32*.
- F.29* Ditch. A smaller ditch in front of ditch *F.28* and which may be part of the defences.
- F.30* Tiled platform. Conjectural position only. Given by Dunkin, p. 144 'Whilst the labourers were cutting down a portion of the Wingfield bank to widen the road, 22nd April, 1845, they laid bare a foot above the level of the present road, a platform composed of square tiles, 7 ft. long and 2½ ft. wide; upon it

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were fragments of calcined human bones and masses of charcoal. The tiles were much damaged by the action of fire.'

- F.31* Pit. A pit about four feet deep, three feet wide and of first century date. It may be associated with the Ditch *F.32*.
- F.32* Ditch. A substantial ditch, very similar to ditch *F.28*. It may represent part of an annexe to the 'fort'. It is curious to note, however, that it is on a pronounced slope and that ditch *F.28* is at the bottom of a slope, a curious place for a defensive ditch. Perhaps additional protection was required at this point and that a more complicated defensive system was created.
- F.33* Kiln. Only the existence of this can be recorded since most of it had been removed by the time it was discovered. It was made from baked clay with no indication of its purpose. It does indicate, however, that the settlement continued up the slope of the hill which was more substantial then than it is now.
- F.34* Burials.¹⁴ There are obscure references to various burials at this point. This is called the "Winfield Bank" although elsewhere the 'Wingfield Bank.' The two are almost certainly the same.
- F.35* Tiled Arch.¹⁵ A very approximate position for a 'tiled' arch, found and destroyed in 1921/2 at the east end of Winfield Bank (north of the road and east of the bank).
- F.36* Wall. This feature is not shown on the map since it is too far to the south-east. However, it is 561 feet from the ditch *F.32* in a south-easterly direction and 22 feet below the last pylon. It is a well made wall of rectangular chalk blocks and yellow mortar. Unfortunately, there was no indication whatever of the period to which it belonged and it could be Roman or Victorian. Further investigation is required.
- F.37* Clay Floor. A first century clay floor, 1-2 in. thick on a chalk base. It was subjected to heavy burning, but there is no evidence why. It appears that the Bank *M.9* was used extensively in Roman times for semi-industrial purposes.

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¹⁴ VCH, Vol. 3 (1932), 91.

¹⁵ R. F. Jessup, *Antiq. Journ.* viii, 338/9.