

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., on the excavations at Bigberry.

A short season of excavation was carried out at the Kentish hillfort of Bigberry in July 1978. Bigberry has been frequently identified with the stronghold which blocked Caesar's advance inland from the coast in 54 B.C., and excavations in 1933-34, principally in the area of the defences at the north-east end, had shown that the hillfort was Belgic in origin with some evidence of earlier Iron Age settlement incorporated in it.

Excavations were concentrated on the northern part of the site, with the aim of examining the defences of the hillfort and a number of anomalies recorded by a magnetometer scan of the whole hillfort; a total of ten trenches were cut. In one of these, the rampart was quickly located and proved to be 11 ft. (3.3 m.) wide and no more than 2 ft. (0.60 m.) high and consisted of a simple dump of sandy gravel, placed on the old ground surface on the natural hilltop gravel; there was no indication of a ditch within the length of this trench, nor in another trench cut 34 ft. (10 m.) to west. Trenching within the defended area recovered evidence of the curving gully and post-holes of a small hut, which had a diameter of no more than 12 ft. (3.60 m.) and a clay floor; a find of interest was a well-preserved iron plough-share of ard type, buried point downwards in the gully. The pottery found was of essentially Belgic character and confirmed that the hut was contemporary with the rampart. Elsewhere on the site, further evidence was found for a neat circular hearth cut into the natural gravelly loam, other gulleys and a water-hole cut to a depth of c. 10 ft. (3 m.) and lined at least twice with a thick seal of clay; this water-hole was probably circular with a conjectural diameter of c. 10 ft. (3 m.).

These limited excavations confirmed the Belgic date of the Bigberry earthwork, but the unimpressive bank (even allowing for erosion) and lack of ditch suggest that this northern line was never utilized but quickly superseded by the fairly massive double bank of the annexe

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defences; probably a second bank (? and ditch) was intended for the remainder of the circuit. The excavations also disclosed clear structural evidence not hitherto recognized at Bigberry, of essentially the same date as the defences.

It is hoped in 1979 to section the annexe defences and examine anomalies in the annexe interior, in the hope of determining their relationship to the main defences.

II. REPORTS FROM LOCAL SECRETARIES AND GROUPS

Kent Defence Research Group. Mr. V. T. C. Smith reports:

It is sad to report that Mr. T. D. Crellin, one of the founder members of the Group, passed away during the year. His main interest was the Dover defences and the Western Heights fortifications in particular. He frequently made his home available for Group meetings and his kindness and contribution to the work of the Group will not be forgotten. It is hoped to remember him through the setting up of a Doug Crellin Memorial Prize Essay scheme. Mr. Crellin's widow, Mrs. B. Crellin, will be keeping his research material together and will make it available to interested persons on request.

In the summer of 1978 contractors' trenches in the area of the Canal Basin, Gravesend, gave an opportunity for a limited further investigation of the Tudor Milton Blockhouse site. However, little significant new information was found and a report on this important site has now been drafted for *Arch. Cant.* The plan for restoration and landscaping of the Gravesend Blockhouse mentioned in the previous annual report, has been accepted by the owners, Messrs. Berni Inns. Work, under the supervision of the Kent Defence Research Group, will be undertaken shortly. An explanatory guide book to the site is to be prepared.

Work has continued on the New Tavern Fort restoration project, further emplacements being excavated and repaired. A replica garrison carriage has been constructed and installed, ready to receive one of the eighteenth-century cannon held at the fort, and a replica traversing platform for a second cannon is to be built. A Second World War Bofors Gun has been purchased from the Ministry of Defence (Navy) for display, utilizing funds kindly given by the Gravesend District Lions Club, and Messrs. D. and K. Bennett are currently negotiating for the acquisition of one of the guns still remaining on the Thames (Maunsell) offshore forts. Mr. W. Stewart has kindly purchased from the Ministry of Defence (Army) at his own expense a large and varied collection of historical artillery projectiles, bringing the New Tavern Fort collection to nearly one hundred. The restoration project is

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currently being re-assessed and it is hoped that greater expenditure upon it may be possible than has been the case hitherto.

Mr. D. C. Collyer has undertaken a newspaper campaign to bring to public attention the need to preserve selected examples of fortifications along the south coast, especially some of those threatened under the Kent County Council's scheme for the removal of coastal 'eyesores'. So far the Kent County Council has taken steps for the retention of one coastal battery. A new control building for Channel navigation has been built at Langdon Battery, Dover. Little actual destruction of the battery has resulted although much of the left flank has been obscured by the new structures. In co-operation with the authorities responsible for the control building, a short guide to the battery is to be prepared. It is understood that visitors are not to be discouraged and the guide will be made available to them. Archcliffe Fort is to be sold by the Ministry of Defence. The site is a scheduled historic monument and therefore any development on the site ought not to involve any destruction, but a watching brief is to be kept. Mr. Collyer and other members have made a number of field visits to defences in the south coast area, and a written and photographic record has been made.

A programme of field visits in connection with the Group report on the Military Railways of Kent has also been started and various other visits in connection with research in the Medway and Thames areas have been undertaken. Some assistance has been given to the editors of the forthcoming volume 4 of the *History of the King's Works*. The Group published a *Handbook of Kent's Defences, 1540-1945*, during the year, utilizing funds kindly supplied by the Kent Archaeological Society. Steps are being taken to prepare a revised and expanded version.

The most important work to be undertaken by the Group in the immediate future will be the creation of a central record of all post-medieval defence works in Kent. This will expand the list of works which at present exists, to include extensive descriptive details, drawings, photographs and more full historical information. The record will be held at a central point where it may be consulted by students.

Closer links have been established with the Medway Military Research Group, who have a representative present at Group meetings. The MMRG is helping with the setting up of the central record. The MMRG have carried out much research work in connection with the defences of the Medway area and have produced several valuable publications on them. They have also carried out preliminary clearance and restoration work at Fort Amherst, Chatham, which is to be purchased by the Medway Borough Council.

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

Various additions and corrections have been sent to me by members and work is in progress filling in more of the Moated Sites Research Group cards. Any more additions or corrections will be gratefully received.

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>N.G.R.</i>
Chiddingstone	Chiddingstone Burghersh	TQ 506446
Headcorn	Bletchenden	TQ 838431
Headcorn	Moat Farm	TQ 832445
Otford	Archbishop's Palace	TQ 528592
Sutton Valence	Bardingley	TQ 779456

The two Headcorn moats already listed should read:

Headcorn	Brook Wood	TQ 827432
Headcorn	Witherden	TQ 842454

The moat at Horsmonden should be Sprivers, *not* Spivers.

Great Norwood moat is in Bobbing parish, *not* Milton.

Moatenden is in Headcorn parish, *not* Sutton Valence.

The asterisk (*) indicates sites not yet located, but Leigh should not have an asterisk.

London Borough of Bromley. Mr. I. W. C. Bouskill reports:

The K.A.S. Vernacular Architecture Survey for the Borough led by Ian Bouskill is well under way with preliminary surveys carried out on several timber-framed buildings and a major aisled barn. A previously unrecorded and unlisted timber-framed building in the process of demolition was brought to the team's attention by Mrs. Patricia Knowlden of the Local History Society for the London Borough of Bromley and also by Mr. Wally Fairhead of the Bromley Consumers Association, a gratifying example of inter-group co-operation. Situated at no. 7 Single Street, Biggin Hill, N.G.R. TQ 43575967, the two remaining roofless bays were examined and recorded before their final destruction.

It is equally gratifying to be able to report that Bromley Borough Council has allocated funds towards the restoration of 40-50, High Street, St. Mary Cray, a derelict timber-framed farm house dating from the seventeenth century. A feasibility study is also being carried out by the Council to see whether restoration is possible for 4-8, Kent Road,

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St. Mary Cray. This unlisted and previously unrecorded timber-framed building has been examined by both the Kent Historic Buildings Committee and experts from the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum at Singleton. The two buildings, originally separate and now converted into a single unit, date to c. 1580 and 1620 respectively.

Two flint implements were found during 1978, the first, a hand-axe, Mousterian of Acheulian tradition, by Mr. B. H. Taylor, on an allotment site at The Avenue, Bickley, N.G.R. TQ 433693 and the second, a leaf or foliate point, Szeletian, of the 25000–35000 B.C. time range by Mr. N. H. Hayward in his garden at 144 World's End Lane, Chelsfield, N.G.R. TQ 468633. Both implements have been examined by Mr. Desmond Collins, M.A., and his full report with illustrations will be submitted for inclusion in the next volume of *Arch. Cant.*

The Orpington and District Archaeological Society has continued to provide interesting monthly lecture meetings and, apart from its own excavation programme, has continued to assist Mrs. Palmer of the London Borough of Bromley Museum when called upon. Reports by both these parties follow. As a final point, the writer gave a lecture to the Orpington Young Conservatives in December on the work of the K.A.S. and its affiliated groups. He used slides kindly loaned by Mr. Peter Tester (various K.A.S. excavations), by Mr. Paul Oldham (projects around Maidstone), by Mr. Roger Walsh (Dartford researches), by Mr. Michael Fisher (O.D.A.S. projects) and slides on the vernacular architecture survey. The talk was warmly received and the writer suggests that a K.A.S. 'pool' of slides should be created for loan to others to give similar general interest lectures throughout the County.

Mrs. L. Palmer, M.Phil., A.M.A., has supplied the following notes on behalf of the London Borough of Bromley Museum.

Poverest Orpington Roman/Saxon site – Work is at present in progress to erect a permanent structure over the Roman bath-house and to consolidate the Roman walls with the ultimate aim of making the site accessible to the public.

In advance of contractors' work a few remaining unexcavated areas round the building were examined. A small area which appears to have contained a Roman refuse-tip was uncovered just outside the wall of Room 3 of the bath-house; large quantities of pottery sherds were cleared, most in a good condition and capable of reconstruction as pots.

Another Saxon burial (burial 82) was uncovered, less than a metre (2 ft. 8 in.) from the Roman building. This proximity of the Saxon graves to the Roman building is one of the most interesting aspects of

the site. The burial was extremely fragmented by Victorian sewer pipes and only a small part of the cranium and a few teeth remained; judging from the condition and size of the teeth, it may have been the grave of an elderly woman. A small badly-crushed pot was the only item found with the burial, but other objects may have been destroyed.

Mr. M. E. Fisher has supplied the following notes on behalf of the Orpington & District Archaeological Society.

The excavation begun in 1977 at Lower Road, St. Mary Cray (N.G.R. TQ 47036736), continued into 1978 and the structure, previously reported in *Arch. Cant.*, xciii (1977) 223, is now positively identified as a corn drier of the Romano-British period (measures 4.5 × 2.5 m. approx.). Several large fragments of mill-stones were recovered from the site, including pieces of Niedermendig lava from the Mayen-Eifel region and coarse-grained sandstone of the 'Derbyshire' Millstone Grit series. The millstone petrological details were kindly confirmed by the Geological Museum, London. Further trial trenching extended the known area of stratified Roman surface, identified by the Romano-British sherds found lying upon it. No further structures were located and excavation may continue when additional sites become available. All developments in the area will be watched by the Society.

A change in local development policy means that a number of Victorian houses in the immediate area will now be renovated and not demolished.

Maidstone Area Archaeological Group. Mr. P. E. Oldham, M.A., reports:

Excavation work in 1978 was concentrated on completion of the work on the moated site at Mott Hall, Bearsted, under my direction. Further work on documentary evidence and parallels must be undertaken to establish the purpose of the site. Mr. D. B. Kelly, B.A., A.M.A., recorded walls revealed by digging for a new sewer at the Romano-British building site at The Mount, Maidstone.

Work has started on a survey of the moated sites of Staplehurst parish under the direction of Mr. M. J. Jessup. Surveys of the moats at Brattle Farm, Castle Bank and Lovehurst have been completed by Mr. Jessup.

The survey of Bradbourne House, East Malling, by members of the buildings section, led by Mr. M. A. Ocock, is drawing to a close and preparations have started for the second stage of the survey of vernacular houses in Bearsted.

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The industrial archaeology section continued its programme of visits and compiling record cards whilst starting a study of iron-working sites in mid-Kent. Prior to closure, a visit to Blakes store in High Street, Maidstone, was organized by Mrs. R. K. Proctor and various features of interest were recorded.

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