

INVESTIGATIONS AND EXCAVATIONS DURING THE YEAR

Dartford District Archaeological Group. Mr C. Baker reports:

Since my report in the 1983 volume the Group had continued with its excavations of the Romano-British Cemetery on East Hill, Dartford. Of all the work carried out on this site during 1985, I have singled out two discoveries for inclusion in this report.

The first was made at the end of 1984, but, due to inclement weather, excavation did not occur until the beginning of 1985. The 'find' was that of a complete horse skeleton buried amidst the Romano-British graves. From the state of preservation of the bones it was obvious that this strange inhumation was found in John Dunkin's *History and Antiquities of Dartford* published in 1844. On p. 92, it is mentioned that the owner of this land on East Hill was Thomas Brandon, a grocer, of Overy Street, Dartford. Dunkin goes on to say that around 1797, Brandon's favourite horse died and was buried in this field on East Hill. In carrying out the burial, a Roman stone coffin was discovered. This coffin was one of the several that have been found in East Hill since the cemetery was discovered about 1792 by Brandon. Sadly, only two coffins are still in existence. The first, re-discovered by the Group in 1973, is now in East Hill House, whilst the other, discovered by John Landale in 1822 is on permanent display in Dartford Borough Museum. The discovery by the Group of this horse burial has now enabled us to locate a definite provenance for one of these coffins.

The second interesting discovery was that of a grave containing a colour-coated bowl of Oxford ware, a colour-coated beaker of New Forest ware and a flask or bottle from Cliffe in Kent. They have been dated as belonging to the latter part of the third century A.D. As well as the pottery the grave also contained eleven copper alloy-bracelets and 150 beads from a necklace. One of the beads is jet, two others are white glass with traces of gold and the rest are of coloured glass. From the size of the grave, which was aligned roughly north-south, it

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would appear to have contained a young individual. However, no trace of bones remain due to the acidic nature of the soil.

In August 1985, the two open weekends which were arranged by the Group on this site attracted five hundred people. Work on the site continues.