

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXVIII

1978

IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

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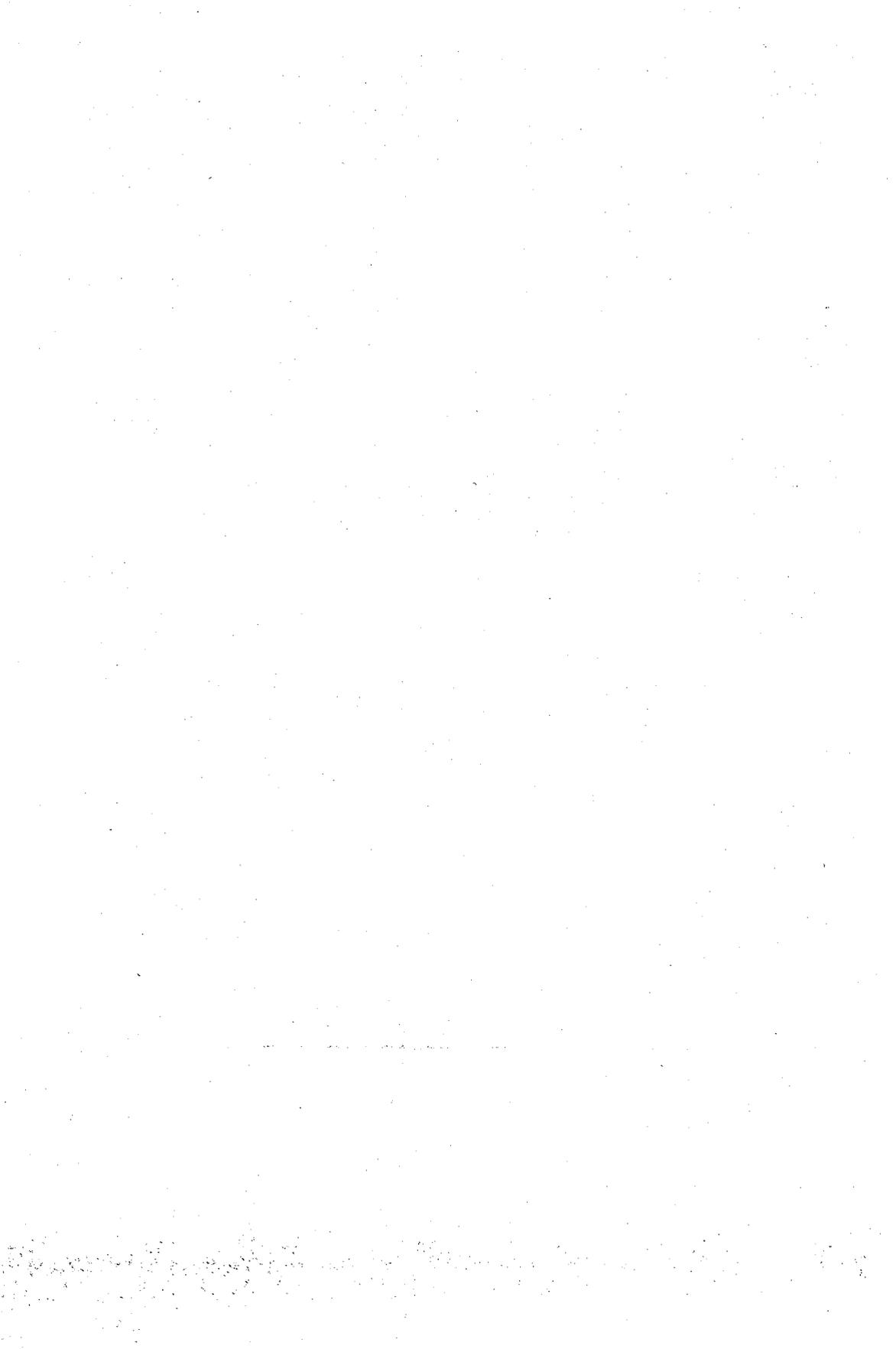
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THE ROMAN FARM SETTLEMENT AT GODMANCHESTER II

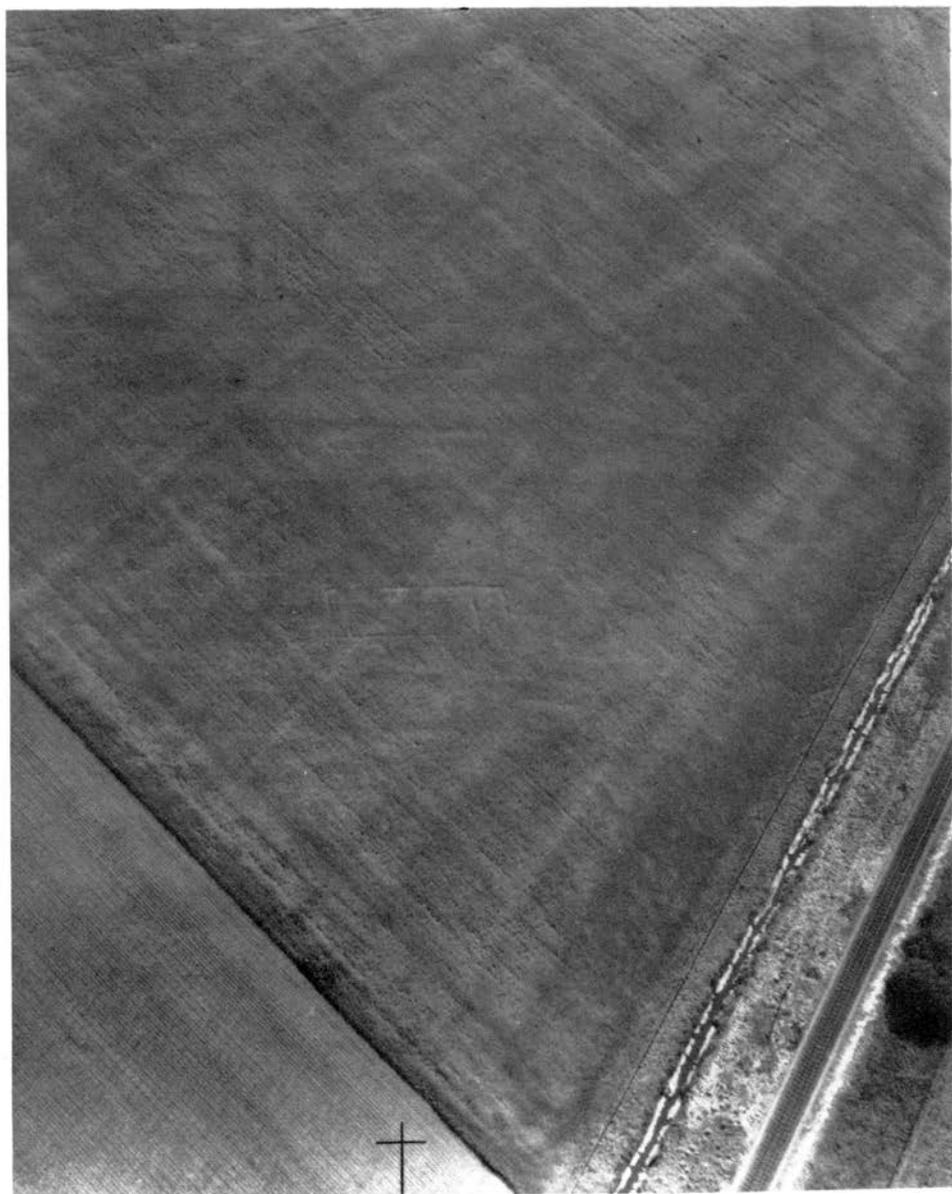
W. H. C. Frend

Work on the Rectory Field site half a mile east of Godmanchester (TL 256714) continued at weekends from the autumn of 1967 to August 1969. This resulted in the excavation on an aisled building of second-century date, which had been located from an air photograph (Plate 1, and see *Proceedings LXI*, 1968, pp 18-45). The building was found 100 ft north of Area B on the published sketch map (*loc. cit.* figure 1 facing p. 21). Its long axis faced south-west across the field and measured externally 92 ft by 33-34 ft wide (a foot wider at the east than at the west end). The foundations of the walls, which were traced throughout their length, were uniformly 2 ft 3 ins wide and were composed of a hard compact gravel mixed with lime. They had been laid in a shallow trench 8 - 9 ins deep which showed traces of a clay lining at the east end. (Plate 2b.)

Within the building, at a distance of between five and six feet from the walls of the main room had been set a range of six parallel posts spaced at approximately five foot intervals. On the south side the first four post-holes from east to west had been dug up to 2 ft 9 ins into the subsoil, packed with large stones with a flat stone at the bottom (in one, a piece of Purbeck marble). When the post, 1 ft 6 ins - 1 ft 9 ins in diameter, had been placed in position, the surrounding pit was filled with compacted gravel and pebbles. (Plate 2c.) The two westernmost posts had been packed even more securely with a bedding of clunch mixed with sandstone pebbles extending 2 ft all round the central post-hole. They had also been dug deeper (4 ft) into the subsoil. On the north side, there was a variation, in that the post corresponding to Post-hole 3 on the south had been placed on a square bed of hardened gravel and not sunk into the earth (Fig. 1).

There were two periods in the building's history, both second century A.D., with evidence for an earlier and later occupation of the site. In *Phase 1*, the building consisted of two rooms (Rooms A and B). Room A at the east end was a narrow chamber, 8 ft 6 ins wide but tapering to 7 ft 6 ins at the north end. Near the south wall was a small stone-lined post-hole 1 ft in diameter, possibly used for a tethering-stake. This room was divided from its neighbour by a partition wall 2 ft wide, made of the same hard gravel mix as the outside walls. The remainder of the building was composed of a single large rectangular room, 80 ft long and averaging 33 ft 6 ins wide, whose roof had been supported by the ranges of stout wooden pillars, already described.

On the north side, the outer wall showed no particular features, but on the south there was evidence for an entrance at the south-east corner of Room B. The corner itself had been destroyed by a later pit, but a square gravel foundation 2 ft across was



PL. 1 Rectory Field, Godmanchester
Note traces of large corridor villa (?) south of 2nd. century aisled villa.
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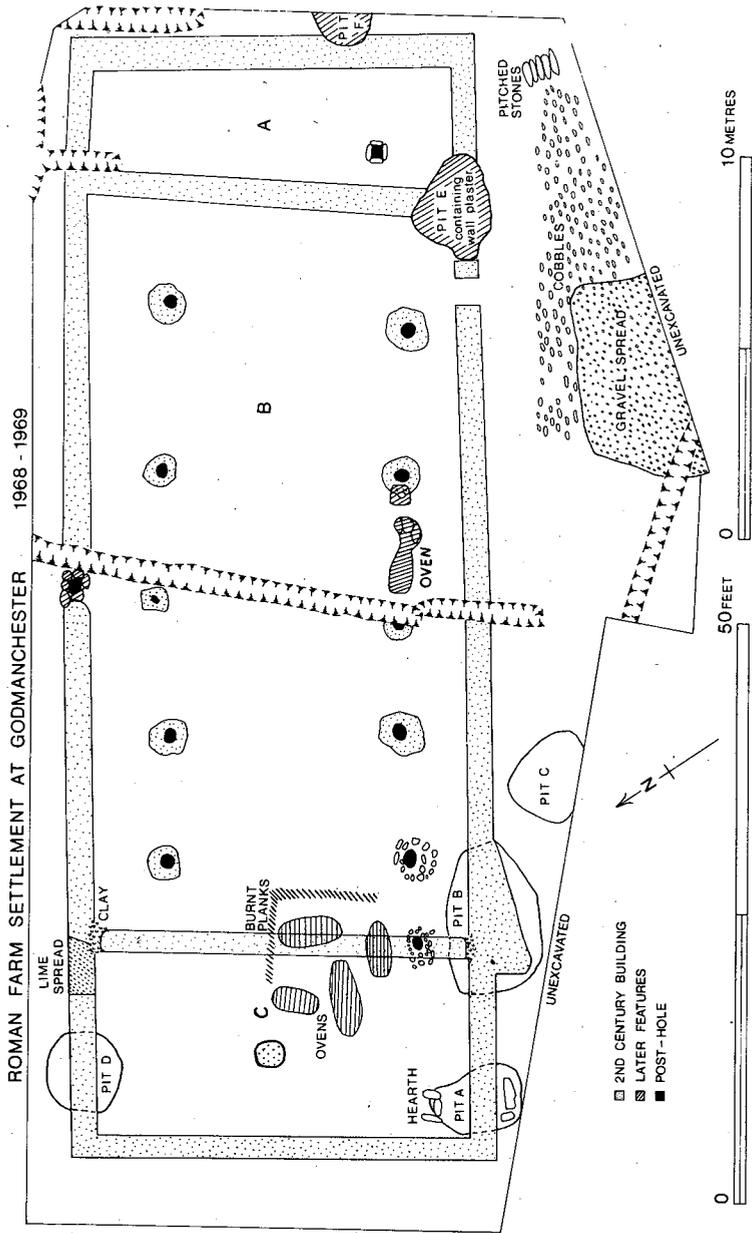


Fig.1 Plan of aisled villa, Rectory Field, Godmanchester

found, separated from the remainder of the wall by a gap of 4 ft, as though it provided the base for a post dividing a wide entrance into two smaller accesses.

The floor level of Room A had been ploughed away, but in Room B some traces of a gravel spread were found. On this level fragments of a stamped mortarium of Antonine date, fragments of the neck and body of an amphora of hard, buff coloured ware, and part of the rim of a large tazza-shaped jar with piecrust decoration were found (Pottery Report No. 3). In addition, small fragments of Samian 33 and 37 and of a hard grey second-century cooking pot were found on this level. In the foundations of the east wall of the building a fragment of Samian 18/31 was recovered.

In *Phase II*, a cross wall of the same composition as the other walls was built near the west end of Room B, providing for a rectangular room 15 ft long and 28 ft 6 ins wide (Room C). (There was no subdivision into two rooms as suggested by the air photograph.) The cross-wall was aligned on the last pair of pillars in Room B, whose post-hole on the south side it covered completely, thus preserving it intact.* It had been bonded roughly on to the exterior walls with clay packing, and an entrance (7ft wide) to the new room had been cut in the north wall. Traces of a small stone hearth consisting of a flat limestone block flanked by two stone uprights, were found near the south-west corner of the room, indicating perhaps that in this phase this room served as the living quarters of the occupants. In the middle of the room a circular pit was found 2 ft in diameter, perhaps a post-hole for a pillar supporting the roof, (excavated by H.R.H. Prince Charles during a visit to the site).

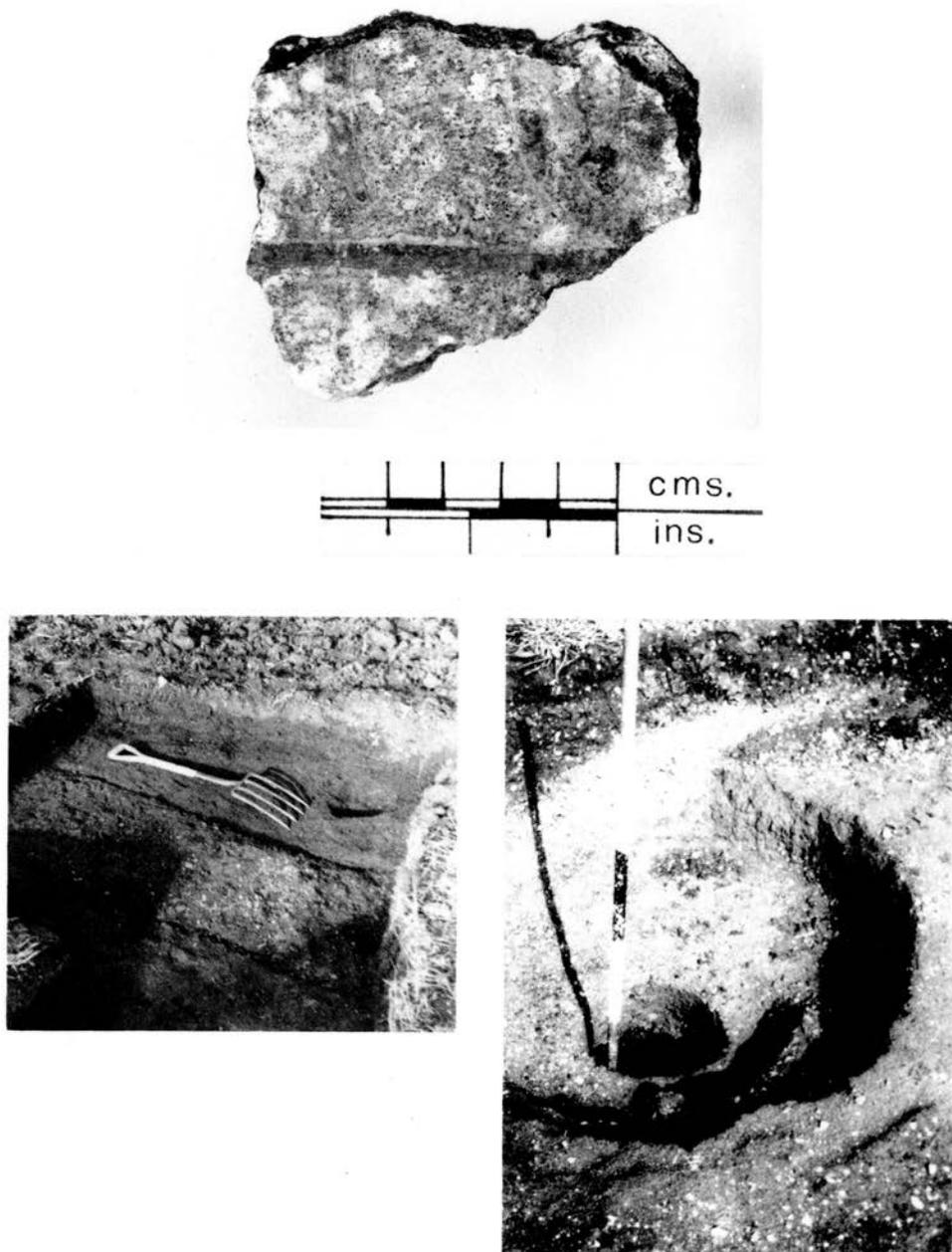
The Godmanchester building appears to belong therefore to a relatively numerous type of aisled house of late first and second century date. That at Wingham in Kent seems to be of similar date and construction, 90 x 52 feet, with an earthen floor in the main hall. (reported in *J.R.S.* LVII (1967), 202 and LVIII (1968), 206).

The excavation of the west end of Room B, and Room C provided evidence for an earlier occupation of this part of the site. It was noticeable that for a distance of 10 feet extending beyond the junction with the cross wall between Rooms B and C, the south wall of the building had been widened from 2 ft 3 ins to 4 ft 8 ins. The reason for this was that the line of the building crossed a pre-existing pit. This was a large shallow, oval, approximately 11 ft x 9 ft (Pit B). Flat pieces of sandstone found in the fill may have been thrown in by the builders, and the fill also produced meat bones, some window glass, a fragment of Samian 33 and the top of a poppy-head beaker, consistent with a date *circa* A.D. 125. A few feet to the east was another similar pit (Pit C) whose fill included some burnt clam and oyster shells, as well as a fragment of Samian 18 (Hadrianic?), and 33, and pieces of a cooking pot of hard white ware.

Below the south-west corner of the building was another pit (Pit A), also including largish flat stones in its fill. This also produced some fragments of rough exterior wall-plaster and a fragment of a hunt cup of Castor ware.

Within the building there was also evidence of earlier occupation. It was found that

*(there was unfortunately no time to look for the corresponding post-hole at north end of the cross-wall).



PL. 2 Godmanchester villa
a. Painted wall plaster with inscription.
b. South wall of house.
c. Post-hole in south aisle of house.

the cross wall between rooms B and C traversed a rectangular area 15 ft X 13 ft which contained the remains of four ovens, two oriented east-west and the others north-south (see Plan Fig 1). Three of the ovens were roughly oval in shape, 7 ft long and 2 ft 3 ins wide and 1 ft 9 ins deep with a slightly rounded bottom, the largest and most western of the group, oriented east-west, was of the same depth but 9 ft long with rounded ends. All four had been lined with clay, and had later been filled in with clay which overlaid some residual burnt material. A fragment of Samian 33 and a piece of Castor-ware pottery was found in the clay fill. Just to the east of the ovens were traces of burnt planks and daub forming the north and east outline of a rectangular structure. This had obviously been burnt down. A fragment of badly burnt Samian 33 was found in the debris. No traces of burning were discernible outside the walls of the building. This burnt structure, and probably the ovens as well as the pits on the south side of the wall foundations, pre-date the aisled building. It would seem that the latter was erected on the site of the hut not long after its destruction, probably near the end of the first quarter of the second century, or a little later.

How long the aisled building was occupied is uncertain, but it had fallen out of use by the end of the third century. At this period, a large rubbish pit 4 ft deep had been dug over the junction of Rooms A and B. This pit (Pit E) contained, apart from meat bones and oyster shells and the fragments of brick and roofing slate, a fragment of the neck of a dark-brown glazed Rhenish-type beaker and iron knife (Small finds, No 1) and a considerable quantity of interesting wall plaster (see below, p.). The pit had been covered by a layer of brownish soil, possibly a plough line, before the final phases of the occupation of the site.

During the excavation of Room B, it was noticeable that there were traces of a sterile layer of earth about 1 inch thick separating the floor-level of the barn-building from scattered late Roman debris above. This late Roman level was found all over the east end of the site both inside and outside the walls of the building.

At some time in the fourth century narrow, steep-sided and flat bottomed trenches were dug north-south across the eastern portion of the site. Trench A, 4 ft deep, cutting the north wall of the building at a point 35 ft from the NE corner, was associated with a post-hole cut into the remains of the north wall and would appear to be the trench for a sleeper beam, indicating the existence of a late building overlying the east end of the house. This trench ended abruptly six feet from the south wall of the house but was overlapped by another, similar trench (Trench B) of the same type running in the same direction. A third, similar trench (Trench C) 2 ft broad and 4 ft 6 ins deep was found 11 ft south of the wall of the building running in an east-west direction. The relation of this trench to the other two is yet to be established. At the north-east corner of the house, traces of a similar trench were found skirting the eastern wall (Trench D), and this in turn was cut by another trench aligned just outside the north wall of the house (Trench E). Traces of a shallow trench cutting across the line of the east room of the house were also found.

The fills of these trenches included exclusively mid and late fourth-century material. The pottery consisted of colour-coated and shell-gritted wares and large burnished pie-

dishes of types already found in considerable quantities in the robber trenches of Area A (see *P.C.A.S.* 1968, p 21-23 and 41). On this site also, whatever the nature of the building indicated by these trenches, it had ceased to be occupied before the end of the Roman period. Above the square cut sides of Trench A and the greasy black deposit it contained, was a drier fill consisting of dark brown earth and a scatter of building of building debris including tile, red tesserae and wall plaster. This level also produced a complete pot of calcined gritted ware (Fig. 2), colour-coated ware, some iron slag, and an abundance of meat bones including the skull of an ox. The other late trenches contained a considerable amount of building material, tesserae and fragments of wall plaster (mainly pink). Another ox head was found in the fill of Trench E. The late structure overlying the aisled house may be associated with the thin (2 in depth at maximum) spread of dark speckly earth that covered the whole of the east part of the site and overlay the wall foundations. This level contained worn coins of Tetricus and the House of Constantine (see p. 12) and worn fragments of fourth-century colour-coated and grey coarse pottery. It may also be associated with a tile-built corn-drying oven which was found placed midway between Post-holes S. 2 and 3 in the south aisle of the building. The oven, 5 ft 1 in long, 1 ft 10 ins wide, and 1 ft 7 ins, deep at its deepest part, was of a figure-of-eight shape, tapering in the middle to 1 ft 4 ins. The ash fill (mainly hawthorn) contained some fragments of fourth-century pottery. The floor of the oven, which sloped up at the east end, was made of brick and roofing slate. Its position, immediately adjacent to two of the main wooden pillars supporting the roof of the aisled building, would hardly have been possible if the latter had been still in use. Its presence may be associated perhaps with a curious rectangular stone block which was found covering much of the actual post-hole area of S.2. This block of sandstone was 1 ft 4 in by 2 ft and 1 ft 3 ins thick, into the centre of which had been cut a square socket 3 ins across and 3½ ins deep. It must have carried an upright designed to support a considerable weight, but its purpose is not otherwise known.

The structure covering the east end of the aisled building and associated trenches do not mark the end of the site in Roman times. A still later phase of occupation was represented by an irregular cobbled area which was traced over an area of 20 ft by 5 ft south of the east end of the building. It was associated with a roughly laid gravel spread on its south side. At the east end of this area the stones were pitched as though for a foundation. That it was later than the fourth-century trenches is evidenced from its encroachment over the fill of Trench C. Two worn coins of the House of Valentinian and some noticeably worn fragments of fourth-century pottery were associated with this level. What this area could have been used for remains uncertain, but it surely represents the latest phase of occupation, perhaps extending into the sub-Roman period.

In addition to the excavation of the aisled building and subsequent structures, exploration work was undertaken by Mr John Rainbird in an area some 50 ft to the north (approximately the "Occupied Area" on Fig 1 of *P.C.A.S.* 1968). There was a considerable scatter of pottery from the second to fourth century, including a late Samian 27 (Lezoux) with a stamp A11[STIVI M] circa A.D. 130-160. Animal bones

were horse, pig, sheep, ox and deer. A scapula of a horse had been chopped into five parts for eating. There was one worn *dupondius* of Domitian dating to A.D. 84 (Cos XI) and one bronze pin. Of interest, too, were the remains of what appear to have been the lowest courses of turf walls. This area showed continuous occupation from the late first to the late fourth century and deserves thorough excavation.

From the excavations in Rectory Field so far reported, there emerge two main periods of intensive occupation, in the second and fourth centuries. The second-century occupation is represented by the aisled house and the rubbish-filled ditch further to the south (Area B). This was a recognizably Celtic farming society, for the aisled house resembles nothing so much as the byres of the Highlands. (See for instance the plan of the cruck-framed byre at Stronmacnair illustrated in *Stirlingshire: Inventory of Ancient Monuments*, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Vol ii, 1963, No 377, fig 165.) The third century is less well represented but the *denarius* of Caracalla (A.D. 211-217), found on Area A in good condition, indicates continued occupation in this period. Occupation, however, was heavy in the fourth century, as is shown by substantial buildings in Area A (perhaps a villa and bath-house), and by the structure overlying the aisled building. It may well have continued into the fifth century in an attenuated form, represented by some of the latest pits and the cobbled area.

SMALL FINDS

1. Iron knife with triangular blade from pit cutting junction between Rooms A and B. 10.7cm long; handle 5.5cm with loop at end. Maximum width of blade 3cm (Compare R. E. M. Wheeler, *Segontium*, Fig 65,3 late third century).
2. Iron object, part of plane? Length 10cm, width 2cm from fourth-century level over NE corner of aisled house.
3. Bead of blue glass from fourth-century layer above Room B.
4. Fragment of bronze bracelet. Same area and level.
5. Fragment of spliced bone, length 8cm, with ring-and-dot decoration.
6. Bronze hook, perhaps part of fibula. Room B, second-century level.

COINS

1. *Dupondius* of Domitian. Very worn, but COS XI decipherable on obverse legend. Trial excavation north of house.
2. Tetricus, worn and clipped AE from fourth-century level over Room B.
3. Crispus 3AE (R.I.C. VII, 252)
obv CRISPUS NOB CAES
Rev BEATA TRANQUILLITAS
On altar inscribed VOTIS XX, a globe, above three stars.

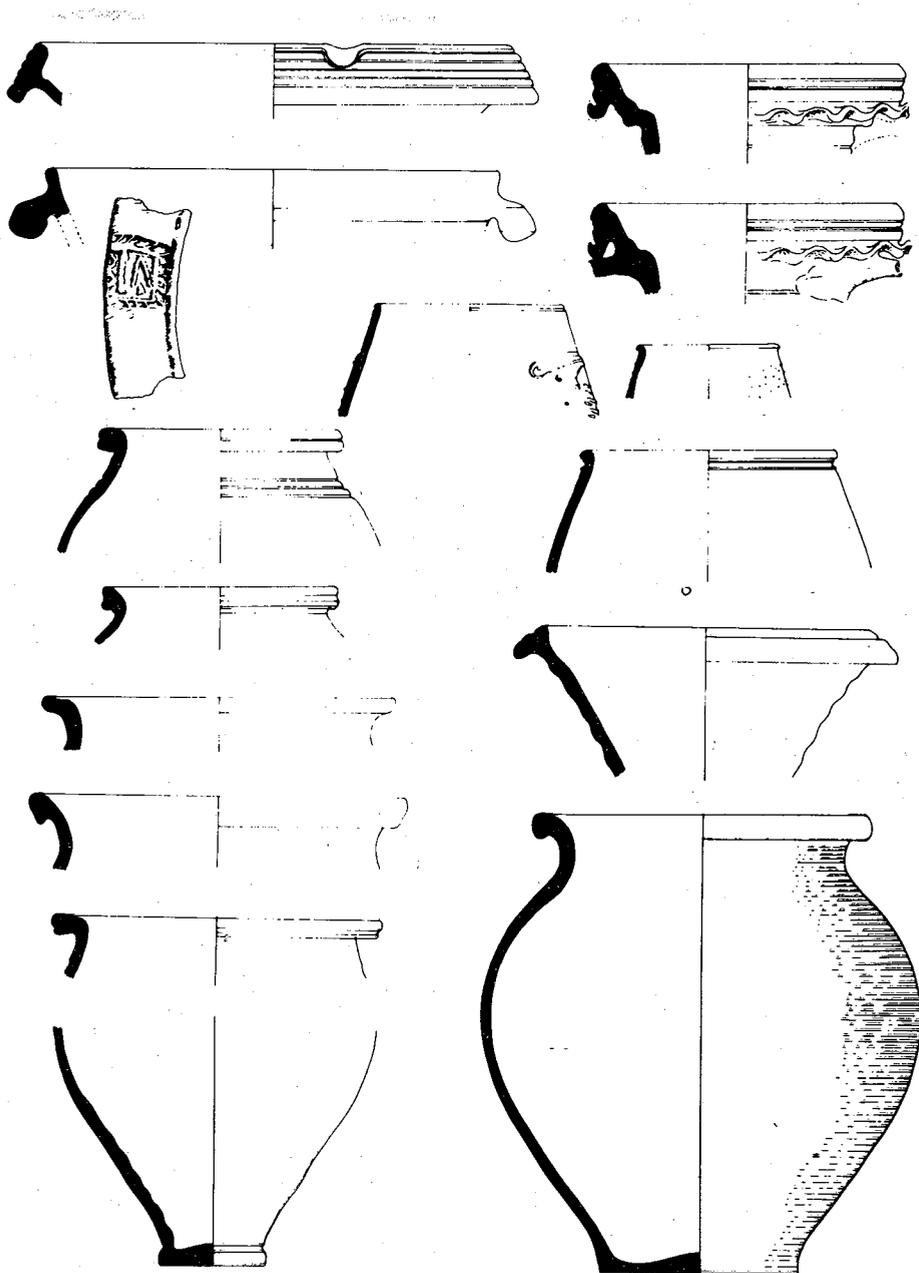


Fig. 2 Roman pottery, Godmanchester villa. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$

Mint PLON (Londinium). A.D. 320-324. Fair condition.

From fourth-century level over Room B.

4. House of Constantine: fourth-century level above Room A. Worn.
- 5 and 6 Two 2AE of House of Valentinian from pit fill outside south wall of house. Worn.

WALL PLASTER

No painted wall plaster was found in connection with the aisled house. Fragments of plain red and pink painted plaster came from the ditches dug across the north-east corner of the aisled building, associated with building debris. Fragments of magenta wall plaster came from the fill of Trench A cutting across its main room. The pit dug along the south wall on the junction between Rooms A and B produced an entirely different type of painted wall plaster. The pattern had been divided into linear panels in a frame of black and red lines against a white background. On one fragment, traces of letters I U, originally in black, could be discerned painted on the white background (Plate 2a.). On another the letters P or B or R and either L or I could be discerned. (Recorded in *J.R.S.*, LVIII, 1968, p 211).

POTTERY

- a. *Samian Wares*. No decorated Samian ware was found, but fragments of types 18/31, 33 and 37 were found on second-century levels on the site.
- b. *Mortaria* (Fig. 2)
 1. Hard whitish ware. Fourth-century type, from Pit D (compare Godmanchester I, No 10 (*P.C.A.S.* LXI (1968), 42) and Little Paxton No 40 (*P.C.A.S.* LXII (1969), 43).
 2. Hard whitish ware, well gritted with high bead and thickened flange. Incomplete stamp, retrograde, set in a herringbone border. Appears to read BIV with a triangular stop within the V. From the shape of the rim and herringbone stamp it would date to the Antonine period circa A.D. 130-180. No exact parallel known asnd an "unusual type" in the view of Mrs K. F. Hartley. Found on the floor level of Room B, 2 ft below the surface.
- c. *Coarse Wares*. (Fig. 2) Most of the pottery types found on the second- and fourth-century levels were similar to those already described in *P.C.A.S.* LXI, 33-43, *Godmanchester* I. Some specimen types are given below:
 3. Tazza-shaped vessel of hard, pinkish fabric, with frilled decoration below rim: traces of handle below decoration. Not a usual type, but vessels of similar shape with frilled decoration with or without handle were found in an early second-century deposit at Verulamium (Wheeler, *Verulamium*, p. 190-192, Fig 32, Nos 44, 46 and 48). Found on floor level of Room B.

4. Beaker. Castor-ware with dark brown slip over pink fabric; roughcast, with small everted rim (Compare Cunliffe, *Fishbourne* II, p 229, Type 266). From fill of Pit B below south wall of house. Early to mid second-century, associated with fragments of poppy-head beaker.
5. Fragment of hunt cup, Nene Valley ware: pipeclay fabric and orange slip. Fill of Pit C (compare *Godmanchester* I, Fig 12, No 9, and Cunliffe, *Fishbourne* II, p 229. Type 269.1).
6. Castor-ware beaker with small groove below rim. Same type as found in Area B (levels 7 and 10) = *Godmanchester* I, p 40, No 4. From Room B, second-century.
7. Flanged bowl: hard white pipeclay fabric with dark lustrous brown slip; ripples down sides. Upper fill of Ditch A (post 350 AD).
8. Complete cooking pot. Hard, calcined gritted ware with rilling on body. Late fourth-century. (Compare *Godmanchester* I, Fig 13, No 1, P 42). From upper fill of Ditch A, associated with fragments of colour-coated ware.
9. Jar: hard, off-white gritted ware, with grooved rim and grooves on shoulder (compared *Leicester*, Fig 27). Top of fill of Pit A, second-century.
10. Jar: hard, off-white, gritted ware, grooved rim. Fill of Pit C. Mid second-century (compare Frere, *Verulamium* Fig 118, No 652).
11. Cooking-pot, hard grey ware with everted rim. Nene Valley type. Room B, second-century.
12. Cooking pot, hard grey ware with heavy everted rim. Lower fill of Ditch A, fourth-century (compare *Little Paxton* No 17).
13. Cooking pot, similar to 9.
14. Base of cooking pot.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As in the earlier seasons, most of the work was undertaken by the A-level class in Classics at Huntingdon Grammar School, supervised by Mr John Mills, Head of Department. I am very grateful to him, and to Miss Carolyn Hull for her pottery drawings, to Mr Roger Jacobi and Mr Paul Callow of Gonville and Caius College for their assistance, and to Mr Bryce Mailier of Rectory Farm, for permission to dig and for his unstinted co-operation.

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