

A Decline in the London Settlement A.D. 150-250?

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RECENT WORK in Southwark suggests that the Roman settlement of the London area, apparently well established by the time of Hadrian (A.D. 117-138), suffered in the later years of the 2nd century a decline which continued—perhaps more markedly—into the earlier decades of the 3rd.¹

The Southwark Sequence.

Excavations during the last few years have shown that by the end of the 1st century A.D. much of the land bordering the two approach roads to the Roman bridge was lined with houses built in clay and timber. At least two phases of such buildings occupied the sites until about the middle 2nd century: then the houses seem to have been abandoned and allowed to collapse. Only one site, St. Thomas St., provided clear evidence from the contents of timber-lined pits—of continuous occupation lasting perhaps until the end of the 2nd century (p. 269-71).

Excavations have not as yet produced evidence of activity in the suburb between c. A.D. 200 and 250, although by the mid-3rd century, or soon after, new wells were being cut and extensions being made to the original St. Thomas St. building. This date might be taken as the start of the suburb's later Roman phase with its changed nature of settlement: in this phase the buildings, where known, were built of stone and more widely spaced than the clay and timber structures they superseded. During the 4th century the first of the "black earth" layers was dumped or spread over much of the area where the earlier buildings had stood. This seems to represent a change over to agriculture, possibly reflecting an increasing need to produce food nearer to the City.

It is the apparent gap between the early and later phase of settlement which concerns us here. The evidence from these excavations is likely to be representative of Southwark and — if the pottery is being dated correctly—suggests that from about A.D. 150 the population was declining, while from about A.D. 200, for perhaps 50 years, the suburb was largely deserted.

To examine whether this phenomenon is more

generally observable a wider enquiry must be made; firstly into the known settlements lying mainly along the major approach roads to Londinium, secondly into the smaller farmsteads, thirdly into the major towns of the region, and fourthly into the villas.

The Roadside Settlements

A number of settlements have been identified on the approach roads to Londinium including Old Ford, Enfield, Brockley Hill, Brentford, Putney, Fulham and Ewell (Fig. 1). Each may well have had a specialised function—e.g. pottery was made at Brockley Hill—but presumably they all relied on the urban population to purchase the food, other goods and raw materials which they produced.

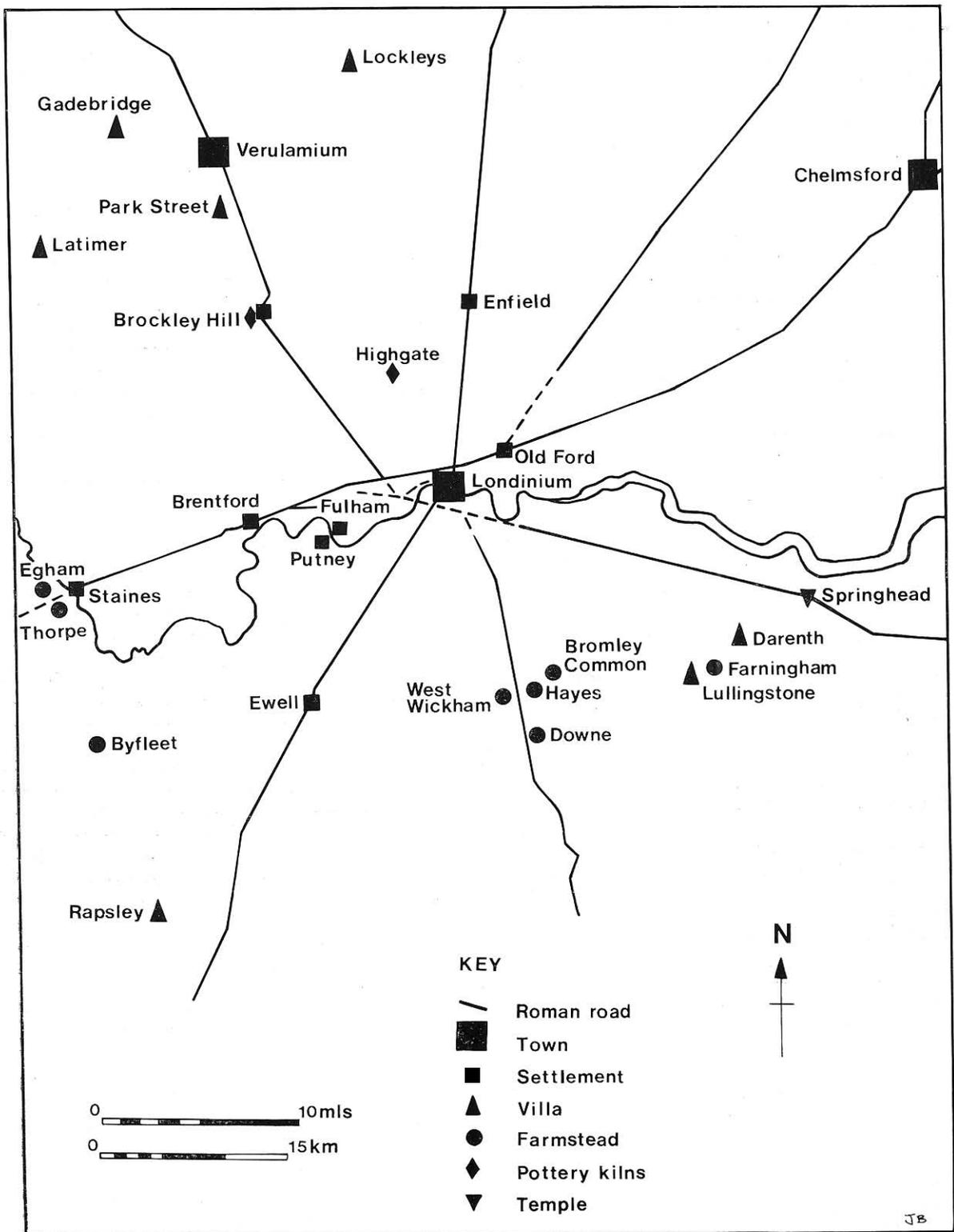
The nearest is at Old Ford along the Colchester route, some 2½ miles east of the City. Excavations in 1969-70 revealed 2nd century features near to the road while further work in 1972-73 uncovered ditches of a similar date, probably field boundaries, some ¼ mile to the south.² However, much of the Old Ford settlement is of later Roman date. The coins found suggest that this later phase of farming and trading, which continued into the early 5th century, did not begin until about A.D. 270.

A community was also established on the Ermine Street at Enfield eight miles north of the City. Burials indicate a settlement of some size which was active before the end of the 1st century A.D.³ Post-war excavations have shown one "small domestic site with timber buildings . . . dated . . . to the late 3rd to mid-4th centuries." Early 2nd century ditches have been found in more recent work,⁴ while the only known coin hoard is thought to date to not earlier than A.D. 160.

On Watling Street, Brockley Hill lay 11 miles north-west of the City. Pottery was made there from soon after the conquest and the distinctive wares are found in the City and Southwark as well as on northern military sites.⁵ For some reason production ceased "circa A.D. 160."⁶ At about the same time the Highgate kilns situated on similarly high ground five miles north-west of the City, but producing very

1. The evidence is based on the findings from Top-pings Wharf (*Trans. London and Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 25 (1974) 1-116) and from various sites excavated 1972-4 to be published as a LAMAS research paper at the end of 1975.
2. H. Sheldon, "Excavations at Lefevre Road 1969-70" *ibid.* 23 pt. 1 (1971) 42-77. The field ditches were found during excavations at Morville St. 1972-3 (report forthcoming).
3. *Prehistoric and Roman Enfield*, Enfield Archaeol. Soc. Research Report 3 (1973).

4. Excavation at Lincoln Road. Information from John Ivens, Enfield Archaeol. Soc.
5. Mortaria of Doinus who used a kiln found at Brockley Hill in 1971 (*Archaeol. J.* 129 (1972) 69-88) have been found on northern military sites (*ibid.*, 88, Fig. 7). Eleven examples of the work of Albinus have come from Scotland including one from the legionary fortress of Inchtuthil (S. Frere. *Verulamium Excavations* 1 (1972) 372).
6. S. Castle, "Brockley Hill" *London Archaeol.* 1 no. 14 (1972) 324-327.



different wares, stopped manufacture⁷ as perhaps did the potteries near to Verulamium.⁸

Nine miles to the west of the City, at Brentford on the Silchester road, recent excavations have provided much evidence of settlement in the 1st and 2nd centuries and from the later 3rd century onwards.⁹ The current site has uncovered a sequence of clay and timber buildings immediately adjacent to the road: these continued in use until the later part of the 2nd century and were stratified beneath a dark soil containing 4th century pottery.¹⁰

At Staines, 11 miles further to the west, a sequence of buildings was found in 1969 with the latest one "destroyed by fire sometime towards the end of the 2nd century."¹¹ Recent work in the town has shown occupation extending back from the road in the 4th century.¹²

Settlement has also been proved at Putney, another Thames crossing point some 7 miles southwest of the City. Here, 1st century ditches, a 2nd century road and cremations as well as 4th century coins have been recorded.¹³ Across the river recent work in Fulham Palace grounds revealed pits and gravel surfaces indicating occupation "from at least 270 until A.D. 380." These features presumably succeeded earlier ones nearby for "a scatter of 2nd century pottery including Antonine Samian" was also recorded.¹⁴

Finally at Ewell, on Stane Street, 17 miles southwest of the City, excavations have shown that "extensive occupation occurred during the Flavian period and continued to the end of the Antonine". Little has been noted of 3rd century date, but a 4th century building and pits have been found.¹⁵

From the evidence so far available it would seem that most of the roadside communities were established by the beginning of the 2nd century. It is also reasonably certain that the two known local potteries (Brockley Hill and Highgate Wood)—ceased production before the end of the 2nd century; that the Brentford buildings had declined and the Staines building burnt down by c. A.D. 200; and that signs of life within the settlements during the first half of

the 3rd century are limited. Yet activity is apparent in most again from the later 3rd century onwards.

The lack of features in the settlements assignable by pottery or coins to the first half of the 3rd century is perhaps significant. As in Southwark it can be taken as indicative of limited activity. The impression that the settlements temporarily declined is strengthened by the chronological gap between 2nd century buildings and 4th century soils observed in the stratigraphy both at Brentford and in the City's suburb.

The Farmsteads

A number of sites often identified as "farmsteads," and usually represented by pits and ditches have been investigated in recent years. Their status is uncertain, and they may be outliers of unidentified "villages" or form part of villa estates. Published examples in West Kent include those at Farningham, (south of the Watling Street) Bromley Common, Hayes, West Wickham and Downe near to the Lewes road.¹⁶ In none of them, the excavator concludes, does the associated pottery date to later than A.D. 140.

A similar site was found near Byfleet, Surrey in 1936 with pottery then thought of as "c. A.D. 50-110" but which would now probably be dated to c. A.D. 130-160.¹⁷ Further to the west excavations on the M25 motorway near Staines have revealed further examples: pits and ditches at Egham contained pottery of c. A.D. 60-150 while features associated with an enclosure at Thorpe produced similarly dated material.¹⁸ At the former site, late 3rd and 4th century pottery was found in the top filling of the main ditch.

Precise information is lacking, probably because the central parts of these sites have not been excavated, but evidence from the "farmsteads" is not dissimilar to that from the roadside settlements and both agree with the findings from Londinium's suburb. What of the position in the major towns themselves?

The Towns

The later years of the 2nd century saw a pro-

7. A. E. Brown and H. L. Sheldon, "Highgate Wood: the pottery and its production" *ibid.* 2 no. 4 (1974) 222-231.
8. I. Anthony, "Excavations in Verulam Hills Field 1963-64" *Hertfordshire Archaeol.* 1 (1968) 1-50.
9. R. Canham, "Excavations at Brentford" *London Archaeol.* 1 no. 13 (1972) 291-295. Post-excavation work has shown that one pit could on the evidence of a coin, date to the early decades of the 3rd century.
10. Information from Alison Laws, London Museum and West London Field Group excavations.
11. M. Rendell, "Roman Staines" *London Archaeol.* 1 no. 7 (1970) 161-162.
12. Information from Kevin Crouch, LAMAS excavation Staines.
13. N. Farrant "The Romano-British Settlement at Putney" *London Archaeol.* 1 no. 16 (1972) 368-371.
14. K. Whitehouse, "A section across Fulham Palace Moat" *ibid.* 2 no. 6 (1974).
15. F. Pemberton, "Prehistoric and Romano-British settlement in Ewell" *ibid.* 2 no. 4 (1973) 84-86.
16. B. Philp, *Excavations in West Kent 1960-1970* (1973)
17. W. Lowther, "Romano-British occupation site near Byfleet" *Surrey Archaeol. Colls.* 46 (1938) 131-136. A Hadrianic/early Antonine date for fig. 2 no. 6 the black burnished jar, seems possible.
18. Information from Bernard Johnson, Surrey motorway excavations.

gramme of public works in Londinium. A second waterfront was built c. A.D. 175-200 perhaps related to, but more likely preceding, the construction of the town defences.¹⁹ Coin finds seem securely to place the bank and walls between c. A.D. 190 and 220.²⁰ But whether these constructions were complemented by much private building or by trading and industrial activity remains in doubt. Some sort of break in the settlement could be inferred from the coins found in the Walbrook Valley where the succession terminates with issues of A.D. 154-155.²¹ Stratification probably similar to that found in Southwark was recorded north of Cheapside where buildings dating to c. A.D. 75-180 "were succeeded by several feet of sterile soil through which were dug . . . medieval pits."²²

Some sort of decline might be inferred from the "Governor's Palace"—presumably one of the more important buildings.²³ It was seen here "that at the end of the 3rd century when the building was in a dilapidated condition, squatters had taken up residence and had burnt fires on a roughly constructed tile hearth."

Fuller publication of post-war excavations may well help to clarify the extent of the activity within the City during the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries. Of the more recent work that at the Custom House showed that one "late 2nd/early 3rd century layer" accumulated in front of the waterfront succeeded by a sterile band and then 4th century deposits.²⁴ Much of the later sequence at Aldgate had been destroyed by cellars, except for that part of the site thought to be under the defensive bank. Nothing survived later than the Antonine period except for one pit of c. A.D. 200 and two of c. A.D. 250.²⁵

Like the City, the two *civitas* capitals nearest to Londinium, Verulamium and Chelmsford, display works of a defensive nature constructed in the later 2nd century. At the former the Fosse earthwork rampart is thought to have been built c. A.D. 160 and the town's wall c. A.D. 200.²⁶ Detailed

excavation in the town Verulamium showed that the buildings within Insula XIV were destroyed c. A.D. 155 in a fire which may have devastated some 50 acres of the town.²⁷ Apparently this Insula was left vacant until late in the 3rd century, although interim reports suggest that others were rebuilt soon after the disaster.²⁸

At Chelmsford, the defences consisting of a clay bank fronted by a two-phased ditch system were levelled with a fill containing burnt building debris contemporary with an extensive fire known in other parts of the town c. A.D. 200.²⁹ Immediate reconstruction is not apparent here: indeed it is thought that following the fire "the settlement did not recover for nearly a hundred years."³⁰

Therefore, apart from the defensive structures of A.D. 160-210, some decline in activity could be inferred from the excavations in the three major towns: this seems possible in Verulamium and Londinium from the later 2nd century onwards and probable in Chelmsford from c. A.D. 200.

The Villas

If the information gathered from the towns, the roadside settlements and the farmsteads around London points to limited activity during the later 2nd and—more especially—in the early 3rd century, it is apparently contradicted by that from the villas.

The reports on Lockleys, Park Street, Gadebridge and Latimer in the north-west, Rapsley in the south-west and Darenth in the south-east will be briefly referred to next. All but the first two envisage major constructional phases in the early 3rd century within a context of continuity. Yet is this view more apparent than real?

The Lockleys report suggested that various buildings stood successively on the site throughout the Roman period except for a short break in the middle of the 4th century. This conclusion has been recently challenged and the suggestion made that the timber-framed building of c. A.D. 50-150 was *not* succeeded by a stone-built house until c. A.D. 300.³¹ This, if

19. T. Tatton-Brown, "Excavations at the Custom House Site 1973" *Trans. London and Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 25 (1974) 117-219.
 20. P. R. V. Marsden, "Archaeological finds in the City of London 1966-69." *ibid.* 22 pt. 3 (1970) 1-9.
 21. R. Merrifield, "Coins from the bed of the Walbrook and their significance" *Antiq. J.* 42 pt. 1 (1962) 38-52. The end of the sequence might coincide with the silting up of the stream and not have any other significance.
 22. At Gutter Lane, Cheapside. W. F. Grimes, *The Excavation of Roman and Mediaeval London* (1968)
 23. P. Marsden, "Archaeological finds in the City of London 1966-68" *Trans. London and Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 22 pt. 2 (1969) 1-26.
 24. T. Tatton-Brown *op.cit.* n.19 above.
 25. H. Chapman and T. Johnson, "Excavations at Ald-

gate and Bush Lane House" *Trans. London and Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 24 (1973) 1-73.
 26. S. Frere, "Verulamium—then and now" *Bull. Inst. of Archaeol.* 4 (1964).
 27. S. Frere, *Verulamium Excavations* 1 (1972).
 28. S. Frere *op.cit.* n. 26 above.
 29. "Roman Britain" in *Britannia* 4 (1973) 301.
 30. J. Wachter, *The towns of Roman Britain* (1974) 200. Something similar might have happened at Colchester. There an extensive late 2nd century fire has been examined. At least one site was not redeveloped after the fire and the burnt daub was seen to be "weathered". R. Dunnett, "Excavations in Colchester 1964-68" *Trans. Essex Archaeol. Soc.* 3 pt. 1 (1971).
 31. J. Ward-Perkins, "Lockleys Roman Villa" *Antiq. J.* 18 (1938) 339-376.

correct, means that the site could have been deserted for some 100 years or more.

The second phase villa at Park Street (Period VII), built c. A.D. 150, suffered a "great deal of decay during its later years" involving perhaps desertion and making necessary "wholesale rebuilding" in c. A.D. 300.³² No coins of A.D. 190-260 were found at the villa, and certainly a period of decline, if not disuse, starting c. A.D. 200 could be inferred from the site evidence presented.

The Gadebridge villa also witnessed major alterations in c. A.D. 300 (Period V).³³ It is perhaps possible to suggest slight modifications to the earlier chronology which would put the construction of the first stone buildings (Periods III and IV) back to the middle 2nd rather than into the later 2nd and early 3rd century.³⁴ Certainly the coinage, if a reliable indicator, does not bear witness to much activity at this time: only 2 out of more than 300 closely datable coins were minted between A.D. 180 and 259.

For the dating of the structural phases of Latimer much depends upon interpretation of the pottery.³⁵ It seems possible that the levels associated with Villa 1 (A.D. 150-180) and with the construction of Villa 2 (A.D. 200) could be earlier than allowed, placing both (as Gadebridge) within the 2nd century.³⁶ Pottery associated with the life span of Villa 2 seems absent, excepting perhaps for the vessels found in the make up for a new floor (Villa 2a, A.D. 240-280). As with Park Street and Gadebridge, major construction was evident c. A.D. 300 (Villa 3 A.D. 290-355) and, as with the former, following a period of "decay, abandonment and vandalism."

Two villas south of London also perhaps lay more stress on rebuilding in the early decades of the 3rd century than the evidence allows. At Rapsley, near Guildford, the Period II house was brought to an end by fire c. A.D. 200 and, it is thought, more or less immediately superseded by a new building (Period III).³⁷ The tall indented beaker "deposited under the door to Room 1 of Building 1" therefore assumes significance. If it can be shown to be a type belonging to the middle 3rd century then some gap in construction—and occupation—between Periods II and III can be envisaged.³⁸

At Darenth the stone-built "Bailiffs House" (Period III) is assigned to c. A.D. 200-220.³⁹ Yet late 2nd century dates might be given to the pottery found in the "carbonised deposits" overlying the chalk ramps of the walls; these may be contemporary with the building but certainly cannot precede it.⁴⁰ The succeeding phase of the house involved a major rebuilding in c. A.D. 250 (Period IV). Is it possible that Period III at Darenth ought to be put back into the later 2nd century and that an abandonment occurred afterwards, as seems to have been the case at nearby Lullingstone between c. A.D. 200 and c. A.D. 280?

A closer dating—if it is needed—of these villas' phases may have to await more precise dating of Roman coarse pottery. Currently it seems possible to argue that most major construction took place both before the end of the 2nd century and after c. A.D. 250, but not between these two dates. Certainly the lack of pottery groups and the infrequency of associated coins of the first half of the 3rd century in the villas might indicate material poverty and even discontinuity of occupation. If so, then they show

32. H. O'Neill, "Excavations at Park Street" *Archaeol. J.* 102 (1945).

33. D. Neal, *The Roman Villa in Gadebridge Park* (1974).

34. For if the middle 2nd century pottery from ditch 2 relates—as suggested to the life of Buildings B and C (Period IV); and if B and C are additions to Building A (Period III) then the first stone buildings (periods III and IV) need to be placed back to at least that date, despite some sherds from ditch 1. The published Samian also seems to indicate Antonine usage of the Period III and IV buildings.

35. K. Brannigan, *Latimer* (1971).

36. Many of the vessels from Latimer "Villa phase I" can be paralleled with material dated prior to A.D. 160 at Verulamium. For instance fig. 27, 50, the key piece for phase I (Frere *op. cit.* n.27 above, 929) dated A.D. 150-160. Figs. 27, 69 and 76 are common in the early 2nd century. (Frere 607-612: A.D. 130-150). Pie-dishes such as Figs. 27, 72 and 78 are similar to examples in the A.D. 155 fire deposits (e.g. Frere, 954 and 991).

37. R. Hanworth, "The Roman Villa at Rapsley, Ewhurst" *Surrey Archaeol. Colls.* 65 (1968) 1-70.

38. Exact parallels for this form are difficult; it seems to have had a long life. For instance, a ditch associated with the Antonine kilns at Colchester contained one example (M. R. Hull, *Roman Potters' Kilns of Colchester* (1963) fig. 75, 11) and vessels of Colchester form 409-10 are assigned to the 4th century.

39. B. Philp *op.cit.* n.16 above, "The Roman Villa at Darenth."

40. The mortarium (Philp *op.cit.*) n.16 above fig. 43, 353) and the cooking pots (fig. 43, 354 and 356) are similar to material from the Antonine kilns at Colchester. Mortaria of Colchester form 498/499 are common *Roman Potters' Kilns of Colchester*, fig. 67) and the cooking pots are paralleled by those from kiln 15 (fig. 76, 5-6). Originally these kilns were dated A.D. 175-210 (*op.cit.*, 176-8), however, due to the reassessment of the evidence from the Northern Frontier, and subsequent redating of the occupation (*Britannia* 3 (1972) 1-55) this probably requires modification. The stamped mortaria from these kilns can now be assigned to the period A.D. 140-200 (CBA Report 10, fig. 7-8), and it is possible that the pottery mentioned above also falls into this period.

the same signs of inactivity as are evident in some at least of the other settlements.

Other Indicators

Pottery itself seems likely to be an important indicator of economic health. Indeed the appearance c. A.D. 270 of the "mass produced" vessels from the Oxfordshire and New Forest kilns has been seen as "allied to a new prosperity evident in the town and country in southern Britain."⁴¹ If this expansion of the potteries heralded revival then the converse may well be true. It is interesting that some 100 years previously the potters at Brockley Hill, Highgate and possibly Verulamium seem to have stopped production while at the same time the Southwark suburb was showing signs of contraction. A collapse in consumer demand might also be inferred from the observations that by the end of the 2nd century "the importance of Samian had declined" while "in the early 3rd century imports of any kind of pottery appear limited to a trickle."

If the amount of pottery indicates the relative level of economic activity so might the number of coins in circulation. Reeces' analysis of over 75,000 coins from 14 sites and collections showed that issues of A.D. 161-238 averaged only between 0.9% and 4.4% of the total coinage although the period represents in length some 20% of the Roman occupation.⁴² The proportions of coins found at Gadebridge and Old Ford fit well with these figures: in both only 1% of the total could be assigned to A.D. 161-238.⁴³

The Causes

Assuming this period was one of decline what were the causes? Certainly the years c. A.D. 150-210 saw intensive military activity in the northern part of the Province. Frere chronicles the troubles which lasted from the Brigantian rising in the 150's to the rebellion which followed Governor Albinus' imperial adventure in A.D. 196-197.⁴⁴ This episode in turn necessitated a lengthy period of campaigning, restoration and administrative re-organisation in Britain which was undertaken by Severus and his successors in the early 3rd century. A breakdown in security during the later 2nd century might be inferred from the coin hoards, which seem to increase significantly despite the small amount of currency found on settlement sites.⁴⁵ An analysis

of more than 650 closely datable coin hoards found in Britain show that 42 contain a latest coin of A.D. 161-180 (Table 1.). The proportion buried per year

Coin Hoards Found

Table 1 Date of latest coin A.D.	No. of years total	No. of hoards total	Hoards per year average
41-402	361	680	1.9
41- 69	28	14	0.5
69- 96	27	15	0.6
96-117	21	11	0.5
117-138	21	13	0.6
138-161	23	19	0.8
161-180	19	42	2.2
180-192	12	14	1.2
138-192*	—	14	—
192-217	25	24	1.0
217-238	21	16	0.8
238-259	21	17	0.8
259-275	16	116	7.2
275-402	127	365	2.9
	361	680	

*Closer date uncertain

during this period is greater than at any time before A.D. 259. Despite the seeming decline in circulated coins in the later 2nd and early 3rd, the number of hoards remains high: 110 of the 680 (16%) could have been deposited between A.D. 161 and 238.

The late 2nd century earthwork defences put up around many of the towns and the stone walls of Londinium and Verulamium, presumably reflect fear that insurrection could spread throughout the Province. Revolt from the west might be inferred from the fire which devastated part of Verulamium in c. A.D. 155-160, Wroxeter and Worcester in c. A.D. 160-175.⁴⁶ The disorders which followed the departure of Albinus' army in A.D. 196 might be seen in the fires at Chelmsford, and Colchester⁴⁷ as well as the burnings of several other Essex sites including Rivenhall, Kelvedon, Billericay, Wickford and Canvey Island in the closing years of the 2nd century.⁴⁸ The desertion of Lullingstone c. A.D. 200 might also be associated with this for "marble portrait busts having been left to their fate suggests an urgent abandonment. The evidence for this is everywhere abundant."⁴⁹

Frere has suggested that the hoarding from c. A.D. 160 onwards especially in Kent, East Anglia and on the south coast might have been in response

41. This and the following quotations are taken from M. Fulford, "The distribution and making of New Forest pottery" *Britannia* 4 (1973) 160-178.
 42. See table IIIB in R. Reece, "Roman coinage in Britain and the Western Empire" *ibid.*, 227.
 43. Reports by M. Hammerson on the coins from Lefevre Road (*op.cit.* n.2 above) and Parnell Road and Appian Road, (*Trans. London and Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 23 pt. 2 (1972) 101-147) and P. Curnow's report on Gadebridge in *op.cit.* n.33 above.
 44. S. Frere, *Britannia* (1967) especially ch. 8 and 9.

45. The information and the table are based on the researches of M. Hammerson.
 46. The dates for these fires are taken from S. Frere *op.cit.* n.44 above, 162, and D. Atkinson, *Wroxeter* (1942).
 47. R. Dunnett *op.cit.* n.30 above.
 48. Information from Warwick Rodwell. Also W. & K. Rodwell, "The Roman Villa at Rivenhall, Essex" *Britannia* 4 (1973) 123.
 49. G. Meates, *Lullingstone Roman Villa, Kent*, MPBW guide (1969).

to the raids of Saxon pirates.⁵⁰ The Essex fires of c. A.D. 200 might also have resulted from Saxon incursions perhaps taking advantage of the absence abroad of the Provincial army. Indeed is it possible that security in the south-east did not return until the coastal forts were built in the earlier part of the 3rd century?

Another cause of the decline could have been recurrent outbreaks of the "Plague of Galen" which affected western Europe between c. A.D. 160 and 190.⁵¹ However, realistic estimates of its effects are difficult to make and there is no proof that it reached Britain. It has been offered as an explanation for the number of late 2nd century infant burials uncovered within the temple precincts at Springhead.⁵² If the Plague was a serious factor then the consequent population decrease could adversely affect economic activity both by cutting general demand as well as by reducing manpower and raising labour costs.

Economic activity might be further reduced as a consequence of taxation imposed by a central administration that seems to have been often oppressive and to have become increasingly weak. The cost of the army within Britain in the later 2nd century must have been large, especially as under Commodus (A.D. 180-192), Severus (A.D. 193-211) and Caracalla (A.D. 211-217) soldiers' pay was considerably raised.⁵³ Severus, it is thought, confiscated

estates belonging to Albinus' supporters and used compulsory labour or service to meet expenses.⁵⁴ His death-bed advice to "pay the soldiers and to hell with the rest" indicates both government problems and priorities.⁵⁵ Under him taxation doubled while Caracalla's granting of Roman citizenship to free provincials has been seen as "a desperate effort to increase the revenues of the Roman Imperial accounts."⁵⁶

Conclusion

If this interpretation of the findings from the London area is correct then the later 2nd and especially the early 3rd century was a period of decline, seen by much reduced activity within the various settlements. Limited trade and industry would be reflected in the lack of pottery and in the smaller amount of currency in circulation and — apart from the town defences—in the general absence of new buildings, ditches, pits and other features which can be assigned to the period after c. A.D. 200.

Acknowledgements

Much help was given by Joanna Bird, who drew the map, Mike Hammerson, who provided the coin hoard information, and Paul Tyers, who assisted in the interpretation of the pottery dating. Other Southwark colleagues suggested improvements: any errors in fact and interpretation are mine.

cause of the final decline of the towns (*op.cit.* n.30 above, 414-422).

50. S. Frere *op.cit.* n.44 above, 184.

51. J. Gilliam, "The Plague under Marcus Aurelius" *American J. of Philology* 82 pt. 3 (1961) 222-251.

52. W. Penn, "Possible evidence from Springhead for the great Plague of A.D. 166." *Archaeologia Cantiana* 82 (1967) 263-271. 5th century plagues have recently been given prominence by Wachter as a

53. M. Grant, *The World of Rome* (1960) 34.

54. D. Dudley, *The Civilisation of Rome* (1960) 207.

55. *Ibid.*, 208, as paraphrased by Dudley.

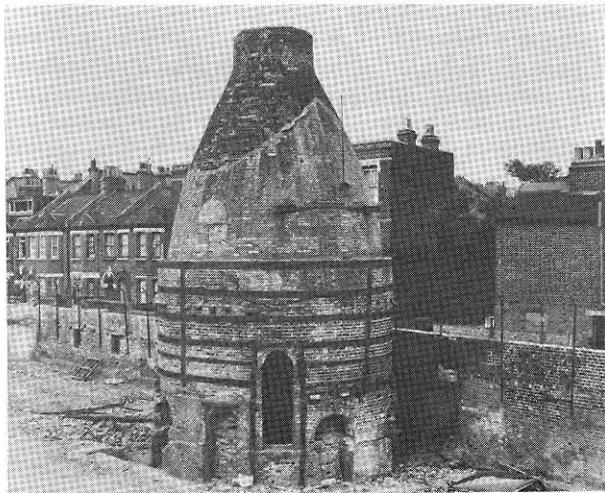
56. J. Balsdon, *Rome: the story of an Empire* (1970) 154: "on the death of a Roman citizen 5 per cent death duties were charged on his estate."

Fulham Kiln is revealed

THE FULHAM Pottery, scene of archaeological activity for the last four years, now presents a different face to the visitor. The range of 19th century buildings on the east side of the yard has been demolished, exposing the bottle kiln (erected around 1843) as a free standing structure. This kiln, which is a listed building, is one of only two surviving bottle kilns in London, the other being in Kensington.

The future of the Fulham kiln is, fortunately, assured. It is intended to create a site museum in the kiln which will display a relevant selection of finds from the site, together with pieces collected by the present owners, The Fulham Pottery & Cheavin Filter Co. Ltd.

The company is continuing its business at the site, and, despite the inconvenience to them of having trenches across the yard is still allowing excavations by the Archaeological Section of the Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society.



(Photo: John Earp)