

## Letters to the Editor

### The Crofton Roman Villa and the Cray Valley

May I refer to the article by Kerry Boyce (*LA* 12, no. 9), centred on the Crofton Villa at Orpington. As director of the complete excavation of the villa in 1988 and the manager of it for the past 22 years, I was surprised by its conclusions. It would also have been helpful to admit that the villa was fully published in 1993.<sup>1</sup> Briefly:

1. The 2 km zone shown around the villa as its estate is grossly excessive at about 2000 acres. The plentiful models in the adjacent Darent Valley indicates about 500 acres of arable, woodland and pasture as more typical.
2. The principal factor here is the major Roman road, crossing the Cray Valley,

### Kerry Boyce replies:

My thanks go to Brian Philp for taking the time to comment on my article (*LA* 12.9). I will reply to his comments in their original order, but first I must apologise for not having referenced his publication (and earlier reports by others) on the Crofton Villa.

Brian correctly maintains that the Crofton 2km zone is excessive. I had indicated that the 2km zone was merely a starting point, subsequently refined, and used the words 'Potential area of the estate' in the caption for Fig. 2. Additional information on this subject, due for publication in this edition of *LA*, ran thus: '... after refinement, using ancient roads and other data, we honed the estate down to c. 300 ha, with the villa lying on the southern boundary of the estate – the probable West Wickham/Croydon road'. The eastern estate boundary may be represented by a route surviving as ancient roads and paths running northwards, east of The Priory, and joining Chelsfield Road after passing the Roman cemetery at Northfield Avenue.

### Chiswick House

The item in Mosaic in the Summer issue (12 no. 9) dealing with the restoration of Chiswick House Gardens describes Chiswick House itself as 'the first and one of the finest examples of neo-Palladian design in England'. This

discovered by my Unit at Fordcroft in 1988 and fully published in 1993.<sup>2</sup> This linked *Noviomagus* (West Wickham) to the west and *Vagniacae* (Springhead) to the east, both listed in the II Antonine Itinerary, and fully discussed in 2000.<sup>3</sup> 3. The crossing-point of this road with the River Cray provided the focus for the scattered Roman sites around Fordcroft. Hence, the Fordcroft area is itself a focus with its own limited hinterland. The known sites in the immediate area reflect this major road. This changes the suggested model. 4. No hollow-way exists along Poverest Road. The low mound on its south side is in fact the actual agger of the Roman road, upon which the Victorian houses were built, as explained in the

The iter II vicinal route: such a route would surely attract settlement to it. However, the trajectory of the Fordcroft 'road' veers away from the Kent Rd/Chelsfield Road settlements, and crosses the Cray at *The Rookery*. The situation can only be reconciled if the road had a very short life, or the area had 'died'. Given the evidence, both are possible, and by implication, 3rd-century Fordcroft becomes a transient mansio. If the road exists, its construction belongs to the troubled times of Severus and Caracalla, during which the itineraries were seemingly compiled.

I have suggested (above) a West Wickham/Crofton road, which may be extended by following the eastern estate boundary that connects with Chelsfield Road. Following parish boundaries and ancient paths eastwards, the route becomes an important Cray/Darent link, passing Roman sites at Cockmannings, Lone Barn and Hulberry, before descending to the Darent via Lullingstone villa (ancient Footpath 203) – onward then to Springhead *via*

published report. As elsewhere in Kent, the Saxon cemetery flanked the road as did the Saxon hut to the east.<sup>4</sup>

5. The cobbling together of disparate scattered discoveries in the Cray Valley, often poorly dated and not necessarily representative, is unlikely to produce a meaningful chronology for some decades to come.

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1. B. Philp *The Roman Villa Site at Orpington, Kent* (1993) Kent Monograph Series 7.

2. B. Philp and P. Keller *The Roman Site at Fordcroft, Orpington* (1995) Kent Special Subject Series 8.

3. B. Philp *Kent Archaeol Rev* 141 (2000) 2.

4. A. Hart *Arch Cantiana* 101 (1984) 187.

the Darent Valley? This vicinal route would have been invaluable to a regional procurator, and takes in a primary site in the Cray and important sites in the Darent. Undoubtedly the road is the focus for settlement, and it may be significant that the metalling at Fordcroft and Wellington Road feeds neatly into this route.

Re the hollow way at Fordcroft: I base my comments on childhood memories of Poverest Road. Due to modern ground-works the 'hollow' is difficult to distinguish today on the Fordcroft (southern) side, but the northern embankment, once heavily revetted, is still visible.

### Corrigenda to the article

In Fig. 2 Goddington appears 400 m inside the 2km zone, when in fact it is located to the east, just outside the zone. Footnote 17 should refer back to fn 13, not fn 12. Fn 21 has been truncated, and should end with the reference: S. Tyler 'Anglo-Saxon Settlement in the Darent Valley and Environs' *Arch Cant* 110 (1992) 71–81.

Greenwich, and the Banqueting House, Whitehall – astonishing innovations in their time, which, far more than Chiswick House, constituted a totally new direction for English architecture.

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