

Weycock Hill, 1953.

By M. AYLWIN COTTON, F.S.A.

WEYCOCK Hill Field, Church Farm, is the best known Roman site in the Parish of Waltham St. Lawrence,¹ although it is many years since it was last excavated. In 1953, Messrs. J. W. Talbot and H. Rose, interested in increasing the information about the earlier history of the Parish, proposed that exploration of the area should be renewed. Permission to excavate was granted readily by the owners, Messrs. A. W. and S. Philp, of Church Farm, and all concerned are grateful to them for these facilities and for their interest and co-operation. A party of some twenty part-time volunteers, recruited almost entirely from residents in the Parish, most of whom were undertaking archaeological field work for the first time, worked on the site for two and a half weeks in August and during the last week of October, 1953. My thanks are due to them for their hard work and interest and for the fact that they made it possible to produce these further notes on the Roman occupation of this area. We were grateful also for the interest shown in this first effort by representatives of the Berkshire Archaeological Society and the Reading Museum. Our thanks are due also to S. K. Jopp, Esq., who has given this area specialised attention from the air and who has permitted the publication here for the first time of one of his air photographs of the site. We are also indebted to George C. Boon, Esq., for the report on the Roman coins.

The areas on Weycock Hill and in its vicinity in which early occupation may exist are large. With limited labour, and a short working season due to the necessity of digging at suitable times between the harvesting of grain and root crops and the reploughing of the land, only a small exploration could be undertaken. Whilst the results obtained were modest in extent, they may perhaps serve as a peg on which to hang a resumé of the known archaeology of the site with a fresh interpretation of its significance. A summary of the conclusions reached is set out on p. 59.

THE OCTAGONAL BUILDING ON WEYCOCK HILL

That there existed on the top of Weycock Hill the ruins of a building, presumed to be Roman, was recorded by leading antiquaries from the early seventeenth century onwards. Camden² stated that "not far off [from Sonning] stands Laurence Waltham, where the foundations of an old fort are to be seen, and Roman coins are often dug up".

¹ Nat. Grid Ref. 41/823778.

² *Britannia* I (Gough's ed. of 1789), 151.

Hearne, a native of White Waltham, wrote in 1710,¹ "Weycock was without doubt such a [Roman] work . . . there having been, as there are now continually, great numbers of coyns ploughed up by the husbandmen to confirm it: and 'twas from this evidence that Mr. Camden has said that 'twas a Roman fort". Later he wrote,² "April 1, 1719. From Harehatch I walk'd to Shottesbrooke, and passed through a great field (in the parish of Laurence Waltham) called Weycock. There is a tradition, that there was a large castle there. Indeed there is no manner of doubt but in this field there was once a very considerable fort, and several buildings besides. The ground called Castle Acre is higher than the rest. Abundance of Roman money hath been found in this field of Weycock. I discovered in many places of it fragments of Roman bricks. I met with two or three workmen, with whom I talked about this field, particularly about the coyns found in it. There was a youth with them, who told me that a great many pieces of money had been ploughed up in this field, and a great many pretty things (says he) besides. I asked him where any of them might be seen; he said at Mr. Neville's of Billingbeare. I am apt to think that some of the pretty things might be *tessellae* of some Roman pavement".

Again Hearne wrote,³ "Leaving Shottesbrooke, about half a mile on this side you stopped at a village called Laurence Waltham, that formerly belonged to the Abbey of Hurley. Here you told me you were shew'd sevrall coyns of the Lower Emperors, found in an adjacent field, which you took the more notice of, because Mr. Camden tells us that in that field was a Roman Fort as he gathr'd from the coyns frequently found by the husbandmen. I have been shew'd divers of these coyns, and I was once of the opinion that 'twas built about the time of Constantius the Younger, but I have since changed that opinion, and I now believe 'twas founded many years before. I have, amongst other coyns, seen one that was dug up here of Claudius Gothicus . . . This Roman castle was in a flourishing condition after the years CCLXX, and perhaps it might continue so till very near the invasion of the Saxons. 'Tis not unlikely but that it had a great dependence upon Silchester in Hampshire, which is at no great distance from it and had a very considerable command over this part of the island, being a very large place, etc. But omitting this, which is nothing more than conjecture, 'tis certain, from the vast number of old bricks and other ruins, that this fort in the parish of Laurence Waltham was of considerable extent, and of no small strength. The field in which it stood is now called Weycock, which though in the first draught of this letter [in 1708] I thought to be nothing but a corruption of the

¹ *Itinerary of John Leland* (1506-52) I, Preface, x and xii (1710).

² *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle*, Glossary appended to Vol. II, 519.

³ *Letter on Antiquities between Windsor and Oxford*. Published first in the *Memoirs for the Curious* for November, 1708, and January, 1709; also separately in 1735. Appended to Vol. V of his 1769 ed. of *Leland's Itinerary*, p. 154.

Saxon word Wig-stow, i.e. a place of incamping, or a fort, yet I have since that time altered my opinion, as I have noted in my Preface to the first volume of Mr. Leland's *Itinerary*".

Stukeley¹ mentions that "Near Reading is Laurence Waltham, which has been Roman: there is a field called Castlefield, and a vast number of coins found".

Ashmole² says of the site, "There seems to have been a considerable Fort, if any Judgement can be formed from the vast number of Bricks and Ruins discovered here. It stood in a Field called *Weycock*, i.e. the *High Road*, and it is at least coeval with *Claudius Gothicus*, in 270". The information of 1790³ adds no new facts. In 1806 the Lysons brothers gave it but a passing reference.⁴

This, therefore, was the extent of the data until the discoveries made in 1837 of a cemetery and wells on the site of the Great Western Railway Cutting (see below, p. 55). At this point, the Rev. Edwin Parker, Vicar of Waltham St. Lawrence from 1834-73, took an interest in the site and collected surface finds. Weycock Hill is in that portion of the Hundred of Wargrave which was granted by Edward VI to Sir Henry Neville, from whom it descended with the Billingbear estates to Lord Braybrooke. In 1847 the Hon. Richard Neville undertook the first excavations in the area.⁵ He felt assured that there must be interesting remains *in statu quo*, and started to dig there in May and June of that year. He seems to have experienced no difficulty then in locating the site of the ruined "fort", which he described as half a mile north-west of Waltham St. Lawrence Church. Employing two labourers, in a month he completely cleared a ruined building which consisted of double concentric octagonal walls. These were found 10" below the surface, were 8' in depth, 3' 6" thick, and 10' 4" apart. The overall measurement of the inner octagon was 35' 11" and the outer 63' 7". The walls were built of mortared flints with a two-course ironstone bonding. The finds consisted of two or three Constantinian coins, a very few fragments of pottery, and pieces of tile and flanged brick. Neville interpreted the structure as a temple. According to the Rev. Edwin Parker, the walls were broken up as far as possible before the site was filled in. A break on the north side might, he thought, have been the entrance.

In the description of the site in the *Victoria County History*⁶ support for the temple theory was given on the analogy of the

¹ *Itin. Cur.* (1776), 62.

² *History and Antiquities of Berkshire* (1736), 187.

³ *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannia IV* (1790), 135.

⁴ *Magna Britannia I* (1806), 199.

⁵ *Arch. Journ.* VI (1849), 114-123.

⁶ *V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 216-7.

sixteen-sided structures found at Silchester, and earlier suggestions that it was an octagonal tower like the Pharos at Dover, or the *Turris Magna* at Nîmes, were discounted. The site has also been mentioned by Peake¹ and Underhill.²

In the course of the last hundred years the exact location of the building on Weycock Hill has been lost. It was rediscovered recently by air photography by Mr. Stewart Keith Jopp (Pl. Ia).³ Unfortunately, this fact was not known to the excavators until after the close of the season, and limited exploration had then been undertaken in an attempt to locate it. In Pl. Ia, taken in 1952, the two octagonal walls show clearly, and, on two opposite sides, double parallel walls perhaps of a temenos appear to show, but no definite evidence of any entrances. Pl. 1b, taken in 1954,⁴ shows the situation of the building in relation to the railway line to its south and the two main trackways dividing the four crop areas. The building is situated just below the crest of Weycock Hill, on its southern slope, and west of the north-south trackway.

In the 1953 excavations, the Weycock rise was designated Site A. As, in August, it was under root crops, only the trackway was available for exploration. Some eleven "sondages" were made in it. The northern slope and the crest produced no evidence of occupation, but to the east of the site of the building there was found a flint cobbling over occupation soil. The natural subsoil here is a sandy loam. Over this was a light sandy soil which contained traces of occupation. The only finds were a few sherds of pottery (a two-strap handle of a white ware flagon, the rim fragment of a flanged dish and a scrap of Samian ware), pieces of red clay roof tiles and a number of flints. The pottery scraps were too small and few to hazard a suggestion as to their date, but the occurrence of the flanged rim dish is not inconsistent with a third or fourth century date. In a limited area there was found on this level a cobbling of large flints with an uneven edge which had no definite shape. At the eastern side of the trackway the flints were replaced by loosely laid ironstones into which four round posts had been inserted (Pl. III). Only disturbed soil and plough soil covered this level. As it could not be related to the building, it cannot be assumed that it was a paved area outside it or contemporary with it. It showed no worn surface and bore little resemblance to Roman road metalling. The impression gained was that it might perhaps represent a spread of material from the earlier excavations, especially

¹ *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 96-7 and 240.

² *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XXXVI (1932), 34.

³ My thanks and acknowledgments are due to Mr. Jopp for his help and for permission to reproduce one of his series of air photographs.

⁴ Kindly supplied by Dr. J. K. St. Joseph. Cf. also *J.R.S.* XLV (1955), 89, which stated that no traces were to be seen of any adjacent settlement. O.S. 25", Berks. Sheets XXX, 7 and 8, Pl. II.

in that the ironstones had been separated from the flints and were thrown down so loosely that no flat laid surface as in a deliberately paved area was found. Neither the flint cobbling nor the disturbed soil over it produced any Roman pottery, and further excavation would be needed before it can be proved that this cobbling is related to the building. Its situation to the east of it does, however, need to be borne in mind in view of a possible eastern entrance (see below, p. 53).

When, in November, the field in which the building is situated was being ploughed, the area to the west of the cobbling was tested by probing with a crowbar. At the point marked (X of Site A, Pl. II), a well-mortared and plaster-faced flint wall was found. There was only time, before being overtaken by the tractor, to uncover some two square feet of its top and one face and to record its position. It is not possible to say whether it was a temenos wall or the octagonal building itself, but its proximity to the trackway suggests the former as the more probable.

The date of the building must still remain an open question. Neville appears to have "dug it out" fairly completely and may in so doing have destroyed the wall-trench and contemporary levels. But he makes no mention of any temenos, and, although the area covered by his excavation is unknown, if one exists it may still be intact. If so, the discovery of a possible enclosure, as suggested by Mr. Jopp's photograph, affords new hope that the structure could be dated by excavation. Neville's finds were scanty, and, being unrelated to stratification, offer only slender evidence. His pottery does not appear to be still available, and the Constantinian coins mentioned cannot be used to indicate an initial building date. As will be seen (p. 44) the area appears to have an early as well as a fourth century occupation. However, these coins, the very slight evidence from our Site A, together with the cogent arguments set forth by Raleigh Radford on temples of this form (see pp. 53-5) tend to support a later rather than an earlier Roman date for the building.

All that can be said of the limited exploration in this area during 1953 is that, aided by air photography, the approximate position of the building has been recovered and the possibility that it has a temenos has been raised, but all else is still uncertain. It is, however, now possible to consider more fully the purpose of the structure in the light of recent discoveries elsewhere.

The distinctive feature of the Weycock Hill building is its octagonal form, one which occurs fairly frequently in Roman temples. Round and polygonal temples have been studied by Koethe,¹ and in his list of octagonal examples only two are mentioned in this country, that at Weycock and one at *Venta Silurum*,

¹ "Die Keltischen Rund- und Vielecktempel der Kaiserzeit". *23rd Bericht der Rom.-Germ. Kommission* (Bonn, 1933), 10-108.

Caerwent, Monmouthshire.¹ To these there may now be added the site recently excavated at Pagans Hill in Somerset,² where there existed the foundations of an octagonal building of unusually massive structure. Rahtz dated it as probably late third or early fourth century A.D. and found other structures in its vicinity. He writes:³ "The concentric plan of the building is the only direct evidence of its having been a temple. Supporting this conclusion are its hill-top position, and its eastern entrance, the latter usual in temples of this type".

The whole question of these octagonal buildings has been ably discussed by Raleigh Radford.⁴ He quotes the Weycock Hill structure as closely comparable with Pagans Hill in its hill-top position and rural surroundings and in the complexity of its layout. The foundations were on an even more massive scale. He saw no reason to dissent from the excavator's interpretation of it as a temple, and, quoting the four Constantinian coins found, noted that although the coin series from the site starts with Nero, the published list is predominantly of the later Roman period.

In one respect the Weycock octagon differs materially from Pagans Hill in that the latter has two buttresses on each of the eight sides of its outer wall externally. Of these buildings, Raleigh Radford writes:

"The very massive foundations of both these buildings and the external buttresses at Pagans Hill preclude a restoration on the normal Romano-Celtic plan, with a central *cella*, surrounded by a verandah. They imply a centrally-planned building with piers or columns linked by arches separating a central area from the surrounding ambulatory, a type adopted and elaborated by the Christian church . . . The thick foundations and heavy buttresses would have been strong enough to carry a vault over the ambulatory, and a central dome. This solution cannot be excluded, though open timber roofs would be more likely on a remote site.⁵ If the building were vaulted it brings the temple into close relationship with the centrally planned early Christian churches. The Lateran Baptistery at Rome,⁶ built by Pope Sixtus III (432-40), may serve

¹ Hudd, *Arch. LXIV* (1913), 447-452. Only partially excavated. For Koethe, *op. cit.*, cf. No. 19, p. 72 for Weycock and No. 38, pp. 89 ff. for Caerwent.

² Philip Rahtz, "The Roman Temple at Pagan's Hill, Chew Stoke, N. Somerset." *P. Somerset and Nat. Hist. Soc. XCVI* (1951), 112-142. For a suggested reconstruction see Fig. 1, p. 120.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-6.

⁵ The Pagan's Hill building was roofed with hexagonal tiles of Old Red Sandstone from Mendip, cf. Rahtz, *op. cit.*, p. 119. At Weycock, there seemed to be a sufficient number of fragments of baked clay flanged tiles and imbrices to suggest a tiled roof.

⁶ Dehio and von Bezold, *Die kirkliche Baukunst des Abendlandes*, Pl. VII.

as an example. The domed central octagon is carried on eight columns linked by round arches, above which is a range of windows in the clerestory. The ambulatory is covered with a series of barrel vaults and lighted with windows set high in the wall and breaking into the line of the vaults. A simpler structure of this type more on the lines of the tiny baptisteries of Aix or Riex¹ would give a good idea of the original appearance of the temples at Pagans Hill and Weycock Hill.

The temple with a closed outer wall and an internal arcade is not unknown in the earlier Roman period, though examples are rare²

The explanation of the buildings at Pagans Hill and Weycock as 'closed' temples, like that at Lydney, is borne out by their late date. Under the influence of the mystery religions the 'closed' temple was tending to replace the older classical type with an open portico or verandah surrounding the *cella*. The extent to which the substitution was occurring can be gauged from the influence which the newer form had on the architecture of the Christian church".

ROMAN OCCUPATION IN THE VICINITY OF WEYCOCK HILL

1. *The surrounding district*

That there was a fairly continuous line of Roman settlement in the neighbourhood of Weycock Hill is well attested. Roman buildings have been found at Castle Hill, Maidenhead; Feens and Berry Grove, White Waltham; and Canhurst Farm, Knowl Hill. Roman pottery has been recorded from Hurley; Boundary Elms, Littlewick; Ruscombe; Milley Farm and the Churchyard, Waltham St. Lawrence.⁴

2. *The Roman road and the "Camlet Way"*

Weycock Hill has also been known as "Castle Acre" or "Highrood". The name Castle Acre has been associated with the ruins of the octagonal building, and it has been suggested that "Highrood" or "Highroad" related to a tradition that an old road

¹ *Ibid.*, Pl. VIII.

² Examples from Stuttgart and Montmartre, near Avallon in Burgundy, are quoted.

³ Cf. Deichmann, *Frühchristliche Kirchen in Rom*, for a comparison between the "closed" concept of the Christian church and the older classical "open" temples.

⁴ For a map showing these sites in relationship to Weycock Hill temple, cf. Seaby, *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XXXVI (1932), Pl. V, opp. p. 34. For references to these sites, cf. *op. cit.*, and Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931). The pottery from the Churchyard is now in the Treacher Collection, Reading Museum. An air photograph of the Feens Villa is in the possession of Mr. F. M. Underhill.

crossed the area.¹ The Lysons² place Lawrence Waltham as on the line of untraced Roman roads between Spinae and London or from Silchester to Lawrence Waltham. The Rev. Edwin Parker thought that an ancient way passed near Weycock leading probably "from London through Coln Brook, Feens in White Waltham, where Roman remains have been found, and towards Reading by Streatley".³ Notes on the supposed Camlet Way, which is postulated as a Roman road running from Camulodunum (Colchester) to Verulamium (St. Albans) and thence to Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester), suggest that it crosses Weycock field.⁴ The case for a Roman road connecting the settlements above mentioned has been summarised by Underhill,⁵ which suggests that it would cross Weycock Hill in a north-east to south-west direction. It is admitted, however, that there is no certain evidence as yet that there is a road in the vicinity of Weycock Hill.

3. *The cemetery in Weycock field*

In the spring of 1837 when the cutting was being made for the Great Western Railway, in low ground on the east side of Weycock field, upwards of thirty skeletons were found spread over an acre of land. They lay only a few inches below ground surface on undisturbed natural chalk, and were buried in an extended position orientated east and west. The Rev. Edwin Parker collected many of the bones and any finds and observed that the site did not appear to be a war cemetery as there was no indication that the limbs or skulls had been broken. The bones were eventually reburied in the Churchyard. It was also reported that a leaden coffin containing a coin and a brick was found near the skeletons, but this was broken up, and sold for metal before it could be examined, and all traces of the contents were lost.⁶

4. *Wells or rubbish pits in Weycock field*

To the south of the cemetery a line of old wells or rubbish pits was discovered in 1837.⁷ They were regularly steened with flint to a depth of ten feet and were four feet in diameter at the top. According to the Rev. Edwin Parker, no ancient objects were found in them. As the railway cutting passed southwards from the cemetery area finds diminished in frequency.

¹ *Bibliotheca Topographica* IV (1790), 135; Ashmole, *History of Berks.* II, 431; Neville, *Arch. Journ.* VI (1849), 118.

² *Magna Britannia* I (1806), 200-1.

³ *Arch. Journ.* VI (1849), 123.

⁴ *Berks., Bucks. and Oxon. Journ.* 30 (1926), 76-8.

⁵ *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XXXVI (1932), 34-5. Map at Pl. V.

⁶ Neville, *Arch. Journ.* VI (1849), 121; *V.C.H. Berks.* I (1906), 218; Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 97-8 and 240

⁷ Neville, *op. cit.*, 121-2; *V.C.H. Berks.* I (1906), 218.

In November, 1890, three Roman wells were discovered.¹ They were situated in the Waltham cutting of the Great Western Railway. The first well was 113' west of the 27½ mile-post and 3¾ miles from Maidenhead Station. It lay on the south side, 24' from the centre point between the two lines of metals. At this point the level of the rails is 17' below ground surface. It had a diameter of 3' 2" and was excavated to a depth of 53' below the ground surface or 36' below the level of the railway cutting. Finds consisted of bones of domestic animals such as ox, sheep, pig, rabbit and birds, bricks, and both floor and roofing tiles, of which several showed impressions of sandal and dog tracks. A human skeleton was found at 20' from the line of the rails. The second well was 120 yards west of the 28½ mile-post and near Weycock Bridge. Its diameter at the top was 3' 8" and at the bottom 3'. Its depth was 57' to the bottom, or 27' below the surface of the rail-bed. In it were the bones and skull of a horse and two pieces of Samian ware with a quantity of wheel-turned pottery. Other animal bones were of boars, goats and dogs. The third well had been cut in a more compact chalk and looked as though it had been bored as its sides were so true and smooth. Its diameter was 3' 2" and it was explored to a depth of 57' from the ground level or 27' below the rails' surface, and, as in the case of the other two wells, to 2' 6" below water level. It produced an iron key, pieces of glass, a whetstone, and the usual debris of bones, pottery, bricks and tiles.

5. *The hill to the west of Weycock Hill. (Site C of Pl. II)*

When, in August 1953, the exploration of the Weycock Hill site was started, Weycock Hill itself was under root crops and could only be partially explored. It seemed worth while, therefore, to test the rise to the west to determine whether it was crossed by a road. An exploratory trench, seven feet square, was dug on the northern slope of this rise. Here the natural soil was found to consist of a soft light yellow sand. Overlying this, and under the plough soil, there was found an old ground surface of a brownish sandy-loam soil. This level produced one sherd of Neolithic 'B' pottery (Fig. 1, 5), a few flint flakes and a little charcoal. No structures were found and there was no trace of any Roman occupation or of a Roman road. A hollow on the south of this rise at the corner of the field boundary was also tested, but proved to be sterile and no sign of a ditch or pit existed. Whilst this solitary Neolithic sherd may not represent anything more than a stray find, its position on this higher ground does suggest that further exploration of the area might be worth while to determine whether or not a barrow or other structure had existed there.

¹ *Maidenhead and Taplow Field Club Reports* (1890-1), 49-50. Perhaps the material in the Maidenhead Public Library, which includes parts of two human skulls, two long bones, a number of sherds of coarse Roman pottery and a piece of Samian ware, came from these excavations.

6. *The area to the south. (Site B. Pls. II and IV)*

The greater part of the work undertaken in 1953 was the exploration of an area designated Site B (Pl. II). Of the four crop-areas in the vicinity of the octagonal building, only that to the south-west was not planted with root crops that year. In August, therefore, it was decided to explore this south-west area in a series of small trenches sited on a line from the main east-west trackway running southwards to the railway line, in order to search for structures or occupation. As, at this date, the exact position of the octagonal building was unknown, this north-south line of trenches was placed at the eastern edge of the crop-area, a line due south of the highest point of Weycock Hill. A fairly rich Roman occupation level was found first in the vicinity of the corner of the chalk spoil bank from the railway cutting (Pl. II). This level occurred to the south as far as the railway cutting, but petered out to the west of our original line, and it did not extend as far north as the trackway. It did, however, appear to extend eastwards. In order to explore its eastern limit a further week's work was done at the end of October, after the potato crop in the south-eastern area had been harvested. The area covered by the majority of these trial trenches is shown at Site B (Pl. II), the extent of the later occupation layer being stippled. At the point marked X on Site B, a spread of surface flints was noted (designated the "flint area") and here a small area was opened up (Pl. IV). In the short time available, and handicapped by rain which rendered the clay soil unworkable, only sufficient excavation was possible to produce the following very preliminary results.

(a) *The earlier occupation level. (Pl. IV, level 3). Late first to early second century A.D.*

In the "flint area" there was found overlying the natural clay a level of clayey loam of a brown colour which contained occupation material. No associated structures were found. Elsewhere on Site B this level tended to be more sandy to the north, east and west. To the south it had been removed in places where a later occupation level was found. Finds from the earlier level in the "flint area" were a bronze stud (Fig. 1, 2), iron nails, scrap and slag, a rubbing stone and oyster shells. The pottery consisted of a Samian Dr. Form 27 cup (Fig. 2, 1), a sherd of a Dr. Form 18/31 dish and the rim of a straight-sided dish (Fig. 3, 1). Elsewhere in Site B this level produced a Samian sherd, a *terra nigra* platter, a necked bowl and two jar rims (Fig. 3, 2-4), a lid fragment of grey paste with a mica-dust surface and a base fragment of a small mortarium in red ware studded with flint particles. This small amount of material is insufficient evidence on which to base any firm date for this occupation level, but it may be noted that the Samian cup is not an early

form and would be in context in a late first to early second century level. On the present evidence, therefore, there is little to suggest that the site was occupied before the Flavian period. In so far as the unstratified coins from the site are known, only a coin of Nero is listed which is of earlier date.

(b) *The flint and chalk structure. (Pl. IV)*

In the "flint area" traces of a structure were found. These consisted of an irregularly shaped block of mortared flints on a base of chalk blocks which had been set into the earlier occupation level and the natural clay; and a puddled chalk foundation, also set in clay, which may have also carried mortared flints originally. In it there was set part of a quern of pudding-stone. In the small area excavated these foundations made no coherent shape. No associated floor level could be distinguished, but a contemporary occupation level abutted against them. Not only had the flint courses been removed, but the chalk basis itself had been partially destroyed as was shown by the presence of flints and chalk, intermixed with earth, in the destruction level (Pl. IV, level 1a) which overlay the upper occupation level in the "flint area". Whether this level included the destroyed remains also of a chalk floor was undetermined. The dating of this structure is discussed below.

(c) *The later occupation level. (Pl. IV, level 2). c. A.D. 370+*

An occupation level contemporary with the flint and chalk foundations was excavated on their northern side. In the trenches to the south of this structure a comparable level occurred which was rich in finds. In places it filled gullies cut in the natural clay, but no pits were found. Near the corner of the chalk bank upcast from the railway cutting a nineteenth century tiled land drain had been inserted at its base on the top of the clay, there being no trace here of the earlier level. The drain appeared to have been pushed in along the clay surface without any trench having been dug, and only the form and texture of the unmortared tiles indicated its date.

The finds and pottery from this level (Fig. 3, 5-17, and pp. 66-7) show that it may be assigned to a date in the latter part of the fourth century after c. A.D. 370.

(d) *The destruction level over the "flint area". (Pl. IV, level 1a)*

The material from this level (Fig. 1, 1 and 4; Fig. 2, 2 and Fig. 3, 18-21, and pp. 67-8) was consistent with the late fourth century dating of the later occupation level. The finding in the plough soil over this level of a cut-down CONSTANTINOPOLIS

coin, which should be at least of Theodosian date, or perhaps A.D. 380+ (see p. 63) was the only indication of the latest date at which the site had been occupied.

CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained from this preliminary re-examination of the Weycock Hill site are here summarised.

The fact that a sherd of Neolithic "B" pottery and flint flakes were found on Site C, the high ground to the west of Weycock Hill, suggests that an early occupation of the area might perhaps be found by further excavation.

In the area to the south of Weycock Hill's highest point, Site B, evidence was found of an earlier occupation level, with no associated structures, which was in places sealed by a later occupation level. Elsewhere it had been removed by later gullies or was sealed only by plough soil. The material obtained from it was too small in amount to give a precise dating, but there was nothing to suggest a pre-Flavian date, and a date as late as the early second century could not be excluded.

Over a more limited area of Site B a thick occupation level, rich in material, was found, which, on the coins and pottery could be dated to *c.* A.D. 370+. Associated structures were gullies cut into the natural clay and an amorphous flint and chalk structure which appeared to have been destroyed to below floor level. The variety and amount of finds, together with this partially explored structure, suggest that there is a dwelling or other building in the vicinity of late Roman date. The only hint given of the duration of this later occupation was that provided by the cut-down CONSTANTINOPOLIS coin, perhaps of Theodosian date or A.D. 380+, found in the plough soil. The earlier evidence from Weycock Hill of a cemetery and wells or pits is concentrated along the railway cutting at the east end of the field near Weycock Bridge and at a considerable distance from Sites A and B, and suggests the possibility of a settlement of large extent. On the other hand, exploration to the north and south-west of Site A produced little evidence of occupation.

Although the octagonal building of Site A was not excavated, its rediscovery from the air by Mr. Jopp has provided the means for recording its position. Exploration in its vicinity was inadequate for purposes of dating it, but the isolation of a late fourth century level on Site B is of interest in the context of the interpretation now given to these octagonal buildings by Raleigh Radford. He regards them as "closed" temples built under the influence of the mystery religions in the later Roman period and a type which was adapted and elaborated in the octagonal baptisteries of the Early Christian Church.

THE FINDS FROM WEYCOCK HILL

(a) Gold objects

A gold chain was reported as having been ploughed up before 1790. It was sold to a Reading blacksmith. (*Bibliotheca Topographica* IV (1790), 135; *Arch. Journ.* VI (1849), 118; *V.C.H. Berks.* I (1906), 218.

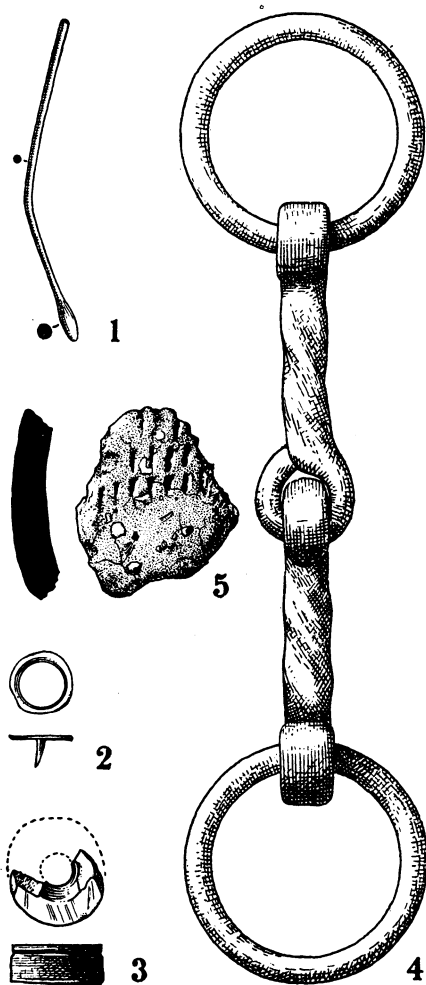


FIG. 1. Miscellaneous small finds. Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$

(b) Bronze objects

Fig. 1, 1. A bronze surgical instrument from the destruction level (level 1a) of Site B. The bulbous end, whilst useful as a probe, may have been also the handle end; that the other end is bent at an angle to the stem may be intentional so that it could be used as a tongue-depressor, although it lacks a flat-bladed terminal (cf. *London Museum Catalogue No. 3* (1930), Pl. XXXVII, 9).

Fig. 1, 2. A small bronze drawing-pin-like stud, with a grooved top surface, from the earlier occupation (level 3) of Site B.

Other bronze finds were a brooch pin from a brooch of undeterminable form, found in the plough soil, and part of the hinge of a brooch and a bronze fragment from the same level as the surgical instrument. A small hollow bronze female head, perhaps a steelyard weight, was ploughed up at an unknown date. (*Arch. Journ.* VI (1849), 121, with woodcut; *V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 218 and sketch. Now in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge).

(c) Bone objects

Fig. 1, 3. A worked bone ring, decorated with two grooves. From the later occupation level to the south of the "flint area" of Site B.

(d) Iron objects

Fig. 1, 4. An iron two-link horse-bit from the destruction level (level 1a) of Site B. The shafts of the links are twisted.

Apart from nails and staples, the only other iron object worthy of mention consisted of very corroded pieces of a curved iron band, perhaps part of a wheel tyre, from the later occupation level to the south of the "flint area" of Site B. Iron slag occurred in most levels, but was especially plentiful in the destruction level over the "flint area" of Site B.

(e) Worked flints

The sandy loam level of Site C produced a worked flint flake, and another, together with two "pot-boilers", came from the plough soil of this site.

(f) Miscellaneous finds

A fragment of lead occurred in the fourth century occupation level of Site B, together with some small scraps of wall plaster which had lost their painted surface. In the earlier occupation level of Site B there was a rubbing stone. A roughly squared block of marble was picked up from the surface not far from the site of the octagonal building, but, being unstratified, cannot be related to it. The piece of a pudding-stone quern found embedded in the

chalk of the "flint area" of Site B (Pl. IV) is too fragmentary to merit illustration. Oyster shells and bones of food debris occurred in both the earlier and later occupation levels of Site B.

EARLIER COIN FINDS

(i) *Greek*

A diobol of the Macedonian king, Amyntas III (389-383 B.C.), perhaps the grandfather of Alexander the Great, is said to have been found on Weycock Hill (Hearne's edition of Leland's *Itinerary* (1744 ed.) has two engraved illustrations on pp. 145-6; hence, Neville, *Arch. Journ.* VI (1849), 120; Evans, *Coins of the Ancient Britons* (1864 with Supplement 1890), p. 208-9; Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 240, and Seaby, *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XLII (1938), no. 28, p. 89, with *corrigendum* in *ibid.* XLIII (1939), 40). This coin appears to have been lost.

(ii) *Early British*

An uninscribed tin coin is attributed to Weycock Hill, which also appears to be missing. It was comparable to the type of Evans H2 or perhaps Mack 9, in his Class I series, dated 100-75 B.C. (Neville, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 125; *V.C.H. Berks. I*, p. 195; Peake, *Arch. of Berks.*, p. 240; Seaby, *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XLII, no. 20b, p. 88; Mack, *The Coinage of Ancient Britain* (1953), pp. 5-9, for an account of this Early British "Tin Money" and its type series).

(iii) *Roman*

No comprehensive list of the Roman coins found at Weycock Hill exists, and indeed, it was stated by Neville that many were in private collections or had been sold to London dealers (*op. cit.*, pp. 119-120). He mentions some of those in his own collection and that of the Rev. Edwin Parker, which, together with a list published by Kerry (*The History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Bray* (1861), 154-5), shows that they cover almost the whole of the Roman occupation, but with a preponderance of later and fourth century types.

THE COINS FOUND IN 1953

Report by George C. Boon, F.S.A.

1. Barbarous radiate, reverse type FIDES MILITVM. Orichalc flan. 13 mm.
2. Barbarous radiate. Type uncertain. 10 mm. Worn.
3. Constantine II as Caesar, A.D. 317-337. Rev. CAESARVM NOSTRORVM around VOT V in wreath. Mint: QA (Arles), A.D. 320-4. Cf. Maurice, *Num. Const.* II, 166, no. V.2. Worn.

4. Constantine I, A.D. 306-337. *Rev.* GLORIA EXERCITVS with one standard between two soldiers facing. *Mint:* · TRS · (Trier), A.D. 335-7. Slightly worn. Cf. Maurice, *op. cit.*, I, 494, no. I, 1.

5. The same type as no. 4, very much worn. Probably unorthodox. 10 mm.

6. CONSTANTINOPOLIS, struck A.D. 330-337. Cut down to 7 mm. The practice of trimming coins to or below the size of Theodosian 4 Æ was not uncommon, but it is hardly likely to have occurred before Theodosian times (say before c. A.D. 380).

7. Constantius II, A.D. 337-361. *Rev.* FEL TEMP REPARATIO, legionary and fallen horseman type. *Mint:* illegible. 13 mm., and probably unorthodox. Slightly worn. This type was struck from c. A.D. 348.

8. As for no. 7, but barbarous, and struck over Constans. *Rev.* VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN

9. Valentinian I, A.D. 364-375. *Rev.* SECVRITAS REIPVB-LICAE. *Mint:* illegible. A fragment only and much worn.

10. Valens, A.D. 364-378. *Rev.* GLORIA ROMANORVM with Emperor dragging captive right and holding Labarum. *Mint:* ^{OF / I} _{CONSIT} (Arles), A.D. 364-7. Slightly worn to worn. Cf. Mattingley and Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage* IX, Arles 7d.

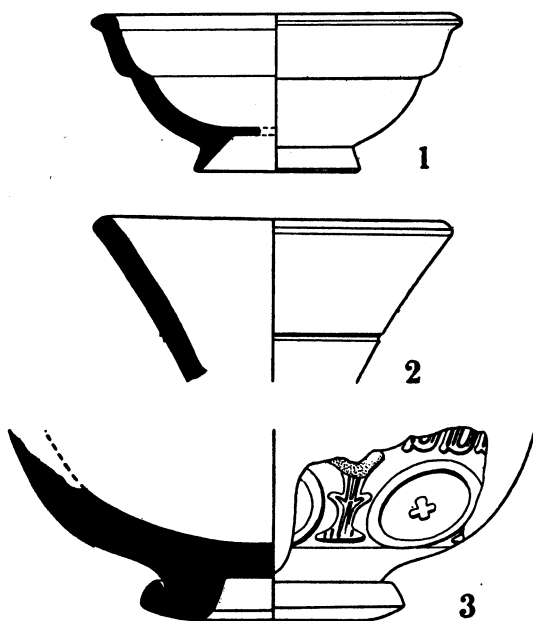
11. Valens, A.D. 364-378. *Rev.* SECVRITAS REIPVB-LICAE with Victory moving left. *Mint:* SM ø (Rome), A.D. 364-75. Cf. Mattingley and Sydenham, *op. cit.*, Rome 24b/28a.

All the coins were found in the later occupation level of Site B with the exception of no. 6 which came from the plough soil of that site.

NEOLITHIC POTTERY

Fig. 1, 5. A sherd of Neolithic "B" pottery, in a coarse hand-made grey-black paste with large flint grits, fired to a brown surface. From the loamy soil over the old ground surface of Site A, it was the only pottery sherd found in the area.

THE SAMIAN WARE

FIG. 2. The Samian ware. Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$ *From the earlier occupation level of Site B*

1. A small Form 27 in South Gaulish ware. The size, marked constriction, internal groove below the rim, and the truncated pointed rim are early features, but the footstand lacks the groove typical of pre-Flavian examples. Cf. Oswald and Pryce, *Terra Sigillata*, 186-8. Flavian.

From the destruction level over the "flint area" of Site B

2. Form 33. The wall is slightly concave externally and the outside is grooved. Cf. Oswald and Pryce, *op. cit.*, Pl. LI, 12 of Trajanic-Hadrianic date.

Unstratified

3. Base of a Form 37. In East Gaulish ware.

THE COARSE ROMAN POTTERY

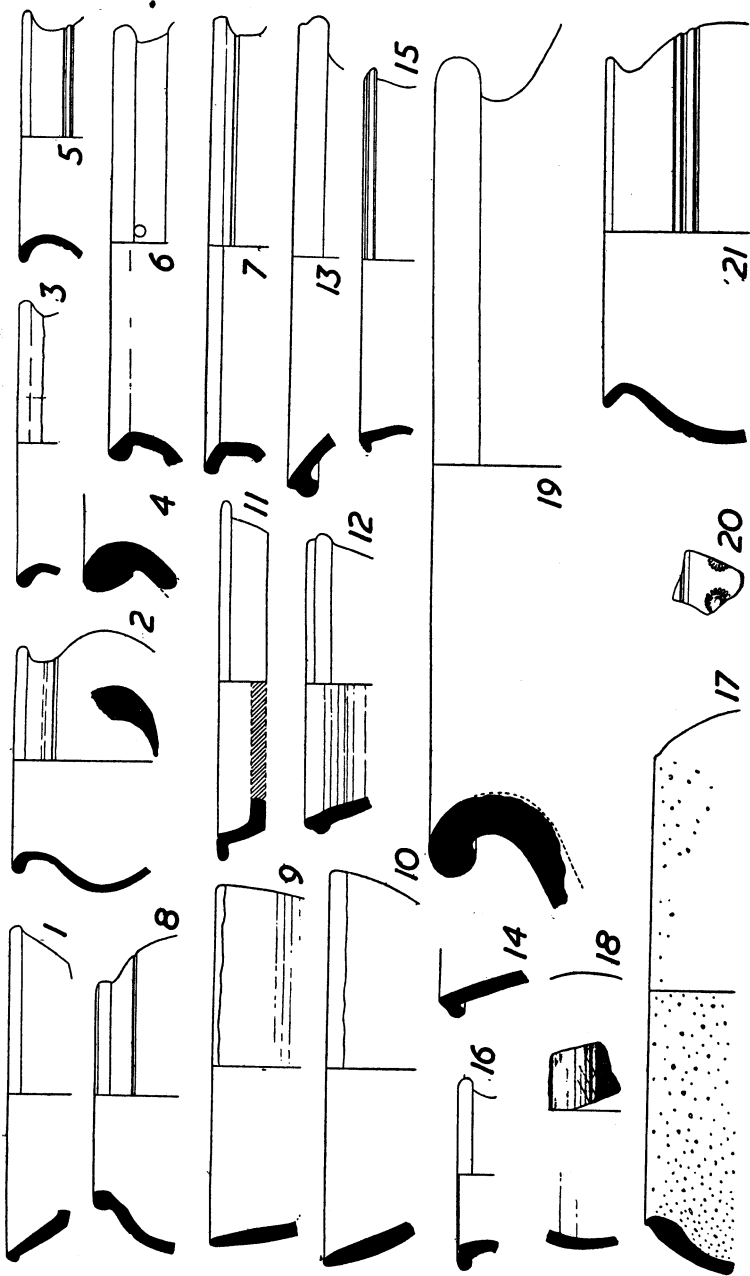


FIG. 3. The coarse Roman pottery. Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$

From the earlier occupation level. Late first to early second century A.D.

1. A small *terra nigra* platter with a straight-sided outplayed wall and a pendent lip. There is only a slight suggestion of an internal groove or offset near the lip, and the wall is not moulded. In hard fine-grained light grey paste, fired grey, with the remains of a black colour-coating. Cf. *Camulodunum*, Fig. 46, 15, which has a comparable pendent lip, and is a variant of *Camulodunum* Form 7, but which has a curved wall and is in *terra rubra* fabric. The Colchester example is from Period I, c. A.D. 10-43.

2. Necked bowl with traces of two slight cordons at the base of the neck. In thin light grey ware with a greyish-white slip. A smaller version of that of *May, Silchester*, Pl. LXXVII, 2, from Pit A, Insula XII, with material of first century date.

3. Everted rim jar of sandy brown ware fumed black in places.

4. Large storage jar with a knobbed rim. In a heavy light grey ware fired to a red and buff colour.

The remaining coarse sherds in this level included a lid fragment in grey ware with a mica-dust surface, and a basal fragment of a mortarium in reddish ware studded with flint grits. Associated Samian ware was the cup of Dr. Form 27 (Fig. 2, 1) and a sherd of a plate of Dr. Form 18/31. The other finds from the level consisted of oyster shells, a bronze tack (Fig. 1, 2), iron slag, nails and scrap. This small assemblage of material is at present insufficient to give a precise date to the earlier occupation level, but there is nothing which is inconsistent with a date in the late first to the early second century A.D. The Form 27 is not a pre-Flavian type, and the Form 18/31 is mainly characteristic of the turn of the first and second centuries, c.f. *O. and P.*, p. 183.

From the later occupation level, c. A.D. 370+

5. Everted rim bowl with a cordon at the base of the neck. In thin light ware of grey paste fired darker grey. This sherd may perhaps be derived from the earlier occupation level.

6-7. Two necked jars with oblique rims. No. 6 has a sloped neck, whilst that of no. 7 is more vertical. No. 6 is in grey paste, fired grey, and has a rivet hole; no. 7 is in a darker grey paste, fired to a dark grey.

8. Bead-rim jar with a grooved shoulder. In grey paste, fired light grey. This form occurs at Silchester in an earlier context. cf. *Arch. XCII* (1947), Fig. 13, 9, from levels dated to c. A.D. 100-120.

9-10. Two straight-sided dishes. Both are in heavy grey paste, fired grey. No. 9 has a greyish-white wash inside and over the top of the rim; no. 10 has a dull black wash in a similar position. Although the form of these simple dishes has little chronological

significance, the heaviness of the ware and the use of colour washes are typical of fourth century examples.

11. Shallow pie-dish with a grooved rim. In sandy brown paste, fired black. The form is commonest in late second to mid-third century levels, cf. *Jewry Wall*, p. 83, and this example is out of place in this level. A deeper example and one with a plain rim occurred also in the destruction level over the "flint area".

12-14. Three flanged dishes with varying rim forms. All are in heavy grey paste, fired grey, and no. 14 has traces of a creamy wash. In this heavy ware and with coloured washes, they are normal in fourth century levels.

15. Pseudo-Samian bowl with a reeded rim. In cream paste with the remains of a brownish-red colour-coating. Four rouletted sherds of pseudo-Samian ware also occurred in this level.

16. This rim, in a pinkish-buff sandy paste with the remains of a cream colour-coating, is reminiscent of the jug series of the New Forest potteries of fourth century date.

17. Bead-rim bowl with a pigeon-breasted profile. In grey paste, fired brown, with an admixture of large grits. Similar bowls, in this "native-looking" ware were common at Silchester in the earlier levels, cf. *Arch. XCII* (1947), Fig. 11, 28-9, and this example was probably derived from the earlier occupation level at Weycock Hill.

In addition, the coarse wares from this level included some sherds of Castor ware, some of thick white paste and one with barbotine decoration. A few scraps of Samian ware were displaced. The finds were a worked bone ring (Fig. 1, 3), scraps of wall plaster, lead, and iron nails, scrap and slag. Although the bulk of the pottery, and more especially the New Forest and pseudo-Samian wares, suggest a fourth century date, and later rather than earlier in that century, the level is more securely dated by the coin finds. These, nos. 1-5 and 7-11 of pp. 62-3, are almost all of fourth century date, and the latest, nos. 10-11 of Valens, dated A.D. 364-367 and 364-375 respectively, are significant. No. 11 was found at the bottom of the level resting on the old turf line, which suggests that the level, as a whole, is later in date than c. A.D. 370.

From the destruction level over the "flint area"

18. A sherd of hard grey ware with a white colour-coating outside above an incised lattice pattern. Like no. 16 above, this sherd is reminiscent of wares from the fourth century New Forest potteries, cf. Heywood Sumner, *Excavations in New Forest Pottery Sites* (1927), Pl. XXIV, 6 from Linwood East Kiln.

19. Large necked storage jar with a rolled-out rim. In heavy grey paste, fired red, and fumed black on the rim.

20. A sherd of pseudo-Samian ware decorated with parts of two stamped rosettes. In a pinkish-red paste which has now lost its colour-coating. The rosette stamp seems to be closer to that of Lowbury Hill, cf. Atkinson, *The Romano-British Site on Lowbury Hill in Berkshire* (1916), Pl. XX, 1-2, rather than to the examples illustrated in the New Forest pottery series.

21. Everted rim jar with a cordoned shoulder. In sandy grey paste, fired dark grey.

Besides the two pie-dishes noted above under no. 11, this destruction level contained a sherd of a New Forest purple colour-coated folded beaker, and two sherds of Castor ware of thick white paste, one with barbotine decoration. Some of the more interesting small finds occurred also in this level, e.g. the two-link iron horse-bit (Fig. 1, 4); the bronze surgical instrument (Fig. 1, 1); a glass handle; a number of oyster shells; many pieces of iron scrap and much iron slag. There were no coins. The material from the level is therefore consistent in date with that of the later occupation level of c. A.D. 370+, and affords no precise evidence as to the duration of the later occupation. But in the plough soil to the south of the "flint area" there was found a cut-down CONSTANTINOPOLIS coin, no. 6 of p. 63, which it is suggested was not likely to have been so treated before Theodosian times, say before A.D. 380. The occupation of the site may therefore perhaps have lasted until at least this date, if not later.

Messrs. A. W. and S. Philp have presented the finds to Reading Museum.