NOTES

Roman material from Chatley Farm, Cobham

The site lies close to the southern bank of the River Mole on lower terrace gravel. In 1942, a 4th-century Roman bathhouse was excavated (Frere 1949) in the north-west corner of the field within which the present site lies, and the existence of an associated building or buildings seemed a possibility. Field walking of the area produced no structural or occupational evidence until April 1979 when the field concerned was subjected to deeper ploughing than usual. Mrs Ann Watson recovered a quantity of Roman tile together with Roman pottery, and was able to define two areas for further investigation. Unfortunately, geophysical surveying and the excavation of two trial trenches by M O'Connell and R Poulton (Conservation and Archaeology Section, Surrey County Council) produced no stratified material (fig 1, areas 1 and 2).

In 1980, further work in this field (fig 1, area 3) took place in response to proposed deep ploughing. Geophysical survey was undertaken by A Clark and A Crocker, and by I Roberts and R Poulton. The former work gave a tentative suggestion of a buried masonry wall close to the bathhouse excavated by Frere. The latter work failed to detect any buried features. A trial trench was therefore opened close to the bathhouse. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered, but a reasonable quantity of pottery and tile was recovered at a depth of 30–50cm below ground level. The sand here was darker than that below and probably represented the Roman land surface, now heavily leached.

If the negative results of this excavation and of geophysical survey are to be relied on, then they provide support for Frere’s suggestion that any villa associated with the bathhouse lay to the north and had been eroded by the river.

The finds by Joanna Bird

The finds from the 1979–80 work at Chatley Farm are listed on Microfiche 2-8. It can be seen from this catalogue how disturbed most of the excavated levels were, and none of the finds has been illustrated. Apart from a small amount of post-medieval material and two prehistoric sherds, the pottery was of Roman date and, with the exception of a small bead rim jar, of the late 2nd to 4th centuries. It consisted predominantly of grey coarse wares from the Alice Holt potteries, with three mortaria and at least two bowls from the Oxfordshire kilns, and a dish and at least one beaker from the Nene Valley. Other finds included a piece of a Roman quernstone of Mayen lava (examined by D F Williams: Microfiche 7–8), 11 flint blades, two pieces of iron slag, and a considerable amount of Roman tile. The tile comprised examples of the common Roman types – tegulae, imbrices, floor tiles and box tiles – and included one piece of probable Italian origin, a rare and important find (see note by D F Williams, Microfiche 6–7).

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Fig 1. Location of the geophysical survey (outlined) and excavation (solid) areas in 1979 and 1980, numbered 1–3. The cross indicates the site of the bathhouse, the outline 'S' around it the extent of the scheduled ancient monument (Surrey no 165)
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