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SMR

**Strawberry Field, Bridge Farm
Pakenham**

TL 930/699
Report No 2002/67 PKM 026

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Introduction

A watching brief was carried out during the laying of a water pipe alongside a tarmac track. The track is south of the farm and joins the main road to the north of and opposite Colgate Bungalow (Figure 1). The site lies to the north of what is suggested to be the centre of the Roman small town (PKM 005) but is situated between the town and the river crossing.

Results

Approximately 0.3km of c.0.5m wide by c.1m deep trench was examined after digging; along with the spoil which was left alongside the track. Detailed recording was not carried out, with the exception of the surveying which was done using a total station theodolite. Only selected finds with the potential to shed new light on the site were recovered, and as a consequence no pottery was kept, despite a scatter which was greatest between the road and the Roman building (Figure 1). Samples of various building materials were kept in the vicinity of the Roman building to help define its character.

A summary description of the trench is given below and related to the plotted course of the trench shown on Figure 1.

- 1) Oblique section across Roman road. Interleaved layers of sand and gravel record the course of the road. It was up to 0.8m thick; the width of the road in section included various repairs and resurfacings over several hundred years and the suggested width may be a little wide than the actual road was at any one time while it was in use although this is not certain.
- 2) Section of ground consisting of dark/black soil over clean gravel/sand where it could be seen at circa 0.8m. Pottery seen in the spoil was not collected.
- 3) Abrupt change in subsoil indicating the commencement of a Roman building with brick stone and flint in the construction. The ground appeared to drop away which would be consistent with a hypocaust system.
- 4) Continuation of building rubble.
- 5) Flint and mortar wall, suggested to be on a diagonal to the trench. The walling stood on natural sand to a height of 0.4m.
- 6) Area of darker soil with substantial layers of clay towards the base of the trench, possibly fragmented clay flooring?
- 7) Section of trench containing large amounts of modern building rubble.
- 8) Remainder of trench. Plough soil visible throughout, no finds visible in the spoil.

The Finds

Sue Anderson

Samples of tile and mortar were collected during archaeological monitoring of work on an excavated trench prior to the laying of a water pipe. The material was largely recovered from spoil, but an *in situ* wall was present and the material is assumed to be related to that.

Twelve fragments (34077g) of ceramic building material, fourteen pieces (2440g) of mortar and a fragment of glass (20g) make up this assemblage. A full list is available in archive.

The majority of tile was Roman, and was in a fine-medium sandy fabric which contained moderate small fragments of tile grog, clay pellets and mica. However, two other fabrics were identified, each represented by a single tile. One was in a medium-coarse quartz-tempered fabric with poorly mixed buff and red clays and occasional mica, and the other contained moderate ferrous fragments and sparse coarse grog. Four pieces were identified as flanged tegulae (one burnt), there were two fragments of box flue tile (one combed, the other with a circular cut-out), and five fragments were unidentified. The flanged tegulae varied in thickness from 20 to 27mm, and some of the thinner unidentified fragments were probably also pieces of these types of roofing tile. However, there were three thicker tiles, 37-52mm thick, which were probably used for flooring or as bricks. Two of these had a coarse flint-tempered mortar on both surfaces, and one of them had been re-used with mortar present on broken edges. One fragment of pale buff grog-tempered peg tile of late medieval or later date was also found.

Most of the mortar collected was also probably of Roman date. Seven large fragments of pink tile-tempered material included pieces of *opus signinum* which was often used as a kind of concrete-like flooring in bath houses. Five hard pieces were coarsely flint-tempered white lime mortar, similar to that present on some of the Roman tile fragments. Two crumbly pale cream fragments which contained large pieces of chalk were more like post-medieval mortar.

One fragment of Roman window glass was also recovered. This was a piece from the edge of some sheet glass, with a slightly rough underside.

The assemblage as a whole is clearly indicative of a high status building, and the presence of *opus signinum* and box flue tiles indicates a hypocaust system, probably forming part of a bath house.

Discussion/Conclusion

The evidence from the monitoring of the trench has established with a high degree of accuracy the course of the Roman road towards the river crossing. Although the section is about 200m from the current course of the river it suggests the road or a ford crossed slightly to the west of the current bridge.

The combination of stratigraphic and finds evidence is consistent with a substantial high status building set back about 30m from the road frontage; they also point towards a building with a hypocaust. The extent of the building after this is difficult to gauge although the clay to the east indicates at least one room in that direction. Although only a small area was seen it should perhaps be compared with a hypocaust building identified on the road frontage approximately 100m to the south.

Andrew Tester, June 2002

