

THE ROMANO-BRITISH SITE AT BODIAM

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SUMMARY

This report deals with some exploratory excavations carried out under the auspices of the Battle and District Historical Society¹ in 1959 and 1960 in an area where, as far as can be ascertained, no previous discoveries of Romano-British remains have been recorded. The building remains found were unimportant; but associated with them in a small space were many objects, dating mostly from the middle of the 1st century to about the middle of the 3rd century, which are not easily matched elsewhere. They have been housed in the museum of the B. and D.H.S. at Langton House, Battle. This report also includes the evidence obtained that no estuary could have existed at Bodiam at the time of occupation of the site, as in later times; and also fresh evidence on the course of the Roman road. The fact that such a small area yielded so much gives promise of rich reward if this part of the Rother Valley, particularly the other sites indicated, could be thoroughly examined at a later date. Although there have been preliminary reports,² the publication of details has been delayed until now by the closure for two years of the B. and D.H.S. museum, and by many other unforeseen circumstances.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks are due in the first place to Mr. H. R. Roberts, Managing Director of Guinness Hop Farms Ltd., for permission to dig in their hop garden, and for generously providing labour to dig trial trenches in 1959. For professional assistance we must thank Mr. J. Manwaring Baines, B.Sc., F.S.A., who gave technical advice in the correlation of levels, and assistance in many other directions; Mr. N. E. S. Norris, F.S.A., for his identification of pottery and metal objects; Mr. D. Thomson for his assistance in the same field; Dr. D. B. Harden, F.S.A., for his examination of the glass; Mr. R. P. Wright, F.S.A., for classification of inscriptions on tiles, glass, and a pottery sherd; Mr. S. S. Frere, V.P.S.A., of the Institute of Archaeology, for identification of two coins; Dr. G. Taylor, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for microscopic examination of burnt wood, charcoal and plant remains; Capt. J. Vickers, for information about tides. The excavation in 1960 could not have

¹ Abbreviated hereafter to B. & D.H.S.

² J. Darrell-Hill, 'The Romano-British site at Bodiam Station', in *Sussex Notes and Queries*, vol. 15 (Nov. 1960), pp. 190-92. 'Finds and Fieldwork' in *Transactions of the B. & D.H.S.* No. 8 (1958-59), pp. 27-28, and No. 9 (1959-60), pp. 30-32.

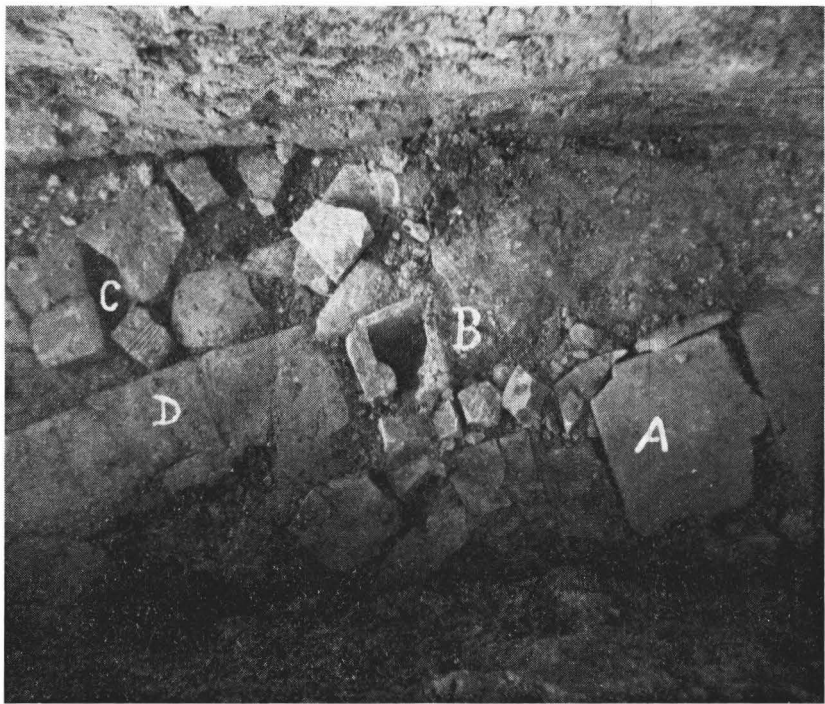


PLATE IA. Level 3 in Trench B, looking N. A—Collapsed drain. B—Flue. C—Combed tile. D—Part of underlying paved area (Level 4).



PLATE IB. The NW part of the paved area in Trench B, with baulk between B and C removed.

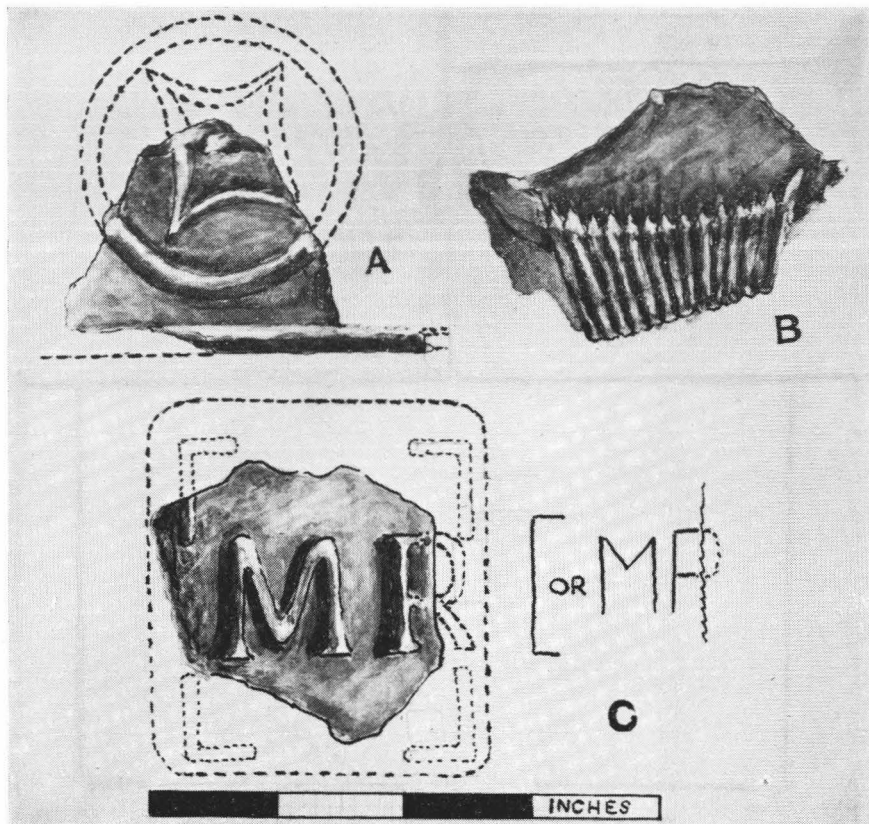


PLATE IIA. Fragments of light blue glass, A.D. 50-150, A and C—bases of bottles, B—part of handle.

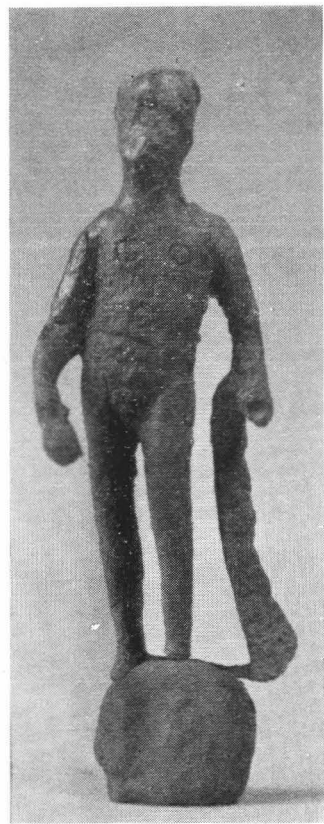


PLATE IIB. Bronze figurine of Mercury, three and a half inches high.

been carried out without enthusiastic and willing diggers, who came from many places and gave what time they could. Among the more regular attendants were Messrs. V. F. M. Oliver, A. Miles, R. Morfey and Mr. and Mrs. G. M. Puckle. To Miss E. Cartwright, of the Institute of Archaeology, who stayed some days at Bodiam, we are indebted not only for work on the site, but also for the restoration of a cooking pot and an urn. To all our helpers we extend our grateful thanks.

BODIAM

Situated at a point where in Roman times the road from the Sussex ironfields¹ to the Watling Street at Durobrivae (Rochester) crossed the river Limen (Rother), it may be supposed that Bodiam was a river port both for shipment of iron, and the import of wares not produced locally; so that a settlement of fair dimensions, situated astride the main road near the crossing, could quite conceivably have developed there. Such a supposition is supported by the discovery of bricks and tiles bearing the stamp of the (Roman) British Fleet, and a figurine of Mercury, the god of traders.

NARRATIVE

In September, 1959, the Guinness Hop Farms Co. Ltd., ploughed up a piece of land which had not been ploughed within living memory. It is bounded on the N. by the river Rother, on the E. by the road between Bodiam railway station and bridge, and on the S. by the disused railway. The Ordnance Survey number of the field is 1/28, and the Nat. Grid Ref. of the relevant part is TQ 783251 (See Fig. 1). As a preliminary, a bank and ditch across the middle and other surface irregularities were levelled, and a plough working at a depth of 12 to 14 inches completed the task. During these operations, Mr. H. R. Roberts, Managing Director of Guinness Hop Farms Ltd., informed us that many fragments of supposedly Roman tiles and pottery were being turned up, and that he had collected several pieces of a large buff-coloured pot. On examining the field it was found that the workmen had collected in heaps some very thick pieces of brick or tile with bosses on them, and a large number of fragments of *tegulae*, one of which was stamped CL BR, the mark of the British Fleet. (See Plate VA). There were also some sherds of coarse grey and black native pottery and one piece of *Terra Sigillata*. (See Plate III 44). These objects had come from a piece of ground, the centre of which is 60 yards due W. of the main road, and 20 yards N. of the railway boundary fence, which is marked Site A on the plan (fig. 1). In another part of the field there was a distinct rise, though probably no more than six inches, in the form of an inverted bowl. As soon as the plough reached this it became obvious that it was the richest part of the whole area. It was designated Site B, and its centre was 20 yards due

¹ I. D. Margary, *Roman Ways in the Weald* (1965), pp. 223, 225.

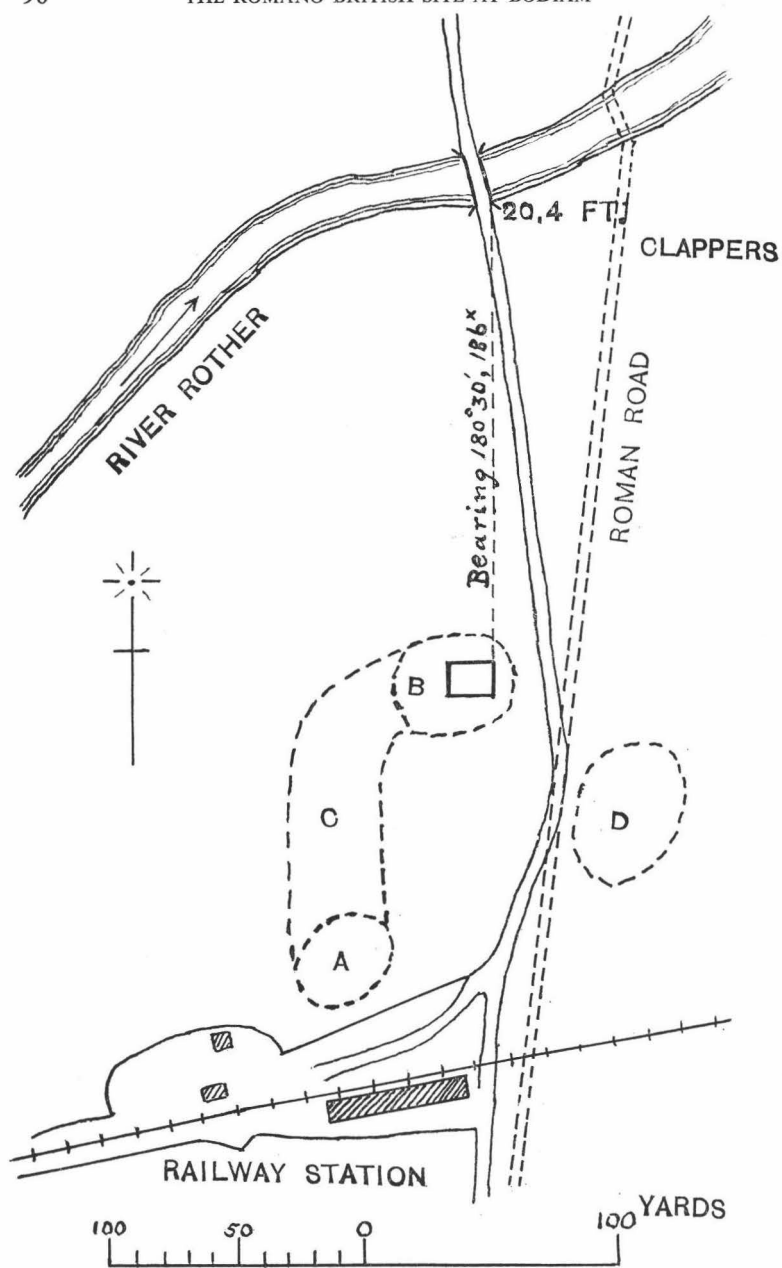


FIG. 1. Situation of the sites

W. of the main road at a point 185 yards S. of Bodiam bridge. Due N. from Site A ran, for 100 yards, a corridor where broken tiles and pottery sherds had been turned up, though in less numbers than at Site A. This area is marked Site C on the plan. In August, 1960, Messrs. Guinness Hop Farms Ltd. ploughed up a field on the other side of the road; and there also, on reaching an area which was slightly elevated, similar Romano-British debris was brought to the surface, and in addition some pieces of medieval pottery. This area, which is somewhat closer to the road than Site B, is marked Site D on the plan. Actually it was only at Site B that any excavation was carried out, and the remaining areas are recorded here for future reference.

THE TRIAL TRENCHES

In September, 1959, Messrs. Guinness Hop Farms Ltd. not only gave permission for small trial trenches to be dug for the purpose of ascertaining whether further excavation at a later date would be worth while, but also kindly provided two men for the work. At Site A a trench 15 yards long and three feet wide was dug parallel to the railway at 20 yards from the goods yard fence. This yielded a small quantity of broken tiles and red, buff, grey and black pottery sherds. As time pressed and Site B seemed more important, digging was stopped at two feet six inches, so that the examination of Site A was but superficial.

At site B two trial trenches were dug to a depth of three feet about E5 and B1 (see fig. 2). Almost immediately portions of massive tiles were unearthed, then a small bronze figurine, an inscribed pottery sherd, and some fragments of glass, one piece of which bore moulded letters. Bad weather then set in, and it was decided, as the trial trenches had shown the importance of the site, to make a more extensive excavation in the spring, to discover, if possible, its use and purpose.

THE EXCAVATION

A start was made at Easter, 1960, by which time a square pattern of hop poles had been erected all over the field. The poles were 19 feet 6 inches apart; a hop plant had been planted at the foot of each, and two more equidistant between them, from which strings ran to wires above. There were thus alley ways 6 feet 6 inches wide running in both directions. Permission was obtained for a limited excavation, provided that the young plants were not damaged. The only way to examine the area was to cut trenches, three feet wide in the alley ways, leaving baulks, three feet six inches wide for the poles and hop plants. Seven alleyways, running east and west, were selected for continuous trenches 54 feet long (marked A to G on fig. 2). Each was divided into six sections, so that a means of recording by letters and numbers was provided. A, B, C and D trenches were dug to their full length, E where required, G partially,

and F was not dug at all. Where features were exposed the baulks between adjacent trenches were, where necessary and possible, cut through. The normal depth of the trenches was three feet nine inches. In certain places digging was carried to four feet nine inches; but water began to seep in at about four feet three inches. In part of E trench digging, greatly hampered by water, was carried to a depth of five feet six inches. Disposal of excavated earth gave trouble; in fact no sooner had a trench been excavated and examined than it had to be refilled with earth from its neighbour, which meant that at no period was it possible to survey the excavated area as a whole.

At an average of 24 inches below the surface a turf line was found, representing a former ground level. The silt between the present and old ground levels contained a few pieces of broken tile and small sherds of black and grey pottery. Below the old turf line the ground was well stratified, and no less than eight occupation levels were noted; but, owing to the awkward conditions imposed, no complete sectional diagram could be made. The distances from the surface at which the levels appeared, as stated below, were taken in a section made in A5 and B5, and varied in other parts of the site.

Level 1, immediately below the old turf line consisted of reddish

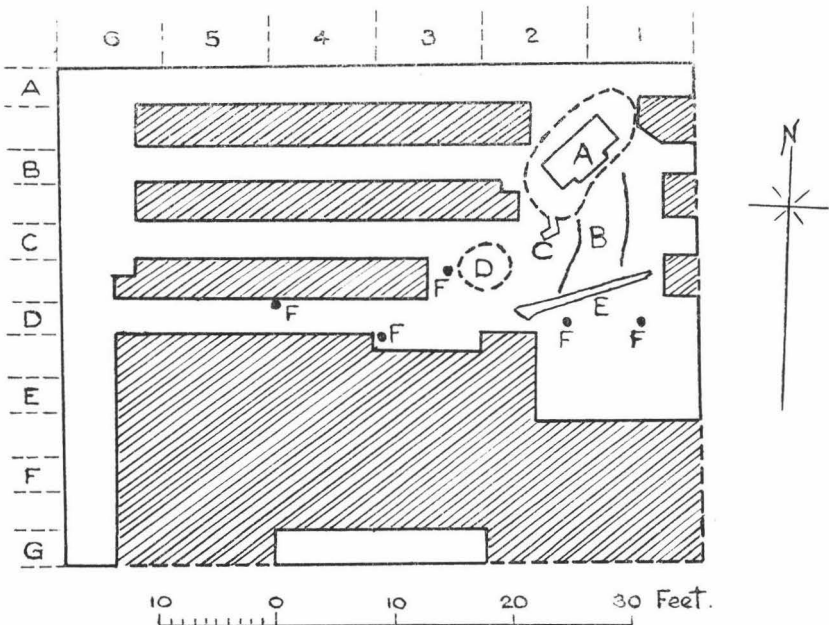


Fig. 2. The excavation at site B.

A and D—paved areas, B—path, C—flanking wall, E—wall, F—post holes.

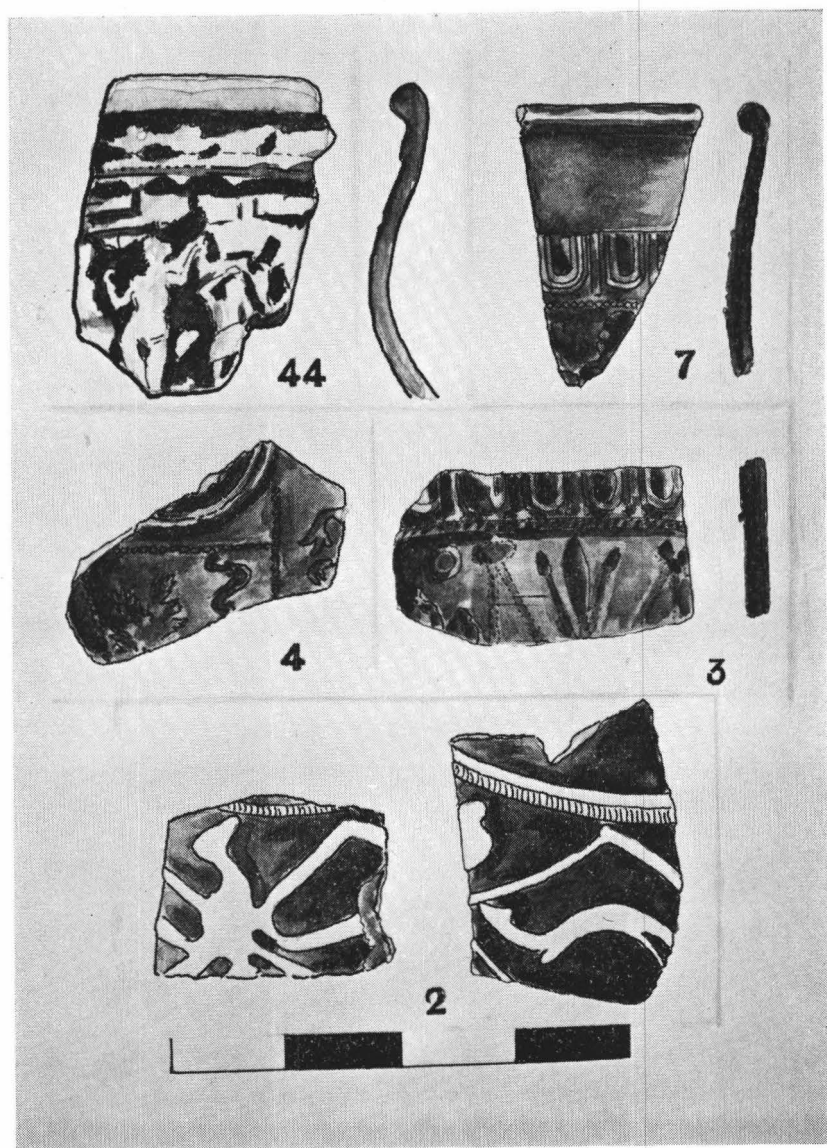


PLATE III. Patterns of Terra Sigillata. Reproduced from sketches, owing to water-worn condition. Scale of inches.

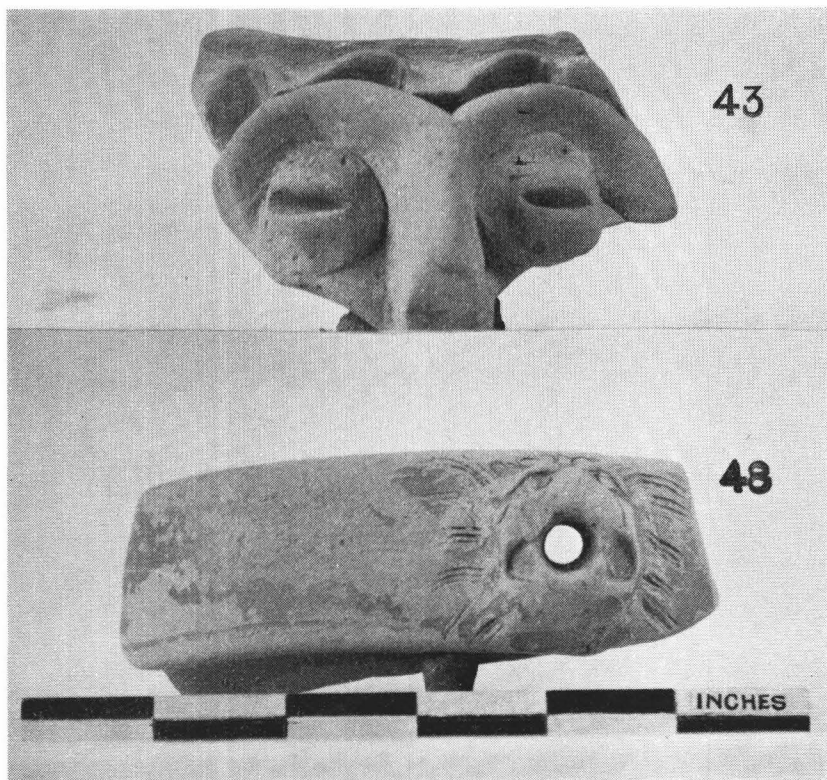


PLATE IVA. 43. Portion of Face Vase. 48. Rim of basin with lion-head orifice.

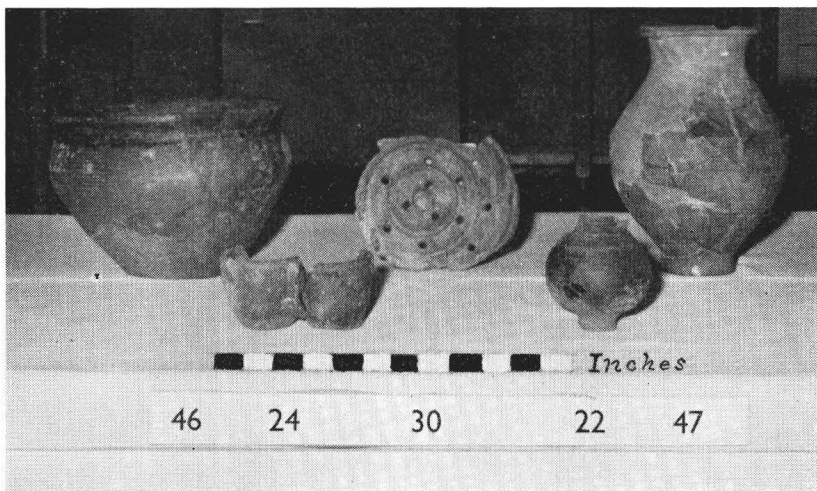


PLATE IVB. 46. Native cooking pot. 24. Two parts of triple votive vase. 30. Cheese Press. 22. Poppyhead beaker. 47. Native urn.

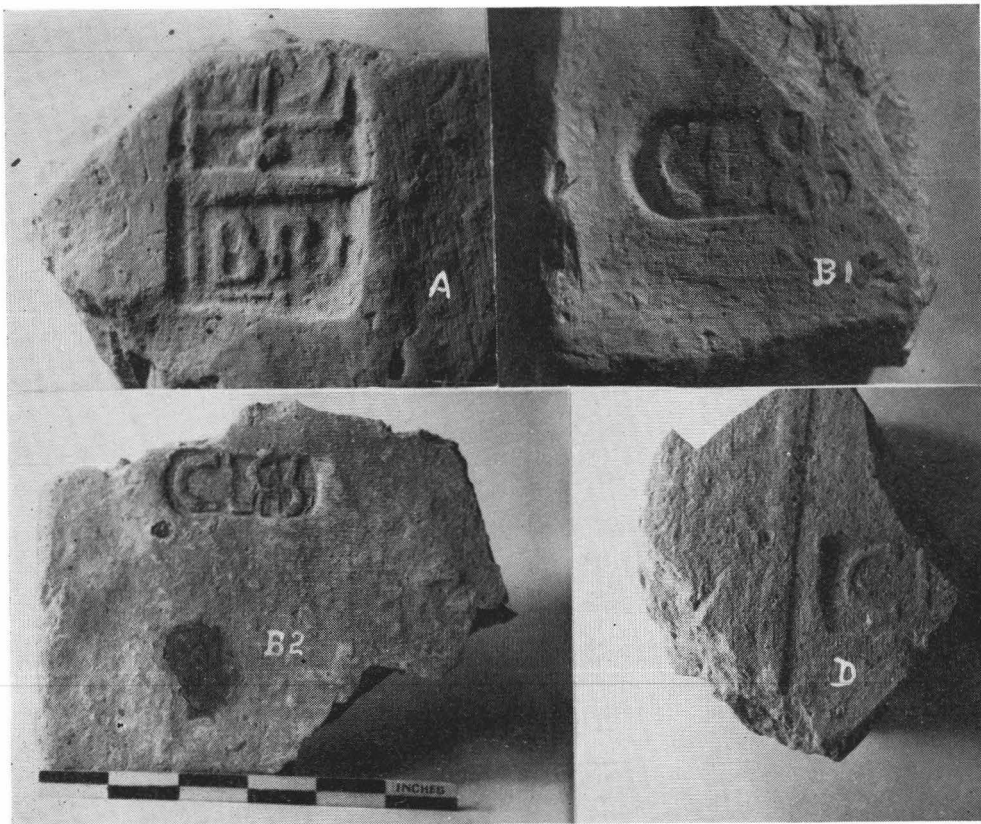


PLATE V. Stamps of the British Fleet. A—Pevensey type, B1—Bardown type, B2—Bardown type (variation), D—Unmatched elsewhere.

clay. Water-worn sherds of black and grey pottery were mixed indiscriminately with pieces of tile, many of which were fixed upright, or at various angles in the soil.

Level 2, at 26 inches from the surface, had soil of yellow clay, in which were embedded a large number of tile fragments, and below which was a layer of charcoal. Although there was a clear distinction between Levels 1 and 2 in some places, there was for the most part considerable confusion between them, caused possibly by early cultivation, or the flooding of the Rother valley from the 13th century onwards. No *Terra Sigillata* was found in either level.

Level 3. When the mixed debris of Levels 1 and 2 had been cleared away, the soil of level 3, beginning at 29 inches, was seen to consist of yellowish clay with a charcoal layer at the bottom. In section 2 of B trench a line of contiguous tiles was exposed, with fallen bricks and tiles on both sides, the whole forming a rough drain, 11 feet 2 inches long, which enclosed the typical grey deposit associated with water. This feature ran SW and NE, and when found in trench A, the intervening baulk was taken down. On the N side of the drain, standing vertically, were three small flues formed of tiles (see Plate 1a).

Level 4 began in trenches A and B at 31 inches. It extended over the whole examined area, and was hard and heavily carbonised. On removing the drain and fallen masonry of Level 3 in A1 and B2, a few pieces of *Terra Sigillata* being found in the process, an elongated kidney-shaped area about six feet by four feet was disclosed. It was outlined in lumps of local sandstone and very roughly paved with tiles grouted with brickdust (see Plate 1b). It was then seen that the drain and the flues of Level 3 had been merely standing on the floor, and that the latter had not been fulfilling their proper function. On and around the paved area lay a large number of broken *tegulae*, mostly in a very fragmentary state, piled upon a bed of ashes. Some lumps of clay daub, bearing the imprint of battens, and corresponding pieces of charcoal in association with them, as well as the tiles which appeared to have slipped off the roof and fallen into heaps in A and B, sections in 4, 5 and 6, as well as C 5 and 6, were evidence that some wattle and daub structure had been burnt down. The ash bed of Level 4 was deeper towards the NW of the site and faded out towards the E and NE. When the paving tiles had been taken up, it was found that they had been bedded on well-rammed brickdust.

At the SW end of the kidney-shaped area was a short piece of flanking wall with a right-angle bend, built of loose sandstone, and about seven feet further to the SW lay another very roughly paved circular area, three feet in diameter. Close to its W side was a post-hole.

In D2 the end of a very rough wall was disclosed. It measured 12 feet long, one foot nine inches high, and 15 inches thick.

It consisted of pieces of sandstone and tiles, one fragment of the latter bearing a CL BR stamp (see Plate V B2). Here two Sestertii of Trajan were found, one at the foot of the wall, and the other, associated with another tile fragment stamped CL BR, on the small circular paved area quite close. The wall, running SW and NE, was slightly curved and ended abruptly, the SW end being thickened to form a roughly circular termination.

A very hard and heavily carbonised surface about ten feet long and four feet wide, formed a sort of path leading from the paved area to the middle of the wall. All these features can be assigned, like the paved area, to level 4, which extended over the whole area examined. On the same level in A3 was found a masked face from a face vase, and in B3 a cheese press and the base of a *Terra Sigillata* bowl with potter's mark.

Level 5 at 39 inches was found to have a soil of yellowish brick-dust packed with clay and well rammed down. It was not specially hard, though it had a marked cohesion in the centre. It petered out towards the SE at about five feet from the wall. At C5 a portion of a small black vase and a *Terra Sigillata* sherd depicting a gladiator (No. 8 on pottery list) were found.

Level 6. The soil of this level, which began at 43 inches, was of reddish clay, well preserved and remarkable for its hardness. It had a layer, one inch thick, of charcoal at the bottom, and petered out towards the SE at about six feet from the wall. It yielded some small sherds of *Terra Sigillata*. Under the SW end of the paved area, and at right angles to its longer axis, lay the short, slightly upheaved, floor of some kind of oven or kiln, or even perhaps a simple form of hypocaust. It measured only three feet by one, and some attempt had been made to reinforce the E wall with fragments of tile and even pottery. A pile of ash and burnt wood lay at the SE corner.

Level 7 at 45 inches contained a high proportion of charred wood, particularly in section 5 between B and C. A badly corroded coin, doubtfully assigned to Antoninus Pius, was found in D4. It was the area of the smallest settlement, and petered out about six feet from the wall. It was the lowest level at which pottery was found.

Level 8 at 48 inches rested on the basic clay. It was only partly covered by Level 7, though overlapped by it to the S. The soil consisted of reddish clay which was particularly hard, resembling concrete in B4-5 and C4-5. It contained only some disintegrated tiles mixed with charcoal.

The basic clay at 54 inches below the surface, on which Level 8 rested, was light bluish-grey, very soft, but of extreme tenacity when dug. It sloped towards the NE and also towards the S; so that the first settlement, which was quite small, must have stood on a small hummock. In part of trench E digging was continued down into the basic clay to a depth of 66 inches, at which depth an ebony-black

tree trunk or plank, eight inches broad, was found lying athwart the axis of the trench. On account of the influx of water it could not be removed.

COINS

(1) Sestertius of Trajan (A.D. 98-117). Obverse: laureate head facing right. IMP CAES NERVAE TRAJANO. Reverse: Figure of Felicitas facing left. AUG. GER. DAC. PMX. . . COS. VI. P. . . T.

[From footings of rough wall at Level 4, associated with a brick impressed CL BR]

(2) Sestertius of Trajan . . . IMP NERVA TRAJANOS

[From the small circular paved area at Level 4, also associated with a brick stamped CL BR]

(3) Sestertius of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180). Laureate head facing right, profile well marked, but legend illegible.

[Ploughed up at site A, and picked up by an employee of Messrs. Guinness.]

(4) Sestertius of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161).

From Level 7 at D.4. Badly corroded and identification very doubtful.

The identifications of (1) and (2) were made by Mr. S. S. Frere.

GLASS (See plate IIa)

The glass found was all blue-green in colour and fragmentary; the chief items being:—

(1) Portion of base of a square bottle of three inches wide, embossed MR (or MP), and showing the end of an embossed angle piece.

(2) A similar fragment, embossed with a circular design.

(3) Portion of the ribbed handle of a vessel.

(4) Fragments of window glass, one side matt, the other glossy.

Other small fragments were all pieces of rectangular bottles, two showing portions of ribbed handles, two of portions of the moulded designs of bases, and the rest were parts of the sides.

Dr. D. B. Harden, Director of the London Museum, to whom it was submitted, assigned all of it to the period A.D. 50-150, and remarked that he could find nothing approaching (1) in Kisa's book or his own notes. He considered (4) to have been cylinder blown, and not made in a flat mould by pouring and rolling out. He passed the glass to Mr. R. P. Wright, editor of *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, who concurred with the conclusions of Dr. Harden, and said that he had had no example of (1) in Britain.

[If a conjecture is permitted, it might be that M stood for *MUNUS*, that the next letter stood either for *PUBLICUM* or *ROMANUM*, and that the mark was equivalent to our W.D.]

POTTERY

Terra Sigillata (See Plate III)

1. Three fragments of Mortarium Form 45. Begins late 2nd, and is especially characteristic of early 3rd century.

2. Rim and part side of bowl with barbotine leaves on curved flange. Development of Curle 11. Trajan-Hadrian. (cp. May York pl. IX 10). [Illustrated].

3. Small part of decorated cylindrical bowl Form 30. Begins early 1st century, lasts until 3rd quarter of 2nd century. Common in Antonine period. [Illustrated].

4. Seven fragments of hemispherical decorated bowl Form 37, with later form of decoration, probably Antonine. [One illustrated].
5. Part of form 78 with ovolo border. Developed from earlier form 30. No evidence after Trajan.
6. Three rivetted fragments, one rivet still in hole.
7. Decorated fragment Form 37. [Illustrated].
8. Decorated sherd, Gladiator, on form 33.
9. Seated male figure on form 33, panel and metope decoration.
10. Base of cup, form 33, potter's mark PISTILI. Pistillus worked at Lezoux in Antonine period.
11. Six sherds of Mortaria, Form 45, one having lion-headed spout. Late 2nd-early 3rd century.
12. Fragment of cylindrical bowl, Form 30. Early 1st-3rd quarter 2nd century.
13. Two fragments, Form 32. Last quarter 2nd and characteristic of 3rd century.
14. Three fragments of biconical cup, Form 27. Late 1st, and lasts well into 2nd century.
15. Campanulate cup, Form 46. Main period mid-2nd century.
16. Fragment, Form 38. Late form of Curle 11. Hadrian to Trajan.¹

Imitation Terra Sigillata

17. Fragment white slip painted, probably New Forest Ware, 4th-5th centuries.
18. Base of imitation Form 45, in colour coated ware.

Native Ware

19. Large sherd of New Forest Ware 'Thumb Pot', with hard purplish glaze and rouletted pattern.
20. Part rim and side of copy of Castor or New Forest ware 'Thumb Pot'. Coarse vesicular ware. Unusual in native paste. Probably 3rd century.
21. Major part of thin grey fumed ware bulbous beaker with acute lattice decoration and small everted rim. Type extends from Flavian period (Newstead) to Antonine period.
22. Poppyhead beaker of grey fumed ware, decorated with raised dots. Common from late 1st to middle of 2nd century. (See Plate IVb).
23. Small wide-mouthed jar of coarse ware. 2nd or 3rd century.
24. Two small bucket-shaped vessels with evidence of being joined by clay luting.
25. Base of cavetto-rimmed olla, probably 2nd to 3rd century.
26. Rim of coarse ware jar, resembling 25 and probably of the same date.
27. Rim of jar with incised cordon decoration and chevron pattern. Made on 1st century design, but with later everted rim. Probably 2nd or 3rd century.
28. Side of porringer with small bead rim, 3rd century.²
29. Similar to and of same date as 28.³
30. Cheese press. Coarse ware.
31. Fragments of shoulder of jar with incised decoration. Probably 1st-early 2nd century.
32. Part of lid or platter. Late.
33. Rim of flagon. Late 2nd century type. Collingwood type 52.
34. Fragment of later native ware of chalky paste with applied finger-impressed band derived from Iron Age form.
35. Handle of amphora. Late type.
36. Two fragments of mortaria. 3rd century.
37. Three portions of porringers. Mid-2nd century.⁴
38. Almost certainly globular amphora. Collingwood type 94. Antonine onwards.

¹ Oswald and Price, *Terra Sigillata*, Pl. LXXI, No. 18.

² Cf., 'West Blatchington'; in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (abbreviated hereafter to *S.A.C.*), p. 235, Pl. 9, No. 92.

³ *Op. cit.*, Pl. VIII, No. 85.

⁴ Cf. K. M. Kenyon, *Excavations at the Jewry Wall Site, Leicester* (1948), Pl. 19, figs. 11 and 20.

39. Two fragments of a large mortarium with unusually large grit.
 40. Part of base of large vessel, cream-coloured ware with combing.
 41. Flange rim of colour-coated mortarium, 3rd century.
 42. Two Castor ware bases, 2nd century.
 43. Portion of Face Vase.

Figurines

- (i) Bronze figurine of Mercury. Poorly moulded and limbs elongated. Native work, probably 2nd-3rd century. (See Plate IIb).
 (ii) Small part of bronze figurine (?) cast on a clay base.

Identification of the above items of pottery and figurines was made by Mr. N. E. S. Norris, F.S.A. He submitted three objects to Mr. D. Thomson, who reported on them as follows:—

30. *Cheese press*. Although uncommon, these have a wide distribution, appearing *inter alia* at Jewry Wall Leicester,¹ Colchester, Halstead Kent, York,² Wroxeter³ and Richborough.⁴ It is stated that cheese presses or squeezers are impossible to assign to any one period, the date will depend on the context in which found and the type of paste. In this case the paste may be dated to the 3rd or 4th century. (See Plate IVb).

24. *Triple vase*. It seems quite probable that you have found two parts of a triple vase. These, it has been suggested by May, had a religious purpose. Again, they are not very common. In the past it was suggested that they were used to contain daily offerings of flowers and incense before household gods' shrines, as they have been found in association with incense bowls. As it is difficult to see any other reasonable use and because of their comparative rarity, I would suggest that a religious use is more likely, and this is borne out by the known use of similar vessels in earlier classical antiquity. The paste and form of the Bodiam triple vase would give it a date in the third or fourth centuries. (See Plate IVb).

43. *Face vase*. These vessels May suggests in his 'Roman pottery found at Colchester' had a special purpose and significance as votive objects. Often they had dedicatory inscriptions as one found at Lincoln, inscribed DO MERCURIO (I give this to Mercury). For the most part they seem to have been made in Germany. From the type of paste, a red sandy ware, I would suggest that this example may have been produced in the same area as the tazza incense bowls. Face vases are not common in this country. They have been found at York, London, and a large number at Colchester. This is, as far as I know, the first example to be found in Sussex. (See Plate IVa). While some of the objects you have found seem to have religious associations, it would be wrong, I feel, to assume that you have a religious site, since these finds and the figure of Mercury . . . could indicate a domestic shrine in a Roman dwelling,

¹ Op. cit., pp. 205-6.

² May, p. 96, and Pl. XXII 20.

³ J. P. Bushe-Fox, *Excavations at Wroxeter in 1912* (1913), p. 71.

⁴ J. P. Bushe-Fox, *Excavations at Richborough*, No. 2 (1928).

and on the whole in the absence of definite and additional evidence to the contrary, I should think that this was the safe conclusion.

OTHER POTTERY

44. Sherd of *Terra Sigillata* bowl with design of dancing girls. Picked up on the surface at Site A. (See Plate III).

45. Triangular sherd of light grey pottery bearing the graffito AD IS with the S reversed. This sherd, found in a 1959 trial trench at Level 4, measures three inches by two inches and is .24 of an inch thick. It came from the cylindrical top of a vessel which had no rim. The interior diameter of the neck was 10.4 inches. The inscription is in cursive script, scratched on the clay before baking. A diagonal line before the A appears to mark the beginning, and a slightly wider space between D and I suggests that AD is a separate word.¹ The sherd was submitted to Mr. R. P. Wright, F.S.A., who reported, 'I can find no name to match this'.

46. Coarse grey-black native cooking pot, 2nd or 3rd century. Restored by Miss E. Cartwright at the Institute of Archaeology. Found at C5 in level 5. (See Plate IVb).

47. Grey-black native urn, restored at the Institute of Archeology. (See Plate IVb).

48. Rim of shallow *Terra Sigillata* basin, with lion head orifice for pouring. Wallside type, late 2nd to early 3rd century. All gloss removed by water. (See Plate IVa).

BRICKS AND TILES

Terra Mammata. From the time when attention was first directed to the area, and during excavation at both sites, fragments of very thick tiles (or perhaps they should be called bricks), bearing bosses, were found. In every case the bosses were found uppermost. Their distribution was haphazard, and in no case could any direct evidence be obtained of their purpose. The tiles were of two sizes; and eventually it was possible to reconstruct from fragments one of the larger type. It measures $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches (two Roman *pedes*) square, and two inches (*unciae*) thick, with a boss three inches in diameter and one and a quarter inches high placed two inches from each corner. These bosses must have been inserted as round balls when the clay was damp. The size of the smaller tiles was estimated from fragments to have been 17 inches by 11 inches by $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches, with four proportionately smaller bosses. Similar tiles, of varying sizes and with a varying number of bosses, have been found at Canterbury, Dover, Colchester, Verulamium,² Angmering³ and Ashted Common.⁴ Many suggestions have been made as to their use, but it seems most likely that they were used in lieu of flue tiles

¹ A much smaller goblet of buff ware with a cylindrical neck, late 3rd or 4th century, was found at Verulamium. It bears MAURUSI in cursive script in a similar position on the neck. R. E. M. and T. V. Wheeler, *Verulamium* (1936), Pl. CXV B and p. 138.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

³ Angmering tiles had two bosses, placed either diagonally, or both at one end. *S.A.C.*, vol. 79, p. 20.

⁴ A. W. G. Lowther, in *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 1926-7-8.

as part of a hypocaust system, either to enable the hot air to circulate under the floor,¹ or up the walls.²

Stamps of the British Fleet (see Plate V). Eight fragments of bricks and tiles bearing the stamp of the (Roman) British Fleet (CL BR, standing for *Classis Britannica*) were found, and submitted to Mr. R. P. Wright, F.S.A. He reported as follows:

- (a) CL (inverted): BR, one *tegula*.
- (b) CLBR with the BR inverted, three bricks.
- (c) CL (triangular stop) BR, poorly impressed, one *imbrex*.
- (d) CL (triangular stop) BR, with stop and letters thinner than in (c); one brick and two *tegulae*.

Mr. Wright published these findings in *Roman Britain 1960. Journal of Roman Studies* (JRS) No. 29, p. 196.

- (a) Was of the Pevensey type,³ found as described at Site A.
- (b) Were of the Bardown type,⁴ and came from Level 4; two being associated with *Sestertii* of Trajan. The BR is an inverted monogram, and in one case is touched by the L.
- (c) Poorly impressed because of the curving surface, was of the Cranbrook type,⁵ and came from Level 3.
- (d) The stamps of this type, like (c), have square corners, while the corners of (a) and (b) are rounded. The lettering, instead of being crude and square, approximates more to that seen on Roman monuments.⁶ A triangular stop separates CL and BR, and the letters can all be read from the same side. Mr. Wright reported that they seem to be unmatched elsewhere. The three examples all came from Level 3. Four of the stamps are illustrated on Plate V, B2 being the only perfect specimen found, and D, though not including the stop, shows the best lettering of the three (d) specimens, and might, perhaps, be designated the 'Bodiam Type'.

Roofing tiles. These were nearly all broken into such small fragments that it was not practicable to estimate the predominant size. It was, however, established that they were not hung, but supported from the bottom of the roof; and, as found at Canterbury,⁷ that there were two devices to prevent slipping. One type had a rectangular cut-away, with vertical sides at the end of the flanges, and the other had similar slots in the same positions which were chamfered.

¹ S. E. Winbolt, *Roman Folkestone* (1924), p. 105. For illustration see J. Mothersole, *The Saxon Shore* (1924), p. 29, fig. 26.

² The late Professor Richmond in conversation. He called them *Terrae mammatae*, and said that they were common in Rome, though somewhat rare in Britain.

³ *S.A.C.*, vol. 51 (1908), p. 112, and *Ephemeris Epigraphica* IX 1276b.

⁴ I. D. Margary, in *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. 32 (1952), p. 107.

⁵ *Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 49.

⁶ Lettering of this type was introduced into Gaul from the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37). Camille Jullian, *Gallia* (1919), p. 188.

⁷ *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. 36 (1956).

WOOD AND CHARCOAL

From Level 4. Ash (*Fraxinus Excelsior*), and possibly hazel (*Corylus Avallana*); but structure of the latter obscure.

Wood, probably from a wattle and daub structure at Level 4. Birch (*Betula sp.*). Willow (*Salix sp.*); but the possibility of poplar cannot be excluded.

Embedded in the basic clay at a depth of five feet nine inches. Charcoal of oak (*Quercus sp.*). Wood of yew (*Taxus Baccata*). Compressed alder (*Alnus Glutinosa*). Bark, probably alder. Large piece of compressed oak wood. Large piece of charcoal, probably willow; but poplar cannot be excluded. Large pieces of charcoal covered with clay, some probably birch, some probably willow (*Salix sp.*); but poplar cannot be excluded. Microscopic examination, and identification were carried out by Dr. G. Taylor, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

THE ROMAN ROAD

The Roman road from the Watling Street at Rochester to the Sussex ironfields and Hastings crosses Bodiam parish. At a point 270 yards NNW of Sandhurst church (Kent), it changes alignment, the new alignment being laid out on Stapley Beacon (Beacon Farm, Staplecross), on a bearing of 186 degrees. Steep slopes necessitated an immediate detour via Bodiam Mill (where the road enters Sussex) and Bodiam church. Thence the road proceeded straight to the NW corner of the moat of Bodiam Castle.¹ From there it ran to the river at a point 200 feet below Bodiam Bridge, which appears to have been the crossing place down to recent times, as the name of the field on the opposite (southern) bank is 'Clappers' which means *stepping stones* or a *rough bridge*.² From that point it again ran straight, on a bearing of 186 degrees, to Staplecross crossroads, and was thus exactly parallel to the main alignment laid out from near Sandhurst church, but displaced 250 yards to the westward.³ The excavation at site B lies 30 yards to the west of the Roman road; and if the tile fragments ploughed up at Site D (unexcavated) were not outliers from Site B, and more foundations lie beneath the surface there, then the Roman road passed straight through the settlement.

RELATIVE LAND AND SEA LEVELS

An important result of the excavation was the proof obtained

¹ The B. & D.H.S. verified this course by exposing the road in five places in 1960 and 1961. See *Transactions* of that Society, Nos. 9 and 10, also Margary, *Roman Ways in the Weald* (1965), pp. 223, 225. Mr. Wingrove Payne exposed the road at Bodiam Castle in 1959.

² *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names*.

³ The bearings of survey line and road were separately calculated; data for the latter being obtained by an exposure by telephone engineers at the bend of the modern road near Bodiam station, and the well-known exposure in the garden of Brasses Farm. These two points align on Staplecross, and the back bearing indicates the river crossing.

of the land level during the Romano-British period; which completely negated the idea that the lower Rother Valley was then an estuary as it was in medieval times. The bench mark on the SE corner of Bodiam Bridge (20.4 feet)¹ enabled the height of the lowest occupation level (No. 8) to be fixed at 13 inches above O.D.² This agreed with the findings of Mr. J. H. Evans, F.S.A., F.R.G.S., who wrote, 'The Roman level in the Thames is to be found just above the Upper Peat Bed at about O.D. This agrees with the Medway data, the horizon of which lies between O.D. and one foot above O.D.; and it represents the land surface upon which the Romano-British population lived and worked'.³ Mr. Evans also considered that the Roman land surface reached the peak of its elevation in A.D. 400, and that the then high tide level with reference to it was a maximum of 10 feet below the present high tide level.

Spring tides in Rye Bay now rise to the height of 11 feet 3 inches above O.D. Assuming that the rise and fall have not changed substantially since Roman times, the lowest occupation level, if it had been subjected to the full effect of the tides, would have been just awash at spring tides in A.D. 400, and in A.D. 100, its approximate date, would have been subject still more to flooding. There could, therefore, have been no estuary or tidal river at Bodiam when the site was occupied.

The tidal pressure in Roman times may not have differed greatly from what it is today; for although there may have been less silt in the river, the mouth, instead of being at Rye Harbour, was nearly twice as far away at Hythe. As Level 8, the first settlement, almost coincides with the present water table, a land surface, higher by 10 feet than now, would place it that height above interference by water in A.D. 400, though a little less in A.D. 100, its approximate date of occupation.

The picture of the Limen (now the Rother) in the Roman period, suggested by the excavation, is that of a navigable river with firm banks, subject only, perhaps, to tidal variations of current; a condition which it seems to have retained well into Saxon times, for the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the Danes towed (*tugon*) their ships up the River Limen in 893. The sinking of the land, and the consequent inroads of the sea completed the inundation of Old Winchelsea in 1287. When, 100 years later, Bodiam Castle was built, it was provided with a dock which could be entered at high tide by vessels of four feet draught. This dock is now 25 feet above O.D.; so that from the 14th century onwards the lowest spring tide would hardly have uncovered the Roman site, which would account for the water-washed condition of the pottery. In

¹ See Ordnance Survey map 6 inch Sussex XXXI SE.

² O.D. (Ordnance Datum) is the mean sea level at Liverpool.

³ John H. Evans, 'Archaeological Horizons in the North Kent Marshes, Roman Level, Appendix A, in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 66.

the circumstances it is remarkable that the finds, particularly the glass, are so well preserved.

CONCLUSIONS

The whole area of excavation measured only 20 yards square, and even this was only partially dug. It was, however, established that in that area there had been eight successive settlements during a period extending over the greater part of the Roman occupation. On four levels, whatever buildings had been erected had been destroyed by fire. The first settlement was small, the second even smaller. Then followed two on a more extended scale. At Level 4, occupied apparently in the early 2nd century, a definite attempt was made to erect a more permanent building on the site. The evidence pointed to a building of wattle and daub with a tiled roof and a very roughly paved floor, which had been burned down. It may possibly have had a small and very primitive hypocaust; but the whole construction was rough, and materials made for other purposes had been used in a haphazard way. That the settlement at Level 4 was connected with the (Roman) British Fleet would seem to be certain; but everything tended to show that the actual site was occupied by local inhabitants, who could have been used by the naval authorities as labourers. The figurine of Mercury, the vestige of another figurine, and the portion of a triple votive vase, all of native manufacture, suggest that either that building or another close by was a domestic shrine for the household gods, and that the inhabitants, therefore, had adopted the Roman way of life. The large number of *Terrae Mammatae*, none of which were, or could have been used, on the site to perform their proper function, and the presence of fragments of *Terra Sigillata*, suggest that there was in the vicinity a much more important building, which may have housed the naval authorities.

From all the evidence, the conclusion that there was in Roman times an important river port at Bodiam would appear to be justified. The hops (*Humulus Lupulus*) which now cover the site are, by current practice, grubbed up after 15 or 20 years; and the ground is then left fallow for one year before replanting. In that year, which may fall between 1975 and 1980, a much fuller examination might be made.