

# EXCAVATIONS AT HAMPTON PARK, SEALE.

BY

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EDITOR'S NOTE.—*The following article was not intended by its Author for publication as it stands. In his absence on Active Service abroad the Council of the Society has decided that it should be printed as a preliminary record, in the hope that a complete report from Mr. Money may be included in a later Volume of "Collections," with sections and more illustrations, together with details of the pottery and other finds, and an examination of the historical setting.*

## *Acknowledgements.*

FOR two short periods during the spring and summer of 1939 work was carried out on a group of mediæval buildings at Hampton Park in the parish of Seale (see Plate VIII, Plan, p. 114).

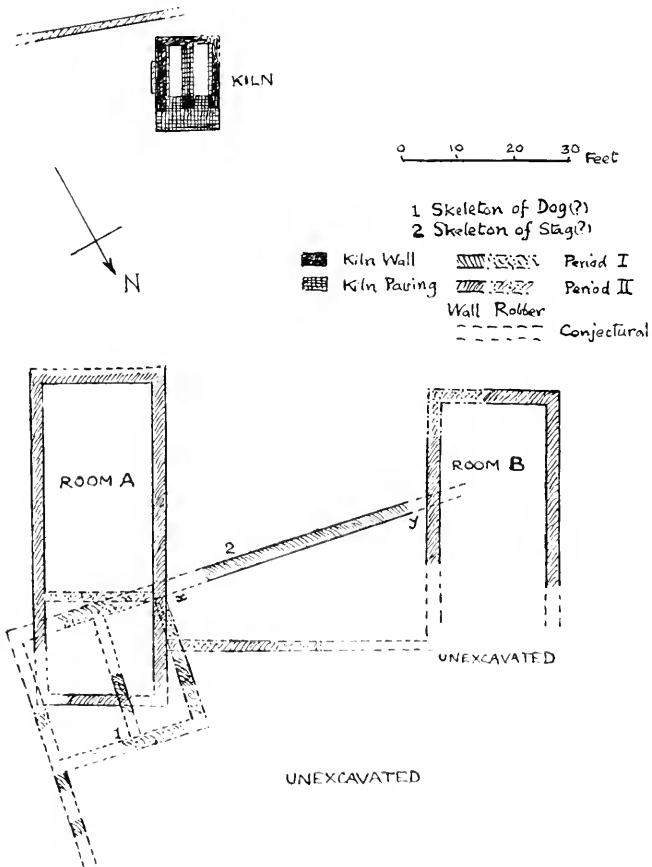
The first indication of any building was given two years before when the land was put under plough. The owner, Mr. Eustace Thornton, communicated this discovery to the Surrey Archæological Society, and Miss Kathleen Kenyon, F.S.A., Secretary of the Institute of Archæology and a member of the Society, agreed to supervise the excavation which was undertaken by the author. The gratitude of all concerned is due to Mr. Thornton, who generously supplied much of the necessary labour and assisted us in every possible way. The Surrey Archæological Society made a grant of £15, which was further augmented by £5 from Sir Charles Marston.

## *The Buildings.*

Two periods in the buildings (the plan of which is not yet fully determined) are discernible. The earlier buildings, traces of which have largely disappeared owing to later robbing but which can be deduced from "robber-trenches," consist of a court-yard laid out roughly on a north-south east-west plan, in the south-east corner of which are two small rooms. It must be said that the lay-out of this building is not definitely ascertained owing to disturbance of the ground caused by roots and later demolition.

The main evidence for the construction of this early building is given by the south wall which is fairly well preserved in its lowest courses. It has a uniform width of about 2 ft. 6 in. and was trench-built into the natural sand and a thin layer of dark sand immediately above the natural which contains pottery and

is presumably connected with the actual *construction* of the wall rather than its *inhabitation*: the actual courses of the wall proper begin immediately above this level. The foundation construction is of unshaped stones roughly mortared. The faces of the wall



PLAN OF EXCAVATIONS AT HAMPTON PARK, SEALE.

From a drawing by J. H. Money.

proper are of dressed stones, but the core is of rougher material. The debris of brick, tile, etc., which surrounds the upper courses of this wall is obviously material scattered by the plough and for this reason cannot be used as reliable evidence for dating the building. The lowest level is undisturbed and is contemporary with the earliest stage of the construction of the early period building.

There are a great many post-holes associated with Period I both in the structure of the wall (to act as supports for the masonry) and independently all over the site. Unfortunately it has not been possible to clear enough ground to plan them. In one portion of the wall it was found that post-holes occurred about every two feet.

The Period II buildings are orientated differently, running roughly from north-east to south-west. The buildings so far discovered consist of two rectangular structures joined at the north end by a cross-wall. Of these two the south-westerly (Room A) is subdivided into a larger and a small room. The smaller room, which lies at the north end of the rectangle, has a rough flooring of bricks lying on a level with the existing portions of the Period I wall, which runs diagonally through the room and was presumably incorporated into the new flooring.

The construction of the Period II walls is thinner and seldom exceeds 1 ft. 9 in. in width. The walls of Room B are faced with dressed stones enclosing a rubble core. Room A is of inferior construction and the walls vary in width from 1 ft. to 1 ft. 9 in.

It will be noticed in the plan that there are two definite breaks (marked *x* and *y*) in the Period I wall at the two points where it intersects the west wall of Room A and the east wall of Room B respectively. It seems clear that this is due to robbing by the builders of Period II. At the point of intersection in the west wall of Room A a portion of the Period I wall has been incorporated in its line. This is made evident by the fact that the faces of the incorporated portion, which are clearly distinct from the rest of the wall, are in a direct alignment with the rest of the Period I wall. Furthermore, the incorporated portion rests directly upon the natural sand, while the Period II construction is laid on top of the dark layer connected with Period I. The Period II walls are trench-built into the debris of Period I. Above this debris is a thin layer of chalk, presumably a rough surface, and above this again is a debris layer connected with Period II.

*N.B.*—It is only in this portion of the building that the full stratigraphical series has been undisturbed.

### *The Kiln.*

To the south-west of the general area lies a kiln constructed of bricks. It is aligned with the later buildings and may therefore be assigned to Period II. The stratigraphical evidence confirms this surmise. To the south of the kiln is a dry-built wall which does not run on the same alignment as the kiln but which is obviously

connected with it, being in the nature of a screen-wall to prevent fall of earth from behind. Both the wall and the kiln have been trench-built into the dark brown sand (which constitutes both previous occupation and sand washed down from the slope above) and thus are assigned to Period II. The lowest courses of the screen-wall have been built into the natural sand which has been cut away to receive it, the level being 6 in. lower to the north of the wall than on the south. The natural sand has been cut away lower still to receive the kiln, the outer face of which (in the south-west corner) is bedded directly against the sand. In this part of the kiln 18 courses still stand to a height of 2 ft. 3 in. The south and west walls of the kiln have been partially dislodged by the pressure from behind. Against the face of the south wall (see Plate VIII) were found the collapsed upper portions of the screen-wall. The collapse must have taken place almost as soon as the kiln fell into disuse, for many of the stones rested immediately upon and against the brickwork.

The interior floor of the kiln, which measures 10 ft. by 7 ft. 6 in., consists of three strips of paving which correspond roughly to three portions of brickwork to the north designed to carry the stoke-hole arches. In the spaces between the strips of paving the sand has been fused by the burning into a hard reddish-brown surface. The remaining portions of the kiln to the north are paved (see Plan). The east wall appears to have been buttressed along part of its length. Immediately above the paving and hard sand which together form the floor of the kiln is a thin buff-coloured layer of clay containing brick chippings, etc. Above this is a thick layer contemporary with the structure: it contains much wood and broken brick and constitutes both the kiln-refuse and the first stage of the collapse of the kiln itself. The inward sag of the kiln wall commences almost immediately on a level with the top of this layer. Above this is a level containing washed sand, tile debris and some brick which must constitute debris both from the kiln and from any building which may exist higher up the hill. Above this again is a thin layer of washed sand which is immediately below the humus level.

### *Skeletons.*

(1) The skeleton of a stag (?) was discovered buried in the natural beside and partly beneath the south wall of Period I (see Plan). Both hind-legs were found to have been severed about 6 in. above the foot and the severed parts laid beside the legs, but in the opposite direction to the remaining portions of the legs. This may indicate some sort of foundation burial similar to that practised



INTERSECTION OF WALLS OF PERIODS I AND II.

*P.* 115.



THE KILN,  
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*P.* 116.

*facing p.* 116



by the Romans and exemplified by infant burials in the theatre at St. Albans and at Wroxeter.

(2) Skeleton of a dog (?).

Numerous animal bones in all levels.

### *Pottery.*

All pottery associated with the site is at the Institute of Archaeology, Regent's Park. The author hopes when conditions permit to make measured drawings for publication of all necessary sherds.

### *History.*

No research has yet been done on the records connected with the site. From the excavation it would appear that the buildings were not ecclesiastical in the strictest sense, though there is no reason to preclude the theory that they were connected with a religious establishment. Further excavation may reveal buildings of the supposed priory.

### *Roman Pottery.*

Many sherds of Roman pottery (including a 1st-century rim of coarse black ware, Castor ware and imitation Samian) have been discovered on the surface and in every level. This is clear indication of a Roman site somewhere in the vicinity.

*Small finds* include many iron nails, a small iron hoop, bronze bell, bronze tweezers, a small object of shale and fragment of stone bowl.