

A Roman ditch at 80 Doods Road, Reigate

In 2002, while building work to extend a basement room below 80 Doods Road, Reigate (TQ 2632 5064) was under way, the owner, Mr Steve Lee, noticed fragments of pottery protruding at eye level from the newly exposed vertical section beneath his house. A visit to the site confirmed the pottery as Roman and the opportunity was immediately taken to examine and record the exposed section to provide a context for the finds. No 80 Doods Road lies some 200m west of the tile kiln and associated features (fig 1), which were excavated in 2004 (Jones 2004) and earlier (Williams & Masefield 2003).

The eastern side of the extended basement was seen to have cut along the line of a ditch, about 4m of which was exposed (fig 2). The basement had been extended about a metre to the east, in the course of which part of the ditch was destroyed. This ditch, the bottom of which lay *c* 1.2m below the base of the wooden floor above, appeared to run downhill to the north at a shallow angle (though this may be an illusion caused by the angle at which it had been cut) and was aligned approximately north–south. The exposed section (fig 3, section ABC) ran at an angle of about 15° to the line of the ditch while the southern wall of the cellar exposed a partial section across it, showing it to have a rounded profile. The extreme dryness of the exposed section in the basement caused some difficulty in its recording. The lowest fill (1) was a sandy grey soil mottled with iron-rich patches, and up to *c* 30mm deep. The pottery seen by Mr Lee lay in the upper half of this fill and comprised the greater parts of two vessels, a mortarium and a storage vessel, together with a sherd of samian and a jar and a few flecks of burnt bone. Above this was a discontinuous layer of charcoal-rich mottled grey/brown sand (2), which faded out before it reached the south basement wall. Above this was a dark mottled brown sand (3) and above that a dark iron-rich sand (4). The base of the topsoil (5) lay above, and included stone rubble.

In early 2003 two trenches were excavated in the garden behind the house (fig 2, trenches 1 and 2). Both proved negative and, as was later shown, were sited slightly too far to the east to intercept the projected ditch. However, both encountered Gault clay as opposed to the Lower Greensand seen in the cellar. Shortly afterwards two small trenches were opened in the front garden (fig 2, trenches 3, 4; fig 3, sections DE, FG). Trench 3 was excavated immediately south of the house and adjacent to its bay window. This was successful in locating the ditch as it emerged from beneath the house and a little more pottery was recovered. This

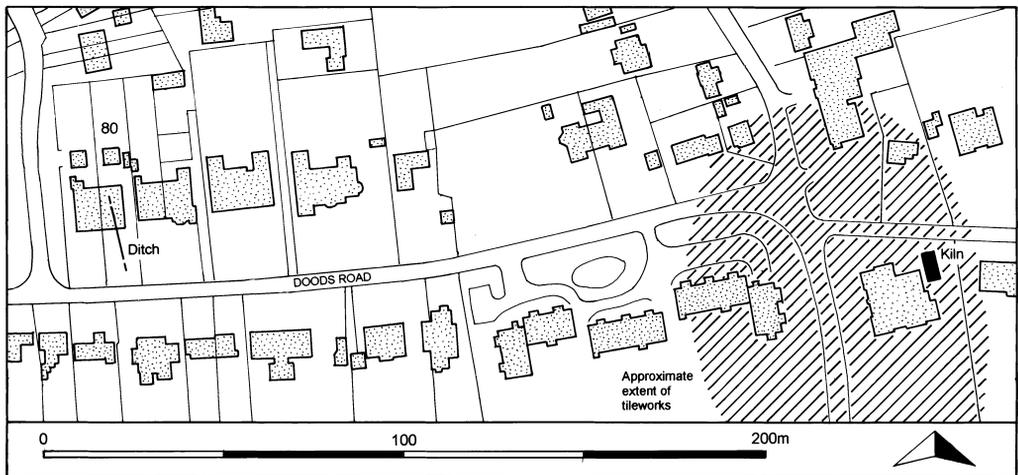


Fig 1 80 Doods Road, Reigate. The Doods Road area showing the ditch found at no 80 in relation to the site of the Roman tileworks. (© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved)

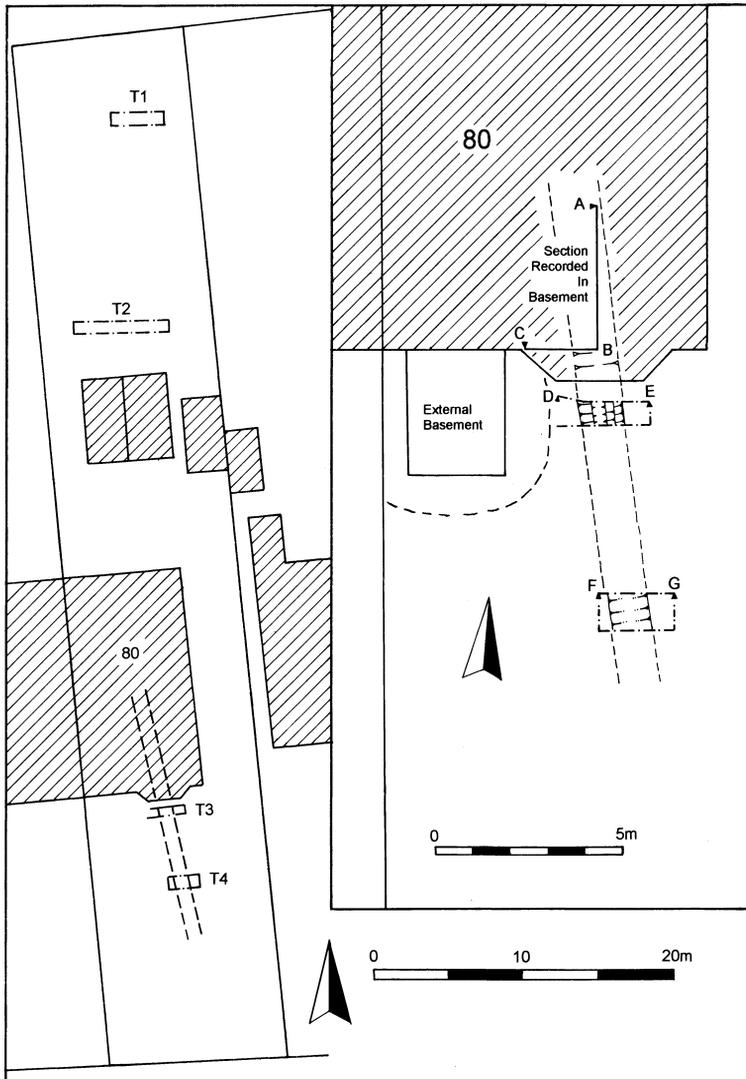


Fig 2 80 Doods Road, Reigate. Location of the Roman ditch and the excavated trenches.

trench showed the ditch to be *c.* 1.3m wide, with a stepped profile. Trench 4 was excavated 5.5m to the south of the house, in the front lawn. This also located the ditch, although it was less clear, but the trench served to confirm its alignment. Neither of these trenches produced the stratification that was recorded in the basement section, being composed of light brown or grey sand with occasional charcoal flecks. Both trenches to the south of the house were disturbed by modern pipes and cables.

The pottery, by Malcolm Lyne (fig 4)

The small pottery assemblage from context 1 includes the following:

- 1 Developed Gillam 238 mortarium in very fine cream fabric (Davies *et al* 1994, Fig 55, 311–13). Probably an import from Gallia Belgica. *c.* AD80–150. Three-quarters of this vessel is present.

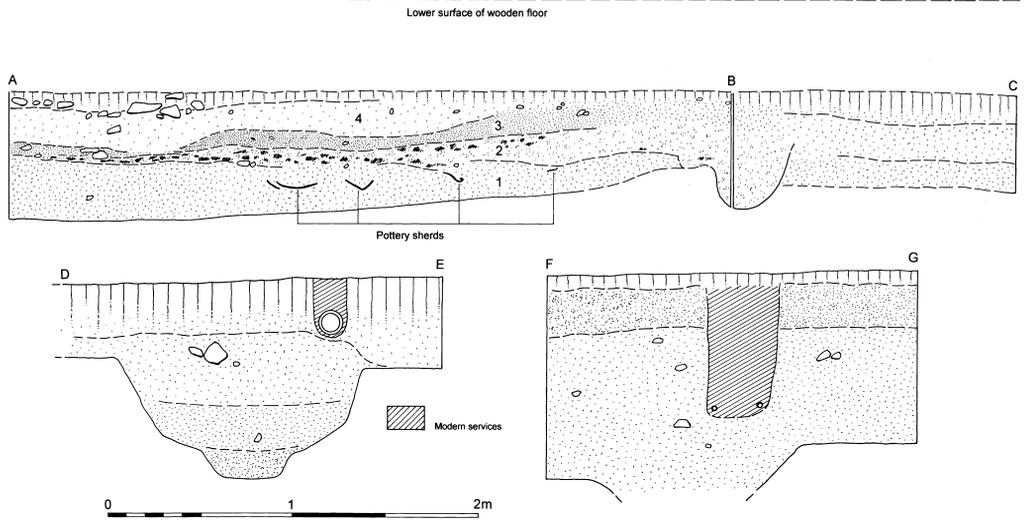


Fig 3 80 Doods Road, Reigate. Sections.

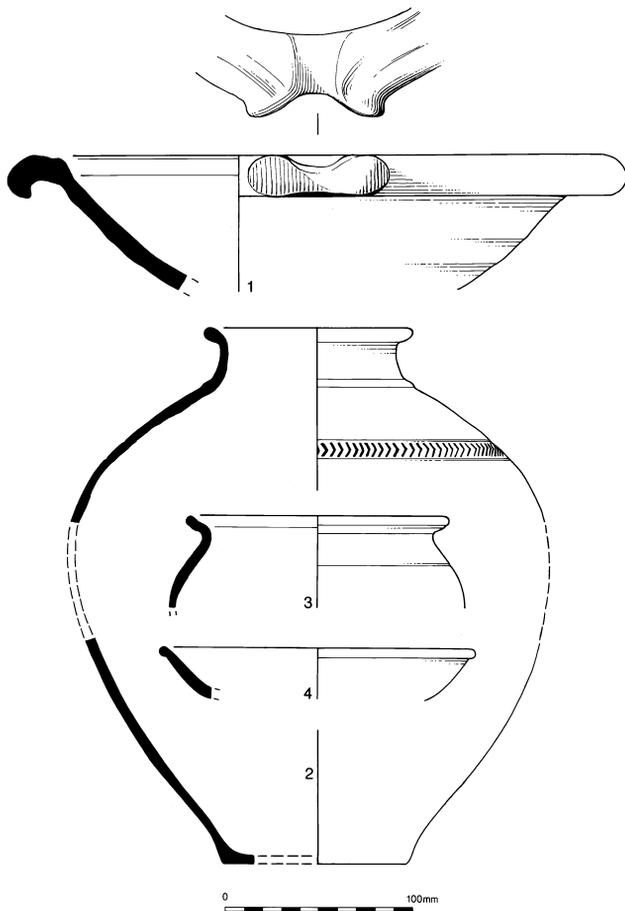


Fig 4 80 Doods Road, Reigate. Roman pottery from the ditch.

- 2 Large fragments of a necked storage-vessel in very fine sanded orange fabric, fired grey externally, with an incised herringbone-decorated cordon on its shoulder. Possibly an Alice Holt product, although the oxidised fabric and decoration are atypical. *c* AD70–150. Roughly half of this vessel is present.
- 3 Very fine sanded greyware jar of Lyne and Jefferies Type 3A-5 (1979). The fabric differs from the typical Alice Holt ones in having soft black ferrous inclusions as well as quartz filler: this pot may come from another, related source in West Surrey. *c* AD90–150
- 4 Dr. 18/31 platter in South Gaulish samian fabric. *c* AD90–110

Also present were: a fragment from an everted-rim storage jar in a terminally oxidised, grog-tempered Patchgrove ware variant from West Kent (*c* AD30–150); five sherds from an open form in North Kent BB2 fabric (*c* AD110–180), and a rim fragment from a necked-jar in grog-tempered East Sussex ware (Late Iron Age–AD200). These vessels suggest that the feature can be dated to *c* AD90–150.

Topsoil removed next door at 78 Doods Road produced a flanged-bowl rim sherd of Lyne and Jefferies Type 5A-2 in sandy rough Alice Holt greyware and of later date than the material from the ditch (*c* AD180–240).

Discussion

The property straddles the junction of the Lower Greensand and the Gault clay that overlies it; the former extending south from, and the latter extending north from the house. At a distance of some 220m west of the site of the tile kiln the ditch is really too distant to be closely associated with it, and indeed no tile fragments were found in the ditch, but it is likely that that industry would have been associated with a domestic site, perhaps a villa. The pottery recovered from the ditch dates to *c* AD90–150, which agrees well with the archaeomagnetic date for the last firing of the kiln (AD90–120, Jones 2004). Unfortunately, the Doods Road area is now rather heavily built up with substantial late 19th century houses rendering further work difficult. However, in 2006 building work was monitored at 97 Doods Road, roughly half way between the two sites. No further evidence for Roman activity was forthcoming.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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