

THE ROMANO-BRITISH VILLA AT SAUNDERTON RECONSIDERED

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THE purpose of this paper is to publish details of recent discoveries made on the site of the villa at Saunderton (Hemley Hill), and to suggest a re-interpretation of the remains found in the excavations of 1938 in the light of this new material, and from what we know of neighbouring villas. A brief summary of the 1938 excavations is followed by a description and discussion of the new material from the site. The evidence for the earliest and latest Romano-British occupation of the site is then reconsidered, and finally the nature of the Saunderton and other villas along the Icknield Way is discussed. An appendix gives details of Romano-British material recently recovered from two sites at Bledlow.

SAUNDERTON VILLA AS REVEALED IN 1938.¹ (Fig. 2)

The excavations of 1938 were limited strictly to the confines of the building discovered, and the eastern extremity of the building was only partially revealed. Four periods of occupation were noted. The first of these was represented by a trench 18' × 10' cut into the natural chalk. From the pit were recovered some small chalk tesserae, and from elsewhere on the site came a considerable quantity of mid 1st to mid 2nd century AD pottery. The second phase of occupation (the excavator's period I) was represented by a rectangular building, 115' × 49½', with flint foundations. A corridor ran the entire length of the south side of the building, and north of the corridor there were ten small rooms, two large ones and an L-shaped corridor. The biggest room was exceptionally large, 35' × 32', and had a series of built channels below the floor, which the excavator believed to be the remains of a hypocaust. No furnace to supply heat to this room was discovered during the excavations. In room IX however evidence for a furnace was found, associated with a so-called T-shaped flue running beneath the floor of that room and its neighbour, room VII. This was compared to the furnaces and T-shaped flues from Hambleton and identified as probably the remains of a corn-drying oven. This second phase building fell into decay and its walls were rebuilt and the interior redesigned at the start of phase 3 (the excavator's period II). The new building retained the front corridor but now contained only three large rooms, each of which was 32' wide and the largest 40' long. The smallest of the rooms had an area of 800 sq. ft. and the largest one of 1280 sq. ft. Subsequently the central room was subdivided by two walls built of rough chalk blocks, to make three rooms, one of which was almost 32' square but the other two being only 5' wide and 10' and 20' long respectively. This represents phase 4 (the excavator's period III). Phase 2 is dated

by the excavator to mid 2nd century–late 3rd century, and phase 3 end of 3rd century to an undetermined point in the 4th century. The end of the Romano-British occupation of the site is said to be no earlier than the late 4th century.

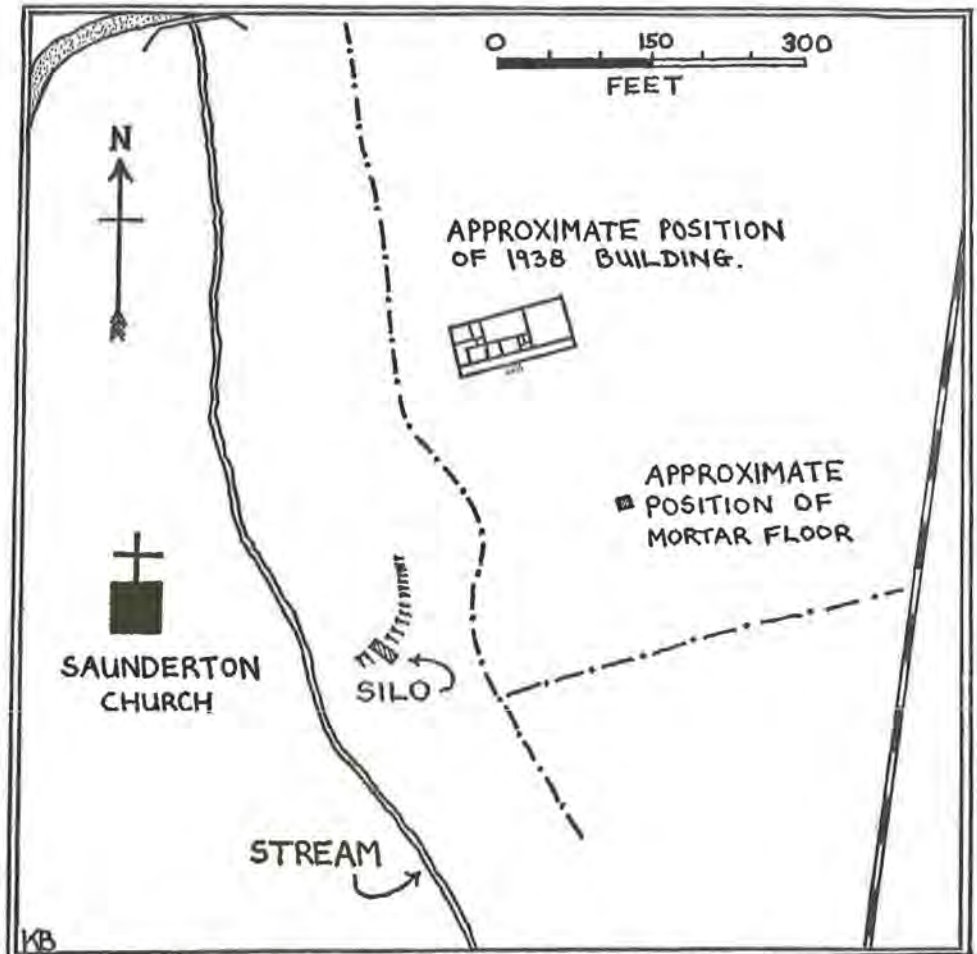


Fig. 1. Sketch map illustrating the position of the 1938 building, new mortar floor, and rubbish pit.

NEW DISCOVERIES AT SAUNDERTON

During the excavation of a silo pit on waste ground approximately 150 yards south of the building found in 1938, (Fig. 1) a local resident, Mr. F. H. Pavry noted the existence of a rubbish pit in the old ground surface (Fig. 3). From this pit he recovered a quantity of pottery, plaster, tiles, and small finds, all of Romano-British date. These he has kept until the present, and the material has now been studied by the writer and is described and discussed below.² An additional structural feature has also been partially revealed by the farmer, who having hit buried walls with his plough in an area approximately 200' south-south-east of the known building, excavated a hole three feet square and discovered a solid floor of coloured mortar (? *opus*).

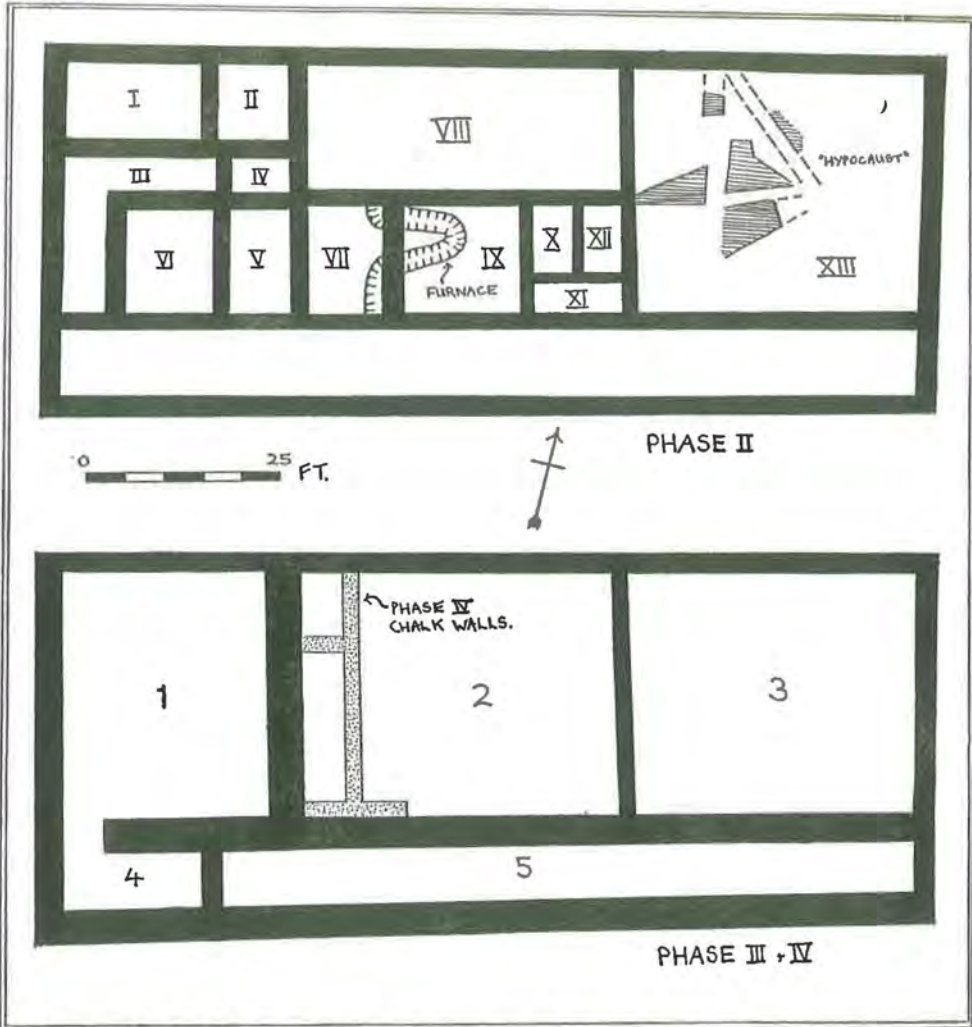


Fig. 2. The building excavated at Saunderton in 1938.

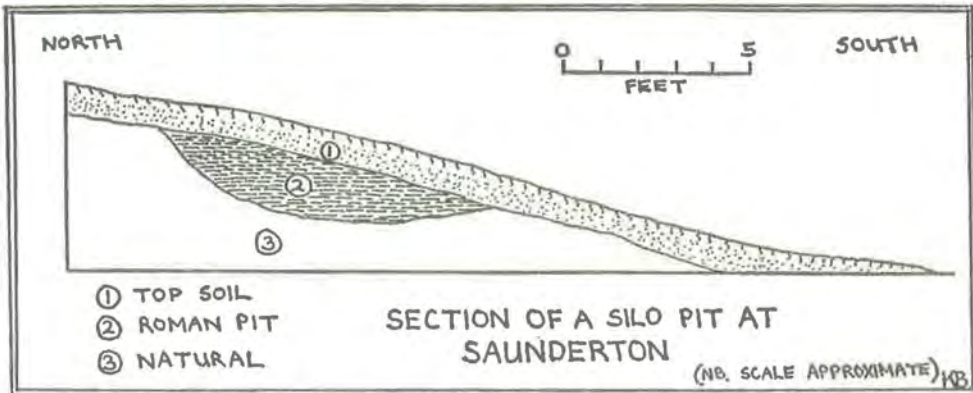


Fig. 3. Section of Silo pit showing position of the rubbish deposit.

THE POTTERY

A total of 138 sherds were kept by Mr. Pavry and examined by the writer. The most numerous fabrics were medium fine grey wares (35 examples, no rims), similar wares but with a dark grey burnished slip (32 examples, 12 rims), and colour-coated wares (25 examples, 3 rims). Other fabrics of interest included brown burnished ware (6 examples, 1 rim), black burnished ware (4 examples, 1 rim), and red-coated imitations of samian (5 examples, 1 rim, plus 14 sherds from a single, large jar). There was one sherd from a hand made vessel. The more significant pieces are now described in detail (Fig. 4).

1. Hard, even, medium grey fabric with small white grits. A dark grey burnished slip on the exterior. Rim of a small jar.
2. Fabric as 1, slip burnished on the interior only. Rim of a pie dish.
3. Fabric as 1, slip on the exterior only. Rim of a flagon.
- 4-5. Fabric as 1, slip inside and out. Pie dish rims.
6. Fabric as 1, slip inside and out. Flanged pie dish rim.

Not illustrated: in the same fabric as 1-6, two pie dish rims similar to 4 and four similar to 2.

7. Hard, even, dark and grey fabric with brown and white grits. The exterior is black slipped and burnished. Rim of an open-mouthed jar.
 8. Hard, even, pale brown fabric with few visible grits. The exterior is brown slipped and burnished. Rim and body sherds of an olla.
 9. Hard, even, medium brown fabric with a few small white grits. Rim of an open-mouthed jar.
 10. Slightly soft, even, pale buff fabric with small white and brown grits. Rim of an open-mouthed jar.
 11. Hadrianic or antonine samian, Drag. 32 rim.
- Not illustrated: A body sherd from a form 37 bowl, Hadrianic (?), with a standing male nude.
12. Rim of a Rhenish beaker.
- Not illustrated: Rim of a similar beaker in Rhenish ware.
13. Hard, even, dark grey fabric with no visible grits. An even, dark brown wash covers both interior and exterior surfaces. Rim from a beaker.

Not illustrated: Two rim sherds from a Castor Box, two sherds of hard white fabric with black wash and white barbotine decoration, two sherds from a large beaker of dark grey fabric with deep brown wash and rouletted decoration on the exterior, and fourteen sherds from a large jar of orange-red fabric with an exterior slip of dull reddish-orange.

Apart from the mid 2nd century samian ware (of which there were only three pieces) none of the pottery need be earlier than late 3rd century (although some of the colour-coated wares would more readily fit an earlier date) with the exception of No. 7 which has a very good parallel from a 2nd century deposit at Latimer.³ The imitation samian and the brown burnished jar (8) can hardly be placed earlier than the very end of the third century and might well date to the middle of the 4th century. Clearly, the grey and grey burnished fabrics,

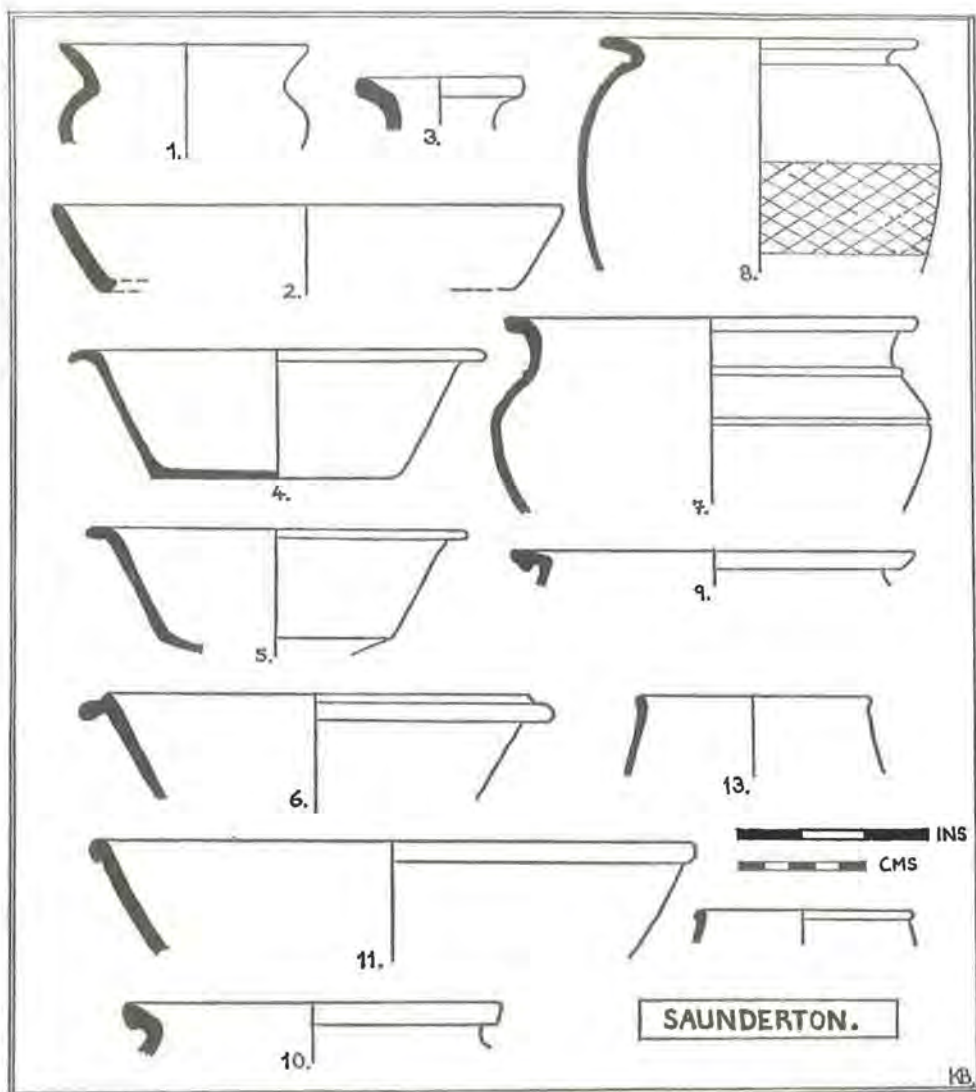


Fig. 4. Pottery from the rubbish deposit.

which between them account for fifty percent of the pottery in the deposit, must hold the key to the dating of the deposit. Grey burnished pottery of the type met with here does not occur at Latimer, King's Lane (Gt. Missenden), and High Wycombe, nor amongst the material from Sarrat, Chorleywood, Chesham, and Shardloes. Sherds of this fabric however do appear amongst the material collected from the sites at Little Kimble, and Bec House, Bledlow. It would seem, therefore, to be a fabric which found a market along the Icknield Way but not in the Chiltern valleys, and it may well prove to be a relatively local type. At Latimer however, a rather similar grey fabric appeared in considerable quantities in the areas of post-villa occupation but was black rather than grey

slipped and burnished. The forms in which both of these fabrics appear are largely the same, being principally imitations of the products of the major black-slipped and burnished pottery centres. Both the forms and the archaeological associations of the Latimer fabric point to a mid-late 4th century date for them, and the writer would suggest that a similar date applies to the examples from Saunderton. The brown burnished olla (No. 8) has a rim form which should indicate a fourth century date,⁴ and a distinctive mortarium flange of white fabric appears to belong with the late fourth century mortaria.

TILE

The tile material collected by Mr. Pavry included seven pieces of flue tile, one fragment (much weathered) of a stamped flue tile, six red and two white tesserae, and two small pieces of tile with the impression of a dog's foot upon them.

PLASTER

Twenty-four pieces of painted wall plaster were recovered, all backed with a medium grain whitish-yellow mortar. Most of the pieces were painted in a single colour (15 maroon, 3 green, 1 black), but in addition to two pieces with panelled designs in three colours, there were three fragments which were more elaborately painted. None of the designs could be identified, but the colours represented were as follows:

Fragment A: yellow ground with grey and red blotches and three brown lines radiating from a single point.

Fragment B: red and yellow fields separated by two narrow cordons of white and orange. On the yellow field a brown ? stalk with a white ? flower at the head.

Fragment C: Cordons of maroon, white and black, and fields of green, red, white and pink.

There were also two red-painted quarter mouldings.

STONE

Eight mosaic stones (approximately 0.4" sq.) were found, of which four were grey, three white and one red. There were also eight pieces of Purbeck Marble. Six of these were fragments from a slab 1.1" thick, the largest fragment being 4" x 2½". Another slab was represented by a single fragment 0.75" thick, and only 1½" x 1" in size. The eighth piece of marble was 2½" square, worked on two sides, and survived to a length of 6"; it appeared to be part of a window sill or a door jamb. Four small items of stone are described in the section on small finds.

METAL

Approximately three dozen iron nails were collected, mostly between 3" and 3½" in length where they survived intact. There were three small finds of metal (described below) none of which were significant. Evidence of metal working on the site was represented by twelve lumps of iron clinker, two pieces of copper or bronze slag, and a piece of fused lead waste.

BONE

Though animal bones were certainly present in the deposit, only one piece of bone was kept by Mr. Pavry, apart from three bone or ivory pins described below. The fragment preserved is a piece from the crown of a human skull, its greatest length and width being two inches. The cause of its separation from the rest of the skull could not be ascertained but some features of the fragment suggest that violence cannot be ruled out.⁵

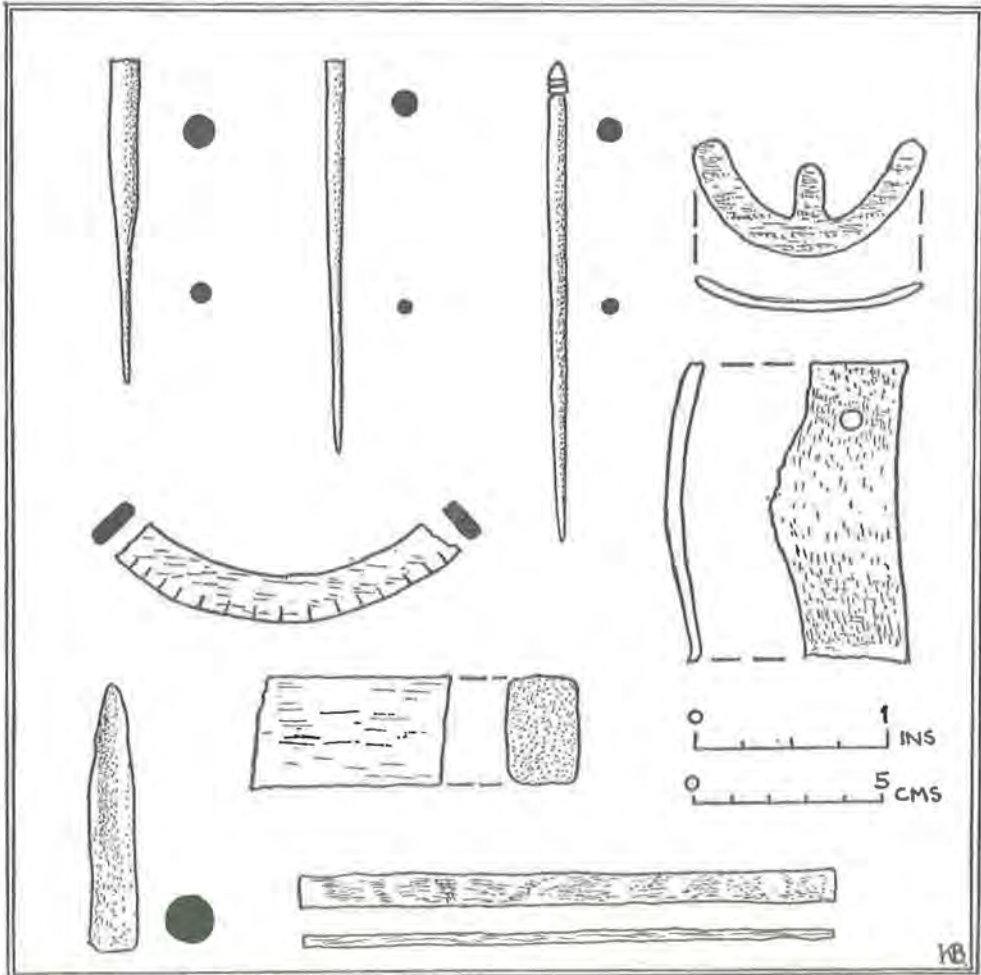


Fig. 5. Small finds from the rubbish deposit.

SMALL FINDS (Fig. 5)

1. Broken ? ivory pin. Lth. 1·7" Diam. 0·15 narrowing to a point.
2. Broken ? ivory pin or needle. Lth. 2·1" Diam. 0·1 narrowing to a point.
3. Complete ? ivory pin with conical head. Lth. 2·5" Diam. 0·1 narrowing to a point.

4. Ornament cut from a small piece of oyster shell. Lth. 1.2".
5. Fragment of lead sheet with a ? rivet hole in one corner. Lth. 1.6" Thk. 0.1 Diam. of rivet hole 0.1.
6. Fragment of a copper/bronze strip. Lth. 1.3" Wdth. 0.35 Thk. 0.05.
7. Thin strip of copper/bronze. Lth. 2.8" Wdth. 0.15 Thk. 0.075.
8. Fragment from a bracelet of Kimmeridge Shale. Lth. 1.8" Wdth. 0.3 Thk. 0.15.
9. Fragment of a hone of Lth. 1.0" Wdth. 0.6 Thk. 0.4.
10. Fragment of a hone of Lth. 1.7" Wdth. 0.9 Thk. 0.2+.
11. Small stone point of Lth. 1.4" Diam. 0.25 to a point.
12. Antoninianus of Gallienus.

This rubbish deposit clearly represents debris cleared from a building or buildings. Apart from the usual domestic rubbish—bones, pottery, broken pins and similar items—there is also sufficient wall plaster, flue tiles, tesserae, and marble slab fragments to suggest that the debris came from a building which was in a state of disrepair or reconstruction. It is tempting therefore to refer this rubbish pit and its contents to the period of reconstruction following the decay of the building during the late third century. The pottery content of the pit however includes a considerable number of sherds which appear to belong to the fourth century and some of these might well belong in the latter half of it. The rubbish deposit may therefore represent the clearing of a decaying building some time during the mid or late fourth century. Some of the material from the deposit provides us with new details about the site—for example, although wall plaster was mentioned in the excavation report there was no description of either the range of colours or the scheme of decoration represented. The iron clinker, copper/bronze slag, and lead waste are the first indications we have that metalworking was undertaken on the site. Other materials recovered from the deposit have a wider significance to which we may return.

THE FIRST PHASE OF OCCUPATION

Apart from the rectangular pit dug into the chalk⁶ the evidence for an occupation of the site preceding the erection of the building excavated in 1938, which was apparently erected in the mid second century, is the "many small chalk tesserae" found on the floor of the pit and a not inconsiderable quantity of mid first century samian. The published material includes 7 pre-Flavian pieces, 5 Flavian, 6 Trajanic-Hadrianic, and three sherds which Pryce would not date more closely than "1st century". In addition there is a beaker which should be of first century date.⁷ A pre-Boudiccan Romanised farm at Saunderton can hardly be imagined, but a Flavian one would not be out of context and the evidence of the samian suggests that the earliest occupation cannot really be any later. This would bring Saunderton into line with Lockleys, Park Street, and Hambleden, and possibly also with Munden, Gorhambury, Boxmoor, Gadebridge, and Little Kimble, all of which were founded sometime in the second half of the first century AD.⁸ Like the rest of these sites, Saunderton was placed close to a major route which was operating within a decade of the invasion, in this case, the Icknield Way. One group of material from the rubbish deposit must probably be referred to this early occupation, namely the pieces

of Purbeck Marble. We know that the material was being quarried and used before the Boudiccan revolt, and first century inscriptions in this material have been found at Chichester, Dorchester, Silchester, Cirencester, London and St. Albans. The marble was also used for pilasters, wall slabs, columns, cornices, dadoes and other architectural features, many of which are illustrated in the palace of Fishbourne, built during the Flavian period. None of the inscriptions and architectural fragments yet recovered seem to have been manufactured after the middle of the second century.⁹ Apart from the forum inscription from St. Albans (also of Flavian date) the use of Purbeck Marble in local villas is attested at Park Street, where it was used for a dado in the baths, and possibly in other parts of the establishment.¹⁰

The nature of the early villa at Saunderton is suggested both by the discovery of these marble slabs, and by the small chalk tesserae found in the bottom of the chalk pit. These latter surely point to the existence, even at this surprisingly early date, of a mosaic floor at Saunderton; they may also provide at least part of the explanation as to why the chalk pit was dug. Amongst the rubbish deposit described above were three small chalk tesserae, and red and grey tesserae of the same size, for which the only parallels from the 1938 excavations are the chalk cubes from the first phase pit. A late first century mosaic at Saunderton must be regarded as a possibility, and the quality of architecture and degree of Romanisation that this would imply for the villa in which it was situated are in any case suggested by the Purbeck Marble pieces already discussed. A final clue as to the quality of the early villa is perhaps provided also by the fragment of stamped flue tile from the rubbish deposit, and a fragment from a similar tile found in the 1938 excavations.¹¹ The former looks like, and the latter (unillustrated) sounds like, a fragment from a typical Ashted tile. Their use in our area is confirmed by the discovery of similar tiles at Latimer, High Wycombe, Park Street and Boxmoor villas.¹² We know that the Ashted tileries only produced these tiles between the late first and mid second century¹³ so that again it is probable that the two fragments from Saunderton should be related to the first phase villa. No traces of flue tiles of this sort were found in the excavated building. If the tiles belong with the as yet undiscovered first century villa, then we must envisage a building which was as sophisticated as any in the countryside around St. Albans at this early date. The earliest mosaics yet discovered in the Chiltern villas are of mid second century date,¹⁴ and the same is true of the earliest hypocaust-heated rooms yet found.¹⁵ Flue tiles may well have been used in a bath suite however, and we do know of three late first century bath suites in the Chilterns, at Gadebridge, Park Street and Boxmoor.¹⁶ South of London there are early villas which exceed the quality of accommodation we envisage for Saunderton (at Angmering and Eccles). Nevertheless, it remains true that if our picture of Saunderton is correct then this villa would be an anomaly in its geographical and chronological context.

THE LAST PHASE OF OCCUPATION

The report of the 1938 excavations tentatively proposed a period of re-building subsequent to the major reconstruction of the building at the start of the fourth century. There can be little doubt that the chalk walls attributed by her to this

fourth phase (her phase 3) do indeed represent a later alteration of the building's plan. The quality of construction is remarkably low, rough blocks of chalk being loosely mortared together and apparently never receiving a covering coat of mortar or plaster.¹⁷ This, and the absence of any foundations for these walls, is suggestive of an unsophisticated and probably transient occupation of the building. The state of the building at this time is perhaps indicated by the chalk-built buttress erected on the north face of the corridor wall in rooms VII and IX.¹⁸ Whether or not the chalk "cobbled" floor in room 3 (previously room XIII) can also be attributed to this phase of occupation is uncertain.¹⁹

The nature of these chalk walls is comparable to that of the two blocking walls constructed in the villa at Latimer during the final decline of the villa,²⁰ and it seems probable that they belong to a similar phase of occupation at Saunderton. If we are to judge from the majority of the Chiltern villas, the last phases of occupation would fall within the last quarter of the fourth century.²¹ Those villa sites which may most profitably be compared with Saunderton, namely the other villas along the foot of the Chiltern Scarp, are for the most part unexplored.²² Little Kimble and Bledlow however have produced sherds of the dark grey burnished pottery which predominates in the Saunderton rubbish pit and which I have suggested belongs to the second half of the fourth century. Other fourth century types which appear on both of these sites are also represented at Saunderton, including a distinctive imitation of samian ware with a red and grey biscuit and a dull red slip, and black burnished pie-dishes.²³ The brown painted jar found at Saunderton²⁴ is paralleled by fragments of three brown painted vessels from Little Kimble.²⁵ On the basis of these four distinctive fabrics, it seems reasonable to assume that in the fourth century Saunderton and its neighbouring villas were drawing their supplies of pottery from the same source or sources. Although the material for dating the latest occupation on any one of these sites is thin, together the three neighbouring sites provide enough evidence to suggest that they remained in occupation until the end of the fourth century. The brown painted wares are themselves probably to be placed within the last quarter of the century, and the forms of the red slipped mortaria from Saunderton and Kimble and the flanged and rouletted bowl from Saunderton find good parallels in closely dated deposits in the north of Britain, also belonging in the last quarter of the fourth century.²⁶ The solitary piece of numismatic evidence to support that of the pottery is an *Æ* 3 of Valens from Saunderton.

Saunderton may have gone into a slow decline like the villa at Latimer²⁷ but unlike Latimer, and the villas at Gadebridge and Boxmoor where occupation into the early fifth century at least seems certain, Saunderton was in an exposed position and in fact lay on one of the early routes of penetration used by the Anglo-Saxon settlers of the fifth century. The numerous Saxon burials around Bledlow and Princes Risborough, and the cemeteries at Bishopstone and its neighbouring sites cannot be closely dated in the main but could be as early as the mid fifth century. A belt-plate from Bishopstone is probably earlier.²⁸ Whether or not the villas along the Icknield Way were abandoned in response to the threat of a Saxon attack we cannot say, although an iron spearhead found on the surface of the villa site at Little Kimble could perhaps be signifi-

cant.²⁹ The skull fragment from the Saunderton rubbish pit, unusual find as it may be in that sort of context, can hardly be related to events at the close of the occupation on the site since neither the date of the material in the pit nor the actual digging of the pit itself would suit this event. It seems more reasonable to relate the pit to the clearing of debris from rooms or buildings fallen into decay and about to be re-occupied. Since the pit appears to date to the second half of the fourth century, a clearing operation and re-occupation of this kind must presumably be related to the beginning of the last phase of occupation on the site, which is represented at present by the chalk walls and buttress. If we are thus to envisage a short abandonment between the end of phase III occupation and the start of phase IV, it is difficult to place this anywhere except as an aftermath of the raids of AD. 367.

THE NATURE OF SAUNDERTON VILLA

In analysing the villa system of the Chilterns recently, I twice referred to Saunderton as a "poor relation" amongst the villas of the region.³⁰ At the time this view seemed fully justified by the evidence from the site. Here was a villa smaller than any other excavated example in the Chilterns, adhering throughout its history to a simple rectangular plan with no wings and no baths. The only floors described by the excavator were of brick and chalk "cobble" respectively, wall plaster was mentioned but was apparently too plain to merit description, two rooms were given over to a corn-drying oven, and the only room which seemed to have a hypocaust system apart from these has the most irregular flue pattern yet encountered in a villa and no known furnace to supply the heat. Small as the amount of material recovered by Mr. Pavry may be, it contains just enough variety to show that this picture of Saunderton villa is entirely misleading.

The first phase villa has already been discussed in detail and surprising as the resulting picture may be, it is difficult to see where it can be in error. If the early villa had the amenities we believe, then to recognise the building excavated in 1938 as its successor is almost inconceivable. Furthermore, we now know that a building of undetermined size stood about 200' south south east of the excavated building, so that we have an alternative successor to offer. Without the excavation of this building there is little that can be said about it, though we may be able to say something in a moment. The excavated building however can be discussed and in particular we can enquire to what extent it would have been suitable as a dwelling house and to what other purposes it could have been devoted.

Attention has already been drawn to the absence of tessellated or mosaic floors in the excavated building, examples of the former of which occur in every excavated Chiltern villa (except Harpsden) and are represented by surface finds on several of the unexcavated villa sites. Similarly the small size of the building has been mentioned. Yet the accommodation offered in the Saunderton building is remarkable in two respects. Two rooms are given over to corn-drying equipment; this is hardly to be expected in the main dwelling house of a Romanised farm, particularly one within easy reach of the civilised life of Verulamium. There are no parallels in the Chilterns for a villa dwelling house

erected from the first with corn drying ovens in two of its rooms. Secondly, the small size of the building is in marked contrast to the biggest room within it. Room XIII (as it was in the excavator's period I) covered an area of 1120 sq. ft. It was this room which had a raised floor beneath which ran the "hypocaust" flues. A room of this size is not to be found even in the most pretentious of the Chiltern villas. The largest room at Latimer is only 470 sq. ft. in area, and there is none larger but for a room at Gadebridge (area a little over 700 sq. ft.) which was used first for industrial processes and then as a storage room, most probably for grain.³¹ I would suggest that the large room (XIII) in the phase II building at Saunderton was used for a similar purpose to the large ("terrace") room at Gadebridge. This would explain the absence of a furnace for the "hypocaust" and also the highly irregular pattern of the "flues"; the intention was simply to raise the floor and allow air to circulate so that the floor could be safely used for the storage of grain. One wonders whether or not rotary querns might have been set up in the adjacent room VIII, since beneath the phase III floor in room 2 (the combined area of rooms VII–XII in phase II) were found two "large" sarsens, which could have been used to make a firm base for a rotary quern.³² As the room was incompletely excavated other sarsens may have remained undiscovered. A fragment from an upper stone of a quern was recovered from Saunderton in 1961.³³ The three small rooms (X–XII) sandwiched in between rooms IX, VIII, and XIII might each have served as a cupboard or store-room to one of the larger rooms. In particular the furnace in room IX would need a nearby stock of fuel which might have been stored in room XI. Certainly these three rooms, each about 10 × 5', were too small to have served any normal domestic function. The reconstruction of phase III made the building even less like a dwelling house, there now being just the three huge rooms (1, 2, 3). The function of the house may have changed at this time. Certainly the demolition of the corn-drying oven, perhaps the removal of the raised floor in room 3 and its replacement by the chalk cobbles, and the disposal of the large sarsen blocks in room 2, suggests that the building was no longer given over mainly to the storage, drying and milling of grain. This may be because grain growing became a less important element in the economy at Saunderton, although we have no evidence for this, or else because this building was required for other purposes and the grain was parched, stored and milled elsewhere. All of the excavated Chiltern villas reveal evidence of rebuilding and extension at the start of the fourth century, and if we are to judge by the proliferation of hypocaust heated rooms, tessellated floors, and more comprehensive bath suites at this time the villa economies flourished now perhaps as never before.³⁴ It may be that as at Park Street,³⁵ the labourers' quarters were enlarged at Saunderton and the building under discussion became a dwelling house for farm workers. Alternatively the building could have served as a store-house, either for equipment or produce.

If the building excavated in 1938 is not identified as the main dwelling house of the villa at Saunderton, then presumably such a house exists in the vicinity of it. This is confirmed by the discovery of the floor which the farmer uncovered and also by the existence of walls in the same area which he has hit with his plough. The nature of the dwelling house can only, of course, be established by

excavation, but there are one or two pointers to the sort of building we might expect. The distance between the excavated building and the newly discovered floor suggests that a courtyard somewhere between 150' and 200' broad separates the dwelling house from this large outbuilding. Traces of a courtyard surface were noted on the south side of the building in 1938,³⁶ and a second structure of undetermined type was found just outside the south-east corner of it.³⁷ The excavator thought this might be the remains of a hypocaust furnace for room XIII. One wonders if it was a similar sort of structure, namely a corn-drying oven built in the yard, perhaps to replace the demolished one in the adjacent building. In this respect the fact that the structure's debris overlay fallen plaster might be significant as indicating that it perhaps belongs to the period following the decay of the building in the late third century; that is, to the reconstruction in which the old drying oven was demolished. The size of the dwelling house must have been very considerable if it required an outbuilding of the size of the 1938 structure. Two structures almost as large as that at Saunderton were found in the courtyard at Hambleden however,³⁸ and some very large outbuildings exist at Gadebridge.³⁹ Similarly large outbuildings may have stood in the courtyards at High Wycombe and Latimer.⁴⁰ All of these were tripartite villas, or elaborations of the tripartite plan, and each of them had a large courtyard. It seems likely that we should envisage a similar arrangement at Saunderton. In this case, the quality of the accommodation would probably be comparable to that in the villas mentioned. We should expect to find heated rooms, tessellated floors, polychrome wall plaster, and perhaps a mosaic or two. The material from the rubbish deposit described above includes the flue tiles, tesserae, wall plaster, and mosaic squares which provide a measure of confirmation for our reconstruction.

Unfortunately we do not know very much about the other villas along the Icknield Way. At Totternhoe a courtyard villa has recently been excavated⁴¹ and provides a parallel to the sort of establishment envisaged at Saunderton. A thorough surface survey at Little Kimble and crop marks on an aerial photograph suggest that a very large villa stood here.⁴² The surface finds, including tesserae, polychrome wall plaster, mosaic squares, and flue tiles form a comparable assemblage to that from the Saunderton pit. The similarities in the pottery assemblage have already been noted. A villa is known to have been situated by the Cuttle Brook at Bledlow.⁴³ The surface finds from here include flue tiles but apart from roofing tiles, little else of structural importance. The site has not however been subjected to a proper survey (see appendix A below). Finally we may note the small "villa" discovered at Terrick in the mid-19th century.⁴⁴ Like the Saunderton building it is difficult to regard it as a dwelling house, neither its size nor its plan being suited to that function. From what we know of the villas at Totternhoe and Kimble, and from what we have attempted to learn about the villa at Saunderton, it seems that the building discovered at Terrick may be an outbuilding belonging to a far more substantial dwelling house yet to be discovered. At present, excavations on the villas along the foot of the Chiltern scarp have been rare and incomplete; future excavations may well reveal a series of villas which in size and quality will equal the best within the Chiltern valleys.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have to record my gratitude to Mr. F. H. Pavry for providing me with the facilities to study the material from Saunderton, Bledlow and Bec House, and for his and his wife's warm hospitality on the occasions of my visits. I am grateful also for his guidance when visiting the site of the Saunderton villa and for enabling me to see the material collected by the farmer. For first drawing this material to my notice I must thank Messrs A. Dodd and D. Humphrey. I have received a great deal of help and all the necessary facilities for study of the material from Little Kimble, Great Missenden, Shardeloes and Princes Risborough from Mr. C. N. Gowing and to him go my warm thanks.

APPENDIX A

ROMANO-BRITISH FINDS FROM TWO SITES AT BLEDLLOW

In addition to the material from Saunderton Mr. Pavry was kind enough to show me material which he has collected from his own garden at Bec House, Bledlow, and to arrange for me to see material collected by local residents from the villa site at the Cuttle Brook, Bledlow. Neither site has been properly surveyed but I feel it is important to record the existence of this material.

Cuttle Brook (NGR SP. 769018)

For previous discoveries on and near this site see *Records*, XI, 58, XVII, 409. A total of about seventy sherds have been collected by local residents, of which fourteen are described.

1. Rim of open-mouthed jar. Rim sharply everted, a beading runs around the base of the neck. Hard, dark grey fabric with black slip. ? 2nd century.
2. Similar to (1) but in a fine, hard grey fabric. 1st-2nd century.
3. Rim of an open bowl. Rim slightly everted, angular carination below neck. Fabric as (1) ? 1st-2nd century.
4. Rim of a small-mouthed jar. Rim everted and thickened. Hardish grey fabric. 2nd-4th century.
5. Rim of a flanged dish. A small triangular flange projecting just below the rim. Dark grey slightly gritty fabric, black slipped and burnished. Late 2nd-3rd century.
6. Rim of a flanged dish. Flange slightly hooked at the end. Dark grey, slightly gritty fabric, black slipped and burnished. c/f Gillam 229. ? Mid-late 4th century.
7. Mortarium rim and flange. Flat-topped rim, thin flange with slightly over-turned rim. Hard white fabric. Early mid 2nd century.
8. Rim of a small jar. A simple rim, forming a collar to a jar. The fabric is brown, coarse with many large grits and poorly fired. The shape and fabric are suggestive of Iron Age A.
9. Base of an Antonine bowl, Drag. 18/31.
10. Body sherd of a bowl. Red fabric with grey core; covered in a dull red slip. Imitation samian (form 32 ?) of a fabric found at Saunderton and Kimble. Late 3rd-4th century.
11. Flange from a bowl. Pale brown fabric with traces of brown slip. ? An imitation of samian form 38. Late 3rd-4th century.
12. Fragment of a flange similar to (11).
13. Body sherd of a mortarium. Fabric pale buff; grits translucent and pink and pale brown in colour. Probably from the Thames Valley kilns.
14. Body sherds from a samian mortarium.

In addition to these finds there were fragments of roofing tile and flue tile and an oblong bead or pendant of ivory, with a square section but rounded corners, and nineteen small incisions cut along each of the four edges.

Bec House. (NGR. SP. 777022)

From his garden, Mr. Pavry has collected some three dozen sherds and 2 coins. The nature of this site is uncertain; no animal or human bones have been found to suggest either rubbish pit or cemetery, and equally no tiles, tesserae or plaster have been discovered to suggest that

a building stood here. But for the absence of wasters and the relevant debris, one might be tempted to conjecture the existence of a kiln, since twenty-eight of the sherds collected are of identical fabric although seventeen individual vessels at least are represented by them. The significant sherds are described below.

1. Everted rim of a jar. Fabric hard and fine; grey with a burnished slip.

2-3. Similar to (1) in fabric and form.

4. Pie dish in fabric as (1).

5-7. Similar to (4) in fabric and form.

8. A rolled rim of a jar in fabric as (1).

9-18. Similar to (8) in fabric and form.

19. Rim of a flanged bowl in fabric as (1).

20. Body sherd of coarse brown handmade fabric with large flint grits.

The two coins found to date are an $\text{Æ} 3$ of Constans (Rev. Gloria Exercitus, 2 soldiers and standard) and an $\text{Æ} 3$ of the House of Constantine (Rev. Victory). These two coins and the flanged bowl rim (c/f Gillam 228) point to a mid-late 4th century date for the group. The presence of so many of the grey slipped and burnished fabrics is interesting as these occur at Saunderton and Little Kimble and appear to have a localised distribution (for Saunderton see above, fig. 4, 1-6). We cannot rule out the possibility of a kiln site in the vicinity of Bec House, working in the mid-late fourth century and producing these attractive imitations of the black burnished wares so characteristic of the period.

¹ D. Ashcroft "Report on the Excavation of a Romano-British Villa at Saunderton, Bucks", *Records* 13 (1939) 398-426. (hereinafter referred to as *Ashcroft*).

² The farmer also recovered a few small finds from the pit and these are included in the description of the material. (SF's 3,4,6,7,12).

³ K. Branigan, *Excavations at Latimer Villa 1965* (Chess Valley Arch. & Hist. Soc. 1965) fig. 2,5.

⁴ J. P. Gillam, "Types of Roman Coarse Pottery Vessels in Northern Britain", *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4th series, 35 (1957), fig. 17, form 147. (hereinafter referred to as *Gillam*).

⁵ Features of the skull fragment which might suggest violence are (a) the fact that it came from the crown of the head (b) the size of the fragment (c) its shape (d) the edge is undercut on one side. All of these features are comparable to the skulls found at Maiden Castle and Stanwick where the native defenders had been slaughtered, in these cases by Romans.

⁶ *Ashcroft*, 399-400, pl. II.

⁷ *Ashcroft*, 416, fig. 4,2.

⁸ Full references are given in the catalogue of villa sites in K. Branigan, "Romano-British Rural Settlement in the Western Chilterns", *Arch. Journal* CXXIV (1968) (hereinafter referred to as *Branigan*).

⁹ G. C. Dunning, "Purbeck Marble", *Arch. News Letter*, March 1949, 15.

¹⁰ A. D. Saunders, "Excavations at Park Street, 1954-57", *Arch. Journal* CXVIII (1961) 105.

H. E. O'Neil, "The Roman Villa at Park Street, near St. Albans, Hertfordshire", *Arch. Journal* CII (1945) 99. (hereafter referred to as *O'Neil*).

¹¹ *Ashcroft*, 408.

¹² For references see *Branigan*, 146.

¹³ A. W. G. Lowther, *A Study of the Patterns on Roman Flue-Tiles and Their Distribution* (1948).

¹⁴ High Wycombe (B. R. Hartley, "A Romano-British Villa at High Wycombe", *Records* XVI, 1959, 253) and Park Street, *O'Neil*, 27.

¹⁵ High Wycombe, Hartley *op. cit.* supra fn. 14, 231; Park Street, *O'Neil*, 45-46.

¹⁶ Gadebridge, D. R. Wilson, "Roman Britain in 1965", *JRS* LVI (1966) 209; Park Street, Saunders *op. cit.* supra fn. 10, 115; Boxmoor, *VCH Herts* IV, 154-55. (Date and purpose uncertain).

¹⁷ *Ashcroft*, 407, pl. VIII.

¹⁸ *Ashcroft*, 407, pl. VII.

¹⁹ *Ashcroft*, 406, pl. V.

²⁰ *Branigan*, 149, and K. Branigan, *Excavations at Latimer Villa 1964* (C.V.A.H.S. 1964) 13, plan 5, K. Branigan, *Fourth Interim Report on Excavations at Latimer Villa* (C.V.A.H.S. 1967) 15, fig. 7.

²¹ *Branigan*, 148-49.

²² *Branigan*, 151-52.

²³ Bledlow, appendix A below; Saunderton, *supra* and fig. 5, *Ashcroft*, 416-21; Little Kimble, *The Roman Villa Site at Little Kimble* (unpublished report by R. D. Thomson, 1957, in County Museum) appendices I and II.

²⁴ *Ashcroft*, 419, fig. 7, 17.

²⁵ Thomson *op. cit.* supra fn. 23, appendix II, No.'s 15, 16, 11.

²⁶ *Gillam*, forms 207-208.

- ²⁷ Branigan, 149–50.
- ²⁸ J. F. Head, *Early Man in South Bucks*, 91–95, fig. 31.
- ²⁹ Thomson *op. cit.* supra fn. 23, appendix V.
- ³⁰ Branigan, 143, 148.
- ³¹ D. S. Neal, *Excavation of a Roman Villa on Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead* (3rd Report, H.H. Exc. Soc.) figs. 5, 6.
- ³² Ashcroft, 406.
- ³³ *Report of the County Museum* (1963, Bucks C.C.) 8, Acc. 134.61.
- ³⁴ Branigan, 147–48.
- ³⁵ Saunders *op. cit.* supra fn. 10, 112, fig. 5 (Building A).
- ³⁶ Ashcroft, 407.
- ³⁷ Ashcroft, 403.
- ³⁸ A. Cocks, "A Romano-British Homestead in the Hambleden Valley, Bucks", *Archaeologia* LXXI (1921) pl. XIII.
- ³⁹ D. R. Wilson, "Roman Britain in 1966", *JRS* LVII (1967) fig. 9.
- ⁴⁰ High Wycombe, Hartley *op. cit.* supra fn. 14, 241 (a building measuring 34' × 22½' +); Latimer, Branigan, 140 (a building measuring 30' × 40' +).
- ⁴¹ D. R. Wilson, "Roman Britain in 1956", *JRS* XLVII (1957) 214; "Roman Britain in 1957", *JRS* XLVIII (1958) 141.
- ⁴² Thomson *op. cit.* supra fn. 23.
- ⁴³ *Records*, XI (1928) 58, *Records*, XVII (1965) 409.
- ⁴⁴ *Records*, II (1861) 53.