

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES FROM NEWTON LONGVILLE, 1964-72

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THIS is a report of observations made by the authors and others over many years, during building operations, road improvement, excavation of trenches, and deep ploughing. Valuable information has been obtained from neighbours, and especially from children. Only sites within the parish boundary are considered. This is intended as a summary, pending detailed reports of finds and excavations.

The first signs of human life in this parish are worked flint flakes of the late mesolithic period found in the excavation at Salden Wood and two more of the same date found at Moor End.

Evidence of Roman occupation comes from the Salden Wood tip, and a site NW of the London Brick Company works on the Bletchley road. Fragments of Roman pottery and a bronze coin found on fields near the village suggest that other occupation sites will some day come to light.

The Saxon period is represented by sherds of late Saxon date found on sites throughout the village.

Signs of mediaeval occupation are found everywhere, especially in Westbrook End, where house platforms are visible. A plan of the ridge and furrow near the village, based on a survey by the authors, follows this paper.

SITES

1. SP84653255 R. B. Sherds
2. SP84173059 R. B. and Mediaeval Sherds
3. SP84303109 17th-century Bellarmine Jug
4. SP84323058 Bone Knife-handle
5. SP84773147 Mediaeval Occupation
6. SP84763114 Mediaeval House-platforms. Flints
7. SP84943164 Spindle-whorl
8. SP83433222 R. B. and Mediaeval Sherds
9. SP84823136 Mediaeval Sherds
10. SP83503120 Roman and other coins

EXCAVATIONS

11. SP84323104 Westbrook End Site A
12. SP84343114 " " " B & C
13. SP84343114 " " " C
14. SP84273102 " " " D
15. SP84433112 " " " E
16. SP84773148 Baytree Cottage
17. SP84773143 St. Faith's Church

- 18. SP84223053 Hangman's Hill
- 19. SP83403130 R. B. Site at Salden Wood Tip
- 20. SP84793248 R. B. Site near the Brickworks
- 21. SP Roman Occupation
- 22. SP Iron Age and Roman Sherds

ABBREVIATIONS

- F. Finds retained by the finder.
- F/B.C.M. Ditto, but to be deposited later with the County Museum.
- B.C.M. Finds in the County Museum.

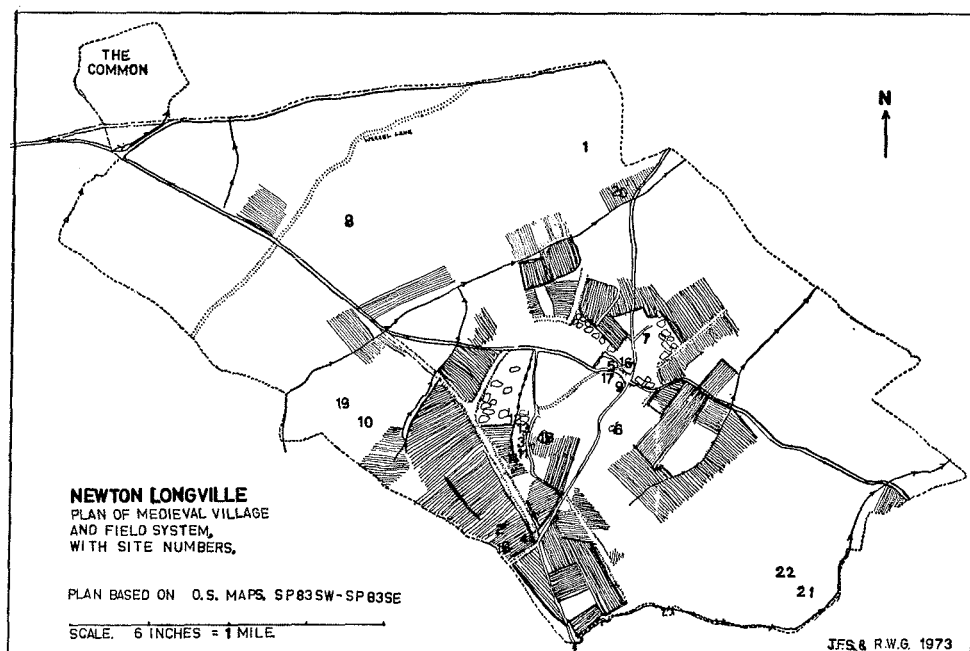


Fig. 1.

- 1. SP84653255 6/2/1966 R. W. G. and B. Stickland.

R. B. sherds were found on the surface of a field, on a southern slope between Railway Farm and the Bletchley—Oxford railway. The site may be connected with one at SP846324. B.C.M.

- 2. SP84173059 2/1/1967 R. W. G.

Sherds, some R. B. with some colour coat and others mediaeval, were found on the surface of a field W. of Hangman's Hill on a slight S.W. slope. Finds include 12th and 13th-c. pottery of a type manufactured at Jack Ironcaps Lane, Great Brickhill, and an iron knife blade. F./B.C.M.

- 3. SP84303019 9/1/67 J. Skinner.

A 'Bellarmine', 17th-c. stoneware wine flagon of continental manufacture, was excavated by the finder, when digging a drainage trench on his father's

farm. The flagon is salt-glazed with face mask of Cardinal Bellarmine and in good condition, but the handle is missing.

A second Bellarmine was found, also with handle missing, in the garden of Baytree Cottage. F. in both cases.

4. SP84323058 March, 1971 Stephen Price.

A 17th-c. carved and polished bone knife-handle was found on the surface of the field in which Hangman's Hill is situated. The elaborate carving was identified by the County Museum as a figure of the Virgin Mary of continental origin. F.

5. SP84773147 October, 1971 R. W. G.

During widening of the Whaddon Road opposite St. Faith's Church, mediaeval features were found: two pits with a quantity of sherds in them, areas of limestone rubble and a stretch of cobbling, probably the pathway, part of which was excavated in Baytree Cottage garden (see p. 321). Finds date from 13th to 15th c.s.

6. SP84763114 4/3/1972 R.W.G.

A much eroded house platform was noted in an overgrown part of the garden of 19 Stewkley Road. It was rectangular 60ft. x 50ft. and about 2ft. high. Nearby two worked flints, probably Mesolithic, were found in the spoil from a pond, recently cleaned out. F./B.C.M.

7. SP84943164 March, 1971 London End Philip Blake.

A spindle whorl of limestone, probably early mediaeval, was found on the surface of the garden of Cotswold House. A similar example is in Luton Museum. F.

8. SP83433222 28/5/1966 R. W. G. J Skinner. K. Bungay.

R. B. and mediaeval sherds were found on the S.E. slope of a field off Weasel Lane. B.C.M.

9. SP84823136 1970 R.W.G.

Odd sherds of mediaeval pottery were found in the spoil from trial trenches dug for the extension to the cemetery S.E. of St. Faith's Church. The ground was much disturbed. F.

10. SP83503120 1965 R. W. G.

A 3rd-c. Roman bronze coin, radiate head, but unidentifiable, was found on the surface of a field S.E. of Salden Wood tip. Finds of other coins have been reported.

11. Westbrook End (Sites A, B, C, D and E)

Westbrook End was the first part of the village to be engulfed by housing development. Maps show that it retained its mediaeval plan with hedgerows marking the sites of dwellings, each with its own strip of land uniform in size and shape and very often its own small pond. The line of ponds starting to the rear of Yewtree Farm and continuing to the west of the village in a northerly direction may be the original West Brook. A local inhabitant called it the village ditch, where most of the refuse was tipped. Fragments of 17th-c. pottery were found by J. Skinner when cleaning out one of the Yewtree Farm ponds. To the W. of the strips the line of the old road can be seen from the air and traced on the ground. Ridge and furrow was evident in the adjoining fields;

the mediaeval field system could have been reconstituted. When housing development took place, mediaeval features were discovered, mostly in the area of Yewtree Farm. Through the co-operation of Richard Skinner three of the sites were investigated before they were destroyed, and two others were observed whilst development was taking place.

11. SP84323104 Site A.

This site was situated some 100 yards E. of Yewtree Farm. Owing to preparations for building and stacking of materials only one area near the road was available for excavation. Although no features of mediaeval date were found in this area, many mediaeval sherds lay in the topsoil. Under scatterings of limestone rubble, excavation revealed a layer of cobbling with 17th-c. sherds trodden into its evenly laid surface. A 17th-c. cottage is said to have stood on the site, so the cobbling may be the pathway leading to it. Between the limestone rubble and the road was a small area of limestone flags forming a square around a black loamy patch. This deposit was trowelled out revealing a drystone catchpit cobble-lined at its base, probably used to collect spring water. Finds suggested a similar 17th-c. date. The site was watched during the entire building excavations, but no more features were found.

12. SP84343114 Site B.

Before the development of Yewtree Close, N.W. of the orchard of Yewtree Farm, a house platform was noted on the end of one of the acre strips. A trial trench on the summit revealed a stretch of cobbling on the side of the platform, similar to the platform excavated in Baytree Cottage garden. The upper end of the cobbling ended in a series of large stones, limestone and bunter pebbles, behind which was a layer of weathered yellow clay. Another trench on the N.W. side located this clay layer with a mediaeval occupation level 9ins. thick on top of it. The clay probably represented a floor layer in a small timber-framed building with cobbling to reinforce and drain the platform. The large stones were the bases of the walls.

13. SP84343114 Site C.

When the site (now called site C) was developed, features of mediaeval date were observed, including a layer of stone and a pit 2' 6" x 1' 6", with a fill of black silty loam. These two features were sealed by an occupation layer and were in section only, so it was not possible to investigate them fully. They were probably connected with the house platform. Finds included 13th-c. sherds and an iron knife-blade.

14. SP84273102 Site D.

A slight linear depression, studded with numerous ponds, probably the old watercourse of West Brook, runs the length of the village on the W. A trench, 8' x 12', was excavated to get a section across the depression 10 yards S. of Yewtree Farm and 50 yards W. of site A. Six inches beneath the turf was a layer of cobbling with mediaeval sherds on its surface. Black silty loam like ditch-silt lay on the cobbles which may have formed a pathway more than 8' wide across the depression.

15. SP84433112 Site E.

In the fields opposite Yewtree Farm housing development revealed cobbling,

It would have been timber-framed, surrounded by cobbling which went up to the doorstep on the east end, with a porch protected by a four-posted lean-to, the Bellarmine being found in one of the post-holes. The remains of the sleeper beam which supported the N.W. wall were found.

The cobbled pathway was then investigated and found to be contemporary with the cottage.

There were three pits, one 17th-c. and two mediaeval. The first was 2' in diameter and 2' 3" deep cut through the platform into the natural clay. 17th-c. sherds were found in it and layers of daub and tiles, showing that rebuilding had taken place. The two mediaeval pits, one cut into the other, containing 13th-c. pottery were not completely excavated. One was sealed by the S.E. wall of the 14th-c. building and the other was sectioned at the limit of the excavation. Both were 3' x 4' and had been filled with black silty sandy loam, perhaps for the erection of the mediaeval building.

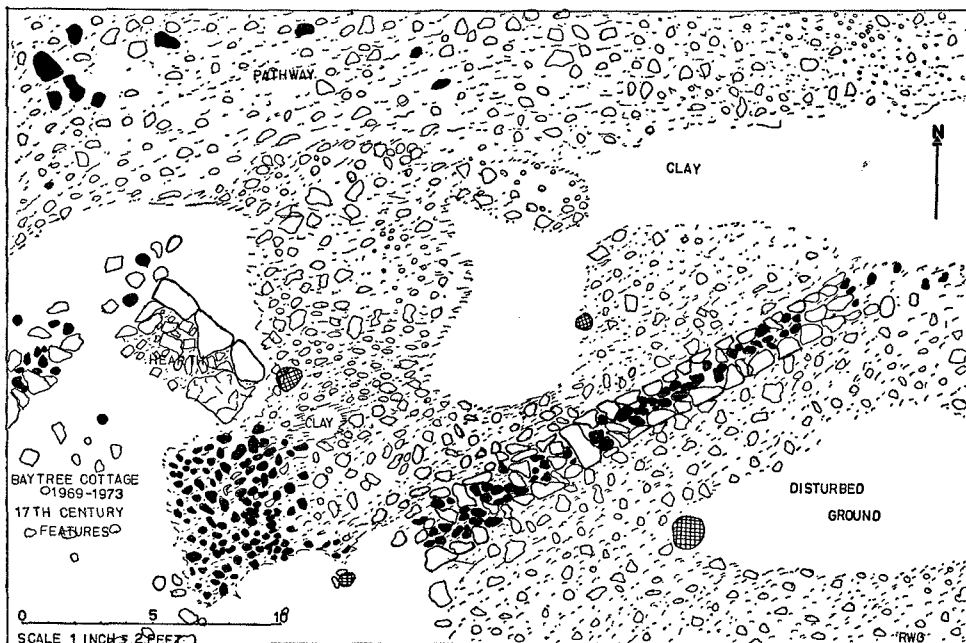


Fig. 3.

Excavation of the mediaeval building

The mediaeval building was sealed beneath the cobbled floor of the 17th-c. cottage, the base of the wall found in the cobbling being the S. wall of a small mediaeval cottage. When a trial trench was cut at right-angles to the wall, an occupation layer was found and beneath it repeated layers of clay representing many floor levels. The top level was littered with sherds and other evidence of 14th- and 15th-c. occupation. Traces of charcoal and daub were found and a 17th-c. post-hole. The wall whose footing trench had been cut through the 13th-c. pit contained a quantity of fine tooled stone. The other walls had been robbed and the depressions filled with rubble of 17th-c. date.

The footing of the S.E. wall was of large bunter pebbles, thrown roughly into the trench, with limestone foundations built on to them. This method was suited to water-logged areas and has been found by D. C. Mynard at Gorefields, Stoke Goldington, and at Walton D.M.V. The mediaeval building at Baytree Cottage had a drainage problem, as the doorway on the N.W. side opened on to a pathway above the level of the floor and there were no drainage gullies to prevent flooding. This pathway was found under the 17th-c. one.

The interior size of the building was 16' x 7', an exceptionally small dwelling. The lower part of the walls was of limestone, the upper perhaps of wattle and daub. Daub was found in the N.W. footing-trenches. A line of staggered post-holes in a robber trench suggested a wattle and daub wall, but, as they were only found W. of the doorway, the posts may have been a reinforcement for a weak section. The W. wall had collapsed inwards and the rubble was left on the floor when it was rebuilt. On top of the rubble in the N.W. corner an open hearth had been built; many broken pot fragments were found among the blackened stones.

The building had a central partition of wattle and daub with stone along its base on which the daub had fallen. No post-holes were found; probably a sleeper beam held the uprights. Most of the finds, including a large fragment of a bronze bowl, were made in the W. end of the building, suggesting that it was the living area. The floor at both ends had traces of charcoal and vegetation. Perhaps it had been covered with straw or leaves.

The building was occupied from the 13th to the 15th c. with repeated alterations; then lay derelict, until demolished to make way for the 17th-c. timber-framed cottage built on the platform. Perhaps the original building was a

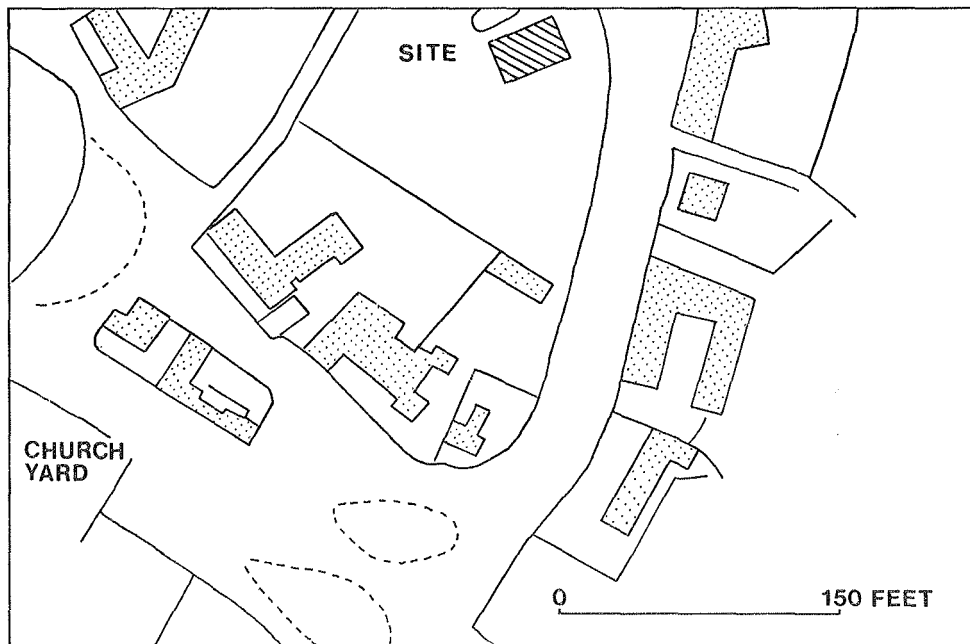


Fig. 4. Baytree Cottage excavation.

temporary structure like the houses run up by squatters on waste land. The dwelling was much smaller than the average peasant cottage, examples of which have been excavated in various parts of the country.

17. SP84773143 St. Faith's Church. R. W. G. J. S.

While the S. aisle floor in the Parish Church was being renewed, three large fragments of a limestone coffin-lid were found; the foot-end was missing. The coffin was orientated E. to W., and slightly tilted to the N., probably owing to ground disturbance. The grave-fill was sectioned and the W. section recorded. The top of the lid showed through a layer of clay mortar which was a floor-level, 2" thick on the S. side and 4" on the N. The coffin had evidently subsided, and the floor had spread over the N. side of the lid. Below this, the cut of the grave showed: the fill was of a natural yellow clay. It had been cut through a made-up layer of sandy loam, and down through a layer of cobbles in which were found some sherds of the early 12th century and others of the Roman period; the Roman rimsherd was very worn and obviously a residual find. The grave-cut continued into the natural clay below. Ground disturbance prior to burial, mainly at the foot, may have been caused by building operations, for a few fragments of building stone were found in the fill.

Coffins of this type are usually of the 13th century, and we have no other evidence than this to date the original interment. The excavation suggested that it was re-buried during the rebuilding of the S. aisle late in the 14th century, having been removed from another position where it was in the way of some structural work. It was so positioned that the top of its lid, which was plain, and convex in section, was flush with the new floor. The surface of this floor, which was of clay mortar, spread over the lid, and helped to preserve masons' tool-marks on the N. side of it and a mass of graffiti on the S. The masons' marks are similar to others in this church, notably those in the nave; the graffiti include part of an inscription in Lombardic lettering reading . . . OR ROME, crude drawings of animals, and a coffin-shaped rectangle and two crosses.

The coffin and the lid were of the same date. The external measurements were 6' 6" long, 2' 3" wide at the head and 1' 3" at the foot; the sides were 3" thick. There was a recess for the head, and a central drainage hole. Within were the bones of an adult male, complete but disarranged. The upper part of the skeleton was *in situ* and little disturbed when it was examined during restoration work in the late 19th century. The lower end of the coffin contained quantities of rubble in which were fragments of mediaeval and modern tile, and of modern land-drain. There were four whole mediaeval floor-tiles, three of them decorated and similar to some laid near the pulpit, probably in the restoration of 1881. The fragments of modern tile were similar to those laid in the Victorian floor. It was evident therefore that all this rubble had been put into that part where the lid was missing, in order to build up to the floor level.

18. SP 8422 3053 Hangman's Hill

The mound called Hangman's Hill was situated on an old cross-roads on

one of the highest points in Newton Longville (406' contour line). It lay in a field called Gallows Piece. The gallows existed in 1732 and was kept "for peculiarity sake", according to Browne Willis. It is shown on Jeffery's map of Bucks., 1770.

In 1962 the mound was trial-trenched by Mr. Pacock of Bletchley who discovered three human skeletons, headless and with hands, feet and various other bones missing. They had been buried in the summit of the mound, apparently in haste. The excavator considered them mediaeval, but sherds observed by the author in the grave-fill suggest a 17th-c. date.

In 1966 Mr Prosser of Mursley, farmer of the land, decided to level off the mound, but first permitted the author to excavate it. At that time the mound was 4' 6" high, 60' across and 90' long including the causeway on the S.W.; it was encircled by a slight depression, later found to be a ditch, except for the causeway area. From the volume of soil from the ditch section and also the slope of the undisturbed part of the mound below ground level, the original height can be estimated at more than 20' above ground. In 1971 it was bulldozed flat.

Excavation. The summit was not examined, for in its mutilated state all evidence of occupation would have been destroyed. The suspected ditch was sectioned on the S. side of the mound, known as Trench 1. Another section had to be abandoned owing to waterlogging. Finally the causeway was sectioned, known as Trench 2.

Trench 1.

Its purpose was to estimate the span of occupation of the mound from the date of its construction. The mound itself contained three layers of soil, known as A, B and C, and the ditch five layers, numbered 1 to 5.

Layer A consisted of the pre-mound turf line which being sealed was useful for dating the construction. The latest finds from it were 12th-c., along with odd Roman sherds.

Layer B (on top of A) consisted of burnt loam and yellow clay, probably the result of the burning of bushes and trees in preparation for construction.

Layer C was the first layer of construction and consisted of packed yellow clay, thrown out of the ditch, containing many fragments of carbonized wood. Possibly the base of the mound was reinforced by alternate layers of clay and brushwood, through which stakes were driven. No stakes were found.

Layer 1 consisted of silted fine yellow clay, containing sherds of the 12th and 13th c.

Layer 2 was the first occupation layer and consisted of dark silty loam, 12" thick. It contained sherds of the 12th and 13th cs. and many fragments of millstone.

Layer 3 consisted of black loam with patches of burnt wood and stone with 12th-c. sherds, perhaps indicating a period of destruction.

Layer 4 consisted of silty sandy loam with few sherds, perhaps representing a period of abandonment. The lower part of the layer contained millstone and 14th-c. sherds; on top of the layer post-mediaeval sherds were found.

Layer 5 consisted of the rest of the silt up to the time when Mr. Prosser filled it in. Finds indicate gradual silting-up from the 14th to 18th cs.

On completion of the section, the side of the mound was revealed, rising steeply at an angle of 50° from the ditch which was V-shaped and still sharp cut. Probably the earthwork was constructed for military purposes. Lack of erosion suggests that the bottom of the ditch silted up quickly or was deliberately filled in.

Trench 2.

Its purpose was to find out whether there was a proper causeway or whether it was the result of infilling by plough action. The causeway was 15' wide. Its N. edge and part of the slope towards the ditch were sectioned and found to contain three layers. The bottom layer was the old turf line found in Trench 1 (layer A), showing that the causeway area was undisturbed when the ditch was dug. Above the turf line was a layer of packed clay with a layer of cobbles sparsely embedded in it. Owing to disturbance at the E. end, the extent of the cobbling could not be determined. The edge of the causeway was examined for evidence of a palisade, but no post-holes were found.

Conclusion.

This mound is similar to mounds at Wavendon and Mursley, excavated by the author (Reports in *Wolverton and District Arch. Soc. J.*, 1968, p. 29, and 1969, p. 59). Both had causeways for access. The former was a motte or small defensive position and the latter was a windmill tump. Another mound with a causeway is Church Hill at Whaddon. Though probably excavated early this century, no report has been made. Mottes at Shenley, Old Bradwell, Wolverton, Wing, Castlethorpe and Cublington have no causeways.

No prehistoric finds were made. The mound showed three main periods of occupation, dated mainly by pottery types. The odd Roman sherds were residual finds, but suggest Roman occupation of a site nearby, perhaps in the field W. of the mound where Roman sherds have also been found.

The mound with its impressive encircling ditch was dug in the 12th c., perhaps as a stronghold. It was only occupied for a short period. In the 13th c. a windmill was built on the summit; it was burnt down in the 14th c. The area was then abandoned and the ditch silted up. Erosion was hastened, when a gallows was erected and criminals hanged there were buried.

In 1962 it was still a landmark; with continued deep ploughing it will soon be a light clay mark on the landscape and a crop mark on an aerial photograph.

19. SP83403130 Salden Wood Tip.

A disused gravel pit at Salden Wood was for a time used as a rubbish tip by Bletchley U.D.C. When it was being closed down and topsoil from the edge of the pit spread over the refuse, Roman sherds were found by the bulldozer driver. When further investigation by the author revealed a number of Roman features, the U.D.C. gave permission for an emergency excavation.

The features consisted of two timber-framed buildings, represented by post-holes, beam-slots and areas of occupational debris. Little substantial stonework was found. Nearby was a clay-lined storage pit 9' 6" in diameter. After silting in, it had been used as a rubbish tip and then partially sealed by cobbling, perhaps a cobbled yard associated with the building.

There was a large tapering ditch 33' long, ending in a gully which led to an oval pit 7' 6" long. This pit was full of a sooty silty substance in which were found a few fragments of metallic slag and a fragment of samian pottery very much warped. Mr. B. R. Hartley considered that it had been subjected to a temperature in excess of 1100°C, but no sign of heat was found in the gully or pit or nearby. The tapering ditch may have been used for steeping the metal to temper it. The scum from the metal which drained off along the gully into the pit had overflowed and spread sediment over a large area. No furnace was found; it may have been destroyed by quarrying or the bulldozer. Many fragments of ironstone were found on the site.

A small timber-framed building stood near the tapering ditch and may have been a workshop. Most of the building had been destroyed; all that remained were two footing trenches and a floor of packed clay.

Near the clay-lined pit was another packed gravel floor in the centre of which was a large posthole 1' in diameter. A footing trench with packed gravel was associated with the floor.

A human skeleton was found buried in the inhabited area with sherds of the late 3rd-c. in the grave-fill. It was lying north to south. The bones belonged to an adult, sex unknown. The upper part had been destroyed by the bulldozer; the rest powdered away on removal. The burial probably took place about the time of the destruction of the site. Other human skeletons had been found early this century, when the gravel pit was working.

A small stream running round the S.W. end of the ridge would have supplied the site with water. No wells were found.

This Roman industrial site was occupied from the late 1st c. A.D. to the middle of the 3rd c. At one stage it was used for iron smelting. Pottery types were used for dating, since no coins were found in the excavation. The author found a 3rd-c. coin in the field next to the site and other unspecified coins have been found there. Features connected with the site may lie undisturbed in the next field, but aerial photographs show no trace of them.

The finds included some worked flint flakes of the Mesolithic period. They were unstratified and had been washed into the upper layers of the tapering ditch, when it silted up. In spite of evidence of industrial activity, few metal objects were found and hardly any made of iron.

20. SP84793248 Roman Occupation Site 2 July 1967.

The site is on low-lying land on Newton Brook between the railway and the main gate of the London Brick Co. When the land was being drained for the installation of natural gas plant, features were observed in the section of a trench. With the contractors' permission a record was made and some of the sherds in the excavated soil were rescued.

The features comprised a large depression and two ditches, 10' wide and 5' deep, the fill of which was in four layers. The bottom layers were of black silty gritty loam with limestone fragments and sherds; on top of this was a layer of grey silt containing vegetable matter.

The main feature, the large depression, some 30' wide and 5' deep, may have been the base of a building. Building stone and roofing tiles (*tegulae*) found near

the steep sides at both ends of the depression suggest that these may have been walls.

The base of the depression was flat with gritty fill cut into natural clay, but no evidence of any tiled or flagged floor, except for a fragment of floor tile found in the fill.

The ditches which were parallel to the sides of the depression may have drained it. The stream, when in flood, had worn away the edge of the ditch nearest to it, with the result that between the ditch and the modern stream a layer of silt and debris had formed, 4' deep at one end.

The lay-out suggests a small building frequently flooded by the nearby stream. It was occupied, therefore, only for a short time, in the 2nd c. The ground has now been made up by the developers, leaving the Roman features undisturbed, except by the new drainage trench.

POSTSCRIPT

Two more sites have recently been discovered by field-walking, both in the area of Borough Farm.

21. SP858303 30/3/73.

This Roman occupation site lies on the S. slope of the ridge, on which the farm is situated, on the N. bank of a small stream. Finds consisted of scatters of limestone and bunter pebbles, with Roman sherds, including plain samian ware, form 31. All came from an area of very black topsoil, suggesting habitation. No Roman tiles were found. Old gravel workings occupy the centre of the field.

22. SP855304 3/4/73.

Sherds of Iron Age (B) and Roman pottery were found on the surface of a ploughed field about a hundred yards S.W. of site (21). The field had patches of natural gravel brought up by deep ploughing. No evidence of buildings was found. As the fields are adjacent, the Roman sherds are probably part of the scatter found on site (21). The only other find was a worked flint, possibly part of a core.

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