

Archaeological Notes

Notes from the Alton district for 1957

THE CHICHESTER—SILCHESTER ROMAN ROAD

The fields on the supposed line of this road, where it passes through the parish of East Worldham, have been kept under observation during the ploughing and cropping seasons. Where the suggested line crosses the Worldham—Wyck Road, the fields on each side show a distinct area of scattered flints in otherwise practically flintless fields. Where the line crosses the junction of three field ditches (O.S. Map 169, 753-369) several large flat stones were noticed at the bottom of the ditch. 450 yards further N.W. where the old medieval hollow road from Clays Farm to Binsted cuts through the supposed line, a line of flints about 2½ feet below the present ground level was noticed (752-395). This spot will be fully investigated when time permits. The clearing of vegetation on a strip through Oakhanger Pond, near Southlands House (772-345) for an electricity cable, has disclosed an embankment on the direct line of the supposed road; this is shown as an island, with two smaller islands on the same line on the 2in. map. Permission is being sought to dig a section through this embankment.

SELBORNE PRIORY EXCAVATIONS

During the last fortnight in August 1957 I again arranged to stay at Priory Farm (through the kindness of Mr Lucas), and considerable progress was made with the help of many enthusiasts who were able to give more or less time to the work—some only a few hours, others were able to come daily.

With the co-operation of an officer of the Royal Engineers, the whole has been surveyed and levels have been taken. This was a most necessary work, which will prove of tremendous value, and we are most grateful to those who made this possible and who carried out the field work involved.

The lead piping which brought the water from the dam further up the valley to the Priory, first discovered by Miss Josephine Knapp two years ago, was further investigated by her, and it was found that the pipe continues in a laid stone channel, roofed over by rough stone work; an attempt to follow the course of the pipe by means of mine detecting apparatus proved unsuccessful, lead being a bad conductor, and the pipe being too deep below the surface to register on the instrument. A small piece of this pipe which had been broken off is being sent to experts for examination and assay.

Considerable progress was made in the excavation of the south-east portion of the Priory Church. Here the discovery of a portion of a well preserved and beautifully carved stone boss, together with a number of sections of ribbing (under masses of rubble) indicate that part of the Sanctuary was vaulted. Further west, the belief that the foundations of the west front of the Priory Church had been found, has now been discarded, and it is now thought that these must be the foundations of a porch or buttress on the west of the church, and of the conventual buildings on the west of the cloister garth. A considerable number of worked architectural details in marble have been unearthed—at the west of the excavations—portions of columns, bases of pillars, etc. Specimens of this stone are being submitted

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for expert opinion to decide if the stone is from Purbeck, or, as in the case of Waverley Abbey, from the more accessible beds in the Petworth area. The two large bases of columns, found many years ago and placed in the garden of the Priory Farm, have been removed from their overgrown position and have been cleaned, drawn and photographed. They look as if in their original position they must have formed part of the west doorway of the Priory Church.

While the weather permits, digging is being continued on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons at the east end of the Priory Church.

(Since these notes were written, the 1958 and 1959 seasons have produced discoveries of far-reaching importance, which will be fully reported later.)

GRANGE FARM, SELBORNE

In June Mr Walter Williams, the tenant under Magdalen College, of Grange Farm, Selborne, discovered what he thought was a foundation of some building while ploughing in a field between the farm house and Gracious Street, Selborne, and invited me to come to investigate. With the help of some of those already working on the Priory, and of Mr Williams himself and his relatives, excavation discovered the foundations of a building approximately 31 feet in length, and 21 feet in width. The footings consisted of large stones, laid in mortar, 2 ft. 3 in. in width, and 6 in. to 9 in. thick, on a rubble base 4 ft. 3 in. in width, lying on the virgin clay. The top of the foundations were about 18 in. below the present ground level of the field; the stone used was the local Selborne rock; in appearance the foundations and the mortar used was very similar to those discovered during the Priory excavations. This, together with the associated finds of medieval pottery fragments and many oyster shells points to the foundations being those of one of the buildings of the Priory Grange Farm—possibly of the original Grange itself—of which Gilbert White writes in the *Antiquities of Selborne*, Letter XXVI:

‘The Priory of Selborne had possessed in this village a Grange, an usual appendage to manorial estates, where the fruits of their land were stowed and laid up for use at a time when men took the natural products of their land in kind. The mansion of this spot is still called “The Grange”, and is the manor house of the convent possessions in this place.

‘The author has conversed with very ancient people who remember the old original grange, but it has long given place to a modern farm house.

‘Magdalen College holds a Court Leet and Court Baron in the great wheat barn of the said Grange annually, where the President usually superintends, attended by the Bursar and Steward of the College.’

(The Court Leet and Court Baron of Selborne were held until the year 1925, when copyhold tenure of land was abolished by the passing of the Birkenhead Act. The Grange Farm, as well as Priory Farm and much other property in Selborne and district still belongs to Magdalen College, Oxford, to which foundation it was granted by William Waynfleet on the suppression of the Augustinian Priory of Selborne in 1486.)

The site of the foundations (738-388) has been reported to the Ordnance Survey.

A ROMAN COIN OF AUGUSTUS, c. B.C. 20

When working on the excavation of the foundations at Grange Farm, Selborne, I had the good fortune to find a Roman coin, of bronze, about a foot below present ground level. The coin is rather worn, but on the obverse two heads can be distinctly seen, and on the reverse there is a crocodile (chained to a palm tree, although this last feature cannot be made out on this specimen).

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB PROCEEDINGS

Selborne was never a Roman station, and although there are records of Roman coins having been found quite close to Grange Farm, including one in the garden of Coneycroft (Hants F.C. *Proceedings*, Vol. IX) and at Jasmine Cottage, just opposite Grange (Carusius and Electus) and I myself found a coin of Maximianus (284-308 A.D.) during the Priory excavations two years ago, all these finds are of coins of much later date, and in all probability came from the Woolmer Pond hoards, which, as Gilbert White tells us, were used as small change in the Selborne shops in his day (*Antiquities of Selborne*, Letter I).

So this coin, being so much earlier than anything previously found hereabouts, must come in a very different category, and cannot have any direct connection with the excavation at Grange Farm. It has been submitted to the experts at the Heberden Coin Room of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, who state that the coin was minted about 20 B.C. in the Roman colony of Nemausus (Nîmes). The heads are those of Augustus and Agrippa. The chained crocodile represents Egypt, and the coin was struck to commemorate the victory of Augustus over Queen Cleopatra in the sea battle of Actium in 31 B.C. The following museum note is added: 'Your coin of Nemausus is quite an unusual find in this country, as you suspected. There are in fact a few others—from Cirencester, Winchester, Tewkesbury and Chester. But these are all of which I know.'

FLEMISH TILES IN HAMPSHIRE

With reference to my paper on the Cheriton Tiles, in Vol. XX of the *Papers and Proceedings* of the Hampshire Archaeological Society, it may be of interest to record that I have received a letter from H. J. E. Van Beuningen, of Rotterdam, inclosing a photograph of a tile in his collection which is identical with the 'Little Ladye of Cheriton' tile. His tile is of the same size as the Cheriton tile, and, like it, shows traces of the floral decoration of the wider border shown in the photograph of the tile in the Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Holland.

Mr Van Beuningen states that his tile was found at the beginning of the war 'in the centre of the old town of Rotterdam, where was situated a monastery, founded in the beginning of the 13th century'. He also states that a similar tile was found last year at Gouda, about 20 km. east of Rotterdam, and promises to send a photograph of this specimen also.

G. E. C. KNAPP.

Saltpetre House, Ashurst, Colbury

A NOTE on the above site was published in the *Proceedings* of the Field Club, vol. XVIII, part 3, p. 335. The following extract from Lewis' *New Forest* throws more light on this somewhat mysterious earthwork; it is part of a transcript of a Copy of Decree of the Court of Exchequer, 19th June 26th Elizabeth (Lewis, pp.184-5).

'And also whereas, heretofore there hath been one piece of the common and waste ground of the said Forest, containing by estimation four hundred acres, inclosed by a composition under covenants, for the bringing to perfection the making of good and perfect saltpetre, by a certain day prefixed in the same composition, which day is already passed long since, and yet the said work not brought to perfection; It is thereupon by the advice and upon the certificate of John Tavener, gentleman, General Surveyor of the said woods, the 19th of June, in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of our sovereign Lady Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, defender of the faith &c. ordered and decreed by the Lord Treasurer, Chancellor, and Baron of this Court of the Exchequer, in manner and form following (that is to say) that the said inclosure heretofore taken in for the making of saltpetre, shall be laid open again unto the common

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by the Lord Warden of the said Forest, with the assistance of two or three justices of the peace next adjoining, before the first day of August next coming.

And whereas, the said Lord Warden requireth to have towards the building of the lodge within the park called the New Park in the same Forest, all those trees standing in the old park there, which were sold by the late Earl of Arundel unto Sir Edward Horsey, Knight, deceased, howbeit suffered to stand to serve the saltpetre man if he could have brought his work to perfection: It is likewise ordered that there shall be a view taken of the said trees by the said John Tavener, surveyor, and upon certificate made into this court, of which view the said Lord Warden to have as many of them as shall be necessary for the repairing and building of the said lodge.'

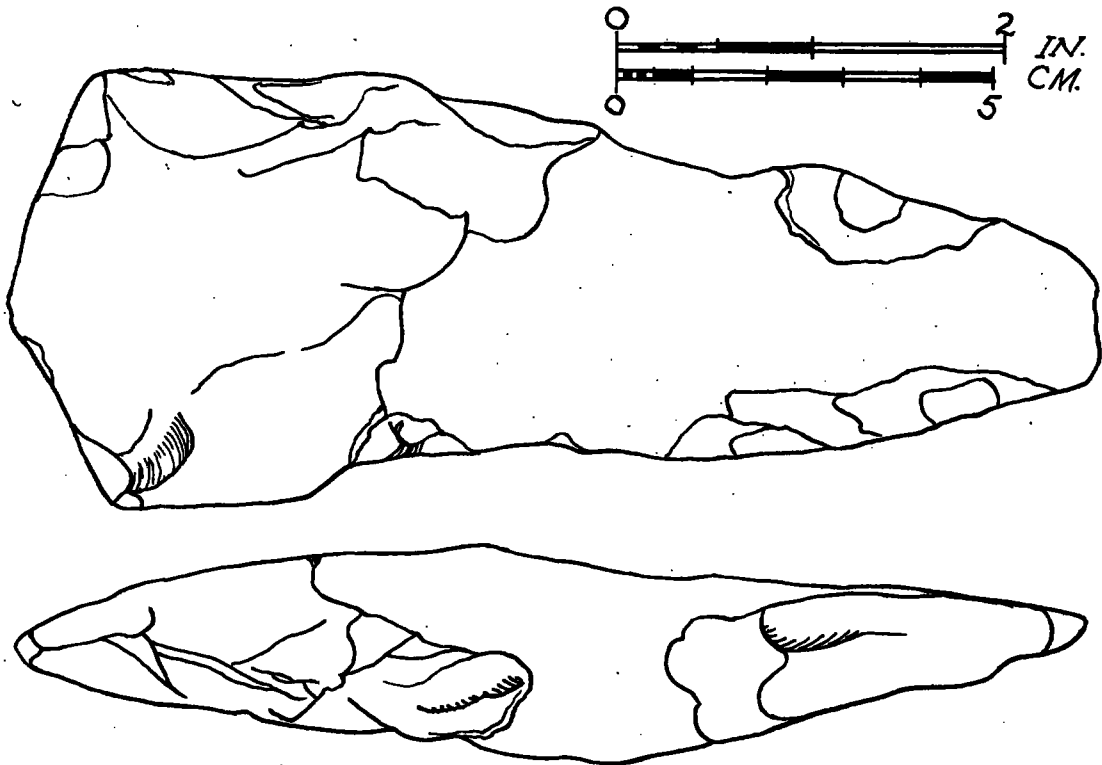
The saltpetre project seems to have been a failure. It is possible that the 'saltpetre man' was a German.

E. C. WREY

A Flint Axe from Fareham

IN the Barnet (Herts.) Museum is exhibited a stone axe, fitted with a modern replica of the Neolithic wooden haft found at Ehenside Tarn, Cumberland. The axehead is made from a flint nodule, naturally waisted and tapering to a squarish butt; little flaking was required to socket it into a haft. The broader end was carefully chipped and polished to an angular cutting edge. It is not certain how the axe came to the museum (bombed in 1941) but it was probably given by the late F. W. Peters, a local collector. Written on the blade is '1933 CAMS FAREHAM' which suggests that the axe came from near the Mesolithic site at Cams recorded by W. F. Rankine in 1951 (*Proceedings Hants Field Club*, XVII, pp. 141-2), but the axe is probably of a slightly later date—anything from Neolithic A to the Early Bronze Age.

D. F. RENN



Beaulieu Abbey

SOME time ago, Mr Widnell, Warden of the Abbey, consulted me as to the gap which, on the plan of the Abbey made by Mr Brakspear and used in the guides, appears between the Infirmary and the Kitchen. Mr Widnell felt, as I did, that there was room for some investigation here.

Accordingly, with the help of Mr Widnell and one of the estate people, I carried out a small excavation. This revealed, as I quite expected, an unmarked doorway in the southern wall of the Infirmary, with steps leading down in the direction of the Kitchen. The space between the buildings produced some paving, and, as a 'dig' at the eastern end of the passage showed a stone threshold, it seems practically certain that there was a paved covered passage way having, not only doorways to the Infirmary and its Kitchen on opposite sides but also a portal at the end towards the monastic fishponds.

Subsequently, I attempted to clear the kitchen itself. Beyond the fireplace on the east side, however, there was no trace of the outer wall in line with the fireplace back. As there seemed to be the beginning of a return wall from the front of the fireplace, this part was dug in case the wall was inset at the further end. The return did not go far, and in digging to trace a possible continuation, the end, southern, wall was struck; this crossed to a corner in line with the back of the fireplace, so the obvious fact was that the wall between this corner and the fireplace had been robbed at some time or other. I had hoped to carry out the complete excavation of the kitchen but, with the other activities of the estate people, I have not been able to fix a time for resumption, though I hope to do so at some future time. Meanwhile, the discovery of the door and passage is of interest.

F. W. ROBINS, F.S.A.