

A ROMANO-BRITISH BATH-HOUSE AT WYCK, NEAR ALTON, HAMPSHIRE

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and V SNETTERTON-LEWIS

ABSTRACT

Prior to the year 1818 a 'Roman Villa' was discovered on the estate of the Right Hon Wm Wickham at Wyck Place, Binstead, Hampshire, and was graphically recorded by W Stevens RMC. A coloured print of the original survey drawing currently hangs in the Curtis Museum, Alton, Hampshire. This paper presents the results of the re-excavation of this building during 1975 and 1976 by the members of the Farnham and District Museum Society Archaeological Group, the objects of which were to locate the building and assess the accuracy of the original excavation plans and sections.

INTRODUCTION

The site (Fig 1), situated at SU 757 393 at approximately 137 m OD, is on the southern edge of a band of upper greensand overlooking a steep drop onto gault clay and 1 km south east of a band of chalk. It is located 0.6 km east of the Roman road from Chichester (*Noviomagus Rignensium*) to Silchester (*Callewa Atrebatum*) and 1.6 km south of the postulated Roman road from Neatham (*Vindomi?*) to the Roman potteries in the Alice Holt Forest (Millett & Graham 1986).

The Nineteenth-Century Excavation

Historical notes regarding the original discovery in 1818 are sparse and apart from the survey drawing by William Stevens (Fig 2) the following extracts from deeds and manuscripts are the only known references to the nineteenth-century discovery.

Extract from lecture delivered by Rev C S Ruddell, Rector of Durrington, Salisbury, 24th Feb 1891

'The old name of Binstead is BENSTED, i.e. BENESTED or BOONSTEAD - a Benefice or holding at the will of the Lord or for life. In this parish are several ancient divisions: BINSTED KING'S BINSTED POPHAM, HAY, WHEATLEY and WYCK. Wyck from Viscus has its name from the Roman Mansion (remains of which were found here in the last generation) which was surrounded by its court, in which the slaves lived; and then by its Viscus inhabited by the Coloni, who had a share in the produce of the farm, and were often those who were born on the estate.'

Extract from particulars of Binsted, Alton, Hants taken from the Wheeler Deeds and other sources, by Mrs M H Wheeler, 1953

'Roman House at Wyck, Roman burials at Wheatley, Pottery Kilns in Alice Holt and as recently as 1951 a Roman Pot was found at Steen Farm.

ROMAN BURIALS. In or about 1850, two Roman Sarcophagi were found at Wheatley Farm. Mrs Louisa Margaret Wheeler of Millcourt stated in 1889 that they were found between Wheatley and South Hay. The 6in OS map shows the site to have been about one third of a mile south of the direct line between these houses. One of the Sarcophagi was hewn out of Local Malm rock and contained a small skeleton and five or six urns. The lid was in pieces and much marked by ploughs. This one is now in the Roman Gallery at the BM.

The second Sarcophagi was of different shape and was taken to Wheatley where it was used as a

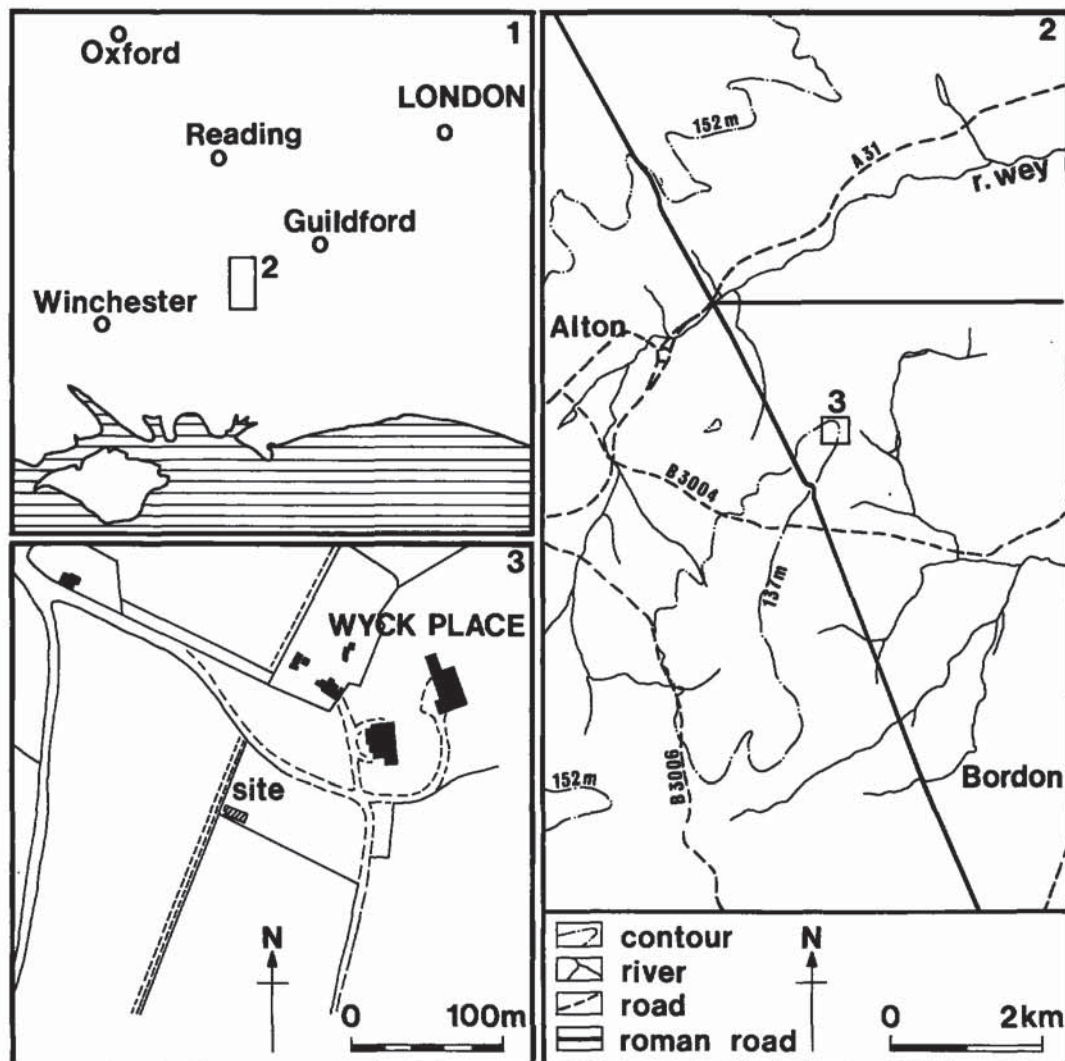


Fig 1. Wyck Bath-house location plans.

cattle trough until 1923 when it was removed to Binstead Kings. This one is hewn out of a much harder rock (? Freestone).

The BM attribute it to 2nd or 3rd Centuries AD. (Nothing is known of its contents when found).'

Extract from MSS Notes by C S Ruddle, presented by W H Ruddle (his son) of The Close, Dockenfield, Farnham, Feb 1936

'Mr Wickham has informed me that the remains of

a Roman Villa were found at Wyck in the last generation and that the leaden pipes belonging to it were long in the possessions of Mr Lowndes, the Rector of Worldham.'

The manuscripts and deeds from which these extracts are taken are in the Wilmer House Museum, Farnham, Surrey.

Research on the archives of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Collections, by the Curator Dr T A Heathcote has revealed that

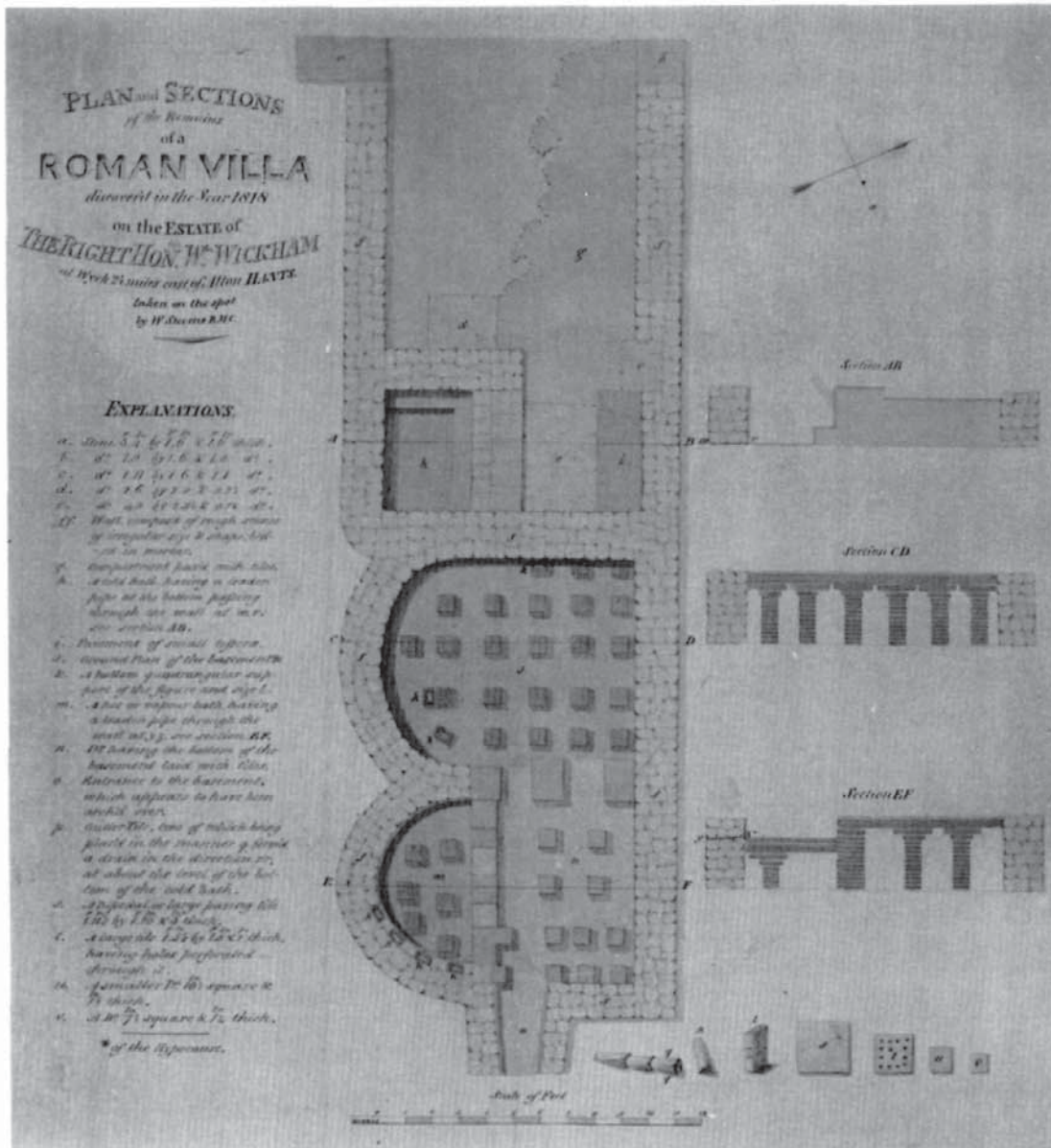


Fig 2. Plan and sections of the bath-house, drawn in 1818 by W Stevens RMC. (Photograph courtesy of Hampshire County Museum Service)

on the 9th of April 1821 there were two Draughtsmen by the name of William Stevens working as masters at the Royal Military College (RMC) Sandhurst.

They were a William Stevens, described as a Military Draughtsman – Master, born in 1793, joined RMC in 1813, one year after it moved from Marlow to Sandhurst, and died on the 21st of March 1827; and another William Stevens described as a Military Draughtsman, born in 1771, who was transferred from the Senior Department for Staff Officers, located at High Wycombe and moved to Farnham and subsequently Sandhurst, finally becoming the Staff College Camberley, to the Junior Department (RMC) on 25th June 1820 and retiring on a pension in 1835.

It would therefore seem probable that the W Stevens RMC recorded on the survey drawing of 1818 (Fig 2) was the first of the two men.

THE EXCAVATION

The excavation was limited to the removal of the nineteenth-century backfill and uncovering of the building as originally excavated. During the progress of re-excavation surviving stratigraphy was revealed in the Stoke Room (Fig 3, layers 10, 11, 14, 15, 16), the drain passing through the Apodyterium and in the Phase I Construction trench (Fig 3, layer 8). All of these layers were excavated and form the only elements of intact stratigraphy examined.

The nineteenth-century excavations had been uniformly backfilled with excavated material, creating an artificial stratigraphy (layers 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13) but items from it help to illustrate the structure and decoration of the building. The rammed chalk floor of the artificial hollow, in which the building originally been constructed, was overlain by a thin layer of humic soil (Fig 3, layer 7), suggesting that the excavation had been left open for a considerable period following its discovery. It therefore seems likely that the building was excavated several years before the time of its recording by W Stevens RMC in 1818 when

the remains had become overgrown. This would satisfactorily explain the inaccuracies of the perimeter on the 1818 Survey Plan, especially on the southern wall (Fig 2).

Following the original excavation, the building was effectively robbed of pilae, box flue tiles and lead pipes, probably by 'souvenir hunters'. The tessellated floor areas, large paving slabs and stone blocks were removed perhaps in attempts to discover concealed features.

The recent excavation of the building accurately recorded the plan and extant sections. This, together with the internal layout derived from the 1818 Survey, enables the phased development of the building to be described.

Phase I

The earliest feature consisted of an uncoursed clunch rubble mortared wall (1.00 m wide) dressed on the south face and constructed in a trench cut into the natural chalk. The foundation width and depth suggest a considerable original height and a substantial enclosure wall. This wall is interpreted as an enclosure associated with buildings elsewhere. The construction trench, to the southern side, had been re-excavated in Phase II to provide an adequate drainage channel for discharge from baths and roof.

Phase II

This phase saw the construction of a simple rectangular bath-house inserted into the Phase I enclosure wall utilising in part its foundations and the southern construction trench.

The surviving walls were in coursed random-size mortared clunch blocks dressed on the south external face and with double tile coursings at 180 mm centres to the South Wall. The exact layout of this phase was not discernible due to the extensive re-modelling in Phase III and the limited extent of the excavation. It would, however, seem likely that the Phase II building incorporated four distinct rooms.

Entering from the Apodyterium which had a tessellated floor, a passage-way would have

extended along the southern side of the building giving access firstly into a Frigidarium located in the same position as in Phase III (Fig 3). The tessellated pavement area (Fig 2, *i*) formed the floor to a cold water basin with a drain through its north wall. The adjacent large stone paving slab (Fig 2, *e*) was utilised as a water run-off platform having an independent under-floor drain formed from imbrex tiles.

Adjacent to the Frigidarium beside the northern wall in the position of the Phase III Tepidarium, was a sunken bath. The internal wall surfaces of this bath were plastered but the Phase III re-modelling had destroyed any surface finish this may have had. This bath, its approach and adjoining area (Phase III Caldarium) formed the Phase II Caldarium which terminated along the western edge of the Stoke Room floor tiles. The Phase II Stoke Room was thus in the same position as in Phase III but slightly larger.

Phase III

The Phase II building was substantially remodelled with the demolition of a large section of the southern wall and the re-organisation of internal areas.

The southern wall was rebuilt, to accommodate two apsidal rooms which projected beyond the edge of the Phase I enclosure wall, thus creating a projecting panel in a hitherto straight wall. The rebuilding used coursed mortared clunch blocks, dressed on the south face and with double tile coursings at 180 mm centres matching the Phase II south wall. This projecting panel is more decorative than necessary but despite this it was ultimately finished in plaster with red ochre painted decoration. This applied decorative feature may, however, have been later in date, a result either of changing fashions or a waterproofing to an exposed wall.

The Apodyterium remained as in Phase II with the redundant drain from the Frigidarium run-off area being covered with a stone slab (Fig 2, *d*). This stone slab may have been the base seating for a small altar. The entrance to the Frigidarium had to be repositioned as the

passage along the south wall had been removed by the apsidal rooms.

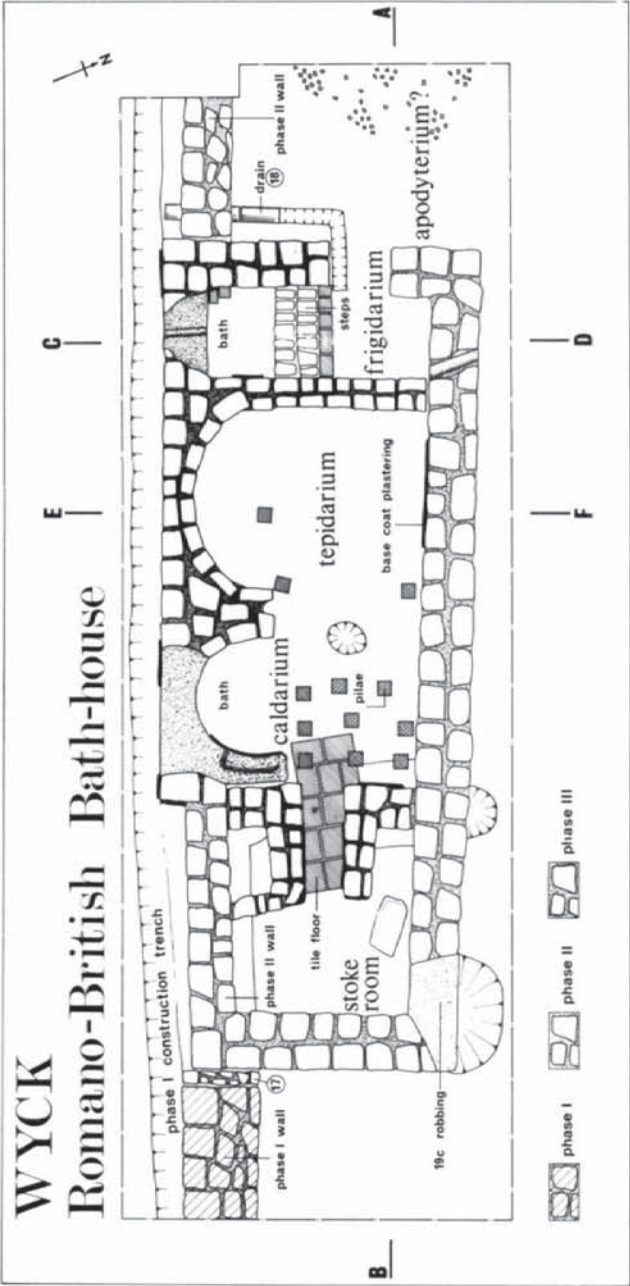
The Phase II cold water basin and water run-off area was abandoned and utilised as a floor, whilst a new cold water bath was constructed along the south wall entered by three tile and stone steps. These steps may be the residual foundation courses of a Phase II wall dividing the water run-off area from the southern passage way. Waste water from this bath discharged through a pipe in the south wall into the Phase I construction trench.

Both the Tepidarium and Caldarium were rebuilt as apsidal rooms with a bath being constructed in the apse of the latter. No signs of any divisions between these two rooms were recorded but the 1818 survey does suggest the bases for two arches. Box flue tiles were built into the apsidal walls of the Caldarium (Fig 2, *k*) which also had a suspended floor (Fig 2, *m*) and was plastered and decorated in a red ochre finish internally.

The Stoke Room furnace walls were rebuilt in mortared random clunch blocks plastered internally and in heat exposed areas so as to protect the stonework from damage from the intense heat. No evidence was seen of any secondary plastering in these areas nor of any major heat damage to the stonework, although the floor tiles were well blackened and heat cracked. The previously unexcavated layers in the Stoke Room revealed the burnt chalk floor to be covered in a layer of charcoal and ash (Fig 3, layer 16) overlain by dark grey occupation fill (Fig 3, layer 11) which contained quantities of pottery, tile and clunch fragments. This was sealed by a layer of tile and clunch rubble (Fig 3, layer 10) representing the final demolition layer for the Phase III building. The occupation filling of the Stoke Room may indicate that the building was used for domestic habitation purposes for a period between its final use as a bath-house and its ultimate demolition. Alternatively it may simply represent dumped rubbish.

Architecture and Construction

The Phase III re-modelling may have been



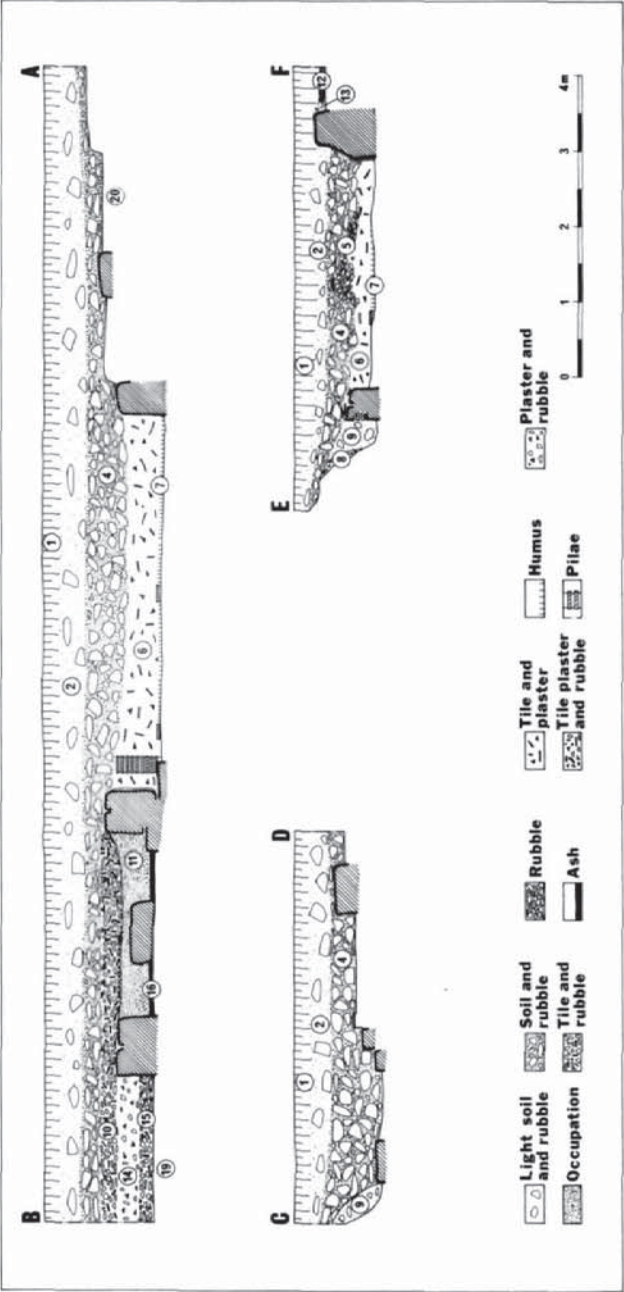


Fig 3. Wyck Bath-house, plan (above), sections (below).

undertaken using a fashionable and orthodox model for such structures. The rebuilding was probably commenced from the western end, where minimal works were required to the Apodyterium. Having established the relative dimensions required for the general arrangement of rooms along the southern wall, it became necessary to fore-shorten the Stoke Room. From the quantity of tegula and imbrex tile recovered it seems that the building had a tiled pitched roof with the Phase III projecting panel being covered by the existing eaves. Apart from two fragments of 20 mm thick Oolitic Limestone, probably roofing slates, no other items of alien or worked stone were excavated.

THE FINDS

The Pottery by Martin Millett

Introduction

With the exception of 35 g of post-medieval pottery from layer 1, all the material presented was Romano-British. A total of 7.617 kg (608 sherds) representing a minimum of 140 vessels were recorded. The information on these is summarised in Tables 1 to 3, using the layers as in the text. Fuller details are retained by the author and are available for examination on request.

The method used has been to look at all the material whether stratified or not so that stra-

Table 1. Summary of fabrics represented, in percentages based on weight (to nearest 1%)

LAYERS	FINE WARES					COARSE WARES			MORTARIA		TOTAL WT. IN KG
	Samian	Local Red	New Forest	Oxford	'A l'éponge'	TOTAL	Farnham	Tilford	Grog-tempered	Oxford	
1*		7				7	70				0.150
2			4			4	89	6			0.554
3								100			0.030
4					3	3	97				0.163
5							100				0.195
8				1		1	80		11		0.368
9		9	2			11	73	10	5		0.964
11		10				10	90				3.493
12	5					5	95				0.298
13							100				0.005
14							100				0.065
15							100				0.055
17							100				0.040
18							100				0.040
19							100				0.135
20							100				0.060
unstratified							100				0.115
TOTAL	<1	7	<1	<1	<1	8	88	2	<1	91	<1 7.617

Note * These figures for layer 1 exclude 35 g, 23% post-medieval pottery.

Table 2. Summary of occurrence of types by layer

TYPES	1 Layer	2 Layer	4 Layer	5 Layer	8 Layer	9 Layer	11 Layer	12 Layer	14 Layer	17 Layer	19 Layer	20 Layer	Dates
<i>FINE</i>													
Samian Dr 33							1						Central Gaul 2nd cent
Local Red 2						1							)
Local Red 3						1							) see discussion
Local Red 4							1						)
Local Red 5							1						)
New Forest (1)													
30.1-2						1							c 300-400+ AD
65-70		1											c 300-400+ AD
86		1											c 320-370 AD
Oxford (2)													
WC 4-7					1								c 250-400+ AD (Mortarium)
C55, or 61, or 68-70					1								c 300-400+ AD
'à l'éponge' (3)			1										c 300-400+AD
<i>COARSE</i>													
Grog (4)					1								c 270-400+ AD
Tilford, 80(5)						1							post c 320 AD
Tilford, 81		1											post c 320 AD
Farnham, 17(5)				1	4								c 100-300 AD
Farnham, 30		1											c 340-400+ AD
Farnham, 41											1		1st cent to c 150 AD
Farnham, 49								2	1				c 150-300 AD
Farnham, 51		1		1		2	1				1		c 250-400+ AD
Farnham, 66											1		1st cent to c 250 AD
Farnham, 76	1	1	2	2		1	7	1	1	1			c 150-350 AD
Farnham, 77				2			1						c 150-400+ AD
Farnham, 78		2											c 250-370 AD
Farnham, 79					1			1					c 150-350 AD
Farnham, 80							1						c 250-400+ AD
Farnham, 81	1	1			1	1							c 250-400+ AD
Farnham, 89		1											c 270-340 AD
Farnham, 97							2						c 250-400+ AD
Farnham, 99							1						c 340-400+ AD

Notes and references:

- (1) References to typology in Fulford 1975a.
- (2) References to typology in Young 1977.
- (3) See Fulford 1977 for discussion of this fabric. Our example is his type 1, Raimbault 1973, type 6. I am very grateful to Dr Fulford for confirming my identification of this fabric.
- (4) Fulford 1975b, type 123. See Fig 4, no 1.
- (5) Types refer to Neatham typology, Millett & Graham 1986, 76.
- (6) Types refer to Neatham typology, Millett & Graham 1986, 76-79.

Table 3. Summary of functional types from Wyck

Dishes	6	9.4%
Bowls	20	31.3%
Beakers	1	1.6%
Jars	32	50.0%
Storage Jars	4	6.3%
Flagon	0	0.0%
Mortarium	1	1.6%
TOTAL	64 vessels	

tified layers can be compared with the whole assemblage and the site assemblage with other sites in the area. Wherever possible reference has been made to standard typologies and dates are given on that basis. For the local material the Neatham evidence is used (Millet & Graham 1986). Only pottery of intrinsic interest is illustrated.

Dating

An overall assessment of the pottery suggests that the site was occupied from the second century to AD 400+. Layer 20 produced the earliest material which can best be dated to c AD 100–150 and layer 11 can be fairly securely dated to after c AD 320 on the basis of the Farnham wares. The material from other layers is of little use in dating the construction although the single rim from layer 17 – between the wall of the bath-house and the

courtyard wall – which presumably dates the Phase II construction, can be dated to c AD 150 to 350, and as Phase III also has to be fitted in, the construction can probably be dated to the late second or third century.

General

The pottery in general shows a similar pattern to that from Neatham although with the exception of the Local Red Fine Ware (Millet & Graham 1986, 70–1), the quantity of fine ware and mortaria is less than at Neatham. This would be consistent with a model which suggests pottery imported into the region was redistributed through the town of Neatham. In this context the significance of the single sherd of 'à l'éponge' ware is difficult to assess as its absence from Neatham may result simply from recent recognition (Fulford 1977). The amount of Hampshire Grog Tempered Ware (Fig 4, no 1: Portchester Fabric A, Fulford 1975b) is also less than that represented at Neatham, again perhaps supporting the redistributive model.

Local Red Fine Ware

A total of 7% of the pottery was this fabric, which is apparently of local origin. This percentage is higher than that from Neatham, suggesting that Wyck was nearer to the source than Neatham. The types represented at Wyck are shown on figure 4 (nos 2–5) and all are variations on the most common Neatham type

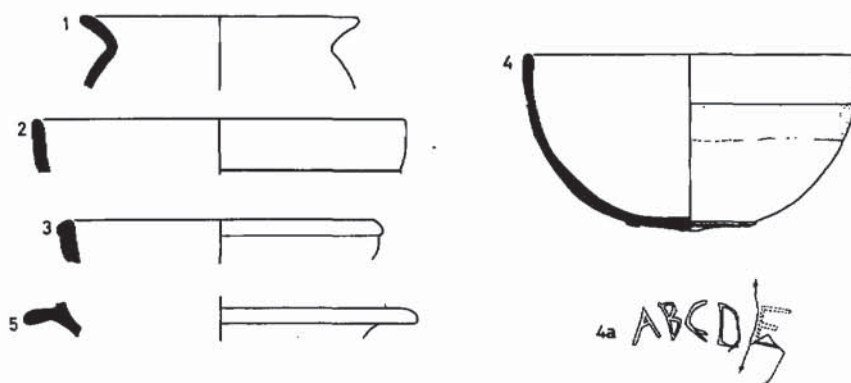


Fig 4. Wyck Bath-house, pottery. 1: Hampshire Grog-tempered ware (layer 8). 2–5: Local Red Fine ware (layer 9; nos 2–3, layer 11; nos 4–5). Scale 1:4.

which imitates the Dr 38 bowl. At Neatham these vessels date to the second half of the third century (Millett & Graham 1986, 70). If the material from layer 11 is not residual, the Wyck evidence suggests that the production was continuing into the second half of the fourth century. This is possible, although further confirmatory information is required from other sites.

One of these vessels, from layer 11 (Fig 4, no 4) has two unusual features. Firstly it bears the graffito ABCDE on the lower half of its exterior (*Britannia* 8, 384, no 24, incorrectly printed as Brusted Wyck) and secondly the vessel has had its flange and footring removed and rubbed down to produce a smooth-surfaced, hemispherical bowl. It is difficult to see the reason for this alteration to the vessel, although one might suggest that the removal of the flange and footring was to make it a scoop for use in the baths.

The Coin by R A Merson

The single coin from layer 18 is a large bronze follis of Constantius I Chlorus as Augustus struck at the mint of Trier during the period 1st May AD 305 to early 307.

Obv. (IMP CONS) TANTIVS P F AVG

Head r.

Rev. GENIO POPV-LI ROMANI

Genius standing l., mintmark

S/F

PTR

(RIC VI 652a or 653a)

Although partially corroded, the coin shows very little sign of wear and was probably lost within a short period of being issued. Where the corrosion deposits are not hiding the surface, the coin has an even pale blue patination.

The large follis denomination was introduced c AD 295–6 as part of Diocletian's reform of the currency. Large folles of the years immediately following the reform are not common on British sites. There was, for example, only one such follis (of Diocletian)

among over a thousand coins from the excavations carried out at the nearby settlement at Neatham (1969–76). This is not necessarily because few were in circulation in the province, but rather that both their comparatively high purchasing power and their larger size meant that they were less likely to be lost than the much smaller bronze coins of preceding and subsequent decades.

Copper Alloy Object by V Snetterton-Lewis

A simple D-shaped belt buckle (Fig 5), devoid of any decoration, from the occupation filling (Fig 3, layer 11) of the Stoke Room.

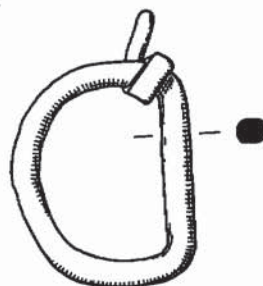


Fig 5. Wyck Bath-house, bronze buckle. Scale 1:1.

The Wall Plaster by G H Cole

With the excavated layers comprising nineteenth-century backfillings, the distribution of wall plaster cannot be regarded as representative of any occupation or demolition stratigraphy.

The wall plaster was applied in several coats, principally being a base coat of coarse material to provide a surface for the application of several finish coats and culminating in a painted design.

Base Coat Plastering

Analysis of the base coat of plaster shows that it consisted substantially of lime with 10% of grey flint, 4% of crushed tile, multi-coloured quartz and sand grains. Applied direct to the stonework structure it had a thickness of 75 mm to 50 mm and when complete provided a

Table 4. Quantitative analysis of base coat plaster

<i>ELEMENT</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>WT</i>
Plaster fragments	8	1020g
External rounded arris, 100mm radius with internal post impression 70mm radius	2	420g
External rounded arris, 120mm radius with internal rebate post impression	2	580g
External rounded arris, 50mm radius with internal rectangular post impression	2	520g
External rounded arris, 40mm radius with two internal rectangular post impressions at 45° to arris	2	540g
External rounded arris, 120mm radius with two internal rectangular post impressions at 45° to arris	1	400g
External rounded corner probably from straight wall into apse, 120mm radius with two internal rectangular post impressions	1	280g
TOTAL	18	3760g

level and even surface over which to apply the finish coats.

The quantitative analysis (Table 4) of this material, with semi-circular and rectangular post impressions on the rear surface occurring only on samples exhibiting external angle rounded arrises, suggests the introduction of surface-mounted timbering around openings in stone walls to provide reinforcement to the plastering at its weakest and most vulnerable locations (Fig 6).

Finish Coats Composition by G C Morgan

The wall plaster is of brushed red ochre (0.25 mm) on white intonaco (0.5 mm), on pale pink mortar (17 mm) on a darker pink mortar (10 mm). Intonaco is the term used for the fine layer of lime used for fresco painting. Both the pink mortars are opus signinum types made from crushed tile. The plaster itself suggests that it is a top coat from a wall and not plastered directly onto the masonry or brickwork of the wall. Analysis of the material shows that the intonaco is mainly lime, with 14% flint, tile and quartz as filler. This is rather

high but may be due to contamination from the lower layer. The pale pink mortar layer, 17 mm thick, is mainly tile with quantities of flint and some quartz (sand grains) in the finer portion. The lower layer is similar but with much lower flint content and some quartz. The lime contents are virtually identical. This looks like two batches of mortar made with the same lime to aggregate ratio but with different aggregate. The presence of glauconite grains in the upper mortar layer may point to the use of the lower chalk as a source of material for lime making.

Decoration

No evidence was seen of any overpainting or repainting and the final decoration was restricted to three simple forms comprising plain white intonaco, plain red ochre and red ochre with single and double white lines (Table 5). Corner details (Fig 7) with crudely formed stops suggest a decorative scheme of empanelled areas throughout the building. One fragment of white intonaco internal angle and the small amount of flat white intonaco

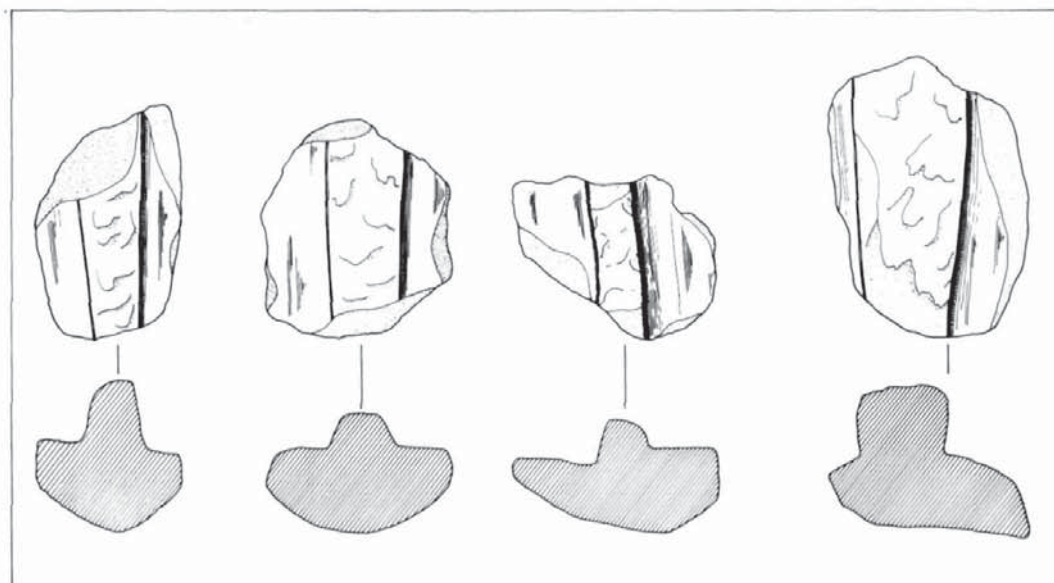


Fig 6. Wyck Bath-house, base coat wall plasterings, showing mortar-filled voids between timbers. Scale 1:3.

Table 5. Quantitative analysis of finish coat plaster

<i>ELEMENT</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>WT</i>
Red ochre – flat	334	13130g
Red ochre with single white lines	30	1710g
Red ochre with double white lines	8	960g
Red ochre – concave	4	1380g
Red ochre – radiused	2	350g
Red ochre – concave with double white lines	1	100g
Red ochre with white line corner detail	1	18g
Red ochre with double white lines and stop detail	2	75g
Red ochre external angle with double white lines	1	60g
White intonaco – flat	5	410g
White intonaco internal angles	1	460g
White intonaco – flat surface with base coat adhering and two internal rectangular post impressions	1	660g
TOTAL	390	19313g

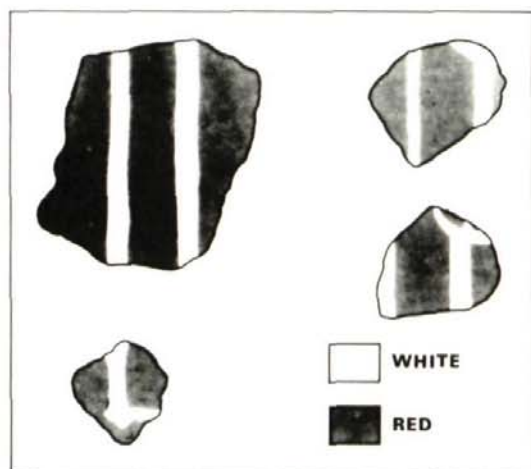


Fig 7. Wyck Bath-house, decorated wall plaster.
Scale 1:4.

plaster may have come from the Frigidarium Bath. The painted decoration surface of the plaster was generally in a good and stable condition with little sign of damage or wear. No spalling or flaking was noted, which in areas of high humidity and condensation may indicate a reasonably short life period between application of the decoration and demolition of the building.

The extant wall plastering (base coat only) in the Tepidarium and Caldarium was at a level beneath the suspended floor and as such represents plastering in the Phase II period prior to the construction of the apsidal rooms and suspended floors.

DISCUSSION

Immediate Environment

The bath-house probably forms part of a larger complex which may have been examined in the early nineteenth century and for which only the sketchiest of notes are known. The comment from the Rev C S Ruddle's lecture notes (see above) regarding the 'Roman Mansion which was surrounded by its court' may imply that the Phase I enclosure wall was excavated previously and in various locations.

The decorated external projecting panel to the south wall of the Phase III building may have been deliberately painted in red ochre so as to form a visually attractive feature when viewed from across an open space. No formal fieldwork was undertaken on the surrounding areas although pottery and tile was collected from the surface of the field to the south of the building.

Dating

The dating of the phases for the building was complicated due to the removal of the majority of the stratigraphy during the early nineteenth-century excavations. However, based on the remaining stratified pottery and the single coin from the drain beneath the Apodyterium floor it would appear that the Phase I enclosure wall was constructed during the period *c* AD 100–150, that the Phase II simple rectangular bath-house was constructed and in use during the period *c* AD 150–320 and that the Phase III re-modelled building was in use from AD 320 to 340 or a little later. The good condition of the red ochre decorated wall plaster from the Phase III building suggests that its life span was relatively short. The transition from a simple rectangular roomed building to that containing apsidal rooms, relative to the phased dating from this site, is loosely paralleled with similar stylistic developments at Beddington (Adkins & Adkins 1986), Six Bells, Farnham (Lowther 1955) and Braishfield (Rogers & Walker 1985), although in the case of the last the stylistic change appears to be slightly later than the others. Doubtless there are other examples of this stylistic redevelopment, but this paper does not attempt to present a comparative analysis.

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