

EXCAVATIONS AT MANOR COTTAGES, NEATHAM, ALTON, 1984–86

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ABSTRACT

Limited trial trenching, in the gardens of Nos 3 & 4 Manor Cottages, Neatham, revealed evidence for occupation of the area from the mid 2nd to the late 4th centuries AD. This occupation, in part, probably represents 'ribbon development' along the Silchester–Chichester road, to the south of the Roman town at Neatham. Mortared footings were also found, however, which are probably the remains of a courtyard wall belonging to a large building, or buildings. From surface evidence, these appear to have existed in the field immediately to the south of the gardens.

INTRODUCTION

The site (SU 7423 4077) lies on river terrace gravels, some 0.3 km south of the River Wey, to the northeast of Alton, in northeast Hampshire. The gravel overlies chalk, is well drained and the position has extensive views to the north, west and south. The area was heavily quarried for gravel in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the remains of several filled in pits are still visible along the ridge formed by the terrace. A number of finds of Roman material have been reported from the immediate area – the most recent of which was the discovery of a *sestertius* of Hadrian in the garden of No 4, Manor Cottages, in 1956. The partially excavated, Roman town site at Neatham (Millett & Graham 1969, 79) lies immediately to the north of the river and the Silchester to Chichester Roman road passes through both sites. The nearest previously known large Roman building lies under the grounds of Neatham Manor, 0.3 km to the west.

In 1984, Mr G Dye, the owner of 4, Manor Cottages, which together with No 3, forms a

single building, dug footings for a garage extension on the east side of the cottage. These cut through approximately 1.0 m of disturbed gravel and exposed the top of half of an apparently circular, stone-lined shaft. Mr Dye dug a further 0.50 m into this feature and recovered a number of sherds of coarse greyware and a fragment of combed hypocaust flue tile. These finds were reported to the Curtis Museum in Alton and as a result the site was visited by members of the Farnham & District Museum Society. While no further work was possible within the footing trenches, it was apparent that Mr Dye had discovered the top of a 3rd/4th century Roman well and that other Roman material was therefore likely to be present in the area. As the owners of both halves of the cottage intended to carry out extensive garden landscaping work, it was felt that a programme of limited trial trenching was justified to establish the nature and extent of the Roman occupation.

The work was carried out between 1984 and 1986, as and when particular areas of the two gardens became available. This report, therefore, covers the results from a number of small trenches, dug at different times within the period and suffers from the usual problems associated with 'keyhole' archaeology. The majority of the finds have been deposited with the Hampshire County Museum Service (Acc No A/1987/12), though some metal objects and coins were retained by the owners.

THE EXCAVATION

The sampled area of the site (Fig 1) appears to divide into four distinct sections, which

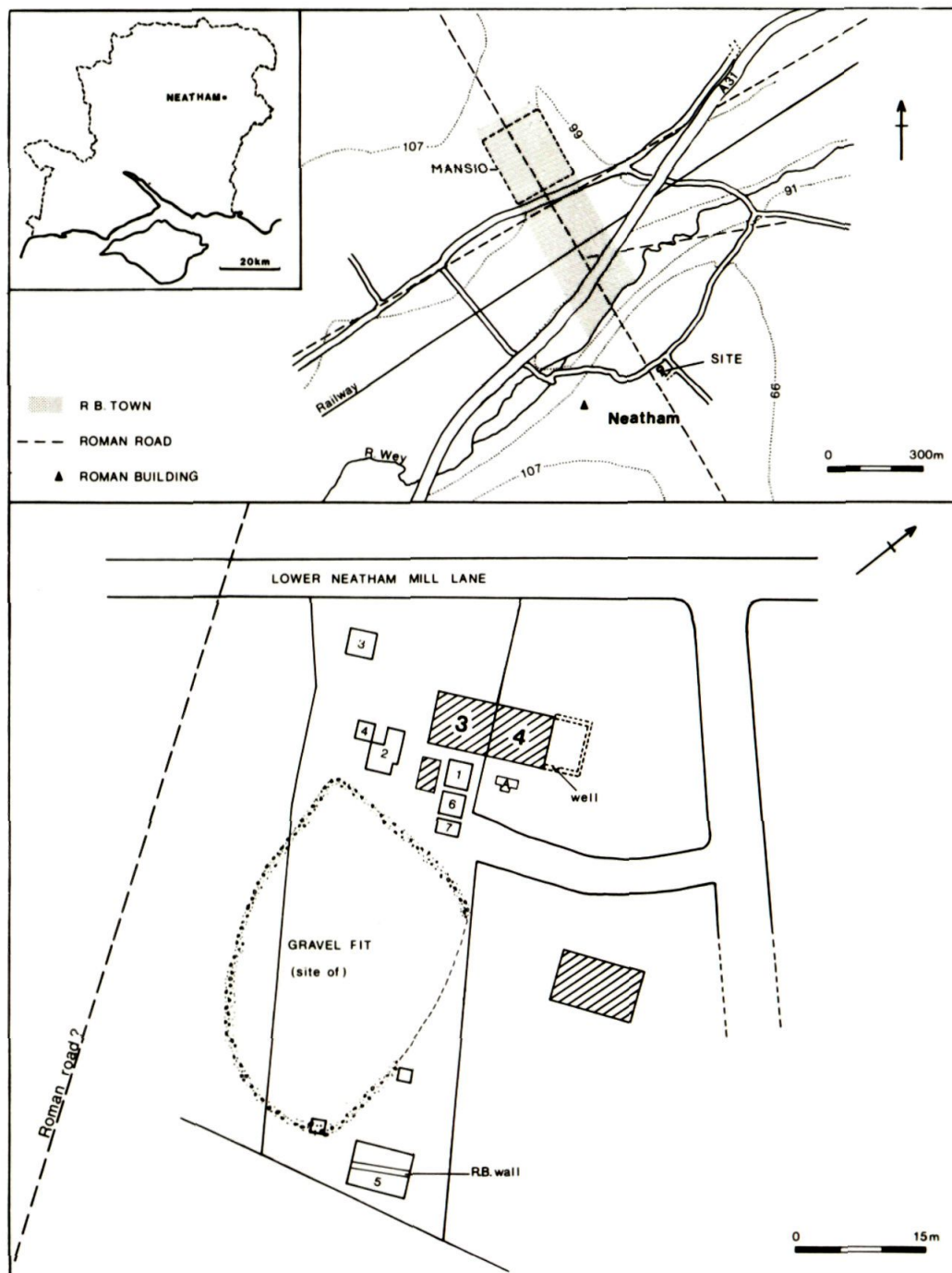


Fig 1. Site and trench location plans.

together provide evidence for four main phases of occupation within the Roman period. The first of these sections lies to the east of the cottages and, while not subjected to any archaeological trial trenching, was adequately sectioned by Mr Dye's garage footing trenches. The stratigraphy consisted of a one metre depth of disturbed gravel containing a mixture of Roman to Victorian material, resting on what appeared to be clean gravel. The only specific feature visible was the well shaft (Fig 1) together with the slight remains of an associated clay floor. These survived because they lay below the junction between the disturbed and clean gravels. It is suggested that this area of the site has been severely dis-

turbed, probably by gravel working, which has removed the original ground surface. The disturbed gravel layer probably represents waste material dumped from the initial quarrying of the pit which is known to have existed next to the site of the cottages in the 19th century. It therefore seems likely that little stratigraphy remains intact in this area, except possibly for deeper features such as pits. This lack of intact stratigraphy makes it impossible to relate the well directly to any of the other features found on the site. The only evidence associated with the well is the pottery and tile recovered from the first 50 cm of the fill. This material appears to date the well to the 3rd-4th centuries AD and it therefore seems likely that this feature

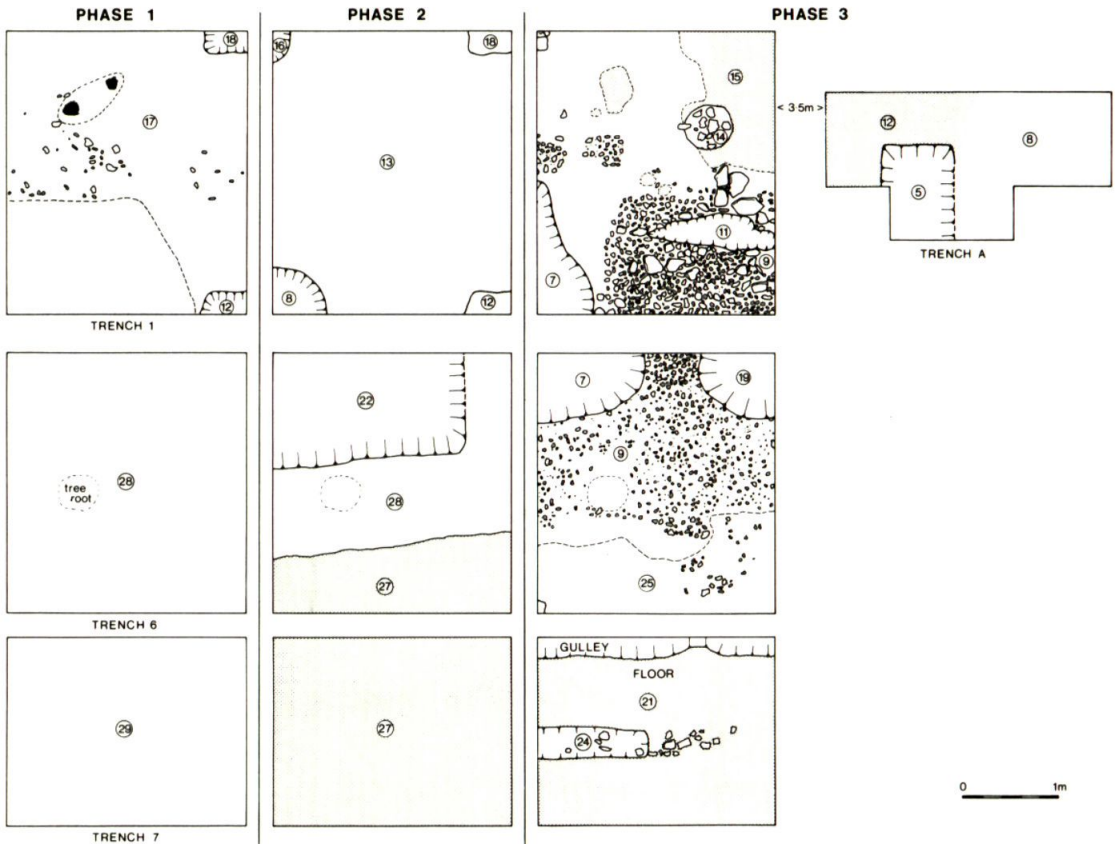


Fig 2. Trenches 1, 6, 7 and A. Phases 1-3. NB trenches shown juxtaposed for convenience.

relates to the general scatter of 3rd and 4th century occupation debris encountered elsewhere on the site (see below).

The second section lies immediately to the south of the cottages (Fig 1, trenches 1, 6, 7 & A) and provided the greatest concentration of Roman material recovered from the site. The natural consisted of clean gravel onto which a series of Roman occupation levels had been deposited. The first three of these levels have been dated on the basis of Mr Lyne's comments on the pottery contained within

them, while the dating of the fourth is based on the evidence of both pottery and coins.

Phase 1 of this sequence (150–190 AD) (Fig 2, trenches 1, 6 & 7) overlies the natural gravel and consisted of a layer of domestic rubbish (6–28 & 7–29), an area of daub and mortar (1–17), together with two iron slag filled pits (1–12, 18).

Phase 2 (190–200 AD) (Fig 2), completely covers phase 1 and consists of the clay floor of a building (6 & 7–27), contemporary with a rubbish deposit (1–13 & 6–28). This latter

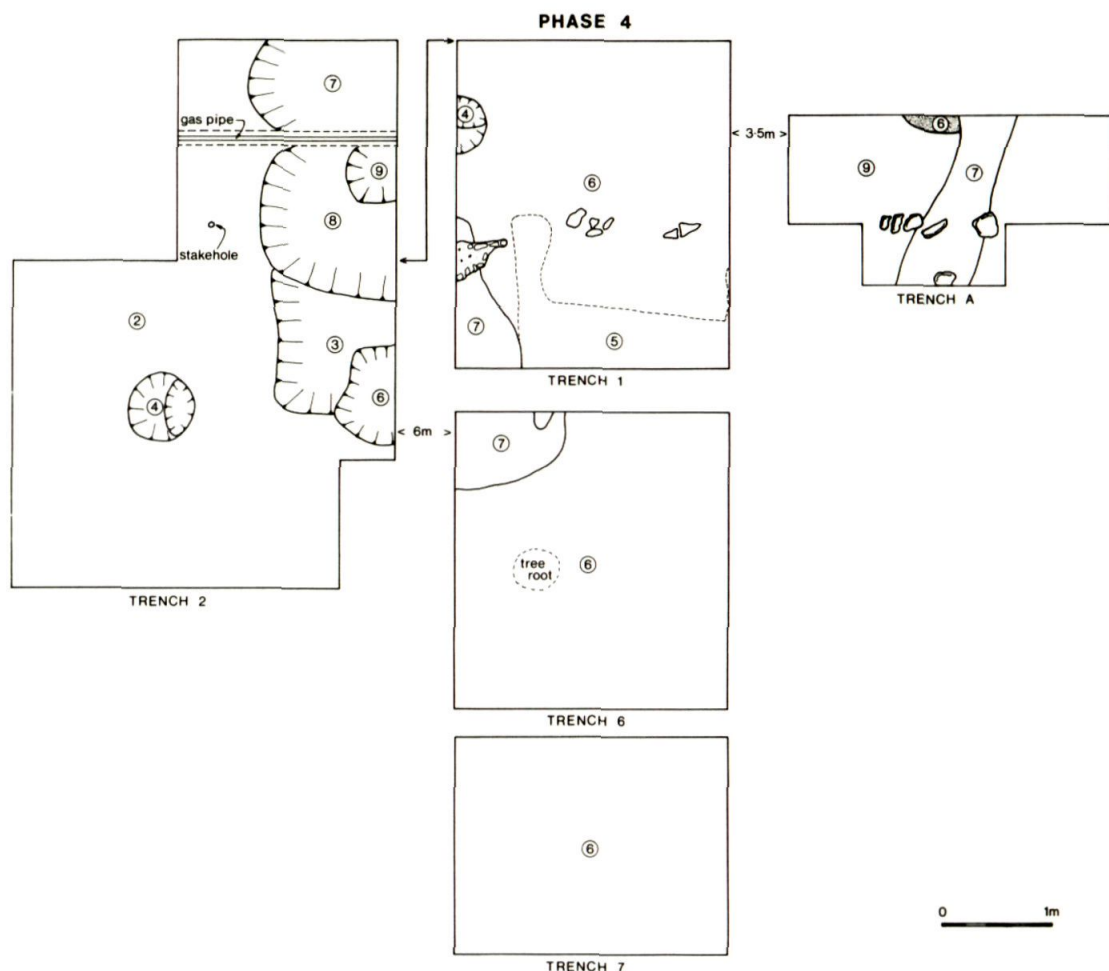


Fig 3. Trenches 1, 2, 6, 7 and A. Phase 4. NB trenches shown juxtaposed for convenience.

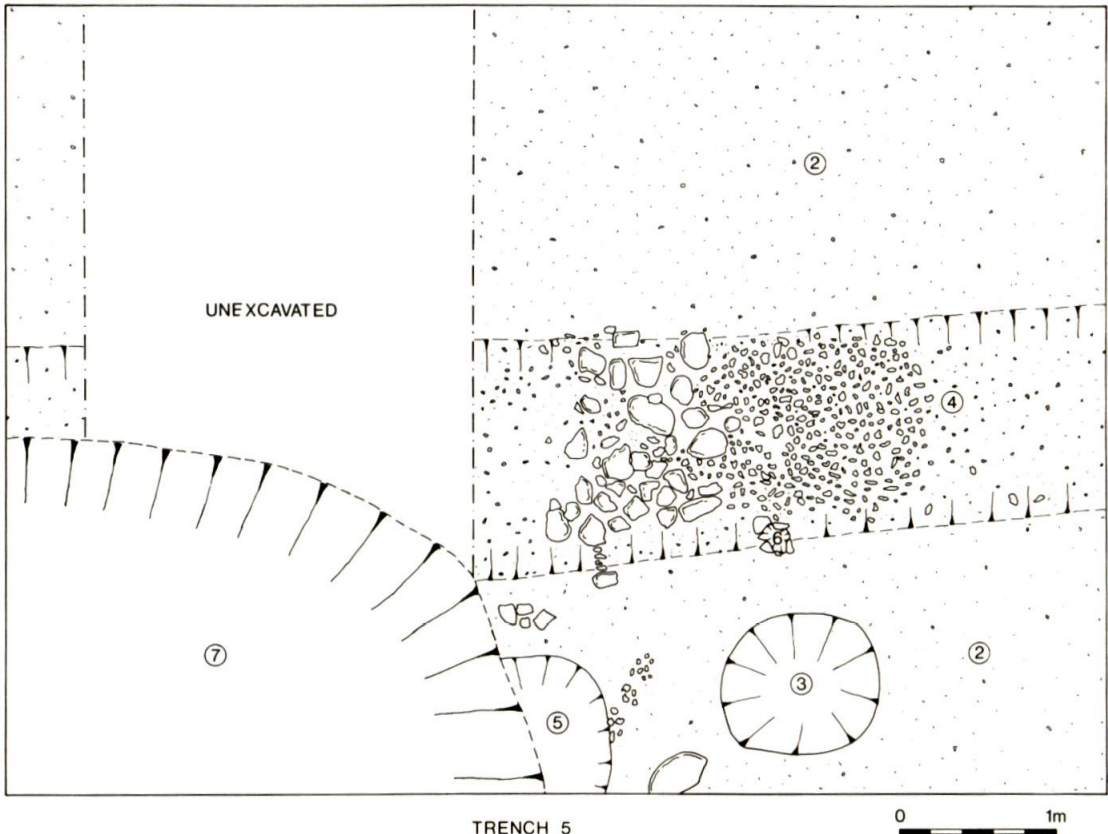
deposit being cut by iron slag filled pits (1-8, 16, 18, & 6-2) and one pit containing domestic rubbish (1-12).

Phase 3 (200-270 AD) (Fig 2), consists of two distinct clay floors (1-15 & 7-21) associated with a beam slot (7-24) and a post hole (1-14) respectively and separated from each other by a band of cobbling (1-9, 6-9). These floors possibly represent the remains of two buildings, the first lying partially in and to the north of trench 2 and the second lying partially in and to the south of trench 7. The first building probably continues to the east and is represented in trench A by a clay floor (A-12) and delineated by a beam slot (A-5). The floors of both buildings are covered by a thin layer of occupation debris, which in turn, in

trench A, is covered by a layer of collapsed daub.

Phase 4 (270-400 AD) (Fig 3), consists of a 15 cm thick layer of occupation encountered in all trenches (1, 6, 7-6, A-9). This layer is associated with a slag filled pit (1 & 6-7) and an ash filled pit (A-6), one post hole (1-4), an area of daub (1-5) and a slight gully (A-7). The level underlies the disturbed garden topsoil.

The third section (Fig 1, trenches 2, 3 & 4), lies to the west of the cottage and consists of a thin scatter of occupation debris, resting on natural gravel. No intact Roman features were encountered other than those in trench 2 (Fig 3). This trench contained a number of intersecting pits dug into the natural gravel (2-3,



TRENCH 5

Fig 4. Trench 5.

6, 7, 8, 9) and overlain by garden topsoil. These pits could not be related stratigraphically to those in the adjacent trenches, though presumably they relate to Phase 4 of section 2, as they contained material of late 3rd and 4th century date. Two post holes (2-4, 5) were also found, only one (4) of which contained datable material, which placed it in the 3rd-4th centuries AD. It is not clear whether these post holes relate to each other in any way, as it was not possible to examine a large enough area to establish the existence of structural features.

The fourth section (trench 5) (Fig 4), lay some 50 m to the south of the cottage and separated from it by the remains of a filled in gravel pit, which had completely destroyed any interconnecting stratigraphy. Three small trial trenches were dug, two of which produced a light scatter of Roman material while the third (Fig 4, trench 5) revealed a 1 m wide footing trench and accordingly this trench was enlarged. While the area had been disturbed by modern rubbish pits (5-7), enough remained intact to establish that the robbed out footings of a mortared flint and clunch wall (5-4) ran through the trench on an east-west alignment. To the south of the wall, which had been set into the natural gravel, two pits (5-3, 5) and a stakehole (5-6) were excavated, containing material of early 3rd century date. A general scatter of domestic rubbish (5-2), of the same period, containing bronze slag, was recovered from the whole area of the trench and underlay the topsoil.

THE FINDS

Coins by R A Merson

Trench SF	Coin Details	Date
No		
1-2	1 Barbarous radiate – antoninianus	268-275
2-3	2 Radiate – antoninianus	268-275
1-3	3 Constans. Gloria Exercitus, 1 standard	337-341

Mint: Trier M LRBC 133

TRPW

2-3	4	Claudius II – antoninianus. Rev. Fides Exerci	268-270
1-3	5	Probable barbarous radiate antoninianus	268-275
1-3	6	House of Valentinian. Rev. Gloria Romanorum, probably	364-378
2-3	8	Imp C Aurelianus Aug. Rev. Soli Invicto	270-275
1-3	9	Claudius II. Antoninianus (Barbarous, postumous) "Consecratio" – Eagle type	268-270
2-8	17	Claudius II. Antoninianus. Fides Exerci LXI Rome (RIC 36?)	268-270
2-8	18	AE c. 2. Antoninianus?	3rd-4th C
2-3	19	Urbs Roma. Rev. Wolf and twins	330-335
		UPLG Lugdunum (LRBC 200)	
1-3	20	Claudius II. Antoninianus. Rev. Solus, stg.	268-275
2-9	21	Claudius II. Antoninianus. Posthumous. Rev. Consecratio – Altar type	268-270
2-3	22	Tetricus I or II. Antoninianus. Rev. Pax	270-273
5-2	29	Barbarous radiate. Antoninianus	268-275
5-2	31	AE 12. Rev. Victory 1. (. . . VGG ?)	c. 380-400
5-2	32	Constans. Rev. Two Victories type D	341-348
		TRP	
7-3	33	Postumus. AE Ant. Rev. Oriens Aug	259-268
6-3	34	Fallen horseman copy (Fel Temp Reparatio) AE 13	Post 350 AD
6-3	35	Claudius II. AE Ant. Posthumus – Divo Claudio, Rev. Consecratio, Altar	Post 270 AD
7-3	36	Valens. Securitas Republicae SI Lugdunum LVGP (LRBC 359)	367-375
7-3	37	Diad. head r. Rev. uncertain (perhaps Securitas Republicae)	Post 370 AD

- 6-3 38 Gallienus. AE Ant. Rome.
Rev. Dianae Cons Aug
I
E (RIC 177) 260-268
- 7-3 41 Constans. AE 3. Two
Victories type. Trier
 $\left(\begin{array}{c} x \\ x \\ x \end{array} \right) \left(\begin{array}{c} x \\ x \\ x \end{array} \right)$ 341/5-348
TRP TRS
- 7-3 42 Constans r Constantius II.
AE 4. Similar to above,
but Rome. R(Symbol)T 341/5-348
- 7-6B 43 Constantius. AE 4. Gloria
Exercitus, 1 standard. 337-341
I
TRP xxx (LRBC 126)
- 7-6B 44 Theodora. AE 3. Trier. Rev.
Pietus Romana 337-341
- 7-6B 45 Valens. AE. 3. Rev.
Securitas Republicae 367-375
OF II (LRBC 523)
[C]ON*
- 6-6A 46 Tetricus I. AE Ant. Rev.
LAE. . . , Laetitia . . . ,
standing. I. (RIC 86-90) 268-270
- 6-6A 48 Victorinus or Tetricus I.
Rev. LA . . . 268-270
Laetitia . . . , standing.
- 7-6B 49 Tetricus I. Rev. . . . ria Aug,
Victory I., reasonable
style (RIC 141) 270-273

Small Finds (Fig 5)

1. Iron knife blade. Length 147 mm. Trench 6 Layer 27.
2. Iron key, double pronged. Length 116 mm. Late 1st/early 2nd C AD. Trench 6 Layer 22.
3. Bronze tweezers. Length 49 mm. Trench 1 Layer 7.
4. Bronze spoon bowl. Width 25 mm. Trench 2 Layer 7.
5. Bronze belt fitting. Trench 1 Layer 6.
6. Lead handle (?). Incomplete. Length 57 mm. Trench 1 Layer 13.
7. Fragment of glass goblet. Pale green. Trench 6 Layer 27.
8. Fragment of glass bottle with flat rim. Blue-green. 1st/2nd C AD. Trench 1 Layer 17.
9. Fragment of glass vessel, decorated with parallel ribbing. Pale green. Late 4th C AD. Trench 1 Layer 4.
10. Fragment of square glass bottle side. Pale green. Trench 1 Layer 17.
11. Fragment of flat based glass vessel. Pale green. Trench 1 Layer 11.
12. Bone knife handle decorated with diagonal and horizontal cuts. Incomplete. Length 43 mm. Trench 1 Layer 13.
13. Bone knife handle with side groove for folding blade (?). Incomplete. Length 55 mm. Trench 1 Layer 13.
14. Bone pin with bulbous head shaped to a conical point. Incomplete. Length 93 mm. Trench 6 Layer 7.

The Pottery by M A B Lyne

Most of the ceramic material from both the 1985 and 1986 seasons of excavation was examined. As far as could be ascertained there was no pottery which need be earlier than the mid-2nd century. All the following analyses are based on rim counts.

Phase 1 150-190 AD

Material from trench 1 layer 17 was analysed. Quantities were too small for accurate statistical analysis, but out of 21 different vessel rims - all of Alice Holt/Farnham industry manufacture (Lyne & Jefferies 1979) - 5 (24%) were from Class 9I hand made store jars and 5(24%) from fine class 2 pedestalled beakers. These percentages are abnormally high and suggest a community using local second rate table wares instead of samian imports and some specialised activity taking place on the site involving large scale storage of dry goods: perhaps a store of some description. Not too much should be read into such a small assemblage however, although the store jar phenomenon continues into the next phase.

Phase 2 190-200 AD

Pottery from trench 1 layers 12 and 13 was examined in detail. Rims from 56 vessels were identified and their analysis in Table 1 is compared with an almost contemporary deposit from Phase II at the pottery production site AH 52 in Alice Holt (Lyne forthcoming).

The proportion of Class 9 store jars in the assemblage, as in Phase 1, is a very high at Manor Cottages. Bowl, lid and dish percentages are very low compared with those at Alice Holt, whereas the jar pattern is remarkably similar.

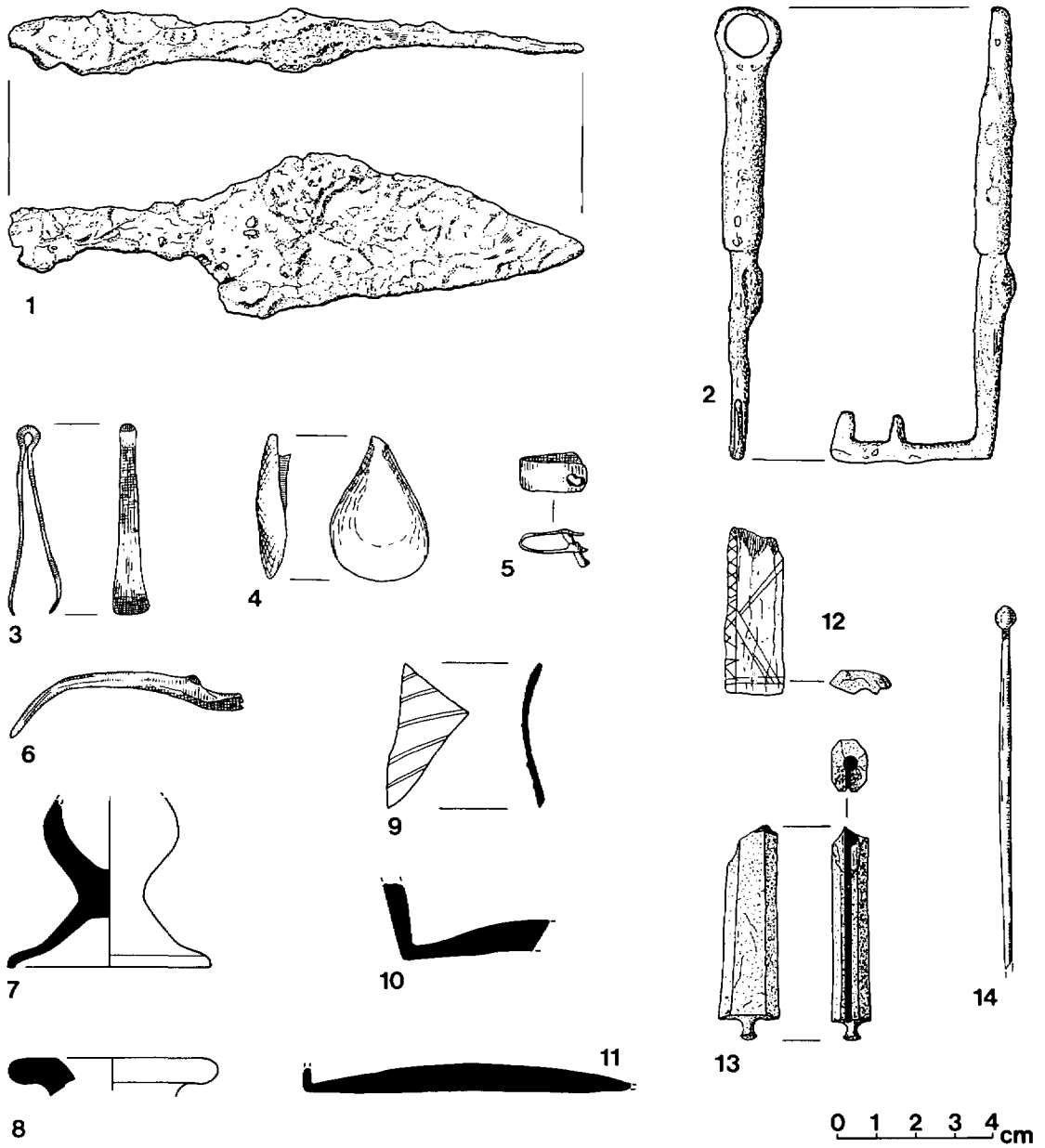


Fig 5. Small finds – objects of iron, bronze, lead, glass and bone.

Table 1. Alice Holt Pottery from Phase 2

Table Wares	Manor Cottages		AH52	
	%		%	
Class 2 Pedestalled beakers	3.50	3.5%	1.00	1.0%
<i>Jars</i>				
Class 1 Cordoned jars	23.50		21.50	
3A Flat rimmed jars	5.25		3.50	
3B Everted rimmed jars	25.50		31.50	
3C Hook rimmed jars	3.50		4.00	
4 Bead rimmed jars	2.00	59.75%	2.00	62.50%
<i>Bowls, lids and dishes</i>				
Class 5A Beaded rimmed bowls	-		10.75	
5B Beaded and flanged bowls	2.00		3.50	
5C Strainers	-		2.00	
5E Large reeded rimmed bowls	-		0.50	
6A Straight sided dishes	3.50		10.25	
6B Beaded rimmed dishes	5.25		0.50	
7 Lids	2.00	12.75%	2.50	30.00%
<i>Flagons and flasks</i>				
Class 1B Flasks	-		1.50	
8 Flagons	2.00	2.00%	-	1.50%
<i>Store jars</i>				
Class 1A Cordoned and necked jars	2.00		3.00	
1C Large cordoned store jars	-		0.50	
9 Hand made store jars	16.00	18.00%	0.50	4.00%
Miscellaneous Alice Holt wares	2.00	2.00%	1.00	1.00%
Nene Valley colour coat	2.00	2.00%	-	
		100.00%		100.00%

Phase 3 200-270 AD

A large assemblage of pottery from trench 5 layers 2, 3, 5, trench 1 layer 5 and trench 6 layer 7 was examined and was subdivided as follows:

		%
Alice Holt	109	97
Samian	1	1
Indet. colour coat	1	1
Grog tempered	1	1
	112	100

The Alice Holt material was further subdivided by vessel class (Table 2) and compared with approximately contemporary assemblages from a farmstead site in Binsted (SU 768 414) excavated in advance of the Esso pipeline in 1981, and layer 1A at pottery production site AH 52 (Lyne forthcoming).

At both Binsted and Manor Cottages, the fine ware pedestalled jar percentage was greater than at source in Alice Holt. The reason for this may be as suggested for Phase 1; the presence of contemporary grey fine ware indented beakers in the Alice Holt repertoire copying Rhenish forms certainly

Table 2. Alice Holt Pottery from Phase 3

	Manor Cottages (112 rims) %		Binstead (70 rims) %		AH 52 (1237 rims) %	
<i>Table Wares</i>						
Class 2 Pedestalled beakers	6.50	6.5%	4.25	4.25%	1.25	1.25%
<i>Jars</i>						
Class 1 Cordoned jars	1.00		11.50		26.25	
3A Flat rimmed jars	1.00		10.00		6.50	
3B Everted rimmed jars	30.50		23.00		20.50	
3C Hook rimmed jars	6.50		10.00		11.00	
4 Bead rimmed jars	1.00	40.00%	1.50	56.00%	1.00	65.25%
<i>Bowls, lids and dishes</i>						
Class 5A Beaded rimmed bowls	3.50		2.75		2.50	
5B Beaded and flanged bowls	20.25		12.75		7.00	
5C Strainers	-		-		0.05	
5D Deep decorated bowls	-		-		0.50	
5E Large reeded rimmed bowls	-		-		0.50	
6A Straight sided dishes	19.50		12.75		7.00	
6B Beaded rimmed dishes	-		-		3.50	
7 Lids	1.00	44.25%	2.75	31.00%	4.00	25.50%
<i>Flagons and flasks</i>						
Class 1B Flasks	1.00		1.50		0.50	
8 Flagons	-	1.00%	-	1.50%	-	0.50%
<i>Store jars</i>						
Class 1A Cordoned and necked jars	3.50		1.50		2.50	
1C Large cordoned store jars	-		1.50		0.25	
9 Hand made store jars	1.75		1.50		2.25	
10 Beehives	-	5.25%	2.75	7.25%	0.25	5.25%
<i>Miscellaneous</i>						
	3.00	3.00%	-		2.25	2.25%
	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

suggests competition with the superior imports. Such competition could only be successful in the neighbourhood of Alice Holt where the local pot prices could drastically undercut those of the outsiders.

The tiny percentage of cordoned jars at Manor Cottages contrasts strikingly with 26.25% at Alice Holt. They appear to be replaced in part by everted rimmed jars. The cordoned jar was one of the first forms produced by the Alice Holt potteries at the end of the Iron Age whereas the everted rimmed jar of developed type was brought into the repertoire during the late second century in response to marketing successes by the rival Dorset B.B1 and eastern B.B 11 pottery industries. We may be seeing an urban preference for a non-local but utilitarian cooking pot form.

The relative percentages of bowls and dishes suggest a similar state of affairs. Beaded and flanged bowls and straight sided dishes are also alien introductions into the Alice Holt repertoire. In this case, however, we are seeing not so much a preference for non-local forms, as they are now rare even at source, but simply a strong emphasis on bowls and dishes at the Manor Cottages site.

Certain classes of vessel manufactured at Alice Holt during the 3rd century are clearly developments of vessel types manufactured there since the inception of the industry or just afterwards. These classes are as follows:

Class 1 Cordoned jars

- 1A Cordoned and necked jars
- 3A Flat rimmed jars
- 4 Bead rimmed jars
- 5D Deep decorated bowls
- 7 Lids
- 8 Flagons
- 9 Hand made store jars

When we re-analyse the assemblages above plus the Alice Holt material from the second well at the King William IV site at Ewell of similar date (unpublished), on this basis we get the following results:

	Manor Cottages %	Binsted %	Ewell %	AH52 %
Indigenous forms	9.25	28.75	16.50	43.00
Non-indigenous forms	90.75	71.25	83.50	57.00

It is possible that we are seeing here the tribal conservatism of the countryside contrasted with the non-tribal nature of small towns. Binsted, being a rural farmstead site, has an appreciably larger percentage of local ceramic vessel classes than both small town samples from Neatham and Ewell. It is unfortunate that most excavation pottery reports give percentages for different fabrics but not types of vessel. As a result, we are not yet able to determine whether there is any real substance in this theory.

Phase 4 270-400 AD

The deposits relating to this phase in trench 2, namely 2-3, 2-6, 2-6A, 2-8, 2-7 and 2-9, produced the largest assemblage of material examined. This was subdivided as follows:

		%
Alice Holt	186	97.50
New Forest c.c.	1	0.50
Oxford cc.	2	1.00
Nene Valley	1	0.50
Grog tempered	1	0.50
	191	100.00%

The shortage of imported fine wares suggests a low level of material culture on what is probably an industrial site judging by the bronze and iron slag present.

The Alice Holt wares were further subdivided into various classes of vessel (Table 3) and compared with an at source group of rims from contemporary waster dump AH 61 (Lyne and Jefferies 1979).

In view of the long period of time covered by this phase not too much should be read into the minor differences in percentages of forms between the two sites. One possibly relevant difference is the presence of Class 2 table ware at Manor Cottages possibly for the same reason as postulated for phases 1 and 3 above.

Table 3. Alice Holt Pottery from Phase 4

	<i>Manor Cottages</i>		<i>AH 61</i>	
	%		%	
<i>Table Wares</i>				
Class 2 Pedestalled beakers	4.50	4.50%		
<i>Jars</i>				
Class 1 Cordoned jars	8.00		8.00	
3B Everted rimmed jars	44.00		30.50	
3C Hook rimmed jars	10.50		18.00	
4 Bead rimmed jars	2.00	64.50%	1.50	58.00%
<i>Bowls, lids and dishes</i>				
Class 5A Beaded rimmed bowls	0.50		-	
5B Beaded and flanged bowls	8.00		12.00	
5C Strainers	0.50		2.00	
5E Large reeded rimmed bowls	1.00		0.50	
6A Straight sided dishes	15.00		15.00	
6C Beaded and flanged dishes	1.50		1.50	
7 lids	1.00	27.50%	2.00	33.00%
<i>Flagons and flasks</i>				
Class 8 Flagons	-		3.00	3.00%
<i>Store Jars</i>				
Class 1A Cordoned and necked jars	-		3.00	
1C Large cordoned store jars	1.00		1.50	
9 Hand made store jars	0.50		-	
10 Beehives	2.00	3.50%	0.50	5.00%
Miscellaneous	-	-	1.00	1.00%
	100.00%		100.00%	

During the period in question production of Classes 3B and 3C cooking pots fluctuated in ratio to each other although Class 3C eventually became predominant. The different proportions of each type on the two sites could easily be due to slight differences in date range.

If we re-analyse the material on the basis of forms of local and non-local origin made in Alice Holt and compare with a rural villa assemblage of similar date from Lodge Farm, North Warnborough, we arrive at the following consistent statistics:

	Manor Cottages (186 rims) %	Lodge Farm (733 rims) %	AH 61 %
Indigenous forms	11.50	14.50	14.50
Non-indigenous forms	88.50	85.50	85.50

(N.B. AH 61 percentages differ from Lyne & Jefferies 1979, 34 because Classes 1C, 2 5C and 5E have been reassessed as non-indigenous.)

The proportion of forms of local origin produced has declined considerably at Alice Holt and there appear to be indications of differences between rural and small town assemblages. More contemporary assemblages from local rural and urban sites need to be analysed on this basis before we can arrive at any final conclusions.

DISCUSSION

The earliest phase of occupation on the site appears to consist of the construction of a building with daubed walls (probably underneath the existing cottage, as no structural remains were found in the trenches), in the mid 2nd century AD, and this appears to be associated with iron working in the vicinity. In the late 2nd century this was replaced by a clay floored building, part of which appeared in the trenches. This building was, in turn, replaced in the 3rd century by two adjacent buildings separated by a cobbled surface. Iron working again appears to continue on the site, from the evidence of the slag filled pits. Analysis of the pottery assemblage also indicates the non domestic nature of the occupation of the site. This type of layout is very similar to that

encountered in the Roman town at Neatham, where rectangular timber buildings with clay floors were constructed 'end on' to the road system and were separated from each other by gravelled yards (Millett & Graham 1986).

At approximately the same period a substantial clunch and flint wall was constructed some 50 m to the south of these buildings. This wall is probably related to a structure(s) lying to the south of the garden, as large

quantities of Roman roof tile and pottery can be found in the adjacent field.

During the 3rd and 4th centuries AD a thick layer of occupation material was deposited over the sites of the earlier buildings and rubbish pits were dug to the west of the existing cottage. It is unclear how this level relates to the wall, but it seems likely that the Victorian gravel workings have destroyed a 4th century structure in the area.

While the Silchester-Chichester Roman road was not located, it must pass very close to the site. Thus, it seems likely that the timber buildings represent ribbon development along the road to the south of the main Roman town site. The purpose of the stone wall is unknown, but might perhaps represent the courtyard wall of a villa sited to the south of the gardens.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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