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A ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT AT LAKENHEATH, SUFFOLK

By GRACE BRISCOE, F.S.A.

Two fields on the north side of Maid's Cross Hill, Lakenheath (Nos. 1062 and 1021 of the O.S. 25'' map Sheet XII. 6 West Suffolk) have yielded a quantity of R.B. sherds and coins in the past turned up by the plough or rabbits, but more recently by excavation. The field numbered 1062 has become known locally as 'The Roman site' (Nat. Grid. Ref. 52/728833), and I have already published a short account of some of the finds from field No. 1021, up to 1945, in the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.*¹ The purpose of the present paper is to record what has been found since that date.

In September 1948 the ploughman drew attention to a cropmark, a line of increased growth about two yards wide, running across the field No. 1021 east to west, sixty yards to the south of a compost pit which had been dug during the early part of the war and had yielded R.B. sherds and other evidence of occupation (Fig. 14). He had noted in the spring two parallel lines of darkish soil turned up by the plough in the neighbourhood of the cropmark.

A trial trench was dug across the cropmark and the section of a silted-in ditch (marked A) was exposed, the dark colour of the filling showing up well against the yellow sandy subsoil. Other trenches at five yard intervals and samplings at yard intervals indicated that the ditch was continuous for at least forty yards. Examination of an air photograph taken in March 1947 showed that there were two parallel whitish lines across the field east to west, the more northerly one corresponding to the crop mark with its underlying silted-in ditch. Probing with a soil sampler in the neighbourhood of the second line led to the discovery of another ditch (marked N), which was wider and deeper than the first one examined. Subsequently the lines of three other ditches have been discovered.

In December 1948 workmen were making a clamp for mangels a few yards to the east of the compost pit. A two-foot wide trench, enclosing an oval area twenty-five yards long and eight yards wide, was dug around the heap of mangels and the soil thrown on the roots for protection. The men observed that while the upthrown

¹ G. Briscoe, Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc., vol. xLI, p. 67.

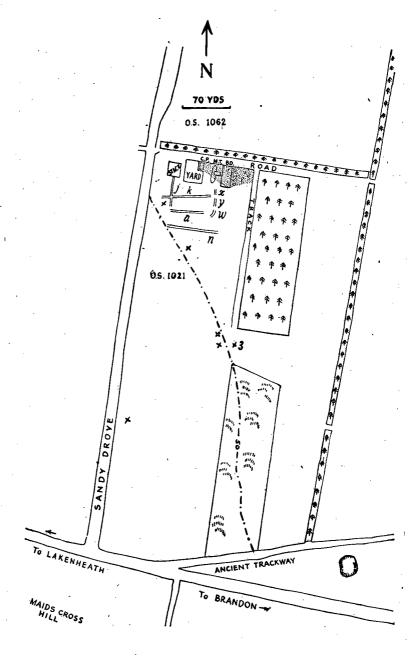
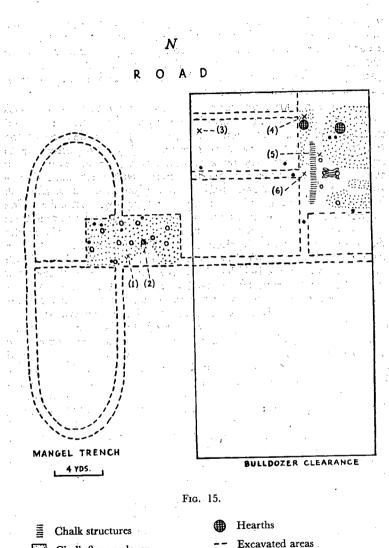


Fig. 14.

C.P. Compost pit. M.T. Mangel trench. B.D. Bulldozer clearance.

 \bigcirc Occupational soil. = Filled-in ditches.

 ** Patches of black soil with R.B. sherds. Patch 3 contained hoard of Samian ware.



Chalk floor or layer

Post holes 0

Bronze objects; (1) hanging vessel, (2) patera, (3) fantail brooch, (4) rod brooch, (5) strip, (6) pin. хx

Coins

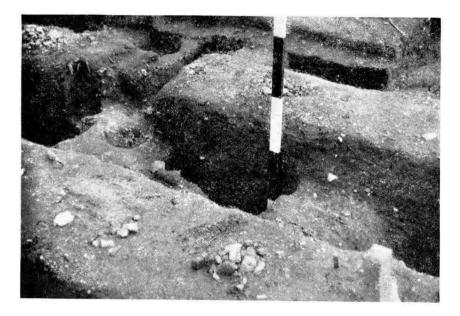
soil was clean and yellow in the south half of the clamp, in the north half it was black. In addition, on the north east quarter, there was a curious mixture of chalk rubble and pebbles in dark sand which did not correspond to conditions they were accustomed to find, namely light yellow sand below the plough line reaching down to natural chalk at variable depths.

In 1949 an area measuring twenty-four by thirteen feet was excavated, covering a portion of the mangel trench where unusual subsoil conditions had been noted (Fig. 15). The clearing of the top soil showed that the dark occupation layer was only five to six inches thick and lay on a compact floor, six to seven inches thick, of chalk rubble and pebbles mixed with dark sand; below was clean sand or natural chalk. The surface of the natural chalk is here very irregular. Gaps in the floor suggested post holes. The surface was probed with a wooden stick which would not penetrate the intact floor. In places the stick would go in suddenly to the depth of a foot or so. In these places there was no layer of chalk rubble, but the space was filled with dark occupation soil to a depth of two to two and a half feet from the surface. The diameter of the holes varied from ten to twelve inches. A number of postholes were located in this way but these did not show any regular arrangement, possibly because of the small area excavated. The chalk floor was not continuous over the whole of the area. On the south side there was a triangular space, six by four feet, where the dark soil extended to a depth of two feet. The edge of the floor had an indented contour, suggesting the partial remains of post holes. In the first post hole examined a bronze patera was found embedded in the dark infill, well below the surface of the floor (Fig. 16A). A few feet away a bronze hanging vessel, in three portions, was lying on the surface of the chalk floor. Although the post holes appear to be haphazard, a case could be made for a small hut, thirteen by eight feet, with posts at four-foot intervals and a row of three posts down the middle. If such a hut existed it would have covered the patera and the hanging vessel. Coins, numerous sherds and bones were found in the area.

Probing with a soil sampler to the east of the excavation just described showed that the spread of black occupation soil was extensive. The limit could be found on the south side but not on the north and east, where investigation was checked by road and woodland (Fig. 14). On the further side of the line of trees separating the two portions of the site, soil sampling showed discoloured sand stretching about sixteen yards to the north of the trees. This was confirmed by a later deep ploughing.

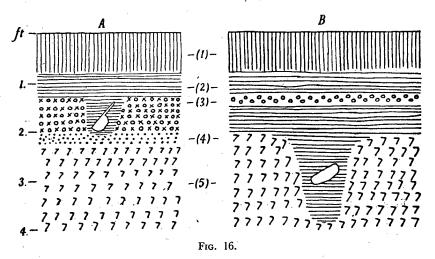
At the end of 1949 the superficial plough soil, nine to ten inches deep, was removed by a bulldozer from an area, thirty by fifteen yards, to the east of the first excavation. Dark soil showed over the

PLATE XVI.



Exposure of chalk wall on right of pole and chalk pillar on left, before removal of baulks between the trenches. The black occupation soil fills the space between these structures and covers them. The superficial plough soil has been completely removed.

whole area cleared except in the south-west corner where clean sand was exposed. In this part the underlying natural chalk was close to the surface.



A.—Section through post-hole in mangel trench excavation, containing patera. B.—Post-hole in bulldozer clearance, containing quern portion. (1) plough, (2) occupation soil, (3) chalk lumps, compact floor with pebbles in A, and layer in B, (4) light sand, (5) natural chalk.

In the north-east corner there was an intensely black patch suggesting a hearth, set in a floor of chalk rubble. A bronze brooch lay on the edge of the hearth. In exploring the relations of this hearth and chalk floor the remains of chalk walls were found. A north-south trench was dug covering the hearth site and then two foot-wide trenches were excavated at right angles between this trench and the eastern border of the bulldozer clearance with two foot baulks in between (Plate XVI). Later the baulks were removed by clearing the dark sand and leaving the chalk structures.

In clearing the occupation soil it was noticed that the top few inches contained a large number of good sized stones and lumps of chalk. These lumps were large enough to have been used as building material and they were scattered in a loose layer two or three inches thick in the substance of the occupation soil. They did not resemble the compact layer of small rubble encountered in the first excavation but suggested rather the debris from fallen walls.

The first piece of wall disclosed was parallel to and just to the east of the north-south trench, with a rounded top twenty inches

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below the surface and a breadth of eighteen inches. It was covered with a foot of occupation soil which reached down on either side to a depth of three feet. It had much the same consistency as the chalk floor in the first excavation and was composed of small pieces of chalk and pebbles mingled with fragments of bone and pottery. The wall could be traced north and south over a distance of fifteen feet, fading out gradually at each end (Fig. 15).

Five feet to the east was a squarish pillar of chalk, two feet high, which had a core of rammed chalk and at each corner an outlier of less compact chalk rubble and mortar-like material. It was covered with a foot of dark soil which also surrounded it to a depth of three feet. Between the outliers on the east and west sides of the pillar were holes, ten to twelve inches in diameter, filled with dark sand reaching down to clean sand on one side and to natural chalk on the other at a depth of four feet below the present surface. These were probably post holes. Six feet to the south of the pillar another. hole of similar size went down into the natural chalk to a depth of four feet (Fig. 16 B). It contained a portion of quern, eight inches long, made of pumice which had become rotten and very friable. It was embedded in the dark infill at a depth of three feet. At two points six feet apart, each at the base of the dark sand to the east of the wall, were fingers of black soil going down into the subsoil, suggesting smaller post holes (Fig. 15).

Large nails, pieces of quern, a loom weight, oyster shells, portions of roof tiles and a bronze pin were in the dark sand between the wall and the pillar. Sherds were more numerous at the base of the in-fill where it merged with the yellow subsoil. At a depth of two feet there was a ring of large stones, four feet in diameter around the pillar. Among these stones was part of a large amphora handle.

In the area to the north-east of the two chalk structures the occupation soil was not so deep. It rested upon a spread of stones two feet below the surface and contained a layer of chalk lumps at a depth of twelve to fifteen inches. In the lower dark section between the chalk and the stones were sherds and pieces of bone. Below the stones was natural chalk. This arrangement covered the space as far as the eastern and northern limits of the excavation, with the exception of a two-foot wide gap ten feet to the east of the first hearth, where black soil went down to a depth of two and a half feet. It contained bones, pottery and a sherd of Samian ware.

The area to the west of the chalk wall was not cleared of occupation soil except for three exploratory trenches. The sections showed a comparatively thin layer of dark sand above a rough chalk layer, under this a scatter of stones which in places lay on the surface of natural chalk. Coins and a bronze fantail brooch (Fig. 19b) were in the dark layer.

No traces of wood were found, charcoal in small quantities only. The number of large nails close to the chalk structures may indicate that wooden walls were erected thereon and the pieces of roof tile suggest a fairly substantial building.

As already mentioned, two parallel ditches were the first parts of the site to be examined; three others were found after the mangel trench excavation. In Fig. 14 it is shown that the five ditches are all on the south side of the main excavation. The first three are nearly parallel to each other, east to west. The other two run north and south.

The first (A) was cut at nine spots and showed a constant triangular vertical section of dark soil, four foot six at the top just below the plough, the base two foot four from the natural surface of the field. A few sherds, a nail and some small pieces of bone came from the infills.

The second (N) was wider and deeper, seven foot by four, and most of the sherds and bones came from the base where the soil was much darker. Traced for sixty yards.

The third (K) had a well-marked outline in section, four foot wide by three foot deep, traced for seventy yards. There was little pottery at the far (west) end, but more at the east end close to the main site where the ditch outline became indistinguishable in a general spread of darkish soil. At one spot, marked (K), there were lumps of daub, one having a hole presumably where it enclosed a stick.

In the fourth (J) the infill was dark brown rather than blackish and was very wide, ten foot by three foot deep. Traces of it were lost as it approached ditch (A) at right angles. The north end could not be pursued owing to a stack.

The only find of note in these ditches was a large rim sherd of grey ware showing a face mask (Fig. 17 a). This was in the most southerly ditch at the spot marked (N).

The fifth line of ditch was different. It was closest to the occupation site and was not continuous, the line being probed with a soil sampler at one-yard intervals. (X) and (Y) were in a straight line and had the same vertical section, three foot eight by two foot three and both had numerous sherds. (Y) was so prolific that the width of the cutting was enlarged to make a clearance ten feet long. There were many dozen sherds of a large storage jar of the 'Horningsea' type, pieces of quern, numerous oyster shells and broken bones. In short it resembled a kitchen midden rather than a boundary ditch. The remaining stretch of ditch (W) to the south, in approximately the same line, was cleared completely. It was twenty-one foot long, two foot wide at the centre and two foot deep.

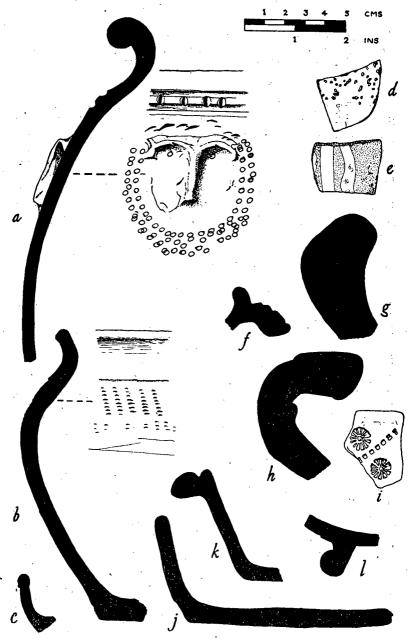


FIG. 17.-Lakenheath pottery.

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The south end curved towards the west. This again was full of bones, mostly jaws of oxen, shells and pottery, including a sherd of dark grey 'rustic' ware and many sherds of dotted ware, of roughcast and of 'hybrids', all rare on the rest of the site.

THE POTTERY

1. Samian. Bulldozer Clearance. Sherds of Samian ware from occupation soil in the neighbourhood of the chalk wall and pillar were very scanty compared with the large amount of colourcoated, gritted and grey ware found. This dark soil was examined over an area measuring twenty-five by seventeen feet, in places reaching to a depth of three feet. Only sixteen sherds were found and some of these are of poor quality. Two sherds (Forms 18-31 Dragendorff) have rings of rouletting on the internal surface of the base. A base sherd with grits inset has a rolled foot resembling that on Form 45. (Fig. 17 l).

Mangel Trench Excavation. Nine sherds from this area included two portions of a Form 33 cup.

The Ditches. The four linear filled in (? boundary) ditches (A), (J), (K), (N), did not produce any Samian. In ditch (W) there were twelve sherds, half of them belonging to a Form 33 cup. Ditch (Y) yielded eleven sherds, including the rim of a very shallow bowl, ten and a half inches in diameter and three quarters of an inch deep, Form 79. (Fig. 17c). A sherd with arcaded decoration was found in plough soil.

2. Castor Beakers. In these sherds rouletting is more common than barbotine. In three cases these types of decoration are combined. Four sherds indicate folded beakers. One thinwalled beaker of Hunt Cup type with blackish slip and white paste decorated with a raised trellis pattern came from the mangel trench site (Fig. 18 b). Three sherds are parts of lids, covered with rouletting (Fig. 18 a). The small bases are mainly squat, one is tall and thickwalled.

3. Painted ware. Seventeen sherds with colourcoated surfaces decorated with stripes of paint resemble the ware of the pot which contained the Freckenham coin hoard, which is securely dated to the latter half of the fourth century.² (Fig. 17 e). All come from occupation soil except one found on the surface. None were found in the ditches and none are large enough to give an indication of the shape of the vessel. Stripes of faint painted lines appear on sherds of larger thicker vessels which have no colourcoating.

4. Dishes. Sherds of dishes of smooth dark ware are common in the occupation soil. Others are of colourcoated ware, some with

² *ibid.*, vol. xLv, p. 68; plate XIII.

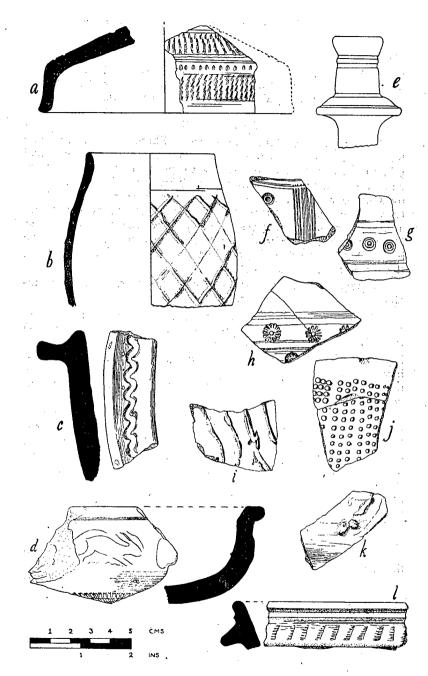


FIG. 18.—Lakenheath pottery.

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metallic finish. The rims are straight or flanged. (Fig. 17 j, k).

5. Flagon. One neck with well-marked lower ring, reddish-buff paste and brick-red colourcoating. (Fig. 18 e).

6. Large storage vessels. At least thirteen, mostly grey or buff with grey core. In one of the largest the ware is pink and gritted. In four the rim diameters measure eighteen inches, in others seventeen and sixteen inches. The rims are strongly everted, except in two cases where they are bevelled with little moulding. (Fig. 17 h, g). One vessel from ditch (Y) has approximately the same size shape and decoration as that from Great Chesterford, called the 'Horningsea jar', shown at the Colchester Exhibition in 1950, the body being completely covered with combing. The base is missing. A large base nine inches in diameter, from ditch W has combing all over the under surface, similar to that on the body. Another vessel is decorated with lattice work.

Mortaria. At least six of coarse ware and one of Samian. 7. The colour is pinkish, stone or pale buff. One is red all through. Rims are reeded. (Fig. 17 f).

8. Gritted ware. Numerous sherds mainly from the occupation soil above and around the remains of chalk walls in the buildozer clearance. The pots are wheel-turned, surface usually pinkish, sometimes blackened, with rolled rims and frequently with fine rilling.

Rustic ware. Five grey sherds, one from ditch (W), of 9 'rustic' ware resemble those found at Wroxeter in early deposits, dated 20-120 A.D.³ Clay is applied in lumps or ridges to the sides of the pot (Fig. 18 i, k). It is interesting to find this type of decoration so far south. R. G. Collingwood 4 remarks that the irregularly ridged type of rustic ware is common as far south as Wroxeter, but never seems to travel into the south of England, it belongs to the Flavian period and begins to disappear early in the second century.

Dotted ware. Practically all the sherds (about fifty) came 10. from ditch (W). At least six pots are represented. One of dark grey ware with everted rim and a broad band of large widely spaced dots around the girth could be reconstructed except for the base. Other sherds showed small closely spaced dots arranged in panels. (Fig. 18 j). Fox 5 notes the similarity of this type of decoration to that on imported first century 'Upchurch' ware. No sherd of dotted ware was found in the occupation soil below the bulldozer clearance.

⁵ C. Fox, Archaeology of the Cambridge Region, p. 208.

³ J. P. Bushe-Fox, Soc. Ant. Research Report, Wroxeter, 1913, p. 50; plate xv. ⁴ R. G. Collingwood, Archaeology of Roman Britain, p. 241.

11. Roughcast. Eighteen small brown sherds, twelve from ditch (W), of roughcast on thin finely made ware, represent seven vessels. The paste is brownish-red except in one case where it is white. This type of decoration has a long life covering the first and most of the second centuries. (Fig. 17 d).

12. Stamped ware. Twenty sherds of the so called 'hybrid' ware, R.B. paste and finish with stamped decoration of A.S. type. Thirteen of these came from ditch (\hat{W}). Six of the (W) sherds, probably all from the same pot of thin brownish-grey ware with burnished surface are stamped with rosettes. (Fig. 18 h). The fineness of the fabric suggests an early date. The dark grey sherds decorated with concentric circles and groups of lines resemble strongly the West Stow hybrids for which a tentative date of A.D. 100-120 is suggested ⁶ (Fig. 18 f, g). On the other hand Myres has suggested a late date for this type of pottery, as all known examples come from the Saxon shore and its hinterland.⁷ None of these sherds were found in the bulldozer clearance in association with fourth century ware. The only example of rosette stamping found in this part of the site is seen on a brick red straight rim (Fig. 17i), which resembles the late red ware with rosette stamping found at Richborough.⁸

13. Face Mask. A large rim sherd of light grey ware, from ditch (N), is decorated with a face mask, the lower part surrounded by small stamped circles to represent a beard. (Fig. 17 a). The mouth is not shown and the general expression is benevolent, in contrast with the Colchester examples.⁹

14. Other forms of ornament. A rim sherd of pseudo-Samian shape with stone-coloured paste and red coated surfaces, decorated * with a running hare in raised relief and bands of rouletting, was found on the surface. (Fig. 18 d). There are many varieties of stab decoration (Fig. 18 l). One example where the profile is complete is shown in Fig. 17 b. Cursive decoration is seen on the flange of a heavy vessel with straight sides, made of buff-coloured paste with a slight admixture of grit. (Fig. 18 c).

THE COINS

Coins from the site number forty-three of which four are illegible. Eighteen of these have been found during the course of excavation, fourteen in occupation soil, four on the surface. The remainder have been given to me by workmen as having

 ⁶ S. E. West, Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch., vol. xxv1 (1952), p. 53.
⁷ J. L. N. Myres, Arch. News Letter, Dec. 1950, p. 103.

⁸ J. P. Bushe-Fox, Soc. Ant. Res. Rep., Richborough 1, (1926), p. 89. ⁹ May's Catalogue, Colchester, p. 143; plate LII.

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come from the site, but the exact find-places are not known. The range of the recognizable coins is from Philip I to Honorius, and that of the eighteen with known find-places is Tetricius I to Theodosius. The period A.D. 244 to A.D. 410 is covered except for one gap between A.D. 273 and 317.

Of the excavated coins all were found in black occupation soil at depths varying from ten to twenty inches from the surface. Their position is given in Fig. 15. In one case (Theodosius) the coin was inside a post-hole at a depth of fourteen inches. In this group the numbers belonging to each Emperor are: 1 Tetricius I (268-273), 5 Constantine I (306-337), 2 Constantopolis (1 barbarous), 1 Constantine II (337-340), 2 Constans (337-350), 1 Constantius II (337-361), 1 Valens (368-374), 1 Theodosius (379-395). The four coins found on the surface soil of the site include 2 Constantine I, 1 Constantine II and 1 Constantius II.

Dealing with the whole group of forty-three coins, the majority are third brasses. There are silver siliquae of Eugenius and Honorius • and a base silver antoninianus of Valerian. A sesterius of ten denarii minted by Constantine I or his sons has on the reverse a star within a wreath. One third brass of Constantine I has the rather unusual reverse of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf. One coin of Constantine II has the Chi-Ro on the reverse.

In the thirty-nine identified coins there are twenty legible mint marks, Lyons 8, Trier 7, Arles 1, Rome 2, Milan 1, Thessalonica 1.

OTHER OBJECTS

Bronze. The most unusual object of bronze is a small hanging vessel. This was found in three parts on the chalk floor of the mangel trench excavation near one of the postholes (Fig. 15). The bowl portion is one and a half inches deep and two inches in diameter. I have not been able to find any exact parallel for this vessel. Possibly it may have been used as a censer. Its small size makes it remarkable (Fig. 19).

Another rare object is a fantail brooch, also found in three parts. The thin repoussée sheet bearing the ornament was found first in superficial occupation soil exposed by the bulldozer. Deeper down were the base plate and the pin. These three parts fitted together to form a perfect brooch. The central disc bears a portrait, a fight between a man with shield and an animal is depicted on the fan part (Fig. 20 a). In a letter to the writer, Mr. M. R. Hull comments 'This brooch is the prettiest example of the smaller and latish form of the "Rosette" brooch. The little repoussée plates are nearly always missing, and this one is particularly pleasing. The



FIG. 19.—Lakenheath. Bronze Hanging Bowl. $(\frac{1}{1})$

date of the brooch is without question about A.D. 45-65. It might be earlier, certainly not later.'

The second brooch found on the edge of a hearth is of the rodbow type, though the bow has been nearly flattened out. The foot plate is unperforated. Mr. Hull regards this brooch as uncommon and quotes as the nearest example, a brooch (No. 6) in the Report on the Jewry Wall at Leicester. The date is uncertain. (Fig. 20 b).

The patera found down a posthole has a good handle with tooled lines, but the base has completely rotted. It can be compared with an example from Bermondsey, illustrated in the London Museum Catalogue No. 3, p. 118.

Other small objects have been a pin with tooling at one end, a narrow strip of bronze with traces of decoration and parts of buckles.

Iron. Iron nails number over fifty, the majority coming from

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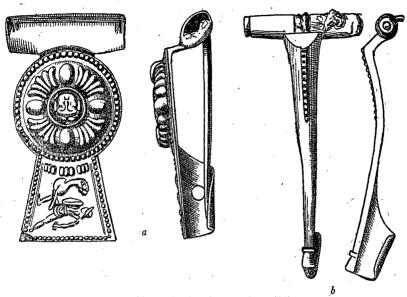


FIG. 20.—Lakenheath Brooches. $(1\frac{1}{4})$ (Drawn by M. R. Hull and block lent by courtesy of the "fournal of Roman Studies".)

the occupation soil between the chalk wall and pillar. Two horse shoes, a large ring and hooks.

Glass. Very fragmentary. A few scraps of light green glass.

Beads. Two shale beads from occupation soil, one flat with two perforations, the other round with a central hole. From the surface of the northerly part of the site, a flat shale bead with two holes, two blue glass beads and a ring inset.

Domestic appliances. Numerous pieces of quern, of Neidermendig lava, of pumice, of pudding stone and of quartzite.

Two loom-weights, flat and circular as if made from pot bases with bored holes, and half a ring-weight carved from chalk.

Four pieces of roof tiles from the area close to the chalk wall.

Animal bones. Numerous bones and teeth, all from common domestic animals, ox, horse, sheep, goat, pig, apart from three antler times from the red deer.

DISCUSSION

The collection of pottery from the Bulldozer Clearance and Mangel Trench excavations resembles in many respects that from the gravel 'throw-in' found in the excavations carried out by Dr. J. G. D. Clark at the Car Dyke, Cottenham.¹⁰ The range of coins confirms the late character of this part of the settlement.

10 J. G. D. Clark, Antiq. Journ., vol. xxix, p. 145.

These finds should be compared with the hoard of Samian and other ware of early character,¹¹ found in one small threefoot wide black pit with a carefully made floor of chalk nodules a couple of hundred yards to the south of the excavations just mentioned. Here the abundance of Samian ware, with potters' stamps of mid-second century date, first century rims, a large cooking pot of Iron Age type, four nearly complete light grey ollae of early type, one with acute angled decoration, low based beakers, the absence of gritted and painted ware (like the vessel from Freckenham already mentioned), all pointed to an early date. In contrast the present excavations produced little Samian and that of poor quality. The dishes with flanged rims the painted ware and a sherd with obtuse angled lattice pattern indicate fourth century.

There appear to have been two periods of settlement. If the burial of the Samian hoard represents a hasty withdrawal the pottery may have come from a distance or from some other part of the site which has not yet been examined.

The in-filling of the four continuous straight ditches did not yield any datable material. It seems most probable they were boundary ditches. The presence of lumps of daub may indicate a fence.

The ditch (W) had a curved outline and had evidently been used as a midden, with its abundance of bones and oyster shells. It contained the majority of the dotted and rough-cast sherds, a sherd of 'rustic' ware and part of a carinated beaker, indicating an early date. It also contained most of the hybrid Anglo-Saxon/ Romano-British sherds. If it be correct to assign these to late fourth century then the contents of the ditch cover a wide range of time.

It may be unsafe to draw any conclusions as to the lay-out of the settlement when only a small corner of the site has been uncovered. But the presence of postholes, of remains of chalk walls with nails and pieces of roof tile in close association, would fit in with a homestead of timber on chalk foundations with a yard roughly floored with chalk and stones and a hut adjoining. The presence of a hanging vessel, posssibly a censer, and a patera on a substantial floor with post-holes may indicate a small building used for ritual purposes. This suggestion is reinforced by the presence in one of the ditches of a face mask, an object usually regarded as votive in character. The silted-in ditches may represent garden boundaries. The abundance of large storage jars and pieces of quern suggest an agricultural holding of some size.

I am greatly indebted to Miss Clare Fell and to Miss Joan Liversidge for their help and advice in the preparation of this report.

¹¹ G. Briscoe, Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc., vol. XLI, p. 67.