

**EXCAVATIONS AT FORDHAM HALL ESTATE, FORDHAM, COLCHESTER,
PHASE I, JUNE 2015 – MAY 2016**

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Summary

Trial trenching on Woodland Trust land, immediately south of Fordham village, Colchester, and overlooking the river Colne, has confirmed earlier indications of the presence of a substantial Roman building complex. This is currently being interpreted as a villa and bath house, with associated industrial activity, probably flourishing in the late 2nd/ early 3rd century. Further open area excavation is proposed (Phase II) to characterise and date the structures more precisely.

A complex of ditches and other features suggestive of earlier occupation have also been identified, and it is hoped these will form the subject of a later (Phase III) excavation.

Background



Fig. 1 Site Location

Location

Fordham lies about six miles north-west of Colchester to the north of the river Colne, which forms part of the parish boundary. Fordham Hall Estate covers approximately 200 hectares of former farmland stretching northward from the river. The archaeological site under excavation is situated to the east of Mill Road, 38m above sea level on fields sloping down to the river and commanding a view across the valley to Colchester with its history beginning before the Roman occupation. (Fig. 1)

Land Use

Land use has varied through the centuries for pastoral to crops. Following the policy of the Woodland Trust management, the fields are planted with woodland or, where the archaeology prevented this, they are down to pasture and a local farmer grazes cattle and sheep. The fields where the site is located were recorded on the 1837 tithe map as Five Acre and Eleven Acre Woolpits and were grazed then and are now maintained as wild flower meadow. The Woodland Trust aims to restore the land to this use once the excavation has been completed.

Geology

The bedrock is London clay with overlying drift deposits from the ice age of boulder clay and Kesgrave sands and gravels.

Archaeological Background

The remains of Roman habitation in Fordham have been in evidence for centuries, notably seen in the use of Roman building material in the North wall of All Saints church. The fields close to the church have been a desirable venue for metal detectorists and the farm manager was happy to give permission to responsible enthusiasts. In 1984, following a report by R D Page and J E Davis of a find while metal detecting, a small excavation was undertaken by G. Mark Davies when two burials were discovered in the field named on the tithe map as Five Acre and Eleven Acre Woolpits. One burial was in a lead coffin (TL 930275), suggesting the likely existence of a Roman habitation. (Ref. 1)

Colchester Archaeological Trust Fieldwalking Survey

In 2002 the farmland changed hands and Fordham Hall Estate, as it came to be known, was leased to the Woodland Trust for tree planting. Before this could begin, an archaeological survey was required and Colchester Archaeological Trust carried out a field walking survey on behalf of the Woodland Trust. The Trust had acquired the lease for the farmland proposing to plant trees. The two fields at the location of the burial were not to be included in the planting programme and were therefore not included in the archaeological field survey, as the remit was to investigate any indication of previously unknown sites. (Ref. 2, CAT 218 2002) The Roman brick and tile found on neighbouring fields supported the existence of a Roman habitation.

The quantity of worked and burnt flints indicated the presence of prehistoric occupation on the Fordham banks of the River Colne in the Neolithic/Bronze Age, preventing the planting of trees on the lower slopes.

Fordham Local History Society Fieldwalking Survey

In 2003 Fordham Local History Society began an archaeological survey of the two fields beside Mill Road omitted from the Woodland Trust survey. The aim was to add to the evidence for the existence and location of Roman habitation. The Woodland Trust gave permission to carry out the survey and David Bradshaw, farmer, allowed access to the fields after the ploughing process and before planting. The whole project was carried out with the help and support of June and John Wallace, the Nayland Field Walking Group and the Colchester Archaeological Trust.

The fieldwalking took place over two days, 30 and 31 August, and washing the finds was completed in September. Finds were weighed, validated and recorded by the end of November. The organisation and presentation of the data was completed in November 2007 and finally published in the Colchester Archaeological Bulletin 2010. (Ref. 3)

A 10% sample of the whole area was taken. All artefacts collected were included in the analysis except slate found only in two squares and slag found only in one. A total of 60.19kg of material was recovered for statistical analysis, averaging 17.3kg/ha over the area surveyed. This was almost 6 times greater than that collected in the survey for the Woodland Trust.

The largest component of the finds, 73.5%, was Roman brick and tile of which tile represented 80%. The low weight of brick compared to tile may be explained by the presence of Roman brick in the walls of the nearby church. The Roman finds were concentrated in the upper field in which the burials were excavated in 1984 and the possible site of a Roman villa was indicated (Ref 1.)

Amongst the tile were 9 tesserae and 5 flue tiles. All of the tesserae and 4 pieces of the flue tile were found in the area of dense distribution of Roman brick and tile. These finds support the suggestion by Davies on the excavation of the lead coffin that this was a high status site. The finds of Roman pot seemed relatively small. One piece of amphora and three pieces of mortaria were identified.

Flints, both worked and burnt, represented less than 3% of total flint recovered. Worked flints were distributed across the two fields, burnt flints were found in both fields but predominantly in the lower field, indicating prehistoric inhabitation.

At this point it was agreed that there was significant supporting evidence of the presence for Roman habitation in Fordham and the site has been sufficiently defined to proceed with a geophysical survey of the area and a possible excavation.

Geophysical Survey

Between June and August 2013, and with further work in April 2014, a survey was carried out by David and Aline Black of Colchester Archaeological Group using magnetometry and electrical resistance measurement. The survey located a number of linear features which suggest ditched enclosures together with the outline of or a more substantial rectilinear or 'L' shaped feature and several large pit-like features. (Ref. 4).

This work was subsequently expanded and refined by Tim Dennis to include a GPR survey of the area, and magnetometry in surrounding fields. This work is ongoing and will be reported separately.

Trial Trenching

Based on anomalies identified by the work of David and Aline Black, five areas were initially selected for trial trenching. When time and labour subsequently became available, and following the further work by Tim Dennis, a further nine trenches were added. The positions and final extent of these relative to the magnetometry survey are shown in Fig. 2. The features later excavated, and measured in by Total Station are shown in Fig. 3.

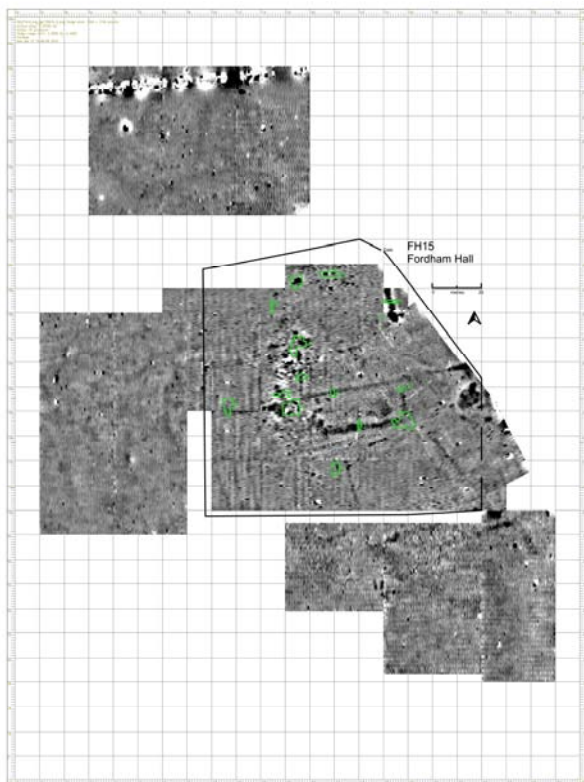


Fig. 2. Magnetometry plot for site and some of the surrounding areas. Trial trench positions are marked in green.

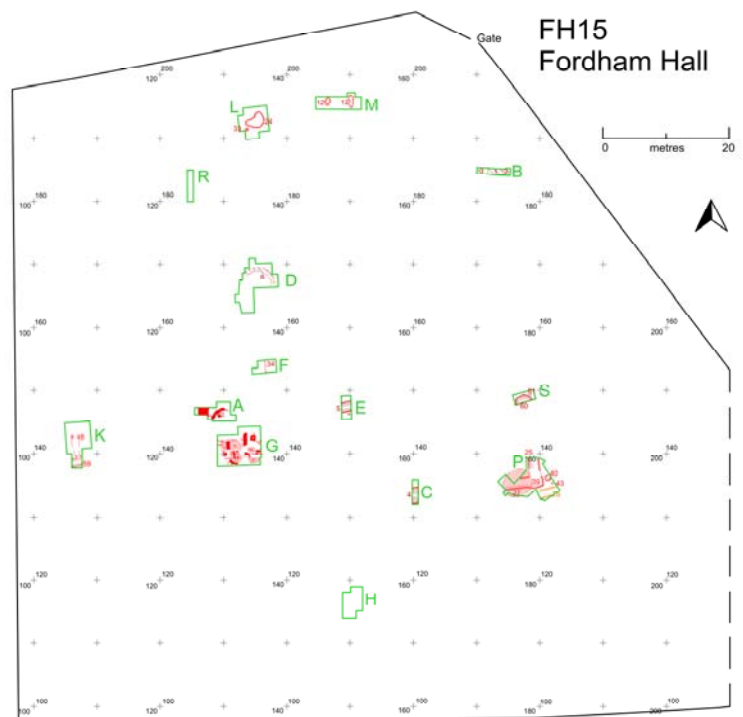


Fig. 3. Site plan. Trial trench positions and identification letters are shown in green. Probable Roman features are in red.

Trench A

Michael Hamilton-Macy & Wendy Shepherd

The original 3m x 1m trench was placed over a linear east-west anomaly showing on both resistivity and strongly on magnetometry. (Fig. 5).

The upper layer was slightly yellow grey and contained light demolition rubble, a small quantity of pottery sherds and a coin dating late 3rd century. (L1.SF4)

The second layer (F50) was one of 4 black organic layers, up to 100 mm deep and thinning towards the east end of the trench. Finds in this layer included butchered bone, teeth, nails, charcoal, fine and coarse pottery sherds and a few small pieces of cast window glass. In the west end of the trench a large quantity of oyster shells were densely packed together.

The third layer, a darker loam 150 mm. deep, contained light/medium demolition. A few pottery sherds and painted plaster were found and a small piece of polished marble with a straight edge size about 8cm by 20mm.

At the south eastern corner of the trench there was heavier demolition rubble including brick, flint, tile and large pieces of mortar.

The fourth layer was a second black organic layer (F51) 100 mm deep. Butchered bone, teeth, wild boar tusk, fine and coarse pottery sherds and a few oyster shells were found in this feature. There were a few small pieces of window glass including a piece of cylinder blown window glass. A part of a shale armlet was found (SF17).

Under F51 on the north side of the trench was a small burnt /red orange clay deposit (F52) about 20 mm thick, extending less than a metre eastwards.

At the west end of TA was a ridge of large loose flints.

The fifth layer (F53), a sterile clay layer, was thought to be natural (see below.)

Trench A was extended 3 times:-

Extension A measured 1.5 m square at the east end going south towards Trench G in order to investigate rubble found in the south east corner of the trench.

Extension B measured 1.5 m by 1m at the east end of Extension A, heading further east in order to investigate the wall foundation heading north from Trench G.

Extension C measured 1 m. square heading north from Extension A in order to investigate the wall foundation (F54) found in Extension A.

Extension A revealed a crude curved rubble foundation (F54) measuring approximately 0.40 m. wide. There was a large quantity of demolition material, tesseræ, tile, *opus signinum* and flint. There was a round anomaly of flint with a tiled base which is part of the wall foundation (F128) Fig. 6). To the south west of this extension are possible remains of a floor or wall, plus a small quantity of tile, brick and plaster. Two bone pins were found here (L02, SF50 and SF61).



Fig. 5. General view of TA, looking NW



Fig. 6 TA F54, F56 & F128. F54 is an apsidal wall foundation, and F56 may be the base of a hypocaust pila. The function of the circular feature F128 is unclear.

The two black layers (F50) and (F51) in the original trench continue into Extension A along the north side. The darker loam area was also present between these two black layers. The wall foundation (F54) was deeper than the clay layer (F53).

A section of the clay layer was removed in Extension A to reveal a further organic black layer (F55). This clay layer was not natural and had been used as infill or as a base. There was a further demolition layer under F55.

The south side of the trench in Extension A revealed a great deal of demolition rubble; this was excavated further. A section of the black layer (F55) was removed from the south of the curved rubble wall foundation (F54.) The end of a well built brick foundation, two courses deep, (F56) measuring about 0.35 m wide was discovered.

Extension B was opened to investigate the wall foundation to see if it continued or connected to a wall in Trench G which was heading north towards Trench A. The upper layer, 0.30 m deep of soft light material with stones, contained light demolition material. Below the soil became stony and sandy and at a depth of 0.50 m appeared to be natural. There was no evidence of the wall continuing at this depth. A coin was found in the soft light material. (SF25)

Extension C, north of Extension A, followed the same stratigraphy as Trench A. The upper layer was of slightly yellow grey loam, the second layer of black organic material (F50) The third layer was a darker loam 0.15 m deep, and the fourth a black organic layer (F51). In this layer F51, two coins dating 2-3rd century (SF40 and SF42) were found along with sherds of fine pottery, painted wall plaster and a fair quantity of oyster shells. The edge of the wall (F54) was clearly defined with the clay sterile layer continuing around the wall eastwards, where the wall appeared to terminate.

Trench B

Jonathan Oldham

This trench was placed over an irregularly outlined, broad linear north-south feature showing very strongly on both resistivity and on magnetometry.



F01 is a large U-shaped ditch or trench cut into natural Fig. 7. There were two distinct layers. The main layer (F01/L02) was a dark grey loamy fill, with few stones and much demolition rubble (fragmented tile and whitish mortar, plus black burned material and soft grey wood ash at lower levels). Moderate quantities of Roman pottery (including indented beaker and a few pieces of Samian) and bone were found along with several pieces of glass and painted wall plaster. Below a second layer (F01/L19) of brown clay loam with few stones, and some fragments of Roman pottery. There were small quantities of residual finds in the topsoil.

Fig. 7. Section of F01 on south side of TB

F02 is a small, fairly deep post hole located east of the ditch or trench (F01). Stony grey-brown clay loam fill throughout. One small fragment of red tile was found at the bottom of the feature.

F03 is a small, fairly shallow post hole located west of the ditch or trench (F01). There was a stony grey-brown clay loam fill throughout. There were no finds from within the feature. It is interpreted as a Roman ditch (it does align with the north-south ditch in Trench P and Trench S). The role of the two postholes is uncertain.

Trench C

Placed over linear east-west anomaly showing on both resistivity and strongly on magnetometry.

F04. Large U-shaped ditch cut into natural. Three distinct layers. Upper (F04/L1) dark grey loamy fill, with stones (F04/L2) at base. Below a third layer (F04/L3) of slightly lighter loam. Modest quantities of Roman pottery, building material and bone throughout. Large fragment of quernstone in upper fill.

Interpreted as Roman ditch (though could be earlier – see notes on continuation in Trench P), with at least one recut.

Trench D

Graham Brundell

The original trench, 4m. x 4m., was positioned on an area of magnetic anomaly.

Below the top soil was a demolition layer (L03) consisting of Roman brick, tile, and mortar, including painted wall plaster, pottery and, most notably, a carved bone plaque (SF11). Fig. 8.

Upon removal of the demolition layer, several robbed out foundation cuts were revealed, including an apse cut (F06). It is conjectured that this is on the north wall of the villa, but more extensive excavation of the surrounding area will be needed to confirm this.

Further extensions of the trench to the south-west have revealed a floor surface (F106). This appears to be the mortar base of a tessellated floor, as approx 500 tesserae have been found scattered on the surface of the floor. Unfortunately none of these were in situ.

There were several areas of burning on this surface. Probably these were created during demolition.

In the extended area was a straight continuation of the apsidal foundation cut heading west. A possible Further cut headed south.

Finds include several coins (SF06, SF07, SF12, SF27, SF32, SF34) all dated to the 3rd/4th century, and large quantities of pot sherds and painted wall plaster, all inwithin the destruction layer L03.

Trench E

Jenny Kay

TE was placed over an east-west linear feature, showing on magnetometry and resistivity. It revealed a small V-shaped ditch running east-west with a shallower slope on north side. Sectioned and planned on the east side. Section shows brick and tile in situ. There was only one layer of grey slightly organic, loamy, stony soil with larger stones towards the base. Within this layer were small quantities of brick, tile, nails and animal bones, including a possible boar's jaw. A considerable amount of pottery sherds, some large (mortaria, amphora, rims and bases), and a small piece of prehistoric pottery. Magnetometry shows it continuing across the site, and in alignment with F59 in TK.

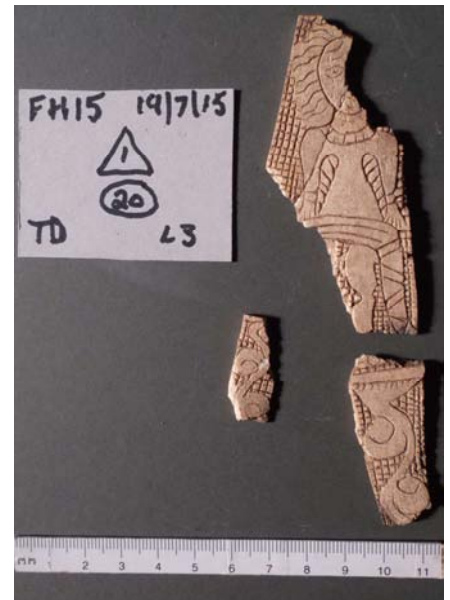


Fig. 8 Fragments of an unusual carved bone plaque. Late Roman

Trench F

Denise Hardy

Originally a 4m x 1m trench, subsequently extended a further metre to the north, placed across a geo-physical anomaly running north-south. Beneath the top soil (plough), excavation revealed a cut, approximately 0.5m across, lined with clay, within which was a rectangular fill of dark soil (F34). Fig. 9. Partially overlying this to the north end of the trench was a spread of redeposited material (F7, L7) containing Roman finds, including tesserae, pot sherds, glass, an iron 'ring' (SF38), and quantities of mollusc shells (whelk, oyster and mussel), and animal bone. This organic spread lay on top of the clay on the north east side, but on natural sand and gravel on the north west side .



Fig. 9. Section on south side of TF, showing dark fill of F34, with surrounding clay packing

The 'box section' could well be a Roman wooden water pipe or culvert as it appears to be leading towards the bath house. Further clarification will be sought during Phase II excavations.

Trench G

Jonathan Oldham

An initial 5m by 5m square, later extended eastwards to 8m x 5m, placed over a mass of dark patches as shown by magnetometry. Dark patches at various levels were also indicated by ground penetrating radar. Resistivity was less clear, showing only as a quiet, slightly "fuzzy" area.

Below the plough soil was an extensive layer of demolition rubble (L03) of Roman brick, tile, mortar, *opus signinum* and plaster. It is likely that this could have caused the "fuzziness" seen on the resistivity. The demolition rubble layer varied in thickness over the excavated area from 0.2m to 0.5m, and contained Roman tesserae, mosaic cubes, painted wall plaster and pottery with occasional bone fragments, iron nails, glass and several bone pins.

Removal of this demolition layer gradually exposed a series of building features, described below, and marked on the accompanying vertical panorama photo Fig. 10. No attempt has been made at this stage to establish the relationship between the various features, which are on a variety of alignments, and at different depths, and clearly represent several phases of building. The trench will be left open and incorporated in the open area excavation planned for Phase 2. It is expected that the further information that this excavation will provide will help clarify the current poor understanding of the building chronology.

F10. A wall base of flints, mortar and layered tiles (c.0.5m. wide, 1.5m. long and 0.1m. high oriented north-south) cut through by the modern field drain (F31) 0.4m north of the south end of the wall.

F11. A mortar floor surface (c.0.1m thick) abutting the wall (F10) to the east with a broken edge to the west and north, and cut through by the modern field drain (F31) 0.4m north of the south end of the floor. Small patches of burned material were noted on the southern part of the floor surface.

F14. A wall foundation of mortar and layered tiles about 0.4m wide, 0.5m long and 0.1m high, oriented north-south, at the south edge of the floor surface (F11), though just west of the wall base (F10).

F15. A concrete floor surface (c.0.1m thick) abutting the wall (F10) to the east and south with a broken edge to the west.

F16. A concrete floor surface (c.0.1m thick) abutting the wall (F10) to the west and extending about 2m east toward wall (F22) with a broken north and north-eastern edge.

F17. A damaged concrete floor surface (c.0.1m thick) abutting the wall (F10) to the north-east and extending south to abut the curved wall (F21) (an apse?). The floor outline appears to be circular, though the east side is badly damaged.

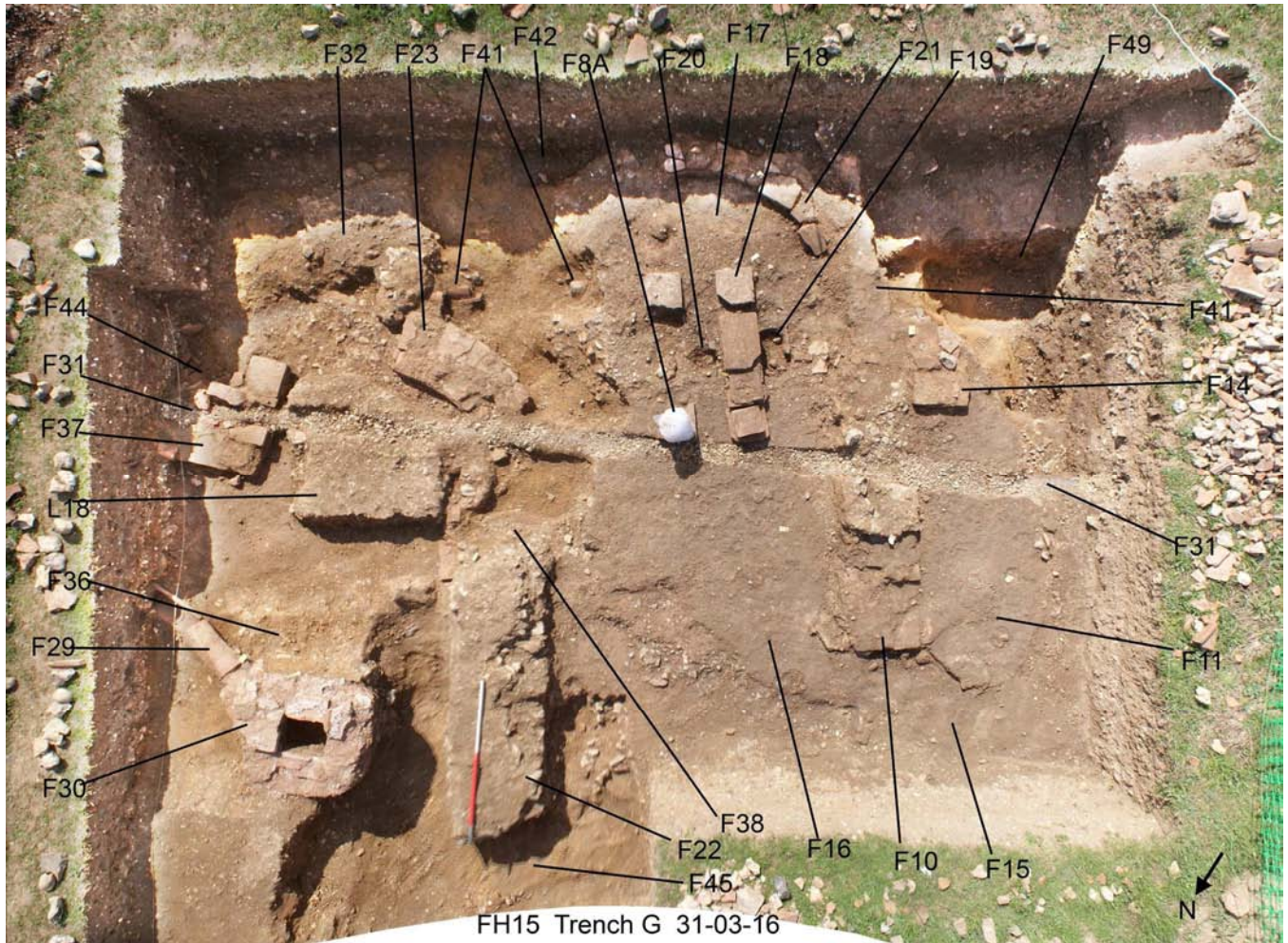


Fig. 10. TG Vertical composite with individual features labelled

F18. Line of stacked tiles (2 deep) aligned north-south on top of floor surface (F17).

F19. Post hole through floor (F17) west of line of stacked tiles (F18).

F20. Post hole through floor (F17) east of line of stacked tiles (F18).

F21. Curved wall base (apse?) of mortar and tiles enclosing damaged floor (F17), abutting north-south wall line (F10) and with a missing east side. The wall base faces south and is at the south edge of the excavated area.

F22. Mortar and flint wall base (0.6m wide, about 1.5m long and 0.5m high aligned north-south to the east of floor (F16) and at the east edge of the excavated area.

F23. Curved wall base (apse?) of mortar and shaped tiles to north-east of curved wall (F21) and floor (F17), cut through by modern field drain (F31), so only about 45 degrees of arc of wall survives. The wall base appears to face south and there is no floor surface surviving to the north.

F29. Pipe formed from imbrices (a drain) curving down and south-east from a 'pedestal' (F30).

F30. 'Pedestal' of tile and mortar (c. 05m square, 0.3m height) with a central square vertical aperture from which the 'drain' (F29) arises via a hole in the bottom south-east corner. There are no other entrance/exit holes in the structure.

L18. Layers of pale orange clay and stones, between the curved wall base (F23) and the 'pedestal' F30.

L20. Dark grey-brown clay loam with stones fill of a channel between the mortar and flint wall (F22) and the 'pedestal' (F30).

L21. Red-orange compacted rubble (with no finds) below L18 north (inside) of curved wall base (F23).

F31. A modern field drain of washed gravel on top of a plastic pipe, which crossed the centre of the area running WNW to ESE (also recorded in Trench K and Trench P).

F32. Rough floor foundation (damaged) south-east of curved wall base (F23) extending south and east with broken edges.

F36. Alternating layers of pale orange clay and flint stones (L18) (two of each layer) extending south from the 'pedestal' (F30) to the south-east of the curved wall base (F23). Very few finds, most of which were from the lower layer of clay near the curved wall base (F23).

F37. Wall base of stacked tiles, south of the 'pedestal' (F30), with the southern half damaged by the modern field drain (F32).

F38. Wall base (?) of stacked tiles abutting and aligned south of large mortar and flint wall base (F22). A possible continuation of F22.

F41. Pipe formed from imbrices (a drain?) with clay packing protruding from under the floor (F17). The pipe is only visible at the edge of the broken floor, and is missing further east, though a depression in the natural indicates the line of the pipe. Fragments of imbrex and scattered small lumps of clay were found in the rubble fill of the robbed out floor and pipe cavity.

F42. 'Pit' of dark grey-brown clay loam south of curved wall base (F21); at the extreme southern edge of the excavated area.

F44. Pipe formed from imbrices (a drain?) curving down and south-east from a 'wall base' (F37).

F45. Floor (or wall base flush with floor level) north-west of mortar and flint wall base (F22).

F49. Deep pit in south-west corner of the excavated area, south and west of wall base (F10) filled with layers of yellow sand and brown clay loam containing few finds and pieces of tile. A pipe of two imbrices protrudes slightly from beneath the wall base (F10), and aligns well (at a slightly higher level) with the pipe end (F41).

The complexity of the feature structures and general lack of alignments of the features strongly indicate a multi-phase building with renovations or new structures being built over pre-existing structure. There are more structures to investigate on all sides of this area excavation, as indicated by magnetometry and ground penetrating radar.

Trench H

Denise Hardy

A speculative rectangular trench 2m x 4m over one of the few areas of magnetic anomaly south of the Eleven Acre Woolpits boundary ditch. Below the topsoil (L1) was a small area of dark burnt material on north east side (F09, L09). The spread of surface burning contained pot, iron, slag, shell, animal bone and charcoal. An extension 1m x 3m in the NE corner contained the same artefacts. In the baulk there was evidence of this charcoal spread going down slightly at approximately 2.20 m from the north edge. A sandy area with no stones, 0.7m x 4.0m in size in the middle of the trench was excavated with no finds. The trench was excavated to natural, mostly at a depth of about 0.3m. At the base of the topsoil (L01), the area contained several pieces of worked flint in the natural sand and gravel.

F09 is interpreted as a Roman waste spread, possibly from a burning event.

Trench K

Jonathan Oldham

TK was placed over a north-south linear feature, showing on resistivity, but not magnetometry.



Fig. 11. TK F08. Early Roman or prehistoric ditch

F08. A small V-shaped ditch running north south was sectioned at the centre of the trench Fig. 11. The line of the ditch was traced at the base of topsoil running to the south end of trench, where it could be seen turning east. One layer (F08/L02) of grey slightly organic sandy soil, which was very stony, more so towards base. No finds came from within the section, though small quantities of residual finds were in topsoil, including one piece of Samian ware, and one piece of prehistoric pottery.

The trench was subsequently extended south to cover a WSW-ENE linear feature which crosses the whole width of the site, as shown by resistivity and faintly by magnetometry.

F59. A small flat bottomed ditch with near vertical sides running WSW to ENE. The ditch was sectioned at the junction with the north-south ditch (F08), which curves east when adjoining the WSW-ENE ditch at a slightly higher level than the base of the WSW-ENE ditch. The fill was of one layer (F59/L25) of grey-brown silty clay with stones, particularly toward the middle of the feature. There was a very thin layer (F59/L26) of yellow-brown sand at the base and south side of the ditch. There were no finds within the section, though small quantities of residual finds in topsoil (particularly associated with a layer of stones at a depth of 0.4m). The age is uncertain, though likely to predate the north-south ditch. Phase II excavation should give a better idea of age, as the feature crosses the area of the Roman structure located 15m further east.

Trench L

TL was placed over a strong irregularly shaped magnetic anomaly, which on excavation resolved into two features:

F24. A pear-shaped pit, maximum dimensions 3.0m. x 2.3m. x 0.9m. deep, with near vertical sides and shallow U-shaped bottom. The orange sandy base showed evidence of having been subjected to considerable heat and was covered by up to seven layers of burning, interspersed with sandy loam. Fig. 12. The lower two or three burning events were in total 0.30m. thick, and contained very few finds and no bone. Occasional areas of lightly fired clay on the base of the pit further suggested that burning may have



Fig. 12. TL West facing section across F24

taken place in situ, but the quantities and level of firing were not sufficient to suggest that the pit had been deliberately clay lined. Above the first four burnt layers, the pit was filled on part of the south side by redeposited gravelly sand. Elsewhere the upper fill was of mainly organic loam (L14) containing large quantities of Roman tile (but little or no other CBM), as well as Roman pottery, and animal bone. Two metal finds of note: A late Roman spear head (SF60) near the top of the fill on the east side, and a coin (SF55) near the centre of the pit.

F33 Located near the south-west corner of F24, a post hole 0.50m diameter x 0.25m deep, which was filled exclusively with large pieces of Roman tile.

The large quantities of tile recovered, including several near complete imbrices and tegulae, suggest that it is possible that the pit was covered by a tile roof supported on wooden posts. If this were so there should have been more than one post hole like F33, but none were found. It is just possible that others were outside the area of excavation, though this would have meant a much larger structure, covering an area much greater than the pit itself. However a roofed structure seems incompatible with the burning events, so on balance it must be concluded that the tiles came from another structure nearby.

The most likely interpretation of the pit is that was a kiln used for manufacture of tile for use in construction of the villa. The likely explanation of the redeposited tiles is that they were wasters, or unwanted material left over after the villa was completed.

Trench M

TM was placed over two intense anomalous “blobs” recorded by magnetometry towards north edge of the site.

F12. An oval pit cut into subsoil. The pit is vertical sided, with a maximum depth below topsoil of about 0.30m. It was filled with a single layer (F12/L02) of dark, humic, burnt material. Within this, considerable quantities of redeposited Roman brick, and pottery, including several large sherds of a single pot. There was evidence of burning throughout the layer.

F13. A shallow irregular pit cut into the subsoil to a maximum depth of about 100mm. It was filled with a single layer (F13/L3) of burnt material, with concentrations of burnt material towards the base. Irregularities around the edge suggested that tree branches or roots or similar had formed part of the original fill. Inclusions of small sherds of Roman pottery, brick and tile were found. A concentration of approximately 30 iron nails was found, clustered mainly near the centre of the pit. The surrounding subsoil showed slight evidence of burning, with patches of orange, semi-fired clay/daub.

This is interpreted as a single event burning pit. The origin of the nails is not clear.

Trench P

Frank Lockwood

Trench P was an area approximately 9m x 7m, designed to investigate and expose the corner of two possible ditches, indicated by both magnetometry and resistivity, approximately 40m west of the Villa.

Fig. 13 shows the detailed layout of the features found.

F31 is a modern field drain running diagonally through the excavation area, to a depth of approximately 1m.

The courses of three ditches were actually found.

F39 and F25, which had been identified by the geophysics, proved to be two ditches, meeting at right angles. Although the corner was largely undamaged, the ditches themselves were cut into by a later, large pit, F27.

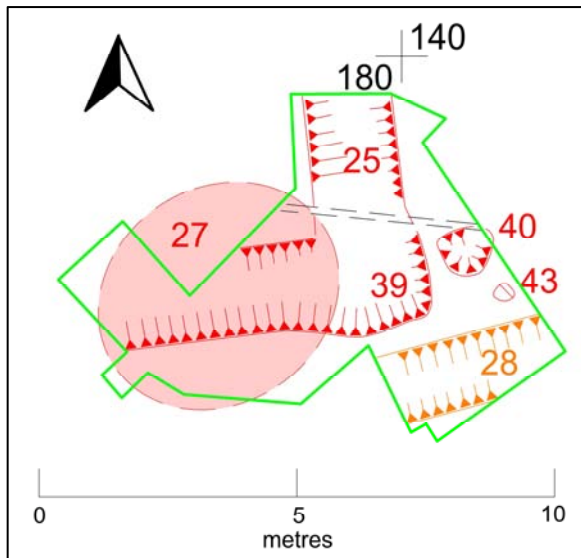


Fig. 13. Plan of TL, showing features discussed in the text. For position on site see Fig.3

At the corner, where the fills of the ditches were undamaged by F27, the fill was of a yellow sandy loam with about 40% mid size gravel. Within the fill, a Roman brooch (SF45) was found in the corner of ditches F25 and F39. It was identified as a Nauheim derivative, one of Rex Hull's Type 19 brooches often referred to as "knotenfibeln". The form is dated broadly to the early 1st century AD.

A further section of north/south ditch to the north west of Area P showed that there were three different cuts to F25. The upper fill (F57) was a dark brown sandy loam. The second and main fill (F25) was of yellow sandy loam and gravel and the possible original ditch (F 58), had a fill of grey silt with clay with a small slot .

In the last cut, F57, finds included part of a storage pot base and a large slab of sandstone (See Note 1, below), approximately 0.36m x 0.33m x 0.11m.

It is not possible to see in the section excavated whether F39 has the same three cuts as F25 as part of its makeup.

F28 was a ditch, running through TP on a roughly east-north-east/west-south-west alignment and slightly south of where the corner of F39 and F25 met. Its fill was made up of dark brown top/sub soil to a depth of 1.15m. and a width of 1.40m. This feature corresponds to a field boundary found on a 1827 Tithe Map which shows it separated 'Five Acre Woolpits' to the north, from 'Eleven Acre Woolpits ' to the south.

There was a small post hole, F43, found slightly to the north of this ditch, which contained the same fill and might be considered contemporary.

F27, the large pit that cut into F39 and F25, was approximately 7.5m long by 5.5m wide and 0.70m at its deepest part. On the south-western half it seemed to be capped by a harder packed layer of dark brown sandy loam, to a depth of 0.30m (L54), which included bone, pot and nail finds, and SF45 and SF49.) It could be a localised compacted area produced by ploughing, as its extent is limited.

F27 could have been some kind of water feature. Its fill was of pure, dark brown/black, very silty loam, with few if any stones and with what looked like, olive coloured 'organic' staining at its sides and base. Flecks of charcoal were noted. A soil sample was taken. The feature perhaps utilised, at its southern and western edge, a natural clay layer that extends in a band running north west to south east through the site. This clay layer varied in depth from 150mm to 10mm within the area of F27.

Finds included a horse skull, and a cow/ram(?) skull with horn and two vertebrae still attached. Several other bones were found, possibly from the same animals. Very few pottery sherds were found, considering the size of this feature, and these were mostly situated at the sides and base of the pit. Metal finds included some small iron fragments/nails, possible iron horse harness fittings and a spear end (? SF76). A small sherd of Egg Shell ware was identified, dated to the late 1st century BC to 1st century AD.

F40, approximately 1m circumference by 0.28m deep, had a fill of redeposited natural sand and gravel. Possibly a tree throw.

Note 1. Peter Lancaster comments:

"The rock fragment appears to be, from naked eye and X20 hand lens observation, largely a crystalline quartzite. It contains significant amounts of micaceous minerals and smaller brown crystals that could be

hornblende. The small sample demonstrates breaks that could be due to fracture planes from the original rock body it came from. It also shows a plane of weakness that may be an original bedding plane, and two inclusions of fine-grained rocks.

My conclusion is that this is a low-grade metamorphosed sandstone. Its origin is likely to be a region demonstrating metamorphosis of original sandstone strata, for example from the Scottish orogenic belts. It is likely to have been transported by glacial action and deposited by glacial melt, supported by the appearance of waterborne surfaces.

There is damage to the rock that could be of human origin."

Trench S

Frank Lockwood

This was small trench, 3.5m x 1.5m, cut to reveal what appeared to be the terminus of the ditch showing on geophysics running north-south, and some 15m north of the corner containing F57, F25 and F58 found in TP.

The terminus (F59) was confirmed, with a fill of dark brown sand loam (similar to F57) and 5% stone getting increasingly sandy towards the bottom. It was cut into a dirty sand and gravel layer which may be natural, but is similar to the second cut (F25) in TP. This possibly needs further investigation.

A possible shallow post hole (F60) was discovered with the same fill as F59.

Pottery and other finds

No funding was available for systematic evaluation of the large assemblage of pottery recovered. Spot dating of individual finds was carried out with assistance from Stephen Benfield of Colchester Archaeological Trust. Where relevant, observations are noted in the text above.

The full assemblage will be retained, and will be evaluated fully as part of the Phase II excavation outlined in Further Action below.

Non-Metal Small Finds

A number of non-metal objects were recovered and considered to be of sufficient interest to be worth recording individually as small finds. As with the pottery, systematic evaluation of these will be carried out along with Phase II objects.

The majority were made from worked bone, and included a large number of bone pins. Of particular interest were the fragments of a bone plaque (SF11 - see Fig. 8) recovered from TD L03. These have been examined and confirmed as of late Roman date.

Metal Small finds

Mark Curteis

Coins

SF4 Carausius, aurel., Obv: IMP C CARAVSIVS PF AVG, Rev: PAX AVG, P/F//-, 286-93, SW/SW. TA L1 11.

SF6 Constantine I, Obv: CONSTANTINVS MAX AVG, Rev: GLOR-IA EXER[CITVS] 1std. chi-rho//[...]. SW/SW. 335-37. TD L3 21

SF7 Constantine II copy, Obv: [...CONSTANTI]NVS AVG, Rev: GLORI-A EXERC-[ITVS] 1std, TRS[.], Trier mint. Diam: 15mm. SW/SW, 337+.TD L3 21

SF12 House Theodosius, Obv: [IMP....]VS AV[G], Rev: [VICTORIA AVGGG]. Trier. SW/SW. 388+. TD L3 25

SF16 Illegible sest., late 1st century or 2nd century. C/C. TC L6 F4 55

SF25 House of Constantine copy, Obv: CON[STAN....]. Rev: [GLORIA] EXERC-[ITVS] 2std. Mint mark illegible. Diam: 15mm. SW/SW. 330+. TA L3 151

SF27 Constans, Obv: Illegible, Rev: [GLORI]A EXE[RCITVS] 1std. Mint-mark illegible. SW/SW. 335-41. TD L3 161.

SF32 Illegible 4th, C/C. TD L3 181

SF34 House Constantine copy, Obv: Illegible, Rev: [VICTORIA]E DD A[VGGQ NN], D//TR[], Trier mint, copy of 8 TR 195, SW/SW, 347+. Diam: 13mm. TD L3. NB came from a packet with another object.

SF40 Constantius II copy, Obv: DN CONSTAN-TIVS PF AVG, Rev: VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN. •//TRS. Trier mint. Diam: 15mm. SW/SW. 347+. TA L1 230.

SF42 Carausius, aurel., Obv: IMP CARAVISVS PF AVG, Rev: TEMPOR FEL Felicitas standing left with caduceus and cornucopia. 'C' mint mark. SW/SW. 286-93. TA L3 237

SF55 Tetricus I, ant., Obv: IMP C TE[TRICVS...AVG], Rev: Illegible. SW/SW. 271-74 TL F24 L14

SF59 Commodus, sest. Obv: [M CO]MMODVS [ANT P FELIX AVG BRIT], Rev: [IOVI IVVENI PM TRP XIII IMP VIII COS V PP S-C], BMC 623, VW/VW, 188-89. TN F1 L2

SF74 Gallienus, ant., Obv: [...GALLIEN]VS AVG, Rev: [VBERIT]AS AVG. Coin shows evidence for burning. SW/SW. 260-68. BG L2 409

SF75 Gallienus, ant., Obv: GALLIENVVS AVG, Rev: DIANAE CONS AVG Doe right. SW/SW. 260-68. BG L2 409

SF81 Radiate copy, ant., Illegible, SW/SW. 273+. Diam: 15mm. BG F50 417.

Coin from unlabelled bag:

House Theodosius, Obv: illegible, Rev:[VICTORIA AVGGG], 388+, C/C.

Additional Metal finds

SF8 Copper alloy bracelet. Part of bracelet. Large circular perforation at end followed by three grooves. Rest of fragment has central groove and notched along both edges.Length: 42mm, width. 4mm. Roman. TD L3 21.

SF15 Copper alloy furniture stud. Flat disc shaped with groove around edge and raised central boss. Concave on underside of box with copper alloy shank. Diam: 20mm, height: 10mm. Roman TB L2 F1 45.

SF20 Copper alloy disc, incomplete, slightly domed with raised central point on outside. Decorative belt fitting? Diam: c.24mm. TF F5 L5 62

SF23 Iron tanged object with tapering cylindrical bone handle. Iron object is very fragmentary and only upper part remains but appears to be cylindrical. Handle is undecorated. Length handle: 82mm, max. width: 24mm. Iron object length: 50mm. TC F4 74

SF31 Copper alloy mount. Conical and hollow. Lower part is vertical with two raised ribs, surmounted with plain domed section. This has a flat top with a central knop. Possibly from furniture or box. Roman. Diam: 24mm, height: 13mm. TD L3 181

SF34 Copper alloy sheet. Rectangular thin strip, broken at one end, perforation at centre of other. Possible strap end or decoration. Length: 25mm, width: 11mm. TD L3. NB coin in same packet with same SF number.

SF 45 Copper alloy Nauheim derivative brooch (Hull type 19) of a type known as a 'knotenfibeln'. Unusual broad flat bow with central and marginal ridges. Lower part of bow forms a bar at right-angles to the upper part, separated by two narrow and a broad collar. One coil of spring (three remain) and pin missing. Catch-plate missing but appears to have been perforated. Early to mid 1st century AD. Length: 75mm. Max width of bow: 8mm. TP F27 L2 254.

SF57 Large, thin, irregular copper alloy disc, with crude central rectangular perforation. Probably a crude washer. Diam: 40mm. Poss. post-Medieval. TL F24 L2 299

SF60 Iron spear head. Long narrow blade, a little wider than the socket, no distinct rib and slight shoulders. The socket appears to be closed. Cf. Manning (1999, 166) V105 and V106 (Mid 1st century AD) and a late 3rd century example from Buch (Stephenson 1999, 53 fig.18:3). Roman. Length: 198mm, blade length: 120mm, max blade width: 30mm, diameter of socket: 25mm. TL F24 L2

SF63 Fragment of loop of copper alloy wire. Possibly from brooch spring. TN F1 L2 330.

SF73 Copper alloy hair pin. Cone shaped head (diam: 7mm), with transverse grooved decoration. Below head at top of shaft are five concentric grooves. Blue glass bead set into centre of head. End of shank missing but re-sharpened. Poss. 2nd century. Length: 72mm. TN F1 L2 359.

SF76 Iron object. Long tapered socket with base of tip only surviving. It is very corroded and categorization is difficult. Weight and thickness could suggest that it is part of a socketed tool rather than a spear head. Length: 165mm, diam. of socket: 32mm, length of socket: 125mm.

SF78 Fragments of copper alloy binding. No decoration but shaped around something curved. TN F1 L2 410

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Manning, W. H. 1999 Catalogue of Romano-British iron tools, fittings and weapons in the British Museum. London.

Stephenson, I. P. 1999 Roman infantry equipment of the later Empire. Tempus

Discussion

The discoveries described above undoubtedly confirm the presence of Roman structures on the site. It would be unwise at this stage to draw too many specific conclusions, but some general observations are in order.

There appear to be at least two main structures. To the south, centred in TG, are what would appear to be the remains of a bath house. *In situ* hypocaust pilae, apsidal wall foundations and drain fragments are all strongly indicative of this type of use, and further confirmation comes from the large quantities of *opus signinum*, hypocaust tile, marble and decorated wall plaster recovered from within the destruction layer covering the remains. The building probably had a tiled roof, suggested by the imbrex and tegulae in the destruction layer, but the relative absence of other CBM suggest it was timber framed. At least two phases of building could be recognised, but further work will be necessary to establish the relationship between these.

The main villa seems to have lain to the north of the bath house, and its north end would appear to have been exposed in TD, showing as a robbed out apsidal foundation trench. To the south of this a series

of mortar floor bases suggesting several building phases. Recovery of several hundred tesserae, none of them *in situ*, suggested that the building had at least one mosaic floor.

The northern edge of the site seems to have been an area of industrial activity. F24 in TL would most likely have been a tile kiln. Whether used for tile manufacture during only one phase of building, or over a longer period of time, must await detailed analysis of the pottery finds within it. The smaller feature F12 in TM could possibly have been a bowl furnace. Geophysical anomalies suggest other possible kilns or similar nearby.

The geophysical results suggested a complex of ditches criss-crossing the site. This was confirmed by exposure of ditches in TC, TE, TK, TP and TS. The east west trench shown by magnetometry and exposed in both TE and TK would appear to have been cut by the bath house structures in TG, suggesting a prehistoric or early Roman date. Roman pottery recovered from the sections suggest that it was still open in the early Roman period, but a few small sherds of prehistoric pottery found in association with it hint at an earlier date. Similarly finds from the complex of ditches in TP hint at a pre-Roman origin.

The vertical sided ditch-like feature exposed in TB is something of an anomaly. It appears finally to have been used as a rubbish pit, but its original purpose is unclear. A vertical sided ditch would be unusual, but it is tantalisingly in exact alignment with the north-south ditch running from F25 in TP and terminating with F59 in TS, and may possibly be an extension of this.

Further Action

A Phase II excavation is planned in which an area 40m x 25m, roughly defined by TD to the north and TG to the south, would be machine stripped of top-soil and then hand dug to expose the footprint of the villa and bath house complex. Funding is being sought to support this.

It is further suggested that a later Phase III investigation should investigate the ditch complexes within the surrounding area, but this would be dependent on further funding and the continued forbearance of the Woodland Trust.

This would still leave further geophysical anomalies, particularly to the north and east of the site for further study.

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Archive Deposition

The archive will be retained initially by Colchester Archaeological Group, pending completion of Phase II excavations, when a decision on deposition of the complete archive from both phases will be made.

APPENDIX

Section Drawings and Plans

Number	Section or Plan	Identifier	Description/Site Grid Ref.
1	S	TM F13	S facing section
2	P	TM F13	
3	S	TK F8	
4	P	TG	
5	P	TM F12	
6	S	TP F28	E facing section
7	P	TP F43	
8	S	TF F7	N facing section
9	S	TC F4	W facing section
10	P	TP F27	Clay overlay
11	S	TL F24	W facing section
12	S	TP F27	S facing section
13	S	TF F26	S facing section
14	P	TE F5	Plan of ditch and pit/post-hole
15	S	TPF14/25/27	
16	S	TE F5	W facing section
17	S	TP F25	NE facing section of ditch
18	S	TP F57	S facing section + F25 + F58
19	S	TK F59	W facing section
20	S	TS F60	N facing section
21	S	TL F24	W facing section
22	P	TK F8 + F59	
23	S	TA F50/F51/F52/F53/F55	S facing section