

CBA

10 Bolton Gardens, London, SW5

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

Research Report

1



ROMANO-BRITISH VILLAS: SOME CURRENT PROBLEMS

Reprinted from the Archaeological News Letter, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1955).

*ROMANO-BRITISH VILLAS:
SOME CURRENT PROBLEMS*

*REPORT OF A CONFERENCE HELD BY THE
COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY, JULY, 1955*

FOREWORD

More than 500 so-called Roman villas have been found in Britain and most of them have been partly excavated. Were they farm-houses, country-houses, official residences? Or were they associated with industry? Although there is a mass of evidence, it still fails to answer clearly these basic questions. Even the tessellated pavements which the earlier antiquaries drew with such skill and which still catch popular imagination, present problems to the archaeologist. He wants to date them precisely and account for their subjects and style.

The truth is that scientific knowledge has come from only about half a dozen houses which have been excavated scrupulously and with sufficient awareness of the wider issues involved. It is essential that these issues should be borne in mind when excavations are undertaken on Roman sites in future. It is not enough to hunt for pavements and small finds like coins and brooches, or even for the whole plan of the house itself. This Conference was organized by the Council for British Archaeology, through its Research Committee for the Iron Age and Roman periods, to present a clear account of what we know and to draw attention to the major gaps in our knowledge. Thus it is hoped that future excavations of villa sites will be conducted with a fuller understanding of the questions which excavation can answer.

CONFERENCE ON ROMANO-BRITISH VILLAS

JULY 14TH, 1955

THE DISTRIBUTION OF ROMAN VILLAS IN BRITAIN*

Speaker: A. L. F. RIVET, M.A., F.S.A.

FOR some time past work has been proceeding on the third edition of the Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain.¹ This is now on the point of publication, and the remarks that follow must be considered in relation to it. In its compilation a number of changes of convention have been made from the second edition, and it will be convenient if two of these are explained at the outset.

The first concerns not villas but the lower forms of peasant settlement. Here the situation has been revolutionized since the second edition by the excavation of the Iron Age site at Little Woodbury,² which showed that many of the sites formerly regarded as villages were in fact no more than farms. While this has destroyed the neat dichotomy between villa and village life, on which Collingwood built, it has in one sense simplified our task. What we are now confronted with in the countryside are differences not of kind but of degree; degree, if you like, on the social scale, but primarily degree of Romanization. Now this is precisely what, in the present state of our knowledge, we can hope to capture in the map. When we have enough evidence regarding purely native settlement, untouched by Roman influence—for example in Scotland and in Wales—and in particular when we can be sure what is contemporary and what is not, then we may hope to complete the picture. For the present the map has to be one not of Britain in the Roman period but specifically of Roman, or rather Romanized, Britain. That in some areas, particularly in the south-east, this may amount to the same thing is incidental.

Now Roman influence can reveal itself in different ways. A farm fully influenced becomes

a villa, but below this level there are many gradations which cannot all be distinguished on a small-scale map. Is it more Romanized to use Castor pottery and barter or to use Imperial coinage and trees? We have shown all finds of Roman material, right down to a single sherd or coin, by dots. This may seem an extreme measure, and we are aware that the individual dots vary greatly in significance. But the validity of a single dot is not of great importance. What matters, at this scale, is the pattern produced by their massing, for this gives what must be, so far as it goes, a valid picture of the spread of Roman influence. At the same time the removal of the two circle symbols from the so-called villages and from "finds indicating permanent settlement" has had another effect, that of throwing into relief the organized system of roads and towns and posting stations which formed the backbone of the province. These two elements, the systematized Roman organization on the one hand and the near-native life of the peasantry on the other, form the background against which the villas must be viewed; and the one is as important as the other.

The second point requiring explanation is the system of classification introduced for the more Romanized buildings. Not only have recognized temples and shrines been given an entirely separate symbol, but also three variations of the triangle have been used to show *Villas*, *Bath Houses* and *other remains probably of Villas* and *Other Substantial Buildings* respectively. This

*Nothing in this paper must be taken as committing the Ordnance Survey to any particular point of view or to any course of action.

classification is based on two criteria, the one evidential, the other real. With regard to the former, the trouble arises mainly from the haphazard digging and inadequate reporting of the past. In many cases all one has to go on is a partial plan, a list of coins and possibly a tessellated pavement. When this is a figured mosaic all is usually (though not quite always) well, but villas were not the only rural buildings with tessellated pavements, and certainly not the only rural buildings. If you miss the temple at Lydney³ and find only part of the guest house you may say that you have a villa. This is difficult to avoid, but what shall we then say of the building at Borough Hill, also situated in a hill-fort? Lydney and Gosbeck's Farm are the only large sites of this kind so far identified in Britain, though they are not uncommon in Gaul, but the smaller shrines can give us pause too. The temple at the Noah's Ark, Frilford,⁵ is situated not on a hill top but beside a stream, and if you ignore the cella you have a plan as good as those of many buildings which have been called villas. Then again there is the building at Beckford, which was excavated in 1924 and from the quantity of Roman material on the site called a villa; it was re-excavated in 1938 and shown to be part of a medieval farmhouse. In Sussex we even found a tile kiln masquerading as the hypocaust of a bath house.⁷ One simply cannot take a length of wall or a tessellated pavement and call it a villa.

The isolated Bath Houses are a peculiar difficulty, as Haverfield long ago pointed out.⁸ They are most common in the south-east, in Kent, Surrey and Sussex,⁹ where stone is short, and they are usually interpreted as relating to a timber villa, the baths alone having been built of stone because of the fire danger. But in at least one case, at Highdown in Sussex,¹⁰ prolonged search has failed to reveal the other buildings. Are they all really bath houses? It is felt that any site shown on the map by a half-and-half triangle requires further investigation.

The real distinction between the classes hinges on the meaning of the term villa. This is an awkward word, and everyone who uses it tends to give it a different shade of meaning. For the purposes of the map it is defined as "the house forming the centre of an estate, whether resting primarily on agriculture or on industry, whose occupier could maintain a civilized way of living according to the standards of his time." Thus on the one hand we classify as "Villas" several houses near Castor, whose mainstay must have been the pottery industry, and on the other relegate to "Building" Catsgore¹¹ which, though undoubtedly a farm, does not come up to the standards required by the locality and the period in which it was

occupied. Iwerne¹² is classified as a "Building" for the same reason. The temporal aspect is important. The general impression one gets—and in the present state of the evidence it can be no more—is that the villas tend to come in two waves. The first, which culminates shortly after A.D.200, almost certainly represents a Romanization of Iron Age farms, of the kind encouraged by Agricola, and the houses are of a comparatively simple kind. This is frequently succeeded by a period of decay in the third century. The second wave, which begins in the third century and culminates in the fourth, produces houses of a much more sophisticated and luxurious character. While these may often be built on the same sites as the houses of the first wave, one cannot help wondering whether there is always continuity of ownership. I would at least suggest that the term "villa system" can properly be applied only to the second wave.

Like all generalizations, this is over-simplified and there are many exceptions. In any case, the evidence is too patchy for firm distinctions, and on the map a black triangle means a house which can hardly be anything but a villa, a half-and-half triangle means an isolated bath house or a building which is probably a villa, and an open triangle means either a building whose character is altogether equivocal or a farm which is distinguished from the native variety by nothing more than its material and its shape. All three have the same shaped symbol, and this may serve to remind us that all are Romanized to the extent of having stone-built foundations and a rectangular plan. But we must also remember that they are only the upper part of a continuous scale. Below them are, first, rectangular buildings without stone foundations, such as occurred at Cherry Hinton in Cambridgeshire.¹³ These are little known at present, but they are common inside towns, and one might expect the equivalent of Catsgore to take this form in the stoneless country of the east. Any pottery scatter may conceal one. Second are native farms like Rotherley and Woodcuts,¹⁴ where Romanization is represented by painted wall-plaster and abundant factory-made pottery, coins and other small finds. Third, native farms with a slight leavening of Roman coins and pottery.¹⁵ And finally, where we reach vanishing point on this map, native farms where no Roman finds of any sort occur. From Woodchester or Northleigh at the top to the meanest peasant dwelling at the bottom, the scale is archaeologically continuous and where we make divisions and what social and economic conclusions we can draw depends on the district and still more on the time with which we are dealing.

For these reasons a map covering the whole

DISTRIBUTION OF VILLAS
COMPARATIVE SIZES OF GROUPS

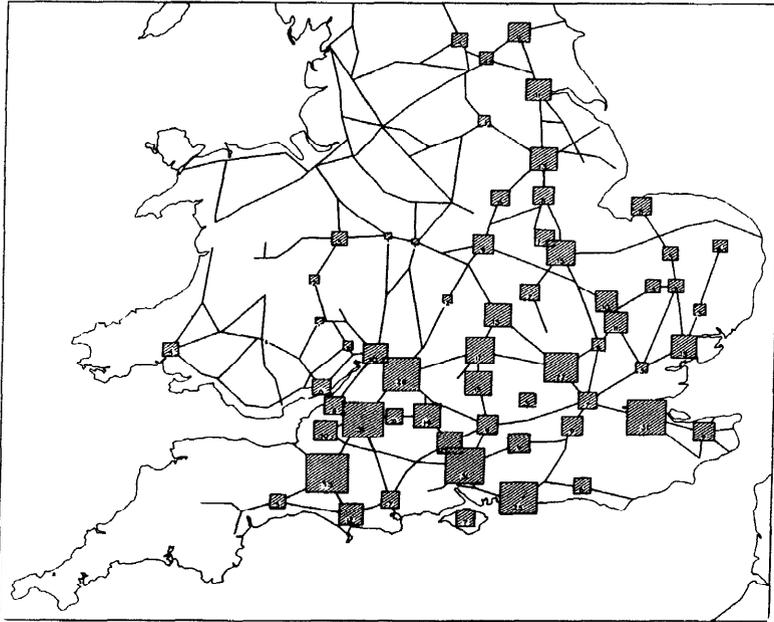


Fig. 1

country over a period of 400 years can be misleading and must be handled with care. Nevertheless some deductions can be made from it and from the distribution picture it gives. In a primitive society the distribution of population depends almost entirely on natural circumstances. The essentials are security and the availability and accessibility of productive land. These in turn are determined by the relationship of natural forest and parkland and the existence of natural means of communication, that is to say ridgeways and rivers. In mapping such a distribution a geological map, or such a reconstruction as can be derived from it, makes the most interesting base, for thus one can determine how far beyond the primitive the society developed. But in Roman Britain, at any rate so far as the villas are concerned, we are not dealing with a primitive society. Security is provided by the central government, and while the availability and accessibility of productive land are still essential, they are governed by factors other than natural. Forests could be cleared whenever it was thought economically desirable—indeed considerable areas must have been cleared merely to provide timber for building and fuel. On the other hand title-deeds determined who should occupy a desirable property and armed

strength could no longer dispute them, and this again might encourage expansion at the expense of nature. As for communications, a network of roads, planned primarily for military and administrative purposes, made almost any part of England easily accessible. Above all, the villa economy was not a subsistence economy. It required the roads to export its produce and import its purchases and the towns for markets and, so far as true Romanization took hold, to provide the amenities of civilized life.

In view of this, the first aspect of villa distribution to which I would draw attention is their relationship to the roads and still more to the towns. The most obvious clusters are round Ilchester and Bath, but if you look at Winchester you will see the same thing happening in a slightly more diffuse form and it is present, in a greater or less degree, at other centres; Mildenhall is a good example and Sandy Lane is another. Indeed it is so marked that it may not be unduly Procrustean to present the picture in another form. On these diagrams all sites given a triangle have been included except the military-type bath houses at Tremadoc and Prestatyn and the outlying villa at Old Durham. The first (fig. 1) shows the villa groups strictly to scale; in the second, where the

centres are included, the contrast in the sizes of groups has been somewhat exaggerated.¹⁶

These diagrams raise several points. First, they give a picture of the comparative degree of Romanization attained in different parts of the country. Here the first place is taken not by the Belgic areas of the south-east, which were the most advanced at the outset, but rather by the Iron Age B country of the south-west; if one could take into account the relative sizes and luxury of the individual villas in the two regions, the south-west would be even stronger. Secondly, the main development often takes place not near the original cantonal capital but near a somewhat smaller town — Ilchester not Dorchester, Rochester not Canterbury, Mildenhall not Silchester. This is something to set beside the fact that nearly all the cantonal capitals seem to have shrunk before they were walled at the end of the second century. The shift may perhaps be due in part to the oppressive liturgies demanded of prominent citizens in the third century, though the dating of the villas concerned (so far as it goes) does not positively suggest it. In any case it seems likely that most small town walling also took place about A.D. 200 and Ilchester at least had attained some sort of civic status by then.¹⁷ Here it is appropriate to remark that the distribution of villas lends no support to the belief that in the third century land-owners in Britain generally forsook the towns and retired to their estates to escape liturgies and taxes. Hardly a villa is more than ten miles from a town of some sort—2½ hours on foot, let alone on horseback—and the two towns on whose supposed history it was based, Wroxeter and St. Albans, are singularly ill-equipped for the process. There are only eight villas which could reasonably be called Cornovian and most of them are poor things.¹⁸ Near St. Albans, again, the standard is not high and the only examples properly excavated—Lockleys,¹⁹ Park Street²⁰ and, a little further west, Saunderton Mill²¹—all declined *pari passu* with the town. Since they depended on the town for their market and since large, self-sufficient villas of the Anthée class are absent in Britain, at any rate before the fourth century, this is to be expected.

There are, however, exceptions, and here I would draw attention to one further aspect of the distribution of villas in relation to towns. In the north midlands, outside the area in which villas are plentiful, almost every small town or posting station has a single satellite—Engleton²² at *Pen-nocrucium*, Shenstone²³ at *Letocetum*, Sapcote at *Venonae*, Norton Disney²⁵ at *Crococalana*, and so on. Now the growth of villas outside the towns proper is easy to understand, but this looks like something different. There is no doubt that the

posting stations are primary and the villas secondary, and one is tempted to see some official link between them, perhaps connected with the collection of the *annona* from the surrounding peasantry. This would give a context for the third-century developments at Norton Disney; and one is reminded of the inscription from the villa at Combe Down, near Bath, which records the restoration of *Principia* in the reign of Caracalla.²⁶

Turning now to the distribution of villas against the natural background, we must still remember that we are not dealing with a primitive society. Given certain basic technical equipment, man can live almost anywhere in the lowland zone of Britain. But the villa owners were not merely living, they were, by any standards, living well. Like other farmers they would no doubt aim at being self-sufficient and would not have to purchase the basic necessities of life — bread, meat, milk and its derivatives. But the glass and fine pottery, the tessellated pavements and marbles, the wine and the other essentials of a civilized life, all had to be paid for. It is improbable that all, or indeed most, of the price came from the farms as such in the first instance. The wealth of the early Celtic aristocrats depended on their position in the tribe—ultimately on martial rather than on agricultural prowess — and later much of the capital put into villas must have come from other sources. But it was invested, not squandered, and regarding the villas as investments what must interest us most is what they produced for the market.

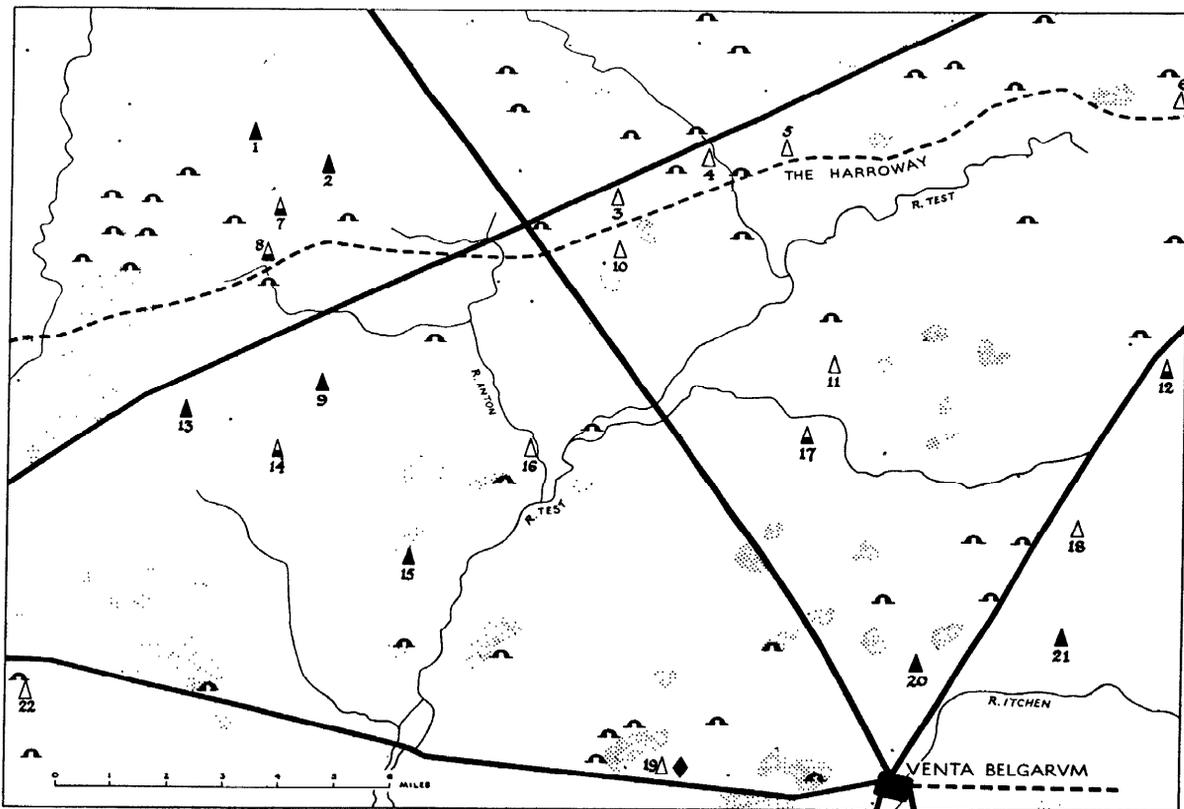
It is inevitable that we should put corn first. It heads Strabo's list of pre-Roman exports, and it was bound to remain the chief item of production. In the period of expansion, when the army was advancing west and north, the Roman government were more interested in the wheat production of the lowland zone than in anything else, not because soldiers lived only on bread, but because this could come only from the settled part of the country, while animal products could be obtained anywhere on the hoof, and especially in north Britain. Later, when the frontier was stabilized and even when part of the garrison grew its own crops, there remained the towns to feed, though the urban population was never large. And in the middle of the fourth century we have the shipment of corn to the Rhineland. But throughout the period the bulk of the corn was taken by the Government in one or other of its manifestations, and the Government was a hard customer. How hard in the first century we know from Tacitus, and the collection of the *annona* later, with its emphasis on corn, hardly amounted to a state subsidy. Indeed it is difficult to see how anyone could make a fortune out of corn.

That they seldom did so is suggested by a consideration of these two maps. Both were compiled before the war, before the prairie-buster and plough-up grants had distorted the natural pattern, and with some reservations they show what a long process of trial and error has proved to be the most profitable use for the various areas of land. What emerges most clearly is that while the granary of England lies in East Anglia and the East Midlands, Ilchester is, if not exactly a cow-town, in the centre of a predominantly pastoral region. Turning back to the Roman map, we see that the main arable areas are indeed settled, particularly the Fenland and the district to the south of it, but that villas here are few. Moreover they are, with half a dozen exceptions, of very poor quality, and the contrast with the galaxies of

Somerset and the Cotswolds is most marked. If one wants a, corn-growing centre, it is to be sought in Great Chesterford and even here, along with ploughs, we find cropping shears.

I do not want to press this point too far, but I do suggest that in dealing with villas we tend to be too corn-minded. Even in the arable area there are other crops which might profitably be grown, especially fruit. Pliny, for instance, specifically mentions the cherry as established in Britain, and cherry stones have been noted at Holt and Silchester.²⁹ An apple stall is depicted in a relief at Arlon³⁰ but why should it not also occur at Rochester or Kenchester? Again, away from farming, what was the organization of the shell-fish industry (for it can hardly be called less)? Then there are more industrially-based villas than

Fig. 2: The region north-west of Winchester. The tucls represent native-type farms and other minor habitation sites; the stippled areas, surviving "Celtic" fields.



is sometimes realized, not only round Castor, but also at Ashtead and Farnham,³¹ and the owner of the elegant house at Borough Farm, Pulborough,³² was not above dabbling in the manufacture of Samian. One would shrink from associating the villas below Mendip with Charterhouse, except as a market, but there are cases of good houses associated with ironstone working,³³ and it is still difficult not to see some link between the outlier at Magor Farm and tin.³⁴ Quarries and forests are other sources of income.³⁵ Finally many villa owners must have retained considerable interests in the towns, so that the size of the establishment need not be related to the size of the estate, and this applies also where the owner lived largely on rents.

Nevertheless the largest alternative to corn growing remains animal husbandry, and especially sheep. This is also the best attested, both by the literature and archaeologically. On the one hand we have the *birrus Britannicus* in Diocletian's Edict³⁶ and the *Procurator gynaecii* at Winchester in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, on the other the vats at Titsey, Chedworth and Darenth³⁷ and perhaps animal enclosures like Soldier's Ring.³⁸ The development of the wool industry still requires elucidation. The *locus classicus* is Cranborne Chase, where the partial depopulation of the Dorset highlands "that a degenerate lord might boast his sheep" is generally accepted. It has been suggested that the degenerate lord in this case was the imperial government, and in view of Bokerly Dyke this may well be so,³⁹ but Cranborne Chase is only part of the Celtic field belt which stretches from the Berkshire Downs to the environs of Dorchester and one would like to know whether the same process took place further south in the interests of such villas as Frampton and Witchampton.⁴⁰ An even more profitable field for study might be the area north of Winchester, where also we have villas superimposed on fields of native type (fig. 2). Here I would first draw attention to Longstock (No. 15 on the map).⁴¹ This is a corridor house with separate baths and outbuildings, excavated in 1922, whose coins range from Gallienus to Constantine II. To the north are traces of Celtic fields, while the villa itself is surrounded by an irregular enclosure. This is very large for the Iron Age — some 2,000 feet across—but whether it is older or younger than the villa remains to be seen. Woodham's Farm, King's Worthy (No. 20) also has an enclosure near it.⁴² Of the villas in the north-west corner of the map all but one appear on the coin evidence to be late. The exception, Clanville (No. 2),⁴³ is particularly interesting. Professor Richmond has recently pointed out that it appears to be a bailiff-run estate. From here came the inscription to

Carinus;⁴⁴ the formula used is identical to that employed on milestones and (if it is not in fact a milestone) one might suggest that it was the emperor's bailiff who erected it. If so, the picture here might be an imperial estate, with native cultivation, later sold or leased off to independent farmers—perhaps to Quintus Natalius Natalinus and his friends, whom we know from the pavement at Thrupton (No. 8).⁴⁵ All this is speculation, but at any rate this area, with several others like it, needs looking into, with a careful reassessment of each individual site.

I have tried to suggest a few of the implications of the map of Roman Britain as it stands today. My remarks have been very generalized, for a very good reason, and I would like to end with a plea. Our business is topography and cartography, and we try to serve up archaeological material in a form in which it can be digested by the historian. We collect information from published accounts, from our correspondents and from our own field checks and record it on maps and in our card index. We can give you chapter and verse for every dot on this map. But as it stands, as a map of 400 years of history on one sheet, it cannot make proper sense. What we have to aim at now is its breaking down into its contemporary phases. For this to be fully accomplished would require a lot of re-excavation, which is a costly and difficult business. But there are a number of things which can be done, without excavation and without much expense. Chief among these is the study of pottery and its application to old sites, and not only the villas. Much of our information comes from excavations made without regard to chronology, and where pottery is mentioned at all the reports bristle with such meaningless terms as "Upchurch ware". There are masses of pottery awaiting classification in museums and still more in the fields (we can tell you where). The study of it must be on a local basis. We have neither the time nor the ability to make it, nor does it come within our terms of reference to do so. What I have in mind is something like the study recently published by Dr. S. Applebaum of sites in the Basingstoke area.⁴⁶ This cannot tell us when a farm became a villa, nor when a villa was prosperous (though here the mosaic experts may be able to help us), but it is something to know in what century a site was occupied. When we have this information on a national scale we shall be able to begin making sense of the topographical record, on the larger scale relating villas and farms to each other, on the smaller scale plotting the decline of one area and the rise of another. Then, and only then, we shall be in a position to produce maps which have some serious historical meaning.

THE PROBLEM OF ROMAN VILLA FIELDS

Speaker: COLLIN BOWEN, M.A.

THE problem of villa field systems is surely as complex as the problem of villa types, in the economic and not the architectural sense. In this short paper I shall consider the possibilities from the point of view of the field worker considering what to look for on the ground. The area with which I am most familiar, central and south Dorset, is a small one and can only contribute material of indirect relevance, but some of this I shall use to illustrate general points. For permission to do this I have to thank the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), though the views I express are entirely my own.

It is likely that the fields of any establishment will have been to some extent mixed in type—e.g., closes, meadows, arable fields. These last might be plots of what we still have to call the more familiar Celtic type, or they might be strip fields. Working on the evidence available in 1937, Collingwood stated “the villas cultivated large open fields, the villages small enclosed ones.”¹ The open fields were conceived as parcels of strips, i.e., something like the medieval form. Collingwood, however, reversed the normal tenurial implication of these field types and suggested a communal tenure of so-called village plots and single ownership of open fields. Little Woodbury has altered the situation radically. Many erstwhile villages can now safely be regarded as single farmsteads. In other words, the villa is of the same essence as many a miscalled village, but it is recognised by the architectural development of the farmhouse itself. (We should not, however, forget that there were *some* pre-Roman villages, or should I say settlements, larger than single homesteads, e.g., Maiden Castle or Hod Hill, or perhaps to draw riskily on Denmark, something akin to the four-household unit on Skorbaek Heath where at least 250 acres of fields are attributed to the one settlement.)²

What we want to know is whether villas—or more properly which villas—have fields that can be distinguished from the “Celtic type”. The crux of the matter is high farming and it seems to me that the field evidence will come mainly from furrow length. Large open fields are sometimes, as by Collingwood, distinguished from small rect-

angular plots, but in fact *individual* strips even of the medieval period are not always significantly larger in area than the rather contemptuously termed plots of the Celtic phase. The essential thing is, however, the economical usage of the plough, and this is where we must consider strip fields.

I think it would be agreed nowadays that a heavy plough is not necessary to plough a strip field on light soils, but since the coulter found on a number of sites do suggest, if not prove, the use of heavy two-way ploughs we must suppose that they were used to plough furrows of reasonable length, and since, if we allow a limit to the field size imposed for instance by the area that could be ploughed in a day, the longer the furrow the narrower the field, and we have the sort of situation in which the strip must have been evolved. It should be noted, however, that it need not automatically involve the formation of strip fields. One of the Welsh customary acres was, for instance, 81 yards long and 27 yards broad—a proportion of only three to one—but must have been considered a suitable size and shape for one man to plough in one day with a heavy plough.

It is necessary to examine carefully all examples of strip fields in a “Celtic” context and for two main reasons: firstly, while it seems that some are Roman in date (all that I happen to know have produced Roman pottery and one example with late sherds had such ill-developed lynchets as to suggest a short life), a pre-Roman date for their origin is possible.

Secondly, and I consider this very important, there has been considerable post-Roman ploughing of the downland—though, indeed, I can only vouch for its extent in Dorset—and this in some cases has entailed the enlargement and mutilation of pre-existing Celtic fields.

To expand a little on these points; fig. 3 illustrates a type of Celtic field most unlikely ever to have seen a heavy plough. Here, on the north slope of Ballard Down near Swanage, is a group of small Celtic fields of which the fifteen on the plan are packed into five acres.

Fig. 4, very different, shows a group of Celtic strip-like fields in central Dorset around a

settlement so far undated though sherds of Samian ware have been found on the recently ploughed surface of the fields. The soil is a good loam over chalk. A light plough could have been used here but the shape of the fields might be due to influence from other areas where the progressive farmer used a heavier plough. There is apparent in the plan a slight suggestion that the fields were laid out in blocks. Elsewhere, in south-west Dorset, there is a group of strip fields laid out on the pasture of the manor of Winterbourne St. Martin in a way reminiscent of the medieval furlong which raises doubts whether indeed it might be Celtic or some sort of medieval outfield.³ (It is illustrated in fig. 5.)

There are, in Dorset at least, instances where the stubs of old small field boundaries, or their apparently ploughed-out lynchets, suggest enlargement in the cause of efficiency. There seems no reason to doubt that some of these represent a "Celtic" phase of development, possibly Roman, but it is necessary to be cautious of the possibility of alteration in a later period.

The evidence for relatively recent ploughing of the downland is derived from written sources⁴ and from the existence on the ground of narrow plough ridges some two to four yards wide of a sort commonly made in the eighteenth and nineteenth cen-

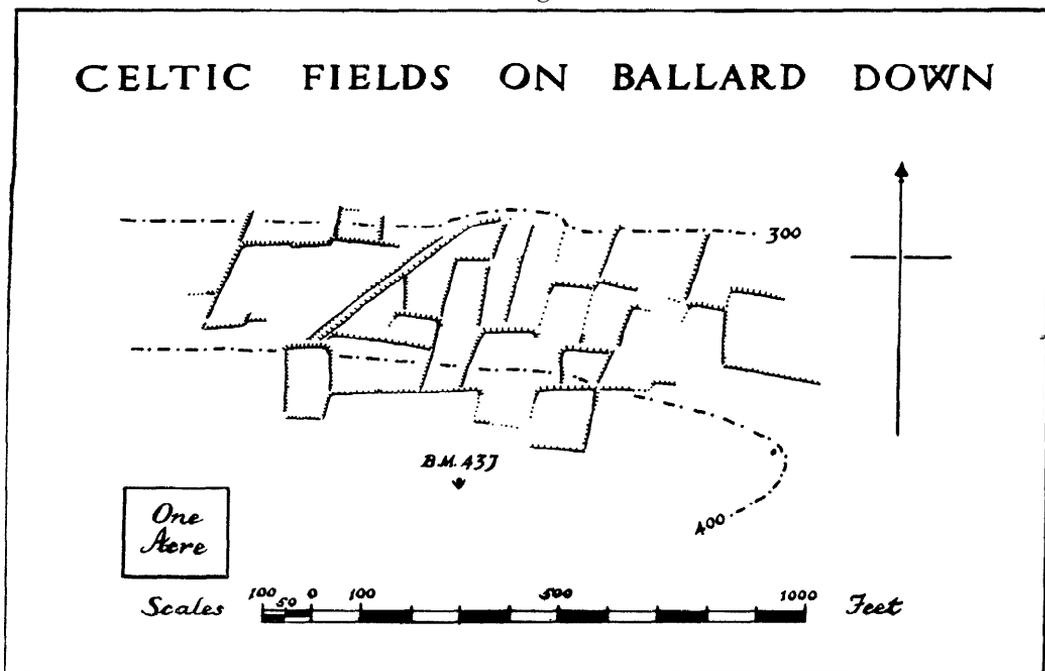
tures.⁵ It is occasionally found within Celtic fields but sometimes overrode the lynchets, while, infrequently, it was sufficiently established to be responsible for new lynchets. Had a turn-wrest plough or technique been used this alteration of Celtic field pattern would be less likely to attract notice.

A more difficult problem is that set by the widespread existences of broad plough ridges—or "broad rig" as I shall call it—on the pasture land outside the bounds of the medieval fields as they are known, for instance, from estate maps of the eighteenth century.

Fig. 6 is a plan of some Celtic fields in south Dorset on which there has been superimposed a pattern of broad rig. The earlier system has been virtually destroyed but its heavier lynchets have determined where the ridges should end. It seems that the Celtic field pattern on the hill slope to the west has also been broken by ploughing—this time without a ridging technique and perhaps at quite a different period—for a bank and ditch that rides over Celtic lynchets has on this slope been almost buried under what is presumably plough soil.

Another area of broad rig laid out like this, in parcels of strips akin to medieval furlongs, lies half a mile to the east. The Frampton villa is two miles distant to the north separated from the rig

Fig. 3



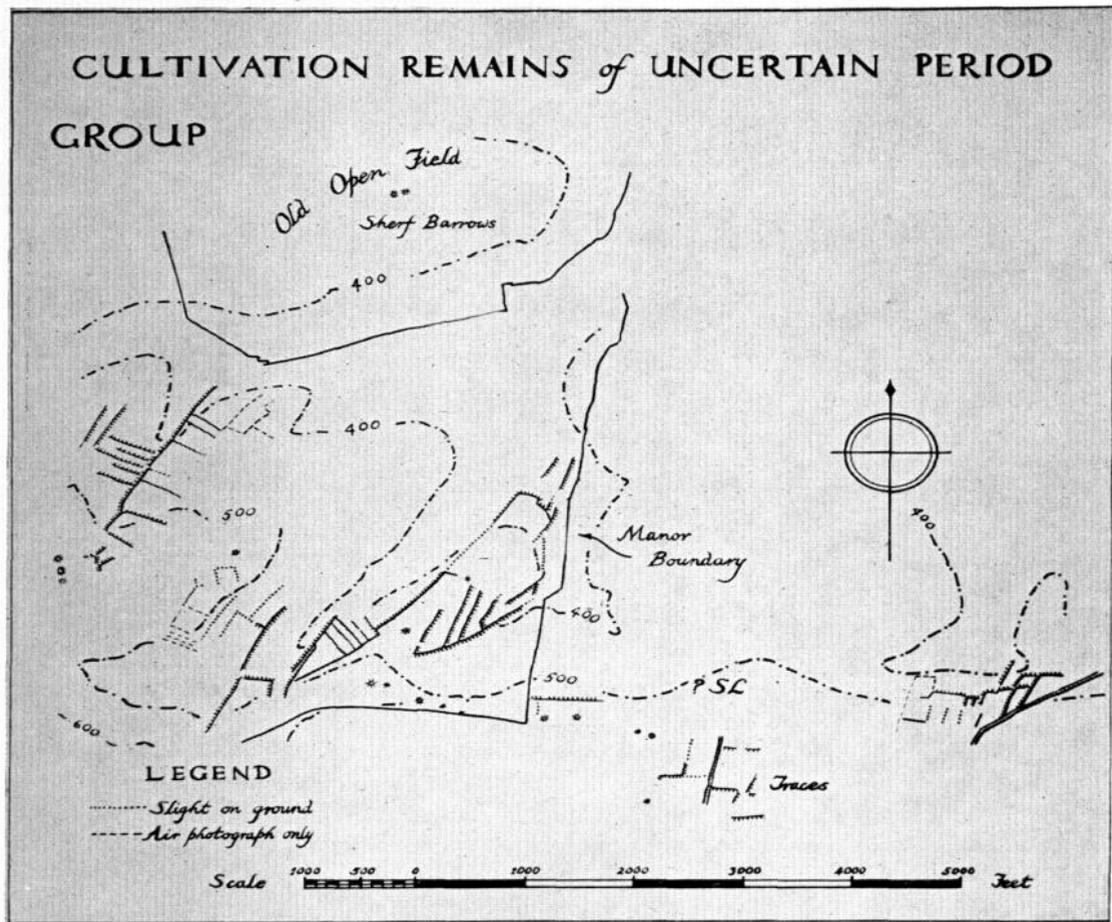


Fig. 5

could be given a Roman dating, for it would surely in that case be a likely form for villa fields of an advanced type. The two-way plough inferred from the coulter finds already makes this feasible, but I must again qualify and say that in my opinion it does not automatically follow. Ridges are, I believe, only left if the same furrows are followed for a number of seasons. Modern farmers often use a ridging technique, but like Columella they avoid building up the ridges into anything significant on the ground by ploughing in different directions on different occasions.

At the moment I am sceptical of a Roman dating for the broad rig so far found on the follow-

ing grounds :

(1) The fact that broad rig is the classical mode of ploughing from medieval days into at least the 17th century.

(2) There is so much evidence for ploughing of the outfield in post-Roman days derived not only from the late narrow rig but from documentary evidence of the medieval period to which I can only refer obliquely by citing Sir John Clapham's remark that "there can be little doubt that, if we knew England completely, we should meet plenty of it."¹¹

(3) It implies a really radical change in practice from that suggested by known Romano-

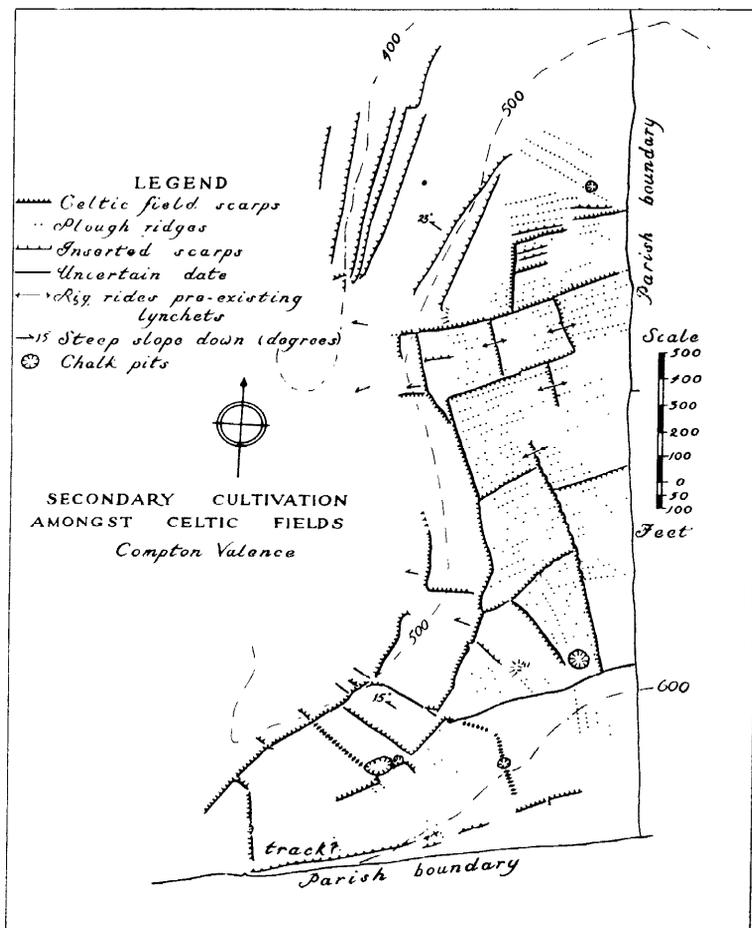


Fig. 6

British fields. I say this despite the evident possibility that the Celtic fields left to us may be but poor outliers on land marginal even in the Roman period. And of course it would suggest a remarkably widespread use of the heavy plough not made any the more plausible by the fact that in those parts of Wessex where I have made comparison the overall distribution bears no significant relationship to the known villas.

In our search for a date mere digging of the rig, as such, would I think be useless for it would certainly contain misleading sherds if over earlier fields and would not necessarily produce any contemporary pottery if it had not been manured.

This scrappy discussion of possible field types illustrated by examples mostly well away from villas has reflected the limitation of my knowledge

but also, I think, the general dearth of published evidence. I shall venture, therefore, on more theory. It is perhaps wrong to make up our minds as to what we might expect to find in the way of fields about a given villa, but it would be folly to ignore the obvious possibilities of variety that will be dependent on:

- (1) The size of the establishment, evidence for centralized working and for the type of plough used.
- (2) The location in relation to geological drift, Celtic fields and later treatment, and so on.
- (3) Dating.

The first factor offers at least three possibilities: (a) A small establishment representing an independent farm whose conservatism and needs might well have been content with Celtic fields of the

old pattern. (b) A small establishment with a bailiff or subservient tenant whose fields reflect a master's policy. (Any Celtic farm near a villa might in fact give clues to the arable field type favoured by the villa.) (c) A larger establishment (perhaps an estate headquarters) where signs of high farming must be looked for. In this case fields of a minimum length would be expected, and my own view is that strips are likely—the tendency discernible on the downland being perhaps a reflection of improvers' practice elsewhere, e.g., among the more progressive villas.

The second factor is that in considering location good rich soil will suggest the use of a heavy plough and this in turn the strip form of field for reasons already given. A light soil might well be progressively farmed in accordance with advanced practice on richer soil (consider for example the largely unnecessary rig on chalk downland in later days). Also, it will perhaps have had Celtic fields of earlier date than the villa and pre-existing lynchets of sufficient size will ensure that any new pattern is a compromise. The problem then is to consider whether alteration belongs to the villa. There must be some examples where this can still be worked out; the evidence for Roman villas replacing or developing Iron Age farms is growing. (Medieval and later ploughing is again a boggy to beware of.)

Modern ploughing is more easy to deal with for it is obvious and in a relatively short time destroys all reliable traces of the fields. Only ditches, if any, will be left, and these are virtually indestructible, though often obvious only under crops.

Finally, since villas may be of different dates and have several phases it is obviously important to date the fields around them. A villa established in the third century, for instance, may have developed a predominantly pastoral economy, perhaps ignoring or making small use of earlier Celtic fields, as did many a southern English farm in later days.

In sum then: villas have to be thought of as establishments whose size, location and date will have a bearing on their field systems. (It has been no concern of mine to consider villas that might

not have been dependent on agriculture.) In the hope that one day we might be able to recognise the sort of field pattern likely to be due to villa influence, it is necessary to find out more and more about the development of Celtic fields and, perhaps just as important, of their regional differences. Scrutiny of all available air-photographs, careful planning and excavation might hope to show what falls into the orbits of Roman villas of different types. After eliminating, if possible, the chances of later alteration, the signs of advanced farming, if any, might be found in a layout of strip fields—just conceivably in broad ridges—or by enlargement of earlier fields within the limits imposed by the presence of pre-existing well-developed lynchets. It is especially desirable to establish the earliest possible date for broad rig in this country, probably by the excavation of earthworks lying over it. Villas that have succeeded Iron Age farms should eventually be found with traceable fields around them. Otherwise, considering the 1,000 acres (i.e., 1 mile by 1½ miles—roughly the area on one print of a 1 : 10,000 air-photograph) postulated for a relatively small villa like Ditchley, and without assuming a fixed relationship of house size to acreage, any Celtic fields within corresponding distance of a villa should be carefully worked over. A largely pastoral economy might be indicated, for instance, by large enclosures, but the combination of one such with at least three corn-drying ovens as at Rockbourne Down is a reminder of the continuation of arable farming. The mere physical contiguity of a villa to fields would have to be investigated by the independent dating of the fields by any means possible.

Direct evidence for fields defined by lynchets and banks is disappearing rapidly under the bulldozer and plough. It is one consolation that this expanding agriculture recovers, under the eye of the aerial camera, ditched fields otherwise lost. Indeed, the best chance of finding out more about the actual boundaries of Romano-British fields in low-lying areas long settled by later man is to encourage arable farming in those areas. The irony of this provides a suitable conclusion.

SOME HISTORICAL PROBLEMS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

Speaker: C. E. S TEVENS, M.A., B.Litt., F.S.A.

I AM going to speak as an outsider and as an ancient historian looking at villa systems. We can dig Little Milton up and get its status; we cannot hope to find out what the system of land tenure was from excavation, only from documents. It is quite likely that large villas were occupied as in Alsace-Lorraine and the Rhineland by people who lived in them and did no farming. On the other hand, there may have been landowners who did farm. In Egypt, there were villages controlled by Apion from his villa in the time of Justinian. He presumably lived on the land and controlled the activities of the population in the villages. But he did not own the villages as we know from the evidence of papyri.

Cranborne Chase has been considered as a possible imperial estate. Does the documentation of the Later Roman Empire substantiate this theory? The alienation of Government land is a characteristic of all provinces at this period. Gaul can tell us a great deal. We have the evidence of place-names, estate-names. This has not been considered properly and there is need for research on these lines. Ireland gives evidence of villas without Roman occupation, in the raths. We can work out what the non-Roman Celtic system in Ireland was. How does it fit with the raths? It looks as if the Celtic system in Ireland was 30 acres of cultivation with waste land around, like the medieval system. It seems to work in groups, like villas.

THE SURVIVAL INTO THE DARK AGES

Speaker: Dr. J. N. L. M YRES, M.A., F.S.A.

THE survival of villas into the Dark Ages is not only, perhaps not primarily, an archaeological problem but a historical problem to the solution of which archaeology cannot hope to provide the only or the major clues. There are many reasons for this. It is a commonplace that archaeology always tells us least about the latest periods on a site. This is because they are at the top and sealed by nothing later: if not totally eroded away, they are most liable to confusion by surface disturbance, etc. All over the Roman Empire, later imperial history has been destroyed in this way on urban sites as well as rural ones. The difficulty of interpreting the later history of villas in this country is thus only one aspect of a universal archaeological phenomenon. Secondly, archaeology will tell most about cultures which are advanced economically and least about peoples who are too ignorant, impoverished or demoralized to make a wide range of material goods. The cultures of Dark Age Britain were of this latter kind and, apart from the pagan burials of Anglo-Saxon conquerors, they were archaeologically as

negative as cultures can be. We must thus face the fact that we are never going to learn much about the later days of Roman villas from the archaeological evidence. Therefore it is necessary to see what other evidence may exist. Here the main weight of testimony is against the notion of survival into the Dark Ages. I mention only three of the more significant classes of evidence: (i) literary, (ii) toponymic, and (iii) linguistic. (i) Of all the Roman institutions in Britain, post-Roman writers remembered least about villas. Indeed they remembered nothing at all. Gildas, writing in the first half of the sixth century, knew a bit about Roman military dispositions and he bewailed the destruction of the Roman towns. But he knew nothing about Roman villas. The only possible conclusion seems to be that they had perished as going concerns so long ago and so completely that they had been forgotten by the early sixth century. Yet, as late as the second half of the fourth century, we know archaeologically that villas were the dominant agricultural fact of large areas of rural Britain. On the other hand,

Gildas does make at least one significant remark which may well be related to the collapse of the villa system. He speaks of a period of prosperity shortly after the withdrawal of the Roman official authority and then of a period in which "the whole province lost the support of its food supplies except only for the resources of hunting." In other words, the province relapsed into a food-gathering economy, which can only mean that organized agriculture as practised on the great estates had ceased.

(ii) On the significant toponymic evidence I need do no more than remind you of what Mr. Stevens has already said. We know the sites of about 500 villas, but we do not know any of their names. This is in complete contrast to the situation in Central and Southern Gaul, where so many modern village names derive directly from the names of the Gallo-Roman estates. It is inconceivable that every single villa name should have perished if they had been going concerns or remembered even in the earliest years of the Anglo-Saxon period. The Anglo-Saxons were aware of many of the old place-names, especially those of rivers, forests, other natural features, and even ruined towns, but no one seems to have given them the name of a single Roman villa.

(iii) On the matter of language, it is important that historians and archaeologists should master the conclusions which Professor Kenneth Jackson has recently placed before us in his *Language and History in Early Britain*. I would draw your attention only to one relevant observation in his work. Professor Jackson says that "the Anglo-Saxons met very few people who talked any sort of Latin at all during the course of the occupation of Britain". Do we realise the extraordinary significance of that fact, if it is true? Who did talk Latin in Britain in the later Roman period? We do not know much about the linguistic habits of the rural peasantry or urban proletariat. But there can be no doubt that the main Latin-speaking classes were those concerned with the operation of the villas and the organization of the Christian church. If Professor Jackson is right in saying that the Anglo-Saxons met few or no people of such classes, those classes must have virtually disappeared before the Anglo-Saxon settlement in the latter part of the fifth century.

It is against this overwhelming evidence from very different sources for the early destruction and collapse of villa economy that we must set the archaeological problem with which we are concerned. I would like to ask three questions:

(1) What do we, in fact, find in Roman villas which is relevant to the problem of how long they continued to function?

(2) What should we look for in future excavations?

(3) Against what should we be on our guard?

It used to be said that hardly a Saxon object had been found in a Roman villa. That is not quite true. Hybrid pottery has been found in one or two villas in the south and at least one in Lincolnshire, but there is still nothing to suggest that early Anglo-Saxon settlers themselves lived in Roman villas. It is important not to misinterpret this evidence. Would one expect the early Anglo-Saxons to live in villas? We know from the later literary evidence of *Beowulf*, etc., that Anglo-Saxon chieftains and their followers liked living in enormous halls where they ate and slept all together. They did not like buildings of typical villa type, partitioned into a number of different rooms intended for different purposes. Even in Gaul, where there is evidence for the continued existence of villa estates, in the sense of juridical and tenurial continuity, there is little sign archaeologically of Frankish chiefs living in Roman villas. The villas fell down or were used as stables and the chiefs built halls for themselves nearby.

The occurrence of late Roman coinage, and the extent of its wear and tear on villa sites is a matter of great importance which would require a separate lecture to itself.

The answer to the question of what should we look for in future excavation is, of course, "any conceivable stratified evidence", bearing in mind that it will always tend to come in the *first* stages of any excavation when it is easiest to misinterpret because we do not know what lies beneath. One moral may be drawn: never clear large areas of top soil from any villa site before you start going down, as you may be removing and destroying the answer to the question, how long did the villa continue to exist?

Finally, there are two things to guard against; first, the facile assumption in many excavation reports that the end of the site is certainly known—e.g., "it was totally destroyed by fire", or "the buildings were deserted and fell down". It is in the nature of the case extremely difficult to be certain how any site came to an end. Evidence of fire is not necessarily evidence for destruction, and there may often be no means of distinguishing archaeologically between slow collapse and deliberate demolition. Secondly, facile deductions from the numismatic evidence. A coin series may give you positive evidence but it is well to remember that it does not tell you anything about the coins which were there but which you have not found. Endless historical uncertainties arise from that simple truth. The presence of coins on, or their absence from, a site, may justify very different conclusions according to the nature of the site. Townsmen

may find it much harder to maintain their existence without coinage than countrymen; and some sorts of countrymen may find it much easier than others. For all these reasons, we should never be

disappointed if archaeology continues to contribute much less than we should wish to the solution of the problem of the last days of most of our Roman villas.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

Speaker: PROFESSOR I. A. RICHMOND, M.A., LL.D., F.B.A., F.S.A.

WHILE the structural problems of Roman villas in Britain would demand a longer discussion than is here possible, something short can conveniently be said about the villa as a type of building. The attempt may be made to get away from the idea of an evolving type and to relate types rather to purpose or function, if that is possible; and specific examples will illustrate the point of view.

A very simple kind of house is represented by Lockleys, Welwyn,¹ and there are several examples of the same kind in the Verulamium district. It offers a picture of the first stage in Romanization of what had previously been an Iron Age site. It is an extremely simple house, and the only doubtful point about its plan is whether the row of post-holes along the front really belongs to it. Their position and spacing hardly fit the kind of building which lies behind them, and their presence raises the question whether there was an intermediate structure between the Belgic hut and the house. But the house itself is so simple in plan as to compel the realization that it is something very much more like the modest farmhouses with which we are familiar in the much later English or Welsh landscape. Economically, too, it may be felt how appropriate to such a stage of transition, between the primitive Belgic hut and the much more elaborate type of Roman villa, this simple dwelling seems to be. Socially, in relation to the family or the farming unit to which it belonged, it betokens a stage of development in which the family is still living together and working together as a unit, in a fashion felt to be perfectly natural. Other references have been made in this Conference to family working: and, if it were asked what kind of simple house would suit a semi-Romanized form of building, the Lockleys type might very appropriately fit the bill. It should be emphasised that, although this building has the rectangularity which we associate with the Roman work, its appearance as an upstanding piece of architecture would probably reveal many points not normally associated with Roman buildings. It is, for

instance, doubtful if the walls went very high or were more than half-timbered in the early stages.

The same type of plan recurs at Park Street,² with the addition of a cellar, which, while structurally a highly Romanized thing, is in function not far removed from the storage pit.

Both these simple and early Roman villas may be compared with Garn, Llanychaer, Pembrokeshire, a seventeenth-century Pembrokeshire farmhouse illustrated by Sir Cyril Fox, which has a ground plan not fundamentally different from the Roman plan, and which is socially related to family working. They illustrate a type of villa very different from that usually appearing in text-books and yet so far removed from the Belgic houses which preceded it as to take its place of right in the context of the Roman villa. No less simple is the stone-built example from Langton, East Yorkshire,³ which belongs at the earliest to the third century. This also earns the right to the title "villa", since its setting shows it to be a villa in the true sense of the word as a farm or agricultural productive unit. As the general plan reveals, house succeeds house; there can be distinguished a mill and threshing-floors, though many of the elements are difficult to relate precisely to one another. Underneath all these lie winding ditches, recognizable as the remnants of boundaries to field and farm. There is also an early ditched enclosure, probably for a timber building not yet recovered. These are the ditches, so often full of pottery and therefore datable, which, given patient excavation or good air-photographs, might be the means of working out an interesting sequence and learning much about the villa and its associated fields. This sort of task is particularly appropriate to a time when archaeology is becoming a costly activity and when local archaeological societies are asking themselves whether they can afford so expensive a form of historical enquiry. To cut a small section across an individual ditch, or to trace a system of ditches by cutting several sections, is a project not beyond the reach of

individuals and societies of modest means. If it is objected that such work is rather dull, it may be said that the consequences are extremely exciting: and such a consideration might in the end fire the enthusiasm of those who get their excitement from a relic or a whole pot, and enable them to concentrate on a piece of work which would really advance archaeology.

Finally, among the simple buildings comes Iwerne,⁶ recently so brilliantly re-interpreted by Professors Piggott and Hawkes. The later-Roman version of these very interesting buildings is the kind of establishment which would not be out of place in the West of Ireland or the Highlands, with farm-house and cow-house inter-connected under one roof. It represents a fascinating piece of social history. There must in fact be many such structures to be found and analysed at the lower end of our villa scale. No historian can despise them, and their importance is that they probably form much more the rule than the exception, in contrast to the larger villas.

Much higher in the scale is Ditchley.⁵ This house is one in which the family unit becomes something different. The large corner rooms represent special rooms thrown out from the rest of the house for its owners. The stage is reached where the working part of the household is becoming consciously separated from master and mistress. But what about other stages? Although the Ditchley excavations told a great deal about the house itself and the associated late-Roman granary, they secured little information about the alleged barn in front of the building. What was this building like, and how did the entrance of the building go through it? Did the main drive pass through a timber gateway and the body of the barn into a courtyard? Or does the barn represent a system of walls to which more might have been added if further excavation had been done? Although the air-photographs seemed to show so much, it is seldom possible to be sure that an air-photograph shows everything.

At Ely Racecourse, Cardiff,⁶ is another example not really so different from Ditchley. It is fundamentally the same kind of house, which was in fact a very common one. The plan shows how intimately the house is connected with the slaves' quarters or barn, later cut off by a boundary ditch, and how a bath-house was in time added to the end of the barn. There is a developing Romanization, though it still falls far short of Mediterranean standards; yet how interesting and how far removed is this modest advance from the squalid world which had gone before. Ely, too, offers an opportunity to comment upon alleged fortification of villas. It is not easy to believe in current examples very strongly. Ditchley shows that a

villa might be walled and ditched, but that such enclosures were no more than a farmyard wall to keep out the chance marauder or wolf.

In the same series as Ditchley and Ely comes Hambleden.⁷ It could be wished that more were known about the main house, and the time at which it changed direction and turned away from the sordid farmyard with which it was once connected. Here we can see a Romano-British farm in development, however difficult it may be to sort out with complete conviction the different periods and the question of how many of the numerous corn-drying furnaces were worked at the same time and which succeeded which. The lesson which it teaches is plain: the moment there is anything like a complete excavation of these modest houses, which are halfway in style and size between the small buildings with which we started and the large *villae*, an economic unit stands revealed. This is particularly clear at Brading, Isle of Wight,⁸ with its fascinating mosaic pavements. Rich as the mosaics of the main house are, it is nevertheless quite evident that the place was primarily a farming establishment, because, on both sides of it, occur the barn-like buildings which, if found outside Pompeii or Herculaneum, would have been termed *villae rusticae*. In the end the farm predominated, even in the main house, where a late corn-drying kiln was inserted into the verandah of the building.

An air-photograph of Little Milton, Oxfordshire,⁹ mentioned already by two speakers, raises a different point. The house itself is evidently not at all unlike the Lockleys villa, with a back corridor and attached buildings. But, in association with it and aligned to it, appears a large number of paddocks or enclosures, defined by boundary ditches, while there is also a hint of something earlier which does not conform to them. It is this kind of clue which, if followed up, will eventually provide an answer to some of those questions posed at this conference. It may tell us what the field-systems of the Roman villa were really like.

The air-photograph of Ditchley exhibits the beginning of the same sort of thing. The drive comes out of the main house and ditches turn to left and right of the entrance. But these ditches overlie the remains of a field-system which has nothing to do with them, and resembles an earlier Celtic system associated with the villa. Such ditches, at either site, might well be tested for archaeological material. They illustrate how much has still to be learnt about the sites of which we know.

Such reflections might induce a return to such houses as Brading and Ditchley, and, in particular, to the associated buildings, of the type called the "Basilican" house. This type of barn building

is not confined to Britain, but is found in Gaul and Central Europe; and, although the latter examples are less numerous than the British, this may well be due to pure chance. For these houses are not attractive to the spectacular excavator, but belong to the dull category which, though not rich in finds, tell much about social life and history. A great many of them are of late date, belonging mostly to the 4th century, but it is not true of all. At Llantwit Major, Glamorgan,¹⁰ Dr. Nash-Williams has shown that the courtyard house and barn building attached to it, belong not to the fourth century but to the end of the second; it would seem that this Antonine barn building is the earliest which can be securely dated. It is true that there are barn buildings from which earlier objects have come, but it cannot be said whether these objects were specifically related to stratification in the building. So Llantwit Major may warn us not to assign all basilican buildings to the later Roman period. The type was one eminently suitable for the combined housing of stock, tools and slaves.

Clanville, Hampshire,¹¹ is the same kind of building, though elaborately fitted-up with heated rooms and mosaic pavements. It is difficult to say with what kind of farm it was associated. The enclosed yard and walls suggest a stockyard. The interpretation of the inscription to Carinus is also difficult, and the suggestion that it was a milestone is not compelling.

But the general questions raised by the basilican villa are these. Years ago, this writer produced a facile paper upon the basilican dwelling and pointed out its similarity to other timber hall-like dwellings. But a similarity is not necessarily a connection. It is necessary to know where this type of building comes from, and it is not certain that even Mayen in the Eifel provides the answer. In Britain an early example, securely dated and securely established, is required before it is possible to talk of origins and distribution of the type in the Imperial provinces. What is wanted, as was mentioned this morning, is a careful review of existing finds from all the Romano-British examples of the basilican building. If one is found to be yielding early material in quantity, there would be a strong case for selective excavation to test whether the building was the first on the

ground or an earlier one lay underneath it. The great addition to our knowledge in recent years is the fact that buildings of this type were still being erected in the second half of the fourth century, as at Denton, Lincolnshire.¹²

As for the larger type of villa, such as Chedworth, it may be deplored that so magnificent a site is not fully excavated. There is in a sense all the more to know about the building because it is a villa about which so much is already known. Chedworth introduces what is called the courtyard type of house, with a multiple series of rooms related to back and front corridors. There are many examples of this, both in Britain and on the Continent, especially in north-west Europe. But Northleigh, Oxfordshire,¹³ reveals an earlier house underneath the courtyard house, with an earlier bath-house attached to it at the corner. The really exciting fact at Northleigh, however, is the discovery of the great range of work-a-day buildings to the south-west. The buildings are on a scale that reminds us of Continental sites like Nennig in the Moselle valley. These outbuildings tally and coincide with the great house, but their purpose is unknown, and it is uncertain whether the large building fits into them or whether they fit another building underlying it. Even this largest type of house, however, is revealed as an economic unit. In the Imperial provinces the country house for pleasure was very rare, and whenever the archaeological surroundings of a villa are known, evidence for agriculture seems to appear. Even Woodchester, Gloucestershire,¹⁴ with its magnificent dining-room and ornamental gateway, is approached through a court of work-a-day buildings resembling barns, with a corn-drying kiln at the end of one of them.

In conclusion, it must be clear how desultory is our knowledge of the whole matter. If this conference has any purpose, it is to see how much has yet to be learnt on all sides of the problem. We know very little about it, and that little is too often the shadow rather than the substance. But two lines of action emerge. There is much to be done in revising our information upon existing examples by means of selective excavation to clear up sequence, dating and purpose. In large-scale work, the crying need is a full-scale excavation of a large villa with all its subsidiary establishments.

FURNITURE, FURNISHINGS AND FITTINGS

Speaker: MISS JOAN LIVERSIDGE, M.Litt., F.S.A.

MOST Roman villas produce very little in the way of small finds and so far most of our evidence for the furnishings of Romano-British houses comes from such towns as Silchester, Caerwent and Dorchester. We also possess other valuable sources of information in the reliefs showing funerary banquet-scenes on tombstones from York and Chester, and in the statues and carvings of seated figures found in various parts of the country. From such material we can deduce that the furniture used at this period included chairs, couches, and small three-legged tables.

For example, a small wicker chair appears with other furniture on the tombstone of Julia Velva at York, and as the seat for the statues of mother-goddesses found at Housesteads, and of the Fortuna at Birdoswald. Chairs of this type had rounded backs made in one piece with the sides, and were set on rectangular or semicircular bases. In a lifesize model from a tomb at Cologne the artist has carefully copied the pattern of the original wickerwork and rendered the seat-cushion faithfully. When this pattern is absent from the chairs depicted on carvings, as on the tombstone from Murrell Hill, Carlisle, presumably the chairs were made of wood rather than of wicker. This distinction between chairs with wickerwork patterns and those without has also been noted on reliefs from other parts of Europe.

Two folding stools of iron with bronze decorations have been recovered from barrow-burials, one at Holborough, Kent,¹ the other at Bartlow, Essex.² Wooden benches have naturally not survived. A stone bench-end, which may have supported a wooden or stone slab-seat, was found in the baths at the fort at Mumrills;³ and something of this kind might well turn up in a villa excavation. Our best evidence for couches comes from the funerary banquet-scene; and the tombstone of Aelia Aeliana found at York shows the characteristic head- and foot-boards, and also the high back,⁴ a feature which is present on many of the British reliefs. The legs are decorated with mouldings, and it is interesting to recall that a similar small leg made of Kimmeridge shale was discovered at Silchester.

In front of the couch we see a small table with three bandy legs, a type of table found in Italy and most of the provinces of the Roman Empire made in wood, bronze, or marble. British sites have produced a unique series of fragments of legs from such tables made of Kimmeridge shale. To modern eyes, the choice of this material seems strange, for Kimmeridge shale, when freshly cut, resembles slaty coal. Polished and oiled, however, it would have a more attractive appearance, and armlets and other shale objects had, of course, been popular in this country since the Neolithic period. The only shale-working centre so far known is that in Kimmeridge Bay, near Purbeck, Dorset; and by Roman times the lathe had come into use there for turning the table-tops. At present fragments of shale furniture have been found as far afield as Caerleon, Foscote in Buckinghamshire, and Rothley in Leicestershire.

The most complete example of a shale table-leg is the one found in a rubbish pit under the hypocaust of a Roman House in Colliton Park, Dorchester. It is decorated with an animal's head with forward-pointing ears, an open mouth and a lolling tongue, the latter being extended in an unrealistic and very uncomfortable manner to join the leg which swells out to meet it. Behind the animal's head is a small notch into which may have fitted a stretcher bar; below the head is a band of fluted ornament; and the whole leg terminates in a claw foot.

Part of a smaller leg comes from the villa at Frampton, and a larger piece was discovered at the Preston villa, near Weymouth. Another very fine head with stylized mane ornaments a fragment found in a well at the villa of Rothley in Leicestershire. Obviously this decoration is inspired by classical prototypes, and the nearest parallel to it appears on a complete wooden table found at Herculaneum.⁶ Here we have animal heads with slightly extended tongues and the same kind of fluted ornament, features derived no doubt, from the beautiful Pompeian marble tables with their finely modelled heads of lions and panthers growing out of bands of acanthus foliage. None of these heads, however, have the elongated heads

of the Dorset beasts, and a closer parallel to them can be found in a Pompeian table-support carved with representations of winged griffins. Here also are the pricked, pointed ears of Dorchester, the stylized mane of Rothley, and the claws with long toe-nails best seen in this country on a shale claw-foot from Silchester. These likenesses are so striking that we may wonder whether the griffin was the beast which inspired the Romano-British craftsmen, especially as its rather uncanny appearance and strange combination of features might well have appealed to the Celtic taste.

There are other fascinating aspects of the decoration of these shale table-legs; their intrinsic interest stimulates us to hope that more fragments may be recovered in the course of future excavations, and that these may throw light upon the date of their manufacture, for few of the examples already found are dated. Silchester and Caerwent have produced pieces of two table-tops. Panels of shale, which may have been used as a decorative veneer for couches, or for the lower parts of walls, are also sometimes discovered. Wells and rubbish-pits are a happy hunting-ground for fragments of this kind, and also for any bits of woodwork which may have survived in damp surroundings. We may hope to find some day in such a place the remains of a worn-out wicker chair, or the leather thongs of a couch-seat, as well as such items of household equipment as iron tools and pewter vessels.

Although no evidence in the shape of actual remains survives, we must presume that plain wooden tables, stools, and cupboards, were used in the kitchens and working-quarters of our villas. Supports of upright stones found in the room identified as the kitchen at Spoonley Wood, may have carried a flat table-top of wood or stone; and relics of this kind, and of anything in the nature of stone shelves or brackets, are worth watching for. A few well preserved hearths might also give us more detailed information about cooking arrangements.

Wooden chests and caskets of various sizes with metal fittings seem also to have been popular; and bronze locks, hinges, strip-ornament, drop handles, and small feet, as well as pieces of bone inlay often come to light. A family treasure-chest discovered at Silchester had been buried in a flint-lined cavity under a tessellated floor. Made of wood which has, of course, failed to survive, it had stood on pieces of flanged tile to protect it from the damp earth. The lid was strengthened with three stalwart iron bands and hinges, and the lock plate, key and iron handle were also preserved. The contents, alas, had vanished. Traces of another iron-bound box were found in the villa at Brislington, Somerset.

For soft furnishings the evidence is very slight. That the Romano-Britons used rush mats, and covers and door curtains of homespun seems probable; and bolsters, cushions and mattresses appear on the couches carved on the tombstones. These were, no doubt, stuffed with wool, feathers, straw, or other vegetable material. It is believed that a cushion stuffed with chaff and decorated with bronze ribbon was burnt along with the folding stool at Holborough. A wide choice of textiles, either imported or made in Britain, was probably available to shoppers in the big towns, and the small textile fragments which are sometimes found in excavations well repay careful treatment and examination. The pattern of a piece of cloth of late first-century date has left an impression of itself on a tile from the Ashtead villa; and a scrap of cloth with a herringbone weave was retrieved from a well on the Roman site at Huntcliff, Yorkshire.¹⁰ Small leather fragments showing signs of stitchery, like the gilded specimen recently found on the site of the London Mithraeum, may possibly have belonged to the upholstery of chairs and couches: clues of this sort may prove invaluable.

Apart from painted wall-plaster and mosaic pavements our knowledge of the decoration of Romano-British villas is very limited. Their exterior walls were frequently plastered and painted red and white; the crest and ridge-stones and carved finials from the roofs of stone-built houses turn up occasionally; and the dwarf pillars from low corridor-walls sometimes have decorative mouldings. Possibly the remains of the columns excavated at Ditchley supported the cornice of a facade of fourth-century type, and stone slabs with edges carved in various patterns found at King's Worthy,¹² Tockington,¹³ Painswick¹⁴ and other sites may also have formed part of cornices. Fragments of statuary and carved reliefs are also occasionally recorded. Items of this kind are especially valuable, since they give us a vivid idea of the appearance of villa buildings.

Traces of wall mosaic are rare in Britain, and Wingham is the only site where it has been found *in situ*.³ Another form of wall decoration occasionally found is *opus sectile*. The clearest traces of a floor in this style come from Angmering, where triangular, oblong, and kite-shaped pieces of coloured stones of the Wealden series, Sussex marble, and white limestone from north Italy were found, some worn by use.¹⁶ That there were wall-veneers of local marbles imitating those popular at Pompeii and Ostia seems a very probable conjecture, and I have already mentioned the possibility that pieces of Kimmeridge shale were used in this way.

Unlike mosaic pavements, the remains of Romano-British wall-paintings have received little attention from students so far. Owing to its fragile nature and usually fragmentary condition it has been held to offer little of artistic value, and until recent years only a few pieces with definite patterns on them were preserved by excavators, and the rest was just thrown away. Occasionally the discovery of plaster is mentioned in excavation reports, but usually without detailed description or comment. The result is that our museums are full of tantalising pieces of plaster of the very greatest interest, with little or no information available about the circumstances of their discovery. In 1848 Richard Neville excavated a villa at Ickleton in Cambridgeshire and found a large quantity of plaster from the walls of rooms which, he says “appears to have been ornamented with a ground of deep rich red, divided into panels by borders of various colours, in which were interspersed birds, flowers, stars and other fanciful objects.”¹⁷

We are fortunate to have even this much of a description, especially as some pieces of the plaster survive and are now in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. Among the “fanciful objects” are the following: a fragment which seems to depict the end of a building, outlined in black on a brown ground with a red tiled roof; a design of roses painted in various shades of red, with green leaves, on a curved piece of plaster which, perhaps, came from an apse or a window-splay; and the foot and part of the drapery of a dancing figure, perhaps a nymph or maenad of the type shown on some of the small dishes in the Mildenhall treasure. The foot is eight inches long, so it must have belonged to a figure about five feet tall, and it is all that survives of what must once have been an imposing large-scale figure-scene.¹⁸ How much more of it is still lying about the site, or was thrown away during the excavations, one can hardly bear to speculate. So far it is a unique discovery in Britain. One thinks at once of the figure-scenes from the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum; and while it is perhaps unlikely that this painting attained to Italian artistic standards, if one not very rich or important villa can produce work of this high order, it is legitimate to wonder what some of the large houses in Somerset or Gloucestershire may not have in store for us. Indeed, one Gloucestershire house, that at Comb End, actually produced remains of a large-scale painting showing the feet and lower parts of the bodies of human figures moving about between the pillars of a building. But this is only preserved for us today in a drawing made by Lysons,¹⁹ none of the actual plaster having survived.

Faces and portions of the human body on a smaller scale have been found on other sites including the villas at Otford²⁰ and Box; but the discoveries which give the best ideas of paintings of this type, and which have certainly revolutionized the study of wall-plaster in Britain come from the Kentish villa at Lullingstone. Here the destruction resulting from a fire caused the painted walls of an upper room to fall into the cellar beneath, and we now realize that these walls were decorated with a series of six richly dressed human figures, some of them standing with outstretched hands, set between the pillars of a colonnade which had either a coffered ceiling or a tiled roof, and a dado of flowers below. The attitude with outstretched hands is that of the early Christians at prayer and is familiar from many a catacomb painting; and the Christian character of these figures is clinched by the discovery of two beautiful painted representations of the Chi-Rho, each placed in the centre of a wreath of flowers, which come, one from the same room, the other from an adjacent chamber.²¹

Since the Lullingstone discoveries are so well known I now turn to the practical lessons they have taught us about research on wall-plaster. To begin with, they were found in hundreds of fragments and in a state of apparently hopeless confusion. Luckily their importance was realised by the excavator, Lt.-Col. G. W. Meates, and he enlisted the aid of Mr. Cregoe Nicholson, with a view to attempting to put this gigantic jigsaw puzzle together. We owe Mr. Nicholson a tremendous debt for the years of devoted work—often very tedious and disheartening work—which he has devoted to the Lullingstone paintings, and his brilliant success shows what can be achieved by such patient sorting and piecing together by a keen and experienced eye. The great lesson to be learnt from work of this kind is that all the painted plaster found during an excavation must be kept, whether it appears to have a pattern on it or not. Very often cleaning reveals a faint smudge of another colour on the edge of a fragment which otherwise may show only the plain red, black or white of a background; and one such smudge may provide the clue from which quite an elaborate reconstruction can be worked out. Any concentrations of plaster fragments should be kept together and fully labelled, and walls should be carefully watched as they are excavated, in case some of the plaster may still be attached to them. Most of the plaster in our museums has no chronological value. But Lullingstone has produced paintings of several different periods all securely dated; and the same is true of a few other recently excavated sites. Evidence of this kind is urgently needed.

Not all villas aspired to figure paintings on their walls; and various gay designs of panelling with leaves and flowers or geometric motifs are much more often found. Usually the decoration started at ground-level with a plain band of colour and above this came a dado two or three feet high of multicoloured stripes and bands. Sometimes this was divided into small panels imitating wall-veneers and consisting of plain grounds splashed with paint, to give the effect of imitation marble veining. Fragments with these splashes of colour have come to light at Box,²² Bignor,²³ and about twenty-five other villas.

Above the dado the wall was usually divided into panels outlined by fine lines; and the reconstruction by Artis of a wall at Castor shows such a scheme with pillars separating the panels.²⁴ More often borders of geometric motifs, or leaves and floral scrolls were used instead of pillars,²⁵ outlined with beaded lines. Occasionally small human figures or animals or some geometric design occupied the centre of the panel.

These are only a few of the motifs found painted on British plaster. Designs are many and various, and the same designs are sometimes found on more than one site. Certain motifs, such as the beaded line used to outline panels, and a twisted line which may be called the "barley-sugar-stick" motif, occur in other Roman provinces. As research progresses we shall no doubt collect many more patterns with continental parallels.

This leads to speculation as to how much we are likely to learn about the achievement of the British wall-painters. Perhaps we may assume that, like the mosaicists, they used pattern books which could have been brought to Britain by artists (some of them possibly from East Mediterranean lands) who settled down in the towns and took on pupils or apprentices. How long did fashions current in Rome and Pompeii take to reach Britain, and to what extent did they appeal to the British householder? The subject matter of some of the mosaic pavements and such a find as the Virgil quotation painted on the walls of the Otford villa show that classical literature and mythology interested many people in Britain. These elaborate and sophisticated themes must have been

deliberately selected, often, no doubt, at no small cost, by villa-owners, to decorate bathroom or dining-room.

Commissions of this type would be confined to the upper strata of the population, but even the poorer less-educated people seem to have wanted gaily painted walls; and as happens today, father seems to have learnt how to do a bit of decorating, even in such villages as Woodcuts or Park Brow.

The quality of the work varies enormously. In some cases we can distinguish the incised guide lines for the edge of a stripe, and also see where the painter's assistant completely ignored it. Occasionally one fragment will show paintings of two periods superimposed one above the other. The composition of the material used as a backing for the plaster, a factor which also affects its quality, is an interesting subject for investigation. Sometimes the back of a plaster fragment bears the impress of the timber or wattle and daub walls, or of the flue-tiles, to which it was attached, and these accidental "patterns" may help in fitting pieces together. The problem of crumbling and of the general fragility of the material can now be overcome by soaking it, after cleaning, in a solution of bedacryl dissolved in toluene for twenty-four hours. This hardens the plaster without altering the colour-values.

Finally, what do we hope for in future as a result of plaster research? Surely a careful and comprehensive collection, study and publication of all existing material. One difficulty arises from the wide range of colours encountered; something in the nature of a standard colour-chart would be an extremely useful thing to produce. Again, many of the motifs are difficult to describe clearly and adequately in words; they must be photographed, and that soon raises problems of finance. Line-drawings can suffice for some illustrations; but in copying a rather smudgy unidentifiable pattern, it is very difficult to produce an intelligible and accurate drawing. However, as more plaster is published we shall gradually build up a corpus of comparative material which can be used for cross-referencing, and meanwhile publication in some form, even if it can only be a very summary form, is essential.

ROMANO-BRITISH MOSAICS: SOME PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

Speaker: Dr. DAVID SMITH, B.A.

SOME 360 out of a total of about 600—or 60 per cent—of the Roman mosaics recorded in Britain belonged to villas. At first sight these figures suggest that the importance of the contribution of the villas to the study of Romano-British mosaics should more than equal that of the towns. This is not so, however, for two reasons. In the first place, the figures include very many imperfectly recorded and often now destroyed mosaics, of which by far the majority belonged to villas. Secondly, very few villa mosaics have so far been dated on external evidence, and none of these is earlier than the fourth century, whilst it is probably safe to suggest that most, perhaps even all, of the rest can be ascribed to the same period, on the evidence of their style. It follows that the villa mosaics by themselves do not furnish material to illustrate the history of Roman mosaic in Britain, and it may well be, in fact, that for this the towns will eventually prove a more fruitful source than the country houses, at least for the earlier periods.

There are at present two serious gaps in the record. Not a single town or villa mosaic in Britain has yet been proved to date from the first century or from the third. It is possible, of course, that no mosaic pavements were laid in Britain before the second century. But what happened between the second and the fourth? Can the industry have lapsed entirely between 200 and 300? But if so, where did the craftsmen of the fourth-century revival come from? The pavements themselves afford good grounds for believing that most of the fourth-century *tesserarii* were Britons trained in their native province. They worked in a number of local styles, of which at least one—that of the Orpheus pavements of the south-west—was already in being by 297, or very soon after, at Cirencester. This style, and others, must surely represent the fruit of local traditions which were developing before 300. Sooner or later some pre-Constantinian, post-Antonine mosaics should turn up somewhere.

There is already abundant material for study, but what is lacking is sufficient dated material. No doubt this will come in due course as fresh sites are dug. But I would like to recall that at Lydney Park and at Denton, Lincolnshire, it has proved possible to date pavements previously uncovered and recorded as long as 150 years ago,

in spite of the fact that in the interval many of them had perished. It should still be possible therefore to recover evidence for dating many other pavements which were unearthed and recorded by our predecessors. Many villa sites might still yield such evidence if re-excavated. Hampshire, Horkstow and Winterton in Lincolnshire, East Coker, Nunney, and Pitney in Somerset, Bignor in Sussex, Pitmead in Wiltshire—these are only a few of the important sites where re-excavation, if possible, might still be rewarding.

Here I would like to mention a peculiar difficulty which may arise in the excavation of a mosaic, one which has not been noted before, so far as I know, and is indeed far from being obvious. It can best be illustrated with an actual example. In 1738 the patterned pavements of the villa at Great Weldon, Northamptonshire, were uncovered and carefully drawn and engraved. In 1953 there came the opportunity to re-excavate them, but by then one of the pavements had been ploughed away; not a *tessera* remained *in situ*. Its foundations, however, were still intact and yielded a coin of 177-178, while below them was a strew of rubbish containing first- and second-century pottery from an earlier house on the same site. A *terminus post quem* of c. 200 was thus indicated for the later house and its mosaics. But it happens that only a few miles away, at Great Caster-ton, a pavement of a pattern identical with the lost Weldon mosaic has been securely dated to the second half of the fourth century. The correspondence in pattern at the two sites was exact; both pavements must have been laid by the same firm and from the same pattern book. It would be quite unreasonable not to regard them as belonging to the same period. Clearly, then, the Weldon mosaic was either a late innovation in a building already about 150 years old, or it was a late fourth-century replacement of an earlier mosaic of which no trace remained in 1953.

This raises an important structural question. There are grounds for believing that in the construction of a new building the laying of the pavements was one of the last operations, coming after the plastering of the walls. But what happened if, in the course of time, the original mosaics were removed and new ones were laid in their place?

It seems probable that the old foundations would usually have served quite well for the new mosaics. If so, any finds sealed in or below them might furnish a *terminus post quem* for the new mosaics, but it could be decades, or a century or more, earlier than their true date. It is imperative, therefore, that the foundations of pavements be examined most closely for the slightest indication of re-use, such as an extra layer of mortar, apparently superfluous, but laid on the old foundations as a bedding for the new mosaic, or any old *tesserae* which escaped removal, even the impressions of removed *tesserae* in the concrete bed below the mortar in which the existing mosaic is set, or, as at Lullingstone, in the border of the "Bellerophon" pavement, a fragment of an earlier mosaic re-used in the later.

Finally, one of the most interesting questions—how did the ancient mosaicist set about laying a pavement? Did he scratch guide lines in the concrete foundation, or did he sketch out the design with paint, in the manner of the Byzantine wall-mosaicists and of those who now restore their work? Or did he simply work by rule of thumb? This at least would account for the obvious miscalculations in some pavements. The same Lullingstone border again affords an example, and there are others. Such details are always suggestive and may throw much light on the methods of the ancient craftsmen. Ultimately we may even discern, from a close study of the mosaics, something of the size and organization of the firms which laid them.

SCIENTIFIC POTENTIAL

Speaker: L. BIEK, B.Sc., A.R.C.S., A.I.I.C.

AT last year's C.B.A. Conference on "Archaeology in the Laboratory" there was evidence of the lack of manpower and equipment; of the different languages used by scientists and archaeologists; and of scientists' desire to be kept in the picture.

If progress is to be made in harnessing the scientific potential, there will have to be a greater appreciation of the scientific attitude. Two of its main attributes were recently described as "a healthy scepticism and an instinctive impulse to put doubtful matters to the direct proof of practical experiment". It is rarely possible to follow such an impulse in the case of archaeological material, because of the time factor involved in the changes of which we can only study the end product. But more could be done in that way, especially where the time factor does not apply as, for example, it does not to the effects of fire which are rarely modified by subsequent burial.

Modern scientific development has now also produced some circumstances which make the outlook more favourable. Scientific institutions using the same methods, for instance spectrographic analysis, are prepared to collaborate on a large project involving archaeological material in order to compare notes on method. Similarly, specialists interested in different aspects

of the same material (for example, tannin) are glad to meet an independent approach to their problem. Only for those reasons has it been possible even to contemplate the organization of specialist work on such a scale as we have attempted with the material from the complex of sites in the Chew Valley of which the centre was a Roman farmstead that may be regarded, for this purpose, as a villa.

If I were asked directly "how much should be done?" I should reply "everything!" unhesitatingly. In practice this is, of course, impossible and might in many cases turn out to be unnecessary. But it is the ideal: all the material should be seen by scientific specialists. We are as yet only groping towards an understanding of what may, and what is not likely to, be important. In the case of the tablet and the jug it was the need for preservation which started the remarkable chain of inter-connected discoveries. It was decided to try and utilize the maximum of the great scientific potential which was evidently contained in the wealth of material from Chew. The work is still in its infancy, but I should like to give a brief outline of how we set about it.

Having spent a day on the site, I tabulated finds and features *qualitatively*, by area and material. Contact with the supervisors of the excavation and

further visits ensured that I had at all times an overall picture. I could thus make arrangements in advance for the examination of material by specialists, and I was able to discuss problems with them more competently.

In that way the excavators were relieved of this responsibility and were able to devote themselves to the rescue excavation. The material gradually reached the Laboratory for preliminary examination, division into groups and ultimate farming out; or under favorable conditions it went direct to the specialist. Where necessary, experts visited the site and took their own samples.

Presented in this way, the whole matter might seem cut and dried; but fascinating though it is, it is also extremely difficult. First there is the great variety and amount of material: out of the well alone came over 1,000 bones (including, apparently, the complete skeletons of nine cows), 2,000 pieces of wood and over 3,000 fragments of stone. Secondly, willing specialists have to be found.

But above all there is the explaining that has to be done with about half the material: such questions as the exact position of a series of soil samples and their relation to one another and to another similar group. The precise nature of the problem and its relative significance must be established. All this has to be compacted and translated into specialist terms, discussed, and rechecked for detail until at last the problem re-emerges in numerical terms. It is difficult to believe how simple words like "silt" or even "hard" and "fine" can impede progress. After

that, the actual analysis is often comparatively easy; but the results raise fresh problems, and more discussion is necessary before a tentative interpretation is put forward.

At nearly every step scientific examination can help—or will be able to, if it is encouraged to develop in this direction—if only by confirming or suggesting. The potential here is very considerable and it has hardly been tapped. The reasons are various: among them lack of specialist labour and time and not, in my experience, interest; but mainly the absence of a fair appreciation of it—either of what can be done by scientists, or of what is wanted by archaeologists.

Finally—does not scientific potential mean, in its most direct sense here, the possible value to pure science of archaeological evidence? This side of the potential has hardly been realized.

Of the newer aspects I would commend to your attention the palaeomagnetic measurement of structures fired *in situ* above 500° and the examination of the sub-microscopic structure of wood. Both are, potentially, independent dating methods. I would also plead for a greater interest in the study of organic complexes such as are found in water-logged ditches, wells and rubbish pits.

These three lines of research are of tremendous interest to pure science. I suggest that if this were borne in mind, the scientific potential could not only be more easily harnessed but also considerably increased. In that way we might get, to carry on Professor Richmond's metaphor, less of the shadow and (I mean this literally) more of the substance.

SUMMING UP

Speaker: DR. P HILIP CORDER

I NOTE the extraordinary number of people here today who are active in the field. That we should have been able to collect so many of them together to discuss the problem of Roman villas marks the importance of the subject. There exists no reliable *vade-mecum* for the villas of Britain: the literature is scattered over numerous and often obscure periodicals. Thus there is no guidance for the field worker.

I have remembered today my first committee at the Antiquaries some 25 years ago—the First Research Committee of the Congress of Archaeological Societies. It produced a report which impressed me very much. Much of it is pertinent to our problems today:

“The villa is the real centre of gravity of Romano-British civilization, and we cannot be said even to have begun the scientific study of that civilization until we begin the scientific study of villas, concentrating on their functions as documents for social and economic history.”

I wonder if we really have advanced so much since that was written in 1931. We can perhaps say that we are able to correct certain ideas current 25 years ago. Professor Richmond has made it clear that we must abandon once for all the word “evolution” from our vocabulary in describing Roman villa house types, for there is no evidence of evolutionary development, the growth of one type from another in time or structure in Collingwood’s valuable series of plans; aisled “barns”, corridor and courtyard houses are now known to be contemporary and to have been used for different purposes. Mr. Bowen has told us that we can no longer equate one particular plough type with one particular type of field. We must give up the idea that one particular field system goes with the Roman farm and another with the pre-Roman isolated farm or family settlement. Indeed since Little Woodbury we have dropped the old facile distinction between villa and village, since we can now recognize these also as farms.

As it becomes less easy to generalize in the old way, so our problems are becoming more acute. What can we set against this? We now have certain “tools” that hardly existed 25 years ago.

The development of air photography is a notable example. Anyone studying field systems and Mr. Bowen’s remarkable work in Dorset, will realize this. But air photography is no substitute for ground survey, as we shall see when we can compare his ground survey of Hod Hill with the old air photographs.

We owe a special debt to the Ordnance Survey for its maps of Roman Britain, past and future. The enormous amount of careful research which has been given to the new map will lead to the emergence of new patterns and new classifications.

There is no need for me to dwell on scientific techniques, for they were fully discussed at a recent Conference. I would like, however, to deprecate the fashion of the incompetent excavator of sending everything in test-tubes to someone else. Proper scientific examination of crucial material is, of course, invaluable, but no competent archaeologist will lightly send anything away for analysis without knowing its exact context and precisely what he wishes to gain from its examination.

It would be possible to make a short list of four or five villa excavations in the last 25 years that have really added substantially to our knowledge, and answered some of the questions asked so pertinently (by Collingwood) 25 years ago. Most, however, have been so partial that they have resulted in nothing more than another dot on the O.S. map: although that is valuable in itself the process has gone far enough.

Another advance in knowledge is evident from the paper read by Dr. David Smith on the dating of mosaic pavements. It is clear that much re-excavation of old sites and of museum collections remains to be done.

In the difficult period about which Dr. Myres spoke, we tend to rely on the numismatists and they on us. As the problems of the late fourth-century coinage are studied alongside excavation we are getting a little more light on the dating of barbarous copies and minims.

Mr. Rivet has stressed the importance of pottery. It is certain that, although we are only now beginning to lay the foundations of the scientific study of Romano-British coarse pottery, it is a vast field certain to remain the main source for

dating humbler houses. A good deal has been done in regional studies of pottery to make the job of the future excavator a deal easier than it was 25 years ago.

There has been in the papers read to us a note of urgency, and this needs stressing again. Deep ploughing is obliterating evidence for ever. The study of field systems in connection with Roman buildings, for example, must be done soon if it is to be done at all.

Speakers have again and again pointed out to us regional studies that can profitably be undertaken in these days when excavation is so expensive as to be out of reach of individuals or local societies. Many of these studies, such as the relationship of villas to towns and other like suggestions made by Mr. Rivet, are suitable to local research groups. The listing of field types, suggested by Mr. Bowen, and the survival of earlier forms of agriculture could possibly be done by schoolchildren. There is a great deal of work in the field for those who are keen and can acquire suitable technique.

Excavation of a different kind is necessary—in museums and libraries, and the re-examination of old excavation reports and material, sometimes undocketed, which has silted up in museums. This needs reassessment in the light of present knowledge. Work such as that so triumphantly done by Professor Hawkes and Professor Piggott on Pitt-Rivers' material is an illustration of what can be done.

What of excavation? We can go on digging up a couple of rooms of a villa, and adding another dot or triangle (usually an open one) to the O.S. map, but it is of little value—at least in the Lowland Zone. What is really needed is the careful selection of certain type sites and their complete excavation, not dwelling-houses only, but all out-buildings, for cow-sheds are more important than corridors and bath-houses, and pigsties than pavements, unless these are to be dated.

Thus in future we have several clear objectives. Mapping of field systems, the topography of villas, research in museums—and a nationally-organized excavation of a few type sites.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

THE DISTRIBUTION OF ROMAN VILLAS IN BRITAIN

- ¹ The Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain, 3rd edn.
- ² P.P.S., n.s. 6 (1940), 30 ff., *Arch. Journ.*, 104 (1947), 27 ff.
- ³ *Soc. of Ants. Res. Comm. Rep.* 9 (1932): the slide was taken from Richmond: *Roman Britain* (Pelican, 1955), p. 140.
- ⁴ *Arch.*, 35 (1853), 383 ff.
- ⁵ *Oxonienia* 4 (1939), 1 ff.
- ⁶ *Tr. Bristol & Glos. Arch. Soc.*, 47 (1925), 350 & 67 (1948), 415. It was called a "farm" by the first excavator and peculiarities of the masonry were noted in *J. R. S.*, 12, 261. Mr. Moray-Williams has now located a Roman building nearby.
- ⁷ At Wiston, *V.C.H. Sussex*, 3 (1935), 67: the plan in the excavation report (*Sussex Arch. Colls.*, 2 (1849), 313) is of a normal tile-kiln.
- ⁸ In a note written in 1914 attached to Heywood Sumner's *Excavations at East Grimstead* (1924)—"We must wait for some piece of lucky or careful excavation which will provide decisive evidence."
- ⁹ For example in Kent, Boughton Monchelsea and Little Chart; in Surrey, Beddington, Pendell and Chatley Farm; in Sussex, Duncton, Clayton and Highdown.
- ¹⁰ *Sussex Arch. Colls.*, 80 (1939), 63 ff.; infm. from Dr. A. E. Wilson.
- ¹¹ *P. Somerset Arch. & Nat. H. Soc.*, 96 (1952), 41 ff.
- ¹² *Arch. Journ.*, 104, 50 ff.
- ¹³ Unpublished. Brief account in *Cambridge City* (R. C. H. M., forthcoming).
- ¹⁴ *Arch. Journ.*, 104, 36 ff.
- ¹⁵ Mainly in the highland zone, including Cornwall.
- ¹⁶ The groups were produced by drawing circles round the main centres and chords where they intersected; they are therefore arbitrary and several alternative arrangements are possible. This does not affect the validity of the limited deductions made here, but there is a certain amount of forcing in places and each case must be considered on its merits. In addition to the easily recognizable centres, the following "assumed centres" have been used: *Moridunum* (near Honiton), *Vindomis* (near Andover), Maidenhead (where the Silchester-St. Albans road may have crossed the Thames), Farnham (a pottery centre) and Hassocks (where the size of the cemetery suggests a considerable settlement). (*The second diagram is not reproduced in this report.*)
- ¹⁷ *P. Somerset Arch. & Nat. H. Soc.*, 96 (1952), 188 ff.
- ¹⁸ Tyrley and Engleton, Staffs, Cruckton, Lea, Acton Scott, Yarchester, Rushbury and Stanton Lacy, Salop, Linley (Salop) might make a ninth, but seems to be a communal settlement rather than a villa.
- ¹⁹ *Ant. Journ.*, 18 (1938), 339 ff.
- ²⁰ *Arch. Journ.*, 102 (1945), 21 ff.
- ²¹ *Recs. of Bucks.*, 31 (1934-40), 398 ff.
- ²² *J.R.S.*, 28 (1948), 183.
- ²³ *Trans. Birmingham Arch. Soc.*, 63 (1944), 1 ff.
- ²⁴ *Trans. Leics. Arch. Soc.*, 18 (1935), 163 ff.
- ²⁵ *Ant. Journ.*, 17 (1937), 138 ff.
- ²⁶ *C.I.L.*, 7, 62.
- ²⁷ Maps of Great Britain (1/625,000, South Sheet) (a) Types of Farming, (b) Land Utilisation (both 1944).
- ²⁸ Richmond, *op. cit.*, 163.
- ²⁹ Pliny: *Nat. H.*, 15, 30. West: Roman Britain—the Objects of Trade (1931), 17 (with refs. for other fruits).
- ³⁰ *Esperandieu* v. 4044. For this series see also Mariën: *Les Monuments Funéraires de l'Arion Romain* (*Ann. de l'Institut Arch. du Luxembourg.*, 76, 1945), p. 75 and (poor) fig. 27. The slide was taken from Cumont: *Comment la Belgique fut Romanisée* (1914), fig. 37.
- ³¹ Ashted, *Surrey Arch. Colls.*, 37 (1927), 144 ff.; 38. (1929), 1 ff. and 132 ff.; Farnham *J.R.S.*, 37 (1947), 175; 38 (1948), 94 ff.

- ² P.S.A. *Lond.* (2nd S.) 23 (1909-1911), 121 ff.; for pottery moulds, *J.R.S.* 42 (1952), 68 ff.
- ³ For example at Clipsham, *J.R.S.*, 30 (1940), 169 and unpublished.
- ⁴ *Journ. R.I. Cornwall*, 24, App. III, *Antiquity* 5 (1931), 494.
- ⁵ For a probable quarry, Swindon, Grinsell: *The Swindon Area in Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon Times* (1951), 16.
- ⁶ Cf. also the reference to British carpets, A.N.L., 5 (1955), 251.
- ⁷ *Arch.*, 59 (1905), 210 ff.
- ⁸ *Arch. Journ.*, 104, 27 ff.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Frampton, Lysons: *Reliquiae Brit. Rom.* I (1818), Pt. iii; Witchampton, *P. Dorset Nat. H. & Arch. Soc.*, 30 (1909), 1 ff. Both were large and luxurious and flourished in the fourth century.
- ¹¹ *J.R.S.*, 12 (1922), 270. A/P No. 1044 in Crawford Collection (O.S.). Crawford & Keiller: *Wessex from the Air* (1928), 29 (No. 216).
- ¹² *J.R.S.*, 15 (1925), 243, 34 (1944), 83.
- ¹³ *Arch.*, 56 (1898), 1 ff., *V.C.H. Hants*, I (1900), 296; Richmond, *op. cit.*, 113.
- ¹⁴ *E.E.*, 9, 984.
- ¹⁵ *Arch.*, 22 (1829), 49 ff.; *Arch. Inst. Salisbury Vol.* (1851), 241 ff. Pavement in B.M.
- ¹⁶ *P. Hants, F.C. & Arch. Soc.*, 18 (1953), 119 ff. The value of Dr. Applebaum's conclusions regarding population is reduced by the paucity of excavated sites in the area. On the available evidence we cannot call either of his "large villas" more than "other substantial buildings" and the site at the Wheatsheaf, both from its finds and its position (midway between Winchester and Silchester, on the borders of the Belgae and the Atrebatas) is as likely to be that of a temple or a road station as of a villa. This sort of difficulty is likely to occur all over the country, but merely emphasises the need to obtain all we can from what we have.

THE PROBLEM OF ROMAN VILLA FIELDS

- ¹ Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain* (2nd edn.), p. 210.
- ² For plan see G. Hatt, *Oldtidsagre.*, Planche 1.
- ³ Cf. footnote 11.
- ⁴ For example: W. Stevenson *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset* (1812), especially pp. 185 and 342-3.
- ⁵ For a typical example see *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 101, pt. 1, Pl. II.
- ⁶ Crawford and Keiller, *Wessex from the Air*, p. 128.
- ⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, Pl. XXI.
- ⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, Pl. XLIX.
- ⁹ Excavations on *Rockbourne Down, Hants*, 1914 Plan opposite p. 15.
- ¹⁰ *Res rustica*, I (Loeb edn.), 135.
- ¹¹ Cf. H.P.R. Finberg in *Devonshire Studies*, p. 284.

BUILDINGS AND CONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

- ¹ Locklevs: *Antiq. Journ.*, 18 (1938), 339-76.
- ² Park Street; *Arch. Journ.*, 102 (1945), 21-110.
- ³ Langton; P. Corder and J. L. Kirk, *A Roman Villa at Langton, near Malton, East Yorkshire*.
- ⁴ Iwerne; *Arch. Journ.*, 104 (1948).
- ⁵ Ditchley; *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936), 24-69.
- ⁶ Ely (near Cardiff); *J.R.S.*, 11 (1921), 67-85.

- ⁷ Hambleden; *Archaeologia*, 71 (1921), 140-198.
- ⁸ Brading; *V.C.H. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, 1, 313-16.
- ⁹ Little Milton; *J.R.S.*, 11 (1950), pl. VI, 2.
- ¹⁰ Llantwit Major; *Arch. Cambrensis*, 102 (1953), 89-163.
- ¹¹ Clanville; *V.C.H., Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, 1, 295-7.
- ¹² Chedworth; *Archaeologia*, 59 (1905), 210-14.
- ¹³ Northleigh; *V.C.H., Oxfordshire*, 1, 316-18; *J.R.S.*, 34 (1944), 81.
- ¹⁴ Woodchester: S. Lysons, *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae*, 2 (1813), pt. I.

FURNITURE, FURNISHINGS AND FITTINGS

- ¹ *Arch. Cantiana*, 68 (1954), 1 ff.
- ² *Archaeologia*, 26 (1836), 300.
- ³ G. Macdonald, *Roman Wall in Scotland* (1934), Pl. XXXVI, b.
- ⁴ G. Home, *Roman York* (1924), opp. p. 48.
- ⁵ *Antiquity*, 24 (1950), 25 ff. Mrs. M. A. Cotton informed the conference that a broken table leg carved from Kimmeridge shale had just been found at Bluehouse Hill, Verulamium. This table-leg was very similar in type to the one from Colliton park, Dorchester. (A photograph of the table-leg is published in *A.N.L.*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 9.) The author is greatly indebted to Prof. Maiuri for information about this table.
- ⁶ *Archaeologia*, 52 (1890), 654.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* 40 (1866), 411.
- ⁸ Barker, *Brislington* (1901), 15.
- ⁹ For textiles cf. P.P.S., n.s., 16 (1950), 136, 139.
- ¹⁰ *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936), 43.
- ¹¹ *J.R.S.*, 15 (1935), 243.
- ¹² *Builder* (Oct. 1887), 554.
- ¹³ *Bristol and Gloucester Trans.*, 27, 161.
- ¹⁴ *Arch. Cantiana* (14, 91882), 135 ff.
- ¹⁵ *Sussex Arch. Colls.*, 79 (1938), 15 ff.
- ¹⁶ *Journal Brit. Arch. Ass.*, 4 (1849), 361.
- ¹⁷ *Cambridge Antiq. Soc. Proc.*, 44 (1951), 14.
- ¹⁸ S. Lysons, *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae*, 2 (1813), Pl. I.
- ¹⁹ R. Hinks, *Cat. of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Paintings in the British Museum* (1933), fig. 64. (N.B.: The upper piece showing part of a figure is published upside down).
- ²⁰ *A.N.L.*, 2, No. 10 (March, 1950), 165; *Arch. Cantiana*, 63 (1951), 47.
- ²¹ *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, 33 (1904), 264.
- ²² S. Lysons, *op. cit.*, 3, Pl. XXXII.
- ²³ Artis, *Durobrivae* (1828), Pl. XXXII.
- ²⁴ C. R. Smith, *Illustrations of Roman London* (1859), Pl. XIII.

SCIENTIFIC POTENTIAL

- ¹ See *C.B.A. Annual Report No. 4 for 1954*, p. 20-2; C.B.M. McBurney, "Science and the Archaeologist", *A.N.L.*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1954), p. 53; L. Biek, "Archaeology in the Laboratory", *Nature* 174 (20.11.54), p. 956.
- ² *A.N.L.*, Vol. 5, No. 7, p. 19.
- ³ In this I was much helped by quantitative lists and tables prepared by the supervisors for the individual areas of the Chew park site, in particular the well, and also for the adjoining six sites.
- ⁴ The examination of these bones is in progress.