It is now nearly half a century since the first detailed account of Kent during the Roman period, begun by Haverfield and revised and completed by Mortimer Wheeler, was published in the *Victoria County History (VCH* Kent, 3, 1932). Dr Frank Jenkins' survey of Roman Kent has since provided a summary of the many archaeological discoveries made during the following years (Jenkins 1966). While, inevitably, any coherent account of Romano-British Kent is bound to cover a certain amount of the same ground, it has been my main intention, in this paper, to review the additional knowledge which has come from subsequently published excavations and research, as well as to highlight those aspects of the archaeology of this part of Britain which are distinctive features within the context of the Roman province as a whole.

When, in AD 43, the forces of the emperor Claudius sailed to invade Britain, one advantage which their leader, Aulus Plautius, had over Julius Caesar a century before was evidently a much better informed intelligence about suitable landing places on the Kent coast. At the safe anchorage of Richborough, Claudian defensive ditches beneath the granaries of a stores base which is probably also of Claudian date (Cunliffe 1968, 4, 6) almost certainly provide archaeological testimony of the invasion. It is not absolutely necessary to infer from Cassius Dio's account of a landing in three divisions that these were at separate places, rather than in successive stages at the same place, and there is no clear archaeological indication that such a strategically hazardous division of forces was made. A pair of ditches with mid 1st century pottery at Reculver, identified as those of a small Claudian fort *(Britannia,* 1 (1970), 304), seems to indicate a measure to protect the Wantsum channel and the Stour shortly after the conquest. The roads from Dover and Lympne to Canterbury are not demonstrably as early as the date of the conquest, and were presumably laid down when naval bases were later established at the coastal sites.

Further inland, there is equally little trace of the passage of Plautius' army. Patrick Thornhill (1976) has recently suggested that it crossed the Medway at Chatham and forded the Thames between Higham and East Tilbury. Dio referred to the general's placing of a detachment of troops, implying a fort, shortly before his advance to the Medway. Fiere conjectured (1974, 80) that it might have been near Harbledown, to guard the crossing of the Stour, and that another fort might be expected by the Medway near Rochester. Two lengths of V-profiled ditch have now been found on the Castle site at Canterbury, associated with a metalled road, and might represent one such fort. They were filled in quickly in the 60s with rampart material, a dead horse, and remains of human skeletons with sword cuts: a violent incident about the time of Boudica's rebellion may be suspected (Tatton-Brown 1977, 213-15). The hoard of 34 gold coins found at Bredgar, representing the equivalent of about three months' pay for a centurion, could have been deposited as the army advanced: the latest coins are issues of AD 41. Finds of military metalwork are, however, rare. In contrast, therefore, with the chain of forts built in the wake of Vespasian's legion in Dorset, and along the Fosse Way frontier zone, there is little evidence that the inhabitants of Cantium were thought to need such repressive supervision.

Consequently, one might expect the area to have been one of the first to have been constituted a self-administering *civitas* based on the pre-existing tribal structure. Precisely how this was arranged presents a minor problem, since Caesar, while describing Cantium as a geographical entity, refers to it as being ruled by four kings whom he names, implying as many tribal units, though he does not say so specifically. At all events, it is as *Duroaverno Cantiacorum* that Canterbury is named in the Ravenna Cosmography, and may thus be identified as *Durovernum,* the chief town of the *civitas.*

Although its choice as such follows from its having been an important pre-Roman centre, it had not been the only one in Kent; but its position as a meeting point of road and, with the Stour, river communications presumably determined the preference it acquired over Rochester, for example, which, with its evidence for the minting of Iron Age coinage, is also accepted as having been an important settlement, one which also developed into a Roman township. Otherwise, the pattern of major Roman settlements is not evidently conditioned by the presence of previous centres of population, but either by that of military stations and harbours along the coast or, as in the case of Ospringe and Springhead, by the course of Watling Street.

Roman Canterbury

The planning of a Romano-British town involved, initially, the laying out of its grid of streets and, if it was to serve as the administrative centre of a community, the building of its forum and basilica. The provision of other buildings-baths, temples, theatres, amphitheatres-though commonly associated with towns of that administrative status, are also indices of the extent to which its inhabitants embraced the ethos of Mediterranean urban culture. If, as has been argued, Canterbury was constituted a *civitas* capital in the mid 1st century, contemporary with the foundation of the *colonia* of legionary veterans at Colchester and of Verulamium (Wacher 1975, 179-80), a generation elapsed before work began on public buildings appropriate to its status, as was also the case at Verulamium. The earliest Roman buildings are timber-framed houses with walls of clay or wattle-and-daub, and earth floors. The theatre and the baths in St Margaret's Street both belong in their initial stages to the later Flavian period, the last two decades of the 1st century, and recent excavations have shown that the side street next to the baths is Flavian or later in date (Blockley & Day 1979).

The alignment of these buildings, at an angle to what had been plotted as the Roman street grid in this area of the town, was supposed to have been related to an original street layout, subsequently realigned (cf Frere 1965, 10; 1970, fig 1). Excavations by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust on sites adjoining Castle Street and St Margaret's Street have shown that in fact the alignment of streets and buildings there was the same throughout the Roman period (Fig 23); earlier conjectural restorations of the street plan must now be revised (Tatton-Brown 1976, 238). These excavations have increased the known area of what are generally accepted as the public baths, the area explored being their south-east end, and revealed part of the stone-lined drain which flanked the side street to their south-west, on the opposite side of which were timber buildings. The baths themselves underwent substantial alterations towards the end of the 2nd century, somewhat before the theatre was rebuilt.

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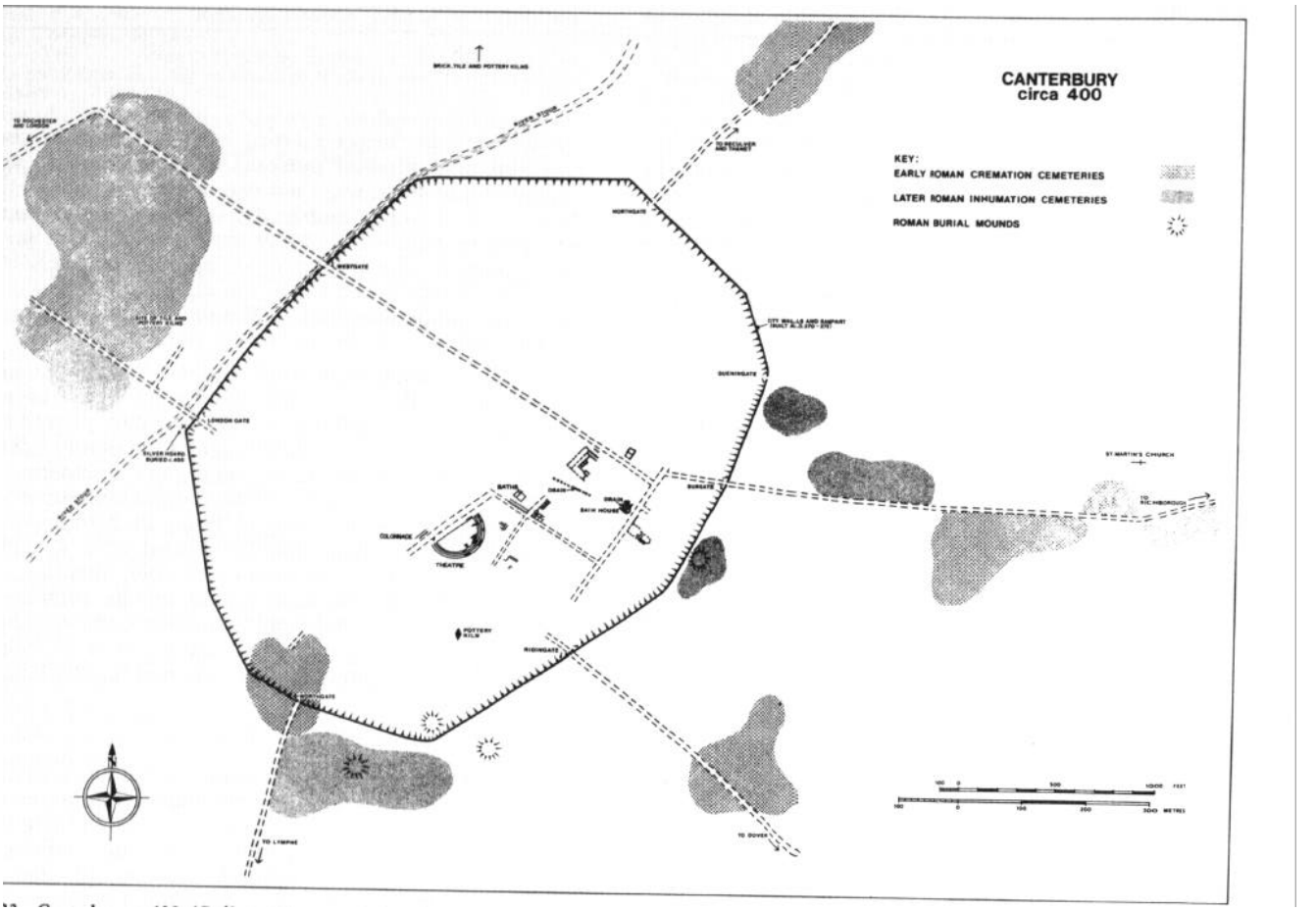

Fig 23 Canterbury, c 400 AD (from the Canterbury Archaeological Trust's series)

The Flavian theatre at Canterbury had its seating supported on a gravel bank which was retained by a perimeter wall 1.2 m thick, and reinforced internally with radial walls. Although the remains of this earlier structure are very fragmentary, and consequently difficult to restore with certainty, it seems that the curvature of the orchestra is not concentric with that of the perimeter wall, and was probably elliptical (Frere 1970, 85; Wacher 1975, 181). Although theatres of this form are known from Gaul an alternative possibility is that the original building was' an amphitheatre.

The new and considerably enlarged construction of the early 3rd century followed the conventional semicircular plan of the classical Roman theatre. It was enclosed by two concentric walls with an ambulatory 2.7 m wide between them, giving an estimated overall diameter of 71 m. The structure of the earlier theatre appears to have provided partial support for the seating, supplemented by additional radial walls. No evidence was found for a vaulted substructure, though presumably the ambulatory was roofed in that way, nor with certainty for stairways giving access to the seating, though two of the radial walls have been interpreted as supports for one (Wacher 1975, 184). Remains of structures on the north-west side of St Margaret's Street have so far been too fragmentary to tell us much about the form of any stage building.

In Gaul, the association between theatres and temples is commonplace, particularly in the rural sanctuaries of native cults. In Britain, the theatre at the Gosbecks temple site and the juxtaposition of that at Verulamium to the maid temple of the town, conform with this pattern. Both temples are Romano-Celtic in plan. It thus seems likely that, in the Celtic provinces, the theatre did not merely provide dramatic entertainment, but was used for mass gatherings on the occasion of religious festivals. Thus, its specific purpose was more intimately connected with indigenous traditions, though expressed in Roman architectural form; a distinctive feature, that is, of provincial Roman culture.

In the light of these general statements one may attempt to elucidate the nature of the site on the opposite side of the street to the north-west of the theatre. Excavations since 1976 of various sites in the block delimited by Castle Street, Beer Cart Lane, and Stour Street (Fig 24) have produced evidence for a gravelled precinct of considerable extent resurfaced on six occasions between the late 1st and the 3rd centuries (Bennett 1978b). This was divided from the street in front of the theatre by a wall of masonry 0.80 m thick, within which was the stylobate wall and drain of a colonnade c 3 m wide. The precinct appears to have been laid out late in the 1st century, at about the same time as the baths and the first theatre were constructed. It appears to have been in disrepair and the colonnade to have been partially robbed in the 4th century or shortly afterwards. Among the debris have been found over 1000 pieces of marble mouldings and veneers, Corinthian column capitals and a fluted column shaft 700 mm in diameter. It seems reasonable to assume that they came from a building contained within the precinct, rather than, say, that they

somehow found their way there from the theatre, much of which seems to have stood until the 11th century. The fluted column is too large to have stood on the stylobate of the colonnade.

It is unlikely that this was the forum, which would normally have been surrounded by a range of rooms with internal and also external colonnades. The precinct of a temple is the alternative most likely on architectural grounds. In Britain, fluted columns seem to have been reserved for external use, and Corinthian capitals were not used on temples of Romano-Celtic plan. Both these factors would favour a temple of classical form, though possibly, as in the temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, housing a deity of Celtic origin. The size both of the precinct and, to judge from the column, of the building, and the sumptuous decoration with imported marble, combine with the theatre to bear witness to Canterbury's architectural distinction in that period. No remains of the building's foundations have been discovered in the area so far available for excavation, though what appears to have been part of a fountain basin lined with *opus signinum,* suggestively placed in line with the central axis of the theatre, was found on the site of 3 Beer Cart Lane in 1979 (Bennett 1979).

These discoveries, however, have not simplified the problem of where the forum of the town stood. This has been thought to have been south-west of the present High Street (Frere 1965, 11). The evidence includes an area of rammed gravel recorded below the cellars of the County Hotel in 1954-5, extending under Stour Street; walls and a wide range of imported marble veneers found in excavation of the yard of the then Fleur de Lys Hotel in 1955; and earlier records of columns and cornice fragments found in the High Street opposite the hotel in 1861. If these were all from the same precinct as that attributed to the temple, it would have been exceptionally large. It is conceivable that Canterbury might have possessed a forum which contained a temple at the opposite end from the basilica (albeit not continuously surrounded by shops), the traditional arrangement in central Italy, though one which would be unique in Britain.

Alternatively, it may be that temple precinct and forum stood in adjoining insulae. A further possibility, which can be canvassed in the light of Dr Urry's note on a supposed circular temple in Canterbury, perhaps more plausibly to be interpreted as the laconicum of a bath building (Urry 1978, n 1), is that the baths, of which the south end has been excavated on St Margaret's Street? extended westwards to the findspots just mentioned. This interpretation, suggested to me by Tim Tatton-Brown, would have the advantage of accounting for the stokehole of a hypocaust noted near the Fleur-de-Lys which has been something of an embarrassment to the forum hypothesis. The rammed gravel would be explicable as the surfacing of a palaestra, and the lavish architectural decoration would not be out of place. Acceptance of this interpretation involves, of course, the sacrifice of all hints about where the forum actually was.

It is perhaps not surprising that it should have taken some years after the laying out of the street grid to accumulate the necessary funds for the considerable investment represented by these late 1st century buildings. This can be seen as part of a wider programme of urban development, being contemporary with that of such towns as Verulamium, Silchester, and Cirencester. Although Tacitus described the governor Agricola in AD 79 as encouraging

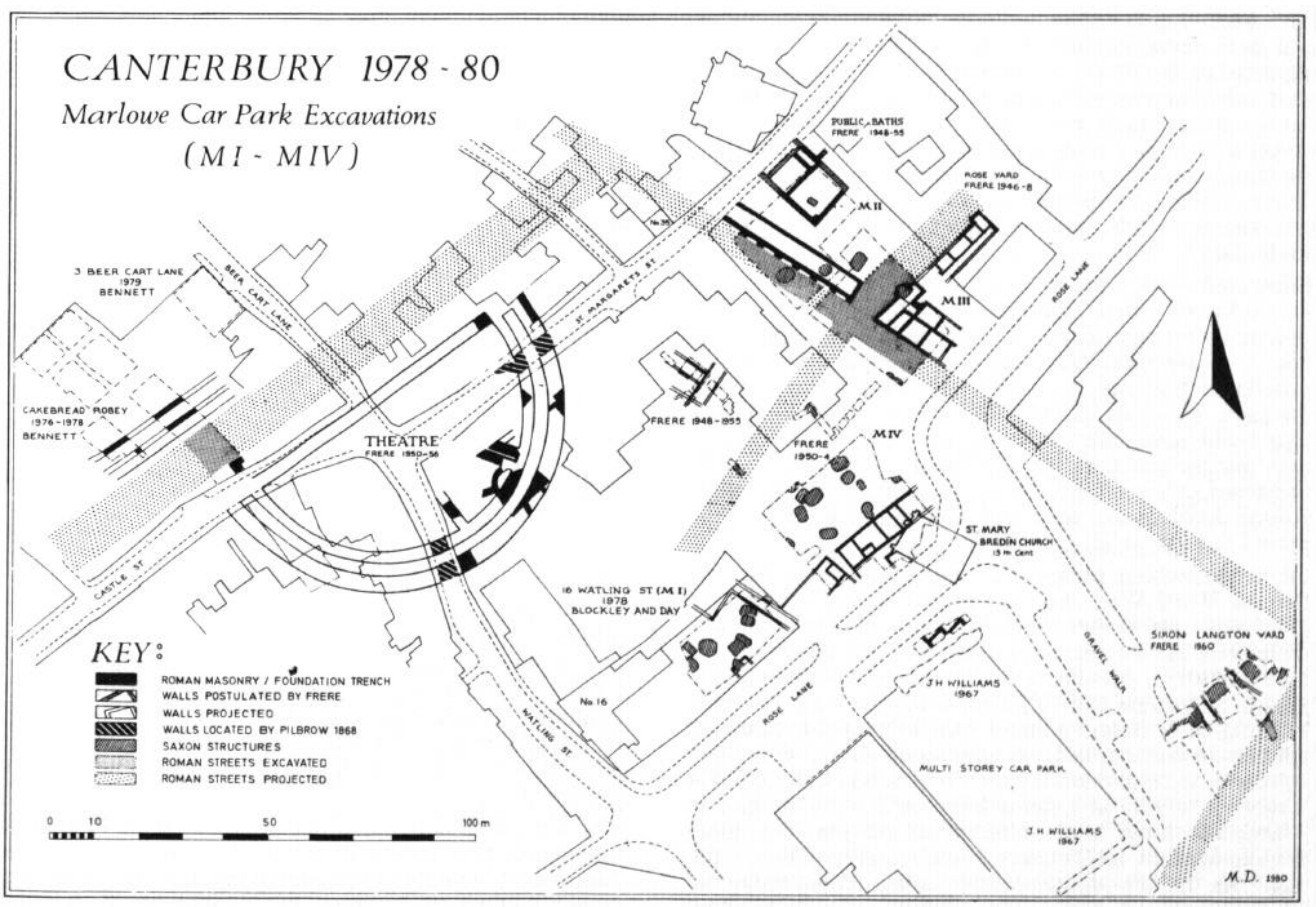

Fig 24 The central area of Roman Canterbury (drawn by Marion Blockley for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust)

individuals and assisting communities to build temples, forums, and houses, there can be little doubt that the *noblesse oblige* of civic benefaction in the Mediterranean tradition made its principal demands on the Romano-British propertied class.

Official contacts may have secured the services of stonemasons from the continent. It was at this time that their techniques became firmly established in lowland Britain, attested for example by the introduction of a north-east Gaulish type of Corinthian capital which became standard, and of which that from Canterbury mentioned above is among the earlier examples (Blagg 1980, 31). Another possible source of expertise, particularly for the carving of marble mouldings and veneers in Canterbury's buildings, was what was almost certainly an imperial building project, the building of the Quadrifrons Arch at Richborough between 80 and 90 AD, shortly after the death of the emperor Vespasian, who had himself commanded one of the legions in the invasion force. It may be seen as commemorating *Britannia perdomita,* the culmination under Agricola's governorship of the conquest initiated at Richborough, as well as a symbolic gateway to the province. Its cladding with marble pilasters and veneers would have required the skills of craftsmen from southern Gaul or Italy who were accustomed to working that material (Strong 1968, 72-3).

On the north-west side of Canterbury, the street grid extends beyond the line taken by the late 3rd century town walls. The defences therefore might represent a contraction in the area of the town on that side, though it is not clear to what extent the laying out of the streets had resulted in occupation of any density in that quarter. The evidence so far is no more than a crossroads with Watling Street and 2nd and 3rd century pottery kilns, which one would have expected to lie outside the residential area. On the south-west side, however, the area of settlement does seem to have spread, since excavations within the walls have revealed a pottery kiln in the garden of the Municipal Buildings near Dane John and cremation burials near the Castle, both of which would normally have been sited outside *the* town *(Archaeol Cantiana,* **51** (1939), 210-11; *VCH Kent* **3,** 70-1).

Compared with some Romano-British towns, relatively little is known in detail about private housing in Canterbury. We do not yet have the complete plan of a single major town house, though numerous remains of walls and mosaic and tessellated floors have been recovered, notably during town drainage operations in the 1860s. Intensive medieval and later building has taken its destructive toll, though one may note that the greater depth of sediments on the west side of the town, adjoining the Stour, and the waterlogging of Roman levels there, may well conceal much better preserved remains, as yet little explored.

Of what has been excavated, for the most part since the Second World War, the most extensive is the house on Butchery Lane, where the earliest masonry structure was built in the late 1st century, and early in the 2nd a wing was added in which, possibly in the 3rd century, tessellated and mosaic floors were laid (Williams & Frere 1948). The bath building on St George's Street was probably that of a substantial town house, and was extensively altered in the mid 4th century. Excavations by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust in 1979-80 of a house between Rose Lane and St Margaret's Street have added considerably to the information obtained in Professor Frere's earlier work on the site. As in the contemporary urban foundations of Verulamium and, given the inadequate archaeological dating for its houses, Silchester, priority was given to public building. Funds were not available for private houses of any quality much before the beginning of the 2nd century. Thereafter, the richer inhabitants of Canterbury seem to have enjoyed prosperous surroundings for the rest of the Roman period. Their urbanity should be recalled when we come to consider the evidence for rural settlement in east Kent.

In the late 2nd century, most Roman towns in Britain were provided with defences in the form of an earth bank and ditch. It seems that Canterbury avoided this necessity and its expense unless one assumes that it had such defences on a different alignment from that subsequently adopted; its fortification, a coursed flint wall 2.3 m thick, without the tile bonding courses typical of such contemporary defensive works as Richborough, but backed by an earth rampart, was not undertaken until AD 270-90. This enclosure of about 50 ha has since served as the basis of the medieval city walls, but rebuilding and refacing has obscured almost all the Roman work; part of the jambs and brick arch of a Roman gateway survive near the Queningate. Of its companions, excavations have revealed the guard-chambers of the south-east (Riding) Gate *(Britannia,* **3** (1972), 351), and the single portal 2.4 m wide of the London Gate which provided a curiously unimpressive passage for Watling Street towards the provincial capital. The Worth Gate, which gave access to Lympne, now destroyed but illustrated in the 18th century *(VCH* Kent **3,** pl xi), also had a single portal, possibly recessed from the face of the wall (Jenkins 1968).

Other towns and ports

At Rochester *(Durobrivae)* an earth rampart and ditch have been sectioned on the south and east sides of the town, and shown to have been constructed not earlier than AD 150-70. A flint wall was added to the front of this some time after 17-90, and perhaps appreciably later in the 3rd century (Harrison & Flight 1968, 75-6). These defences, which enclosed an area of 23½ acres (9.5 ha), form the basis for the Norman circuit, though partially removed on the west side by the construction of the castle. Relatively little is known about the Roman town apart from its defences, but a notable recent addition has been provided by excavations outside the east wall of the castle in 1976 (Flight & Harrison 1978, 34). A coursed flint wall 0.6 m wide continuing for at least 16 m formed a T-junction with a second wall which had the slot for a wooden cill running down the middle of it. Nearly 400 identifiable coins from the associated humus-rich occupation layer show continuous activity from the late 3rd until the end of the 4th century at least. The high rate of loss of predominantly small denominations suggests proximity to a market area. Earlier features included six small ovens or kilns, possibly domestic.

Fairly extensive areas of settlement are indicated by the plotting of building remains, burials, and other scattered finds at Maidstone and Crayford (Webster 1975, 59, figs 7, 8), though no evidence for any defences there has yet been recorded. Whether the former site should, however, be interpreted as a *vicus* is uncertain. The latter may be identified as the *Noviomagus* of the Antonine Itinerary and the Peutinger Table, following Rivet's explanations for the minor discrepancies between actual and recorded intermediate distances along those routes and others (Rivet 1970, 44).

The identification of Springhead (Fig 25) with *Vagniacae,* mentioned only in the Antonine Itinerary, depends on admission of a scribal error adding ten miles to its distance from Crayford *(ibid).* Here, excavations by W S Penn, continued after his death under the direction of Syd

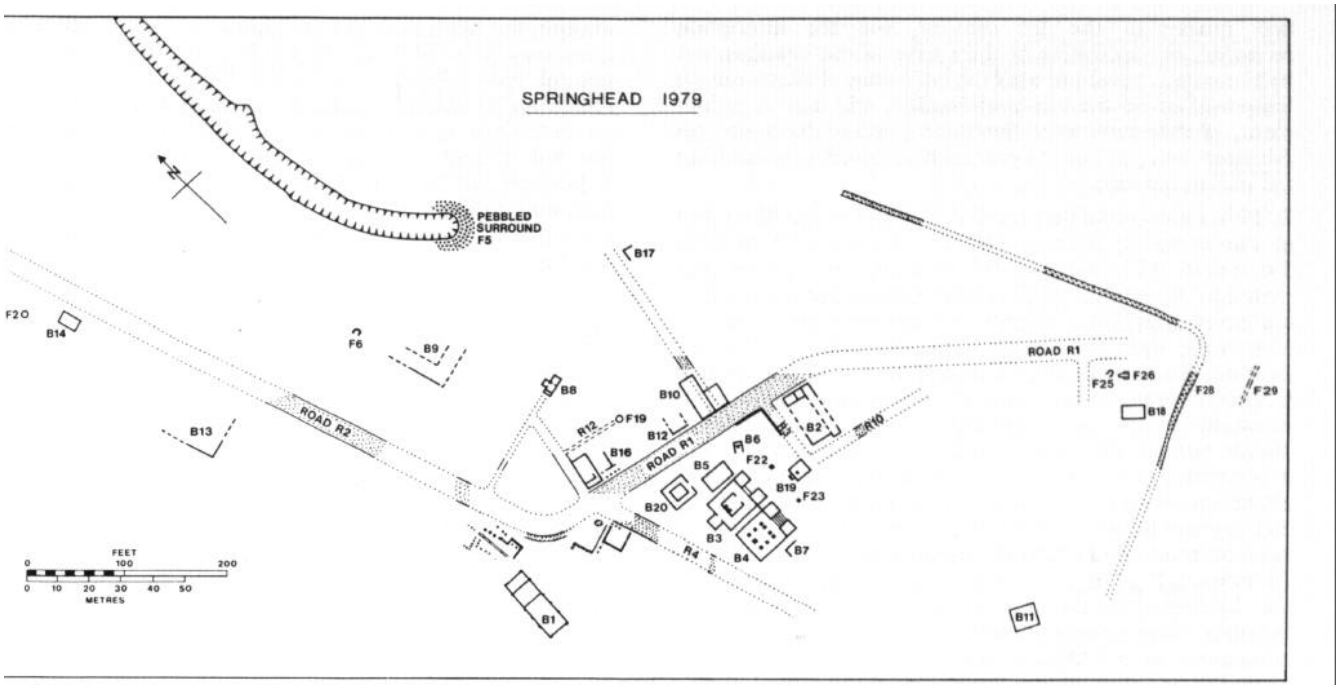

Fig 25 The Roman settlement at Springhead: revised plan, 1979 (drawn by S R Harker)

Harker, have revealed an important temple complex. The richly-furnished walled cemetery nearby (Jessup 1959, 29-30) adds to the evidence for a community with some prosperous inhabitants. An irregular street layout, a number of domestic buildings, and evidence for industrial workings have also been excavated (Penn 1965).

Although little is known of the harbour at Richborough, there is evidence for a flourishing settlement there in the early part of the 2nd century. The timber buildings of the Claudian stores base were demolished about AD 85. Late Flavian timber-framed buildings which succeeded them in *insulae* V and VI were apparently destroyed by fire within a few years; those in *insula* V were replaced in masonry. A masonry house in *insula* IV, possibly a *mansio,* was constructed in the first part of the 2nd century, it is thought, replacing a similar building, and stood until demolished in the course of construction of the Saxon Shore fort. By then the settlement had long been in decline. Limited excavation outside that fort, supplemented by air photography, shows roads and remains of other buildings to the south and west, in addition to two Romano-Celtic temples, a cemetery, and an amphitheatre. Coin evidence from the latter suggests that it may have been contemporary with the fort (for a summary of the evidence from the site as a whole, see Cunliffe 1968,231).

It is possible that, as Cunliffe has suggested, Richborough's apparent early prosperity as a port suffered from the competition of Dover, where a late 1st or 2nd century quayside and jetty have been excavated (Rahtz 1958, 112-17), and where we now know that the fort of the Classis Britannica was established in the first half of the 2nd century. The extensive civilian settlement to the north of the fort included a large bath building, in addition to the celebrated Painted House, as well as clay-walled buildings and a shrine whose dedication by a *strator consularis* is recorded on an altar he erected *(Britannia,* **8** (1977), 424 and 426).

Forts

The presence of a base of the Roman fleet at Dover had long been suspected from finds of its tiles with the stamp **CL BR.** The rescue excavation and preservation from destruction of a large part of it have been one of the major contributions to the military archaeology of Roman Britain in the last decade, and have revealed barracks, at least two granaries, and its defensive circuit (Philp 1981). At Lympne there was also occupation connected with the Classis Britannica. Roach Smith (1852, 25) found **CL BR** stamped tiles and an altar dedicated by L Aufidius Pantera, a mid 2nd century prefect of the fleet, with other stones reused in the Saxon Shore fort, but structural evidence in *situ* has not yet been found. The fleet's cross-channel base at Boulogne and its role in the iron-workings of the Weald have also been the subject of detailed investigation in the past few years, and Cleere (in Johnston 1977, 16-19) has recently reviewed the greatly increased knowledge of the Classis Britannica and its activities.

During the 3rd century the naval arm of Roman military forces in Britain was reorganized in a way which is still obscure. The title of the Classis Britannica disappears from the record, and the Dover fort was largely abandoned by the early years of the century (Philp 1981, 94-9). Mainly during the 3rd century, but with additions and subtractions in the 4th, there was developed a series of coastal forts from north Norfolk to the Solent, known from the title of the 4th century Counts under whose command they were listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as the forts of the Saxon Shore.

Our knowledge of all four of the Kentish Saxon Shore forts has advanced considerably. The work of the Reculver Excavation Group at the fort of the *Cohms Prima Baetasiorum,* a garrison attested both in the Notitia and by tile stamps, has established *Regulbium* as typologically one of the earliest of the series, in company with Brancaster (Philp, nd). The fort wall with its rounded corners, the east and south gates, the headquarters building, two barrack blocks, and one or possibly two internal bathhouses follow the layout normal in 2nd century forts, contrasting with later Saxon Shore forts which reflect 3rd century develop ments in Roman military architecture on the continent, Coins and pottery have suggested a construction date in the

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