ROMAN BRITAIN

CONTENTS

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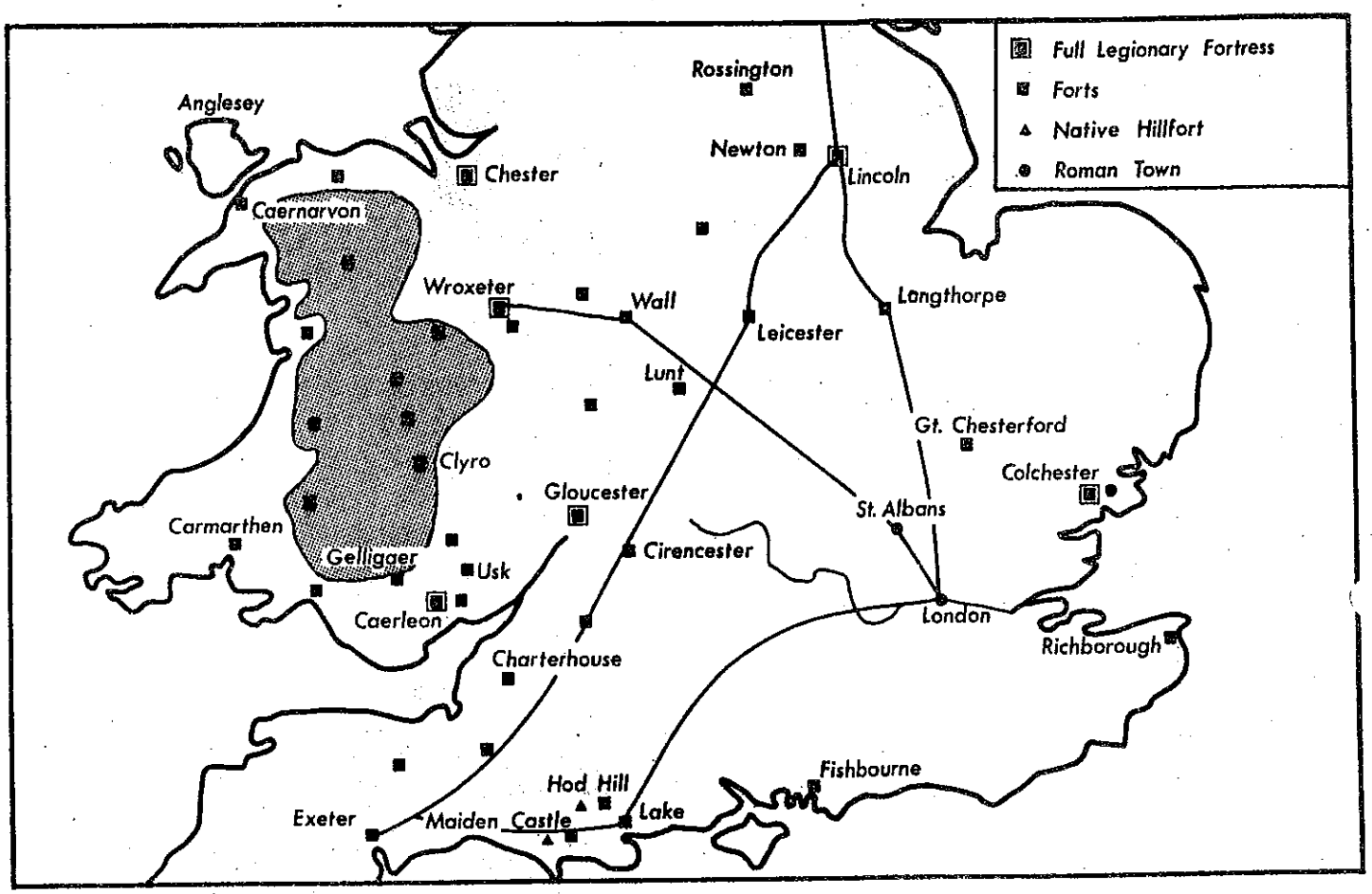
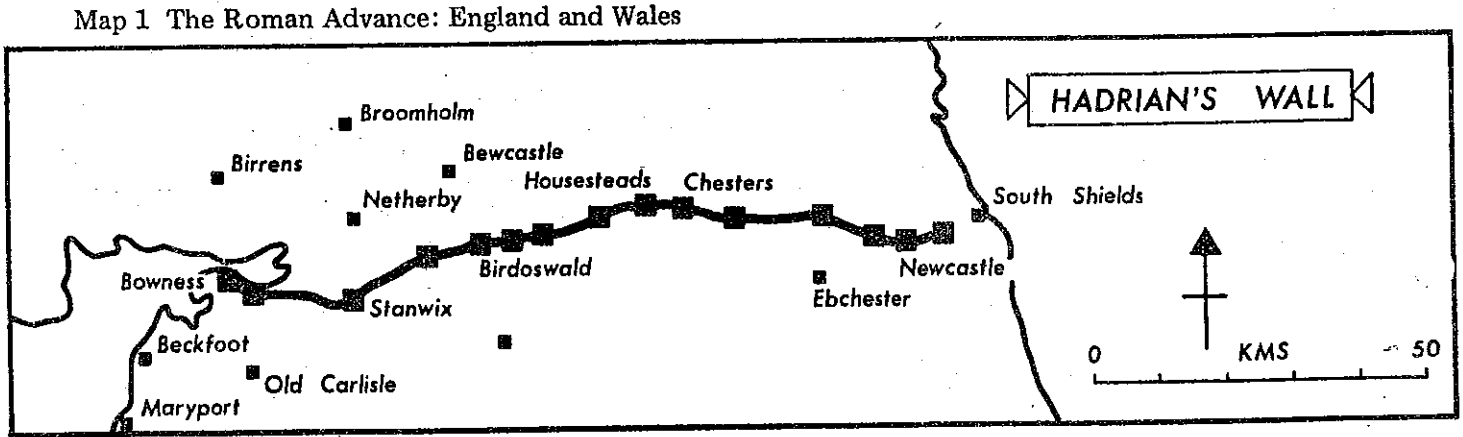
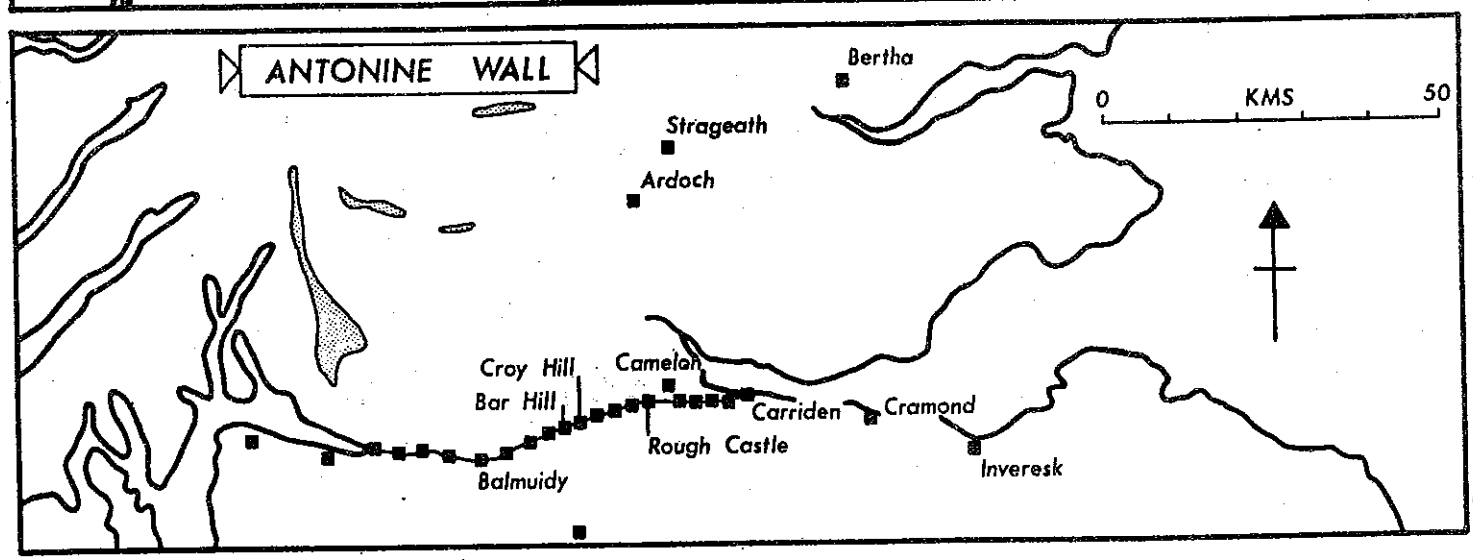
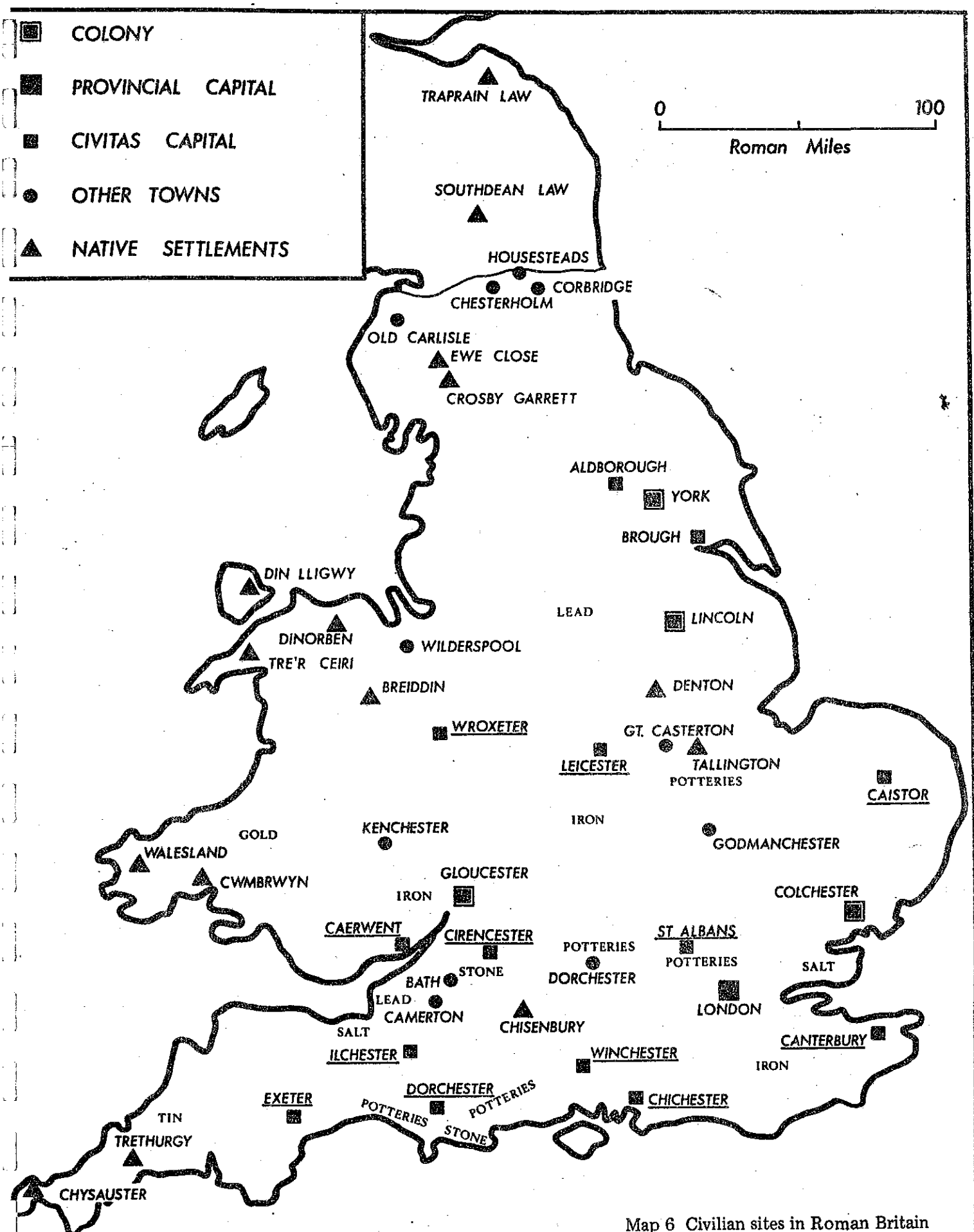


Map 1 The Roman Advance: England and Wales

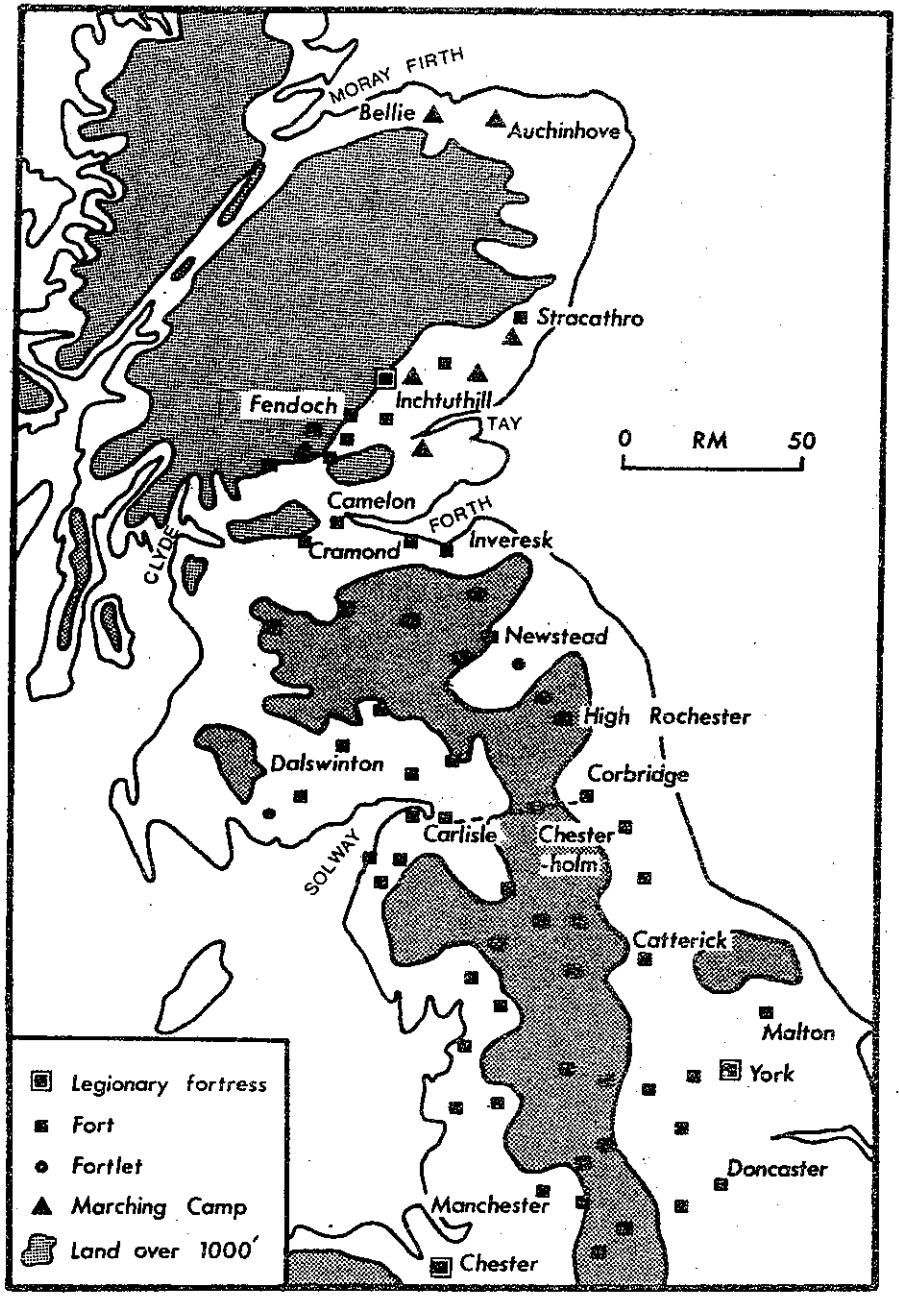




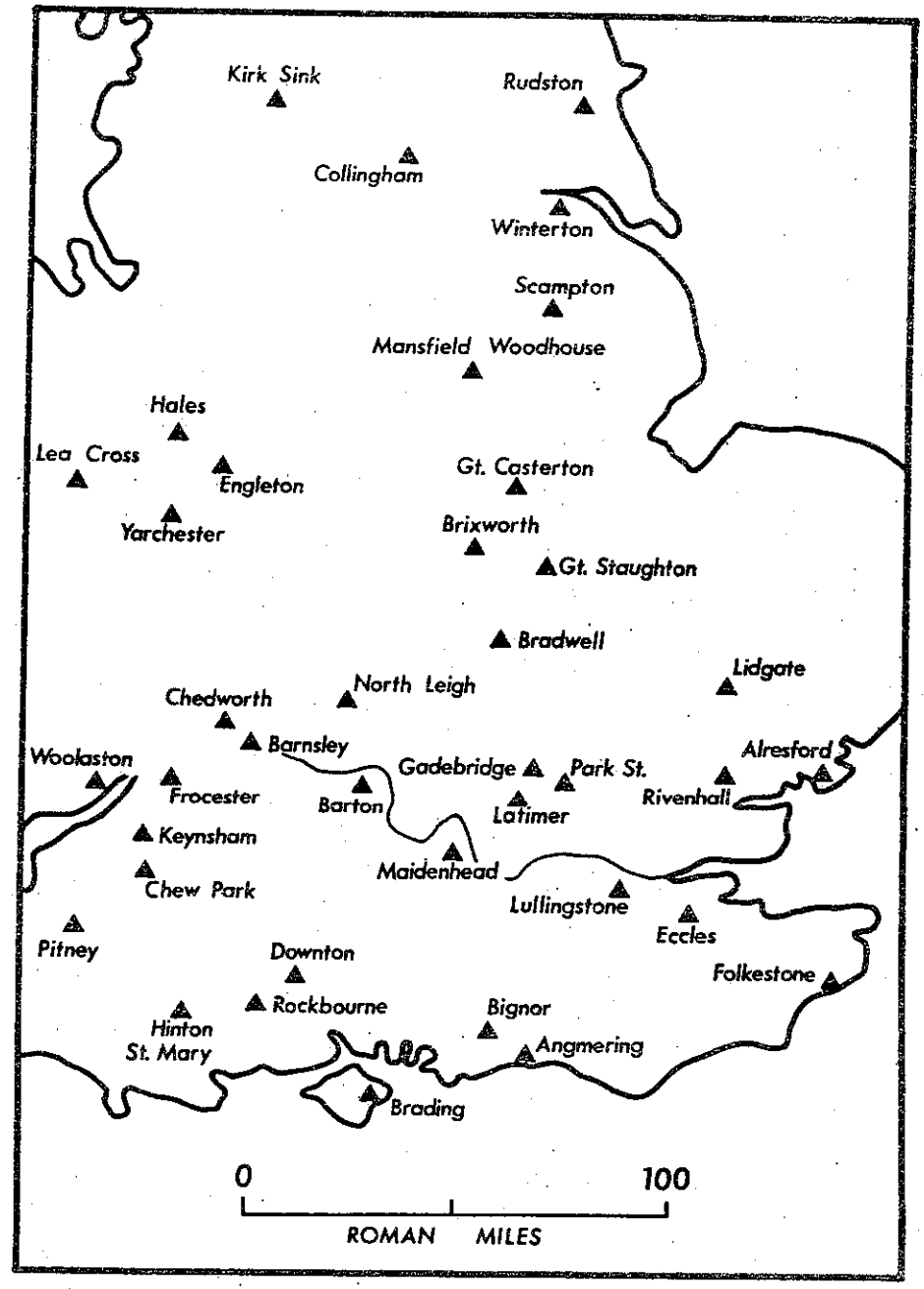
Maps 2 and 3 The Hadrianic and Antonine Frontiers



Map 6 Civilian sites in Roman Britain



Map 4 The Roman advance: Scotland and the North to A.D.84



Map 5 Some villas in Britain

1 THE ROMAN ARMY

The Roman Soldier

When the Romans invaded Britain in A.D.43 their army was made up of two types of soldier — the legionary and the auxiliary. The legionary was a Roman citizen and an Italian, but the auxiliary came from one of the tribes or kingdoms defeated by the Romans. As more and more troops were needed to control the growing empire, the Romans found new ways of recruiting soldiers. Provincials were drawn into the ranks of the legions and in the second century the Romans began to use regiments of barbarian tribesmen from the very fringes of the empire, to which they gave the name *numerii*. Later still they began to settle frontier areas and other threatened areas with farmer-soldiers — men who were given land to farm in exchange for providing military service when called upon. We can recognise the arrival of such men in Britain in about A.D.370 (see broadsheet 12). No one is sure just how large the Roman army in Britain was by that time, but for much of the second and third centuries it is thought to have included about 60,000 to 70,000 men. Less than a third of these were legionaries and most were auxiliaries, but in addition to *numerii* there were also the men of the British Fleet whose ships were based at places like Dover and Reculver. In the late third and fourth centuries one must also include the garrisons and sailors attached to the coastal forts, and the soldiers of the mobile Field Army.

The Auxiliaries

The first auxiliary units raised by the Romans were commanded by their own chieftains and regarded by the Romans as little more than a rabble. In time the Romans came to recognise the special skills which auxiliaries could bring to the army, and to place them under the command of Roman officers. The importance of the auxiliaries should not be underestimated. It is clear they undertook much of the hard fighting in the conquest of Britain, and certainly they comprised the greater part of the Roman garrison of the province.

The auxiliary infantry were organised into cohorts of about 500 men (occasionally twice as big), or else into mixed cohorts in which 120 cavalry were included. Such units were obviously useful for controlling and patrolling difficult country. In addition there were auxiliary units made up entirely of cavalry and called *alae*.

Some of these units were first raised and paid for by wealthy Romans, and the units were named after their founder. In Britain, for example, there were the Ala Indiana and Ala Petriana. Most auxiliary units, however, were named after the territory in which they were first recruited, and their names tell us of the distant places from which soldiers were brought to Britain.

Amongst these were the Hamian archers from Syria who spent many years at Carvoran fort on Hadrian's Wall. Other auxiliary units were also specialists, including the Batavians from Holland, who were skilled in making river crossings and played an important part in the conquest of Britain.

The Legions

There were never more than four legions in Britain and usually there were only three. Apart from being crack troops they were also a powerful weapon in the hand of the Roman governor, and so the emperors were careful to spread the legions thinly across the empire.

No one knows exactly how many men there were in a legion, but the total number of men on the pay-roll was probably approaching 6,000. Of these about 5,300 would be fighting troops. These men were commanded by a legate, who had under him ten tribunes. Each tribune commanded a cohort of men, the normal cohort consisting of 480 men. A cohort in turn consisted of six of the famous 'centuries', which surprisingly contained not a hundred men each but only 80. Each century was, of course, in the hands of a centurion, and was in turn divided into 8 or 10 smaller platoons (called *contubernia*). In addition to these infantry soldiers and their officers the legion had 120 mounted troops who could act as scouts and carry important messages.

As well as all these fighting men, however, the legion had its own clerks, surveyors, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, and medical corps. Thus a Roman legion was in many ways a self-contained unit, capable of maintaining itself in the field for long periods of time.

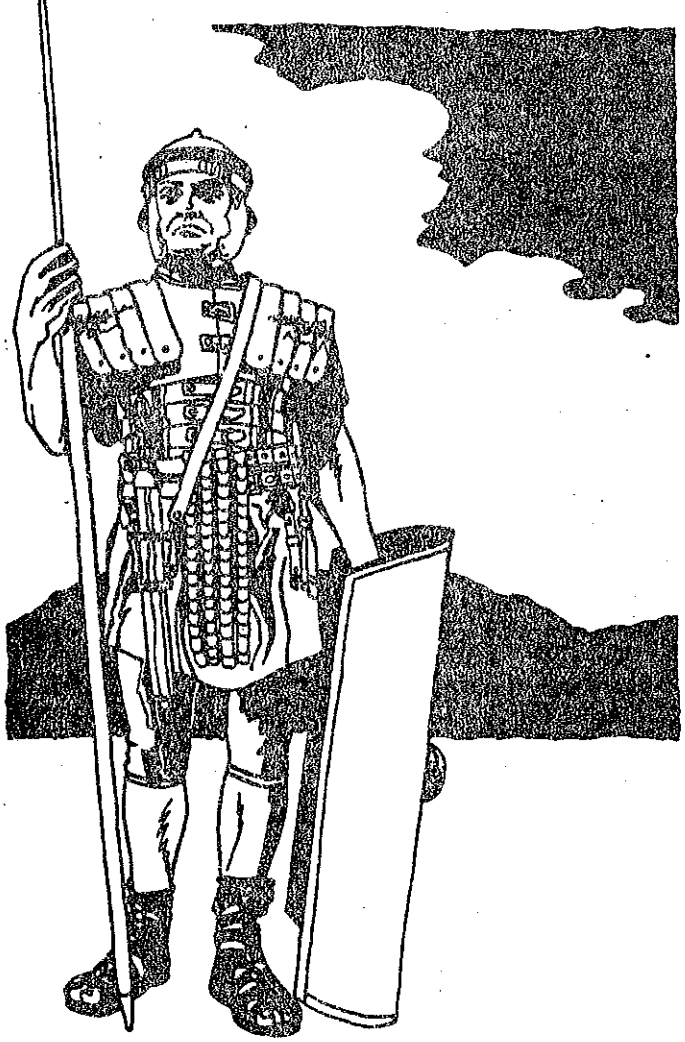


Fig.1.1 A legionary of the invasion period

Roman Forts

The first Roman forts built in Britain had defences made of turf ramparts with wooden gateways and timber rampart walks. Inside, timber barracks, stores, workshops, a headquarters building and a house for the fort's commander were laid out between two main roads which ran through the fort at right angles to each other.

By the time of Agricola (about A.D.80) the layout of the buildings inside the fort was much the same in all forts. A good example of this layout is to be seen in the plan of the fort at Fendoch (Perthshire), which was built under Agricola's command.

At the centre stands the headquarters building with an open courtyard before the long hall where disciplinary cases were heard. At the rear are the rooms housing the various offices and, at the centre, the regimental shrine. To one side of the H.Q. is the house of the commanding officer, and to the other two granaries for storing a year's supply of corn. Behind the H.Q. is a hospital and three buildings which were probably stores and workshops. At either end of the fort were the barrack blocks, each with a centurion's quarters at one end, a covered verandah outside, and ten double-rooms. Each double-room was to take a platoon of 8 men, and each barrack block a century. Ten barrack blocks therefore point to a garrison of a double-cohort (or *milliary* cohort).

By about A.D.100 many forts were being rebuilt in stone, but almost all of them followed the same plan as the earlier timber forts.

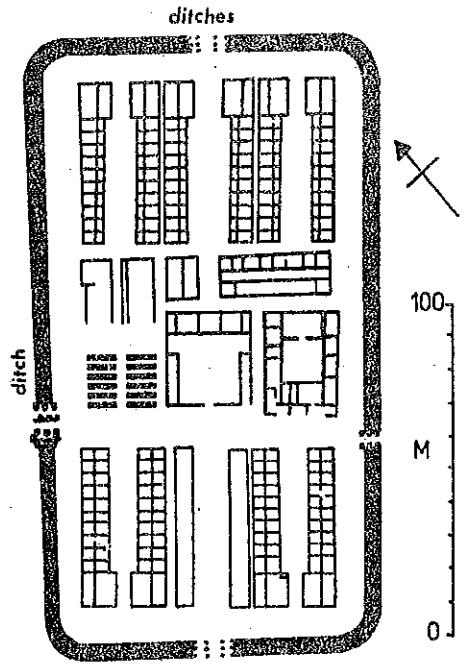


Fig.1.2 The timber and turf fort at Fendoch (Perth), built by Agricola in A.D.83-84. Outside the turf rampart there were defensive ditches, and the three main gates were flanked by timber towers. The hospital, behind the commander's house, has ten wards — one for each century.

Roman Camps

The layout of the Roman forts described above was partly based on the layout used for temporary camps occupied by the army when it was on campaign. Even when they were to occupy a camp site for only a single night, the army would build itself a rectangular enclosure with a ditch, low rampart and palisade to defend it. Inside the defences, the leather tents were laid out in neat rows.

Many of the camps of this sort found in Britain, like that at Stracathro (Angus), were occupied by troops on the march, but others were used for some weeks or months by troops employed on construction work of one sort or another. A third use was the practice camp. Roman soldiers had to train and exercise just like modern ones, and there are many places in northern Britain and Wales where their practice camps remain. A good example is at Burnswark (Dumfries) where a siege camp was built for the soldiers to carry out mock attacks on the existing but now abandoned Iron Age hill-fort.

The marching camps are often known from aerial photos rather than excavation, but their size gives a good idea as to how many men occupied them. A full legion could occupy a 20 acre marching camp, whereas a permanent legionary fortress required about 50 acres. Size may also provide a clue as to the date of Roman marching camps — like the huge 65 and 130 acre forts of Severus — as may the nature of the gateway defences, which were particularly distinctive during the later first century.

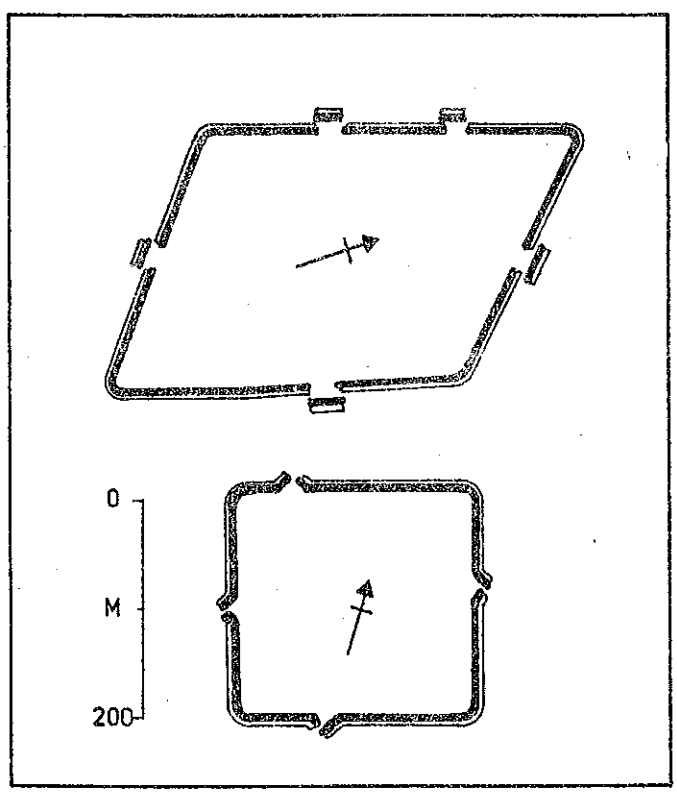


Fig.1.3 Two temporary camps, the upper at Featherwood West (Northumbria) and the lower at Dealginross (Perth). The gate defences at Featherwood are of the type called *tutuli* and those at Dealginross are *claviculae*.

Everyday Life in the Army

A Roman soldier was normally expected to serve for 25 years, be he legionary or auxiliary. When he joined the army he had to buy his equipment, and part of his pay was also kept back to pay for food, boots and bedding, and contributions to soldiers' benefit funds.

Apart from fighting, patrolling and guard duties, a Roman soldier, like his modern counterpart, also undertook a variety of other duties including fatigues and acting as batman to his centurion. In addition there was a good deal of maintenance work needed in the permanent forts, and away from the forts there were various tasks such as road and bridge building and repair.

The soldiers leisure time was largely spent in gambling in the regiment's bath-house, or drinking and gaming at a local tavern. Outside the gates of most forts small communities grew up which served the needs of the local garrison. Local women formed attachments to soldiers and bore them children, although until the end of the second century serving soldiers were not allowed to marry.

After discharge many of these soldiers married and settled down to civilian life close to their old fort. The legionaries were given a cash payment or land to farm for their 25 years service, and the auxiliaries received the highly valued grant of Roman citizenship. From the tombstones, and occasionally the bronze discharge diplomas, of these men we learn a great deal about their careers in the army and sometimes about their families.

Fig.1.4 A tombstone from Carlisle of a lady called Aurelia Aureliana. She was the wife of Ulpius Apolinaris, who was probably a soldier serving on the northern frontier. Note the sculptor's mistake — the lady has a beard!

Weapons and Armour

The weapons and armour of the various auxiliary units varied considerably, but that of the legions was much the same throughout all of the legions at any particular time.

The legionary wore a bronze helmet with nose, neck and cheek guards. His leather tunic was protected by breast and shoulder plates above, and by scale or chain armour below. In addition he had a long semi-cylindrical shield covered with leather and decorated with bronze binding and emblems. He had two principal weapons, the javelin (or *pilum*) and the short-sword (or *gladius*). In battle the long javelins were thrown at a distance of about 30m from the enemy. If they did not kill or wound him, they were so unweildy that he often had to throw his shield away. In close combat the short-sword came into its own, and as the legionary pushed with his shield he made short thrusts with his sword.

When it was necessary to capture a defended enemy camp or hillfort, then the Romans brought up their catapults (or *ballistae*) to fire iron darts or stone balls at the defenders. We know that catapult barrages preceded the Roman capture of the hillforts at Maiden Castle and Hod Hill in Dorset. Following such a barrage, the gateways were attacked by units with shields linked together to form the famous 'tortoise', which were then able to approach the gates and burn them down.

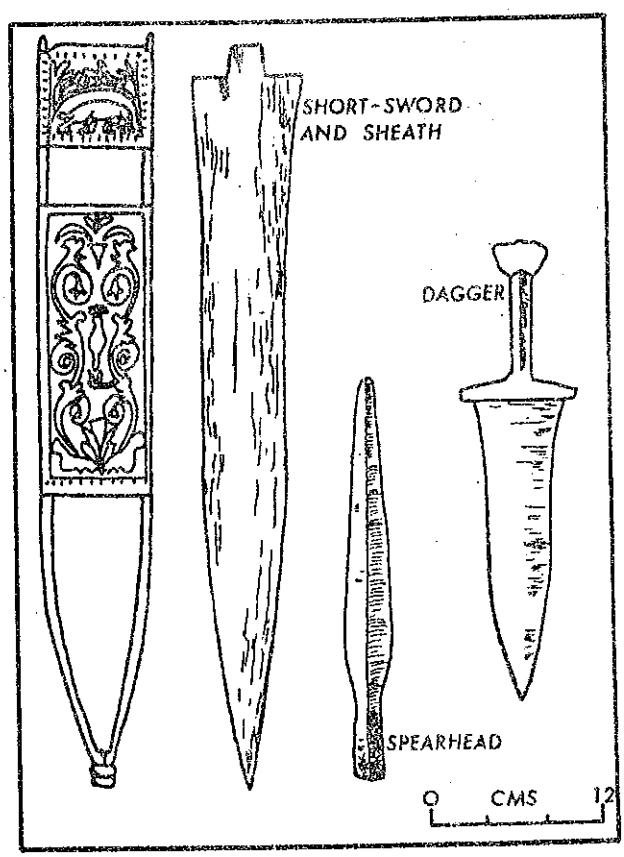


Fig.1.5 Roman weapons, including the short-sword and its fine decorated bronze scabbard from the Thames.

The Role of the Army

It is often thought that the army had little to do in Britain but fight battles and keep the peace. In fact they did very much more than this. The army was responsible for the supervision of many of the imperial estates in Britain, including both farms and mining sites such as Charterhouse on Mendip, where silver and lead were extracted.

They also carried out much construction work which was useful to the population as a whole. Army surveyors laid out the lines of roads and army engineers and troops were responsible for their construction and the building of bridges. It is thought likely that the army were also responsible for the planning, if not the building, of some of the town walls and civilian town halls and market places (basilicas and forums). In addition many soldiers were seconded to the staff of the governor to help in the administration of the province.

Perhaps more important than these official duties, however, were the ways in which the soldiers encouraged the civilians to adopt Roman ways. They were paid in coins and in order to sell to the troops local traders needed to adopt the use of coinage too. The soldiers' pottery, trinkets, and clothes were not in the same style as the native ones and local craftsmen began to make these things in a style which would attract their custom. By mingling and trading with the British the army introduced them to the Roman way of life.

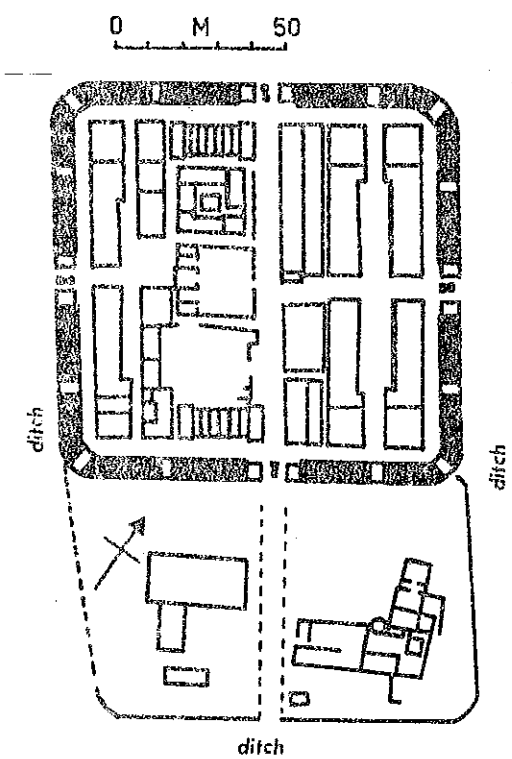


Fig.1.6 The second fort at Gelligaer, built between A.D.103-112, is typical of early second century forts in having an earth/clay rampart reveted with stone. Its buildings, including the bath-house in the annexe, are all of stone.

Places to visit

Roman forts can still be seen in many parts of Britain, and if your school cannot organise a visit to one you may be able to visit one on holiday. The following are some of the better preserved ones to see.

Scotland — see broadsheet 3 for Antonine forts.

Northern England — see broadsheet 3 for Hadrian's Wall forts.

North West — Hardknot (Cumbria), Ribchester (site museum).

North Wales area — Chester (an important museum also).

South Wales area — Caerleon (an important museum also).

Midlands area — The Lunt, Baginton (Nr.Coventry; site museum).

East Anglia — see broadsheet 12 for Shore forts.

South & East — see broadsheet 12 for Shore forts.

South West — Hod Hill (earthworks only).

In addition to museums at the places mentioned above there are important collections of Roman military material at the following museums:

Newcastle on Tyne, University Museum
York, Yorkshire Museum
Lincoln, City Museum
Colchester, Colchester and Essex Museum

Most larger museums have some Roman military equipment in their collections — visit the nearest museum to you and see if you can spot any in their showcases.

Things to do

1. Alongside is a plan of the Roman fort at Gelligaer. See if you can identify the various buildings, and try to work out how many soldiers made up the garrison of the fort.

2. Find out where the nearest forts to your school were, and mark their positions on Ordnance Survey maps. Then see if you can understand why the Romans built them where they did - do they command a good view or a river crossing? Do they block the entrance to a valley? Are there traces of a nearby Roman road?

3. Even if there are no remains visible above ground, visit the site of the nearest Roman fort if you can.

4. If you like making models you can buy 'Airfix' 72nd scale plastic figures of Roman legionaries to paint. See if you can make up a century of such figures, and with balsa wood build to the same scale a model of the fortlet at Barburgh Mill (Dumfries).

5. Read more about life in the Roman Army in the booklet *The Roman Army* by Graham Webster (Chester Museum) or in *Everyday Life in Roman Britain* by Anthony Birley.

Produced by: Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

2 THE CONQUEST OF BRITAIN

Claudius and the Invasion

Julius Caesar brought Roman troops to Britain in 55 and 54 BC, but almost a century elapsed before the Romans again invaded the island. Many reasons have been suggested for the Emperor Claudius deciding to conquer Britain.

It is true that Britain had resources of gold, tin, lead, iron and silver, which the Romans were quick to exploit when they invaded, and Strabo (a Greek geographer) tells us that the British were also exporters of corn and cattle. Such wealth might have attracted the Romans, but it was probably insufficient to pay the cost of keeping an army in Britain.

Equally it is unlikely that the British tribes posed any threat to Roman control of France and Belgium, even though the tribe of the Catuvellauni now controlled much of the south-east corner of England.

More important than these reasons for Claudius' decision was the situation of the emperor himself. On the assasination of the previous emperor, Caligula, he had been thrust unwillingly onto the throne. To stay there he needed both popular support and the favour of the army. By completing a task begun by the great Caesar himself, and one which promised not to be too difficult, he could win the support he desired. The Roman writer Suetonius, who wrote a short biography of Claudius, tells us that Claudius "decided that Britain was the country where a real triumph could be most readily earned".

Time Chart — Conquest of Britain

AD 43	Invasion under A. Plautius
	Frontier established west of Fosse Way
AD 47	New Governor, O. Scapula
AD 49	Colonia of Colchester founded, attack on Wales
AD 51	Capture of Caratacus
AD 52	New Governor, D. Gallus
	Consolidation in south-east Wales
AD 57	New Governor, Q. Veranius
AD 58	New Governor, S. Paulinus, attack on N. Wales
AD 60	Revolt of Boudicca
AD 61	New Governor, P. Turpilianus
AD 63	New Governor, T. Maximus
AD 65	Preparations for campaigns in Wales
AD 69	Civil Wars, New Governor, V. Bolanus
AD 71	New Governor, P. Cerialis
	Conquest of Brigantia, capture of Stanwick?
AD 74	New Governor, J. Frontinus
	Conquest of Wales
AD 78	New Governor, J. Agricola
AD 80	Advance to the Central Lowlands
AD 82	Conquest of south-west Scotland
AD 84	Battle of Mons Graupius, occupation of N. Scotland

The Invasion -- AD.43 — 47

Under the command of Aulius Plautius, four legions and perhaps 30,000 auxiliaries set sail for Britain in July, AD.43. All the troops probably disembarked at or near Richborough here a base camp was established. Once the army was assembled it moved inland to meet the British forces led by the two brothers Togodumnus and Caratacus, kings of the Catuvellauni.

In spite of fierce opposition the Romans crossed first the Medway and then the Thames, where they awaited the arrival of Claudius before moving on the native capital at Colchester. With Togodumnus dead, and Caratacus fled westwards, British opposition crumbled. Once Claudius had returned to Rome, Plautius began a three-pronged advance into southern England, with the XXth legion in reserve at Colchester. The IX legion moved northwards to establish fortresses at Longthorpe and Newton on Trent. The XIVth legion fought their way north-westwards and may have established a base at Leicester. Finally, the IInd legion, under its commander Vespasian, fought a bloody campaign to the south-west.

With a supply base at Fishbourne and another fortress at Lake, the IInd met and overcame resistance from the defenders of hillforts such as Maiden Castle, Spettisbury Rings and Hod Hill. Eventually they secured the south-western end of a frontier which ran, roughly, from the mouth of the River Severn to that of the Humber.

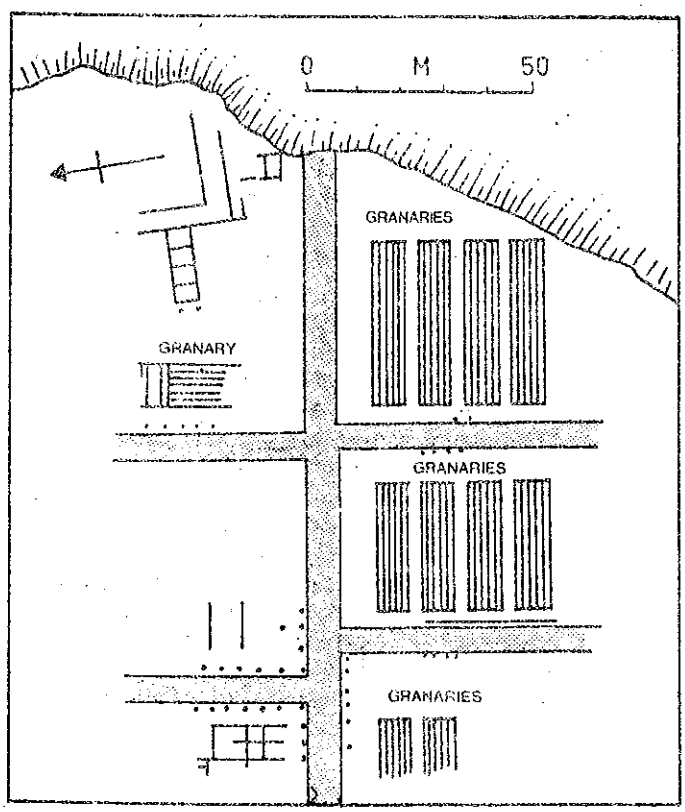


Fig.2.1 Plan of the Claudian supply base at Richborough, notable for its many granaries, intended to store grain brought in to supply the army of conquest.

The Invasion — AD.47—60

In the Midlands the frontier established by AD.47 was not satisfactory, and the new governor (Scapula) in the face of attacks from Welsh tribes had to push the frontier forward to the River Severn. After a raid into North Wales, Scapula brought the XXth legion up to a new base on the Severn at Kingsholm. With the XIVth also poised at the Severn further north, he launched an attack on the Silures and Ordovices of south-east and central Wales. Caratacus, who had organised the Welsh resistance was defeated and fled to the kingdom of Brigantia, north of the Trent. But Cartimandua, Queen of the Brigantes, had a treaty with Rome and handed over Caratacus to Scapula.

Scapula's campaigns had not quelled the Welsh, however, and they continued to resist the Roman advance in the West, first repelling Roman advances into their territory and then attacking and crossing the newly established frontier. Under Nero, the Romans spent the years 54—60 campaigning in both north and south Wales, and the establishment of forts at Usk and Clyro in this period suggests they had now decided to conquer Wales and bring it within the province of Britain.

In AD.60 a Roman army led by the then Governor, Paulinus, marched through north Wales and crossed the Menai Straits to Anglesey. The XIVth and XXth legions, supported perhaps by 10,000 auxiliaries, massacred the tribesmen and Druids assembled there.

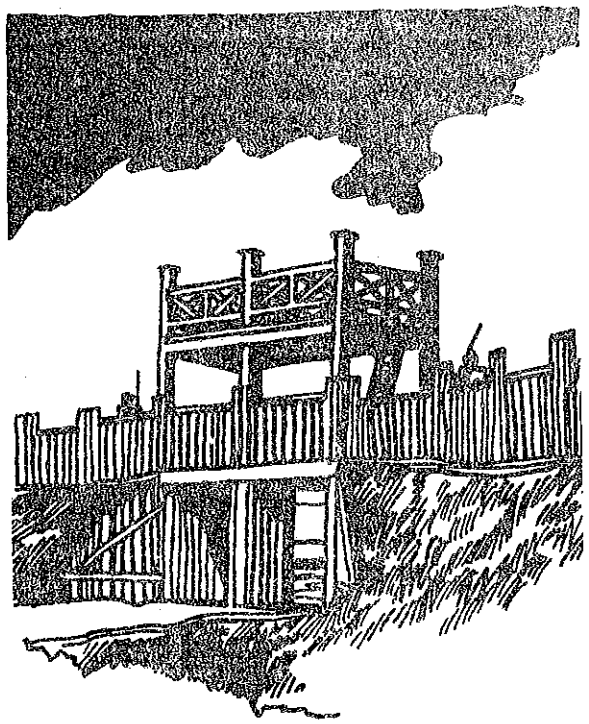


Fig.2.2 Reconstruction of the gateway of the fort at the Lunt (Baginton — see fig.2.4). Timber and turf defences like these were typical of early Roman forts in Britain.

Boudicca's Revolt

Plans to complete the conquest of Wales were interrupted by a serious revolt in south-east England. The death of Prasutagus, a client king who ruled the Iceni of East Anglia, led to his kingdom losing its independence and to the Romans confiscating much of his property. His queen, Boudicca, led a revolt which was soon joined by the tribesmen of Essex, the Trinovantes. They were embittered by the building of a Roman colony on the site of their own capital at Colchester, and by the arrogant behaviour of the retired soldiers who lived in it.

Colchester was captured and burnt and its people slaughtered. The IXth legion, trying to intervene, were defeated and fled, and Boudicca's forces marched on London. Paulinus, meanwhile, had rushed to London with cavalry troops but realised he could not defend it with so few men. He retreated to the Midlands, leaving Boudicca to destroy both London and St Albans. Here, as at Colchester, archaeologists frequently find the deep deposits of ash which mark the events of A.D.60 and houses and shops which were burnt down by the rebels. Boudicca's forces then pushed on along Watling Street to meet the forces under Paulinus' command. These were the XXth and XIVth legions, and some auxiliary cohorts. Somewhere in the Midlands the final battle took place and Roman discipline and organisation triumphed over far superior numbers.

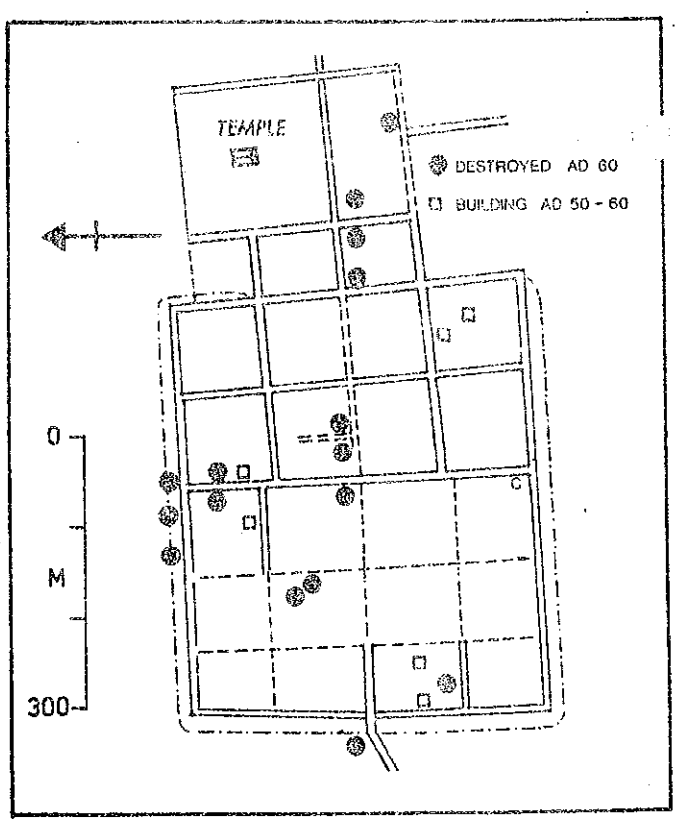


Fig.2.3 Plan of Colchester at the time of Boudicca's revolt. The dot-and-dash line indicates the outline of the former legionary defences.

Britain after Boudicca

It took more than a year for the Romans to finally quell the revolt, during which time Paulinus was replaced by a governor more willing to show clemency to the rebels. Forts were rebuilt and army units were moved to new locations, in an attempt to secure the hard-won peace. The fort at Baginton (near Coventry) was one of the forts probably built as a direct result of the rebellion.

There was little attempt to rebuild large areas of the three towns which had been destroyed, and instead, once the internal security was established, the Romans began preparations for advances on one or two fronts. A new legionary fortress at Gloucester (see broadsheet 6) and a massive supply base at Usk both suggest that one of the targets was to finish the work of Paulinus and finally conquer Wales. In the north, following the establishment of a legionary fortress at Lincoln c.AD.60, forts at Chesterfield, Rossington and perhaps even at York, may mean that the Romans had already anticipated the collapse of their client-kingdom of Brigantia. If the Queen, Cartimandua, lost control there, the whole northern frontier was in danger.

During the Roman Civil Wars of AD.69, this is just what happened, and it was as much as the governor, Bolanus, could do to save the Queen herself. Once again, plans for the conquest of Wales had to be put on one side and the Roman army had to march northwards.

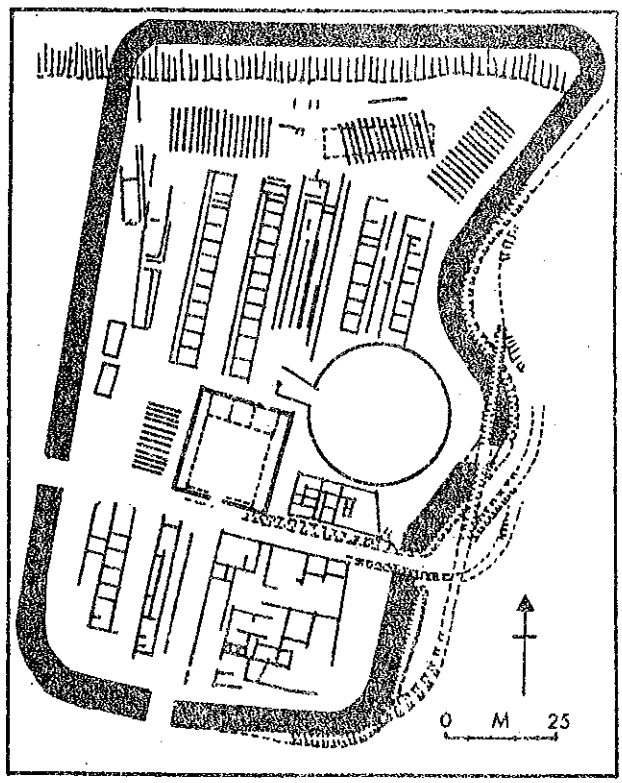


Fig.2.4 The Lunt fort, Baginton. Note the circular gyrus for training horses, the barrack blocks, and at the top of the granaries.

Wales and the North

Vespasian, who emerged as emperor from the Civil Wars, had served in Britain and knew its problems. He reorganised its garrisons and sent Cerialis, who had commanded the IXth legion during Boudicca's revolt, to become governor and secure the northern frontier. In three campaigns between 71 and 74, Cerialis effectively conquered Brigantia and began to build forts along either flank of the Pennines. Having defeated the leader of the Brigantian rebels, Venutius, and captured his stronghold — probably at Stanwick — Cerialis also founded a legionary fortress at York. This replaced the fortress at Lincoln, and clearly indicated that the Romans intended now to hold on to Brigantia.

By 74 the Romans were at last able to turn their attention to Wales. A new governor, Frontinus, was sent to solve the problems posed by Wales — how to penetrate and conquer such difficult, mountainous territory, and how to successfully garrison it after it was conquered. By the use of sea-borne troops and supplies, and the use of cavalry, he was able to conquer much of Wales by AD.77. Legionary fortresses at Caerleon and Chester held by the IInd and XXth legions respectively, formed the two 'pegs' on which a network of auxiliary forts like Gelligaer were hung, controlling river mouths and valleys and restricting the movements of the Welsh. The conquest of Wales was all but complete.

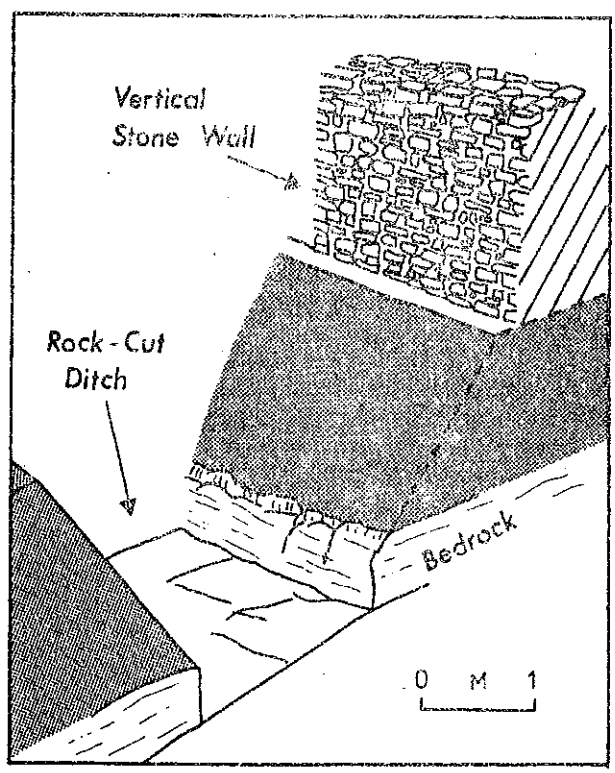


Fig.2.5 The reconstructed defences of the native stronghold at Stanwick (N.Yorks), thought to be the capital of Venutius.

Agricola and Scotland

Vespasian now appointed as governor of Britain Julius Agricola, who had previously served here under Paulinus and Cerialis. After a brief campaign in North Wales, Agricola conducted a major operation in Brigantia in A.D.79, presumably to reinforce Cerialis's work and secure his rear from attack as he prepared to move into Scotland. Vespasian, it seems, had now determined on the conquest of most, if not all, of the British mainland. In A.D.80, in spite of atrocious weather, Agricola's army reached the isthmus flanked by the rivers Forth and Clyde. The following year was spent in consolidating this area, building forts such as Newstead, Castledykes and High Rochester. Tacitus tells us that he also built forts across the isthmus, but there is no certain trace of them at present, although on the Forth a fort was built at Cramond to enable supplies to be brought up by ship. Defended enclosures underlying mid-second century forts on the Antonine Wall, such as Croy Hill, are now known to date to the mid-second rather than to Agricola's conquests. Once the central lowlands and southern uplands were secured by forts, Agricola marched into south-west Scotland, which threatened to outflank his western supply road, and built further forts at places like Dalswinton and Gatehouse. A naval reconnaissance up the west coast revealed that beyond the Clyde the army would have to advance through the straths of eastern Scotland.

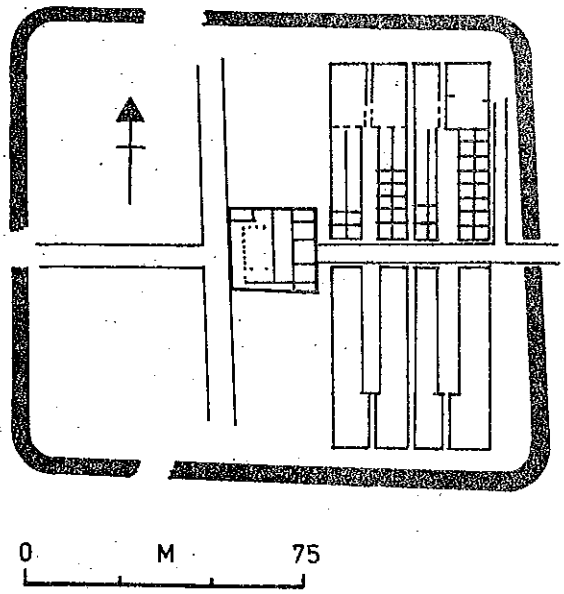


Fig.2.6 The fort at Strageath, built by Agricola in A.D.83-84. The bottom row of barracks is restored on the basis of those found to the north. It is thought that the garrison was a part-mounted cohort of auxiliaries. In the mid-second century a forward post related to the Antonine Wall was built directly above the Agricolan fort.

Agricola and the Far North

With his rear once again firmly secured, Agricola set out for the far north of Scotland. In A.D.83 he advanced along the east coast, constantly supplied and supported by the fleet. His line of advance is marked by his marching forts, known mainly from aerial photos, and by some of the permanent forts, such as Fendoch (see broadsheet 1, fig 1.2), which he began to build in the river valleys. When he retreated to winter quarters at the end of the campaign, he left behind the XXth legion in a massive new legionary fortress at Inchtuthill.

Early in the spring of A.D.84 they were joined once more by the IInd and IXth legions, and Agricola set out to bring the Caledonians, who lived in the highlands, to battle. By raiding coastal settlements, Agricola enticed the Caledonians into battle at a place called Mons Graupius. This was probably near the Moray Firth, and after he had won this decisive battle Agricola marched further into unknown territory. At present, the furthest north of the Agricolan forts found from the air are at Auchinhove and at Bellie on the River Spey.

We may never know whether Agricola would or would not have conquered the extreme north of Scotland. He was recalled to Rome in A.D.84, and by A.D.87 the need for troops elsewhere in the empire had led to Inchtuthill and other forts in the straths being abandoned.

Places to visit, Things to do

Richborough (Kent)	—	see the defences dug by the first Roman troops in A.D.43.
Maiden Castle (Dorset)	—	see the massive defences and gates that Vespasian's troops stormed.
Hod Hill (Dorset)	—	see the hillfort which surrendere to a catapult barrage, and the Roman fort built in one corne of it.
The Lunt (Coventry)	—	see a partly reconstructed fort of A.D.60.
Stanwick (N. Yorks)	—	see the partly reconstructed defences of Venutius' stronghold
Caerleon (Gwent)	—	see the legionary fort, founde by Frontinus.

You can see Roman weapons, pottery and other things of this period at many museums, including York, Chester, Verulamium (St Albans) and Fishbourne.

1. Read the story of Agricola's life (and especially what he did in Britain) as written down by his own son-in-law, Tacitus. (Penguin Classic: H. Mattingly *Agricola*.) Then try to mak out a life-chart for Agricola.
2. Cut out a map of Britain in polystyrene tile or corrugated cardboard. Make paper flags on pins, and mark each with the name of a legion. See if you can trace the movement of th legions from A.D.43 to A.D.84, and mark legionary forts on your map.

Produced by: Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

3 THE NORTHERN FRONTIER

The Northern Frontier under Trajan

With the withdrawal of troops from all the forts north of the Forth-Clyde isthmus, the Romans were once again faced with the problem of establishing a northern frontier. For a decade or more they appear to have held on to the forts in southern Scotland, rebuilding and enlarging many of them such as Newstead and Dalswinton.

Shortly after Trajan became emperor in A.D. 98 the three remaining legionary forts, at York, Chester and Caerleon were rebuilt in stone. This may well mark a decision to permanently fix the frontiers and dispositions in Britain. Trajan's answer to the problems of the northern frontier was to withdraw his troops now from southern Scotland too and to base his frontier on the road from Carlisle to C[illegible]idge — the Stanegate.

There were already four forts along this stretch of road — Carlisle, Nether Denton, Chesterholm and Corbridge. These were about a day's march apart. To convert this line of forts into a viable frontier three further forts were needed to reduce the distance between them to about half a day's march — about 6 miles. We believe that these new forts were built by Trajan and that smaller fortlets were probably placed between each pair of forts. The forts would be held by a cohort of troops, but the fortlets by only one or two centuries perhaps. If the whole system was completed, then there would be seven forts and six fortlets, with a total frontier garrison of perhaps 4,000 men, but several of the fortlets have yet to be discovered.

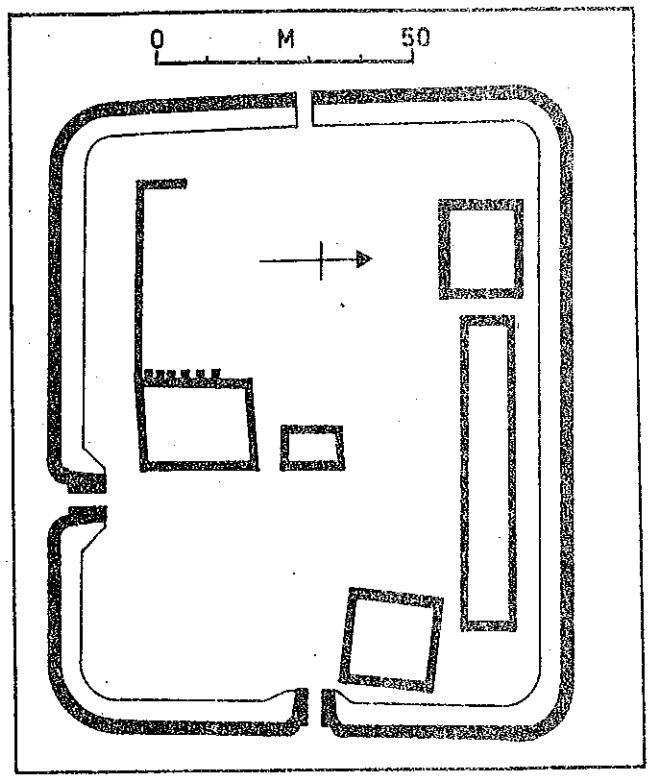


Fig.3.1 The fortlet at Haltwhistle Burn on the Stanegate, probably built by Trajan as part of his solution to the frontier problem.

Hadrian's Wall

Hadrian visited Britain in A.D.122 and decided, in the words of his Roman biographer, "to built a wall 80 miles long to separate the barbarians from the Romans".

As planned, and first built, the Wall was an adaptation of the Stanegate frontier. The forts on the Stanegate were still to be garrisoned and the Wall was patrolled by troops who occupied fortlets placed every mile along the wall. Between each fortlet (or milecastle) were two turrets which acted as watch-towers and offered protection from the weather to the men on patrol.

The Wall itself was about 16ft. high with perhaps a 6ft. parapet to protect soldiers moving along the wall top between turrets. In the front of the Wall was a ditch, except where the Wall was sited on the edge of the crags and a ditch was unnecessary. The Wall and ditch together ran for 76 Roman (71 modern) miles, although about 30 miles of the western end of the Wall were actually built in turf rather than stone. This was later rebuilt in stone, and the Wall extended by 4 miles, but not before more drastic changes had been made. To the rear of the Wall a double ditch with a continuous bank between was constructed. This Vallum seems to have been used to protect the rear of the Wall and its troops. At about the same time a major change of plan saw the Stanegate forts abandoned and a series of forts inserted into the Wall itself.

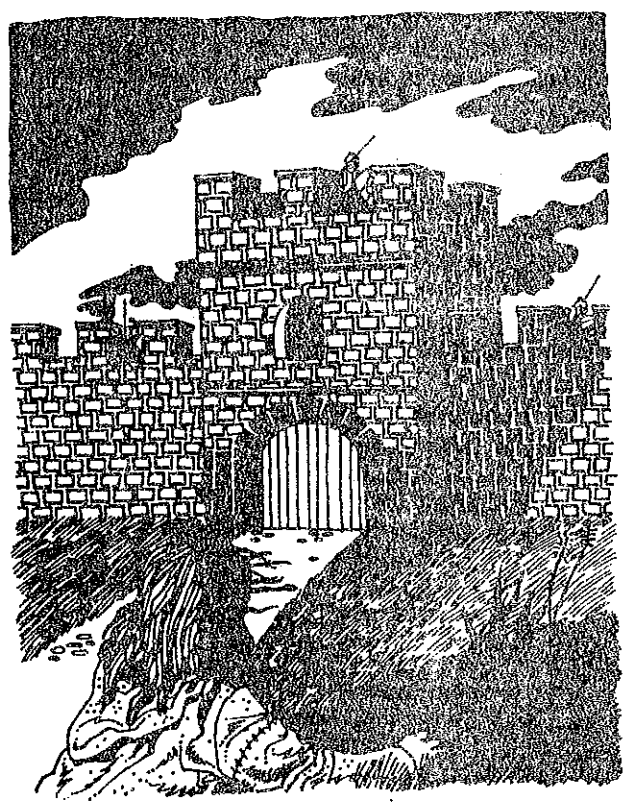


Fig.3.2 A reconstruction of a milecastle as seen by someone approaching the Wall from the north.

Hadrian's Wall — Forts and Garrisons

Eventually 16 forts were built on the line of the Wall, and to these may be added the fort at South Shields, by the mouth of the Tyne, and four forts which protected the west flank of the Wall — the Cumberland coast. In addition there were outpost forts at Birrens, Netherby, Bewcastle, High Rochester and Risingham to the north of the Wall. Some of these forts were built and garrisoned long after Hadrian's death.

Most of the original forts were built across the line of the Wall, and had not four but six gates — three to the north and three to the south of the Wall. Inside there were the usual buildings, laid out to the standard plan as described in broadsheet 1, but built in stone rather than in timber like the first century forts described in broadsheet 2. Outside the forts were bath-houses and temples, and it is inscriptions associated with the latter, and others from the repair of buildings, which provide most of our information about the fort garrisons.

The forts were manned by auxiliary units, mostly infantry cohorts of 500 men, but sometimes units of cavalry, mixed regiments of infantry and cavalry, or First Cohorts of about 800 men. Chester's fort, for example, was garrisoned by a mixed regiment raised in Yugoslavia, and subsequently by ala II Asturum, a cavalry regiment raised in Spain. The total garrison of the Wall and its outpost forts was perhaps about 14,000 men, of which up to 10,000 may have been on the Wall itself.

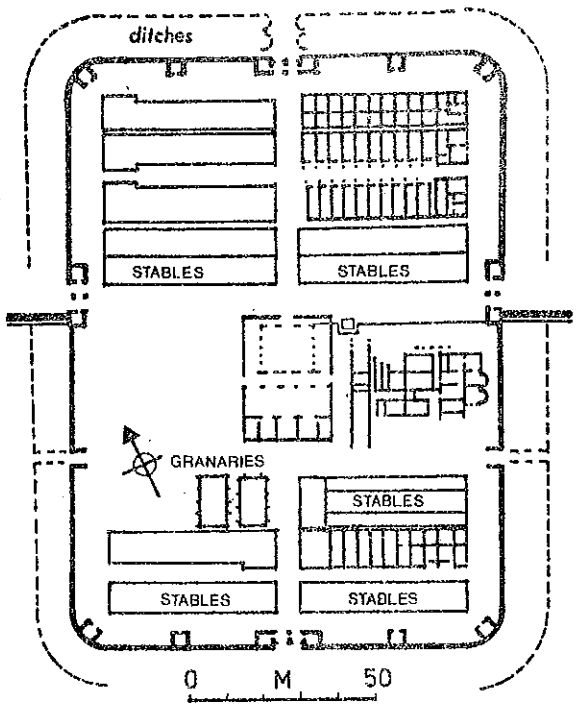


Fig.3.3 The fort at Chesters on Hadrian's Wall, as it was in the fourth century. Its defensive arrangements, with three double-gates north of the Wall itself, are part of the original design

The Antonine Wall

The last of the forts added to Hadrian's Wall was built by A.D.136; within three years, Antoninus Pius, was planning his campaigns which by A.D.143 saw Hadrian's Wall abandoned and a new frontier work erected about 80 miles further north.

We are still not certain why this abrupt change took place. There may have been disturbances north of Hadrian's Wall, as the Greek writer Pausanias seems to imply, and it may have been felt that the security of the province was best guaranteed by conquering and occupying the troublesome area. It has been suggested, however, that Antoninus needed a major military success to secure his own position.

In any event, the Forth-Clyde isthmus was now bridged by a turf wall some 10 or 12ft. high, fronted by a wide, deep ditch. The wall was less than half the length of Hadrian's Wall (37 miles) but it had at least 16 forts, and probably as many as 19. This means they were much closer together than the forts on Hadrian's Wall but most of them were also much smaller. Typical forts such as Bar Hill were between 2.5 and 3.5 acres in size; Balmuidy at 4.3 acres was one of the largest forts on the Antonine Wall.

Apart from being smaller and closer, the Antonine forts were also different in that most of them were built in turf and timber, and were less regular in their plan than the Hadrianic forts. Their garrisons, which seem to have included some legionaries, perhaps totalled about 7,000 men.

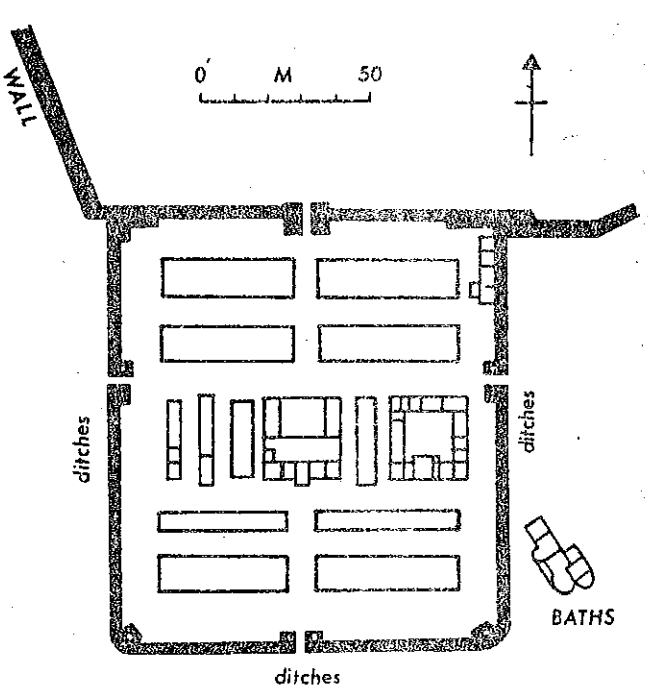


Fig.3.4 Balmuidy fort on the Antonine Wall. Its accommodati suggests it was garrisoned by an auxiliary cohort of 500 n Note that like all the other Antonine Wall forts it lies ent south of the Wall itself.

The 'Brigantian War'

Although the Antonine Wall required a smaller garrison than Hadrian's, its occupation actually required considerably more men than the Hadrianic frontier. North of the Wall there were outpost forts such as Strageath and Ardoch which protected Fife and the long Firth of Forth. On the south shore of the Firth there were forts at Cramond and Inveresk. Similarly there were forts protecting the Firth of Clyde in the west. Above all, however, southern Scotland had to be secured by about 30 forts and fortlets if the frontier was to be safe from attack in the rear. In addition to the Wall garrison, therefore, the new frontier needed another 15,000 troops perhaps to support it. These were found partly by taking troops from Wales but largely by abandoning forts in the north of England.

In these circumstances unrest among the Brigantes could burst into outright rebellion, and there are some indications that this may have happened. A coin of A.D.155 is thought to indicate a Roman victory in Britain and a famous inscription of this period from the R. Tyne records the arrival of reinforcements for all three British legions. Beyond Hadrian's Wall the fort at Birrens was destroyed about this time, and rubbish pits at Newstead contained debris from a cleaning-up operation, including armour and human skulls. Collectively the evidence does suggest trouble in the north in the 150's, and it was probably at this period that the Antonine Wall was abandoned for the first time.

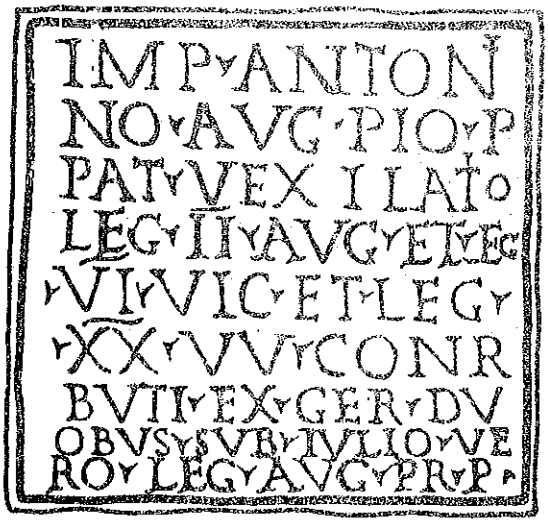


Fig.3.5 The Tyne Inscription, a dedication slab reading:
"For the Emperor Antoninus Augustus Pius
Father of his country
The detachment contributed from the two Germanies
For the Second Legion Augusta and
The Sixth Legion Victrix and
The Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix
Under Julius Verus, Emperor's Propraetorian Legate"
(Set this up)

The Withdrawal from Scotland

The first abandonment of the Antonine Wall is marked by signs of both destruction and demolition, and it is thought that the garrisons withdrew from their forts in an orderly fashion in response to the events further south. It appears, however, that the forts were soon rebuilt and occupied, suggesting that, in spite of the problems posed by its occupation, the Antonine Wall was to remain as the new frontier.

The Wall was probably operative again before A.D.160, but there then appears to have been an abrupt and complete change of policy, which might be connected with the death of Antoninus Pius and the succession of Marcus Aurelius. In any event, there is no dateable pottery from the Antonine Wall later than c.A.D.160. Equally, the latest stratified coin found there is one minted in A.D.154-5. Although experts still argue about it, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the northern Wall was finally abandoned before A.D.165.

Hadrian's Wall, which was already being repaired in A.D.158, was now fully re-occupied, and all the troops north of it were withdrawn but for a small number of important outposts such as Birrens and Newstead. At the same time, some of the abandoned forts in the Pennines were re-garrisoned. These new dispositions were not seriously challenged until A.D.196 when the governor of Britain, Clodius Albinus, led a large army to Gaul to uphold his claim to the throne. Albinus must have left the northern frontier without an effective garrison.

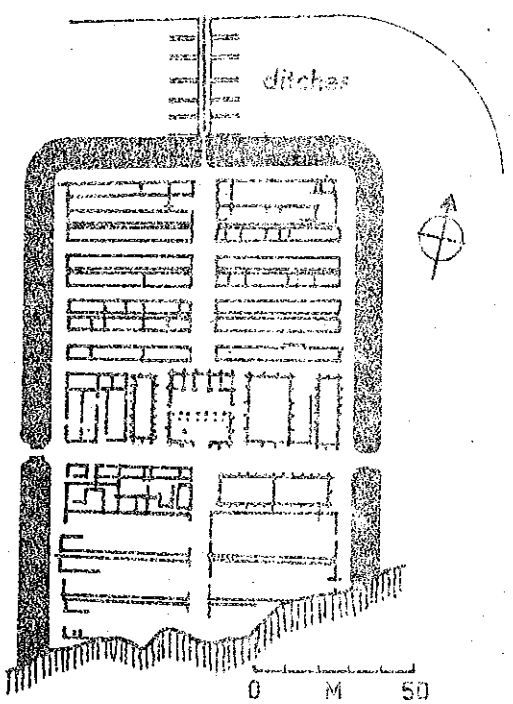


Fig.3.6 The fort at Birrens, built in A.D.158, was 4 acres in size and held a garrison of a part-mounted cohort. The stables were at the southern end of the fort, and the barracks at the northern. Note the six ditches.

Severus and the Northern Frontier

The extent to which the British tribes took the opportunity to attack the frontier forts in 196 is still argued. Dio Cassius tells us that the Maeatae tribe had to be bought-off in 197, and there was clearly a long period of unrest in the north. So much so that eventually, in 208, the new emperor, Severus, arrived in Britain with an expeditionary force. At South Shields a supply base was constructed, with at least twenty granaries. From here supplies were shipped to further bases at Cramond on the Forth and Carpow on the Tay. Aerial photographs, showing marching camps of 65 and 130 acres in size, allow us to trace Severus' campaigns to the southern shore of the Moray Firth.

When Severus died at York in 211, it was left to his son Caracalla to complete the re-organisation of the northern frontier. It is doubtful if Severus ever intended to re-occupy Scotland; certainly Caracalla's frontier stayed at Hadrian's Wall. The garrison of the Wall, however, was now about 2,000 men larger than under Hadrian, and about a third of the entire garrison was cavalry. Beyond the Wall four major outposts existed at High Rochester, Risingham, Netherby and Bewcastle — each garrisoned by a mixed unit of infantry and cavalry a thousand strong. From these forts also operated *exploratores* (scouts), who patrolled further north still. Thus, north of the frontier itself was a deep zone over which the Roman army kept close control.

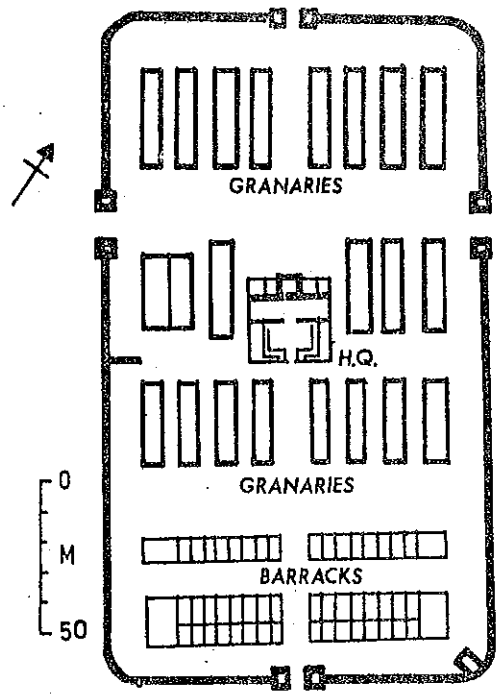


Fig.3.7 The Hadrianic fort at South Shields was rebuilt by Severus as a depot for sea-borne supplies for his Scottish campaigns. The barrack blocks show accommodation for a cohort, but most of the fort is occupied by buttressed granaries.

The Southern Frontier

The solution to the problem of the northern frontier established by Severus and Caracalla at last promised to bring peace and security to the whole province. Yet it was now that a threat to the *pax Romana* appeared from an unlikely direction. Southern and eastern England were the parts of Britain nearest to Roman Gaul and should have been secure from hostile attack.

By the early third century, however, Saxon raiders from across the North Sea were beginning to trouble the east coast of England. The large number of coin hoards of the late second century found in east Anglia and the south-east may be one reflection of their activities. More certainly the strengthening of the coastal defences attests to the threat they posed. An existing naval base at Dover was abandoned around the end of the second century, but by A.D.230, and possibly earlier, a much larger base was built at Reculver. With an area of 8 acres it was large enough to house both a cohort of auxiliaries and men of the British fleet. Its location suggests that it was intended to protect the mouth of the Thames, and thus the sea approaches to London. Significantly, a second fort of similar design was probably built at this time at Brancaster, safeguarding the entrance to the Wash. For a time at least, these forts and the activities of the British fleet secured Britain from sea-borne attack.

Places to visit, Things to do

Two forts on the Stanegate frontier can be visited:

Chesterholm — see the 4th century gates, H.Q., and stores.

Corbridge — see the remains of the Severan supply base.

On Hadrian's Wall, see for example:

Chesters — see barracks, the H.Q., commanders house and baths

Housesteads — see the H.Q., gates and communal latrine.

Castle Nick and Bardon Mill — milecastles with barracks.

Brunton and Warden — turrets and lengths of wall.

The Antonine Wall is less spectacular and poorly preserved:

Rough Castle — see the defences of the fort, and remains of the Antonine Wall and ditch.

Cramond — a small part of the fort is exposed, and a bath-house may eventually be opened to the public.

The activities of Severus can be seen at Corbridge and at South Shields (see the granaries, west gate and H.Q). Of the two early 3rd century coastal forts little can be seen though parts of the defences are visible at Reculver.

1. A useful model of a milecastle on Hadrian's Wall is available, with Roman legionaries, as an 'Airfix' plastic kit.
   There is a Jackdaw pack available describing Hadrian's Wall and life in the Roman army.
2. Imagine you wanted to lead a raiding party across Hadrian's Wall and into the province of Britain. Where and how would you try to cross the frontier?

4 THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITAIN

The Province of Britain

Before the Romans conquered Britain, the island was a patchwork of tribal kingdoms, confederacies, and local chiefdoms. The Romans formed the conquered territories into a province, known as Britannia, which was ruled on behalf of the Emperor by a governor or *Legatus Augusti pro praetore*. Initially some tribal kingdoms, such as those of the Iceni, Brigantes, and Regni, were allowed to keep their local independence and their rulers became client-kings. The palace at Fishbourne was probably the home of the client-king of the Regni, Cogidubnus.

As these rulers died, however, their kingdoms were incorporated into the province. At the same time, local self-government was gradually extended to the settlements of army veterans known as colonies, to privileged towns which were given the status of *municipium*, and to the population of much larger areas, usually based on existing tribal regions, which were organised into *civitates* — local authorities.

About the beginning of the third century Severus divided Britain into two provinces — Britannia Superior and Britannia Inferior — which split the area south of Hadrian's Wall in two with the boundary line drawn roughly from the Wash to the Mersey. A century later Diocletian further divided Britain, to make a total of four provinces, and in the middle of the fourth century a fifth province, named Valentia, was created in northern Britain.

Provincial Capitals

The administration of the provinces was based on a provincial capital, which until the revolt of Boudicca seems to have been the colony at Colchester. Apart from the offices and residence of the governor and the other administrative staff, the provincial capital also housed the principal temple of the imperial cult and was used once a year for the meeting of the provincial council — a largely advisory body comprised of delegates from the various local authorities.

After A.D.60 the capital of the province appears to have been London, where remains of a large palace thought to belong to the governor and built about A.D.75 have been recognised. London has also yielded a building thought to be used by the Procurator of the province (see on the next page) and inscriptions which clearly indicate that the seat of government was there. A large fort in one corner of the city probably housed troops serving on the governor's staff and those needed for ceremonial purposes in the capital.

When the province was divided then of course further capitals were needed. York was the capital of Inferior before it became capital of Britannia Secunda in the fourth century. At this time Cirencester was probably made capital of Britannia Prima, whilst Lincoln may have become capital of Flavia Caesariensis. The last of the provinces, Valentia, may have had its capital at Carlisle.

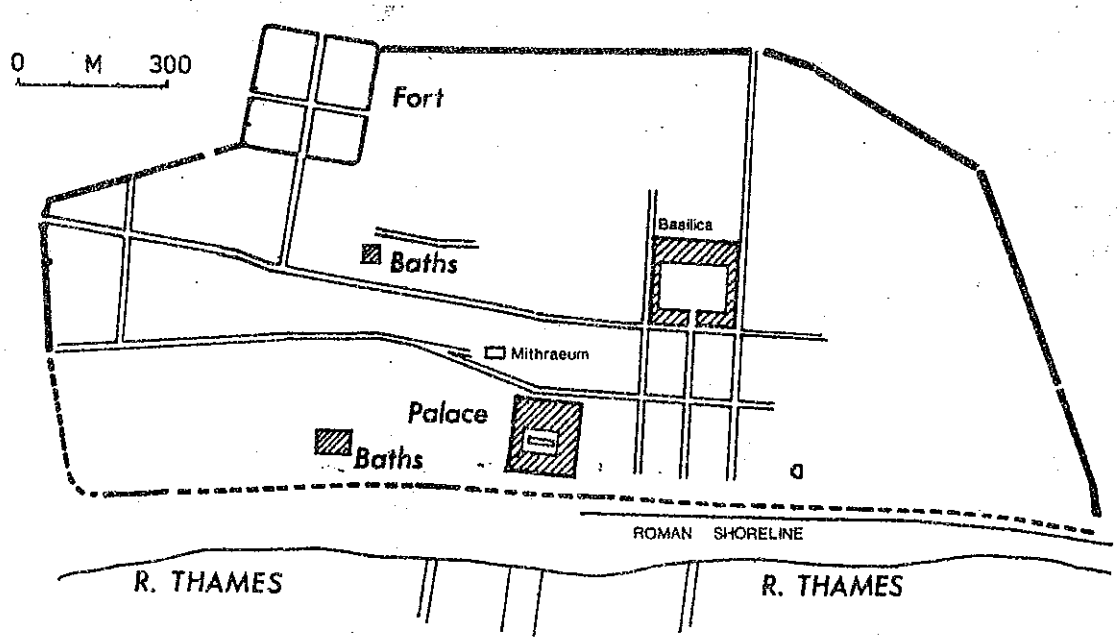


Fig.4.1 The map of Roman London is still only known in outline. Recent discoveries have included the recognition of the governor's palace, a large bath building, and the riverside wall, all between one hundred and two hundred metres north of the present embankment. The Roman riverside wall was built on thousands of timber piles driven into the gravel.

The Governor

Provincial governors were chosen from men who had served in the Roman senate, and in provinces with more than two legions (including Britain), from men who had held the consulship in Rome. We know the names of many of the governors of Britain, the most famous of whom is Agricola. His career is broadly similar to that of many other governors.

Born in A.D.40, by the time he was twenty Agricola was a tribune in one of the legions which faced Boudicca's rebels. Shortly after he became a senator, then a quaestor (dealing with finances) in the province of Asia, in A.D.66 he was appointed a Tribune of the People in Rome, and two years later a Praetor (concerned with legal matters). In 69 or 70 he was sent to Britain for a second time, now as commander of the Twentieth legion. From here he moved to his first governorship, of Aquitania (central and south-west France). This was a province with no legionary garrison. In A.D.77 he was elected consul, and within a year was once more back in Britain, as the newly appointed governor.

We can see from Agricola's career, that governors were carefully chosen from men with a wide experience of legal and financial administration, as well as considerable service in the army. This was because there was a great deal more to a governor's job than commanding the army in the field.

Fig.4.2 An imaginative reconstruction of the facade of the Governor's palace in London, fronted by a pool with fountains (the remains of which have been found).

The Work of the Governor

As the province became more settled, campaigning became a less important part of the governor's role. The governor also oversaw law and order in the province, and was directly concerned with criminal law and the Court of Appeal. Legal matters took up so much of the governor's time, in fact, that from the 70's a deputy, known as a *legatus iuridicus*, was appointed to ease this burden.

The governor was also responsible for communications in the province, including road and bridge-building and the running of the imperial post. Additionally, he was expected to receive deputations and petitions, and to make periodic visits to different parts of the province.

To help him the governor had a large staff. Some of these were unofficial — friends and advisors — but the official staff were overseen by a centurion and included ten soldiers seconded from each of the legions who carried dispatches and helped in the administration of law and order (*speculators*). Other soldiers served as *beneficiarii*, and inscriptions referring to them occur as widely spread as Winchester, Wroxeter and Catterick. We believe their duties included control of the supply routes in the province. Clerical staff included secretaries, clerks and accountants, and these, like the speculators and advisors, used offices attached to the governor's residence in London.

Fig.4.3 An altar from Winchester set up by a *beneficiarius* on the Governor's staff at Winchester.
"To the Italian, German, Gallic and
British Mother Goddesses
Antonius Lucretianus, beneficiarius consularis,
restored this."

ocal Councils

he colonies, municipia, and the civitates (of which there ere eventually more than twenty in Britain) were all verned by a council (or *ordo*) of nominally one hundred embers. These had to meet certain property qualifications. rom amongst them four magistrates were elected each ear. The two senior magistrates mainly concerned emselves with administering the law, whilst their junior lleagues (*aediles*) supervised public works — repairs to oads, aqueducts, sewers, and so on. There might also be wo *quaestors* who would see to matters of local finance.

etween them, these officials would take on much of the ocal responsibility for the work of the governor and the rocurator. Civil law cases would be tried, taxes and the orn levy collected, roads and the staging places of the nperial post would be maintained. Every five years the ensus returns would be revised to ensure that everyone vas paying the correct amount of tax.

ll of this work was administered from the basilica uilding in most towns, which included not only the aisled all ere assemblies took place and legal cases were heard, ut a... the council chamber and office for the magistrates nd their clerks. Although small towns which were not civitas capitals appear to have lacked basilicas, we know that they too — if they had the status of a vicus — also had heir own council.

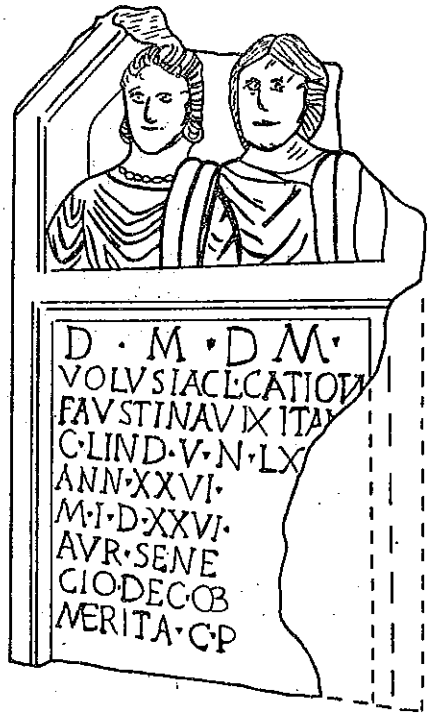


Fig.4.6 A curious tombstone from Lincoln, showing two ladies, and carrying two funerary inscriptions. Volusia Faustina (on the left), who died at the age of 26, was the wife of Aurelius Senacio, a councillor in the colony.

aw and Order

We have seen that justice was administered both by the governor and by the local councils, the latter concerning hemselves mainly with civil law cases. Roman law, like modern law, was complex. There were several sets of laws existing alongside one another, including laws applying to Roman citizens and those applying to both citizens and non-citizens. In Britain it is likely that Cel law also operated.

Punishments varied not only according to the crime but also in relation to one's class. A serious crime would rarely mean death for a member of the upper classes; they might be deprived of their citizenship and some of their property. A poorer man might receive the death penalty for a similar crime, or be sent to the mines. Imprisonment was not used as a punishment, although suspects could be held in custody.

Much of the time spent on administering justice was taken up with wills and the problems of inheritance. Details of one such case from Roman Britain survive and concern a legionary who had committed suicide. The Emperor (Hadrian) decided that unless the suicide was intended to avoid a punishment the man's will was valid. If he had no will, then his next of kin should inherit his property. It says much for the Roman legal system that the affairs of this unfortunate soldier should have finally been considered and settled at the Emperor's direction.

Places to visit, Things to do

Fishbourne — see the palace of the client-king, Cogidubnus.

The various towns (colonies, municipia and vici) which are worth visiting are listed on broadsheets 5 and 6.

1. The following is a translation of the inscription in illustration 5.

   The civitas of the Parisi
   For the Honour of the Divine House of the Emperor Caesar
   Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius
   , Father of His Country, thrice consul and to the deities
   of the Emperors, Marcus Ulpius Ianuarius
   aedile of the vicus of Petuaria presented
   this new theatre stage at his own expense.

Try to answer the following questions from the information in the inscription:

1. The Parisi were a tribe in east Yorkshire. What was their legal status?
2. What was the Roman status and name of Brough-on-Humber?
3. What is the latest date by which the tribe and the town could have acquired their status (note the emperor!).
4. What sort of responsibilities would Marcus Ianuarius have had in local government?
5. Does the provision of a theatre stage tell us anything about the kind of man Ianuarius was?

Produced by: Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

The Procurator

One aspect of the province which was no concern of the governor was its financial organisation. This was controlled by a *Procurator*, assisted by junior officials. His central office was in the provincial capital, and in London we believe we can identify the building used by the procurator Classicianus shortly after the Boudiccan revolt.

Apart from paying the army, the procurators office was responsible for collecting taxes and overseeing imperial estates. An estate (*saltus*) might be a farm, but often it was a quarry, an iron works, or a lead mine. A junior procurator, usually with a small number of troops, would see to the day-to-day running of a *saltus*.

The main taxes to be collected were those on land and on moveable property. In addition, there were death duties, customs dues, and other minor taxes. Taxes were paid partly in money and partly in produce. Grain and hides were always needed by the army, and there was a corn levy (*annona*) which provided corn for the garrison of the province.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of both the financial and legal administration of a province was the small number of staff needed to make it work efficiently. The total employed by both procurator and governor may have numbered no more than two hundred. The secret of the system was, of course, the degree to which the Romans delegated responsibilities to local authorities.

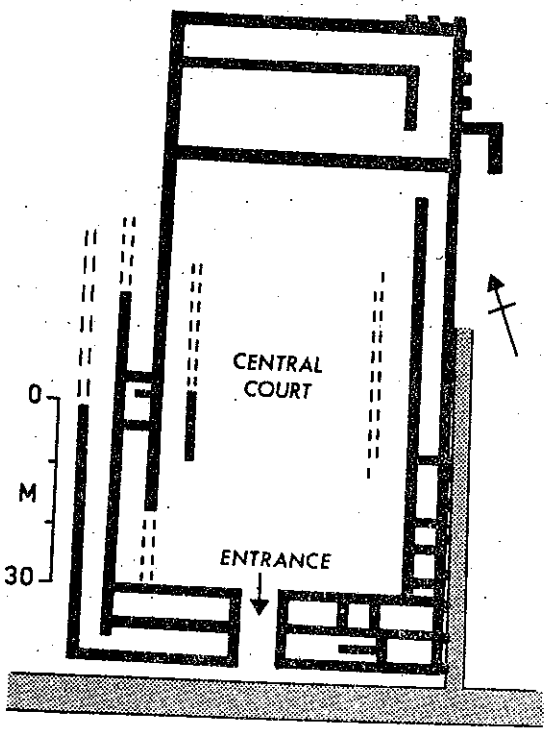


Fig.4.4 A large building constructed about A.D.60. Sometimes called the 'proto-forum' it seems too small to have served that purpose, and it is thought more likely to have been the office of the procurator.

Local Government

The earliest grants of local self-government were often made to colonies (*coloniae*) which were towns of Roman citizens, frequently retired legionaries. The citizens of course possessed all the rights and privileges of the Roman citizen, and they were responsible for the administration of both the town and its surrounding area or *territorium*.

Similar responsibilities fell to the citizens of a *municipium*. This was a status, carrying Roman or Latin citizenship with it, granted to important towns. Tacitus calls St Albans a *municipium*, and other British towns no doubt achieved the status later, perhaps including Leicester.

Most of the larger towns of Roman Britain acted as the administrative centres of local authorities called *civitates*. These were based, where possible, on existing tribal territories and as legal units they were usually much larger than a colony or municipium and its territories.

Towns which did not rank as colonies or municipia, and this included many civitas capitals, normally had the status of a *vicus*, and they too had their own council. Finally, a civitas was broken down into a number of administrative areas, each of which was known as a *pagus*. These various legal units could of course overlap. For example, St Albans was a municipium but it was also the capital of the civitas of the Catuvellauni.

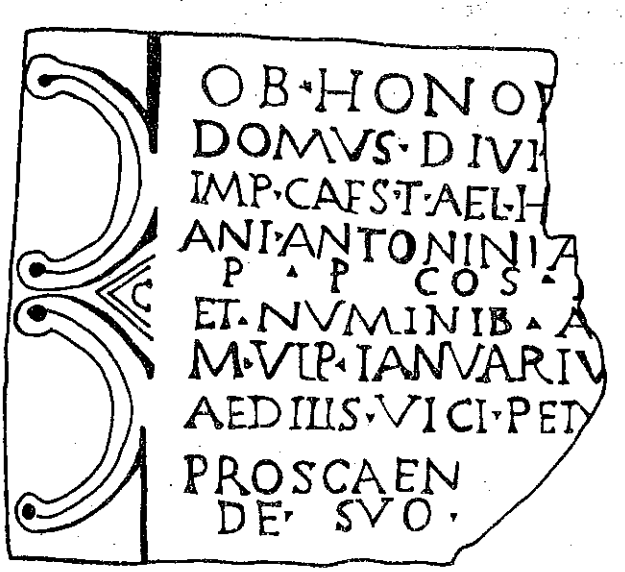


Fig.4.5 A broken dedicatory inscription, once attached to a theatre stage in Petuaria (modern Brough-on-Humber). A translation of the text, and some questions about its significance, are to be found on the last side of this broadsheet. This is one of a handful of inscriptions from Britain which specifically refer to a *civitas*.

5 THE GROWTH OF TOWNS

Iron Age Towns in Britain

By the time Claudius' legions landed in A.D.43 many of the British tribes had built settlements with many of the features we normally associate with towns.

The most impressive remains of such settlements which can still be seen today are those of hillforts like Maiden Castle and Hod Hill in Dorset, Danebury in Hampshire, South Cadbury in Somerset, and Croft Ambrey in Herefordshire. Though small by Roman standards, ranging from about 20 acres to about 60 acres, such hillforts were densely packed with the timber-framed huts used as houses and working places by the British. At Hod Hill, for example, there may have been between 200 and 300 such huts, housing a population of 500 to 1,000. In some cases the huts were laid out in neat rows and streets are recognisable, implying both planning and probably someone with the authority to impose it. Several hillforts also had public shrines or temples, and at South Cadbury a bronze-smith's workshop was identified.

Elsewhere, at places like Colchester, St Albans, Canterbury and Silchester there were much larger settlements on low-lying land. These *oppida* were defended by great dykes enclosing in some cases several square miles, but the whole of this area was not densely occupied. Rather, the urban character of these sites is reflected in the number of specialist craftsmen known to have operated, their wide-ranging trade contacts, the fact that many of them were coin mints, and their clear status as tribal capitals.

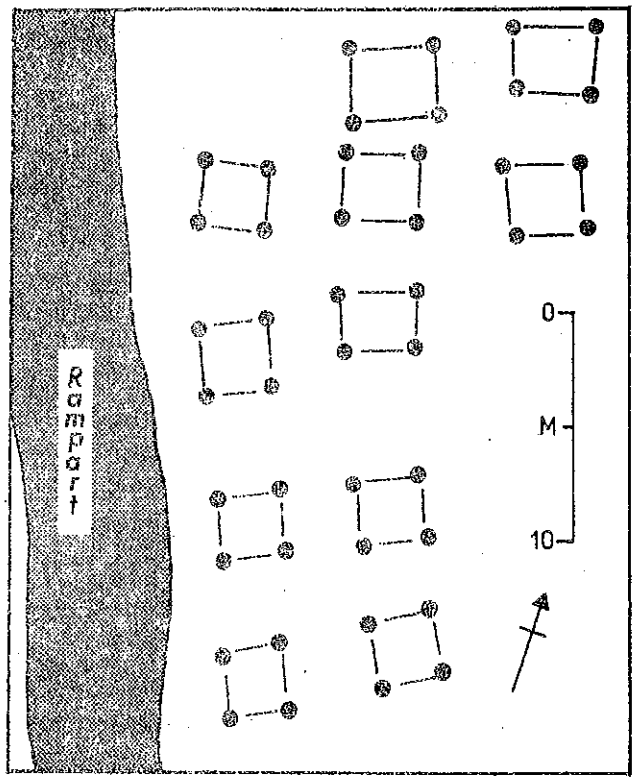


Fig.5.1 Part of Moel-y-Gaer hillfort with rows of small four-post buildings. Their arrangement and spacing, imply communal planning and control.

The Origins of Towns in Roman Britain

Whilst none of the hillforts in England became the site of a Roman town, all the *oppida* we have just mentioned, and a number of others, were soon replaced by Roman towns on the same site. This was presumably because the Iron Age *oppida* and Roman towns were intended to fulfill the same functions — as the centre of a tribal administration and as market places. Equally, because they were tribal capitals, they were naturally occupied by the Roman army initially and early roads were built running to and through them.

Other Roman towns grew up where no important native settlements had been for the same reason — the building of a fort and the construction of a road. The soldiers provided a 'market' for the products of local craftsmen and traders, who were soon settling in the area adjacent to the fort. When the troops moved on and the fort was abandoned many of these communities were well enough established to continue in existence as small towns. Great Casterton is a good example of this process at work.

The building of the main roads in the province was soon followed by the establishment of the routes by which official messengers carried government letters across the country. To aid them, small resting places and stables, called *mansios*, were built at intervals along the main roads. Some of these *mansios* were erected in existing towns but others were built in open country. Soon, however, other people began to settle around the new mansio, and small towns like Godmanchester came into being.

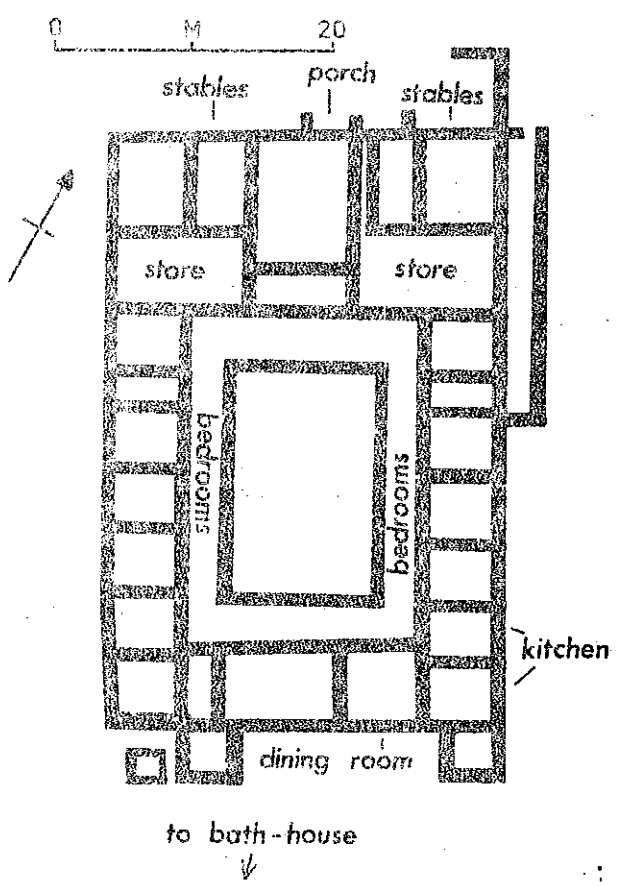


Fig.5.2 The mansio, or inn, at Godmanchester (Hunts.).

The Origins of Towns in Roman Britain (cont.)

Apart from towns which grew up to serve the needs of a fort and then became market centres for surrounding farms, there were others whose growth was determined by commercial factors. Some were ports, like Sea Mills near Bristol, and others relied on the nearby exploitation of raw materials, like Charterhouse on Mendip (near the lead mines). Small towns such as Wilderspool in Cheshire seem to have grown up as centres of industrial activity.

There were also a few towns which grew and prospered because they were associated with temples to which many pilgrims were attracted. The most famous example is Bath, whose hot baths and temple to Sulis-Minerva attracted visitors from France as well as from many parts of Britain. Other, smaller, towns which seem to have thrived mainly on the custom of pilgrims are known at Springhead (Kent), Nettleton (Wiltshire) and Wycomb (Gloucestershire).

Clearly, there were many different factors which led to the foundation of towns in Roman Britain, and although one factor or another was often particularly important in individual cases, most towns fulfilled a variety of roles. What is perhaps surprising is that none of these towns were founded by the Romans themselves. They encouraged towns to develop, but the only towns which they themselves established were the colonies (for retired soldiers) at Colchester, Gloucester and Lincoln (see broadsheet 6).

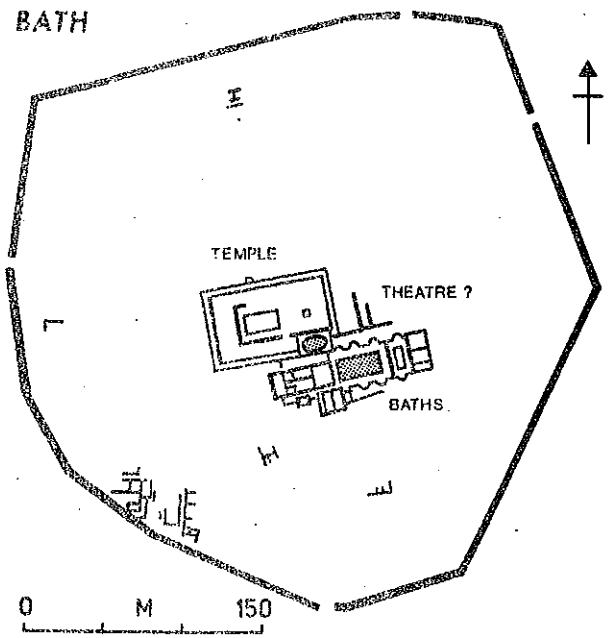


Fig.5.3 The Roman town at Bath (Avon). The baths survive but the other remains are known from 'rescued' fragments beneath later buildings. The importance of the baths and associated temple and theatre to the prosperity of Roman Bath is clear — the central complex alone occupies perhaps a sixth of the entire area of the town.

The Growth of Towns

By the time of Boudicca's revolt in A.D.60 towns in the Roman sense of the word were beginning to grow over much of southern England. Many were still no more than villages which served Roman forts, but three towns of size and importance are mentioned by Tacitus as having been destroyed by the rebels.

Colchester was probably the town from which the province was administered at this time, and had been founded as a colony in A.D.49. According to Tacitus the town had no defences but boasted a Council house, a theatre, a temple, and a statue of Victory. Excavations have revealed part of the temple, which was a magnificent building in the classical tradition. Archaeologists have also found shops selling lamps, Gallic pottery, and Rhenish glass which were burnt down by Boudicca.

London had become an important town by A.D.60 by reason of its position on the Thames and at the meeting place of several important roads. Tacitus tells us little about it, except that it was already a place for business-men and traders, but excavations have revealed gravelled streets, timber buildings and at least one building with stone walls.

St Albans grew up on the site of its Iron Age predecessor as the principal centre of the tribe of the Catuvellauni. At the time of Boudicca it was defended by a rampart enclosing 120 acres. The whole area was not yet occupied by buildings but a street-system existed and alongside Watling Street stood a fine row of shops, including a restaurant and a bronze-smiths.

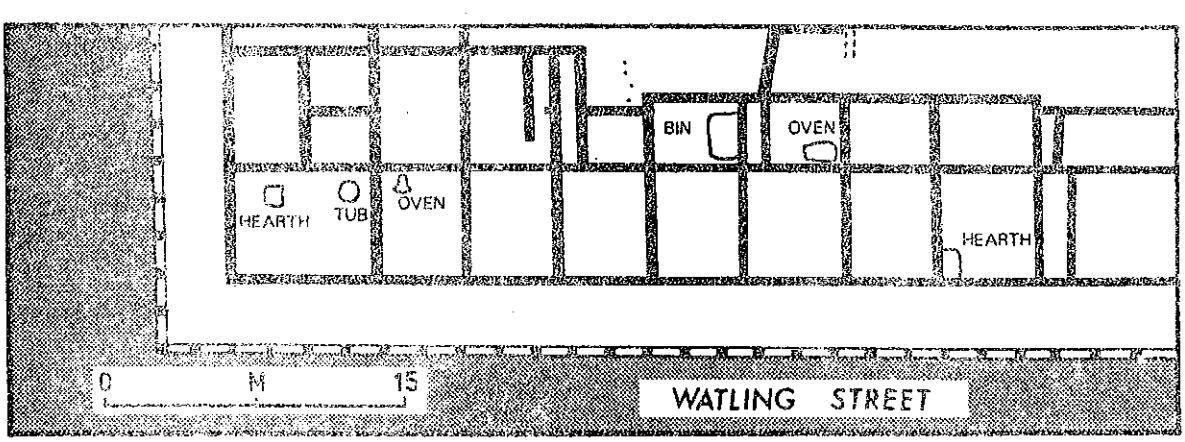


Fig.5.4 Shops at St Albans built in A.D.49 and burnt down in A.D.60.

Towns in the late First Century

Although the towns destroyed by Boudicca were not fully rebuilt for more than a decade, by the mid 70's these and other towns such as Canterbury, Chichester, Winchester, Cirencester and Exeter were growing rapidly. These were to be tribal capitals, and in the 70's the Romans granted the privileges of local government to the tribes centred on them.

As a result, these towns now saw the building not only of the Council house and adjacent market place (basilica and forum) but also of amenities such as baths, temples and theatres. Street systems were laid out or, if already in existence, regularised.

Long, narrow-fronted shops began to front the roads leading to the market place, and private citizens began to invest capital in the building of houses with several rooms, painted plaster on the walls and hard, mortar floors. Much of this development was undertaken by the local people as they grew to appreciate the advantages of living in towns with these various amenities, but apart from granting local government to several tribes in the south of England at this time, the government may also have provided the expertise of military surveyors and architects to help with the work. Tacitus tells us that Agricola gave official assistance for the building of temples and market places, and some British towns have a forum and basilica that looks very much like a headquarters building in a Roman fort!

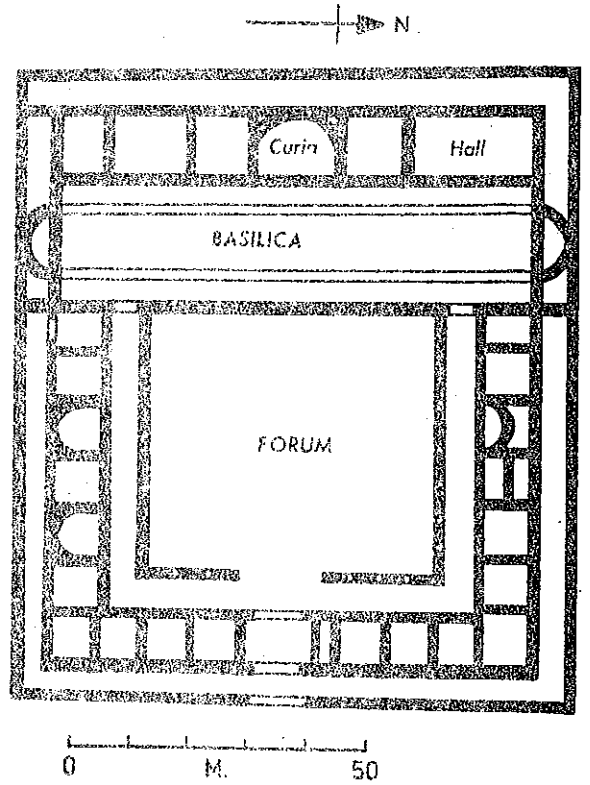


Fig.5.5 The first century forum and basilica of Silchester (Berks.), similar in design to a military H.Q.

Towns in the Second and Third Centuries

Further grants of local self government were made by Hadrian, perhaps in connection with his visit to Britain in A.D.121/2, and towns such as Caerwent and Aldborough became tribal capitals.

In the mid-second century many of these large towns were given earth ramparts to defend them. Most of these ramparts were constructed between A.D.150 and A.D.200 but we cannot date them more closely or be certain as to why they were built. Although a number of towns, including St Albans, Wroxeter and Chelmsford, suffered serious fires around A.D.150-60, there is no evidence that these were other than accidental. Equally, disturbances on the northern frontier in the late 150's probably had no effect on the southern part of the province. On the other hand, some of the ramparts certainly seem to have been erected before the usurpation of Albinus in the 190's, and cannot easily be connected with him.

Indeed, by the early third century, some towns, such as Leicester, Cirencester and London, were already being fortified with stone walls and elaborate gateways. The main gates often had double, arched, roadways for wheeled traffic, and flanking passages for pedestrians. Although economic problems and insecurity in the late third century occasionally saw defences neglected, these walls safely protected the towns from the threat of raiders and allowed them to survive and flourish again in the fourth century.

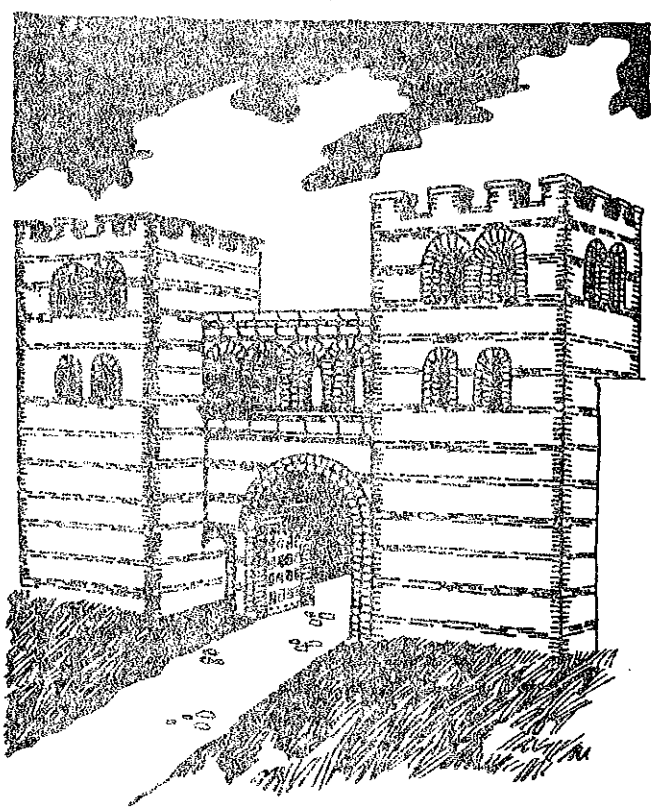


Fig.5.6 A reconstruction of the Silchester Gate at St Albans: note the pedestrian passage and tile-bonded walls.

Small Towns in Southern Britain

Apart from the major towns we have mentioned above, and with which broadsheet 6 deals in more detail, there were dozens of smaller towns in Roman Britain. Some had defences but others seem never to have been provided with them. They developed, as we saw earlier, for a variety of reasons — as posting stations, spa's and cult centres, industrial centres, ports, and to serve the needs of forts. Whatever their origins, all of them came to play an important local role as market places for the produce of the countryside, and as places where a variety of services could be provided for the rural population.

Each of these towns had its own character but there are features common to most of them. They are built around or alongside a Roman road, from which cobbled lanes or streets run off at about right angles. There is little sign of formal planning, and none of the municipal drainage and sewage systems one finds in the larger towns. Equally, there are few, if any, public buildings and private houses tend to be small, simple in plan, and moderately provided with mortar or tesselated (a sort of coarse mosaic) floors. Many of the buildings prove to be workshops as well as homes.

The size of such towns varied a lot, but they were often between 15 and 30 acres, and must have been populated by no more than a few hundred people. Despite their small size, they played an important part in the life of the province, and one which is often forgotten or underestimated.

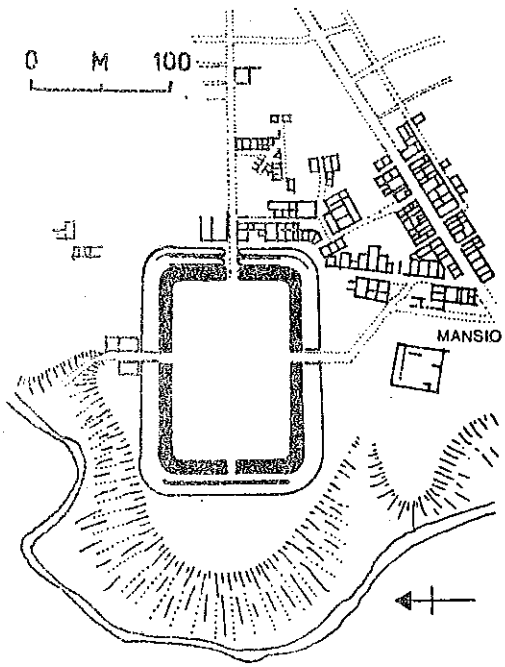


Fig.5.7 A plan of the *vicus* outside the fort at Old Carlisle. The regularity of planning of the buildings, and the organised street system, suggests that the towns inhabitants were more Romanised than has often been supposed.

Small Towns in the Military Zone

In Wales and in the northern frontier region, forts established in the late first or second century more often than not remained in existence until the late fourth century. Consequently, small settlements which grew up to serve them never had the opportunity to grow in quite the same way as some of those in southern Britain, and they continued to be closely associated with a fort throughout the Roman occupation.

These towns were important, however, for they were the *only* towns with which many native farmers in the frontier areas ever came into contact; neither were they necessarily small. At Chesterholm and Housesteads they were over 10 acres in size, at Corbridge 30 acres, Old Carlisle 40 acres, and Carlisle possibly as much as 70 acres. They were peopled by Britons and by retired soldiers from many different parts of the empire, who had married and settled on their discharge.

Apart from houses the settlement consisted of shops and taverns and sometimes bath-houses and temples. All of these buildings tended to be grouped around one or two of the roads leading into the fort, but side roads or lanes frequently lead-off at right angles to give the towns an appearance not unlike that of their counterparts in the south. From surviving inscriptions we know that many of these frontier towns exercised a measure of local government, overseen by two magistrates.

Places to visit, Things to do

There are some impressive examples of Roman town walls still to be seen in Britain, and on Hadrian's Wall there are extensive civilian settlements to be visited.

Caerwent (Gwent) — see the complete circuit of town defences.

Silchester (Berks) — see the town walls still standing.

Cirencester (Glos) — see the earth rampart and the stone wall which succeeded it.

Horncastle (Lincs) — see the town wall and bastions.

Aldborough (N.Yorks) — see the town wall and towers.

Housesteads (Hadrian's Wall) — see the streets and houses of the civilian settlement.

Chesterholm (Hadrian's Wall) — see the extensive civilian settlement including hostel and bath-house.

1. Find out which is the nearest Roman town to you, and how large it was. Then trace its outline (or an area equivalent to it) onto a map of the modern town in which, or near which you live. You will be surprised just how small the Roman town was.
2. Write down a list of the sort of things you think a Roman soldier might want to buy in a civilian settlement. See if you find examples of shops selling any of these things which have been excavated at Housesteads, Corbridge or Chesterholm.
3. Try to model a short section of town wall in quick-drying

Produced by: Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

6 THE MAJOR TOWNS

Colonies in Roman Britain

Colonia were towns occupied by Roman citizens and governed in a similar way to Rome itself. The civilian settlement outside the legionary fortress at York was given the title of *Colonia*, perhaps in the third century, but the term is particularly applied to towns deliberately founded to house retired legionaries. Three such towns existed in Roman Britain, and each was built on the site of an abandoned legionary fortress.

Colchester became a colony as early as A.D.49, and by A.D.60 it boasted several public buildings (see broadsheet 11, fig.11.5). It eventually grew to over 100 acres, and within its walls were many fine houses with patterned mosaic floors. Over fifty such floors have already been found there.

Li. ln became a colony perhaps about A.D.90, and like Colchester expanded beyond its fortress walls to become a town of nearly 100 acres. Although little is known of its buildings, its aqueduct and sewers partially survive and attest to the skills of the Roman engineer. The north gate of the colony also survives and one can still pass through its archway.

About A.D.98 a third colony was founded at Gloucester. The first colonists lived in buildings very much like military barracks, but impressive public buildings including the Council house and market, and a public baths soon followed. As at Colchester and Lincoln there is the impression of a well ordered and wealthy community.

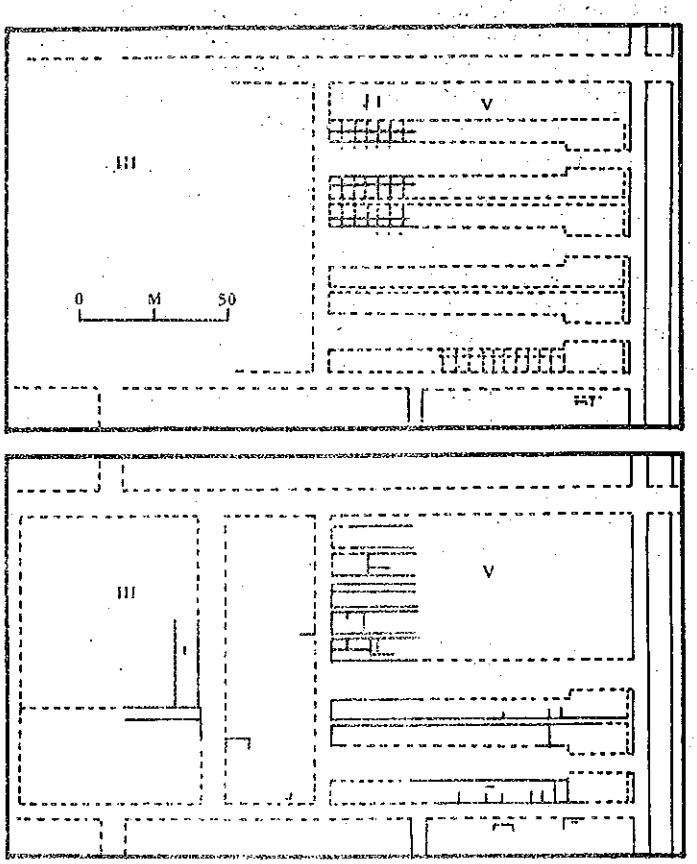


Fig 6.1 Above, the central area of the legionary fort at Gloucester. Below, the same area in the first phase of the colony — note the similarity of layout.

'Civitas' Capitals

Most of the best known towns of Roman Britain, and many of those which became modern towns, acted as the administrative capitals of the *'civitates'* — the local authorities or governments which the Romans established over much of the province.

We are not certain how many towns fulfilled this role but there were probably at least twenty. Some *civitates* appear to have been divided into two authorities later in their history. The Durotriges, for example, had a capital at Dorchester (Dorset), but perhaps soon after A.D.200 they appear to have been divided into two *civitates* and a second capital was established at Ilchester. Other *civitates* which may have been eventually divided into two authorities include the Catuvellauni (with Water Newton as its secondary capital), the Belgae (with Bath as a new capital) and the Dobunni (with Kenchester taking on an administrative role).

The size to which these capital towns grew, and the amenities provided within them, varied from one *civitas* to another. Much depended on how committed the local people were to town life and Romanisation in general. The largest such towns were Cirencester (240 acres), St Albans and Wroxeter (each about 200 acres); the smallest were Caerwent (44 acres), Caistor (35 acres) and, if it was a capital, Brough on Humber (13 acres!). The majority of the civitas capitals in southern Britain, however, were about 100 acres in size and had populations perhaps of about 4,000 to 5,000 people.

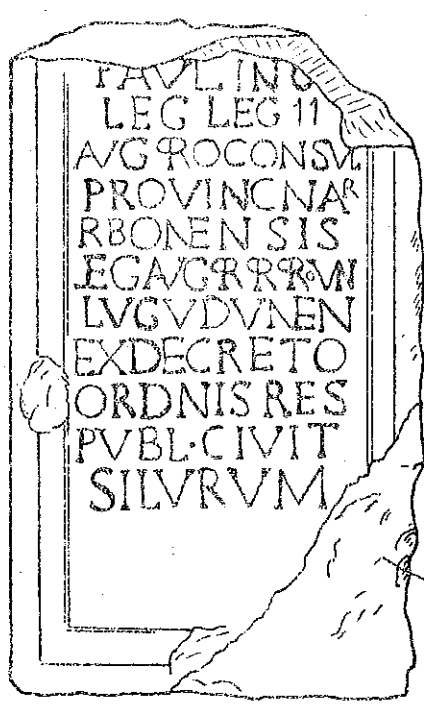


Fig.6.2 An inscription of c.A.D.219 from Caerwent set up 'by decree of the council' of the civitas of the Silures. Caerwent was the tribal capital of the Silures.

Civitas Capitals — Town Planning

Although the shape of the area enclosed by the town walls varies greatly from one capital to another, the layout of the towns is similar in many ways. There are usually four major gates through which pass the two main streets. These cross each other at right-angles near the centre of the town, and the rest of the settlement is served by a grid-system of smaller streets which join the principal ones.

At the centre of the town is the Council house (*basilica*) and market-place (*forum*), and very often the main temple. There may also be a market-hall near the centre, and in some towns either a theatre or a bath building. Often the baths are placed nearer the edge of the town, however, perhaps because of the fire risk they posed. Other public buildings placed around the fringes of the town usually include a public inn (or *mansio*), a temple near one of the main gates, and somewhere just beyond the walls an amphitheatre. Caerwent is unusual in having an amphitheatre inside the defences.

The private buildings tend to follow a certain pattern too. Near the centre, and particularly on the main street leading to the forum, the buildings are mainly shops and small houses packed closely together because frontage was expensive here. Away from the busy centre, one usually finds the larger, more spacious private houses with their own baths and enclosed gardens.

Civitas Capitals — Market Centres

As the largest centres of population in the region, the civitas capitals were obviously important market places. The forum served as a market place, but around it on three sides there were usually permanent shops fronted by a covered walk. In some towns, these facilities were augmented by a market hall (macellum), comprised of further permanent shops under cover. Examples of market halls are known at Cirencester, Wall, and St Albans. These halls might be devoted to one trade or the sale of one commodity.

As the economic centre of the town, the forum naturally attracted other tradesmen, who built their shops close to the forum and along the main road leading to it. At Caerwent, for example, one can see a line of these shops strung along the south side of the main street near the forum, baths and temple, and some early examples at St Albans are illustrated on broadsheet 5.

These shops were normally narrow buildings — because there was great demand for frontage on these streets — with workshop-cum-showroom at the front and living quarters behind. Just as the market hall and forum allowed the farmer to sell his produce to the townsmen, so these shops with their carpenters, shoe-makers, cloth-merchants and bronze-smiths, met the needs of the country. Here too, imported pottery, glass and even wine and savoury sauces could be bought by townsmen and country-dweller alike.

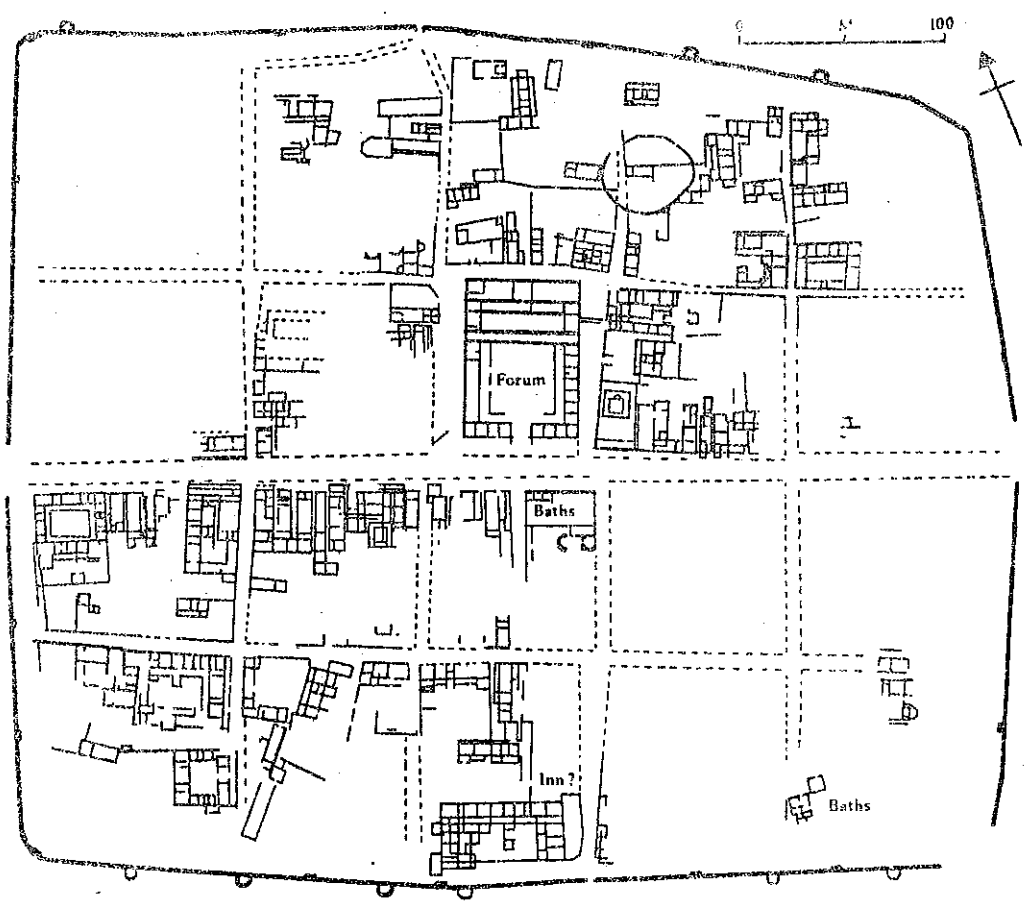


Fig.6.3 The town of Caerwent. The central position of forum and basilica, and adjacent temple, are typical of civitas capitals the position of the amphitheatre is not. Note the courtyard houses in the s-w corner.

Civitas Capitals — Their Social Role

Like market places everywhere, the forum of a Roman town was as much a place for meeting friends and gossiping as it was for buying and selling. The civitas capitals therefore served an important social function, which was reflected in the provision of public buildings for social use.

One such building was the bath-house. In a well-equipped public baths this would offer the bather a choice between a steam-heat and a dry-heat bath, with either cold or hot plunge-(water-) baths to follow. The bather would begin in the changing room, move via the cold room, to the warm room, and thence to the hottest room next to the furnace. Before bathing, the visitor might exercise in the yard and afterwards he could sit and talk or gamble with his friends.

The public met in far greater numbers of course at the theatre and amphitheatre. Not all the civitas capitals had theatres, and their presence is usually taken to denote the Romanised tastes of the population. On the stage of the theatre, and in the 'orchestra' (semi-circular space in front of the stage) plays, dancing and music were performed. In the oval amphitheatre, seating several thousand people, re robust entertainments such as animal baiting and probably occasional gladiatorial combats, were to be seen. Whether or not chariot races took place in Britain is uncertain, but one is portrayed on a mosaic from Horkstow (Lincs) and a charioteer and his team are seen on another mosaic from Colerne (Wilts).

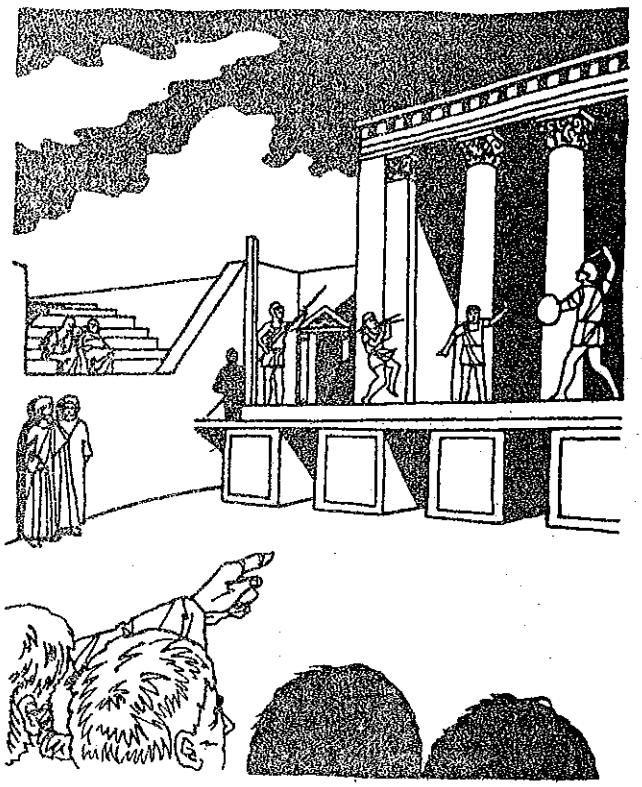


Fig.6.4 An imaginative reconstruction of a performance in the theatre at St Albans. As originally designed the St Albans theatre had both a stage and an arena-like orchestra.

Civitas Capitals — Private Homes

The most prolific buildings in the towns were, of course, private houses. Most first century houses were relatively simple rectangular buildings with four or five rooms and mortar floors. By the middle of the second century more spacious houses either built around an enclosed court or else with projecting wings were being erected.

These larger houses frequently had a large, mosaic-floored r' 'ng room with under-floor heating. Adjacent reception rooms might also have mosaic-floors or floors of coloured mortar. Nearby were bedrooms for the owner and his guests. These rooms were linked to the servants quarters and the kitchens by one or two corridors, and in some houses there were also small private bath-suites at one end of the building.

In the principal rooms, apart from mosaics there was painted wall and ceiling plaster. Just as some mosaics were geometric patterns so some plaster was painted in simple panels. Other owners, however, wanted to display their love or knowledge of Roman culture and the mosaic floors would carry scenes from mythology or portraits of the gods. In these circumstances walls might be painted to imitate marble panels and stone columns.

Houses such as these represent a tremendous change from the timber huts occupied by even the wealthy Britons at the time of the Roman invasion.

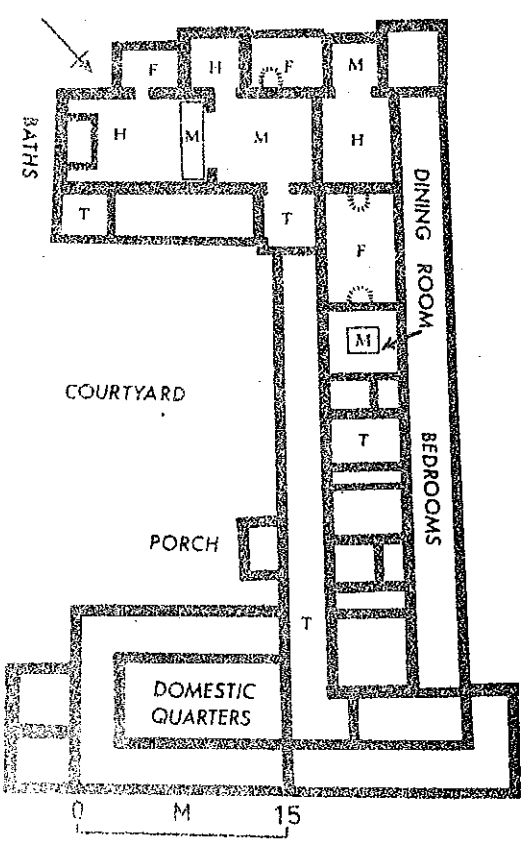


Fig.6.5 A house of the mid-second century, St Albans.

Roman London

Londinium was neither a colonia (although it was probably given this title in the 4th century) nor a civitas capital, yet it was the largest town in Roman Britain. Its walls, probably erected about A.D.200, enclosed 330 acres, although the wall along the north bank of the Thames was not built until the mid-4th century (for a plan of Roman London, see broadsheet 4).

Then, as now, London had a cosmopolitan population. Apart from statues of, and dedications to, a great many Greek and Roman deities, we know that London also contained a temple to the Egyptian goddess Isis and another to the Persian god Mithras. Various inscriptions found in London also attest to the foreigners who came to the city.

Recent excavations have begun to throw light on the great public buildings of London. The forum-basilica complex was huge — almost 550ft. square. The forum itself was approached through a monumental columned entrance, whilst the basilica-building had perhaps two dozen offices in which the town's administration was conducted. This complex overlay an earlier monumental building which was perhaps the Procurator's residence in the period after Boudicca's revolt (see broadsheet 4).

A very large bath-house stood at Huggin Hill, whilst just north of Cheapside was a smaller bath building, perhaps for the exclusive use of members of a guild of craftsmen rather than the general public. Other major buildings included the governors palace and the temple of Mithras (described on broadsheets 4 and 11), and a fine monumental arch featuring portraits of several of the gods.

Apart from its role as the capital of the province, London had already assumed its position as a great commercial city. Traces of the quays at which ships loaded and unloaded have been found, and indeed remains of the ships themselves have occasionally been salvaged.

These ships brought imported bronzeware, glass, pottery, food-stuffs and wine to Britain from the Continent and the Mediterranean. Apart from the imports themselves, the tools the Roman dockers used to handle and open the loaded crates have often been discovered.

Apart from being an important place of trade London was also a centre of manufacturing. There were glass-works in Clements Lane, enamel works in Nicholas Lane, a goldsmith's at Cannon Street, and several bronze-smiths and carpenters. Alongside the Walbrook the damp soil has preserved thousands of pieces of leather, including shoes and other items of clothing. The same area has continually yielded large quantities of small change, writing styli, and fragmentary scales and weights. It is clear that the area around the Walbrook was a thriving commercial area in the Roman period, and that many traders built their homes in this area. Apart from early discoveries of mosaics, however, we know little of the fashionable houses of Roman London, which must have included some of the largest and best furnished in the province.

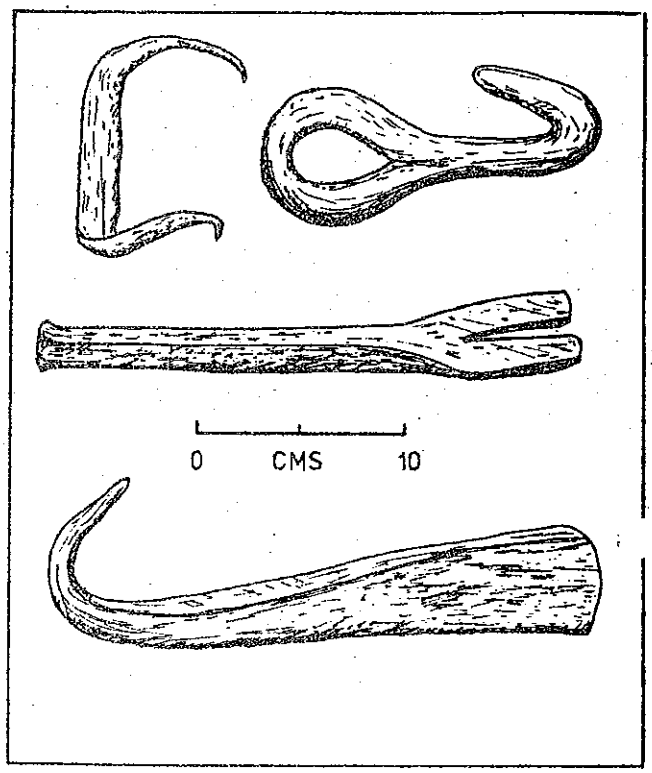


Fig.6.6 A group of tools — grapples and a crow bar — thought to be used by dockers unloading ships at Londinium.

Places to Visit, Things to Do

Civitas capitals with visible buildings include:
Wroxeter (Shropshire) — see the baths and basilica.
Caerwent (Gwent) — see shops and the principal temple.
St Albans (Herts) — see the Roman theatre, and two rooms o a town house.
Cirencester (Glos) — see the amphitheatre (known as the Bull Ri
Dorchester (Dorset) — see the amphitheatre (Maumbury Rin).

The Museum of London has a large collection of finds from Roman London, and Cirencester Museum has some excellent reconstructions of rooms from Roman houses found in the tov .

1. How big were Roman houses? Look at the house found at St Albans in illustration 5. Work out the size of its living rooms and bedrooms and compare them to the rooms in your own home.
2. See if you can find out the medieval populations and areas of civitas capitals such as Canterbury, Chichester, Winches r, Exeter and Leicester. We believe that these figures may giv us a reasonably good idea as to the Romano-British populations of these towns. Why do you think the Roman and Medieval populations might have been of a similar siz

Produced by: Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

7 INDUSTRY AND CRAFTS

Industry and Crafts

Roman shops, as we have seen, were places where tradesmen not only sold things but also made them — on the spot. Every town in Roman Britain had its small-scale crafts and industries, and in some of the larger towns there were specialised crafts. At Silchester, for example, there was a silver refinery, and at Caistor a glass factory.

Some smaller towns, however, were rather like industrial estates, the main road through them being lined with workshops. Two such towns are Camerton (Avon) and Wilderspool (Cheshire). At Camerton, on the Fosse Way, a dozen large stone buildings were associated with a series of ovens and furnaces, some of which were probably for iron and bronze working, but others of which may have been used for malting barley and for pewter working.

At Wilderspool there were probably twice as many buildings, and a wide variety of crafts were practised. Iron, bronze and lead were all worked here, and glass and pottery were manufactured. Some workshops managed to combine two such crafts, and we find bronze brooches for example, which are decorated with glass inlays.

These were all manufacturing crafts, but the raw materials they used were supplied by extractive industries in the countryside. Camerton and Wilderspool were situated near some of the resources they needed, but other materials were brought long distances by road or water. With manufacturing crafts concentrated in, or near the towns, good communications were very important.

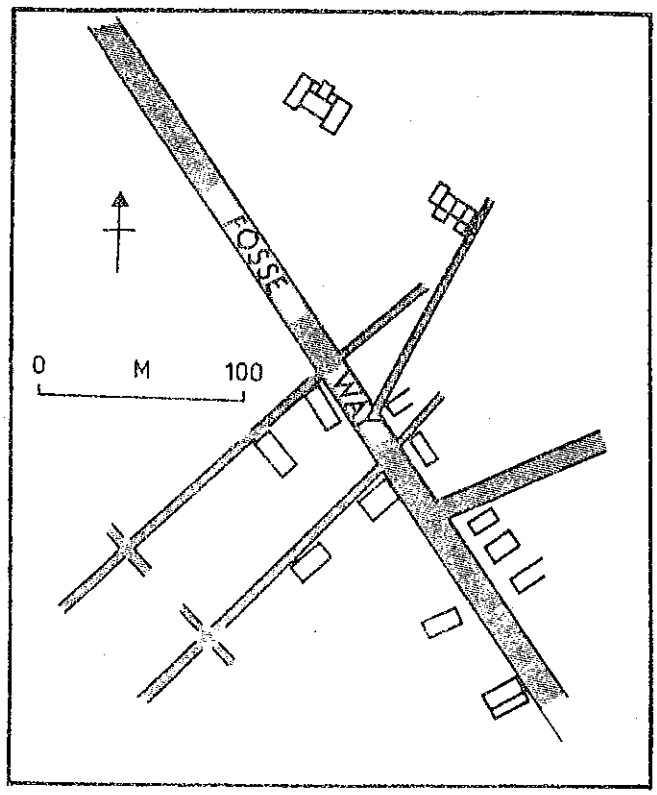


Fig.7.1 The settlement at Camerton (Avon) with industrial buildings lining the Fosse Way.

Metal and Stone-working Crafts

Some of the commonest tools found on Roman sites belonged to blacksmiths, and it is common for their workshops to be found. Apart from their own hammers, sets, tongs and anvils, the blacksmiths made a very wide range of other tools which enabled other craftsmen to ply their trade. Carpenters, for example, could buy saws, chisels, gouges, and planes from a blacksmith. Many farmers employed smiths to make spade-irons, ploughshares, sickles, and a host of other agricultural tools.

In contrast to iron, pewter working was limited to a small number of workshops. Pewter, being an alloy of tin and lead, was a craft which was particularly centred around the Mendip lead mines. Evidence of its manufacture has been found at Camerton, Bath, Nettleton and Gatcombe. It was particularly used to manufacture sets of dinner plates, dishes and flagons.

Another craft with a regional focus was jet-working. This shiny black material — not unlike coal — was extracted in the Whitby region of Yorkshire and used to make small signet rings, medallions and brooches, and other items of jewellery. These things found a market throughout Britain and were also exported to the Rhineland. A somewhat similar material, shale, was used for bangles too, but was made into spindle whorls, and a variety of small objects for the home. Around Kimmeridge in Dorset, where the industry had a long ancestry, shale was turned on a lathe and used for decorative chair and table legs.

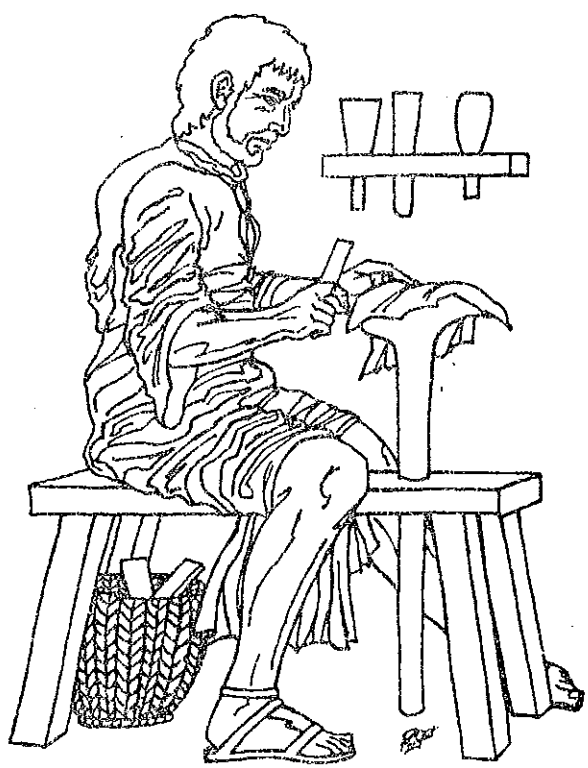


Fig.7.2 The Roman blacksmith made tools for many other craftsmen like the cobbler seen here (reconstruction based on a relief from Gaul).

Pottery Making

A certain amount of pottery was imported into Britain, mainly from Gaul and Germany but also (in the form of amphorae) from the Mediterranean. Whilst amphorae came as containers for wine and sauces, Rhenish ware from Germany and samian pottery from central and southern Gaul were imported as high quality table-wares. The glossy red samian ware occurs on most town and villa sites and was clearly popular amongst the Romanised elements of the British population.

Much of the pottery used for everyday purposes, however, was made at small local kilns which supplied perhaps a nearby town and several villas and farmsteads. Such kilns might be situated just outside the walls of a town, like those outside the south-east gate of St Albans, or they might be in the countryside and perhaps part of a villa estate. These potteries normally produced a range of cooking vessels, storage jars, and perhaps simple table-ware.

The kilns themselves were usually circular structures with a raised floor on which the pots were stacked for firing. The floor might be of thick clay with circular perforations through it, or a series of clay bars which rested on the side of the kiln chamber and were supported by a pedestal in the centre. A small, local pottery might have four or five such kilns, but far more were used by the important pottery-producing centres which supplied whole regions and specialised in the production of particular types of pottery.

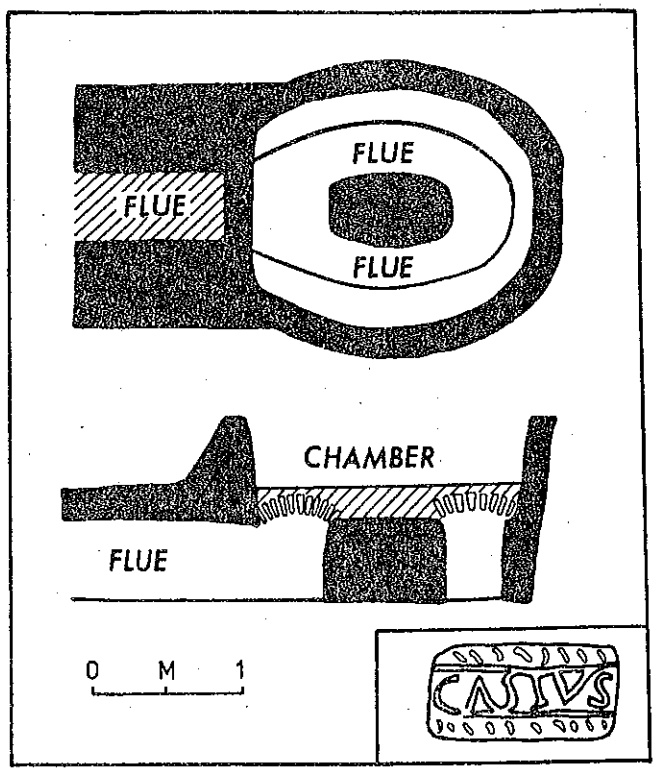


Fig.7.3 A pottery kiln used by the mortaria maker Castus at Radlett (Herts). (Inset — the stamp of Castus, found on 22 mortaria discovered inside this kiln.)

The Major Potteries

In the New Forest and the Nene valley, the potters were particularly known for their table-ware, which was usually coated with a brown or black wash. The New Forest pottery may have been produced as a part-time activity by local farmers, but the Nene valley beakers were decorated with hunting scenes in low relief.

Some of the New Forest wares, and others produced by the important potteries around Oxford, were covered with a red wash or slip which attempted to provide a cheap imitation of the imported samian ware. Alongside this table-ware the New Forest and Oxford kilns also produced grinding bowls, or *mortaria*, for use in the kitchen.

Most *mortaria*, however, came from specialised factories of which those at Colchester, Brockley Hill, Mancetter and Hartshill were the most important. In the first and second century mortaria manufacturers used to stamp their names on their products, and it is possible to trace the careers of individual potters in this way.

The success of the mortaria potteries was outstripped by that of the potteries of southern Dorset which specialised in the production of cooking vessels. The Black Burnished Ware, in which they made a range of upright cooking pots (*ollae*) flanged bowls and pie-dishes, was traded throughout the province and frequently imitated.

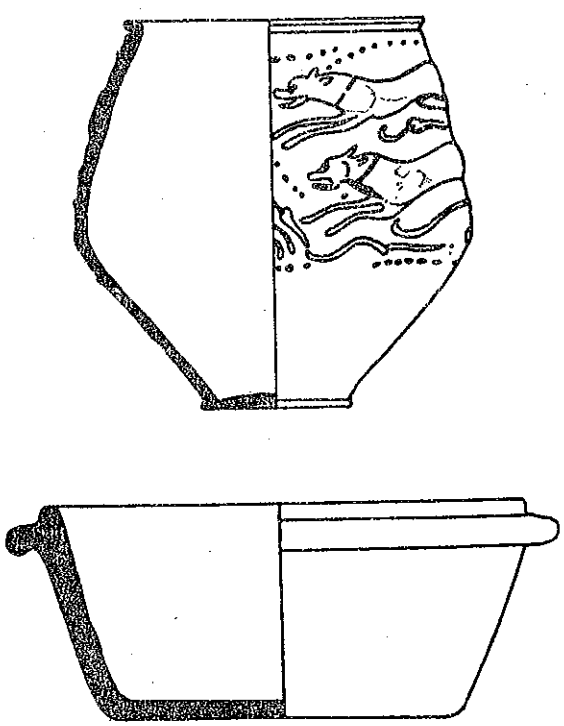


Fig.7.4 Above, a Nene Valley beaker with hunting dogs chasing a hare. Below, a typical Black-Burnished flanged bowl of 3rd—4th century date.

The Lead Mines

Lead was considered an important material by the Romans since they could extract silver from it with which to make coinage. Thus the Romans began to mine lead in Mendip, Flintshire, Derbyshire, and the north of England as soon as they conquered these areas. The mines were kept under Imperial control, at first overseen by the army and later by civilians who leased the mines from the emperor.

Charterhouse on Mendip was the most important centre in Britain, and there are still traces of the fort and amphitheatre associated with the mining settlement which grew up there. When the lead from Mendip (and other mines) had been de-silvered, it was cast into 'pigs' (bars) weighing about 200 lbs each and could then be carted away for sale.

'Pigs' of lead were often stamped with inscriptions which tell us the names of either the regiments or the individuals who oversaw their production. The IInd Legion Augusta controlled the Mendip mines for many years, but later a group of lessees known as the Novaec. Company are to be found inscribing the pigs.

The lead was used for a variety of purposes, but particularly for pipes to carry water for bathing. In Bath, the great hot bath itself was lined with lead, and the baths and their lead sheathing can still be seen to this day. Some British lead seems to have been exported, and a lead cistern found in Pompeii was probably made of Mendip lead.

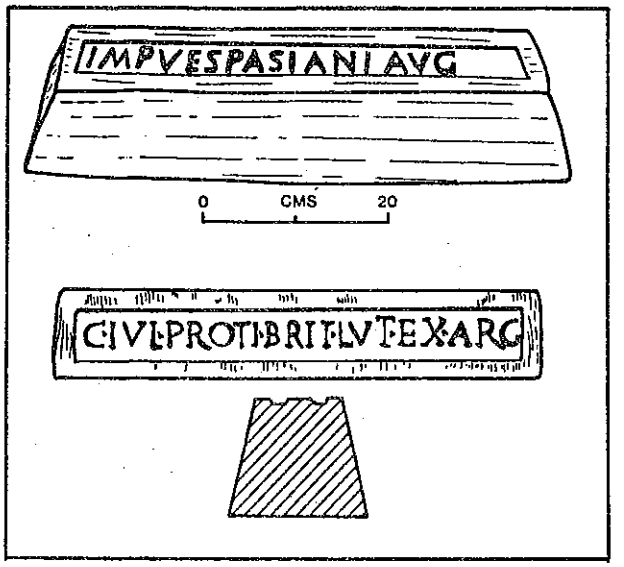


Fig.7.5 Two lead pigs. Above, found at Charterhouse, a pig carrying the name of Vespasian and produced therefore between A.D.69-79. Below, found at Hexgrave Park (Notts), a pig with the inscription:
'G(aius) Julius Protius·Brit(annia)·Lut(adarum)·
Ex·Ar(gentariis)'
Protius is the lessee, and Lutadarum the mining centre somewhere in Derbyshire (possibly Chesterfield).

Other Metal Industries

Apart from lead and silver, other metals were extracted in Roman Britain. Like silver, gold was so valuable that it was mined under the direction of the army. At Dolaucothi in Southern Wales the shafts of the Roman gold mine can still be seen, and nearby is the fort from which the work was directed. In north Wales and Anglesey it was copper that was mined, and this was undertaken both by civilian companies and — on a part-time basis — by native farmers. Similarly, the production of tin in Cornwall seems to have been largely the concern of the local people.

Far more widespread was the production of iron. There were particularly important deposits which were worked in Roman times in the Weald of Kent, the Forest of Dean and in the east Midlands. Those in the Weald may have been used to produce iron used by the army and the fleet, but in the east Midlands it again appears to be the concern of the native population. In some cases, the production of iron seems to play a part in the economy of country villas, as seems to be the case at Great Weldon (Northants). Lumps of smelting debris here weighed up to 80 lbs each!

Alongside traditional 'bowl hearths' for smelting, the Roman period saw the introduction of shaft-furnaces 5ft—6ft high, in which greater amounts of iron could be efficiently smelted at one operation.

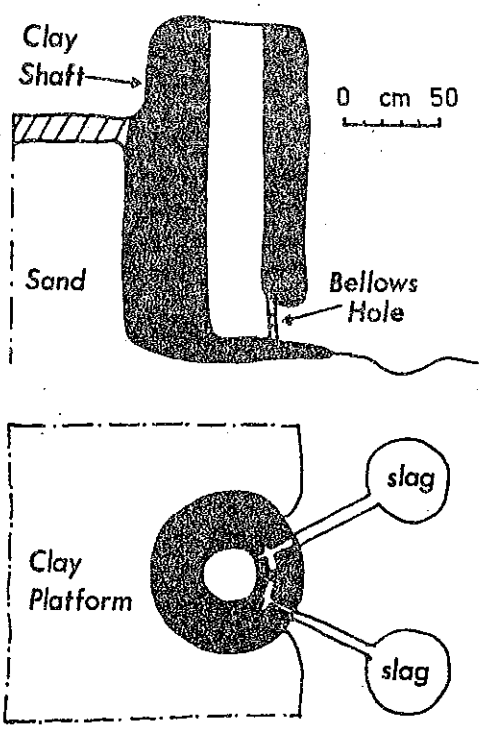


Fig.7.6 One of five shaft-furnaces of 2nd century date found at Ashwicken, Norfolk, producing cakes of slag weighing up to 40 lbs.

Building Stone

Most regions of Britain had supplies of stone which could be used for building the walls of houses, shops, temples, markets, and indeed town-walls themselves. Sandstones, limestones and flint were common materials for these purposes, and some of the finer sandstones and limestone were used not only for walls but columns, balustrades and other architectural items. There were two stone industries which were particularly important in this respect.

The attractive limestone found around Bath was widely used for both full-sized and miniature columns, and for roof decoration (finials), as well as being employed for the manufacture of altars and inscribed slabs.

Some of the finest inscriptions set up in Roman towns in southern Britain, however, were made of another stone known as Purbeck Marble, from Dorset. The famous forum inscription from St Albans and the inscription from the temple of Neptune and Minerva at Chichester were both made of Purbeck Marble. This stone was also used for decorative slabs around the base of walls and occasionally for columns.

Although the stone was obviously quarried in the countryside, it was often taken to a nearby town for working. From Bath for example, we have inscriptions referring to both a stonemason (called Priscus) and a sculptor (named Sulinus)

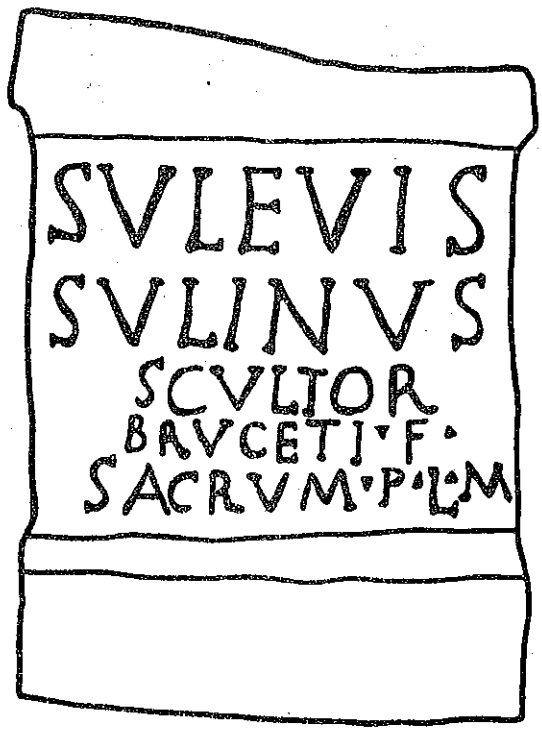


Fig.7.7 An inscribed statue-base dedicated by 'Sulinus, a sculptor sone of Brucetus', and found at Bath. An altar found at Cirencester some 45 kms away was dedicated by the same man.

Some Other Industries and Crafts

Obviously there were many other crafts in Roman Britain than those we have been able to mention so far. Bakers and cobblers, butchers and carpenters all played their part in the life of the province. So too did the mosaicists who were kept busy, particularly in the fourth century, laying attractively patterned floors in town and country houses alike. Over 400 surviving mosaic floors are known from villas alone, so that the total number laid in the province must have run into several thousand.

There were also extractive industries other than the mining and quarrying described earlier. The production of salt by the evaporation of sea-water, either in pots or in clay evaporation tanks built at high tide-mark, was undertaken in the Fens, on the Somerset Levels, and along the coast of Essex. Salt found a ready market because it was used to preserve food.

The preparation of food stimulated two other industries. In the Roman world corn was ground on rotary querns (millstones) to make flour, and there were quern factories using local stones in many parts of Britain. A well-known example is that at Wharncliffe (Sheffield), producing querns of Millstone Grit.

Although most food was cooked or baked on wood fires a number of ovens and hearths have also yielded lumps of coal. Some of this was mined from the coalfields of Nottinghamshire and Somerset, and a Roman writing in the 3rd century A.D. (Solinus) actually mentions its use at Bath.

Places to Visit, Things to Do

Charterhouse — visit the Roman amphitheatre associated with the lead mines.

Dolaucothi (near Llandovery) — see the mining shafts dug by the Roman gold miners.

York Museum — see the fine collection of jet jewellery and other items, found in the city.

Dorchester (Dorset) Museum — see a collection of shale product and materials from a shale worker's workshop.

Bristol Museum — see lead pigs from Charterhouse.

1. Go to your local museum and see if they have any Roman pots on display. If they have, look carefully at their shape and size and see if you can identify the purpose for which they were made. Were they cooking pots, tableware, storage vessels, or grinding bowls?
2. Make a model of a Roman shaft-furnace in clay. You can see what they looked like in figure 6 on the previous page.
3. Try mosaic laying — the easy way. Cut up coloured paper into squares about 1cm each. Then stick them onto a sheet of paper about 50cms square to make a pattern (you might copy a simple Roman mosaic). See how long it takes you — then imagine having to carefully chop up stone and tile to the same size and lay it over an area of perhaps 4 metres square. How long do you think it might take to lay such a mosaic?

Produced by: Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

8 VILLAS — A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

hat is a Villa?

he word villa is a Latin word that we have taken over and sed without attempting to translate it into English. If we e the word, then of course we must try to use it in a milar way to that in which the Romans themselves used it.

oman law said simply that a villa was a building in the ountry. But it is clear from contemporary writers that not ery rural building was regarded as a villa; there were others hich they preferred to call huts, cottages or simply 'buildings.' he villa seems to have been a more important and sophisti- ted building than any of these, although it too was usually ut not always) the centre of a farm. In general, the term ems to have been applied to farmhouses which attempted o provide much the same accommodation and amenities as shionable town-houses.

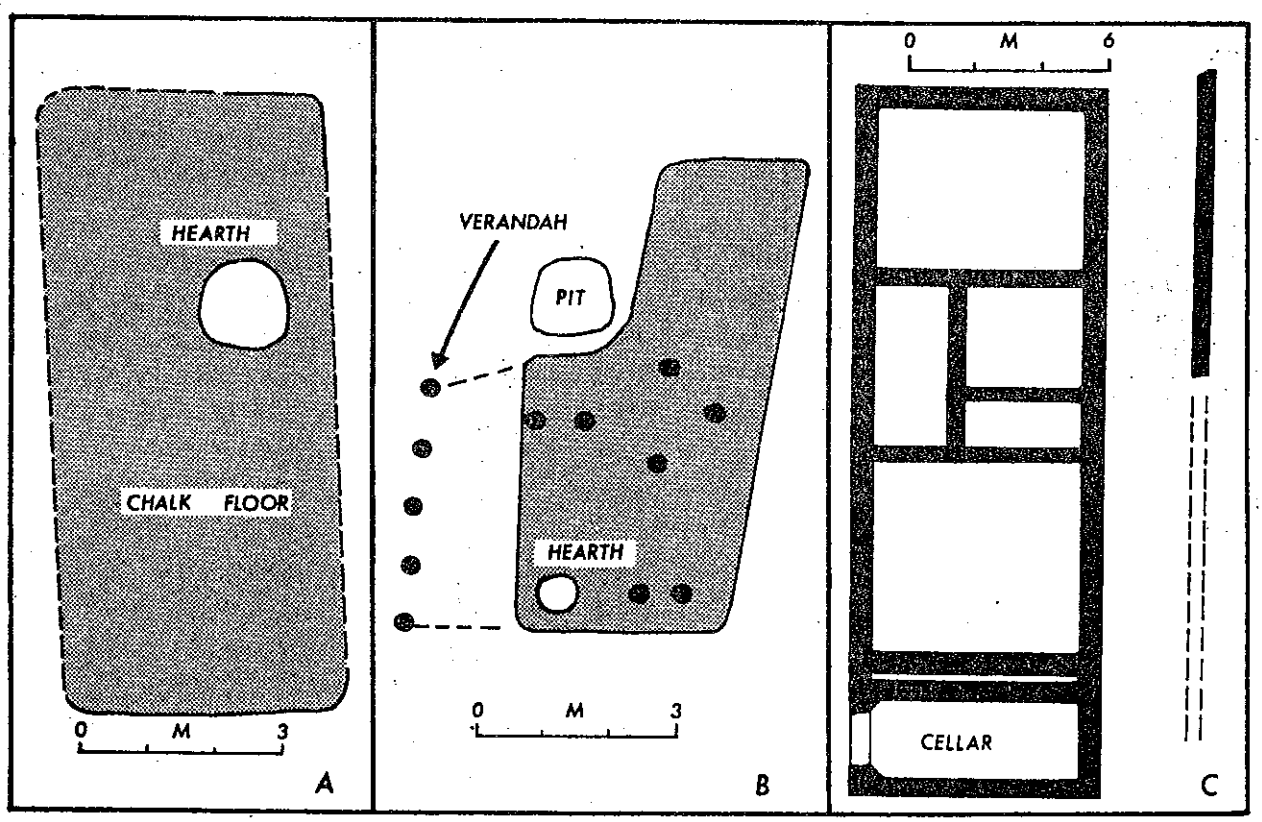
p. ice this would mean that it would have many separate ooms, linked by corridors to kitchens and domestic quarters. me of the living rooms and bedrooms would be heated by pocaust, floored with mosaics or coloured mortar, and have inted plaster on walls and ceilings. The roof would be of tone slates or clay tiles, and often there would be a bath- ite or separate bath-house.

rtunately these features all leave clearly recognisable emains for the archaeologist to find, so that in most cases at ast, it is not difficult for us to decide whether or not an cavated building should be called a villa.

The Origins of the Romano-British Villa

The amenities provided in the villas imply that their owners were both reasonably wealthy and Romanised, and initially at least, this means that the villa owners were mainly drawn from the ranks of the old tribal aristocracy. It seems likely that these men held onto the estates they owned at the time of the conquest, and in south-east England there is now a large number of villas which have proved to overlie Belgic farmsteads. Some of the most recently excavated ones include Shakenoak (Oxon), Latimer (Bucks), Gorhambury (Herts), and Brixworth (Northants).

At Park Street (Herts), only two miles from St Albans, we can see the development of the farm from a timber hut built about twenty years before the invasion, through a further timber phase, to the first masonry villa erected perhaps about A.D.75. Although the first hut measured 26ft. x 11ft. it seems to have been but a single large room with a central hearth. The second hut, burnt down about A.D.60 (by Boudicca's rebels?) was slightly smaller but had two or three separate rooms and a covered verandah. In this sense it anticipated the villa which succeeded it, for this building had five rooms and a verandah, as well as a cellar. The introduction of masonry foundations, tiled roofs, and mortar floors are clear indications of Roman influence, but whether the plans of these simple villas also reflect imported ideas is at present uncertain.



ig.8.1 Three successive farmhouses at Park Street. The earliest, built about A.D.20, survived only as a chalk floor and hearth.

The Winged Corridor Villa

Although the simple villa with a block of four or five rooms is the earliest to appear in Britain, it was soon followed by the first winged corridor villas which were to become the most common villa design in the province. Late first century examples such as Alresford (Essex) and Boxmoor (Herts) already show the presence not only of projecting wing rooms at each end of the central block of rooms, and the connecting corridor which fronts them, but also of a second corridor at the rear.

Some villas in fact boast front and rear corridors, but no wing rooms, so that they are really enlarged versions of the earliest villa plans. A more common variety, however, sees the addition of wing rooms which project both frontwards and backwards, so that the villa looks something like a letter H in plan. The villa at High Wycomb (Bucks), built about A.D.150, is a good example of the type.

Whether or not the design of the winged corridor villa was imported from Gaul is still uncertain, although examples of it do appear there a little earlier than it first appears in Britain. Another variation of the type, mainly dated to about A.D.300 in Britain, certainly appears to be of Gallic inspiration. This is the winged corridor villa with a large gravelled yard at its centre — often containing an oven or two, a water tank, or a rubbish pit. These features can be seen in the villa at Chew Park (Avon).

Courtyard Villas

Villas which were first built as winged corridor buildings were often later developed by extending the wings to form an enclosed courtyard. Some of these villas, like Bignor in Sussex, became very large indeed and had an ornamental garden in the courtyard area, surrounded by four colonnades. For the most part, such villas belong to the fourth century, and some, like Keynsham (Avon), were not elaborations of existing buildings but were planned on this lavish scale from the beginning.

Other corridor villas were developed in a different way, and instead of further suites of living rooms, baths, and guest rooms, buildings to house farm labourers and even animals were arranged to complete the enclosure of a central yard. Villas of this sort, of which Gadebridge Park (Herts) is a good example, are in many ways like a small modern farmhouse fronted by its farmyard.

What these differences of plan mean in terms of social class and social attitudes is uncertain, but some of the farmyard villas may have been occupied not by the villa owner but by a bailiff who ran the farm for him. Accommodation like that at Keynsham, Chedworth and Bignor on the other hand can only have been provided for the use of a very wealthy owner with highly Romanised tastes. It is important to remember, however, that almost all of these villas — whatever their size and design — were the centres of agricultural estates.

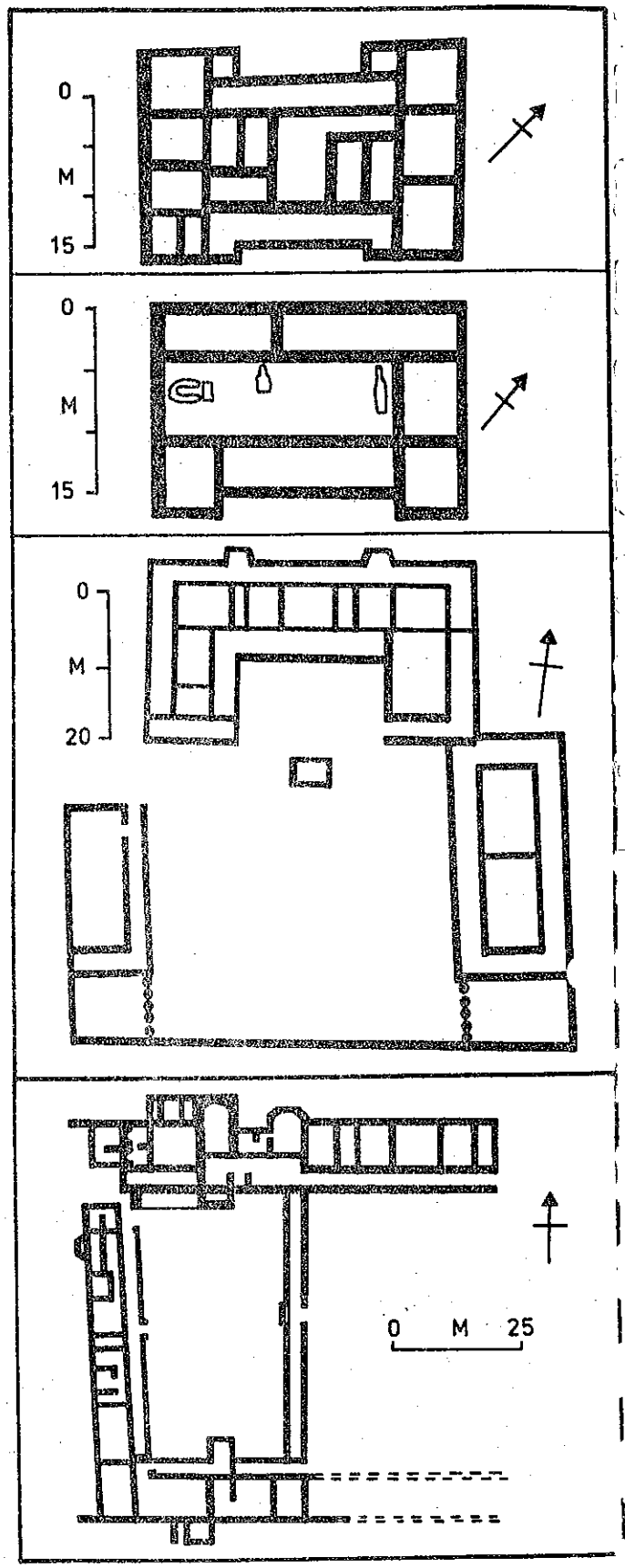


Fig.8.2 From top to bottom, the villas at High Wycombe, Chew Park, Gadebridge Park and Chedworth.

Villa Mosaics

On present evidence perhaps only one villa in four possessed any patterned mosaic floors, but many of the others had a simpler and coarser form of mosaic usually called a tesselated floor, as well as floors of mortar, *opus signinum* (a sort of pink concrete), tiles and stone slabs.

Although we do not know how much a mosaic floor cost to lay, they were clearly expensive if only because laying them was a time-consuming job. It is not suprising therefore that the most numerous and intricate mosaics are found in the largest of the courtyard villas. Chedworth villa, for example, boasted fifteen mosaics, and Woodchester as many as twenty.

The majority of mosaics were geometric patterns, based on a number of basic shapes and motifs; diamonds, lozenges, circles, octagons, scrolls, intertwined ribbons, and others. These designs were often extremely attractive to look at.

The smaller number of figured floors are particularly interesting, however, for on these we see various Roman deities and scenes from mythology, and just occasionally such things as chariot races, gladiatorial combat, and scenes from Latin literature. Perhaps the most famous is the mosaic from Low Ham (Somerset) which shows scenes from Vergil's Aeneid. Floors such as these suggest that the villas in which they are found were the homes of men who had firmly embraced Roman culture and could also read and write Latin.

Fig.8.3 Dido and Aeneas as portrayed on the mosaic floor from Low Ham villa (Soms). Other scenes from Virgil's epic are shown on adjacent panels of the same floor.

Furnishings

Apart from mosaic floors there were other ways in which the furnishings of a villa matched those of a town house and revealed the Roman tastes of its owner. The principal rooms were often heated by hypocausts beneath the floor and lit by bronze candelabras, whilst other rooms lepended on braziers and small hand-carried oil lamps.

The walls of the living rooms and bedrooms, and usually the corridors too, were plastered and painted. As with the mosaics, the commonest treatment of walls was with rectilinear designs, particularly panelling which was often painted to resemble marble slabs. More and more villas, however, are revealing traces of painted walls showing human figures, birds, animals and especially flowers, trees, and plants.

Moveable furnishings were provided by wooden and stone furniture and, much more rarely, stone sculptures. These were usually of Roman gods, such as the figures of Luna from Woodchester and Bacchus from Spoonley Wood.

The wooden furniture has long since rotted away, but apart from some attractive table legs carved from shale, there are sufficient pictures of cupboards, couches, stools, tables and chests on Roman tombstones to show us the sort of furniture to be found in both villas and town houses. By modern standards, however, the Roman home used little furniture.

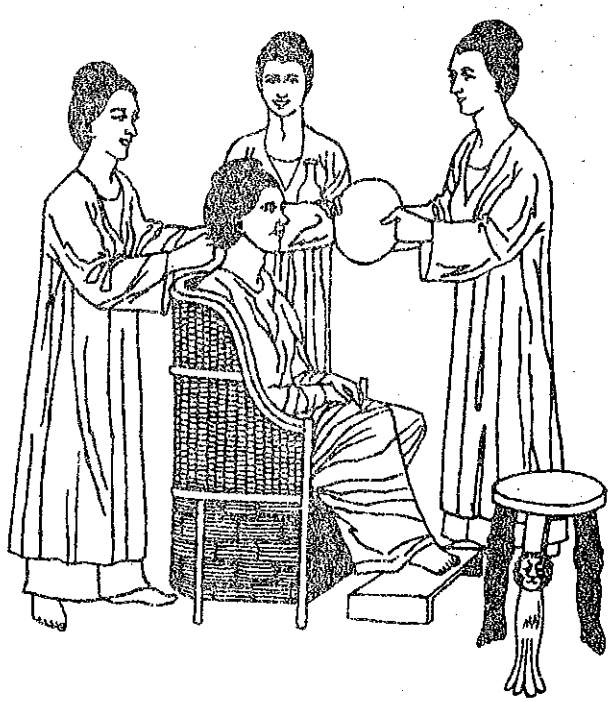


Fig.8.4 A reconstruction of a provincial lady at her toilet, based on a relief from Trier. The wickerwork chair seems to have been popular in the northern provinces, as do the small tables with feline faces.

Villa Baths

Although there are many villas where bathing accommodation has yet to be found, it is likely that the great majority of villas had their own bath. In some cases these were isolated buildings, erected at some distance from the villa itself both for reasons of safety and so that the baths could also be used by labourers. High Wycombe and Gadebridge Park villas both have separate bath-houses of this sort.

Other villas have bath-suites built into the main residential block, as is the case at Chedworth. In this situation, it is likely that a bath-house was built elsewhere on the estate for the farm-workers, and a number of apparently isolated bath-houses of this sort are known in Britain.

One particularly interesting bath-house, which shows another solution to the problem, is that at Park Street. A large bath-house was built here in the enclosed yard, with a full range of bathing accommodation. Later, a much smaller suite of bath-rooms was added at one corner, with the entrance facing away from the house. There is little doubt that the new baths were for the use of labourers, and the existing building for the occupants of the villa.

Where the baths were mainly or exclusively for the owner to use, then mosaic floors are often found, and wall plaster showing fish and other sea-creatures sometimes survives.

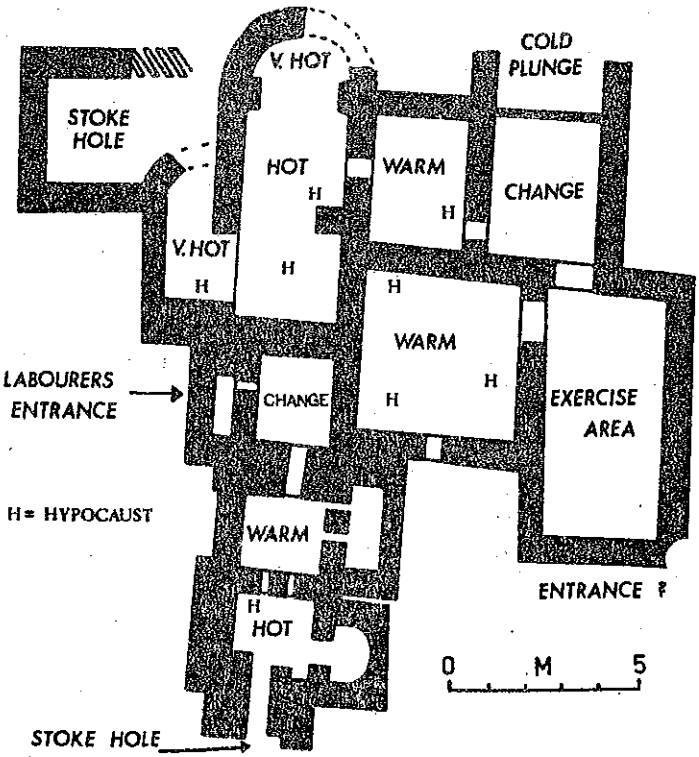


Fig.8.5 The bath-house at Park Street villa. The farmhands' baths were added in the early 4th century to the main baths built in the mid second.

The Distribution of Villas

Although we have talked in general terms about the history and design of the villas in Britain it is important to realise that there are important regional differences both in the history and distribution of villas. There are recorded traces of about 1,200 villas in Britain, and all but about 50 of them are east of the River Severn and south of the River Humber. They are most thickly distributed south and east of a line drawn from the Wash to the mouth of the Severn, although there are notable gaps even in this area, in the Fens, the Weald and Salisbury Plain.

In general the villas of Kent, Sussex, Herts, and Bucks are the earliest to appear and develop, but the biggest and most richly appointed villas are mostly in the west country. In time there may prove to be regional variations in design, and already we can identify four regional schools of mosaicists serving towns and villas alike.

Local concentrations of villas are usually linked to the presence of a nearby town and to areas of good farming land. A study of about 250 west country villas showed that about three-quarters of them were within 16 kms (10 miles) of a town, and a similar number were within 4 kms of a main Roman road. These figures emphasise the close link between villas and towns, which we shall mention again in the next broadsheet.

Places to Visit, Things to Do

Villas are partially preserved at several sites in southern England:

Lullingstone (Kent) — a small villa, possibly a pleasure house.

Brading (IoW) — a villa with fine mosaic floors.

Rockbourne (Hants) — extensive remains of a villa and outbuildings.

Chedworth (Glos) — the main residential wings with fine mosaics.

Somerdale (Avon) — the *moved* foundations of a tiny villa.

Dicket Mead (Welwyn, Herts) — complete bath-house of a villa.

Kings Weston (Avon) — a small villa with mosaics and baths.

There are site museums at Chedworth, Somerdale and Rockbou n

1. Try to work out just how much 'living space' there was in each of the villas in illustration 2, and in the Belgic huts and first villa at Park Street. Compare them to each other (and perhaps to your own house) and see if the different figures suggest anything about the different numbers of people living there, their different requirements, and the different functions of the various rooms in each building.
3. It is not difficult to make a model of a Roman villa from card, or else to make a detailed model of the foundations wi balsa wood. Try to obtain the plans of a villa near you and m a model of it. k

Produced by: Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

9 VILLAS AS FARMS

Villas as Farms — the evidence

In broadsheet 8 we looked at villas as places to live, but as we reminded ourselves there, villas were usually the focus of a farming estate — they were farmhouses. Wherever excavators have examined the areas around the villa building itself they have almost invariably found evidence of the farming activities which were organised from the villa.

A great deal of the evidence of this sort comes from other buildings — granaries, barns, cattle sheds, and stables. Then there are other smaller structures which also tell us something about farming — corn-drying ovens, hay-stack bases, threshing floors and wells. In and around all of these places the archaeologist also recovers farming implements — ploughshares, sickles, blacksmiths tools, spade blades and harness pieces. From rubbish dumps he may well obtain thousands of animal bones, and if he is lucky and careful he may also recover remains from various plants, both wild and domesticated, that grew on the farm. Finally, beyond the immediate area of the farmyard he may be able to identify the remains of fields, droveways and paddocks. From all of this information we can piece together a picture of farming on a villa estate.

In the illustration below, you can see how such evidence has been used to provide an interpretation of the villa and its surroundings at Frocester Court in Gloucestershire.

The Gardens

Although large ornamental gardens were probably restricted to the big courtyard villas, many villas probably had small formal gardens. At Frocester Court, flower beds have been identified flanking the path up to the villa's front door. Much of the immediate area around the villa, however, was often given over to fruit and vegetable gardens.

The iron blades fitted to wooden spades are quite frequent finds on villas and they were probably used in turning over the vegetable gardens. We know that cabbage, carrot, celery, turnips and parsnips were all grown in Roman Britain. An area behind the villa at Frocester was identified as the likely vegetable garden there.

Tree-pits found to the front of the Frocester villa are thought to indicate the position of a small orchard. From other villas in the region, particularly Chew Park, we know that cherry, plum and hazelnut were all grown, and probably pear and walnut too. Discoveries of pruning knives and saws also point to the care of fruit-trees.

Apart from fruit and vegetables, the area immediately around the villa was probably used for the rearing of chickens, ducks and geese. All three are known from their skeletal remains at Frocester and at a good many other villas too. In most cases the quantities of fowl, fruit and vegetables produced were sufficient only for consumption on the estate.

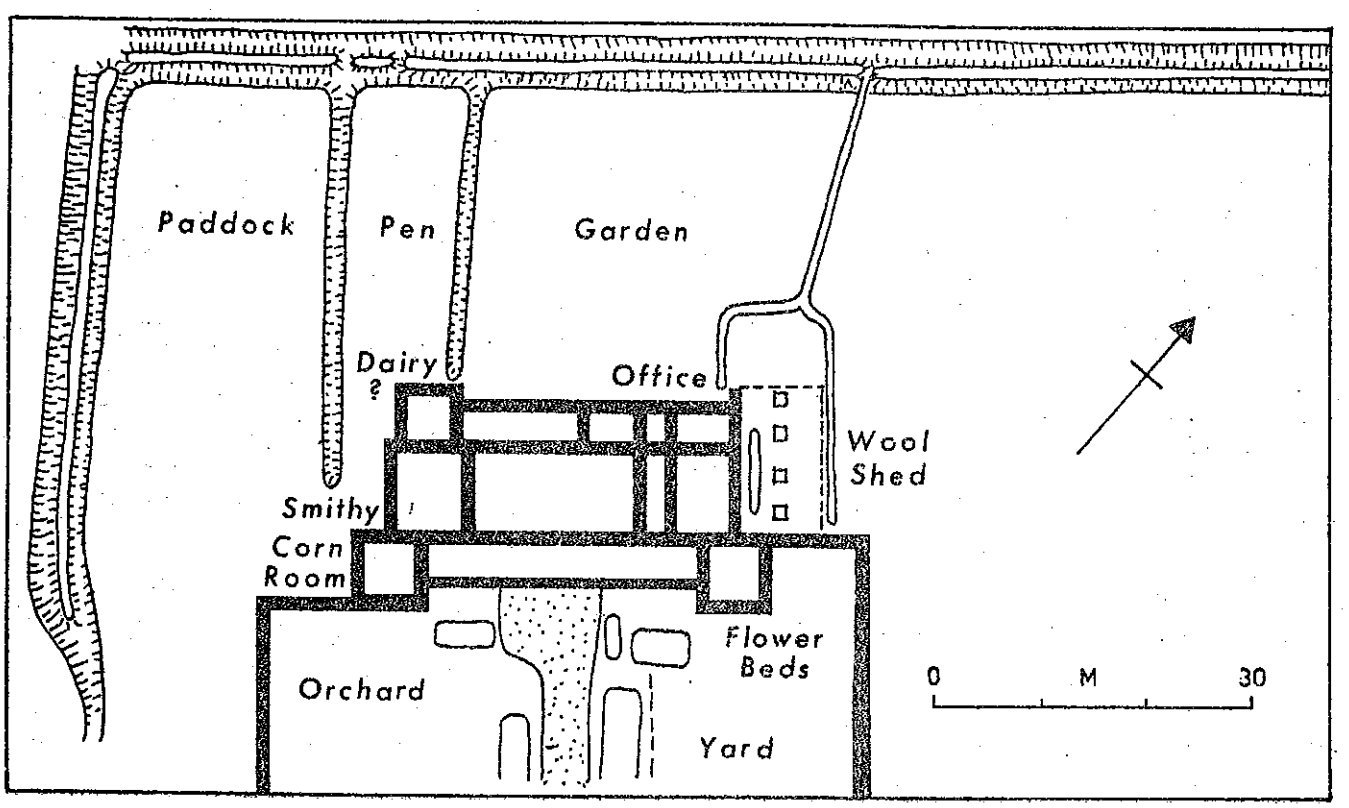


Fig.9.1 The plan of Frocester Court villa (Glos.) interpreted as a farm from the evidence of its buildings and the materials found in them. The villa was first built about A.D.275.

Fields and Ploughing

The profits from an estate came mainly from corn, cattle and sheep. Most villas operated a mixed economy producing all three, and crops were protected from animals by field boundaries. In some areas such fields still survive and can be related to a nearby villa.

At Lye Hole (Avon) at least eight such fields have been recognised attached to the villa enclosure. The boundaries are made up of low stone banks, and the fields were each about 30 metres wide. Their original length is uncertain, but at Barnsley Park (Glos) over 80 hectares (200 acres) of fields survive and fields of about the same width here were commonly about 80 metres in length.

These fields seem to be longer and narrower than earlier 'Celtic' fields, and the change in shape may relate to the appearance on Roman estates of heavier ploughs with a large iron ploughshare and a coulter (a blade which cuts the turf vertically). Ploughs such as these were pulled by a pair of oxen, and a model from Piercebridge (Durham) shows a farmer, wearing a hooded cloak, ploughing in this way.

The presence of ox-teams on villa estates is usually indicated by finds of ox-goads and by the recognition of byres in which the oxen were stalled. At Pitney (Soms), for example, it is suggested that 6 or 7 pairs of oxen were maintained in the byre, and this in turn allows us to estimate that 350-400 acres a year were under plough on this estate.

Fig.9.2 A Romano-British ploughman at work, based on a bronze model from Piercebridge.

Processing the Crops

When the crop, usually of wheat or barley but sometimes including oats or rye, was ripe it was harvested by hand with short sickles or reaping hooks. Although a donkey-propelled machine called a *vallus* was used in Gaul we have no evidence of its use in Britain.

The heads of corn were taken from the fields by cart to be threshed, either on hard floor areas prepared for the job — like one found at Ditchley villa (Oxon) — or else in the nave of aisled barns. Corn also seems to have been frequently parched in Roman Britain by drying it on the floors of specially constructed corn-ovens. These take on a number of different designs, of which the T-shaped oven is probably the commonest. At Hambleden villa there were more than a dozen corn-ovens, of several different types, scattered about the farmyard.

Once the grain was ready for storage then that which was not going straight to market would be stored in a granary on the barn. Some villa granaries had raised floors like the military granaries, and examples of this type have been found at Ditchley and Norton Kirby (Kent). Other villas like Gorhambury (Herts) and Iwerne (Dorset), stored grain in square tower-granaries with extra-thick walls to allow them to be built higher and resist the pressure of the stored grain inside them. A third granary type, which might also have had a raised floor, was the buttressed room such as we find at Pitney villa and at Witcombe.

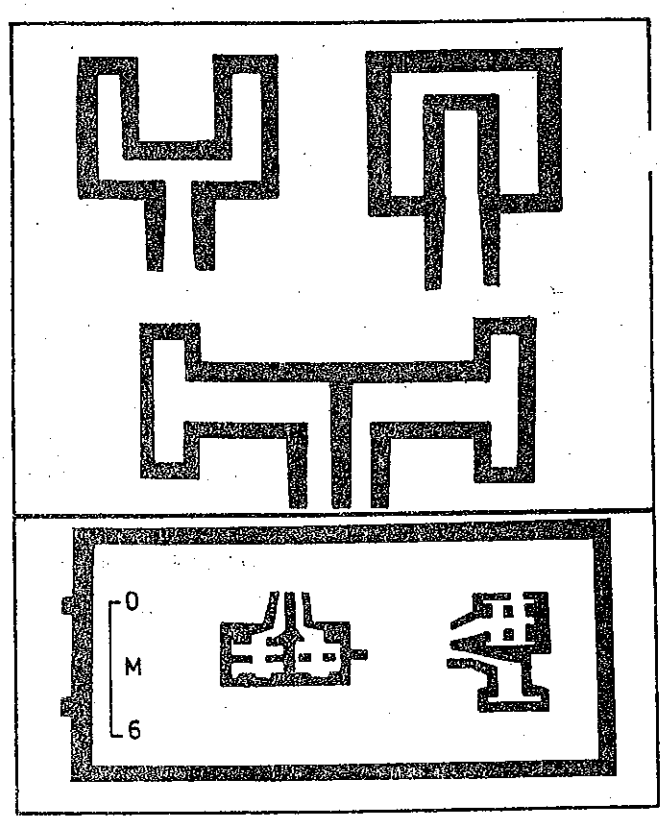


Fig.9.3 Above, three varieties of corn-oven from Hambleden villa, and below, further examples at Hambleden installed in a large outbuilding.

Cattle-raising on Villa Estates

From the bones found in rubbish pits near villas we can learn a lot about how and why villa owners raised cattle. The great majority of the cattle appear to have been 'Celtic' short-horns, which were raised to produce both beef and hides. The size of the herd varied from estate to estate, of course, and there is no way in which archaeological evidence can determine the number of cattle in any given herd. Rubbish tips thought to have been used on only a single occasion at Chew Park and at Gatcombe (Avon), however, include the remains of not less than 33 cattle in each case.

In the summer the cattle could be grazed on the hill pastures and water meadows and on large estates herded by men on horseback. In winter the nucleus of the herd, least, were housed in byres like those at Spoonley Wood and Iwerne.

There they were fed on hay, beans, pease or vetch. The hay was cut with huge scythes, an example of which was found at Barnsley Park villa, and stored either in barns or in the loft of the byre. Barns are not uncommon buildings near villas, as examples from Barnsley Park, Pitney and Gadebridge Park all demonstrate.

When the cattle were ready for slaughter they were usually driven to market and subsequently slaughtered in the town, although at Gatcombe a building thought to be a slaughter-house has been found on the villa estate.

Sheep and Pigs

Although most farms appear to have kept a mixture of animals, some areas were more suited to the one than the other. It is thought that the Cotswolds may have been an important sheep-rearing area in the Roman period, and shears have been found at Chedworth and Whately villas. At Frocester Court a fulling and felting shed was actually built onto one corner of the villa, and a dipping pool was found nearby. The implication is that Cotswold sheep were kept for their wool. The same picture emerges from a study of the bones from the villas at Chew Park and Star, which would have grazed sheep on Mendip.

Many villas produce evidence both for sheep production, and for the spinning of wool in the form of spindle whorls — discs used to weight spindles for hand spinning. It is significant, however, that loomweights are not found in villas, as they frequently are in Iron Age huts, and this suggests that weaving was now centralised in the towns or specialist mills.

Alongside cattle and sheep, most villa-based farmers raised pigs. In many cases they were simply left to forage in the woodlands but a few villas produce evidence suggestive of a more positive approach to pig-rearing. At North Wraxall and Pitney villas, long narrow stone buildings have been identified as pig-sties where pigs could be grain-fattened.

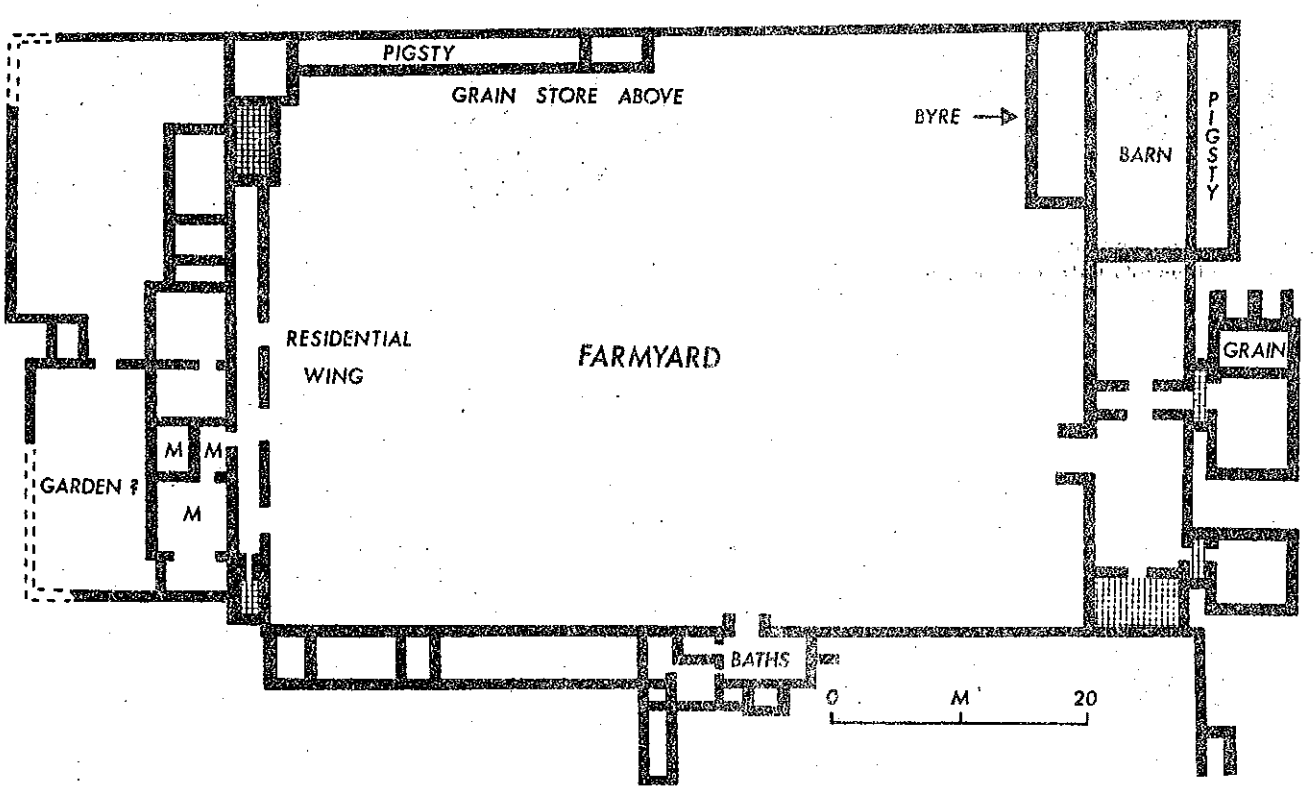


Fig.9.4 Pitney villa interpreted as a farm: note the buttressed granary, long, narrow pig-sties, and the baths sited for use by labourers as well as villa occupants.

Tenants and Estates

We know from Roman writers that many of the large villa estates were partially rented out to tenant farmers, who might pay their rent partly in cash, partly in kind, and partly by labouring in the landlord's fields.

It is impossible to certainly identify landlords and tenants in terms of excavated buildings, but some of our largest villas stand very close to much smaller villas with only a handful of rooms and simple mortar floors. A good example is the appearance of Brislington and Somerdale villas very close indeed to the immensely rich villa at Keynsham. Here, we might suggest, we are looking at the villas of landlord and tenants.

Other tenants, however, probably lived not in villas but in small villages or isolated farmsteads. An example of the first is the site at Lockington (Leics) where ditched enclosures containing circular buildings are only 200m from a small villa. The second situation is recognisable at Lye Hole, where above the villa and its long narrow fields, there is a contemporary farmstead (Butcombe) still using the squarer 'Celtic' fields and featuring a complex of pens, enclosures and at least one byre-like building at its centre.

When we try to think about the way in which villa estates were farmed, we must remember that farming activities on nearby 'native' sites may well have been integrated into the villa economy.

Places to Visit, Things to Do

A list of villas open to the public was included in the previous broadsheet (No.8). Of these, only that at Rockbourne reveals much evidence of farming activity. Here, on the south side of the yard, adjacent buildings housed corn-ovens and mill-stones. On the opposite side of the yard, next to the baths, was the smithy.

1. Try to think further about the way in which a villa economy operated. On a typical villa estate, producing cattle, sheep, pigs, fruit and vegetables, and grain, what sort of products might have reached market? Where was 'market' and how might the farm produce have got there? What sort of things would a farmer have hoped to acquire in the market which he needed on his estate and could not produce himself?
2. If you visit the villas at Chedworth, Somerdale, Brading or Rockbourne, be sure to look carefully at the collections in the small museums at each of these sites. See what you can learn about the villas as farms from the objects on display.
3. See if you can discover where the nearest villas to you are, and see how they relate to the nearest Roman roads and towns. On an Ordnance Survey map, or better still actually on the ground, see if you can identify the likely route that the 'farm-road' from the villa would follow to join the main road.

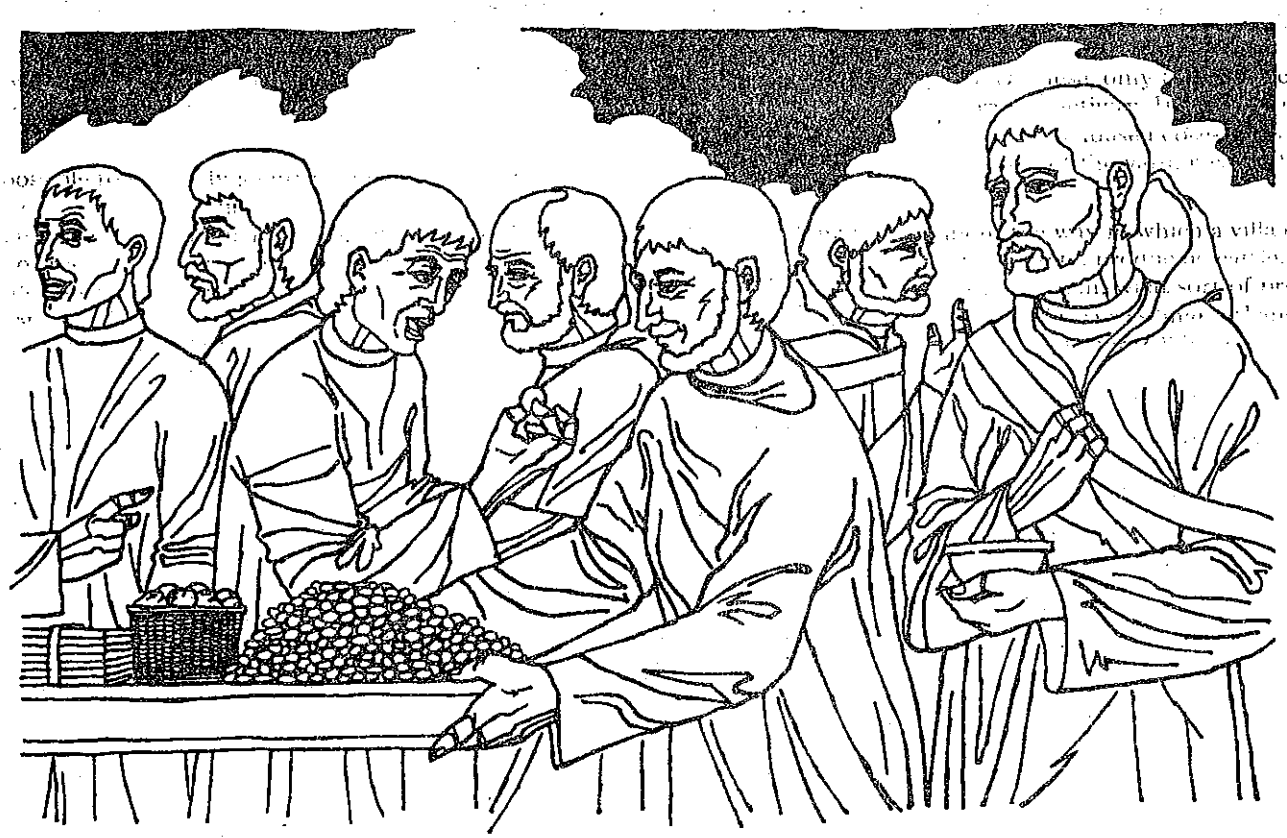


Fig.9.5 Tenants paying rent to their landlord — a scene based on a stone relief from Neumagen.

10 NATIVE FARMS AND VILLAGES

Salisbury Plain

We noted, on broadsheet 8, that even in southern England where villas are numerous, there were areas where villas were not to be found. Salisbury Plain and the Fens are the two most prominent of these.

Native farmsteads such as Woodcuts and Rotherley were established decades before the Roman invasion, and they persisted with few changes throughout the Roman occupation. Apart from the introduction of a rectangular living house and of corn-drying ovens, the most obvious difference is the replacement of native pottery by wheel-made Romano-British wares. There may have been some changes in farming methods but these are difficult to detect archaeologically; there was a reduction in the total capacity of grain storage pits — but this native method of storage was nevertheless continued.

Apart from farmsteads we also have villages on Salisbury Plain in the Roman period, sometimes with hundreds of acres of long rectangular fields surviving around them. At Chisenbury Warren, for example, the platforms of about 80 rectangular buildings occupy an area of nearly 15 acres, mainly to the west of a long street, which eventually leads into a 'village green' at its northern end.

We are uncertain why settlements of native type persist on Salisbury Plain and why villas are not to be found there. It may be that this area was maintained as an imperial estate throughout most of the Roman occupation.

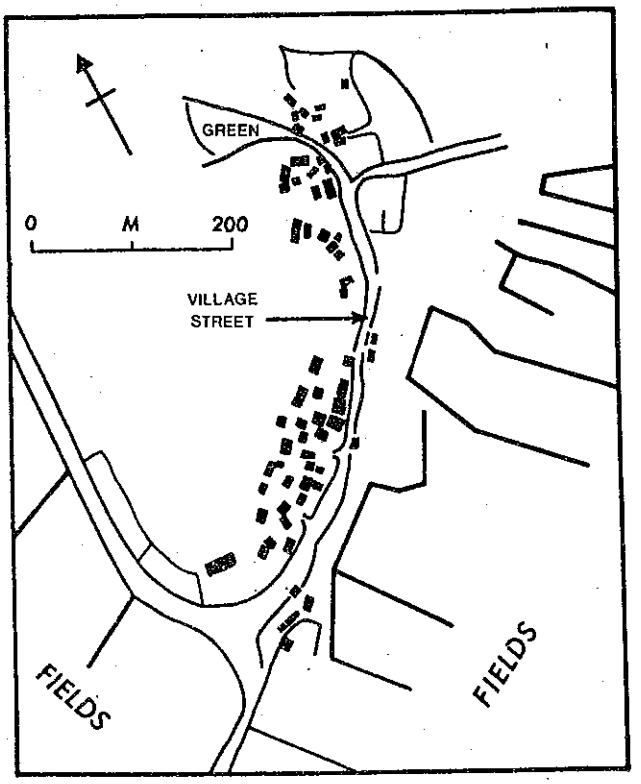


Fig.10.1 A plan of Chisenbury Warren (Wilts), a Romano-British village. The site is known only from field survey and not all the buildings would be contemporary.

The Fens

It has also been suggested that the Fens were farmed as an imperial estate, and there was certainly government involvement here. Extensive drainage works in the reign of Hadrian must have been undertaken by the army. The opportunity was taken to link natural watercourses with artificial channels to provide a communications system which ran from the River Cam to the River Humber. The most important part of this system was the Car Dyke. Along these waterways may have passed the produce of the Fens on its way to supply the forts in north-east England. Although some crops were grown here, it is clear from the droveways and large areas of enclosed pasture seen on aerial photographs that cattle-raising was the most important farming activity.

Many of the earlier enclosed farmsteads, like Tallington, again show few changes from pre-conquest farms, and still have four-post granaries, storage pits and fire-pits. Later in date are the 'basilican' buildings, sometimes called villas, which are found in several counties in and around the Fens. Many of these began as timber buildings and were later rebuilt in stone. A good example is Denton (Lincs.), where an aisled timber building about 30m long was constructed about A.D.300. About A.D.370 it was rebuilt with stone foundations and given tesselated floors. This end was probably always a living area, the rest of the building being for storage of equipment and cereals or fodder.

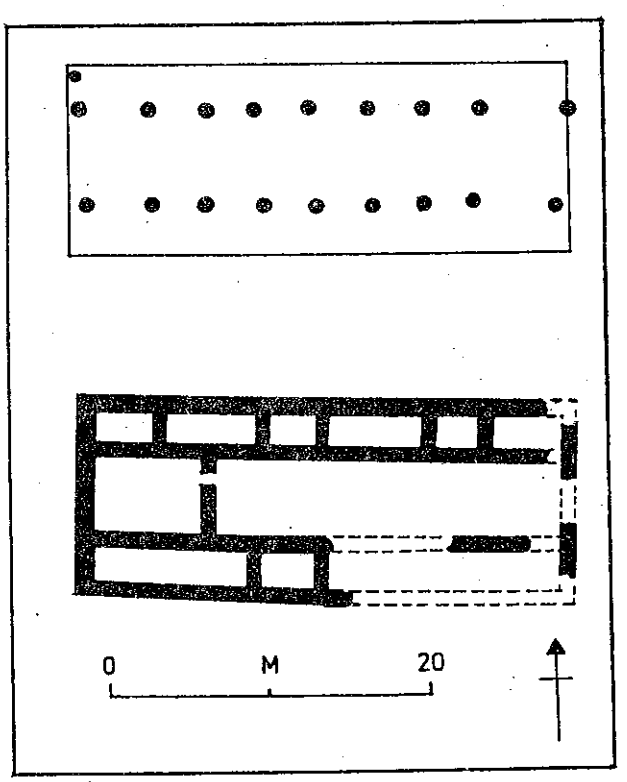


Fig.10.2 Two successive buildings at Denton. The upper was an aisled timber barn, overlain in the late 4th century by a building with stone foundations, which preserved the original plan and dimensions but partitioned the aisles.

Devon and Cornwall

Apart from two or three examples on the very eastern fringe of Devon, and an isolated example at Magor in Cornwall, the south-west peninsula is devoid of villas. Equally, there are no Roman towns worthy of the name but for Exeter. By and large the people of Devon and Cornwall — the Dumnonii — maintained a life-style which went back many centuries before the Roman conquest.

Little is known of Roman rural settlements in Devon, although a number of rectangular enclosures with timber huts appear to be typical. Further west more distinctive types of settlement can be recognised. One is the village of 'courtyard' houses, of which Chysauster is the best known example. Here, there are eight houses, each roughly oval in shape with rooms built into the main external wall of the house. At the centre is an open yard, to one side is the main oval or circular living room, and to another is a workshop or store. Frequently there are traces of pre-Roman settlement beneath such settlements.

Far more numerous, and rather more widespread in west Cornwall, are the 'rounds' — usually roughly oval enclosures, with circular huts built up against the enclosure wall. A completely excavated example at Trethurgy proved to contain about five dwellings, a byre, two or three storage huts, and perhaps a shrine. For the twenty or so people who occupied such settlements, Romanisation meant a handful of coins and a few pots imported from further east.

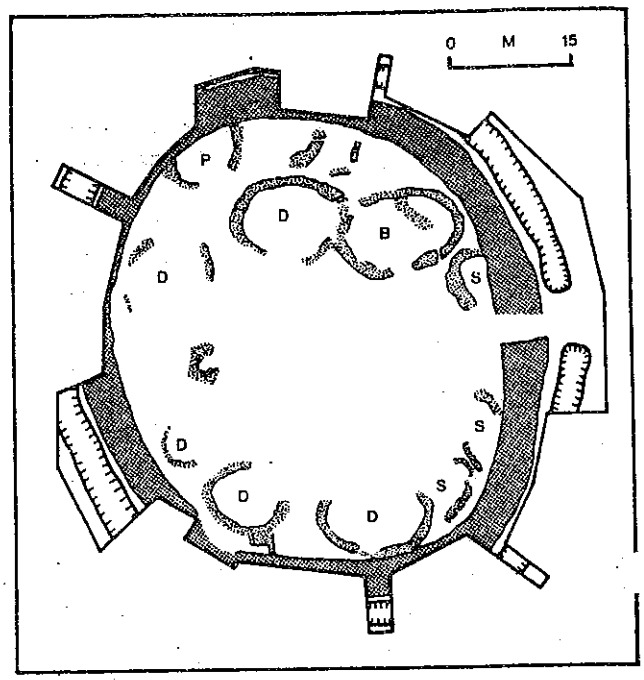


Fig.10.3 The 'round' at Trethurgy. Key to buildings: D — dwelling huts. S — store-sheds. B — byre. P — animal pen. Note that the huts tend to cluster near the enclosure wall for protection from wind and rain.

South-west Wales

The only town in south-west Wales seems to have been the vicus which served the fort at Carmarthen, yet the local people — the Demetae — appear to have been organised into a *civitas* by the Romans. Their administrative centre was presumably at Carmarthen.

Although there may have been several different types of rural settlement in the region, in the area near Carmarthen one type appears to be typical and relatively numerous. This is the round or oval enclosure containing a long rectangular building, typified by the site of Cwmbrwyn. Here a building with stone foundations was over a hundred feet long, and it has even been suggested it may have been a barrack for a small detachment of troops. However, nothing has been found here or at other excavated sites at Trelissey and Walesland Rath to suggest military occupation. Indeed, at Walesland Rath two circular timber huts were contemporary with the rectangular building and the site was clearly a native farmstead.

Walesland Rath also proved to have been first built, with timber ranges alongside the enclosure bank, and two or three circular huts, in the Iron Age. The Roman buildings were inserted later, and it is possible that the same sequence of events happened at Cwmbrwyn and Trelissey. As in Cornwall, Romanisation of the local farmers is largely represented by small quantities of Romano-British pottery.

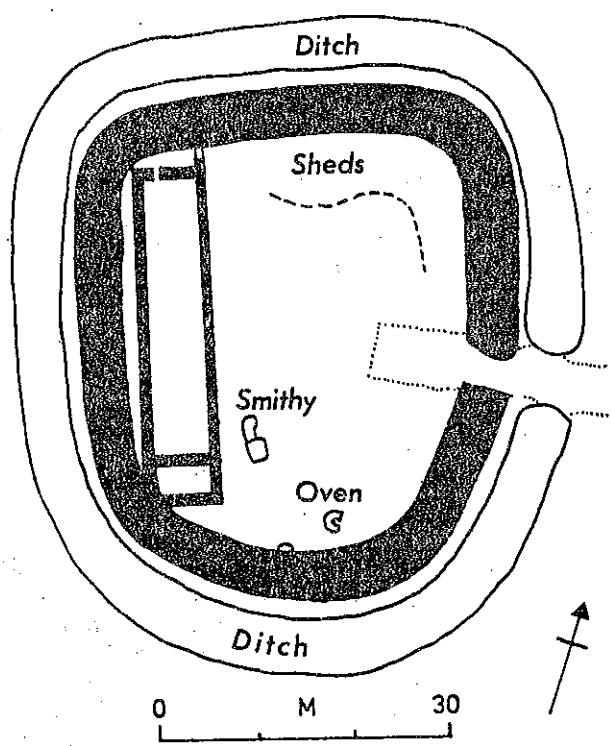


Fig.10.4 The enclosed farmstead at Cwmbrwyn, probably occupied in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. The adoption of a long rectangular dwelling house and store-shed may reflect the influence of Roman military architecture.

North Wales

We are still uncertain as to what happened to many of the people living in the mountainous area of central Wales after it finally fell to the Romans in the 70's, but it is unlikely that it was completely depopulated as has sometimes been claimed.

Some Welsh hillforts continued in occupation, and further north we have examples of hillforts occupied either by individual farmsteads or by much larger communities. At both the Breiddin and Dinorben a large circular timber hut built inside the hillfort appears to represent the nucleus of a 3rd-4th century farm, whilst at Trer Ceiri in Caernarvonshire about a hundred stone-walled huts are the houses, sheds and workshops of a village.

The occupied hillforts, however, are greatly outnumbered by the enclosed native farmsteads of north Wales, of which about three hundred are known. Many of these farmstead enclosures are oval or sub-circular in shape, with circular and oval stone huts either built into the enclosure wall itself as at Caer Mynydd, or else standing free in the yard. A more distinctive type, whose origins are uncertain, is the enclosure with four or five straight sides and a mixture of rectangular and circular huts. Typical of this type is Din Lligwy, with a rectangular building forming a gateway or entrance.

On all of these farmsteads, the larger circular huts seem likely to have been the houses, and the rectangular ones barns or byres.

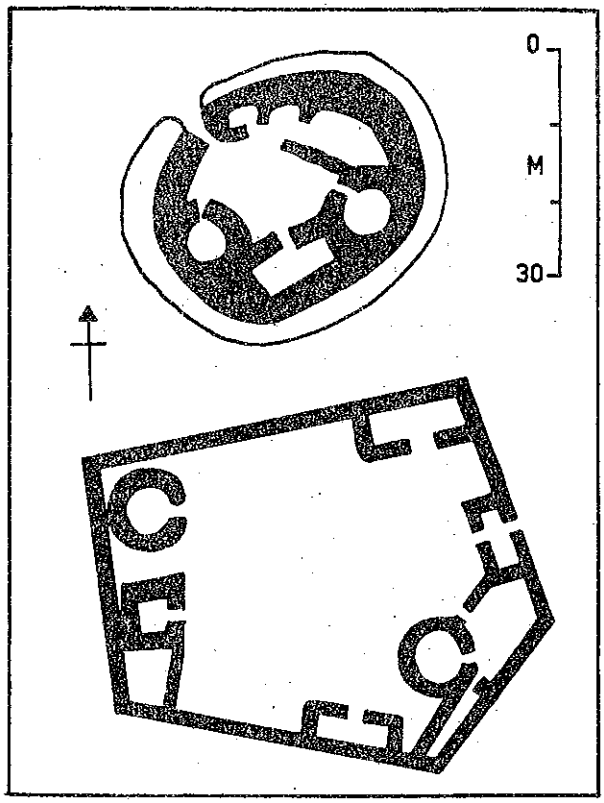


Fig.10.5 Two different types of farmsteads, both typical of north-west Wales. Above, the site of Cae'r Myndd; below, Din Lligwy (Anglesey).

Northern England

Although an increasing number of villas are being discovered in southern and central Yorkshire, and occur sporadically as far north as Old Durham (about 25 kms south of Hadrian's Wall), most of northern England was populated by people who lived in farmsteads and villages of native type.

Ewe Close is perhaps the best known of these settlements, and is usually described as a village, because it contains between fifteen and twenty roughly circular huts. The largest of these, about 15m across stands at the centre of an L-shaped enclosure and was probably the main dwelling, but most of the other structures are very small and were probably stores or worksheds. To the east of the main enclosure is a block of small, roughly rectangular enclosures which may have been cultivation plots for crops.

Elsewhere large areas of 'Celtic' fields survive, with numerous farmsteads and hamlets approached by droveways dotted amongst them, often less than a kilometre apart. The impression is that most of the river valleys of north-west England were thickly populated and the landscape well-organised by the farmers. The same picture is emerging in parts of north-east England where aerial photography is revealing an even more highly organised landscape with rectilinear fields or paddocks, droveways and roads, and farmsteads stretching for mile after mile. The only difference here is that we find ditches replacing stone walls as the principal boundaries.

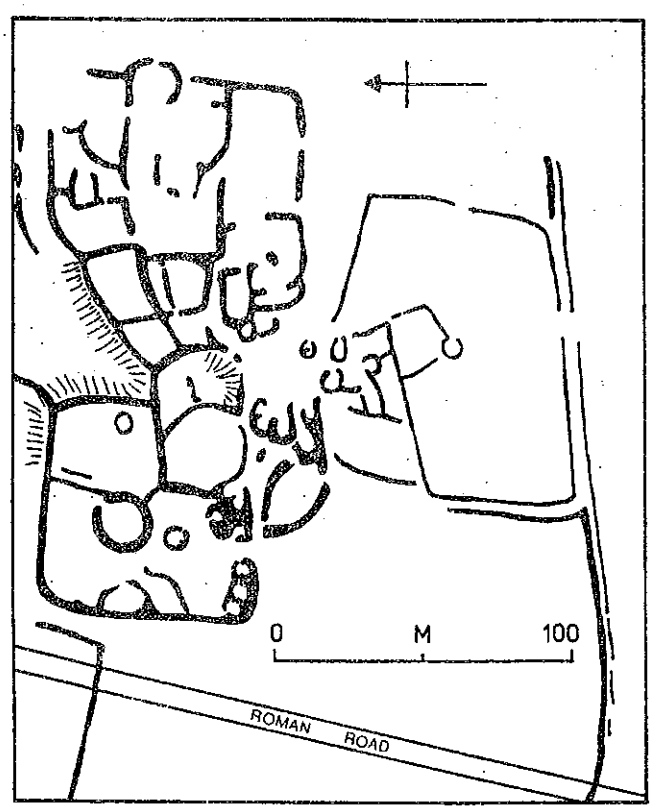


Fig.10.6 The settlement at Ewe Close, with the main occupation area at bottom left and cultivation plots at top left.

Beyond the Frontier

In much of western and northern Scotland the Roman conquest made no impact at all on either the patterns or forms of rural settlement, but in southern Scotland and Northumbria there were important changes in both. Hillforts seem to have been abandoned, and in many cases small hillforts have settlements of stone-walled circular huts built over their Iron Age defences. A good example is Southdean Law (Roxburgh). An alternative form of settlement, particularly common in the Cheviots, is the homestead with a circular or oval enclosure, containing up to five or six stone huts grouped at the rear of a scooped-out yard area. Both types of settlement appeared to be occupied by just two or three families and neither can be described as a defended settlement.

In this they contrast markedly with the hillforts of the pre-Roman era, and it is difficult not to associate the abandonment of the hillforts with the arrival of the Roman army. But whether the Romans forcibly moved the people north of the Wall out of their forts, or whether the peace imposed by Rome encouraged them to settle in more accessible places is uncertain. Certainly there was a considerable flow of Roman goods into southern Scotland, particularly in the 3rd century, and the hillfort capital of the Votadini at Traprain Law was not only allowed to flourish but was clearly the destination of many Roman imports. It is against this background that the success of the frontier policy in the 3rd and 4th centuries must be viewed.

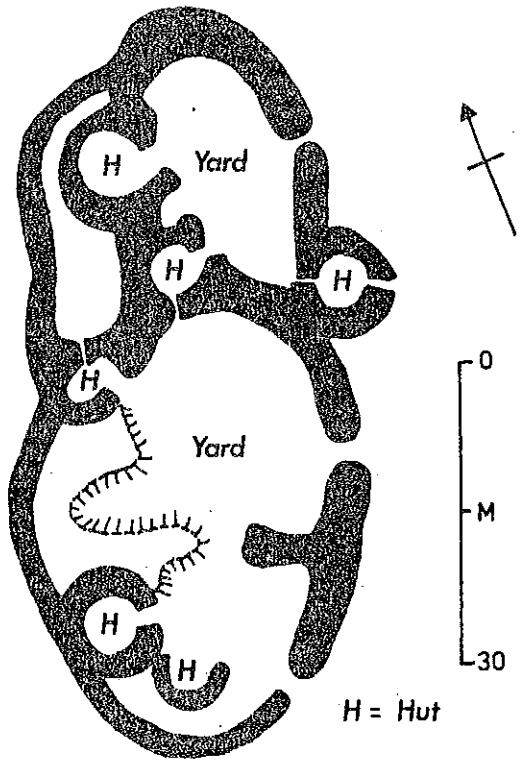


Fig.10.7 The enclosed settlement at Cockburn Law (Berwicks) with two yard areas, each with occupation huts at the rear.

Native Farms and Farming

It will be apparent that the native farmsteads represent a high degree of continuity from the Iron Age. Throughout the highland regions, farmsteads are mainly found inside circular or oval enclosures. The stone-built circular huts include dwellings, stores and work-places. Structures such as corn-drying ovens, granaries, threshing floors and pig-sties, are absent.

To a certain extent their absence underlines one of the differences between farming on villa estates and on native farms. Although both types of farm normally operated a mixed economy, the villas frequently specialised to a certain degree and used Roman innovations in buildings, tools and techniques. They also operated on a larger scale and they did so to make a profit.

The native farms of the highland zone were more concerned with subsistence farming, and generally depended more heavily on cattle and sheep. Consequently we do not find large areas of the longer, narrower 'Roman' fields we noted at Barnsley Park and Lye Hole villas but smaller areas of the squarer Celtic fields, or series of cultivation plots as at Ewe Close.

Romanisation on these settlements was often a matter of a few coins and brooches, and some hard, wheelmade pottery. We must remember however, that although we talk of Roman villas and native settlements usually the population of both types of settlement were, in fact, native Britons.

Places to visit, Things to do

Chysauster (Cornwall) — see the village of courtyard houses.

Din Lligwy (Anglesey) — see the polygonal farmyard with circular and rectangular buildings.

Tre'r Ceiri (Gwynedd) — climb up to this remarkable hillfort with its dozens of stone-built huts.

Crosby Garrett (Cumbria) — find three Roman settlements and their fields within a few hundred metres of each other.

Traprain Law (Lothian) — climb to the top of this tribal capital where an abundance of Roman imports, including a hoard of silver, were found.

Some questions to think about:

1. Why should the Romans perhaps have kept Salisbury Plain and the Fens as imperial estates?
2. How might we explain the change from an aisled timber building to a stone, partitioned one at Denton and other similar sites?
3. In what ways do the native farmsteads of the highland zone reflect their adaption to their environment?
4. Where and how might farmers in north Wales or the Pennines have obtained Roman brooches, coinage and pottery?

11 THE GODS OF ROMAN BRITAIN

Celtic Religion

Most of us think of Druids when we consider the religion of the Celts, and Caesar and other Roman writers devote much space to describing them and their activities. They appear to have supervised ceremonies, sacrifices and acts of divination, principally in sacred groves but also at other open places such as rivers and bogs. The gods and spirits to whom offerings were made were very numerous, mostly being specifically related to a locality or a tribe. Sulis, for example, was worshipped in the area around Bath, whilst Brigantia was clearly a tribal deity in northern England. Apart from animal and human sacrifices, rich deposits of offerings from bogs like that at Llyn Cerrig Bach (Angelsey) and from rivers like the Thames, include such things as shields, helmets, swords, and decorative bronzework.

Apart from sacred bogs, rivers and groves there were other places of worship, however, which were shrines or temples in the normal sense. At Heathrow, the Iron Age village included a square timber temple with a covered walk-way around it, and at South Cadbury a square shrine was fronted by a porch and antechamber. Circular shrines can probably be identified at Pilsdon Pen (Dorset) and Maiden Castle, and at Frilford (Berks) a circular ritual enclosure housed a setting of three pairs of timber posts. The shrines at Maiden Castle and Frilford were alongside or underneath temples of the Roman period.

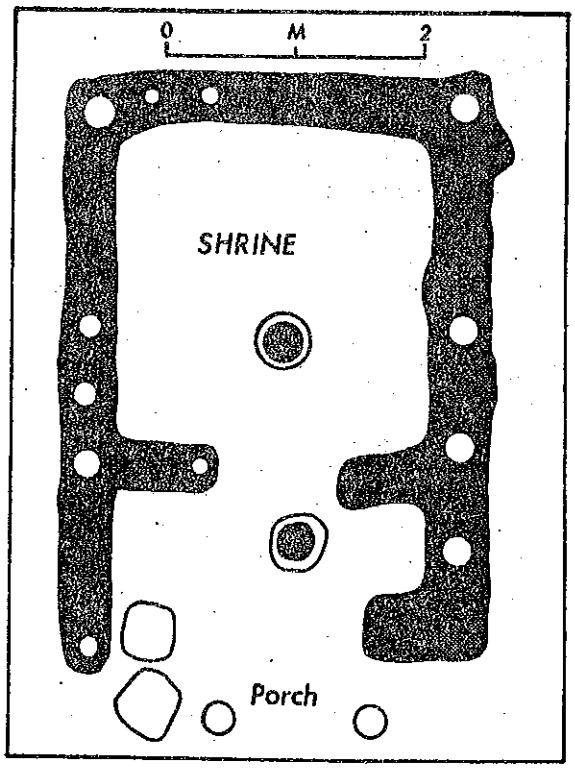


Fig.11.1 The early 1st century A.D. shrine at South Cadbury (Soms). The approach to the shrine was marked by a line of burials of complete carcases of cattle, sheep and pig.

Romano-Celtic Temples

The Roman temples which succeeded the Celtic shrines at Maiden Castle and Frilford were of the type usually called Romano-Celtic, which appear in three main forms. One is the square temple, like that at Maiden Castle, with a central shrine surrounded by either an open verandah or an enclosed corridor. Additional rooms were often added to these temples to serve either as stores for offerings or as rooms to be occupied by priests. One of the Frilford temples had an annexe of this sort, but that which overlay the Iron Age shrine was circular in shape. Temples with a circular cult room and a circular verandah outside it are relatively rare, but in addition there are other shrines with just a single circular wall enclosing the sacred area. The third type of Romano-Celtic temple is the polygonal form, like that at Pagan's Hill (Avon).

Altogether more than sixty Roman-Celtic temples are known in Britain, situated both in towns and in the countryside. As the term 'Romano-Celtic' implies, we believe they were dedicated to Roman and Celtic deities who were identified with one another. At Nettleton (Wilts) an altar bore a dedication — to Apollo-Cunomageus — confirming this; but in most cases we can only identify the Roman deities concerned because it is their statues and representations which survive. The most common of these seem to be figures of Mars and Mercury, though others of Jupiter and Vulcan are known.

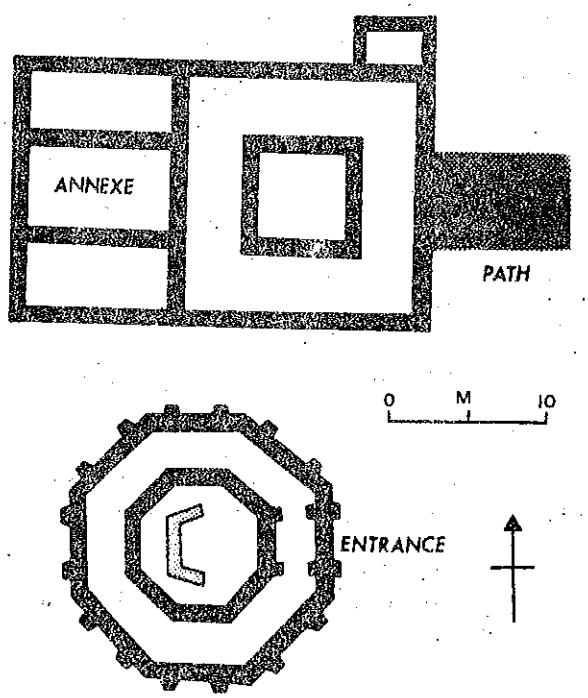


Fig.11.2 Romano-Celtic temples at Frilford (Berks) and Pagan's Hill (Soms). Frilford is an elaborated example of the common square cella temple, whilst Pagan's Hill is octagonal and unusual for its buttressed walls.

Romano-Celtic Religion

To what extent the rites and ceremonies associated with Romano-Celtic temples were derived from Celtic religion is uncertain, although there can be no doubt that human sacrifice was no longer practised.

Excavations at Uley (Glos) have produced some clues to the rituals practised at this temple, including the deposition of miniature pots and the writing of curses on lead tablets. A large number of sheep and goats seem to have been sacrificed at Uley, and it has been suggested that the temple may have kept its own flocks specially for this purpose.

Other temples, at Woodeaton (Oxon), Frilford and Pagan's Hill, were associated with the regular and deliberate deposition of coins in the pathways leading to the shrine, and large quantities of coins have been found at other Romano-Celtic temples too.

It may be that the quantities of coinage from these sites, however, is to be related to yet another function of the rural temples. In Gaul, we know that some rural shrines were the focus of fairs and of markets, and it seems likely that some, at least, of the British temples were used in a similar way. Some, such as Pagan's Hill, certainly had adjacent accommodation where visitors could be put up, but the number and nature of the nearby buildings at some other temple sites suggests that they had become major cult centres in their own right.

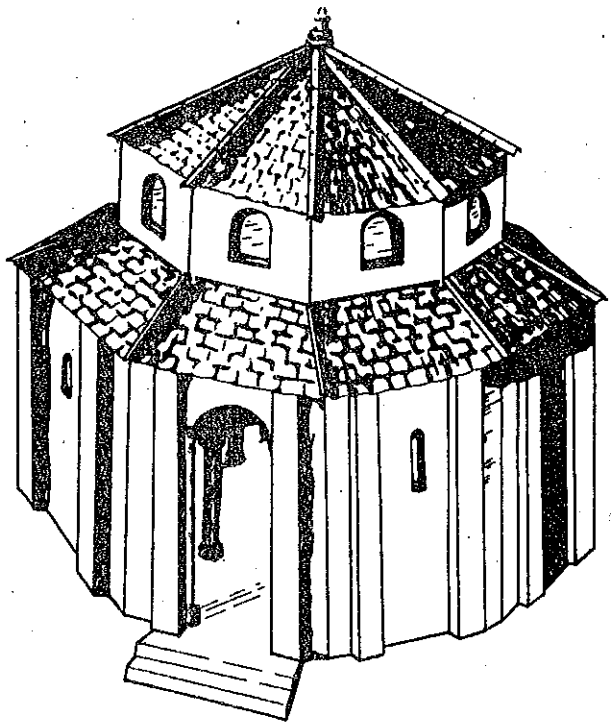


Fig.11.3 A reconstruction of Pagan's Hill temple. Its buttresse suggest there was no open verandah here but that the outer wall was built in stone to roof height. The cella here, as elsewhere, was small and suitable only for individual worship

Romano-Celtic Cult Centres

Some Romano-Celtic temples appear to be the focus of cult centres which grew up in the countryside. At Springhead in Kent no less than five temples are associated with the settlement and must be regarded as the principal reason for its existence. The temple at Nettleton seems to have spawned an accompanying settlement of about thirty buildings, which presumably met the needs of pilgrims to the shrine. The same may be true of the straggling settlement at Wycomb (Glos), where a Romano-Celtic temple inside a walled enclosure appears to be associated with a theatre, which would presumably have been used for religious performances.

All three centres, however, were probably unimportant compared to the great complex — still barely explored — at Gosbecks near Colchester. A pre-Roman sacred site was here developed into a major centre with a temple, inside a triple enclosure, a theatre some 200m to the south, and probably a bath-house to the west. Further explorations will almost certainly reveal more buildings, including perhaps an inn, like those found on more than twenty similar sites in Gaul. These fair-grounds seem to have been used on some of the many public holidays in the Roman calendar.

The Gosbecks temple may well have been dedicated to Mercury, a superb statue of whom (51 cms high) was discovered nearby, but further temples may well exist within the precincts of the site.

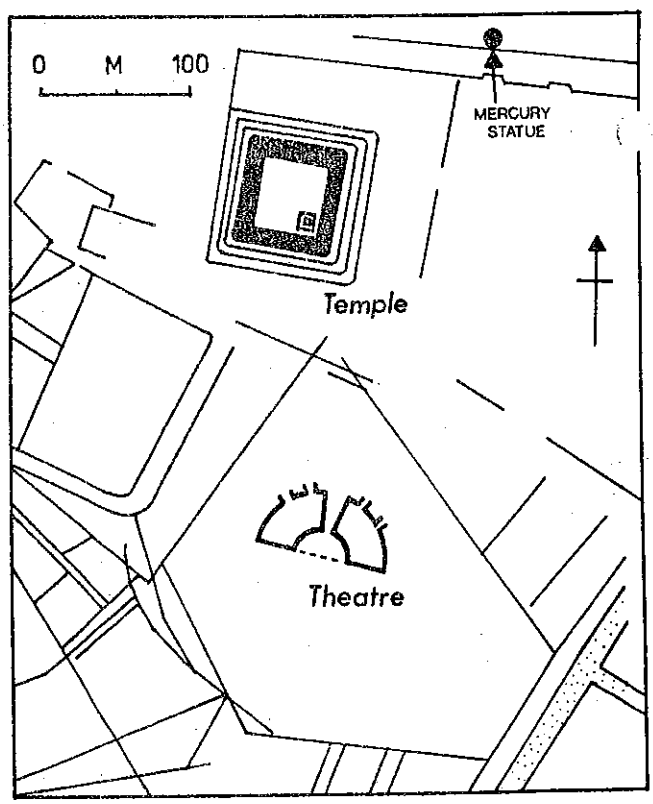


Fig.11.4 The 'fair-ground' complex with temple and theatr at Gosbecks. The ditched enclosures are not all contempor

The Roman Gods

Although many of the Roman gods were worshipped in association with existing native gods there were some temples where Classical deities alone were worshipped and temple buildings conformed to the Classical plan. The earliest such temple constructed in Britain was at Colchester, where the cella (shrine) stood on a massive platform and was fronted by a portico and flanked by colonnades. The temple was dedicated to the emperor Claudius and formed the focal point for the imperial cult. Inscriptions suggest that temples dedicated to the imperial family also existed at York, Lincoln, and London.

Classical temples discovered in other towns such as St Albans and Wroxeter, were probably dedicated to any one, or all three of the Divine Triad – Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. Usually little more than the podium (platform) survives, but at Bath it has been possible to reconstruct the Classical temple there in some detail (see broadsheet 5, fig.5.3 for a plan). In particular some fine pediment sculptures from above the entrance survive showing winged Victories supporting the shield of Minerva. The temple was dedicated to Minerva, conflated with a Celtic deity Sulis.

Bronze figurines, occasional stone statues, and figured mosaic floors all point to an acquaintance with, and perhaps an acceptance of, the classical gods at a personal level in both towns and villas. Equally many dedications from Roman forts, indicate that these gods were popular with the soldiers of the Roman army.

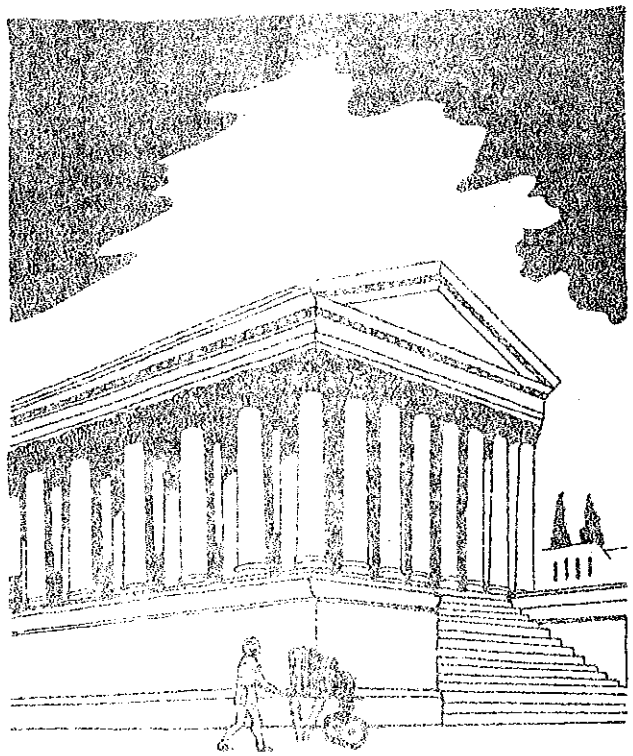


Fig.11.5 A reconstruction of the Temple of Claudius at Colchester, of which only the platform (podium) and a few architectural fragments survive.

Mithraism

Among the officers of the army the cult of Mithras, a Persian god, seems to have been popular in the second and third centuries with four known temples from military sites and at least six more suspected from the evidence of inscriptions. His appeal also to the merchant and offical classes is suggested, however, by the great London mithraeum.

The cult was centred around the struggle between good and evil in which Mithras played a crucial role by catching and sacrificing a large bull. His followers were expected to display both moral and physical courage, and initiation into each of the seven grades of the cult was accompanied by ceremonies which included ordeals.

The temples to Mithras all follow a basic design with an ante-chamber from which one entered the main cult room. This was slightly sunk into the ground, and the central passage was flanked by raised benches. The members of the cult sat on these. At the far end stood the altars, and behind them the *reredos* – the important sculptured slab showing Mithras slaying the bull.

The excavation of the mithraeum at the fort of Carrawburgh on Hadrian's Wall not only revealed these features, and broken remains of other sculptures, but it also revealed some evidence for the ordeals undergone by initiates. In the anteroom was an ordeal pit, in which a person could lie, covered by slabs, whilst a fire was lit alongside. The Carrawburgh temple was vandalised about A.D.325.

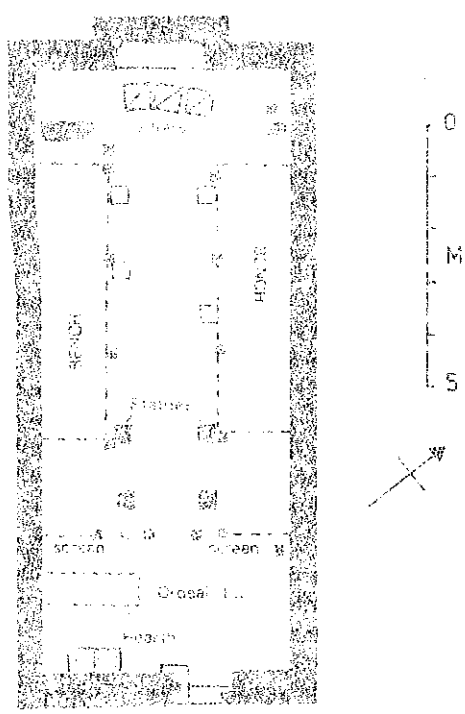


Fig.11.6 The mithraeum at Carrawburgh. The 'reredos' stood in the [illegible] and the central passage was flanked by statues of Cautes and Cautopates – representing Light and Darkness.

Christianity

The desecration of the Carrawburgh and other mithraic temples in the fourth century is thought to reflect the growth of Christianity amongst the troops. There are brief references in Tertillian and Origen to Christians in Britain in the early third century, and representatives of the British church attended a number of Councils in the fourth century.

The archaeological evidence for Christians in Roman Britain is gradually accumulating. At Silchester a small building near the forum has been identified as a church on the basis of its plan, and there are two possible churches at St Albans, where the martyrdom of St Alban took place. The location of another church is probably indicated by the hoard of Christian silverware from the town of Durobrivae (Water Newton). This included some votive plaques, a dish, three bowls, a wine-strainer and a chalice, all but the latter carrying the Khi-Rho monogram (the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek).

Some of the most impressive evidence for a thriving urban community of Christians, however, has come from Dorchester (Dorset), where a large cemetery at Poundbury, just outside the town, has been excavated. Christian burials seems to have been made here from the late third century, all aligned east-west, and some placed inside mausolea with painted figures on their walls. Hundreds of burials were made here over a period of a century or so in coffins mostly of wood but sometimes of lead or stone.

Fig.11.7 The central bust of the Hinton St. Mary mosaic, thought to be a portrait of Christ. Note the Chi(X) and the Rho (P) behind the head, these being the traditional Christian monogram from the Greek name *Khristos*.

Christianity in the Countryside

In the fourth century Christianity was a part of the Roman way of life, having become the empire's official religion in A.D.312. It is not surprising, therefore, to find villa owners adopting the 'new' religion, or at least the outer trappings of it.

Stray finds of Christian objects such as pewter vessels, pottery, and signet rings carrying the Khi-Rho monogram have been found on a number of villas, and presumably indicate Christian ownership.

One villa where a dedicated Christian clearly lived was Lullingstone. A room at one end of the villa was given over to use as a Christian chapel, its walls painted with Khi-Rho symbols and with an arcade of figures in long robes, whose significance is uncertain. The Christian nature of this room has led to suggestions that the mosaic in the main living room also had a Christian meaning. It showed Bellerophon slaying a mythical creature, the Chimaera, and might represent the triumph of good over evil.

Other villa mosaics with this motif might be suspected of a Christian significance but we cannot be certain. Far clearer examples are the Frampton (Dorset) mosaic with a Khi-Rho prominently placed, and the Hinton-St Mary floor which not only features a Khi-Rho but a human bust thought to be Christ himself. Significantly, both of these floors also portray Bellerophon and the Chimaera.

Places to visit, Things to do

Maiden Castle (Dorset) — see the Romano-Celtic temple and priests house.

Caerwent (Gwent) — visit an urban Romano-Celtic temple.

Colchester (Essex) — see the vaults of the Temple of Claudius.

Bath (Avon) — visit the famous hot-baths, still fed by a spring after 2,000 years.

Benwell (Newcastle) — visit the temple of Antenociticus.

Carrawburgh (Hadrian's Wall) — see the temple of Mithras and its altars.

Lullingstone (Kent) — see the Bellerophon mosaic.

The British Museum has the Lullingstone Christian wall-plaster, the Hinton St Mary mosaic, and the Water Newton Hoard.

The University Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne, has important religious material from Hadrian's Wall and a full-size reproduction of the Carrawburgh mithraeum.

1. Try to compile a list of all the gods and goddesses worshipped in Roman Britain. You will be staggered by just how many there were. Some useful places to look, if you can get the books from a library, are:

J. Liversidge	*Britain in the Roman Empire*
A. Birley	*Everyday Life in Roman Britain*
London Ass. of Classical Teachers	*Some Inscriptions from Roman Britain*
British Museum	*Guide to Antiquities of Roman Britain*
A. Ross	*Pagan Celtic Britain*

Produced by Department of Prehistory & Archaeology, University of Sheffield

12 BRITAIN IN THE 4th CENTURY

Saxons and the Saxon Shore

By about A.D.270 the prosperity and security of the earlier third century were threatened by events in Gaul. On the one hand a series of local usurpers led to weak government and Germanic invasions across the Rhine, whilst on the other progressive debasement of the coinage fired inflation. The results in Britain were initially a decline in maintenance of some public and private buildings, but subsequently a threat to the security of the province.

The threat came from Saxon and Frankish sea-borne raiders, whose impact is first indicated by the building of Reculver and Brancaster about A.D.230 (broadsheet 3). Most of the other forts built along the coast between the Wash and the Solent (known as the Saxon Shore) were constructed in the period A.D.276-85, perhaps on the orders of the Emperor Probus.

These forts were all situated close to the sea or on a navigable river and were the bases from which flotillas of ships operated against the raiders. Most of the forts are roughly square in plan, defended by tile-bonded walls with projecting bastions on the outside. These probably each carried a ballista (two-man catapult) for defensive purposes. We still know little of the interior layout and buildings of these forts, but they were less regularly planned than other Roman forts and some of their buildings were of unusual plan. At least two forts, for example, had their bath-buildings *inside* the defences.

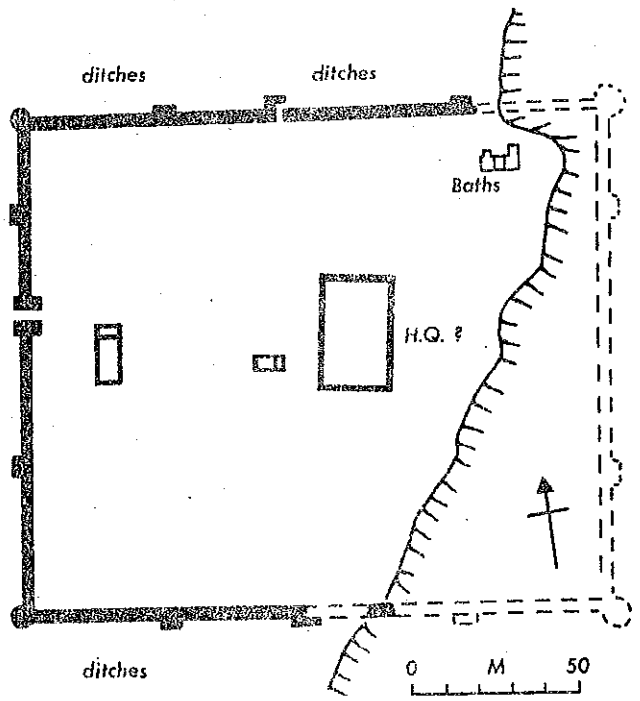


Fig.12.1 The Saxon-Shore fort at Richborough, about 6 acres in size. Although little is known of interior buildings, it is clear that the layout was different to that of a usual Roman infantry or cavalry fort.

Carausius and the early Fourth Century

At about the time the Shore forts were nearing completion, the admiral of the British Fleet, Carausius, set himself up as Emperor in Britain. He had already been successful in reducing raids across the Channel, and he now increased his popularity in Britain by issuing the first 'reformed' coinage (with a higher metal content) for a long time. In A.D.293, however, he was assassinated by his less able lieutenant Allectus. By A.D.296 Roman forces under Constantius were able to cross the Channel and bring the short-lived 'British Empire' to an end.

There are clear signs throughout the province that a general recovery was well underway by the time Constantine became Emperor in A.D.306. Forts were repaired, roads restored, and public and private buildings in town and country alike saw extensions and improvements taking place.

By the 340's though, the northern frontier was again causing some concern, with some forts beyond Hadrian's Wall showing signs of destruction at this time. The threat of coastal raids also returned, both in the south-east and along the western seaboard, where the Irish pirates formed the danger. Pevensey was added to the Saxon Shore system, and forts were established at Cardiff, Holyhead, Lancaster and perhaps elsewhere on the west coast. Pressure on the province was beginning to mount from all directions.

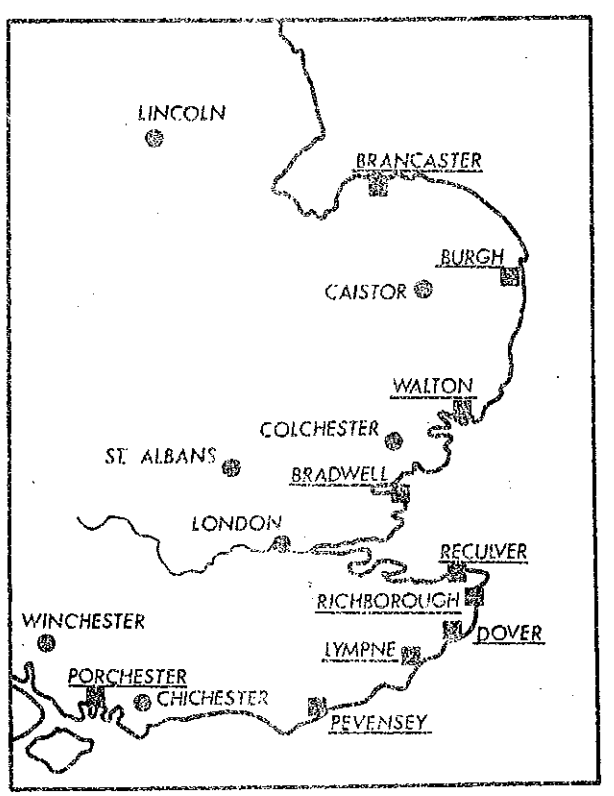


Fig.12.2 The Saxon-Shore and its forts. Note the two early 3rd century forts, Reculver and Brancaster, protect the vulnerable inlets of the Thames and the Wash.

The Barbarian Conspiracy — A.D.367

The historian Ammianus Marcellinus tells us that in A.D.367 the frontiers of Britain were overwhelmed by a co-ordinated attack by Saxons, Franks, Picts, Attacotti (from the Western Isles) and Scots (from Ireland). The commander of the Saxon Shore forces was killed, the commander of the field army was besieged or captured, and the countryside was overrun with raiders. The archaeological evidence for this great disaster is mainly reflected in the measures taken afterwards rather than in the destructions of A.D.367 itself. There is no certain evidence that the forts on Hadrian's Wall were attacked, and it is possible that raiders from the north came by boat and outflanked the frontier. Equally, fortified towns and garrison forts further south seem to have been avoided by the raiders.

Scattered through Britain, however, are a number of villas which *may* have been victims of the raid. Old Durham villa, south of Hadrian's Wall, appears to have been destroyed about this time, whilst a victim of the Saxons may have been the villa at Chilgrove in Sussex. Irish raiders may have been responsible for the destruction of Kings Weston villa in the 360's, and of nearby Brislington. Here, four of the villa's occupants appear to have been killed and subsequently their bodies were tipped down a well at the back of the villa. The raiders of 367 were primarily after plunder and they sought it where it could be most easily obtained, from the defenceless villas.

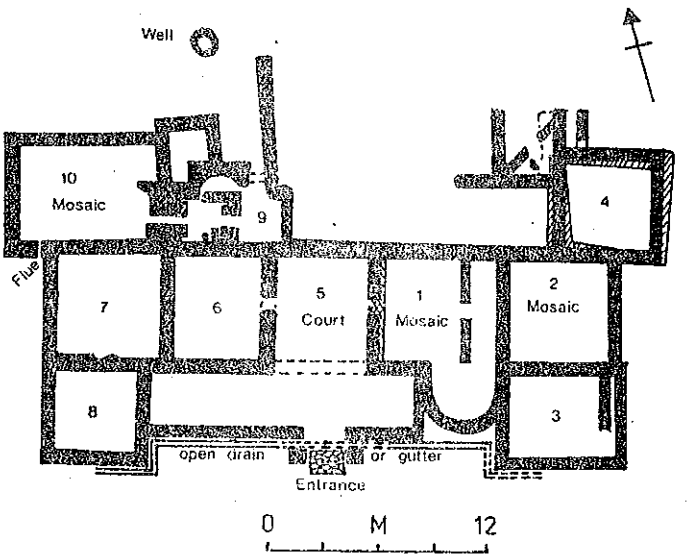


Fig.12.3 The villa at Brislington, probably a victim of Irish raiders in A.D.367. In the well remains of four humans and at least a dozen cattle were found, together with pieces of mosaic and seven pewter vessels. There was also a great deal of building debris. Rooms 1 and 2 showed traces of fire, and it is possible that the victims were cleared from these rooms when the villa was re-occupied.

Count Theodosius in Britain

In 368 the Emperor Valentinian sent Count Theodosius to Britain to restore the situation, and we believe we can trace his work in the archaeological record.

On the northern frontier many forts were rebuilt and partially redesigned at this time. Headquarters buildings in some forts were altered to be used for storage or even living accommodation, and it has been suggested that civilians from the adjacent *vici* moved into the forts, which now became effectively fortified villages. We cannot be certain that this happened, and certainly the *vicus* at Chesterholm continued in occupation after 367. The coast between the Tyne and Flamborough Head was now protected by a line of watch-towers, which must have been linked to flotillas of scout-ships and warships based in the estuaries of the Tyne, Tees and Humber.

Further south town walls were given projecting bastions like those earlier introduced to the Shore forts. The appearance of new, wide ditch-systems around some of the towns with bastions such as Great Casterton, suggests they were intended to carry catapults too. In addition to this strengthening of town defences, some towns may now have received small garrisons, for Theodosius appears to have brought with him Germanic troops whose distinctive buckles have been found in towns like Dorchester (Oxon), and occasionally on villa sites such as Shakenoak.

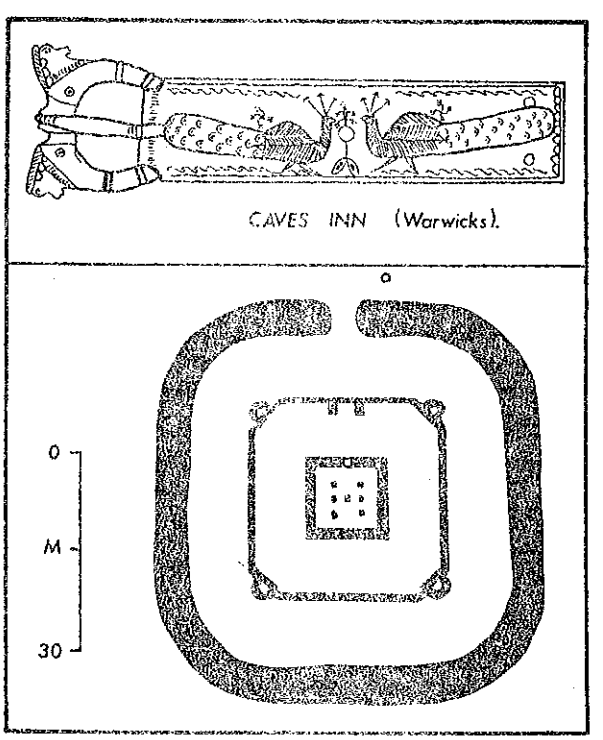


Fig.12.4 Above, a superb belt plate and buckle of the type worn by newly raised units of the time of Theodosius. Found at Cave's Inn (Warwicks). Below, the watch-tower at Scarborough, built by Theodosius's troops.

The Retreat from Britain

From A.D.370 onwards, the history of Roman Britain is difficult to interpret. It is clear from written sources that Picts, Irish and Saxons continued their raids after 367. Things may have improved briefly when the army commander, Magnus Maximus, set himself up as Emperor in 383. He was popular in Britain, but by depleting the island's garrison to support his claim in Gaul he further weakened its ability to oppose the raiders. Maximus may have attempted to replace the regular troops he withdrew by raising regiments of Britains, or they may have been organised by the general Stilicho, who was sent to re-organise the defences of Britain in A.D.396-8.

We have no certain evidence of Stilicho's activities, but apart from the appearance of British units defending a number of towns, it is about this time that there are increasing signs of Germanic families being settled in Britain. At Mucking (Essex), for example, in a suitable position to defend the Thames estuary, a settlement of over a hundred Saxon sunken-floor huts was founded shortly before A.D.400. Stilicho's work may have been intended as much to release regular troops to defend Italy as to strengthen Britain, and certainly by 407 the last such troops had left Britain. Three years later the Emperor Honorius told the British to make their own arrangements for defence.

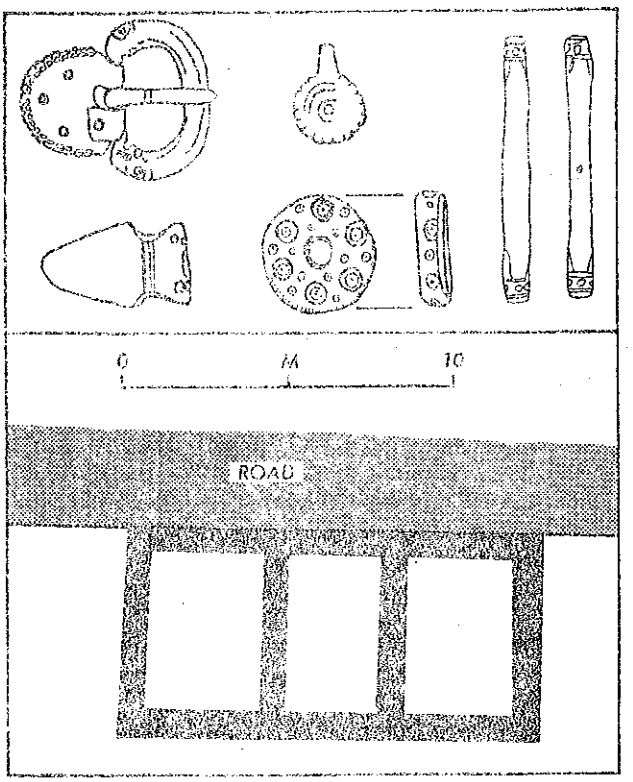


Fig.12.5 Dorchester (Oxon). Above, bronzes of Germanic type perhaps associated with an urban garrison. Below, a late 4th century building possibly used as barracks for the troops.

The Decline of the Villas

In some areas the events of 367 seem to have led to a rapid decline in the fortunes of the villas. In the south-west many villas shows signs of lack of maintenance and a lowering of living standards after A.D.370. At Box people lived in the bath suite, at Keynsham they did their cooking in a mosaic floored corridor, while corn-ovens were built in former living rooms at Atworth and Witcombe.

Some villas in the region, mainly those near fortified towns, do not reveal this early decline; Hucclecote, Ilchester Mead, Lo[illegible]ham, and Whittington all have mosaic floors which were probably laid *after* 367. A similar pattern emerges in other parts of the province, many villas showing signs of decline in the later fourth century, but a few revealing continuing prosperity. The villa at Great Casterton, for example, saw considerable extensions and improvements after A.D.370.

A decline in living standards should not be confused either with abandonment or squatters. Often it resulted from the owner moving to live in his town house and no longer being prepared to keep his villa buildings in proper repair. The farms and estates were still farmed, however, and there is some evidence to suggest that some villa *estates* survived intact into the period of the Saxon settlement. But as villa buildings grew increasingly ruinous so they were completely abandoned and people began to build farm-houses of different type alongside the ruins.

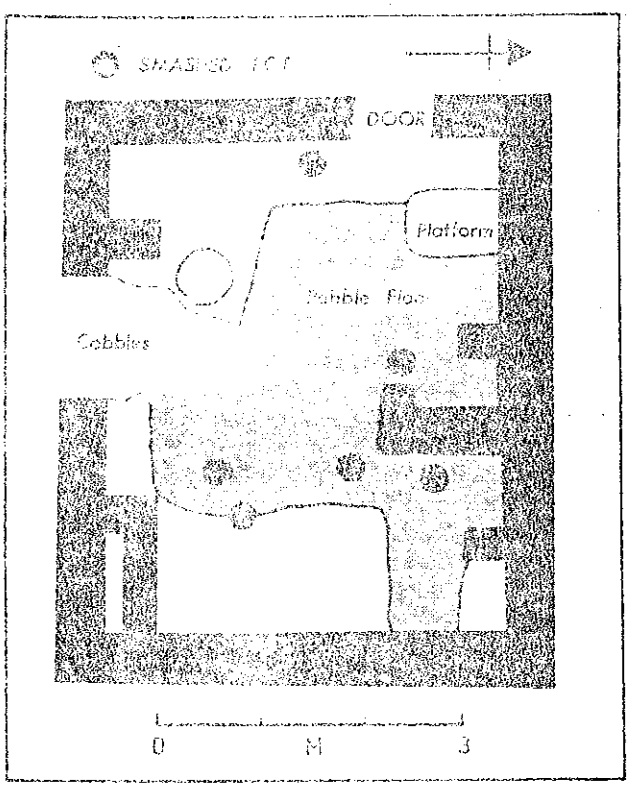


Fig.12.6 A small timber-framed house built in the courtyard of the villa at Latimer (Bucks) after the villa was abandoned.

Town Life in the late Fourth Century

Although the confidence of the villa owners may have been disturbed by the raids of 367, the restoration by Theodosius, and in particular the attention paid to the security of the towns, enabled town life to prosper in the late fourth century. Indeed, the return of many villa owners to their town homes may have stimulated urban activities after A.D.370.

At St Albans excavations have revealed good evidence for the vitality of town life in the late fourth century. The temple near the theatre was restored and, about A.D.380, embellished with a new columned gateway. Nearby, stood a five-roomed house with tesselated floors, which was not built until some time after 367. A hypocaust-heated room was added to one corner of the house around A.D.400. More remarkable was the house built on one corner of insula 27 about A.D.350. This was a courtyard house, with a corridor running around three residential wings. There were nearly twenty rooms in the house, many tesselated floors, and a mosaic. About A.D.390 two rooms were enlarged, given underfloor heating, and each paved with a patterned mosaic.

It seems likely that similar building activities took place in other towns such as London, Cirencester, Silchester and Gloucester where there are scattered traces of prosperity in the late 4th century. At Gloucester, for example, mosaics were still being laid after A.D.370, whilst at Cirencester new hypocausts were being built at this time.

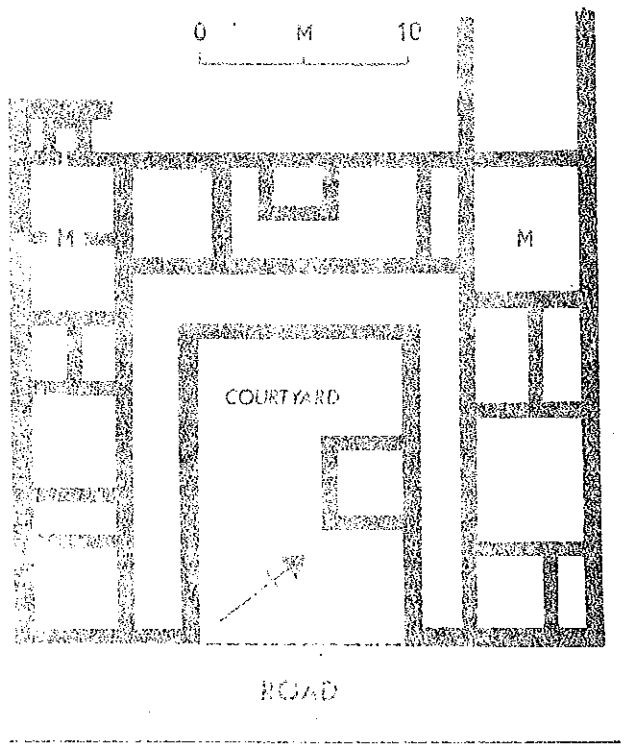


Fig.12.7 The house in insula 27 at St Albans, built about A.D.380. The two rooms marked M had mosaics laid over tessel floors in c.A.D.390.

Britain in the Fifth Century

The history of Britain from about A.D.410 is difficult to trace, and varied considerably from one area to another. It is clear that many towns survived as organised communities into the later fifth century or even longer, and from the writings of Bede (a monk living in the early 8th century) it is clear that one factor affecting the survival of the Roman way of life in some towns was the strength of the Christian church.

Elsewhere the nature of the urban garrisons may have been a crucial factor. Towns such as Canterbury and Dorchester, where we believe Germanic troops were stationed in the late fourth century, were amongst the earliest towns to become Saxon settlements: At both towns Saxon huts were found alongside Roman streets which were apparently still in use. A third factor was the attitude to Britain of the Saxons and the Irish. In the east, the Romano-Britons found the Saxons hungry for new land on which to settle; in the west, they found that the Irish were principally interested in loot.

These and other factors meant not only that towns survived much longer in some areas than in others, but that the Romano-British population also survived in great numbers in some regions. Even in areas of Saxon settlement, however, many Romano-Britons seems to have lived alongside the newcomers and we can no longer paint a picture of a Roman Britain which ended in a massacre of its peaceful inhabitants.

Places to visit, Things to do

Burgh Castle (Suffolk) — see the tile-bonded walls and towers of the Saxon Shore fort.

Caerwent (Gwent) — walk along the bastioned defences.

Cardiff (S. Glamorgan) — see the defences of this western coastal fort.

Chesterholm (Northumbria) — the H.Q. building is seen as it was rebuilt by Constantius.

Goldsborough (N. Yorks) — visit the best preserved of 'Theodosius' signal stations.

Holyhead (Angelsey) — see the towers and walls of a coastal fort.

Pevensey (Sussex) — walk round the defences of this mid-fourth century addition to the coastal defences.

Portchester (Hants) — the defences of this Saxon Shore fort survive with a total height of 20ft.

Richborough (Kent) — the Saxon Fort defences enclose earlier military remains.

Scarborough (N. Yorks) — see a Theodosian signal station.

St Albans (Herts) — a stretch of the defences complete with bastion is preserved.

1. Were garrisons were small and perhaps used mainly to man coastal and inland ways. Try to estimate the minimum number of men that might have formed the garrison of Caerwent (for a plan, see headpiece 6).
2. If you can borrow a copy of Bede *A History of the English Church and People* and of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* try to make a chart showing the fortunes of towns like St Albans, London, Cirencester, Gloucester, Bath and Pevensey from the information they yield.

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