

## THE ROMAN BUILDING AT CHART SUTTON REVISITED

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This site is recorded in the Kent Historic Environment Record as follows:

In 1949-1950 consequent to marks noticed on an aerial photograph which has since been mislaid, excavations by the late Mr M.C.W. Thomas, Bursar of Sutton Valence School, and Mr V.J. Newbury revealed the ragstone foundations of a Roman building measuring 60 ft. x 27 ft. (long axis NW-SE) which contained a corridor and three small rooms, two with hearths. Finds from the site include 4 coins ranging from Hadrian to Constantine, a large quantity of iron slag and a pipe clay figurine of Venus. The last is now on exhibition in Maidstone Museum and the remainder are in Mr Newbury's possession. Amongst the pottery found was a piece of Samian of c.130-160 AD date, and a storage jar of Patch Grove ware. The aerial photograph marks suggested the building lay on the S. side of a rectangular enclosure which covered many acres but the area is now an orchard and this cannot be recognised; the form and its proximity to RR 130 have suggested that it may be the site of a mansio and its position, 12 Roman miles from Rochester, is significant. The site of the building at TQ 8047 4965, was pointed out on the ground by Mr. Newbury. There is now nothing visible on the surface to indicate it. [KCC Monument No. TQ 84 NW 6.]

An assortment of records of the original excavation was passed some while ago to Rose Clancey and the author, both of the Maidstone Area Archaeological Group, by Albert Daniels with the intention of putting an article of record together for publication in *Archaeologia Cantiana*.

The collection of records includes V.J. Newbury's notebook containing what appears to be the draft of the associated excavation report (handwritten) which has been transcribed by the author and set out below, accompanied by eleven illustrations. The collection also contains site notes of the excavations (and various loose sheets and drawings) various details from which are included in the paper below but which are to be published in full separately, together with transcriptions, on the KAS website. This paper is in three parts:

- Transcription of the draft excavation report by V.J. Newbury.
- Three specialists' reports. (*In the absence of finds available for examination these have been prepared based on the illustrations available and the relevant portions of the author's transcriptions: Non-samian pottery; Samian pottery; Coins.*)
- General Commentary by the Author.

The precise purpose of the Chart Sutton building is not readily apparent from the excavated fabric and associated finds as recorded and remains a subject of

conjecture. In the paper below it is variously described either as a villa-type building or, because of its assumed proximity to a major Roman road a good distance from any major settlement, as some kind of traveller's accommodation (*mansio*).

THE DRAFT EXCAVATION REPORT BY V.J. NEWBURY – TRANSCRIPTION

[Uncertain wordings or additions, e.g. headings, shown in square brackets. Dimensions given in Newbury's report are retained below, with metric conversions added.]

The site was first discovered by Mr M.C.W. Thomas who noticed a large rectangular area, covering many acres, showing on an R.A.F. aerial photograph in the KAS Collections. On investigating the area he found it proved to be fieldworks, surrounded by a very low earthwork; in places nearly ploughed out (**Fig. 1**). By

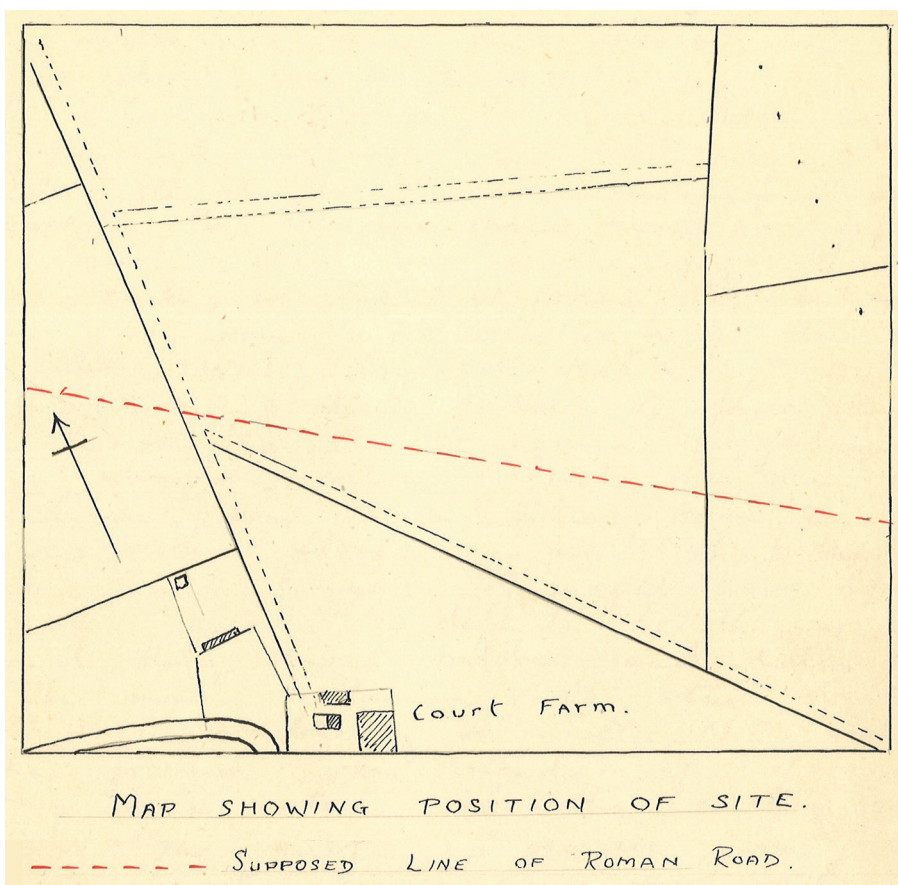


Fig. 1 Newbury's map of the position of the site: it does not record the precise location of the excavated building itself within the demarcated fields north of Court Farm. The dashed red line is the conjectured course of Roman road. The bend in the lane in bottom left-hand corner and some of the hedge/track lines appear on modern OS maps. The NGR (TQ 8047 4965) places the site very close northward to where the conjectured road crosses the junction of hedge/track lines on the left.



of yellow clay, which had been taken from the floor, leaving a hollow which had been filled up with ash, pottery, etc. This room proved to be the richest for finds: the floor was made up of 10in. [c.0.25m] of dark soil and ash, which contained hundreds of pottery shards. The most interesting being a piece of Samian ware, having a very rare ovolo, and is dated about AD 130-160. The entrance appears to have been situated in the south-east corner.

Room B at the eastern end of the corridor proved to be the same size as A, having its hearth, which was made up of three or four rock [sic], in the north-west corner. The entrance seems to correspond with room A; i.e. in the south-west [end] of its west wall.

A hard packed patch of floor ran from the hearth to the south-east corner, suggesting that there was an entrance into the main building. Between Room A and B is Room C, if room it was, the floor was made of packed small rock, which suggests it might have been a covered yard. No definite hearth was to be found, only burnt patches and little pottery.

The main entrance to the building was undoubtedly on the north-east side, as the ground was made up of small ragstone [chips?] etc. at the centre suggesting a path. The roof no doubt was of thatch as not a single roof tile was uncovered.

[Excavated Trenches]

Cutting A was dug across the site from north to south 9ft [c.2.74m] from the west wall. It was 4ft [c.1.22m] [wide] and was carried down to the Roman floor of the building (Fig. 2). The top soil was cleared down to about 10in. [c.0.25m] to a

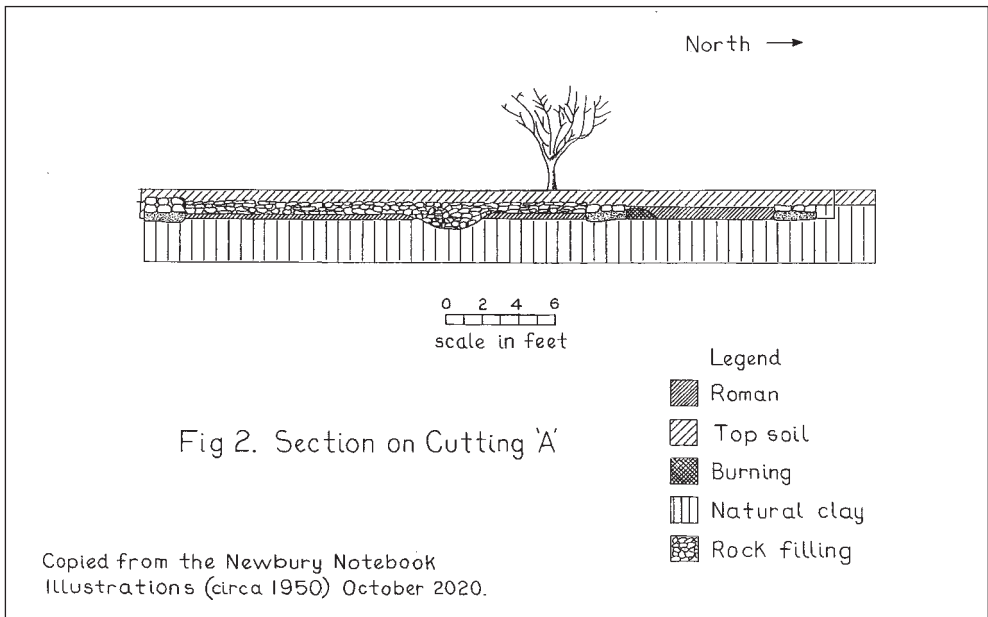


Fig. 2 Cutting A section drawing, originally on squared paper, kindly redrawn on plain background by David Bacchus.

level rock floor packed with clay. Under this was a 2nd and 3rd level rock floor each packed with clay. This is only rock filling; and is only in the main part of the building and was no doubt a floor made at a late date, when the remains of the building were reused. Two pieces of calcareous tufa were found in the floors and it must be supposed they were [once?] part of the Roman walls.

The cutting at the north end was quite free of the rock filling, that is the other side of the wall. A very rich deposit of black soil full of pottery and iron was found here. Against the wall was a patch of thick burning which proved to be a hearth. Below this is a layer of which no Roman pottery was found only 'Belgic'.

Returning to the level below the rock floors, this is the Roman floor, made of clay and small rock. The floor was level and showed signs of great heat at the south end which corresponds with the south wall which has been subjected to great heat also. The clay floor was so smooth in places that it resembled asphalt.

[Pipe Clay figure]

The fine pipe clay figure was found in the wall debris 8ft [c.2.44m] from the north end of the west wall (**Fig. 3:** these two photographs from Maidstone Museum are inserted into Newbury's notebook to illustrate his report). It is strange that it was not found when this corner was robbed of rock in the 18th century. These figures which are of small size, called 'sigilla' or 'sigillaria', were used for votive purposes, and represent all kinds of figures of gods. Few specimens have been found in Britain. Some were found in rubbish pits at Richborough and Canterbury.

More than 200 at a time have been found in France. A very common type is a nude figure of a female seated in a chair, suck[le]d by two children, supposed to represent the *De[æ] Matron[æ]*, or *Matres* (a fragment found at Canterbury 1950). A manufactory of them was discovered some years ago at Heiligenberg, near



Fig. 3 Two photos (inserted into Newbury's notebook as illustrations) of Roman pipe clay Venus figurine including inch and centimetre scales. ('NGR 51/804495' written in ink on reverse of each photograph, together with 'Maidstone Museum Photograph' stamp.)

Mutzig, on the Bruche. Many of these figures, are in the British Museum, found in the neighbourhood of Lyons, are of a very white paste and represent Mercury, Venus Anadyomene, and other figures.

Pottery (Figs 4-9)

[The specialist report below provides further details of each item based on the listing here. However some renumbering is made in the specialist report indicated here by nos in square brackets at the end of the entry. The pottery illustrations are reproduced from Newbury's notebook; for ease of reference Newbury's original drawing nos (DWG) are also indicated in the specialist report.]

1. Jar, out bent rim, burnished black ware with band of tooled trellis pattern.
2. [blank ]
3. Cooking-pot with simple thickened rim, coarse grey ware.
4. Cooking-pot with simple thickened rim, coarse black-grey ware.
- 5[A]. Small beaker of pink-grey coarse ware. [5]
- 5[B]. Bowl; dull black grey surface, with tooled trellis pattern. [6]

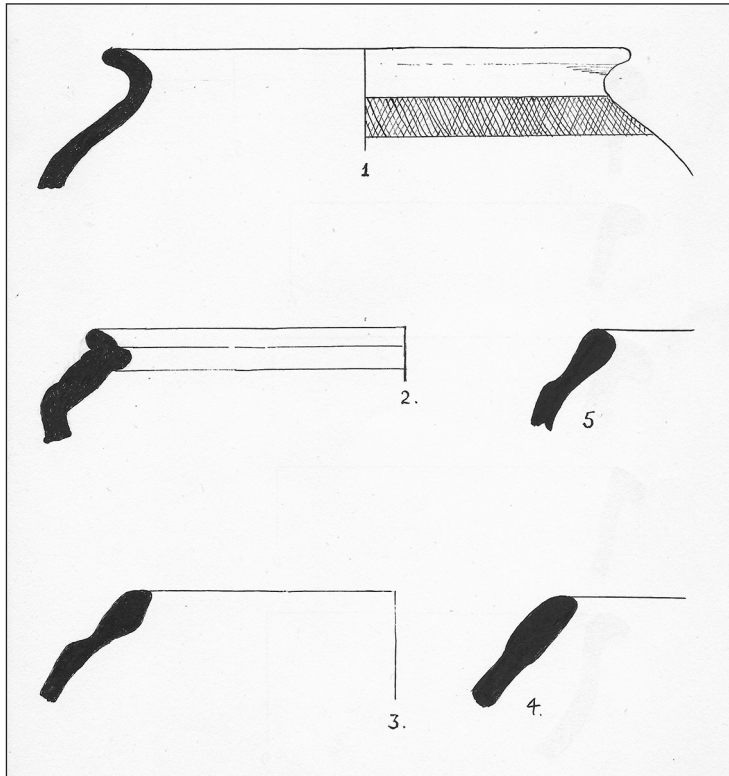


Fig. 4 Rim sherds 1-5A (Lyne 1-5) Scale 1:2.

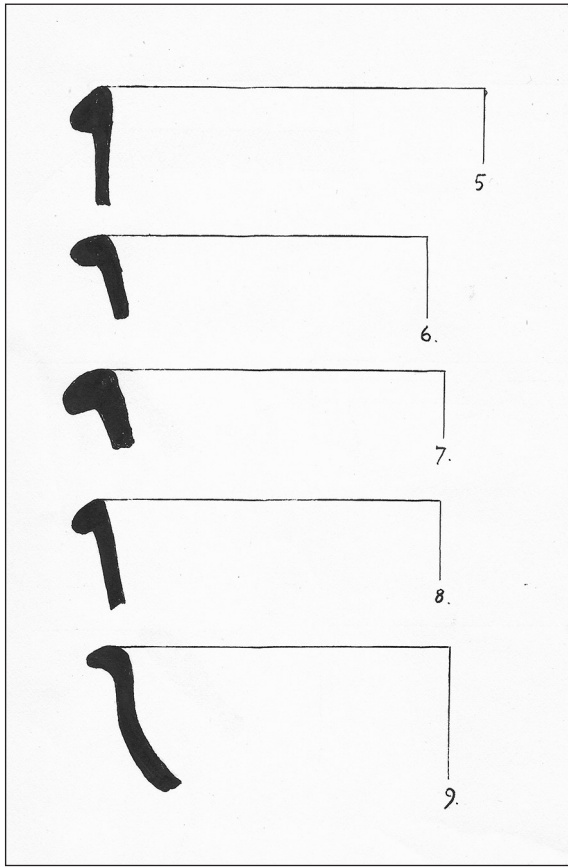


Fig. 5 Rim sherds 5B-9 (Lyne 6-10) Scale 1:2.

6. Bowl; grey paste. [7]
  7. [blank] [8]
  8. Dish; black grey ware. Another grey-pink [*example?*] with tooled trellis pattern. [9]
  9. Dish; grey ware, burnished on the inside. [10]
  10. This rim sided dish is of a hard grey paste, which is darker at the core. [11]
  11. Dish, similar to the last only side is a little deeper. The same grey smooth paste. [12]
  12. Dish, grey paste burnished inside, tooled trellis pattern below deep tooled rim line. [13]
  13. Dish, grey gritty paste of a very hard nature. [14]
- [*N.B. There are no items 14 or 15, either described, or illustrated.*]
16. Storage jar, light grey paste. [15]

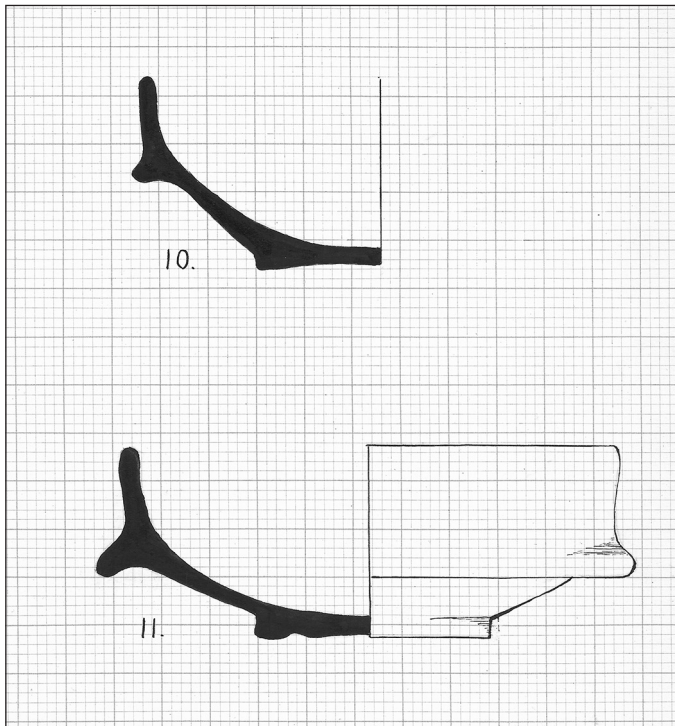


Fig. 6 Rim, body and base sherds 10-11 (Lyne 11-12) .

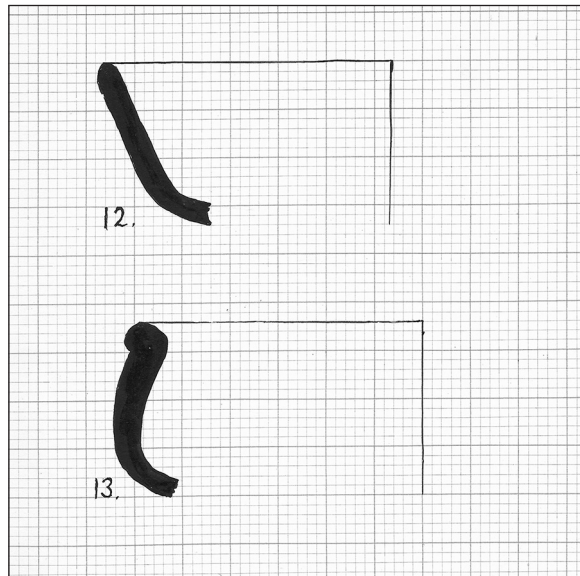


Fig. 7 Rim and body sherds 12-13 (Lyne 13-14) Scale 1:2.



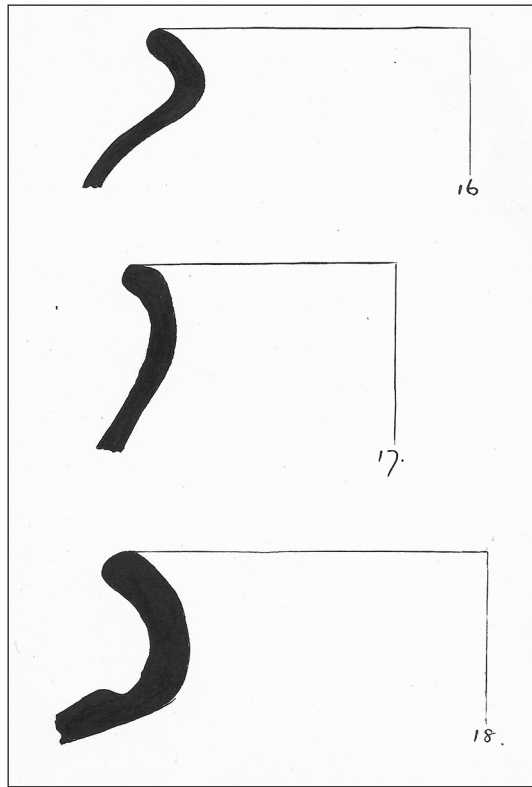


Fig. 8 Rim and upper body sherds with partial shoulder 16-18 (Lyne 15-17) Scale 1:2.

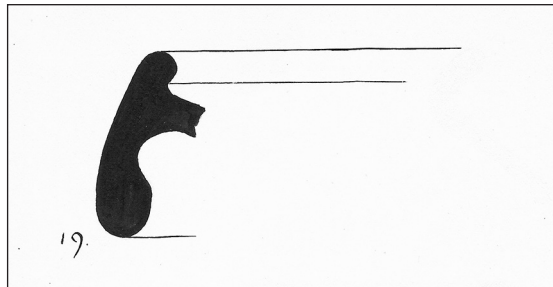


Fig. 9 Mortarium rim sherd 19 (Lyne 18). Scale 1:2 (assumed).

- 17. Jar, dark grey paste, burnished on the outside. [16]
- 18. Large storage jar in dark grey paste. [17]
- 19. Mortarium; cream ware, with bead and down-turned flange. [18]

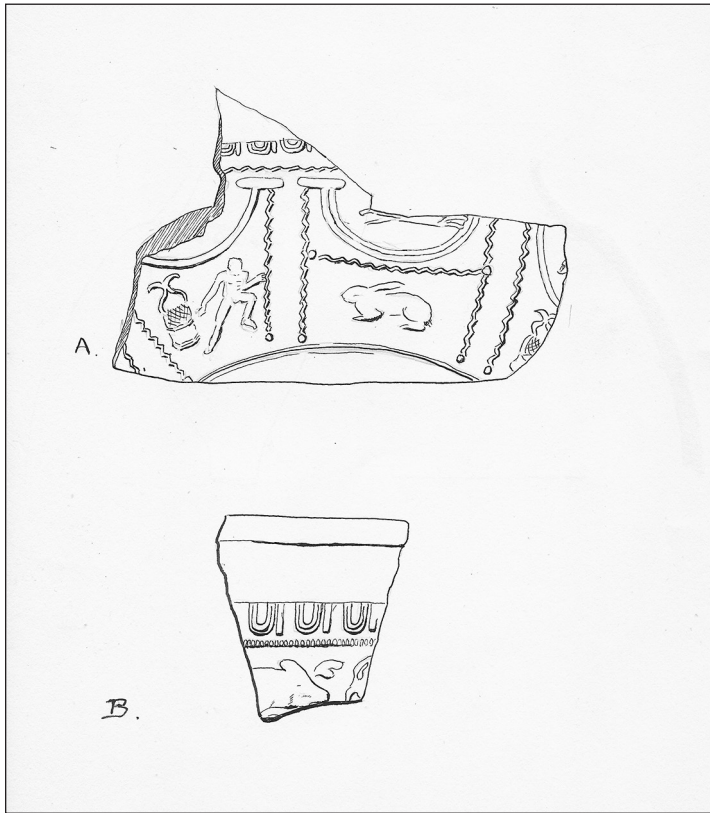


Fig. 10 Samian Ware A and B (decorated sherds).  
(Scale 1:2 assumed, no sections.)

### Samian Ware (Fig. 10)

- A. An interesting piece of Stanford samian with very rare ovolo (similar to Corbridge and Caerwent.) The wavy line below the ovolo is consistent [with] Lezoux ware of AD 150 but was going out of fashion about this time. Perhaps 130-160 would be a safer estimate of date.
- B. A fragment of samian bearing a boar[']s head.

### Patch Grove Ware

Large storage jar of the Patch Grove type, of pinkish colour (Fig. 11).

A similar one, only rather larger, from Orpington, and in possession of Mr. A. Eldridge. This was found with bead-rim vessels and 1st [cent] [first-century] pottery on sites between High Street, St. Marys Cray and Orpington By-pass.

[Jar body sherd, with shoulder decoration and scale in inches, illustrated on page opposite text]

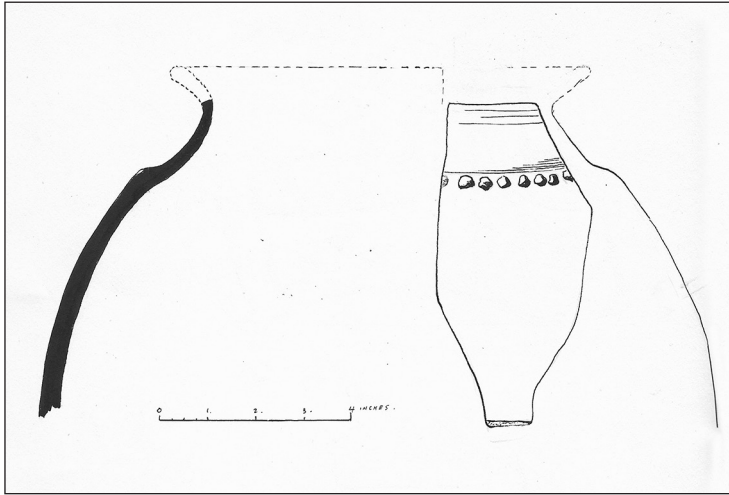


Fig. 11 Patch Grove ware jar body sherd, with shoulder decoration and scale in inches (Lyne 19).

Metal Finds [*no illustrations*]

A small bronze dress fas[tener] similar to the modern dress hook and eye.

A round bronze disc convex with square stud fitting at back. This was found in the main part of the building. It may have been a harness fitting.

Two small bronze pins. Fibula pins?

A large number of iron nails and fragments of iron, one piece resembling a sickle.

Large quantities of iron slag [were] found all over the site. One piece was found deep down in the underlying subsoil.

Only one small piece of lead was found.

Other Finds [*no illustrations*]

Very little *glass* was found, just a few fragment [*sic*] green in colour which had been subjected to heat.

Fragments of *wall plaster* were found all along the footings of the North and West walls on the outside. The fragment [*sic*] consisted of grooved squar[ing], how large could not be determined as the fragment [*sic*] were too small. The gro[o]ves were painted red on the white ground. This rather suggests that the outside of the wall [was] decorated as no plaster was found inside the building

Three pieces of [an] *antler* were found in room C. When pieced together they formed one piece 15" [inches] [c.0.38m] long.

Coins [*no illustrations*]

A.[R]. denarius

O: HADRIANUS AUGUSTUS, laureated head to right.

R: C[O]S III, figure standing left holding patera and cornucopia.

AE. sestertius

O: ? M. [COMMOUS] [*sic*] ANTONINUS AUG, laureated head right.

R: figure standing left holding branch & cornucopia.

AE.

O: CONSTANTINE AUG., laureated head right.

R: MA[TI]A [*'TI' corrected in ink*] DEVICTA

A.E. This coin was very much worn.

### THREE SPECIALIST REPORTS

Specialist Report 1. The Non-Samian Pottery from Chart Sutton *by Malcolm Lyne*

There are major problems in writing a report on the pottery from this site. None of it appears to survive and the site archive lacks any detail as to how much was discovered. All we do have are several pages of drawings with fabric descriptions restricted to colour and coarseness and lacking contextual information. Nevertheless, many of the drawn pieces can be dated by form and their fabrics inferred.

1. Jar with everted rim and latticed-band on shoulder in burnished black fabric. (Fabric uncertain but nearest form parallel is Monaghan's Thameside form 3I4.2 (1987). *c.AD* 50/70-100.)
2. Lid-seated bead-rim jar with corrugated shoulder. No fabric description is given but of Monaghan's Class 3L10. *c.AD* 70-150.
3. Bead-rim jar in coarse grey fabric. Probably datable to *c.AD* 43-70.
4. Bead-rim jar in coarse black-grey ware. Probably datable to *c.AD* 43-70.
5. Small bead-rim jar of Monaghan type 3G5.2 in pink-grey coarse ware. *c.AD* 50-70. DWG 5A.
6. Bowl of Monaghan Class 5D2 in grey-black BB2 fabric with burnished latticing (not shown on drawing). *c.AD* 110/120-180. DWG 5B.
7. Bowl of Monaghan Class 5C1 in 'grey paste' *c.AD* 150/70-240. DWG 6.
8. Another example but lacking fabric description. *c.AD* 150/70-240. DWG 7.
9. Bowl of Monaghan Class 5C4 in 'black-grey' BB2 fabric. *c.AD* 150/70-250. DWG 8.
10. Dish of Monaghan Class 7A2 in grey ?North Kent Fineware with internal burnishing. *c.AD* 43-120/140. DWG 9.
11. Bowl of Monaghan type 5B1.1 in hard grey ?North Kent Fineware with darker core. Copying Samian Dr 38 bowl form. *c.AD* 140-250. DWG 10.

12. Another example in similar fabric. *c.*AD 140-250. DWG 11.
13. Dish with beaded rim and external latticing (not shown on drawing) in 'grey paste' with internal burnishing. Lattice decoration on vessels of this type is normally found on BB1 examples from Dorset rather than those in BB2. *c.*AD 120-200. DWG 12.
14. Bead-rim bowl in 'grey gritty paste of a very hard nature'. DWG 13.
15. Everted-rim jar in 'light-grey paste'. Probably not a Thameside product. ?AD 130/40-180/200. DWG 16.
16. Jar in 'dark grey paste, burnished on the outside'. Possibly a biconical beaker of Monaghan Class 2G2 in North Kent Fineware *c.*AD 43-100. DWG 17.
17. 'Large storage-jar in dark-grey paste'. ? *c.*AD 50-100. DWG 18.
18. Wall-sided ?Colchester mortarium in 'cream ware'. *c.*AD 140-200. DWG 19
19. Storage-jar in Patchgrove ware fired pink with a stabbed shoulder cordon. The rim is missing but the vessel can be loosely dated to *c.*AD 50-270. (Fig. 11)

Chart Sutton lies very close to the Loose *oppidum*, which is thought to have been the centre for the production of the glauconitic wares so characteristic of the upper Medway valley from the Late Iron Age to *c.*AD 60. A lack of distinctive forms associated with that industry and a predominance of second-/early third-century Thameside industry forms suggests that the building was occupied from *c.*60 to *c.*250. There is no surviving ceramic evidence for late Roman activity.

#### Specialist Report 2. The Chart Sutton illustrated Samian finds by *Dr Steven Willis*

Item A: this is a sherd from a Drag. 37 decorated bowl. The ovolo design has been truncated showing some lack of care in production. The ovolo is rather square with a short square ended tongue. There is quite a gap to the border which is of gentle wavy line type. The design is arranged in panels divided by similar wavy lines topped by astragali. The upper zones have single and double-band festoons, both simply plain. The lower panel on the left has two very common motifs: the paired sea creatures over a stand and the naked male (being Rogers 1974, Q58 and Oswald 1936-7, no. 688 types respectively). CINNIMVS II and others used the former while many used the male figure (including CINNIMVS but this is unlikely to be a bowl of his workshop). The lower zone to the right has a left facing sitting hare. The design looks to repeat. Overall there is a remarkable economy in the mould makers' design seen in this example with generous spacing employed and the unusual feature of an uninhabited gap between panels; these narrow bands, where they occur, are normally populated with a column, vertical line of hollow rings, etc. or even a mould makers stamp, but here the width is perhaps prohibitively narrow. It is difficult to find a parallel for such economy of design. The *c.*1950 notebook stated 'The wavy line below the ovolo is consistent for Lezoux ware of AD 150 but was going out of fashion about this time. Perhaps 130 to 160 would be a safer estimate of date'; indeed a date of *c.*145-165 looks reasonable to this reporter.

Item B: this illustrated rim sherd is almost certainly from a Drag. 37 bowl (the other possibility being a Drag. 30 bowl, which a much less frequently encountered form). The ovolo has a straight tongue with a squared terminal; it may have twist lines (as in barley sugar) but these are not clear on the illustration. The spacing of the ovolos is less clustered than is typical and the general appearance resembles the ovolos of type 3 and 5 as distinguished by Stanfield and Simpson of CINNIMVS II (1958, fig. 47), but the match is not perfect and other workshops used similar ovolos, as in the case of IVLLINI (e.g. Stanfield and Simpson 1958, pl. 126; fig. 36 nos 1 and 2, but here with a cord border). Underneath a tight bead border there appears an animal running to the right; this superficially appears to be a boar but on closer examination is more likely a hound as with Oswald types 1934, 1942, 1951 (Oswald 1936-7), unfortunately there is insufficient detail to be precise. A leafy fragment, presumably a space filler, occurs to the front of the animal and looks to be part of the common generic bifid vegetal emblem of the type illustrated by Rogers (Rogers 1974, K16-26). The design may be freestyle with perhaps part of another animal just caught on the edge of the sherd to the right. Going by this drawing there is little to base a tight date on this sherd (as there may be if it was available to examine more closely), and a date of *c.*AD 150-190 can be suggested.

### Specialist Report 3. The Coins by *David Holman*

There is a limited amount that can be said about an assemblage as small as this (only four coins) other than to note a bias towards the 2nd century, a date which is supported by contemporary evidence in the form of pottery. Unfortunately, as no indication is given of the size of the uncertain coin it cannot be stated if it was early or late. The Constantinian coin need not have anything to do with the building and could relate to an entirely different phase of use of the site. Even the contextual evidence offers nothing of use, with two of the coins recorded as having come from either topsoil or spoil, and no indication for the remainder.

Suggested reconstruction, with corrected legends:

1. O: HADRIANVS AVGVSTVS Laureated head to right. R: C[O]S III Figure standing left holding patera and cornucopia. Emperor: Hadrian	Denomination: Denarius Date: AD 125-128 Mint: Rome Possible reverse: Genius standing left Suggested reference: RIC 173
2. O: M. [COMMODOVS]ANTONINVS AVG Laureated head right. R: Figure standing left holding branch & cornucopia. Emperor: Commodus	Denomination: Sestertius Date: AD 183 Mint: Rome Possible reverse: Hilaritas standing left Suggested reference: RIC 354

3. O: CONSTANTINVS AVG.	Denomination: Nummus (AE3)
Laureated head right.	Date: AD 323-324
R: [SAR]MA[TI]A DEVICTA	Mint: Not known
Emperor: Constantine I	Reference: Not known ('As RIC VII, Trier 429')

4. This coin was very much worn and no further detail is provided.

#### GENERAL COMMENTARY BY THE AUTHOR

##### The Building

*[Dimensions given in Newbury's report are included below, with metric conversions. Dimensions derived by measurement from his drawings are given in metric only.]*

In the notebook, Newbury's Cutting A (Fig. 2) and plan (Fig. 1 (A)) are both drawn on pages printed with half-inch squares, each with five marked divisions of one tenth of an inch. Section A has a scale shown in which one inch represents four feet (1:48). The original building plan as drawn (with no scale shown) has an apparent scale of one inch representing five feet (1:60) on the basis of a stated total building length of 60ft (c.18.29m).

The Monument Record TQ 84 NW 6 gives dimensions of 60 x 27ft (c.18.29m x c.8.23m) for the Chart Sutton building. This is in accordance with the section of the main room shown in Newbury's Cutting A drawing (Fig. 2), but with no extra allowance for the 8 foot (c.2.44m) corridor discovered subsequently, nor for its northern external wall.

Wall thicknesses appear to vary between 0.66m and 0.70m according to measurements taken from this drawing. With the inclusion of a northern external wall of c.0.70m thickness, the drawing of Cutting A (Fig. 2) indicates that the overall width of the Chart Sutton Roman building was c.11.39m. However, measurement of Newbury's plan (Fig. 1(A)) suggests a slightly greater total width for the building: c.11.73m, as opposed to c.11.39m. On this plan, Cutting A is shown positioned only 8.5ft (c.2.59m) from the internal face of the west wall, as opposed to the 9ft (c.2.74m) stated in his report. Various features that were included in Newbury's notebook illustration of Cutting A suggest that his drawing was a combination of section and elevation.

Two extensions to the south beyond the south wall of the building were interpreted in Newbury's report as buttresses. However, three projections with approximate lengths of 2m, 1.68m and 1.2m respectively were drawn on the plan.

In Newbury's report he states that 'the walls were traced and uncovered'. The site notes appear to suggest that, beyond exposure of the walls, excavations may have been restricted to Cutting A, the northern rooms and corridor of the building, and adjacent areas. The area actually excavated remains unclear. It is not known how thoroughly the south-western side of the site was investigated.

## The Site Notes

The site notes [*see KAS website*] cover dates from January 1950 to February 1951 and have also been transcribed by the author. Each site note is written in the same hand as that used throughout the notebook. Most include Newbury's signature or initials. Each has a standard printed rectangular diagram (with compass points) representing the main room of the building. Hand-drawn additions show the area of work, and location of some finds and features. Context detail is mostly limited to description of layers such as top soil, lower soil, or first, second, and third levels, or layers. Specific depths for layers removed within Cutting A are stated in Site Note No. 9.

Site Note 10 records a feature observed in the 'second level' within Cutting A to the north of the north wall of the main room: at a point marked X, 'signs of a posthole' 2ft 9in. (c.0.84m) 'N of N wall' and 1 foot (c.0.30m) 'from E side of cutting'. It seems that this feature lay within Room A, but was omitted from Newbury's report and Cutting A drawing (Figs 1(A) and 2).

The assortment of additional loose sheets in the Newbury archive on the KAS website provides further useful information. One small drawing appears to be Newbury's suggested reconstruction of a simple thatched building, with painted plaster decoration to north and west external walls illustrated by use of coloured ink. Sketch plans and sections contain extra detail relevant to individual features and finds.

## Finds

The significance and quantity of particular find-types is difficult to assess from information contained in Newbury's report and site notes. Amongst metal finds, Newbury's report refers to 'a large number of iron nails and fragments of iron' and 'large quantities of iron slag' found 'all over the site'. The site notes, however, include no more detail beyond the reference in Site Note 7 to 'some iron', plus pot and bone, found in removing 'all three layers ... down to Roman floor level' from an indicated area of Cutting A. Few finds can be reliably ascribed to any particular context thus making different periods of use of the building difficult to determine.

Finds not listed in Newbury's report, but mentioned in the site notes, include the following:

*Animal bones and teeth (SN Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7)*

*Hollowed bone, polished (SN No. 11)*

*Patera, near-half, black (SN No. 14)*

*Roman tile, single piece (presumably not roof tile) (SN No. 3)*

## The Pipe-Clay Figure (Fig. 3)

Newbury records the circumstances and location of discovery of a pipe-clay figure in an area denoted by hatching on the diagram in Site Notes 12 and 13, dated 8-9th April (1950), and the following comment: 'Cleaned end of west wall. This turns East at end. Halfway along in this wall debris a figure of a nude female was uncovered'.

This figure is included, together with relevant *Archaeologia Cantiana* references, amongst Kent examples listed by Frank Jenkins:

(17) Chart Sutton (fig. 40). Found on the site of the Roman villa. Complete with the



head but the legs and the plinth are lacking. Height now 12.7 cms. Type I B; hair style 2' (Jenkins 1977, 334).

He deemed this 'a good example of an attempt to indicate the decoration on the garment' (*ibid.* 305-6).

Further incomplete pipe-clay figurines have been found in the Maidstone area in recent years. In 2010 a fragment consisting of a portion of the legs only (identified by Albert Daniels) was found during excavations of a Roman building at Lower Gallants, East Farleigh (image on MAAG photographic archive). In 2014 the lower section of a pipe-clay figurine depicting Venus Anadyomene was found during Canterbury Archaeological Trust investigations at a site in Church Street, Maidstone (O'Shea and Weekes 2014, fig. 3, 138).

Matthew Fittock has most recently discussed the subject of pipe-clay Venus figurines and others, and analysed their distribution, fragmentation and deposition (Fittock 2015, 2018). The abstract of his PH.D. thesis includes the following observation:

The social distribution and contexts of the British finds shows that pipeclay objects were mainly used by civilians – probably in domestic shrines and occasionally in temples and in the graves of often sick children (Fittock 2018).

### The Site Location and its significance

The circumstances of the 1949-1950 discovery of an 'incomplete pipe-clay statuette of Venus ... during recent excavations on the site of a Roman building behind Chart Sutton church (National Grid Reference 51/804495)' were first published in *Archaeologia Cantiana* (Terry 1950, 155). This grid reference also appears on the reverse of the photographs of the figurine in the Newbury notebook (the more precise NGR given in the HER for the building is TQ 8047 4965). Mr Newbury's map of the position of the site (Fig. 1) unfortunately does not record the precise location of the excavated building itself within the demarcated fields north of Court Farm, although the line of the Roman road (conjectured) is shown. The site lies at c.110m AOD on the Hythe Beds of the Lower Greensand close to the geological boundary with the overlying Drift (BGS, 1976).

Local stone was presumably used in the construction of Chart Sutton Roman building; the area is well known as a source of Kentish Ragstone (Worssam 1963, 28-45). It is less than 4km from the quarries in Boughton Monchelsea. Some Calcareous Tufa is still being deposited in the Maidstone area by streams fed with springs (*ibid.*, 101, 124-5).

Elizabeth Blanning examines numerous facets of rural settlements in Kent in her recent PH.D. thesis (Blanning 2014). Common features, such as villas sited on the Lower Greensand (or Chartland), or in close proximity to Roman roads or prehistoric routes, are noted. 'Chart Sutton is directly on Margary's Route 131, not far from the junction with Route 13, leading to speculation that it may have been a *mansio*' (*ibid.*, 198).

Of forty-four listed villa sites examined in Blanning's thesis it is one amongst only ten noted to be lying within 1km of a Roman road, and one of only four villas observed to be situated between 100 and 149m AOD (most occurring at elevations below 50m) (*ibid.*, table 6.7, 196-7; 198; fig. 6.8, 199).

In recent decades fruit and arable crops have been cultivated in the vicinity, although evidence exists for a variety of types of former land use associated with Chart Sutton. A ninth-century Anglo-Saxon charter refers to ‘wood which is called Cært’, with fields, pastures, meadows and pannage (Cowper 1915, 204). In the 1086 Domesday survey Chart Sutton was assessed at 3 sulungs with ‘land for 8 ploughs ... 6 acres of meadow, [and] woodland ... 3 arpents of vineyard and a park for wild beasts’ (Williams and Martin 2002, 19). Interestingly, Domesday mentions only three vineyards in Kent (Darby and Campbell 1962, 608-610).

The inclusion of a piece of iron ‘resembling a sickle’ amongst the finds excavated at Chart Sutton is interesting. It is possible to speculate about its date, accuracy of identification, original form and function, and even, tentatively, whether this could have represented an artefact associated with viticulture. Early Roman features nearby, consisting of Roman enclosures with evidence of metal working furnaces and trackways, might also be of particular relevance. These were discovered during excavations at Haven Farm, Sutton Valence; a later Roman burial was also found (HER TQ 84 NW 249).

Further evidence for Roman activity in the area around Sutton Valence, including a walled cemetery (TQ 84 NW 1), was examined by Neil Aldridge some years ago in his consideration of a suggested amendment to Margary’s proposed Roman road No. 131 (formerly route II) (Margary 1965, 228; map: 233); both the original and alternative routes were described (Aldridge 2006, 171). Aldridge suggested that the stone building of Roman date excavated in 1949-50 at Chart Sutton, together with the associated feature of rectangular enclosure, was perhaps more reminiscent of a villa estate rather than a *mansio* (*ibid.*, 176-7). Indeed, when compared with larger sites included in a 1995 study of Roman infrastructure (Black 1995), there is insufficient evidence for an interpretation that the site at Chart Sutton represents an official establishment.

### Comparisons with similar buildings

Although uncertainties remain regarding the Chart Sutton Roman building, comparisons with other excavated buildings are nevertheless worthwhile. Similarities can be noted between the main room at Chart Sutton and the Furfield Quarry ragstone-foundation building, ‘Building 2’ (18.0 x 7.50m) at nearby Boughton Monchelsea, a Roman farmstead building founded in the second half of the second century, in regard to size, and to the presence of buttresses. However, those of ‘Building 2’ are more numerous and do not appear to exceed 1m in length (Howell 2014, 58-59, fig. 13). Chart Sutton includes putative buttresses longer than most of those at Furfield, and also in different positions. Especially when compared with the buttresses at Furfield, the projections at Chart Sutton might more readily be interpreted as indications of additional accommodation of some kind extending to the south of the building shown on Newbury’s plan, rather than as buttresses.

Of simpler Roman buildings excavated in Kent, the examples perhaps most comparable with Chart Sutton in terms of arrangement and size are presented by Sandwich, HER Monument No. TR 35 NW 91 (Parfitt 1980, 1981), and early phases of the villa at Sedgebrook (HER TQ 65 SW 20). A simple rectangle in its initial phase, Sedgebrook was later extended beyond a modest hall house to

include more elaborate accommodation ‘Sedgebrook (fig. 6.16) and Sandwich (fig. 6.17) both appear to be of the ‘narrow hall’ type but adapted to winged corridor form in different ways’ (Blanning 2014, 210, 211). Both are examples of villas founded by the early second century AD in Kent (*ibid.*, 205-208).

A recent study of rural settlement of Roman Britain includes a plan of Sedgebrook Field, Plaxtol, as an illustration of one of the main villa building types in the south region: ‘corridor/winged-corridor’ (Smith and Allen *et al.*, 2016, 109, fig. 4.42). Sandwich villa is indicated as having evidence of occupation commencing in the first century AD within the chronology of villa sites (*ibid.*, 91, fig. 4.18).

Perhaps the closest parallels to the Roman building at Chart Sutton are suggested by two crop-marks noticeable in 2013 Google Earth images, each consisting of a rectangle on a north-west by south-east orientation with possible corridor along its south-west side. The first is in the immediate vicinity of this building at Chart Sutton, but situated slightly to the east of the location marked for the Roman Building TQ 84 NW6 on the Historic Environment Record. This is suggestive of an associated structure on a similar orientation, possibly of similar date. On a Google Earth image from 2013, the second crop mark can be seen in a field to the east of the course of the Rochester-Maidstone Roman road, in a location *c.*150m to the west of *Curlews* in the region of Boxley Abbey. These remarkably similar crop-marks might represent examples of simple, possibly early, Roman buildings, each near a Roman road.

In a note to Mr Newbury dated 9 October 1953 (included in the site archive), Allen Grove wrote ‘Herewith the C. Sutton excavation book returned, for which many thanks. I am enclosing my Maidstone notes – but I think that we really must have a session!’. This seems to imply a revision meeting was intended but it is not known whether any amended report was ever prepared.

As it is, the existing evidence relating to pottery and coins found during the Chart Sutton excavations appears to support an early foundation date for the building, with occupation continuing well into the third century AD. Belgic pottery found below Roman levels may suggest that occupation of the site commenced before the Roman period.

It is hoped that this article and further related documents on the KAS website will improve understanding of the Chart Sutton site as excavated in 1949-1950 and facilitate future research. Questions may remain unanswerable due to the limited records and the passage of time. Attempts made by the author and others to trace the finds and information formerly available have met with little success. Scope remains for further investigation in this potentially important area of Chart Sutton, especially with the benefit of modern, non-intrusive, archaeological techniques.

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