

# A ROMAN FORT NEAR FAVERSHAM, KENT

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*A weekend of excavation by members of the Kent Archaeological Field School revealed a fastigated Roman military ditch on the site of a previously unknown Roman fort. Pottery found in the infill of the ditch has now been dated by Dr Malcolm Lyne to the time of the Claudian Invasion...*

**T**he various trenches on this site yielded a total of 554 sherds of largely Late Iron Age and Roman pottery. The bulk of this material (374 sherds) came from the upper fill of the military ditch and just 20 sherds from the primary silting of the same feature.

## **Fabrics**

The fabric series is divided into two groups; with the coarse kitchen wares having the prefix C and the fine table wares that of F.

C.1. Handmade grey-black with profuse ill-sorted up-to 2.00 mm crushed calcined flint filler.

C.2. Fine 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware. There are fragments from both handmade and wheel-turned vessels in this largely Late Iron Age fabric. These fine grog-tempered native wares did not survive long into the Roman occupation before being superseded by vessels in fine Romanised wheel-turned fabrics such as Upchurch ware (Fabric F.2).

C.3. Coarse handmade or tournette-finished 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware. The use of this fabric persisted long into the Roman period in East Kent; developing first into Transitional Belgic/Native Coarse Ware (c.AD 70-200) and then into Native Coarse Ware (c.AD 170-300).

C.4. Brown to black wheel-turned fabric with a mixture of very-fine quartz sand and grog filler.

C.5. Coarse brown wheel-turned fabric with profuse up-to 0.50 mm quartz filler and occasional tiny shell inclusions, fired rough brown-black. An early Thameside fabric of mid to late first century.

C.6. North Kent Shell-tempered ware. Wares in this fabric are more characteristic of West Kent and were manufactured at Higham and on the Isle of Sheppey from the Late Iron Age onwards. Production after the late first century became largely confined to storage vessels which continued to be made until some time after AD 170. Some storage jars from the London area

have traces of resin sealant on and under their rims, indicating that these vessels were used as packaging for some unspecified product such as salt. The Faversham sherds are all from one such storage vessel and confined to the upper fill of the fort ditch in Trench 2.

C.7. Very fine quartz-sanded grey Thameside industry fabric with rough finish and external 'scorching'.

C.8A. Very fine quartz-sanded grey to brown Thameside BB2 fabric fired polished black, c.AD 110-300.

C.8B. As above but with grey surfaces. The classic Thameside greyware, c.AD 110-300.

C.9. 'Native Coarse Ware' (Pollard 1988). High-fired grit and grog tempered fabric used mainly for knife-trimmed everted-rim jars between c.AD 170 and 300 and largely confined to East Kent. This fabric dominates pottery assemblages of that period at Ickham and Monkton, suggesting coastal manufacture along the western end of the Wantsum Channel.

C.10. Coarse-sanded wheel-turned Thameside greyware with a rough pimply finish, c.AD 100-300.

C.11. Very fine sanded Canterbury grey ware with profuse up to 0.50 mm multi-coloured quartz filler and rough surfaces.

F.1A. Terra Rubra TR1(A). Sandfree non-micaceous cream fabric with internal red colour-coat (Stead and Rigby 1989,121). One sherd from an open form is present in the assemblage from Trench 1 Layer A, c.15 BC-AD 25.

F.1B. Terra Rubra TR2. Self-slipped bright orange fabric with polished surfaces (ibid.,126). One sherd is present in the Trench 1 Layer A assemblage, c.AD 1-65.

F.1C. Gallo-Belgic Whiteware. Fragments from a rouletted butt-beaker are present in the

assemblage from Trench 2.

F.2. Wheel-turned grey, sandfree Upchurch ware with brown to dark-grey grog inclusions and surface polish, c.AD 43-300.

F.3. Oxidised orange version of the above fabric with or without external white slip.

F.4. Very fine wheel-turned reddish-brown fabric with silt-sized quartz filler. One sherd from a bead-rim beaker with vertical burnished body lines is present in the assemblage from Trench 1.

Found in layer A:

F.5. Sand-free orange fabric fired burnished honey-brown with occasional up-to 2.00 mm white chalky inclusions. Two sherds from a vessel of uncertain form are present in the assemblage from Trench 2 Layer A. F.6. East Gaulish Samian.

also present.

The lack of rim fragments makes any closer dating than c.AD 43-70 difficult for this assemblage but the nature of the material from the overlying Assemblage 2 in Trench 1 implies that the fort is Claudian.

### Assemblage 2

From the rubbish dumped in the top of the partially silted up Trench 1. This deposit produced 70 sherds (564 gm) of pottery of Late Iron Age to Pre-Flavian character. The lower part of the top-soil above produced 111 sherds (1,022 gm) of very similar material, although contaminated by 12 sherds of second-century character. This assemblage breakdown indicates its early date. The presence of sherds in fabrics which scarcely



Map showing Roman remains in the vicinity of Syndale (from Arch. Journ. lxxxvi,299). The possible Roman fort is located at Syndale (B) whilst a still-standing Roman mausoleum encapsulated in a early Saxon church (K) is to be found to the north-west. Roman cemeteries are to be found north of Watling Street towards the east (D) and the rich Jutish cemetery of Kingsfield is located to the south of Faversham.

### Assemblage 1

From the primary silting of the military ditch in Trenches 1 and 2.

This material is of key importance in dating the fort but unfortunately lacks rims and other diagnostic sherds. The primary silting 30 cm above the base of the ankle-breaker slot in Trench 2 produced one sherd from a closed form in wheel-turned grey-black Fabric C.4: six sherds from closed forms in coarse 'Belgic' grog-tempered Fabric C.2 fired patchy brown/black/buff-brown came from a similar horizon in Trench 1. A further group of six sherds were retrieved from higher up in the primary ditch silts of Trench 2. Once again, these consist entirely of bodysherds: three from a jar in coarse Fabric C.2, one from a jar with carinated shoulders in brown Fabric C.4 fired rough blue-grey and another in very fine sanded orange fabric fired grey with patchy superficial reddening. A flake from a Dressel 20 amphora is

outlived the Late Iron Age, such as flint-tempered Fabric C.1, the fine grog-tempered Fabric C.2 and Terra Rubra Fabric TR.1A, may represent a pre-Roman element in the assemblage which was perhaps residual in use. The fact that none of the datable forms have an inception date of later than AD 50 leaves little doubt that this assemblage accumulated between c.AD 43 and 50/60. What this assemblage also indicates is that vessels in the classic Upchurch wheel-turned greyware began to be made within a very few years after the Roman Conquest. The handmade fine grog and silt tempered Type B2-1 jar is in a fabric not much different to but less well-prepared than wheel-turned Upchurch ware, and the Monaghan Type 3A1-3 jar in the latter fabric is clearly a development of that type. We may perhaps see in these two vessels the transition from a Late Iron Age native fineware to a Romanised one during the first five years or so of the Roman occupation.

### Assemblage 3

From the rubbish dumped in the top of the partially silted-up military ditch in Trench 2. The assemblage from this deposit is considerably larger than that from Trench 1 (304 sherds, 4,184 gm) and was also quantified by the number of sherds and their weight per fabric:

This assemblage differs from that retrieved from the upper part of the same ditch in Trench 1 in having a much more extended date range. Pre-Flavian sherds are present but large quantities of late-first to late-second-century material indicate that rubbish continued to be dumped in the top of the ditch at this point until c.AD 200.

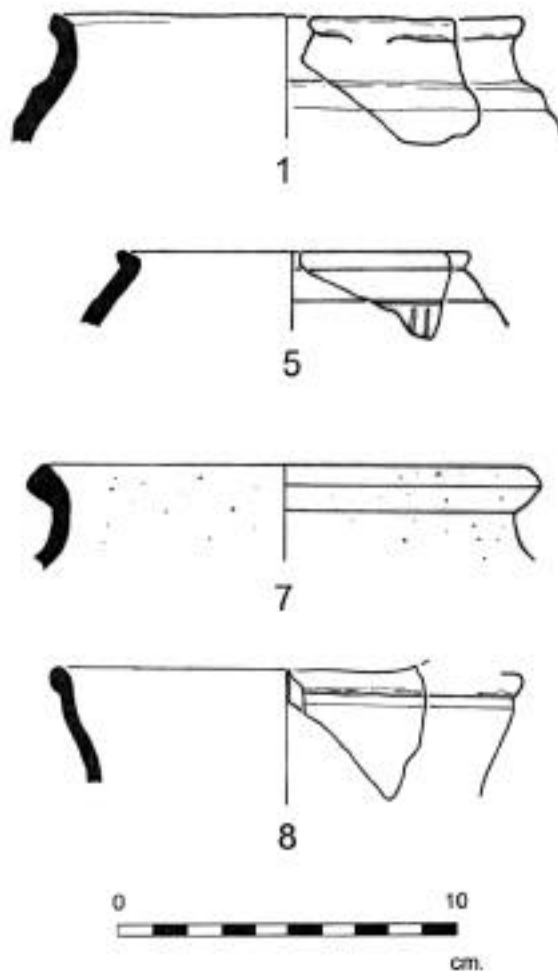
The presence of this late material is reflected in the percentage breakdown of the assemblage: 'Belgic' grog-tempered wares are well down to 24% by sherd count, whereas the percentage of Upchurch grey and oxidised fabrics from the Medway marshes and Isle of Sheppey remains at 35% and is joined by appreciable quantities of BB2 and Thameside sand-tempered wares from the same area, 22%.

The early material differs little from that recovered from Trench 1, although Terra Rubra is absent: three fragments from a butt-beaker in Gallo-Belgic Whiteware are, however, present. The Upchurch greyware includes examples of Monaghan's Type 5B6 and 7A2 platters (c.AD 70-130 and 43-140 respectively) and a jar of Type 4A2 (c.AD 110-200). Upchurch oxidised wares include an example of flagon type 1E4-1 (c.AD 120-190): a further example of this flagon type in Fabric F.5 is also present.

Thameside forms include a jar of Monaghan's Type 3H2-2 in 'scorched' Fabric C.7 (c.AD 160-230), a necked-bowl of Type 4G3 (c.AD 50/70-100) and a 'pie-dish' of Type 5C4 (c.AD 150/170-250) in Fabric C.8A, and a re-fired Type 5D3 in the same fabric (c.AD 120-190). A number of sherds from a storage jar of Monaghan's Type 3D3 in North Kent Shell-tempered ware (c.AD 50-150) and fragments of Canterbury greyware are also present, as is a post AD 170 sherd of Pollard's 'Native Coarse Ware'. The following sherd is of particular interest: a fragment from bead-rimmed bowl with traces of a handle, in white-slipped Fabric E.3. The external rim of the bowl has a diameter of 140 mm.

### Assemblage 4

From the interior of the fort under the turf in Trench 4. The 21 sherds (212 gm) of pottery from



*These are examples of the types of sherds found at Syndale. There is little doubt that the assemblage of pottery accumulated between c. AD 43*

*and AD 50/60. The nature of the material from Assemblage 2 in Trench 1 implies the fort is Claudian, and of extreme importance to invasion studies.*

this trench have a time-span similar to the assemblage from Layer A in Trench 2. Two sherds of 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware are associated with a fragment from a Central Gaulish Samian Curle 11 bowl (c.AD 120-140), a flagon footring in sandy buff Canterbury fabric (c.AD 50-200), a Dressel 20 olive-oil amphora sherd and 11 beaker sherds in grey Upchurch ware. These latter include a rim sherd from a poppyhead beaker of early second century date (c.AD 100-150).

One would not expect to find much pottery associated with the occupation of what was probably a short-lived Conquest period fort. What is clear is that occupation of sorts continued within the area of the fort during the late first and second centuries, some of the rubbish from which was tipped into the upper part of the partially silted-up fort ditch.

**Malcolm Lyne**