The Hucclecote Roman Villa

by E. M. Clifford
1961, Vol. 80, 42-49

© The Society and the Author(s)
The Hucclecote Roman Villa

By E. M. CLIFFORD, F.S.A.

The Gloucestershire County Council acquired the land to the south of the Hucclecote Roman Villa¹ for the purpose of building a school. Because of its close proximity to the actual site of the villa, the Ministry of Works decided that exploratory trenches should be cut before building took place. The plans for the school showed that there would be a block of buildings as well as tennis courts close to the new boundary fence on the north.

It had been agreed that the contractors should be given possession on the 29 September 1958, and the writer was asked to undertake the excavation in the early part of that month.

Excavation

As close as possible to the northern fence a grid of 10-foot squares with 2-foot baulks was laid out for a distance of 420 feet × 36 feet in three rows called A, B and C. In order to obtain the greatest amount of information in the shortest time, trenches 7 feet × 3 feet were excavated in alternate 10-foot squares. After reaching square A XI at 252 feet, four squares were missed and square A XII was tested at 312 feet. Four more squares were missed and at 372 feet square A XIII was excavated. At 420 feet the last square in that row A XIV was examined.

In B XXVI there was some construction of note and the whole of that square was excavated. Three-foot trenches were cut in the squares to the north and to the south. As the square to the north was an intermediate one and therefore without a number it was labelled AXA, that to the south is C XXXI. The floor extended into all three squares, but not beyond. The sections of these trenches show humus (1) and subsoil (2) resting on a floor laid over the old turfline. A land drain of modern or earlier (but post-Roman) date cuts the subsoil, floor and old turfline.

In A XIII there was some simple construction and a substantial floor, some stones measuring 1 foot 9 inches × 6 inches. The whole of this square and B XVII to the south were excavated. It was here the

brooch, two of the pieces of Samian ware and Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 of the coarse pottery were found.

![Site plan of the Hucclecote Roman Villa](image)

Fig. 1. Site plan

The sections of these trenches show humus (1) and subsoil (2); the stone floor (4) was laid on the natural (after removal of the old
turfline) and was covered with an occupation layer (3). This floor was delimited by a robbed out stone wall of which only the footings in a trench dug into the natural remained, outside this (to the left in the B XVII section) was a level which corresponded to the occupation level on the floor of A XIII over the old turfline.

Discussion

PLATE IV, a, shows the type of floor construction which is of poor quality compared to that found in the villa itself in 1933. These foundations may belong to workshops or outbuildings, but whatever their purpose, they belong to the early part of the life of the villa, as Samian ware of the Flavian period, a brooch of the early 2nd century and coarse pottery of that date were found there, to the exclusion of any later material, with the exception of coarse pottery No. 3 which is later. This is in sharp contrast to the abundance of late material found in 1933.

It is possible that the construction discovered was the stone footings upon which half-timbered buildings had been erected. Nails suitable for such a purpose and pieces of hard, high quality daub, which could have filled the spaces between the timber uprights, were found. Attention may be called to the drawing on plaster found in the earlier excavation and given by the writer to the British Museum; this shows the type of construction which may have been used.1

1 FCNFG, xxv, pt. 3 (1935), p. 254; JRS, xxiv, p. 213, fig. 8; B.M. Guide to Roman Britain (1951), p. 58, fig. 27, no. 2.
THE HUCCLECOTE ROMAN VILLA

The stone used in the construction is that of the Great Oolite (which crops out at Birdlip Hill, 4½ miles to the south-east), Reddish Sandstone from the Old Red Sandstone and Pennant Sandstone; the last two are to be found in the Forest of Dean area. Pennant Sandstone was largely used for the floors. The Vale of Gloucester is composed of Lower Lias, Yellow Limestone and blue clays resting on Trias Red Sandstone and Marl. At Hucclecote the Lower Lias Yellow Limestone was seen in square B XVII 3 feet 9 inches below the surface (as it is at Chosen Hill or Churchdown) with the blue clay above.1 This blue clay covers the field, except for a thin bed of gravel, nearer to Horsebere brook to the north. The land has been under heavy cultivation for a very long time and so there is 9 inches or more of top soil.

The Hucclecote Villa is notable in that beneath it there is a late Bronze Age Deverel-Rimbury domestic site and also Early Iron Age occupation. In Romano-British times it was occupied until at least the 5th century A.D., since after A.D. 395 a new mosaic floor was laid over an already existing mosaic floor, on which a coin of Theodosius was found.

Since the excavation of 1933 much evidence has accumulated to show that life in this then inaccessible Cotswold country, continued far into the 5th century in much the same way that it had in the 4th century.

Tiles

This site and the surrounding area was in all probability part of the territorium of the Colonia of Glevum, since tiles issued by the 'Mayor' of the day have been found at Hucclecote and Barnwood2 as well as the more ordinary stamped tiles. The 1958 excavation has added one more to the large number of the latter which have been found in Gloucestershire.3 It is T₄ P₄ F₄ of which there are several examples (PLATE IV, b). As the whole of the datable finds of 1958, with the exception of one piece already mentioned, are not later than the 2nd century, it is possible to consider whether stamped tiles can be said to be 2nd century. It has not been possible before to consign them to any century but it would be of interest if we could say manufacture began in the 2nd century, or even a little earlier, as possibly the Glevum ones did.

A brooch is of the Wroxeter type (FIG. 2)⁴ and early 2nd century in date; there is a bronze pin of perhaps a penannular brooch (FIG. 3).

1 Kindly identified by Dr F. S. Wallis.
2 Trans. BGAS, vol. 52, p. 229.
4 Kindly described by Mr M. R. Hull.
The Samian ware is 2nd century; it comes from squares A VII and A XIII, all in Level 3. The coarse pottery is almost all 2nd century in date. A sickle is among the iron objects. There are a very large number of earthenware tile fragments both 'tegulae' and 'imbrices', but none of stone from Dean Forest. Earthenware tiles formed the first roof of the Villa itself, a later roof being of Old Red Sandstone from the Forest of Dean. Fragments of decorated hypocaust flue tiles, pilae and drainpipes are numerous in this excavation. Great numbers of bones and teeth of ox, pig and sheep and horse, shells of snails, oysters and mussels were found.

From Level 2 in square B XXI comes the tubular spout of a pitcher, which is probably early 13th century rather than 12th century, a close parallel comes from Gloucester.  

---

1 Kindly described by Prof. D. Atkinson.
2 Kindly drawn by Miss Clare I. Fell.
3 Kindly described by Mr G. C. Dunning and Mr J. G. Hurst, Ant. Journ., xx (1940), p.106. fig. 4,
Note on a Brooch from Hucclecote

By M. R. Hull

This brooch belongs to a type which has not hitherto received much attention. In profile it has considerable likeness to the Backworth brooches, but the simpler and earlier members of the series show quite clearly that it developed from the ‘Polden Hill’ type. The difference from the Backworth series lies in the fact that the head, though variable in shape, is never trumpet-shaped, while the upper half of the brooch is approximately of D-section, with the flat side uppermost, i.e. outwards. This flat surface is almost always divided into two, or three panels filled with enamel. The enamel is mosaic, that is, the colours, usually two only, in alternate squares or rectangles, are not divided by a wall of bronze.

The distribution as known at present is as follows:—the list is headed by Wroxeter, with four examples, and it may well be that the main centre of manufacture lay thereabouts; the other places with one each are:—Brough-under-Stainmore; Canterbury; Caves Inn (Warwick); Cirencester; London; Northchurch; Pont-y-Saison; Silchester; Traprain Law; Warrington; Wycombe, near Cheltenham.

The above list includes nothing, so far as I know, which helps to date the series. Since it begins from an early form of the Polden Hill type I would expect it to start at least in Flavian times. The extensive use of enamel and its general (developed) features suggests it was contemporary with the Backworth brooches, and this is supported by certain rather florid additions which also appear on decadent Backworth brooches. The enamelled examples of what I have called the ‘Wroxeter’ type should mostly be 2nd century.

Samian Ware

By Professor D. Atkinson

No. 1. Part of base of form 18/31, date to the Flavian period, and compare with O. & P., pl. xliv, 11. From A VII (3).
No. 2. Part of rim of form 27, Flavian from A XXIII (3).
No. 3. , , , 18 ,

47
Coarse Pottery From The Hucclecote Villa
Site In 1958

No. 1. Mortarium, Hard cream ware, well gritted with drooping flange and small flat ridge-hole in wall. Richborough, iii, no. 359, where it is Nero-Vespasian; Ant. Journ., xxiv, p. 58, fig. 5, no. 43, Vespasian; Clausentium, fig. 20, no. 6, Flavian.

No. 2. Mortarium. Hard yellow ware, sparsely gritted, with flat oblong flange at right angles to the ridge which is slightly offset.

No. 3. Large bowl, rather soft, bright pink ware, early 2nd century.

No. 4. Large bowl, soft red ware, with triple reeded rim. Camulodunum, pl. ii, no. 41, 1st century; Camerton, fig. 45, no. 492, p. 183.

No. 5. Large bowl, hard grey ware, mica dusting. Camulodunum, pl. lxxvi, no. 222,


No. 7. Jar, hard light grey ware. 'Barnwood', Trans. BGAS, vol. 52, fig. 12, no. 6, p. 235, 1st century.


No. 9. Base of jar, with beaded foot, hard grey ware. 'Barnwood', ibid., vol. 52, fig. 13, no. 13.

No. 10. Large storage jar, hard black ware. 'Hucclecote', ibid., vol. 55, fig. 25, no. 6, 1st century.

Thirteen flint fragments, a rim of Samian ware, a fragment of a bronze bracelet and a coin radiate of Carausius have been found on the ploughed surface of this field during the last two or three years by Mr A. R. Garrod and presented by him to Gloucester Museum who allow their publication in this report. Captain H. S. Gracie has kindly described the flints as follows:—

The patina ranges from none, through grey to brown. In this and in the kinds of flint represented the collection is very similar to that from Barnwood (Ant. Journ., xxxiv, 1954, pp. 183-7). The unpatinated pieces may have lain in a sandy layer near the surface, and the brown suggests contact with gravel and, perhaps, a greater age

Of the fifteen flints the following are worthy of note:

A 'slug', probably of the Bronze Age. Unpatinated black flint.
A small round scraper. Unpatinated black flint.
A scraper made on the bulbous end of a flake.
A scraper on a blade. Light brown flint.
A very thin end-scaper.
A large flake with one sharp edge, much damaged in use, and the other side thick and blunt with the original cortex.
PLATE IV, a. Foundation of floor

PLATE IV, b. Stamped tile.
Acknowledgments

The land had been out of cultivation since it had been acquired by the County Council and it was thickly covered with tall thistles. The weather during the excavation was extremely wet and tribute must be made to the staff of the Ministry who remained cheerful and efficient in really trying conditions. I am grateful to the Ministry for the opportunity of excavating. Thanks are due to Mr H. R. Cox who helped throughout, and to the Contractors, Messrs H. W. Tily & Son for their kindly co-operation, Prof. D. Atkinson, Miss Clare Fell, Mr M. R. Hull, Capt. H. S. Gracie and Dr F. S. Wallis.