

EXCAVATIONS IN SOUTHWARK

1945 - 1947

by

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ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following abbreviations are used for the Southwark sites.

K.H.Y.	King's Head Yard.
I. & D.	Ingledeu and Davenport's Premises, 20 Southwark Street.
B.H.S.	199 Borough High Street.
M.	Newcomen Street Site.
M.C.	Mermaid Court Site.

The Roman number which follows the site initials indicates the level. In the case of the Newcomen site, letters are used to indicate the different fills (e.g. A = Ditch A, L.B. = Lower Black).

<i>Ant. J.</i>	<i>Antiquaries Journal.</i> Society of Antiquaries of London.
<i>Arch.</i>	<i>Archaeologia.</i> Society of Antiquaries of London.
<i>Arch. J.</i>	<i>Archaeological Journal.</i> Royal Archaeological Institute.
<i>Ashtead 1927-8</i>	Excavations at Ashtead, Surrey. 2nd Report (1927 and 1928). A. W. G. Lowther, <i>Surrey Arch. Colls.</i> XLI.
<i>Balmuildy</i>	<i>The Roman Fort at Balmuildy.</i> S. N. Miller.
<i>Birdoswald-Pike Hill</i>	Excavations on Hadrian's Wall in the Birdoswald-Pike Hill Section, 1929, I. A. Richmond and E. B. Birley. <i>Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society's Transactions.</i> N.S. XXX.
<i>B.M.</i>	British Museum.
<i>Brockley Hill 1947</i>	Report on the excavations at Brockley Hill, Middlesex, 1947. K. M. Richardson. <i>Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society</i> , N.S. X., Part 1.
<i>Brockley Hill 1950</i>	Report on the excavations at Brockley Hill, Middlesex, 1950. S. Applebaum. <i>Transactions of London and Middlesex Archaeological Society.</i> N.S. X., Part 3.
<i>Brough IV</i>	<i>Excavations at the Roman Fort at Brough, E. Yorkshire, 1936.</i> P. Corder and T. Romans. Hull Museum Committee.
<i>Caerhun</i>	<i>Excavations on the Site of the Roman Fort of Kanovium, at Caerhun, Caernarvonshire.</i> P. K. Baillie-Reynolds (also in <i>Archaeologia Cambrensis</i> , 1934).
<i>Caerleon 1927-9</i>	The Roman Legionary Fortress of Caerleon in Monmouthshire. Report on the Excavations carried out in 1927-9. V. E. Nash-Williams. <i>Archaeologia Cambrensis</i> , LXXXIV.
<i>Caerleon Amphitheatre</i>	The Roman Amphitheatre at Caerleon, Monmouthshire. R. E. M. Wheeler and T. V. Wheeler, <i>Archaeologia</i> , LXXVIII.
<i>Caistor Pottery</i>	Roman Pottery from Caistor-next-Norwich. D. Atkinson. <i>Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society</i> , XXVI.
<i>Camulodunum</i>	C. F. C. Hawkes and M. R. Hull. Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries, No. XIV.
<i>Charlton</i>	The Earthworks at Charlton, London, S.E. F. C. Elliston-Erwood, <i>J.B.A.A.</i> , LXXII.
<i>Charterhouse</i>	Romano-British Cemeteries of Haslemere and Charterhouse. J. Holmes, <i>Surrey Arch. Colls.</i> , LI.
<i>Chatley Farm, Cobham</i>	The excavation of a Late Roman Bath-house at Chatley Farm, Cobham. S. S. Frere, <i>Surrey Arch. Coll.</i> , L.
<i>Cohen</i>	Médailles Impériales.
<i>Corbridge</i>	Corstopitum; Report on the excavations in 1911. R. H. Forster and W. H. Knowles. <i>Archaeologia Aeliana</i> VII and VIII.

- Great Casterton
G.H.
J.B.A.A.
J.W.
L.M.
Lockleys, Welwyn
London, G.P.O.
M. & S.
Newstead
O.
Oldbury
O. & P.
Ospringle
R.C.H.M.
Richborough I-IV
Silchester 1938-9
Silchester Pottery
Surrey Arch. Colls.
V.C.H.
Verulamium
Verulamium 1938
Verulamium Kiln
Verulamium Theatre
Wroxeter 1936-7
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F. Oswald: *Index of Figure-types on Terra Sigillata.* Liverpool, 1936.
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Report on the Excavation of the Roman Cemetery at Ospringle, Kent. W. Whiting, W. Hawley and T. May. Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries, No. VIII.
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Excavations at Silchester 1938-9. M. A. Cotton. *Archaeologia*, XCII.
The Pottery found at Silchester. T. May.
Surrey Archaeological Collections. Surrey Archaeological Society.
Victoria County History.
Verulamium, A Belgic and Two Roman Cities, R. E. M. Wheeler and T. V. Wheeler. Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries, No. XI.
Report on Excavations at Verulamium Insula XVI, 1938. K. M. Richardson, *Archaeologia*, XC.
A Roman Pottery of the Hadrian-Antonine Period at Verulamium. P. Corder, *Ant. J.*, XXI.
The Roman Theatre at Verulamium, St. Albans. K. M. Kenyon, *Archaeologia*, LXXXIV.
Excavations at Viroconium, 1936-7. K. M. Kenyon. *Archaeologia*, LXXXVIII.

INTRODUCTION

The initiative in arranging for the excavation of bomb-damaged sites in Southwark was taken by the Surrey Archaeological Society. The Society had set up a Post-war Planning Committee in 1944; in that aspect of planning which involved making arrangements for the examination of sites made available by bomb damage, excavation in Southwark clearly took a high place. At the suggestion of the Committee, therefore, the Society was instrumental in the formation of a Southwark Excavation Committee in 1945. We were fortunate that the then Mayor of Southwark, Alderman L. J. Styles, was deeply interested in the history of the Borough and an expert on many of its aspects. Alderman Styles consented to become the Chairman of this Committee; and to his enthusiasm, energy, and skill in mobilising the resources of the Borough, the Excavation Committee and the excavators are deeply indebted. Mr. S. S. Frere, F.S.A., acted as Secretary of the Committee, and Mr. A. B. Honey, then manager of the Walworth Street Branch of Barclays Bank, as Treasurer, and both worked extremely hard in its interests. Other members were the Provost of Southwark, G. L. Young, Esq., W. C. Berwick Sayers, Esq., J. G. (now Sir James) Mann, S. Toy, Esq., I. A. Richmond, Esq., P. Corder, Esq., A. W. G. Lowther, Esq., F. C. Elliston-Erwood, Esq., T. E. C. Walker, Esq., G. H. Harvey, Esq., the Rev. Canon T. P. Stevens, and the Public Librarian of Southwark. The knowledge and interest of all these gentlemen was of very great assistance to the execution of the undertaking.

Mr. Frere gave invaluable help, both as Secretary of the Committee and by taking charge of the excavation of several of the sites. He also carried out a preliminary detailed survey of bombed sites, plotted on the 25 in. O.S. map, in the course of which he narrowly escaped arrest as a possible enemy agent. To his enthusiasm and hard work I am personally most deeply indebted. Miss K. M. Richardson and Mr. Nicholas Thomas also took charge of sites and to them also I am most grateful. The actual excavation was almost entirely the work of volunteers. They were far too numerous for me to mention them individually by name. But it is quite literally true that without them the work could not have been accomplished; for labour was at that time almost unobtainable, and the resources of the Committee, in any case, inadequate to pay for it. So almost every spade-full of soil was shifted by volunteer labour. The only exception was that, with the aid of a grant from the Surrey Archaeological Society, a maximum of three (mainly unsatisfactory) labourers was employed for three weeks. This report should thus be dedicated to the volunteers of all ages, from schoolboys to octogenarians, who made it possible. An especially pleasing contribution to the work was made by two groups of foreign students, American and Dutch, who were brought over in 1946 by the British Council especially to take part in the excavations. To them and to the British Council an especial word of gratitude is due. The plans of the sites were surveyed and drawn by Mr. J. H. Harvey, F.S.A., and Mr. P. L. Stiles. I am most grateful for their assistance in this matter.

The site owners were most generous in their permission to carry out the excavations. The warm thanks of the Committee are here recorded to D. H. Gaskain and Co. for permission to excavate on the King's Head Yard Site, to the Newcomen's Educational Foundation and the Marshall's Charity in respect of the Newcomen

Street site, and to W. R. Daniel Ltd. in respect of 199 Borough High Street. D. H. Gaskain and Co. also most kindly provided us with a room to serve as dig headquarters at the King's Head Yard in the pleasantly odoriferous atmosphere of a hop warehouse, and the Marshall's Charity foundation did the same kind service at the Newcomen Street Site. All the negotiations with the property owners were, at the instance of Alderman Styles, undertaken by Mr. G. E. Hardy, Borough Engineer and Surveyor. Mr. Hardy also gave invaluable help in the provision of equipment. For his most willing co-operation I am deeply grateful.

Reports on finds were very kindly undertaken by Dr. Felix Oswald, Dr. D. B. Harden, Mr. B. W. Pearce, Mr. E. A. Lane, Mr. Adrian Oswald and Mr. G. C. Dunning, and I have much pleasure in acknowledging their welcome interest and assistance.

The excavations were financed by grants from the Surrey Archaeological Society, the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Archaeological Institute and the British Archaeological Association. The total expenditure was £84 16s. It was only the assistance of volunteers which made possible the accomplishment of such a substantial amount of work on such modest resources.

The work was spread over three seasons from 1945 to 1947. Throughout most of the period from spring to late autumn (with some work by Mr. Frere at Christmas) it was restricted to bi-weekly evening sessions until dusk by people after they had done their day's work. During August each year, full-time work was carried out for about three weeks.

The long delay in the appearance of this report is purely my responsibility, due to increasing pressure of other archaeological work. For this, my apologies are due to the Committee, to financial sponsors, and to all my assistants.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Excavations were carried out on five sites (fig. 1), in premises at King's Head Yard, 20 Southwark Street, near Newcomen Street, Mermaid Court, and 199 Borough High Street. The selection of sites was, of course, largely governed by the distribution of suitable bombed sites. The ideal conditions were buildings with cellars of medium depth, not encumbered by debris. The resources of the Excavation Committee were too slender to undertake clearance from the modern surface to Roman levels, or to clear accumulated debris. Cellar areas were therefore essential, and investigation showed that very deep cellars had, in fact, removed all the Roman levels. On these grounds, investigation of a number of bombed premises was ruled out. A further consideration was the advantage of sites in the neighbourhood of which Roman finds had previously been made.

The greatest concentration of Roman finds is shown by the map (fig. 2)¹ to lie along the river bank. Here, however, though there were bombed buildings, none provided suitable conditions for excavation. The sites selected were therefore in the other area of potential importance, the line of Stane Street to London Bridge, along which the map shows a scatter of Roman finds.

The excavations confirm the suggestion given by the map as to the character of Roman Southwark, namely that the main settlement was confined to the riverside area, and was a bridgehead settlement at the Surrey end of the Roman London

¹ The map is based on finds recorded in *V.C.H. Surrey*, Vol. IV, and *R.C.H.M. London*, Vol. III.

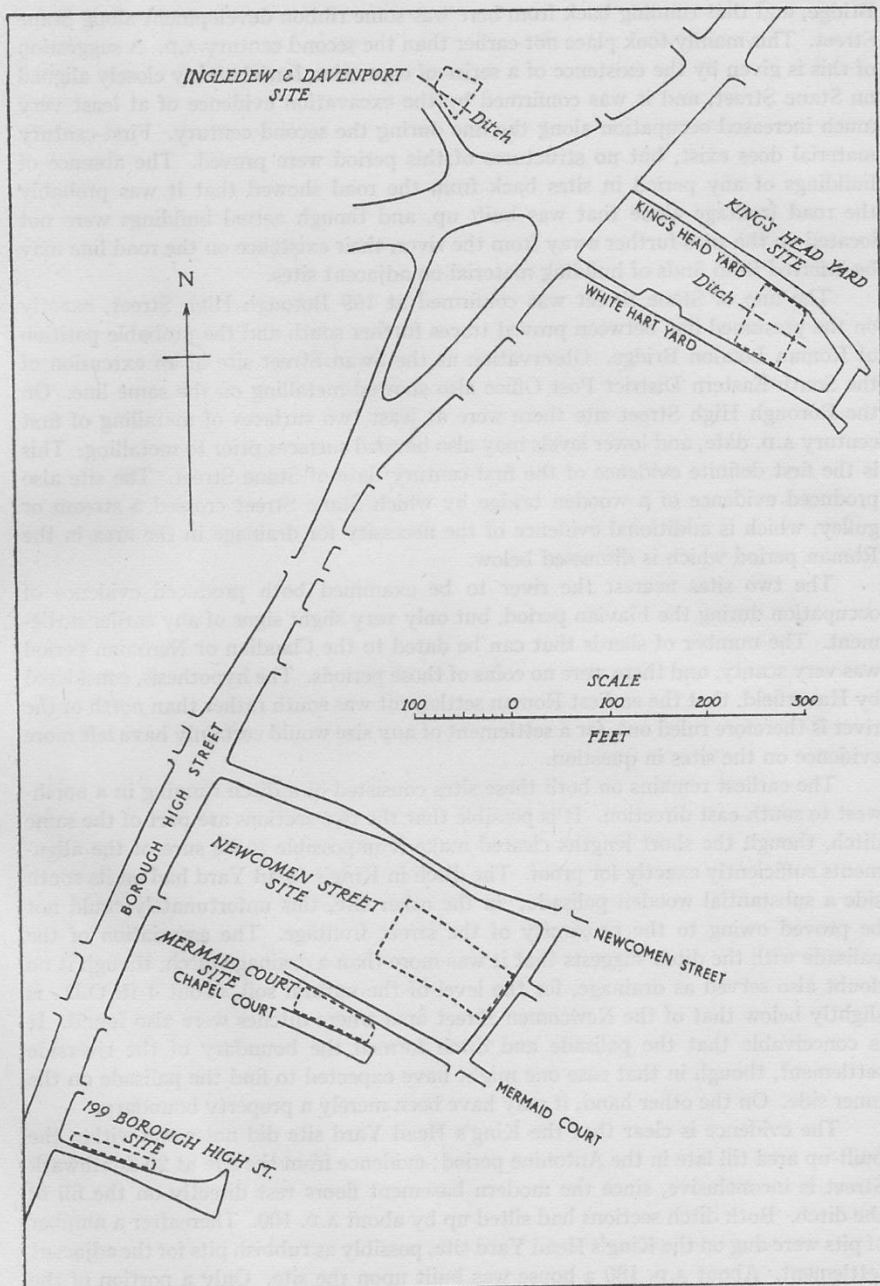


Fig. 1.—KEY PLAN OF SITES.

Bridge, and that running back from here was some ribbon development along Stane Street. This mainly took place not earlier than the second century A.D. A suggestion of this is given by the existence of a series of cremation burials fairly closely aligned on Stane Street, and it was confirmed by the excavation evidence of at least very much increased occupation along the line during the second century. First-century material does exist, but no structures of this period were proved. The absence of buildings of any period in sites back from the road showed that it was probably the road frontage alone that was built up, and though actual buildings were not located on the sites further away from the river, their existence on the road line may be inferred from finds of building material on adjacent sites.

The line of Stane Street was confirmed at 199 Borough High Street, exactly on the presumed line between proved traces further south and the probable position of Roman London Bridge. Observation at the Swan Street site of an extension of the South-Eastern District Post Office also showed metalling on the same line. On the Borough High Street site there were at least two surfaces of metalling of first century A.D. date, and lower levels may also be road surfaces prior to metalling. This is the first definite evidence of the first-century date of Stane Street. The site also produced evidence of a wooden bridge by which Stane Street crossed a stream or gully, which is additional evidence of the necessity for drainage in the area in the Roman period which is discussed below.

The two sites nearest the river to be examined both produced evidence of occupation during the Flavian period, but only very slight signs of any earlier settlement. The number of sherds that can be dated to the Claudian or Neronian period was very scanty, and there were no coins of those periods. The hypothesis, considered by Haverfield, that the earliest Roman settlement was south rather than north of the river is therefore ruled out, for a settlement of any size would certainly have left more evidence on the sites in question.

The earliest remains on both these sites consisted of a ditch running in a north-west to south-east direction. It is possible that the two sections are part of the same ditch, though the short lengths cleared make it impossible to be sure of the alignments sufficiently exactly for proof. The ditch in King's Head Yard had on its south side a substantial wooden palisade; in the other site, this unfortunately could not be proved owing to the proximity of the street frontage. The association of the palisade with the ditch suggests that it was more than a drainage ditch, though it no doubt also served as drainage, for the level of the natural soil, about 4 ft. O.D., is slightly below that of the Newcomen Street area where ditches were also found. It is conceivable that the palisade and ditch formed the boundary of the riverside settlement, though in that case one might have expected to find the palisade on the inner side. On the other hand, it may have been merely a property boundary.

The evidence is clear that the King's Head Yard site did not come within the built-up area till late in the Antonine period; evidence from the site at 20 Southwark Street is inconclusive, since the modern basement floors rest directly on the fill of the ditch. Both ditch sections had silted up by about A.D. 100. Thereafter a number of pits were dug on the King's Head Yard site, possibly as rubbish pits for the adjacent settlement. About A.D. 180 a house was built upon the site. Only a portion of the plan could be recovered within the limits available, but it may have been a building of considerable size, fronting on Stane Street.

This building went out of use, possibly destroyed by fire, at the beginning of the fourth century, and there was clear evidence that there were no later structures on the site. The problem of the history of Southwark in the fourth century is discussed below.

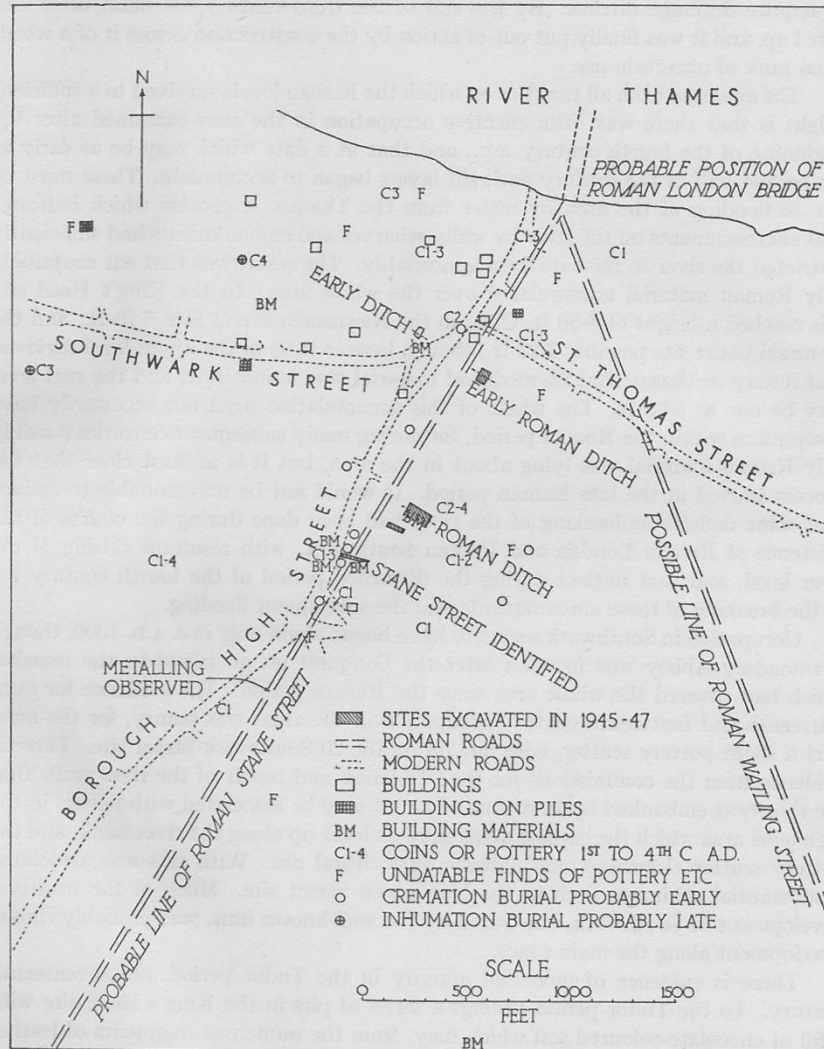


Fig. 2.—MAP OF ROMAN REMAINS IN SOUTHWARK.

The evidence of the relatively restricted area occupied by Roman Southwark was confirmed by the excavations on the Newcomen Street and Mermaid Court sites further south. These sites were never built upon in the Roman period, though the presence of building material upon them suggests that there may have been

houses between these sites and Stane Street. The Newcomen Street site was crossed by a series of ditches, which seem, in one form or another, to have existed from the first century down to the end of the third century. There was no evidence that the general area was actually marshy at that date, but clearly it was sufficiently damp to require drainage ditches. By the end of the third century the main ditch had silted up, and it was finally put out of action by the construction across it of a wood-lined tank of uncertain use.

The evidence from all the sites on which the Roman levels survived to a sufficient height is that there was little effective occupation in the area examined after the beginning of the fourth century A.D., and that at a date which may be as early as the second half of the century dark silt layers began to accumulate. These must be due to flooding of the area by water from the Thames, a process which indicates that encroachments on the river by walls, wharves and embankments had sufficiently restricted the river to raise its level appreciably. The result was that silt containing only Roman material accumulated over the whole area. In the King's Head site this reached a height of 6.50 ft. O.D., in the Newcomen Street Site 5.70 ft., and the Mermaid Court site possibly 7.22 ft., though here so little of the upper level survived that it may be chance that no medieval material was found in it, and the real level may be one at 6.55 ft. The whole of this accumulation need not necessarily have taken place within the Roman period, for during many subsequent centuries possibly only Roman material was lying about in the area, but it is at least clear that the process started in the late Roman period. It would not be unreasonable to deduce that some definite embanking of the river had been done during the course of the existence of Roman London and Roman Southwark, with resultant raising of the river level, and that neglect during the disturbed period of the fourth century led to the breaking of these embankments and the subsequent flooding.

Occupation in Southwark seems to have begun again only in c. A.D. 1300, though Bermondsey Abbey was founded after the Conquest on an island in the marshes which had covered the whole area since the Roman period. The evidence for even thirteenth and fourteenth century occupation in the areas was scanty, for the most part a slight pottery scatter, with one pit on the 20 Southwark Street site. There is evidence from the commissions for the inspection and repair of the river walls that the river was embanked by that time. The pit may be associated with houses in the high level area which the earliest maps show as built-up along the river bank, and the pottery scatter elsewhere may indicate agricultural use. With this was associated a substantial drainage ditch in the Newcomen Street site. Much of the medieval development of Southwark, illustrated by the well-known inns, was probably ribbon development along the main roads.

There is evidence of increased activity in the Tudor period and seventeenth century. To the Tudor period belongs a series of pits in the King's Head site with a fill of chocolate-coloured soil which may, from the numerous fragments of leather in them, be connected with tanning, a well-known Southwark industry. In the Newcomen Street site there is evidence from large quantities of domestic ware of considerable occupation in the neighbourhood in the seventeenth century. The ware, however, comes from layers that indicate that, probably in the second half of the century, there was a series of floodings in the area, presumably due to breaches in the embankment, though the silting up of the medieval ditch may have something

to do with it. After the first silting the ditch was re-cut, but again silted up and was overlaid by two further silting layers. The area did not, however, remain completely marshy, for with the first of these layers, dating probably to the third quarter of the century, is associated a large brick-built cellar, presumably part of a substantial building. The alluvial soil surrounding it was probably used for agricultural or horticultural purposes. Still within the seventeenth century was another silt level, associated with a rebuilding of the cellar. We thus have here the picture given by contemporary maps of houses stretching out from the river along the successor of Stane Street, and the hinterland an area of gardens intersected by frequent water-courses. The latest evidence from the site was that the cellar went out of use c. A.D. 1800, all subsequent deposits being truncated by the factory basement of the period of the industrial development of Southwark which started c. 1850.

A further point must be added to this summary, and that is the light thrown on the nature of the pre-Roman occupation of the area. It is clear that the actual Southwark area was unoccupied in the Iron Age. Only about three minute sherds of Iron Age A pottery and one flint arrowhead belong to the pre-Roman period. However, the type of Romanised native ware which formed much of the domestic pottery can be taken as evidence of the associations of the people who came to be incorporated in the Roman settlement. It is quite clear that there is no appreciable Belgic element. This is demonstrated by a comparison of the Southwark pottery with that from Verulamium. The Belgic cordoned and pedestal vessels are completely lacking, as are the Belgic storage jars with arcaded combing and the cooking jars with recessed rims. The place of these last two classes of vessel is taken by jars of Patch Grove type and bead-rim jars of Charlton type. The Patch Grove jars have been shown by Mr. Ward Perkins¹ to have a distribution along the North Downs and the south of the Thames, limited on the east by the Medway valley, an area in which the pedestal urns typical of south-eastern Belgic pottery hardly occur. The Charlton bead-rim jars² have a similar distribution. Another class of vessel which differs from those of the south-eastern Belgic group is the type of bowl and jar with vertical neck and rolled rim. This has some affinities with the Belgic of West Surrey and Hampshire, centred on Silchester. These characteristic forms run right through the pottery of Southwark, beside the more generalised Roman forms, and are a reminder of the strong indigenous element present in the Romano-British settlements. The differentiation evident between places geographically so close as Verulamium and Southwark emphasises the need for more regional studies of Roman coarse pottery, and stresses the light the variations can throw on the preceding native cultures.

¹ *Oldbury*, pp. 150 and 175, and fig. 19.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 150 and 176, and fig. 10.