

Volume 93 abstracts

Farley Heath Roman temple

The Roman temple at Farley Heath has been a well-known archaeological site since the middle of the 19th century. It is in a rural, and relatively isolated, position, and began to be subjected to metal detection damage in the early 1990s. Excavation by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit was funded by English Heritage, in order to record the surviving stratigraphy before further destruction. The results of the excavations are described and discussed in the light of earlier investigations on the site, and the opportunity has been taken to provide comprehensive publication of the large and important collection of Roman finds from previous work.

It is now clear that the site has seen activity since at least the Neolithic period. It is argued that the context of this pre-Roman activity was ritual, in relation to a distinct hilltop location. The evidence, almost entirely of finds, seems most conclusive for the later Iron Age. It is, however, clear that an Iron Age shrine did not precede the Roman temple on exactly the same site, as for example at Uley, Gloucestershire.

Use of the site extended throughout the Roman period, but the date(s) when the temple and its surrounding *temenos* were built cannot be precisely established. The temple was of the common *cella* and ambulatory type, while the *temenos* is unique in Britain forming an irregular polygon, which enclosed some 1.2ha. This is a relatively large area, but the evidence suggests there were no permanent structures within it. South and west of the *temenos* a variety of evidence has been recovered pointing to industrial and, perhaps, settlement activity.

The site appears not to have seen much activity after the Roman period and prior to extensive robbing of its stone from the later 17th century onwards. It seems, nevertheless, that some memory of its religious purpose was retained over this long period.

Claims that the temple was associated with a ‘ten acre enclosure’ are dismissed, the features in fact forming elements within a more extensive series of land boundaries on Farley Heath belonging to the medieval or post-medieval periods.

Green Lane, Wanborough: excavations at the Roman religious site 1999

Following a geophysical survey of the field to the south of the known Romano-Celtic square temple a series of trial trenches was opened. Pre-Roman activity was largely confined to what may be a ritual well or shaft that appears to be connected to the site occupied by the later temples by a curving trackway, thought to be ceremonial. To the west of the square temple an apparent ditch terminal was succeeded by a small, probably circular, enclosure, at the centre of which may have been a prominent tree. This phase, which began in the middle of the 1st century AD, was associated with the burial of lambs and other votive deposits and may have been the focus for the coin hoard deposited cAD50–60, and which was robbed and largely dispersed in the 1980s.

This phase was succeeded before the middle of the 2nd century by a hitherto unsuspected flint-built temple of sub-circular form with an eastern entrance porch and a wooden floor and which appears to be a formalisation of the plan of the earlier enclosure. This temple appears to have suffered a dramatic structural failure and seems to have collapsed partially shortly after construction. The circular temple was quickly replaced, following a re-dedication ceremony, by the square temple in about AD160/170. In any event it had been dismantled by the late 2nd century and its site largely respected by later activity, with the exception of a few, possibly ritually positioned, pits. Later activity is confined to the construction of a parish boundary bank across the site and an associated small group of medieval pennies, which may indicate a memory of the religious site.