Phase 4 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Evidence for late activity was almost entirely restricted to the eastern part of both excavated areas. Only one modern feature was noted elsewhere; pit 93 (Phase 2) was cut by a concreted post foundation. To the east, evidence points to late agricultural or horticultural disturbance, with no evidence for medieval activity at the site.

To the south in Area 1 (Figs 3 and 5), postholes 11 (fill 12) (Fig. 6), 62 (fill 61) and 64 (fill 63) were of similar size and depth (c 0.28 m in diameter), most likely representative of modern fence lines. Similarly, ditches 14 (fill 15) and 20 (fill 21), both of which produced modern pottery and clay pipe suggesting a 19th century origin, were interpreted as agricultural trenches or hedge lines. Further to the north in Area 2 (Figs 3 and 5), ditches 26 and 53 lay on a similar alignment and may represent the continuation of ditches 14 and 20 after a significant gap. Ditch 24, which ran perpendicular to the majority of other linear features on the site, was also recent in origin and presumably a land boundary.

To the north in Area 2 (Figs 3 and 5), pit 22 (fill 23) was modern, producing a range of late ironwork. Pit 30 was a shallow oval feature, 0.7 m east-west, by a maximum of 0.4 m north-south. The partial skeleton of an immature sheep (32) less than one year old was disposed of within the pit and was overlain by a friable grey-brown silty clay (31). The complete non-survival of animal bone from earlier features suggests that this pit was of recent date.

At the extreme western edge of Area 2 (Figs 3 and 4), a large cut feature (36, Fig. 7) was interpreted as a possible sunken trackway. The primary fill (48) was a hard-packed, dense layer of cobbles in a compact greyish red-brown clay matrix, which produced an iron nail. Although it was not traced across the extent of the section investigated, layer 48 was tentatively identified as a road or trackway surface. It was overlain on its north-eastern edge by fill 52, a relatively thin (maximum 0.1 m) layer of grey clay loam which probably accumulated when the track fell into disuse. Both fill 52 and fill 48 were completely sealed by fill 40, a thick (0.4 m) hard-packed layer of reddish brown silty clay containing abundant charcoal, slag, and bone. This was interpreted as deliberate backfill. Fill 40 was cut by a single large circular posthole (44, fill 45), 1.1 m in diameter, and 0.9 m deep. Both fill 40 and posthole fill 45 were sealed by fill 37, a dark greyish brown clay loam producing a mixed range of finds, including residual Iron Age pottery, flint and 18th century glass. This was partly overlain by a dump of angular Ragstone blocks (130) representative of a modern disturbance directly below layer 2.

Deposits 126 and 127, toward the eastern end of Area 2 (Figs 3 and 5), were both soft brown silty clays restricted in area and irregular in form; both were associated with recent disturbance and were determined to be modern.

Artefactual evidence

Flint

by Hugo Lamdin-Whymark

Introduction

In total, the site produced 18 struck flints and four pieces of burnt unworked flint (Table 1). The raw material is generally a good quality grey-brown gravel-derived flint. Its condition is generally fresh, although several pieces exhibit post-depositional edge damage. None of the flint derived from features dated earlier than the Iron Age and therefore represent disturbance and subsequent re-deposition.

Methodology

The flint assemblage was catalogued according to broad artefact/debitage type. The general condition was noted and dating was attempted where

possible. Unworked burnt flint was described and quantified by piece and weight.

Table 1: Composition of the flint assemblage

Category	Total
Flake	9
Blade	1
Single platform blade core	1
Multi-platform flake core	1
Core on a flake	1
End scraper	2
Retouched flake	1
Hammerstone	2
Burnt unworked	4
Total	22

The assemblage

The flakes in the assemblage are relatively thin and narrow, often exhibiting platform edge abrasion. The single platform blade core has numerous bladelet scars and also exhibits platform edge abrasion. This core may date to the Mesolithic or early Neolithic period. The other cores offer little technological information as the multi-platform flake core is extremely rolled, and the core on a flake has only two removals. The retouched element of the assemblage consists of two end scrapers, both manufactured on relatively thick flakes with abrupt distal retouch, and a retouched flake with abrupt retouch on the right side. Two flint hammerstones were recovered. The first hammerstone weighs 269 g and has been very well utilised. The second hammerstone may more accurately be described as a pounder. Although it was broken in half, it weighs 335 g and has heavy battering at one point only. The assemblage is broadly Neolithic in date, except for the blade core which is possibly Mesolithic.

Iron Age and Roman pottery (Fig. 8)

by Edward Biddulph

Introduction

A total of 1,039 sherds weighing 9,997 g was recovered during the excavation. The majority of the pottery dates to the late Iron Age and early Roman periods, but the early-middle Iron Age is also represented. The Roman pottery falls within a restricted date range, spanning the mid 1st-early 2nd centuries AD. Later pottery is limited to an intrusive fragment of 3rd century or later date and three post-medieval sherds. The assemblage condition is mixed. Sherds are generally small and abraded, although large, fresh pieces were recovered. Vessel rims were commonly broken at the neck, rendering close identification of form types difficult.

The pottery was sorted into fabric groups based on surface appearance and major inclusion types. The fabrics were identified using the series devised for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust. For the purpose of this report, the fabrics were generally referred to by brief descriptions (Table 2) rather than by the system of codes employed in that series. Detailed descriptions of these fabrics may be found in Pollard (1987, 168-213) or Tomber and Dore (1998). It should be noted that glauconite and flint-tempered Iron Age fabrics do not form part of the Canterbury fabric series and therefore new codes (IA1 and IA2, respectively) were devised for the purposes of this report. The form typology follows Thompson (1982) for the late Iron Age and Monaghan (1987) for the Roman period. Vessels were quantified by Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs).

The pottery

Iron Age pottery dominates the assemblage. It consists of 32% by weight, with the largest single group being glauconite sand-tempered ware. This fabric belonged to a tradition strongly associated with sites along the Medway valley (Pollard 1988), and its dominance at Maidstone is of little surprise. At Queen Elizabeth Square, the fabric was probably introduced during the middle Iron Age or the beginning of the late Iron Age, prior to the widespread use of grog

Table 2: Pottery fabrics quantified by sherd count and weight

Fabric (CAT fabric codes in brackets)	Sherds	Weight (g)	% Wt	Mean sherd wt (g)
Flint-tempered wares (IA2)	276	2216	22%	8
Glauconitic sand-tempered ware (IA1)	309	3189	32%	10
'Belgic' fine grog-tempered ware (B1)	258	2297	24%	9
'Belgic' coarse grog-tempered ware (B2)	33	651	7%	20
'Belgic' grog-tempered ware with sand (B5)	4	22	<1%	6
'Belgic' shell-tempered ware (B6)	20	217	2%	11
'Belgic' coarse sandy fabric (B9)	7	78	1%	11
'Patch Grove' grog-tempered ware (R68)	5	180	2%	36
Fine sandy grey ware (R7)	5	10	<1%	2
Coarse sandy grey ware (R73)	23	274	3%	12
Fine reduced Upchurch-type ware (R16)	31	216	2%	7
Fine oxidised 'Upchurch'-type ware (R17)	9	74	1%	8
Fine white/cream ware (R75)	12	129	1%	11
Fine Pink/buff ware (R70)	22	132	1%	6
Nene Valley colour-coated ware (LR11)	1	2	<1%	2
South Gaulish samian ware (R42)	2	20	<1%	10
Central Gaulish samian ware (R43)	2	16	<1%	8
Italian amphora fabric (B19)	1	144	1%	144
South Spanish amphora fabric (R50)	1	84	1%	84
Post-medieval pottery (PM)	3	28	<1%	9
Unassigned	15	18	<1%	1
Total	1039	9997		

Table 3: Pottery vessel classes quantified by EVE in order of significance

Fabric (CAT fabric codes in brackets)	Flagon	Beaker	Jar	Jar/bowl	Bowl	Dish	Cup	Lid	Total EVE	%EVE
'Belgic' fine grog-tempered ware (B1)			2.04		0.10			0.23	2.37	34%
Glauconitic sand-tempered ware (IA1)			1.01		0.08				1.09	16%
Fine white/cream ware (R75)	1.00								1.00	15%
Fine reduced 'Upchurch' -type ware (R16)		0.20				0.62			0.82	12%
Fine oxidised 'Upchurch' -type ware (R17)		0.30			0.26				0.56	8%
'Patch Grove' grog-tempered ware (R68)			0.50						0.50	7%
'Belgic' shell-tempered ware (B6)			0.18						0.18	3%
Central Gaulish samian ware (R43)							0.11		0.11	2%
'Belgic' coarse sandy fabric (B9)			0.05						0.05	1%
Flint-tempered ware (IA2)				0.10					0.10	1%
Coarse sandy grey ware (R73)						0.10			0.10	1%
Total EVE	1.00	0.50	3.78	0.10	0.44	0.72	0.11	0.23	6.88	
% EVE	15%	7%	56%	1%	6%	10%	2%	3%		

tempering. The largest quantities of glauconite sand-tempered ware from any single context were found in deposits consisting exclusively of that fabric type or together with equally large amounts of hand-made flint-tempered pottery. This included material of certain early-mid Iron Age date. Glauconite sand-tempered pottery remained dominant during the late Iron Age, but appeared to decline rapidly during the first half of the 1st century AD. An increase in the proportion of grog-tempered pottery was met by a decrease in the proportion of glauconite sand-tempered ware. By the late 1st century, the latter had virtually disappeared. This supports Pollard's claim for an earlier 1st century decline for glauconite sand-tempered pottery (op. cit., 32).

While the use of flint-tempered pottery generally continued in Kent beyond the Roman conquest (op. cit., 37), at Queen Elizabeth Square the evidence points to a halt in the tradition by the end of the late Iron Age. This is consistent with the regional pattern. Such pottery appears to be largely absent from the 'Belgic' *oppidum* site at Quarry Wood Camp, Loose (Kelly 1971), and flint-tempered pottery from the Mount Roman villa was deemed to extend no later than the 1st century AD (Savage 1999, 115). The flint-tempered pottery assemblage included few rims, but characteristic early Iron Age material distinguishable by form and rusticated surfaces (Macpherson-Grant 1998, 131) was certainly present. What proportion of the assemblage that this represents cannot be confidently established, but rusticated sherds were present in the largest groups of the fabric, and these were associated with glauconitic, as opposed to grog-tempered, pottery.

In sharp contrast, the use of grog-tempered pottery, although current during the late Iron Age, proliferated only after the mid 1st century AD. Four separate fabrics were recognised, the most common being the fine 'Belgic' ware which was characterised by smooth, dark blue-grey surfaces. This dominated the Roman period assemblage. 'Patch Grove' ware contributed only a minor share of the assemblage and was represented by a single necked jar. This is probably reflective of the chronology of the site. Pollard (1987, 210) places the *floruit* of this ware in the late 1st-early 2nd century, with production extending into the 3rd century. At the Mount Roman villa, the fabric was recovered from deposits dated to the mid 2nd century onward (Savage 1999, table 1). Just one context (fill 71 from pit 70, Fig. 7) from the site dated to the 2nd century; most Roman period pottery was confined to the mid-late 1st century. The shell-tempered ware, part of an established local tradition (Seager Smith 1995, 105), was consistent with a 1st century AD date.

The range of forms reflected the pre-Roman mid 1st century emphasis: jars predominated. Glauconite sand-tempered jar types included those with a variety of plain, bead and club rims. Vessels were generally globular and invariably decorated with combing or furrowing on the body. A wider range of jars was available in grog-tempered ware, including bead rimmed vessels (Thompson 1982, type C1-4), necked and cordoned jars (op. cit., types B1-1 and B3-1, respectively). Other vessel classes remained rare during the Iron Age. Cordoned and wide-mouthed shallow bowls were evident. These were essentially grog-tempered (op. cit., types F3-4 and G2-3) and provided evidence that there was little attempt to diversify. Appropriately, lids were the next most common late Iron Age form type after jars. The two classes were presumably used in conjunction with one another.

The chronological trend also means that sandy grey wares, normally ubiquitous on most Roman sites (61% by sherd count at Snodland; Seager Smith 1995, 104), formed a very small proportion of the assemblage at Queen Elizabeth Square. Most sherds were non-diagnostic body sherds, although a bead-rimmed dish (Monaghan 1987, type 5C/5D) was recovered from early 2nd century pit 70 (Fig. 7). Reduced 'Upchurch' ware from north Kent contributed amounts roughly equal to the sandy grey ware. The fabric was introduced to the site during the later 1st century with pit 70 yielding the

largest quantity of sherds. Vessel forms included a poppyhead beaker (op. cit., type 2A5) and a flanged dish (op. cit., type 5B). The oxidised fabric also reached the site, but only during the early 2nd century. Vessels in this fabric included a globular beaker and a bowl with compass-decoration (op. cit., types 2H and 4H2, respectively). Both pink/buff and white/cream wares were poorly preserved, and a single rim was retrieved. This rim and a number of handles suggests that the majority of body sherds, probably of local origin, derived from flagons. The high representation of this type in terms of EVEs demonstrates the way in which relative vessel proportions can be skewed by the presence of a single complete rim when the overall assemblage size is small.

Continental wares comprised both amphora and samian fabrics. The former included a body sherd of Italian origin which was recovered from late Iron Age ditch 33 (Fig. 7) together with glauconite sand-tempered and grog-tempered pottery. The amphora vessel type could not be identified, but taking into account the ceramic associations and date of the context, it remains a strong possibility that the sherd belonged to a Dressel 1 amphora. If so, this has implications for the status of the site. This form was recovered from only a handful of sites in Kent, including the major settlement at Rochester (Pollard 1988, 232) and Quarry Wood, Loose (Peacock 1971, 182; Arthur 1986, 241 and 257). Its possible recovery at Queen Elizabeth Square suggests a functionally important or substantial settlement. The absence of other late Iron Age continental imports argues against this, however, as does the lack of platter and beaker copies. Despite the presence of the Italian amphora, continental influence appears to have been weak, although levels of continental pottery were generally low at any site in Kent (Pollard 1988, 33). A second amphora sherd again could not be closely identified, but may have come from a Dressel 20 olive oil container from southern Spain. Roughly equal amounts of south Gaulish and central Gaulish samian were found. The former is a reasonably common 1st century site find, although its appearance at Queen Elizabeth Square in the form of a Dressel 18 dish and Ritterling 12 bowl was residual. Both vessel types were found in pit 70 (Fig. 7). This pit also yielded a central Gaulish samian Dressel 27 cup from Lezoux, attesting to occupation continuing at least through AD 120 (Webster 1996, 3). Roman pottery of later date was restricted to a fragment from a Nene valley colour-coated ware beaker, which arrived in Kent after the late 2nd century (Pollard 1988, 210). Its appearance at Queen Elizabeth Square may have derived from plough or manuring activity.

Discussion

Although few large, well-dated pottery groups were recovered, the broad chronological trends seemed generally clear. Early-mid Iron Age occupation was attested by the presence of handmade, rusticated flint-tempered pottery. Postholes 43 and 80, yielding no other pottery, tantalisingly hint at the presence of a structure dating to this period. However, most early-mid Iron Age pottery was usually found in association with mid-late Iron age fabrics and must have been residual, suggesting that the focus for the early settlement was destroyed by later occupation or was beyond the boundaries of the excavated area. Slightly more than a third of the ceramic assemblage by weight (34%) dated to the mid-late Iron Age. Unfortunately, the dominance and longevity of glauconite sand-tempered pottery means that this range cannot be refined. Nevertheless, that the fabric was rarely found in association with grog-tempered ware, which carries a 1st century AD date at the site. This suggests that there was no substantial gap in activity between the early-late Iron Age. Most pottery (42%) was recovered from Roman period contexts, and the bulk of this was deposited during the second half of the 1st century AD. At this time, grog-tempered ware dominated ceramic supply. Occupation continued into the 2nd century, although only a single feature (Pit 70, Fig. 7) had a certain 2nd century date. The assemblage is unlikely to date much beyond AD 120. Occupation either halted completely at this time, or moved elsewhere; the

presence of Nene valley colour-coated ware, albeit intrusive and very abraded, hints at the latter. In any case, glazed pottery suggests a resumption of activity during the post-medieval period.

Some spatial patterning can be observed. Area 1 and the eastern half of Area 2 (Figs 3 and 5) yielded largely pre-Roman pottery. The latter provides a focus for the early Iron Age material. In contrast, the western half of Area 2 (Figs 3 and 4) had a distinct early Roman character and also contained the latest Roman feature, pit 70. Likewise, linear features and postholes, uncovered mainly in Area 1 and the eastern half of Area 2, tended to be of pre-Roman origin, while pits were largely dug after this period. Ceramic preservation was reasonably uniform across time and feature types. Flint-tempered, glauconite-tempered and grog-tempered wares all share similar mean sherd weights of 8 g, 10 g and 9 g respectively. These were relatively low, suggesting that each fabric was subjected to the same degrees of post-breakage disturbance prior to final burial. Early 2nd century pottery was slightly better-preserved; the coarse sandy grey ware fabric had a mean sherd weight of 12 g. The location of actual pottery use during the pre-Roman and early Roman periods was probably outside the excavation areas. The mean sherd weight calculated for the principal feature types reinforces that point. Pottery from pits, ditches and postholes incorporated sherd weights of 10 g, 9 g, and 8 g respectively. Taking into account that the pottery was subjected to several episodes of disturbance prior to final burial, a high level of residuality should also be expected. However, without the presence of closely dated fabrics that can be tracked in later deposits, at least until the early Roman period, gaining a reliable measure of residuality is onerous.

The Queen Elizabeth Square site fills a gap in ceramic knowledge in a region dominated by villa and cemetery sites. The type of site that the pottery represents remains unclear, and the lack of comparative material impedes better understanding. A low-status rural settlement represents the most appropriate category. The site extended beyond the excavated area, and settlement shift through time is a distinct possibility. Moreover, the amphora and samian evidence hints at wider trade links. It is worth noting that the Quarry Wood *oppidum* was located nearby. This may not only have provided refuge for the inhabitants at Maidstone during the late Iron Age (Kelly 1971, 74), but also a point of distribution for material that was otherwise inaccessible to them, including the possible Dressel 1 amphora.

Catalogue

Vessels are presented in chronological order and illustrate the typological range of the assemblage.

1. Flint-tempered ware. Bowl or jar. Context 84, ditch 83. Trench 2, Phase 2.

2. Flint-tempered ware. Bowl or jar. Context 84, ditch 83. Trench 2, Phase 2.

3. Glauconitic sand-tempered ware. Narrow-mouthed jar. Context 84, ditch 83. Trench 2, Phase 2

4. Glauconitic sand-tempered ware. Bead-rimmed jar. Context 50, pit 49. Trench 2, Phase 2.

5. Glauconitic sand-tempered ware. Barrel-shaped jar. Context 50, pit 49. Trench 2, Phase 2.

6. Glauconitic sand-tempered ware. Plain rimmed jar with combed and finger-impressed decoration. Context 68, pit 49. Trench 2, Phase 2.

7. 'Belgic' fine grog-tempered ware. Plain necked jar, Thompson B1-1. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

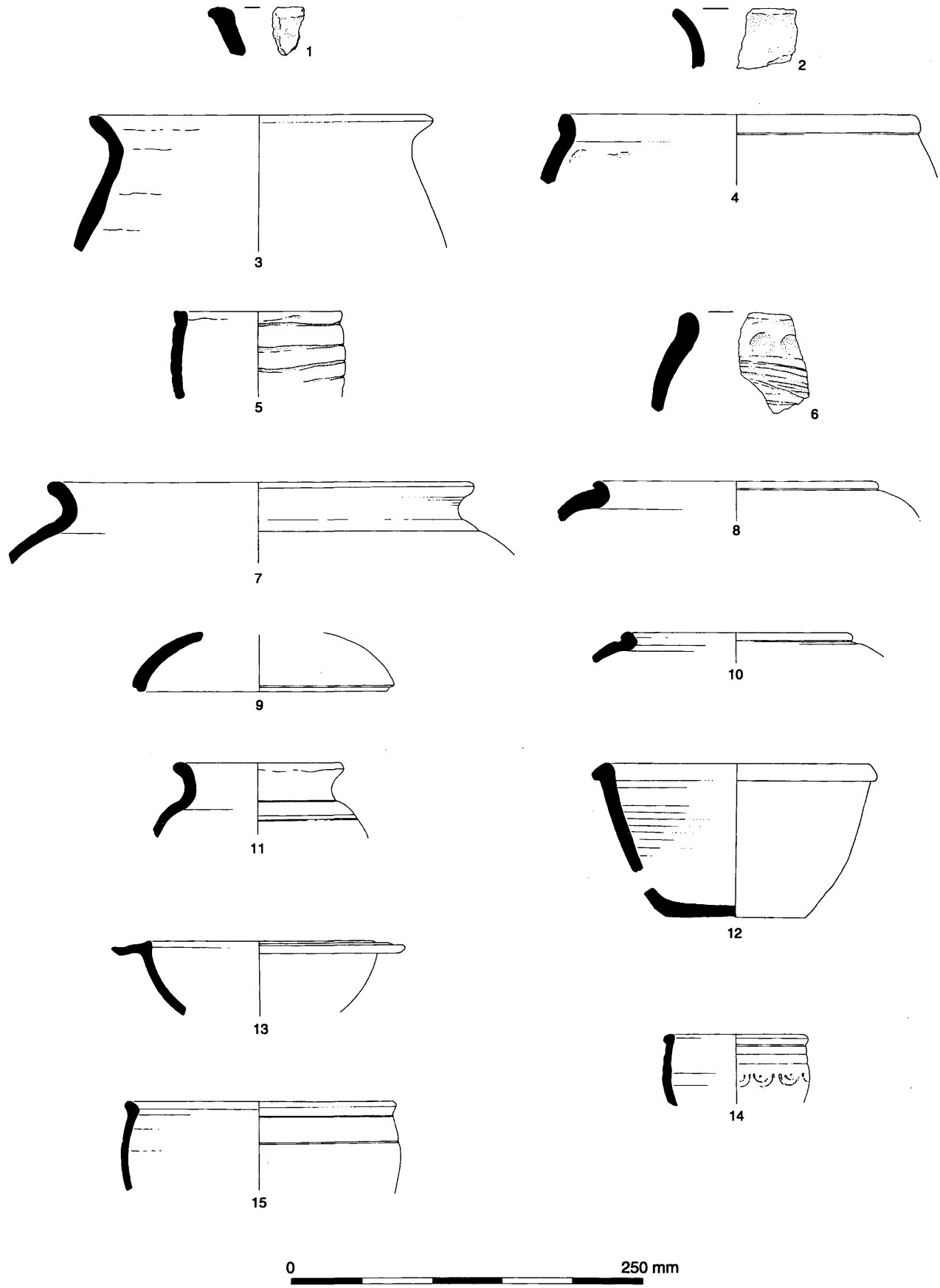

Figure 8: Iron Age and Roman pottery

8. 'Belgic' fine grog-tempered ware. Bead-rimmed jar, Thompson C1-4. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

9. 'Belgic' fine grog-tempered ware. Lid. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

10. 'Belgic' shell-tempered ware. Bead-rimmed jar, Monaghan 3F. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

11. 'Patch Grove' grog-tempered ware. Necked jar. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

12. Coarse sandy grey ware. Black surfaces. Bead-rimmed dish. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

13. Fine reduced 'Upchurch' -type ware. Flanged dish, Monaghan 5B. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

14. Fine oxidised 'Upchurch' -type ware. Carinated bowl, cf. Monaghan 4H2. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

15. Fine oxidised 'Upchurch' -type ware. Neckless, globular beaker, cf. Monaghan 2H. Context 71, pit 70. Trench 2, Phase 3.

Other finds
by Christine Howard-Davis

Few other finds were recovered during the excavation. A single fragment of glass from fill 37 (trackway 36, Phase 4, Fig. 7) is no earlier than the late 18th century. Similarly, small fragments of modern brick were recovered from a number of Phase 4 contexts.

Five of the six fragments of iron recovered also derived from Phase 4 contexts and require no further comment. The sixth fragment (SF 4, fill 102), was a nail. Its presence within one posthole (101) of a suggested four-post structure (Plate 1) might be of significance, though little is known of the use of iron nails in domestic structures during the late Iron Age.

A small amount (225 g, 23 fragments) of metal-working debris was recovered from 11 contexts, all fills of Phase 2 or 3 features. All fragments are small, abraded and not of particular diagnostic significance, except to indicate secondary iron-working on or near the site during Phases 2 and 3 on the basis of hammerscale from 199 and 122. Additionally, 2.3 kg of burnt clay was recovered from a large number of features dating to all phases. The only identifiable form is structural daub (877 g), which displays some possible wattle impressions.

Ecofactual evidence
Charred Plant Remains
(Appendix I, Table 4)
by Ruth Pelling

Introduction

Bulk samples of 4-30 litres were processed from selected Iron Age and Romano-British pits, postholes, a hearth, pit and ditch fills. The samples were processed using bulk flotation employing a modified Siraf-type machine and flots were collected onto a 250 μm mesh. The assessment of the flots identified four samples with a high quantity of remains and these were subjected to detailed analysis. Two further samples contained a moderate amount of seeds and chaff while an additional nine samples contained little or no environmental material.

Of the four samples analysed, three were from Phase 2 (mid-late Iron Age) and one was from Phase 3 (Romano-British). The Iron Age samples derived from two pits or postholes (samples 1 and 3) and one hearth (sample 8). The Romano-British sample was taken from a posthole (sample 14).

Methodology

Each sample was put through a stack of sieves from 2mm to 500 μm to aid sorting. All identifiable seeds, chaff or other plant items present were extracted and submitted for identification. Sample 8 produced a large quantity of chaff

fragments and therefore only 20% of the 500 μm fraction was sorted. Of the >1 mm fraction, 100% of the flot was sorted. Identifications were made based on morphological characteristics and by comparison with modern reference material. Cereal grains were counted on the basis of embryo ends. Pulses were numerous in sample 3. Fragments of less than one half were not extracted or counted. The counts were therefore based on whole or half seeds. Identification was based on the presence of the characteristic short rounded hilum. The plant parts recorded in Table 4 (Appendix I) were seed, nutlet, etc. unless otherwise stated. Nomenclature and taxonomic order of weed seeds follow Clapham *et al.* (1989).

Results

Cereal grain, chaff and weed seeds were present in all four samples. Sample 3 (fill 19, pit 18, Phase 2) contained nearly 2000 pulses, of which 439 were identified as *Pisum sativum* (pea). A further 65 were tentatively identified. The majority of the seeds were well preserved, but lacked the hila necessary for firm identification. Thus these were recorded as *Pisum/Vicia* sp. (pea/bean). Given the complete absence of any positively identified *Vicia* species, it is likely that the remainder of the pulses were also *Pisum sativum*. Many of the pulses were notably wrinkled. This is possibly a product of the variety of pea (a similar appearance is seen in some traditional varieties of garden pea (Mark Robinson, pers. comm.), although it is not possible to dismiss this as a product of preservation.

Cereal remains from samples of both Phase 2 and Phase 3 included *Triticum spelta* (spelt wheat), *Triticum dicoccum* (emmer wheat) and *Hordeum vulgare* (barley). Seeds of *Avena* sp. were also included with the cereal grain, although the only floret base recovered (the only part identifiable to species) was of the wild variety *Avena fatua*. The *Hordeum vulgare* appeared to be a hulled six-row or lax eared variety given the presence of asymmetric grains. Grain outnumbered chaff in samples 1 and 3, while chaff outnumbered grain in sample 14. Sample 8 produced a particularly large quantity of chaff, the majority of which consisted of glume bases. *Triticum spelta* was more numerous than *Triticum dicoccum*, although *Triticum dicoccum* was sufficiently numerous that it should not be regarded as a mere contaminant of the *Triticum spelta*. The hulled wheats appeared to be more numerous than *Hordeum vulgare* and *Avena* sp., although this may be a product of preservation or use rather than a marker of importance in the economy.

Several seeds of *Brassica/Sinapis* (cabbage, turnip, mustard etc.) were present in sample 3. In addition, there were 106 small spherical seeds which lacked the characteristic cellular surface structure by which they could be identified to *Brassica/Sinapis* with any certainty. Many of the seeds had actually sprouted. Preservation was such that there was no attempt to identify the seeds to species. They were recorded as the cultivated/edible species although it is possible that a wild variety was present. Occasional fragments of *Corylus avellana* (hazel) nut shell and *Prunus* sp. (sloe, plum etc.) stone were also noted in the samples and may represent food debris or indicate use as fire wood.

Weed seeds, although generally few in number, were more numerous in sample 8. Large seeded grasses dominated the sample including *Bromus* subsect *Eubromus* (brome grass), *Galium aparine* (goose-grass), *Vicia/Lathyrus* sp. (vetch/vetchling/tare) and *Fallopia convolvulus* (black bindweed). The species present included weeds characteristic of spring-sown crops (peas, barley and/or oats) such as *Fallopia convolvulus*, and weeds of autumn-sown crops such as *Galium aparine*. Also present were various species which are associated with a range of ruderal habitats such as *Stellaria media* (chickweed), *Chenopodium album* (fat hen) and *Rumex* sp. (docks). Seeds of *Sambucus nigra* (elder) in sample 8 may have been derived from fire wood.

Discussion

A mixture of burnt food product (grain and/or pulses) and cereal processing waste (chaff and weeds) was present in the samples in varying proportions. While sample 3 contained a mixture of grains and other edible seeds, peas were by far the most numerous crop present. It is reasonable to assume that the peas represented a processed harvested crop, possibly accidentally burnt in storage, or deliberately so, after spoilage from pest damage or mildew. The grain and *brassica* seeds may have entered the deposit by a number of routes, for example as accidentally burnt food waste or as damaged products deliberately destroyed. Sample 8, conversely, must represent cereal processing waste. Few grains were preserved and the sample was dominated by glume bases and weed seeds. This deposit must largely derive from the processing waste of spelt and emmer wheat, possibly processed together (although it is possible the waste products were mixed after processing). The waste was presumably derived from Hillman's processing stages 11 and 12 (Hillman 1984), at which the chaff and weed seeds are separated from the prime grain using medium and fine sieves. Some larger weeds may have been picked out from the grain by hand. The fact that the feature from which this sample derived was a possible hearth (pit 49, Fig. 6) suggests the deposit represents *in situ* or dumped burnt fuel. The composition of the samples therefore suggests that cereal processing was taking place at the site, although this might only include the later stages.

Several cultivated crops seem to be represented in the samples. Both spelt and emmer wheat were present, as well as hulled six-rowed barley and oats. Recent evidence from excavations along the route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link suggests that the local pattern for Iron Age and Romano-British sites in the area was for either spelt wheat cultivation or spelt and emmer wheat cultivation (Pelling, 2001). Spelt wheat appears very early in the archaeological record, at least in the Thames Estuary area, where a deposit of spelt wheat from Dartford was dated to the middle Bronze Age (Pelling, forthcoming b). No sites have yet been identified which produced emmer wheat only. The corpus of published sites from the area is as yet limited, but evidence for both emmer and spelt were recovered from a pit at Wilmington (Hillman 1982) and from Hascombe in Surrey (Murphy 1977). The mixture of spelt and emmer processing waste raises the possibility that the two species were cultivated and processed together as a mixed crop, although this cannot be conclusively demonstrated.

In other well-studied areas of southern Britain, such as the Thames Valley and the Hampshire basin, emmer wheat was probably only present as a weed of spelt during the Iron Age, although it was recorded at some sites during the Roman period as a crop in its own right, for example from Mansfield College, Oxford (Pelling, 2000). In the north-east of England, emmer wheat was cultivated at some sites through the Iron Age. This was evidenced where the choice of wheat seemed to be based on the agricultural regime of the site, either in the context of an extensive or an intensive form of agriculture (van der Veen and O'Connor 1998). Until more detailed analysis is conducted on a range of sites within Kent, it will be impossible to determine the strategies behind the choice of wheat. It is likely that the choice may be complex, based on a range of conditions such as availability, relative performance and yield, farming strategy and personal choice.

While there was no evidence for cultivated oats in the deposits and the only identifiable floret base was of wild oats, it is still possible that the oats do represent a crop. While oats have been recorded from the Neolithic onward, they tend to appear in small numbers until the Iron Age. From the Iron Age much larger deposits have been recovered, for example from within the Hampshire chalklands (Campbell 2000), which include the cultivated species suggesting oats to be a crop in their own right. Wild oats may appear as weeds within a crop of cultivated oats and would be a tolerated impurity, particularly if the oats were destined for animal rather than human consumption.

The *brassicas* include cabbage, turnip, swede and mustard, the seeds of any of which can be used for oil, or as a condiment. The group also includes weeds, but the relatively large number of seeds in one deposit and the absence of seeds in the other samples suggest they represent a deliberately harvested deposit rather than weeds. Large deposits of charred or mineralised *brassica* seeds have been recovered from several Iron Age sites including Balksbury Camp (de Moulins, 1996) and Old Down Farm (Murphy 1977) in Hampshire, Devizes in Wiltshire (Pelling 2002), and Biddenham Loops, Bedfordshire (Pelling, forthcoming a). This evidence suggests that *brassicas* were being cultivated at this time. If cultivated as a leafy vegetable it would be expected that the crop would be harvested before it set seed.

The large deposit of seeds from this and other Iron Age sites therefore suggest that a seed crop is represented. The final and most significant cultivated crop plant represented was *Pisum sativum* (pea), an important find for this period. While the wrinkled surface is a feature of some varieties of sweet garden peas, *Pisum sativum* var. *sativum*,. it is difficult to distinguish between garden pea and field pea (*P. sativum* var. *arvense*) which tends to be cultivated for livestock fodder. Furthermore while a particular crop might be grown for fodder in a modern day context, this does not imply that it was not grown as a food crop in an archaeological context or vice versa. A single specimen from an Iron Age pit at Whitfield-Eastry bypass near Whitfield, Kent (Campbell, forthcoming), was recently identified as *Pisum sativum* var. *sativum*, the garden pea, by Ann Butler (Institute of Archaeology, UCL) using electron microscopy. Therefore, the presence of a garden pea variety during the Iron Age in Kent is plausible. Peas, like all pulses, tend to be under-represented in archaeological deposits as their preparation does not require exposure to fire prior to cooking and they do not survive waterlogging well. They occur in small numbers from the Bronze Age onward (Legge 1981) and are often interpreted as contaminants of the cereal crop, sometimes as evidence for their cultivation as a fodder crop and to maintain soil fertility in a crop rotation system (Jones 1996). The large deposit recovered at Queen Elizabeth Square suggests a harvested crop, burnt either by accident during storage, or deliberately due to pests or spoiling. If garden peas are represented this suggests that a wide range of cultivated food plants was being utilised. The production of peas as a field crop could indicate the practice of an intensive form of agriculture.

Discussion and synthesis

The excavations at Queen Elizabeth Square revealed a relatively continuous settlement of the area from the early Iron Age to the mid 2nd century AD. Whilst residual, flintwork from the site hinted at earlier Neolithic activity, no contemporaneous archaeological features were recognised at the site.

The dating evidence for Phase 2 points to an origin for agricultural activity at the site during the early Iron Age. It remains difficult to characterise this early phase of activity due to a relative lack of archaeological evidence. Many of the features allocated to Phase 2 produced a range of mid-late Iron Age pottery, providing a date for the most intense period of activity which was most likely agricultural in nature.

Although physical evidence for Roman activity during Phase 3 was sparse, a certain continuity of use was implied by the continued zoning of pits to the west of the excavated area, and the possibility that the substantial ditch that bounded this activity during the late Iron Age was renewed or replaced during the Roman period. The dating evidence implies that activity came to an end by the mid 2nd century; only a single fragment of later Roman pottery hints at continued occupation in the vicinity.

In general, the evidence points to a relatively low-status rural site, possibly of the family unit type suggested by Philp (1984, 29) as widespread in Kent during the late Iron Age. Little is known about the appearance of the settlement which consisted of one or possibly two four-post structures (Plate 1)

in relatively close proximity to a large hearth, pits and elements of a ditch system. The dimensions of ditches 74 (Fig. 6) and 33 (Fig. 7) were comparable to those of the enclosure ditches at Farningham Hill described by Philp (1984, 9 and figure opposite), but whether they represented a formal enclosure or were simply field boundaries could not be determined from the short lengths examined.

The presence of fragments of (possibly) Dressel 1 and Dressel 20 amphorae in Phase 2 was of interest. The presence of these types implies that the pre-conquest Roman influence clearly seen in the range of imported prestige goods at many of the high status sites of late Iron Age Kent may have percolated down through the contemporary social structure. There was no indication of the agency by which the Dressel fragments arrived at the site. It is possible that their presence was accidental, perhaps as waste dumped from elsewhere. Hammerscale from several of the Phase 2 pits indicated secondary ironworking on the site from an early stage. Its association with a large and apparently well-constructed hearth presumably indicates blacksmithing, but there was nothing to suggest that this was for more than the routine maintenance of tools required on any farm.

The Roman origins of Maidstone are unclear. It seems unlikely on the evidence available that there was any significant settlement in the area during the 1st century AD. The major pre-conquest urban *foci* lay to the north and the south-east in the *oppida* at Rochester and Canterbury, having moved away from enclosed *oppida* such as that postulated at Quarry Wood Camp, Loose (c 1.5 km south-west of the present site), and perhaps having been replaced by Rochester itself (Drewett *et al.* 1988, 162). A number of authorities have, however, assumed that the density of rural settlement was maintained throughout pre-conquest and early post-conquest Kent, although these sites are poorly represented in the archaeological record (Drewett *et al.* 1988, 205, Houliston 1999, 158).

There is little evidence from Queen Elizabeth Square to suggest that the nature of settlement changed with the increase of Roman influence. The evidence, although sparse, implies a continuation of agricultural activity. Indeed it is possible that the four-post structures (Plate 1) continued in use into this period, given that the only dating evidence from any of the component postholes was a single sherd of late prehistoric pottery. Two late Iron Age four-post structures are also known in the Maidstone area at Thurnham (OAU 2000, 455), while an example of early Roman date was excavated at Westhawk Farm, Ashford in 1999 (Booth *et al.*, forthcoming).

Elsewhere in Maidstone, excavation on the site of The Mount Roman villa has provided evidence of Flavian-Trajanic and earlier activity before the villa was established c AD 130 (Houliston 1999, 74). The rise of this large and presumably influential villa estate coincided with the decline and apparent demise of activity at Queen Elizabeth Square, perhaps hinting at a change in the land-management regime of the area, though the two sites are too far apart to have been directly linked. Indeed Houliston (1999, 158) notes the presence of at least eight villas within a 5 km radius of The Mount, implying intensive and highly structured agricultural activity. The suggestion that few of the villa and farmstead sites of west Kent appear to have had their origins in the pre-Roman period (Houliston 1999, 160) might reinforce the notion of a significant shift in ownership and influence in the early years of the Roman occupation. However, recent work at Thurnham (OAU 2000) demonstrated the presence of a late Iron Age predecessor. This contradicts Houliston's suggestion, as does evidence from Keston (Philp *et al.* 1991; 1999) and Eccles (Detsicas 1983, 120) and it may be no coincidence that the more extensively excavated villa sites in the area have generally produced evidence of earlier origins. Such a view does not necessarily conflict with the suggestion of Drewett *et al.* (1988, 216), following Black (1987, 9), that many of the villa estates of

west Kent were created by the amalgamation of several smaller extant farms, a process that might well be reflected by the situation in Maidstone and which could explain the apparent decline at Queen Elizabeth Square.

On present evidence, the nearest of the Maidstone area villas to Queen Elizabeth Square were those at Barton Road, Maidstone, poorly understood but clearly very substantial (Roach Smith 1876; Wheeler 1932, 99-100), roughly 2.5 km north-north-west of Queen Elizabeth Square, and a bath house at The Slade, Boughton Monchelsea, less than 1.5 km south-south-east (Wheeler 1932, 105-6). It is likely that the latter was a component of a more extensive site of villa type, rather than an isolated building, but direct evidence of this is lacking. Further Roman building remains of uncertain character are located c 330 m north-east of the Boughton Monchelsea bath house some 1.2 km south-east of Queen Elizabeth Square (Kent SMR KE2139). Another Roman building lies c 2.3 km due west of Queen Elizabeth Square near Pimp's Court (Wheeler 1932, 113). Of more immediate importance, however, are the 'Roman foundations' discovered in the general area of Queen Elizabeth Square in 1840. The character of these remains unclear, but an indication of their status may be provided by the nearby presence of the so-called Joy Wood, Lockham walled cemetery, adjacent to Pested Bars Road, Boughton Monchelsea, located beside the Roman road only 500 m south of the present site (Jessup 1959, 14-15, 26-7 for convenient summary). Since the association of sites of this type is most commonly with villas (Jessup 1959, 19), and the structures and finds in the present case are clearly of high quality, it seems reasonable to suggest that the walled cemetery might have been associated with the nearby 'foundations' which would then have formed part of a (perhaps substantial) villa. The date of the majority of material from the cemetery, in a range from the late 1st-early 2nd centuries (Jessup 1959, 27), is approximately coincident with that of the Roman activity at Queen Elizabeth Square, but it is clear that the cemetery remained in use at least into the second half of the 2nd century, as indicated by the occurrence of 'Castor ware, ornamented with hunting scenes' (Wheeler 1932, 159), if not later. It may be that the Queen Elizabeth Square site was for a time a contemporary subsidiary of the postulated villa rather than being immediately abandoned as a result of the villa's development, but this is speculative, as is the (reasonable) assumption that the occupation span of the villa itself was rather longer than indicated by the date range of the walled cemetery.

Although as early as 1975, Webster (1975, fig. 8) postulated the existence of a small town at Maidstone, there has been little discovered that directly confirms his hypothesis. The current state of knowledge summarised by Houliston (1999, 158) 'all that can be said is that there is an intensification of activity along the routes of the Medway and the main Rochester road in the Maidstone area' still remains the case. Nevertheless the location at an important road junction some 13 km from the nearest known major settlement, at Rochester, would make Maidstone a plausible location for at least a modest nucleated settlement.

There is no meaningful evidence for activity at Queen Elizabeth Square after the mid 2nd century. A single sherd suggests a continuing presence in the vicinity, perhaps as late as the 4th century, but even this need not have arrived at the site during the Roman period. For whatever reason, the site appears to have been effectively abandoned after the mid 2nd century, except perhaps for some kind of agricultural use, and to have remained largely undisturbed into the nineteenth century, when there is more direct evidence of renewed agricultural activity.