

THE ROMAN TOWN SITE AT CAISTOR ST. EDMUND

January 1972

General

The two fields forming the enclosed Roman town site were ploughed at the end of November 1971 to destroy the stubble and grasses left after the crop of barley was harvested. I am informed that a chisel plough was used and that in parts of the field a depth of more than 12 inches was set.

The small field was then sown again with barley but the large field was left fallow, immediately following the ploughing the field was saturated by very heavy rainstorms and is still almost completely clear of weeds. In consequence the ground surface has weathered considerably to show the road system, tiles, pottery and coins all much more easily than usual.

The site has been divided into sectors formed by the road system - see following diagram.

Please refer to diagram previously circulated

Survey of Individual Sectors

Sector 1

No great signs of damage. Some pottery.

Sector 2

This sector has been one of the most affected by ploughing since the deep ploughing of autumn 1961. At that period and in the following year much damage was done to the floor levels in this area with resultant finds of large numbers of tesserae (mostly white but some black) and later of coins. These are now much less frequently found in the sector which is now extensively littered with masses of tile and mortar - apparently part of the foundations underlying the floor levels already destroyed.

Sector 3a

The more northerly portion of this sector is in the same condition as Sector 2 (for the same reasons) but the more southerly part is not too badly affected. Few finds until very recently when some pottery found in southern portion, together with a few red brick tesserae (as in Sector 3b). Also this year 3 complete large flat tiles were found turned up close together and appear to be part, possibly, of a hypocaust as they had mortar only on the large flat faces and not on the sides.

Sector 3b

This small sector has, for the first time to my knowledge, yielded a few sherds of pottery. There is also more tile together with a few red tesserae made from tile. These have been found here previously.

Sectors 4, 5 and 6

No undue signs of disturbance in 4, plentiful pottery and tiles near road separating sector 5 and 6. (Large flints also in Sector 6 with tiles).

Sector 7

This sector appears to have suffered badly in the more westerly part of the area (adjoining Sectors 2 and 8a) where a large mass of tile, mortar and general occupation debris yielded large quantities of pottery and some bronze. At the other end of the Sector, adjoining Sector 12, many small pieces of bronze were found scattered over the surface together with coins (mostly early 4 Century AD). Further down the field, toward Sector 2, the coins were mostly barbarous radiates.

Sector 8a

Similar considerations re general condition as for Sector 7. A few items of bronze were found as was one minim. Also in this Sector was a portion of white mosaic flooring of poor quality, apparently on the site of a building noticed on the aerial photographs.

Sectors 8(b), 13(b) and 17(b)

No finds and no evidence of occupation - light sandy soil with many large pebbles.

Sectors 9, 10, 15 and 17(a)

No apparent deterioration - few finds of note.

Sector 11

Pottery is quite common as are coins. 8 of these coins belong to the 4 Century and 4, including one each of Valentinian II and Theodosius I were found close together as if from a small hoard. Also many piece of sandstone.

Sector 12

This area is believed to be the forum site. For some years the Sector has been deteriorating but this year the process has accelerated and the middle portion of the area is now strewn with masses of tile, flint and mortar, with a few pieces of pottery. There are many roofing tiles around the outside of this badly disrupted area, and the coins and pottery are also mostly outside this area although a bronze spoon was found in the middle of the badly affected portion.

Sector 13(a)

Some deterioration with more debris.

Sector 14

Part of this Sector (adjoining road running diagonally towards N.E corner of town) are badly disturbed and contain large quantities of tile and mortar, and some pottery.

Sector 16

This Sector suffers badly in patches, particularly near the main East/West road, but does not appear to have deteriorated unduly over the last year. Coins are still found here quite regularly - particularly those of Valens (364 - 378 AD).

General Conclusions

The general condition of the site gives cause for concern - particularly in Sectors 2, 3(a), 7, 8(a), 12 and 16, while there is increasing damage to both the banks and the walls. The former by ploughing and by rabbits, and the latter by human agency. The only way to safeguard the site would appear to be to prevent ploughing which has caused the great deterioration in the site, and subsequent finds of large quantities of pottery and man coins (formerly sealed under floors and bearing clear indications of this - e.g coins in good condition with pieces of mortar ? adhering thereto.

Transcribed by Ian Jackson 13/10/2016