Roman religious sanctuaries in rural southern Britain: a context and explanation for the structures recently revealed at East Farleigh

Stephen Clifton

Abstract

This paper aims to show that the late Iron Age and Roman site at East Farleigh is not the villa that it was thought to be by its 19th century discoverers, but instead is part of a rich tradition of rural religious sanctuaries that can be seen in the south-east of Britain. I will be looking at the similarities and differences between a number of religious sites in Kent and beyond, as well as identifying what I believe to be misattributed sites. By looking at the circumstances of these sites and comparing what initially appear to be very different, localised complexes, it is possible to discern some patterns that can help to shed some light on life in rural southern England during the Roman period.

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Introduction

This paper seeks to take the, as yet, largely unpublished material from a Romano-British site in Kent which has been the subject of on-going recent research excavations, and compare it to other sites in the county and beyond. It is my belief that the site is a religious sanctuary site, with origins in the late Iron Age, and ending in the early 5th century. However, the style of the buildings are not obviously 'sacred'. There are no epigraphic clues to firmly identify the nature of the site. Instead, much of the evidence is hard won and incrementally forms a picture that does not conform to the preconceived notions of a 'villa' in the Roman countryside. When the idea that this was a sacred site was first mooted at an open day at the site in 2010, many of the visitors were sceptical. A typical response was, "this is a Roman building in the countryside, it must be a villa," so strong was their conditioning. Since then a systematic analysis of the assemblage, combined with research into how this and other sites worked, has resulted in a much better understanding, and has led to a reappraisal of a number of other sites which had been formerly 'understood'. It is clear that our knowledge of Romano-British sites in southern Britain, and the transition from a pre-Roman Iron Age, still has a long way to go. This paper is intended to shed some light on this particular site in Kent as well as drawing parallels with other sacred and secular sites in Roman Britain.

The site at East Farleigh, was discovered in the 19th century, and believed at the time to be a villa. It has caused a great deal of head scratching for the Maidstone Area Archaeological Group, (MAAG), a local volunteer group, that started to explore the site in the spring of 2005. East Farleigh is a sprawling village to the west of Maidstone in Kent, centred around a medieval crossing of the River Medway and associated roads running off in all directions. When the group started to excavate, under the directorship of Albert Daniels, latterly assisted by myself, there was very little expectation of finding anything other than a previously disturbed site. But despite the relative lack of preservation in some places, it soon became clear that the site had not already been examined archaeologically, and that it was largely untouched.

In the 1830's a Roman building was discovered by workmen on agricultural land in East Farleigh whilst putting in new trackways and agricultural buildings. A measured plan of this building was published by J. Smith in 1839. This plan was titled 'Foundations of a Roman Villa at East Farleigh', and is the first reference to Roman buildings on the site. It also refers to previous removals

of 'foundations', (Smith, 1839, 57). MAAG were invited to the site by the owners to see whether there was any more to the building and to improve on the rather basic plan, (fig.3). The building was explored with selective trenching over two seasons that identified the layout of the structure and some tentative dating. However, it did not match the building on the 1839 plan, which raised the obvious question as to where was the building that had been found previously? During the group's time on the site this structure was never identified. An educated guess would be that it was largely removed to make way for hop pickers accommodation which is believed to have been built around the 1830s, in the south-east corner of the site. MAAG went on to investigate the site for a further ten years, uncovering at least six buildings in total as well as identifying Iron Age activity in the form of two large ditches. The group are continuing to excavate on land to the south of the buildings, where evidence for further activity before and after the Roman period is emerging, (Clifton, forthcoming).

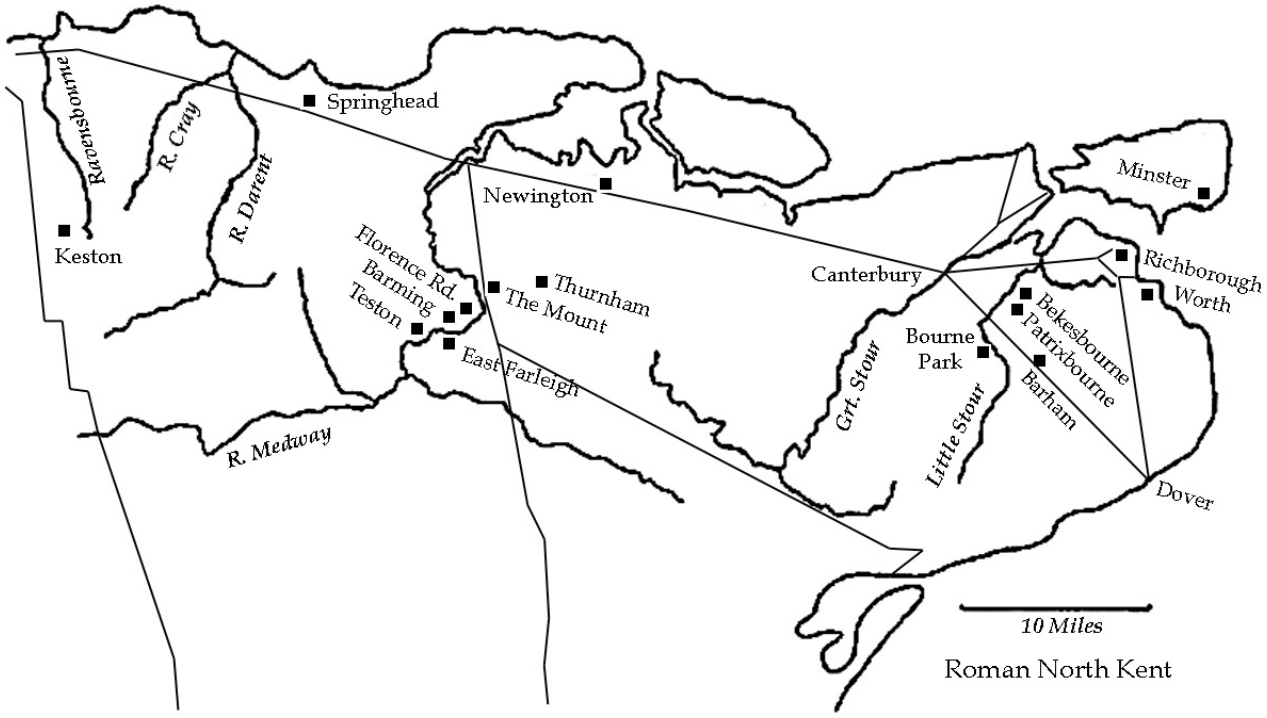


Fig. 1 Roman North Kent, (Redrawn after Andrews, 2001, 27).

To appreciate the site at East Farleigh it is important to get a broader understanding of the local Roman geographic context. Along this part of the river Medway there are a number of known villas,

at Teston, Barming, and at least two in Maidstone. Most are on the north bank of the river Medway looking south. There are other Roman period buildings in Maidstone, such as the Mount Roman villa, which it has been suggested is in fact a *Mansio*, and another potential villa to the east near Loose Road, which was partially explored in the 19th century, but since 'lost' beneath early 20th century housing. There are Roman period burials along the route of the modern roads, which indicate the existence of a similar road network in the Roman period, and suggests that there may have been a river crossing at East Farleigh where the buildings excavated by MAAG look across the valley at the known villa at Barming, (Payne, 1880, 169). It is easy to imagine a crossing point here, possibly predating the Roman era, hinted at by the late Iron Age finds and features found on both sides of the river. Unfortunately none of these villas have been fully excavated, with the exception of the Mount, which in fact sits to the east of a bend in the river Medway, and is probably associated with the Roman road from Rochester to the south coast, (Margary, 1946, 33).

There are however a number of sites, often attributed as 'villas', that do not make sense as villas and in fact have a number of characteristics which mark them out as something different. Their identification is often difficult because of the lack of surviving superstructure above the Roman ground level. Some of these characteristics can be identified at East Farleigh, and parallels can be found at other sites. There are no exact replications though, what we see is a number of similarities, indicating a broad emulation rather than a direct copy. Meonstoke is a prime example, long thought to be the site of a villa but it has a number of elements that are similar to East Farleigh, and a number of other sites with which I will draw comparison. Meonstoke contains at least four buildings, the first one that was excavated was a long aisled building with corridors on either side. But subsequent survey work and excavation has revealed a number of small temples or shrines and a possible bath house. The site sits to the south west of the river Meon, and the orientation of the buildings is northeast, (King, 2018, 3). This arrangement, although not remarkable in itself can be seen as a recurring theme. Sometimes we see another set of Roman buildings to the north of the river, facing south, almost certainly an associated villa complex. This arrangement suggests a river crossing and connecting roads. Almost a toll arrangement. This is very similar to the site at East Farleigh. Are we seeing the entrepreneurial villa owner controlling the crossing and encouraging travellers to stop at the sanctuary and give thanks for a safe journey, all for a small fee or a votive deposit? Or is it sited on a boundary, a 'liminal' position, from one world to another?

Miranda Aldhouse-Green used her closing remarks at the 2019 Roman Society conference at the British Museum on Roman Temples to read out in full the words of Pliny the Younger to his architect Mustius:

> By the advice of the Haruspices, the temple of Ceres, which stands on my property, will have to be repaired, embellished, and enlarged. It is, to be sure, old and small, though, for all that, it is very crowded on a particular day. FOR, on the Ides of September, a large assemblage is gathered there from the whole district, much business is transacted, many vows are undertaken, and many are paid, yet there is no refuge near at hand against either the rain or the sun. It seems to me, therefore, that I shall be acting in accordance with the dictates of generosity as well as of religion by constructing the temple in the handsomest style, and adding to it a colonnade — the former for the use of the goddess, the latter for the use of men. Consequently I should be obliged by your buying four columns of marble, of whatever sort you think fit; also by your buying marble for the adornment of the floor and the walls. Moreover, there will have to be either made or bought a statue of the goddess herself, because the old one which is there, and which is of wood, is in some of its parts mutilated through age. As to the colonnade, nothing occurs to me in the interval which seems to be required from your neighbourhood, unless indeed you would draw up a plan in accordance with the locality. It cannot be built round the temple, for the ground on which the temple stands is closed in on one side by a river with extremely steep banks, and on the other by a road. Beyond the road there is an extensive meadow, in which the colonnade might find space conveniently enough, opposite to the temple itself; unless you shall discover anything better, who are accustomed to overcome difficulties of locality by your art.
>
> *(Pliny, Letters, 39)*

This brief letter gives unique insights into the circumstances surrounding a temple on private land owned by Pliny. It does not tell us what form this temple took, but it does tell us that there was an architect involved; that large numbers of people attended, whom he did not necessarily know; that business was conducted as well as religious ceremonies at regular sacred festivals; and that he did not have to consult religious authorities over the style of the facility, although *Haruspices* instigated the renovation initially. We are also told that it is a temple dedicated to the goddess *Ceres* whose wooden statue needs replacing and that the temple stands next to a river and by a road. It would be useful if Pliny's temple could be found, but he tells us enough for us to recognise the pattern. It is also clear that he has a responsibility towards the upkeep and maintenance of the temple. Black goes further, suggesting that Pliny himself is the officiator at the temple, and that priests were not always a requirement, (Black, 2008, 19). If this is the case then it would imply that the temple was not in constant use but only on particular occasions. Of course, we do not know how representative

Pliny's account is, and his circumstances in first century Northern Italy were very different to those in faraway Britannia. But the archaeological record is demonstrating that in Britain at least, there was a wide variety of styles and arrangements for temple sites. We see singular temples, such as Worth in Kent, as well as complexes such as Lydney, Uley and Nettleton Scrubb which appear to have been rural centres intended for multiple deities, often with more than one temple or shrine, and sited on important transport routes. Their location close to nearby villas suggests a relationship, but the exact nature of this is hard to prove, but Pliney's testimony may be relevant here, suggesting that villa owners were responsible for the temples, at least in the rural areas where they owned the land. The fact that so many of the sacred sites overlay earlier Iron Age sites must indicate a deliberate act, and may suggest ancestral ownership or tribal significance.

There are a wide array of sites that are described as a 'sanctuary'. The style and arrangement of the buildings, seem to vary immensely and are undoubtedly subject to local preferences and whims, whilst perhaps being the result of the process of choice from a menu of styles, features and deities. At one end of the spectrum are the large multi-structure complexes such as Springhead in Kent, and Altbachtal at Trier in Germany, and at the other, there are smaller temple sites such as Lamyatt Beacon and Pagans Hill in Somerset. These tend to be classed as a sanctuary if they are remote from other aspects of life, as opposed to being in a town or on a villa estate. A sanctuary implies a place of safety where contemplation can take place, and so it might be expected to see more buildings than just temples – dormitory blocks, bath-houses and other buildings. At Lydney, in Gloucestershire, believed to be the site of the healing deity, Nodens, as well as the temple, there is a guest house, a bath suite and an *Abaton* or contemplation chambers, (Wheeler and Wheeler, 1932). However, there has perhaps been a tendency to over categorise, suggesting a site is either a villa or a religious sanctuary, (Bowes, 2006, 73), and this may be a reflection of modern prejudices rather than a realisation of the true nature of the Roman landscape. It is hard for us now to appreciate the extent to which religion permeated every facet of life in the Roman world. Almost every action in daily life would have been accompanied by ritual or a consultation with an appropriate deity. Roads and river crossings would have been prime spots for a consultation to ensure that the omens were good, (Derks, 1998, 144), and consequently many temples are found close to roads and on the banks of rivers. The buildings at East Farleigh being one example but sites such as Nettleton Scrubb in Wiltshire and Springhead in Kent are similarly sited. Many villas had shrines and *Lararium* such as

at the Loose Road villa in Maidstone, (Smith, 1876), which had an unusual corridor and apse, suggesting a shrine, (Black, 2008, 11).

Many writers refer to 'cults' as being instrumental in the nature of these sacred sites, (Derks, 1998, 187), however this word has come to mean something rather different in the modern world, and suggests alternative belief systems to the orthodox religions endorsed by the state. In the Roman world this distinction is not really valid. Although there were the pantheon of Roman deities, it seems that any new religion could be introduced and expect to gain adherents. Hence the 'cult' of Mithras, or the Egyptian 'cult' of Isis. In the western provinces the indigenous local deities seem to have continued to be venerated, perhaps, it could be argued, in a 'Romanised' guise and often conflated, or 'syncretised' with one of the Roman gods, (Ibid, 101). It is still an area that requires more evidence, whether rural sanctuaries were administered by 'cults' or by the local elite land-owners, merely providing religious facilities to venerate the local gods in the latest style.

In many ways, the rise of the rural temple can be seen as part of the villa phenomenon and goes hand-in-hand with the growing prosperity of the province, (Smith et al 2018, 135). This is reflected in the spread of both Romano-Celtic temples and villas which predominate in the more affluent region south-east of an approximate line from the Wash to the Severn estuary, (Ibid, 133). Villa estate boundaries were indicated by property markers which had to be consecrated with a sacrifice, and villas without temple facilities were seen as 'unprotected' and were expected to wither and not prosper, (Bowes, 2006, 74). There are many examples of temples associated with villas, referred to as 'Villenheiligtümer', (estate shrines), such as Otrang and Newel in Gallia Belgica and Darenth and Bancroft in Britain, but some sites of religious activity are close to a villa site, but clearly separate, as at East Farleigh. These sites seem to be something slightly different. They are well-located, yet possibly part of an estate, suggesting that they may be entrepreneurial endeavours, placed to entice travellers and pilgrims alike to the facility in order to profit from the sale in votive items and hospitality, (Woodward 1992, 47; Aldhouse-Green, 2018, 88). Many were located on pre-Roman sacred sites, and it is sometimes possible to discern the syncretised deity, as at Nettleton Scrubb, where Apollo Cunomaglus is believed to be the principal deity, suggested by Aldhouse-Green as a hunting god, from 'Cunomaglus' meaning 'Hound-Lord', (Aldhouse Green, 2018, 89). Although Smith points out there are several other deities inferred by the finds at Nettleton Scrubb, such as Diana, Rosmerta, Mercury and Silvanus, indeed he suggests a menu of gods were available for consultation

and worship, (Smith, 2000a, 2010). Some sites are clearly designed to host seasonal religious festivals and act as a meeting place, (Henig, 1984, 157), and mark a difference with the smaller, more intimate shrines associated with pre-Roman worship, (Woodward, 1992, 47).

At many sacred sites there are numerous buildings that do not appear to be temples or shrines, and which are difficult to identify, such as at Uley in Gloucestershire and Nettleton Scrubb in Wiltshire, (Woodward, 1992, 49; Smith, 2000a, 38). As King points out, "it is clear that the architecture of ancillary buildings at temple sites can often resemble villa buildings, and can be confused with them." (King, 2018, 9). This is a problem, and the story of Meonstoke in Hampshire is having to be rewritten in light of recent discoveries, despite a British Museum label for the reconstructed end wall. Many of the deliberations in King's paper on the site echo the thinking that took place at East Farleigh, (Ibid, 5). It is often the finds assemblages that can confirm the religious nature of the site. At Uley, for instance, the huge wealth of religious material left little doubt as to the nature of the site, (Woodward, 1992, 72). However, at some sites the assemblage is more marginal, such as Brean Down in Somerset, where very little was recovered other than coins, (Ibid, 72). This is because there is often so little left of the structures, usually only the remains of the ground plan survive. At East Farleigh we are fortunate to have walls surviving to waist height in places, and this has allowed us to gain much more information and insight.

Fig. 2 Aerial photograph showing the River Medway and the Maidstone area.

East Farleigh

The site at East Farleigh was first discovered in the 19th century by workmen making alterations to the trackways for agricultural purposes, when some of the fields and orchards in this part of Kent were re-purposed for growing hops. There are several references to 'foundations' being removed from about 1800 onwards and culminating in a roundup of activities by Smith in his 1839 article with a sketch plan of the building, (Fig.3), (Smith, 1839, 57), at the time thought to be a villa. In 2005, the Maidstone Area Archaeological Group, (MAAG), were invited by new landowners to investigate the site believed to be represented by the partial plan and see what more could be learned. A resistivity survey was carried out, followed by targeted test pits, and the outline of the building was established. However, the resultant plan did not match that produced in the 19th century by Smith. This suggested that there were more buildings than was originally thought. The group then set about looking for other associated structures, and by 2017 had uncovered at least six buildings and two separate ditch systems.

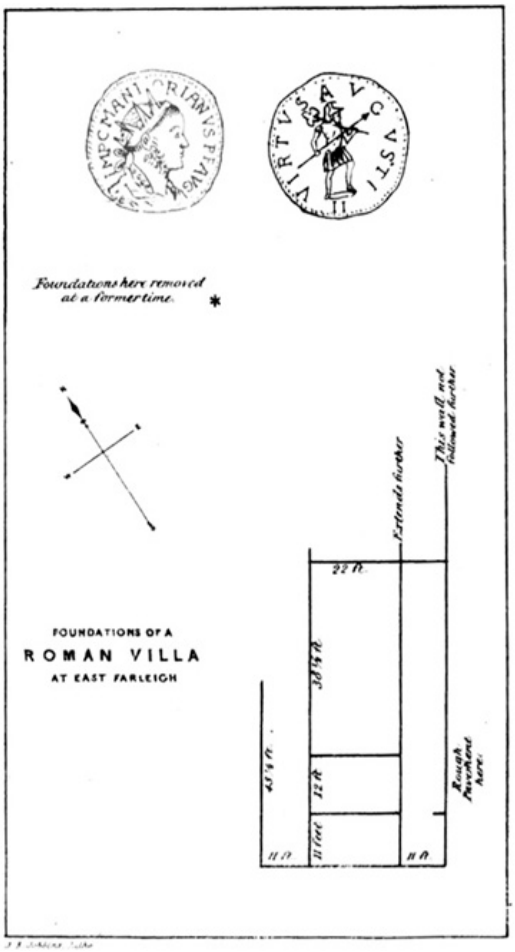


Fig. 3 Original plan of East Farleigh building, (Smith, 1839, 57)

Iron Age Origins

The earliest activity on the site appears to be late Iron Age. Residual pottery in small quantities was found all over the site, dating from 60BC to AD50, (Lyne, 2019). As well as two Iron Age coins dated 10BC and AD1, both of which were found in Roman contexts, (Holman, 2018). There are two ditches, (A and B), that underlie several of the Roman buildings, (fig. 4). These were traced over a 70m length, running roughly east-west in parallel, approximately 5.5m apart and then turning to the north where it was possible to glimpse at least one of the ditches beneath building six and other features. Pottery from the ditches has suggested that they remained open for some time, possibly as long as 150 years in the case of ditch B. Several coins have been found in contexts possibly related to the cessation of the ditches dated to the late first or early second century AD, and consistent with four cremation burials found approximately 150m to the south in 2019, (Clifton, forthcoming). It has been suggested by Smith that Roman builders sought out these ditch systems for superstitious reasons rather than out of ignorance of their potential structural weakness, (Smith, 1997, 249). We see this time and again, at sites such as Thurnham and Westhawk Farm, both in Kent.

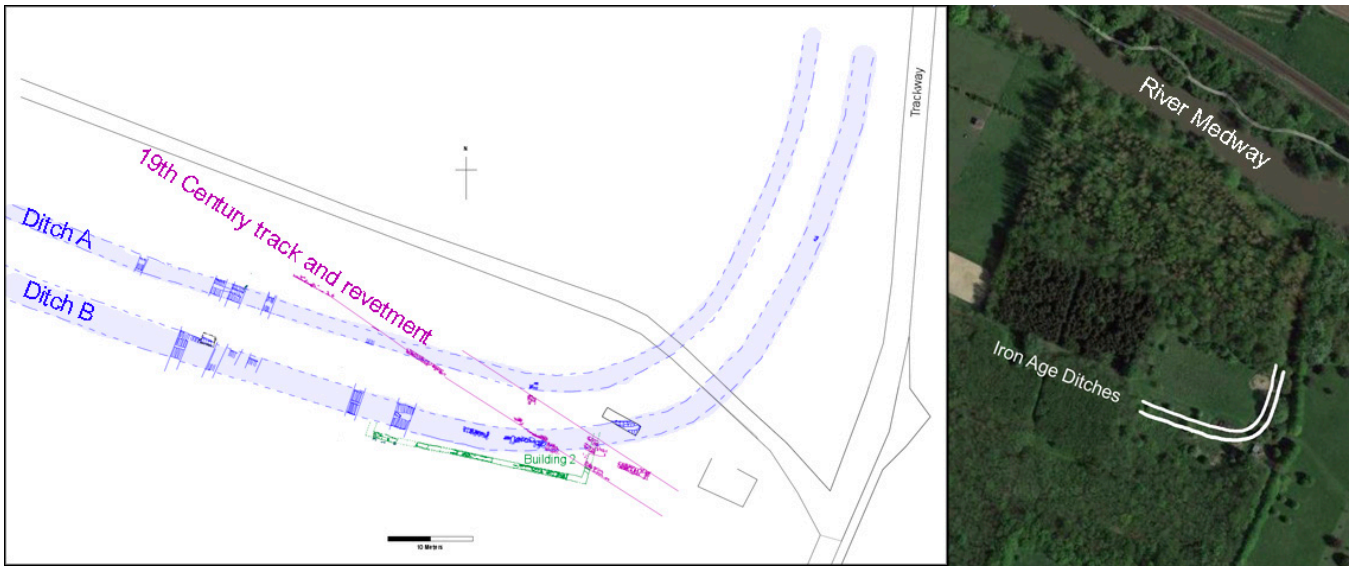


Fig. 4 Iron Age ditches at East Farleigh, (Clifton, 2020).

Unfortunately, it was not possible to explore the full extent of this ditch system, and so we do not really know its purpose or significance. Given the dating of the ditches and their position in the valley floor close to the River Medway, it is possible that we are looking at an *oppidum*, similar to

Quarry Wood at Loose, which Detsicas suggests was part of a network controlling the river crossings, (Detsicas, 1983, 2). Quarry Wood also has numerous later Roman structures associated with it. However, there are topographical limitations at East Farleigh. The site is situated on a plateau adjacent to the River Medway with a steep slope in between, limiting its potential extent at this location. However, as has been shown at other similar sites, such as Verulamium, *Oppida* can vary greatly in size, and there is much debate about the way that they functioned, with clear evidence for zoning and a wide variety of different activities, (Niblett, 2001, 47). Detsicas's view seems to be based on a militaristic interpretation of these phenomenon, yet there is little actual evidence for this, and some *oppida* stretch for several miles, making their potential defence very difficult.

The fill of the ditches indicated a seamless transition into the Roman period and implied that the site, and the ditches, were still in use beyond AD43, however we did not encounter any structural evidence that could be dated to this period in support.

One significant find in ditch B was an almost intact jar in black Belgic grog tempered fabric, dated 50BC to AD60, (Lyne, 2018). It was found in one of the lower fills. Assumed to be a ritual deposition due to its complete nature, perhaps placed when the ditch was partially filled with water.

The underlying Iron Age activity on the site may be a clue to the nature of the later Roman buildings positioned here. If we are seeing an earlier ritual landscape it may have been seen as an ideal location for temples close to a river for sacred reasons, (Derks, 1998, 144). This is supported by Casey's 'development economics', where new wealth generated by local entrepreneurs is invested in new sacred facilities on traditional sites and at key junctions and river crossings, (Casey, 1992, 98). Alternatively the position close to the river with a potential crossing point may just have meant that it was an ideal location and one that was likely to be revisited time and again.

The Roman Buildings

The first of the Roman buildings constructed on the site seems to coincide with the filling in of the Iron Age ditches, around AD150. This is a barn-like structure orientated roughly east-west, with a large 3.27m wide door opening in the southern wall. It is estimated to have been just under 27m in length, but the width is less certain, as all of the northern side of the building appears to have been

lost during the Roman remodelling and then further truncated by the 19th century trackway and revetment, identified as 'building 2' it can be seen in fig. 5 and 6. Only the south-east corner and the southern wall remain, removed to the level of the floor and truncated at the western end by the later building. It is hard to date the demolition of this early phase of building, however, it would appear from the pottery evidence that the later building that replaced it was constructed around AD200, suggesting a demolition date prior to that but after AD150.

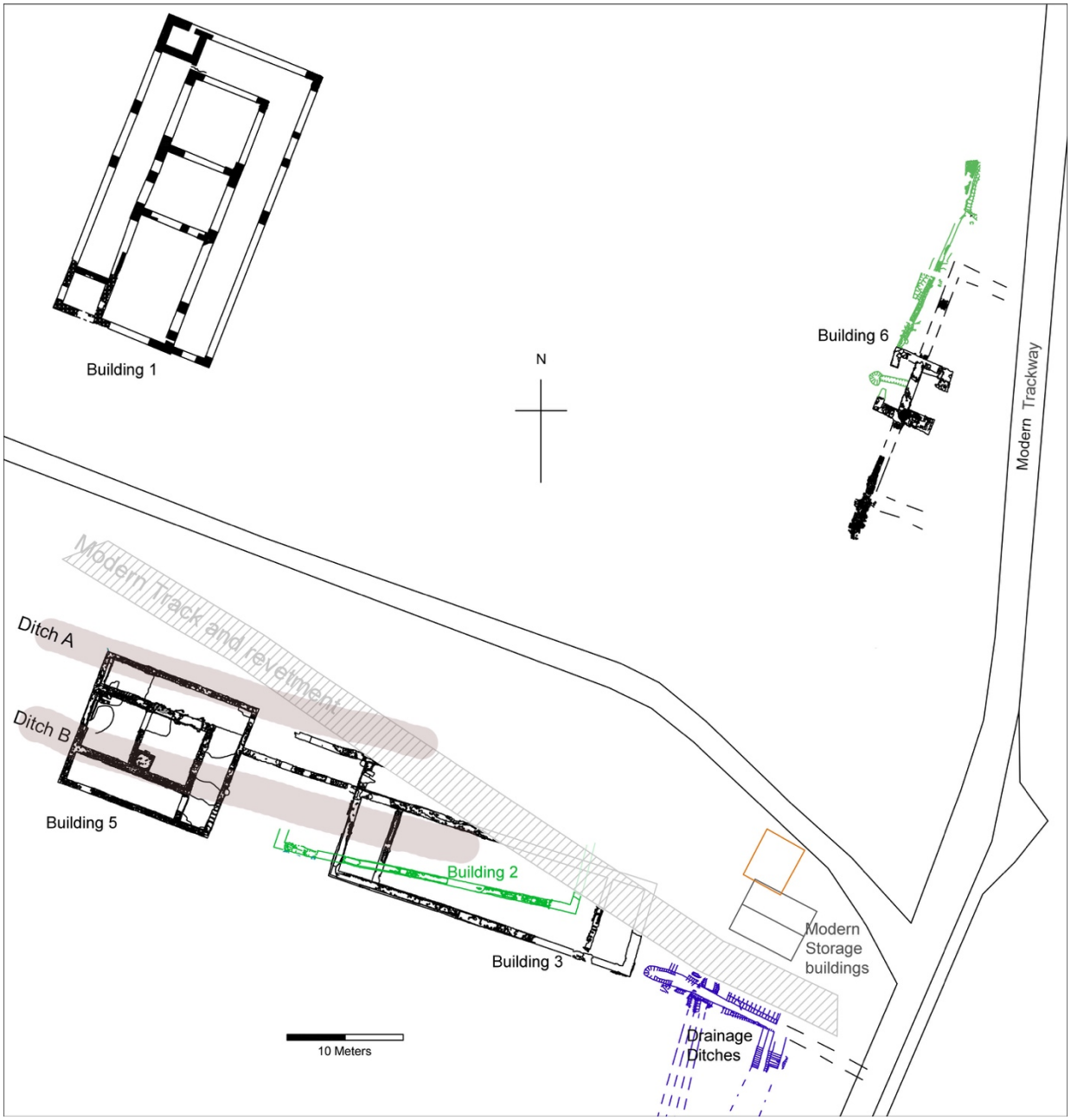


Fig. 5 East Farleigh site plan, (Clifton, 2017).

Its shape would suggest a utilitarian building perhaps connected with agriculture, and it would seem likely that there were other buildings associated with it, but none were discovered during the excavation programme.

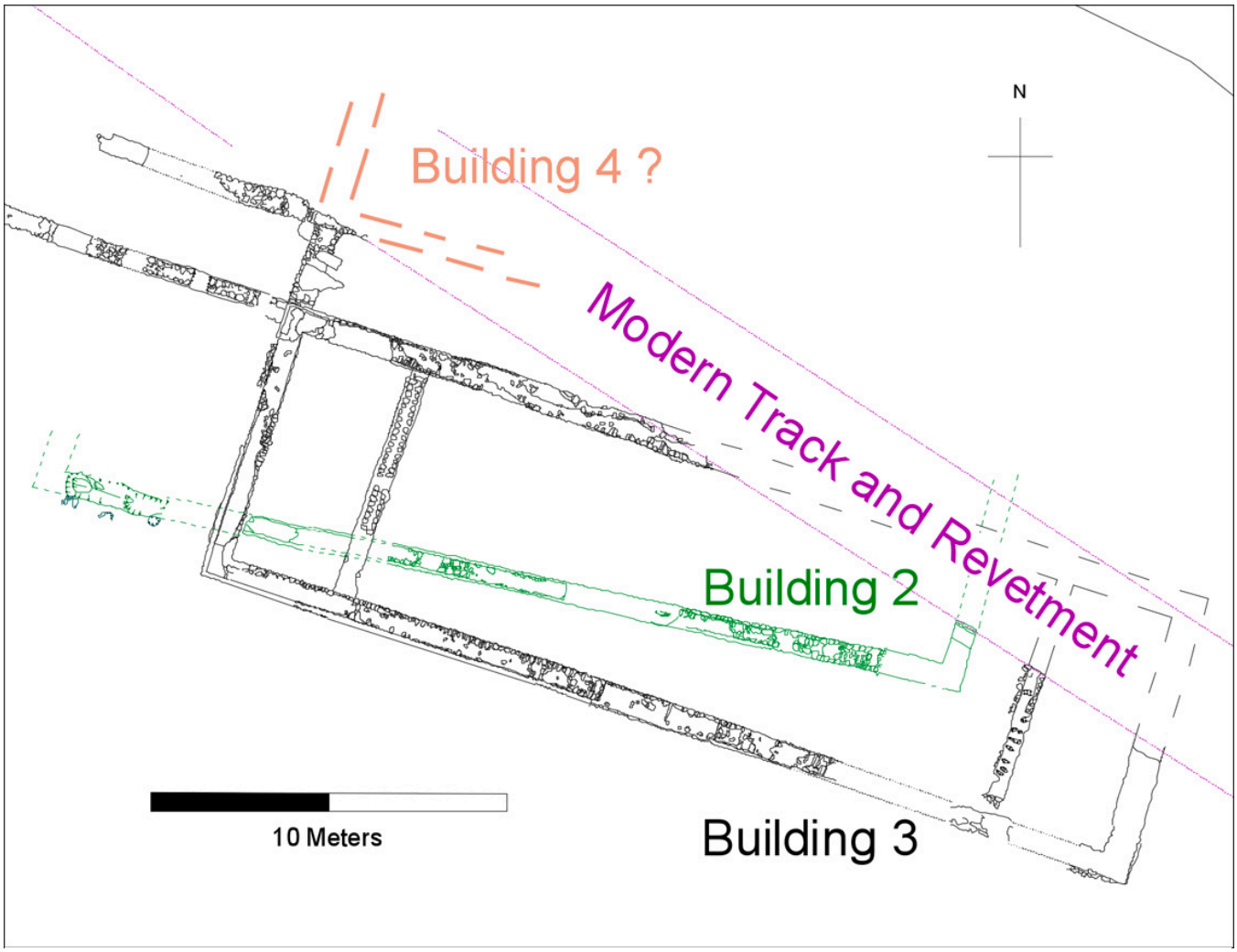


Fig. 6 East Farleigh plan of buildings 2, 3 and 4, (Clifton, 2017).

Building three, appears to have replaced building two, although also losing its north-eastern corner to the modern revetment, remained partially standing to a level of eight or nine courses of stone in the south-western corner. It was 27m x 7.8m and was on a slightly different alignment to the building that it replaced. It had a large, 3.39m wide entrance in the southern wall. There were originally two internal walls, and evidence for an external door in the northern wall of the western end room, but the corresponding position in the eastern end has been lost. There is evidence for a

metalled surface in places overlying the demolished internal wall, suggesting a repurposing of the building, rather than a preliminary stage of the demolition. At the western end, the floor consisted of the natural sandy gault clay which had been turned dark red from the heat of numerous oven structures of varying size dug into the floor. Pottery from the building suggests that this transformation in usage took place during the third century. The reddening of the clay surface stretched to halfway down, but did not impact on the walls and was also confined to the inside of the building, (fig.7). It also crossed the area where the eastern internal wall had been removed, suggesting that the internal walls had been removed before the insertion of the ovens, and perhaps to facilitate this new usage.

Fig. 7 Author's photograph of the central section of building 3 looking north, showing the reddened earth from the heat of the ovens at the western end, and the late corn-dryer inserted over the fill of ditch B. The southern wall and entrance to building 2 can be seen in the centre, reduced to floor level. The southern entrance to building 3 can be seen in the bottom right.

At least one corn-dryer was inserted into the building cutting through the reddened floor surface, and although this yielded no dating evidence, it must have been late in the building's life, probably sometime in the fourth century. When excavated, a large capping stone was found placed on top of the structure. This stone showed no sign of the effects of heat or indeed any usage, and so the conclusion must be drawn that this was a ritual act at the cessation of its useful life, a phenomenon seen elsewhere on the site. There were also the remains of two other possible 'corn-dryer' type structures in the western end of the building.

Building three does not appear to have been constructed as a stand-alone structure, indeed there are two walls running off to the north and the west from the north-western corner of the building, (Fig.6). The wall heading north connecting to what appears to be the corner of another building, with another wall running off to the west from this corner. Unfortunately this structure, building four, appears to have been all but lost to us, due to the 19th century track and revetment, which has left only a few stones at the southwest corner. Indeed the revetment is built of stone that looks suspiciously like it could have come from the Roman structure it replaced. The wall running off to the west from the remains of building four appears to have been demolished to accommodate the construction of building five. This would suggest that building three was part of an interim phase of construction and there may have been other buildings associated with it that were either demolished during the remodelling of the site in Roman times, or during the subsequent 19th century ground works. No trace of any buildings from that phase was found during the excavation process. Whatever buildings were originally associated with it we know that building three was retained as part of the next phase of building, sometime in the first half of the third century.

A series of ditches, that appear to have been used for drainage, terminate just in front of the eastern end of building three. Excavation revealed the primary system running off to the east with a tributary joining from the south, down the hill. A magnetometry survey of the adjacent parcel of land to the east showed the ditch running along the line of slope, parallel to the river for a further 100m, (Taylor, Forthcoming). This would suggest that they were designed to divert water running down the hill into these water channels away from as yet undetected buildings. It may also be that the channels, once full of water, may have been deliberately created for other purposes, possibly ritual.

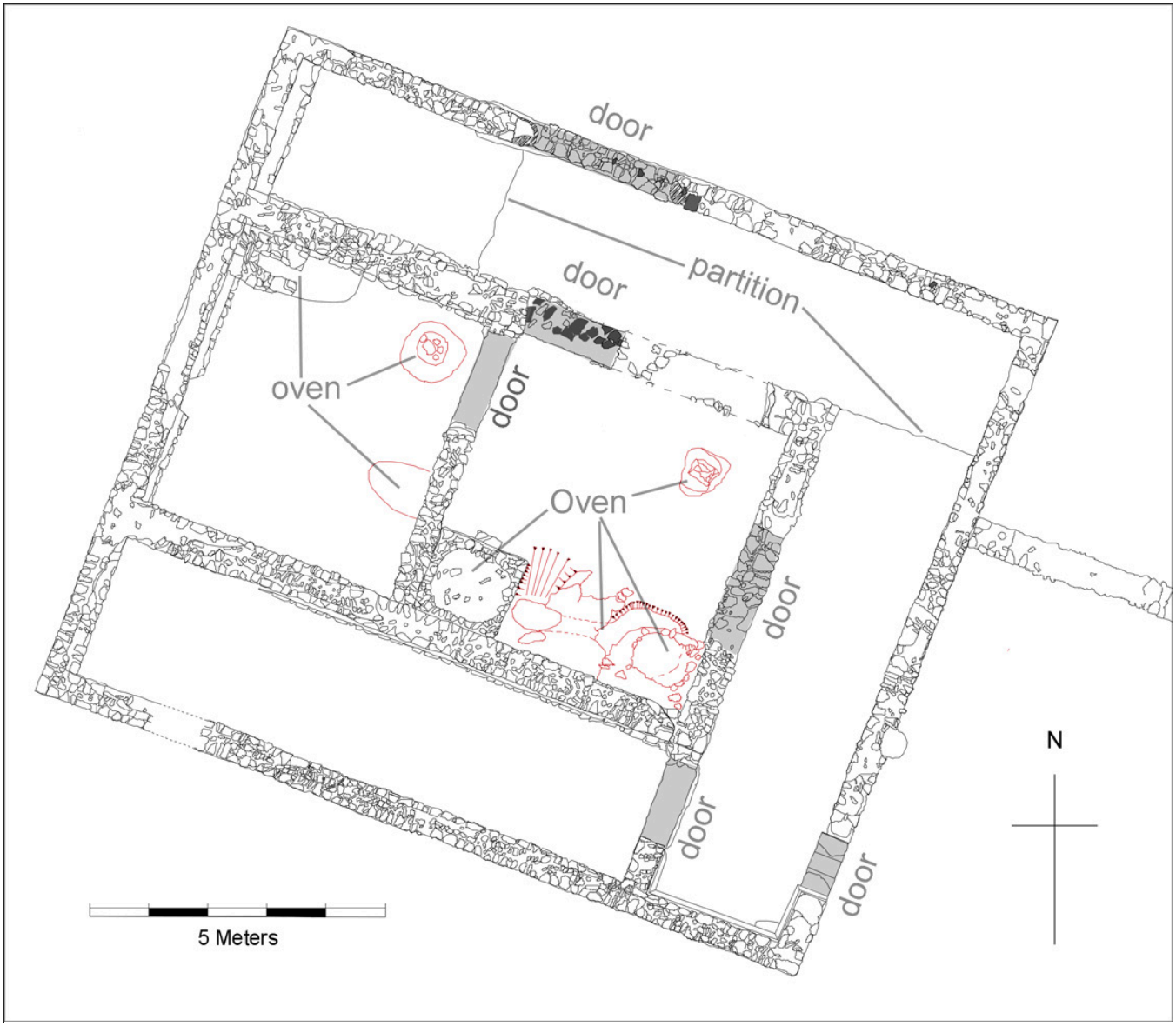


Fig.8 Plan of building five at East Farleigh, (Daniels and Clifton, 2010).

Building Five

Building five is one of four buildings that share a geometric alignment around an apparently open courtyard space facing northeast. It is the most complete building and survives to waste height in places and retains its whole floor plan. It sits in the south western corner of the site and is aligned with buildings one and six which look to have been conceived as an architectural whole.

The building measures 13.9 m x 12.05 m, and has a corridor or *ambulatory* on three sides, and a central double *cella.* The corridor is 2.2m wide. There are indications that the corridor had two

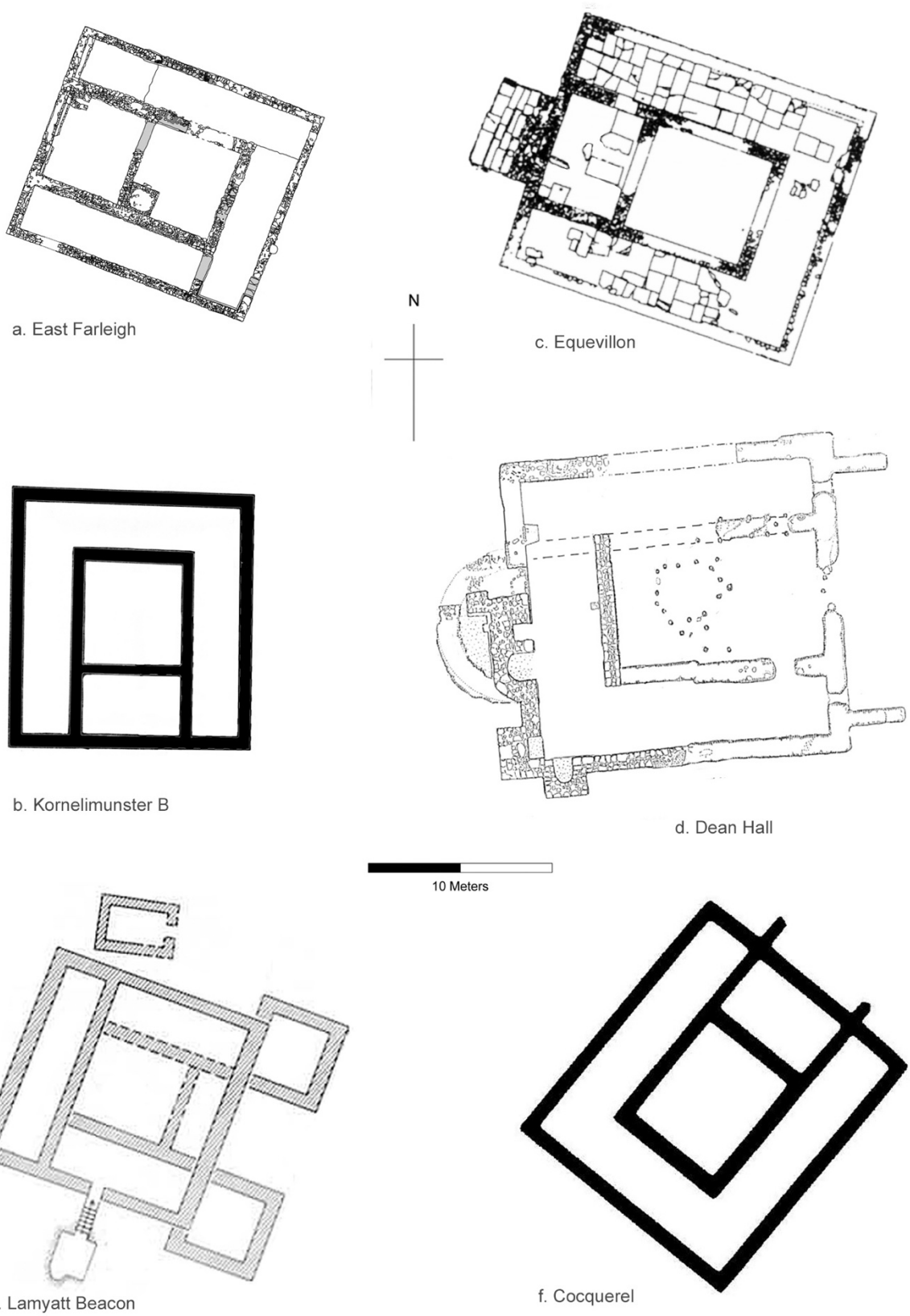


Fig.9 Comparison buildings, (a. after Daniels, 2010; b. after Rodwell, 1980, 518; c. Hostein et al, 2014, 195; d. Frere, 1985; e. Leech, 1986, 263; f. after Agache, 1997, 558.)

partition walls, which may have been removable, (fig.8). The section of corridor on the southern side was separated from the rest of the corridor by a wall with a doorway. The floor of this separate area was different to the rest of the building, being earthen of local clay and hassock and appeared to be of a utilitarian function. The outer walls of the building had been removed down to one or two courses of stone, especially at the north eastern corner, although the western wall retained stonework to approximately a meter in height. The inner cella was still standing to approximately 1.5 meters in places, although the north-eastern corner was severely reduced. The building was constructed of local ragstone, with some tufa quoining evident. Unusually for Britain there was some painted wall plaster remaining on the external western wall, comprising black banding separating a lower red section and an upper white/pale blue section, (fig.11). This plasterwork did not appear to extend around the corners to the adjacent walls. There was evidence for painted plaster on the internal walls, although none remained attached. This plasterwork was painted a deep 'Pompean' red, except for areas at the western end of the northern corridor and the southern section where it was painted white. There were no indications of any windows, nor were there any remains of columns found. The western end of the building and the central cella were covered in a thick layer of tumbled stone, indicating that this area of the building had been standing to a significant height, until it either fell or was pushed over. The floors consisted of a metalled surface, formed of small stones pressed into the clay surface. This floor survives in patches, and in between, a sub-layer of much larger ragstone pieces is revealed.

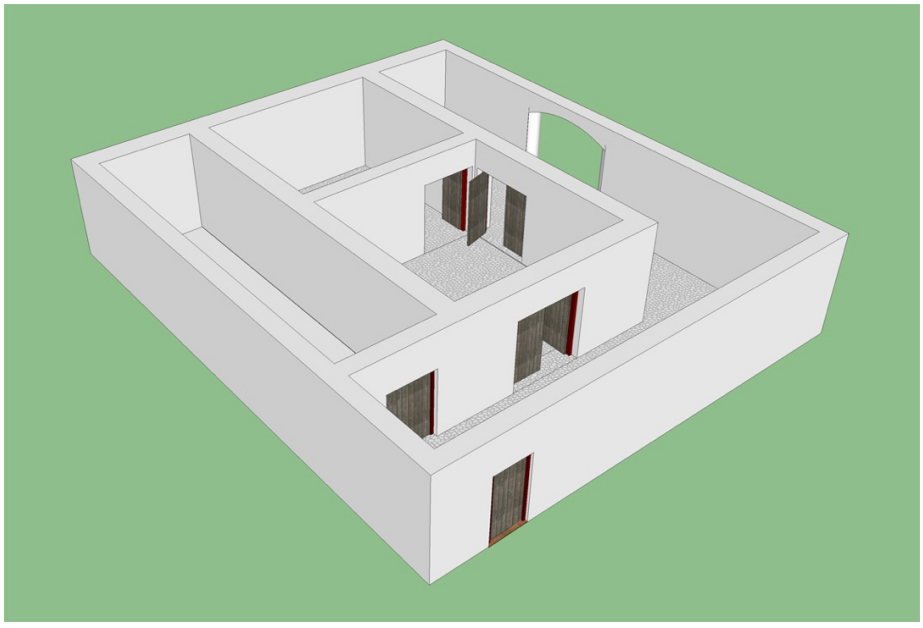


Fig. 10 East Farleigh building five internal showing arrangement of doors, (Clifton, 2020)

The cella is subdivided into two chambers, of roughly equal size, with a large double doorway between. There are also large double doorways between the corridor and the first cella chamber on the northern and eastern walls, (fig.10). In the inner chamber of the cella there is a small rectangular oven built into the north western corner, and in the outer chamber there is a large square oven, with a circular inset, that appears to be a bread oven, built into the south western corner, although it is possible that this was constructed for a different purpose initially. These two oven structures, made of stone, appear to be part of the original structure of the building. Additionally there are a number of more ad-hoc, oven-like structures, that appear to be late in the building's life, inserted into this part of the building, (fig.25). A lead curse tablet or *defixio* was found amongst the stone demolition layer and was found to contain a list of 14 names, both Celtic and Roman, (Tomlin, 2016, 415). A small hoard of 154 copper alloy coins was found in the floor of the inner chamber.

Fig.11 East Farleigh Building five from the west, and the painted plaster on the external wall, (Clifton, 2010).

These coins are predominantly clipped copies, and all date to the House of Constantine, AD330 – 365. Several very worn coins of the House of Theodosius, AD395 – 402, were found in amongst the stone demolition, (Holman, 2018), consistent with similar finds from elsewhere on the site, this suggests a final demolition date at the end of the fourth century, or more likely, given the worn condition of the coins, sometime in the fifth century.

Building five appears to be a Romano-Celtic style temple, although its plan is unusual in Britain, with most parallels on the continent, such as Cocquerel, Equevillon, and Kornelimunster, (Fig. 9). The nearest equivalent in Britain is perhaps Lamyatt Beacon in Somerset or Dean Hall in Gloucestershire. However, East Farleigh differs from these other examples, as they are believed to be 'podium' temples, accessed via steps directly into the central 'cella' section. The East Farleigh example is not a podium temple and is accessed via a doorway directly into the northern corridor.

The main entrance faces the courtyard, to the north-east. This doorway was 2.39 meters wide, and when discovered was blocked with mortared stone infill. The sides of the doorway were formed from semi-circular tufa blocks, and suggested that the doorway was not furnished with doors, and was designed to facilitate the passage of large numbers of people. There is a secondary external doorway of standard size on the eastern wall at the southeast corner, which would originally have been behind a wall connecting building five to building three. This small single doorway in the south-eastern corner, is suggestive of an administrative access for temple officials, an impression that is supported by the joining wall between building three and five, which would have created an area at the rear not seen by worshippers at the front of the temple, (fig.12). This connecting wall was later removed sometime in the third or early fourth century. The internal, 'temporary' walls, may have created different 'zones' and may explain why there are two large doors into the cella, allowing the flow of visitors to be managed around the building. It may also be that there were other small shrines within the corridor, indeed, the end of the corridor at the southeast corner is the only part of the structure where decorative mouldings survive, indicating a special area which may have been a small wall shrine. A comparison maybe the octagonal temple at Nettleton Scrubb which has an *aedicula* or shrine built into the inner wall of the ambulatory, (Wedlake, 1982, 44).

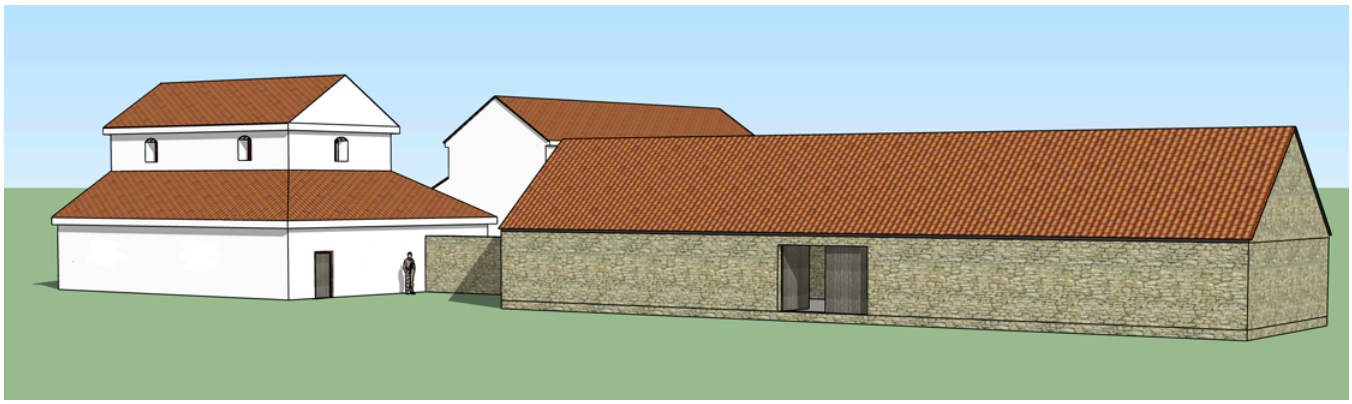


Fig. 12 East Farleigh buildings 3 and 5 seen from the south, (Clifton, 2020).

Building One

Building one was the first building that MAAG uncovered in 2005. The building measures 27m by 14m and does not have any direct linkage to any of the other buildings as far as we know. The level of preservation is poor, with only a single course of un-mortared stones being all that remains of most of the walls. An exception is the north-west corner where the remains of a substantial mortared section of wall was revealed at a lower level than the rest of the building. This wall appears to be a surviving fragment of an earlier building, subsequently replaced by building one. Unfortunately it was not possible to explore this potential earlier phase further. It is possible that the footings were retained because the walls were useful in this position to the replacement building, although the same technique is replicated with buildings 2 and 3.

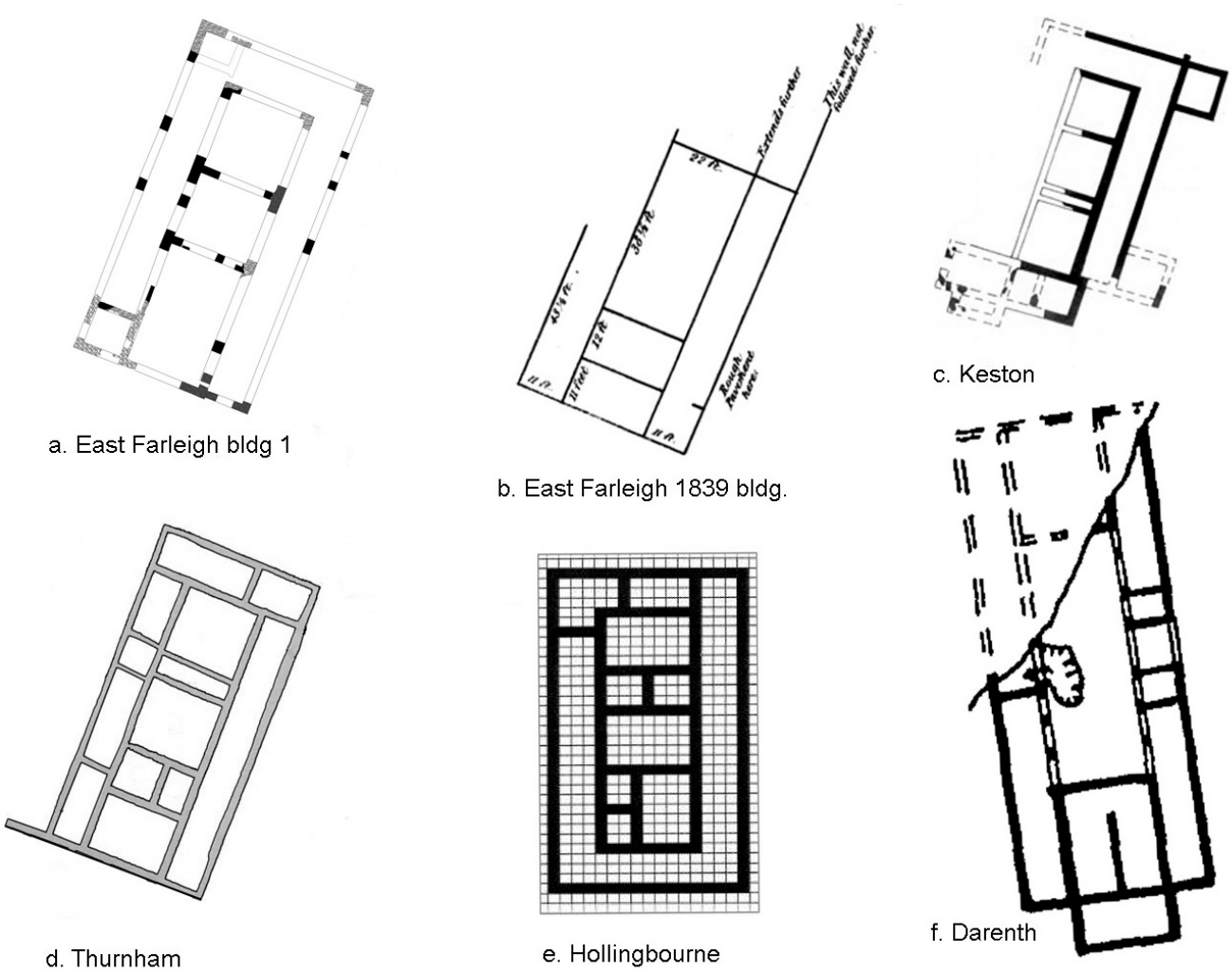


Fig. 13 Comparison of aisled buildings in Kent, (a. Daniels, 2007; b. Smith, 1839; c. Philp et al., 1999; d. Booth, 2011; e. Feakes, 2006; f. Black, 1981).

Building 1 has three central rooms, surrounded on three sides by a corridor. There only appears to be one cross wall interrupting the corridor, (other than the possible earlier phase walls noted above), at the south-western corner. The ground plan of the building is strikingly similar to building five, albeit extended to accommodate an extra central room. The orientation is in line with buildings six and five, pointing north-east, although it is hard to be sure whether the main entranceway was on the eastern wall facing the open area, or on the southern wall as at Meonstoke, which has a similar structure of comparable proportions. In my reconstruction of this building I have placed the door facing the open area to the east, this is because, unlike the Meonstoke example, any door in the southern wall would have opened into the first chamber of the cella, rather than the corridor, as seems to be more common with these basilical buildings elsewhere. This raises the question of what this building was used for. Was it another temple, only with a triple cella? Or was it some sort of meeting place? There do not appear to be any small rooms or cells which would normally be associated with sleeping quarters. There are other similar, although not exact, examples, (fig.13), such as a structure identified principally through a resistivity survey at Hollingbourne in Kent, which is a good comparison, although this has extra walls, other examples include Thurnham and Darenth. The buildings at both Keston and Thurnham are similarly located to the example at East Farleigh in relation to the other associated buildings on the site, although again, not exact replicas.

The 1839 Building

This was the building that brought MAAG to the site at East Farleigh in 2005, (fig.3). After 12 years excavating at the site, the group had uncovered at least six Roman buildings, but still there was no sign of the building that was found in 1839. It is likely that much of this building was removed to make way for the construction of hop-picker's accommodation, and associated tracks and revetments in the 1830's. I have speculatively included it in my site reconstruction, (fig.16), based on the antiquarian references and deduction, although there is no direct archaeological evidence for it as yet. We also do not know which phase it would have belonged to, but as it has much the same orientation as the other later phase buildings, I have assumed that it may have been contemporary with them and survived into the fourth century.

The 1839 building is an aisled building, at least 18.5m long and 13.4m wide. The full ground plan is not recorded, probably because only the area that they were intending to demolish was exposed at

the time and no indication of wall thickness is given, but the overall proportions look similar to building one. The main differences between them are the internal wall arrangements. This building was almost certainly much longer, and there are walls continuing to the north-east.

This building has parallels at many other sites, and appears to be quite a common if adaptable form. Already mentioned is the similarity with the basilical building at Meonstoke, but another building at Hollingbourne, which was located primarily through resistivity survey work, also appears to be about the same proportions and orientation, and is sited on the bank of a river, (Feakes, 2008, 19).

Building six

Building six is aligned to building one and five and therefore seems to have been conceived as part of this group of buildings. Exactly what the build sequence was is hard to work out because all three buildings are independent of each other. However, the pottery evidence suggests a construction date sometime at the end of the second or beginning of the third century, (Lyne, 2019). There were a number of coins found associated with the demolition layers, the latest of which was Theodosius I, 388 – 395AD, (Holman, 2018).

Fig. 14 Building six, (Clifton, 2017).

The building measures roughly 5m x 5.5m. The most striking thing about it is that there is a wall, (0.88m wide), running through the middle of the building from south-east to north-west. When the building was discovered, this central wall had been removed to close to the floor level internally within the building, (fig. 14), effectively forming two 'C' shaped sections bisected by this central wall. There was no doorway between the two halves visible, although there was a small channel, 0.12m wide, that appeared to have been built into the structure, possibly to allow drainage from one chamber to the other.

On the eastern and western side of the building were two openings, at 2.61m and 2.89m respectively, (by contrast the external opening to building five was 2.39m), which emphasises the different treatment of the two chambers and perhaps suggests that they were not intended to be seen simultaneously. These openings are not symmetrically in the centre of their respective walls, being closer to the south than the north. It is not clear whether they would have had doors. There is no evidence to suggest that they did. On both the south-western, and south-eastern doorjambs there is evidence, in the shape of a spread of mortar, that at some time the openings had been altered to be narrower. But at the time of excavation no more substantial evidence of this alteration remained, suggesting that if it had been altered in this way, it had subsequently reverted to its original size or was a very ad-hoc alteration.

On the inside of the southern wall of the building, where the central wall meets the outer walls there is a niche, created from stone and mortar set into the wall, (fig.15). The niche is a small rectangular inset described in reddish orange mortar that could not have been constructed whilst the central wall was in place. Similar features are seen at Dean Hall in Gloucestershire. The wall's removal would have turned the building into a possible gateway, given the two opposing entrances. If the central wall external to the building was removed at the same time, the land to the east and west of the building would have been accessible without the need to go through the building.

In the eastern chamber two stone 'benches' were found. These could perhaps be interpreted as *exedre*, or cult benches, where worshippers could come and share a meal with the deity. The floor in both chambers appears to have been a metalled surface, with small pieces of stone pushed into

the soil. However this floor does not extend from east to west due to the intervening central wall which protrudes slightly above the floor level. There are no obvious signs of wear, or cart ruts in the remains of the central wall to indicate traffic from one side to the other.

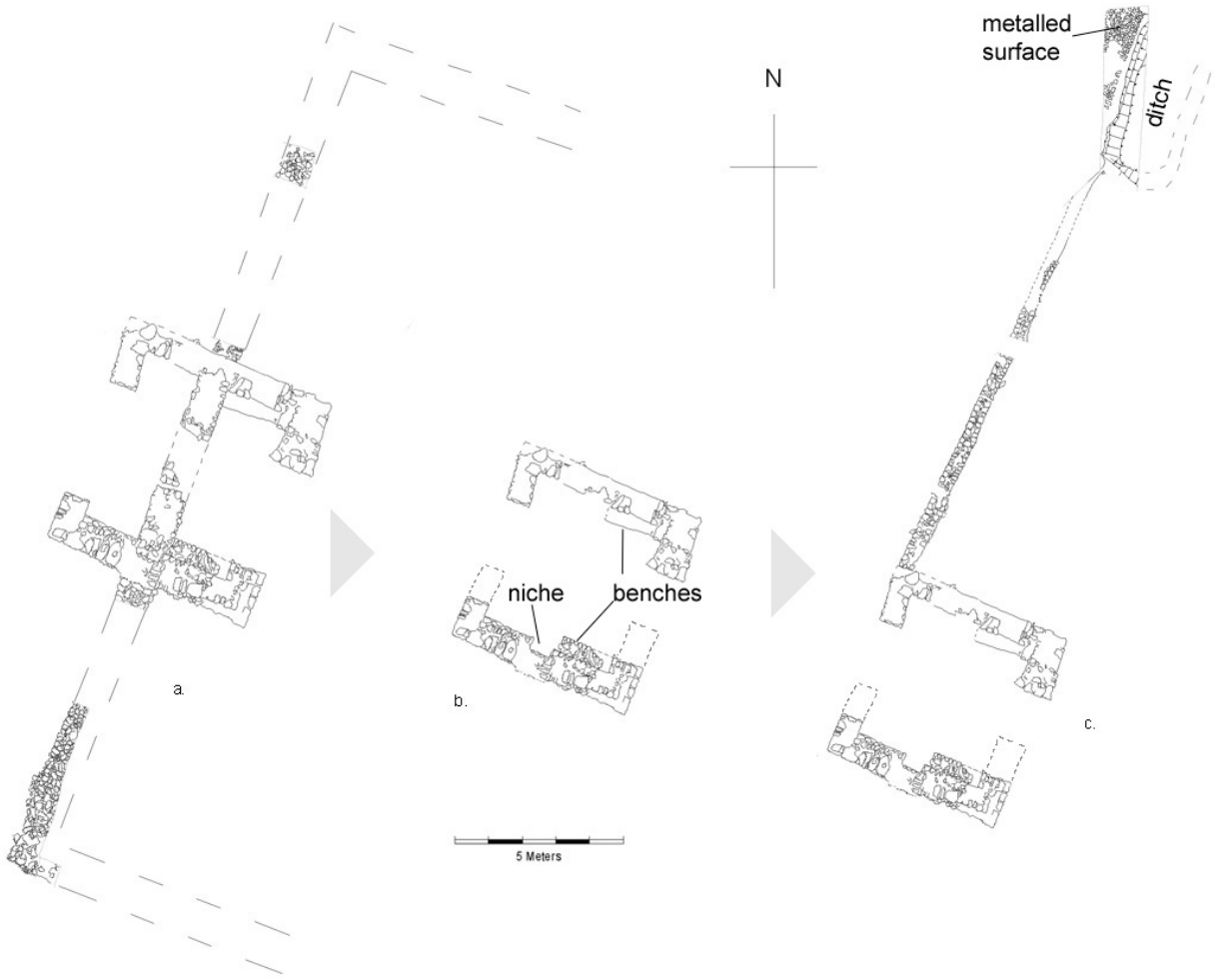


Fig. 15. East Farleigh, building six showing development phases, (Clifton, 2017).

The metalling on both sides of the building does appear to extend beyond the entrances, and was followed for 1.5m to the east, suggesting a trackway or paved area in front of the entrances. The central wall extends beyond the building to the north and south. Time constraints meant that the wall could not be followed more than a few meters either side. However, it was possible to determine that the wall ran 7.5m to the south, and at least 5.5m to the north, although not much

more. No corners were observed, however it is possible to infer from where the wall was absent that it must have turned to the east at both ends, creating one end of an enclosure, with the building roughly central on its western wall. The land to the east of building six was not available during the period of excavation to test this theory.

The next phase seems to be the removal of the central wall externally to the building. It is possible that this occurred simultaneously with the removal of the wall within the building, however its utility would have changed, as it would then be freestanding. It may be that the narrowing of the entrances may have facilitated doors to secure the building as a detached structure.

The addition of a low narrow wall butted against the northwest corner of the building heading northeast towards the river was the next event. This wall, was roughly 340mm wide and constructed of dressed ragstone blocks back to back. The wall was visible as a single course over a 12m length, laid directly onto the subsoil with no foundation and no mortar, and was robbed out to nothing for the last 2m. It lead to a metalled surface of which it was possible to excavate only a small area. This wall was narrow and would not have been able to sustain many courses, and so must have been a low wall. A cemetery wall would have seemed to be a reasonable guess, however no burials were discovered and it would have been customary for the wall to completely enclose a cemetery, and there is no evidence of that here.

At some point before the building was finally demolished it was used for a different purpose. There was a feature cut into the floor of the building predominantly on the western side, but terminating on the eastern side, cutting through the central wall. This feature looks like a classic 'corn-dryer', however there is no sign of any burning at the stoke end and at the other end there is a hole, produced by removing the wall and floor of the building and some of the sub-floor stone make-up material. When excavated this hole was largely filled with a substantial piece of ragstone which appeared to be a ritual act of cessation. This feature looks more like some sort of sluice, than a corn-dryer, but there were no other clues to shed light on its function. It was in turn covered by demolition material from the building.

There are no obvious parallels for this building in Britain, although it does appear to be reminiscent of small shrines but here installed back to back with a possible temenos.

The final years at East Farleigh

Sometime towards the end of the third century the site appears to go into decline. Evidence from the pottery would suggest that building five was still standing in the mid fourth century and this was when the north-eastern doorway was walled up, (Lyne, 2019). However, activity at the building appears to continue, with at least five ovens being inserted, and quern stones and mortaria left broken inside. The outer wall of the ambulatory was removed from the north-eastern corner and some of the cella at the same point, presumably to gain better entry to this area. Late fourth century coins from the demolition layer over building five and building six suggest that the buildings were finally demolished at the end of the fourth century and probably into the early years of the fifth, (Holman, 2018). However, unlike building one, six and the 1839 building, the cella of building five, and at least some of building three remained standing until this final demise, whether by natural collapse or purposeful demolition. The other buildings were dismantled down to ground level in most places, and the building materials apparently removed from the site. Building six clearly has evidence for later re-use at the end of the fourth century, with the insertion of the sluice, and the later phase small wall butted against the north-west corner.

The question therefore arises, who was reusing these buildings at the end of their life, and what for? If we accept that building five was walled up in the mid fourth century, then there was half a century of potential use after this. We can perhaps imagine that the land-owner sealed off these buildings, possibly simultaneously removing the tiles from the roof, so that they could not be used. But the local populace still saw this as a sacred site and wished to use it as such. This later impromptu use is noted by Farquhar at the Progress Roman site near Otford, (Farquhar, 2017, 23), and other examples include Nettleton Scrubb, (Wedlake, 1982, 81), where a late shrine was constructed from building debris. At East Farleigh there are also several infant burials close to some of the standing walls. One of which was inside the south-east corner of building five on the floor surface and covered with crushed burnt clay in the area where moulded cornicing may have indicated a shrine.

The ovens are a curious feature and have caused much discussion, with it being suggested that the building was reused as a kitchen, (Daniels, 2010, 12), but another explanation may be the continued use of these as part of the rituals, either for cooking sacrificial animal parts, or for baking bread as an offering or part of the ritual. It is unlikely that anyone was living in the ruined buildings, however

there are a number of post-holes from around the buildings which may indicate additional shelter was built, possibly on a temporary basis. Unfortunately these post holes contain no dating evidence, and stratigraphically they appear sometime between the backfilling of the Iron Age ditches, approximately 150/170AD, and the demolition of the buildings, approximately 400AD. It maybe that we are seeing a seasonal return to the site, perhaps to celebrate religious festivals by those still adhering to the deities or cults at the site, presumably without the knowledge or permission of the landowner, if indeed there was one by this time. If there was a river crossing, as seems likely, then it is possible that this was still in use even though the religious facilities may have been in ruins.

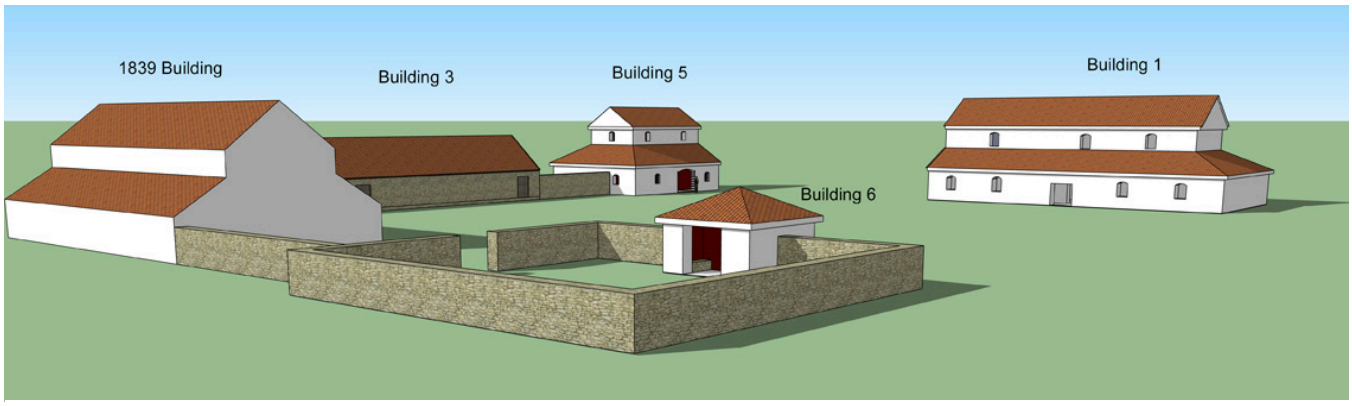


Fig.16. East Farleigh buildings from the north-east, (Clifton, 2020).

Conclusions from East Farleigh

We have been able to establish that there was an Iron Age presence on the site before the buildings were constructed, possibly an *oppidum*. There are at least three distinct phases of buildings on the site, finally being abandoned in the late 4th, early 5th century. The last phase of buildings constructed in the early 3rd century, was built around a courtyard area oriented north-east towards the river Medway and a villa on the far bank at Barming. Of these buildings at least one was a temple, to an unknown deity(s). Two others are possible religious buildings. It is not clear whether the earlier phases were also of a religious nature. There is no evidence that any of the buildings are associated with a villa on the south side of the river, although it is possible that the villa on the north side may have been part of the same estate with a river crossing and associated roads.

Finds assemblages

The assemblage of finds at East Farleigh is fairly typical of sacred sites, and is equally unremarkable in not providing a pointer towards a particular deity, (fig.17). Indeed, although there is one building believed to be a temple, there are several other buildings which could also have been shrines dedicated to other gods. The evidence suggests a broad commonality with other sacred sites, and perhaps indicates that people merely used whatever they owned that looked like a valuable object, irrespective of the nature of the deity. A coin 'hoard', found in the sub-floor layer of the cella, contained almost entirely copies that were clipped, this is very common at cult sites and perhaps points to their preparation specifically for votive activity, (Woodward, 1992, 67). There were also a number of pieces of copper and lead sheet, which were uninscribed in any way, but which would most likely have been shiny when deposited. There is no indication of any sort of shop or kiosk amongst the buildings excavated so far, however there are similarities in the rings and bracelets found, which might indicate a common source produced at or near the complex. The lead *defixio* found at East Farleigh, (fig.18), contains a list of 14 names, some using 'mirror writing' to add extra potency, but alas gives no further clue to the circumstances of its deposition or the deity invoked, (Tomlin, 2016, 415). At several sites the spread of votive objects close to ancillary buildings has been used to infer outlets for the sale of such items, such as at Woodeaton, or at Lydney, (Woodward, 1992, 73; Smith, 2000a, 284), which is probably prompted by an apparent similarity with classical porticos seen around temple enclosures in Rome which were multifunctional spaces for shops, notice boards and meetings, (Stambaugh, 1978, 572).

At East Farleigh many of the objects have been broken, often in more than one place, suggesting a deliberate act. A good example is a bone stylus, broken in two places, or a mysterious jet object, broken at both ends, (fig.19). This is often described as the ritual 'killing' of an object by bending, breaking or disfiguring it, such as the miniature silver spearhead from Uley, twisted so that it is no longer a viable object, (Woodward, 1992, plate four). There are a number of categories of finds from East Farleigh that chime with assemblages found elsewhere; a collection of 36 antler tools and horn cores, including one antler base carved to form an amulet; 17 snapped fragments of copper alloy bracelets; 15 copper alloy rings including a key ring; nine pieces of lead or copper sheets including one lead *defixio;* two fragments of pipeclay Venus figurines. Also found at East Farleigh were a number of fossils including a small sea urchin. Seen as curiosities when discovered, they are echoed

by similar finds at Meonstoke and Farley Heath in Surrey and noted by Anthony King who suggests that these were brought to temples as offerings due to their unusual nature, (King, 2018, 6).

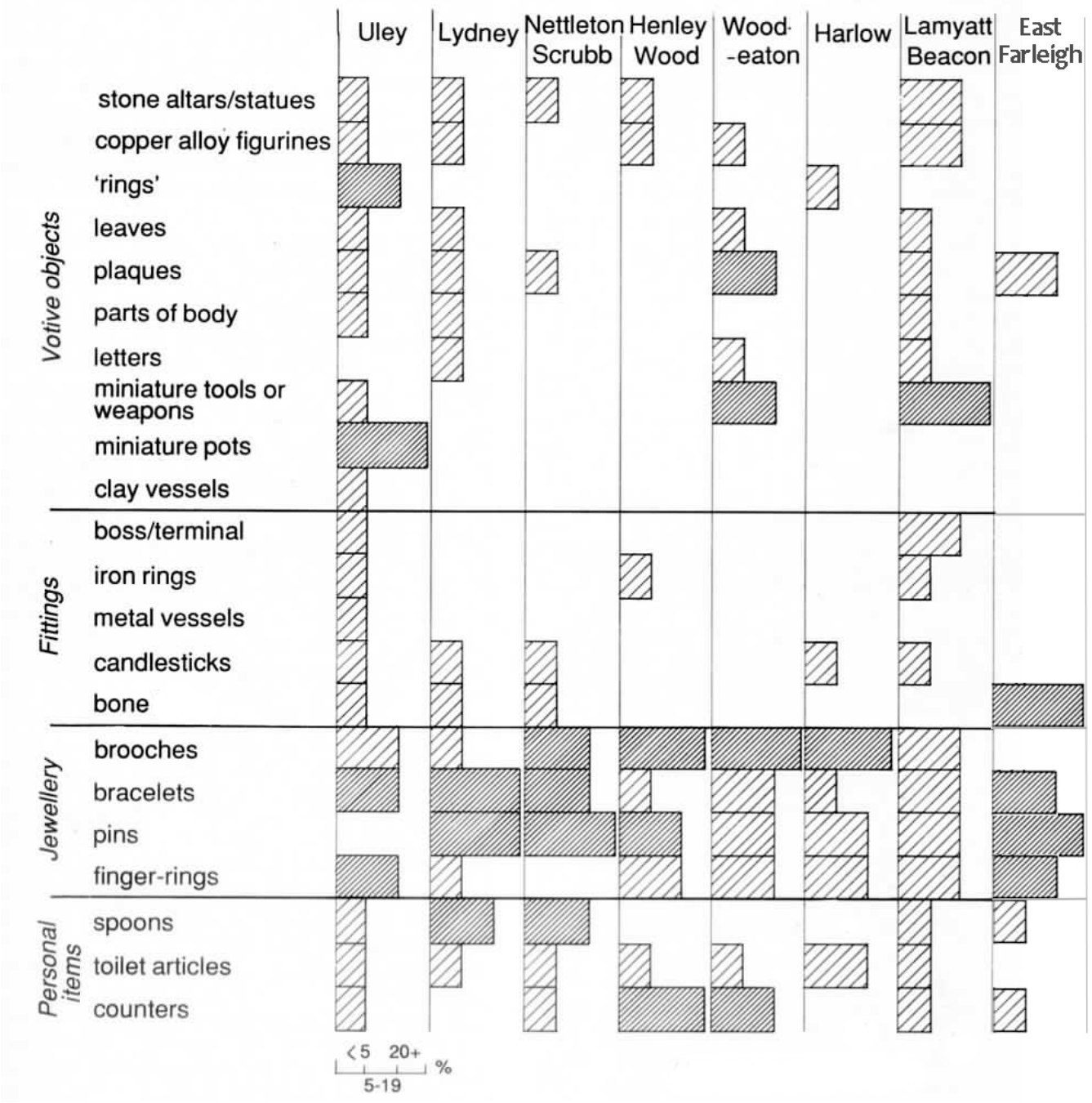


Fig.17. Table showing comparison of finds assemblages at a selection of temple sites, with East Farleigh added for comparison, (redrawn after Woodward, 1992, 75).

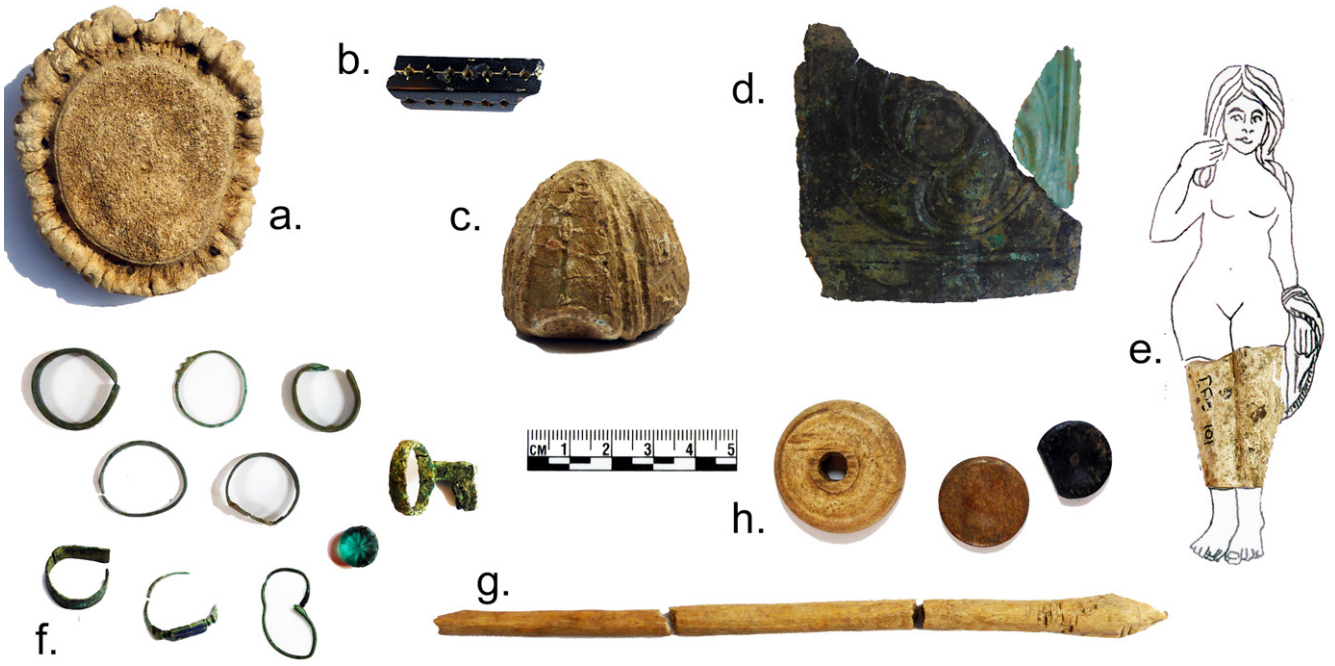
At many temple sites there is little left of the building other than the footprint of the walls, and it is difficult to project a three-dimensional structure from a two dimensional ground plan. It is often the

pattern of finds that confirms the site as sacred, such as at Kelvedon in Essex where the assemblage was key to its identification as a sacred site, (Smith, 2000b, 98). It is not always straightforward though, as we see a bewildering array of material goods, supposedly lost or discarded at almost all Romano-British sites in Britain, especially villa sites, making the distinction between domestic refuse and ritual offering especially finely balanced, (Ibid, 59). Some ritual sites do not have a great many finds at all, such as Elms Farm in Essex, but others are especially well furnished and we can start to see patterns emerging. For instance, at Uley there is a significant array of material allowing the excavators to identify the deity associated with the sanctuary as Mercury, from a fine statue head found at the site, (Woodward, 1992, plate two). This is a magnificent example, and very rare. But the wider assemblage of finds at Uley is just as valuable, such as the large collection of rings and other jewellery, (Ibid, 72). The first century saw the deposition of large numbers of antlers and bone tools, but brooches used as votive items diminish after this time as they begin to go out of fashion. Bracelets, beads and rings begin to be more common instead, perhaps suggesting a more intimate form of worship.

Fig.18 Defixio from East Farleigh, (Illustration by R.S.O. Tomlin, 2016)

Woodward breaks down the finds assemblages into military/martial, ie weapons, different types of circular object, possibly including coins, and personal items such as bracelets, pins and toilet

articles, (Woodward, 1992, 74). Depending on the mix of objects, may give a pointer to the deity that the temple is dedicated to. Whereas Aldhouse-Green cites the finds at Nettleton Scrubb, brooches, bracelets and pins, as confirming it as a healing sanctuary, and the phallic pins being associated with fertility. Lydney is also believed to be a healing centre, partly attributed due to the discovery of a figurine of a pregnant woman clutching her abdomen, and a number of small votive bronze dogs, (Aldhouse-Green, 2018, 91 & 94). It seems to me that it is very dubious to be concluding so much from so little evidence. Pliny tells us that there was a statue to Ceres in his temple, (Pliny, Letters no.39), and this tends to colour our thinking for other temples, in different circumstances and at different times, believing that all temples were dedicated to a single god. The evidence from Uley is wonderfully compelling, but it is surprisingly rare to find any evidence of statuary, or epigraphic material in Britain that tells us how the temple functioned and to whom it was dedicated.



a. antler base amulet b. broken jet object c. sea urchin fossil d. bronze plaque
e. fragment of pipe clay 'Venus' figurine, (illustrated by RSO Tomlin) f. collection of copper alloy rings
g. broken bone stylus h. gaming counters

Fig.19 Sample of finds from East Farleigh, (Clifton, 2020).

Of course, these objects in and of themselves do not identify a site as sacred, many of them are perfectly ordinary everyday items that might be expected to be recovered from a domestic setting. Indeed, it is this mundane aspect that has contributed to the difficulty in separating secular from sacred. On top of this, the ubiquity of ritual practice in the Roman world has made it possible for either interpretation to be possible, or indeed a mixture of both, (Henig, 2003, 128), and it is often the subjective opinion of the excavator as to the attribution a particular find or site is given, which can result in years of misattribution, such as at Meonstoke, (King, 2018, 5). Smith suggests that there was a social hierarchy in the votive objects, and perhaps in the temple itself. So that some items were perceived as more valuable or worthy than others, and some temples were more important than others, perhaps reflecting different levels in society, or different aspirations, (Smith, 2000a, 56). Webster proposes that different items have different significance, ie. rings symbolised unity or eternity whereas brooches represent bonding, (Webster, 1986, 60). Woodward points out that the objects seem to follow fashion, but suggests that the prevalence of flat copper alloy rings at sacred sites may imply a kind of 'ring-money', (Woodward, 1992, 72).

However, the variety of finds clearly intended as votive offerings does not necessarily give us the identity of the deity or what the circumstances of deposition or offering were. It can be argued that the deity was relatively immaterial and that it was the *religio* or correct religious practice, that was important, with many of those attending enacting a ritual without knowing the finer points of why they were doing it, (Revell, 2013, 22). The gods were therefore created anew by the ritual fervour generated by the priests and sanctuary environment. Perhaps reminiscent of modern Roman Catholic or evangelical practices. Smith sums it up thus: "orthopraxy - ensuring the correct religious actions, such as sacrifice and offering - appears to have been more important to ensure civic and cosmic stability than orthodoxy - ensuring correct beliefs", (Smith *et al*, 2018, 120). It is also possible that some religious centres either had multiple deities, or perhaps none at all. If sites such as East Farleigh and Nettleton Scrubb are set up to exploit travellers or pilgrims, it would make sense for the facility to be able to accommodate as many different religious requirements as possible. A modern comparison might be a motorway service station with multiple food outlets to cater for different tastes. Indeed Smith notes that at Lamyatt Beacon there are images of Mars, who is believed to be the principal deity, but there are also images of Jupiter, Mercury, Minerva, Hercules and a *Genius*, and he recognises that attempts to reconcile votive assemblages to deities are not easy

or necessarily very successful, (Smith, 2000a, 57). King postulates that some of the smaller altars were portable, and so you could take your altar and your beliefs with you, (King, 2017, 129), perhaps to multi-functional temples which were not dedicated to any one specific deity, or perhaps there was enough variety at any one facility to accommodate most beliefs. Certainly the question must be asked why were there often more than one temple or shrine at a site if they were dedicated to a cult associated with only one deity?

Site Comparison

Structural Identification: Traditionally, scholars have identified a number of different categories of sacred building, divided between classical temples, rare in Britain, and eastern cult temples, usually identified as basilical in form, and then the Romano-Celtic style temples, which are by far the most numerous in Britain and which are perhaps a link back to indigenous pre-Roman religious practices, (Ghey, 2007, 22). These divisions are based on apparent architectural differences, Henig subdivides the Romano-Celtic temples further into large urban, small rural, temples of pilgrimage and the centres of private or restricted cults, (Henig, 1984, 157). We are accustomed to seeing the square within a square style of temple, and can readily recognise it as fitting the formula, but many temples do not conform to this style. Lydney and Uley are examples of this. It is likely that there are as yet unrecognised forms of temple architecture in Britain. East Farleigh is one such example, with parallels predominantly on the continent. Booth points out in the HS1 report on Thurnham the similarity of building type at a number of supposed villa sites, (fig.20), (Booth, 2016, 284). He compares a rectangular building on the site, which is seen as an ancillary structure to the main villa building, (although being proportionally larger), to other buildings in Kent, at Keston and Minster (Thanet). He suggests that these are all temples, but then retreats from this idea in the face of a lack of confirmatory evidence, (Ibid, 286). There are parallels to these buildings on the continent at Genainville and Grobbendonk, where they are identified as twin cella temples, (Faudet, 1993, 17; Rodwell, 1980, 519). Perhaps the best example in Britain is Friars Wash in Hertfordshire, which appears to be two co-joined temples, (Smith *et al*, 2018, 133). The structure at Minster, building 4, (Parfitt, 2006, 115), seems to be associated with the villa, rather than being part of a separate complex, although the provision of a second bath house and a possible octagonal shrine, (Parfitt,

pers. comm.), suggest a more hybrid arrangement. Booth also noted that this building form seems to be local to Kent, (Booth, 2011, 284), and he also discusses the access to the Thurnham building and concludes a north-eastern bias favouring an entrance and trackway from the north-eastern corner of the building, in line with my observations concerning alignment, (Ibid, 286).

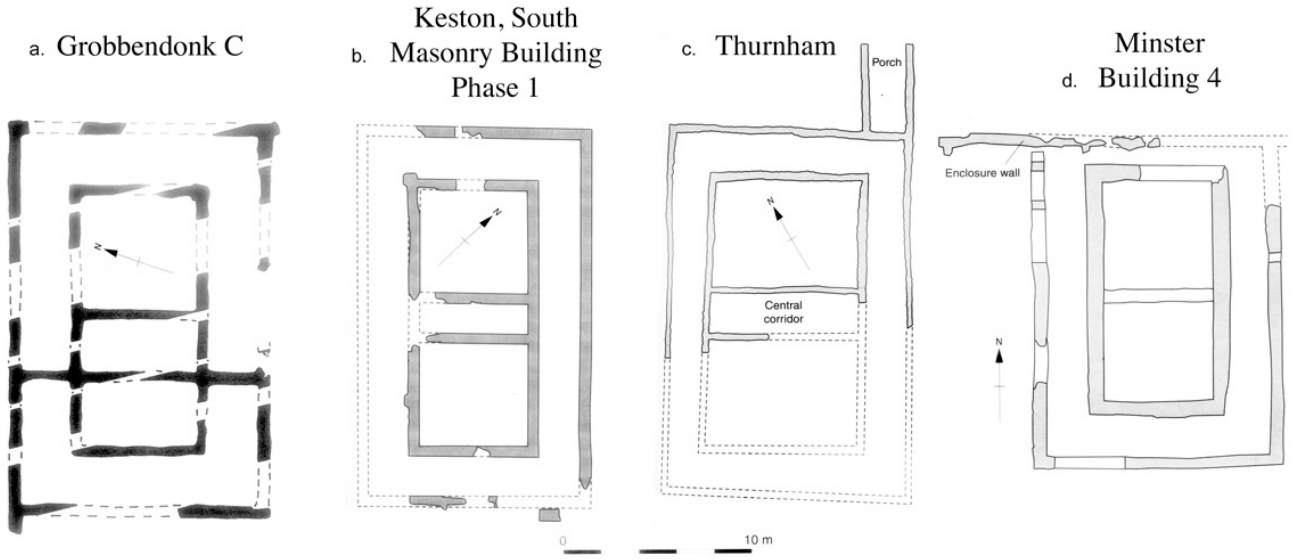


Fig.20 Structural comparison (a. Rodwell, 1980, 519; b. after Philp et al, 1999; c. Booth, 2011, 285; d. after Parfitt, 2006).

Another similarity between Keston and Thurnham is the presence of an aisled building in a very similar position in relation to the other two main buildings. This might not arouse much question traditionally, with an aisled barn being an expected feature of a villa 'farm'. However, if a new attribution as a temple complex is considered, these buildings can be looked at in a different light. In the case of Keston, the whole site is littered with sacred structures: the circular 'tomb 1', a secondary 'tomb 2', numerous structured deposits in shafts, as well as several burials, (Philp et al, 1999, 191). It is clear that there is sacred activity running right through the Roman era here, and Black suggests that the shafts alone in association with a possible temenos constitute a shrine with sacred activity prior to the stone structures being built in about AD200, (Black, 2008, 4). An explanation for Keston could be the development of a 'Hero' cult, based around the burial of a key figure, (Haeussler, 2010, 211), these were often sites with late Iron Age origins, such as the Folly Lane site just outside Verulamium, (Niblett, 1999), Brisley Farm near Ashford, (Stevenson, 2012),

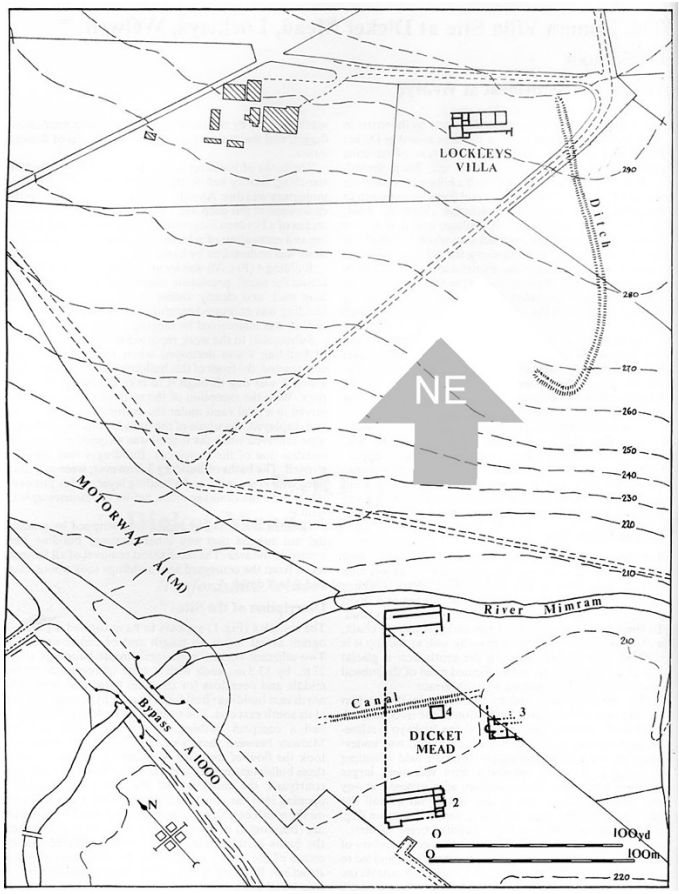


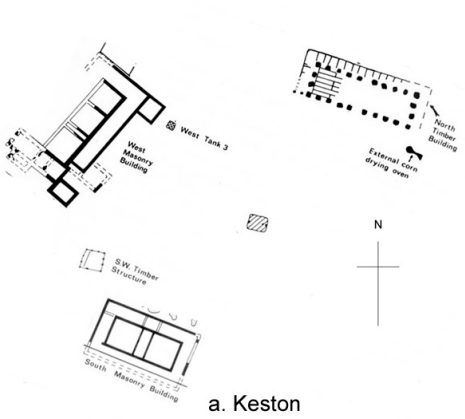
Fig. 21 Lockleys and Dicket Mead, (Ward-Perkins and Rook, 2007, 80).

or perhaps Lullingstone in Kent, (Meates, 1955), where in times of social upheaval a hero figure comes to be venerated and after his death the burial becomes the focus of a cult. There are also many other features at Keston that could be of a sacred nature, such as ovens, tanks, and ditches associated with the buildings. A bath house, located approximately a mile to the north-west of the site, at Baston Manor, (Philp, 1973, 80), could have been part of an as yet undiscovered villa associated with the site to the south. With these characteristics in mind the aisled building on both these sites deserves more attention. Are we looking at a different form of temple, perhaps a *Mithraeum* or a shrine to one of the other eastern cults? The lack of an apse is no bar to this being a Mithraeum, (Walsh, 2018, 361), indeed the plan is very similar to a temple discovered during work on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in 2001/2002 by Wessex Archaeology at Springhead, (Andrews, 2008, 52). This may be fanciful in the absence of any other direct evidence but a more sacred role for these buildings should not be discounted.

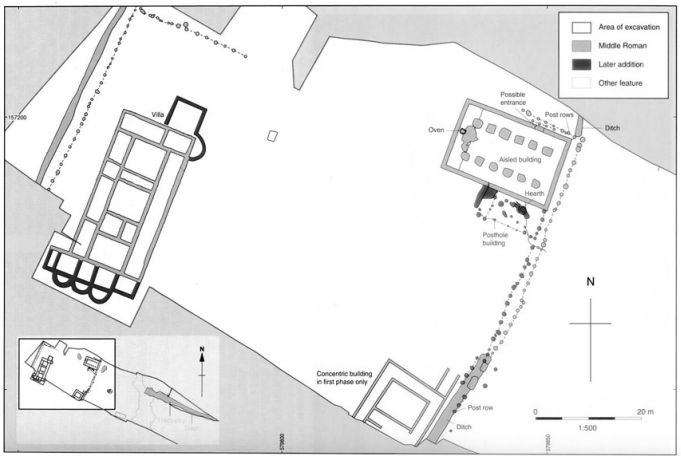
I have identified another location which I believe broadly fits this pattern, it is the twin sites of Lockleys and Dicket Mead in Hertfordshire. Lockleys was excavated in the 1930's, and identified as a multi-phase villa, with its earliest phase in the pre-Roman period, dated to the early first century BC, (Ward-Perkins and Rook, 2007, 6). Dicket Mead on the other hand was discovered in 1960, and largely destroyed by the building of the M1 in 1970, (Ibid, 79). Dicket Mead lies to the south of the River Mimram, and consists of a complex of buildings arranged in a parallelogram, (although the eastern extent was not ascertained), angled north-east, towards the contemporary villa of Lockleys, which faces south-west.

The arrangement of buildings at Dicket Mead resembles some of the sanctuary complexes seen in Germany such as Heckenmunster, (Faudet, 1993, 41), and it comprises an outer wall connecting two large buildings, with a number of small chambers on the eastern side of the southern building, reminiscent of the *abaton* at Lydney. In between lies a square building that is surely a shrine or temple. A partially excavated bath-house lies to the east. Another feature is a canal bisecting the site from northwest to southeast, just to the north of the central square building. A curious arrangement for a villa, but for a religious sanctuary, the canal may have had sacred significance, and echoes the canalisation at Nettleton Scrubb, (Wedlake, 1982, 3). The finds from Dicket Mead are, as so often, not confirmatory either way, with a mix of bone pins, lead sheet, copper alloy rings (including a ring key), amongst the small finds, (Ward-Perkins and Rook, 2007, 145-162). However, there were five copper alloy letters found which are an occasional find at temple sites such as Lydney, Woodeaton and Lamyatt Beacon, (Woodward, 1992, 75). Given the proximity of the Lockleys site less than 300m to the north west, it is unlikely that we are looking at two separate villas, but with the relative positioning, with Dicket Mead to the south of the river, it is more likely that the latter is part of the wider Lockleys estate, based on an Iron Age precursor, and that a river crossing was the focus of a religious sanctuary complex. It is strongly reminiscent of the arrangement at East Farleigh.

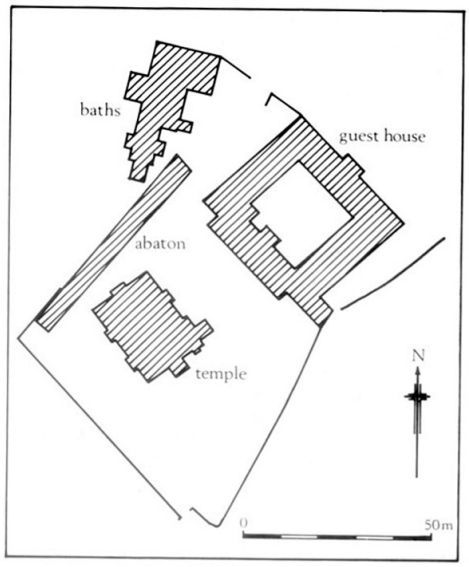
Religious Sanctuaries: The conclusion that the site at East Farleigh is a religious sanctuary complex is partly based on the number of buildings associated with the primary temple. It is comparable to Nettleton Scrubb and Uley in terms of size and complexity, but very different in form. There does not seem to be much agreement on a definition of a 'sanctuary' amongst scholars, often used as another term for 'religious site'. However, a 'sanctuary' to me implies a place of calm and reflection. By its very nature a place to spend time, and therefore a place where provision for pilgrims or visitors to stay, possibly overnight, would be expected. As Aldhouse-Green points out, the countryside was a hive of religious activity, with a wide variety of sanctuaries, shrines and temples, (Aldhouse-Green, 2018, 88), which suggests that religious sanctuaries are different to lone temples or shrines. What differentiates a 'sanctuary' from an isolated single structure such as Worth in Kent or Lamyatt Beacon in Somerset



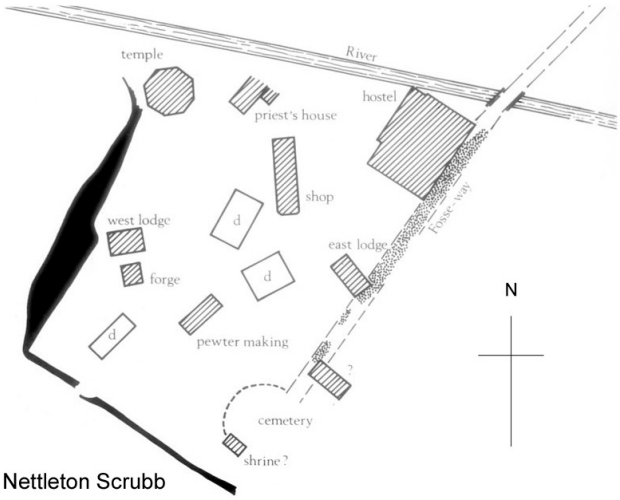
a. Keston



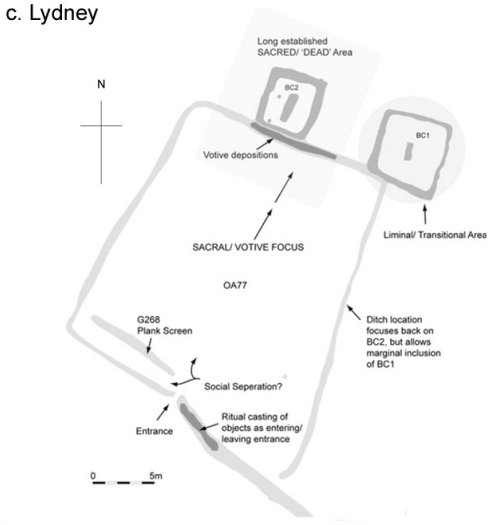
b. Thurnham



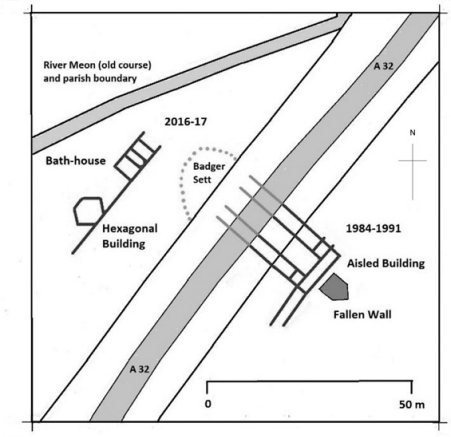
c. Lydney



d. Nettleton Scrubb



f. Brisley Farm



e. Meonstoke

Fig. 22. Site comparison, note the north-east/south-west alignment, (a. after Philp et al, 1999, 195; b. after Booth, 2011, 282; c. Woodward, 1992, 49; d. Woodward, 1992 50; e. King, 2018, 3; f. Stevenson, 2012, Fig.8).

is the number of ancillary buildings and the possible multiplicity of shrines and gods on offer. There are a number of larger complexes that can realistically be described as sanctuaries in Britain, such as Uley and Lydney in Gloucestershire, Nettleton Scrubb in Wiltshire, and Springhead in Kent. There are a great many, very impressive sanctuaries in Gaul which often have theatres and extensive bathing facilities as well as numerous temples, Ribemont-sur-Ancre and Sciaux a Antigny near Vienna are fine examples, often described as pilgrimage sanctuaries, (Derks, 1998, 189; Faudet, 1993, 33), but in Britain this scale of complex is rare, examples such as Frilford in Essex and Bath in Somerset are the nearest comparisons identified so far. However, it is worth pointing out that no two sites are exactly the same, they are all a pick and mix of features, and we can only guess at the process behind the design and build, (Smith *et al*, 2018, 161), although the shape and style of the temple appears to have little bearing on the nature of the cult, (Smith, 2000a, 279). Many have *temenos* boundary walls, such as Lydney, but others such as Uley and East Farleigh do not. It is hard to draw conclusions that apply to all examples, and it may be that local variations, possibly rooted in the pre-Roman Iron Age tribal arrangements, are an important driver here, (Ibid, 342).

It is one thing to have a small temple or shrine at the bottom of the garden, as at Otrang where the temple sits at the other side of the valley to the villa, conferring divine protection, (Derks, 1998, 143), but large religious complexes on apparently private rural land take more explaining. Smith suggests that almost all rural religious sites are connected in some way to villa estates, (Smith, 2000a, 342). It may be an extreme manifestation of the circumstances that Pliny describes, where at certain festivals, people congregate at the temple complex to observe the correct rituals, do some business and catch up with the gossip, before the final sacrifice and associated feast. Conceivably, the considerate land owner may see it as his duty to lay on facilities to accommodate his visitors, just as Pliny does. The question arises then as to whether the landowner pays for this? Derks offers some insight on this aspect based on Northern Gaul. Here there is a legal distinction between public and private cult spaces, such that private cult centres were provided for cult communities and were financed and maintained, to officially supervised standards, by the cult themselves. Whereas public sacred sites were provided for the benefit of the entire community, and rituals were performed by official priests at the expense of the public purse, (Ibid, 185). He goes on to acknowledge the difficulty with identifying which is which in the absence of epigraphic evidence.

Orientation: The site at East Farleigh seems to be following a different pattern to that identified at many of the excavated sacred sites in Britain, appearing to have been conceived as one architectural concept, rather than an accretion of related buildings. Despite this there are a number of similarities between sites that I have identified based on analysis of East Farleigh. The first point of similarity is the north-east orientation. At East Farleigh the principle entranceway to the temple, (building 5), is very clear and the buildings are oriented firmly north-east, although due to the nature of the site around an open courtyard area, some of the doorways will inevitably face in other directions, such as building six which has one entrance to the north-west and the other to the south-east. It is not necessarily that the individual buildings are orientated to the north-east, but that the facility as a whole is angled in this direction. This characteristic is sometimes masked by different phases of the building programme, as illustrated at Nettleton Scrubb, which has buildings at many different angles but the overall orientation is still north-east, (fig. 22). A clue as to why this is may lie in a site of pre-Roman date, at Brisley Farm near Ashford in Kent, where a temenos associated with two elaborate burials was oriented north-east, with a clear entrance and votive focus, (Stevenson, 2012). This late Iron Age preference may have been incorporated into some later, Romano-British, sacred requirements. It may also have something to do with the fact that it is only at this angle that the sun never penetrates directly and buildings can remain in permanent shade, especially if there are very few windows, which may have manifested as a sacred preference.

This is not to say that all temple complexes are oriented north-east, patently that is not so, but this does seem to be a marked characteristic of some of the complexes in southern Britain. Orientation of temples has been a hot topic for many years, and the wise archaeologist would do well not to venture into this minefield. Greek temples were predominantly oriented towards the east, whereas Etruscan temples had a southerly bias. Roman temples have examples at all angles, with the possible exception of north, (Aveni and Romano, 1994, 255). Vitruvius is little help here; he suggests that temples should ideally face the west, but when on the banks of rivers or besides roads they should face the said river or road, (Vitruvius, BkIV, ChV). But in Britain there are many variations. One complication is the identification of the entrance to the temple. Smith says that where the entrance is known, 90% are oriented to the east, which he suggests is ritually prescribed, (Smith, 2000a, 318). However, Lydney is a good example where the entrance is to the south-east, but the orientation of the buildings is to the north-east. At Springhead, the complex follows the line of Watling Street,

north-west but the entrances to the temples appear to be on the eastern side angled slightly north-east, (Andrews, 2008, 48). In Oswald's 1991 analysis of Iron Age roundhouses, there is a marked preference in Britain for east or south-easterly facing entrances, and a similar pattern can be seen in continental Gallo-Roman temples which he suggests are based on cosmological principles, (Oswold, 1991). However, Haselgrove points out that at Gournay-sur-Aronde in France, that the enclosure entrance faces north-north-east, (Haselgrove, 1995, 73), similar to the British examples that I have given.

Windows: At East Farleigh, the outer ambulatory wall of building five does not survive above five or six courses above the Roman ground level, so it is impossible to tell for certain whether there were any windows. However, there were 47 pieces of window glass found at the site, predominantly from the vicinity of building five, suggesting that there were at least some windows in this building, (Broadley, 2019, 5). In parts of the building the internal walls were covered in plaster painted a dark red, which would have made the interior very dark, even on a bright day, and it would have been necessary to have used candles or lamps to navigate inside the building, especially if there were no windows in some areas. Internally the arrangement and decoration are designed to enhance the mystical atmosphere of the buildings. What natural light there was would have come from clerestory windows high in the cella and would only have reached the ambulatory when the connecting doors were open. In my reconstruction of the buildings at East Farleigh I have given them windows on the ambulatory simply because it seems sensible to have some natural light. But actually there is very little evidence for windows in temple buildings. The nymphaeum at Gennes in France has windows in the apse, (fig.23), (Maligorne, 2012, 137), and the huge cella at Autun in France also has windows on the ground floor, (Lewis, 1966, Plate 1a, 173), but neither of these examples are really representative of the Romano-Celtic temples that we find in Britain. The only known site in Britain to have windows is Nettleton Scrubb, where the inner cella of the octagonal temple has a window, which the excavator believes was replicated on some of the other walls, (which have not survived), allowing viewing from the ambulatory into the central area. There is also evidence for shutters on this window, enabling it to be closed off as needed, (Wedlake, 1982, 63). However this is so rare that we do not know how typical it would have been.

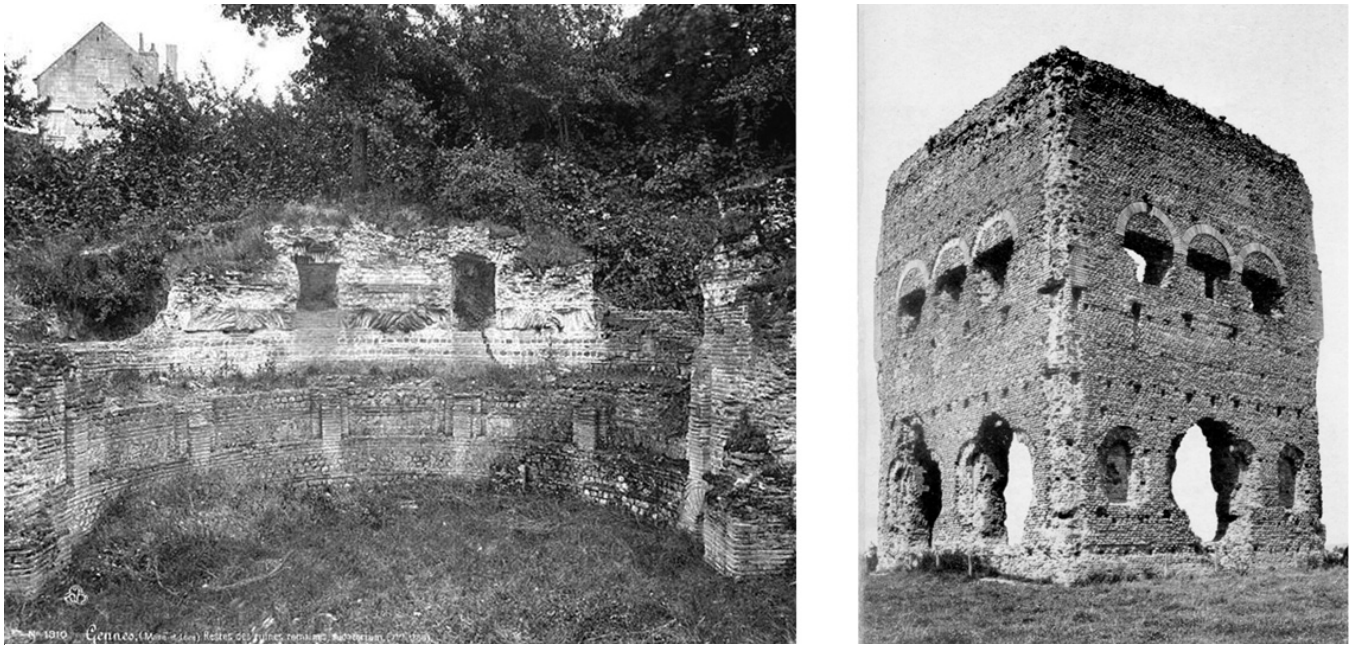


Fig.23 The nymphaeum at Gennes, (Maligorne, 2012, 137); Temple of Janus, Autun, France (Lewis 1966, Plate Ia, 206).

Location: The proximity of a river or watercourse, often to the north of the site, is a recurring theme with many sacred sites. This is likely to be accompanied by the presence of a crossing and associated roads. The positioning of sanctuaries at boundaries or 'liminal' junctures can be attested at sites in rural Italy, (Glinister, 1997, 77), and this is certainly true of East Farleigh, which sits on the south bank of the river Medway, and indeed may have been close to springs that issue from the ragstone bedrock into the river from time to time. There is a strong relationship between religious observances and watercourses predating the Roman era, (Hutton, 2013, 182; Walton, in Press). Faudet's 1993 inventory of temples in Gaul showed that 90% of the 653 sites were at prominent positions in the landscape, particularly at the confluence of rivers or by bridges, (Faudet, 1993, 25), this is echoed by Smith who says that a third of all temple sites in Britain are on or near rivers, (Smith, 2000a, 312). Derks, concurs, citing Dounberg, Colijnsplaat, and Andernach as examples of sanctuaries in the northern provinces where they form a key part of the Roman landscape at river crossings, (Derks, 1998, 144). Springs are obviously another focus, with Bath and Springhead as prominent examples. Sites on the coast, often near estuaries, are also a common location, such as Minster in Thanet, (Parfitt, 2006). Casey suggests that the answer lies in the arrival of newfound

wealth being invested in new facilities on ancestral land, partly out of religiosity and munificence, but also as a visible manifestation of that wealth and as a sound investment, (Casey, 1992, 99).

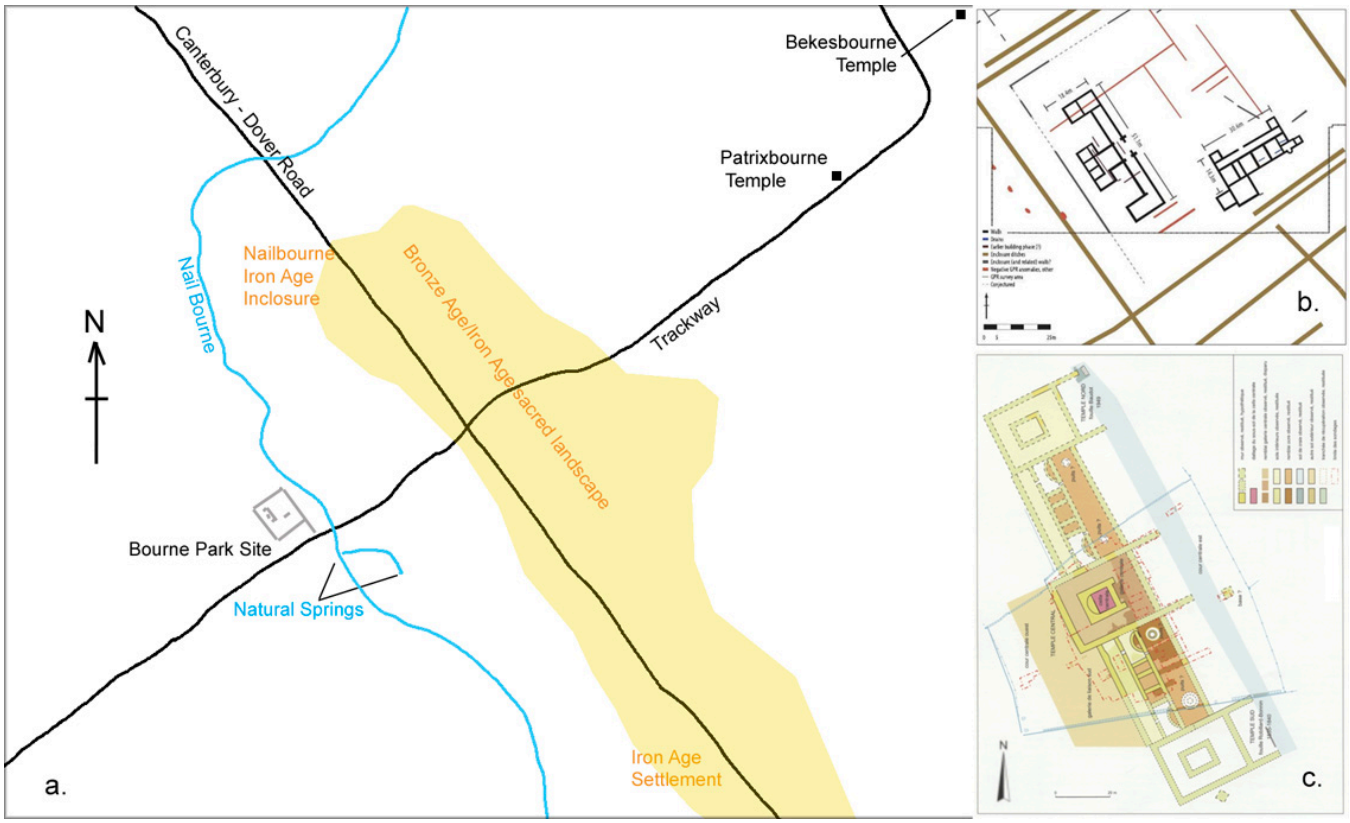


Fig.24 Bourne Park site, (a. redrawn after Wallace and Mullen, 2019; b. Bourne Park Roman buildings, Wallace and Verdonck, 2019; c. Aulerques Eburovices, after Guyard et al, 2014, 43).

Wallace and Mullen's recent analysis of survey data for East Kent has thrown up a new sacred site at Bourne Park close to the Roman road from Canterbury to Dover, (fig. 24). It is sited on the banks of the Nail Bourne river oriented north-east. This is an unusual form for Britain, but is reminiscent of similar sites in Gaul such as the sanctuary at Aulerques Eburovices, (Guyard *et al*, 2014, 43). It is associated with what appears to be a classic winged corridor villa, and sits within an earlier sacred landscape. A possible road running north-east/south-west and forming a 'T' junction, links the site with two further temples at nearby Patrixbourne and Bekesbourne, (Wallace and Mullen, 2019). Although only known through survey data, it meets all of the criteria that I have identified.

Ovens and Temples

At East Farleigh there appear to be at least four phases of ovens. Firstly there are the small oval shaped structures dug into the floor of building three. These may have been instigated prior to the construction of the other buildings, (five, one and six), and more than likely carried on in use in support of the other structures, eventually being superseded by the corn-dryer type ovens seen at the western end of the building and finally the one in the middle of the structure. It is unclear what these were used for, but presumably some sort of baking connected with the rituals, or perhaps just to feed the assembled worshippers.

Then there are the other oven-like structures built into the fabric of building five. There may have been others elsewhere on the site, but they have not survived. The two inside the building are very different to each other, both constructed of mortared stone built into a corner. The larger of the two, (the 'bread-oven', fig.25a), in the outer chamber was clearly contemporary with the construction of the building, as evidenced by the offsetting of the doors through to the inner chamber, if the doors had been central, they would have fouled the oven and it would have been too hot and cramped. It is conceivable that the structure was not originally intended as an oven, an alternative interpretation as the base for a lead tank or cult statue is possible. Any daub superstructure and the plasterwork has disappeared so it is impossible to say for sure, but the presence of reddened clay and stone within the circular structure makes its use as a hearth or oven at some time seem likely. The other oven structure in the inner chamber is rectangular and much smaller, (fig.25b), and was found choked up with red and black ash and soot. The obvious question is why there are two such structures within the building, albeit of different proportions, which clearly had different functions.

In the later phase of the building's life, after the main entrance has been walled up, and subsequently demolished, a number of other, more ad hoc oven structures were dug into the two central chambers. In the outer room a corn-dryer with a crooked flu was built, and then a secondary structure built over the top once it had become choked up. There was also a small wattle and daub oven with a roof tile as a base, built into the middle of the floor. At least two other similar structures were inserted into the inner room, along with quern stones and two pots dug into the floor. The sheer number and variety of these structures suggests use over a long time, rather than some sort

of industrial use, and ties in with the idea of people returning to celebrate festivals at regular times of the year and continuing to carry out the appropriate rituals which presumably involved their use.

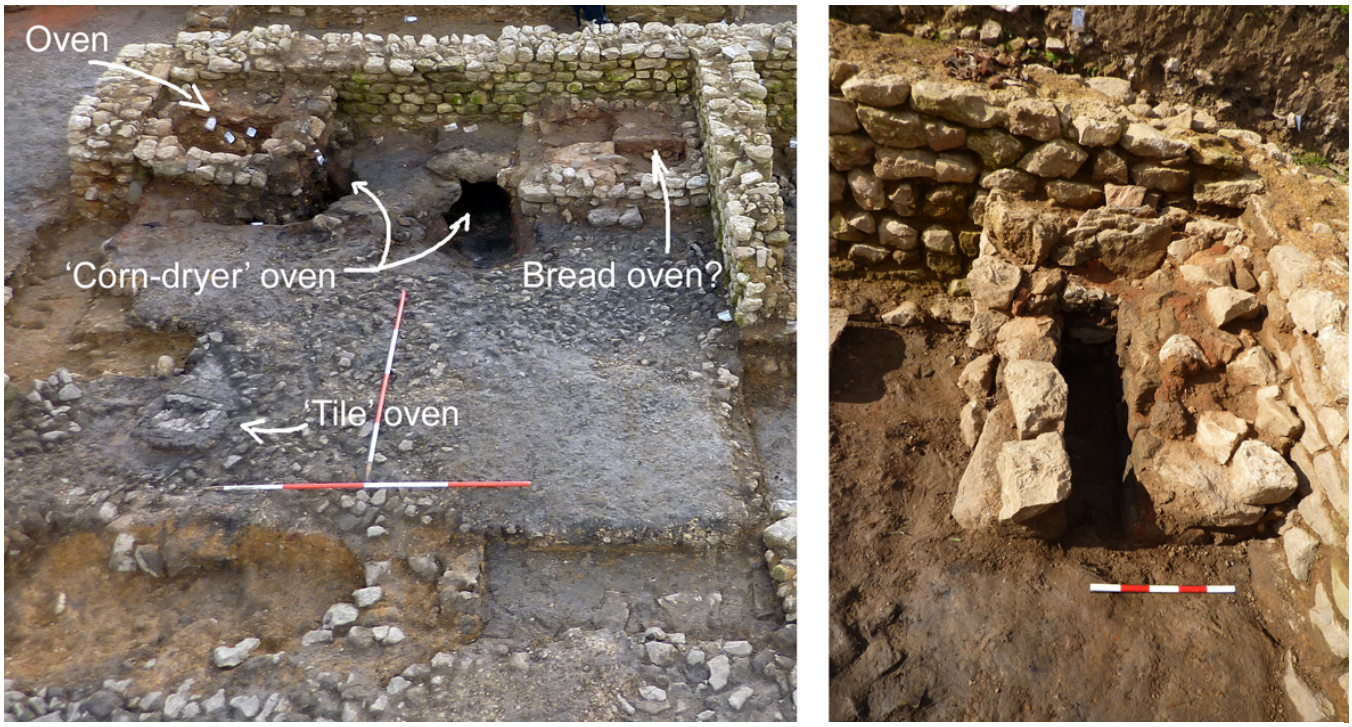


Fig. 25a East Farleigh, Building five, outer cella room showing various oven structures. Fig.25b showing oven built into the corner of the inner cella room.

Ovens at temple sites are quite common, and are perhaps one of the focuses of temples, alongside statues, altars and pools, (Smith, 2000a, 319). Ovens have been found at 17 sites in Britain, such as Verulamium's 'triangular temple', Titsey in Surrey, Chanconbury Ring in Sussex, Newington and Springhead (temple 1), in Kent. Most ovens were external to the temple structure, and this may be to avoid the risk of fire, or it may be because the associated activities took place outside the building. At only two sites, (other than East Farleigh), Springhead and Brigstock, Northants, are the ovens actually inside the main temple structures. What we do not know is how exactly they were used. It has been suggested that the ovens were for preparing the sacrificed animals prior to the feast at the end of the ceremony, (Greenfield, 1963, 68). The examples from East Farleigh are of various sizes and shapes and clearly were intended for different purposes. Many of the structures would have

been too small to have been used to cook the carcass of sheep or goat. Even if the animals had been butchered, the ovens were unsuited for use as a barbecue. They are much more reminiscent of bread making facilities, a Kentish parallel would be the site of Roman buildings in Broadstairs where numerous ovens had been dug through the floor of a rectangular building displacing several infant burials, (Moody, 2007, 202), this building has the size and proportions of a shrine or small temple, and the ovens clearly demonstrated continued re-use over a long period.

Smith suggests that the frequency of ovens on sacred sites points to their importance within the ceremonies, and that the occurrence of mortaria are to be expected as part of the food preparation associated with the rituals, (Smith, 2000a, 330). Broken quern stones are another common find, and have usually been assumed to be votive offerings, rather than part of the ritual, (ibid, 319). The ovens at East Farleigh were accompanied by both quern stones and mortaria fragments within the buildings. Presumably smoke from internal ovens was not an issue, merely adding to the mystical atmosphere before making its way out through the tiles on the roof, thereby confirming the lack of a ceiling and upper storey. It may also suggest that the ovens were fired up under very supervised and perhaps infrequent occasions, to minimise any risk of fire, and perhaps indicates the internal nature of the rituals, at least at those temples with internal hearths.

Discussion

The Roman period in Britain marks the start of a monetary experiment where we witness the influx of money into a society that previously had found other ways to trade. Suddenly cash was available to almost everyone, not just the controlling elite, (Casey, 1992, 99). For those parts of the country that were receptive, and that seems predominantly to have been the south-east of the country, (Taylor, 2007, 109), opportunities were available. Britain had its first taste of consumerism and capitalism, (Webster, 1986, 60). Of course there were still winners and losers and there were still slaves and a hierarchical social structure. But for some, it was possible to make money and indulge in the material rewards that were available. We see this reflected in the villas that started to spring up within 20 years of the Claudian invasion. Smith links the rise of the villa specifically to the introduction of monumental stone temples, believing that the local elite were using them to enhance their standing and maintain their position, socially, politically, and financially, (Smith, 2000a, 310).

If villas are a direct development of the *oppida* system, seen at Verulamium for instance, where they are zoned into broad family units, or 'clans', (Stead & Rigby, 1989, 53), then their allocated retained land becomes the site of the villa as we move into the Roman period. Very often we see a succession of rebuilding, starting small and enlarging or changing. Those changes reflect the growing size and importance of the clan and represent an investment and growth in financial terms, as well as an engagement with the latest styles and fashions, which would explain the many extensions, add-ons and alterations seen in the archaeological record at villa sites. Something that might not be expected from a speculative property tycoon based in Rome. It is indicative of the rise of local people seizing an opportunity - the new entrepreneurial class predicted by Casey, (Casey, 1992, 99), or perhaps the old elite maintaining their position. Unfortunately, it is likely to be a largely male dominated phenomenon, although there is little actual evidence of gender in the archaeology, (Smith, 2000a, 326). We can see the preoccupation in material goods reflected in the defixiones that have been recovered from temple sites such as Bath and Uley, involving frequent appeals to the gods for the return of stolen goods. Often, to us, quite trivial items or small sums of money, but it is an indication of the increased materialism that is prevalent at this time.

> "The sheet of lead which is given to Mercury, that he exact vengeance for the gloves which have been lost, that he take blood and health from the person who has stolen them, that he provide what we ask the God Mercury... as quickly as possible for the person who has taken these gloves."
>
> *Defixio from Uley, (Burnham et al, 1996, 439).*

We have also seen in the south-east particularly, that archaeologically, the transition into the Roman period is seamless, and that many villas and temples are built on earlier, Iron Age sites, (Smith *et al*, 2018, 136). This is a strong clue that we are seeing a local population buying into the Roman single market, and when circumstances and fortunes allow, they are building on ancestral land in the latest *Romanitas* style. Of course, with the advent of new-found affluence, the gods have not gone away, if anything they have perhaps become more important and more ubiquitous. It is not for nothing that Mercury, the god of trade and commerce is one of the most popular deities at Romano-British sacred sites, (Webster, 1986, 60). People now had more to lose. Another sign of success, and ostentatious benevolence, was to build a new temple or sanctuary. These would often be on the site of earlier

sacred sites, another 'zone' within the former *oppida*. Whether by accident or design these sacred sites attracted pilgrims who spent money at the temples, buying votive items, having a scribe write a defixio or paying to stay overnight and have a priest interpret one's dreams. The temples and shrines are another manifestation of Britain entering a new economic phase, enabled by being part of the Roman empire. Britain was entering the Roman single market, and whilst that remained stable, Britain flourished.

Aldhouse-Green suggests that Nettleton Scrubb, built over an Iron Age site on the route of the Fosse Way, was a key stopping off point for pilgrims from Cirencester making their way to the sacred centre at Bath, which she likens to Canterbury Cathedral, (Aldhouse-Green, 2018, 89). At Altbachtal, Trier in Germany, we see a mass of temples and shrines crammed together. It is believed that these represent the religious intent of the numerous businesses in the town, and the variety of temple size reflects the size and success of the businesses, (Derks, 1998, 143). These shopkeepers and tradespeople were in effect investing in divine insurance policies. A mosaic from the cella at Lydney gives us a good indication of the way that these temples were financed; *'For the God'*(singular)*'Mars Nodens Titus Flavius Senilis, superintendent of the cult, from the offerings had this laid; Victorinus, the interpreter (of dreams), gave his assistance',* (Wright, 1985, 249). So there must have been a lot of wealth generated by worshippers making offerings, which paid for the temple upkeep. It would also have attracted money into an area where there was a prestigious temple complex such as Lydney or Nettleton Scrubb. This mosaic also hints that people were perhaps sleeping overnight at the temple in order to have their dreams interpreted, and is suggestive of the dormitory facilities on site being connected to the sacred practices.

Haeussler argues that the *Interpretatio Indigena* meant that the Roman authorities were not interested in the local cults or beliefs, provided they were not contrary to Rome's interests, and we are therefore witnessing a persistence of the local belief systems. Temples and religious spaces would have been created to suit local sacred needs. He argues that local people across the empire would have adapted and evolved their local beliefs, borrowing aspects from across the empire to create new deities and belief systems. It was local, indigenous people who chose to adopt Roman style architecture or anthropomorphised styles of sculpture, thereby creating a hybrid, (Haeussler, 2012, 143). This chimes very well with Casey's view of an economic revolution driving the changes that are apparent in the Celtic belief systems, (Casey, 1992, 99), and is perhaps also supported by

the demise of these structures in the fourth century when there is political upheaval on the continent, and the money supply is largely withdrawn in Britain, and we see villas and temples dismantled or abandoned, (Smith, 2008, 175).

Looking at continental Europe, the Romano-Gallic form of temple appears everywhere in the Celtic territories once they are incorporated into the Roman Empire. There has been much debate about the style of these temples and their origin, with King citing Heathrow and Hayling Island as evidence for a pre-Roman origin, (King, 2007, 14) and Derks and Smith pouring cold water on this suggestion, (Derks, 1998, 183; Smith et al, 2018, 135). We do not see them in Celtic territories outside the Empire, such as Ireland and Scotland, nor do we see them in the Mediterranean world. They seem to be a manifestation in stone of the shrine within an enclosure which has ancient Celtic roots. The fact that as far as we know they coincide with incorporation into the Roman Empire must be a strong indication that the circumstances provided by being part of the Roman system facilitated their development. However, we can speculate that regardless of whether the first design was by a Roman architect or a Celtic entrepreneur, their ubiquity must indicate their popularity and acceptance by the indigenous people who would have seen them almost everywhere, especially in Picardy in Northern France where they are represented so densely, (Agache and Breart, 1975). It is also an indication of the availability of wealth to build these structures on private land. The fact that many are sited on earlier Iron Age sites, such as Pagans Hill, Lamyatt Beacon, Maiden Castle and Camerton, is perhaps a confirmation of ancestral tribal ownership of the land.

The precise arrangement of buildings at East Farleigh appears to be unique, yet many of the underlying factors are common; it sits on the banks of the River Medway, and may even be associated with local springs; it is almost certainly associated with the villa across the river at Barming; and is built over earlier Iron Age features. The arrangement of buildings around a central rectangular ‘courtyard’ space is one that echoes many of the large villa complexes, such as Darenth or Bancroft and which Haselgrove suggests are rooted in much earlier Iron Age precursors, (Haselgrove, 1995, 73), again reinforcing the idea that ‘Roman’ buildings in southern Britain and on the continent, may have used Roman building techniques, but their instigators were largely indigenous elite landowners and merchants. The rural temples and shrines, in southern Britain appear to have taken many forms, and perhaps were the result of a number of different motivations. Some were clearly part of villa estates, and may have been largely for the use of the owners and the

wider 'clan', however if we are to extrapolate from Pliny's letter to his architect, then much like country churches and chapels on country house estates in later times, the local population would have used the facility at times of festivals and occasion. Other rural complexes, further from villa buildings, but sited on roads and at liminal junctions, were clearly intended to draw in visitors to the centre, either on their way elsewhere, or as a destination in its own right.

The complex of buildings at East Farleigh is clearly not a villa, and so far no such building has been identified on the southern bank of the river here. It is inconceivable that the Barming villa owners would choose to site their building so close to another similar property. These buildings were inheritors of pre-Roman tribal boundaries, and were as much about establishing a 'territory' as they were about displaying wealth, prestige and influence. Perhaps for some villa owners, establishing a religious sanctuary on the land was taking this power and influence one step further. The example of the Lydney mosaic shows that these facilities could also be great generators of wealth. At East Farleigh it is likely that there was a river crossing, and roads leading to the river and away to the south coast from the other side, as well as roads connecting to the wider road network, (fig.2). These may all have been in place long before AD43 and formed part of the infrastructure of the *oppidum*. Travellers, or 'pilgrims' would have stopped off at the sanctuary for a period, maybe a few days, maybe longer. We do not know precisely the nature of the gods at East Farleigh, but there is evidence that we have more than one temple on the site and possibly several different shrines, so it is likely that the complex catered for a number of different belief systems. Certainly this would have been the case in provincial Italy, (Glinister, 1997, 64), where multiple deities were venerated at many sanctuary sites.

Early sacred sites did not necessarily require a building. The idea of 'sacred groves' and caves has come to us through the classical authors, and it was probably the case that early beliefs in Italy and other parts of the Mediterranean were much the same, (Ibid, 63). However, by the third century in southern Britain, the temple structures were clearly very important, especially if it was desirable for worshippers to remain for extended periods of time. It is this golden age of pagan worship that is represented by the buildings at East Farleigh.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the site at East Farleigh is not a villa, and that it is a religious sanctuary site, comparable, but different in form, to other religious sanctuary sites in southern Roman Britain. The nature of the evidence is not absolute. We are dealing with partial survival and an almost complete lack of epigraphic evidence. We have to carefully reconstruct a scenario from the fragmentary archaeological material that has been retrieved. Although MAAG excavated the site for twelve years, it was not possible to explore everything, and it is fair to say that there are undoubtedly many more years of archaeological work that could be done on the site to further support, (or dispute), the ideas that I have put forward here.

I believe that I have demonstrated that the most complete surviving building on the site, building five, is an unusual form of Romano-Celtic temple, with parallels primarily on the continent. One of the unusual features is the number of oven structures that were encountered during excavation. I have explained the important role played by these structures in the rituals conducted at the temple, and shown that it is not necessary to introduce a change of use to explain the presence of these structures.

There are still many unanswered questions that I hope future generations of archaeologists will get the chance to answer. Not least is the nature of building six, which I believe to be a double shrine and temenos, but which no doubt will continue to generate debate. Building one also is a potentially important building. Is it a triple cella temple, as I suspect or is it something else? Looking at the wider landscape it is important to identify associated roads, river crossings and the proposed relationship with the villa at Barming.

The site at East Farleigh is remarkable for its level of preservation, and I believe deserves to be appreciated for the important site that it undoubtedly is. I hope that this paper has gone someway to highlighting its significance.

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