

# ROMAN WIGHT

*By*

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## **1. A history of previous research**

Most of the early antiquarian research into Roman Wight, as in other parts of Britain, related to the excavation of villa houses. The earliest such excavation was that at Rock, Brighstone in 1831 (Kell 1856), followed by those at Carisbrooke (Spickernell 1859), Gurnard (Kell 1866) and Brading during the 1880s (Price and Price 1881 and 1900). Other villa sites were noted at Combley and Clatterford during the same period (Kell 1856). The published accounts of most of these excavations are somewhat deficient but, in the case of Gurnard, are supplemented by unpublished manuscript notes of further excavations carried out after publication of the earlier work in 1866. Just a few of the artefacts found at Carisbrooke and Gurnard still survive.

The one exception to this sorry tale is Brading: the published accounts of the excavations carried out by Captain Thorp and the Price brothers is more informative than most for this period and most of the pottery and other finds are still extant.

Other 19<sup>th</sup> c. observations on the Island's Roman archaeology are largely restricted to brief accounts of coin hoards from Farringford, Wroxall and Cliff Copse, Shanklin written up by Kell (1863). A further hoard found at Wootton in 1833 had to wait for more than 100 years before a reasonably-detailed account was produced (Sydenham 1943).

The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw little improvement in the quality of archaeological activity relating to Roman Wight. Poorly-recorded excavations at Combley villa in 1910 (Sydenham 1945, 426-29) were, however, soon followed by the activities of Ambrose Sherwin as curator of Carisbrooke Castle museum during the 1920s and 30s. He is, perhaps, best remembered for his involvement in Percy Stone's excavation of the Shide Roman villa at Newport in 1926-28 (Stone 1929, Sherwin 1929) but his manuscript notes relating to a wide range of discoveries on the Island are invaluable to researchers even today and are accompanied by a profusion of drawings of potsherds and other artefacts from a great variety of sites. It can justifiably be said that he laid the foundations for modern archaeology on the Island before his death in 1942.

A lapse in archaeological activity following Sherwin's death came to an end with a long series of annual excavations at the Combley villa between 1968 and 1979, carried out by Mr L.R.Fennelly of the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society. These excavations were never written up by the excavator, apart from interim notes (Fennelly 1969 and 1971), but the entire site archive has been lodged with the County Archaeological Unit and a text prepared for future publication (Fennelly *et al* Forthcoming).

With plough damage threatening the Rock villa, this site was re-excavated to modern standards by David Tomalin of Carisbrooke Castle Museum between 1974 and 1976 and also awaits publication (Tomalin Forthcoming). The 1980s saw two further excavations by Tomalin, at the Redcliff salt production site just north of Sandown (Tomalin 1990) and of a 4<sup>th</sup> c. corndryer at Packway, Newchurch (Tomalin 1988). Most of the resources of the new archaeological unit were, however, devoted to the plotting and recording of sites and finds along the Spithead foreshore between Wootton Creek and Quarr: a process which continues today and has resulted in the recognition of a beach emporium at Fishbourne, Bembridge limestone quarrying at Quarr and at least one brine-boiling hearth. The publication of this work is now at the editing stage and should go to press in the near future (Tomalin et al Forthcoming).

Finds by fishermen and marine archaeologists indicate the possibility of shipwrecks at the Needles, in Yarmouth Roads and on Ryde Middle Bank and also throw light on patterns of trade with the Island in Roman times.

The last ten years has seen considerable activity by commercial units on the Island and particularly by Kevin Trott Archaeological Services. The ongoing work by this organisation has included the excavation of a number of Late Iron Age and Roman sites along two pipelines in the north of Wight, new work at Brading villa in advance of the construction of a new museum, excavation of a Roman industrial building at Yaverland and, most recently of a Roman causeway at Alverstoke Pond. The same organisation has also excavated sites subject to erosion along the west and south coasts of the Island at St Catherine's Point, Grange Chine, Atherfield Point, Barnes Chine and Sudmoor.

The increase in metal-detecting over the last few years and the setting up of the Portable Antiquities Scheme has led to a great increase in the number of coins and other pieces of Roman metalwork being recorded. Coin hoards have been recorded from Combley Farm, Tapnall Farm, Spring Vale and Newchurch, and the residue of an undeclared hoard from the 1970s recovered from a dealer.

All of these recent discoveries have greatly enhanced the conception of Roman Wight presented in the last overview of the archaeology of the Island (Tomalin 1987) to a heavily populated island with numerous farmsteads and a probable military presence at St Catherine's Point. This should not, however, be surprising in view of the varied fertile soils and the good local climate.

## **2. The Late Iron Age background**

Our understanding of Late Iron Age culture on the Isle of Wight and the effects of the Roman Conquest on it has improved markedly over the last 30 years but is still somewhat deficient.

The most extensively dug site is perhaps Knighton: this was dug by Fennelly in the 1970s but was unfortunately never published. Examination of the finds and archive does, however, reveal a community engaged in agrarian activities and iron production on a site which was abandoned at the time of or shortly before the Roman invasion. The ceramic archive is particularly interesting in that the ditch assemblages suggest that manufacture of flint tempered and vesicular grog-tempered saucepan-

pots, as well as slack-profiled bead-rim jars in similar fabrics, on the Island continued until shortly before the Roman Conquest: sandy Vectis wares, so typical of the Early Roman period, do not seem to have appeared until the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and are found in direct association with the flint and grog tempered wares.

The site also produced much fired clay, including both raw-fired and organic-tempered kiln bar fragments. These fragments do not include pieces from briquetage containers; indeed the inland situation of Knighton would make even the drying of sea-salt unlikely. What we have here may be evidence for pottery manufacture, although other industrial processes are possible

The nearby site of Havenstreet, excavated by Kevin Trott on the line of the Sea Clean pipeline (Lyne 2001, Trott 2001, p.18-19, SMR 4028) also has evidence for iron production and provides a clearer sequence of events. Ditch 44 on that site seems to have remained open from c.50BC to 0BC. It yielded a lower assemblage of grog-tempered saucepan-pots and calcined-flint-tempered globular bead-rim jars accompanied by Campanian Dressel 1A (c.130-50BC) and Catalan Dressel 1 (c.50BC-AD20) fragments, suggesting deposition during the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BC. A later assemblage from the same ditch has a much smaller grog-tempered saucepan-pot element: the much larger quantities of calcined-flint tempered ware have a much wider range of forms than previously and include open forms such as carinated bead-rim bowls of Late Iron Age type in association with Catalan Dressel 1 (c.50BC-AD.20) and Dressel 2.4 (c.50BC-AD.50+) fragments. This assemblage was probably deposited during the last decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and is totally lacking in Vectis ware.

Ditch 45 at Havenstreet has Late Iron Age Vectis ware forms in its lower fills but no amphorae. Calcined-flint and grog-tempered pottery in the earlier tradition is also present in a feature which can probably be dated c.0-AD.50. There is no evidence for post-Conquest occupation on this site either.

Another site with evidence for an end to occupation at the time of the Roman invasion is the newly-discovered hill-fort at Yaverland. The lower fills of the main defensive ditch yielded a couple of sherds of Middle Iron Age-Late Iron Age 1 character and the upper fills had nine sherds in a mixture of calcined-flint and early Vectis ware fabrics. A second yielded 33 fresh sherds in early Vectis ware fabric variants, including the greater part of a CAM 2 platter copy of c.10BC-AD.50 date. The top of the main defensive ditch contained a human skeleton which appears to have been deposited face down with its hands tied behind its back (Lyne Forthcoming A).

The pottery sequence from an Iron Age to Roman ditched enclosure at Mersley Farm has produced Middle Iron Age saucepan-pot and globular jar fragments in a variety of calcined-flint, grog and shell-tempered fabrics from the lower fills of the enclosure ditch and in association with Dressel 1 amphora fragments in both Campanian Black Sand and Italian Volcanic fabrics. Late Iron Age and Early Roman Vectis ware fragments are predominant in the upper fills of the ditch; also associated with imported amphorae.

Two shell-tempered fragments from Middle/Late Iron Age saucepan pots from Yaverland include tiny, largely complete fossil gastropod shells in their largely oyster shell filler. Similar fossil gastropod shells also occur in sand-tempered Late Iron Age and Early Roman Vectis ware sherds from the Fishbourne beach emporium site and they are also present in briquetage fragments from Yaverland.

This suggested to me that the pottery, like BB1 around Poole Harbour, was made on coastal brine-boiling sites. In an endeavour to locate the production site, I took all of the known sherds with fossil gastropods to the Natural History Museum. All of the shells were identified as being of the species *Tarebia acuta* – a species characteristic of the Headon Hill formation of the Upper Eocene. The best exposure of this formation is in the cliffs of Colwell Bay in West Wight, where a localised oyster bed is exposed. Examination of the cliff talus yielded Middle and Late Iron Age and Early Roman sherds along with briquetage and thus another Vectis ware production site.

The Isle of Wight has produced unusually large numbers of imported pre-Conquest amphorae from the Roman world (Carver 2001, Fig.21). They have been found on 35 Island sites; mostly rural settlements but including some underwater and inter-tidal locations. The latter locations include a probable anchorage site at Yarmouth Roads with fragments from at least 21 Dressel 1A amphorae and stray amphorae of the same type from Ryde Middle Bank and the Western Solent.

It would appear that the Isle of Wight played a significant role in the importation of wine from the Roman Empire through Gaul during the period 100-50BC before the disruption of this trade by Caesar's Gallic wars. When importation recommenced, it was no longer that of Campanian wine in Dressel 1A amphorae but of wine in Catalan Dressel 1, 1B and 2-4's. The presence of at least six Dressel 1B amphorae on the Island is unusual as most of the wine trade involving these was centred on the territories of the Trinovantes and Catuvellauni in the east of Britain. Two probable burials with amphorae of this type at Packway, Newchurch and Newport Goods Yard are also unusual as interments with Dressel 1B's are otherwise confined to the same tribal territories.

### **3. Landscape and land use**

The structure of the island is that of an eroded monocline of successive Cretaceous formations with its northern vertical edge made up of a long chalk ridge running from Tennyson Down and the Needles in the west to Culver Cliff and Whitecliff Bay in the east. The southern slopes of this monocline form the chalk ridge occupying the southernmost part of the Island between St Catherine's Point and Ventnor, with the area between these ridges being made up of a variety of earlier Cretaceous sands and clays exposed by denudation. The area to the north of this monocline is occupied by later Eocene and Oligocene clays, sands and limestones.

The resultant variety of fertile soils, coupled with the good climate enjoyed by the Isle of Wight, attracted both cereal cultivation and livestock rearing in Roman times. There is good pollen evidence for continued woodland clearance, both on the heavy Tertiary clays of the north of the Island in the countryside around Newnham Farm, Binsted and at the Clatterford villa on the chalk in the centre. Of the 47

excavated Roman occupation sites on the Island, cited here, four are on the clays and sands of the Wealden formations of West Wight, six are on the Lower Greensand and Gault clay, eight on the Upper Greensand and Chalk, 14 on the Tertiary clays, sands and limestones of Northern Wight, five on gravels, two on brickearth and seven on the coastal landslips along the south and west coasts.

Most of the Celtic field systems that must once have existed on the Island have been obliterated by later agricultural activity but some of the high ground of the chalk ridge crossing the Island has escaped cultivation since Roman times. Field systems are still visible on the Upper Chalk at Brighstone (SZ42658422,SMR305), Pitts Down Calbourne (SZ42908580,SMR411), Little and Newbarn Downs Calbourne (SZ43908580,SMR412), Mersley Down Newchurch (SZ55908740, SMR 991), Ashley Down Newchurch (SZ57308770, SMR 992) and Brading Down (SZ60108670, SMR 1058)

The Clatterford villa site has evidence for the cultivation of spelt wheat and its processing on site during the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, whereas the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century dryer at Packway, Newchurch was used for drying bread-wheat and barley (Tomalin 1988). Recent excavations at Brading villa are suggestive of more specialised agrarian activities. There is very little evidence for cereal cultivation on a villa estate where the main crop appears to have been the Celtic bean. There is further evidence for the cultivation of such beans at the Clatterford villa and at Flowers Brook, Ventnor: they may have been dried and ground up to make flour or porridge.

The pottery assemblage from the late 3<sup>rd</sup>-to-early 4<sup>th</sup> century building at Rock has abnormally high numbers of flagons represented. This and the presence of a ?wine press base in front of what appears to be a two story stone building with undercroft rooms suggests that we are dealing with a winery with storage facilities. The situation of the site beneath the south facing slope of the chalk ridge running across the centre of the Island would also be ideal for the cultivation of the vine. It has also been suggested that the terraces on the south side of Mersley Down further to the east indicate the presence of another Roman vineyard (Kevin Trott pers comm.).

The rearing of cattle was important at Brading and there is some evidence for their slaughter on site and the tanning of their hides to make leather during the late Roman period. Other cattle reared on the Island were driven down to the beach at Fishbourne during the late 4<sup>th</sup> century before being pole-axed and having their carcasses loaded on boats for either export or military supply.

#### **4. Settlement**

The best known aspect of Roman occupation of the Isle of Wight is that of substantial stone-built farmsteads or villas lived in by people of substance. In 1987, it could be said that there were eight such buildings on the Island, at Gurnard (Kell 1866, SMR 1483), Brading (Price and Price 1881 and 1900), Combley (Fennelly 1969 and 1971, SMR883), Carisbrooke (Spickernell 1860), Shide (Stone 1929), Rock (Tomalin Forthcoming), Clatterford (Kell 1856) and Bowcombe (Sydenham 1945, SMR2015). Of these, Gurnard, Carisbrooke, Clatterford and Bowcombe were the targets of poorly-recorded 19<sup>th</sup> century or later excavations, although more recent

work at Clatterford has done much to improve our knowledge of that site (Busby et al 2001).

The excavations at Brading were well-recorded by 19<sup>th</sup> century standards and more recent but as yet unpublished excavations have done much to improve our knowledge of the history and economy of this villa estate. The Shide villa at Newport was also well recorded by the standards of the day and, once again, more recent unpublished work has added to our knowledge of the earlier Roman history of the site. The unpublished excavations at Combley and Rock during the 1960s and 1970s have also provided considerable information about those buildings.

As can be seen from this account, the operative words are ‘poorly-recorded’ and ‘unpublished’ and to this list can now be added probable and even less understood buildings at Mersley Farm (SMR1022), Rew Street (Sydenham 1944, SMR583), Chawton (Trott 2004, SMR 5248 and SMR 5253) and Watergate Newport (Frere and Tomalin 1991, SMR 926).

The three ‘villas’ that have furnished information about their early histories (Brading, Combley and Shide) indicate the presence of fairly humble establishments during the late 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. Fragmentary remains of the stone wall foundations for a building of indeterminate plan were located for the pre-Flavian Phase 1 at Combley and were associated with a variety of imported Gallo-Belgic finewares. This building was replaced during the late-first to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century Phase 2 by a simple two or possibly three cell cottage. A similar structure seems to have existed at Brading (Tomalin and Hanworth 1998,1) in association with areas of late 1<sup>st</sup> century occupation, including a possible pottery clamp, and considerable quantities of briquetage (Trott 1999).

Late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century occupation on the site of the later villa building at Newport (Shide) is represented by a ditch, midden and earthfast post built structure with more evidence for sea salt production or use in the form of briquetage fragments (SMR 855).

Elsewhere on the Island, a number of low status native sites of early Roman date have been located along the south and west coasts. The Ventnor area has yielded a number of shell middens, at Binnel (SMR693, SZ52407580), Gills Cliff (Benson 1954, SZ55627758), ‘Lyncombe’ Castle Road (SMR742, SZ55617742), ‘Salcombe’ Castle Road (Poole 1928, SZ55567738) and Steephill Castle (Basford 1980, SZ55257719). The Gills Cliff site was subjected to further excavation by Kevin Trott in 2000 and shown to consist of a northern midden of Middle Iron Age date and a southern one with ceramic evidence for Late Iron Age and Early Roman activity up until c.AD.70/100. A shell midden at St.Catherine’s Point (SZ49907520) yielded further pottery of Late Iron Age and early Roman date between the wars (SMR3388).

There are further early Roman occupation sites along the west coast of the Island with little sign of substantial buildings. Atherfield Cliff (SZ45207912) had ditches and pits (Sherwin 1936): further work by Kevin Trott has yielded several pottery assemblages of Late Iron Age to 4<sup>th</sup> century date from a variety of similar features . Barnes Chine (Trott 2004A, SMR 5596, SZ43558075) also had ceramic evidence for occupation throughout the Roman period, very little of which was

stratified. The two Grange Chine sites at SZ42098168 and SZ42198163 (SMR1873) produced ceramic evidence for occupation throughout the Roman period and Sudmoor Site 1 (SMR 1365, SZ39878252) yielded traces of three huts (Dunning 1935, Sherwin 1939A, Hookey 1951) with pottery indicating occupation from the Late Iron Age until the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

The presence of brine-boiling hearths in Late Iron Age-to-Early Roman contexts at Barnes Chine and Grange Chine and the coastal siting of these sites suggests that their economies were based on salt production and fishing, with the fragments of bitumen noted by Kell at Barnes Chine (SMR322) perhaps being used to seal jars of salt or some other marine produce. An elongated amphora-like Vectis ware jar from Grange Chine may also have been used to transport a product (Lyne Forthcoming B): another example of this type of vessel is known from Yaverland on the east side of the Island (Lyne Forthcoming A). Early Roman sea-salt producing sites are also known at Redcliff north of Sandown on the east coast of the Island (Tomalin 1990, SMR1126) and on the beach at Fishbourne on the north-east coast (SMR5637).

Other Early Roman occupation sites with little evidence for substantial buildings are known from Ashey Down, Newchurch (Drewett 1970,55,SMR1794), Lake Middle School (Brading 2001,PMR2259), Mersley Farm (Trott 2002A,SMR 2463), Queens Road Newport (Sherwin 1939B,SMR852), Quarr Beach Site 4, Briddlesford Lodge Farm (Anon 2005, p.38-40, SMR 3966), Padmore Farm Whippingham (Anon 2005,p.25-29, SMR 4581), Dores Farm Arreton (Trott 2001,p.17), Yaverland and South of Centurion's Copse Bembridge (Trott 2002B, 10-11): casual Roman finds from other places on the Island suggest that the true number of Early Roman occupation sites in the Late Iron Age tradition is considerably greater.

The late 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards saw changes in the pattern and nature of settlement on Vectis, with many of the native occupation sites failing to outlive the second century. Phase 3 at Combley saw the construction of an aisled farmhouse c.AD.250 on the east side of the cottage structure. It is tempting to regard this structure as evidence for the Combley estate being bought up by another elsewhere and run by a bailiff living in the old cottage and slaves based in the aisled barn. The presence of two mosaics in the aisled barn does, however, suggest a higher status for the building. Phase 4 saw the replacement of the old cottage by a new bath house, perhaps at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It has been suggested that this building served 'both managers and tenants of the estate as well as the owner of the establishment' (Fennelly *et al* Forthcoming).

The later history of Brading villa was somewhat different. A period of industrial activity took place in front of the villa house during the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, involving a possible kiln making Vectis ware succeeded by a furnace used for parching crops of Celtic beans. This is not what one would expect to be taking place in front of the entrance to a farmhouse and suggests that the building had been downgraded. Very soon after this, and at about the same time as the Combley aisled barn was constructed, the old farmhouse was rebuilt as a substantial winged corridor house. This house was equipped with a series of fine mosaics and was clearly lived in by people of substance. The construction of this new house was accompanied that of

an aisled barn similar to Combley, a nymphaeum and probably the detached bath block at the east end of the south range.

The mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century (c.AD.270) also saw the construction of the substantial winged corridor house at Shide, Newport, incorporating a small bath block. Little is known of the other villa buildings but sewer trench excavations indicate that there was a walled courtyard to the south of the house and traces of another hypocausted building were discovered in 1933 (SMR855).

The aisled building at Carisbrooke has much in common with that at Combley in having a mosaic in the principal room and a bath house. The dating is difficult to arrive at because of the poor recording of such an early excavation but the coin list suggests construction during the mid-to-late 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

The small five room corridor house at Rock was constructed c.AD.275 and may have had a specialised function. Quantification of the pottery assemblages from the building show abnormally high percentages of flagons: this, coupled with the circular base of what may be a press immediately in front of the structure, the south-facing aspect and the light chalky soil, suggest the possibility of viticulture and the bottling and storage of wine.

This great flowering of villas on the Island between 250 and 270 suggests increased prosperity but all this came to an end some 50-to-80 years later. A lack of post-330 pottery forms at Combley, together with the latest coins from the site, suggests that occupation ceased during the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century. Recent excavations at Brading villa provide a clearer picture of the abandonment of the villa house between 300 and 330 and its later conversion into an agricultural building. Disarticulated human remains from within the villa house and some evidence for burning suggest the possibility of a violent event leading to its abandonment.

Glassware, pottery vessels and a variety of other objects of 3<sup>rd</sup> century date may have been salvaged from the house and dumped in Rooms 16 and 17 of the aisled building: this and other buildings continued to function but now, perhaps, as the administrative centre of a bailiff run estate for an absentee owner.

The mid-4<sup>th</sup> century saw the ripping out of some of the room partitions within the derelict farmhouse and the installation of a corn-dryer at the northern end of the front corridor. A scarcely circulated nummus from within the corn-dryer is dated c.AD.348-50 (Lyne Forthcoming C)

Occupation in the Shide, Newport villa house also seems to have ended early. The pottery includes nothing which need be later than c.AD.320 and, whereas the latest coin from off of the floor of the villa farmhouse at Brading is one of Allectus (c.AD.293-6), the latest coin from Newport is of the Tetricii (c.AD.271-4). As at Brading, human remains in the form of a woman's skull and femur were found in the destruction debris of the building.

The building at Rock also seems to have been largely abandoned during the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century. Later occupation was very limited in scale and restricted to squatting



in a ruinous building after AD 370. A corndryer was constructed in Room 4 during this period of squatting when the building was already lacking much of its roof.

We have little information about the Carisbrooke and Clatterford villas (SMR1706) but the coin list from Spickernell's excavation of the aisled building at Carisbrooke suggests that it too was abandoned during the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century. Dating of the winged corridor villa at Clatterford is uncertain due to lack of excavation but excavations in Building 2 to its south-east suggests construction during the late-3<sup>rd</sup> century and cessation of occupation during the early 4<sup>th</sup> (Busby *et al* 2001,102-3).

Field-walking over the site of the Packway, Newchurch villa building has produced pottery of 4<sup>th</sup> century date and, together with the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century pottery from the excavated corn-dryer, indicates a Late Roman date for the structure. Lesser occupation sites with Late Roman pottery include Brickfield Farm Cottage Calbourne (SMR1372), Rew Street (Sherwin 1936,SMR582), St Catherine's Point (SMR2063), Chessell Calbourne (SMR 5259), Chillingwood Copse (Trott 2001, p.19-20, SMR 4551), Great Biddlesford Farm, Atherfield Point, Sudmoor, Grange Chine, Limerstone Down Brighstone (SMR299), Rookley Farm (SMR824), Quarr Beach Site 4 (SMR 5328) and Yaverland. The last-mentioned was an industrial site and is dealt with below under that heading: the rest are represented by little more than occupation horizons. An occupation site in Shalfleet Vicarage Garden can only be broadly dated to The Roman period and produced pottery, tile and evidence of metal-working (SMR2512).

The material culture of the inhabitants of the Island seems to have differed little from that of those on the mainland. Articles of personal adornment, such as brooches, pins, rings and the like are the same and either imported or copied locally: the same applies to other objects such as the linch pin from Brading. The pottery making traditions were, however, different and are dealt with in detail under the heading of 'Crafts and Industries' below.

## **5. Ceremony, ritual and religion**

Most of the evidence for ritual activities in Roman times usually comes from burials, so it is unfortunate that all but one of those on the Island were excavated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with few records being kept. Three 'sepulchral' urns were found in Grove Road Ventnor (Kell 1856, SMR 746) and more than 20 when making a railway cutting through Hunny Hill Carisbrooke in 1861 (Wilkins 1862). The account of the discovery of a stone cist at Sheepwash Freshwater is more informative (SMR 49). This contained a human cranium and a two-handled Vectis ware jar.

Further possible indications of the continued Celtic practice of the veneration of the human head takes the form of carved stone heads from Luccombe Shanklin (SMR 735) and Culver Cliff Bembridge (SMR 1173).

Drewett's excavation of two Bronze Age barrows on Ashley Down (1970) indicated that both had been the object of some kind of veneration during the Roman period. Both produced 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century Roman coins: Barrow 8 also yielded 30 sherds of Roman pottery and Barrow 9 had a similarly dated secondary inhumation inserted into it.

Fishing must have been a significant part of the economy of Vectis: a complete New Forest flagon, ritually killed by having a hole drilled in its side, was recovered from the sea bed in Newtown estuary and may have been tossed into the sea by fishermen to propitiate either Neptune or Oceanus.

Perhaps the most unusual evidence for religious practices comes from Brading villa. The Bacchus mosaic in the south-east corner of the final 3<sup>rd</sup> c. building has a curious panel depicting a cock-headed man standing at the foot of a flight of steps leading up to a temple. To the left of this temple are two gryphons walking left and right. Recent excavations in the courtyard immediately to the east of this room uncovered a pit containing the skeletons of two cockerels.

The material salvaged from the villa house after its sacking and stored in Rooms 16 and 17 of the aisled barn included a leaf-shaped copper alloy spoon bowl and a flower-shaped cup in similar material. The glass in the same deposit included fragments from an oculus (Shepherd Forthcoming).

One of the symbols used by Gnostic sects on amulets is that of a fowl-headed man and another is that of human bodies with snakes for limbs. The Bacchus mosaic has a border of what appear to be tritons with fish-tails for legs. We lack details about the rites of Christian Gnosticism as most of their writings were burnt as heretical by the early Church Fathers. It does seem possible, however, that Gnostic rites of a Pagan or Christian nature were practiced by the inhabitants of the Brading villa during the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

## **6. Military installations**

The lower enclosure at Carisbrooke Castle has been variously claimed to be Roman or Norman since its discovery during the 1920s (Rigold 1969, 129-30). More recent excavations by Young (2000) found no traces of Roman occupation and it was concluded that the enclosure was Late Saxon in date.

Unpublished and ongoing excavations by Trott at St Catherine's Point have, however, yielded a fragment from a CLBR stamped tile residual in a Late Roman enclosure ditch. Preliminary examination of the style of lettering suggests that this tile was produced at Boulogne and may have been used in either a signal station or military lighthouse at what is the southernmost point of the Isle of Wight (Lyne Forthcoming D). It would be very unlikely for the Romans not to have had some kind of beacon at this point.

## **7. Crafts and industries**

The Isle of Wight straddles the entrances to two of the best natural harbours in Europe, namely Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour, and seems to have been of some considerable importance in the Late Iron Age wine trade between Britain and the Continent. Despite this fact, it appears that local pottery production on the Island remained firmly rooted in Late Iron Age technology throughout the 370 years of Roman occupation.

The Vectis ware pottery industry was first recognised by Tomalin during the late 1970s and a preliminary corpus was published by him in 1987. The Late Iron Age to Late 1<sup>st</sup> c. form range is similar to but more limited than that of the contemporary Durotrigian Black-burnished ware industry just across the water to the west of the Island in the Isle of Purbeck and around Poole Harbour.

The early form range is dominated by a variety of bead-rim bowls and jars and cooking-pots with weakly-everted rims. Open forms are few and far between. The most common fabric is grey or brown with profuse sub-angular quartz filler, fired reddish-brown with thin discontinuous surface greying. Another variant is fired black and can be difficult to distinguish from Durotrigian Black-burnished ware.

Tomalin is of the opinion that there were small pottery producing centres scattered across the northern part of Vectis and exploiting the varied Tertiary clays and wood from their natural tree cover as fuel for firing the wares. Kiln bar fragments have been discovered at the Combley villa site (Tomalin 1987,31) and an alleged kiln was recorded at Thorness in 1930 on the north coast of the Island just to the west of Cowes (Sherwin 1933, SMR566). The sketch by Sherwin appears to depict the base of a large circular oven; well in excess of a metre in diameter and floored with potsherds. There are no indications of flues, however, and it is more likely that this 'oven' was the substructure of a clamp. The pottery from Thorness indicates a 2<sup>nd</sup> c.date

Ditch digging at Newnham Farm, Binstead near Ryde in 1983 sectioned seams of black sooty soil with potsherds in an area of wet marshy land with traces of old clay workings. The pottery includes spalled, oxidised and underfired everted-rim cooking-pots, flanged dishes and both incipient and developed beaded and flanged bowls, indicating 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> c. pottery production: a few Late Iron Age/Early Roman Vectis ware wasters are also present (SMR1455, Lyne Forthcoming E).

The evolution of the Vectis ware industry during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries differs from that of the related BB1 industry in that the small island centres never became large concerns and did not, therefore, standardise their form range to the same extent. Second-century reeded-rim and flanged bowls betray Rowlands Castle and BB1 influence respectively. As with BB1, the everted and cavetto rims on cooking-pots became more developed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century: body decoration is, however, rare and obtuse-lattice decoration is virtually unknown.

The smallscale nature of Vectis ware production led to great variability in vessel sizes and a lack of uniform 'factory runs'. Pottery manufacture was probably subordinate to other activities such as sea salt production and fishing: preliminary work on the distribution of Newnham Farm Vectis ware indicates that it makes up only 10% of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> c. from the Yaverland site near Bembridge, only eight kilometres from the production site and is present in very small quantities at Brading. Household industry like this was clearly not geared to export but tiny numbers of 3<sup>rd</sup> c. vessels are found at sites along the mainland coast opposite the Island.

Vectis ware production finally ceased during the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century after a long decline brought about by both the appearance of Late Roman handmade grog-

tempered wares during the third quarter of the 3rd century and the mass importation of New Forest greywares on to the Island after 260-270.

The filler used in the local Late Roman grog-tempered wares is very similar to that used in some Vectensian Middle Iron Age saucepan pots and may be crushed briquetage. Clay pan supports from the Durotrigian brine boiling site at Hamworthy are in streaky white and orange fired Bagshot clay and the filler in Middle Iron Age and Late Roman grog-tempered pots from the Island and the mainland opposite consists of crushed white, orange and buff-fired clay grog.

Site percentages of Late Roman grog-tempered ware suggest a source in the north of Vectis and possibly along the estuary of the River Medina on or near the Bagshot clay outcrop. Why did the Late Roman grog-tempered ware producers revert to using a filler not used on Vectis since the Middle Iron Age? If we assume that the grog is crushed briquetage, then it suggests that supplies of such filler were only sufficient for limited pottery production. An increase in pottery production on salterns during the Late Iron Age and earlier Roman period may have led to the potters looking for a more prolific source of filler such as beach and cliff-face sand. A reduction in output after 270 may have in turn led to a reversion to old potting practices.

The mass importation of New Forest greywares seems to have commenced during the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century and was accompanied by that of colour-coated fineware beakers and other forms. This trade continued for about 150 years into the early years of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Small numbers of Oxfordshire Red Colour-coated vessels also arrived on the Island during the 4<sup>th</sup> century and one or two Alice Holt/Farnham greyware vessels are known from late-fourth century contexts at Brading and elsewhere.

Tile manufacture is suspected at Combley villa, as a large number of tiles from that source are distorted and fired a distinctive blue colour (Tomalin 1987,98). Such manufacture may also have taken place elsewhere on the Island but clear evidence is lacking. A site discovered on the line of the Seaclean pipeline just west of Chillingwood copse to the south-west of Havenstreet also has evidence for tile manufacture during the Late Roman period (K.Trott pers comm..)

The quarrying of building stone also took place on the Island and of Bembridge and Quarr 'featherbed' limestones in particular. Bembridge limestone was used for rotary querns, roofing slabs and general building stone and is present in one form or another on most 'villa' sites on the Island. This limestone was also used in the construction of Fishbourne Palace and earlier structures on that site. The probable quarries for this stone have been located at the low water mark on Quarr beach and have Atrebatian 'Overlap' pottery of latest Iron Age and pre-AD.60 date associated. These pots were probably dropped by stone masons brought over from the mainland.

There is some evidence for the importation of raw Kimmeridge shale blocks on to the Island and the production of armlets and turned vessels at Bouldnor beach (Trott and Tomalin 2003, SMR185). Such material was probably brought in by sea from the civitas of the Durotriges to the postulated emporium in Yarmouth Roads (see below).

Iron production also took place on a limited scale at several places on the Island. Slag is present in small quantities at Chillingwood Copse, Clatterford (Dungworth 2001,114), Merstone Arreton (Trott 2004B), Yaverland etc. The late 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century building at Yaverland (Lyne, Trott 2002B, p.11-35) appears to have been industrial in nature, with evidence for the working of copper, lead, glass and iron. One of the items recovered from the building was a part-used billet of iron and indicates the importation of such material from elsewhere for processing on the site.

Another characteristic of the Yaverland site is the presence of abnormally large numbers of lead and copper weights, ranging in weight from 1 sicilicus (6.82gm) to a semis (163.72gm). Fragments from two steelyards are also present and the presence of part of a stone mould suggests that the workshop was used for the manufacture of articles of personal adornment. Small quantities of iron slag were also found at Brading as were globules and tap waste fragments of copper alloy.

## **8. Trading links and internal communications**

We have evidence for two emporia on the north coast of Vectis. The first of these was on Fishbourne beach at the entrance to Wootton Creek. The dredging and deepening of the channel used by car ferries from Portsmouth triggered off coastal erosion which stripped the sand from the beach and exposed black mud full of complete and semi-complete pots ranging in date from the Iron Age to the Medieval period.

These broken vessels are a mixture of broken cargo from beached vessels and jetsam from the galleys of the same. The Late Iron Age and Early Roman material has a predominance of Durotrigian pottery and its successor BB1: there is very little of the local Vectis ware. Durotrigian pottery occurs in significant amounts on most Island sites but in nothing like the amounts from the beach. It seems likely that merchants from Poole Harbour and Hengistbury Head beached their ships here to trade with the islanders.

Other ships took a shorter route from Chichester Harbour and included Rowlands Castle ware amongst their cargoes. Amounts are never large but suggest limited persistent trade from the late 1<sup>st</sup> to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Yet other ships came from much further afield: a tripod bowl with rouletted decoration is a rare 1<sup>st</sup> c. import from Aquitaine. South Gaulish and Central Gaulish Samian was also present on the beach and includes a complete Curle 15 bowl with a large stone embedded in its base. This is clearly a usable kiln second and may have been discarded from the galley of a ship trading in Samian to the Island. Other imported wares include Moselkeramik from Trier and East Gaulish beakers from Rheinzabern.

The second emporium was in Yarmouth Roads at the western end of the Solent. Material dumped from anchored vessels has been found in large quantities on nearby Bouldnor beach but nearly always in a heavily-rolled state. Other pots have been dredged up by fishermen off Yarmouth.

A small hoard of 2<sup>nd</sup> century sestertii and dupondii from the low water mark on the beach at Spring Vale at the eastern end of Spithead may indicate the site of yet another emporium.

There are suspected Roman wreck sites in both the Solent and Spithead and analysis of the pottery dredged up from these suggests that traders from western Gaul and South-West Britain brought their ships up the Solent, whereas ships from North-East Gaul, Eastern Britain and the Rhineland made use of Spithead for access to the Island and mainland anchorages opposite (Lyne Forthcoming).

We have already mentioned the evidence for importation of Samian, Moselkeramik and other finewares from the Continent during the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Some of the pots salvaged from the Brading villa house and deposited in Rooms 16 and 17 could well be from a single mid-3<sup>rd</sup> c. ship's cargo of Rhineland origin and acquired at the Fishbourne Beach emporium. They include two complete East Gaulish Samian bowls of type Lv Sb/Sh (c.AD.225-60 and c.AD.180-240), a Walters 79 example from the same source (c.AD.180-240) and six Moselkeramik indented beakers (c.AD.200-275).

Much larger quantities of BB1 vessels were imported from Dorset throughout the Roman period and were joined by similarly large quantities of New Forest grey and fine wares during the Late Roman period. One unusual aspect of the Late Roman importation of pottery is the presence of Oxfordshire greyware vessels at Brading (Lyne Forthcoming C) and Barnes Chine (Lyne 2004). A number of pink-grog-tempered jars from the Towcester area are also present at the St Catherine's Point site in Late Roman contexts. Oxfordshire greywares and pink-grog-tempered wares other than storage vessels are virtually unknown on sites in the South-East of Britain and suggest some kind of direct trade link between Vectis and the Midlands of Britain.

We have already referred to the paucity of Vectis ware on the mainland. The great increase in ceramic imports, and in particular from the New Forest kilns, during the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century was matched by a considerable increase in ceramic exports from the Island. This increased exportation was entirely driven by Late Roman Grog-tempered wares, which are now found in appreciable quantities on sites in the Hampshire Basin and West Sussex and as far north as Berkshire (Lyne 1994, Industry 6A). This trade may well have taken place on the back of that in sea salt and became increasingly significant in the later years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Coinage supplied to the Island during the Roman period also gives clues as to trading links. The most striking of such clues is supplied by a bag of coins dropped into the surf during trading transactions at the emporium on Fishbourne Beach. This group of 70 coins (Lyne Forthcoming H) includes 22 large Ae2s of Magnus Maximus, one of Theodosius 1 and a copy of a similar coin of Gratian. These all date between 381 and 387 and show little sign of ever having been in circulation.

Coins of this type are particularly scarce in Roman Britain and what there are tend to come from coastal sites such as Richborough, where as many as 11 are recorded. None are recorded from Canterbury, Chichester, Portchester, Bitterne or Exeter.

The Continental distribution of the *Reparatio Reipublicae* issues is heavily concentrated in Northern Gaul and the Limes and there was considerable local copying of the type in the former area. Gaul had not received an influx of Valentinianic coinage on anything like the scale of that which entered Britain between 367 and 378. As a result, most of the base currency in circulation there during the 380s consisted of worn Constantinian coinage and *Fel Temp Reparatio* issues of the period 350-364. Magnus Maximus's coinage was clearly needed to rectify shortages in Gaul and the heavy local copying of his Ae2s suggests that the supply of the new coins was insufficient to cope with the great demand. The few examples of the Ae2s on sites in Britain probably arrived in the course of cross-channel trade, but failed to penetrate much beyond their points of entry.

The Fishbourne Beach group of coins is, therefore, of particular interest in that it almost certainly came from a ship of Continental origin. There is further interest, in that the coins appear to be virtually uncirculated and include three cases of die links. Magnus Maximus usurped power in Britain in 383 and Gratian was assassinated later in the same year, before Maximus seized control of the Gallic mints. The presence of a fresh coin of Gratian, imitative or otherwise, in a parcel of equally fresh issues of Maximus suggests that these coins were dropped in late 383 or 384 from a ship belonging to either to the latter's fleet based at one of the Gallic Shore forts or a civilian supplier obtaining grain, meat or some other commodity from Vectis to victual the army operating in Gaul at that time. There may be a connection with the scatter of pole-axed cattle skulls found on the beach nearby.

No Roman roads were known for certain on the Island until very recently when a gravel road on a wooden causeway was discovered running north-to-south across Alverstoke pond. Nothing has been published as yet but this author has seen photographs of a nummus of Magnus Maximus and two ritually 'killed' iron knives from the excavations (Kevin Trott pers comm.). Most of the Island roads in Roman times, however, probably took the form of Iron Age trackways continuing in use.

## **9. The end of Roman Wight**

Evidence for early 5<sup>th</sup> c. activity on Wight and elsewhere in Britain is very elusive: there appears to be an almost complete lack of artefacts. It may, however, be that this apparent lack of material culture is illusory in that a reassessment of the Theodosian nummi from Richborough has revealed the presence of two issues of 421-23, one of 423-25 and one of 425-35 (Abdy and Williams 2006): further issues of 421-23 and 425-35 are known from Verulamium and Wroxeter. Base coinage has no meaning outside a full monetary economy and it has been suggested that such coinage continued in circulation until the 430s (Moorhead 2006): an even later end date seems possible.

This would suggest that the final 4<sup>th</sup> c. occupation on many Roman sites could be extended well into the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the accepted end date for Roman pottery production similarly extended.

The Isle of Wight is notable for the large number of Theodosian coin hoards found there. Robertson records four (2000, Fig 24), from Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin and Wroxall with probable deposition dates of AD.403 or later: to these can now be

added the 1875 Havenstreet find and the 1996 Combley hoard of 1156 nummi (Lyne Forthcoming G). All of these find spots are on the eastern side of the Island.

A solidus of Libius Severus (461-65) was found at Mount Joy, Newport before 1856 and may perhaps be regarded as part of a cluster of 5<sup>th</sup> c. gold coins otherwise represented by two of Valentinian III from Chichester and the Patching hoard in West Sussex.

Evidence for early 5<sup>th</sup> c. occupation on the Island also takes the form of an unusual convex-sided dish type with solid hemispherical bosses; probably made in northern Wight in handmade grog-tempered ware (Lyne 1999). They occur at Brading in a very late pit full of demolition debris, on Fishbourne Beach, at Rew Street and inside the shore fort at Portchester, where there are nine from the post AD.345 occupation. The nearby Crown Offices site at Fareham had an example from the fill of a ditch of probable early 5<sup>th</sup> c date containing abnormally-large numbers of vessels in Overwey/Portchester D fabric and rusticated Saxon pottery. Yet another, reconstructable, example comes from the dark earth over a pit containing a coin hoard deposited after 403 at the Brook Street site in Winchester and another from a late gully with crude handmade pottery at the Abinger villa in Surrey.

An identical form but in different fabric was made in the vicinity of Dorchester-upon-Thames. Find spots form a cluster around the town and, where datable, are clearly very late indeed. The 5<sup>th</sup> c. Saxon occupation within Dorchester yielded a couple of crude handmade copies of this boss decorated dish form but in typical Early Saxon sandy fabric.

It, therefore, seems very likely that the Isle of Wight vessels are 5<sup>th</sup> century in date and were presumably made alongside somewhat less distinctive jars similar to those which had been made throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

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