

WHAT THE ROMANS LEFT FOR US

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Last week whilst talking about the Bronze and Iron Ages I mentioned the discovery in the early part of the 20th century of a couple of dug-out canoes and a paddle found at Send by Mr W G Tarrant. Of course at that time there was no radio-carbon dating (or dendrochronology), so we cannot be certain when the paddle or canoes were actually made, but when Tarrant came to develop the Hockering Estate a few years later we know that he (or at least his workers) did discover a Romano-British site dating from the 1st century AD, including a piece of a large Urn (used for storing grain) together with a piece of a quern-

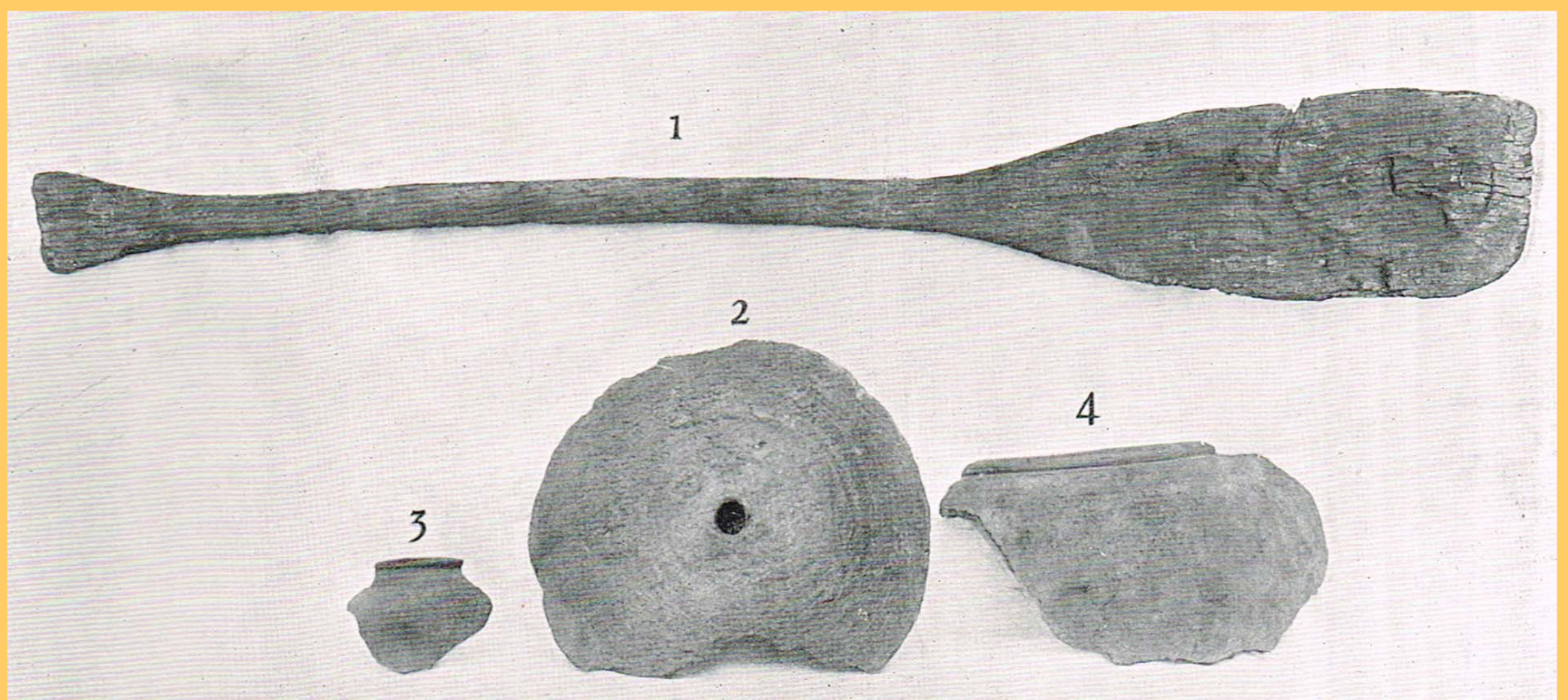
W.G. Tarrant developed the Hockering estate in the early 20th century after the Smallpiece family (who came from the village of Hockering in Norfolk) laid out the area for housing in 1904-5.

stone that would have been used to turn the grain into flour.

In the Wey Valley at Old Woking another Romano-British site was discovered in the late 1960's and early 70's. Sherds of various types of Romano-British pottery, including a number

of sizeable rims and bases were discovered and excavation revealed the post holes of a timber building 15m x 5m which appeared to have been destroyed by fire. There was also an adjacent ditch, an enclosure ditch, and a possible trackway and ford across the River Wey (that may line up with a postulated Roman

The pieces of pottery and quern stone found at The Hockering, shown here together with the wooden paddle he found at Send, are evidence that in Romano-British times man lived on the dry ridge above the Hoe Valley.



Not all Roads lead to Rome!



I mentioned above about the possible road from Farley Heath towards the known Roman road between London and Silchester at Bagshot, but there is another postulated road linking Winchester to London suggested as far back as 1888 when Mr H.F. Napper suggested 'A line drawn through the earthworks on St George's Hill and Caesar's Camp and Farnham, would strike Winchester via Alton and Alresford'. Traces of a raised roadway (in line with the postulated Winchester route) cut across the Woking Golf Course before being bisected by the railway and then becoming visible again on St Johns Lye. The projected route would then go on through Goldsworth (pots of coins often being found buried beside known Roman roads), and across Woking Heath to Woodham and on to Weybridge.

A 'military road', presumably on the line of Woodham Lane (above), is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon bounds of Chertsey Abbey, which also records the place name 'Mimbrugge' (or Mimbridge). As the Saxons were not noted for road and bridge building it has been suggested that the military road and the 'bridge by the field of mint' may well be of Roman origin. More work, however, will have to be done if these routes are to be proven.

Road from the Temple at Farley Heath to the Roman Road between London and Silchester at Bagshot). Pottery from the site ranged from the 1st to the 4th century 'with a higher proportion of the earlier material being found in the area of the timber building.'

The burning of buildings seems to have been a common fate at that time. Another excavation, this time at 'Black Close' in Mayford, revealed

'several pieces of building material, with evidence of fire and a few pieces of charred wood.' The excavation report in 1974, continues the list of finds which included...

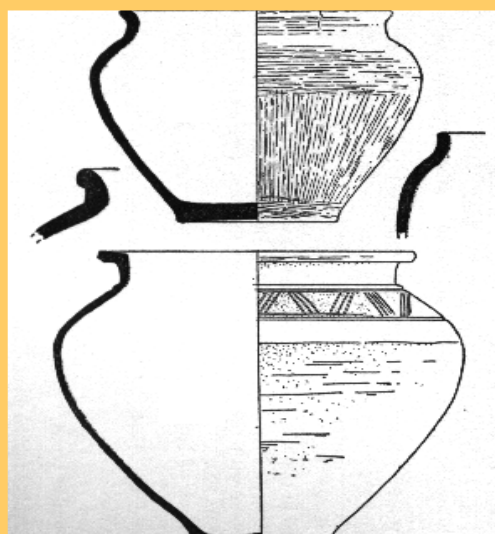
'A number of large rims and other sherds of different types of Romano-British coarseware and a quarter section of the top stone of a hand rotary quern.'

Where these pots were made is not certain, but there were apparently local potteries quite capable of producing some of these types of pot.

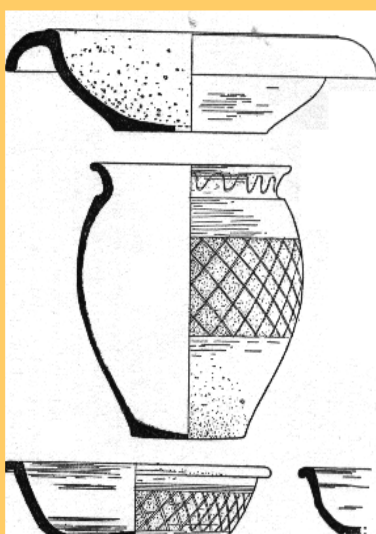
'In a field north east of Wisley Church a very complete kiln containing some broken pottery was found. Some fragments proved to be Romano-British ware. They may probably be assigned to the 1st century AD'.

That was reported in the Surrey Archaeological Collections of 1912, whilst across the river from Wisley in the 1930's a Romano-British occupation site was discovered at Sanway, in Byfleet, dating from 50-160 AD.

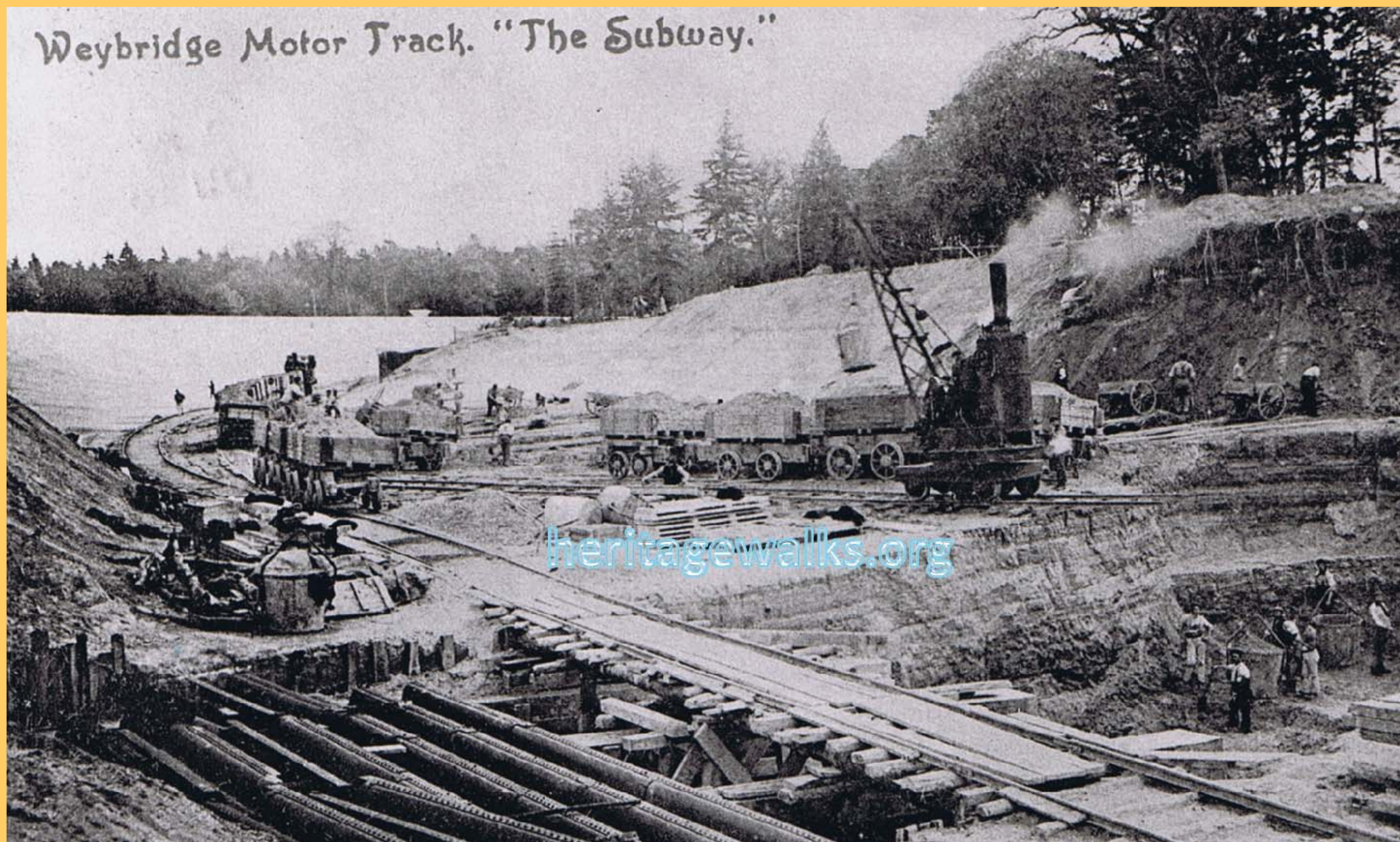
Other odd fragments of pottery have apparently turned up at Knaphill, Smarts Heath, Pyrford and Byfleet, but not all the pottery was produced locally as a portion of a Samian-ware bowl found on the Hermitage Estate in the 1960's shows that someone in the area at least was rich enough to afford some of the finest pottery imported into this country at that time.



Drawings of some of the pottery found at Sanway in the 1930's



Weybridge Motor Track. "The Subway."



In 1906 the building of Brooklands Race Track brought about the discovery of dozens of Roman Coins and with the discoveries during the building of Sheerwater and Maybury in the 1950's mentioned last week, it just goes to show that evidence of our prehistoric past can be found in the most unlikely of places.



Moving back to the Wey Valley another pot was discovered in a field at Pyrford, but this one contained a collection of 82 Roman Denari coins dating from between 69 and 161AD. The field is now the houses of Romans Way, and a similar find a few centuries earlier undoubtedly led to the naming of another part of Woking as 'la Goldhord' – now corrupted from its 13th century form to Goldsworth.

One or two Roman coins have apparently turned up at Winern Glebe in Byfleet (dating from 238-378 AD), at Maybury (337-361 AD) and by the side of Smarts Heath Road in Mayford, but the largest recorded collection in this area is the Brooklands hoard, mentioned below.

By now, of course, we have reached the end of our look at the 'Prehistory' of the area, as records from the so-called 'Dark Ages' lead us to discover our 'history' - the story of the area through written records

The Buried Treasure of Brooklands

The hoard mentioned at Brooklands is recorded in the Surrey Archaeological Collections of 1909 where G.F. Hill reports on the find and the fate of the coins...

'On Whitsun Monday, 1907, the workmen engaged in making the Brooklands Motor-track discovered an earthenware jar containing a number of bronze coins. The exact number will probably never be known, for there was a scramble for the contents of the jar. The find comprised, so far as I have been able to ascertain, - 68 coins, which were seized by the coroner. I have seen 64 of these; the remaining four are, I believe, in the possession of the coroner and the local inspector of police, as mementoes of the discovery. Four have been retained by Mr Locke-King, the owner of the land, and 60 generously presented by him to the British Museum.

Seventy two were shown at the British Museum by two persons soon after the discovery was made. Two others were mentioned as having been sold.'