

An octagonal bath-house at Bax Farm, Teynham

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Introduction

In 1998, as part of the Swale Archaeological Survey conducted by the author, the probable site of a Roman villa was rediscovered¹ by fieldwalking and confirmed by test pits at Scotlands Field, Bax Farm, north of the village of Teynham, which in turn lies just west of Faversham (Kent).² The site lies north of Roman Watling Street and south of the Swale channel (Ordnance Survey TQ 9480 6421; fig. 1). Geologically, the site is similar to Teynham Court Farm with its possible Roman temple, a spine or finger of brick earth running north into the marshland of the Swale estuary. The brickearth low hill (5-17 m OD) has outcrops of Head Chalk. The Roman site itself is at c.8.50 m OD, and the Roman octagonal building (see below) would have had a good command of the Swale channel while itself remaining visible from Watling Street which runs c.1.45 km to the south. The Roman building lies on a shallow, E-facing slope which leads down to freshwater springs (Conyer springs, continuing to the moated mediaeval farm of Frognall). These springs flow north past the E side of the octagonal building to the Swale channel some 2 km distant. The east stream was probably utilised by the Roman villa as a water supply and to access the Swale channel via Conyer creek. To the west of the site, another freshwater stream,³ which fed the moat of the mediaeval castle of Tonge, encircles the hill before joining the eastern stream.

The fieldwalking of 1998, based on a 10-m grid, recovered Roman as well as earlier and later material. Roman pottery ranging in date from the late 1st to the 4th c. A.D.; it included Samian ware, Black-burnished ware, fine oxidised Upchurch type ware, Belgic shelly ware, Brockley Hill mortaria, and Dressel 20 amphoras. Other finds included mosaic tesserae, Late Roman window glass, a worked ivory object, a white clay figurine, copper alloy boat nails, and a Late Roman enamelled mount.

The Kent Archaeological Field School⁴ began work in 2006 with a geophysical survey conducted by M. Davies and test pits; it continued in 2009 with the complete excavation

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- 1 In September 1986, B. Philp undertook some work on the site, but no report was published other than a brief mention in the *Kent Archaeological Review* for the winter of 1986, p. 121: " ... Deep ploughing had revealed a scatter of Roman material on farmland and it seemed likely that a site was being badly damaged. Urgent trial excavations on the site, fitted between cropping and ploughing, were carried out by members of the KARU ... The excavations revealed part of a substantial Roman building, with some walls surviving to a height of about 4 feet and several rooms with traces of hypocausts. However, plough damage was found to be confined to the upper deposits only."
 - 2 The land, in the ownership of Mr. O. Doubleday, is currently under arable cropping and archaeological investigation has shown that the Roman monument is not being seriously damaged. In the recent past this had been an orchard. The farming régime recently implemented by Mr Doubleday excludes deep ploughing, which means that the buried monument and its surrounding archaeology can be preserved *in situ*.
 - 3 This western stream originates in the Spring of St. Thomas Beckett immediately adjacent to Watling Street at Bapchild.
 - 4 The Kent Archaeological Field School is a non-profit organisation with some 800 members, committed to disseminating information about the techniques used in practical fieldwork and recording. To this end a number of annual training excavations have been carried out on sites either not well understood or under threat from farming activities. After excavation, the present site was reinstated to prepare the land for sowing during the autumn months.