

NONSUCH ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY  
EXCAVATION AT 'WOODGATE', LONDON ROAD, EWELL, SURREY  
(TQ 22196305)

ARCHIVE REPORT

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## EXCAVATION AT 'WOODGATE' 1976

(TQ 22196305)



Photo: Abdy

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## 1. ABSTRACT

During the 1970s, several seasons of excavation in the extension to the churchyard of St. Mary the Virgin, Ewell Parish Church, revealed two phases of settlement on Stane Street (Pemberton, *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. 69, pp. 1-26, 1973).

In July 1976, the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society decided to excavate a small area at the end of the garden of the house known as 'Woodgate', London Road, Ewell, as it backs on to the north-west boundary of the extension to the churchyard at the point at which earlier excavations had taken place. Although a scatter of Roman material was found, no structure of any kind was uncovered.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

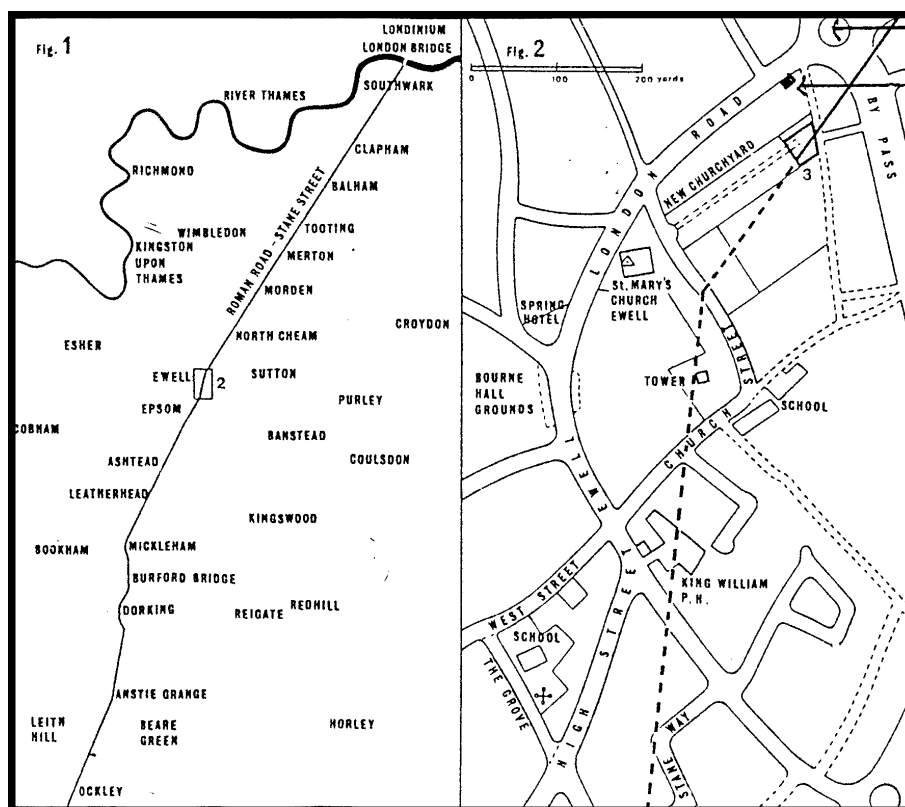
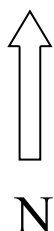
'Woodgate' is situated on the east side of the London Road, about 40 metres in a southerly direction from the Organ Crossroads on the Ewell By-Pass (A240). At the time of the excavation, it stood in a sizeable garden, but a large part of this was subsequently sold and is now covered by a development of 'Georgian' style houses. The NAS attempted to mount a Rescue excavation before development took place. According to the site diary, the excavation lasted only 10 days, not worked consecutively, during late July and August 1976.

The writer of this ARCHIVE REPORT did not take part in the excavation although she visited it on one occasion. After nearly 19 years, a reconstruction has been attempted by reference to the site records which were deposited, together with the finds, in Bourne Hall Museum. The records are uneven in quality and there are omissions of information normally regarded as essential to the interpretation of a site. There is, however, some record-keeping by the former Site Assistant, Miss M. Godman, and by the late Miss P. Davies who compiled the Small Finds Register. Their hand writing and that of Mr R. Temple have been recognised but, as a Site Register is not available, there is no evidence as to how many people worked on the excavation, and who directed it although Mr Temple who left Ewell some years ago, normally directed (Godman, pers.comm.).

## 3. THE EXCAVATION (NAS Code W76)

The site of the excavation is shown on the location maps - Figs. 1 and 2. They are reprinted from Mr Pemberton's report, with his kind permission and that of the Surrey Archaeological Society.

Figs. 1 and 2  
Location Maps

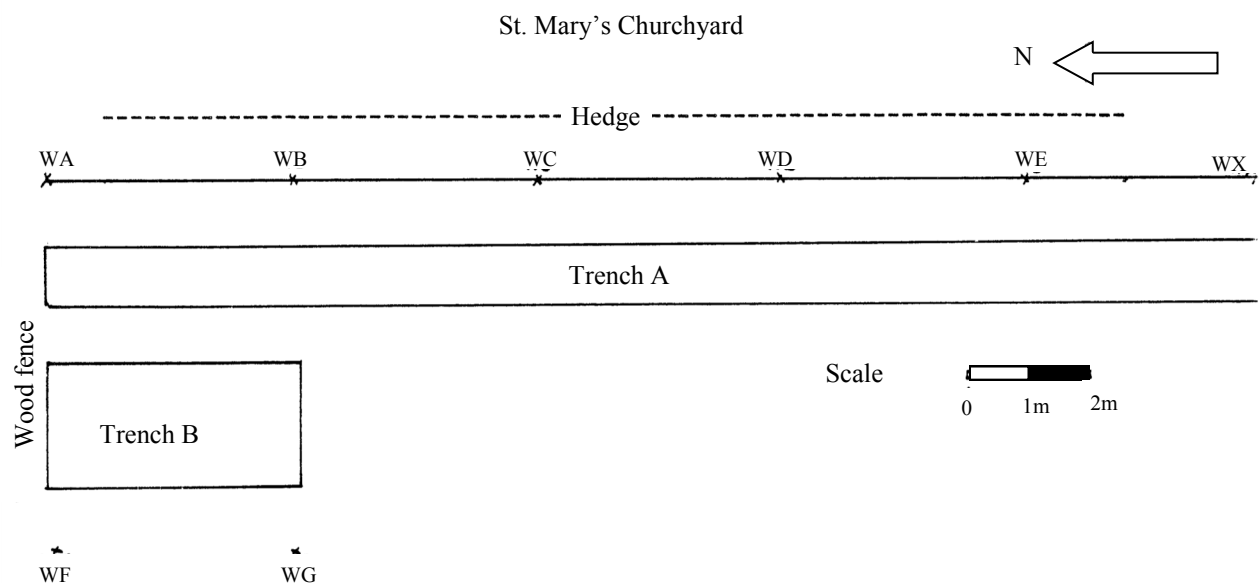


After clearance of the ground nearest to the churchyard boundary, a datum line 8 metres long was laid parallel to the boundary. TRENCH A (see fig.3) was then opened 1m from the datum line, and 1m wide. Posts WA, WB and WC were set at 4m. intervals. Later, the trench was extended to 16m. and posts WD and WE were erected. Finally, the trench was extended a further 4m. (total 20m.) to post WX.

A second trench, designated B, and measuring 2m. x 4m. was opened later, parallel to the first 4m. of TRENCH A (i.e. between posts WA and WB); and posts WF and WG were erected.

The sole entry in the site diary for the last day of the excavation – 29 August – records a third trench being opened. This was designated TRENCH H and measured 2m. x 2m., but there is no information about its position, nor was any plan nor section drawn.

Fig 3 PLAN OF TRENCHES A AND B



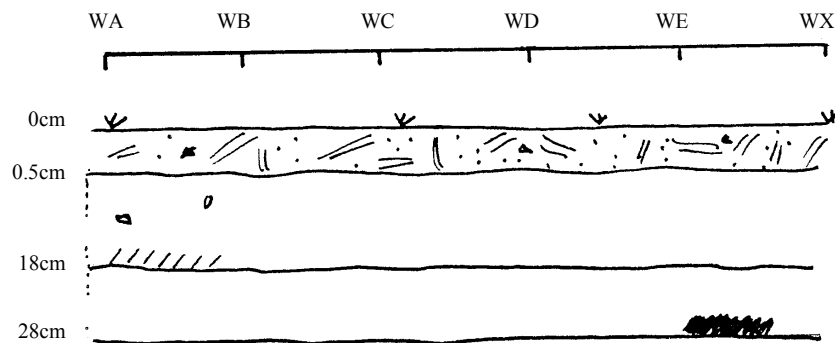
#### ATTEMPTED RECONSTRUCTION OF SECTION OF TRENCH A

No drawings of sections of Trenches S, B and H are filed with the site records so it is concluded that none were drawn. There is, however, a little information about the layers in Trench A so the possibility of producing a reconstruction, to scale, has been considered. There are problems in attempting this – for example (i) devising a scale to accommodate a 20m. (or 2000cm.) long trench with layers shown at 0.5 cm., 18 cm and 28 cm., which will fit into a reasonable-sized page, even allowing for the possibility of reduction in size of the drawing; (ii) the characteristics of the soil in every layer has not been recorded; (iii) features such as 'sparse layer of cobbles', 'soft, dark area' and 'blacker earth' have not been measured and, therefore, their position cannot be drawn accurately.





Taking all these factors into account, a diagrammatic reconstruction of a section of Trench A, as it might have appeared, is shown on page 5. Insets, to scale, have been considered of the divisions in Trench A in which features are recorded but, in view of (ii) and (iii) above, they could not be drawn accurately.

Fig.4 DIAGRAM OF SECTION OF TRENCH A  
(not to scale)

POSTS WA-WX = 20M.



#### KEY

	Layer 1	Topsoil, mixture of medieval, Victorian and modern debris 0-0.5cm
	Layer 2	Soil not described 6-18cm (i) Sparse cobbles, between posts WA/WB (ii) At 19cm, soft, dark area between posts WA/WB
	Layer 3	Soil not described 19-28cm At 28cm blacker earth between posts WD/WE
		

#### LAYERS IN TRENCH A (P.76/1 of Site Book)

Discussion with the Site Assistant has made it possible to revise the preliminary table of layers which she prepared for Trench A.

#### 1. Copy of preliminary table as written:-

Layer	Depth below datum line	Trench	Brief Description
1		All	Topsoil. Modern. Victorian 18 <sup>th</sup> century medieval material
2	0.5 cm		Cobbles, (Another hard 'sparse layer – not to be confused with lower cobbles)
3		WA/WB	In vicinity of flint tumble. Not significant.
4	18 cm	WA	Soft dark area. Amalgamated with 2.
5	50 + cm	WA	Area below lower cobbles. N.end
6	30 + cm	WB	SE end. Possible pit. Not confirmed. Amalgamated. with 2.
7		WF	50 cm trench N-S in centre of WF.
8	28 cm	WD/E	Blacker earth starting at 28cm.

2. The final version appears to be –

1. Topsoil
2. Incorporates former layers 2,3,4 and 6
3. Former 5 \*
4. Former 8

\* Difficult to interpret, as is former 7

#### 4. REPORT ON THE FINDS

##### 4.1. Pottery

Report by Miss S. Huson BA (Hons.), MIFA, Surrey County Archaeological Unit

##### 4.2. Flints

##### 4.3. General Comments on Small Finds; photograph illustrating a selection

##### 4.4. List of Missing Finds

The finds have been sorted and are stored in three boxes which have been deposited in the Museum at Bourne Hall. The boxes are labelled as follows:-

Box 1 Small Finds \*

Box 2 Pottery

Box 3 Flints, clay pipe stems and building materials

\* Box 1 includes 69 sherds as specified in the Small Finds Register – i.e. they are in addition to the pottery in Box 2. It is not clear why they were sorted in this way. It may be that the pottery in Box 1 was measured in, whereas that in Box 2 was not.

#### 4.1 POTTERY FROM 'WOODGATE'. EWELL 1976

The Roman pottery archive that was retained from the excavations at 'Woodgate', Ewell 1976, amounts to 769 sherds, c.6.3kg and 10.5 Eves (Orton 1980). A large proportion of the pottery were rimsherds and it is suspected that there may have either been a selective collection of such sherds during the excavations or a later retention of the more interesting sherds, which has created this bias.

The majority of the sherds are medium to small in size, and many were rolled and abraded. This high breakage rate and wear would suggest that few of the sherds were from primary contexts and that most had been re-deposited. This is born out by the fact that 17 out of the 26 contexts (excluding the small-find sherds) also contained Medieval or later pottery. The pottery is more helpful, therefore, in giving an overview of Roman activities in Ewell, than specific stratigraphical interpretations.

The samian indicates that Roman occupation, or at least, activity, started in Ewell as early as the Flavian-Trajanic periods, but was certainly well under way by the 2nd century and continued into the 4th century. Indeed, there is a slightly higher proportion of later vessel types and fabrics. Alice Holt greywares dominate the assemblage throughout the whole period of occupation, and examples of late (3rd-4th century) Overwey wares also from the Surrey/Hants border are amongst the assemblage. There are examples of grog- and shell-tempered wares, possibly locally made in Surrey or from the North Kent area. Also possibly from Kent are the fine greywares sherds, usually from beakers. Fine and coarse oxidised fabrics and fine white wares could also be locally occurring, possibly made in the Staines area. Wares from further afield include Verulamium white wares, red and white Oxfordshire fabrics, Nene Valley colour-coats, possibly Colchester colour-coated sherds and a few examples of BB1 from Dorset. The only continentally traded wares are Dressel 20 amphorae from southern Spain and the samian which comes from south, central and east Gaul.

The assemblage is dominated by jars (82 vessels, by individual rimsherds), mostly in the Alice Holt and Verulamium fabrics. These are predominantly everted-rimmed jars (nos 1 and 2), with fewer examples of cordoned-rimmed jars (no 3), and bead-rimmed jars (nos 4 and 5), there are also quite a large number of bowls (42 in all) including dog-dishes (nos 6 and 7), flat-rimmed bowls (no 8), and bead-rimmed bowls (no 11). Most, however, are late flanged types (no 9), and again, they are usually found in Alice Holt fabrics. For such a small assemblage there was a reasonable range of vessel types, including beakers (24), (nos 13 and 14) and flagons (9)(no 10) mostly in the fineware fabrics, dishes (11), lids (8)(no 12), strainers (2) and mortaria (8).

The assemblage from 'Woodgate' is one of both kitchen and table wares and may be the clearance debris from nearby

buildings. The settlement itself seems to have been of some status to attract imported wares from its earliest period of occupation (the late 1st century onwards). That there is a mixture of local products and regionally traded ones (as well as the few more widely travelled), and the settlement's longevity, is probably a factor of Ewell's location along Stane Street and the Hogsmill stream.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Suzanne Huson BA (HONS), MIFA

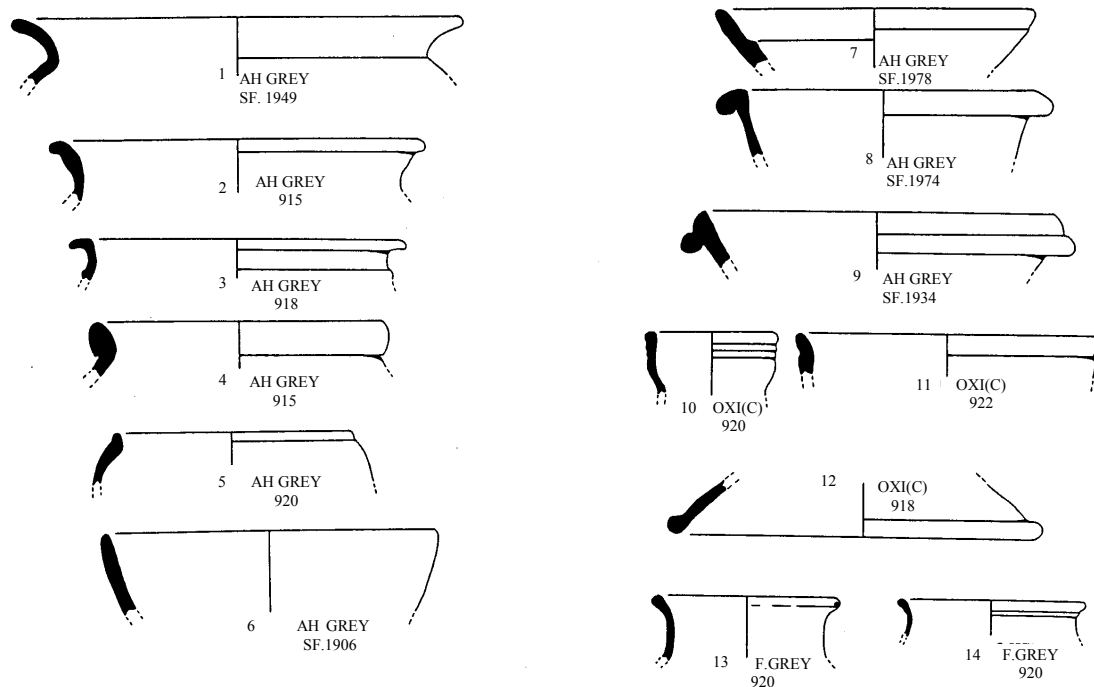


Figure 5 'Woodgate', Ewell: A selection of vessel types from the Roman pottery assemblage.

Scale 1:4

(AH Grey = Alice Holt greywares; F. Grey = Fine greyware;

Oxi (C) = coarse oxidised fabric)

‘WOODGATE’, EWELL 1976 SAMIAN REPORT

Decorated Samian

SF 1969 Dr 30, SG. The right hand gladiator is close to Hermet pl 21, Nos 143 and 144. AD 75-95.

907 Sherd, CG. Festoon probably Rogers F40, Cinnamus group. AD 145-175.

Plain Samian

SF 1923 Dr 18/31R, CG, Hadrianic-early Antonine.

SF 1925 Dr 37, CG, Hadrianic-Antonine. The ovolo is too abraded to identify.

SF 1963 Dr 33, EG Rheinzabern, late 2nd-first half 3rd century.

SF 1964 Dr 18, SG La Graufesenque, late Flavian-early Trajanic. Burnt.

SF 1973 Dr 31, EG Trier, late 2nd-mid 3rd century.

SF 1975 Dr 18/31, CG, Hadrianic-early Antonine.

SF 1984 Dr 18/31, CG, Hadrianic-early Antonine.

SF 1987 Dr 31, CG, Antonine.

907 Sherd, Dr 18, SG, second half 1st century.

908 Dr 38, EG, later 2nd century. Probably from same vessel as sherd in 916.  
Three sherds Dr 27, SG, second half 1st century. Probably all 1 vessel.  
Sherd, CG.

916 Dr 38, EG, later 2nd century. Probably from same vessel as sherd in 908.  
Dr 18, SG, Flavian-Trajanic.  
Sherd, possibly Dr 33, CG.

917 Dr 27g, SG, 1st century.  
Dr 18/31 or 31 sherd, CG.

918 Dr 18/31, CG, mid-late 2nd century.  
Two sherds, probably Dr 36, CG, Hadrianic-Antonine.  
Sherd Dr 33, CG, mid-late 2nd century.  
Base, Dr 18/31, CG, Hadrianic-Antonine. Burnt.  
Sherd, CG.

919 Dr 36, CG, Hadrianic-Antonine.  
Sherd, Dr 31, CG, Hadrianic-early Antonine. Burnt.  
Sherd, Dr 31, CG.  
Sherd, CG.

920 Dr 31, CG, Antonine.  
Dr 33, CG, Hadrianic-Antonine.  
Dechelette 72 or similar, CG, Antonine.  
Dr 18/31 or 31 foot-ring, CG, Hadrianic-Antonine.  
Sherd, CG, Hadrianic-Antonine. Fragment of decoration too abraded to identify.  
Seven sherds CG, two joining.

921 Two sherds, CG.  
Sherd, EG.

922 Seven sherds, CG, three joining.  
Sherd, SG.



## NOTES

This archive report has been prepared in line with the Study Group for Roman Pottery's 'Guidelines for the archiving of Roman pottery', compiled by Maggie Darling, October 1994. It comprises archive sheets of the pottery by individual context and small finds number. Wares and form types have been identified wherever possible, but attributions have not been forced if at all in doubt, as this may lead to false conclusions about the pottery assemblage. In addition the larger rimsherds were drawn as part of the archive, and a few have been drawn to publication standard to accompany the note which summarises the nature of the pottery from 'Woodgate' 1976. Further work on this site might best be combined in a synthesis of the pottery from other Ewell backlog excavations.

I would like to thank Joanna Bird for kindly checking the samian identifications.

Suzanne Huson BA (HONS), MIFA  
October 1995

## THE FLINTS

An analysis of flints recovered was prepared by Mr Temple and is filed with the site records; it has recently been reviewed by Mrs P.Nicolaysen. The revised list is attached.

It is recorded that 47 pieces of flint were recovered from Trench A, mainly from Layer 2 (see revised table of layers on p.6). As a general rule, the tool forms, though small, are well-produced and include several borers and scrapers – see under ‘Discussion’.

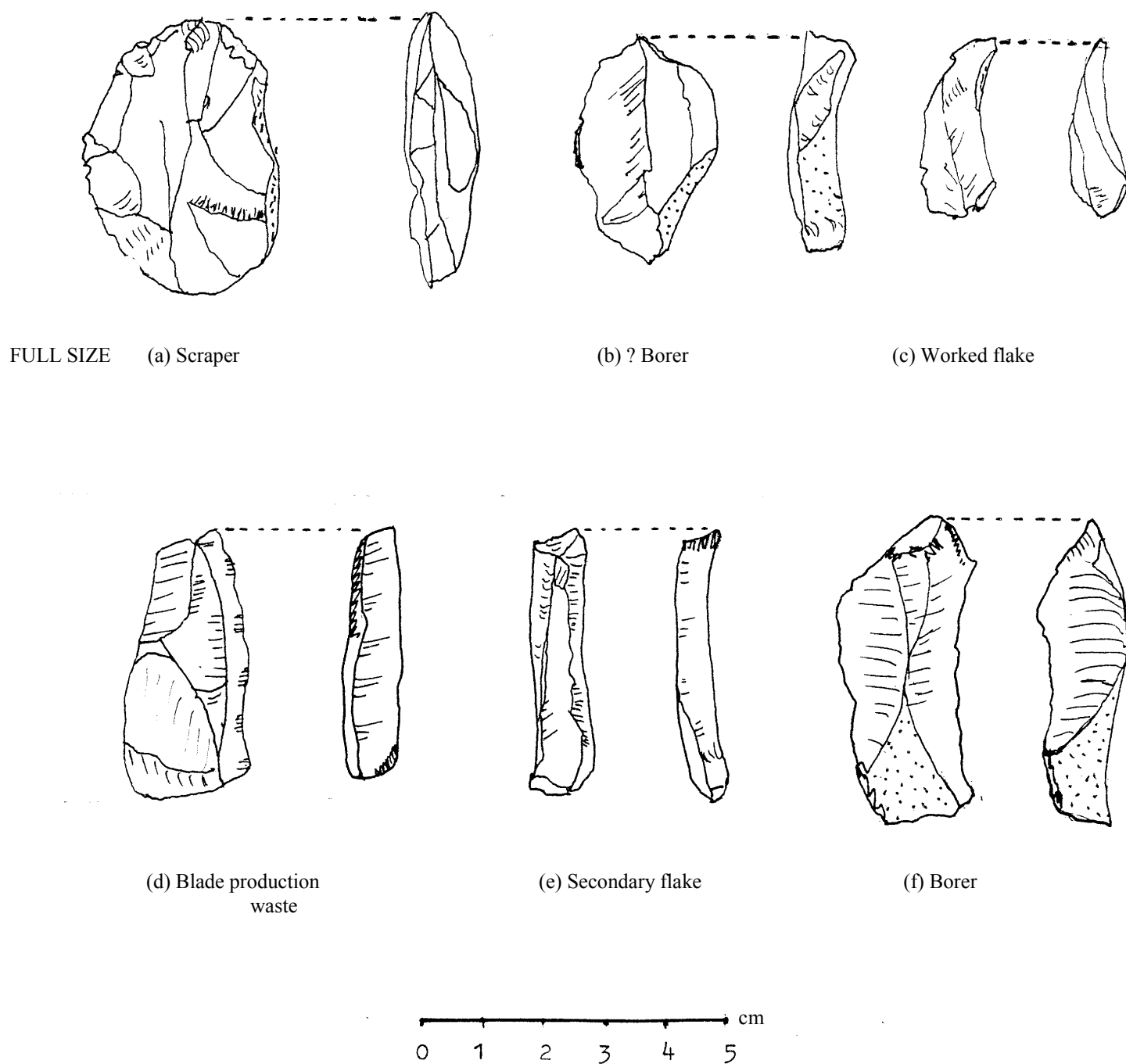


Figure 6 - Examples of flint

WOODGATE 76: FLINTS

Bag No.	Description	Layer	Number of Pieces
907	1 core rejuvenation flake, 3 secondary flakes	2	4
908	1 flake, heavily patinated	2	1
910	1 small end scraper, 1 borer, 1 secondary flake	2	3
911	1 blunted back blade, 1 blunted and notched point	2	2
912	1 flake, 1 worked lump ? small hammerstone	2	2
913	1 flake	2	1
917	* 1 ? scraper, 1 flake, 1 microburin	2	3
918	1 scraper	8	1
920	1 blade, 2 borer, 2 flakes	2	3
921	2 borer/awls (1 worn), 1 burin, 2 scrapers, 1 ? scraper, 3 secondary flakes	2	9
922	* 4 borers, 4 secondary flakes, 1 scraper, 2 burins	2	11
923	2 flakes	2	2
924	1 secondary flake	2	1
926	1 blade butt	2	1
927	1 blade segment	2	1
		Total	<u>45</u>

Notes

- (i) \*Originally, 2 pieces were listed in Bag No. 917 and 12 in Bag No. 922. It may be that the microburin now listed under Bag No. 917 was originally in Bag No. 922.
- (ii) In addition to the flints sorted into these bags, it was noted that 2 were listed in the Small Finds Register. One was identified as a borer, the other, which is noted as missing, as a blade (S.F No. 1950).

TOTAL OF FLINTS 47

## GENERAL COMMENTS ON SMALL FINDS FROM THE GARDEN OF 'WOODGATE'

According to the Small Finds Register, Box No.1 should contain 91 items – i.e. S.F.Nos. 1900-1990 inclusive. It appears, however, (Godman, pers.comm.) that 22 items, representing 'a selection of the most interesting finds', was extracted for one of the displays prepared for a meeting of the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society to illustrate the Society's archaeological activities. Further enquiry suggests that, when the display was dismantled, the finds were not reunited with the others in Box No. 1. A list of these missing finds is attached to this report in the hope that, some day, they may be discovered, recognised and returned to Box 1.

Until this happens, and as there is a separate report on pottery, there seems to be very little worth drawing or photographing. Illustrating scraps of metal and of building material, hardly identifiable, and of part of pipe stems would be of doubtful value, but the following objects may be of interest:-

Figure 7. Photograph of a group of small finds from the garden of 'Woodgate'



Photo: Abdy

1. Bronze strap-end (?)
2. Bronze terret (rein-guide), possibly for a small animal - e.g. a mule
3. Fragments of sandal nails (?)
4. Half of broken gaming counter, back incised
5. Fragments of glass, including part of handle of glass or small flagon

NONSUCH ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY Excavation at 'Woodgate' in 1976 (Code W26)

Finds stored in Bourne Hall Museum (The Lodge): Boxes 1, 2 and 3.

The following are listed in the Small Finds Register (filed with the site records) but are not in Box 1 with the other finds listed, nor in Boxes 2 and 3.

S.F.No.	Brief description according to S.F.Register
1910	Coin
1924	Sherd – decorated Samian
1926	Coin
1929	Coin
1930	Coin
1943	Rim – grey
1944	Rim – grey rolled
1945	Coin
1946	2 rims
1947	Rim – Samian
1948	Rim – grey
1950	Flint blade
1952	Pie dish – Roman – black
1953	Rim – cream
1954	Rim – grey
1955	Base - cream
1956	Rim – grey flanged
1959	Gem stone – green
1961	Coin
1962	Coin
1977	Tweezers
1980	Rim – Samian

Checked 7.4.95

## 5. DISCUSSION

As explained, the purpose of the excavation at the end of the garden of 'Woodgate' was to discover if there was any evidence of settlement such as was found in St. Mary's churchyard.

The excavation consisted of only two small trenches, possibly a third, and in them 8 layers, subsequently reduced to 4, were identified. The time spent on it amounted to only 10 days, not worked consecutively, by a handful of 'diggers'. It is understood (see NOTES in Appendix C) that it was regarded as a Rescue excavation in advance of the development of part of the garden as a building site.

For the purpose of comparison with the results of excavations of known Roman sites in the immediate vicinity of 'Woodgate', at present only Mr. Pemberton's report (op.cit.) is available. However, reports on past NAS excavations in the 1970s and 1980s are being prepared for report or publication and, indeed, the report on the King William IV site in Ewell village is expected in the near future. These reports may help with the interpretation of the site at 'Woodgate'.

It can, however, be said that, in the garden of 'Woodgate', a scatter of Roman material similar to that in St. Mary's churchyard was discovered and that it included artifacts such as pottery, fragments of glass, a pair of tweezers, a terret and, according to the site records, scraps of bone although no bone was found among the small finds in the storage boxes. No evidence of structures was uncovered; no gullies, nor postholes, nor floorings, nor middens similar to those in St. Mary's churchyard. Here again, when excavations subsequent to 1973 have been published, further comparisons may be possible.

It can also be said that the occupational debris suggests an area on the fringe of the settlement alongside the stretch of Stane Street which was identified in St. Mary's churchyard. In his report, Mr. Pemberton did not refer to flints, but he has confirmed (pers.comm.) that flints have been found on other sites which he excavated in Ewell - for example, Grove School. The flints found at 'Woodgate' re-inforce the evidence of Mesolithic settlement near the Hogsmill stream which flows through Ewell. Considered in relation to the stream, the flints from the garden of 'Woodgate' appear to have been found at a distance of about 300m. in a direct line. Their discovery in the upper layers remains a mystery unless this can be explained by soil disturbance.

In her pottery report, Miss Huson concludes that the examples of Samian indicate that 'the Roman occupation or, at least, activity started in Ewell as early as the Flavian-Trajanic periods, but was certainly well under way by the 2nd century, and continued into the 4th century'. She also comments that Alice Holt greywares dominate the assemblage throughout the whole period of occupation. This comment and her conclusion that the range of kitchen and tableware, both local and imported, indicate the longevity of settlement in Ewell are important points to be borne in mind when pottery from other sites is considered.

It has to be admitted that the results of this excavation appear to be unproductive by comparison with the adjoining site in St. Mary's churchyard but it may be regarded as 'clearing the ground' even if, at this stage, it does not appear to carry forward productive research about Roman sites in Ewell.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My warm thanks are due to those who advised me in preparing this report: Mr. J. Cotton, MA, FSA, for reading it in draft; Mrs. P. Nicolaysen, Diploma in Archaeology, for guidance on lithic tool forms; Mr. B. Leech, Diploma in Architecture, RIBA, Chartered Architect; and to Mr. P. Price, BSc, Chartered Engineer, for suggestions as to the attempted reconstruction of the section of Trench A. Miss M. Goodman, Site Assistant for the excavation, gave her time generously to discuss my queries on the site records. Mr. C. Abdy gave encouragement in his capacity of Convenor of the NAS Archaeological Reports Sub-Committee, and took the photographs of the present house 'Woodgate', and of the selection of small finds. I also acknowledge the help given by Mr. J. Harte, Curator, Bourne Hall Museum.

Finally, special thanks are due to Miss S. Huson, BA (Hons), MIFA, who wrote the report on the pottery, to Mrs. J. Bird, FSA for general advise, and to the Archaeological Research Committee of the Surrey Archaeological Society for their grant to cover the cost of the pottery report.

E.M. Myatt-Price  
Ewell  
November 1995

## APPENDIX A

Building report on 'Woodgate' by I.J.West, reprinted from the NAS Newsletter 1976/3.

There are four main phases in the development of this house: the first two are of late 18<sup>th</sup> century date followed by early 19<sup>th</sup> century work, and finally, there are 'modern' additions.

It is difficult to trace the junctions between the two phases of 18<sup>th</sup> century date and at first these were thought to be of one build, but examination of the roof construction indicated the two phases of construction. The earliest is the left hand half of the main block and would originally have comprised two rooms on each floor plus a cellar. At the rear, a hipped end projects slightly from the main roof indicating the original width. In the front bay there are vertically sliding shutters to all windows.

The construction of the right hand half of the main block closely followed and, like phase 1, it had a canted bay but there are only vertical shutters to the ground floor. This addition doubled the above-ground size of the house.

Phase 3 was constructed of red bricks while previously brown bricks had been used. This addition provided a new entrance and stair and is located to the left of phase 1 at the rear of the 'modern' gabled section. The stairs start with a fine curtailed step and gracefully turn through 180 degrees, there are gentle curves in all the angles and the mahogany banister sweeps up to the first floor building. At this time, if not before, the walls were rendered externally and marked to indicate stonework; this has mostly been replaced with pebble dash.

The 'modern' additions to 'Woodgate' include the gabled section to the left of the main block and two extensions to the rear. It is understood that the new owners intend to restore the house and erect two 'Georgian' houses in the garden to the right of the property.

Canted = an external angle

Curtailed step = the lowest step in a flight of stairs ending at its outer extremity in a scroll

## APPENDIX B

EXCAVATION AT WOODGATES (sic) by Dick Temple, reprinted from the NAS Newsletter 1976/4.

The Society has excavated in the garden of Woodgates (sic), which backs on to St. Mary's churchyard at the point where the previous excavation took place. It was hoped to find an extension of the cobbled area and perhaps the remains of a house. Although a scatter of Roman material was found, no structure of any kind was uncovered. This excavation has now been closed although we may seek permission to dig in another part of the garden at a later date.

## APPENDIX C

Description of Site Records for 'Woodgate' (NAS Code W76) as at 7 April 1995.

### A. WRITTEN

These are filed in a blue folder containing:-

1. Index: only 1 entry ('Page 76/1 and 2: Plan of Site')  
Note: the plan of the site was filed later in the folder – see below.
2. List of layers numbered 1-8, later revised, after discussion with the Site Assistant to number 1-5. See comments on the drawing of the section of Trench A.
3. Site note-book or diary – i.e. daily record of work on site. There are entries for  
1976 July 24, 25 and 31. August 1, 7, 15, 21, 22, 28 and 29.
4. Plans of trenches A and B, drawn to scale.
5. Analysis of contents of bags numbered 900-927 containing finds into –

Bone	Flints (worked and crackled)
Metal	Pottery (Samian and coarse)
Building material	Small finds e.g coins, glass
6. Small Finds Register – Nos. 1900-1990.

7. List of numbers of bags by 'cat' (this means 'catalogue' (Godman, pers.comm.))  
Containing flints and metal. The numbers are:-

902	916-918 incl.	926
905-8 incl.	920-924 incl.	927
910-913 incl.		

## B. FINDS

These have been deposited in the museum in Bourne Hall, Ewell. They are stored in 3 cardboard boxes:-

Box 1	Small finds
Box 2	Pottery
Box 3	Flints, clay pipe-stems and building materials

\*\*\*\*\*

## NOTES

- (i) Records which do not appear to have been made:

Survey of site before start of excavation  
Site Register  
Sections of Trenches A and B  
Plan and sections of Trench H – referred to in diary

- (ii) Personal comment by Site Assistant (Miss Godman): This was regarded as a Rescue excavation, there were only 3 or 4 people digging at one time and Mr Temple was not always available to direct.

Some of the finds which were scrappy and fragmented were not thought to be of any significance and were thrown away.