



# Continuity between the Iron Age and Roman Period in Ewell

## IA AND RB SITES IN EWELL



Illustration of an Iron Age settlement (courtesy of SyAS)

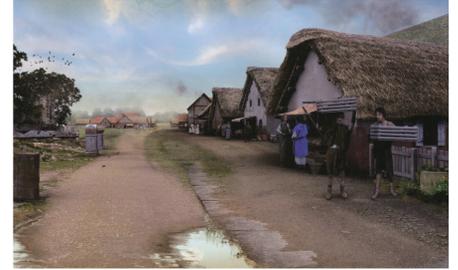


Illustration of the Roman roadside settlement - could Roman Ewell look like this ?



Bourne Hall lake is supplied by the springs, the source of the Hogsmill River.

Excavations took place on the bed of Bourne Hall Lake in 1990



IA re-enactors on the lawn at Bourne Hall

The presence of iron shears, spindlewhorls and loom weights at a number of sites indicates the use of wool in spinning and weaving. The pasture on the North Downs has been used for sheep rearing from prehistory.



Examples of IA spindlewhorls



Iron Age miniature spearhead deposited in the springs



Part of a Late Iron Age-Roman bovid-headed cosmetic grinder found in Bourne Hall Lake. These cosmetic sets are found almost exclusively in Britain



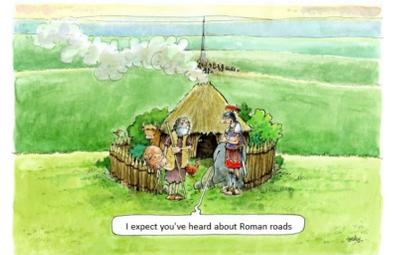
IA gold stater found in the springs



**Iron Age Pottery, Ewell churchyard**  
Whilst excavating a grave at Ewell churchyard in 1961 (Block H, grave 30), a possible ditch was revealed, containing black earth and Iron Age pottery.

**Church Meadow (adjacent to Ewell Churchyard No.4)**

Excavations 2012-14 revealed, alongside abundant RB material, several sherds of Iron Age pottery, as well as small amounts of pottery from the Late Neolithic onwards.



Even before the Romans built a road through what is now Ewell, the area with its springs, chalk grassland, arable land and marshes drew people from the Mesolithic onwards.



RB brooches deposited in the springs

### King William IV

This public house in the centre of the village, 160m SE of the springs, was excavated piecemeal over 11 years from 1967 and revealed evidence for activity on the site. This included: a beaker of Early Bronze Age date, likely to be from a burial; curved gullies which may be eaves-drip gullies for LBA round houses (with associated pot); a large Late IA pit with a cremation burial in 1-2 butt beakers, at least 2 Roman wells, a mortared floor building, a possible corn-drier, butchery evidence, large post holes and rubbish pits.



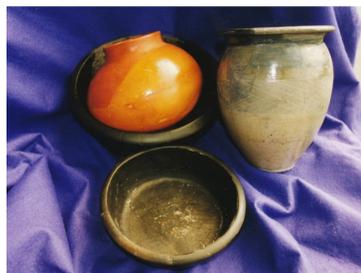
There is a strong indication of a ritual element at King William IV. It is suggested that the randomly placed large postholes represent ritual activity such as an artificial grove or open-air shrine replicating a Pre-Roman religious sanctuary. The earlier Roman well may have provided the water element in the religious rituals.

### Iron age and Roman material in Ewell

Iron Age and Roman material have been found together on a number of sites in Ewell. The Iron Age material is quite well distributed; although not as widely scattered as Roman finds; this could, wholly or partly, reflect the much greater visibility of the latter outside of formal archaeological investigations. Many excavators in Ewell have had a Roman focus which, together with the disturbance caused by settlement over a long period may have caused bias in the available records. (Extensive Urban Survey - Ewell 2003)

### Grove School

Excavations in the grounds of Grove School revealed (between 1970 and 1972) a fairly dense scatter of flint-tempered Late Iron Age pottery overlying a Mesolithic stratum, to one side of a known Romano-British boundary ditch.



Complete Roman vessels from King William IV, which may have been ritually deposited

LIA-ERB sites, such as Purberry Shot and The Looe, were likely occupied by native farming people of IA tradition under Roman influence from Ewell.

### Purberry Shot

Timber huts and pebble floors are common in this period and parts of such floors, together with a cob oven and 40-foot well were found by AWG Lowther during excavations in 1939 at Purberry Shot, London Road, Ewell. The site appears to have been occupied from 200 BC to AD 150 with considerable occupation about the date of the Claudian invasion extending well into the Roman period without any break.



Hearth Bottom from Purberry Shot

There was evidence of considerable iron working activity and a quantity of iron cinder and a piece of iron ingot bar were located. A hearth bottom was recovered for which there are parallels at Queen Mary's, Carshalton.



Examples of Patchgrove pottery from Purberry Shot



Examples of Roman pottery from Purberry Shot

Other finds at Purberry Shot, apart from pottery, included an iron brooch, iron latch-lifter key of common IA type, a bone point and part of a triangular burnt clay loom weight. Roman finds included a razor, part of a mirror and toilet implements such as tweezers.

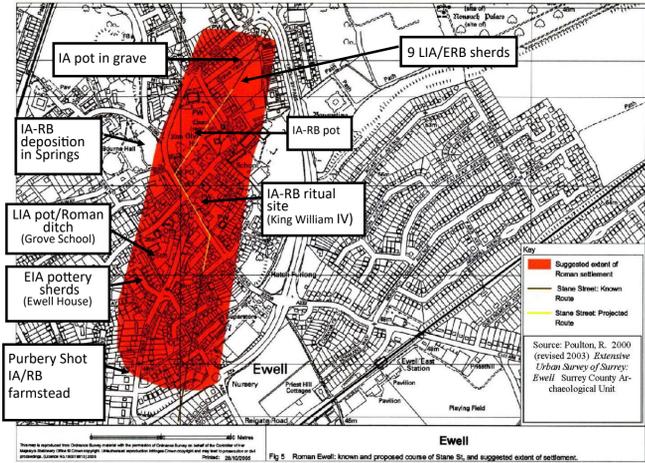


Excavation of the well at Purberry Shot

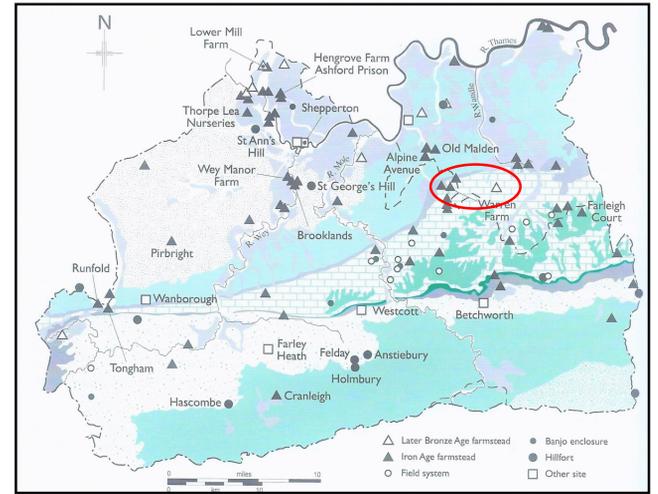


# Continuity between the Iron Age and Roman Period in Ewell

Ewell is known to have been a Romano-British roadside settlement, with numerous finds and settlement evidence. Less is known about the Iron Age period, and the continuity between the two periods.



**Problems in discussing Late Iron Age - Romano-British continuity in and around Ewell**  
While some sites such as Purbery Shot and The Looe farmsteads show clear evidence of continuity between the LIA-ERB there are other find sites that do not conform so easily. Part of the problem is the accurate division of IA pottery into the Early, Middle and Late Iron Age (by modern standards). Pottery defined as IA on Ewell sites would benefit from clearer identification into more defined sub-periods. Some pottery has not been lodged with Bourne Hall Museum and is no longer available for research purposes.



The distribution of Iron Age settlement (based on Hanworth 1987, fig 6.1)  
Area of Ewell and its hinterland

Map of the suggested extent of the Roman settlement of Ewell with sites of Iron Age/ Late Iron Age- Roman occupation

**Legend**

- Iron Age finds
- Late Iron Age find spot
- Early Roman find spot

**Find Details:**

- Dupondius of Vespasian 69-76 AD
- Coin of Domitian 81-96 AD
- IA silver coin of Amminus AD
- Lower part and catchplate brooch 50-100 AD
- Upper part Hod Hill brooch 43-75 AD
- Fragment from a large Bow brooch 43-100 AD
- Colchester Brooch 50-80 AD
- LIA button and loop fastener 50 BC-100 AD
- Colchester brooch 50-70 AD
- Upper part worn Colchester brooch 43-100 AD
- IA Gold quarter stater
- IA cast potin no image available
- A gold quarter stater of Cunobelinus Linear type, cAD10-40.
- Coin of uncertain type
- Hod Hill brooch 43-75 AD
- An as of Vespasian 77-78 AD
- Atrebatic gold stater
- IA flat linear type potin
- Copper alloy Colchester brooch 1st c. AD
- Roman Republican silver denarius issued by Postumus dated 74 BC
- 2-piece Colchester type brooch 50-70 AD
- Gallo-Belgic gold stater
- Atrebatic gold stater



# Continuity between the Iron Age and Roman Period in Ewell

## IA AND RB SITES IN THE EWELL HINTERLAND



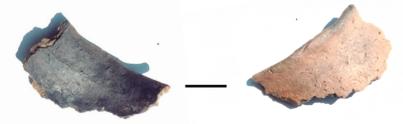
### IA and RB settlement evidence

- "Apparently Early Iron Age", pot-boilers, animal bones and a worked flint found when sectioning the Stane Street "causeway". (SHHER\_2562)
- Coarse Roman pottery found during same excavation. (SHHER\_1089)



### IA activity

IA sherd of pottery found during work on Nonsuch Mansion stables. It is thought to have been found in a pit or ditch feature. (BH Museum)



IA sherd found beneath Nonsuch Mansion stables



IA sherd found in Test Pit 6 in Old Stables Field, Nonsuch Park (OSF2019)



### Early Iron Age occupation site Nonsuch Park

Evidence during the construction of the Cheam bypass road, in 1939. Hearths, spindle whorls and pits containing Iron Age pottery and burnt flints were found, along with Early Iron Age pottery of type c. The exact location along the unfinished road is uncertain.



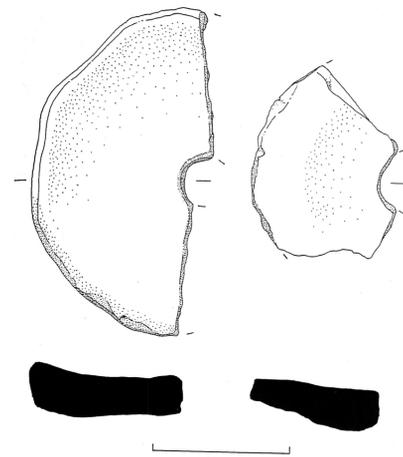
### IA activity

Seven Iron Age sherds found in Old Stables Field during field walking in 1959-60 by David Cousins. A prehistoric pot base, likely dated to the Iron Age was found during test pitting in September 2019, carried out by Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society and Surrey Archaeological Society. (NHLF).



### Iron Age finds at Warren Farm, Ewell

A small number of prehistoric features were recorded, most of which appear to be Middle Iron Age in date, but which may include features of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Finds included fragments of two rotary quern stones, dated LIA-ERB period. The features, mostly ditches and pits, may be associated with small settlements which lay outside the excavation area. Earlier use of the site was indicated by the recovery of several struck flints and a fragment of polished axe.



Warren Farm, Ewell - fragments of two LIA-ERB rotary quern stones



### IA-RB occupation in Aragon Avenue, Ewell

Iron Age and Romano-British occupation found during the digging of the foundations of houses at Aragon Avenue, Ewell, in 1959. A ditch or pit contained IA pottery, triangular loom weights and flint flakes. The Roman pottery included Samian and coarse ware; it was Hadrianic (117-138 AD) in date.

### An Iron Age storage pit

An IA pit of Little Woodbury type, near Chalkpit Lane, Epsom, was excavated by Frere in 1940. The finds included Iron Age A and AB pottery, a saddle quern and animal bones. These were presumed to relate to a contemporary settlement. A later evaluation by SCAU as part of an application for the construction of a golf course at Downs Farm, Ewell, recovered few pieces of burnt flint but the only feature found was a modern pit.



### Iron Age/Romano-British farmstead at The Looe (1st - 4th century)

An Iron Age/Romano-British farmstead in the grounds of Looe House, was excavated circa 1950 by Tom Walls. The area is on an elevated spur of the North Downs which has seen activity from the Mesolithic/ Neolithic periods onwards, culminating in the establishment of a farming settlement occupied in the decades either side of the Roman conquest. The main occupation phases date to the 1st and 2nd century AD, but continuing into the 4th century. Iron Age pottery and two urned cremations were found at the top of one pit with bone discs bearing graffiti. Two inhumation infant burials were also found.

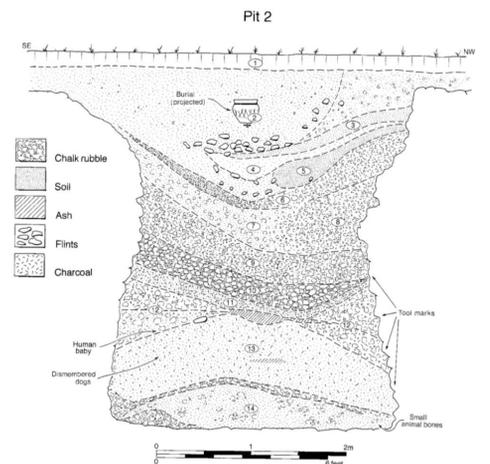
It has been suggested that an ancient track leading from Ewell in the direction of Burgh may have spanned the prehistoric - Roman period; the Looe farmstead lies close to the line of this feature as do the 4-5th c. Roman cremation and inhumation burials between The Looe and NESCOL College.



Interpretation of an Iron Age settlement (Butser Iron Age Farm)

### Quern stones in the Ewell Hinterland

Rotary quern stones were introduced in the Middle Iron Age, replacing saddle querns, to process grain. Sarsen was only used at Warren Farm in probable late Iron Age contexts. Ferruginous sandstone only occurs at King William IV, where it is undated and at The Looe where it is late Iron Age. Both stone types can probably be deemed to be remnants of earlier quern manufacture. Greensand that is not from Lodsworth, or from the Folkestone Beds, is found almost entirely in late Iron Age to early Roman contexts (also mostly at The Looe and Warren Farm). (Shaffrey 2017).



Above - section of an Iron Age storage pit at The Looe

Finds thought to have been ritually placed in pit 2 include a dismembered dog, a human infant and a late 1st or early 2nd urned cremation burial of a young man. Pit 1 held dog bones, pebble slingshot and a horse foreleg whilst the basal fill of pit 3 contained a complete (though smashed) pottery vessel and the skeleton of a

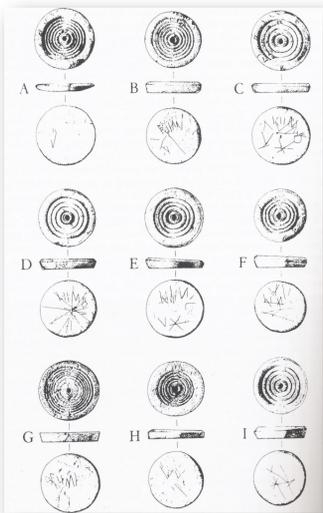
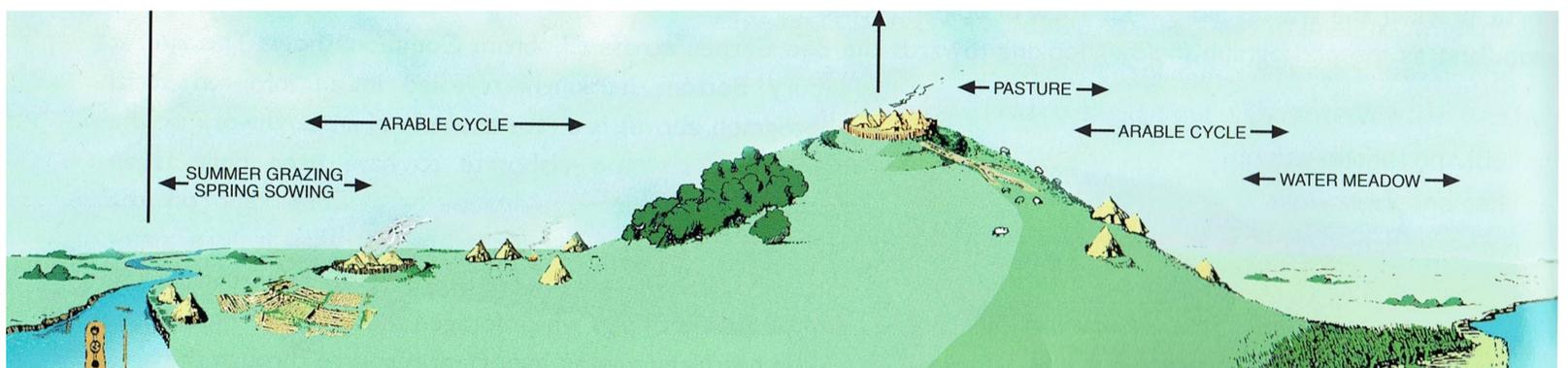


Illustration of bone gaming counters found at The Looe

The pits at the Looe revealed assemblages of Late Iron Age and Roman pottery incorporating sherds of West Sussex grog-tempered ware, fragments of greensand rotary querns, and items traditionally associated with weaving including triangular clay loomweights, chalk spindle whorls and a bone gouge, all of which you'd expect to find in a farmstead environment. However there were also deposits that could be considered to hold ritual significance which may imbue the whole with a spiritual aspect (Cotton 2001).

A diagram showing the land use of an Iron Age farm



The beginning of permanently cultivated field-systems date from the Iron Age. The landscape gradually changed as agricultural practices and styles of landholding evolved. There are no such 'Celtic fields' identified in or around Ewell.