

A ROMANO-BRITISH HOUSE AT ORPINGTON

Map Reference 51/46, 454658.

This house, in part excavated by the writer in 1927, has not yet been described and probably cannot be, because of the many untoward circumstances associated with it.

It was first brought to the notice of various archaeological societies by correspondents who described the deliberate destruction of massive walls, and the looting of the site by casual visitors, and a subsequent visit to the area confirmed that thick walls had been destroyed by the contractor to provide hard core and that souvenir hunters had caused much other damage. There was undoubtedly the remnant of an early building of Roman date here, but all that remained untouched was a small triangular area 50 ft. by 50 ft. by 70 ft., i.e., about 140 square yards, that might repay examination. By means of funds supplied by some of these societies and private donations, excavation was commenced and the remains of a corridor house with some heated rooms over a hypocaust were revealed, together with floors of plain plaster and tesserae. A preliminary plan was made by the district council's surveyor and photographs taken, but once again owing to newspaper publicity the site was invaded over the week-end and practically everything destroyed. Any further excavation was impossible and the site was abandoned to the contractors.

It can, however, be stated that the original house was not less than a hundred feet long and about fifty feet from front to back and it may originally have extended into the area now covered by the railway goods yard, but if so, this part must have been destroyed many years earlier when the yard was laid out. Dating material was chiefly pottery, much of which was removed to the council offices but cannot now be traced. Some in the writer's possession, together with recollections of other fragments found, would place the period of occupation within the second and third centuries, and that from the abundance of wood ash on the site the upper part of the house may have been of wood and

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destroyed by fire. A certain amount of painted plaster from the walls was found but not sufficient to make a comparison with the Lullingstone house a profitable study. There was also evidence of a pre-Roman (Iron Age) occupation of part of the site.

F.C.E.-E. .