

## Coastal villas, maritime villas; a perspective from Southern Britain

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**Abstract** The coastal siting of Romano-British villas is generally discussed and attention is particularly focused on the Channel seaboard of Britain. Here, comparison is made with the distribution of those natural harbours and offshore anchorages that have been traditionally favoured by sailing craft. These are clearly described in the first edition of Hobb's British Channel Pilot of 1859. A relationship is proposed between the rare incidence of leeward anchorages and the siting of villas at Folkestone, Eastbourne, Sidlesham, Weymouth and Honeyditches. Other villas with significant maritime settings are identified at Southwick, Fishbourne, Emsworth, and Brading all of which adjoin harbours or 'roads' identified by Hobbs. In the Eastern Solent, anchorages at Spithead, Mother Bank and Cowes Roads are equated with the *Magnus Portus* described by Ptolemy. At this location some supportive evidence is offered by Roman ceramics recently recovered from the seabed. Attention is also drawn to maritime themes in the mosaics at Fishbourne, Brading and Low Ham where the chosen mythological scenes appear to be an overt expression of contemporary nautical preoccupations.

**Keywords** Roman ports · Roman anchorages · Roman villas · *Magnus Portus* · Roman Britain

*'We must take the current when it serves or lose our ventures'*  
Julius Caesar. Act iv. 3

### The search for Romano-British ports

Writing in 1978, Henry Cleere remarked that a search for Roman harbours in Britain was an unrewarding exercise showing virtually no 'hard' evidence in the form of excavated wharves

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and jetties. Harbours, he observed, had often been ill-defined by archaeologists but, for the purpose of discussion, he proposed his own definition embodying any site from which goods and passengers could be transferred from ship to shore or *vice versa*. Such a site could encompass stone or wooden wharves and docks, simple wooden jetties or the revetted bank of a river. It could also include natural havens from which goods and passengers could be landed by lighters working off an open shore or where shallow-draught craft could be safely beached. It has been, he observed, the minimal docking requirements of many Roman boats and the scanty archaeological record offered by these latter types of harbour that has made a survey of Romano-British harbours so difficult.

Some three decades later we find that excavations on London's Roman waterfront have greatly enriched our understanding of the character of Britain's major Roman port. Nevertheless, the haziness that Henry Cleere observed at the other end of the spectrum still clouds our overall vision of a province that metropolitan Rome considered to be so distinctly maritime. The archaeological value of simple havens and landing places has been recognised by Sean McGrail (1985) whilst Gustav Milne (1990) has stressed the economic importance to Rome of the armada of those humbler craft that comprised the bulk of the Roman merchant fleet.

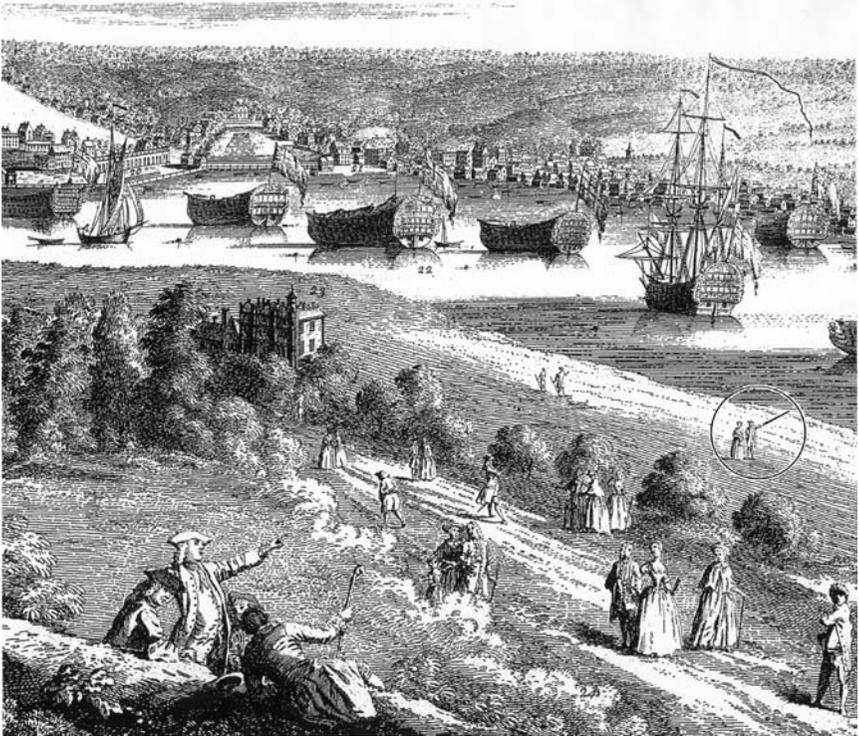
Mason (2003:9) has admirably summarised the current problem of Romano-British ports and havens.

'Erosion, siltation, fluctuations in sea-level and changing currents have all, either individually or collectively had an effect on ancient coastal and riverine sites. Some are buried beneath many feet of silt while others, conversely have been partly, or in some cases totally, destroyed. Also, because they have retained their capability as a port, more than a few are overlain by modern settlement and harbour works'.

In his short paper of 1978, Cleere reviewed the evidence for potential harbours by examining the Roman road network and the distribution of known coastal settlements. By this means he identified some forty-five perceived landing places from which goods, civil passengers or troops might gain ready access to the heart of *Britannia*. Of these locations, Cleere observed that 71% were essentially military in nature and were mostly located on the shores of the highland zone. A further 13% seem to have sprung from military origins before proceeding to acquire any significant commercial function.

The remaining 16% include London, Rochester, Chichester, Bitterne (Southampton), Radipole (Weymouth), and Sea Mills (Bristol) where a commercial role would seem to prevail. At Rochester it was observed that this riverside community on the Medway could provide an outlet for the rich villas of the North Downs yet at no other of the forty-five sites could a causal relationship be readily claimed between villas and sea-borne trade.

An interesting omission from the Medway was mention of the substantial Roman building at Frindsbury. This lies only 150 metres from the present inter-tidal shore and it occupies the environs of former Quarry House. This was once a fine Jacobean mansion built as the home of a highly successful family of entrepreneurs and ship-builders (Fig. 1). It was in the yards of the Quarry House estate, in the early 19th century, that so many oak-hulled frigates were built. With a good sheltered harbour and copious supplies of Kentish timber so ready to hand, had the Roman building on this spot marked the centre of a similarly successful timber and ship-building industry? We should not forget that the most direct route for the supply of Kentish ragstone during the construction of *Londinium* and its defences lay through the Medway gap. It would be here that a need for ships would arise after the establishing of the *Classis Britannica* in the later 1st century AD (Milne 1998).



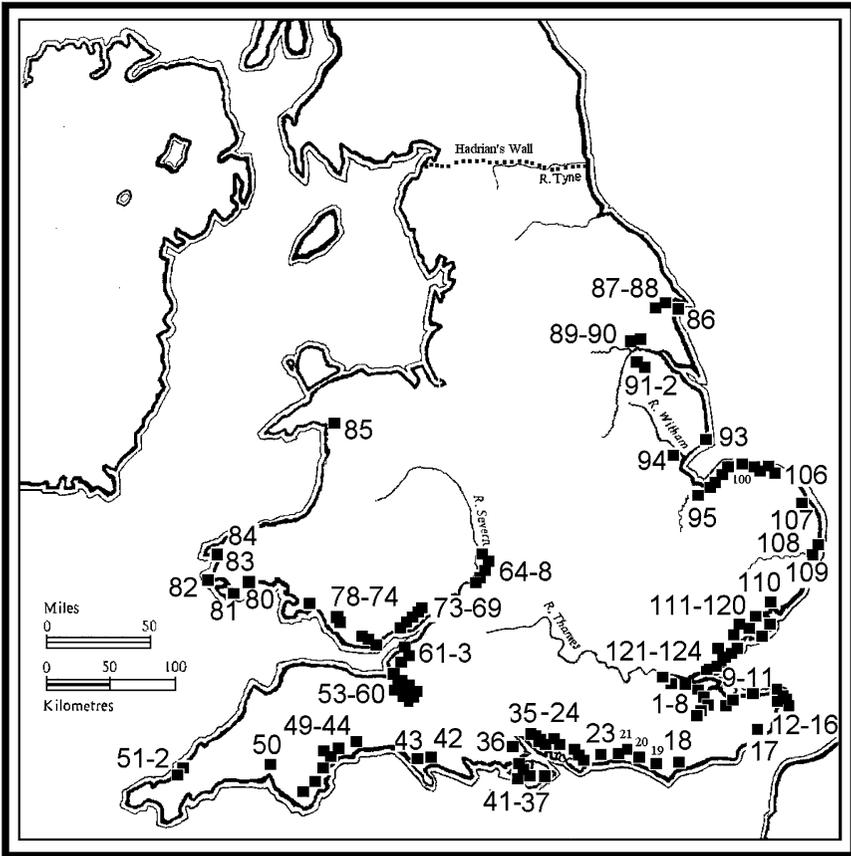
**Fig. 1** Sea-going vessels anchored in Limehouse Reach on the river Medway, as observed by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck in 1738. The Roman building on the Frindsbury shore (inv. 4) lies in the proximity of the couple with the pointing cane (circled) to the right of Quarry House (23). This mansion was occupied by the Brindleys, a prosperous family of military ship-builders whose opportunism may mirror events in Roman times.

### Coastal villas in south western Britain

Despite the lack of overt evidence to link port communities with Romano-British villas, there remains an arguable case for the participation of certain villa owners in particular maritime activity. A map of the overall distribution of known villas in Britain is an obvious starting place. Here we find that there are substantial sections of the coastline where villa estates are noticeably absent (Fig. 2). The Dumnonian peninsula, with its fine array of natural harbours, is a particularly striking case. This contains virtually no villas west of site 50.

On the western seaboard the taming and draining of the mighty Parrett, has now severed the prosperous villa of Low Ham from an important riverine link with the Bristol Channel. For the great military and civilian populations centred at Gloucester, Caerwent, Caerleon and Usk, a riverine route via the Parrett to Ilchester and by road to Dorchester provided a vital alternative to the difficult circumnavigation of the Dumnonian peninsular (Leach & Leach 1982:72; Holbrooke 1998).

At the mouth of the Parrett there are riverside settlements at Combwich and Crandon Bridge and villas at Bawdripp and Puriton (Inv. this paper nos 59 & 60). These provide access to a spur road that allowed cartage to Ilchester. For heavier Roman cargoes however, transfer from ship to barge was probably preferable in the Parrett. It was perhaps through



**Fig. 2** The coastal villas of eastern and southern Britain.

this facility that the villa at Low Ham (inv. 56) and its neighbours might prosper through maritime trade.

The draining of the north Somerset levels has similarly placed the villas of Wemberham and Portishead (inv. 62 & 63) in settings that are no longer obviously associated with the sea. At the latter site a mosaic containing exotic millefiori tesserae hints at the presence of a prosperous community that may once have been set at the edge of estuarine waters (Brown 1965). Somewhat similar situations can be observed in south Lincolnshire and Romney Marsh where successive schemes of drainage and land reclamation have severed other Roman settlements from their contemporary shorelines.

### Coastal villas west of the Severn

West of the Severn this study notes fifteen sites. Up-channel from Cardiff we find four overlooking the Severn's alluvial plain. Here they may claim some control over minor landing places or 'pills' where we can suspect fishing and ferrying. Similar activities are recorded in medieval and Tudor times when boats known as Severn *trows* and *picards* carried much fish and grain in Severn waters. Contemporary records indicate that the latter

are clearly coasters but not fishing vessels. A statute of Henry VIII describes them as ‘*grete botes with foremasts*’ of 15 to 36 tons burden (Burwash 1947:127; Hutchinson 1994:67). *Romano-Celtic picartos* are cited later in this paper.

On the Silurian coast west of Cardiff (inv. 73) we find that Wales’s meagre population of villas is scattered near the coast. This sparsity prompts comparison with *Dumnonia* where strong Celtic social traditions could readily exclude many aspects of Romanisation including its vernacular buildings.

For masters of small modern sailing craft, particular safe anchorages are recommended at Milford Haven, Tenby and Swansea. Coast-hugging along the Devon and Silurian shores is still commonly recommended because direct crossings of the Bristol Channel are fraught with dangerous races and ever-shifting shoals (Hanson 1971:237).

Milford Haven is deemed one of Europe’s finest natural harbours yet we find no on-shore evidence of its utilisation in Roman times. The locale of Tenby seems similarly bereft although the northern margin of Saundersfoot Bay is watched over by a potential villa site at Amroth (inv. 81). Near Swansea we find a well-positioned maritime villa site at Oystermouth (inv. 79) but we are denied almost any knowledge of its character. Another notable harbour is the confluent mouth of the Elai and Taff rivers. Cardiff’s shore-fort has made good use of this haven and we may suspect that the upstream villa at Ely (inv. 73) was also able to draw on this resource. Stackpole and Carmarthen are now recognised as difficult but usable harbours if local knowledge is employed in their approach (Hanson 1971:237–242). In the 4<sup>th</sup> century a coastal military base functioned at Carmarthen and we might postulate that a long-established maritime community was resident here.

It seems that the establishing of modest coastal villa buildings in Silurian territory may have been promoted or assisted by essential shore-hugging voyages along the South Wales seaboard. History identifies *Picatae* as Romano-British sailing craft (Dove 1970). When *picards* were plying the Bristol Channel in Tudor times, it is tempting to view these as the eventual successors of these craft that had once serviced a chain of Romano-Celtic maritime communities on the Silurian coast.

### The coastal assets of the Trinovantes

The East Anglian coast is a further area where varied levels of maritime activity can be detected. With the exception of the Snettisham - Salthouse segment of the north Norfolk coast (inv. nos 91–101), the great bulge of the Anglian coastline is virtually devoid of villas. In contrast, the Essex seaboard is very different. The latter is essentially Trinovantian territory and it is here that we find a reticulated coast with cut-off islands, spits, inlets and salt marshes. These features combine with a rich marine resource to produce a coastline that has inevitably nurtured early maritime interests. Recent documentation by the Department for the Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) shows these creeks and the near-shore zone to be a great reserve of the edible oyster *Ostrea edulis*. Mussels and cockles can also be successfully exploited here provided that a fleet of small specialised coastal craft is maintained (Fig. 3 & appendix 2).

Writing in 1958, M. R. Hull was perhaps the first to lay emphasis on the fact that *Camulodunum* was essentially an *oppidum-port* with important seaward approaches. It has since become evident that a second contemporary fortified coastal settlement was operating in Trinovantian territory. This was apparently equipped with wharves, and was sited at the head of the Blackwater estuary at Heybridge (Dunnett 1975; Wickenden 1986; 1996:7, 78 Fig. 1). The general level of maritime activity on this coast begs comparison with medieval and later times when local fleets of small craft, called doggers, pursued herring on a massive



**Fig. 3** The principal oyster fisheries of eastern and southern Britain 1997 MAFF data.

scale. They were supported by a coastal salt-processing industry that begs comparison with Romano-British practice on the Anglian and Wash coasts.

On the Essex coast, a 15th century port like Ipswich, could harbour foreign traders amounting to some 40% of all mooring craft (Burwash 1947:216 for record of AD 1492). Steers (1964:369) identifies the main East Anglian exports of medieval times to be grain, wool and cloth. Here we come close to *Strabo's* list of Britain's pre-Conquest exports of the 1st century AD. We may also recall the potent corn-ear depicted by *Cunobelinus* and his moneyers at *Camulodunum*.

Coastal *oppida* are by no means common in Britain and comparison seems to be restricted to *Camulodunum*, *Hengistbury* and perhaps the 16 hectares of unfinished fortified headland enclosing *Bindon Hill* and *Lulworth Cove* on the Dorset coast. To these, perhaps, we might add a postulated and seemingly lost Regnensian site at *Selsey*. This, like *Bindon Hill*, may perhaps have been a failed *oppidum*, ill-served by its seaward approach.

By the close of the first century AD it seems that some of the most promising maritime locations on the Trinovantian coast had already been claimed by villa communities. This is particularly well demonstrated in the mouth of the Colne where the gravel spur at *Fingringhoe Wick* was to become the site of no less than three separate Roman houses (Hull 1963; Dunnett 1975; Mason 2003:158, Fig. 37; this inv. 110). It has been argued by Hull (1958) that this

particular community is best seen in an entrepôt role, its site lying close to the head of the Colne's present 3-metre navigable channel.

At Fingringhoe traces of a Roman wooden jetty have been observed. It is from here that mariners may make little progress upstream to *Camulodunum* except with the advantage of a flood tide. It seems that the naval advantages of Fingringhoe were first seized when a Claudian supply base was sited at this location. A view provided by the 18th century engravers Samuel and Nathaniel Buck captures the navigable attributes of the Colne at the threshold of Colchester.

Other key coastal locations have also been exploited around the mouth of the Colne. These are marked by villas or buildings at Brightlingsea, Alresford and West Mersea (inv. 108, 109 & 111). There is also by an apparent villa site at St Osyth Priory (Hull 1963; Dunnett 1975; this inv. 107). Further, unexcavated, members of this group attend the adjacent mouth of the Blackwater estuary at Salcott and Tollesbury (*ibid*, this inv. 112 & 114). Other Trinovantian villas or communities that may lay claim to coastal interests are those at Ipswich, Harwich, and Little Oakley (inv. 104–106).

Archaeologists have also conjectured the possible presence of Trinovantian ports or landing places at Tilbury, Southend, Shoebury, Great Wakering and Burnham on Crouch. These give rise to the suggestion that early prosperity in this region arose from ready maritime links across the 'Narrow Seas' when Romano-Celtic boats seem to have been employed in a riverine trade on the Rhine (Hawkes & Hull 1947:2; Dunnett 1975:124–125; McGrail, 1998). Despite the obvious success of such links, it may be equally argued that, given the geography of this coastline with its teeming wealth of marine life, the home environment would naturally associate many Trinovantian communities with the sea.

### The maritime interests of the Cantiaci

Some of the physical characteristics of the Trinovantian coast may also be found on certain sections of the north Kent coast, in the territory of the *Cantiaci*. Here rich oyster beds were also to be found on a seaboard that, on its Thames shoreline, was bordered by salt-marshes crazed by shallow creeks and channels. Such, it seems, was the maritime setting of the villas of Northfleet, Chalk, Boxted and Faversham. Some further indications of creek-head settlement on the North Kent coast have also been noted by Wilkinson (1997).

In the mouth of the Medway at Rochester we find that the Roman town of *Durobrivae* was preceded by a late Iron Age coastal settlement. This, perhaps, was somewhat akin to Heybridge. This Kent community was apparently able to confirm its status by operating a mint.

Detsicas (1983:3) suggests that, in contrast with the *Trinovantes*, the *Cantiaci* had been placed at an economic disadvantage due to their anti-Roman stance during the Caesarian invasion. Whilst this may have initially affected economic development and coastal trade in this territory during the early post-Conquest period, we should not overlook the small but significant scatter of bronze 'ship staters' in Kent (Muckleroy *et al.* 1978). These seem to proclaim a well-established maritime interest shared with the Trinovantian king *Cunobelinus*. His abbreviated name *CUN* is to be found on these coins just below an image of a high-hulled single-masted ship. The inscription virtually obliterates the feint letters *CAMU* that seem to identify the Trinovantian oppidum-port and mint at *Camulodunum*. The reverse side of the coin shows a winged female with wreath between the letters *SE*.

Single examples of the 'ship staters' have been cited at Canterbury and Colchester but further finds, made by metal detectorists in Kent, bring the present total to 11 (de Jersey, pers. comm. Fig. 4). These include finds from the coastal temple at Worth. The issue of



**Fig. 4** Late Iron Age tribal populations and places in the maritime regions of southern Britain. The distribution of *Cunobelin* ship staters in Cantiacian and Trinovantian territory is also shown.

these highly distinctive coins seems to imply that pre-Roman maritime interests amongst the *Cantiaci* may have been sufficiently strong to affect the *Trinovantes* during the development of their links across the Narrow Seas. The ear of corn displayed by *Cunobelinus* on some of his gold coins may signify a major export contributing to the king's wealth. The issue of ship staters may acknowledge, or indeed reward, *Cantiacian* compliance with the comings and goings of his craft in the mouth of the Thames estuary. For archaeologists and coastal managers, these coins emphasise a particular need to identify and protect Late Iron Age and Roman anchorages and landing places on seaboard of Essex and Kent.

The changing geography of the former Isle of Thanet is an appropriate reminder to us of uncertainties that have been introduced by subsequent changes in shoreline (Steers 1964:334–7). In this case the silting and reclamation of the Wantsum Channel demonstrates that coastal accretion, marine recession and the works of drainage engineers can place villas and other Roman settlements far from their original coastline. The palaeogeography of the Wantsum Channel and the Stourmouth inlet offers the possibility that a more effective navigable access may once have served Canterbury's *Durovernum* and the preceding, yet little known, Late Iron Age settlement that also seems to have occupied this spot. A simple reconstruction of these channels has been postulated by Mason (2003:159, Fig. 80). At Dungeness and Romney

Marsh massive accretion and coastal reconfiguration has similarly isolated and landlocked former coastal sites like Bodiam and Lympne. A reconstructed outline of the Roman coast here has also been offered by Mason (2003:81, Fig. 26).

On the remaining seaboard of the home counties, south of the Thames, we find that most Roman coastal settlement is set within a very different topography. Here, a recent survey shows that nearly half the total villas for this region lie within 10km of the sea. Most of these buildings lie close to the estuaries or the coastal shoreline (Sheldon *et al.* 1993; Corti & Sheldon 1995).

### Villas showing varying levels of coastal and maritime interests

It has been claimed that some villas may have been sited to take particular advantage of good riverine routes. In support of this proposal it has been observed that horses may tow by water 200 times the quantity they might carry on land. Some villas on the Medway, Adur, Parrett and the lower Severn are well sited for such use. Riverine transport is well quantified in some post-medieval accounts. These show that the savings offered by river freightage could amount to as much as 90% or even 97% (Sheldon *et al.* 1993:42). In suitable locations access to cheap riverine and seaborne transport might allow an enterprising landowner to undercut the costs of conveying conventional agrarian produce to market. Nevertheless, this need not necessarily provide a primary reason for the siting of a villa. Other villa-type buildings, like those in Silurian territory, may have arisen as part of an acquired lifestyle adopted as a result of regular maritime contact with other parts of the province. Some of these Silurian villas may have been more reliant upon trafficking and less dependent on conventional agrarian production.

This review gives particular attention to the spectrum of maritime factors that may have determined the siting of certain villas on the English Channel coast. Villas like Preston, Havant, Hardley and Uplyme, lie some distance from the shoreline so it seems unlikely that their function was essentially associated with maritime activity. Nevertheless, the sea may have provided a useful supplement to their economy. These we might describe, simply, as ‘coastal villas’. Others, it seems, were sited at locations that could offer more fundamental links with the sea. It is here that we will require more information on the offshore attributes of a villa’s catchment area.

### The mariner’s requirements

In order to assess the maritime potential of English Channel villas it may help to consider their general location from a mariner’s point of view. Writing in 1849, the naval hydrographer J. S. Hobbs has much vital wisdom to offer masters of sailing craft when navigating this highly varied coastline. Here the prevailing south-westerly winds present a common hazard for ships seeking safe harbour or a secure near-shore anchorage. In the latter case, suitable leeward shelter can be particularly important yet hard to find.

Masters of boats also require firm *ground* in which to embed their anchors. This must be combined with *good riding*. The latter usually means freedom from the south westerly *fetch* that delivers Atlantic waves that can pitch and toss a craft at its mooring. This problem can be a significant one at a Roman port like Dover.

A bay protected by a westerly headland or land mass can offer valuable shelter but the ground conditions must also be suitable and the approach should be free of dangerous ledges and shoals. Unfortunately the dominant north-easterly trend of the English Channel coast

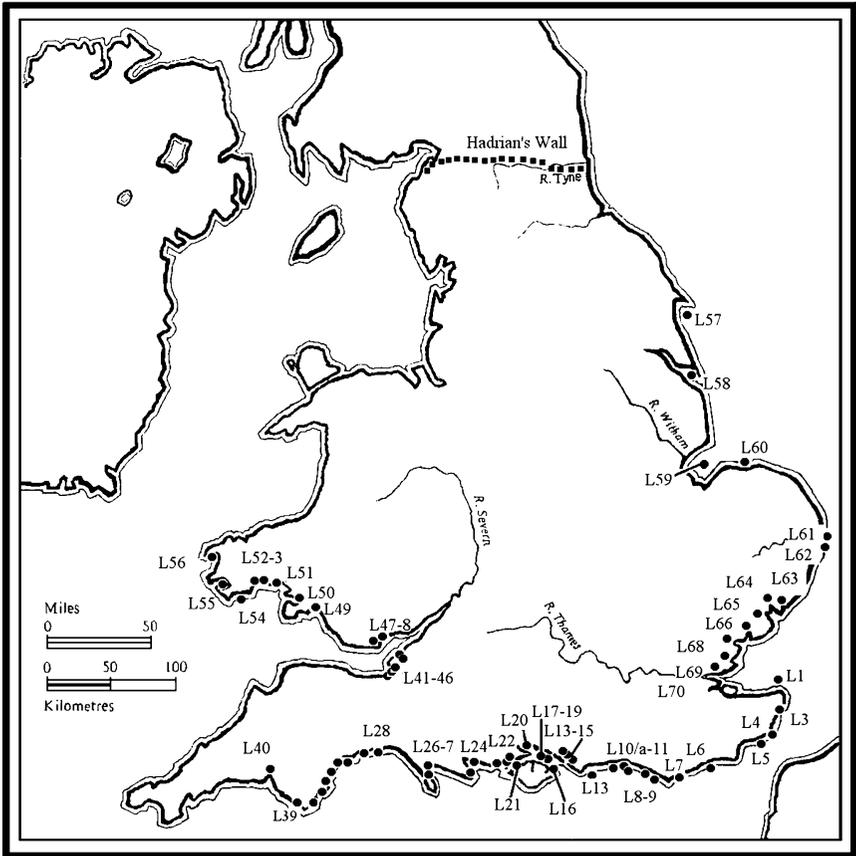
has created very few opportunities to gain shelter in the lee of a northeast-facing shore. Ideally, a river mouth set within high rising terrain might provide these conditions, but again the need for freedom from ledges, shoals and adverse currents must also be met. Set deep between the South Downs, rivers like the Adur and the Arun, ostensibly offer such shelter, yet the narrowness of their mouths and the presence of strong offshore currents flowing over an array of dangerous shoals can severely lessen their usefulness. The guidance given by Hobbs also shows that the timing of entry into such river mouths can also be critical when their harbourage is only tidal. This is confirmed by some later pilotage guides also cited here.

Where compromises in the quality anchorage must be accepted there arises a need for sound and detailed knowledge of local pilotage. Such conditions remind us that Romano-British coastal communities would be unable to function in a purely passive or receptive role when dealing with the comings and goings of coastal craft from foreign parts. If coastal communities, including villa communities, were served by ships, it would be essential that the local community provide much of the pilotage and boat-handling skills. In all probability, the nautical skills held within the cantons of the *Trinovantes*, *Cantiaci*, *Regni* and *Durotriges* made these communities the natural sources of ships for the *Classis Britannica*.

When we come to view the number of natural anchorages and harbours that are suitable for regular use on the southern and south-eastern coasts of Britain, the total is remarkably low. Those identified by 19th century pilots amount to little more than thirty over a distance of 300 km (Fig. 5). Such is the span of the coastal villas of the English Channel from the North Foreland near Ramsgate to Lyme Bay. These anchorages and havens are summarised in the following table.

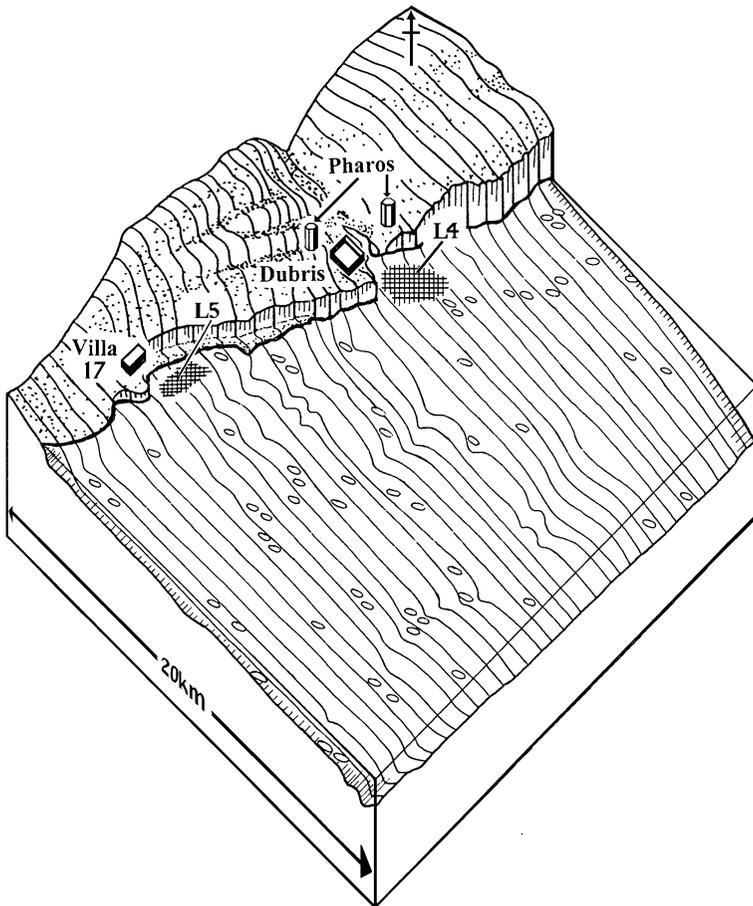
#### **Notable safe havens and anchorages on the ‘villa coast’ of the English Channel**

- L1. Margate Road: Learmonth (1922:286) identifies an anchorage in some 13 m of water and 1.3 miles northward of Foreness. In 1922 it is used for quarantine purposes. A second anchorage can be obtained off Margate town ‘in some 12.8 m where the bottom is mud outside the chalk ground’. (A villa building found in the town overlooks this anchorage).
- L2. Broadstairs: King and Hull 1889:129) identify a minor anchorage off the harbour at Broadstairs in 20 feet at low water. If present in Roman times, this would be of little attraction compared with the Wantsum Channel.
- L3. Small Downs and the Wantsum: An offshore anchorage now extends for some 2 miles between Deal and Sandwich. It provides anchorage in 6 to 2½ fathoms in poor ground conditions (Hobbs 7). It seems that this may have become a very poor successor to a well sheltered harbour that once offered itself to Roman craft when the former Wantsum Channel gave access to the official landing place at Richborough (Rivet & Smith 1979:16)].
- L4. Dover Road (Fig. 6): This can offer good anchoring for mariners wishing to stop a tide but, generally, there is ‘so great a swell that ships roll too much’ (Hobbs 14).
- L5. Folkestone Road (Fig. 6): There is an anchorage in 12–14 fathoms offshore but near this place and westward of it there is a ledge of rocks (Hobbs 14).
- L6. Hastings Road: In the open road vessels may anchor in 2 to 5 fathoms, the latter depth being about a mile from the shore (Hobbs 15).
- L7. Eastbourne Road (Fig. 7): ‘Southward of the town and about a mile from the shore you will have a fine sandy bottom with 4–7 fathoms of water and shelter offered by the high land of Beachy Head. But do not go too near shore or northward of the town for here the ground is rocky and foul’ (Hobbs 13).



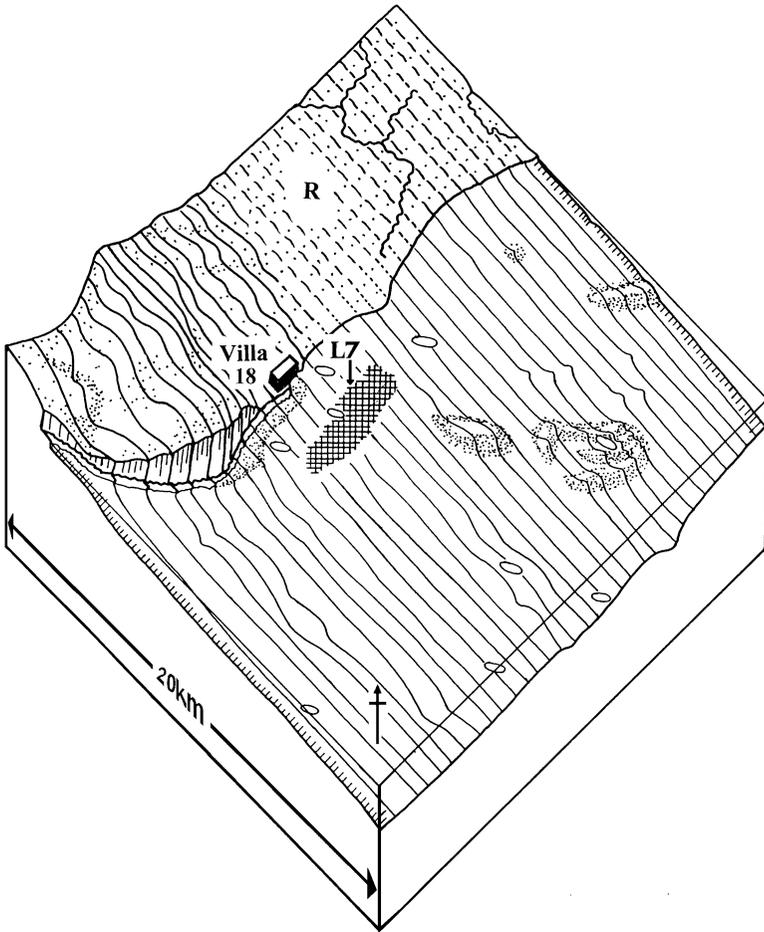
**Fig. 5** The distribution of havens and anchorages (after Hobbs 1859).

- L8. Cuckmere Haven: A very shallow haven at the mouth of the Cuckmere offering no more than 6 feet at low ebbs. In stormy weather it can be completely stopped up (Hobbs 17).
- L9. Seaford Road: An excellent offshore anchorage in 5 to 7 fathoms with good holding ground. Inshore lies the mouth of the Ouse at Newhaven and an excellent tide harbour (Hobbs 17–18).
- L10. The mouth of the Adur at Southwick and Shoreham: The mouth of the Adur is obstructed by a massive shingle bar that diverts the river eastwards along the shore from Shoreham to Southwick. Inside the bar good anchorage is to be found but the approach to the harbour is beset by the Jenny Ground Rocks, Church Rocks, Dutch Rocks and the Grass Bank. All of these must be carefully avoided (Hobbs 18–19). King and Hull (1889:194) recognise an anchorage mile offshore in 16 to 24 feet in sand, gravel and chalk ground. Similarly favourable conditions are noted further west near the shallows at Worthing (anchorage 10a).
- L11. The mouth of the Arun at Littlehampton: The Arun is navigable at least as far as Arundel but the flood tide at the mouth can be difficult and there are the Bognor Rocks, Shelly Rocks, Kingmore Rocks and Winter’s Knoll Shoal to be avoided. Also offshore is a *road* offering 3½ fathoms in open water but no shelter (Hobbs 21–22).



**Fig. 6** The maritime setting of *Dubris*, Folkestone villa (17) and anchorages L4 and L5. Modern wrecks, denoted as ovals, indicate the intensity of sea-borne traffic.

- L12. Pagham Harbour and The Park: The Park is an offshore anchorage lying in the eastern lee of Selsey Bill. It is suitable for ships that are obliged to bear up for anchorage due to contrary winds (Hobbs 23 & 25). Pagham Harbour offered no more than mud and shoals to 19th century navigators but this might not preclude its usefulness in earlier times when it may have functioned as a river mouth (Aldsworth 1987:43).
- L13. Chichester Harbour and Chichester Channel: Chichester Harbour is an extensive creek or ria reaching 7 km inshore to Southbourne. An additional eastern arm gives access to Bosham and the approach to Fishbourne Roman palace. Just inside the mouth of the harbour there is 4–5 fathoms of water but in the inner reaches the low water channel is extremely narrow and to gain shore access ashore, craft must be beached at high tide (Hobbs 25–26).
- L14. Langstone Harbour: A sheltered ria inlet on the east side of Hayling Island offers 4 or 5 fathoms just inside its mouth. The entrance is, nevertheless, blocked by Langstone Bar. This nearly dries at low water (Hobbs 26). High water permits access to the modest port



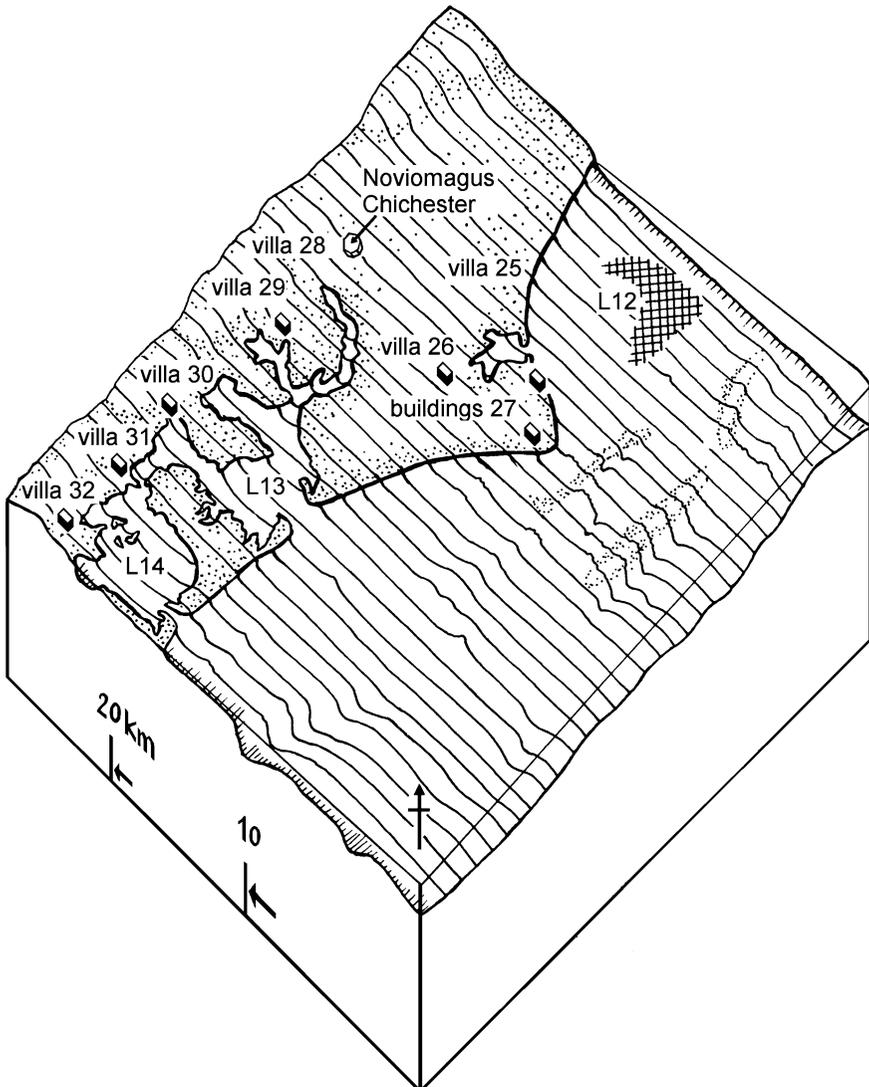
**Fig. 7** Eastbourne Road L7 and the maritime setting of its shoreline villa (18). Modern wrecks, denoted as ovals, reveal the intensity of local seaborne traffic.

of Emsworth but much of the harbour is extremely shallow and the size and character of this approach in Roman times is in some doubt.

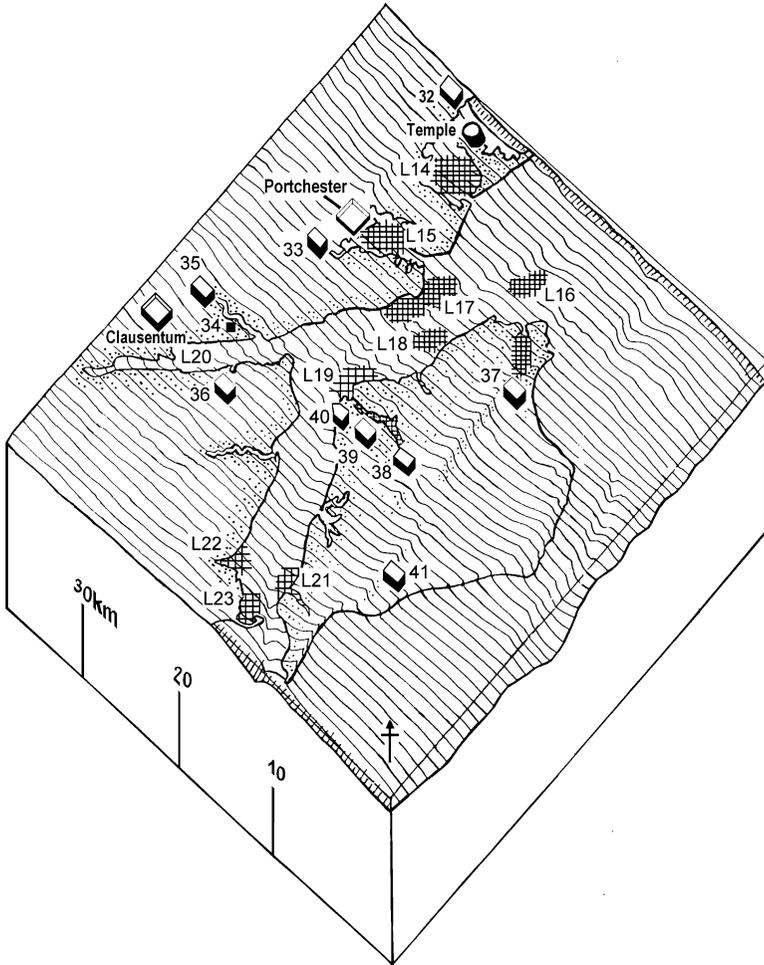
- L15. Portsmouth Harbour: This is a large natural harbour with good anchorage just inside its mouth and with low water channels leading to Portchester and Fareham (Hobbs 30). Like the harbours of Langstone and Chichester much of its interior is extremely shallow and its former character is not fully understood.
- L16. St Helens Road and Brading Haven: This sheltered road lies at the eastern end of the Isle of Wight where an anchorage in 8 or 9 fathoms can be obtained over fine sandy ground (Hobbs 29–30). This road also offers an off-shore stop-over for craft wishing to enter the mouth of the former natural harbour known as Brading Haven.
- L17. Spithead and Stokes Bay (Fig. 8): Spithead is an extensive offshore anchorage lying in the Eastern Solent. It enjoys the shelter of the landmass of the Isle of Wight and it has been greatly favoured as a ‘man of war’ anchorage in post-medieval times. Good holding grounds are to be found here in some 6–17 fathoms (Hobbs 29). Stokes Bay is

a further extension of this anchorage and is distinguished by its use by merchant ships (Hobbs 32).

- L18. Ryde Roads and the Mother Bank (Fig. 8): This is a linear anchorage in the lee of the north east coast of the Isle of Wight. It is separated from Spithead anchorage by the central deep water channel of the Eastern Solent. The bank offers good anchorage in 7–8 fathoms. It is safely sheltered from southerly winds, on good clean grounds (Hobbs 34). (This anchorage has produced a scatter of Roman ceramics).
- L19. *The Cowe* and the Medina estuary (Fig. 8b): Since medieval times ‘the Cowe’ has been acknowledged as a good near-shore anchorage. It is now known as Cowes Roads.



**Fig. 8a** Selsey Bill and its leeward anchorage at “the Park” (L12). The natural ria harbours of Chichester and Langstone (L13 & L14) are also shown.



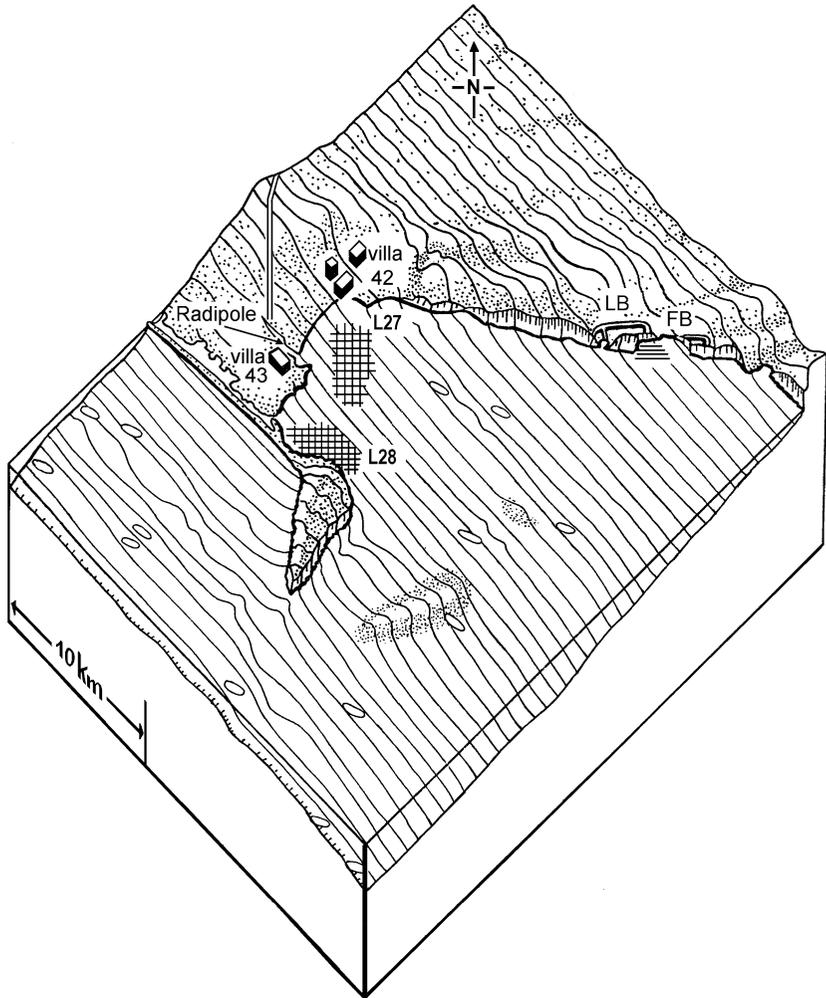
**Fig. 8b** Solent anchorages L14–L23 and the island of Vectis. Locations L17–L20 appear to befit the position of the *Magnus Portus* cited by *Ptolemy* in the early 2nd century.

It offers good holding ground in 8–11 fathoms NNE of the mouth of the Medina estuary (Hobbs 35). The estuary can be easily entered at all states of the tide and navigation is possible for a further 6km to the medieval port of Newport. (Roman amphora fragments have been recovered from the seabed of Cowes Roads at a depth of 4–6 metres).

- L20. Southampton Water: A large ria inlet trending NNW. A central deep-water channel leads 9 km to Southampton and the Test where a shore-fort is sited. The western shore is favoured for sheltered anchorage but landings here can be impeded by mudflats. Favoured western anchorages lie within the cusp of Calshot Spit, at Hythe, and at Eling. Favoured eastern anchorages include Southampton quay and the Test and Hamble rivers. Anchorages in Southampton Water can be used at all states of tide. The Water is perhaps an arm of Ptolemy’s *Magnus Portus*.

- L21. Yarmouth Harbour and Roads: A well sheltered ria inlet on the north west coast of the Isle of Wight. The mouth of the Eastern Yar river has offered sufficient anchorage to spawn a medieval port and town. Offshore, the roads offer good anchorage to the east of the town but care must be taken with a single anchor for the tides run strong and irregularly (Hobbs 35). (This anchorage has yielded scatters of Late Iron Age and Roman pottery).
- L22. Lymington River: Inside the mouth of the river, low water access has been sufficient to promote and sustain the modest medieval port of Lymington. Outside the mouth the ground is good and the riding better than either Yarmouth, Cowes or the Mother Bank (Hobbs 35).
- L23. Hurst Road: An anchorage of 4–7 fathoms in the lee of Hurst shingle spit (Hobbs 35). It is poorly situated for land access.
- L24. Christchurch Harbour: There is good anchorage in the bay eastwards of the harbour mouth in some 4 fathoms but Christchurch is a ‘bar harbour’ and accessible only to small vessels at high water (Hobbs 38). Conditions may have been different in earlier times.
- L25. Poole Harbour: A large natural harbour which enjoys the uncommon advantage that the ebbing and flowing of the tide occurs twice in 12 hours. The harbour is commodious with deep water channels giving access to an inner harbour at Hamworthy and the Piddle river as far as Wareham Quay. The approach to the harbour mouth is impeded by Poole Bar where ‘*no strangers should attempt to cross*’ (Hobbs 39–40).
- L26. Studland Bay: Good anchorage may be found in both easterly and westerly gales in Studland Bay. The adjacent Bay at Swanage is not recommended on account of its concealed rocks (Hobbs 40).
- L27. Weymouth Bay and Harbour (Fig. 9): On the bar of this modest harbour there is no more than 6 feet at low water and the approach channel is narrow. There is nevertheless excellent shelter from the prevailing south-west winds and good riding in both the harbour and in Weymouth road. Care must be taken of the rocky shoal called the Mixon (Hobbs 41).
- L28. Portland Road (Fig. 9): An excellent anchorage offering shelter from the westerly and southerly winds (Hobbs 42). It is the closest anchorage for access to the outcrops of Portland stone that were worked on the peninsula in Roman and later times.
- L29. Bridport: A bar harbour at the mouth of the river Brit offering a shelter that can only be gained at high water. The adjacent coast is inhospitable, the only possible landing point being Seaton Beach where ‘*a vessel in distress may run on shore... and save lives*’ (Hobbs 44).
- L30. Axemouth and Beer Road (Fig. 10): In early Victorian times the mouth of the Axe still provided a creek that, with suitable winds, could be used for landing at any time of the tide. Vessels could also anchor at a distance of half a mile off Beer in 4–5 fathoms (Hobbs 44). In 1839 major changes in the shoreline commenced. Since Hobbs’ account the mouth of the river been obstructed by a large pebble bar. Previously a broad sheltered inlet seems to have offered a safe haven here with upstream access to a suspected Saxon port at Axemouth (Silvester 1981:78, 82).

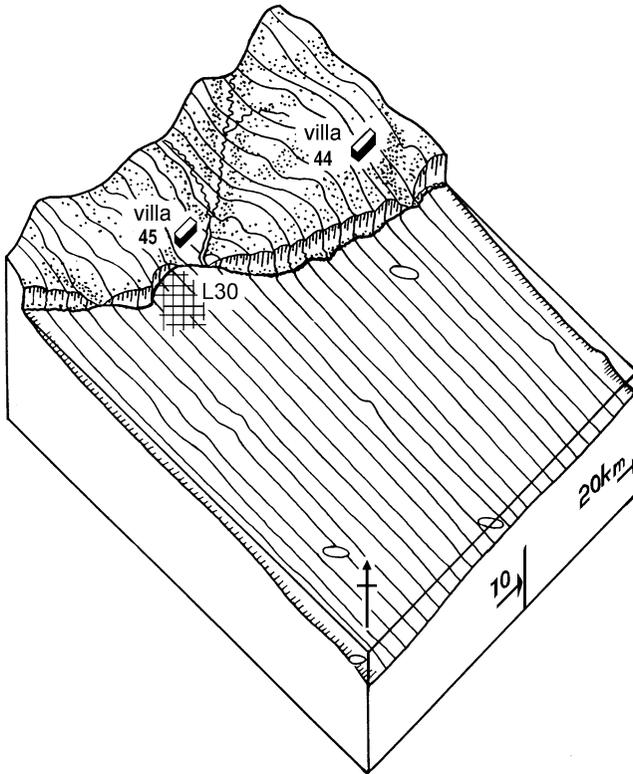
West of Axemouth firm evidence of coastal villas begins to fade but there still remained a need for Roman craft to find havens and anchorages on this westerly coastal shipping route. This route served the great military fort at Exeter and the Cornish tin workings of the 3rd and 4th century. Fortunately, for the mariner, much of this coast is crenulated with deep sheltered *rias*. Between Axemouth and the entry to Exeter there are also some good land



**Fig. 9** Favoured anchorages at Weymouth Road (L27) and Portland Road (L28). Onshore lies Weymouth villa (43) near Radipole harbour. To the north of the bay lies a temple at Jordan Hill and villa buildings at Preston and Bowlease (42). The putative coastal oppidum at Lulworth/Bindon (LB) and the Flowers Barrow hillfort (FB) are also shown. Modern wrecks, shown as ovals, indicate the intensity of local coastal traffic.

places on the open shore such as the ‘*fine shingly beach . . . for good landing at half flood*’ at Sidmouth (L31; Hobbs 1959: 44). At Budleigh Salterton (L32) the beach and river mouth is suitable for small craft approaching at high water to seek the shelter of Otterton Head whilst at Needlesham Cove a good anchorage can be found for coasting vessels wishing to stop a tide over clean sandy ground in 5 fathoms of water (Hobbs *ibid*).

Exemouth (L33) offers a long narrow ria inlet with a low-water bar giving access to a sheltered anchorage and a navigable channel leading to *Isca Dumnoniorum* (Hobbs 1859: 45–46). Moving southwards, Teignmouth (L34), Babbacombe (L35), Tor Bay (L36) and Brixham (L37) offer offshore roads with excellent shelter from the south-west (Hobbs 1859:45–46). West of Brixham there are deep penetrating rias offering good harbours at



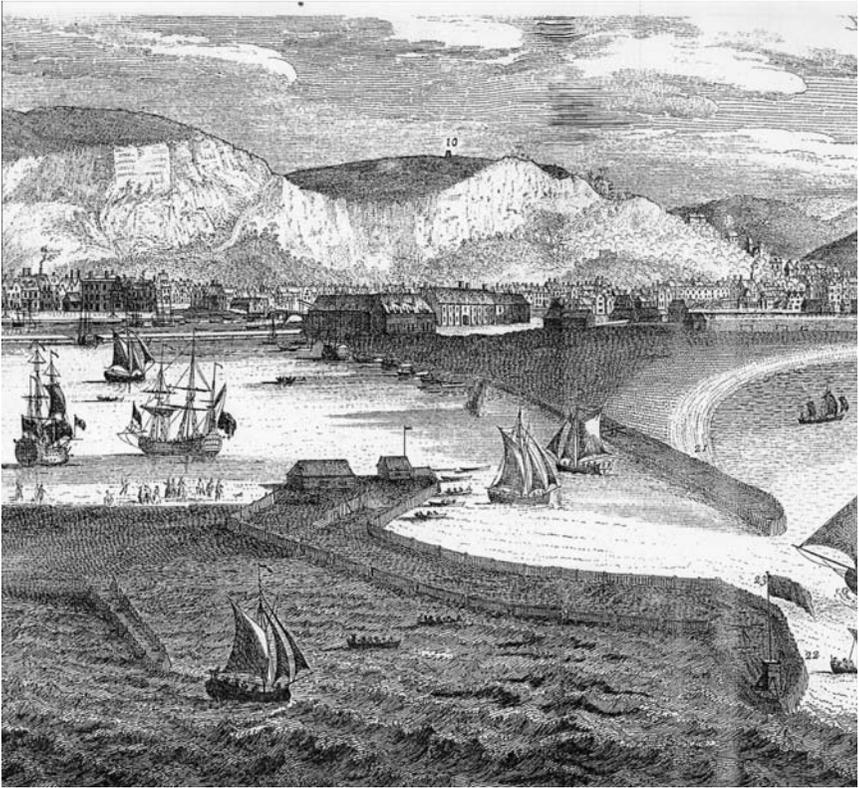
**Fig. 10** Beer Head, Beer Road (L30) and the onshore facilities at Honeyditches villa (45). Modern wrecks, shown as ovals, reflect the intensity of coastal traffic.

Dartmouth (L38); Salcombe (L39) and Plymouth Sound (L40). Beyond this point there is a dearth of Roman building. Further potential anchorages and harbours in this part of the Dumnonian peninsular are not listed in this text.

### **Romano-British villas, anchorages and landing places on the eastern coast of the English Channel**

Paging through the advice given by Hobbs it soon becomes evident that, due to the varied character of the coastline, the distribution of promising harbours is by no means even. Starting in the east we find that although locations 1 and 2 are well placed for the short crossing of the English Channel, they are of limited attraction being subject to exposed moorings. Here, the lost channel of the Wantsum may have offered an important alternative in the past.

It is evident, from the account given by Hobbs, that before the offshore breakwaters were installed at Dover, a heavy swell prevailed in Dover Road. Hobbs also cites a '*counter-current setting athwart the harbour's mouth*'. Both of these conditions could be unwelcome obstacles for the *Classis Britannia*. It is also interesting to observe that the southern English word Dover or *Duvver* identifies a sandy strand rather than a port or a specific landing place. The depiction of 18th century Dover by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck shows that the strand



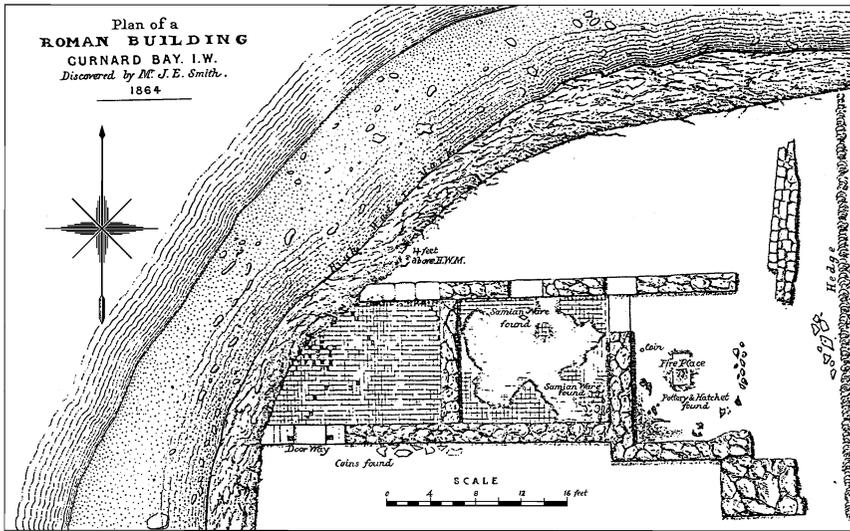
**Fig. 11** A view from Dover Road in 1739 by Samuel & Nathaniel Buck. The swell of the southwesterly fetch can be seen. Smacks and long boats serve the offshore anchorage whilst a flagstaff (23) warns against ill-timed entry into the tide harbour. At the rear of the inner artificial basin, a drawbridge (8) gives access to the site of the Roman harbour. On the skyline (10) is the eastern pharos, now destroyed.

and the modest river mouth required considerable modification to provide adequate mooring facilities in this tide harbour (Fig. 11).

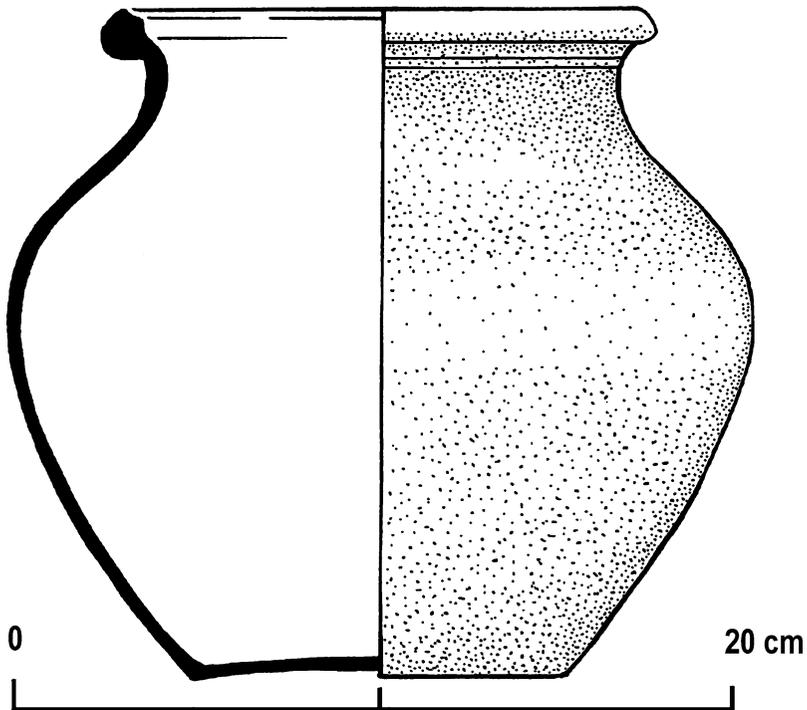
Rigold (1969a) reviewed the evidence for a former navigable inlet at Dover. Here he recognised that the lost estuarine mouth of the Dour had been modified by a substantial Roman sea wall. This apparently gave protection to an inner ‘basin’ with a waterfront equipped with piles, groynes and mooring rings (Rigold *ibid*; Philp 1981:9).

Despite these facilities we should not overrate the effectiveness of *Dubris*. When we consider the restricted catchment offered by the Dour valley and the very modest water budget of this minor river, it seems unlikely that natural processes would scour this debouchment to a depth that could accommodate anything more than a tide harbour. This could impose a waiting period of several hours in the inclemency of Dover Roads. Mason (2003:108, Fig. 41) reconstructs a penetrative inlet at Roman Dover but observes that it was probably occupied by mudflats and was generally unusable.

These impediments at Dover would seem to make anchorage location 5 at Folkestone a particularly important option for the early mariners when awaiting high water or seeking natural shelter on this difficult and critical section of Britain’s coast. It may therefore be no coincidence that high on the cliff edge overlooking this sheltered spot we find the East Cliff



**Fig. 12** A Victorian engraving records the Vectensian shore-side villa at Gurnard (40), lost to coastal erosion in the 19th century. A wooden pier or jetty of Roman date was also observed at that time.



**Fig. 13** An E-ware jar from Ashey Down, Isle of Wight, intimates Vectensian connections with the Western Atlantic seaways in the 5th century AD.

villa. This occupies a setting that certainly seems incongruous with the conventional needs of agriculture (Rigold 1972; Cunliffe 1975; Detsicas 1983).

East of Folkestone the Roman shoreline has been lost to accretion. As a consequence, the present coastline is devoid of an appropriate sheltering headland for 70 km until we reach location 7 in the lee of Beachy Head. Here at Eastbourne we find another lone coastal villa that, in this case, is virtually sited on the shore (Fig. 7). West of Beachy Head mariners can find no suitable landing place or shelter at the foot of the great chalk cliffs until reaching the mouth of the Sussex Ouse at Newhaven.

It is at Brighton that the Sussex coastal plain can first be distinguished and it is at this point that the shoreline becomes particularly attractive to pastoral and agrarian interests. Moving westwards, Hobbs tells us that the natural harbour offered by the mouth of the Adur can be utilised by those who can navigate the approach at the right state of tide. Here at location 10 we find a large and successful early villa just 0.8 km from the shore at Southwick. Some 5 km west of Shoreham a scatter of Roman buildings has been detected close to the open coast at Worthing. Offshore, a minor anchorage (location 10a) has been noted.

Location 11 at the mouth of the Arun offers a harbour that is somewhat similar to the haven at Southwick. Here we find the villa site of Littlehampton lying within 1.5 km of the shore and the present harbour. Once in the Arun estuary we find further villas lying within close reach of the more intrepid navigator. Before its draining, the Black Ditch may, arguably, have offered an approach to the substantial early villa at Angmering, but, in view of their close proximity, it seems more likely that the Roman buildings at Littlehampton may have served the principal maritime interests here. Further upstream, the villa at Tarrant Street, Arundel, and even the settlements and iron industries of the Wiggonholt-Hardham-Pulborough area, seem well placed to exploit a boat or barge route to the sea. This would take craft down the narrow and meandering estuarine channel of the Arun.

West of the Arun mouth, the West Sussex coastal plain broadens into the rich coastal farmland that was so tenaciously held by the *Regni* (Cunliffe 1973). At its most southerly point the plain reaches to Selsey. It is here that hydrographer Hobbs points us to an important leeward offshore anchorage at location 12. Known as ‘*the Park*’ this anchorage lies close to the silted and uninviting inlet at Pagham. Some adjacent Roman buildings at Sidlesham and Selsey seem to offer appropriate coastal settlement.

Selsey itself offers a significant history as a Late Iron Age and Early Roman coastal settlement of some considerable importance (Cunliffe 1973:17). The history of coastal erosion at Selsey and the geography of its truncated and abandoned estuarine channels now make it impossible for us to assess the former character and status of this tantalising site.

Viewed in a geographic perspective, it is arguable that the siting of the *oppidum* and *civitas* capital of Chichester represents a compromise between the successful scarp-foot settlements on the South Downs and the good land-quality and the maritime potential offered by the West Sussex coastal plain. It seems that the maritime interests of this coastal population should not be under-estimated for the deep-penetrating ria creeks leading to Fishbourne, Bosham, Emsworth and Langstone are all headed by Roman buildings that lie within a few hundred metres of the sea. (A supposed villa at Southbourne is unsubstantiated). Further evidence of Roman activity has also been detected along the eroding shores of the Chichester Channel (Cartwright 1984).

On the east shore of Hayling Island the little known univallate fort of Tournerbury seems to mark the position of a significant coastal community of Iron Age times. Not far away, at North Hayling, lies an imposing Romano-British temple. The temple offers an appropriate repository for libations and offerings of a community that could control this fine natural harbour. Maritime temples are uncommon but it might be argued that those at

Worth, Hayling, Jordan Hill, Brean Down and Lydney were particularly well placed to meet maritime needs. At Lydney, a mosaic depicting a maritime scene was commissioned by a man whose shortened title, PR.REL, suggests him to be the officer in charge of the nearby fleet supply depot (Johnson 1980:90, Fig. 37).

As we pass westwards from the West Sussex villas we find that the width and depth of the low water channels of the Solent creeks become notably greater. Here, at location 15, we find the shore fort of Portchester (Fig. 8b). From this point the coastal plain follows the eastern margin of Southampton Water to the river Test and the Roman settlement at Bitterne. West of Langstone, the incidence of villas becomes less intense. If villas such as those at Fishbourne, Emsworth and Langstone (inv. 30 & 31) were well placed to exploit harbour locations 13 and 14 then it seems that once we enter the Eastern Solent, other Romano-British communities or estates were better placed to seize the maritime initiative.

### The Vectensian villas

It is at this point that we can usefully turn to the offshore Roman community in the island of *Vectis*. With a total land area of some 380 km<sup>2</sup> this island is notably well endowed with villas. A total of nine confirmed sites hints at insular prosperity, yet we should also recall that, in this rather exceptional fragment of Roman Britain, economic success was ever dependent upon markets which, in this particular case, could be accessed only through maritime trade.

The siting of most of the Vectensian villas seems to offer distinct maritime possibilities. This is undeniably displayed at the villa at Brading, where the owner uses a maritime panel in his mosaic floor to emphasis the winning of pleasure and success through a mastery of the sea (Fig. 13).

On the northern coast at Gurnard, a modest Roman building was apparently accompanied by a wooden jetty or breakwater (Kell 1866; Motkin 1990). This site lies very close to an inter-tidal outcrop of Bembridge Limestone. Unfortunately, the Gurnard Roman building was appropriated by Neptune in 1866 and has eluded scientific investigation.

Midway inside the navigable channel of the Medina river lies a shore-side villa midway between Newport and Cowes (KTAS 2003). At the head of the Medina estuary, at Newport, we find an array of villas at the very heart of the island. The building closest to the head of navigation is the Newport villa. This lies just 0.8 km from the medieval and modern quay. Within 50 m of the medieval quay Roman coins have been recovered from the estuarine silt. The same Victorian account also records numerous fragments of amphorae not far from the opposite bank (Kell 1853).

Just west of the medieval port we find a cluster of at least three villas sited on the floor of the Bowcombe valley. These lie just below an enigmatic stone fort of Roman plan lying beneath Carisbrooke Castle (Rigold 1969b; Johnson 1976:141; Young 2000; Tomalin 2002). This valley also accommodates a Saxon settlement that precedes the medieval foundation of Newport in the 12th century.

The floor of the Bowcombe valley is notably under-investigated yet it seems that, at this location, we are seeing the demographic epicentre of Romano-British Wight. Here, wealth gained through successful farming and other enterprises was able to support at least three villas lying within 2.5 km of the nearest point of shipment at Newport. In post-medieval times we find analogous prosperity when sheep farming and corn production was concentrated in this valley. This gave rise to a chain of water mills and a prosperous export trade centred on Newport quay.

In West Wight we find the lone scarp-foot villa of Rock lying 2.5 km inland from Grange Chine and the soft clay cliffs of the Island's south-west coast. In some respects this late

3rd century building epitomises the difficulties of identifying villas with particular maritime interests. A cartage distance of 2.5 km to an inhospitable shore does not make this villa an obvious site for maritime activity. Nevertheless, we find in its foundations an imported granite boulder that has been used as a stone-dressing tool (Tomalin 1987, G6). It is unlikely that this distinctly foreign item arrived by any other means than a ship. An apparent import of another kind was a Mediterranean house mouse that seems to have established a successful colony in the environs of this building (Tomalin forthcoming).

Below the eroding cliff-line at Grange Chine, a talus slope offers a strew of Roman artefacts. These seem to represent the maritime front of the Rock villa estate. These coastal finds include a number of amphora sherds of Dressel types 1 and 2/4 and some clay roofing tiles which might arguably belong to some cliff-top buildings. The ceramics show that a community was already active here by the close of the 1st century AD. Fragments of briquetage indicate that one activity had been salt production (Trott & Tomalin 2003:177, Figs. 25–26).

### The location of the *Magnus Portus*

A further issue that remains to be explored is the potential association between the Vectensian population and an array of highly serviceable anchorages identified in the Solent by Hobbs (1859:28–35). The principal anchorages in this group are to be found at locations 17–19; being those traditionally identified as Spithead, Stokes Bay, Mother Bank, and ‘*the Cowe*’ (Fig. 8). All of these locations lie within, or at, the edge of the Eastern Solent. It seems that it was at this spot that the 2nd century geographer *Ptolemy* identified his *Magnus Portus* or great port.

In the various medieval versions of the maps that accompany copies of *Ptolemy*’s text, the *Magnus Portus* is placed somewhere between the Island of *Vectis* and *Britannia*. Rivet and Smith (1979:116) point out that since this name is also placed in *Ptolemy*’s ‘coastal list’ it is intended to be descriptive of an area rather than an actual place or settlement. This implication is drawn from the fact that the coastal list otherwise excludes the proper names of places. In Rivet’s interpretation the *Magnus Portus* seemed to be ‘the whole sheltered area between the Isle of Wight and the mainland’. Nevertheless, the navigational guidance provided by Hobbs, and the historic evidence for anchorages in medieval and post-medieval times, suggests that locations 17–19 in the Eastern Solent are those best able to fulfil mariners requirements of a great port.

Less certain is the role of Southampton Water (location 20), for it seems surprising that its shores did not accommodate a settled population somewhat larger than that which is evident at Bitterne, Badnam Creek and Fairthorne. It is interesting to observe that Hobbs also excludes the main body of Southampton Water in his description of suitable anchorages. Nevertheless, its bed has yielded amphorae and other pottery off Calshot and Hythe (IWSMR; Hants SMR SU 40 NW 2). Perhaps the strong tidal flow and the distance from the lee shelter of the high ground of the Wight has been a common disincentive to mariners.

### Seabed evidence for the *Magnus Portus*

In 1996 a preliminary attempt was made to test for the presence of anchorage debris in the area potentially covered by the *Magnus Portus*. This test was made by means of an archaeologically monitored oyster dredge following the course frequently trawled during the licensed oyster fishing season. The results of this survey were generally rewarding for they confirmed the presence of Roman artefacts on the ‘good holding grounds’ at locations 18 and 19.

During this two day trawl virtually all of the recovered material proved to be post-medieval but during their longer licensed sessions of fishing, at locations 18 and 19, fishermen retrieved a wider chronological sample. This included Roman amphorae fragments and other ceramics (Tomalin 1997). This evidence provides us with a greater degree of confidence in placing the *Magnus Portus* in the Eastern Solent. Moreover, onshore at Wootton Haven, an extensive strew of Roman artefacts including amphora fragments has been recently recovered from a perceived landing and watering place for ships at location 18 (Tomalin 1997; Loader *et al.* 1997).

In medieval times further strews accrued at Wootton Haven when the nearby monastery at Quarr maintained ‘*a grete refuge and conforte to all the inhabitants... and estraugiers travelling by the seid sees*’ (Hockey 1970:228). Here we see a medieval link between the shore community at Wootton Haven and an offshore anchorage that was regularly used by ships bound for foreign parts. The character of the Roman inter-tidal strews would seem to accord with a similar practice at the time when this anchorage was then identified as the *Magnus Portus*.

Due to the details given in Hobbs we must also consider some modest anchorage sites in the Western Solent. These include Yarmouth Roads, a site that has been explored both by trawling and by underwater archaeological inspection. This location too has revealed a modest strew of Roman ceramics that can be traced in the near-shore zone to a depth of 16 m. The artefacts from this site offer a broad chronological span ranging from the pre-Conquest period to the 4th century AD. The presence of amphorae of Dressel types 1 and 20 are a reminder to us that, like locations 18 and 19, the cargoes arriving at this spot included cross-Channel consignments.

### **Romano-British villas, anchorages and landing places on the western sector of the English Channel**

If the anchorages of the Eastern Solent were put to good use during the Roman period then we must ask how such an arrangement might work. On the English Channel coast, east of the Solent, we find just ten acceptable landing or anchoring points over a distance of 200 km to the mouth of the Thames. West of the Solent the opportunities for ships to find safe anchorage become progressively scarcer.

Poole is a substantial natural harbour capable of serving some of the important Roman pottery and stone industries of Purbeck yet the approach, or closing zone, that leads to its narrow mouth is treacherous. This is demonstrated by the wrecks of later craft, now strewn in an apron across the shallow seabed (Tomalin 1997b). At the rear of this fine natural harbour lies Hamworthy, the site of a 1st century coastal installation that was linked by road to an inland military base at Lake Farm (Putnam 1984:15–16, 53). The overland link via Ilchester to the Parrett river and the Bristol Channel is very important. The dearth of formal Roman buildings around the coast of the Dumnonian peninsular suggests that this overland short-cut was highly favoured.

Passing beyond the shelter of Studland Bay (location 26) we find that the topography of the Purbeck coastline to be generally hostile to mariners until we reach the lee anchorage at Weymouth Road (location 27). Here, a shallow bar harbour can be found in the mouth of the Dorset Wey (Fig. 9). As a potential Roman anchorage Weymouth Road still awaits archaeological assessment. A small globular Roman amphora dredged from this bay in 1880 (Oliver 1923:41) points to its significance.

At high tide craft can now enter the Dorset Wey as far as a dam at Radipole Lake. In the mid-channel sediments of this river a Dressel Ib amphora and ‘various utensils of similar ware’

were recovered in the late 19th century (Damon 1890; Peacock 1970:180). Sadly, in 1996, the bed of the Wey was dredged for navigation purposes. At this time a request for the dredging operations to accommodate archaeological observation was refused (Putnam 1997 pers. comm.). Here, it seems, is a weakness in the shoreline management plan and the coverage of Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and coastal planning (PPG16 and PPG 20).

The neighbouring offshore anchorage at location 28 lies in the lee of the Isle of Portland (Fig. 9). This anchorage is well suited to serve the prosperous Roman stone quarrying industry on this tied island. The same location also seems to be an area highly suitable for seabed archaeological prospection.

Once free of the difficult tidal race at the tip of Portland Bill, sailing craft are beset by some 50 km of dangerous coastline. Hobbs eloquently reminds us that for the ‘*saving of lives*’ a last resort is to run for Seaton Beach near location 30. The only notable respite from the turbulent southwesterlies on this difficult coast is to be found in the lee of Beer Head at location 30. Here we find the Beer Road anchorage and the former haven of Axemouth (Fig. 10).

Just 0.8 km from the shore at location 30 we also find the isolated Roman villa of Honeyditches (Miles 1977; this inv. 45). This site displays a substantial detached bath-house that seems to befit rather more visitors than just few local farmworkers of the 3rd or 4th century (Silvester 1981:82). In the view of its excavators, the economic links of this villa lay eastwards in Durotrigian territory, where a direct sea route to Poole Harbour would seem to be necessary (Silvester *ibid*). This assumption by Silvester may require some qualification for we must not forget that at the end of such a journey the access to Poole could be restricted by the tide and the bar. Other options would include locations 28, 27 and 26 where a sheltered stop-over might be secured before moving on for Poole, Yarmouth or the *Magnus Portus*.

### The Solent lay-over

From all of these observations we might conclude that, on a long English Channel coastline that was difficult for mariners, the *Magnus Portus* offered an essential and secure mid-point lay-over for coastal craft plying the Channel route. Here craft could safely anchor regardless of the tide and, in the words of Hobbs, ‘at any depth’. Moreover, ships of modest size and seaworthiness might congregate here to form secure flotillas and to re-assess the weather before entering into the more hazardous stages of their journey. This is precisely the evidence we find in the medieval port books of Southampton when ships laden with West Country slate arrived and left together (e.g. Quinn 1938, 1:16, 2 January 1469).

East of the ‘great port’, a number of further intermediate stop-overs were available to ships moving up Channel for *Londinium*, *Camulodunum* or the Rhine mouth. It would be misleading to grade these anchorages by nominal values accorded to shelter and safety but it might not be unreasonable to give priority to those that were not tidally restricted and were capable of providing Channel voyagers with the vital leeward shelter from the southwest winds. Such a choice would give us a sailing distance of 30 km to location 12 at *The Park* and a further 80 km to Eastbourne Road and its attendant villa at location 7. A further journey of 80 km would bring us to the Folkestone Haven and its cliff-top villa at location 5.

### Some locational factors

This very general survey of southern Romano-British coastal villas lays emphasis on the navigational attributes of natural harbours and anchorages. It draws evidence from the *British*

*Channel Pilot* of 1859. This was a publication produced for the masters of sailing craft at a time when the erection of breakwaters and the practice of dredging were in their infancy. Some features cited in this Victorian manual may have seen little change over many centuries. This might be said of the important lee headlands identified at Folkestone, Beachy Head, Studland, Portland-Weymouth and Beer. Elsewhere, at locations such as the lost Wantsum Channel, Romney Marsh and the Dungeness areas of Kent, natural changes have transformed the coast since Roman times.

At some coastal villas we may suspect that maritime interest was considerably greater than the simple pursuit of local fishing. Activity of this kind has been recently suspected on the Kent coastal dunes at Deal (Pratt & Elder 2000). Due to the geographic idiosyncrasies of the English Channel seaboard, the villas at Folkestone, Eastbourne, Weymouth and Honeyditches were exceptionally well placed to receive ships that were virtually obliged to shelter at these locations. If these villas prospered by the hosting of crews it would be but a very short step to sponsorship, partnerships and the investment of venture capital in trading voyages. To these villas we might add the villas of Southwick, Fishbourne, Langstone, Brading, Newport, Northwood and Weymouth. All of these offered exceptionally fine natural harbours, once certain tidal impediments could be overcome. Given the advantage of knowledge of local pilotage, these communities were very well suited for maritime enterprise. Like the Medway villas, these sites mostly show signs of early beginnings in the 1st century AD. This means that it is not unreasonable to suspect that vital knowledge of local pilotage was drawn from a resident tradition well rooted in the pre-Roman Iron Age.

We should not overlook the ability of coastal villa-owners to draw upon their woodland estates to nurture and sustain *Britannia's* merchant fleet. The post-Conquest decades of the first century provided a boom opportunity and we may suppose that the early Regnensian coastal villas are a manifestation of the new need to secure full communication between Rome's new province and the continent. Similarly, it seems that the riverine villas in the Medway valley may have been quick to respond to a demand for food, ships, timber and stone to service the burgeoning new capital at *Londinium* (inv. nos 4–8).

Certain of *Britannia's* maritime villas had particular coastal resources to exploit. The Essex coast, the North Kent coast in the Whitstable region and the Solent coast all had bountiful supplies of delectable oysters. Eventually, some of these resources may have been exploited to the brink of extinction. In the Vectensian household at Newport, oysters were shipped in from a source some 20 km away at Christchurch Bay. In the Medina river and in Vectensian coastal waters it seems that the local supply had dwindled to negligibility by the late 3rd century (Winder pers. comm.).

On the Somerset coast, certain maritime villas might claim their location as their primary asset. Those close to the navigable course of the Parrett (inv. nos 53–61) could offer wharfage, crange and overland cartage on the key overland shortcut to Poole Harbour. Further north, in the narrowing mouth of the Bristol Channel, the villas of Wemberham and Portishead (inv. nos 52–63) could offer a valuable ferrying point leading to the chain of villas on the Silurian coast of South Wales.

### **The search for social and economic patterns**

Much ink has been expended in conjecturing the status of villas and their owners through the classification of ground plans. Smith (1997) has admirably explored these complexities, identifying recurrent components in villa plans and laying before us a host of interpretive challenges. Perring (2003) has given particular attention to potential relationships between people, activities and rooms.

Some villas seem well suited as ‘seats of lordship’ and this might be proposed for the early coastal villas at Aylesford, Southwick, Fishbourne and Brading. Some households of this rank may have held dominion over smaller villas on their neighbouring coasts. Such instances might even include a rich villa household like Bignor where proprietorial control might be held over a lucrative Regnensian fishing or shipping fleet based elsewhere. Free movement of investment capital in the new province of *Britannia* could so readily generate invisible links of this kind. We must also recognise that marriage and bequest in Roman Britain could lead to the acquisition of distant holdings by remote landlords and proprietors.

Very few coastal villas seem unable to demonstrate at least one obvious maritime asset. Such exceptions include Magor, Lower Rosewarne, Uplympe, Rock, the Worthing complex and the Preston Park villa at Brighton. Poor anchorages at some villas may have been compensated by other maritime resources. This may be the case at Whitstable where the villa faces an unsheltered northern shore yet the seabed is teeming with oysters. At the Vectensian villa at Gurnard, the coast provides an unattractive anchorage yet its inter-tidal ledges offer a ready supply of good quality building stone suitable for shipment.

The dearth of villas in the Dumnonian peninsular has long caught the questioning archaeological eye. Thomas (1976:199) recognises a marked cultural change west of the Parrett-Axemouth line where villas soon disappear from the map. This line seems to mark the boundary of the Roman canton of *Dumnonia*. Within this boundary, a distinct Romano-Celtic society seems to have held to entrenched traditions. These promoted a broad middle class of small land-owning families and a wider distribution of wealth. Valuable deposits of Cornish alluvial tin, rich coastal fishing-grounds and a bewildering array of fine natural harbours should have generated overt displays of economic success in the coastal regions of this canton.

If prosperity was generated in Dumnonian coastal communities it was also well concealed. During the Late Iron Age, *Dumnonian* society eschewed the use Celtic coinage. Later, it seems, wealth was more often expressed in cattle and the proliferation of the walled farmsteads known as ‘rounds’. If *Dumnonian* harbours and anchorages were crowded with sea-going craft, there were deep-seated social reasons why this wealth should not be declared in the built environment ashore.

An analogous trading pattern in Tudor times shows large quantities of Cornish white fish and minerals being shipped as far east as Southampton. At the same time we see little built expression of wealth in the Cornish homeland. There is an archaeological caveat here because the absence of villas in this region should not devalue our assessment of the maritime importance of the seaboard of Devon and Cornwall. There are exceptionally fine anchorages and natural harbours here. It is here that we should now seek the submerged archaeological archive of past maritime activities.

### Some chronological considerations

Several of the coastal villas identified in this study show no more than modest cumulative growth. Some buildings like Magor, Uplympe and Rock may claim little more than an incidental relationship with the coast. Where the development of coastal and maritime villas is more pronounced, certain shared phases of activity seem to be discernable.

The first phase of Romano-British maritime villa development concerns the post-Conquest boom. This was a time when certain favoured tribal communities could secure a head-start in developing the firm cross-Channel communications that were now demanded by the new province. Historic evidence shows there were pre-existing maritime links that could

be readily developed. The voyages of the *Veneti* to a market or ‘emporion’ on the coast of Britain is well known. *Strabo*’s list of British exports or cargoes is helpful although he omits to name ports or regions. Less quoted are the cross-Channel ethnic ties of the continental and British contingents of the *Atrebates*. The fact that the flight of *Commius* and his compatriots was affected by an assembled body of Gallo-British ships should not be overlooked.

The maritime role of the *Trinovantes* in the post-Conquest boom is somewhat ambiguous. A relatively early capitulation may have included this tribe amongst the eleven anonymous and submissive ‘nations’ cited on the triumphal arch of *Claudius*. Such inclusion may just have won a reprieve for the maritime interests of these people. Such a privilege might be prized alongside similar interests won by the *Regnenses*. The latter were clearly a favoured client kingdom fulfilling the role of *socii* or allies.

On the other hand, Dunnett (1975:32) emphasises that the *Trinovantes* had already cast themselves as *dediciti* or enemy people who had orchestrated notable anti-Roman resistance in both Kent and Essex. Nevertheless, prior to his death in AD40, *Cunobelinus*, the king of the *Trinovantes*, had maintained a long-standing accommodation with the Roman world. After *Claudius* had entered *Camulodunum* in the autumn of AD43, we may postulate some hard talking in which both sides would wish to see well-manned harbours and a co-operative native fleet. Perhaps the dead *Togodubnus* was left with the blame.

A further significant episode in the history of Romano-British maritime communities is the collapse of the *Allectus* usurpation in the AD 296. Given the maritime background of both *Carausius* and *Allectus* there can be little doubt that their co-conspirators were heavily drawn from the principal ship-building, provisioning and seafaring communities of the Channel coast. In Rome they were dubbed the ‘abominable clique’. The aftermath of the *Allectus* defeat would be devastating for these families. Reprisals, executions and confiscations would inevitably take their course.

In the coastal villas at Dartford, Brighton, Fishbourne, Brading and Newport there is notable evidence of extensive destruction around this time. The diminution of these villas stands in sharp contrast with the wealth enjoyed and exhibited in villas in Dorset during the early 4th century. If blame had been apportioned on a cantonal basis, the *Durotriges* may well have escaped.

A final chronological event concerns the eventual demise of the maritime villas. *Britannia*’s dying yet tenacious hold of her sea-lanes is well demonstrated in the Late Roman period when ties were retained along the Atlantic seaboard. The Channel sea-lanes were harried by barbarian pirates from the late 3rd century onwards. The use of small camouflaged scout-ships by *Allectus* suggests an early warning system. This infers a justified fear of raiders coming ashore.

By the late 4th century we find the naval policing of the Channel divided under two commands separated by the Wight/Contentin line. To the east, the shore-forts and the fleet were controlled by the *Litus Saxonicum*. To the west, the sea-lanes were monitored by the *Tractus Armoricanus* (Johnson 1980:87). The division of this naval task surely reflects differing strategic requirements as well as an apparent safeguard against further misbehaviour by a tarnished Romano-British navy.

In the eastern naval zone it is evident that Saxon and Frankish raids were becoming a serious onshore threat. In the western zone we may postulate an element of self-policing whereby native ships from *Dumnonia* and the Welsh cantons might have shared a certain familiarity with the Irish homelands and markets of their fickle and potentially dangerous barbarian neighbours.

There is a particular independence to a ship at sea. This can defy the conventional *realpolitik* of armed occupation and the possession of territory. Enterprising seafarers have often brokered successful trading arrangements across the boundaries of conflict zones. After the ‘great raid’ of AD367, short term order was restored by *Theodosius* yet the balance of military intelligence between the two sides may have significantly changed. The very co-ordination of the raids of this year suggests that this ‘barbarian conspiracy’ was able to seize advantage of pre-occupations and events that were unravelling within the heart of Rome. Such knowledge and communication could only be gained through the seaways themselves. Our suspicions must surely fall on elements of complicity within some of the maritime communities of the Romano-British West.

During the 5th century *Dumnonia* begins to emerge as a Celto-Roman kingdom, drawing upon much of its pre-Roman identity and tradition. Some Irish settlement appears on the northern coast of Cornwall where it seems to be benignly accommodated (Thomas 1976:209). We also see in *Dumnonia* a certain folk exodus to Brittany in response to the threat of Anglo-Saxon advance from the east. Both of these movements signal the use of old Celtic maritime connections and allegiances. At the same time we find these western sea-lanes now provisioned with Mediterranean wines and ceramics drawn along the Atlantic seaboard. E-ware, a product of Aquitanian potteries is a litmus trace of the new maritime pattern. It permeates Ireland and North West Scotland yet it also penetrates the Channel, reaching as far west as Wight and even to the Dutch province of Brabant (Thomas 1959). Class B amphorae from the Eastern Mediterranean follow much the same route although they seemingly fall short in their up-Channel penetration.

From the floor of the *Magnus Portus*, at Ryde Middle Bank, comes a fragment of a Palestinian amphora and also a complete amphora of Black Sea style (indentification by D. Williams & D. Peacock). Both items are at home in the 5th century. The nature of these *Dumnonian* maritime activities during the Roman and early post-Roman period are a reminder to us that coastal trading communities could readily proceed without the endorsement of an attendant villa. Our review of coastal villas makes it easy to recognise that the Romano-British model for these changes had already been set in Dumnonia and Wales. We must now recognise that anchorage strewn on the neglected and unprotected tracts of our seabed offer the best means of reconstructing the coastal economic geography of these times.

### Changing coastal environments

Recent studies at Dover have proposed a Roman sea-level some 3.93 m below present (Wadlove 1990). Despite this substantial change it is reasonable to assume that the massive chalk cliffs of this coastline have been long confined to a slow and steady pace of recession. This means that, at this particular spot, navigational considerations in Roman times probably differed very little from those of the time of Hobbs.

The effects of eustatic changes of sea-level are likely to have been more far reaching on those low-lying coastlines that were naturally vulnerable to erosion and inundation. Such vulnerabilities are of particular interest to us where past navigational access has been sought into river mouths. Hobbs observed the presence of a number of navigationally restrictive bars at the mouths of certain important inlets such as those at Littlehampton, Christchurch harbour, Weymouth and Bridport. What we need to know from the geomorphologists and sedimentologists is how fickle these bars may have been and what evidence can be gathered of their past history.

In the case of a lower sea-level individual studies are needed to establish whether a steepened gradient and stronger outflow would free some of these harbours of their obstructive

bars. Alternatively, a lower base level may have produced accreting conditions in which mudxs-flats further obstructed the outflow of some rivers. This could make them barred or obstructed at low tide.

### Coastal archaeological settings at risk

During the past decade much emphasis has been placed on the value of the settings of archaeological monuments. The need to consider their group value, their fragility and their cultural potential has also been emphasised. In the coastal zone attention has been drawn to the need for a ‘seamless approach’ in which submerged archaeological sites are accorded legislative and curatorial protection that is no less effective than that provided for the cultural heritage on land.

This paper seeks to invigorate the processes of identification and protection. Below Britain’s mean low water mark, in the domain of the mineral regulating authorities, coastal protection authorities, port and harbour authorities and river authorities, it can only be said that our protective and investigative philosophies are still truly at sea.

This study invites a new vision of those neglected near-shore and inter-tidal settings that accompany our on-shore coastal monuments. We should begin with the realisation that mapmakers and legislators de-value many of our key maritime sites when they conceal the submerged cultural landscape beneath an opaque and beguiling blanket of blue. In the Solent, on the floor of the *Magnus Portus*, the survival of artefact-fields of scattered Romano-British anchorage debris at locations 17, 18 and 19 are testimony to the submerged archaeological archives we are failing to acknowledge. This should be a wake-up call to all who seek to protect the maritime dimension of the common European cultural heritage.

### Appendix 1: Inventory of coastal villas, maritime villas(\*) and indeterminate and related Roman buildings on the coast of southern Britain

#### Abbreviations and notes

This inventory makes full use of the valuable gazetteer compiled by Eleanor Scott (1993) and the judgements she has made in identifying potential villa sites. SCGT refers to the villa inventory of Sheldon, Corti, Green & Tyers (1993) and its addendum of 1995. The references cited for individual villas show the source of information gathered for this paper. They are not exhaustive and do not necessarily cover all primary sources for these sites. These are best sought in Scott (1993). National grid references to four or six figures are given where they have been available.

For convenience, some bibliographic sources, including the *Antiquaries Journal* (*Ant. J.*); *Britannia* (*Brit.*); the *Journal of Roman Studies* (*JRS*); the *Victoria County History* (*VCH*) and county volumes of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments (*RCAHM*) are cited within the inventory. Other abbreviations are for Site and Monuments Record (*SMR*) and National Monuments Record (*NMR*).

The inventory includes some villas that might exploit direct riverine access to the sea. Some villas with indirect access are also included, like those upstream of the rapids on the Severn at Gloucester. Some villas, like Llandfaolog (Dyfed) have been omitted where their riverine connection is too lengthy or the stream too weak. Some general consideration of potential coastal change, of the siltation of rivers and their mouths and the potential colluviation of valleys has been taken into account. The changed configuration of the Wash and the coastline of the north Norfolk coast demonstrate some of these difficulties of

judgement. It is hoped that these uncertainties will prompt others into the necessary coring and palaeoenvironmental fieldwork. Hopefully, others will be able to make meaningful additions and amendments to this preliminary list.

## KENT

### Coast of the Thames Estuary.

1. **Dartford** TQ 54 74; 54 73 & 58 75.
  - a. Near the bank of the Darent river, a minor tributary to the Thames.
  - b. Building with a tessellated floor reported in 1889. Other buildings have since been reported in the town. One seems to have been abandoned in the late 3rd century.
  - c. Scott 1993:104, KE22-25.
2. **Northfleet** TQ 6160 7410
  - a. On the edge of old drained salt marsh and a stream leading to the Springhead Roman temple on Watling Street. The site lies 0.8 km from the present shore of the Thames.
  - b. Three individual buildings include a bath house.
  - c. Detsicas 1983:115–116; SCGT 11.
3. **Chalk** TQ 6760 7300
  - a. At the head of reclaimed salt marsh 1.4 km south of the present shore of the Thames
  - b. Traces of Roman buildings include a bath house.
  - c. Detsicas 1983:116–119; SCGT 2.
4. **Frindsbury** TQ 749 693 (Fig. 1)
  - a. On the edge of the floodplain of the Medway river facing Rochester. Within 200 metres of the shore of Limehouse Reach, an anchorage formerly much favoured by large sailing craft docking at Rochester or refitting at Chatham (cf. Buck & Buck 1738). The river bed beneath the Chatham, Limehouse and Bridge reaches of the Medway must be of high archaeological potential.
  - b. A substantial Roman building has been traced on the former foreshore.
  - c. Page 1932:115–116; Detsicas 1983:94.
5. **Burham** TQ 72 61
  - a. In an estuarine setting on the east bank of the navigable Medway river about 2 km north of the villa at Eccles.
  - b. A partially investigated villa some 200 m from the riverbank.
  - c. Scott 1993:103, KE16
6. **Snodland** TQ 70 62
  - a. In an estuarine setting on the east bank of the navigable Medway river not far from Burham and Aylesford villas.
  - b. A partially excavated villa includes a bath-house.
  - c. Page 1932:124; Scott 1993:108, KE87.

**7. Aylesford, Eccles TQ72 60**

- a. On the east bank of the navigable Medway river. Pre-Roman settlement is indicated nearby by a significant Belgic cemetery.
- b. A large villa noted for its particularly early mosaic of c. AD 65. Other buildings have been noted in the vicinity.
- c. Scott 1993:103, KE6-7

**8. Maidstone. TQ 74 56**

- a. On the west bank of the navigable Medway river upstream of the Aylesford, Burham and Frindsbury riverine/estuarine villas.
- b. Extensive villa noted c.1835. Other Roman building materials have been reported in the town.
- c. Page 1932. 3:99; Scott 1993:106, KE59-61.

**9. Upchurch (Boxted Farm) TQ 8540 6630**

- a. 1.2 km north of Watling Street and 1.3 km south of the present high water wharf at Lower Halstow
- b. A large building of early Roman date traced in 1882
- c. Page 1932:106–108; Detsicas 1983:128, 130; SCGT 15. Scott 1993:108 KE92

**10. Sittingbourne, Mere Court & Murston**

- a. Close to Watling Street, leading from London to Canterbury, and adjacent to the navigable head of Milton Creek.
- b. Large Roman building noted at Mere Court and further building materials recorded at Murston
- c. Frere 1992; Scott 1993:108, KE86.

**11. Whitstable TR 12 64**

- a. Some distance inshore from an open coast noted for its oyster resources.
- b. A cellared Roman building with a wall composed of broken tiles. Painted wall plaster of 1st-2nd century date had fallen from an upper room.
- c. Scott 1993:109, KE98

Coast of the English Channel.

**12. Margate TR 3510 7005**

- a. Sited within 0.8 km of the shore, this villa may have extended its economic interests to the anchorage at Margate Roads (L1) and the prolific oyster beds of the Thames Estuary.
- b. A modest building with four rooms was observed during road building in the town. Four other potential villa sites have since been noted by Scott (KE62–63 & 65–66).
- c. SCGT 27; Taylor 1932:121–122. Scott 1993:107, KE64

**13. Ramsgate TR36 65**

- a. Inshore from Pegwell Bay

- b. Roman coins, pottery and a wall have been lost to the sea. Elsewhere, aerial photography indicates a small villa enclosed by two ditches.
  - c. Scott 1993:107, KE78-79.
14. **Minster in Thanet** TR 3140 6465
- a. On the east shore of the Wantsum Channel facing the Roman shore fort at Richborough. This location may have suited an anchorage or a ferry link with the former Isle of Thanet.
  - b. A developed row house with extended wings is surrounded by a rectangular walled enclosure.
  - c. *Brit.* 23 (1992) 307; *Brit.* 35, (2004), 315, Fig. 16 for plan; Sheldon *et al.* 1993; Scott 1993:107 KE67.
15. **Sandwich** TR 3590 5730
- a. Close to the west shore of the Wantsum Channel, a former seaway and anchorage much used to gain access to Richborough. A reclaimed area, nearby, retains the name of ‘Sandwich Haven’ but this will post-date the open channel of Roman times.
  - b. A winged corridor house with 1st-4th occupation yet a 4th century gully cuts the structure.
  - c. Detsicas 1983; Sheldon *et al.* 1993; Scott 1993:108, KE82.
16. **Sholden** TR 3570 5290
- a. Perhaps linked with an unknown anchorage associated with the former mouth of the Wantsum Channel.
  - b. Roman tile seen in sewer trench.
  - c. *Brit.* 23 (1992), 307; SCGT 30; Detsicas 1983; Sheldon *et al.* 1993; Scott 1993:108, KE83.
17. \***Folkestone, East Cliff** TR 2400 3700
- a. Unusually sited on the cliff top overlooking the Folkestone Bay anchorage (Fig. 6, location L5).
  - b. A large villa was examined in the 1924 when tiles of the *Classis Britannica* were found in its construction. Its mosaics have since been lost to cliff erosion. A fine view of Channel shipping seems significant. The villa is accompanied by a quernstone industry exploiting a hard stratum of the Folkestone Beds at the foot of the Lower Greensand cliff (Keller 1989). This shore-side industry hints at maritime communications that may yet be traced through the distribution of these highly robust products.
  - c. Winbolt 1925a, 1925b & 1926; Cunliffe 1968:260; Rigold 1972; Detsicas 1983; SCGT 5; Scott 1993:105, KE36.  
EAST SUSSEX
18. **Eastbourne.** TV 6140 9840
- a. On a small beachhead cliff close to a sandy shoreline. The presence of the shore fort *Anderida* lying some 6.6 km to the north east at Pevensy (*Anderida*) attests the presence of a Roman safe haven on this section of coast. The safe anchorage at

- location 7 at Eastbourne Roads (Hobbs 1859, 13) lies immediately offshore from this villa (Fig. 7).
- b. A modest building recorded only in topographical sketches. Apparently an early Regnensian villa since eroded by the sea.
  - c. Page 1935:24; Sutton 1952; Cunliffe 1973:79, SCGT 53; Scott 1993:58, EA9.
19. \***Newhaven** TQ 4460 0130
- a. Close to an estuarine haven within the mouth of the Sussex Ouse (L9), Brandon (1971) considers that the debouchment of the Roman Ouse lay due south of Newhaven town near the Iron Age hillfort at Castle Hill. From here, the subsequent accretion of a shingle spit seems to have progressively coaxed the mouth of the river eastwards towards Seaford Head (Morris 1931). This allowed the development of a medieval harbour at Seaford until, in the 16th century, a breach in the shingle spit established the ‘New Haven’ close to the site formerly occupied in Roman times. Hobbs (1859:17–18) describes the new haven as a tide harbour considerably improved since the construction of its piers or breakwaters but the timing of entry is critical. This problem can be mitigated by anchoring some 2 km SE of the river mouth in Seaford Road, a location which may have been equally helpful to Roman craft.
  - b. Two sites are known within the present town. One was a row house with long corridor examined by Spurrell in 1852. Later discoveries include an aisled hall with associated occupation all enclosed by a ditch.
  - c. Bell 1976; Sheldon *et al*, 1993; Scott 1993:59 EA16-17.
20. **Brighton, Preston Park** TQ 3090 0570
- a. A Regnensian coastal villa in a chalkland setting some 2 km up-valley from the open shore at Brighton. It can claim no obvious maritime attributes.
  - b. A corridor villa of the 2nd and 3rd centuries and destroyed by fire in the late 3rd.
  - c. *JRS* 55 (1965) 220; SCGT 58; Scott 1993, 58, EA6.
- WEST SUSSEX
21. \***Southwick** TQ 2430 0550
- a. On the West Sussex coastal plain 0.9 km inshore from anchorage L10, Shoreham Harbour and the mouth of the Adur. Steers notes major erosional changes at the mouth of the Adur including the loss of the coastal villages of Pendre and Aldrington.
  - b. An early Regnensian courtyard villa with some palatial attributes. Its partial plan shows affinities with the larger villa or proto-palace at Fishbourne.
  - c. Winbolt 1932; Cunliffe 1973; Rudling 1985; SCGT 60; Scott 1993:191, WS91; Steers 1964:305–310, Fig. 65.
22. **Worthing** TQ 10 30; 13 02, 14 03, 16 02 & 14 07
- a. A loose chain of sites lies inshore of a sand and shingle strand-line along some 5 km of the West Sussex coastal plain. A minor open-water anchorage (L10a) has been noted offshore. For coastal changes see Steers re. Southwick.
  - b. Several Roman buildings have been poorly investigated. One was 20 m long. Another comprised building materials found 300 m inland from present shore.
  - c. W. Sussex SMR nos 3314, 3239, 4321, 4323 & 2977; Scott 1993:194, WS112–116

**23. Littlehampton TQ 2143 2174**

- a. Within 1.5 km of the present waterfront on the Arun river and 1.3 km from the open shore facing an off-shore anchorage at location L11.
- b. A Regnsian corridor villa of 1st–3rd century date. Further Roman settlement is known nearby.
- c. West Sussex SMR 2142-WS5755; Rudling 1982:277–279; Black 1987:155; Sheldon 1993; SCGT 69; Scott 1993:188, WS59.

**24. Arundel TQ 01 08**

- a. Arundel comprises a Norman castle and a medieval market town at a crossing point and docking point on the Arun estuary some 6 km upstream from the river mouth at Littlehampton. Further upstream lie the Roman Wealden iron industries near the head of the navigable river in the Billingshurst area.
- b. Roman pavement observed in Tarrant Street c. 1896. Further evidence of a 1st century villa was found here during the 1980s
- c. WS SMR 2002; Black 1987:152; Scott 1993:182, WS10.

**25. Pagham SU 898 015**

- a. Three potential sites are adjacent to the large silted creek of Pagham Harbour facing an off-shore anchorage at ‘the Park’ (Fig. 8a, L12).
- b. This site is attested by a scatter of tile and white tesserae. See also Sidlesham and Selsey.
- c. Pitts 1979:75, gaz. no 64. Black 1987:155; Scott 1993:188, WS63.

**26. \*Sidlesham SZ 8550 9700**

- a. Regnsian villa lying 0.6 km inland from the heavily silted natural harbour of Pagham. Offshore lies a historic anchorage at ‘the Park’ (Fig. 8a, L12).
- b. An excavated bathhouse with indications of other buildings. Claudian occupation precedes building. Last coin is AD 325.
- c. Collins, Wilson & Wilson, 1973; SCGT 59; Cunliffe 1971 (1) 9, Fig. 4; Sheldon *et al.* 1993; Scott 1993:190, WS80. See also Pagham and Selsey.

**27. Selsey SZ 874 950**

- a. The Selsey peninsular is a low soft projection of the Sussex coastal plain. Its tip, at Selsey Bill, is highly susceptible to coastal erosion. There is evidence of coastal retreat and the truncation of former tidal channels. The Bill offers shelter to an offshore anchorage lying to the east of ‘the park’ (Fig. 8a, L12).
- b. Submerged Iron Age and Roman artefacts and wells in the inter-tidal zone attest much land-loss at Selsey. A large Iron Age ditch and some traces of a Roman building (SMR no 460–WS1705) may be the last on-shore remnants of former settlement and a potential oppidum here. At Church Norton Roman building materials lie beneath a Norman ringwork close to the shore. This site could denote long-standing strategic interests in the anchorage on the sheltered side of the Bill.
- c. Heron-Allen 1911:86, 296; Salzmann 1912:61; Aldsworth & Garrett 1981; Black 1987:156; Sheldon 1993:189, WS73–75; West Sussex SMR nos 0460 & 0341; Scott 1993:189–190, WS 72–75.

28. \***Fishbourne** SU 839 048

- a. On the Sussex Coastal plain at the head of the Chichester Channel, an arm of Chichester Harbour (Fig. 8a, L13).
- b. An unique Regnensian villa of palace status. Built in later 1st century date and embellished with exotic building materials including stone from Turkey, Greece, Italy, France and the Channel Islands. Local shipments of Purbeck and Bembridge limestones also supplied the villa. Other maritime elements include some floor mosaics with oceanic themes and a revetted and canalised channel (Cunliffe 1971, 1996). If controlled by gates or sluices, this waterway might enable small craft, such as lighters, with a draft of no more than 1 m to approach to within 110 m of the palace steps. The distance from the palace to the present navigable head of the Chichester Channel at Dell Quay is 1.6 km. A detached aisled house is located on the opposite east bank (Rudkin 1986).
- c. Cunliffe 1971 & 1996; Rudkin 1986; Black 1987; West Sussex SMR 0648; Scott 1993:184, WS25.

29. **Bosham** SU 811 052

- a. On the west bank of the Bosham Channel, a northern tributary creek of Chichester Harbour (L13).
  - b. On a low peninsular later favoured for a Saxon regal coastal settlement with a palace used by King Cnut.
  - c. An apparent temple (SMR530-WS1770) is attended by a two-roomed building (WS1771) A mosaic and other foundations (WS1772 & 1774) are reported not far away. These could signify a nearby villa.
  - d. West Sussex SMR WS1770-4; Black 1985.
- HAMPSHIRE

30. \***Emsworth** SU 7340 0590

- a. Within of 0.8 km of the shore of the Emsworth Channel at the rear of Chichester Harbour. 1.7 km from a similar coastal site at Langstone.
- b. A potential Regnensian coastal villa now denoted by Roman tiles re-used in the local church.
- c. Hampshire SMR.

31. \***Langstone** SU 7170 0540

- a. Within 0.4 km of the Langstone/Emsworth channel and close to the present crossing to Hayling Island.
- b. A poorly investigated Regnensian villa.
- c. Hampshire SMR

32. **Havant, Bedhampton** SU 6915 0726

- a. At the east end of the Portsdown chalk ridge overlooking Langstone Harbour (Fig. 8a, L14) and 1.6 km from the shore.
- b. A corridor villa examined in an unpublished excavation of 1925. Nearby, at North Binness Island (SU 6935 0465), Roman brick and tile occur close to the high water mark. Further villa remains at Havant are noted by Scott 1993.
- c. Hampshire SMR.

**33. Fareham, Paradise Farm SU 5943 0714**

- a. At the west end of the Portsdown chalk ridge overlooking Portsmouth Harbour (Fig. 8b, L15) and 0.9 km from the navigable head of the Wallington River at Fareham. Closer to the medieval waterfront at Fareham, Roman building materials have also been found at SU 5816 0635.
- b. Traces of Roman buildings.
- c. Hants County SMR SU50 NE 12B-C; SU50 NE 14B.

**34. Bursledon, Badnam Creek SU 4800 0860**

- a. Close to the shore of the Hamble estuary below Bursledon. This navigable channel leads from a villa site at Fairthorne, Botley to Southampton Water (Fig. 8b, L20).
- b. Roman tiles, pottery and a lead curse tablet. The tablet is appropriately dedicated to *Lord Neptune*. It curses the man boy or girl who has stolen the solidus and six argentioli from Muconius.
- c. Hants County SMR SU40 NE 14A & 28; Tomlin 1997.

**35. Fairthorne, Botley SU 521 118**

- a. The site adjoins the crossing point on the Hamble river for the Roman road from Winchester to Chichester. The Hamble estuary gives access to Southampton Water (Fig. 8b, L20).
- b. Apparently a villa settlement with adjacent tile kilns lying close to the navigable head of the Hamble estuary.
- c. Hants County SMR 490.

**36. Hardley, Hants SU 4303 0344**

- a. On the west side of Southampton Water (L20) and 1.8 km inshore from Cadland Creek (Fig. 8b).
- b. Roman tile, daub and pottery suggest an unexcavated Roman building.
- c. Hants County SMR.

**ISLE OF WIGHT****37. \*Brading, Isle of Wight SZ 5995 8627**

- a. Near the eastern tip of the Isle of Wight. The villa lies 0.6 km from the former shore of Brading Haven, a very large natural harbour which has now been drained (Fig. 8b, L16).
- b. The largest of the Vectensian villas. Evidence of maritime activity includes boathooks and a large mosaic that includes a significant maritime theme. Winged corridor residence suffers a major fire in late 3rd century, Use of aisled building and walled courtyard persists in the 4th century.
- c. Price & Price 1881; Smith 1979; Tomalin 1987; Witts 2005; Trott Pers. comm.

**38. Newport, Isle of Wight SZ 5011 8855**

- a. 0.8 km upstream from the present head of navigation on the Medina estuary at Newport, a historically favoured anchorage (Fig. 8b, L19).

- b. A winged corridor house preceded by 1st century occupation. House seemingly abandoned in late 3rd century.
- c. Stone 1929; Sherwin 1929; Tomalin 1987.

### 39. Northwood, Isle of Wight

- a. On the west bank of the Medina estuary some 200 m from the shore. Close to a small silted creek that appears to have been used by stone-bearing craft in the 19th century. The estuary is a fine natural harbour leading towards the Newport villa (Fig. 8b, L19).
- b. An unexcavated villa observed in 2004. A field scatter of clay roof tiles suggests an east-facing building some 30 m long. Sampled pottery dates from 1st to 3rd century.
- c. Fieldwork report quoted by courtesy of Kevin Trott Archaeological Services.

### 40. Gurnard, Isle of Wight SZ 4706 9539

- a. On the north coast of the Isle Wight some 3 km west of an historic anchorage at Cowes (Fig. 8b, L19). At the mouth of a small silted inlet now drained by the Luck stream The building was adjoined by inter-tidal outcrops of Bembridge Limestone, a Vectensian building-stone exported from the 1st century onwards. 1 km west of the villa, this stone is well exposed at low water at ‘Quarry Ledge’ where Roman clay tiles have been found nearby.
- b. A simple ‘row house’ once stood within a few metres of the Solent shore. It was lost to coastal erosion in 1866. A Victorian account records a wooden jetty extending across the inter-tidal zone and associated with ‘dumps of Roman pottery’.
- c. Kell 1866; Tomalin 1987; Motkin 1990.

### 41. Rock, Brighstone, Isle of Wight SZ 4242 8412

- a. A scarp-foot villa lying 2.5 km inland from an enigmatic settlement on the southwest coast of Wight at Grange Chine (Fig. 8b).
- b. A substantial stone corridor house with undercroft. Late 3rd century construction. Granite ballast boulder incorporated in villa foundations. Some Roman tile also noted at neighbouring coastal location at Grange Chine.
- c. Isle of Wight SMR 277; Report forthcoming. For plan see *Brit.* (1976) 7:369.  
DORSET

### 42. Bowlease Cove, Preston SY 703 827 & 7025 8194

- a. One building was found 0.8 km inland from coast of Weymouth Bay at Preston in 1852 (RCHME 1970, Dorset II.3. pl 225). A further building, of 3rd-4th century date, was investigated much closer to the shoreline in 1969 (Putnam 1969). This latter site lies 4 km NNE of the mouth of Weymouth Harbour.
- b. Rooms and a mosaic floor observed at the first site. At the second site a substantial stone building has been lost to the sea at the mouth of the Jordan River (Putnam 1969).

43. \***Weymouth** SY 6778

- a. Weymouth Bay offers sheltered anchorage from south-westerly winds at location 24. The villa overlooks a small cove and seemingly offers a water supply. It is close to the mouth of the present harbour and the tidal entrance to Radipole (Fig. 9).
- b. Part of a Roman building with a mosaic floor found in Newbury Road Weymouth in 1902.
- c. Farrar 1963; Scott 1993:54 DO31–33.

**DEVON**44. **Holcombe, Uplyme.** SY 315 928

- a. This site lies 3 km from the mouth of the Lim at Lyme Regis where landing and mooring have never been satisfactory without the assistance of an ancient and massive harbour wall known as ‘the Cobb’. This villa lies 7 km east of Honeyditches and shows no evidence of maritime activity (Fig. 10).
- b. A small Late Iron Age farmstead lay in a well sheltered valley. It was succeeded by an aisled building and, eventually, a long corridor house with an elaborate octagonal bath house.
- c. Pollard 1974; Scott 1993:50, DE19.

45. \***Honeyditches, Seaton.** SY 238 909

- a. The site lies 0.8 km from the present shoreline where a massive shingle bar has apparently blocked a former haven and access to an upstream Saxon port at Axemouth. Offshore lies an important leeward anchorage at Beer Road (Location 30; Fig. 10; Hobbs 1859:44). This villa apparently belongs to the Durotrigian group but is sited in an extreme westerly location at the interface with Dumnonian territory.
- b. A narrow range of stone rooms was accompanied by long timber buildings which show military affinities in their style (Bidwell pers. comm.). A large detached bath house seems to have anticipated many visitors perhaps including those arriving by sea.
- c. Miles 1977; Silvester 1981; Scott 1993:50 DE15.

46. **Axminster.** SY 29 97

- a. At Woodbury Farm, close to the Saxon and medieval town of Axminster. This is 8 km upstream from the mouth of the river Axe and 7 km from the villa at Honeyditches. The river is not navigable to this point.
- b. Perhaps a *mansio* and *vicus* with a some maritime interest and possibly the Roman settlement of *Moridunum*.
- c. Scott 1993:49, DE1.

47. **Otterton Point** SY 07 81

- a. On headland overlooking a small tidal inlet at the mouth of the river Otter. Approach can be endangered by offshore shoal known as Otterton Ledge.
- b. Box tile found and two Roman buildings traced after fieldwalking.
- c. Scott 1993:50, DE13.

48. **Exmouth**. SY 00 80

- a. Exmouth lies at the mouth of the Exe inlet and the mariner's approach to the Roman fortress, civitas capital and port of Exeter.
- b. Residual Roman building materials have been found in disturbed contexts in the medieval town.
- c. Scott 1993:49, DE8.

49. **Totnes** SX 80 60

- a. Totnes is a successful medieval borough and port with Norman castle overlooking the estuarine and navigable Dart. Downstream a large ria inlet offers an excellent sheltered anchorage.
- b. Roman tile and pottery has been found in the town and further tile has been observed in the castle. (More Roman tile reported some 2 km upstream at Dartington Hall).
- c. Holbrooke cited in Scott 1993:50, DE17 & DE7.

50. **Plymouth** SX 48 53

- a. In a key position near the head of Plymouth Sound at a spot destined to become a principal medieval and modern port. The Late pre-Roman Iron Age coastal settlement at Mount Batten is close-by.
- b. Roman tile in residual context in medieval town.
- c. Scott 1993:50, DE14.

**CORNWALL**51. **Magor, Illogan** SW 63 42

- a. In the upper valley of the Red River, a minor stream flowing to St Ives Bay some 4 km to the west. The villa has no ready access to a good anchorage other than the bay. Better anchorage is found at Hayle and St Ives some 8 and 11 km away. Despite its coastal position the villa shows no evidence of a maritime role.
- b. A winged corridor villa of short-lived duration in the 2nd and early 3rd centuries.
- c. O'Neil 1932 not in refs?; Branigan 1976; Scott 1993:48, CO1.

52. **Lower Rosewarne** SW 64 40

- a. On upland some 2 km southeast of Magor villa and further land-locked.
- b. Two fragments of tessellated pavement recovered from an uncertain context.
- c. Scott 1993:48, CO2.

**SOMERSET & AVON**53. **Somerton** ST 48 31etc.

- a. A scatter of villas and building remains adjoins the Saxon *burh* of Somerton. The *burh* occupies a promontory overlooking the course of the river Cary. Estuarine conditions may have penetrated close to this spot in earlier times. Close to the riverbank at Etsome Farm it is believed that there is a villa submerged in peat. Other villas, including Bradley Hill, Bancombe Hill, Melbury and Hurcot and a settlement at Catsgore, occupy higher ground in the vicinity of Somerton.

- b. Mostly 3rd and 4th century occupation noted. A 4th century cemetery at Bradley Hill indicates an element of in-breeding with just two in-coming males. This seems ill-matched with a maritime community.
- c. *VCH Somerset* (1906) 1:324; Somerset SMR nos 54483-6 54501, 54503 & 54534; Leech 1977.
54. **Compton Dundon** ST 49 31 etc.
- a. A riverine villa overlooking the east bank of the Cary, which was possibly a former estuarine tributary of the Parrett.
- b. Several Roman buildings include an H-shaped villa. 1st and 4th century occupation reported.
- c. *VCH Somerset* (1906) 1:323–4; Somerset SMR nos 53764 & 53765; Scott 1993:166, SO14-1
55. **Huish Episcopi** ST 42 27
- a. On rising ground near the east bank of the formerly navigable Parrett close to the abandoned port of Langport.
- b. Roman buildings materials reported . More than one building suspected.
- c. Somerset SMR 54039; *JRS* (1947) 37:173; Scott 1993:168, SO32.
56. \***Low Ham** ST 43 28
- a. On high ground some 2 km from the old navigable course of the Parrett river near Langport.
- b. A prosperous villa of the 4th century Its bath house contained the unique mosaic portraying the story of the voyage of *Aeneas* and his tragic love for *Dido*. This includes a panel depicting three rigged galleys.
- c. Somerset SMR 53980; *JRS* 36, (1946) 142, (1947) 173, (1949) 109, (1954) 99–100; Radford & Dewar 1954; Scott 1993:168, SO39.
57. \***High Ham** ST 42 29
- a. On high ground overlooking the old navigable course of the river Parrett near Langport. It is slightly closer to the river than the neighbouring villa at Low Ham. Langport lies some 20 km from the Bristol Channel. It is postulated to be the lost Saxon ‘ship harbour’ cited in the 8th century as *Llongborth* (Thomas 1976:206).
- b. An old excavation has revealed two mosaics.
- c. Som SMR53971; *VCH. Somerset* (1906) 1:328; Scott 1993:168, SO 39.
58. **Chedzoy** ST 34 37
- a. On a raised islet in the Somerset Levels close to the, now drained, course of the river Cary.
- b. Potential villa signified by pottery and hypocaust.
- c. Scott 1993:166–7, SO12.
59. \***Bawdrripp** ST 32 40
- a. At foot of scarp slope some 1.5 km from the present estuarine meander of the Parrett not far from the river mouth.
- b. Several Roman buildings and some very large storage jars and amphorae noted.
- c. *JRS* (1945) 35:86; Somerset SMR 10039; Scott 1993:166, SO2.

60. **Puriton** ST 31 41

- a. At the western tip of the Polden Hills overlooking the mouth of the Parrett. A neighbouring strategic position was later adopted for a Norman castle.
- b. Iron Age occupation and Roman foundations reported.
- c. Somerset SMR 10713; Scott 1993:170, SO49.

61. **East Huntspill** ST33 46

- a. Some 2 km upstream from the present navigable head of the river Brue. (The river course is now managed and drained). A well-positioned site close to the Bristol Channel coast.
- b. Roman building materials observed.
- c. Somerset SMR 10492; Scott 1993:167, SO23.

62. **\*Wemberham**, Yatton. ST 40 65

- a. On the estuarine bank of the navigable Yeo some 5 km upstream from the river mouth at Woodspring Bay on the Bristol Channel shore. Its position on low marshy ground seems to accord with a lower sea level and contemporary enterprises in salt marsh reclamation on the North Somerset levels during and after the 2nd century. Boon 1980:27, 34; Rippon 2000.
- b. Partially excavated in 1884 when mosaics were recorded.
- c. *VCH* Somerset (1906) 1:353–362; Boon 1980; Scott 1993:19, AV88.

63. **\*Portishead**. ST 467 755

- a. Close to the edge of the reclaimed alluvium floor of the Gordano valley. Now some 2 km from the sheltered shore of the Bristol Channel at Kings Road.
- b. Traces of Roman buildings and a derived glass tessera have been detected by minor rescue excavations. Occupation is dated mid 3rd-mid 4th century
- c. Brown 1965; Scott 1993:17 AV67.

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE

64. **Naunton** SP 11 24

- a. Riverine villa on the east side of the navigable Severn some 20 km above the rapids at Gloucester.
- b. Ploughed-out earthwork and building scatter.
- c. Gloucs SMR 525; Scott 1993:74, GS74.

65. **Tewkesbury**

- a. Tewkesbury Park. A potential riverine villa upstream on the navigable Severn
- b. Tiles and tesserae noted
- c. Gloucs SMR 5523; *Glevensis* (1976) 10:30; Scott 1993:77, GS101

66. **Deerhurst** SO 86 29

- a. Potential riverine villa on the east bank of the Severn some 10 km above Gloucester. The site later becomes a significant Saxon settlement with church. This is a navigable route much used in medieval times but requires a change of craft at rapids at Gloucester.

- b. Disturbed Roman building materials and two cremation burial found in the vicinity of the Saxon church
  - c. Gloucs SMR 457; Butterworth 1887:10; Ant J. (1975) 55:351-3; Scott 1993:71, GS36.
67. **Norton** SO 85 24
- a. On floodplain on east side of the navigable Severn some 5 km upstream from the rapids at Gloucester.
  - b. Potential riverine villa marked by scattered building materials
  - c. Gloucester SMR 5602; Scott 1993, 75, GS77
68. **Sandhurst** Handleywood SO 83 24
- a. On floodplain on the east side of the navigable Severn some 5 km upstream of the rapids at Gloucester.
  - b. Roman building with mosaic and hypocaust noted.
  - c. Gloucs SMR 4341; Scott 1993, 75, GS83.
69. **Lydney** SO 62 01
- a. On west side of Severn Estuary below an Iron Age hillfort overlooking a tributary stream. The stream offers a navigable inlet.
  - b. Villa recorded 1 km east of the excavated temple site.
  - c. *Brit* 19 & 20: 469 & 310; Scott 1993:74, GS72.
70. **Boughspring** SO 56 97
- a. On high scarp overlooking the west bank of the Severn Estuary
  - b. House 30 × 16 m of 3rd-4th century date.
  - c. Gloucs SMR 20; *Brit. Vols.* 4, 12, 18, 19, 22; Scott 1993:69, GS22
71. **Tidenham** Palace Cottage ST 55 97
- a. On the west coast of the Severn Estuary overlooking a landing-place called Pill House.
  - b. Walls, tessellated tiles and hypocaust noted.
  - c. Gloucs SMR 20; Scott 1993:77, GS102.  
GWENT
72. **Caldicot** ST48 87
- a. On the west coast of the Bristol Channel immediately east of a landing place called Caldicot Pill and near the mouth of the Nedern Brook.
  - b. Timber buildings reported.
  - c. Scott 1993:80, GW2.

## GLAMORGAN

73. **Ely** ST 14 76

- a. In the valley of the river Elai upstream from Cardiff and its Roman shore fort.
- b. Stone building erected in the early 2nd century and apparently abandoned in the late 3rd.
- c. *Brit.* (1982) 13:211; *Ant J* (1937) 17:138; Scott 1993:67. GL2

**74. Llanbethery ST 03 70**

- a. In a small valley upstream from a rivermouth sheltered by a headland known as Breaksea Point.
- b. Probable villa site.
- c. RCAHM Glamorgan (1976) 1. ii:114; Scott 1993:67, GL3.

**75. Llantwit Major**

- a. On south Glamorgan coast with no direct association with the sea.
- b. Aisled house with added wings Erected in 2nd century and flourishing in the 4th.
- c. Brit. (1974) 5:225–50; Scott 1993:67, GL5.

**76. Monknash SS 91 69**

- a. On open coast of Glamorgan facing SW.
- b. A potential villa marked by building rubble and 3rd century pottery.
- c. Scott 1993:67, GL6

**77. Clemenstone, Ty Bryn SS 91 73**

- a. In a tributary valley of the river Ogmore.
- b. Roman building presents within a ditched enclosure.
- c. Scott 1993:67, GL19.

**78. Newton Nottage, Porthcawl. SS 84 78**

- a. Landlocked behind extensive dunes fronting on to a small bay north of the mouth of the Ogmore river. The bay lies open to the south-west but is partially sheltered by Porthcawl Point.
- b. Probable villa site with 4th century occupation.
- c. Brit. (1987) 18:304; Scott 1993:67, GL8.

**79. Oystermouth ST 08 71**

- a. At the east end of the Gower peninsular. In the lee of Mumbles Head. The villa is close to a fine well-sheltered east-facing cusp of Swansea Bay.
- b. Tessellated floor believed to underlie early Christian church.
- c. Robinson 1980:27-32; Scott 1993:67, GL9

**DYFED****80. Llandowror SN 25 12**

- a. In the valley of the Afon Taf northwest of the ria inlet at Laugharne.
- b. Buildings, corn-driers and baths within a ditched enclosure.
- c. Dyfed SMR 3900; Scott 1993:57, DY8.

**81. Amroth, Trelissey. SN 17 07**

- a. On the north coast of Saundersfoot Bay where shelter can be gained from the W and SW.
- b. Stone buildings within a ditched enclosure.
- c. Dyfed SMR 3664; Scott 1993:56, DY2.

**82. Castlemartin Burrows SR 89 97**

- a. In the valley of the Castlemartin Brook and inshore from a west-facing coast characterised by extensive sand-dunes.
- b. Floor tiles indicated a Roman building
- c. JRS (1956) 46:150.

**83. Stackpole SR 98 27**

- a. A good off-shore waiting anchorage at Little Haven allows access to a small east-facing harbour that dries to a firm sandy bottom at half tide. Approach requires local knowledge.
- b. Roman building material (mortar and *opus signinum*) and occupation reported .
- c. Dyfed SMR 623; *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 7th series, 1926, 192; Scott 1993:58, DY19.

**84. St Davids SM 73 27**

- a. Near westernmost tip of Pembrokeshire and facing SSE into St. Brides Bay. Near the head of navigation on the river Alan and near to the medieval port and town of St, Davids.
- b. Stone foundations reported.
- c. Dyfed SMR 2632; Scott 1993:57, DY17.

**GWYNNEDD****85. Tremadoc SH 55 40**

- a. Overlooking Traeth Bach a well sheltered natural harbour at the head of Tremadoc Bay.
- b. A Roman bath house has been postulated as befitting a civilian community.
- c. Daniels 1969:187-90; Scott 1993:80, GW1.

**NORTH YORKSHIRE and HUMBERSIDE****86. Bridlington Bay**

- a. This bay is generally equated with the ‘*Safe-haven Bay*’ described in the early 2nd century by *Ptolemy*. The bay is sheltered from the north by Flamborough Head. Ramm (1978:22–3) identifies this as the *Ocellum promontorium*, named by *Ptolemy*. Rivet & Smith concur on the bay but defer on the identity of the head. Ramm remarks on substantial coastal change and land-loss south of the Head. Steers substantiates these changes showing the loss of some 26 medieval towns or villages in a broad swathe. He also postulates an off-shore position for the Roman coast. The former presence of a lost Roman coastal settlement is intimated by a spur road heading from Rudston towards this spot. Nothing seems to be known of the submerged archaeology on the floor of the bay.
- b. Hinderwell 1811:276; Ramm 1978:23 & 68; Steers 1974:409–13, Fig. 89; Rivet & Smith 1970:429.

**LINCOLNSHIRE****87. Rudston TA 08 66**

- a. Some 8 km inshore from the present coast of Bridlington Bay (L57).

- b. A 4th century villa with a distinctive local school of mosaic design that includes an aquatic scene.
  - c. Ramm, 1978, 92–98; Scott, 1993, 100, Gaz. HU 17.
88. **Harpham** TA 09 63
- a. Some 7 km inshore from the present coast at Bridlington (L57).
  - b. A substantial 4th century house of E-plan. The corridor rooms were floored with mosaics.
  - c. Ramm, 1978, 98–99; Scott, 1993, 98, Gaz. HU 5.
89. **Brantingham** SE 93 28
- a. Some 3 km inshore from the coastal settlement and ferrying point on Ermine Street at *Petuaria* (Brough-by-Humber; L58).
  - b. The largest of the known villas in the territory of the *Parisii*. A corridor house with extensive mosaics of the same school as Winterton and Horkstow.
  - c. Ramm, 1978, 99–100; Scott, 1993, 97, Gaz. HU 2.
90. **Welton** SE 97 27
- a. Overlooking the north bank of the Humber estuary (L58) close to the ferrying point on Ermine Street at *Petuaria* (Brough-by-Humber).
  - b. A modest corridor house occupying a Late Iron Age site. Demolished c. AD 340 but post-villa occupation may persist into the 5th century.
  - c. Ramm, 1978, 100; Scott, 1993, 100, Gaz. H22.
91. **Winterton** SE 91 18
- a. Close to Ermine Street some 4 km south of its interception with the south bank of the Humber (L58).
  - b. Late Iron Age occupation is succeeded by aisled buildings and a corridor house with mosaics of the 4th century.
  - c. Scott, 1993, 101, Gaz. HU 24.
92. **Horkstow** SE 98 19
- a. At the foot of a chalk scarp overlooking the river Axeholme just 3 km south of its confluence with the Humber estuary (L58).
  - b. A villa with notable mosaics uncovered in 1797.
  - c. Rivet, 1969, 102-7, 122, 272; Scott, 1993, 98, Gaz. HU 7.
93. **Skegness** TF 52 61
- a. A Roman road leads from *Lindum* to Burgh-le-Marsh beyond which a course to the shore is now obscured by Croft Marsh. This is reclaimed land thought to post-date 1608-10. A past anchorage might be postulated within the cusp of a proto-spit predating the configuration of the present spit at Gibraltar Point. In the 16th century, Leland cites ‘a great haven’ at Skegness. Steers notes this to be a successful port in the 14th century. The accretion and later dispersal of a former ness is suspected. This would be linked with a cycle of past spit formations.
  - b. Roman pottery and possibly building material reported in Lincoln museum. The Roman road to Burgh-le-Marsh may befit something more than a coastal or maritime villa.
  - c. Whitwell 1982:305; Scott 1993:126, LI 146; Steers 1964:692.

**94. Frampton TF 28 41**

- a. On the west side of the mouth of the river Witham and probably closer to the shore before the land was reclaimed behind the so called ‘Roman Bank’. The Witham is still navigable to Boston. Further upstream lies ‘Haven Bank’. Steers outlines the medieval coastline of the Wash, showing a broad inlet and potential haven at the mouth of the Witham. Another drained inlet 10 km west is still identified as Bicker Haven.
- b. Roman building material, pottery and quern reported.
- c. Whitwell 1982:234; Scott 1993:120, LI 59; Steers 1964:691–709.

**95. Tallington TF 09 08**

- a. A riverine site on the Welland with apparent navigational access to the Wash.
- b. Possible Roman timber building.
- c. Whitwell 1982:320; Scott 1993:126, LI 167.

**96. Holbeach TF 31 11**

- a. Within the so called ‘Roman Bank’ that may indicate an approximate coastal boundary of earlier times. The former mouth of the Welland might be postulated as an anchorage
- b. Building debris, daub and pottery reported here but the location might best befit saltmaking activities.
- c. Lincs SMR 7983; Scott 1993:122, LI 87.

**NORFOLK****97. Snettisham TF 689 338**

- a. On rising ground overlooking reclaimed land in the mouth of the river Ingol. It is 4.4 km from the present coastline at Snettisham Scalp where there now lies a deep water anchorage in the Inner Roads.
- b. A villa of 3rd-4th century date. Three other sites noted in the parish.
- c. Lincs SMR 1514, 1476 & 16501; Nat. Mon. Rec. TF 63 SE 22; Gregory 1982:357, 359; Scott 1993:137, NF176-9

**98. Heacham**

- a. Facing the east shore of the Wash where the navigable channels are constantly shifting. The approach today is largely barred by Stubborn Sand but a single channel passes southward towards Snettisham Scalp. Steers shows this section of coast free of siltation prior to the historic reclamations of the Wash.
- b. Tegulae in pit.
- c. Lincs SMR 1438; Scott 1993:133, NF92; Steers 1964:437, Fig. 96.

**99. Hunstanton**

- a. Near the coastal terminus of the *Peddars Way* Roman road. Offshore channels are constantly changing but the coastal flats narrow here to give some shallow access to the present beach. Hunstanton’s eroding chalk cliffs could be the remnants of a former protective foreland.

- b. Four individual sites including tesserae, a walled enclosure. 1st-4th century occupation.
- c. Lincs SMR 1271, 1275, 16374 & 12841; Scott 1993:134, NF110–113.

#### 100. **Holme-next-the-Sea**

- a. Adjoins the coastal terminus of the *Peddars Way* Roman road. The present coast is barred by the Holme Dunes where past coastal changes are evident.
- b. Roman building material and sherds reported.
- c. Lincs SMR 1077; Scott 1993, NF105

#### 101. **Tichwell**

- a. Tichwell is now served by a shallow channel being an inner creek of Brancaster Bay (Hanson (1971:128-9) generally warns against any landing on this coast where winds, tidal stream and swell are all treacherous and where strandings can be disastrous (but see Brancaster).
- b. Tegulae and 3rd-4th century occupation
- c. Lincs SMR 18500; Scott 1993:138, NF195.

#### 102. **Brancaster**

- a. Apparently in the vicinity of the shore fort and its associated anchorage. Hanson, (1971:135–7) advises that Brancaster creek is the best of very few options for landing on this north Norfolk coast. Terny Point is a spit now providing shelter to a shifting channel leading to an anchorage at Norton Hole. Substantial shifts must be expected since Roman times.
- b. Building materials and sherds reported
- c. Lincs SMR 19120; Scott 1993:130, NF24.

#### 103. **Burnham Norton**

- a. Like Brancaster, this site may have been associated with the anchorage at Norton Hole or its Romano-British equivalent.
- b. A scatter of Roman tiles, flint rubble and sherds.
- c. Lincs SMR 20343; Scott 1993:130, NF29.

#### 104. **Burnham Thorpe**

- a. Another site possibly associated with an anchorage at or in the vicinity of Norton Hole (above).
- b. Roman tile and 1st-2nd century sherds scattered with medieval material.
- c. Lincs SMR 13771; Scott 1993:130, NF30.

#### 105. **Stiffkey**

- a. Inshore of a tidal channel protected by dunes at Blakeney Point. A muster roll of 1582 identifies Blakeney harbour as a thriving port receiving ships in excess of 100 tons (Steers 1964:368–9). Hanson (1971:129–131) now identifies the Blakeney channel as a difficult but acceptable anchorage provided that local pilotage is used.
- b. Roman building materials and 2nd-4th century occupation evident at two sites.
- c. Lincs SMR 1863/5 & 1867; Scott 1993:138, NF186–7; Steers 1964:368–9.

**106. Wiveton**

- a. A bar and creek coast subject to coastal change seemingly regulated by the shifting of the bars. Like Stiffkey/Blakeney this is another ‘decayed port’ formerly receiving notable shipping in Tudor times.
- b. Tiles and sherds noted
- c. Lincs SMR 6140; Scott 1993:139, NF216.

**107. Salthouse**

- a. A diminished port with former coastal access as per Wiveton. Steers notes ships in excess of 30 tons recorded here in 1570.
- b. Tegulae, bricks and sherds noted
- c. Lincs SMR 6215; Scott 1993:137, NF163; Steers 1964:368.

**108. Caister-on-Sea**

- a. On the northern edge of the valley mouth of the Bure Yare and Waveney rivers. The mouth of these combined rivers is now bar-diverted some 10 km to the south to Gorleston-on-Sea. The river gives access to a potential anchorage at Breydon Water and to the Roman shore fort at Burgh Castle (*Gariannonum*). Scott distinguishes three sites in the vicinity of a Roman coastal settlement that seems to be served by its own road from *Durobrivae*.
- b. Reported finds include Roman tiles and 3rd–4th century pottery.
- c. Lincs SMR 13228, 13229 & 8692; Scott 1993:130, NF31–33.

**109. Belton TG 50 01**

- a. Some 2.5 km from the present coast at Great Yarmouth. Possibly accessed via the Waveney river passing upstream of *Gariannonum*.
- b. Cropmarks indicate a possible villa
- c. Nat Mon Rec. TG 50 SW 24.

**SUFFOLK****110. Ipswich TM 14 46**

- a. At Castle Hill, Ipswich at the head of the Orwell estuary. The present channel is now dredged to some 5 metres but this need not preclude the survival of sub-tidal artefact-fields or anchorage scatters in undisturbed parts of estuary.
- b. A villa of 1st–4th century date.
- c. Dunnett 1975:101, 123; Nat Mon Rec. 14 NW 16; Scott 1993:174, SU13.

**ESSEX****111. Harwich**

- a. At the mouth of the Stour estuary, Harwich is cited as a fine natural harbour accessible at all times (Hanson 1971) but it is subject to intense commercial traffic and dredging. The latter poses a perceivable threat to submerged archaeological evidence.
- b. Stone foundations and a tessellated floor reported.
- c. Cited on maps by Rivet (1969: Fig. 5.1) and Going (1996: Fig. 1). Essex SMR 3396; VCH Essex 3 (1963) 135; Rodwell 1978:29; Scott 1993:63, ES42.

**112. Little Oakley** TM 22 29

- a. Not far from minor creeks leading into a convenient anchorage known as Hamford Water. This creek system also allows ready access to the rich oyster beds in Twizzle Channel and Kirby Creek.
- b. A suspected villa at this site has produced evidence of occupation from the 1st to 4th century.
- c. Nat Mon Rec. TM 22 NW 3: Essex SMR 3313; VCH Essex 3 (1963), 164; Rodwell 1978:29; Scott 1993:64, ES49.

**113. St. Osyth** TM 12 15

- a. A favourable site for habitation close to the navigable head of St Osyth Creek. This is a narrow arm of the Brightlingsea Creek and is accessible at high water.
- b. Traces of Roman buildings have been found under the medieval priory.
- c. Hull 1963a:126; Blake 1965; Dunnett 1975:96.

**114. Brightlingsea** TM 05 18; TM 08 17; TM 07 18.

- a. At least three Roman buildings have been identified at and near Brightlingsea. That at Alboro Point lies 200 m east of the shore of Colne. Brightlingsea Creek provides a 2 m low water anchorage and is accessible at all tides (Hanson 1971). The village still accommodates a significant oyster-fishing industry
- b. Dunnett 1975:123–124; Scott 1993:60–1, E9–E11.

**115. Alresford** TM 062 199

- a. Within 300 metres of the shore of Alresford Creek The creek now dries early and is best navigated at high water when its east mudbanks are covered (Hanson 1971).
- b. A substantial winged corridor house of 1st century date and a bath house were discovered in 1885
- c. Hull 1963a; Dunnett 1975:96–7; Scott 1993:60, ES2.

**116. \*Fingringhoe** TM 04 22

- a. On a low gravel ridge close to the head of the low water channel of the river Colne.
- b. Three individual Roman buildings have been identified. A Claudian fort has also been recorded as well as a wooden jetty (NMR TM 01 NW 32). At high tide boats can navigate a further 6km upstream to *Camulodunum*.
- c. Hawkes & Hull 1947:19–20; Hull 1958:1; Dunnett 1963:97.

**117. West Mersea**, Mersea Island TM 00 12

- a. At an unknown date Mersea Island has been detached by the coalescence of the Pyefleet and Strood Channels. Settlement at this end of the island is well placed for landing and it provides for easy access to the rich oyster beds that proliferate in the Strood and Salcott Channels. These have been a staple industry for the village of West Mersea.
- b. A large villa with mosaic floors was detected in the vicinity of West Mersea church in 1730. Another building is known to the west.
- c. VCH, Essex (1963) 3:164; Rodwell 1978:30; Scott 1993:66, ES76.

**118. Salcott** TL 94 12

- a. Salcott has access, at high water, to the open sea via the Salcott Channel. This broad shallow creek is a national source of oysters.
- b. Roman walls observed at Salcott.
- c. Hull 1963a:162; Dunnett 1975:96.

**119. Tolleshunt Knights** TL 92 14

- a. Traces of a Roman building have been observed some 2.5 km upstream from the present navigable head of the Salcott Channel.
- b. Tessellated floors noted.
- c. Dunnett 1975:96; NMR TL 91 SW 5; Essex SMR 11447/11494; *VCH* Essex (1963) 3:192.

**120. Tollesbury** TL 96 08

- a. At high water, this village can be approached by boat via the Tollesbury Fleet and its inner arm that is known as the Woodrolfe Channel. Tollesbury Fleet and a flat known as the Nass are a national source of oysters
- b. Three sites of Roman buildings have been noted at Tollesbury. They include a tessellated floor.
- c. Hull 1963a, 192; Nat Mon Rec. TL 90 NE 2; Essex SMR 11477, 12135, 12136; Scott 1993:66, ES70–ES72.

**121. Heybridge and Maldon** TL 83 06

- a. Maldon is a tide port on the river Chelmer at head of the Blackwater Estuary.
- b. A supposed villa has been noted here (Nat Mon Rec. TL 80 NW 37). The greater part of Iron Age and Roman settlement at the head of this estuary seems to have been sited on the opposite bank of the river at Heybridge where a Roman port seems to claim significant Iron Age origins
- c. Wickenham, 1996:77–8; Scott 1993:64, ES52.

**122. Mayland** TL 90 03

- a. Adjoins a southerly creek on the Blackwater Estuary.
- b. Roman roof tiles with artefact scatter on eroding beach.
- c. Essex SMR 12077; Scott 1993:64, ES53.

**123. Hadleigh** TQ 81 88

- a. In this section of the Thames mouth, favoured anchorages for small sailing craft lie at the entrance to Leigh Creek and in Hadleigh Ray. Further offshore lies the Nore, well known as a principal naval anchorage in post-medieval times.
- b. A possible villa has been identified by aerial photography where tile, tesserae and pottery have also been reported
- c. Nat Mon Rec. TQ 88 NW 60.

**124. Thundersley**, Castle Point TQ 81 88

- a. Near north shore of Thames Estuary and inshore of Canvey Island.

- b. Villa detected on aerial photographs and confirmed by scatter of tesserae and roof tiles.
- c. Essex SMR 9568 & also 9674 for a suspected site; Scott 1993:61, ES13 & 14.

**Appendix 2: British designated oyster beds of the eastern and southern coast: being the principal regional spawning grounds and sources of *ostrea edulis* now protected by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1997)**

1. Clay Hole (Wash).
2. Brancaster, Norfolk.
3. Butley Creek (R. Ore near Orford Ness).
4. Walton Blackwaters, Essex Twizzle and Kirby Creeks, Mill Lane.
5. West Mersea, Essex, Tollesbury Freeground, Strood Channel, the Nothe, Salcott Channel and Little Ditch.
6. Blackwater, Essex-Bench Head, St Peters Flats, Batchelor Spit, Buxey Sands, The Nass.
7. Crouch, Essex-Althorne Creek, Purleigh Shawl, Outer Crouch.
8. Roach, Essex-Paglesham Pool, Middleway, Devils Reach, Quay Reach, Dunhopes, Pond Lays.
9. Swale (North Kent).
10. East Last Bank, Clite Hole, the Street, (Kent, Thames Estuary).
11. Kentish Flats (Thames Estuary).
12. Chichester Harbour.
13. Langstone Harbour.
14. Portsmouth Harbour.
15. Southampton Water.
- 16a. East and West Solent.
- 16b. Medina estuary.
- 16c. Beaulieu.
- 16d. Lymington River.
17. Poole Harbour.
18. Plymouth Sound.
19. Truro River (Cornwall).
20. Fal River (Cornwall).
21. Percuil (Cornwall).

**SPECIFIC OYSTER BEDS WITHIN THE SOLENT**

Ryde Middle Bank; Kings Quay; Osborne Bay; The Butts; Lee-on-Solent; Hill Head; Brambles Bank; Stanswood Bay; Lepe; East Sowley; Peel Bank; Mother Bank; Spit Bank; Newtown Bank; Saltmead Ledge; Thorness; Warner Bank; E of NE Ryde Middle; SW of Gilkicker; Sowley.

**Appendix 3: Roman ports and potential landing places recognised by Henry Cleere in 1978**

- 1 Tyne estuary; 2 Scarborough; 3 Filey; 4 York; 5 Brough-by-Humber; 6 Winteringham; 7 Lincoln; 8 Brancaster; 9 Caister-by-Yarmouth; 10 Burgh Castle; 11 Colchester/Finginhoe; 12 Bradwell; 13 London; 14 Richborough; 15 Reculver; 16 Richborough; 17 Dover; 18 Lympne; 19 Hastings; 20 Pevensey; 21 Chichester/Fishbourne; 22 Portchester; 23 Bitterne; 24 Hamworthy; 25 Radipole; 26 Exeter/Topsham; 27 Sea Mills; 28 Gloucester; 29 Caerwent; 30 Caerleon; 31 Cardiff; 32 Neath; 33 Carmarthen; 34 Pennal; 35 Caernarvon; 36 Caerhun; 37 Chester; 38 Wilderspool; 39 Ribchester; 40 Lancaster; 41 Ravenglass; 42 Moresby; 43 Maryport; 44 Beckfoot; 45 Bowness

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## Informal summary

A new examination of seabed archaeological evidence identifies a notable association between coastal villas and natural harbours and anchorages on the seaboard of southern lowland Britain. At some of these locations pre-Conquest maritime activity is evident in coastal settlements. Examples are Heybridge; Castle Hill, Newhaven; Selsey, Tournerbury, Hengistbury; Bulbury and Bindon. Most of the coastal villas are concentrated in the Trinovantian, Kent and Solent regions where the natural incidence of oysters is particularly high. This may have been an additional factor in prompting or nurturing the development of early seafaring communities.

The Solent has been recently targeted for experiments in monitored trawling and seabed archaeological survey and it is here that Roman and later anchorage scatters or ‘debris fields’ have now been identified. It is proposed that Magnus Portus identified in the 2nd century by Ptolemy is centred on the Eastern Solent, a location which was later chosen for the anchorage of merchant ships, military flotillas and transports in post-medieval times. The British Channel Pilot of 1859 identifies a limited number of leaward havens several of which are virtually obligatory as stop-overs for sailing craft seeking a safe coastal route in sight of land. This factor can be argued for the English Channel coast, the Bristol Channel and South Wales coast and the North Sea coast as far north as Flamborough Head. It is in these contexts that villas such as Folkestone, Eastbourne, Sidlesham, Weymouth, and Honeyditches are to be found.

This study confirms that there is an urgent need to appraise the sub-tidal dimension of Roman Britain and to take immediate precautionary action where the survival of this resource is threatened by the activities of off-shore mineral extraction, the navigational dredging activities of port and harbour authorities, mollusc dredging, coastal defence and reclamation and the construction of marinas, pipelines and outfalls.