



OFFICE OF WORKS: DEPARTMENT  
OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND  
HISTORIC BUILDINGS

# RICHBOROUGH CASTLE

OFFICIAL GUIDE



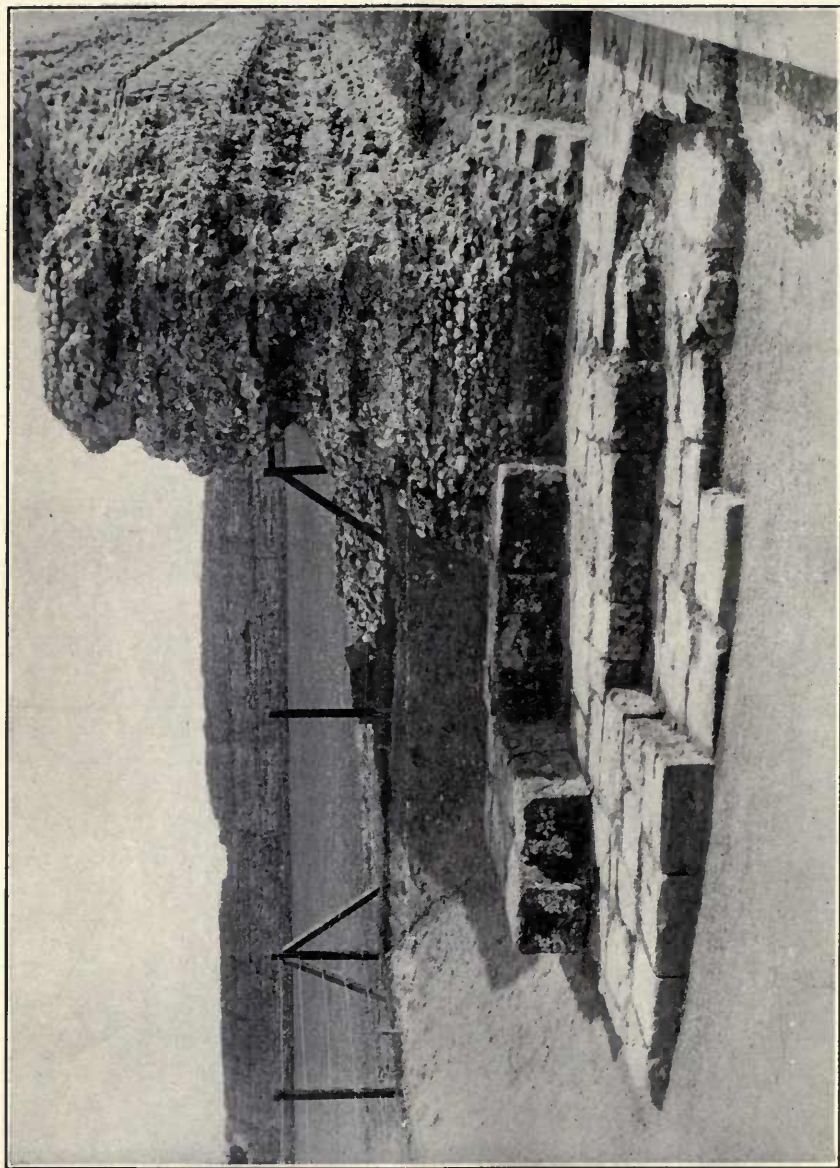
PRICE SIXPENCE NET

CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED









*Frontispiece.*

REMAINS OF WEST GATE AND WEST AND SOUTH WALLS.

# RICHBOROUGH CASTLE

By J. P. BUSHE-FOX, F.S.A.

INSPECTOR OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS FOR ENGLAND.

LONDON :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY  
HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

1922



WICHITBOROUGH CASTLE

THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
IN SENATE  
JANUARY 1872

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE SITE . . . . .	5
HISTORY . . . . .	6
THE FORT . . . . .	9
THE CONCRETE FOUNDATIONS WITHIN THE WALLS . .	11
OTHER BUILDINGS WITHIN THE WALLS . . . .	13
THE AREA OUTSIDE THE FORT . . . . .	13
THE AMPHITHEATRE . . . . .	14
THE CEMETERY . . . . .	14
THE MUSEUM . . . . .	15

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE	
2	THE SITE
6	THE WALLS
9	THE HOUSE
11	THE FOUNDATIONS WITHIN THE WALLS
12	OTHER BUILDINGS WITHIN THE WALLS
13	THE AREA OUTSIDE THE WALLS
14	THE AMPHITHEATRE
14	THE CEMETERY
15	THE MUSEUM



# RICHBOROUGH CASTLE

## 1.—THE SITE.

THE Roman fort of Rutupiae, now known as Richborough Castle, lies about a mile and a half north of Sandwich and is situated on an undulating hill which rises to a height of about 50 feet above the marsh. In order to form an idea of the appearance of the site in Roman times, it is necessary to transform in one's mind the whole of the surrounding marsh into sea, with the Isle of Thanet rising from it to the north and the mainland stretching away to the west and south.

Rutupiae would have been separated entirely from the mainland at high tide by a narrow strip of sea and at low tide by a sandy creek across which the Romans must have constructed either a bridge or causeway. Where this was situated is uncertain, but it was probably at the narrowest point to the west of the Island, a little to the south of the modern road. The line of the Roman road from here onwards to Durovernum, the modern Canterbury, cannot now be traced, but that it ran across country in a practically straight line in accordance with the usual Roman practice may be assumed, and the first two or three miles of the Canterbury-Sandwich Road after leaving Canterbury may have formed part of it. The site was also connected with Dubris (Dover) in Roman times by a road which ran through Woodnesborough and Eastry.

The harbour of Rutupiae would have been very accessible for the light draft ships of the period, and good shelter for them could have been found to the north or south-west. The geographical position of the site made it eminently suitable as a port for shipping plying between this country and the Continent, and as such it was undoubtedly used during the whole period of the Roman occupation.

## 2.—HISTORY.

Rutupiae is mentioned many times by Roman writers, and it would appear that the whole of this part of the coast was known as the Rutupine Shore, as one of the earliest references, dating from the reign of Trajan 98—117 A.D., mentions the oysters from that locality (the British oysters, Pliny states, were held in high esteem at Rome). Ptolemy in his geography, compiled in the first half of the second century, states that Rutupiae, with London and Canterbury, were towns of the Cantii, a tribe which inhabited the district roughly corresponding to Kent. In the Antonine Itinerary, believed to have been compiled in the second century A.D., it is called a port or haven. For the fourth century there are some still more definite references. Ammianus Marcellinus states that Julian despatched the general Lupicinus to Britain in 359 to repel the Picts and Scots, and that he embarked from Boulogne with a fleet and landed at Rutupiae, which he described as a safe and quiet station. The same writer also tells us that another general, Theodosius, the father of the Emperor of that name, entered the country by the same route in 368, in the time of the Emperors Valentinian and Valens, when on his way to quell a rising of the northern tribes and at the same time to protect the country against the inroads of the Saxons and Franks on the south coast.

The above are the most important references to the site by classical writers and from them and the objects discovered on the site it is possible to restore an outline, at any rate, of its history and the great events with which it was associated.

The Rutupine shore is mentioned as early as the first century, and that the town itself was occupied at that period is clearly shown by the coins, pottery and other datable articles that have been found. It is probable that it was inhabited before the Roman invasion under Claudius in A.D. 43, as a few pieces of pottery of pre-Roman native technique have been recovered from the site. There is at present, however, little evidence of an extensive occupation before the period 70-100 A.D., for which there are many remains, and it is more than probable that Rutupiae was used as one of the main ports for the disembarking of troops and supplies in connection with the great military operations that were carried out during that period in the west and north, when the tribes in Wales were subdued and the general Agricola made his expedition into Scotland.



During the second and part of the third centuries it probably served as one of the chief commercial ports of this country, the greater part of the trade with the Continent passing through it. Many coins of Carausius, the Admiral of the Emperor Maximian, who with the aid of his fleet and the Legionaries in this country set himself up as Emperor in Britain in A.D. 286, have been found on the site and show that it was used to a large extent during his time and was probably the harbour for his fleet as well as that of his successor Allectus, 293-296 A.D., whose coins are also plentiful. In the early part of its existence as a Roman port it may well have been unfortified, as the British tribes on the adjacent mainland had been entirely subdued soon after the Roman invasion, and there was no fear of an attack from the sea at that period. Later, however, the conditions altered, the sea-faring Saxons from the east became a constant source of danger, and to protect the country from their raids a chain of forts was constructed along the coast. The *Notitia*, a document showing the distribution of the troops all over the Empire, the British section of which is believed to depict the organisation of the fourth century, states that these forts were under the command of the Count of the Saxon Shore and were placed at intervals along the coast from Brancaster on the north of Norfolk to Porchester near Portsmouth. One of these was Rutupiae, which, together with that whose ruins are still to be seen at Reculver, commanded the straits between the Isle of Thanet and the mainland. When these forts were constructed is uncertain, but they probably date from the latter half of the third century.

The passages already referred to show that towards the end of the fourth century Rutupiae was the port at which reinforcements brought from the Continent for the army of Britain were landed. The *Notitia* states that it was garrisoned by the Second Legion. This Legion came to Britain in the first century A.D., and remained in the country until the close of the Roman occupation. Its headquarters during the greater part of the time appear to have been at Caerleon in South Wales. The garrison was therefore stronger than that of the other forts under the command of the Count of the Saxon Shore. These two facts, taken together, indicate that at this period Rutupiae was the chief military port of Britain and the headquarters of the naval defences of the province.

This harbour, so intimately connected with the early years of the Roman occupation of Britain and their sojourn here for over 350 years, must also have been one of the last places occupied by

them, and must have been largely used during their gradual evacuation of the country. Magnus Maximus, proclaimed Emperor in Britain in 383 and styled by the poet Ausonius the Rutupine Robber, took many of the best troops from this country to the Continent and with their help made himself eventually master of the Western Roman Empire. He was, however, at last defeated in Northern Italy by the Eastern Army, and few if any of his troops could ever have returned to this country. In consequence the depleted garrisons on the North British frontier and the east coast were hard pressed in defending themselves against the Picts, Scots and Saxons, but at the very end of the fourth century the general Stilicho—if the poet Claudian is to be believed—succeeded in restoring security to the country. In one of this poet's works Britain is made to speak as follows :—" I was perishing at the hands of the neighbouring tribes, when Stilicho took up my defence : the Scot was stirring up the whole of Ireland and the sea foamed with his hostile oars : it is the work of Stilicho that I no longer fear the darts of the Scot, nor trouble at the Pict, nor look out along my line of shore for the Saxon, who might arrive with every shift of the wind." Again in another of Claudian's poems Rome is made to say : " Now that the Saxon is tamed, Britain is secure, now that the Pict has been crushed." The good times in Britain were, however, not destined to last long. Stilicho was obliged to withdraw a whole Legion for the defence of Italy against the Visigoths, and although that danger was overcome, there soon followed other and more dangerous blows at the heart of the Empire itself. Britain was cut off from the rest of the Empire by the great barbarian invasion which devastated Gaul in 406, making it impossible to restore the depleted garrison of the province.

Left to themselves, the remaining troops in Britain set up Emperors of their own, the first two being murdered almost as soon as elected, but the third, a Briton named Constantine, survived long enough to follow the example of his predecessor Magnus Maximus, and, gathering together a large force, proceeded to the Continent. It was not long before he was defeated, and what was left of his army never returned to Britain. This last withdrawal of troops was the final blow to the Roman domination of this country, and in 410 the Emperor Honorius bade the Britons defend themselves, as he was unable to give them assistance. This, however, was beyond their power and before the end of the fifth century much of the east and south of the country was in Saxon hands.









There is nothing to show how long Rutupiae survived the final withdrawal of troops, but that it soon fell to the invading Saxon is certain, and Saxon objects that can be dated to the fifth century have been discovered on the site. That it may have been used as a port by them is probable, but it is never mentioned as such after Roman times. A tradition that St. Augustine landed there in 597 rests on no good authority and is directly contradicted by the more trustworthy evidence of Bede, but a chapel dedicated to him, of which all trace has now disappeared, is known to have existed within the Roman walls. The receding of the sea deprived the site of all importance, and a new port and town sprang up at Sandwich, which became one of the Cinque Ports in the thirteenth century. This, again, shared much the same fate as Rutupiae, and it was not until the war of 1914-18 that the Rutupine shore once more became a scene of military and naval activity, when the great port of Richborough was formed almost under the ruined walls of the Roman Rutupiae.

### 3.—THE FORT.

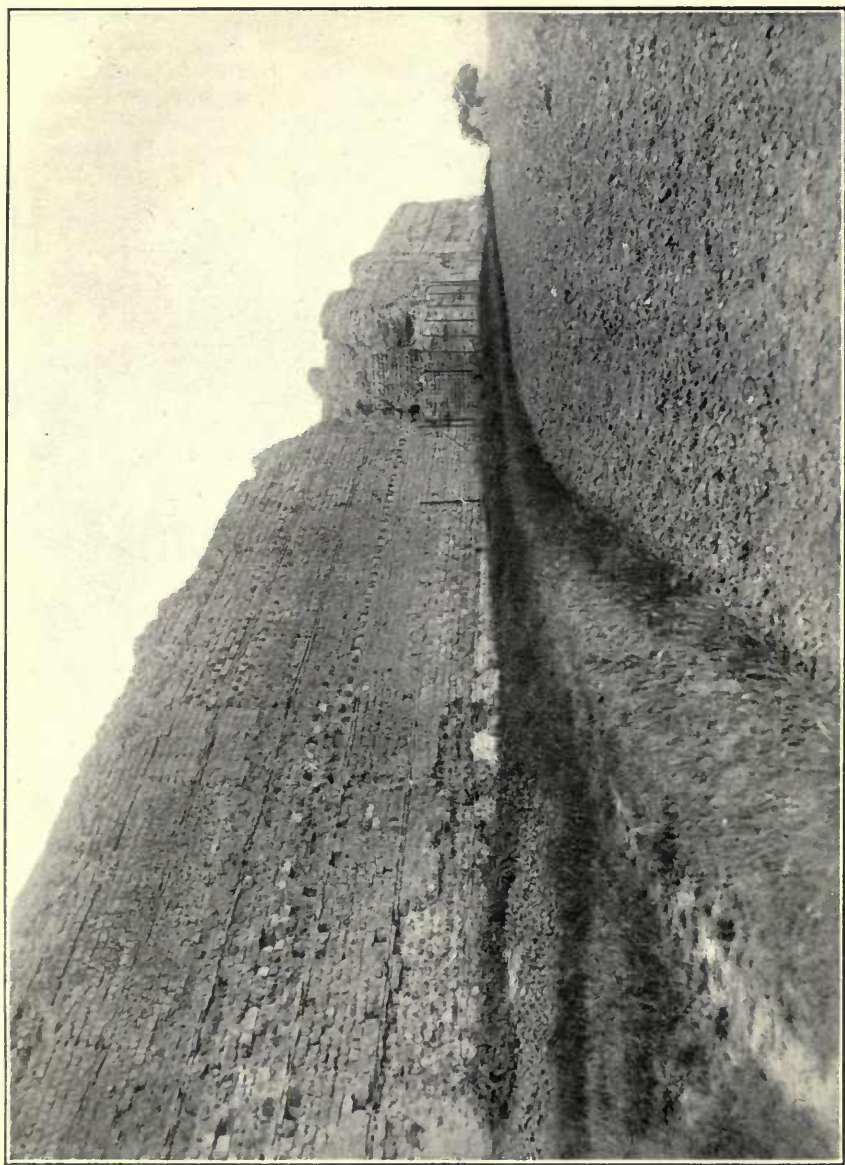
*The Walls.*—The massive walls of the Roman fort are at the present day the only visible remains of Rutupiae. They were probably constructed in the third century A.D., and have much in common with several other Roman forts, such as those at Pevensey and Porchester, which appear to have been built at about the same period. The fort was rectangular, measuring from the outer face of the walls 494 feet north and south and probably 550 to 580 feet east and west, the area enclosed being a little over six acres. It is, however, now difficult to define with certainty the exact position of the east wall. Fragmentary remains of its foundations have been discovered at the bottom of the steep bank on this side, but they were so irregular and at places sloped at such a steep angle that it is not easy to believe that they were in their original position. The most probable solution would seem to be that the east wall originally stood on the top of the slope, and that after the receding of the sea the River Stour gradually undermined this projecting headland, causing a large portion of it to subside bodily, bringing with it the east wall and part of the south wall. At the same time the east end of the north wall slid slightly outwards and toppled over. Fallen masses of the latter, and also part of the east wall, may still be seen. The east wall was probably of similar construction to the west, with a gateway, two rectangular towers, and round towers at the angles.

Long stretches of the walls on the south-west and north are standing in a wonderful state of preservation, rising in some places to as much as 25 feet, their width being on an average 11 feet. The foundations are composed of layers of boulders and chalk which were placed in a trench dug into the natural soil. Upon these foundations the walls were built up in a succession of horizontal layers of flint boulders with a considerable number of rough blocks of chalk and stone and occasional fragments of the marble casing from the structure that stood on the large concrete foundation in the interior of the fort. The whole was cemented together with extremely hard mortar containing pebbles, sea shells, etc., and a large proportion of broken brick. The external surface of the wall was faced with regular courses of ashlar with horizontal bonding courses of double or single rows of bricks at intervals of from two to four feet. These did not as a rule extend into the core of the wall more than two bricks deep. The face of the north wall is the best preserved and it is obvious that an ornamental effect had been attempted by the use of alternate stones of different colours in horizontal rows. The interior face of the walls has now practically disappeared, but it seems to have been of flint with bonding courses of brick and not of dressed stone blocks like the exterior. At one place, however, on the north wall, five courses of dressed tufa remain.

*Towers.*—Rectangular towers projected some ten feet from the face of the wall. The lower parts of four of these still exist, two on the west wall and one each on the south and north walls. The position of a fifth can be seen near the east end of the north wall and there was probably another on the south in a corresponding position. These turrets were bonded into the main wall and contained two chambers divided by a massive concrete floor reinforced by wooden beams. Their construction is similar to that of the main wall above which they probably rose to a considerable height. At the S.W. and N.W. angles of the fort and projecting from it were circular towers, the north-west being 18 feet in diameter and the south-west 18 feet 6 inches. Only the lower courses of these remain and it is impossible to say whether they were of solid construction or contained chambers.

*Entrances.*—The main entrance to the fort was situated 50 feet to the north of the centre of the west walls. The greater part of it has been demolished, probably to obtain the large dressed blocks of stone of which it was constructed. Excavations here indicated, however, that it consisted of a single entrance passage





EXTERIOR OF NORTH WALL SHOWING POSTERN TURRET.



some 10 ft. 6 in. wide, flanked on either side by towers, 25 ft. long by 12 ft. 6 in. wide, which projected 6 ft. beyond the outer face of the main wall and from the inner face about 7 ft. 6 in. There would have been guard chambers in the towers and probably other rooms above while the wall walk would have been continued over the entrance. The remains of the southern of these gate towers have been left uncovered.

At about the middle of what remains of the north wall is situated a projecting bastion or tower which protected a small entrance in its eastern side. This entrance could have been little more than 3 ft. 6 in. in width, and would, therefore, have been easy to defend. The entrance passage in the tower was 7 ft. 8 in. wide and in the end of the main wall on the east side of this, at a height of about 15 feet, are three square holes which appear to have held beams to support the floor of a chamber above. A writer of about the middle of the last century describes the floor of the entrance passage as being formed of solid stone-work down the middle of which ran a covered drain from the interior and the course of this can still be traced. The remains of a head carved in stone can be seen let into the north wall of this bastion. In the south wall of the fort, at a point nearly opposite this gate and where the remains of the fort wall end abruptly, indications of a projecting turret, which presumably contained another small entrance, have been discovered.

In all probability, there was a gateway in the missing east wall opposite and very similar to the one in the west wall.

#### 4.—THE CONCRETE FOUNDATIONS WITHIN THE WALLS.

Within the area of the fort and slightly to the north-east of the centre is a rectangular block of concrete composed of layers of flint imbedded in mortar and sunk in the natural sand to a depth of over 30 feet. The main body measures 126 ft. from north to south and 81 ft. from east to west, but the upper 5 ft. project 10 ft. on the north and south and 12 ft. 8 in. on the east and west, making the dimensions at ground level 146 ft. by 106 ft. 4 in. The upper surface of this huge mass is level and is covered with a six inch layer of mortar upon which is a layer of sand or gravel. In this, but separated from it by a layer of chalk blocks and another of Kentish rag, is a cruciform concrete construction, the north and south arm measuring 8 ft. 6 in. wide by 86 ft.



long and the east and west arm 22 ft. by 47 ft. It stands now about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ft. high but was probably higher. Its sides and ends are ragged, but within living memory, the ends and inner angles were faced with tufa blocks. Surrounding this cruciform construction and standing on the concrete platform at 16 ft. from its outer edge is a 2 ft. 3 in. wall with an offset on the inner face of about 10 in. It stands 1 ft. 6 in. high in places and is composed of boulders embedded in mortar but of inferior quality to that of the concrete foundation or the cruciform structure. Where this wall stands highest the remains of a bonding course of tiles may be seen. Like the cross it does not stand immediately on the concrete platform but on an intervening layer of sand. Near and as a rule on the outer side of this wall have been discovered many architectural fragments of white marble slabs and mouldings which must have formed the casing of some structure of very considerable artistic merit. They consist of moulded shells for columns and pilasters, slabs for wall facings, steps and pavements, cornice mouldings and fragments of ornamental detail. In one place between the remains of the wall and the outer edge of the concrete block a piece of marble pavement was found actually in position.

Many theories have been propounded to explain the purpose of this extraordinary structure but no really satisfactory solution has yet been devised. The huge concrete mass has been thought to contain chambers for the storage of treasure and more than one attempt has been made to penetrate into the interior but no sign of a room of any description has been met with. It has also been suggested that a pharos or lighthouse stood upon the platform or that it carried machinery for the hauling up of ships within the fort or served as the base for some huge catapult or engine of war, or as the foundation for a temple or monument. It is, however, with our present knowledge, impossible to say what was the purpose of this erection or if the cruciform structure and its surrounding walls are contemporary, or even if the huge concrete foundation was originally built for the purpose of carrying them. All that can be said is that the enormous concrete foundation was built to carry some structure of tremendous weight but there is no evidence to show whether this was ever placed upon it. The concrete cross may have been part of the original design or it may be later and there is now no indication for what purpose it was used. The numerous marble fragments and portions of bronze statues found in the vicinity, certainly indicate that the superstructure was of an unusually ornate description for Roman work in this country,



"THE CROSS" RICHBORD CASTLE SANDWICH



# Post Card

Correspondence

Address

# Post Card

Correspondence

Address



and it is greatly to be regretted that the small portions of inscription discovered are too fragmentary to afford any clue to its date or purpose. It seems certain, however, that the marble-faced building was in ruins before the construction of the fort, as several fragments of the moulded marble are built into the core of the main wall of the fort.

#### 5.—OTHER BUILDINGS WITHIN THE WALLS.

Of other buildings within the fort practically nothing is known, and up to the present little or no effort has been made to explore them. That some at any rate of the rooms of the houses were decorated with painted wall plaster and were warmed by hypocausts or hot-air systems is shown by the numerous fragments of coloured plaster and flue tiles that have been met with at various times, and there is ample evidence that the roofs were composed of red brick tiles.

In dry seasons it is possible to trace on the turf the lines of walls at more than one place, and the position of some of these is indicated upon the plan.

#### 6.—THE AREA OUTSIDE THE FORT.

How much ground was occupied by the town is not known, and can only be ascertained by careful and systematic exploration. Several small excavations have been undertaken at various times, but these have mostly been confined to the fort and its immediate neighbourhood. Many relics have, however, been discovered scattered over the island, but mostly on the east and south-east sides, which part would appear to have been the most densely inhabited area, while to the west of the fort some evidence has been found that the town was laid out in squares in accordance with the usual Roman practice. To the north of the fort the remains of buildings and a considerable layer of burnt wheat were discovered, and as the granaries containing the supplies for the garrison would hardly have been without the walls, it seems probable that there were storehouses on this part of the site where the grain was kept pending its shipment to the Continent, there being evidence that at any rate in the fourth century this country exported corn to Gaul. When the railway was being made at the foot of the hill to the south of the fort the foundations

of a Roman building were cut through, but no information is recorded concerning it beyond the fact that the walls were composed of flint and tiles with a foundation of chalk, and that the rooms were floored with a thick layer of concrete.

#### 7.—THE AMPHITHEATRE.

On the high ground south of the fort is a very pronounced depression roughly oval in shape. This marks the site of an Amphitheatre, which was explored in 1849, and proved to measure 200 ft. by 166 ft. It consisted of an encircling wall 3 ft. 6 in. wide, built with flint faced with chalk, while the angles at the entrances were strengthened at intervals with bonding courses of tiles. The inner face of the wall was coated with coarse mortar, and from it an inclined plane consisting of mortar and clay sloped inwards for some 8 ft. This stood to a height of 7 ft. against the wall, and rested on a pavement of mortar 2 in. thick, which extended towards the centre of the area for some 15 ft. No remains or indications of seats were discovered, but these may well have been of wood, of which all trace would now have disappeared. There were entrances on the north, south and west. The northern was the best preserved, and was flanked externally by walls at right angles to the main walls and projecting some 6 ft. from it. The entrance passage, which originally had been vaulted, was 9 ft. wide and had a hard pavement of flint and rubble which sloped down towards the interior. The east main wall projected 3 ft. into the passage, leaving a space of 6 ft. for the gate, the position of which was indicated by two gate stops near the inner angle of the wall on the west side. The other two entrances were not so well preserved, but they appear to have been constructed on the same plan. On the ruined wall of the west entrance a skeleton was found lying on its left side with the legs drawn up and the wrists crossing each other, and with it was found a coin of Constans, A.D. 332-350, indicating that the Amphitheatre had probably fallen into decay and ceased to be used about the middle of the fourth century.

#### 8.—THE CEMETERY.

Urns containing burnt human bones have been discovered in a sand-pit on the left-hand side of the road leading from the fort to the village, and it is probable that the cemetery was situated on this part of the site.

## THE MUSEUM AND OBJECTS FOUND ON THE SITE.


Many finds of small objects have been made at Rutupiae, and there is a representative collection in the museum on the site. The collection includes brooches, various ornaments—some enamelled—portions of statuettes, pins and decorated fragments of jet and bone, iron weapons, tools, etc., and a very large amount of pottery of all descriptions, much of it imported ware from the Continent. Many hundreds of coins in gold, silver and bronze have also been discovered. They date from the last century B.C. to the fifth century A.D., but mostly belong to the last century of the Roman occupation. Relics of the Saxon period such as coins, brooches and other small objects have been found on and near the site.

The finding of an inscribed silver ingot near the large concrete foundations within the walls, and the fact that some coins of the Emperor Carausius bear the mint marks R. and R.S.R. and cannot with certainty be assigned to any known mint, suggest the possibility that these coins were actually struck at Rutupiae. Some authorities do not, however, accept this view, and believe the Carausius coins to have been struck at the London mint.





Visited Rickborough 26 Sept 1923. Klein there.

A Roman tile or brick measured  $15 \times 10\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{3}{4}$   
Some made thus  and built in the  
walls. They would also serve as roofing tiles.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 048 825 4



