

Area K: LPRIA and Roman pottery summary

by Anne Thompson

Introduction

A total of contexts were recorded, of which 318 (excluding unstratified and cleaning layers) contained pottery. The total sherd count was 24,181, weighing 580.7 kg.

The area is bounded to the north by Road 3, to the west by Road 2 and the edge of the excavation. On the east it adjoins Area A1. An area in the centre of Area K remained unexcavated and work concentrated round the edges. Many features were not bottomed and in places the recording could be confused. The most prominent characteristic of Area K is (a) the density of pit complexes and the greatest amount and quality of pottery came from these. There is also very much more tenuous evidence of (b) sparse ditches, (c) some evidence for Roads 2 and 3 and possible predecessors, (d) various possible structures, (e) a number of possible ovens/kilns and hearths, and (f) one possible well.

Landscape.

Before the construction of Road 3 on the northern side of the Area, there may have been a pit or ditch, **4779 (group K7)**, the ditch hypothesis partly suggested by the siltiness and absence of finds in the lower fills. It was in-filled in the mid-1st century AD, represented by the middle layers. Its top fill, however, context 4766, may be a pit cutting into it, and its pottery has a general Roman date.

There is a possible earliest road surface below the Road 3, surviving as **layer 4662 (K6)**. The pottery is mid-1st to early 2nd AD, narrowed to no earlier than AD 55/60 by the presence of Verulamium white ware. Since layer 4662 is cut by the later fill of feature 4779, this suggests a possible earliest date of AD 55/60 for context 4766 and anything stratified above.

Road 3 itself is represented by prepared surfaces of successive phases. The earliest, 4626 (K3) had no finds but a mid-1st to early 2nd century date is implied from being stratified above context 4766 of ditch/Pit 4779. In the next Road 3 phase, 4580(K4) had early 2nd century pottery; this is a silt/use deposit rather than construction. The latest surviving cobbled surface, 4538(K5), has a small pottery assemblage datable only as Roman (c.p. 15), so its construction and use could be from early 2nd century onwards.

A possible **roadside ditch (K45)** along Road 3 is postulated but the relevant contexts have no finds. It is stratified above post-hole 4970 which had pottery of LIA date (c.p. 10); also above layer 4830 of sondage K40, which had late 4th century+ pottery but is poorly recorded.

Road 2 survives in poorly recorded layers of gravel in the area where Roads 2 and 3 meet. Very little pottery was recovered. Layer 4900, cobbles below Road 2, had pottery of c.p. 15 (Roman), as had 4863, whilst 14057 had LIA (c.p. 10). The coin dated AD 138-60 from 4863 shows the road as in use at that time. The road passes over Pit/post-hole 14057 (surely a pit?) which has mid-1st century pottery.

The only other landscape feature is **Gully 4226/4356 (K38)**, an irregular possible boundary ditch to the south of, and parallel to, Road 3. Section 4356 had Roman (c.p. 15) pottery; it cut into Pit 4337 which has pottery of mid-1st to early 2nd centuries AD, and is cut by Pit 4102 which was in-filled in the mid-3rd century from pottery evidence..

Structures

The clearest is **building K18**, two sides of a rectangle are seen in foundation trench 4810/4812/4814/4816. The small groups of pottery are of mid-2nd to early 3rd centuries (c.p. 18-20), so that although the groups are small they are consistent. A number of hearths are associated

inside the building, of which only 4887 and 4901 had Roman (c.p. 15) pot. Hearth 4929 cut into the foundation trench 4812, providing from its pottery a tentative late 2nd to early 3rd century horizon. The prepared gravel surface 4794, a possible flooring layer inside K18, had a large assemblage ascribed to the late 2nd century though with much residual pottery. This made up the entire floor area, together with 14044, from which no pottery was recovered. A cleaning layer, 4706, covered the entire inside of the building, and may be an occupation layer of built-up material, or material dumped on abandonment: its large assemblage is mid-2nd to early 3rd centuries, quite consistent with the other dates for the building. Outside the building, layer 4990, a “yard” area between K18 and the supposed junction of Roads 2 and 3, had a small pottery group of mid-1st to early 2nd centuries.

These dates are consistent with those suggested by the substantial material from the layers excavated below building K18. These comprise 4993, a layer of early to mid-1st century dumped over LIA pits, and above this, 4992 has late 1st to early 2nd century pottery, and 4855 has a group of mid-1st to early 2nd centuries. These large amounts of pottery may have been dumped to level up the surface ready for the building of K18.

Two sides of a possible **rectangular building, K20**, are fairly tenuous: pottery evidence from post-hole 4590 only, a single large jar sherd giving a LIA (c.p. 10) date, or later.

On the same spot as K20, but with no stratigraphy, possible **building K21** produced very small amounts giving LIA (c.p. 10) dates for slot 4891, pit 14015 and post-hole 14017. However, 14015 is likely to be mid-1st century or later since it cut layer 4937 which has a large mid-1st century group, and this may help to refine dates for K20.

Pottery evidence for **?wall line K30** - seen only in a small sondage - consists of very small groups. Beamslot 4676 yields a mid-1st to late 2nd century date, and a case can be made for no later than early 2nd century. Post-hole 4672 has LIA (c.p. 10) pottery; however, it cuts the spread 4665, whose provides a horizon as its large group has a mid-1st century date. The pottery supports a possible date range of mid-1st to late 2nd centuries.

There is some evidence in plan for **rectangular building K19**, regular stakeholes fronting onto Road 3. The pottery, however, is too sparse to be very helpful, very few sherds from post-holes 4618, 4622 and 4628 providing a mid-1st century horizon; the date range could extend later.

There is no pottery evidence for possible **building K32**, a group of disparate post-holes and slots. The gravelly surface below, layer 4390 of group **K31**, produced a very little undiagnostic Roman pottery, so the building, if it exists, is Roman (c.p. 15). Stratigraphically above building K32, another possible **building, K33**, consisted of two post-holes and a slot cut into a series of clay floor layers. The only pot produced, tiny amounts from 4269 and 4219, give general LIA (c.p. 10) and Roman (c.p.15) dates respectively. Even more tenuous are possible **stake structures K26** and **K27**. Both cut natural gravel 4339, but no pottery was recovered and they remain undated.

A case can be made for the possible **corner of a building, K36**, from the pottery. 4625 produced a small mid-1st century group, and 4094 a smallish group dated early to mid-1st century AD. These are at odds with other contexts 4280 and 4299, said to be no earlier than 2nd century from the stratigraphy, and may support the suggestion that 4094 stands out from other contexts.

The pottery evidence is slightly more substantial for **wall line 4861/14033 K28**, two gullies and a spread of daub representing an apparent collapsed wall, stratified above oven K23. Gully 4868 and spread 4609 both produced a smallish groups of mid-2nd to early 3rd century pottery.

A possible **round structure, K35**, has a large pottery group for the centre post-hole 4182, its bottom fill being late 1st to early 2nd centuries, but the top fill mid-2nd to early 3rd centuries. This could be the date for the structure. Only tiny amount of pottery came from other post-holes, giving LIA c.p. 10(4270) and Roman c.p. 14(4323) dates only.

The pottery evidence with regard to the possible **corner of a structure, K29**, suggests that the postholes do not form a feature: 4935 has a reliable mid-to late 2nd century group, 4685 has mid-to late 1st century and 4131 has LIA (c.p. 10) pottery. Post-hole 4131 is also cut by Pit 4258 (K8), in-filled in the mid-1st century.

The evidence for structures in Area K thus appears to fall into the period from mid-1st to mid-3rd centuries, though this does not rule out continuing use of existing structures. A large number of post-holes remain unaccounted for under **K34**, mostly with small pottery groups giving unreliable dates. The dates are preponderantly LIA to the mid-1st century, and two post-holes (4107 and 4308) had transitional MIA/LIA (MICW) sherds, the latter with Roman pottery also.

Ovens and kilns.

The evidence is that of demolition of these features, probably during the 2nd or early 3rd centuries. Tile-built **oven 4021, K22**, has pottery evidence of demolition in the mid-2nd century. **Kiln 4838 K23** has only one sherd of Roman (c.p. 15) pottery and relies on stratigraphy for its dating of 2nd century+. Substantial groups of pottery from **Oven 4005 K24** resemble rubbish pit groups and appear to represent material dumped after disuse, especially since there is little evidence of excessive heat affecting the pottery. The feature was in-filled in the mid- to late 2nd century, but the stokepit 4024 had material dumped into it in the early 3rd century.

Hearths

These were scattered unrelated features with very little finds. 4378 has heavily burnt material of late 3rd to mid-4th century, showing some definite continuation of activity in Area K in this period. 4861 has a large group but undiagnostic sherds; stratigraphy suggests a late 1st to early 3rd century date range.

Pits

Pits form the greatest number of features and by far the greatest density of pottery.

K8 consists of mostly small pits scattered with no spatial pattern, though with some stratigraphic relationships of intercutting features.

Late 1 st century BC to early AD 1 st century	1 (4026)
?late 1st century BC to mid-1st century AD	
(c.p. 9-10):	1 (4018)
early to mid-1st century AD (c.p. 13-14):	10 (best dated: 4203, 4463, 4698,
mid-1st century AD (c.p. 14):	8 (best dated: 4193, 4258,
4786, 14064	
LIA general (c.p. 10):	15
mid-1st to early 2nd centuries (c.p. 14-17)	1 (4163)

K11 is a cluster of fairly small pits in the south-east sector of Area K, distinguished from other LIA pits by their quantities of cbm. The group is well dated by the fairly large pottery groups to the

early to mid-1st century AD (Pits 4130, 4285, 4287, 4517, 4655). Of these, Pit 4285 is late 1st century BC to early AD 1st century, 4130 and 4517 are early 1st century and 4655 mid-1st century. Pit 14041, located outside the cluster, is the only one with a mid-2nd century pottery date for its in-filling.

K9 is second series of pits following on chronologically from K8. The pits have, like K8, no spatial patterns or clusters. Fairly large pottery groups were recovered, with a date range overall of mid-2nd to early 3rd centuries. Layer 4200 over a number of these provides a ceiling of late 2nd to early 3rd centuries. The only pits distinguished by reliable early 3rd century assemblages are Pit 4137 and the top fill of Pit 4008. Pit 4496 has a later stage of in-filling with much pottery in the late 3rd-early 4th centuries, or alternatively, two sources.

K51 early Roman pits.

K10 middle Roman Pits continue the pattern of scattering over the Area. They are distinguished by a restricted range of finds from K9. Most have a fairly large group of pottery, the following being well dated:

AD mid-2nd to early 3rd centuries(c.p. 18-20): 1 (4022)

AD late 2nd -early 3rd centuries (c.p. 19-20): 4 (4010, 4426, 4241, 14124)

AD early 3rd century (c.p. 20): 1 (4044)

AD early to mid-3rd century (c.p. 20-21): 1 (4487)

K52 Middle Roman pits, mostly small and filled with rubbish deposits.

Problem pits K12: two large poorly recorded pits, apparently representing several pits mixed together. The various fills have been separately recorded and have an overall range of mid-2nd to late 3rd centuries, but the stratigraphy is not so clear and despite large assemblages these pottery groups are not so useful for study.

K13 Late Roman pits. These form the only evidence for later activity in Area K, but are large and produced quantities of pottery. Most had fairly large amounts of residual pottery. Pit 4128 is outstanding for the excellent preservation of the pottery and low residuality.

AD mid-3rd century (c.p. 21): 1 (14099, not well recorded)

AD mid-to late 4th century+:(c.p. 24-25): 1 (4139)

AD late 4th century+(c.p. 25): 3 (4128, 4153, 14098)

The layers 4277 above 4153 and 4689 above Pit 14098 have late 4th century+ groups.

K53 Well

The well was not fully excavated. The pottery evidence, which is from the latest fill (4537) suggests it was finally in-filled in the mid- to late 2nd century AD.