

AREA P - LIA/Roman pottery Summary by Joyce Compton

Introduction: 139 contexts producing pottery were recorded. A total weight of 132901g was recovered, dating from the Late Iron Age to the late 4th century+. The area lies in the east of Area A2 and is characterised by boundary ditches and groups of pits.

Linear features: The most easterly linear feature in Area P is the N-S boundary ditch P3; this was truncated to the north by P22 and also cut by LIA pits 8873 and 8907. Its length could be traced south-eastwards to the edge of the excavated area. The pottery recovered from two of the excavated segments provides an early 1st century AD date, as there is imported fineware present along with grog-tempered pottery. To the west, a second boundary ditch, P7, ran parallel to P3 and was a possible replacement for P6. Both P6 and P7 were cut by LIA pit 8594. No pottery was recovered from P6 and only a few sherds of grog-tempered pottery came from P7, but this supports the Late Iron Age date provided by stratigraphy. The N-S gully, P5, which lies between ditches P3 and P7 produced no pottery. A small section of a third N-S ditch, P8, appeared in the south-west corner of the area; this curved more to the south as it passed beyond the edge of excavation. Its fill contained sand-tempered probable MIA/LIA transitional forms in several contexts, along with grog-tempered pottery, and will be published as a group with the assemblage in pit 8525.

An E-W ditch, P4, cut nearly all the features it encountered. It is a poorly dated feature but the pottery provides a late 2nd/3rd century date. A second, enigmatic, E-W ditch with rounded terminals lies close to building P10, although association with this building is not established. It was only partially excavated due to waterlogging, but the fills contained a quantity of sand-tempered pottery in transitional MIA/LIA forms. There is no imported fineware or Roman fabrics, both of which are present in the contexts associated with P10.

A curving ditch, P1, situated between ditch P7 and gully P5 also has an unknown function. To the north it terminated in a pair of pits containing prehistoric pottery, which was also found in the terminal itself. Two segments excavated in the southern section produced a mixed assemblage, but predominantly dating to the Late Iron Age. Unfortunately, the ditch had been removed in the centre by a largely unrecorded pit, P16, the full extent of which is not known. This contained another mixed assemblage and was cut in turn by a lined pit, P12, which produced a small amount of pottery dating to no later than the late 2nd century. The dating (and function) of these features remains problematic.

Structures: A few structural features were identified, although the identification of actual building plans was not always possible. Moreover, the pottery from these contexts added little to the dating or provided much in the way of evidence to demonstrate the contemporaneity of the features. The amounts of pottery recovered were variable, often none or just a few sherds, so that close dating was rarely possible. The rectangular building, P10, had pottery in just five contexts and the small amount present appeared to confirm an early 1st century AD date. Similarly, the possible structure, P15, yielded very

little pottery and this is inconclusive for dating purposes. The contexts associated with circular building, P11, contained no pottery. Various miscellaneous postholes produced small amounts of pottery which were poorly dated and therefore of little use in providing evidence for cohesive groupings.

Pits: Some of the best assemblages come from the Late Iron Age pits; twenty-one survived later activity and sixteen are dated by the pottery they contained. Five groups have been selected for publication, two of which (8525 and 8786) produced handmade and sand-tempered vessels which will enable research into the Middle/Late Iron Age transition. Pit 8525 is cut by ditch P8 which also has probable transitional forms in several contexts. Also to be published as a group are pits 19104 and 19159, along with the ditch/trench feature (P9), which cuts 19159 and is cut by 19104. There is a progression from handmade forms through to Gaulish imports in their assemblages.

The early Roman pits are less well-dated; their contexts contained more in the way of bodysherds and in two cases the assemblages were mixed. Only one pit has been selected for publication, although there are fourteen in the group, and this contained mostly LIA material. Three out of the nine mid-late Roman pits have been selected, dating from the late 3rd to the early/mid 4th centuries. Pit 19006 has an odd collection of pottery - at least nine different bases, some whole, and eight different rims were retrieved, but very few small or bodysherds. Whether this indicates selective deposition or selective excavation is hard to determine.

The late Roman pits all contain residual material to a greater or lesser degree, and most of the assemblages are broken and abraded, especially those dating to the late 4th century+. One group of these pits to the west of Area P was associated with postholes, seemingly of the same date. Some features contained Saxon pottery and research is possible into the Roman/Saxon transitional period. Unfortunately, because of the broken nature of the pottery, only one context, 8505, has been selected for publication; this dates to the mid/late 4th century.

There was a large feature (P22) in the north-east of the area, the function of which remains obscure but thought to be a quarry or an odd replacement of an earlier boundary ditch. The pottery shows a chronological progression upwards but much of the assemblage is broken and abraded, including that in the latest contexts. The pit could have been infilled at any time between the 1st and 3rd centuries, possibly later. A contribution by the assemblage in this feature into the proposed study of residuality, context formation processes and rubbish disposal patterns is feasible.

Well: Only one well was identified; approximately 1m. of deposits were excavated because of ground water. No firm date for its construction could be ascertained but a small amount of 1st/early 2nd century pottery was recovered from a context likely to represent a component of the construction phase. The disuse fills are dated to the early/mid 3rd century with residual pottery in the upper fills, and an overlying layer represents final accumulation into the 4th century. The well cuts ditch P9.

Fabrics: The bulk of the pottery is locally made; grog-tempered fabrics dominate Late Iron Age contexts and black-surfaced and greywares the Roman contexts. There is little imported ware throughout all periods, most occurs in Late Iron Age contexts. The main imports for this period appear to be mainly *terra nigra*, *terra rubra* and Central Gaulish micaceous wares. Two features contain *terra rubra* but no *terra nigra*, ditch P3 and pit 19104, although the TR in 19104 is associated with micaceous *terra nigra* which is also an earlier fabric. There is potential for the refining of the chronology for the contexts containing these Late Iron Age imports.

Conversely, very little pottery, apart from samian, is imported from the Continent during the Roman period; most of the fineware comes from the Nene Valley industry, plus a small amount of red colour-coated ware from Oxford. There are just ten examples of East Gaulish (Rhenish) ware beakers and only one Central Gaulish. One sherd of East Gaulish ware (context 8737) bears a white-painted “S” and comes from a “motto” beaker. There is also a beaker sherd from the Lower Rhineland.

Forms: There are interesting vessels present in Area P, mostly from Late Iron Age contexts, and there are new forms for publication which will augment the proposed Essex typology. Otherwise, most forms are utilitarian; jars, beakers, bowls and dishes are numerous. Mortaria appear in twenty-one contexts; most are locally-produced Colchester products but there are some from Oxford in both white fabrics and the later red colour-coat. Flagons are rare but are from more varied sources. Forms of interest include two fragments from strainer-bowls and the rimsherd from a cauldron, which is in storage jar fabric, rather than the customary shell-tempered ware.

Residuality: An opportunity for research into the nature of residuality and context formation processes presents itself, with obviously residual pottery in the late Roman pits and postholes and the upper fills of the well. The contexts in the large feature, P22, could represent infill over a period of time or redeposition at a later date. It was noted in the assessment report (CRW, section 3.23.1.4) that later features did not necessarily contain much of the earliest material in their fills and that seems to be the case for Area P, eg. the residual pottery in the late Roman pits is mainly mid Roman. There is evidence that prehistoric pottery is residual in some LIA features, for instance ditch P8.

Quantified groups: Twenty-four contexts (8502, 8505, 8519, 8521, 8526, 8527, 8596, 8723, 8766, 8785, 8802, 8830, 8890, 8957, 8967, 19105, 19109, 19110, 19111, 19116, 19145, 19150, 19160 and 19161) were selected for study by Eves and of those 16 were considered worthy of publication. The intercutting pit and ?ditch complex (pits 19104, 19159, and ditch segments 19115/19144) has been selected for publication as a group with a sequence running from the MIA-LIA through to early Roman, although none of the features was excavated beyond the water-table. Other pits are useful for the transitional Middle/Late Iron Age period and the pottery in some later pits will contribute to the defining of the transition from late Roman into Saxon, although the latest pottery groups are much broken and abraded. This may indicate different depositional processes in the late Roman period compared to the early.