

Area E - LPRIA & Roman pottery Summary By Anne Thompson

Introduction: A total of 299 contexts were recorded, of which 109 (excluding unstratified and cleaning layers) contained pottery. The total sherd count was 8,491, weighing 116.1 kg. The Area occupies a strip between Areas D and F and shares some ditch features with Area D in particular. The main feature types are:

- (a) ditches and gullies, dated to the LIA, early Roman and Latest Roman periods only;
- (b) pits, which account for the greatest amount of pottery, with pottery dates from possible 1st century BC through to Latest Roman, AD360+.
- (c) miscellaneous features, including possible postholes, one LIA cremation pit, one mid-Roman well, and one inhumation.

The standards of recording vary. The pottery dating evidence is good for quite a number of features but less so for others. There are a few useful stratigraphic sequences though in the main the dating depends on artefacts. Leaving aside the presence of residual prehistoric material the pottery covers all periods from the LIA to late 4th century. The LIA well represented, although there is a fairly even representation of other periods. In most cases it is the disuse horizons of a feature which have the best-dated pottery, especially in the case of ditches.

Landscape: The key early features are two parallel ditch systems, Groups E17 and E15 running N-S. It is noted that they are parallel with ditch D17 in Area D, and that the landscape was also marked by numerous pits within these systems. The earliest ditch appears to be E17 (8096/8147/8205). Pottery evidence was able to confirm its integrity as a feature, and suggests a possible 1st century BC date. The other parallel ditches (Group E15) have a stratigraphic sequence, 8212 being earliest, then 8210, both of which contain no pottery, and finally ditch 8208, the recut of 8210. 8208 has pottery reliably dating it to the LIA, to a later LIA phase than ditch E17, but still probably pre-Conquest. Still in the LIA, Ditch E21 (8244/9273) ran ENE/WSW, abutting Ditch F50 which is stratigraphically later than E17; the pottery confirms this, being well-dated to the mid-1st century AD. The Group E3 curving ditches 8085/8103/8185 are, however, incompletely excavated and poorly dated by the pottery; they were probably in-filled in the early Roman period. The N-S gully, Group E4, has a date for its disuse in the mid- to late 2nd century from the pottery evidence, which was also able to confirm its integrity as a feature. Area E appears to have had no further land divisions in the Roman period until the latest ditch/gully, 8066/8088 (Group E2), running W-E, whose disuse is dated to the late 4th century+.

Structures: There are several series of likely postholes and slots, but no particular structures have been identified. Only one posthole had a post-pipe recorded, and in general it is not possible to recognise whether the pottery, where present, dates the construction, use, repair or demolition of any possible structure. These features contained very few sherds, and only general dates could usually be assigned. The best dating evidence came from Group E16, which was associated with LIA and early Roman material. However there was no meaningful pattern to the features. One of the slots, 8159, may have a 1st century BC date although it cuts the earliest ditch, E17, and some of this may be residual.

Cremation: Pit 8177 (E5) was the only cremation pit in Area E, and the only feature underneath the brickearth layer (with the possible exception of Group E15). Pit 8155 seems to have comprised a single cremation in one vessel, with three ancillary vessels standing next to it. The suggested date

is early to mid-1st century AD for the pit, which makes it roughly contemporary with the occupation features, the early ditches and numerous pits.

Well: Feature 8188 (E1) was a timber-lined well with 6 successive contexts producing a large group of pottery. Its in-filling was well-dated to the late 2nd/early 3rd centuries. This was quite in keeping with the dendrochronology date of AD159 for the well timbers.

Pits: Area E is well represented with pits in all periods, a total of 51, more numerous than the ditches. They produced the largest assemblages in the Area, and typically contain considerably more pottery than the ditches. Pits are identified within all the ceramic phases, with some well-dated pits in each, which have contributed to a refinement of the dating.

Pit/Possible SFB: sub-rectangular Pit10782 (E23) was seen as a possible SFB from the presence in its first fill of ?Saxon pottery. However the feature produced a large cohesive pottery group in good condition giving a late 2nd/mid/3rd century date for its in-filling, and nothing of later date; a case can therefore be made for it being a Roman feature. The inhumation E24 which has a similar date, was apparently placed opportunistically into its slump-hollow. (NB the Saxon pottery report is awaited and may throw light on the interpretation).

Inhumation: the ill-defined grave 10776 cut into 10782 held an articulated prone human skeleton.. The pottery, dating to the 3rd century, does not appear to have been deliberately deposited and there were no grave goods.

Brickearth: No pottery was recovered from the brickearths (E6), probably reworked, which overlay ?natural gravel, over most of the Area. The only features underlying or cutting it were the cremation E5, and possibly ditch E15.

Summary of Fabrics:

A fairly wide range of fabrics was represented, by far the greatest quantities being locally made sandy greywares, followed by LIA grog-tempered wares and black-surfaced wares. There were imports in very small amounts, with some notable fabrics absent.

LIA period: Gallo-Belgic wares were not at all common in Area E. TR occurs in pits 8019, 8026 and 8282; TN in pits 8012 and 8026. North Gaulish *Cam* 113 beakers and Central Gaulish fine cream slipped wares also occur. There was no Central Gaulish micaceous ware. A sandy fabric, possibly MIA/LIA transitional, was present in a few features only.

The early Roman period produced black-surfaced wares, sandy grey wares, with some North Kent grey wares. Colchester buff fabrics, occasional Verulamium white wares and white or cream slipped wares occur.

In the Mid-Roman period Colchester colour-coat fabrics were added. The only Rhenish wares were in Well 8188 (from Central Gaul) and pit 8080 (from East Gaul). In the Late Roman features Rettendon wares were sometimes found from c.AD260, Nene Valley colour-coat fabrics are quite frequent, with a small quantity of BB1. In the Latest Roman period (late 4th century) Late shell-tempered wares are the most significant for dating, together with Oxfordshire oxidised wares.

Summary of forms:

Open forms: the AD 1st century platters, mostly *Cam* 2, 24 and 32, were replaced in the Mid-Roman period by B2-B4 dishes and in the Late Roman period flanged B5 and B6 dishes were added. Bowls were not frequent, limited to form C16 in the early Roman period and the flanged C8 in the Latest Roman. Bowl-jars E2 and E5 occur from the mid-Roman period in small quantity. There is one grog-tempered LIA strainer-bowl (form M1) in pit 8272.

Closed forms: by far the most frequent and varied vessels throughout Area E were jars, including storage vessels. The LIA cremation vessels in group 5 had affinities of form are with Hertfordshire (King Harry Lane and Baldock). Fragments of similar jars occur among the pit groups and were not limited to funerary use. Despite the evident use of lid-seated jars (mostly form G5), lids were very infrequently recognised, most of them in Area E being LIA. The LIA contexts had occasional *Cam* 113 butt beakers with their grog-tempered imitations and carinated cups. A variety of fine beakers in COLC, NVC and grey wares probably performed the same functions from the 2nd century. The presence of mortaria as an indication of Roman methods of food preparation around Area E is worth consideration. They are not frequent but more were found than expected; 45 in 19 contexts. Of those identified, twenty were of Colchester fabric; one ?Lower German/Colchester; one Hadham; two Nene Valley, one Mancetter/Hartshill, one East Anglian and seven from the Oxfordshire industry. The D1 and D2 forms in the 1st-2nd centuries, D11 and D13 in the 2nd century and D12 in the late Roman period were the most frequent.

Quantified groups: of the 28 contexts selected for quantification by EVE's, 13 are possible candidates for publication. The cremation E5 is of intrinsic interest and in good condition. There are useful LIA and Early Roman pits, 8014, 8026 and 8277 (E8), 8265, 8277 and 10054 (E15). The well E1 (8188) provides a useful mid-Roman group. Large late pottery groups are represented in group E11 (10000, 10001 and 10028).

In summary: apart from a few stratigraphic sequences it is largely artefact evidence which is relied upon for dating. This is an area dominated by pitting though with some ditch sequences and very tentative structural features. The pottery evidence confirms the integrity and date of the early ditches as being LIA and Early Roman. Then for the 3rd to mid-4th centuries AD there is little activity associated with ditches. There is one ditch/gully with pottery evidence for its disuse in the late 4th century+. There is very tentative evidence for structures in the LIA/Early Roman period. The fairly well dated evidence for funerary activity consists of the early to mid-1st century cremation and the mid-3rd century inhumation. The Well has good pottery evidence for a sequence of in-filling from the late 2nd to early 3rd centuries AD. There is pitting activity in all periods. The size of pits and their assemblages vary considerably but there are well-dated pits in all periods. Some useful groups were identified on which to base further study.