

## Early Romano-British Settlement at Brinklow, Milton Keynes

Evidence for early Romano-British settlement was identified during salvage survey and limited excavation works following topsoil stripping for development at Brinklow (CAS: 6102; SP 89953768), in April 1995.

The site lies at 70m OD, upon Oxford Clay, with a thin patchy covering of Boulder Clay, on the north-facing slope of Kents Hill, about 1km to the east of the River Ouzel, a tributary of the River Great Ouze (BRGS 1971; Horton *et al.* 1974, 28-35, 49-50). Today this area is within the angle created by Tongwell Street (V11) and Brudenell Drive (to the north of H8), within the new town of Milton Keynes. The development area (over 12000m<sup>2</sup>), was cleared in stages by machine, during which an amateur metal-detector survey recovered a gold 'linear' type stater of Cunobelin, minted AD 10-20 (Arsdell 1989, 396-398) and also identified the presence of archaeological deposits. The subsequent archaeological salvage operation took place over one day and included a detailed survey of apparent features and a limited investigation of a few (002-008). Archaeological visibility was inconsistent across the site and generally poor, thus limiting the reliability of the results. Almost 0.3m of topsoil and a further 0.2m of a loamy clay subsoil had previously been removed over the entire area.

The archaeological activity was concentrated in the central and southern areas of the site. Ditches to the north and east (006 and 002) of the settlement may have formed a rectilinear enclosure and an eastern entrance was suggested by the presence of a ditch terminal. No limits to the settlement could be established with confidence along the south or west sides. A linear spread of soil (007) recorded along the western side is not believed to be the return of the enclosure ditch. Ditches belonging to former field boundaries of probable medieval or later date were also recorded. The linear

soil spread followed a parallel course to one of these ditches and may therefore date to the same phase of activity. The area to the north and east of the enclosure was devoid of activity, whilst the area to the southeast of the former field boundaries had a sparse feature distribution, perhaps due to the incomplete nature of the stripping, at the time of the archaeological investigations.

Occupation features included over twenty postholes or small pits, and thirteen large pits. Two clusters of possible postholes were observed: a small arc possibly forming a circular structure (10m in diameter) at the northern centre of the site; and two groups possibly forming two contiguous rectangular buildings at the east side of the site. In addition, the large pits (up to 3m in diameter) also displayed a bi-focal spatial distribution; an eastern group to the west of the rectangular buildings and a northern group to the west of the circular structure. The gold stater was recovered from a small pit (008) associated with the eastern pit group. An apparently isolated pit was also recorded over 30m to the south, in the vicinity of a small patch of burning.

The limited excavations recovered a minimal number of artefacts, mostly pottery (29 sherds) and some animal bone. The overall impression of the pottery assemblage is that it is of Early Romano-British type with 'Belgic' affinities, and is provisionally dated to the first century AD. The eastern arm of the possible enclosure ditch contained this pottery (including a cordon-impressed rim) and a small amount of fired clay. Further sherds of a similar type came from both large pit groups, and an additional quantity of unstratified material (including 'Belgic'-type brick) was not inconsistent with a date in the first century AD for the settlement. This date also accords with the coin of Cunobelin. A small number of worked flints and burnt flints suggest prehistoric activity at the site, prior to the Romano-British settlement.

In summary, the evidence suggests the presence of a single phase, enclosed settlement, of possible (low) farm

status and dating to the first century AD.

This report and two plans form the only record of the site, for which no context sheets were compiled. The finds and drawings are currently held by Buckinghamshire County Museum, Halton, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

## References

Arsdell, R.D.Van, 1989 *Celtic Coinage of Britain*, 393-427.

British Regional Geological Survey, 1971. *Milton Keynes; Solid and Drift*. Sheet SP83 and parts of SP73, 74, 84, 93 and 94. Scale 1:2500.

Horton, A., Shephard-Thorn, E.R. and Thurrell, R.G., 1974. *The Geology of the New Town of Milton Keynes*. NERC 74/16.