

# Recent work in Brentford: excavations and observations 1974-82

ALISON PARNUM  
JONATHAN COTTON

A SERIES OF excavations conducted in advance of the redevelopment of the centre of Brentford during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Fig 1, Nos 1-12) had revealed traces of a small Romano-British settlement straggling along the line of the modern High Street,<sup>1</sup> without convincingly locating the main London to Silchester road (Margary Route 4a)<sup>2</sup> on which it was thought to lie. When, therefore, post-excavation work on the earlier series of sites was nearing completion, in the summer of 1974, and the West London Archaeological Field Group found itself once more in a position to undertake large-scale excavation in the town, two further sites were selected in the central development area (Fig 1, Nos 13 and 14) in an attempt to pinpoint the position of the elusive road, and to better define the nature and extent of the settlement alongside it. This work, which forms the subject of the first part of the present article, also had the additional advantage of providing another opportunity to locate traces of prehistoric and Saxon occupation, which a combination of chance finds

and previous excavations had suggested were present in the vicinity.<sup>3</sup> The second part of the article contains a summary of the results of a watching brief carried out during the construction of a new supermarket in the same area in 1982, while a concluding section attempts to draw together some of the main points arising from the work.<sup>4</sup>

## The excavations of 1974-5 and 1977

Brentford is situated on the outside of a large meander in the west London Thames, at the point where the river Brent joins the main stream. Lying between +7 and +10m O.D., the NE/SW alignment of the High Street follows the edge of a southward-sloping ledge of free-draining yellow-brown brickearth which rises steeply some 2m from the gravels of the Thames flood plain (Terrace 1). Sites 13 and 14 lay on this brickearth ledge, in the area between the Half Acre and the new County Court on the north side of the High Street (Fig 2).

The westernmost site (Site 13), excavated in 1974-5, comprised an area of c. 450m<sup>2</sup> (540 sq yds) in the back garden of a public house known as 'The Feathers', which was then used by the WLAFG as a processing centre. The second site (Site 14), 70m (77 yds) distant, dug three years later in 1977, and something over 200m<sup>2</sup> (240 sq yds) in extent, lay between Roy Canham's Site 9, excavated in 1970-1,<sup>5</sup> and the County Court. Both sites are now covered by the new International Supermarket and its car park (see below).

The present account deals only with the prehistoric and Roman material, for which a final report is now in preparation; an 18th century clay pipe kiln discovered on Site 14 has already been published elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> The most complete stratigraphic sequence was recovered on Site 13 in 1974-75 and has enabled a broad framework of four chronological 'horizons' to be established for the

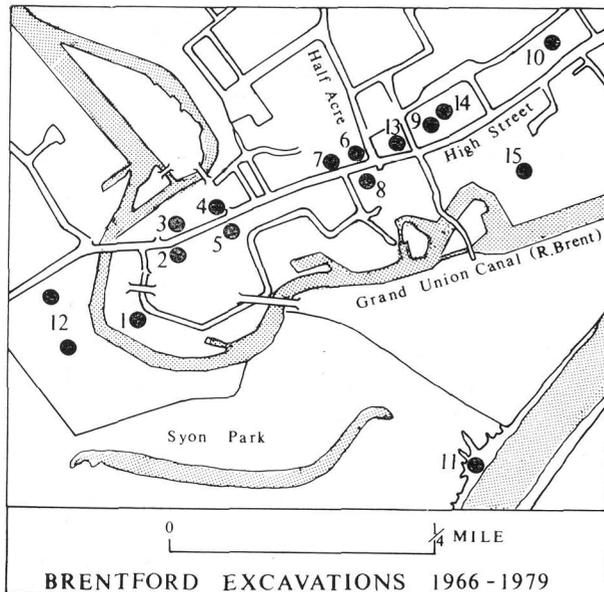


Fig. 1: Brentford Excavations 1966 - 1979 : location of sites.

1. A. J. Laws 'Excavations at Northumberland Wharf, Brentford' *TLAMAS* 27 (1976), 179-205; R. Canham *2000 Years of Brentford* 1978.
2. I. D. Margary *Roman roads in Britain* 1967.
3. R. A. Smith 'Specimens from the Layton Collection in Brentford Public Library' *Archaeologia* 69 (1920), 1-30; G. F. Lawrence 'Antiquities from the Middle

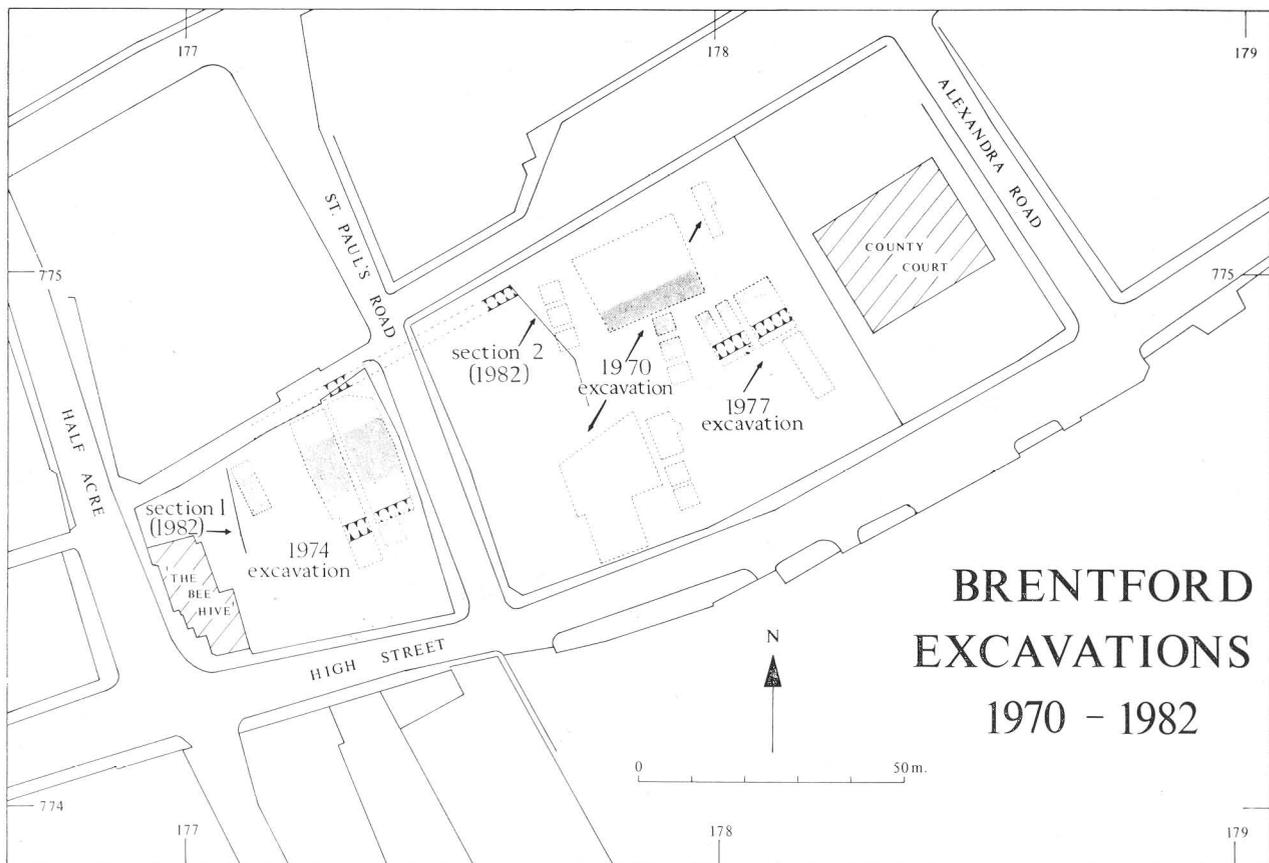


Fig. 2: Area plan of sites excavated in 1974/75 (Site 13), 1977 (Site 14), and 1982 (Sections 1 and 2) showing a diagrammatic representation of the early road and its side ditches.

Roman period in the eastern part of the town. With the exception of Horizon II, each horizon is demarcated by the construction or remodelling of a gravel road surface, and is sub-divided into a number of phases. Here, discussion centres on the better preserved evidence from Site 13, supplemented where necessary by that later recovered from Site 14. Dating for the various horizons rests on provisional analyses of the coins, mortaria, samian, Alice Holt and Oxford wares.

#### Prehistoric

A considerable amount of struck flint and fragmentary, heavily flint-tempered pottery was recovered from later contexts and from the uppermost 30cms (12in) of a well-rooted sandy grey-

brown brickearth layer underlying the earliest Roman levels on both sites. This, in turn, overlay a sterile orange brickearth resting directly on the flood plain gravels. Analysis of the brickearth layers suggests a water-laid rather than wind-blown origin for both.<sup>7</sup>

The struck flint from the top of the upper layer consists of debitage referable to both Mesolithic and Neolithic flint-working techniques, and includes a relatively high number of one and two platform cores, core-tablets and core-rejuvenating flakes. Diagnostic artefacts are few by comparison and comprise a small series of microliths of obliquely-blunted and rod forms, together with a single fragment of a polished flint axe. Scrapers, usually a

- Thames' *Archaeol J* 86 (1929), 69 - 98; Canham *op.cit.*
4. Site 15, excavated in 1979 south of the High Street, provided merely a geological section through a series of riverine deposits, and is therefore not considered further here.
  5. Canham *ibid.*, 24 - 31.

6. A. J. Laws and A. Oswald 'The Kiln of William Heath, eighteenth century Brentford Pipemaker' in P. Davey (ed) *The Archaeology of the Clay tobacco Pipe VI : Pipes and Kilns in the London Region BAR 97* (1981), 15 - 65.
7. Dr. D. T. John (Geography Dept., Kingston Polytechnic) *pers. comm.*

common artefact-type on settlement sites, are noticeably scarce. The pottery meanwhile is too fragmented to be securely identified, although several possibly Neolithic and Bronze Age-type fabrics appear to be present.

### Roman

#### Horizon I (c. A.D. 43-90)

With two notable exceptions, all contexts relating to Horizon I can be associated with the construction and maintenance of the early road running west from London.

#### Phase I

Two small features on Site 14, which contained pottery of probably Conquest date (Fig. 3)<sup>8</sup>, are the earliest Roman contexts yet excavated in the town. The first consisted of a narrow NS gully dug into the sandy grey-brown brickearth, and later cut by the large Phase III ditch (see below). The second lay some 3m (10 ft) to the east and consisted of a black occupation spread resting immediately on the brickearth. Both features were sealed beneath a pebble surface attributable to Phase II (see below), although unfortunately neither could be stratigraphically related to the earliest road found on Site 13. This consisted of a linear metalled surface orientated NE/SW, which had been laid down over a cambered foundation of sterile, redeposited brickearth c. 0.5m thick. The gravel surface was only 6m (20 ft) in width, and dipped away to both north and south. There was no sign of a similar surface on Site 14, 70m (77 yards) away, although part of its brickearth foundation was encountered, a little to the north of the two Conquest-phase features mentioned above.

#### Phase II

Following the construction of this early road, it was apparently quickly sealed by a second dumped brickearth layer supporting a more substantial spread of gravel some 12m (39ft) in width. This second road surface was flanked, both to north and south, by a contemporary gravel surface or hard-standing one pebble thick, which had been trodden into the natural brickearth alongside the road, and which had also effectively sealed the two early features on Site 14.

#### Phase III

Cutting through this flanking pebble surface was a large ditch found running parallel to the southern edge of the Phase II road on both Sites 13 and 14.

A possibly contemporary northern ditch was located during site-watching in 1982 (see below). The southern ditch had a shallow V-section profile c. 2.25m (7ft) in width and 1m (3ft 3in) deep (Fig 4). Its primary silt contained samian and coarse wares of Neronian date. The main fill, consistent on both sites, was composed of almost pure yellow brick-earth suggesting a purposeful backfilling. Pottery and a coin of Vespasian indicate a Flavian date for this operation.

#### Horizon II (c. A.D. 90-170)

Two successive phases of occupation were evident sealing the back-filled southern roadside ditch and resting above the Horizon I Phase II gravel surface on either side of the road itself.

#### Phase I

Settlement is represented by clay patches surviving from floors or possibly collapsed clay walls, post holes and fragments of daub, which point to the existence of flimsy timber-framed structures flanking the road. As on Site 9, the distribution of contemporary rubbish pits is probably the best guide to the spacing and density of the buildings.<sup>9</sup> Although undated, a substantial rectilinear pad of rammed gravel 5 x 2m (16 x 6½ft) in extent, with post holes set around its outer edge, and presumably representing a small, gravel-floored structure, may also belong here, as it overlies the backfilled southern roadside ditch on Site 14.

The Phase I settlement appears to have been destroyed by fire in the Hadrianic period, as the deposits are associated with considerable traces of burning. A substantial drop in samian in the decades around A.D. 120 to 140 probably reflects the wider cessation of samian supply noted recently for this period.<sup>10</sup>

#### Phase II

Subsequent to the destruction of the Phase I settlement, a number of features indicated renewed occupation of the area around the middle of the second century. Structural remains in the form of beam slots belong to this phase, although, as in Phase I (with the exception of the possible gravel-floored building), no complete ground plans were recovered. The samian supply appears to recover around A.D. 150, and the range of coarse wares includes poppy beakers reminiscent of Highgate Wood Phase IV,<sup>11</sup> bowls with roller-stamped deco-

8. Dr. P. Tyers *pers. comm.*

9. Canham *op.cit.*, 148.

10. G. Marsh 'London's samian supply and its relationship to the development of the Gallic samian industry' in A. C. and A. S. Anderson (eds.) *Roman Pottery Research in Britain and North-West Europe* BAR S 123 (1982), 173 - 238.

11. A. E. Brown and H. L. Sheldon 'Highgate Wood' : the pottery and its production' *London Archaeol* 2 (9) (1974), 230 - 231.

12. W. Rodwell 'Stamp-decorated pottery of the early Roman period in eastern England' in P. Arthur and G. Marsh (eds) *Early Fine Wares in Roman Britain* BAR 57 (1978), 225 - 292.

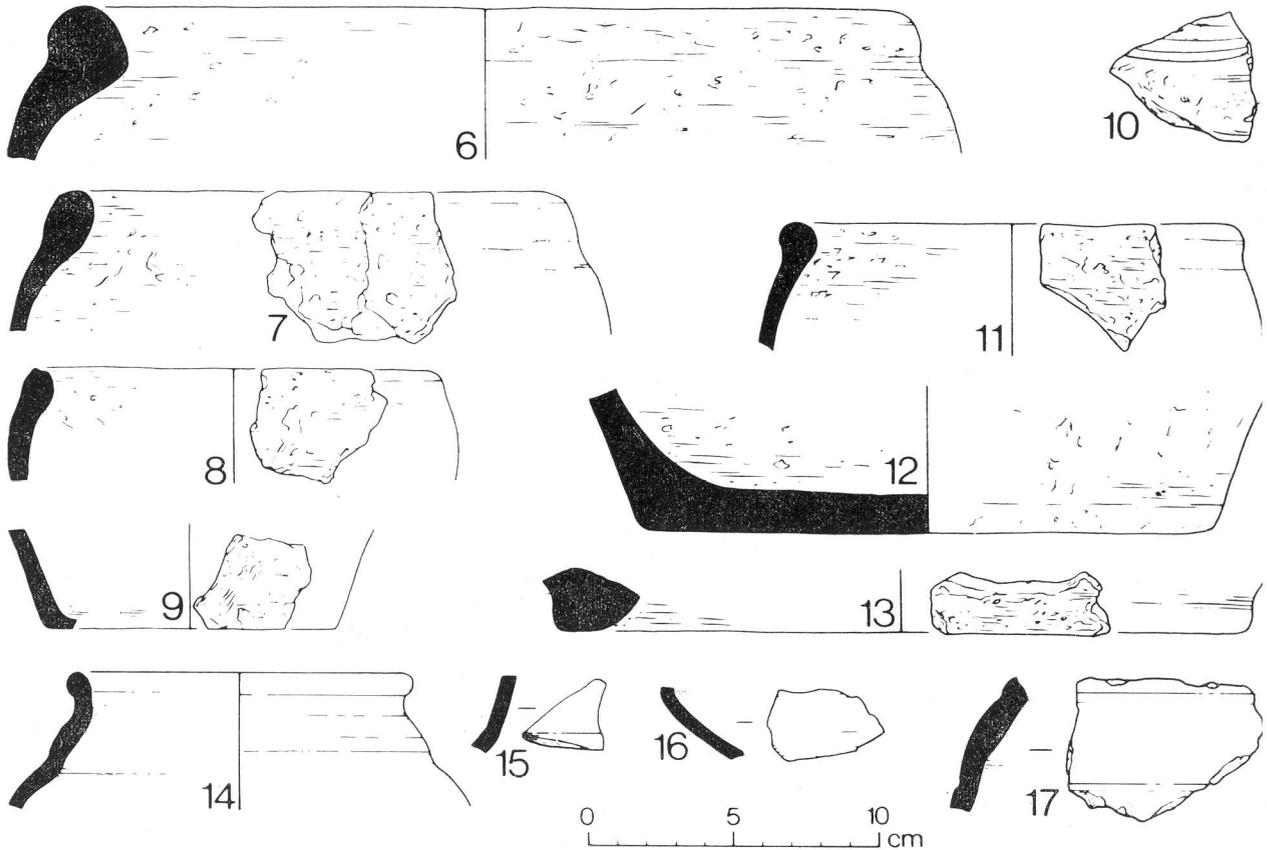


Fig. 3: Conquest period pottery from Site 14.  
(P. Tyers)

ration,<sup>12</sup> reeded rim bowls and mortaria. This phase of occupation was, however, short-lived and again apparently destroyed by fire *c.* A.D. 170.

#### Horizon III (mid-late 3rd century)

##### Phase I

Following the Antonine fire there appears to have been a considerable gap in the occupation until the middle years of the 3rd century. The area was then apparently levelled up with a thin layer of gritty yellow-brown soil and a new gravel surface laid down on either side of the existing road.

##### Phase II

Resting on this gravel were patches of clay containing flecks of fine white mortar; several pits and post holes suggested that the occupation was similar in nature to that destroyed in the Antonine fire. The features were associated with a destruction layer which included widespread traces of burning, and it therefore seems likely that this phase of settlement met the same fate as its predecessors. A date well into the second half of the 3rd century is

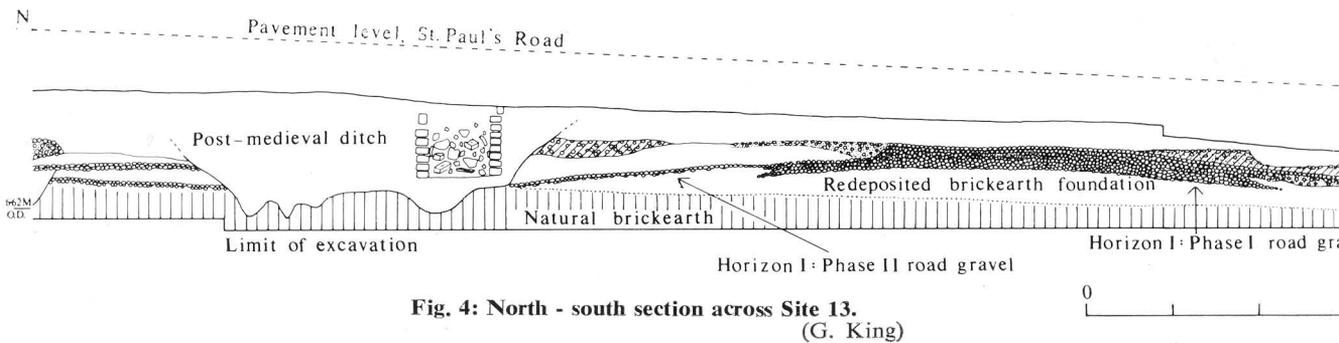
indicated for this by finds which include sherds of colour-coated Oxford wares and Alice Holt products.

#### Horizon IV (late 3rd-4th century)

A southerly shift in the road alignment is the most notable feature of this period, with a resultant encroachment of settlement onto the former road surface immediately to the north.

##### Phase I

After the destruction of the final phase of Horizon III occupation on the south side of the road, the area was levelled up with a dump of gritty yellow soil, 0.5m (1ft 8in) thick in places, which provided the foundation for a further substantial rammed gravel surface (Fig 8). The dumped layer contained much residual material in addition to Alice Holt products dated A.D. 270+ and mortaria dated A.D. 250-350. On balance, a very late 3rd or early 4th century date would therefore appear likely for this episode. That the latest gravel surface superseded the former road lying to the north is confirmed by



**Fig. 4: North - south section across Site 13.**

(G. King)

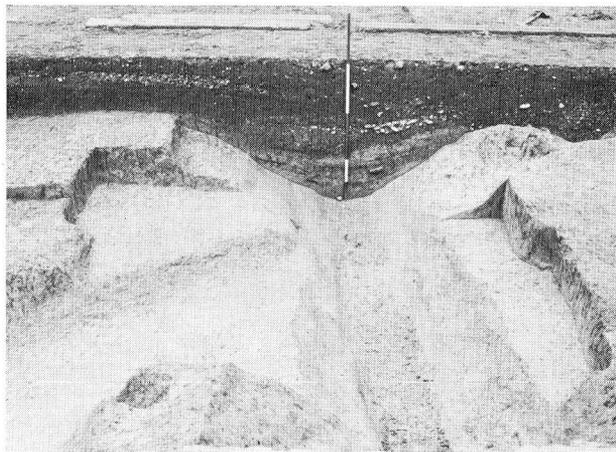
a sequence of pits and post holes cutting the earlier surface. The earliest of these features dates to A.D. 270+, while another produced a little-worn coin dated between A.D. 330-335.

#### Phase II

The latest surviving Roman level consisted of a much-disturbed dark soil which sealed the Horizon IV Phase I surface. On Site 13 this layer produced a total of 13 coins, mostly of late 3rd or early 4th century date, although the latest, a coin of the House of Valentinian, is dated A.D. 364-378. Whilst fragmentary, traces of possible structures were present in this deposit in the form of further clay patches, and these may relate to a small series of features cutting the Horizon IV Phase I road. There was, unfortunately, no sign of the hoped-for Saxon occupation on either site.

#### The 1982 watching brief

Following the series of excavations carried out in the 1970s on the northern side of Brentford High Street between 'The Beehive' public house on the Half Acre and the new County Court (Fig 2), the



**Fig. 5: The southern road ditch on Site 13 looking east, showing the brickearth backfilling and subsequent gravel surfaces.**

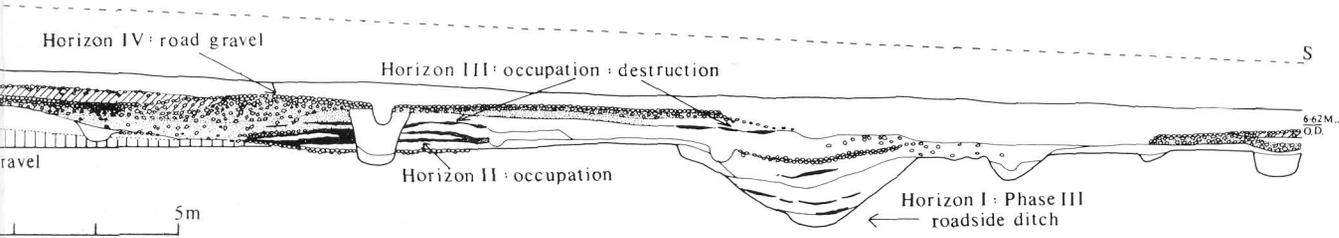
(Photo: G. King)

construction of a new International Supermarket in the same area allowed additional observations to be made during May and June 1982. The initial phase of this development involved the closure of St Paul's Road, and the subsequent removal of all the archaeological deposits overlying the natural clay-silts ('brickearths') and river gravels at the western end of the site. Facilities provided by the contractors, Norwest Holst Construction Limited, during the course of this latter operation enabled measured drawings to be made of two sections cut right across the Roman road found previously, and allowed the recovery of small groups of datable material from contexts alongside and beneath it.

#### Section 1

The first of the two recorded sections, 16m (52ft) in length, oriented roughly NS and situated some 9m (30ft) to the east of 'The Beehive' (Fig 2), revealed a complex sequence of interleaved gravel and brickearth spreads similar to, if somewhat more disturbed than that found c. 15m (50ft) further east in 1974-5. Stratigraphically, the earliest road phase was represented by a neatly-cambered rammed gravel layer 4m (13ft) wide and 10-15cms (4-6in) thick laid on an apparently 'scraped-up' foundation of sandy brickearth (see Horizon I Phase I above). This appeared to have been dumped directly onto a layer of sandy, greyish-brown brickearth 50-60cms (20-24in) thick, whose upper 20cms (8in) or so contained a number of feather-sharp flint artefacts and small sherds of heavily flint-tempered pottery.

In its second phase, the road seems to have shifted slightly to the south with the addition of a second, more substantial but less compact gravel layer which sealed the earlier metalling beneath its northern edge (see Horizon I Phase II above). Neither the full width of this second phase surface nor the position of any accompanying roadside ditches could be established due to later disturbances. Thereafter several successive partial re-surfacings appear to have taken place, although their localised nature on the section makes them



more difficult to correlate with the sequence obtained previously.

Later phases of activity are represented by a series of medieval pits and scoops which, together with a large early post-medieval ditch and two 18th/19th century brick outhouses, had been cut into the accreted Roman gravel surfaces.

Section 2

The second section, 25m (80ft) in length, oriented roughly NS, and situated some 70m (77yds) further east in an area trenched during 1970-1,<sup>13</sup> was much disturbed, and revealed only isolated patches of gravel metalling similar to those uncovered during this earlier work. However, the stratigraphy at either end of the section was much better preserved, and the profiles of two substantial ditches 21m (68ft) apart survived intact.

Considerable difficulty surrounds the interpretation of these latter features as stratigraphically contemporary roadside ditches — not least the removal of crucial deposits between them. However, the shallow V-section of the southern ditch is somewhat similar to that of the Horizon I Phase III ditch located in 1974-5 and again in 1977 on the south side of the road, while the establishment of the alignment of the northern ditch at various points along the perimeter of the supermarket site (Fig 2), suggests that it too was originally conceived as a linear feature running parallel to the road.

No datable material was recovered from the southern ditch, although if it can be equated with the two stretches found earlier, it is likely to have silted up (or been filled up) by the Flavian period. The evidence from the section suggests that it had cut through an earlier gravel surface lying to the south (Horizon I Phase II?) and was overlain by two subsequent gravel spreads, the later of which may correlate with the latest gravel surface recorded previously (i.e. Horizon IV Phase I).

Unlike the southern ditch, which had been dug

into brickearth, the northern ditch, lying further up the natural ground-slope, had cut through the brickearth and some 86cms (2ft 10in) into an outcrop of fine orange-yellow gravel. It is tempting to see this as a quarry ditch providing gravel for an early road surface, although quite which one is stratigraphically unclear. The ditch itself produced no dating evidence, although a layer sealing the stabilised backfill contained a small group of pottery including conjoining sherds of samian Drag. form 30 dated between A.D. 65 and 85.<sup>14</sup>

Subsequently, an attempt seems to have been made to re-establish the line of the ditch a metre or so to the south, as a second ditch with a shallow

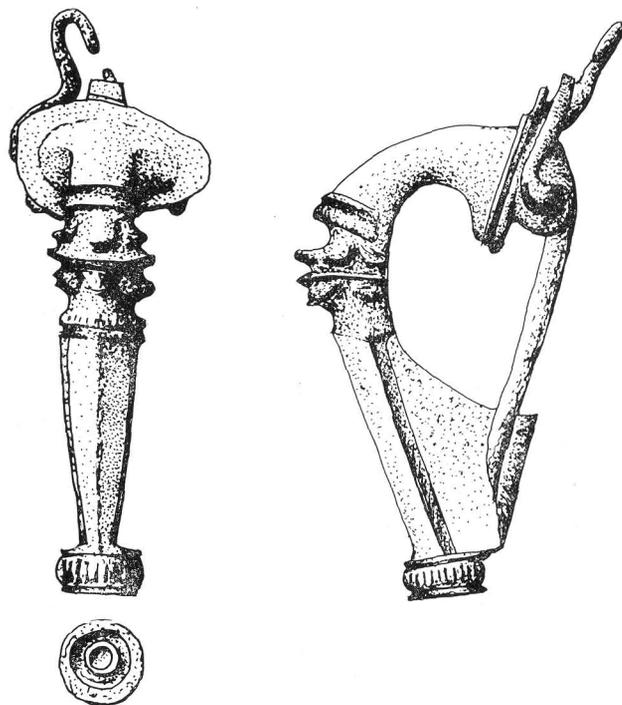


Fig. 6: Bronze trumpet brooch from Horizon IV. Scale 1 1/3 times actual size

(M. Cotton)

13. Canham *op.cit.*, 24-25, Trenches C1 - CIII.

14. G. Marsh, *pers. comm.*

V-section profile had been cut into its southern edge. The homogenous fill of the second ditch contained pottery of generally later 1st century date, and the possibility exists that it relates to settlement activity alongside the road rather than to the road itself.

Where not disturbed, later phases of activity consisted of a series of soil layers, suggesting that much of the area was under cultivation in the post-Roman period. Brick cellars and a backfilled archaeological trench on the other hand reflect the growth and subsequent decline of modern Brentford in the post-medieval centuries.

## Discussion

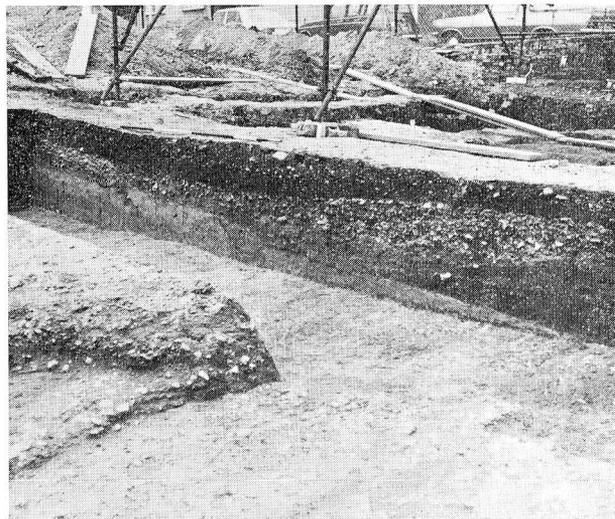
### Prehistoric

One of the initial aims of the Brentford excavations, that of locating substantial traces of later prehistoric activity, remains largely unfulfilled. The well-rooted layer of sandy brickearth containing struck flint and pottery which has been encountered on several sites is difficult to interpret, but presumably represents part of an early soil profile truncated by later activity. Only one small feature, a probably Neolithic gully, has been found to underlie it.<sup>15</sup>

However, internal evidence provided by a preliminary analysis of the flintwork itself, which includes very few 'domestic' artefacts such as scrapers but a high proportion of unworked debitage, suggests that the local river margins were being used primarily for the collection of raw materials and food during the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, rather than as settlement areas in their own right.



**Fig. 7: Horizon III occupation deposits overlying earlier backfilled southern road ditch, looking west.**  
(G. King)



**Fig. 8: Horizon IV road surface overlying earlier roads.**

(G. King)

The profligate use of flint resources here is in marked contrast to the situation further inland on the terraces, where, in the later Neolithic at least, suitable flint was usually worked right down, and the proportion of utilised to non-utilised pieces is somewhat greater.

The virtual absence from the town of material datable to the last two millennia B.C., in spite of numerous finds from the river,<sup>16</sup> has not been contradicted by the recent work. It may well be, as Canham noted,<sup>17</sup> that it was the construction of the Roman road along the edge of the brickearths which first attracted permanent settlement to the area. Alternatively of course, the act of construction may have destroyed the evidence.

### Roman

The Roman roads which converge on London are generally thought to have been laid out in the years immediately following the Conquest.<sup>18</sup> Pottery found beneath the Colchester road at Lefevre Road, Old Ford suggests that it was in use 'soon after the start of the occupation',<sup>19</sup> while the evidence from Southwark points to a date of c. A.D. 50 for the construction of the two major roads aligned on the

15. Canham *op.cit.*, 20 - 21.

16. Smith *loc.cit.*; Lawrence *loc.cit.*

17. Canham *op.cit.*, 148.

18. e.g. R. Merrifield *Roman London* (1969), 30 - 31.

19. H. L. Sheldon 'Excavations at Lefevre Road, Old Ford, E. 3' *TLAMAS* 23 (1971), 44.

20. H. L. Sheldon 'The 1972 - 74 Excavations: their contribution to Southwark's history' in J. Bird *et al* (eds.) *Southwark excavations 1972 - 74 I* (1978), 24 - 27.

Thames crossing south of the river.<sup>20</sup> The construction of the Brentford section of the Silchester road is difficult to date with any precision, however, although the Neronian pottery from the primary silt of the Horizon I Phase III ditch provides a *terminus ante quem* for the two earliest road phases. Had there been a discernible stratigraphic relationship between the Conquest-phase features on Site 14 and the first road surface, a greater degree of precision would perhaps have been possible.

First located in 1974-5 and again in 1982 (Section 1), the width of the earliest road surface (Horizon I Phase I) varies between 4m and 6m (13 ft and 20 ft), and can be compared with a measurement of 3.75m (12 ft 3 in) obtained from a further stretch of the same road excavated in Staines, 10.2 Roman miles to the south-west, in 1977<sup>21</sup>. The line chosen for the road appears to have been first stripped of turf and topsoil, levelled, and a cambered brickearth foundation constructed to receive the rammed gravel surface. The metalling itself, composed of small to medium orange-yellow gravel, is visually similar to the natural gravel cut into by the northern roadside ditch or quarry discovered in 1982, although unfortunately the contemporaneity of the ditch and road could not be established.

Shortly thereafter, and before it had become worn, the early road was extensively remodelled (Horizon I Phase II), attaining a full width of some 12m (40 ft). Subsequently, the V-section ditch belonging to Horizon I Phase III was cut through a contemporary hard-standing to the south. Following the apparently deliberate backfilling of this latter feature in the Flavian period, the area adjacent to the road was released for settlement use.

Unlike Staines, the next major settlement along the Silchester road, with its pre-Flavian clay and timber buildings<sup>22</sup>, no substantial evidence of occupation prior to the Trajanic period has yet been recovered from Brentford, although small amounts of earlier refuse beneath the Phase II hard-standing south of the road and within and overlying the roadside ditches suggest activity of some sort in the vicinity. In view of the town's undoubted strategic position and suggested role of *mutatio*<sup>23</sup> this is somewhat surprising, although clearly early settlement may lie undiscovered on the Brent crossing 500m (550 yds) further west<sup>24</sup>. Once established alongside the road, however, occupation appears to



Fig. 9: Overall view of south-west area of Site 13 after excavation, showing section of road at top of picture, southern roadside ditch in foreground.

(G. King)

have been fairly intensive for close on a century until the latest in a series of fires, in the Antonine period, brought it to a temporary close. As such therefore, this part of the settlement at least seems, on present evidence, to fall into the wider pattern of Flavian/Trajanic expansion and Antonine diminution noted elsewhere<sup>25</sup>.

If the evidence is to be trusted, and it has yet to be confirmed, the break in occupation which followed lasted until the middle years of the 3rd century, although there is nothing to indicate that the road itself fell out of use during this time. This apparent gap in the archaeological record is not confined to Brentford alone, suggesting that wider political, social and economic causes may have to be sought<sup>26</sup>. A short-lived recovery in the settlement's fortunes followed a further remodelling of the existing road surface (Horizon III Phase I),

(continued on p.336)

21. K. Crouch 'New Thoughts on Roman Staines' *London Archaeol* 3 (7) (1978), 180. The early road uncovered on CAD in 1977 cannot, until further analysis is complete, be dated any more precisely than 'pre-Flavian'. K. Crouch *pers. comm.*  
 22. Crouch *op.cit.* 180.  
 23. Laws *loc.cit* 187.

24. However, no such indications have been found during the excavations conducted so far in this area. Canham *op.cit.* Sites 2-4.

25. J. Wachter *The towns of Roman Britain* (1974), 289 ff.; W. Rodwell 'Trinovantian towns and their setting: a case study' in W. Rodwell & T. Rowley (eds.) *Small Towns of Roman Britain BAR* 15 (1975), 93.

since the iron in the latter acts as a flux to bring down the vitrification temperature. White-firing pots would therefore have been more expensive to fire than red-firing ones<sup>19</sup>.

These are probably the reasons why there were large areas of the country in which the use of white slip was extremely limited and in which neither light-firing wares nor totally white-slipped redwares are found. White-slipped redware may be limited by economics to areas bordering those in which white-firing wares were produced. By no means every area producing white-firing pottery was surrounded by an area of white-slipped redware production so that, although one can partially explain the spread and use of white-slipped redware in terms of the need to compete with the producers of white-firing wares, this cannot be the whole explanation. Neither can the cost of white clay be totally responsible for the

limited area in which white-slipped redwares were produced.

The disappearance or decline of the technique in the later medieval period may have two causes. Firstly, it may be a symptom of the increasing plainness of later medieval jugs. In the 14th century, decoration, the amount of glaze used and individuality of form all declined. Secondly, in their central area of use the white-slipped redwares were replaced by light-firing wares, due mainly to the expansion of pre-existing industries such as that on the Surrey-Hampshire border.

Why an industry situated in a marginal woodland area, producing less well-made pottery in a clay that is more expensive to fire should become the most successful medieval pottery in the country is a question whose answer is worthy of another article.

19. The sources of white-firing clay known in the medieval period and the extent of their utilisation is under review. A recent summary of the use of white clays

in the floor tile industry is given by P. J. Drury in D. Crossley (ed. 1980) *Medieval Industries*.

(continued from p.325)

although this was again brought to a close by fire, probably some time during the late 3rd century.

The last phase of road-building (Horizon IV Phase 1) involved a southerly shift in the alignment, which effectively sealed the Horizon III Phase II occupation beneath it. The former road surface to the north was abandoned and quickly overtaken by roadside occupation — an episode hitherto difficult to explain, except in terms of a dislocation of communications in the early years of the 4th century.

The final deposit which can be related to the Romano-British occupation of the area consists of a much-disturbed dark soil containing late 3rd and 4th century pottery and coins which seals all earlier activity. Whether or not this layer can be equated with the late- or sub-Roman 'dark earths' recorded on other urban sites<sup>27</sup> is, however, unclear. More certain is the absence of Saxon material from the recent excavations — somewhat of a disappointment in view of the single *Grubenhäus* located in 1970-1<sup>28</sup>, but not surprising considering the disturbed nature of the late Roman and post-Roman deposits in the area.

### Conclusion

The last eight years of work in the town have

therefore succeeded in answering certain specific questions about its early development. In particular, the position and chronology of its most important feature, the London to Silchester road, have been established with some degree of certainty, and progress made on unravelling the various phases of clay and timber buildings which existed alongside. However, a number of problems remain unresolved, particularly regarding the whereabouts of any later prehistoric, pre-Flavian and Saxon occupation in the area. It is therefore to be hoped that further work at the western end of the High Street, parts of which are scheduled for redevelopment over the next five years, will enable a still fuller account of the town's early history to be written in the years to come.

### Acknowledgements

The excavations have been carried out by the West London Archaeological Field Group on behalf of the Museum of London and thanks are due to the many organisations and individuals who have supported the work. Grants have been made available by the Department of the Environment and the London Borough of Hounslow and we are particularly grateful to the Borough for permission to excavate on Sites 13 and 14 and to Watrglade Jasta International and Hugh Wade of Norwest Holst Construction Ltd., for allowing the surveillance of building work during 1982.

26. H. L. Sheldon 'A Decline in the London Settlement A.D. 150 - 250' *London Archaeol* 2 (1975), 278 - 284; H. L. Sheldon 'London and South East Britain' in A. King & M. Henig (eds.) *The Roman West in the*

*Third Century*' BAR S 109 (1981), 363-382.

27. e.g. Sheldon (1981) *op.cit.* 365 - 367.

28. Canham *op.cit.*, 30 - 31.