

Fig. 1: (left) two Iron Age pits before excavation.  
(right) the right-hand Iron Age pit with a pot *in situ* during excavation.

# Excavations at Beddington 1984-87: the final interim

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THE FINAL PHASE of the latest excavations at Beddington (TQ 297 658), which had begun on 5th November 1984, came to an end on 1st May 1987 when the Manpower Services Commission Community Programme scheme was terminated after thirty months of continuous excavation<sup>1</sup>. During that time work was completed on a number of areas that had not been fully excavated in the 1981-83 excavations<sup>2</sup>, and a much larger area (c 1½ acres, 0.6 ha) to the south of the previous excavation was examined (Fig. 2).

Although the depth of archaeological levels was relatively shallow – on average less than one metre (three feet) deep – the stratification was complicated because of the long and apparently almost unbroken sequence of occupation in many parts of the site; this complexity of stratification along with the unexpectedly good preservation of the features on the site necessitated a more detailed excavation of this area than was originally envisaged.

1. For previous work on the site see L. Adkins, R. Adkins and J. G. Perry 'Excavation at prehistoric and Roman Beddington, 1984-85' *London Archaeol* 5, no. 6 (1986) 152-7; L. Adkins and R. Adkins *Under the Sludge. Beddington Roman*

## Prehistoric

The earliest find from the excavation was a mattock made of red deer antler. Although it is broken into two pieces which refit, preliminary examination by Jill Cook of the Quaternary section of the British Museum has shown that the surface of the piece is in good condition and exhibits distinct toolmarks which should yield information about how it was made and hafted. Similar examples from this country are known to be of mesolithic and neolithic date. The one from Beddington is a particularly fine specimen; it was found in material probably derived from a post-glacial channel, which suggests that its date may be quite early. A radiocarbon accelerator date is awaited.

Of particular importance for the prehistoric period was the discovery of evidence for numerous round-houses, of various types of construction, which probably span the period from the Late Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age. The evidence for

*villa* (1986) Beddington, Carshalton & Wallington Archaeol Soc.

2. *Excavations at Beddington: prehistoric settlement and Roman villa*, forthcoming SAS/LAMAS monograph.

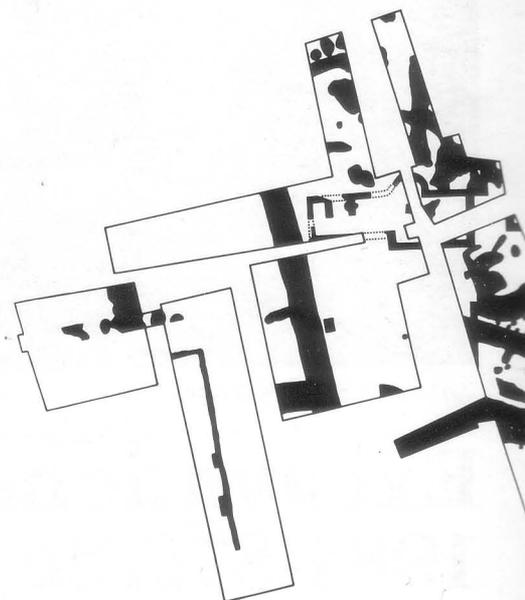
these round-houses consisted of shallow circular gullies, deeper circular ditches, and postholes; some of the postholes were clay-lined and there was evidence for the replacement of posts in many cases. Linear ditches were also excavated, which appear to represent field and enclosure boundaries. The limits of the settlement northwards (probably destroyed) and westwards have yet to be assessed. Together with a programme of analysis by the Environmental Unit of the Museum of London, the excavation of this settlement provides an invaluable contribution to the previously limited evidence for Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement in this part of the Thames Valley (see Fig. 1).

### Roman

The final phase of the project concentrated on the completion of the excavation of the outbuildings to the south-east of the site. These buildings probably represent a succession of barns, each replacing the previous one. One barn, aligned east-west and probably the earliest of the series, consisted of two parallel rows of eight postholes. The second timber barn, aligned north-south, had two rows of seven postholes. The minimum dimensions of these two barns were 18m × 8m (59ft × 26ft) and 18m × 7m (59ft × 23ft) respectively, if it is assumed that the original posts represented the lines of the walls; in fact, it is much more likely that the posts formed two rows of internal supports and that the walls, for which no evidence survived, lay some distance outside these posts. This would give these two timber barns a floor area similar to that of the third barn.

The third barn, which seems to have superseded the other two barns, was built in the same area. It had two lines of internal posts set on post pads, and a wall with masonry footings of unmortared flint nodules similar in construction to the foundations of the walls of the villa-house. To the south, evidence was found for a clay wall parallel to the southern wall of this barn, which may represent a lean-to. The maximum dimensions for this barn were 35m × 15m (115ft × 49ft).

Just to the east of the latest barn was situated a well. This was fully excavated with the aid of a pump. The well pit was cut through natural gravel and partly into the underlying London Clay. The lower lining of the well was constructed from three courses of oak planks, which were built into a square box-like construction with lap joints (Fig. 3). The planks still retained visible woodworm holes and adze and saw cut marks, and due to the high quality of their preservation, they are being conserved (Fig. 4). It is hoped that this wooden lining will eventually be reconstructed and go on display in the Museum of London. Above and supported by the timber





50

100  
Metres

Fig. 2: plan of all major features discovered so far.



Fig. 3: top of the timber lining of the Roman well.

lining was a circular lining of tufa and chalk blocks (Fig. 5). The well pit had been backfilled, largely with gravel and with London Clay near the surface. The well survived to a depth of just over 3m (10ft). There was no surviving evidence for a super-structure.

The fill of the well contained much environmental evidence, and at the bottom of the well the waterlogged deposits contained a horse's skull, leather shoes and Roman pots, which appear to have been a ritual deposit.

Further environmental sampling was undertaken in conjunction with the excavation of several Roman pits and ditches.



Fig. 5: a half-section through part of the tufa and chalk lining of the upper part of the Roman well.



Fig. 4: lifting a plank from the timber lining during excavation of the Roman well.

### Post-Roman

Very little evidence was found of any post-Roman activity; in particular there was no evidence for any Saxon occupation despite the proximity of an early Saxon cemetery to the south of the site.

### Future work

Until the gravel extraction commences, no further excavation of the site is envisaged. In the meantime an extensive programme of post-excavation work has been planned in order to write up the results of the last thirty months' excavation for archive and publication.

### Acknowledgements

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