

## AREA R PHASING

### Area summary

Area R encompassed the excavated parts of the field originally designated Area B, located on the northern periphery of the 1994 area of excavation and immediately south of Drury's Crescent Road excavation and west of the 1993 site.

The excavated area consisted of two trenches (north and south) either side of a palaeochannel, which ran more or less along the foot of the gravel terrace. This ancient, silted-up, watercourse was clearly visible both on aerial photographs (Fig. R1) and on the field surface as a seasonally marshy area. A machine-dug trench, across the palaeochannel, connected the two areas of excavation (Fig.R2).

The north trench was 107m long and 10m wide. This was area mechanically stripped of topsoil, revealing widespread deposits of homogenous gravelly silts, within which feature definition was extremely poor. Within this large machine-stripped area, excavation was limited to a centrally located 40m strip, where features, including Roman cremations and potential sunken floored buildings, were more immediately obvious. Excavation within the north trench was selective and the full stratigraphic sequence was not revealed.

The south trench was a 26m by 21m area on the opposite side of the palaeochannel. Again, excavation of features was selective, particularly as the archaeology was obscured by a gravelly silt deposit across the northern two thirds of the trench.

The linking trench across the stream channel was 2.4m to 2.9m wide and 32m long and, by necessity, its sides were stepped. Very little of the palaeochannel deposits were excavated by hand, work largely being limited to recording of the machine-cut section.

Although excavation in Area R was limited in extent and scope, the resulting records do give an insight into the nature of land-use alongside the palaeochannel and of the watercourse itself; albeit skewed towards the later periods of the settlement. Very little is known of the pre-Roman activity in this area simply because excavation rarely penetrated this far down through the overlying stratigraphy.

North of the palaeochannel it is likely that there were earlier remains present, obscured below the Roman dump deposits, which were simply not reached. To some extent, this was also the case in the south trench, although a few Period II features did protrude from the edges of later masking deposits. These indicated the presence of regular, late Iron Age, land divisions along the south side of the palaeochannel and perhaps hint at occupation within them. No evidence relating to the nature and use of the palaeochannel at this time was collected, although it is highly likely to have been an active watercourse.

Evidence of early Roman activity was widespread and showed very different land-use either side of the watercourse. On the north side, this took the form of deliberate dumping of gravels and silts, with the aim of raising and levelling the ground surface. This created a new north bank which required revetting and most likely narrowed the channel significantly. Following this remodelling, the north bank was the site of a small cemetery, consisting of late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD cremation burials, which may serve to emphasize the peripheral nature of the land to the north of the watercourse during the early Roman period. In contrast, no corresponding land raising was undertaken on the south side of the channel. Here, a sequence of ditches running parallel to the palaeochannel may have marked the northern limit of settlement at this time.

Dumping on the north bank was resumed during the mid Roman period, sealing the cremation burials. This episode clearly had a different source of dump material, containing large quantities of brick, tile, burnt clay and charcoal – all presumably derived from the demolition of a substantial building. With this dumping finished, the north bank was occupied for the first time, with rubbish pits being dug within newly established land units marked by ditches, including one wood-lined example – possibly a mill race. Within the watercourse, the majority of the silts exposed were of 3<sup>rd</sup> century date and these seem to indicate that the watercourse silted up fairly rapidly. This accumulation was clearly contemporary with the dumping and levelling on the north bank, containing similar deposits of brick

and tile rubble. Evidence of 3<sup>rd</sup> century activity along the south side of the watercourse was very limited, though some continued occupation is suggested by rubbish deposition in a disused well.

Occupation and land-use on the north bank remained static during the late Roman period, with boundaries and the wood-lined ditch continuing to function. While occupation probably also continued on the south side a new, relatively insubstantial, land division appears to have been created. It is likely that the palaeochannel had all but silted up during the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Continued occupation of the north bank, into the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, is evidenced by the presence of two sunken-floored buildings which may well have been positioned in relation to surviving later Roman boundary features. Occupation within this latest Roman / early Saxon period was clearly related to that from Crescent Road (Wickendon, 1986, 17-8).

### Phasing Summary

Period	Period description	Sub-period	Date
I	-		MIA/LIA transition
II	Regular land division & occupation on south side of palaeochannel. North unknown		LIA & transition
III	Dumping, & consolidation of the north bank, cremation burials. Occupation on south bank		Early Roman
IV	Further dumping, then occupation		Mid Roman
V	Continued occupation		Late Roman
VI	Limited occupation		Latest Roman/Saxon
VII	20 <sup>th</sup> century dumping in palaeochannel		Post early Saxon

### Period I

No features of this date have been identified.

## Period II (Fig. R3)

No pre-Roman features were encountered during the course of excavation in the north trench of Area R. As previously mentioned, this was certainly due to the limited stratigraphic depth investigated; it is reasonable to assume that Iron Age features remained unexcavated at the bottom of the sequence, or had been truncated and removed by Roman period activity.

Only three features within the south trench were identified as being of late Iron Age date. This was in part due to limited removal of Roman deposits which covered much of the trench. Only where natural brickearth was exposed were Period II features discerned. Most significant were parallel ditches 12284 and 12360 which defined the extent of a strip plot backing onto the palaeochannel. Their presence served to show that occupation of the 'back' of the terrace was within well defined land units and may be associated with similar land division in Area G (ref) to the south. The only feature likely to have been contemporary with the use of the plot was pit 12288.

No Period II deposits were located within the trench across the watercourse, principally because excavation did not penetrate this low due to waterlogging. However, it is likely that the watercourse was an important landscape feature at this time, dictating the shape of land units backing onto it.

### Ditches 12284 and 12360

Linear feature 12284 was traced for a distance of almost 6.0m before its course was obscured by the overlying gravelly silt which covered much of the south trench. This NNW-SSE aligned feature was not excavated in its own right but seemed to be a ditch where cut through by well 12245. Exposed only in the sides of this well, it was established to be 1.8m wide and 0.22m deep. Although no dating evidence was obtained from 12284, it was cut by a number of Period III features and may reasonably be assumed to belong to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, passing out of use by the end of the late Iron Age.

Feature 12360 was a similar linear feature which ran parallel to ditch 12284, 23m to the east. Although also unexcavated, it was of similar proportion in plan, at 1.6m wide and occupied a similar stratigraphic position, being overlain by the same gravelly silt deposit.

It is postulated that these ditches were contemporary features of the late Iron Age landscape and that, together, they constituted the boundaries of a 23m wide strip plot. This land plot is presumed to have incorporated the palaeochannel as its northern boundary, the ditches themselves most likely draining directly into it.

### Pit 12288

Feature 12288 was an oval cut, 0.66m long and 0.3m deep, with near-vertical sides. It was originally identified as a storage jar oven due to the presence of a substantial part of a storage jar lying in its top. However, the jar shows no sign of internal burning and, in hindsight, neither the cut nor its fills were typical of such ovens elsewhere across the site. This appears to be confirmed by the late Iron Age date of the pottery; the others being of early Roman date at Heybridge.

However, the charcoal-rich nature of the lower fill (12269) and the absence of finds other than pottery and a tiny amount of burnt bone, along with the presence of the storage jar, suggest a fairly specific function for this feature. It is possible that the jar was deliberately inserted into the top of this partially infilled pit, though whether for practical or ritual reasons is unknown.

### Pit 12288

12288*	Pottery fabric GROG
--------	---------------------

This feature contained Late Iron Age grog-tempered pottery.

### **Period III (Fig. R4)**

In the early Roman period, there is evidence for widely differing uses of the land to either side of the palaeochannel. To the north, the land surface was built up in an episode of concerted dumping of gravel and silt. This raised the sloping land-surface by a metre alongside the river channel and seems to have necessitated revetment of the northern edge of the watercourse. This activity is interpreted as part of a deliberate scheme to reclaim some of the marshy peripheries of its channel, regularize its course, and perhaps increase its flow. Interestingly, there was no evidence of features subsequently cut into these dump deposits in this period, which may indicate this undertaking required a protracted period of time.

#### **Mention cremations.**

No such remodelling of the topography was undertaken south of the watercourse. Instead, the existing land surface remained unaltered and was the apparent location of occupation activity. Well 12245, rubbish pits and a scatter of post-holes attested to likely domestic occupation extending north to a series of ditches parallel with the watercourse and probably marked the limit of the settlement in this period. These ditches were apparently employed to take excess water away, perhaps controlling flow into, and preventing flooding of, the settlement areas which backed on to it. These ditches displayed a series of southward shifts which may indicate incursion of water brought about by the shifting of the north bank of the channel.

### **North bank layers (Fig. R5)**

**(12037, 12047, 12065, 12066, 12068, 12071, 12088, 12119, 12123, 12127, 12136, 12139, 12172, 12173, 12373)**

These layers were the earliest of a series of extensive deposits which covered the area bounded by the palaeochannel to the south and the gravel terrace step to the north. They comprised relatively finds-free layers of yellow-brown silty sand and gravels (12065 and 12068), dark grey clays (12066 and 12071), and brown silty clays (12127) which overlay natural sands and gravels. Where these deposits extended to the edge of the palaeochannel (12173, 12136 and 12139), they created what must have been a steeply sloping bank (although, due to truncation by later pit 12175, this can only be inferred from the section). These deposits were all revealed in the sections of machine cut trenches and very little hand excavation of them was undertaken. All were noted to have contained rare tile fragments and only a single sherd of undiagnostic Roman pottery was collected from 12127 and three from 12037.

Although originally described as dump deposits and interpreted as the earliest phase of deliberate building up of the land surface, it is possible that 12065, 12071 and 12066 in fact constitute the remnants of the original subsoil, and possibly even topsoil, above natural gravel. If so, all deposits above, particularly thick silty gravel deposit 12068, may then be construed to be subsequent dumps.

A substantial deposit of yellowish brown sandy silt-clay was encountered wherever excavation penetrated far enough through the sequence, and was recorded under various context numbers, chiefly 12037. It covered most of the excavated part of the north trench, and is presumed to have extended considerably both east- and westwards. This deposit clearly sloped down to the south, falling by as much as 0.5m across the 8m-wide trench. It was traced as far south as the edge of the palaeochannel itself where it was recorded as deposit 12172, although its precise relationship with the river deposits was obscured by truncating pit 12175.

While occasional, sometimes large, tile fragments were noted to occur in 12172, none was collected and only three sherds of pottery were retained. The latter offer a 2<sup>nd</sup> to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD date range, the earlier end of which is in accordance with its stratigraphic position. It is likely that this 0.4m thick deposit was a dump, or series of dumps of broadly similar material, used to raise the height of the north bank; although it would appear that no concerted attempt was made to level the land surface at the same time.

To the south of the watercourse, there was no evidence of a similar pattern of concerted deposition. All excavated features occurred above natural brickearth and gravel.

**Layers** 12037, 12047, 12065, 12066, 12068, 12071, 12088, 12119, 12123, 12127, 12139, 12172, 12173, 12373

12037	Pottery jar G5.5 (GRS)
12127	Pottery fabric BSW

Just two deposits yielded pottery. Context 12037 is reasonably well dated; it contained a jar that dates from the mid 2nd to early/mid 3rd century AD.

**River channel deposits (12136, 12137, 12138 and 12168) (photo of *in situ* posts?) (Fig. R6)**

Little evidence is available for the early Roman deposits within the watercourse itself. Excavation, restricted to the largely machined trench, rarely penetrated deep enough for them to be encountered. Although no dating evidence was collected from the lowest silts in the excavated sequence, it is possible that all were of early Roman date. All overlying deposits were 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Driven into these bluish-grey silt-clays and sands were a number of wooden stakes. Four vertical stakes of approximately 0.14m diameter were recorded at, or near, the foot of the newly created north bank. Although these stakes were removed, the silts through which they had been driven remained largely unexcavated. Further stakes were encountered further into the palaeochannel, but not satisfactorily recorded (photo). Three of the larger excavated stakes were sampled for dendrochronological analysis but found to be unsuitable, having too few rings.

It is conjectured that these stakes were the remains of a wooden revetment along the north edge of the watercourse, constructed to retain a bank created by the raising of the land surface alongside. However, bearing in mind that there seem to have been other unrecorded stakes further out into the channel, a jetty or a bridge construction cannot be ruled out. At this period, the channel would have been in the region of 14m wide, and the tips of the revetting stakes were no more than 1.3m below the top of the bank, setting a maximum for the depth at the stream edge. It is not clear if the central channel was any deeper. It seems possible that the stream was only intermittently (seasonally?) active and was more of a marsh than a river.

**Well 12245**

Circular feature 12245 was most probably a construction cut for a well. The 2.0m diameter cut was not fully excavated, but investigation to a depth of 0.75m revealed near-vertical sides cut through Period II ditch 12284 and into the underlying natural brickearth. The upper part of this cut was filled with a brownish-grey sandy silt. Although excavated to slightly below the modern watertable (1.70m OD), no waterlogged deposits or internal wooden structures were encountered. Quantities of pottery, tile and animal bone were recovered together with lead fragments and weights (SFs 6361, 6362) and an illegible sestertius (SF6384). While it is possible that this feature was constructed as early as the end of Period II, it is clear that the well passed out of use in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. However, its depth seems to have promoted slumping of the infill deposits and it is suspected that, due to the presence of both late Roman and early Saxon pottery, a later slump accumulation deposit was not recognized in the field.

**Well 12245**

12245	Samian dish f18/31R or f31R (CGSW) Other pottery dish B1 (BSW), bowl C7 (GRF) mortarium D2.2 (BUFM) Coin sestertius, AD C1-2 (SF 6384)
-------	---

The presence of a D2 mortarium suggests that the well was out of use by the second half of the 2nd century AD. Most of the pottery, including grog-tempered ware, is somewhat earlier, dating from the mid 1st to early 2nd century AD. However, some of this may derive from features cut by the well.

### **Gully 25269** (12274 and 12276)

In close association with well 12245 were semi-circular gullies 12274 and 12276. Not excavated, they were recorded as two conjoining lengths of curving gully or slot; it is more likely that they constituted a single cut 25269, perhaps with a variable fill. As such they formed a half circle around the north and east of the well and are postulated to be the foundation of a wooden structure around it and contemporary with its early use. Whether this was a walled and roofed structure, or merely a protective fence, is unknown. Apparent replacement by a Period IIIb post-built structure would suggest that it dated to the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. (slight strat prob = 12276 apparently cut by pit 12278 which is cut by the well – resolve please!)

### **Pits 12278, 12282, 12293, 12297, 12295, 12311, 12313**

Only a small number of early Roman pits was recognized. It is likely that more lay concealed below the thin gravelly silt layer 12267. It is perhaps significant that no pits post-dating the early Roman period were found beneath the gravel spread and north of 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Period II b) ditches 12291 and 12236. This suggests these ditches did define a tangible boundary as well as providing a dating horizon for 12267. Pits 12293 and 12311 contained small amounts of tile and bone, as well as pottery of late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD date. Collectively, these pits demonstrate that settlement extended right up to the edge of the watercourse during this period.

#### **Pits 12278, 12282, 12293, 12297, 12295, 12311, 12313**

12293	Pottery jars G5.3 (GRS) G26 (GRS)
12297	Pottery fabric GRS
12311	Pottery jars G44 (STOR), fabrics BSW GRS

These features produced little or no dating evidence. Pit 12293 is the best dated, yielding a G5 jar belonging to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The G26 jar is attributed to the 3rd century, although its abraded condition suggests that the jar is intrusive here.

### **Gully 12309**

Cut 12309 was only revealed in a machine-cut section across the south trench (Fig. R6), it being masked by the same overlying homogenous gravelly silts as obscured the pitting. Running on a NE-SW alignment, this linear feature had a U-shaped profile, 0.6m wide and 0.4m deep. It ran roughly parallel to the watercourse and appears to have been late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, cutting across the top of filled pit 12293.

### **Ditch 12291**

As is the case with all of the early Roman ditches in the south trench, ditch 12291 was only recorded in section (Fig R8). Although established to be a linear feature, some 1.2m wide and only 0.16m deep, its line can only be approximated. It is assumed to have run broadly parallel with the south side of the watercourse with the other Period III ditches, 12236 and 12299, to its south. A small amount of tile and pottery were collected from its fill, though the latter only gives a general early Roman date.

#### **Ditch 12291**

12291	Pottery fabrics BSW GRS
-------	-------------------------

Pottery dated no closer than Roman was recovered.

### **Ditch 12236**

Recorded only in section (Fig. R6), this 1.5m wide and 0.6m deep linear cut ran broadly parallel to the watercourse and to the other Period III ditches to either side, 12291 and 12299. Its extent beyond the section trench can only be postulated.

This relatively substantial ditch contained a lower, gradual silting, fill which yielded mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery and an upper backfill of early 3<sup>rd</sup> century date. Thus, this ditch appears to have had a

prolonged use. The finds assemblage, with its modest quantities of pottery, tile animal bone and ironwork seems consistent with this date range and may suggest deposition of domestic rubbish.

Ditch 12236

12236	<b>Samian f31 f33 Other pottery</b> dishes B1 (BSW) B3 (GRS) B4.2 (BSW), jar G24.2 (BSW), fabric NVC
-------	--

With the exception of a sherd of Nene Valley Colour-Coated ware, which may be intrusive, 3rd century material is absent. Filling is likely, therefore, to have occurred during the second half of the 2nd century AD, a date suggested by the presence of samian and coarseware dishes.

**Ditch 12299**

Linear feature 12299 was clearly two cuts with indistinguishable fills, presumably one a recut of the other. Each would have been around 1.5m wide and 0.5 to 0.6m deep; similar to ditch 12236, only a few metres to the north. Only recorded in section (Fig. R6), it is again postulated to have run parallel to the watercourse and the other Period III ditches, 12291 and 12299, to its north. No finds were retrieved from its fill, though it was sealed by Period IV deposit 12267.

**Structure 35: Post-holes 12241, 12243, 12270, 12272**

Four broadly similar post-holes occurred in the immediate vicinity of well 12245. They are postulated to denote a roughly rectangular structure which stood over the well. Post-hole 12243 cut the foundation gully 25269, indicating that this replaced the earlier circular structure around the well.

**Post-holes 12270, 12243, 12272, 12241**

12272	<b>Pottery</b> fabric GRS
-------	---------------------------

These features produced little in the way of dating evidence. While Roman pottery was recovered from 12272, post-hole 12241 yielded residual grog-tempered wares.

**Post-holes 12224, 12227, 12232**

A row of three substantial post-holes occurred in the southern part of the south trench. All were oval and between 0.4 to 0.6m wide and of similar depth. Cut 12227 contained evidence of *in situ* burning. All contained early Roman pottery. Together they displayed an ENE-WSW alignment, parallel with the Period III ditches to their north. Other, unexcavated, post-holes were recorded on the pre-excavation plan for this area and could conceivably be parts of the same, undefined, structure. *Save a few lines here: these don't warrant a mention?*

**Post-holes 12224, 12227, 12232**

12224	<b>Pottery</b> fabric GRF
12227	<b>Pottery</b> fabric GRF
12232	<b>Pottery</b> fabric GRS

Small quantities of undiagnostic Roman pottery were recovered.

**Cremation burials: 12003, 12006, 12038, 12105, (12120), 12203, (12208), 12219 (Fig. R7)**

Cut into the upper dump deposits along the north bank of the palaeochannel was a group of eight, or possibly nine, cremation burials. Not only notable for their tight clustering, they were also the only later 2<sup>nd</sup> century features cut into the dumps, being sealed by further dump deposits of Period IV date.

Cremation 12003

Slightly oval cut, maximum of 0.6m wide and at least 0.2, deep. The cremation assemblage consisted of a large greyware jar, containing cremated material, with an inverted samian dish used as a lid. A greyware flask lay to the north. This was the first of the cremation burials to be encountered; the jar protruded particularly high, although no cut could be discerned around it at the same level, and was disturbed during machine stripping of the trench.

#### Cremation 12006

A sub-square cut, approximately 0.6m across and 0.13m deep. It contained a centrally-placed black-surfaced ware jar containing cremated remains along with a ?complete (check) folded beaker. The jar had been placed (unusually?) directly on top of a samian cup. There were no other finds (well, 2g of tile spall if you want to be picky, but unsure quite where these were prob from sample? Sample proc sheet mentions fe obj too, but none in finds database.)

#### Cremation 12038

A small oval cut, maximum of 0.45m wide and 0.12m deep. The truncated cut and its immediate vicinity contained the disturbed remains of a single flask in black-surfaced ware. No cremated bone was observed.

#### Cremation 12105

A circular cut, 0.3m diameter and 0.14m deep. It contained a tall jar within which was another, inverted, smaller jar. No cremated bone was observed.

#### Cremation 12120

A slightly oval cut, 0.48m wide and 0.1m deep. It contained a single, crushed, greyware jar but no evidence of cremated material.

#### Cremation 12203

A square cut, approximately 0.9m wide and 0.27m deep. This feature contained the largest and most diverse assemblage of grave goods, comprising a large greyware storage jar containing cremated material and six ancillary vessels to its west. The collection of ancillary vessels included: a small roughcast beaker on top of a samian dish; an inverted samian cup partially overlying the dish; a greyware flask and a buff ware flagon in the south-west corner; a broken small green glass flask towards the north-west corner. A single green glass bead (SF 7368) was recovered from the soil sample taken from the backfill.

The burnt contents of the cinerary jar included 14 bone counters, seven unidentified iron objects along with a quantity of human bone. Within the backfill of the cut, nails were located at the corners and other iron objects, probably box-fittings, were found, demonstrating that the assemblage had been interred within a wooden box. Also an iron hanging lamp (SF 4787).

#### Cremation 12219

A sub-square cut, a maximum of 0.9m wide and 0.3m deep. A large, centrally-positioned, greyware storage jar, containing cremated remains, had probably fallen onto its side. A samian dish remained in place in the mouth of the jar and was noted to have a rim-sherd missing. Two further small vessels, a greyware flask and a carinated jar, lay to the east and west of the principal vessel. (Reputedly, a virtually complete glass cup was also present in the assemblage – some doubt as it doesn't appear in any photos of the *in situ* burial). A piece of green melted glass was also present in the backfill and is presumably derived from a burnt pyre offering.

#### Pottery spread 12208

Deposit 12208 was a discrete spread of pottery over an area of 0.9m by 0.4m. It apparently overlay dump deposit 12037 and no cut was discerned. This 2<sup>nd</sup> century material contained a miniature vessel and majority of a jar, which may indicate that it derived from a cremation burial, perhaps disturbed during further dumping during Period IV. No cremated material was identified.



As a group, the eight definite cremation burials form a small, but clearly defined cluster. The shapes of their cuts betrayed two trends; one square and generally deeper; the other round and shallow. The square cuts, 12203 and 12219, contained the more elaborate assemblages, most likely in boxes, while those in rounded cuts were relatively simple assemblages of one or two vessels.

The absence of burnt human remains in 12038, 12105, 12120 and 12208 does not necessarily detract from their being cremation burials. All were similar to assemblages which did include such material. It is apparent that it was not deemed necessary to inter the complete remains of an individual in this rite of burial and it may well be the case that remains of the corpse were not strictly necessary at all.

The location of these burials, on the north side of the watercourse, may suggest adherence to Roman laws regarding burial, accepting that the watercourse itself marked a boundary to the settlement, with land to its north being regarded as peripheral.

The earliest pottery in these features could in theory be as much as a century earlier than the latest. It is possible that this little group represents just one fraction of a larger, long-lived cemetery. It is also possible that the pottery had been curated and that antiques/heirlooms were used as grave goods. The stratigraphy (above the dumped bank deposits, which admittedly are not well dated but not likely to be earlier than mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century, and below the more substantial rubble dumps of the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century), and the tight clustering of the group, suggest that a short time-span was involved, and the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, with 12006 in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> is the preferred date for these burials.

**Cremation pits** 12003, 12006, 12038, 12105, 12120, 12203, 12208, 12219

12003	<b>Samian</b> dish f31 (CGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> jar G36 (GRS) G40 (GRS)
12006	<b>Samian</b> cup f33 (CGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> beaker H35 (RED)
12038	<b>Pottery</b> jar G40 (BSW)
12105	<b>Pottery</b> jars G5.5 (GRS) G9 (GRS)
12120	<b>Pottery</b> jar G5.5 (GRS)
12203	<b>Samian</b> dish f18/31 (CGSW), cup f33 (CGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> jars G40 (GRF) G45 (GRS), beaker H20 (COLC), flagon J3.3 (COLB)
12208	<b>Pottery</b> jar G22.1 (BSW), miniature R3 (BSW)
12219	<b>Samian</b> dish f18/31 (CGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> jars G29.1 (BSW) G40 (GRF) G45 (GRS)

The earliest burials, dating to the mid 2nd century AD, include 12203, 12219 and spread 12208. Burial 12006, producing an early to mid 3rd century folded beaker, was deposited perhaps a little over half a century later. The pottery from the remaining burials is consistent with a mid to late 2nd century date range. I think I can make 12006 late 2nd century.

JC note: The identification of the beaker in 12206 has been changed from H35 to H20.3 (mid to late 2nd C).

**Period IV:** (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) (Fig. R8)

Consider discussing homogenous layer (12267) et al here? See end notes

Evidence of 3<sup>rd</sup> century activity along the south side of the watercourse was very limited. Well 12245, although no longer still functioning as a water source, survived and was used more as a convenient rubbish pit. No other excavated features of this date were identified and this may indicate decline in the intensity of occupation or settlement shift.

Following the insertion of burials into the Period III dumps on the north side of the palaeochannel, dumping activity was renewed. In contrast to the previous dumping episode this included substantial deposits of building rubble and charcoal. These hint at the demolition of a substantial building somewhere in the settlement during the early to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, perhaps following its destruction by fire. The rubble dumps were then levelled off with further widespread dumps of gravelly silts with far lesser finds densities and perhaps represent the reconstitution of the land surface.

Within the watercourse, the majority of the silts exposed were of 3<sup>rd</sup> century date. Although excavation, either by machine or by hand, did not expose underlying accumulations of earlier date, it is supposed that mid-Roman deposits constituted the majority of the fills within the palaeochannel. If so, this indicates that the watercourse was allowed to silt-up with little attempt maintain its flow. Within this silting were rubble (brick and tile) dumps similar to those to the north and it is clear that build-up within the channel was contemporary with dumping and levelling on the land surface. There may even have been a deliberate attempt to reclaim this land from marsh.

Small rubbish pits were cut into the dumps and levelling material. As these occurred in the vicinity of the Period III-IV cremations it would seem that the nature of this area had shifted from burial and the sacred to more profane uses, including rubbish disposal. Further evidence of change in land-use was provided by shallow north-to-south ditch 12027 which probably indicates that this north bank was now subdivided, perhaps into regular plots. Substantial wood-lined ditch 25271 is another indicator of this vicinity's new use; thought to be a water-channel in its own right, perhaps even a leat and if so a potential contributing factor to the silting up of the main watercourse.

**Dumps and levelling (12041, 12056, 12057, 12063, 12064, 12075, 12078, 12079, 12104, 12111, 12114, 12115, 12124, 12190, 12061/12371, 12040, 12048, 12055, 12067, 12089, 12103, 12118) (Fig. R9)**

Above the Period III dump deposits, and sealing the cremation burials cut into them, were silty gravel deposits containing substantial amounts of building rubble; mainly brick and tile, but also nails and window glass along with charcoal and burnt clay fragments throughout. Some of this dumping appears to have been within large shallow pits or scoops (e.g., 12075, 12061), as well as across the land surface. The dumps were similar to deposit 308 of Drury's Crescent Road site, Period IV Phase 2 (Wickenden 1986,13-15, broadly contemporary). Additional brick and tile rubble was found in 3<sup>rd</sup> century contexts within the river channel and these were also likely to be associated with this episode.

Further widespread deposits of relatively clean gravelly silts overlay the rubble dumps and are thought to be levelling layers associated with the reconstitution of the land surface in this vicinity. Again, this may be equivalent to gravels 303 in the Crescent Road site (Wickenden 1986,15).

12041	<b>Samian</b> bowl f37 (EGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> dishes B4 (BSW) B5 (GRS), bowl C18 (NVC), beaker H32/H33 (NVC)
12056	<b>Samian</b> cup f33 (CGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> dish B2/B4 (BSW), fabric NVC
12057	<b>Pottery</b> dish B2/B4 (GRS) fabrics NVC NVM
12075	<b>Pottery</b> dishes B2 (BSW) B3 (BSW) B5.1 (GRS), mortarium D14.1 (NVM), jar G5.5 (GRS), fabric NVC
12078	<b>Pottery</b> dishes B1 (BSW), B4 (BSW), beaker H32 (NVC)
12104	<b>Samian</b> fabric CGSW <b>Other pottery</b> fabrics GRS BSW
12111	<b>Pottery</b> dish B3 (GRS), beaker H32 (NVC)
12114	<b>Samian</b> dish f31R (CGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> dishes B2 (BSW) B3 (GRS), fabric NVC
12115	<b>Pottery</b> fabrics COLC NVC

12061	<b>Pottery</b> fabric BSW GRS
12371	<b>Pottery</b> dishes B2/B4 (GRS) B3 (GRF), jar G5.5 (GRS), beakers H32 (NVC) H35 (GRF)
12040	<b>Samian</b> bowl f40 (EGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> jar G5.5 (GRS)
12048	<b>Pottery</b> dish B2 (GRS) jar G5 (GRS)
12055	<b>Pottery</b> dishes B1 (BSW) B2/B4 (BSW)
12118	<b>Pottery</b> dish B1 (BSW), fabric COLC

The range of Nene Valley products, well supported by samian, provides an early to mid 3rd century AD date for feature deposition. Contexts bereft of strong dating evidence nevertheless contained pottery consistent with this date. Context 12103 yielded residual early Roman pottery.

### **Pits 12020, 12025, 12034, 12022**

Cut into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century dumps and levelling deposits was a small number of pits. Most were round to sub-square and 1-2m wide; small cut 12022 may have been a post-hole rather than a pit.

Occurring in very close proximity to the Period III cremation burials, pits 12020 and 12025 were thought to be further burials at the time of excavation. Both contained burnt bone and charcoal. However, unlike the confirmed cremation burials, no assemblages of grave goods were encountered. Furthermore the two groups of features were stratigraphically remote, being separated by the Period IV dump and levelling deposits. It is probable that any burnt bone content derived from the attested disturbance of the earlier burials.

These pits generally contained large assemblages of pottery and tile in relation to feature size, as was also the case with 3<sup>rd</sup> century pits elsewhere across the settlement. Iron nails were also present, though the quantity of animal bone was conspicuously low. Twelve sherds of vessel glass (ref. to glass report?) from pit 12020 may, along with the burnt bone previously mentioned, be derived from a disturbed cremation burial.

### **Pits 12020, 12025, 12034, 12022**

12020	<b>Samian</b> dish f79 (EGSW), bowl f37 (EGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> dishes B1 (HAB) B2 (BSW) B3 (GRS), beaker H32 (NVC)
12025	<b>Pottery</b> fabric COLC
12034	<b>Pottery</b> dishes B1 (GRS) B2 (GRF), jar G5.5 (GRS), fabric NVC
12022	<b>Pottery</b> dish B4 (BSW), mortarium D11 (BUFM), beaker H32/H33 (NVC)

The presence of Nene Valley colour-coated ware, supported by dishes, dates the infilling of these pits to the first half of the 3rd century AD. Colchester colour-coated ware, now approaching the end of production, may be residual in 12025.

### **Ditch 25270** (Seg. 12027) (Fig. R10)

A north-to-south shallow linear cut ran across the north trench, to the east of the majority of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century pits described above. Some 1m wide and a maximum of 0.28m deep, it was exposed for a length of approximately 5.6m and had a rounded terminal at its south end. Interpreted as a minor boundary ditch, its alignment was at odds with all preceding linear features, seemingly indicating that a realignment of land divisions had taken place following the 3<sup>rd</sup> century reinstatement of the north bank. The ditch terminated before it reached the watercourse, so it is unlikely to have had any drainage function. This boundary function may be supported by the fact that, apart from small pit 12022, all of the contemporary pits were restricted to its west side. No other 3<sup>rd</sup> century features were identified between ditches 25270 and 12047, perhaps defining an open space of some 20-30m width. Ditch 25270 was most likely dug in the mid to late 3<sup>rd</sup> century but continued to accumulate material as late as the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Its fills contained late 3<sup>rd</sup> century pottery, with late Roman and Saxon material in the latest fill only. Its fills included a possible structured deposit of complete vessels located toward its terminal (Fig R20), along with large amounts of tile, iron objects (*35 iron objects; part of a box?*) and some glass fragments. Some of this material showed signs of careful placement; at least one vessel was inverted and others set on tile ‘pedestals’. While this may seem superficially reminiscent of a disturbed or redeposited cremation, it was certainly much later than the others.

Ditch 25270 (segment 12027)

12027*	<b>Pottery</b> Dishes B5.1 (GRS) B6.2 (GRF) B6.3 (BB1), jars G24 (RET) G38 (BSW), beakers H39 (GRS) H41 (NVC)
--------	---

A large volume of good quality pottery was recovered. The latest forms, principally dishes and beakers, provide a late 3rd to early 4th century AD infilling date. That the ditch received material after this date is suggested by the presence in the top fill of late 4th century Oxford red colour-coated ware.

**?Pit 12061 /12371 is this worthy of its own descriptive section?**

**What if 12371/12061 is really a semi-basemented building alongside 12027? Look at its strat position on/within dumps.**

### **Ditch 25271 (segments 12046, 12182) (Fig. R10)**

A NW-SE aligned ditch, exposed for a distance of 11m, crossed the east end of the excavated area of the north trench. At a maximum of 2.35m wide and 0.75m deep, it was the most substantial ditch in this area. The base displayed a gradual slope down to the south-east and may be presumed to have drained into the watercourse. At the foot along either side were the remains of a wooden lining or revetment, consisting of oak **?planks** retained by vertical stakes (Fig. R10). Although only a single course of this revetment survived, it is assumed that it originally extended the full height of the open ditch.

The presence of such a lining within this major ditch signals its function as an active channel along which water flow was intensive. Projection of this channel, to the north-west and south-east as a straight linear, would suggest that it was deliberately constructed to cut the corner of the palaeochannel (Fig. R.14). A function as a mill race/leat may be speculated.

The revetting of this ditch appears to have prolonged its use. The timber lining has produced a dendrochronological date of AD215-260 (**ref. to dendro report**) and a mid 3rd century construction date for the ditch is likely. However, even the lower ditch fills yielded 4<sup>th</sup> century Roman pottery plus some early Saxon. The abraded nature of the ceramic assemblage, and the deposition pattern of the flat silt-gravel fills themselves, argue for 25271 being a well-maintained water channel which was deliberately infilled as late as Period VI.

Ditch 25271 (12046, 12182)

12046*	<b>Samian</b> fabric EGSW <b>Other pottery</b> dishes B2 (GRS) B3 (GRS) B4 (BSW) B5 (GRF) B6 (BSW) B10 (HAX), mortaria D11.1 (BUFM) D14.1 (NVM), jar G24 (RET), fabrics LSH OXRC <b>Coin</b> denarius, AD 100-230 (SF 4776)
12182	<b>Pottery</b> dish B3 (GRS), fabric RET

In addition to the late 4th century+ pottery, a larger amount of predominantly 3rd century material was collected from the ditch. This was very fragmented and abraded and may have been redeposited as backfill.

### **River channel deposits (12093, 12094, 12096, 12097, 12098, 12099, 12100, 12101, 12142, 12157, 12158, 12159, 12160, 12163, 12164, 12165, 12167) (Fig. R6, R9)**

Within the watercourse, a substantial sequence of water-laid deposits was revealed in the machine-cut section. These were subject to very limited hand excavation due to severe water-logging. Recorded in section, these deposits were essentially substantial grey clays separated by thin layers of sand. It was noted that this sequence became more complex and intermixed at the centre of the channel and that the silting sequence suggests a shift of the main current toward the south bank through the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. In addition, the clay deposits seem to contain sand in the lower part of the sequence but silt in the upper, perhaps indicating a slowing in the rate of water flow through the channel.

While early 3<sup>rd</sup> century pottery was recovered from deposits 12101 and 12159, the majority of the sequence below them is essentially undated. It is difficult to speculate as to the nature and extent of the Period IV accumulation within the channel, though it is postulated that the channel was not particularly deep in its entirety and that the majority of its silting belongs to this period. This 3<sup>rd</sup> century accumulation appears to have filled the whole of the channel, as denoted by the dating of deposit 12093. Interestingly, none of the upper channel fills contains later pottery, suggesting there

was no longer a hollow to fill in beyond this period. The nature of the seed remains recovered from three of these deposits (12101, 12135, 12142; [ref to wet macro report](#)) also suggests that the channel was not active, or only intermittently so, while they were accumulating.

Within this sequence, deposit 12101 is worthy of particular note. Over 16kg of tile was retrieved from this substantial yellow-grey sand and gravel deposit, together with pottery and tesserae. This building rubble content was also present, in significant but lesser quantity, in overlying layers 12094, 12096 and 12097, with 12094 being particularly noteworthy for the 71 tesserae retrieved from it. Most importantly, the deposition of this material in the watercourse is likely to have been contemporary with that in the dumps along the north bank. How this material got into the river channel is a matter for speculation; was it a deliberate dump or was the material eroded out of the built-up bank itself? If the channel was not particularly active, the former must be more likely.

**River channel deposits** 12093, 12094, 12096, 12097, 12098, 12099, 12100, 12101, 12142, 12157, 12158, 12159, 12160, 12163, 12164, 12165, 12167

12093	<b>Samian</b> cup f33 (CGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> dish B2 (GRS), fabric NVC
12094	<b>Pottery</b> fabric STOR
12101	<b>Samian</b> mortarium f45 (EGSW) <b>Other pottery</b> jar G5.5 (GRS), fabrics NVC NVM
12159	<b>Pottery</b> fabric NVC

Only small quantities of pottery were recovered, though generally consistent with a 3rd century date.

**Period V:** (Late 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD) (Fig. R11)

To the north of the palaeochannel, both boundary ditch 12027 and the wood-lined ditch 25271 continued to function, or at least accumulate material, into this Late Roman period. A small cluster of post-holes and large square cut 12061/12176 serve only to hint at further activity in this late Roman period.

On the south side of the watercourse, well 12245 was now clearly defunct and seems to have undergone a considerable degree of slumping as earlier fills settled, allowing late material to continue to accumulate even though it had probably been out of use for a century or more by now. Parallel gullies 25185 and 25186 showed that the earlier east-to-west ditches had passed out of use and that a new set of fairly insubstantial land divisions were now occupied.

The apparent absence of river channel deposits later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD makes it difficult to speculate about the nature and influence of the watercourse during this period. Although not formally identified, it is likely that the area of the ?former channel continued to accumulate silts and that the depth and flow of water became restricted. It is possible that it was no more than a boggy area in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

**Gullies 25185, 25186, 12301**

Narrow linear cut 25185 ran on a NNW-SSE alignment across the south trench. Neither end of this 0.4m wide and 0.3m deep feature was located, but it is interpreted as a gully extending up to, and perhaps draining in to, the river channel/marsh.

Feature 25186 was a 6m long slot which ran parallel to gully 25185, 10m to the west. At a maximum width of 0.7m and 0.35m depth,

Feature 12301 was an unexcavated length of gully. With a 0.6m width and NNE-SSW alignment, it may be construed to have been associated with gully 25186, running at right-angles to it.

**Gullies 25185 (12213, 12352, 12353), 25186 (12238), 12301**

12213	Samian fabric SGSW Other pottery jar G44.5 (STOR), fabric GRF
12238	Samian bowl f38 (CGSW) Other pottery jar G40 (BSW), fabrics COLC NKG

The presence of Colchester colour-coated ware and samian suggests that gully 25186 was infilled by the end of the 2nd century AD. The pottery from 12213, though not closely datable, is consistent with 2nd century deposition. Stratigraphically these seem unlikely to be so early, though the stratigraphy is not clear-cut

**Discuss nature of large cut 12061/12176 – is it a building?**

**Post-holes 12011, 12013, 12015, 12017, 12032**

A small cluster of late Roman post-holes were excavated just to the west of what must have been by now redundant ditch 12027, together with a single isolated post-hole 12013. All are the latest features in the sequence but none show any patterning . poss assoc. with building 12061/12176?

**Post-holes 12011, 12013, 12015, 12017, 12032**

12011	Pottery fabric GRS
12013	Pottery fabric GRS
12032	Pottery fabric BSW

Small amounts of poorly dated Roman pottery were recovered.

*Need these?*

**Period VI:** (end of 4th and into 5<sup>th</sup> centuries) (Fig. R12)

Continued occupation of the north bank, into the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, is evidenced by the presence of two sunken-floored buildings, Buildings 67 and 68. Building 67 appears to be the only feature which shared a similar alignment with ditch 12027. While the ditch appears to have disappeared by this date, it may be speculated that other elements of the late Roman land division endured and were respected by later, early Saxon period, structures. Although in close proximity to Building 67, Building 68 was perhaps more closely aligned on nearby wood-lined ditch 25271, which may still have been functional during this period. It was during this period that the ditch was finally infilled. As a group, these Period VII features suggest that remnants of the late Roman land-division remained, though did not necessarily function, and that they were incorporated into the latest pattern of settlement. No such occupation evidence was identified on the south side of the watercourse, which is assumed to have been entirely silted-up by this time and manifest only as a boggy linear depression through which water still flowed on a seasonal basis.

These early Saxon structures were clearly an outlying part of Drury's Phase VI occupation, a short distance to the north-east (Wickenden, 1986, 17-18). As noted repeatedly on other sites, Saxon activity seems to be concentrated around the edges of the former Roman settlement (need refs.).

**Building 67**

Building 67 was evidenced by a shallow rectangular cut **12062** which measured 3.2m by 1.7m and only 0.12m deep. It was surrounded by four, possibly five stakeholes (one, undifferentiated, stake-hole was almost certainly included in the outline of the main cut). The structure had clearly suffered machine truncation during the stripping of the north trench, but was well defined against the Period IV homogenous gravel spreads.

The fills of this feature yielded few finds, with just 400g of tile and 42 sherds of pottery. 'Residual' Roman material was scarce, perhaps because earlier stratigraphy was well sealed below the Period IV consolidation layers.

**Building 68**

Feature 12228 was a vertical-sided rectangular cut measuring 4.2m by 3.4m and 0.9m deep. It contained a substantial clay lining which extended up a 'ramp', 12365, located in the south-west corner. 'Cut' into this thick clay lining was a smaller, centrally located, rectangular cut 12230 measuring 3.4 by 2m. At just under 0.9m deep, it did not cut through the base of 12228's clay lining (check). Single small post-holes 12192, 12193 and 12194 were located at three of the corners of 12230 and another, 12195, at its centre. A fourth post-hole may have originally existed at the south-east corner, but been removed by a much larger post-hole 12364. This oval cut was up to 0.8m wide and was probably a replacement or enlargement of a smaller precursor.

The base of 'cut' 12230 was distinguished from the clay lining into which it intruded by being a compacted and dirty clay deposit of only a few centimetres thickness. However, it was overlain by another thin (0.03m thick) mixed clay layer which may have simply contaminated what was in fact part of the clay lining of 12228. The remainder of the cut was filled with dark brown silts to a depth of 0.2m. **Finds**

Adjacent to Building 67, this structure appeared to be another sunken floored building, although it clearly differed in its construction. The clay-lining of the construction cut 12228 presumably functioned as damp-proofing for the building constructed on top. Its less-conventional construction may be an indication of an alternative use; while it was almost certainly contemporary with Building 67 it could have had a different function. This explanation is not entirely satisfactory and it has been alternatively suggested that the clay served to *retain* water, with the structural elements perhaps evidence of a roof structure above. Functioning as some sort of tank, it could perhaps have been associated with the later use of the wood-lined ditch 25271.

**Building 67** (12062, 12082, 12084, 12086)

Cut 12062 yielded residual 2nd and 3rd century Roman pottery.

**Building 68** (12191, 12192, 12193, 12194, 12195, 12228, 12230, 12364, 12365)

Cuts 12191, 12193, 12228, 12230 and 12364 produced residual Roman pottery. 12228 and 12230 yielded the most, over 1.5kg between them. The pottery from the former was very abraded and was possibly redeposited for the purpose of backfilling the feature.

**Period VII (Fig. R13)**

Evidence of activity beyond the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD was very slight and limited to a single large pit or ditch 12175 and deposit 12162, both of which were located at the top of the river channel sequence. Deposit 12162 was clearly an early 20<sup>th</sup> century dump of building rubble – perhaps intended to consolidate over the remains of the silted channel to provide a firmer crossing of it for grazing livestock. Although no dating evidence was obtained from probable pit 12175, it is likely to have been post-medieval.

It is perhaps interesting to note that the 19<sup>th</sup> century gravel quarrying present on the Crescent Road site (Wickenden 1987, 17) was absent in Area R. It would appear that such extraction did not encroach beyond the edge of the upper gravel terrace.

**Ditch/Pit 12175**

Large cut 12175 was revealed only in the section of the machine-cut trench across the watercourse. It was located on the very edge of the watercourse, truncating the interface between the dumps of the north bank and the accumulations within the channel itself. As exposed in section, this feature was 2.1m wide and 0.85m deep. While no artefactual material was collected from its fills, building debris was noted to be present in what appeared to be a recut and pottery was present throughout. The top of wooden upright 12126, which belonged to the postulated Period III revetment, was encountered in the base of the cut; whether the post was itself truncated by the digging of this pit/ditch, or had already rotted down as far as the watertable, is unknown.

At the time of its excavation, it was interpreted as a likely ditch running parallel to the watercourse. However, it was not traced beyond the confines of the trench. While it is possible that it was a late Roman or early Saxon cut, which either followed, or was associated with the robbing of, the postulated Period III revetment, this feature could equally be an incidentally sited post-abandonment period pit.

**Dump deposit 12162**

Again revealed only in section, deposit 12162 was a layer of brick, tile and plaster (?mortar?) within which early 20<sup>th</sup> century ironwork and bottles were noted. Of variable thickness, the section showed that this spread of material occupied undulations in what is presumed to have been the contemporary surface of the field. Its spread also coincided with the middle of the underlying palaeochannel and what was still the lowest lying part of the field (Area B). It was also noted during the initial stripping of Area R that such rubble was deposited along the length of the field. This material therefore appears to be a modern attempt to counter the boggy nature of the field surface.



Scrapped stuff – is any of it still useful?

**South bank layers (12300, 12349, 12355, 12370)**

**WHERE DOES LAYER (12267) FIT IN?**

To the south of the river, silty gravel layers seem to have been laid down on top of more or less natural brickearths and gravels and above redundant features such as ditch 12285. However, they were almost wholly overlain by Period IV homogenous layer 12267 and revealed only within limited areas of excavation which penetrated below it, so their true extent and nature remains unknown. A surfacing, or at least consolidating, deposit is postulated and its consistent horizontal level is noted.

Interestingly, gravel deposit 12300 would appear to demonstrate that its edge was perpetuated by 12267 and it is speculated that the latter was, in fact, a reworked upper portion of this.

None of these gravelly deposits are reliably dated, though they seem to have post-dated the parallel, east-west aligned, ditches of Period xx (i.e. xxxxx), though this was not conclusively demonstrated through excavation. Frequent bone, tile and moderate amounts of pottery were noted for (12349), though none collected.

Ignore these unless they appear in sections and need explaining? 12267 gets a couple of mentions in text, may need excising?