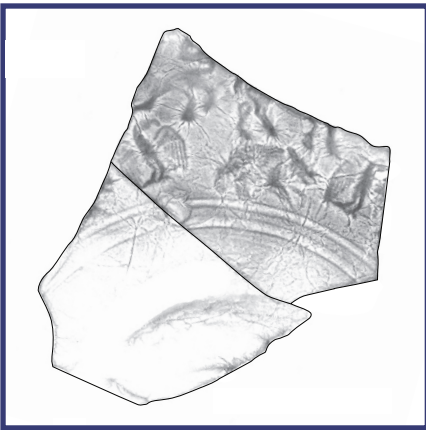


Roman and Medieval  
Field Systems at  
Aylesbury Vale Parkway  
Berryfields MDA  
Buckinghamshire



**Interim Report**



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**ROMAN AND MEDIEVAL FIELD SYSTEMS AT AYLESBURY VALE PARKWAY,  
BERRYFIELDS MDA, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: INTERIM REPORT**

by

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*During 2007 and 2008 Oxford Archaeology undertook an excavation at Aylesbury Vale Parkway, Buckinghamshire. Finds retrieved from the excavation provided an indication of Bronze Age occupation in the area, although the focus of this activity is likely to have been located away from the site. The earliest significant period of activity was Roman. Early Roman ditches were uncovered, and a cremation burial was assigned to the mid Roman period. The landscape in the later 3rd or 4th century was marked by a system of enclosures and boundaries. These were laid out with reference to Akeman Street, the Roman road that passed to the south. A possible timber structure may have been associated with the enclosures, but remained undated. Two late Roman inhumation graves were also recorded. Some of the finds collected from the site, including a stone column fragment and a mass of late Roman coins, suggested occupation with a status consistent with the putative roadside settlement or town at Fleet Marston, which was located to the west of the excavated site. Two phases of medieval agriculture were uncovered. The first, a series of furrows, was concentrated in the southern part of the site. This was replaced by ridge and furrow some time between the 10th and 16th centuries.*

## INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological investigation was carried out by Oxford Archaeology in advance of construction of Aylesbury Vale Parkway railway station and park and ride facility. The development forms part of a Major Development Area (MDA) comprising an area of 195 ha of former

agricultural land to the north-west of Aylesbury that has been identified within the Aylesbury Vale District Plan for development as housing, employment, retail and community facilities together with the necessary infrastructure and landscaping. Aylesbury Vale Parkway is situated in the southern part of the MDA, adjacent to the Aylesbury to Calvert Junction railway line (Fig. 1). The investigation comprised 'strip, map and sample' excavation undertaken in two phases between October - December 2007 and April - June 2008, encompassing a combined area of *c* 1 ha. A watching brief was also carried out during groundworks associated with construction of an associated access road. The work was commissioned by Aylesbury Vale Parkway Ltd in accordance with a condition attached to the planning permission requested by Sandy Kidd, the Senior Archaeologist at Buckinghamshire County Council and archaeological advisor to Aylesbury Vale District Council.

This report represents an interim statement on the results of the archaeological investigation. While the stratigraphic, artefactual and environmental analysis and recording have been completed, further consideration will be given to the findings when the report is integrated with the results of other investigations within the MDA. This will allow the site to be placed into its wider context. The integrated report will be published in due course.

### **Location, geology and topography**

Aylesbury Vale Parkway is located *c* 3 km to the north-west of Aylesbury, on an area of former agricultural land known as Billingsfield, located at NGR SP 787 154 (Fig. 1). The site comprised a roughly L-shaped area encompassing an area of *c* 1 ha adjacent to the Aylesbury to Calvert Junction railway to the south of the A41. It lay on a slope that rises from 73 m above Ordnance Datum (OD) in the north-west to 78 m OD in the south-east, forming the western side of a modest knoll between the River Thame to the east and a minor tributary stream, the Fleet, to the west. The underlying geology is comprised of the Jurassic and Cretaceous clay of the Denchworth Soil Associates (SSEW 1983), sealed beneath soils of clay and fine loam.

### **Archaeological background**

The Major Development Area is situated within a landscape of known archaeological importance. Although few prehistoric remains have been recorded in the vicinity, a group of possible barrows situated *c* 500 m south-west of the site may attest to activity of this period, and a D-shaped soil mark of uncertain date, situated *c* 2 km south-east of the site, may also be prehistoric. Akeman Street, the Roman road that links London and Cirencester via Verulamium, Aylesbury and Alchester,

extends from east to west across the southern tip of the Major Development Area, and a small Roman settlement was located beside this road *c* 1 km to the west, south of Fleet Marston Farm, where a minor road branched off to the north toward the possible site of a villa. The settlement is known mainly from surface finds, including tegulae and pottery of 2nd-4th century date, and according to Ordnance Survey records Roman building materials and foundations were removed by a farmer in 1941. The extent of the settlement has not been defined, but cropmark evidence indicates that a complex of ditched enclosures extended between the road and the site of the modern farm (Pre-Construct Archaeology 2009). The date of these features has not, as yet, been confirmed by excavation, but it is likely that they represent elements of the Roman settlement.

A programme of fieldwalking and evaluation trenching was carried out at Billingsfield by AC Archaeology in 1997 in connection with an earlier planning proposal (Cox 1997). The evaluation recorded only a small amount of prehistoric pottery and worked flint, but was more productive of Roman remains. The line of Akeman Street was confirmed, lying parallel to and 20 m south of the alignment indicated on Ordnance Survey maps. Evidence for a possible settlement, in the form of humic soil spreads, cremation burials, quarry pits and enclosure or field boundary ditches, were recorded close to the line of the road, with the greatest concentration occurring on the highest part of the area, immediately south-east of Aylesbury Vale Parkway.

Evaluation of the whole MDA area also identified a ladder settlement dating from the Roman period located a short distance from Aylesbury Vale Parkway, on the northern side of the A41 (GSB Prospection 1999a and b, OA 2002).

### **Excavation methodology**

The excavation was carried out in two phases (Figs. 2 and 3). Phase 1, excavated in 2007, consisted of an area that measured 25 m wide and extended for 125 m parallel to the A41 and 280 m parallel to the railway, and Phase 2, excavated in 2008, extended this area by adding a further 20 m to the width and 80 m to the southern end. The overburden, comprising the modern topsoil and subsoil, was removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, working under close archaeological supervision. Machine excavation was undertaken to the top of archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural. At this point machine excavation ceased and all archaeological features thus exposed were excavated by hand in accordance with standard OA practice (Wilkinson 1992). In addition to the routine collection of finds during the course of the excavation, the entire Phase 2 area was surveyed with a metal detector, resulting in the recovery of more than 100 coins of Roman date. A watching brief (Fig. 2) was also maintained during groundworks associated with the

construction of an associated access road.

### **Acknowledgements**

Oxford Archaeology would like to Aylesbury Vale Parkway Ltd for funding the excavation and post-excavation programme. The authors would like to thank in particular Ashley Gierth of John Laing plc for his continued support during this reporting phase. The authors are also grateful to Sandy Kidd, the Senior Archaeologist at Buckinghamshire County Council, whose assistance and advice is very much appreciated. Thanks are owed to Tom Clarke, who carried out the metal detector survey of the Phase 2 excavation. Edward Biddulph would like to thank Joanna Bird for identifying a piece of decorated samian. The fieldwork was directed by Ian Cook and managed by Tim Haines. The authors extend their thanks to the following staff for their contribution to the project during and after fieldwork: R Bailey, C Boston, R Broome, S Carvalho, C Champness, R Correia, R Friend, P Gane, R Griffin, L Howarth, L Heatley, A Hodgkinson, J Hutchings, G Jones, A Kilgour, N Lambert, A Latham, M Littlewood, B McAndrew, J Meen, J Michel, K Moon, J Mumford, C Parsons, R Peacock, E Punkett, K Proctor, B Pihlwret, A Reis, R Scales, J Thurstan, and M Vitolo. The post-excavation analysis was managed by Edward Biddulph.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

### **Prehistoric activity**

No features were found that could be attributed to the prehistoric period, and the only evidence for the presence of people at Aylesbury Vale Parkway at so early a date came in the form of a small assemblage of flint flakes and pottery that occurred as residual material in features of later periods. A total of three flint flakes, none of which was chronologically diagnostic, were recovered from the fills of Roman ditches. A sherd from an everted-rim shouldered jar in a flint-tempered fabric attributable to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age came from a furrow (625), and four small, undiagnostic sherds in a similar fabric were found in a tree throw hole (596).

### **Roman period**

#### ***Early Roman***

Two ditches were identified at the south-eastern end of the excavation that lay at right angles and



may have defined two sides of a rectilinear enclosure (Fig. 4). A short segment of a ditch (660), orientated NE-SW and measuring up to 1.5 m wide and 0.3 m deep, extended into the excavation area from its south-western edge for *c* 12 m. A small assemblage of pottery was recovered from the ditch, including rims from at least three grog-tempered jars dating to the late Iron Age or early Roman period and some smaller sherds of post-conquest type. Ditch 400, which was also dated by pottery to this phase, was recorded some 15 m to the east. The edge of the feature was disturbed by a later tree-throw hole, but the depth was similar and together the ditch segments may relate to an enclosure or system of drainage.

### ***Mid Roman***

The remains of a cremation burial (453), consisting of the burnt bones of an adult individual (455) and fragments of a shelly-ware jar (456) that may have served as an urn, were recovered from ditch 660 near its northern terminal (Fig 4). No grave cut could be discerned and it was not entirely clear whether these remains had been incorporated into the fill of the ditch or represented a discrete cremation burial that had been dug into the ditch after it had in-filled. Given the fragmentary nature of the vessel, it is perhaps more likely that the remains had been re-deposited, or disturbed by the digging of the ditch. A radiocarbon determination on a sample of cremated bone offered a date for original burial of cal AD 123–240 (95% (date representing 92% of area of curve); NZA-33951).

### ***Late Roman***

#### ***Quarry pit 539***

A large pit (539), located at the southern edge of the excavation (Fig. 4), may have been a quarry used to extract the clay into which the pit had been dug. The full extent of the feature was not established as it continued beyond the edge of the site, but it measured at least 5.2 m across and was 0.76 m deep. Late Roman pottery, including Oxford red colour-coated ware, was recovered from its single fill.

#### ***Ditch 358***

The quarry pit was cut by ditch 358, which extended across the southern part of the excavation (Fig. 4). The ditch was considerably larger than those in the central part of the excavation, measuring up to 1.85 m wide. It was distinctly V-shaped towards its western end and as much as 1 m deep, with a primary fill of light brown silty clay and upper fills of dark grey soil from which most of the finds assemblage was recovered (Fig. 7b). To the east the profile changed to a wide, flat base and the

ditch was between 0.4 m and 0.8 m deep with only or two fills (Fig. 7d). Although a coin (SF5) of 1st or 2nd century date was recovered from its lower fill, a more reliable date for its infilling is likely to be indicated by the associated late 3rd and 4th-century pottery, which includes shelly ware from Harrold and colour-coated wares from the Nene Valley and Hadham. An Oxford colour-coated ware bowl dating from AD 325 and a coin of Constantine (SF9) dating to AD 330-335 suggests that material was accumulating after the second quarter of the 4th century. Hammerscale recovered from the ditch is potentially significant, as it indicates that an area of iron smithing was situated nearby, although no *in situ* evidence for metalworking, such as hearths or furnaces, were identified.

#### *Inhumation burials 424 and 436*

Two inhumation burials were located adjacent to the southern side of ditch 358 (Figs 4 and 5). They had been placed close together, lying end-to-end on a parallel orientation to that of the ditch. Both graves had been heavily disturbed by later ploughing and in neither case was it possible to accurately define the cut of the grave pit. Grave 424 contained the remains of an adult individual (425), possibly female, orientated WNW-ESE and placed supine with the head to the east. A coin (SF10) recovered from the backfill (426) indicated that the burial dated from the second quarter of the 4th century or later. Grave 436, located next to 424 and sharing orientation, contained an adult female (438), aged over 40 years at death, interred in a similar position to the skeleton in grave 424. A radiocarbon determination on a sample from the right radius returned a date of cal AD 253–411 (95%; NZA-33936). Pottery in the backfill of this grave (439) was not closely datable, but is consistent with a late Roman date.

#### *Features of uncertain date within the Roman period*

##### *Field boundaries in the middle part of the site*

A sequence of ditches was identified in the middle part of the excavation that defined the boundaries of a complex of fields or enclosures (Fig. 6). The pottery recovered from these features was exclusively Roman, but was not sufficiently diagnostic to enable the dates of the features to be refined any further than this. In their earliest form these features comprised a pair of insubstantial, parallel ditches (329, 355/357) aligned N-S and *c* 50 m apart. Ditch 329 was exposed for a total length of 28 m within the area of the excavation, and extended further to the south beyond the edge of the excavation. Its greatest surviving dimensions were at the southern end, where it measured 1.35 m wide and 0.3 m deep, and at the northern end it petered out rather than ending in a clearly defined terminus. This is likely to indicate that its northward extent had been destroyed by plough

truncation. Ditch 355/357 similarly continued to the south beyond the excavation. Although it measured 1.04 m wide and 0.38 m deep at the southern end, it was considerably less substantial for most of its recorded length. It extended into the site for some 47 m, and had been truncated at its northern end by a later plough furrow. A break in this ditch 15 m from the southern edge of the excavation is likely to be the result of later ploughing and not an original feature. No artefactual material was recovered from either ditch.

Ditches 329 and 355/357 were superseded by ditch 332, which defined a boundary that extended laterally across both earlier ditches. Ditch 332 was recorded for a distance of *c* 70 m, although it may originally have extended further as the ends petered out due to plough truncation rather than ending in deliberate terminals. It varied from 0.6 m to 1.2 m wide and was 0.23 m deep (Fig. 7a), and yielded a small assemblage of 11 sherds (36 g) of Roman pottery. Ditches 354 and 657 branched off its southern side and extended for 10 m, perhaps indicating that the presence of fields or enclosures adjoining the main boundary.

The final phase of this sequence of features was represented by a single ditch (356), which cut ditch 332 and appears to have represented a re-establishment of the boundary formerly defined by ditch 355. Ditch 356 could be traced for a length of *c* 30 m, petering out at its southern end and truncated at its northern end by a plough furrow. As with the other ditches in this sequence it was rather shallow, measuring 0.8 m wide and 0.32 m deep (Fig. 7b), and it contained two small sherds of Roman pottery.

Two other ditches may have formed parts of this group of boundaries, but did not have stratigraphic relationships that would enable their place within the sequence to be established. Ditch 320 was located to the west of the main group of ditches and extended for at least 48 m on a N-S orientation, continuing beyond the northern edge of the excavation. It thus lay approximately parallel to the N-S boundaries of the earliest and latest phases in the sequence and at right angles to ditch 332. It was of similarly modest dimensions to the other features, measuring 1.2 m wide and 0.18 m deep, and a single scrap of Roman pottery was recovered from its fill. Ditch 653 lay to the north of the other boundary ditches, and was orientated on a rather oblique angle to their more regular alignments. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature and it is uncertain whether it should be associated with the Roman field boundaries or with the later plough furrows.

#### *Tree-throw holes*

A total of 93 tree-throw holes were investigated during the excavation (Fig. 4). The dates at which these features formed are uncertain, and it is possible there was accumulation within the voids of

cleared or felled trees over a prolonged period. Overall, a Roman date is preferred. Tree-throw holes 583 and 630 were cut by medieval plough furrows (Fig. 7e). Roman pottery, the latest pieces dating to AD 250-410, was recovered from 27 tree-throw holes. A radiocarbon determination from an animal bone from tree-throw hole 367 (Fig. 4) offered a date of cal AD 68-231 (95%; NZA-33929), and a sample of charred seeds from pit 459 – interpreted as a tree-throw hole – gave a date of cal AD 82-225 (95%; NZA-33906).

### ***Roman coins recovered by metal detecting survey***

A layer of brown silty soil (602) *c* 0.2 m thick was recorded at the upper, south-eastern end of the excavation, where it overlies ditch 358 and was observed to be cut by the later plough furrows. A metal detector survey carried out across the entire Phase 2 excavation area resulted in the recovery of 116 coins of Roman date from this deposit (Fig. 8). These were generally worn, making precise identification difficult, but were mainly of later 3rd and 4th century date. This assemblage adds to the 220 coins collected in 2009 from Billingsfield during two ‘Weekend Wanderers’ metal detecting rallies, and casual metal detecting activity in the area over a number of years has yielded more coins. These discoveries extend the concentration of coins further west into the Fleet Marston parish (R Tyrrell, pers. comm.).

### **Medieval period**

Two distinct groups of plough furrows resulting from ridge and furrow cultivation were identified, located in the central part of the excavation and at the south-eastern end (Fig. 3). The furrows in the central part of the site were oriented ENE-WSW and lay *c* 8 m apart, while those to the south-east, the preservation of which was somewhat more patchy, were orientated NW-SE and occurred at intervals of *c* 6 m. It is uncertain whether the differences in orientation and spacing indicates that they derive from two separate episodes of cultivation, or whether they represent contemporary cultivation of two adjacent fields.

### **Undated features**

A group of eight features (225, 250, 252, 255, 259, 261, 262, 264) was identified east of ditch 357 that may represent the bases of the truncated postholes of a timber structure (268). These features were all circular or sub-circular in shape (Fig. 6), measuring 0.5–0.8 m in diameter, and were very shallow, none surviving to a depth of more than 0.1 m. They did not form a clearly defined structure, but lay in a rough oval measuring *c* 9.3 x 6.7 m. No artefactual evidence was recovered

from these features.

Two features (179, 450) were investigated that were interpreted as deliberately dug pits. Pit 179 was located at the northern end of the excavation (Fig. 6) and pit 450 (not illustrated) toward the southern end. Neither yielded any datable artefacts.

### **Watching brief area**

Two small pits and a shallow ditch were recorded within the watching brief area (Fig. 2). One pit (710) contained a small sherd of Roman pottery, but the other (708) was undated, yielding only a flint flake and some poorly preserved animal bone. The ditch, like those in the main excavation area, was very shallow, with a depth of no more than 0.15 m.

## THE FINDS

### **Roman pottery**

By Edward Biddulph

#### ***Introduction***

A total of 1436 sherds, weighing 14280 g, was recovered from the site. Of this total, 237 sherds were unstratified. A note of the diagnostic forms and fabrics was made, but otherwise this material did not form part of the analysis. The stratified assemblage was sorted within contexts into fabric groups, which were weighed and counted. Vessels were identified by rims, which were quantified by vessel count (MV) based on rims and estimated vessel equivalent (EVE); the latter method records the percentage (expressed as a decimal number) of the surviving rim circumference (Table 1). Nomenclature for forms and fabrics followed standard OA guidelines (Booth nd), though reference was also made to regional corpora, for example Young's Oxford-region typology (Young 1977), and the Camulodunum/Colchester typology (Hawkes and Hull 1947; Bidwell and Croom 1999).

In summary, the site saw a relatively high level of activity in the early Roman period. This dropped during the 2nd and early 3rd century, but there was a significant increase the amount of pottery deposition from the late 3rd century onwards. Quite when the Roman settlement was abandoned is difficult to determine. An Oxford red colour-coated bowl points to occupation after 325, and it is possible that pottery deposition continued well into the late 4th century.

TABLE 1 Quantification of fabrics in stratified contexts

| <b>Fabric</b>   | <b>Sherds</b> | <b>Weight (g)</b> | <b>MV</b> | <b>EVE</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| FLINT – Prehistoric flint-tempered fabric                   | 8             | 36                | 1         | 0.1        |
| A11 – South Spanish amphora fabric                          | 3             | 38                | 0         | 0          |
| B11 – Black-burnished ware 1                                | 7             | 31                | 2         | 0.04       |
| B20 – Black-burnished ware 2                                | 6             | 64                | 3         | 0.15       |
| C10 – General shelly ware                                   | 34            | 219               | 2         | 0.2        |
| C11 – Late shelly ware                                      | 18            | 178               | 5         | 0.28       |
| E80 – Grog-tempered ware                                    | 379           | 3629              | 28        | 2.41       |
| F44 – East Gaulish ‘Rhenish’ ware                           | 1             | 1                 | 1         | 0.05       |
| F51 – Oxford red colour-coated ware                         | 82            | 636               | 8         | 0.79       |
| F52 – Nene Valley colour-coated ware                        | 19            | 211               | 6         | 0.6        |
| F55 – Colchester colour-coated ware                         | 1             | 14                | 1         | 0.31       |
| F56 – Hadham oxidised ware                                  | 8             | 44                | 2         | 0.08       |
| F60 – General red/brown colour-coated wares                 | 8             | 37                | 1         | 0.14       |
| M21 – Verulamium-region white ware mortarium                | 1             | 55                | 0         | 0          |
| M22 – Oxford white ware mortarium                           | 7             | 216               | 1         | 0.06       |
| M24 – Nene Valley white ware mortarium                      | 2             | 27                | 1         | 0.05       |
| M41 – Oxford red colour-coated ware mortarium               | 4             | 145               | 1         | 0.3        |
| O10 – General fine oxidised wares                           | 131           | 378               | 14        | 1.14       |
| O20 – General sandy oxidised wares                          | 41            | 168               | 8         | 0.52       |
| O80 – Coarse-tempered oxidised wares                        | 37            | 1060              | 1         | 0.08       |
| O81 – Pink-grogged ware                                     | 70            | 1487              | 3         | 0.18       |
| R10 – General fine grey wares                               | 64            | 478               | 7         | 0.58       |
| R20 – Sandy grey ware; includes Verulamium-region grey ware | 4             | 40                | 1         | 0.04       |
| R30 – General medium sandy grey wares                       | 155           | 1341              | 25        | 2.31       |
| R40 – Hadham grey ware                                      | 8             | 60                | 0         | 0          |
| R50 – General black-surfaced wares                          | 31            | 232               | 3         | 0.16       |
| R90 – Reduced storage jar fabrics                           | 6             | 86                | 1         | 0.06       |
| S20 – South Gaulish samian ware                             | 7             | 70                | 0         | 0          |
| S30 – Central Gaulish samian ware                           | 17            | 62                | 3         | 0.18       |

|                                     |      |       |     |       |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| S40 – East Gaulish samian ware      | 3    | 3     | 0   | 0     |
| W10 – General fine white wares      | 5    | 14    | 0   | 0     |
| W11 – Oxford parchment ware         | 3    | 171   | 2   | 0.3   |
| W12 – Oxford white ware             | 1    | 3     | 1   | 0.12  |
| W20 – General sandy white wares     | 10   | 66    | 3   | 0.36  |
| W21 – Verulamium-region white ware  | 13   | 54    | 1   | 0.08  |
| W30 – North Gaulish fine white ware | 3    | 3     | 0   | 0     |
| Z – Unidentified                    | 2    | 2     | 0   | 0     |
| TOTALS                              | 1199 | 11359 | 136 | 11.67 |

### *Assemblage composition*

TABLE 2 Pottery from early Roman context groups. Key: C jars (unidentified to type), CD medium-mouthed necked jars, CE high-shouldered necked jars, EA butt-beakers. \* = fabric present, but with no surviving rim

| <b>Fabric</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>CD</b> | <b>CE</b> | <b>EA</b> | <b>Total EVE</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|----------|
| E80           | 0.36     | 0.13      | 0.43      | 0.42      | 1.34             | 97.8     |
| O10           |          |           |           |           | *                |          |
| O80           |          |           |           |           | *                |          |
| R10           |          |           |           |           | *                |          |
| R30           |          | 0.03      |           |           | 0.03             | 2.2      |
| W10           |          |           |           |           | *                |          |
| Total EVE     | 0.36     | 0.16      | 0.43      | 0.42      | 1.37             |          |
| %             | 26.3     | 11.7      | 31.4      | 30.7      |                  |          |

The earliest pottery recovered was flint-tempered (FLINT), which dated to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age. A single vessel – a shouldered jar with an everted rim – was recorded. All sherds were residual in later deposits and cannot be taken to indicate prehistoric activity within the excavated areas. It is possible that the material derived from the Berryfields site immediately north of the Aylesbury Vale Parkway area, where Bronze Age occupation is attested. The earliest activity at the site dated to the early Roman period (AD 43-120), probably within the second half of the 1st century. Pottery from context groups phased to the period accounted for 12% of the whole assemblage by EVE (Table 2). Grog-tempered ware (E80), which generally spanned the end of the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, made the single largest contribution. Reduced and red-surfaced fabrics were available as mainly high-shouldered necked jars, medium-mouthed jars, and

butt-beakers. A coarser, oxidised, grog-tempered ware (O80) was probably restricted to storage jars, though no rims were encountered. Other wares took minor shares of the assemblage, but, found in association with grog-tempered ware, helped to give the context groups a post-conquest date for deposition. Just one vessel was recorded – a medium-mouthed jar in a sandy grey ware (R30). Other vessels, recorded in later Roman groups, are likely to have been residual occurrences of early Roman pottery. These include a globular beaker in sandy grey wares, a platter in black-surfaced ware (R50), a fine grey ware (R10) beaker, and a Drag. 29 decorated bowl and Drag. 33 conical cup in South Gaulish samian ware (S20).

With the exception of a cremation burial, no context groups were phased to the 2nd century or first half of the 3rd. However, 25 sherds of certain middle Roman date were recovered from later deposits, which suggests that middle Roman occupation was located close to the areas of excavation. This material largely comprised Central and East Gaulish samian, a Curle 11 flanged bowl, Drag. 31 dish, and Drag. 27 cup being among the forms encountered. Other pottery included black-burnished ware (B20), East Gaulish ‘Rhenish’ ware (F44), a bag-shaped beaker in Nene Valley colour-coated ware (F52), and a dish (possibly imitating samian form Drag. 31) in sandy white ware (W20). Amphorae were restricted to body sherds from South Spanish olive oil containers. The remains of a cremation burial (453) included fragments of a shelly-ware jar, which may have served as a cinerary urn. A radiocarbon determination from the cremated bone offered a middle Roman date for the burial, and the pottery is consistent with this. A potential source is Harrold in Bedfordshire, where one of the principal manufacturing sites of shell-tempered pottery was situated; pottery arrived from there into the northern part of Buckinghamshire throughout the Roman period (Marney 1989, 58).

TABLE 3 Pottery from late Roman context groups. Key: B flagons, C jars, D bowls/jars, E beakers, H bowls, I bowls/dishes, J dishes, L lids. \* = fabric present, but with no surviving rim

| <b>Fabric</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>H</b> | <b>I</b> | <b>J</b> | <b>L</b> | <b>Total EVE</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|----------|
| A11           |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          | *                |          |
| B11           |          |          |          |          |          |          | 0.02     |          | 0.02             | 0.4      |
| B20           |          |          |          |          |          |          | 0.09     |          | 0.09             | 1.9      |
| C10           |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          | *                |          |
| C11           |          | 0.15     |          |          |          |          |          |          | 0.15             | 3.2      |
| E80           |          | 0.21     |          |          |          |          |          | 0.14     | 0.35             | 7.4      |
| F51           |          |          |          |          | 0.54     |          | 0.07     |          | 0.61             | 12.8     |
| F52           | 0.2      |          |          |          | 0.16     |          |          |          | 0.36             | 7.6      |



|           |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| F55       |      |      |      | 0.31 |      |      |      |      | 0.31 | 6.5  |
| F56       |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.03 |      | 0.03 | 0.6  |
| F60       |      |      |      |      | 0.14 |      |      |      | 0.14 | 2.9  |
| M21       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| M22       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| M24       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| M41       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| O10       |      |      |      | 0.3  |      | 0.1  |      |      | 0.4  | 8.4  |
| O20       |      | 0.22 | 0.02 | 0.02 |      |      |      |      | 0.26 | 5.5  |
| O80       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| O81       |      | 0.06 |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.06 | 1.3  |
| R10       |      | 0.08 |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.08 | 4.8  |
| R20       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| R30       |      | 1.01 |      |      | 0.14 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.21 | 1.46 | 30.4 |
| R40       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| R50       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| S20       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| S30       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| W10       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| W11       |      |      |      |      | 0.06 |      |      |      | 0.06 | 1.3  |
| W12       | 0.12 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.12 | 2.5  |
| W20       |      | 0.12 |      |      |      |      | 0.1  |      | 0.22 | 4.6  |
| W21       | 0.08 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.08 | 1.7  |
| W30       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | *    |      |
| Total EVE | 0.4  | 1.85 | 0.02 | 0.63 | 1.04 | 0.15 | 0.36 | 0.35 | 4.8  |      |
| %         | 8.3  | 38.5 | 0.4  | 13.1 | 21.7 | 3.1  | 7.5  | 7.3  |      |      |

Pottery from context groups phased to the late Roman period (AD 250-410) accounted for 35% of the entire assemblage (Table 3). The assemblage was inevitably dominated by sandy grey wares. These were available mainly in medium-mouthed necked jars. A cooking-jar with everted rim deriving from a black-burnished ware prototype, a bowl with curving sides, lids, and a narrow-necked jar with a frilled bifid rim (cf. Marney 1989, fig. 33.11) were also recorded. In addition, a rim fragment was tentatively identified as a dish or bowl with a dropped flange. Most of the grey ware was doubtless of local origin, but some grey wares arrived from more distant sources. A small amount of fine grey ware (R40) arrived probably during the 3rd and 4th century from the Hadham kilns in Hertfordshire, possibly accompanying the more prolific fine oxidised ware (F56). A grey version of the Verulamium industry's standard white ware was recorded, though is likely to be

residual. Black-burnished ware (B10) arrived from Dorset (plain-rimmed dishes were represented), while necked, hook-rimmed jars and dropped-flanged dishes were available in shelly ware (C11) from the Harrold kilns.

Oxidised wares contributed some 15% to the late Roman assemblage by EVE. Much of the material was very fragmented and could only be assigned to general categories. It is suspected that some sherds attributed to fine oxidised wares (O10) were once colour-coated. Vessel classes seen in the fabric (rims were rarely identified to specific type) include beakers and dishes. A flanged dish was similar to a standard Hadham product (cf. Bidwell and Croom 1999, type Cam 317), although the fabric lacked the conventional 'salt and pepper' appearance (Tomber and Dore 1998, 151). Sandy oxidised ware (O20) was equivalent to fabric R30, being coarser than O10 and available mainly as jars. Pink-grogged ware (O81), characterised by pink/orange surfaces and dark grey core, was manufactured in the Stowe and Towcester area – kilns have been discovered in Stowe Park (P Booth, pers. comm.) – from the second half of the 2nd century to at least the mid 4th (Taylor 2004, 60). A range of forms were produced, although only storage jars were identified in this assemblage.

White wares made a small contribution (10% by EVE), but were relatively diverse in terms of fabrics. North Gaulish white ware (W30) probably arrived during the mid 1st century AD, though was residual, as was a Verulamium-region white ware (W21) ring-necked flagon, which dated to the late 1st or first half of the 2nd century. Some sherds recorded as sandy white ware (W20) may more properly be identified as fabric W21, but were too fragmented to be certain. Necked jars were recorded. Two Oxford-region fabrics reached the site after the late 3rd century: two carinated bowls (Young 1977, type P24) were seen in parchment ware (W11), while a single ring-necked flagon (type W6) was available in fine white ware (W12).

In the phased assemblage, Oxford mortaria were present as body sherds, but pieces identifiable to type were recovered from post-Roman deposits or were unstratified. These included white ware (M22) bead-and-flanged mortaria (Young 1977, types M2 and M22) and red colour-coated (M41) wall-sided vessels (type C97). Nene Valley potters were responsible for other mortaria (M24). A Verulamium mortarium (W21) was no doubt residual. The Oxford and Nene Valley products were probably accompanied by finewares. This was a major category, taking a 30% share of the assemblage by EVE. Oxford red colour-coated ware (F51) was the commonest fabric. (It should be noted that many sherds lacked the surface slip and, without other diagnostic traits, cannot be distinguished from Oxford oxidised ware, although this fabric is rare in Buckinghamshire (Marney 1989, 126).) Three forms were identified: a bead-rimmed dish dating from 270 and based on a samian prototype (Young 1977, type C45), a necked bowl, which emerged after 325 (type

C75), and, more doubtfully, a 4th-century carinated bowl (type C81). Nene Valley colour-coated ware (F52) was reasonably well represented. Forms were largely restricted to dropped-flanged bowls and plain-rimmed dishes. Hadham oxidised ware (F56) was relatively scarce, though, as suggested above, more sherds might be found within the O10 category. A Cam 317 dish was recorded. A Colchester colour-coated ware (F55) funnel-necked, bulbous beaker (Cam 395), one of the Colchester industry's latest products, is of interest, since the fabric is a rare occurrence in the region (Marney 1989, 137), although notably Colchester colour-coated ware has been recorded at nearby Berton (Parminter 1986, 59). The sources responsible for the colour-coated fabrics, F60, are unidentified; the pieces may represent minor, reasonably local, workshops, although it is possible that they are simply atypical products of the larger industries.

### ***Pottery use***

Evidence of use was recorded on some of the pottery. Two Oxford white ware mortaria had been burnt; one, a bead-and-flanged type (Young 1977, type M22) was burnt on top of and below the flange, while burning was noted on the internal surface of the base of a second piece. Such evidence is known elsewhere, for example at the Chemistry Research Laboratory site in Oxford, where a number of Oxfordshire white ware mortaria were uniformly burnt on the flanges and rims (Biddulph 2005, 163), and it is a strong possibility that mortaria were used as cooking vessels, as well as food preparation vessels. The pattern of burning suggests that the mortaria were inverted over cooking vessels set on the hearth or were perhaps used to create an oven in the manner of a testum (Grocock and Grainger 2006, 77-82). Evidence of reuse or adaptation was recorded on three base sherds (two of fabric E80, the other being O81), which had been perforated after firing. No evidence of wear or graffiti was noted.

### ***The pottery in its regional context***

Comparing the assemblage from Aylesbury Vale Parkway with others in and around Aylesbury helps to identify patterns of pottery supply and provides a sense of the type of site that the pottery represents. Unfortunately, the comparative study is hampered by the paucity of quantified data. The record for Berton (Parminter 1986) and the Aston Clinton bypass (Slowikowski 2008) is relatively comprehensive and so exceptional, though none of the pottery was quantified by EVE. However, some means of comparison can be gained from the descriptions of the pottery alone. In general, the chronological pattern seen at the Parkway site is matched at other sites in the Aylesbury area.

Late Iron Age pottery from Walton Court, Aylesbury, was of different character to the grog-

tempered material at Aylesbury Vale Parkway. The former included barrel-shaped jars and wide-mouthed jars (Farley *et al.* 1981, fig. 8) which did not tend to match the Parkway forms. Occupation at Walton Court may well have begun earlier, before the conquest, and appears to have been followed by an early Roman hiatus, a time marked by deposition at the Parkway site. There was a contemporaneous phase of deposition at Bierton (Parminter 1986, 67). Pottery belonging to this period included grog-tempered pottery and jars with rusticated decoration. The samian assemblage included a South Gaulish decorated bowl, Drag. 30, dating to the mid 1st century (Dannell 1986, 58). Occupation commencing in the late Iron Age at Lower Icknield Way Site B on the Aston Clinton bypass continued into the early Roman period. The large assemblage was dominated by grog-tempered and sandy wares, though some 'exotica', including samian, Gallo-Belgic terra nigra and white wares, was recorded (Slowikowski 2008, table 13). Such pottery was absent at Aylesbury Vale Parkway.

On the whole, the pottery from the Aylesbury area suggests a lower level of mid Roman occupation. Cremation burial 453 was the only feature at Aylesbury Vale Parkway certain to date to the 2nd century, though residual Central Gaulish samian from the site hints at contemporaneous activity in the area. The jar from the burial contrasts with a considerably richer ceramic group from a grave at Weston Turville, which contained, among other finds, three samian vessels (a cup and two dishes), two beakers and two ring-necked flagons (Waugh 1962). This is an exceptional group, however, and grave 453 and others, such as a cremation burial recorded on the Aston Clinton bypass, which contained an urn and two beakers (Masefield 2008, 51), are likely to represent a more typical sort of rite in the Aylesbury Vale in the 1st and 2nd centuries. A ceramic group from a pit at Buckingham Street pointed to occupation in the first half of the 2nd century there (Greep 1982, 91), and 2nd century pottery, most obviously samian, was recorded at Bierton and Walton Court (Dannell 1986, 57-8; Dickinson 1981, 69-70). However, as much of this material was residual, the extent, level and character of 2nd- and early 3rd-century occupation in Aylesbury is difficult to assess.

As at Aylesbury Vale Parkway, pottery groups from neighbouring sites have a late Roman emphasis. Late 3rd and 4th-century material appeared to dominate assemblages at Walton (Farley 1976, 164), the Watermead roundabout site at Buckingham Road (Hawkins and Dalwood 1988, 163) and Walton Court (Farley *et al.* 1981, 69), and was an important component at Bierton (Parminter 1986, fig. 28). A large quantity of pottery, double that assigned to the early Roman period, was recovered from Icknield Way Site B (Slowikowski 2008, table 19). In general, products from the Oxford and Nene Valley industries were conspicuous, though overtaken by grey wares in

terms of quantity, and a number forms – red colour-coated and white-ware mortaria, colour-coated bowls and dishes, and grey ware dropped-flange bowls and necked jars – were recorded across the Aylesbury area.

Quite what types of site the pottery assemblages represent is very uncertain, given the nature of the investigations and lack of pottery quantification. The early Roman assemblage from Aylesbury Vale Parkway is perhaps too small for reliable comparison with that from the Aston Clinton bypass, but the greater range of fine wares at the latter, including imported fine wares, is likely to be significant, hinting at a higher ranking site responsible for it. Masefield (2008, 194) argues for a farmstead of some pretension, perhaps developing with elements traditionally associated with villas, immediately beyond the area of excavation. But while the early Roman assemblages of Aston Clinton and Aylesbury Vale Parkway can be separated by key fabrics, there are few differences between their late Roman assemblages (Fig. 9). Admittedly, the proportions of shelly wares, ‘Belgic’ wares and samian do not match, but this simply reflects a greater amount of residuality and perhaps a different supply pattern at the Parkway site. In terms of fine and specialist wares, such as white wares, mortaria and finewares, the assemblages are close enough to suggest a similar settlement status. That said, the dominance in the late Roman period of regional industries such as Oxford tends to mask differences between sites (cf. Booth 2004, 50). If a villa did develop at Icknield Way Site B, then its pottery would not necessarily be distinguishable from that of a lower-status site.

A further clue to site type is provided by the samian, although its value is limited given that it has tended to be found as residual occurrences in late Roman groups. The amount of decorated samian compared with plain forms can be a useful index. Steve Willis (2005, section 7.3.2; 1998, 105-111) records higher than average proportions of decorated samian at military and urban sites, and lower than average proportions at basic rural sites. At Aylesbury Vale Parkway, four out of 27 samian sherds were decorated, giving a proportion of 15%. At Bierton, at least eight sherds out of 275, or 3% were decorated (Dannell 1986, 57-8). From Walton Court, five decorated vessels were reported, but it is not known how much samian was found in total (interestingly, it has been suggested that Walton Court was the site of a fort (Radford and Zeepvat 2009, 55), but the samian has not been reported in sufficient detail to provide support for this view). The two samian vessels from Buckingham Street were both plain (Greep 1982, 91). One may suggest from this that the inhabitants at Aylesbury Vale Parkway had better access to samian compared with other settlements and that this is consistent with the site’s position on Akeman Street and its close proximity (and possible connections) to the centre at Fleet Marston. However, this conclusion, given the

incomplete state of the pottery record across the Aylesbury area, is extremely tentative.

***Catalogue of illustrated pottery*** (Fig. 10)

*Ditch group 660, cut 430, fill 431. Ceramic date: AD 43-100*

1. Medium-mouthed jar (Cam 260), grog-tempered ware (E80)
2. Necked jar (Cam 220), red-surfaced grog-tempered ware (E80)
3. Necked jar (Cam 228), red-surfaced grog-tempered ware (E80)

*Ditch group 660, cut 498, fill 499. Ceramic date: AD 43-100*

4. Butt-beaker (Cam 119), grog-tempered ware (E80)

*Pit 446, fill 447. Ceramic date: 4th century*

5. Ring-necked flagon, Verulamium-region white ware (W21); 2nd century
6. Flagon or beaker, Nene Valley colour-coated ware (F52)
7. Narrow-necked jar or flagon with frilled decoration (cf. Perrin 1999, fig. 68.381 or Marney 1989, fig. 33.11), sandy grey ware (R30)
8. Medium-mouthed necked jar, sandy grey ware (R30)
9. Medium-mouthed necked jar, sandy oxidised ware (O20)
10. Medium-mouthed necked jar, sandy grey ware (R30)
11. Storage jar, pink-grogged ware (O81)
12. Carinated bowl (Young type P24), Oxford parchment ware (W11)
13. Bead-rimmed dish (Young type C45), Oxford red colour-coated ware (F51)
14. Flanged dish (Cam 317), Hadham oxidised ware (F56)
15. Dish with groove and frilling below rim and burnished surfaced, sandy grey ware (R30)
16. Bowl (Drag. 29) in South Gaulish samian ware (S20) with unusual freestyle decoration depicting at four animals: a bear (Hermet 1934, plate 26, no. 1), an eagle (Hermet 1934, plate 28, no. 8), a lion (Hermet 1934, 25, no. 26), and probably a deer. AD 60-80. (Identification by Joanna Bird.)

*Pit 446, fill 448. Ceramic date: 4th century*

17. Medium-mouthed necked jar, sandy white ware (W20), possibly Verulamium (and residual)
18. Necked bowl, brown-slipped ware with red core (F60)
19. Bead-rimmed dish copying Drag. 31, sandy white ware (W20)

*Ditch group 358, cut 333, fill 334. Ceramic date: AD 325-400*

20. Necked bowl with rouletted decoration, Oxford red colour-coated ware (F51)

*Pit 539, fill 540. Ceramic date: Mid 3rd to 4th century*

21. Funnel-necked beaker with globular body (Cam 395), Colchester colour-coated ware (F55)

## **Ceramic building material**

by Cynthia Poole

Ceramic building material totalling 27 fragments (1503 g) was recovered from twelve contexts (Table 4), although two-thirds of the assemblage was unstratified. Preservation was poor, with over half moderately to heavily abraded and a low mean fragment weight of 56 g. No complete tiles survived and the only complete dimension measurable was thickness. The majority of Roman pieces were made in either a sandy fabric (C) or a fine clay fabric (D). While the majority of pieces were of Roman date, some medieval or post-medieval roofing was identified.

TABLE 4 Quantification of ceramic building material forms

| <b>Forms</b>  | <b>Count</b> | <b>% Count</b> | <b>Wt (g)</b> | <b>% Wt (g)</b> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Brick         | 2            | 7.4%           | 274           | 18%             |
| Imbrex?       | 2            | 7.4%           | 115           | 7.65%           |
| Tegula        | 5            | 18.15%         | 375           | 25%             |
| Plain         | 7            | 26%            | 507           | 34%             |
| Voussoir      | 1            | 3.7%           | 31            | 2%              |
| Roof: flanged | 1            | 3.7%           | 99            | 6.5%            |
| Roof: flat    | 1            | 3.7%           | 11            | 0.75%           |
| Roof/imbrex   | 4            | 14.8%          | 26            | 1.7%            |
| Misc          | 4            | 14.8%          | 65            | 4.3%            |
| Total         | 27           |                | 1503          |                 |

### ***The Roman forms***

A limited range of forms survived, comprising roofing, brick and voussoir. A number of plain fragments measuring 20-29 mm thick probably derive from tegulae. One of these with a very worn surface had probably been used in a floor or metalled surface. The tegulae included one with a poorly preserved flange and curved profile (type D or E), measuring 32 mm wide by 46 mm high

externally. At the corner this had been cut to form an upper cutaway of type A4, partly truncating the flange to a depth of 17 mm. One piece had remains of the finger groove alongside the flange base and another a single curving finger groove that probably formed part of a type 1 signature mark. Thickness ranged from 15 to 25 mm. Two pieces 14 and 20 mm thick were probably imbrex and some other pieces 12-14 mm thick could not be defined with any certainty as imbrex or later flat roof tile. Two fragments, one with a corner, measuring 35 and 37 mm thick were identified as brick. These are probably from the smaller types such as *bessalis* or *pedalis*. A single fragment of flue tile is interpreted as *voussoir* on the basis of combed keying on adjacent surfaces. The combing was coarse, the bands measuring more than 27 mm. The comb had over four teeth with a short wide V-shaped profile, probably similar in form to one illustrated by Brodribb (1987, fig 48.3).

### ***Medieval–post-medieval tile***

One certain fragment of medieval/post-medieval flat roof tile, probably peg tile, was identified and three other fragments may be either peg tile or Roman imbrex. An unusual form was a flanged tile that had the characteristics of the Anglo-Norman roofing form rather than a tegula. It measured 16 mm thick and had a rectangular flange 16 mm wide by 25 mm high with no cutaway at the corner. A conical nail hole measuring 10 mm diameter narrowing to 3 mm at the base was made before firing and was centred 40 mm from the top and side edges. It was unglazed and had pressure mark from stacking on the side of the flange.

### ***Discussion***

The presence of less common forms in both the Roman and medieval periods suggests that the material derived from core buildings of a wealthy or high-status estate, such as a villa with heated and vaulted rooms in the Roman period, and possibly a manor house in the Norman period.

### **Fired clay**

by Cynthia Poole

Fired clay amounting to a total of 41 fragments (234 g) was recovered by hand excavation and sieving, the latter accounting for three quarters of fragments (or half the assemblage by weight). The mean fragment weight (MFW) of 5.7g is indicative in the poor quality of preservation, which is reflected in the preponderance of non-diagnostic material.

The majority is made in fabric A, a fine, slightly porous clay with a silky texture; the porous



characteristic may have resulted from decayed organic matter or leached shell. If the latter it may that suggest it is derived from a similar source to fabric H, which contained shell grit and voids of leached shell. It is probable that the local geological clay deposits or overlying clay subsoils formed the source of the clay fabrics.

The majority of the fragments were non-diagnostic, most having a single flat smooth surface. The fragments from pit 459 had a grey to brown surface and may be derived from a hearth surface. An unstratified piece had two flat surfaces joining at right angles and may derive from a piece of oven furniture. The only diagnostic item was part of a firebar (from furrow 409) of rectangular section measuring 44 mm wide. It is typical of the tapering fire or kiln bars found in the east Midlands region. This type of object has been found associated with pottery kilns (Swan 1984), though they may have been used with ovens or kilns of other functions. They date to the late Iron Age and Roman period and suggest that this is the general date of the assemblage. Five sherds (28 g) of briquetage were recovered from the fill of tree-throw hole 429.

## Lithics

by David Mullin

A total of three worked flints were recovered from three contexts (Table 5). In addition burnt flint, weighing 336 g, was recovered from a further seven contexts.

TABLE 5 Summary of the worked flint

| Context | Description             | Raw material     |
|---------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 195     | Broken blade-like flake | gravel flint     |
| 439     | Secondary flake         | dark grey flint  |
| 556     | Core trimming flake     | dark brown flint |

The assemblage from the site appears to be residual within later features and the small quantities recovered limits the interpretation of the material beyond illustrating a human presence in the local area during the Neolithic/Bronze Age period.

## **The worked stone**

by Ruth Shaffrey

### ***Description***

Three pieces of worked stone were recovered from the site, including two architectural fragments and a quern stone. A fragment of miniature column is made of clearly banded, spar supported, shelly oolitic limestone, most like Purbeck limestone. A fragment of probable quern or millstone is also made from a Jurassic shelly limestone. Limestone was not a common choice for a quern material during any period. However examples of Roman date have been recovered from sites including Peterborough, Ashton, Faringdon, and Fairford, Thornhill Farm (Shaffrey in prep; Shaffrey 2005, Shaffrey 2004; I Meadows pers. comm.). Its presence suggests *ad hoc* use of materials. A small fragment of larvikite wall veneer was unstratified. Larvikite is a syenite and marble usually known as blue pearl granite (despite the fact that it is not a granite) and mainly known for its use in major buildings, such as Westminster Abbey and in (relatively modern) shop frontages. It is not likely to be of Roman origin.

The presence of a column of certain Roman date hints at the possibility of Roman buildings nearby of reasonably high status. The limestone quern is in contradiction, however, suggesting instead the use of whatever was to hand, with little consideration for the quality of the finished product. The objects probably relate to different phases of activity.

### ***Catalogue of worked stone (not illustrated)***

1. Miniature column. Banded shelly oolitic limestone. Probably from the Purbeck Beds. Neatly worked around the circumference and with one very worn side. Measures approximately 160 mm diameter. Ditch 419 (fill 422), group 649, late Roman, probably 4th century.
2. Probable millstone or rotary quern. Jurassic shelly limestone. Several finger width parallel grooves on one side consistent with the preparation of a millstone grinding surface although limestone is an inappropriate material. Quarry pit 446 (fill 447), late Roman.
3. Wall veneer. Larvikite (marble). Thin piece, slightly polished on one face. Measures 5 mm thick. Unstratified.

## **Metal objects other than coins**

by Ian Scott

### ***Composition of the assemblage***

The small metalwork assemblage consists of 69 objects comprising 15 pieces of copper alloy, 47 pieces of iron and seven pieces of lead. In addition, there are four small unidentified fragments of iron and a small unidentified piece of lead. The bulk of the assemblage (46 objects) was unstratified.

### ***Stratified material***

The stratified material comprises iron objects and one piece of melted lead, and is made up largely of nails (nine objects) and miscellaneous fragments (five). There are also seven hobnails (collected from late Roman ditch 358, medieval furrows 414 and 463, and layer 602) and an iron hook from furrow 347. The hobnails are almost certainly of Roman date, but the hook is probably medieval or post-medieval.

### ***Unstratified material***

The unstratified finds include four possible lead weights, one biconical, two crudely formed cone-shaped weights, and the fourth formed from a pierced flattish irregular lump. Personal items consist of three hobnails, fragments of two 1st-century brooches, a possible bracelet fragment, a hair pin head, and small object that may be a nail cleaner. Household objects comprise a whittle tang knife, probably modern, and a lead rivet used to repair a ceramic vessel. Structural items consist of two stout joiner's dogs and a T-staple. There are eight nails, eight miscellaneous fragments and three objects of uncertain identification. Finally there are nine pieces of waste comprising either broken fragments, or melted pieces, of copper alloy.

### ***Catalogue of illustrated material*** (Fig. 11)

1. Langton Down brooch fragment with non-reeded bow. The spring is held inside a cylindrical enclosure. Early–mid 1st-century AD. Cu alloy. L: 19 mm; W: 18.5 mm. Unstratified. A good parallel for this type of brooch comes from Dragonby (Olivier 1996, 242-44, fig.11.5: 53). Langton Hill type brooches are found widely in Gaul and Germany and in southern England in the early 1st century AD. They were found in the late Iron Age King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead and Rigby

1989) and seem to date from just before the Claudian invasion (Olivier, 1996, 244; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 150).

2. Hod Hill brooch fragment with hinged pin. Mid 1st-century AD. Cu alloy. L: 17 mm; W: 15 mm. Unstratified. Hod Hill brooches occur in the early 1st century AD on the continent and are often associated with military sites (Olivier 1996, 248). In Britain they date to the period of the Claudian conquest and immediately after. They are absent from King Harry Lane, but occur at Hod Hill and at Colchester in Claudio-Neronian contexts (Bayley and Butcher 2004, 152-53).

3. Possible bracelet fragment. Formed from plain narrow strip with a thin extension at one end, around which a coil of thin wire is wrapped. The coil is probably part of an adjustable clasp. The strip is bent into a curve. Cu alloy. L: 50 mm. Unstratified. A good example of an almost complete sliding clasp on a bracelet with a circular section band comes from a late Roman inhumation at Colchester (Crummy 1983, 38, fig. 41: 1601). The majority of bracelets date to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

4. Hair-pin fragment with knob head (Type 2, Cool 1990, 154, fig. 1: 7-9; fig. 2: 1-2), with most of stem lost. Round pin head, with stepped collar or moulding to stem. Cu alloy. L extant: 11 mm; D: 8 mm. Sf 108, unstratified.

5. Possible nail cleaner. Small object comprising thin sinuous slightly tapering stem of sub-rectangular section. It ends at one end in a terminal that looks like an open mouthed snake head. The wide end has a flat expanded terminal. Dating uncertain. Cu alloy. L: 32 mm. Sf 60, unstratified.

## **Coins**

by Paul Booth

Some 116 Roman coins, mostly of later 3rd to 4th century date, were recovered during the excavation, but as the majority were found with the aid of a metal detector, most were unstratified. The coins vary considerably in condition, with many being eroded or heavily encrusted. While the majority can be approximately dated, in many cases detailed identification and dating are precluded by their condition (reflected by the lack of references in Table 7), and specialist cleaning of a sample of the coins did not significantly enhance the degree of precision of identification. For these reasons the listing of the individual coins is relatively summary in fashion, and in any case assignment of coins to specific catalogue numbers is rarely possible. Some date ranges remain very broad and some of these identifications are based on general characteristics rather than observable

details. Twenty-two coins (19% of the assemblage) can only be dated in very broad terms.

### ***The assemblage***

The assemblage is summarised in terms of chronological units in Table 6 below, using widely accepted issue periods where possible. The coins are listed individually in approximate chronological order in Table 7.

TABLE 6 Chronological breakdown of coin assemblage

| Approximate date range | Numbers of coins of this period |          |          | Total |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|
|                        | Certain                         | Probable | Possible |       |
| 1st-2nd century        |                                 | 3        |          | 3     |
| 260-296                | 26                              | 3        | 1        | 30    |
| 306-330                | 2                               | 1        |          | 3     |
| 330-335                | 8                               |          | 1        | 9     |
| 335-341                | 13                              |          |          | 13    |
| 341-348                | 6                               |          |          | 6     |
| 350-364                | 7                               | 2        | 3        | 12    |
| 364-378                | 14                              | 5        | 1        | 20    |
| 388-402                |                                 | 1        |          | 1     |
| 320+ / 4C              | 4                               | 4        |          | 8     |
| 250-400                |                                 |          |          | 11    |
| Total                  |                                 |          |          | 116   |

Three early Roman coins were present, but all were extremely worn and eroded; none was identifiable, but one (SF34) was reminiscent in character of Claudian imitation asses (see for example Kenyon 1987). None of these coins need have been present on the site until long after their date of minting.

The later 3rd century is well-represented, with almost 26% of all the coins from the site assigned to this period. Their condition makes it impossible to assess the precise proportion of irregular issues, but this is likely to have been high. A minimum of 20 of the 30 coins in this group are identified as potentially irregular and could therefore probably be dated after *c* AD 270. In most cases the original types on which they are based are unclear. Identified emperors include Gallienus

(two coins, of which one is probably irregular), Claudius II and perhaps Tetricus I (irregular). One coin (SF71, context 447) with a radiate bust appears to have the incomplete obverse legend ] LORIA[. The reading is not certain, but if correct suggests the emperor Florian (AD 276), whose coins are rare as site finds in Britain. Unfortunately the coin is damaged and the reverse is completely obscured.

Early 4th century coins are typically quite rare, and the present assemblage is no exception to this rule. After AD 330 it is notable that the one-standard type of Gloria Exercitus (AD 335-341) is more common than the two-standard type (AD 330-335). Representation of mid 4th century issues is fairly typical, all the coins dated 350-364 being imitation Fel Temp Reparatio (fallen horseman) types. It should be noted that for present purposes irregular coins of the periods 330-335, 335-341 and 341-348 have been assigned to the date range of the original issues.

Coins of the House of Valentinian (364-378) form another significant component of the assemblage, but later coins are very scarce, only one being assigned with confidence to the period 388-402. Other pieces from the latter period might possibly be included amongst the unidentified 4th century material, but cannot be identified on the basis of size alone.

### ***Discussion***

The assemblage is in most respects fairly typical of rural settlements, with its later Roman emphasis. The overall numbers are quite high given the number of excavated late Roman features, but are explained in terms of proximity to the poorly-known roadside settlement at Fleet Marston, centred a little to the west of the present site. Two metal detector rallies carried out in 2007 in the area immediately east of the present site produced a further 220 Roman coins (R Tyrell pers. comm.). These have not yet been recorded in detail, but the images made available suggest an assemblage very similar in character to the present material, and typically in similarly poor condition in many cases. Interestingly, among a very small 1st-2nd century component the rally material includes a Claudian copy as with the reverse type of Minerva, supporting the suggested identification of SF34 above. Other finds from the immediate area include a report of a hoard from Putlowes Farm, just south of Berryfields, but no details are known of this.

Three Claudian copies (as well as regular issues of this period) were among the coins recorded from Walton Court, only 4 km south-east of the present site (Nash 1981). The overall character of the assemblage of over 200 coins from that site is fairly similar to that from Berryfields, but there was local variation within the Walton Court assemblage, with some areas producing higher proportions of 1st-2nd century coins, and an overall higher representation of

issues of the House of Theodosius (*ibid.*, 67).

There are few other assemblages available for comparison from the near vicinity. In terms of general character, assemblages from roadside settlements or ‘small towns’ are usually comparable with other rural rather than urban assemblages. The nearest extensively published ‘small town’ assemblages are from Cow Roast and Alchester, both on Akeman Street and respectively some 18 and 20 km east and west of Berryfields and both with some 420 coins (Reece 1991, 24; Darwish 2001). The strong late Roman presence at both sites is characteristic, although in both cases the period 388-402 is rather better-represented than at Berryfields. This pattern of loss is very similar to that in one of the principal rural assemblages in the region, from the villa complex at Bancroft (Davies 1994). One of the main differences between these groups is that both Berryfields (along with metal detector rally finds) and Cow Roast have relatively high representation of later 3rd century coinage: *c* 26% at Berryfields and almost 29% at Cow Roast as opposed to 17.5% at Alchester, for example. The significance of this variation is unclear, but it might link Berryfields to a pattern of coin loss seen more widely to the east, in Hertfordshire and elsewhere, although the levels of 3rd-century coin loss are still well below typical eastern urban ones, as seen at sites such as Verulamium (eg Reece 1995, 204-5).

TABLE 7 Coins

| Ctxt | SF | Est Date | Denomination          | Reverse                                | Mint | Obverse                     | Ref | Condition                     | Comment  |
|------|----|----------|-----------------------|--|------|-----------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|--|
| US   | 34 | 1C       | ?as 24mm              | standing figure                        |      | head poss l                 |     | worn and encrusted            | character reminsent of Claudian copy   |
| 352  | 5  | 1-2C     | dupondius/as?         | ?                                      |      | ?                           |     | v worn and eroded             |  |
| US   | 57 | 1-2C     | sestertius? 30mm      | standing figure                        |      | head r                      |     | eroded and encrusted          | no legends visible   |
| 104  |    | 259-268  | antoninianus 19mm+    | ?                                      |      | IMP GAL[LIENUS etc          |     | worn, incomplete              | poss irregular?  |
| US   | 77 | 259-268? | antoninianus 18-20 mm | ?                                      |      | ]GALL[IENUS etc?            |     | v worn                        |  |
| US   | 29 | 260-296  | antoninianus 18mm     | VIRT US [AUG ?                         |      | radiate head r?             |     | eroded                        |  |
| US   | 51 | 260-296? | antoninianus 21mm     | ?                                      |      | ?                           |     | eroded                        | poss 4C but antoninianus more likely   |
| US   | 20 | 268-270  | antoninianus 19-20mm  | FIDES [ ? Soldier with 2 standards     |      | IMP C CLAU[DIUS AUG?        |     | worn                          | rev should read FIDES MILITUM or FIDES EXERCI or similar, but end letters do not look like this? |
| US   | 49 | 271-274? | antoninianus 17mm+    | jug and other ?'pontifical implements' |      | radiate head r, unbearded   |     | s worn, extensive edge damage | youthful bust, eg Tetricus II, no legends survive  |
| 447* | 71 | 276?     | antoninianus 18mm     | ?                                      |      | ]LORIA[ radiate head r      |     | worn, bent and edge damaged   | poss obv reading FLORIANUS   |
| US   | 19 | 270-296  | antoninianus 17mm     | CONCORD]IA AUGG ??                     |      | ]CUS PF AUG? radiate head r |     | worn                          | poss Tetricus, ?irregular  |
| US   | 24 | 270-296  | antoninianus 14mm     | figure l                               |      | radiate head r              |     | worn                          | irregular  |
| US   | 36 | 270-296  | antoninianus 14-17mm  | figure l                               |      | radiate head r              |     | worn, thin                    | irregular  |
| US   | 38 | 270-296  | antoninianus 14-15mm  | altar                                  |      | radiate head r              |     | v worn                        | irregular?   |
| US   | 40 | 270-296  | antoninianus 14-16mm  | ?                                      |      | radiate head r              |     | encrusted and flaking         |  |
| US   | 41 | 270-296  | AE4 10mm              | ?                                      |      | bearded head r              |     | s worn                        | small, v irregular. The back of the obv head does not survive, so cant tell if it is radiate     |



|      |     |               |                          |                             |            |                           |                      |                         |  |
|------|-----|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| US   | 43  | 270-296       | antoninianus 12mm        | figure                      |            | radiate head r            |                      | worn                    | irregular  |
| US   | 54  | 270-296       | antoninianus 15mm        | Salus?? L                   |            | radiate head r            |                      | worn, corroded          | irregular  |
| US   | 58  | 270-296       | antoninianus 17-<br>18mm | ?                           |            | radiate head r            |                      | encrusted               |  |
| US   | 69  | 270-296       | antoninianus 14-<br>18mm | figure                      |            | radiate head r            |                      | v worn                  | irregular  |
| US   | 74  | 270-296       | antoninianus 16mm        | figure I, C in r field      |            | ]DIO? Radiate head r      |                      | worn                    | obv legend poss DIVO CLAUDIO,<br>but rev type does not match<br>Consecratio issues, irregular? |
| US   | 86  | 270-296       | antoninianus 16mm        | ?                           |            | radiate head r            |                      | v worn, encrusted       | irregular  |
| US   | 89  | 270-296       | antoninianus 11mm        | ?                           |            | radiate head r            |                      | v worn                  | irregular  |
| US   | 94  | 270-296       | antoninianus 11mm        | uncertain                   |            | radiate head r            |                      | s worn                  | irregular  |
| US   | 110 | 270-296       | antoninianus 11mm        | figure?                     |            | radiate head r            |                      | s worn, encrusted       | irregular  |
| US   | 116 | 270-296       | antoninianus 16mm        | ?                           |            | radiate head r            |                      | encrusted               | irregular  |
| US15 |     | 270-296       | antoninianus 14-<br>15mm | ?                           |            | radiate head r            |                      | v worn and battered     | irregular  |
| US2  |     | 270-296       | antoninianus 17mm        | figure I                    |            | radiate head r            |                      | v worn                  | ?irregular   |
| US9  |     | 270-296       | antoninianus 15-<br>16mm | eagle                       |            | radiate head r            |                      | v worn                  | irregular?   |
| 336  | 6   | 270-296?      | antoninianus 16-<br>17mm |                             |            | ?radiate head r ]AUG      |                      | worn and eroded         | irregular  |
| US   | 13  | 270-296?      | antoninianus 10mm        | ?                           |            | poss radiate head         |                      | s worn                  | clear, but v uncertain, perhaps<br>very barbarous radiate                                      |
| US   | 99  | 270-296?      | fragment                 | ?                           |            | bearded head r?           |                      | worn                    | irregular  |
| US   | 90  | 270-<br>296?? | antoninianus 16-<br>17mm | ?                           |            | ?                         |                      | eroded                  | character of flan suggest late 3C<br>rather than 4C  |
| US   | 21  | 309-319       | AE3 18mm                 | SOLI [INVICTO] COMITI       |            | CONSTANTINUS PF AUG?      |                      | s worn, eroded          | lower legs of Sol appear draped?   |
| US   | 44  | 322           | AE2 19mm                 | BEATA TRANQUILLITAS         | PTR. Trier | CONSTAN]TINUS] IUN NO[B C | RIC VII<br>Trier 353 | s worn, part broken out |  |
| US   | 18  | 324-330?      | AE3/4 13mm               | figure, cf Spes Reipublicae |            | ?                         |                      | s worn, but v eroded    | Rev figure with two infants - Spes   |

|      |     |           |             |  |                          |                            |                         |                               |  |
|------|-----|-----------|-------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
|      |     |           |             |  |                          |                            |                         |                               | Reipublicae or poss Pietas Romana                            |
| US   | 80  | 324-341   | AE3 15mm    | standing empress (Pietas, Salus or Spes) |                          | head r                     |                         | encrusted and edge damaged    | no legends survive   |
| 405  | 9   | 330-335   | AE3 16mm    | Gloria Exercitus 2 standards             | branch over<br>TRP Trier | CONSTANT]INUS IUN NOB C    | as RIC VII<br>Trier 556 | s worn                        | rev legend off flan - irregular                              |
| US   | 55  | 330-335   | AE3 16mm    | Gloria Exercitus 2 standards             |                          | head r                     |                         | worn, encrusted, edge damage  |  |
| US   | 78  | 330-335   | AE3 14-15mm | wolf and twins                           |                          | URBS [ROMA                 |                         | worn                          | irregular?   |
| US   | 101 | 330-335   | AE3 15mm+   | wolf and twins                           |                          | Urbs Roma                  |                         | s worn, extensive edge damage | insufficient survives to be possible<br>to tell if irregular |
| US   | 122 | 330-335   | AE4 11mm    | Victory on prow                          |                          | head l (Constantinopolis)  |                         | v worn                        | irregular  |
| US   | 123 | 330-335   | AE3 16-18mm | Victory on prow                          |                          | CONSTANTINOP]OLIS          |                         | encrusted                     |  |
| US   | 103 | 330-335?? | AE3 14mm    | wolf and twins??                         |                          | ?                          |                         | worn and incomplete           |  |
| US   | 17  | 332-333   | AE3 17mm    | Gloria Exercitus 2 standards             | TRP* Trier               | CONSTANTINUS IUN NOB C     | RIC VII<br>Trier 545    | s worn/worn                   |  |
| US   | 112 | 333-334   | AE3 16mm    | Gloria Exercitus 2 standards             | *PLG Lyons               | head r                     |                         | encrusted                     | obv legend uncertain   |
| 348  | 3   | 335-341   | AE3 14mm    | Gloria Romanorum 1 standard              |                          | ]NUS IUN NC                |                         | worn                          |  |
| US   | 37  | 335-341   | AE3 13mm    | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              |                          | S]TANTI NUS IUN [NOB C etc |                         | worn, encrusted, edge damage  | irregular?   |
| US   | 46  | 335-341   | AE3 14mm    | Gloria Exercitus 1 standard              |                          | CONSTAN [S PF AUG          |                         | worn, encrusted               |  |
| US   | 47  | 335-341   | AE4 12mm    | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              | PLG. Lyons               | ]STANT[IUS PF AUG          |                         | s worn                        | neat, but small, irregular?                                  |
| US   | 75  | 335-341   | AE3 14mm    | Gloria Exercitus 1 standard              |                          | head r                     |                         | s worn, edges missing         | irregular?   |
| US   | 76  | 335-341   | AE3 14-15mm | Gloria Exercitus 1 standard              | ?                        | head r                     |                         | worn, partly eroded           | irregular??  |
| US   | 79  | 335-341   | AE3 15mm    | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              |                          | CONSTAN] [PF AUG ?Constans |                         | s worn                        | irregular?   |
| US   | 114 | 335-341   | AE3 16mm    | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              |                          | head r                     |                         | encrusted                     |  |
| US   | 119 | 335-341   | AE4 9mm     | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              |                          | head r                     |                         | s worn                        | neat but irregular, obv legend<br>uncertain                  |
| US16 |     | 335-341   | AE3 13mm    | Gloria Exercitus 1 standard              |                          | head r                     |                         | worn, corroded                | irregular/   |
| US17 |     | 335-341   | AE3 14mm+   | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              |                          | head r                     |                         | worn, much edge damage        |  |
| US4  |     | 335-341   | AE4 12mm    | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              |                          | head r                     |                         | s worn                        | irregular  |
| 426  | 10  | 335-341   | AE3 15mm    | GLORIA EXERCITUS 1 standard              |                          | head r                     |                         | encrusted                     |  |
| 368  | 7   | 341-348   | AE3 15mm    | Victoriae dd augg q nn                   | ?                        | head r                     |                         | worn, encrusted               |  |

|      |     |           |             |                           |                    |                           |                 |                            |  |
|------|-----|-----------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--|
| US   | 16  | 341-348   | AE3 15mm    | Victoriae dd Augg q nn    | TRP ? Trier        | CONSTAN S PF AUG          |                 | encrusted                  |  |
| US   | 22  | 341-348   | AE3 14-15mm | Victoriae dd augg q nn    |                    | CONSTAN [S PF AUG ?       |                 | worn, encrusted            |  |
| US   | 42  | 341-348   | AE3 15mm    | Victoriae dd augg q nn    |                    | ]F AUG head r             |                 | s worn, edge damage        | irregular?   |
| US   | 98  | 341-348   | AE3 16mm    | VICTORIAE DD [AUGG Q NN ? |                    | head r                    |                 | encrusted                  |  |
| US7  |     | 341-348   | AE4 11mm    | Victoriae dd augg q nn?   |                    | head r                    |                 | eroded                     | irregular  |
| US   | 31  | 350-364   | AE3 15mm    | FEL TEMP] REPAR[ATIO      |                    | DN CONSTANT] IUS PF AUG   |                 | s worn, edge damage        | irregular  |
| US   | 59  | 350-364   | AE3 16mm    | FEL TEMP REPA]RATIO       | S PLG              | head r                    |                 | worn, eroded               | S PLG should not be possible?<br>Therefore irregular?    |
| US   | 61  | 350-364   | AE4 9mm     | fallen horseman??         |                    | head r                    |                 | SW/W                       | irregular  |
| US   | 124 | 350-364   | AE4 10mm    | fallen horseman?          |                    | head r                    |                 | worn, encrusted            | irregular  |
| US   | 129 | 350-364   | AE4 10mm    | ?fallen horseman          |                    | head r                    |                 | worn, edge damaged         | irregular  |
| US10 |     | 350-364   | AE4 7mm     | Fel Temp Reparatio?       |                    | ?                         |                 | worn, eroded               | irregular  |
| US6  |     | 350-364   | AE4 12mm    | Fel Temp Reparatio        |                    | DN CONST[ANTIUS etc       |                 | s worn                     | irregular  |
| US   | 85  | 350-364?  | AE3 15mm    | fallen horseman??         |                    | head r?                   |                 | encrusted and edge damaged | irregular  |
| US   | 54  | 350-364?  | AE4 10-11mm | ?                         |                    | head r                    |                 | worn, encrusted            | size suggests irregular FTR                              |
| US   | 39  | 350-364?? | AE4 10mm    | ?                         |                    | head l?                   |                 | worn                       | poss irregular FTR??                                     |
| US   | 87  | 350-364?? | AE4 10mm    | ?                         |                    | ?                         |                 | encrusted                  | v thick, nothing visible                                 |
| US   | 113 | 350-364?? | AE4 6mm     | ?                         |                    | ?                         |                 | worn                       | prob this date on basis of size and<br>general character |
| 287  | 1   | 364-378   | AE3 17mm    | SECURITAS RIPUBLICAE      | CON[ Arles         | DN VALENTINI ANUS PF AUG? | ?LRBCII,<br>521 | worn, edge damage          |  |
| US   | 23  | 364-378   | AE3 17mm    | Gloria Romanorum          |                    | head r                    |                 | eroded                     |  |
| US   | 53  |           | AE3 17mm    | GLORIA ROMANORUM          | OF III in<br>field | head r                    |                 | worn                       |  |
| US   | 68  | 364-378   | AE3 17mm    | Securitas Reipublicae     |                    | head r                    |                 | encrusted and part missing |  |
| US   | 82  | 364-378   | AE3 17mm    | SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE     |                    | DN VALEN S PF AUG?        |                 | v worn                     | edge damage has removed mint<br>mark                     |
| US   | 97  | 364-378   | AE3 17mm    | Securitas Reipublicae?    |                    | head r                    |                 | worn and incomplete        |  |

|      |     |           |               |                         |                                       |                  |  |                               |  |
|------|-----|-----------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| US   | 111 | 364-378   | AE3 14mm+     | Securitas Reipublicae   |                                       | head r           |  | worn and much edge damage     |  |
| US   | 126 | 364-378   | AE3 16mm      | GLORIA ROMANORUM        |                                       | head r           |  | worn, encrusted               |  |
| US1  |     | 364-378   | AE3 17-18mm   | ??Gloria Romanorum      |                                       | head r           |  | v corroded                    |  |
| US12 |     | 364-378   | AE3 16mm      | Securitas Reipublicae?  |                                       | head r           |  | eroded                        |  |
| US13 |     | 364-378   | AE3 18mm      | GLORIA ROMANORUM        |                                       | head r           |  | worn and edge damage          |  |
| US3  |     | 364-378   | AE3           | Gloria Romanorum        |                                       | head r           |  | worn                          | only small fragment survives                   |
| US5  |     | 364-378   | AE3 15mm      | GLORIA] RO[MANORUM      |                                       | head r           |  | worn                          | ?trimmed                                       |
| US   | 14  | 364-378?  | AE3 15-16mm   | Gloria Romanorum??      |                                       | head r?          |  | encrusted                     |  |
|      |     |           |               |                         | II in r field,<br>poss CO<br>below, ? |                  |  |                               |  |
| US   | 52  | 364-378?  | AE3 16mm      | Gloria Romanorum?       | Arles                                 | ?                |  | eroded                        |  |
| US   | 56  | 364-378?  | AE3 18mm      | Gloria Romanorum?       |                                       | ?                |  | eroded                        |  |
| US   | 115 | 364-378?  | AE3 18mm      | ?                       | CONS Arles                            | head r           |  | v worn, encrusted             |  |
| US14 |     | 364-378?  | AE3 16mm      | Securitas Reipublicae?? |                                       | head r           |  | eroded                        |  |
| US   | 28  | 364-378?? | AE3 16mm      | Securitas Reipublicae?? |                                       | head r           |  | eroded                        |  |
| US8  |     | 367-375   | AE3 16mm      | Gloria Novi Saeculi     | CON? Arles                            | head r (Gratian) |  | corroded                      |  |
| US   | 117 | 388-402?  | AE4 12mm      | SALUS REIP]UBLIC[AE ?   |                                       | head r           |  | s worn but eroded             |  |
| US   | 70  | 4C        | AE4 10mm      | ?                       |                                       | ?                |  | eroded                        | nothing visible, but size suggests<br>350-364  |
| US   | 96  | 4C        | AE4 11mm      | ?                       |                                       | head r           |  | corroded                      | just possibly Ho. Theodosius?                  |
| US*  | 106 | 4C        | AE3 15mm      | ?                       |                                       | head r           |  | worn, just over half survives |  |
| US   | 12  | 4C?       | AE3 16mm      | ?                       |                                       | ?                |  | eroded                        |  |
| US   | 83  | 4C?       | AE4 12mm      | ?                       |                                       | ?                |  | eroded                        |  |
| US   | 120 | 4C?       | AE3/4 12-13mm | ?                       |                                       | ?                |  | v worn and encrusted?         |  |
| US   | 127 | 4C?       | AE4 9mm       | ?                       |                                       | ?                |  | encrusted                     | ?irregular AD 350-364, subcircular             |
| 339  | 4   | 3-4C      | AE3 17mm      | ?                       |                                       | ?                |  | encrusted                     |  |
| 602  | 133 | 3-4C      | fragment      | ?                       |                                       | ?                |  | fragment                      |  |
| US   | 45  | 3-4C      | AE3 17mm      | ?                       |                                       | head r??         |  | eroded                        | if obverse is correct then may be c<br>364-378 |

|      |     |      |          |   |  |       |  |  |                            |
|------|-----|------|----------|---|--|-------|--|--|----------------------------|
| US   | 50  | 3-4C | AE4 11mm | ? |  | ?     |  | eroded                                     | prob 4C?                   |
| US   | 81  | 3-4C | AE4 12mm | ? |  | ?     |  | eroded                                     |                            |
| US   | 93  | 3-4C | AE3 16mm | ? |  | ?     |  | eroded                                     | surfaces completely eroded |
| US   | 109 | 3-4C | fragment | ? |  | ?     |  | worn/eroded                                |                            |
| US   | 121 | 3-4C | AE3 15mm | ? |  | ?     |  | encrusted and extensive<br>marginal damage | ??                         |
| US   | 128 | 3-4C | AE4 12mm | ? |  | ?     |  | worn flat                                  |                            |
| US   | 139 | 3-4C | AE3 13mm | ? |  | head? |  | worn, encrusted and edge<br>damaged        | ?                          |
| US11 |     | 3-4C | AE3 16mm |   |  |       |  | encrusted                                  |                            |

## Metalworking debris

by Edward Biddulph

A total of 1172 fragments of iron slag, weighing 664 g, was recovered from the site. The majority of this was micro slag and identified as hammerscale, which consists of fish scale-like fragments of iron dislodged during working, or spheroidal droplets of liquid slag expelled during hot working. It is important in interpretation of activity on sites, because it is highly diagnostic of smithing and tends to build up in the immediate vicinity of the smithing hearth and anvil. Table 8 lists the contexts in which the material was found.

TABLE 8 Quantification of metalworking debris by context

| Context | Count | Weight (g) | Phase           | Feature        |
|---------|-------|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 0       | 2     | 472        | Undated         | Unstratified   |
| 187     | 200   | 50         | Undated         | Tree-throw 186 |
| 307     | 1     | 10         | Undated         | Tree-throw 306 |
| 335     | 180   | 10         | Late Roman      | Ditch 358      |
| 336     | 190   | 10         | Late Roman      | Ditch 358      |
| 352     | 150   | 18         | Late Roman      | Ditch 358      |
| 405     | 1     | 36         | Late Roman      | Ditch 358      |
| 426     | 80    | 7          | Late Roman      | Grave 424      |
| 439     | 180   | 14         | Late Roman      | Grave 436      |
| 454     | 10    | 3          | Mid Roman       | Burial 453     |
| 455     | 78    | 6          | Mid Roman       | Burial 453     |
| 457     | 100   | 28         | Early/mid Roman | Tree-throw 459 |
| TOTAL   | 1172  | 664        |                 |                |

The slag was collected from tree-throw holes, graves, and a ditch. All the material was redeposited, and there was no evidence of anvil settings, hearths, or other indications of metalworking within the excavated area itself. Nevertheless, given the nature of material, the micro slag suggests metalworking activity close to the site, probably to the west of the concentration in the southern-eastern part of the excavated area and towards the Fleet Marston settlement. In such a roadside settlement, it is expected that smithing was one of the activities carried out. Potentially the mainly late Roman slag recovered from Aylesbury Vale Parkway locates the metalworking activity, or some of it, to a peripheral location on the town's eastern edge.

## **The human remains**

by Helen Webb

### ***Introduction***

Two inhumation burials and one cremation deposit were examined. The inhumations – 425 (group 424) and 438 (group 436) – had been buried in WNE-ESE-aligned earth-cut graves, with the heads at the east end. Both were buried in a supine (on the back) position, although the upper body of skeleton 425 was tilted on to the right slightly. Both had been heavily disturbed by ploughing. The cremated bone (455) was recovered from a very fragmentary urn (456) within the fill of a ditch (430). The inhumation burials date to the late Roman period, while the cremation burial was mid Roman.

The skeletal material was examined in accordance with national and international guidelines and methods (eg Aufderheide and Rodriguez-Martin 1998; Brickley and McKinley 2004; Brothwell 1981; Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994; McKinley 2004; Miles 1963).

### ***The inhumations***

Both individuals were very incomplete. Skeleton 438 was between 25% and 50% complete, while 425 was represented by less than 25% of the whole skeleton. The surface preservation of the bones was fair to good, consistent with Grade 3 (cf. McKinley 2004, 16). This means that the general morphology of the bones had survived, but erosion (probably caused by root action) affected most surfaces and obscured detail in some areas. Both skeletons were extremely fragmentary, consistent with the burials having been heavily disturbed by ploughing.

Both individuals were adult (over 18 years). Skeleton 425 could not be aged more precisely than this, but given the minimal cranial suture closure and absence of any joint changes associated with increasing age, it may be suggested that this was an adult who was probably below the age of about 40 years at death. Dental attrition of the maxillary molars was analysed in skeleton 438 but was deemed unreliable as an indicator of age, because a number of the mandibular molars had been lost ante-mortem. Ante-mortem loss of the molar teeth biases patterns of attrition making the correlation between rates of wear and age less clear. Both pubic symphyses in this individual were incomplete, although gross degenerative changes were observed on the parts present. The changes suggest that this was an older adult.

Few sexually dimorphic skeletal features were present in either of the skeletons. However,

425 was tentatively estimated to be a possible female, based on the small occipital protuberance and overall gracile nature of the skeleton. Skeleton 438 was estimated as a probable female, based on three of four cranial and two (incomplete) pelvic features.

Owing to the incompleteness and extremely fragmentary nature of the skeletons, the presence or absence of most of non-metric traits could not be scored. However, one trait, metopism, was observed in skeleton 438. Metopism refers to retention of the metopic suture which divides the frontal bone in the vertical plane and usually fuses in childhood. Metopism is a highly heritable trait (Hauser and De Stefano 1989).

### ***Pathology***

Only one area of pathological change was noted in skeleton 425. An oval lytic lesion, 4.5 mm by 6.5 mm, was observed on the proximal ulna on the lateral aspect of the trochlear notch (elbow joint). This lesion is characteristic of osteochondritis dissecans, a defect in subchondral bone, most often (but not exclusively) on convex diarthrodial joint surfaces (Aufderheide and Rodríguez-Martín 1998, 81). In this condition, necrosis, or death, of skeletal tissue occurs as a result of a deficiency in the blood supply, often as a result of trauma (Roberts and Manchester 2005, 121). Physically active young males (such as athletes) are most often affected in the first two decades of life (Roberts and Manchester 2005, 121; Aufderheide and Rodríguez-Martín 1998, 81; Rogers and Waldron 1995, 28). The elbow is the third most common site for this lesion, after the femoral condyle (knee) and talus (ankle) (Aufderheide and Rodríguez-Martín 1998, 82-3). In the Roman period, this condition is seen in increasing frequency in the knee joint, possibly as a result of occupational trauma (Roberts and Cox 2003, 151).

Skeleton 438 displayed more evidence of pathological change than skeleton 425. A total of 20 teeth were present in this individual, 15 of which had dental calculus. This was graded as slight, because it was present as flecks on most teeth. Calculus is formed by the mineralization of organic material and bacteria and, as such, reflects the lack of importance (or perhaps inability owing to illness) given to maintaining healthy teeth. It accumulates on the teeth faster when there is a high protein and/or carbohydrate diet, the bacteria favouring an alkaline oral environment (Roberts and Manchester 2005, 71). Calculus is a significant cause of periodontal disease and subsequent tooth loss (Levin 2003). Owing to post-mortem damage it was not possible to say whether the present skeleton had periodontal disease because no alveoli could be examined. One tooth, the right maxillary first molar, had a carious lesion. Dental caries involves the destruction of the enamel surface, the dentine (internal part of the tooth) and the cement (outer layer of the roots). This is



caused by the acid produced by bacteria present in dental plaque (Hillson 1996, 269). The cavity on the first molar was of medium size, was located on the mesial surface of the crown, and had penetrated through the crown into the pulp cavity. Infection of the pulp cavity may lead to the formation of an abscess, a collection of pus, which often leads to the loss of a tooth, after which the infection usually resolves. In the present example, the right maxilla was not present for observation. At least three teeth, the left maxillary first premolar and the left mandibular first and second molars, had been lost ante-mortem, identified by the regeneration of the tooth sockets. Ante-mortem tooth loss may result from abscess development secondary to caries, periodontal disease secondary to gum disease or calculus formation, pulp exposure and abscess formation secondary to severe attrition, deliberate extraction, accidental trauma or fighting (Waldron 2007, 117).

In addition to the dental pathology, skeleton 438 had osteoarthritis involving several joints around the skeleton. Osteoarthritis is a disease that affects any synovial joint in the skeleton, and is the most common joint disease in both modern and archaeological populations. On dry bone, it is diagnosed by the presence of eburnation (polishing) or at least two of the elements of pitting, bony contour change, and/or osteophytosis, generally marginal or less commonly on the joint surface (Rogers and Waldron 1995). Skeleton 438 had osteoarthritis of the right shoulder (acromioclavicular joint), both hands (inter-carpal, carpo-metacarpal, metacarpo-phalangeal and interphalangeal joints), the spine (thoracic and lumbar) and both hips (acetabulae). Eburnation was observed on all these joints with the exception of the acetabulae, which had marginal osteophytes and altered bony contours. Also, small rounded lytic lesions were observed around the margins of the acetabulae, indicative of joint cysts. Joint cysts (often termed synovial, or subchondral cysts) are a prominent finding in osteoarthritis, as well as in other articular disorders (Aufderheide and Rodríguez-Martín 1998, 94; Resnick 1995, 1271). Osteoarthritis is a multi-factorial condition in which the advancement of age increasingly becomes a predisposing factor.

### ***The cremation burial***

The total weight of the cremated bone from all three spits and the cleaning layer directly overlying the urn was 44.4 g. The largest fragment, probably that of a humerus, measured 30 by 14 mm. The majority of fragments were 4-10 mm in size. High fragmentation hindered the identification of many of the fragments. Almost half of the total weight of bone was unidentified (20.5 g/44.4 g), 10.2 g of which were unidentified long bone fragments. In general, all areas of the skeleton, skull (but no teeth), vertebrae, ribs, pelvis and upper and lower limbs, were represented.

Two fragments of bone had hues of a blue/grey colour, but all other fragments were buff

white. Thus, the colour of the bone was fairly homogeneous throughout the skeleton. The fracture pattern, warping and transverse fissures observed on the bone fragments were typical of remains resulting from the cremation of a fleshed corpse rather than a defleshed corpse. The remains of at least one individual were present. The overall size and morphology of the remains indicate that the individual had probably attained adulthood when he or she died. Sex could not be estimated owing to the fact that relevant elements were missing or were too poorly preserved. No pathological abnormalities or non-metric traits were observed.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

### **Animal bones**

by Lena Strid, with a contribution by Rebecca Nicholson

#### ***Introduction***

The faunal assemblage comprised 522 re-fitted fragments from securely dated contexts. Of these, 527 fragments (85%) were hand collected and 95 (15%) were recovered from sieved bulk samples. The bones were identified using Oxford Archaeology's comparative skeletal reference collection in addition to standard osteological identification manuals (Bacher 1967, Cohen and Serjeantson 1996, Hillson 1992, Schmid 1972 and Woelfe 1967). All the animal remains were counted and weighed, and where possible identified to species, element, side and zone. For zoning, Serjeantson (1996) was used, with the addition of mandible zones by Worley (forthcoming). Sheep and goat were identified to species using Boessneck et al. (1964) and Prummel and Frisch (1986). They were otherwise classified as 'sheep/goat'. Long bone fragments, ribs and vertebrae, with the exception of the atlas and axis, were classified by size: 'large mammal' representing cattle, horse and deer, 'medium mammal' representing sheep/goat, pig and large dog, 'small mammal' representing small dog, cat and hare, and 'microfauna' representing animals such as frog, rat and mice. The general condition of the bones was graded on a 6-point system (0-5), grade 0 equating to very well preserved bone, and grade 5 indicating that the bone had suffered such structural and attritional damage as to make it unrecognisable.

For ageing, Habermehl's data (1975) on epiphyseal fusion was used. Cattle horn cores were aged according to Armitage (1982) using texture and appearance of the horn core surface. Tooth wear was recorded using Grant's tooth wear stages (Grant 1982), and correlated with tooth eruption

(Habermehl 1975). In order to estimate an age for the animals, the methods of Halstead (1985), Payne (1973) and O'Connor (1988) were used for cattle, sheep/goat and pig respectively. The sexable elements in the assemblage, that is, pig canine teeth, were recorded using data from Schmid (1972). Observance of medullary bone in birds were used to indicate the presence of egg-laying females. Measurements were taken according to von den Driesch (1976), using digital callipers with an accuracy of 0.01 mm. Large bones were measured using an osteometric board, with an accuracy of 1 mm.

### *Assemblage overview*

The bone condition was generally fair (Table 9), suggesting that food and butchery waste were mostly securely deposited, although trampling and carnivore gnawing occurred to some extent. Burnt and gnawed bones were only recorded in the late Roman and medieval phases. The late Roman assemblage contained two burnt bones and 14 bones with traces of carnivore gnawing, whereas there was one burnt bone and three gnawed bones in the medieval assemblage. Distortions to several of the fish vertebrae in the late Roman assemblage are consistent with chewing. However, with such a small number of bones, this interpretation is very tentative. The species present included cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse, dog, field vole, domestic fowl, frog, pike and perch. One unidentified equid and cyprinid were recorded in the late Roman assemblage. The sieved samples contained mostly indeterminate bones and bones from unidentified amphibians and micro-mammals.

TABLE 9 Preservation level for animal bones

| Phase       | n   | Preservation |        |        |        |
|-------------|-----|--------------|--------|--------|--------|
|             |     | 0 Excellent  | 1 Good | 2 Fair | 3 Poor |
| Early Roman | 6   | 1            | 1      | 4      |        |
| Late Roman  | 515 | 37           | 63     | 398    | 17     |
| Roman       | 30  | 2            | 18     | 4      | 6      |
| Medieval    | 68  | 3            | 11     | 51     | 3      |
| Total       | 619 | 43           | 93     | 457    | 26     |

TABLE 10 Number of identified fragments per species, minimum number of individuals (MNI) within parenthesis

| Species    | Early Roman | Late Roman | Roman | Medieval |
|------------|-------------|------------|-------|----------|
| Cattle     | 1 (1)       | 49 (3)     |       | 9 (1)    |
| Sheep/goat |             | 14 (1)     | 1 (1) | 8 (1)    |
| Pig        |             | 9 (2)      | 1 (1) | 1 (1)    |
| Horse      | 1 (1)       | 13 (2)     | 2 (1) | 4 (1)    |
| Dog        |             | 1 (1)      | 1 (1) |          |

|                      |     |       |     |      |
|----------------------|-----|-------|-----|------|
| Field vole           |     | 1 (1) |     |      |
| Domestic fowl        |     | 4 (1) |     |      |
| Bird                 |     | 1     |     |      |
| Frog                 |     | 1 (1) |     |      |
| Amphibian            |     | 8     |     |      |
| Pike                 |     | 3 (1) |     |      |
| Cyprinid             |     | 1 (1) |     |      |
| Perch                |     | 1 (1) |     |      |
| Fish                 |     | 2     |     |      |
| Microfauna           |     | 4     |     |      |
| Medium mammal        | 2   | 23    |     | 4    |
| Large mammal         | 1   | 48    | 11  | 16   |
| Indeterminate        | 1   | 339   | 14  | 26   |
| Total fragment count | 6   | 522   | 30  | 68   |
| Identifiable to taxa | 2   | 95    | 5   | 22   |
| Total weight (g)     | 103 | 7717  | 242 | 1192 |

### ***Early Roman***

The early Roman assemblage comprised six bone fragments from ditches 400 and 660. One cattle mandibular third molar and one horse maxillary molar were the only fragments identified to species. The cattle tooth was in wear stage g, equivalent to the adult age range, according to Halstead (1985).

### ***Late Roman***

The late Roman bone assemblage is the most substantial assemblage at the site. A total of 519 bones were recovered from five features: boundary ditch 358, quarry pits 446 and 539, pit 635 and grave 424. The remains from the grave comprised only one amphibian bone and was probably intrusive. The pits and the ditch yielded bones in similar amounts, suggesting that assemblage differentiation between feature types (cf. Rielly 2009, 206) is not likely to be a major reason for the dominance in bones from large mammals.

### ***Livestock***

The late Roman assemblage is strongly dominated by cattle (Table 10). A species comparison using MNI gives less marked dominance by cattle, which is consistent with that method's promotion of less numerous species in favour of more frequently occurring species (Hambleton 1999, 34-35). The ageing data are limited, but suggest that most cattle were sub-adult or adult at the time of death. The data for sheep and pig were too small for interpretation. Nevertheless, neonatal and juvenile animals were absent. Neonatal mortalities are usually common in extensive animal husbandry, which suggests that the absence of neonatal remains are due to taphonomic factors, to which their fragile bones are particularly sensitive. Measurements could only be taken on one cattle distal

radius and two cattle distal tibiae, all of which were found to be within the same size range as cattle bones from contemporary sites (ABMAP 2010). Butchery marks were recorded on one cattle axis and one pig humerus. The axis had been chopped through, indicating a severing between the first and second vertebrae which would have removed the head from the rest of the carcass. The humerus displayed a chop mark on the upper third of the shaft, probably from an attempt to portion the shoulder joint. One cattle metatarsal displayed pathological bone growth and swelling on the posterior/medial and posterior/lateral edges of the distal metaphysis. The aetiology is unknown, but may be due to infection.

### *Other species*

With exception of horse, most other species in the assemblage are represented very sparingly. The paucity of wild mammals is typical for lower status domestic Roman assemblages (Yalden 1999, 100-102). The horse bones are mostly incomplete, but no chop marks or cut marks could be observed. All horse bones are skeletally mature, with the exception of one unfused distal radius from a horse less than 3.5 years old, one fragmentary horse skull with six unerupted permanent molars, indicating an age-at-death of 2-4 years (Habermehl 1975, 31) and one single mandibular deciduous tooth. All fowl bones were adult, suggesting that their primary use was as providers of eggs and feathers rather than meat. One bird long bone fragment had medullary bone present, indicating that this bird was in an egg-laying stage when it died. The bone was fowl-sized, but could not be identified to species or family.

### *Fish* by Rebecca Nicholson

The lower fill of boundary ditch 358 contained five fish vertebrae. Three are from juvenile pike (*Esox lucius*), one poorly preserved vertebra is probably from a cyprinid (Cyprinidae – carp family), and another probably from perch (*Perca fluviatilis*). All the fish bones came from exclusively freshwater species which would have been caught locally. Although fish was popular elsewhere in the Roman empire, in Britain fish remains are rare on Roman-period sites outside the urban centres (Locker 2007).

### *Roman*

The bones from the Roman assemblage were retrieved from ditches of a field system, which could not be dated to a particular phase of the Roman period. The assemblage is very small, comprising a single bone each of sheep/goat, pig and dog as well as two horse bones. One horse tibia was

unfused distally, indicating an age-at-death of less than 2 years and so suggesting that horses may have been bred at the settlement.

### *Medieval*

The medieval assemblage contained a small number of bones from cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse. The fact that the assemblage derives from plough furrows suggests that the bones were incorporated into middens and later ploughed into the fields to enhance soil fertility. All bones derived from sub-adult or adult animals. One horse radius had a horizontal cut mark anteriorly at mid-shaft, a location usually interpreted as marks from filleting (Landon 1996, 76-7). Since horses were not commonly eaten during the medieval period, the cut mark is quite interesting. The eating of horse flesh may have occurred during a period of starvation, but it is perhaps more likely that horse flesh was used to feed dogs, a practice that is known from post-medieval records (Thomas and Locock 2000, 89-90).

### *Discussion*

There is a paucity of Roman animal bone assemblages from the Aylesbury region. A small assemblage from Buckingham Street in central Aylesbury produced 30 fragments of animal bone identified to species, as well as an articulated horse skeleton. The species present were cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse and domestic fowl (Jones 1982, 94-95). A possible villa in Bierton, just north-east of Aylesbury, yielded 668 identifiable fragments. However, the pottery indicated significant levels of interference from both earlier and later periods. The numbers of cattle and sheep bones were of similar frequency (G Jones 1986, 74-75).

It is generally held that Romanised settlements focused their animal husbandry on cattle as opposed to the native Iron Age settlements' preference for sheep (Cool 2006, 83; King 1991, 17). It is therefore plausible that the predominance of cattle at Aylesbury Park and Ride is real, despite the small sample size. The suggested subsistence economy, with pigs kept for meat and cattle and sheep/goat kept for meat, dairy, wool, manure and traction, is also plausible. Data from the contemporary villa in Bancroft, Milton Keynes, indicate a similar subsistence-based economy, with three peaks of cattle slaughter: surplus males, young adults slaughtered for meat and adult cattle slaughtered at the end of their useful working lives. Sheep showed a similar slaughter pattern, with young and adult animals (Levitan 1994, 540).

The medieval bone assemblage was retrieved from plough furrows, suggesting that they were included in midden material deliberately spread on the fields. Medieval settlements are

common in the Aylesbury area and the bones probably came from a nearby farm.

## **The charred plant remains**

by Wendy Smith

### ***Introduction***

Charred plant remains and charcoal were recovered through bulk sampling of sediments from sealed features. In total, 21 samples from cremations, ditches, inhumations, pits and a tree-throw were collected. Only one of these samples was considered suitably rich to merit further analysis. Sample 19 (context 457) was collected from tree-throw 459. Seeds from the sample were radiocarbon dated to cal AD 82-225 (95%; NZA-33906).

The archaeobotanical samples were processed using a modified Siraf-style flotation tank. The flots (the material which floats) were collected in a 0.25mm sieve and the heavy residues (the material which does not float) were retained in a 0.5mm nylon mesh. Heavy residue fractions were rapidly scanned by eye for any artefacts or ecofacts. The flots were assessed (Smith 2009) and sorted by the author under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x12–x15. Identifications were made at magnifications up to x45 on a Meiji EMZ Zoom microscope. Nomenclature follows Stace (1997) for indigenous taxa and Zohary and Hopf (2000) for cultivated species. The traditional binomial system for the cereals is maintained here, following Zohary and Hopf (2000, 28, table 3; 65, table 5). In the case of sample 19, no charred plant remains (excluding charcoal) were noted in the heavy residue fractions, so this report is based entirely upon the flot.

### ***Results***

Table 11 presents the fully quantified archaeobotanical data for sample 19. A small quantity of cereal grain was recovered, but in general this sample is dominated by weed seeds, especially vetch/vetchling (*Vicia* spp./ *Lathyrus* spp.). Figure 12 presents the relative proportion of main plant categories as a graph, with vetch/vetchling treated as a separate category to other weed/ wild taxa.

TABLE 11 Charred plant remains from feature 459, sample 19

|                     |            |  |
|---------------------|------------|--|
| <b>Sample No</b>    | 19         |  |
| <b>Context No</b>   | 457        |  |
| <b>Feature No</b>   | 459        |  |
| <b>Feature Type</b> | Tree-throw |  |

| Phase   | ROM              |   |
|---|------------------|---|
| <b>Sample Volume (L)</b>  | 40 L             |   |
| <b>Flot Volume (ml)</b>   | 62 ml            |   |
| <b>Proportion of flot sorted</b>  | 100%             |   |
| <b>Seeds per litre of sediment</b>  | 16.58            |   |
|   |                  |   |
| <b>Cereal Grain</b>   |                  |   |
| cf. <i>Hordeum</i> spp. - tail grain                                      | 1                | possible barley                             |
| <i>Triticum</i> spp. - indeterminate                                      | 16               | wheat                                       |
| Cereal - indeterminate  | 39 <sup>E</sup>  | cereal                                      |
| Cereal/ POACEAE - indeterminate   | 30 <sup>E</sup>  | cereal/ large grass                         |
| <b>Cereal Chaff</b>   |                  |   |
| <i>Triticum</i> spp. - indeterminate rachis node                          | 2                | wheat                                       |
| <i>Triticum</i> spp. - indeterminate glume fragment                       | 4                | wheat                                       |
| Cereal/ POACEAE - culm base   | 4 <sup>E</sup>   | cereal/ Grass Family                        |
| Cereal/ POACEAE - culm node   | 4 <sup>E</sup>   | cereal/ Grass Family                        |
| <b>Tree/ Shrub</b>  |                  |   |
| <i>Corylus avellana</i> L. - nutshell fragment                            | 1                | hazel                                       |
| <b>Weed/ Wild Plants</b>  |                  |   |
| <i>Ranunculus</i> subgenus RANUNCULUS                                     | 1                | buttercup                                   |
| <i>Chenopodium</i> spp.   | 23 <sup>E</sup>  | goosefoot                                   |
| <i>Chenopodium</i> spp. - small-seeded                                    | 17               | goosefoot                                   |
| <i>Montia fontana</i> L.  | 1                | blink                                       |
| <i>Cerastium</i> spp.   | 7                | mouse-ear                                   |
| cf. <i>Agrostemma githago</i> L. - calyx tip                              | 1                | corncockle                                  |
| <i>Polygonum</i> cf. <i>aviculare</i> L.                                  | 3                | possible knotgrass                          |
| <i>Rumex</i> spp.   | 17               | dock  |
| <i>Vicia</i> spp./ <i>Lathyrus</i> spp.                                   | 336 <sup>E</sup> | vetch/ vetchling                            |
| <i>Vicia</i> spp./ <i>Lathyrus</i> spp. - favulariate seed coat           | 40 <sup>E</sup>  | vetch/ vetchling (irregular ridged surface) |
| cf. <i>Vicia</i> spp./ <i>Lathyrus</i> spp. - fragments (est whole seeds) | 20 <sup>E</sup>  | possible vetch/ vetchling                   |
| <i>Medicago</i> sp./ <i>Melilotus</i> sp./ <i>Trifolium</i> sp.           | 2                | medick/ melilot/ clover                     |
| FABACEAE - unidentified pod fragments                                     | 4                | Pea Family                                  |
| ? <i>Myosotis</i> sp.   | 1                | tentative forget-me-not                     |
| <i>Euphrasia</i> spp./ <i>Odontites</i> spp.                              | 3                | eyebright/ bartsia                          |
| <i>Galium</i> spp.  | 6 <sup>E</sup>   | bedstraw                                    |
| <i>Valerianella dentata</i> (L.) Pollich                                  | 1                | narrow-fruited cornsalad                    |



|   |                 |                            |
|---|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i> (L.) Sch. Bip.                               | 22 <sup>E</sup> | scentless mayweed          |
| <i>Eleocharis palustris</i> (L.) Roem. & Schult./ uniglumis (Link)<br>Schult. | 2               | common/ slender spike-rush |
| <i>Avena</i> spp. - awn fragments   | +               | oat                        |
| cf. <i>Avena</i> sp. - glume fragment   | 1               | possible oat               |
| <i>Avena</i> spp./ <i>Bromus</i> spp.   | 6 <sup>E</sup>  | oat/ brome                 |
| <i>Bromus</i> spp.  | 3               | brome                      |
| POACEAE - small-sized caryopsis   | 20              | Grass Family               |
| POACEAE - medium-sized caryopsis  | 17 <sup>E</sup> | Grass Family               |
| POACEAE - culm node   | 1               | Grass Family               |
| Unidentified  | 3               | -                          |
| Unidentified - stalk  | 3               | -                          |
| Unidentified - twig fragment  | 1               | -                          |
| <b>TOTAL IDENTIFICATIONS</b>  | <b>663</b>      |                            |

### **Discussion**

Notably, approximately 60% of the assemblage is vetch/vetchling (*Vicia* spp./*Lathyrus* spp.) seeds. Two possibilities for the abundance of vetch/vetchling are immediately obvious: that vetch/vetchling was intentionally grown as a fodder crop, or that vetch/vetchling was a weed of a cereal crop which was subsequently removed (possibly in coarse sieving or hand-cleaning grain) into feature 459.

The use of vetch/ vetchling as fodder crops is well known in Europe and the Mediterranean (e.g. Sarker et al. 2001). The intentional cultivation of small-seeded legumes for livestock fodder is likely to date back to the Iron Age in the British Isles (e.g. Hodgson *et al.* 1999, 261). The likelihood that such fodder crops would run to seed, however, is low since they would be intentionally grown for their leaves and edible flowers. Nevertheless many vetches set seed progressively, and thus flowers and pods may exist simultaneously, so it is not impossible that seeds would arrive with vetch/vetchling fodder.

Some have viewed the increased recovery of vetch/vetchling as a potential indicator for the depletion of nutrients in the soil and potentially the expansion of cultivation onto less favourable soils (Jones 1984, 121–2). Certainly, the low-level recovery of vetch/vetchling seeds is quite typical in the Milton Keynes area in the Iron Age and Roman periods (M Jones 1986; 1993). However, the recovery of a large concentration of vetch/vetchling seeds is unusual. Only Bancroft (Nye and Jones 1994, 563) has produced an assemblage with large concentrations of vetch/vetchling (equivalent to

34% of all identifications).

Like the Bancroft deposit, context 457 is a secondary deposit of charred debris. Both deposits also included a small proportion of cultivated cereals and, therefore, there is the possibility that these assemblages may represent crop contaminants, possibly even of a residual crop. Whether a system of crop rotation was in place in the Roman period is pure speculation and one cannot rule out the possibility that the vetch/vetchling was a crop in its own right. Unfortunately, this is the first deposit where vetch/vetchling dominates the assemblage and without further supporting evidence, it is not possible to fully establish whether vetch/ vetchling is a cultivar in its own right or merely a contaminant. Given that tree-throw 459 was extremely shallow (0.18 m), it seems unlikely that the charred remains represent cleaning or ash lining of this feature (cf. Monk 1991, 106; van der Veen and Jones 2006, 222) and at present an interpretation of this low-level of charred material (16.58 seeds per litre of sediment sampled) as rubbish seems most likely.

### Summary of radiocarbon dating

by Edward Biddulph

Radiocarbon determinations were sought from four features – two tree-throw holes, the remains of a cremation grave and one inhumation grave. The dating was undertaken by the Rafter Radiocarbon Laboratory, New Zealand. The results are summarised in Table 12.

TABLE 12 Radiocarbon determinations

| Lab ref.  | Context | Feature             | Material    | C14 age      | Calibrated date         | Confidence interval |
|-----------|---------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| NZA-33906 | 457     | Tree-throw hole 459 | Seeds       | 1862 ± 25 BP | AD 82-225               | 95.1%               |
| NZA-33929 | 368     | Tree-throw hole 367 | Animal bone | 1874 ± 35 BP | AD 68-231               | 94.9%               |
| NZA-33936 | 438     | Grave 437           | Human bone  | 1706 ± 35 BP | AD 253-411              | 94.8%               |
| NZA-33951 | 455     | Grave 453           | Human bone  | 1840 ± 25 BP | AD 123-240<br>AD 89-102 | 92.0%<br>2.9%       |

## DISCUSSION

All the prehistoric evidence recovered from Aylesbury Vale Parkway – the flint flakes and the scraps of flint-tempered pottery – was residual, deriving from areas of activity beyond the site. But the material is unlikely to have travelled far. Fieldwork south of Berryfields Farm and immediately north of the Parkway site revealed a prehistoric settlement defined by enclosures, a trackway, and roundhouses; much of the pottery recovered from the evaluation and subsequent watching brief belonged to the Iron Age, though a small number of earlier prehistoric struck flints were also recovered (Dodd 2002; T Haines, pers. comm.). Later agricultural activity, such as manuring, could well have carried stray material a short distance to the south.

The earliest features at Aylesbury Vale Parkway belong to the early Roman period. Ditches in the southern corner of the excavation area that appear to mark out an enclosure are likely to belong to a more extensive field system dating to the 1st century AD. Later 1st and early 2nd-century pottery was recovered from an area in Berryfields some 500 m north-east of the excavation, revealed by a geophysical survey and trenching to be the site of a settlement and series of enclosures extending either side of a trackway (Dodd 2002; see Fig. 1). Further early Roman activity lay further to the south-west in Billingsfield, where pits and ditches were found (Fig. 13; Cox 1997, 30-1).

Burial 453, dated by radiocarbon to the 2nd century or first half of the 3rd, was the only feature that belonged with certainty to the mid-Roman period. The burial, recovered from ditch 660, may well have been redeposited and lost grave goods in the process, though the basic provision of a jar – whether to contain the cremated bone or accompany it – is in keeping with the burial rite identified in the area. A cremation grave uncovered from Trench F6 of AC Archaeology's evaluation contained a cinerary vessel only (Cox 1997, 12), admittedly, like burial 453, poorly preserved. Excavation of evaluation trench C14 revealed another cremation burial; both jars present in the pit were identified as urns (Cox 1997, 11). Further afield, a cremation grave found at the Lower Icknield Way site on the Aston Clinton bypass contained a ceramic urn and two accompanying beakers (Masefield 2008, 51). Burial 453 was dated later than these burials, which were assigned to the 1st-century AD, but it nevertheless appears to be part of the same tradition of simply-furnished graves. It stands in contrast to a much richer 2nd-century grave recorded at Weston Turville; this contained seven ceramic vessels (three of them samian), glass vessels and metal objects (Waugh 1962).

Both inhumation graves from Aylesbury Vale Parkway (424 and 436) are likely to date to the 4th century. The burial rite and absence of grave goods are markedly different from grave 453, but it

is notable that all three were located in the same area of the site, towards the south-eastern corner of the excavated area and, like the burials from the evaluation, close to the Roman road.

The excavation uncovered no trace of the Roman road of Akeman street, whose traditional projection, as recorded on Ordnance Survey mapping, extends close to the southern part of the site (Fig. 13). Sections of the road in the form of gravel surfaces and flanking ditches were exposed during the evaluation. The road, however, was shown to extend some 20 m south of the traditional alignment (Cox 1997, 13), and would therefore pass very close to the southern tip of the Phase 2 excavation area. Ditch 358 was parallel with the road and it is tempting to interpret it as an outer roadside ditch, though this is not without its difficulties. The evaluation showed that the flanking ditches – a pair on each side – varied in width, depth and profile, and within these ranges ditch 358 can be accommodated reasonably comfortably (Fig. 14). In addition, pottery retrieved from the ditch pointed to a 4th-century date for filling, and the ceramics recovered from ditches exposed in the evaluation, comprising late Roman wares and residual 1st-century material, is consistent with this (Corney 1997). However, at *c* 15 m, the gap between ditch 358 and the edge of the revised road alignment seems rather wide, being more than double that recorded in the evaluation (Cox 1997, fig. 12C) and in a road exposure on the Aston Clinton bypass at Woodlands roundabout (Masefield 2008, fig. 11). Ditch 358 might be better regarded as the southern boundary of an enclosure or field, probably associated with ditches 357, 356 and 655, whose orientation was defined by the line of the road but was otherwise unconnected with it. If so, then the road at this point lacked a ditch on the north side or was served only by an inner ditch extending along the verge.

On the whole, close dating of the field system in the middle part of the site has not been possible. A tentative connection with ditch 358 potentially places the system of ditches in the late Roman period, though it is possible that the system was set out earlier, perhaps in the 1st century following the construction of the road. Apart from pottery broadly dated to the Roman period, two sherds of 1st-century grog-tempered pottery were collected from ditch 356. During the 1st century, the southern part of the site was wooded. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the tree clearance resulting in a mass of tree-throw holes occurred sometime between the late 1st and mid 3rd centuries, though pottery appears to take this activity into the late Roman period. A context for the clearance could include road construction; pottery collected from the make-up deposit of a length of road recorded in evaluation trench F2 points to construction in the second half of the 1st century AD (Cox 1997, 14), potentially overlapping with the date range offered by the radiocarbon determinations. It is possible, however, that the trees were cleared simply to expand the land available for agriculture.

Evidence for the economic basis of the settlement represented by its discarded waste is limited. A traveller on Akeman Street passing the site would have seen cattle and, to a lesser extent, sheep in the fields. Both species were kept for meat, dairy, wool, manure and traction. Pigs, which provided meat, and fowl for feathers and eggs were reared closer to settlement. The vetch that dominated the assemblage of plant remains recovered from tree-throw hole 549 may have been grown in the surrounding fields for fodder, though it is possible that vetch had been removed as a weed from a cereal crop.

Finds spots and scatters place the putative roadside settlement or town of Fleet Marston west and north-west of the Aylesbury Vale Parkway site, around Putlowes Cottages and straddling Akeman Street and another Roman road, seen as a crop mark, that extends north through Fleet Marston Farm (Fig. 1; Leary and Robertson 2009, plate 1). The relationship between the town and the Aylesbury Vale Parkway is unclear, but, clearly lacking hearths, structures, and other evidence of settlement, the Parkway site must have been peripheral to the town. And with evidence for occupation north and south-west of the site, the field systems uncovered by the excavation can potentially be identified as outlying farmland associated with those areas. That said, finds from the Parkway site – a miniature column fragment and ceramic building material from vaulted and heated rooms – are likely to have derived from a high-status site, most obviously public buildings in the town, though they could alternatively have belonged to a satellite villa (cf. Radford and Zeepvat 2009, 57). Similarly, the mass of Roman coins from the southern end of the site is almost certainly a product of the site's proximity to the town. The finds recorded here do not give a full picture of the pattern of coin loss, and information on the larger groups collected from metal detecting rallies and other metal detecting activity is awaited. However, what tentatively emerges from the examination of the coins is that the profile of the assemblage is more typical of roadside settlements, 'small towns' or villas than major urban centres. There is a degree of agreement with this view from the pottery; the amount of samian, for instance, was more in keeping with higher-status settlements than rural settlements, while the general composition of the ceramic assemblage matched that recorded at Icknield Way Site B on the Aston Clinton by-pass, a site with aspects of villa-like occupation (Masefield 2008, 194).

No trace of Saxon occupation or activity was found, despite documentary evidence for a royal palace at Quarrendon. No doubt the site formed part of open fields at this time. In the medieval period, the land was put under the plough. The excavation uncovered two areas of ridge-and-furrow cultivation, one in the southern part of the site, and the other in the central area. The two systems do not share orientation, but in the absence of useful dating evidence it is not possible to

attribute this to chronological factors (although it would not be surprising if the southern group, with its irregularly-shaped furrows, were found to be the earlier), or organisation, representing two fields under separate, but contemporaneous, tenure. Evidence from the evaluation indicated that ridge-and-furrow extended across Billingsfield to the south-east (Cox 1997, 34). Some furrows were orientated NW-SE, like the southern group, and may be part of the same system, but others had a E-W orientation and again may have a different date or be part of another field. There was no evidence that dated to the 16th century or later, and the land across the Parkway site remained available for agricultural use into the post-medieval period.

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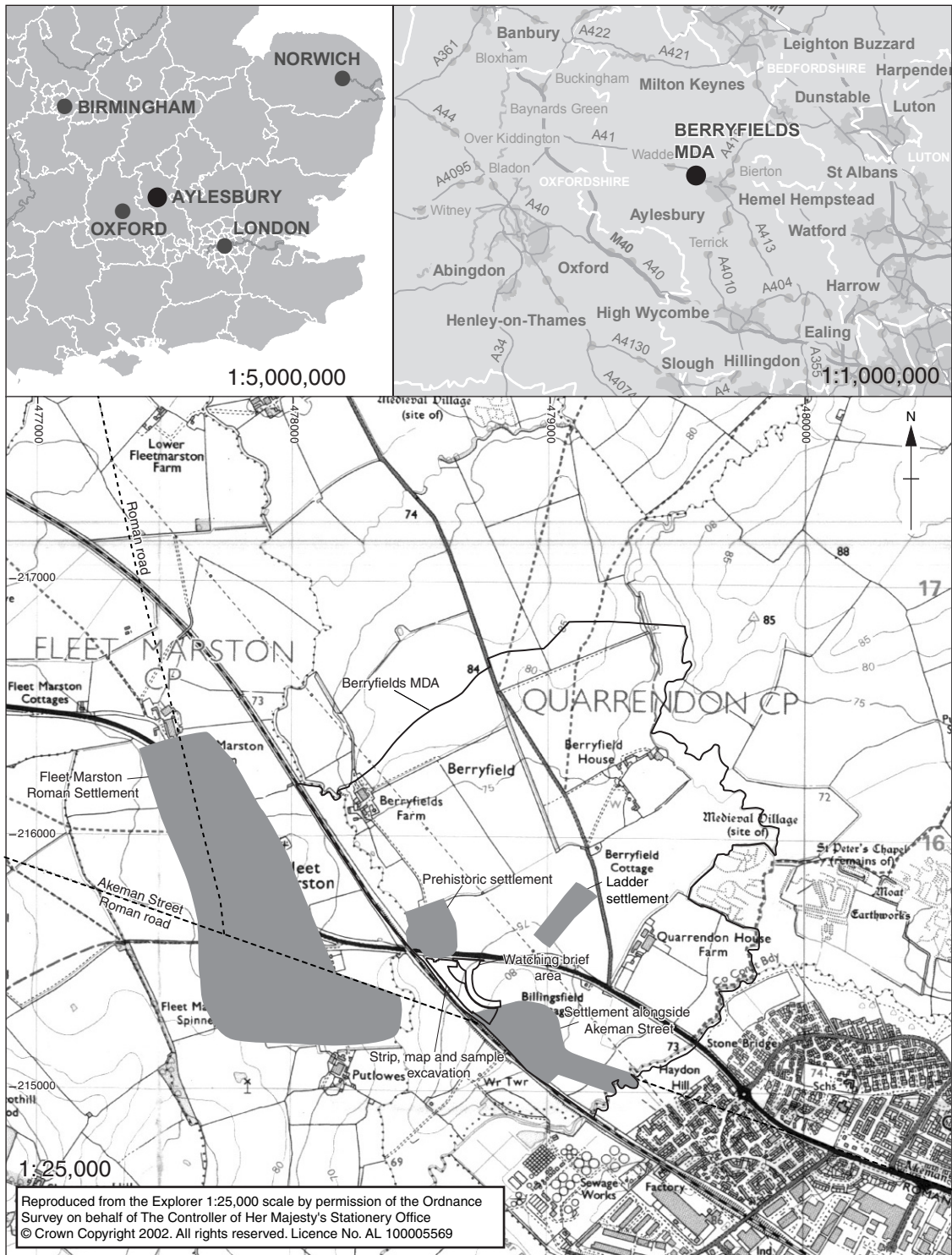


Figure 1: Site Location





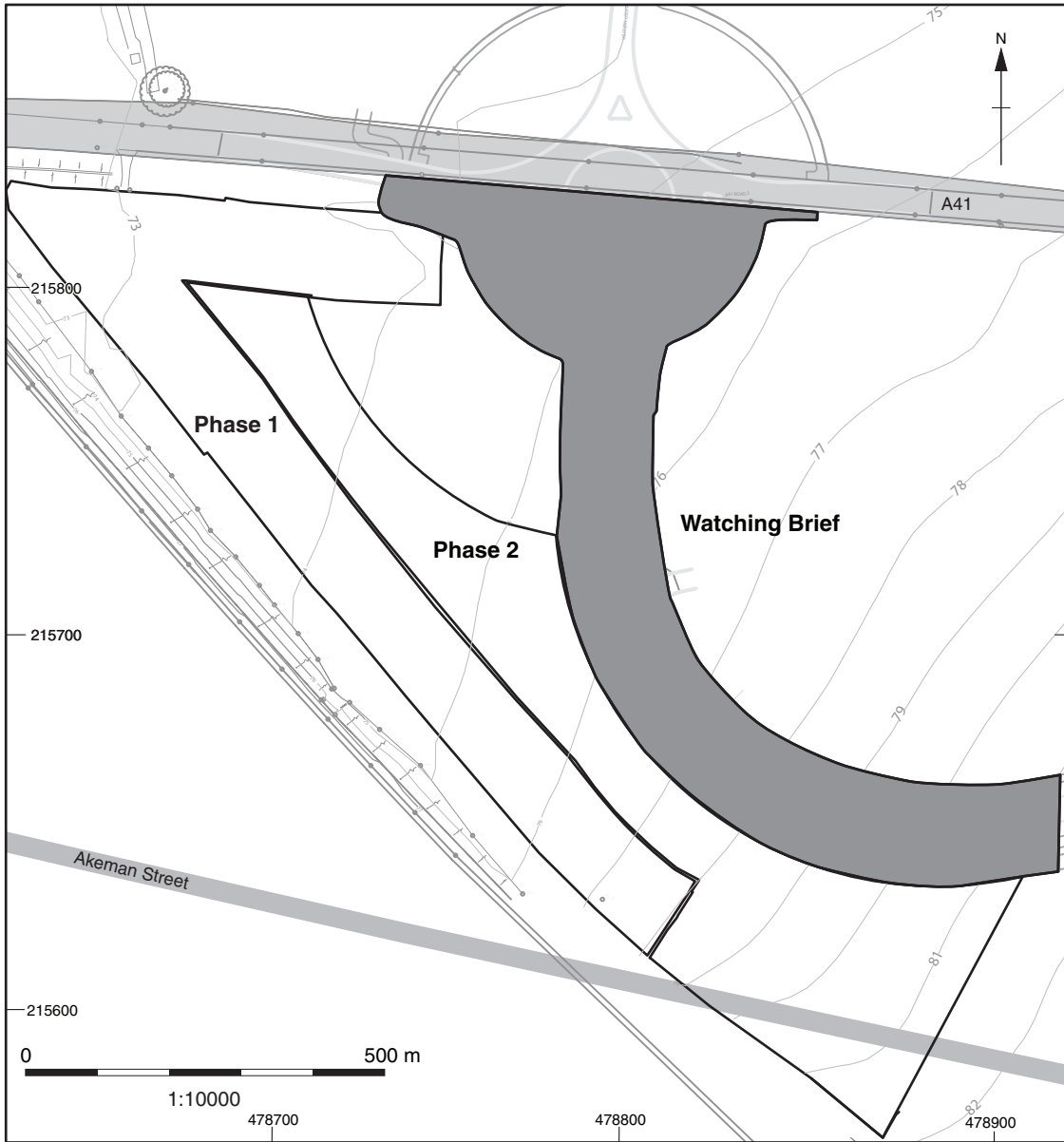


Figure 2: Areas of investigation



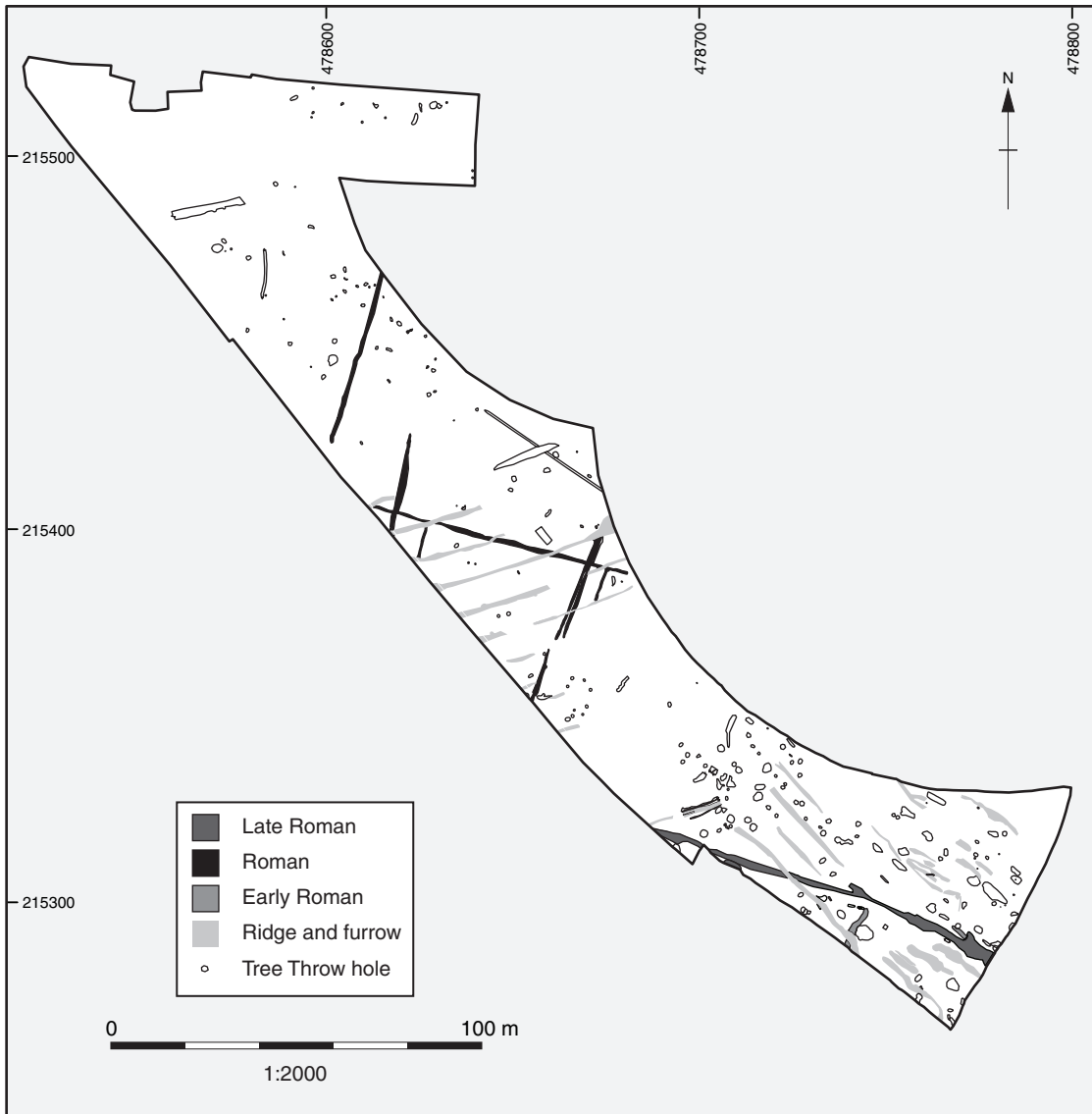


Figure 3: Plan of all archaeological features



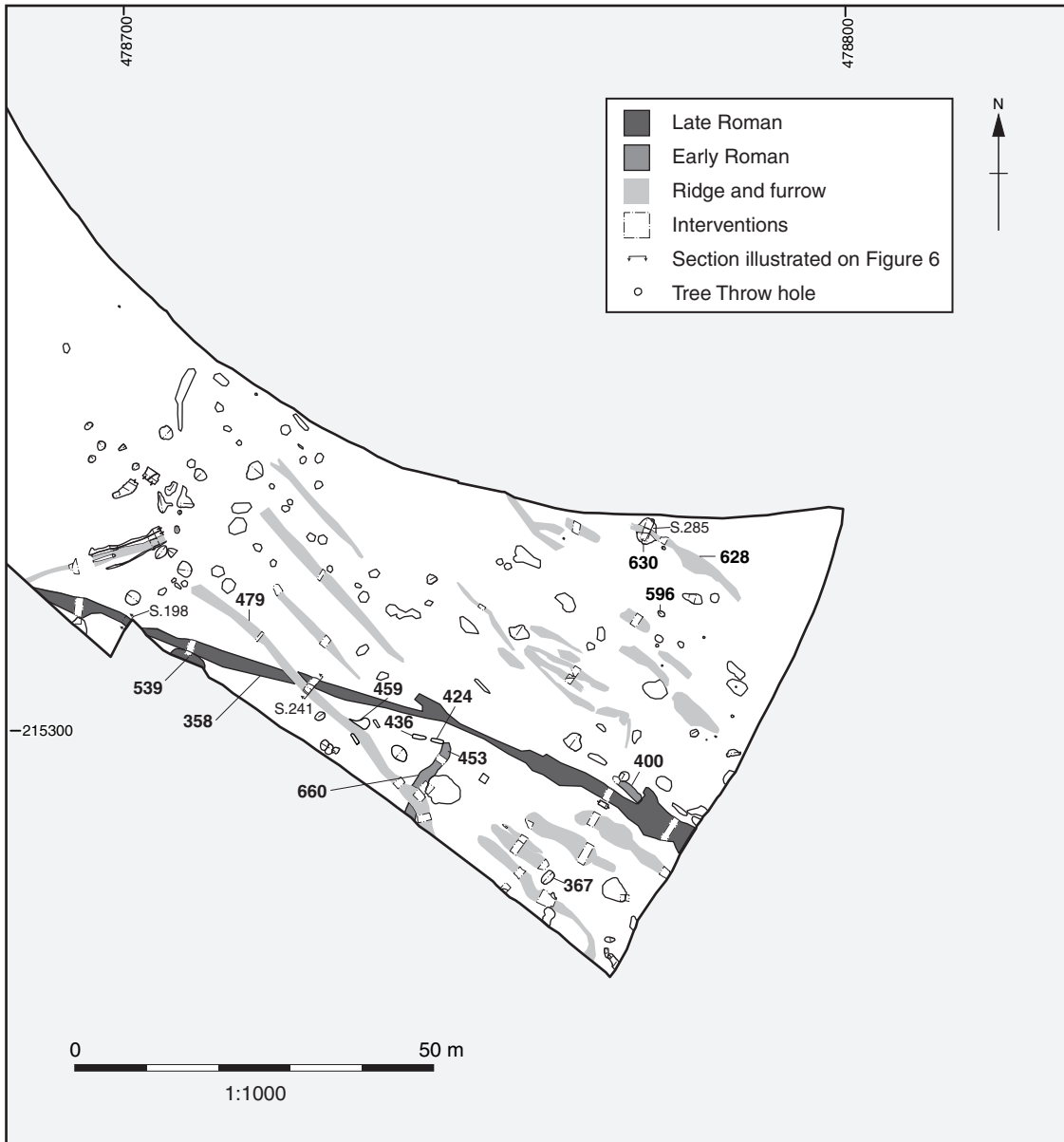


Figure 4: Southern part of the site



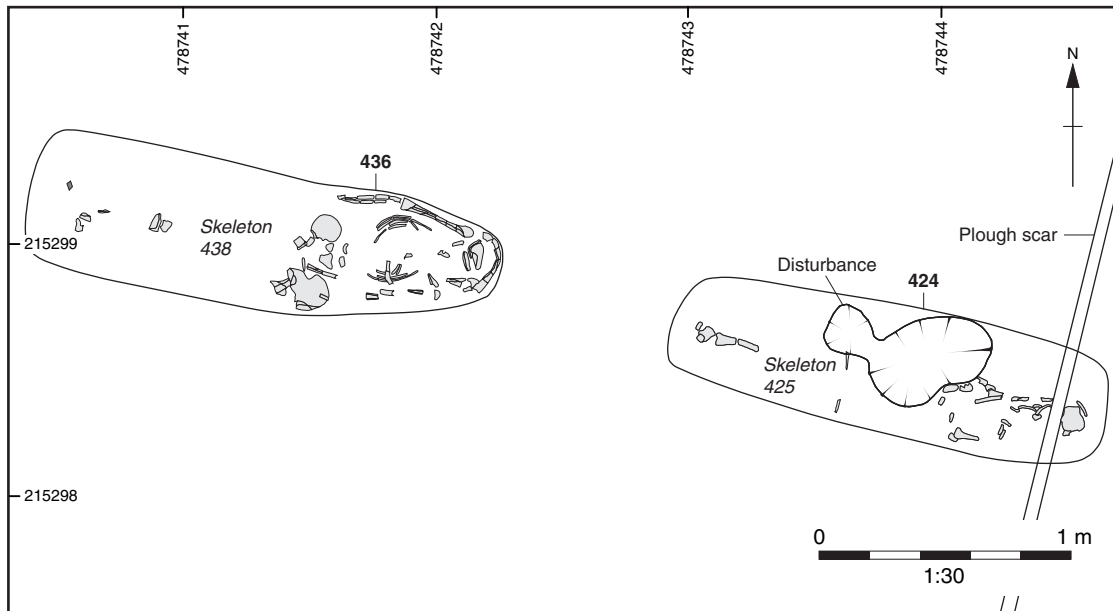


Figure 5: Burials





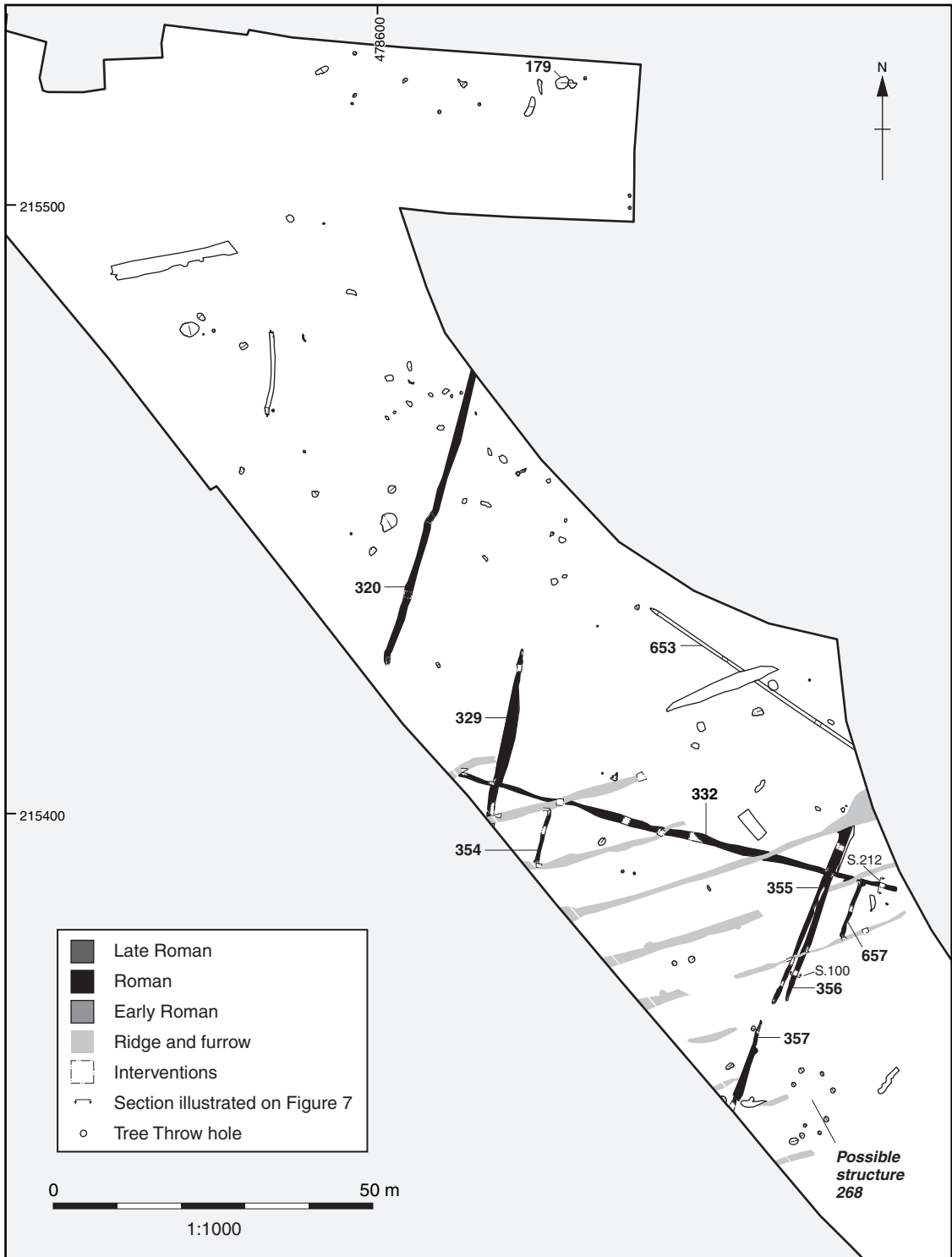


Figure 6: Northern part of the site



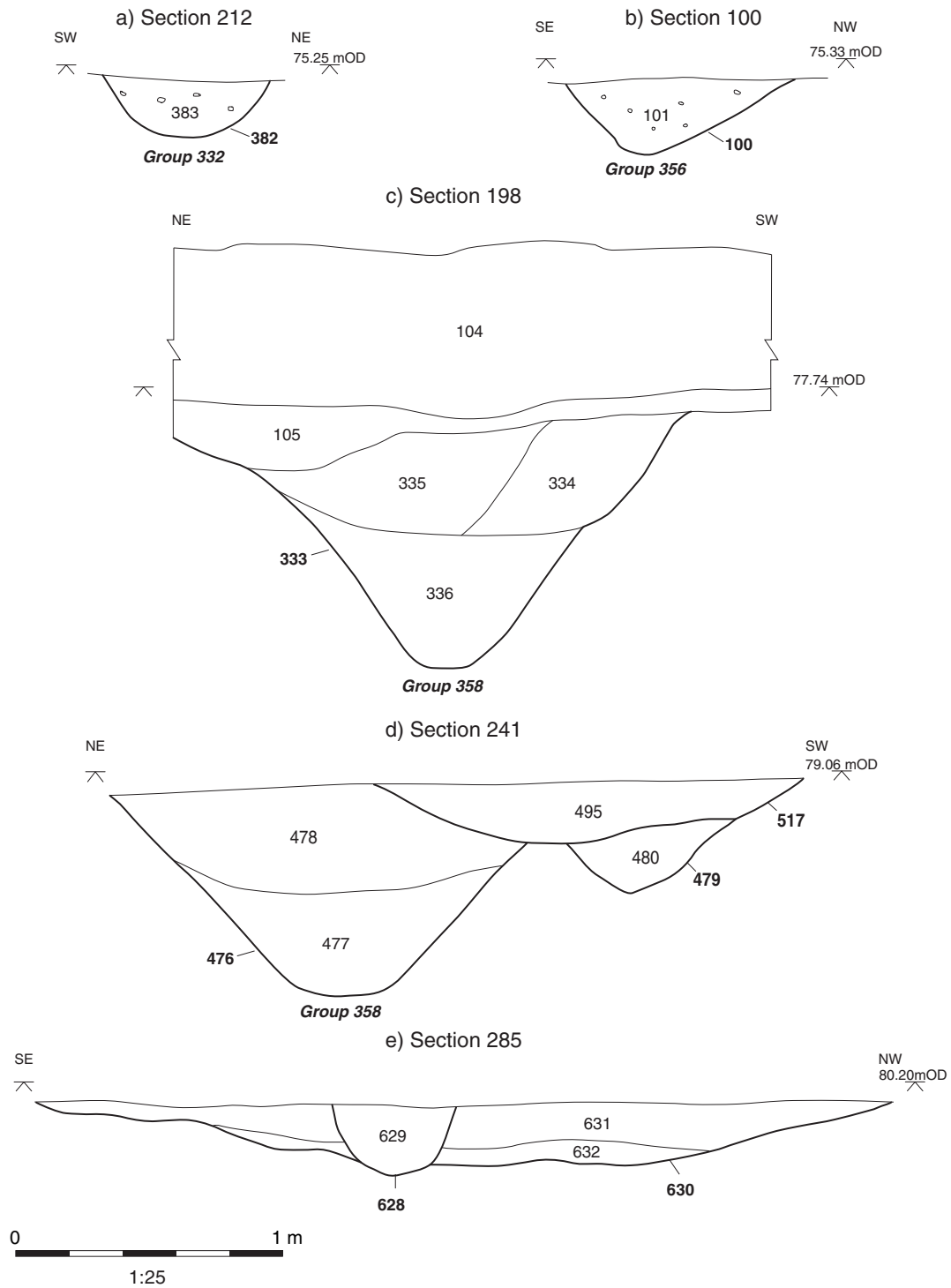


Figure 7: Sections across excavated features. Field boundary groups 332 (a), 356 (b) and ditch 358 (c); group 358 cut by plough furrow 479 (d); tree throw hole 630 cut by plough furrow 628





Figure 8: The distribution of Roman coins



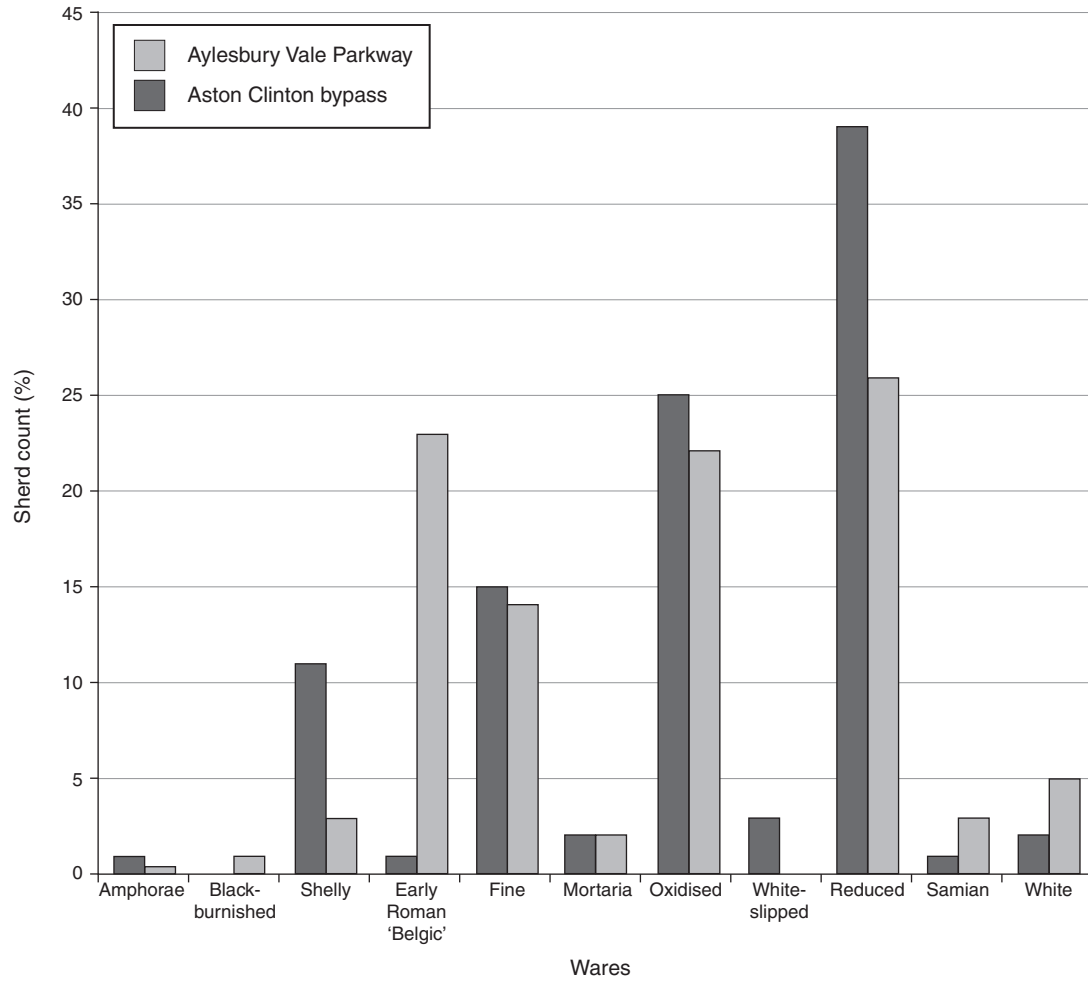


Figure 9: Roman pottery: Comparison between late Roman assemblages from Aylesbury Vale Parkway and Lower Icknield Way Site B, Aston Clinton bypass (Slowikowski 2008, Table 19)





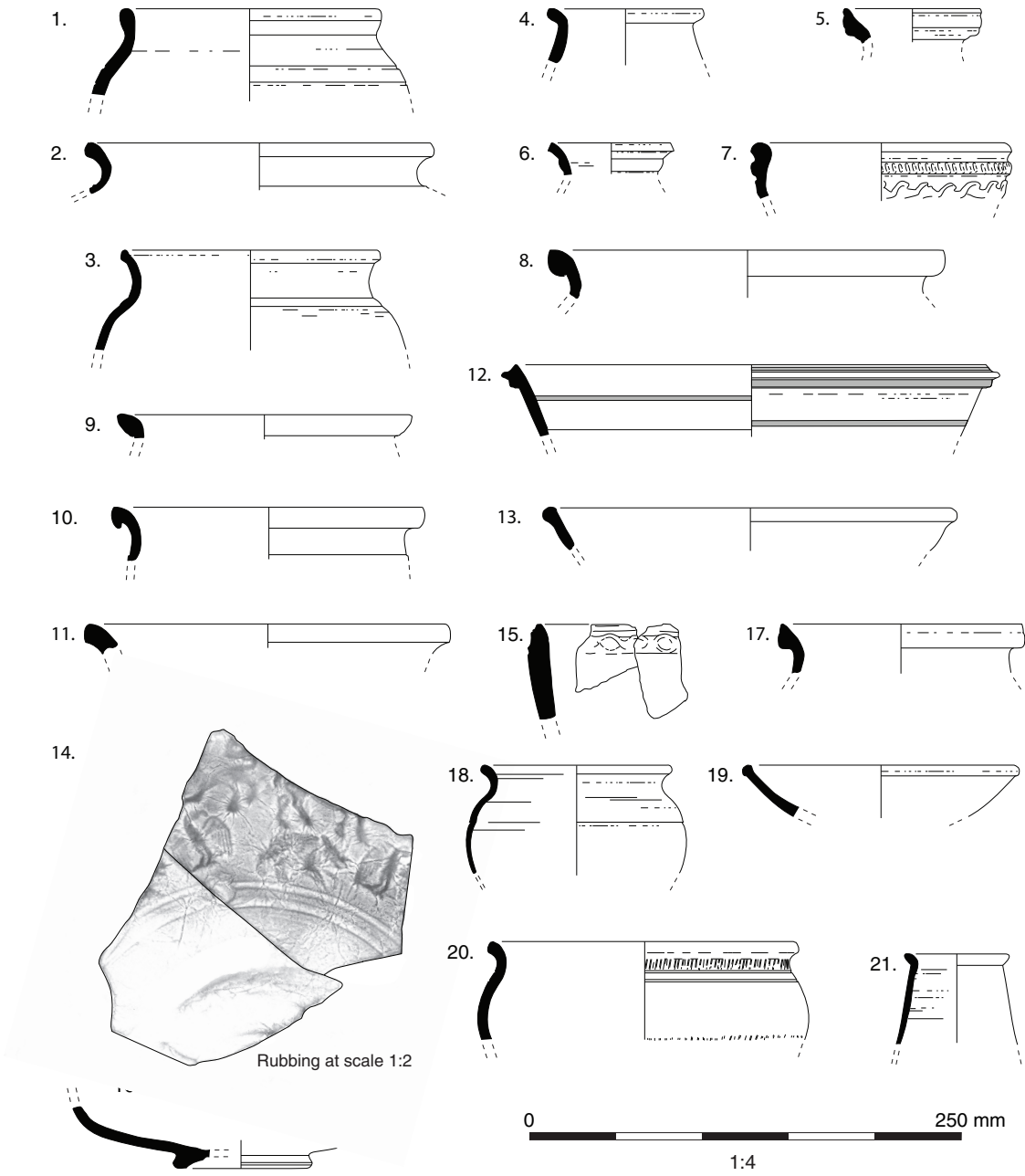


Figure 10: Roman pottery



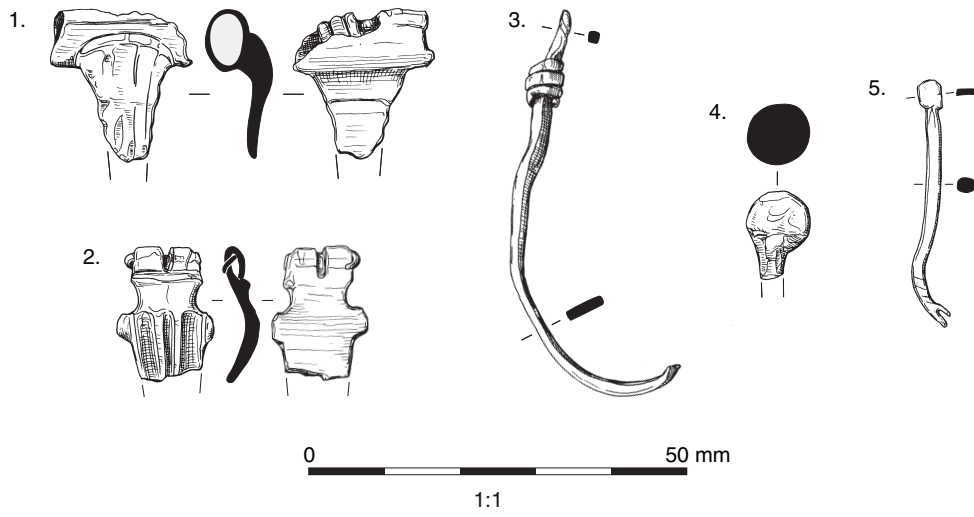


Figure 11: Metal objects

- 1. Langton Down brooch fragment; 2. Hod Hill brooch fragment; 3. Possible bracelet fragment;
- 4. Hair-pin fragment; 5. Possible nail cleaner.



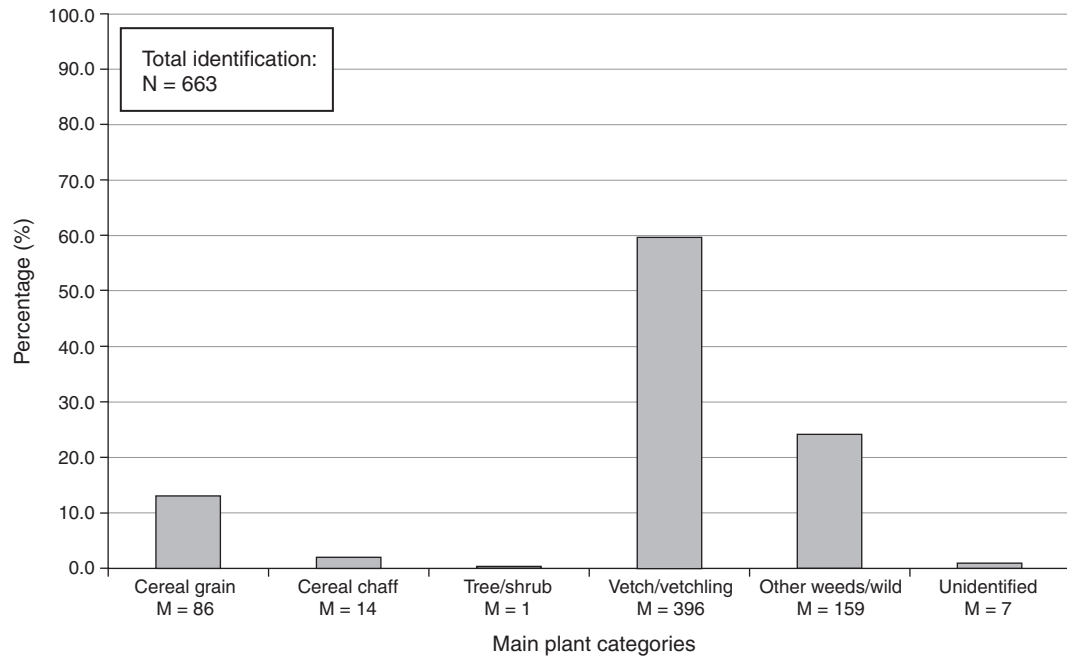


Figure 12: Relative proportion of main plant categories



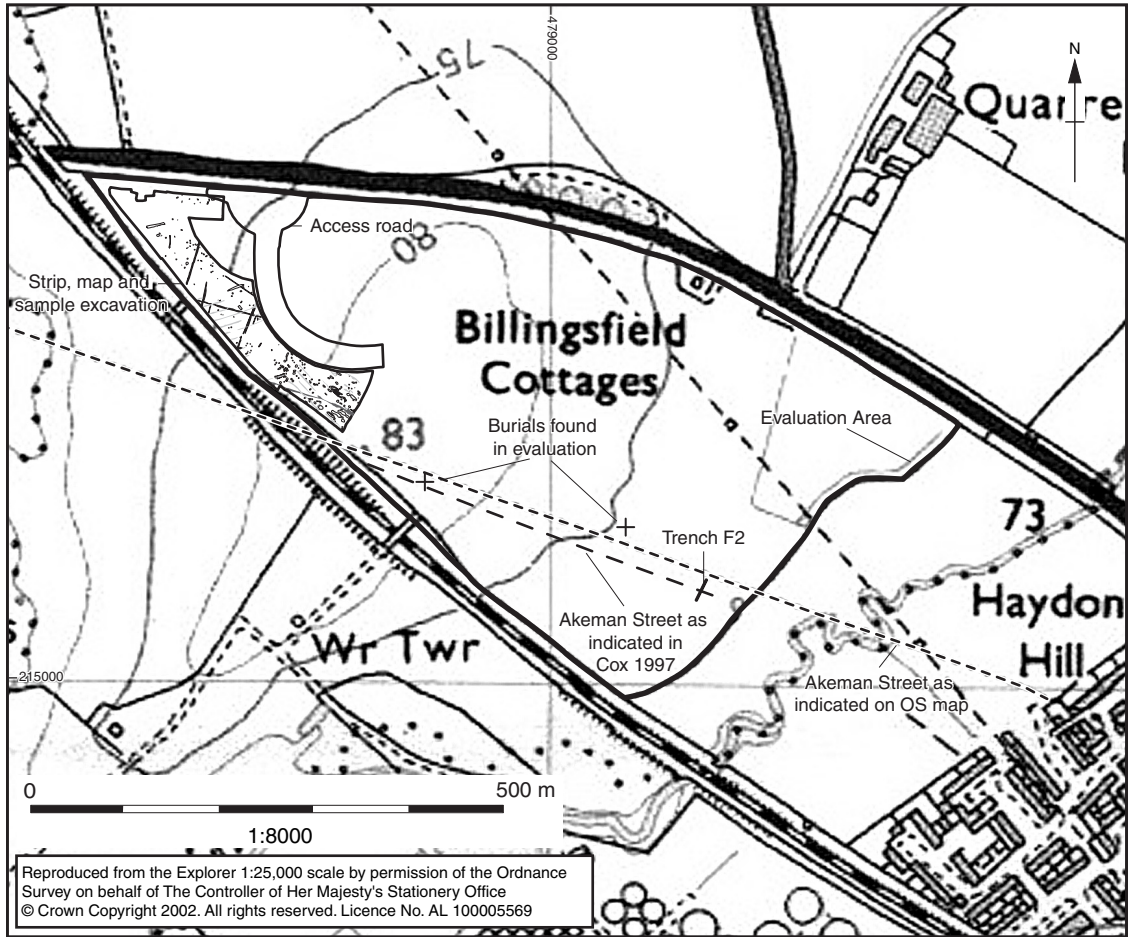


Figure 13: Billingsfield, showing areas of evaluation and excavation





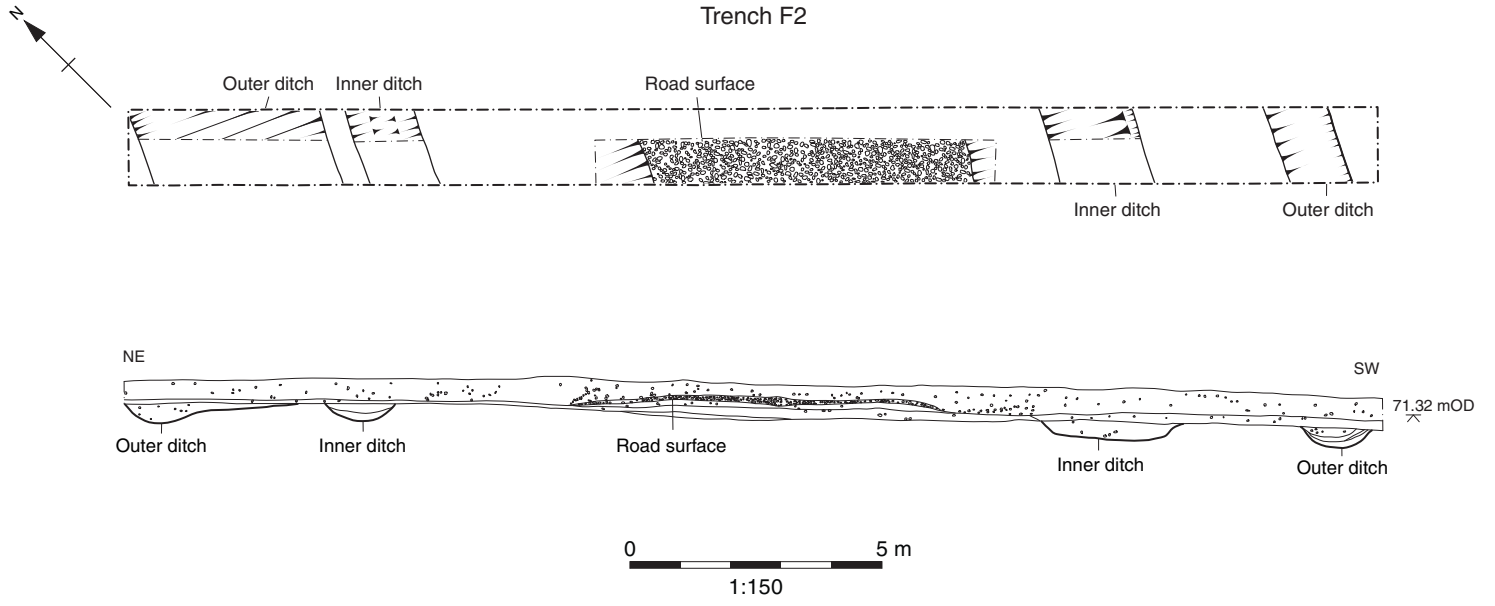


Figure 14: The Roman road as uncovered in evaluation trench F2 (Cox 1997, Figures 12 and 15A)





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