



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM

**'The Old Shops Site',  
Mill Street, Rocester,  
Staffordshire**

**A post-excavation assessment  
and research design**

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit*



THE QUEEN'S  
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES  
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

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## **Excavation at 'The Old Shops Site', Mill Street, Rocester, Staffordshire in 2000. A Post-Excavation Assessment.**

### **Summary**

This report briefly summarises the results of a five-weeks excavation of part of the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>-century *vicus* outside the west gate of the Roman fort complex at Rocester, Staffordshire (NGR SK110393) and provides an initial quantification of the excavation paper archive, finds assemblages and environmental assemblage. An assessment is made of the academic value of further post-excavation analysis of this material, and proposals are made for a post-excavation programme leading to publication.

### **Introduction**

This report briefly summarises the results of a five-weeks excavation in February-March 2000 at the 'Old Shops Site' (Figure 1), in part of the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>-century *vicus* outside the west gate of the Roman fort complex at Rocester, Staffordshire (NGR SK110393) and provides an initial quantification of the excavation paper archive, finds assemblages and environmental assemblage. An assessment is made of the academic value of further post-excavation analysis of this material, and proposals are made for a post-excavation programme leading to publication. The report follows procedures defined in The Management of Archaeology Projects (MAP 2).

An archaeological evaluation was conducted on the adjacent development site, following demolition of blocks of flats and prior to the redevelopment of two parcels of land located on either side of Mill Street, Rocester, Staffordshire, in September - October 1996. For clarity in this report, that exercise will be referred to as the 'Mill Street Evaluation'. Previous excavation on one part of the Mill Street site in the early 1960s, identified surviving archaeological features and deposits, suggesting the potential for survival elsewhere within the site. In 1996 the Mill Street Evaluation identified three zones of archaeological survival (Mould 1996). Zone 1 was characterised by construction trenches and foundations associated with 1880s terraced houses. These foundations sat on top of, or were cut into, the sand-gravel subsoil. Zones 2 and 3 were characterised by the survival of a complex and well-preserved sequence of archaeological features and deposits with associated artefacts. These archaeological deposits were dated to the late-1st - early-2nd century AD, with some 3<sup>rd</sup>-century activity also present in one trench, and were interpreted as representing further parts of the Roman *vicus* first examined by Sturdy in the 1960s (Bell 1986).

The 'Old Shops Site' lay immediately adjacent to Mould's zone of archaeological potential Zone 3. Following demolition of the shops in December 1999, an archaeological evaluation was therefore conducted on this site, and significant archaeological deposits were immediately identified. An area excavation commenced on the site in early 2000. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Miller Homes in advance of proposed redevelopment of the plot. The archaeological evaluation and excavation were conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), briefs prepared by Staffordshire County Council and specifications prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, all conforming to procedures defined in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1991).

For the purposes of this report, the results of the evaluation and excavation phases have been conflated.

### **The Archaeological Background**

The site, whose underlying geology comprises river terrace sand-gravel, lies within an area of known archaeological context. It is located at a point where the Roman road from Derby to Chesterton crosses the River Dove. Excavations in the 1960s confirmed the presence of a Roman fort and associated *vicus*. This area was further investigated in the period 1985-87, when it was shown that there was a complex sequence of late-1st century Roman military activity and three successive forts, the latest of which was occupied until c. AD 200. A 'small town', or village, developed in the 3rd and 4th centuries and was, in turn, succeeded by Anglo-Saxon and medieval occupation. This archaeological and historical development is outlined in Esmonde Cleary and Ferris (1996) and will not be repeated here.

### **The Paper Archive**

The paper archive resulting from on-site recording consists of context (layer) sheets, feature sheets, drawings on permatrace, black and white photographs and colour slides. The quantities of material are as follows:

Context sheets: 125  
Feature sheets: 60  
Drawings; 49  
BW photos: 76  
Colour slides: 48

### **The Stratigraphic Sequence**

The archaeological deposits on the site had been heavily truncated by later disturbances, including gardening, and the digging of foundations for a terrace of houses here in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and, more destructively, for shops and garages in the 1960s. Archaeological deposits therefore survived largely as 'islands' of intact stratigraphy. Following site clearance of an area c.200 sq.m. by mechanical excavator working under archaeological supervision, the initial approach adopted as the excavation strategy was to fully excavate by hand all post-Roman disturbances and garden soil deposits, and to then excavate the exposed Roman deposits in plan over the whole excavation area in stratigraphic sequence. However, due to poor weather conditions and logistical problems connected to the relatively restricted size of the area being excavated, the earliest Roman horizons were not excavated in plan across the whole site as one exercise, though the sequence was otherwise fully-recorded.

Initial post-excavation analysis of the stratigraphic record has led to the production of a site matrix and a provisional phasing of the site. The phasing has been created in relation to four main archaeological soil horizons which were recorded as being present across the whole site, and to which the otherwise-truncated sequence of other

archaeological deposits and features can be related. Without examination of the more diagnostic and closely-datable specialist ceramics from the site (ie the samian and mortaria) the Roman phases have all been grouped together as being later 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>-century in date, though some later material may be present in the uppermost horizons, as was found during the Mill Street Evaluation. The phasing has been provided to the specialists undertaking the finds and environmental assessments.

A brief description of the principal features of each phase is given here, along with a list of each principal type of feature (ie pit, post-hole, slot, gully, wall etc). Phase plans have not been drawn up at this stage, as this can only be done definitively following more detailed analysis of the pottery from each individual feature, and the likelihood of the identification of sub-phases within this initial framework. Phase 1 represents the earliest Romano-British activity on site and Phase 3 the latest. While a very small quantity of medieval finds came from the site, it has now been confirmed that no features of this period are present. The residual medieval pottery has not been assessed, nor have post-medieval pottery finds.

### **Phase 1**

Phase 1 has been defined as a period at which site clearance and levelling can be seen to have taken place. The natural sands and gravels (5008) were evidently disturbed in places by root action, while an overlying grey-brown silty layer (5057, 5095) may represent the remnants of a truncated old soil. A shallow, curvilinear gully (F560) was recorded as both cutting 5057 and being partially sealed by it, indicating that the old soil had been itself disturbed and turned over. Two very shallow, sub-circular pits (F553 and F554) were also cut at this time, along with a single small post-hole (F519). Fifty seven sherds of pottery, including 22 sherds of samian, came from layer 5057 and will probably enable a close date to be set for the commencement of activity on the site. Few other finds came from this phase.

#### **Principal Features.**

Pits: F553, F554.

Post-hole: F519

Gully: F560

#### **Pottery Key Groups**

Context 5057.

### **Phase 2**

Phase 2 represents a sequence of activity that it will obviously be possible to divide into a number of sub-phases during fuller post-excavation analysis. Following the levelling of the upper surface of Phase 1 soils 5057 and 5095 a small round-ended timber building was erected on the site, represented by gully F521 (and possibly gully F537 recorded in section only). It is uncertain whether isolated post-holes F528 and F535 formed part of the same structure. Pit digging took place in the area outside the timber building, principally to the north of the structure, contemporary with, and followed by, the dumping and levelling of mixed, mottled soils (including the most extensive of these deposits 5053) containing quantities of pottery and other artefacts, most notably iron nails in layer 5053. It is possible that layer 5053 represents the demolition horizon for the timber building. A stone building, represented by three

stretches of sandstone wall (F 538, F551 and F403 in the evaluation) and possibly by robber trench F552 was now erected. The walls were very badly disturbed and heavily robbed, while the interior of this part of the building, or rather that small part of the interior that lay within the area of excavation, had no intact mortar floor surface, though a linear deposit of heavy yellow clay (5112) may represent a make-up layer for a floor. The excavator observed that the narrow, 1.8m-wide space between two of the walls suggested that this was a corridor rather than a room as such. A possible well (F533-not bottomed) is likely to be contemporary with the stone building, while it is less certain which of the numerous pits to the north, many of them intercutting, were dug during the life of this building. Following demolition and partial robbing of the stone building of Phase 2, a mixed brown clay silt with charcoal (5006) was spread over the area.

#### **Principal Features**

Pits (\*may be cess pit): F510, F514, F517, F518, F520, F522, F523, F524, F525, F526, F527, F530, F531, F534, F536, F540, F550, F558, F559\*.

Post-holes: F528, F535.

Gullies: F521, F537.

Walls: F538, F551.

Robber trench: F552.

Well?: F533.

#### **Pottery Key Groups**

Context 5089 (F533)

Context 5039 (F517)

Context 5048 (F522)

Context 5052 (F524)

Context 5088 (F531)

Context 5086 (F534)

Context 5006

#### **Phase 3**

A number of pits was cut into the upper surface of 5006, including one pit (F512) containing mineralised deposits that may indicate its use as a cess pit, though the backfill (5048) did not have the colour or appearance of cess. A single isolated post-hole (F504) was also recorded at this horizon. Once more, dumping of soil now took place across the whole of the excavated area, perhaps in preparation for the laying down of a thick cobbled surface (5007), composed of both large river cobbles and small gravel cobbling.

#### **Principal Features**

Pits (\*may be cess pit): F507, F508, F509, F512\*, F513, F516, F529.

Post-hole: F504.

#### **Pottery Key Groups**

Context 5007

Context 5018 (F512)

#### Phase 4

The Phase 3 cobbled surface 5007 was cut by a number of pits of varying size. This activity would appear to represent the final phase of Romano-British activity on the site.

#### Principal Features

Pits: F500, F501, F503, F506, F511, F515, F532, F555.

#### Pottery Key Groups

No suitably-sized groups.

#### Post-Roman Phases

Following levelling of the area, the site remained unoccupied for some considerable time. Though some sherds of medieval and earlier post-medieval pottery were recovered from the excavation no features or layers dated to this period. A 0.25-0.35m-deep garden soil across most of the excavated area was probably 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>-century in date and associated with the terrace of brick cottages standing here till the 1960s. The cottage foundations and those of the succeeding 1960s-shops pitted the whole area of excavation, in many places down to the natural sands and gravels, severely truncating the earlier archaeological horizons in the process.

#### Finds and Environmental Assessments

##### Roman Pottery by Lynne Bevan

A total of 4890 sherds of Roman pottery was recovered. The composition of the assemblage by pottery type and relative quantities of feature sherds to plain and decorated body sherds is shown in Table 1, together with the occurrence of makers stamps on samian vessels and mortaria. Samian, mortaria and amphorae have been assessed separately below, according to the degree of involvement required from external specialists, and the general coarsewares are considered as a separate group.

	Rims	Bases	Stamps	Plain Body	Decorated Body	Total:
Samian	200	55	4	169	137	565
Mortaria	33	6	3	31	-	73
Amphorae	2	-	-	48	-	50
Coarse pottery:						
Greywares	377	107	-	1561	252	2297
Orange/buff wares	100	42	-	432	43	617
White wares	47	26	-	380	9	462
BB1	101	45	-	184	69	399
Blackwares	36	6		170	18	230
Derbyshire ware	12	4	-	59	4	79
Fine wares*	14	4	-	55	45	118
Post-Roman:						

Medieval	7	1	-	12	2	22
16 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> c	3	-	-	10	4	17
19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> c						Not counted

\* includes mica-dusted wares, colour coats, Nene Valley, and glazed wares.

Table 1: Quantification of pottery.

### Samian

A total of 565 fragments of Samian was recovered, 45% of which comprised feature sherds, including approximately 200 rims and five complete vessel profiles. Almost 25% of the Samian was decorated and four stamps and three incidences of *graffiti* were identified among the assemblage. Almost 32% of the samian assemblage came from post-Roman deposits and will therefore only be scanned during full post-excavation analysis. The assemblage will otherwise be fully reported on by Steve Willis, and stamps identified by Brenda Dickinson.

### Amphorae

A total of 48 fragments of amphorae was recovered, the majority of which were large, undiagnostic Dressel 20 body fragments. Cataloguing and quantification of this material will be required at full post-excavation stage, with specialist consultation with David Williams being required for one or two sherds.

### Mortaria

Seventy-three fragments of mortaria were identified among the coarse pottery, three of which were stamped. A full report on the mortaria will be required. In common with previous mortaria assemblages from Rocester from the New Cemetery (Ferguson 1996) and Orton's Pasture (Bevan forthcoming), this will be achieved in consultation with Mrs Kay Hartley who will also produce a report upon the stamped mortaria.

### The Coarse Pottery

For the purposes of the assessment, the pottery has been quantified by sherd count in broad family groups defined by macroscopic analysis only at this stage. Identification of certain groups is to some extent therefore inevitably subjective and some degree of overlap is possible between some groups, particularly in the case of some probable BB1 copies, as previously identified among the assemblage from Orton's Pasture, Rocester (Bevan forthcoming). The main fabric groups represented, and their relative quantities are presented in Table 1. Initially, in post-excavation, a full quantification of the whole assemblage will be required by fabric, weight and EVEs. However, further study will otherwise concentrate only upon providing spot dating and analysing and presenting in detail selected key groups (listed at the end of this assessment report), using the pre-existing form series from past excavations in

Rocester (Bell 1986, Leary 1996, Bevan forthcoming) and the fabric series defined by Leary for the New Cemetery site (Leary 1996).

Quantification of the whole assemblage will allow direct comparison to be made with the published assemblage from the New Cemetery site and the soon-to-be published Orton's Pasture assemblage. The focus of subsequent research will be on the identification of contrasting areas of site function, such as food consumption and food storage, the latter suggested by a similarly-high proportion of grey ware storage vessels to that noted among previous assemblages from Rocester. Greywares, which account for over 46% of the total assemblage, are the dominant pottery fabric, followed by orange-buff wares at 12% and Samian at 11% of the assemblage respectively. In addition to the large and varied Samian assemblage, some high quality coarsewares are also present among the assemblage, including green glazed wares, among which there is the possibility of some potentially 'new' forms being identified to complement the existing known repertoire which was substantially increased by the glazed wares present in the Orton's Pasture assemblage (Bevan forthcoming). It is hoped that study of the mortaria assemblage will reveal further information regarding the military production of mortaria in the vicinity of the site and illuminate exchange mechanisms involved in the importation of mortaria from more distant kilns. Further stamped vessels increase the already unusually large number of stamped mortaria from Rocester as a whole (K. Hartley pers. comm.)

Some almost-complete coarse pottery vessels are present in the 'Old Shops' assemblage and it is intended to investigate the possibility that such vessels were deliberately selected for discard in certain features, such as pits, as previously noted among the Orton's Pasture assemblage where the site was at least partially-defined by a ritual or special function reflected in some aspects of the material culture (Bevan forthcoming).

While some additional forms will require illustration, the overall impression of the assemblage at assessment stage is that many of the forms present have already been published and noted at Rocester (Bell 1986, Leary 1996, Bevan forthcoming) or at Derby (Dool *et al.* 1985). The large number of grey ware jar forms seem to be very much already recorded forms from Rocester. The majority of the vessels in the assemblage would seem to be later 1<sup>st</sup>-century-early/mid 2<sup>nd</sup>-century in date.

**Coarse Pottery Key Groups** (No. of form sherds in brackets-[ ]).

**Pottery Key Groups; Phase 1**

Context 5057 [9].

**Pottery Key Groups; Phase 2**

Context 5089 (F533) [18]

Context 5039 (F517) [21]

Context 5048 (F522) [22]

Context 5052 (F524) [28]

Context 5088 (F531) [24]

Context 5086 (F534) [11]

Context 5006 [59]

**Pottery Key Groups; Phase 3**

Context 5007 [51]



Context 5018 (F512) [27]

**Pottery Key Groups; Phase 4**

No suitably-sized groups.

**Other Finds Assessment by Lynne Bevan**

**Statement of Potential**

Although relatively-small in size, the small finds assemblage is varied and interesting both in artefactual terms and also in its dating potential. As with the pottery assemblage, the emphasis in terms of small finds study will be upon the comparison of artefactual groups from different features with a view to reconstructing different activity areas and discard mechanisms and also investigating the possibility of special/ritual deposition as suggested by certain aspects of the Orton's Pasture assemblage (Bevan forthcoming).

The finds have been listed and discussed by material below.

**Worked Bone**

A bone handle (5039) and a bone spoon (5044) were recovered, for which further research and illustration will be required.

**Roman Window and Vessel Glass**

Nine fragments of window glass were recovered (5003 x 7, 5007 x 1). Vessel glass comprised two rims from jars (5055, 5081), part of a handle from a jar (5072), and 33 fragments from blue-green bottles (5000 x 1, 5001 x 1, 5002 x 1, 5003 x 2, 5006 x 2, 5007 x 2, 5018 x 3, 5020 x 2, 5030 x 1, 5034 x 1, 5039 x 1, 5044 x 1, 5048 x 2, 5050 x 1, 5052 x 2, 5053 x 2, 5060 x 1, 5071 x 1, 5073 x 2, 5089 x 1, 5098 x 2, 5103, 5107 x 1). The majority of bottle fragments were undiagnostic base and body fragments for which identification to form and close chronological resolution will not be possible, although a high proportion came from exclusively Roman contexts also containing datable Roman pottery.

A summary catalogue will be required for the window glass and undiagnostic bottle glass, and further research, including illustration, for the handle and two rim fragments. The compilation of a full catalogue and a short report is recommended for the illustrated material.

**Glass Beads**

Three glass beads were recovered, two of which were turquoise frit melon beads (5050/SF19, 5098) and the other a green cylindrical bead (5007/SF2). Illustration, the compilation of a full catalogue and further research will be required for the beads.

**Silver**

Two fragments from a small ring were recovered (5107/SF28) for which further research, cataloguing and illustration will be required.

### **Copper Alloy**

Twenty-four items of copper alloy were recovered, including a pair of broken tweezers (SF29), two *ligulae* (5007/SF10, 5052/SF22), a small spoon (5052/SF20), a key handle (SF30), a pin (5003), three studs (5002, 5006/SF17, 5067), one of which had glass inlay (5067), a bracelet fragment (5073/SF25), a ring (SF26), six bow brooches (5006/5007/SF3, 5047/SF27, 5051/SF23, 5053/SF21, 5081/SF24, 5100/SF32) and a pennanular brooch (5052/SF18). Other finds consisted of a hollow, segmented ?decorative fitting of leaded copper alloy (5093/SF31), two implement shafts (5007/SF11, 5089), two sections of tube (5107/SF28) and a coin (5010/SF1). In addition, eight unidentifiable fragments of copper alloy were found (5073 x 7, 5089 x 1).

Despite a high incidence of fragmentation among the assemblage, the condition of the copper alloy was generally stable. The compilation of a catalogue, further research on all identifiable objects and fittings, and selective illustration of the best-preserved pieces is recommended.

### **Lead**

Two lead objects, a possible handle (5003) and a reel-shaped object (unstratified), and four fragments of lead (5052 x 1, 5060 x 1, 5067 x 2) were recovered. The compilation of a summary catalogue and further research, possibly including illustration, on the handle and the reel-shaped object is recommended.

### **Iron**

The iron assemblage was in a poor condition, with a high incidence of fragmentation and corrosion. Few identifiable items were present. Objects for which x-ray will be required comprise a possible pennanular brooch (5007/SF8), a large unidentified object (5066), and a rectangular fragment of ?plate (unstratified/SF12). In addition, four small unidentified fragments (5052/SF18 x 3, 5089 x 1) and a total of 128 nails were found in the following contexts: 5002/1003 x 2, 5006 x 3, 5006/5007 x 1, 5007 x 1, 5018 x 4, 5029 x 1, 5032 x 1, 5037 x 2, 5047 x 7, 5048 x 1, 5052 x 33, 5053 x 34, 5066 x 2, 5067 x 5, 5074 x 1, 5075 x 2, 5084 x 1, 5085 x 1, 5086 x 3, 5089 x 5, 5096 x 4, 5098 x 2, 5103 x 2, 5106 x 4, F529 x 1, unstratified x 5. While the majority of the nails were found singly, or in small groups, two larger concentrations comprising over half of the nails, came from contexts 5052 (F524) and 5053 (a layer).

With the exception of two hobnails from the edge of a sandal which were preserved *in situ*, attached to a fragment of leather sole (5075), the nails were all chronologically-undiagnostic nails of the kinds used for building and carpentry. Unless x-rays reveal objects of archaeological interest, no further action will be required on the iron assemblage.

### **Worked Stone**

Four items of worked stone were recovered; half of a rotary quern (5098/SF33), a fragment of roof tile (5072), a possible whetstone (5003) and a possible worked fragment of stone (5013). Further research and geological identification will be required upon these items.

### **Brick and Tile**

A total of 20 fragments of brick, weighing 701 grams, and 49 fragments of tile, weighing 2589 grams, were recovered from the following contexts:

Brick: 5007 x 1, 5018 x 1, 5048 x 3, 5071 x 1, 5082 x 1, 5087 x 8, 5088 x 1, 5106 x 3, 5107 x 1.

Tile: 5003 x 2, 5006 x 1, 5007 x 4, 5016 x 1, 5020 x 4, 5023 x 1, 5028 x 1, 5034 x 1, 5037 x 1, 5039 x 3, 5044 x 1, 5046 x 3, 5047 x 2, 5048 x 1, 5053 x 3, 5067 x 6, 5068 x 3, 5073 x 1, 5084 x 1, 5093 x 3, 5096 x 1, F529 x 3, unstratified x 2).

With the exception of two *tegulae* fragments (5016, 5020), the tile assemblage was not chronologically-diagnostic, although a Roman origin for most of the tile, as well as brick, can be assumed since the majority came from stratified Roman contexts. The amounts of brick and tile, which appear to have originated from buildings in the vicinity of the site, are too small to warrant further study or analysis.

### **Slag**

Small quantities of slag were recovered from the following contexts: 5001 x 5, 5002 x 2, 5003 x 25, 5054 x 1, 5071 x 1, 5125 x 1, 5039 x 1, 5089 x 1. The largest quantities came from chronologically-mixed layers, and while it is possible that smithing activities were being carried out, particularly in view of the quantity of fired clay from context 5003 (see below) which might be suggestive of a hearth or working area, this activity cannot be adequately dated to the Roman period. Therefore no further action will be required upon this material.

### **Fired Clay**

Sixty-three fragments of fired clay were recovered, either singly or in small groups of up to fifteen, from a number of contexts (listed below). Although almost-exclusively Roman in origin (apart from the largest quantity from 5003), the small number of fragments is not significant and no further action will be required for this material.

Fired clay by context: 5003 x 15, 5012 x 2, 5015 x 1, 5016 x 1, 5018 x 2, 5020 x 3, 5021 x 1, 5023 x 1, 5024 x 1, 5028 x 8, 5036 x 3, 5044 x 4, 5048 x 1, 5049 x 1, 5050 x 1, 5052 x 3, 5053 x 2, 5054 x 1, 5067 x 1, 5071 x 1, 5087 x 1, 5089 x 1, 5088 x 1, 5089 x 1, 5091 x 1, 5093 x 1, 5116 x 1, unstratified x 3.

### **Modern Glass**

Five fragments of green bottle glass (5002 x 2, 5003 x 2, 5071 x 1) and a fragment of window glass (5001) were recovered, and no further action will be required on this material.

### **Miscellaneous Finds**

An oyster shell (5002), two small fragments of mortar (5003, 5006), four modern coins (5001), and 14 fragments of clay pipe (5001 x 6, 5002 x 3, 5003 x 1, 5004 x 3, 5007 x 1), were recovered for which no further action will be required.

### **Animal Bone by Emily Murray**

Eleven boxes (c. 32 x 32 x 17 cm) of hand-collected animal bone, weighing c. 30 kg, were recovered from the excavation. This total includes modern and unstratified contexts not considered in the assessment.

Ten bulk samples (between 10-20 litres each) were taken during the course of the excavation. No large samples were taken and no coarse sieving was carried out. Of the ten samples recovered, eight were processed by wet sieving (1mm mesh) and the residues were hand-sorted. Five samples contained 'countable' (see below) animal bone elements and these are listed in Table 4.

### **Assessment of Faunal Remains**

#### ***Methods of Assessment***

The faunal material was recorded using a modified version of a system devised by Davis (Davis 1992: Albarella & Davis 1994). This system considers a selection of anatomical elements as 'countable', while the presence of non-countable specimens of interest, such as antler, horncores, pathologies and non-countable elements from unusual species, are noted. The measurements inferred vary according to element and species but the majority of these follow von den Driesch (1976). Mandibles are considered to be ageable where two or more teeth are present with recognisable wear. No attempt was made to differentiate sheep and goat at this stage.

Five of the eleven boxes were examined in detail (i.e. roughly 50% of the Roman assemblage), along with all of the bone recovered from the bulk samples. The material not considered for detailed assessment was briefly scanned to determine whether it differed in any way.

#### ***Preservation***

The preservation of the bone overall was generally quite good, although it was highly fragmented and a sizeable percentage of the countable cattle elements comprised phalanges and teeth.

#### ***Range & Variety***

Cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse, dog, chicken, goose and roe deer were the range of species identified (Tables 2 & 4). Cattle clearly dominated the NISP (number of identifiable specimens), as was also the case at other contemporary sites excavated at

Rocester (see Hammon *forthcoming* and Levitan in Esmonde Cleary & Ferris 1996). However, the lack of large samples mitigated against identifying whether this predominance is genuine or not. Evidence of gnawing was infrequent, and was noted only on one or two specimens, while juvenile/neo-natal sheep/goat bones were present in two contexts (5098 & 5039).

A small number of fish fragments was recovered from the bulk samples (contexts 5038 & 5044), although unfortunately they are unidentifiable. This is a dietary element that was not noted at either the New Cemetery excavations (Levitan in Cleary & Ferris 1996) or Orton's Pasture (Hammon *forthcoming*) where bulk sampling was also undertaken.

### Potential for Analysis & Recommendations

The importance of this assemblage is in its civilian/domestic, as opposed to military, provenance. It is unfortunate that it is so highly fragmented, as this will limit the amount of information that can be recovered. The potential for interpretation is further limited by the small size of the sieved assemblage. Given these factors, and the relatively small size of the hand-collected material (see Tables 2 & 3), it is unlikely that much meaningful comparison could be made between the proposed sub-phases. It is therefore recommended that for some aspects of the analysis different phases are combined. It will be of interest to integrate the results with other excavations in the village, notably the results from Orton's Pasture Phase 1 (Hammon *forthcoming*) and Levitan's group 1 (Phase 1A-1B: late first to mid-second century) from the New Cemetery (Levitan in Cleary & Ferris 1996) but also to make comparison with other contemporary civilian Roman assemblages.

Phase	No. of contexts	cattle	sheep/goat	pig	bird	Other	Total	comments
2	14	136	26	22	3	4	191	Horse, dog, goose & domestic fowl
3	4	7	-	1	-	-	8	-
Total	18	143	26	23	3	4	199	
<i>Total (est.)</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>286</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>398</i>	

Table 2 Number of 'countable bones' (from hand-collected assemblage) used for assessment, with estimated totals for the full assemblage (figures in italics).

Phase	No. of contexts	ageable mandibles				Measurable bones					
		cattle	sheep/goat	pig	Total	Cattle	sheep/goat	pig	bird	other	Total
2	14	3	5	7	17	31	10	8	3	2	54
3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1			1
Total	18	3	5	7	17	31	10	9	3	2	55
<i>Total (est.)</i>		<i>6</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>110</i>

Table 3 Number of ageable mandibles and measurable bones/teeth (from hand-collected assemblage), with estimated totals for the full assemblage (figures in italics).

Phase	Context	feature	Sample	countable bones						measurable bones					comment	
				cattle	s/g	pig	other	bird	fsh	cattle	s/g	pig	other	bird		
2	5038	514	2	2	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	5044	518	4	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	roe deer
2	5039	517	5	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
?	5029	559	10	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	5089	533	7	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	domestic fowl
Total				3	1	4	1	1	5	1	-	-	1	-	-	

Table 4 'Countable' and measurable animal bone elements from the sieved samples (s/g = sheep/goat)

## The Plant Remains by Marina Ciaraldi

Soil samples were collected during the excavation in order to investigate the presence and the quality of preservation of biological remains. This assessment, however, discusses exclusively the plant remains recovered from the nine samples processed.

Some of the research questions considered during the assessment of the plant remains can be summarised as follows:

- The comparison between the plant assemblage recovered from the Roman *vicus* and the attached Roman fort (Moffett 1996) is important in the understanding of the economic relations between these two contemporary sites. They can reveal important aspects such as the strategy of food production adopted by the civilian population as a consequence of the presence of a military population or they can provide evidence of a difference in the food supply to the inhabitants of the *vicus* and those of the forts.
- The presence of different areas of activity on site, particularly those related to the processing of crops.
- The presence of ritual offerings such those identified in the nearby Roman site of Orton's Pasture, Rochester (Monckton Forthcoming).

### Methods

The samples were collected at the excavator's discretion, according to the guidelines outlined in the *On Site Guide to Environmental Sampling and Processing*, BUFAU. They were floated by using bucket flotation. The light fraction (flot) of the soil was recovered using a 500 µm sieve, the heavy fraction (residue) was recovered on a 1mm mesh. The residue was sorted by eye, while the flots were scanned under a low-power stereomicroscope. Only a percentage of the flots was scanned, as indicated in Table 5. The identification of the plant remains has to be considered preliminary, as no reference collection was used at this stage.

The samples were all from pits, with the only exception of sample No.9 that was taken from layer 5115.

### Results

The charred plant remains recovered from the samples were generally scarce. Some small, mineralised lumps were observed in the flots of samples 3 and 10 (respectively F512/5048 and F559/5029) but a thorough examination of the residues did not reveal any other mineralised biological remains. Most of the charred seeds were poorly preserved and appeared distorted and crumbly, as if exposed to high temperatures.

Barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) is the most common cereal and some of the barley grains were germinated. Spelt (*Triticum spelta* L.) and emmer (*Triticum dicoccum* Schub.) were recognised as well, although they need a more accurate identification. A few grains of oats (*Avena* sp.) and rye (*Secale cereale* L.) were also recorded. Weeds were only limited to a few grains of grasses and some ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata* L.) seeds. No chaff was present in the samples examined.

## Discussion and recommendation

The smallness of the plant assemblage and its poor preservation suggest that the results obtained by their study will be rather limited. There are, however, some important points that need to be considered. The plant material recovered from the *vicus* is the only one available for a comparison with the plant assemblage from the Roman fort. It is a rare occasion to be able to compare plant remains from two contemporary sites that are economically and socially related, such as a fort and its *vicus*. On the basis of these considerations, it is suggested that full analysis on the four richest samples is undertaken.

Some attention will also have to be paid to the presence of coal in some of the samples, although it is likely that they occur naturally in the deposits as a consequence of natural deposits of coal in Staffordshire. The plant remains could also provide a suitable and important comparison with the plant assemblage from Metchley Roman fort, Birmingham (Ciaraldi forthcoming) and other military sites in the midlands.

Sample N.	Feature	Context	Vol. processed	Vol. of flot	% assessed	Context type	TAXA	Charcoal	NOTES	Further analysis
2	514	5038	12	20	100	pit	Cereals (6), oats (4)	++		NO
3	512	5048	18	130	25	pit	Barley (7) some germinated, ribwort ( <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> ), brome grass ( <i>Bromus</i> sp.), hazelnut	++	mineralized lumps	YES
4	518	5044	20	110	100	pit	Barley (3), oats (1), hazelnut (1)	+++	small frags of coal	NO
5	517	5039	20	100	50	pit	<i>Triticum</i> sp. (2), Barley (1), <i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> (1)		some bones	NO
6	527	5063	10	50	100	pit	Bread wheat ( <i>Triticum aestivum</i> ) (4) barley (2), rye (1), grasses (2), <i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> (2) hazelnut (1)	++	small frags of coal	YES
7	533	5089	22	180	50	pit	Barley (4) <i>Triticum</i> sp. (2), bread wheat ( <i>T. aestivum</i> ) (3), spelt ( <i>Triticum spelta</i> ) (1), apple or pear ( <i>Malus/Pyrus</i> )	++++	slags	YES
9	-	5115	10	10	100	layer	Barley (2), <i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> (1)			NO
10	559	5029	12	100	50	pit	Barley (5), <i>Triticum</i> sp. (2) possibly bread wheat, grasses (1) <i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> (1)	++	small frags of coal, some possibly burnt, mineralized lumps. Bones frags	YES

Table 5. Plant remains from Rocester (RO2000)



## Assessment Overview

The excavation has provided important evidence about the chronology, layout, and nature of activity in the *vicus* that complements and enhances the results of the work carried here on a smaller scale in the 1960s (Bell 1986), the evaluation of the adjacent development area in 1996 (Mould 1996) and the subsequent watching brief during redevelopment.

The recovery of finds and environmental material during the *vicus* excavation has provided the type of information which should allow social and economic data to be added to the picture. The individual specialist assessments above indicate the academic potential of the further, fuller study of each category of material, and in some cases, particularly where disturbance and truncation has compromised the integrity of material's context, no further work has been recommended.

Taken together, the work of Fiona Sturdy in the 1960s, the BUFAU evaluation of the Mill Street site in 1996 and the subsequent watching brief on that site, and the excavation that forms the subject of this present assessment tell us a great deal about the layout and spatial zoning in the Rocester *vicus*. There are evidently, even at assessment stage, quite specific characteristics to the archaeology of the excavation area. Firstly, the excavated area contains part of a stone building, the first such structure found in the Rocester *vicus*. Secondly, that building is part of a complex sequence of activity excavated in plan over a relatively large area here that can be better understood and interpreted than sequences previously only seen in small evaluation trenches, and there only excavated to a sufficient degree to satisfy the requirements of the evaluation. Thirdly, apart from the stone building, a few gullies and one or two isolated post-holes—all these features relating to timber buildings—, the archaeology of the excavated area was dominated by the digging of pits, perhaps both rubbish pits and cess pits. This difference is also reflected in the virtual absence of hearths and the small quantities of iron smithing slag from the excavated area, material that was present in a number of the evaluated zones in greater concentrations.

Studies of patterning within and between the finds assemblages during the recommended further study should allow information to be obtained about functional differences within the *vicus* and about any changes over time. Perhaps more importantly, it should be possible to usefully compare the quantified finds and environmental data from the *vicus* with the larger assemblages from within the fort (that is from the New Cemetery excavation) and from the somewhat enigmatic military/religious site at Orton's Pasture. The broad contemporaneity between certain phases at these three Rocester sites makes this potential aspect of the proposed study of particular academic importance. Alongside Wall, Rocester is now one of the most-studied Romano-British sites in the county, something that will be further enhanced by the publication of the results of work on the present site described in this report. Finally, it should also be possible to contextualise the Rocester *vicus* within this overall monument type on a national level, with reference to the studies carried out by Sommer (1984) and Smith (1987).

## **Post-Excavation Programme**

The following post-excavation programme will be carried out between July-December 2000, with a view to submitting a report to the Transactions of the Staffordshire Archaeological Society. The report will be provisionally titled 'Excavation and Recording in the Romano-British Vicus, Rocester, Staffordshire' by I.M.Ferris and L.Bevan, with contributions by M.Ciaraldi, B.Dickinson, K.Hartley, R.Ixer, D.Mackreth, L.Mather, E.Murray, R.Tomlin, D.Williams, and S.Willis, and illustrations by M.Breedon and N.Dodds. It is hoped that material from the two separately-commissioned archaeological projects in the adjacent areas of the *vicus*-that is the evaluation of 1996 (sponsored by East Staffordshire District Council) and the watching brief of 1999/2000 (sponsored by Miller Homes)-can be integrated into this account, should funding for this be made available.

### **Contributors:**

#### **BUFAU Staff**

I.Ferris-Site narrative, summary and conclusions. General Editor and Project Manager.

L.Bevan-Small finds and Roman coarse pottery. Project Finds Manager.

L. Mather-Site archive and matrix.

M.Ciaraldi-Charred and mineralised plant remains.

E.Murray-Animal bones.

M.Breedon-Illustrator.

N.Dodds-Illustrator.

K.Muldoon-Archive.

#### **External Specialists**

K.Hartley-Mortaria stamps.

D.Mackreth-Brooches.

R.Tomlin-Graffiti.

R.Ixer-geological Identification

D.Williams-Amphora stamps.

S.Willis-Samian.

B.Dickinson-samian Stamps.

### **Breakdown of Individual Tasks**

Stratigraphic Report + Discussion: 5 days (I.F.).

Illustration: 4days (M.B.).

### **Samian-Time Required**

Further research and the compilation of a report: 5days (S.W.).

Illustration of selected sherds: 0.5 day (M.B.).

Identification of stamps: 0.5day B.D.).

### **Amphorae-Time required**

Further research and compilation of a report: 0.5days (L.B.)

Further research on form pieces and some fabrics: 1 day (D.W.).

Illustration of c. 2 sherds: 0.25 day (M.B.)

#### **Mortaria-Time Required**

Recording with Mrs. Hartley: 1 day (L.B.).  
Further research and compilation of a report: 2 days (L.B.).  
Recording: 1 day visit (K.H.).  
Report on stamped mortaria: 1 day (K.H.).  
Illustration of selected profiles and stamps: 1.5 days (M.B.).

#### **Coarse Pottery-Time Required for Further Work**

Relating fabric series to previous Rocester series: 1 day (L.B.).  
Cataloguing of relevant groups: 5 days (L.B.).  
Quantification: 2 days (L.B.).  
Further research: 2 days (L.B.).  
Report writing: 5 days (L.B.).  
Selection for illustration: 0.5 day (L.B.).  
Liaising with illustrator: 0.5 day (L.B.).  
Illustration and mounting of c. 20 pieces: 4 days (M.B.).

#### **Other Finds-Time Required for Further Work**

##### **Worked Bone**

Compilation of catalogue, further research and a full report: 0.25 day (L.B.).  
Illustration: 0.25 day (M.B.).

##### **Roman Glass**

Compilation of catalogue, further research and full report: 0.5 day (L.B.).  
Selective illustration: 0.25 day (M.B.).

##### **Selected Metalwork**

Compilation of catalogue, further research and full report: 2 days (L.B.).  
Selective illustration: 2 days (M.B.).

##### **Stone**

Further analysis, compilation of catalogue and report: 0.25 day (L.B.).  
Geological identification: 0.25 day (R.I).

##### **Animal Bones**

Bone recording & data entry	4 days (E.M.)
Data analysis & inter-site comparison/review	2 days (E.M.)
Writing of report	2 days (E.M.)
Final editing	0.5 days (E.M.)

##### **Plant Remains**

Sorting and identification	2 days (M.C.)
Writing up of report	2 days (M.C.)

## Contents

- Introduction (I.F.)-500 words, 1 figure, 1 photo.  
The Archaeological Background (I.F.)-750 words.  
The Stratigraphic Sequence (I.F. and L.M.)-3500 words, 4 figures, 6 photos.  
Finds: Romano-British Coarse Pottery (L.B.)-3500 words, 3 figures, 2 tables, 2 photos.  
    Samian (S.W.)-1500 words, 1 figure, 3 tables.  
    Mortaria (K.H. and L.B.)-750 words, 1 figure, 1 table.  
    Amphorae (D.W. and L.B.)-400 words, 1 figure.  
    Small Finds (L.B.+ D.M. on brooches)-1000 words, 1 figure, 1 photo.  
Environmental Evidence: Charred Plant Remains (M.C.)-1000 words, 2 tables.  
    Mineralised Plant Remains (M.C.)-500 words.  
    Animal Bones (E.M.)-1500 words, 3 tables.  
Synthesis and Discussion (I.F.)-5000 words, 1 figure, 1 table.  
Bibliography-2500 words.

**Total-** 22,350 words, 13 figures, 12 tables, 10 photos.

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### **Acknowledgements**

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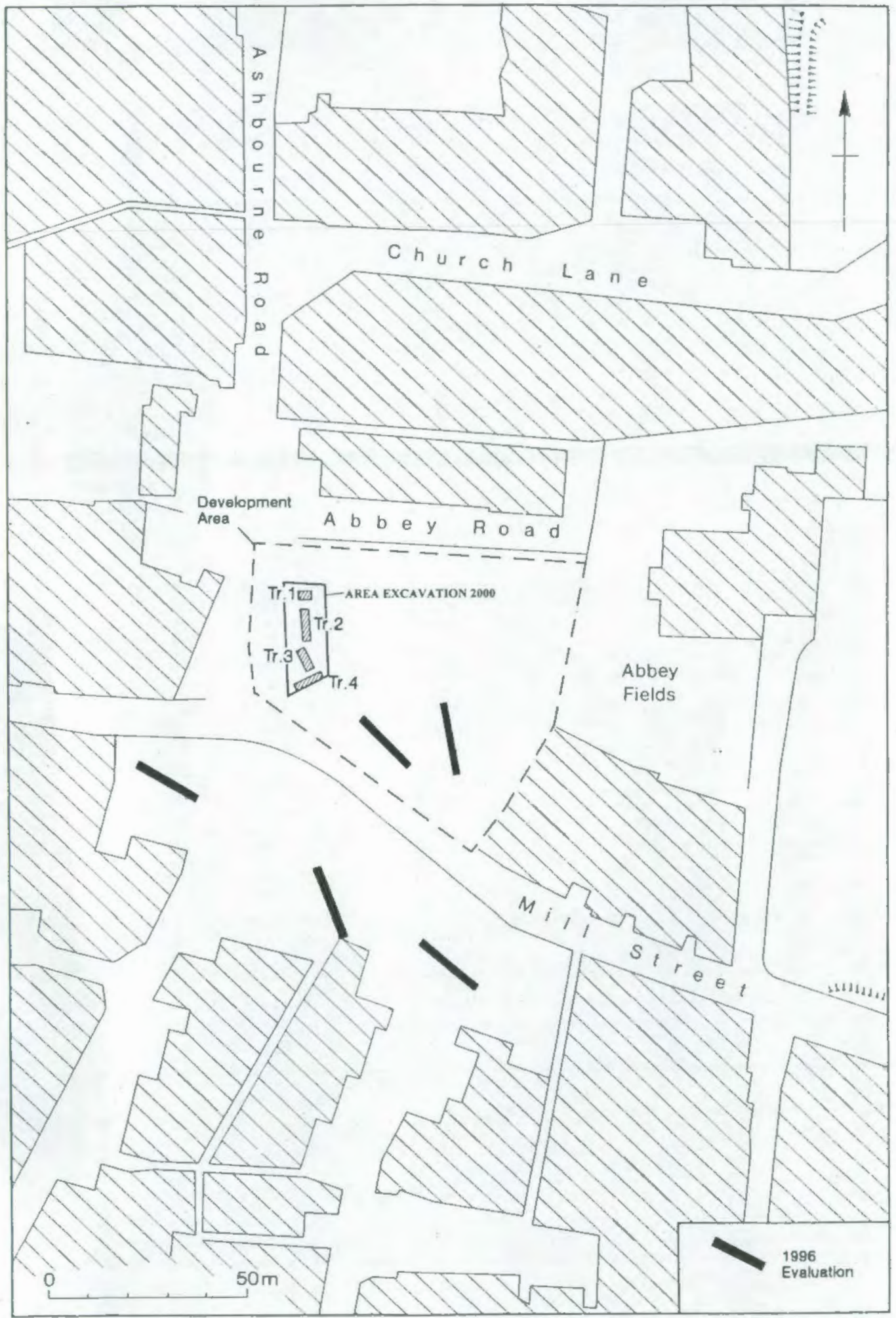


Fig. 1

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*For further information please contact:*

Simon Buteux BA MPhil MIFA, Iain Ferris BA MIFA or Gwilym Hughes BA MIFA  
Field Archaeology Unit, The University of Birmingham,  
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT  
Tel: 0121 414 5513 Fax: 0121 414 5516  
Email: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk Web: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

*B. U. F. A. U.*

