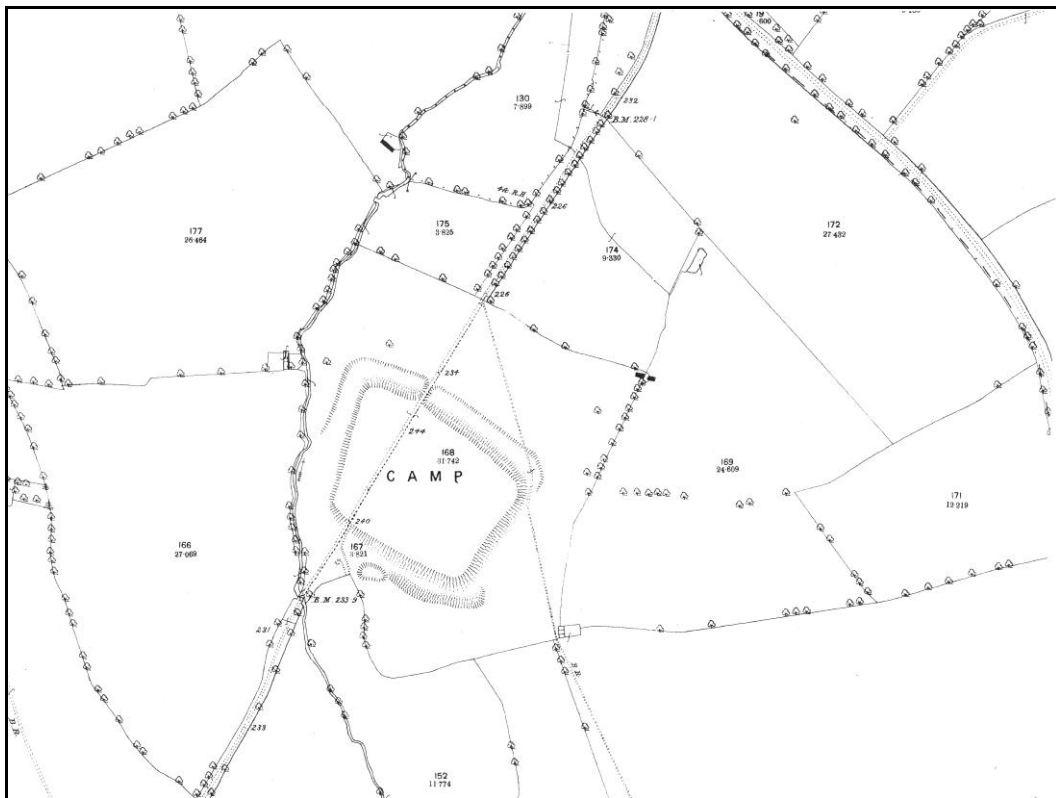


Archaeological Observation at Tyler Packaging, Fosse Way, Chesterton and Kingston, Warwickshire

Catherine M. Coutts and Caroline Rann



Report 0929

May 2009

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Summary

Archaeological observation at Tyler Packaging, on the Fosse Way, Chesterton and Kingston, revealed archaeological deposits of Roman date in a number of stanchion pits and service trenches excavated for the construction of a new warehouse.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for a new warehouse (Planning Ref. S98/1660) and a loading bay with associated drainage. Because the site lies within an area of high archaeological potential, just to the north-east of the Roman town of Chesterton it was thought that Roman archaeological deposits might be disturbed during the work. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of archaeological observation of the excavation of the stanchion pits for the new warehouse, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in May-June and October 2008. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code CT08.

2. Location

2.1 The site is located at national grid reference SP 341 600 on the north-west side of the Fosse Way in the parish of Chesterton and Kingston. The development site was previously concrete yard and grassed area.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Lower Lias Clays (British Geological Survey 1974).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The Roman town at Chesterton (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. MWA 798; VCH 1904, 367-8) was probably the second largest settlement in Warwickshire in the Roman period, after Alcester (Fig. 1). It lies on the Fosse Way (HER MWA 4759) one of the main Roman roads in the country, which is believed to have been laid out to support a temporary frontier in the early stages of the Roman invasion of Britain. At Chesterton there is some evidence of Iron Age occupation predating the Roman settlement (MWA 5707).

3.2 The central part of the town consists of a subrectangular enclosure straddling the Fosse Way defended by a wide shallow ditch with an internal bank and wall now much eroded (HER MWA 6219). This part of the site is within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 35103).

3.3 Within the defences traces of a street system show as cropmarks from the air. Excavations in 1921-2 revealed a considerable depth of remains which included building rubble, a mosaic pavement and wall plaster (HER MWA 4525). Excavations

in 1961 across the Fosse revealed the remains of a north gateway (HER MWA 3679) and further work in 1967 examined the defences at the north corner. The 1967 excavation also revealed a series of three phases of timber buildings fronting the Fosse succeeded by a stone building of five rooms with an associated cobbled courtyard. There was also evidence of later, Anglo-Saxon occupation (HER MWA 4520, 5706, 5708).

3.4 Some pottery has been found on the west side of the settlement (HER MWA 900) and west of the stream (HER MWA 4547), but observations along the stream (HER MWA 4521, 4522) suggest that the occupation tails off in this direction.

3.5 In 1966 a number of burials were disturbed just south of the ditch (HER MWA 4519) and other human bone has been found in the bank of the stream west of the camp. This suggests that a cemetery lay in this area.

3.6 To the east and south there was extensive settlement outside the defended area. Air photographs show the street pattern extending to the east and a number of property boundaries aligned on the streets (HER MWA 4524). Ploughing of the fields has unearthed considerable quantities of Roman material (HER MWA 4546) including traces of a stone building with a hypocaust system (HER WA 4523).

3.7 The occupied area seems to extend c.350m south of the defences. In 1966 the building of a reservoir disturbed pottery and building rubble from at least two stone buildings (HER MWA 904, 2674). Other material has been collected from south of the reservoir (HER MWA 5916) including an Iron Age coin of the Dobunni tribe (HER MWA 6638). A geophysical survey covering both the defended area and that to the south has revealed a road running south from the settlement with properties and buildings aligned on it (Adams 2000).

3.8 North of the defences the extent of the settlement is uncertain. In June 1992 observation of a newly cut drainage ditch along the north side of the Fosse adjacent to the present site by Adams and Jenkins revealed a scatter of Roman finds and building material (Adams 2000; EWA 7002). Archaeological recording took place at Tyler Packaging in 1994, during the construction of a new office block and services. A quantity of Romano-British building materials was recorded, including evidence for a hypocaust system, suggesting the presence of a high status building in the vicinity fronting the Fosse Way (HER MWA 7109, Palmer 1994). Subsequent archaeological recording during topsoil stripping at the rear of the site in 2001, when a warehouse extension was being constructed, revealed no archaeological features or finds (HER EWA 6895; Gethin 2001).

4. Observation

4.1 Topsoil (1) was removed from the footprint of the new building with a tracked vehicle using a toothless ditching bucket, to a depth of 0.3m, revealing a greyish brown clay loam former ploughsoil (2, Figs. 2 and 3). No finds were recovered during topsoil stripping. Twenty-one stanchion pits were then machine-excavated around the perimeter of the building footprint. Pits 1-13 cut partly into the unstripped turf around the stripped area. The pits were between 1.2m and 1.4m wide by 1m across. They were excavated to between 0.8m and 1m deep. The north-eastern part of the building footprint was covered with concrete (11) at the start of works but this was later removed.

4.2 Pits 1-10 were excavated to a depth of 0.28m-0.36m into the geological natural of Blue Lias Clay (4) and in Pit 1 Lias Limestone was reached (5). In Pit 11 natural clay 4

was overlain by 0.25m of natural red brown clay (9). Pit 12 cut into 80mm of natural red brown clay 9.

4.3 In two of the stanchion pits (1 and 10) Romano-British pits were recorded (6 and 7), cutting geological natural clay. The feature in Pit 1 (6) cut through the natural clay and into the underlying bedrock (Fig. 4). It was difficult to determine its original function because of the small size of the stanchion pit, however, its fill (12) produced four sherds of Romano-British pottery. In the south-west corner of Pit 10 the natural clay was cut by a pit (7) at least 0.40m deep which did not contain any dating material in its fill (8) but was overlain by a layer of occupation material (3, below) which contained Romano-British finds elsewhere, suggesting a Roman date for the pit itself.

4.4 In Pits 1, 2 and 3 a Romano-British occupation layer of dark grey clay (3) with finds of pottery, tile and animal bone was recorded, measuring between 0.28m and 0.70m deep (Fig. 5). The same occupation layer was recorded in pits 10, 11 and 12 but no finds were produced in these.

4.5 In pits 12-21 a deposit of brown clay was recorded (10) which was predominantly modern backfill from the construction of the existing warehouse. This was overlain by concrete (11) in the north-eastern side of the site.

4.6 Drainage trenches were also excavated within the footprint of the building (DT 1 and 2). In the south-west part of these the dark grey clay occupation layer (3) was recorded while to the north and east the modern layer 10 was recorded.

4.7 In October 2008 a 2.5m square pit was excavated to the south-east of the new warehouse for the insertion of a tank. This cut into the natural clay (Fig. 6). Roman pottery, tile and a nail were recovered from the same dark grey occupation layer (3) previously seen in the stanchion pits in this part of the site. A narrow, 0.5m wide, trench was excavated from the tank and 6m of this was open at the time of the site visit. The trench reached up to 2.1m deep; no finds were recovered from the spoil, and detailed recording was not possible due to instability of the sections and waterlogging of the trench, although layer 3 appeared to continue along the full length seen.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Romano-British archaeological features were recorded in two of the stanchion pits (1 and 10), which were located on the southern part of the warehouse footprint. An occupation layer containing Romano-British finds was also recorded in the southern part of the site in six of the stanchion pits and in three drainage trenches. It would seem likely that the whole area between the new warehouse and the site frontage where the 1994 observation took place will contain Romano-British remains, possibly including the remains of a high status building, as suggested by the finds from the 1994 work.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A: List of Finds

<i>Pit</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date/Comments</i>
1	1	Pottery	1	Romano-British
1	1	Land drain	2	horse-shoe shaped 18th-century
1	3	Pottery	5	Romano-British
1	3	Iron	1	corroded iron lump
1	3	Animal Bone	2	Cattle pelvis fragment and molar
1	12	Pottery	4	Romano-British
2	3	Pottery	2	Romano-British
2	3	Animal Bone	2	2 adjoining fragments of cattle long bone
2	3	Tile	3	Romano-British
3	3	Pottery	1	Romano-British
3	3	Tile	1	Romano-British
Tank	3	Pottery	6	Romano-British
Tank	3	Tile	8	Romano-British
Tank	3	Iron	1	Nail

Appendix B: List of Contexts

<i>Pit numbers</i>	<i>Context number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	1	Topsoil	0.26m-0.56m
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	2	Layer of greyish brown clay loam (old ploughsoil)	0.24m-0.40m
1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12	3	Layer of dark grey clay (occupation layer)	0.28m-0.70m
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11	4	Natural clay	Up to 0.36m
1	5	Lias Limestone bedrock	
1	6	Possible pit	
10	7	Possible pit	0.42m
10	8	Fill of pit 7	0.42m
11, 12	9	Reddish brown clay layer - natural	Up to 0.25m
12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21	10	Brown clay layer - modern	0.40m-0.60m
12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21	11	Concrete	0.04m
1	12	Fill of pit 6	



Fig. 3: Topsoil stripping



Fig. 4: Feature 6 cutting bedrock in Pit 1



Fig. 5: Grey occupation layer (3) above natural clay in Pit 2



Fig. 6: Tank trench and drainage trench