

Romano-British Stockton: Archaeological Excavations in School Street, Stockton, Warwickshire

Stuart C Palmer

with contributions from Chris Jones, Bryn Gethin, Phil Mills and Jerry Evans
and illustrations by Candy Stevens



Report No 0936

August 2009

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Warwickshire Museum Field Services
The Butts
Warwick
CV34 4SS

Summary

The excavation of a T-shaped trial trench within the footprint of a proposed new dwelling at School View, along with subsequent salvage recording during groundworks, revealed a sequence of four Romano-British ditches and gullies aligned parallel to School Street, along with a further diagonal gully of Romano-British date and an undated small pit or posthole. Two medieval gullies followed the same alignment.

The Romano-British features yielded a small assemblage of pottery of 1st-4th century date and probably delineated boundaries associated with a nearby farming settlement. The low density of finds suggests that the focus of the settlement lay outside the immediate area of the present development.

School View occupies a prominent street corner within the historic village, close to the parish church. The two medieval gullies seem likely to have been associated with a building plot on the street frontage, although any such building was almost certainly truncated by the terrace cut into the sloping site to create stabling in the early 20th-century. A medieval soil layer probably represents cultivation in the rear of the plot.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford on Avon District Council for the development of land at School View, School Street, Stockton, Warwickshire (Ref 07/03454/FUL). The development site lies in an area of archaeological potential and it was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological fieldwork before the development commenced.

1.2 Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a field evaluation which was approved by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority and were commissioned to undertake the work in January 2009. Some significant archaeological deposits were recorded during the evaluation and therefore a further WSI was approved for a salvage recording during the construction programme.

1.3 This report presents the results of the evaluation and the subsequent salvage recording which was undertaken in February 2009. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under site code SS09.

2. Location and Topography

2.1 The development site is located at the junction of School Street and Post Office Lane in the centre of modern Stockton at National Grid Reference SP 438 638 (Fig 1). The development site was formerly a private garden.

2.2 Medieval Stockton was built on a relatively steep south-east facing slope of a low prominence formed by an outcrop of Jurassic Blue Lias between the 95m and 100m contours (British Geological Survey 1984). The prominence crests at 115m aod some 600m to the north and falls more gently to a wide plain at 85m aod to the south and east. The ancient road between Rugby and Southam crosses the crest, avoiding what was possibly a wide boggy plain.

2.3 Drainage on the slopes is indistinct, the modern field pattern with its attendant ditched boundaries having incorporated any minor stream courses, although the valley bottom drains to the south to join a tributary of the River Itchen.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background by Chris Jones

3.1 Cropmarks recognised from aerial photographs of the area to the south of the existing village probably indicate prehistoric or Romano-British activity but have yet to be tested (Fig 1). A rectilinear enclosure with a southern entrance is conjoined to a linear boundary feature which typically in this region would indicate an Iron Age (800 BC - AD 43) farmstead (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 7253). A similar boundary ditch and settlement has recently been partially excavated within the nearby cement works to the west (Palmer forthcoming; not on Fig 1). Also apparent as cropmarks are two parallel ditches which typically would imply a road or trackway between fields. However, archaeological trial trenching carried out immediately north of these features in 1993 recorded only evidence for the ridge and furrow of the medieval field system (HER MWA 7248, Warwickshire Museum 1993), which suggests that the cropmarks reflect part of a system that has otherwise been obliterated by successive farming regimes.

3.2 The manor of Stockton is not mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 but it is thought to have formed part of the large manor of Long Itchington, of which it was later held (VCH 1951, 226). Stockton first appears in documentary records in 1272 as *Stocton*. The name originates from the old English *Stocc Tun*, probably meaning 'stump enclosure', while the name for the inhabitants *Stochemehull* appears in 1206 in a field name from the neighbouring parish of Southam (Gover *et al* 1936, 146). In the medieval period the village (HER MWA 9063) was a nucleated settlement typical of the Feldon area of the county (VCH 1951, 226). It was based around an H plan of roads with the church and manor house in the south-east corner to the south-east of the current development site.

3.3 The parish church of St Michael (HER MWA 942), a Grade II Listed Building (Listed Building No. 307225), has elements of 14th-century date surviving in the south wall of the chancel while the tower dates to the 15th century. The majority of the church was rebuilt in the 19th-century. A watching brief carried out on building work at the church in 2008 recorded evidence for medieval wall foundations along with undated and post medieval burials (Oxford Archaeology 2008, 1).

3.4 The site of the medieval manor house survives as earthworks for three sides of the water filled moat that once surrounded it (HER MWA 941). It is located to the south-east of the church and was entered by a gap through the moat in its western corner. The 17th- and 18th-century Manor Farmhouse (Listed Building No. 307223, Grade II), between the church and the site of the moated manor is presumably a later successor. The only other structure of any antiquity surviving in the village is the late 17th-century 26-28 Post Office Lane (Listed Building No. 307231, Grade II) to the north-east of the current development.

3.5 From the early 19th-century onwards the village gained a more industrial character as a result of the limestone quarrying (for cement) that developed in the surrounding area. The population of the village trebled over the course of the century as a result (VCH 1951, 226).

3.6 The earliest detailed map of Stockton is the 1st edition Ordnance Survey of 1887 (Fig 2). This shows a boundary feature crossing the present development site, separating the existing cottages from an area of orchard or garden to the north. The boundary appears to demarcate the foot of slope of an extant earthwork terrace.

Local information suggests that the development site was formerly used by a coal merchant and some brick buildings associated with this use survived until recently.

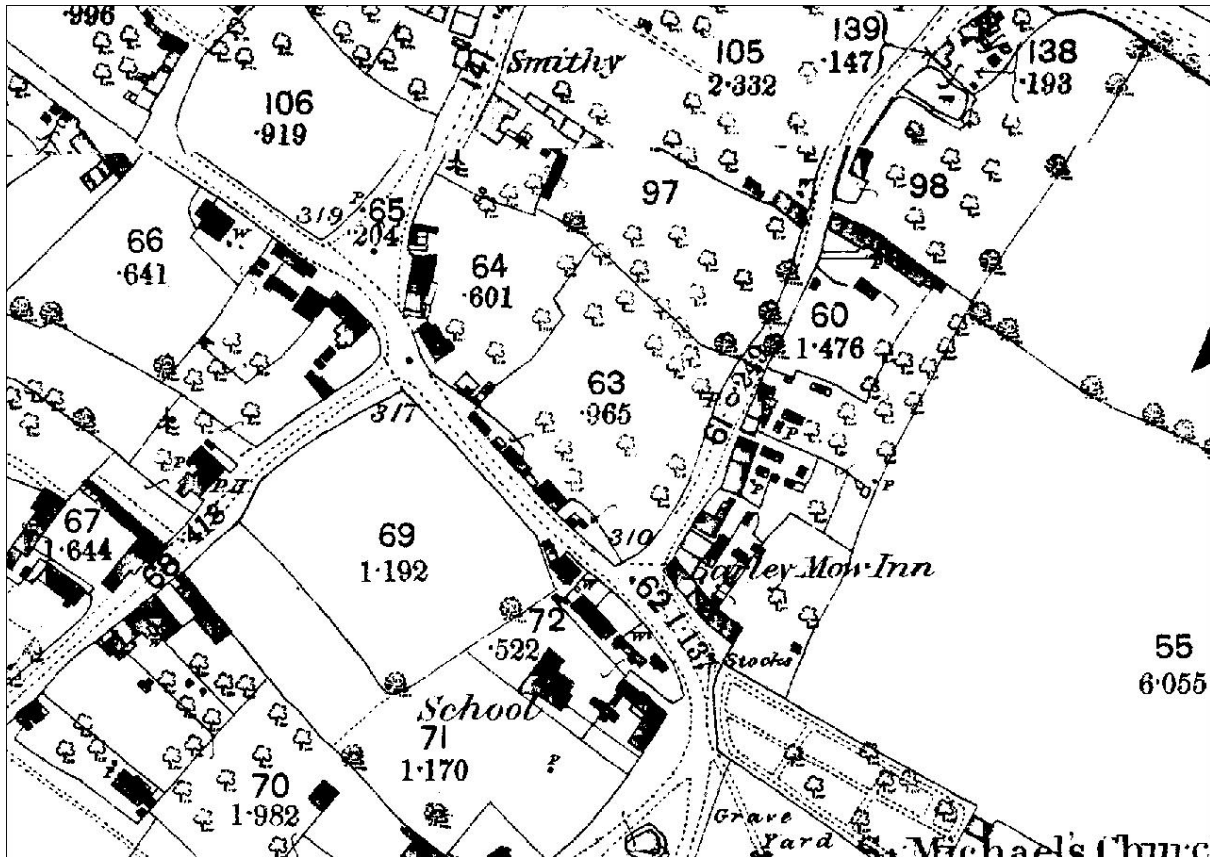


Fig 2: Detail from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887

4. Aims and Methods

4.1 The evaluation was designed to discover the date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits which might be present within the area of the proposed development scheme.

4.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of historical map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications. This was followed by the excavation of a T-shaped trial trench in a position agreed with the Planning Archaeologist within the footprint of the proposed new house. The trench was excavated using a tracked excavator with a 1.8m ditching bucket.

4.3 The evidence from the trial trench clearly indicated that archaeological deposits might be disturbed by the development. Therefore a programme of salvage recording was agreed with the Planning Archaeologist and was subsequently commissioned in order that any such deposits could be recorded before being destroyed by the development. All the foundation trenches and the reduction of ground levels inside and outside the new building were undertaken under archaeological supervision. Foundation trenches were machined using a toothed bucket whilst ground reductions were achieved with a ditching bucket.

5. Results by Bryn Gethin

Geological Natural

5.1 Lias stone bedrock underlies the entire site, the uppermost strata being fragmentary in a clay matrix. Superficial deposits of brownish-yellow clay and greenish clay with Lias fragments (14) were cut by the archaeological features.

Phase 1: Romano-British

THE PARALLEL DITCH AND GULLY SEQUENCE

5.2 At the north-eastern end of the area V-shaped ditch 1 was aligned north-west to south-east. It was 2.5m wide and 1.1m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 4). A primary fill of greyish-brown clay loam with olive clay mottling (21) yielded five sherds of Romano-British pottery and two fragments of animal bone. It was overlain by a deposit of brown clay loam (3) from which more Romano-British pottery and animal bone was recovered and a thin lens of greyish-brown clay loam (2) which also yielded Romano-British pottery.



Fig 4: Ditch 1 viewed from the north-west

5.3 Some 2m to the south-west gully 4 had steeply sloping sides up to 1.3m wide and a flat base 0.3m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 5). It was filled with dark greyish-brown clay loam (5) from which 19 sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered.

5.4 Gully 15 was aligned parallel, some 3m to the south-west of gully 4. It was at least 0.9m wide by 0.30m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 6) and filled with dark greyish-brown clay loam (16) from which four sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered.

5.5 Gully 17 was cut along the south-western edge of gully 15, probably as a direct replacement, and was at least 0.90m wide by 0.20m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 6) and

was filled with greyish-brown clay loam with occasional olive mottling (18) from which a single sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered.



Fig 5: Gully 4 viewed from the north-west



Fig 6: Gullies **15** and **17** viewed from the north-west



Fig 7: Ditch **10** viewed from the north-west

5.6 Ditch **10** was aligned along the edge of the earthwork terrace and the south-western edge of the site. It had gently sloping sides at least 2.0m wide, a flattish base 0.4m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 7) and was filled with greyish brown clay loam (**11**) from which two sherds of Romano-British pottery and three fragments of animal bone were recovered.

OTHER FEATURES

5.7 Gully **8** was aligned ENE/WSW between gullies **15** and **4** although no relationships could be established. It had steeply sloping sides 0.4m wide, a rounded base 0.12m deep (Fig 3, Section C; Fig 8) and was filled with dark greyish-brown clay loam (**9**) containing two sherds of Romano-British pottery.



Fig 8: Gully 8 viewed from the west

5.8 Ditch 4 cut through an undated but probably Romano-British small pit or posthole 6 (0.45m wide x 0.12m deep) (Fig 3, Section B) which was filled with greyish-brown clay loam (7).

Phase 2: Medieval

5.9 Gully 19 was aligned north-west to south-east. It was 1.0m wide by 0.1m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 9) and filled with greyish-brown clay loam (20) which yielded three sherds of medieval pottery.



Fig 9: Gully 19 viewed from the north-west



Fig 10: Gully 23 viewed from the south-east

5.10 Gully 23, on the same alignment as gully 19, had near vertical sides 0.50m wide and a rounded base up to 0.30m deep (Fig 3, Section D; Fig 10), sloping down from its south-eastern terminal. It was filled with olive brown clay loam (24) the upper part of which contained densely packed, irregular Lias rubble from which a medieval sherd was recovered. This feature was probably a drain.

5.11 A layer of dark grey clay loam cultivation soil (13), up to 0.35m deep (Fig 3, Section A), which yielded three fragments of medieval pottery overlay the north-eastern part of the area (above the terrace).

Phase 3: Modern

5.12 A brick floor (Fig 11) laid in the terraced area at the south-western edge of the site was associated with layer of very dark greyish-brown clay loam with frequent 20th century floor tile fragments (22) which was observed across the top of the Phase 1 ditch 10. These deposits related to 20th-century structures, long since demolished.



Fig 11: Brick floor 25 at the edge of the terrace bank viewed from the south-east

5.13 Topsoil across the higher, north-eastern part of the site was very dark greyish-brown clay loam (12) and was up to 0.40m deep.

6. The Pottery by Dr Phil Mills MIfA and Dr Jerry Evans

6.1 Fifty seven sherds of pottery, including 13 rims were presented for examination. Also included were a fragment of fired clay (D00) from gully fill 24 and 4 fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), including a combed box flue tile from ditch fill 21.

6.2 The earliest material is represented by a single grog tempered 'Belgic' ware globular jar from gully fill 16 with a probable 1st-century date. The majority of the Roman material from 5, 11 and 21 can be dated to the 2nd-century onwards. There is

a component of later fabrics, including a pink grog tempered jar (Tomber & Dore 1998; G11, PNK GT) from ditch fill 3, of late 3rd-century or 4th-century date, and some Harrold shelly ware (Tomber & Dore 1998; C11, HAR SH). There is a fragment of a Central Gaulish Samian Dragondorff 18 dish appearing residually in ditch fill 5.

Breakdown of assemblage by ware

Fabric code	Fabric class	Nosh	MNR (minimum no of rims)
C00	Calcareous tempered wares	7%	8%
E00	Early 'Belgic' grog-tempered wares	2%	8%
G11	Coarse gritted wares	4%	8%
O00	Oxidised wares	11%	8%
R00	Reduced wares	65%	38%
S00	Samian	2%	8%
Z00	Medieval	11%	23%
<i>N(Quantification by number)</i>		57	13

6.3 The combed pattern on the flue tile is probably 2nd-century in date and is consistent with the majority of the Roman pottery dated here, although its presence is not necessarily indicative of a hypocaust structure.

6.4 A summary of the Warwickshire fabric classes determined is shown below. As would be expected the dominant fabric type are the grey wares, R00, which included a number of sandy grey ware types, including a necked jar with a beaded rim from 5, which may be a Bubbenhall product, from east central Warwickshire. There is a relatively large, at 11% by number of sherds (nosh), assemblage of oxidised wares, including one example of Severn Valley ware. The Class C (shelly/calcareous) component includes later (later 3rd- to 4th-century) products from 3, also found with the pink grog tempered material G11 (of later 3rd-century or later date), but there may also be some earlier Class C material from the site.

6.5 The majority of the forms recovered are jars, but include some table ware represented by a grey ware constricted neck jar, necked jar and the samian dish.

6.6 The medieval pottery covers a range of fabrics, including some probable Chilvers Coton fabric Ai products (Mayes & Scott 1984), with a date of 13th- to 15th-century.

7. Discussion

7.1 The sequence of Romano-British ditches and gullies probably represents boundary features associated with a farming settlement. The larger ditches (1 and 10) conceivably formed enclosures that surrounded areas of habitation, although it is not possible from the current evidence to establish where the occupied areas were. The low density of finds from these features suggests that the nearest settlement nucleus lies outside the development site, although the curious gully 8 and undated posthole 6 present a tantalising prospect for closer settlement activity.

7.2 In contrast to the ditches, the smaller gullies are similar to those found around fields, which are often successively re-cut over periods of many years and which often migrate in this process. The fact that all these Romano-British features are aligned the same as the existing street pattern is curious and suggests that the road known now as School Street may pre-date the medieval period.

7.3 The finds from the site are too few to reliably indicate individual phases of activity, but can broadly illustrate the chronology of the occupation. The earliest activity on the site is represented by a single sherd of 'Belgic' pottery from gully 15 (fill 16) which dates from the 1st-century AD, and as such may have been in use before the Roman invasion of AD 43. The larger proportion of 2nd-century material would seem to suggest that settlement was well developed by this time and although some material could date from the 3rd and 4th centuries, it seems likely that the foci of activity had either translocated further afield or otherwise diminished in the Later Roman period.

7.4 The two medieval features seem likely to have been associated with a building plot on the street frontage, although such a building was almost certainly truncated by the terrace cut into the sloping site to create stabling in the early 20th-century. The medieval cultivation soil could have developed in a garden although it is also possible that it was a plough soil that developed over a period in which the site was not occupied.

7.5 The earthwork terrace was though man-made, no doubt the natural slope in this area being too steep to enable the construction of the necessary stabling and yard surfaces in the early 20th century.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The evaluation and subsequent salvage recording have provided evidence for an hitherto unknown aspect of the development of Stockton; the presence of a Romano-British settlement, albeit of unknown focus or extent.

8.2 The work has demonstrated that a medieval building probably occupied the street frontage.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Noel Clough for commissioning the project and Matt Sharples and Bernard Alsop of Noralle Traditional Country Homes for their assistance and cooperation. The project was managed for the Museum by Stuart Palmer and the fieldwork was carried out by Stuart Palmer, Bryn Gethin, Caroline Rann and Kevin Wright. The report was checked by Ian Greig.

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Appendix A: List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Date</i>
2	Pottery	8	Jar rim fragments (R100)	Roman
3	Pottery	11	Jar with an everted rising rim (C00); Wheel made (HARSH) (C11); Pink grog tempered (PNKGT) (G11); 2 x O00, 5 x R00	LC3 - C4
3	A. Bone	9		
5	Pottery	19	C00; O00; A constricted neck jar with a short tapering rising rim (R00); Dish base with intersecting circle burnished line decoration externally (R00); Necked jar with beaded rim; probably central Warwks industry Bubbenhall, Ryton on Dunsmore; a necked jar with a triangular sectioned undercut rim (R00); Samian Drag 18	C2
5	Tile	3		Roman
9	Pottery	2		Roman
9	A. Bone	2		
9	Iron object	2		
11	Pottery	2	Wheelmade C00; Jar rim everted rising rim (O00); R00	C2
11	A. Bone	3		
13	Pottery	3	Cooking pot jar base with green glaze (Z00); Cooking pot jar rim sherd green glaze, Chilvers Coton fabric I	C13-C15
16	Pottery	4	Globular jar with heavily rilled shoulder well wheel made necked internally lid seated with tri slightly undercut rim (E00); 3 x R00	C1
16	A. Bone	2		
18	Pottery	1	SVW? (SVW OX) (O00)	LC1-C4
18	A. Bone	1		
18	Slag	1		
20	Pottery	3	Jar with everted bead rim (Z00); Chilvers Coton? (Z00)	C13-C15
20	Iron object	1	Blade fragment?	
21	Pottery	5	R00	Roman
21	Tile	1	Flue tile combed	C2+
21	A. Bone	2		
24	Pottery	1	Sandy Oxidised, hand made with grey core	Medieval
24	Daub	1		

Appendix B: List of Contexts

Context No. Type/ description

1	Ditch
2	Ditch fill
3	Ditch fill
4	Gully
5	Gully fill
6	Posthole
7	Posthole fill
8	Gully
9	Gully fill
10	Ditch
11	Ditch fill
12	Topsoil
13	Cultivation soil
14	Natural clay
15	Gully
16	Gully fill
17	Gully
18	Gully fill
19	Gully
20	Gully fill
21	Ditch fill
22	Ditch fill
23	Gully
24	Gully fill