

Late Iron Age/Early Roman and  
Anglo-Saxon Archaeology at  
Rayford Caravan Park, Tiddington Road,  
Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

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**Report 1039**

**September 2010**

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## **Summary**

Archaeological excavation of an electricity supply trench at the entrance to Rayford Camp Caravan Park, within the Scheduled Romano-British village of Tiddington, recorded a hearth, gullies and pits dated to the 1st century AD on the edge of the Second Avon Terrace. This part of the settlement appeared to end in the 2nd century, but a sequence of gullies located on a slight prominence on the First Terrace provide a possible seasonal foci for an otherwise unsuspected and indistinct settlement of Anglo-Saxon date.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Central Networks Ltd were required to make alterations to electricity supply apparatus at Tiddington, Stratford-upon-Avon. An existing overhead supply carried on posts has been replaced by an underground supply. The land over which the supply crosses lies within the boundaries of a Romano-British village. The surviving remains are all below the current land surface and are considered to be of national importance (Scheduled Ancient Monument Warwickshire No 184) being protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. English Heritage advised Central Networks Ltd that the alterations would not be allowed without a suitable programme of archaeological work.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork consisting of the archaeological excavation of a 1.5m wide cable trench through the Scheduled Area, combined with the archaeological observation of the remaining supply trench excavated by contractors was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in March and April 2008, in accordance with a Proposal for Archaeological Fieldwork (dated March 2007).

1.3 This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code TC08.

## **2. Location**

2.1 The site of the electricity supply alterations lies between the village of Tiddington and Bridgetown, Stratford upon Avon, on the north side of the Tiddington Road, between National Grid Reference SP 2157 5554 and 2135 5576 (Fig 1). The cable was laid within a recently widened verge alongside the entrance trackway which leads from the Tiddington Road to the caravan park sited next to the River Avon.

2.2 The Tiddington Road runs along the southern side of the Avon, ostensibly following the northern edge of the second river terrace; the drive to the caravan park sloping down from the terrace edge onto a narrow linear outcrop of Mercia Mudstone according to the Geological Survey of Great Britain (British Geological Survey 1974) before falling again onto the first river terrace, whilst the caravan park is sited on the Alluvium of the floodplain.

## **3. Aims and Methods**

3.1 The archaeological programme was designed to preserve by record any evidence for past human settlement or other activity that might be destroyed or disturbed by the construction of the cable trench. This was achieved by the archaeological excavation of a 1.5m wide trench through the Scheduled Area, down to the top of the

highest significant archaeological horizon or the top of the geological natural (whichever the higher), and the excavation by hand and recording of any archaeological deposits which might be present. This was followed by the archaeological observation of the remaining trench to the north of the Scheduled Area.

#### **4. Archaeological and Historical Background**

4.1 The earliest datable find in the area is a rare form of stone implement, a possible leaf point of Upper/Final Upper Palaeolithic date (c40,000-8,000 BC), the period in which modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) began to colonise the part of the continental landmass that is now the British Isles. It was found in about 1930 during the construction of No 80 Tiddington Road (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record Number MWA 893). It is one of only two finds of this period known from the entire county and the paucity of finds of this date in Britain suggests that there was only a very small population at this time.

4.2 After the last Ice Age had ended c10,000 years ago, the region was sporadically visited by growing numbers of Mesolithic (c8000 BC - 4000 BC) hunter gatherers. No finds of this date are known in Tiddington but it is certain that they would have travelled along the Avon Valley during this time. At the beginning of the Neolithic period c4000 BC, domesticated cattle and sheep along with domesticated cereals such as wheat and barley began to arrive in Britain from the continent and the indigenous people slowly adopted a new world view which included the construction of ceremonial and funerary monuments and the inevitable, but piecemeal adoption of agriculture. Thin scatters of flint tools and waste flakes of this date have been found in fields to the east of Tiddington suggesting the locale was visited but no concentrations are dense enough to suggest settlement. The technology for working metals such as copper and tin was imported from the continent around c2500 BC in the Early Bronze Age. There are sporadic flint finds of this date in the area and a number of cropmarks around Tiddington represent ring-ditches or ploughed out burial mounds of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

4.3 Permanent settlement of this part of the Avon Valley probably originated in the Late Bronze Age c1000 BC. Cropmarks to the east of Tiddington represent boundary features that define land-units that may well have remained in existence throughout the Iron Age (c800 BC - AD 43) and later.

4.4 The earliest dated settlement evidence in the area is Middle to Late Iron Age (c400 BC - AD 43) and was excavated at the NFU site in the early 1980s (not marked on Fig 1). This was probably one of a number of small farmsteads in this part of the Avon Valley, which is likely to have been heavily exploited by this time (Palmer 1983).

4.5 One or more of the Iron Age settlements developed into a large village (HER MWA 4469), during the Roman period (AD 43 - 410). The impetus for this particular type of development may well have been a location at a crossroads: a road along the south side of the river, following the line of the modern Tiddington Road, met another running south-east to north-west down to a ford. The ford was probably at the place where Roman coins and brooches were dredged out of the river in 1982.

4.6 The village grew rapidly during the 1st and 2nd centuries, serving as a market for the farms in the vicinity. The settlement seems to have contracted during the 3rd and 4th centuries, with some areas being abandoned whilst one area was defended in the late 4th century.

4.7 Imperial Rome withdrew from Britain in the early 5th century AD, and settlement after this date is often difficult to identify in the archaeological record not least because of the collapse of the Roman industries which produced datable artefacts in the later 4th century which culminated in a total absence by c430 AD (Esmonde-Cleary 1989) and the absence of any building forms which have left a recognisable trace. However, recent finds in the vicinity of early Anglo-Saxon pottery indicate that some form of settlement continued into the post-Roman period at Tiddington (Palmer & Palmer 1988; Biddulph 2005; Palmer 2008).

4.8 The first modern indications of the existence of the Roman settlement came in the 18th and 19th centuries when large numbers of Roman coins were collected from the fields at Tiddington. Systematic investigation began in the 1920s when housing development spreading along the Tiddington Road uncovered Roman remains. In 1923 a cemetery of 220 burials was encountered under 77 Tiddington Road (HER MWA 1014). These excavations also produced some Iron Age pottery (HER MWA 1064) but the suggestion that there were also Anglo Saxon finds (HER MWA 6268) is unsubstantiated. In 1925-7 the construction of the golf course revealed more Romano-British burials and the remains of buildings (Fieldhouse *et al* 1931). Further excavation work was carried out in 1937-8 at 102 Tiddington Road and in 1939 at 84 (HER MWA 1072).

4.9 In 1980-1 a large scale excavation was carried out in advance of the construction of new offices for the NFU Mutual and Avon Insurance on a 4ha site on the east side of the settlement. This revealed dense Roman occupation from the 1st century AD to the 4th century when a large defensive ditch was dug round part of the settlement. Many settlements were fortified at this time, a corollary of the uncertain times at the end of the empire, but the extent of the defended area remains unknown. The houses were mostly of timber with thatched roofs, although one large stone house was also found. The plots also contained outbuildings, corn-drying ovens, wells and rubbish pits, and there were streets paved with gravel. Outside the settlement, areas of cemetery, rubbish pits and field system were located.

4.10 In 1982 another large area, within the settlement to the north of the Tiddington Road, was excavated in advance of the building of the Reading Court sheltered housing. Here also dense Roman occupation dating from the 1st century AD to the mid-3rd century was found. The earliest buildings were timber roundhouses surrounded by animal enclosures. In the 2nd century paved roads were laid out accompanied by more timber buildings, now rectangular, of a more Romanised form. Two pottery kilns, one late 1st-century, the other early 2nd-century were also found. After the early 3rd century no further buildings were constructed, but the roads continued in use and some late (4th-century) burials were deposited alongside them.

4.11 Part of the floodplain to the north of the current works was evaluated in 1993 and found to be devoid of any significant archaeological activity (CAT 1993). In 2002 land immediately east of the driveway was subject to an archaeological evaluation which was able to identify a concentration of features at the southern, higher, end of the site, with an apparent decrease down slope (JSAC 2002).

## **5. Results**

5.1 The following narrative describes the deposits excavated in the 1.5m wide trench (Fig 2). No significant observations or finds were made in the area to the north of the Scheduled Area (Fig 1).

## Natural

5.2 At the southern, higher, end of the site, geological natural was loose, reddish-yellow gravel (8) heavily disturbed by tree roots (Fig 3, Area A). It extended some 25m from the edge of the Tiddington Road forming the northern, sloping, edge of the Avon's Second Terrace. Immediately down-slope to the north, a c1.0m wide band of Mercia Mudstone (29) appeared to interleave with pale brown and black mottled, virtually stone-free, loamy sand (9). This sandstone-like deposit extended down the valley slope some 70m from the Tiddington Road, to where another outcrop of Mercia Mudstone (29) formed a low rise. A hollow (3) in the top of 9 at the foot of the terrace slope was semi-waterlogged, the sand appearing tell-tale grey. The Mercia Mudstone was capped to the north by red clayey gravel (46) which extended to the edge of the first terrace and where it was overlaid by pale brown alluvial silty clay (47).



Fig 4: Phase 1 gullies 6 and 4, viewed from the west

### Phase 1: Early to mid-1st century AD (Fig 3, Area A)

5.3 The top of deposit (9) contained 9 sherds which appeared to have worked their way down the soil profile by translocation or lessivage via soil cracks although it is possible that they may have lain on the former ground surface when the Phase 1 features were cut.

5.4 The southernmost feature recorded, gully 4, was aligned north-east/south-west, had steep sloping sides 0.60m wide and a rounded, albeit irregular base 0.25m deep (Fig 3, Section D; Fig 4). It was filled with dark greyish-brown sandy loam (5), which contained pottery, fired clay and animal bone.

5.5 Gully 6 was dug along the interface between the Second Terrace gravels (8) and the narrow band of Mercia Mudstone (29). It was slightly curved, although this may have been an illusion given the narrow width exposed, had irregular sides between 0.60m and 1.00m wide and a rounded base 0.18m deep, albeit distorted by animal disturbance (Fig 3, Sections B & C; Fig 4). It was filled with dark brown sandy loam (7) containing pottery and animal bone.



Fig 5: Phase 1 gully **24** and Phase 2 gully **10**, viewed from the north-west



Fig 6: Storage jar fragment in the base of gully **24**, viewed from the north

5.6 Gully **24** was aligned east to west, had steep sloping sides between 1.0m and 1.4m wide and a rounded base 0.45m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 5). Substantial parts of one or more storage jars were found along the base of the ditch (Fig 6), overlaid by very dark greyish-brown sandy loam (**25**).

5.7 Pit (or gully butt end) **16** lay to the north-east of **24**, had steep sloping sides 0.54m wide and a rounded base 0.23m deep (Fig 3, Section A). It was filled with very dark greyish-brown sandy loam (**17**).

5.8 Pit **18** lay to the north-west of **16**, had very steep sloping sides 0.42m wide and a rounded base 0.22m deep (Fig 3, Section A). It was filled with very dark grey sandy loam, packed with olive grey clay (**19**) which contained pottery and fired clay.

5.9 Gully **20** was aligned east to west, had steep sloping sides 0.50m wide and a rounded base 0.20m deep (Fig 3, Section A; Fig 7). It had an uncertain relationship with gully **41** immediately to the north, which was similarly aligned, and had a rounded profile 0.80m wide by 0.15m deep. Both gullies were filled with very dark grey sandy loam (respectively **21** and **42**). The eastern side of **41** was cut by doughnut shaped pit **22** which was 0.72m wide and had a flat base 0.04m deep filled with reddish-brown sandy clay (**23**).



Fig 7: Gully **20**, viewed from the north-west

5.10 Pit **26** had shallow sloping sides 0.86m wide by 0.13m deep and contained heat affected yellowish-red loamy clay (**27**) which probably represented a hearth base (Fig 3, Section A; Figs 8 & 9).



Fig 8: Hearth pit **26** before excavation viewed from the west



Fig 9: Hearth pit **26** after excavation



## Phase 2: 2nd century (Fig 3, Area A)

5.11 Doughnut shaped gully **10** cut Phase 1 ditch **24** and had a rounded profile some 0.70m wide and 0.10m deep. It was filled with very dark greyish-brown sandy loam (**11**) indistinguishable from overlying layer (**2**)

5.12 The Phase 1 features were sealed by between 0.15m and 0.25m of colluvial dark greyish-brown sandy loam (**2**) which extended down-slope to the first terrace where it settled up to 0.6m deep in the water-logged hollow (**3**). This did not appear to extend south of the Phase 1 features. Although this could be the result of plough truncation at the lip of the terrace removing the deposit from upslope, it is thought more likely that the material was colluvial, having been eroded from Romano-British contexts on the second terrace proper.

## Phase 3: Anglo-Saxon (Fig 3, Area B)

5.13 This phase was represented by a sequence of east to west aligned shallow gullies located on the southern edge of a shallow rise in the First terrace, 40m north-west of the Phase 1-2 features. They seem most likely to represent enclosure boundary features. The southernmost cut was gully **14**, some 0.90m wide and 0.20m deep (Fig 3, Section H; Fig 10). To the north gully **12** was 0.30m wide and 0.07m deep and had an uncertain relationship with shallow pit **30** (Fig 3, Sections I & J; Fig 10). Gully **35** was 0.75m wide and 0.10m deep (Fig 3, Section G; Fig 11), gully **39** was 0.45m wide and 0.13m deep (Fig 3, Section B; Fig 11), and gully **37** was 0.45m wide and 0.10m deep (Fig 3, Section F; Fig 11). All the gullies and the pit were filled with dark greyish-brown sandy loam (respectively **15**, **13**, **31**, **36**, **40** and **38**) of which **15**, **38** and **40** contained Anglo-Saxon pottery.



Fig 10: Gullies **14** and **12**, viewed from the south-east



Fig 11: Gullies 35, 39 and 37 cut by plough furrow 32, viewed from the south-east

5.14 An undated pit 33 located to the north of the gully sequence is thought likely to belong to this phase. It was sub-circular with a rounded profile 0.60m wide and filled with dark greyish-brown sandy loam (34).

#### **Phase 4: Medieval to modern**

5.15 Two furrows belonging to the medieval field system were recognised in the trench on the first terrace. Furrow 32 cut through the Phase 3 gully sequence (Fig 3, Section B) and was 0.43m wide filled with brown sandy loam (43). Furrow 44 at the northern end of the excavated trench was filled with brown sandy loam (45). At the southern end of the trench no furrow cuts were identified although the depth of the combined ploughsoil horizon (1) across the top of the Phase 2 colluvial layer (2) suggests that the trench was positioned within a ridge and also through a former headland. Ploughsoil across the trench was very dark greyish-brown sandy loam (1).

### **6. The pottery** by Jeremy Evans and Philip Mills (with a note on the samian by Gwladys Monteil)

#### **Introduction**

6.1 The assemblage consists of 574 sherds of pottery and 10 fragments of fired clay or industrial ceramic. The majority of the material dates from the early to mid-1st century AD (Phase 1), although there is a 2nd century group (Phase 2) from gully fill 11, and a probable Anglo-Saxon component from contexts 15, 38 and 40 (Phase 3). There is a single sherd of samian which dates AD 120 - 200 from Phase 2 hollow fill 3.

6.2 Table 1 shows a breakdown of the main fabric classes, whilst a summary of important fabric types is shown in Table 2. The largest group is the grog tempered Belgic wares (Class E), which make up 84% of the assemblage. The next largest group are the calcareous wares (Class C) that include some early shelly wares and some Malvernian Palaeozoic material. The Anglo-Saxon wares make up some 6% of the assemblage, but only come from three contexts.

**Table 1: Pottery ware class frequency**

Ware	Class	No%	MNR%
Belgic	E	84%	85%
Calcareous	C	9%	10%
Gritty	G	1%	0%
Reduced	R	1%	0%
Samian		0%	5%
Anglo-Saxon		6%	0%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>574</b>	<b>20</b>

**Table 2: Pottery ware class and quickly recognisable fabric breakdown**

Fabric		No%	MNR%
E00	Belgic	84.15%	85.00%
C00	Other Calcareous	7.14%	5.00%
C10	Shelly	0.52%	0.00%
C22	Malvernian Paleozoic limestone-tempered ware	0.87%	5.00%
G24	Savernake?	0.52%	0.00%
G44	Malvernian Metamorphic-tempered Ware	0.17%	0.00%
R00	Other Reduced	0.52%	0.00%
R31?	Hand made Reduced with organics	0.17%	0.00%
S00	Samian	0.17%	5.00%
AS00??	Anglo-Saxon	5.75%	0.00%
	<i>N</i>	<b>574</b>	<b>20</b>

6.3 An approximate functional analysis of the two assemblages, using MNR (Minimum Number of Rims) is shown in Table 3. This is a small sample so should be treated with caution. As would be expected, jars are clearly dominant overall, with 80%, of which 5% are wide-mouth jars and 10% storage jars. This latter high figure is of note because of the evidence of disproportionate deposition of storage jars from specific areas of Tiddington (Evans & Mills 2008).

**Table 3: Approximate functional analysis of the excavated assemblage by MNR**

Amphorae	Flagons	Jars	Wide Mouthed Jars	Storage Jars	Beakers	Mortaria	Bowls	Dishes	Lids	<i>N</i>
-	-	65%	5%	10%	5%	-	15%	-	-	20

### Samian ware by G. Monteil

6.4 A single sherd from a bowl form Dr37 was recovered from context (3). The sherd was examined, after breaking, under a x 20 binocular microscope in order to identify

the fabric. It consists of a rim sherd from a Central Gaulish bowl of form Dr37; no decoration has survived (AD 120-200).

## **Discussion**

6.5 The assemblage includes a pre-Flavian group of largely Belgic, grog tempered, wares with some connection to the wider region demonstrated by the presence of the Palaeozoic limestone-tempered and Savernake fabrics. There is a high level of storage jars, which is comparable to that from 119 Tiddington Road (Evans & Mills 2008) and very much higher than the sites reported on by Booth (1996).

6.6 There is evidence of some Flavian material in (3) and (11), presumably right at the edge of the Flavian and later nucleus of the settlement and some later Anglo-Saxon activity, which is less prominent here than at 119 Tiddington Road (Evans & Mills 2008)

## **7. Discussion**

### **Phases 1 - 2: Early to mid-1st century AD – 2nd century AD**

7.1 The features were clustered at the southern, higher end of the sloping site and seem likely to be representative of domestic occupation. The nature of the settlement is difficult to characterise given the restricted nature of the excavation, but it is likely that it was an agricultural farmstead. The gullies, pits and hearth are typical in this sense. None of the gullies obviously demarcated a building plan, and given the slope this is not surprising, although a rectangular building was recorded in the adjacent evaluation (JSAC 2002).

7.2 The pottery clearly suggests that occupation of this part of the settlement began in the 1st century AD, although it is not yet possible to determine whether this was before or after the Roman conquest. However the area was largely abandoned after the 2nd century. Similarly dated occupation evidently spread eastwards along the upper parts of the slope, at the Reading Trust site (Palmer 1983) and between 117-123 Tiddington Road (Palmer & Palmer 1988; Biddulph 2005; Palmer 2008). By and large the evidence to date has been of peripheral features but these must reflect the density of occupation on the less-well examined 2nd terrace to the south of the road. Abandonment of these areas in the 2nd century suggests that the settlement(s) contracted or there was a shift in foci. This is curious and not explainable on current evidence, but comparably dated settlements spread along the Arrow Valley at Salford Priors (Palmer 2004) were thought to reflect the relocation of settlement in the early years of Roman rule (Palmer 2000, 219). However, the uncertainty of the dating and the limited scale of the excavations in this part of Tiddington preclude much further comparison other than that most of the 1st century settlements at Salford Priors and Marsh Farm were abandoned in the 2nd century; the surviving settlement developing into a villa in the 3rd century. Currently the evidence at Tiddington suggests that settlement contracted from its maximum into at least two 4th century nuclei (N Palmer pers comm).

### **Phase 3: Anglo-Saxon**

7.3 This phase was restricted to the central part of the trench, on the southern edge of a slight rise on the 1st terrace. The gullies were all shallow and seem likely to relate to successive boundary features, although the nature of the bounded areas remains a mystery. It is possible that they were constructed as drainage features

around or through a settlement and the inclusion of consequential amounts of pottery might well support this. However, this part of the terrace is notorious for flooding and the rise might often stand as an island at such times. It is difficult therefore to envisage any permanent settlement in this area. This would though suggest some kind of seasonal activity such as animal breeding was being conducted.

7.4 Anglo-Saxon activity at 117 - 123 Tiddington Road was evident as pottery in a large ditch which followed the alignment of earlier features and no contemporary evidence was found at the Reading Trust site. This suggests two close but separate foci of activity. This is an extremely rare occurrence for the period and implies a more sophisticated settlement pattern than has hitherto been suspected.

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 The conventional way to lay an underground cable by digging a deep, narrow trench, almost always precludes the possibility of understanding the archaeological deposits that are destroyed in the process. Generally finds are recovered but the context in which they were deposited remains a mystery. The archaeological excavation of the 1.5m wide trench at Tiddington has enabled a far better understanding of the archaeological contexts along the route. This is most clearly demonstrable at the south-eastern end of the trench where the natural slopes had eroded and the deposits intermingled with an homogenous colluvium.

8.2 The work has provided invaluable data on the extent of the late Iron Age and early Roman settlement as well as an otherwise unsuspected Anglo-Saxon foci. The results will be integrated into the growing corpus of sites excavated in what is becoming an increasingly important and unusual example of developed settlement.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Appendix: List of Finds

*Context    Material    No    Date/Comments*

### Phase 1

5	Pottery	1	AD 1-60
5	Fired clay	4	
5	Bone	1	Animal
7	Pottery	8	
7	Bone	16	Animal
9	Pottery	9	AD 1-60
16	Pottery	5	AD 1-60
16	Bone	2	Animal
18	Pottery	14	AD 1-60
18	Fired clay	1	
19	Pottery	2	AD 1-60
20	Pottery	43	AD 1-60
20	Fired clay	6	
20	Bone	5	Animal
25	Pottery	221	Pre-Flavian
25	Fired clay	3	
25	Bone	33	Animal
27	Pottery	24	AD 1-60
27	Fired clay	12	
28	Pottery	?	AD 1-60
42	Pottery	4	AD 1-60
42	Fired clay	1	

### Phase 2

3	Pottery	8	120-200
11	Bone	3	Animal
11	Pottery	51	2nd century

### Phase 3

15	Pottery	32	Anglo-Saxon
36	Pottery	3	AD 1-60 (residual)
38	Pottery	10	Anglo-Saxon
38	Slag	1	Fuel-ash slag
40	Pottery	19	Anglo-Saxon

### Phase 4

32	Pottery	9	AD 1-60 (residual)
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