

112 Tiddington Road, Stratford-on-Avon

Archaeological Recording

June 1991

Archaeological Recording at 112 Tiddington Road, Stratford-on-Avon

1. Introduction

Following the granting of planning permission to build a garage at 112 Tiddington Road and in view of the site's location in the centre of the known Roman settlement arrangements were made that the excavation of foundations should be observed by Warwickshire Museum.

2. Archaeological Background

The Romano-British settlement at Tiddington was a large village, covering an estimated 22ha on the south bank of the River Avon, about 1.5km east of modern Stratford-on-Avon (Fig. 1). It appears to have grown up where 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.

It seems likely that the village came into existence at the very end of the Iron Age, about AD30-50, just before the arrival of the Roman army, but it is possible that it began a little later around a Roman fort set to dominate the river crossing. Whatever its origin it grew rapidly through the late 1st and 2nd centuries, serving as a market for the farms in the vicinity, clustered on the easily worked soils of the gravel terraces along the river. The village was itself linked by Roman roads to the main Roman towns in the area at Alcester and Chesterton-on-Fosse. The main road from the Fosse to Alcester by-passed Tiddington using another ford downstream by Clopton Bridge; and it seems to have been the rise in importance of this, the "Straet-ford", which led to the abandonment of the Tiddington site at the end of the Roman period and the development of modern Stratford in its current position.

The first modern indications of the existence of the site 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 No. 77 Tiddington Road and in 1925-7 the construction of the golf course revealed more burials and the remains of buildings. Further work was carried out in 1937-9.

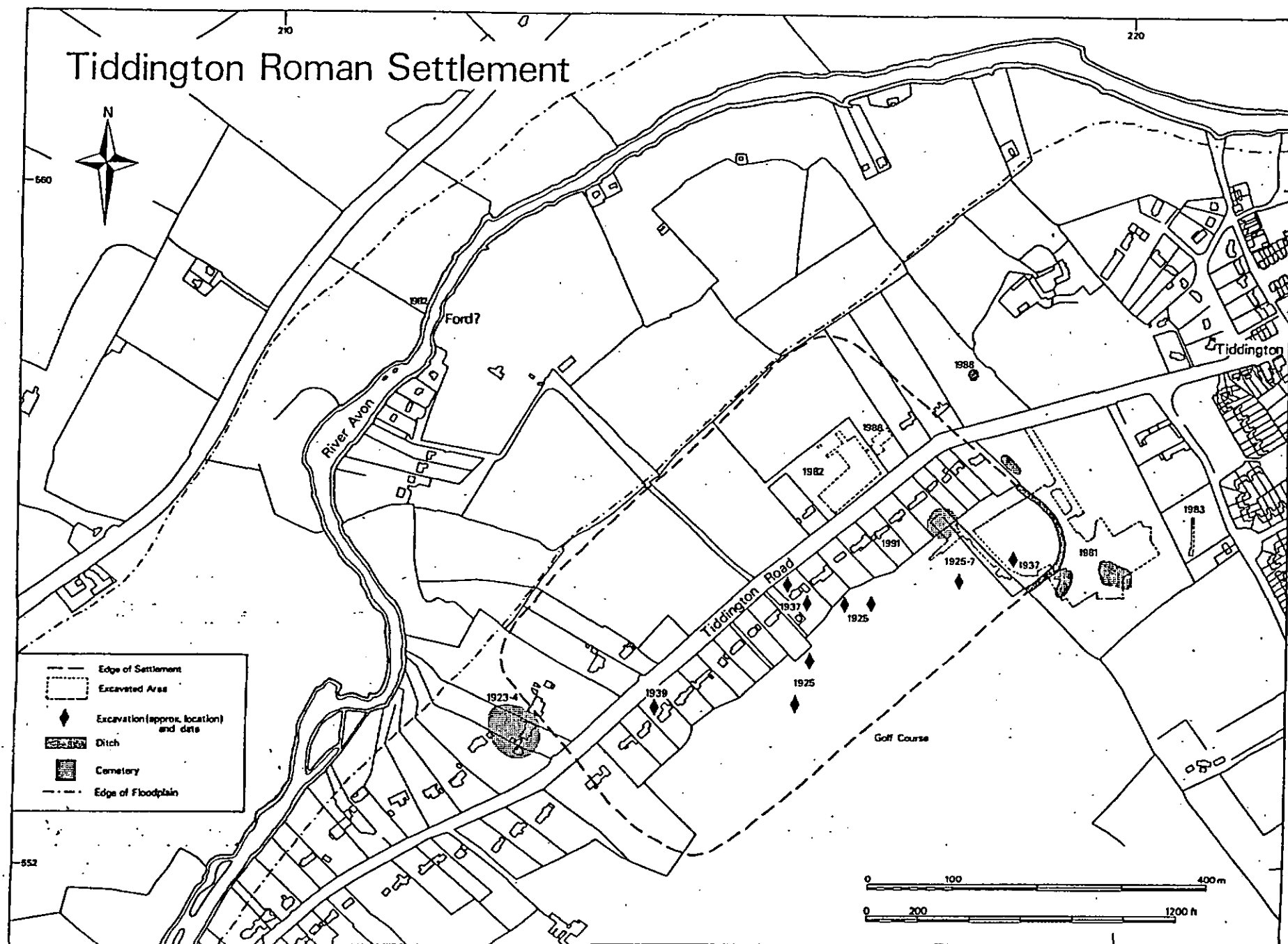


Fig 1

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 the settlement. The houses of the settlement 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.

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 third century no further buildings were constructed, but the roads continued in use and some late (4th century) burials were deposited alongside them. In 1983 a small excavation, adjacent to the NFUMAI site, on Knights Lane traced further rubbish pits and a corndrying oven alongside a trackway outside the settlement; and in 1988 in advance of the building of 117 Tiddington Road more late 1st and 2nd century activity was identified.

As a result of the 1980-1983 excavations the importance of the site, both to the history of Stratford and Warwickshire, and as a well-preserved example of a little understood type of Romano-British settlement, was recognised and the undeveloped parts of the settlement were given legal protection as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Warwickshire No. 184).

3. Observations at 112 Tiddington Road

A topsoil layer, c.1m deep, was removed from an area, c.6m x 6.5m, to the west of the existing house, by a JCB hydraulic digger down to natural gravel. No archaeological layers overlaid the gravel, but a number of pits and postholes, containing 2nd-4th century pottery, were observed cutting into it (Fig. 2). These features were excavated and recorded, and quantities of finds, mainly pottery and animal bone, were collected from them. For full details of the features see Appendix A, and for a list of the finds, see Appendix B.

In the southern half of the area there were four small pits containing material of 2nd century date (104, 107, 108 and 109); a fifth lay just to the north (103). Pit 109 contained a possible lining of limestone rubble in the bottom (109/2). The pits were probably for the disposal of domestic rubbish, pit 108 containing 131 fragments of animal bone, representing food refuse.

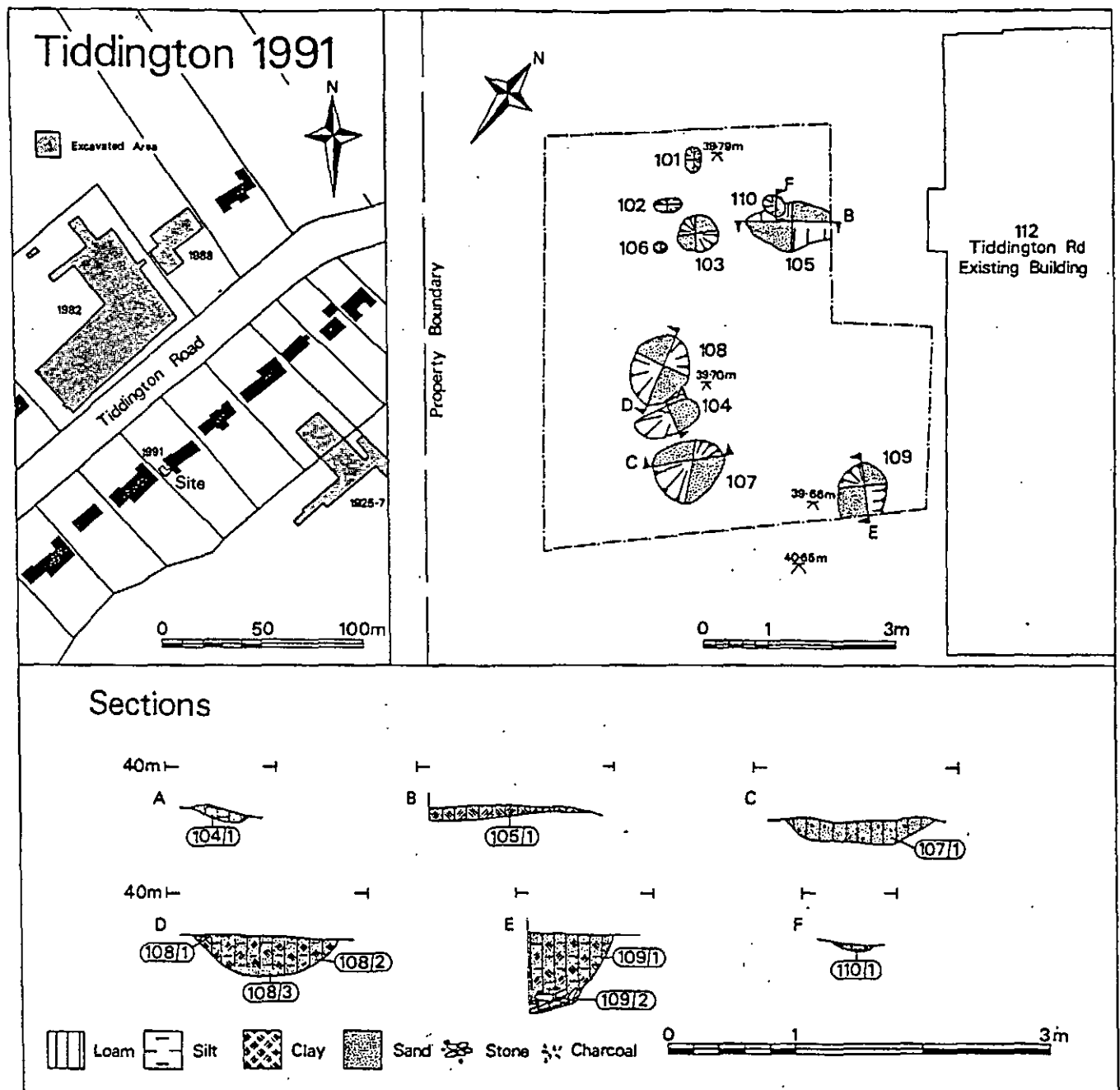


Fig 2

In the north part of the area there was a shallow hollow (105), and three postholes (101, 106 and 110) of late 3rd/4th century date. A fourth posthole (102) contained Roman pottery that could not be closely dated. It is likely that the postholes would have supported the uprights of a timber building or buildings, most of which lay outside the excavated area.

4. Conclusions

The excavated features show that this part of the settlement was occupied from the 2nd to the later 3rd/4th century. No 1st century features were found but this could be explained by the small size of the area excavated. The evidence for timber buildings is in line with previous findings: most of the buildings on the settlement were of timber, as suitable building stone was not available locally.

5. Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum is grateful to Mr D Allison for permission to carry out the recording work. The work on site was carried out by Gavin Lines, Robert Jones, Richard Saunders, and Kevin Wright. The Roman pottery was dated by Dr Jerry Evans. This report is the work of Gavin Lines and Nicholas Palmer.

Warwickshire Museum
August 1991

Appendix A: Excavated features

| Feature No. | Feature Description | Dimensions L x W x Depth | Fill | Date |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 101 | Post hole | 0.35m x 0.25m x 0.05m | Dark brown sandy clay silt/loam (101/1) | Late 3rd/4th century A.D. |
| 102 | Post hole | 0.40m x 0.55m x 0.08m | Dark brown sandy clay silt/loam (102/1) | 2nd-4th century A.D. |
| 103 | Pit | 0.50 x 0.40m x 0.10m | Dark brown sandy clay silt/loam (103/1) | 2nd(-3rd) century A.D. |
| 104 | Pit | 0.95m x 0.45m x 0.10m | Brown sandy loam (104/1) | (Late 1st-) 2nd century A.D. |
| 105 | Pit | 1.30m x 0.85m x 0.12m | Dark brown sandy Clay loam (105/1) | 3rd/4th century A.D. |
| 106 | Post hole | 0.15m x 0.15m x 0.05m | Brown sandy clay Silt/loam (106/1) | 3rd/4th century A.D. |
| 107 | Pit | 1.30m x 0.85m x 0.15m | Brown sandy loam (107/1) | (Late 1st-) 2nd century A.D. |
| 108 | Pit | 0.95m x 0.45m x 0.34m | Dark brown sandy loam/silt + 50% charcoal (108/1) 0.03m deep; Dark brown sandy Clay silt/loam (108/2), 0.23m deep; Very light brown sand (108/3), 0.1m deep | 2nd century A.D. |
| 109 | Pit | 0.85m x 0.70m x 0.65m | Dark brown sandy silt loam (109/1), 0.5m deep; Dark brown sandy silt loam + 25% limestone rubble (109/2), 0.15m deep | (Late 1st-) 2nd century A.D. |
| 110 | Post hole? | 0.20m x 0.20m x 0.05m | Dark brown sandy silt + 60% charcoal (110/1) | - |

Appendix B: Finds

| Site | Context | Material | No. of fragments |
|------|---------|-------------|------------------|
| TD91 | 000 | POTTERY | 5 |
| TD91 | 101/1 | POTTERY | 2 |
| TD91 | 102/1 | POTTERY | 6 |
| TD91 | 103/1 | POTTERY | 3 |
| TD91 | 104/1 | POTTERY | 5 |
| TD91 | 105/1 | POTTERY | 2 |
| TD91 | 106/1 | POTTERY | 1 |
| TD91 | 107/1 | POTTERY | 4 |
| TD91 | 108/1 | POTTERY | 12 |
| TD91 | 108/1/1 | POTTERY | 4 |
| TD91 | 109/1 | POTTERY | 13 |
| TD91 | 000 | A.BONE | 5 |
| TD91 | 102/1 | A.BONE | 1 |
| TD91 | 104/1 | A.BONE | 1 |
| TD91 | 105/1 | A.BONE | 1 |
| TD91 | 107/1 | A.BONE | 1 |
| TD91 | 108/1 | A.BONE | 71 |
| TD91 | 108/1/1 | A.BONE | 60 |
| TD91 | 109/1 | A.BONE | 5 |
| TD91 | 104/1 | NAILS | 1 |
| TD91 | 107/1 | IRON OBJECT | 1 |
| TD91 | 000 | CLAY PIPE | 1 |
| TD91 | 105/1 | TILE | 1 |

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