

117 Tiddington Road

Stratford-on-Avon

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SWA 4310
MWA 6397
MWA 6398
EWA 1098



Archaeological Excavations

WARWICKSHIRE MUSEUM

1988



Warwickshire
County Council

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS ON THE SITE OF 117 TIDDINGTON ROAD,
STRATFORD-ON-AVON - A SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Tiddington Roman Settlement

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 southeast to northwest 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 creation of the golf course revealed more burials and the remains of buildings. Further work was carried out in 1937-9.

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 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

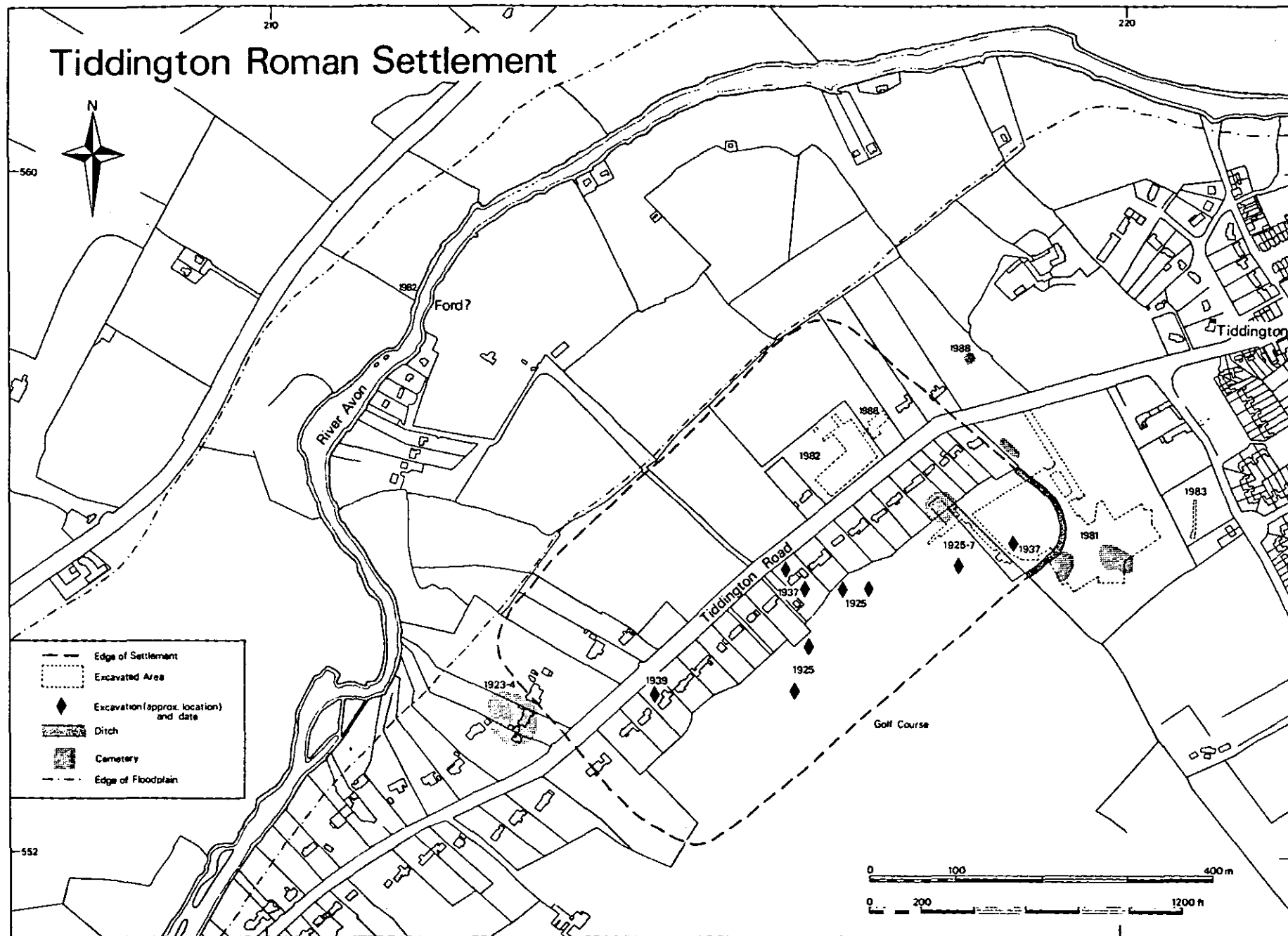


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2: General view from W.



Fig. 3: General view from NE.

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.

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 of national importance.

Excavations at 117 Tiddington Road

In 1988 Planning Permission was obtained and Scheduled Monument Consent granted for the construction of a house on the plot of land at 117 Tiddington Road adjacent to Reading Court, the site of the 1982 excavations. It was a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent that the site of the house be investigated archaeologically before building work began and in October and November 1988 an excavation was carried out by the Warwickshire Museum funded jointly by Mr G. Williams, the developer, and English Heritage.

As on the adjacent site the excavation (Figs. 2 and 3) revealed dense Romano-British occupation stretching from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD, although the main concentration was from the late 1st to the mid-2nd century. The excavated area appeared to lie astride the rear boundaries of properties fronting the Roman predecessor of the Tiddington Road. A series of recut gullies enclosed an early/mid-late 1st century enclosure containing a clay lined hearth. To the north there was a cluster of late 1st century quarry pits. By the early 2nd century a second enclosure had been added to the south west of the first.

There was little evidence of activity from the mid-2nd to the 4th century when two graves were dug, the skeleton in one buried wearing hobnailed footwear. The most significant discovery, however, was of an enclosure dating to the early Anglo-Saxon period (late 5th/6th century) defined by two large ditches, aligned on the Tiddington Road. This is the first evidence to come to light that any occupation continued at Tiddington after the Roman period.

The finds included quantities of bronzework, ironwork, flint, stone and lead objects, pottery, animal and human bone, tile and ironworking slag.

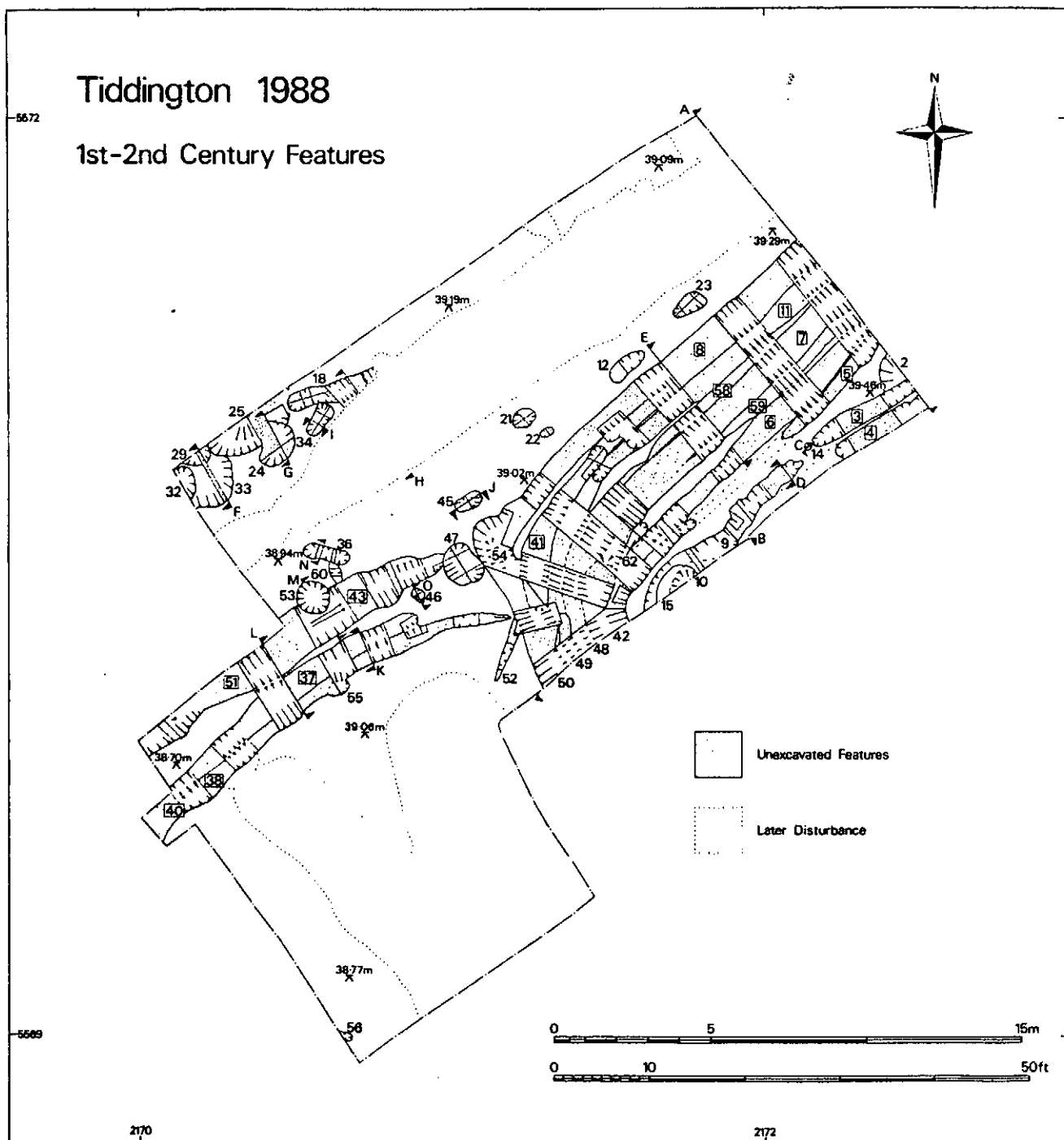


Fig. 4.

THE 1988 EXCAVATION

Methods

The topsoil, which consisted of a post-medieval and modern ploughsoil, was removed by machine and the resulting surface was then scraped clear of loose soil. A variety of undisturbed Romano-British and later features, mainly pits and ditches was revealed. These features could be detected because they were filled with material that was different in colour or texture to the surrounding subsoil. They therefore showed up as patches or strips of loamy material surrounded by gravel. By removing sections of the loamy fill it was possible to reconstruct the original shapes of the features. Where two features overlapped the fill of the later one ran across that of the earlier. It was thus possible to work out the sequence in which the various features were dug and filled. Almost all the features contained broken pottery and because the pottery in use changed markedly over the Roman period it was possible to assign an approximate date for the filling of a feature based on the pottery types present. Once the various features were defined and sectioned they were described, photographed, planned and cross-sections were drawn.

1st century enclosure, hearth and pits (Figs. 4, 5 & 6)

The earliest features encountered were a series of gullies which ran south-eastwards from the north east edge of the trench before curving southwards. These were boundary/drainage gullies surrounding an enclosure fronting onto the Tiddington Road to the south and probably containing a building. The enclosure would also presumably have been fenced in some way although no traces of fences survived. Each gully was relatively short lived, silting up and being redug on a slightly different line, generally to the north-west so that the enclosure gradually grew by encroachment. The earliest gully (4) belonged to the early/mid 1st century AD. This was succeeded by gullies 3 and 9, 5, 6, 42, 7 and 48, 58, 59, 11, 41 and 49, and 52 through the late 1st century. Two pits (2 and 62) were also early in the sequence, being cut by gullies 3 and 6 respectively. The posthole 14, adjacent to gully 3 may have held a fence post, or a gate post for an entrance.

As the gullies moved north-westwards the space to the south east became available and at some stage in the late 1st century a clay lined hearth (15) was built here (Fig. 6). This was presumably an outside feature as no traces of a building were found around it. After the hearth fell out of use it was covered by a layer of loam gravel and charcoal (10).

In the north west corner of the site there was a group of pits (24, 25, 29, 32, 33, 34 and 18), varying from 0.90-3.0m across x 0.10-0.25m deep. They were filled with brown/dark brown sandy loam containing few finds and were presumably not rubbish pits; it is possible that they may have been quarry pits to provide gravel for floor or yard surfaces. There was a scatter of other pits of this date across the site (22, 23, 45, 47 and 55).

Tiddington 1988

Sections 1

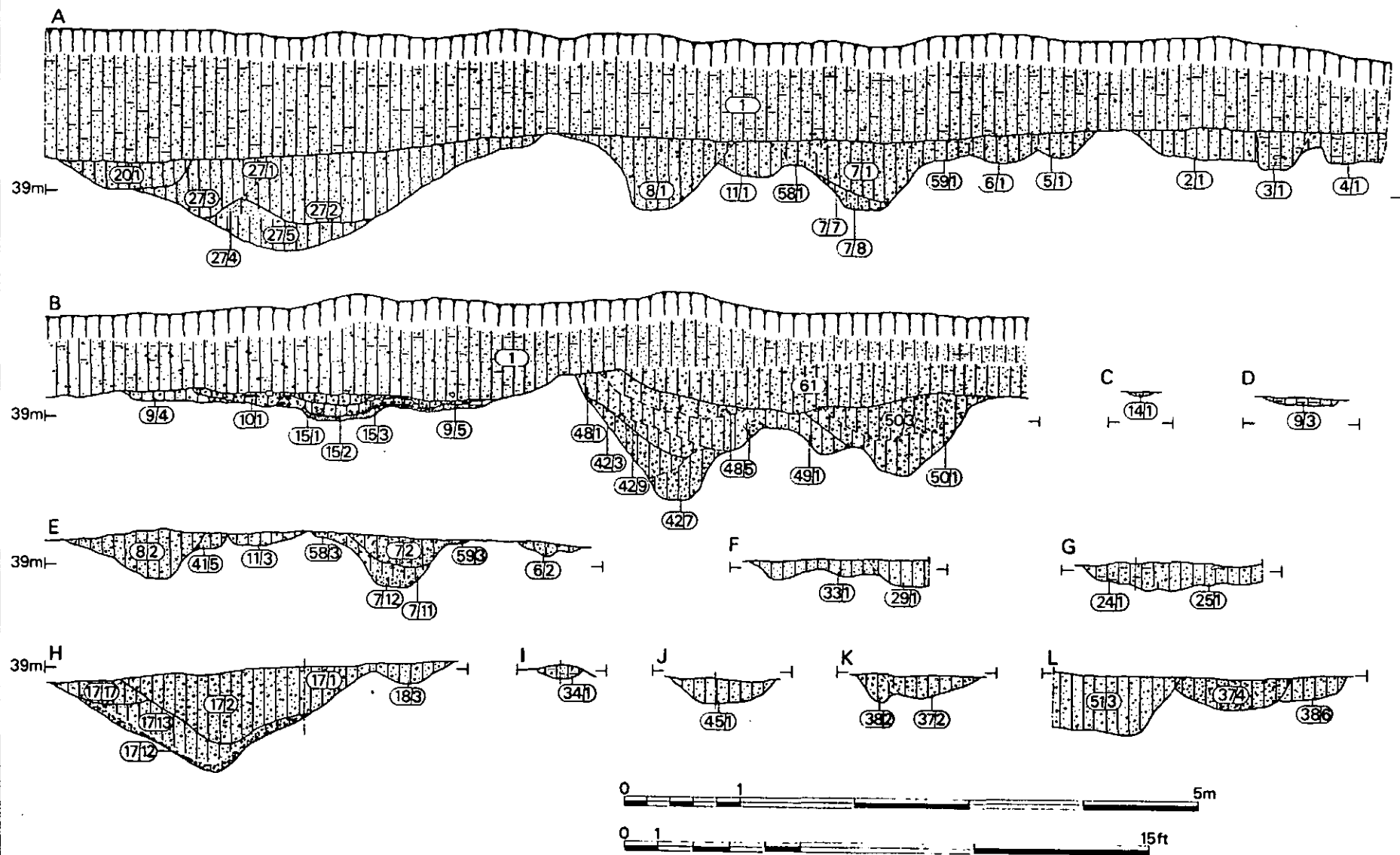


Fig. 5.



Fig. 6: Late 1st century hearth 15.

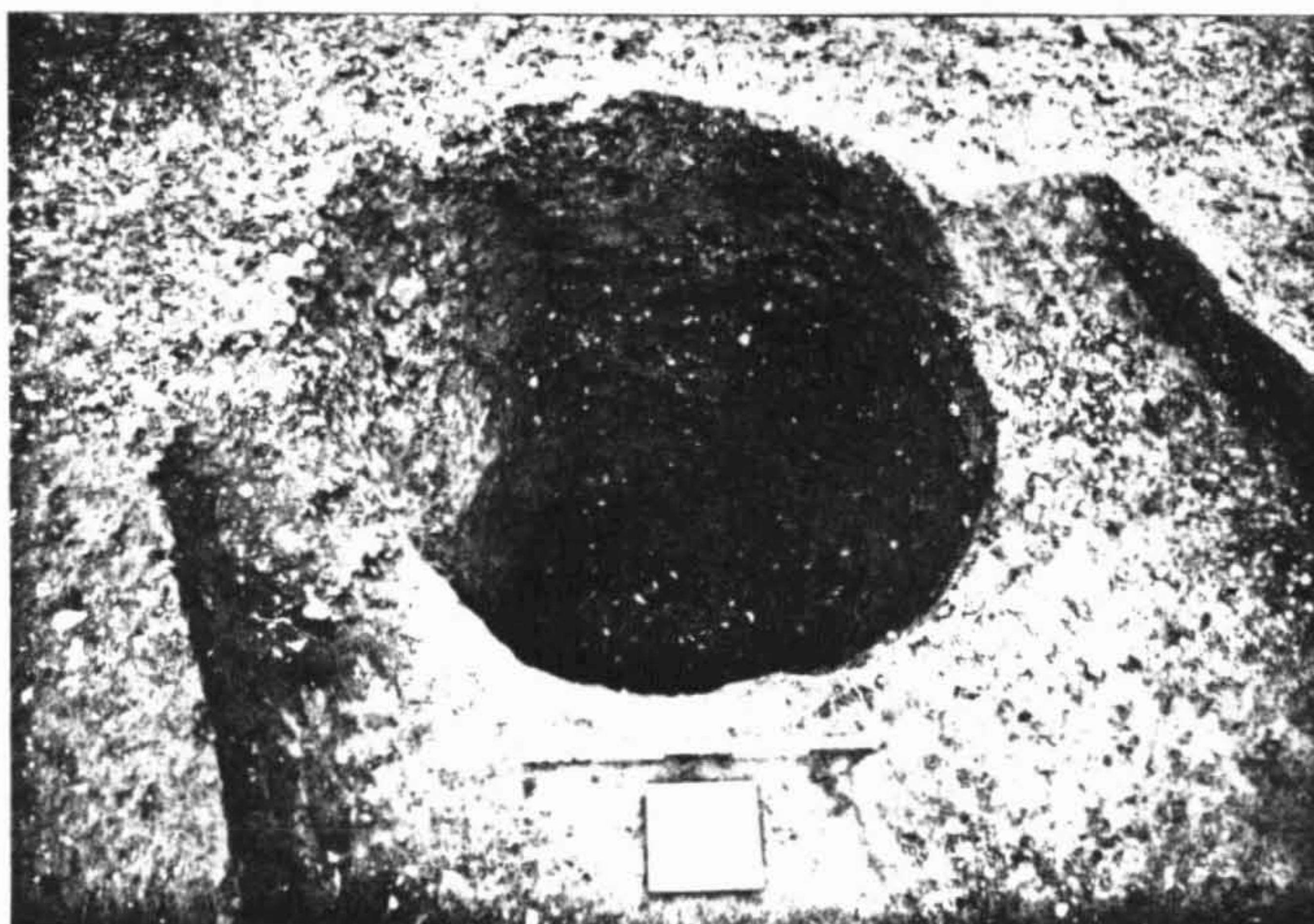


Fig. 7: Early 2nd century pit 53.

Tiddington 1988 Sections 2

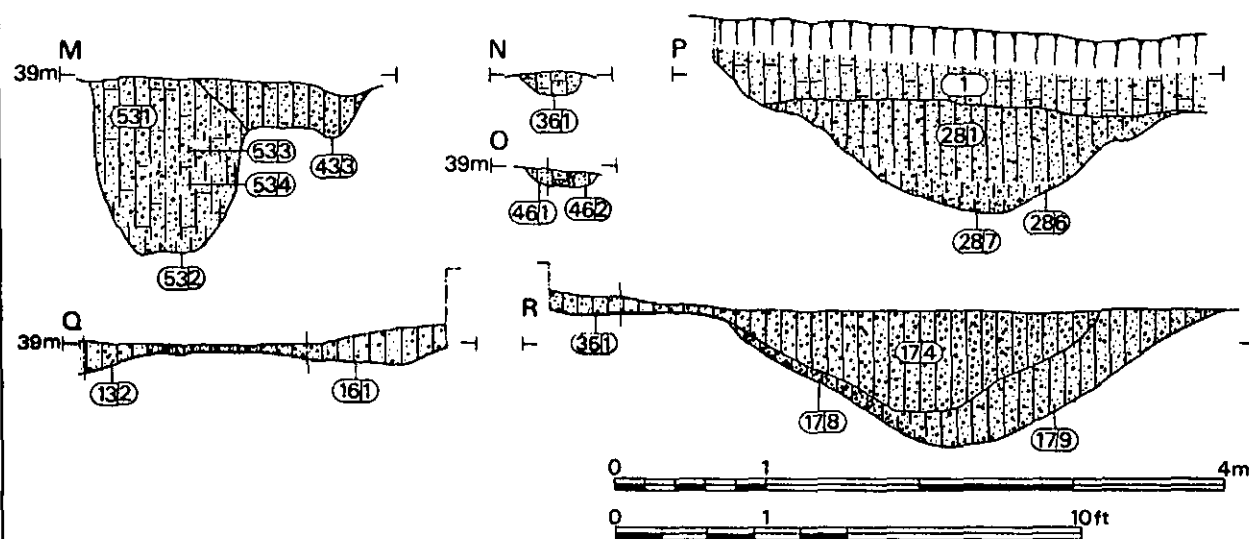


Fig. 8.

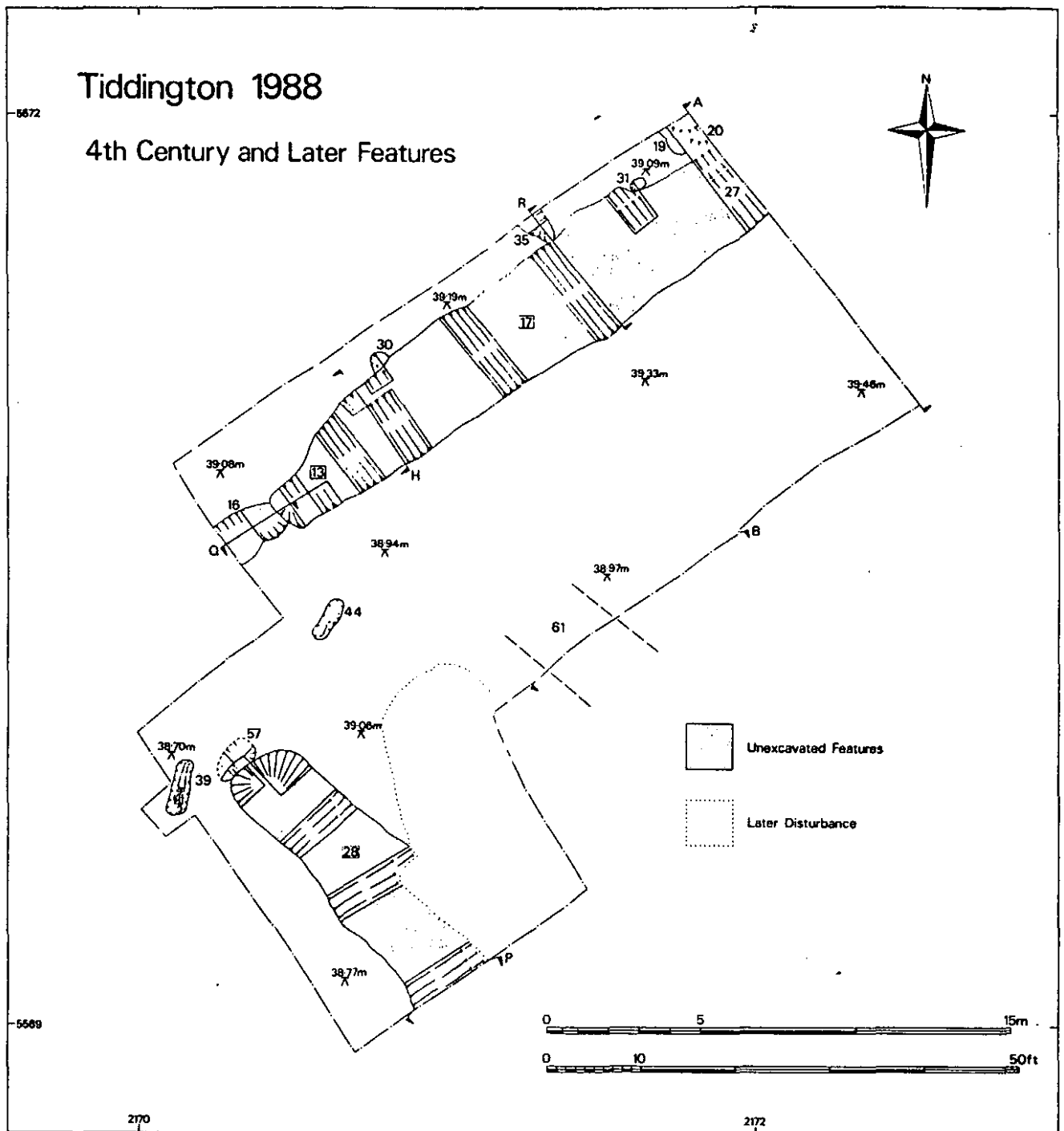


Fig. 9.

At some stage at the end of the 1st century another enclosure was set out on the south west side of the first one. This was outlined by gully 38 & 40, which ran into the TR82 site where it turned at right angles towards the Tiddington Road. There was a road to the south west of this enclosure and this may have turned to run along the backs of the enclosures, although no trace of road surfaces was found in the excavated area.

Early 2nd century (Figs. 4, 5, 7 & 8)

The two enclosures continued in use into the early 2nd century. To their north west more pits were dug (60, 36, 53, 46 and 12). The largest of these was 53 (Fig. 7), 1.13m in diameter x 1.15m deep. Its purpose was uncertain; it contained few finds and was therefore not a rubbish pit.

The final boundary of the north east enclosure was marked by the early 2nd century gullies 8 and 50/54. The original boundary of the south west enclosure (38/40) was replaced by gully 37 and then, further north, by 43/51, which cut pit 53. The final enclosure gullies seem to have been infilled by the mid-2nd century by which time the enclosures seem to have fallen out of use.

Undated features

A few of the features found could not be dated as they contained no datable pottery or had no stratigraphic relationships with dated features. These were gully 56 in the south corner, and hollow 21.

4th century and later (Figs. 5, 8, 9, 10 & 11))

Between the mid-2nd and 4th centuries there was little evidence of activity on the site, which must have been open space within the settlement. This is slightly different to the 1982 site which remained built up until the mid-3rd century. The 4th century activity consisted of a single hollow (16), which might have been the end of a ditch, and two graves.

Graves (Figs. 10 & 11)

The latest Roman features found were the two graves (39 and 44). These probably belonged to the 4th century; although containing no direct dating evidence they formed part of a group with others in the 1982 excavation which were 4th century AD in date. Under Roman law burial was supposed to take place outside settlements but by the 4th century this rule was widely ignored at Tiddington and elsewhere. Most of the skeleton in Grave 44 had been removed by later ploughing and only part of its left leg remained in situ. The grave was aligned north-east to south-west with the head to the north-east. The skeleton in Grave 39 (Figs. 10 & 11) was much better preserved with most of its bones surviving in situ. This grave was aligned south-south-west to north-north-east with its head to the south. The skeleton had been buried wearing iron-shod shoes or sandals, as clusters of iron hobnails (168 in total) were found over each foot. This is a fairly common feature of Romano-British burials and sometimes the shoes can be seen to

have been placed deliberately in the grave alongside the body and not actually worn. Other human bone in the topsoil shows that at least one more grave had been completely ploughed away.

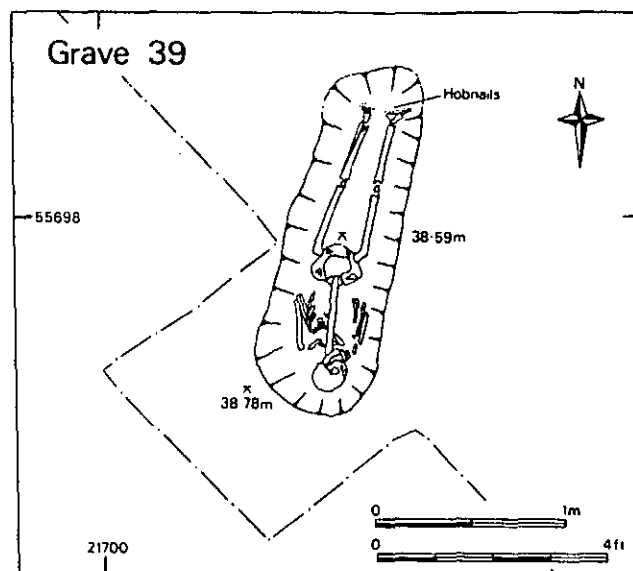


Fig. 10.

Anglo-Saxon enclosure (Late 5th/6th century) (Figs. 5, 8 & 9)

Some time in the 5th century, at the end of the Roman period, the settlement at Tiddington was abandoned in what was probably a gradual process and the main centre of occupation moved downstream to the area around Clopton Bridge. The cemetery for the new Saxon settlement has been found near the Alveston Manor Hotel. Until the present excavations no trace of continuing occupation had been found at Tiddington, and the location of the corner of a substantial enclosure dating to the late 5th/6th century is the most important discovery of the excavation.

The enclosure was outlined by two ditches (28 and 13/27/17) set at right angles and aligned on the Tiddington Road. There was a gap 6m wide on the west corner which was presumably an entrance. Ditch 28 was 3.3m wide x 1.10m deep, although it is possible that it had been recut; ditch 13/27/17, which had been recut twice, varied in width from 2.25-3.0m and in depth from 0.6-0.9m.

Along the north side of 13/27/17, and cut by the latest ditch were two postholes 30 and 31 which may have supported a fence alongside the ditch. Feature 35 may have been the end of a gully running up to the ditch. After ditch 27 was filled in a small pit (20) was dug into it in the north corner of the site, and this was itself cut by another pit (19). Ditch 28 was also cut after being infilled by pit 57.

Because so little of the enclosure was excavated it is not possible to be definite about the character of the Saxon occupation - whether it represents a single farm or something more. The possible fence on the outside of the ditch suggests that it involves more than just the enclosure.



Fig. 11: Grave 39.

Medieval and modern

After the abandonment of the settlement the site reverted to fields and was subject to medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. The remains of one of these medieval furrows (61) could be detected running north-west to south-east across the centre of the site. The great depth of topsoil (1) over the site can probably be explained as a result of this medieval ploughing.

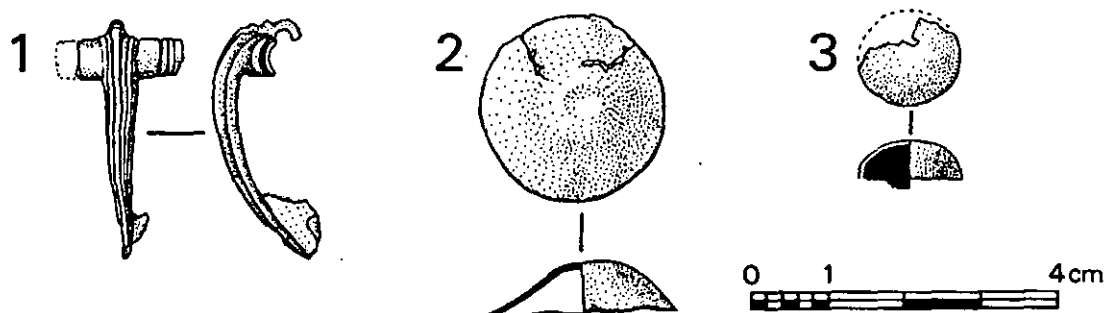
The one remaining feature encountered was a large modern pit filled with builder's rubbish in the south part of the site, which had been dug within the last year or so.

FINDS

Summary

Bronze objects	5	(See report below)
Iron	5 groups	(See report below)
Nails	17	
Lead	2 scraps	
Worked Flint	9	(See report below)
Pottery	1452	(See summary report below)
Slag	35	fragments of blacksmithing slag
Stone quern fragments	2	(See report below)
Tile	17	fragments
Animal Bone	1356	(See summary report below)
Charcoal	8	fragments
Claypipe	1	fragment
Daub	285	fragments (some very small)
Human Bone	429	(See report below)

Bronze



Quern

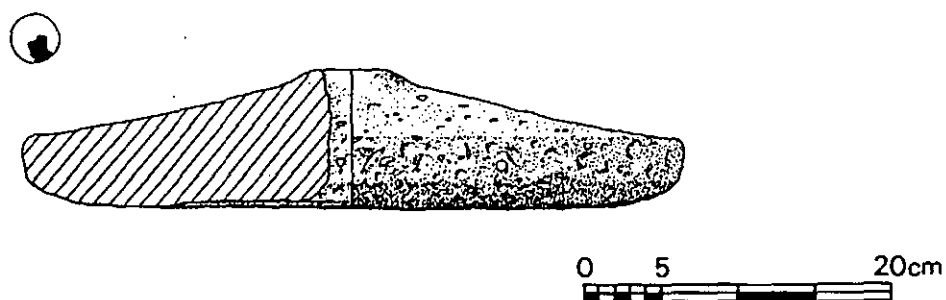


Fig. 12: Bronze objects (1:1) and stone quern (1:5).

Bronze Objects by Dr. G. Lloyd-Morgan FSA. (Fig. 12)

1. Dolphin brooch, Collingwood Group H, with moulded decoration running the length of the bow, complemented and paralleled by the narrow band of moulding on the better preserved wing. The rear pointing hook to hold the chord of the spring is preserved in part, but the spring and pin are lost. The catchplate is damaged but traces of linear incised decoration can be seen on the outer face. L. 32.5mm. (TM88, SF 17, 17/4, Ditch fill, 4c).

Compare the more elaborate pieces in Hattatt 1985, 73 Fig. 30 esp. Nos. 347, 348, where a date of AD 40-55 is suggested. The decoration along the bow can be paralleled by the less well preserved piece from Coleshill, Warwicks. (GH 1978 SF 1008).

2. Sub conical head of stud with remains of lead filler. The pin is lost and the stud head cracked and a little damaged. Diam. c.25mm, Ht. 7.7mm. (TM88, SF 8, 28/1, Ditch fill, Early 2c).

Compare the related examples from earlier Tiddington excavations SF M39, SF M615 and TD81 SF 197.

3. Hollow dome headed stud, damaged and incomplete with lead filler still in situ. The pin, probably of iron, is lost. Diam. c.14mm, Ht. c.6mm. (TM88, SF 9, 1, Topsoil).

4. Strip with traces of incised lines running as a border just inside the edge. Rather worn. Possibly part of one side of a pair of tweezers, or, more likely, an applique edging strip. 33.3mm x 8.3mm, max Th. 1.2mm. (TM88, SF 4, 1, Topsoil).

5. Fragment of sheet or plaque with traces of ?nail hole to one side. 8.6mm x 1.21mm, Th. c.0.5mm. (TM88, SF 1, 8/2, Ditch fill, Early 2c).

Bibliography

Hattatt, R., 1985

Iron Age and Roman Brooches (Oxford).

Ironwork

1. Stem with looped terminal. L. 63mm. From a knife or other implement with a looped handle. (TM88, SF 2, 1, Topsoil).

2. Hobnails. A total of 168 hobnails were found in Grave 39 over the feet of the skeleton. 63 (SF 18) came from a shoe or sandal on the left foot, 52 (SF 19) from one on the right foot; a further 53 (SF 20) came from the space in between. Three of the burials from the Reading Court site contained hobnails, as did eight further burials from the NFUMAI site dating from the 2nd to the late 4th century.

3. Nail cluster. A fused lump of at least 20 nails corroded together. (TM88, SF6, 13/1, Ditch, late 5th/6th c). These had presumably been removed from a building and collected together as scrap to be melted

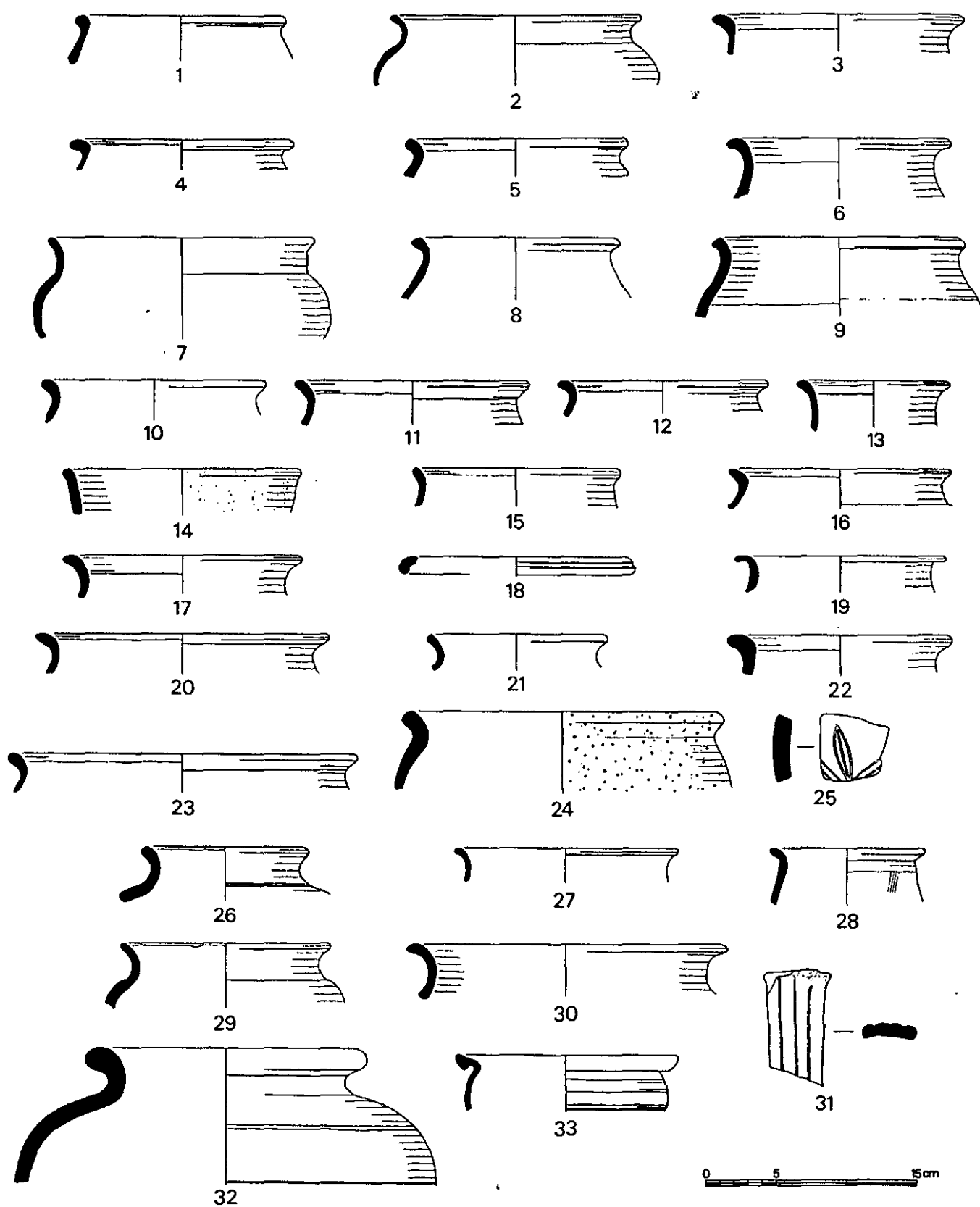


Fig. 13: Pottery from 1st and 2nd century contexts.

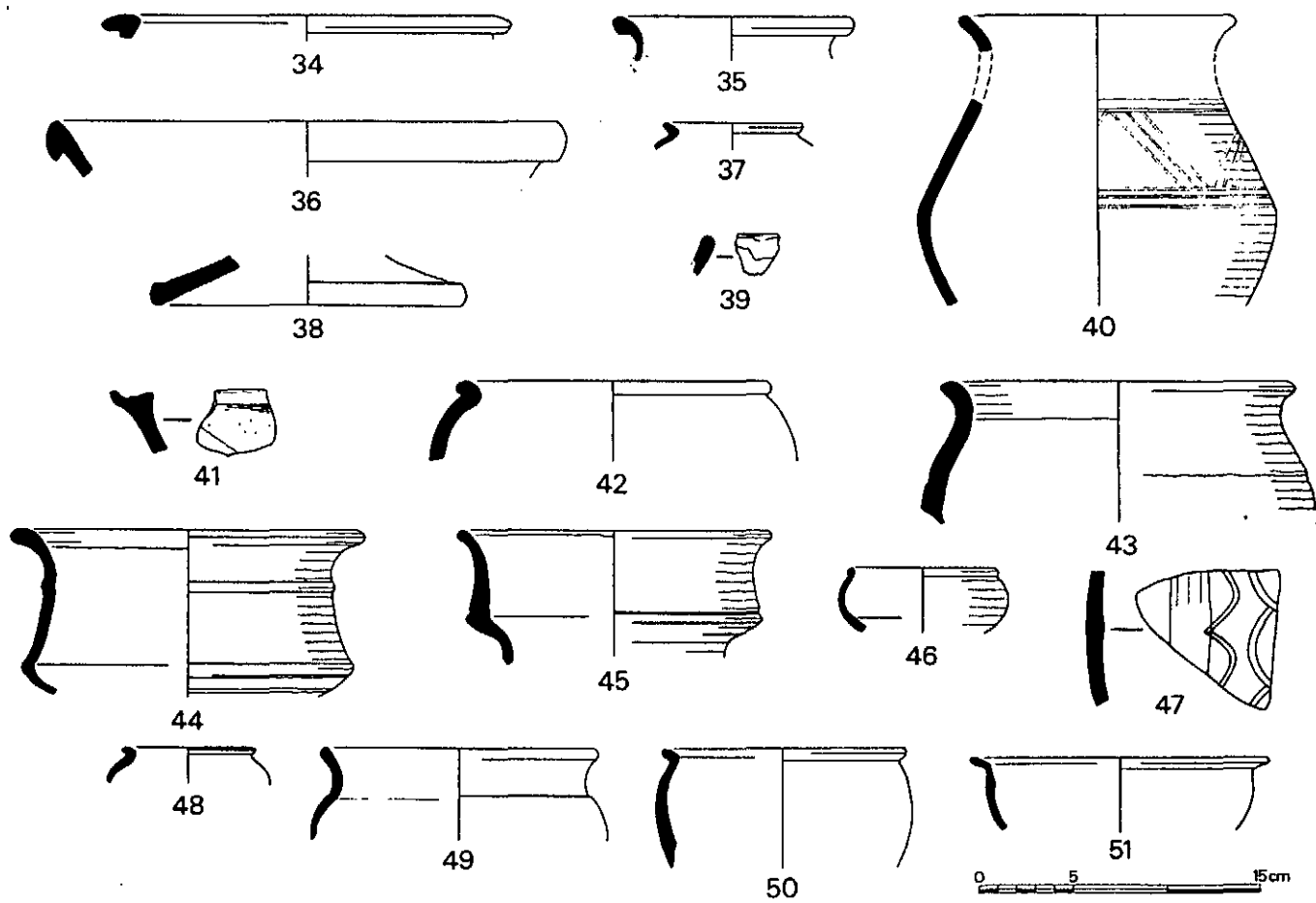


Fig. 14: Pottery from late 5th/6th century and later contexts.

down and reused. A further 15 nails, probably also from the cluster, were found loose in layer 13/1.

Two more loose nails were found in topsoil (1).

Objects of stone

Quern fragments (Fig. 12)

Both fragments of quern (hand operated millstone) are of Old Red Sandstone Conglomerate and will have been imported to Tiddington from the Forest of Dean.

1. Lower stone fragment, outward sloping sided, sloping grinding surface with central wear peak, tapering (slightly off centre) spindle hole (Diam. 30mm). Diam. 440mm, Th. 82mm. (TM88, SF 13, 1, Topsoil).

2. Small fragment. 74mm max. (TM88, SF 12, 1, Topsoil)

Worked flint by Dr. L.H. Barfield

9 fragments were collected of which three proved to be of interest: a core, from which tools had been struck, with two striking platforms (TM88, SF 10, 1, Topsoil); a flint blade (TM88, SF 5, 13/1, Ditch, late 5/6c); and a struck flake (TM88, SF 16, 40/1, Gully, late 1c).

Together with the fragments from the other Tiddington excavations these pieces suggest the presence of a Late Neolithic (c.2000bc) settlement in the vicinity.

Pottery by Paul Booth (Figs. 13 & 14)

The pottery from TM88 is very similar to that from the adjacent larger TR82 (Reading Court) excavation. Apart from the presence of the first Anglo-Saxon pottery found at Tiddington, the most noteworthy feature is the predominance of 1st century AD material, much of it dating from the early years of Roman settlement at Tiddington. This pottery is in a style which may have appeared at Tiddington shortly before the Roman conquest, but dating is uncertain (Nos. 1-25, 29-30 & 41-47). It is generally wheelthrown, in contrast to the pottery of preceding periods which was handmade, though a few pieces of the latter do survive. Most of the early Roman pottery at Tiddington was probably manufactured close to the site.

Pottery styles changed in the later part of the 1st century AD and more recognisably 'Roman' fabrics and vessels appeared. There is a little of this material, which was used throughout the rest of the Roman period; most of it at this site probably dates to the early years of the 2nd century (Nos. 26-28, 31-38 & 48-51).

It is interesting that products of a pottery kiln excavated at TR82 and dated c.AD 130-160 are very rare at the present site, possibly indicating that occupation on the site was sparse at that time. A few features contained distinctively later pottery, mainly of 4th century date. This group consisted of pottery from a much wider range of sources than the earlier material - including fine table wares from Oxfordshire and the Nene Valley, near Peterborough, and various utilitarian vessels from the Severn Valley region (eg. Nos. 34 & 36), from Dorset, Northamptonshire (No. 35), and from a source near Milton Keynes.

The most striking feature of the later material is the presence of sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery (Nos. 39 & 40), many from a single vessel decorated with horizontal and oblique lines. The quantity of this pottery indicates continued use in the Saxon period, perhaps in the late 5th/6th century, of some of the Roman ditches.

Human Remains by Christine Osborne

Three groups of human bone were recovered: one complete skeleton (TM88 39/1), and two small groups of leg bones (TM88 44/1 and 1).

Grave 39/1

Skull, mandible, fragments of cervical, thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, fragment of clavicle, fragments of scapula, both humeri, both radii, both ulnae, 2 metacarpals, 5 hand phalanges, both pelves, both femora, both patellae, both tibiae, both fibulae, 3 left, 6 right tarsals, and 3 left and 4 right metatarsals.

The bones belonged to an old adult (over 50 years old) male whose stature can be estimated at $167.146\text{cm} \pm 3.94\text{cm}$ (5ft 6ins \pm 1.5ins). Generally throughout the skeleton the bones appeared robust and well muscled.

The acetabulae of both pelves had wear and pitting along the posterior walls and slight lipping around the rims. Both femora had post mortem damage but no apparent pathology.

Both femora had extremely marked gluteal tuberosities and linea asperas (the areas of attachment for the gluteus maximus and adductor magnus respectively). The left femur had a large lumpy area of remodelled bone on the posterior shaft along the line of the gluteal tuberosity and a similar, though much less severe, reaction on the linea aspera. This may indicate some sort of damage to the tendinous insertions at some time.

The right fibula had an area of thickening and remodelling in the lower region of the shaft which was probably an old healed fracture. The bone had healed with very little misalignment. Such a fracture would be incurred by a hard blow to the back of the lower leg. The distal shaft of the fibula in the region inferior to the medial malleolus was spurred. This is the region of attachment of the calcaneofibular ligament. The surviving tarsals seemed unaffected, though they may have suffered post mortem damage and any pathology may have been lost.

Grave 44/1

Left femur, right tibia, 7 right tarsals, 5 right metatarsals and 3 right phalanges.

The bones are extremely fragmentary and belonged to an adult individual.

Topsoil 1

Fragments of shaft of right femur, of right tibia and of fibula.

From an adult individual.

Animal Bone - A summary report by Julie Hamilton

The bone was in fairly poor condition, as indicated by the low percentage identified (<25%), fairly high proportion of teeth among the identified fragments, and lack of bones complete enough for measurements to be made. Many bones were worn or shattered. Nevertheless butchery marks and gnawing by both large and small mammals were noted.

The large mammal bones from Roman contexts comprised only domestic species. Cattle fragments were most numerous, followed by sheep (including sheep/goat, no positive goat identifications were made) and pig, with a few horse and dog fragments. The low numbers of identified fragments make it pointless to ascribe significance to differences between feature types or phases. The bone probably represents more or less domestic rubbish including food remains.

There were a few bird bones, probably from domestic fowl.

The few identified fragments from Saxon contexts were mainly cattle, with a few of sheep and horse.

In the sieved samples (Roman and Saxon) there were a few fragments of sheep teeth, and at least one vole tooth, plus vertebrae and ribs of vole-sized mammals (not yet identified). The bulk of the samples was made up of unidentifiable crumbs of bone, a few calcined or blackened.

Table 1: Summary of Bone fragment numbers and Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI)

Phase		SPECIES					Total	Unidentified
		Cattle	Sheep*	Pig	Horse	Dog		
Early 1c	n	-	2	-	-	-	2	3
	%							
	MNI							
Late 1c	n	40	23	13	3	3	82	163
	%	48.8	28.0	15.9	3.7	3.7		
	MNI	1	2	3	1	1		
Early 2c	n	22	10	3	4	1	40	162
	%	55.0	25.0	7.5	10.0	2.5		
	MNI	2	2	1	1	1		
4c	n	38	2	2	-	-	42	268
	%	90.5	4.8	4.8				
	MNI	2	1	1				
Late 4c	n	1	1	-	-	-	2	19
	%							
	MNI							
1c/4c	n	-	-	-	-	-	0	2
	%							
	MNI							
Late 5/6c (Saxon)	n	26	1	-	6	-	33	159
	%	78.8	3.0		18.2			
	MNI	2	1		1			
Topsoil	n	57	39	7	2	2	107	272
	%	53.3	36.4	6.5	1.9	1.9		
	MNI	3	3	1	1	1		
Total	n	184	78	25	15	6	308	1048

*Includes sheep/goat; no positive goat identified.

There were also a few bird bones (cf. fowl), and in the samples a vole tooth and some vertebrae and limb bones of ?vole - not yet identified to species.

