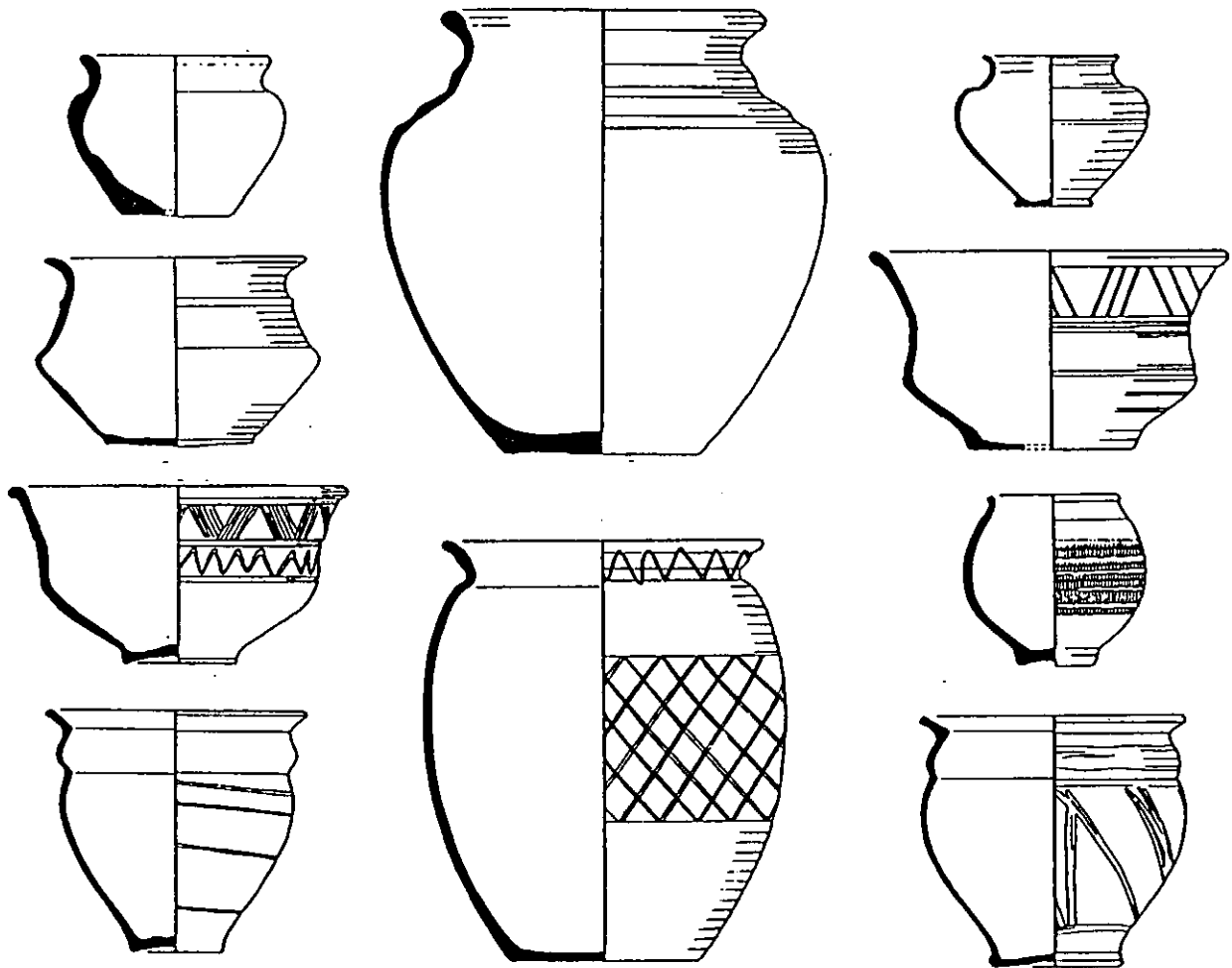


SWA 18675  
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NWA 7176  
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# Further Archaeological Recording

at 112 Tiddington Road,

Stratford-upon-Avon



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Warwickshire Museum Field Services  
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## Summary

Archaeological excavation and recording of four foundation trenches for a new front portico at 112 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon revealed a group of Romano-British pits that had been backfilled with domestic rubbish including animal bone and pottery of mid-late 2nd century date. The pits, which may have included a large sump or well that was impractical to fully excavate, probably relate to a further group of rubbish filled pits examined nearby in 1991. It is clear that this area of the village was used for rubbish disposal in the mid part of the 2nd century but there is no clear evidence for use in the later part of the Romano-British period.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission was granted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council for alterations and extensions to 112 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon (Planning Ref. S00/03060/FUL). The site lies within the known extent of a Romano-British village and as such the redevelopment had the potential of encountering significant archaeological deposits. A condition of planning permission required that the applicants secure a programme of archaeological works to accompany the development. In the event much of the redevelopment proceeded without an archaeological programme being in place.

1.2 Warwickshire Museum Archaeology Projects Group were asked to provide a costed proposal for the final stage of ground disturbance, the foundation pits for the new front portico. This report presents the results of that work undertaken on the 3rd and 5th of March 2003. The project archive will be stored at The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust under site code TT03.

### 2. Location

2.1 The site lies on the south side of the Tiddington Road at National Grid Reference SP 1713 5597. The underlying geology of the site is 2nd terrace river gravel (British Geological Survey 1974). The area examined was previously a tarmac driveway.

### 3. Archaeological background

3.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the area is a Palaeolithic hand axe found in about 1930 during the construction of no 80 Tiddington Road. This is a redeposited find in the gravel terrace and does not indicate a site of this period.

3.2 The most important remains in the vicinity are those of a Romano-British settlement, covering an estimated 22ha on the south bank of the River 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.

3.3 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 'Straetford', 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.

3.4 The first modern indications of the existence of the 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 no 77 Tiddington Road. These excavations also produced some Iron Age pottery (but the suggestion that there were also Anglo-Saxon finds is unsubstantiated). In 1925-7 the construction of the golf course revealed more Romano-British burials and the remains of buildings. Further excavation work was carried out in 1937-8 at no 102 Tiddington Road and in 1939 at no 84.

3.5 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 were located areas of cemetery, rubbish pits and field system.

3.6 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 round houses 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 have been recognised, 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 corn drying 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, and some Anglo-Saxon, activity was identified.

3.7 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). Since 1990 a number of observations and small excavations have been carried out on the settlement which have tended to confirm the conclusions of the earlier work. These include adjacent to no 80 Tiddington Road (Warwickshire Museum 1996; 1997a), no 82 (Warwickshire Museum 2000a) no 102 (Warwickshire Museum 1997b), no 124 Tiddington Road (Warwickshire Museum 1999; 2000b).

3.9 In 1991 a small-scale excavation was conducted in advance of the construction of a new garage block on the present site. An area c 6m by 6.5m was machined down to natural gravel revealing a small number of pits and postholes. These contained pottery and animal bone representative of rubbish disposal during the 2nd century AD. A small group of postholes in the north of the area may have related to a wooden building or buildings of late 3rd/4th century date, most of which lay outside the excavated area (Warwickshire Museum 1991).

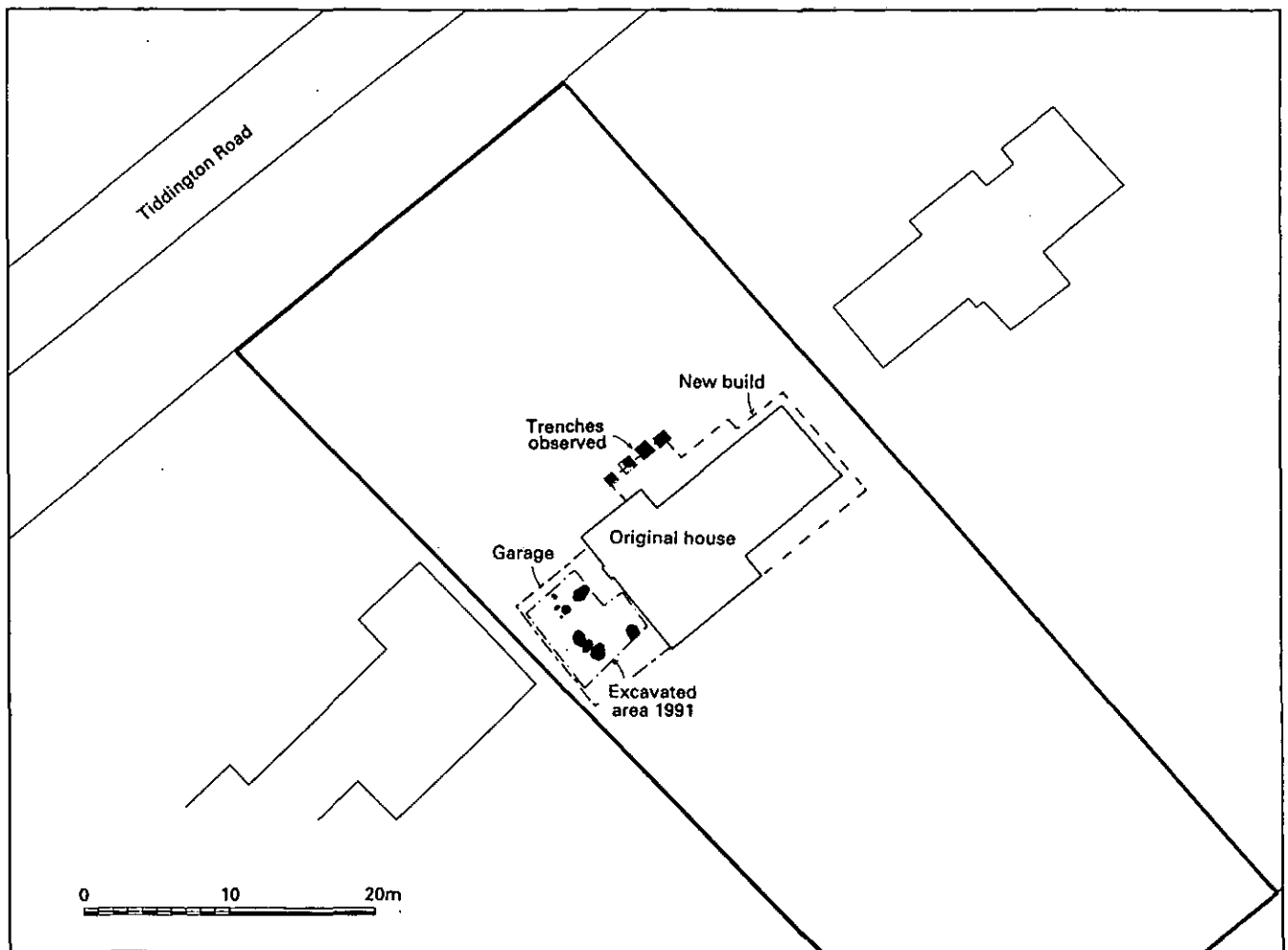


Fig 2: Trench locations

#### 4. Observation and recording

4.1 The four foundation pits were entirely hand dug. Natural geological subsoil was observed in three of the pits. It consisted of reddish-yellow sand and gravel (1).

##### Trench 1

4.2 This trench measured 0.70m by 0.70m and was cut a maximum of 1.28m deep from the tarmac surface. On the north side of the trench, the natural gravel (0.86m below the tarmac) was cut by a pit 2 (0.43m deep). A basal fill (3) dark yellowish-brown sandy loam was overlain by a lens of redeposited sand (4), which in turn was covered by a dump of very dark greyish-brown sandy loam with small gravel inclusions and much charcoal (5). Inside the lip of the pit a patch of yellowish-brown sandy loam may have been the result of gravel erosion from the pit edge (6). These contexts could not easily be distinguished during excavation hence the finds derived from them were amalgamated as 23. These were mainly 2nd century but included one probably intrusive 4th century sherd and a circular plate brooch with probable traces of enamel. These contexts were sealed by a 0.70m thick layer of dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam plough soil (7) and finally capped by 0.19m of modern

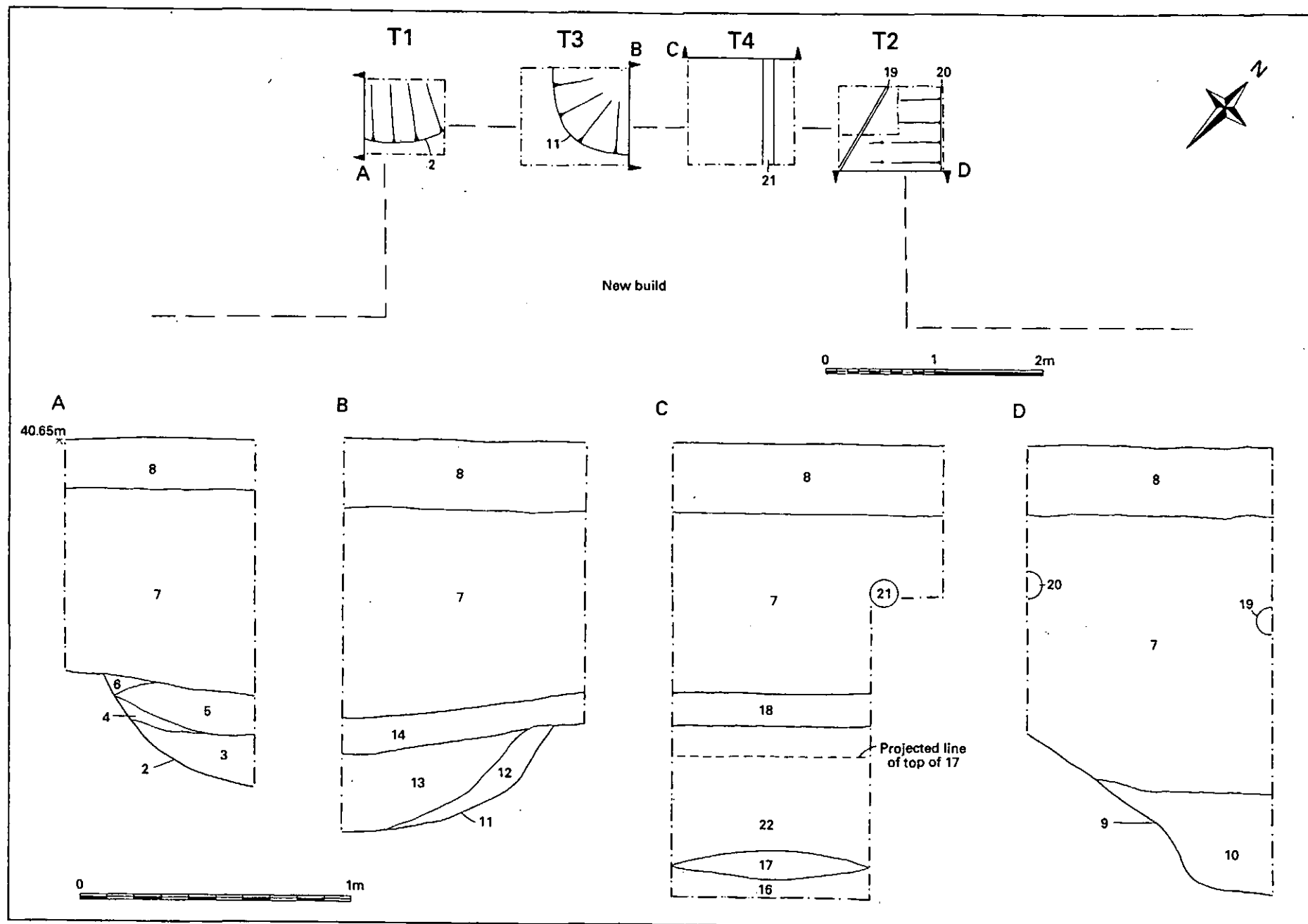


Fig 3: Detailed trench plans and sections

surface construction 8, which included a layer of brick hardcore, covered by a layer of stone chippings, a thin layer of red tarmac and a final covering of black tarmac.

## Trench 2

4.3 Trench 2 measured 0.80m by 0.95m and was cut 1.70m deep from the modern surface. The trench appeared to have been positioned over a pit 9, which cut into the natural 0.60m. It was filled with dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with 20% small gravel pebbles (10) that was only distinguishable from the overlying ploughsoil layer 7 by the increased amount of these inclusions and the mid-late 2nd century pottery recovered from within it. The ploughsoil (7) was cut by a water pipe 19 and a gas pipe 20, although construction cuts for these two services could not be distinguished. The modern surface and its foundation layers (8) were a total of 0.24m thick.

## Trench 3

4.4 This trench measured 0.90m by 1.00m and was cut 1.47m deep from the modern surface. The natural gravel was encountered at a depth of 1.10m from the surface and this was cut by pit 11 (0.43m deep). A primary fill of dark greyish-brown sandy loam (12), tipped down the eastern side of the pit, and was overlaid by a dump of dark grey sandy loam (13). This in turn was sealed by a layer of dark greyish-brown sandy loam with 20% small gravel pebbles (14). These three fills could not be distinguished during excavation and the mid-late 2nd century finds from them were therefore amalgamated as 24. These pit fills were overlaid by ploughsoil 7 and sealed by the modern surface make-up 8, which was 0.26m thick.

## Trench 4

4.5 Trench 4 was 1m square at the surface and was cut a maximum 1.70m deep, presumably into the fill of a large pit-like feature 15. Natural was not observed within the confines of the trench and excavation was stopped at an arbitrary level because of water ingress and the instability of the trench walls. The lowest fill 16, dark greyish-brown sandy loam with patches of charcoal. It contained mid-late 2nd century pottery and was overlaid by a dump of redeposited sand 17, first visible at 1.17m below the surface level. This dump tipped down from the south and its surface area was scored by linear troughs probably caused by water flowing over the soft sandy surface, implying that it had once been open to the elements. It was overlaid by a dump of dark greyish-brown sandy loam with 15% small gravel pebbles (22). This in turn was covered by a layer of compacted dark greyish brown sandy loam with 20% small gravel pebbles (18). Further mid-late 2nd century finds from layers 18 and 22 were amalgamated as 25. These fills were overlaid by the plough soil 7 and sealed by the surface material 8.

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 Each of the foundation trenches encountered a pit associated with rubbish disposal, those in trenches 2, 3 and 4 forming a group dating to the mid-late 2nd century AD. The pit encountered in trench 1 may also have been backfilled at this time, although a single 4th century sherd, if not derived from a later and otherwise undetectable intrusion, suggests activity in the later period. It is also possible that the deposits identified in trenches 2 - 4 were all part of the same larger feature. If this was the case, the feature would have been in excess of 3.5m wide. Possible explanations for such a large pit include a gravel quarry or a well. This kind of



feature would not be out of place within the confines of the village and could originally have been lined in wood or even wattle, neither material necessarily leaving an archaeological trace after the passage of c1850 years.

5.2 The date range of the finds recovered from the pits clearly suggest contemporaneity with the pit group identified to the west (Warwickshire Museum 1991), although these were generally more shallow. The building contractor (Stan) who hand excavated the foundations for the current alterations reported that similar soils containing a large quantity of animal bone were encountered to a depth of 1.50m across the new frontage. No pottery was noticed but this was almost certainly because it was unexpected and therefore not recognised. Taken together, the evidence suggests that the pits extended over a wide area and it seems increasingly likely that in the mid-2nd century AD the area was used for rubbish disposal.

5.3 The absence of any later deposits with the exception of the single 4th century sherd could infer that the area attracted little activity in the later Roman period although, the 1991 evidence did include some postholes and a hollow of this date. It remains possible therefore that other later evidence was not recognised within the confines of the portico foundation pits.

5.4 The work has added useful data to our knowledge of the layout and development of Romano-British Tiddington. The thick layer of plough soil (7) that covered the deposits has accumulated since the medieval period and has been recognised across the settlement. It masks the underlying archaeology and affords it protection from much of the modern development in the area. It is likely that many of the houses along the Tiddington Road overlie good quality archaeological deposits only punctured by the deep foundation trenches of their load bearing walls.

5.5 This current work has shown that important information can be gained even from relatively small trenches and when compared to the results of some salvage recording projects in the area, clearly demonstrates the advantage of hand digging as opposed to merely recording machine dug trenches.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Mr and Mrs Taylor for commissioning the work and for providing a steady stream of hot tea whilst on site. The work on site was carried out by the author who would like to thank Stan the building contractor for his assistance and forbearance. The illustrations in this report area by Candy Stevens. Nick Palmer commented on the pottery and checked this report.

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## Appendix: List of Finds Recovered

<i>Trench No</i>	<i>Context No</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Assemblage date</i>
1	23	Pottery	15	Mostly 2nd century but 1 4th century sherd may be intrusive
1	23	Animal bone	22	
1	23	Copper alloy brooch	1	Circular plate brooch with bosses around edge, probably enamelled
2	10	Pottery	18	Mid-late 2nd century
2	10	Animal bone	19	
2	10	Iron slag	2	
3	24	Pottery	2	Mid-late 2nd century
3	24	Animal bone	3	
4	16	Pottery	7	Mid-late 2nd century
4	16	Animal bone	7	
4	25	Pottery	29	Mid-late 2nd century
4	25	Animal bone	32	



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