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Excavation of Roman features and
deposits on the outskirts of *Cunetio*,
Mildenhall, Marlborough,
Wiltshire in 1997

Detailed Excavation Report

Wessex Archaeology

Report Reference 43455 b

1st Draft – 26th October 1998

**Excavation of Roman features and deposits on the outskirts of *Cunetio*
(Mildenhall), Marlborough, Wiltshire in 1997**

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**Report Ref: 43455 b
1st Draft - 26 October 1998**

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Excavation of Roman features and deposits on the outskirts of *Cunetio* (Mildenhall), Marlborough, Wiltshire in 1997

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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned and funded by Thames Water Utilities. The co-operation of Thames Water Utilities and especially Mr Alan Young (Project Manager) and Ms Juliet Roper (Senior Conservation and Heritage Scientist) is gratefully acknowledged.

The collaborative role of Mike Lang Hall (Archaeological Consultant), Roy Canham and Duncan Coe (Wiltshire County Council) is also acknowledged, as is the assistance of the Resident Engineer, Mathew le Port (Gleasons).

Aerial photographic transcription was undertaken by Chris Cox, Air Photo Services, and her assistance during the course of the project is acknowledged.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Roland J C Smith and was directed in the field by Phil Harding with the assistance of Julie Lovell, James Wright and Cornelius Barton. This report has been compiled by the staff of Wessex Archaeology and individual contributions are acknowledged in the text. The finds work was managed by Lorraine Mephram. The illustrations were prepared by S E James.

The author would like to thank Mark Corney for his helpful comments and advice on the results of the fieldwork.

Excavation of Roman features and deposits on the outskirts of *Cunetio* (Mildenhall), Marlborough, Wiltshire in 1997

Introduction

Wessex Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological works in advance of the construction of a new sewer pipeline at Mildenhall, near Marlborough in Wiltshire. This was undertaken following the advice of Mike Lang Hall, Archaeological Consultant, and the Archaeology Service of Wiltshire County Council that the line of the proposed pipe was likely to disturb archaeological remains associated with the Roman small town of *Cunetio*. Accordingly a Brief for a programme of archaeological recording was prepared for Thames Water Utilities by Mike Lang Hall. A specification based on the Brief was prepared by Wessex Archaeology and approved by Mike Lang Hall and the Archaeology Service of Wiltshire County Council prior to the commencement of fieldwork. This report summarises the results of the excavations and watching brief undertaken in 1997.

Archaeological Background

The proposed pipeline ran for approximately 910m to the south of the River Kennet, from OS Grid Ref. SU 2151 6958 at its north east end to OS Grid Ref. SU 2069 6914 at its south west end (Fig. 1). At its north eastern end, it lay within approximately 30m of the extent of the nationally protected Scheduled Monument of the small Roman town of *Cunetio* (Wilts AM 666).

Much of the extent of *Cunetio* is known only through the interpretation of aerial photographs, with very little archaeological excavation within the settlement itself. Much of the archaeological evidence has been collated recently to form the basis of a discussion of the origin and development of the Roman small town (Corney 1997).

Pre-Roman settlement in the area is thought to have focused on the univallate enclosure at Forest Hill and its associated earthworks, which lie 1km to the south west of the pipeline, and may have acted as the focus for a Late Iron Age '*oppidum*'. Whilst there has been no excavation of this enclosure, numerous findspots of Late Iron Age material are recorded from the area. This enclosure was subsequently occupied in the Roman period by a winged corridor '*villa*', which shows clearly on aerial photographs (Corney 1997, 339).

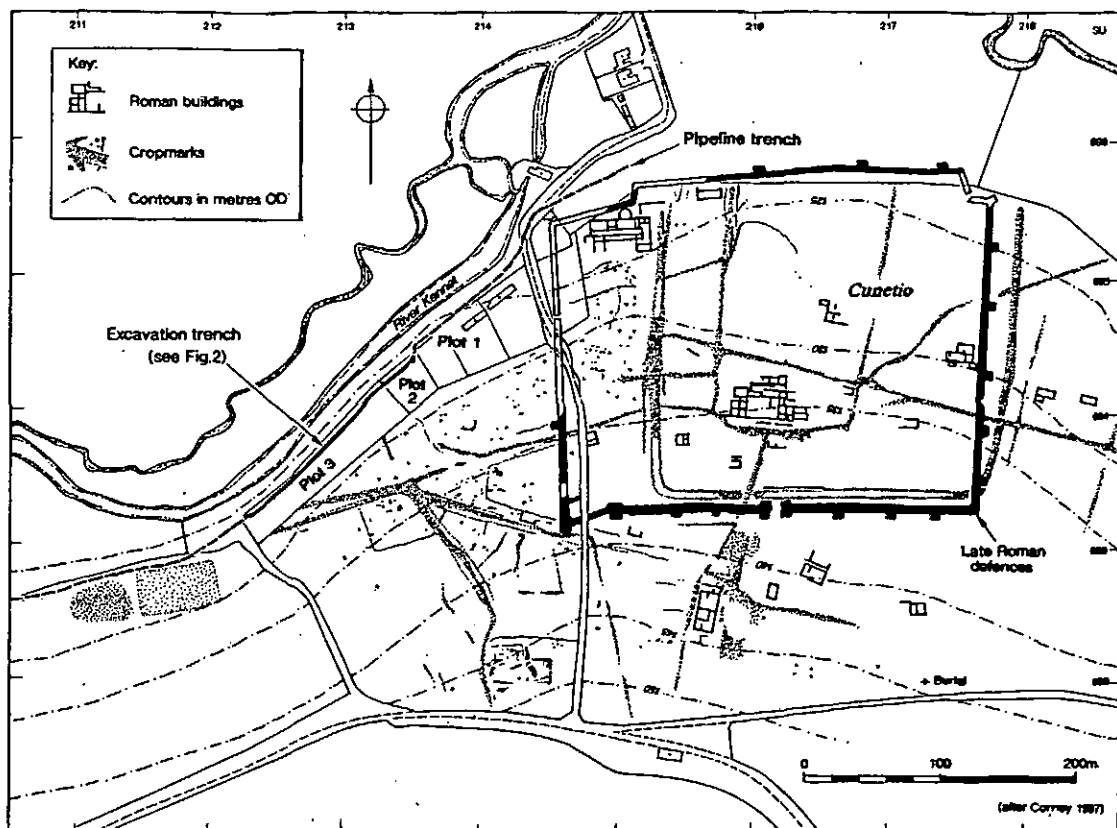


Fig. 1

The exact date of the origin of *Cunetio* itself is uncertain. Limited excavations on the site have however demonstrated occupation in the vicinity of the town from the second half of the first century AD onwards. The evidence for early occupation within the modern field name of 'Black field' includes a well containing a large assemblage of pottery, including Samian ware and local fine wares of Claudio-Neronian date and a bronze military apron mount of the first century AD (Annable 1966, 9-24). Other early Roman finds consist of coins (including some Republican issues), and early pottery. Corney suggests that the initial occupation of the site may have been military in origin, with a post conquest fort controlling the river crossing (1997, 347), although there is no trace of a fort on aerial photographs.

There is good photographic evidence for two successive defensive circuits for the town, along with a number of buildings and the street grid. Excavations undertaken on the smaller, earthen defences have yet to be published in detail, although by analogy to similar small towns, notably Alcester, these may date to the second or third centuries AD (Corney 1997, 348). This defensive circuit consists of a double ditched enclosure enclosing some 6 hectares, which presumably had an internal earthen rampart (Burnham and Wachter, 1989, 150)

The later defensive circuit consisted of a substantial stone wall and buttresses. Excavation has dated the construction of the wall after *circa* AD 360, and has established that the buttresses are likely to have been contemporary with the wall construction. This circuit appears to show little regard for extant street systems or the line of the earlier defences (Burnham and Wachter, 1989, 150).

A comprehensive survey of the aerial photographic evidence relating to the area to the west of the town was undertaken by Air Photo Services for this project. This identified extensive cropmark evidence for continued occupation to the west of the town in the form of roads, possible enclosures, buried walls and possible buildings. These features could not, however, be traced in Plots 1-3 (Fig. 1) through which the pipeline was cut. These fields all slope steeply down to the river, and colluvial and alluvial action may have masked such cropmark evidence.

Previous excavations in Plot 3 of the pipeline in 1951 identified the location of a late Iron Age or early Roman inhumation cemetery. The cemetery consisted of the excavation of eight skeletons in relatively shallow graves, some of which partially overlay each other. Artefacts associated with these burials included animal bones, pottery of first century AD date and two

fibulae. Four of the burials were flexed, and a fifth prone. On the basis of associated artefacts, the burials were thought likely to date to the first century AD (Meyrick 1955, 20). All of the burials were aligned “east to west”, with the exception of the prone burial, which lay “north to south”. The exact location of these burials within Plot 3 was not reported, although their location is described as being “low and quite near the present course of the Kennet, with a brook only about 20 yards away” (Meyrick 1955, 20), whilst the author also mentions that further excavation was restricted because the east end of the field was being used for potatoes.

In the light of this archaeological background, a two-stage programme of archaeological works was undertaken. The first of these involved the stripping and subsequent excavation of the area regarded as of the highest archaeological potential – amounting to some 310m of the pipeline route, incorporating Plots 1, 2 and 3. The remaining length of pipeline was to be monitored during topsoil stripping and subsequent trenching. Emphasis was placed on establishing the location of important deposits and the targeted excavation and recording of those deposits threatened with disturbance.

Methodology

Topsoil was stripped from a trench (1.6m by 310m) along the proposed pipe line route in the area, comprising Plots 1, 2 and 3. (Fig. 1). The trench was excavated under close archaeological supervision to the surface of the archaeological remains or to the top of undisturbed geology. In Plot 1, this involved the excavation of a considerable depth of modern ‘made ground’ overlying alluvial deposits and gravels, whilst in Plots 2 and 3, the subsoil deposits above chalk ranged from 0.2 to 1m in depth, generally increasing in depth from east to west.

All archaeological features were defined, planned and recorded. All features threatened by the proposed course of the pipeline were sample excavated in order to establish their form, function and date. All excavation ceased at 1.2 m below ground level, which represented the installation depth of the pipe. All human remains were fully excavated, and a Home Office Licence obtained in accordance with the *Burial Act* of 1857.

Results

Watching Brief.

The entire length of the pipeline not subjected to archaeological excavation was monitored during topsoil stripping and trenching. No archaeological deposits or features were identified during the course of this monitoring.

Plot 1

Plot 1 lies immediately adjacent to the present course of the River Kennet. Topsoil stripping revealed a relatively intact sequence of deposits. The removal of the topsoil revealed a light-medium grey silty clay and a mid grey silt, both containing modern pottery and ceramic building material. These sealed a thick band of dark grey fine silty clay containing quantities of Roman pottery, animal bone, driftwood and roof tile. This overlay an unsorted gravel in an orange silty clay matrix, which may represent a decalcified solifluction deposit of the last glaciation.

Although archaeological remains were recovered from these deposits, none were demonstrably *in situ*. The matrices of the deposits encountered are consistent with either having been lain down or truncated by a change in the course of the River Kennet.

Plots 2 and 3

These Plots comprised two small rectangular paddocks divided by a discontinuous hedge. They lay on the lower slopes of the valley immediately above the bluff of the floodplain. The easement, which was 168 m long, lay approximately 4 m from the northern fence. A number of archaeological features were identified, excavated and recorded. They were distributed throughout these two Plots although a concentration of features, including postholes and linear features, was located towards the west of Plot 3 (Fig. 2).

A detailed phasing of the site has been undertaken using stratigraphic relationships and dated finds from the fills of feature. The majority of material recovered and features excavated belong to the early Roman period (1st and 2nd centuries AD), although smaller numbers of late Roman and medieval material and features were also excavated (Fig. 2).

Early Roman (1st and 2nd centuries AD).

The dominant feature of the early Roman period was ditch 43. This massive ditch ran north west - south east across the stripped area. This ditch measured some 9.8m at the top, and was excavated to a depth of 1.2m below ground surface (Fig. 3). The upper part of the ditch profile was sealed by ploughsoil accumulations which had migrated downslope. The upper fills (layers 46 and 47) are likely to represent later accumulations of debris within the slumping into the infilled ditch. Both layers contained significant quantities of Roman pottery, dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, with a smaller proportion of 3rd century pottery. Layer 46 also contained a fourth century coin.

The upper fill of the ditch proper (layer 44) consisted of a considerable spread of charcoal and burnt material, 7.2m wide and some 0.05 to 0.15m deep in places. Dating material recovered from this layer included sherds of pottery dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The origin of this large amount of burnt material is unclear. The burnt layer contained large quantities of charred plant remains, mainly grain, as well as very large quantities of charcoal. This sealed a much deeper secondary ditch fill, layer 48, which contained pottery dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

Considerably fewer finds were recovered from layer 57, which filled much of the eastern half of the ditch, although the small number of sherds recovered were of a similar date range. This layer comprised re-deposited chalk rubble, which is thought likely to have derived from a chalk-built rampart to the east of the ditch which was subsequently slighted, and used to back fill the ditch. Although health and safety restrictions meant that the ditch could not be fully excavated, auguring indicated that the fills off the ditch continued for a depth of at least another 1.2m.

Very few first and second century AD features were excavated to the north east of the ditch. Four features are however likely to date to this period. Pits 40 and 42 lay at the north eastern end of the trench. Both of these lay outside the line of the pipeline, and consequently, neither was excavated. Surface collection of artefacts from both features recovered pottery of 1st and 2nd century date. It should be emphasised that in both cases, the number of sherds recovered was small, and that 1st and 2nd century sherds were often recovered from later contexts and features during the excavations. A third pit of this date lay some 20m to the south west - pit 21,

the earliest pit in pit group 158. This was 2.4m in diameter, 0.6m deep and contained ten sheds of pottery dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

The most substantial feature to the north east of ditch 43 was well 35. This feature was approximately 4m across and had vertical sides. It had been backfilled in two clear phases. The earliest of these fills consisted of a mid grey-brown silty loam and appeared to represent a circular shaft in the centre of the feature. This shaft had subsequently been backfilled with large numbers of sarsen boulders and flint nodules. Both fills contained pottery of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The form of this feature clearly suggests that it is likely to have been a well, with the central shaft being backfilled after the well had gone out of use. No traces of a timber or stone lining were identified, although the feature was not excavated to its full depth, and it was impossible to ascertain whether waterlogged traces of such a lining may have survived at a greater depth.

There is a noticeable dearth of features of this date to the immediate west of ditch 43. Indeed, the only feature of this date within 35-40m of the western edge of the ditch is a sub circular feature (pit 51), the fills of which contain six small sherds of undiagnostic pottery, which may be dated to this period. This pit was irregular in form and profile, and may be natural in origin. The majority of the early Roman features lay in the west of the trench. These occur in an area where the overall density of features is higher. A number of these other features are undated, but are likely to be early Roman in date (see below). These features are all either pits or ditches.

The early Roman ditches in this area are generally aligned north west to south east. The main exception to this is ditch 75, which has an east to west alignment. This ditch, which was 0.9m wide and 0.45m deep was cut by a slightly later and deeper ditch (ditch 77 measured 0.8m wide and was 0.73m deep) on the more common alignment. Both ditches contained early Roman pottery. Some 3m to the west of these two ditches is ditch 68. At 0.8m wide and 0.54m deep, this is very similar in form and alignment to ditch 77. Two other ditches, 96 and 110, further to the east are dated to the early Roman period. Of these, the former is relatively shallow, at 0.25m, whilst the latter is deeper, at 0.89m. In form, all five of these ditches differ slightly, and it is unlikely that they represent a coherent system, although they may all have functioned as drainage features. There are a number of similarities between some of these

ditches and undated ditches in the same area, and the majority of these are probably contemporary.

Two pits in this area could be firmly dated to the 1st or 2nd century AD – pits 101 and 141. Pit 101 was roughly sub-circular with sloping sides and an irregular base. This was *circa* 1.8m across and 0.24m deep. Pit 141 was also roughly sub circular, *circa* 2.2m wide and 0.62m deep. Fragments of re-deposited human bone belonging to two individuals were recovered from the fill of these features. As with the majority of pits on the site, these are shallow in relation to their diameter, and it is unlikely that they were of sufficient depth to have functioned for anything other than rubbish disposal.

Later Roman (3rd and 4th century AD).

In contrast to the early Roman period, there are few features that can definitely be related to the later Roman period. Only six features can definitely be dated to the 3rd or 4th centuries. All but one of these were located in the north east of the trench. The exception to this is pit 71, which was roughly ovoid and some 0.92m deep. This is the deepest of the pits excavated of this date.

Two of the pits in pit group 158 also date to the late Roman period. Both pits 25 and 27 contained late Roman pottery. Pit 27 was the stratigraphically earlier of the two, and was circular, 1.2m in diameter and 0.4m deep. This was cut by pit 25, which was similar in shape, but 2.4m wide and 0.6m deep. The function of these intercutting pits is uncertain, although the quantities of material recovered from both suggests that they are likely to have functioned as rubbish pits.

A single cremation burial was excavated in the north east of the trench. This consisted of the burial of cremated human bone in a pottery vessel, associated with a dump of pyre debris. The cremation vessel, a Black Burnished Ware jar (Fig. 4), was placed in a shallow cut (Fig. 2, 15) adjacent to a steep-sided sub-circular pit (14) which contained pyre debris. Pit 14 was approximately 1.3m in diameter and 0.3 m deep. It contained quantities of burnt human bone, the square base of a glass vessel, hobnails, nails, a copper alloy fitting, a coin of Constantine I (dated to between AD 306 and 337), sherds of pottery and small quantities of unidentifiable burnt animal bone.

Pit 14 cut a sequence of two earlier pits – pits 16 and 30. Pit 30 is likely to have acted as a rubbish pit, but the function of pit 16 is less certain. The base of the pit is lined with a layer of tile and sarsen stones. This lining is likely to have been functional, and may indicate that the pit was used for storage.

Medieval.

Two ditches and a pit were dated to the medieval period. Both of the ditches were aligned north west to south east. Ditch 121 was a large ‘V’ shaped ditch, which was 1.9m wide and 0.8m deep. Ditch 108 lay some 5m to the south west, and was less substantial (0.7m wide and 0.65m deep). Both contained sherds of medieval pottery dated to the 12th and 13th centuries AD. The south westernmost feature excavated, a shallow pit (pit 104) also contained pottery of this date.

Undated.

A substantial portion of the features excavated could not be closely dated. The majority of these lay in the south west of the trench. Two of the pits in pit group 158 (pits 19 and 23) could not be closely dated. Both were truncated by Roman pits (pit 19 by early Roman pit 21 and pit 23 by late Roman pit 25). Both contain ceramic building material and are likely to date to the Roman period.

A similar pit group lay in the south west of the trench (pit group 159, consisting of pits 127, 129 and 137). This was cut by medieval ditch 121, but cannot be closely dated. Other undated features include six ditches (ditches 54, 73, 90, 92, 144, and 149). Two of these, ditches 90 and 149, contain fragments of ceramic building material whilst ditch 144 was truncated by irregular pit 151. Ditch 90 contained two postholes dug into its base. Three other postholes were excavated in this area (postholes 88, 94 and 106). None of these shared similar characteristics or alignments, and it is impossible to postulate structural remains from such limited evidence. With the exception of ditch 90, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the ditches had a structural function.

Two truncated, intercutting graves were excavated immediately to the east of medieval ditch 108. Both of these inhumations were relatively shallow and disturbed by medieval ditch 108. The earlier of the two graves, grave 60, was aligned roughly east-west, with the upper torso to the east. Much of the bone was disturbed by grave 67. Human bone belonging to two further

individuals were recovered from the fill of grave 60, and these may have derived from other truncated graves in the vicinity. Five sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the fill of grave 60, although these are likely to have come from the fill of ditch 108, which was not initially recognised as truncating this grave. The later burial (grave 67) was in slightly better condition, with significant portions of the skull and the left arm surviving *in situ*. In both cases, the body was too badly preserved to establish the precise body position. Redeposited human remains were also recovered from the fills of undated linear 149,

Two irregularly shaped features (55 and 57) were also excavated. Their irregular form and barren fills suggest a natural origin.

Finds *by Moira Laidlaw with a contribution by Nicholas Cooke*

Metalwork

The metalwork includes nine copper alloy and 62 iron objects, all dated broadly to the Romano-British period.

The iron consists mainly of nail fragments (58) including large, flat-headed nails with rectangular-sectioned shanks as well as three hobnails. Two small strips and two unidentified fittings were also recovered. Most of these objects came from the upper fill of pit 14 or from ditch 43. None of these objects are chronologically distinctive, but are dated as Romano-British on the basis of associated pottery.

The copper alloy consists of one hollow cordoned fitting from pit 14 and one fragmentary, semi-circular fitting from ditch 43.

The Coins *by Nicholas Cooke*

Two copper alloy coins were recovered. Both are 4th century AD in date. One is a very small copy of a 4th century coin, with heavily stylised lettering and engraving, whilst the second is a coin of Constantine I.

1. Obj. No. 524, Context. 12

Obverse: Heavily corroded. X-Ray shows bust r. *Text:* CONSTANTINVS P AVG

Reverse: Heavily corroded. X-Ray shows standing figure with 2 standards/staffs and a star to r. (Possibly a PRINCEPS IVVENTVTIS type)

Diameter: 22mm.

Metal/Denomination: copper alloy. AE2 *Follis*.

Description: completely illegible except in X-Ray; coin in very poor condition.

Date: AD 306 – 337

2. Obj. No. 502, Context. 46

Obverse: V. Stylised engraving. Bust r. Corroded.

Reverse: IV. Stylised engraving of ?fig. No attempt at lettering in exergue.

Diameter: 9.5mm.

Metal/Denomination: copper alloy. AE4 *Follis*.

Description: very small coin..

Date: Almost certainly a 4th century AD copy

Pottery

The pottery assemblage consists of 1,106 sherds (20,601 g), predominantly of early Romano-British date, with a small quantity of later Romano-British material. Medieval and post-medieval material is also present in small quantities, but is not discussed further here. The bulk of the pottery is in a relatively good condition but due to the soft nature of the grog-tempered fabrics many surfaces are worn. The majority of sherds are moderately large (mean sherd size overall 18.6g), although with the exception of one complete vessel reconstructable profiles are rare.

The pottery was analysed using the standard Wessex Archaeology pottery recording system (Morris 1992). The assemblage was divided into 21 separate fabric types which fall into four broad fabric groups: Group C (calcareous), Group G (grog tempered), Group Q (sandy) and Group E ('established' wares with well-known fabric types and sources). Terms describing the frequency of inclusions in the following fabric descriptions are defined as follows: rare (1-3%), sparse (3-10%), moderate (10-20%), common (20-30%) and abundant (40-50%). Pottery fabric totals are given in Table 1. The correlation between vessel forms and fabric types is summarised in Table 2.

Romano-British pottery

Finewares

Finewares are subdivided into imports and British finewares. Imported wares consist of a small quantity amphorae, mainly Spanish Dressel 20 types but also including one Pélichet 47 (both have similar broad date ranges from 1st to 3rd centuries AD), and a small quantity of samian. The samian occurs mainly as small, plain body sherds and includes both Central and Southern Gaulish products. Vessel forms present include a Central Gaulish Drag. 15/17 platter or 15/31

bowl, Drag. 18/31 platters, one Central Gaulish Drag. 33 cup; there is nothing here which need be dated earlier than *c.* AD 90, although the presence of other South Gaulish sherds could indicate a slightly earlier date range.

British finewares of known source include one example of an Oxfordshire white ware mortarium (Young 1977, type M17, dated AD240-300). Otherwise, the absence on the site of later finewares from Oxfordshire or the New Forest would tend to confirm the generally early date range of most of the assemblage.

In addition, two British fineware fabrics of unknown source were recorded:

- Q104 Hard, moderately fine fabric containing moderate, well-sorted, rounded quartz <1mm. Catch-all fabric for moderately coarse oxidised wares with cream slip.
- Q106 Soft, fine fabric containing rare, well-sorted, rounded quartz 0.25mm; rare mica flecks. Catch-all fabric for finer oxidised wares.

Fabric Q104 was distinguished mainly on the basis of the characteristic cream slip. With the exception of one everted jar rim the sherds are all plain body sherds. The cream slip on a number of sherds is very worn which suggests that other oxidised sherds attributed to Q106 may in fact originally have been slipped. The application of a fine cream slip on red-firing fabrics is recorded from other early Romano-British sites in the area, eg. Maddington Farm, Shrewton (Seager Smith 1996). Fabric Q106 is a catch-all group for fine oxidised wares, probably locally produced, and which vary slightly in firing from buff, pale grey to orange. A small quantity of sherds are colour-coated wares most likely from a production centre near Wanborough in north Wiltshire known to have been producing colour-coated wares in the second quarter of the 2nd century AD (Anderson 1979). This fabric was also recognised at the Wiltshire sites of Butterfield Down, Amesbury (Millard 1996, fabric type Q113) and Figheledean in the Avon Valley (Mepham 1993, fabric type Q114). Other possible sources for the fine oxidised fabrics may be the kilns at Purton which are recorded as producing a range of oxidised wares during the 2nd century AD (Anderson 1979), or possibly the Oxfordshire industry (Young 1977).

Coarsewares

Fourteen coarseware fabric types were recorded including at least two fabrics of known source, but consisting mainly of 'catch-all' groups covering fabrics probably from more than one production centre. Each fabric type covers a broad range of variation in the size and frequency

of inclusions and in firing conditions. Some fabric types are likely to be variants of fabrics from known sources, particularly the grog-tempered fabrics.

Grog-tempered fabrics

- G100 Soft, fine fabric containing moderate, moderately-sorted grog <4mm (mainly 1mm); sparse, well-sorted, rounded quartz <0.5mm. Variable firing, oxidised/unoxidised.
- G101 Hard, fine fabric containing moderate, moderately-sorted grog <6mm; moderate, well-sorted, rounded quartz <0.5mm. Variable firing, oxidised/unoxidised.
- G102 Very hard, irregular fabric containing common, well-sorted grog <1mm; moderate, well-sorted, rounded quartz <0.5mm. Generally unoxidised, pale grey.
- G103 Hard, irregular fabric containing common, well-sorted grog <1mm; sparse, angular, calcined flint <2mm; moderate, well-sorted, rounded quartz <0.5mm. Generally pale to dark grey.
- G104 Hard, fine fabric containing sparse, well-sorted grog <4mm; rare, well-sorted, rounded quartz <0.25mm. Generally pale grey or orange.

Sandy fabrics

- E100 Black Burnished ware. For fabric description see Williams (1977) and Seager Smith and Davies (1993)
- Q100 Hard, moderately fine fabric containing common, well-sorted, rounded quartz 1mm; moderate, well-sorted, rounded glauconite <0.5mm; sparse, moderately-sorted grog <4mm. Generally grey.
- Q101 Very hard, moderately coarse fabric containing common, well-sorted, rounded quartz 0.5mm. Catch-all fabric for moderately coarse greywares.
- Q102 Very hard, moderately coarse fabric containing abundant, well-sorted, rounded quartz 0.25mm. Catch-all fabric for moderately coarse oxidised wares.
- Q103 Hard, fine fabric containing moderate, well-sorted, rounded quartz 0.25mm. Catch-all fabric for finer greywares.
- Q105 Very hard, moderately coarse fabric containing moderate, well-sorted, rounded quartz 0.5mm. Catch-all fabric for coarse greywares.
- Q107 Hard, moderately coarse fabric containing common, fairly well sorted, rounded quartz <1mm; rare iron oxides. Oxidised orange-brown with unoxidised blue-grey core; cream slip. Mortarium fabric.

Calcite-tempered fabric

- C100 Hard, fine fabric containing abundant, poorly-sorted, sub-rounded calcite <3mm (mainly 0.5mm); sparse shell <4mm. Dark grey with greyish brown external surface.

The grog-tempered fabrics dominate the ceramic assemblage and range from soft fabrics with moderately coarse grog (G100), fine fabrics with fine grog temper (G104) to hard well-fired fabrics (G101 and G102). The harder fired fabrics G101 and G102 is comparable to fabric 1 manufactured at Oare, while the soft, more irregular fabric G100 is closer to Oare fabric 2 (Swan 1975). The other grog-tempered fabrics are also likely to include Savernake variants, although the relatively fine, more sparsely grog-tempered fabric G104 may include products of the Whitehill kilns (R. Hopkins pers. comm.).

The sandy fabrics are grouped very broadly into fine (Q103), moderately coarse (Q100, Q101, Q102) and coarse (Q105). Each fabric type probably consists of fabrics from a number of

different sources, although all are likely to have been locally produced. Kilns in north Wiltshire such as at Whitehill Farm, Toothill Farm and Purton are known to have been producing similar fabrics from the late 1st century well into the 2nd century AD (Anderson 1979). A significant quantity of Black Burnished ware sherds from the Wareham/Poole Harbour area of Dorset are also present.

The coarse mortarium fabric Q107 can be compared with fabric 88 at Cirencester, which has certain strong affinities, for example in the use of similar trituration grits, with Oxfordshire products, but which is thought more likely to represent local copies of Oxfordshire products (Rigby 1982); examples are widely distributed in the south-west, across Gloucestershire, Avon, Somerset, north Wiltshire and Dorset, and are dated from the late 2nd century to the end of the 3rd century AD.

Forms

The most common grog-tempered fabric is fabric G101 which generally occurs as moderately thick-walled sherds derived from large storage jars and smaller, necked jars, both vessel forms common amongst the Savernake ware repertoire, particularly towards the end of the 1st century AD when the shoulders of the pots became less pronounced (Swan 1975, fig. 4). Vessel forms in other grog-tempered fabrics are similarly restricted, comprising mainly necked jars, with some flat-topped and bead rim bowls, and lids, while forms in G103 are closer to native Late Iron Age forms, eg. bead rim jars.

The forms present in the sandy fabrics also consist mainly of later 1st and 2nd century AD types. These include necked jars, some cordoned, upright and everted rim jars, bowls/dishes with beaded or plain rims, and flagons. The upright rim jars are likely to be slightly earlier 1st century types than the everted rim jars, which are recorded as becoming more common in the 2nd century in north Wiltshire (Anderson 1979, fig. 8, 2-4). Vessel forms identified in Black Burnished ware include both characteristic early and late Roman forms such as 'dog dishes', flanged bowls, drop-flanged bowls and everted rim jars, forms which range in date from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, forms 2, 3, 20, 22, 25). One complete late 3rd/4th century AD everted rim jar, with a characteristic narrow band of obtuse lattice decoration, had been used as a cremation vessel (Fig. 4, 1).

One calcite-tempered sherd (S100), recovered from pit 71, also demonstrates a later Romano-British element. The sherd has closely-spaced horizontal rilling, decoration typical of a widespread tradition of later 4th century AD vessels in calcareous fabrics; examples from north Wiltshire and south Gloucestershire are recorded, for example, at The Hermitage, Swindon (Seager Smith 1997) and Cirencester (Keely 1986, fig. 111, nos. 197, 200).

Distribution

The largest concentration of pottery, approximately 40% of the total assemblage by weight, came from ditch 43. Much smaller quantities of pottery (less than ten sherds per context) were also found in the ditches in the west of Plot 3. Moderate concentrations of pottery were recovered from the east of the trench from pits 16 and 30, pit group 158 and well 35. The small quantity of later Romano-British wares were mainly found associated with earlier fabrics, for example within pits 14 and 30.

Discussion

The majority of the fabrics and vessel forms present fit well within a date range of later 1st to 2nd century AD. Parallels for the forms can be found within the repertoires of the production areas of north Wiltshire and the Savernake Forest (Anderson 1979; Swan 1975). The lack of earlier 1st century AD pottery such as butt beakers and flagons, such as are recorded from a mid 1st century well at *Cunetio* (Annable 1966; Swan 1975) and nearby Wanborough (Anderson forthcoming) suggests that the earliest phase of occupation on the site began in the second half of the 1st century AD with the main phase of activity concentrated in the early 2nd century.

The presence of a significant quantity of Dorset Black Burnished ware, including both early and late Roman forms hints at the continued competition faced by the Wiltshire industries. However, although there are other demonstrably late Romano-British fabrics present (mortaria in Oxfordshire whiteware and fabric Q107), other characteristically late fabrics such as finewares from the Oxfordshire and New Forest production centres are absent from the trench and would suggest that activity in this area had declined by the later Romano-British period. The limited range of fabrics and forms recovered from along the route characterise a relatively low status civilian settlement associated with the town of *Cunetio*.

Illustrated vessel (Fig. 4, 1)

1. Complete cremation vessel, Black Burnished ware. PRN (pottery record no.) 237, Obj. No. 500, context 15, pit 14.

Ceramic Building Material

A relatively large quantity of ceramic building material was recovered, particularly from pits 16 and 30. With the exception of a very small quantity (nine fragments) of medieval and post-medieval brick and tile, all this material is Romano-British. Quantities are sufficient to indicate the presence in the vicinity of a substantial building or buildings, particularly when combined with the evidence for stone building material (see below).

The Romano-British material was further divided into diagnostic forms and consists of five flanged fragments derived from *tegulae*, five flue tile fragments with combed keying, two *imbrices*, 37 tile fragments, 13 brick fragments and 106 miscellaneous tile/brick fragments. The tile/brick fragments could be derived from flooring or possibly from hypocaust supports.

No detailed fabric analysis was undertaken but a brief visual examination of the assemblage indicated that only a small range of fabric types is present. These range from a soft fabric with moderate grog inclusions, a moderately fine sandy fabric to a moderately hard sandy fabric with iron oxide inclusions.

The bulk of the ceramic building material (91% by weight) was recovered from pits 16 (20,113 g) and 30 (21,958 g). The pits in the east of Plot 2 were lined with ceramic building material and also contained large quantities of stone (see below). The remaining ceramic building material was dispersed in small quantities (less than seven fragments per context), in a number of features within Plots 2 and 3.

Glass

One small fragment of glass was recovered from the upper fill of pit 14, which contained pyre debris. This is from the base of a square bottle in a pale blue/green metal. Square bottles are found mainly within the period AD 70 to 120/30 and continued in use until the later 2nd or early 3rd century AD (Cool and Price 1995).

Stone

A total of 66 fragments of stone building material was recovered weighing 39,743 grammes, the bulk of which was recovered, together with ceramic building material (see above), from pits 16 and 30. Most of these fragments are roughly shaped slabs of limestone and range in thickness from 15-45mm. Two large slabs are roughly square in shape and measure 29mm x 29mm x 40mm. Other fragments of stone building material consist of two limestone and six red sandstone tile fragments (10-19mm thick), possibly derived from roofing tiles although none have surviving nail holes.

In addition, one limestone *tessera* was recovered from ditch 43, one quern fragment in quartz conglomerate from pit 16 and four small fragments of lava quern from the topsoil in Plot 3.

Worked Wood

One wooden pin was retrieved from burnt layer 44 in ditch 43. Such organic objects rarely survive; in this instance the pin had been completely carbonised. The head is formed by two simple notches on either side of the shaft which is circular in section and tapers towards the missing tip.

Illustrated object (Fig. 4, 2)

2. Small pin fragment, tip missing, simple head formed by two notches. Obj. No. 525, context 44, ditch 43.

Human Remains *by Jacqueline I McKinley*

Cremated and unburnt human bone from seven contexts was received for analysis, including remains from an urned cremation burial and two inhumation burials. Bone from other contexts represents redeposited remains. The inhumation burials are possibly late Iron Age or early Roman in date and the contexts containing redeposited unburnt bone date from the early Roman period or are undated. The contexts containing cremated bone were dated to the 3rd or 4th centuries AD.

Methods

The urned cremation burial was excavated from a vessel (Fig. 4, 1) in a series of five spits of equal depth. Analysis of the cremated remains followed the writer's standard procedure, to enable assessment of the degree of bone fragmentation and potential deliberate bias in the skeletal elements collected for burial (McKinley 1994a). Age (cremated and unburnt remains) was assessed from the stage of ossification/epiphyseal bone fusion (Gray 1977; McMinn and Hutchings 1985; Webb and Suchey 1985), the length of long bones (Bass 1987), the pattern of degenerative changes in the pubic symphyses (Brooks 1955) and the general degree of other age-related changes to the bone (e.g. Bass 1987). Sex was ascertained from the sexually dimorphic traits of the skeleton (Bass 1987). Levels of reliability reflect the quantity and quality of available traits on which to base the assessment; '??' denotes 'possible', '?' denotes 'probable'. The bone was too fragmentary to calculate any skeletal indices.

Results

A summary of the results is presented in Table 3. The two inhumation burials were from very shallow graves 60 and 67 and had been subject to substantial disturbance, hence the low skeletal recovery. Burial 59 from grave 60 was cut by both the insertion of burial 66 in grave 67 and by a later, medieval ditch. The condition of the bone was generally good; that from the inhumation graves, both *in situ* and redeposited, was slightly worn, in contrast to the redeposited bone from the ditch and pit to the west which had a much fresher appearance. Much of the bone from burial 66 was stained a darkish brown, indicative of organic inclusions within the burial environment. The cremated remains were all well preserved.

The remains of a minimum of two cremated and seven unburnt individuals were identified. Each of the inhumation graves held the *in situ* remains of a single individual. However, redeposited bone from two adults was also recovered from in the west of the earlier grave (60). This end of the grave had been cut by the medieval ditch and the redeposited bone probably originated from graves removed during its insertion. Parts of a minimum of three individuals were recovered from the fill of ditch 151 and of the adjacent pit 141. In the former, the remains had been deliberately placed, being in a clear concentration, and the fresh appearance of the bone suggests it was redeposited shortly after being disturbed.

Although no direct joins were found between the bone from the cremation burial (160) and that from the adjacent redeposited pyre debris (12), there was no duplication of skeletal elements, and the age and general morphology of the bone was similar in both contexts. It is likely that the bone originated from the same cremation, these types of associated deposits having been found elsewhere (McKinley 1998). The deposition of pyre debris in pre-existent features is one of the characteristic forms of this type of deposit.

The small size of the unburnt bone assemblage and nature of the deposits – mostly disarticulated, redeposited bone – precludes much demographic discussion. The inclusion of individuals of both sexes and an age range from neonatal to older adult, suggests the assemblage represents part of a ‘normal domestic’ cemetery.

The majority of the pathological lesions were of a degenerative nature (Rogers and Waldron 1994), most commonly associated with age-related wear-and-tear. None of the lesions were severe.

The cremated bone from the burial was generally well-oxidised, buff-white colour (Holden *et al* 1995), though a few fragments from most skeletal areas were black, blue or grey. In contrast, a substantial amount of the bone from the redeposited pyre debris (context 12) was of the darker hues. Since it would appear that the bone from both contexts originated from the same cremation, the overall efficiency of cremation indicated is only moderate, suggesting some general deficiency in the pyre technology such as insufficient time for cremation (?too little fuel), or adverse weather conditions curtailing the process. The inclusion of the more highly oxidised bone within the burial as compared with that left amongst the pyre debris may be associated with collection of the bone for burial; the white (oxidised) bone being more easily distinguished from the fuel ash on the burnt-out pyre. It may also be significant, in this respect, to note that more small bones – tooth roots and phalanges - were recovered from amongst the pyre debris than within the burial, and that only 35% of the bone from the pyre debris was >10mm as compared with 85% of that from the burial. Whilst a number of factors may affect bone fragment size (McKinley 1994b), including the added protection offered by an urn, it seems likely, in this instance, that there was a bias towards collecting more of the larger bone fragments for burial.

The combined weight of bone from the two contexts, 654.3g (33% in the redeposited pyre debris, 67% in the burial), represents a maximum of 65% of the expected weight of bone from an adult cremation (McKinley 1993). Given that both the burial and the pyre debris were recovered, this relatively low weight of bone suggests that some was removed to a third (or more) place. It has been suggested elsewhere that this type of activity formed part of the mortuary rites (McKinley 1997a).

Fragments of skull generally represent a high percentage of the identifiable bone fragments within a cremation burial. Within the redeposited pyre debris c. 34% of the identifiable bone represented skull fragments (about average), compared with only 3% within the burial. This suggests that fragments of skull were deliberately selected for disposal elsewhere. Such low recovery of skull fragments has been noted by the writer in only three other cremation burials (from >4000; McKinley 1995 and 1997b, 69). Wells also noted a deficiency in skull fragments in one burial (SG30) from Puckeridge (1981, 0.291).

Analysis of the bone within the different spits excavated from the vessel produced no evidence to suggest that the bone was deposited in any deliberate order.

The combined cremation of an adult and an immature individual represents the most commonly occurring type of dual cremation (McKinley 1997a and 1995). Although impossible to prove, the indication in this instance is that mother and child died and were cremated together.

The unburnt bone assemblage clearly forms part of a cemetery of uncertain size, eight burials having already being recovered in the 1950s (Meyrick 1955), giving a total number of 15 individuals to date. The presence of so much redeposited bone indicates that the cemetery was, possibly substantially, disturbed by later activity in the area.

Discussion

The excavation of a number of Roman and medieval features within the limitations of the pipeline easement have shed considerable light on the nature and extent of the archaeological remains to the west of *Cunetio*. In addition to extending the area of archaeological remains to some 300m from the defences of the late Roman town, these excavations have also established

that the zone of archaeological activity extends as far north as the floodplain of the River Kennet.

The majority of archaeological features excavated dated to the early Roman period. Clearly the most prominent of these is ditch 43. This clearly formed a major boundary feature, and is almost certainly defensive in nature. The excavated evidence suggests that the ditch had a chalk built rampart on its north eastern edge. There are no contemporary features for 15m to the north east of the ditch – this would allow sufficient space for the construction of such a feature. Beyond this, the evidence for early Roman occupation consists of a well and a number of rubbish pits. With the exception of pit 51, which may be natural in origin, there are no early Roman features within 50m of the south western edge of ditch 43. Beyond this there is a considerable density of early Roman material and undated features. These are thought likely to represent features associated with a domestic settlement, although none of the excavated postholes or ditches can be regarded as necessarily structural. Given that this density of features does not extend any closer to ditch 43, it is likely that the ‘empty’ space between the two may have been intentionally barren and acted as a defensive zone in front of the ditch.

The size of the ditch and the supportive evidence for a rampart suggests a defensive function. It is thought likely that this ditch continued as far as the River Kennet, a short distance to the north, and may have formed the western boundary to the nucleated settlement in the second century AD. This feature is not visible on aerial photographs, presumably because it was buried under an accumulation of hill wash, and its full extent is uncertain. If this does form part of a second century defensive system, then it may have been designed to protect a river crossing to the north east.

The two superimposed east west graves excavated in the south western end of the trench are undated. In form however, they are superficially similar to the burials previously excavated in the area (Meyrick 1955, 20), which were associated both with Late Iron Age and Early Roman material, and are thought likely to date to the early Roman period. Both sets of graves share a common alignment and location, and seem likely to have formed part of the same burial tradition. If these burials are dated to the 1st century AD, then it is possible that these are associated with the first phase of Roman occupation in the area, which may have seen a shift in the settlement focus away from the univallate enclosure at Forest Hill towards a settlement within the river valley. The presence of further re-deposited human bone in a number of features in this area, including pit 141 (dated to the 1st or 2nd centuries AD) supports this dating

for the burials, and also suggests a higher concentration of truncated burials in the immediate vicinity of the trench.

The later Roman features are fewer and less informative. The majority appear to be rubbish pits. The exception is the cremation burial in the north east of the trench. Cremation burial is relatively unusual in the fourth century AD, with inhumation the predominant form of burial (Philpott 1991, 50). However, late Roman cremation burials were found at Winterbourne Down (Algar 1961, 470), Lankhills in Winchester (Clarke 1979) and Owslebury (Collis 1977, 27).

The medieval remains uncovered during the course of the excavation probably represent activity peripheral to a nearby agricultural settlement.

The limited nature of the archaeology uncovered makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions as to the significance of the features excavated. However, it is clear from these excavations that there is strong evidence to suggest that 1st and 2nd century settlement extended considerably beyond the limits of the later town defences, and that part or all of this area may have been enclosed by similar features to ditch 43, which is thought likely to have been a defensive ditch. This is supported by the limited dating evidence for the small number of inhumations excavated within Plot 3, which are likely to have been associated with such a settlement.

There is less evidence for settlement in this area in the late Roman period, when the small town of *Cunetio* has two successive defensive circuits. There would appear to be less direct evidence for settlement extending as far to the west as it does in the early Roman period. The 4th century cremation burial, however, along with occasional rubbish pits, points to some continued activity in the western hinterland of the town. It is impossible to establish from the limited excavated evidence whether the cremation burial is an isolated feature or whether it formed part of a larger extra-mural cemetery.

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Table 1: Pottery fabric totals

Fabric	Nos	W(g)	% of R-B total (by weight)
Amphora	17	1422	7.4
Samian	52	451	2.3
Oxford whiteware	1	92	0.5
<i>Calcite tempered coarseware</i>			
C100	1	31	0.2
<i>Grog-tempered coarsewares</i>			
G100	45	763	3.9
G101	163	4662	24.1
G102	106	3044	15.7
G103	2	76	0.4
G104	148	3163	16.4
<i>Sub-total</i>	464	11708	60.5
<i>Sandy fabrics</i>			
Black Burnished ware	86	1607	8.3
Q100	8	108	0.6
Q101	78	576	3.0
Q102	47	276	1.4
Q103	180	2361	12.2
Q104	25	112	0.6
Q105	20	174	0.9
Q106	36	233	1.2
Q107	9	182	0.9
<i>Sub-total</i>	489	5629	29.1
Total Romano-British	1024	19333	-
Medieval	79	1081	-
Post-medieval	3	187	-
TOTAL	1106	20601	

Table 2: Quantification of vessel forms by fabric type

VESSEL FORMS	G100	G101	G102	G103	G104	Q101	Q102	Q103	Q104	Q105	Q106	Q107	E100	Total
JARS														
Large storage jar		4	1											5
Globular jar with bead rim			3	1		1								5
Necked, everted rims	3	5	2		10	6	1	12	1	1			11	52
Necked, upright rims		1	2					1						4
JAR/BOWL														
Wide mouthed jar/bowl								1						1
BOWLS/DISHES														
Plain rim							1			1			10	12
Bead rim			1							1				2
Flat-topped rim					1	1	1						4	7
Flanged rim													2	2
Cordoned											1			1
Platter						1								1
LIDS					3		1							4
FLAGONS							2				1			2
MORTARIA												1		1
Unidentified form	1		1		4	2	3	9		4			2	26
TOTAL	4	10	10	1	18	11	9	23	1	8	2	1	29	124

Table 3: Human remains - summary of results

Context	Feature	Date	Type	Cremated bone wt.	% rec. & skel. elem.	Age	Sex	pathology	comment
12	Pit 14	Late Roman	Redeposited pyre debris	213.6g	-	Adult	?	-	ivory ring; u/b pig/sheep; charcoal; b.shell
160	Fill of vessel (Fig. 4, 1)	Late Roman	Urned cremation burial	440.7g	-	1) mature adult 2) neonate	1) ??F	-	
59	Grave 60	Undated (possibly Late Iron Age)	Inhumation burial	-	c. 20% a.u.l.	Older subadult (17-19 yr.)	?M	-	
59a	Grave 60	Undated (possibly Late Iron Age)	Redeposited unburnt bone	-	c. 1% s.a.u.	Mature adult	M	Hypoplasia; calculus; oa – 2T; op – 2T bsm, p.humerus; pitting – 2 rib facets	in W. end grave cut for burial 59
59b	Grave 60	Undated (possibly Late Iron Age)	Redeposited unburnt bone	-	c. 2% u.	Adult	??F	op – scapula	location unclear, ?in W. end grave cut for burial 59
66	Grave 67	Undated (possibly Late Iron Age)	Inhumation burial	-	c. 15% s.a.u.	Adult	?M	op – C1, T7-11/12, l.12 th rib; oa – T8, r.costo-vertebral	some ?disturbed from burial 66 in machining
79	Topsoil	-	Redeposited unburnt bone	-	<1% u.	Subadult	-		= 59
140	Pit 141	Early Roman	Redeposited unburnt bone	-	<1% s.a.u.	1) adult 2) neonate	-		
150	Ditch 149	Undated	Redeposited unburnt bone	-	c. 10% s.a.u.	1) older adult 2) adult	1) ?M 2) ??F	oa – 1T, 1 c-v, l.hip, r/l shoulder; op – T bsm; exo – ilium, 2 x p.ulna	

KEY:

cb wt. - total weight cremated bone (g); r - redeposited; inh. - inhumation; b - burnt; u/b – unburnt;

% rec. - percentage skeleton recovered (unburnt) skeletal elements (s - skull, a - axial, u - upper limb, l - lower limb); bsm - body surface margins; T - thoracic; oa - osteoarthritis; op - osteophytes; p – proximal; exo – exostoses; r./l. – right/left

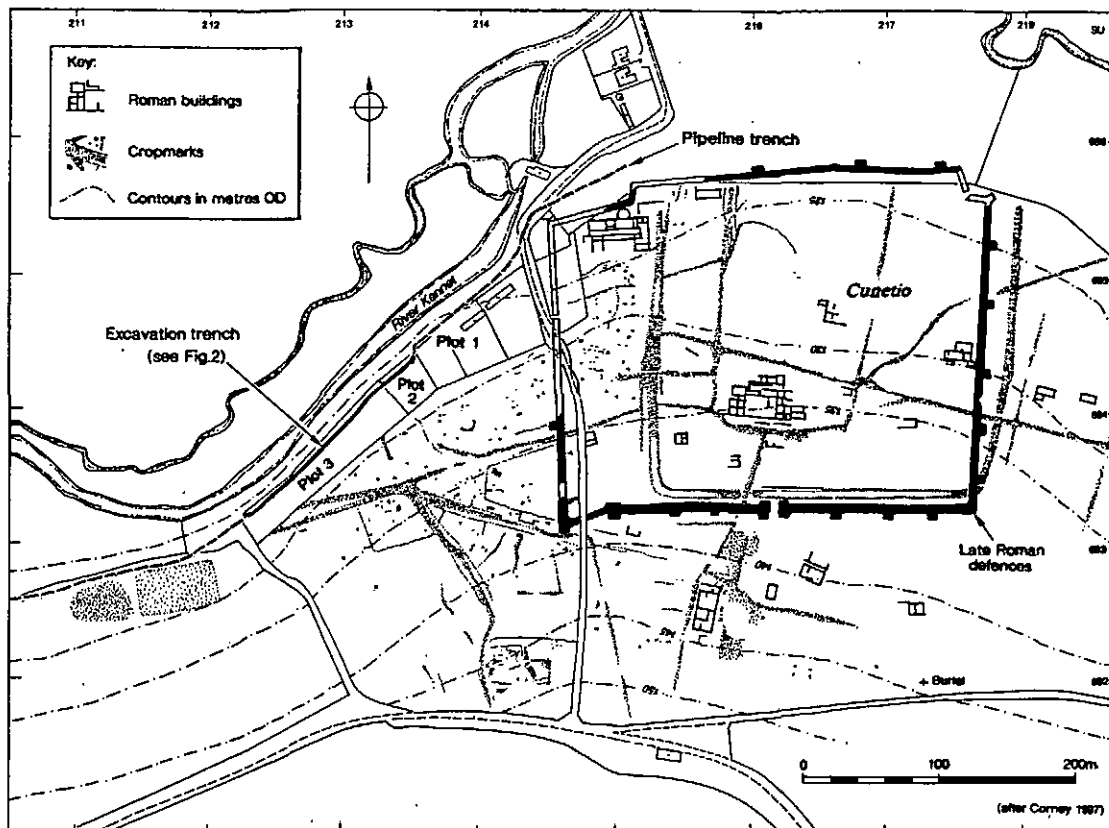


Fig. 1

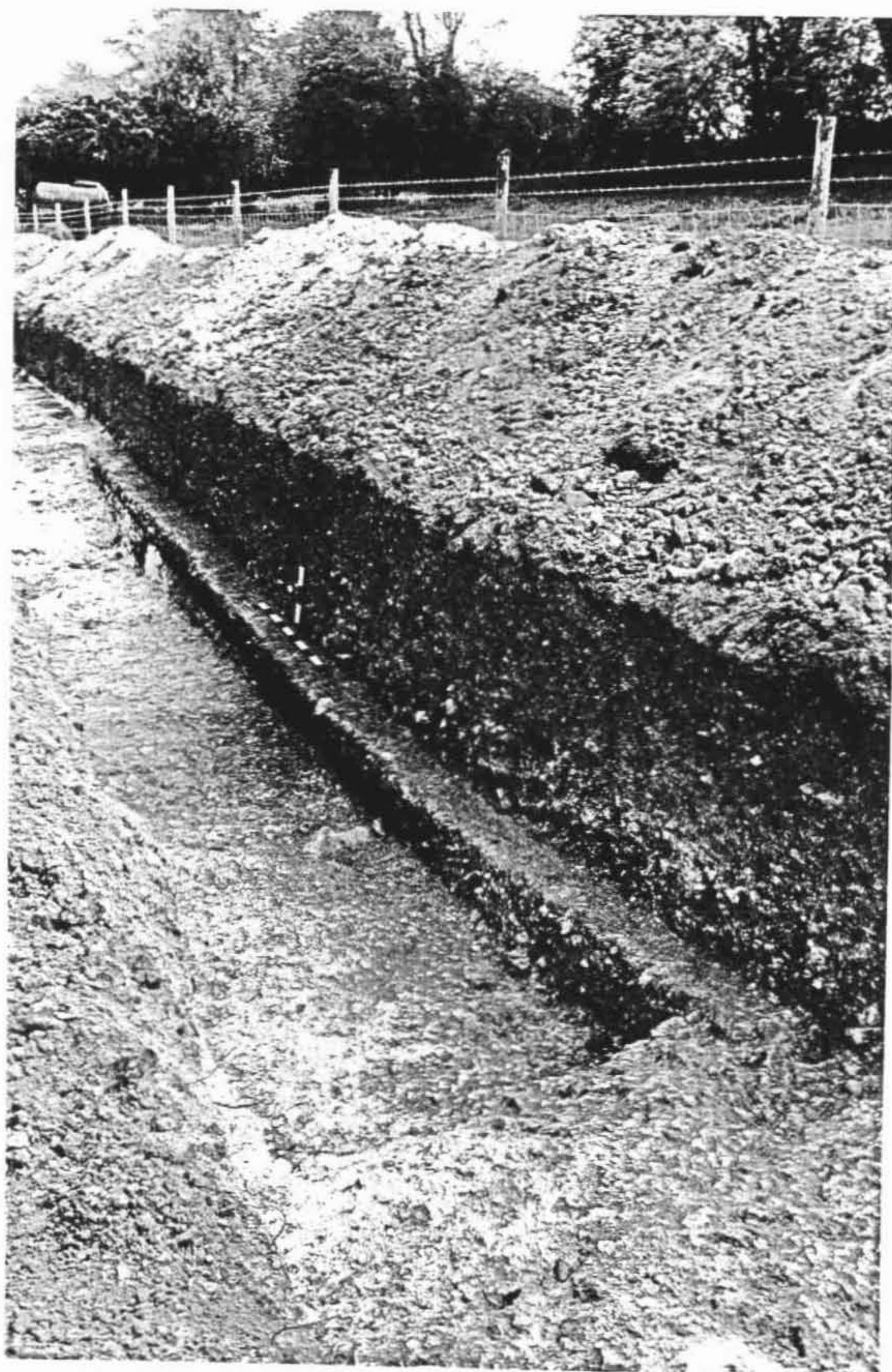


Fig. 3

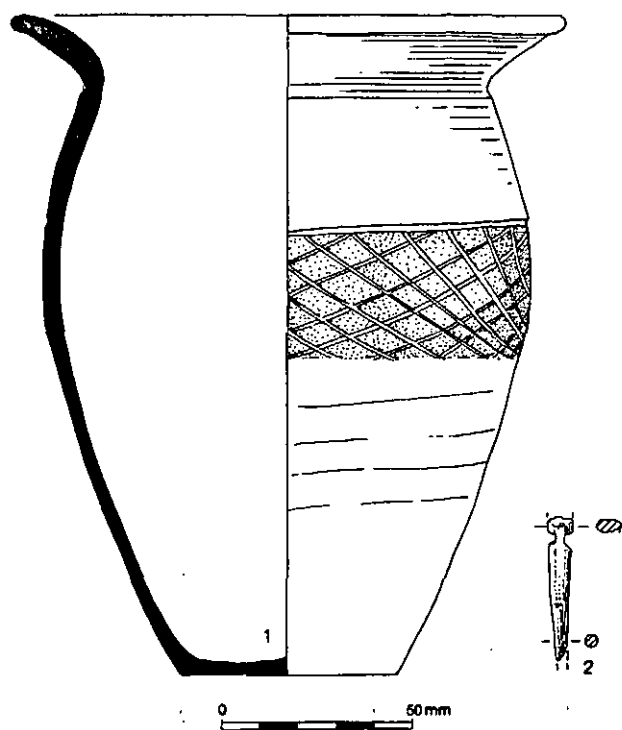
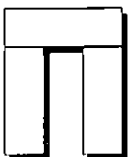


Fig. 4



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