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A LATE IRON AGE AND ROMANO-BRITISH FIELD SYSTEM

SITE 10A, SOUTH MARSTON PARK WILTSHIRE

By

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With contributions by Teresa Gilmore, Alex Lang, E.R. McSloy, K.M. Price and Sylvia Warman

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© Cotswold Archaeology Building 11, Kemble Enterprise Park, Kemble, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6BQ Tel. 01285 771022 Fax. 01285 771033 E-mail: info@cotswoldarch.org.uk Draft publication report for Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine A Late Iron Age and Romano-British Field System at Site 10A, South Marston Park, Wiltshire

by Derek Evans and Mary Alexander

with contributions by Teresa Gilmore, Alex Lang, E.R. McSloy, K.M. Price, and Sylvia Warman

Excavation took place on Site 10A of South Marston Park, near Swindon in advance of an office development, to investigate the evidence for Late Iron Age/Early Roman activity previously identified in archaeological evaluation trenches. The excavations revealed field systems and activity on the periphery of a rural settlement. Occupation started in the Later Iron Age and continued throughout the Roman period. Middle Iron Age pottery found in later ditches suggests earlier activity in the vicinity. The large majority of the features relate to two phases spanning the Roman period and include the buried remains of three infants.

Introduction

In July 2006 Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological excavation at Site 10A, South Marston Park, South Marston, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 1845 8879). This work was undertaken at the request of R. J. Leighfield and Sons Ltd and took place in advance of the construction of office buildings and car parking facilities at the site.

Previous discoveries in the immediate vicinity had identified the archaeological potential of the area and so a field evaluation (MoLAS 2005b) was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the redevelopment of the site. The evaluation trenches revealed Late Iron Age/Early Roman ditches, pits and postholes. Planning permission was subsequently granted by Swindon Borough Council with a condition requiring advance archaeological excavation.

The site is located within South Marston Park industrial estate, which lies to the north-west of South Marston village (Figure 1). At the time of the excavation it consisted of overgrown scrubland bordered by artificial earthen bunds. The site lies at approximately 109.6m AOD, with a slight rise to the north. The underlying geology is mapped as Upper Corallian Red Down sands and clays (BGS 1974). The natural substrate exposed during the excavation consisted of slightly sandy orange-brown clay.

Archaeological Background

An archaeological evaluation in 2001 and a watching brief in 2003 at the Kingsdown Crematorium, some 1.2km to the north-west of the present site, recovered large quantities of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age worked flint artefacts (*WANHM* 98 (2005), 354) and numerous further prehistoric worked flints have been unearthed in the Kingsdown area (*WANHM* 70-1 (1978), 133; *WANHM* 98 (2005), 354). A series of Middle Iron Age pits and ditches were revealed during an evaluation carried out at the Honda Car Manufacturing Plant, approximately 600m to the south of the present site, (*WANHM* 84 (1991), 144).

The site lies approximately 1km from the A419, which runs on the rough alignment of Ermin Street, a major Roman thoroughfare. Roman pottery sherds have been recovered from several findspots within a 1km radius from the site (e.g. *WANHM* 72-3 (1980), 206; *WANHM* 98 (2005), 254) and archaeological work undertaken at the Honda Car Plant (*WANHM* 84 (1991), 144) recorded Roman drainage ditches and field boundaries, as well as a possible wall foundation.

The archaeological excavation immediately to the south-east of the present site at Viscount Way uncovered a number of late Iron Age/early Roman features interpreted as belonging to a domestic occupation site and associated agricultural activity (Figure 1; MoLAS 2005a). The preliminary assessment of these features suggests ring ditches and other ditched enclosures indicative of roundhouses, foodprocessing areas and animal pens. Also recorded were a series of boundary ditches, as well as a watering hole and a well. Activity at the site continued into the late Roman period, when a series of interconnecting drainage ditches was established. A late Roman stone wall probably formed part of an enclosure, and large quantities of building material must derive from a nearby Roman building.

Fieldwork methodology

The 2005 evaluation found the northern part of the site to be heavily disturbed by modern activity. Consequently, this was excluded from the present excavation. Fieldwork commenced with the mechanical removal of topsoil and subsoil under archaeological supervision. The archaeological features thus exposed were hand-excavated. A minimum sample of 5% was excavated of all linear features, and 50% of all discrete features, such as ditches and pits. Where human remains were encountered, these were fully excavated. The bases of post-medieval furrows were

not excavated, and earlier features were not traced below furrows. Where numerous context numbers have been applied to a single feature (for example, as a result of several archaeological interventions along the length of a single gully), this report allocates generic context numbers for ease of description.

Excavation Results

Archaeological features and deposits were present throughout the excavation area (Figure 2). Truncation was not extensive, although a series of post-medieval furrows ran across the site on a north-west/south-east orientation, obscuring all of the archaeology along their route. There were also a small number of modern service trenches and geotechnical test pits. Quantities of dateable artefactual material were recovered from the fills of the archaeological features enabling the recognition of two main periods of archaeological activity, dating to the Middle to Late Iron Age (*c*.3rd century BC to 1st century AD) and Roman periods. While evidence for Period 1 was very limited and possibly residual, two distinct sub-phases of activity could be discerned within Period 2 (Roman).

Those features from which no dateable artefacts were recovered were allocated to a period/phase on the basis of their morphology, location and physical and stratigraphic relationships with other dated features. The northern end of the site was traversed by a north-west/south-east-aligned palaeochannel cut by Period 2 features.

Period 1: Middle to Late Iron Age (c.3rd century BC to 1st century AD)

A 12.5m length of curvilinear Ditch 1 lay towards the southernmost corner of the site (Figure 2). Orientated with its long axis on a north-east/south-west line, this gully was 0.2m deep and 0.85m wide, with a flat-bottomed U-shaped profile. It contained two clayey fills from which Late Iron Age pottery, animal bone and fragments of a probable clay weight of triangular or pyramidal form were recovered.

Period 2: Roman

Period 2, phase 1: (mid 1st to 2nd century AD)

The site was divided-up by a series of shallow linear ditches (Figure 2). Typically around 0.1–0.2m deep and up to 1.25m wide, they had U-shaped profiles and were present throughout the excavated area, although they were more concentrated in the

southern half of the site. Ditches 2–17 were laid out close together on a northeast/south-west alignment, with less frequent ditches laid out at right angles (Ditches 18–22). All the ditches had identical clay fills and clearly defined part of a field system. Large amounts of 1st to 2nd-century AD pottery were recovered from these ditches, along with animal bone, fired clay, mortar and a fragment of a copper-alloy brooch. Ditch 15 truncated late Iron Age Ditch 1.

Nine pits and seven postholes were scattered throughout the excavation area. The pits were between 0.5m and 2.2m in diameter and generally sub-circular in plan. They typically displayed roughly U-shaped profiles of between 0.1m and 0.5m depth and contained greyish clay fills. There was no obvious pattern to the distribution of these pits within the site. Some of them contained abundant 1st to 2nd-century AD pottery and some animal bone and may therefore have had a primary or secondary use as waste disposal features. The remainder contained no artefacts or ecofacts. The postholes cannot be related to any clearly-defined structures. They were generally around 0.2m to 0.4m in diameter and 0.06m to 0.3m in depth. They are undated by artefacts, but are considered to have originated in this phase due to the similarity of their fills to those of the more securely features.

Period 2, phase 2: (2nd to late 3rd/4th century AD)

A small number of features were found to contain later Roman pottery. These were generally located towards the south-west of the site, although Ditch 28 lay towards the north-west limit of excavation. This ditch was aligned north-east/south-west and was 2m wide. After the ditch had accumulated a fill of redeposited natural it was recut and further in-filled with a darker clay than the fills of the Phase 1 features which yielded 2nd to 4th-century AD pottery. Ditch 28 was truncated at both ends by post-medieval furrows. Its line was continued some 6m to the south-west by Ditch 27, which was 1.5m wide and 0.45m deep. This ditch also featured a primary redeposited natural layer and a darker main fill, which contained mid 3rd to 4th-century AD pottery. It is likely that, as with Ditch 28, the darker deposit lay within a recut. While the south-western end of 28 was truncated by a furrow, the north-eastern end of 27 displayed a rounded terminus indicating that there was an intentional gap between the two lengths of ditch.

An amorphous silty spread lay within Hollow 29 in the southern corner of the site. Measuring 0.35m in depth and irregular in both plan and profile, the nature of this feature was difficult to discern, although it may be a natural depression which silted-up or a zone of erosion caused by animal trampling. It yielded 2nd century AD and later pottery.

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The hollow was cut by Ditches 30 and 31, which also truncated some of the Phase 1 field system ditches. Both of these ditches were orientated north-east/south-west and had fairly irregular profiles. Ditches 30 and 31 were 2m and 2.6m wide respectively. They each contained two clayey fills from which 2nd to 4th-century AD pottery was recovered. It is possible that the ditches were in fact waterholes for livestock.

Ditch 26 ran on a north-west/south-east alignment at the south-western edge of the site. Although this was superficially similar to the Phase 1 field system ditches, its clayey infills contained 2nd to 4th-century AD pottery. To the south-east of this lay Ditch 24 up to 3m wide and 0.65m deep. It contained a primary silting of redeposited natural and a secondary clay silt infill which was significantly darker in colour than the infills of the other features at the site and probably sat within a recut of the ditch. Large quantities of 3rd to 4th-century AD sherds and a 4th-century coin were retrieved from this feature. Lying in the top of this ditch were the skeletons (013 and 014), of two neonatal human infants (Figure 4) They had apparently been placed together on the surface of the ditch fill without an associated grave cut. Skeleton 014 lay on its left side and 013 on its right, with its back to 014; they had been deposited 'head to tail' in a rough foetal position. Their deposition and similar age of death might suggest that they were twins. A single bone of a third neonatal infant was found within the same section of the ditch fill.

Ditches 25 and 23 projected from the northern edge of Ditch 24. Although Ditch 23 was undated artefactually and Ditch 25 yielded only non-specific Roman pottery, the fills of both of these features were impossible to distinguish from the main fill of Ditch 24 itself, suggesting that they were similar in date. Ditch 25 also cut Ditch 26.

Finds

The Flint, by K.M. Price

Eighteen pieces of flint from eight contexts were recovered. One whole flake and two broken flakes exhibit signs of working;. The broken flake and whole flake from context 015 (Ditch 24) are both heavily patinated indicating burial in a calcareous environment. It is impossible to identify hammer mode due to the poor condition of the flint. The worked pieces were all redeposited in Roman features. The remainder of the assemblage consists of heat affected unworked flint. There is nothing about this small collection that is sufficiently diagnostic therefore it is impossible to suggest a date.

The Pottery, by E.R. McSloy

Pottery amounting to 1417 sherds (12.6kg) was recovered. A total of 103 sherds date to the Middle and Late Iron Age/Early Roman period (up to the mid 1st century AD). The larger part of the assemblage dates to the Roman period.

The pottery was quantified according to sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalent (EVEs), based on rim. Vessel form, largely on the basis of rim type was also recorded. Fabric descriptions and coding for the late Prehistoric pottery follows the scheme recommended by the Prehistoric Pottery Research Group (PCRG 1997). Coding for the Roman component follows the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998), where applicable.

The condition of the pottery is generally poor. Sherds are typically abraded with average sherd weight of 8.9g which is low for a largely Roman assemblage. The poor condition of the material, together with the consistently high levels of residuality are suggestive of high levels of disturbance.

Iron Age

A total of 103 sherds (747g) were attributable to the Iron Age/Early Roman period on the grounds of fabric and form. The larger part of this material was re-deposited in Roman contexts. The range of Iron Age fabrics compares to a large extent with the larger published groups from the Swindon area, including the enclosed Early and Middle Iron Age sites at Groundwell Farm (Gingell 1981) and Groundwell West (Timby 2001). Calcareous fabrics, comprising mainly of Jurassic fossiliferous shelly limestone-tempered types, were a feature of the Groundwell sites and are ubiquitous across sites in the Upper Thames valley to the north (Timby 2004, 107-8).

Very few vessel forms were identifiable amongst this assemblage, making closer dating problematical. A simple rim from a vessel in a sandy fabric from Ditch 1 (fill 017) and sherds from a thick-walled vessel with crude, expanded rim are typical of Middle Iron Age vessel forms known in the region (*c*. 3rd to 2nd century BC). Much of the material probably dates to the Late Iron Age, and most likely to the mid 1st century AD. Grog-tempered sherds in handmade and wheelthrown forms are certainly of this period, as are bead-rim jars in fine limestone-tempered fabrics (Figure 3, 1). The latter compare to vessels from Thornhill Farm, Fairford associated with mid/late 1st-century AD features (Timby 2004, fig. 4.11, 36).

Phasing

A single feature, Ditch 1, is considered to date to Period 1. Pottery from this feature included 24 sherds (217g) in handmade calcareous, and sandy fabrics, together with wheelthrown grog-tempered sherds. The grogged material and bead-rimmed jars in fine limestone-tempered wares suggest mid 1st-century AD dating. Five sherds of Savernake type ware is not inconsistent with such a date, however a further nine sherds including Central Gaulish samian and Black-Burnished ware can be considered intrusive.

Roman

Some 1305 sherds (11732g), of Roman pottery was recovered. The composition in terms of fabric type and source is shown in Table 1. The bulk of the coarsewares are attributable with some certainty to North Wiltshire sources, principally the Purton/Whitehall Farm complex 7km to the west (Anderson 1979) and the Savernake Forest/Oare region, 15km distant (Swan 1975, 35-61).

The dominant reduced fabrics, NW G and NW BS, are typical of North Wiltshire fabrics found at Cirencester and Wanborough. Greyware fabrics similar to the principal NW G, but with red/orange or grey/orange 'sandwich'-effect core are also from the same region and compare to North Wiltshire variant types recorded for example at Horcott, Fairford (Timby and Harrison 2004, 55-67). Forms among the greywares comprise mainly necked, medium-mouthed jars with simple curving or hooked-over rim forms (Figure 3, 5). A few non-jar forms are recorded, which include dishes or bowls with flat or bead-like rims deriving from Black-Burnished ware types, and sherds from round-based strainer bowls.

Savernake wares contribute 16.7% of the total sherd count. The larger part of this group comprises a coarse, handmade fabric (Tomber and Dore 1998, 191), occurring typically as thick-walled neckless storage jars with short-everted or beadlike rims. A finer variant coded SAV GTf occurs as necked jars (Figure 3, 3). It compares to material known from Cirencester (Rigby 1982, 154) and from Wanborough, where it is considered as a possible locally-made variant (Seagar-Smith 2001, 255).

With the exception of the small number of Oxfordshire colour-coated and whitewares, the oxidised wares can be ascribed to North Wiltshire sources. Forms consist of flagons, including a small ring-necked vessel (Figure 3, 6). White-slipped fabrics are poorly represented although it seems likely that the total figure may be an underestimate and reflects poor surface survival. The poor preservation may similarly

have resulted in under-representation of colour-coated wares and mica-dusted wares. The latter is present only as a body sherd from a probable beaker with circular bosses, which is similar to a vessel from Wanborough (Seagar-Smith 2001, fig. 101, 40).

Regional imports comprise Black-Burnished ware which makes up 9.4% of the assemblage by sherd count and Oxfordshire wares (OXF RS and OXF WH), which combined make up *c*. 2%. Typically, Black-Burnished forms consist of jars, with fewer flat-rimmed or flanged bowls and plain-rimmed dishes. Identifiable Oxfordshire forms were restricted to mortaria.

Gaulish samian amounts to 22 sherds (154g) or 1.7% of the assemblage by count. Two sherds derive from Southern Gaul (La Graufesenque), with the remainder from Central Gaul (Lezoux). Identifiable forms are restricted to plainwares, bowls (Drag. 31 and 31r) and a single cup (Drag. 35). In terms of quantity and composition the group is typical of the samian components of lower status rural sites and across southern Britain.

Dating

The bulk of the pottery derived from linear features, which produced small and generally well broken-up groups with much evidence for residuality. Consequently this hinders the creation of a tight chronological framework. Viewed overall the assemblage is typical of the earlier Roman period, before the middle of the 3rd century AD. The relative abundance of Savernake wares, together with two sherds of South Gaulish samian, are indicators activity of the mid/late 1st century or early 2nd centuries AD. Central Gaulish samian, which makes up the bulk of the samian suggests a 2nd-century AD focus. The Drag. 31 and 31r bowls, probably date after *c*. AD 160. Late forms in Black-Burnished and Oxfordshire colour-coated wares, which date to after the mid 3rd century AD, are present in small numbers. Specifically 4th-century AD types, such as certain Oxfordshire colour-coated wares or Harrold (Bedfordshire) shell-tempered wares, are not present.

The phased groups (Table 2)

On the basis of stratigraphical relationships, the (Period 2) Roman activity was divided into two phases. The larger part of the pottery assemblage related to Phase 2 and in particular the fills of Ditches 24, 30 and 31.

Phase 1 (mid 1st to 2nd century AD)

'Iron Age' fabrics are notably more abundant in this phase than in Phase 2. Much of this material is certainly residual, although fabrics including fine limestone-tempered and wheelthrown grogged types were probably current into the third quarter of the 1st century AD. Savernake wares, which are unlikely to be later that *c*. AD 130/40 are much more abundant in this phase than phase 2. Savernake wares were dominant, almost to the exclusion of other types in a number of contexts, including Ditch 19 (fill 028). A single sherd of South Gaulish samian, dating before *c*. AD 110 was recovered from Ditch 14 (fill 026). Ditch 7 (fill 192) produced 56 sherds from two vessels: the larger part of a carinated jar in coarse greyware fabric (GW) with neck cordon, and a necked jar in fabric SAV GTf. The former (Figure 3, 4) compares to vessels from Wanborough (Seagar-Smith 2001, 271, Fig. 87, no. 206 and 274, Fig 89, no. 235) and is unlikely to date after *c*. AD 120.

Central Gaulish samian, including a Drag. 31R bowl from Pit 185 which dates after c. AD 160, together with small quantities of Black-Burnished ware suggest that some Phase 1 features were open into the later 2nd century AD. Oxfordshire colour-coated wares, single sherds of which occur in the upper fills of Ditches 10, 15 and 18 should be regarded as intrusive.

Phase 2 (2nd to Late 3rd/4th century AD)

The bulk of material from this phase, (510 sherds), derived from the fills of Ditch 24. Somewhat smaller groups were recovered from Ditches 30 and 31 and Hollow 29. All are broadly similar in composition and suggest a date no earlier than the mid/later 2nd century AD. Samian from this phase includes Drag. 31 type bowls dateable to the second half of the 2nd century AD, present for example in Ditches 24 and 31. Late 2nd to mid 3rd-century AD dating is probable for a Oxfordshire whiteware flagon (Young type W30) with trefoil-rim from Ditch 24 (Young 1977, 105). Similar, dating is provided by the quantities of Black-Burnished ware which is significantly more abundant compared to the previous phase (Table 2). Large joining sherds from bowls with flat, grooved rims (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, type 43.1) were recovered from Ditches 24 and 30. These together with plain-rimmed dishes with intersecting arc decoration, probably date to the first half of the 3rd century AD. White-slipped fabric SOW WS, unlikely to date before the late 2nd century AD is present in small quantities. The latest material, present in Ditches 24, 29 and 143 consists of Oxfordshire colour-coated products dateable after *c*. AD 240.

Discussion

The assemblage compares in many respects with numerous rural assemblages from the wider region, including Horcott, and Thornhill Farm near Fairford (Timby and Harrison 2004; Timby 2004, 90-108). Quantities of Middle and Late Iron Age pottery, though mainly residual, are evidence for nearby activity during this period. In terms of dated features on this site, it would appear that the field system was in use from the mid 1st century into the second half of the 3rd century AD. The poor condition of the pottery suggests that the main settlement focus was not contiguous with the area excavated. The assemblage has a distinctly utilitarian character, indicated by a prevalence of jars (70% of total EVEs) over other forms (14% flagons; 13% bowls/dishes; 3% beakers/cups; 0.7% mortaria). This, combined with the small size and composition of the samian assemblage, suggests activity at the lower end of rural society.

Illustrated Vessels (Figure 3)

- 1. Period 2 Ditch 12 (fill 64). Fabric IA LI. Jar with bead-rim. Handmade.
- 2. Period 2 Pit 152 (fill 154). Fabric SAV GT. Jar with bead-rim. Handmade.
- 3. Period 2 Ditch 31 (fill 192). Fabric SAV GTf. Necked jar with curved rim and wide girthgroove. Probably wheelthrown.
- 4. Period 2 Ditch 7 (fill 192). Fabric GW. Carinated, necked jar with bead-rim and neck cordon. Wheelthrown.
- 5. Period 2 Ditch 24 (fill 15). Fabric NW G. Necked jar with hooked-over rim. Wheelthrown.
- 6. Period 2 Ditch 24 (fill 15). Small ring-necked flagon. Fabric NW OX. Wheelthrown.

The Building Material and Fired Clay, by E.R. McSloy

Ceramic Building Material

A small quantity of ceramic building material (23 fragments weighing 1767g) was recovered from eight deposits. All the material can be broadly dated to the Roman period. The assemblage is heavily fragmented, and a number of smaller, unfeatured pieces could not be identified to form. Identifiable forms include brick with thicknesses in the range 30–35mm; tegulae and one flue tile with a combed keying to one face. The flue tile fragment aside, no signature marks, knife-tripping or impressions of any kind were noted.

Attempts were made to match fabrics against a type series produced for a slightly larger group of material recovered from the nearby Viscount Way site (Betts 2005, 18–19). A narrower range of fabrics occur here compared with that group,

although there is good correspondence between the types identified and nothing to argue against Betts assertion that the material derives from a single production site. The major tilery at Minety, located 15km to the northwest, which operated from the later 1st and into the mid/later 2nd century may well be the most likely source (Stone 1983, 18). The majority of pieces occur in fabrics which broadly correspond with fine sandy fabric WT1 and silty type WT6. Tegula fragments from deposits in Ditch 24 and Ditch 27 may be overfired examples of type WT1. They exhibit distinctive sandwich-effect (grey/orange/grey) firing visible in the fracture. A brick fragment from Ditch 24, which otherwise matches the description of fabric WT6 is notable for the apparent use of yellow/cream-coloured clay pellet as a moulding material in place of the more usual sand.

Building stone

Two fragments of flat stone, between 13mm and 17mm thick are identifiable as roofing material of probable Roman date. A fragment from Ditch 27 is of fine oolitic limestone from a local Cotswold source. The second fragment from Ditch 31, is of a micaceous sandstone almost certainly of the Pennant series and probably deriving from the Bristol area. The limestone fragment retains part of a nail hole and an original edge which suggests it may originally have been of diamond-form.

Fired clay

A small quantity (572g) of fired clay was recovered. Joining fragments from Period 1 Ditch 1 which occur in a hard-fired fabric containing oolitic limestone and burnt-out organic inclusions, retain part of a pre-firing perforation. The fragments probably represent a clay weight of triangular or pyramidal form consistent with the Late Iron Age/Early Roman date indicated for the deposit. The remainder of the fired clay from Period 2 deposits, consists of formless fragments in a soft pale orange fabric.

Metal Artefacts, by E.R. McSloy

One copper alloy brooch and 36 fragments of iron items were recovered. The iron objects derive mainly (31 items) from Ditch 24. Identifiable items comprise hobnails (21) and a shoe cleat. The remainder consist of carpentry nail fragments (10) and unidentifiable fragmentary objects.

^{1.} Copper alloy (Figure 3, 1). Fragment of bow and catchplate from a Nauheim derivative brooch. Striplike bow with double line of knurled decoration. This is a one-piece brooch type dating to mid 1st

century AD, which is common at Wanborough (Butcher 2001, 41 nos. 1-37). Length (surviving): 15mm. Period 2 (Phase 1) ditch 22, fill 198.

Coin

A single coin, a 4th-century AD AE3 bronze copy, was recovered from Ditch 24 (Period 2, Phase 2). The reverse design (standing emperor and kneeling woman) (after) REPERATIO REPUBLICICAE? is crude and indistinct. Date: *c*. 378–87?

Environmental Evidence

Human Bone, by Teresa Gilmore

Three neonatal inhumations were recovered. Burials 013 and 014 were interred together, within the upper fill of Ditch 24. Burial 013 was on its right hand side, facing away from 014; Burial 014 lay on its left hand side, facing the back of Burial 013 (Figure 4). Evidence of a third burial consisted of a single bone found within the same ditch fill. A bulk soil sample was taken from burials 013 and 014 to ensure complete retrieval of skeletal elements. The soil sample was sieved using a residue mesh size of 1mm. Table 3 contains a summary of the skeletal material present.

All bone present was in very good condition; bones were intact with good surface detail and little fragmentation had occurred on the long bones. Burials 013 and 014 were substantially complete; in both cases the skull was fairly fragmentary but the remaining parts of the skeleton were intact and in good condition. The evidence for a third burial consisted only of the distal right tibia and may be residual. The disarticulated material, recovered from bulk recovery of the soil surrounding Burials 013 and 014 is of good condition but cannot be assigned to either individual. For foetal or neonatal individuals, age can be determined using diaphyseal length (Ubelaker 1978) and epiphyseal fusion (Schwartz 1995). Sexing is not possible.

No long bones survived intact, but several long bones with a clean break were identified and could be confidently reconstructed and used to measure the diaphyseal length. Burial 013 had seven long bones that could be reconstructed for age determination (right and left femur, right tibia, right and left humerus, left radius and right ulna). In Burial 014, only the left tibia could be reconstructed. Burials 013 and 014 are similar in age, both aged about the tenth gestational month, or around the time of birth and the single bone from fill 015 is a younger individual, aged around the eighth gestational month.

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Foetal body length can be calculated using the long bone diaphyseal length and calculations from Ubelaker (1978). Only long bones that were intact or demonstrated one clean break and could be reconstructed were used to calculate body length. Burial 013 produced an average foetal body length of 55.0 cm, using seven reconstructed long bones; this is typical of the tenth lunar month, around the time of birth. Burial 014 produced a foetal body length of 53.4 cm, using the left tibia. Burials 013 and 014 exhibited signs of woven bone formation on the surface of the majority of bones present, including the external rib surface and exterior cranial vault surfaces. As this formation was observed on all bones present, this was interpreted as normal bone growth and not the result of infection. One lower left lateral incisor crown was present from Burial 014. Two upper central incisors and two first molar crowns were recovered from the disarticulated material in the environmental sample. All teeth present were deciduous (milk teeth) and consistent with an age of death at around birth. No signs of dental pathology were noted.

Burials 013 and 014 were interred together in the foetal position. Considering the similar age of the two individuals, it is probable that they were interred at the same time and could be siblings, perhaps even twins. The third individual was represented by the presence of a third distal tibia (ankle) fragment only. Disposal of infants within pits and ditches is a trend that continued from the Iron Age and indicates disposal of an individual outside of a settlement with little ceremony (Philpott 1991, 98).

Animal Bone, by Sylvia Warman

A total of 1500 fragments from 1137 animal bones weighing 8.5kg was recovered from 45 deposits. Of these 164 were identified to species and included 16 mandibles and 28 epiphyses. Preservation was moderate to good.

The methods undertaken for analysis conform to English Heritage guidance (EH 2002). The bone was rapidly scanned and recorded at context level using a Microsoft Access database. The information recorded included; number of bones, number of fragments, weight of bones in grams, number of bones identifiable to species, fragmentation and preservation, numbers of mandibles, epiphyses and whole bones, species and body parts identified, age and state (including modifications such as butchery, burning, gnawing etc). Full details of this information are available in the archive.

Results

Most of the animal bone came from deposits dated to Period 2 (Roman). A small quantity of animal bone was recovered from the Period 1 ditch but none was identified to species. Horse and cattle were identified amongst the bone recovered from unstratified deposits.

The species identified from Period 2 deposits included horse, cattle, sheep, sheep/goat, pig and dog. No bird remains were identified to species but fragments of bird bone of goose-size and chicken-size were found. The majority of the animal bones came from adult or sub-adult individuals. The range of parts of the skeleton found for each species was quite limited in most contexts. Cattle showed the widest range of elements, particularly from Ditch 24, and Ditch 31. Horse and sheep/goat were represented by a more restricted range of body parts. The dog remains were mainly teeth and skull parts from Ditch 24 and Ditch 19, but a humerus was also found in Ditch 27. A single pig humerus from a sub-adult individual was the only evidence for this species. In terms of the size of the livestock most of the material is unremarkable, however a cattle femur from Ditch 31 was large and robust from a mature adult. Some signs of post depositional damage were observed including weathering and root etching. Butchery was noted in a third of contexts which produced animal bone, and gnawing by dogs found in four contexts.

Discussion

The assemblage is dominated by domestic species, in particular cattle. The second most numerous taxon is sheep/goat followed by horse, dog and pig, the latter being represented by a single bone. There is limited evidence for domestic fowl but nothing can be identified to species. The lack of any infant or juvenile material could be taken to suggest that stock-keeping rather that stock-rearing was the main farming practice. but the lack of bones from younger individuals may result from a preservation bias towards the more robust bone that derives from older age groups. The excavated assemblage from Viscount Way includes juvenile sheep, pig and horse (MoLAS 2005a). One third of contexts which produced animal bone also displayed signs of butchery which suggests that this material is from domestic waste. This interpretation is further supported by burnt bone found in four deposits. The range of colour from black though grey to white reflects a range of temperatures (Lyman 1994, Shipman et al. 1984). The presence of dogs is attested by both their bones and the characteristic gnaw marks on some of the bones of other livestock species. Dogs obviously had some access to food waste but it appears that the material was in general buried rapidly. A large cattle femur was found in Ditch 31, and we may note

that where cattle remains of a noticeably large size have been found in Roman assemblages in eastern England, the import of breeds from outside of Britain has been suggested (Dobney 2001, 38-9).

This assemblage is largely consistent with that expected from a Roman rural settlement (Dobney 2001, 36). However the categories of material that are underrepresented in this assemblage; such as domestic fowl and juvenile domestic animals, are contained in the Roman assemblages from the excavations at Viscount Way sites 10E and 10F to the south-east of the site (MoLAS 2005a) which suggests that these sites lay closer to the settlement to which this field system must have belonged.

Discussion by Alex Lang and Mary Alexander

Period 1 Middle-Late Iron Age

A single feature, Ditch 1, appears to pre-date the field system. Late Iron Age material recovered from the primary fill indicated that it was infilled in the mid 1st century AD, but Middle Iron Age ceramics also occurred residually within its fills. Little can be said of this feature, other than it appears to be a drainage ditch describing the south-east side and corner of a field, and that its full extent is obscured by later ditches, suggesting a continuity of alignment. It should also be noted that about a hundred sherds of Iron Age pottery was retrieved from residual contexts across the excavation area. Some of this was of Middle Iron Age date, and indicates activity over a longer period of time than the features suggest. This material may relate to the activity recorded at the Honda plant 600m to the south (*WANHM* 84 (1991), 144) where Middle Iron Age pits and ditches were excavated, or from another focus of settlement even closer to the site.

Middle Iron Age sites are present within the Swindon area, such as those near Blunsdon (Gingell 1981; Walker et al. 2001) some 4km west of the site. However, Middle Iron Age material was not found at Sites 10E and 10F, Viscount Way South Marston Park (MoLAS 2005a). The provisional results from these sites would suggest that only Late Iron Age ceramics were identified there which clearly overlap with the early Roman material.

Period 2: Roman

The north-east/south-west alignment of Ditch 1 from the earlier period is followed by a number of other ditches attributed to the earlier Roman period. Further ditches found at the southern end of the site crossed these on a north-west/south-east alignment with considerable amounts of ceramic material retrieved from them. Taken together, the features suggest a ditched field system in use in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD; the scatter of post-holes and pits were too dispersed to suggest structures other than possible fence-posts. The retrieval of domestic refuse from the ditches and pits points to the presence of a low status farmstead in close proximity to the site. The quantities of finds are at their highest in features located in the south and south-east areas of the excavation.

The field system found here can be related to the discoveries in the excavations at Viscount Way to the south-east (MoLAS 2005a, 8). The results of these excavations await full analysis, but the assessment of the data suggests the earliest activity there dates to the 1st century BC and 1st century AD, with significant signs of settlement associated with penannular gullies, possibly indicative of roundhouses. In all likelihood the field system here was associated with the settlement at Viscount Way. The excavations here and to the south-east provide good evidence of the general intensification of settlement and agricultural activity during the Late Iron Age and early Roman periods in the Upper Thames Valley and adjacent areas (Lambrick 1992; Moore 2006; Holbrook 2006, 101-2).

The evidence for activity after the 2nd century AD was distinct to that of the earlier phase. This consisted primarily of a large ditch (Ditch 24) and a worn hollow in the southern part of the stripped area, and a discontinuous north-east/south-west ditch to the west. Ditch 24 contained large amounts of artefactual material, including tegula and brick. This change possibly represents a break or shift in settlement activity during this period, with the large ditch representative of a new boundary established after the earlier field system had fallen into disuse. The quantity of building material in Ditch 24 would suggest this transition was accompanied by the construction nearby of one or more buildings in the Roman architectural tradition. This shift is also mirrored within the areas excavated at Viscount Way with very little mid- to late Roman activity recorded in the nearest area (zone 1). In zone 2, some distance from Site 10A, considerable quantities of roofing tile and brick also suggest the construction of new buildings in this period, although they were similarly not located within the excavated area (MoLAS 2005a, 15).

The burial of infants in boundary ditches is not uncommon in the Roman period, especially at rural sites (Philpott 1991 97-98). There is only one possible comparable example from Wiltshire, at Rotherley where infant burials of suggested Roman date were recorded from pits and ditches (Foster 2001, 169). It is possible

that the coin found in the same ditch fill was a grave good for one of the burials, although most infants were buried with little ceremony and no grave goods.

The excavations tally well with the results of previous archaeological work in the vicinity and support the view that agricultural activity in the area spanned the Late Iron Age and Roman periods. There are strong indications that an as yet undiscovered Roman building or buildings associated with this use of the land lay in the immediate vicinity of the site, possibly to the south or south-east, and that the focus of activity moved in this direction in the later Roman period. The material culture suggests a rather poor farmstead occupied or used over a considerable period of time, perhaps as much as 300 years.

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Table 1: Pottery fabrics

Date/Origin	Fabric Group	Fabric	Count	Weight (g)	Rim EVEs
Iron Age	IA flint	F	2	6	-
	IA calcareous	SH	9	49	-
		LI	46	266	0.31
		Llc	9	52	0.02
	IA sandy	Q	22	157	-
	IA grog	Gbel	4	34	
		GT	11	181	0.03
Sub-total			103	747	0.36
Roman local wares	Savernake type	SAV GT	142	3644	0.30
		SAV GTf	94	1056	0.62
	North Wilts reduced	NW G	414	2753	3.05
		NW BS	133	690	0.99
		NW Grc	57	308	0.22
		NW Gsc	30	223	0.24
	Misc. reduced	GW	70	486	1.23
		GWc	30	285	0.29
		GWfine	1	6	0.30
		GWfl	5	29	-
		GWwh	3	33	-
	North Wilts oxid.	NW OX	130	645	1.28
		NW OXf	2	11	-
		NW OXrs	3	10	-
		NW OXws	4	17	0.12
-	North Wilts colour-coated	NW CC	6	13	-
	Local mica-dusted	LOC MIC	1	1	-
	South-west white-slipped	SOW WS	4	97	-
Roman	Dorset BB1	DOR BB1	123	708	1.27
regional	Oxford. colour-coated	OXF RS	15	256	0.03
wares	Oxford. white	OXF WH	6	127	0.05
	WH	WH	6	19	0.08
	Roman shell-tempered	ROM SH	1	1	-
Roman,	Baetican amphora	BAT AM	3	150	-
continental	South Gaulish samian	LGF SA	2	4	-
	Central Gaulish samian	LEZ SA	20	150	0.23
Sub-total			1305	11722	10.3

Fabric Group	Pd. 2.1 Cou.	Pd. 2.1 %Cou.	Pd. 2.1 Wt. (a)	Pd. 2.1 EVEs	Pd. 2.2 Cou.	Pd. 2.2 %Cou.	Pd. 2.2 Wt.(a)	Pd. 2.2 EVEs
IA flint	-	-	-	-	2	0.2	6	-
IA calcareous	37	8.9	204	0.19	8	0.9	67	0.02
IA sandy	17	4.1	135	-	2	0.2	11	-
IA grog	7	1.7	65	-	3	0.3	30	-
Savernake	84	20.4	1641	0.38	135	15.6	2876	0.54
North Wilts grey	210	54	1414	1.98	493	57	3193	4.26
Misc. grey	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
North Wilts oxid.	23	5.6	95	0.12	80	9.4	437	1.08
North Wilts CC	1	0.2	1	-	5	0.6	12	-
South-West	-	-	-	-	4	0.5	97	-
white-slipped								
Dorset BB1	10	2.4	43	0.12	107	12.4	647	1.08
Oxford CC	3	0.7	113	-	9	1.0	122	-
Oxford white	3	0.7	20	-	3	0.3	107	0.05
Misc. white	3	0.7	5	-	3	0.2	5	0.20
Roman shell	1	0.2	1	-	-	-	0	-
Baetican amph.	1	0.2	2	-	2	0.2	148	-
South Gaul	1	0.2	3	-	1	0.1	1	-
samian								
Central Gaul	11	2.7	127	0.06	7	0.8	21	0.17
samian								
Totals	412	-	3869	2.85	864	-	7780	7.4

Table 2: Period 2 pottery by phase

Table 3: Skeletal inventory

SK No	% Present	Age	Sex	Elements present	Dentition Present	Foetal body length (average)	Diaphyseal length
013	85-90	Birth	n/a	Skull, vertebrae, arms, legs, ribs, pelvis, scapula, metacarpals, metatarsals, phalanges	None present	55.03 cm	R. Tibia. 67mm
014	90-95	Birth	n/a	Skull, vertebrae, arms, legs, pelvis, scapula, clavicles, metacarpals, metatarsals, phalanges	Lower left 2nd incisor crown	53.41 cm	L. Radius 55.04mm L Humerus 69.0mm L Femur 79.21mm R Femur 78.74mm R Tibia 68.54mm R Humerus 69.34mm R Ulna 63.75
	5-10	~ 8 mths <i>in utero</i>	n/a	Distal Tibia only	None present	n/a	n/a
Disarticulated material from sample. Belongs to either Burials 013 or 014.	5-10	Birth	n/a	Skull, vertebrae, metacarpals, metatarsals, phalanges, pelvis, epiphyses	L & R upper central incisors, Upper M1.	n/a	n/a



Fig. 1 Site location plan (Scale 1:1250)



Fig. 2 Excavated features (Scale 1:1000)





Fig. 3 Roman pottery. Scale 1:4 Roman brooch fragment. Scale 1:1



Fig. 4 Burials 013 and 014