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# A Roman Extra-Mural Settlement at the Woolf Institute, Westminster College, Cambridge

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*A small excavation in 2015 revealed part of an agricultural settlement located just outside the 4th-century defences of Roman Cambridge focused on Castle Hill. In the immediate pre-Conquest period a field system was laid out, which during the mid 1st to mid 2nd century AD was superseded by a series of agricultural strips or paddocks, at least two post-built structures and a scatter of pits. Further reorganisation was evident in the Middle Roman period when two substantial and parallel boundary ditches were constructed. Late Roman activity was limited to two inhumations, interred in coffins close to the earlier boundary ditches, that presumably formed part of a small cemetery. Despite the limited size of the area, the site sequence generally reflects the broader development of Roman Cambridge and helps to illuminate the extent and character of settlement and related activity on the south-western fringe of the town. Furthermore, it casts some doubt upon the projected south-west alignment of Akeman Street shown on current published plans of the town.*

## Introduction

Westminster College, a theological college of the United Reformed Church, established here in 1899, is situated on the corner between Madingley Road and Lady Margaret Road in Cambridge, just beyond the walled area of the Roman town known as *Duroliponte* (Fig. 1). Archaeological investigation was prompted by the construction of a new building and associated works for the Woolf Institute within the grounds of the college. In 2013 an evaluation comprising two trenches positioned to the west of the main college buildings identified at least three substantial Romano-British ditches and a pit (Collins 2013). The subsequent excavation by Oxford Archaeology (OA) East in July 2015 revealed further evidence of land use spanning the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age to the post-medieval periods, including two inhumation burials. This paper focuses on the Late Iron Age and Roman phases of activity and discusses how these relate to the broader chronology and development of Roman Cambridge. The overall results of the excavation and the methodologies employed are fully detailed in

the archive report (OA East report no. 1809; Graham 2016), which is available to download from the OA library <<https://library.thehumanjourney.net>>. The project archive will be deposited with Cambridgeshire County Council under the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) code ECB4283.

## The Site in Relation to Late Iron Age and Roman Cambridge

Castle Hill appears to have been the focus of a major settlement founded in the Late Iron Age, possibly after c. 10BC. Covering an area of at least 1.2ha concentrated on the higher ground, evidence from pottery imports suggests that this early settlement may have been of some status (Evans and Ten Harkel 2010, 35; 54). The location of a small Flavian fort on the crest of the hill straddling the route that would later become Akeman Street had previously been suggested by the discovery of a V-shaped ditch forming two partial sides of a rectangular enclosure (Alexander and Pullinger 1999, fig. 7.2; Taylor 1999, 77). The evidence for this putative fort was far from conclusive and the interpretation has since been challenged (Evans and Ten Harkel 2010, 57). During the 2nd and 3rd centuries there appears to have been considerable settlement expansion, represented by the remains of single roomed wattle and daub houses with associated yards, pits and timber-lined wells on the western side of Castle Hill. A shrine was established and a stone building, possibly a *mansio*, was constructed, along with a grid of streets laid out parallel to Akeman Street. A period of contraction followed, evidenced by the abandonment of some of the smaller buildings south-west of Castle Hill and digging of quarries and rubbish pits. By the mid 4th century a series of defences comprising a substantial ditch, rampart and stone wall were constructed around the settlement, enclosing a reduced area of c. 8.6ha.

Based on Alexander and Pullinger's reconstruction plan of Roman Cambridgeshire (1999, fig. 7.2) the south-west gate of the town was located approximately 100m to the north-east of the site (Fig. 1). A road, possibly the continuation of Akeman Street, is

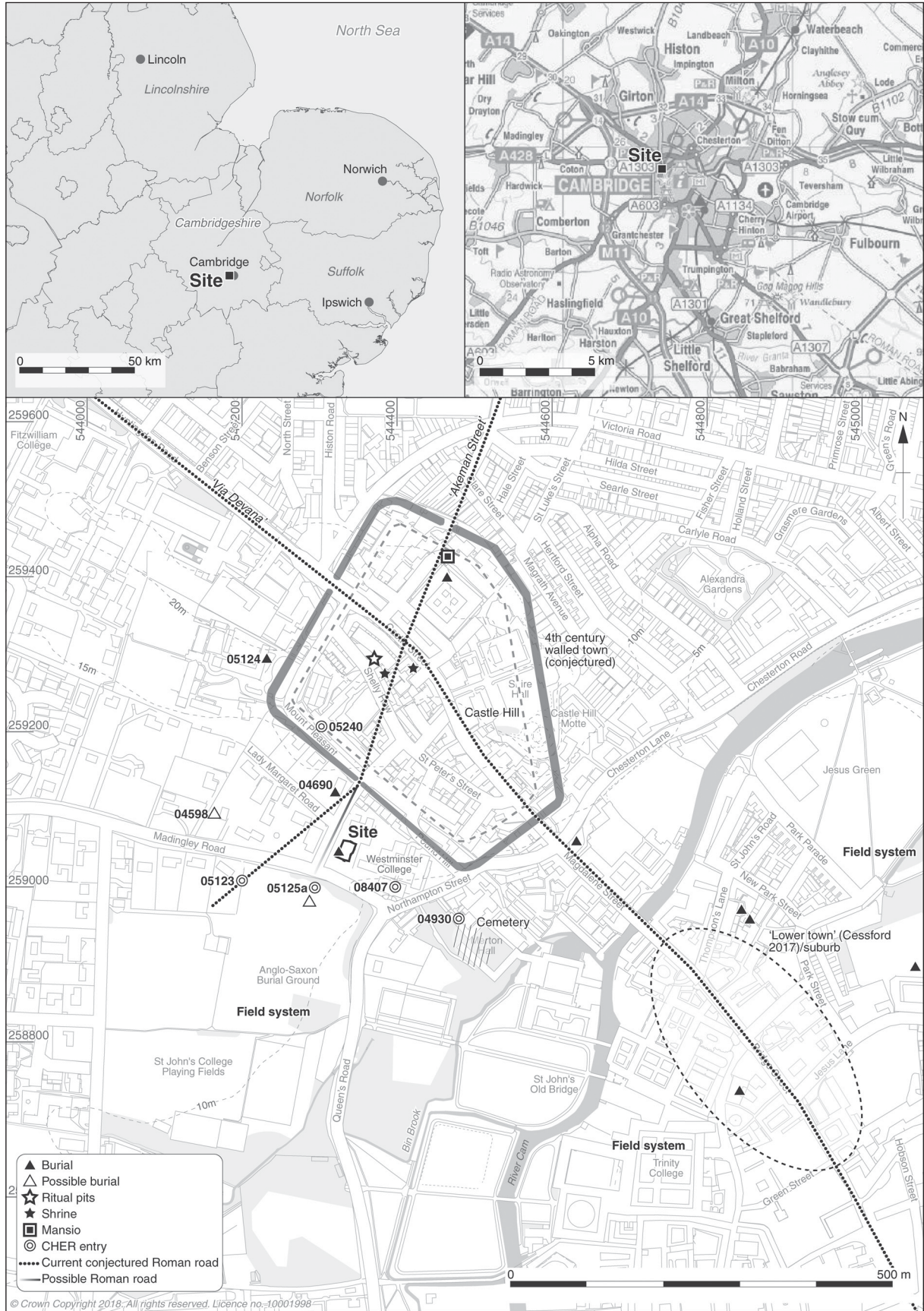


Figure 1. Site location in relation to the Castle Hill and 'Lower town' Roman settlements, burials and other pertinent sites (after Cessford 2017, fig. 6).

shown extending out of the gate in a south-westerly direction, which if projected would pass close to the site's western boundary. A Roman road was purportedly discovered in a sewage trench in Madingley Road (CHER 05123) to the west of the site. Various investigations and findspots recorded by MacAlister amongst others and noted in the CHER hint at the extent of Roman activity within the vicinity of the site. In the late 19th century the remains of two buildings, a kiln or oven and large quantities of artefacts were identified to the immediate north-west (CHER 04690; MacAlister 1896), while a number of pits/wells and a probable skeleton were unearthed to the west (CHER 04598; MacAlister 1896). Roman pottery and possible burials have also been recovered from close by, to the south (CHER 05125a; Fox 1923) and south-east (CHER 08407) of the site. Further to the south-east a complete burial and disarticulated skeletal remains from ten individuals were found, dating from the 3rd/4th century AD (CHER 4930).

A report from the Westminster College Committee in 1903 (977–985) recorded a note about previous discoveries at the site: "Pottery. In the excavations for the foundation of the College there were found a number of pieces of pottery, including one good specimen of a samian bowl: all of them are Roman with the exception of one urn, which is Early Saxon. These specimens, as they were found, were carefully put aside by Professor MacAlister, and in November last were transferred by him to the Library." As part of the excavations undertaken for the Woolf Institute, a brief catalogue of the reconstructed vessels and other pottery housed in the college library was compiled and included in the archive report (Wadeson 2016, 58–60).

### The Excavation (Fig. 2)

The c. 0.41ha excavation was located on a level artificial terrace averaging 10.76m OD, with the natural topography sloping downwards from the north-east. The underlying bedrock geology is blue-grey Gault formation clay (British Geological Society 1981), overlain by glacial till and made ground. Four phases of predominantly Roman activity were identified, spanning the early 1st to late 4th centuries AD, with the main phase of use being during the mid-1st to mid-2nd centuries (Figs. 2, 6). Pottery formed the major component of the finds assemblage, a summary of which has been incorporated within each phase description. The Roman features were overlain by a medieval silt that appeared to have been water lain, which was cut and/or sealed by a scatter of medieval and post-medieval features, garden soils and the remains of a path (not illustrated; Graham 2016). Unless otherwise stated, features were predominantly filled by grey or greyish brown silty or sandy clay with occasional sub-rounded stones and charcoal flecks.

### Late Pre-Roman Iron Age to Early Roman (AD 30–60) (Fig. 2)

Located within the southern half of the site was part of a field system aligned north-east to south-west, represented by two abutting ditches (488 and 593) that measured between 0.50m to 0.83m wide and 0.17m to 0.45m deep. A probably associated fence line was indicated by a line of four large postholes positioned parallel to and on the western side of ditch 593.

Pottery (483 sherds, 8.55kg, 5.68 EVE) associated with this phase was predominantly recovered from the upper fills of the ditches, forming 31% by weight of the total assemblage. The pottery is transitional between the latest Iron Age and Early Roman periods, with the majority being wheel made coarse sandy grey ware Romanising wares with a range of fabrics, colours and finishes. Cordoned jars are particularly well represented with small amounts of shell tempered bowls and storage jar fragments. Although no definite Iron Age pottery sherds are present, the absence of samian ware is consistent with a pre-Conquest date. Of particular note is a coarse sandy grey ware Romanising jar (SF38) that was found at the intersection point between the two ditches. The top part of this vessel has been lost but the body and base survive and it is decorated with a fine horizontal combed motif. This was initially considered to be a cremation vessel, however there was no evidence to support this. Instead, the care with which the vessel was placed and its location at the point where the two ditches met suggests a votive offering. Another find of note from this ditch is a rather poorly preserved Colchester brooch (SF35), a type which has continental origins and was already in use and being made in Britain before the arrival of the Romans, and continued in popularity well into the middle years of the 1st century AD.

### Early Roman (mid 1st to mid 2nd century AD) (Figs 2, 3)

A change in land-use is indicated by a series of six linear and slightly curving ditches aligned generally NNE to SSW across the site, cutting across the earlier field system or enclosure. Broadly contemporary with the ditches were the remains of two possible timber structures and various pits; an increase in the quantity of finds, particularly pottery, was associated with this phase.

Structure 1 comprised an L-shaped group of sub-circular postholes located in the north-west corner of the site. Although its full plan was not discernible, the main element comprised a line of four postholes (450, 456, 420 and 473) that extended on a north-east to south-west orientation with two intercutting postholes (356 and 354) set at right angles to the north-west. The postholes measured between 0.3m and 0.5m wide and between 0.06m and 0.45m deep with fairly steep sides and rounded bases. The intercutting postholes produced small quantities of 1st to late 2nd century pottery. Four postholes (332, 338, 408, 591)

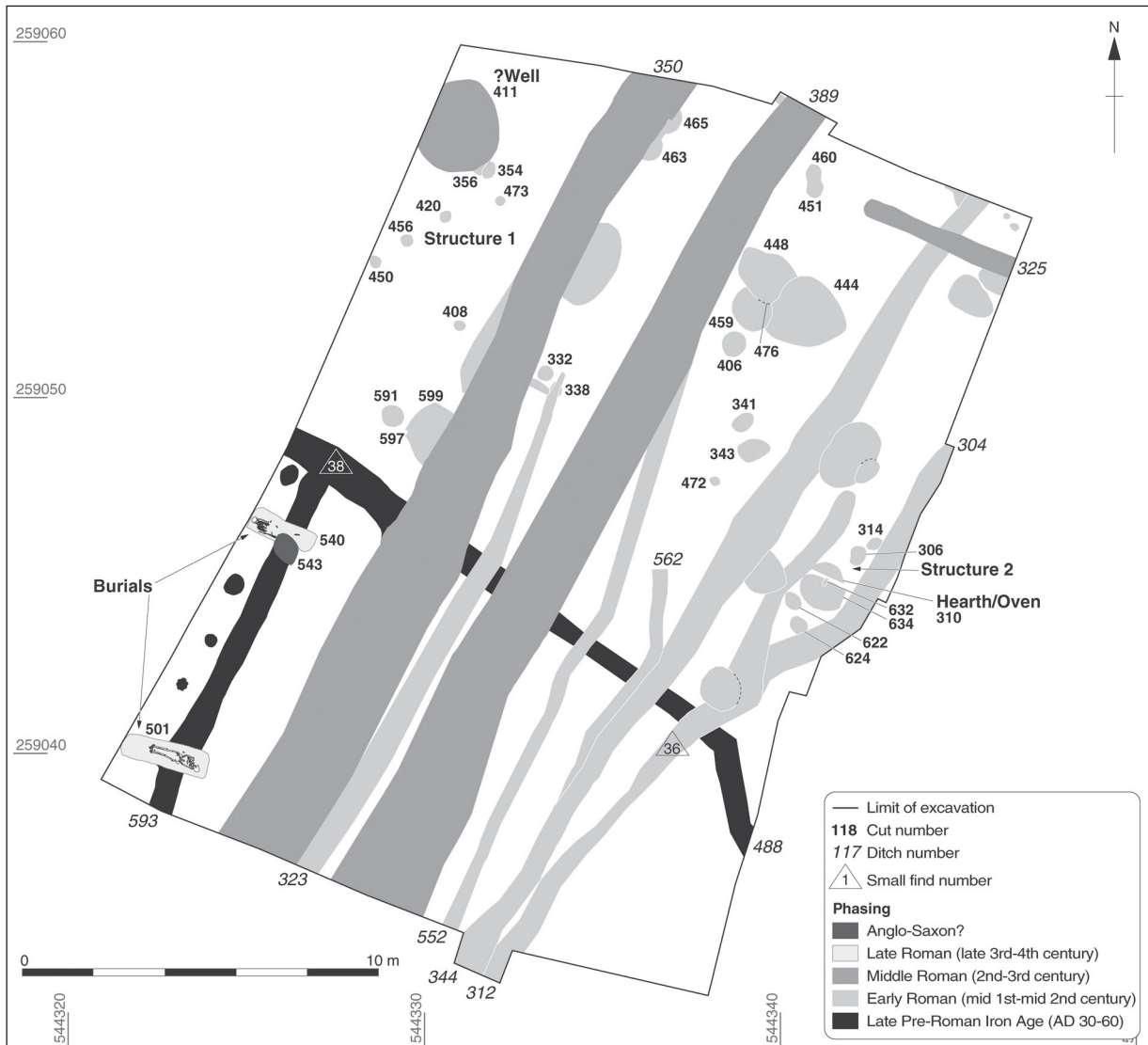


Figure 2. Plan of the excavation showing all phases.

and a gully or beamslot (597) located to the south-east may have formed part of another structure, although too little survived to discern a plan. The postholes produced small amounts of pottery, animal bone and fired clay fragments, while the gully or beamslot contained a notable collection of finds comprising 3.4kg of mid to late 1st century pottery, 0.3kg of animal bone and an iron spike or punch (SF54).

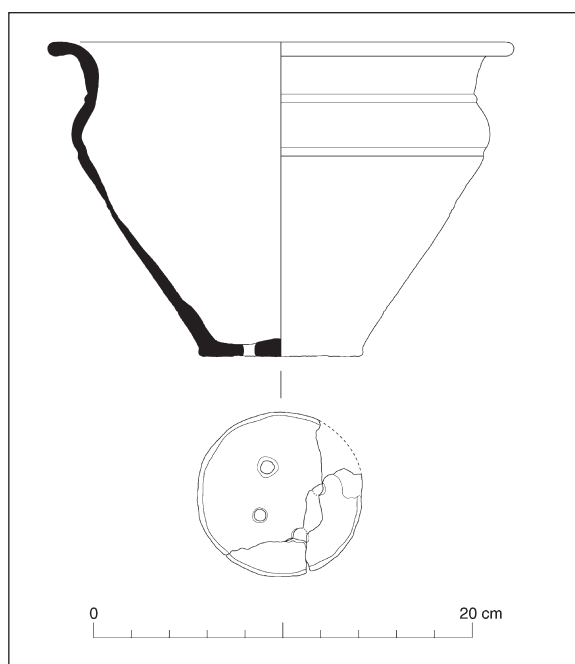
A further possible structure (Structure 2) was identified at the eastern edge of the site, indicated by a group of six postholes (306, 314, 622, 624, 632 and 634) associated with a shallow pit or hearth/oven (310). The sub-circular pit/hearth retained evidence of two clay linings, the uppermost of which showed evidence of burning and produced a moderate amount of charcoal and fired clay. All the pottery (0.576kg) from the feature came from the final disuse fill and is datable to the early to mid 2nd century. Twelve pieces of daub, many with wattle impressions, were also found, that probably originated from the oven superstructure,

although an environmental sample only contained charcoal and a single charred cereal grain.

Other postholes or small pits were identified to the north-west (472, 343, 341, 406) and close to the site's northern edge (451, 460, 463 and 465). Although a few of these produced small quantities of Early Roman pottery, too few were exposed to determine whether they might have been related to fence lines or other structures.

Extending across the site was a series of broadly parallel and occasionally intercutting shallow ditches (304, 312, 562, 344, 552 and 323) which measured between 0.4m and 1.2m wide and a maximum of 0.5m deep. One of the earliest ditches in the sequence (312) was located at the eastern edge of the site and followed a slightly sinuous route adjacent to Structure 2. This ditch is of note as a second fragmented but almost complete coarse sandy grey ware Romanising jar (SF36; Fig. 3), with several holes drilled in its base, had been placed at the point where the ditch crossed

earlier field/enclosure ditch 488. A collection of juvenile sheep bones was also recovered from the same ditch section.



**Figure 3.** Almost complete coarse sandy grey ware Romanising jar (SF36) found within Early Roman ditch 312.

A cluster of four sub-circular intercutting pits (444, 448, 459, 476) lay a few metres to the north-west of Structure 2. Two of the pits (459, 444) were steep-sided and noticeably deeper than the surrounding features. The earliest of these (pit 459) was 0.80m deep and contained slumped deposits of sandy silt, suggesting that it may have remained open for a while. Pit 444 was the most easterly and largest of the group, measuring 1.96m wide and 0.95m deep. Small quantities of Early Roman pottery, animal bone, fired clay and occasional oyster shell were recovered from the pits, which may represent small-scale clay quarries. Numerous other pits of varying size and shape were scattered around the site, several of which cut the series of ditches. The pits were generally very shallow and predominantly contained single fills which produced low levels of pottery, animal bone and fired clay in addition to a fragment of quern stone (SF48).

Overall this phase produced the largest period group of pottery (42% by weight) within the total assemblage, comprising 730 sherds weighing 11.46kg (6.36 EVE). The majority of this was found within the ditches, although some material was also found within the oven/hearth, pits and postholes. Coarse sandy grey ware Romanising wares are still evident in a similar range of forms as in the previous phase. However, it is the more standard Roman sandy grey ware fabrics that form the majority, albeit present only in a limited range of forms. Well represented are

globular jar fragments and also some platter and dish forms. These sandy grey wares are supplemented by a similar sandy oxidised fabric used to produce more specialist ceramic vessels, including flagons and mortaria. Other coarse wares include a small number of shell tempered jar/bowl pieces and a significant number of Horningsea storage jar fragments. Samian wares appear for the first time, while other fine wares include three Nene Valley beaker fragments and a single piece of Spanish olive oil amphora.

#### *Middle Roman (2nd to 3rd centuries) (Fig. 2)*

This phase was characterised by two substantial, steep-sided and parallel ditches (350 and 389) aligned north-east to south-west in the western half of the site, along with a probable well. Westernmost ditch 350, which had a maximum width of 2.90m and depth of 1.02m, contained an initial slumped deposit extending down both sides of the cut, overlain by subsequent fills of silt and sandy clay. The latter produced a range of finds indicative of nearby settlement including pottery, small amounts of animal bone, slag, part of a possible ceramic crucible, Roman tile and lava quern (SF49). The final disuse fill contained a moderately large assemblage of pottery including samian, alongside small quantities of animal bone (some burnt), slag, shell and tile. Adjacent ditch 389 was smaller, measuring a maximum of 1.90m wide and 0.62m deep. It contained a similar sequence of fills which produced largely residual pottery (also including samian), presumably reworked from earlier deposits.

Located in the north-east corner of the site was a narrow, straight ditch or gully (325) aligned north-west to south-east, possibly forming a subdivision within an enclosure. The gully, which was exposed for 2m before terminating, measured 0.82m wide and 0.23m deep and produced a collection of predominantly residual pottery. In the north-west corner was a possible well (411), located to the west of ditch 350, that cut one of the postholes forming Structure 1. The large steep-sided sub-circular cut (2.6m wide and 1.3m deep) had a concave base and contained a sequence of eleven silty clay fills, including possible remnants of a lining. The latter was represented by three deposits located at the base of the cut, including a strongly organic component of degraded wood. Only residual Early Roman pottery was recovered from the various fills, while environmental samples contained a large assemblage of charred cereal processing waste in addition to carbonised cereal grains of emmer and spelt wheat.

This phase produced less pottery than the previous phases (441 sherds, weighing 5274g (3.30 EVE)), forming the third largest phase group within the assemblage (c. 19% by weight), with the majority being found within ditches; particularly ditch 350. The coarse sandy grey Romanising wares are still present in a similar range of forms as in previous phases, although these would be residual by the mid-2nd century AD. It is the fully Roman and standardised

sandy grey ware fabrics that form the majority within the group, although present only in a limited range of diagnostic forms. Well-represented are globular jar fragments and straight-sided dishes with beaded rims in the black burnished tradition that had become fashionable in this region by the mid-2nd century AD. These sandy grey wares were supplemented by more specialist vessel types such as flagons and *mortaria*. Some more gritty oxidised sherds are consistent with Verulamium products and were perhaps traded from the St Albans region. Other diagnostic coarse wares include a significant number of Horningsea storage jar fragments. Samian tablewares are still rare – but at their most numerous – within this phase group. Other fine wares include a single Nene Valley colour coat jar fragment and a single sherd of Spanish olive oil amphora.

**Late Roman (late 3rd to 4th centuries) (Figs 2, 4 and 5)**

A significant reduction in activity was evident in this phase, which was represented by two inhumation burials (501 and 540; Figs. 4 and 5) located in the south-west corner of the site, positioned close to the Middle Roman boundary ditches. The burials, which cut across the latest Iron Age to Early Roman field system (ditch 593), followed a broadly north-west to south-east alignment. Both inhumations had been placed within rectangular grave cuts, while the presence of iron nails (Figs. 4 and 5) suggests that the individuals had been interred within coffins. No grave goods or other closely datable items were recovered but subsequent radiocarbon dating, carried out on the left femurs, indicated a later Roman date for both burials.

Grave 501 (L 2.72m, W 1.22m, D 0.19m) contained

the moderately well-preserved remains of an adult (possible) female (Sk 503). The skeleton was laid supine with the head to the east and turned to the south, and arms crossed over the pelvis. It had an estimated stature of 155cm and few pathological changes, although healing periostitis was present on the distal femur. Dental health appears to have been fairly poor with caries, periodontitis and ante-mortem tooth loss of the lower right molars evident. Radiocarbon determinations indicate a date range of 210–430 cal AD ( $1769 \pm 34$  BP @ 95.4% probability; SUERC-69254), and 250–390 cal AD (@ 68.2% probability) for this burial.

Grave 540 was located approximately 6m to the north-east of grave 501 (L 1.94m, W 0.92m, D 0.18m). It contained the skeleton of an adult male (Sk 542) laid in an extended supine position with the head to the west and turned to the north-east. Only the upper elements of the skeleton survived, with parts of the lower left arm, pelvis and legs – apart from some of the left foot bones – not present as a result of truncation of the grave by a later pit/hollow (543). Healed rib fractures were observed on the left hand side of the skeleton, while dental health was again poor with a high number of caries observed, although there was less ante-mortem tooth loss than that seen in Sk 503. Radiocarbon determination for this skeleton indicates a date range of 140–410 cal AD ( $1796 \pm 34$  BP @ 95.4% probability; SUERC-69254); 230–380 cal AD (@ 68.2% probability).

A number of poorly-preserved and unstratified Late Roman coins were found that are also indicative of low levels of activity on or near the site in this period. The pottery from this phase is the smallest period group within the entire assemblage (2% by weight) and relates exclusively to the two burial backfills. The assemblage mostly comprises the fragmentary remains of Romanising coarse grey ware jars and

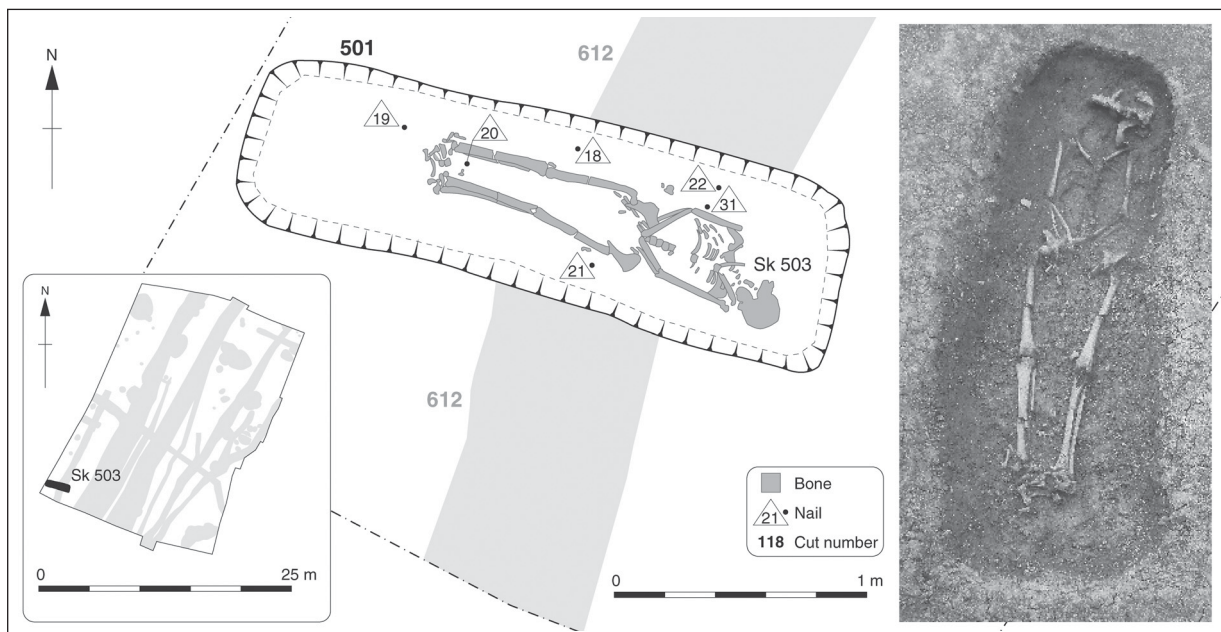


Figure 4. Detail of inhumation 503.

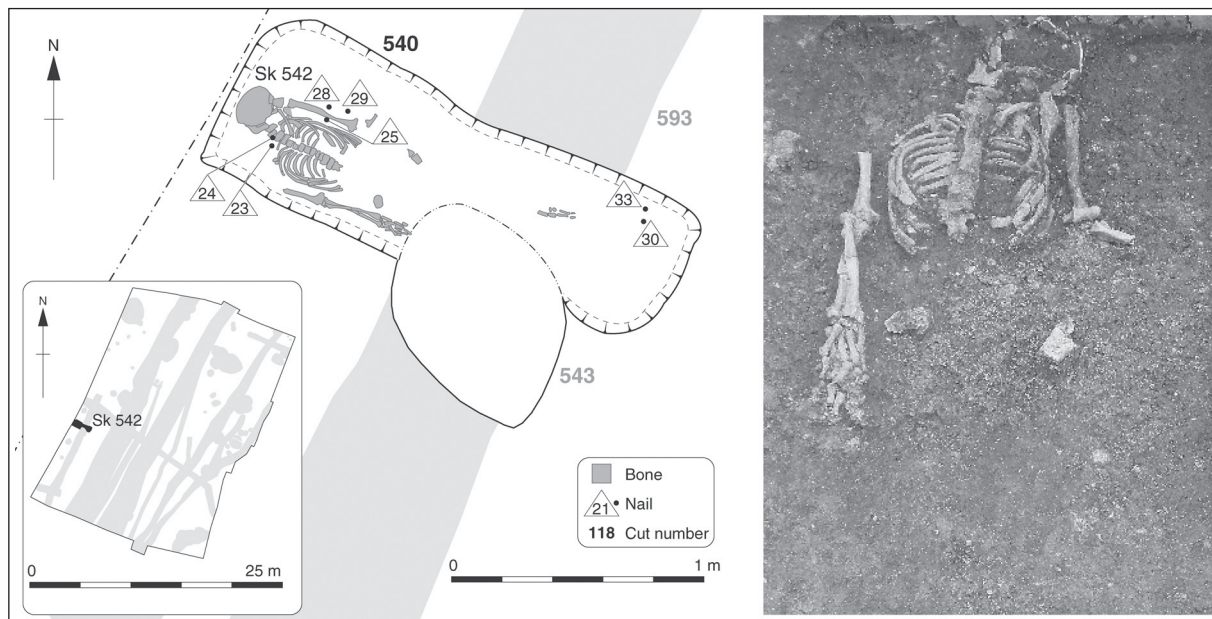


Figure 5. Detail of inhumation 542.

storage jars, all of which are likely to have been residual. Pit/hollow 543 produced a single small (16mm in diameter) stone object interpreted as a possible bead, tentatively dated to the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon period.

### Finds and Environmental Evidence

The excavation produced a total of 1,851 sherds, weighing 27,404g, of predominantly Early to Mid-Roman pottery. The majority of the assemblage is locally produced wheel-made utilitarian coarse ware vessels comprising jars, bowls and handmade storage jars. There appears to have been a seamless transition between the very latest Iron Age and Early Roman use of ceramics within the excavated settlement, whereby the transition between Romanising grog tempered and Roman primarily sand tempered cordoned wide mouthed vessels is clearly recorded. The post-Conquest coarse wares are supplemented by a small amount of imported Gaulish fine table-ware consisting of samian from several factories.

A small assemblage of metalwork (65 fragments) was recovered from the site, the majority of which is ironwork, together with nine items of copper alloy. A single worked stone object, possibly an Anglo-Saxon bead, was also found. Five of the copper alloy objects are Late Roman coins datable to the 3rd and 4th centuries. The only other Roman object of note is the poorly preserved Colchester brooch (SF35), which is of a type already in use in south-eastern Britain prior to the Roman Conquest. The iron work mostly consists of fragmentary hand forged nails deriving from the coffins associated with the two burials, as well as a possible punch. Low levels of non-magnetic met-

alworking debris (220 pieces weighing 1,928g) were collected, several of which have vitrified clay lining adhering and may derive from a hearth base or crude crucible, while one small green-coloured prill may be from copper-alloy working.

Two fragments of quern were also recovered, one (SF48), of gritstone with chipped channels along the grinding surface, came from the fill of an Early Roman pit, while the other is a piece of lava (SF49) with one surface smoothed from wear, found in a Middle Roman ditch. Other finds comprise 46 pieces of ceramic building material, of which only three could be identified as Roman. Of the 36 fragments of baked clay that were collected, 21 have wattle impressions suggesting they originated from a structure; 12 pieces came from the hearth associated with Structure 2.

A total weight of 15,308g of animal bone was recovered from all phases of the excavation, the majority of which derived from Roman pits and ditches, in addition to two post-medieval pits. The total number of identifiable specimens is 1325, of which 393 (c.29.6%) were not identifiable to species. A large quantity of the assemblage could only be identified to medium (370 fragments; 28%) and large (142 fragments; 10.7%) mammal categories, with 29 fragments (2.1%) being assigned to small mammal. Horse forms the largest identifiable component (162 fragments; 12.2%), followed by sheep/goat (110 fragments; 8.3%), cattle (67 fragments; 5%) and pig (25 fragments; 1.9%). Dog (10 fragments; 0.8%), bird (12 fragments; 0.9%) and frog (five fragments; 0.4%) make up a small component of the assemblage.

Fourteen bulk environmental samples were taken from features within the excavated areas and twelve samples from the two grave fills. The samples taken

from the fills of the graves were mainly devoid of preserved plant remains, while the remaining samples were also unproductive with only occasional specimens of charred grains and legumes surviving. The exception was the samples from Middle Roman pit/well 411 which contained cereal grains, although the absence of waterlogged preservation indicates that if this was a well it had dried out prior to its backfilling.

### Discussion (Fig. 6)

From a ceramic perspective, the majority of the assemblage is consistent with the buried fragmentary remains of domestic rubbish, probably from an agricultural settlement just outside the centre of the developing town. It is clear, however, that all ceramic deposition declined rapidly after the mid-2nd century as no material later than the early 3rd century was found. Indeed, it seems that most sites so far excavated nearby fit this pattern, whereby significant ceramic deposition in the latest Iron Age to the Early/Mid Roman period is followed by reduced activity after AD 200, when the area presumably reverted to agricultural use. It appears likely that the location of the site near to the (possible) Roman fort and growing town aided the supply of pottery, both domestic and imported wares, until the area was abandoned.

Although the environmental samples from the site generally produced few identifiable plant remains, emmer wheat was identified, a cereal that was perhaps generally less common on Roman sites than spelt wheat which was more favoured for large scale cultivation. The presence of quern fragments also suggests that crop processing was being undertaken at the site, alongside farming or processing of horse, cattle, sheep/goat and pig. Whilst the material culture from the site is indicative of domestic waste, no clear evidence of a dwelling was identified, although any domestic buildings may have lain closer to the (presumed) road frontage. The paucity of Roman ceramic building material indicates that it is unlikely that any substantial buildings were located in the vicinity, confirming that this small settlement was predominantly rural in character.

### *Late pre-Roman Iron Age Field System (Fig.6a)*

Probably representing part of a field system or enclosure, the pair of ditches and a fence line located within the southern part of the site were presumably associated with the early settlement established on Castle Hill to the north-east (Alexander and Pullinger 1999). Pottery recovered from the upper ditch fills is transitional between the Late Iron Age and Roman periods (c. AD 30–60), with the absence of samian supporting a pre-Conquest date. Although no associated settlement features were identified, the placement of a complete pottery vessel at the junction of the two ditches is noteworthy, especially as a similar deposit (SF36; Fig. 3) was also found in a comparable Early Roman ditch to the south-east.

### *Early Roman Agricultural Strips and Associated Activity (Fig.6b)*

At some point in the mid to late 1st century AD, the field system was superseded by a series of narrow ditches and gullies extending NNE to SSW that appear to have been cut in a progressively westerly direction. The ditches may have been broadly parallel with the projected route of the Roman road (?Akeman Street) to the west of the site (Fig. 1), perhaps forming plots or a series of agricultural strips on the edge of the main settlement to the north-east. Similar evidence has been identified at other large Roman settlement sites, including Radwinter, where the ditches were interpreted as delineating small paddocks or fields parallel to the Roman road to Wixoe, on the Essex/Suffolk border (Havis 2001, 241).

The remains of at least two earth-fast timber structures were identified that appear to have been broadly contemporary with the parallel ditches. These are both likely to have been agricultural rather than domestic buildings, although the presence of a number of pits in this phase is indicative of nearby settlement. Structure 1 may have been a small barn or shelter, although too little was exposed to be certain. The possible circular structure (Structure 2) at 3m in diameter may have been a small workshop, given the presence of the oven or hearth; fragments of metalworking debris containing traces of a vitrified clay lining and a prill possibly from copper alloy working were also found in the vicinity. Similar remains, including an oven/hearth and wooden structure were found to the north of the site, close to Mount Pleasant (Alexander 1964; CHER 05240, Fig. 1).

### *Mid-Roman Reorganisation (Fig.6c)*

A change in the layout and function of the site between the 2nd to 3rd centuries was clearly evident, with the cutting of two large parallel ditches and a relatively deep pit or well. Although the ditches followed the general alignment of the previous smaller ditches they were far more substantial, suggesting that they may have delineated a boundary – possibly the eastern side of an enclosure adjacent to the Roman road (Fig. 1). This might indicate a move away from the small scale largely self-sufficient mixed farming practices of the earlier Roman period towards a more livestock-focused economy. The expanding urban population of Cambridge in this period would have led to an increased demand for food, requiring more intensive farming in the areas immediately adjacent to the town. A major farm/supply centre was revealed during excavations at Vicar's Farm as part of the University's West Cambridge development, located within Roman Cambridge's immediate western hinterland, while recent fieldwork has also confirmed the presence of an extensive lower town/roadside suburb to the south-east of the River Cam (Cessford 2017). Excavations in the vicinity of the site, notably within the grounds of St Edmund's College (Evans and Ten Harkel 2010, 38), have further demonstrated



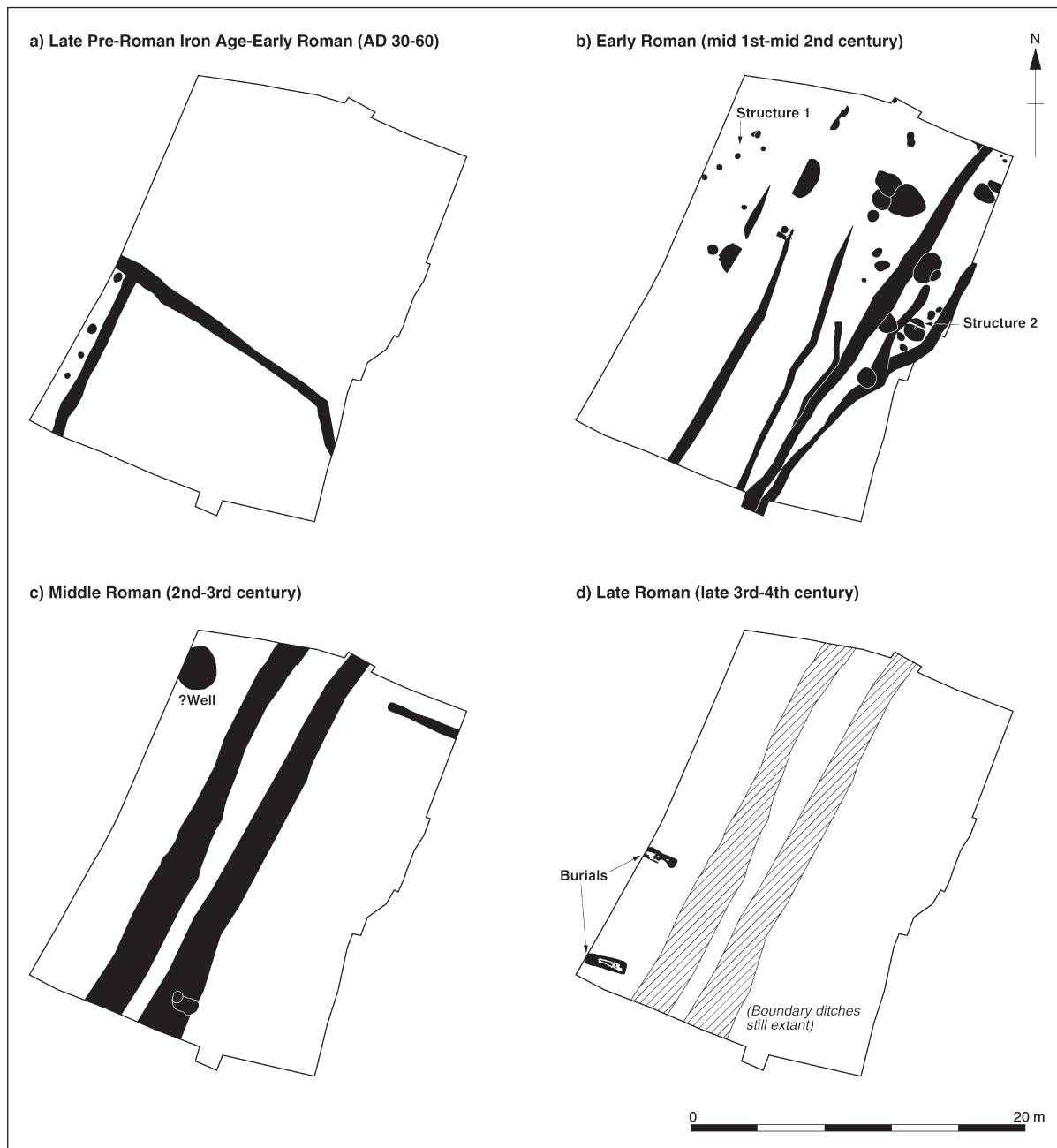


Figure 6. Simplified phase plans showing development of the site during the Roman period.

the extent of Roman settlement in this period. It is feasible that the Westminster College site represents a south-westwards development of settlement (possibly close to the road) as part of the Middle Roman ‘expansion’, but it is more likely that it was part of a separate farmstead within the town’s immediate hinterland. Although the Castle Hill area appears to have been of some significance during the 2nd century, current evidence does not indicate that occupation was particularly dense (Cessford 2017, 74), while associated material culture, notably pottery, from the Westminster College site suggests that activity was already declining in this area by the later 2nd century.

**Contraction and Decline? (Fig.6d)**

Perhaps reflecting the wider development of Roman Cambridge – which by the mid-4th century was still flourishing but had contracted within a defensive circuit on Castle Hill – the site witnessed little development after the 3rd century. The Middle Roman boundary was presumably still a visible earthwork at this time as two burials were placed adjacent to it, perhaps suggesting that the possible roadside enclosure was re-purposed as a cemetery. Other human remains have been found in the vicinity of the site, with the closest possibly being just to the south (Fig. 1; CHER 05125a; Fox 1923). This may suggest a dis-

persed cemetery extending close to the road leading out of the south-west gate of the walled Roman town. A small enclosed cemetery broadly dated to the 2nd–4th century was identified during various phases of fieldwork within the grounds of St Edmunds College to the north-west of the site (CHER 05124). Associated with the enclosure, which was laid out at 90 degrees to the New Hall Road, were two fragmentary inhumations and a cremation burial. The two coffined inhumation burials found at Westminster College are clearly later Roman, although the number of complete or near complete vessels currently housed in the college library (Wadson 2016, 58–60) may hint at an earlier cremation cemetery that was disturbed during the construction of the college buildings. The two inhumation burials do not suggest any particular social status, although the pathologies exhibited are consistent with manual labour that would be in keeping with a rural community.

### Conclusions

This small agricultural settlement on the south-west edge of Roman Cambridge was clearly inextricably linked to the establishment and development of the larger settlement of *Duroliponte* and in particular the Roman road located somewhere to the north-west. The general NNE to SSW orientation of the boundaries and other ditches mirrors that of enclosures and other features identified at nearby sites including St Edmunds College and Trinity Hall. On current interpretive plans of Roman Cambridge, Akeman Street is shown heading in a more south-westerly direction out of the town, which appears to be at odds with the general axis of ditches and other features identified in this area. This, combined with the presence of burials at the Westminster College site and to the immediate south, suggests that Akeman Street may have been located much closer to the site, possibly on a similar trajectory to the (much later) Madingley Road just to the west.

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