

THE ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT AT STADEN NEAR BUXTON: THE 1983 EXCAVATIONS

(WITH ARCHIVAL MATERIAL CONCERNING THE 1926 EXCAVATIONS)

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INTRODUCTION

The site has been described in the report of the 1981 excavations (Makepeace, 1983: 75). The 1983 rescue excavations concentrated on a small, roughly rectangular, enclosure 56' x 40' (17m x 12.2m) adjacent to the building uncovered in 1981 (Fig. 1). Part of the enclosure has been disturbed by mechanical excavation and illicit bottle digging, where a former Buxton refuse tip had encroached upon the site.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Excavations took place between May and September 1983, and revealed that the appearance of the northern section of the enclosure had been distorted by a covering of rubbish and waste lime over two feet (0.6m) thick. The enclosure was slightly terraced into the slope of the hill (Fig. 2), and consisted of fairly substantial walls of weathered stone. No strong revetting was found, but in the southern section some large stones appeared to be reinforcing or strengthening blocks for the rubble wall. Only in the north-eastern section was there evidence for a double slab-on-edge wall with rubble infill (EF/IJ). No building foundations were located within the enclosure; pottery was found, but was fragmentary and abraded. In the absence of other evidence to the contrary, the lack of significant internal features and the crushed and worn sherds suggest that the enclosure was a pen for livestock. Bone fragments, preserved by the alkaline soil, were found as infill in the enclosure-wall. This infill also contained an occasional pottery sherd.

At the north-eastern section, underneath the rubble at the base of the slab-on-edge walling, were fragments of square-sectioned nails and an iron hook-shaped object. Near the south-western corner was found a sherd of prehistoric pottery resembling Grooved ware. A number of flints found near the north-western corner confirm early occupation of the site.

Underneath the walling of the south-western corner near to the Grooved ware sherd were four shallow post holes. Nothing was found to indicate that they formed part of the enclosure wall; thus they were probably part of an earlier phase of construction.

THE FINDS

The pottery (Fig. 5)

Illustrated

- 1 Flagon handle, triple ribbed, red/orange fabric, slightly hollow near base.
- 2 Colander base, small sherd in fine red/orange fabric.
- 3 Black burnished ware, small rim sherd, zig-zag pattern below damaged rim. (Possible

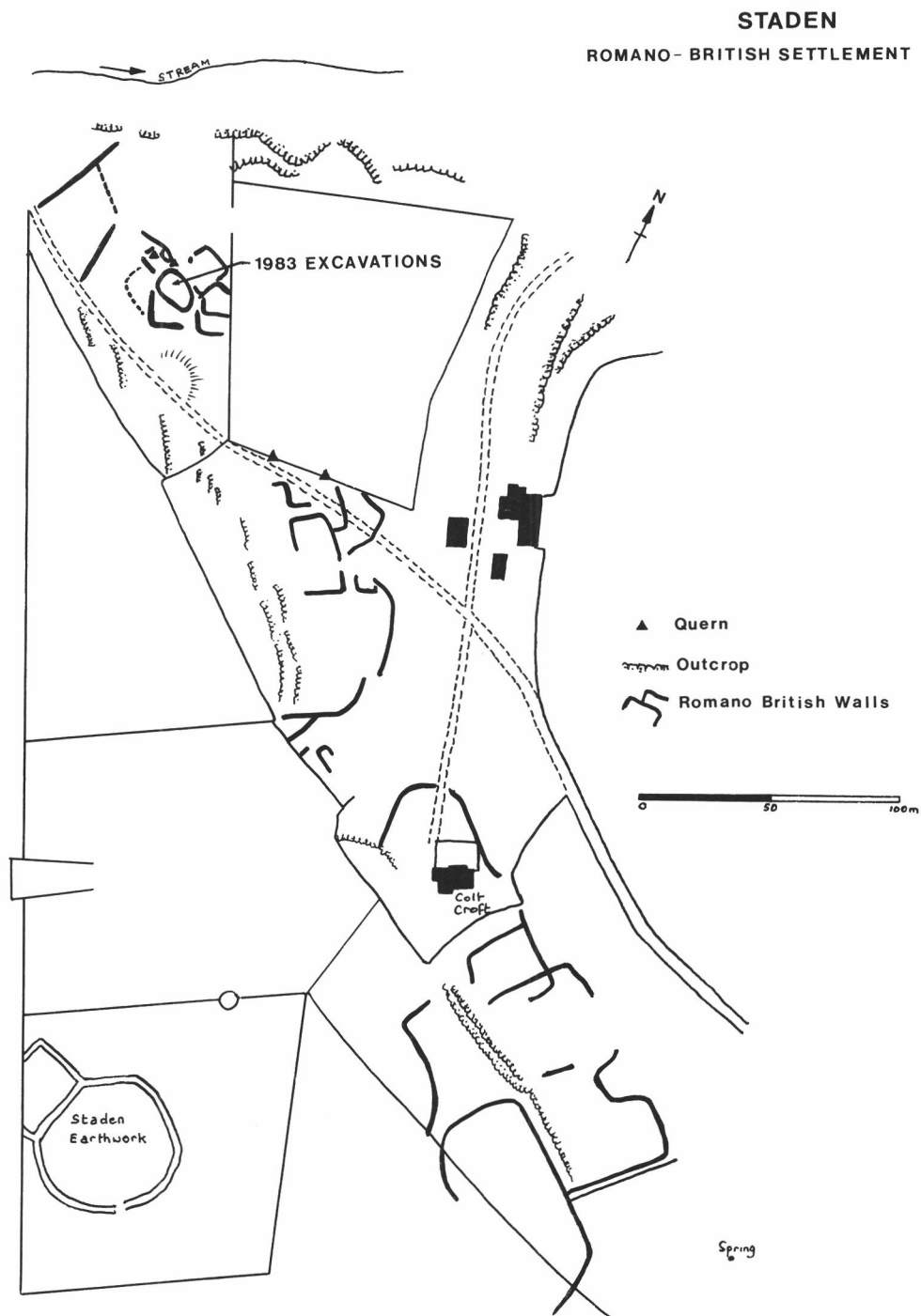


Fig. 1 Staden Romano-British settlement: site plan

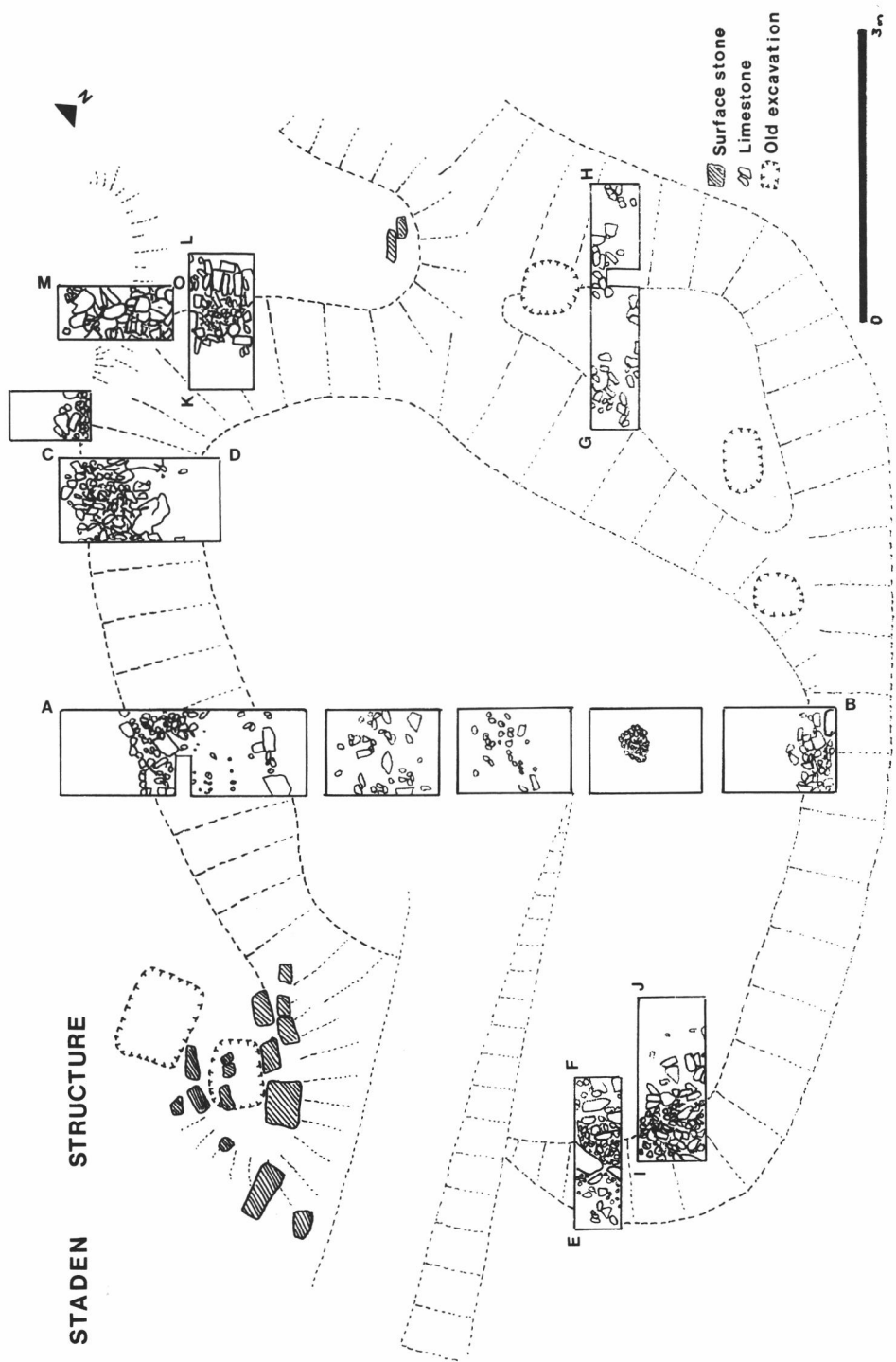


Fig. 2 Staden Romano-British settlement: structure of enclosure

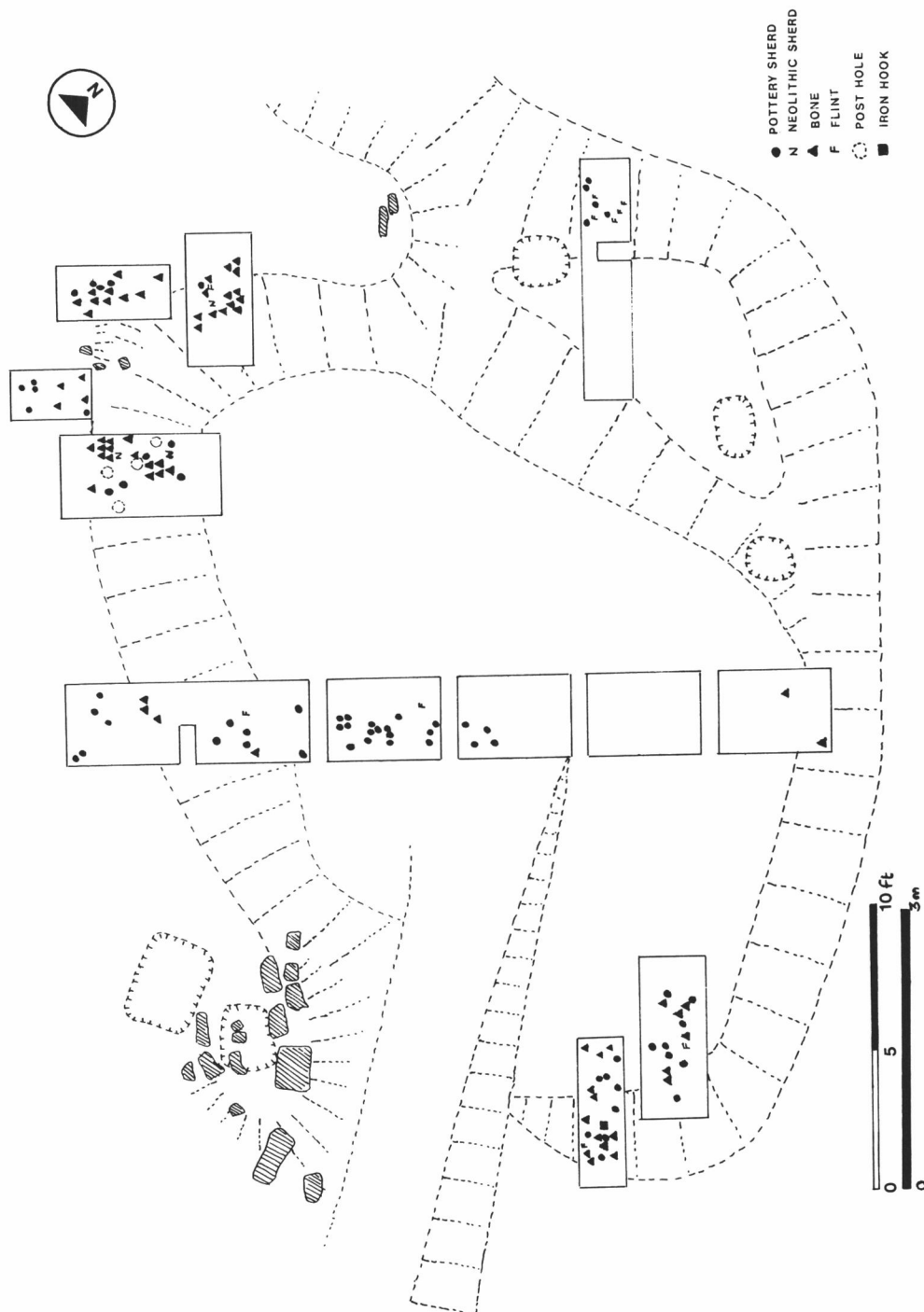


Fig. 3 Staden Romano-British settlement: distribution of finds

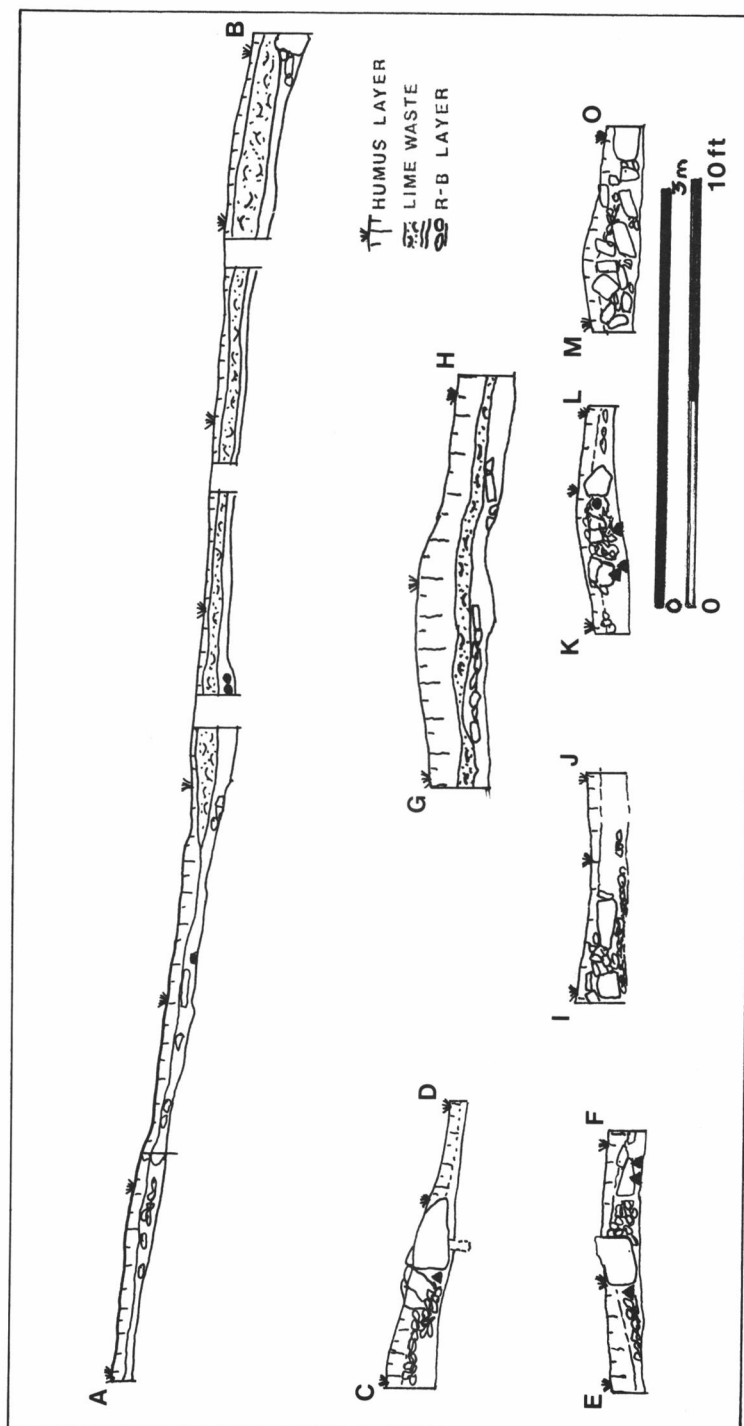


Fig. 4 Staden Romano-British settlement: sections

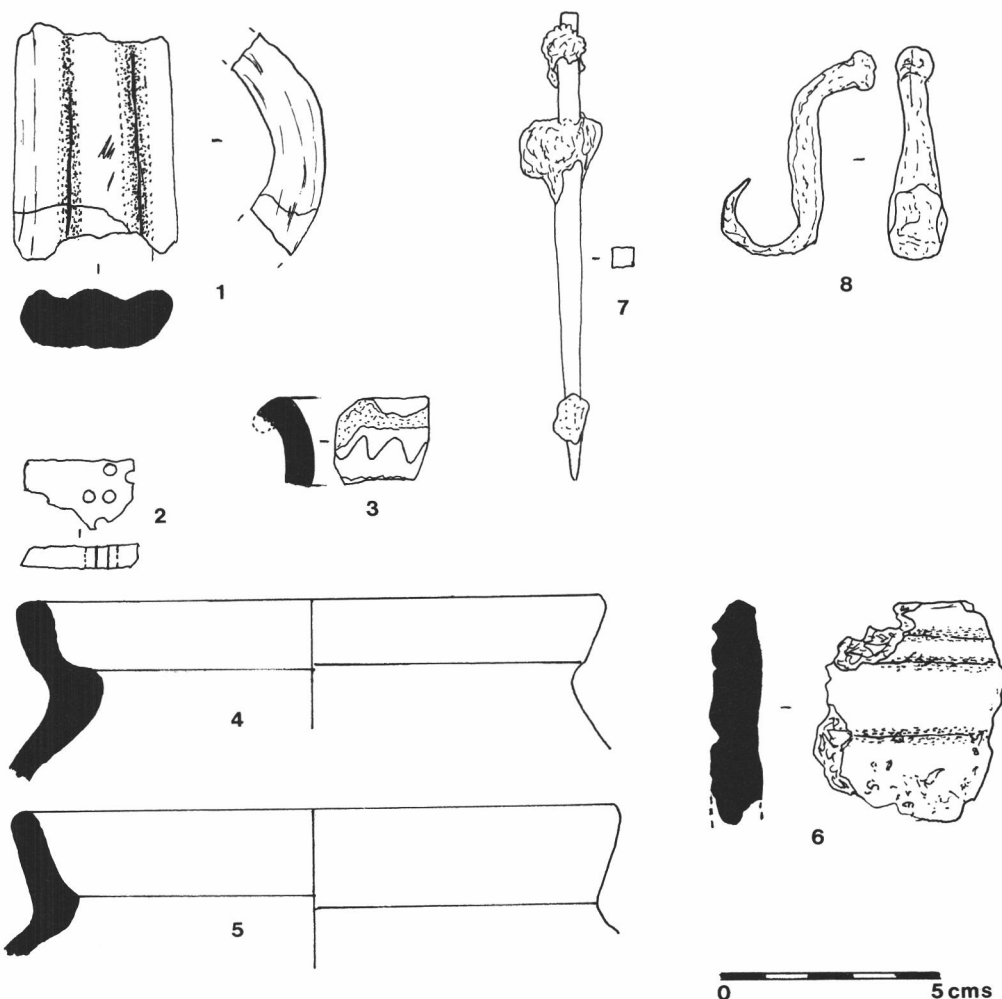


Fig. 5 Staden Romano-British settlement: 1983 finds

Gillam type 122/125: A.D. 120-180).

- 4 Derbyshire ware, grey/buff exterior, buff interior, soft and poorly fired, gritty, everted form.
- 5 Derbyshire ware, grey, hard, 'stone ware' fabric, calcitic grits, everted form (found in disturbed layer amongst lime waste).
- 6 Neolithic grooved ware, rim sherd, reddish brown exterior (Munsell colour chart: 5YR 4/3). The fabric is soft and soapy, with a moderate number of inclusions represented by irregular voids, and generally resembles Fabric 4 from Mount Pleasant, Kenslow (Garton and Beswick, 1983: 7-40).

Not illustrated

- i Black burnished ware: two small chamfered base sherds, one with a lattice pattern similar to that found on a sherd excavated in 1981.
- ii Body sherd of a jar, red fabric with grey core, two concentric grooves at junction of

'neck' with body (?beaker or flagon).

- iii Derbyshire ware: many poorly fired abraded sherds in grey, buff and red /orange, gritty, fabric.
- iv Five prehistoric sherds: similar to 6, but much weathered and abraded.

Metalwork (Fig. 5)

Illustrated

- 7 Iron nail, partly corroded, square section, slightly tapering to point; length 11cms.
- 8 Iron hook or fastening, 'S'-shape, corroded; maximum length 5.5 cms; perhaps part of a horse harness. (The curved lower part is much thinner than the rest, suggesting wear; in use, the bulbous end may have been fastened to some other object.)

Not illustrated

- i Four iron nail fragments

Other material

Not illustrated

- Eleven waste flint/chert flakes (three showing some trimming).
- Two hematite (iron ore) pebbles.
- A piece of waste clinker showing iron and lead ore with vesicles.

Animal bones (M.B.)

OX represented by:

- Proximal end of tibia (severely gnawn by rodents)
- Shaft of long bone (gnawn)
- Shaft of meta podical (gnawn)
- Proximal end of meta podical
- Fragment of ulna (3)
- Fragmentary phalange
- Incisor
- Proximal fragment of humerus
- Distal end of humerus (2)
- Distal fragment of femur (2)
- Proximal end of femur
- Teeth (numerous)
- Fragmentary shaft of tibia (gnawn)
- Humerus fragments
- Femur fragments

SHEEP/GOAT represented by:

- Fragment of lower jaw with four teeth

DOG (?) represented by:

- Long bone of immature animal

Also many indeterminate bone fragments, mainly of Ox.

DISCUSSION

The pottery is very similar to that from the 1981 excavations, thus a date within the second century A.D. seems plausible. The evidence of early prehistoric pottery and flints supports the thesis that there was a neolithic settlement in the vicinity. The faint traces of post holes may date from the neolithic period, and certainly antedate the enclosure wall. The enclosure does not appear to have been used for horticulture and the abraded and comminuted pottery suggests that it was a pen for livestock (probably cattle, in view of the frequency of ox bones here).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Miss P. Beswick (Keeper of Antiquities, Sheffield City Museum) and Dr M. Bishop (Curator, Buxton Museum) for the identification of the neolithic pottery and the analysis of the animal bones respectively; and to Mr R. Mycock for allowing the excavations to continue on his land.

APPENDIX:

REPORT ON THE 1926 EXCAVATIONS AT STADEN

Recently Dr M. Bishop (Curator, Buxton Museum) uncovered information relating to the excavations in 1926 by Mr R. Woolecroft, Mr I. Franklin Evans and Mr Woolecroft's son Dick, at Staden. These excavations were conducted between Sunday, March 28th and Sunday, May 9th 1926. R. Woolecroft's diary of the excavations can be seen in Buxton Museum. He describes the site thus:

I became interested in the possible significance of certain apparently artificial irregularities which occur on the surface of a piece of ground known as Limepiece, about two hundred yards north of the earth circle (Staden Earthworks), and in the occupation of the Buxton Corporation. This ground is of a peculiar and irregular shape and a great portion of it is situated on an uneven slope, while limestone rock juts through the thin soil, so that the whole place has a very rough appearance. Upon this ground there is an irregular earthwork ...

This site has been identified as part of the Romano-British settlement discussed in the present paper.

Mr J. W. Jackson, former curator, Buxton Museum, recorded the finds; his report is as follows:

Mr R. Woolecroft of Buxton has asked me to look over and report upon some ancient remains found by him during the excavations near Staden Low in 1926. The remains consist of various animal bones and teeth, Roman pottery, chert and flint chippings, a portion of a polished stone implement and some interesting bronze trinkets.

The animal remains are in a much broken condition, as is usually the case with pre-historic and Roman-British collections. They represent both wild and domestic animals. Of the first group there are several fragments of antler, including tine and the basal portion of a shed specimen, also an astragalus and two teeth, all belonging to Red Deer. The domestic animals in the collection are the small Celtic Ox (*Bos Longifrons*) represented by split and broken limb bones and numerous teeth, including those of calves; small sheep (broken bones and teeth, one bone being a slender-shanked metatarsal very typical of the Roman-British Sheep); pig (represented by two teeth), and horse (one lower and one upper molar).

The pottery is unfortunately very fragmentary, but several interesting types can be identified from the portions of rims and bases which are present. Of red glaze (Terra Sigillata or Samian Ware) there are only three tiny fragments one of which is of the decorated type and shows the head of some animal (perhaps a dog). A fragment of the rim of a mortarium in cream-coloured ware is interesting. The rim is of the roll and bead type, as in early forms of this utensil. Fragments of light red, unglazed ware are common and both fine and coarse varieties are present. One fragment is the base of a vase (diameter $2\frac{3}{16}$ " 'heeled' with ring on underside. It is of the type found at many Roman Stations. Pieces of grey ware are also common and include the half-base and fragment of side of a vase. The diameter of base is $2\frac{3}{8}$ ", it is slightly 'heeled', thin in the centre and at the side. Another base of a vase has a diameter of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ", the base is almost flat and much thicker than the preceding.

There is also a fragment of the side of a vase with trellis design on exterior surface. A rim fragment of another vessel has tooled diagonal lines on a black polished surface just under the rim.

A fragment of buff ware is also present; it is of coarse paste and forms the side with rim and base of a dish or bowl of a depth of $2\frac{3}{16}$ ".

The chert and flint objects call for no special remarks; they appear to be simply chippings produced

in the manufacture of larger implements.

The imperfect stone implement is of greater interest; it consists of the lower half of a polished stone axe with flat sides and convex faces, and is similar to others belonging to the later, or dolmen stage of the Neolithic or New Stone Age. The stone is a fine-grained volcanic ash and is not of local origin. The broken condition of the implement renders it impossible to give full dimensions.

According to Mr Woolecroft, this specimen was found isolated, out at some distance from the other objects obtained from this site. Its presence here may indicate that the site was also occupied early in prehistoric times.

The bronze articles consist of three specimens. One is an ornamental piece of bronze, probably part of a bow of a fibula. It is, unfortunately, too imperfect for description. The second object is the fragment of the bow of a fibula with a small ring of blue enamel round a centre point. It is badly corroded and very imperfect, but what remains suggests a fibula like one found in Poole Hole, of 2nd or early 3rd Century A.D. The third object is a pennanular fibula, minus the pin. Similar specimens are recorded from Poole Hole, Thirst House, and Frank-in-the-Rocks Cave near Hartington.

Mr Woolecroft's discoveries are important as adding somewhat to our imperfect knowledge of Roman Buxton. It is of interest here to note that several finds of Roman antiquities were made in 1903-04 during the construction of Holker Road, Silverlands, Buxton. These include an embossed Samian bowl of 1st Century A.D. date and fragments of others belonging to the 2nd Century A.D.

The objects Mr Woolecroft has obtained at Staden Low give promise that, if excavations on a large scale were undertaken and the site properly surveyed, the results would well repay the labour. We should then be in a better position to sum up the period and type of occupation.
J.W.J.

What remain of the archaeological materials relating to these excavations were recently presented by Mrs Woolecroft to Buxton Museum. These are as follows (Fig. 6):

Illustrated

- 1 Flat or reed bow brooch (Langton Down type), badly corroded, but showing spring head and part of the bow (ribbed longitudinally): pre-conquest/Flavian (see Hattat, 1982: 39).
- 2 Disc-and-trumpet brooch, corroded Sii type (Woodcuts); circular, blue enamelled central piece: second century A.D. (Collingwood; see Hattat, 1982: 87).
- 3 Bronze decorated piece, slightly corroded and damaged; does not appear to have been part of a brooch; may have been attached by rivets to leather. Central arch has asymmetrical wing, with some incised decoration. Use unknown.
- 4 Pennanular bronze brooch, with iron(?) pin missing (iron corrosion on side); terminals plain, with additional moulding. Similar to Ai types: c. second century A.D. (see Hattat, 1982: 39).
- 5 Neolithic axe fragment; lower half has polished surface near cutting edge. Volcanic ash; probably Group VI (according to Jackson).
- 6 Samian sherd, featuring leopard or lion chasing another animal; ovolo pattern and spindle.
- 7 Derbyshire ware, lid seated jar, type A. Holbrook. Blue-grey exterior; bead rim intumed (see *DAJ* 82, 1962: 34).
- 8 Derbyshire ware, everted rolled rim, type B. Holbrook. Poorly fired; buff-grey (see *DAJ* 82, 1962: 35).
- 9 Grey ware, base, fine grey matrix; slightly heeled on base.
- 10 Mortarium, white pipe clay; bead and hooked rim. Hartshill type (see Makepeace, 1983: 80).

Not illustrated

- i Five unworked chert pieces.
- ii One flint piece, showing some striking.
- iii Three pieces of lead ore (galena).
- iv One sandstone ball, diameter c. 3.5cms. Shape appears to be artificial; use unknown.

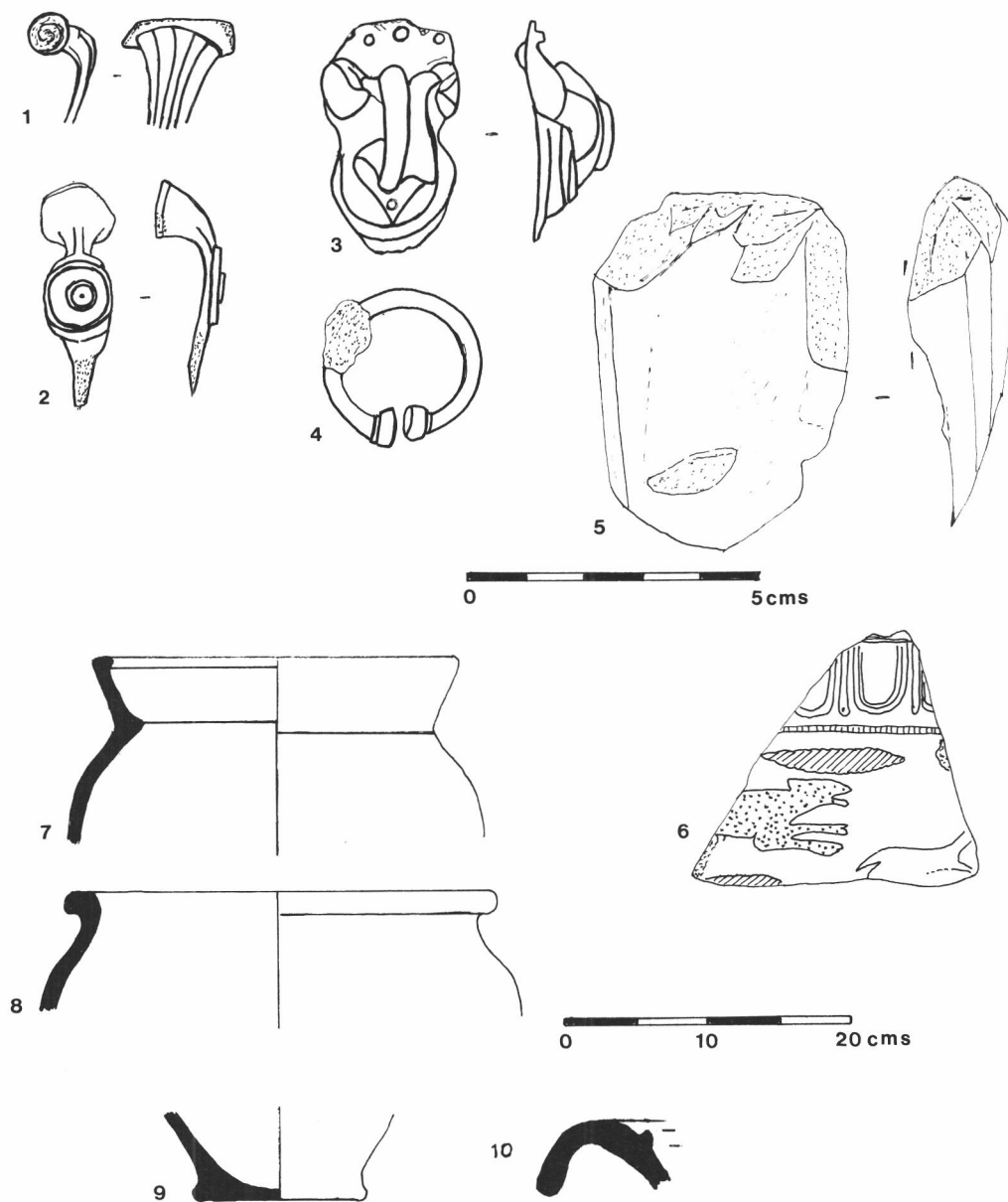


Fig. 6 Staden Romano-British settlement: Woolecroft (1926) finds

The 1926 excavations provided some evidence for neolithic activity. Scattered flints and pottery found in the course of the the current series of excavations (Makepeace, 1983: 75-86) further strengthen the case for neolithic settlement, although no structures of definite neolithic date have been detected. The 1926 animal remains are probably Romano-British, since they compare well with similar recent finds from the Romano-British settlement.

The late-first/early-second century A.D. date of the bronzes shown in Fig.6 is similar to that of those found in the recent excavations. The date of the 1926 Romano-British pottery also suits that of the more recent discoveries. Fragments of samian ware, black burnished ware with lattice design, and grey wares can also be related to recent finds. (Black burnished ware of a similar date was also found in the recent Poole's Cavern excavations (Bramwell, D. *et al.*, 1983: 47-74).)

The current excavations at Staden are being conducted in the area of Limepiece, and it is hoped that they will shed further light on the 1926 excavations .

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