

AN ASSEMBLAGE OF ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY FROM ALFRETON ROAD, DERBY

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BACKGROUND

By Ben Moore

In February 2016, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) undertook an archaeological investigation of land at the former Derby Cables and Crompton Parkinson site, Alfreton Road, Derby (NGR: SK 3578 3819) as part of discharging a condition of planning consent. The site, due north of Derby town centre (Fig. 1), is approximately 5.5 hectares in size and the evaluation consisted of the excavation of seven trial trenches.

The development area occupies a brownfield site with standing modern industrial units to the south. The site lies to the north of the scheduled monument of Little Chester Roman Fort known as Derventio Coritanorum. From the late 1st century AD a vicus grew up around the fort and along Ryknield Street which passed to the east of the fort (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 224). This article reports on an assemblage of Romano-British pottery found in two contexts from a single trench excavated during the evaluation. The purpose of the report is to help meet Research Objective 5B of the research agenda for the historic environment of the East Midlands which refers to the dissemination of information on Roman artefactual material (Knight et al 2012, 73).

The seven evaluation trenches were positioned to investigate the projected route across the site of Ryknield Street and to investigate any associated deposits or features. Features and deposits of Romano-British date were limited to Trench 6 in the south-western corner of the development site (Fig. 2).

Deposit (602), a dense, compact dark brown sand and clay, making up a possible occupation layer or surface, contained animal bone and abundant charcoal as well as pottery sherds of Romano-British date (Moore 2016, 12). Deposit (605), filling ditch [604], was a yellowish brown silty clay which, like deposit (602), contained Romano-British pottery sherds, animal bone and numerous flecks and fragments of charcoal. Deposit (605) also contained lumps of redeposited natural clay which suggested that ditch [604] had been backfilled intentionally (Moore 2016, 13). The good condition of the pottery, along with the presence of multiple sherds from single vessels found close to each other, also indicated that backfilling of the ditch occurred rapidly over a short period of time. Along with the pottery, the large quantities of animal bone retrieved from both deposits indicate nearby domestic activity during this period.

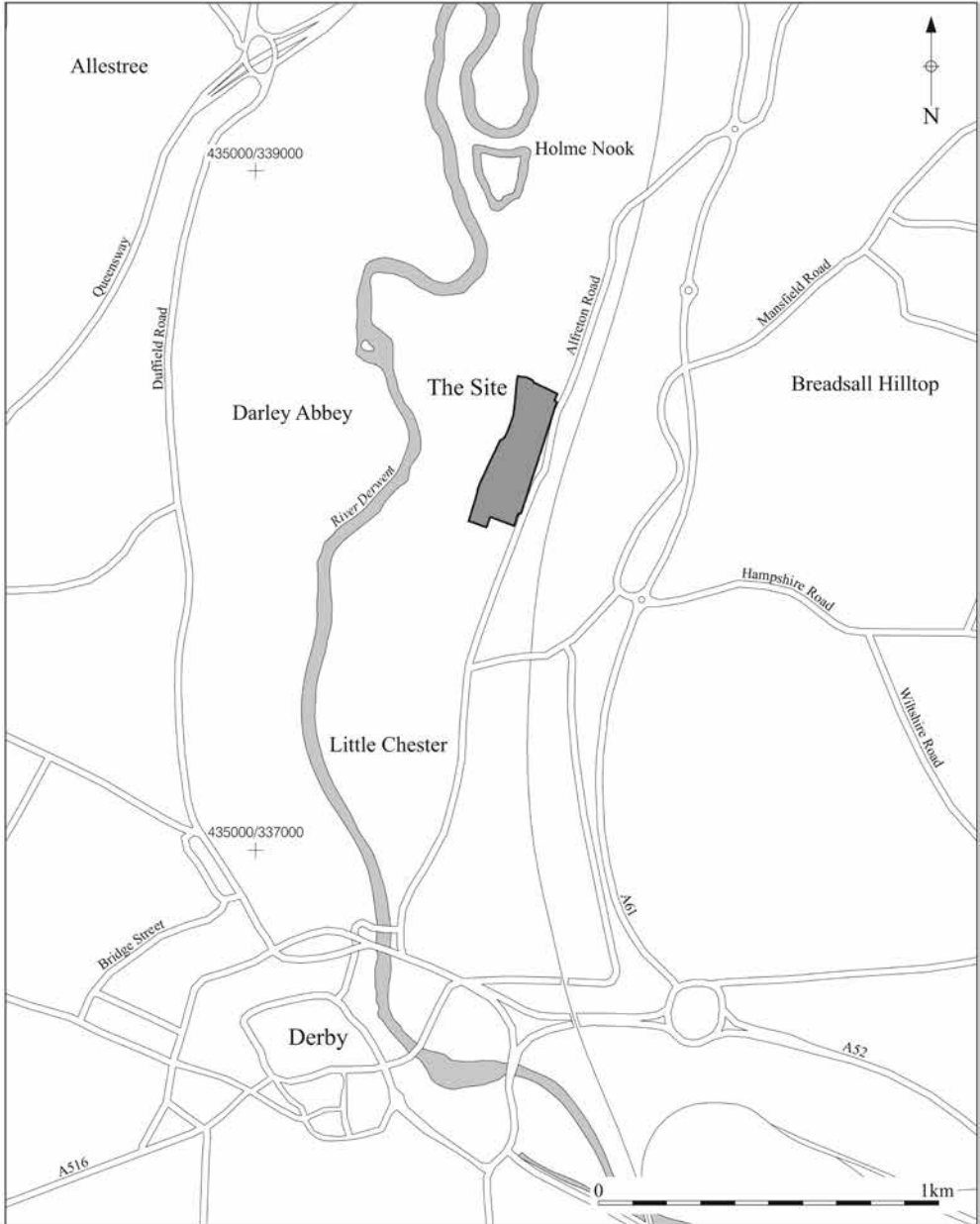


Fig. 1: Site location (scale 1:20,000).

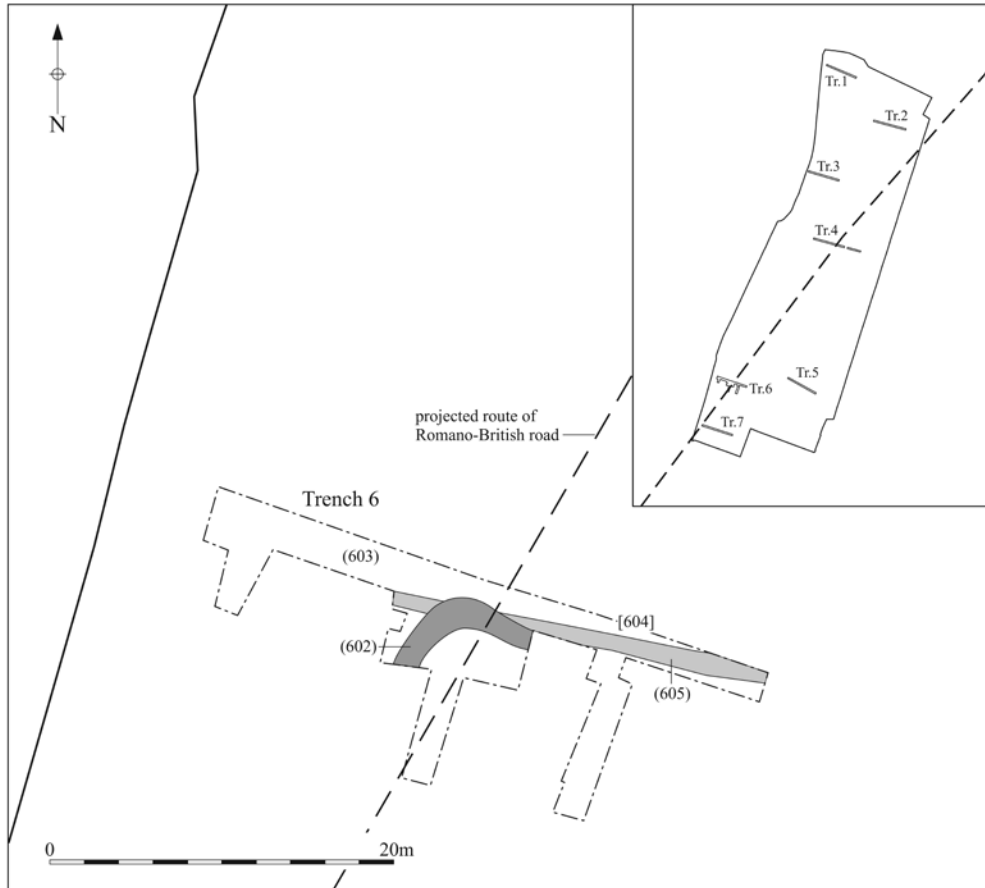


Fig. 2: Detail of Trench 6, showing the deposits from which the pottery was recovered (scale 1:400).

THE POTTERY

By Louise Hird

A total of 136 sherds, weighing 2684 grams was examined from two contexts – (602) and (605). The fabrics were classified according to the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection, Tomber and Dore 1998, where possible.

Fabrics

CO OX – Coarse, oxidised fabric

CO RE – Coarse, reduced fabric

DER CO –Derbyshire coarse ware

DOR BB1 – Dorset Black Burnished Ware F OX – Fine, oxidised fabric

OXF WH – Oxford white ware (mortaria) OXF RS – Oxford red-slipped ware

SAM – Samian

The Assemblage

As well as locally produced coarse wares in both oxidised and reduced fabrics, there was a significant number of sherds of Derbyshire ware (DER CO). All the Derbyshire ware sherds were from jars of Gillam 152 (Fig. 4). Given the proximity of known kilns at Hazelwood and Holbrook (Kay 1962) producing the ware, it is not surprising that one of the sherds from deposit (605) was a slight 'second' with a distorted rim. Production of Derbyshire ware began in the mid 2nd century AD in the local area before becoming a more widely traded ware in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD when it was exported to the Hadrian's Wall area amongst others.

Also from deposit (605) there is a BB1 (DOR BB1) dish of mid 2nd century AD date (Fig. 3) and a flanged bowl (Fig. 5.1) in Oxford red slipped ware (OXF RS) of a form which is dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD (Young 1977). Another vessel, a dish, could possibly be an Oxfordshire product (Fig. 5.2). The only Samian vessel present in the assemblage is a dish of Drag 18/31 or 18/31R (Fig. 6) dating to the early/mid 2nd century AD (Fig. 6). The only sherd of mortarium was a fragment of bead from an Oxfordshire white ware vessel (not illustrated).

Apart from the later Oxfordshire flanged bowl the pottery assemblage deposition can be dated to the second half of the 2nd century AD.

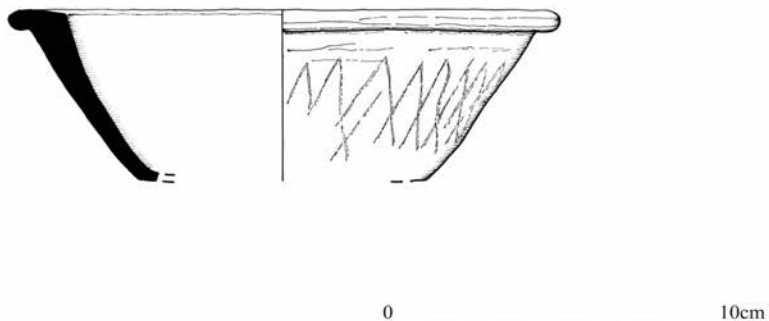


Fig. 3: Black Burnished ware dish of mid second century date (scale 1:2).

Illustrated vessels

Fig. 3 Dish in DOR BB1, Gillam 1976, 59. Mid 2nd century AD.

Fig. 4.1 Jar in DER CO, Gillam 152. Derbyshire oxidised fabric. The form is dated AD140-350 by Gillam but in the production area a 2nd century AD date is probable.

Fig. 4.2 Jar in DER CO, Gillam 152. Derbyshire ware reduced fabric.

Fig. 4.3 Jar in DER CO, Gillam 152. Derbyshire ware reduced fabric.

Fig. 5.1 Oxford red slipped ware flanged bowl. OXF RS. Trace of white paint remains on rim Young Type 51/52. AD 240-400.

Fig. 5.2 Grooved rim dish in fine oxidised fabric F OX. Probably an Oxford product.

Fig. 6 Samian dish, Drag 18/31 or 18/31R, dated to the mid 2nd century AD.

Fig. 7.1 Jar in CO OX of 2nd century AD form.

Fig. 7.2 Jar with rouletted decoration in CO OX ware. Locally produced and of 2nd century AD form.

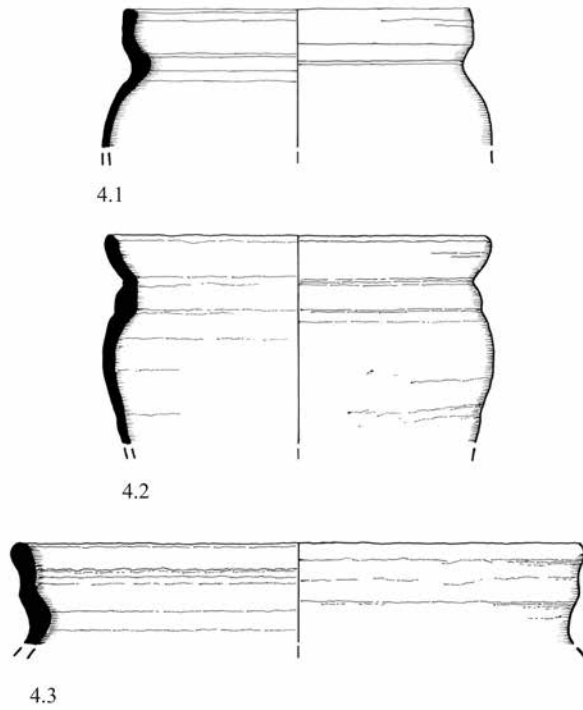


Fig. 4: Derbyshire ware jars (scale 1:2).

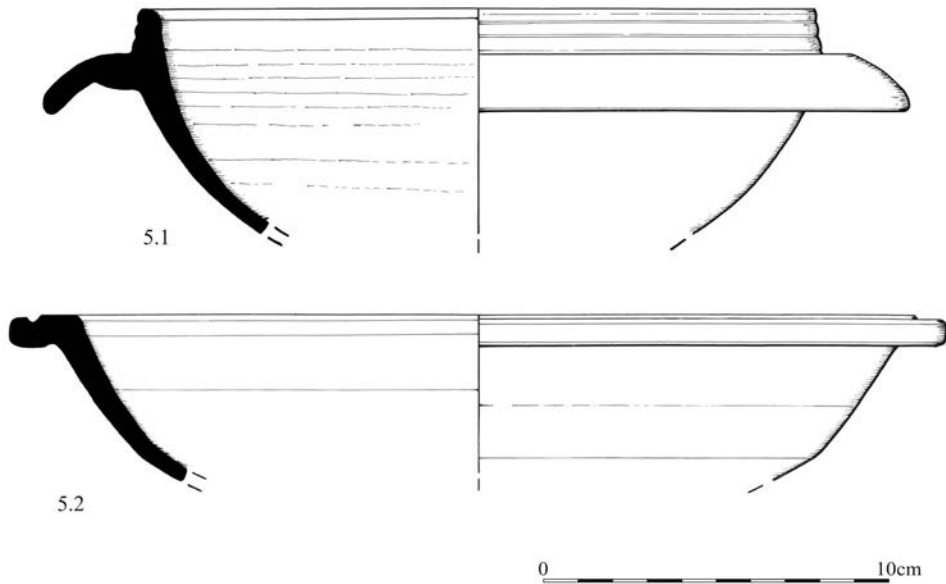


Fig. 5: Oxfordshire ware bowls (scale 1:2).

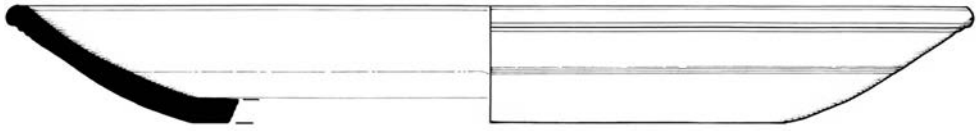
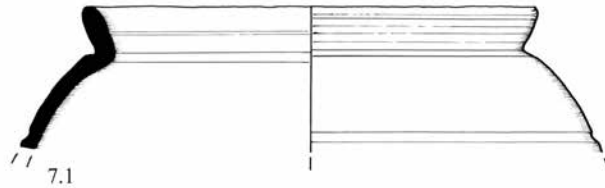
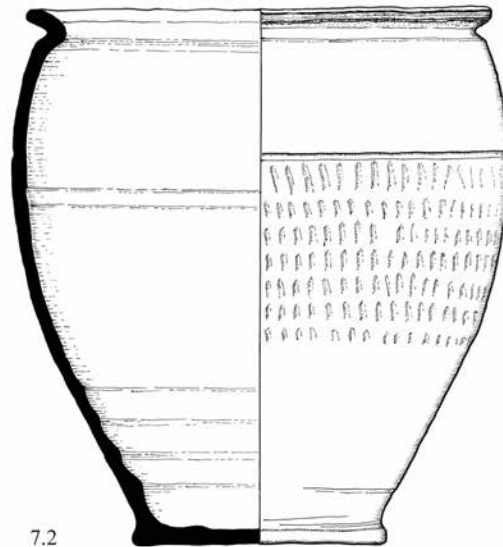


Fig. 6: Samian dish (scale 1:2).



7.1



7.2

0  10cm

Fig. 7: Coarse Oxidised ware of probable local origin (scale 1:2).

CONCLUSIONS

Trench 6 contained features and deposits which evidenced Romano-British activity within the development site during the mid 2nd century AD, possibly continuing into the 4th century AD. The evidence consisted of an irregular surface and an east-west aligned ditch. Both features yielded a significant quantity of Romano-British pottery sherds including multiple sherds from single vessels and an assemblage of animal bones consisting of sheep/goat,

cattle and horse. The vessel types which make up the assemblage are associated with food storage, preparation and serving and are likely to relate to domestic occupation in the vicinity. However, there was no evidence to suggest the ditch found in Trench 6 was directly related to the projected route of Rykniel Street.

The pottery assemblage for the most part dates to the second half of the 2nd century AD and may be related to activity that commenced following the Antonine re-occupation of Derventio Coritanorum (Swan 1984, 125). A similar date range has been attributed to a recently excavated pottery assemblage associated with Derventio Coritanorum's fort defences but in that case the assemblage constituents were quite different, containing a relatively high proportion of fine wares and a poor representation of locally produced Derbyshire wares (Miller and Dunn 2014, 18). In contrast, much of the assemblage from the former Derby Cables and Crompton Parkinson site was locally produced coarse ware probably derived from the nearby kilns at Holbrook and Hazelwood, which lay close to the line of Rykniel Street (Myres nd, 6). The difference in the two assemblages may be related to the fort assemblage being derived from a military supply chain rather than a local market.

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