

The Mileoak Roman Villa, Handley, Towcester, Northamptonshire

Report on the Excavations of 1955 and 1956

by CHARLES GREEN and JO DRAPER

This report has been prepared by Jo Draper, with the aid of a grant from the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Department of the Environment, from notes and a partially prepared manuscript left by Charles Green, who died in 1972.

The introduction and general description are the work of Charles Green, revised by Jo Draper, and the description of the excavated features, finds reports and discussion the work of Jo Draper.

SUMMARY

In late Pleistocene times melt water left a deposit of Chalky Boulder Clay in a low point of the topography, here composed of Bajocian and Bathonian sediments. By the late Belgic period this stood as a slight dome and was used as an occupation site. Around AD 65-75 a substantial rectangular stone building, c 40 m by 16 m was constructed on the site. It had corridors on both long sides, twelve rooms, at least one mosaic and a hypocaust and a cellar. This building continued in use without major alteration until c AD 140-160, when it was demolished. A small irregular ditch or drain to the east of the building was backfilled c AD 100, whilst the building was in use. After at least partial destruction of the building a path was laid along the east side of the remains of the building: deposition of clay further to the west may have occurred at this time.

A medieval road was constructed across the building, and part of a medieval building was found to the east of the Roman one. The villa was discovered in the mid nineteenth century, but its precise location was forgotten until it was rediscovered in 1954.

INTRODUCTION

Pottery and structural remains were first noted on the site of this villa about 1846-8 and, in his survey of *Romano-British Northamptonshire*, in the Victoria County History, 1, Haverfield (1902, 199) included it in his list of villas as 'no 23, the Foscothe Villa', basing his information on the records of its discovery in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* for 1847, 1849 and 1852. These record the discovery of bricks, tiles etc; 'the site was not explored'.

In the meantime the precise location of the building seems to have been forgotten. It was not until 1954, when the field 'Delf No 1' on the south side of the Towcester — Abthorpe road, which had been under grass in living memory, was ploughed that the site was again recognised by local residents. Small test trenches to the outer walls were cut by Mr Victor S Ashby and a few friends and the approximate extent of the structure was determined. As it was clear that ploughing would rapidly destroy the remains, an excavation of the site was arranged for the 1955 season by the Ministry of Works. For this purpose a small area was left unploughed, the remainder of the field being under a crop of barley.

The landowners, University College, Oxford, and the tenant, Mr J W Barford of Mileoak Farm, readily agreed to the excavation. In 1956, after the first year's work had proved the need, they extended their permission to allow the investigation of a small part of the field on the north side of the road, a field at that time containing a crop of beans.

The labour was provided by Messrs Chowns Limited, the local contractors to the Ministry of Works. Mr Green was fortunate in having their Mr E Inwood as chargehand throughout the work, as he had had previous excavation experience.

Digging began on June 16, 1955, and the filling in was completed by August 23. The later excavation, north of the road, began on April 9, 1956, and continued until May 5.¹

Foscote, from which Haverfield took his original name for this villa, is a hamlet some three quarters of a mile west of the villa site. As, however, it lies in the adjoining parish of Abthorpe, it has been thought desirable to re-name the villa as 'The Mileoak Villa' as it stands on Mileoak Farm, in the parish of Towcester. In the third edition of the Ordnance Survey *Map of Roman Britain* (1956) it is named in the index as 'Foscote (N.E. of)'.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Northamptonshire uplands form a part of the Jurassic Ridge, long recognised as a line of prehistoric communication between south-western and north-eastern Britain (Grimes 1951). The southern part of the county, in which the villa lies, was in Catuvellaunian territory; the later Roman town of *Lactodorum* was nearby.

Through it ran the great Roman road, now known as Watling Street, from London and Verulamium to Chester and the north west. At Towcester it was joined by a secondary road from Southampton, running through Winchester, Silchester, Dorchester (Oxon.) and Alchester. Many villas are known to have stood on these limestone wolds, an area divided from the Cotswolds by the broad valley of the Stour and the narrow valley of the Cherwell, both of which are floored with the Liassic clays.

From a source near the Oxfordshire boundary, the river Tove flows roughly eastward to Towcester, the site of the Roman *Lactodorum*, on Watling Street. East of the town, it bears to the south east and joins the Ouse near Stony Stratford. In its upper course it has dissected the Great and Inferior Oolite Series of the upland, exposing sediments of the Upper and Middle Lias strata in its valley sides. Running along a hillside shelf on the south side of the valley above Towcester lies the modern Towcester — Abthorpe road, a minor road which continues up the valley through Wappenham to Sulgrave, and so to Banbury in Oxfordshire.

Close to the western boundary of Towcester parish, about a mile and a half from the town centre, the shelf broadens and here, facing westward and straddling the modern road, lies the villa (FIG 1). As the excavation revealed, a broad

¹ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Mr. Green wished to record his thanks to Mr W S Marsh, Estate Bursar of University College, Oxford, who visited the site during the excavation and who did much to aid the work; to Messrs Chowns Ltd, whose directors and staff were at all times ready to help when called upon; to Messrs Victor S Ashby and R Kingston, of Towcester, both of whom gave generous help in many ways; to Miss Eileen Marlow and Miss Mary Barford, who gave much help with the section drawing; to Mr Alan Warhurst, Curator of the Northampton Museum, and his staff; to Mr Torr, who so kindly undertook the processing of exposed plates and films; and above all, to Mr and Mrs J W Barford of Mileoak Farm, whose kindly interest and generous hospitality contributed so much to the success of the excavations. Mr Green also gratefully acknowledged Mr Barford's contributions to the solution of topographical problems. His family have farmed in the district since Commonwealth days, and he had the lore of the countryside at his fingertips.

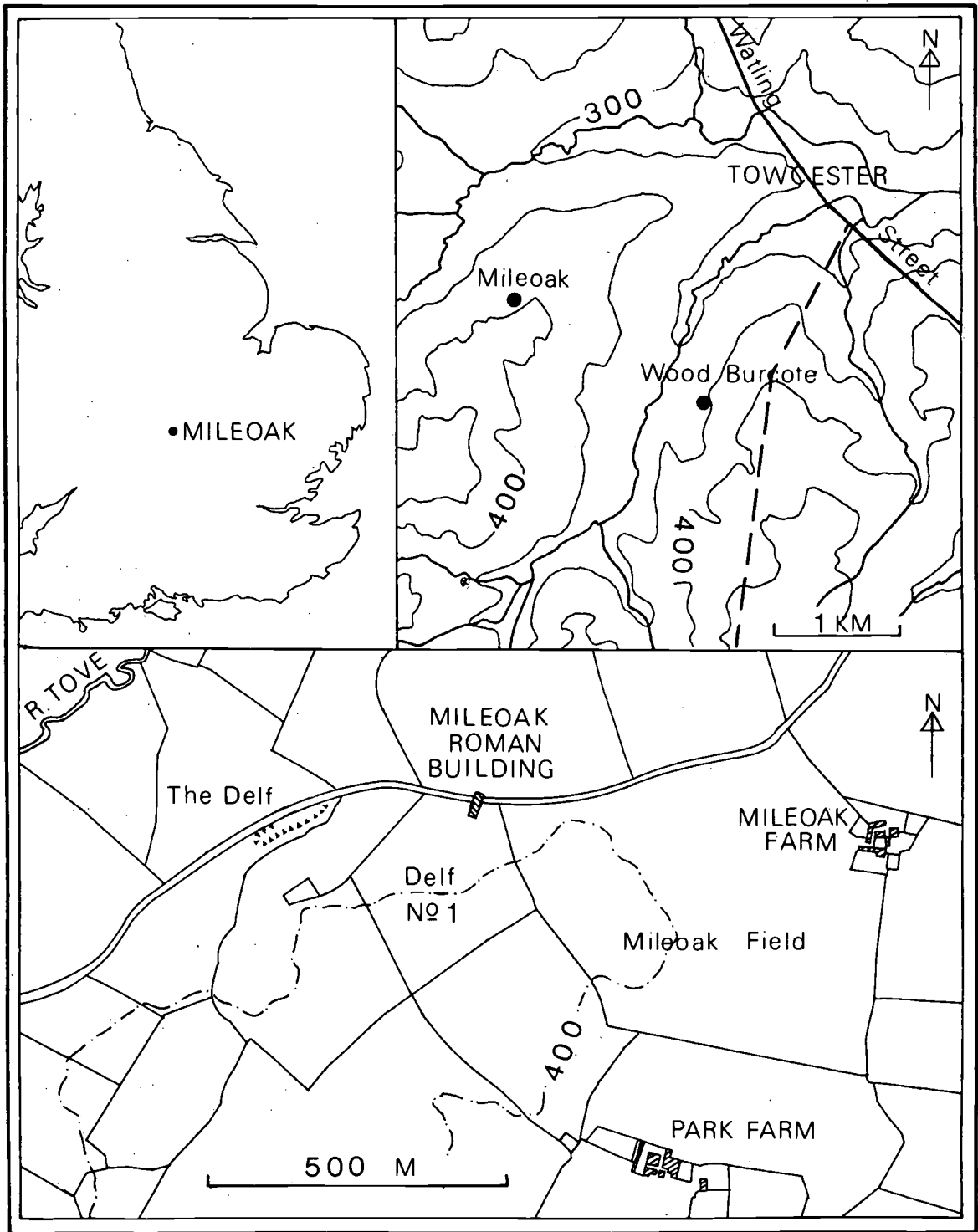


Fig 1 Mileok: site location maps, after Charles Green. Contours in feet.

shallow gully, filled with stiff Chalky Boulder Clay, had been torn in the oolitic Blisworth Limestone and, at the time the house was built, the clay had been eroded to a shallow domelike form, draining gently to south, south west and west, the drainage line following roughly the limits of the excavation (FIG 2).

This broken limestone rim, running roughly east and west across the northern end of the building, was in the early stages of the excavation to lead to some confusion, for in the preliminary tests of 1954 its debris had been mistaken for an extension eastward of the building lying along a north-south line. The existing building, as it is now recorded, was in fact believed at the time to be the west wing of a larger structure. It was for this reason that tests were made in the north western corner of Mileoak Field, south of the spinney, where it was thought the southern end of a postulated east wing might lie. Here it was that the medieval floor was exposed and recognised to belong to a different age (FIG 2).

Some 200 yards to the west an old quarry, 'The Delf', marked an outcrop of ferruginous sandstone of the Northampton Sand, the earliest archaeological traces of which were found in the Belgic floors below the villa. A mile and a half to the south east, capping the ridge east of the Brackley road and the Swinney Brook — as it is locally named — lies the site of the Roman road from Alchester to Towcester (FIG 1). This road has been traced northward through Stowe Park to a point in Whittlebury parish 3 miles south of the site.²

North of this point there are no visible traces along its presumed line until, just where the ridge top dips down towards Towcester, a slightly raised *agger* of stone seems to mark its course where it turns a little to the eastward to join the Watling Street and so to pass into Towcester by the main road bridge and gate.

An old paved track, now earth covered, lay pointing towards the villa in a field bordering the west side of the Brackley road. This may perhaps be the villa's outlet to the contemporary main road, but as no other clear traces could be found, either east of the Swinney Brook or to the westward in Mileoak Field, it must remain uncertain.³

The immediate area of the villa site has been considerably modified since Roman times by the construction of the Towcester-Abthorpe road. The original bordering ditches lay much wider apart than the present day ditches and hedgerows. That on the south cut right through the wall foundations into the clay. What may be the old northern ditch, cut close to the broken limestone edge, actually ran along the line of the northern wall but this, owing to its greater depth of footings, showed some traces of its original line.

This early road appears to have lain on the land belonging to Mileoak Farm and, in the middle of last century, the landowner decided to reduce the width of the road by removing the bordering fences, filling the ditches and throwing the verges into the adjoining fields.⁴ This was done and, it would seem, was the occasion on which the villa's traces were first noted. South of the road, on the lower slope of the 'dome', the building was left untouched, but on the northern side, over and to the west of the building, the surface had been cut in a slope down to the new carriageway, thereby removing most of the north western corner of the building. It was, then, a sadly mutilated building which awaited investigation.

² Information from the Chief Archaeology Officer, Ordnance Survey.

³ Preliminary information from Mr J W Barford. The track and its line in both directions were carefully surveyed by Mr Barford and Mr Green.

⁴ Information from Mr J W Barford.

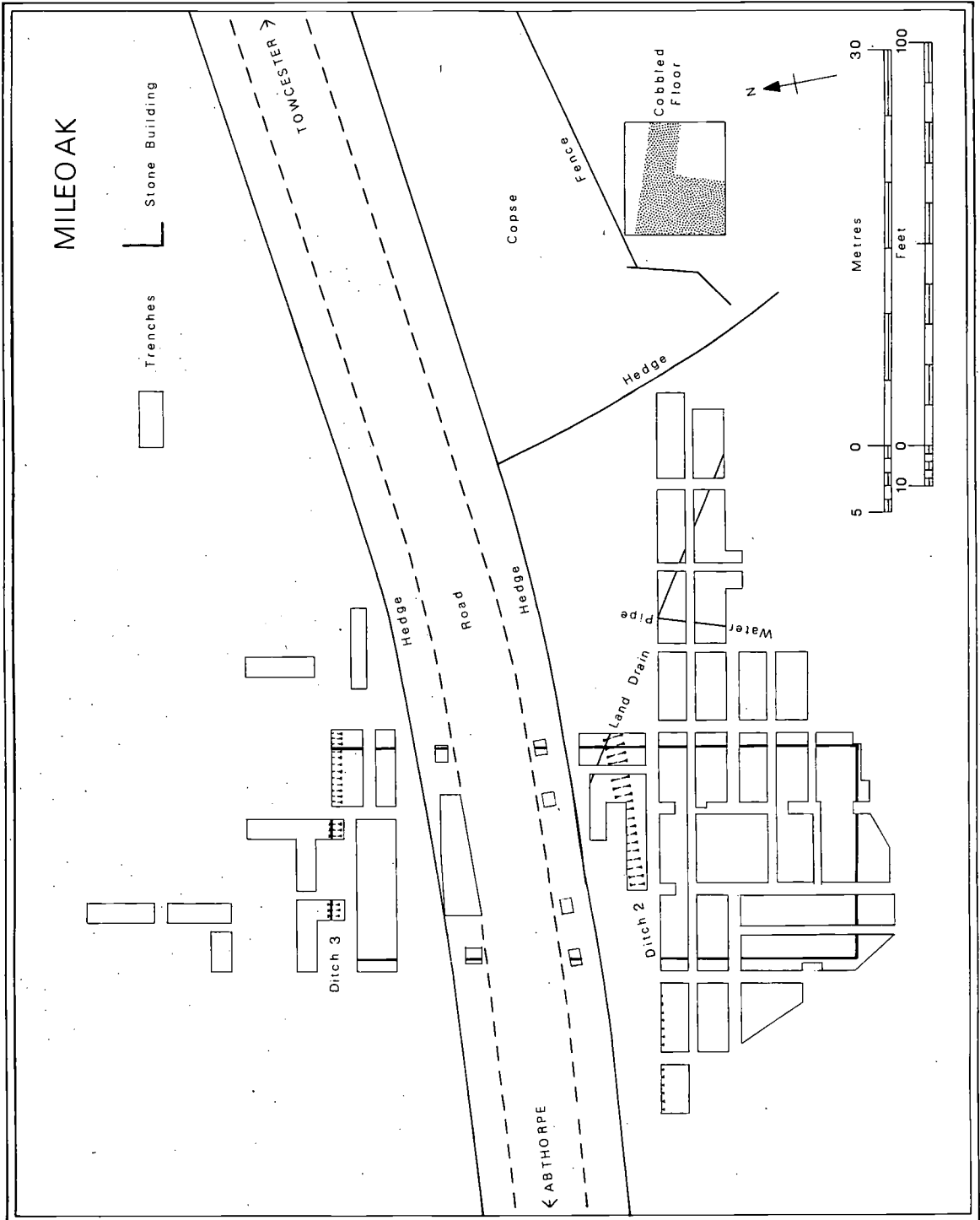


Fig 2 Mileoak: trench location plan including an outline of the stone building, and post Roman features.

EXCAVATED FEATURES

BELGIC

Pottery nos 1 and 2 FIG 7; iron nos 24 and 28 FIG 13; plan FIG 3; sections AB, CD and LM FIG 4; and PL 7.

At the southern end of the site, sealed by the clay and sand floors of the later stone building, were 13 areas of burnt material, probably hearths. They were cut by the walls of the stone building, and maximum dimensions varied from 2ft (0.60m) to 10ft (3.00m). They rested directly on a thin layer of ironstone cobbling, which itself sealed the top of the natural clay. This clay was disturbed to a depth of 6-8in (0.15m to 0.20m) beneath the eastern corridor of the stone building, and to a shallower depth to the west. This disturbance of the clay extended over the whole of the area of the stone building to the south of the road. The cobbling was not found more than *c* 2ft (0.60m) from the building, and it is possible that it only survived here because of the protection afforded by the building. The path to the west of the building (p 44) also sealed the top of the clay, but since the path was later in date than the stone building, and since the clay there had probably been disturbed during the Roman period, the fact that the cobbling was not found does not indicate that it did not originally extend that far.

The specific areas of cobbling were not recorded, but it disappeared towards the centre of the stone building. The hearths were obviously part of the same phase of occupation as the cobbling since they were all recorded as lying directly on top of the cobbles. A 2-4in (0.05m-0.10m) thickness of burnt red clay was recorded beneath hearths 1, 4, 7, 8 and 9, and nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 10 and 11 all had burnt red centres.

No structures were noted in association with the hearths and cobbling. One posthole was excavated on the extreme south western corner of the stone building and another outside the building on the east (postholes 1 and 2). Indications of other postholes were found, but their positions were not recorded. Posthole 2 is clearly sealed by the destruction rubble of the stone building, and the stratigraphic position of posthole 1 is not clear. Both could relate to the hearths, but no 1 in particular may be of later date.

The small amount of pottery securely stratified with the hearths is late Belgic. It is possible to conjecture that some of the earlier samian from the site (p 45) relates to this period, but the secure stratification of a coin (no 1, p 45) and samian (nos 1 and 2, p 45) of the period AD 55-75 within the floor structure of the stone building, and the fact that there is only one piece of samian from the site which may be earlier than the Flavian period (no 24, p 47) makes this unlikely.

An alternative is that the hearths and the buildings presumed to be associated with them, are part of the same phase as Ditch 1 (p 43) whose backfilling probably dates to around AD 100. In this case all the first century samian would be considered part of the debris of this phase of occupation, and the coin and samian in the floors of the stone building residual, and not indicative of the date of that building. Stratigraphically there is no connection left between the hearths, or the stone building, and Ditch 1. Adherents to this theory would move the date of construction of the stone building forward to sometime just after AD 100, giving that building an even shorter life. It would, however, be difficult to consider as residual the samian bowl found in the corridor floor (no 1, p 45), since it was two-thirds complete, and was found in a small area. It was almost certainly broken *in situ*. Thus this theory seems unlikely and is rejected.

THE STONE BUILDING (see plans FIGS 2 and 3, and sections FIG 4).

The major phase of occupation on the site was represented by a rectangular stone building, 130 ft (39.60 m) long and 51½ ft (15.70 m) wide. This had been cut by the modern road, and the areas of the building to the north and south of this road show different characteristics and different survival patterns. For these reasons the two areas have been described separately.

AREA TO THE SOUTH OF THE ROAD

The larger part of the building lay to the south of the road. There was a corridor on the east and west sides, and 5 rooms within the central area.

The eastern and western outer walls (hereafter called corridor walls) had shallower footings than the main and partition walls, the corridor walls being on average 2 ft (0.60 m) deep and the others 3¼ ft (1.00 m). All footings were deeper at the northern end of the site: for example, the main wall footings were 2½ ft (0.75 m) at section A-B and 3½ ft (1.10 m) at section C-D. The footings were cut through the ironstone cobbling and hearths of the earlier period into the natural clay.

WALLS (see PLS 2, 3 and 4).

The walls were all *c* 2 ft (0.60 m) wide and fitted closely into the footings trenches, which were only slightly larger. Where surviving, the walls all appeared to be of one period. The corridor walls have been less robbed than the others.

The greatest height of wall surviving above present floor level was only 1 ft (0.30 m) and the floor levels were almost certainly lower than they were when the building was in use. Since the walls have probably also been lowered it is difficult to estimate the original height of either the floor or the walls.

Some indications that at least part of the superstructure of the walls was half-timbered were found, although the width of the surviving walls was larger than that usually found with timbering. In Room 6, on the inner side of the west main wall, lying on the clay floor, two pieces of carbonised wood were found, joined at right angles. Both were *c* 1 in (0.02 m) thick, one 2½ ft (0.75 m) long and 6 in (0.15 m) wide and the other *c* 1 ft 6 in (0.45 m) long and 7 in (0.17 m) wide. This may have been part of a wooden wall panel. More conclusive evidence was found to the west of the north-south partition wall between rooms 1 and 2. A 'sandwich' of wall plaster, face outwards/carbonised wood/clay or burnt daub/carbonised wood/wall plaster, face outwards, was found, again lying on the clay floor. Unfortunately no more detail is recorded, but this must have been part of a wooden framed, wattle and daub filled, plaster surfaced wall panel. Quantities of burnt wood and large nails were also found to the east of the same partition wall, and to the south of the main wall in the same area. These could have been derived from the roof, but equally they may be from wall panels.

These finds, the carbonised wood and nails noted in other areas of the site, and the paucity of stone rubble, suggest that at least some of the walls were only dwarf masonry walls used to support a timber superstructure.

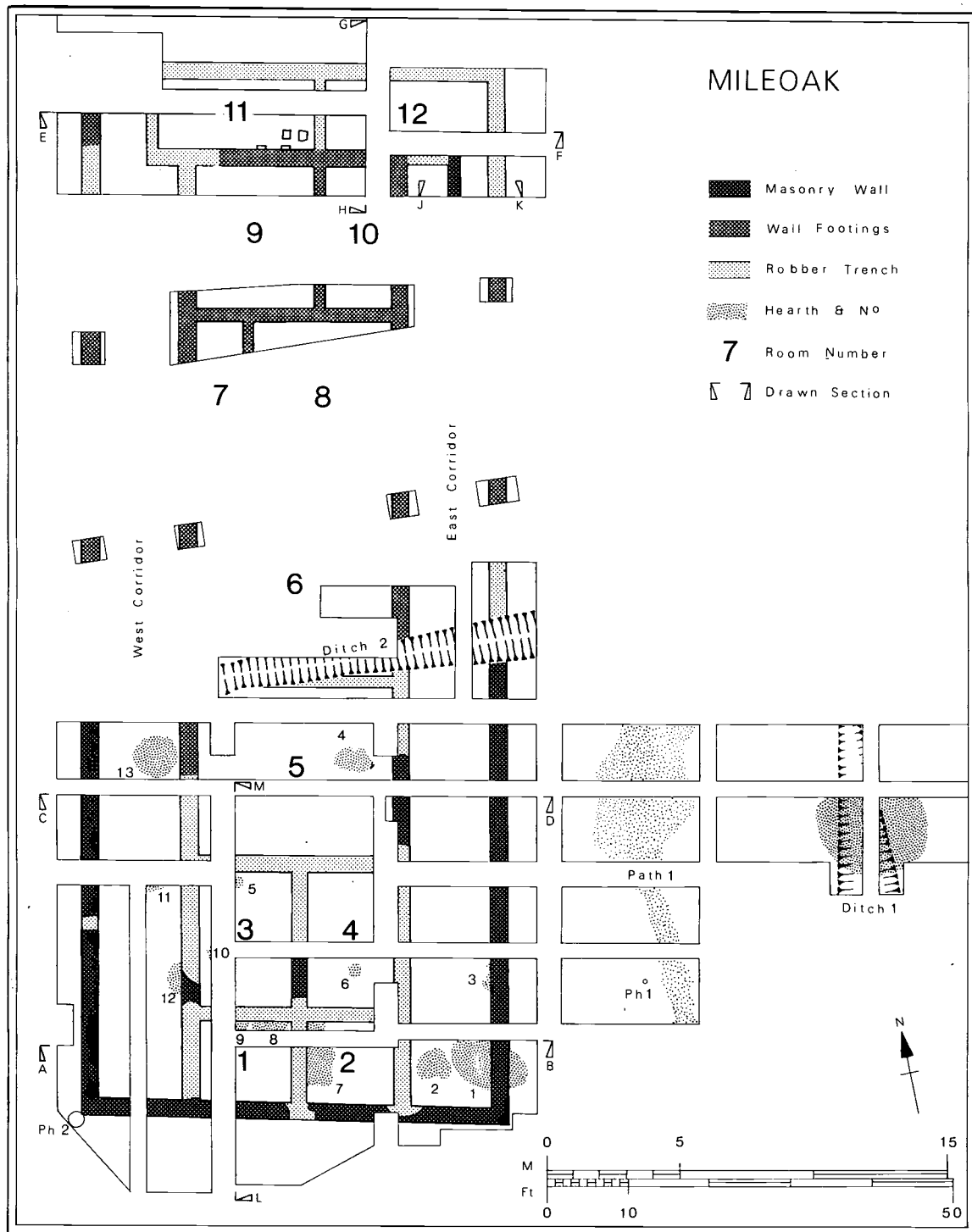


Fig 3 Mileoak: excavated features.

FLOORS

In general the floors in this part of the building were clay, or clay and sand, on average 6 in (0.15 m) thick. No occupation debris or apparent wear was noted on any of them and it seems likely that they have been lowered since the building went out of use.

The floors were laid directly onto the ironstone cobbling and hearths of the earlier period.

The eastern corridor floor varied from greenish brown clay to a more sandy clay. The southern end of this floor was laid on a thin layer of rubble, and had either been laid in several layers, or had been repaired (section AB). The western corridor floor was clay, partly green. The centre of this corridor had two floors, an upper one of clay, which was divided from the lower one of sanded clay by a layer of brown loamy soil.

Rooms 1, 3 and 4 all had clay floors. Rooms 2 and 5 had clay floors with sand beneath them. The clay in room 5 showed a similar 'layering' to that in the southern end of the eastern corridor. This floor may have been laid in several layers, or it may have been repaired.

ROOF

Quantities of broken red clay tiles, both flat and imbrex, formed the major constituent of the rubble, both immediately outside the building and over the area of the building itself, so that these were certainly the roofing material used.

INTERNAL DECORATION

During the exploratory excavation of the site by Mr Ashby, wall plaster was found standing to a height of 1 ft (0.30 m) at the top of one of the walls. Which wall, the colour of the plaster and whether it was internal or external is not clear, but it was found in the southern area of the building.

AREA TO THE SOUTH OF THE ROAD

Eastern Corridor:

One small piece of white plaster with splash decoration was found *in situ* on the inner face of this corridor wall. The height of the plaster, which could have helped with fixing the original floor levels, is not recorded. Other pieces of this pattern enclosed by a rectangle formed by a thick bluey black stripe lined on one side by a thin red stripe, were found in the central area of the corridor. It is clear that the side of the stripe not lined with red bordered a plain area at least 150 cm wide. Some plain white plaster, a small piece of sea green plaster and other fragments of splash decorated plaster were found. Plain white plaster with a thin (80 mm) stripe yellow and another of sea green were found, also in the central area. It is impossible to relate these to the bluey black stripe pattern or to tell whether they were horizontal, vertical or otherwise.

The rest of the plaster from the corridor consists of fragments of splash decorated panels, or the bluey black and red stripe. Fragments were found along the whole length of the corridor on the south side of the road. The splash decorated plaster is in red, yellow and bluey black: sometimes one colour only, sometimes two and many of the larger pieces have all three colours.

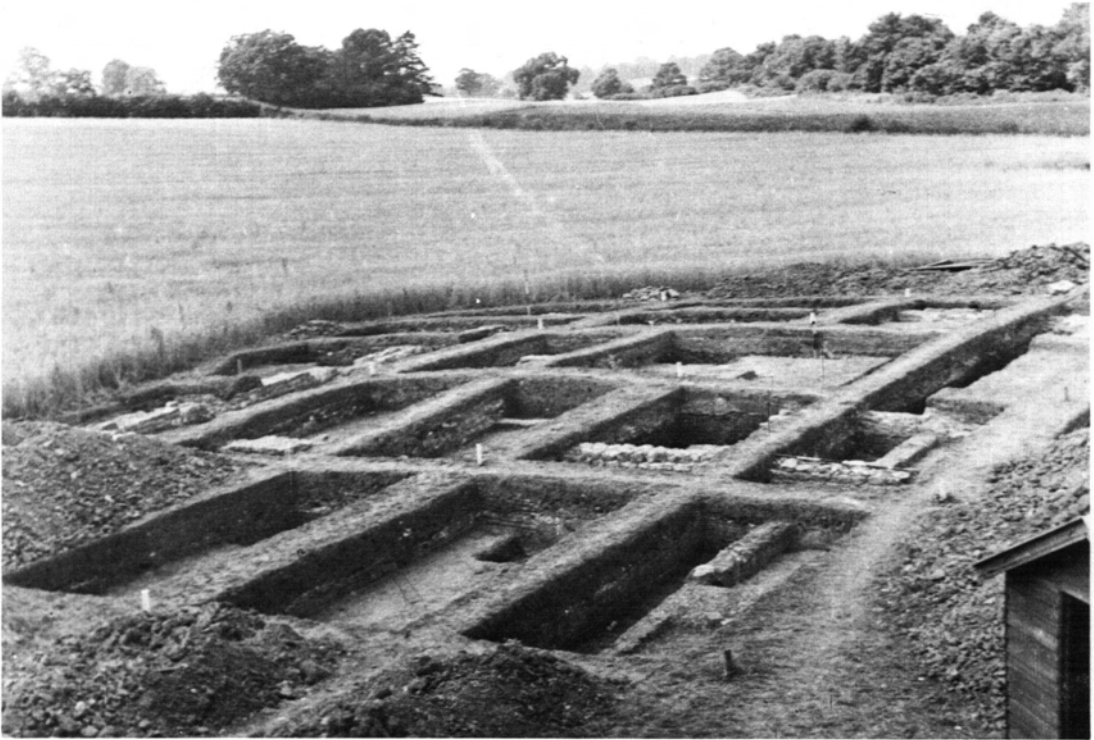


Plate 1 Mileoak: general view of the stone building on the south of the road, from the north-east. Scale in feet.



Plate 2 Mileoak: general view of the stone building on the south of the road from the west. The western corridor wall is in the foreground. Scale in feet.



Plate 3 Mileoak: the south western corner of the stone building. Scale in feet and inches.

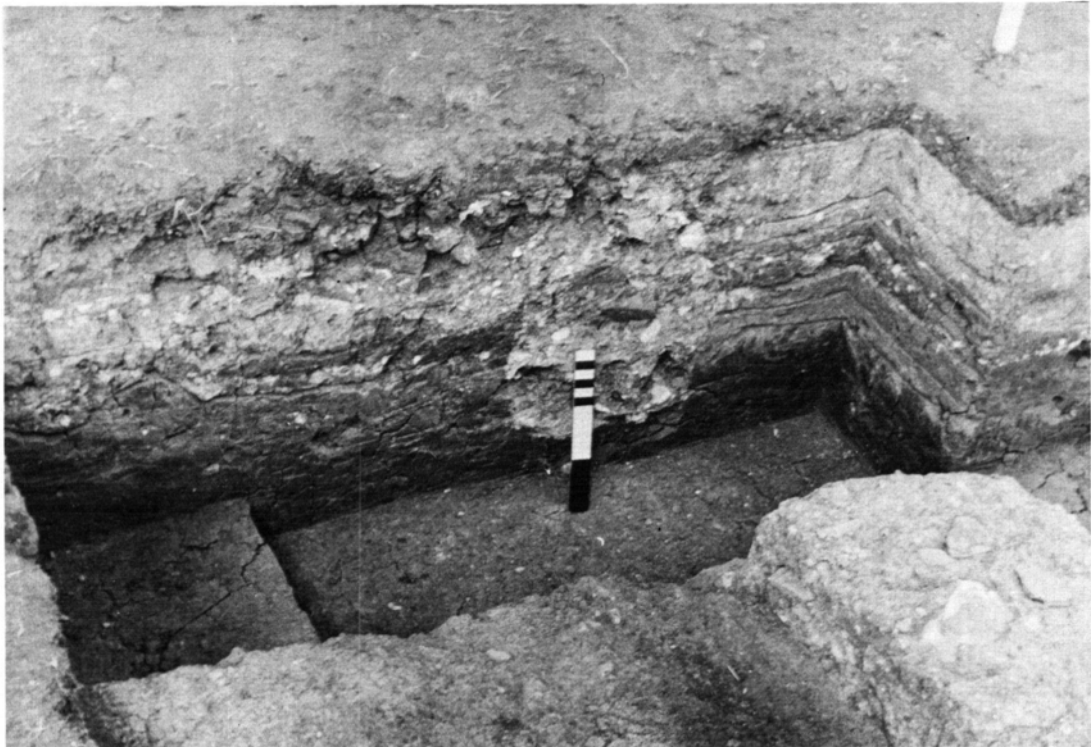


Plate 4 Mileoak: part of section A-B across the western corridor wall robber trench and the floors. Scale in feet and inches.
Northamptonshire Archaeology 1978, 13

The large pieces of plaster from this corridor give the clues for much of the other plaster from the site, which occurs in smaller fragments. The bluey black stripe pattern is found making a corner (FIG 11, 10), and another piece shows the complete width of the bluey black stripe, and shows that there is not a red stripe lining both sides of it (FIG 11, 9). These large pieces of plaster are much thicker than the smaller fragments which survive. They are up to 80 mm thick, and contain great lumps of tile towards the back (up to 70 mm long *c* 10-20 mm thick). There is no obvious top layer, and most of the plaster is fairly coarse.

Room 1

Wall plaster similar to the bluey black stripe pattern was found in the rubble in this room: portions of the red and bluey black stripes, yellow, black and red splash decorated plaster and plain white plaster were found.

The robber trench for the partition wall between rooms 1 and 2 contained splash decorated plaster, a small piece of finer quality plaster painted red and an amorphous piece of pink cement.

Room 2

In room 2 the 'sandwich' of wall plaster, burnt wood and daub was found (p 34), but the colour of the plaster is not known. Plain white plaster, tri-colour splashed plaster and the wide bluey black stripe, all probably relating to the scheme already described in the corridor and room 1, were found here. Two pieces of different patterns are illustrated (FIG 11, 11). On one there is a narrow red stripe with blue either side of it, and the other has several yellow stripes on a bluey black ground, with splashes of a bright sea green.

Room 3

The robber trenches between rooms 1 and 3 and between rooms 3 and 4 both yielded small pieces of the bluey black stripe pattern. From room 3 or 4 comes part of the same pattern, including part of a corner like no. 10 (FIG 11). Another bluey black stripe is complete and 60 mm wide. One piece from this group, a narrow blue stripe on a splashed ground, is illustrated as part of no. 12 (FIG 11), as a smaller similar piece was found in room 4.

Room 4

Tentative reconstruction of a panel is possible from the fragments found in the rubble in this room (FIG 11, 12). The pattern includes the bluey black stripe. Here it is possible to relate the narrow yellow stripe to the pattern, and to suggest that the splashed area was broken up by narrow blue stripes. It is impossible to know if the narrow stripes were horizontal or vertical: no 10 suggests that the wide stripes occurred both horizontally and vertically.

Quantities of small pieces from this panel were found, and some plain red plaster.

Room 5

Very little plaster was found in this large room. One piece with a white stripe and white and yellow splashes on a blue ground (FIG 11, 13) was found in the topsoil in this room, and another piece with only the white stripe was found in the rubble. Plain white plaster was also found.

Western Corridor

In the central area of this corridor, just outside the corridor wall, some plain white, finer quality plaster was found, some of it shaped (FIG 11, 15). This may be part of a moulding from the junction of floor and wall. The other plaster found was also of the better quality, and was painted red with green and white, and white stripes (FIG 11, 14). A large unsurfaced (120 mm by 40 mm square) piece of pink cement was also found here, along with coarser white plaster splashed with red, bluey black and yellow, and part of a thick bluey black stripe.

EXTERNAL DECORATION

Quantities of plain maroon wall plaster were found outside the building on all sides. On the west scraps were found as far as 25ft (7.60m) away from the building. Beside the middle section of the eastern corridor wall maroon plaster was found lying face downwards, as if it had fallen from the external face of the wall. Similarly, at the northern end of the western corridor wall, some 1½ ft (0.45 m) from the external face of the wall, a line of maroon plaster, face downwards, was traced for c 5ft (1.50m). Both these areas of plaster were in the lower levels of the destruction rubble.

It seems likely, therefore, that the walls were rendered externally with plaster, which was painted maroon.

AREA UNDER THE ROAD

Eight small trenches, four each side of the road, were dug in the roadside verges, to check the position of the corridor and main walls of the building. Remnants of the footings courses of these and internal partition walls were found, but the area had been disturbed to such an extent that this was all that remained. The footings trenches were dug into the natural clay, but no further stratigraphy survived, so that there is no indication of the flooring used in this area. The footings were of similar dimensions and construction to those already described to the south of the road.

AREA TO THE NORTH OF THE ROAD

The western side of the building on this side of the road had been destroyed, probably by ploughing. Only a small length of the footings of the western corridor wall survived, almost on the corner at the northern end.

This northern wall was destroyed in its upper levels by a modern disturbance (p 42), but its deep, robbed footings trench survived at the eastern end, below this disturbance. The western half was completely destroyed.

At the eastern end, parts of the internal partition walls survived. These walls and the western corridor wall, where it survived, were of similar dimensions and construction to those south of the road.

CELLAR (See PLS. 5, 6 and 8)

The eastern half of the north wall, the east corridor wall and the wall in the centre of the eastern corridor (hereafter referred to as the cellar wall) all had extremely deep footings, being on average 5ft (1.50m) deep. The footings trenches were all cut through the natural clay to a level just above that of the change in subsoil to limestone. Their depth was required because they surrounded a cellar. The other wall to face the cellar, the east west partition

wall, did not have such deep footings, and this side of the cellar was only faced with the natural clay. Therefore this wall probably only carried a light loading (section G-H FIG 4).

The only one of these deep walls to have the masonry surviving was the cellar wall; all the others had been robbed completely. Fourteen faced courses of this wall survived, standing to a height of just under 4ft (1.20m) on the cellar side. Three faced courses were excavated on the other side of the wall, to the corridor. It is uncertain whether the wall was faced for its full height on this side; it seems unlikely.

The exact original depth of the cellar is not clear. No floor levels survived in this area, and since the floor level of the cellar itself was below the bottom of the walls, it seems likely that the cellar had become slightly deeper with use. However, the depth was now *c* 4ft 6in (1.40m) and it was likely to have originally been *c* 6ft (1.80m) below floor levels. The latest floor in the cellar was simply the top of the natural limestone, which had been trampled.

HYPOCAUST

The floor level of room 11 had been destroyed, but there remained, laid directly onto the natural clay surface the remains of 5 pilae. These were constructed of both tile and stone set in pink concrete, which contained chips of tile. It seems likely that the concrete and tile shown on section G-H (FIG 4) resulted from the destruction of the floor, rather than being part of the floor structure.

Three fragments of box or flue tile were found in the rubble in this room and another was found in the southern area of the building (FIG 11, 6, 7 and 8). Many coarse red tile tesserae, *c* 1 in (25mm) square to *c* 1½ in (40mm) square, were also found in the rubble in room 11. As no small tesserae were found it is possible that the floor, which was laid on the pilae, consisted solely of large tesserae; however, it is possible that they only formed a border around a mosaic of finer stones.

INTERNAL DECORATION

Only a few fragments of wall plaster were recovered from this area of the building. The two striped and spotted pieces illustrated (FIG 11, 16 and 17) are the most complex, but plain maroon plaster was also found, including a large quantity near the east west partition wall.

DATE OF THE STONE BUILDING

The two most useful indicators of the date of the building are the coins and the samian, both those which are stratified within the building and those in general association with it. A denarius of Claudius 1, probably lost *c* AD 50 - 70 (p 45 no 1) was found in the earliest sand and clay floor in the eastern corridor, along with a samian bowl made *c* AD 55-75 (p 45 no 1). In the western corridor floor a piece of samian, which was probably made before AD 79, was possibly found (p 45 no 2).

Of the remaining samian from the site, only two pieces are possibly as early as Neronian (AD 54-68) (p 47 nos 24 and 25). Two thirds of the samian vessels from the site date from *c* AD 70-100. The rest are second century, and since three of these pieces are stratified in the destruction of the cellar, it seems likely that these



Plate 5 Mileoak: north side of the road: the cellar fills. Part of section E-F. The main wall background left. Scale in feet.



Plate 6 Mileoak: cellar fills, with background left the cellar wall, and background right the main wall. Foreground part of section E-F. Scale in feet.
Northamptonshire Archaeology 1976, 13

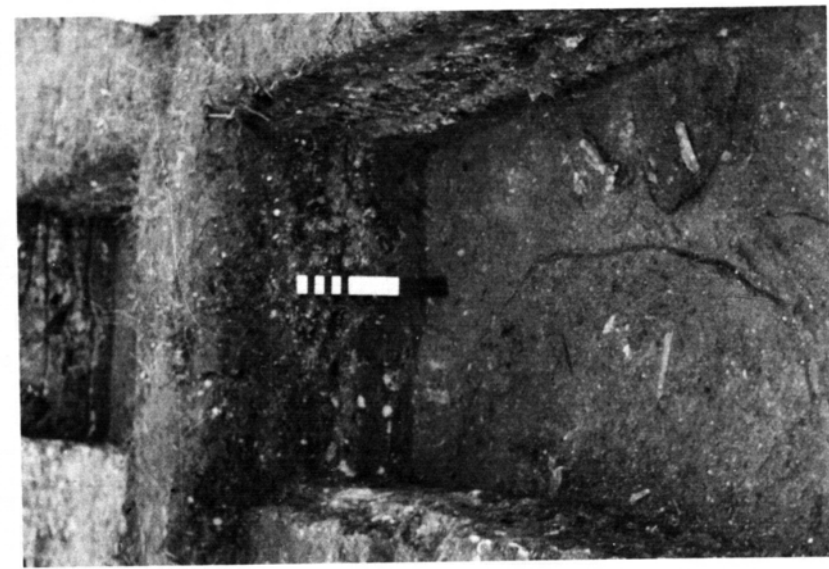


Plate 7 Mileoak: Hearth 1 cut by the eastern corridor wall. Scale in feet and inches.



Plate 8 Mileoak: the cellar wall from the east. Scale in feet.

vessels are associated with the later use of the building, if not its destruction. The other two coins from the excavation were probably lost in the late first or early second centuries.

On balance it seems likely that the stone building was constructed around AD 65-75, since this is when the samian pottery starts to occur in quantity. This agrees with the date suggested by the coin and samian found in the floors.

It is difficult to use the coarse pottery as close dating evidence, since very little was discovered in association with the construction of the building.

The stratification, with its lack of any levels between the hearths of the first period and the floors of the second, suggests that the stone building was constructed immediately after the earlier buildings went out of use. There is no evidence to suggest that the site was levelled exactly to the hearths and cobbling of the earlier period.

DESTRUCTION OF THE STONE BUILDING

The cellar

Pottery nos 78-110 FIG 9; sections EF, GH, JK FIG 4; and PLS 5, 6 and 8.

The most detailed and clearest evidence for the end of the building comes from the deposits in the cellar. On the trampled floor, which at the western end had been worn down to the natural limestone and which at the eastern end was the overlying natural clay, a layer of mortar fragments, containing a little pink concrete was deposited. At the bottom of this layer were several large pieces of carbonised wood, the largest being c 12ft (3.65m) long. At the western end of the cellar there were limestone blocks, which may have fallen from the western lining wall of the cellar, if such a wall existed. This lowest rubble layer contained a small amount of plaster.

At the western end, on top of this rubble, there were several thin layers of yellow clay and layers of mortar. These layers tapered towards the centre of the cellar, suggesting that the clay at least originated from that face of the cellar, and that the mortar rubble was also deposited from that side.

The eastern end showed a similar sequence, with a layer of mortar rubble containing pink concrete, a little wall plaster and quantities of broken roofing tiles, being overlain by a thick layer of clay containing a little stone. Here, however, it seems unlikely that the clay was derived from the face of the cellar, since the robbing of this wall was clearly later than the deposits in the cellar, and the clay face behind the wall was not eroded away.

On both sides, above the last clay layer, another layer of rubble, intermixed with clay on the west, was deposited. This was followed by a thick layer of black material, which completed the cellar filling. This contained a few pieces of stone, tile and cement. The profile of these layers makes it clear that they have been truncated, and the level of the floor to the west confirms this.

In the entrance to the cellar (section J- K, FIG 4) the sequence is more simple. A thick layer of mortar rubble laid on the floor was followed by a thick layer of clay. On top of this was another layer of rubble, and the last filling was the burnt material found in the rest of the cellar.

Over the rest of the building on the north side of the road there was little destruction rubble, probably because the area had been ploughed (pottery nos 134-138, FIG 10). Immediately beneath the plough soil were the denuded floors, none of them retaining their original surfaces.

Area to the south of the road.

Pottery nos 111-133 FIG 10.

On this side of the road, as to the north, it is clear that the robbing of the walls is subsequent to the deposition of the rubble. The rubble lay directly on the floors of the building, and consisted mainly of wall plaster, mortar and tiles, with a little building stone. The rubble had probably been disturbed since it was itself very shallow, and only *c* 1ft (0.30m) below the present ground surface.

DATE OF DESERTION AND DESTRUCTION

The date of the desertion of the site, and the destruction of the building is shown by the samian and other material, both stratified and unstratified. The series of samian from the site runs up to the Hadrianic-Antonine period, with two pieces which are later Antonine. Since one of these comes from the general destruction rubble (no 48, p 47) and the other from the destruction rubble over Ditch 1 (which is sealed by a layer of clay) (no 20, p 46), they may both be associated with demolition, robbing or other short-lived activity on the site after the desertion and partial demolition or collapse of the building. The best-stratified samian for dating the desertion of the site comes from the cellar, (nos 3-6, p 45), where it was in association with broken roofing tiles and general rubble, suggesting that by this time the building had collapsed. This samian is Hadrianic-Antonine, which along with the fact that the bulk of the late samian is of this date, suggests that the building was deserted *c* AD 140-160, and that robbing or some other short-lived activity took place on the site *c* AD 150-170. There are no coarse wares from the site likely to be later than the mid second century AD, and no coin which is likely to have been lost after that date.

STONE ROBBING

Pottery nos 139-140 FIG 10; and all sections FIG 4.

The robber trenches in both areas are clearly cut through the shallow rubble, and on the south of the road there is no dating evidence, either by artefact or stratigraphy, for the date of the robbing. Many of the robber trenches, including the eastern main wall, the north south partition wall between rooms 1 and 2 and the main western wall, contained much mortar and wall plaster.

On the north side of the road, the north wall of the building was dug away by a 19th century ditch-shaped depression. This could have been a roadside ditch, similar to that found on the south of the road (p 45) but it does not run parallel to either the road or the other ditch. At the eastern end this northern wall had been completely robbed out at an earlier period. Therefore this 19th century excavation would have found no stone at this end. This feature contained two pieces of pottery (no 142 FIG 10, p 57), which probably date from *c* 1820-50. It is possible that this disturbance is part of a mid 19th century exploration of the site, implied by the notes in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* for 1847 (p 355), 1849 (p 396) and 1852 (p 109). It is, however, possible that these discoveries were associated with the backfilling of the ditches as suggested

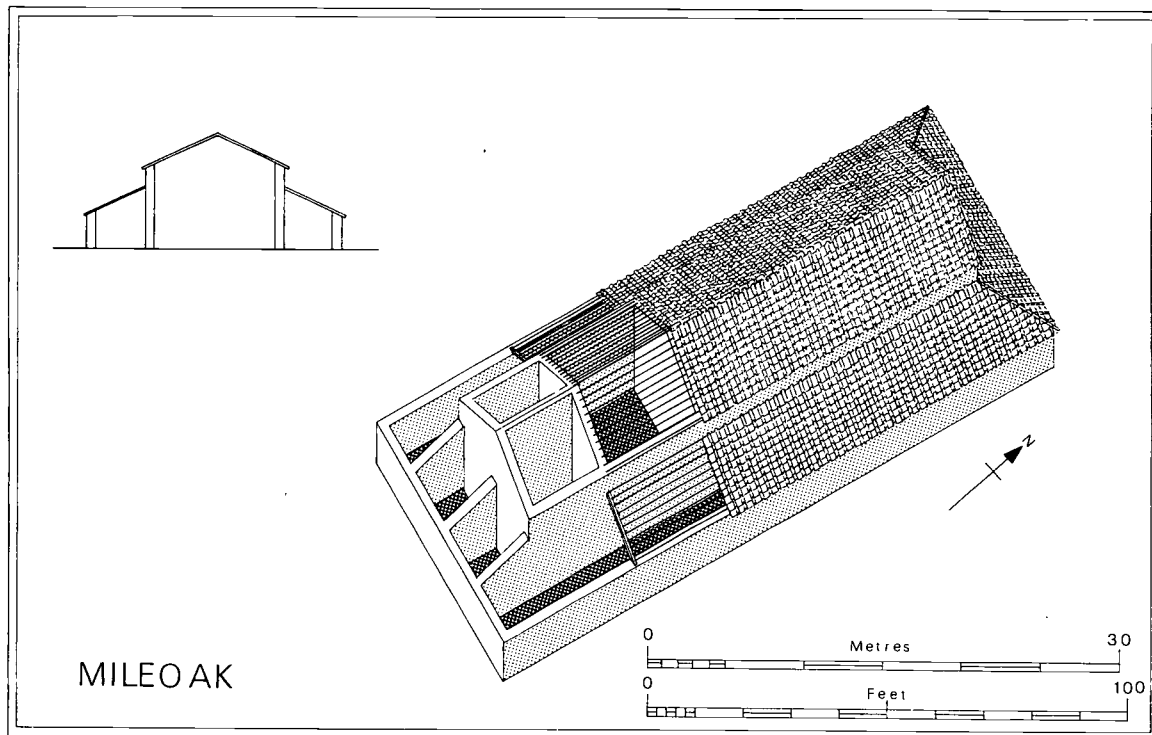


Fig 5 Mileoak: possible section and reconstruction of the stone building. Since no evidence was found for the position of windows, doors etc. they have been left from the drawing.

above (p 31). It seems a great coincidence that the ditch runs exactly along the top of the wall, and it may well be a robber trench.

The date of the robbing is not clear. The northern wall was clearly robbed out well before the late 19th century disturbance was dug along it, and the nineteenth century ditch 2 on the south side of the road was cut through the robber trenches there, but there is little earlier dating evidence.

AREA TO THE EAST OF THE BUILDING

Ditch 1

Pottery nos 3-34 FIG 7.

Some 40 ft (12.00 m) to the east of the building a small part of what was perhaps a ditch was found. In the 20 ft (6.00 m) which was excavated this ditch narrowed from 7 ft (2.10 m) wide at the south to 3 ft (1.00 m) wide at the north. It also deepened from 1½ ft (0.45 m) below topsoil at the northern end to 4½ ft (1.40 m) at the southern end. It was cut into the natural clay, and was backfilled with mixed clay containing a few fragments of tile and wall plaster. The sides were very irregular and the feature is not at all clear. On the plan (FIG 3) a regularised version is shown. The ditch contained samian dating from the Flavian or early

Trajanic periods, and so must have been backfilled in the late first century AD, whilst the stone building was in use. Its function is not obvious: it may have been part of a much larger feature. It has been suggested above (p 33) that this feature could relate to the earlier phase of occupation. However, it seems more likely, since it is so irregular, that it is either a drain, or just possibly a quarry pit for clay associated with the stone building. It seems unlikely, and is certainly unusual, for a ditch to vary in depth and width to such a marked degree in such a short length. Mr. Charles Green, the excavator, considered it to be a drain, associated with the stone building, and this seems the most likely explanation.

In a shallow saucer-like depression, circular and 14ft (4.25m) in diameter, cut into the top of the ditch fill, was a layer of black, burnt material 6in (0.15m) thick at maximum, which contained quantities of pottery. The black material was thicker to the north and thinner towards the south. No postholes were found beneath or around this depression.

Immediately overlying the black material were quantities of broken red clay roofing tiles. The burnt material contained late Hadrianic to Antonine samian, as did the destruction layers in the cellar and the general destruction rubble. It is not clear whether this blackened area and the tile rubble is the destruction of a small building isolated from the stone building or whether it is part of the general destruction rubble.

It is clear that these features, that is ditch 1 and the burnt area, were sealed by a 6in (0.15m) layer of clay. It is not clear what became of this layer. The path (below) between the building and ditch 1 was apparently laid on a layer of clay, but since the intervening sections were not drawn it is not possible to tell if this is the same layer of clay. The upper level of clay, sealing the area of the ditch and other features, contained quantities of pottery (nos 51-77, FIGS 8 and 9).

Path

Pottery nos 35-37 FIGS 7 and 8 and PL 9.

Some 20ft (6.00m) to the east of the stone building, and apparently on a different alignment from it, was a gravel path. This was c 8in (0.20m) thick at maximum and was laid on disturbed brownish clay, which was directly on top of the natural clay. On the western side, at the northern end, the path was clearly laid over the destruction rubble of the building, which here as elsewhere, consisted mostly of tile with a little wall plaster. Above the path was building rubble and soil (pottery nos 38-46, FIG 8).

The path contained only Flavian and Trajanic samian, but this must be redeposited material, since the path is laid over the destruction rubble which is demonstrably mid second century.

THE POST ROMAN PERIOD

Medieval cobbled floor (FIG 2 and PL 11).

Some 125ft (38.00m) to the east of the stone building a cobbled floor was found, consisting of irregular limestone blocks laid directly on the natural clay, at a depth of c 2ft (0.60m) below the present ground surface. The south east corner had been destroyed. The excavator records medieval sherds in association with this feature, and so it must be part of a medieval building. No structure was found since only a small area was excavated.



Northamptonshire Archaeology 1978, 13 floor, looking east. Scale in feet and inches.



Plate 9 Mileoak: the path to the east of the stone building. Scale in feet.

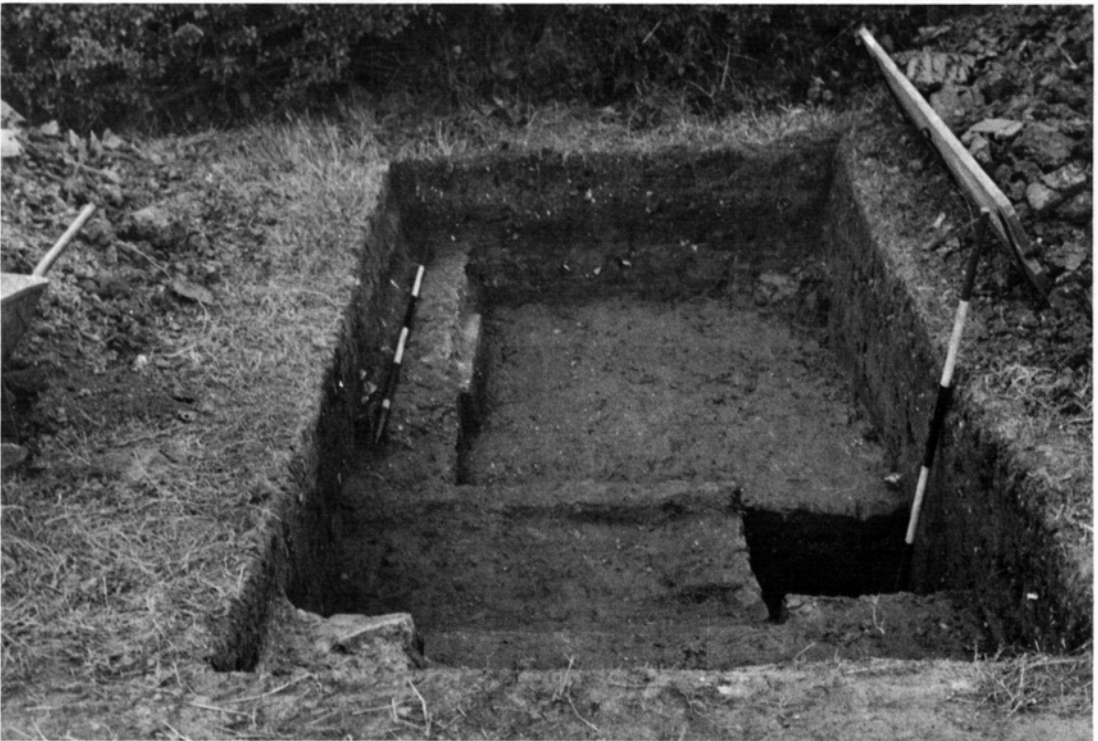


Plate 10 Mileoak: Ditch 2 cutting the eastern corridor wall of the building (left foreground). Scale in feet.

Ditch 2 (PL 10).

To the south of the roadside hedge, on the south side of the road, a 'U' shaped ditch was excavated. It was 2ft 10in (0.85m) deep and 3ft (0.90m) wide, and was cut through the Roman stone building. It contained clay, with rapid silting at the bottom.

The 19th century land drain crosses this side of the site, cutting through the ditch, and finally a modern water pipe crosses this land drain.

The excavator of the site was told in 1955 that until *c* 90 years ago the hedgeline on the south of the road was further south than it was in 1955. This was proved by Ditch 2, which was some 12ft (3.65m) to the south of the present hedge.

THE FINDS

COINS

Richard Reece has kindly examined the coins, and his comments are reproduced here.

1. From the bottom of the lower floor in the eastern corridor: a denarius of Claudius I, as *RIC* 33, minted AD 49-50. Probably lost *c* AD 50-70.
2. From the rubble in room 2: an As of Vespasian, as *RIC* 494, from the mint of Lyon, but exact consulship and date uncertain. Probably lost AD 75-125.
3. From the topsoil to the east of the building: an As of Domitian, reverse illegible. Probably lost in the second century AD.

SAMIAN WARE FROM MILEOAK⁵

by HEDLEY PENGELLY

The samian ware ranges in date from Neronian/Neronian-Flavian times to the late-Antonine period. The total of vessels represented is about seventy and includes the following readily identifiable forms: S.G., form 27 (9), 18 (7), 37 (6), 33a (5), 15/17 (4), 30 (3), 29 (2), 18R (2), 18/31R (2), 33 (1), 35 (1) and 36 (1). C.G., form 27 (3), 18/31 or 31 rim (2), 37 (1), 31 (1), 33 (1), Curle 11 (1), 45 (1), 42 (1) and a large jar or flagon. E.G., form 33 (1). The bulk of this material is South Gaulish, all probably from the kilns at La Graufesenque, and accounting for about 75 per cent of the total examined. Of the remainder, just over 23 per cent is Central Gaulish and just over 1 per cent East Gaulish. Of five potters' stamps recorded, all are South Gaulish; none is definitely pre-Flavian and only one could fall as late as the Flavian-Trajanic period. Of the decorated ware, eleven vessels are South Gaulish, only one (a rim) is Central Gaulish and a small jar is either Central Gaulish or East Gaulish. The majority of this material is from the destruction rubble, which includes a high proportion of South Gaulish ware of Flavian and Flavian-Trajanic date. The latest pieces in the destruction level are a Central Gaulish form 45 of *c* AD 170-200 and the handle of a large flagon or jar of probable late-Antonine date. But the total of second century vessels of Central or East Gaulish origin is very small by comparison with the South Gaulish total and, in the main, seems to be of Hadrianic/early Antonine date than later.

Building: from within the eastern corridor floor 1. A large amount, in fragments, of a South Gaulish dish of form 18 stamped FELICISMAN by Felix i of La Graufesenque (*cf* Hermet 1934, PL 111). Apart from La Graufesenque, examples of this stamp occur at Hofheim and Rottweil and on decorated bowls of form 29. Felix's decorated ware is normally Neronian, but his stamps occasionally reach Vespasianic foundations. *c* AD 55-75 (FIG 6, 2).

Building: possibly from floor 2. Two adjoining fragments of form 15/17. South Gaulish. Probably Vespasianic.

Building: possibly from cellar floor 3. Form 27. Central Gaulish. Hadrianic-Antonine.

Cellar: lowest rubble 4. Part of a neat, thin-walled cup of form 27. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian.

5. Form Curle 11 with strongly curved flange. Central Gaulish. Hadrianic.

Cellar: black layer 6. Form 18/31 or 31 rim. Central Gaulish. Hadrianic or Antonine.

Within path 7. A small rim fragment from a neat, thin-walled cup of form 46 or dish of form Curle 15. Probably South Gaulish and Flavian.

8. Form 36, large, slightly burnt. South Gaulish. Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic.

Ditch 1: lowest fill 9. Form 33a. South Gaulish. Flavian or, less likely, Flavian-Trajanic.

Ditch 1: middle fill Two adjoining fragments of no 9.

⁵ I am indebted to Miss B M Dickinson for the information on which the notes on the potters' stamps listed are based.

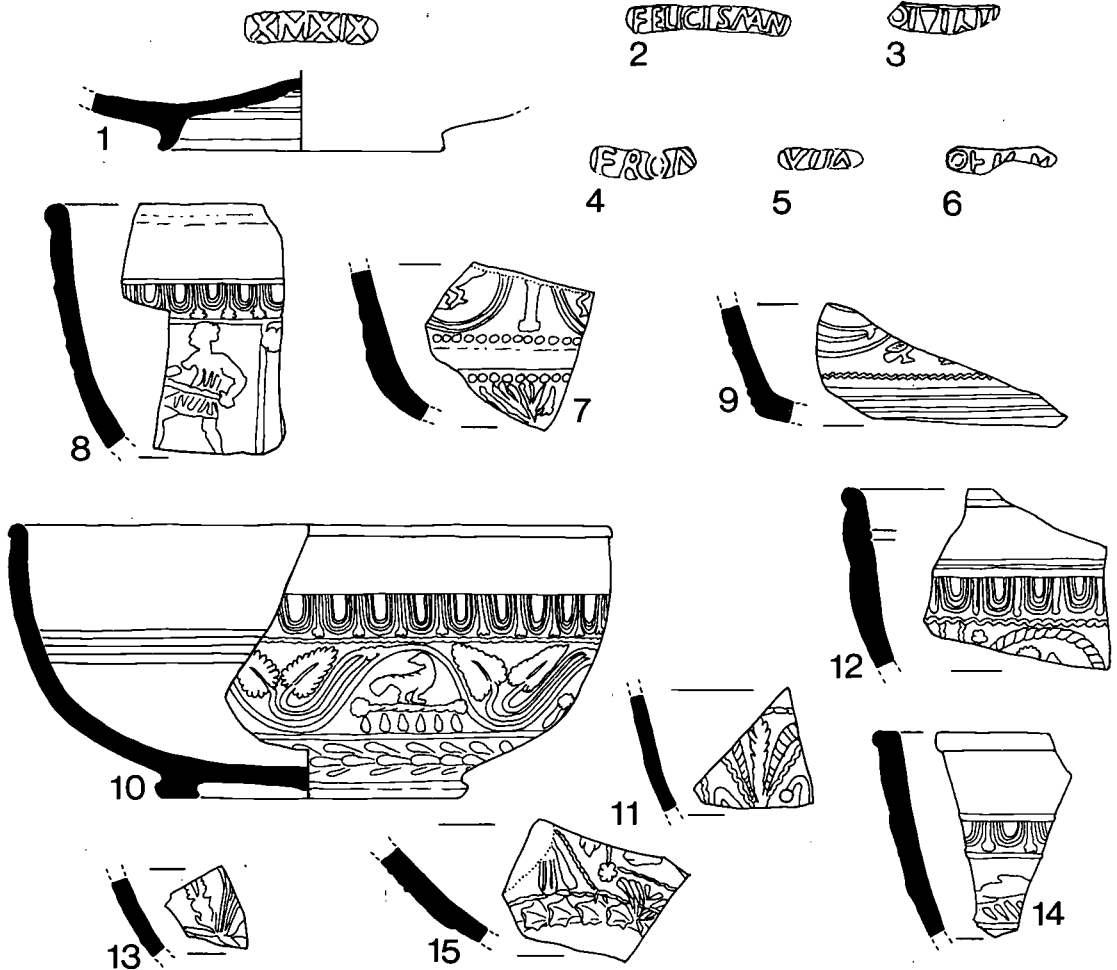


Fig 6 Mileoak: terra rubra (no 1): Samian (2-15). Nos 1-6 full size, 7-15 at 1/2.

Ditch 1: upper fill Four more fragments of no 9.

10. Form 29, South Gaulish. A fragment giving parts of both zones of decoration. In the upper zone, two poorly-impressed triple festoons with birds (H28, 39) and (H 28, 40) alternating. In the lower zone traces of a poorly-moulded leaf and bud in a continuous scroll. Not assignable to a particular potter, but c AD 70-85. (FIG 6, 7).

Isolated destruction rubble over ditch 1 11. Form 37, eroded, with ovolo with large rosette to tongue and panel with *bestiarius* (H 23, 253). Rather coarse wavy lines, and rosettes at corner junctions. Not assignable to a particular potter, but South Gaulish and c AD 75-100. (FIG 6, 8).

12. Form 18. South Gaulish. Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic.

13. Four pieces of form 27. South Gaulish. Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic.

14. Part of a large dish or open bowl with curving wall such as form 36 or Curle 11. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic.

15. Two fragments of a large cup of form 27. Central Gaulish. Hadrianic.

16. A fragment of a small enclosed jar with rouletted shoulder. Central or East Gaulish. Hadrianic or early Antonine.

17. A tiny fragment of form 35/36 (rim) or Curle 11 (flange). Central Gaulish. Hadrianic or Antonine.

18. Two fragments of form 33. This cup appears to be from one of the early East Gaulish centres such as Blickweiler or La Madelaine. Late-Hadrianic or Antonine.

19. A tiny fragment, possibly form 27. Not otherwise identified due to slight burning of the fabric.

20. Form 45. Central Gaulish. c AD 170-200.

Under general destruction rubble 21. A fragment from the base of a bowl of form 30 depicting part of a large scroll with small bird (not closely identified). South Gaulish. Probably c AD 65-80. (FIG 6, 9).

22. Form 33a, South Gaulish. Two adjoining fragments stamped OIVIRIL by Virilis i. Virilis worked at La Graufesenque, though this particular stamp has not been found there. The record for his other stamps, including examples from Caerleon, Butzbach and Saalburg, suggests Flavian activity, but his decorated bowls of form 29 could just be late Neronian. c AD 65-90. (FIG 6, 3).
 23. Form 33a. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic.
 - General destruction rubble* 24. Form 27, partly burnt, with crackled glaze and two internal grooves below the rim. South Gaulish. Probably Neronian.
 25. Form 18R, slightly burnt. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian, possibly Neronian-Flavian.
 26. Form 15/17, badly eroded. South Gaulish. Flavian, but no later than AD 85.
 27. Five fragments of a small cup of form 27, South Gaulish, stamped FRON by Frontinus of La Graufesenque, though neither this particular die, nor another with the same reading, have been found there. Both are known only on cup forms and both presumably have a complete N, but it tends to get chopped off by the surrounding circle. It is possible, however, that we are dealing with broken dies, but if so, the originals have yet to be found. Site evidence for our stamp is unsatisfactory, though, for what it is worth, an example in the Yorkshire Museum is probably from York. However that may be, there is no doubt that Frontinus was primarily a Flavian potter as is attested by his numerous decorated bowls of forms 29 and 37 with typical Flavian decoration and stamps at such sites as Camelon, Newstead and Cannstatt (FIG 6, 4).
 28. Form 15/17 or 18 base. South Gaulish. Flavian.
 29. Form 18. South Gaulish. Flavian.
 30. Form 18/31R. South Gaulish. Flavian.
 31. Two adjoining fragments of form 27. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian.
 32. Five fragments of a large form 27. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian.
 33. Form 27, large. South Gaulish. Flavian.
 34. Form 27g stamped VIIA, probably illiterate. South Gaulish. Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic. (FIG 6, 5).
 35. Form 33a. South Gaulish. Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic.
 36. Nine fragments, some joining, of a small thin-walled bowl of form 37, South Gaulish, with internal medial grooving below the rim. The trident-tongued ovolo was used by Mercato of La Graufesenque (*cf* Knorr 1919, Taf 57, 19; Hermet 1934, PL 119, 1 for small bowl from Nimègue which also has the tri-lobed basal wreath depicted here as do three stamped bowls at Richborough; *cf* Bushe-Fox 1928, PL XXVII, 11; Bushe-Fox 1949, PL LXXXI, 47; Cunliffe 1968, PL LXXX, 19). The main zone of decoration, which has borders of coarse wavy lines, depicts a continuous scroll with a pair of frilled and pointed diverging leaves in the upper concavities, and single rows of leaf-tips below birds looking back (H 28, 39 and 40) alternating in the lower. This work recalls a Mercato style bowl at Wels, which also has the same ovolo and basal wreath (*cf* Karnitsch 1959, Taf 14, 1). The trifid tendril binding on the Mileoak and Wels bowls, occurs on signed work of Mercato at Silchester (*cf* May 1916, PL XXV, 5); the frilled and pointed leaf is close to, but perhaps slightly larger than, one appearing in a saltire on what looks like a bowl by Mercato or close contemporary at Newstead (*cf* Curle 1911, pl 207, FIG 4), which in turn is like a second Wels bowl (Karnitsch 1959, Taf 15, 3) and a Margidunum bowl (Oswald 1948, PL XXI, 2) and the leaf-tips below the birds appear to be the same as another Margidunum bowl, also assigned to Mercato (*cf* *ibid*, PL XXII, 3). c AD 90-110. (FIG 6, 10).
 37. Form 27. South Gaulish. Flavian-Trajanic.
 38. Form 35, part of large cup with external medial grooving on the footring. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian-Trajanic.
 39. Form 35 with poor glaze. Probably South Gaulish and Flavian-Trajanic.
 40. A slightly burnt flake from a dish or open bowl with curving wall. Probably South Gaulish and Flavian-Trajanic.
 41. Form 18, badly eroded. South Gaulish. Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic.
 42. Two fragments of form 18/31. Central Gaulish. Probably Hadrianic or Hadrianic-Antonine, though it is not clear whether the fabric is that of Les Martres-de-Veyre or Lezoux.
 43. Form 33. Central Gaulish. Late-Hadrianic or Antonine.
 44. Part of a footring. Central Gaulish. Probably Hadrianic-Antonine or Antonine.
 45. Fragment of a large, thick-walled dish (form 36 etc) with external grooving at junction of base and wall. A product from Les Martres-de-Veyre, not closely dateable within the first half of the second century.
 46. Form 42 (variant), slightly burnt. Central Gaulish. Mid second century.
 47. Form 31. Central Gaulish. Antonine.
 48. A complete oval-sectioned handle from a large, high-necked flagon or jar. Central Gaulish. Certainly Antonine; probably late-Antonine.
- Sherds of no. 8.
- Clay over rubble, ditch 1 etc.* 49. Form 15/17, eroded. South Gaulish. Flavian, but no later than AD 85.
50. Form 29 rim. South Gaulish. c AD 75-85.
 51. Form 37 rim. South Gaulish. Flavian.
 52. A large cup of form 33a, in fragments, giving part of an unidentified potter's stamp. South Gaulish. Flavian. (FIG 6, 6).

53. Two flakes of form 18R. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian.
54. Form 18/31R, slightly overfired and with crackled glossy finish South Gaulish. Probably Flavian.
55. A fragment of a thin-walled bowl of form 30, with brown-red glaze and rivet hole, giving part of a tri-lobed plant in the upper concavity of a saltire. Not assignable to a particular potter or group of potters, but South Gaulish and probably *c* AD 85-110. (FIG 6, 11).
56. Form 33. South Gaulish. Flavian-Trajanic.
57. Form 18. South Gaulish. Probably Flavian-Trajanic.
58. Part of a badly eroded dish (form 18 etc). South Gaulish. Probably Flavian-Trajanic.
59. A small slightly burnt fragment. Possibly South Gaulish, but not closely dateable.
- Topsoil.* 60. Two adjoining fragments of a large thick-walled bowl of form 30, South Gaulish, well-moulded and with glossy finish. The ovolo, with thin tongue swollen at the tip, occurs on a form 37, in the Pompeii hoard of AD 79, stamped, in the mould, by the Neronian-Flavian potter Mommo of La Graufesenque (*cf* Atkinson 1914, PL XIII, 65). It occurs also on a form 30 bowl in an early Flavian pit group at Verulamium (Frere 1972, FIG 86, 34), on two bowls of form 30 and one of form 37 at Margidunum (Oswald 1948, PLS XII, 4 and 5; XIV, 26 which also has the wavy-line above the ovolo here, also a similar neat, shallow rim), on three bowls of form 37, at Southampton, to be equated with the work of Mommo, almost certainly (*cf* Rogers and Laing 1966, FIGS 1, 15 and 17; 11, 30) and on a form 30 bowl at Wels (*cf* Karnitsch 1959, Taf 31, 4). These bowls all have bold wavy-lines of similar type to the Mileoak ones. The Mileoak medallion compares well with those on two further stamped bowls of Mommo at Pompeii (*cf* Atkinson, *op cit*, PL IV, 15 and 18, the former also having the Mileoak double wavy-lines). And the two rosettes here appear to parallel those on yet another Mommo bowl at Pompeii (*cf* *ibid*, PL V, 16). There can be little doubt that this bowl is the work of Mommo, and probably falls *c* AD 65-85. (FIG 6, 12).
61. Form 15/17. South Gaulish. Flavian, but no later than AD 85.
62. Form 18. South Gaulish. Flavian.
63. A small fragment from South Gaul. Probably Flavian.
64. Part of the base of a bowl of form 37, South Gaulish, with brown-red glaze. The composite plant was used by Vitalis (*cf* Knorr 1919, Taf 83E from Vindonissa) and other potters producing at La Graufesenque in Flavian and Flavian-Trajanic times. Probably *c* AD 85-110 (FIG 6, 13).
65. Form 37, South Gaulish, with a scheme of panels having borders of coarse wavy lines. In one panel, a saltire with tri-lobed bud like No 40, and in another, a figure to right not positively identified, but possibly Diana and the hind of the general type (H 18, 6), over a grass tuft. The general style occurs in the Bregenz Cellar deposit (*cf* Jacobs 1912, Taf I-V), but the unevenly-impressed basal wreath has not been paralleled. *c* AD 90-110 (FIG 6, 14).
66. Form 37, South Gaulish, with the trident-tongued ovolo noted under No 40. Below the ovolo, there runs a narrow zone of decoration with borders of coarse wavy lines. The poorly-moulded hare to right is too mutilated to identify with certainty, whilst the grass tuft is the same as the last. *c* AD 90-110 (FIG 6, 15).
67. Form 37 rim. Central Gaulish. Hadrianic-Antonine or Antonine.
68. Part of a small, thick-walled cup of form 27. Central Gaulish. Probably Antonine, but no later than AD 160.

AN IMITATION TERRA RUBRA STAMP

by VALERY RIGBY

(FIG 6, 1).

1. From the rubble over the building to the north of the road. The base from a platter or bowl with a tall functional foot-ring. Orange fine grained paste; self coloured soapy smooth burnished finish. A central potters mark comprising X, V and I motifs, and reading XIVIX.

The stamp is unique; there is no known example from the same die, although there is a very similar stamp on the base of a platter from an unstratified context in the King Harry Lane cemetery, St. Albans, Herts (excavations by Dr I M Stead). It is possible that both platters are from the same source. It is not an import, and the source could be fairly local, perhaps Nene Valley. Given the height of the foot-ring, the platter should be pre-Flavian or Flavian at the latest.

THE OTHER POTTERY (FIGS 7-10)

The illustrated pottery has been selected for one of two reasons. Either a dateable group is thoroughly represented or else less well stratified pottery is illustrated to show further forms or fabrics. Later groups from the site have the inevitable problem of contamination from the earlier pottery already on the site: no attempt has been made to remove this 'residual' material since this is a dangerously subjective exercise. However, where vessels have been illustrated in an earlier group, and occur again in a later one, this fact is merely cross-referenced. The range of pottery from the site is particularly interesting since occupation ends in the latter part of the second century, so that there is no contamination by later Roman material.

GREY WARES

Rather than repeat the same description of similar grey wares, they are described here, and letters assigned to them. Fabric A is a distinctive hard, metallic-coloured mid to dark grey, sometimes with a deep orange core. It has a small amount of small inclusions. The surfaces are distinguished by having a number of medium sized flecks of dark grey and sometimes have a thin reddish cast. Forms found in this fabric include small cookpots (nos 5, 27, 30 and 69) a beaker (no 29, sherds of poppy head beaker and sherds of a channel rim jar. It is possible that the kiln producing these pots had ceased operating by the mid second century since none of this fabric was found in the large group of c AD 140-160 from the cellar (nos 78-110). It is certainly present in the group of c AD100 from Ditch 1 (nos 3-14), and its presence in some of the later groups from the south of the site may be residual.

Fabric B is less distinctive. It is softer than fabric A, but still not actually soft. It has more inclusions, which are also larger than those in A, B being tempered with sand. The fabric is pale grey with plain darker grey surfaces. The forms found in B are much more diverse than fabric A, including lids of various forms (nos 12, 13, 15, 21, 22, 48, 68, 116, 118), a flagon (no 16), poppy head beaker sherds, cookpots (nos 39, 43, 46, 59 and 65), a channel rim jar (no 56), and a distinctive bowl (nos 42, 62 and 73). Again this fabric is not represented in the cellar, being replaced by a much harder grey ware; fabric D.

Fabric C is between A and B in hardness, and is similar in colour to B. However, it is heavily tempered with sand and has hard but sandy surfaces and is thereby easily distinguished. Forms occurring include a distinctive cookpot (no 11), channel rim jars (no 54) and a cookpot (no 93).

Grey ware fabric D does not occur outside the group of c AD 140-160 from the cellar. This is a harder, more regular fabric, pale to mid grey in colour, lightly sanded. The surfaces are smooth and darker grey. The vessels are more neatly potted than the earlier ones. Forms include cookpots (nos 81, 83, 84 and 90) of various sizes and a distinctive bowl (no 85).

BELGIC

Hearth 4

1. Cookpot: sparsely gritted black fabric with rather soapy red surfaces.
2. Butt beaker: as number 1 but brown surfaces.

The beaker is similar to one from Saffron Gardens, Bletchley, (Waugh, Mynard and Cain 1974, FIG 4, p 393, no 11) which is in a context for which a date in the first half of the 1st century AD is suggested (*ibid* p 375). Similar material comes from a ditch at Stoke Goldington (Mynard 1966, FIG 3) where a mid first century date is again suggested. These native copies of Belgic butt-beakers occur at Fishbourne (Cunliffe 1971, type 64.2) in period 1 (c AD 43-75).

A similar vessel similar to no 1 was found at Verulamium in a mid 1st century AD context (Wheeler 1936, no 53, FIG 34, p 194). The pots here probably date to the middle of the first century AD.

ROMAN

Ditch 1 basal: see samian nos 9-10 p 45.

3. Handle: grey, gritty fabric: buff surfaces.
4. Base: fine slightly gritted black fabric with dark brown to black surfaces.
5. Base: fabric A.
6. Store jar: very like no 1.
7. Bowl: as no 6.
8. Cookpot: as no 1: remnants of burnishing.
9. Storage jar: heavily grogged, light weight, red fabric; red surfaces.
10. Sherd: finely gritted, hard black to buff fabric, grey internally: black externally with impressed comb decoration.
11. Cookpot: fabric C.
12. Lid: fabric B.
13. Lid: fabric B.
14. Mortarium: Mrs K Hartley has kindly examined this mortarium, and no 139, and her comments and descriptions are reproduced here: granular greyish cream fabric with a little white, black and brown trituration grit surviving: unusually large rim. The fabric and form are typical of mortaria made in the extensive potteries south of Verulamium centering on Brockley Hill, which are of particular importance for the production of mortaria in the Flavian to Antonine period. This example was probably made in the period c AD 75-115.
15. Lid: fabric B

Not illustrated: sherds of a storage jar like no 9; sherds of a large base which is at least 15cm across and is similar to no 6, but which has pink surfaces; and a sherd of a calcite gritted channel rim jar with scoring externally. The samian from this ditch is Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic, so that

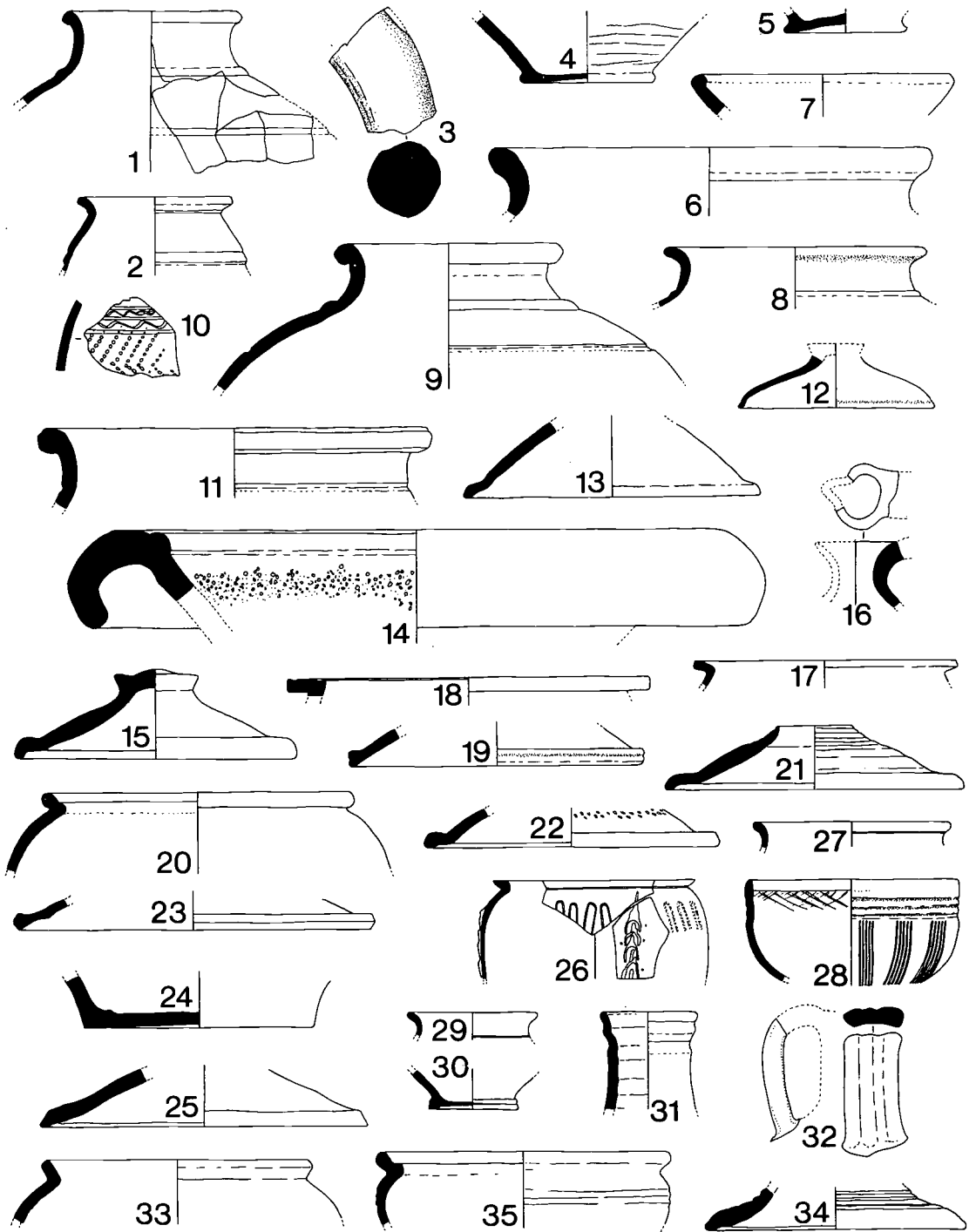


Fig 7 Mileoak: Roman pottery (¼)

the fill probably dates to the late first century, perhaps *c* AD 100. This would fit in date with the coarse wares which form a useful small group of this period.

Burnt material over ditch 1

Junction of ditch 1 and burnt material

16. Flagon neck with handle attachment: fabric B.
17. Rim: soft fine black fabric with red to grey surfaces.
18. Rim: gritty red fabric and surfaces which are partly fire-blackened.
19. Lid: fine orange fabric with a grey core: dark grey surfaces.

Not illustrated: lid as no 15, a store jar as no 9 and cookpot similar to no 17.

Lower part of burnt material

20. Channel rim cookpot: coarse grey to pale orange fabric: pale orange surfaces fire blackened externally: possibly very slight rilling externally.
21. Lid: fabric B. Hole at the top appears to be original.
22. Lid: fabric B.
23. Lid: black gritty fabric: smooth black surfaces.
24. Base: grey fabric with some fine grits: orange surfaces with occasional red grits.

Not illustrated: another channel rim jar as no 20 but slightly smaller, and one in fabric A; a lid as no 22 but without decoration; another lid as no 21; a flagon neck as no 16 but larger; and two cookpots as no 11.

Burnt material

25. Lid: orange fabric with orange to black surfaces.
26. Fine beaker: very fine off white fabric: applied decoration, almost black surfaces. Fragments of this beaker were found in the clay over the rubble and in the burnt material and in topsoil. A similar vessel was found at Leicester (Kenyon 1948 FIG 43, p 160, no 7, in a context *c* AD 125-130); and the type appears at Verulamium from *c* AD 110 (Wilson in Frere 1972, FIG 111, p 293 and p 264) where a continental origin is suggested. Dr K T Greene has kindly informed me that this type of barbotine 'hairpin' decorated beaker was made at Lezoux (and other sites in the area?) *c* AD 70-140. He comments that they are rare, but recurrent in small numbers on sites in Britain.
27. Cookpot: fabric A.

Not illustrated: sherd with poppy head decoration, fabric B; a similar, finer sherd; and a cookpot similar to no 8.

Rubble over burnt material: see samian nos 11-20 p 46.

28. Bowl: very fine black fabric: orange with a thick black core, orange to dark grey, soapy surfaces with traces of burnishing: incised decoration externally, scratches internally. This bowl is probably of the so-called 'London ware' usually found with decoration of scribed concentric circles. This vessel is plainer, but is of a similar profile to those found at Brixworth and Elton (Woods 1970, FIG 37, nos 262 and 263). Late first or early second century.
 29. Beaker: fabric A
 30. Base: fabric A.
 31. Flagon neck: gritty pale orange fabric and surfaces.
 32. Handle: buff to grey gritty fabric with grey to dark grey surfaces.
 33. Cookpot: soft orange fabric and surfaces which are partially fire-blackened.
 34. Pedestal base: fine black fabric with black to grey surfaces: similar to no 28, but not so soapy.
- Not illustrated: another base as no 30; large pot as no 81; and a sherd of poppy head beaker in fabric A.

The samian in the burnt material, and in the rubble over it, includes along with the Flavian and Flavian-Trajanic material found in all over the site, Hadrianic and Antonine samian, with one piece which is as late as *c* AD 170-200. The coarse pottery from these layers includes material similar to that from the earlier fill of the ditch, for example, nos 24, 30 and several mentioned but not illustrated. It is notable that many channel rim jars occur in these later levels and there is only one sherd in the earlier ditch. Kilns producing channel rim jars have been excavated at Hardingstone, Northants (Woods 1969). These kilns were apparently operating only until the end of the first century AD (*ibid*, 9).

The lids in the ditch, nos 12 and 13, are of a similar fabric to those in the later deposits, but the earlier ones are not decorated and are of simpler form.

The mixture of pottery in the later levels, including some from the earlier levels, makes it difficult to distinguish the true nature of the later material, except where it consists of forms absent from the earlier group.

Under the path: see samian nos 7 and 8 p 45.

35. Channel rim jar: as no 20.

36. Bead rim cookpot: shelly dark grey fabric: red surface internally and black externally.

Rubble under path

37. Store jar: almost black fabric with occasional large grits: soft orange surfaces.

Rubble between path and stone building

38. Jar: probably fabric B but fabric pale.

39. Cookpot: fabric B.

Not illustrated: at least two others like no 39.

Rubble overlying the path and the clay surfaces

40. Bowl: finely gritted with grey core and orange surfaces.

41. Channel rim jar: soapy grey fabric with occasional small shell inclusions: orange surfaces with remnants of possible burnishing.

42. Bowl: fabric A.

Not illustrated: sherds of the mortarium no 14 and a channel rim jar in fabric A.

43. Jar: fabric B.

44. Bowl, or possibly lid: soft fine grey fabric with black surfaces.

45. Bowl: pale orange fabric with occasional inclusions, some of them red: pale orange surfaces with incised decoration. A similar bowl was found at Irchester (Knight 1968, FIG 9, p 121, no 15).

46. Jar: fabric B.

Rubble over ditch 1

47. Base: fine dark grey fabric: almost white surfaces with grey spots: finer than fabric A.

48. Lid: fabric B.

49. Bowl: finely gritted grey fabric: orange surfaces.

50. Cookpot: grey core: dark orange surfaces.

Not illustrated: another lid as no 48 and one as no 68.

Clay sealing area of ditch 1 etc: see samian nos 49-59 p 47.

51. Channel rim jar: black fabric with fine and occasional large grits, orange surfaces: ridged externally.

52. Channel rim jar: as no 51 but black to orange surfaces and no ridging.

53. Channel rim jar: soft fine grey fabric with black surfaces: similar to no 44.

54. Channel rim jar: fabric C.

55. Channel rim jar: dark brown finely gritted fabric: black surfaces: ridged as no 4.

56. Channel rim jar: fabric B.

A full range of these channel rim jars has been illustrated from this large group. No 20, from the earlier levels, is of a different and coarser fabric than any here. No 53 is the finest, and is of a very different character to the others. Two of the grey fabrics are represented in this form and there are two other coarser, dark fabrics.

57. Cookpot: coarse grey fabric: red surfaces.

58. Cookpot: fine grey fabric with occasional fine grits: soft pale orange surfaces: pot is very light in weight.

59. Cookpot: fabric B.

60. Cookpot: granular grey fabric: black surfaces. Again, these cookpots show a wide range of fabrics.

61. Base: fine very pale buff fabric and surfaces.

62. Bowl: fabric B.

63. Lid: as no 63 but bright orange fabric and dark grey surfaces.

64. Bowl or lid: similar to no 62 but slightly finer: incised lines below rim.

65. Base: fabric B.

66. Lid: finely gritted orange fabric with occasional larger inclusions, some of them red: orange surfaces, fire-blackened, on rim: coarser than no 45.

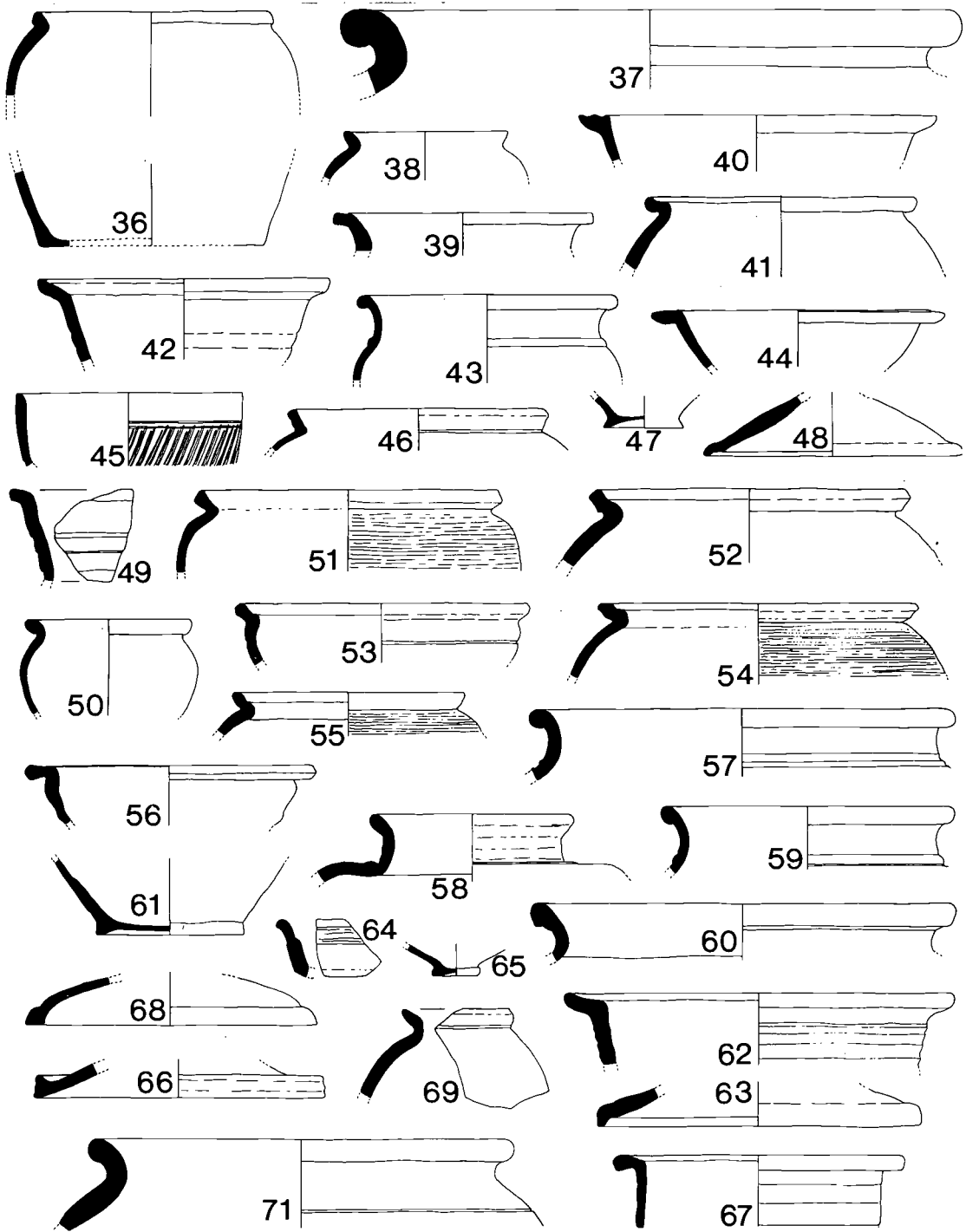


Fig 8 Mileoak: Roman pottery (1/4)

67. Bowl: dark brown fabric with many fine grits: black surfaces.

Clay to the west of ditch 1

68. Lid: fabric B.

69. Jar: fabric A.

70. Jar: probably fabric A, but has an orange tinge.

Clay further to the west

71. Large jar: coarse, heavily gritted orange fabric with a grey core, some red inclusions: orange surfaces.

72. Sherd of large jar: somewhat similar to no 71, but much finer soapy fabric and surfaces: incised decoration.

73. Bowl: fabric B.

74. Handle: similar to no 72, but harder and heavier.

75. Channel rim jar: as fabric B, but grey core and orange fabric: orange streaks on grey surfaces.

76. Base: soft, fine grey fabric and black surfaces, as nos 44 and 53.

77. Lid: dull orange gritty fabric with grey core: grey to black surfaces: incised decoration perhaps rouletted.

Not illustrated: a channel rim jar in fabric B, and 2 small ones in fabric A.

This layer of clay contained only a few fragments of Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic samian, all of which are residual, since the clay seals a destruction layer containing Hadrianic-Antonine samian.

Rubble in the cellar: see samian nos 4 and 5 p 45.

78. Ring neck flagon: very gritty orange fabric with very pale buff surfaces.

79. Bowl: soapy grey fabric with occasional fine grits: orange surfaces.

80. Lid: gritty orange fabric with dark grey surfaces: unlike the grey fabrics A, B, C or D.

81. Large jar: fabric D.

82. Rim: very fine off white fabric with a few tiny inclusions: almost white surfaces grooved internally and externally.

83. Beaker: fabric D but with a dark brown core.

84. Cookpot: fabric D.

85. Shallow bowl: fabric D.

Not illustrated: sherd of fine large grey vessel with poppy head decoration.

Ash, upper level in cellar: see samian no 6 p 45.

86. Cookpot: heavily shell gritted grey fabric: red shelly surfaces.

87. Store jar: rather soapy grey fabric with occasional grits: pale orange surfaces.

88. Base and rim of jar: shell gritted dark grey fabric: black to brown surfaces.

89. Channel rim jar: finer, harder more regular fabric than the channel rim jars previously illustrated; with occasional shell: dark grey and ridged externally: dark orange internally.

90. Jar: fabric D.

91. Channel rim jar: fine red fabric with fine grits: red surfaces with grey on rim.

92. Channel rim jar: fabric D.

93. Jar: fabric C.

94. Jar: very regular grey fabric: hard with some grits: smooth grey surfaces: possibly burnished externally.

95. Jar: as no 94, but slightly softer.

96. Jar: as no 94, but pale buff internally.

97. Jar: regular, black, finely gritted fabric with black surfaces: burnishing externally, possibly black burnished ware (BB1), or an imitation (Woods 1970, p 12).

98. Base: as 94 but slightly rougher internally.

99. Pedestal base: red to dark grey fabric with many small grits: dark grey to grey surfaces.

100. Cookpot: grey slightly gritted fabric: grey surfaces burnished.

101. Base: black fabric with some small grits: black surfaces.

102. Lid: as 99.

103. Base: fabric D.

104. Bowl: as 99 and 102. Similar to one from Brixworth (Woods 1970, FIG 8, no 13) found in an Antonine context. However, a similar bowl from Leicester (Kenyon 1948, FIG 40, p 148, no 20) occurs in a context c AD 110-120.

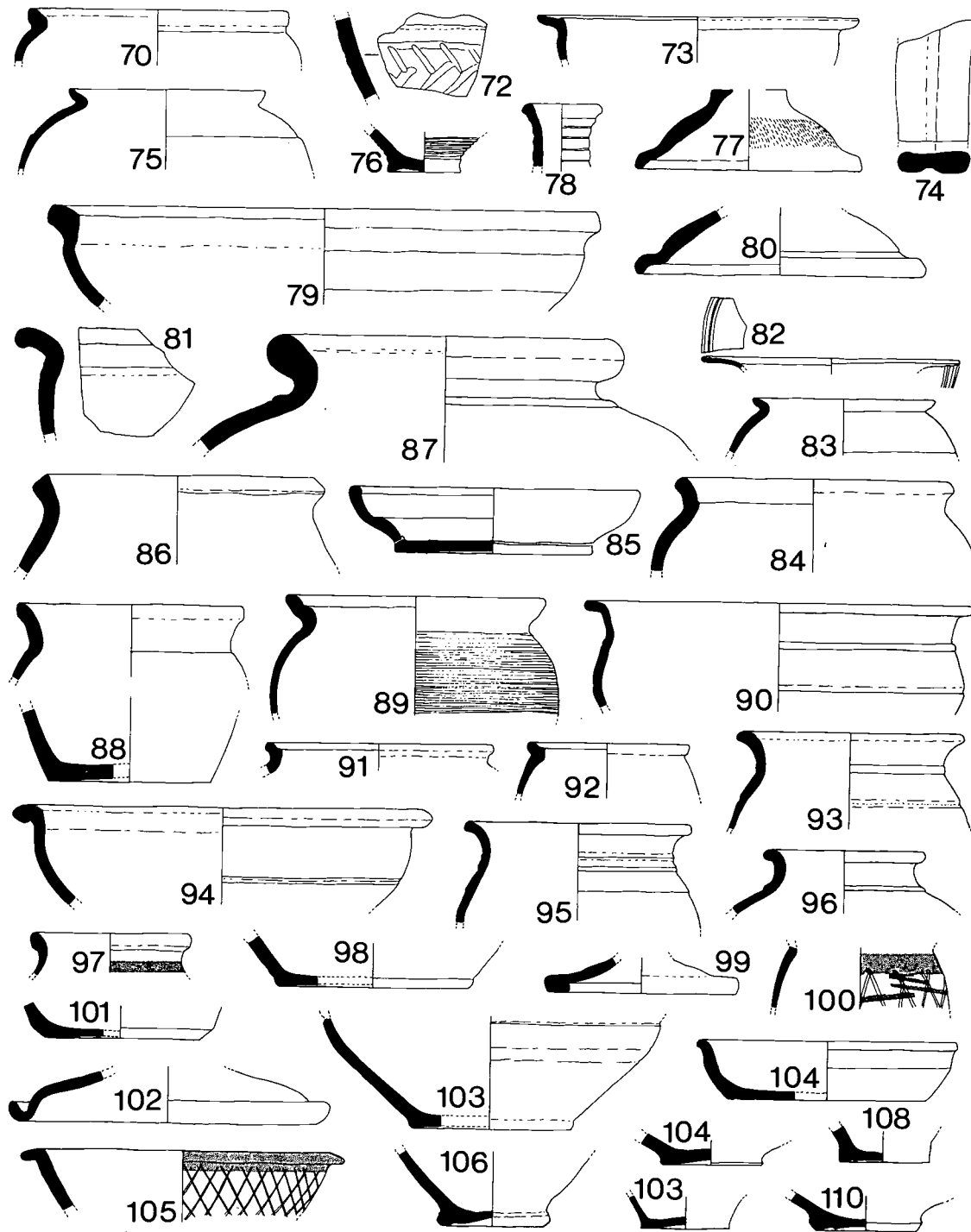


Fig 9 Mileoak: Roman pottery (¼)

105. Pie dish: as no 97 but slightly coarser. BB1 or imitation (as no 97): of Gillam's form 309 which occurs on Hadrian's Wall c AD 160-200.
106. Base: as 96.
107. Base: gritty pale buff to orange fabric with occasional red inclusions: pale pinky buff surfaces.
108. Base: off white slightly gritted fabric and surfaces.
109. Base: fine dark pink fabric with tiny grits: dark pink internally and red externally.
110. Base: gritty orange fabric: darker orange surfaces.

Not illustrated: another jar as no 88, at least 4 channel rim jars as no 89, at least 4 cookpots as nos 90 and 95; and sherds of at least 3 very thick store jars.

The samian from the cellar includes three pieces from the lower fills which are Hadrianic and Hadrianic-Antonine and Flavian. The latter is residual. The black, upper fill contained one piece which is Hadrianic or Antonine. Combined with other evidence from the site (p 42) it is clear that the cellar group dates from c AD 140-160.

Apart from the ever present problem of residual material, this large group is a useful sample of the wares current around the middle of the second century.

It seems more profitable to consider the pottery from this group in relation to the earlier material from the site, rather than to draw extensive parallels. The groups are well dated by the samian they contain, and since occupation of the site seems to be limited to the period c AD 55-170 at the outside limits, later contamination does not occur. The most noticeable difference occurs with the grey fabrics (see introduction p 49).

Black burnished ware also occurs in this group and not elsewhere on the site. The complete absence of colour-coated wares is noticeable, since this normally occurs in groups of the second part of the second century.

At Brixworth (Woods 1970) a large group of c AD 160 contained similar forms to those here, including rather amorphous jars like no 93 etc., poppy head beakers, and channel rim jars. Black burnished ware was also found at Brixworth (*ibid* FIG 5, no 32) and it was interpreted as imitation, locally made, copies of the Dorset product. A few sherds of colour coated ware were found at Hadrianic-Antonine levels at Quinton (Friendship - Taylor 1974). The material here also compares broadly with a group from Verulamium (Wheeler 1936, Group B, FIGS 27 and 28) dating from c AD 160-190, which includes the Belgic prototype shaped cookpots (FIG 28, nos 17-19) also found here.

Rubble to the east of the building

111. Bowl: buff micaceous fabric: buff internally and dull red to black externally.
- 112.Handled neck: very regular hard grey fabric with grey surfaces: unlike the other grey fabrics.
113. Small jar: regular grey fabric, softer than no 112 with eroded black surface externally.
114. Jar: extremely fine white fabric: off white surfaces.
115. Jar: as 113.
116. Lid: fabric B.
117. Bowl: soft soapy grey fabric: black surfaces: as nos 44 and 53.
118. Lid: as fabric B but blackened.

Rubble over building to the south

119. Base: as no 1.
120. Bowl: soft, gritty red fabric with grey core: red surfaces.

Rubble to the south of the building

121. Jar: fairly gritty dark grey fabric: black surfaces: just possibly burnished externally.
122. Base: grey fabric with darker grey core, irregular sized grits with some large: orange surfaces: holes pierced in base after firing.
123. Neck: finely gritted black and grey fabric: black surface externally with impressed comb decoration: grey internally.
124. Cookpot: dark grey finely gritted fabric: rough grey surfaces.
125. Beaker: as 115 but red internally.
126. Decorated sherd: fabric A incised, probably rouletted decoration.
127. Bowl: as nos 81 etc. See Kenyon 1948, FIG 21 p 87 no 10 for a similar vessel found in a context c AD 100.

Rubble to the west of the building on the south of the road

128. Neck: as no 120.
129. Jar: as nos 1 and 119.

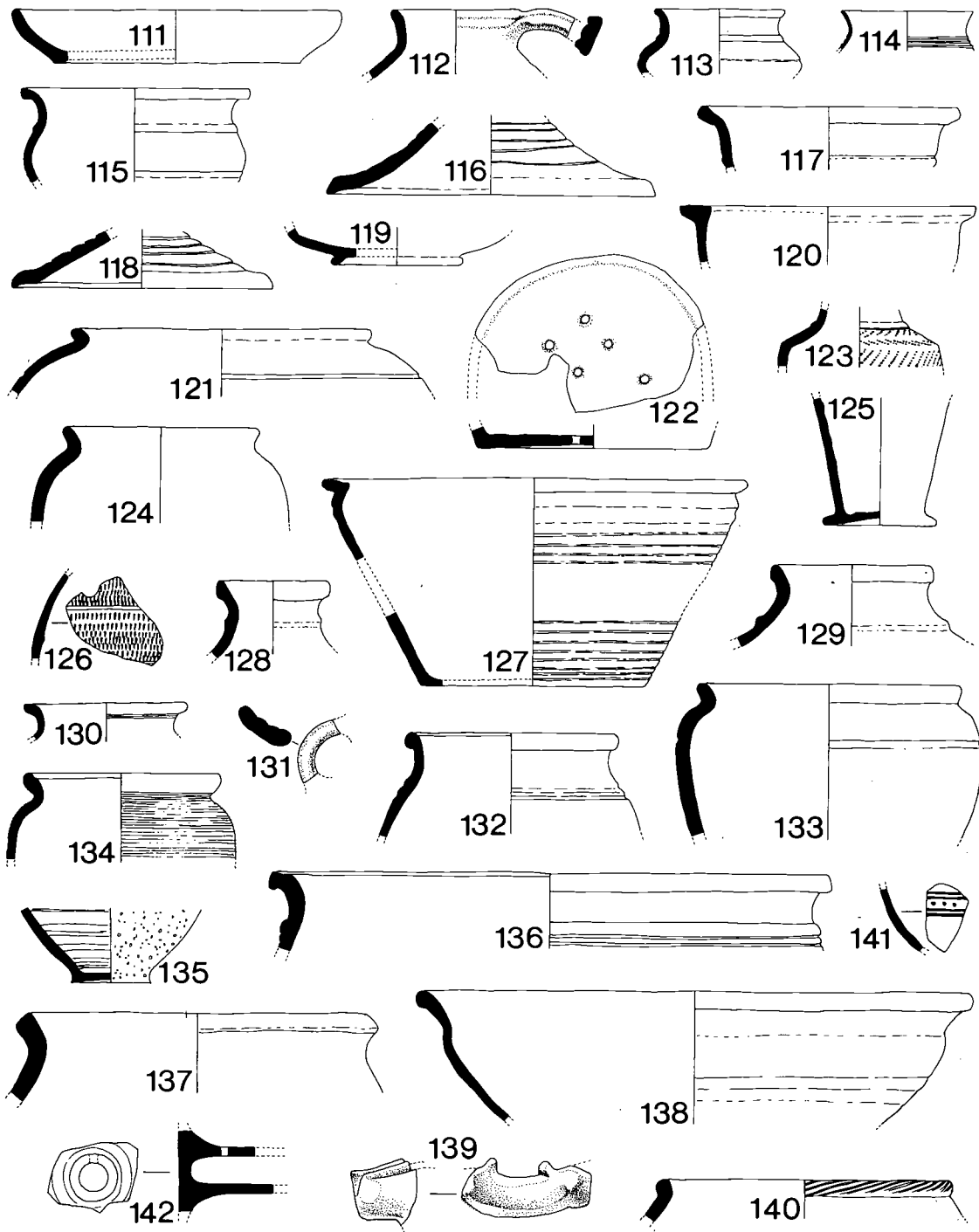


Fig 10 Mileoak: Roman and post-medieval pottery (no 142) (¼)

130. Jar: finely gritted orange fabric: orange surfaces.
 131. Handle: pale orange gritty fabric: off white surfaces.
 132. Jar: pale grey, regular, slightly gritted fabric: pale grey internally, grey to dark grey externally.
 133. Cookpot: coarse, shell tempered grey fabric: red internally and black externally.

Rubble over building to north of the road

134. Channel rim jar: regular black fabric with many small grits: dark grey surfaces.
 135. Base: regular, slightly gritted orange fabric: orange internally: 'rustication' of spots applied externally.
 136. Large jar: smooth grey fabric with occasional small grits: very smooth orange surfaces.
 137. Cookpot: heavily shell tempered grey fabric: grey externally and red internally.
 138. Bowl: smooth grey-black fabric with a thick black core: dark grey internally: remnants of a black surface externally: similar to nos 44, 53, and 117 but harder.

Robber trenches

139. Mortarium spout fragment: fine-textured cream fabric. From a Flavian mortarium, almost certainly of form Gillam 238. These were made either in Kent or Gaul (Hartley 1977, group II).
 140. Slashed rim: black slightly gritty fabric with some shell temper: black surfaces. Perhaps mid first century AD (Friendship-Taylor 1974, p 29). A specifically local type. At Hardingstone (Woods 1969, p 14) the slashed rim vessels also had grooves for lids, a feature missing from this one. At Hardingstone a date *c* AD 10-35 is suggested.

Topsoil

141. Painted sherd: pale orange finely sanded fabric: darker orange surfaces with red painted decoration. For a discussion of these painted wares see Woods 1970, pp 36-38 and FIG 39: a wide date range: probably Flavian-Antonine.

Ditch 3

142. Handle: smooth red fabric with a grey core: covered overall externally with a brown glaze. Probably 19th century.
 Not illustrated: a poor quality English bone china bowl with crude onglaze painted decoration of flowers in grey, crimson and sea green. Probably Staffordshire *c* 1820-50.

TILES (FIG 11).

Discs.

- 1 and 2. From the rubble in the central area immediately to the east of the building. Both seemed to have been formed as rough circles, rather than chipped to shape. Pale brick red sandy fabric with small red inclusions.
 3. From the rubble in room 1, as nos 1 and 2, but with slight possible traces of mortar on the back. Another similar but rougher disc came from this rubble.

Another similar to no 1 was found sealed beneath the path to the east of the building, and another the same was found in topsoil. One similar to no 3 was found in the rubble to the south of the building. Three very rough discs of similar size to nos 2 and 3 were found actually in the gravel forming the path to the east of the building.

Therefore nine of these rough tile discs were found on the site, all but one being stratified in Roman levels. Their use is not clear. Only one shows a slight trace of mortar. They appear to have been deliberately made the shape they are. Perhaps they were used as lids.

4. Small rectangular tile: from the rubble to the east of the building. Three exactly similar were found together. Similar fabric to the discs: each face is a smooth surface. $\frac{1}{4}$ of each is slightly burnt and blackish. No wear on any surface.
 5. Large quarter round tile: from the rubble in the south east corner of the building: fabric as tile discs: all surfaces show traces of white mortar. One flat face shows less mortar than the others. The remains of another, perhaps originally slightly larger, quarter round tile were found in the robber trench of the eastern corridor wall, a little to the north of this one. These large tiles or bricks are presumably for some specialised construction purpose. They are stratified in Roman levels.

Box tiles

Fabric as the tile discs.

6. From the rubble in room 11.
 7. From the rubble in room 11. This tile is chamfered on two edges.
 8. Softer, darker red fabric: from the clay over the rubble to the west of the building.

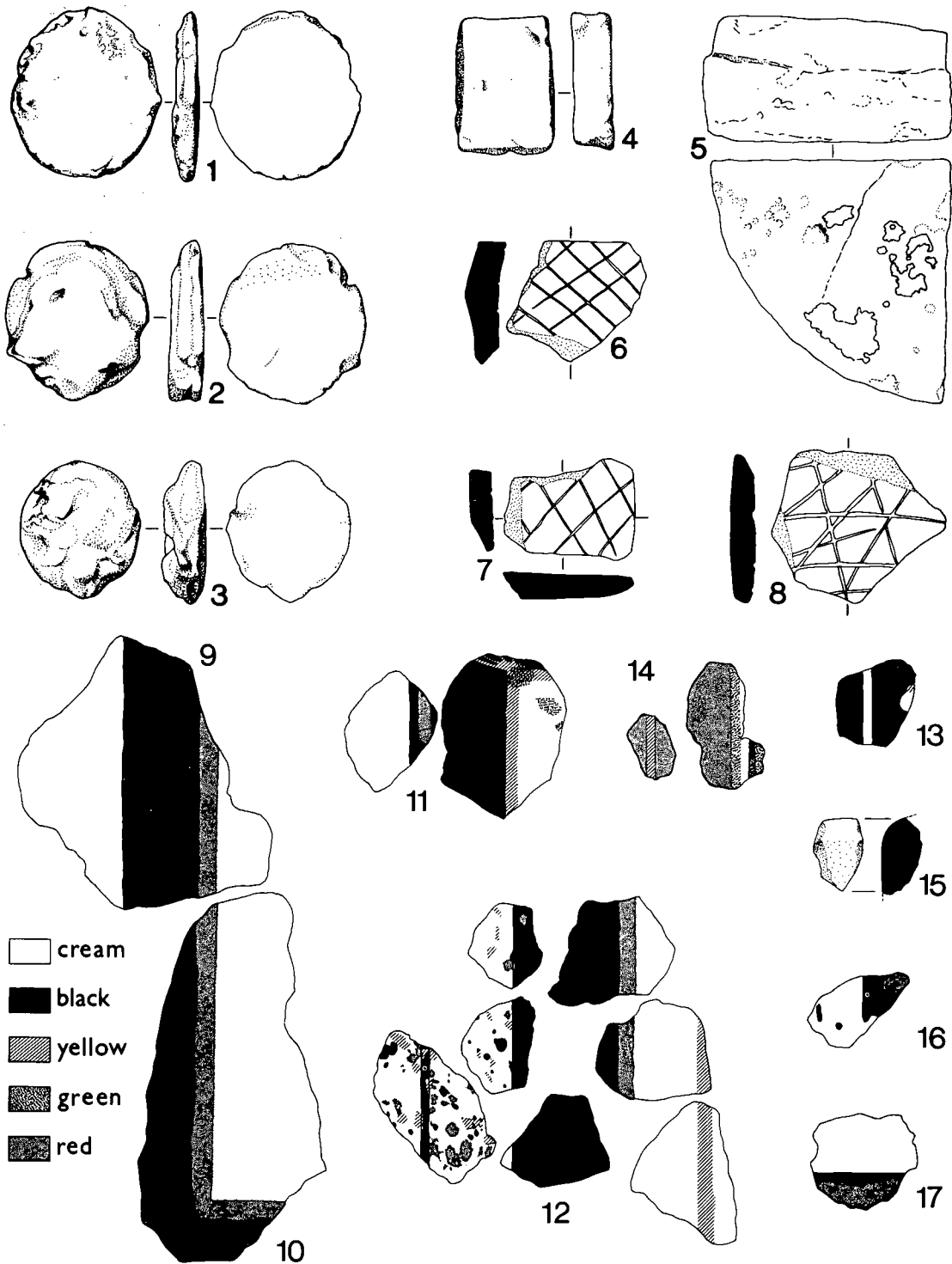


Fig 11 Mileoak: top, tiles; bottom, painted wall plaster (¼)

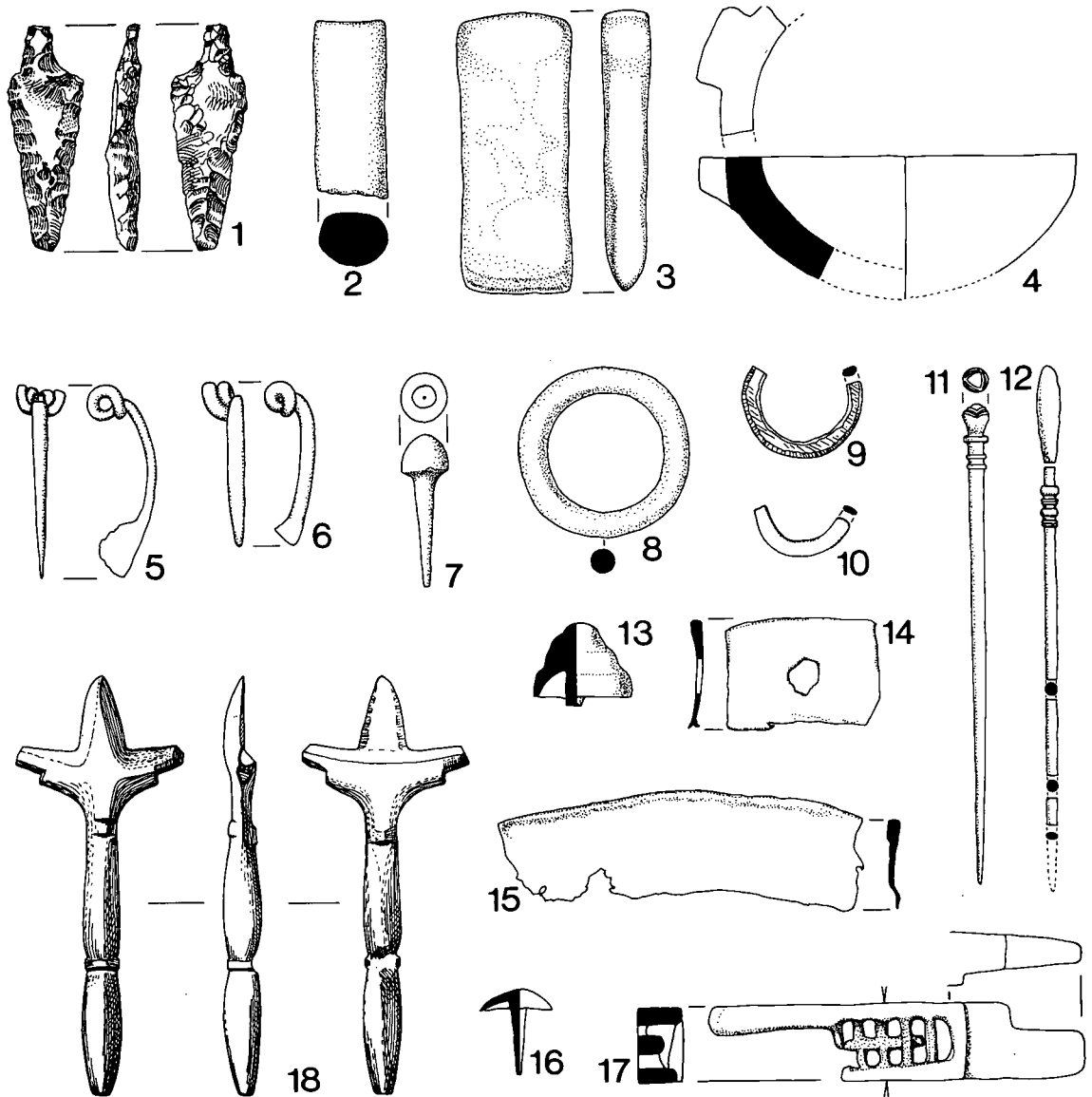


Fig 12 Mileoak: flint (1; 2/3); stone (2-4; 2/3); bronze (5-17; 2/3)

Other fragments of box tile came from the rubble in rooms 3 or 4, and further fragments were found in the same context as nos 7 and 8. Thus three fragments were found in the area to the south of the road, and five from the northern area. The *pilae* bases found in room 11 show that box tiles, used as flues in the hypocaust, were used here, but there is no evidence for a hypocaust to the south of the road. There may have been one under the present road.

WALL PLASTER (FIG 11)

- 9 and 10. From the rubble in the eastern corridor.
- 11. From the rubble in room 2.
- 12. From the rubble in room 4: piece on the left from rooms 3 or 4.
- 13. From the rubble in room 5.
- 14 and 15. From the rubble in the western corridor.
- 16 and 17. From the rubble over the northern area of the building.

STONE (FIG 12)

1. Flint: from the rubble to the west of the building: tanged missile point formed by shallow bifacial flaking: probably early Bronze Age. Richard Bradley has kindly examined this flint and his comments are here reproduced.

Dr R J King has kindly examined the stone objects (nos 2-4) and his geological descriptions are here reproduced.

2. Broken whetstone: from topsoil on the roadside, so perhaps recent: composed of an arkosic fine-grained quartzose sandstone with a calcic cement. It resembles Millstone Grit (Middle Carboniferous) lithologies, but no attempt at provenance can be made. It could be glacially derived and have weathered out from the boulder clay on the site.
3. Whetstone: from the rubble over room 3: composed of a quartzose slightly micaceous siltstone showing well defined bedding planes parallel to the flat face of the object. The cementation is siliceous. Its horizon is problematical, resembling Lower Silurian siltstones from the Welsh Border area siltstone facies of the Old Red Sandstone (Upper Devonian) or equally well, Coal Measures Sandstone (Upper Carboniferous). It is also very likely to be glacially derived and to have been found by the users on site.
4. Mortar: from topsoil over room 5: a fine grained shell and slightly sandy limestone of Upper Purbeckian age, ie Lower Cretaceous, containing the ostracod *Cypridea* sp., and tests of *Viviparus* sp. The provenance of this horizon is limited in Britain to a triangular area which includes Oxford, the Vale of Wardour and the Dorset coast. It is however extensively exposed in parts of France, especially the fringes of the Paris Basin.

BRONZE (FIG 12).

5. Brooch: from beneath the rubble near the path.
6. Brooch: very corroded: from the rubble in room 1.

These brooches are of Camulodunum type VII, Nauheim derivative (Camulodunum p 312, PL XCII, nos 55-57), found there during the Claudio-Neronian period. At Verulamium they were found in contexts dating to the second half of the first century AD (Wheeler 1936, FIG 43, nos 1 and 2). They are of the so-called 'poor man's' type.

7. Heavy nail: from the rubble to the east of the stone building.
8. Ring: from the rubble immediately to the west of the stone building.
9. Broken ring: on the clay surface to the north of the stone building.
10. Broken ring: from disturbed levels over the cellar.
11. Pin, perhaps a hair pin: from the burnt material over ditch 1, ie Hadrianic-Antonine.
12. Probably a toilet implement as the thickened end is solid: from the same context as no 11.
13. Stud with a broken iron pin: from the robber trench of the main west wall.
14. Pierced sheet: from the rubble immediately to the south of the building: apparently whole.
15. Possible part of the folded rim of a vessel: from topsoil in the area of rooms 1 and 2.
16. Stud: from beneath the rubble to the west of the building. Nos 15 and 16 may be from harness.
17. Lock bolt: from the clay over the destruction rubble to the west of the building.
18. Silvered mirror handle: from the black fill in the upper part of the cellar.

LEAD (FIG 13).

19. Spindle whorl: from above the roof spill to the west of the building.
20. Stopper: from the topsoil to the extreme east of the site: possibly modern.

IRON (FIG 13).

21. Arrow head: unstratified. X-ray shows file marks where the body joins the wings. Medieval.
22. Socketed iron point: from the rubble in rooms 1 or 2: point broken off: probably a wooden handled tool.
23. File: from the post-medieval ditch 3, so possibly modern: a small area of ridging survives as drawn.
24. Knife blade: from an ironstone cobbling, so perhaps Belgic: tip broken off.
25. Hinge: from the robber trench of the main west wall: X-rays show hole and a dome which is probably another nail *in situ*.
26. Ring: from within the path to the east of the building: probably from harness.
27. Linch pin: from near ditch 2 in disturbed levels: hole revealed by X-ray: probably post-medieval.
28. Bill hook: from the top of hearth 13: X-ray shows holes in handle: probably Belgic.

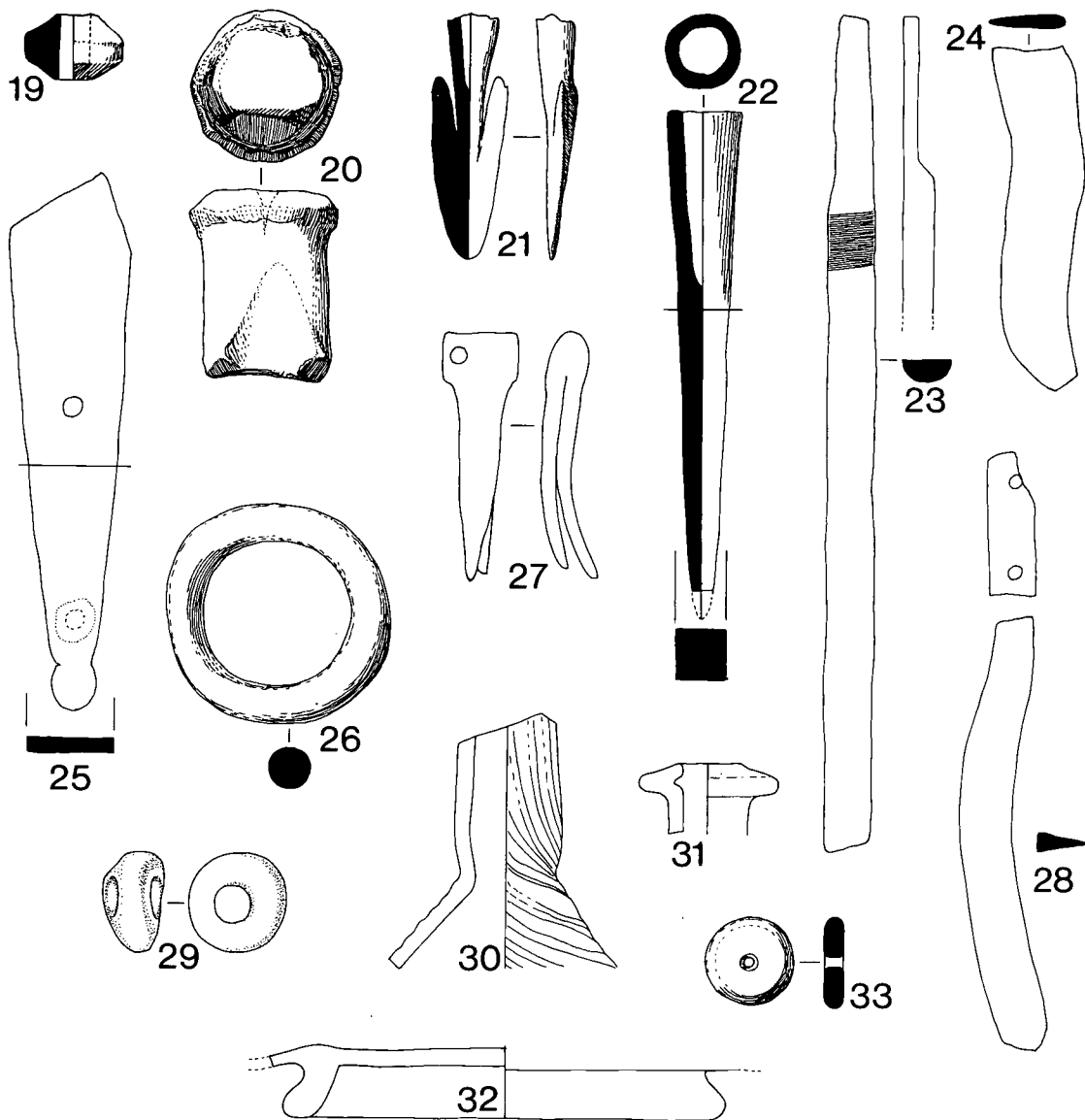


Fig 13 Mileoak: lead, glass, iron and bone (nos 19, 20 lead, 21-8 iron, 29-32 glass, 33 bone; all 2/3 except 28 which is 1/3)

GLASS (FIG 13).

- 29. Bead: from beneath the path to the east of the building: clear pale greeny blue.
- 30. Neck: from roof spill immediately to the east of the building: twisted clear greeny blue.
- 31. Bottle neck: from the clay to the east of the building: clear greeny blue: see Charlesworth in Frere 1972, FIG 75, no 15, and the discussion of these bottles, which are most common *c* AD 70-*c* 120 (*ibid* p 202).
- 32. Base: from rubble to the west of the building: clear dark amber.

BONE (FIG 13).

- 33. Possibly a button: unstratified.

ANIMAL BONE.

There was very little animal bone found at Mileoak and it mostly consisted of the larger bones only. It has been examined by R T Jones at the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, who reports that there were present bones of cattle (*Bos sp.*), sheep (*Ovis sp.*), Pig (*Sus sp.*), Roe Deer (*Capreolus Capreolus*) and domestic fowl (*Gallus sp.*).

DISCUSSION

Discussion of the earlier period of the site is made difficult because of the uncertainty about its true nature. It is clear that it consisted of an unknown number of timber buildings, relating to the cobbling and hearths excavated, but we have little or no information about the buildings themselves. To add to the uncertainty it is difficult to be exact about its date. The little pottery recovered from the hearths is Belgic and it is probable that the timber buildings date from the middle of the first century AD; and that it was a simple 'native' type of settlement, similar to that of phase 1a at Quinton dated to around the middle fifty years of the first century AD (Friendship-Taylor 1974). If this is so the mid first century pottery occurring in later and unstratified deposits, for example most obviously nos 10, 123 and 140, derives from this phase.

It has been suggested, by associating the timber buildings with ditch 1, that the earliest phase might not end until *c* AD 100 (see p 33). However, it seems more likely that this feature relates to the stone building (see p 44).

It is difficult to gauge the length of time the first phase lasted. It is obviously not associated with the stone building itself, and it seems unlikely to be associated with the construction of the stone building, eg as workmen's huts, because it is directly beneath that building.

There are no intervening layers between the timber phase and the stone building, so it seems unlikely that much time elapsed between the desertion of one and the construction of the other. Since the stone building appears to have been constructed around AD 65-75 the earlier phase may have lasted from the middle of the first century AD until that time.

The sickle indicates that corn was grown and harvested. (FIG 13, 28).

The lack of detail from the site, and the lack of stratified pottery means that it has added little to our knowledge of the Belgic period, but another site is added to the catalogue of Belgic sites with subsequent Roman occupation. Others in Northamptonshire include Quinton (Friendship-Taylor 1974), Brixworth and Deanshanger. Irchester (Knight 1967) is a small Roman town with Belgic antecedents, and Duston, near Northampton, and Weekley (Kettering) are both major Belgic sites with subsequent Roman occupation (both unpublished: material in Northampton and Kettering museums). There are many other small sites both in Northamptonshire and the other counties in the locality with occupation of both periods. A recent discussion of some Iron Age sites with subsequent Roman occupation (Wilson 1974, pp 251-253) mentions a site at Wollaston, Northants, where aerial photography has revealed a small corridor house lying next to a group of overlapping enclosures one of which contains possible dwelling sites.

THE STONE BUILDING (FIG 5).

The substantial stone building constructed on the site *c* AD 65-75 has no obvious parallel either locally or nationally. It is a sophisticated, large building, with at least one hypocaust and mosaic and complex internal decoration. The plan here is simple; a corridor on both the long sides, with at least twelve rooms opening off them. The southern end was the simpler, with clay floors. At the northern end, there was the hypocaust and the remains of a simple tile tesserae mosaic, and a cellar. A recent discussion and catalogue of cellars in Roman buildings (Brodrigg, Hands, and Walker 1971, pp 21-26) shows that many date from the first or second century, as does this example. The central part of the building has been destroyed. It is evident that the rooms were lit by clerestory windows in the main walls, since the majority of the rooms do not have outside walls, but are bounded by corridors. The corridor walls have shallower footings than the main walls, which also suggests that they were not carried up to the same height as the main walls. The building appears to be of all of one construction period and its simple outline rather confirms this.

The structure may be compared on plan to Richmond's 'Aisled House' type (Richmond in Rivet (ed), 1969, pp 64-68). However, these are basically timber structures, some of which are barns and some of which have later masonry insertions. Most examples are late in date. However, their construction is similar to the Mileoak building, with aisles or corridors along the long sides and probably clerestory windows to the central rooms.

It is possible that the building had a timber superstructure constructed on the dwarf stone walls, the lower parts of which were excavated, and that the walls were rendered externally with maroon painted wall-plaster.

However, since the walls are 2ft (0.60m) wide, which is rather wide to take a superstructure of timber, it remains possible that some of them were of stone to their full height. The building was roofed with red clay tiles.

It is clear that the building was decorated internally in a fairly uniform style. The eastern corridor and rooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 seem to have been decorated with mock marble panels separated by broad stripes. Bluey black, red and yellow are the main colours found, with a little sea green. Room 5 seems to have had a different scheme based on white, yellow and blue, if the few pieces found in that area are indicative of the whole. The western corridor may have had some moulded details and red areas with green and white stripes, all in a better quality plaster than the patterns found elsewhere. The area to the north of the road yielded very little plaster, but there seems to have been similar spotted and striped decoration here.

The building was probably erected *c* AD 65-75 and was deserted by the middle of the second century. In comparison with much of the local rural Roman occupation, for example Quinton (Friendship-Taylor 1974, phase 2) or Overstone (Williams 1976) the building is very sophisticated. This may be partially due to the site being a mere 1½ miles from the small Roman town of Towcester.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTINUITY (FIG 1).

Since the site of a late Belgic or early Roman simple settlement was selected, or re-used, for a much larger house of *c* AD 65-75, it is worth looking for the

factors which induced this continuity. It is probable that the later settlement took over the fields of the earlier one and that this is at least part of the reason for continuity.

However, communications probably figure largely in the siting of both periods. Watling Street, which runs from Verulamium to High Cross and passes through Towcester (*Lactodorum*) (Margary, 1955, route If, p 158) is only *c* 1½ miles away, as is Towcester itself. The other known Roman road from Alchester to Towcester (*ibid*, route 160a, p 148) is slightly nearer to the site, being a little over a mile away at its closest point. The site is also close to the river Tove, which continues in to Towcester.

Towcester itself was a small Roman town (excavations by J Alexander 1955-6 (Alexander 1967): A E Brown (Brown 1975, p 255, 1976, p 335 and 1977, p 399) and others all substantially unpublished), and it is probable that proximity to a larger settlement influenced the siting of the settlement. Locally, as discussed above (p 31) the site is well placed, sitting on top of a dome of well-drained clay, on the edge of the limestone shelf. The building materials for the stone building may originate from this very limestone, and iron impregnated sandstone, such as that found in the floors of the Belgic period, is found a little to the west of the site. It is difficult to know why the site was deserted in the middle of the second century. Another Roman site, Wood Burcote, which is *c* 1 mile away to the south of Towcester, and which is even closer to both Roman roads and Towcester itself than Mileoak appears to continue in use from the Flavian period until the fourth century (Woods 1975, p 255).

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