

Roman Architectural Masonry from Northamptonshire

by PAUL WOODFIELD

Many sites of the Roman period in Northamptonshire have produced an occasional fragment of architectural masonry, often only as a surface find. It is unfortunate that these pieces, being relatively cumbersome, have too often been set apart from other related finds and, in due course, have become lost or ignominiously cast out.¹ These fragments can however provide a valuable, if not exactly an explicit, clue to the appearance of the buildings in the Roman town or landscape, and can reinforce other evidence on the more elusive phenomena such as the degree of sophistication obtaining at a given site. The material from which they were made can furthermore shed some light not only on a clearly important industry but on trade organisation and connections within the province.

The schedule attached to this paper contains all the significant architectural fragments known to the present writer to have been found within the borders of the county, taken for this purpose to exclude the former Soke of Peterborough and the sites around Castor, now part of Cambridgeshire. The list does not include minor fragments like plinth chamfers, from which little can be deduced, nor does it contain the numerous sites producing simple dressed masonry, which might well be taken to indicate buildings of quality, but where chance has not preserved the architectural trimmings.

The drawn pieces fall into two simple categories, differentiated by style. Group 'A' includes the larger, more monumental and classical items, and Group 'B' those of a smaller size and less classical in character.

GROUP A

This category contains stonework showing distinct affinities to conventional classical Roman architecture. Columns are of recognisable orders, and other stonework represents entablatures and plinths of buildings constructed entirely in stone. It will be noted that these generally come from known Roman urban contexts; thus they probably represent the remains of the main public buildings, basilica, baths and official religious structures;² in fact those buildings likely to have been sponsored by the public purse, which by its nature, would have had a vested interest in conformity.

Where such masonry is recovered from apparently rural contexts, it may be taken as an indication of a special class of monument, like a water source temple, where the *raison d'être* is immovable, or a settlement where the degree of urbanism is yet to be fully established, as at Brixworth or Medborne-Ashley. Bannaventa, by its location on Watling Street, must have had official recognition, yet excavations have not only failed to produce any architectural masonry but no stone buildings at all seem to have ever been built.³ Other urbanised or

¹ The loss of specimens should serve to underline the danger of not making proper provision for their safe keeping, and will also serve as a reminder that, as large stones are not readily destructible, their rediscovery is a distinct possibility to be borne in mind.

² The majority of rural temples and shrines apparently had little in the way of architectural pretensions in the classical sense, and their internal features would generally have differed little in scale from domestic buildings of Muckelroy 1976, 173f.

³ Information provided by the excavator, Mr S Taylor.

industrialized settlements which have not produced architectural material, Duston, Kettering, Ashton and Wellingborough may never have had central government instigated buildings, but have grown up around local industry after the main administrative structure had been established at other centres. The almost total impoverishment of Verulamium by later stone robbing however serves to indicate the very low rate of survival of architectural pieces in the presence of later settlement.

GROUP B

This group exists by contrast to Group A. Characteristically it has smaller columns with simple turned capitals and bases, devoid of enrichment, where classical precedent is so distant as to be barely discernable. Items in this Group have been recovered from both urban and rural sites, including some from known villas, where they must represent a major architectural element in the design of the principal building on the site. Again by contrast with A these items probably represent the aspirations and investment of private individuals. Some, particularly those from fringes of towns, might possibly be survivals from funerary monuments, although evidence for this type of monument in Britain is very slender.

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS: COLUMNS

The column is the most distinctive architectural legacy of the ancient world, and its adoption in stone is itself a strong indicator of a classicising influence at a provincial site. Architectural stonecarving is not known prior to the Roman conquest, and was doubtless introduced by the army itself which carried such trades, not only for its own use but as an instrument for the setting up of romanised life in civilian administrative centres. It may be guessed that after some twenty to thirty years of this process acculturation would have taken place to the extent that the stone column would be freely adopted, and thus it would not be out of place to assume that the earliest columns for civic buildings would approximate more or less to the classical canons of proportion, and when local stone industries developed, they would also adopt, within a wider margin of acceptability, the same proportions. It is indeed probable that any wide deviation would appear grotesque to both Roman and non-Roman accustomed to official architecture. For want of any better yardstick, it would therefore not seem too unrealistic to take Vitruvian standards (Vitruvius, Lib III, Caput II) to reconstruct the overall height of Group A columns where the shaft diameter is the only dimension to survive. These standards provide a restricted range of options, varying with the scale of the building and the desired effect, ranging from 8:1 for aerostyle temples, to 10:1 for the heavier styled pycnostyle temples, the unit being the lower diameter of the column shaft. In Gaul, these rules are largely borne out by surviving major monuments, the Maison Carrée at Nimes, for instance, having a ratio of 9.2:1. In Britain by contrast there is minimal evidence for insular practice; the re-erected column of the York *principia* is squatter, at 7.2: 1. The indications, slight and inadequate as they are, suggest an insular preference for shorter, thicker columns.

Two Group A column fragments, Ringstead and Irchester 1, give, using a minimum Vitruvian formula of 8:1, estimated heights of 5m (16ft 5in) and 5.6m (18ft 4in) respectively, the two storey or 'giant order' column. This scale compares with the re-used columns from the west gate area, Silchester (654mm diameter)

or the theatre *proskenion* column at Verulamium (590mm). The finishing of the surface of the shaft with scale patterns at Ringstead is known on other British sites,⁴ and has usually been taken to indicate the probability of a special class of monument known as Jupiter Columns. These are well known in Europe, particularly in north east Gaul (Lambrechts 1942, 81-99) but also occurring though much more rarely, in Britain.⁵ They normally comprise a giant column of the Corinthian order, surmounted by a three-dimensional representation of the deity, erected over an octagonal drum featuring relief figures in niches on each face representing minor deities or days of the week, the whole being mounted on a square pedestal base. On the Ringstead drum there is no hint of the low relief figures appearing on the shaft, as for instance on the much smaller Wroxeter specimens, but scales occur with sufficient regularity on European examples of this type of monument that the probability of Ringstead being one must be allowed. Jupiter columns were apparently erected as foci to Jupiter cults on large estates, perhaps in association with local cults, and this would explain the appearance of a monumental piece of masonry at a comparatively rural site.

The Group B fragments present a different problem of reconstruction as the formal system of proportions cannot be scaled down to the extent that buildings would appear unacceptably miniaturised. Two almost complete columns give a clear idea of the acceptable proportions; a complete column from Chesterton, former Soke of Peterborough, and within what may well prove to be the same masonry tradition as the Northamptonshire stones, has a lower shaft diameter of 183mm and an overall height of 925mm, giving a proportion of 1:5. Also, towards the south west, a column with missing capital from Silchester (Fox and Hope 1890, PL 27; FIG 1) gives, when reconstructed, a proportion of 6.5: 1, although others further south west suggest the proportion 1:5 was usual in that area. On this slender evidence a proportion of 1:5.5 may be taken as a guide.

Twelve Northamptonshire specimens, capitals, shafts and bases, provide estimated heights within the range 825mm to 1485mm (2ft 8in to 4ft 11in), and of these, three quarters form a significant group within the narrower range of 825-1116mm (2ft 8in-3ft 8in). It thus seems that the dwarf column with an average height around 970mm or 3ft 2in had a distinct role to play in private architectural schemes. In order to meet the human scale, it would be necessary to raise them on walls some 3ft or 1 metre high and with entablature over, would reach domestic room height, but an enhanced scale could be achieved by employing a timber arcade instead of a conventional horizontal architrave. The alternative is to suggest their use in positions where the human scale is less relevant, such as in funerary monuments, which are likely to be sited on villa estates in later periods, and would merit permanent construction of good quality, or possibly internal *lararia*.

It is commonly suggested that villas with corridors had columnated walls to the exterior, and some such arrangement is hinted at in contemporary illustrations (FIG 1), although in these the columns seem generally to be based at ground level. Whether this type of reconstruction can still be upheld in view of the lack of security and protection from the weather it implies is a question which merits review. The only evidence on site in Northamptonshire is from Gayton, where the columns do not appear to be related to a corridor, and their spacing,

⁴ eg Wroxeter, with a scale pattern, and Catterick, with reserve leaves.

⁵ Wroxeter, Catterick, Great Chesterford, Cirencester, Chichester, and Irchester (see Inventory no 17).

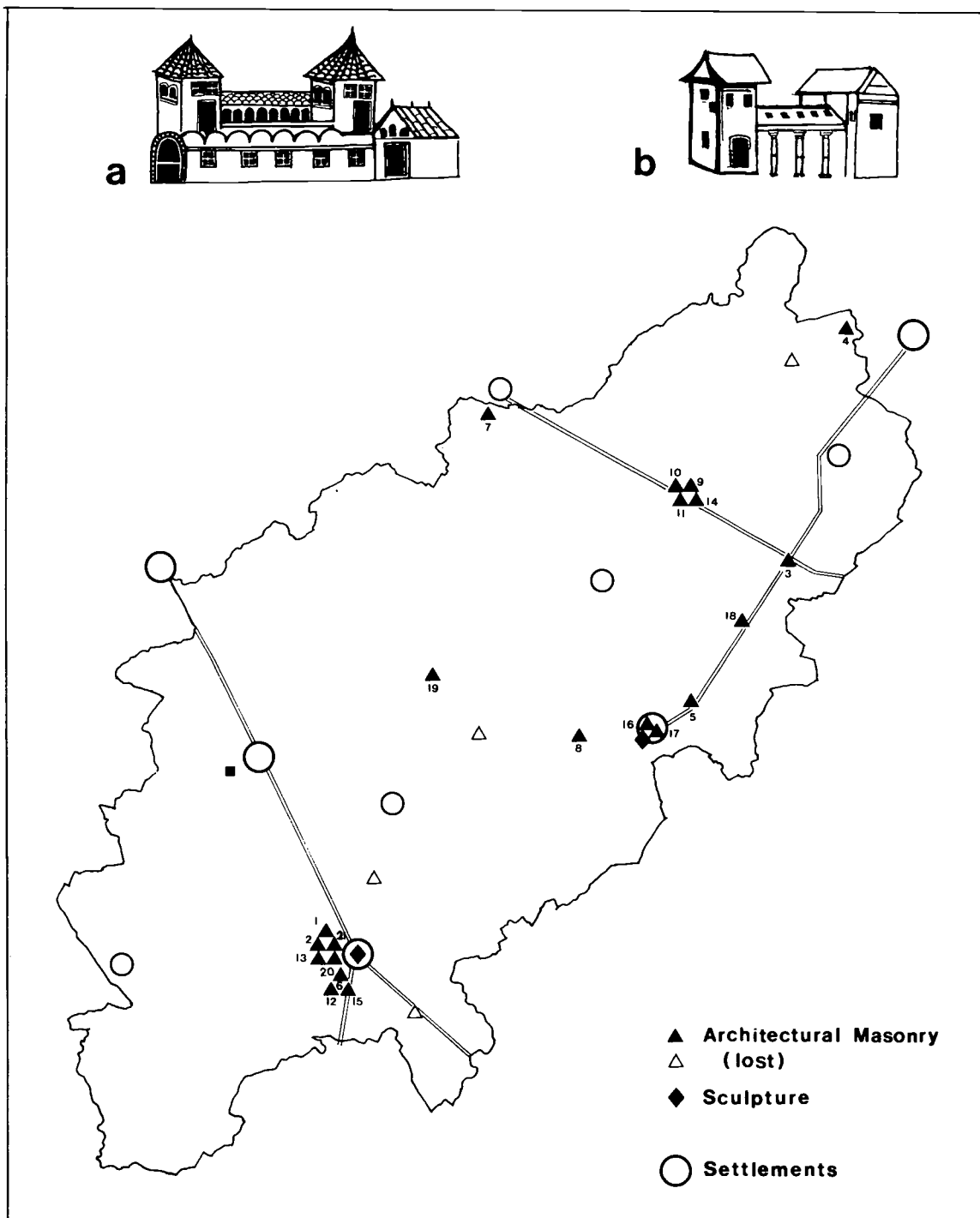


Fig 1. Distribution of finds of architectural masonry from Northamptonshire. Numbers refer to Inventory.

at approximately thirteen feet centres implies something larger than the standard Group B column. The columns rarely if ever show evidence for weathering *in situ*, as differentiated from subsequent damage, so a sheltered position between room and courtyard, or even internal between room and room would be preferred for the dwarf columns. A few Roman frescoes suggest a partly open arcade at first floor below the eaves (FIG 1); in view of the probable wooden superstructure over these short columns some such arrangement may be a possibility where the aspect is sheltered. Three Northamptonshire pieces, Yarwell, Towcester 5, and Ashley, fall towards the upper end of the estimated height range, 1,256mm to 1,485mm (approx. 4ft to 5ft). These may have had a slightly different function, and an internal position *in antis* between major reception rooms in a public or large private building would be an appropriate position. If used externally, columns of these dimensions could conceivably have formed, raised on plinths, the sort of modest portico indicated by the plans of Gorhambury II, or Northchurch, in Hertfordshire, or Bradwell, Buckinghamshire.

CAPITALS

Seven specimens of capitals from the county are still extant. Irchester 1 stands apart from the others by virtue of its scale, and by its closer adherence to classical prototype, the Corinthian capital. It is severely weathered, and has deteriorated further since its discovery and illustration (*VCH Northants* 1, 1902, 181), and, in comparison to other British examples (Blagg 1977, 63) except that at Catterick, is relatively crude. The corner volute leaves have a deep-cut central midrib, but otherwise only have simple horizontal cuts to indicate the vegetative form, the characteristic lobes of the acanthus leaf being absent. At the centre the flower is too badly damaged to be recognised as such, but is supported by leaf forms, with crude lobes, which rise instead of from caulicoli, from curious inverted petal forms previously recorded, and now only to be discerned with the eye of faith. The capital was made from two blocks of Weldon stone, laid on the natural bedding plane, and cramped together at centre top, and further morticed for a dowel and for lifting. The unorthodox form of this capital like the Catterick example but unlike the large figured capital from Cirencester suggests a special function, and its being found in loose association with Irchester 2a and 2c, the top and bottom sections of an octagonal drum with relief figures in niches, raises the strong possibility that it is from another Jupiter column.

The remaining six capitals accord to the well known British type that has often been referred to, rather irrelevantly, as Tuscan. All are of the smaller Group B and are constructed with a number of simple mouldings turned, with or without a necking moulding, on a monolithic shaft. They are always devoid of enrichment and bear little or no relation to the conventional orders, in fact 'not in the purest taste' (Buckman and Newmarch 1850, 22). The one quasi-Ionic capital from Chesterton, Cambridgeshire (Peterborough) is in all probability Norman. These capitals are usually competently turned, with little doubt on a lathe, and bear no traces of applied finish in the form of lime plaster skim or colour. Some sign might be expected to have survived in the deeper mouldings had it ever been present. They are constructed with an eye to economy, the mouldings do not generally spread much beyond the diameter of the shaft, and the abacus and base are generally monolithic. No two capitals are exactly alike, although two, Towcester 1 and 2, are within permissible limits for the same building (Blagg 1977, 56, 59).

The standard succession of mouldings, cyma, fillet and cavetto in descending order, which regularly appear at such sites as Silchester and Caerwent, has yet to appear in Northamptonshire.

All capitals from the county exhibit recesses on the top of the abacus. These have been variously described as evidence for lathe turning, holes to facilitate handling, and mortices for dowels or fixing plugs. The holes on these Northamptonshire examples are unlikely to have been primarily intended to receive the chuck of a lathe, as for instance on the small lathe turned capital from Higham Ferrers the hole is neither central to the abacus nor perpendicular to the axis of the column, a situation that would have made lathe work difficult. No recess has the inclined sides of a Lewis hole necessary to provide lifting tackle with a mechanical grip, and the small scale of the columns does not seem to need the postulation of other lifting devices. *Poloi*, dowels of wood, lead or iron were known to the ancient world since ancient Greece (Robertson 1954, 42) and must indeed have been essential in areas subject to earth tremors. Thus the appearance of the device in British provincial work need be no surprise since the requirement for a permanent fixing between column and entablature must have still been felt both in erection, and for safety of the completed structure. The actual need however is called in doubt as it appears that the supplier of architectural work to Wroxeter felt no such similar compulsion to provide dowel holes. The evidence provided by the holes themselves is scanty; a number retain traces of a lime mortar, and Towcester 5 has sufficient bedding to preserve the impression of a round-headed dowel, its smoothness suggesting lead rather than wood as a bed for an iron dowel. One specimen, Titchmarsh, retains slight iron-staining in the hole which reinforces the suggestion that the dowel here was also iron run in with lead. These dowel holes or *empolia* taken with the absence of smaller stone entablature fragments are indirect evidence that in Group B structures the superstructure was generally constructed in wood.

One base, Wood Burcote 2, has a similar dowel hole under the lowest torus. This also suggests a method of providing a mechanical key between column base and podium or wall, and the roughness of the hole may indicate that the dowel in this case could have been in a harder stone, mortared in. Towcester 5, having a dowel hole mid shaft, suggests that 2m (6ft) was in practice the maximum working size for a monolithic column.

BASES

Of the nine bases known to have been found in the county, three have survived (FIG 3). Only one conforms approximately to the conventional Attic type of base, Wood Burcote 2, found under a hedge during field walking and much damaged by agriculture. Superficially it resembles bases of Blagg's Wroxeter-Chester school in having equal tori, grooved around the girth, but differs not only by being in a different stone, but also in detail, the fillets being rounded, and the scotia being without a lower stop. The characteristic long upper cyma at Wroxeter is also absent although the Wood Burcote specimen is too damaged for any precision in this area. The remaining two bases come from one site, the circular temple at Brigstock, where they and other architectural fragments were re-used in the late third or fourth century as hardcore fill to the floor (Greenfield 1963, 228f and FIG 11). Although they may well have originally come from the same building, they bear little resemblance beyond being in the same stone, and having a preference for shallow, rounded mouldings. Brigstock 2 may be the base of a pilaster, pilasters being known just outside the county at Castor, but the round

face beneath the lowest member raises questions, and the possibility of this piece being the upper moulding of a small altar or plinth should be considered.

SHAFTS

Neck mouldings survive from four sites, and range from the elaborate split torus, quadrant, and double fillet of the Group A shaft from Ashley (FIG 3) to the simple annular ring moulding of Wilby. Entasis appears only on Towcester 5 but may have occurred on smaller columns, as the Chesterton column in Peterborough Museum demonstrates.

ENTABLATURES AND PLINTHS

Three pieces only survive in this category, all of Group A, Group B structures being unlikely to carry stone superstructures. Brixworth (FIG 4) is the only indubitable section of the enriched classical cornice. It carries robust but crudely executed leaf forms on two hollow mouldings, separated by a fillet, the upper perhaps representing alternating acanthus and anthemion, and the lower showing a fruiting form, probably reflecting the classical lotus and palmette pattern. The order of mouldings suggests that this piece of masonry must be part of the upper section of a cornice, even though the top fillet is exceptionally deep. The whole scale is large, indicating a building of column height above 7m (23ft), perhaps a classical temple. Of particular interest is the survival of dark red paint as background colour, preserved by the fragment having been built into the walling of the Saxon basilica (Blagg 1976, 171 and *J. Brit. Archaeol Ass*, 131, 1978).

The frieze, Towcester 4 (FIG 5) also represents a major building. The height of this piece, taking the classical formula as a very rough indicator, suggests a building of column height of 3.5m (11ft 6in). It bears a weathered reversing tendril scroll, with caulicoli sprouting triple heads to the margins, and alternate annulet and four-petalled flower nodes. This unusual piece has few parallels in Britain, another being the shrine at the great bath at Bath (Cunliffe 1971, PL 8), but similar friezes are a regular adjunct to Corinthian temples elsewhere (eg temples at Pula, and Nîmes).

The third specimen, Towcester 3 (FIG 4), is more difficult to assign. It comprises a top fillet, cavetto and two lower fillets, coarse and without enrichment. It may also be a cornice, but could equally be the capping of a podium or plinth. The stone is worn rather than weathered on its upper surface, but this distinction is marginal, and it may well have got worn in its re-used position in the 4th century when it formed the padstone for an assumed timber post of a building in the industrial suburb of the town. Some significance may be attached to the fact that three Towcester specimens, Towcester 3, 4 and 5 were recovered in the same excavation, although the dimensions strongly suggest that they were not originally from the same building.

MATERIALS

The County of Northamptonshire embraces, at its northern end, limestones of the Inferior Oolite series which have been worked for freestone down to the present day. The central tracts of the county yield the brown liassic marlstones and to the south the softer bleached oolites and the cornbrash outcrop. These

jurassic and liassic rocks continue through Oxfordshire to the Cotswolds. There is thus no shortage of good stone for architectural work in the area.

In the Roman period freestone is known to have been worked from the limestone near Ancaster, Lincs; Ketton, Rutland; Barnack; the Weldon-Stanion area in Northants; at Taynton, near Burford, and from the Great Oolite in the Corsham Down area near Bath. Other limestones were extracted from other geological deposits further afield; Portland; the Magnesian limestone from Yorkshire and the Marquise, Pas de Calais. Other stones were employed for similar architectural work elsewhere, sandstone in Cheshire (Runcorn), and North Wales (Bodysgallen); gritstone from Derbyshire, and chalk in the south east. The architectural masonry from Northamptonshire is exclusively of limestone. Unfortunately the Jurassic limestones are notoriously difficult to assign to any specific geographical locality due on one hand to the homogeneity of the material, and on the other to the variety of facies appearing at any one source. Some of the material has been kindly examined on site, and in the laboratory, by Mr F Dimes and Mr Martyn Owen of the Institute of Geological Sciences, London, and their conclusions are noted in the Inventory. It is not possible for every piece to be examined, and so the identified specimens have been used as yardsticks against which to make provisional conclusions on the other pieces.

Of the 22 architectural specimens that are still extant, twelve are ascribed tentatively to a source in the Weldon area, four to a source further north, possibly Ketton, and a third group to the Box Ground limestone of Bath. With the Wilby shaft there was some doubt as to whether it could have originated at Clipsham as an alternative to Bath. The small capital from Higham Ferrers is of a fine grain limestone, and could be a selected Weldon stone, or even a good quality Blisworth Limestone.

It thus appears that the primary source for local architectural work lies within the county itself near Weldon, but having connections further north towards Ketton. The market was, however, penetrated by stone from a second source, the well known Box Hill quarries, which during the Roman period were supplying the needs over much of southern England where native stone was short (Williams 1971). Conspicuous by its absence from Northamptonshire is the Derbyshire gritstone, which furnishes up to 95% of the architectural work at Leicester (Hebditch and Mellor 1973, 81-83), not far away, and within what might otherwise be seen as the same market area. This distribution, with only 5% limestones at Leicester, strongly indicates that water transport was the governing factor in its distribution, for the limestones are available to Roman Leicester at no more than half the distance of the gritstone. Had road transport been competitive then not only gritstone but the Cheshire sandstones, which provide an equally large share of the architectural work at Wroxeter, might have been expected to arrive in the county by Watling Street, although it may be assumed that limestone was used in preference. Some road transport must have been involved in the distribution of the Bath stones, however, as it would seem too precarious to postulate regular shipping via the Channel to the Wash, and a distribution by road from a river head on the Cherwell, having been transported thence down the Thames, would seem altogether more likely.

Of sculptural pieces and non-architectural stonework from the county the pattern seems very similar, with Weldon supplying the more bulky and the second

grade items, and the better quality work being executed in compact harder stones from further afield.⁸

The Borough Hill fragment points up the different specification needed for monumental inscriptions, and here 'Forest Marble' of Norton, Oxfordshire, has provided a suitable alternative to the better known Purbeck stone. The absence of clearly identified Barnack stone, a source which was well developed in the Anglo Saxon period (Jope 1964, 91-118), is an apparent anomaly and may be to some extent explained by the difficulties of identification.

Leaving aside the specialised Borough Hill fragment, there appears to be a limited number of sources of freestone supplying Northamptonshire with its architectural stonework, the major centre lying somewhere in the present Weldon area. The uniformity of style presented by the Group B work, not only within the county but much further afield, can perhaps be explained partly by assuming a restricted number of sources, and partly by the simplicity of construction allied to the cost of transport. Whether the architectural work was actually carved or turned near the quarry site, or worked by itinerant masons from rough outs on the site of its erection, is still a question to be resolved. Common sense would favour the former arrangement for Group B masonry at least, on the grounds that the number of items required on any one project would hardly merit the transportation and erection of the equipment needed on site, nor would the not inconsiderable increment of weight of unworked stone over the finished article be lightly disregarded. In this light therefore, the uniformity of appearance can be better accounted for if they are produced by a manufactory, or group of associated stonemasons, working near the source.

CONSTRUCTION

The stonemason's craft in the Roman period has been discussed in some detail by Tom Blagg (1970). The Northamptonshire capitals in particular tend to support his thesis that they were at least finished on a lathe, as evidenced by the trueness of their turnings and the multiplicity of fine mouldings. Direct evidence for the use of the lathe cannot be taken from the axial holes, as discussed above and demonstrated by the eccentric position of the top recess on the Higham Ferrers example, and it must be considered that the column was mounted on the lathe clamped head and foot in a wooden jig, the abacus and base remaining monolithic for that purpose.

Some such arrangement must have been used for those columns like the Wroxeter examples where the dowel hole is very frequently missing. The monolithic nature of Group B columns up to a height of 2m or 6ft has also been alluded to, and Towcester 5 and Ringstead are the only drums of composite columns. Towcester 5, in addition to exhibiting the classical entasis, also displays the feature known to the classical world as 'anathyrosis' — a narrow chisel drafted margin defined by a small groove, within which the meeting surface is dished and dressed with a point to assist a mortar key. Iron cramps for heavy masonry construction, run in with lead, are well known, particularly in north Britain. The phenomenon appears on the Irchester I capital, built up from two vertical halves and cramped twice on the top face in this manner.

⁸ For a discussion of stone quarries supplying this area (although later in time) see Arkell, W J, *Oxford Stone*, 1947.

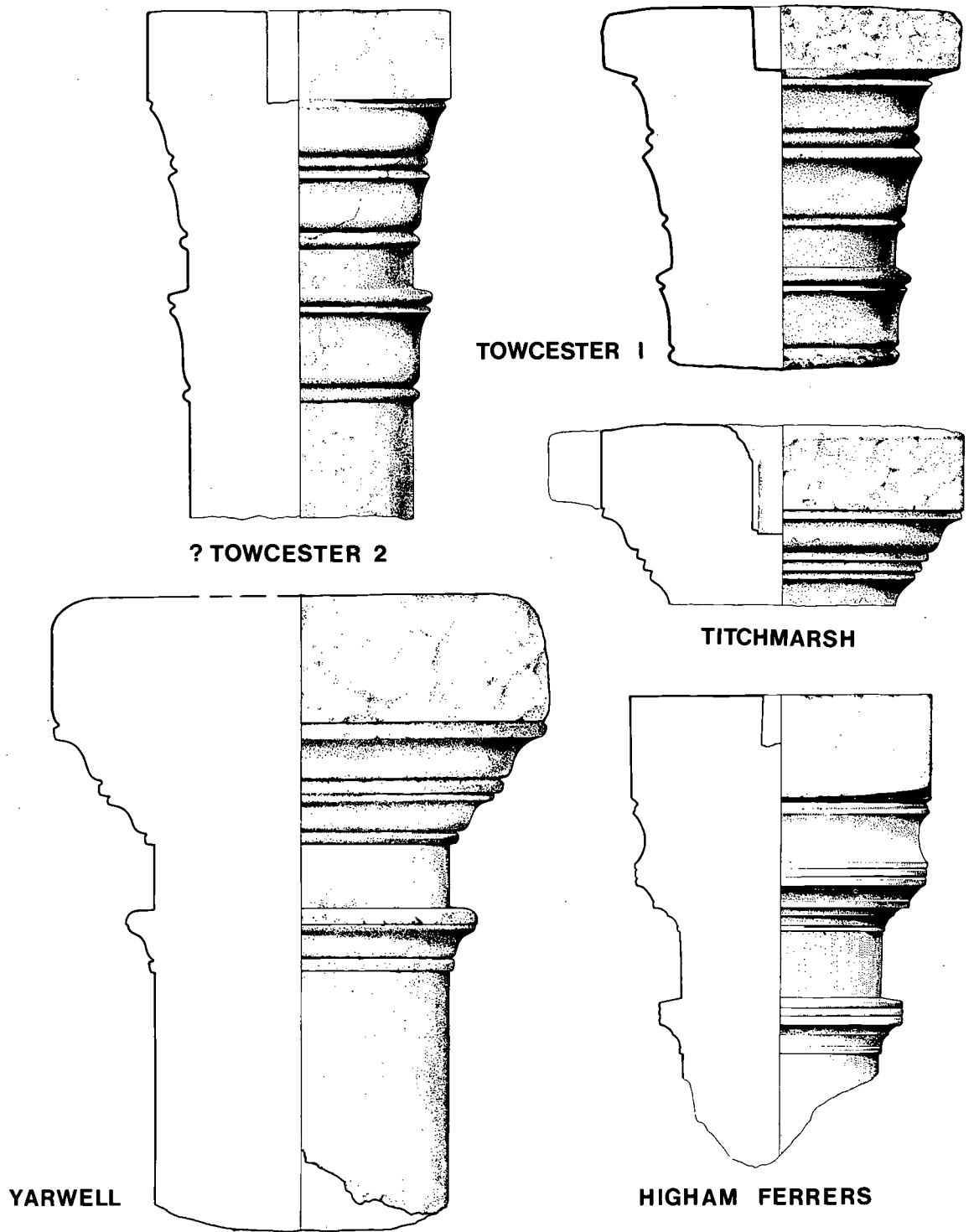


Fig 2

Capitals. 1:5

DATING

The architectural masonry from the county provides to date no satisfactory evidence for the period of production of this type of work, and the whole subject, which is vastly complex, must await the results of studies being conducted on a province-wide basis by Tom Blagg. Towcester 1, 2 and 3, Ashley, and the Brigstock group, were all apparently discovered in a re-used context, in all cases late 3rd or 4th centuries. Elsewhere the indications are that the stone working industry did not generally get under way until towards the end of the 1st century AD, although there are exceptions at London and Fishbourne. Thus the date generally given — 2nd to 3rd centuries — must stand until more specimens are properly excavated from buildings for which they were made.

INVENTORY

FRAGMENTS FROM GROUP B STRUCTURES

CAPITALS (FIGS 2-3)

1. TOWCESTER 1

Recovered from tip during sewerage works in the town 1976.

Abacus: 214 mm (8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in)

Column shaft diameter: 170 mm (6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in)

Height: 285 mm (11 $\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Box Ground Bath stone (F Dimes identified in laboratory). Buff shelly medium and uneven grained oolitic limestone.

Two cymae rectae bounded each by fillets, a short necking, and below a further upright cyma also bounded by fillets. Abacus has central dowel recess 42 mm square, 49 mm deep. Lower face of capital rough and apparently broken, but may be an eroded worked face.

2. TOWCESTER (?) 2 (2 pieces)

From Northampton Museum. No provenance known.

Abacus: 226 mm (9 in)

Column shaft diameter: 175 mm (6 $\frac{7}{8}$ in)

Height: 395 mm plus 330 mm (total 2 ft 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in)

Bath stone, as last, bedded vertically.

Similar succession of mouldings to Towcester 1 but lowest cyma larger and abacus thicker. The resemblance suggests this specimen also came from Towcester reinforced by its partial coating with a water deposited lime encrustation. A petrifying stream in Towcester was celebrated in former times though now almost forgotten. It passes through the Roman industrial suburb where Inventory Nos 13, 20, 21, were found.

3. TITCHMARSH

From Roman settlement at TL005794 (RCHM site no 22). Casual find.

Abacus: approx 270 mm (10 $\frac{3}{8}$ in)

Shaft diameter: 182 mm (7 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)

Fossiliferous limestone with well developed ooliths. Possibly from Ketton (F Dimes).

Abacus, cyma recta, two fillets and a cavetto. Abacus with dowel recess twice cut, 47 mm square and below, 28 mm square and having slight iron stain suggesting an iron dowel or cramp. Underside of capital eroded but probably a worked face. One face of capital is fire stained. Reference: RCHM 1975, 99 (mentioned).

4. YARWELL

From Roman building, RCHM site no 3, TL 06699790. 1953. Formerly in Oundle School collection, now lost.

Abacus: approx 390 mm (1 ft 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in)

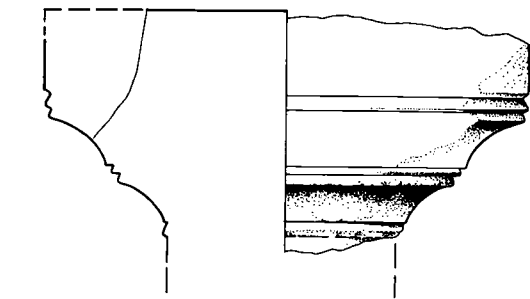
Shaft diameter: approx 230 mm (9 in)

Height: approx 500 mm (1 ft 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ in)

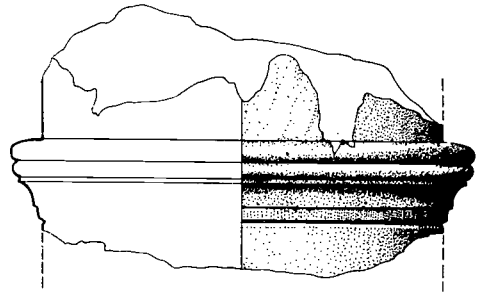
Limestone, unidentified.

Square abacus, monolithic capital moulded cyma recta, fillet, smaller cyma recta and second fillet. Necking and neck moulding of cover torus, cyma recta and fillet. Dowel hole cannot be seen in photograph supplied for the RCHM survey.

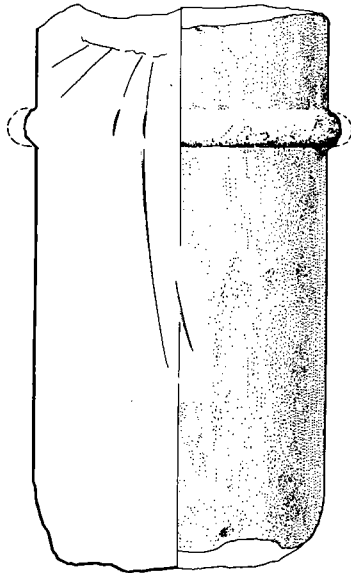
References: RCHM 1975, 114 and PL 24(b); *Northamptonshire Archaeol*, 11, 1976, 178.



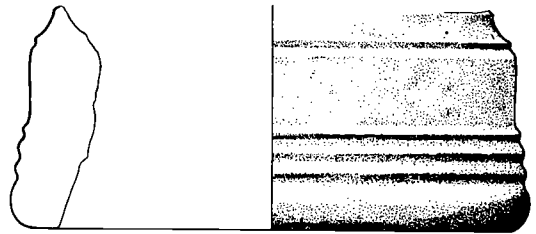
WOOD BURCOTE 1



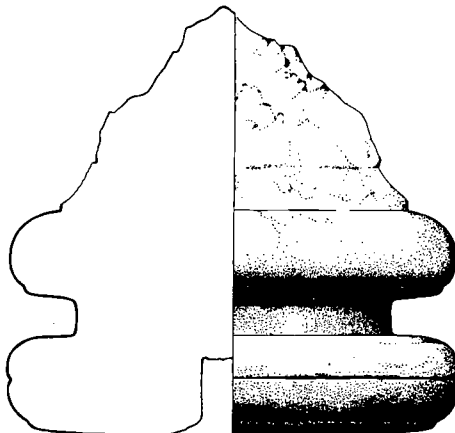
ASHLEY



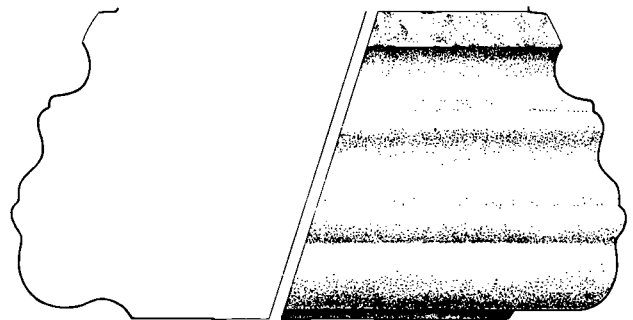
WILBY



BRIGSTOCK 1



WOOD BURCOTE 2



BRIGSTOCK 2

Fig 3 Capital, necking, and bases. 1:5.

5. HIGHAM FERRERS

Found TL 95506935 on known Roman site between River Nene and fishponds, after ploughing, NW of settlement. Privately held (A Rollings, Rushden).

Abacus: 241 mm (9½ in)

Shaft diameter: 173 mm (6¾ in)

Height: 377 mm (1 ft 2½ in)

Dowel hole: 22 x 33 x 41 mm deep, slightly inclined to perpendicular and without jointing material within.

Vertically bedded close grained fossiliferous and vesicular limestone.

Square abacus, capital commencing with unusual deep hollow and continuing with an ill defined series of fillets and peaked chamfers. Necking and below, a neck moulding of three fillets and further peaked chamfers. The mouldings on this specimen are entirely different from other Northants columns, suggesting a different school of stonemasonry.

Reference: *BNFAS*, 2, 1967, 12.

6. WOOD BURCOTE 1

Found in undated pit on villa/mill site SP 605469, February 1978. Marked F207.

Estimated column diameter: 150 mm (6 in)

Abacus: approx 318 mm (1 ft 0½ in)

Shelly limestone, probably Box Ground (F Dimes)

This is the smallest of the Northamptonshire specimens. Two cavetti divided by fillet, and lower fillet before ?start of shaft. Both fillets acute angled.

SHAFTS WITH MOULDINGS (FIG 3)

7. ASHLEY

From excavation of villa at SP 788917.

Shaft diameter: 270 mm (10⅝ in)

Well developed fossiliferous oolite, bedded vertically, probably Box Ground (F Dimes).

Section of shaft with neck moulding comprising two fillets over a cavetto, and lower fillet, notched into shaft. Fire damaged *in situ* prior to, or during destruction, and redeposited in the 4th century.

8. WILBY

Found in 1972 at SP 863872 after ploughing. Northants Museum ref: D.49.1972.26.

Shaft diameter: 203 mm (8 in)

Height: 370 mm (1 ft 2⅝ in)

Fossiliferous uneven grained oolitic limestone, probably Box Ground (F Dimes).

A section of column shaft bearing a simple annular ring moulding, presumably a necking moulding. The shaft is somewhat flattened on one side suggesting that it was originally attached or in close association with other masonry. It also bears scratch marks reminiscent of a sundial, probably fortuitous. Slight pink staining from fire on one face, probably while *in situ*. The Bath type stone is the best evidence that this piece is Roman.

BASES (FIG 3)

9. BRIGSTOCK 1

Late 3rd century floor make-up of circular shrine, Brigstock, SP 963861.

Coarse grained oolite, Weldon(?) (H A H MacDonald).

Fragment of a probable column base bearing simple but clearly cut shallow rilled mouldings, the uppermost, a hollow moulding being broken so that no estimate of shaft size is possible.

Reference: *Antiq J*, 43 Pt. 2, 1963, 251 and FIG 11.

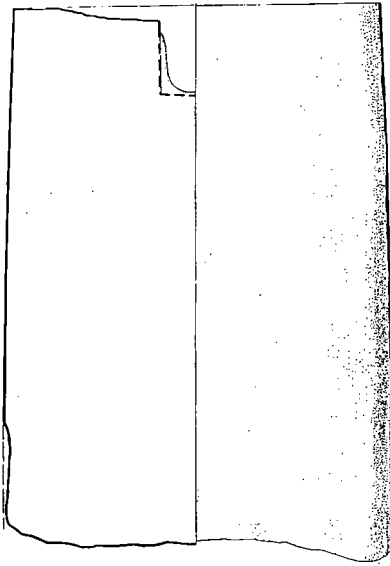
10. BRIGSTOCK 2

As above.

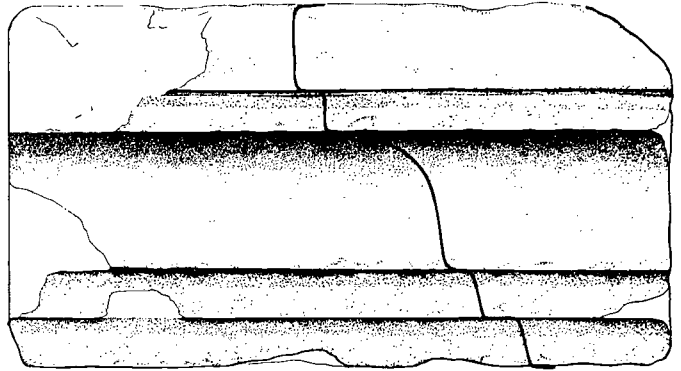
Stone identical to last.

Corner of a rectangular moulded stone, probably a pilaster base, with splayed fillet (damaged), scotia and deep torus with central cordon. The underside has a circular central feature divided from the torus by a shallow hollow moulding. It is not clear whether this fragment preserves the full original range of mouldings, so the dimensions of the pilaster cannot be estimated. The function of the circular foot suggests that it was mounted itself on a column, but the possibility of the piece being the top moulding of a small altar must also be allowed.

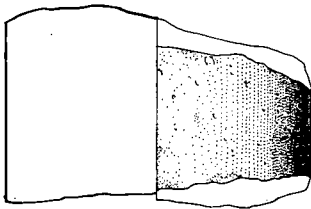
Reference: As last. The illustration in FIG 11 is misleading.



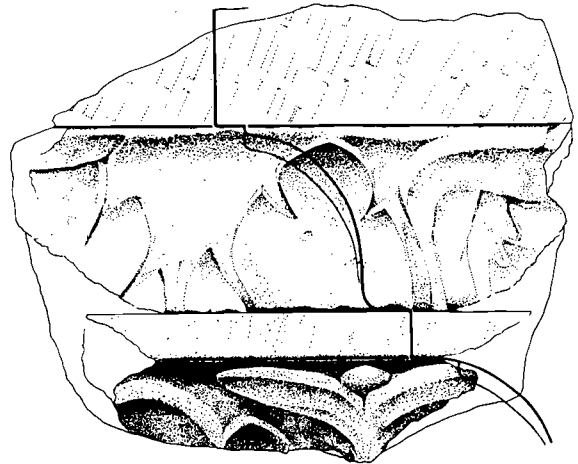
TOWCESTER 5



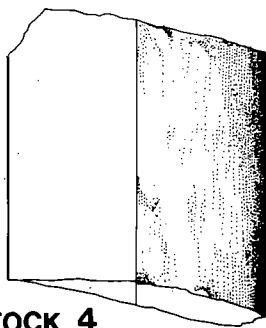
TOWCESTER 3



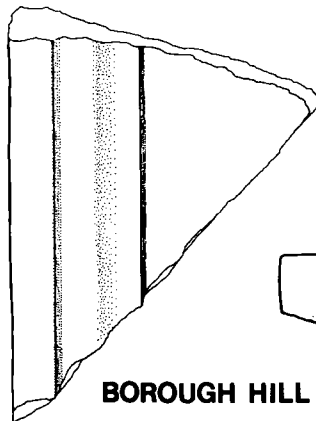
WOOD BURCOTE 3



BRIXWORTH



BRIGSTOCK 4



BOROUGH HILL

Fig 4

Shafts, cornices, and inscription panel. 1:5

11. **BRIGSTOCK 3** (not illustrated)
 Find spot and material as above.
 Concave fragment with finely moulded ridges in the manner of the rilling on Brigstock 1. It is not possible to suggest what architectural feature this small piece represents.
 Reference: As last, FIG 11, 1.
 The same floor deposit produced a few more small fragments of similar stonework, none of which presents any clear mouldings.
12. **WOOD BURCOTE 2**
 Found under hedge on site of villa/mill, SP 685469.
 Column shaft diameter: 184 mm (7¼ in) approx.
 Coarse fossiliferous limestone. Weldon, Northants (F Dimes).
 Attic base, very badly damaged. Upper and lower tori of equal size, lower only retaining girth grooving. Dividing scotia without lower fillet. Fillets rounded. Upper moulding unclear but probably a simple cavetto. Dowel hole on underside, roughly opened out.
- SHAFTS* (FIG 4)
13. **TOWCESTER 5**
 St. Lawrence Road excavations 1975 in 4th century occupation, not in original position.
 Shaft diameter: 248-260 mm (10 in)
 Length (broken): 360 mm (1 ft 2¼ in)
 Firm grained oolitic limestone, probably Box Ground.
 Shaft of column with distinct entasis and one unbroken jointed face. Arris chisel drafted 12mm wide, defined by slight channel, and inner part dished and point dressed. Dowel mortice at centre, 60 mm deep, retaining inside lime mortar packing bearing shape of original insert, a dome headed object. It seems unlikely that such a smooth shape should be carved in wood, and it is concluded that it represents a metal dowel run in with lead.
14. **BRIGSTOCK 4**
 From circular temple, Luscostes Lodge, Brigstock, with Inventory nos 9, 10, 11.
 Column shaft diameter: 173 mm (6¾ in)
 Broken length: 190 mm (7½ in)
 Vesiculated and fossiliferous limestone. Probably Weldon.
 Section of shaft, broken at both ends and subsequently discoloured by fire.
15. **WOOD BURCOTE 3**
 Unstratified, at villa/mill site, SP 685469.
 Shaft diameter: 197 mm (7¾ in)
 Broken length: 138 mm (5½ in)
 Thinly bedded and well developed fossiliferous oolite. Weldon, Northants (F Dimes).
 Short section of column shaft devoid of any notable features.

FRAGMENTS FROM MAJOR STRUCTURES (GROUP A) (FIGS 4-6)

16. **IRCHESTER 1**
 Burrow Field excavations, 1879, from building at centre of town and close to the supposed temple.
 Estimated width: 1,030 mm (3 ft 4½ in)
 Estimated column diameter: 700-720 mm (2 ft 4 in)
 Loose grained well developed oolite, set with bedding horizontal. Probably Weldon stone.
 Vertical half of capital derived from Corinthian type, with concave sides and corner volutes (broken), supported by lobeless leaves bearing transverse cuts and midrib only. Central flower form broken, and supported by crudely lobed leaves springing from what in 1879 appeared to be inverted trefoils. Top face of capital has cramp hole and roughly chased channel for metal tie to second half of capital, also a dowel hole and round ended mortice, perhaps for handling purposes.
17. **IRCHESTER 2**
 Burrow Field, Irchester, south of last, in 1879 excavations.
 Width each face: 608 mm (2 ft)
 Weldon type limestone.

This specimen comes in three pieces, separated in antiquity by the fissile nature of the stone. The octagonal form is shown on each, thus they may with some degree of certainty be related and correctly set up in the yard of Chester Farm.

- A. Three facets of an octagonal pier, each bearing sculptured forms carved in three-quarter relief into the faces, forming segmental headed niches. Only the top 5in survives, the centre panel having what may be interpreted as a turriform head, flanked by an object having a trefoiled apex. The right hand panel appears to be halved and a similar indistinct form occurs centrally on this, and even less distinctly on the left hand panel.
- B. A 10mm thick section, now mounted, probably correctly, midway between fragments A and C. It bears an octagonal corner and indications of drapery.
- C. A further thin section bearing the base of the carved panels, the centre very fragmentary but with a shape, possibly a foot to the left of the niche, and the right hand panel bearing two feet of a figure standing with feet splayed.

Further fragments possibly of this monument are mentioned by Baker (1879, 57 57) but are no longer extant.

These three fragments appear to form an octagonal drum of a monument, either free standing or attached in the manner of a pilaster. The worked face dividing the right hand niche must be interpreted as a stone joint rather than a designed end as the resulting half niche would have been most unsatisfactory.

A parallel piece, though larger, from Great Chesterford, Cambridgeshire now in the British Museum, is interpreted as a Jupiter Column. A 5-lobed turriform figure within a niche appears at Cirencester (Clifford 1938, PL 10, FIG 17; Toynbee 1964, 163, FIG 41) where the deity is interpreted as a Genius. Turriform crowns are also an attribute of a Tyche. The panels on a Jupiter Column octagonal drum often bear minor deities, and sometimes, figures symbolic of the days of the week. At Paris, the four figures on the square plinth are of Romanised native deities.

Reference: *VCH Northants* I, 1902, 181, FIG 11.

18. RINGSTEAD

Found September 1975 in depression in gravel near known Roman site, SP 978749. RCHM site no 5.

Column shaft diameter: 625mm (2ft 0 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)

Drum height: 550mm (1ft 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)

Shelly oolitic limestone. Probably Weldon.

Drum section of giant order column decorated with overlapping scales in staggered horizontal rows, 13 scales around diameter, each with midrib, and preserving some setting out lines at springing of curved ends. Dowel holes, 90mm x 20mm top and bottom.

Reference: *Northamptonshire Archaeol*, 11, 1976, 193 (note).

ENTABLATURES AND PLINTHS

19. BRIXWORTH

Recovered from works between the first two bays of the north aisle at the west end of the Anglo-Saxon basilica in 1958.

Shelly oolitic limestone.

Section of ?cornice, deep top fillet, cyma reversa enriched with leaf forms, perhaps alternate acanthus and anthemion, fillet and hollow moulding, probably cavetto also enriched with a lotus and acanthus derived forms.

There are traces of a dark red pigment on the background from which the leaves were presumably picked out in a different colour. In view of the widespread origin of other building material incorporated in the Saxon structure, the possibility of this piece coming from some distance away must be borne in mind.

Reference: Blagg, T F C, in *J Brit Archaeol Ass*, 131, 1978.

20. TOWCESTER 3

Excavations in St Lawrence Road, Towcester, 1975, reused in 4th century.

Length: 440mm (1ft 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in)

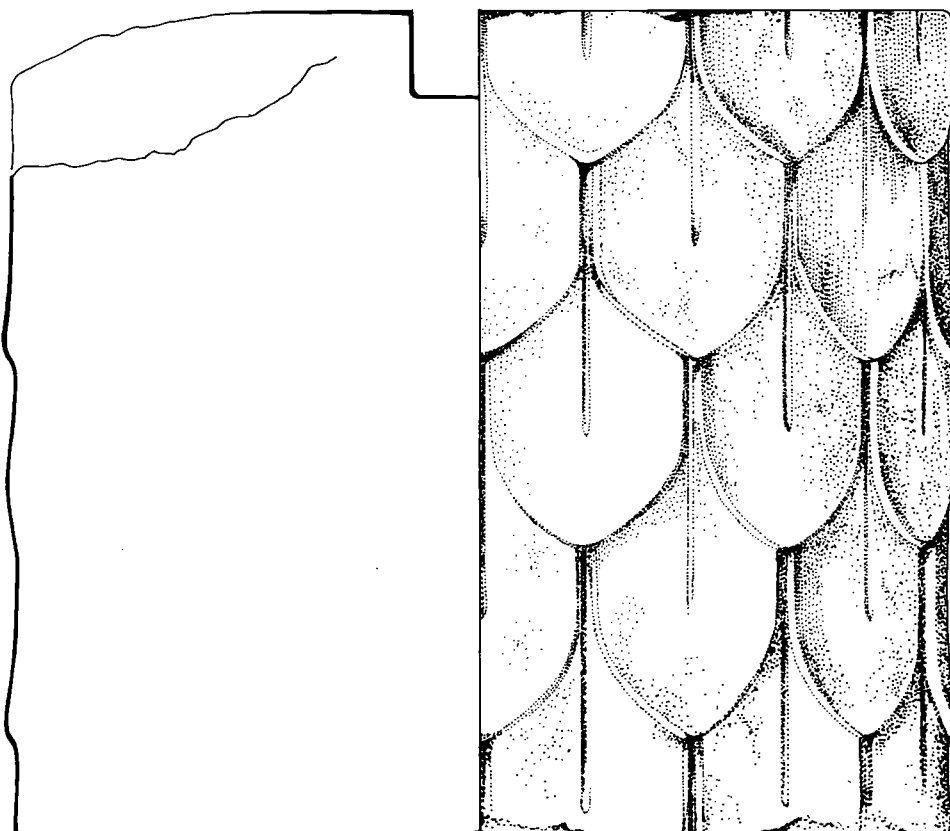
Depth: 470mm (1ft 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in)

Well formed oolitic limestone, Ketton (?) (F Dimes).

Section of large scale cornice or plinth, consisting of fillet, cavetto, and two fillets, coarse and without enrichment. Each fillet is cut on a slight rake outwards and having imprecise arrises. Little weathered, the cavetto bearing tool marks of mason's claw. Top surface abraded, possibly



TOWCESTER 4



RINGSTEAD

Fig 5 Frieze. Scaled column. 1:5

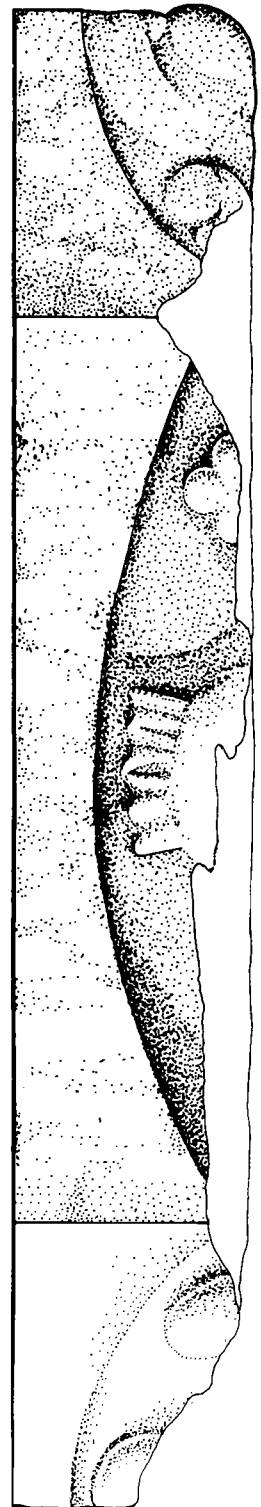
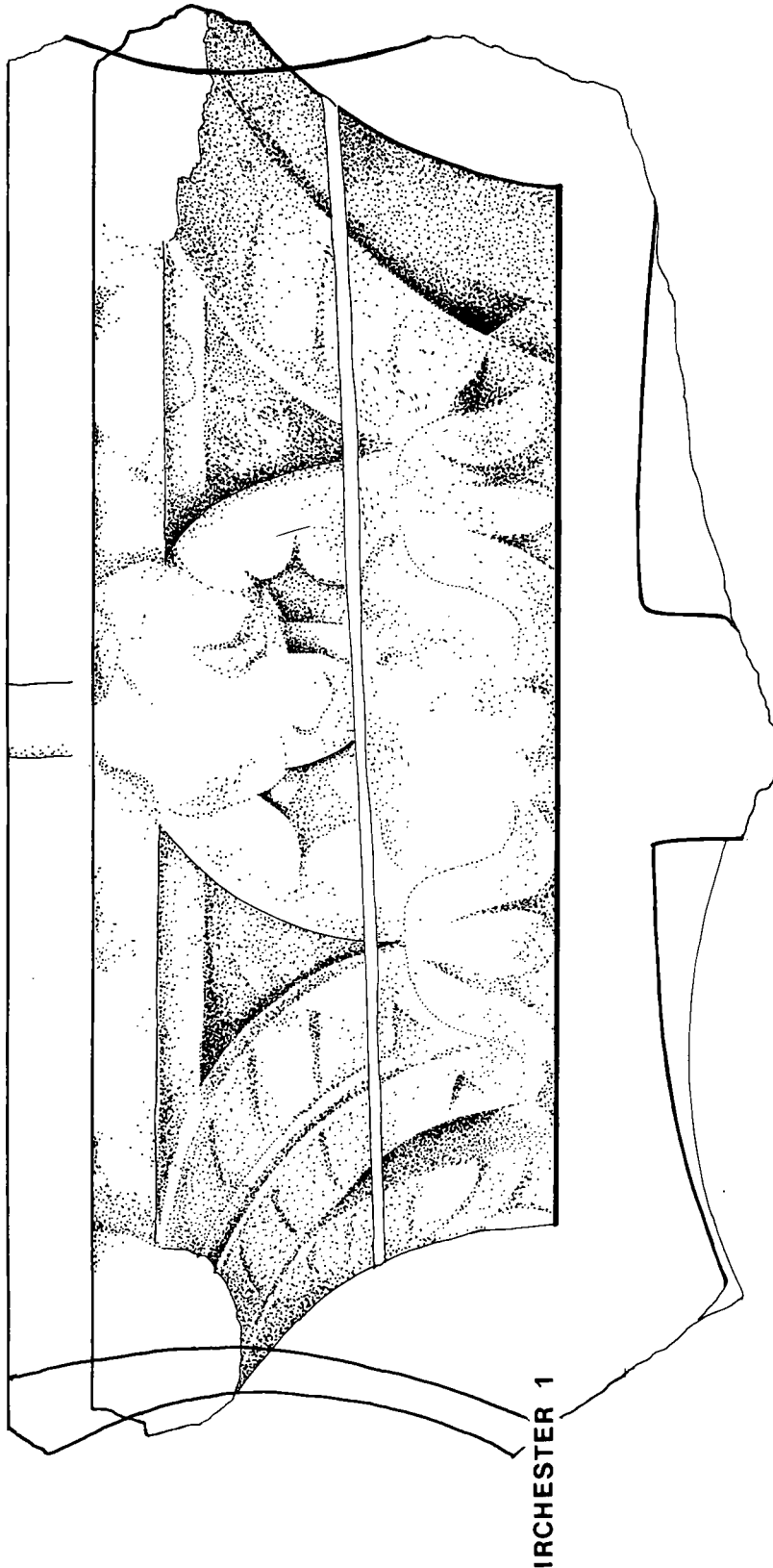


Fig 6 Irchester monumental column. 1:5

in situ but as the stone was re-used in a 4th century industrial building, the attrition of the surface may have occurred in this position. The under face appears to be dressed for jointing rather than exposure, thus the lower is more likely to be the start of a plinth than a corona of a cornice.

21. TOWCESTER 4

Excavations in St Lawrence Road, close to but not associated with Inventory nos 13 and 20.

Length: 650 mm (2ft 1½ in)

Depth: 290 mm (11½ in)

Well formed oolitic limestone. Probably Ketton (F Dimes).

Section of a frieze, bearing a reversing acanthus tendril scroll, with one flower and one annulus and centre pellet at the nodes, and three petalled flower forms in the angles springing from caulicoli reaching alternate margins. All rather weathered. Three dowel holes on one face, other face abraded in secondary use. Probably the frieze of a Corinthian style monument or portico.

ARCHITECTURAL MASONRY NOW LOST

Capitals

YARWELL. (See Inventory no 4 above).

Shafts

APETHORPE. A section of a column, found during investigations of the villa site, also two stone Laricum altars.

Reference: *VCH* 1902, 192 (see *RCHM*, 1975, 8-10).

Bases

GAYTON. A wall of the villa excavated in 1840 66ft long, had four column bases spaced equidistantly along.

For plan, see *Archaeologia*, 30, 1841, 125-31.

WHITTLEBURY. A 'columnar base' from the 1850-51 excavations of the villa in Holton Coppice, The Gullet, described by Edward Pretty as 'exceedingly well moulded'.

References: *J. Brit Archaeol Ass*, 6, 1851, 75; and 7, 1852, 113; also *Archaeol J*, 7, 1850, 172.

MOULTON. Base of column found in association with tessellated floor, at No 28, Booth Drive, SP 78506454. The pavement is still in position, but the column base has disappeared.

Reference: *Northamptonshire Archaeol*, 9, 1974, 91.

OTHER ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

BOROUGH HILL (FIG 4). Section of edge moulding of architectural slab, presumably carrying an inscription, found in 19th century at 'side of house with flue tile'.

Forest Marble from Oxfordshire (F Dimes) 48 mm thick at edge thickening to 55 mm. Polished within the flat ogee moulding of border to high finish. Lime mortar adhering to rear. The fact that the edge mouldings were not polished to the same standard suggests that they were originally painted or gilded.

A close parallel appeared from the Forum site, Verulamium, now in the Verulamium Museum. Northampton Museum.

OTHER WORKED MASONRY FROM NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

HARGRAVE. Sarcophagus in Weldon stone. Baker 1893-4, 83.

IRCHESTER. Sarcophagus, broken head end, now at Chester Farm.

IRCHESTER. Lid for sarcophagus, also at Chester Farm.

IRCHESTER. Tombstone from Burrow Field, found 1853, with dedication to ANICIVS SATURNVS, Strator, now in the British Museum.

Reference: *RIB* 1, 233.

SCULPTURE

TOWCESTER. Head of underworld deity, possibly a tombstone finial. Now in the British museum.

Given by Lord Fermour Hesketh, provenance unknown. Oolitic limestone, ? Ketton.

Reference: Toynbee, 1962, 48, where described unhelpfully as 'British stone'. A good wash would help.

IRCHESTER. Torso of nude youth with ? dagger on right hip. Possibly a representation of Mercury.

Oolitic limestone, possibly from Bath area. Found 1878 'built into ancient wall'. Perhaps another example of late Roman re-use. Northampton Museum. Noted in *VCH Northants* 1, 1902, 181. THRAPSTON. Boundary stone from TL 005794, with part of inscription PP. Limestone with gritty veins.

This specimen may not be Roman. Northampton Museum.

Reference: *J Northampton Mus Art Gallery*, 4, 1968, 2-3.

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