

## A Roman villa and an Anglo-Saxon burial at Wootton Fields, Northampton

by

ANDY CHAPMAN, ALEX THORNE AND TIM UPSON-SMITH

with contributions by

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### ABSTRACT

*A previously unknown Roman villa standing within a square ditched enclosure of nearly 0.5ha, and overlying a pit alignment and middle to late Iron Age settlement, was located in 1999 during monitoring of groundworks on a new housing development. The partially exposed building remains were cleaned and planned before they were reburied for long-term preservation. The main house comprised a simple strip building with front and rear corridors. One room was furnished with a hypocaust and had painted walls, but the absence of any tesserae shows that there were no mosaics or tessalated pavements. A probable original bath house at the northern end of the range was replaced by a bath house at the southern end. This was therefore a relatively impoverished villa presumably farming a small estate that never generated great wealth. In 2002, an area to the north-east was excavated prior to further housing development. It contained a small ditched enclosure, dated to the first century AD, and a pond and several shallow pits containing iron smelting debris dating to the third to fourth centuries AD. An area of Roman occupation on the opposite side of the valley was subject to evaluation in 2002, followed by a watching brief and limited excavation in 2003. Here a hoard of coins was buried within a pottery vessel in the 330s AD. A further small coin hoard was deposited in the 370s in a pit next to the small pond to the north-east of the villa. A small quantity of fifth century Saxon pottery and an Anglo-Saxon inhumation burial of the seventh century show that there was later activity around the villa site. The*

*medieval field system appears to have respected the location of the villa, suggesting that some walls may still have been standing when the field system was established in the tenth century AD or later.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Wootton Fields Roman villa lies in the parish of Wootton, on the southern side of Northampton (Fig 1: NGR SP 766 563). The area was pasture fields before it was taken into one of a series of housing and retail developments that have progressively infilled a substantial block of land lying to the south and east of Wootton village and bounded to the south-west by the M1 motorway.

Construction began in January 1999 with provision only for intermittent archaeological monitoring as the works were being carried out under an old planning permission. Dennis Jackson monitored the development on behalf of Northamptonshire Heritage, under the volunteer network scheme, and discovered a previously unknown Roman villa within an 18.5ha pasture field immediately east of the village and north of the Quinton Road (Fig 2).

The part of the villa uncovered measured 100m N-S by up to 18m E-W, along an area stripped to form a lorry haul road (Fig 3 and Plate 1). The exposed remains were cleaned and planned, with limited excavation, and were then reburied to be preserved within a public open space (Chapman 2000). The broader setting of the villa was examined by geophysical survey to either side of the haul road and the access road. Along the line of the new access road, Curtlee Hill, an area 10m wide

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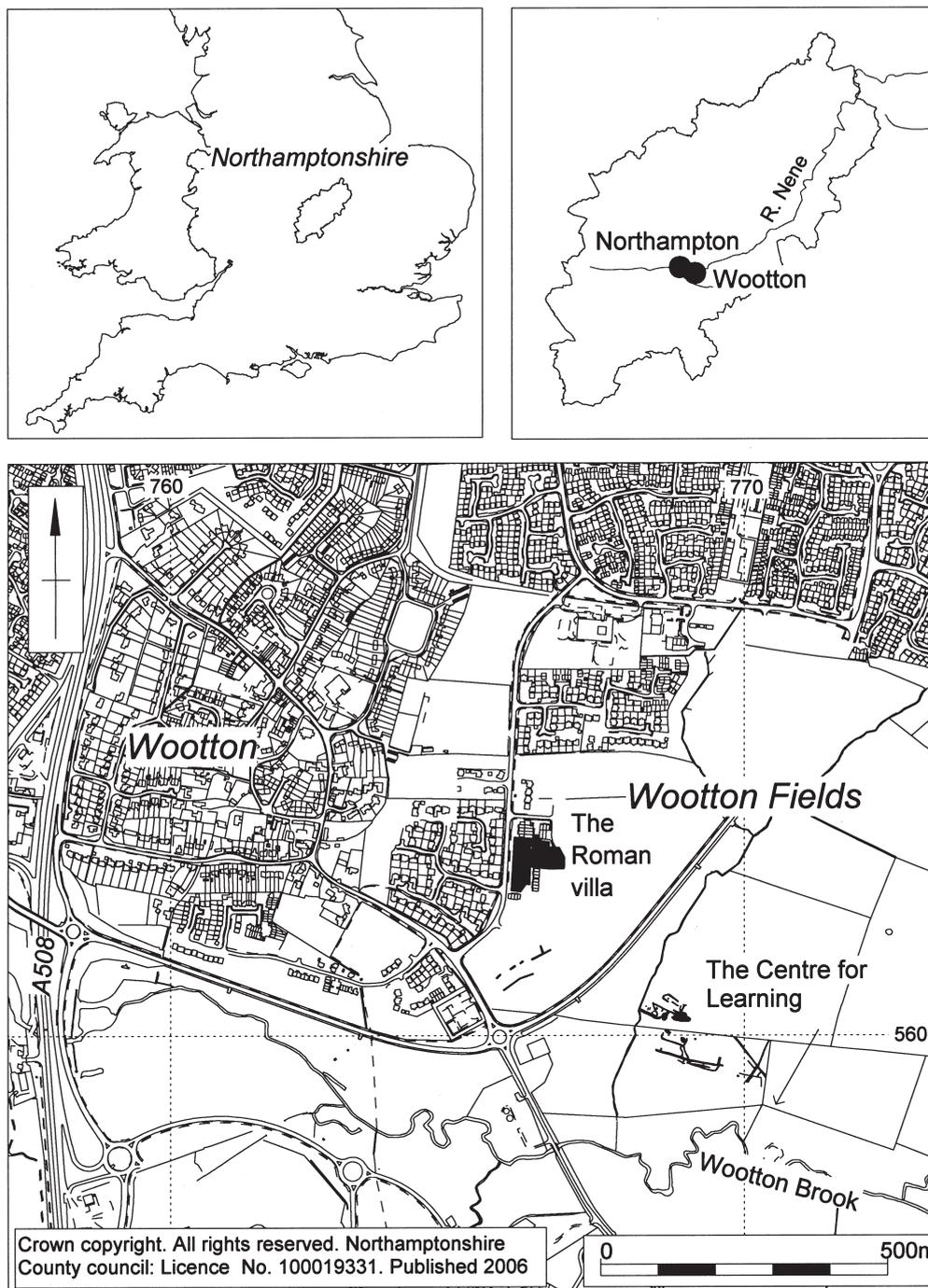


Fig 1 Wootton Fields Roman villa, location plan

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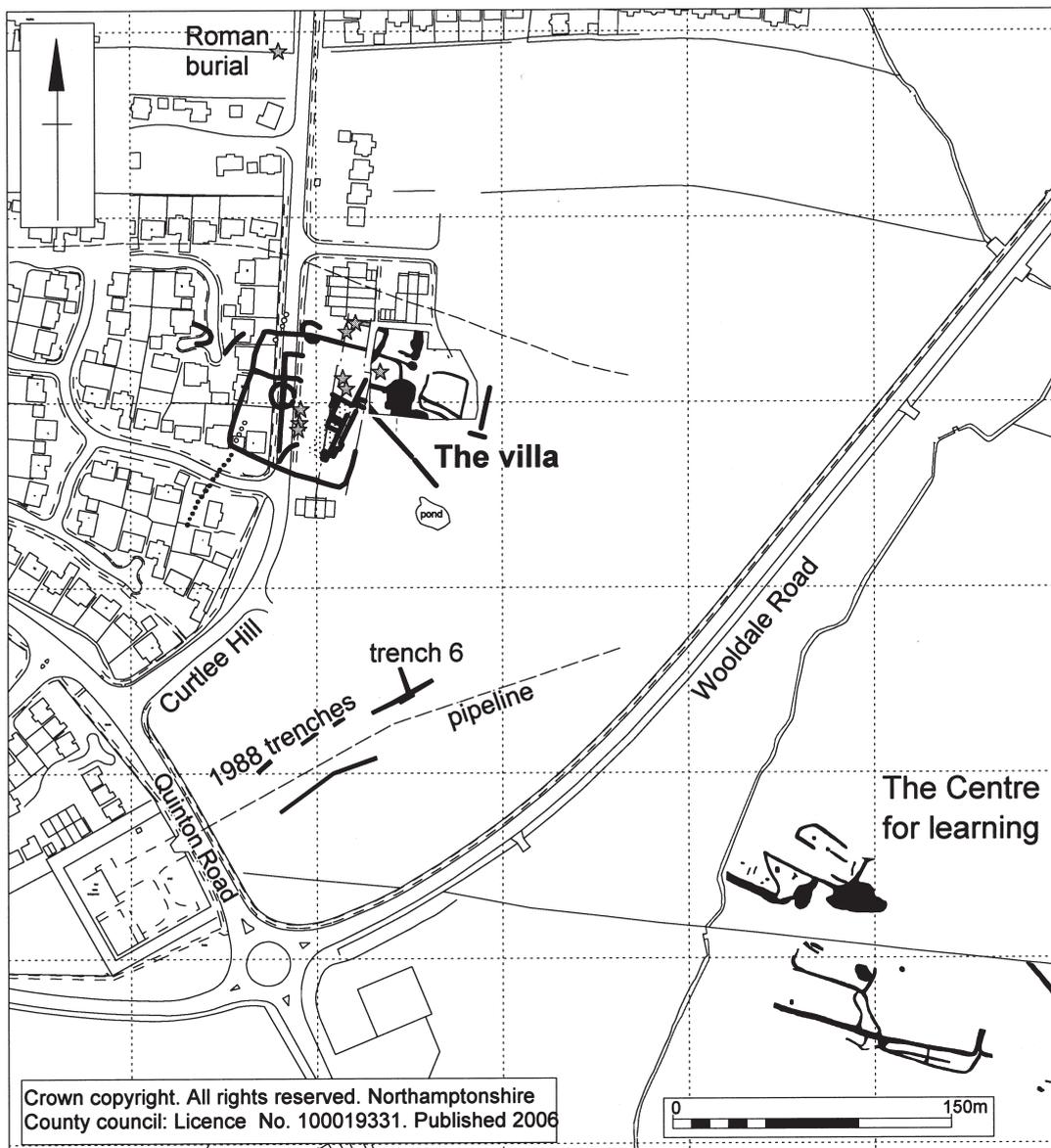


Fig 2 The Roman villa and its environs

by 100m long was subject to salvage excavation prior to road construction. This work was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology, with the weekend assistance of local volunteers and with the co-operation of David Wilson Homes Ltd. Financial support came from the County Council and English Heritage funded the geophysical survey,

the site recording, the salvage excavation and the preparation of an assessment report. The preparation of a report for publication has been funded by Northamptonshire Archaeology.

In January 2002, David Wilson Homes Ltd commissioned Northamptonshire Archaeology to carry out an open area excavation of an enclosure adjacent to

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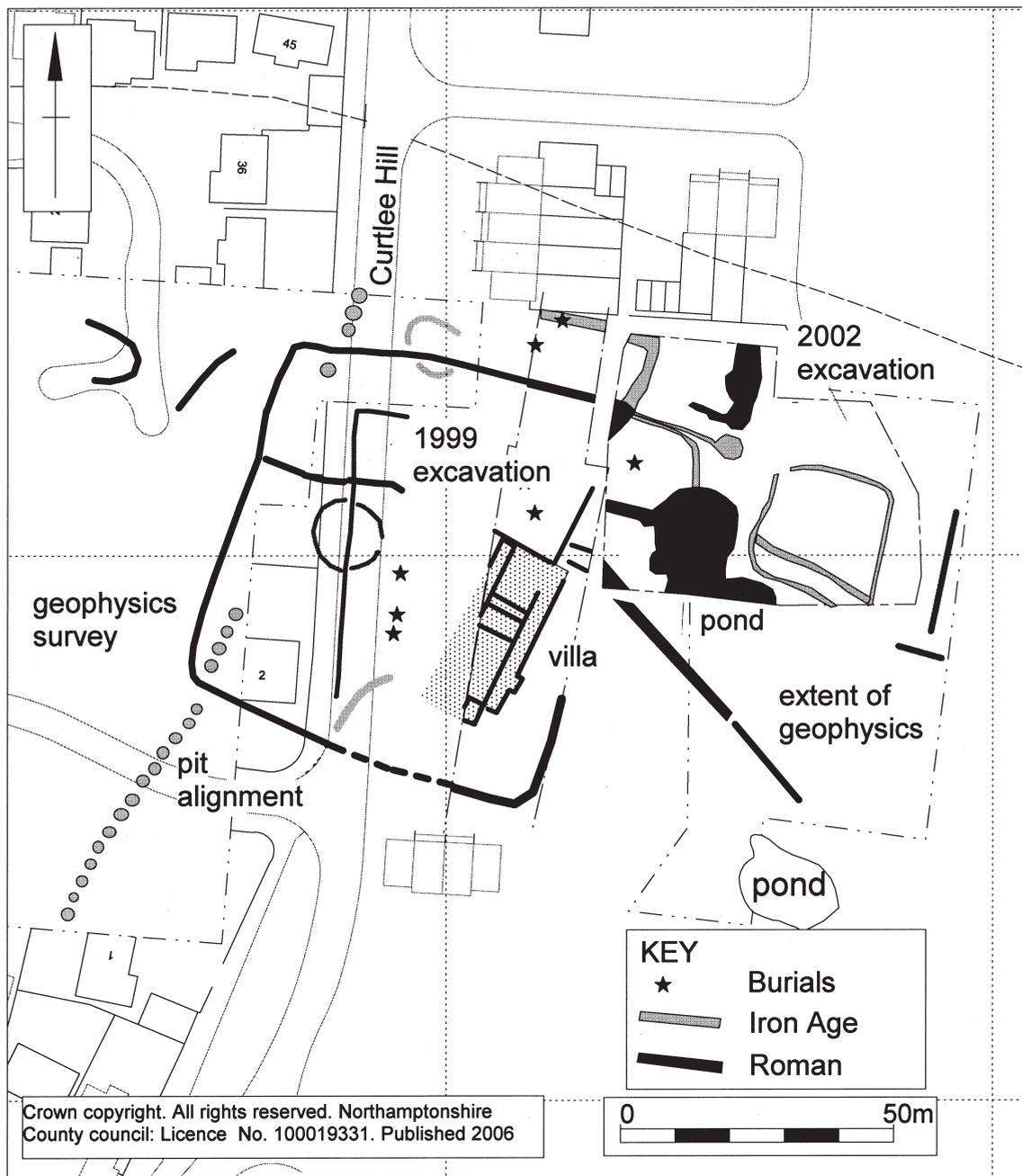


Fig 3 The Roman villa and its precinct

the villa (Fig 3: Chapman and Thorne 2003). This area also included a small silted pond, from which a small coin hoard was recovered. A further pond

to the south was dug out during later construction works by the developers, but without informing Northamptonshire Archaeology. It appears that metal

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Plate 1 Cleaning and recording the villa (pillared hypocaust in foreground)

detectorists recovered a quantity of coins from the dumped silts from this pond (Charmian Woodfield pers comm). This would suggest a similar situation to the deposition of the coins in the excavated pond, but no further details are available.

A watching brief was maintained immediately following completion of the excavation, when the surrounding zone was stripped of topsoil, and an intermittent watching brief was maintained over the longer-term progress of the development through to the end of July 2002. In June and July 2002 the preserved area of villa, measuring 47m north-south by 20m east-west, was landscaped by raising the ground level with imported soil. A low curvilinear bank was constructed over the western half of the area, to provide a deterrent to vehicle access, and a protective layer of compacted clay loam, up to 0.30m thick, was spread across the eastern half of the area.

On the opposite side of the valley, to the south-

east of the villa, Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Northamptonshire County Council and Kajima Construction to carry out an evaluation, and a subsequent watching brief and contingency excavation, on land east of Wooldale Road prior to the construction of the Centre for Learning, now the Caroline Chisholm School (Fig 2). Geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation was carried out in 2002, and a watching brief and excavation in 2003 located a further area of Roman activity, part of which has been preserved in-situ by raising the ground levels (Upson-Smith 2004). The activity comprised an intricate network of ditches and a possible pond, a single inhumation burial, and a hoard of late Roman coins was also recovered.

In 2003 workmen excavating a boundary ditch alongside Curtlee Hill 150m north of the villa (Fig 2: SP 7658 5649), uncovered a small quantity of human bone which was reported to the police. The police had the remains examined and radiocarbon

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dated. They came from a c30-year old woman of Roman date (255-530 cal AD; 98% probability; laboratory reference not known). This adds to the human remains of Roman date located in association with the work in both 1999 and 2002.

It must also be noted that as the area of the Roman villa was developed under an old planning permission, and consequently there was no systematic evaluation or investigation of the full extent of the villa environs, it is certain that other features, perhaps even including buildings associated with the villa, would have been either lost within the development works or still lie concealed by the new housing development.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The initial weekend of cleaning in January 1999 was carried out by a volunteer work force that included some professional archaeologists, but was largely made up of local independent and amateur archaeologists. Particular thanks are due to Roy Friendship-Taylor and other members of the Upper Nene Archaeological Society; to the group who came all the way from St. Albans; to Charmian and Paul Woodfield; to Gill Johnson; to Martin Tingle, who helped during the initial weekend and through the following week; to David Neal for advice on excavation methodology; and to Sandy Kidd, Graham Cadman and Greg Phillips of Northamptonshire Heritage, Northamptonshire County Council. Thanks are also due to the site developer, David Wilson Homes Ltd, and to their on-site contractors, for providing time and assistance for the completion of the cleaning and recording. Northamptonshire Heritage, in its role as curator, was responsible both for the discovery and for negotiating with the developer to provide time to carry out the investigation. Dennis Jackson, who had been responsible for the initial discovery, assisted with the excavation of the Iron Age features. Michael Webster and Alex Thorne of Northamptonshire Archaeology worked as volunteers on the initial weekend, and the recording and excavation was directed by Andy Chapman.

The excavation of 2002 was funded by David Wilson Homes Ltd. Alex Thorne was project director and Andy Chapman was project manager.

The trial trench evaluation at the Centre for Learning was carried out under the supervision of Steve Hayward in 2002. The watching brief and recording action was

carried out by Tim Upson-Smith in 2003, with Tony Walsh as project manager. Digitally generated maps and plans are by Andy Chapman, the site plans are by Mark Roughley with additional work by Jacqueline Harding and Hari Anne Jacklin.

#### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The villa lies on the southern slope of an east-west ridge that reaches 100-110m aOD. The ridge is straddled by the present village, with the valley of the River Nene to the north (Fig 1). The villa lies at 86m and 87m aOD on the south-east facing slope of a small but deeply incised valley containing a short tributary stream which runs south-west into Wootton Brook. The brook runs westward to feed into the River Nene on the western side of Northampton. The Wootton Centre for Learning site lay on the opposite side of the valley, on the lower slopes of a lower rise to the east of the tributary stream, at 76m to 85m OD.

The underlying geology comprises Northampton Sand on the higher ground with Upper Lias Clays on the lower lying ground to the south and east (Geological Survey of Great Britain (England & Wales), Solid and Drift, Sheet 202, 1969). The villa sat on Northampton Sand comprising shattered small ironstone pieces in a matrix of red brown sand, with an area of tenacious yellow clays to the immediate south of the villa precinct. To the east the Northampton Sand deposits became progressively thinner and clays were exposed to the immediate east of the small enclosure excavated in 2002 (Fig 3). The Centre for Learning site lay largely on clays.

#### THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

At the time of development the field containing the villa was under pasture, and the well preserved ridge and furrow earthworks of the former medieval field system indicate that there had been little or no ploughing for several centuries, which would explain the lack of chance recoveries of surface finds. David Hall noted nothing during fieldwalking in the early 1970s while preparing the Wootton Parish Survey, although two new Romano-British sites, including a villa, were found elsewhere in the parish (Hall 1976).

However, a nearby and probably associated site was located in 1966 by Dennis Jackson during

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a watching brief along the course of a major gas pipeline, which runs to the south of the villa (Fig 2). He noted the presence of burnt stone, roofing tiles and ditches together with Roman pottery and a coin of Constantius II, 356-61AD (BNFAS 1966, 14; BNFAS 1971, 19 and RCHME 1985, fiche 424, Wootton Site 6). The site location was published as SP 766 562, placing it within 50m of the villa, but comparison to the mapped location of the gas pipe suggests that a location at SP 766 561 would be more appropriate.

In 1988, as part of the initial preparation of a scheme for development of this land, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by the Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit to test for the presence of Roman buildings in this vicinity of the pipeline observations (Cadman 1988). Six trenches were excavated, with a total length of 155m. In five trenches there were no archaeological features, but the northernmost trench, 6, contained a series of ditches that produced a small assemblage of finds including tegulae, imbrex and possibly box flue tile, and pottery ranging in date from later first to the fourth century AD (Fig 2, trench 6). It was concluded that this material was most likely to come from a Roman building lying on the Northampton Sands geology to the north, where the villa was eventually found, but it was not possible to test this hypothesis at the time.

#### THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The villa at Wootton Fields had extensive views to the east across the adjacent stream valley and beyond this to the lower lying ground along the valley containing Wootton Brook. Two other major Roman sites overlook this valley to the immediate south-east, and another lies to the north-west.

A Roman settlement to the south of the village of Quinton lies at the head of the next tributary stream to the east, 3km from Wootton Fields villa. It was partially excavated in the 1970s and produced evidence for two main periods of occupation (Friendship-Taylor 1974 and 1979). The first period was dated to between the mid-first and the late-second centuries AD, and comprised 'Belgic' roundhouses superseded by rectangular stone buildings. Following an apparent century of desertion, there was further occupation, represented by a well and a circular stone building, from the late third century and probably continuing into the fifth century AD.

Piddington Roman villa lies 5km to the south-east of Wootton Fields villa, on high ground between tributary streams on the southern flank of Wootton Brook; it has been extensively excavated over the past two decades or more by the Upper Nene Archaeological Society (Friendship-Taylor 1989). A late Iron Age settlement preceded the first stone structure, a simple strip building constructed in the later first century AD. A separate wing was added, and by the end of the second century the two ranges had been linked to form a true winged corridor villa. There were further modifications through the third century, but in the fourth century there was a decline and much of the building fell out of use, being reduced to a largely derelict squat in the later fourth century.

There was also a second Roman villa within the parish of Wootton, it lay at the western end of this elongated parish, 3.5km north-west of Wootton Fields villa and to the south-west of Hunsbury Iron Age hillfort, overlooking the Wootton Brook near its confluence with the River Nene. The site was partially excavated between 1973 and 1981 by the Northampton Development Corporation Archaeology Unit but the results have not been fully published (RCHME 1985, 39, plate 3 and fiche fig 38).

Several other minor sites of Roman date are also known along the valley of Wootton Brook, largely from finds of Roman material recovered either by chance or during fieldwalking. Of particular interest is a hoard of 634 coins in a pot, found in a stone pit in 1842. The coins range in date from Gallienus (253-268AD) to Numerianus (283-284AD). The find spot was at *c* SP 758 562, placing it on the north bank of Wootton Brook immediately east of the A508 road and some 800m west of the villa.

Other nearby Iron Age and Roman sites to the north-east have been subject to archaeological investigation during 1999 by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in advance of a housing development at Courteenhall, Northampton.

#### THE GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

by Peter Masters

Detailed geophysical survey, using both magnetometer and resistivity techniques, was carried out following the discovery of the villa in order to define the extent of the archaeological features directly associated with both the Roman villa and

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the Iron Age occupation. As some areas had already been stripped of soil and other areas were occupied by spoil heaps, this limited the survey to areas to the west and east of the villa. The area investigated spanned 185m east-west by 120m north-south (Fig 3). The features located include the villa precinct ditch, a previously unknown pit alignment and a sparse scatter of curvilinear anomalies in the western area, and linear anomalies on the lower lying ground to the east, including the enclosure excavated in 2002. Resistivity survey was carried out on the narrow grass berms adjacent to the exposed part of the villa in order to detect further walls, but no significant results were obtained.

#### THE CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

The major episodes of activity located by the various phases of work is summarised below (Table 1).

In the following account, the archaeology and the associated finds will be described in chronological order period by period. This account has been condensed from the three original reports (Chapman 2000; Chapman and Thorne 2003; Upson-Smith 2004), which are available in the Sites and Monuments Record. The specialist finds reports have been condensed and abridged by Andy Chapman.

#### THE PIT ALIGNMENT

Geophysical survey located a 130m length of a pit alignment lying to the west of the excavated areas and running on a general NNE-SSW alignment, but with at least one major change of alignment (Fig 3).

The pits appear to have been circular, c1.0-1.5m

in diameter and spaced at intervals of c3.1m. To the north the alignment should have crossed the line of the new road, Curtlee Hill. No pits were seen after soil stripping, but they may have been missed in the patchy natural of shattered ironstone and sands. Unfortunately, the area to the west of Curtlee Hill was not subject to any further investigation prior to development for housing and no further information is available. This feature is obviously undated, but by analogy with other regional examples it is most likely to date to the early Iron Age (Kidd 2004). This opens the possibility that there was a broad continuity of occupation on this hillside from the early Iron Age onward. In particular, the way in which the alignment of the western side of the ditched villa precinct runs closely parallel to the line of the pit alignment may suggest that this boundary was still extant in the landscape when the villa was established, probably several centuries later.

#### MIDDLE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT

A single oval pit towards the southern end of the estate road (Fig 4, 17), 1.35m in diameter by 0.30m deep, contained most of the scored ware sherds recovered from the site, and this may suggest a middle Iron Age date for this feature. To the immediate north there was a broad curvilinear ditch (19), c3.0m wide. A section was not bottomed as the water table was encountered, and while the ditch was undated it is most likely to have been of middle or late Iron Age date. Soil stripping along the access road to the south was observed and no ditches were seen in cleanly exposed natural clays, suggesting that this ditch was part of a boundary system within an open settlement and not the northern arm of a large enclosure.

Table 1: Summary of the chronological sequence

Nature of occupation	Date
A pit alignment	Early Iron Age?
Middle Iron Age settlement	4th to 1st century BC
Late Iron Age settlement	mid-1st century BC to early 1st century AD
Late Iron Age/early Roman enclosures	mid-1st to early 2nd century AD
The formation of the villa precinct	late 2nd/early 3rd century AD
The Roman villa	3rd – 4th century AD
Industrial activity near the villa	4th century AD
A late Roman coin hoard	330s AD
A small late Roman coin hoard	370s AD
Anglo-Saxon occupation	5th century AD
Anglo-Saxon burial	7th century AD
The medieval field system	

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The ditch probably continued eastward under the Roman villa and then terminated to the east (Fig 6, 146) in an area containing several large pits (147 and 148), which were not excavated, although the absence of Roman occupation debris suggests an Iron Age date. A complete upper stone from a beehive quern (Fig 11) was recovered from the exposed fill of one of these pits (147).

LATE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT

To the west of the villa, a roundhouse and other associated ditches and pits were excavated on the line of the access road (Fig 4, IA roundhouse). The roundhouse ditch was 0.25-0.45m deep and had been recut once. It enclosed an area 10.6m in diameter and there was a 2.5m wide entrance immediately south of east. The ditch terminal was filled with grey soil rich in comminuted charcoal and contained burnt cobbles, measuring 150-200mm, and some pottery. A pit just within the roundhouse ring ditch to the north was also filled with grey soils containing burnt cobbles.

Lengths of shallow linear or curvilinear ditch lay immediately to the south, north and east of the roundhouse, and a group of pits to the east cut both these ditches and the roundhouse ditch. The pits ranged from 1.0m to 2.1m in diameter and up to 0.40m deep, and were filled with brown loam containing little in the way of stone or other inclusions, but the two that were extensively excavated produced good pottery assemblages. These contained globular bowls with burnished surfaces, and one ditch produced a single sherd of "belgic" wheel-thrown pottery. This activity may therefore be dated to between the middle of the first century BC and the early decades of the first century AD.

Further features of possible Iron Age date were located by geophysical survey to the north and west of the roundhouse, and more may lie beneath the unexcavated areas and the villa itself. A curvilinear ditch cut by the northern arm of villa precinct ditch may have been another roundhouse (Fig 4).

THE IRON AGE POTTERY  
by Dennis Jackson

A total of 101 sherds (weighing 3.89kg) of later middle Iron Age or late Iron Age pottery was recovered from pits and ditches to the west of the Roman villa. Virtually all of the sherds contained shell, although in varying quantities, although a few sherds also contained ironstone grits. The finer vessels typically contained

sparse fine shell, while the larger jars contained more and coarser shell. Sparse grog occurs in a few sherds in association with fine shell, but it is not the dominant inclusion often found in an assemblage of late Iron Age-early Roman pottery. The same is true of quartz, where although the pottery at Wootton is generally hard, the quartz may have occurred naturally in the clay. The site at Wootton is in an area where clay is readily available for pottery production.

No profiles can be reconstructed and most of the 15 rim sherds are too small to reliably estimate the diameter of the vessels. The most numerous sherds are from thick-walled jars, with rim sherds that derive from bipartite vessels with interned upper walls or concave necks. Scoring of middle Iron Age type occurs on sherds from a single vessel from an isolated pit, 17, to the south of the roundhouse. There are rim sherds from three globular bowls, a form common in the later middle Iron Age assemblages at the nearby hillfort at Hunsbury (Fell 1936), as well as at other local sites of this period at Hardingstone (Woods 1969) and Moulton Park (Williams 1974). Two rim sherds have highly burnished surfaces, and similar examples occur at Hunsbury and amongst late Iron Age pottery at Wakerley (Jackson and Ambrose 1978 fig 36, 20) and Towcester (Lambrick 1980 fig 22, 1).

The assemblage can be compared to material from sites at Hardingstone, only 1 km to the north, and Moulton Park. On both of these sites the late Iron Age pottery was succeeded by 'belgic' wheel-made pottery, indicating that the Wootton assemblage can be dated between the middle of the first century BC and the early decades of the first century AD.

THE LATE IRON AGE/EARLY ROMAN ENCLOSURES  
(mid 1st to early 2nd century AD)

Much of the eastern part of the area excavated in 2002 to the north-east of the villa (Fig 3) was occupied by a sub-rectangular enclosure with rounded corners, measuring 25.0m east-west by 22.0m north-south (Fig 5, Enclosure). This is dated by small quantities of pottery from the fills of the ditches and some internal features to the mid-first century AD. The pottery includes grog-tempered, calcite gritted and sandy wares in a range of forms that include cordoned and neck jars, lid-seated (channel-rim) jars and larger storage jars (pottery identification by Roy Friendship-Taylor). Further ditches and pits to the west of this were of the same date, indicating there was an extensive area of first century occupation here, although the more westerly features had been disturbed by later activity.

The enclosure had a narrow entrance at the north-west corner, but only one terminal survived (389). At the north-east corner the ditch was 1.03m wide by 0.83m deep. The well-preserved lower sides were cut into natural lias clays, and the ditch here would have retained standing water and must have silted rapidly. The eastern and southern arms were similar but slightly shallower, at 0.50m deep, while the western arm was a narrow, ill-defined gully, 0.50m wide by 0.22m deep. There was a scatter of contemporary features within the enclosure. To the west there were several postholes or small pits, typically 0.50-1.00m in diameter by 0.20-0.30m deep, while individual pits to the north and east were 0.45m deep. Near the centre of the enclosure remnants of a possible structure were defined by two slots set at right angles, each 3.00-4.00m long, 0.80m wide and up to 0.20m deep (408). A linear ditch (391), which had been recut at least once, ran across the southern part of the enclosure and was probably slightly later in date, but had similar form and fills and

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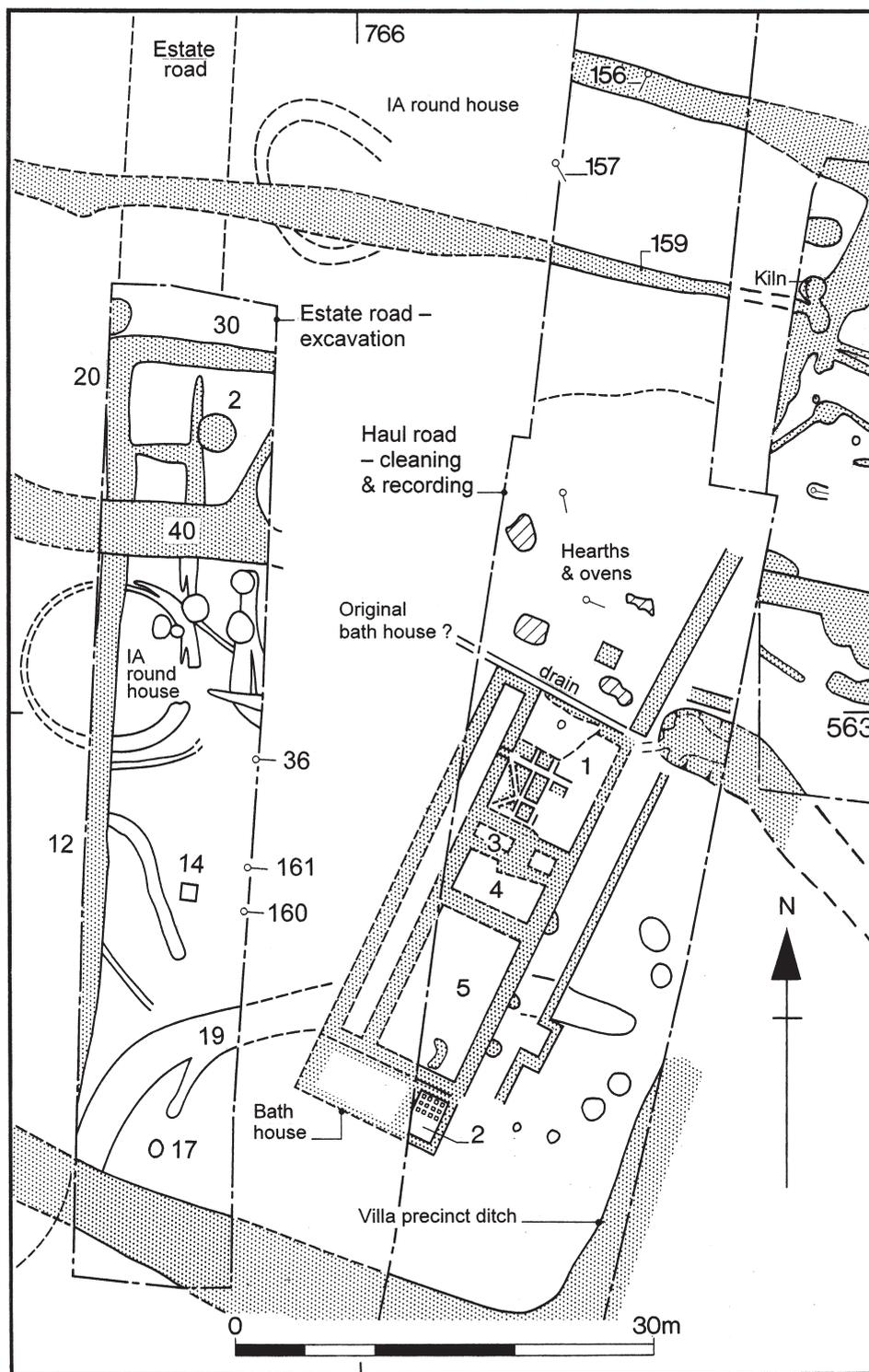


Fig 4 The Roman villa: excavated areas

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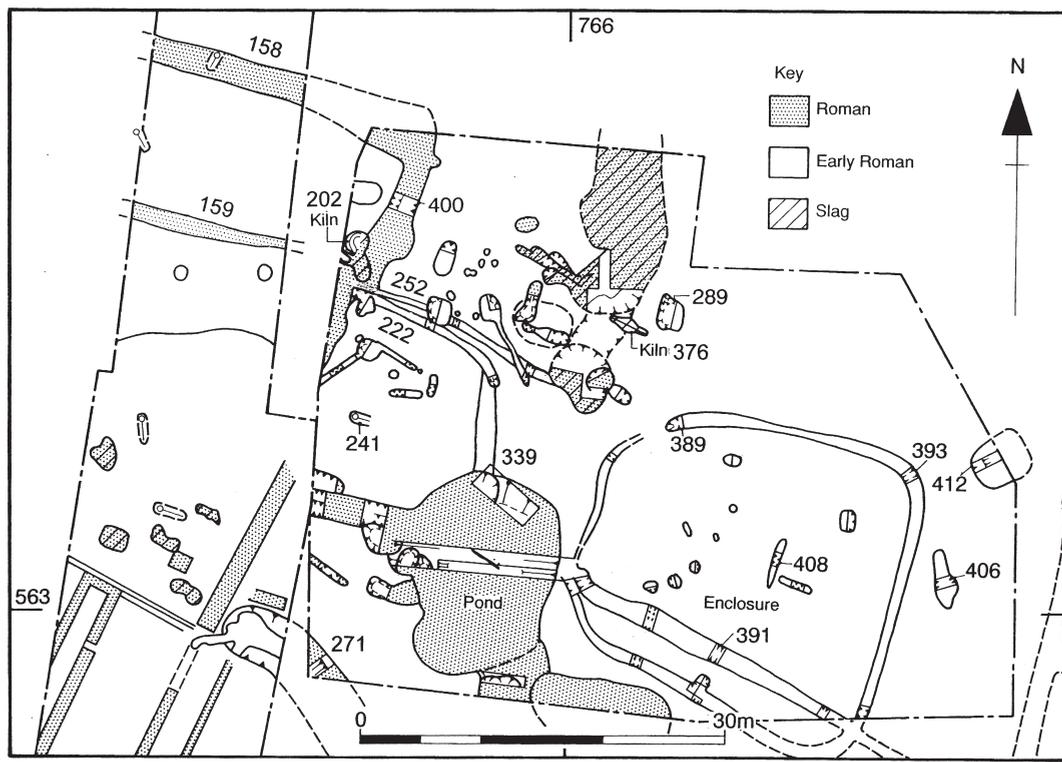


Fig 5 The first century enclosure and the Roman pond and pits

contained only first century pottery, indicating that it was also part of the first century occupation.

West of the enclosure, a pair of shallow ditches (Fig 5, 252 and 222), each 0.70-0.90m wide by 0.20-0.35m deep, respected the alignment of the northern side of the enclosure. A complete upper stone from a flat rotary quern (Fig 12) was recovered from (252) along with a small assemblage of mid-first century pottery. The southern ditch originally turned southward, towards the later pond area, but this arm had been abandoned and was filled with clean clays.

Although the enclosure to the east is specifically dated to the mid-first century, nearby activity continued into the later first/early second century AD. To the north and east of the enclosure shallow but extensive pits, (289) and (406), contained small groups of pottery dated to the late first/early second century, while pit (406) also contained a quantity of fired clay.

At the western end of ditches (252) and (222), a broad ditch system comprising a sequence of four shallow ditches (400), each 1.0m wide, ran northward and then turned to the west onto the alignment of a ditch located in 1999 (Fig 5, 158). These ditches have not been dated, but the absence of pottery or dumped building material and other debris, so characteristic of the Roman ditches, together with the second century kiln cutting the ditch fills, suggests that this ditch system probably also belonged with

the first to early second century settlement. The ditch systems may have formed a small rectangular enclosure, 14m wide by at least 25m long. However, while an early origin is postulated there is a coincidence of these alignments with the later north-east corner of the villa precinct, which would imply that the layout of the ditches enclosing the villa in the later second century was determined by the pre-existing enclosure ditches that had been established in the mid-first century AD.

A group of pits and gullies dated to the mid-first to late first/early second century lay both to the north and south of linear ditches (220) and (222). Three substantial pits to the north were 2.00-2.80m long and steep sided, and two were 0.40m deep while one was in excess of 0.90m deep with a shallow, sinuous gully running southwards from it for 6.0m. They all had similar fills of grey brown loams containing some limestone and ironstone and small domestic assemblages of pottery and animal bone. A scatter of postholes in the same area may also be contemporary. To the immediate south of the ditch system, there was a pair of linear slots, 0.40m wide by 0.20m deep, which terminated at the edge of a circular pit of similar fill and depth. The slots and associated postholes may have formed wall slots for a fence or some small timber structure, but they seem too far from perpendicular to have been the walls of a building. Other shallow, irregular pits and slots lay nearby.

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THE ROMAN VILLA  
(late 2nd century to 4th century AD)

A simple strip building, 29m long by 14.5m wide, including front and rear corridors, was aligned north-south and stood within the eastern half of a near square, ditched enclosure, measuring 70m N-S by 65m E-W and enclosing 0.48ha, just over an acre (Figs 3 and 4). The date of construction has not been directly established, but evidence for the demise of the earlier ditch systems and the creation of the villa precinct obtained in the 2002 excavation suggests that it was probably constructed in the late second or early third century. However, as the general evidence from the site indicates continuity of occupation, this building may well have replaced an earlier building complex, perhaps entirely timber built.

THE VILLA ENCLOSURE

A combination of geophysical survey and excavation defined the ditch system forming the near square villa precinct (Figs 3 and 4). A single section was excavated across the ditch on the access road to the south of the villa. This section was taken to a depth of 1.0m, the level of the water table, where the ditch was cut into clay natural, although the ditch continued below this. The earliest ditch, to the south, was in excess of 3.0m wide with a clean clayey fill, and was later recut. On the northern, inner side there was a steep-sided slot, up to 0.90m deep by 0.50m wide, which probably held a timber palisade. This must have been removed at a later date, and the slot had been partly cut away by a final V-shaped ditch, 3.6m wide and probably 1.5m deep. The upper fills of this ditch, to a depth of 0.6m, contained much charcoal and burnt soils, evidently tipped from the inner edge, which may have come from the furnace room of the bath suite, which stood a little to the north-east. The final fill contained quantities of building debris, particularly ceramic roof tile and fragments of limestone and ironstone, probably dumped in the ditch when the villa walls were being robbed and demolished.

The western arm of the enclosure was only recorded by geophysical survey, while the northern arm ran across the haul road (Fig 4, 159). Here it was only 1.5m wide, but it was cut through ironstone, rather than the clay that was present along the southern arm, and so perhaps had not required recutting.

Part of an eastern arm was seen to the east of the villa, but this ditch certainly did not extend as far north as the ditch receiving the outflow from the stone-lined drain along the northern side of the main range of the villa. To the north of the villa the eastern side of the precinct was marked by a wall that ran northward from for at least 15m (Fig 4). Beyond the northern end of the wall there was a shallow ditch system that is presumed to have turned westward to join the northern arm (159).

THE VILLA BUILDING

While the villa appears to have comprised a simple strip building with front and rear corridors, there is no doubt that much evidence for complexity of construction and development had been lost (Fig 6). The core of the building comprised a range 29.0m long by 9.0m wide (internal dimensions of 27.0m by 7.0m). Eastern and western corridors increased the overall width to 14.5m, while the addition of the bath suite at the southern end gave an overall length of 33.5m.

Virtually all of the standing walls of the villa had been levelled in antiquity, so what typically survived were either the wall foundations or the backfill of the robber trenches, and some wall

lengths had been totally lost. The principal lengths of surviving wall foundation comprised the main eastern wall of the villa (Fig 6, 118/149), the parallel outer wall of the eastern corridor (120), and a short length of the southern wall adjacent to Room 2. The wall foundations comprised slabs of mixed ironstone and limestone typically set transversely to the wall line and steeply pitched, although occasional squarer blocks had been flat laid. The outer stones were typically larger and more regularly laid than the core and, with the exception of the eastern corridor wall, they were set in a sandy mortar. Machine digging had frequently damaged the wall foundations when the machine bucket had caught and lifted pitched foundation stones, which had then inevitably also lifted adjacent stones.

The single length of surviving standing wall lay to the north on the western side of Room 1 (130). The basal course was 0.93m wide and the second course was inset on the western outer face by 0.10m. It was faced in flat-laid, squared blocks of mixed ironstone and limestone, with stones typically 200-400mm long and 100-120mm thick. The core was of irregular small fragments of ironstone and limestone, often steeply pitched, and bonded with a cream coloured lime mortar. To the south of Room 1 and in the exposed part of the western corridor, the standing wall had been robbed. The robber trench fill, comprising small chips of ironstone and limestone in a matrix containing decayed mortar, was exposed but not excavated, although the foundations presumably still survived below this. To the south of Room 1 the internal partition walls had been almost totally lost.

A single room at the northern end of the range, Room 1, 8.5m long by 6.8m wide, was provided with a channelled hypocaust that branched from a central flue opening in the western wall (Plate 2). The system was formed by a series of rectangular and triangular piers faced with up to four surviving courses of flat-laid fragments of roughly squared limestone and ironstone. The main flue was 0.45m wide by 0.35m deep, and immediately inside the western wall the facing stones were discoloured red by intense heating, although in the area of the stokehole any burnt debris had been removed by later activity, possibly at the addition of the western corridor. The side flues were typically 0.25m wide by 0.20-0.25 deep. Fragments of painted wall plaster and fragments from an *opus signinum* floor, 20mm thick, were recovered from the fills of the flues, but no *tesserae* were recovered from this room or elsewhere on the site.

The pieces of painted wall plaster are predominantly white or red, although there is a single piece in yellow and two small fragments in black, but there is insufficient to reconstruct the decorative scheme. Some fragments in mottled red over a white background suggest the presence of a marble effect dado. In the few pieces with bordering colours, red beside white or yellow, the borders are all distinctly curved, and there are no pieces indicating the presence of line and stripe frameworks for rectilinear panels. The decorative scheme would therefore appear to have comprised large-scale figurative images.

When the room fell into disuse the piers of the hypocaust system in the northern half of the room were largely dug out leaving a layer of demolition debris comprising mixed mortar and small fragments of stone and ceramic tile (129). This material also partly concealed the stone-lined drain, indicating both that the northern wall of Room 1 had been removed, and that the drain had fallen into disuse. Deposits relating to the later industrial activity overlay this demolition layer, and are discussed below.

To the south of Room 1 it was difficult to determine the room arrangement. Any floors had been lost, and all that remained were

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

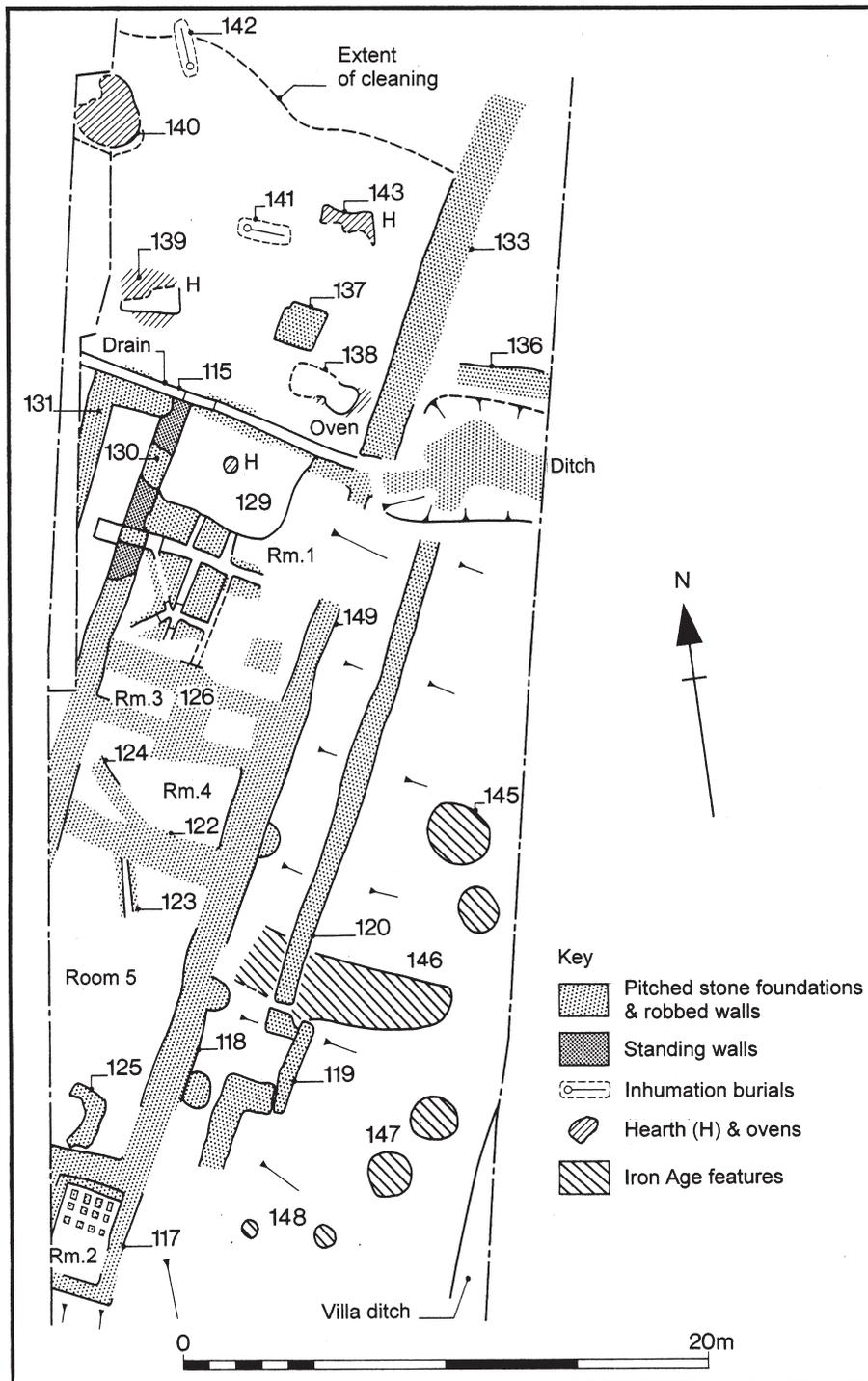


Fig 6 The Roman villa building

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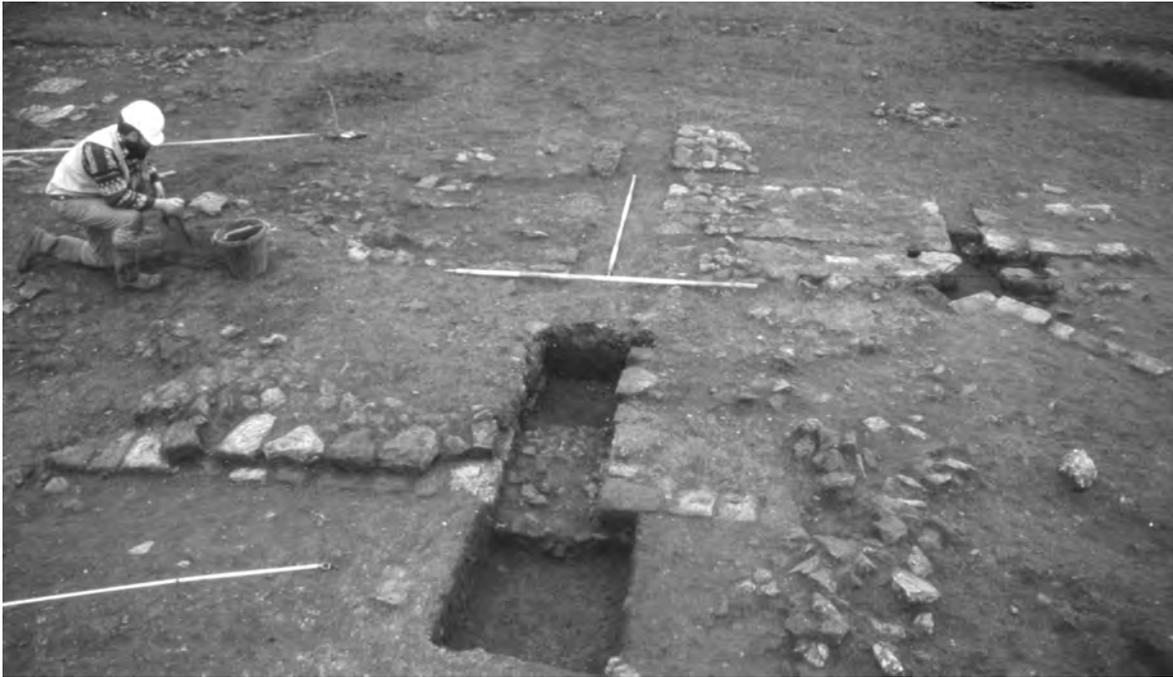


Plate 2 The channelled hypocaust, room 1 (flue in foreground)

ill-defined areas of mixed soils that represented the extent of the robbed walls. The most likely interpretation is that there had been three rooms in this area. Room 3 was only 1.5m wide and must have served either as a corridor or as a narrow antechamber to Room 1. Room 4 would have been 3.0m wide. A narrow linear feature, 0.40 wide (124), ran obliquely across the south-western corner of the room and was perhaps a drain or an earlier gully. Room 5, to the south, was 11.0m long, and no evidence for a partition wall had survived. It may have formed the entrance hall and main public room of the villa. Two irregular concentrations of stone against the external face of the wall foundation may have been bases for columns or pilaster buttresses flanking an elaborate doorway. In the northern part of the room two linear settings of small ironstone pieces (123), set 0.25m apart, may have been a drain or were related to earlier activity. To the south the exposed natural was overlain by a remnant layer containing ceramic tile fragments and small pieces of broken-up *opus signinum* in a matrix of brown loam mixed with pale cream mortar (125). This deposit was perhaps associated with either the construction or the demolition of the adjacent bath suite.

A stone-lined drain (115), 0.45m wide by 0.25m deep and lined with two courses of flat-laid limestone slabs, ran along the northern side of the main building and had presumably served a building lying further to the west. An indication of the nature of this building is provided by a layer of building rubble that survived at the western limit of excavation and contained fragments and blocks of ironstone and limestone and at least two large pieces from squared tufa blocks. In addition, a piece of *opus signinum* from a broken up floor came from a pit within the

road corridor to the west. The debris and the drains suggest that there may have been an original northern bath house, which was presumably levelled when the southern bath suite was built.

The presence of a southern bath suite was denoted by a rectangular chamber (Room 2), measuring 3.4m by 2.2m, containing the pillared hypocaust of a hot room floored with *opus signinum*. Four columns of *pilae* spanned the width of the room and three rows survived in-situ (Plate 3). Above this, part of the floor had also been in-situ, but was pulled out by a mechanical excavator during the machine stripping, and was later recovered from the spoil heaps (Plate 4). It comprised large ceramic tiles, 580mm square by 60mm thick, known as “bessales” (Brodrigg 1987, 34), which spanned the *pilae* columns and supported an *opus signinum* floor, 100mm thick with a 40mm deep quarter-square moulding.

Large quantities of box flue tile fragments were scattered in the machine disturbed soils in and around this room. The stokehole may have lain to the south, where the ground level had been truncated by later activity. A displaced tile from the *pilae* in this room was decorated with graffiti, see below.

The whole of the eastern corridor was exposed. It was 2.1m wide and lay across ground just beginning to fall away to the east, so that the narrower outer wall foundations were more deeply founded than the broader wall of the main building. Towards the south a 4.0 length of the footings were offset to the east by 1.2m, presumably forming a rectangular porch, perhaps with a stepped entrance, as part of the access to Room 5, with its elaborate pillared or buttressed doorway.

Only the northern end of a western corridor was located. At 1.7m wide, it was slightly narrower than the eastern corridor. The

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

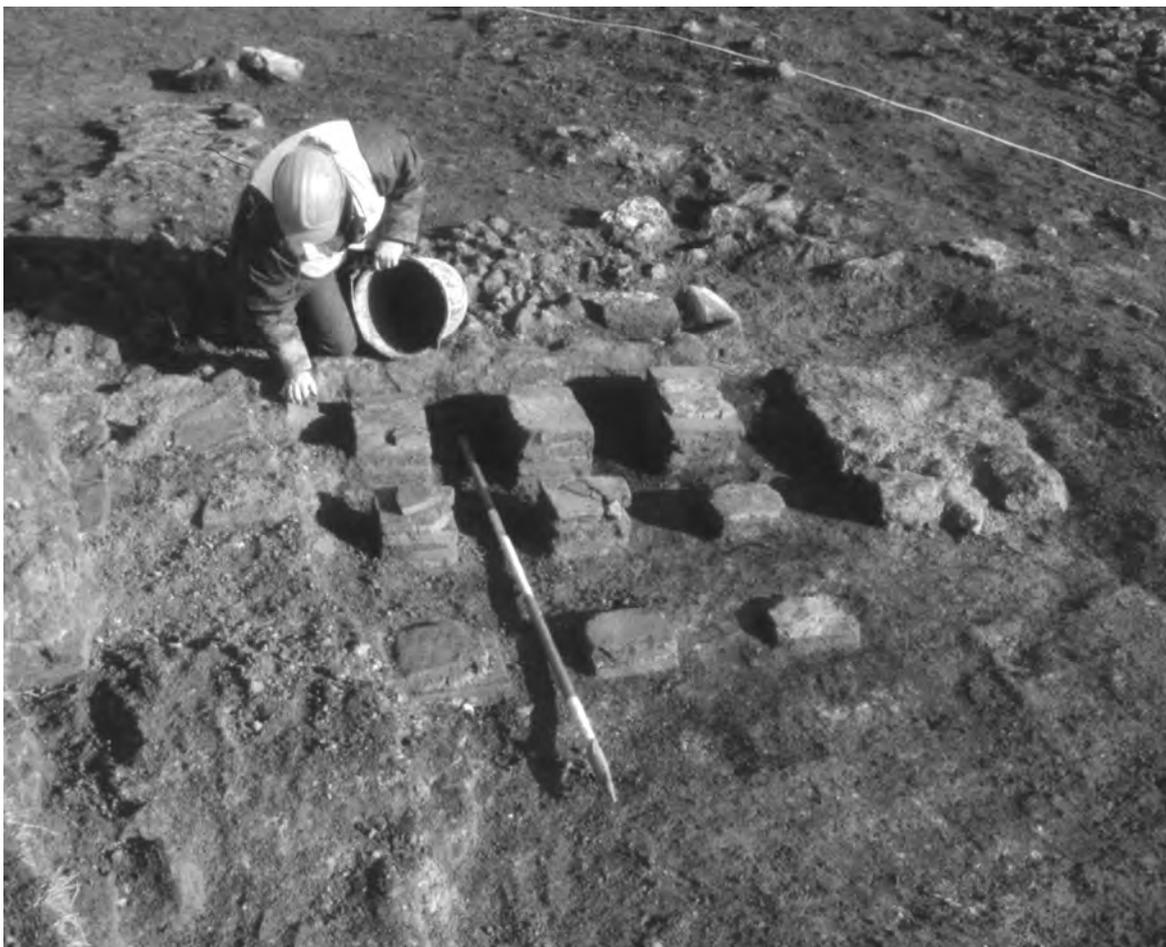


Plate 3 The pillared hypocaust, room 2

removal of the stokehole for the hypocaust system in Room 1, which would have lain in this area, indicates that this corridor was a later addition, perhaps contemporary with the demolition of the probable northern bath house and its relocation to the southern end of the range. There was therefore at least sufficient profit from the estate to enable some modifications to be made to the villa buildings.

*THE WESTERN DITCHES AND PITS*

A number of ditches and pits of Roman date lay to the west of the villa, and were excavated along the access road (Fig 4). A substantial ditch (40), up to 4.0m wide, ran eastward from the precinct ditch. The uppermost fills were of recent origin, and the



Plate 4 The displaced opus signinum floor from room 2

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Plate 5 The kiln on the north-eastern area, under excavation

ditch had evidently survived as a minor earthwork, although there is no reason to doubt its Roman origins. It was perhaps associated with the postulated northern bath suite, perhaps providing the water supply to it.

Linear ditches (12 and 20/30), 1.70m wide and in excess of 0.40m deep, which ran along the western edge of the excavated area and at an oblique angle to the villa building, may have been associated with the original use of the larger ditch (40). The upper fills contained occasional concentrations of building debris, particularly roof tile fragments, while deposits of oyster shell suggest that this was occupation debris and not demolition debris. A large circular pit (2), 2.80m in diameter by 0.45m deep, contained a substantial deposit of occupation debris including, pottery, animal bone, oyster shell and even fragments of *opus signinum* from a broken-up floor, already cited as possible evidence for the presence of a demolished northern bath suite.

#### ACTIVITY NORTH-EAST OF THE VILLA

On the area to the north-east of the villa, excavated in 2002,

a pottery kiln was constructed within the fills of the earlier ditch systems (Fig 5, Kiln 202). The circular chamber was near vertical-sided and flat-bottomed, 1.95m in diameter by 0.65m deep, with a flue opening 0.70m wide. The fired clay lining was red/pink in colour. The chamber was later relined around its western half only, which reduced the diameter of the chamber to 1.50m. No kiln furniture remained in situ, and it must have been furnished with a temporary central column and removable kiln bars at each firing (Corder 1957, 18-19). The chamber was half-filled with clay and scorched clays that must have come from a domed superstructure (Plate 5). To the south there was an oval stokehole, 2.4m long by 1.50m wide. On the western side of the stokehole there was an opening into a second, presumably earlier, kiln chamber that lay largely beyond the excavated area.

A further kiln (376) lay to the east, and was partly concealed beneath the fourth century dumps of soil and metalworking slag. It was a small horizontal-draught kiln with a central chamber and flues to the west and east (Corder 1957, 23-24 and fig 13). It was 3.30m long, including the stokeholes, but the chamber was oval in plan, 1.7m long by 1.0m wide and 0.26m deep, with 0.40m

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

wide flue openings. The vertical, clay-lined walls were burnt red, but much of the harder fired-clay lining had been lost.

A ditch in the south-western corner of the excavation was V-shaped, 1.4m deep and some 2.5m wide, with a primary fill of dark yellow brown silty clay (Fig 5, 271). The subsidence hollow was filled with grey brown to grey loam, rich in charcoal, and this was sealed beneath a layer of limestone and ironstone fragments. This ditch was a continuation from a ditch terminal, with an upper fill of stone rubble, located in 1999 to the immediate west, into which the stoned-lined drain had emptied. Geophysical survey shows that this ditch ran south-eastward for at least a further 45m (Fig 3). It ran down the slope towards a modern pond, and perhaps originally emptied into a pond at this same location. It was probably a pond in this location from which metal detectorists were obtaining coins in 2002.

Much of the south-western corner of north-eastern area was occupied by an extensive but shallow sub-rectangular pond, 17.0m long by 12.0m wide and up to 1.25m deep, and associated ditches and pits (Fig 5). While permeable Northampton Sands were exposed on the surface around the pond, it bottomed on an underlying bed of Lias Clay, which would have retained water effectively. The lower fill of the pond comprised dirty natural clays and silts, but this was difficult to determine due to the constant inflow of water and the similarity of these deposits to the underlying natural clays. Above this there was grey brown silty clay containing scattered pieces of stone rubble. Within this deposit there was a length of rectangular-sectioned oak plank, 3.2m long by 0.43m wide and 0.19m thick. This had clearly been a structural timber, but the outer surface had been lost to decay, removing any evidence for carpentry. In addition, two upright posts set 0.50m apart had been driven into the natural clay near the centre of the pond. One of these was recovered. It was a massive oak post, 0.98m long by 0.28m wide, worked to a rectangular sectioned point at one end. The in-situ posts and the displaced plank may suggest that there had once have been a platform or walkway that ran to the centre of the pond. Although these larger timbers had survived, there was no further smaller wood or other organic debris within the pond deposits.

An east-west ditch, 1.10m wide by 0.30-0.40m deep, which had been recut once, probably drained into the western side of the pond. A series of pits lay around the western and northern margins of the pond. They were either rectangular or oval in plan, varying from 2.00-3.50 long and 0.50-0.90m deep, with the steep sides and flat bottoms indicating that they had been filled quite rapidly. The primary fill of the deepest pit comprised a layer of brown decayed small wood debris, 120mm thick, but no preserved seeds or fruits. The pit fills all produced pottery, animal bone and occasional other finds, including a fine copper alloy fitting from a small box or casket (Fig 10).

The final fill of the pond contained building debris, which included irregular fragments of ironstone and limestone, some burnt, with the occasional piece of ceramic tile and much animal bone. The pottery from the pond and the pits is broadly dated to the third to fourth centuries.

#### THE TIMBERS FROM THE POND

By Rowena Gale

Cross-sections from each waterlogged timber, which were well preserved and firm, were submitted for examination. The samples were prepared for examination using standard techniques (Gale and Cutler 2000). Thin sections were examined using a Nikon labophot-2 microscope at magnifications up to x400.

The sample woods were matched to reference slides of modern wood.

The long plank was of oak heartwood (*Quercus* sp.), with the bark and sapwood absent. The sample consisted of an irregularly shaped radial section of wood, with a radial measurement of 130mm (it is probable that the complete radial measurement would have been at least 200mm). The growth rate appears to have been moderate with 43 fairly evenly spaced growth rings recorded, mostly about 4-5mm wide but with a few at 2-3mm in width.

The driven post was also of oak heartwood (*Quercus* sp.), with the bark and sapwood absent. It comprised a (?quartered) radial section of the trunk, measuring 160mm in width. The growth rate was slower and more irregular than in the plank sample, and about 51 growth rings were noted.

#### INHUMATION BURIALS

Inhumation burials were present in three specific locations near the villa. These appear to mark the presence of small inhumation cemeteries both within and beyond the villa precinct. They are all undated and while some are most likely to represent the inhabitants of the villa, it may also be noted that an Anglo-Saxon inhumation lay to the immediate east, see below.

Two inhumation burials were identified during cleaning of the industrial area immediately north of the villa building, and the exposed bones were covered over and the burials were left in the ground (Figs 4 and 6). Both were probably adults, and they appeared to be extended and supine burials. One was aligned W-E (141), only the feet were uncovered, and the other S-N (142), only the skull was exposed. In both instances a grave cut could only be vaguely discerned against the complex background stratigraphy, and it is possible that there are further burials in this area. They seem most likely to be late Roman in date.

Two inhumations had been partially exposed and damaged during soil stripping at the northern end of the site, beyond the enclosure ditch. They were both fully excavated and lifted as this area lay at the limit of the area of agreed preservation (Fig 4). Both were aligned roughly N-S; one was late adolescent (156) with the grave cutting the fill of an earlier ditch and the other was an adult (157). Both had been interred prone, face down.

At least a further three inhumations lay to the west, along the eastern edge of the cutting for the estate road corridor and 10-15m from the villa building (Fig 4). They were all apparently aligned W-E, with the skulls and upper torso exposed and damaged, although the remainder of each was left in-situ (36, 160 and 161). They lay within an area that was otherwise devoid of Roman cut features, apart from a small square stone base (14). This may suggest that this was a garden area, with the base perhaps a plinth for a statue within an area perhaps containing a small family cemetery for the owners of the house.

#### LATE ROMAN INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

Cleaning of the area to the immediate north of the villa building revealed a complex palimpsest of features and layers that could not be fully understood in plan alone. However, from the presence of extensive areas of reddened and blackened soils and stones, often rich with comminuted charcoal, it was evident that there had been at least four large-scale ovens/furnaces or hearths in this area (Fig 6).

The only clearly defined feature was a square masonry base, measuring 1.70m by 1.55m (137). It was faced in rough-hewn limestone and ironstone, with a core of mixed stone rubble bonded with an

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orange brown sandy mortar. At least three courses survived; the lowest visible course was offset. The northern corner had been cut away by a later feature.

To the south-east there was a circular oven/furnace, *c.* 1.2m in diameter, with a stokehole to the west (138). The chamber had been lined with flat-laid limestone slabs set in a clay matrix, and these had been scorched bright red. To the north-west there was probably a further circular oven/furnace (140). Only a short length of a lining of flat-laid limestone slabs was exposed, and the rest of its extent was defined by a layer of charcoal rich, burnt soil covering an area up to 2.8m in diameter. A third oven/furnace may have lain to the north-east, where an oval area of dark grey soils was bounded to the south by a scatter of burnt limestone slabs (143). To the south-west there was a surface of large, flat-laid limestone slabs with heavily worn surfaces (139), measuring approximately 3.0m by 2.0m. The southern edge was clearly defined, but to the north it was obscured by a layer of dark grey, fine silty clays and patches of reddened soil.

The date of this activity relative to the main villa building has not been firmly established, but there is evidence that use of the area continued after the abandonment of Room 1 (see above). It is therefore possible that this industrial activity represents a final phase of use, or reuse, following either the abandonment of the villa as a main residence, or at least a major refurbishment that had involved the removal of Room 1.

A layer of dark, charcoal rich soil across the northern half of Room 1 covered both the drain and the backfilled flues of the hypocaust (Fig 6, 129). Within this area there was a small hearth, 0.50-0.60 diameter, comprising hardened and blackened soils and fine grey ash (H). It contained small flecks of copper alloy and part of a crucible was also found in this area, indicating that copper alloy casting was being carried out. Small quantities of iron slag recovered around the north-east corner of the building suggest that iron working was also being carried out.

The northern half of the excavated area of 2002 contained a series of irregular to oval shallow, bowl-shaped hollows, up to 0.30m deep, filled with soils containing iron smelting tap slag (Fig 5). They covered an area 20m south-north by up to 10m east-west, and in the watching brief it was observed that the deposit came to an end some 5m to the north of the excavated area. The associated pottery suggests a fourth century date for the deposition of the iron working debris. As no metalworking furnaces or hearths lay in this area of the site, the material was evidently being deposited at some distance from its source, which was probably the industrial area at the northern end of the main villa complex.

At the southern end of the northern hollow the base of the pit was partly surfaced with well-laid limestone and ironstone fragments, which were unburnt but worn smooth. The function of this surface is uncertain. It is tempting to suggest that it may have formed a crushing floor for the preparation of iron ore for roasting prior to smelting, but there was no evidence that it had been used for this purpose. The other hollows all bottomed on natural.

All of the hollows had similar fills of dark grey to black soils rich in comminuted charcoal and containing fragments of limestone and ironstone, pottery, animal bone and substantial quantities of tap slag and some furnace lining. The slag was in large fragments and clearly represented a primary deposit of metal smelting debris. A particularly dense concentration of slag lay within the latest of a series of three intercutting gullies, 0.12-0.26m deep, that cut across the general fill of the northern hollow. At the end of the excavation the northern and most extensive area of dumped debris was fully sectioned by machine to show that it

bottomed on natural and was not concealing a smelting furnace or other features.

#### THE METALWORKING DEBRIS

by Andy Chapman

A total of 50.17kg of metalworking debris was retained, but this represents only a small sample of the exceptionally large quantities that were present in the group of shallow pits, with some secondary deposition in the upper fills of the pond and nearby pits. The total quantity would have been at least 20 times that recovered and might have weighed in excess of a tonne.

The metalworking debris was classified into three categories; tap slag, pit "lining" and undiagnostic slag. Tap slag forms the major part of the assemblage, at 39.3kg. It is in fragments ranging from small pieces up to slabs of 100-200mm diameter and 20-50mm thick. It is clean and fresh in appearance, with the characteristic "lava flow" surfaces. The material is dense, but containing sparse large voids, and is typically dark grey in colour with occasional patches of red to purple.

A feature of particular note was the presence of nine cylindrical rods of slag. The more complete examples are 95-110mm long, and they range from 20-44mm in diameter. At one surviving end they are sometimes attached to irregular masses of slag. Five of the nine examples have a characteristic D-shaped section, presumably a result of flow through a circular aperture but with the slag not fully filling the aperture at the time that it solidified. The other four had circular sections. They would appear to be the product of tapping furnaces by thrusting a rod through the choked tapping apertures at the base of the furnace to provide tubular openings for the slag to run out of, with the flow subsequently solidifying within these openings. They suggest that the furnace walls were of the order of 95-110mm thick.

The second major group comprises fired clay "lining". This occurred in conjunction with the tap slag, and it appears most likely that it merely comprises the natural sandy clay from the bases of slag-tapping pits that has been fired by contact with the molten slag. The third group comprises a few large pieces of undiagnostic slag, at 0.6kg, probably merely further pieces of tap slag lacking or having lost the distinctive "lava flow" surface.

The material is indicative of bloomery smelting being carried out on an extensive scale. It is notable, however, that the assemblage comprises only the debris from slag tapping, with no undiagnostic slag or specific furnace lining debris. It would appear that this material, which must also have been produced in some quantity, was being dumped in other locations that have not been identified. No significant quantity of slag was identified to the west during the recording of the villa. There is no evidence in the recovered material for smithing taking place on the site.

#### ROMAN ACTIVITY AT THE CENTRE FOR LEARNING

On the opposite bank of the stream, lying 350m to the south-east of the villa, an area of contemporary occupation, perhaps part of the villa estate farm, was investigated in 2002 and 2003 in advance of the building of a new school (Fig 2).

The area was in two distinct parts (Fig 7). The northern area was to form part of the school sports

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

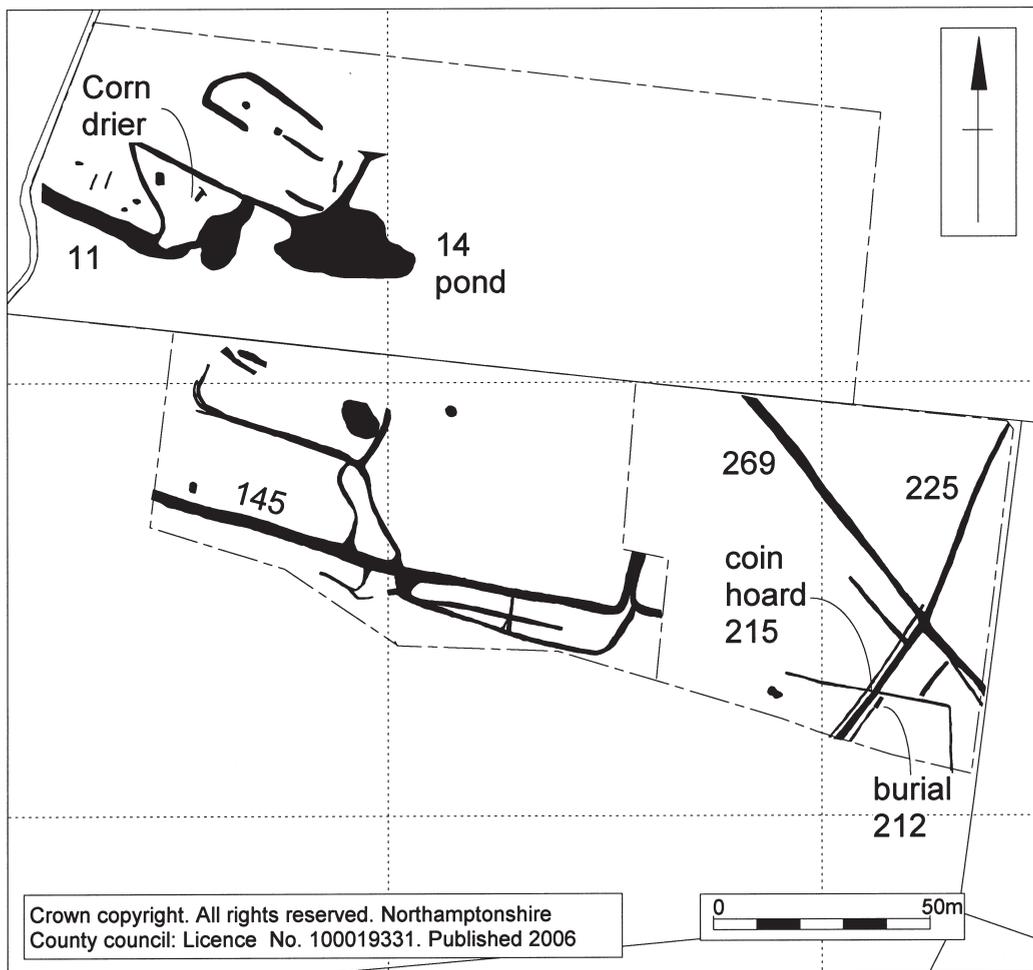


Fig 7 The ditch systems at the Centre for Learning

fields, and the topsoil and subsoil was stripped from the former rough pasture. The area of soil strip measured 150m east-west by 50m north-south, and the archaeological features, which were clustered on the lower ground at the western end of the stripped area, were exposed and recorded in plan, but they were not excavated, although pottery exposed on the surface was collected to provide dating evidence.

The area to the south was to be dug out to form balancing ponds, and here the requirement was for contingency rescue excavation of any archaeological deposits exposed by the soil stripping. The western and central part of the area, measuring 133m west-east by 75m north-south, was stripped in June 2003,

and the eastern end, measuring 66m west-east, was stripped in August 2003. The exposed features were both planned and sampled to define their form and to recover dating evidence.

There was no evidence for any occupation dating to the Iron Age, and the sparse collection of small and abraded sherds of Samian ware spanning the first and second centuries AD might have come purely from manure scatters, perhaps suggesting that the area was at this time part of the arable lands pertaining to the villa.

The bulk of the recovered diagnostic pottery falls between the second and fourth centuries, with certain fabric types and forms being more specifically

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mid-late third to fourth century in date. It would therefore appear that the main period of activity was from the later second century onward, suggesting that occupation on these slopes commenced at about the time of the establishment of the stone-built villa. It may have been directly associated with an expansion of the villa estate at this time.

#### THE PONDS, DITCHES AND A CORN DRIER

In the northern area all of the ditches were aligned south-east to north-west, running down the slope (Fig 7). Above the ditch systems there was a large oval area, 32m long by 15m wide, filled with dark soils (14), which may have been a silted pond. A linear ditch ran directly down slope from the pond and linked with the northern end of a second smaller possible pond, 12m long by 8m wide. A broader ditch system (11) ran down slope from this pond, so it would appear that both of the major ditches may have provided drainage from the ponds.

Between these two ditches, there were a number of narrow gullies, scattered small pits, 1.2m to 2.0m in diameter, and a larger, sub rectangular pit, measuring 3m by 2m. There was also a T-shaped corn drying oven, comprising a flue aligned south-west to north-east, 2.8m long by 0.5-0.8m wide, broadening towards the transverse chamber at the northern end, which was 2.8m long by 0.2-0.3m wide, with both lined with rough limestone blocks.

To the north there was a possible small ditched enclosure, measuring 25m by 12m. Within the enclosure there were two pits, both sub-circular and 1.5m and 1.8m in diameter. Further indistinct linear features were noted but the full extent of these could not be traced. A ditch running northward from the larger pond may have connected with a larger pit, or even another pond, but this area lay beyond the northern limit of the soil stripping.

#### THE BOUNDARY SYSTEMS

In the southern area there was a further system of linear ditches, mainly aligned north-west to south-east, running with the slope. One ditch system (145) was traced for a total length of 120m, and was V-shaped, 1.0m wide by 0.4m deep, and had been recut twice. It evidently continued down slope to the west, but was lost where it entered the eastern part of the watching brief area, although a much narrower ditch (229) further east appeared to follow the same

alignment. A series of other ditch systems appeared to be related to this major boundary, and suggest the provision of a number of adjacent enclosures or paddocks, with the more sinuous ditches perhaps providing drainage, given the underlying tenacious clays and the consequent poor natural drainage. In all cases, the full extent of the ditches could not be traced beyond the limits of the watching brief provision.

The eastern end of the area contained two linear ditch systems. Ditch (225) was aligned north-east to south-west, with narrow gullies running alongside it. An inhumation burial (212) lay beside this ditch and on the same alignment, see below, while 3m to the north of the burial a fourth century coin hoard was buried in a pit (215) cut into the upper fills of the ditch.

The final phase of activity comprised a new linear ditch (269), cutting across the earlier system and running north-west to south-east (269). This ditch ran across the site for 94m, but was not observed within the watching brief area to the north, where it may have been lost to ground level truncation.

#### THE INHUMATION BURIAL

A single inhumation burial (212) lay adjacent to a ditch system (225), and 3m south of the coin hoard. The grave cut measured 2.1m by 0.6m and was aligned south to north, with the burial extended and supine with the head to the south, the arms extended by the side and the legs crossed at the ankles. There were no grave goods. The condition of the skeleton was poor, with some of the bone only existing as soil stains. The stature of the individual was measured in the ground at around 1.75m (5ft 9ins) indicating that this was probably an adult male. A single tooth recovered from the area of the grave is a deciduous tooth, which would have been lost by the age of 12 years (examined by Hari Anne Jacklin), so it is evidently not from this individual and may suggest that another nearby inhumation had been largely lost.

#### THE FOURTH CENTURY COIN HOARD

The coin hoard was within a small pit (215) cut into the upper fill of a linear ditch system (225). The coins had been placed within a small pottery jar with an inverted bowl forming a lid (Fig 8). It had presumably been placed upright in the ground, but was found on its side and partly inverted with coins

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

spilling out of the top of the jar. This disturbance may have been caused by ploughing at some time in the past, with the pot dragged sideways and the lid partly removed, so that some of the coins spilled out, and were found beyond the main mass. Due to the clay and the consequent wet ground conditions in this area, the main mass of copper alloy coins that had spilled out were corroded and the bulk of them had fused together into a solid mass, fossilising them in position after the original plough damage had occurred. The base of the jar was damaged by the modern machine stripping, exposing the mass of coins still in-situ within the jar, although these too were corroded and fused together (Plate 6). Based on the average weight of the loose coins and the estimated weight of the fused coin mass, it would appear that the hoard contains around 1900 coins. From the few loose coins available, it appears that the hoard had been deposited at the end of the 330s AD, see below.

THE NATURE OF THE OCCUPATION

Unfortunately, the investigations at the school site are isolated islands of archaeology and the full extent of the ditch systems is unknown, which makes it difficult to discuss the form and function of this occupation area.

The major ditches appeared to be extensive linear boundaries that presumably defined large blocks of land, perhaps delineating part of an extensive system of fields and paddocks. However, the presence of numerous subsidiary ditches containing quantities of pottery and some building materials, suggests that there was associated domestic activity, although no exact focus for this has been established. The density of pottery recovered was greater towards the west, suggesting that the settlement lay on the lower slopes, and this was also indicated by the presence of a corn drying oven, while the environmental samples from the ditches contained both cereal grains and quantities of chaff, showing that the western area in general was a focus for crop processing. It may be that this area functioned as part of the farm estate that was attached to the villa through the third and fourth centuries.

Only a handful of pottery sherds were recovered from the ditches at the eastern end of the site. This, together with the presence of the coin hoard and the inhumation burial, may indicate that these ditch systems lay at the margin of the settlement area,

perhaps forming the up-slope limit of the paddocks surrounding the settlement area.

THE COINS AND THE LATE ROMAN COIN HOARDS

COINS FROM THE VILLA

by Ian Meadows

Six coins were found during the cleaning of the building area, but only three are from stratified contexts. With the exception of one mid-late second century sesterius of Marcus Aurelius (161-180), the entire collection dates to the late third and early fourth century, comprising two barbarous radiates, a coin of Allectus (293-296), and coins of the House of Constantine.

THE WOOTTON CENTRE FOR LEARNING COIN HOARD

by Ian Meadows

A total of 19 copper alloy coins were recovered as individual finds together with an estimated 1900 coins directly from the hoard. With one exception, the individual coins were recovered from the plough soil by metal detector survey, and seven of these came as loose finds close to the hoard, and had probably been disturbed from the hoard by ploughing. The general scatter of coins date from the last quarter of the third century, although a mid-fourth century coin came from the pond in the watching brief area.

The seven coins recovered by metal detecting in the immediate vicinity of the hoard comprised four examples of the Urbs Roma issue; two Constantinopolis issues, three Gloria Ex 2 standard type and two more of the single standard type. Where dateable, these belong to the period 330-345 AD.

During excavation and the preparation of the hoard for X-radiography a number of coins became detached from the main mass. It was possible to identify 15 individual coins, of four types. The types are Constantinopolis (3 examples), Urbs Roma (5), Gloria Ex 2 standards (4) and Gloria ex 1 standard (3). This combination would suggest a date in the 330s AD as the Gloria



Plate 6 The coin hoard, showing the exposed mass of coins in the base of the jar

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Ex 1 standard type is only issued 335-341. The 2 standard type is earlier 330s and the other two issues have a longer life generally extending up to 337. This suggests that the coins of the hoard belong to the second half of the 330s. Without further cleaning and without being able to identify individual emperors or mint marks greater precision is impossible. From the weight of the fused coin mass it is estimated that the hoard contains c1900 coins.

*THE POTTERY VESSELS CONTAINING THE COIN HOARD*  
by R M Friendship-Taylor

The jar (Fig 8, 2) is relatively small and is typically later Roman in date. It has been manufactured from finely granulated shell-tempered fabric and is fired to a brown/black colour. The dish/bowl (Fig 8, 1) is also in a finely crushed shell-tempered fabric, fired to light fawn in colour. It has a small incipient bead around the top of the rim, suggesting it was produced during the late third or, at the latest, the early fourth century AD, which would have made it up 30-50 years old when the hoard was deposited. Both vessels are typical of 'Harrold-type' wares manufactured in Bedfordshire (Brown 1974).

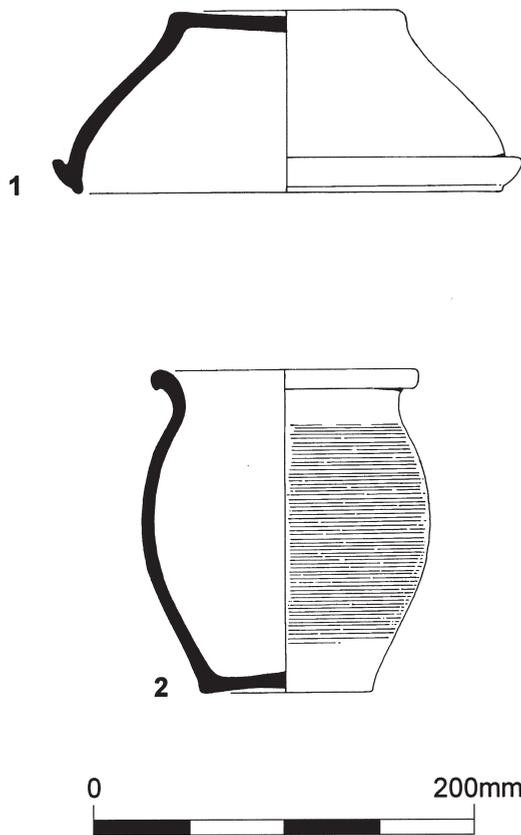


Fig 8 The pottery vessels that contained the coin hoard

*THE COIN HOARD FROM THE POND*

At the Roman villa a small coin hoard was recovered from a pit on the northern edge of the pond lying to the north-east of the villa building (Fig 5, 339). The feature was exposed in a machine cut box section, and was 4.00m in diameter and in excess of 1.00m deep. Coins lay in a relatively tight cluster within the fill of brown clayey loam, and further coins were found more scattered to the east, where the pit fill had been eroded by later activity. A total of 38 mid- to late-fourth century coins, probably deposited in the 370s, were recovered but as the feature was not fully excavated the full hoard was probably well in excess of this total. The main cluster of coins was spread over a distance of at least 1.0m, suggesting that they had not been within a small container and leaving it unclear whether they represent a single deposit that became scattered or a slightly longer-term deposition of coins into the pit. Other objects from this pit included the neck of a fine glass vessel and a large lead fitting. Shortly following the deposition of the coins and other finds they were sealed by a soil layer containing stone rubble, probably marking the infilling of the pond.

*THE COINS*  
(identifications by Steve Critchley)

Fifty-one Roman coins were recovered during excavation, with 38 of these coming from the dispersed hoard next to the pond. The scattered coins were located in metal detector surveys by Steve Critchley, while those from the hoard were from a combination of hand excavation and metal detector scanning of the in-situ fills.

The 13 scattered coins from the north-eastern area excavated in 2002, span an extended period from a dupondius of Antoninus Pius (138-161) to a late fourth century coin of Gratian (367-378). Features to the immediate south of the pond and the fills of the pond produced small quantities of coins in poor condition of mid-fourth century date, with the only identifiable example dated to 364-378.

The coins in the hoard were also in poor condition, and only eight can be specifically attributed. They range in date from a coin of Constantine I (330-346) to coins of Valens (364-378). This suggests that the hoard was probably deposited at some time in the 370s AD, but it contained some issues 30-40 years old at the time. The presence of a coin of Gratian (367-383) elsewhere on the site, may suggest that occupation continued for only a few years after the deposition of the hoard. The coin hoard was reported to the coroner as it fell under the provisions of the Treasure Act 1996, but the Department for Culture, Media and Sport disclaimed the coins as the landowner was seeking no reward and they formed part of a formal archaeological archive.

THE ROMAN POTTERY

THE ROMAN POTTERY FROM THE VILLA  
by Tora Hylton

Of the total of 404 sherds of Roman pottery, weighing nearly 10kg, much of it was fragmented, weathered and abraded. The majority was collected during cleaning, and cannot be assigned to closely defined contexts, although much of this was clearly within extensive soil layers containing demolition debris. Small

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

quantities came from the excavation of short lengths of the flue, stokehole and drain associated with room 1, and further quantities came from the excavation of pits and lengths of ditch in the road corridor to the west of the building. The assemblage spans the first to fourth centuries, but with second and third century material predominating, and comprises local and non-local table wares (bowls, dishes, flagon, cups, beakers) and kitchen wares (storage/cooking vessels, colander and mortaria), together with a small quantity of Samian.

*EARLY ROMAN POTTERY*

Small fragments of grog-tempered ware displaying features associated with Gallo-Belgic type wares of the first century AD, and contemporary with material from the enclosure to the north-east, was recovered as residual finds in Roman contexts. The only identifiable form is a rim fragment from a butt-beaker decorated with cordons. Early shell-gritted forms include a single channel-rimmed jar decorated with oblique incisions on the rim and a selection of body sherds decorated with fine horizontal rilling on the exterior surface.

Late first and early second century material comprises a small number of hard-fired grog-tempered wares, which may be from storage jars. Twelve sherds of samian span the first and second centuries AD. Identifiable forms include hemispherical bowls (Dr. 37, Webster 1996, 47), a dish decorated with a barbotine motif of trailed leaves (Dr. 36, *ibid* 1996, 46) and a series of cups (Dr.27, Dr.33 and Dr.33A, *ibid* 1996, 38 & 45).

*LATER ROMAN POTTERY*

Greyware forms predominate and are mainly represented by necked and neckless jars, together with a body sherd from a poppy-head beaker. Locally manufactured Nene Valley Grey Wares include a shallow bowl with a plain up-right rim, dog dishes and a bowl with rounded rim (Howe *et al* 1980, fig 2, 17).

There are two sherds of soft-pink-grogged ware, a fabric that tends to be abundant in west Northamptonshire, north Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire, and dates from the second to fourth centuries AD. Black-burnished type ware is represented by a dog dish and flanged bowls.

Other diagnostic pieces include a small selection of local and non-local colour coated wares. Local wares manufactured in the Nene Valley include, a folded beaker (Howe *et al* 1980, fig 5, 52) and a shallow dish with plain rim (*ibid*, fig 7, 87) of fourth century date. There are 13 sherds of non-local colour-coated wares from the Oxford region. Two pieces represent samian copies of Dragondorf types 31 (Young type 45, fig 58) and Dr. 38 (Young 1977), while other forms include a necked jar (Young type C18, fig 54) and a flanged bowl with upright rim (Young type C51, fig 390). In addition two fragments of mortaria (Young type C97/C98, ?C100) may also be from the Oxford kilns.

THE ROMAN POTTERY FROM THE NORTH-EASTERN AREA

by Roy Friendship-Taylor

The assemblage comprises 616 sherds of pottery weighing 13.65kg, spanning the first to fourth centuries. It is unremarkable with very few well-dated groups, and most of the sherds are generally of comparatively small size.

The Roman pottery comes from a variety of sources, such as

Much Hadham, the Verulamium region, Oxford and the Lower Nene Valley. However, as with nearby Piddington (Friendship-Taylor 1989), Quinton (Friendship-Taylor 1979 & 1999) and Stanwick, (Colin Wallace pers comm) Lower Nene Valley pottery is not so well represented as, for example, that from the Oxford region. This is surprising, as one would expect that the direct river communication, linking the upper Nene region with the Peterborough (Durobrivae) potteries of the Lower Nene region, would increase its incidence. However, it would seem likely that the bulk of the Lower Nene pottery went in an easterly/northern direction - serving the Fenland areas where, for example, Stonea near March (Cambridgeshire) produced good ranges of Lower Nene Valley pottery (Jackson and Potter 1996).

Wootton, in common with the local sites at Quinton and Piddington, drew its later Roman pottery supplies from the south-east and the west, such as Much Hadham and the Oxford region. One surprising aspect is the lack of Ecton ware from the assemblage (Johnston 1969). This may be because Wootton was getting its pottery from elsewhere, perhaps as a result of market forces, but this area of the site may not have been so active during this period, as there is a general lack of pottery from the early second century.

An interesting aspect of the assemblage was the juxtaposition of the early Saxon pottery with typical late Roman types, such as Oxford, Hadham and late black burnished ware. This does raise the possibility that both the late Roman and Saxon wares were in use together which may be compared with Orton Hall Farm, Peterborough (Mackreth 1978).

THE ROMAN POTTERY FROM THE CENTRE FOR LEARNING  
by Tora Hylton

A total of 705 sherds, weighing 13.670kg was recovered.

*EARLY ROMAN POTTERY (1ST TO 2ND CENTURIES AD)*

There is no diagnostically early material. Twelve very abraded sherds of Samian span the first and second centuries AD, with a single diagnostic rim sherd from a Type 31R (Webster 1996, fig 22), which dates from the mid-second century.

*LATER ROMAN POTTERY (2ND TO 4TH CENTURIES AD)*

The majority of the diagnostic pottery falls between the second and fourth centuries, with certain fabric types and forms being more specifically mid-late third to fourth century. The assemblage comprises a wide range of domestic forms for use in the kitchen, on the table and for storage. The major fabric type is greyware, making up nearly 50% of the total assemblage. Diagnostic forms represented include dishes/bowls with flanged rims, shallow dishes with plain upright rims (dog dish) and necked and neckless jars. Forms of decoration include, combing, burnishing and rouletting. Shell-gritted wares make up 18.4% of the total and include necked and neckless jars, bowls with flanged rims and a large storage jar. There is a small quantity of Soft Pink Grog fabric, most probably from large storage jars.

Fine tablewares are represented by a range of colour-coated wares manufactured in the Lower Nene Valley and Oxfordshire. Examples of the former date from the mid third to fourth century and are represented by beakers, dishes, bowls and a jar. There are a small number of finely manufactured beakers, including a

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pentice-moulded beaker with rouletted motif (Howe *et al* 1980, fig 5, 56), an indented beaker and a fragment of a folded scale beaker (Howe *et al*, fig 4, 42, 38 & 39). Other forms worthy of note include dog dishes and flanged bowls (Howe *et al*, fig 7, 87 & 79). One of these has a painted motif on the rim, an imitation copy of samian form Dr 36 (Howe *et al*, fig 7, 81), which dates to the late third/mid fourth century, and jars decorated with barbotine and rouletted motifs. Mortaria manufactured in the Nene Valley is represented by a reeded rim sherd with black grits (Howe *et al*, fig 8, 102).

Oxfordshire ware colour-coat dates from the second half of the third century, and is represented mainly by sherds of red colour-coated wares, together with fragments of mortaria. Colour-coated wares generally replicate Samian forms, and include imitation Drag 31 (Young Type C45 - Young 1977, fig 58), a wide rimmed shallow bowl imitating Drag 36 (Young Type C47, fig 58) and a flanged bowl imitating Drag 38 (Young Type C51, fig 59). A necked jar (Young Type C75, fig 62) dates from c 325-400 AD. Mortaria forms are represented by Young Type C97.1 (fig 67) which replicates Drag 45 and dates from 240-400 AD, and Young Type C100 (fig 67, C100.10) which dates from 300-400 AD. All examples have translucent, rounded white/pink quartz trituration grits.

## ROMAN BUILDING MATERIALS

### ROMAN BUILDING MATERIALS FROM THE VILLA

by Tora Hylton and Andy Chapman

Much of the 28 kg of fragmented tile comprises large identifiable pieces that display very little sign of abrasion and ware, as smaller fragments were generally discarded on site. In addition, most of the tile and *opus signinum* floor of Room 2, which had been pulled out by machine excavation prior to the recognition of the villa, was also recovered. A small quantity of *opus signinum* was also recovered from Room 1. Tile types have been identified by the presence of unique features: the upright flange on a *tegula*; the curvature of an *imbrex* and the combed keying lines and perforations of box flue tiles.

Three main fabric types were observed, although there may be other slight variations:

Shell-tempered fabrics, containing abundant crushed fossil shell and fired to a pale buff colour, predominant. A similar fabric has been recorded at Quinton (Friendship-Taylor 1979, 121ff), where it was suggested that it displays similarities to material produced at the Harrold Kilns, Bedfordshire (Brown 1974, 9).

Sandy fabrics with varying quantities of fine-medium sand are generally orange in colour, although a small amount has a distinct grey core.

Grog-tempered fabric, soft with sparse inclusions, fired to a buff/pink colour with dark-light grey core, which resembles Milton Keynes Fabric-5 (Zeevat 1987, 120) and Quintons Fabric d (Friendship-Taylor 1979, 123).

### ROOF TILE AND SLATE

A total of 81 fragments, weighing 12.73kg, comprise both *tegulae* (41 fragments) and *imbrices* (40 fragments), manufactured from all three fabric types. There are no complete examples. On 10 fragments of sand tempered *tegulae* and *imbrices* fired to a

pale colour, the exterior surfaces are coated in a maroon/red coloured wash/paint. Numerous sites in the Midlands have produced evidence for the use of coloured paints on roof tiles, including Bancroft Villa, Milton Keynes (Zeevat 1987, 119) and Croughton Villa (unpublished), for further examples see Brodribb (1987, 137). Three pieces of *tegulae* contain nail holes towards their edge, perforated before firing. One fragment of *imbrex* is decorated with a combed wavy-line motif.

Fragments of roofing slate in fine grained sandstone were recovered from the excavated opening of the hypocaust flue into Room 1. The larger fragments indicate minimum dimensions of 400mm square by 25mm thick, with a single central perforation, one of which contained a fragment of an iron nail.

### HYPOCAUST TILE

The majority of box flue tile (*tubulus*) (Brodribb 1979, 148), 32 fragments weighing 8.57kg, was retrieved from the demolition debris in and around the pillared hypocaust in Room 2. They are all in a shell-tempered fabric, fired to a pale buff colour, and two fragments provide a depth measurement of c120-130mm. Fourteen pieces were furnished with oval side apertures, and 20 had combed keying lines in varying patterns; no examples have been roller stamped.

There are three displaced *pilae* tiles from Room 2. One is sand tempered, measuring 180 by 175 by 30mm, with a signature in the form of a triple-lined cross, and another is shell tempered and slightly bigger, 210 by 220 by 32mm.

The surviving part of the pillared hypocaust in Room 2 comprised three rows of four *pilae*. Two rows comprised columns standing three *pilae* high, 140mm, formed from tiles 215mm square and 30mm thick with 25-30mm of pink mortar between them. These were set on larger base tiles, 290mm square and 30mm thick, which were set on a mortar bed. The northernmost row was of the same build but the *pilae* were rectangular, being made up of columns of single and half tiles.

In addition, a rectangular base tile with square *pilae* tiles still attached was recovered from spoil in the vicinity of Room 2. The base tile measures 370mm by 250mm and is extensively decorated with a range of incised graffiti (Fig 9). The principal group comprises several animal figures of various sizes. The largest appears to be a red deer, given what appears to be a fine set of antlers, and the smaller running animals may also be deer. The other graffiti comprise an oval enclosing a row of dots, and a possible crude phallus.

### ROMAN BUILDING MATERIAL FROM THE NORTH-EASTERN AREA

by Pat Chapman

Building materials were present in all the later Roman features including the fills of the pond and the associated pits and the pits containing iron working debris. A total of 148 pieces of tile, weighing 26.2kg, was retained as a sample of larger identifiable pieces. Three main fabric types are similar to those reported from the villa itself, see above.

### ROOF TILE

A total of 85 fragments, weighing 16.64kg, comprise both *tegulae* (57 fragments) and *imbrices* (28 fragments), with both types manufactured in the three main fabrics. The exterior surfaces

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

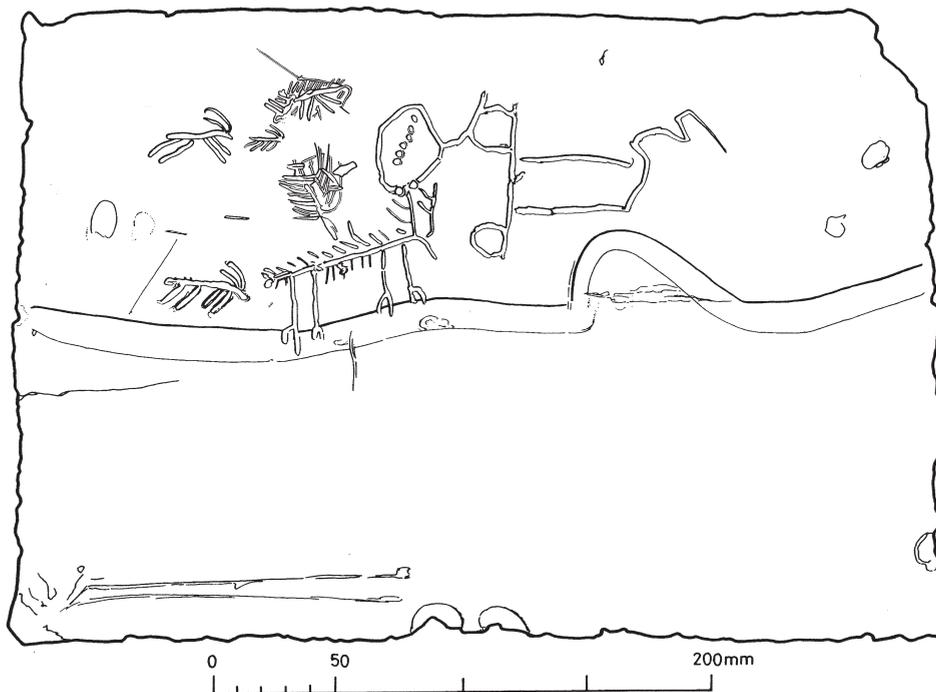


Fig 9 Ceramic tile with graffiti

on seven tegula fragments had been coated in wash/paint, six in a maroon red colour and one in black, as also seen at nearby Piddington villa (Ward 1990). One *imbrex* had a worn chevron design starting at one end but fading away after five repeats, another had a series of horizontal and lateral lines along one side.

**HYPOCAUST TILE**

There are 15 fragments of box flue tile (*tubulus*) weighing 1.53kg, in the three fabrics. One fragment has a depth measurement of 128mm. Of the ten combed pieces, three have broad shallow curves, resembling finger markings, and the other seven have combed keying lines in various patterns.

**STRUCTURAL TILE**

Only 7 fragments of *pilae*/brick, weighing 1.81kg, was recovered, none with surviving dimensions, and one small fragment of perforated limestone tile was found. A single small block of tufa was also recovered. One example of a *pot lid* was found cut from a piece of fine sandstone. It is roughly circular, 90mm in diameter and 10mm thick. Those found at Piddington Villa were mainly cut from *tegulae* although one was in local limestone (Ward 1990). They are a widespread find, but of uncertain usage.

**ROMAN BUILDING MATERIAL FROM THE CENTRE FOR LEARNING**

by Tora Hylton

A total of 179 fragments of ceramic tile, weighing 16.06kg, was recovered. Much of the assemblage is fragmentary and displays signs of abrasion, suggesting that it had been lying around for sometime prior to deposition. Three main fabric types are represented, which parallel those from the villa, see above.

**ROOF TILE**

There are 62 fragments of tegulae and 20 of imbrices, with all three fabric types represented. One perforated fragment has the hole positioned 20mm from the top edge, and has been drilled from both sides after firing. Similar examples have been recorded at Bancroft Villa (Zeepvat 1987, 120) and Piddington, Northamptonshire (Brodrribb 1987, 10). Four fragments of buff-coloured grog-tempered fabrics retain worn patches of maroon and dark red paint.

**HYPOCAUST TILE**

Hypocaust tile is represented by seven fragments of box flue, identified by the keying lines, executed with a four or five-pronged tool. A large square brick, measuring up to 205mm by 45mm thick, and weighing 2.375kg, is part of a "bessales", a tile used to support the floor suspended above the hypocaust (Brodrribb 1987, 34), and is similar to the examples from the bath house of the villa.

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OTHER ROMAN FINDS

OTHER ROMAN FINDS FROM THE VILLA

by Tora Hylton

There are 48 individually recorded finds recovered during cleaning and also from a metal detector survey across both the site and the associated spoil, but the paucity of metal items is highlighted by the low recovery rate from the metal detector survey. The assemblage includes a considerable number of iron nails. Copper alloy objects include fragments from a bracelet, ribbon strip type, and a hook which may have been part of a steelyard, and is similar to an example from Richborough (Bush-Fox 1949, plate XXXVIII, 133). With the exception of a single knife blade fragment, the iron objects are either nails or rod fragments. The rest of the assemblage comprises off-cuts from sheet metal, suggesting that fabrication took place on the site, while molten dribbles of lead indicate occasional melting.

There are 14 fragments of vessel glass, from ten vessels including mould-blown bowls and jars, fragments of handles from jugs and bowls and body sherds from probable square bottles. Decorative techniques include cut decoration set just below the rim and mould blown and drawn striations. There is a single fragment of window glass.

OTHER ROMAN FINDS FROM THE NORTH-EASTERN AREA

by Tora Hylton

There is a small group of 14 finds. A spindle-whorl manufactured from a reused pottery base sherd was from a late first/early second century pit. A right-angled corner bracket in copper alloy from a box or casket has decorative lanceolate terminals, with small perforations for a fine retaining pin (Fig 10), and comes from a third/fourth century pit, together with scrap lead and a fragment of pale green glass. Cast copper alloy corner bindings are not common, as they are more usually iron, like the box fittings recovered from Bancroft Villa, Milton Keynes (Manning *et al* 1987, fig 58 & Manning and Musty 1977), although they have been recorded at Corbridge (Allason-Jones 1988, fig 85, 164) and Fishbourne (Cunliffe, 1971, fig 52, 199). The neck from a cylindrical narrow necked unguent bottle in pale green glass has a shallow horizontal groove on the inside of the rolled rim (Price & Cottam 1998, 22), a technique prevalent on first and second century vessels. There are five nails, two melted fragments of lead and a large offcut of lead sheet came from the same pit as the coin hoard.

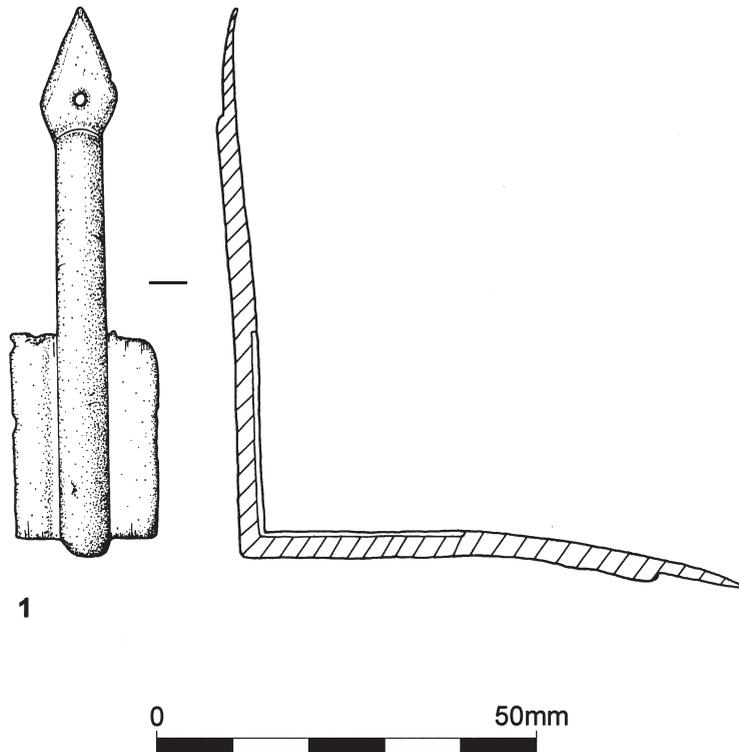


Fig 10 Copper alloy corner binding from a box or casket

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

OTHER ROMAN FINDS FROM THE CENTRE FOR  
LEARNING  
by Tora Hylton

A bronze lock-pin from topsoil, is of uncertain use but they are commonly found on Romano-British sites. A large number were recovered at Vindolanda (Birley 1997, 30, figs 11 and 12), while others have been recorded at Fishbourne (Cunliffe 1971, fig 46, 118), Wood Corner and Bancroft Villa, Milton Keynes (Zeepvat, 1987, fig 43, 88 and Hylton 1994, fig 150, 141).

THE QUERNS AND MILLSTONES  
by Andy Chapman

There is a complete upper stone from a beehive quern of the classic Hunsbury type (Ingle 1993/4 and Watts 2002, 27-38), with a handle socket penetrating to the hopper, a second, diametrically opposed handle socket, which is a less common feature, and an iron sleeve set in the base of the narrow eye (Fig 11). It came from an undated pit (Fig 6, 147) near the villa and is most likely to be of late Iron Age date. Like many stones of this type it has

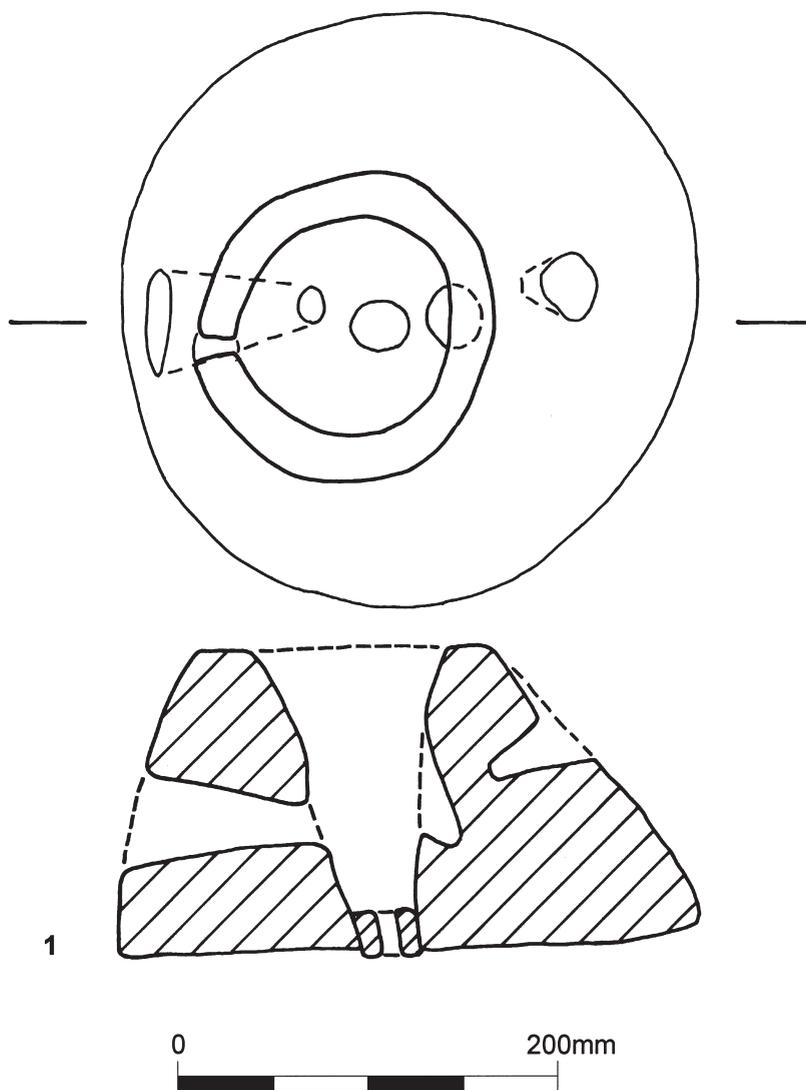


Fig 11 Iron Age beehive quern

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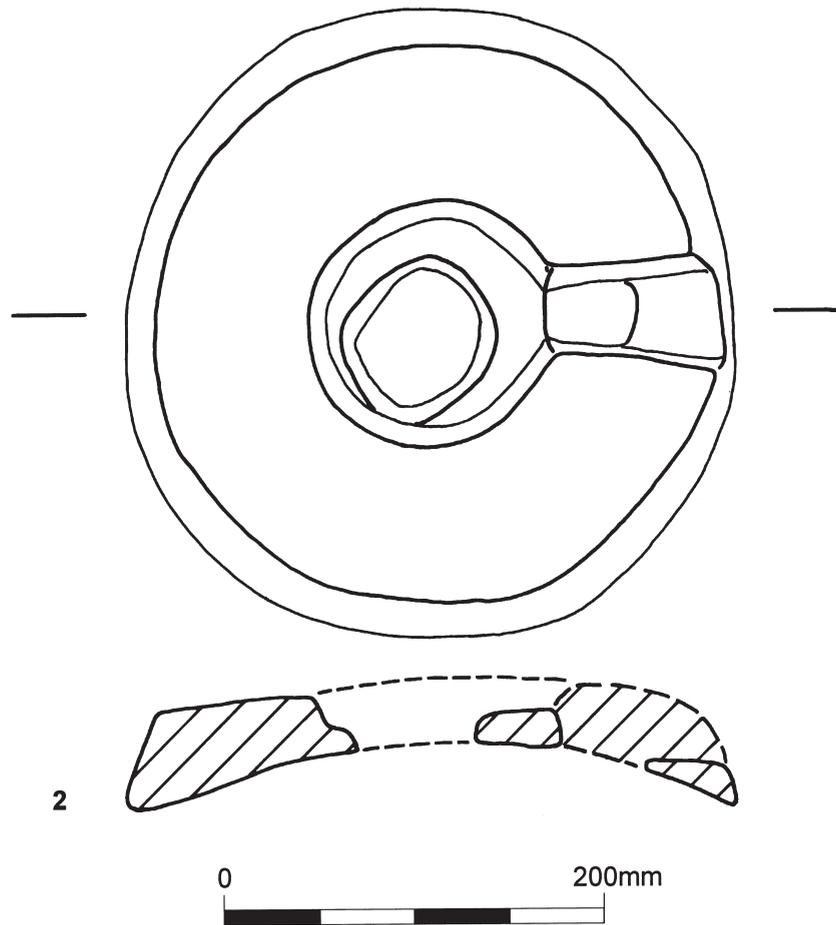


Fig 12 Roman flat quern

been subject to asymmetrical wear, so that eye is no longer perpendicular to the grinding surface. It is probably in Spilsby Sandstone, from the Lincolnshire Wolds, and at Hunsbury Hill there were 16 examples, making it the second most common type, after Millstone Grit (Ingle 1993/4, 28-29).

Three complete or partial stones and two small fragments were recovered from the north-eastern area. Three are in Millstone Grit, presumably from Derbyshire, while the other two are in coarse-grained sandstones of similar texture but with pale, better cemented matrices.

A roughly square slab of Millstone Grit, 330mm diameter by 35-50mm thick, is pitted and damaged, perhaps as a result of pounding rather than grinding. A fragment from a rounded, well-worn cobble of Millstone Grit, 55mm thick, is from a rubbing or pounding stone, and came from a pit dated to the late first/early second century.

A complete upper stone from a rotary quern was recovered from a gully (252) dated to the mid-first century AD. It is 330mm in diameter with a broad, shallow hopper and a wedge-shaped handle groove with a terminal recess, the base of which has been worn through by use (Fig 12). It conforms broadly to the classic early Roman flat-topped quern form (Watts 2002, 33-37).

Part of a large stone in Millstone Grit was recovered from a pit in the area containing the dumped iron working debris. It comes from an upper stone 540mm in diameter and 30-36mm thick, with an eye 37mm in diameter and a rounded, recessed collar.

At the centre for Learning, two pieces of worked stone were recovered from the topsoil. Both are in Millstone Grit. One is a small, hand-sized rubbing stone. The other has a hollowed surface and was probably used as a general grinding stone or mortar.

A ROMAN VILLA AND AN ANGLO-SAXON BURIAL AT WOOTTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON

THE ANIMAL BONE

ANIMAL BONE FROM THE NORTH-EASTERN AREA

by Karen Deighton

A total of 10.3kg of animal bone came from the pond fills and the slag dumps. There was a preponderance of the two major domesticates, cattle and sheep/goat, with the two present at similar levels allowing for the respective size differences. The pond group is dominated by cattle and the slag dump by sheep/goat. With such small numbers interpretation is problematic, but as the slag dump may be slightly later in origin it might suggest a shift towards sheep farming in the final decades of the villa. Pig (4%), deer and horse (2% each) are present in small quantities. Deer was restricted to antler, both shed and removed with a skull fragment, and the presence of a sawn antler fragment is indicative of on-site antler working.

ANIMAL BONE FROM THE CENTRE FOR LEARNING

by Karen Deighton

A total of 9.02kg was recovered by from 73 contexts. The assemblage is dominated by cattle, with considerably lower numbers of sheep/goat, and no wild species were present. A bird element appeared to be goose.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE FROM THE NORTH-EASTERN AREA

by Karen Deighton

Four bulk soil samples were taken, each of c20 litres. The samples from the pond and pit were stack sieved and the two from the area containing metalworking debris were coarse sieved.

A sample from the lower pond silts contained no preserved organic debris or carbonised material. A sample from the primary fill of an adjacent pit contained quantities of partly decayed organic material in the form of a dense mat of fine twigs, typically no more than 5mm in diameter, with no larger roundwood present. No preserved fruits or seeds were present.

A sample from deposits containing metalworking debris produced small quantities of wood charcoal but no carbonised seed remains, and no hammerscale was present.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE FROM THE CENTRE FOR LEARNING

by Karen Deighton

Nine samples from the ditch systems were processed using a siraf tank fitted with a 500-micron mesh and flot sieve. Preservation was reasonable although some cereal grains were fragmentary and abraded.

The cereal species present included spelt (*Triticum spelta*), hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) (2-row and 6-row), possible oat (*Avena sativa*) and possible rye (*Secale cereale*). The frequent presence of chaff, as well as grains, in certain contexts suggests that on-site processing was taking place.

The weed species present were cleavers (*Galium aparine*), fat

hen (*Chenopodium album*) and dock (*Rumex* sp). All are common crop weeds, which would have been introduced to site with the harvested crops. Oat could also be present as a wild contaminant.

ANGLO-SAXON OCCUPATION AND BURIAL

THE EARLY SAXON POTTERY

by Paul Blinkhorn

A small deposit of pottery came from one of the spreads of dark loam and tap slag within a shallow hollow on the area to the north-east of the villa (Fig 5). This context, and the other similar deposits containing slag, also produced much late Roman material and it seems most likely that the Anglo-Saxon pottery is intrusive into these late Roman deposits.

The assemblage comprises 13 sherds, with a total weight of 587g and an estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference, of 0.08. Two sherds are from the flat base of a large vessel, there is a rim from a small bowl, a rusticated sherd and another with linear decoration; the others are plain bodysherds. Four fabric types were identified: containing coarse quartz (3 sherds, 247g); sandstone and chaff (2 sherds, 89g); sparse quartz and Ironstone (4 sherds, 185g); and fine quartz (4 sherds, 66g).

The majority of this assemblage is typical of the early or middle Saxon handmade pottery of the region. The rusticated sherd is more typical of the early Saxon (AD 450-650) period, and numerous finds of such vessels have been made on sites of that date, such as Mucking in Essex (Hamerow 1993). The incised sherd is also of early Saxon date; generally, the Anglo-Saxons all but ceased to decorate pottery with the advent of Christianity. The exact decorative scheme is uncertain, but appears to consist of two parallel incised lines on the upper shoulder of the vessel, without evidence of any other surface enhancement. Myres (1977, 17-18) saw at least some of the vessels with this sort of decoration as being amongst the earliest Anglo-Saxon pottery in England, although with the *caveat* that such styles did continue on as late as the sixth century. Generally, however, such vessels tend to be early, and so it is possible that this sherd may be evidence of the villa still having been in use in the fifth century, and after the end of Roman rule in Britain.

THE ANGLO-SAXON INHUMATION

A single inhumation burial lay on the western part of the excavated area (Fig 5, 241). An adult female had been interred, extended and supine, in a shallow grave, surviving no more than 0.12m deep and aligned west-east. The head was upright and the left arm was strongly flexed, indicating that the person had not been buried in a shroud (Fig 13).

Analysis of the skeletal evidence, by Trevor Anderson, indicated that this was a large-boned female 1.69m (5' 6½") tall, aged 40-50 years at death. The incomplete and damaged surfaces of the pubic bones, with deep circular cavitations, indicate that she had given birth, and strenuous activity had resulted in widespread spinal degeneration and osteo-arthritis of both elbows; and she had a low standard of oral health, with loss of some molars many years before death, caries destruction and abscess formation.

She had been buried with a small group of four grave goods. There was a copper alloy pin and an amber bead on the shoulder and neck respectively, and a small iron knife and a circular

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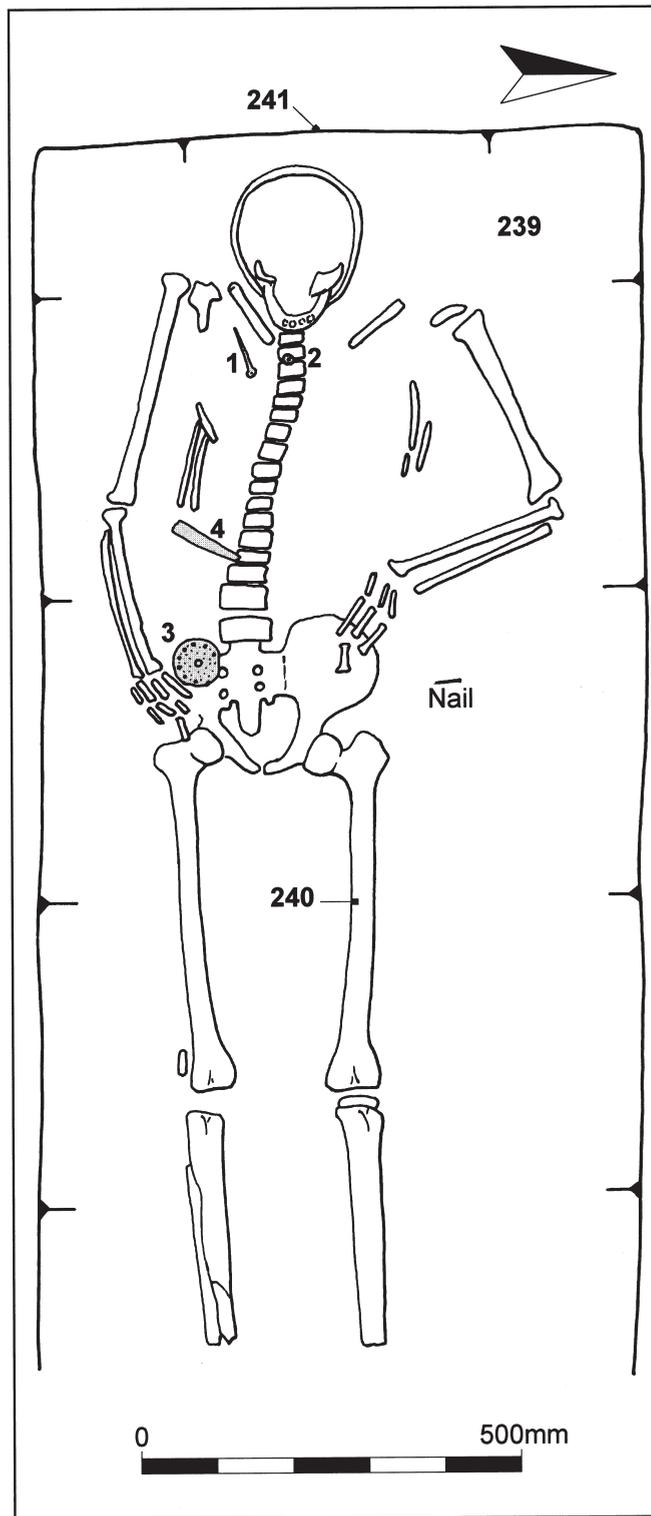


Fig 13 The Anglo-Saxon inhumation burial

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Table 2: The radiocarbon date

Laboratory & context no.	Context details	Sample details	d13C d15N	Conventional radiocarbon age BP	Calibrated date cal AD 68% probability 95% probability
Wk-11232	Anglo-Saxon	Bone	-19.82	1403 +/-48	600-670
241	inhumation	collagen	-10.87		540-720

Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, University of Waikato, New Zealand  
Calibration: OxCal v3.5 Bronk Ramsey (2000)

decorated antler disc or amulet at the waist had perhaps originally been suspended from a belt (Fig 13, 1-3). The paucity of grave goods and the type, style and date of the objects are all characteristic of mid to late sixth century and seventh century burial practises. A similar range of artefacts were recovered from a burial at the late sixth/seventh century cemetery at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard (Hyslop 1963, fig 4), where the objects include a copper alloy pin, an amber bead, iron knife and iron buckle. The finds evidence has been confirmed by radiocarbon dating of a bone sample from the inhumation, which places the burial in the first half of the seventh century (600-670 cal AD, see Table 2). A burial from Oundle, Northamptonshire, with a similar antler amulet and also on the

outskirts of a Roman settlement, perhaps a late Roman villa (Maull and Masters this volume) has been radiocarbon dated to the mid-sixth to mid-seventh centuries (540-640 cal AD, 68% probability, 1481+/-49 BP, Wk-11235), giving a broader but overlapping date range.

*THE GRAVE GOODS*  
by Tora Hylton

The copper alloy pin is plain with a perforated disc head (Fig 14, 1). It lay on the right side of the neck pointing upwards and outwards, like an example from Portway, Andover (Cooke and

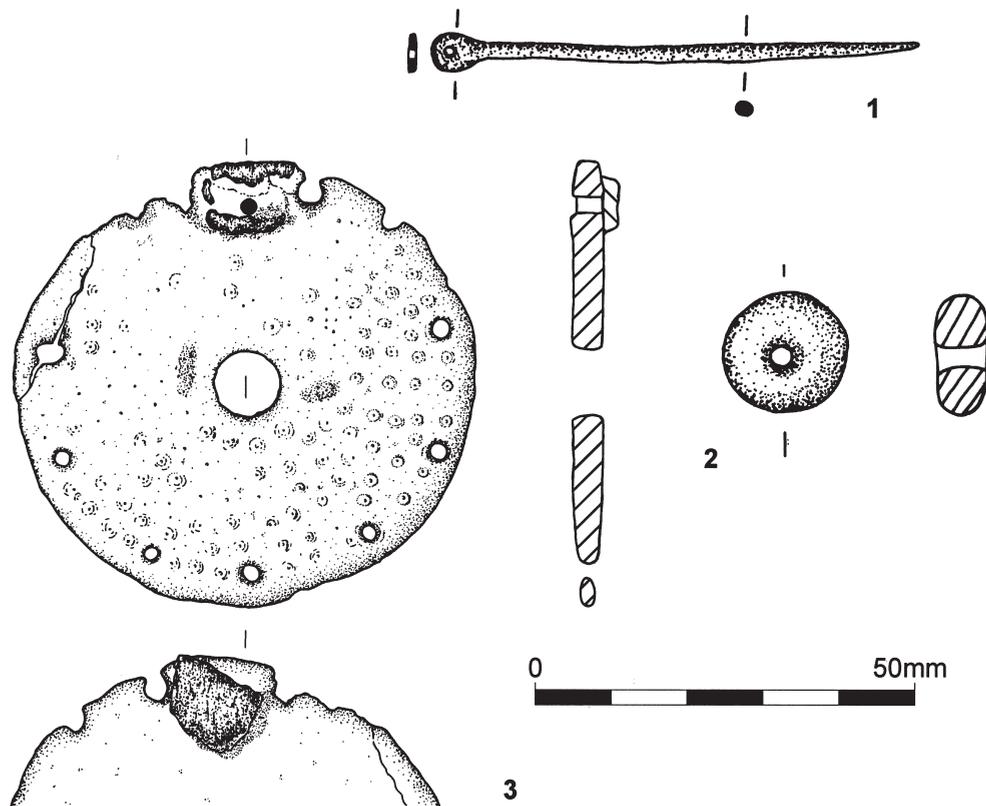


Fig 14 The Anglo-Saxon grave goods

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Dacre 1985, fig 64, grave 52,3), suggesting that it had been used to fasten a cloak or veil. A large number of pins from the burials at Castledyke South cemetery, Barton on Humber, were recovered from a similar area of the body and analysis indicated that they had been used to fasten clothing (Drinkall and Foreman 1998, 270). Four copper alloy pins with perforated heads were recovered from Buckland Cemetery, Dover (Evison 1987, 83). In some ways, these single perforated pins display similarities to the more ornate class of link-pins, pairs of pins connected by a fine chain, which were also in use during the seventh century (Geake 1997, 35-6).

The amber bead, 17mm diameter by 6mm thick, had probably been suspended from the neck on an organic thread (Fig 14, 2). Amber beads are particularly prevalent in graves of sixth century date, as demonstrated by the presence of 275 amber beads in burials of mid to late sixth century date at Buckland Cemetery, Dover (Evison 1987, 57). They are also known in small numbers in seventh century burials particularly those of children (Geake 1997, 35-36).

The discoid pendant had either been retained within a bag/pouch or was suspended from the waist; and the presence of part of an iron attachment loop may suggest the latter (Fig 14, 3). Similar examples from Burwell, Cambridgeshire were associated with chatelaines (Lethbridge 1931). The pendant has been manufactured from a transverse slice of antler burr, with all the protrusions removed to create a flat disc, 60mm diameter by 5mm thick. It is perforated through the centre and there are a series of smaller, near equidistant perforations around the periphery. The marginal perforation opposite to the suspension fitting is worn, suggesting that another item was suspended from it. As with other similar objects, both faces are heavily ornamented with ring-and-dot motifs. On one side they are readily visible, but worn, and appear to have been set out in six roughly concentric rings, while on the other face only a small number of dots survive, indicating that object had a long period of use. A folded ferrous metal strip has been fastened to the edge of the disc by means of an iron rivet. This most probably would have acted as a loop for suspension, and may have been a repair once some of the marginal perforations had worn through.

Such objects are not uncommon, they usually associated with female burials, and it is thought that may have been amulets. A similar but tear-shaped example was recovered from the left hip of a female burial at Oundle, Northamptonshire (Maull and Masters this volume). In his discussion on similar objects, MacGregor (1985, 107) notes that examples have been recorded in Cambridgeshire at the Barrington Cemetery (Foster 1884) and at Burwell (Lethbridge 1931). Larger more crudely fashioned rings have been recovered from cemeteries at Thurmaston, Leicestershire (Williams 1983, fig 28, 56) and Spong Hill (Hills 1977, fig 136).

The iron, whittle tang knife (not illustrated) was lying on the right side of the burial close to the waist, suggesting that it had been suspended from the waist, probably in the leather sheath. Part of the blade, which was 12mm wide by 4mm thick, and the tang were missing, and faint traces of organic remains survived on the blade (David Parish, Conservator, pers comm).

#### THE MEDIEVAL FIELD SYSTEM

There were well-preserved earthworks of the medieval ridge and furrow field system surrounding the villa. A general survey of the field system and the arrangement of the ridge and furrow was

compiled by David Hall (1976). This shows a junction of N-S and W-E headlands lying at approximately the location of the villa. Unfortunately, by the time the presence of the villa had been recognised much damage had been done to these earthworks, so it was not possible to produce a more detailed survey in the area of the villa. However, the surviving areas to the immediate west and east were both sketch plotted and plotted from the geophysical survey results.

To the west of the villa the furrows were aligned N-S. They were also aligned N-S to the east, but here there was a headland to the north against an adjoining system of E-W aligned furrows. The western end of this headland had been lost, but it clearly lay within the northern part of the villa precinct. It was also noted by Dennis Jackson that in the area of the villa itself there was an extensive area of level ground, and this was later still evident in the undisturbed area to the immediate west of the exposed villa building.

There was therefore a roughly square area devoid of ridge and furrow earthworks located over the villa and at the junction of two former field systems. This implies that the medieval field system had respected the presence of the villa and that the area had not been subject to ploughing. One possibility is that at the formation of the field system the villa still survived, at least partially, as an upstanding ruin. If so, then much of the evident extensive robbing of the walls may have occurred during the medieval period, with the stone probably going to the houses and farms of the present village and parish. This would also explain why a major ditch to the west of the villa, which appeared to be part of the Roman water supply system to a northern bath house, had apparently survived as a shallow earthwork until relatively recently.

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