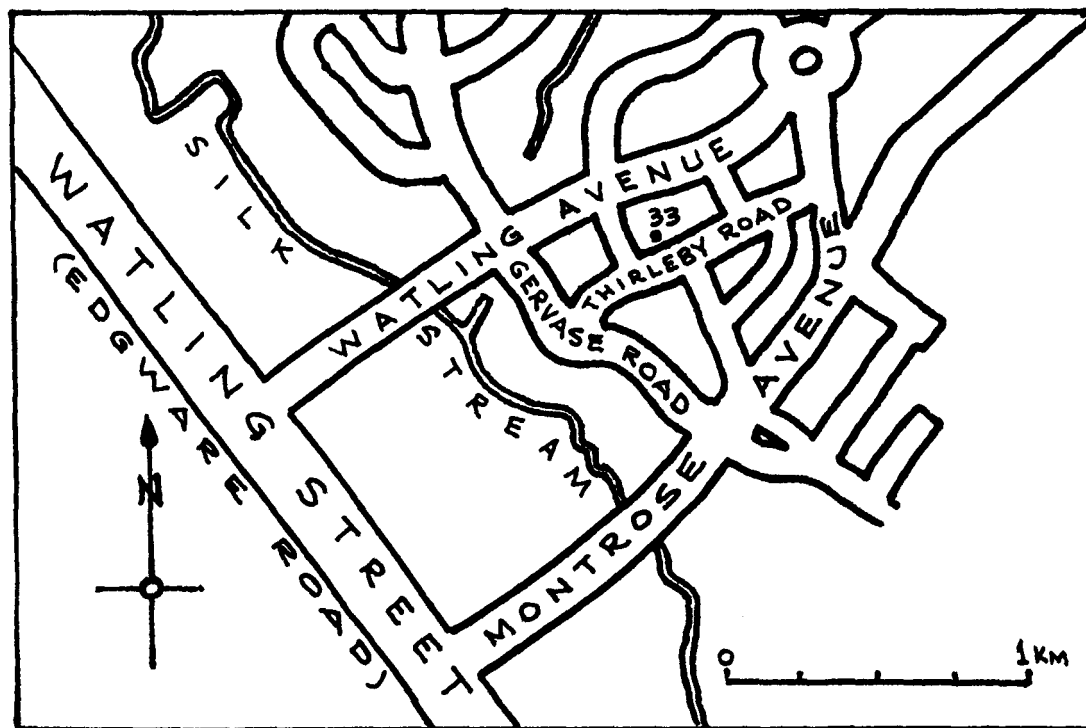


ROMAN POTTERY FROM THIRLEBY ROAD, BURNT OAK, EDGWARE

REPORTED BY
THE HENDON & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

In 1970 the tenant of No. 33 Thirleby Road (TQ 2059 9080), on the GLC Watling Estate at Edgware, dug two parallel trenches for a car run-in from his front gate to his garage door. These were just under a metre apart and each about 250mm deep, 300mm wide and 15m long. In the spoil from these trenches he noticed part of an unusual vessel. This he brought along with some other sherds to the Hendon & District Archaeological Society for identification.



The sketch-map, drawn by William Morris, shows the relationship of the site to the line of the modern A5 road, believed to lie on or very close to the original line of Watling Street.

The large fragment was the rim, neck and handle of a single-handled grey coarseware flagon, dated to the late 3rd/early 4th century.¹ The rim was undercut; the top of the handle was pushed close up beneath the rim, with the mark of the potter's thumb showing; there were some faint dark grey vertical striations on the neck; traces of white paint on both rim and double-grooved handle; and a deep groove running round the neck just above the base of the handle. The fabric was hard, harsh to touch and similar to fabrics used in kitchen vessels from the Alice Holt/Farnham area.² Half a dozen of the other sherds were also Roman.

The following year the tenant of No. 33 allowed the Hendon & District Archaeological Society to excavate the central strip of the car run-in; and later in 1971 he permitted two trenches, each 2.5m by 1.25m, to be cut in his front lawn, which was separated from the run-in by a flower bed 1.5m wide.

As a result of these two very small excavations (covering an area of only 18 sq. m in all) a modern trench running right across the site east-west was identified; two pits, possibly Roman, were found, one underlying a disturbed layer filled with much modern building material, and both containing a silty grey fill with fragments of Roman pottery. One of the pits, in the car run-in, was probably only the base of a pit, the top of which had already been cut away; at full depth it was only 300mm below modern ground surface. The other pit began 450mm below modern surface and went to a depth of one metre. An area which may have been part of a pit or gully was also found; it contained a similar grey silty fill with pottery, but because of the limits of the excavation its area could not be defined.

The pit in the run-in produced, at 50mm below modern ground surface, a small bronze coin in a frail condition, which has been identified as a barbarous radiate dating to A.D. 270-300.

In all, 52 sherds of Roman pottery were found, 19 of them unstratified and the remainder uncovered in the grey pit-fill. The fragments included 4 flanged rims; two body sherds from a thick grey storage jar; part of a redware base and part of a redware lid, both with traces of applied red slip; a number of greyware dish and jar rims, several undercut and some with white paint; some colour-coated fragments, one with rouletting; part of a black burnished indented beaker, cross-hatched in white; and a body sherd of a pipe-clay mortarium with dark grits. Almost all the sherds were heavily abraded, and all could have fallen within the date range of late 3rd/early 4th century.

Thirleby Road runs east-west just over a kilometre from the north-south line of Roman Watling Street (now the A5) at Burnt Oak. The house in the garden of which the pottery was found is situated below the brow of a small hill or knoll. It seems possible that a Roman building may once have crowned this hill (now completely built over) and that the rubbish from it was deposited in pits lower down the slope.³

NOTES

1. Mr. Norman Cook kindly looked at the material on two occasions and expressed an opinion on the date.
2. Cf R. Blurton 'Excavations at Angel Court, Walbrook, 1974' *Trans. Lon. Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 28 (1977) Fig. 8 No. 204. The parallel is not

exact, as the Walbrook rim is not undercut.

3. HADAS would like to acknowledge with thanks the helpful co-operation of the tenants of 33 Thirleby Road, Mr. and Mrs. John Whiston.
4. The finds are lodged with the Hendon & District Archaeological Society.