

# EXCAVATIONS AT CANON'S CORNER, BARNET, MIDDLESEX

Alex Smith

*With contributions by Leigh Allen, Edward Biddulph, Paul Booth, Bethan Charles, Kate Cramp, Ruth Pelling, Sue Pringle and Ruth Shaffrey*

## SUMMARY

*Excavation of a small area at the base of Brockley Hill revealed a section of Watling Street Roman road and its eastern roadside ditch, together with a series of associated ditches, gullies, and postholes. Some of these ditches may have served as drainage channels, while others are more enigmatic and could represent enclosure boundaries. Finds indicate activity of a non-domestic nature, commencing in the later part of the 2nd century AD, when the pottery industry on the upper slopes of Brockley Hill had largely ceased. Most of the pottery was probably dumped at Canon's Corner from other sites during the later Roman period. The location of the road section to the east of the modern A5 suggests that it swung over from the west towards the bottom of the hill, although it is quite possible that this part represents a widening of the road in the 3rd to 4th century AD.*

## INTRODUCTION

In March 2001, Oxford Archaeology (then Oxford Archaeological Unit, OAU) were appointed by the National Grid Company plc to excavate an area of approximately 940 sq.m, prior to the sinking of a shaft and construction of a head house and access road. The site was in a field to the north of Canon's Corner roundabout (NGR TQ 1830 9290), adjacent to Watling Street Roman road (the modern A5), and near to excavations carried out by Wessex Archaeology (WA) in 1997 (Fig 1).

The brief was to investigate, characterise and record any archaeological evidence which would be destroyed by the development. In particular,

it was proposed to investigate any roadside ditches or other features and deposits relating to Watling Street, and to clarify the nature of the Roman road and possibly its subsequent development as a major route. It was also the intention to look at evidence for the Roman site of *Sulloniacae* or possible roadside ribbon development associated with the settlement.

## GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The area of excavation lies towards the base of Brockley Hill. The ground falls very gently from south-west to north-east, with an average level between 75 and 80m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is London Clay, with low permeability ensuring rapid flooding in certain conditions.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Archaeological investigations have been carried out on numerous occasions along the line of the A5 road running up Brockley Hill (Fig 2). The principal objectives of most of these excavations were to locate and investigate the Roman settlement of *Sulloniacae*, mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary as being 12 miles from London and 9 miles from Verulamium, and to locate the exact course of the Watling Street Roman road. Despite the intensity of archaeological investigation, these two objectives are far from being completely resolved, although important evidence

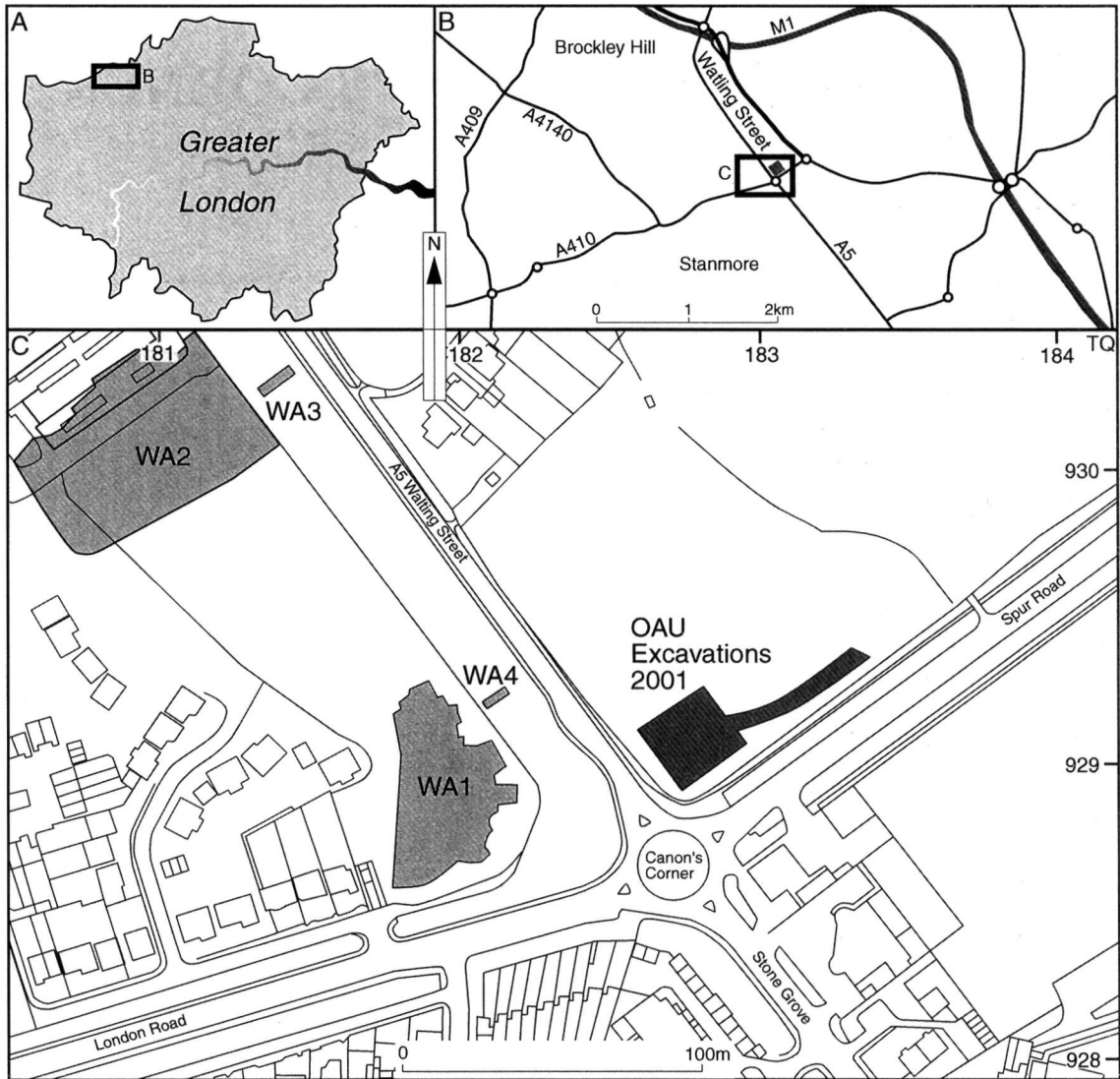


Fig 1. Site location showing OAU excavation in relation to previous Wessex Archaeology excavations

for the nationally important Verulamium region pottery industry (later 1st to mid 2nd century AD) has been gained, with many kiln sites being discovered on the upper slopes of Brockley Hill (Castle 1976; Tyers 1998; Fig 2, Areas 1–3). Roman Watling Street has been traced for much of its length, lying on the western side of the modern A5, a line confirmed by excavations in 1995 (Bowsher 1995; Fig 2, Area 5). However, there is still some dispute as to the line of the road towards the base of Brockley Hill, where the 2001 OAU excavation lay (see discussion below). Other archaeological features in the area include

two late 1st- to early 2nd-century cremation burials north of Piper's Green Lane found in 1954 (Suggett 1958; Fig 2, Area 4), and a linear earthwork running through Pear Wood called Grims Ditch (SAM 120), thought to have been a possible 5th-century territorial boundary between the sub-Roman populations of London and Verulamium (Castle 1975, 275). Much closer to the Canon's Corner site were excavations carried out by Wessex Archaeology in 1997 (McKinley 1998; Figs 1–2, Area 6), which revealed a series of ponds, along with spreads of dumped masonry and ceramic material. It was suggested as a

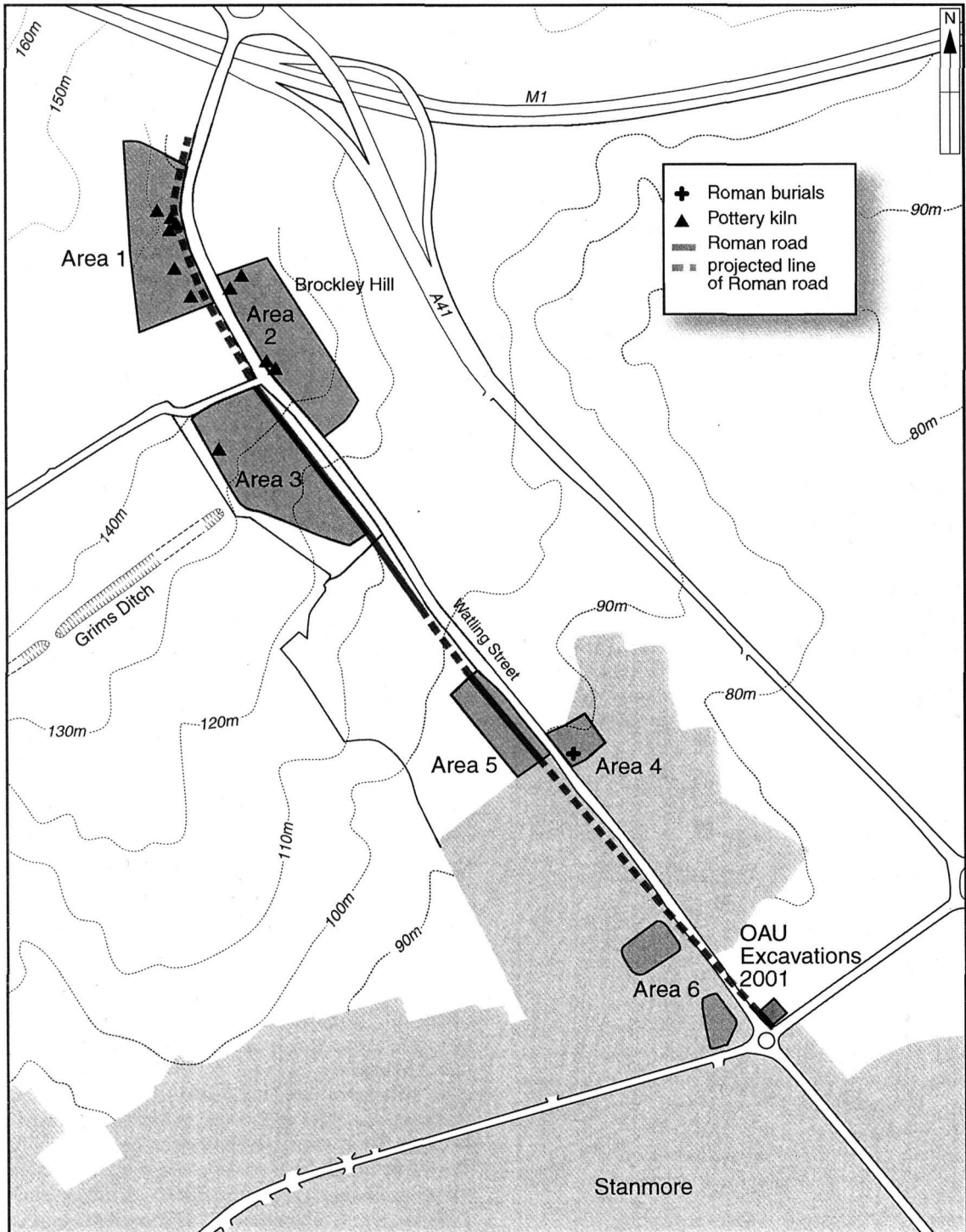


Fig 2. Main areas of excavation and principal archaeological features along the route of Watling Street at Brockley Hill (after McKinley 1998, Fig 2, with additions)

possible Roman industrial site and rest station on the west side of Watling Street, although the features were somewhat enigmatic.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

The principal archaeological features of the Canon's Corner excavation are described below and are marked on Fig 3. The area was machined down under supervision to the significant archaeological horizon, and, after cleaning by hand, sections were cut through the archaeological features in order to determine their nature. This was made difficult by heavy rain and large volumes of standing water, which caused

problems for machining and identification of finds and features. The southern part of the site, which contained the section of Watling Street Roman road, was particularly badly affected, with the result that some sections could not be fully excavated. In addition to the area shown on Fig 2, a strip along the access road was excavated (Fig 1), but revealed no archaeological features as it was covered by standing water.

### Roman

*Watling Street ditch [29, 34 and 39] (Figs 3-4)*

The Watling Street ditch (Sections 5-7), which lay approximately 1m east of the roadway, was

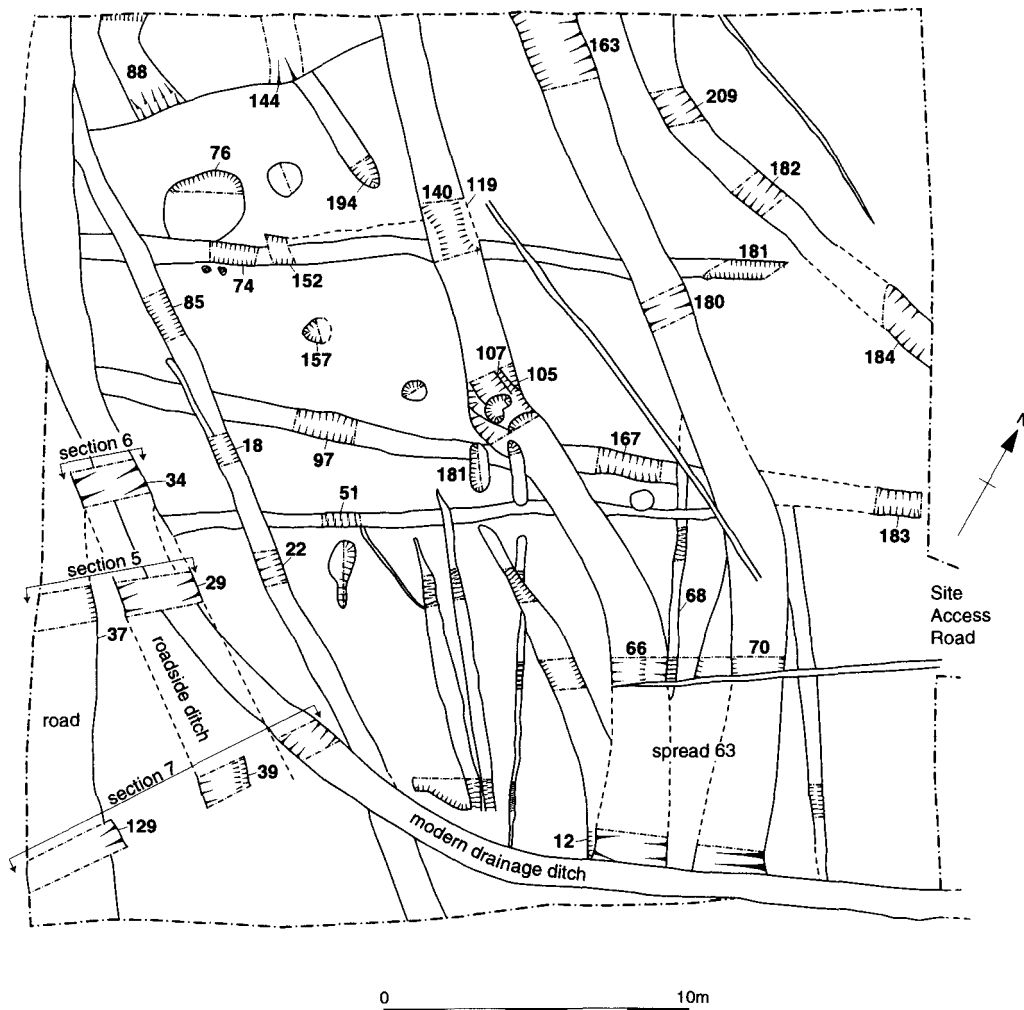


Fig 3. Plan of excavated area showing main features

excavated in three sections. The V-shaped northern ditch section (Section 6) had steep sides and a primary deposit of water-borne clay [33] which was devoid of finds. The main fill of this section [32] derived from a gradual build-up of water action and contained very abraded pottery and tile. The pottery dated mostly from the early 3rd to mid/late 4th century AD.

Approximately 5m further to the south, Section 5 showed the ditch to be more irregular in profile, although the width was difficult to ascertain accurately due to similarity between fill [28] and the colluvial subsoil. None of the fills contained any finds.

The southernmost ditch section (7) had a U-shaped base with a sloping side to the south-west and a shallow stepped side to the north-east. This side may have been recut at some point, although no truncation of earlier fills was observed. A deposit [40] on the north-eastern side contained large quantities of tile but no pottery, and was thought to have been trampled or re-deposited clay associated with the use of the road and associated ditch. The subsequent silting of the ditch [41-3] derived mainly from the north-east side, and contained Roman pottery which was not closely datable. All of these fills were stratigraphically later than Layer [62], which is seen as the final construction layer for the road surface (see below).

All three sections of the roadside ditch were truncated by a modern drainage ditch [126, 31, 27].

#### *Watling Street road [129, 37] (Figs 3-4)*

Two sections of a road presumed to be Watling Street were excavated, although both ran into the south-west baulk, so the full width of the road could not be recorded. Additionally, it was not possible to fully excavate Section 5 as it was largely underwater, consequently the complete profile is unknown. A layer of compacted flint gravel [36] in this section was excavated to a depth of 4cm before the water table was reached. The metalling lay within a cut feature [37], so as to be sunken below surface level, and it may well have been a construction layer rather than the actual road surface, as otherwise it would have become waterlogged very easily. The subsequent layer of silty clay mixed with tile and pottery [35] was quite substantial in depth (40cm), and there was no indication of any further gravel

layers in this section. This upper layer contained mixed pottery of late 2nd- to late 4th-century date.

In the southern section (Section 7) there was clearer evidence for the sequence of road construction. The initial make-up consisted of re-deposited natural clay [124] contained within a cut [129], full of Roman tile, but no pottery. The subsequent layer [123], which comprised compacted flint gravel, was heavily truncated and existed in pockets, compressed into the clay layer beneath. It is possible that this was the initial road surface, although it would have been of very poor quality for such a major road, and it is perhaps more likely to have been a construction layer, as suggested for Context [36]. This was succeeded by a silty clay layer [62, 128] which may have acted as the final make-up for the probable road surface [122], comprising compacted and worn metalling. Thus a low bank (agger) would have been created, with water draining off into the side ditch. The central part of the road seems to have been infilled [121] with silty sand and resurfaced with compacted gravel [61] at a later date. This was probably a localised repair caused by wear, and the metalling contained pottery of late 3rd- to late 4th-century date. The general sequence of gravel and clay/silt layers is similar to a section of Watling Street examined by Bowsler (1995, 48-50, fig 6b), c.0.6km to the north-west.

#### *Chronology of road and ditch*

The quantity of diagnostic pottery from the possible Watling Street road and ditch was minimal, but, aside from a few sherds of mid 1st- to mid 2nd-century date in a disturbed upper surface spread [60], most of it dated from the late 2nd to mid/late 4th century AD. It is possible that the road and ditch were kept relatively clear until the later 2nd century, after which material was re-deposited there from other areas. Alternatively, this section of the road may have been part of a road widening development which occurred in the later Roman period (see discussion below). At some point in the 4th century, it appears that the road was re-metalled in places, probably as localised repairs.

#### *Associated Roman features*

The area to the east of the Watling Street ditch contained a succession of ditches, gullies and

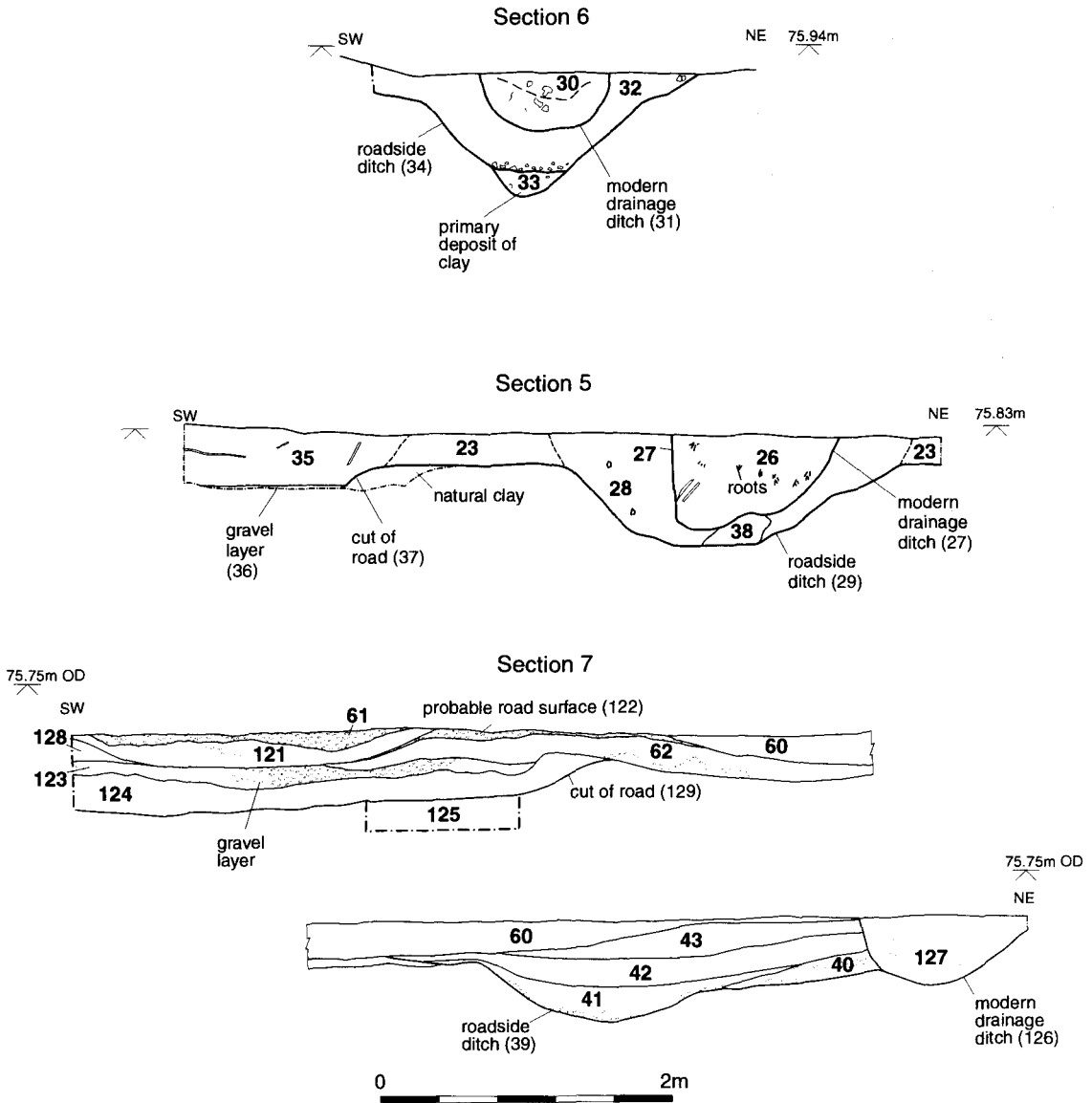


Fig 4. Sections 5-7: Watling Street road and eastern ditch

postholes, many of which contained Roman tile and pottery indicating activity from the 1st to 4th century AD, with a distinct emphasis on the later Roman period. Much of the pottery was very worn with only a broad date range, making it difficult to assign precise chronological sequences for the features. This was further complicated by the disturbed nature of much of the stratigraphy.

Among the earliest stratigraphic features were two shallow ditches or gullies running approxi-

mately east-west from the eastern roadside ditch. The southernmost ditch/gully [97, 167, 183] was covered by Roman plough soil at its eastern end, and contained mid to late 1st-century AD pottery in its disturbed upper fill [188]. To the north, the other ditch/gully [74, 181] cut plough soil containing mid 1st- to mid 2nd-century pottery, while a possible recut of this feature [152] cut an occupation layer [153] containing pottery no earlier than mid 2nd-century AD. Both of these gullies were cut by two north-south linear

features containing pottery primarily of 2nd- to 4th-century date. The westernmost [140/119, 107/105, 66] was a substantial irregular ditch, which appears to have contained a possible palisade in one section [107], and was recut, probably in the 3rd/4th century. The eastern linear feature [163, 180, 70] contained layers of compacted gravel, suggesting a possible trackway, although most of it appears quite narrow (*c.* 1.7m wide). In the southern part of the site, the linear features were obscured by a spread of re-deposited material [63] containing Roman and medieval pottery (see Post-Roman activity, below). The spread was difficult to distinguish from the fills of features beneath, although a sondage was cut through to help determine the nature of this area. It appeared that the linear features ran into, or were cut by, a hollow [12], probably man-made, containing concentrated gravel deposits, Roman tile and Roman and medieval pottery.

A further ditch in the north-east of the site [209, 182, 184] contained a small amount of 2nd- to 4th-century pottery. The easternmost section [184] was devoid of finds and only partly visible. Another ditch to the west [85, 18, 22] was dated on ceramic grounds to the 3rd to 4th century AD, while part of a very substantial ditch [88, 144], over 5m in width and 0.6m in depth, was found running SW-NE across the northernmost part of site. Most pottery from this feature was late 2nd- to 4th-century in date, with a preponderance of later material.

The only features aside from ditches and gullies were six possible postholes in the northern part of the site, in no recognisable pattern. The two that produced dating evidence indicated a 1st- to 2nd-century date.

### Post-Roman activity

Aside from the modern drainage ditch running in an arc from the north-east to south-west, there are no features of demonstrable post-Roman date, although a small amount of medieval (12th- to 14th-century) pottery and a 12th-century horseshoe suggest some further activity at the site. This material is concentrated in the south, primarily in spread [63] and the fill of the features beneath. It is possible that the recutting of this area is medieval in date, although the material is too disturbed and features too unclear to have any great level of confidence.

## FINDS

### Metal artefacts

*Leigh Allen, with identification of the Roman coins by Paul Booth*

A small assemblage comprising three copper-alloy and three iron objects was recovered from the excavations; all the objects are in very poor condition. The copper-alloy finds consist of two coins and a possible stylus. SF 5 from the upper fill [147] of ditch cut [163] is a corroded fragment from a coin, possibly an *as* originally at least *c.* 28mm in diameter. The letter C (of 'SC' in the field) is visible on the reverse. The coin is possibly 2nd-century in date. The second coin (SF 4), from a possible tree throw [92], is very corroded, with a diameter of *c.* 13mm. It is almost completely illegible and is late 3rd- or 4th-century in date. The third copper-alloy object (SF 1), which came from a dark spread across the eastern corner of site [13], is a very corroded slender strip of copper, circular in cross section and tapering to a point at either end; both ends are very corroded and this need not be the original shape of the object. At the centre where the object is better preserved there is a decorated section with fine criss-crossing grooves and raised ridges running around the strip. It is possible that this decorated surface originally extended along the full length of the strip.

The three iron objects consist of a horseshoe arm, a nail shank and a miscellaneous curved fragment. The horseshoe arm (SF 3) came from a disturbed layer between the Watling Street road and ditch [62], and has a lobate profile and three lozenge-shaped nail holes. This type of shoe is hardly known before the Norman Conquest but is common thereafter; it is predominant throughout the 12th century and is replaced by a heavier more developed type of shoe in the 13th century (Clark 1995, 96). The date is therefore consistent with the medieval pottery found at the site. The nail shank was recovered from the modern drainage ditch [26] and the curved fragment (SF2) from the subsoil.

### Flint

*Kate Cramp*

The excavation produced a total of 95 struck flints within eight individual contexts. A further

160 pieces of burnt unworked flint, weighing 20g, were recovered from the site.

No potential *in situ* assemblages were noted, and no diagnostic tool-types were recovered. Rather than an artefact, the scraper from Context [63] probably represents a piece of thermally-fractured flint that has been subjected to a small amount of modern mechanical damage. The flakes, from Contexts [120 and 191], are generally in a poor condition and may represent naturally-struck pieces.

Relatively large quantities of spalls were recovered from the site, a number of which were in fresh condition and may have derived from the same nodule. The fill [120] of recut ditch [140] in particular produced a total of 50 spalls of a similar iron-stained, translucent gravel flint. It is conceivable that the spalls represent genuine micro-débitage, deposited in the course of knapping activity. However, given the paucity of associated flint work such as flakes and cores, it is more likely that the majority of the spalls are the result of modern plough or trowel damage.

Together with the questionable authenticity of the individual artefacts, the limited size of the assemblage implies that prehistoric activity at the site was negligible.

## Roman pottery

*Edward Biddulph*

A total of 178 sherds of Roman pottery weighing 1,482g was recovered from the excavation. Its condition was generally poor; most sherds were small and abraded. Few forms could be identified, while some sherds were assigned to sources with only marginal confidence.

Fabrics were identified using the MoLAS series of common names and codes. Descriptions of these are provided by Symonds and Tomber (1994). Most of the imported and Romano-British traded wares are described in greater detail by Tomber and Dore (1998). Form typology follows Marsh and Tyers (1978, 546–82).

The pottery derived from a limited number of sources. The largest single fabric group, sand-tempered grey wares (SAND), accounts for 39% of the assemblage by weight. Most of it is likely to have originated locally. Verulamium region and Nene Valley wares both account for 12% of the assemblage. Oxfordshire products seem to have been of lesser importance, although a range of

fabrics is represented. Products from the Hadham region are poorly represented; reduced wares are entirely absent and the oxidised fabric (MHAD) makes little more than a token contribution. However, that it is present at all reflects a general predilection for oxidised wares, which make up the bulk of the assemblage. A sherd of a South Gaulish form 30 or 37 samian bowl, probably manufactured at La Graufesenque, is the sole piece of definitely imported pottery. Like the rest of the pottery, its surfaces are very worn, though traces of moulded decoration are visible.

Inevitably, jars were the commonest vessel class. These included storage jar (2V) and everted-rimmed cooking pot (2F) fragments. Mortaria, mainly from Oxfordshire, with the remainder from the Nene Valley and Hadham regions, were unusually well represented, contributing over 10% of the assemblage by weight. At London, mortaria tend to account for less than 5% of any assemblage (*eg* Symonds and Tomber 1994, tables 1–5). Bowls were more numerous than dishes; the former included a reed-rimmed bowl (4A1) from Verulamium and a Nene Valley bead-and-flanged bowl (4MX). Drinking-related vessels are limited to three probable beakers and two flagon handle sherds, one of which was in Verulamium region white ware. Of intrinsic interest was a black-burnished style dish base with a small 'X' graffito scored after firing on its exterior surface; its significance is unknown; marks of ownership or contents are among the more reasonable explanations.

The bulk of the assemblage dates from the second half of the 2nd century onwards. It contrasts with the assemblage recovered from the WA excavations to the west of Watling Street (Seager Smith 1998, 51–6), which contained a greater proportion of 1st- and early 2nd-century pottery, particularly Verulamium region white ware, grog-tempered ware, and South Gaulish samian. The absence of recognisable early to mid 3rd-century pottery argues for a reduction or break in activity during this time, although, given the size of the assemblage, this lacuna is perhaps unsurprising. The supply of non-local wares, such as those from the Nene Valley and Oxfordshire, increased from the late 3rd century. How late settlement activity continued is uncertain. The limited range of late Roman fabrics (chiefly OXRC and CALC) hints at a date terminating around the mid 4th century, although the presence of Portchester D ware west of Watling Street (Seager Smith 1998, table 1) is



Table 1. Roman pottery fabrics by sherd number and weight

Fabric	Sherds	Weight (g)
South Gaulish samian ware (SAMLG)	1	6
?Colchester colour-coated ware (COLCC)	1	2
Much Hadham oxidised ware (MHAD)	2	24
Nene Valley colour-coated ware (NVCC)	13	90
Oxfordshire red colour-coated ware (OXRC)	8	44
Black-burnished-style ware (BBS)	10	118
Miscellaneous sand-tempered wares (SAND)	75	584
Late Roman 'calcite-tempered' wares (CALC)	1	10
Grog-tempered wares (GROG)	3	28
Miscellaneous shell-tempered wares (SHEL)	4	24
Nene Valley white ware (NVWW)	2	104
Miscellaneous oxidised wares (OXID)	28	170
Miscellaneous fine oxidised wares (OXIDF)	4	12
Oxfordshire white-slipped red ware (OXWS)	3	12
Oxfordshire white ware (OXWW)	5	72
?Verulamium region coarse white-slipped ware (VCWS)	2	10
Verulamium region white ware (VRW)	16	172
<b>Total:</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>1482</b>

likely to push this date further into the second half of the century.

The assemblage is typical of that recovered from linear, surface and structural features, in that sherds are small and worn. Half of the pottery derived from ditches and gullies. Much of it was recovered from single or upper fills. The lower fills from two ditches [39 and 144] yielded pottery, although these contained just six and seven sherds respectively. While the absence of imported pottery and reliance on local producers, at least until the late 3rd century, suggest a low-status settlement, the pottery assemblage and the features from which it derives may properly reflect the peripheral nature of the excavated area. Unlike low-status sites such as Harefield Road, Uxbridge (Booth 1995, 19), which almost exclusively yielded locally-produced wares, wider trade links were evident at Canon's Corner. In addition, clearly residual pottery, such as the sherds of VRW in ditch [17], gully [52] and surface [61], had a similar mean sherd weight to the later, contemporary, pottery, suggesting that all the pottery in these contexts derived from the same source prior to final deposition. The conclusion that the pottery became incorporated into features away from the main focus of settlement through re-deposition and dumping episodes seems inescapable. Interestingly, a similar view is expressed by Seager Smith (1998, 56) with regard to the pottery from the west side of Watling Street.

## Medieval and post-medieval pottery

### *Edward Biddulph*

Ten sherds of South Hertfordshire grey ware/Limpsfield ware (SHER), weighing 103g, were recovered from the site. This sand- and flint-tempered fabric is dated c.1150–1300. Four vessels, comprising a flange-rimmed bowl and three square-rimmed cooking jars, were represented. The medieval pottery was in noticeably better condition than the Roman wares, suggesting that the focus of its use was closer to the point of final deposition or that it was subjected to fewer episodes of disturbance. The distribution of this pottery was largely restricted to the south-east corner of the site within homogeneous deposits (in and around [63]). Two sherds of post-medieval porcelain were recovered from the topsoil [14]. Both sherds appear to form part of a flat handle attached to a porringer.

## Worked stone

### *Ruth Shaffrey*

Three items of worked stone were found during the Canon's Corner excavation (Table 2). The piece of Millstone Grit is clearly a quern fragment, despite having no edges. Such an item could have been easily transported from a

Table 2. Worked stone

Context	Lithology	Interpretation	Description
26 (fill of modern ditch 27)	Chalk	Possibly used in building or in a floor	Large chunk with one smooth side suggesting use of some kind
90 (fill of ditch 88)	Fine-grained sandstone	Possible mortar rim	Curved rim, probably belonging to a mortar. Measures 82 × 38 × 20mm. From an artefact with a diameter of less than 35cm
169 (backfill of ditch 167)	Medium-grained Millstone Grit	Possible quern fragment	One very smooth flat surface, and, opposite, a slightly worn surface. No edges. Measured 70 × 52 × 28mm

probable source in Derbyshire via Watling Street and is therefore not a surprising find for a roadside location. The sandstone fragment was probably a mortar rim, and was associated with pottery of 4th-century date. Finally, the large chalk fragment was certainly utilised, but it is not clear for what purpose it was intended. Possibly it had some structural use such as part of a floor, as one side is very worn.

### Ceramic building material

*Leigh Allen, with fabric identifications by Sue Pringle*

A total of 388 fragments of ceramic building material weighing 25,913g was recovered from the excavation. The fragments were in poor condition with a large number of small and heavily abraded fragments. No examples of intact tiles were recovered and no complete width or length dimensions were recorded. Only a very few fragments were identifiable to a definite form, and the majority were plain with no distinguishing features. Eight fabric types were recognised, and have been compared with the MoLSS fabric series.

#### Forms

In total there were only 45 fragments identifiable to a specific form of tile: *tegula*, *imbrex*, box-flue, or brick. 17 fragments (2,401g) were identified as coming from *tegulae*. They either had part of the flange attached or evidence of the finger groove at the base of the flange. The thickness of these fragments lay in the range 17–26mm with most of the fragments measuring between 23 and 26mm. The flange heights measured 35–57mm. The

predominant fabric was Fabric 3. Only three fragments (275g) were identified as coming from *imbrices*, the curved tiles that cover the flanges of the *tegulae*. The thickness of the fragments lay in the range 11–16mm. The predominant fabric was Fabric 3.

There were 11 fragments (903g) identified as coming from box-flue tiles. They all had incised combing marks on the upper surface: this acts as a key for plaster. The thickness of the fragments lay in the range 11–21mm with the majority of the fragments at the lower end of the range. Fabrics 3 and 7 were predominant. 14 fragments (2,803g) came from large floor tiles or bricks (fragments with a thickness greater than 39mm).

The remaining fragments are grouped together either as flat tiles, if they have a measurable thickness, or miscellaneous, if they are irregularly shaped with no complete dimensions. There were 99 fragments (12,039g) assigned to the category of flat tile. These could be fragments from any of the above mentioned types or from one of the great variety of floor tiles used in the Roman period. There are no complete dimensions other than thickness to indicate what forms these may have been. A large proportion of the assemblage (7,492g) comprised 244 small abraded fragments with no measurable dimensions. All fabric types were represented in this category.

#### Samples

Samples from eight different fabric types were submitted to MoLSS for identification (Table 3).

Most of the samples (2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10) fall into the 2815 group made from the red-firing London clays. The group is sub-divided into four categories according to the grade of quartz in

Table 3. *Tile fabric types*

Sample No.	Weight	% of total weight	Form	MoL Fabric No.	Comments
1	995g	3.8%	Brick	3023	
2	5502g	21.2%	?	2815 group	Variant with paler silty streaks
3	7963g	30.7%	?	2815 group (2452)	
4	3520g	13.6%	Brick	2815 group (3006)	
5	3110g	12%	Brick	2815 group (3006)	
6	1708g	6.6%	Brick	3060	
7	2676g	10.3%	Box tile	2815 group (3004)	
10	247g	0.95%	Brick	2815 group?	Over-fired and vitrified

the matrix and the coarseness of the inclusions; the three finer types can only be distinguished with macroscopic examination. The fabrics in this group commonly contain small amounts of white calcareous and dark red iron-rich material, and infrequently contain blocky clay inclusions or paler silty lumps and swirls. The date range for all except fabric 2459B is *c.*AD 50–160.

The main divisions of the 2815 group are as follows:

Fabric 2452. Clean looking matrix containing very fine quartz with very sparse coarser grains. Medium grade moulding sand.

Fabric 2459A. Very fine quartz and sparse inclusions of medium to very coarse quartz. This fabric has a granular look under the microscope. Medium grade moulding sand. A later version, 2459B, which first appears between *c.*AD 120 and 140 has a very fine moulding sand.

Fabric 3006. Very fine quartz and sparse inclusions of medium to very coarse quartz. Medium grade moulding sand (this is the commonest fabric type recovered from excavations carried out by MoL and is used as the standard against which to measure the variants).

Fabric 3004. Very fine quartz with frequent to common inclusions of medium to coarse quartz. Medium to coarse moulding sand.

Samples 1 and 6 are in a version of London clay which contains fine black iron oxides. Fabric 3023 is red with the fine black particles and cream-coloured rounded inclusions or streaks. Fabric 3060 is plain red with the same black inclusions. Both types have fine moulding sand, although a version with coarse sand is occasionally seen, usually from late Roman deposits. Both types match material from kilns at Radlett, Herts.

Other black-speckled clays occur in the London area, and it is possible that there were alternative kiln sites for some of this material, but Radlett is the most likely source of tile found at Canon's Corner. The date range is *c.*AD 50–120 for the Radlett production.

#### *Summary*

The tile assemblage is very fragmentary and abraded and there are no large pieces of any type of tile. The material seems to have been scattered fairly evenly across the site. The presence of roof, floor and box-flue tile fragments indicates a building in the vicinity but the paucity of readily identifiable fragments and the high level of abrasion implies that the pieces have probably been scattered a fair distance from their source. This scatter may be a result of field manuring or of use as hard core for the building of the road. Nearly 25% of the total weight of tile was recovered from the sections across Watling Street and the ditch that lay 1m to the east of the road. Nearly half of the identifiable fragments of *tegula* and box-flue tile came from Context [62], a make-up layer within the cut of Watling Street. Context [61], the latest metalling of the road, contained mostly fragments of plain flat tile. Nearly 90% of the assemblage is made from London clay and dates to the period *c.*AD 50–160 with the remaining 10% possibly being produced in Radlett, *c.*AD 50–120.

#### **Animal bone**

##### *Bethan Charles*

A total of three fragments of bone was recovered by hand from the site. Two were from the fill of

ditch [209] and another from posthole [157]. The bone was in very poor condition and was not identified to species. A further 32 fragments of bone were recovered from environmental samples, sieved through a mesh of > 10mm and 10-4mm. All were small fragments in very poor condition, and none could be identified to species. The majority of the sieved bone (25 fragments) came from posthole [157], associated with 2nd-century AD pottery, and included a very small fragment of burnt bone.

### Charred plant remains

*Ruth Pelling*

Ten bulk samples were taken for the extraction of charred plant remains from Roman period ditches lying alongside Watling Street. The samples were processed using a modified Siraf type machine and flots collected onto 250µm mesh sieves. No charred seeds or chaff were recovered from the flots, so it is unlikely that any cereal processing or food production type activities were taking place in the immediate vicinity. Occasional charcoal fragments were present, including *Quercus* sp (oak) and Pomoideae (apple/pear/hawthorn *etc*), possibly representing contemporary fuel use. Fragments of coal and numerous ants were present in the flots suggesting recent disturbance of the deposits had occurred, hence it is possible that the charcoal may be derived from later contamination.

### DISCUSSION

Excavations at Canon's Corner uncovered part of a substantial metalled road surface and an associated eastern ditch, which despite not being of the highest quality construction, must have been Roman Watling Street. The ditches, gullies and postholes to the east are more enigmatic, but chronologically and spatially clearly relate to the road and ditch. The amount of standing water in the trenches during the excavations suggests that some of the ditches may have served as run-off drainage channels, to keep the road from being flooded. A possible cut for a palisade within one section [107] of a linear ditch running parallel to Watling Street may represent part of an enclosure system, although the extent and nature of this remains unclear.

Other ditches – including the very substantial feature to the north-west [88, 144] – could have marked boundaries in and around the site.

The overall chronology of the excavated area, as indicated by the pottery, is quite similar to the WA sites, with the main phase of activity ranging from the later 2nd to mid/late 4th century AD. This was seemingly after the pottery kilns on the upper slopes of Brockley Hill had ceased production. The nature of this activity is uncertain, but the finds and environmental evidence do not indicate any domestic occupation and there is nothing to suggest any direct association with the settlement of *Sulloniacae*. Along with the WA sites, Canon's Corner may have been part of an unofficial rest stop alongside the road before it ran up Brockley Hill, although the character of the two sites is somewhat different. However, both excavations did reveal mixed spreads of Roman tile and pottery, probably dumped there from nearby settlements during the later Roman period (McKinley 1998, 65). The presence of non-local wares in the pottery assemblage suggests that the settlement(s) from which they derived had wider trade-links than would be normal for typical low-status rural sites, and it is certainly possible that at least some came from *Sulloniacae*.

### The line of Watling Street

The line of Watling Street Roman road in the area of Brockley Hill was initially thought to have been traced to the east of the modern A5 road (O'Neil 1951, 137–9; Margary 1973, 171). However, more recent excavations failed to find the road on this side, and instead found evidence to indicate that it ran slightly to the west of the modern road (Castle 1976, 207; Bowsher 1995; McKinley 1998), although Bowsher (1995, 54) did argue that it must have swung back to the east towards the base of the hill. This latter point was refuted by McKinley (1998, 63), who suggested that a ditch located in a small trench just to the west of the modern A5 – 200m to the north of Canon's Corner – was the western Watling Street roadside ditch. This interpretation was made on the basis of morphological comparison with Bowsher's roadside ditches, although the area was heavily truncated and no dating evidence was recovered (*ibid*, 50). The results of the OAU Canon's Corner excavations indicated that at least part of Watling Street lay

to the east of the modern A5 road, so Bowsher's argument that the road swung back to the east would seem to be correct (see Fig 2 for projected line of road). The deviation need not have been that substantial however, as recent work on Ermin Street in Gloucestershire has shown that in some places the road surface was widened significantly in the later Roman period, being up to 14m across (Mudd *et al* 1999, 267). If this was the case with Watling Street, then the section found in the south-west corner may have extended westwards under much of the modern road. The near-absence of 1st- early 2nd-century pottery from the road section and ditch in this area, together with the relatively poor quality of the road construction, does imply that this section may have been part of a road-widening development in the later Roman period.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavations and post-excavation programme were funded by the National Grid Company plc, and the work of their Consents Officer, Karen Brown, is acknowledged. Thanks go to the Development and Regeneration Division of the London Borough of Barnet, and to Robert Whytehead of English Heritage for advice and assistance during the course of the excavation. The project was managed by David Wilkinson, and directed on site by Andrew Norton. Thanks go to the site excavation staff who worked under adverse weather conditions. The illustrations were prepared by Sarah Lucas. The text was edited by Rachel Tyson.

The site archive has been deposited with the Museum of London.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BOOTH (1995), P Booth 'The Roman pottery' in A Barclay, A Boyle, P Bradley and M R Roberts 'Excavations at the former Jewsons Yard, Harefield Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 46, 19-20
- BOWSHER (1995), D Bowsher 'An evaluation of the Roman road at Brockley Hill, Middlesex' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 46, 45-57
- CASTLE (1972), S A Castle 'Brockley Hill, the site of *Sulloniacae*?' *London Archaeologist* vol 1 no. 14, 324-7
- CASTLE (1975), S A Castle 'Excavations in Pear Wood, Brockley Hill, Middlesex 1948-1973' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 26, 267-77
- CASTLE (1976), S A Castle 'Roman pottery from Brockley Hill, Middlesex, 1966 and 1972-4' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 27, 206-27
- CLARK (1995), J Clark 'Horseshoes' in J Clark (ed) *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London: 5 The Medieval Horse and its Equipment c.1150-c.1450*, 75-123
- MARGARY (1973), I Margary *Roman Roads in Britain* (3rd edn)
- MARSH & TYERS (1978), G Marsh & P Tyers 'The Roman pottery from Southwark' *Southwark Excavations 1972-74 vol II*
- MCKINLEY (1998), J I McKinley 'Excavations of a Romano-British roadside site at Brockley Hill, Stanmore, Middlesex, 1995-7' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 49, 31-66
- MUDD, WILLIAMS & LUPTON (1999), A Mudd, R J Williams & A Lupton *Excavations alongside Roman Ermin Street, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire: Volume 1: Prehistoric and Roman Activity*
- O'NEIL (1951), H E O'Neil 'Watling Street, Middlesex' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 10, 137-9
- SEAGER SMITH (1998), R Seager Smith 'Pottery' in J I McKinley 'Excavations of a Romano-British roadside site at Brockley Hill, Stanmore, Middlesex, 1995-7' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 49, 51-6
- SUGGETT (1958), P G Suggett 'The Moxom Collection (a Romano British pottery group from Brockley Hill)' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 21, 60-4
- SYMONDS & TOMBER (1994), R P Symonds & R S Tomber 'Late Roman London: an assessment of the ceramic evidence from the City of London' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 42, 59-99
- TOMBER & DORE (1998), R Tomber & J Dore *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: a Handbook*, MoLAS monograph 2
- TYERS (1998), P A Tyers 'Amphoras and the origins of the Brockley Hill Roman pottery industry' *London Archaeologist* vol 8 no. 11, 292-7