

AN EXCAVATION AT THE SIR JOHN ATKINS BUILDING, CAMPDEN HILL, ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

Timothy Bradley

With contributions by Mike Seagar Thomas, Berni Sudds, Barry Bishop and S P Toms

SUMMARY

An excavation at the Sir John Atkins Building, Campden Hill, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea revealed a concentrated area of prehistoric and later activity cut into river terrace gravels in the up-slope part of the site. This included a large sub-rectangular feature and associated postholes and pits dating to the Early Iron Age. These features were slightly later in date than the Late Bronze Age 'burnt mound' identified at The Phillimore's site immediately to the south, but both suggest a continuity of occupation from the Late Bronze Age into the Early Iron Age. The Late Iron Age was represented by pits, stakeholes and gullies, as well as a north-south orientated ditch. Two Roman ditches were identified along broadly the same alignment. A probable plough soil sealed these features, from which unabraded early Saxon pottery as well as earlier residual material was recovered. The post-medieval period was represented by a re-cut 18th-century field/plot boundary ditch and a large gravel extraction pit. A small pit also yielded a homemade musket-sized gunflint dateable to between the late 16th and 19th centuries.

INTRODUCTION

The site was located at the Sir John Atkins Building, Campden Hill, Kensington, London W8 (TQ 2510 7985), and covered approximately 0.95 hectares. It comprised a number of buildings dating from the 1950s and 1960s, densely packed around a central courtyard. The only open areas which remained were three car-parks to the north-east, north-west, and south, access

ramps to the east and west, and a small central yard space. There was also a significant slope downwards across the site of approximately 4m from Campden Hill to the north to Sheldrake Place to the south. The site was bounded by housing to the east and Holland Park School to the west (Fig 1).

Prior to fieldwork a specification was prepared (Norton 2002a) and an evaluation was carried out in April 2002 (Bradley 2002). No archaeological deposits were found in the north-east car-park, east ramp, south car-park or central courtyard, which contained only modern made ground and hill-wash gravels, with extensive truncation associated with the construction of the standing buildings. In the north-west corner of the site, however, the Campden Hill slope appeared to level out to form a natural gravel terrace or platform, upon which some early human activity had clearly taken place. Archaeological Test Pits 2 and 3 revealed a number of intercutting man-made features, some of which contained large quantities of burnt flint. Iron Age pottery was also found. The subsequent excavation trench was therefore located in the north-west car-park area of the site. The area of excavation measured 9.5m north-south by 22.5m east-west and incorporated the area of Test Pits 2 and 3 (Fig 2).

Of crucial importance in understanding the nature and longevity of human activity in this vicinity are the results of the archaeological investigations also undertaken by PCA for

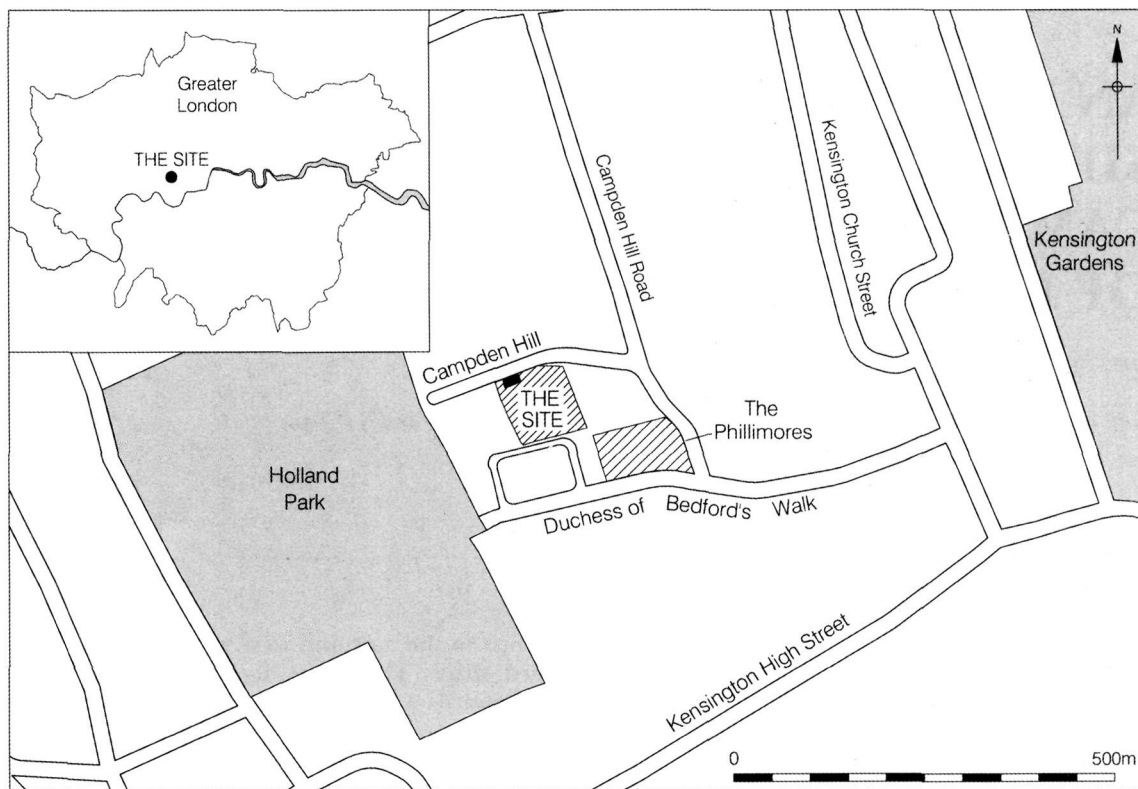


Fig 1. The site location

Phillimore Hill Limited in May 2001 at The Phillimores immediately to the south-east (Fig 1). While these have been reported elsewhere in detail (Moore *et al* forthcoming), the results are revisited here to show the findings of both sites in a wider context.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located on the southern side of Campden Hill, approximately 150m to the east of Holland Park. Due to the construction of the main building and its extensions, only the car-parks and the access ramp still reflected the natural slope of the hill at the time of excavation. The surface sloped down approximately 4m from north to south, at heights of between approximately 33m OD (north car-park) and 29m OD (south car-park). The underlying geology of the site is London Clay, overlain by superficial deposits of hill-wash clayey gravels

across the majority of the southern and eastern area. The latter appear to derive from the more substantial terrace identified to the north. This terrace is identified as Lynch Hill Gravel on Sheet 270 of the British Geological Survey, and was recorded at heights of between 32.25m OD and 31.87m OD.

Until very recently, little was known about the prehistory of the area. However, excavations immediately to the south-east of the site, at The Phillimores, have revealed prehistoric exploitation of a lower brickearth terrace which appears to be very similar in character to that recorded at the Sir John Atkins Building (Moore *et al* forthcoming). There, a number of stake- and postholes and cut features containing burnt flint and Late Bronze Age pottery have been interpreted as evidence of a 'burnt mound', several of which have recently been identified in the London region. Further evidence of prehistoric activity is scarce. Two early stone tools (Lewis 2000), two bronze weapons (Brown &

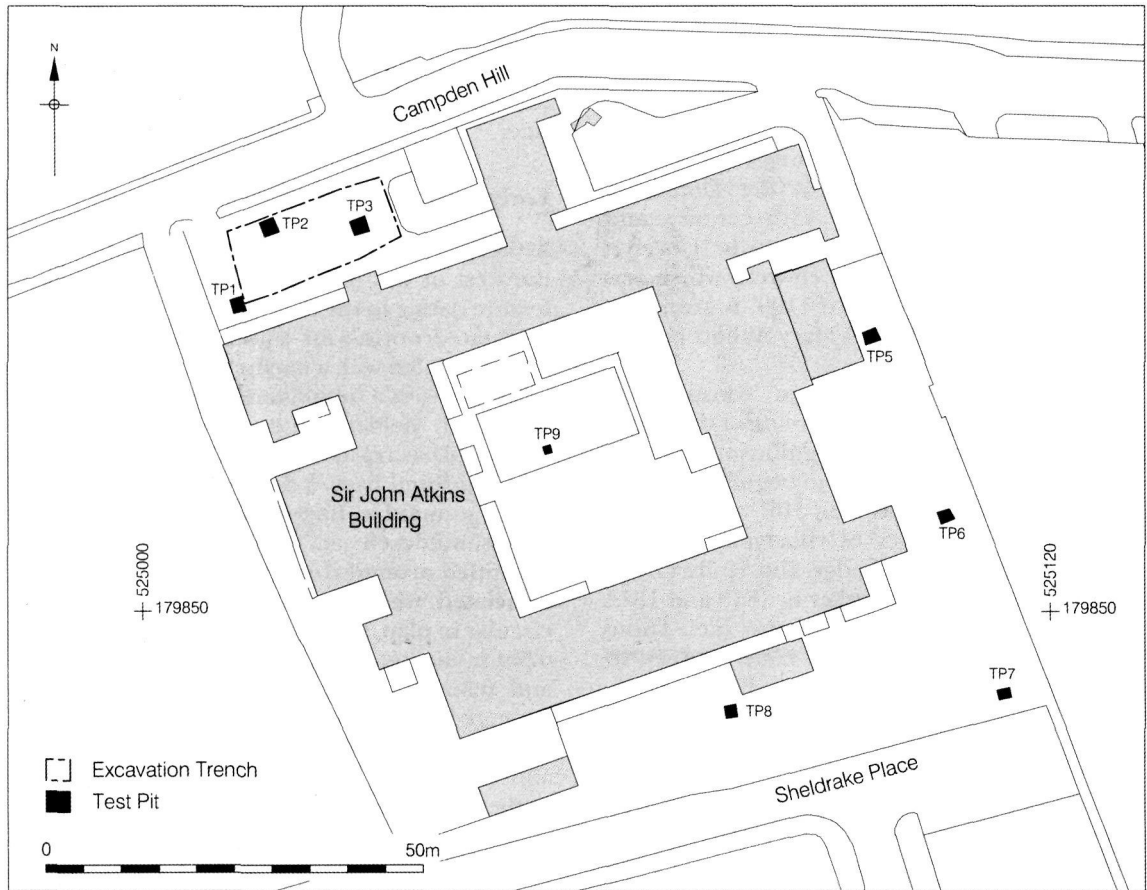


Fig 2. The trench and test pit locations

Cotton 2000a), and several residual sherds of Iron Age pottery (Partridge 1997) have been found in the vicinity, as well as a Late Bronze Age hoard (found in 1867) from around Kensington church, situated to the south-east. The hoard consisted of metalwork including horse-gear, axes, knives, gouges, and bits of scrap (Brown & Cotton 2000b) and has been dated to the Ewart Park phase of the Late Bronze Age, c.900–600 BC.

Two Roman roads are thought to have run westwards and traversed the Borough, extending from *Londinium*. One is thought to have exited at Newgate, and run along the course of Oxford Street, Notting Hill, Holland Park Avenue, and Goldhawk Road, whilst the other passed through Ludgate and is thought to be aligned with the Strand, Kensington Road, then Hammersmith and Chiswick (Margary 1955). The site lies half-way between, and 500m from, these routes and

would therefore have been situated in an area with considerable potential for small roadside settlements or farmsteads. As yet, no Roman settlements have been found in the Borough, although evidence of Roman occupation was recorded at 6–16 Old Church Street (Farid 2000), where investigations revealed an early Roman ditch and a slightly later pit. A possible Roman roadside ditch was also recorded at Earls Terrace, Kensington High Street (Douglas 2001), and considerable Roman settlement activity has recently been excavated in Hyde Park (Bradley 2003).

Evidence for the Saxon and medieval periods is also relatively scarce. The excavations at Earls Terrace produced remains of timber buildings dating to the late Saxon/early Norman period, which may have represented a farmstead or have been part of a larger manorial complex. Middle Saxon and Saxo-Norman features were also

identified at 6–12 Church Street, comprising boundary ditches, pits, and postholes. A probable medieval arable deposit was recorded at The Phillimores, immediately to the south. The presence of a settlement in Kensington during the Saxon period is suggested by the name *Chenesiton*, recorded in the Domesday Book, *Kensiton* in the early 13th century, and finally *Kensington* from 1235 onwards (Gover *et al* 1942). An early medieval church, which was probably in existence before 1100, is known to have occupied the site of St Mary Abbots church to the south-east.

The post-medieval landscape consisted of arable land with extensive quarrying of the gravel and brickearth deposits. Significant changes took place in the locality at the beginning of the 19th century, when Campden Hill was formerly laid out and a number of villa-type mansions were built. Thornwood Lodge and Holly Lodge (built by architect John Tasker in 1813 and 1814 respectively) were situated on the site. These were demolished during the 20th century to make room for the Sir John Atkins Building.

THE EXCAVATION

The evaluation produced a small pottery assemblage which was provisionally dated to the Late Bronze Age and was therefore thought to be broadly contemporary with the activity at The Phillimores. The more comprehensive sample provided by the open area excavation suggested

a more likely Early Iron Age date for the earliest phase of activity, however, although some of the struck flint may have represented residual material from as far back as the Middle Bronze Age.

Early Iron Age

A large sub-rectangular cut situated towards the west of the trench was the most significant feature dating to the Early Iron Age (Fig 4). It was orientated north-west–south-east and measured 3.85m by 2.3m with a maximum depth of 0.4m. It was filled with a homogeneous mid-brown sandy silt, which yielded pottery sherds belonging to the post-Deverel-Rimbury tradition, including a heavily gritted base, a finger-nail impressed rim, and the angular, finger-tip impressed shoulder of a shouldered jar. A series of postholes was identified around this cut, interpreted as being associated with it. These were generally sub-circular in plan, and measured between 0.3m and 0.5m in diameter, with depths of between 0.15m and 0.3m. The alignment of these postholes appeared to respect the north-west, south-west, and south-east sides of the rectangular feature, and it is likely that together they represent a timber framed structure, possibly a building, which would have had a ground plan of approximately 6.5m by 7m (Fig 4). Whilst the exact form and function of the building cannot be ascertained, the large rectangular feature may represent a storage pit within it. A shallow



Fig 3. Overview of site from top of Sir John Atkins Building, facing north

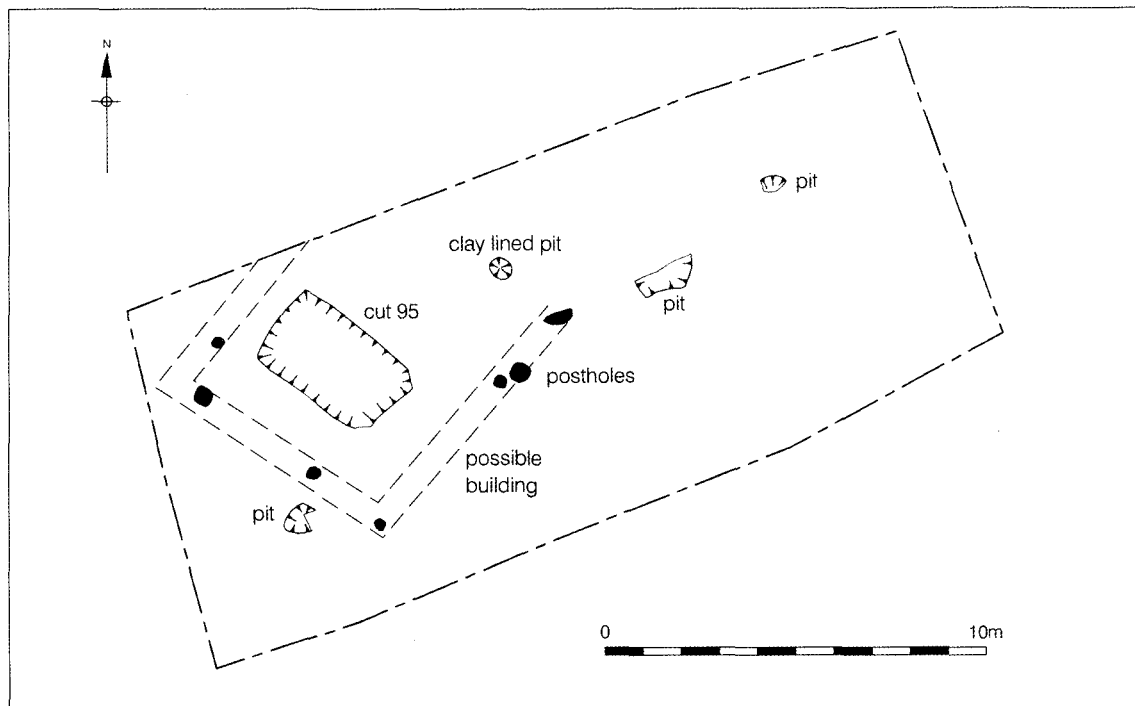


Fig 4. Early Iron Age features

circular feature was also recorded within the ground plan of the projected building. It had a diameter of approximately 0.5m and a depth of 0.14m, and had been lined with a 0.05m thick deposit of clay. This lining suggests that its function may have involved holding water; its small size would probably preclude its use as a cooking pit.

Three other features were recorded during the excavation which can tentatively be attributed to the Early Iron Age period. A sub-circular pit with a diameter of 0.85m was identified towards the south-west of the trench, with a slightly larger but truncated pit also recorded further to the east; both of these produced sherds of flint and coarse sand-tempered pottery. A small pit was recorded towards the east of the trench that was stratigraphically dated to the same period. Whilst the function of these pits was unclear, they provided further evidence of land use activity in the Early Iron Age.

The Late Iron Age

Features dating to the Late Iron Age were most numerous within the area of excavation.

A large north-south orientated ditch, [138], was found towards the east of the trench (Figs 5-6). It had a distinct V-shaped profile and was 1.9m wide and 0.81m deep. It was filled with a sandy silt which produced pottery including a sherd from a closed-mouth jar. Typologically this can be paralleled with vessels found at Bigbury (Thompson 1983), but jars of its general type in shell-tempered fabrics occur widely in, or, as in this case, directly below early Romano-British assemblages (Seagar Thomas below). The size of this ditch suggests that it would have been a fairly significant feature in the local landscape, most likely delineating a boundary.

Three large pits (approximately 1.5m in diameter) were located along the sides of the ditch. The southernmost of these, [110], produced pottery sherds, including those from a closed-mouth jar with bead rim, similar to that found in ditch [138], as well as a fired clay loom-weight. The northernmost of these three pits, however, was striking in that it yielded pottery sherds from a fine sandy bead rim jar (fabric Q2), which was distinct from both material recovered from the ditch and the other two pits situated along its edge. Two further jars in this

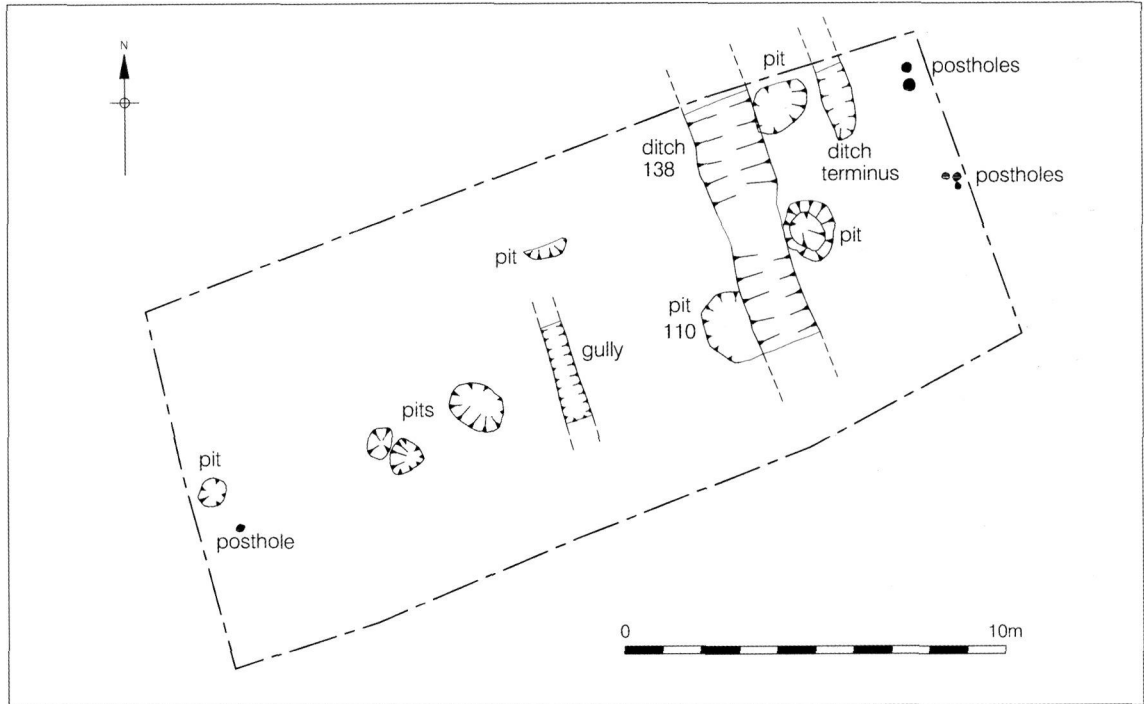


Fig 5. Late Iron Age features



Fig 6. Excavation of ditch [138], facing south

fabric and tradition were found in the overlying plough soil, and it is possible that they also originated from this pit. This distinct assemblage might suggest that the pit, whilst broadly falling within the same date range as other features from this phase, was not in fact coeval. Several other pits were located towards the central and eastern areas of the trench, which all produced pottery dating to the late 1st century BC. They may have been used for storage, or possibly the disposal of rubbish.

A timber structure, or structures, was indicated by several postholes located along the extreme eastern side of the trench. Although the evidence was slight, they have been dated to one phase of activity because of their positioning. Whilst the exact nature of the structure(s) they represent cannot be ascertained with any certainty, their closely set groupings may represent the two western corners of a structure extending to the east. A ditch terminus and smaller gully were also attributed to this phase of activity, although, again, the dating evidence was meagre, and the only certainty is that stratigraphically they predated early Roman features.

Roman

Early Roman

A further north-south ditch, [148], was identified towards the east of the trench, although it was truncated across the middle and at its southern end by late post-medieval features (Fig 7). It was 1.36m wide and approximately 0.2m deep, and was filled with a dark brown sandy gravelly silt which yielded abraded Late Iron Age pottery, as well as four sherds from a South Gaulish Samian Dr 18 platter (*c.*AD 43–90) and several sherds of early Roman greyware. This ditch is likely to represent a later re-cut of, and extension to, the Late Iron Age ditch terminus (Fig 5). It certainly respects the same alignment, and may be associated with marking the same boundary. No other 1st-century AD features were identified within the area of the trench.

Later Roman

An ovoid pit, which was recorded truncating ditch [148], produced a truncated jar in Thameside greyware. The lack of a rim made precise dating impossible, but the fabric was of a type normally associated with the period *c.*AD 150–270.

The Late Iron Age boundary ditch [138] (Fig 7B) also appeared to have been re-cut in the later Roman period. Although originally excavated as the secondary fill of ditch [138], the re-cut was subsequently recorded in section; it was filled with a silty sand which produced a single sherd from a developed beaded and flanged bowl in greyware, and a shattered but reconstructable bowl in Oxfordshire red colour-coat ware. The latter was unusual in being stamped in the samian manner, and probably dates to *c.*AD 270–300. Again, it is likely that this ditch represents a reaffirmation of broadly the same boundary represented not only by the Late Iron Age ditch, but also the early Roman ditch situated immediately to the east, suggesting almost continuous occupation of the site throughout this time.

Saxon(?)

A possible plough soil, which was composed of a charcoal flecked, dark brown gravelly silt with a maximum thickness of 0.3m, sealed all these features. Pottery from this layer included both Late Iron Age and late Roman sherds, suggesting that ploughing had disturbed the underlying features and deposits. Fragments from a jar

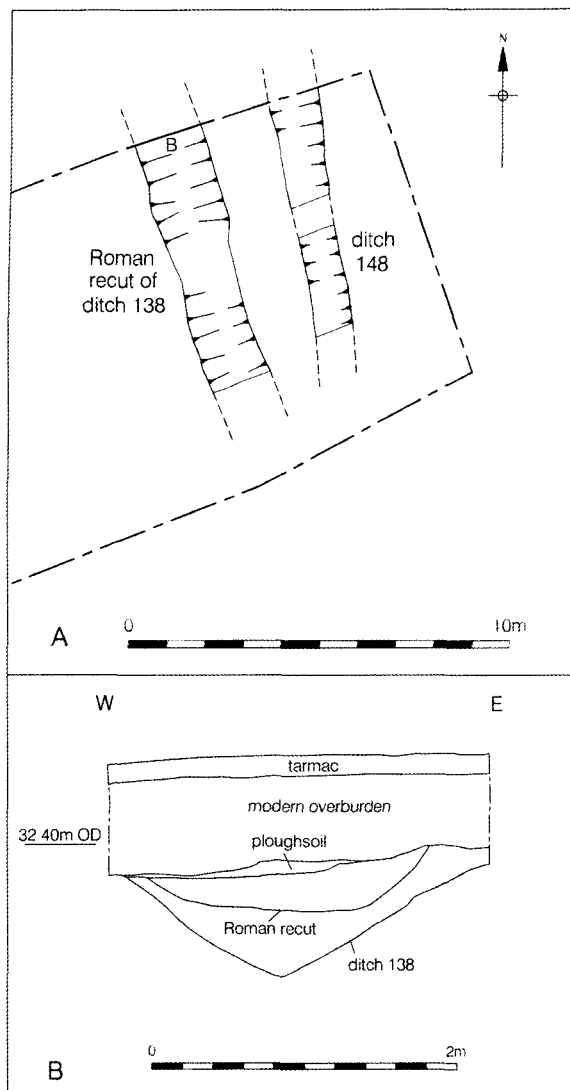


Fig 7. A. Roman features; B. South facing section through ditch [138]

of probable early Saxon date were recovered, potentially dating the layer to the Saxon period. The lack of pre-18th-century features suggests that agricultural activity continued in the area well into the 18th century.

Post-medieval

Several features were recorded which were cut through the plough soil, and these were generally characterised by their less leached out appearance, being darker in colour than deposits

from earlier phases. An east–west orientated ditch/gully, which was later re-cut, was recorded extending across the middle of the trench; this is likely to have delineated the boundary between two fields or plots. A large amorphous feature was also recorded across the northern edge of the trench and extending beyond the limit of excavation. The size and depth of this pit, 8.5m across by 0.92m deep, would suggest that it represented gravel extraction activity. Rocque’s map of 1746 certainly indicates that quarrying occurred in the area in at least the mid-18th century, and its location on the gravel terrace next to the access road provided by Campden Hill would make it ideally placed for this. Dating evidence suggests that both the field boundary ditches and the quarry pit were backfilled in the late 18th century, presumably in order to level the ground prior to the construction of villas during the early 19th century.

A small pit was also recorded towards the south-east of the trench, the fill of which contained a large amount of very degraded bone. It was most notable, however, for producing a homemade musket-sized gunflint dateable to between the late 16th and 19th centuries.

THE FINDS

Late prehistoric pottery (Fig 8)

Mike Seager Thomas

The Phillimore’s site produced the first stratified assemblage of prehistoric pottery to have been recovered from the Kensington area. As only the second, the present assemblage provides a welcome opportunity to examine a range of associated Greater London prehistoric pottery forms and fabrics. Such study is essential if we are fully to understand the development of the region during the period, for, by adding to our detailed knowledge of Greater London prehistoric pottery, it improves its chronological resolution and so helps contextualise the sites which yielded it. The prehistoric assemblage comprises 163 sherds weighing 1721g; many of the sherds are from Roman or later contexts or belong to small context assemblages only, but sufficient were associated for the group as a whole to be interpretatively useful. On the basis of its internal associations — both fabric and typological — and comparisons with pottery from other sites, the assemblage can be shown

to belong to two widely separated prehistoric periods: transitional Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, dated to around the 7th century BC, and later pre-Roman Iron Age, dated to the last centuries BC and the first century AD. Overall it indicates a significant, if interrupted, occupation of the site during the later prehistoric period.

Interpretative context

The earlier of the two prehistoric groups represented in the Sir John Atkins Building assemblage comprises pottery belonging to a late phase of the post-Deverel-Rimbury pottery tradition. For the Thames Valley this tradition has been discussed in detail by Barrett (1980). The published Greater London site assemblages to which the present group is most closely related are those from Bermondsey (Sidell *et al* 2002), Snowy Fielder Lane, Isleworth (Timby 1996), and Heathrow Airport (Canham 1978). The post-Deverel-Rimbury assemblage from The Phillimore’s (Moore *et al* forthcoming) is slightly earlier. Locally relevant later Late Iron Age traditions have been discussed by Harding (1972), Cunliffe (1991), and Thompson (1982). Although the developmental sequence of this material is clear, its calendar dating within the later Iron Age is not, and the ‘age system’ nomenclature applied to it differs from assemblage to assemblage, hence the adoption here of the term later Iron Age. Owing to the lack of prehistoric pottery from Greater London, the following discussion is based largely upon the assemblage’s internal relationships and comparisons with typologically/fabric similar pottery from the immediately surrounding counties.

Fabric analysis

The assemblage comprises ten fabric types. The principal inclusion types present are burnt flint, quartz sand, and shell. Five fabric types occur in chronologically diagnostic forms, which have closely dated regional parallels, or were consistently associated on site with typologically dated material. One belongs to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age only and four to the later Iron Age only. The Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age fabric type comprises a very coarse ware, whilst the later Iron Age fabric types represent fine, intermediate and coarse wares. The remaining five fabric types, which include both intermediate and coarse wares, have Late Bronze

Age/Early Iron Age and later Iron Age parallels in off-site assemblages. Accordingly, none can be dated precisely. Fabrics from features with prehistoric *termini post quem* are quantified in Table 1, fabrics from features with Romano-British or later *termini post quem* in Table 2.

Pottery typology

Early first-millennium BC pottery

A single group of feature sherds belonging to the post-Deverel-Rimbury pottery tradition comes from pit 95. It includes a heavily-gritted base (in fabric F1), a finger-nail impressed rim, the angular, finger-tip impressed shoulder of a shouldered jar, and a combed body sherd. Feature sherds were also residual in pits 18 and 71, and the plough soil. Although combing and heavily-gritted bases were long-lived, collectively the ‘decorated’ forms which comprise most of these sherds are characteristic of later rather than earlier post-Deverel-Rimbury traditions. Parallels for them are present in the Greater London late post-Deverel-Rimbury assemblages (eg Timby 1996), and they occur in assemblages from regional sites such as Petter’s Sports Field, Egham (O’Connell 1986), and

Orsett causewayed enclosure (Barrett 1978). Radiocarbon dates associated with ‘decorated’ post-Deverel-Rimbury pottery focus on the 7th century BC or the LBA/EIA (Needham 1996). This makes the present assemblage slightly later than that from the nearby Phillimore’s site.

Later first-millennium BC and early first-century BC pottery

The later Iron Age assemblage includes one vessel paralleled in an assemblage from Bermondsey, where it is dated to the Middle Iron Age (Sidell *et al* 2002), and all have parallels in later Iron Age assemblages from outside Greater London. Key amongst the latter is Bigbury where vessels similar to all three forms are associated with early grog-tempered wares (Thompson 1983). These date to the first part of the Late Iron Age. Also notable are parallels in a slightly earlier assemblage from Cassington, Oxfordshire (Harding 1972). Their Romano-British associations probably place them in the first century AD.

Importance of the assemblage

When we look at early first-millennium BC pottery use in the area, two things immediately

Table 1. Quantification and dating of pottery from contexts with prehistoric *termini post quem*

Italics = sherd groups incorporating Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age feature sherds; underlined = sherd groups incorporating later Iron Age feature sherds

Fill Cut	50	91	94	117	123	129	109	137	151	Fabric date
	N/A	92	95	118	124	130	110	138	152	
<i>F1</i>	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	LBA/EIA
	0	0	73	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>F2</i>	0	2	23	2	0	5	0	2	0	
	0	4	<u>136</u>	8	0	17	0	7	0	
<i>F3</i>	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	
	0	1	28	0	0	0	0	13	0	
<i>Q1</i>	2	1	2	0	1	4	2	1	0	
	5	1	23	0	1	3	43	8	0	
<i>S1</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	
	0	0	5	0	0	0	29	0	0	
<i>S2</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	
	0	0	2	0	0	0	16	0	0	
<i>Q2</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<u>1</u>	
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<u>23</u>	
<i>Q2F</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	
<i>S3</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	0	<u>16</u>	<u>24</u>	0	
<i>Fe</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	1	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	0	53	18	0	
Context	LBA/EIA						Later IA			
TPQ										

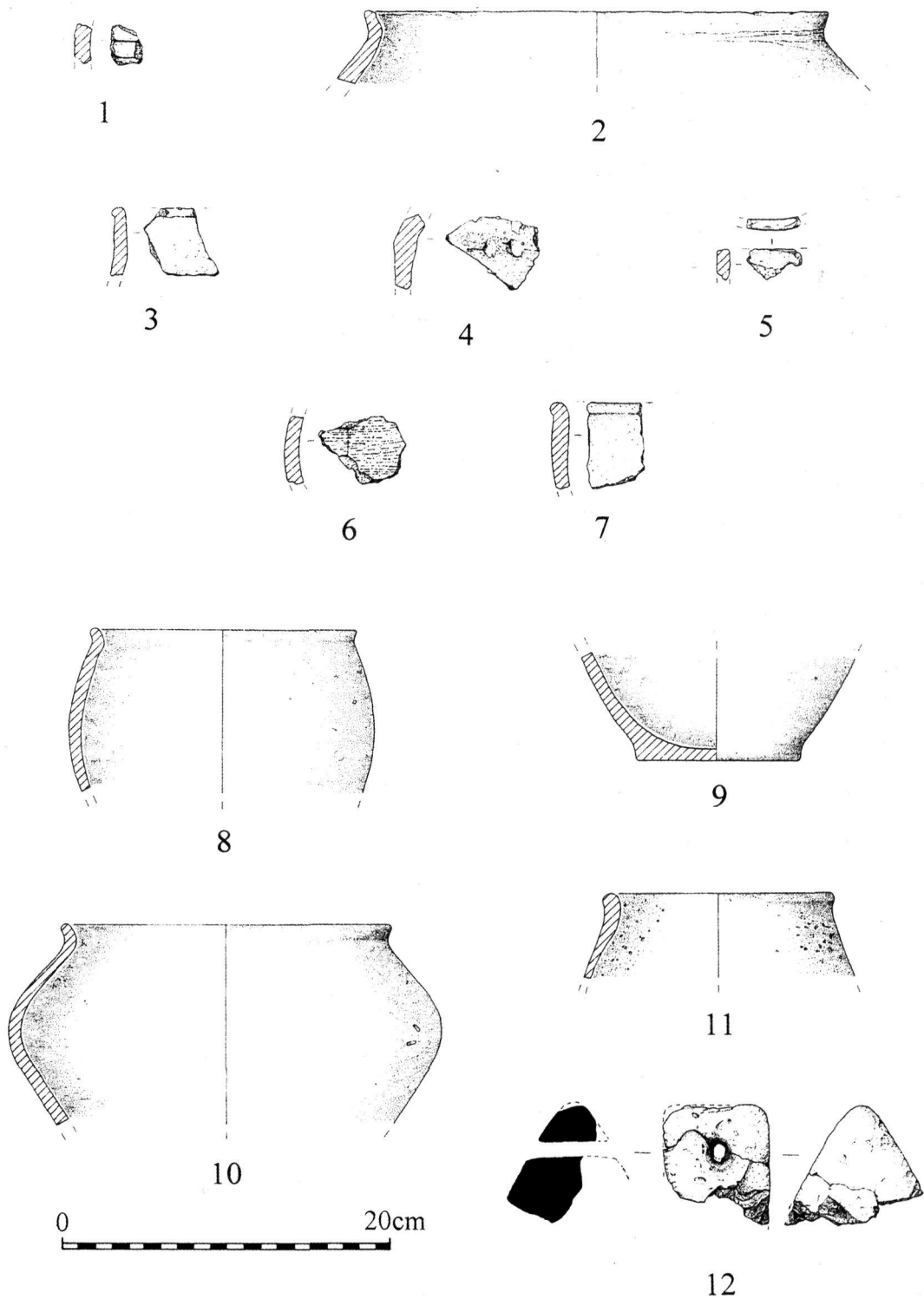


Fig 8. Iron Age pottery (Nos 1–6: Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age; Nos 7–11: Late Iron Age) and loom-weight

Table 2. Quantification of prehistoric pottery from features with early Romano-British or later *termini post quem*

Fill	Prehistoric sherds			Context TPQ
	Qty	Weight in grams	Fabric/form	
2	4	13	F2, F3	post-medieval
3	2	9	F2, F3	post-medieval
52	3	5	Q1	ERB
62	32	824	F1, F2, Q1, Q2	RB/PM
64	1	2	Q1	post-medieval
70	5	134	F2, F3	post-medieval
101	6	25	F2, F3, Fe/U	RB
136	12	53	F1, F2	ERB
145	12	90	F2, Q1, Fe/U	RB

stand out. The first is that while Kensington was occupied for an extended period, it may not have been occupied in any one area continuously. By contrast, the later Iron Age/early Romano-British occupation displayed considerable continuity. The second is that, although activity was not continuous in any one area, the pottery identifying it — both at the Sir John Atkins Building and at The Phillimore — fits well into a far-reaching and developing tradition, even to the extent of the fabrics comprising it. Early first-millennium BC Kensington was not isolated culturally. No doubt shifting settlement was part of the same culture. This contrasts with evidence from an unpublished excavation on a post-Deverel-Rimbury site at Newbury Park, Redbridge, but it is consistent with evidence from many sites outside Greater London which show shifting settlement to be the norm at this period. The evidence of the later Iron Age/early Romano-British pottery for continuity of settlement and sudden changes in domestic fashion in pottery reflects a rather different, much more modern tradition.

Ceramic weight (Fig 8)

Berni Sudds

Two fragments from the apex of a triangular ceramic weight were recovered from the fill of a Late Iron Age pit, [110]. Contemporary and earlier examples in the Greater London region have been recovered from Bermondsey Abbey (Rayner 2002), Warren Farm, Romford (Greenwood 1997), and an earlier Middle Iron Age example from Caesar's Camp, Heathrow (Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993).

The two fragments conjoin to form one of three original apexes. More complete examples

from Warren Farm and Bermondsey Abbey demonstrate two or three pierced holes, but it is not possible to determine what type is represented here as only one hole survives (Greenwood 1997; Rayner 2002). The fabric of the weight is fairly fine and sandy (clear, white and grey, sub-angular to rounded quartz up to 2mm) with occasional coarse flint and quartz inclusions. Red iron oxide is also evident in addition to rare organic inclusions. The example has a reduced grey and orange/brown core and oxidised mid-orange surface.

Triangular forms are typically Iron Age in date (Foster 1986; Greenwood 1997; Grimes & Close-Brooks 1993; Poole 1984; Rayner 2002) and are commonly interpreted as loom-weights. Other possibilities, including thatch or door weights, have also been considered (Poole 1984, 406).

Flint

Barry Bishop

Fragments of burnt flint were recovered from many contexts across the site, datable from the Early Iron Age onwards. It had all been burnt, consistent with deliberate fire damage, and, although only moderate quantities were recovered from any particular context, it was spread persistently throughout the site, possibly originating within the original soil horizons.

The extent of the spread and the consistency of its burning suggests that it may not have resulted solely from incidental hearth use, and may have originated from more specialised activities. Such an interpretation is of interest as this may indicate the continuation of the type of processes recently identified at The Phillimore's 'burnt mound' site, either a contemporary spatial continuation of the activities there or, if

associated with the slightly later Early Iron Age occupation identified at this site, a chronological continuity in the kinds of activities that were being pursued.

The struck flint assemblage consisted of three flakes, two cores, and a possible core tool. One of the flakes, recovered from a post-medieval pit, consisted of a homemade musket-sized gunflint dateable to between the late 16th and 19th centuries.

All of the other struck pieces were manufactured from gravel pebbles, presumably obtained locally. Both cores consisted of small rounded pebbles. One, from context [02], had only two flakes removed, the other, from context [52], was more extensively reduced, utilising two platforms. No attempts at platform preparation were apparent, although many incipient Hertzian cones from failed attempts at flake removal were visible. The two remaining flakes, from contexts [02] and [109], reflected the crude reduction style of the cores, being small and squat and without any evidence of systematic production. The core tool, from context [52], was made by steeply retouching a thermal chunk, making a possible scraping type implement. These pieces all demonstrated a very opportunistic and expedient approach to flint working, involving the selection of an easily available pebble and hitting it until either it, or one of the resultant flakes, produced an adequate working edge.

The size of the assemblage precludes either confident dating or interpretation of the nature of the activities represented. Nevertheless, the assemblage would be most characteristic of industries dating to the end of structured flint working traditions, from about the Middle Bronze Age and after, and could easily be contemporary with either the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age activity identified in the area.

The burnt flint as well as the struck flint, whether originating from local domestic activity or as part of a continuation of the slightly earlier activity identified from The Phillimores, adds important new data to the very limited knowledge of the later prehistoric occupation of the area.

Luminescence dating report

P S Toms

Three burnt flint samples were submitted for thermoluminescence dating. Unfortunately, during the post-excavation process it was found that

one of the samples (Lab Code GLO13) derived from the plough soil, [62], the reworked nature of which suggests flint extracted from this level may not be in primary context. The results of this sample are therefore not considered here. The other two samples came from fill [101] of Late Iron Age pit [102], and fill [109] of a similarly dated pit [110]. They were taken to provide dating evidence additional to that provided by the pottery as the ceramic dating for this period requires improvement. The dates arrived at for the samples are shown below:

Context	Lab Code	Age	Error	Date
109	GLO3012	7045	870	5912–4172 BC
101	GLO3014	2840	335	837–502 BC

An assessment of the accuracy of the dates obtained has been made within the context of the potential existence of residual datable signals subsequent to burial, due to pre-burial exposure to an attenuated thermal regime, generating age overestimates. The datable luminescence signal in flint is associated with the thermoluminescence peak at 380°C and the complete removal of this signal requires a firing temperature of ~450°C. An estimation of the firing temperature of burnt flint prior to interment can be made through signal analysis comparing a natural and additive-dose thermoluminescence response. If the firing temperature prior to interment were sufficient for complete removal of the 380°C thermal signal then a plateau in ratio values should exist for the breadth of 300°C to 450°C.

The change in natural to additive-dose thermoluminescence ratio with temperature exhibits a large amount of random variation principally generated by the low doses and/or low signal sensitivity to dose associated with each sample. However, a systematic rise in this ratio with temperature above ~360°C for GLO3012 and GLO3014 suggests the final firing temperature of these two samples was $\leq 360^\circ\text{C}$. The evidence on the whole suggests that a residual thermoluminescence signal was present after final firing and that the age estimates derived from each sample should only be considered maximum ages. Unfortunately therefore the technique did not improve the dating framework for the site.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Until the recent excavations at The Phillimores site immediately to the south, little was known

about the prehistory of the area. Indeed the paucity of known sites in Kensington is particularly striking when compared with other London boroughs along the Thames. The quantity of archaeological features, pottery, and food debris recovered from The Phillimores was slight, but the combined presence of large quantities of burnt flint, pits, and a water source suggest it may have been a 'burnt mound' site. 'Burnt mound' sites have been interpreted as evidence for cooking activities (Barfield 1991; Ramseyer 1991), sweat lodges or saunas (Barfield & Hodder 1987), and textile production (Jeffery 1991), as well as a range of other activities (Barfield & Hodder 1987). Clearly the level of confidence to be placed in the identification of the particular pursuits linked to any 'burnt mound' site is dependent on the extent of the area exposed and the associated assemblages. A pit with a small placed deposit of Late Bronze Age date was found with the 'burnt mound' evidence at The Phillimores (Moore *et al* forthcoming). The fact that a 'burnt mound' was in the vicinity of the Sir John Atkins site during the Late Bronze Age may therefore reflect a variety of activities but probably included a ritual aspect.

Whilst the earliest occupation recorded at the Sir John Atkins Building site is slightly later in date, it does suggest significant, if perhaps interrupted, use of the area in the later prehistoric period. Despite the absence of previous archaeological evidence to support this, geographically and topographically it is less surprising. Generally speaking the location of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age sites in the London area varies little, with most known sites and settlements being on Thames brickearth and gravel terraces less than 40m above sea level (Greenwood 1997), as is the case at both The Phillimores and the Sir John Atkins Building.

Unlike The Phillimores, however, at the Sir John Atkins Building the concentration of Early Iron Age features which can be broadly associated with some form of settlement activity was relatively high, given the comparatively small size of the excavation area. Of particular note was the rectangular structure of post-fast construction, housing a large rectangular pit. Structural evidence for the Early Iron Age in London is sparse, although increasing with finds at Heathrow Airport Terminal 5 and Perry Oaks. Rectangular buildings are more generally associated with the Late Iron Age (Sealey 1997). Perhaps the most likely interpretation for a

structure such as this is as a granary, suggesting localised agricultural exploitation of the landscape.

The lack of evidence for Middle Iron Age activity on the site appears to suggest a hiatus in the use of the area at this time, perhaps indicative of shifting settlement activity. However, given the location of the site on what was presumably a fertile, well drained and easy to work soil which had previously been occupied, a complete cessation of occupation in the general location of the site, especially along the gravel terrace, seems unlikely. This lack of archaeological evidence for the Middle Bronze Age is perhaps better explained by the small area of the excavation. It is worth noting that the excavation was situated on the southern edge of the gravel terrace, and the relatively flat plateau of land immediately to the north may have been the centre of occupation in any period.

The Late Iron Age is characterised, among other things, by increased evidence for the organisation and exploitation of the agricultural landscape (Haselgrove *et al* 2001), and linear boundaries, field systems, pit alignments and isolated pits are all indicative of such activity. Archaeological evidence for the Late Iron Age at the Sir John Atkins Building included at least one boundary ditch, as well as possible pit alignments, which may therefore be indicative of further agricultural exploitation of the area. That this occupation included domestic activity is confirmed by the presence of both shell- and sand-tempered jars, as well as a fired clay loomweight.

Archaeological evidence from the site suggests a continuity of occupation between the Late Iron Age and the early Roman period. A 1st-century AD boundary ditch was identified immediately to the east, but along the same north-south alignment as the Late Iron Age ditch, which was itself then re-cut in the later Roman period. This sequence would suggest a time-transgressive concern with marking the same boundary, and therefore probable continued occupation of the site. A single pit was also recorded from the later Roman period that may have been associated with the boundary ditch immediately to the west. The truncated jar in Roman greyware which was recovered from it may have been deliberately placed, reflecting concerns with marking this boundary. Indeed, it has been suggested that when pits are accompanied by ditches this may constitute a plot of land, separated by lanes

and/or a field boundary (Wilson 1995). It is interesting to note that all the ditches identified during the excavation were aligned at exactly a right angle to the route of Campden Hill. This may suggest that there has been a track or road there since at least the Late Iron Age, utilising the line of the gravel terrace, perhaps with fields or plots extending from it.

The presence of agriculturally worked soils suggests arable farming was carried out in the area in the post-Roman period, and the presence of probable Saxon pottery from within this layer also indicates domestic activity in the vicinity. A similar medieval plough soil was recorded sealing the prehistoric features at The Phillimores. There is then a break in the archaeological record for both sites until the 18th century, when plot boundary ditches suggest increased horticultural activity, and a gravel extraction pit next to Campden Hill may indicate resurfacing of the road prior to, or during, the formal laying out of the area for villas in the early 19th century.

Until recently archaeological evidence for this area of Kensington was very limited, and for the prehistoric period, other than a few chance finds, non-existent. The excavations carried out at The Phillimores and the Sir John Atkins Building have therefore provided important new evidence for extended occupation of this area of Kensington from the Late Bronze Age through to the Roman period. The development of these sites has revealed exploitation of Thames brickearth and gravel terraces along the southern slope of Campden Hill. Whilst the areas of excavation have been relatively limited, it is clear that late prehistoric and Roman Kensington was not isolated, and it fits well with the developing regional cultural traditions throughout this extended period of occupation.

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