

# Excavations at Roxton, Bedfordshire, 1972-1974

## The Post-Bronze Age Settlement

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### SUMMARY

*The excavation of a cropmark complex (TL 157535) south of Roxton village concentrated on the examination of five ring ditches, and parts of a system of associated rectilinear enclosures and other features.*

*The ring ditches were shown to be ploughed-out burial mounds of Bronze Age date. These and their associated settlement will be described in a later paper.*

*The Bronze Age earthworks began to be ploughed during the Iron Age. They were bounded on the east in the first century B.C. by a palisaded defensive ditch laid across the floodplain of the river. To the east of this boundary, field enclosures were laid out. A second series of small field enclosures for arable and stock were organised across the cemetery site, probably in the first century A.D. Ploughing of these ditched fields during this period continued to remove the external banks and fill the ditches of the burial mounds. This farming was probably seasonal and discontinuous, and the enclosures could be regarded as the, 'out-fields' of a 'farm' possibly at some distance. By the middle of the first century A.D. the palisaded ditch had been totally filled, and during the second century A.D. the field system was substantially modified to accommodate an habitation area at the centre of the field unit. However, the structural and material evidence suggested that this accommodation was temporary, and the occupation short and seasonal. Use of the fields for arable continued after this short occupation. There was also slight evidence to suggest the presence of a 'Celtic shrine' nearby.*

*Two hearths, carbon-dated to the fourth-sixth century A.D., cut into the upper plough-wash silts of two of the ring ditches, indicating re-use in the post-Roman period.*

*All traces of these earthworks were finally removed during the medieval period.*

### INTRODUCTION

The excavations set out to examine in detail a group of five ring ditches together with an associated system of linear boundaries. These had been identified in aerial photographs by Prof. J.K. St. Joseph, K. Field and others. This cropmark complex (Plate 1), and others, have been systematically plotted by the Conservation Section of Bedfordshire County Council, for the County Sites and Monuments Record, at the scale 1:10,000 (Fig 1B).

The cropmarks (Beds. C.C. S.M.R. 619) at TL 157535 were to be destroyed by gravel extraction during 1972-74. Co-operation with the quarry (Redlands Gravel Co.), and the farmer

(Philip Bath) enabled archaeological excavations to take place in advance of each phase of gravel extraction. These excavations were financed by the Department of the Environment and Bedfordshire County Council.

Each ring ditch was almost totally excavated by the quadrant method, and sample trenches were cut through the linear boundaries. These excavation areas are shown in Fig 1C. Excavation was carried out by hand after the modern plough-soil had been removed by machine.

It was possible to carry out further observation, and sometimes excavation, of most major elements (such as ditches and pits) during quarry operations. However, it was not always possible to record the

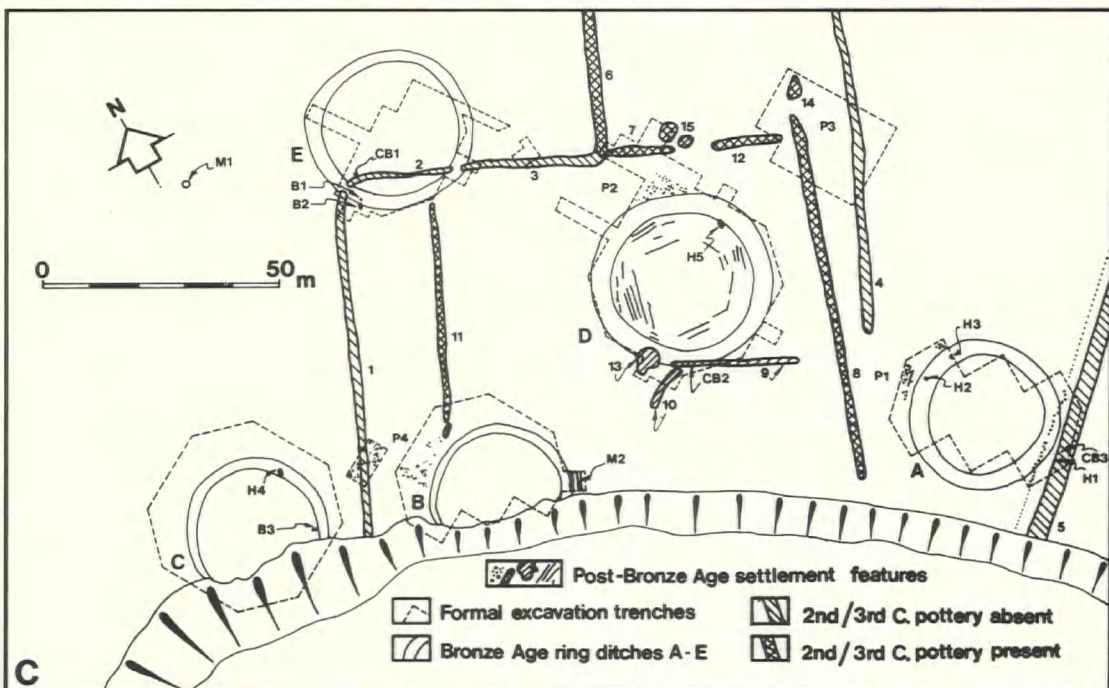
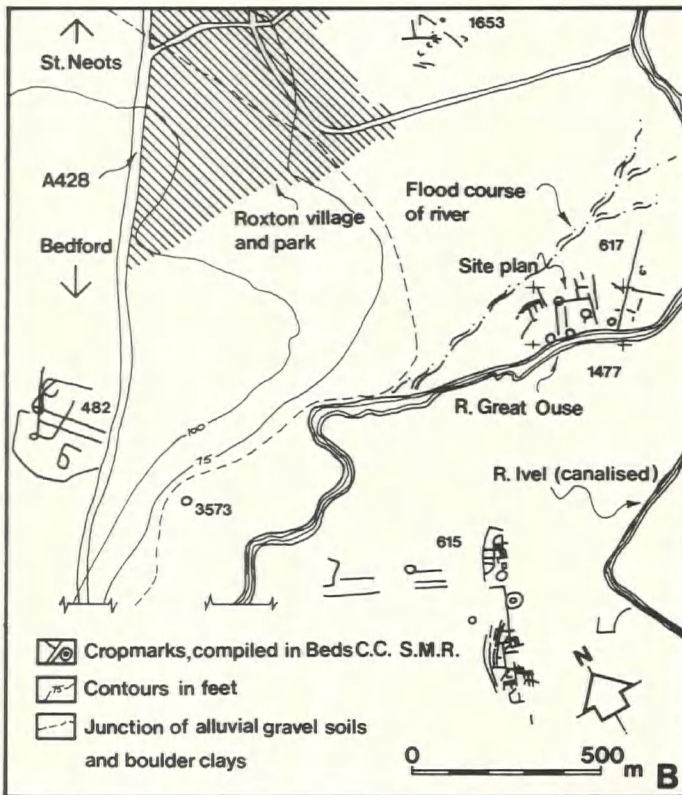
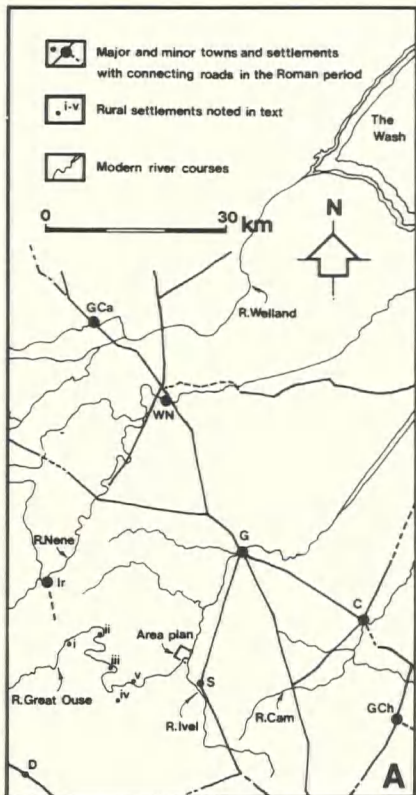




Fig 1 Roxton excavations: Location: Area and Site Plans:

#### A. Location plan

Based on Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain (Second Edition 1979):

- GCa : Great Casterton
- WN : Water Newton (*Durobriyae*)
- G : Godmanchester (*Durovigutum*)
- Ir : Irchester
- C : Cambridge (*Durolipons*)
- S : Sandy
- GCh : Great Chesterford
- D : Dropshort (*Magiovinium*)

Local sites noted in the text:

- (i) : Odell (SP 956568)
- (ii) : Radwell (TL 010574)
- (iii) : Bromham (TL 017573)
- (iv) : Elstow (TL 050473)
- (v) : Newnham (TL 073493)

#### B. Area Plan

Cropmarks plotted at 1:10,000 from Bedfordshire County Council's sites and Monuments Record have been compiled from a number of sources:

Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography  
National Monuments Record  
Mr. K. Field  
Bedfordshire County Council

#### C. Site Plan

Plan of formal excavation trenches and major features with general date interpretation. The detail relating to the Bronze Age ring ditches (Central Burials, Secondary burials, pits and post-structures . . .) has been omitted to clarify the nature of the Later Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman settlement features.

- B1 - B2 : Inhumations and Cremations (Roman)
- B3 : Flexed Inhumation (Saxon)
- CB1 - CB3: Articulated cow bones (Iron Age/Roman)
- H1 - H3 : Field Hearths (Iron Age/Roman)
- H4 - H5 : Stone laid hearths (late-Roman, post-Roman)
- 1 - 4 : First to third century A.D. field gullies
- 5 : First century A.D. palisaded boundary ditch
- 6 - 12 : First to third century A.D. field gullies
- 13 - 15 : Second to third century A.D. pits
- P1 - P4 : Post structures
- M1, M2 : Medieval features

smaller ditches and post-holes, nor the upper levels of larger ditches and gullies, because of the nature of the topsoil stripping carried out.

The site record and index has been deposited in Bedford Museum, together with the finds, apart from the human skeletal remains which were deposited in the Department of Physical Anthropology, University of Cambridge. All features and finds mentioned in the text can be related to the published site plan (Fig 1), which can in turn be related to the museum records. Publication of the site has also been split into two. The Bronze Age cemetery and earlier settlement will be published at a later date.

### THE EXCAVATED FEATURES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

It is only possible to examine the site as a chronological sequence by the grouping of field boundaries firstly, in terms of their relationships within the total site plan; secondly, in terms of their function, size and profile shown by excavation; and thirdly, in terms of the history of the site as dated by the diagnostic pottery recovered within the plough silts.

The total layout of the post-Bronze Age settlement boundaries can be seen in the cropmarks (Fig 1B, Plate 1). These can be grouped into three units.

- I The long linear boundary ditch lying at 'right-angles' to the present course of the River Great Ouse, and running south-west to north-east, together with boundaries laid-off to the east.
- II Ditches lying centrally across the Bronze Age cemetery.
- III Cropmarks in the Northern corner of the site; a series of ill-defined criss-cross patterned ditches.

Only those at II were fully examined, and observed in detail during topsoil stripping for gravel extraction. In I the long linear boundary was examined where it ran adjacent to ring ditch A. In III pottery was collected during quarry operations from the topsoil strip immediately around and above them, and in a single feature cut in the gravel.

No occupation levels survived intact on the site, and all datable material had been removed or deposited in pre-existing features as a result of ploughing, apart from the material deposited in two hearths (H4 and H5), gully (7), pits (13) - (15) and burials (B1) - (B3). The site stratigraphy was such that only a few relationships could be defined in the area of detailed excavations.



### EARLIER IRON AGE OCCUPATION

Settlement during this period was only apparent from the quantities of highly abraded pottery sherds recovered from the plough-wash silts of the Bronze Age ring ditches and in later features. It would seem likely that structures of this date were hidden amongst the vast array of undated post-holes identified on the site (Fig 1C, P1-4). Ploughing probably took place during this period, and began to infill the ditches of the Bronze Age cemetery structures.

### LATER IRON AGE OCCUPATION

#### *Boundary ditch (5) and associated field unit I*

Later Iron Age ('Belgic') occupation was only identified in the abraded pottery in the plough-wash silts of boundary ditch (5). This ditch was 3.5 metres wide and 1.5 metres deep with a 'V' profile. A row of postholes ran parallel to this ditch on the western side. These were 20-30 cm deep, and spaced 60 – 150 cm apart. They cut through the lower plough-wash silts of ring ditch A, indicating that the area had already been ploughed by the time this boundary was constructed. Second/Third century finds were absent from the plough-wash silts of this ditch, although pottery of this date was present in the nearby upper plough-wash silts of ring ditch A, and in some boundaries of field system II. It is likely therefore that this ditch was filled and the boundary redundant by the end of the first century A.D.

The massive proportions of the ditch and palisade make a strong boundary defence, which may have defined separate land holdings, or territorial divisions. All the barrows lie immediately to the west of it, which may suggest territorial continuity with the Bronze Age.

The field boundaries to the east were not examined, but can be assumed from their layout to be contemporary. It is probable that the 'Belgic' pottery in (5) is derived from settlement in this area. The large quantity of cattle bones (CB3) recovered from (5) contained a high percentage of vertebral bones which suggests stock slaughter on site. The presence of red ochre on some of these bones might indicate some ritual significance for

this deposit (cf below). A concentration of burnt charcoal and soil (H1) in (5), was probably connected with scrub clearance.

### LATER IRON AGE TO THIRD CENTURY OCCUPATION

#### *Field unit II*

All the field gullies at II on plan were of similar scale and profile, and all had roughly the same orientation. They were therefore considered as a single unit. However, the stratigraphic relationship of the gullies to the Bronze Age ring ditches and their silts differed and the occurrence of habitation debris in the gully silts varied. It is clear from this that the field boundaries which the gullies defined were sometimes modified or replaced, and that the fields which they enclosed had different functions. These fields were probably also surrounded by hedges, banks and fences but only the gullies survived.

The small field boundary gullies (1) – (4) and (6) – (12) were steep sided and flat bottomed and varied in width from 0.3 – 1.0 metres, and in depth from 0.2 – 0.5 metres. In all of them an initial weathering and collapse of the gravel sides was noted. The subsequent silting, apart from (7), was characterised by medium sand loams with up to 15% gravels and grits. These soils were ill-sorted and no stabilised turf lines could be identified within them. No direct evidence existed for gravel banks alongside the ditches, since the upper levels of all ditches and associated occupation horizons had been eroded by subsequent ploughing, nor could evidence for banks (or hedges) be inferred from the ditch silts. Field gullies (1) – (3) butted ring ditch E, and subsequently were filled by the same plough-wash deposits. Gully (2) cut across the camber of a then extant mound. The changes in level at the base of the gully and a shallowing and narrowing at its centre, suggests that the height of the mound would have been about 1 metre.

Gully (9) cut across the upper plough-wash silts of ring ditch D. This may therefore be a late addition to the field unit since it was cut *after* the ring ditch had been substantially filled with plough derived soils. Field gully (11) stopped well short of ring ditch B, and bent away from it, suggesting that at this time an external bank surrounded this burial mound. Unfortunately at this junction all the upper levels of this ring ditch down to the Bronze Age turf line had been totally removed by modern and earlier ploughing,



and so it was not possible to define this relationship further. However, slight evidence for an external bank on a small portion of the eastern side below two late plough-marks (M2), was recorded, but this was very much eroded and little more than a slightly denser spread of gravels.

It was clear that when some of the field boundaries were set out that ploughing had already taken place and that there was now no regard for the barrows as 'ritually' significant areas, although they were to be re-used for burial in three cases. Neither were they seen as an obstacle to ploughing in small arable fields. Ploughing of the ring ditches began prior to the first century BC (see above).

Evidence for second/third century habitation within this field system was found in the distribution and deposition of pottery and other debris in the plough-wash silts of gullies around ring ditch D, (7)–(11), and in the upper silts and berm of ring ditch D. This debris was *not* characteristic of manuring. Large sherds survived (e.g. castor ware lid, Fig 2, 15), together with a high concentration of metalwork (nails, plate and spring lock may be the remains of a bound 'box' Fig 4, 8-12), a single tile, a Rhenish lava quern fragment, one coin of Trajan, and other material indicative of occupation. Ditch (7) was packed with pottery in a deposit of fine sandy loam and crushed charcoal which was substantially different from the plough-wash sediments in all other gullies and ditches. A concentration of post-holes (P2) lay adjacent to the south. However, there were no indications of substantial buildings, nor enough material to suggest a long occupation. The post-holes were cut one into another indicating replacement, but no individual structures could be differentiated. The buildings to be inferred would hardly have been suitable for other than temporary shelter, animal penning, or barns.

Roman pottery over ring ditch A, and post-structure (P1), suggest a second focus of activity at this corner of the central enclosure. It is probable that there was some reorganisation or replacement of field boundaries in the second century, gully (8) probably replaces the gully (4), and gullies (1)–(4) were probably fully silted at this time.

Concentrations of burnt charcoal and soil (Hearths 1, 2, and 3), within the upper silts of ring ditch A, indicated the periodic necessity for scrub clearance. The occurrence of charcoal, throughout all levels of plough-wash, suggested

that this was carried out occasionally, and was indicative of periodic land use and the rotation of arable and pasture areas.

A series of soil pits (13) (14) and (15) were dug around the boundary of the second/third century 'enclosure'. Two burials (B1) and (B2) were also placed in the corner of a field at the limits of the habitation site. B1 was a cremation in a second/third century 'seconds' pot, and adjacent was an extended inhumation (B2) lying roughly north-south with the head to the north (Plate 2). Both were cut into the upper ring ditch silts of E.

A single coin of Trajan was recovered from the upper ditch silts of ring ditch D.

Articulated cattle bones (CB1 and 2) were found in the silts of (2) and (9), indicating stock slaughter on site (see below p 45), and a single grain of hulled barley was recovered from the lower plough-wash silts of ring ditch E.

Interpretation of this evidence suggests that the boundaries served as field divisions between animal grazing, arable fields, and at one point an 'habitation' area. The lack of habitation debris prior to the later 2nd century indicates that when the fields were laid out they were the 'marginal out-fields' of settlement, within the flood-plain of the river. However the fields must have been at times accessible in late autumn and early spring for the harvesting and planting of grain-crops, which shows that these fields were used to their fullest extent. In the second/third centuries, there was a short period of occupation without significant buildings which may indicate additional pressure on land. The area reverted to out-field management after this habitation ceased.

The occurrence and absence of second and third century pottery in the boundary gullies of this field unit are shown in Fig 1C. (second/third century pottery also occurred in the upper plough-wash silts of Ring ditch D on the north western side, but shading for this has been omitted for clarity). This pottery was derived from a habitation area centred on ring ditch D and defined by gullies (7)–(12), and much of it occurs in the gully and ring ditch silts as a result of ploughing after habitation ceased.

The absence of second/third century pottery from the lower plough-wash silts of A-E and gully (6), and throughout the silts of gullies (1)–(4), suggests that they were filled by the second century. The only pottery recovered from these deposits was Early Iron Age, highly abraded, and presumably residual. Much of the lower plough-wash





Plate 1 The site prior to quarrying



silts of the ring ditches accumulated before the first century BC. That other of the field unit gullies were *not* filled by the second century, since they contain pottery of the second to third centuries, can only be explained in two ways:—

(i) *The Gullies were all cut at the same time.*

In this case there was initially no habitation on the site, and that the gullies were filling as a result of differential ploughing, due to earthwork obstacles, hedging and penning arrangements. Only residual material from the Earlier Iron Age filled some of these ditches. The ring ditches must have filled with plough derived soils to different levels since all the gullies had varying relationships to them. Occupation in the second-third centuries subsequently led to pottery being deposited in those ditches not filled by previous ploughing.

(ii) *The gullies containing pottery of the second - third centuries were cut later.* In this case the gullies must have been cut to follow the alignment of gullies that had previously been filled. It follows therefore that the boundaries marked by the filled gullies were also marked by other means which would have been visible when the second set were cut, *i.e.* by hedges, banks or fencing. No direct evidence is provided for these in this field unit, but it is likely that they were present since the function of the boundaries was to pen stock from arable, and within habitation areas. This explains some functional replacement of boundaries, such as (4) by (8).

It is not possible on the stratigraphic evidence described to be certain of the correct sequence of events. However both alternatives allow that the gullies were filled at different rates; the Bronze Age mounds and ditches were still present as obstacles; field hedges and banks were in all probability present; the fields were initially farmed as out-fields, and they were laid-out prior to the later second century A.D.

The distribution of the second/third century pottery shows that gullies (1) - (4) filled first of all. These are the outermost boundaries of this group of fields. It is likely that they were hedged to pen the 'stock' between them, which would suggest the the gullies were filled as a result of arable ploughing of the areas to the north and west of (1) - (3) and (6), and to the east of (4). The penning between these outer gullies would have served to separate stock, and in the 2nd to 3rd centuries

habitation. Ploughing after habitation ceased also included the central 'stock/habitation' area, which might suggest that the site was subsequently used only for arable, or at very least there was a change in the land-management policy.

It should also be noted that none of the boundaries of this field unit are aligned with or make use of the palisaded boundary (5). In addition no Belgic pottery was present in the area of the ring ditches or in the gullies of this field system. It would therefore seem likely that this boundary (5) was redundant when this field unit was laid out. This evidence suggests that field unit II was constructed at the end of the first century A.D.

#### THE POST THIRD CENTURY LAND USE

The second/third century habitation was ploughed after its desertion. Ploughmarks that must have been covered during the next seasons ploughing by material derived from the mound and the occupation debris that previously lay on it, were noted on the berm of ring ditch D. These varied from 4-10cm in width, and were only up to 2cm deep. The profile was variable and not well preserved in the gravel subsoil. They ran discontinuously in parallel groups spaced as little as 20cm apart (Fig 1C). They succeeded in reducing the mound to an irregular angular plan. Two hearths, (H4) and (H5) cut into the upper ring ditch silts were of a specific type, and charcoal from them gave radio-carbon determinations of

H4 : 310 a.d. ± 80 years (HAR - 1004)

H5 : 530 a.d. ± 70 years (HAR - 711)

The difference in date is somewhat surprising because of the identical nature of the two hearths. Both were cut about 15cm into upper plough-wash silts, at the bottom of each was laid a flat bed of rounded firecracked sandstones (up to 15 cm size). The cut was about 1.4m long and 0.8m wide with rounded ends. The hearths were orientated in exactly the same direction, roughly north-south, and both were cut in the same position relative to their respective ring ditches. The ring ditches and their mounds must therefore have still survived as earthworks. The bases of these two hearths were covered with charcoal of hawthorn (*Crataegus sp.*) and firecracked flint. No suggestion as to the function could be made, but that they had a specific use rather than being the sites of field clearance fires is certain. The origin of the stone was not ascertained.

A shallow burial (B3) lay just below the modern ploughsoil on the inner lip of ring ditch C. The



burial was incomplete but may have been flexed. It was laid east-west with the head to the west, and was accompanied by the remains of an iron knife, which was laid behind the pelvis and pointed to the head (Plate 3). Burials accompanied by this type of grave goods are usually Saxon of sixth or seventh century date (Meaney and Hawkes, 1970).

### THE MEDIEVAL OCCUPATION

#### *Field Unit III and final plough erosion of the ring ditch cemetery.*

Medieval pottery was present above and around the cropmarks in the northern corner of the site (unit III). Information was recovered during quarry stripping of the area, but it was not possible to examine the exposed features by proper excavation. It is likely, however, that they date to this period. Part of a shallow dish in a fine sandy fabric of the 14th century was recovered from the small pit (M1) on the southern boundary of this cropmark (Fig 1C). Two parallel features (M2) occurred at a very high level, and cut across the outer lip of ring ditch B. These also cut across the top of earlier plough-soils, and what may be the remains of an outer bank to this ring ditch. They did not touch the gravel subsoil. Both were linear and parallel, but with a very irregular and discontinuous profile of up to 70cm wide and 10cm deep. Their lines were approximately 130cm apart. These survived just below the modern ploughsoil and may represent the silted remains of medieval ploughing.

A silver coin of 1561 was recovered from the base of the modern plough-soil to the east of ring ditch E.

### DISCUSSION

The post-Bronze Age settlement can be divided into five periods; Earlier Iron Age, Later Iron Age, First to Third century A.D., post-Roman and medieval. In all of these periods only partial survival of material and structures occurred, due to progressive degradation by ploughing, and erosion of the site along its southern edge by the shifting course of the river Great Ouse. No sharp divisions between these periods could be identified to provide certain dates of abandonment, desertion and re-occupation. However, it was possible from the excavated evidence and intensive survey of the surrounding area to discern a remarkable similarity between the settlement and landuse patterns of the Bronze Age, Roman and Medieval periods.

The Bronze Age settlement pattern for the area is discussed in Woodward (1978). The Early Bronze Age ring ditch burial cemetery (circa 1700 b.c.), and the ring ditch site 3573 (Fig 1B), were located on marginal land within the floodplain of the river. The associated habitation was located nearby above this floodplain, at the junction of the Upland clays and the gravel terrace. A large

concentration of knapped flint debris was found in the turf line of ring ditches B and C, which could be dated to circa. 1100 b.c. from associated secondary burials. This suggests that, whilst the site continued to be used for burial, habitation episodes also occurred sporadically. This pattern is repeated on the ring ditch sites at Milton Keynes (Green 1974) and at Radwell (Hall and Woodward, 1977). The carbon dates and a summary discussion of the settlement and habitation characteristics of these ring ditches in the Great Ouse Valley can also be found in Hall and Woodward (1977).

Use of the site continued into the first millennium BC. Residual Earlier Iron Age pottery was found in the plough-wash soils which infilled the features of later periods, but there was no structural evidence associated with this period. At most the surviving evidence suggests that the site was used for temporary habitation, and could therefore still be regarded as marginal land used seasonally, and probably sporadically.

A major boundary defence was built across the site, probably in the late first century BC. This separated the fields to the east from the barrow cemetery, and probably served as a land-holding or territorial division. Some form of continuity with the Bronze Age might be suggested, if the cemetery is regarded as having been located on marginal land at the edge of a territory.

At some stage in the first century AD the agricultural use of the ring ditch cemetery area was regularised by the enclosure of fields with small hedged gullies. These were presumably constructed to separate livestock from arable areas. In the second century AD the field unit was adapted and reorganised with a central 'enclosure' around ring ditch D being used for habitation, but without significant buildings being constructed. There was evidence for stock slaughter on site from the first century BC to the third century AD. The stratigraphic evidence also suggests that ploughing occurred throughout this period, in spite of seasonal flooding and Bronze Age obstructions. The use of such land for habitation suggest not only land pressure but also perhaps short spells of drier climate.

However, neither farming nor habitation were ever intensive or permanent. At times the fields were presumably just used for seasonal grazing, and scrub would grow. Burning of such scrub is attested by the charcoal deposits within the silt layers. One unsolved problem is the location of the farm from which these fields were worked,



which was presumably above the floodplain.

A more intensive settlement (482), of the first – second century AD and situated about a mile away at TL 144539, could be associated with the development and farming of these fields, (Fig 1B). This site has been described by Granville Rudd (see below). It provides evidence for pottery manufacture, which could be connected with the occurrence of the ‘seconds’ pot used for the cremation (B1) in the ring ditch silts of E.

The number of well dated field systems and settlements of this type and period are few along the Great Ouse valley. The five sites of this period on the gravel terrace which have been excavated in some detail are at Odell (SP 956568), Radwell (TL 010574), Bromham (TL 017573), Elstow (TL 050473), and Newnham (TL 073493). These are shown in Fig 1A, (i) – (v). Of these sites only two give any detailed evidence on the settlement fields; those at Radwell and Odell.

At Radwell (Hall, 1973), the fields of the settlement are smaller, more numerous and organised on a more regular grid. They varied in size from 12m to 20m wide, and 15m to 56m in length, and could be dated to the second and third centuries AD. There was also evidence for more substantial associated buildings, although these were not certainly domestic. This complex was situated on a part of a well drained gravel terrace, which was not particularly subject to flooding. It was suggested that there was some evidence for a ‘villa’ type building to the south. Contemporary burials were located inside one of the fields nearest to the buildings, and these were taken to indicate that at least part of the buildings were domestic, as it was unlikely that burials would be sited near purely farm buildings (Hall, 1973, 70). However, the reverse argument was used for Iron Age burials on the site (Hall, 1973, 71). The location of Burials (B1) and (B2) at Roxton on the edge of one of the fields adjacent to a temporary habitation area, perhaps points to a medial view. That is, burials related to rural farming settlements were located in nearby fields, but the status of that field was in no way different from its neighbours, and that its distance from the habitation site was not important. The same is true for the burials at Odell (Dix, 1980).

The fields at Odell were rectilinear and regularly grouped along a driveway running down to the river floodplain. They were in use from the first to fourth century AD. Again, as at Radwell and Roxton, the farm was partly located on the site of a

Bronze Age cemetery. Some of the fields too, were of comparable size and they were closely associated with a farm and habitation areas. As on the previous sites the ditches of these fields were cut to provide divisions between animal penning/pasture and arable areas. The evidence from the fields themselves indicated that shallow holes were cut to retain water for animals, and that hedges were planted alongside the field boundary gullies.

Other excavated sites along the Great Ouse cannot be closely compared with the site at Roxton, because of incomplete excavations, the partial survival evidence, and the different status of the sites. All are habitation complexes; Elstow (Woodward, 1977) and Bromham (Tilson, 1973), were ‘farms’ of Later Iron Age to third century date, and Newnham was a 1st century farm which appears to have developed into a villa/farm in the 2nd to 3rd centuries (cf. *Britannia* (5), 1974, 435). Also, none of these sites can be interpreted as being located on ‘marginal’ land and none are (significantly) associated with Bronze Age cemetery areas, as at Radwell, Odell and Roxton. The continuing use of the site at Roxton into the post-Roman period can be paralleled at Odell, but the nature of the ‘settlement’ was not defined. The charcoal type present in the two hearths of the 4th to 6th centuries AD was chiefly blackthorn and hawthorn (*Cretaeus sp.*) which might suggest that cleared land was reverting back to thorn scrub. The post-Roman settlement evidence at Odell was also limited, but the presence of three timber constructed wells showed that farming may have continued into the 6th century (Dix, 1980).

The closely spaced parallel and right angular cropmarks in the northern corner of the site produced 14th century pottery. Possibly these identify the position of medieval barns or outbuildings on the edge of meadow land. Ploughmarks (M2) on the edge of ring ditch B and the total erosion of all earlier earth works, show that the area continued to be used for arable, and that the area was part of the open fields of Roxton village, which is itself in a classic settlement position above the floodplain of the river at the junction of glacial clays and the gravel terrace (Woodward 1978). Similar closely intersecting cropmarks appear on the other side of the river at Blunham (615). These may also be medieval since they continue along the alignment of the medieval village street to the south.

River erosion and the use of land for pasture to the south makes it impossible to give the limits of



the site in this area. Site 1477 (cf below) does not exist, being a misinterpretation of aerial photographs. The cover of alluvium on the area between the confluence of the Great Ouse and Ivel makes it likely that this area was unsuitable for arable fields at any time in the past. Today it is permanently pastured meadowland.

The status of the site at Roxton can be seen as being similar for all periods of use. In the Bronze Age it was used for a planned cemetery and sporadic or seasonal habitation on the edge of settlement. Later this marginal land continued to be used for organised out-fields of settlement and as an occasional burial place. Sporadic habitation episodes on the site were temporary and presumably related to changes in land management, population pressures, and climatic variation.

## THE FINDS

### THE EARLIER IRON AGE POTTERY

(Fig 2, 1-4)

All the earlier Iron Age pottery recovered from the site was much abraded and occurred residually in the later 'plough-wash' silts of ring ditches A-E or later field gullies. The only diagnostic rims and bases came from the upper plough-wash of ring ditch C and the lower plough-wash of ring ditch D.

These sherds were characterised by being hand-made, fired at low temperatures, and oxidised on the external margins, but with a brown-grey to black reduced core. The material was frequently gritted with white angular flint (up to 1 mm) and with occasional grog. Some sherds were soft and soapy in texture, but others were harder with angular breaks. The surfaces were frequently pitted, with some vegetable tempering often apparent and with grit inclusions often protruding. Finger pressed surfaces were frequent. The surface of some sherds were harder and smoothed in treatment, more reminiscent of Bronze Age urn material. One body sherd from the lower plough-wash of ring ditch C had a ring join, and another from the same context had a slight thickening and external curve which could possibly represent the base of a collar, but was too fragmentary to illustrate. All the diagnostic rim and base sherds from this broad range of material are illustrated. (Fig 2, 1-4).

Although these fabrics have close affinities with the Bronze Age urn material, they can be clearly differentiated on the basis of inclusions, hardness and surface treatment. Although none of this material can be closely dated, its origin in the early centuries of the first millennium BC is likely. It is markedly different from the fabrics and forms of the Later Iron Age and Roman periods.

1 Simple everted rim, grey-brown reduced core with light brown external and internal margins. Mica gritted sandy fabric with small angular flint and grog inclusions. Slightly soapy to the touch but with protruding grits. (*Ring ditch C, u.p.w.*)

- 2 Shoulder with oblique 130° angled spatula impressions. Grey brown reduced core with red-brown external margin. Sandy fabric with angular flint grits. Slightly soapy to the touch with protruding grits internally and a smoothed external surface. (*Ring ditch C, u.p.w.*)
- 3 Base with vertical finger grooves. Black reduced core with red brown external and internal margins. Occasional mica sand grits and grog tempers. Slightly soapy to the touch, with a pitted external surface due to vegetable tempering. (*Ring ditch D, l.p.w.*)
- 4 Base sherd, grey-brown reduced core with angular flint grits. Slightly soapy to the touch with protruding grits. External surface highly abraded. (*Ring ditch D, l.p.w.*)

### THE FIRST CENTURY 'BELGIC' POTTERY

by Brian Dix

(Fig 2, 5)

A number of much abraded pieces of a first century AD 'butt' beaker vessel were recovered from the plough-wash silts of boundary (5). The cordoned wall of a sole diagnostic piece is illustrated (Fig 2, 5). The vessel was hand-made and probably finished on a 'tournette'. The exterior is burnished. The soft, reduced fabric is of a 'Romanising' type: fine dark grog has been added to the slightly sandy clay matrix, which also contains mica and occasional white angular flint grits. The vessel has been fired black at the exterior surface with a grey core and brown inner surface.

Similar fabrics occur at other sites along the Great Ouse Valley but no other butt beaker as thick walled as this example has yet come to the writer's attention.

### THE ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY

by Brian Dix and Peter Woodward, with a contribution on the Samian pottery by Hedley Pengelly

(Fig 2, 6-22, Fig 3, 23-45)

The stratified Romano-British pottery was recovered from the boundary ditches of a series of small rectilinear field gullies of field unit II, from the upper plough-wash deposits in the Bronze Age ring ditches A, D, and E, and from some rubbish pits and series of post-holes and slots representing timber buildings. However, the small quantity of material so recovered and the consequent impracticability of arranging it into closely stratified groups invalidates any examination in terms of spatial location. Nevertheless, although deriving from a number of different features and levels, the pottery represents a fairly homogeneous collection of material dating at the earliest from the mid- to the late second century AD. The almost total absence of flanged dishes and colour-coated bowls from the Oxford region, which become important elements in pottery assemblages of the area from the late - third century onwards (cf. Woods, 1973), would further suggest that the Roxton material was deposited in the century after c. A.D. 170. Yet, although many of the sherds probably relate to an activity within this period, the present paucity both in the discovery and publication of well-stratified and securely dated groups of pottery from comparable sites in the immediate area precludes the possibility of any finer dating. In



the following catalogue of the pottery, those sherds which might be considered most diagnostic, by being described in detail, are therefore intended to suggest a chronological context for the other material. Their find-spots are given in terms of the features illustrated at fig 1C, with the abbreviation *u.p.w.* used to denote the upper plough-wash of the ring ditches.

### The Samian Pottery

by Hedley Pengelly

#### (a) Plain forms (not illustrated)

With the exception of a single first century A.D. piece, no. 2 below, all the plain samian forms date from the Antonine period:

- 1 Form 33. Central Gaulish. Antonine. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 2 Part of a large cup of form 35. The rather hard, pale micaceous fabric, slightly pitted, and the very patchy pale orange-to reddish-brown micaceous slip, externally lustrous, internally matt, and partly worn away, suggest first century origin at Lezoux. First century Lezoux ware is generally inferior to contemporary South Gaulish samian. Often the wide range of fabrics and slips are of very poor quality due to technical shortcomings and the use of unsuitable clay. Common enough at Lezoux, these efforts, not surprisingly, achieved little success further afield, and in Britain distribution is confined to sites in the south. Export from Lezoux to Britain fell under Nero and Vespasian and was probably confined to the period c. A.D. 55-75. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 3 Part of the rim of a large deep-sided dish of form 31. Central Gaulish. Mid-to late-Antonine. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 4 Form 31R. Central Gaulish. Antonine, not earlier than A.D. 150. (*Gully 10*).
- 5 Three joining fragments, slightly burnt, of a very large dish of form 36. Central Gaulish, with plain rim similar to examples from Pudding Pan Rock (cf. Oswald & Pryce 1920, pl. LIII, 19). Probably late-Antonine. (*Gully 8*).

#### (b) Decorated Samian (Fig 2, 6).

A fragment from the base of a large bowl of form 37, Central Gaulish, in the characteristically untidy style of Secundus I of Lezoux (cf. Simpson & Rogers, 1969, fig 2.4, and Stanfield & Simpson 1958, pl. 154. 14-16, there assigned to Pugnus). These bowls give most of the detail on the Roxton sherd which has a double-medallion or festoon; hare (Dechelette 1904, 950A, variant); gadroon (cf. Rogers 1974, U153); cornucopia (U245) and triple leaf (H109). Secundus was a contemporary of Cinnamus. His work is relatively common at military sites in northern Britain and in the Danubian provinces which formed a major market for Central Gaulish ware in the second half of the second century (e.g. Karnitsch 1959, Taf. 56, 4, 5). c. AD 150-80. (*Ring ditch D u.p.w.*)

### The Coarse Pottery

#### (a) Mortaria

- 7 Wall-sided mortarium with grooved wall Oxford ware finished with orange wash. Late-second to mid-third

century A.D. cf. Young, 1977 type M15. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*).

- 8 Mortarium with upstanding rim and a downward hanging flange with closed hook. Oxford ware, slightly overfired. Second half of the third century A.D. cf. Young, 1977, type M18.3. (*Gully 7*).

#### (b) Colour-coated wares

- (i) Beakers with plain or cornice rims (Gillam 1970, types 77, 84-5 and 89; cf. also Hartley 1960, fig 4.1) are characteristic of the earliest period of colour coated production in the lower Nene valley, c. A.D. 170-240. Of the several examples of this type of vessel recovered during the excavations, the following are illustrated.
- 9 Beaker with plain rim in fine white paste with a slip coat which has fired light brown on the outer surface and darker on the inside of the vessel. Below a double groove a row of applied pellets forms the upper edge to some animal scene *en barbotine* (*Gully 7*).
- 10 Beaker with cornice rim. Formerly decorated with zoomorphic motifs as 4 above. The slightly sandy orange paste bears a dark olive slip. (*Gully 7*)

#### (ii) Bowls

- 11 Small bowl with fairly upright sides decorated with a band of rouletting. The fine white fabric is coated with a brown slip and is similar to examples from East Northamptonshire for which no precise source has yet been identified (cf. *Britannia vii. 1976. p.63*). (*Gully 7*).
- 12 Wall-sided bowl with grooved rim. White colour-coated ware from central and southern parts of the Oxford potting zone (Young, 1973 p. 110; 1977, p. 120). Probably current by the mid-third century A.D. Cf. Young, 1977, type WC3. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*).
- 13 Rim of medium-mouthed bowl in a hard fine grey-white paste with olive grey slip. (*Gully 7*).

#### (iii) Dishes

- 14 Segmental dish, the form of which possibly derives from the Samian dish Dr. 36. Hard smooth grey-white paste with olive grey slip. A running scroll decoration *en barbotine* decorates the inside of the rim below a pronounced groove and recalls similarly designed vessels manufactured in the lower Nene valley c. A.D. 210-40 (cf. Hartley 1960, fig 4 and Dannel 1973, fig 1, 1a-b). (*Gully 7*).
- 15 Lid of 'Castor box' decorated with wedge-shaped rouletting. Its somewhat sandy orange paste is coated with a dark olive grey slip. The type appears to have been made at most of the lower Nene valley kilns from the late-second century until the end of production (cf. Hartley 1960, Fig 4. 17). (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*).

#### (c) Other pottery

Among the non-imported wares at Roxton the following broad classes of fabric have been distinguished.

- (a) A fine relatively smooth-textured fabric, easily scratched. The basic colour of the oxidised version is orange often with a grey core. The reduced colour ranges from light to dark grey. The sandy matrix has small quartzite and mica grits with occasional medium sized



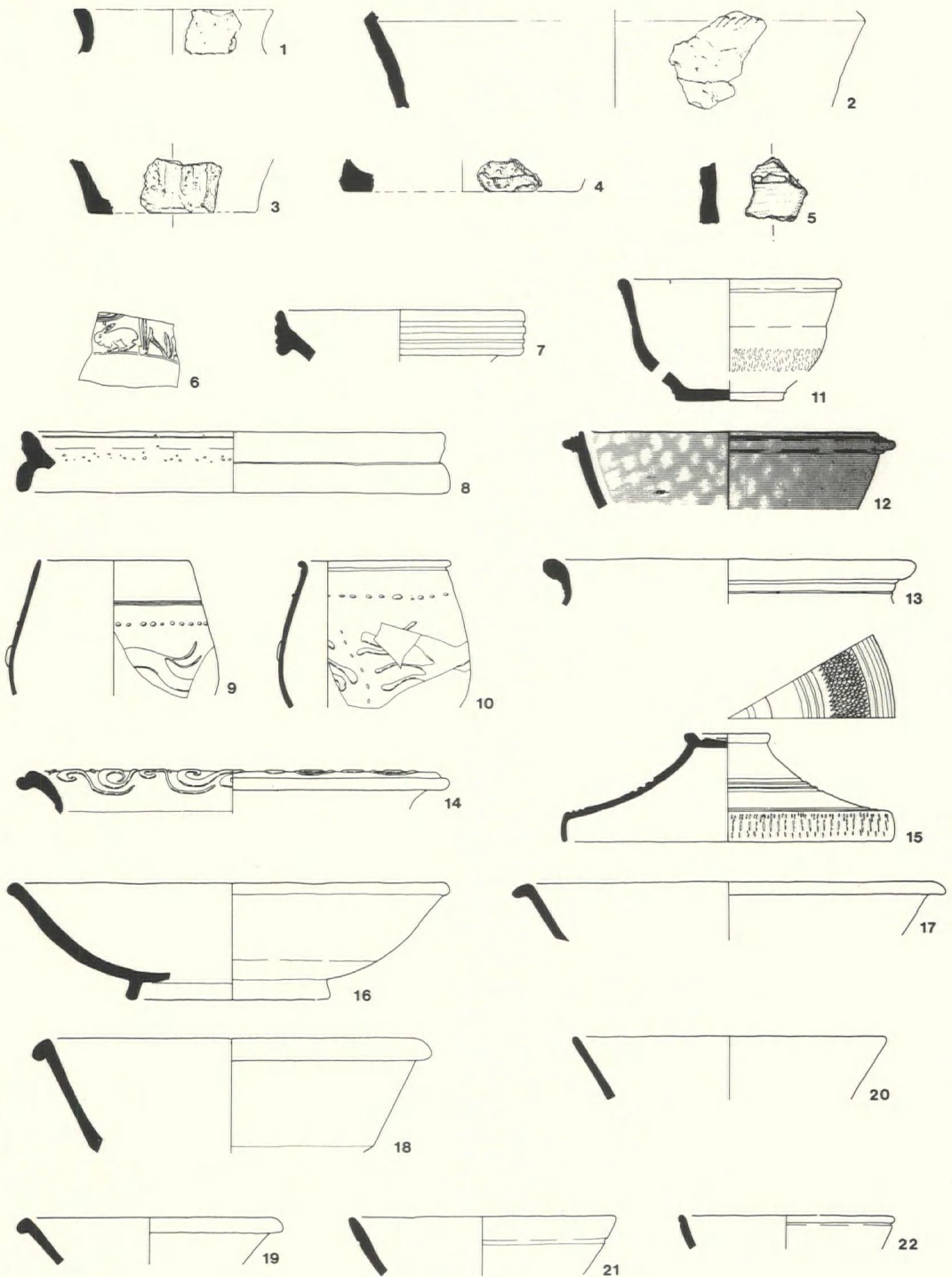


Figure 2 Iron Age and Romano-British pottery, 1-22  
(scale ¼)



flint grits. Voids derive from occasional shell impurity or the loss of grits resulting from the rather crumbly nature of the fabric. Within the tradition of local oxidised wares which included those of Oxfordshire and other areas (e.g., Young, 1977, p.185).

- (b) A smooth fabric with a slightly 'soapy' texture. Predominantly a fine reddish brown to light buff colour which is often differentially fired. Well integrated into the fabric are quantities of ground shell, varying in size from extremely fine to thin plates up to 5mm across.
- (c) A very soft 'soapy' fabric which is orange in colour and sometimes differentially fired. A high shell content, mainly of a flat disc type, causes the pot to spall and shear easily. Its looseness in the clay matrix and subsequent high rate of erosion have resulted in a 'corky' or 'vesicular' appearance. There is also a medium-sized grog content which is rather badly integrated into the matrix material.
- (d) A fine laminated white fabric with a rough surface resulting from the even distribution of small quartzite grits throughout the matrix. It is a hard tough fabric with occasional voids.
- (e) A fine sandy orange-red fabric with a grey core which has been reduced to a dark grey colour at its surface and contains an even distribution of small-to medium-sized mica and quartzite grits.
- (f) A fine grey to buff sandy fabric which has evenly distributed within it small quartzite and mica grits. Its surface texture is fine and smooth as a result of burnishing.

Most of these fabrics were presumably manufactured locally in a range of vessel types with many examples produced in reduced finishes.

(i) Bowls and dishes

- 16 Bowl. Fabric A. The vessel is in close imitation of samian form Dr. 31 even to the extent of reproducing the internal ridge at the junction of the wall and base. The prototype was common in the late Antonine period (Oswald & Pryce, 1920, p.183). This derivative ought probably to be dated to the succeeding half century or so, although later copies of the same vessel form occurred in Oxfordshire colour-coated wares from the late-3rd century onwards (cf Young 1977, types C44-46), and so a later date cannot be entirely discounted. (*Pit 14*).
- 17 Bowl or dish with a small, thin, slightly out-curving rim. Perhaps similar to the last. Fabric A, reduced. (*Gully 10*).
- 18 Dish with a heavy, triangular, undercut rim. Fabric A reduced. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*).
- 19 Dish with a short thick rim of a slightly triangular section. Fabric A reduced (*Pit 14*).
- 20 Straight-sided bowl or dish. Fabric A reduced. (*Pit 14*).
- 21 Straight-sided dish. Fabric F. Slight groove decorates the outside wall below the rim. (*Pit 13*).
- 22 Bead-rim dish. As Fabric A but with surface differentially fired to an oxidised buff colour (*Gully 8*).

(ii) Vessels with constricted mouths

With one exception, Fig 3, 45, the remaining coarse pottery sherds belong to vessels characterised by their

constricted mouths. The profile below the rim ranges from a straight length or 'neck' which ends in a pronounced turn to shoulder (*fig 3, 23-25*), to a less distinct neck with a gradual turn towards the shoulder (*fig 3, 42, 43*). However, whilst the material could be categorised in terms of necked jars and bowls, such an analysis, based inevitably upon a definition of proportion (cf Webster, 1976, pp. 17-20) cannot be applied in those instances where little of the profile survives below the rim. Accordingly, the examples given below are grouped to illustrate the variety of forms present at Roxton. The vessels belong to that tradition of pottery manufacture which stemmed from such 'belgic' designs as the cordoned jar with its medium or narrow neck (cf. Kenyon, 1948, pp. 97-8), and which lasted in some areas well into the fourth century A.D. (e.g. *ibid.*, fig 54, 12; Woods, 1973, fig 8. F100). However, consistencies in vessel design and the widespread manufacture of the type have resulted in the impossibility of arranging a detailed chronological sequence for the product (cf. Johnston, 1969, p. 86), and at best the Roxton examples can only be dated from their association with better classified sherds. The richness of vessel forms further suggests a variety of original function. However, the surviving nature of material precludes any arrangement in this way and would itself perpetuate an illdefined and already overworked method of classification.

- 23 Fabric A reduced. Rim turned out and slightly thickened. This vessel was formerly used as a cremation urn: the choice of a kiln-waster or more properly 'second', is interesting, apart from any religious considerations, for its implications regarding former marketing practices and for its suggestion of the location of a kiln site nearby. (*Deposited in u.p.w. of ring ditch E, B1*).
- 24 Fabric E reduced. Neck fairly straight to an out-curved rim. Grooves at the beginning of the shoulder. (*Pit 14*).
- 25 Fabric A reduced. Neck curved out slightly to a less pronounced rim than 24. Faint groove-tooling decorates neck. (*Gully 7*).
- 26 Fabric E reduced. High neck flaring into rim. (*Pit 13*).
- 27 Fabric A reduced. Rim rolled over and rounded; grooved neck. (*Gully 8*).
- 28 Fabric D. Neck fairly straight to an out-curved and somewhat rolled over rim. (*Pit 13*).
- 29 Fabric F reduced. Neck curved out slightly to an undercut rim. (*Pit 13*).
- 30 Fabric A reduced. Rim curved out and somewhat squarish in section (*Gully 7*).
- 31 Fabric C. Short neck curving into a heavy, flattish, rolled over rim. (*Gully 10*).
- 32 Fabric B reduced at outer surface. Fairly short neck curving into a more square rim than 31. (*Gully 28*).
- 33 Fabric C. Rim well curved out, flat on top. (*Gully 7*).
- 34 Fabric F reduced. Rim only slightly out-curved (*Gully 7*).
- 35 Fabric D. Rim everted, but not sharply so; grooved internally. (*Pit 13*).
- 36 Fabric A reduced. Short curved neck. Grooves at the beginning and just above the middle of the shoulder bulge. (*Gully 7*).



- 37 Fabric A reduced. Short curved neck (*Ring ditch D u.p.w.*)
- 38 Fabric A reduced. Short neck; rim curved right out to a thick squarish section. Groove at the beginning of the shoulder. (*Pit 14*).
- 39 Fabric C reduced at exterior. Rim rolled over to form a squarish section. (*Gully 7*).
- 40 Fabric B. As 34, but rim flatter (*Pit 14*).
- 41 Fabric C. Very straight quite short neck curving to a fairly flat angular rim as in 40. Slight groove above shoulder (*Gully 7*).
- 42 Fabric A reduced. Slightly curved neck; rim thickened and rounded. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 43 Fabric E reduced. Short neck curving to a rounded rim. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 44 Fabric A reduced. Slightly everted rim. (*Pit 14*).
- 45 Fragment of lid. Fabric A. (*Pit 14*).

### THE MEDIEVAL POTTERY

(Fig 3, 46)

A number of medieval sherds of a sandy fabric were recovered from the vicinity of group III field gullies, during quarry stripping of the area. Only one piece was diagnostic and this was part of a bowl, pushed into a shallow pit to the west of ring ditch E (Fig 1C, M1). This sherd is illustrated.

- 46 Shallow bowl or dish with upright folded rim. The sandy fabric is within the C6 range recognised at Bedford. (cf Baker and Hassall in Baker et al 1979 p. 172). It has a light brown core oxidized to a red brown on internal and external margins. The surfaces are rough and occasionally pitted where inclusions have been loosened. The external surface is smoke blackened, and the vessel is wheel thrown. (*Pit M1*).

### THE VENUS FIGURINES

by Frank Jenkins MA, PLD, FSA

(Fig 4 Nos 1-3)

All the pieces described are made of well levigated white pipe-clay and derive from possibly two statuettes. When complete they portrayed a female personage standing completely nude, grasping with her right hand a wayward tress of hair which falls over the front of the shoulder. In her left hand she supports a *tunica* which hung down to the ground by her left leg.

- 1 Two pieces which join, were of the front of the personage from the waist down to just below the knees. The left hand supports a *tunica* the lower part of which has gone through breakage. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*).
- 2 A portion of the front of possibly the same statuette as No. 1 *supra*. from just below the knees to the feet with a piece of the *tunica* attached to the left leg. (*Ring Ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 3 A small hollow domed plinth retaining a piece of the hem of the *tunica*. The fracture scar shows that this piece does not belong to No. 2 *supra*. (*Ring Ditch D, u.p.w.*)

The art type stems from that of the classical Roman goddess Venus Anadyomene, of which these statuettes are inferior Gallo-Roman copies. They were cast in two

piece clay moulds, one for the front and one for the back, and were mounted on separately made small hollow domed plinths. They were mass-produced in quantity in the various *officinae* situated in central Gaul, principally along the Allier and tributaries centred on Moulins-sur-Allier, which specialised in the production of a wide range of moulded clay statuettes of several types. It is clear that the Venus type was very popular and was widely exported to the western provinces. (Tudot, 1860; Rouvier-Jeanlin, 1972; Vertet and Vuillemot, 1974).

A significant quota penetrated the British market where, with slight variations in minor details this type is, on the present evidence, the most numerous of all the various types of Gallo-Roman clay statuettes found in the province. These statuettes of Venus are most numerous, and presumably were more popular as cult objects in the civilian areas of the province (Jenkins, 1958), particularly in those *civitates* in closer proximity to the Gallic mainland whence they were exported, and in the immediated homeland of cults with which they were associated (De Vesly 1909; Miln 1877; De Laet 1950).

The use of clay statuettes of the kind under discussion, as *ex votis* to the gods at temples, for domestic worship and as grave offerings is well attested (Jenkins 1958), but at present it is impossible to place the Roxton examples in any one of these categories. Without stressing the point here, the position of the site at Roxton is worthy of comment. It is sited near the junction of the River Great Ouse and the River Ivel, and it was at confluences that the Gauls tended to build shrines. In Britain altars to *Condatis*, the deity whose name means "the Joiner Together", have been found at two places situated at watersmeet in Co. Durham, viz:—Piercebridge and Chester-le-Street. There is also the Roman settlement known as *Condate* situated at the confluence of the River Weaver with its several feeders at Northwich in Cheshire. As the close association of the clay statuettes of Venus with the water-cults in Gaul is well attested, those examples found at Roxton would not be out of place close to the confluence of two rivers. It would not be beyond the bounds of possibility that there is a slight chance of the existence of an as yet undiscovered shrine at Roxton.

At present the chronology of the industry and the development of the export trade in Gallo-Roman clay statuettes has not been satisfactorily determined. On the basis of the evidence derived from excavations carried out at Gauting (Bavaria) and at Hofstade-bij-Aalst (Belgium) it appears that clay statuettes of this type of Venus had arrived at both places either in the reign of Hadrian, or in that of his successor Antoninus Pius, but certainly before A.D. 150. (Kellner, 1971; De Laet, 1950).

Not many of the examples which arrived in Britain as imports, have been found in stratified deposits associated with other archaeological material, but the available evidence suggests a date not earlier than A.D. 125 and not later than 150 A.D. The length of time that elapsed between the arrival in this country of these comparatively fragile objects and when they were discarded is not known. As objects of veneration a life of some twenty years might be the maximum, hence



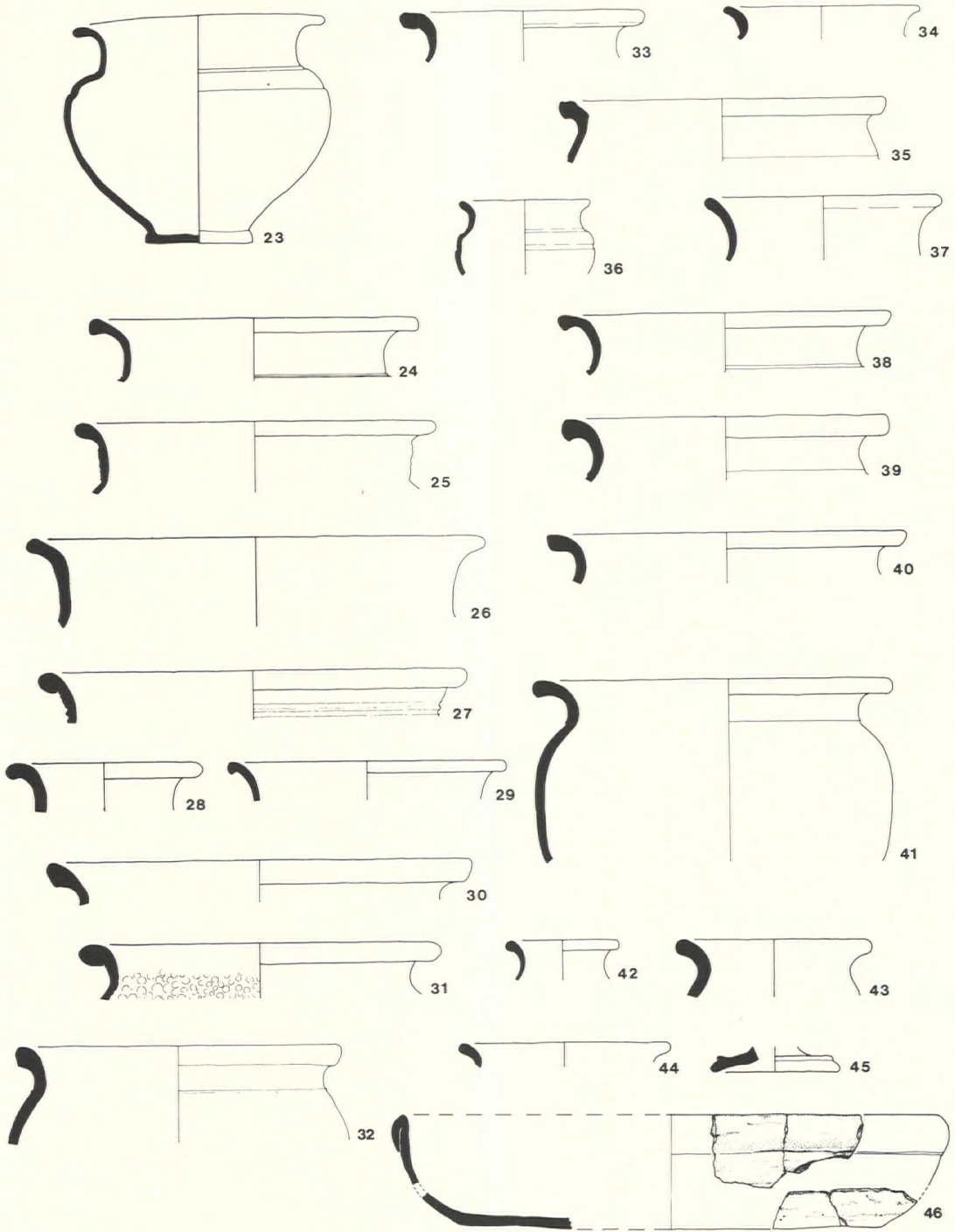


Figure 3 Romano-British pottery, 23-45; Medieval pottery, 46  
(scale  $\frac{1}{4}$ )



as the examples found at Roxton seem to have been imported between A.D. 125-150, and were recovered in a context dated by the associated material A.D. 170-270, they are best regarded as survivals in later debris.

### OBJECTS OF IRON

(Fig 4, 4-14. Fig 5, 15-16)

The majority of ironwork occurred in the 2nd/3rd century habitation context, much of it from the upper plough-wash silts on the northern side of ring ditch D. One concentration consisted of a punched iron plate, an iron bar and pieces of a barb-spring padlock (Fig 4, 9-11), possibly representing the remains of an iron bound box. Two hooks and a part of a handle (Fig 4, 13, 14) were recovered from pit 13. A quantity of nails were recovered from the site, of which a sample are illustrated. A reaping hook (Fig 5, 15), is a further indication of the arable nature of the site.

- 4 Iron nail with squared head, shaft broken. (*Ring ditch D u.p.w.*)
- 5 Iron nail with flattened head. Shaft broken. (*Ring ditch D u.p.w.*)
- 6 Iron nail with rounded head, possibly complete but point damaged, the most common type on site. (*Ring ditch D u.p.w.*)
- 7 Iron pin or nail with indented, concave, circular head. Squarish section to shaft. Possibly part of ornament. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 8 Broken-off head to heavy pin. Circular head. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 9 Iron plate with one or more punched holes, recovered in association with objects 10-12. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 10 Iron bar of square cross-section found in association with objects 9, 11 and 12. (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 11 Part of a barb-spring padlock. This can be paralleled in both civilian and military contexts (Cunliffe (1975), 241, Fig 128, 218) for object type and fuller note). (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 12 Iron plate and hook, possibly part of catch or lock (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 13 Iron-wire hook (broken) pit 13. (*Ring ditch D, pit 13*)
- 14 Iron hook or handle (Broken). (*Ring ditch D, pit 13*)
- 15 Reaping hook (twisted and bent). A type that is found in the Iron Age contexts and which continued in use into the Roman period. (cf Manning (1976), 30 and fig 8) (*Ring ditch D, u.p.w.*)
- 16 Iron knife accompanying crouched inhumation (B3). This object is incomplete and its precise type remains indeterminate. However its occurrence in a grave may indicate that it accompanied a burial of pagan Saxon date (cf. Meaney and Hawkes, 1970).

### OBJECTS OF BONE

(Fig 5, 17-18)

A simple ornamental bone pin was recovered from pit 14. This was complete with faceted sides to the shaft and an irregular hexagonal head and separated from the shaft by a single groove (Fig 5, 17). This approximates to Crummy type 2 (Crummy, 1979), but the conical head is absent. Possibly late second-third century AD.

A small bone wedge with green cuprous staining was

recovered from the upper plough-wash of ring ditch C. No Roman parallel could be found. It may be residual from an earlier period (Fig 5, 18).

### OBJECTS OF STONE

(Fig 5, 19-20)

Two pieces of 'Kimmeridge' shale armllets were recovered from the site, in the upper plough-wash deposits of ring ditches E and D. These were circular in section, lathe turned and both had a diameter of about 8 cm. This form is common from the second century onwards, (Calkin (1953)).

19 Shale armllet piece, radius about 8 cm (*Ring ditch E, u.p.w.*)

20 A single hone stone of a micaceous sandstone was recovered from the upper plough-wash of ring ditch D.

A fragment of Rhenish lava quern was recovered from gully 7. This was very fragmentary and damaged. Its original diameter was probably about 30cm. It was probably the lower stone of a pair (not illustrated).

### THE COINS

by John Turner, Bedford Museum

A single very badly worn and corroded coin was found in the upper plough-wash of ring ditch D. All that it was possible to say with certainty was that it was of *orichalcum* and a *dupondius*. The portrait resembles most closely Trajan, but the small fragment of obverse inscription still readable was not sufficient to confirm this.

A coin of Elizabeth I was recovered at the base of the modern plough-soil to the east of ring ditch E. This was a badly struck (hammered) silver  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Legend to the left on obverse and right on reverse was virtually absent.

Privy mark	—	lis
Obverse	—	Bust to the left with rose behind. Lead, E.D.G. ROSA. SINE, SPINA
Reverse	—	Royal arms, dated 1561, CIVITAS, LONDON

### THE ANIMAL BONES

by Annie Grant

The majority of the bones found at Roxton were found in Iron Age or Roman contexts. Over 80% of these were cattle bones, with sheep and horse bones next in importance. The most unusual feature of this group of bones was the presence of two partly articulated cattle spines (Fig 1C, CBI-2), one found in gully (2) running across ring ditch E and the other in gully 9 near ring ditch D. The bones found in boundary ditch (5) (Fig 1C, CB3) includes a high percentage of vertebral bones. The presence of these vertebrae may be due to a particular butchery technique practised by the people who used the site, where the limb bones and the meat were removed from either side of the vertebral column, which was then discarded as waste. The vertebrae found in the ditch (5) were sometimes coated with red ochre. This may indicate that some ritual significance was attached to the placing of the vertebrae in the ditches.

Sheep bones formed 9% of the Roman and Iron Age bones, and pig bones less than 1%. Horse bones were as



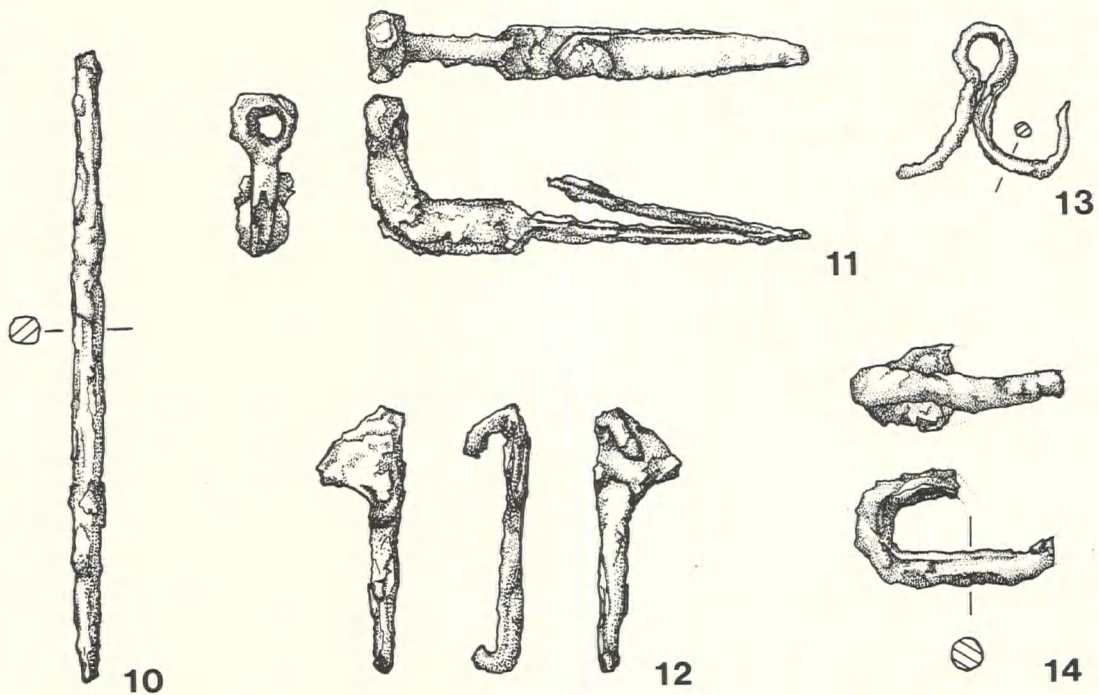
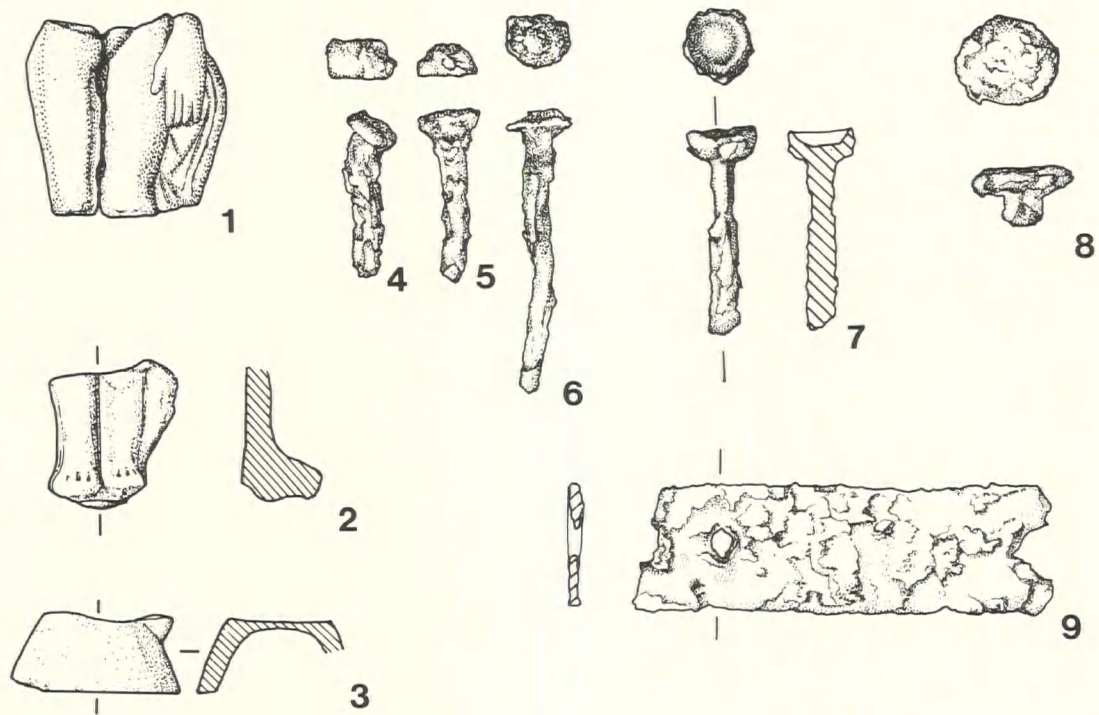


Figure 4 Romano-British pipe-clay Venus figurine, 1-3; and ironwork, 4-14 (scale ½)



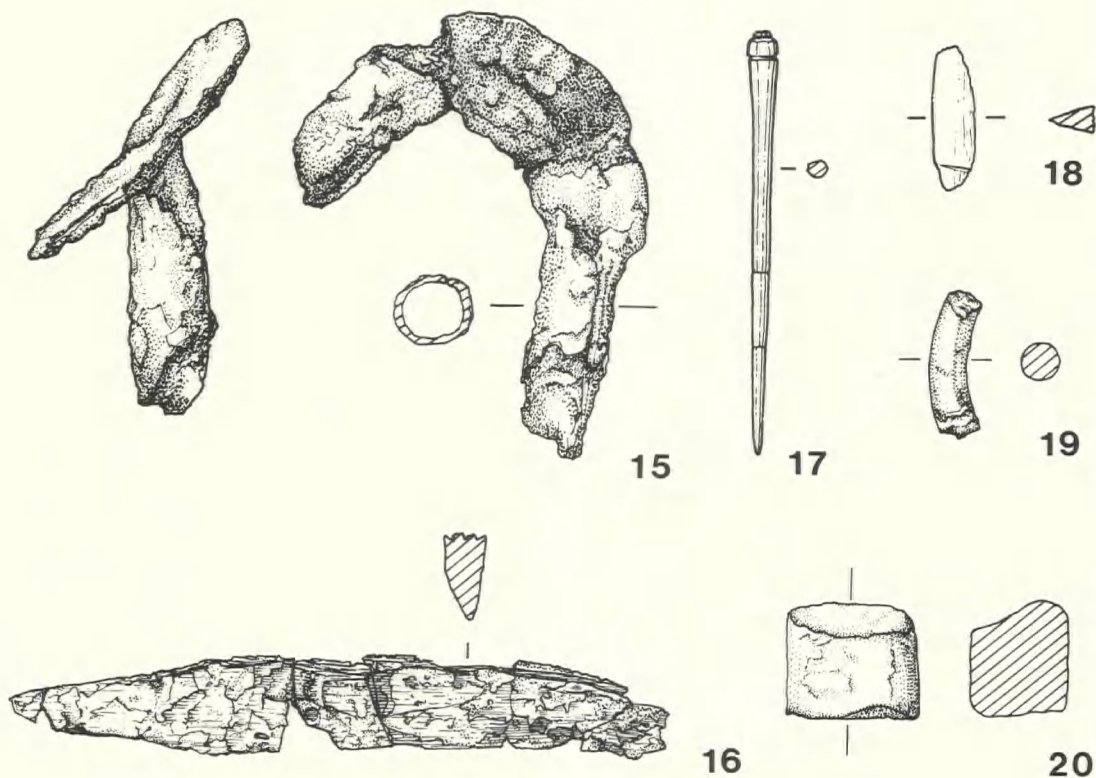


Figure 5 Romano-British ironwork, 15-16; bone objects, 17-18; and stone objects, 19-20 (scales: 15-17, 19-20 at  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; 18 at full size)

common as sheep bones in Roman contexts. The other animals, dogs, cats, red deer, birds and badgers were only represented by a very few bones.

The majority of the bones would appear to be the remains of the meals of animals that had probably been kept in the area of the site, and in this light the scarcity of pig bones and the relatively high numbers of horse bones is interesting. However, too few bones were recovered to allow any more than the most tentative of conclusions.

#### THE HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

by C.B. Denston, Department of Physical Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Of the post-Bronze Age human skeletal remains submitted to the department, two were from inhumations (B2) and (B3). One of these was extended (B2) and the other crouched and accompanied by an iron knife (B3) (plates 2 and 3). A third group of bones (B1) had been cremated and placed in a jar of 2nd/3rd century date. All burials were in a fragmentary or eroded state of preservation. All the remains have been retained in the Department of Physical Anthropology, Cambridge.

#### Burial B1

It is possible that these remains were not of a single individual but of two. However there were no duplicate portions of bones to substantiate this hypothesis. The fragments were of differing colours. This was probably because they received varying degrees of heat in the process of cremation.

Fragments of the skull and of certain postcranial bones were recognisable, and it would seem that some fragments of long bones of one colour were too large in proportion to belong with other fragments of a lighter colour and smaller proportion. These fragments were not of similar bones, but the relative size in their positions in the skeleton (e.g. radius and femur) would seem to suggest they were not from the same skeleton.

Colour: White - light brown.  
Length of fragments: 0-46mm  
Sex: Possibly male. ? Female.  
Age at death: Adults.  
Weight: 282.5gm.

#### Burial B2 (Plate 2)

The human remains submitted to the department for examination were in the main of the postcranial skeleton, through a few fragments of skull were present. The frag-





Plate 2 Extended Romano-British inhumation

mentary nature unfortunately made it impossible to record any of the usual biometric measurements on the skull, and only four of the long bones produced measurements from which a tentative reconstructed stature could be assessed.

From an examination of the innominate bones, it was clear that the individual was a female. This was substantiated by sexual features of other bones, and the overwhelming non-robust appearance of all of the remains. Owing to the inability to determine the development age by change at the pubic symphysis, it remained for the dental attrition to produce an age at death. Fortunately the right half of the mandible, and the right dental arcade of the maxilla were both preserved; the mandible having three molars, two premolars, a canine and a lateral incisor *in-situ*, and the maxilla producing one molar, one pre-molar, a canine and two incisors. The first premolar, and the first and second molars had been lost from the maxilla *anti-mortem*. The dental attrition of the teeth suggested a person possibly from forty to forty-five years. An approximate stature of 5' 1¾" was computed from the combined maximum length measurements of the femora, left radius and left ulna. Most body portions of the vertebrae were not preserved, and those that were preserved displayed erosion, the superior and inferior articular facets throughout these bones were well preserved, and those of the fourth and fifth lumbar vertebrae and the sacrum displayed the involvement of osteoarthritis. No caries or abscesses were noted in the mandible and maxilla, but resorption of the alveolar borders suggested some periodontal infection. The mandible fragment also displayed a non-metrical feature in the form of a torus in the area of the premolars and the first molar, and situated on the lingual surface of the corpus.

Sex: Female  
Age at death: 40-45 years  
Stature: 1.57 metres.

#### *Burial B3, (Plate 3)*

The remains were of a very fragmentary nature with many bones, or portions of bones missing, this preventing any attempt at reconstruction of individual bones. The skull was very fragmentary and displayed post-mortem erosion and obvious indications that it had suffered post-mortem distortion, possibly due to earth pressure. Though fragmentary, the portions of bones present suggested the individual was quite robust and certainly of male sex. An age at death was assessed from the state of attrition of the molar teeth *in-situ* in a portion of the maxilla and those from a portion of the mandible. 25-30 years was an approximate age. These teeth were first and second molars from the right side of the maxilla, and first, second and third molars with also a premolar from the left half of the mandible. None of the teeth displayed evidence of ante-mortem decay.

#### *The pre-Iron Age burials*

The human skeletal remains dated to the Neolithic and Bronze Age will be described with the details of the Bronze Age ring ditch cemetery.

#### *OTHER ROMAN MATERIAL*

A single piece of pale green bottle glass with surface lamination was recovered from the upper levels of pit (13).

Both tegulae and imbrices occurred in the upper levels of the ring ditch silts of D. Four pieces were noted but not collected. It is not likely, since they were so few in number, that they were used for roofing on this site.

Oysters were noted in the upper plough-wash of ring ditch D, and in pit (13).

#### *RESIDUAL MATERIAL*

Residual material from earlier periods was noted in the Roman levels. The earlier Iron Age pottery has been described in a previous section.





Plate 3 Crouched inhumation with iron knife

Two bronze pins from the upper plough-wash of D and in gully (7), were of a Bronze Age type. They were presumably disturbed from the ring ditch structure D, during the 2nd/3rd century occupation, or during the phase of ploughing which followed this. They were found in silts nearby the Roman Imperial coin (see previous). These will both be described in the report on the Bronze Age cemetery.

Worked flint was recovered from the site in all levels. This was identified as being residual from the Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation of the site, apart from a single gun flint found at the top of the ditch of ring ditch A. This material will be discussed in detail with the Bronze Age cemetery.

## SPECIALIST REPORTS AND OTHER NOTES

### THE SOILS AND SEDIMENTS

All the features on this site were cut into fluviatile sands and gravels and their associated soils of the flood plain terrace of the river Great Ouse. A general idea of the soils in the area can be found in King D.W. (1969). The soils here were gleyic brown earths of the Biggleswade series and the associated brown earths developed on the same parent material.

A full report on the soils and ring ditch sediments at Roxton has been prepared by Dr. H. Keeley and Mr. R. Allen (Keeley 1974; Keeley 1976). However, much of this is of a technical nature and more specifically relates to the Bronze Age ring ditch sites. A full description can be found in the site record and archive deposited in Bedford Museum, but that information which is of importance to the description of the Bronze Age mound structures and their subsequent erosion will be found in the second Roxton report.

### WOOD IDENTIFICATION

by Carole Keepax, Ancient Monuments Laboratory, Department of the Environment

Of the charcoal submitted to the laboratory for examination, only two samples were from the post-Bronze Age settlement levels. These were from the two hearths H4 and H5.

#### Hearth 4:

This sample consisted of three large bags full of charcoal. About 25% of one bag was identified. Most of the sample was blackthorn (*Prunus cf spinosa* L.), with some hawthorn-type (*Crataegus/Pyrus/Malus/Sorbus* sp.), and a small amount of buckthorn (*Rhamnus Catharticus* L.).

#### Hearth 5:

This sample consisted of hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.). Both branch and twiggy fragments were present.

The sample submitted from the Bronze Age levels of the site will be found described with the details of the Bronze Age ring ditch cemetery.

### CARBON DATES

by R.L. Otlet and A.V. Walker, Nuclear Physics Division, Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell

Two samples of charcoal from post 2nd/3rd century contexts were submitted for radio-carbon dating. These were from two hearths H4 and H5. Details of the method of measurement have been described in Otlet, R.L. and Walker; A.V. (1978).

#### Hearth 4

HAR - 1004: Charcoal of hawthorn sp. (ref wood identification), 310 a.d.  $\pm$  80 years.

#### Hearth 5

HAR - 711: Charcoal of hawthorn sp. (ref wood identification), 530 a.d.  $\pm$  70 years.

The difference in date from two stratigraphically identical features is discussed in the site description.

The samples submitted from the Bronze Age levels of the site will be found described with the details of the ring ditch cemetery. They have, however been previously published in Otlet R.L. and Walker A.J. (1978) and discussed more fully in Hall D.N. and Woodward P.J. (1977).



## GEOMAGNETIC MEASUREMENT

by Mike Barbetti, Oxford University Research Laboratory for Archaeology

A sample of the sandstones in the base of hearth (H4) were taken for the measurement of the preserved magnetic orientation. It was hoped that these measurements might contribute to a reference curve of earth's magnetic field changes *vis-a-vis* carbon-date; that is provide a 'geomagnetic date' for the hearth.

Preliminary basic measurements showed that the magnetic directions of the samples were scattered, suggesting that the stones were heated on more than one occasion and were rearranged between heating events. Consequently, it was not possible to provide a 'geomagnetic date' for the hearth.

## THE GRAIN AND SEED REMAINS

by J.R.B. Arthur, FLS

A single grain of six row hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) was recovered from the lower plough-wash of ring ditch E.

The other seeds and grain recovered from the site were from the central Bronze Age burial pits or ring ditches B and C. This material will be described with the report on the Bronze Age cemetery.

## THE ADJACENT CROPMARK SITE (482)

by G. Rudd, Longsands School St. Neots  
(Fig 1B)

This site (at TL 144539) was examined in 1969 when road improvements were made to the A428 road along the section between TL 148544 and TL 142536. A watch was kept for archaeological features when a new roadside drainage ditch was dug. The sections of numerous pits and ditches were revealed along its length with a concentration centred at about TL 145540. Pottery in these features was exclusively Roman and mainly of the late 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. A quantity of burnt clay, crushed charcoal and debris was suggestive of the near proximity of a pottery kiln. In a ditch partly overlying the brick pier of the gateway to 'High Barns' a skeleton of a man aged about 35 years was carelessly buried among burnt daub and building materials. No detailed excavation of these features was possible. The finds have been placed in Longsands School Museum.

## THE ADJACENT SITE (1477)

(Fig 1B)

The site (at TL 155533) is described in the Bedfordshire Sites and Monuments Record as the pit alignment discussed and described in 'A Matter of Time' (1960), 28-31. The gazetted site at Roxton has a N.G.R. at TL 157535 which is clearly erroneous since it is coincident with the ring ditch site described here. Re-interpretation of the aerial photographs cited (St. Joseph, WV 15-18, located in N.M.R. as 147/156536), shows that these may have been misinterpreted, and apart from the excavated site no others (in particular a pit-alignment) are present.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These excavations were carried out by Alison Taylor and Peter Woodward for the Department of the Environment and Bedfordshire County Council. The excavation of ring ditch A was carried out by Granville Rudd and pupils of Longsands School. All excavations were carried out in advance of gravel extraction and were only possible by the co-operation of the landowner, Philip Bath, and Redlands Gravel Company. The work was carried out over a long period of time (Autumn 1972 and Autumn 1974); excavation was fairly continuous with a small budget; and thanks are due to all those who periodically helped us on the site in a variety of weather conditions. Thanks are particularly due to Robert White, Fran O'Neill, Patrick Allen, David Wicks, Bob Mustoe, Tom Longford, Mark Gregson, Sharon Smith, John Martin, Bridget Andrews and Susan Seawright. Excavation was also greatly helped by groups from Luton Sixth Form College, U.S.A.F. with Sgt. Ross, the Police Cadet College (Bedford), Carlton House School and Bedford Teacher's Training College. Post excavation work was possible with the space provided by Bedford Museum. Thanks are due to many specialists; Annie Grant - animal bones, Brian Dix - Roman pottery, Frank Jenkins - Venus Figurine, Bernard Denston - The human skeletal remains, Carole Keepax - wood/charcoal identification, Helen Keeley and Ron Allen - the soils, Mike Barbetti - Geomagnetometry, John Turner - Coins, Bob Otlett (Harwell) - Carbon dates, J.R.B. Arthur - Seed remains, Arthur Apsimon - Bronze Age and Early Iron Age pottery, Richard Bradley - Flint, who provided reports on various aspects of the site, some of which have been published here and others will be published later with the report on the Bronze Age ring ditches. Thanks are also due to Christopher Chaplin who drew the Roman pottery, Anne Rotheram and Jane Birch who drew most of the finds, Peter Cox who arranged the figures for publication, and Portia Askew who did much of the typing.

Particular thanks are due to Brian Dix who offered many useful suggestions on aspects of the Roman settlement at Roxton and also to Evelyn and David Baker and others in the Conservation Section of Bedfordshire County Council who eased the problems of writing up this report whilst in Dorset. Acknowledgements are also due to Ken Field for the publication of his superb aerial photograph of the Roxton site and to the Ordnance Survey for permission to publish plans based on 1:10,000 mapping and the Revised map of Roman Britain.

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*The Bedfordshire Archaeological Council is indebted to the Department of the Environment for a grant towards the costs of this paper.*