

NOTES

A polished stone axe from Streatley

JAMES DYER

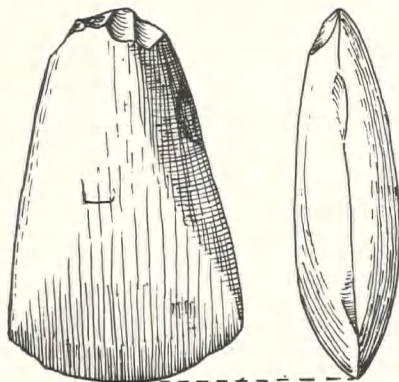


Fig 1 Greenstone axe from Streatley.
(Scale $\frac{1}{2}$)

The polished greenstone axe illustrated was found at Streatley in 1976 north-east of the point where the track of the old Bedford Road crosses

the Streatley – Barton Hill Farm road (TL 085-285), and about 1 km north-west of the ring ditches excavated at Barton Hill Farm in 1954-5 (*Beds. Arch. J.*, 1, 1962, 1-24). It is now in the possession of Mr James Ashley-Cooper of Hexton Manor.

The axe is quite small, measuring only 9.5cm long and 5.6cm wide. It has been thin sectioned by the Implement Petrology Committee and belongs to petrological Group VI: the well-known axe factories of the Langdale area of Cumbria. Twenty-two Bedfordshire axes have now been thin sectioned, and Dr W.A. Cummins, Chairman of the Committee, reports that eleven of them belong to Group VI. Five come from Cornwall and two from Charnwood Forest. The origin of the others is still uncertain. The dominance of the Langdale axes reflects the national distribution. They are mainly concentrated around the mouth of the Humber, and the Bedfordshire examples may have reached the county by way of the east coast and the Great Ouse valley.

Iron Age features at Radwell gravel quarry

DAVID HALL and JOHN HUTCHINGS

During 1972-4 gravel working at Radwell (TL 010574) uncovered a multiperiod site ranging from the Bronze Age to the Roman periods. The site, lying on the gravel terraces of the Ouse in the northern part of the County, has already been described in the account of the Bronze Age and Roman discoveries.^{1, 2}

A small quantity of Iron Age material was also discovered. The remains revealed in 1972, consisting of an Early Iron Age cremation, a Belgic ditch, and four first-century AD burials, were also published in the first report.³

In 1973 further Iron Age material was recovered. The principal remains consisted of a domestic

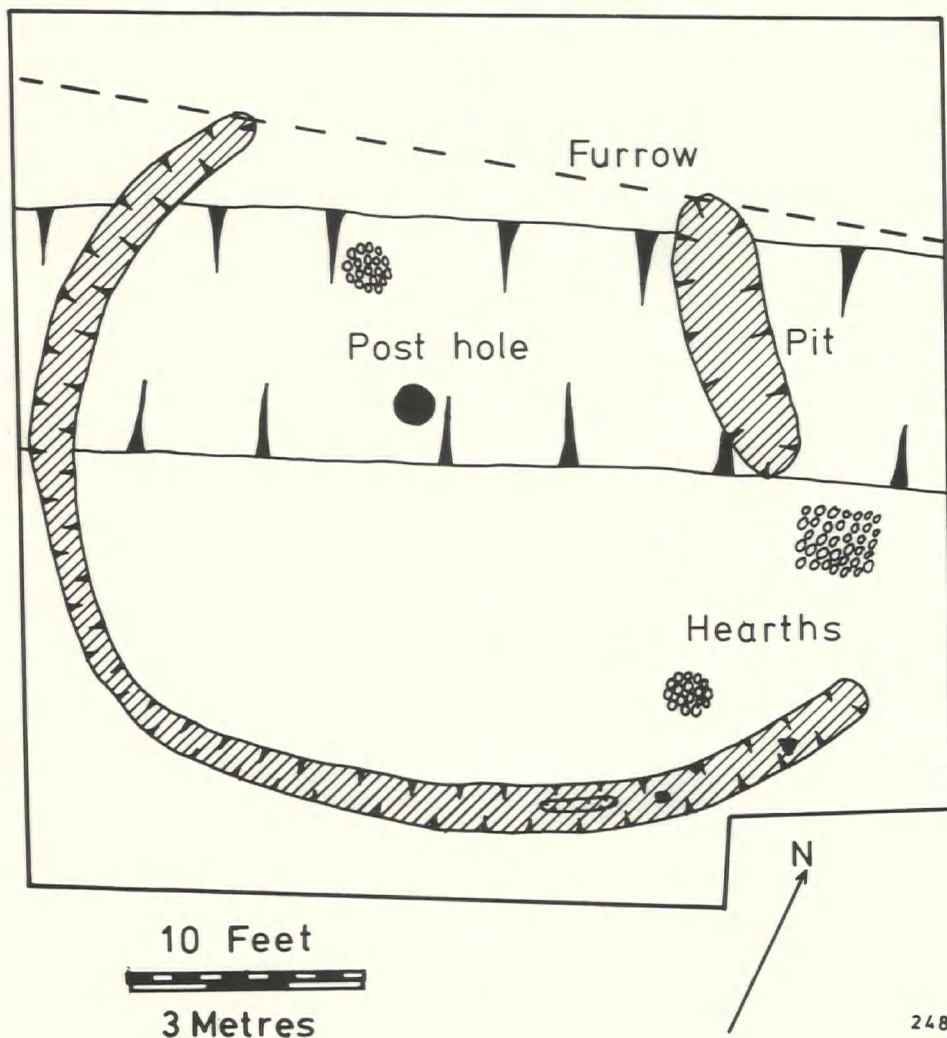


Figure 2 Iron Age features at Radwell Gravel Quarry

hut site. Rather unusually, this comprised of a ditch describing a semi-circle only (Fig 1). The width was about 0.6m and the depth varied from 0.1m to 1.0m, measured from the top of the gravel subsoil. The diameter of the circle was 11 metres, in the centre was a post hole 0.5m deep and 0.5m wide. Along the open side were three areas of ashes and burnt stones representing hearths.

No trace of any structure was found on the in-

side of the ditch. Indeed, the depth of the ditch and its steep sides, often vertical, strongly suggest that it was a palisade trench and not a drip gully. Presumably the 'open' side was completed with a flimsy structure such as wattle, which did not penetrate the subsoil.

Outside the hut was a pit 3.7m long and 1.1m wide, but no stratigraphic evidence survived to show whether it was contemporary with the hut or not.

The ditch and pit were filled with dark deposits containing the usual debris of ash, charcoal, food, bones, and potsherds. The period of occupation would appear to be during the third and second century BC. Although large pottery sherds were found, all were from vessel bodies, and are not very diagnostic, and have not been drawn.

The gravel workings have now moved away from the area of intensive settlement, and no further discoveries seem likely in the immediate future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Messrs Radwell Gravels for continued access to the quarries, and to P.W. Martin and A. Goldsworthy for help with the excavation.

NOTES

- 1 'Radwell excavations 1974-1975 : the Bronze Age ring ditches' David Hall and Peter Woodward, *Beds. Arch. J.*, 12 (1977) 1-16.
- 2 'Rescue excavations at Radwell gravel pits 1972', D.N. Hall, *Beds. Arch. J.*, 8 (1973) 67-91.
- 3 Hall, *loc. cit.*, f.n.2.

Romano-Saxon Pottery: a critical note

DAVID H. KENNETT

In an article in 1956, J.N.L. Myres suggested that a group of pottery in typical Roman fabrics but with decoration possibly suggesting a Germanic influence on its production, could usefully be regarded as indicative of a cultural influence by Germanic settlers in Britain on the highly-specialised pottery industry of the province.¹ Since then, the thesis has been made more elaborate to the extent that one scholar has suggested that this pottery, termed by Myres 'Romano-Saxon Pottery', forms part of an evolving craft from late Roman to early Saxon.²

It is easy to see how pots with dimples arranged in patterns suggestive of pottery of a date anything up to a century beyond that of the wares under consideration might be regarded as precursors of the finger-tip ornament found on Saxon pots. It is tempting to suggest a relationship between Roman pots with a band of diagonal grooves and similar decoration found on Saxon pots. The presence of stamps and bosses on Roman pots could be construed as a continuum which precedes their occurrence on Saxon pots. Yet one problem of these Roman pots lies in their fabric.³

There seems to be no suspicion of the adoption of other than good Romano-British fabrics, often of the best quality. There is no hint even that these products use the friable fabrics of the native pots which are found on Roman sites. And irrespective of their date, the stamps and the bosses which are found on these pots seem far removed from these found on Saxon pots.

Late Roman stamped wares in Britain are as yet imperfectly understood; yet it seems evident that there is as great a range here as from continental sites on the borders of the Roman Empire.

There is another more considerable objection to regarding these wares as implying a Saxon connection. Probably more than five thousand Saxon cremation urns have been excavated and preserved, yet not one single sherd of this material has so far been published from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery.⁴ Roman pots are used as cremation containers by fifth and sixth century Saxons; but these are pots of the second or even the first century.⁵

In this context, it is perhaps significant that the objections hitherto raised to the concept of 'Romano-Saxon' pottery have been made by scholars whose experience lies equally with Roman wares as with Saxon.⁶

From the viewpoint of the future settlers rather than that of the contemporary consumers 'Romano-Saxon' pottery is an unhelpful concept. For the pottery of the earliest English, as J.M. Kemble discerned more than a century ago,⁷ a very respectable ancestry on the north European littoral can be seen and it did not require the use of the potter's wheel. There is a technological chasm between wheel-thrown pottery and that which is hand-made. The so called 'Romano-Saxon' pottery is wheel-made; its decoration exhibits a regularity possible only when placed on fast-rotating drum. Even the bosses are regularly done on what will