Early Roman occupation on the site of the former Queensway Hall, Dunstable

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SUMMARY
Excavations in advance of the redevelopment of the former Queensway Hall, Dunstable, uncovered ditches and pits dating to the later part of the first century A.D. The quantity of pottery recovered indicated that the site was associated with settlement, although no evidence of buildings was present. Other finds and environmental material were meagre. While the site may have had an agricultural basis, it is possible that it was associated with the early establishment of the Roman town of Durocobrivis. It is unclear whether the site's abandonment in the late 1st or early 2nd century AD represents a purely local change of land use or has wider significance.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological excavations were undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on the site of the former Queensway Hall, Dunstable (TL 01902280) in order to satisfy conditions of a planning consent obtained by Asda for the construction of a new retail store. The overall project comprised a desk-based assessment undertaken by Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service (BCAS 1998); a ground-probing radar survey (Stratascan 1999); trial trench evaluation (NA 2000); and an area excavation and watching brief. The site covered 2.36ha of land surrounding the former Queensway Hall (Fig 1).

The main focus of the excavations lay at the front (NW side) of the development site where early Roman occupation was identified in Test Pits 3 and 8 of the evaluation (Fig 1). Subsequent excavations examined an area of c.100m by 40 m between these trenches where part of a rectangular enclosure and other features were recorded (Fig 2). A watching brief to the south-west (the former car park) revealed extensive modern disturbance and no features of significance.

LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies close to the historic core of Dunstable, the Roman town of *Durocobrivis*, which grew up at the junction of Watling Street and the Icknield Way. It is situated about 300m north of the road crossing in the NE quadrant of the town. The underlying geology here is Chalk. At the time of the excavations the ground was fairly level, with a slight rise from SE to NW. This rise is likely to have been more pronounced before the modern development of the area which appeared to have truncated the Chalk to a greater degree in the NW part of the site than elsewhere.

The layout and extent of the Roman town are not known. The NE quadrant of the present town has revealed evidence for Roman houses and a road just north of the Icknield Way (Matthews 1964), about 200m south of the Queensway Hall site. Other remains have been found further away in the SE, NW and most notably the SW quadrant, where a formal late Roman inhumation cemetery, and earlier pits and wells, have been investigated (Matthews 1981).

THE INVESTIGATIONS

The evaluation and subsequent excavation and watching brief were conducted to Briefs issued by the Heritage and Environment Section of Bedfordshire County Council and project designs for each stage of work, submitted by Northamptonshire Archaeology to Gifford and Partners, consultants for the developer.

The evaluation, undertaken in August 2000, comprised eight test pits, each 5m by 5m square, mechanically excavated in the car parks and open ground around Queensway Hall. Most of the test pits showed around 0.5m of modern deposits overlying a thin greyish subsoil. On the W side of the site, however, (test pits 2, 3 and 4) the modern makeup for the car park and pedestrian walkway appeared to have truncated the Chalk to some degree. Two of the test pits on the S side of the Hall (test pits 4 and 5) were targeted on possible archaeological anomalies identified in the GPR survey, but no archaeological remains were found here. Archaeological features were discovered in test pits 3 and 8 in front of Queensway Hall. These comprised three ditches and

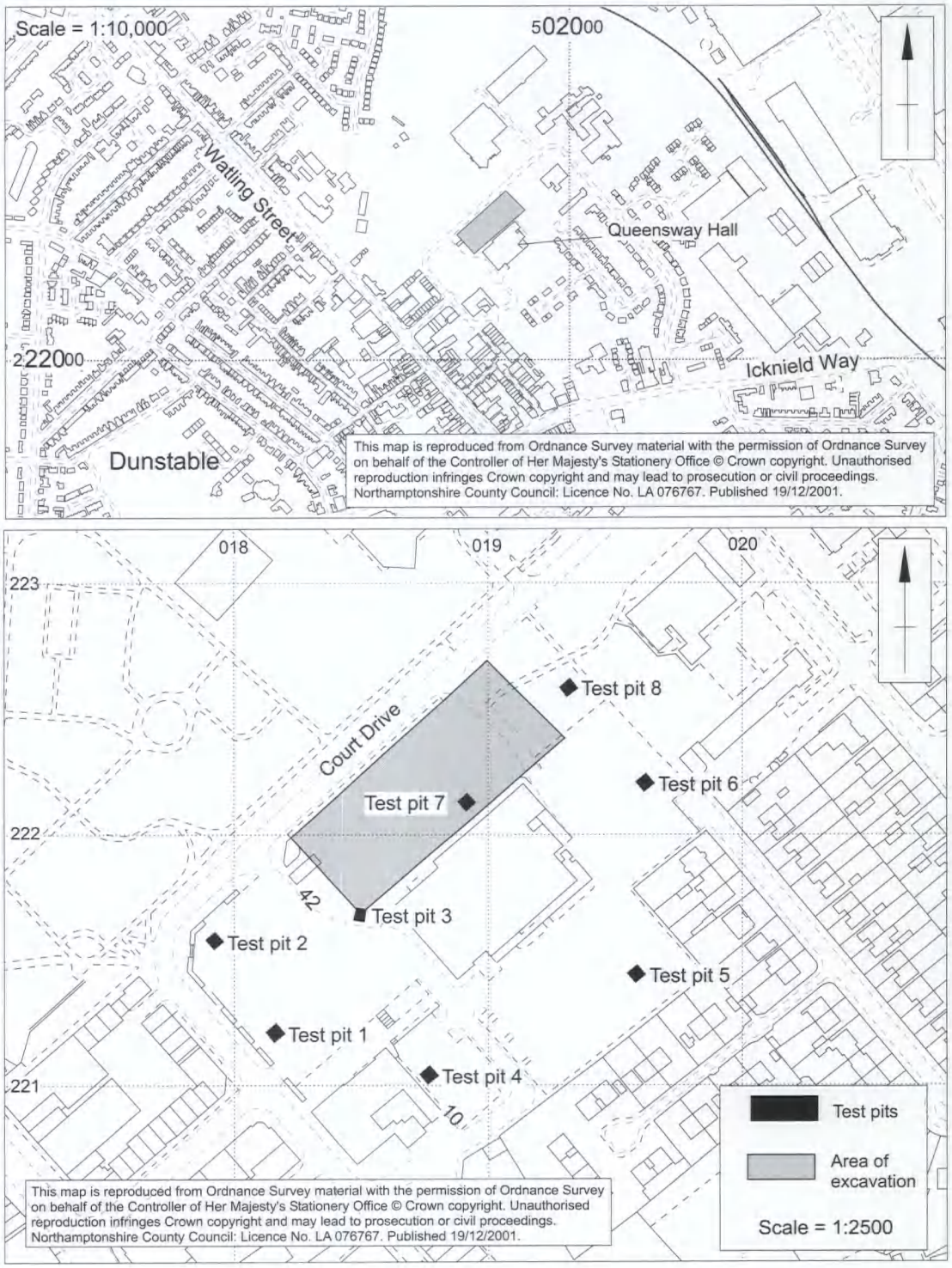

Figure 1 Site location

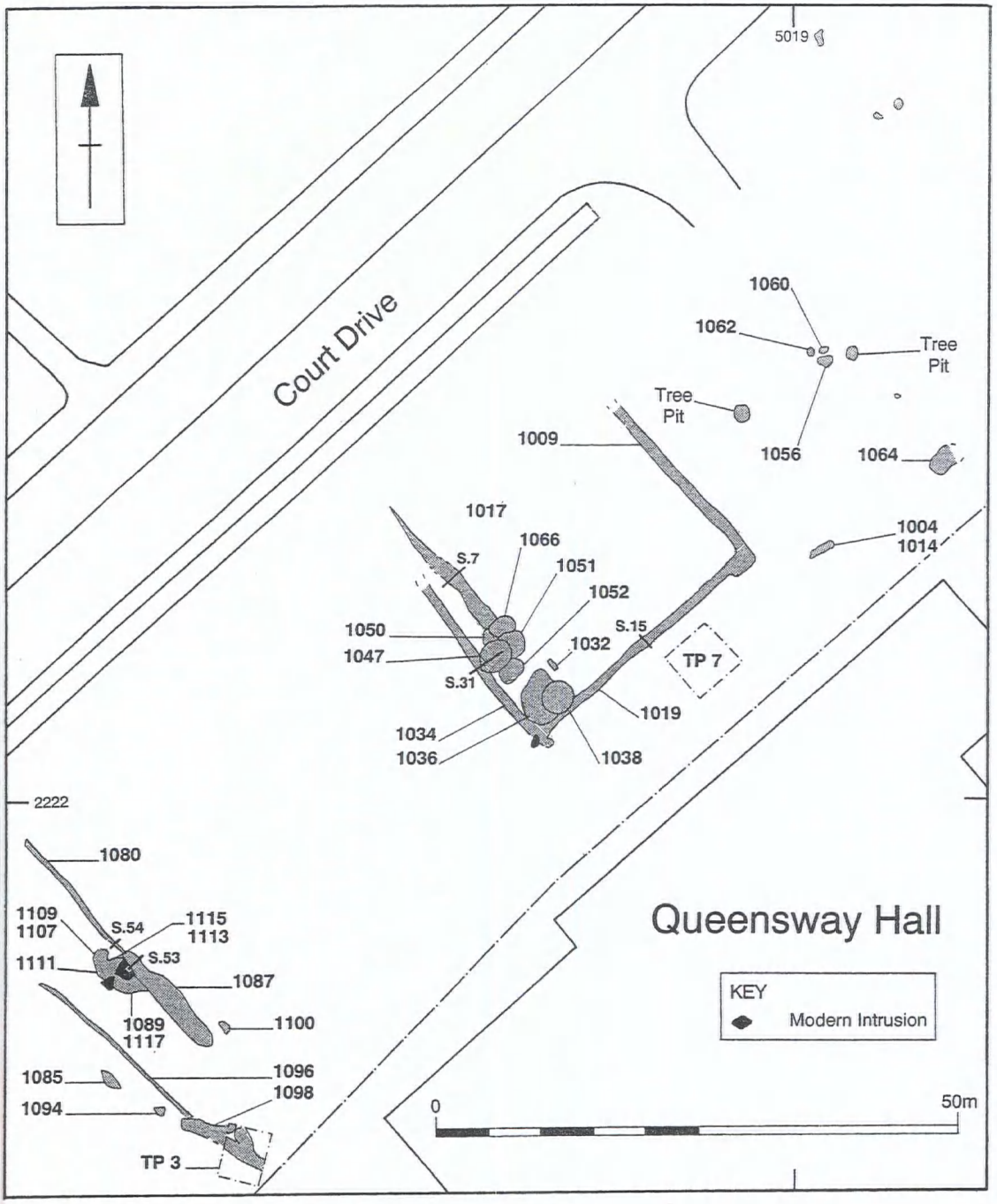

Figure 2 Site plan: all features except modern

three pits. The quantity of pottery and other finds from test pit 3, amounting to about 90% of the pottery retrieved, indicated occupation in the immediate vicinity, while finds from test pit 8 were far fewer, suggesting a more peripheral area.

Accordingly a mitigation strategy was adopted whereby the area between test pits 3 and 8 was stripped for detailed excavation, while a watching brief was subsequently maintained on the western car park in case further remains came to light. Due to time pressures the excavations were undertaken while construction works were in progress. The need to maintain access for construction plant resulted in three separate stages of work (the NE, central and SW areas – amalgamated in Fig 2).

As well as the archaeological features there were a number of modern intrusions and two post-medieval tree-planting pits. The planting pits would appear to correspond to the avenue of trees shown on the 1840 Tithe Map and later Ordnance Survey maps when the site was within Dunstable Park (BCAS 1998). The amount of 20th century intrusion along the Court Drive frontage means that the NW extent of the site was never recovered.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LAYOUT

The excavations revealed a generally sparse scatter of ditches, gullies and pits with associated pottery and a limited range of other finds dating to the early Roman period. The main feature of note was a rectilinear enclosure, defined on three sides, with two groups of pits in the south-western corner. Other ditches and gullies on a similar alignment lay SW of the enclosure, and there was a scatter of smaller pits to the NE of the enclosure. While some features were without finds, there was no evidence of earlier or later activity – with the exception of clearly modern features – and it is likely that all the archaeological features present were associated with the 1st century occupation.

The pottery assemblage indicates a relatively brief occupation in the second half of the 1st century AD, although it is possible that the occupation started slightly earlier (Timby, this report). The site is therefore of broadly one period, although several features were intercutting and occupation can be broken down into at least three phases in the complex areas of the site.

ENCLOSURE AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES

The enclosure was devoid of features, except in a quite tightly defined area inside the S ditch. Here a ditch (1017) and two groups of intercutting pits were examined.

Phase 1 – Segmented ditch 1017

This feature was probably the earliest in this area. While it could have been contemporary with the Phase 2 enclosure, it was of a different form and probably pre-figured it. It ran south into a group of intercutting pits (Phase 3) and did not reappear.

Two sections excavated through this ditch showed the sides of the feature to be irregular in plan, suggesting that it had been dug as a series of linked pits rather than a continuous ditch. The feature was up to 1.5m wide and 0.4-0.5m deep with moderately steep sides and a flattish base (Fig 3, section 7).

The fill (1018) was similar in both sections, without evidence of re-cutting, indicating that, however originally dug, the feature had infilled as a single entity. The uniform greyish brown silt fill contained abundant chalk inclusions, with a middle fill lens of chalk rubble suggesting that it had been deliberately backfilled. This rubble may have come from a bank, although there was no indication on which side it might have been.

Phase 2 – Enclosure ditches 1034, 1019 and 1009

Three sides of a rectangular enclosure were found with an internal dimension of about 23m in a NE-SW direction. The NW-SE extent of the enclosure was not recoverable due to extensive modern disturbance to the NW.

The NE arm of the enclosure, ditch 1009, ran for about 20m within the excavation area. Four 1.0m wide sections were excavated through it. The ditch was about 1.0m wide and 0.4-0.5m deep with steep sides and a flat base. The main fill (1026) was a mid-grey brown silt with occasional chalk fragments, although the basal fill tended to contain more chalk lumps. One of the sections showed a distinct chalky rubble fill (1027) on the western side of the ditch, perhaps suggesting the collapse of an internal bank.

The SE arm of the enclosure, ditch 1019, ran for about 24m. The E corner was relatively wide (1.5m) suggesting the presence of a recut, although none was visible in the section. The remaining length of the ditch was between 0.65 and 0.80m wide and 0.25-0.40m deep, shallowing towards the SW where it was cut by pit 1038. It had steep sides and a flat base. Its main fill, 1020, was mid grey-brown silt with frequent medium (up to 40mm) chalk fragments. In the central section of the ditch, the upper 100mm of fill (1029 and 1043) was softer and siltier and contained the majority of the finds

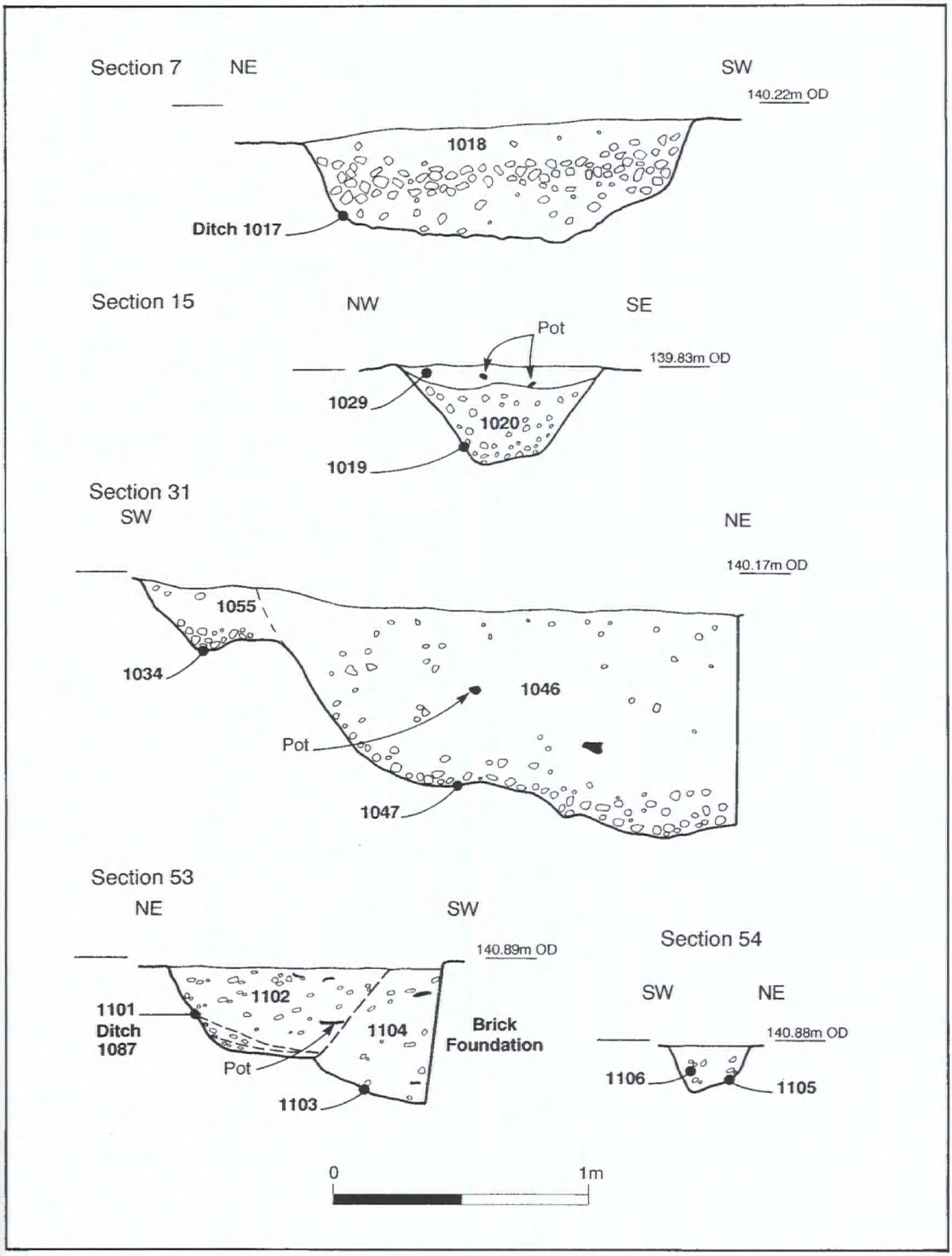

Figure 3 Sections

of pottery (Fig 3, Section 15).

The SW arm of the enclosure (1034) had a sharp but indistinct junction with ditch 1019 where there was modern concrete intrusion. Generally the ditch grew larger towards the NW from 1.0m wide and 0.3m deep to 1.2m wide and 0.4m deep. As elsewhere the fill (1035, 1054, 1055) was a uniform mid greyish brown silt with frequent chalk inclusions.

Phase 3 – Pits

The northern group of pits were not visible as individual features from the surface and were only defined through excavation. The relationships between these features, and between the pits and the later enclosure ditch, were difficult to determine, although on the evidence of the relationship between Pit 1047 and the enclosure ditch, which the pit appeared to cut, it seems likely that the group of pits was probably later than the enclosure. It is possible, however, that some or all of the earlier pits were contemporary with the enclosure.

Pit 1050

Pit 1050 was the earliest of the group of features in this area. It was roughly circular in shape, about 1.3m in diameter and 0.7m deep with steep sides and a flat base. Its fill (1048) was a mid-brown silt with moderately frequent chalk inclusions, becoming frequent towards the base. It was cut by pits 1066 and 1047.

Pit 1066

Ditch 1017 appeared to be truncated to the S by pit 1066, although it is possible that this pit was actually part of the ditch, turning or offset to the E. It was about 1.3m wide and 0.5m deep with a chalky rubble fill. It cut pit 1050 to the W and was cut by pit 1051 to the S.

Pit 1051

Pit 1051 was half-sectioned and projected to be roughly circular in plan. It was about 1.3m in diameter and 0.45m deep. It had a single mid brown silt fill with frequent chalk inclusions (1049). It was recorded as cutting pit 1066, and cut by pit 1047, although these relationships were difficult to determine.

Pit 1052

This pit was the southernmost of this group of pits. It was almost entirely excavated and found to be an irregular oval in shape (1.2-1.6m across) reaching a maximum depth of 0.3m. Its single mid-brown, chalky fill (1053) yielded a relatively large quantity of pottery and animal bone, including a large proportion of a hand-made bowl (Fig 4.1). It had an unclear relationship with pit 1047, but appeared to be cut by it.

Pit 1047

This was the largest, and probably the latest, of this group of pits. It was roughly circular or oval in shape, up to 3.2m in diameter and 0.7m deep, with moderately steep sides. Its single fill (1046) was a mid-brown silt with moderately frequent chalk inclusions increasing towards the base. It appeared to cut gully 1034 of the enclosure (Fig 3, Section 31).

Another group of pits was located in the southern corner of the enclosure. Pit 1038 appeared to cut enclosure ditch 1019. Pit 1036, the earlier of the two, had an unclear relationship with the enclosure ditch, although the fact that it had not completely filled by the time pit 1038 was dug may suggest that it did not pre-date 1038 by much and is likely also to have cut the ditch.

Pit 1036

This pit, in the southern corner of the enclosure, was sub-circular in shape and about 2.5m in diameter. It was, however, only 0.2m deep. Its main fill (1037) consisted of about 70% chalk rubble in a mid greyish brown silt matrix. This was overlain by 1039, a less chalky silt, which was common to both this and pit 1038.

Pit 1038

This pit was approximately circular in shape, 2.3-2.4m in diameter, and 0.6m deep with moderately steep sides and a flattish base. Its main fill, 1040, consisted of about 50% chalk rubble in a grey-brown silt matrix. This appeared to represent deliberate infilling. The upper fill, 1039, would appear to represent the natural silting of partly backfilled and abandoned features.

Unphased

Pit 1032

Pit 1032 was a shallow, sub-rectangular feature, 1.45m long, 0.35m wide and 40mm deep. Its single fill (1033) contained some pottery and bone.

FEATURES NE OF THE ENCLOSURE

A scatter of generally small and shallow pits lay NE of the enclosure.

Pit 1004

A pit, about 2.6m long and 0.7m wide, reaching a depth of 0.4m. It was cut to the S by pit 1014. It had an upper brown silty fill (1021) and a lower chalkier fill. It contained pottery and animal bone.

Pit 1014

A small, circular pit 0.45m in diameter and 0.1m deep. Its fill (1015) was a grey-brown silt. It cut pit 1004.

?Pit 1064

A shallow linear pit or possible ditch terminal in the extreme eastern corner of the site. Its exposed length was about 2.0m, although it extended outside the excavation area to the NE. It was about 1.6m wide and just 0.13m deep. Its single fill (1065) was a dark brown silt with few inclusions.

Pit 1056

Shallow, sub-circular pit 1.3m in diameter and 0.15m deep. It had a dark brown silty fill (1057) with few inclusions.

Pit 1060

Shallow, oval pit, 0.96m long, 0.66m wide and 0.11m deep. It had a single brown silt fill (1061) with few inclusions.

Pit 1062

Shallow circular pit, 0.5m in diameter and 0.10m deep, with a single dark brown silt fill (1063).

DITCH SEGMENTS, PITS AND GULLIES IN SW AREA OF SITE

A group of features was identified in the SW area of the site. This comprised two, or possibly three ditch segments, at least eight pits, some of them intercutting, and two rectilinear gullies. One of the ditches was the same feature as was found in test pit 3 of the evaluation. It is not possible to equate the phasing to that in the enclosure area.

Phase 1 pits

Two pits can be ascribed to the earliest phase of activity on this part of the site. Both were heavily truncated by later pit cuts.

Pit 1113
A feature, just 0.1m deep, almost entirely removed by later features 1111 and 1115 on either side. Its light brown silt fill (1114) was without finds.

Pit 1107
A shallow feature, 0.15m deep, largely removed by pit 1109. It had a light brown chalky silt fill (1108) without finds.

Phase 2 pits

Pit 1111
A shallow, sub-circular feature about 1.1m in diameter and 0.2m deep with a flat base. Its fill (1112) was a mid-brown silt with some chalk inclusions. It cut pit 1113 to the north.

Pit 1115
A shallow feature of probable oval shape, about 1.0m long by 0.7m wide and 0.2m deep, with a flat base. Its single fill (1116) was a mid-brown silt with some chalk inclusions. It cut pit 1113 to the south and was cut by ditch terminal 1101.

Pit 1109
A feature of uncertain, but probably sub-circular shape, about 1.0m in diameter and 0.22m deep. It contained a single fill (1110) of mid-brown silt with chalk inclusions.

Pit 1103
This pit was of unknown shape and dimensions as it was truncated both by ditch 1087 and by a modern brick foundation (Fig 3, Section 53). It was about 0.55m deep and filled with a mid-brown silt with some chalk inclusions (1104), without finds.

Phase 1-2 – Rectilinear Gullies 1080 and 1096

Two linear gullies were found running NW to SE across the site. They extended off site to the NW and their S terminals were truncated by the later ditches 1087 and 1098. They were approximately parallel and about 6.5m apart.

Gully 1080
Two sections were excavated (cuts 1080 and 1105). The feature was about 0.3m wide and 0.2m deep with an irregular base (Fig 3, Section 54). Its fill (1081/1106) was a uniform mid-brown silt with some chalk inclusions. To the S it was cut by terminal 1101 of ditch 1087.

Gully 1096
Two sections were excavated (cuts 1096 and 1119). The feature was 0.45m wide and 0.22m deep with an irregular concave base. Its fill (1097/1120) was a uniform mid-brown silt with chalk inclusions containing some pottery. It was cut to the S by the terminal of ditch 1098.

Early phase ditch

Ditch 1089 (1117)
This feature appeared as a heavily truncated ditch on the W side of ditch 1087. It would have been in excess of 0.5m wide and 0.3m deep with a flat base. Its fill (1090) consisted largely of redeposited chalk rubble within a matrix of light brown silt.

Feature 1117 may have been the same ditch lying further N on the W side of ditch 1087, although its position would indicate that the ditch curved to the W. It was in an area of modern intrusions and its overall form and relationship with the pits to the N was unclear. Its fill (1118), however, contained less chalk rubble than 1090. Its W edge was stepped to a flat base 0.33m deep.

Later phase ditches

Ditch 1087
This ditch was the latest in the sequence of features in this area. It was examined by three sections (cuts 1087, 1101 and 1092). The ditch was 25.0m long, 0.9-1.3m wide and 0.30-0.58m deep. Its cross-profile was variable but it was generally steep or moderately steep-sided and flat-based.

Both its northern terminal (1101) and southern terminal (1092) were quite steep-sided, although the middle section (1087) was flatter and shallower. Cut 1087 had been cut to the same depth as the earlier ditch 1089. All sections had similar mid-brown silty fills containing chalk inclusions (fills 1102, 1093 and 1088).

Ditch 1098
This was a round-based ditch, over 17.0m long, 1.0m wide and 0.3m deep, with moderately sloping sides. Its fill (1099) was a light brown silt with moderately frequent chalk inclusions. The ditch was the same as ditch 302 of Evaluation Trench 3 which was 1.0m wide and 0.5m deep.

Pits on alignment with Ditch 1098

Two linear pits, 1094 and 1085, lay to the north of ditch 1098 and appeared to continue its alignment. They are therefore probably later than the other pits.

Pit 1094
This pit or slot was 1.3m long, 0.5m wide and 0.15m deep with gently sloping sides and a flattish base. It was filled with a light brown silt with some chalk inclusions, but without finds (1095).

Pit 1085
This pit or slot was 3.3m long, 0.6m wide and 0.35m deep. It had irregular, gently sloping edges. Its fill, 1086, was a mid-brown silt with some chalk inclusions.

Other pit

Pit 1100
This pit lay to the E of ditch 1087. It was heavily truncated by modern intrusions, but was approximately circular in plan, over 0.75m in diameter and 0.3m deep. Its single mid-brown silt fill (1084) contained some pottery.

THE POTTERY
Jane Timby

INTRODUCTION
The pottery assemblage from all phases of archaeological work comprises some 1747 sherds weighing 24.7kg. With one exception, the group appears to belong to a single phase of activity dating to the second half of the 1st century AD, possibly just extending into the early 2nd century. The exception is a post-medieval sherd accompanied by a clay pipe stem from a tree planting pit (1006). In addition, a small quantity of fired clay and ceramic building material was retrieved.

Pottery was recovered from 42 individual contexts contributing to some 33 individual features, mainly pits, gullies and ditches. The pieces are quite well preserved with an overall average sherd size of 14g reflecting the undisturbed nature of the deposits from which it was recovered. In many cases, several sherds from the same vessel were present.

METHODOLOGY
The assemblage was sorted into broad fabric groups based on the nature of the inclusions macroscopically visible in the clay. Full details of the defined fabrics can be found below. The fabric groups were quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalent (eve) for each context. Rim sherds were identified to form and other details such as decoration and evidence of use or reuse were noted. The data was put onto an MS Excel spreadsheet, a copy of which is deposited with the site archive. A summary quantification of the fabrics is shown in Table 1.

ASSEMBLAGE DESCRIPTION
The assemblage comprised a mixture of indigenous late Iron Age wares alongside Roman material, the latter including a small number of imported vessels. The former occurs in both handmade, wheel-turned and wheel-made forms. The principle native fabrics are grog-tempered, sandy and shelly. Grog-tempered wares dominate accounting for 53.5% by sherd count of the total assemblage, followed by sandy wares (c.35%) with shelly wares only accounting for 2%.

Amongst the Roman imported wares are nine sherds of imported South Gaulish Samian (forms Dragendorff 15/17, 18, 29 and ?30), two sherds of Dressel 20 olive oil amphora from southern Spain, and one colour-coated dish, possibly from central Gaul (Fig 5.23). The Samian includes a dish (Dragendorff form 18) stamped by the workshop of Pontus (OF.PONTI.) who was in production between AD 70 and 95.

A thin-walled globular, colour-coated beaker with fine roughcast decoration (Fig 4.11) is probably a regional import, as is a white ware flagon with a Hofheim-type rim (Fig 4.4). Other regional imports include 65 sherds of Verulamium white ware. Vessels include a large unguent jar comparable to an example found in London (*cf.* Davies *et al.* 1994, Fig 41.230) (Fig 4.5), a flat-rim dish (Fig 5.24) as Camulodunum type 243 (Symonds and Wade 1999, 478) and flagon. Three pieces of fine grey ware barbotine dot decorated beaker may also be regional imports. Other vessels of note include a white-ware bowl with traces of orange –red painted decoration (Fig 5.17) analogous to Young (1977) form W53 and probably an Oxfordshire product and a few fineware oxidised sherds or white-slipped sherds, mainly flagon, of unknown provenance.

Within the local ware groups the dominant form is the jar represented by several large, handmade, wheel-finished storage jars, channel-rim jars, and everted or thickened rim jars. Some of the vessels are decorated with impressed or incised designs including wavy lines, comb-impressed dots or with tooled or burnished line lattices (e.g. Fig 4. 12-14). Some of the handmade storage jars have coarse combing or horizontal rilling. At least three vessels have post-firing holes. One grey ware sandy jar from ditch 1087 had a large hole, 16mm in diameter, drilled through the body; a sherd of shelly ware from ditch 1098 had a smaller wall perforation, whilst a grey ware jar from pit 1103 had a hole in the base.

Less common are bowls and platters. The latter includes at least five vessels imitating imported moulded Gallo-Belgic forms, in particular Camulodunum forms 8 and 12 (Hawkes and Hull 1947, 219) (*cf.* Fig 4.3, 6-8).

Two sherds show evidence of reuse, one from ditch 1098 has been shaped into a counter approximately 50 by 54mm, whilst a smaller perforated disk, diameter 25mm was present in ditch 1019.

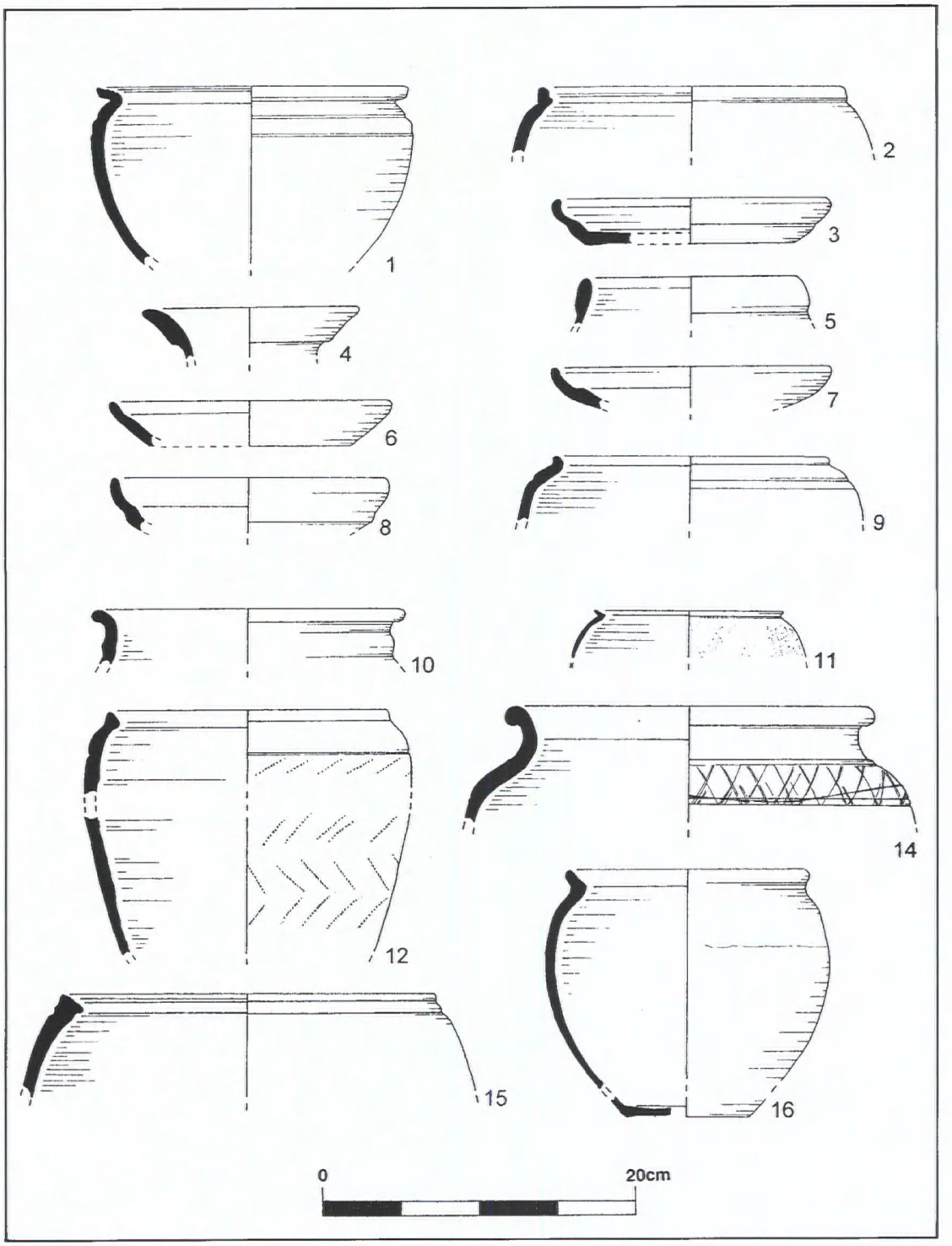

Figure 4 Pottery 1-12 and 15-16 (1:4)

	Fabric	Description	No	%	Wt	%	Eve	%
IMPORT	BAT AM	South Spanish Dressel 20	2	*	164	*	0.13	1
	SGSAM	South Gaulish sigillata	9	*	172	*	0.3	2.5
	CGCC	?Central Gaulish colour-coat	4	*	24	*	0.07	*
REGIONAL	VER WH	Verulamium white ware	65	4	523	2	0.24	2
	OXF WH	Oxfordshire white ware	11	*	30	*	0.25	2
	CC1	finely roughcast colour-coat	1	*	8	*	0.07	*
	WW1	white sandy ware	1	*	21	*	0.1	1
UNKNOWN	GREY5	fine grey/black sandy	4	*	15	*	0	0
	WSLIP	white-slipped oxidised	19	1	156	*	0.09	*
	OXID3	fine orange sandy	9	*	62	*	0.18	1.5
	WW2	miscellaneous white ware	1	*	3	*	0	0
LOCAL	GROG1	grog-tempered	512	30	10624	43.5	1.67	13.5
	GROG2	grog-tempered	103	6	997	4	0.65	5.5
	GRLI	grog and limestone-tempered	24	1.5	172	*	0	0
	GRSA	sandy with sparse grog	268	16	4164	17	2.47	20
	SHELL	fossil shell rich fabric	39	2	664	3	0.38	3
	CASA	sandy with calcareous	10	*	173	*	0.52	4
	GREY1	black, sandy, sandwich core	308	18	3291	13.5	2.08	17
	GREY2	grey sandy	120	7	1005	4	0.82	6.5
	GREY3	black sandy	71	4	864	3.5	0.97	8
	GREY4	light grey sandy with limestone	80	5	1145	5	1.36	11
	GREY6	black micaceous ware	3	*	37	*	0	0
	GREY00	miscellaneous grey sandy	7	*	28	*	0	0
	OXID1	medium sandy oxidised	2	*	30	*	0	0
	OXID2	medium sandy oxidised	10	*	129	*	0.02	*
	OXID00	miscellaneous orange sandy	5	*	12	*	0	0
Total			**1688**	**100**	**24513**	**100**	**12.37**	**100**

*=less than 1%

Table 1 Summary quantification of fabric types.

DISCUSSION

The earliest archaeologically defined feature in the area of the enclosure, linear ditch 1017, produced just six sherds of native ware: two grog-tempered and four sandy with limestone. Dating could thus lie anywhere in the 1st centuries BC-AD. Of the associated pit complex pottery was recovered from pits 1050, 1052 and 1047. Pit 1047 produced a large assemblage of 192 sherds (1846g). This contained several sherds suggestive of a date somewhere in the last quarter of the 1st century AD, or just possibly the early 2nd century; for example, a ring-necked flagon, Verulamium ware (VER WH), South Gaulish Samian and three fine grey wares decorated with barbotine dots. The assemblages from the former two pits were much smaller but could be seen as broadly contemporary with pit 1047. Both contain Verulamium ware and various grey sandy wares alongside grog and grog-and-sand-tempered wares.

The enclosure ditches produced a good group of 293 sherds (3940g). The assemblage includes examples of Gallo-Belgic inspired native dishes, a Hofheim-type white-ware flagon, Verulamium wares including the unguent jar, South Gaulish Samian, local channel-rim jars and a fragment of Roman tile, probably pila. On balance a date in the period AD 50/60-80 would fit this group, possibly slightly predating the latest pit group 1047.

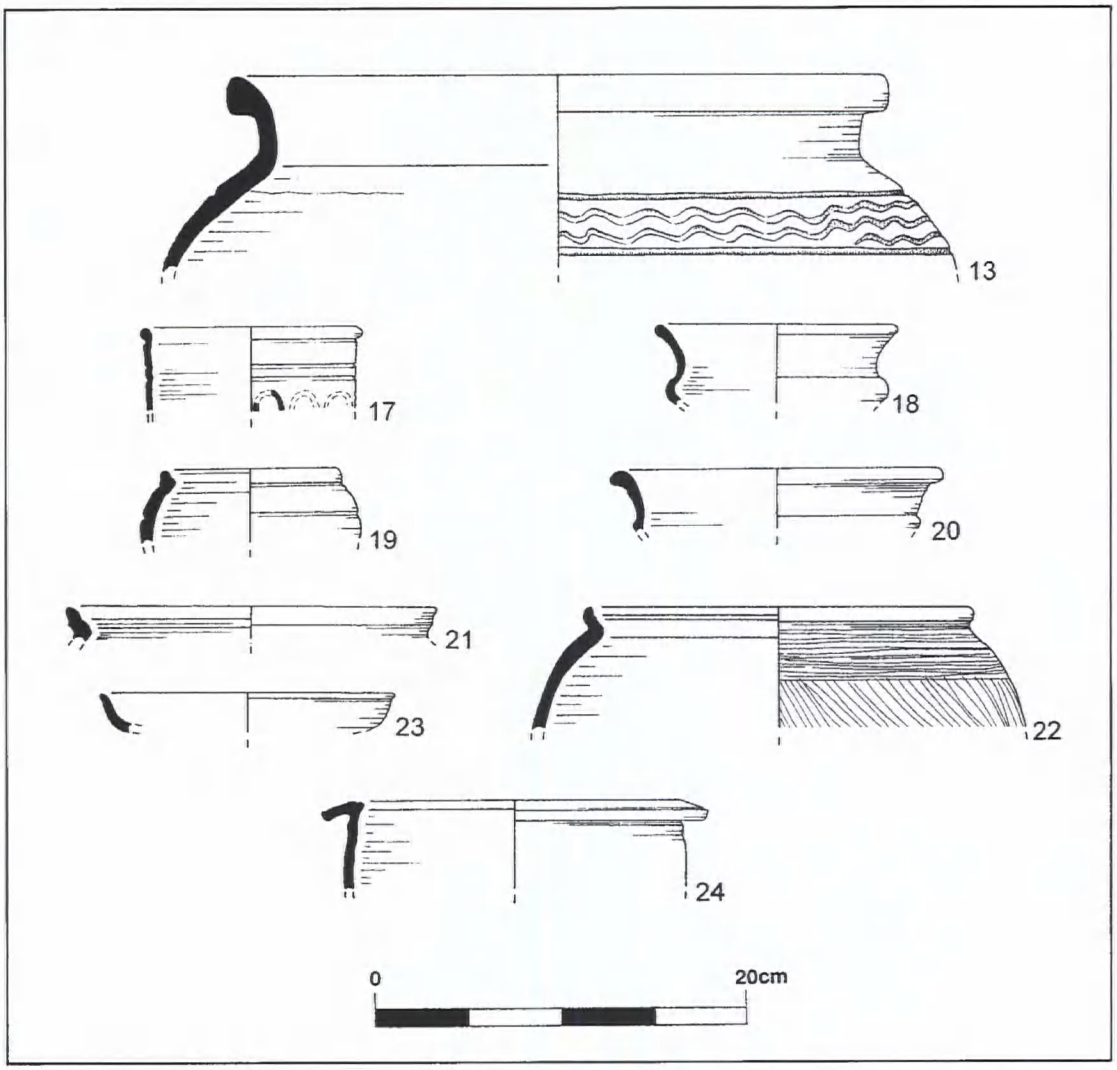

Figure 5 Pottery 13 and 17-24 (1:4)

In the southern corner of the enclosure a particularly large assemblage of pottery was recovered from layer (1039/1042) sealing pits 1036 and 1038, amounting to some 450 sherds (4632g). This includes the Oxfordshire painted ware bowl (Fig 5.17) along with several sherds of grog-tempered storage jar, various grey sandy wares, one tiny scrap of South Gaulish Samian (?Dragendorff 30) and four sherds of Verulamium ware. Shelly wares are sparse. The Oxfordshire bowl would suggest a date in the later 1st or very early 2nd century.

Of particular note from the features to the NE of the enclosure, is the group from pit 1004 with one sherd of Dressel 20 amphora and the stamped Samian (see above) dated AD 70-95. The coarsewares include two Gallo-Belgic inspired dishes and a handle from a Verulamium ware flagon. Ditch 1087 also yielded a good assemblage of 351 sherds (7475g). These sherds were particularly well preserved with an average sherd size of 21g. Amongst this group was the globular roughcast beaker (Fig 4.11) which shows a firing flaw suggesting that is was a waster or second, a Dressel 20 rim, 22 sherds of Verulamium ware and five fragments of ceramic building material. Again the group is consistent with a date in the later 1st century.

The presence of both continental and regional imports dating to the post-conquest period alongside wares of a more traditional nature raises the status of the group. The location of the site at the junction of Icknield Way and Watling Street would explain the marked presence of Verulamium white ware at the site. The fine tablewares and oil amphora suggest either familiarity with, or the adoption of, Roman eating and cooking habits.

The assemblage from Queensway Hall complements material previously excavated from the area, in particular, it is broadly contemporary with a group of pottery from a ditch excavated in Priory Meadow, immediately to the south (Hagen 1972). This appears to date to the late 1st or early 2nd century suggesting a phase of clearance or change at this time. Other Roman sites investigated within Dunstable have generally been slightly later (2nd-4th century) in date. Closer comparison comes with sites excavated to the north of the modern town. The Queensway Hall occupation appears to be partly contemporary with the multi-period site at Puddlehill also sited adjacent to Watling Street (Matthews and Warren 1992). It probably slightly post-dates a small settlement site investigated at Sewell Lane, immediately west of Puddlehill and possibly part of the same complex, which produced pottery dating from the 1st century BC to around the middle of the 1st century AD (Walker 1992). The Sewell Lane groups show some overlap in terms of form and fabric amongst the indigenous wares but lack any Roman element to the assemblage.

CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED SHERDS

Enclosure and Pit 1052

4.1 Black, handmade bowl with a double groove on the rim. Irregular wipe marks on the interior. GRSA. Pit 1052 (1053).
4.2 Channel-rim jar, wheel-made. GREY2. Ditch 1019 (1029)
4.3 Black, handmade dish copying an imported form. Probably originally with a defined footring. GREY3. Ditch 1019 (1020).
4.4 White-ware collared rim flagon WW1. Ditch 1019 (1020).
4.5 White-ware unguent jar (VER WH. Ditch 1019 (1020).
4.6 Shallow dish, GREY2. Ditch 1009.
4.7-8 Shallow dishes, black in colour. GROG2. Ditch 1009.
4.9 Black, beaded rim, wide-mouthed jar. GRSA. Ditch Pit 1052 (1053).

Ditch 1087

4.10 Wide-mouthed jar/bowl with a bulged neck. GRSA. Ditch 1087 (1093).
4.11 Large ovoid beaker with a short everted rim. Sparse fine sand roughcasting on the exterior. CC1. Ditch 1087 (1093).
4.12 Several sherds from a grey, wheel-made jar with comb-impressed decoration. GREY4. Ditch 1087 (1093).
4.14 Necked jar, dark grey in colour with a lighter core. Decorated with a lightly incised lattice. GREY1. Ditch 1087 (1093).
4.15 Large channel rim jar with a double groove on the rim. GRSA. Ditch 1087 (1102).
4.16 Hand-made, black jar with a wheel-finished rim. GREY3. Joining sherds from ditch 1087 (1102) and pit 1103 (1104).
5.13 Large handmade jar with a wheel finished rim. GROG 1. Ditch 1087 (1093).

Other deposits

5.17 White ware bowl imitating a Dragendorff form 30 decorated with orange-red painted arcs. OXF WH. (1039).
5.18 Small flared rim bowl. GREY2. (1039).
5.19 Lid-seated jar with a black exterior and brown interior. GRSA. (1042).
5.20 Grey ware bowl. GREY4. (1042).
5.21 Channel rim jar. SHELL. (1042).
5.22 Wheel-made channel rim jar. Lightly combed exterior. SHELL. Ditch 1098 (1099).
5.23 Highly micaceous dish with traces of a dark red colour-coat on the interior and exterior. Burnt. Pit 1111 (1112).
5.24 Flat rim bowl with two grooves on the rim. VER WH. Ditch 302 (303).

DESCRIPTION OF FABRICS

Where applicable cross-references are given to the National Roman Reference Collection codes (Tomber and Dore (T&D) 1998) and no further description is given here. Fabrics are also tied in to the Bedfordshire CeramicType Series (BCTS) (*cf.* Dawson (1988, 10-16) for the late Iron Age fabrics). Comparison was also made with the Manshead Archaeological Society (MAS) reference collection (Horne and Schneider 1992) which mainly focuses on Roman and Saxon wares.

Continental imports

Dressel 20 South Spanish amphora (BAT AM) (T&D 1998, 84) BCTS R19A, MAS 98.

? Central Gaulish colour-coated ware (CGCC): A fairly soft, orange fabric distinguished by the presence of frequent flecks of gold and white mica up to 1mm and finer. Traces of a red colour-coated surface are present on both the interior and exterior surfaces. Represented by a single platter sherd, which has been burnt (Fig 5.23).

Regional Wares

White ware (WW1) (BTR R03): A pure white medium sandy ware. Wheel-made collared (Hofheim) flagon (Fig 4.4). Possible a continental import.

Colour-coated beaker (CC1) (BTRF R38): A fine, orange ware, with traces of dark red-brown matt colour-coat. Partial traces of a fine sandy roughcast finish. Globular beaker with a short everted rim (Fig 4.11).

Oxfordshire white ware (OXF WH) (T&D 1998, 174) BCTS R11A.

Verulamium white ware (VER WH) (T&D 1998, 154) BCTS R03B, MAS40, 54.

Source Unknown
Fine grey ware (GREY5) (BCTS R06C). Dark grey, fine ware with a sandy texture. No macroscopically visible inclusions. Wheel-made beakers with barbotine dot decoration.

White slipped oxidised ware (WSLIP) (BCTS R05A): Various oxidised sandy wares with white-slipped or orange slipped surfaces. Mainly flagons included one ring-necked example.

Fine oxidised ware (OXID3): A dark orange, fine sandy ware with a slightly powdery feel. Rare grains of rounded quartz and dark red-brown iron.

White ware (WW2) miscellaneous other white wares. BCTS R03.

Local wares

Grog-tempered wares
GROG1 (BCTS F06C, MAS34). A moderately hard ware generally orange brown in colour with a grey core, slightly soapy feel. The paste contains a common frequency of rounded to sub-angular grog up to 4mm in size and rare quartz sand. Mainly used for handmade vessels, less commonly wheel-made forms.

GROG2 (BCTS F06B). A dark brown, or black, fine to medium grog-tempered ware. Soapy feel. Used for hand-made and wheel-made vessels.

GRLI (?BCTS F05). A fairly hard, grog-tempered ware, mainly reduced with sparse voids or calcareous inclusions visible at x20 magnification.

GRSA (BCTS F09). Hard, well-fired sandy ware generally with oxidised surfaces and grey core. The paste contains a moderate to common frequency of well-sorted mainly clear quartz accompanied by sparse sub-angular to angular fine grog (less than 1mm). Rare grains of flint and calcareous grains are also present.

Shelly wares
SHELL (BCTS F07). A brown, or orange-brown, ware containing a common frequency of fossil shell. Mainly occurs as channel rim jars.

CASA: Grey or brown sandy ware. At x20 a sparse frequency of calcareous inclusions or voids with traces of decayed calcareous material are visible.

Sandy wares
GREY1 (BCTS F28): A generally black ware with a red-brown core and grey inner core. At x20 the paste contains a sparse to moderate frequency of ill-sorted, rounded quartz and rare calcareous inclusions. Mainly wheel-made forms.

GREY2 (BCTS F28): A poorly consolidated ware with brown surfaces and a grey core. The paste contains a sparse scatter of ill-sorted, rounded, fine quartz with occasional grains up to 2mm. Rare inclusions of limestone and iron.

GREY3 (BCTS F12). Hard, black sandy ware with a slightly granular feel. At z20 the paste contains a moderate to common frequency of rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, rare limestone. Hand-made and wheel-made vessels.

GREY4 (BCTS R06E): A well-fired, light grey sandy ware with rare grains of black iron and limestone up to 1mm in size. At x20 the iron and limestone presence is more obvious along with some mica and a sparse scatter of rounded quartz.

GREY 6 (BCTS R06D): A wheel-made black ware with a red-brown core and interior. Distinguished by a highly micaceous (muscovite) content with flecks up to 1mm in size. Fine sandy texture with sparse visible grains of iron and quartz.

GREY00 (BCTS R06): Miscellaneous other grey wares.

OXID1 (BCTS R05A): A hard, mid orange medium sandy ware with a blue-grey inner core. The surfaces have a thin purplish-orange wash. The paste contains a moderate frequency of well-sorted rounded to sub-angular quartz, some iron stained, up to 0.5mm. Sparse limestone grains or voids.

OXID2 (BCTS R05): A hard, sandy textured orange ware with a brownish interior and mid grey inner core. The paste contains a common frequency of well-sorted, fine, rounded quartz (less than 0.5mm), some iron stained, along with rare iron and limestone grains up to 1mm.

FIRED CLAY AND CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL
Jane Timby

Fourteen fragments of fired clay of indeterminate form and function were recovered from ditch 302 and pits 1038 and 1047. The fabrics mainly contain coarse vegetation. Eleven fragments of Roman tile were recovered from ditches 1009 and 1087 and from pits 1036, 1047 and 1064. Parts of at least two tegulae and two pilae were present.

OTHER FINDS
There was an extremely limited number and range of other finds from the site. The Roman finds comprised a number of small fragments (540g) of lava quern from contexts 1039 and 1042 (pit 1038). Three struck flints are undoubtedly residual, while 15 iron nails and a fragment of glass are more likely to be post-Roman.

ANIMAL BONE
Eden Hutchins

A total of 544 fragments of animal bone were retrieved, of which 73 (13.4%) were identifiable to species. This is a low proportion reflecting the moderate to poor condition of the assemblage. Many remains were fragmentary and had suffered from post-depositional weathering and worm action.

Species	*Cattle*	*Sheep & Sheep/Goat*	*Horse*	*Pig*	*Dog*	*Roe Deer*	*Total*
Body Parts							
Skull/Mandible	15*	5	6	2**	-	-	28
Humerus	4	3	-	-	-	-	7
Femur	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Metapodials	2	4	1	-	-	-	7
Scapula	1	1	-	1	-	-	3
Radius	1	2	1	-	-	-	4
Tibia	2	2	2	-	-	-	6
Digits/Ankles	4	-	3	-	1	-	8
Ulna	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Pelvis	1	-	2	-	1	-	4
Horn Core	2	-	-	-	-	1	3
Total	**33**	**18**	**16**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**73**

* including 2 loose teeth ** Pig tusks

Table 2 Quantification of identified animal bones

Table 2 summarises the identifiable species and elements. The catalogue is retained in the archive.

Due to the small numbers of identifiable bones, few conclusions can be drawn about the assemblage, although the dominance of cattle and sheep/goat appears fairly typical of a Roman agricultural settlement. The high proportion of horse bones is noteworthy, although seven of the bones come from pit 1047 and only one or two animals need be represented. The roe deer horn is uncommon, but not significantly so. The antler was not shed – parts of the skull remained attached, and the animal would have been killed between late spring and late autumn in its third year.

No particular conclusions can be drawn concerning the representation of body parts. The high proportion of skulls is a result of the fragmentation of these bones. The overall distribution of one is similar to that of the pottery.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Four 20-litre samples were taken for the recovery of economic and environmental indicators, and were additional to the four samples taken during the evaluation phase of investigation which yielded meagre results. The charred plant remains and snails were assessed. The results did not warrant further detailed work and the assessments are presented here.

CHARRED PLANT REMIANS
Eden Hutchins

The results are presented in Table 3

The charred seed assemblage was particularly small. A small amount of wheat (*Triticum*) was present in every sample, but the condition was too poor to identify further. Dock (*Rumex*) is a common weed of disturbed ground, particularly at the edges of human activity. Overall the samples were unremarkable.

THE SNAILS
Mark Robinson

The results are given in table 4.

Sample	5	6	7	8
Context	1026	1039	1093	1086
Feature	Ditch 1009	Pit 1038	Ditch 1087	Pit 1085
Triticum sp.	1	2-10	11-100	2-10
Triticum spelta			1	
Rumex sp.		1		1

Table 3 Charred plant remains – species present

Sample	5	6	7	8
Context	1026	1039	1093	1086
Feature	Ditch 1009	Pit 1038	Ditch 1087	Pit 1085
Pomatias elegans	-	+	-	-
Cochlicopa tridentatum	-	++	-	-
Cochlicopa sp.	++	+	++	++
Vertigo pygmaea	++	+	++	+
Pupilla muscorum	+++	+++	+++	+++
Vallonia costata	++	++	++	++
V. excentrica	+++	+++	+++	+++
Vallonia sp.	+++	+++	+++	+++
Punctum pygmaeum	-	+	-	-
Discus rotundatus	-	+	-	-
Aegopinella nitidula	-	-	-	+
Cecilioides acicula	+++	+++	+++	+++
Helicella itala	++	++	++	++
Trichia hispida gp.	+++	+++	+++	+++
T. striolata	+	-	-	+

+present, ++many, +++ very many

Table 4 Snails – species present

All four samples contained several thousand snails, as might be expected from such large samples. All are dominated by the open-country snails *Pupilla muscorum* and *Vallonia excentrica*, along with the more catholic *Trichia hispida* gp. and the burrowing snail *Cecilioides acicula.* Another snail characteristic of dry open habitats, *Helicella itala*, is well represented in all the samples. In addition, Sample 6 contains lower concentrations of shells associated with more shaded habitats, including *Carychium tridentatum* and *Discus rotundatus.*

The results suggest that dry open conditions prevailed on the site during the early Roman period. However, it is possible that tall herbaceous vegetation, providing a little shelter, was growing in the tops of pits 1036 and 1038, the location of Sample 6.

DISCUSSION

SITE LAYOUT AND DATE

The layout of the site was relatively simple with a limited number and range of features, all of which were relatively shallow. It is evident that the site had been truncated by agriculture and modern development, but the degree of truncation has proved impossible to quantify and it is uncertain how many shallow features might have been lost. There was also considerable modern intrusion, particularly on the Court Road frontage and across the car park. There is therefore no good indication that the limits of the sire have been reached in any direction and the site plan must be assumed to be incomplete in its extent as well as in the number and density of features.

The site plan, together with the dating evidence provided by the pottery, indicates a relatively brief duration of occupation in the second half of the 1st century AD. It is possible that the Phase 1 ditch (1017) and the stratigraphically early pits in the SW area were earlier than this. These contained few or no finds, and no pottery diagnostic of the later 1st century. Ditch 1017 is interpreted as having been dug in segments and backfilled deliberately. It is considered unlikely to have been contemporary with the enclosure, (although stratigraphically this is possible), and appears instead to have conditioned the location and alignment of the enclosure in Phase 2.

The enclosure itself is more securely dated to the later 1st century. It can be seen to have had an influence on the location of the pit groups within it in Phase 3, even when it had apparently gone out of use and been cut by the latest pits in the sequence here. SW of the enclosure, gullies 1080 and 1096 are closely aligned with the enclosure ditches and of similar form. The pits were intensively recut and there is a repetitive pattern of the gullies cut by deeper but shorter lengths of ditch. Again, in this area land use would appear to have been quite tightly controlled.

The occupation was short-lived, ending in the late 1st or early 2nd century AD, and the site was not re-occupied. The snails from the top of the latest pits (1036 and 1038) suggest that the site may have become overgrown (M Robinson, this report).

NATURE OF THE OCCUPATION

Despite the absence of evidence for structures or other clearly settlement-related features, the quantity and condition of the pottery recovered strongly indicate that there was occupation in the immediate vicinity. The range of imported items and fine tablewares may also suggest an occupation of relatively high status. There was, however, a lack of other material such as coins and personal adornments which may have helped confirm this impression. The small quantity of building material – *tegulae* from late-phase pits 1047 and 1087, and a possible *pila* from the enclosure ditch (1009) – is not sufficient to suggest the destruction of a Roman-style building in the area.

The absence of evidence for buildings should not be unexpected for this period, even on a moderately truncated site. For the 1st and 2nd century occupa-

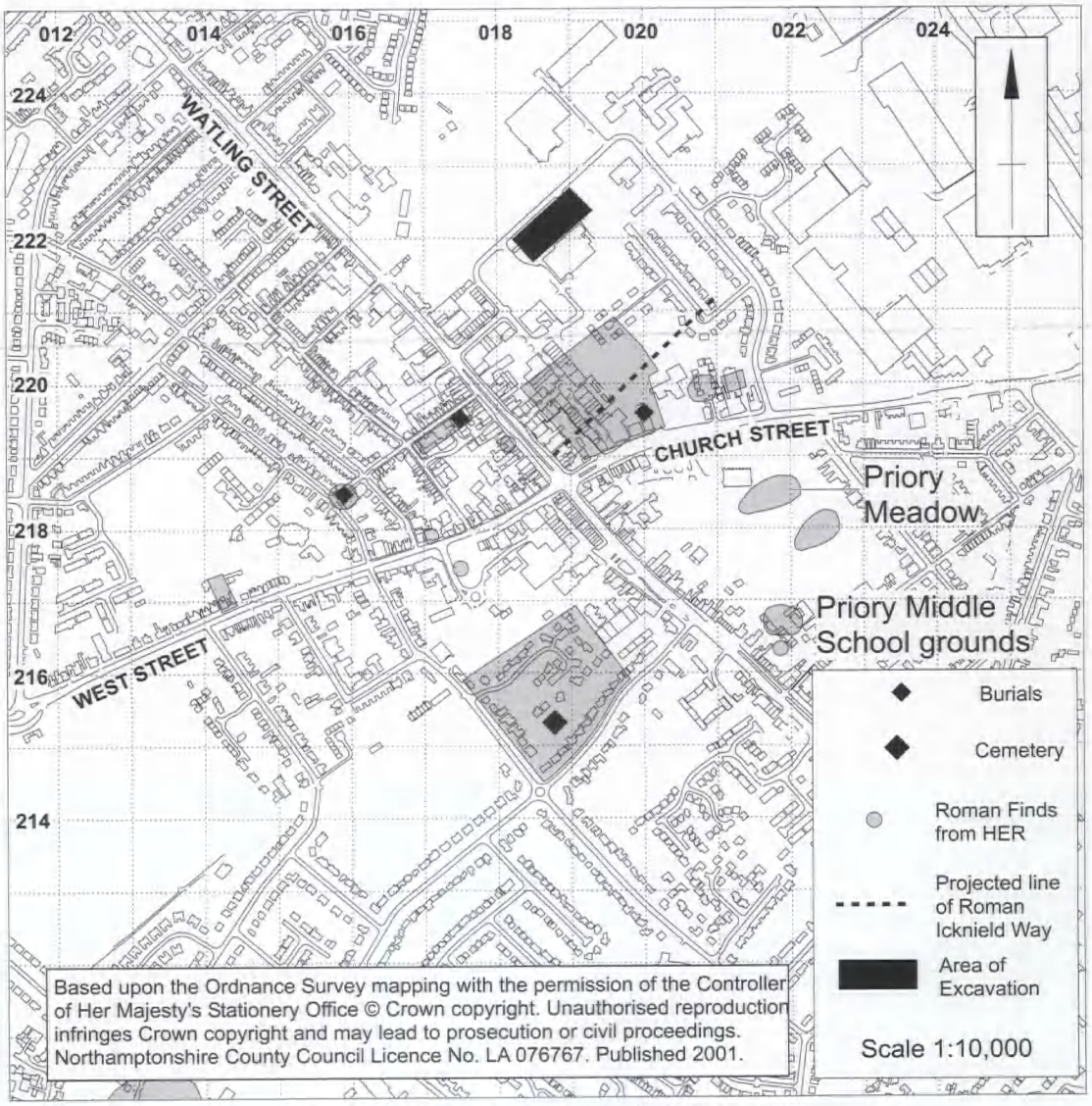

Figure 6 Site in relation to Roman finds in Dunstable

tion at Puddlehill, some structures were only evident as earthen floors containing trodden debris. The excavators considered that the buildings were likely to have been constructed on sill-beams laid directly on the Chalk surface or in very shallow trenches (Matthews and Warren 992, 18-39).

The settlement may have had an agricultural basis although there was no real indication of this from the features or finds. It is unclear whether agricultural structures (such as barns, grain stores and corn dryers) were absent from the site, had been lost to modern disturbances, or may have existed outside the area investigated. The deeper pits may have functioned for grain storage although none were of typical grain store form, being rather wide in relation to their depth. Charred plant remains were found to be sparse and it is unclear whether crops were processed on site or not. With the exception of a few fragments of lava (probably from querns) there was an absence of agricultural or craft implements among the finds. The absence of metalworking residues can also be noted, although again, given the limitations of the investigations, the significance of this is uncertain. The animal bone assemblage was unremarkable but would not be out of place in a Roman agricultural settlement. In view of the site's date and proximity to the historic core of Dunstable it may be appropriate to consider possible urban associations, although there is no obvious evidence for these either. The position of the site set back from Watling Street probably rules out a direct concern with any official functions, or with trading or workshop activities. In common with other 'small towns', it is no doubt safe to assume that *Durocobrivis* maintained strong agricultural connections (Burnham and Wacher 1990, 44-5) and a predominantly agricultural basis to the settlement seems likely.

THE SITE'S RELATIONSHIP TO ROMAN DUROCOBRIVIS

Excavations since the 1960s have shown conclusively that a Roman settlement grew up at the junction of Watling Street and the Icknield Way, although its layout and extent are not known. Figure 6 shows the location of the site in relation to other Roman finds mapped in the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (up to 1999). In the NE quadrant, about 200m S of the Queensway Hall site, extensive remains of Roman wells, pits and houses were uncovered and partly recorded under salvage conditions during site clearance along Church Street (Matthews 1964). A roadway was recorded surviving as a hollow way about 15m wide and running at a slight angle to Church Street so as to meet Watling Street about 30m north of the present crossing. Its date of origin is unclear, but it appears to have been re-metalled to a narrower width in the mid or later Roman period and is a good candidate for the Roman line of the Icknield Way. Its recorded orientation (48 degrees) is very similar to that of the enclosure at Queensway Hall lying 220m to the north and, unlike modern Church Street, it ran almost exactly at right-angles to Watling Street. On this evidence there is, therefore, some suggestion that the enclosure at Queensway Hall had an association with the Roman town in its initial founding and development during the 1st century.

Elsewhere in Dunstable evidence for 1st-century occupation has proved elusive although a ditch in Priory Meadow, in the SE quadrant would appear to have been backfilled in the early second century (Hagen 1972; Timby, this report) and may be associated with the initial settlement. It lay about 300m E of the crossing of the Icknield Way with Watling Street, in the same relative position in the SE quadrant as the Queensway Hall site did in the NE quadrant. From the published plan it would appear to have been aligned parallel to Watling Street. South of this, a shallow and stratigraphically early ditch in the Priory Middle School grounds yielded a sherd described as late Iron Age or early Roman (Warren and Hudspith 1993, 7), and a few sherds of similar date were recorded elsewhere in the excavation.

The major excavations of the 3rd to 4th century cemetery in the SW quadrant of the town (Matthews 1981) showed that the burials (numbering 112), overlay enclosure ditches, wells and kilns, although the nature and dating of this earlier occupation is not clear. One deep pit, described as a cess-pit (Feature M18) was abandoned in the early 2nd century and infilled. The dating of the wells here, of which five were recorded, is less secure but generally they were probably abandoned later. This area of the town would seem to have been inhabited until the late Roman period after which settlement retracted and the land was used for burial. A Roman inhumation has been recorded from the top of an infilled well in the NE quadrant of the town (Matthews 1964). In the NW quadrant, a Roman burial in a lead coffin and three probable Roman inhumations in a ditch have also been reported. These may indicate settlement retraction in these areas also. An exception to this pattern of retraction is the record of a pit containing 3rd/4th century pottery from West Street, 500m or so from the junction with Watling Street. This may be associated with ribbon development along the Roman Icknield Way (Warren1998).

Other find-spots of Roman material show a general clustering within about 300m of the Icknield Way and Watling Street crossroads with few sites further afield. It is evident that the Roman occupation did not purely take the form of ribbon development along the main roads, but spread for a considerable distance from both. As yet there is no indication that a pattern of side streets linked these areas. The Queensway Hall site therefore fits into this urban framework without any obvious signs that it had urban functions. The absence of evidence for archaeological features on the evaluated SE side of the Queensway Hall site is puzzling, since they would be expected to have been denser in this direction. It is possible that they simply did not survive here or that the evaluation trenches failed to locate them.

On the slender evidence available, the Queensway Hall site may be considered part of the initial layout of settlement which 'failed' at an early date. Its dating and alignment make it less likely that it was part of a pre-Roman settlement abandoned when *Durocobrivis* expanded. Only further work will determine whether this change in land use around the late 1st or 2nd century reflected a wider remodelling of the town, or was a more local phenomenon.

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