The Roman Settlement at Sandy, Bedfordshire

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SUMMARY

A re-assessment of the pre-Roman and Romano-British occupation comprises three centuries of chance discoveries and excavations. The Roman settlement was undefended, concentrated at the junction of five roads, with a satellite native settlement and a cemetery containing inhumations in coffins and cremations. The economy is defined as consumption and redistribution of goods; pottery and limited bronze and iron-working are suggested.

A fresh assessment of the evidence for Roman occupation at Sandy must resolve a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, the location of the site and the exotic objects discovered suggest a settlement of some importance. On the other, the lack of a planned outline, or of any substantial remains of dwellings, excludes it from any list of Romano-British "small towns". Occupation was continuous, and apparently substantial, from pre- to post-Roman times; do we invoke special factors to explain the phenomenon of prosperity without structures, or has the site suffered more than most from a millenium or so of land-use?

THE SITE

Sandy occupies a major gap in the ridge of Upper Greensand that sweeps roughly SW-NE across Bedfordshire. Through it the River Ivel runs northwards to join the Ouse some 3 miles to the north. To the east, steep wooded slopes and three Iron Age fortifications overlook the settlement, and to the west and south stretch several miles of flat alluvial soil and Oxford Clay. In the centre of figure 1 Stratford Road, to the east of the railway, marks the division. To the southeast lies the large expanse of Biggleswade Common. A lesser valley leads northeast from the settlement site, and is followed by a Roman road. Corallian limestone, a building material used in the settlement, is found 2 miles to the N.E. along it.

The site marked a major intersection of roads, comparable in function and importance to the modern railway junction. The settlement was on level ground, occupying an imprecise area comprising the modern Cemetery, the Chesterfield to the south, and part of the Station and railway marshalling yard. To the west, there rose a small hill, Tower Hill, now entirely quarried away; this was the cemetery.

The subsequent history of the site is relevant to the state of the evidence. Saxon and medieval Sandy was to the north-west of the Roman, around the parish church; and further expansion was further west, towards the Great North Road, the modern successor to the Roman road and parallel to it on the west of the Ivel. The forgotten site became "nothing but a warren" (Blome, 1673, 45) until the creation and development of the railway. At the beginning of this century, before the establishment of the Cemetery on part of the Chesterfield, the land had been revived by "trenching", whereby trenches were driven across the field, the soil from one being shovelled into the next. The destruction of ancient features by this can still be observed in newly-dug graves; these graves, in turn, are the major source of recorded features. Within living memory, the Roman road across the Chesterfield was almost completely removed by farmers as an obstruction to the plough; and market gardening has ensured that the land is under almost continuous cultivation.

The site was once famous as a hunting-ground for antiquaries and collectors, and best known for the numerous coins found on the surface of the Chesterfield. They were known locally as "chesterpieces"; their frequency is attributed to the fact that the men hoeing the market gardens (for which Sandy has always been famous) work on their hands and knees, and no object, however small, escapes their notice. A ring with a Christian emblem was found by a woman in this way, about 1720, and reported in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1764, 60). Many objects, now familiar, were found here and described, possibly for the first time in Britain. Camden, (1695) mentions an urn "red, like coral, with an inscription", a description also used by Stukeley in his unpublished *Common-*
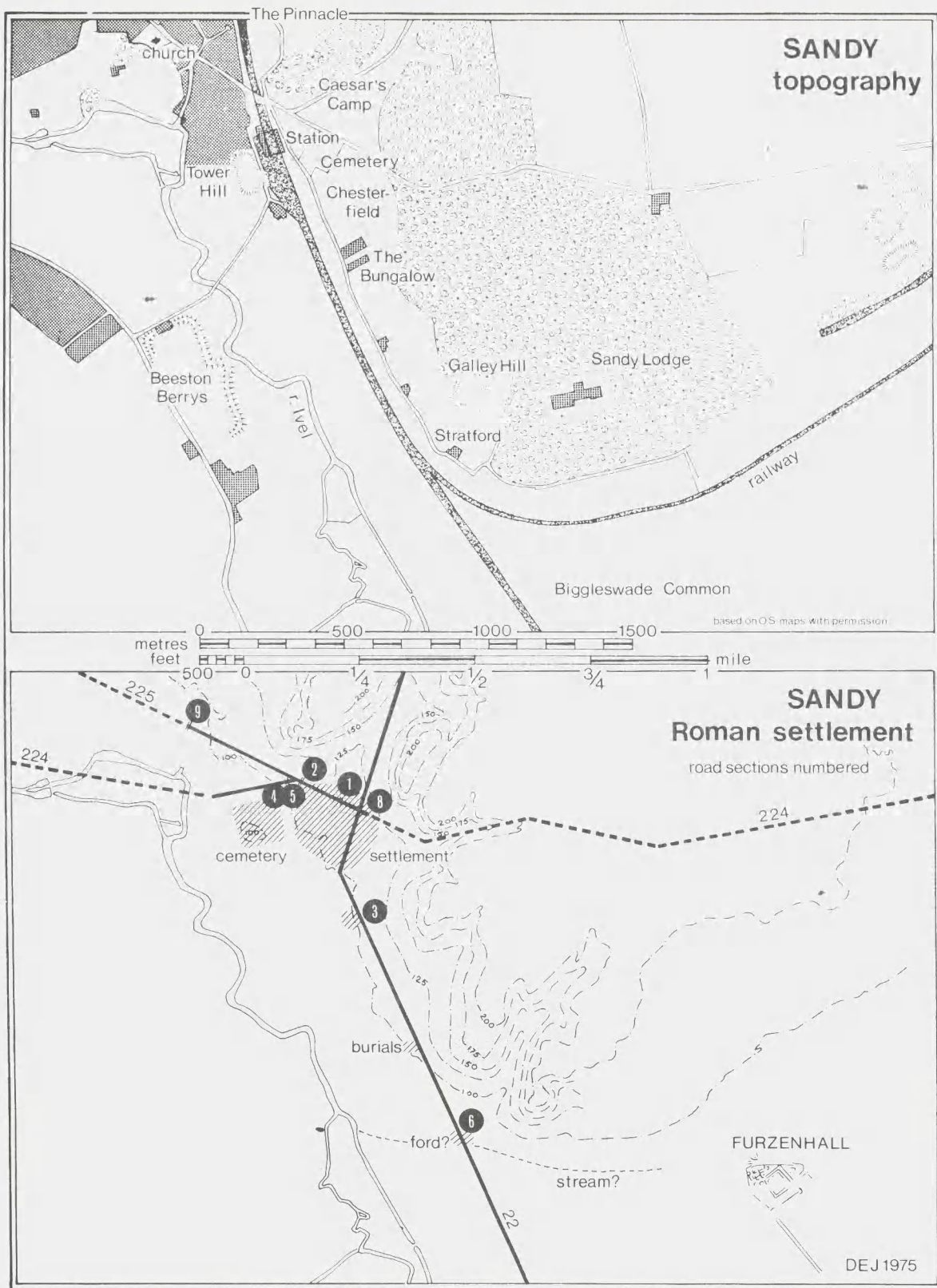
SANDY topography

The Pinnacle

church

Caesar's Camp

Station

Cemetery

Tower Hill

Chester-field

The Bungalow

Galley Hill

Sandy Lodge

Beeston Berrys

r. Ivel

Stratford

railway

Biggleswade Common

based on OS maps with permission

metres 0 — 500 — 1000 — 1500

feet 500 — 0 — 1/4 — 1/2 — 3/4 — 1 — mile

SANDY Roman settlement

road sections numbered

cemetery

settlement

burials

ford?

stream?

FURZENHALL

DEJ 1975

Fig 1   The Topography of Sandy and its Roman Settlement.

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W ④ hearth   E
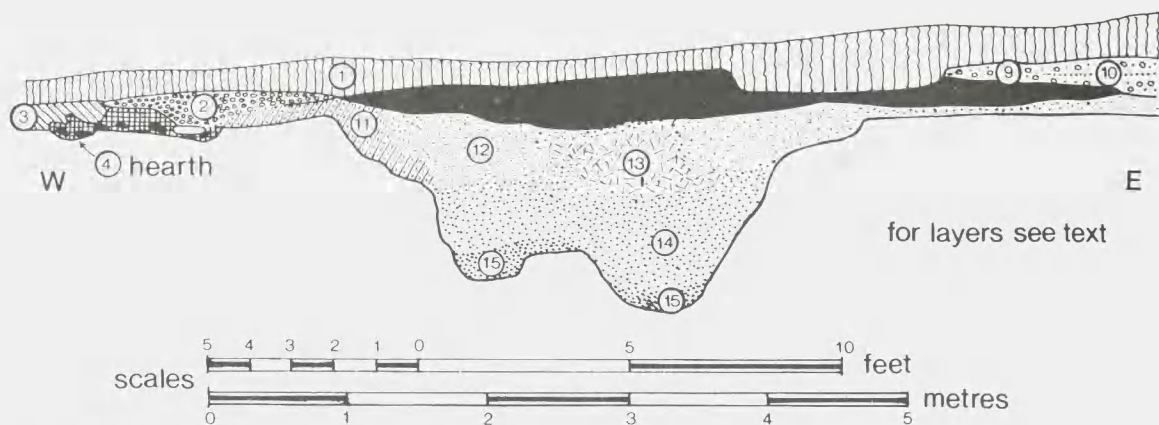
for layers see text

scales

Fig 2   The Bungalow: Sections

place Book now in Devizes Museum. The phrase probably originated from the pen of John Aubrey in what is the earliest literary reference to the site — in his largely unpublished *Moumenta Britannica*, a manuscript now in the Bodleian Library, written about 1666. He was apparently used independently by Camden (1695), Gough in revising Camden (1806) Stukeley and Warren (1779). To Blome (1673) is due the first appearance of the erroneous identification of Ptolemy's *Salena(e)* with Sandy a mistake followed by Camden (1695 and 1806), Evans (1864) and Ransom (1886), in spite of two reasoned denials by Beldam (1868), and Bradley (1883). The fame of the site, established by the "vases, urns, lacrymatorys, lamps and immense numbers of coyns" (Stukeley) was enhanced by the contents of the Roman cemetery, when Tower Hill was quarried between 1850 and 1911. Captain Peel bought the land for the branch railway from Sandy to Potton, and "formed quite a museum from the antiques then found. Among the rest was a Roman sword in fine preservation, and he being a fighting man, had one made from it for his own use, which he used in India during the mutiny, where he fell at Lucknow" (Baker, 1874).

THE SETTLEMENT

(a) Origins

The evidence for the Iron Age in this area has never been adequately summarised. This will be the subject of a further paper in this *Journal*, and only conclusions are given here.

The earliest Iron Age settlement seems to have been not in the valley but on the high ground to the east and north-east. Of the three hillforts, none is securely dated. Abraded sherds excavated from the interior of the Sandy Lodge site, from the rampart of Galley Hill and from the surface of Caesar's Camp may date the earthworks, but could be residual. However, settlement is indicated by a hearth and pit excavated on The Pinnacle.

The impact of Belgic-style Catuvellaunian influence in the Ivel valley is clearly seen in the pottery, coins and other objects. The fine pottery of Aylesford-Swarling type comes partly from a small cremation cemetery near the modern Cemetery, where other similar material probably indicates settlement.

Further south, at The Bungalow, there is clear evidence for settlement by the mid-first century A.D. Since its original publication (Johnston, 1955), the material has been re-examined and the pottery appears here for the first time (fig 14). The inhabited area was on the western lip of the ditch, and on the site of The Bungalow itself. The "hearth" (fig 2 layer 4) was a mass of burnt material containing stones, bones and pottery of Belgic type (e.g.6). The intrusive brick belongs to the gravel layer 2 that seals it, and to layer 11, which is derived from the disturbance of 4 when the adjacent ditch was filled in.

The ditch, which runs NW-SE and whose double bottom is the result of either re-cutting or intersection with another, is roughly contemporary with its pottery; the lack of a primary silt and its unweathered condition suggest that it was soon backfilled. This filling, layers 12-15, was a fairly consistent reddish-brown sandy soil, though 13 had a more clayey texture. It had the tumbled appearance of deliberate backfilling (possibly in two stages) from a bank on the west; if so, the bank would have sealed the "hearth", suggesting a panic defence at about the time of the Roman
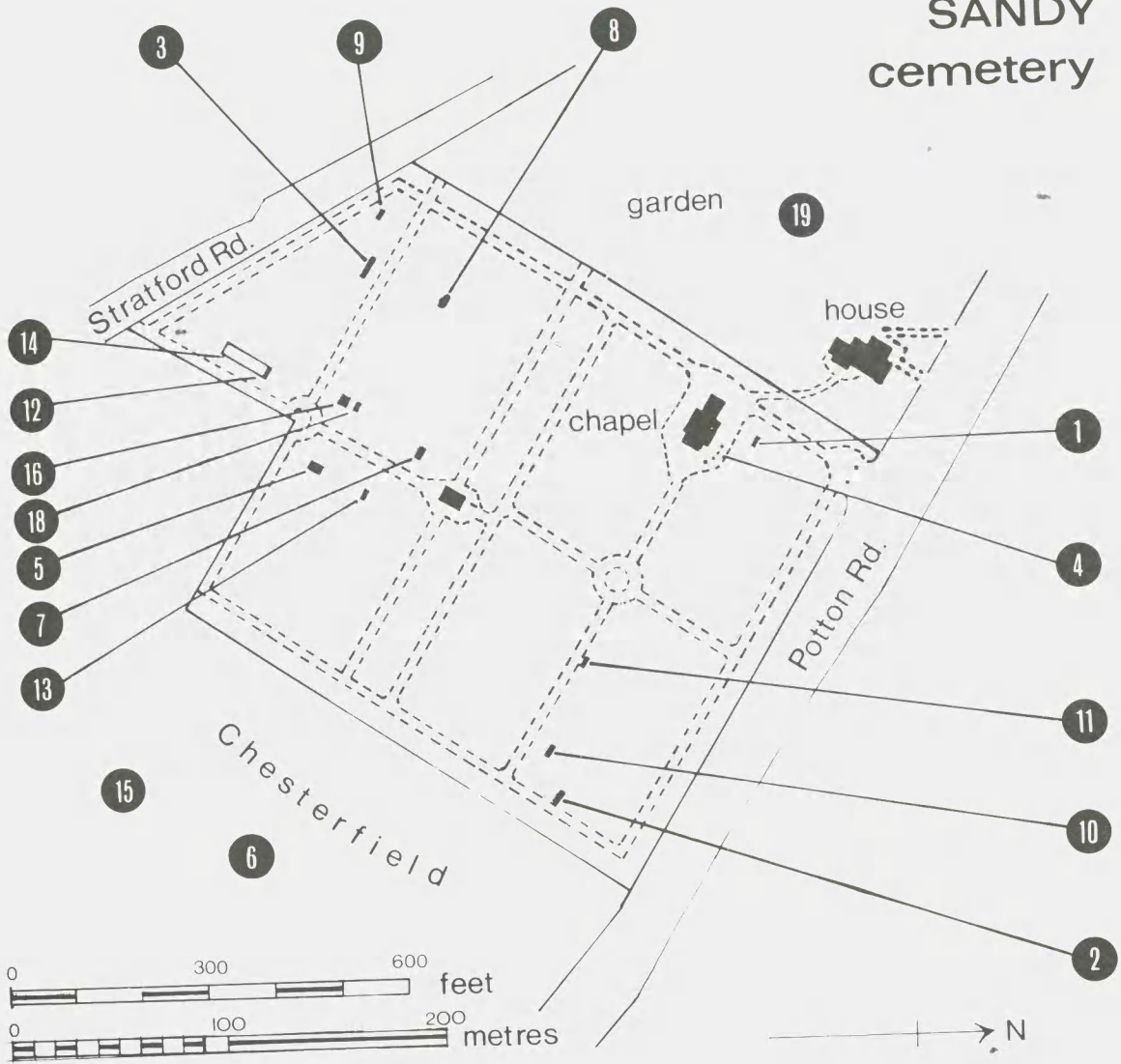
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SANDY cemetery

Fig 3   The Cemetery and Chesterfield

conquest. This was sealed by the Roman road, in whose foundation layer was a very small piece of samian "clearly of 1st century date . . . almost certainly pre-Domitianic"[1]. The pottery from the ditch filling (e.g. 3, 14, 16, 17 and 21), with the brooch (fig 6, 1), would support this mid-first date for the backfilling of the ditch and the construction of the road. The filling also contained a fragment of human skull (parietal bone from a young individual).[2]

Continued occupation on the site of the modern house is shown by two coarse sherds (16, 17), the mortarium (18) and the amphora (22).

(b) The Settlement Pattern

The scatter of finds shows that the settlement was not compact, but strung out along the road through the valley, as far south as Stratford, where there may have been a ford across a stream which was diverted when the railway was built. A fair amount of undateable Romano-British pottery was found here in the excavation to find the Roman road. (Johnston, 1964, 238).

The density of finds shows that the main settlement was under the modern Cemetery and the part of the Chesterfield adjoining. The southern and south-eastern sections of the Cemetery produce

the most finds, and evidence for dwellings. It should be stressed that all finds are made in the course of grave-digging; that some sections thus exposed have been examined and recorded by the writer, but that the majority of the information recovered is due to the observant eye of the Cemetery Keeper, Mr H. Gurney, since 1956. There is thus a large quantity of unprovenanced pottery and coins; the recorded finds are listed below; and numbered on figure 3.

Road Metalling
1   Gravel metalling and mortar.
2   "concrete" metalling, 10-12ft wide, below layers of sand and fine limestone, and clay (prob. disturbed by "trenching").
3   An E-W gravel track, running roughly in the direction of Tower Hill, also observed in the part of the Cemetery to NE.

Structural Evidence
3   (cont.) burning and sandstone lumps.
4   NE of the chapel, sandstone blocks were found in quantity when making up the path, associated with road metalling. Possibly a roadside building?
5   large flat sandstones, almost certainly a floor.
6   in the Chesterfield, SE of the Cemetery, many large flat sandstones are pulled to the surface by cultivation [also: box flue-tile and *tegula* at Cambridge (unprovenanced)].

Pits and Hearths
7   a layer of ash and lime possibly a pit. No finds.
8   pit with Roman pottery, brick fragments and mortar.
9   A U-shaped pit, sectioned by a modern grave. Roughly 7-8ft deep, 6-8ft wide at top. It contained three skeletons (identified at the time as probably all male); of the three skulls, one was possibly dented on top. All dumped in head-first. Associated with light grey Roman pottery, including a mortarium, a narrow glass bottle neck (fig 10, 1), a bronze tool (fig 7, 15). Also a set each of horns of cow, sheep and goat. The pottery is in the Bedford Museum, but cannot now be identified.
10   a hearth (?) with a pebble base, crackled flints and burnt clay. Horns and pottery. [also: fragments of burnt clay 18mm thick with rectangular edge and piece of burnt hearth with vitreous slag (at Cambridge, unprovenanced)].

Pottery
11   nearly ½cwt of pottery from one (modern) grave.
12   5 samian bases and other pieces with potter's marks (see below p.48) Forms Drag. 27, 33, 31, 29/37, 44 represented.
13   complete samian dish (Drag. 32 stamped MVSICI M).
14   flower-vase (fig 13a) and pottery face-mask (pl. 3, b).
15   pottery recorded from the Chesterfield (TL 179486) and published (Kennett, 1973), included a late third-early fourth century unguentarium (ib. fig 1) and graffito (below, fig 13b no 2).

Miscellaneous Material
16   part of a baked clay slab, grass-marked on one side, probably from a kiln or oven. Associated with pottery — samian and colour-coated wares.
17   a baked clay fire-bar. Provenance uncertain.
18   coin of Arcadius/Honorius.
19   from the Keeper's garden. Coin of Domitian.
20   from paths in Cemetery. 2 coins = Victorinus and Constans.
21   3 bronze bracelets (fig 7 nos 23-5).
22   SW section of Cemetery. Perforated pottery spindle-whorl (not illus)

(c) Roads
The roads have received more attention than any other aspect of Roman Sandy, and are published in detail by the Viatores (Johnston, 1964). In the following summary, page references are to that work (except where stated otherwise). Excavated sections are numbered on figure 1.

Route 22, from London, was missed by excavation at Stratford (section 6, pp 235, 238) and sectioned at The Bungalow (Section 3, above p.37). The angle in the Chesterfield is dictated by the road's course through the gap to the NE Metalling was robbed out on either side of Potton Road (Section 8, p. 236). The branch, route 225, has been identified in the Cemetery (section 1, p 246) and sectioned in the Cemetery Keeper's garden (section 2, pp 246, 516). It was missed by electric cable trenches in Stratford road (section 8, p 236) and recognised by the Fire Station (section 9, p 246). Subsequently, Romano-British sherds from All Saints Church, London Road, have confirmed this line. The second branch, route 224, was sectioned twice by pipe trenches in the Keeper's garden (sections 4, 5, p 271). There

is also the possibility (above p. 37 and fig 3, 3) of a gravel track leading towards Tower Hill from the settlement. Dating evidence suggests the mid-first century for route 22, and late second century for 225.

The resulting geometry requires explanation. The junction in the Chesterfield doubtless marks the nucleus of the settlement. Observation confirms that there was not a northward extension of route 22 through the Cemetery to make a triangle. Route 224 did not branch off at this point because Tower Hill would have stood in its course, and so left route 225**at the more convenient point further north.

(d) Burials (figs 4a, b)

The Saxon and Roman cemeteries lay to the west of the Roman settlement, and the burials were found and recorded over a period of some 70 years during the creation and development of the railway.

The chronology of these developments, including the complete removal of Tower Hill for ballast, has been studied in detail by Mr Alan Johnston, on whose notes and drawings the following and figs 4 a-b are based. The Great Northern Railway was authorised by act of Parliament in 1846 and the London-Peterborough line opened in 1850. The branch line from Sandy to Potton was added between 1852 and opened in 1856/7. The quarrying of Tower Hill for ballast began, probably for this branch, in about 1852 and continued until at least 1911 (the latest dated find). The sources for this chronology include Ordnance Survey maps of 1884, 1901 and 1926 and unpublished documents of the G.N.R. (The finds are described in the sources quoted below.) The method of quarrying is clear from the quarry outlines, and a calculation of c.3940 sq ft per annum provides the estimated annual growth rings of fig 4a, where the five broad phases of quarrying are shown.

Coffins were found in two groups. The wooden coffins were found in 1853, in the same year as the mass inhumations and urns, which were "opposite to the station house and coal depot, and on Tower Hill". On the chest of one skeleton was a "shallow vessel of lead" (now lost). Three wooden coffins with lead linings were found in 1879 and 1880 (Elger, 1879; and Anon, 1880). They had angle irons and 6-7 large nails 8in long at the corners. One nail is at Bedford, with the head possibly of a second, and two more at Cambridge. The size of the nails implies thick wooden planks, as at Colchester (where they were thought to be
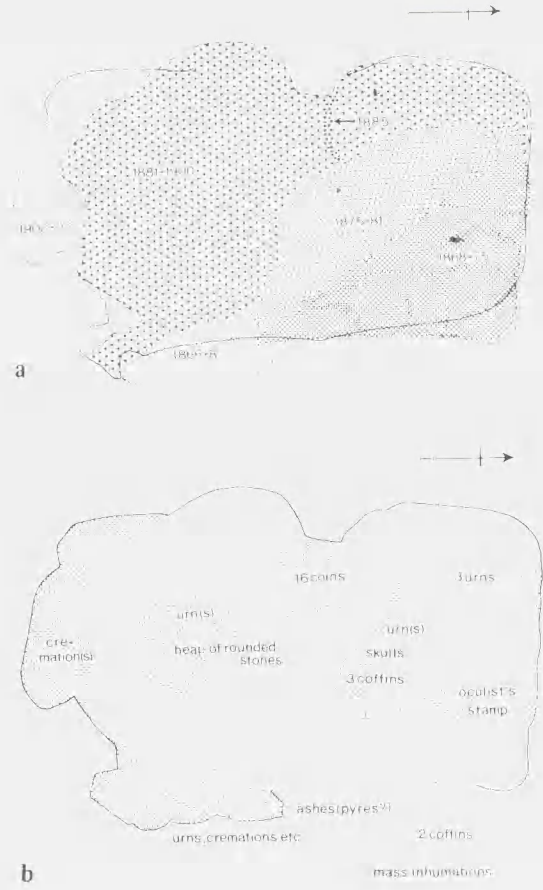
a

b

Fig 4   a: Tower Hill: progress of quarrying
         b: Tower Hill: conjectural find-spots

hollowed treetrunks) (Hull, 1958, 256). Two coffins contained skeletons, and all three lay E — W.

Inhumations seem to be recorded from three areas. "A number of skulls" was found close to the northern coffins in 1878 (Elger, 1879) and "in the exhumations further south, near the station, the bodies were thrown together in a mass, so that, in the words of the workmen, it was a bank of bodies" (Taddy, 1853). The third discovery, in 1953, was in the corner of the modern cemetery the three inverted skeletons in a pit with grave goods (above p. 39 and fig 3, 9).

Urns, with and without cremations, were numerous and widely distributed. At least 14 cinerary urns are recorded (7 at Bedford, 1 in private hands), and between 10 and 30 complete vessels have survived. From the railway, one contained 3 sets of bones divided by small squares of netting, with a

ring and a coin. Another (Warren, 1779) contained cremated bone evenly mixed with grey sand, and a third (now at Bedford) held the remains of a young woman with a plain finger ring and clip-shaped pin (fig 7. 16a-b). Wyatt (1866) records at least 11 "deposited 2½ - 3ft below the surface, at the bottom of the alluvial soil and on top of the sand bed" (i.e. at the foot of Tower Hill). They were surrounded by ashes and associated with animal bones, some of which were burnt. This may have been the pyre area. One tiny piece of distorted and evidently burnt glass at Cambridge is probably from a cremation.

It has proved impossible to fit the extant pottery into the quarrying pattern of fig 4b, and to establish a sequence of urn burials. A few bear dates, either of their discovery or their acquisition by collector or museum, mostly after 1900. Only 3 (in the Ashmolean dated 1876) can be placed, and they are typologically early.

On the other hand, we can point to three distinct burial areas, Belgic, Roman and Saxon, with scattered burials elsewhere and at least two roadside burials; within the Roman cemetery, the coffins were in two groups, away from most of the urns and cremations, and possibly in an area dedicated largely to inhumations (cf the "skulls" and perhaps the oculist's stamp). If the same progression is found as, for example, at York – of cremation being superseded by inhumation by the end of the third century. (York 79, 105) – then the cemetery must have grown from south and east, extending northwards towards the railway bridge where the latest – Saxon-burials were found. This sequence is confirmed by the pewter dish; only three other cemeteries are known to have had pewter grave goods (Lankhills, Winchester; Richborough, Kent; Cogenhoe, Northants.) The date of this dish is likely to be fourth century.[3] The mass inhumations closely resemble the elongated burial pits "on the outskirts" of the Railway Station cemetery at York (ibid, 79). It is also noteworthy that at Trentholme Drive (ibid, 101) the pyre area was distinct at first from the burial area, and was itself later used for burial – as seems to have been the case at Sandy, with at least 11 urns deposited in the pyre ashes at the foot of Tower Hill, at both sites the cremation of animals seems to have been part of the rite. York also provided the explanation of the "heap of rounded stones which had been carefully selected and were of equal size" (Latchmore, 1890); in two cemeteries (York, 79, 105) graves were marked by cairns of cobbles.

Evidently, the cemetery did not have precise limits, and – to judge from early accounts – stretched across the Chesterfield. In addition, the Tower Hill discoveries included much non-funerary material (e.g. the iron work hoard, "a quantity of charred wheat . . . amounting to near thirty quarters" (Mayle and Price, 1850), and much of the pottery). This mingling of domestic and funerary material was noted at Colchester (Hull, 1958, 252, 255). At the Union Cemetery, as at Vindonissa, the area seemed to have been also the town rubbish-dump. Elsewhere, however, the extra-mural houses and graves were mingled without system. Both observations might describe the situation at Sandy.

Some early discoveries, presumably from the Chesterfield, may have been roadside burials south of the settlement. Camden (1695) records glass cinerary urns and one samian vessel containing ashes, Warren (1779) a simple cremation in urn and Pownall (1787) another with several articles of a lady's toilet, including a curved pin and a mirror. Further south, towards Stratford (fig 1), a buff Romano-British jar (of which a sketch survives) contained a cremation. There was a small cemetery here, as skeletons were observed c. 1900 when digging up the track, now Stratford Road, and in the adjoining farmyard.

THE FINDS
(all objects are in the Bedford Museum unless otherwise stated).

(a) *Silver* Coins apart, no silver object has survived. From a cremation in Tower Hill came a "silver ring, set with cornelian, bearing the device of an eagle . . ." (Taddy, 1853), the second discovery of this stone, the first, "a cornelian intaglio" having been recorded by Stukeley (1724). More important was "a curious mirrour, or speculum . . . of a mixt metal, copper, silver and iron . . . I measured it two inches five lines, by two inches four lines. It is surprising that it hath preserved its polish to so great a degree after lying buried so many hundred years." (Pownall, 1787). It accompanied a cremation in an urn.

(b) *Bronze* The finest surviving object is undoubtedly the small *phalera* (pl. 3a), now at Cambridge. When first published (Ransom 1905) it was identified as Mercury; a new interpretation was advanced in 1939 by Professor A. Alfoeldi and summarised by F.M. Heichelheim (1946) suggesting that "it represents one of the usual symbols for a happy after-life, and shows the head of Bacchus or one of his superhuman followers." It has three small holes, and it is suggested that it

was fixed, like other similar pieces, to a funerary car. Both interpretations are doubted by Professor J.M.C. Toynbee (1964, 337), who regards it as a Medusa, whose "hair is very snake-like, even if no actual snakes can be discerned in it; and the lightly incised wreath of leaves and berries that surrounds the mask would suit Medusa in her role as a goddess of earth and fertility. This was obviously an imported work, probably from Gaul." These *phalerae* were charm-like decorations attached to metal or leather corselets, and were military equipment. However, as all three known British examples were found on civilian sites, she suggests that they may have been "lost by their owners after retirement from active service".

At Bedford is a small flat bronze head attached to a broken and bent handle (fig 5). Deriving from a trefoil-lipped jug it can be compared to examples at Hauxton (Liversidge, 1957, 8-9 and fig 1 and 4c) and Nijmegen (den Boesterd, 1956, nos 235 and 236). The face, poorly modelled and indistinct, is female, apparently enclosed in a cowl or bag suspended by the top two corners. It probably represents Medusa.

Gough's edition of Camden (1806) mentions "a brass female head about 3ins high, which he (the owner) supposed to be Boadicea, more probably a standard-pole." Watkin (1882) identified this as a steelyard-weight; it has since disappeared.

In 1856 on the estate of the late Capt. Peel "when they were making a branch railway from Sandy to Potton" (Baker, 1874) 3 fine bronze bowls were found, which are now in the Bedford Museum. As Capt. Peel bought the land for the branch line these might be from the Station end of it — a hoard buried between Tower Hill and the settlement. They have been published in detail by Kennett (1969), who at the time concluded that they are imports of the late fourth century though he now considers them to be more probably Romano-British copies of the continental types, having seen a greater range of the European ones. To this he has added (1971) a fourth, separate from the series; this is native work of the same period. A small fragment of a copper bowl with the rim turned over an iron wire was found (unstratified) at The Bungalow.

Ten brooches survive, complete or in part (fig 6). With the possible exception of no 10, they are all early types, of British workmanship (except no 6).

1) a one-piece brooch, of pre-conquest type, from the ditch filling at The Bungalow.

2) a one-piece, Nauheim Derivative brooch. The type was common by AD43 and continued almost to the end of the century. Exact provenance uncertain. For the decoration of the back, cf Wheeler (1930), fig 24; 2 and Hull (1947), pl. LXXXIX, 5 (AD43-8). (3, 4, 5, 8.) derived from the true Colchester type, these have the spring-pin made separately and secured to the body. Nos 3 and 4 are so closely similar that they might even be from the same batch. 3 is unprovenanced, 4 from the modern Cemetery and 5 from the excavations at Furzenhall Farm. A common first-century type. No 8 appears to be part of another (at Cambridge).

Fig 5 Bronze Handle
       from Jug with
       Medusa mask
       (scale ½)

6) a Hod Hill type brooch, a continental derivative from the Aucissa type. The head is rolled backwards to hold the iron hinge-pin; the silvering of the lower part and the single hole in the catch-plate are typical. These brooches were imported at the time of the conquest, generally by the military, and remained popular for another 20-30 years. Of uncertain provenance; the pin, probably belongs to it.

7,9) British derivatives from no 6. No 7 which is closely paralleled at Colchester (Hull, 1947, pl.xcvi, nos 129-30) is carefully made; the rolled-back head, however is unusual for a British brooch (Mackreth, 1972, 24). In no 9 the head is rolled forward and the additional hook indicates that it was probably one of a pair, joined by a bronze chain. The hinge pin is of iron. Both are of uncertain provenance, no 7 being now at Cambridge, no 9 at Bedford. Mid-late first century.

10) a penannular brooch, of uncertain provenance. The body is circular in section, with regular transverse ribbing, the terminals (apparently undecorated) turned back and flattened. The type
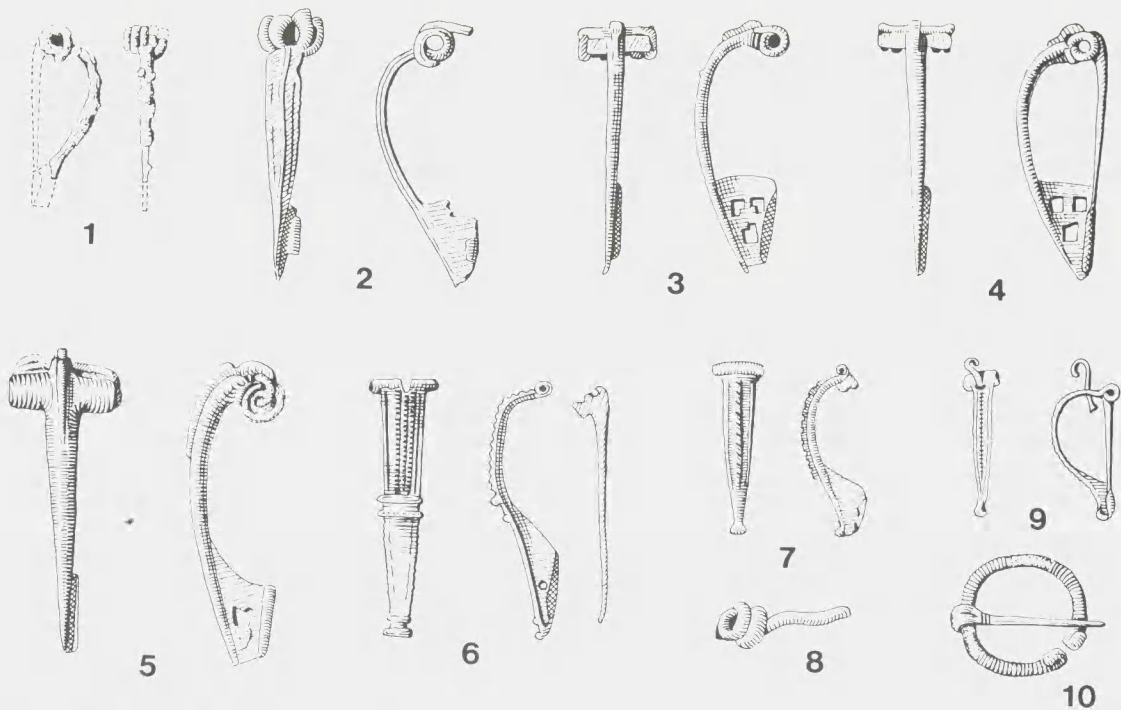
Fig 6   Bronze brooches (scale $^2/_3$)

(Fowler, 1960, type D) is not precisely dateable, and had a long life. These terminals are thought to be earlier than the cast knobs, in general: cf early examples at Verulamium, AD 5-35 and 80-100 (Wheeler, 1936, fig 24 no 4 and fig 45 no 39), Wroxeter prob. 80-120 (Bushe-Fox, 1916, pl xvi no 14) and a late, plain example at Latimer dated to late third – late fourth century. (Branigan, 1971, fig 44, 611). The ribbed body is paralleled in undated examples at Richborough (Bushe-Fox, 1926, p 46 no 25) and Lydney Park (Wheeler, 1932, fig 14 no 37).

The bracelets (fig 8 and fig 7 nos 21-28) call for little comment. All, except 23-5, are at Cambridge. These three, a set from one modern grave, would fit a child.

Three rings are known (fig 7, nos 16a-18), of which no 18 is certainly not a finger-ring. A further large ring (not illustrated) of bronze over an iron wire, was found unstratified at The Bungalow, and is not certainly of Roman date. No 16a was found with 16b and the "cremated remains of a young woman in an urn" (Bedford Museum registers).

The pins, nos 4-8 (at Cambridge) and 16b are of common Romano-British types. No 11 is a needle, no 10 has an expanded end for mixing medicaments or cosmetics on a stone palette, and

no 16b may be not a pin but a pair of tweezers. One wonders if this is Pownall's *hasta recurva* (Pownall, 1787). The ring-headed pin, no 9, has been thought by Smith (1905) and Fox (1923, 107) to be Iron Age, through an association (which cannot now be verified) with a La Tene III urn (which cannot now be found). The dating of this type of pin, sometimes known as "ibex-headed", is disputed, and a fourth century AD date has been proposed by Stevenson (1955). This particular specimen, which is in the British Museum, is listed by Fowler (1963, 153) among pins of Roman date; she suggests that some, at least, may go back to the first century BC, that they were made and worn throughout the Roman period, and that they have a high survival value.

Miscellaneous bronze objects. The Cambridge collection, given by W. Ransom, includes a number of fragmentary objects (fig 7 nos 1-3, 14, 20-28) which have the appearance of scrap metal. 1-3 in particular look like offcuts of bronze, with trial toolcuts, and it is not impossible that working, or re-working of bronze for small metal objects was carried out on the site.

No 12 has been carefully bent, and the hole suggests that it might have held a pin for scribing or surgical work. If it were straight, however, its
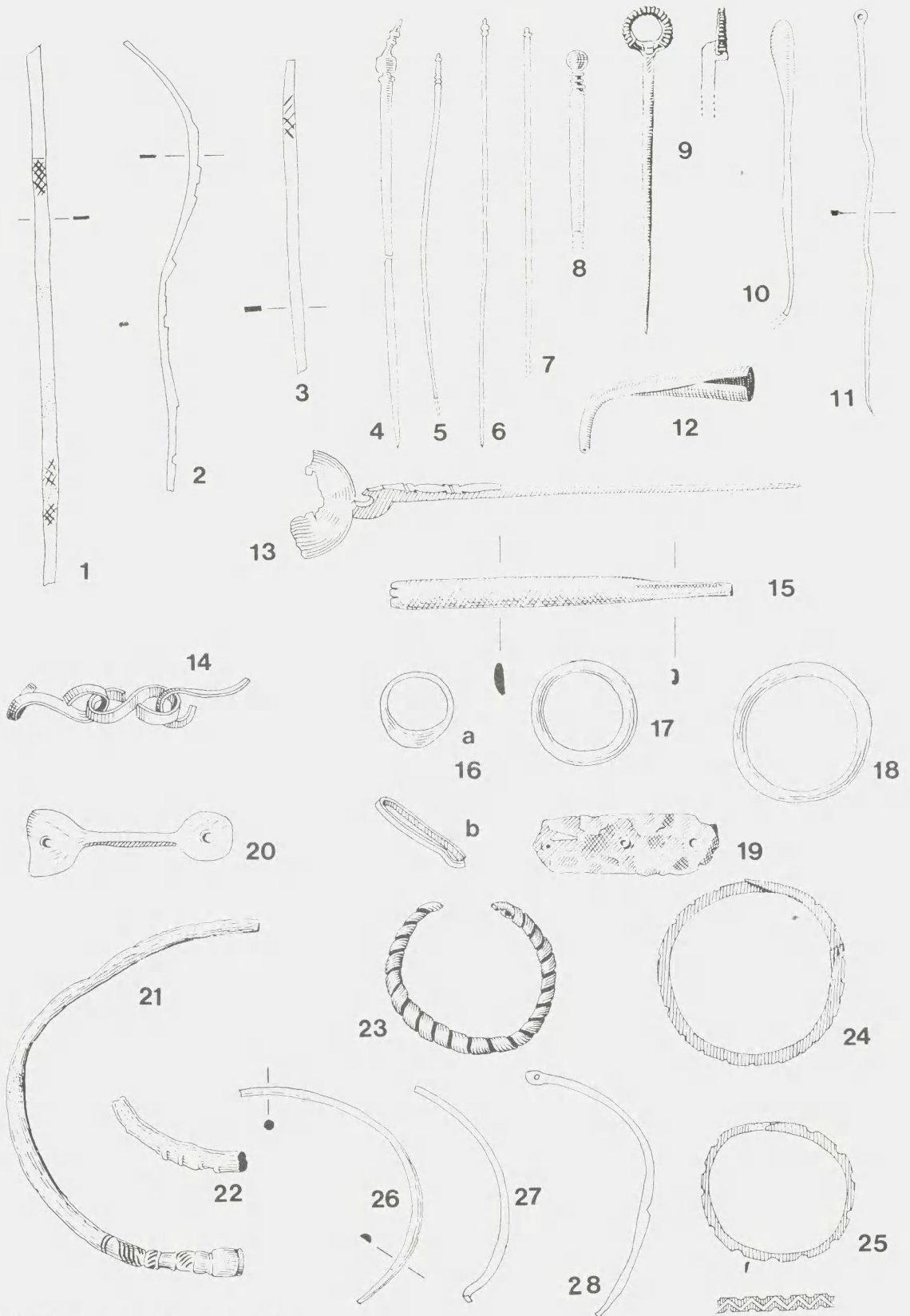
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Fig 7   Bronze Objects (scale $^2/_3$)

form would be that of a simple ferrule. It is an unstratified find from The Bungalow.

No 1 appears to be a surgical or manicure tool, for which no precise parallel is known. It was found in the pit with the 3 inverted skeletons and the glass flagon (fig 10, 1).

No 19 is a small cast plaque, of uncertain form. It has three small holes for attachment.

No 20 is clearly a fastener, but since the holes are round, rather than square, it may have been attached by sewing, rather than nails or rivets.

(c) Lead/Pewter

1 A small, flat-bottomed dish of lead or pewter, was once at Bedford. Diam. 6.6 in and height approx 0.7 in. It was broken and distorted, but is doubtless that recorded by Taddy (1853) as found on the chest of one of the skeletons at Tower Hill, in one of the two wooden coffins. It is probably fourth century (see above, p. 40).

2 Cards at Cambridge describe, in Sir Cyril Fox's writing, a "lead pig, shaped like the prow of a boat," and a "leaden cushion-shaped weight with a constricted waist". Both are lost.

(d) Iron

The hoard, probably from Tower Hill, and now in the British Museum, has been published in detail by W. Manning (1964). It comprises 4 leaf-shaped linch pins, 1 hub rim, 4 hub linings, 1 axle guard band, 1 farrier's buttress, 1 curry comb handle, 1 firmer or paring chisel, 1 mower's anvil, 1 cobbler's last, 1 key, 1 anvil and 1 axe. Manning omits 3 items studied by the writer in c 1953. They are:

2 broken hub rims, resembling those published. Diameters approx. 4.5 in and 5.0 in.

1 unidentified object (fig 9, 4), length 13.25in. At least one, and possibly 3, ornamental scrolls sprang from each side. The object was broken at one end, and much corroded; it appeared to have been forged in one piece.

In addition, it was noted that the mower's anvil was unused, and that the cart fittings did not make satisfactory pairs, supporting the identification as a hoard.

An iron plough coulter, of Roman type, is in the Bedford Museum (not illus). Its length, 2ft 9ins., and its provenance is not known.

An iron object at Bedford (fig 9 no 3) appears to be a large pin. But since it is of iron, the usual material for stili and nearly 4½in. long, it may be the rare variety of stilus with a knobbed, instead of flattened erasing end.
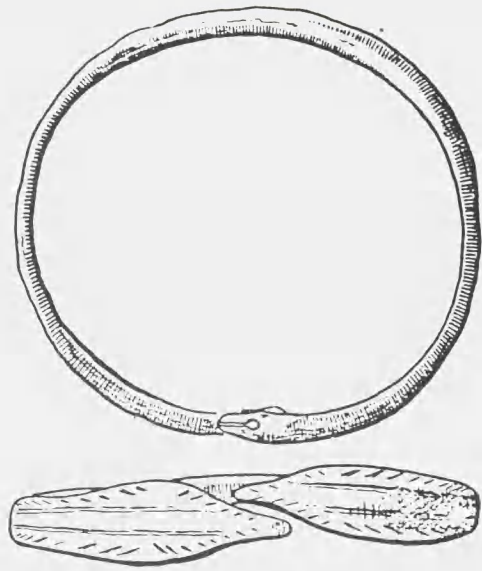

Fig 8   Bronze bracelet (actual size)

A much corroded knife-blade is at Bedford (not illus). It is 7.3in long, and 1.5in wide at its widest point.

A sickle-shaped object at Bedford (fig 9, 1) is identified there as a strigil. Only the size and curvature support this, as the strigil normally is broad and U-shaped in section. It might be the blank for a small sickle; although much corroded, it certainly had no cutting edge; nor is it clear whether the square end is intentional, or broken. It is too flat to be a latch-lifter of conventional form; but if a pivot hole or hook is missing from the broken end, it could be a door-handle of the kind found at Latimer (Branigan 1971, fig 43, No 588). Its provenance is unknown.
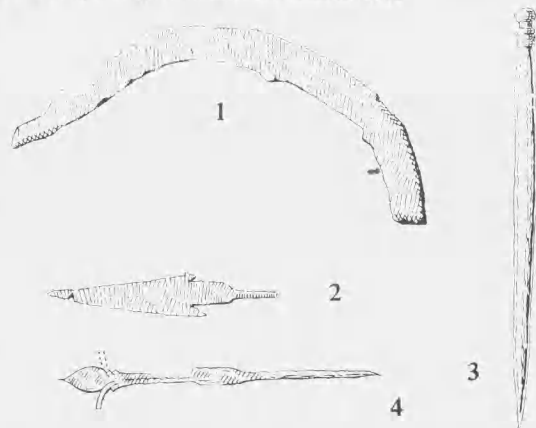

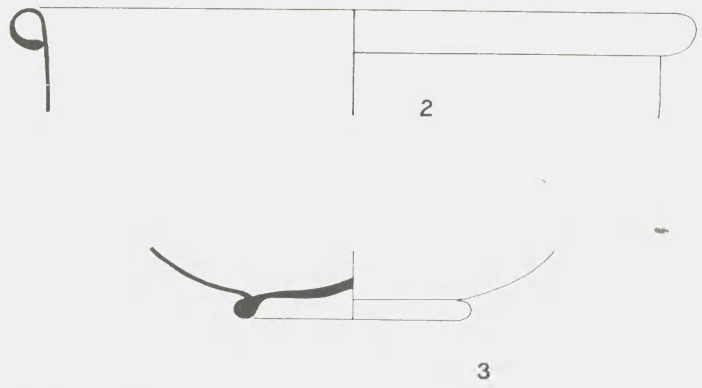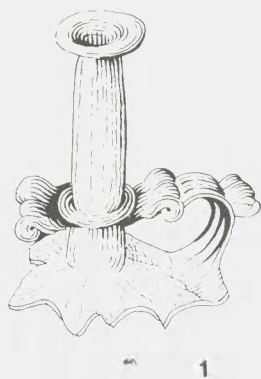Fig 9   Iron Objects (scales: 1-3 at ½; 4 at ⅛)

Fig 10   Glass (scales: 1 about ½; 2, 3 at ½)

A barbed and tanged arrowhead at Bedford (fig 9, 2) is described there as "Iron Age". While it could easily be medieval (though the tanged form is less common than the socketed), it is probably safer, in view of its accession number, to regard it as Roman (cf the arrowheads found in coffin burials at Colchester (Hull, 1958, 256)).The bow and arrow were occasionally part of a Roman huntsman's equipment (Liversidge, 1968, 364-5). Contrast the late first century B.C. specimen from Maiden Castle (Wheeler, 1943, fig 88, 9).

(e) Bone

No bone objects are recorded from Tower Hill. The modern cemetery has produced a circular bone counter with central perforation (not illus) and the Furzenhall Farm excavations 3 fragmentary pins (not illus).

(f) Glass (fig 10)

Camden (1695) mentions "Glass urns containing ashes" and Stukeley (1724) "lacrymatorys". Fragments of glass were found at Tower Hill (Wyatt, 1866) and a fragment at Cambridge is burnt.

Parts of three vessels from the modern cemetery survive (fig 6). The rim (no 2) is in yellow, and the base (no 3) in pale green glass. The neck of a two-handled flagon in pale green glass was found in the pit with the three inverted skeletons. (p.40). It is a late third century vessel with a ribbed or plain body, possibly shell-shaped, but here probably bulbous. Probably from the Cologne area. [4]

(g) Stone

The occulist's stamp (fig 11) is on the edges of a steatite slab 5.3cm x 3.8cm x 0.9cm. The illustration (drawn from an impression) reads:

1) C VAL AMANDI/DIOXVM AD REVMATIC (um)
2) C VAL VALENTINI/DIAGLAVC (ium) POST IMP (etum) LIP (pitudinis)
3) C VAL AMANDI/STACTVM AD CAL (iginem)
4) C VAL VALENTINI/MIXTVM AD CL (aritudinem)

On the slightly bevelled sides of the stamp are the following cursive graffiti: DIOX DIAGLAVC STAC MIXT as guides to the user of the stamp. The text means:

1) Gaius Valerius Amandus' vinegar salve for running eyes.
2) Gaius Valerius Valentinus' celandine ointment to be used after an attack of inflammation of the eyes.
3) Gaius Valerius Amandus' drops for poor sight.
4) Gaius Valerius Valentinus' mixture for clearing the eyes.

The stamp could be used to impress a cake of ointment or the clay or wax seal of a liquid container.
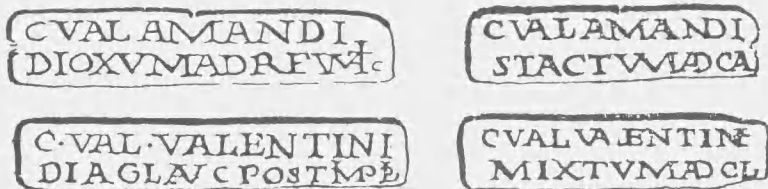

Fig 11   The oculist's stamp (actual size)

This stamp is described by both Watkin (1876) and Watson (1873) as having been found in 1873 "in a ballast-hole near Biggleswade Station". The British Museum registers, however, refer to this statement and explicitly contradict it, by saying "found at Sandy, not Biggleswade" (on the authority, it seems of the donor). The approximate find-spot is suggested on fig 4b.

At Bedford is an ironstone "lapstone or last" — foot-shaped but little more than 7in long. (fig 12). The lower half of a quern survives at Bedford, and a sandstone whetstone (?) at Cambridge. Cards there mention pieces of squared slate and sandstone, and three "mealing-stones" from the Chesterfield.

(h) Miscellaneous finds

1 Lamp, (pl 2) red glaze. Hellenistic type with one small side-lug. Length 3.1in. 2nd century B.C. Harden (1950) regards this as a genuine import in ancient times but Harbison and Laing (1974, 15, no 8) as probably a modern loss. If genuine whether it is from a Belgic or Roman burial is unknown, as its provenance (Evans Bequest) is uncertain.

2 Flower-vase (fig 13a) in cream, sand-gritted ware. The three vases and the handle have been painted with a light brown slip. The base is a clay ring, pierced with three holes, over which the miniature vases have been luted. In this it differs from the fragmentary specimen from Silchester (May, 1916, pl L no 75). No two seem alike; they may be joined without a ring (Wacher 1969, fig 74, 600), made as a group of four (Hawkes and Hull, 1947 274, fig 57, no 11) with or without a filling spout (Wheeler, 1930, pl LVIII) or a handle, as here. Dates range from mid-first century (Hawkes and Hull, op cit) to fourth century (Hull 1958 type 495).

3 Face-mask, (pl 3) in fine cream ware, with red paint on the hair and eyes, and two rings on the neck of the jug. Face-masks are not uncommon on Romano-British pottery, often used as funerary ware. This is a variety attributable to the Stibbington kilns of the Nene Valley, a similar mould to Hartley (1960) fig 4 no 15.

4 Graffiti (fig 13b).

I   XVIII (or less probably, XIV N) The vertical stroke after the X is certainly deliberate, probably a mistake (XI or XIII intended and corrected). On a piece of thick white storage jar, from the modern cemetery.

2   A second graffito (Kennett, 1973) incised after firing on the base of a very abraded ? colour-coated vessel. Probably an owner's mark.

Fig 12   Ironstone last (scale ¼)

COINS

The recorded and extant coins comprise an alleged hoard and numerous chance finds. These have been examined by Dr R. Reece, whose detailed report will appear in a future issue of the *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal*. He comments that the hoard contains obvious contaminants, but that there may be at the core of the material a genuine Theodosian hoard, many of whose pieces have strayed into the list of general site finds. The latter range from Republican to Monorian issues: there is little support for the other site evidence of occupation before the Flavian period. The coin series runs smoothly to the end of the 4th century, ending abruptly with the hoard of about AD400.

POTTERY

1 General

With the exception of the flower vase (fig 13a) and the face-mask (pl 3) the only pottery published here is from The Bungalow site. This illustrates most of the forms and fabrics that are found, out of context, elsewhere in Sandy. Moreover, fig 14 contains the dating evidence for the conclusions on p.52. The copious pottery from Tower Hill and the modern Cemetery can be dated only typologically; there is no internal dating evidence, or stratified groups.

There is, surprisingly in view of the quality of the local clay, no conclusive evidence for pottery manufacture here. Possible kiln waste has been detailed above, to which should be added one possible waster and blemishes on cinerary urns from Tower Hill suggesting that "seconds" might have been on sale locally. Finally, one might question, but should not ignore, Ransom's identification (1886) of "an iron implement with serrated edge . . . the teeth being alternately set in opposite directions. I was puzzled to understand its use, until, turning out a piece of pottery near, and comparing the indentations upon it, I found that they corresponded exactly with the marks which would be made with the teeth of the implement."

Pottery was certainly made on the "villa" site, 2¼ miles to the north-west, near Tempsford (Rudd, 1964). The products have not yet been identified at Sandy.

2 Fabrics

a A "soapy" ware, frequently found in the Ouse Valley. It is a medium hard ware, sometimes with shell or fine grit added; it appears waxy, when burnished with the back of a finger-nail. Probably the result of low-temperature firing.

b Shell-tempered ware, the crushed shell being, as far as is known, a deliberate additive, in varying densities. Calcite-gritted ware is not found at Sandy.

c A fairly hard, dry dull ware with slightly pitted surface, caused by the disappearance of shell temper in the firing.

d Grog-tempered ware. This is not common, and not readily recognised; perhaps for this reason it has not been identified on other Bedfordshire sites. In the south of Britain, it is found in hand-made mid-late Roman pottery; at Sandy, however, it appears on hand-made early wares. At The Bungalow, for instance, 5 sherds were grog-tempered, including no 9.

e A hard, grey ware with very fine sand grit (and very occasionally orange surface). It is not known whether this is of local or non-local manufacture.

f White ware. In its coarser, creamy variety it is found in Romanised wares, such as flagons. However, a few sherds of the Gallo-Belgic "white ware" were found at The Bungalow. This has very fine sand grit, a matt surface caused by throwing in a wet slurry, and the vessels are thin-walled and hard. Hawkes and Hull (1947, 238-9) suggest that it was made, in some quantity, in the Colchester kilns, up to 61 AD. This is probably the source of ours.

g Sand-gritted, handmade and undecorated. Sometimes rough externally, sometimes burnished. Varying hardness and colour. Its presence throughout the deposits at The Bungalow suggests a mid-first century date.

3 Non-Local Wares

a A single glazed sherd has been recognised at Bedford (Kennett). This has not been examined by the writer, and it is not known whether it is of British manufacture or imported from the Continent.

b Some, at least, of the fine grey wares might be from the Upper Nene potteries, though (with the possible exception of no 16) the distinctive traits have not been confirmed.

c The colour-coated "Castor" wares of the Peter-borough region are certainly found at Sandy (e.g. pl 3).

d Colour-coated pottery (including one rosette-stamped sherd) from the Oxfordshire kilns have been recognised at Sandy.

e Mortaria. Two stamps are known:

1 MATVGENVS   This specimen is now lost.
  FECIT

2)DIIX i.e.)DEX   the stamp is from the same die as one found at the Hambleden villa (*Arch.* 71, 188 fig. 19, 4, read as DVX). A name such as VINDEX would be possible. Although the fabric has been heavily burnt, it is still characteristic enough to indicate an origin in the potteries near Watling Street, south-east of Verulamium. The rim may be compared to some produced in that area c. A.D. 110-140 (5)

f Samian. (6) with the exception of the sherd, quoted above, none of the samian has been found in a stratified context. One specimen of black samian is known. The following stamps are known:

Certain: DAGOMARVS; OF. ABN; OF. SEVER; LOGI-RNI; IIALBINIM; ALBVCI; GIPPLM; BITVRIX F; OF SABINI; NAMIL CROESI; OF PONTEI; MVSICI M; PINNAE M.

Interpretation uncertain; IININININLM; OFTTFIR (?)W

Possible potters (identified from decoration); Germanus, Passienus, Frontinus/Crucuro, Advocisus, Paternus.

4 Pottery from The Bungalow (fig 14)

Nos 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13-15 and 20, with the brooch (fig 6, 1), form a closed group from the ditch filling sealed by the road metalling. Nos 16-19 and 21 are from the foundations of The Bungalow, and belong to the later Roman occupation of the site.

The pottery from the ditch is of distinctly Aylsford-Swarling type, and the forms are not uncommon locally, as a recent ceramic survey (Simco, 1973) has shown. Only a more precisely dated group could show how far into the Roman period the tradition persisted. Nos 5, 6 and 8 would look at home in a Roman context; and as they are unstratified, and not part of the group, they may indicate continued occupation and the persistence of forms. However, the group as a whole (of which only samples are shown) has a purely Belgic look, undiluted by any sherds of distinctively Romanised wares. No 7, if not imported *terra rubra,* is a close imitation of it; and the 13 small sherds (of indeterminate form) of the white ware, Fabric F, strengthen the similarity

with the pre-Boudiccan deposits at Colchester that can be seen in the other forms.

1   cordoned bowl or jar. Handmade, mid-grey, roughly burnished. Layer 2.

2   cordoned jar. Wheelmade, grey sandy ware, lightly burnished. Narrow cordons between tooled lines. House foundations.

3   pedestal. Wheelmade, grey-buff, the footring probably turned, and certainly burnished. House foundations. A similar pedestal, from the modern cemetery, was sliced off obliquely above the foot, *before* firing.

4   butt-beaker. Wheelmade, fine hard grey, buff slip, burnished. The cup-shaped rim is a rare feature. Layer 11. From the same layer, a wall-sherd of classic butt-beaker, in fine buff ware, rouletted and burnished.

5   cooking-pot. Wheelmade, buff with grey core, shell-tempered. House foundations.

6   shouldered jar. Wheelmade, hard dark grey, smoothed outside, narrow cordon between tooled lines. House foundations.

7   beaker. Wheelmade, in fine hard pale orange-red fabric, carefully turned to a precise angular profile and burnished. The surface, which is a slightly richer, deeper version of the fabric, suggests that it is an imitation of *terra rubra*. There are slight traces of ?rouletted decoration that has strayed from the zone below. For a less angular version of the form cf. Hawkes and Hull (1947) pl LV, no 84a (pre-61 AD) layer 9.

8   storage jar. Wheelmade, buff, shell-gritted. House foundations. A similar specimen with a series of small holes pierced into (but not through) the rim came from layer 15.

9   storage-jar (?). Handmade, coarse grog-tempered, buff with grey core fired dark brown inside. Combed decoration. Layer 1.

10   storage-jar (?). Handmade, coarse gritty, grey. The rim thickening is not coil-built, but an addition of separate lumps of clay. Combed decoration and faint burnished lines with roughly burnished zone below the (missing) rim. House foundations.

11   storage jar (?). Handmade, coarse grog-and-sand-gritted, grey. Combed and scored decoration. Layer 11.

12   storage jar. Handmade, coarse sand-gritted, buff with grey core, roughly burnished. Combed decoration, done from right to left. House foundations.

13   storage-jar (?). Handmade, coarse gritty, buff-grey fired black inside. Grooved decoration. Layer 9. Another similar in grog-tempered fabric
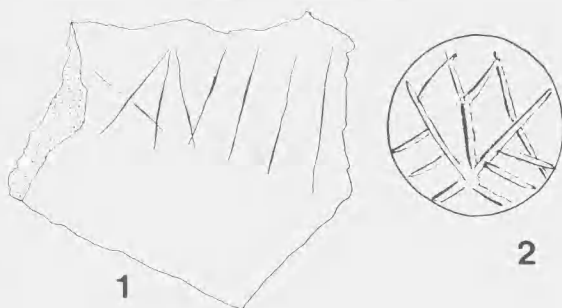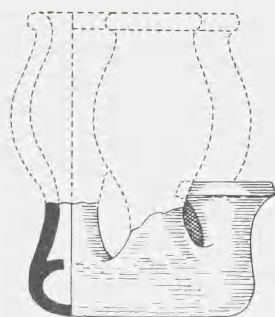

Fig 13   a: Flower vase; b: graffiti on pottery (scale ½) from layer 11.

14   storage-jar. Handmade, soft, shell-gritted, dark grey. Layer 14.

15   jar. Handmade, soft sandy, reddish-buff with grey core, fired dark brown outside, and burnished. Layer 14.

16   pie-dish. Wheelmade, hard grey, turned and partly burnished. A 2-3 cent. form. The neat chamfer was found to be characteristic of the potter(s) at Ecton, Northants (Johnston, 1969, no 45) and a specimen was dated to not later than 160 A.D. at Brixworth (Woods, 1967, 14 no 3). House foundations.

17   flanged bowl. Wheelmade, hard fine sandy, grey. House foundations. A 2-3 cent. type.

18   mortarium. Cream fabric, no grit visible. A mid-late third century form.

19   flagon, ring-necked with rim pinched to form a separate spout. Wheelmade, coarse sandy, with some white grit, grey fired buff outside. House foundations. A first-century type (cf Bushe-Fox, 1932 pl xxxiii, no 206.)

20   amphora (not illus) Sherd from shoulder of globular oil amphora. The neck has been broken off and the edge has become smoothed as a result of subsequent usage of the body. Spanish (?). House foundations.

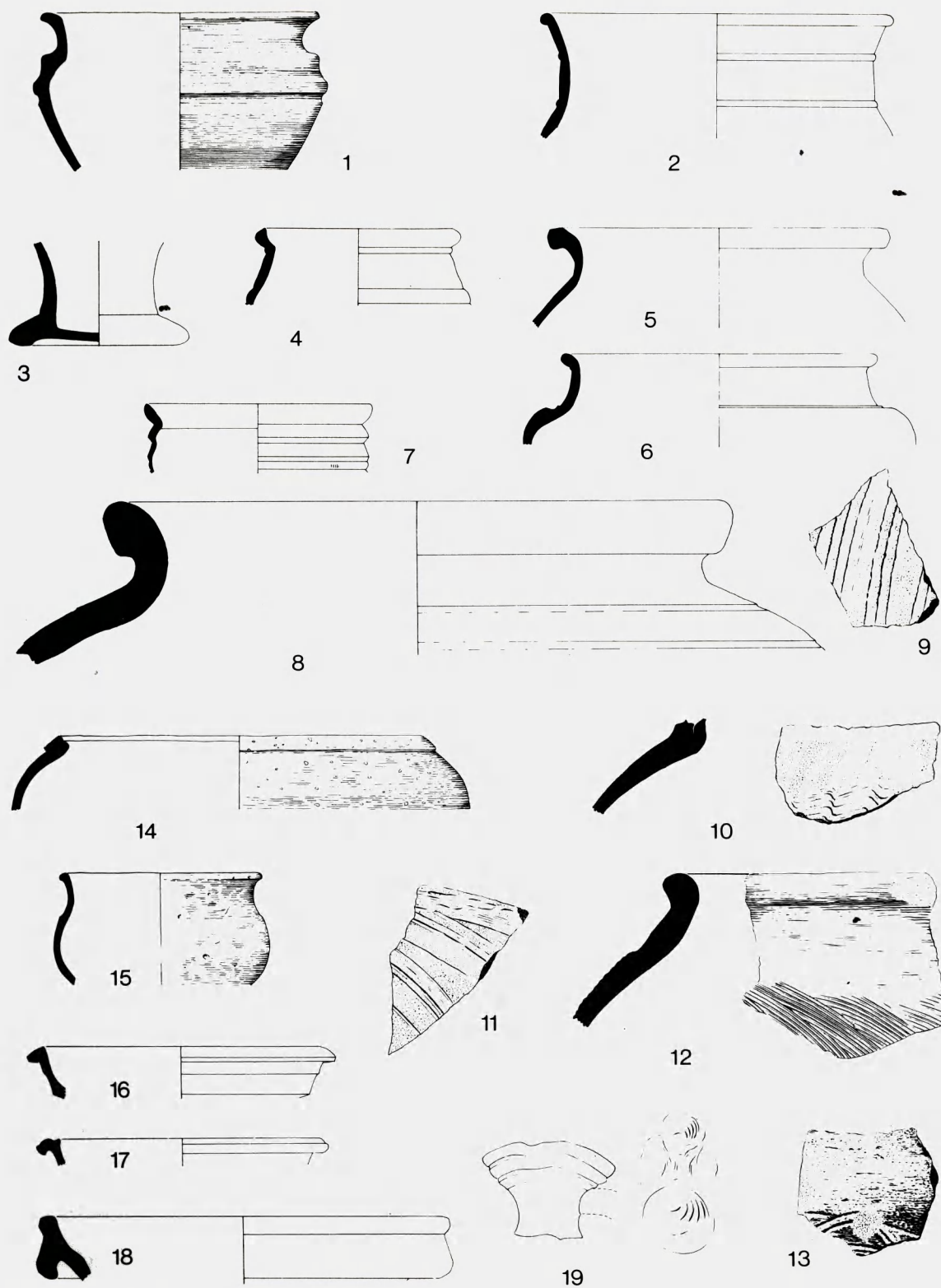21   amphora (not illus). Small body sherd of a second globular amphora. Layer 12-13.

Fig 14   Pottery (scale ¼)

22 amphora (not illus). Ribbed sherd in fine creamy-white fabric. This came from the flat-bottomed form Dressel 30/Pelichet 47. Probable date mid 2nd — late 3rd century A.D. South Gaulish. House foundations.

DISCUSSION

It is hard to visualise the settlement in physical terms. Ephemeral buildings, possibly timber-framed on low sandstone walls, doubtless clustered around the road junctions, and straggled along the main road to the south, towards the ford. Dwellings and workshops would be indistinguishable, and a tiled roof would mark out the one building of importance. This was a diffuse settlement, the focus of a diffuse population, dispersed in the countryside during their lifetimes, and gathered in the large cemetery only after death.

If it is hard to visualise the settlement, it is even harder to visualise the surrounding countryside; there has been no systematic fieldwork to produce even a distribution map of surface finds. Apart from the undated and lost earthwork at Beeston Berrys (Johnston, 1959 and Dyer, 1972) two contrasting sites are known in the neighbourhood. The site near Tempsford (TL 165522) lies to the north, midway between routes 22 and 225. It has produced wasters and kiln evidence, over a wide area (Rudd, 1964). The quality of the material suggests a villa, doubtless materially self-supporting, with pottery as an ancillary industry.

Of probably greater relevance is the unpublished evidence from air photographs and excavation at Furzenhall Farm, Biggleswade Common. Here an enclosed kite-shaped settlement of 0.6 acres (0.25 ha) was apparently the focus of an extensive area of low-lying alluvial land whose cultivation is known from cropmarks — probably mixed farming with scattered peasant habitations. It produced third-fourth century pottery and slight building evidence from a pit, while the brooch (fig 6, 5) and scattered pottery suggests earlier occupation nearby. A droveway led to the south, and entrances opened to east and north-west; probably a farm track ran westwards from the latter under Galley Hill to join the main road. Here was apparently a satellite to the Sandy settlement, distinct in its form, and complementary in its economy. At last we can see one aspect of Sandy's connection with the surrounding countryside, the source of the corn-filled pit, the users of the plough-fillings, the cart-fittings, the mower's anvil and the hunting-arrow (if fig 9, 2 is correctly identified). This site

will be published in a future number of this *Journal*; it highlights the need for further regional fieldwork, a plea that has recently been made in general for the context of small towns and rural settlements (Todd, 1970, 130).

The roads invite us to consider briefly the wider context. The traveller from London via the small Romanised town of Braughing and the little-studied settlement at Baldock would not find Sandy a memorable event en route for the next town of Godmanchester. Through traffic from east to west would link the settlements of the Cambridge area to the extensive native sites, known from air photographs, in the Cople-Moggerhanger area, towards
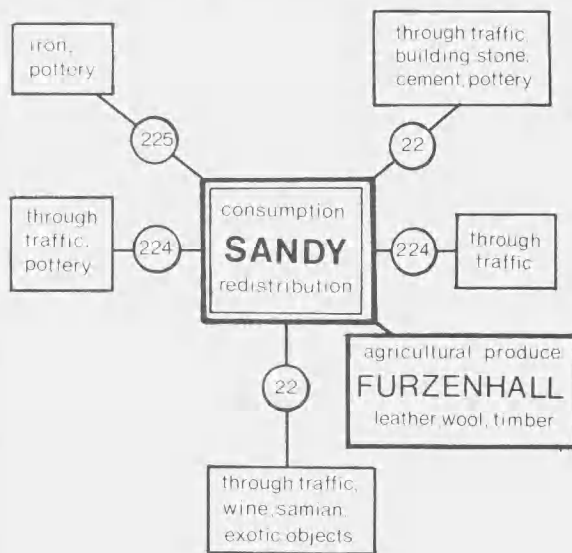

Fig 15 The Economic Basis

Bedford. To the north-west, along route 225, lay the sources of iron and pottery in the Nene Valley of Northamptonshire, and further west the pottery manufacturing establishments of Oxfordshire. Pottery, at least, from these sources has been recognised at Sandy.

Roman Sandy, therefore, was a centre for consumption and redistribution (fig 15). Some of the items stated in the model are reasonable speculation, and none is exclusive; but others are attested by the evidence detailed in this paper. To a limited extent, the settlement, was also a production centre, in iron-working, pottery and possibly bronzeworking. Like many or most road junctions in the Roman world, one might expect it to have been a religious spot; but any temple or shrine must have been a slight affair, to have left no

traces; cemetery apart, the only hint of ritual practices is the pit with three inverted skeletons and accompanying offerings. And yet the regular discoveries of unusual finds in and around the modern cemetery (copious coins, flower-vase, bracelets, mirror, lamp, etc.) might suggest temple offerings, rather than domestic rubbish. They did not accompany burials.

This paper opened with a reference to "special factors" — a question that has not been answered. The possibility of a posting-station or undiscovered military site as a nucleus is the least likely, and would rest purely on the possible military associations of the bronze phalera and the Hod Hill brooch, with much conquest-period material. Alternatively, one might suggest a function as a funerary and religious focus; but, of the circumstantial evidence quoted above, nothing is incontrovertibly dedicatory. What is certain is that this was not a residential centre for the conventionally wealthy — it is significant, for instance, that not a single *tessera* or chip of painted plaster has yet been found. The hypocaust evidenced by the single flue-tile cannot have been very substantial. Nor was Sandy a centre for bureaucratic administration, the collection of the *annona militaris* (for this would require secure defences), the upkeep of the roads and the *cursus publicus,* or even the policing of the neighbourhood (Todd, 1970, 120 and 126). The true nature of the prosperity of the place is surely the perfectly mundane one suggested in fig 15; this is the only conclusion to be safely drawn from the fragmentary evidence.

That the evidence is fragmentary is due to the exceptional and varied use of the land — the quarrying, the "trenching", the railway excavations, the intensive cultivation and the gravedigging. This paper has attempted what is perhaps impossible - to reconstruct a picture from a jigsaw when most of the pieces are missing.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper concludes on a more personal note. I was grateful for the invitation to contribute to this volume for two reasons. First, it was to Sandy that Mr F W Kuhlicke took me, exactly 20 years ago, to record the Roman road sectioned by a newly dug grave; from this visit grew a lifelong enthusiasm for archaeology. Furthermore, it has compelled me to look again at what I published a few years later; and enabled me to present the material afresh in the light of subsequent discoveries and more mature reflection. This is in no sense a final statement; there is more work to be done, and

the areas of need have been pointed out above. This paper offers a challenge which, it is hoped, other fieldworkers will take up.

NOTES

1 Identification by Mr B.R. Hartley.
2 Identification by Miss T. Molleson (British Museum, Natural History).
3 I owe this information to Mr D. Brown (Ashmolean Museum).
4 Drawings and notes were submitted to Miss D. Charlesworth for comment.
5 This specimen was submitted to Mrs K. Hartley for comment.
6 Rubbings and notes of most were submitted to Mr B.R. Hartley for identification.
7 The amphora sherds were submitted to Dr D.P.S. Peacock for identification.
8 Paper completed 25 October 1974.

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