

IRON AGE/ROMANO-BRITISH FEATURES AND A FOURTH CENTURY A.D. CHRISTIAN LEAD TANK FROM FLAWBOROUGH, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

by

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INTRODUCTION

During 1998, while metal detecting within a field in Flawborough parish, South Nottinghamshire, which had previously produced Late Iron Age and Romano-British metalwork, Chris Smith, Derrick Smith and Martin Meets partly uncovered a large lead object. Following inspection of the site by members of Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit and Mike Bishop (Nottinghamshire County Council Principal Archaeologist), the object was identified as one of a small group of known late Romano-British circular lead tanks. Appreciating the rarity of such an object, especially if it lay within its original context, the Unit conducted a limited excavation funded by Nottinghamshire County Council with the support and co-operation of the landowner Mr.J.Hawthorne.

BACKGROUND

The modern village of Flawborough (SK78084310) surmounts a ridge of shale and limestone at 36m O.D., overlooking the River Smite 500m to the west at c.17m O.D. and the tiny hamlet of Dallington 100m to the north. Both Flawborough and Dallington appear in Domesday (Morris 1977), but have since shrunk partly due to 17th century enclosure (Doubleday 1951). The lead tank was discovered within the substantial field between the village and the River Smite, which lies at a height of 20m O.D., on an underlying geology of Mercian Mudstone. The exact findspot lay within a shallow linear depression that runs partially around three sides of a slightly raised 150m x 100m rectangular area (Figure 1). This area incorporates a number of depressions and scatters

of skerry stone, possibly from structural remains, with occasional surface finds of Iron Age, Romano-British and medieval pottery.

Relatively little is known of the archaeology along this stretch of the River Smite, although widespread prehistoric settlement is suggested by rectilinear cropmarks to the north (SK779435), southwest (SK780428) and southeast (SK785424), while coinage (May 1994) and metalwork of Iron Age to Anglo-Saxon date have been found throughout the valley by metal detectors. Excavated remains include the substantial Iron Age enclosed settlement c.4km up river at Aslockton (Palmer-Brown and Knight 1993), while the site lies only 6km to the southeast of the major Roman road, the Fosse way (A46), with its small towns of *Margidunum* (8km distant), *Ad Pontem* East Stoke (8.5km) and *Crococalana* Brough (16km) (Figure 1).

METHODOLOGY

The objective of the fieldwork was to expose the lead tank and determine the nature and date of its deposition before removing it for safekeeping and further study. Upon discovery the lead tank had been partially exposed lying within a dark brown clay loam 0002, which was hard to distinguish from the topsoil 0001. A 2.5m x 2.5m area (01) immediately around the tank was therefore excavated by hand in order to gauge the depth of the topsoil, while preventing any disturbance to the tank by mechanical excavation and allowing the retrieval of any associated finds within 0001. A surrounding area of c.6m x 7m (02) was topsoiled by machine using a toothless

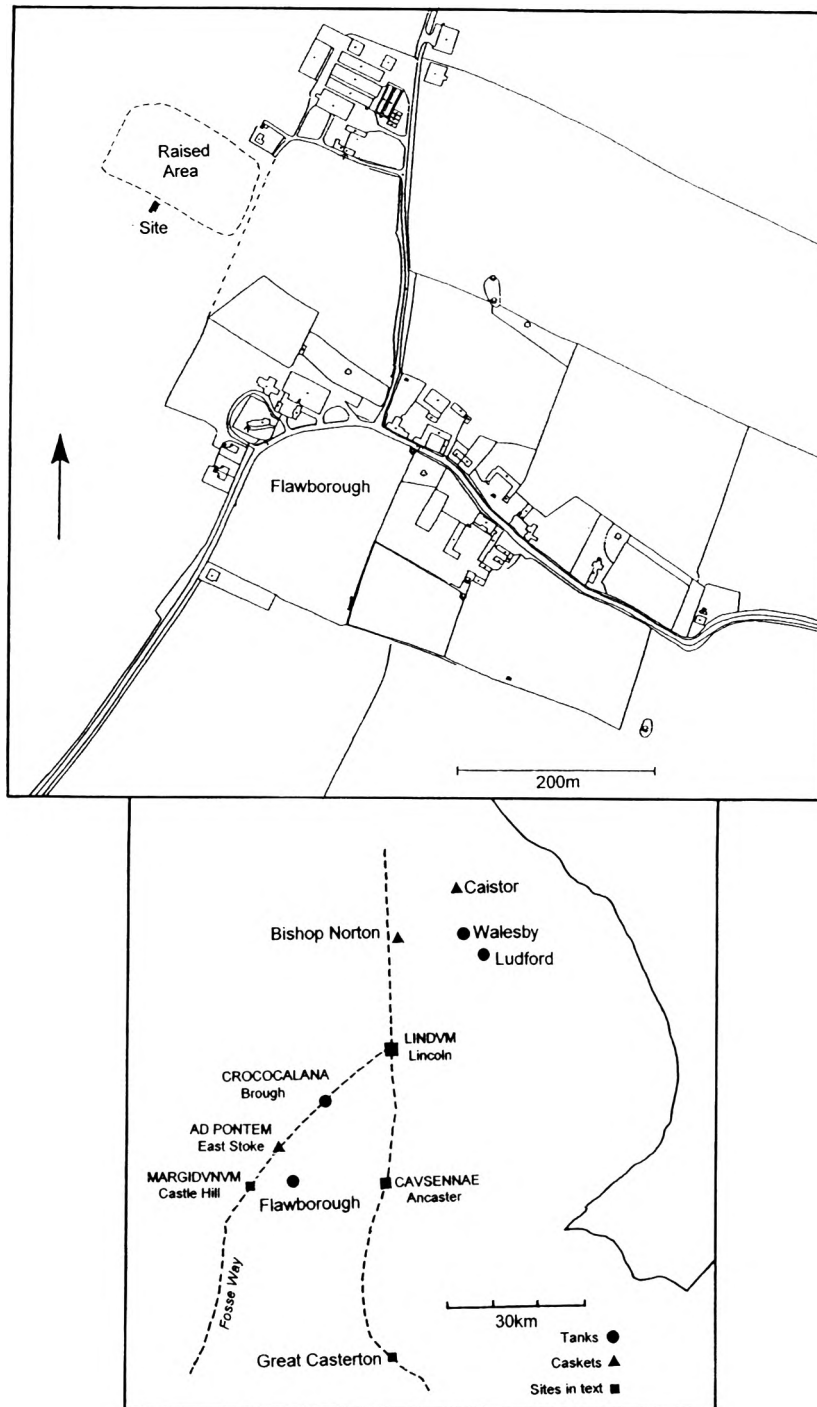


FIGURE 1: Site Location, in Flawborough (Top) and regionally in relation to Roman sites referred to in text (Bottom).
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bucket. To confirm the extent of deposits in the southwest corner of the trench a 3m x 1.6m extension (03), was subsequently topsoiled by hand.

Removal of the topsoil revealed the tank to be lying in a sub-round pit 0002 cut into a series of ditches (Figure 2). This included at least four ditches 0005, 0009, 0010 and 0011 aligned southeast to northwest, with a smaller ditch 0004 running partly parallel along the north side. Present on the north side

set at a 90° angle to these was a further ditch 0003, running north-eastwards. Many of the features were cut into a natural subsoil of either pale green (0007, 0013) or red marl (0006), while all appeared truncated by the topsoil. Excavation of the pit in spits revealed that some edges had been slightly overcut during its initial discovery, while the tank was in two halves lying one on top of the other (Plate 1). In order to obtain dating evidence for the sequence of ditches, three 1m-wide cuts were excavated by hand in spits

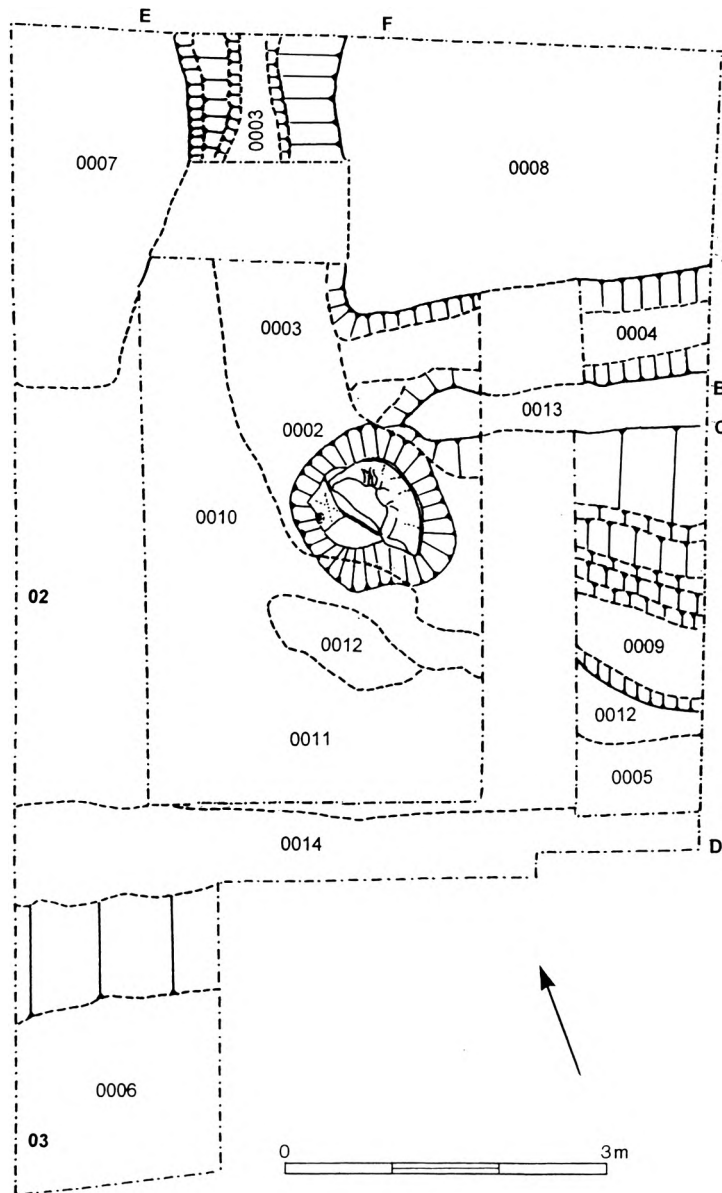


FIGURE 2: Post-excavation plan of the site.

away from the disturbance of any intersection. These were supplemented by the excavation of 0.2m in spits from a 3m x 5m area across the intersection of ditches, in order to clarify their relationship in plan (Figure 2). Artefacts were recorded three dimensionally and given individual three character finds codes (e.g. AFN). Due to the known presence of metalwork in the near vicinity metal detectors were used, however no finds of note were recovered.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Ditch 0004 (1st Century BC - Early 1st Century AD)

The earliest feature was the east-west ditch 0004, c.1.26m wide by 0.46m deep, possessing an asymmetrical profile with a steeply cut south side and narrow flat base. The fill comprised three elements, a, b and c, all of dark brown clay loam, with variations in clay content (Figure 3). Thirty-three sherds of pottery were recovered of mid to late Iron Age date. Within the lower levels of the ditch these comprised shell tempered wares, including a sherd of probable Scored Ware and another exhibiting combed decoration (Figure 8, AFX, AFS). In contrast, in the upper fill levels there were a number of sherds of wheel thrown pottery largely identifiable only from single sherds, including corrugated jars (Figure 8, ACJ, AFM), a cordoned jar (Figure 8, AFO) and a burnished short everted rim with a rebated shoulder decorated with near vertical lines suggestive of a butt beaker (Figure 8, AFL). The assemblage includes wares of a quality usually absent from Iron Age sites in Nottinghamshire (Knight and Howard 2004, 100). Together with the Iron Age metalwork previously recovered from the field by metal detectors, this suggests 0004 relates to a site of some material status within the near vicinity.

Ditch 0010 (Mid-Late 1st century AD)

Excavated to its full depth of 0.8m, 0010 aligned southeast to northwest, possessed a stepped north side and slightly sloping base, while the south side was truncated by ditches 0009 and 0011 (Figure 4). Although separated from 0005 at the base by a ridge of pale green marl 0012, at a higher level the

relationship between 0005 and 0010 was impossible to distinguish due to the similarity in fill deposits. In section, four fills were discernible, comprising slight variations on brown clay loam. Pottery present comprised examples of shell tempered wares (Figure 8, AFD) and mixed grit wares (Figure 8, ACR), dated within the late Iron Age to Conquest period. 0010 is thought to represent an enclosure ditch of this period.

Ditch 0014 (Mid 1st– Mid 2nd century AD)

This comprised a 0.9m wide linear band of reddish brown loamy clay, running southeast to northwest parallel to 0005 and 0010 (Figure 2). The north edge of 0014 was truncated by 0011. Though it remained unexcavated, the linear nature of the feature suggests it may be a gully or ditch. Pottery (Figure 8, AFB) from the top fill suggests a mid 1st to mid 2nd century AD date.

Ditch 0005 (Late 3rd- 4th century AD)

The ditch profile of 0005 was only partly revealed to a depth of 0.54m and 0.8m wide, exposing a single dark brown fill, which remained largely unexcavated (Figure 4). Although its true dimensions were unclear due to truncation by ditch 0009 to the north and the post-medieval feature 0011 above, 0005 is thought to be a substantial enclosure ditch, which pottery including Nene Valley Colour Coat Ware (Figure 8, AES) suggests is late 3rd to 4th century AD in date.

Ditches 0003/0009 (Late 3rd to Late 4th century AD)

Cut into 0010 were ditches 0003 and 0009, set at approximate right angles to each other forming the possible corner of a ditched enclosure (Figure 2). Ditch 0003, running north-eastwards, c. 2m wide by 0.6m deep, possessed flared edges and stepped sides narrowing to a flat base, with thin lenses of weathered marl visible in the dark brown clay loam fill (Figure 5). Ditch 0009 running eastwards was slightly darker in fill possibly due to the presence of 10% charcoal inclusions. It possessed a steeply cut north side and rounded base, but was truncated on the south side by 0011. Both 0003 and 0009 contained butchered animal bone, much probably from earlier features

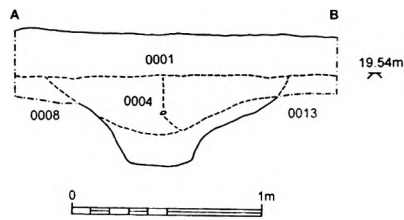


FIGURE 3: Northwest facing section AB, showing 0004.

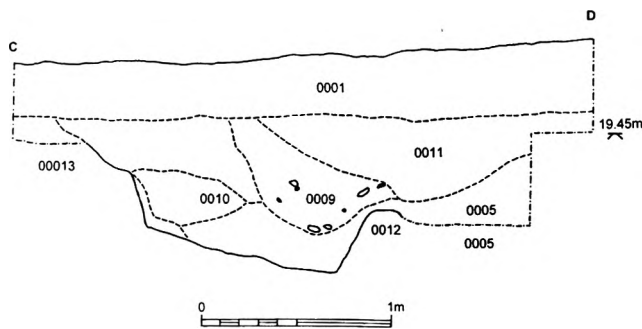


FIGURE 4: Northwest facing section CD, showing 0010, 0005, 0009 and 0011.

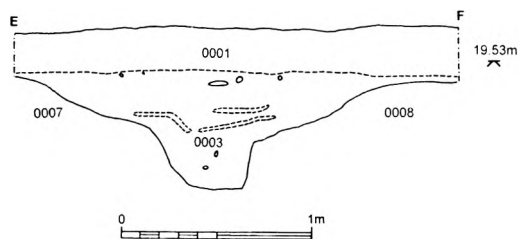


FIGURE 5: Southwest facing section EF, showing 0003.

(details in archive) and flat, angular stones similar to those visible, scattered in the field. Along with earlier residual material, 0003 and 0009 contained several large sherds of late 3rd to 4th century AD pottery in the upper half of their fills. Identifiable sherds from 0003 included a medium necked jar (Figure 8, AHC), a narrow necked jar or beaker (Figure 8, ABX) and late gritty grey ware bodysherds, indicating a late fourth century date for these ditches.

Pit 0002 (Late 4th century AD?)

Pit 0002 containing the tank was sub-round in plan, c 1.6m in diameter by 0.46m deep with steeply cut sides and a flat base. The fill was homogeneous dark brown loam (probably due to quick backfilling)

cut through 0003/0009, indicating these ditches had largely silted up when deposition occurred. Burial of the tank at the corner of 0003/0009 may indicate that the ditches were still visible landmarks, either as linear hollows or perhaps marked by surviving banks or hedges, suggesting later identification of the tank's whereabouts may have been a consideration of those who buried it. The tank had been placed within the pit in two roughly equal halves. Perhaps significantly, the half with the Chi-Rho (see further below) was placed in the pit upside down with the base facing upwards, while the other half was placed base first on top of this. While the tank halves were damaged and folded inwards none of this appeared to be due to later ploughing activity. Instead, to fit within the pit, the tank seems to have been deliberately crushed during backfilling, although a degree of symbolic defacing of the tank cannot be ruled out. No finds associated with the tank were recovered from the pit. Only animal bone and pottery, including grey ware (Figure 8, AEH), originating from the disturbed fill of earlier features, was present. This material together with dating evidence from ditches 0003 and 0009, suggests a late 4th century AD or later date for the deposition of the tank.

Post Medieval Feature 0011

Running northwest to southeast this shallow linear feature, c. 1.8m wide by 0.4m deep with gently flared sides, rounded base and brown clay loam fill, cut both 0005 and 0009, suggesting a post-Roman date. Artefacts included residual Romano-British pottery, as well as two sherds of medieval pottery and a single base sherd of post-medieval black-slipped earthenware. The feature may represent a former post-medieval field ditch or given its shallow profile, an in-filled medieval furrow.

THE LEAD TANK

Construction and Ornamentation of the Lead Tank

Similar to other known examples (Guy 1981, 273), the lead tank is constructed from three sheets of lead, a circular base c.900mm in diameter by 7mm-11mm thick, and two side sheets c.1350mm long,

410mm wide and 3mm-4mm thick. The edge of the base sheet is bent up to form a lip on which the side sheets sit giving a total height of *c.*460mm. These are sealed together by autogenous soldering (i.e. soldering using the same material, lead, as a cementing agency) a method seen on other tanks and lead coffins (Richmond 1945, 165-166; Toller 1974, 10-13). This involves T-shaped strips of lead lying horizontally between the base and side sheets. Several such strips of varying length, joined to each other by horizontal Y-shaped joints, form the joint between the sides and base. Small diagonal cuts along the sheet edges appear to represent keying, facilitating the bond between the strips and the sheets. These are evident on similarly constructed lead objects including a lead casket from East Stoke (Frere and Tomlin 1991, Plate VI B) and lead tank from Brough (Watts 1995, Plate VI). Externally the strips remain roughly rectangular in profile (18mm high by 9mm thick) forming a projecting lip around the base of the side sheets. Internally, the joint between the base and side sheets are sealed by further lead strips of varying length, hammered flat (42mm wide by 4mm thick), which appear to survive only intermittently. Autogenously soldered external strips, rectangular in profile, are apparent along the vertical joints between the side sheets, although internally no strips, if ever present, survive. Before deposition the tank was divided into two roughly equal halves by separating the joint between the two side sheets and from these points cutting the base in two. This may have been aided by the heating of the tank beforehand.

The tops of the side sheets have been bent at 90° to form a flat-topped rim, with a rounded edge projecting out *c.*8mm, which exhibits worn cable decoration. Each side sheet is divided by moulded vertical bands (*c.*35mm wide) edged with single cable decoration, into five *c.*250mm wide panels each containing a *crux decussata* or Cross of St Andrew (ten in total) in single cable decoration. All decoration is in moulded relief, a common technique usually involving the impression of several stamps into a damp sand matrix to form the necessary mould into which molten lead would be poured to form the decorated sheet (Figure 6; Toller 1974, 10; Toynbee 1964, 345-346). Differences exist between the two halves with one half possessing additional ornamentation, presumably indicating its intended use as the frontal piece of the

tank (in contrast to possibly related lead objects such as a casket from Caistor, which is decorated on all four sides). This ornamentation includes a 40mm high border running 25mm below the rim of the tank containing foliate scrollwork bounded above and below by a single horizontal line of cable decoration. The scrollwork bears similarities to vine scroll notably found on mosaic borders (*c.*mid 4th Century AD) at Great Casterton, Rutland and Apethorpe, Northamptonshire (Neal and Cosh 2002, 82, 229). Scrollwork, although different in detail, is also evident on two lead caskets from Bishops Norton and Caistor, Lincolnshire (Petch 1957; Hawkes 1947, 24). If representative of the vine, this may have Christian connotations, after *John* 15.1 'I am the vine' (Thomas 1981, 92). The scrollwork is separated into two sections, with each pattern being the reverse of the other, giving the effect of each section flowing away from the centre of the tank (Figure 7). This effect could be achieved using the same stamp inverted, during construction of the sand mould. Approximately half way along the side sheet, between the sections of scrollwork is a 42mm high inscription reading *VTERE EELIX*. The *E* in *EELIX* is a misformed *F*, (although a clearly formed extension of the upper arm of the *E* is present) while the *X* also appears misformed with the arms of the right half appearing smaller. This may be evidence of inexperienced or illiterate workmanship. The inscription is clearly intended to be *VTERE FELIX*, 'good luck to the user' (Frere and Tomlin 1991, 68, *RIB* 2416.8), a common inscription that appears in a number of non-Christian contexts from at least the 2nd century AD on utensils such as pots, metal skillets and dishes, spoons and glass drinking vessels; and on articles of dress such as rings, brooches, bracelets and belt fittings (Sherlock 1984). Its later appearance on objects with Christian associations

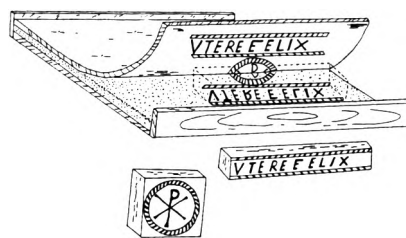


FIGURE 6: Production of a lead side sheet using a damp sand matrix and stamps.

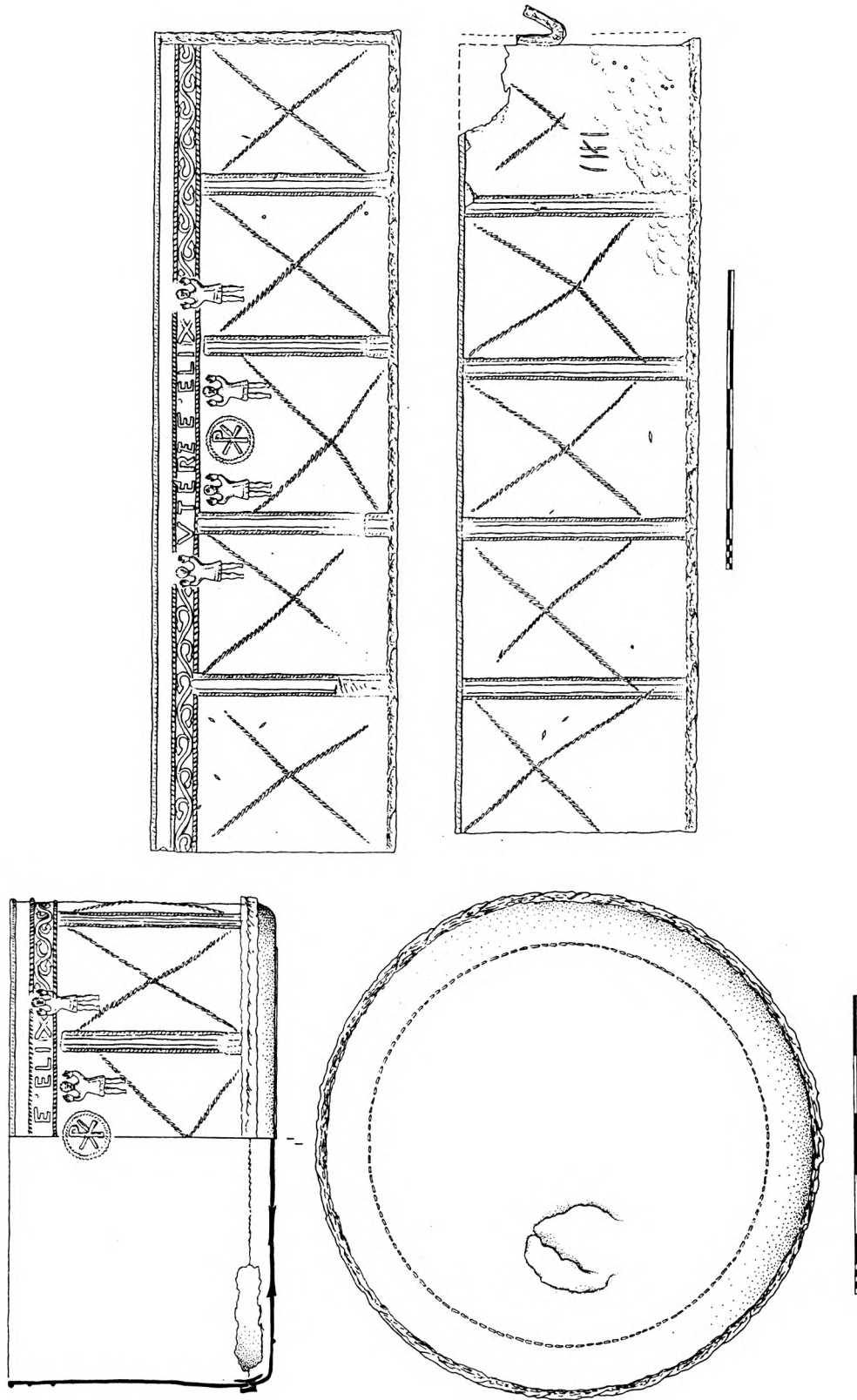


FIGURE 7. Reconstructed views of the side and base sheets of the lead tank (D. Hopkins).

(including a lead casket from *Ad Pontem* with a Chi-Rho monogram) has led to the suggestion of some special Christian connotation by this period (Wright 1955, 147).

The inscription is preceded by a 107mm high human figure and terminates with a similar figure, although this portion of the tank is twisted into folds and is not readily visible. Another two similar figures lie within the panel directly below the inscription, flanking a Chi-Rho monogram (comprising the first two Greek letters X and P of Christ) which is encircled with single cable decoration to form a motif *c.* 84mm in diameter (Figure 7). This in turn lies above a *crux decussata*. The figures appear crudely formed and worn with little detail distinguishable, although hair, eyes, nose and fingers are discernible on the third figure in particular (Plate 2), while all appear to be dressed in a long sleeved, knee length, unbelted tunic. Significantly, all four figures have both arms held high above the shoulder as if in prayer, in the so-called *Orans* posture, as epitomised by the painted plaster figures within the house-church at Lullingstone Villa, Kent (Meates 1955; 1987). Elsewhere *orantes* have often been recorded in funerary settings including tombstones (Thomas 1981, 92, 181).

Evidence of repair includes the addition of a 170mm separate section of the rim, a roughly sub-oval shaped plug (45mm by 20mm) for a small hole below the rim and a substantial (155mm by 180mm) sub-rounded patch to the base (Figure 7). Whether these indicate repair arising after a period of use or to defects from the casting process is unclear.

The tank has sustained considerable damage with both sides bent and folded inwards towards the base. This may have facilitated burial. While the cutting of the tank in two may have aided its transport and deposition, the whole tank would have required five or six people to lift it over a short distance. Numerous knocks and scratches are evident on the surface of the tank including two punctures/tears (100mm by 24mm, and 17mm by 15mm) on the less decorated side sheet. To this can be added on both halves, an apparently random series of nineteen circular punched indentations (5mm in diameter) and nineteen punctures varying from lozengiform to lentoid in profile (up to 22mm by 7mm). The former, which fail to puncture the tank, appear both externally and internally, while a small group is clustered on the lower corner of one of the side sheets. This may indicate that these marks were made by hand, before



PLATE 1: The lead tank as discovered in pit 0002, crumpled and in two halves.

the tank was folded inwards. In contrast the lozengiform/lentoid marks are only present puncturing the external surface of the tank sides (Plate 3). Surrounding surface depressions suggest this involved some considerable force. Their location, the force required to puncture the tank, and their profiles, suggest these marks may represent damage by a bladed object such as a spear tip or arrowhead.

Amongst the many surface scratches intentional graffiti is hard to discern in the present degraded state of the tank, prior to conservation. Possible examples include three characters *c.*35-40mm high incised together on the external side of the tank. The form of these characters is unclear, particularly the first example which may be read as *I* or *Y*. Further graffiti includes the presence of two lattice-like patterns scrawled internally on the base of the less decorated tank half. The largest of these appears to consist of ten lines by nine lines of *c.*10mm squares, while the smaller less defined consists of possibly seven lines by seven lines of squares. These closely resemble the gaming boards found at other sites incised on various objects, such as tile at Silchester (Boon 1974, 151).



PLATE 2: Detail of *Orans* figure, with inscription above showing misformed E.

Appraisal of the lead tank

Including the Flawborough tank a total of twenty-two whole or partial circular lead tanks (plus one lost tank) ascribed a Romano-British date have been

recorded, all within Britain, largely confined to East Anglia, the East Midlands and southern lowlands, with more than one example found on some sites (Table 1).

Table 1.

Recorded Romano-British Lead Tanks

Location by County	Source	Location by County	Source
Caversham, Berks	Hassall and Tomlin 1989	Ludford, Lincs	Worrell 2005
Ashton (1), Cambs	Guy 1977	Walesby, Lincs	Petch 1962
Ashton (2), Cambs	Guy 1977	Oxborough, Norfolk	Frere 1986
Burwell, Cambs	Guy 1978	Rushden, Northants	Looker 1998-99
Cambridge, Cambs	Donovan 1934	Brough, Notts	Watts 1995
Huntingdon, Cambs	Donovan 1934	Flawborough, Notts	Elliott and Malone 1999
Wilbraham, Cambs	Watts 1988	Icklingham (lost), Suffolk	Salmon 1730
Willingham (x2 pieces), Cambs	Philips 1970	Icklingham (1), Suffolk	Kraay 1942
Ireby, Cumbria	Richmond 1945	Icklingham (2), Suffolk	West 1976
Bourton (1), Gloucs	Donovan 1933	Pulborough, Sussex	Curwen 1943
Bourton (2), Gloucs	Donovan 1933	Kenilworth, Warwicks	Guy 1987
Heathrow, Greater London	Petts 2003		

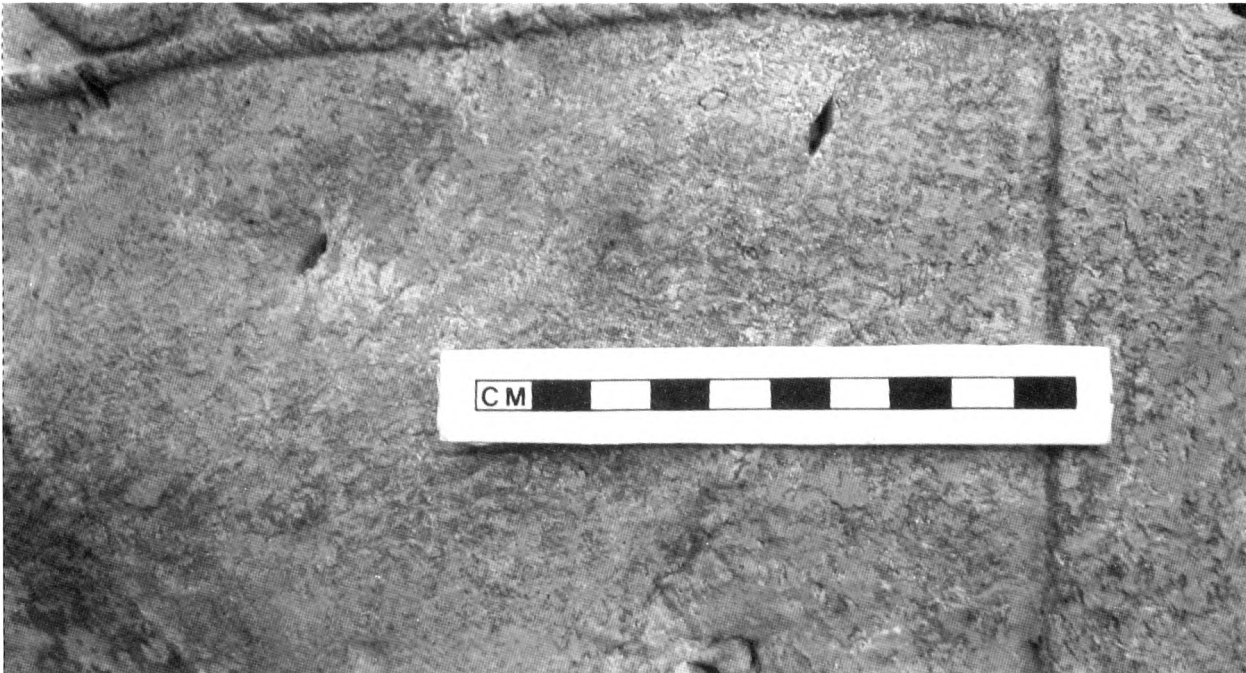


PLATE 3: Side sheet showing lozengiform and lentoid punctures, with surrounding surface depressions and foliate scrollwork above.

Of interest is a small number of lead tanks from Anglo-Saxon/post Roman contexts including two tanks at Whithorn, Dumfries and Galloway (Hill 1998), two tanks at Flixborough, Humberside (Leahy 1994), three tanks at Garton, Yorkshire, one from Westley Waterless, Cambridgeshire and one from Riby Cross Roads, Lincolnshire (Cowgill 1994), and Stidriggs, Dumfries and Galloway (Leahy 2003, 165). Many of these differ from the Romano-British tanks in being constructed from a single piece of lead, although similarities exist in the construction and decoration of some, notably one of the Flixborough tanks which is divided into panels by vertical bands and possesses a six armed motif resembling an Iota-Chi (Cowgill 1994).

None of the Romano-British tanks have been recovered from their original place of use. A number have been found apparently dumped or discarded in features such as pits and wells, sometimes in association with late 4th century AD material (Watts 1991, 168). This has led to speculation that many were discarded during the revival of anti-Christian

paganism following the accession of the Emperor Julian the Apostate in 360-363 AD (Guy 1981, 275; Watts 1991, 147). The dating of the deposition of the lead tanks, along with their accompanying stylistic motifs, appears to date their use to the early to mid 4th Century AD (Watts 1991, 169).

However, given it's late fourth century AD or later deposition date, and the similarity in the motifs used (*orantes* and encircled Chi-Rho) to those from the upper room at Lullingstone villa constructed c.380-385 AD (Meates 1979, 38), a later date for the Flawborough tank cannot be ruled out. The damage to the tank, including the possible gaming boards and weapon damage, suggests that deposition occurred without deference, possibly even with deliberate violent symbolic defacing. Burial of the tank in the former corner of an enclosure ditch, likely to have been a visible landmark, could have been in order to aid identification of its location. Whether this was for later retrieval or represented symbolic burial similar to contemporary late 4th-early 5th century inhumations in enclosure ditches elsewhere in

Nottinghamshire (such as Raymoth Lane, Worksop) is unknown (Palmer-Brown and Munford 2004)

The lack of an original context for any of the tanks has led to some uncertainty as to their function. Their decoration with Christian motifs and their ability to hold water has led to their association with the Christian baptismal ceremony, possibly serving a similar role as a font, either for baptism by affusion, the pouring of water over the head (Guy 1981, 274) or following baptism, the more obscure rite of *pedilavium*, foot washing (Watts 1991, 171). The former appears to be supported by the only previously known figured scene from a tank, on the example from Walesby, which has been interpreted as depicting a baptism in progress (Thomas 1981, 223). A small group of lead fonts, of similar construction and similar in size, are known from the 12th-13th century AD, including the surviving example at Ashover, Derbyshire (Bond 1908, 75-87). Interestingly the burial of medieval fonts on church sites is known following replacement by new examples, sometimes on more than one occasion, and usually occurring with reverence. This process is thought to symbolise an understanding of baptism as death and burial as well as rebirth (Stocker 1997, 17). The Flawborough tank, despite its imagery and clear association with Christian use, appears at first not to advance the debate on function. However, the presence of the *orantes* may be of symbolic significance. In the catacombs of Rome the only picture of Jesus in the *orans* posture is in a scene of baptism (Stevenson 1978, 89), while in general *orantes* are often found in a funerary context (Thomas 1981, 94, 181). Together these elements suggest the presence of the *orantes* may be deliberate, signifying baptism as the death of an individual's former life and resurrection or rebirth as a Christian (Stevenson 1978, 89), possibly supporting interpretation of the tank's use as a baptismal font.

Romano-British circular lead tanks have been classified into three groups by Watts (1991, 159-166) based on their decoration with identifiable Christian symbols. The first group are those tanks marked by the most recognizable Christian symbols the Chi-Rho or Iota-Chi monograms. The second group is formed from tanks marked by the *crux decussata* or cross of St Andrew alone, (which also accompanies

the Chi-Rho monogram on a number of tanks). The third group are marked with the least readily identifiable Christian symbol, the circle. To this a further distinguishing characteristic can be added in the form of the stamps used in creating the Christian ornamentation. For many of the tanks such motifs are formed by the use of existing non-Christian ornamental stamps, such as lengths of cable decoration combined to create the arms of an Iota-Chi, as on the Brough tank (Watts 1995), or Chi-Rho to which is added a separately inscribed ' \supset ' shaped loop to form the head of the Rho, as evident with the Pulborough example (Curwen 1943). These contrast with the Flawborough example, which in the form of the encircled Chi-Rho and *orantes* uses specifically made Christian stamps. Whether this reflects a slightly earlier date for some of the more crudely made tanks, perhaps made in response to an initial demand for such objects, as opposed to those with Christian stamps created for an established Christian market for lead tanks, is uncertain due to the lack of more precise dating evidence, but may be suspected.

The Flawborough tank in possessing an encircled Chi-Rho, the *crux decussata*, scrollwork, figures and an inscription, is unique amongst known lead tanks. However, a number of these elements are also exhibited on other Christian lead objects within the region. This includes the encircled Chi-Rho and inscription, including misformed *E* and *X* in *FELIX* which are present on a lead casket found at nearby *Ad Pontem*, East Stoke, Nottinghamshire (Wright 1955). The same two misformed characters appear to be evident within the inscription of *DO FECIT FELIX* on a lead casket from Bishop Norton, Lincolnshire (Petch 1957). It is possible that these objects, (particularly *Ad Pontem* and Flawborough, with the use of similar or the same stamps) may come from the same workshop (presumably using lead from the Peak District) which given the apparent similarity in construction techniques or ornamentation may have produced caskets, tanks and other items such as coffins, examples of which are evident along the Fosse Way in Nottinghamshire. These include coffins at *Margidunum* (Todd 1969) and Brough (Smith 1941), the casket at *Ad Pontem* (Wright 1955) and tanks from Flawborough and Brough (Watts 1995). The imagery and function of some of these objects suggest Christian worship, probably centred

administratively on nearby Lincoln. This has been suggested as the possible seat of a bishop, in part due to its position as provincial capital of *Britannia Secunda*. Certainly, a bishop would have been required to preside at such liturgical events as baptisms (Watts 1991, 170). A bishop of Lincoln may have been among the Romano-British bishops present at the Council of Arles in 314 AD (Jones 2002, 119). Evidence of Christianity within the territory of this bishopric (in addition to those along the Fosse Way) includes timber churches at the site of the forum, Lincoln, although dating remains imprecise (Jones 2002, 129), along with tanks and caskets at Ludford, Walesby, Bishop Norton and Caistor (Worrell 2005, Frere and Tomlin 1991; *RIB* 2416.14, *RIB* 2416.7, *RIB* 2416.4; Jones 2002, 122), and the possible Christian cemetery at Ancaster (Wilson 1968).

CONCLUSION

As in the handful of other excavated examples the Flawborough tank was found to lie in a secondary context with a late 4th century AD *terminus post quem*. The weight of the tank, which appears to preclude its easy movement, and the location of its deposition suggest a link with the rectangular raised area immediately to the northeast. The presence of stone scatters which could possibly indicate the remains of structures, plus finds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery and metalwork across this area, supplemented by evidence from the excavated ditches, suggest the existence of a settlement in this vicinity. If this is the case the presence of the tank suggests the practise of Christian ceremony on the site, possibly within a Late Romano-British house church such as found at Lullingstone villa, Kent (Meates 1979) or extra mural church site as suggested for Icklingham, Suffolk (West 1976) of which only a handful of sites are known around the country (Watts 1991, 99-145).

The Flawborough tank's discovery and detailed motifs, strengthens the limited evidence for the existence of Christianity in Nottinghamshire during the later Romano-British period, and suggests a possible local origin for the manufacture of related lead objects for this community. The unique character of the tank and the possibility of an associated late

Roman Christian site in the near vicinity highlight the find as one of both local and national significance. It is hoped that further work will be carried out to investigate the raised area in order to discover the wider context for the deposition of this unique find.

THE FINDS

Iron Age and Romano-British Pottery

by Ruth Leary

Introduction.

A total of 122 sherds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery (1643g) from at least 27 vessels were recovered by excavation. The pottery forms and fabrics largely belong to two chronological periods, the late Iron Age to Conquest period and the 4th century AD, with nothing necessarily lying between. The two groups were small and the site probably lay on the edge of a domestic settlement. The pottery was in a good state and soil conditions were favourable with shell inclusions surviving burial. According to nationally approved standards (Darling 2004), a catalogue recording vessel part, abrasion, fabric, form, decoration, rim diameter, sherd conditions such as burnt, riveted etc, and date range was compiled and the fabrics and forms quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalent. Full details are contained within the archive.

Fabrics

The fabric of the pottery was first examined by eye and sorted into fabric groups on the basis of colour, hardness, feel, fracture, inclusions and manufacturing technique. A sample of the sherds was further examined under an x30 binocular microscope to verify these divisions. The size of the sample was as large as was felt necessary for each fabric group.

Shell-tempered wares

- CTB1 Brown-orange, often with grey core. Hard with smooth, slightly soapy feel. Abundant, ill-sorted, coarse-fine shell and rare, medium, subrounded quartz.
- CTA2 Dales ware. As Tomber and Dore 1998 DAL SH.

Mixed grit wares

- GTA5 Dark grey/black, hard, smooth with irregular fracture. Moderate, ill-sorted fine to coarse but predominantly fine shell, moderate, ill-sorted fine to coarse rounded argillaceous inclusions, sparse, medium, rounded quartz. A fine version of a fabric group which falls within the Trent Valley ware group, Todd 1968a.
- GTA8 Brown with grey core. Hard with leathery feel and irregular fracture. Sparse medium shell, moderate, medium, subrounded quartz and moderate, coarse, rounded argillaceous inclusions, brown and grey. Trent valley ware variant, Todd 1968a.

smooth with irregular fracture. Moderate, well-sorted medium quartz, sparse medium shell and angular grey inclusions, ?grog.

Reduced Roman wares

Transitional fine quartz tempered wares

- BSA1 Black/dark grey. Hard, smooth with finely irregular fracture. Moderate to sparse, well-sorted medium, subangular quartz, sparse, coarse rounded grey argillaceous inclusions and white calcareous inclusions or vesicles.
- BSB1 Dark grey/ black surfaces with brown core. Hard,

- GRA Grey, hard, smooth feel and smooth fracture. Moderate, fine, well-sorted, subangular quartz and sparse, medium-sized, rounded, grey/brown inclusion.
- GRB1 Greywares. A group of grey fabrics tempered with moderate quantities of medium-sized quartz not otherwise subdivided due to the endless variations in the attributes and impossibility of either consistently identifying subgroups or identifying their sources. Most sherds compared well with the Swanpool kiln products (Webster and Booth 1947).
- GRC Medium to light grey. Hard with rough feel and hackly fracture. Abundant, ill-sorted, medium to coarse subangular quartz; sparse, medium-sized, rounded, black iron oxides. Cf. grit-tempered wares of the late 4th century from Swanpool and other kilns (Darling 1977, 31).

Table 2.

Flawborough fabric quantification. PRIA-ERB: Pre-Roman Iron Age to early Roman.

Date group	Fabric	Sherd Count	Sherd Weight	Rim %	Minimum vessel no.	Rel % count	Rel % weight
PRIA-ERB	BSA1	2	16.8			1.64%	1.02%
PRIA-ERB	BSB1	1	3	2	1	0.82%	0.18%
PRIA-ERB	CT	3	129.1			2.46%	7.86%
PRIA-ERB	CTB1	63	604.4	30	10	51.64%	36.80%
PRIA-ERB	CTB1/8	1	4.6	5	1	0.82%	0.28%
PRIA-ERB	SLG1	1	24.3	5	1	0.82%	1.48%
PRIA-ERB Total		71	782.2	42	13	58.20%	47.62%
ERB	FLA	1	6.2		1	0.82%	0.38%
ERB	GRA	1	18.3		1	0.82%	1.11%
ERB	GTA5	2	14.4		1	1.64%	0.88%
ERB	GTA8	8	92	5	1	6.56%	5.60%
ERB	GTA8?	1	10.5			0.82%	0.64%
ERB Total		13	141.4	5	4	10.66%	8.61%
Late RB	CTA2	3	104.8	50	1	2.46%	6.38%
Late	GRB1	28	570.2	16	6	22.95%	34.71%
Late	GRB1/BB1	1	3.7		1	0.82%	0.23%
Late	GRC	1	2.1			0.82%	0.13%
Late	NV1	1	2.6		1	0.82%	0.16%
Late	NVG	1	9.6	5	1	0.82%	0.58%
Late RB Total		35	693	71	10	28.69%	42.19%
Other	BRCK	1	2.7			0.82%	0.16%
Other	FC	1	12.1			0.82%	0.74%
Other	Q1/FC	1	11.2			0.82%	0.68%
Total		122	1642.6	118	27	100.00%	100.00%

White ware

- FLA Cream. Slipped, sometimes firing to darker yellow or greyish hue. Hard and smooth with very finely irregular fracture. Moderate, well-sorted, very fine, subangular quartz, moderate fine, ill-sorted, rounded, red, brown and black inclusions (possibly clay pellets and some oxides; occasional, well-sorted, fine, rounded, calcareous inclusions; sparse, well-sorted, fine, flakes of mica. Similar to examples from Mancetter-Hartshill kilns, Coventry. Tomber and Dore 1998 MAH WH.
- NV1 Nene Valley colour-coated ware with a fine sand-tempered white fabric and a black colour coat. Tomber and Dore 1998 LNV CC.
- NVG as NV1 but with grey surfaces and pale grey fabric. Similar to Nene Valley grey wares.

Iron Age fabrics

- Q1 Fine textured, hard, smooth fabric with smooth fracture. Oxidised. Sparse, fine quartz and fine rounded argillaceous inclusions. This may be fired clay or part of a handmade PR1A jar.
- SLG1 Dark grey, hard, smooth with fairly smooth fracture. Moderate, well-sorted, medium, rounded quartz, sparse, ill-sorted coarse slag, rare, coarse, rounded grey argillaceous inclusions, rare, ill-sorted medium calcareous inclusions, shell?
- FC Fired clay.

The assemblage was dominated by two ware groups – the shell-tempered wares and the grey wares (Table 2) with the shell-tempered ware more numerous by sherd count. This measure may be less reliable than weight as shell-tempered wares tend to fragment more than grey wares. Minor wares in the pre-Roman Iron Age (PR1A) and early Roman period included medium and fine quartz tempered wares and mixed grit wares which belonged to the Trent Valley ware group (Todd 1968a). A slag-tempered sherd belongs to this period and can be matched at several sites in the East Midlands including Gamston, Aslockton and Parson's Hill, Bingham, all Nottinghamshire, used for Iron Age handmade jars, including scored ware (Knight 1992, nos 11 and 21 and Knight *pers. com.*) as well as in Derbyshire at Ockbrook (Leary 2001, 113-4).

The GTA fabrics compare with samples of Trent Valley ware (Todd 1968a). The harder sandier version, GTA8, is likely to date to the post-Conquest period but the soapier GTA5 compares with sherds from Hoveringham (Leary unpublished), which are

associated with Iron Age types only. The white ware flagon base can be broadly datable to the 1st or 2nd century but cannot be closely dated. The finer GRA sherd may also belong to this period but its source is uncertain.

The diagnostic grey wares are principally of types comparable to the products of the Swanpool kilns except a finer GRA sherd and plain-rim dish in a fabric similar to that made in the Nene Valley kilns. One sherd of Nene Valley colour-coated ware was also identified and the thickness of the sherds suggests it came from a bowl or dish of late 3rd-4th century date. Two sherds from a double lid-seated jar on a dark grey shell-tempered ware is a common type in Lincoln in the late 4th century but its source is uncertain although the form was made in the Swanpool kilns in a gritty grey ware. One sherd was in a fabric similar to BB1 but its overall characteristics suggest it may be a local copy.

The majority of the vessels could have been obtained locally. Analysis of other shell-tempered wares along the Trent Valley suggests a source in the Penarth Group within the Trent Valley or the Lower Jurassic clays, also within the Trent Valley (Vince 2005). The grey wares (both GRB1 and GRC) could come from Lincoln or an industry making similar fabrics and forms. Fabric CTA2 is likely to come from the vicinity of the Humber (Darling 1977, 30-1). The Nene Valley wares and the white ware were traded over a greater distance. The white ware base could come from the Mancetter-Hartshill kilns, near Coventry, which supplied this area with mortaria for much of the Roman period.

Catalogue of illustrated sherds by context and summary of stratified group

Ditch 0004

- AFN BSB1 stubby everted rim from jar. 3g. RE 2%.
- AFL SLG1 tapering everted rim of vessel with cordon outside upper body, Burnished with oblique and near vertical burnished lines above cordon. Probably a butt beaker copy. 24g. Re 5%.
- AFK BSA1 curving bodysherd below cordon. Burnished all over outside. 15g.
- AFO Three adjoining sherds from jar with flat cordon outside the body and horizontal groove below. 57g. Very abraded

- AFM CTB8 corrugated jar bodysherd. Possibly same vessel as above indicating at least three or four furrows on shoulder of jar. 10g.
- ACJ Small corrugated CTB8 jar bodysherd. Cf. Todd 1968a 4g ACJ.
- AFS Unabraded oxidised CTB1 sherd from jar with vertical combing interrupted by a horizontal groove. The shell in this sherd is more abundant than is normal for this fabric. Cf. Pollard 1994, 72-3 for occurrence of this type in the late PRIA and Oswald 1948 pl. VIII for examples in the early Roman period. 24g.
- AFX Small CTB1 bodysherd, oxidised surfaces, with grooves. The intersecting character of these suggests this is scored ware rather than combing. Middle-late Iron Age, Knight 2002. 7g.

Also bodysherds of fabrics BSA1 (2), CTB1 (21) and GTA8 (1). CTB1 sherds only were recovered from the lowest spit and these included the scored ware sherd (no. 14) and a combed sherd suggesting occupation may have begun in the middle-late Iron Age. Material from spit 2 included sherds from the GTA5 corrugated vessel which suggests infill took place in the mid 1st century in the late Iron Age or Conquest period. The absence of any diagnostically Roman pieces suggests this ditch went out of use at this time.

Ditch 0010/11

- AFD. CTB1 everted rim of necked jar or bowl. The rim tip is thickened and burnished. Late Iron Age or Conquest period. 9g. RE 5%.
- ACR. Rim sherd of GTA5 jar with everted rim and at least two shoulder corrugations, cf. Todd 1968a.
- AEL. Rebated rim of CTB1 jar with rebated neck and traces of probable slashes or incisions on the shoulder. Cf. storage jars at Margidunum, Oswald 1952 pl. VIII no. 1, 1941 fig. 10 nos 25-6 16g. RE 4%.

These ditches contained predominantly CTB bodysherds (12 from 10 and a further 5 from 11) with a GRB1 bodysherd and one GTA8 jar from spits 2 and 1 ditch 10/11 (no. 19) respectively and a CTB1 rebated rim jar (no. 20) and GRB1 bodysherd from spits 2 and respectively of ditch 11. Ditch 11 was of post-Mediaeval origin so the material derived from the earlier feature. The GRB1 sherd from spit 2 in ditch 10 indicates a date in the Roman period but the remaining sherds suggest a date in or just after the Conquest.

Ditch 0014

- AFB. CTB1 rim sherd of internally bevelled bead rim jar. Cf. Knight 1992, 50. Late Iron Age to mid-2nd century. 14g. RE 8%.

One undiagnostic GRB1 sherd and a further CTB1 sherd were also identified. A date in the mid 1st to mid 2nd century is possible.

Ditch 0005

- AEQ Everted rim of wide-mouthed jar, burnished all over. Of East Midlands burnished ware type, 3rd-4th century probably late 3rd -4th century. AEQ.
- AES Rim and body of plain-rim dish burnished all over. The fabric compares with vessels from the Nene Valley kilns, although Swanpool is a possibility. Cf. Perrin 1999, 101, most common in the 4th century. 10g. RE 5%.

Also sherds of GRB1 (1) and CTB1 (2). The pottery gives a date range in the late 3rd-4th century.

Ditch 0009

- AHB. Very battered rim of wide-mouthed jar, cf. jars dated to the 3rd century at Lincoln (Darling 1999 fig. 37 nos 372-278 and p. 131). 46g. RE 5%.

This ditch contained another GRB1 bodysherds from 9B spit 5 and two further GRB1 sherds from the upper fills, including the neck of a late wide-mouthed jar (Todd 1968b) with a sherd from a Nene Valley colour coated ware dish/bowl in spit 1, dating to the late 3rd-4th century. Ditch 9a yielded only one CTB1 scrap so was not securely dated but may belong to the PRIA-early Roman phase of occupation.

Ditch 0003

- AHC Rim of medium-necked jar with lid-seated rim. This form compares with Swanpool type H (Webster and Booth 1947 H1, H8 and H16) and has been dated to the 4th century, being the form characteristic of late 4th century deposits at Lincoln (Darling 1977, 30-1 and 1999, 131). 79g. RE 35%.
- ABX Two adjoining sherds from a GRB1 narrow-necked jar or beaker with notched cordon around the shoulder, cf. Darling 1999 fig. 32 no. 206 on a beaker in a layer dated to the 4th century.

This feature contained a scrap of late gritty grey ware in the base, suggesting a *terminus post quem* in the late 4th century and this date is supported by the character of the other diagnostic sherds (nos 5-6). Other material included nine GRB1 sherds, one GRA bodysherd, three CTB1 bodysherds, two GTA8 bodysherds and a scrap of Q1 or possibly fired clay.

Pit 0002

- AEH GRB1 bodysherd from closed vessel with a zone of lattice burnish above a zone of combed wavy line decoration. Probably a narrow-mouthed jar of type common in the late 3rd-4th century.

Also a CTB1 scrap, a sherd from the base of an FLA2 flagon, another GRB1 bodysherd and a sherd from the base of a GTA8 jar. The latest vessel in this fill is no. 4 and the group includes sherds dating to within the mid 1st-2nd century.

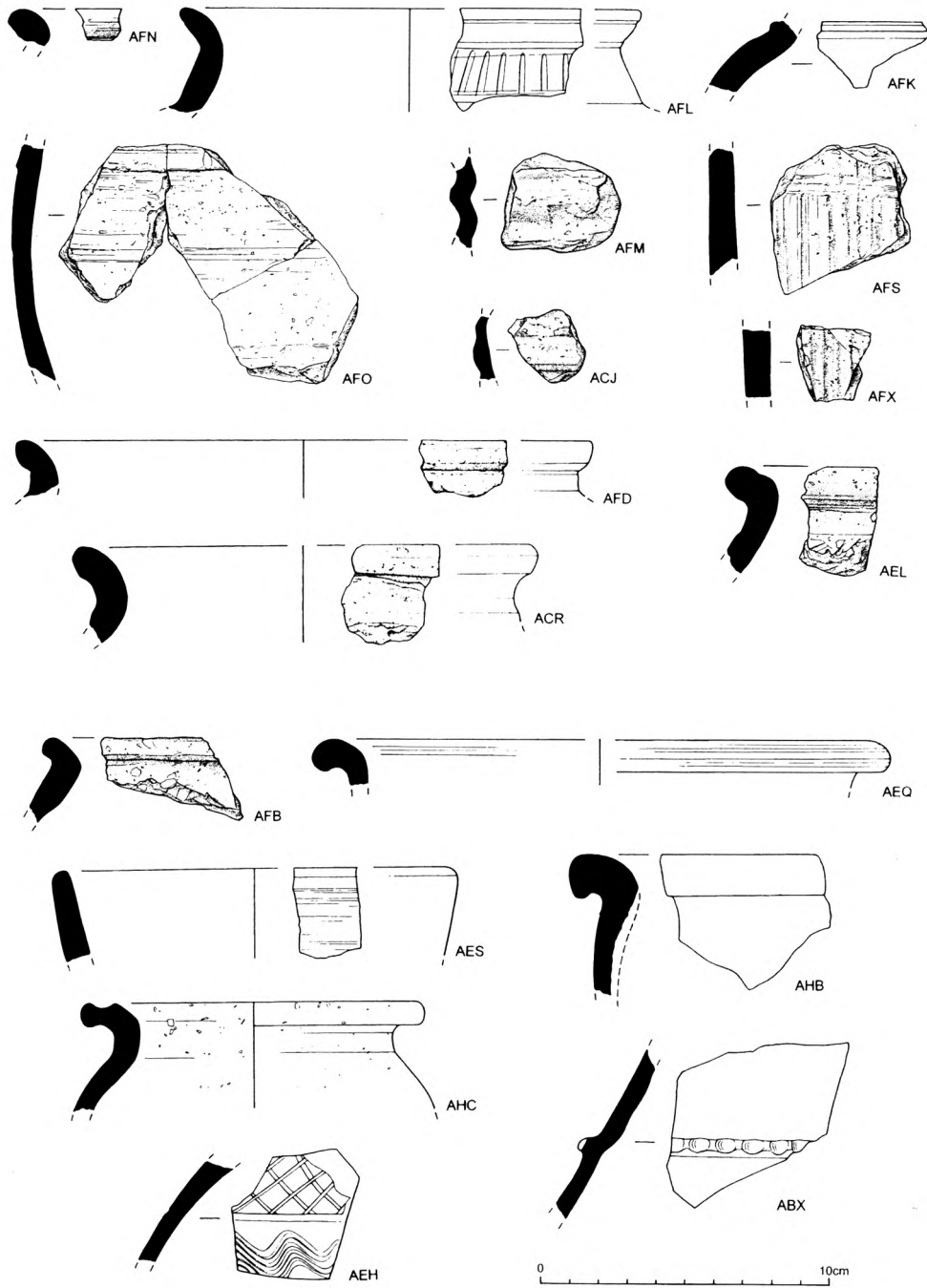


FIGURE 8: Iron Age and Romano-British Pottery.

CONCLUSION

The group is very small making interpretation hard. The assemblage is dominated by jars with only two pieces of fine ware – the white ware flagon and the colour-coated dish/bowl – and no samian at all. Most of the pottery was regional coarse ware and traded finewares contributed less than 2% of the total assemblage. The pottery indicates occupation began

in the late Iron Age and probably ceased at or just before the Conquest with very little later material until the 3rd or 4th century. Ditch 0009 may have been in use during the 3rd century but most of the later material indicates activity in the 4th century and included pottery common in the late 4th century. Pit 0002 is given a *terminus post quem* in the late 4th century by the group of late pottery found in ditch 0003.

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42 IRON AGE/ROMANO-BRITISH FEATURES & A FOURTH CENTURY A.D. CHRISTIAN LEAD TANK

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