

## A Roman Inhumation at 37 Ivel Road, Sandy

Human bones were disturbed during the excavation of a pond in the garden of 37 Ivel Road, Sandy. The bones were located to the south-west of the cottage at Ivel Road at an approximate grid location of TL 17619 48721.

The undisturbed geological layers consisted of yellow sand (2) and the burial was located below *c.* 0.80m of topsoil (1) consisting of dark reddish brown silty sand with occasional small sized stones.

Archaeological excavation of the bones revealed that they were part of an inhumation burial. The burial consisted of a simple grave cut [3], *c.* 1.80m long, 0.60m wide and 0.50m deep. The skeleton (4) was laid out supine within the cut with its hands folded across the pelvis. Four iron nails were found with the body, two at the feet, one at the pelvis and one at the left elbow. The position of the nails suggest that they may have held a shroud. A linear orange discoloured stain alongside the body, reported and removed by the construction workers, could also indicate the existence of a coffin.

Grave fill (5) consisted of mid reddish brown silty sand with occasional small iron stones and fine rooting. It contained a fragment of Roman pottery (see below) which indicates a Roman date for the burial.

The inhumation represents an isolated burial dating to the Roman period. The burial lies *c.* 300m west of the centre of the Roman settlement of Sandy which grew from possibly pre-existing Iron Age occupation and expanded along the newly established Roman road from Godmanchester to Baldock which runs north-south through the settlement and across a low saddle in the Greensand Ridge. A further road may have run westwards from Sandy towards settlements near Bedford (Dawson 1995).

Roman burials are usually located outside the main settlement areas and inhumation burials were excavated along the Stratford Road to the south of the Roman settlement. The existence of a further burial to the west of the settlement near another prospective road is therefore not surprising.

### **Skeleton (4)**

Less than 50% of the individual is present, and no bones survive intact. Preservation is moderate to poor, with much erosion and loss of surface detail. The skeleton is too fragmentary for estimations of age and/or sex to be clearly determined, although dentition suggests an individual of at least 21 years of age. Skeletal elements are summarised below.

#### Skull

Elements deriving from the parietal; temporal; and occipital regions; left maxilla; left mandible.

Dentition: 15 teeth remain *in situ*; 6 loose; all worn.

Mandible: incisors x 4; canine x 2; premolar/molar x 9.

Maxilla: premolar/molar x 4; + 2 indeterminate.

#### Post-cranial

Right clavicle  
Right arm: humerus; radius; ulna  
Left scapula  
Left arm: radius; ulna  
Left hand: metacarpals x 4  
Right hand: metacarpals x 3; phalanges x 9  
Vertebrae: cervical; C1 (atlas); C2 (axis); C3-5; ?thoracic x 1  
Partial hip bone (innominate; left and right)  
Indeterminate rib fragments  
Right leg: femur shaft; tibia shaft  
Foot: ankle bone (?navicular)

### Other finds

#### Layer (1)

Description	Sherd / frag.	Wt (g)	Date range
Pottery: Shell (R13) rim sherd	1	41	Roman
Pottery: White-slipped grey ware (R06H) rim sherd	1	13	Roman
Pottery: Mottle/speckle-glazed ware (P19)	2	6	Post-medieval
Pottery: Staffordshire slip-ware (P30)	1	6	Post-medieval
Pottery: English stoneware (P48)	1	17	Post-medieval
Gault clay flat roof tile	5	174	Post-medieval
Sand tempered flat roof tile	3	50	Post-medieval
Clay tobacco pipe stem and bowl	3	14	17 <sup>th</sup> century

#### Fill (5)

Black-slipped grey ware Roman pottery sherd (fabric R06I<sup>1</sup>) from base of dish or bowl (20g); animal bone rib fragment from large mammal (21g), animal teeth x 3 (13g).

### Acknowledgements

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### Bibliography

Dawson, M. 1995. "Sandy". In: Brown, A. E. (ed). *Roman Small Towns in Eastern England and Beyond*. Oxbow Monograph 52.

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<sup>1</sup> Fabric type determined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology.



Location of skeleton within pond excavation. Looking west.



Skeleton (4) fully excavated. Looking west, 1m scale.