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Archaeological Investigations at the ‘Warren’s Croft’ Site, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire

By Simon Stevens, Lucy Allott, Luke Barber, Anna Doherty, Susan Pringle, Elke Raemen and Lucy Whittingham

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2 Chapel Place, Portslade, East Sussex, BN41 1DR

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INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological work was undertaken by Archaeology South-East (ASE; UCL Institute of Archaeology) at the 'Warren's Croft' Site, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire (NGR 571350 165980; Figure 1) in order to fulfil the terms of a planning condition (Wokingham District Council Planning Reference F/2004/0991). The site lies 8km to the south of Reading, and just to the south of the village of Spencers Wood, to the west of the Basingstoke Road (B3349).

At the time of the archaeological work, the site was divided into two irregularly shaped parcels of land by a line of mature trees and hedges, with a marked slope downwards from west to east from *c.*62m AOD at the western boundary to *c.*57m AOD at the Basingstoke Road. The highest point of the site offered far-reaching views across the valley of the River Loddon to the south-east, and to the higher ground beyond. The underlying geology at the site consisted of the clays, silts and sands of the London Clay formation with no superficial deposits (BGS 2023).

The current report provides details of the archaeological investigation of three mitigation areas, (two open areas and a further area examined during a watching brief, targetted on concentrations of archaeological remains encountered in trial trenches mechanically excavated at the site in late 2004 (ASE 2005a). The mitigation work was carried out by ASE in first half of 2005.

Figure 1: Site location and plan

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

It is thought that this part of Berkshire was first inhabited during the Palaeolithic (Hosfield et al. 2007), but that Neolithic forest clearance was followed by more concentrated occupation during the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Features noted on aerial photographs of probable prehistoric date and occasional finds of flintwork are known from the general area, and closer to the site at Sheepbridge Court Farm (*c.*700m to the east) and at Lamb's farm, Swallowfield, *c.*400m to the south (MoLAS 2003; Gates 1975; Ford 1987).

Late Iron Age and Roman occupation in the area was centred at Silchester (*Calleva*), and the road between there and London ran *c.*3km to the south of the current site. Occupation of Silchester appears to have continued after the collapse of Roman governance in the early 5th century. Closer to the site, Iron Age and Roman features have been recorded to the west (WA 1990) and at a similar distance to the north-east (TVAS 2012). A significant assemblage of early Roman pottery was recovered from part of an enclosure identified and excavated in advance of housing immediately to the west at Beech Hill Road in 2016 (Massey and Jones 2020).

Following the Norman Conquest, the county of Berkshire thrived because of its rich river valley pasture fields. There is a scheduled medieval moated site locally at Sheepbridge and other medieval remains are known in the general area of Spencers Wood, although these mainly constitute find-spots of pottery. However, the remains of a medieval farmstead with a tiled hearth were uncovered *c.*1km to the north-east of the current site (MoLAS 2003).

The prosperity of the area continued into the post-medieval period largely because of the local wool industry; cartographic evidence suggests the presence of buildings at the site in the 18th century, although no buildings are shown on the Ordnance Survey maps of the 19th century. The B3349 Basingstoke Road, located immediately to the east of the site was a designated Toll Road (ibid.), and continues as a busy route on the southern approach to Reading.

A geophysical survey was undertaken which included the site and two trial trenches were subsequently excavated within the boundaries of as part of a larger evaluation project by Cotswold

Archaeological Trust (shown in Figure 1). A ditch dated to the post-medieval or modern period was the only feature encountered, although a single sherd of Roman pottery was also recovered (ibid.).

THE EXCAVATED REMAINS

Introduction

The evaluation indicated the survival of a clear concentration of Late Iron Age to early Romano-British features in the north-western corner of the site and an area was mechanically stripped, allowing the exposed deposits to be manually excavated and recorded (designated Area II).

In the eastern half of the site, the evaluation trenches uncovered evidence of land division, but apparently dating to a longer timeframe with pottery assemblages of Middle Iron Age, Late Iron Age to early Romano-British, medieval material recovered from the encountered ditches and gullies. Again, further mitigation was required, and an open area (designated Area I) was mechanically stripped and the archaeological deposits were manually investigated. In addition, a further area was the subject of an archaeological watching brief. In the event, no significant archaeological remains were recorded in that part of the site.

All work was carried in accordance with accepted professional standards, and in accordance with the terms of a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2005b). The features recorded were assigned to one of six periods of activity based on the recovery of datable artefacts, rare stratigraphic relationships and/or spatial relationships. Full details of the archaeological deposits are housed with the project archive (ASE 2006).

Period 1: Prehistoric

There was a thin scatter of worked and fire-cracked flint from across the site, recovered from the overburden and found as residual material in later features. The only feature dated to this period was

gully [117], which ran broadly north-south across T22 (Figure 1) and was partially truncated by Middle Iron Age ditch [107].

Period 2: Middle Iron Age

Field System 1

In the south-east corner of Area I, a number of gullies ran broadly from north-east to south-west, and north-west to south-east (Figure 2). It is likely that these represent the boundaries of at least two fields and a drove-way (FS1). A single shallow pit [208] containing pottery of this date was encountered on the eastern edge of excavation.

Figure 2: Plan of archaeological features within Excavation Area I

Field System 1 has been dated from a limited assemblage of Middle Iron Age pottery recovered from the ditch fills. Very small quantities of pottery of early Roman and medieval date were also recovered from features associated with the field system; on balance these have been interpreted as intrusive (the medieval pottery probably originated in an overlying series of gullies). However, large assemblages of Middle Iron Age pottery were generally lacking from features in Area I, leaving this dating somewhat open to question.

Ditches and gullies assigned to this period were also clustered in evaluation Trenches 18, 22, 23 and 28 (Figures 1 & 2). Although it is difficult to extrapolate these features, they suggest that the Middle Iron Age agricultural landscape extended to the south-west of excavation Area I. In general the pottery groups from the evaluation trenches were also limited. However, the deposition of partially-complete pots in ditches in T22 and T28 was indicative of long-recognised phenomenon of deliberate burial of artefacts, for ritual or ceremonial purposes (*cf*. Hill 1995), and may suggest more intensive Middle Iron Age activity in the vicinity than was suggested by the recorded deposits.

Period 3: Early Roman

Introduction

The majority of features encountered at the site were assigned to this period. Large closely datable pottery assemblages suggest that these features were infilled after the Roman Conquest and that this period of land-use had ended by the late 1st century. There was no clear evidence of stratified pre-Conquest pottery groups, although presumably some features may have been in use for an extended period.

The most striking remains consisted of part of a hill-top enclosure, which survived as a recut enclosure ditch, gullies and pits of varying size, identified during the evaluation and more fully investigated in excavation Area II (Figure 3). There was also a broadly contemporary field system to the west, and a scatter of small pits and post-holes across both examined areas.

Figure 3: Plan of archaeological features within Excavation Area II

Enclosure 1

Owing to the instigation of a Tree Preservation Order, and the position of an area of public open space within the development (offering preservation of remains *in situ*), only the north-west quarter of a hill-top enclosure (ENC1) was investigated during the open area excavation stage in Area II.

Sections were excavated across the ditches forming the north-west corner of the enclosure exposed within the excavation area. The enclosure's south-western corner was probably encountered in T43, and a ditch excavated in T37 may mark the eastern edge of the enclosed area.

It did appear that the main enclosure ditch had been recut and/or slightly realigned on a number of occasions, presumably as it silted up, or became clogged with the domestic refuse from occupation within the area it defined. The excavated sections did not suggest a systematic approach to this, although recuts were sometimes difficult to detect in the fills. There was evidence of redigging/realignment of the ditch along the northern 'arm' of the enclosure, and a gully running away from the north-western

corner of the enclosure may be the remains of an attempt to improve drainage by linking the enclosure ditch to the field system to the west.

Dumping of domestic waste (particularly pottery) was evident in all sections excavated through the enclosure ditches, although very little environmental evidence was obtained from their fills.

A series of shallow parallel gullies were sited within the enclosure; two of the gullies were parallel with the northern arm of the enclosure and intersected with it as it turned southwards, with no clear relationships, suggesting the features were open at the same time. A third gully laid out on a slightly different orientation was encountered to the south, with a local realignment; the point where it would have intersected with the outer enclosure lay outside of the excavation area. Evidence from the plan of the features partially excavated in T43 suggests at least one further internal division.

The area of the site in which enclosure was located was observed to be particularly prone to flooding, even after comparatively light rain, despite being on high ground, so it is presumed that these gullies formed part of a local drainage system designed to alleviate the risk of inundation of structures and/or storage pits, based on the vagaries of the local geology.

A group of eight pits were encountered within the enclosure. The finds assemblages suggested that the pits were filled by domestic refuse, including pottery, quernstone fragments, loom weights and limited amounts of charcoal. The largest assemblages of pottery were recovered from pit [500] and pit [573]. Sizeable assemblages were also found in pits [502] and [504]. Smaller assemblages were present in elongated pit [553], pit [534] and pit [547]. The environmental evidence from these features was on the whole relatively poor but was indicative of the processing of cereal crops (spelt and emmer wheat in particular) in the vicinity, and of the storage of such grain, before the pits were backfilled with domestic refuse.

There were also somewhat enigmatic glimpses of industrial and craft activity from some of the pit fills. A group of kiln bars, probably indicating the presence of a pottery kiln in the immediate vicinity, were recovered from features within the enclosure. This perhaps suggests that waster pits, and/or the kiln itself lay within the unexamined area of the enclosure. Similarly, the recovery of fragments of loom weights is probably indicative of weaving in the vicinity.

Field System 2

The scant remains of a field system (designated FS2) were encountered to the west of the enclosure, made up by shallow gullies probably representing field boundaries, and /or drove-ways between fields. Limited pottery assemblages suggest the field system was in use while the adjacent enclosure was occupied.

Period 4: Later Roman

A small number of features in Area I were assigned to this period on the basis of pottery dated to the mid 3rd to early/mid 4th century. They constitute a scatter of pits and post-holes within an apparently unenclosed landscape. The widely dispersed pits were of quite different shapes and sizes and may have varied considerably in function. Most contained only small quantities of artefacts, although irregular, elongated pit [374], which produced a very substantial pottery group of over 300 sherds, appears to have been deliberately filled with domestic refuse. Also of particular note was pit [309], which contained environmental evidence of charred cereal grains (unfortunately most unidentifiable) and weeds suggesting its use for the storage of grain from local fields.

The quantity of pottery in pit [374] (and of residual later Roman pottery and tile recovered from medieval gullies) suggests that a contemporary settlement was located close-by. Domestic or industrial activity of some kind was also suggested by residual, heavily burnt, Roman bricks, probably from a hearth of some kind, recovered from later pond [431] (although it was considered possible that these had been re-used in a medieval hearth structure). Despite the fairly substantial quantity of material culture, there was very little evidence of more substantial structures or enclosures from this period.

Period 5: Medieval

Field System 3

Medieval pottery was recovered from the majority of the linear features making up the field system (FS3), and although most dating was not more precise than a broad 1275 to 1500 range, stratigraphic relationships and the differing character of the ditches suggest a field system in use over a long time frame. There was also a large pond [431] into which a substantial assemblage of medieval tile had been dumped; significant quantities of medieval tile was also recovered from large pit [383]. Although the last infilling of the pond was stratigraphically later than the ditches which ran into, it appears that the ditch system was designed to allow access to this feature from all directions, and also at least partially fed it; it is therefore considered to be part of this group of features.

Structures (S1, S2 and S3)

Possible evidence of three ephemeral structures survived within the field system. Post-holes arguably formed the corner of a post-built building (S1). Two of the post-holes included local sandstone post-packing and medieval pottery was recovered from post-holes [335] and [349]. Another similar post-built structure (S2) produced a small quantity of medieval pottery, although the additional presence of Romano-British pottery casts some doubt on the dating of the features.

One further small scatter of post-holes near the eastern limit of Area I may also represent another medieval structure (?S3), however, they did not form a coherent shape in plan and are undated and so could equally be associated with the Period 2 field-system. It is thought that the structures could have been erected in this part of the site to act as shelters, but the slight nature of the evidence precludes any further interpretation.

Period 6: Post-medieval

No post-medieval features were encountered in either of the excavation areas. Post-medieval features and/or areas of recent truncation were concentrated in the trial trenches in the area covered by the watching brief. There is cartographic evidence for the presence of buildings in that part of the site from the 18th century (MoLAS 2003, fig. 4), but no tangible building remains were encountered during the

excavations. A small assemblage of post-medieval material was, however, recovered from the overburden in the vicinity, including a coin; a badly corroded copper halfpenny of George II (Young bust: 1729–1739; ASE 2006).

FINDS

The Iron Age and Roman Pottery by Anna Doherty

The assemblage totals 2993 sherds, weighing 39.61kg, from 1130 estimated vessels. The pottery was recorded for the post-excavation assessment by Rupert Featherby (2006), according to the Museum of London fabric and form codes (MoLA 2019). It was quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated number of vessels (ENV). Where appropriate, the fabric-series was expanded to provide correlation with the Silchester type-series (Timby 1989; 2000). Although quantification at this level of detail is available in the archive, the following report generally discusses fabrics at a broader ware group level.

Middle Iron Age

Close dating of this material remains difficult because it was mostly recovered in very small context groups from Field System 1. However, it includes a few larger parts of vessel profiles including in ditch [107], gullies [105] and [122], and layer [166], which contained material of mixed date including medieval CBM. This material might be dated anywhere within the range *c.*300–50 BC. There is little evidence of continuity between this and the following phase, as Middle Iron Age sherds appear very rarely as residual elements in later contexts.

This assemblage is dominated by hand-made quartz-sand fabrics which are typical of the Middle Iron Age in this part of the Thames valley (Table 1). Although some contain rare flint inclusions, only one vessel of this phase is clearly flint-tempered. Most of the fabrics of this period are probably of

local origin but one vessel is of note because it contains common glauconite. Fabrics of this type are usually associated with Upper Greensand geology and similar wares found at Thames Valley Park have been attributed to a source probably at least 30km away, in either north Hampshire or north-west Oxfordshire (Mepham 1997, 49). It seems possible that vessels traded or exchanged over longer distances might have had special significance attached to them and it is worth noting that this vessel (Figure 4, P3) is one of those deposited at least partially complete in ditch [107].

Table 1: Quantification of Middle Iron Age fabrics

Ware type	**Sherd Count**	**Weight (g)**	**ENV**
Flint-tempered wares (FLIN)	4	45	1
Glauconitic wares (GLAUC)	64	461	1
Sand-tempered ware (SAND)	46	727	5
Sand with rare flint (SANDF)	53	701	7
Total	167	1934	14

The narrow range of shouldered (Figure 4, P1, P2) or plain jar forms (Figure 4, P3, P4), possibly related to the Saucepan tradition are types commonly associated with the Middle Iron Age in central southern Britain. Although the assemblage may be too small to draw any firm conclusions, the absence of more clearly defined or decorated Saucepan pots could be significant since a distinction has been noted between local sites like Riseley Farm, which feature only sand-tempered coarser wares, and Thames Valley Park and Aldermaston Wharf where undecorated Saucepan pots in predominately flint-tempered fabrics have been suggested to have cultural associations with Hampshire assemblages the St Catherine's Hill/Worthy Down style zone (Mepham 1997, 50).

Early Roman

Overview of context and dating

Approximately three-quarters of the total pottery assemblage is of early Roman date. Although this group is dominated by tempered wares, these are accompanied by Roman material in all contexts groups of any size. This phase should therefore probably be assigned entirely to the early Roman period, although it is possible that pottery was being used on site in the Late Iron Age. Overall, it appears likely that early Roman activity is confined to the to the pre-Flavian period. The proportions of fabrics and forms are quite consistent throughout the larger stratified groups, suggesting very limited typological development or change in patterns of supply. In most respects, the assemblage is comparable to that from the adjacent Beech Hill Road site (Jones 2020); however, it has a notably higher proportion of tempered wares, especially grog-tempered fabrics, probably suggesting a slightly earlier emphasis. Although features on site are indicative of agricultural activity, settlement is also hinted at by this fairly large assemblage, probably deposited over no more than 30 years. It is particularly notable that around 40% of the pottery of this phase (860 sherds) comes from large groups from the fills of the enclosure (ENC1) ditch.

Fabrics and forms

Over a third of the pottery from this phase is made up by Silchester ware (FLIN1), broadly in line proportions seen in the Claudio-Neronian period at Silchester itself, where there was a sharp increase in flint-tempered wares during Period 3 (Timby 2000, 297). The quantity of flint-tempered wares is slightly higher than at Beech Hill Road nearby, where they accounted for 28% of sherds (Jones 2020, 15). Although present in similar proportions at Wickhams Field, Silchester ware makes up a notably smaller proportion at Binfield and also in the Thames Valley Park assemblage, where grog-tempering is much more important, perhaps due to the fact that it was produced in the vicinity (Laidlaw 1996, 149; Booth 1995, 112; Mepham 1997, 55).

Table 2: Quantification of early Roman fabrics

Ware type	**Count**	**Wt (g)**	**% Count**	**% Wt**
Alice Holt-Surrey ware	104	1665	4.6	5.1
Unsourced colour-coated ware	3	3	0.1	<0.1
Unsourced reduced fine wares	13	101	0.6	0.3
Flint-tempered (Silchester) ware	832	16014	36.8	49.1
Grog-tempered wares	496	8061	22	24.7
Mixed-tempered wares	259	2170	11.5	6.7
Unsourced oxidised coarse wares	51	379	2.3	1.2
Oxidised fine-wares	8	92	0.4	0.3
La Graufesenque samian ware	8	35	0.4	0.1
Unsourced reduced coarse wares	472	4009	20.9	12.3
Verulamium region white-ware	11	76	0.5	0.2

A narrow range of Silchester ware forms was employed at the site, most examples being plain rim jars with an internal thickening, similar to Thompson's (1982) form C3 (e.g. Figure 4, P7, P8; Table 3). Finer necked jars, which were commonly recorded at Silchester, are mostly absent at Spencers Wood, although some examples of bead or everted rim jars were noted in flint-tempered fabrics (e.g. Figure 4, P9, P10, P11). Conversely, flint-tempered storage jars (e.g. Figure 4, P5, P6) are quite common in this assemblage but are not in the Silchester repertoire. Although the storage jars are of an indistinguishable fabric, it is possible that they could be from a different source.

Grog-tempered wares, which account for 22% of the Late Iron Age/early Roman sherds, are notably more common than at nearby Beech Hill Road where they accounted for 9 % of sherds (Jones

2020, 15). The fact that they are out-numbered by flint-tempered/Silchester type wares is also perhaps chronologically significant and probably provides more evidence for largely post-Conquest activity. By contrast, in groups dated to the early/mid 1st century AD from Three Mile Cross, grog-tempered fabrics notably accounted for 57% of the assemblage while flint-tempered wares made up just 28%. By the early Roman phase, the relative proportion of these wares was more comparable to the current assemblage (Timby 2010a, 14).

The grog tempered wares fall into two main groups: coarser wares comparable to Silchester fabric G1, and finer fabrics with reddish surfaces, similar to G4, the former being only slightly more common than the latter. The G1 wares are more often used for coarser forms including Thompson C3 jars (not illustrated) and large necked jars (e.g. Figure 4, P13, P14) whereas the G4 fabric is associated with finer jars but also with fine or table ware forms like platters (e.g. Figure 5, P22) and cups (e.g. Figure 5, P23). Oxidised grog-tempered fine wares are encountered across the high-status Aylesford-Swarling assemblages of Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire which has led to speculation that these might be the product of one specialised industry (Timby 2000, 236). However, the appearance of significant quantities of this ware at a lower-status settlement such as Spencers Wood might suggests that a number of more local industries were part of a wider cultural tradition of imitating Terra Rubra.

Mixed-tempered wares make up a significant proportion of the assemblage but these include 16 different fabrics groups with varying proportions of sand, grog and flint. These are a diverse group, ranging from essentially Romanised wheel-thrown sandy wares with a scatter of flint, to extremely coarsely-tempered handmade vessels. Few diagnostic feature sherds are attributable to these wares but the forms are mainly confined to jars. The fact that so many different fabrics variants are represented may attest to a lack of standardisation in the products of local non-specialised industries.

Table 3: Correlation of Early Roman fabric and form by percentage of total ENV

	Alice Holt-Surrey ware	Unsourced reduced fine ware	Flint-tempered (Silchester) ware	Grog-tempered ware	Mixed-tempered ware	Unsourced coarse oxidised ware	Unsourced fine oxidised ware	La Graufesenque samian	Unsourced reduced coarse ware	
Unassigned flagons									0.4	
Flagons total										**0.4**
Unassigned jars	4		5.7	5	3.2				10.8	
Plain rim jars (Thompson C3)			18.7	2.2	1.1					
Bead rim jars	0.7		0.4	0.4	1.1				2.2	
Necked jars	2.8	0.4		2.9	0.7	0.7			8.3	
Narrow necked jars	0.4									
Storage jars			5.4	1.4	1.1					

	Alice Holt-Surrey ware	Unsourced reduced fine ware	Flint-tempered (Silchester) ware	Grog-tempered ware	Mixed-tempered ware	Unsourced coarse oxidised ware	Unsourced fine oxidised ware	La Graufesenque samian	Unsourced reduced coarse ware	
Lid-seated jars				0.4						
Jars total										**80**
Unassigned beaker/jars	0.4			1.1	1.1				2.9	
Beaker/jars total										**5.4**
Unassigned beakers	0.4			0.4						
Butt-beakers				0.7		0.4			0.4	
Beakers total										**2.2**
Unassigned dishes/bowls									0.4	
Surrey bowls	1.4								1.4	

	Alice Holt-Surrey ware	Unsourced reduced fine ware	Flint-tempered (Silchester) ware	Grog-tempered ware	Mixed-tempered ware	Unsourced coarse oxidised ware	Unsourced fine oxidised ware	La Graufesenque samian	Unsourced reduced coarse ware	
Aylesford-Swarling style platters	1.1			1.1		0.7			1.4	
Dragendorff 15/17 platters								0.7		
Dishes/bowls/platters total										**8.3**
Unassigned cups				0.4						
Cups total										**0.4**
Lids			1.7				0.4			
Strainers				0.4	0.4				0.4	
Other forms total										**3.3**

Roman sandy fabrics make up nearly a third of the early Roman pottery, notably a lower proportion than at nearby Beech Hill Road (Jones 2020, 15). A number of fabric variations correlating to Silchester codes were recorded but most are unprovenanced. Pottery production is still poorly understood in Berkshire and there appears to have been no major pottery industry located within the county, although a few isolated kiln sites have been identified (Harrison 2018, 127–128). Kiln bars were recovered from the site itself, although no other direct evidence of production was observed. Unsourced forms are predominantly non-distinctive necked jars (e.g. Figure 5, P15, P16).

A significant proportion of the Roman sandy wares are positively identified as products of the early Alice Holt industry which is known to be a major supplier of coarse wares to Silchester and its hinterland (ibid, 117). Most types can be readily paralleled in the corpus of Alice Holt forms (Lyne & Jeffries 1979) including class 4 bead rim jars (e.g. Figure 4, P12), class 1, necked jars (e.g. Figure 5, P17, P18), a class 3 jar/beaker, possibly derived from butt-beakers (Figure 5, P20), a class 5 'Surrey bowl' (Figure 5, P24) and a class 6 Gallo-Belgic derived platter (Figure 5, P21) It is also possible that some of the unprovenanced early Roman sandy wares represent less well-fired early Alice Holt fabrics. One form with a very long narrow corrugated neck particularly stands out and appears to be in the tradition of earlier Aylesford-Swarling style wares (cf Thompson 1982 form B3-5), despite being in a Romanised sandy grey ware possibly of the Alice Holt industry (Figure 5, P19). Elsewhere in the table ware assemblages, there appears to be clear preference for shallow dishes and platters (particular Lyne & Jefferies classes 5 and 6), which were also well represented at Beech Hill Road (Jones 2020, 17).

Discussion

Local rural sites, like Reading Business Park, Wickhams Field, Arborfield, Binfield, Three Mile Cross and Northcourt Avenue, Reading generally lack the wide range of fine wares seen at the *civitas* capital of Silchester (Timby 1992, 87; Laidlaw 1996, 149; Lyne, 1998–2003, 46; Timby 2010a, 15; Timby 2010b, 33), although very occasional examples of Gallo-Belgic imports have been noted in the hinterland, including a single sherd of Terra Rubra at Shinield (McSloy 2020, 41). Fulford (1993, 19, 25–8) has evaluated the possibility of a close economic relationship between Silchester and surrounding

settlements, possibly taking the form of tributes, taxation or direct control of agricultural land by an urban elite. If this is the case, it resulted in only a limited impact on material culture. At Spencers Wood, Roman fine wares are present in only tiny quantities, although fine grog-tempered ware (G4) accounts for over 10% of sherds from this phase. Small quantities of butt-beakers and platters indicate that rural communities had uses for these new forms and the consistent red oxidisation on G4 vessels also suggests that they appreciated the prestige in imitating imported Terra Rubra. However, it is worth noting that most examples of butt-beakers, for example, are very loose copies, which may have been used quite differently to the originals and overall, the impression is that Roman practices of eating and drinking were only adopted to a limited extent.

Later Roman

Assuming that non-diagnostic sherds which appear in late Roman groups are not residual, this phase accounts for around 20% of the total assemblage. Only 16 contexts were spot-dated to the mid 3rd to mid 4th century, and most of these contained small quantities of pottery which offer only limited evidence of domestic settlement. However, one very substantial group of over 300 sherds was recovered from a context, fill [375] of pit [374] (Figure 5, P25–P28).

The assemblage from the pit is dominated by reduced sandy coarse wares with Alice Holt wares being the most common, followed by BB1 and other unsourced greywares (Table 4). A terminus post quem date of AD 250 is provided by BB1 vessels with obtuse lattice decoration but the group lacks the late Roman grog-tempered wares, Portchester D ware and Hadham/ Oxfordshire red-slipped wares which are present in small quantities throughout most of the rest the later Roman assemblage, suggesting that this feature can be quite tightly dated to around the latter half of the AD 4th century. The feature also contains the only central Gaulish samian vessel, an 18/31 or 31 dish, which, given the absence of other 2nd century pottery on the site, may be an heirloom survival rather than a residual sherd.

Table 4: Quantification of later Roman fabrics

Ware type	Count	Weight (g)	% Count	% Weight
Alice Holt/Farnham wares	189	2162	33.2	42.6
Black-burnished ware 1	99	618	17.4	12.2
Black burnished style wares	14	70	2.5	1.4
Unsourced colour-coated ware	9	20	1.6	0.4
Unsourced reduced fine wares	34	216	6	4.3
Grog-tempered ware	8	291	1.4	5.7
Much Hadham ware	3	50	0.5	1
Nene Valley Colour-coated ware	1	14	0.2	0.3
Unsourced oxidised coarse ware	18	113	3.2	2.2
Unsourced oxidised fine ware	4	8	0.7	0.2
Oxfordshire red-slipped ware	16	264	2.8	5.2
Portchester D ware	6	42	1.1	0.8
Central Gaulish samian ware	5	40	0.9	0.8
Unsourced reduced coarse wares	163	1162	28.6	22.9

Although the number of diagnostic feature sherds from this phase is small, jars continue to dominate, making up around three-quarters of forms in context [375] and over 90 % in this phase as a whole. These are mainly accounted for by necked forms in the repertoire of the Alice Holt industry (e.g. Figure 5, P26) and black-burnished ware everted rim forms (e.g. Figure 5, P27). The bulk of non-jar forms are made up by plain rim dishes (e.g. Figure 5, P28) and bead-and-flange bowls (not illustrated)

in the black-burnished tradition. Partial examples of red-slipped samian style bowls and mortaria from Oxfordshire and Hadham were also occasionally noted in the later Roman material outside of pit [374].

Figure 4: Illustrated pottery

Figure 5: Illustrated pottery

Illustrated pottery catalogue (Figures 4 & 5)

P1 Handmade shouldered jar with upright rim; fabric FLIN; context [40]

P2 Handmade shouldered jar with upright rim; fabric SANDF; context [106]

P3 Handmade, plain, slightly open profile vessel, possibly related to saucepan forms, although not particularly finely finished; fabric GLAUC; context [108]

P4 Handmade plain, slightly open profile vessel, possibly related to saucepan forms, although not particularly finely finished; fabric SANDF4; context [123]

P5 Coarse flint-tempered storage jar with simple short necked/everted rim; fabric FLIN1; context [539]

P6 Coarse flint-tempered storage jar with simple short necked/everted rim; fabric FLIN1; context [539]

P7 Large plain rim jar with internal thickening cf Thompson (1982) C3; fabric FLIN1; context [539]

P8 Smaller Thompson (1982) C3 jar; fabric FLIN1; context [539]

P9 Bead rim jar, comparable to Thompson (1982) C1; fabric FLIN1; context [539]

P10 Jar with short everted rim cf Thompson C2; fabric FLIN1; context [539]

P11 Jar with short everted rim and pronounced internal thickening; fabric FLIN1; context [539]

P12 Alice Holt bead rim jar cf Lyne & Jefferies (1979) class 4; fabric AHSU; context [539]

P13 Large necked jar; fabric GROGS5; context [539]

P14 Large necked jar; fabric GROGS5; context [539]

P15 Necked jar; fabric SAND; context [539]

P16 Necked jar; fabric SAND; context [539]

P17 Alice Holt necked jar cf Lyne & Jefferies (1979) class 1.18; fabric AHSU; context [539]

P18 Necked jar with carinated shoulder possible Alice Holt product cf Lyne & Jefferies (1979) 1.20-1.23; fabric SAND; context [539]

P19 Jar with very tall corrugated neck, possibly influenced by girth beaker forms; fabric AHSU; context [539]

P20 Jar/beaker possibly derived from butt-beaker forms cf Lyne & Jefferies 1979 3B.6; fabric AHSU; context [539]

P21 Aylesford-Swarling style platter, possible Alice Holt product; fabric SAND; context [539]

P22 Aylesford-Swarling style platter; fabric GROG4; context [539]

P23 Straight-sided cup with hemispherical lower body and slight footring, possibly loosely imitating Terra Rubra forms; fabric GROG4; context [539]

P24 Surrey bowl; fabric; fabric AHSU; context [539]

P25 Fine beaker or jar; fabric FINE; context [375]

P26 Necked jar; fabric SAND; unstratified

P27 Everted rim jar; fabric BB1; context [375]

P28 Plain rim dish; fabric BB1; context [375]

The Post-Roman Pottery by Lucy Whittingham

Introduction

The excavations recovered 331 post-Roman sherds, weighing 5,417g, from 27 stratified and 23 unstratified contexts. Although medieval material (Period 5) dominates the assemblage, 89 sherds (1,984g) are of the post-medieval period (Period 6) though, of these, only seven predate the mid 18th century. The vast majority of the post-medieval assemblage consists of later 18th- to early 20th- century industrial wares retrieved from the topsoil. Although some of the earlier post-medieval pottery is from features most/all may be intrusive. The post-medieval assemblage, probably derived from manuring, is not considered further here.

Although the stratified assemblage is dominated by medieval material, the sherds are usually small and abraded with signs of being adversely affected by acidic ground conditions. It is likely that most of the material has been subjected to some reworking: not unexpected considering the majority of

the assemblage was recovered from ditches. Residuality is present but is difficult to gauge in many contexts due to most producing only one or two sherds. By far the largest two groups are from the western terminus of the northernmost ditch of Field System 3, with 74 sherds and one of the sections through (actually excavated during the evaluation in Trench T10) with 49 sherds; both probably date to the second half of the 14th century.

Methodology

Medieval pottery assemblages in Reading have been identified previously with reference to three overlapping fabric type series, the Wessex Archaeology type series, Mellor's type series for Oxfordshire (Mellor 1994) and a system based on fabric inclusions (Underwood 1997). Fortunately all three cross reference to each other and are referred to here when needed.

The assemblage

The earliest medieval pottery consists of chalk and chalk-and-flint tempered coarse-wares of East Wiltshire type, probably dating to the 12th to early 13th centuries. Such wares have been identified previously at Reading (Underwood 1997), Newbury and Oxford (OXAQ, Mellor 1994). These account for 12 sherds (193g) but are usually residual in later deposits. The largest group of these early wares is from ditch [355] which produced six sherds from an 11th- to 12th- century chalk tempered cooking pot, although sherds from other fills of this feature were substantially later. The presence of these sherds certainly suggests the onset of medieval activity by the 12th century.

Some 59 sherds are of locally produced oxidized/reduced medium/coarse sand tempered wares. Unfortunately the absence of feature sherds prevents close dating but they are typical of the sandy ware tradition of the region, common from the mid/late 12th to mid 14th centuries. A number of sherds of Kingston type ware from rounded jugs were also recovered which may represent regional imports filling a gap in the local market for well-made glazed jugs during this period. The degree of residuality of the

local sandy sherds is unfortunately uncertain but it is likely that they represent a continuation of agricultural activity throughout the 13th and earlier 14th centuries.

The majority of medieval pottery is in coarse Surrey/Hampshire border ware. This ware is later than the Kingston material and its presence in larger groups may indicate a period when the ditches were falling out of use and being used deliberately for refuse disposal. The coarse border ware assemblage tends to be less abraded than the earlier material and includes diagnostic sherds: there are at least eight cooking pots with a distinctive flat-topped rim indicative of a date after 1340 (Pearce and Vince 1988, fig 114, 467–471). There are no bifid rim cooking pots which would be indicative of a date from AD 1380 to 1500, so their absence suggests that there was no significant activity beyond the late 14th century. Other forms in coarse border ware include rounded and baluster jugs; thumbed base sherds were recorded in the latter fabric and a possible large cistern/bung-hole jar was represented by a large grooved strap handle. One sherd of Early German stoneware is an unusual continental import.

By comparison with other excavated assemblages at Reading waterfront (Underwood 1997) the medieval assemblage is typical of this area. Within the assemblage, the range of fabrics represented by coarse and fine wares and East Wiltshire type ware can be considered to have been produced relatively 'locally'. These are wares which were produced in Berkshire or possibly in the neighbouring counties of Oxfordshire and Wiltshire and which are frequently associated with towns along the Thames valley, such as Wallingford, Newbury and to a lesser extent, Oxford. Regional imports from further afield, are well represented in Kingston-type ware and more frequently in coarse Surrey/Hampshire border ware but the assemblage as a whole would not be out of place in a low-status agricultural setting spanning the mid 12th to late 14th centuries.

The Ceramic Building Materials by Susan Pringle

Introduction

A total of 335 items of stratified building material, weighing 28.15 kg was recorded from Roman and medieval deposits. A summary quantification by material and chronological period is set out in Table

5. Of the 33 contexts with ceramic building materials, only two, [432] and [433], the fills of pond [431], contained large amounts; the remainder each contained from one to sixteen fragments.

Table 5: Quantification of the building materials by material, weight and count

Material	Count	Count as % of total	Weight (kg)	Weight as % of total
Medieval ceramic building materials	280	83.6%	19.6	69.6%
Roman ceramic building materials	39	11.6%	7.51	26.7%
Undated tile	11	3.3%	0.85	03.0%
Undated clay and daub	5	1.5%	0.19	0.7%
Total	335	100%	28.15	100%

Methodology

All the ceramic building material was recorded on a standard form based on that of the Museum of London. Tile was recorded by fabric, form, weight and fragment count. Where the form was not identifiable, fired ceramics were recorded as 'tile'. Roman and medieval fabric type series were devised; fabric descriptions were done with the aid of a x10 binocular microscope. Medieval fabrics were compared with those associated with the medieval tile kiln at Jubilee Square, Reading. Where applicable, fabrics were cross-referenced to the Museum of London (MoL) type series for tile fabrics. Samples of the fabrics were retained in the archive. Information on the recording sheets was entered onto an Excel database.

The fabrics of the stratified material were examined and a site-specific type series established. In the fabric descriptions the following conventions are used: the frequency of inclusions is described as being sparse, moderate, common or abundant; the size categories for inclusions are fine (up to 0.25

mm), medium (between 0.25 and 0.5 mm), coarse (between 0.5 and 1 mm), and very coarse (greater than 1 mm). The terminology used for Roman form categories is that suggested by Brodribb (1987).

Roman fabrics and forms

Several different Roman fabrics were present, although two groups were predominant; a powdery orange red fabric (FINE), and a group of orange coloured fabrics with prominent inclusions of quartz and siltstone (SSIL, SSIO). Within these groups, four fabrics were identified; a fifth had a fine-textured orange clay matrix with cream silty marbling and lacked quartz inclusions (SILT).

FINE Orange red matrix (Munsell 2.5YR 5/8, red), powdery texture; very fine quartz in matrix with few inclusions other than moderate fine white mica, sparse medium to coarse quartz and poorly sorted red iron (24 fragments);

SAND Orange red fabric; very fine background quartz with sparse to moderate inclusions of medium to coarse quartz, silt and/or iron-rich material (4 fragments);

SILT Orange fabric with prominent cream silty streaks; lacks quartz (1 fragment);

SSIL Light brownish orange matrix (Munsell 5YR6/6, reddish yellow) with occasional cream silty clay marbling in some examples; common fine to medium quartz and sparse flint with moderate inclusions of poorly sorted cream and red clay pellets, < c.10mm; medium to fine moulding sand (3 fragments);

SSIO Orange fabric; similar to SSIL with burnt organics and organic voids (1 fragment).

The source kilns of these fabrics are not known, although it is likely that tiles in the FINE fabric would have come from kilns utilising the London Clay which underlies the site, and that the silty fabrics

were made from clays with a higher calcareous content, deriving from the Chalk geology which lies to the north-west of Reading, to the west, and to the south of the site towards Basingstoke.

Table 6: Identifiable Roman tile forms by count and weight

Form	Count	Count as % of total	Weight grams	Weight as % of total
Brick	25	75.8%	573.3	81.6%
Mud brick	3	9.1%	19.5	2.8%
Tegula	5	15.2%	1,10.0	15.7%
Totals	33	100.1%	702.8	100.1%

Brick

Bricks were recorded in FINE, SAND, SILT and SSIL fabric groups. Of the 25 securely identified Roman bricks, 20 were in the FINE fabric, including all the bricks from features of early Roman date. There were no complete bricks, and fragments ranged from 29mm to 64mm thick, with a median of 35mm. Two bricks in context [433] were reduced with vitrified sand on the edges and one was heat-cracked; these came from the fill of pond [431] and may have been re-used in a post-Roman kiln structure.

Mud brick

Three abraded fragments of dried mud brick were recorded from one of the pits inside the enclosure one of the fragments was 60mm thick. The fabric was orange and sandy with poorly-sorted quartz up to 2mm in size, flint and sparse shell inclusions.

Roofing tile

No complete roof tiles were present but fragmentary *tegulae* in silty fabrics (Fabric SSIL and related SSIO) came from two early Roman period contexts. No imbrices were identified. The deposit in context

[539], fill of enclosure ditch [538], is of interest as only *tegula* flanges are present, suggesting that the tile may have been worked on site, possibly for re-use, in the Roman period. A tegula from context [505], fill of Roman pit [504] within the enclosure, is also likely to have been re-used, probably in a hearth, as it was sooted on the upper surface and severely heat-cracked.

Flue tile

No flue tiles were positively identified from Roman contexts although a flat tile 28mm thick with combed parallel keying on the upper face and sooting on the sanded face (fabric SAND) may be an unusually thick box flue (residual inditch fill from medieval Field System 3). A thinner tile fragment with identical keying was unstratified. Both were very abraded.

Discussion of the Roman assemblage

The Roman assemblage consists almost entirely of bricks, with small amounts of tegulae and perhaps box flue. Although ceramic building materials first occur on the site in the early Roman period - bricks, tegulae and mud bricks are present in features with pottery dates of AD 50-70/75 — there is nothing to indicate primary deposition; the predominance of bricks and other flat tiles and the degree of abrasion suggests that they were brought to the site for re-use from the mid-1st century AD on.

Medieval fabrics and forms

Fabric 1: Fine sandy/silty fabric. Orange, often with lighter surfaces; matrix has fine background quartz and mica but is poorly mixed with bands of light orange clay and lumps of darker red, iron-rich clay; inclusions are of poorly sorted quartz up to very coarse, and iron-rich sandstone. Moulding sand is poorly sorted (medium to very coarse) with moderate flint flakes (200 fragments).

Fabric 2: Fine sandy fabric. Orange matrix, sometimes with yellow streaks, with abundant very fine to fine sand. Sparse inclusions of calcium carbonate. Coarse moulding sand (57 fragments).

Fabric 3: Coarse sandy/silty fabric. Poorly mixed orange clays with lighter silty streaks and lumps; matrix contains fine background quartz and common inclusions of coarse quartz (6 fragments).

Fabric 4: Clean fabric with medium sand. Orange-red matrix with silt-sized background quartz and medium quartz (amounts vary from moderate to abundant, sometimes poorly mixed). Moulding sand medium and relatively well sorted (13 fragments).

All the fabrics were, in many respects, similar, the main differences being the size and quantity of the quartz component. This suggests that they may have come from different kiln sites which utilised clays with similar geological characteristics. Fabric 1 is the most abundant in all medieval features, and accounts for approximately 70% of the medieval assemblage by weight. Fabric 2 makes up approximately 15% of the assemblage and Fabrics 3 and 4 are present in smaller quantities. The source kilns of Fabrics 2 and 4 are not known, but Fabrics 1 and 3 are identical to Fabrics 2 and 3 from the tile kiln recently excavated at Jubilee Square, Reading (Betts 2001).

The medieval tile assemblage consists entirely of roofing tile. The abraded condition of some tiles is a hindrance to identification but almost all is peg tile; the quantification is set out in Table 7.

Table 7: Securely identified medieval tile forms by count and weight

Form	Count	Count as % of total	Weight grams	Weight as % of total
Peg tile	272	97.8	18,850	96.2
Ridge tile	5	1.8	489	2.5

Hip tile	1	0.4	254	1.3
Total	278	100	19,593	100

Peg tile

The majority of the peg tiles, also known as plain tiles, are in Fabric 1. No complete tiles are present, but dimensions of 178mm wide and 13mm thick and 180mm wide were noted in two tiles in Fabric 1; where nail-holes survive they are circular. One tile from pond [431] has what appears to be part of a shoulder on a vertical edge, but it is insufficient evidence for the presence of shouldered peg tiles. Peg tiles in Fabric 2 also have round nail-holes and are 13 mm to 15 mm thick. A tile in Fabric 3, 160mm wide and 15mm thick, has two blind round nail-holes placed asymmetrically. No glaze was noted on any of the peg tiles. The only oddity was a peg tile in Fabric 1 with one edge apparently trimmed to a curve (diameter c.320mm) which was noted in the fill of medieval ditch [278]. The same context contained a Roman brick which may have been similarly shaped.

Ridge tile

All the identifiable ridge tile was in Fabric 1 and was recovered from the fill of pond [431]; the single example in Fabric 2 may be residual Roman *imbrex*. Two of the ridge tile fragments in Fabric 1 were partially covered with a thin yellowish-green glaze.

Hip tile

One hip tile was present in Fabric 4, in the fill of pond [431]. Only the curved lower edge survived; it was unglazed.

Discussion of medieval assemblage

Although sufficient peg tile was present to demonstrate occupation of the site in the 14th to 15th century there is little evidence of primary deposition, with the possible exception of the fills of pond [431]. The tile fabrics are probably all local, with the majority probably originating from the Jubilee Square tile

kiln in Reading. Archaeomagnetic dates of AD 1365–1400 have been obtained for the last firing of the Jubilee Square kiln and associated pottery dates are within the range 1250–1500 (Les Capon pers comm), which suggests that the bulk of the medieval tile on the site can, with reasonable confidence, be dated to the period from the second half of the 13th century to the later 14th century.

The Roman bricks found in medieval contexts could be residual or could be due to the continuing re-use of Roman building materials in the early medieval period, when very little contemporary brick was in circulation. There is, for example, evidence of extensive but poorly dated robbing of Roman structures at Silchester, which lies approximately seven kilometres to the south west of the site (Fulford and Timby 2000, 78–80, 580–1).

The Fired Clay by Elke Raemen

Introduction

The excavations produced 126 fragments (weighing 8744g) from 27 individually numbered contexts, including the topsoil. The vast majority of pieces (103) was recovered from contexts attributed to Period 3, followed by 11 fragments from Period 4. Undated and medieval fragments are few and featureless and have therefore not been considered further. However, all pieces are recorded in full detail for archive.

Fabrics

A total of eight different fabrics was recorded. Variations are overall minor and may often represent natural inclusions rather than intended temper. Some pieces are, however, noticeably more sandy (i.e. Fabric 4). Clay sources are likely to have been local. An overview of the fabrics and forms occurring in Period 3 has been given in Table 8. All pieces from Period 4 are in Fabric 1. The fabrics are as follows:

Fabric 1: Sparse fine sand-tempered with occasional quartz inclusions to 1mm and occasional crushed flint temper to 3mm.

Fabric 2A: sparse fine sand-tempered with occasional iron oxide inclusions.

Fabric 2B: Sparse fine sand-tempered with rare iron oxide inclusions to 2mm and rare crushed flint to 4mm.

Fabric 3A: Sparse fine sand-tempered with rare crushed flint to 3mm.

Fabric 3B: Sparse fine sand-tempered with occasional iron oxides to 2mm and occasional to moderate organic temper, some with rare crushed flint to 4mm.

Fabric 4A: Sparse medium sand-tempered with occasional quartz inclusions to 2mm and occasional crushed flint temper to 9mm. Rare flint pebbles to 15mm, some with occasional iron oxide inclusions to 3mm.

Fabric 4B: Moderate medium sand-tempered with occasional quartz inclusions to 1mm, some with rare flint pebbles/crushed flint to 16mm.

Fabric 4C: Moderate fine to medium sand-tempered with rare crushed flint/pebbles to 11mm and rare to occasional organic temper.

Table 8: Overview of the forms by fabric in Period 3.

	Form									
Fabric	Amorphous	Corner frag	Kiln brick/slab	Kiln daub	One flat surface	Kiln bar	Parallel flat surfaces	Rounded surface	Triangular block	Fabric Total
1	27	2		1	7			1	4	42

2A	5	1			2					8
3A		1	1						12	14
3B	1				1				1	3
4A	1	1			1			1	3	7
4B	2	1	1						3	7
4C	7				6	8	1			22
Form Total	43	6	2	1	17	8	1	2	23	103

Overview of the Assemblage

Kiln furniture

A total of 104 fragments have been attributed to Period 3. Of interest is the kiln furniture, recovered from the fills of pits [37], [504] and [547] (all pits within the enclosure) Included are eight rectangular-sectioned (36mm by 42mm to 43mm by 48mm) kiln bars from pit [547]. One shows a tapering end (Figure 6, 4), whereas others have a flat end (Figure 6, 5). All are heavily reduced. No complete example survives. The same context also contains a piece of thick daub with surface and wattle imprint (diameter 18mm), which is likely to have formed part of the kiln floor. In addition, [37] and [504] each contained a thick slab or brick, a form probably also related to kiln furniture. Dimensions vary with the smaller example measuring 110mm by 90mm by 29mm thick (Figure 6, 3) and the larger piece measuring 175mm by 86mm by 45mm high (Figure 6, 2).

Figure 6: Fired clay

Triangular blocks

A total of 23 fragments of triangular blocks with lateral perforations through the corners were recovered from the enclosure ditch. These are usually identified as loom-weights, although there are also strong arguments to identify the pieces as oven bricks (Poole 1995, 285–286). A minimum number of nine individual blocks are represented. Some of the remaining fragments exhibit a single surface or a corner

but some of the featureless fragments are also likely to form part of similar 'loom-weights'. No complete examples survive and the full width only survives on an example from fill [9] of ditch [8], measuring 89mm.

The pieces are too fragmentary to allow for in depth classification; however, where enough of the corner survives, all appear to be perforated, which suggests that these pieces would originally have been perforated on all three corners. Only one complete perforation survives (Figure 6, 1; ditch [4], fill [5]). Diameters vary between 11mm and 17mm. None of the piercings show any signs of thread wear.

Eleven fragments, representing one triangular weight, were recovered from the segment of the enclosure ditch encountered in Trench T37. Included is a corner fragment as well as a piece exhibiting a partial piercing (diameter 12mm); no thread wear is visible.

Discussion

Although none of the kiln furniture was recovered *in situ*, the occurrence of such fragments indicates the presence of a (pottery) kiln in the vicinity. The assemblage is small and no pottery wasters or kiln-like features were identified. However, at least two features which contained kiln furniture, appear on the eastern periphery of the site, suggesting the presence of a kiln some way beyond the site boundaries.

Kiln bars lacking the tapering feature appear most commonly in the Thames Estuary, which may be indicative of the preference in these areas for multiple pedestals rather than one central pedestal, which would have accommodated the cigar-shaped bar better. A single cigar-shaped bar was also recovered from this site, however. Where both forms appear on one site, one variety may have served as portable flue-roofing (Swan 1984, 64). Both tapering and non-tapering bars are considered early types.

The kiln 'bricks' are too small and thin in size to have functioned as bars or pedestals and their purpose remains obscure. The use of these bricks, often described as 'Belgic bricks', is also mentioned by Swan, who suggests a possible function as flooring plates (Swan 1984, 65). They could also have been utilised as spacers.

Evidence for another 1st-century pottery kiln was recovered at Thames Valley Park, Reading (Barnes et al. 1997, 67), where *in situ* evidence, in the form of a portable clay pedestal, was found. The

latter probably formed part of a 'slab-type' pedestal kiln, which is attributed to the Late Iron Age or immediately post-Conquest period. Pottery wasters, all of 1st century date, were recovered in association with the pedestal.

The majority of triangular weight fragments were recovered from the early Roman enclosure and adjacent features and none were recovered *in situ*. It should be noted that none exhibit any traces of wear, and this may be due to the distribution of pressure across the weight. Signs of wear were however, observed around perforations of weights on other sites, for example at. Ashford Prison, Middlesex, where the orientation of thread imprints suggested the use of two holes at the same time (Sudds 2006, 71). As this indicates suspension, it supports the theory the objects were used as loom-weights.

On the other hand, perforated clay weights often appear to be associated with oven or hearth debris, suggesting they may have been used as oven bricks or makeshift fire-bars (Poole 1984, 285; Brown 1984, 64). The evidence from Ashford Prison appears more tangible, and at the moment their identification as loom-weights is still the more accepted hypothesis. Triangular weights were also recovered at Thames Valley Park, Reading (Barnes 1997, 67–68) and Park Farm, Binfield (Roberts 1995a, 117), suggesting that they represent a common type of activity on local rural sites, whether it be weaving or the use hearths or ovens.

Catalogue of illustrated objects (Figure. 6)

1 Ditch [4] (fill [5]). Enclosure Ditch. Period 3. Fired clay triangular loom-weight. Incomplete. Fabric 3A

2 Pit [37] (fill [38]). Enclosure Ditch. Period 3. Fired clay brick/slab. Complete. Fabric 3A

3 Pit [504] (fill [505]); Inside Enclosure. Period 3. Fired clay brick/slab. Near complete. Fabric 4B

4 Ditch [547] (fill [548]); Inside enclosure. Period 3. Fired clay kiln bar. Incomplete. Tapering. Fabric 4C.

5 Ditch [547] (fill [548]); Inside enclosure. Period 3. Fired clay kiln bar. Incomplete. Fabric 4C.

The Geological Material by Luke Barber

Introduction

The site produced just 78 pieces of stone, weighing in excess of 17.2kg, from 13 individual contexts. The assemblage, which is mainly of Roman and medieval date, has been fully listed on pro forma sheets for the archive.

Stone from Roman contexts

The earliest material is dated to the early Roman period. This group is dominated by four fragments from Lower Greensand rotary querns (3,886g). These include one upper stone (46mm thick with a diameter in excess of 310mm from pit [504], two lower stones (from ditch [511], and the element of the enclosure ditch investigated in Trench T37), and an undiagnostic piece, again from ditch [511].

The lower stones are both approximately 300mm in diameter with outside edges 22 and 45mm thick, with maximum central thicknesses of 60 and 52mm respectively. The example from [518] appears to have been re-used after breakage: the underside showing a dished grinding area. Such re-use of broken stones is quite common on low-status rural sites (Barber forthcoming). Other stone of this period consists of various small, irregular pieces of local Tertiary sandstones, probably from the Bagshot Beds and a single unmodified piece (146g) of dark grey imported igneous rock.

A further Lower Greensand rotary quern fragment (550g) was recovered from the segment of the enclosure ditch encountered in Trench T39. This consists of an upper stone in excess of 300mm in diameter, measuring 50mm at its outside edge. A single Late Roman feature found in Area I, pit [383], produced only local Tertiary sandstones, though one example may have been utilised as a whetstone.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

The Charred Macrobotanical Remains by Lucy Allott

Introduction

A total of 63 bulk environmental samples were taken during excavations at the site. Abundance, diversity, state of preservation and preliminary identifications of organic remains were recorded (Gray 2005). The assessment revealed small to moderate assemblages of both charred and uncharred macrobotanicals and highlighted several samples with some potential for further identification of these remains.

This site is located on clay soils and was very wet at the time of excavation, however, as none of the deposits were considered waterlogged any uncharred remains must be considered to be of modern origin. This analysis therefore focuses upon samples rich and moderately rich in charred macro plant remains only and confirming, refining and quantifying these identifications.

Methodology

Samples were processed in a flotation tank and the residues and flots were retained on 500µm and 250µm meshes respectively. Prior to assessment the residues were air dried and scanned for archaeological and environmental remains. Charred macrobotanical remains were analysed from 15 samples ranging in size from six to 24 litres. Flots selected for analysis were passed through 4mm, 2mm, 1mm, 500 and 250µm sieves prior to sorting under a stereozoom microscope at x7–45 magnifications. Identifications have been made with reference to comparative material held at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London and in identification atlases (Anderberg 1994; Berggren 1969; 1981; Cappers et al. 2006; Jacomet 2006; NIAB 2004). The nomenclature used follows Stace (1997).

Results

Area I: Middle Iron Age (Field System 1)

Two samples from ditches within Field System 1, Area I produced small macrobotanical assemblages, including some possible bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*). Due to the scarcity of remains no further information regarding activities associated with this period of land use can be determined from these samples.

Area II: Early Roman (Enclosure Ditch and Internal Ditch)

Samples from the enclosure ditches and an internal ditch within Area II produced very limited assemblages of macrobotanical remains. Cereal grains were rare and generally considered indeterminate, although several spelt (*Triticum spelta*) glume bases were present in the fill of internal ditch [511]. Seeds of mustard/cabbage/charlock (*Brassica/Sinapsis* sp.) were the most commonly occurring charred plant remains within these features and in the fill of enclosure ditch [513] in particular.

Area II: Early Roman pits

In addition to indeterminate cereal grains and fragments, spelt and emmer glume wheats (*Triticum spelta/dicoccum*) were represented by grains, glume bases and spikelet forks in samples from pit features [500], [504], [562] and [534]. Occasional bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) caryopses were also recorded in these pits. Oats (*Avena* sp.) that may be wild or cultivated as well as chess (*Bromus* sp.) were present in several features and the fill [563], of pit [562] contains several awns that may be from oat (*Avena* sp.). None of the individual taxa were abundant and it is notable that, on the whole, wheat cereal grains and other primary crops were poorly represented. These pits also contain small assemblages of arable weed seeds from mustard/ cabbage/ charlock (*Brassica*/ *Sinapsis* sp.), plantains (*Plantago* sp.) including ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), blinks (*Montia* cf. *fontana*) and knotgrass/ dock/ bindweed (*Polygonum/ Rumex/ Fallopia* sp.).

Area I: Late Roman (scattered features in Area I)

A series of scattered features within Area I dated to the late Roman period produced variable assemblages of macrobotanical remains. Charred macrobotancials and wood charcoal were scarce in

samples from pit [374], post hole [361] and gully [419]. In contrast sample <1044> from the middle fill [344] of pit feature [342] produced the richest assemblage from this site with more than 102 fpl (fragments per litre).

The assemblage was predominantly composed of indeterminate cereal grains although glume wheats of both spelt and emmer are also indicated by the presence of grains and glume bases. Cereal bran, which consists of broken down and amalgamated cereal grains and other indeterminate charred matter, is moderately frequent in this deposit. Oats (*Avena* sp.), chess (*Bromus* sp.) and other grass weeds were relatively common and although quite a broad range of other weed taxa are also evident, these seeds are not abundant. Arable weeds and plants that grow on disturbed ground such as knotgrass/ dock/ bindweed (*Polygonum/ Rumex/ Fallopia* sp.), fat hen (*Chenopodium* sp.), stinking chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*), nipplewort (*Lappsana communis*), violet (*Violet* sp.) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) were identified. Sedges (*Carex* sp.) provide limited evidence for damp ground.

By contrast the lower fill, [343], of this pit feature produced a far sparser assemblage with only occasional cereal grains, chaff and weeds, including oxtongue (*Picris* sp.) and knotgrass/ dock/ bindweed (*Polygonum/ Rumex/ Fallopia* sp). Both weeds grow on disturbed or cultivated land and oxtongue are common on calcareous soils. A third sample from the upper fill contained insufficient charred plant remains to merit further analysis. The distribution of charred remains in these samples reflects the on-site observation that the secondary deposit in the pit was blackened and rich in charred material.

Discussion

Archaeobotanical assemblages from both early and late Roman occupation deposits at the site contain similar assemblages of crop taxa, consisting predominantly of wheat although some barley, beans and peas were also recorded. Arable weed taxa were present in the majority of samples while chaff, particularly from glume wheat was predominantly confined to the pit features. Charred botanical remains were infrequent in the ditch and gully features so any possible interpretations are therefore skewed towards activities utilising pits.

These samples provide limited evidence for bread wheat cultivation, a crop that became increasingly favoured during the Roman occupation of Britain and for barley as well as non-cereal crops. Glume wheats appear most prominent and the data suggest both spelt and emmer were grown throughout the Roman land use. The majority of samples with moderate to rich assemblages were from pit features located within a series of ditches forming an enclosure. This area of the site is also located on relatively high ground and it is possible that the features represent grain storage pits although the deposits are not particularly rich in the actual grain crop. They do, however, contain arable weed taxa and chaff that are by-products of crop processing and are often found within such features.

It is possible that the pits were cleaned or sterilised by charring any remnants of grain or other remains within the storage pits prior to reuse. Chaff may have been used as fuel, in addition to charcoal, for this purpose, or it may already have been incorporated within the deposits with the grain and weeds. There is also significant archaeological evidence for grain, seeds and other plant remains being deliberately deposited within storage pits (Hill 1995) and it is possible that crop seeds in these pits were also deliberately included during infilling; however this cannot be conclusively determined from these archaeobotanical assemblages.

Since processing peas and beans does not heavily rely on fire and their chances of survival archaeologically are therefore reduced, it is not unexpected that these plants are less abundant in the archaeological deposits. This is perhaps even more easily explained, given that the richest deposits are from possible grain storage pits. Rather than indicating that these crops were unimportant agriculturally at this time, the pattern observed may therefore be related to the methods by which they were processed and stored as well as being influenced by post-depositional factors.

Pit [342] (Area I), sample <1044> is anomalous as it was comparatively rich in macrobotanical remains. Taxa present are very similar to those recovered from the pits within the enclosure, and this pit feature may also have been used for grain storage. The most significant difference in this deposit is the prominence of cereal grains, albeit indeterminate fragments and bran. The secondary pit fill layer, which is rich in charred remains, may represent an outer crust that forms around the grain crop during storage. Although no germinated grain was recorded, much of the grain was very poorly preserved, which may have resulted from the cereal breaking down and decomposing prior to becoming charred.

Although this layer was located above the base of the pit feature it may represent the original base of the pit and the underlying deposit [343] could consist of loose natural ground into which the charred remains have percolated over time, giving it the appearance of an archaeological deposit. Unfortunately it is not apparent whether the remains were charred *in situ* and they may equally derive from redeposited material cleaned from another storage pit.

Sampling has highlighted evidence for differential preservation between the different types of features at Spencers Wood. While the ditches produced very small assemblages, most of the large pit features sampled contain remains of grain and associated crop processing waste and in particular this waste appears to be directly associated with grain storage. These macrobotanical assemblages provide no clear suggestions of changes in the agricultural regime through time although it should be acknowledged that this is likely to be biased by the nature of the features and the activities represented.

Charcoal by Lucy Allott

Introduction

Environmental samples yielding charcoal were taken from Late Iron Age, Romano British and medieval contexts. The analysis aimed to give an indication of the range of wood present in the documented features and to assess the significance of the taxa present.

Charcoal fragments >4mm were removed from the flots and residues. These have been counted to give an indication of the varying quantities of charcoal recovered from the features. Where possible, three fragments from each context were fractured and viewed using a reflected light microscope at magnifications of x50–400. Some of the contexts did not contain 3 fragments and in these cases all charcoal was analysed. Identifications were made using charcoal identification texts (Hather 2000; Schweingruber 1990; Schoch et al. 2004) and reference material held at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. Identifications have been made to species, genus or family, where possible. Some taxa, such as apple and pear, are anatomically very similar and have been grouped.

Results

Charcoal from Spencer's Wood varied in size and preservation. Some of the contexts contained large quantities of charcoal, however, once sectioned it became apparent that the internal structures were damaged or obscured by sediment. The charcoal also tended to be fairly soft and did not fracture cleanly. Several identifications have been made, however, the list of taxa and interpretations are limited.

Taxa identified include: Quercus sp. (Oak) Castanea sativa Sweet chestnut Maloideae group (Malus - apple, Pyrus - pear, Sorbus - whitebeams and Crategus – hawthorns) Betula sp. (Birch)

Sample <1034>, fill [259] of ditch [258] contained Quercus sp. (oak) and Castanea sativa (sweet chestnut. This sample was taken from a medieval ditch terminal containing medieval and small quantities of Roman pottery.

Samples <1050> and <1074>, contexts [362] (fill of ditch [361]) and [539] (fill of ditch [538]) respectively, contained oak and taxa from the Maloideae group. This grouping includes several taxa, such as pear, apple, hawthorn and whitebeam that are anatomically very similar and are therefore difficult to distinguish using their anatomical features alone. Context [362], a Roman post-hole, was extremely charcoal rich but much of this charcoal was poorly preserved.

Sample <1031>, context [249] (fill of posthole [248]) and <1032>, fill [251] of posthole [250], both contained Oak sp. These samples were taken from two fills with Roman pottery. Other taxa may be present in the charcoal from these features however poor preservation precluded identification.

Sample <1065>, context [507] (fill of posthole [506]) contained sweet chestnut and birch charcoal. This post-hole feature located outside of the Roman enclosure area did not yield datable material such as pottery and has not been carbon dated. The date of this feature is therefore uncertain. From the identification of Castanea sativa (sweet chestnut), which was introduced to northern Europe in the Roman period, it can be suggested that this feature does not predate the Roman occupation at the site.

Discussion

Due to poor preservation, identifications were only given for specimens from six of the contexts that yielded larger quantities of charcoal. This was achieved by selecting the best preserved specimens.

Charcoal fragments from all other contexts were fractured and viewed but the sections were not clear enough to provide identifications. The majority of this charcoal contained fine silt that obscured and damaged the anatomical features used for identification. The introduction of silt may be caused by fluctuations in ground water level or the site repeatedly being inundated with water from another source. The site contains a series of drainage channels (S. Stevens pers. comm.) which may have periodically filled, saturating the surrounding sediments and features.

The identified taxa are typical of the natural vegetation in the region. The identification of sweet chestnut is interesting because this species was introduced in the Roman period. The site contains an earlier as well as later Roman occupation and could have provided a good opportunity to investigate the appearance and use of sweet chestnut. It is therefore unfortunate that the poor charcoal preservation prevents its occurrence at the site from being explored further.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The archaeological investigation of the site allowed the examination and preservation by record of a variety of archaeological remains, ranging in date from prehistory to the late post-medieval period. Arguably the most significant area of the site was the somewhat enigmatic early Romano-British enclosure, and it was certainly the part which produced the richest evidence of material culture

The Middle Iron Age field system (FS1)

Although the evidence for the Middle Iron Age field system was somewhat patchy, the network of shallow ditches and gullies was indicative of activity, and/or partition of the land. Studies have highlighted the complexities of the process of dividing the land and the various socio-economic and

other reasons behind it (Yates 2007). Unfortunately the nature of the remains dating from this phase did not allow in depth analysis of farming methods in use at that time.

The possible evidence of structured deposition of partially-complete pottery vessels in ditches is of interest. There is clear evidence of this 'intentional' deposition of material culture across Europe from as early as the Neolithic (Chapman 2000) and this tradition certainly continued into the Iron Age in Southern Britain (e.g. Hill 1995; Hamilton and Gregory 2000). Research on specifically Middle Iron Age pit deposits has suggested that there is evidence of structured deposition of artefacts at sites of varying character (Hamilton 1998).

The early Roman enclosure (ENC1)

Domestic and agricultural evidence

Given that only around a quarter of the enclosure at the current site was investigated it proved difficult to draw firm conclusions as to its function, although much of the evidence was agricultural or domestic in nature. The occurrence of large quantities of domestic waste in the enclosure ditches hints at the presence of a fairly substantial domestic settlement either within or very close to the enclosure, despite the lack of evidence for structures. Pottery was generally less abundant in the internal features of the enclosure, although this perhaps only suggests that it was discarded in different locations from where it was used.

There was very good evidence, from both the quernstone and macrobotanical assemblages for cereal cultivation and for crop processing on site, especially of spelt and emmer wheat. The enclosure's internal pits were fairly confidently interpreted as being initially designed for grain storage.

Craft and industry

The tantalising evidence for the presence of a pottery kiln, provided by a number of pieces of kiln furniture, might suggest the location of a production site broadly contemporary to that discovered at Thames Valley Park, Reading (Barnes et al 1997, 67). The fact that this evidence was concentrated in

the internal pit group, could suggest that a kiln lies within the unexcavated portion of the enclosure. However the complete absence of recognised wasters in the pottery assemblage remains problematic and it must be acknowledged that the kiln bars could derive from a different process, which also left no archaeological trace.

The occurrence of a number of clay objects related to weaving is also of particular note, and although these were all deposited in ditches, they suggest that this craft activity was taking place nearby.

Other comparable enclosure sites

Clearly the 'Warrens Croft' enclosure dovetails into a known pattern of Romano-British ditched enclosed sites, both in Berkshire and further afield. Indeed, another early Romano-British enclosure was found immediately to the east at the Beech Hill Road site (Massey and Jones 2020) suggesting this highpoint in the landscape was an attractive location for settlement at the time.

The enclosure investigated at the Thames Valley Park (Barnes et al. 1997) shows evidence of early Romano-British activity within an enclosure dating from the Iron Age. Unfortunately, it did not prove possible to investigate the surrounding field systems noted from aerial photographs at that site (*op. cit* 115). The current excavation did have the opportunity to do this and arguably the results do give some credence to the idea of a continuity of land-use from the Late Iron Age into the early Romano-British period, based on enclosed farmstead and associated ditched fields, with a change to more industrial activities late in the Romano-British period (ibid.).

A broadly similar layout of contemporary enclosures and associated fields was seen at another Berkshire site, at Binfield near Bracknell (Roberts 1995b, 93–124). There was clear evidence of round houses within an enclosure at that site, and although there were problems with dating, early Romano-British occupation was confirmed by the pottery assemblage. The main enclosure also appeared to be subdivided as at the present site (ibid.)

Further afield, archaeological investigations at Horticultural Research International, Littlehampton, West Sussex revealed the remains of a subdivided early Romano-British enclosure, with surviving kilns, and kiln waste deposits (Lovell 2002). Evidence of crop processing (associated with a

'working hollow') was also present and the excavator suggested that the enclosure might also have been used as a stock enclosure during another phase (ibid. 38).

The relationship with the civitas capital at Silchester

Research has suggested the existence of a *'Silchester Late and Latest Iron Age Community'* which occupied an area of 25–30kms in diameter centred on the settlement (Hutt et al. 2009, 65). There was clear continuity into the early Romano-British period, both at Silchester and in the surrounding landscape, and the distribution of early Romano-British pottery in the region suggests that the hinterland at that time was of similar size (Fulford and Timby 2000, 309). Clearly then, the current site fell well within Silchester's sphere of influence, but in terms of material culture, rural sites like Spencers Wood did not appear to have the same access to (or preference for) Roman goods. This is clearly demonstrated by the very small proportions fine and table wares, particularly drinking vessels, in the pottery assemblage.

The abandonment of the enclosure

The dating of the pottery suggests that most of the features went out of use at a broadly similar time, probably within 30 to 40 years of the Roman Conquest. It is notable that both earlier and later activity was focused away from the area of the enclosure, despite its prominent position on high ground with commanding views of the local landscape. The propensity of this area to flood (as it did during the evaluation and excavation phases, even after light rain), was arguably an influential factor. Although the system of ditches forming the enclosure and sub-dividing it may have proved adequate at times, its abandonment could be attributed to the eventual recognition that the enclosure site had simply become unsuitable for habitation.

Later Roman exploitation

In the later Roman period, the north-eastern part of the site began to be utilised, albeit in a much less intensive way than in Period 3. The focus had clearly moved away from the enclosure, and there was no evidence of sustained occupation at the site during the intervening time. The site seems to have been an entirely open area in this period and was characterised by widely-spaced discrete features which yielded little evidence as to their function. However, one pit produced a substantial pottery assemblage and another, good environmental evidence for grain processing and storage, suggesting that a more substantial domestic and/or agricultural site may lie to the north or east of the limits of excavation in Area I.

The Medieval field system

After another hiatus, medieval agricultural activity was again focused in Area I. The scant evidence of medieval buildings and the generally low levels of material culture suggest agricultural activity rather than permanent domestic habitation.

Post-medieval activity

The post-medieval buildings know to have existed at the site from cartographic sources had left only subtle traces, and only a limited range of material culture.

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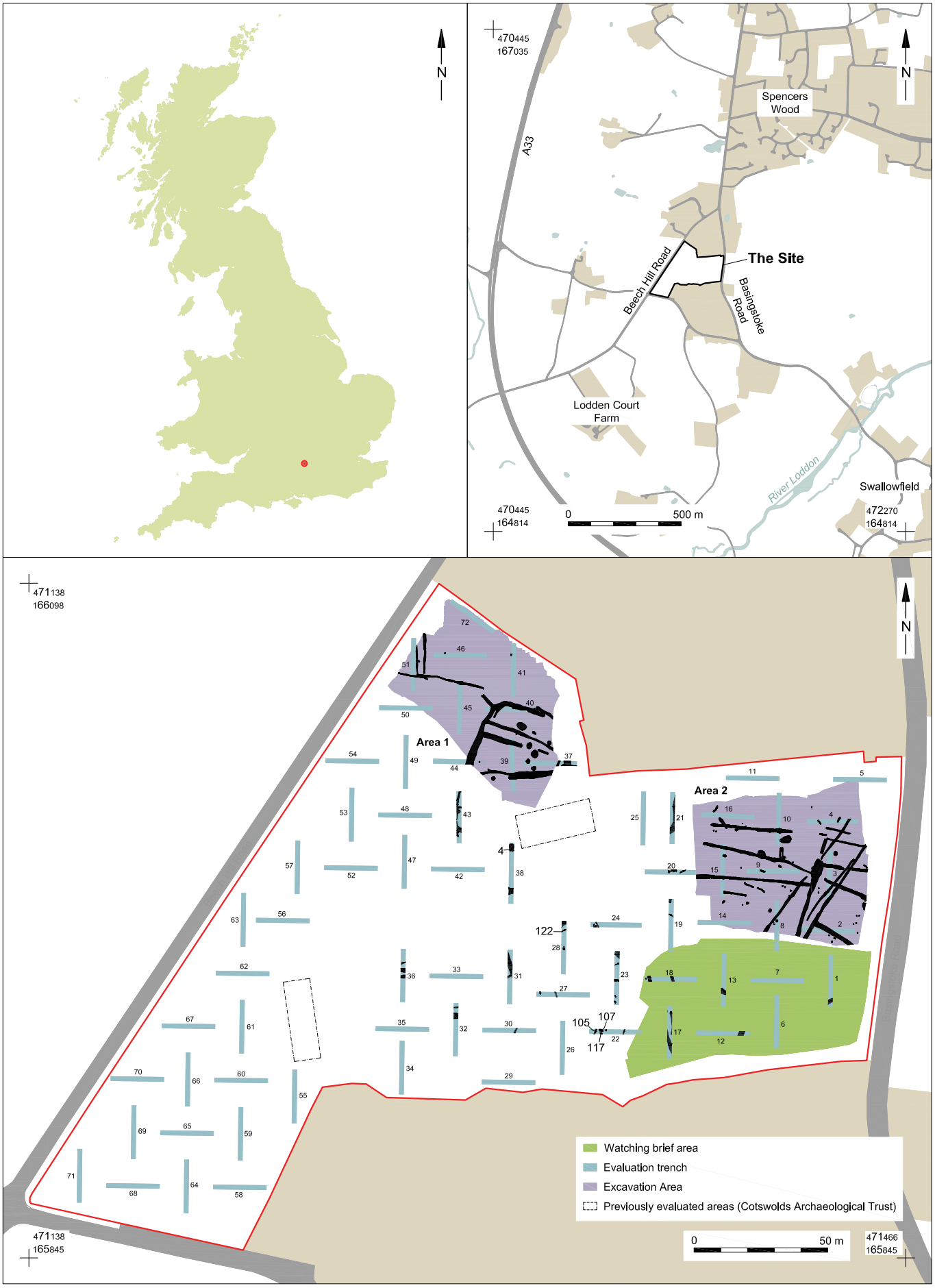
Fig.1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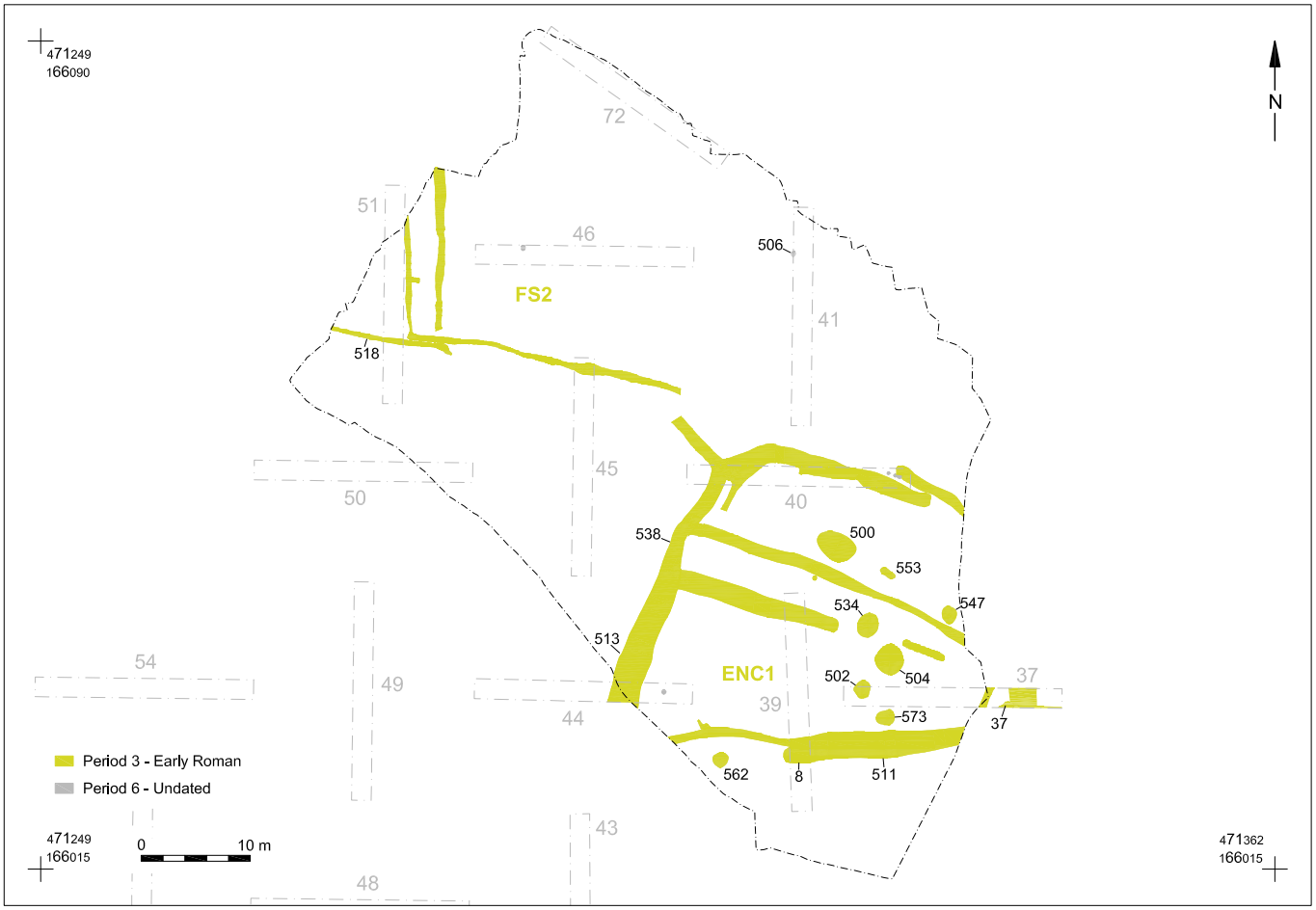
470445
167035
Spencers
Wood
A33
The Site
Beech Hill Road
Basingstoke
Road
Lodden Court
Farm
River Loddon
Swallowfield
470445
164814
0
500 m
472270
164814
471138
166098
Area 1
Area 2
122
105
107
117
Watching brief area
Evaluation trench
Excavation Area
Previously evaluated areas (Cotswolds Archaeological Trust)
0
50 m
471138
165845
471466
165845

Fig.2


471369
166023
471369
165962
0
10 m
471460
165962
N
11
5
16
4
25
21
10
374
250
248
309
361
383
258
419
FS3
342
431
15
3
20
9
335
S1
349
355
278
208
FS1
19
?S3
14
8
2
S2
Period 2 - Middle Iron Age
Period 4 - Later Roman
Period 5 - Medieval
Period 6 - Undated

Fig.3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166090
N
72
51
46
506
FS2
41
518
45
50
40
538
500
553
534
547
513
ENC1
502
504
37
54
49
44
39
573
37
562
8
511
Period 3 - Early Roman
Period 6 - Undated
471249
166015
0
10 m
43
48
471362
166015

Fig.4

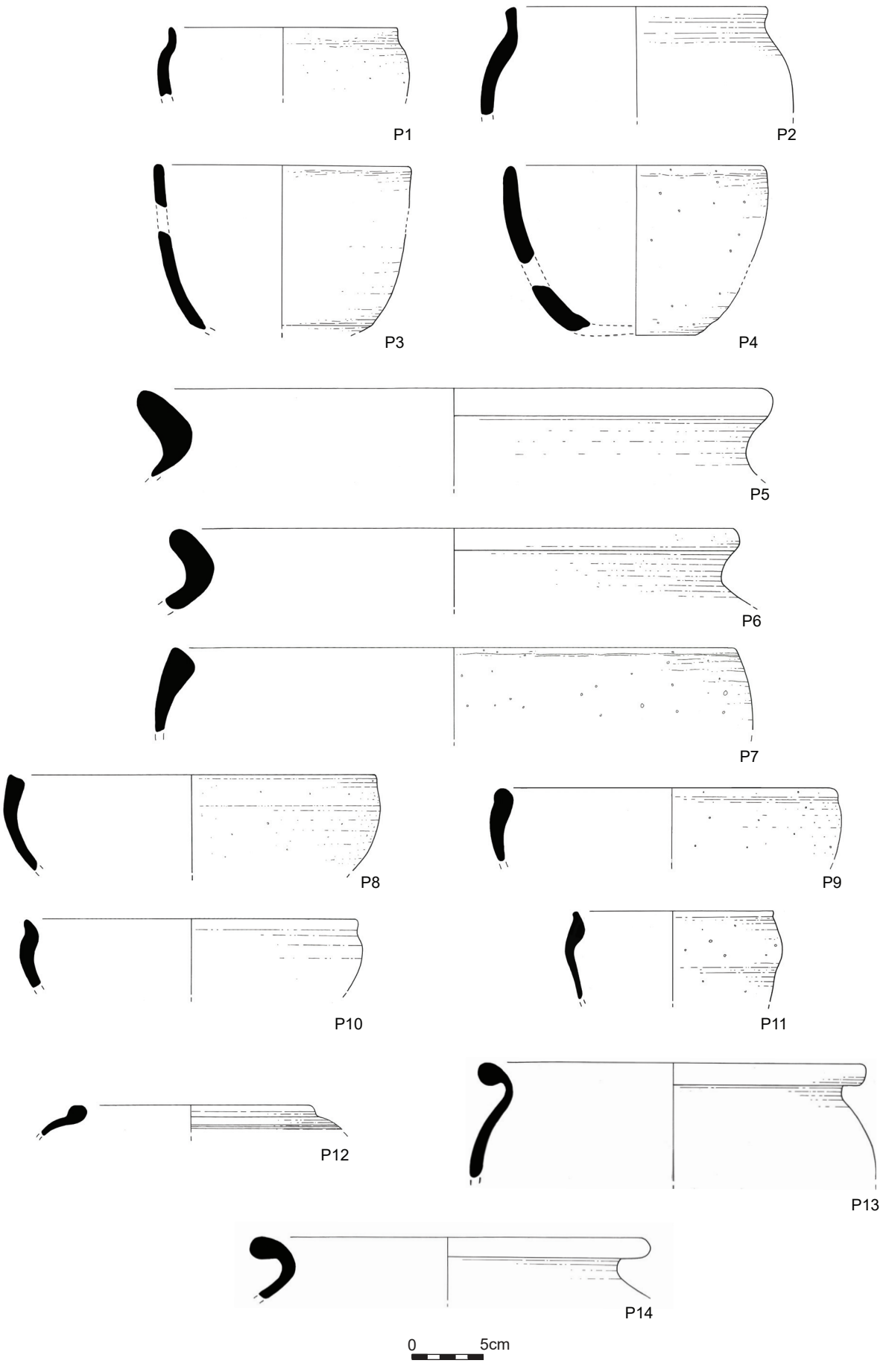


Fig.5

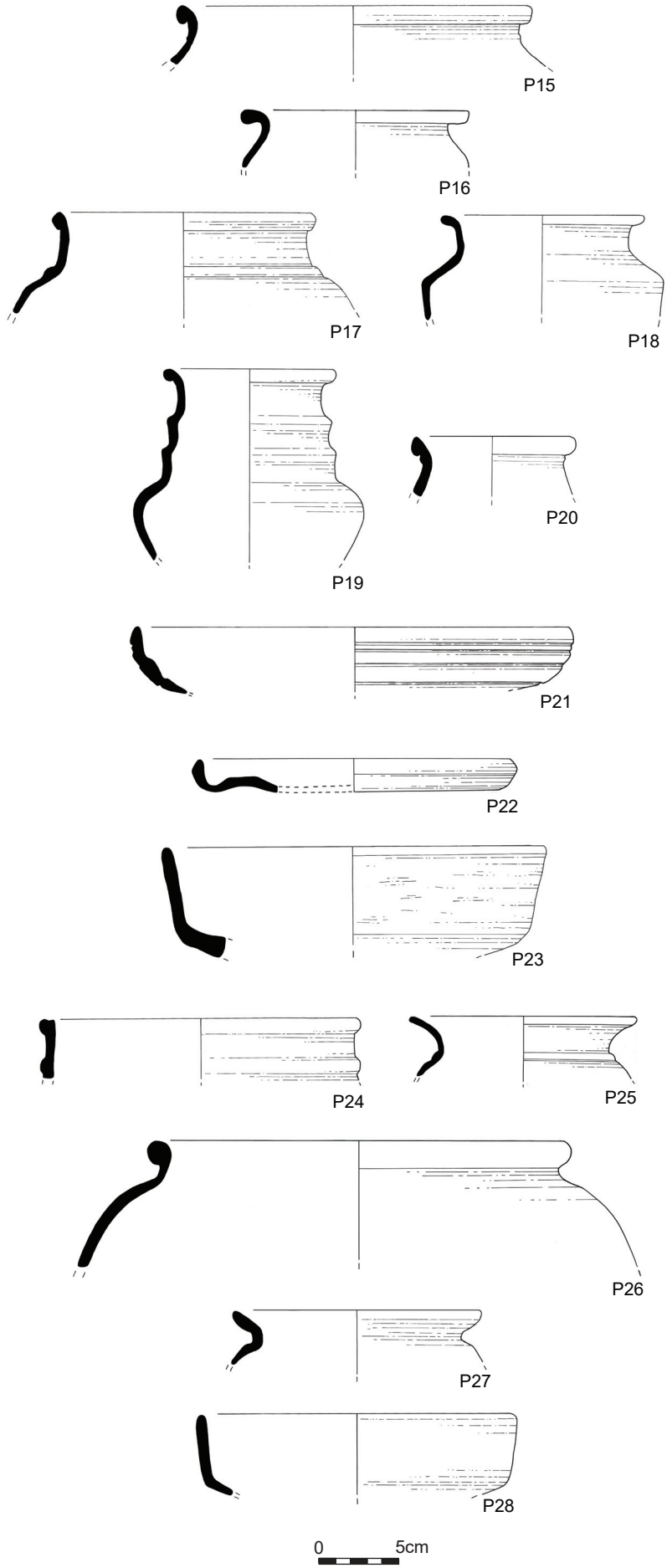
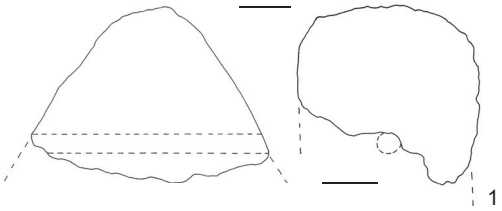


Fig.6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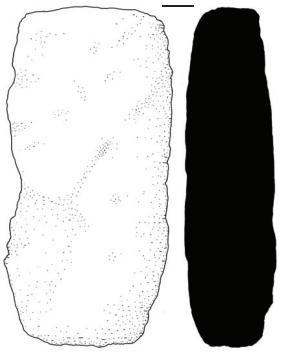
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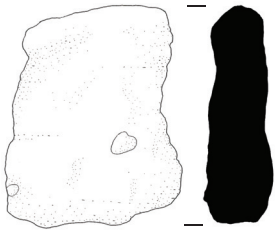
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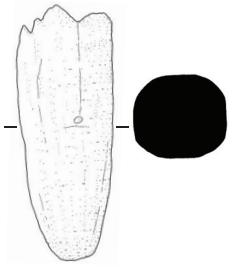
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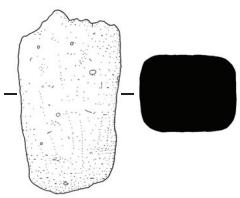
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