

A Romano-British Settlement to the Rear of Denchworth Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Evaluation and Excavation in 1996 and 1998

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SUMMARY

Evaluation and excavation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeological Trust in 1996 and 1998 within an area of known Romano-British occupation. Excavation revealed a metalled trackway with flanking ditches, plot boundaries and pits datable to the period from the late 1st to earlier 2nd century. A thick cultivation horizon accumulated across part of the site during the 2nd and 3rd century, upon which a stone building was constructed after c. AD 270. Only part of the building lay within the excavation area, and it was seemingly contained within a ditched enclosure. The building was comprehensively dismantled and robbed of building materials, and a sherd of 6th- to 9th-century pottery was recovered from one of the robber trenches. The nature of Roman settlement at Wantage is reviewed in the light of the present and previous discoveries.

In 1996 The Vale Housing Association Ltd. applied for planning permission for a residential development on a 0.32 ha. land plot between Stockham Way and Denchworth Road. The site was formerly allotments. Excavation and observation over the last few decades, and in particular an excavation at Mill Street in 1993-4,¹ has identified an emerging picture of Roman and Saxon activity in this part of Wantage (Fig. 1). Accordingly Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology Service, on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council, required that the archaeological importance of the site be evaluated prior to determination of the planning application. In January 1996 Cotswold Archaeological Trust excavated two evaluation trenches within the site, revealing Romano-British ditched boundaries and possible pits (Fig. 2).² These remains were vulnerable to damage from the proposed development and, when planning permission was subsequently granted, a condition was attached requiring the prior excavation of two areas, totalling approximately 694 m.², centred on the remains recorded within the evaluation trenches.

Cotswold Archaeological Trust carried out the excavation of these two areas, coded A and B, between October and November 1998. During the course of the excavation a significant and unexpected discovery was made that could not reasonably have been predicted from the results of the evaluation. This comprised part of a Romano-British stone building lying on the very edge of Area A. As the remaining part of this structure which lay within the bounds

¹ N. Holbrook and A. Thomas, 'The Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Wantage, Oxfordshire, Excavations at Mill Street, 1993-4', *Oxoniensia*, lxi (1996), 171-6.

² C. Bateman, 'Land off Denchworth Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation' (CAT TS. Rep. 96336, 1996).

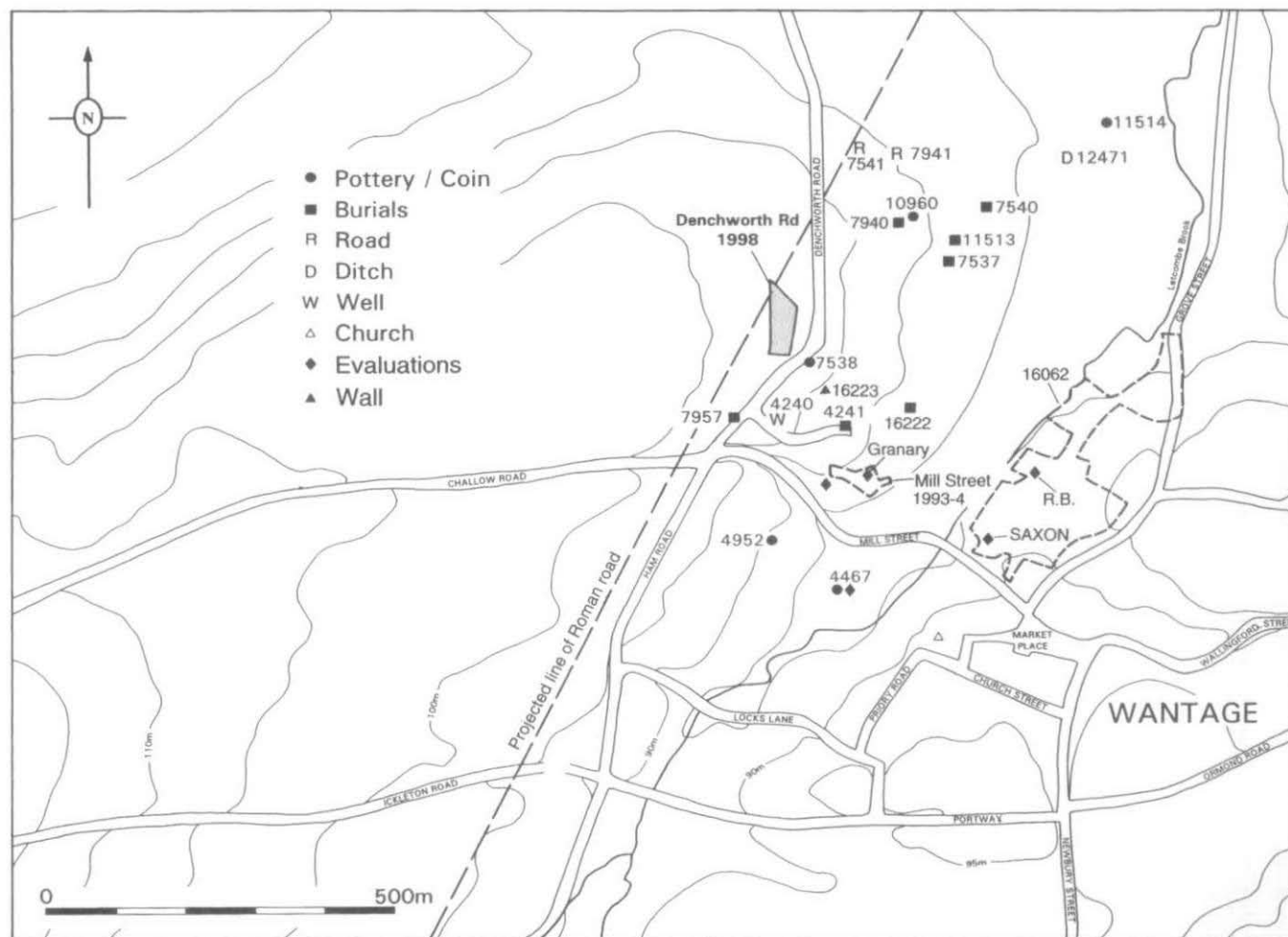


Fig. 1. Map of Roman discoveries in Wantage. Numbers refer to entries on the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record.

of the development area was to be destroyed, additional emergency funding was secured from the Vale Housing Association and English Heritage for the rapid investigation of a further area of some 300 m.² (termed area A+) with the primary objective of recovering the plan of the stone building.

Following completion of the site works an assessment was made of the main findings and a programme of analysis and research proposed. This strategy was approved by English Heritage and Oxfordshire County Council, and analysis commenced in March 2000. This report presents the results of the excavation and post-excavation phases.

LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site lies within the Belmont area of Wantage, approximately 800 m. NW. of the town centre. It is located W. of Denchworth Road on a plateau above the W. slopes of the Letcombe Brook at between 97.5 m. and 98.25 m. OD. (centred on NGR: SU 394 883) (Fig. 2). The British Geological Survey maps the surface geology of the study area as Pleistocene Upper Greensand, consisting of stiff clays and marl with pockets of silty clay underlain by a stiff sandy silty clay.

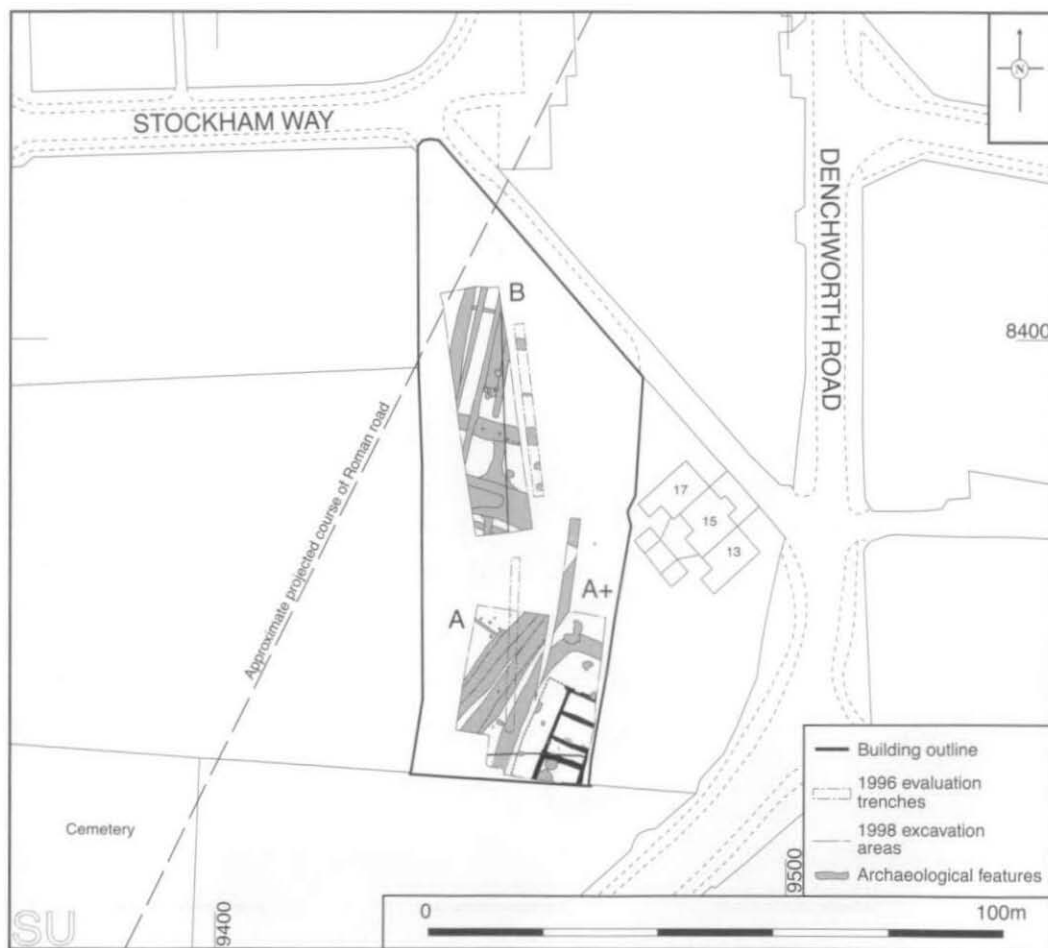


Fig. 2. Location of the evaluation and excavation trenches.

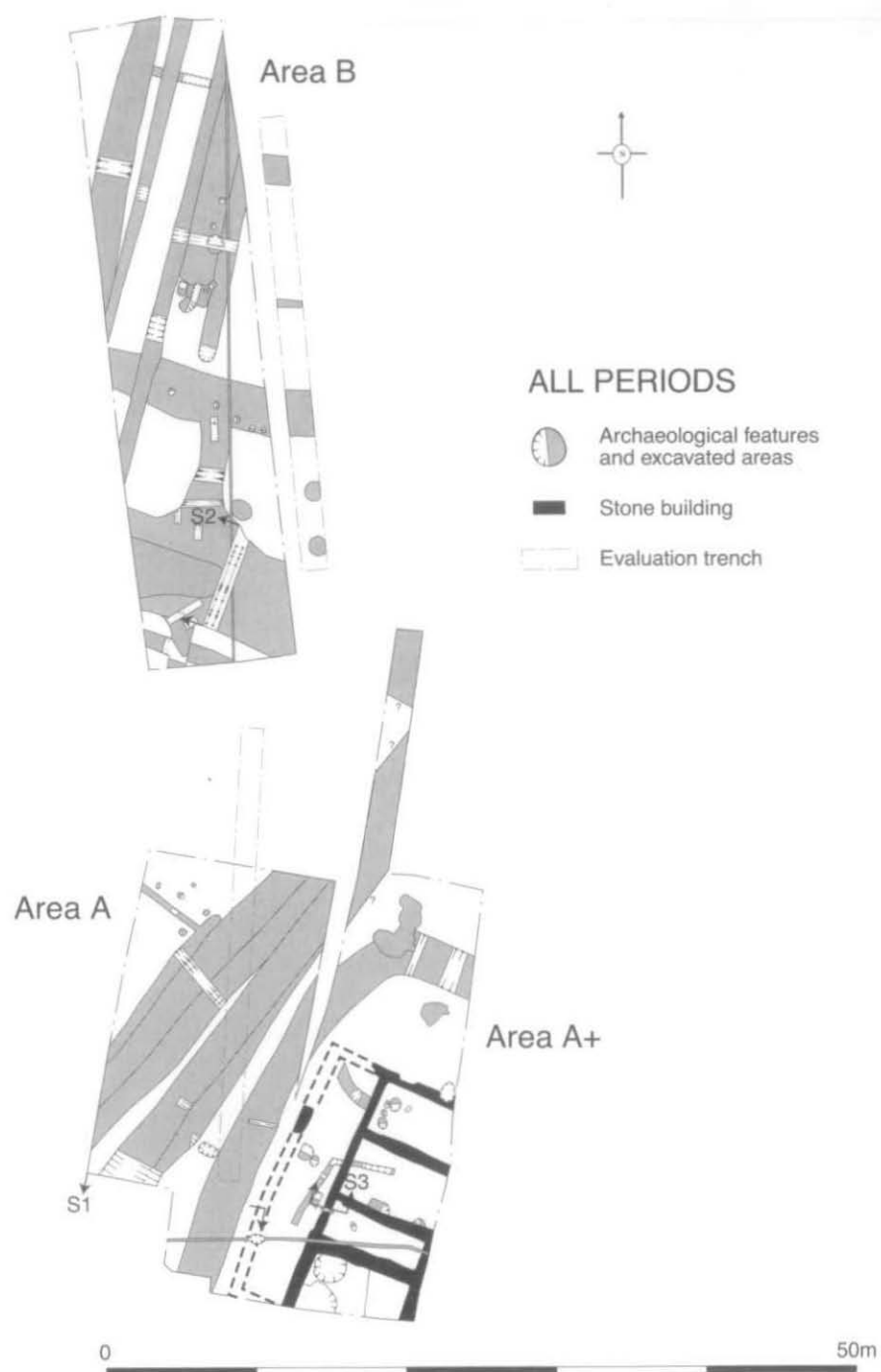


Fig. 3. Excavated features, all periods.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Allotment soil was removed by a mechanical excavator, using a toothless grading bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. This revealed a subsoil horizon which hand-cleaning revealed to be cut by a series of shallow, amorphous scoops. These features were sampled and a number discounted as tree root disturbances and allotment-related features. The subsoil was subsequently trial pitted and sampled before being removed by machine to the level of the natural greensands.

The main excavation objectives were to recover the plan and structural sequence across the site. All pits and postholes were half-sectioned and all linear features as a minimum sectioned once by hand (Fig. 3). All structural features were totally excavated. Priority was attached to features yielding sealed assemblages that could be related to the structural sequence, and those which yielded biological remains of potential palaeo-environmental interest. A full written, drawn and photographic record was made.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Six periods of activity were identified through stratigraphic relationships, orientation and a consideration of the dating evidence. They are:

- Period 0: residual prehistoric artefacts
- Period 1: late 1st to mid 2nd centuries AD
- Period 2: mid 2nd to mid 3rd centuries AD
- Period 3: mid 3rd to late 4th centuries AD
- Period 4: after the late 4th century
- Period 5: undated, post-medieval and modern

PERIOD 0 (RESIDUAL PREHISTORIC ARTEFACTS)

No features were found that could be conclusively attributed to the prehistoric period, although a small assemblage of artefacts was recovered from residual contexts across the site. The total of 34 flints form a largely undatable assemblage although several small fine blades suggest the presence of a Mesolithic component. Nineteen sherds of prehistoric pottery were also found. One sherd suggests possible early to middle Bronze Age activity in the locality but most of the assemblage is compatible with a middle to late Iron Age date.

PERIOD 1 (LATE 1ST TO MID 2ND CENTURY AD)

Within the area subsequently occupied by the Period 3 stone building it was only possible to excavate limited areas down onto the surface of the natural subsoil, the level at which Period 1 features were recognised. Within this area (Area A/A+) a series of truncated sub-circular pits, with gently-sloping sides and broadly flat bases, cut the natural greensands and contained charcoal-rich silty-clay fills (Fig. 4). The truncated nature of the features suggests that they had been cut from a higher level, their upper edges having been lost due to subsequent reworking of the overlying deposit through agriculture. A curvilinear ditch 1214, 0.8 m. wide with a maximum depth of 0.15 m., became extremely shallow where it ran to the SE. and must have terminated beneath a retained baulk to be replaced by a cluster of small pits or postholes. This ditch might have formed part of an agricultural or domestic enclosure, although an interpretation as the drip gully of a roundhouse with the pits and postholes marking one side of a SE. facing entrance is equally possible. If the gully was circular an extrapolated diameter of c. 10 m. can be proposed, in which case the opposite side of the roundhouse within the excavated area would have been removed by the digging of Period 3 ditch 1098. To the S. of 1214 a steep-sided trench 1220 was partially exposed, 0.45 m. wide and 0.15 m. deep, which turned through an approximate right angle. This might have defined a rectilinear fenced enclosure, although the feature evidently did not continue much further to the SW. There were no stratigraphic relationships between these various features to indicate whether they were contemporary or represented several phases of activity within Period 1.

Within Area B ditches defined an arrangement of small agricultural or domestic plots. Ditch 2010 was cut by ditch 2012, which was subsequently recut as 2049. The latter ditch ran perpendicularly to join a NE.-SW. aligned slightly sunken trackway approximately 2.5 m. wide. The track was examined in one place where the primary surface 2041, formed from chalk and flint fragments set in greensand ditch-upcast, was flanked by ditches 2036 and 2037 (Fig. 8, section 2). The track was subsequently resurfaced with a wider and more durable flint metalling 2032 and bordered by recut ditches 2038 and 2039. A shallow, somewhat irregularly-shaped linear depression 2020 ran N. from the trackway to join ditch 2027, whose width of 1.7 m. and depth

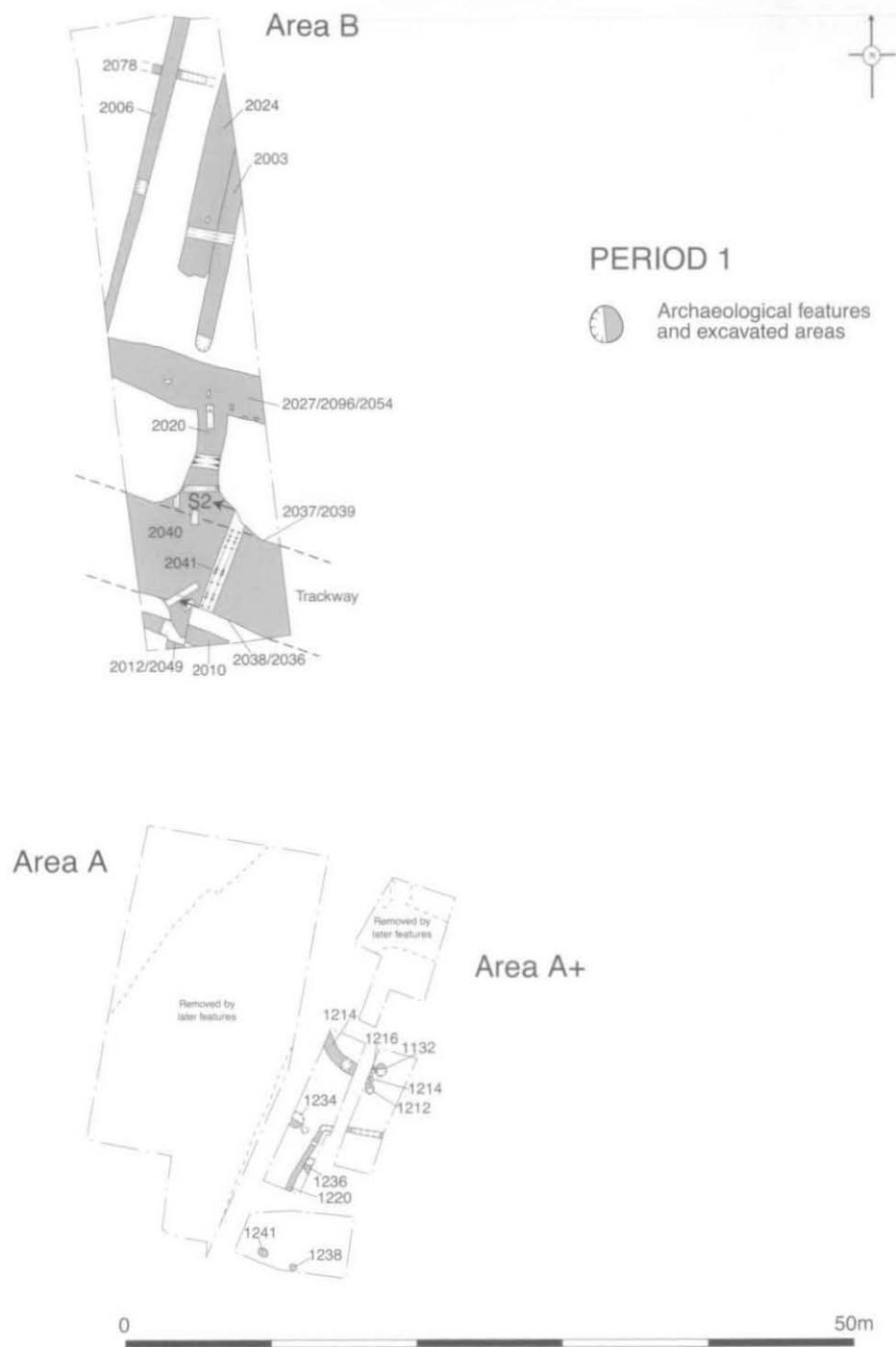


Fig. 4. Period 1.

of 0.8 m. could suggest a stock-control function. Ditch 2027 was later recut as 2096 and again as 2054. In the northern part of Area B a small ditch 2078 ran parallel with ditch 2027. It was subsequently cut by three NE.-SW. aligned ditches 2006, 2024 and 2003 which appeared to respect the major boundary 2027.

Eventually the trackway fell out of use, and in the absence of conflicting evidence this event is ascribed to the end of Period 1. A series of clay and chalk dumps 2029, 2030 and 2040 was deposited across the flint surface 2032, and its flanking ditches 2038 and 2039 infilled with silty-clays 2031 and 2034.

Dating Evidence

Although some of the pottery could potentially date to the later 1st century, firmly 2nd-century material was recovered from the fills of the following features.

The fill 2026 of ditch 2024: fragment of Central Gaulish samian.

The fill 2034 of ditch 2036: Central Gaulish samian Dr 18/31-31.

The fill 2013 of ditch 2012: SE. Dorset BB1 flat-rimmed bowl.

The fill 1213 of pit 1212: body sherd of SE. Dorset BB1 cooking-pot with obtuse-angled lattice decoration indicating a 3rd or 4th-century date.

Features associated with the disuse of the trackway in Area B yielded only nine sherds of pottery. None of this need date later than the 2nd century.

The samian and flat-rimmed bowl indicate that occupation continued into the first half of the 2nd century. The SE. Dorset BB1 cooking-pot would push activity into the 3rd century at earliest, although the lack of any other forms and types of similar date make it safest to consider this sherd as intrusive.

Discussion

The features discovered in Areas A+ and B were of different character. In Area B the metalled trackway might conceivably have led to the putative Roman road that ran between Wantage and Frilford. The road cannot be traced with confidence as it approaches the town, although projecting the long alignment apparent as far as Grove SW. provides a course immediately W. of Area B (Figs. 1, 2). Observations of road metalling 200 m. NE. of the excavation lie close to the predicted line (Fig. 2, 7541, 7941).³ Indeed it is conceivable that it was the road that dictated the dominant NE.-SW. alignment evident on the site, with the trackway leading from it at right angles. The ditches to the N. of the track seemingly defined agricultural plots, while within Area A+ the activity appears more domestic in character, gully 1214 possibly being a truncated drip gully of a roundhouse, and 1220 part of a fenced enclosure. This activity is broadly contemporary with Period 1 at Mill Street, 200 m. to the SE., which comprised a series of agricultural boundary ditches.

PERIOD 2 (MID 2ND TO MID 3RD CENTURIES)

A small area of remnant clay soil 1050 (n.i) was noted within the NW. corner of Area A but did not extend into Area B. It was sealed by a more extensive, artefact-rich, silty-clay horizon 1162 (recorded as 1122 where it was sealed beneath the Period 3 building) on average 0.5 m. thick. It is conceivable that there had been a horizon through which the Period 1 features were cut, and that this subsequently became merged with 1122/1162 through agricultural reworking. A programme of test-pitting did identify subtle sub-horizons within 1162, although the recovery in one location of late 3rd-century or later Oxfordshire colour-coated ware from the lowest horizon indicates an ongoing process of accretion, utilisation and reworking during Periods 2 and 3. No features were found in Area A/A+ that cut the cultivation horizon and yet were clearly earlier than the Period 3 building. In Area B it is conceivable that some of the features assigned to Period 3 could have originated in Period 2, but proof is lacking.

Dating Evidence

Deposit 1122 and associated contexts which were sealed by the floor of the stone building yielded an assemblage which need not be later than the later 2nd century. Pottery associated with the construction of the stone building indicates that this did not occur before the mid 3rd century at earliest. Accordingly the majority of the pottery from 1122 is likely to be residual, most probably being reworked material from the underlying Period 1 features. This interpretation is supported by the heavily fragmented nature of the pottery. Later pottery was recovered from deposit 1162 outside the building indicating that it was still accumulating material throughout Period 3.

³ Holbrook and Thomas, *op. cit.* note 1, pp. 171-3.

Discussion

The horizon sealing the Period 1 features in Area A+ is likely to have been an agricultural ploughsoil, the horizons detectable in the test-pits perhaps reflecting periods of stabilisation under grass cover. Within Area B it is conceivable that some of the features assigned to Periods 1 and 3 respectively might also have been in use following the abandonment of the Period 1 structures and before the construction of the Period 3 building. Stratigraphic relationships are lacking, and the quantity of pottery recovered from the ditches does not permit certainty. Nevertheless there was clearly a reorganisation in land use in the later 2nd or early 3rd century, around the same time that the Period 2 timber buildings were being constructed at Mill Street.

PERIOD 3 (MID 3RD TO LATE 4TH CENTURY)

Stone building

A stone building lay within the SE. corner of the site. Only part of its ground plan was recoverable, but this comprised a rectangular range 18 m. long and in excess of 12.5 m. wide (Figs. 5, 6). The building consisted of a range of four rooms (Rooms 1, 2, 3, and 5) with a 17 m. long and 3 m. wide corridor (Room 4) on the NW. side. Walls 1128, 1200 and foundation trench 1182 identify three sides of the range whilst a robber trench, 1160 either marks the fourth or an internal partition. Wall 1142 separated the corridor from the range. Robber trench 1160 defined the SE. side of Rooms 3 and 5, but seemingly did not continue on the same alignment through Room 2 (to judge from the small area available for investigation) and so this room (and perhaps Room 1 as well) appear to have been longer than Rooms 3 and 5. Foundation trenches for the building cut through Period 2 horizon 1122 and into the underlying greensands. The trenches averaged 0.95 m. in width and 0.75 m. in depth, and had been backfilled with large sub-angular chalkstone fragments and compact green clay (Fig. 8, section 3). Where sampled the footings were sealed by a thin, mortared gravel capping from which the mortared stone walls were constructed, offset by c. 0.2 m. in places, but little of the above-ground structure survived. A total of 6.5 m. of walling survived as a single course, whilst an 8.1 m. length of internal wall 1142 stood to two courses in height.

Room 1 was 3.5 m. wide by in excess of 6 m. internally, and sealed beneath the floor make-up was a small sub-circular pit 1129 which contained a foundation inhumation burial of an infant that was either still born or died shortly after birth.⁴ Internal bedding and/or floor levels were found throughout the range. Room 1 contained a greensand/clay make-up 1121 which might have supported a flagged floor, extensive disturbance to this layer perhaps having resulted from subsequent robbing of the flags. Room 2 (3.8 m. wide by in excess of 6.7 m. long) possessed the best quality surviving flooring, with a foundation of mortary-sand 1187 capped with a 20 mm. thick skim of *opus signinum* 1154. Rooms 2 and 3 were separated by a narrow room (Room 5, 6.6 m. long by only 2.5 m. wide) which must have served as a cross passage or staircase. It contained a rough stone make-up 1158 which also may have supported a flagged floor. In Room 3 (6.6 m. long by an extrapolated width of 4.5 m.) a clay/stone bedding for a gravelly-mortar surface was subsequently resurfaced with a clay/stone foundation layer 1137 supporting a finer gravelly-mortar surface 1138. The corridor (Room 4) contained a thin, patchy, bedding of mortary sandy-gravel 1210 upon which a single *in situ* sandstone floor slab survived.

External Areas

Two reused sandstone roof tiles 1240 set level with the base of the external wall 1200 suggest the former presence of some manner of external surfacing immediately outside the building. The building itself appeared to be contained within an enclosure defined by ditch 1098 which ran 1.5 m. outside wall 1200 for approximately 25 m., before turning E. to run for at least 3 m. parallel with wall 1128 (Fig. 5). The ditch, 0.95 m. in depth, was still partially open at the end of Period 3 and contained Period 4 demolition debris (Fig. 8, section 1). Pit 1096 lay immediately outside of ditch 1098. A sequence of parallel linear ditches was encountered immediately W. of ditch 1098. Ditch 1085 contained abundant cattle and horse long bones, and a near complete horse skull, and was subsequently recut as 1087 and then again, more narrowly, as 1091 (Fig. 8, section 1). To the W. parallel ditch 1012 was noted in association with a perpendicular spur 1101. An

⁴ For a discussion of child burials as foundation deposits in Roman Britain see E. Scott, 'A Critical Review of the Interpretations of Infant Burials in Roman Britain, with Particular Reference to Villas', *Jnl. Theoretical Archaeol.* 1 (1990), 3-46.



Fig. 5. Period 3.

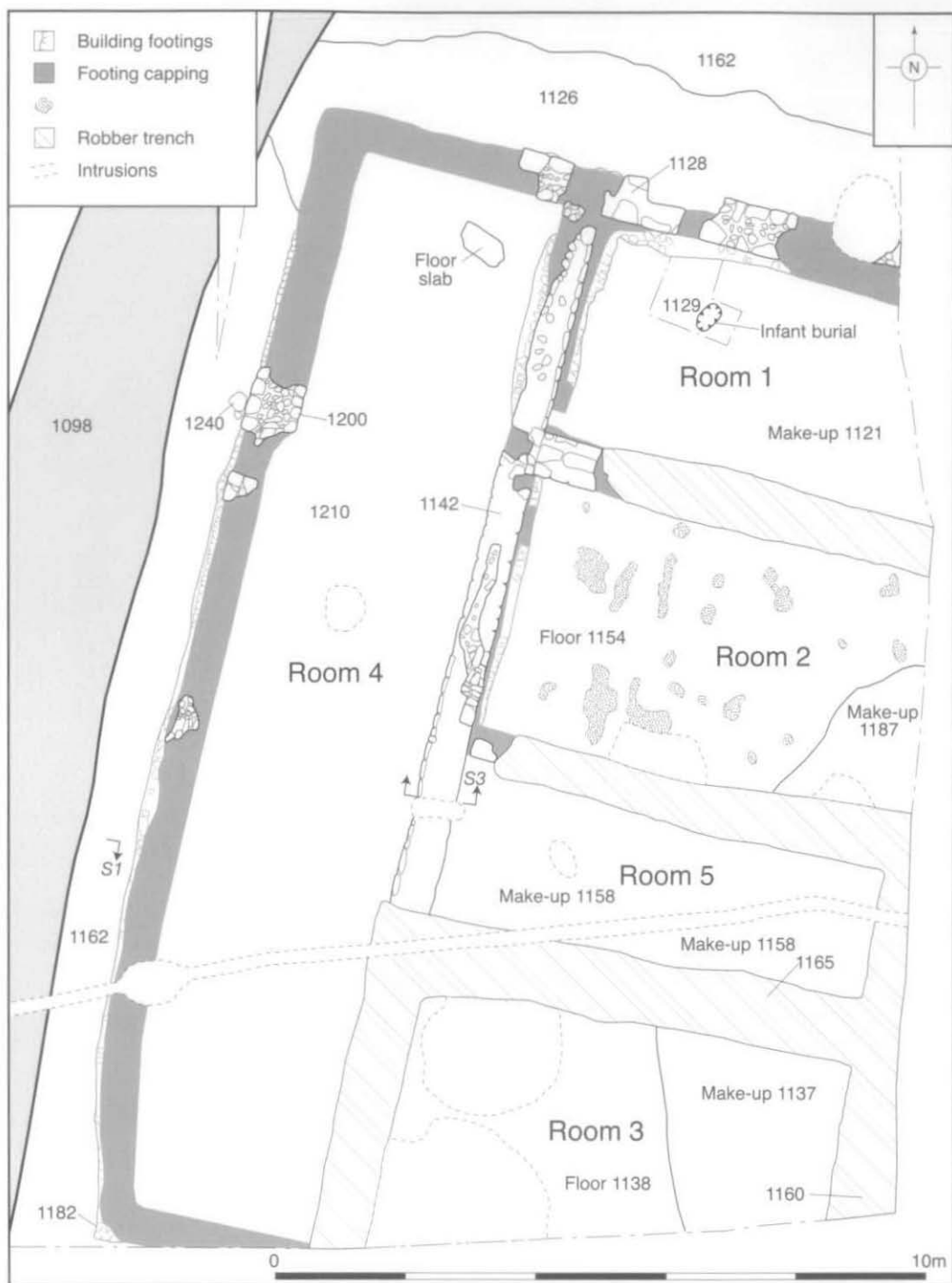


Fig. 6. Period 3 stone building.

irregular arrangement of postholes might have been part of various fencelines. Both 1012 and an adjacent ditch 1039 were subsequently cut by ditch 1014 on the same alignment that contained abundant animal bones in a variety of its fills, including a number of complete or near complete cattle and horse long bones and a complete horse skull. The precise sequence and contemporaneity of these various ditches remains unclear, but the evidence of their repeated recutting with late 4th-century artefacts in their upper fills indicates the maintenance of an important boundary line to the NW. of the building. Cultivation horizon 1162 outside of the stone building was cut by the various ditches but yielded later 4th-century artefacts indicating its continued accumulation of material throughout Period 3.

Within Area B parallel ditches 2015 and 2008 tended slightly more to the W. than the ditches alongside the building. Pottery suggests that these ditches may have been cut sequentially, with 2015 the earlier. A line of postholes at right angles to ditch 2008 formed an associated fenceline. Immediately within ditch 2008 a series of sub-circular refuse pits, some of them intercutting, were dug. One, 2042, had an inverted cow skull that displayed evidence of having been skinned and de-fleshed (p. 322), and a femur, placed on the floor of the pit. This is possibly an example of deliberate, structured, deposition rather than casual disposal. Some of the pits were cut by a squarish well shaft 2068 with near vertical sides, 1.4 m. by 1.25 m. in plan. Auguring established that the well was approximately 2 m. deep and had been backfilled with silty clays. No stone, or traces of organic, lining was found. A further pit, 2092, cut across a corner of the infilled well shaft.

Dating Evidence

Construction of the stone building. Floor make-up 1210 within Room 4 produced two sherds of a white painted Oxfordshire colour-coated ware beaker (Young⁵ type C27 dated c. AD 270-400) and a sherd of a SE. Dorset BB1 jar decorated with an oblique lattice. The beaker suggests a date after c. AD 270 at the earliest for the construction of the building.

Deposits contemporary with the occupation of the stone building. No useful dating evidence was recovered from any features that could directly be associated with the occupation of the building, and the only evidence for the duration of Period 3 derives from the features in the external areas. Pottery suggests that the earliest ditches were the successively recut sequence 1085, 1087, 1091. None of the pottery from these features need be much later than the mid 3rd century and it is therefore conceivable that the latest ditch 1091 may have filled up before the stone building was even constructed. The fill 1013 of ditch 1012 contained an illegible barbarous radiate coin of 270-90 (SF 100) and fill 1040 of adjacent ditch 1039 sherds of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware indicating a date after the mid 3rd century. These ditches had infilled before ditch 1014 was dug, the fillings of which yielded Oxfordshire colour-coated ware types C128, C45, M22, C97⁶ and barbotine scale-decorated beaker, as well as later Roman shelly ware. The latter indicates that the ditch was at least partly open in the later 4th century. The fillings of ditch 1098 produced pottery broadly consistent with a 3rd- to 4th-century date.

Cultivation horizon 1162 which is defined as the equivalent horizon to 1122, but which lay outside the stone building, produced a diverse chronological range of material spanning the 2nd to late 4th centuries indicating that it was continuing to accumulate material during Period 3. The following coins were recovered: Valentinian I, AD 367-75 (SF 159), Constans, AD 348-50 (SF 165), Constantine II, AD 337-41 (SF 183); Victorinus, AD 268-70 (SF 164), Gallienus, AD 260-68 (SF 158), Julia Mamaea, AD 222-35 (SF 180), and Domitian, AD 81-2 (SF 144). Several typical late 3rd- to late 4th-century pottery types were present, notably late Roman shelly ware, Oxfordshire colour-coated forms, Oxfordshire white wares, a SE. Dorset BB1 conical flanged bowl, and Midlands grog-tempered storage jar. Two late 3rd- or 4th-century copper-alloy bracelets were also recovered (Fig. 11, 1-2).

In Area B ditch 2015 produced Oxfordshire colour-coated ware which suggests that it was probably abandoned in the second half of the 3rd century, or later. It may have been replaced by ditch 2008 which produced three sherds of later Roman shelly ware from the primary fill 2046 indicating that it was not filled before the second half of the 4th century. The rest of the pottery from this feature was largely residual 2nd- to 3rd-century types, and the complete absence of colour-coated wares typical of the later 3rd-4th centuries might suggest deliberate backfilling using soil accumulated during the 3rd century. The well 2068 produced a small group of nine sherds, mainly grey wares with a single Central Gaulish samian sherd, all of which could date to the 2nd-early 3rd century.

⁵ C.J. Young, *Oxfordshire Roman Pottery* (BAR Brit. Ser. 143, 1977).

⁶ Ibid.

Discussion

As only part of the stone building lay within the excavation area there are obviously difficulties in restoring its plan. If the building consisted solely of the five rooms partly exposed, this would indicate a rectangular block of four rooms, with a corridor to the rear, the whole being approximately 18 m. long by 12.5 m. wide externally. The building could thus be classified as a so-called corridor or row-type house, but one of very small size.⁷ Similar houses are known from rural contexts in Oxfordshire at Barton Court Farm where the building was 25 m. long by 10 m. wide and probably dates to the late 3rd or 4th century, and from aerial photography at Little Milton (building c. 25 m. long by 10.5 m. wide).⁸ Houses of similar size to that here have been excavated at Marshfield, South Gloucestershire, which was 22 m. long by 10.2 m. wide and dates to the third quarter of the 3rd century, and Huntsham, Herefordshire, 18 m. long by 9.1 m. wide.⁹ On this interpretation the Wantage building would have faced SE. with views across the valley of the Letcombe Brook and with the corridor to the rear of the house, the latter also suggested by the close proximity of the enclosure ditch on this side of the building. It cannot be certain, however, that the building was not more extensive. A distinct corner was found at the SW. end of the corridor immediately inside the limit of excavation, although it is possible that further rooms lay to the SW. of Room 3. The recovery of box tiles from demolition debris points to a hypocausted room in the vicinity, and the fragment of *opus signinum* lining most likely derived from a feature such as a plunge bath. Such a room need not have been integral to the house, however, and the material could derive from a detached bath-house. If the excavated rooms are part of a more extensive structure it seems most likely that it would have extended further to the SE., with the excavated portion forming the E. wing of a much larger house. Some wing corridor villas have corridors around the outer side of the wing rooms, as at Ditchley, Gadebridge Park, Herts., and Box, Wilts.¹⁰ In all three cases, however, the corridor returned to run along the rear of the main range, an arrangement precluded at Denchworth Road. Some support for this interpretation might be gained from the fact that robber trench 1160 which defined the SE. side of Rooms 3 and 5 did not carry through into Room 2 which must therefore have been longer than those rooms. Limited auguring proved possible in the neighbouring gardens immediately to the E. of the excavation area, and this detected further stonework at comparable depths to the excavated remains for a distance of at least 10 m. Whether such material was *in situ*, or simply rubble lying beyond the bounds of the structure was impossible to determine.

Of the rooms uncovered only Room 2 contained an *opus signinum* floor. Room 5 is conventionally described as a cross passage and occurs in many simple row-type houses. Its purpose was to provide access to rooms without the need to pass through others, but given the presence of the longitudinal corridor here which could have provided access to all rooms, it is conceivable that Room 5 may have accommodated a staircase.¹¹

⁷ J.T. Smith, *Roman Villas, a Study in Social Structure* (1997), 46-64.

⁸ D. Miles (ed.), *Archaeology at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, Oxon* (CBA Res. Rep. 50, 1984), 12-14. Little Milton plan in R.G. Collingwood and I.A. Richmond, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (2nd edn. 1969) fig. 46, c; photo in S.S. Frere and J.K.S. St. Joseph, *Roman Britain from the Air* (1983), 188-90.

⁹ K. Blockley, *Marshfield-Ironmongers Piece, Excavations 1982-3* (BAR Brit. Ser. 141, 1985), 37-40; E. Taylor, 'Report on the Excavation of Huntsham Romano-British Villa and Iron Age Enclosure 1959-1970', *Trans. Woolhope Naturalists Field Club*, xlviii (pt 2), 1995 (1998), 236-41.

¹⁰ C.A.R. Radford, 'The Roman Villa at Ditchley, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, i (1936), 24-69, although for a recent reassessment see P. Booth, 'Ralegh Radford and the Roman Villa at Ditchley', *Oxoniensia*, lxiv (1999), 39-49; D.S. Neal, *The Excavation of the Roman Villa in Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead*, 1963-8 (Res. Rep. Soc. Antiq. London 31, 1974); H. Hurst, D.L. Dartnall, C. Fisher, 'Excavations at Box Roman Villa, 1967-8', *Wilts. Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.* 81 (1987), 19-51 with references to earlier work.

¹¹ In some cases the corridor is a later addition to row-type houses, but here the corridor appears to have been integral to the original plan; certainly no evidence was found to suggest that it was an addition. Frere and St. Joseph (op. cit. note 8) favour a similar interpretation for the narrow room visible on the plan of Little Milton.

The building was seemingly contained within a ditched enclosure 1098, which ran very close to its rear wall, and beyond this was a major boundary that was repeatedly redug. The latter might have formed a more extensive enclosure that was replaced by 1098, although ditches 1091 and 1014 were still at least partly open at the time when demolition of the building was largely complete. The construction of the house at Denchworth Road is broadly contemporary with the erection of the Period 3 stone tower granary and associated stock enclosures at Mill Street.

PERIOD 4 (AFTER THE LATE 4TH CENTURY)

No evidence of dereliction was encountered within the building. The absence of accumulated deposits, or of significant quantities of finds over the floors, indicates that the building was kept clean and occupied until it was dismantled. The absence of significant amounts of tile and rubble immediately above the structure suggests the careful stripping of roof tiles, floor slabs and walling stone.

A series of robber pits and trenches, not all necessarily of the same date, had removed much of the flooring material and chalkstone rubble wall footings (Fig. 7). The robber trenches appeared to have been dug from SE. to NW. until sufficient stone had been obtained to meet requirements. Small areas of debris from the dismantling and robbing of the building overlay surviving floor and bedding layers, and were sealed by a more widespread stony-clay deposit 1209. Ditches 1098, 1091 and 1014 were all still partially open when the structure was demolished, since their upper levels contained rubble, tile and mortar debris 1043. This material could be traced as a thin mortar spread on the surface of cultivation horizon 1162 back to the dismantled building, where it sealed the robbed rear corridor wall (Fig. 8, section 1). Further mortar and chalkstone spreads, 1126, 1139 and 1140, lay immediately N. of the building. The mortar lens 1043 also defined the interface between horizon 1162 outside the structure and a subsequent post-Roman garden soil or manured plough soil 1002.

PERIOD 4

-  Archaeological features and excavated areas
-  Romano-British soil
-  Walls
-  Unexcavated robber-trench fill

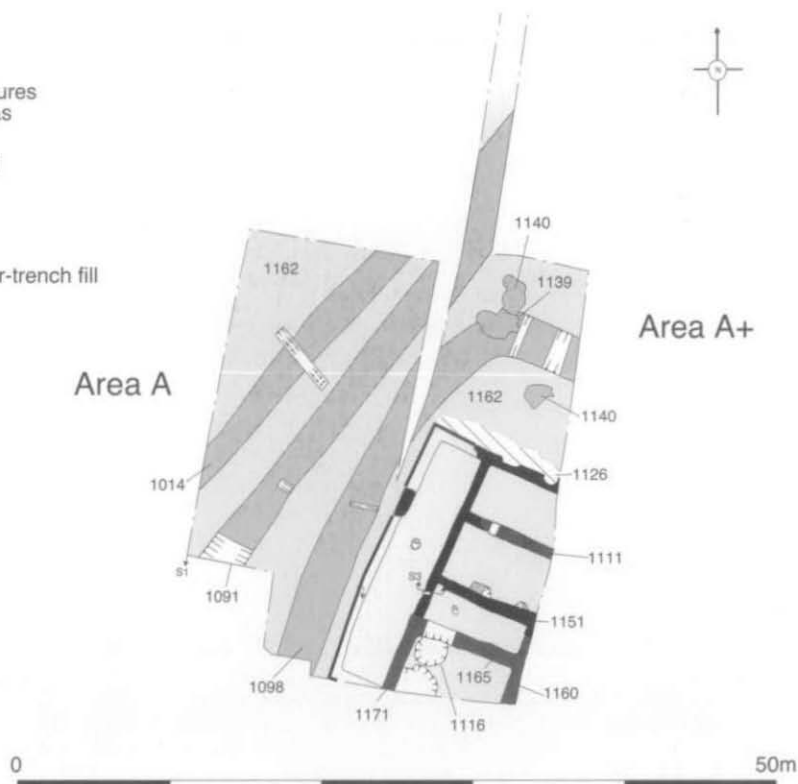
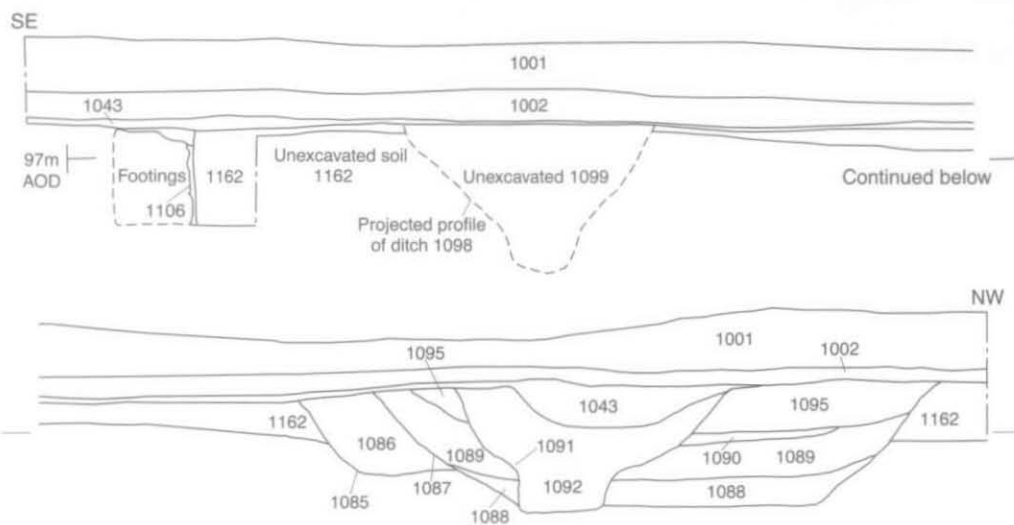
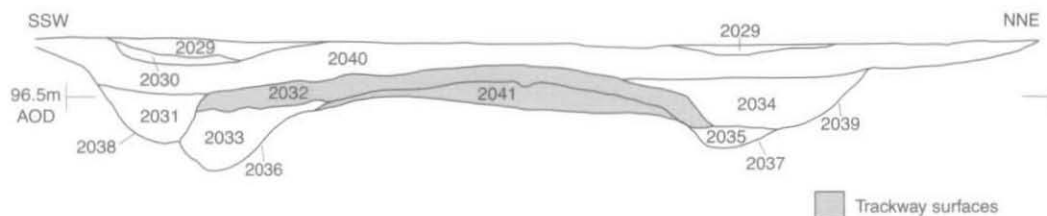


Fig. 7. Period 4.

Section 1



Section 2



Section 3

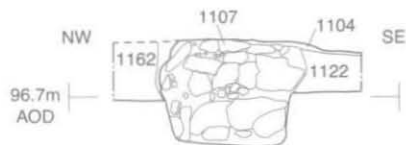


Fig. 8. Sections.

Dating Evidence

Period 4 rubble deposits produced the following coins: Valens, AD 364-7 (SF 166) from 1126, Constans, AD 347-8 (SF 170) from 1208, and an illegible 1st- or 2nd-century issue (SF 143) from 1139. Robber trench 1165 yielded a coin of the House of Constantine, AD 335-4, and trench 1151 an issue of Probus, AD 276-82 (SF 168). Pottery was recovered from debris layers 1120, 1141, 1103 stone spread 1139 and the robber trenches and pits. All the pottery dates to the later Roman period with one notable exception, a sherd of organic-tempered handmade ware of Saxon type from robber trench 1165. Unfortunately the date range of this ware is quite wide, anywhere between the 6th-9th centuries. Other sherds from the robber trenches include typical 4th-century colour-coated wares.

Discussion

There is little useful evidence for how long the house and associated settlement continued in use. Some of the ditches to the rear of the building were still open in the later 4th century, and a coin of 367-75 was recovered from the cultivation horizon. The building was systematically robbed of its reusable materials, although this process could have occurred over a protracted period. A single sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery from one of the robber trenches indicates that robbing was still occurring in the 6th century or later. This was the only piece of Anglo-Saxon pottery recovered from the site.

PERIOD 5 (UNDATED, POST-MEDIEVAL AND MODERN)

A number of sub-circular scoops and pits were noted cutting soil 1002. These shallow features yielded only residual Roman pottery and may reflect modern allotment cultivation upon the site. Two modern service lines were also encountered.

THE FINDS

COINS by PETER GUEST

The excavations at Denchworth Road produced a total of 23 coins, 20 of which date to the Roman period. The assemblage also included two modern copper-alloy coins and a lead token of 16th- to 18th-century date (Table 1).

All the coins were found in Areas A or A+ and the greatest concentration was recovered from the artefact-rich cultivation horizon 1162 around the stone building. The seven coins from these layers comprise an *as* of Domitian, several 3rd-century coins (including a badly preserved *denarius* of Julia Mamaea), and three 4th-century bronze coins, the latest of which was struck between AD 367 and 375. It is suggested that this garden soil accumulated over a considerable period of time and had been subjected periodically to horticultural reworking. The wide range of coins from context 1162 supports this interpretation, though the discovery of a George III farthing from an equivalent layer elsewhere on the site (context 1043) indicates that the uppermost levels have been contaminated by relatively modern activity.

Three coins originated from deposits associated with the demolition and robbing of the stone building (contexts 1126, 1139 and 1208). One of these is a heavily worn *sestertius* of the 1st or 2nd centuries (SF 143), while the other two are 4th-century bronzes providing a *terminus post quem* of AD 364-7 for the end of the house (SF 166 and 170).

The coins from Denchworth Road are summarised chronologically in Table 2, and the coins from Mill Street have been provided for comparison. Although the number of coins from these two sites in Wantage is very small, both lists suggest that the main period of coin loss occurred during the 4th century – Denchworth Road produces a peak of coins from AD 330-348, while Valentinianic coins were most common from Mill Street. There are no coins later than AD 375 from Denchworth Road.

The absence of late 4th-century coins, however, is not necessarily indicative of occupation having ceased before the end of the 4th century as bronze coins of the House of Theodosius are not very common on many rural sites in the Oxfordshire region of Roman Britain. Sites such as Barton Court Farm¹² and Asthall¹³ produce small numbers of late 4th-century coins (typically 5% of the coin-list), yet coins of this date must have

¹² Miles, *op. cit.* note 8.

¹³ P. Booth, *Asthall, Oxfordshire: Excavations in a Roman 'Small Town', 1992* (Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph 9, 1997).

TABLE 1. COIN CATALOGUE

<i>Context</i>	<i>SF no.</i>	<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Obverse</i>	<i>Reverse</i>	<i>Mintmark</i>	<i>Mint</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Reference</i>
1162	144	As	DOMITIAN	TRP COS VII[I] DES VIII[I] PP - SC			81-82	—
1139	143	Sestertius	illegible	Illegible			1st-2ndC	—
1162	180	Denarius	JULIA MAMAEA	IVNO CONSERVATRIX			222-35	RIC: 343
1162	158	Radiate	GALLIENUS	ORIENS AVG			260-68	RIC: 249
11621	64	Radiate	VICTORINUS	Illegible			268-70	—
1013	100	Barb. Radiate	illegible	Illegible			270-90	—
1178	168	Radiate	PROBUS	VIRTUS AVGVSTI	//RB	Rome	276-82	RIC: 234
1147	162	AE3	CONSTANTINE I	PROVIDENTIAE AVGG	//STR cres.	Trier	324-25	RIC: 461
U/s - A	154	AE3	CONSTANTINE II Caesar	GLORIA EXERCITVS (2 stds)	* in cres.//PLG	Lyon	330-35	HK: 198
U/s - A	156	AE3	CONSTANTINE II Caesar	GLORIA EXERCITVS (2 stds)	branch//TRS	Trier	330-35	HK: 81
1174	169	AE3	House of Constantine	GLORIA EXERCITVS (2 stds)	[.....]		335-41	—
U/s - A	155	AE3	THEODORA	PIETAS ROMANA	[.....]		337-41	—
1162	183	AE3	CONSTANTINE II	GLORIA EXERCITVS (2 stds)	[.....]		337-41	—
1208	170	AE3	CONSTANS	VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN	branch//TRP	Trier	347-48	HK: 158-60
U/s - A	153	AE3	CONSTANS	VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN	D//TRS	Trier	347-48	HK: 149
1162	165	AE3	CONSTANS	FEL TEMP REPARATIO — (Phoenix I)	//STR	Trier	348-50	CK: 33 —
U/s - A	157	AE4 copy	illegible	As Fel Temp Reparatio (falling horseman)	[.....]		352-64	—
1126	166	AE2	VALENS	SECVRTAS REIPVBLICAE	OF/II//CONP	Arles	364-67	CK: 486
U/s - A	152	AE3	VALENS	SECVRTAS REIPVBLICAE	OF/II//CONST	Arles	364-67	CK: 483
1162	159	AE2	VALENTINIAN I	GLORIA ROMANORVM (8)	OF/II//LVGP	Lyon	367-75	CK: 317
u/s	182	Pb token	5 petaled flower with dots in angles	Geometric / anthropomorphic Form			16th - 18thC	— —
1043	105	Farthing	George III	Britannia			1806	—
U/s - A	161	Halfpenny	illegible	Illegible			19th - 20thC	— —

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF THE ROMAN COINS FROM WANTAGE

Issue		<u>Denchworth Road</u>	<u>Mill Street</u>
Period	Date	No. of coins	No. of coins
1	Up to AD 41		
2	41-54		
3	54-68		
4	68-96	1	2
5	96-117		3
6	117-138		1
7	138-161		
8	161-180		
9	180-192		
10	193-222		
11	222-235	1	
12	235-260		1
13	260-275	2	5
14	275-296	2	5
15	296-317		1
16	317-330	1	
17	330-348	7	7
18	348-364	2	8
19	364-378	3	12
20	378-388		1
21	388-402		4
	'Roman'	1	8

been circulating in considerable quantities. The excavations at Barton Court Farm recovered a hoard that included 44 Theodosian coins, while a second hoard from White Horse Hill, near Uffington, illustrates that these coins certainly were available at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries.¹⁴ The excavations at Mill Street produced four Theodosian coins indicating that occupation in parts of Wantage clearly continued into the late and post-Roman period.¹⁵

Furthermore, the settlements at Wantage, Barton Court Farm and Asthall apparently conform to a pattern of coin loss observed at other rural settlements in the region, such as Old Shifford,¹⁶ Yarnton,¹⁷ Frilford¹⁸

¹⁴ Paul Booth pers. comm.

¹⁵ P. Guest, 'Coins', in Holbrook and Thomas, op. cit. note 1, pp. 129-33.

¹⁶ C. King, 'Roman coins', in G. Hey, 'Iron Age and Roman Settlement at Old Shifford Farm, Standlake', *Oxoniensia*, lx (1995), 139.

¹⁷ Paul Booth pers. comm.

¹⁸ C.H.V. Sutherland, 'Coins', in J.S.P. Bradford and R.G. Goodchild, 'Excavations at Frilford, Berks., 1937-8', *Oxoniensia*, iv (1939), 49-53 and 61-5.

and Lowbury Hill.¹⁹ These sites produce considerable quantities of late 4th-century coins, although Valentinianic issues are invariably more common than Theodosian. The relative scarcity of coins struck between AD 388 and 402 from Lowbury Hill and Frilford is significant given the nature of these settlements as ritual centres.²⁰ Boon pointed to the under-representation of Theodosian coins from Lowbury and Frilford, compared to other known temple sites in the South-West, and it seems that this pattern is repeated at other rural sites in the region, including Wantage.²¹

POTTERY by JANE TIMBY

The evaluation and excavation resulted in the recovery of 1497 sherds of pottery, 23.5 kg., mainly dating to the Roman period but accompanied by a few pieces of prehistoric, Saxon and modern date. Medieval sherds were conspicuously absent. The material was generally very well-preserved with at least two reconstructible Roman vessels. The average sherd size of 15 g. is quite high and reflects material that has not been subjected to intense or ongoing disturbance.

Pottery was recovered from a total of 129 contexts with an additional 59 sherds from unstratified collections. Of these only 22 (17%) yielded 20 sherds or more, whilst 14% produced between 10 and 20 sherds. It should be remembered when considering the dating that a lower level of confidence should be assigned to those 89 contexts with less than 10 sherds.

Methodology

The assemblage was sorted into fabric classes and quantified by sherd count, weight and rim estimated vessel equivalents (eve) for each excavated context. The data was entered on to an Excel spreadsheet which forms part of the archive. Fabrics which appear in the National Roman reference collection²² are referred to using the recommended codes (see Table 3). Other wares are referred to using a similar style of coding which is part of a more locally based system developed by the author for the region. Where appropriate a reference for these is provided in Table 3; other types are briefly described.

Rims were coded according to form or, where they exist, established typologies, for example, for the Oxfordshire products. In the following report the pottery is discussed by period followed at the end by a brief discussion placing the assemblage in its local and regional context. A small number of vessels have been selected for illustration.

Prehistoric

At least 21 sherds of prehistoric pottery were present scattered in amongst the Roman material. Two contexts, 1117 and 2011, contained only prehistoric material albeit single sherds. A variety of fabrics was observed including sandy glauconitic types, a shell-tempered ware and several calcined flint fabrics. Although featured sherds were rare, most of the material would be compatible with a middle-late Iron Age date. A possible exception is a calcined flint-tempered sherd from 1133 which shows the possible edge of a cordon which could suggest an early-middle Bronze Age date.

Residual middle Iron Age pottery has previously been observed in the general vicinity at Mill Street²³ but no foci for such Iron Age occupation have been identified to date in the immediate area.

¹⁹ G. Boon, 'The coins', in M.G. Fulford and S.J. Rippon, 'Lowbury Hill, Oxon: A re-assessment of the probable Romano-Celtic temple and Anglo-Saxon barrow', *Archaeol. Jnl.* 151 (1994), 173-7.

²⁰ Fulford and Rippon, op. cit. note 19; R. Hingley, 'Location, Function and Status: a Romano-British 'religious complex' at the Noah's Ark Inn, Frilford (Oxfordshire)', *Oxf. Jnl. of Archaeol.* 4 ii (1985), 201-14. At Frilford the majority of Theodosian coins were recovered from the cemetery rather than the temple, Sutherland, op. cit. note 18, p. 63.

²¹ Boon, op. cit. note 19, p. 176.

²² R. Tomber and J. Dore, *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: a Handbook* (1998).

²³ J.R. Timby, 'The Pottery', in Holbrook and Thomas, op. cit. note 1, pp. 131-47.

Description of fabrics

(The equivalent fabric codes from the Mill Street²⁴ assemblage are shown in brackets).

EPFL: Early Prehistoric coarse, calcined flint-tempered ware.

PREHF1: Later Prehistoric coarse, calcined flint-tempered ware.

PREHF2: (IA4) Later Prehistoric finely crushed, calcined flint-tempered ware.

PREH3: (?IA1) Later Prehistoric, glauconitic sandy ware with sparse voids from leached fossil shell.

PREH4: (IA2) Later Prehistoric sandy ware.

PREHSF: Later Prehistoric sandy ware with sparse to common angular flint.

Roman

The bulk of the pottery dates to the Roman period. Although there could potentially be a few late 1st-century AD pieces, most of the wares appear to span the 2nd to 4th centuries. The presence of several late Roman shell-tempered wares suggests that material was still accumulating in the area in the late 4th century.

Fabrics

The fabrics are arranged into four main groups according to the likely source areas: continental imports; regional imports; local wares and source unknown. Table 3 provides a quantification of the complete assemblage with summary descriptions of the individual fabrics and published references where appropriate. No further details are given for the named wares. Brief descriptions are given for the various local or unprovenanced types below. Table 4 presents a quantification of the assemblage by period.

Description of fabrics

(The equivalent fabric codes from the Mill Street assemblage are shown in brackets).

Local Wares

SANDGL: (R7) Glauconitic sandy wares. A black or brown ware of medium hardness. A moderately fine, sandy, paste distinguished by the presence of black or red-brown glauconitic ferruginous grains. Likely source from the Lower Greensand series.

OXF GR: (G1) Oxfordshire grog-tempered storage jar. A grey, black or brown, smooth soapy ware with a slightly lumpy texture. The fine textured paste contains a moderate to common frequency of rounded to sub-angular grog/clay pellets of various shades; grey, black and orange-brown. Occasional visible rounded quartz grains.

Source Unknown

GROG: Other grog-tempered wares, handmade and wheelmade.

GRSA: Sandy fabric with added grog. Handmade.

GRFL: Grog and flint-tempered wares. Handmade.

ROFLINT: wheelmade Roman flint-tempered wares.

GREY1: Medium-fine grey sandy ware.

GREY2: Medium grey sandy ware.

GREY3: Medium-coarse grey sandy ware.

OXID1: Fine orange sandy ware.

OXID2: Medium-fine sandy ware.

MISC CC: Miscellaneous colour-coated ware.

BW: Black sandy ware.

BWMIC: (R6) Micaceous, black sandy ware.

²⁴ Ibid.

	OXF RSM	Oxon colour-coated mortaria	Young 1977, 173	15	1	409	1.5	22	1
	OXF WH	Oxfordshire whiteware	T&D 1998, 174	22	1.5	154	*	11	*
	OXF WHM	Oxon whiteware mortaria	Young 1977, 56	20	1.5	1401	6	50	2.5
	OXF WHB	Oxfordshire burnt whiteware	Young 1977, 113	18	1	219	1	32	1.5
	OXF WS	Oxfordshire white-slipped ware	T&D 1998, 176	16	1	164	*	17	*
	OXF WSM	Oxon white-slipped mortaria	Young 1977, 117	1	*	48	*	12	*
	OXF RE	Oxfordshire reduced ware	Young 1977, 202	480	33	6525	28	781	40
	OXF OX	Oxfordshire oxidised ware	Young 1977, 185	40	2.5	269	1	30	1.5
	OXF CC	Oxon early colour-coat	Booth 1994, 134	5	*	17	*	18	2
	OXF GR	Oxon grog-tempered storage jar		86	6	3382	14.5	38	2
	GROG	other grog-tempered wares		24	1.5	351	1.5	10	*
	GRSA	sandy fabrics with grog		17	1	212	1	35	2
	GRFL	grog and flint-tempered		2	*	8	*	0	0
UNKNOWN	ROFLINT	wm flint-tempered		3	*	31	*	7	*
	GREY1	fine-medium grey sandy wares		101	7	882	4	43	2
	GREY2	medium grey sandy wares		183	12.5	1823	8	212	11
	GREY3	coarse grey sandy wares		4	*	37	*	0	0
	OXID1	fine-medium oxidised sandy		14	1	101	*	27	1
	OXID2	medium oxidised sandy ware		13	1	110	*	7	*
	MISC CC	Misc colour-coated ware		1	*	2	*	0	0
	BW	Misc black sandy ware		23	1.5	127	*	15	*
	BWMIC	fine black micaceous ware		3	*	64	*	12	*
Sub-total				1462	100	23191	100	1946	100
SAXON				1		7		0	
POSTMED				15		82		0	
TOTAL				1497		23485		1951	

Reference abbreviations: T&D 1998 = Tomber and Dore, op. cit. note 22; Anderson 1979 = A.S. Anderson, *The Roman Pottery Industry in North Wilts.* (Swindon Archaeol. Rep. 2, 1979); Young 1977 = Young, op. cit. note 5; Booth 1994 = P.M. Booth et al., 'A Romano-British Kiln Site at Lower Farm, Nuneham Courtenay, and other sites on the Didcot to Oxford and Wootton to Abingdon water mains, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, lviii (1993), 87-217. * = less than 1%.

Samian ware

A total of 53 sherds, 448 g., of samian ware was recovered, mainly Central Gaulish in origin. Two small pieces of South Gaulish ware were present, only one of which was stratified in ditch 1214. The assemblage only contained eight decorated sherds, five from one vessel; reported on separately below. Amongst the recognisable plain wares were forms Dr 30, Dr 31 (3), Dr 33 (4), Dr 37, Dr 42 and Curle 15. One Dr 33 cup from ditch 2008 has a lead rivet repair.

*The Decorated Samian by J. M. MILLS**Catalogue*

1. Small bodysherd Dr 30 (CG) roughly shaped to form a counter/disc. The edges are worn as if by use. Too little of the decoration survives for the identification of the pottery. Hadrianic or Antonine. Context 103 (= Layer 1122), Period 2.
2. Body sherd, Dr 37 (CG), the ovolo is Rogers B.206²⁵ with small bead row below (Fig. 9, 1). The surviving decoration comprises erotic group O.K.²⁶ impressed horizontally within festoon Rogers (F.15). The astragali at the ends of the festoon are blurred. All of these motifs were used by Laxtucissa and Paternus II. The ovolo, beads and festoon can be seen on a stamped bowl of Laxtucissa from Silchester,²⁷ whilst the erotic group impressed horizontally and the festoon occur on a stamped bowl of Paternus from Le Mans (unpub). A mould, probably of Paternus, from Lezoux in the Museum at Roanne has the ovolo, beads and erotic group.²⁸ Because the erotic group is impressed horizontally, the Wantage bowl is more likely to be the work of Paternus II. A date of c. AD 150-90 would cover the production period of both potters. SF130. Layer 1043, Period 2/3.
3. Body sherd Dr 37 (CG) with part of vine leaf and winding scroll. Not identifiable. Antonine. Context 125 (= ditch 1085), Period 3.
4. Rim sherd (5 joining sherds), Dr 30 (CG) with label stamp of Doeccus which reads [DO]IICCI (Fig. 9, 2). The ovolo (Rogers B.161) has a bead row below. The decoration is panelled, the motifs include cherub O.440 in festoon Rogers F.34 with astragalus Rogers R.18 and cupid O.442A in a plain arcade with rosette (Rogers C.67) at ends. The label stamp is to the right of this figure. Both figure types are known from other stamped bowls.²⁹ Date c. AD 165-200. Layer 1139, Period 4.

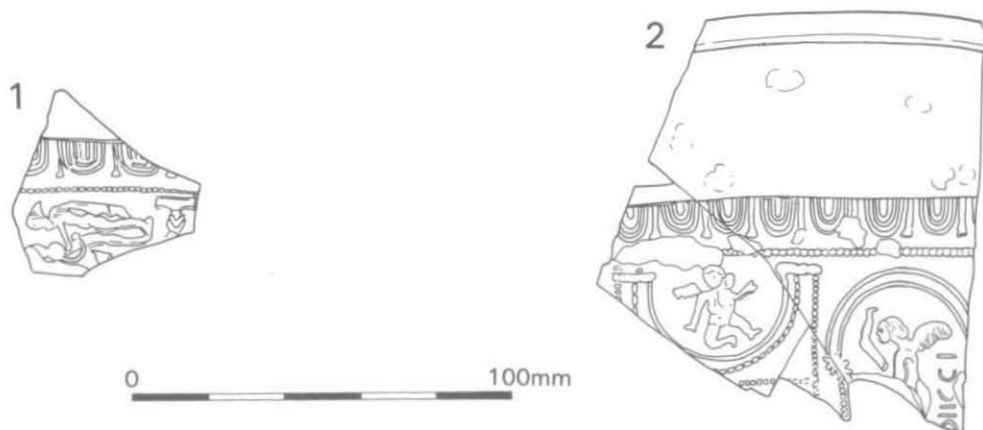


Fig. 9. Samian ware.

²⁵ Rogers - G.B. Rogers, *Poteries Sigillées de la Gaule Centrale I. Les motifs non figurés*, suppl. à Gallia, XXVIII (1974).

²⁶ O. - F. Oswald, *Index of Figure-Types on Terra Sigillata ('Samian Ware')* (1936).

²⁷ S&S 1990 - J.A. Stanfield and G. Simpson, *Les Potiers de la Gaule Centrale* (1990), pl. 97, 4.

²⁸ C. Belmont, *La Collection Constancias. Céramiques Gallo Romaines de Lezoux au Musée de Roanne* (1994).

²⁹ Ibid. pl. 148, 14 and 22.

TABLE 4. POTTERY BY PERIOD

PERIOD	1	1	2	2	2/3	2/3	3	3	4	4	5	5
FABRICS	No	wt	no	wt	No	wt	No	wt	no	wt	no	wt
<i>Prehistoric</i>	7	44	3	8	0	0	7	37	1	13	3	100
<i>ROMAN</i>												
Imports												
BAT AM	0	0	0	0	1	19	1	190	3	610	0	0
GAL AM	0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	2	57
SG/CG SAM	3	39	4	20	12	54	13	162	10	128	4	11
MOS BS	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	23	0	0	1	1
Regional												
DOR BB1	3	46	2	32	11	148	22	331	23	356	7	75
LVN CC	0	0	0	0	2	12	1	4	2	2	0	0
NFO CC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0
PNK GT	0	0	0	0	3	406	0	0	2	104	0	0
ROB SH	0	0	0	0	5	92	9	143	2	23	15	250
ALH RE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	226
SVW OX	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	48	0	0
SOW WS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	11
SAV GT	3	168	1	34	1	238	5	177	0	0	1	37
Local												
SANDGL	14	395	0	0	0	0	9	136	0	0	9	98
OXF CC	0	0	2	11	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
OXF PA	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	7
OXF RS	1	4	0	0	20	231	31	520	45	573	25	265
OXF RSM	0	0	0	0	2	18	1	3	7	162	5	226
OXF WH	6	33	0	0	7	45	6	33	1	8	1	32
OXF WHB	0	0	0	0	3	27	11	141	2	45	2	6
OXF WHM	0	0	0	0		143	7	510	3	373	0	0
OXF WS	0	0	1	36	3	24	5	61	2	14	5	29
OXF WSM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	48	0	0
OXF RE	84	1634	26	165	59	889	120	1781	50	607	89	1079
OXF OX	7	46	1	5	3	23	16	94	5	50	8	51
OXF GR	4	86	3	76	8	380	40	1655	10	277	14	491
GROG	6	104	0	0	0	0	4	40	1	7	9	69
GRSA	7	61	2	35	1	20	3	22	2	10	2	64
Unknown												
RO FLINT	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	55	0	0	0	0
GREY 1	21	297	13	38	4	25	38	350	4	54	9	47
GREY 2	2	22	8	80	12	165	79	871	14	150	43	368
GREY 3	14	81	1	21	0	0	3	16	0	0	0	0
OXID 1	2	47	2	44	1	4	2	8	4	12	3	26
OXID 2	3	21	1	2	0	0	5	69	1	1	2	15
MISC CC	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BW	1	1	3	11	4	46	12	55	2	4	1	10
BWMIC	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	64	0	0	0	0
Saxon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0
Post-medieval	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	14	72
TOTAL	188	3051	71	586	172	3019	468	7577	202	3703	279	3723

Period 1

Features allocated to the earliest phase of Roman which predates the stone building produced a total of some 180 sherds, 2901 g. The pottery came from a number of small pits or ditches, most of the groups being quite small. The average sherd size at 17 g. suggests little disturbance by subsequent activities. The range of wares is quite narrow. A high percentage of the vessels derive from local or unknown, but probably local, sources. Imports are limited to one South Gaulish and two sherds of Central Gaulish samian, three of DOR BB1 and a single Savernake jar sherd. Glauconitic sandy wares are well represented, as are Oxfordshire grey wares (OXF RE) and other miscellaneous grey sandy wares. Amongst the OXF RE wares are necked and expanded rim jars, including one with a profile and burnished lattice (e.g. Fig. 10, 1), vertical walled dishes, flat-rim dishes and a beaker and an oxidised butt beaker (OXF OX) of a type thought to have been made in the Abingdon area in the pre-Flavian period³⁰ from ditch 1214. Although some of the pottery could potentially date to the later 1st century AD, the samian along with the DOR BB1, which includes a flat rimmed bowl, suggest a date around the mid 2nd century for the latest material.

Period 2

The main deposit allocated to Period 2 is 1122, the horizon sealing the Period 1 features within the confines of the building. A similar horizon outside the building (1162) has been separated out as Period 2/3 as this was clearly still accumulating material after 1122 was sealed. Layer 1122 and linked contexts produced a small assemblage of some 84 sherds (796 g.). The average sherd size at 9.5 g. is nearly half that from Period 1 indicating that the material is much more fragmented, possibly as a result of agricultural activity. The assemblage is dominated by Oxfordshire and other grey wares. Amongst the Oxfordshire products are two sherds of early matt colour-coated beakers comparable to the material from the Nuneham Courtenay kilns dating to the 2nd century³¹ (e.g. Fig. 10, 2) and some fine grey wares with burnished decoration (Fig. 10, 3). Traded wares include small amounts of Dorset black burnished ware (DOR BB1), Savernake ware, one sherd of South Gaulish samian (cup) and three sherds of Central Gaulish samian (Dragendorff forms 31 and 33). None of this material need date later than the later 2nd century.

Period 2/3

The equivalent horizon to 1122 outside building 1162 produced a more diverse chronological range of material spanning the 2nd to late 4th centuries. This layer produced some 172 sherds (3019 g.) which were better preserved compared with that from 1122 with an average sherd size of 17.5 g. Several typical late 3rd- to late 4th-century types were present, notably OXF RS forms Young³² a variant of C18 (Fig. 10, 5), C45, C51 and C97, Oxfordshire white wares (forms P34 (Fig. 10, 4), M3³³ and a burnt whiteware jar), a DOR BB1 conical flanged bowl, Midlands grog-tempered storage jar (PNK GT) and late Roman shelly ware (ROB SH). Amongst the imported wares are two amphorae sherds; a Spanish Dressel 20 olive oil amphora and a Gallic wine amphora. In addition 12 sherds of Central Gaulish samian were present.

Period 3

Period 3 contexts relating to the construction of the stone building and activity contemporary with its occupation produced some 462 sherds (7507 g.). The profile of the pottery assemblage does not greatly differ from that of Period 2/3 with material typical of the 2nd through to the later 4th centuries.

The only floor make-up to contain pottery was layer 1210 in the corridor which produced two sherds of a white painted OXF RS beaker (type C27) and a sherd of a DOR BB1 jar decorated with an oblique lattice suggesting a date after c. AD 270 at the earliest for the laying down of this material.

Most of the Period 3 pottery derives from ditches with a mixture of 2nd- and 3rd-century wares, some types possibly continuing into the 4th century. Sherds of imported 3rd-century Moselle black-slipped beaker appear for the first time. Thirteen sherds of samian are present including a Dr 33 cup with a lead rivet repair. Local Oxfordshire wares again dominate, particularly grey wares, but also colour-coated wares, white wares and grog-tempered storage jar.

³⁰ J.R. Timby, P. Booth and T.G. Allen, 'A New Early Roman Fineware Industry in the Upper Thames Valley' (unpubl. rep. Oxf. Archaeol. Unit, 1997).

³¹ P.M. Booth et al., 'A Romano-British Kiln Site at Lower Farm, Nuneham Courtenay, and other sites on the Didcot to Oxford and Wootton to Abingdon water mains, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, lviii (1993), 87-217.

³² Young, op. cit. note 5.

³³ Ibid.

Of the three sequences of ditches running parallel to the building, 1085/1087/1091 appears to be the earlier with none of the pottery being much later than the mid 3rd century and thus potentially predating the stone building. Ditch systems 1012 and 1098 both contain 3rd- to 4th-century finds with a much higher proportion of colour-coated ware (Oxfordshire, Nene Valley and Moselle beaker). Vessels of note from 1098 include an oxidised Abingdon-type butt beaker (OXF OX) (Fig. 10, 7), an OXF RE carinated bowl (Fig. 10, 8), a grog-tempered storage jar (Fig. 10, 9), a bowl with incised decoration (Fig. 10, 10) and a jar (Fig. 10, 11). The presence of later Roman shelly ware in 1014 suggests that this ditch was not infilled until the later 4th century. Amongst the recognisable Oxfordshire forms in this ditch are types C128, C45, M22, C97 and a barbotine scale-decorated beaker.

In Area B Period 3 pottery was associated with ditches 2008 and 2015. Ditch 2008 contained pottery spanning the 2nd to late 4th centuries. Three sherds of later Roman shelly ware came from the primary fill 2046 suggesting abandonment during the later 4th century or later. By contrast most of the remaining pottery dates to the 2nd-3rd centuries including an Oxfordshire white ware mortarium, Young³⁴ type M14, with a production date of *c.* AD 180-240, a 2nd-century poppyhead beaker (Fig. 10, 12) and white ware beaker decorated with red barbotine dots. A complete absence of colour-coated wares typical of the later 3rd-4th centuries might suggest deliberate backfilling using soil accumulated during the 3rd century. Ditch 2015 produced 24 sherds which suggest it was probably abandoned in the second half of the 3rd century, or later. Of particular note is the base of an OXF RS bowl from this feature with an incised lattice and other marks on the interior of the footring (Fig. 10, 6).

Period 4

Period 4 contexts produced a total of 202 sherds, 3703 g. of pottery much of which came from the debris layers 1120, 1141, 1103, stone spread 1139, and the robber trenches and pits. All the pottery dates to the later Roman period with one notable exception, a sherd of organic-tempered handmade ware of Saxon type from robber trench 1165. Unfortunately the date range on this type of ware is quite wide, anywhere between the 6th-9th centuries. Other sherds from the robber trenches includes typical 4th-century colour-coated wares, various grey wares, including a jug, Young type R9, and DOR BB1. Robber pit 1184 produced an OXF RS bowl, form C81. Other 4th-century types came from the debris layers and pits, and include examples of mortaria types C100 and M17, a disc-mouthed flask C8, and bowls C45, C47 and C81. Examples of several wares appear for the first time from these horizons, in particular New Forest colour-coated indented beaker (NFO CC), Oxfordshire white-slipped mortaria (OXF WSM) and a sherd of Severn Valley ware (SVW OX).

Period 5

A smaller group of 157 sherds, 1877 g. of pottery came from the post-Roman horizons, mainly the topsoil. The sherds although still in reasonable condition have a slightly lower average sherd size of 11 g. Of particular note is a colour-coated dish, type C84 with rosette decoration (Fig. 10, 13), a burnt white ware bowl type W59 (Fig. 10, 14) and the only sherd from a white-slipped, comb decorated Alice Holt storage jar (ALH RE). Most of the material is Roman with just 13 sherds of post-medieval/modern date. No further examples of Saxon pottery were present and medieval wares are completely absent.

Discussion

The assemblage from Denchworth Road complements that recently published from Mill Street.³⁶ Although both assemblages show the same chronological span, the considerably larger group from Mill Street shows a greater emphasis on material of 1st to 2nd-century date and less on the later Roman assemblage, although it has significantly more post-Roman finds. This tends to be reflected in the range of wares present rather than the overall quantities of the main groups. A comparison of the continental imports, for example, show similar proportions of samian and the same range of amphora at both sites. In terms of regional traded wares DOR BB1 accounts for 4% by weight of the total assemblage at both sites, with minor amounts of SAV GT, ALH RE and PNK GT. Late Roman shelly wares are slightly more common at Denchworth Road accounting for 2.5% of the assemblage whereas at Mill Street they contributed less than 1%. Comparison of some of the local Oxfordshire products also shows a very similar profile with OXF RE accounting for 27-28% at each and OXF WS and OXF PA appearing only

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Timby, *op. cit.* note 23.

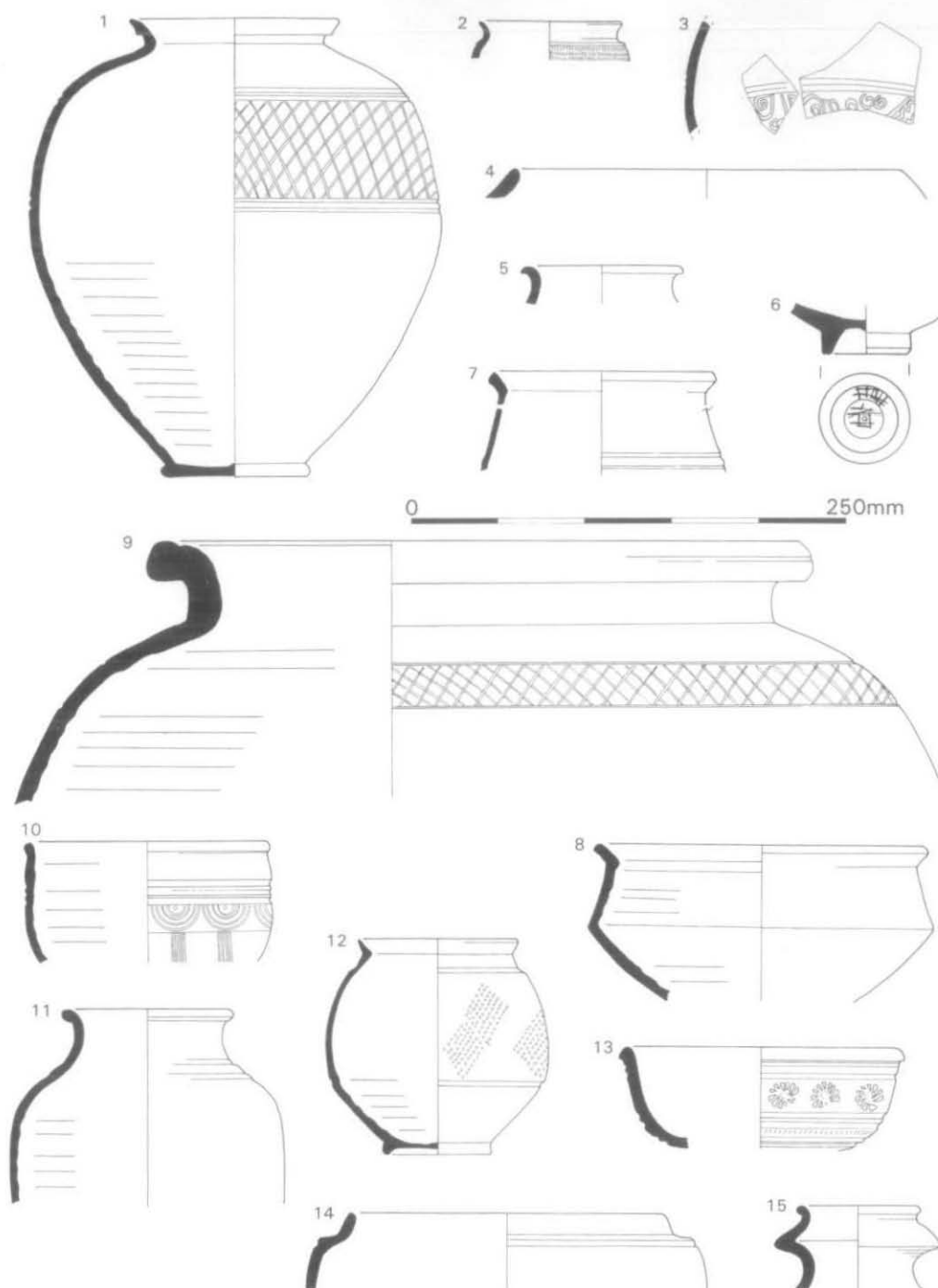


Fig. 10. Coarse pottery.

as minor groups. Considerable difference is reflected however, in the proportions of colour-coated wares (OXF RS) which are more than twice as common at Denchworth Road at 8.5% compared to just 3.5% at Mill Street. One obvious explanation is the presence of the 4th-century stone building at the former. It has been observed elsewhere³⁷ that villa and villa-type sites have the highest representation of fine and specialist wares, with expected percentages in excess of 11% in the later Roman period. If the continental imports are added to the colour-coated wares then Denchworth Road has around 15-17% fine and specialist wares compared to around 8-9% at Mill Street.

The Denchworth Road assemblage is also characterised by a relatively high proportion of storage jars in various fabrics (OXF GR, SAV GT, ALH RE, PNK GT). Such a feature seems to be very typical of rural settlements and is presumably related to the storage or processing of raw materials such as agricultural produce. Large storage vessels do not tend to be so common in urban assemblages.

Catalogue of illustrated sherds (Fig. 10)

1. Hard, fired grey sandy ware jar, decorated with a burnished line lattice. OXF RE. Ditch 2024 (2025). Period 1.
2. Small beaker with a matt brown slip and fine rouletted decoration. Early Oxfordshire colour-coated ware. OXF CC. Layer 1122, Period 2.
3. Two bodysherds, probably from the same vessel with burnished line decoration. OXF RE. Layer 1080. Period 2/3.
4. White ware box, OXF WH. Young 1977, P34. Layer 1080. Period 2/3.
5. Brownish-red colour-coated jar, variant of C18. OXF RS. Context 103. Period 2/3.
6. Base from a colour-coated bowl, slightly burnt on the upper surface. Lines have been scratched into the interior of the footring. Ditch 2015 (2016). Period 3.
7. Orange sandy ware butt beaker, OXF OX. Context 105 = ditch 1098. Period 3.
8. Hard, fine grey sandy ware carinated bowl. OXF RE. Context 109 = ditch 1098. Period 3.
9. Handmade storage jar, OXF GR, with burnished lattice decoration. Context 109 = ditch 1098. Period 3.
10. Hemispherical bowl, hard, fine grey ware with incised and combed decoration. OXF RE. Ditch 1098 (1099). Period 3.
11. Grey sandy ware everted rim jar, OXF RE. Ditch 1098 (1099). Period 3.
12. Hard, fine grey ware poppyhead beaker decorated with lozenges of barbotine dots. Ditch 2008 (2009). Period 3.
13. Burnt OXF RS dish, Young 1977, type C84, decorated with impressed rosettes. Topsoil 1001. Period 5.
14. Whiteware bowl, Young 1977, type W59 with a blackened exterior, OXF WHB. Topsoil 1001. Period 5.
15. Jug, grey sandy ware, OXF RE. Tr A, unstratified.

SMALL FINDS by JANE BIRCHER

Copper Alloy

1. Complete but distorted bracelet of almost round section flattening towards the terminals (Fig. 11, 1). The hook-and-eye fastening has a block near the hook end. The bracelet is basically undecorated although two faint diagonal grooves near the blocked terminal give the impression of a twist and the outer edge of the eye is delicately notched at regular intervals giving a rosette effect. This bracelet belongs to a widely distributed and well-known type of late Roman (late 3rd and 4th centuries AD) bracelet. A close parallel of D-shaped section but without the decoration comes from the Poundbury cemetery³⁸ where it is suggested that blocked hook-and-eye terminals are a 4th-century type. Length 184 mm., maximum diameter of bracelet (not terminal) 3.2 mm. SF134. 1003 = 1162, Period 2/3.
2. Approximately half of a penannular bracelet of oval to flattened D-shaped section, wider and flatter at the terminals (Fig. 11, 2). One terminal is extant, decorated with three pairs of opposing marginal notches. Late 3rd or 4th century AD. Length 93 mm. SF175. 1193, = 1162, Period 2/3.

³⁷ P.M. Booth, 'The Pottery', in Booth, op. cit. note 13, pp. 105-34.

³⁸ H. Cool, 'The copper alloy and silver gravegoods', in D.E. Farwell and T.I. Molleson, *Poundbury Vol. 2. The Cemeteries* (1993), 89-96, fig. 65.12.

3. Tubular object made of cast, possibly leaded, bronze solid at one end and hollow at the other (Fig. 11, 3). It is decorated with two raised sections, both comprising a broad high rib with smaller ridges on each side. There is a group of three punched dots, arranged in a triangle, on each broad rib. Part of a larger, unidentified object of good quality workmanship, possibly a neck-ring of late Iron Age type.³⁹ Length 36.4 mm., maximum diameter 11.3 mm. SF141. 1139, Period 4.
4. Curved fragment of thin sheet metal now very corroded but possibly part of the domed head of a stud. Original diameter 16 mm. SF135. Re-cut 1087 (1092), Period 3.
5. Penannular object. Heavy bar of round section bent into a ring with overlapping ends. External diameter 21.5 mm., internal diameter 14 mm., section 5.5-5.8 mm. SF184. Ditch 1014 (1017), Period 3.
6. Droplet, possibly suggestive of on-site metal-working. Length 11 mm. SF160. 1162, Period 2/3.

Lead

7. Flat, almost round droplet, possibly used as a weight. Overall dimensions 17 x 15 x 3 mm. SF151. Unstratified, Area A+.
8. Sheet fragment with moulding on one face, possibly part of a larger object such as the base of a vessel. Overall dimensions 19 x 18 mm., thickness 2 mm. SF167. Robber trench 1111 (1113), Period 4.
9. Thin sheet fragment with one rounded end and folded over on two edges. Overall dimensions 19 x 15 x 6 mm. SF171. 1210, Period 3.
10. Cut segment of a round lump scored by a cut mark. Overall dimensions 41 x 18 x 12 mm. SF172. 1210, Period 3.
11. Small, flat, irregularly-shaped splash. Overall dimensions 19 x 14 x 2 mm. SF174. 1122, Period 2.
12. L-shaped splash. Overall dimensions 70 x 45 x 20 mm. SF179. 1208, Period 4.
13. Splash. Overall dimensions 30 x 22 x 6 mm. SF181. Unstratified over 1140.

Iron

14. Socketed mortise chisel. The chisel is formed from a rectangular bar, bevelled on one face only to create a cutting edge, now damaged. The incomplete round socket contains traces of mineralised wood. This type of chisel is common in the Roman period.⁴⁰ However the utilitarian nature of this tool has ensured that the type continues in use until the present day, therefore it is not necessarily of Roman date. Length 205 mm., socket diameter 25 mm., extant dimensions of tip 15 x 4 mm. Unstratified Area A+.
15. Offcut or possibly a small tool in the shape of a rectangular-sectioned bar which tapers and curves to a crude point. Length 72 mm., section 10 x 5 mm. SF101. Pit 1037 (1038), Period 5.
16. Chain. One complete and two incomplete elongated figure-of-eight chain links of a type widely used in the Iron Age and Roman periods⁴¹ as well as later. Complete link length 64 mm., maximum width 22 mm. Context 103, Period 2/3.
17. Large flat-headed stud. Similar studs were found amongst the coffin fittings at the late Roman cemetery at Poundbury⁴² where it is suggested they were possibly of a decorative nature. Diameter of head 45 mm., length 25 mm. SF178. 1208, Period 4.
18. Strip, possibly from a hinge or binding strip for a door. The strip has three original edges and is broken at one end. A centrally positioned hole would have held a nail or rivet. Overall dimensions 80 x 62 mm., hole diameter 9 mm. SF173. 1210, Period 3.
19. Flat plate now broken into roughly a crescentic shape, probably with no original edges. Overall dimensions 85 x 40 mm., thickness 4 mm. SF108. Pit 1077 (1078), Period 4.
20. Plate fragment, broken on all edges and now pentagonal. Maximum dimensions 75 x 60 mm., thickness approximately 10 mm. SF123. Re-cut 2054 (2045), Period 1.
21. Small lump, mainly corrosion products. Length 32 mm. SF127. Re-cut 2038 (2052), Period 1.
22. Two lumps, mainly corrosion products. SF104. Ditch 2003 (2005), Period 1.
23. Three corroded and encrusted lumps and one piece of ?hammerscale. Sample 15. Layer 1122, Period 2.

³⁹ R.P. Winham, 'Finds of metal', in P.J. Fasham, *The Prehistoric Settlement at Winnall Down, Winchester* (1985), 46-56, fig. 42.16.

⁴⁰ W.H. Manning, *Catalogue of the Romano-British Iron Tools, Fittings and Weapons in the British Museum* (1985), 23-4, B35-9, fig. 4.5.

⁴¹ Ibid. 139, S9-13, pl. 64.

⁴² J.M. Mills, 'Iron coffin nails and fittings', in Farwell and Molleson, op. cit. note 38, pp. 117-18, fig. 82, nos. 31-7.

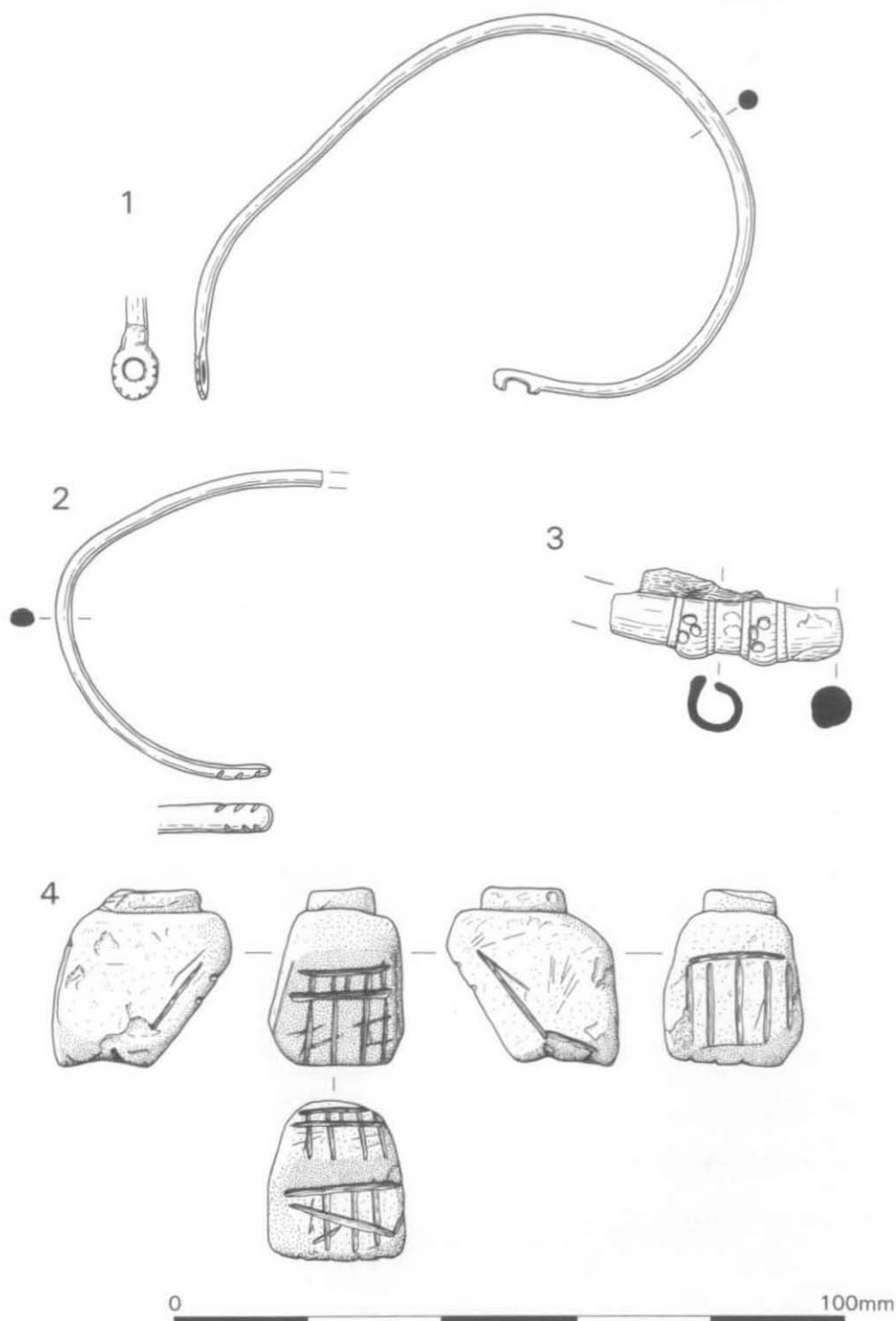


Fig. 11. Small finds.

Iron Nails

For the purposes of this report the nails have been divided into the following seven types (Table 5). Types A-C cover undiagnostic fragments and types D-G complete or near complete examples:

- A. Shank only from nail over 60 mm. in length.
- B. Shank fragment under 59 mm. in length.
- C. Round head only.
- D. Nail with round head and square shank original length over 60 mm.
- E. Nail with round head and square shank original length under 59 mm.
- F. Nail with large round head over 20 mm. diameter and square shank.
- G. Hobnail.

TABLE 5. NAILS BY PERIOD AND TYPE

Type	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Period 1		1			1		
Period 2		4			1		
Period 2/3		2			1	2	
Period 3	2	10	1		4	1	23+
Period 4	4	21		4	14	1	
Period 5	2	5		2	7	1	
Unknown	1			3			
Total	9	43	1	9	28	5	23+

A total of 95 nails or nail fragments was recorded from the site; 88 from Areas A/A+ and 7 from Area B. Apart from this disparity, no meaningful information could be deduced from the spatial distribution of the nails. All are of similar form with tapering, square-sectioned shanks and flat, round or sub-rectangular heads although five nails (type F below) have noticeably larger heads. All the nails with heads extant accord with Manning's type 1b.⁴³ This type of nail has a long history but there is no reason why all the nails from this site should not be Roman.

The nails are in a poor condition, most are heavily corroded and some mineralised. Only 13 are complete; 53 are fragments and the remainder are damaged at the tip. At least three are clenched. The majority of the nails are robustly made with at least 23 originally over 60 mm. in length. The condition, completeness and large size of the nails suggests that they were utilised for structural purposes. From Table 5 it can be seen that the largest number of nails come from Period 4 contexts and may therefore be associated with the dilapidation or demolition and abandonment of the stone building.

In addition, in excess of 23 hobnails were recovered.⁴⁴ The group of 20 and the group of two hobnails with further fragments may represent discarded portions of shoe soles rather than casual losses. All the hobnails come from Period 3 contexts, contemporaneous with occupation of the building.

Worked Bone

24. Long tapering bone object, complete but now broken into two pieces. The shaft has been cut with a knife into rough facets and the top is conical. Some cancellous tissue remains at the point. The object is most likely to be an unfinished pin of Crummy type 1 of 1st- to 2nd-century AD date⁴⁵ although it has been suggested that pins were not manufactured in this way.⁴⁶ Length 109 mm., maximum section 9 x 8 mm. SF185. Pit 1053 (1054). Period 4.

25. Fragment of pin or possibly needle shaft. Length 41.5 mm. Sample 15. Layer 1122. Period 2.

⁴³ Manning, *op. cit.* note 40, pp. 134-7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 135, type 10.

⁴⁵ N. Crummy, *The Roman Small Finds from Excavations in Colchester 1971-9* (1983), 19-21.

⁴⁶ N. Crummy, 'Bone-working at Colchester', *Britannia*, XII (1981), 277-85.

Stone

26. Possibly a crude figurine of a schematically depicted seated person (head missing) with drapery, or more probably a basket chair, depicted by scratched lines (Fig. 11, 4). Chalk figurines are widely known in the Late Iron Age and into the Roman period although this example is smaller than most and no parallels have been found for the chair. Perhaps this is a local rendition of the Dea Nutrix type of pipeclay figurine showing a seated goddess in a wickerwork armchair.⁴⁷ Overall dimensions 26 x 25 x 21 mm. SF115. Layer 2032. Period 1.

Discussion

Only two of the copper-alloy objects (nos. 1 and 2 - the bracelets) are of closely datable Roman form and belong to the late 3rd or 4th centuries AD. No. 3, possibly a late Iron Age neck-ring, is certainly a quality object and its poor condition and incompleteness may indicate its survival in use as an heirloom into the Roman period. With the possible exceptions of no. 7 (if used as a weight) and no. 8 (if part of a vessel) all the lead is consistent with on-site lead-working, perhaps in association with the construction of the main house. Finds of lead were confined to Areas A and A+. Apart from two horseshoes from post-medieval/modern contexts (see archive) all of the iron objects, including the nails, could belong to the Roman period.

This is a small assemblage, domestic and commonplace in character. A number of objects are perhaps suggestive of small-scale manufacturing (no. 6 - copper-alloy droplet; the lead; no. 14 - iron chisel and no. 15 - iron offcut; no. 23, if hammerscale and no. 24 - ?pin rough-out). Two items - no. 3, the ?neck-ring and no. 26 - the chalk figurine may belong to the period before the construction of the stone building.

WORKED STONE by RUTH SAUNDERS

Two rotary quern fragments (SF 137 and 138) were recovered from 1092, the fill of Period 3 ditch 1091. They are both of the same lithology, a Millstone Grit, and may be from the same artefact. Their thickness suggests that they may be from a mechanically operated millstone rather than a hand operated quern.

Also recovered were a number of roof and floor stones, including several complete examples with a single suspension hole. The majority of the building stone is of limestones from the Corallian.

FIRED CLAY by EMMA HARRISON

Fired clay was recovered in small quantities from a number of Period 1-5 features, with the largest assemblage from the fill 2045 of Period 1 trackway ditch 2054. Many of the fragments have a flat surface with numerous organic impressions, whilst some have a smooth flat surface on the opposite or an adjoining face. The material appears to come from a pit lining, as it appears insufficiently highly fired to be from an oven lining. Two fabrics are present, one of which has chalk, flint and rounded quartz inclusions whilst the other is a finer fabric with fewer, smaller quartz inclusions and mica. Both also contain an abundant black, rounded inclusion.

BRICK AND TILE by EMMA HARRISON

Brick and tile was recovered from 41 excavation and two evaluation contexts. Many of the fragments are small and unidentifiable to type, but 33 *tegula*, 28 *imbrex* and 22 box tile fragments were identified. The latter indicate a hypocausted structure in the vicinity. Almost half of the *tegula* and *imbrex* fragments are from Period 4 demolition 1120. One *tegula* fragment from robber trench 1165 has a nail hole. The majority of the fragments of box tile also derived from Period 4 demolition and robbing deposits, although single fragments also occurred within period 2/3 horizon 1062 and the fill of Period 3 ditch 1014.

MORTAR AND PLASTER by EMMA HARRISON

Plain white wall plaster was recovered from the fill of ditch 1014 and a single fragment painted red from ditch 1087. *Opus signinum* was recovered from seven predominately Period 4 contexts, much of it with a red painted surface suggestive of its use as a lining (of a plunge bath?). Two fragments of *opus signinum* flooring were found, one a piece of a quarter-round moulding, the other from a substantial floor 62 mm. thick that was quite unlike the floor excavated in Room 2. The fragments must therefore have derived from a structure (a bath?) that lay outside the excavated area.

⁴⁷ M. Rouvier-Jeanlin, *Les Figurines Gallo-Romaines en Terre Cuite au Musée des Antiquités Nationales* (1972), 156-84.

STRUCK FLINT by GRAEME WALKER

Thirty-four pieces of flint were recovered from Romano-British and unstratified contexts. Most of the assemblage consists of trimming waste, largely secondary and tertiary flakes and some blades. There are few primary flakes and no cores. There are also no implements, although six pieces show signs of slight retouch and/or utilisation.

GLASS by EMMA HARRISON

Three small pieces of colourless Romano-British glass were recovered. Two are curved sherds from unidentifiable vessels, while the third is a flat fragment of window glass from a Period 4 demolition deposit (1120).

HUMAN REMAINS by TONY WALDRON

Human remains were recovered from pit 1129, the foundation burial beneath the floor of Room 1 of the stone building. They included the skull, mandible, both ilia, vertebrae, ribs, phalanges and long bones, all of which could have come from one infant. Judging from the length of the intact limb bones, it seems likely that the child was born alive but died within the first month of life.⁴⁸ There was no indication on the skeleton of the cause of death.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

ANIMAL BONE by MARK MALTBY

Methods of Analysis

Measurements were taken where possible following von den Driesch's⁴⁹ descriptions. Ageing of cattle, sheep/goat and pig mandibles adapted the system of Grant.⁵⁰

Preservation of the Bones

Surface preservation of the bones was good, and only three bones were burnt. Gnawing evidence was more common, with 23% of the identified fragments suffering some damage (Table 6).

Assemblage Size

A total of 1163 fragments was recorded from the excavations, of which only 467 were identified. It is a small assemblage spanning several centuries of occupation, but is similar in size to the assemblage from Mill Street⁵¹ and the two samples can be compared.

Species Representation

Cattle bones were the most commonly identified in all four periods (Table 6), representing 52% of the identified mammal fragments (excluding rabbit (modern intrusion) and small mammals). Cattle was also the most common species identified at Mill Street but there they provided only 46% of the assemblage.⁵² As at Mill Street, cattle tended to be better represented in later Roman deposits. This may indicate beef consumption was becoming more important, although other explanations are possible such as differential preservation and disposal.

⁴⁸ I.G. Fazekas and Kósa, *Forensic Fetal Osteology* (Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978).

⁴⁹ A. von den Driesch, *A Guide to the Measurement of Animal Bones from Archaeological Sites* (Peabody Mus. Mono. 1, 1976).

⁵⁰ A. Grant, 'The Use of Toothwear as a Guide to the Age of Domestic Ungulates', in B. Wilson, C. Grigson and S. Payne (eds.), *Ageing and Sexing Animal Bones from Archaeological Sites* (BAR Brit. Ser. 109, 1982), 91-108.

⁵¹ M. Maltby, 'Animal bone', in Holbrook and Thomas, op. cit. note 1, pp. 155-63.

⁵² Ibid. 157.

TABLE 6. ANIMAL BONE FRAGMENTS

Species	Total
Cattle	199
Horse	45
Pig	27
Sheep/Goat	98
Dog	8
Red Deer	1
Hare	6
Rabbit	47
Short-tailed Vole	2
Mouse	1
Rodent	16
Domestic Fowl	4
Goose	1
Raven	1
Rook/Crow	1
Frog	1
Frog/Toad	5
Eel	1
Unidentified Fish	3
Total Mammal	450
Total Bird	7
Total Amphibian	6
Total Fish	4
Unidentified	696
Total	1163
Eroded	18
Gnawed	105
Ivored	5
Burnt	3

Totals include bones from sieved and unsieved samples

Sheep/goat were the second most common species representing 26% of the identified mammal bones, which is substantially less than in the Mill Street sample (38%). This may be the result of variations in deposition of bones in different parts of the settlement. No bones could be identified as goat, compared with 18 definite sheep specimens, supporting the Mill Street evidence that sheep provided the vast majority of the sheep/goat assemblage.

Pig bones were generally poorly represented, amounting to only 7% of the total identified mammal assemblage. The ratio of sheep/goat to pig (78:22) was slightly lower than in the Mill Street sample but comparable with samples from other rural and small urban settlements in Roman Britain.

Horse bones outnumber pig and contribute 12% of the total identified mammal assemblage. The ratio of cattle:horse (82:18) is similar to the Mill Street assemblage. Horse bones tend to be better represented in rural settlements and on the periphery of large settlements in Roman Britain.⁵³

Only small numbers of dog bones were found, although their presence is indicated by the large number of gnawed bones. Wild mammals were represented by small numbers of hare bones, a red deer tooth and a rabbit skeleton which is assumed to be a modern intrusion. Small mammal bones were mainly recovered in sieved samples and included short-tailed vole and wood mouse. Only seven bird bones were identified, most of which belonged to domestic fowl but domestic/grey lag goose, raven and rook/crow were each represented by a single bone.

Four fish bones were recovered including a vertebra of an eel from a Period 1 sieved sample. No fish bones were recorded at Mill Street. A small number of amphibian bones were also retrieved from sieved samples (Table 6).

The Cattle Assemblage

The bones represented in the cattle sample (Table 7) were from all parts of the carcass but, as in the Mill Street assemblage, certain elements such as phalanges, vertebrae and other more fragile elements were comparatively rarely recovered. Generally there was a more even representation of the major elements than at Mill Street, with little evidence of large accumulations of bones of a particular type, commonly found in large urban settlements. A number of largely complete limb bones were found in some of the Period 3 ditch fills.

Butchery marks were observed on 26 cattle bones and full details are stored in the archive. These included eight examples of upper limb bones that bore marks on the shaft made by a heavy blade running along the bone removing slivers of bone along with the flesh during filleting. This method has been commonly observed on urban and military sites but only rarely on rural sites,⁵⁴ although it is also evident on bones from the small town of Neatham, Hampshire. The presence of this type of butchery mark suggests the presence of specialist butchers in Wantage from the earliest period represented.

Other butchery evidence consists of a mixture of knife cuts, chop marks and occasionally saw marks, with no clear chronological variations. This mirrors the results from Mill Street and, in this respect, butchery methods are more diverse than encountered on contemporary major urban sites, perhaps indicating that butchery was not solely in the hands of specialists.

Two horn cores with chop and saw marks indicated removal of the horn sheath presumably for working. A largely complete cattle skull recovered from pit 2042 (Period 3) bore fine knife cuts on several parts of the skull indicating that it had been skinned and defleshed. A depression on the frontal bone may indicate pole-axing but the damage may have occurred after death.

Chop or saw marks were observed on 22 cattle bones. Apart from the skimmed bones, most of these were associated with dismemberment. There was no evidence for longitudinal splitting of bones for marrow as commonly recorded in assemblages from major urban sites.⁵⁵

Fine incisions made by knives were observed on seven cattle bones, three of which also bore chop marks. A humerus bore knife cuts and chop marks around its distal end both made during dismemberment. A first phalanx bore knife cuts probably associated with skinning. It also bore chop marks on the proximal end made during separation from the metapodial. Generally, cleavers tended to be used more commonly than knives for butchery in the Romano-British period but the excavations in Wantage have shown both types of tool were still used in some cases.

Evidence for cattle mortality rates is limited. Five mandibles had surviving teeth, four of which belonged to adult animals over four years of age. The other belonged to an immature animal probably killed between two and four years old. Epiphyseal fusion data confirmed the virtual absence of young calves in the assemblage, although one humerus was probably from a neonatal mortality. The others indicated that most of the cattle were under or about four years old and may represent a policy of culling some cattle for meat between three and five years old. Nearly all the fusion evidence derived from Period 3 deposits, whereas all

⁵³ M. Maltby, 'The Meat Supply in Roman Dorchester and Winchester', in A.R. Hall and H.K. Kenward (eds.), *Urban-Rural Connexions: Perspectives from Environmental Archaeology* (Symposia of Assoc. for Envir. Archaeol. 12, Oxbow Mono. 47, 1994), 85-102.

⁵⁴ M. Maltby, 'Urban-rural Variations in the Butchery of Cattle in Romano-British Hampshire', in D. Serjeantson and T. Waldron (eds.), *Diets and Crafts in Towns* (BAR Brit. Ser. 199, 1989), 75-106.

⁵⁵ Maltby, op. cit. note 53; K. Dobney, D. Jaques and B. Irving, *Of Butchers and Breeds. Report on Vertebrate Remains from Various Sites in the City of Lincoln* (1996).

but one of the ageable mandibles were from Period 1, so it is possible that there were chronological changes in exploitation with more cattle being killed for meat in the later deposits associated with the stone building. However, it must be emphasised that the sample size is small.

TABLE 7. CATTLE, SHEEP/GOAT, PIG, HORSE AND DOG ELEMENTS REPRESENTED

	Cattle	Sheep/ Goat	Pig	Horse	Dog
Horn Core	2				
Maxilla	6	5	2		
Skull frag	17			4	
Mandible	17	13	4	7	5
Hyoid	1				
Loose Teeth	17	24	7	6	2
Humerus	14	3	2	1	
Radius	8	9	6	1	
Ulna	2		1	1	
Os Coxae	9	1		3	
Scapula	12	2	1	4	
Femur	16		1		
Patella		1			
Tibia	16	11	1	1	1
Astragalus	2				
Calcaneus	3	1			
Carpals	5				
Centroquartal		1			
Metacarpals	9	8		1	
Metatarsals	10	11		1	
Lat. Metapod.				1	
Phalanx 1	10	3			
Phalanx 2	7	3	2	1	
Phalanx 3	1			1	
Sesamoids	1				
Atlas (VC1)	3				
Axis (VC2)	2			2	
Cervical V	1			3	
Thoracic V	5	1		3	
Lumbar V	2			3	
Sacral V				1	
Ribs	1	1			
Total	199	98	27	45	8

Three complete limb bones from Period 3 provided withers height estimates of 120, 125 and 129 cm. These represent quite large cattle by Romano-British standards. As at Mill Street, several of the limb bone breadth measurements taken on Period 3-4 specimens indicated that they belonged to quite large cattle, probably males, but sample sizes are too small for more detailed analyses. Several cattle limb bones had minor pathological conditions resulting in distortion of their articular surfaces. Such anomalies are not necessarily caused by working but their relatively high frequency may suggest that many of the older cattle were used as plough animals.

The Sheep/Goat Assemblage

Sheep/goat bones survived less well than cattle, but the assemblage is dominated by denser elements such as loose teeth, mandibles, tibiae and metapodials (Table 7), indicating that their relative frequency should be regarded as a minimum figure when compared with cattle. As at Mill Street, it is probable that more sheep than cattle were consumed, although the latter would have contributed by far the greater weight of meat.

Nine sheep/goat mandibles provided tooth ageing data. Two belonged to lambs probably under a year old; four were from second year mortalities; one was from a sub-adult animal and two were from adult animals with heavy wear on some molars. This fairly broad range with a slight peak of second year mortalities again supports the evidence from Mill Street.⁵⁶ Meat production was, on this limited evidence, more important than wool production.

Size data was limited and only six sheep/goat bones bore butchery marks, of which three consisted of knife cuts and three of chop marks, showing that a variety of equipment and methods of butchery were employed.

Other Domestic Mammals

The pig sample was too small to permit detailed analysis of element representation. The horse remains included four cervical vertebrae from the same immature animal in ditch 2012 (Period 1). Ditch 1014 (Period 3) included a pair of complete mandibles from an adult male horse and the fragmentary remains of a complete skull from an older male. Partial remains of another skull were found in ditch 1085 (Period 3). A pair of complete pelves, three lumbar vertebrae and the sacrum of an adult horse were found in post-medieval or modern pit 1024 (Period 5). These albeit small groups of associated bones indicate that horse carcasses tended not to be as scattered or as fragmented as cattle bones. No butchery marks were observed and there is therefore no conclusive evidence that horseflesh was consumed by the inhabitants.⁵⁷ Tooth eruption data showed the presence of four adult animals but at least one immature animal was also represented. The main value of horses would have been as working animals. Lateral lengths of two complete horse limb bones produced withers height estimates of 129 cm. and 148 cm., the latter being a large specimen for the period.

A dog tibia from ditch 2015 (Period 3) bore knife cuts on the shaft near the distal end. These could be skinning incisions but disarticulation cannot be ruled out. Two adult dogs were represented by mandibles, but no bones were measurable.

Other Species

Wild mammals were poorly represented and appear to have contributed little to the meat diet. Domestic fowl were kept and probably eaten although not in great numbers based on the surviving evidence. On this site their bones were only found in later Roman features, although they were found in earlier deposits at Mill Street. Their relatively low frequency is typical of villa and small urban settlements in Roman Britain.⁵⁸

As at Mill Street, the only evidence for goose is in a late Roman deposit 1151 (Period 4). Raven was also represented on both sites but rook/crow was not identified at Mill Street. No evidence for butchery was found on any of the bird bones.

The sieving policy enabled the recovery of a small number of fish bones including a common eel vertebra, indicating that such sources of food were at least occasionally exploited.

The small numbers of small mammal and amphibian bones represent species that are suited to a wide range of habitats but they could indicate the presence of open spaces and some undergrowth in the vicinity.

⁵⁶ Maltby, *op. cit.* note 51, p. 160.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 161.

⁵⁸ M. Maltby, 'Domestic Fowl on Romano-British sites: inter-site comparisons of abundance', *Internat. Jnl. of Osteoarchaeol.* 7 (1997), 402-14.

Conclusions

The excavation produced a relatively small assemblage of bones, which possesses many characteristics of the sample previously studied from Mill Street. It was concluded that the Mill Street assemblage lacked the evidence for large-scale meat processing evident at certain large urban centres, but was a slightly richer and more diverse assemblage than is often found on rural sites. The Denchworth Road group has expanded the evidence for specialist butchery techniques, and the dominance of cattle and sheep in the meat diet of the inhabitants has been confirmed. There is some evidence that some larger stock were exploited in the late Roman period. However, many of the traits of faunal assemblages typical of major urban centres were not evident (e.g. high percentages of pig; split cattle limb bones; marked peaks in slaughter age). The assemblage is more varied than some samples from rural settlements, however, including slightly higher percentages of hare, domestic fowl and fish. Some of the animals, particularly cattle, may have been brought for slaughter and butchery at the settlement.

SHELL by EMMA HARRISON

A small quantity of 70 shells or fragments was recovered from 25 contexts. All are oyster fragments except for one mussel shell and one snail.

ARCHAEOBOTANICAL EVIDENCE by ANDREW S. FAIRBAIRN and PHIL AUSTIN⁵⁹

The broad aims of the analysis were to provide information about the plant resources utilised at the site, the function of the features and characteristics of the Romano-British environment. Few Romano-British assemblages of plant remains have been studied from the Wantage area, with only one from the Romano-British settlement at Wantage itself.⁶⁰ The analysis, therefore, had the potential to contribute not only to an understanding of plant use at the site, but also to that of Wantage and its environs.

Materials and methods

The samples chosen for analysis are detailed in Table 8. Seven samples were chosen in total, two from Period 1 cut features, one from Period 2 horizon 1122 and four from Period 3 ditch fills contemporary with the occupation of the stone building. The sample set covers the main periods of activity at the site and provided material from a representative range of site contexts.

Cereals, chaff and seeds were studied using a dissecting microscope and identified with reference to standard identification manuals⁶¹ and the seed reference collection of the Institute of Archaeology, London. Wood charcoal was pressure fractured to expose the transverse, radial longitudinal, and tangential longitudinal planes. Sections were supported in a sand bath and examined at magnifications up to x400 using an epi-illuminating microscope. Identifications were determined with reference to Schweingruber⁶² and through comparison with authenticated reference material where necessary. Nomenclature follows Stace.⁶³

Cereal Grains, Chaff and Seeds (A. S. Fairbairn)

The identified cereal grains, chaff and seeds are listed in Table 8, with English names and habitats in Table 9. Although many of the specimens were badly damaged and fragmented, a large number of species were present.

⁵⁹ Dept. of Archaeology, Univ. of Cambridge (ASF); Inst. of Archaeology, University Coll., London (PA).

⁶⁰ C. Stevens, 'The Roman agricultural economy', in Holbrook and Thomas, op. cit. note 1, pp. 169-71. An assessment of the charred plant remains from an evaluation at Limbborough Road, Wantage, suggested limited potential at this particular site: 'Wessex Archaeology, Limbborough Road Development, Wantage, Oxfordshire, Archaeological Evaluation' (Wessex Archaeol. Rep. 35662a, 1997).

⁶¹ S. Jacomet, *Prähistorische Getreidefunde* (1987); G. Berggren, *Atlas of Seeds and Small Fruits of North-west European Plant Species with Morphological Descriptions. Part 3: Salicaceae - Cruciferae* (1981).

⁶² F.H. Schweingruber, *Microscopic Anatomy of Wood* (1990).

⁶³ C. Stace, *New Flora of the British Isles* (1991).

TABLE 8. CARBONIZED PLANT REMAINS FROM SELECTED SAMPLES

Period	1	1	2	3	3	3	3
Area	A+	B	A	A	A	A	B
Context	1133	2033	1122	1016	1040	1092	2059
Feature	1132	2036-	-	1014	1039	1091	2058
Sample	16	10	15	6	7	9	12
Volume (Litres)	30	20	40	20	20	20	20
Context type	Pit fill	Ditch	Lens in Soil	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Posthole
CEREAL GRAIN							
<i>Triticum spelta</i>	3		2		2	1	6
<i>T. cf spelta</i>				2			2
<i>T. cf aestivum</i> s.l.					1		1
<i>T. cf dicoccum</i>			1				
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	1	2	1(5)	1	1(1)	0(1)	2(3)
<i>Secale cereale</i>			1				
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> (hulled)	2(2)		1		3		1
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>				1			1
Cerealia	2(8)	1(6)	3(32)	1(3)	2	5	1(8)
CEREAL CHAFF							
<i>Triticum spelta</i> spikelet forks (glumes)	0(15)	0(5)	1(46)	0(1)	9(1)	0(16)	1(116)
<i>T. cf spelta</i> spikelet forks (glumes)	0(5)		0(8)	0(16)	0(1)	0(5)	0(12)
<i>T. cf dicoccum</i> spikelet forks (glumes)			0(1)			0(1)	
<i>Triticum</i> sp. spikelet forks (glumes)	0(42)	0(97)	0(60)		0(39)	0(51)	0(293)
<i>Avena</i> type awn	2	3		2	2	0(5)	1
Cerealia awn		12			3	1	4
<i>Triticum aestivum</i> rachis internode			1				1
<i>T. aestivum/durum</i> rachis internode			2				
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> rachis internode	1		1		1		1
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> (6-row) rachis internode							1
Cerealia rachis internode	2	7	1		7	9	21
Cerealia culm node	0(1)						
Large-seeded Fabaceae	0(4)						
WILD PLANT SEEDS							
<i>Papaver</i> sp.			1				
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i> type			1				
<i>Stellaria</i> cf. <i>media</i>			3				
<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.	2	1		3			5
<i>Lathyrus nissolia</i>	1		4(2)				
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i>	0(3)	2	7(6)		1(1)	1	

Trifolieae - cf <i>Medicago</i>	10	1	26	2	1	3	
Trifolieae cf <i>Trifolium cordate</i> type	5	4	49	7	5	6	3
Trifolieae cf <i>Trifolium</i>	4	4	28		3		
Trifolieae indet			0(3)	0(1)	0(2)		
cf <i>Daucus carota</i>					1		
<i>Torilis nodosa</i>							3
<i>Fallopia convolvulus</i>	1						
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>			11				
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	1		4				8
<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>			1				
Lamiaceae (cf <i>Calamintha</i>)			9				
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>				1			
<i>Galium aparine</i>	0(3)				2(10)=4	0(6)=2	
<i>Galium verum</i>	1						
<i>Centaurea</i> sp.							0(1)
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>		2		1		3	4
<i>Juncus effusus</i> type	1			1	1		
<i>Carex</i> sp.					2		
<i>Eleocharis</i> sp.	2		2			1	
<i>Alopecurus</i> sp.			2				
<i>Anthoxanthemum</i> sp.	1						1
<i>Avena</i> sp.				1			2
<i>Bromus</i> sp.		1					2
<i>Lolium perenne</i>		6	6			4	11
<i>Phleum</i> sp.	2						
<i>Poa</i> cf <i>annua</i>			3	1			
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>			1				
Poaceae	1	4	8	2	7	20	7
Poaceae rachis internodes							16

Cereal Grains

Cereal grains were present in all of the samples and were often badly damaged, being vesicular, distorted and fragmented. Of the identified specimens, wheat grains were the most abundant especially those of spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*), present in all but sample 10. Occasional grains of emmer wheat (*T. dicoccum*) and the free-threshing bread wheat (*T. aestivum*) were also identified. The second most abundant grains were those of barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), including several hulled specimens, but it was impossible to identify either symmetrical or asymmetrical grains because of the state of preservation. Other identified cereals included a single grain of rye (*Secale cereale*) and several specimens of oat (*Avena* sp.), although grains of the latter may be from either cultivated or wild types.

TABLE 9. ENGLISH NAMES AND HABITATS OF IDENTIFIED REMAINS

LATIN NAME	ENGLISH NAME	SOURCE & HABITAT
CEREALS		
<i>Triticum spelta</i>	spelt wheat	Crop
<i>T. cf aestivum</i> s.l.	bread wheat	Crop
<i>T. cf dicoccum</i>	emmer wheat	Crop
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	wheat unspecified	Crop
<i>Secale cereale</i>	rye	Crop
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> (hulled)	hulled barley	Crop
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	barley unspecified	Crop
<i>Cerealia</i>	cereal unspecified	Crop
OTHER		
<i>Papaver</i> sp.	poppy	Arable/Disturbed
<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.	goosefoot	Arable/Disturbed
<i>Fallopia convolvulus</i>	black bindweed	Arable
<i>Galium aparine</i>	cleavers/sticky-grass	Arable/Disturbed
<i>Stellaria</i> cf. <i>media</i>	chickweed	Arable/Grassland (drier soils)
<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>	corn gromwell	Arable/Grassland (drier soils)
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	scentless mayweed	Arable/Disturbed (heavier soils)
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	sheeps sorrel	Arable/Grassland (drier soils)
<i>Poa</i> cf <i>annua</i>	annual	Arable/Grassland
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	dock	Arable/Grassland
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i> type	buttercup	Grassland/Waste
Trifolae – cf <i>Medicago</i>	medick	Grassland/Waste
Trifolae cf <i>Trifolium cordate</i> type	clovers	Grassland/Waste
Trifolae cf <i>Trifolium</i>	clovers	Grassland/Waste
<i>Galium verum</i>	lady's bedstraw	Grassland/Waste
cf <i>Daucus carota</i>	wild carrot	Grassland/Waste (drier soils)
Lamiaceae (cf <i>Calamintha</i>)	calamint	Grassland/Waste (drier soils)
<i>Torilis nodosa</i>	hedge parsley	Grassland (drier soils)
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	oat-grass	Grassland (drier soils)
<i>Bromus</i> sp.	brome-grass	Grassland
<i>Anthoxanthemum</i> sp.	vernal grass	Grassland
<i>Phleum</i> sp.	cats-tail	Grassland
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	rye-grass	Grassland
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	selfheal	Grassland/Waste (heavier soils)
<i>Lathyrus nissolia</i>	grass vetchling	Grassland/Waste (heavier soils)
<i>Alopecurus</i> sp.	foxtail	Grassland (damper soils)
<i>Juncus effusus</i> type	rush	Wet pasture/Wetland
<i>Carex</i> sp.	sedge	Wet pasture/Wetland
<i>Eleocharis</i> sp.	spike-rush	Wet pasture/Wetland
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i>	vetch/tare	–
<i>Centaurea</i> sp.	centaury	–

Cereal chaff

Many of the chaff components were poorly preserved and thus beyond secure taxonomic identification. Spikelet forks and glume bases of spelt wheat dominated the assemblages, and occasional emmer wheat glume-bases were also found. Large assemblages of glume-bases were present in several samples, including over four hundred specimens in sample 12. Accompanying the glume-bases were the cereal awn fragments, including those of oat, from either wild or domestic forms. Rachis internodes were also commonly preserved. Many specimens were fragmented and defied identification, but most were probably from a glume wheat species (e.g. spelt). The presence of bread wheat at the site was confirmed by the identification of a rachis internode in sample 15, another being from an unidentifiable free-threshing wheat species. Barley rachis segments were present in several samples, including one that had the spikelet attachment scars preserved, indicating that it was from a six-rowed variety. The final chaff element was a single fragment of a cereal stalk (culm) node in sample 16.

Legume crops

Most of the larger-seeded legume specimens almost certainly derive from wild *Vicia/Lathyrus* (vetch/tare) species, and the only probable presence of cultivated beans or peas is in sample 16, where several badly damaged fragments of a large-seeded legume were found. All of the fragments appear to have derived from a single large specimen, possibly celtic bean (*Vicia faba*), although this is speculative. The lack of cultivated legumes in the assemblage is striking.

Wild plant seeds

A large number of wild seeds were preserved in the samples, including a surprisingly diverse 'weed-flora'. The identified assemblage included several grass species, small-seeded legumes and a number of other herbs of grassland, arable and waste places (Table 9). The lack of woodland species is noticeable and all of the species can comfortably be placed within open, human-modified habitats.

The assemblage included several very common and widely distributed arable weeds, such as the goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.), black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), poppy (*Papaver* sp.), and cleavers (*Galium aparine*). All of these, and the other possible arable weeds, are also found in a variety of disturbed habitats, roadsides, etc. Several other possible arable weeds such as corn gromwell (*Lithospermum arvense*), sheeps sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), and chickweed (*Stellaria media*)⁶⁴ favour drier soils, although the latter is a very variable species. The silicified nutlets of corn gromwell were burnt and are thought to be ancient specimens, not modern intrusions.

Many of the remaining species are most typically found in grassland and/or waste ground and several, such as rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), are important and productive pasture plants. These include the numerous small-seeded legumes found in all of the samples and identified as clover and medick. Identification of small-seeded legumes is difficult, but the three types identified here formed discrete groups and are the most likely source plant. They are commonly found growing together in pasturage and are common fodder plants. Among the grassland taxa are several indicative of drier conditions, including hedge parsley (*Torilis nodosa*) and oat-grass (*Trisetum falvescens*). The latter and wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) are common plants of chalk grassland. Several plants also favour heavier, clay soils, such as self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) and grass vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*). A final group of plants are indicative of high groundwater and wetland condition. Spike-rush (*Elecharis* sp.) is a common constituent of low-lying meadows and damp pasturage, as are the rushes (*Juncus* spp.) and sedges (*Carex* spp.), although all are common in a variety of wetland habitats.

Taphonomy

The assemblages derived from sediments in ditches, postholes, pits and a cultivation horizon. In no case was *in situ* burning identified and all of the charred remains derive from burnt debris thrown or placed in various cut features. The distortion and damage caused to many of the cereal grains suggests that the assemblages were exposed to high temperatures during charring, although the presence of some of the light chaff elements suggests that burning was not of even temperature. High temperatures would also explain some of the distortion and swelling seen in many of the wild plant seeds. The preservation of the lighter chaff elements and the testa/pericarp of many specimens suggest that burial of the remains was rapid.

⁶⁴ M. Hanf, *The Arable Weeds of Europe* (1983).

With the exception of sample 15 (context 1122) there was little wood charcoal in the assemblages. This and the dominance of cereal remains, arable weeds and grassland plants in the assemblages, identifies an agricultural origin perhaps derived from the burnt waste from stables, ovens, corn-driers or other structures. Movement of the burnt debris into the features is likely to have mixed up the remains of several episodes of burning and plant use. Even so, taxa are repeatedly seen in the assemblages and the individual tolerances of the plant species provide reliable information about the potential sources of the crops and fodder plants. The lack of the remains of other resources (e.g. fruitstones) and a broader range of crops suggest that the charred residues derived from specific agricultural processes associated with livestock and cereals, rather than deriving from the mixed general kitchen debris from cooking fires and ovens. These activities may include cereal grain processing or the maintenance of stables, byres and styes.

Crops and agricultural practices

The assemblage contains specimens of all of the major cereal crops that were grown in Roman Britain. Taken at face value the assemblages would suggest that spelt wheat and hulled barley, probably six-row, were the dominant cereals, with the free-threshing wheats minor components of the agricultural economy. The status of rye is uncertain, and it may have been burnt as a crop weed.

Interestingly there was little evidence of the domestic pulses, pea and bean, that were important crops in the period elsewhere. The fragments in sample 16 suggest that they may have been used at the site, although their presence may have been under-represented because of the same charring bias affecting the free-threshing cereal crops. Flax and fruit crops are similarly absent. As explained above this may be the result of preservation of only the residues of specific agricultural processes, rather than general food debris.

Sources

All of the resources and weeds identified in the assemblages were potentially grown in the immediate environment of the site. At least some of the crops would have been grown along the drier soils of the scarp slope of the Lambourn Downs with its mix of soil-types. Taxa such as wild carrot and scentless mayweed with their preferences for chalky, dry soils and heavier soils respectively, could both be accommodated on the scarp slope. The presence of grassland plants from heavier, wetter soils and drier grassland areas suggests that hay derived from meadows in the clay vale and floodplain to the north as well as the drier uplands along the scarp slope. The main indicators of wetter meadows and pasture are the wetland plants sedge (*Carex* sp.), spike-rush (*Eleocharis* sp.) and rush (*Juncus* spp.), which could derive from a number of wetland habitats. The association with numerous grassland specimens supports a wet-pasture source.

The agricultural economy

The range of plants present in the assemblage shows that the settlement from which the plant remains derived used the local soil resources to provide both cereal and fodder crops for sustenance of the human communities and stock animals. Evidence from fragments of a rotary quern supports the processing of crops nearby and supplements the charred plant evidence of threshing, winnowing, sieving and milling. Much of the burnt plant material in the features may have come from spikelets accidentally burnt during oven-drying prior to de-husking. That would account for the dominance of spelt wheat in the assemblages. Hay was gathered and brought to the site.

The lack of fruits and exotic items suggests that few of the new resources that graced the table of Britons during the Roman period seem to have made it to this part of Wantage. The assemblages described here are specialist agricultural residues and may not relate to the plant foods that reached the table. It is unclear if the spelt and barley produced at Wantage went to local consumers or were part of the wider system of trade and re-distribution.

Little variation is seen in the range of crop species, grassland plants and arable weeds through the three periods of site occupation. The picture is one of a stable agricultural economy. The construction of the stone building had no effect on agricultural activity at the site, to judge from the composition of the samples from the Period 3 ditches.

The wood charcoal macro-remains (Phil Austin)

Only charcoal from sample 15 (Period 2 cultivation horizon 1122) was examined. No other samples contained a sufficient quantity of fragments to enable meaningful analysis and the overall quantity of wood charcoals in the samples was small.

Following Keepax's⁶⁵ recommendation, 100 fragments from the >4 mm. size category were chosen for examination, and 25 fragments from the >2 mm. size category were also examined.

TABLE 10. PLANTS IDENTIFIED IN WOOD CHARCOAL MACRO REMAINS FROM SAMPLE 15 (CONTEXT 1122)

Family	Species/Genus/Type	English name
Aceraceae	<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple
Betulaceae	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
	c.f. <i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam
Oleaceae	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
Rosaceae	Sub-family Maloideae Type (inc. <i>Crataegus</i>)	Apple sub-family type (inc. Hawthorn)
Fagaceae	<i>Quercus</i> spp.	Oak

Results

Six taxa were identified (Table 10) with only one fragment of a hardwood twig being unidentifiable. Only the presence of a taxon is attributed any interpretative significance. Fragment count/weight per taxon have not been accorded significance and neither is recorded here.

The two species of oak indigenous to Britain, *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*, cannot be differentiated on the basis of anatomical characteristics.⁶⁶ Members of the Maloideae include *Crataegus* spp (hawthorn), *Pyrus communis* (wild pear), *Malus sylvestris* (crab apple) and *Sorbus* spp. (whitebeam, rowan, wild service tree). Differentiating between the Maloideae is frequently impossible on the basis of anatomic characteristics. However, in some of the fragments from Denchworth Road it was possible to tentatively distinguish *Crataegus* type charcoal. Data from comparable charcoal deposits in southern Britain is scant and often sample/fragment quantities are small, making comparisons between sites impossible. Nonetheless, each taxon has been recorded from various contexts of similar age.⁶⁷

Taphonomy

It was noted that both twigwood and stem wood were present for most of the taxa for which maturity could be evaluated, but only one fragment, the unidentified twig, retained the pith, outmost rings, and bark. All other fragments lacked bark tissue and either the innermost or outermost rings. No pattern was evident in the age ranges observed for any taxon.

Less than ten fragments of *Quercus* and Maloideae appeared 'vitrified'. Prior and Alvin⁶⁸ associate a 'vitrified' appearance with exposure to extreme temperatures (>700°C), but this phenomenon remains poorly understood. It is significant that only a few fragments were affected and this probably reflects the ephemeral properties of the fire and/or particular properties of individual pieces of wood prior to charring.

Charred fungal mycelium, present in the vessels of numerous fragments, is indicative of some biological degradation prior to charring and was not confined to any particular taxon. This suggests either a derivation as deadwood in the process of decay or that biological degradation began whilst in storage or during service. Given the condition of the wood prior to charring, and perhaps the size of the charcoal deposit itself, the most likely explanation for the charcoal accumulation is that it represents the deposition of debris cleared from hearth-like fires.

⁶⁵ C. Keepax, *Charcoal Analysis with particular reference to Archaeological Sites in Britain* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of London, 1988).

⁶⁶ Schweingruber, op. cit. note 62.

⁶⁷ E.g. H. Godwin, *History of the British Flora. A Factual Basis for Phytogeography* (1975); Keepax, op. cit. note 65; R. Gale, 'Charred wood', in N.M. Sharples, *Maiden Castle. Excavations and Field Survey 1985-6* (Eng. Heritage Archaeol. Rep. 19, 1991), 125-9; I. Figueiral, 'The charcoals', in M.G. Fulford and J.R.L. Allen, 'Iron Making at the Chesters Villa, Woolaston, Gloucestershire: Survey and excavation, 1987-91', *Britannia*, XXIII (1992), 188-91.

⁶⁸ J. Prior and K.L. Alvin, 'Structural Changes on Charring Wood of *Dichrostachys* and *Salix* from Southern Africa', *IAWA Bulletin*, 4 (1983), 197-206.

Source and Environment

The presence of twigs and biologically degraded wood suggests that wood was probably acquired from a local source. Each of the six taxa identified are considered indigenous to southern Britain, although *Carpinus* is at its westernmost limit in the study area.⁶⁹ None of the woody species reputed to be Roman introductions, *Juglans regia* (Walnut), *Castanea sativa* (Sweet Chestnut), and *Ficus carica* (Fig),⁷⁰ were identified.

The taxa represented are not exclusive to any single habitat type and are found on a broad range of soil types throughout lowland Britain. Nonetheless, there is a slight bias towards taxa favouring calcareous and base rich soils, notably *Acer*, *Fraxinus*, *Carpinus* and (though not positively identified) *Crataegus* and *Sorbus* spp. among the Maloideae. These taxa, along with *Corylus*, could have been present on the Berkshire Downs near the site. It is likely that *Quercus* was confined to the less calcareous soils on the scarp or clay vale. Though intolerant of prolonged flooding *Fraxinus*, *Quercus*, and (less so) *Carpinus* are tolerant of damp conditions, and may have been present on the wetter clayey soils, perhaps as the arboreal element of wood pasture. However, taxa more clearly indicative of wet conditions, and often associated with water courses, were not detected within the material examined.

The presence of woodland in and around Wantage during Period 2 of the site cannot be demonstrated unequivocally from the charcoal evidence, but despite strong evidence for an open landscape characterised by arable fields and grassland, and the lack of woodland indicators among the carbonised seeds, *Quercus*, *Fraxinus* and *Carpinus* are essentially woodland trees typical of mixed deciduous woodland, whilst *Corylus* is a frequent understory shrub alongside these taxa, especially in managed stands, where *Acer* can also be present.⁷¹

However, direct evidence was observed suggesting that the charcoal derived from managed stands, but all of the taxa identified at this site are common elements in present day hedgerows. Hedges are known to develop spontaneously or persist as linear remnants of former woodland.⁷² In the latter instance these can be species rich, often composed of the same community of plants that formerly made up the woodland. Taking both the findings of the seed and cereal analysis and the charcoal evidence into account, such an interpretation is appealing.

Discussion and Conclusions

The assemblages described here broaden the range of utilised zones identified at Mill Street, adding calcareous pastures and wet meadows as sources of plant resources, while the crop assemblages are similar to those from Mill Street, with spelt wheat and barley as the main crops. However, the suite of crops is similar to others identified at a range of sites in central and southern England,⁷³ but much narrower than that identified in several more thoroughly sampled, larger sites⁷⁴ and the possibility remains that some of the free-threshing crops, namely bread wheat and rye, are under-represented and may have also been economically important.

⁶⁹ J.S. Rodwell, *British Plant Communities. Vol. I: Woodlands and Scrub* (1991).

⁷⁰ O. Rackham, *A History of the British Countryside* (1986).

⁷¹ Rodwell, op. cit. note 69.

⁷² Rackham, op. cit. note 70; R. Mabey, *Flora Britannica* (1996).

⁷³ J. Giorgi and M. Robinson, 'The Environment', in M. Foreman and S. Rahtz, 'Excavations at Faccenda Chicken Farm, near Alchester, 1983', *Oxoniensia*, 11 (1984), 38-45; M. Jones, 'The Plant Remains', in M. Fulford, *Guide to Silchester: The Forum Basilica, 1982-1984* (1985), 33-4; M. Jones, 'Carbonized Grain', in R.J. Zeepvat, R.J. Williams and D.C. Mynard, *Roman Milton Keynes: Excavations and Fieldwork 1972-1982* (1987), 192-3; J.R.A. Greig, 'The British Isles', in W. Van Zeist, K. Wasylkova and K. Behre (eds.), *Progress in Old World Palaeoethnobotany* (1991), 299-334; W. Carruthers, 'Charred Plant Remains', in C. Butterworth and R.S. Smith, 'Excavations at The Hermitage, Old Town, Swindon', *Wilts. Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.* 90 (1992), 55-76; P. Hinton, 'Charred Plant Macrofossils', in J.I. McKinley and M. Heaton, 'A Romano-British Farmstead and Associated Burials at Maddington Farm, Shrewton', *Wilts. Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.* 89 (1996), 65-7; E. Pearson, 'Charred Plant Remains', in C. Mould, 'An Archaeological Excavation at Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 11 (1997), 65-107; M. Robinson, 'The Charred Plant Remains', in P.M. Booth, op. cit. note 13, pp. 147-8.

⁷⁴ G. Lambrick and M. Robinson, 'The Development of Floodplain Grassland in the Upper Thames Valley', in M. Jones (ed.), *Archaeology and the Flora of the British Isles* (1988), 55-75; Miles, op. cit. note 8.

The crops were possibly grown in rotation with fodder crops and in association with hay crops from meadows on land of lower arable potential. Such arrangements have been identified at several sites of the period in the Upper Thames Valley⁷⁵ and widespread use of pasture is known in the region across from the scarp slope, clay vales and floodplains from at least the middle Iron Age.⁷⁶

The seed and cereal assemblages derived from specific agricultural practices, not allowing a full assay of the range of plant resources used at the site to be made. Many of the exotic herbs, fruits and delicacies that graced the Roman table were lacking in the assemblages, as were fruits that were commonly utilised in the period⁷⁷ and, in general the assemblages allow little to be said about the diet of those in the area and specifically the inhabitants of the stone building.

The charcoal macroremains complement the findings of the seeds and cereal analysis. On the evidence available wood exploitation was confined to fuel use associated with both domestic and, perhaps, light industrial/craft activities, but, regrettably, the lack of charcoal suitable for analysis prevented analysis of any temporal changes in the use of wood resources. The charcoal studied indicates the local presence of trees and shrubs during Period 2 that probably featured as minor components in the various landscape units and habitat types identified in the seed and cereal analysis. Whereas the seed and cereal assemblages derived from an open landscape, the findings of the charcoal analysis encourage belief in the probable presence of hedgerows and/or isolated wooded areas, possibly under management. Wood pasture is another possibility. Whatever the case it is unlikely that the region was totally denuded of wood resources. Together the plant macro remains show the use of a range of cultivated and tended plant resources from a wide range of landscape units in a landscape that had been extensively modified, primarily for economic purposes.

GENERAL DISCUSSION by NEIL HOLBROOK

In the report on the excavations at Mill Street published in 1996 a general survey of the state of knowledge of pre-medieval Wantage was attempted. Since then further work has occurred, and it is worth examining how this affects the conclusions reached in that report. In addition to the excavation reported above, there have been two further evaluations since 1996. A small evaluation at 78 Mill Street by CAT found a continuation of some of the ditches discovered at Mill Street, but otherwise adds little fresh information.⁷⁸ Evaluation comprising 23 trenches by Wessex Archaeology on a 2 ha. site at Limborough Road immediately to the E. of the Letcombe Brook (Fig. 1, 16062) found late Roman ditches in two trenches, possibly part of an agricultural enclosure.⁷⁹ The pottery recovered from the ditches was fresh and unabraded, suggesting nearby settlement, and eight 3rd- or 4th-century coins were also recovered. An Anglo-Saxon gully lay in another trench, and a background scatter of such pottery was retrieved from elsewhere on the site. There were no prehistoric features, although five sherds of late Bronze Age or early Iron Age pottery were found. In addition to these recent investigations the following discoveries have also been added to the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Register since 1996 (Fig. 1): 16222 Roman inhumation, male, no grave goods, recorded in 1972; 16223 ?Roman chalk block wall and trench visible in sewer trench in 1972.

⁷⁵ M. Jones, 'The Plant Remains', in M. Parrington, *The Excavation of an Iron Age Settlement, Bronze Age Ring-ditches and Roman Features at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon (Oxfordshire) 1974-1976* (1978), 93-110;

G. Lambrick and M. Robinson, *Iron Age and Roman Riverside Settlements at Farmoor, Oxfordshire* (CBA Res. Rep. 32, 1979); Miles, op. cit. note 8.

⁷⁶ Lambrick and Robinson, op. cit. note 75.

⁷⁷ Pearson, op. cit. note 73.

⁷⁸ A. Barber, '78 Mill Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Evaluation' (CAT Rep. 98893, 1998).

⁷⁹ Wessex Archaeology, op. cit. note 60.

Little can be said as yet of the nature of prehistoric activity in Wantage. Iron Age pottery has been found in residual contexts at Mill Street, Denchworth Road, and Limborough Road, but no structural evidence has yet come to light. The possible neck-ring from this excavation (Fig. 11, 3) might also be ascribed a late Iron Age date. The question of whether there was any late pre-Roman Iron Age occupation at Wantage must therefore remain open for the present.

Turning to the Roman occupation, it was concluded in the Mill Street report that the evidence then available best fitted an interpretation as a roadside settlement, with agricultural buildings and fieldsystems to the rear of house-plots on the road frontage. It was suggested that the Letcombe Brook may have formed a natural E. limit to such activity. The work at Denchworth Road has provided a valuable opportunity to examine an area close to the projected alignment of the Roman road and thus test the hypothesis of a roadside focus for the community. Despite all the uncertainty concerning the precise course of the road discussed above (p. 295), if the projected alignment is approximately correct it might be expected that Area B in particular would have been occupied by buildings fronting onto the road. Clearly the excavated evidence does not conform to this pattern, and instead throughout Periods 1-3 Area B was occupied by agricultural plots and associated features. There were structures possibly associated with settlement within Area A+ in Period 1, but thereafter there was a hiatus until the construction of the stone house in the later 3rd or early 4th century. That building seemingly faced away from the road, and was separated from it by ditched enclosures. The plan of the building, such as it is known, is best paralleled in rural villas, and demolition debris containing box tiles from a hypocaust and *opus signinum* (possibly from the lining of a plunge bath) suggests further rooms beyond the excavation area, although evidently in the near vicinity. These observations, in themselves, do not necessarily rule out an interpretation as a roadside settlement, for road frontages were not always continuously and intensely developed,⁸⁰ and the presence of villa-type buildings within such settlements is not unparalleled.⁸¹ Conversely it must be recognised that the fact that the stone house faced away from the putative road line, and was separated from it by a repeatedly maintained ditched boundary, is very unusual in a roadside context.⁸²

The categorisation of settlements that are much better understood than Wantage into roadside communities / 'small towns' / villages is fraught with difficulty, and a range of seemingly heterogeneous sites are often placed into one category or another simply because they do not fit into other easily defined groups.⁸³ Given the limited knowledge of the extent and morphology of Roman Wantage it may not be productive to attempt too detailed a classification at the present time, although the recent work at least raises the possibility that Wantage was a villa estate centre or nucleated village rather than a roadside settlement *per se*.⁸⁴ The house at Denchworth Road and granary at Mill Street may have been two of a greater number of late Roman buildings loosely grouped on the hillside above the Letcombe Brook. The principal villa house might also await detection, unless the Denchworth Road

⁸⁰ B.C. Burnham, 'The Morphology of Romano-British 'Small Towns'', *Archaeol. Jnl.* 144 (1987), 176.

⁸¹ B.C. Burnham, 'A Survey of Building Types in Romano-British 'Small Towns'', *Jnl. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.* 141 (1988), 45-7.

⁸² Burnham, *op. cit.* note 80, p. 182.

⁸³ M. Millett, 'Strategies for Roman Small Towns', in A.E. Brown (ed.), *Roman Small Towns in Eastern England and Beyond* (Oxbow Mono. 52, 1995), 29-30.

⁸⁴ For discussions of these types of settlement see R. Hingley, *Rural Settlement in Roman Britain* (1989), 102-5, with particular reference to the close association of villa and 'non villa' settlements around Frilford, and for villa estate centres J.R. Timby, *Excavations at Kingscote and Wycomb, Gloucestershire* (1998), 292-3.

structure is in fact part of a substantial winged house. If this interpretation of the evidence is favoured, the presence of the road need not be coincidence, and indeed may have been a determining factor in the choice of the site. For instance, the small town or estate centre at Kingscote, Glos. lay close to a principal road but was not seemingly focused upon it.⁸⁵ If Wantage does fall into the category of an extensive villa complex, it will join the poorly known villas of Woolstone, Fawler, and West Challow, the latter only 2 km. to the W., as the fourth such site lying at the foot of the Downs. Clearly opportunities for further archaeological work in Wantage need to be firmly grasped before we can obtain a better understanding of the status and role of the Roman settlement.

Knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon occupation of Wantage remains sparse, although it is of note that the single sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery recovered from Denchworth Road contrasts with the 62 sherds and 12 fired-clay loomweights found at Mill Street, and a further 10 sherds from the evaluation at Limborough Road (Fig. 1, 16062). The focus of Anglo-Saxon settlement at Wantage clearly did not lie in the immediate vicinity of the present site, and perhaps should be sought in the area to the N. of Mill Street.

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⁸⁵ Timby, *op. cit.* note 84, p. 7.