

An Early Romano-British Villa at Combe East End

GEORGE SPEAKE

with contributions by PAUL BOOTH, HILARY COOL and JULIE HAMILTON

SUMMARY

The previously unrecognized early villa site at Combe East End, on the west side of Blenheim Park, is an intriguing addition to the impressive concentration of elite Iron-Age and Roman settlement bordering Akeman Street and set within the confines of the north Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch. There is evidence for continuity of settlement and the transition from a late Iron-Age ditched enclosure to the construction of a substantial stone-walled rectangular villa within the second half of the first century AD. Two further stone buildings form part of the complex, but unlike the more elaborate plans of the villas at North Leigh and Stonesfield, the main villa building at Combe retained its simple form until occupation of the site ended in the fourth century. Connections with the wider Roman world are evidenced in the finds. The economy of the villa and the interrelationship with the other villas in the region are considered.

HISTORY AND DISCOVERY

The site was identified in August 2001 by the author whilst walking on the fields below Combe East End. Surface scatters of broken tile (tegulae and imbrices) together with pieces of dressed stone were noticed in the plough soil of a field which had been fallow since the previous year. Copper alloy items, a brooch, a looped cosmetic pestle, samian ware and fragments of glass vessels were found in subsequent fieldwalking. The pottery found suggested an occupation period in the first to third centuries AD. The only Roman find recorded previously in the area was that of a bronze coin of Aurelius under Pius found at Dog Kennel Hill in 1911.¹

Aerial reconnaissance has not revealed any obvious archaeological features, unlike the impressive plans of the Ditchley villa shown in photographs taken by Major Allen in 1934.² Yet photographs in the Ashmolean Museum show that Allen flew over the Combe site at least twice in 1935. In one of the photographs his aircraft must have been vertically above to record an angled view of the Bronze-Age disc barrow in the valley below Dog Kennel Hill on the opposite side of the River Evenlode.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The villa site is on Blenheim Estate farmland above Dog Kennel Hill and below Combe East End (at SP 425 154; Fig. 1). The area under investigation lies on a scarp of Forest Marble of the Middle Jurassic at c.100 m OD. The Evenlode valley slopes away to the south and there is a steeper dry valley to the west.³ The nature of the soils on the site varies from a brash with

¹ VCH Oxon. 1, p. 335.

² As at Shakenoak, nothing of the plan of the villa buildings could be detected in aerial photographs.

³ Geological Survey Map of England and Wales, 1:50,000 (solid and drift), sheet 236 (1982); P. Powell, *The Geology of Oxfordshire* (Wimborne, 2005), p. 95.

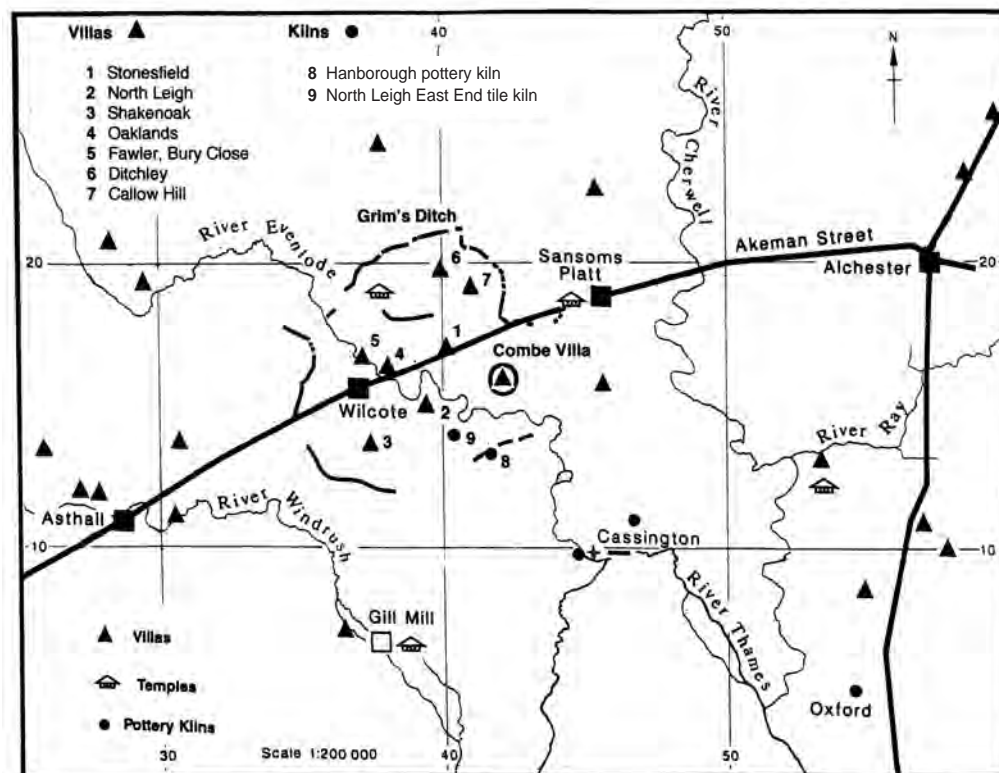


Fig. 1. Villa sites by Akeman Street and Grim's Ditch.

angular limestone lumps to a friable red-brown loam. To the north is a narrow outcrop of Cornbrash lying beneath a broader band of Oxford and Kellaway Clays, on which the hamlet of Combe East End is situated. The band of clays extends to the rising ground of High Lodge in Blenheim Park (116 m OD), with its overlying deposit of Plateau Drift, made up of Bunter and Lickey Quartzite pebbles, most likely of glacial origin.

The geomorphology and geological layering of the landscape undoubtedly influenced where settlement took place. Spring lines from the clays could have provided a water source for any settlement lower down the slope above Dog Kennel Hill. Earlier prehistoric activity, from the Mesolithic to Bronze Age, has been found in the vicinity, and the site of the Iron-Age farmstead and Romano-British villa is on a well-draining, south-facing slope.

DISCUSSION

Excavation has identified a minimum of three stone-walled buildings belonging to the villa complex, although a clear understanding of the functional and chronological relationship of these structures to each other has not been firmly established. In addition, what may be interpreted as the circular drip-gullies of several Iron-Age roundhouses are detectable on the geophysical surveys, both within the ditched enclosure and outside of it, although their existence has not been confirmed through excavation. The ceramic evidence would indicate that there is continuity and transition from earlier middle Iron-Age occupation to a later Iron-

Age farmstead, with its enclosure ditches and suspected roundhouses (see Booth, below). This appears to be followed, without any break in the ceramic sequence, by the rectangular plan and more sophisticated building techniques of a Romano-British villa with its ancillary structures.

In 2000 some sixty-two villas were known in Roman Oxfordshire, of which about fifty were reasonably securely identified.⁴ The Combe villa is a significant addition to this list, adding to a distinctive group of early villa sites bordering Akeman Street and situated within the earthworks of the north Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch, now generally accepted as dating to the late Iron Age (Fig. 1).⁵ These early villas are difficult to classify in terms of status since they typically lack diagnostic features such as hypocaust heating, mosaic floors and wall-painting common in fourth-century villas.

Building 1

This was a rectangular stone structure measuring 34 metres by 9 metres sited on the crest of a slope, facing south and overlooking the river valley. Its prominent position, north-east of the Iron-Age enclosure, suggests that it was a clearly visible feature and that aesthetic considerations such as the provision of a good view over the valley landscape may also have determined its location. The structure can be classed as a 'cottage villa' with a simple rectangular plan and additional rooms provided by subdivisions, without a corridor or wings.⁶ It has parallels in the plans of the early Hertfordshire villas at Lockleys and Park Street.⁷ There is no conclusive evidence in the trenches crossing Building 1 that there was an earlier rectangular timber building, or 'proto villa', as a predecessor for the stone building, as has been recognized at Ditchley and Frocester.⁸ Furthermore, given the plentiful local availability of building stone it also seems unlikely that a timber structure rested on the stone foundations. The assumption is that the building had a single storey. Roof tile may well have been sourced from the kiln site at North Leigh East End (SP 402144), although it is uncertain when this kiln started production.

It appears from the geophysical surveys and excavation that the building was not enlarged in the way that happened at Ditchley, Shakenoak and, most spectacularly, in the multiple phases of the North Leigh courtyard villa.⁹ Yet there is tantalizing evidence in T1/05, T2/06 and T2/07 to suggest more than one phase of building, and possibly changing functions for different areas within the building. Fragments of stone slates, very possibly from Stonesfield, were recovered in several trenches. These may have been used at a later date to repair and partially replace the terracotta roof tiles. (Whether the first stone built villa had a terracotta-tiled roof, or one of thatch or shingles, is uncertain.) A discrepancy of the walling by the north-west corner (T2/06) might indicate that there had been a rebuild, on a slightly different alignment. This could have been the result of subsidence, as the west end of the building had been constructed over an Iron-Age ditch. But the secondary alignment of stones within the building south of the wall might also relate to a sub-division of the space or have been the base of some internal structure, such as a cooking range. No trace of painted plaster was discovered within Building 1, although

⁴ M. Henig and P. Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire* (Stroud, 2000), pp 85–6; several more examples can now be added.

⁵ T. Copeland, 'The North Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch: A Fieldwork Survey', *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), p. 287. Excavations of Grim's Ditch in Blenheim Park show that where the two features meet the Roman road was later than the earthwork.

⁶ K. and P. Dark, *The Landscape of Roman Britain* (Stroud, 1997), p. 44; R. Hingley, *Rural Settlement in Roman Britain* (London, 1989), p. 38.

⁷ H.E. O'Neill, 'The Roman Villa at Park Street, near St Albans', *Archaeological Journal*, 102 (1945), pp. 21–110.

⁸ C.A.R. Radford, 'The Roman Villa at Ditchley, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936), pp. 24–69; E. Price, *Frocester: A Romano-British Settlement, Its Antecedents and Successors. Vol 1: The Sites*, Gloucester and District Archaeological Research Group (2000), pp. 63–86.

⁹ Henig and Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire*, pp. 82–8.

it seems likely that most of the fragments of wall decoration found in T3/09 and T2/09 originally came from this structure. The discovery of the iron share from an ard plough in T2/07, adjacent to a partition-wall, perhaps indicates that the building's function changed over time from domestic use to agricultural storage.¹⁰

In terms of its plan, only two inner dividing walls have been revealed through excavation. It is possible, however, that a third dividing wall lies between T1/03 and T1/05, beneath the fence enclosing a modern conifer plantation. Where the entrance or access doorways were positioned remains uncertain, but there is evidence for an open-sided roofed verandah, not an enclosed corridor, on the south side. A post-pad for such a structure was recorded in T1/06, one metre south of the villa wall. The flooring of the verandah appears to have been of stone and mortar, but a number of floor tiles found in T2/07 south of the wall imply that sections may have been tiled, or may have been part of a verandah structure, perhaps related to an entrance porch. The floor surface of Building 1 consisted throughout of limestone pieces bonded with a creamy white mortar capping. In places the floor had turned pink with traces of burning, although whether this indicates multiple hearths or the location of braziers is uncertain. In modern times deep ploughing has inflicted damage to areas of mortar flooring, as well as removing sections of walling stone, leaving only the limestone rubble foundations. Survival of the external walling varied in each trench. No laid course of stone survived of the east wall, in T2/05, above the random rubble foundation.

On the north side, part of a stone surfaced pathway was recorded in T1/03. This was bordered by a 'U'-sectioned ditch, 290 centimetres wide, located five metres north of the building and parallel to it. To the east of the building was a consolidated surface of gravel and small pebbles. This surface was relatively free of occupation debris, with sparse finds of ceramic material and bone, suggesting some care was taken to sweep this area to keep it clear. A possible entrance to the building may therefore have been from here.

In front of the villa, the sloping area to the south was bounded on the west side by a carefully constructed wall linked to the south-west corner of the building, which followed the alignment of its west wall. This was a later feature and would have created a boundary to the west side of the forecourt area. It had been constructed with care on top of an Iron-Age ditch. A well-preserved five-metre length of the base of this wall survives intact from the south-west corner of the building with sections of the remainder being partially demolished and robbed. There is no evidence for a matching wall linked to the south-east corner of the villa creating an enclosed forecourt. However, a ditch five metres to the east of the villa (T2B/05), with a single layer of large stones forming the base of a revetment on its east side, could have acted as an enclosure or boundary, before it was subsequently filled and finally capped with stone rubble in the late third or early fourth century. Layers of paved stones, some with worn polished surfaces, uncovered in T3/07 imply a villa yard or forecourt with human or animal traffic. The line of yellow ochre mortar found in the south of T3/07 can be explained as a trace of the south section of the demolished wall boundary. The discovery of an enamelled terret ring, an unstratified find from the topsoil above the villa yard, might suggest that within this area there had been ancillary structures, such as stabling for a horse and storage for a wheeled cart.

Building 2

The stone foundations of Building 2, partially uncovered in trenches T2/08 and T2/09, indicated a much smaller structure, a square building measuring 6.75 metres by 6.75 metres, containing a single room with no apparent subdivisions and with a rectangular extension on its western side. Its alignment appears to relate to the trackway which approaches the site from the south-

¹⁰ A change of use from domestic to agricultural storage in the final phase of the Stonesfield villa could explain the discovery of carbonized grain covering the mosaic floor: J. Pointer, *An Account of a Roman Pavement lately found at Stunsfield in Oxfordshire* (Oxford, 1713).

west and also parallels the orientation of the walls of Building 1. It was built above a section of the eastern side of the Iron-Age enclosure ditch, approximately 30 metres south-west of the villa. Chronologically it is a later structure and most likely contemporary with the building of the villa yard wall, with which it shares close similarities in terms of dimensions and construction of the foundation courses.

Within the building, subsidence had occurred above the Iron-Age ditch, giving a very pronounced slope to the floor in the north-west corner, although this had not affected the stone courses of the north and west walls, which had remained level. It was evident that deeper foundations had been used for the walling above the ditch. No precise dating has been established for the destruction of the building, evidently by fire. The pottery, reduced wares and white-slipped fabrics, found amongst the rubble collapse and area of burning in the centre of the building, can be assigned to the second and third centuries AD.

It is not certain if the section of wall south of Building 2 in T2/09 was part of this structure, or part of an additional building. It is wider than the walls of Building 2, with a rubble foundation course of more randomly sized limestone pieces. It is also on a slightly different alignment, suggesting that it belongs to a different constructional phase. The presence of some stone pentagonal roofing slate amongst the stone collapse on its south side might indicate a structure such as an open-sided shelter shed. Further investigation is needed to clarify this.

Building 3

This appears most likely to be a circular stone building, located c.40 metres due west of Building 1, lying close to the northern edge of the enclosure ditch. Two opposing perimeter arcs of its curved foundation wall were uncovered in T3/08, giving an external diameter of c.10 metres.¹¹ Comparable structures from Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire have been discussed in detail by Keevill and Booth,¹² who have preferred the term 'circular structures' rather than the overly deterministic term 'roundhouse', given the varied uses of circular stone-built structures in Roman Britain on villa sites, religious sites and more mundane rural settlements.¹³ Booth has noted that stone-built circular structures are much less common in Roman Oxfordshire and surrounding counties to the west than in Northamptonshire.¹⁴ But both authors agree that the Roman structures represent the continuity of an Iron-Age tradition. Their external diameters range in size between about 6 metres and 16 metres. The size of the Combe building is close to the circular structure on the Shakenoak villa complex (Building K), which has an external diameter of c.10.3 metres.¹⁵

In terms of their dating, on the present evidence it appears that none of the parallels for the Combe circular structure needs to be dated before the middle of the second century, with most being assigned to the third and fourth centuries AD.¹⁶ As yet a firm dating for the Combe structure has not been ascertained. There appears to be more than one phase, as the mortar floor overlay an earlier, sooted, cobbled surface. Whether this was the floor of a late Iron-Age circular house remains uncertain. The distribution of E wares, in association with both B1 and B3, although more concentrated around B1, does suggest some shared contemporary activity and chronological overlap (Booth, below).

At Shakenoak the excavators dated the circular building after 200 AD. They interpreted it as

¹¹ It could be argued that with an incomplete plan, these sections of walling could equally belong to a 'D'-shaped structure, but the case for a circular structure seems stronger.

¹² G. Keevill and P. Booth, 'Settlement, Sequence and Structure: Romano-British Stone-Built Roundhouses at Redlands Farm, Stanwick (Northants.), and Alchester (Oxon.)', Upper Nene Archaeological Society, *From Round House to Villa* (Northampton, 1997), pp. 31–7.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 35.

¹⁵ A.C.C. Brodribb et al., *The Roman Villa at Shakenoak Farm, Oxfordshire: Excavations 1960–1976*, BAR BS, 395 (2005), p. 424.

¹⁶ Keevill and Booth, 'Roundhouses at Redlands Farm', p. 37.

a domestic structure, but argued that its construction suggested a downward shift in the social status of the occupants of the villa complex, constructed as it was in a disused fish pond in front of the imposing façade of the dwelling of a prosperous farmer.¹⁷ Whether such a suggestion is valid for Building 3 at Combe is open to debate. On the present evidence, with only a fraction of the building excavated, it would be highly speculative to propose something similar.

What seems likely for Building 3, on the evidence of the pottery and animal bone, is that its primary function was domestic, as at Shakenoak and elsewhere,¹⁸ but different functions, agricultural, religious and industrial, have been claimed for other circular structures. An agricultural function is thought to be likely for the two examples at Alchester, the larger one being identified tentatively as an unroofed animal pen. The circular building at Frilford, the so-called 'rotunda', is arguably religious and linked to the Romano-Celtic shrine. An industrial function, associated with the pottery industry, seems most likely for the circular buildings at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford.¹⁹ Yet the majority of examples discussed by Keevill and Booth come from villa contexts where interpretations about their status and chronology are open to question.

Continuity and Context

The chronology, spatial layout and evolution of the Combe villa demands some comment, in relation to the neighbouring villas bordering Akeman Street and set within the Grim's Ditch complex. What is distinctive at Combe is the proximity of the Iron-Age features, with several walls of the buildings overlying Iron-Age ditches and gullies. An analysis of the pottery has shown a concentration of activity from the middle Iron Age in the enclosure area with some peripheral activity in the area of the villa. An unbroken sequence of occupation can also be attested into the late Iron Age. The evidence of the finds, pottery, glass and brooches would support the idea of continuity of occupation throughout the first century with the transition from a late Iron-Age farmstead to the building of a stone built 'cottage' villa within the second half of the first century. This continuity of occupation on the Combe site is significant, for evidence for such continuity on any of the other early villa sites within the Grim's Ditch complex has proved elusive. How many of these villas may have had an Iron-Age precursor is a matter for debate, which only future excavation and reappraisal might clarify.

A late first-century origin has been argued for both Ditchley and Shakenoak. Early origins are also claimed for North Leigh and Bury Close, Fawler, where the first phase building was assigned a late first- to early second-century date. Pottery evidence suggests that Callow Hill may also be no later than late first to early second century.²⁰ Certainly at Callow Hill the relationship between the dykes, claimed to be contemporary with Grim's Ditch, and the substantial villa enclosure is of some relevance and importance.²¹ Here is a site just a short distance south-east of the Ditchley villa, linked in Copeland's view to a 'significant Iron-Age settlement' of some pretension.²²

The function and dating of Grim's Ditch has been much debated, although the consensus is now that it is late Iron Age.²³ Copeland has proposed that the banks and ditches were constructed in two phases, and suggested that within its bounds may be an Iron-Age unit of countryside, most likely belonging to an eastern group of the Dobunni, surviving to become a Roman estate. Indeed, the suggestion has been made that there is a case for seeing Akeman Street

¹⁷ Brodrick et al., *Shakenoak*, p. 560.

¹⁸ Keevill and Booth, 'Roundhouses at Redlands Farm', p. 37.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 38.

²⁰ P. Booth, 'Ralegh Radford and the Roman Villa at Ditchley: A Review', *Oxoniensia*, 64 (1999), pp. 47–8.

²¹ N. Thomas, 'Excavations at Callow Hill, Glympton and Stonesfield, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, 22 (1957), pp. 28–30.

²² T. Copeland, *Akeman Street: Moving through Iron Age and Roman Landscapes* (Stroud, 2009), pp. 65, 111.

²³ D.B. Harden, 'Excavations on Grim's Dyke, North Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 2 (1937), pp. 74–92.

in the Wychwood area as 'a pre-Roman route across country joining the Grim's Ditch with Bagendon, and possibly St Albans, as important centres for Iron-Age communities.'²⁴ Certainly it is tempting to see a link between the development of Akeman Street and the means by which new ideas reached the late Iron-Age inhabitants of the Wychwood area. However, it must be acknowledged that networks of communication in the late Iron Age were not just east-west but also north-south, along the river valleys, carrying the salt trade from the west Midlands.²⁵

Yet it is possible that the east-west connections may prove to be more important. Peter Salway has stated that the density of villas in the Cotswolds must certainly have much to do with the eventual existence of Akeman Street as the highway between two of the principal towns of Roman Britain, Verulamium and Cirencester. Within the Grim's Ditch complex the relative proximity of the villas to Akeman Street should be noted, and the Stonesfield villa site lies adjacent to it. The early development of the roadside settlement at Wilcote, which also provided quarried stone for the surfacing of Akeman Street, has produced material in the form of carrot amphorae and Claudian samian ware which suggests a close connection with patterns of military supply.²⁶ Yet the view put forward by Ainslie that the Roman military construction of Akeman Street acted initially as a temporary frontier, following the Claudian conquest, has had only limited support.²⁷

In looking for the inspiration for the plan of the Combe villa (Building 1), consideration should be given to the findings from the excavation of the early villa at Ditches (Glos.). This was set within a large, late Iron-Age enclosure close to the Dobunnic oppidum of Bagendon.²⁸ The Ditches villa in its initial phase is similar in scale to the Combe villa (30 metres long east-west and 13 metres wide north-south), though it has extra dividing walls. It also has a south-facing orientation. The origin for this plan came possibly from northern Gaul, perhaps reflecting close links between southern Britain and Gaul before and after the Roman conquest.²⁹ But contact with Gaul may well have been indirect, for the similarity of the villa plan with Hertfordshire exemplars near Verulamium may imply that the inspiration travelled along Akeman Street. It is possible, therefore, that the Dobunni of the Grim's Ditch area were recipients of such influences perhaps earlier than the inhabitants of the Ditches villa site further west.³⁰ The excavators of the Ditches villa claim that the first phase of the stone-walled villa block was built in the later first century AD (AD 70s), making it an exceptionally early villa outside south-east England. It can be reasoned, from the ceramic evidence, brooches and particularly the glass, that a similar dating could be given for the construction of Building 1 at Combe.

There may have been, however, more than one route and agent of transmission of the new building styles to the Cotswold region. Whilst a case can be made for the inspiration for both the Combe villa and the Ditches villa building having travelled along Akeman Street east to west in the mid first century, the valleys of the Thames tributaries should not be ignored.³¹ Attention has been drawn to the similarity in plan with the first phase of the villa at Little Milton, which might suggest that the Thames valley was 'an important cultural mobility route',³² but an early dating of this villa is not definite.³³

²⁴ T. Copeland, *Iron Age and Roman Wychwood* (Charlbury, 2002), p. 75. More recent consideration of this is given in Copeland, *Akeman Street*, pp. 31–75.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 61, 115.

²⁶ Booth, 'Ralegh Radford at Ditchley', p. 45.

²⁷ R. Ainslie, 'Akeman Street – A Possible Roman Frontier', *SMidA*, 35 (2005), pp. 43–5.

²⁸ S. Trow et al., *Becoming Roman, Being Gallic, Staying British – Research and Excavations at Ditches Hillfort and Villa 1984–2006* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 51–75.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 53.

³⁰ P. Salway, 'Roman Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 64 (1999), p. 17.

³¹ Copeland, *Akeman Street*, p. 133.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ P.J. Drury, 'Form, Function and the Interpretation of the Excavated Plans of Some Large Secular Romano-British Buildings' in *idem* (ed.), *Structural Reconstruction: Approaches to the Interpretation of the Excavated Remains of Buildings*, BAR BS, 110 (1982), p. 297.

Whether the skills for the building of rectangular stone structures were derived from the Roman military can be questioned. The army was engaged in only a limited amount of masonry construction in first-century Britain and civilian masons from Gaul were probably the source of skilled labour.³⁴ But the construction of large, urban civic buildings with dressed ashlar masonry perhaps cannot be compared with the more rudimentary skills needed to build the stone rubble walls of the simple early villas. Nevertheless, the masonry skills of the early Romano-British villas with their mortared stonework must have created a significant visual impact adjacent to the circular, timber and wattle round-houses of the late Iron-Age farmsteads, and been seen as an expression of wealth and prestige.

The fact that later circular stone structures were built adjacent to some of the early villas, as at Combe, Ditchley and Shakenoak, does imply a persistence of an Iron-Age building tradition. This continuity makes sense if the builders of these villas are seen not as Gallic immigrants but as native Britons open to influences of the Gallo-Roman world. This receptivity to *Romanitas* by indigenous native elites of the Dobunni, within the Grim's Ditch area and further west at Ditches, is surely manifest in these early villas.

Economic and Social Status

Implicit in the definition of a villa site is the concept that it has a higher status than a simple farmstead, but to regard all the villas within the Grim's Ditch region as being of equal status would be misguided. The architectural features of these villas vary in terms of their scale and development through time, which must be inextricably linked to their economic success, social structure and status. How much land was associated with each villa is uncertain. Smaller villas may well have been subsumed into the estate of a larger villa. It has been suggested that the villas at Shakenoak and Ditchley could have become a part of the larger villa estate of North Leigh,³⁵ and the villa of Combe may, by the fourth century, have been part of the estate of the Stonesfield villa.

At Combe, the transition from an Iron-Age farmstead of roundhouses with ditched enclosures to a stone-built villa may not reflect any dramatic change in the agricultural economy of mixed arable and pastoral farming. The economy of the late Iron-Age farm may have been that of mixed cereal growing and stockraising, but the archaeological investigation to date has not utilized flotation tanks to recover evidence for cereal production in the form of carbonized grain, enabling identification of likely cereal species. However, the fragments of rotary quernstones recovered from several contexts, one fragment from the enclosure ditch and the others associated with Building 1, confirms the processing of cereal grain. The prosperity of villas in the region may be closely linked to the high fertility of the cornbrash soils, suitable for cereal production, and the good communications provided by Akeman Street. Advances in agricultural technology can be attested by the discovery of an iron ploughshare, stored within Building 1, but no iron coulter was found in association.

The animal bone recovered from the enclosure ditch shows a dominance of sheep, followed by cattle and pig. It has not been determined whether the ditches and gullies evident on the survey to the north and west of the villa were stockyards or paddocks used in animal husbandry. No wells have so far been identified, but water could have been sourced from the River Evenlode close by, or from springs further up the slope, to the north of the villa buildings.

Any attempt to assess how much land was associated with the Combe villa is fraught with difficulty, although this has not prevented Applebaum estimating the sizes of other nearby villa estates.³⁶ He suggests the Shakenoak estate comprised about 500 hectares, Ditchley about

³⁴ T.C. Blagg, 'An Examination of the Connexions between Military and Civilian Architecture in Roman Britain', in idem and A.C. King (eds.), *Military and Civilian in Roman Britain: Cultural Relationships in a Frontier Province*, BAR BS, 136 (1984), pp. 249–64.

³⁵ Brodribb et al., *Shakenoak*, pp. 259–60.

³⁶ S. Applebaum, 'The Agriculture of Shakenoak Villa', in Brodribb et al., *Shakenoak*, pp. 550–1.

350 and Callow Hill 120. At Combe the Evenlode would have been a natural boundary to the south (its environs providing pasture and meadow), but the other boundaries can only be guessed at.

Networks of trade also provide some indications of status. Food items such as oysters, sea mussels, olive oil in amphorae from southern Spain and wine in amphorae from southern Gaul utilized at Combe indicate contacts which were more exotic than those of purely local supply networks. To what extent the roadside settlement at Wilcote was an agent in the supply of such items to local villas from the first century onwards remains a matter for debate. The pottery evidence is another indicator of relative status. The Combe assemblage includes imported samian and other high-status fine ware, as well as utility pottery provided probably by the two local kilns at Hanborough in the second half of the first century.³⁷ More distinctive and unusual (though difficult to explain) is the relatively high proportion of samian vessels and cups associated with drinking compared to assemblages from other Cotswold villa sites.³⁸

The imported glass, with its bias towards first-century exemplars, provides a different but equally tantalising source of evidence. It confirms that the site was occupied within the first twenty-five years of the Roman occupation, and probably very early in that period. In addition, Hilary Cool has suggested that the pillar-moulded bowl composition seen here could suggest a military site. Such a military connection cannot be totally dismissed, although the evidence is slight. Two of the copper alloy small finds from Combe, the tubular ferrule and the acorn amulet pendant (Fig. 11, nos. 14, 21), may have military associations. Booth has suggested that a link with the military at Wilcote on Akeman Street would explain the Niedermendig lava querns, the presence of Claudian samian ware and significant quantities of amphorae in early contexts. Military equipment, including a gladius handle, has also been excavated at Asthall.³⁹

However, such items as the cosmetic pestle, a cosmetic palette and the spoon probe or ligula, are to be associated with feminine adornment, and would suggest a concern for elegance and appearance, appropriate for a proud woman of the villa. The lumps of painted plaster from the walls hint at colourful decorative schemes in the villa interior. Fixtures and fittings are not much in evidence, other than the fragment of a bronze ring, part of the ring handle from some item of furniture.

Overall, it seems likely that the Combe villa was built for the same sort of reasons which Peter Salway has suggested for many of the north Oxfordshire villas. In other words, it was one of those villas belonging to a country landowner who wanted his house in what were probably regarded as very appealing upland valleys, close to the company of his neighbours, in good sporting country and located by the fast road to Alchester, about ten miles away, and, in the other direction, about twenty-five miles from the bigger centre at Cirencester.⁴⁰

However, in considering the evidence of the finds and the nature of the buildings revealed, it has to be acknowledged that the status of the Combe villa appears modest in comparison with the sumptuous development of the neighbouring villas at North Leigh and Stonesfield, with their splendid fourth-century mosaic floors and bath-houses. More investment in grander building is evident too in the later phases at Ditchley, Shakenoak and at Bury Close Fawler, where a hypocaust system was introduced in the second phase.⁴¹

Why such development did not happen at Combe is open to question. Apparently the status of the occupants declined and possibly the site took on an at least partly industrial use. Traces

³⁷ D. Sturdy and C.J. Young, 'Two Early Roman Kilns at Tuckwell's Pit, Hanborough, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, 41 (1976), pp. 56–64.

³⁸ Booth, below.

³⁹ P. Booth, 'The Regional Archaeological Setting of the Roman Roadside Settlement at Wilcote – A Summary', in A.R. Hands, *The Romano-British Roadside Settlement at Wilcote, Oxfordshire*, 3 vols., BAR BS, 232, 265, 370 (1993–2004), vol. 2, p. 11.

⁴⁰ P. Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981), p. 608.

⁴¹ T.G. Allen, 'Excavations at Bury Close, Fawler', *Oxoniensia*, 54 (1988), p. 312.

of smithing, in the form of slag and charcoal, were in evidence by the north-west corner of the villa forecourt where part of the enclosing wall of the forecourt had been demolished. In the final phase Building 2 suffered a severe fire, perhaps associated with this activity.

Chronology

In spite of the relatively high percentage of finds recovered from the topsoil and unstratified contexts, several chronological phases can be identified in this material, from the pre-conquest period to the fourth century AD. The chronological phasing of the site features can be broadly understood through an analysis of the pottery and the stratified small finds. Here a brief outline will be given of the evidence for dating the villa development.⁴²

The numismatic evidence is sparse, limited to five coins, ranging chronologically from a Dobunnic Anted coin of c.25 AD, to a fourth-century coin of Constantius (c.336 AD). Only one coin, a dupondius of Trajan, was found in a sealed context. The small number of coins recovered is surprising but consistent with early occupation and the pattern elsewhere, where the use of coinage on early domestic sites was minimal.

The ceramic evidence indicates that some of the ditches, particularly the enclosure ditch west of Building 1, date from the middle Iron Age and that activity continued into the late Iron Age. A detailed analysis of the pottery has demonstrated that in the area of Building 1 only 2.6 per cent of the sherds can be attributed to the middle Iron Age in contrast to 28 per cent of the sherds in the enclosure to the west. But in terms of dating the construction of Building 1 what is of significance is the concentration of E wares across the site. The greatest concentration of E ware sherds, which clearly indicate activity in the mid first century AD, is to be found around Building 1, where they constitute 40.3 per cent of the assemblage. The percentage of E wares was lower (25 per cent) in Building 3, north of the enclosure ditch. This would suggest that activity and occupation in both these areas were contemporary, but with a greater focus of activity around Building 1.

By contrast, the pottery associated with Building 2 indicates a later period of use, in the second and third centuries AD, given the relatively high proportion of reduced wares (66.3 per cent) which were recovered. This is closely followed by the 60.2 per cent of reduced ware fabrics retrieved from the assemblage in the south-east of the villa yard. It can also be argued on the basis of construction technique that the later building of the wall joining the south-west corner of Building 1 is contemporary with Building 2.

Nearly all the samian sherds retrieved from stratified contexts were associated with Building 1, of which 34 per cent derived from South Gaul, the remainder being Central Gaulish. A stratified rim and body sherd from a pre-Flavian Form 24/25 cup found in a sealed layer of dark loam beneath the gravel and mortared surface external to the south wall of Building 1 (T1/03) is evidence for its construction in the latter half of the first century AD.

The evidence provided by the brooches found on site is also revealing. With the exception of the 'late La Tène' example (Fig. 9, no. 3) from the upper level of the enclosure ditch (T1/09), all the brooches came from Building 1, including two from the forecourt. Whilst there is uncertainty in determining how long brooches remained in use before being lost or deposited, all but two of these examples, the oval brooch (Fig 10, no. 12) and a stray topsoil find (Fig 10, no. 10), were made and acquired in the first century AD, before and after the Claudian conquest.

The glass collected from the site is unlike the glass composition on any other regional villa and more like material found on a military site of the Claudian-Neronian period. Romanisation of the site, in the form of a new stone-built rectangular building, would appear to have happened within the first twenty-five years of the Roman conquest. This is consistent with the acquisition of the South Gaulish samian and the concentration of E wares in the area of Building 1.

⁴² A record of prehistoric activity on the site, from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic, as evidenced by flint and stone artefact scatter, has been compiled by Terry Hardaker and is held in the site archive.

The chronological development of the site after the first century is difficult to chart precisely. Most of the fine ware and coarse ware pottery ranges from the first to the second century but also extends beyond, as evidenced by the small number of sherds of later Oxfordshire fine ware, mortaria and Nene Valley fabrics. It would appear that the peak of activity was in the second century, with the expansion of the villa complex to include Building 2 and the creation of the partially enclosed forecourt with its western wall. Activity decreased considerably in the third and fourth century, as can be attested in the pottery distribution. The late fine ware recovered came mostly from the north and east of Building 1. The ditch to the north of Building 1 was still open in this period since material recovered from the fill included a third-century minim, tentatively identified as being of Claudius II (260–286), and a handle fragment of fourth-century glass, recorded as coming from the lower level of the fill. The ditch to the east of the villa, which contained three neonates, had been filled and capped by the late third or early fourth century, on the evidence of the pottery in the uppermost layer. Whilst some activity can be attested in the fourth century, the date of the final demise of the villa is unknown.

GEOPHYSICS AND EXCAVATION RESULTS

Geophysical Surveys

A 40 m x 40 m resistivity survey carried out by Roger and Sally Ainslie in May 2003 was targeted over the area where ploughing had revealed the greatest concentration of tile and building stone. A more extensive survey completed by Oxford Archaeotechnics in July 2003 comprised a combination of topsoil magnetic susceptibility field sensing and magnetometry.

The resistivity survey was hampered by the very stony character of the soil, but the results were better than expected. The plot appears to show a large structure with the side wall of a presumed enclosure running downhill from its western side. The structure appears to have a single internal partition. The enclosure wall seems to overlie a ditch which runs diagonally north-west to south-east across the survey area. A slight rectangular trace in the enclosure in front of the structure was interpreted as being of potential archaeological interest.

The survey undertaken by Oxford Archaeotechnics centred on NGR 442600 215450 and covered a strip of land 100 m wide and 320–330 m long (3.2 ha in area) alongside the eastern boundary of the field situated immediately north of the plantation on Dog Kennel Hill. Within this, an area measuring 100 m x 90 m was selected for detailed magnetometer (gradiometer) survey, on the basis of artefact scatters and scanning anomalies. Many magnetic anomalies were recorded, the most numerous being a series of positive anomalies representing enclosure ditches and other linear features which extend in all directions beyond the survey area. The most clearly defined anomalies show part of a sub-rectangular enclosure some 50–60 m in width, on a north–south axis (Fig. 2). A length of at least 40 m is visible before the feature is lost beneath Dog Kennel Hill plantation. The north-eastern angle of the enclosure is rounded and represented by a relatively strong magnetic anomaly (over 3 nT), suggesting a ditch 1.5–2 m wide.

The north-western angle is more angular, slightly greater than 90 degrees. An entrance, perhaps 3–4 m wide, lies almost exactly midway along the northern side, associated with what looks remarkably like an internal clavicula appended to the west side of the entrance. What appears to be a short stretch of ditch, 5–6 m in length, runs obliquely across the north-west angle, stopping short of the west side of the enclosure.

The interior of the enclosure seems generally free of further substantial ‘cut’ features, although a series of localized scoops or pit forms may be part of a weak ring some 12 m in diameter within the north-east quadrant; what appears to be a second smaller ring, c.6 m in diameter, lies close to its western side.

To the east of the enclosure lies an area containing a substantial number of magnetic anomalies, which clearly extend eastwards beyond the modern boundary and northwards beyond the magnetometer survey area. This activity is defined on the west by a slightly curving north–south ditch running at a distance of between 12 and 20 m from the eastern enclosure ditch; their common alignment may suggest that they are contemporary. A 20 m stretch of ditch running perpendicular probably defines the northern extent of this particular area of activity, although a further section of ditch can be seen to run northwards beyond the scope of the present survey. Within this magnetically ‘busy’ area lie two negative anomalies, 9 m apart, which may indicate the presence of limestone walling or footings. There is a suggestion of associated organized structural elements occurring as a series of cell-like rectilinear anomalies, which appear to abut the southernmost of these walls. A number of pits and smaller intrusions are also present.

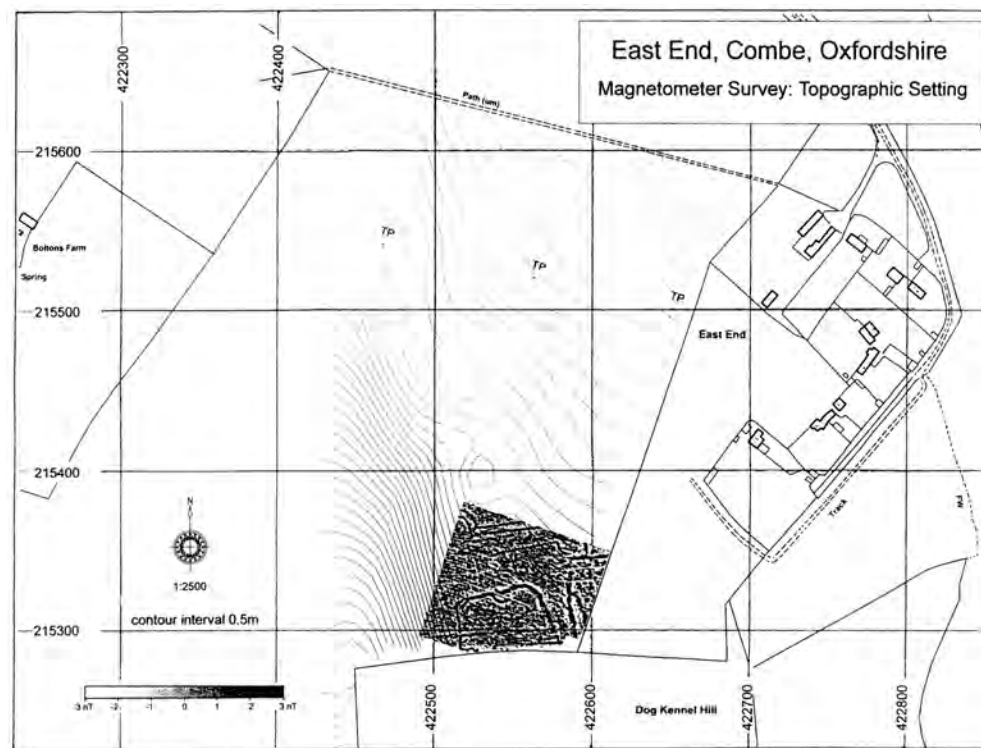


Fig. 2. Combe East End: magnetometer survey and topographic setting.

Outside both enclosures there are areas of pits and/or silted hollows, with at least eight substantial examples lying within 25 m of the northern entrance to the sub-rectangular enclosure.

Much of the northern half of the survey area is occupied by an arrangement of grouped linear 'cut' features, seemingly small ditches or gullies approximately 1 m in width. The northernmost pair, spaced 5 m apart, follows a precise curve northwards towards the very edge of the combe. A linear feature runs parallel at a distance of some 12 m to the south showing a similar curved termination (this time to the east), and there are faint suggestions of further similar linear features running both parallel and orthogonal.

The gradiometer plot is crossed by a number of striations, some positive and some negative, which are indicative of ploughing and other agricultural activity. In places where these anomalies occur locally as negatives, particularly deep ploughing or mole ploughing may be suspected (which may have brought the substrate/limestone up into the topsoil). There is a light litter of ferrous material across the site, which is typical of an arable agricultural landscape.

Roger Ainslie undertook a further magnetometer survey in April 2006. This measured 60 m x 60 m and was planned to give a 10 m overlap at the northern edge of the survey conducted by Oxford Archaeotechnics. The purpose was to gain more information about the curious formal arrangement of the grouped linear 'cut' features, the seemingly small ditches or gullies approximately 1 m in width. Figure 3 shows these surveys combined. It is very revealing. The lower of the parallel gullies continues and then butts another gully or ditch almost at right angles, linking it to a ditch which runs parallel to the alignment of the villa and lies north of it. A parallel group of three ditches extends north beyond the edge of the survey area. The eastern ditch extends southwards enclosing a possible droveway or track, which opens into a bucket-shaped enclosure, north of the villa building.

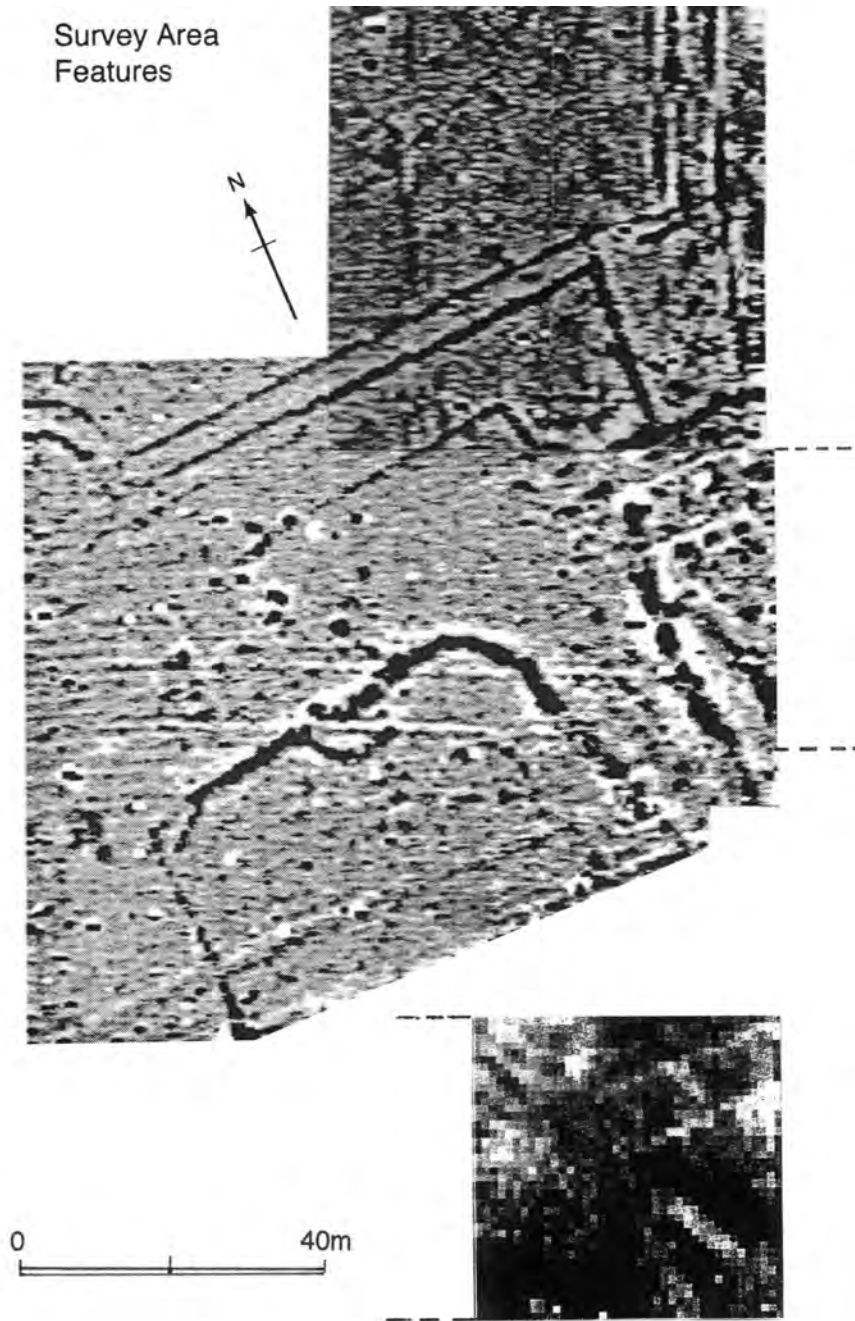


Fig. 3. Geophysical surveys combined.

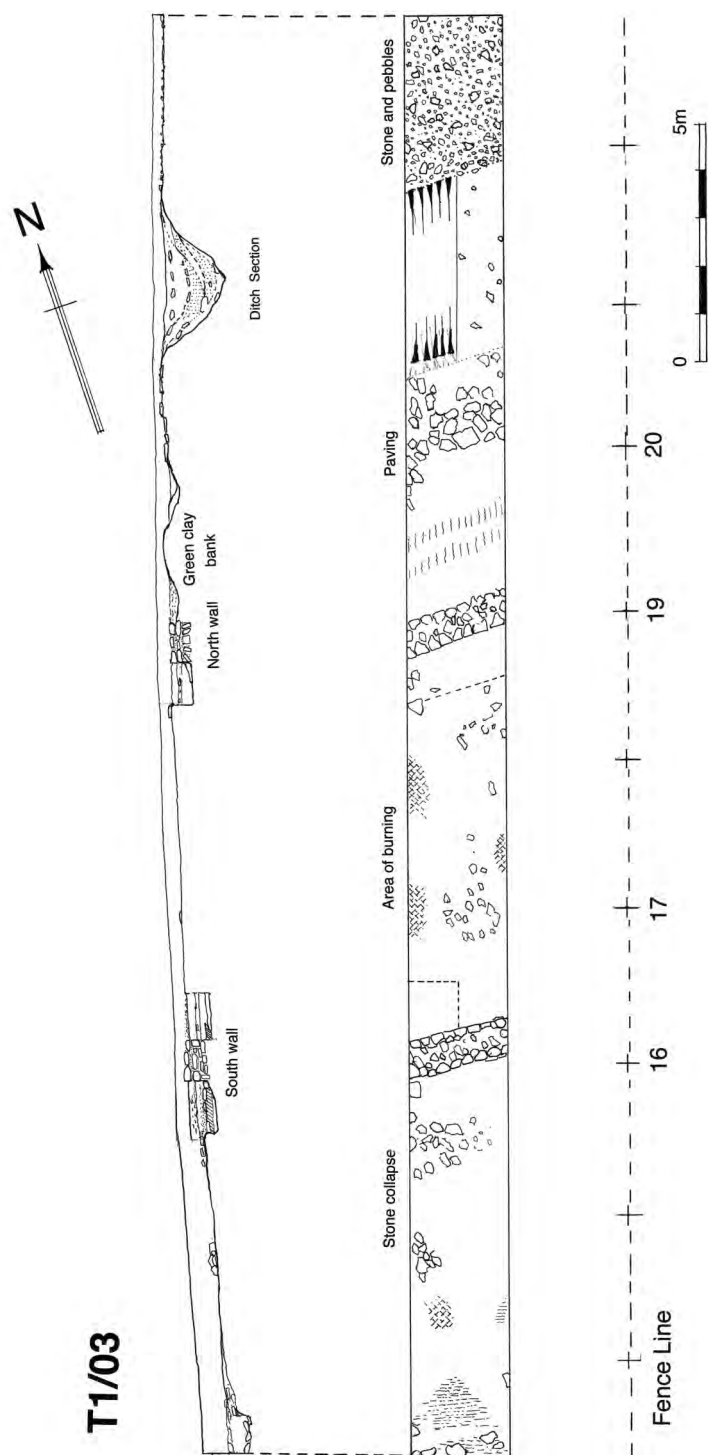


Fig. 4. Plan and section of evaluation trench, T1/03.

Evaluation

It was evident from fieldwalking and the surface spread of stone, mortar, tile and charcoal in the topsoil that agricultural activity had caused significant damage to the underlying archaeological deposits. Yet the finds from fieldwalking and the evidence of the surveys suggested that the surviving archaeological features might give significant insights about the development of a suspected late Iron-Age farmstead and the transition to a Romano-British villa. Ditches and cut features, suggestive of the late Iron Age, are clear on the magnetometer survey. It was also apparent that archaeological features extended outside the survey areas. Geophysical survey of a fenced-off plantation of Christmas trees to the east was impossible, but differential growth in the size of the trees was consistent with varied soil depth over buried ditches and walls.

Following the completion of the surveys, two trial trenches of 10 m x 2 m (A and B) were exposed in August 2003 2.5 m from the plantation fence to determine the depth of features below the surface, namely the north and south wall of the suspected villa structure indicated by the resistivity survey. This survey indicated the partial plan of a building with at least one internal division and a north wall with an estimated minimum length of c.27 m. and a width of c.9 m. Given the uncertainty about the depth of topsoil, this was removed with mattock and shovel rather than machine. The tops of two well-built stone and mortar walls were uncovered at a depth of 15 cm. Ploughing had scored some of the stones in the top course, but few had been dislodged.

With the walls located and exposed, a small mechanical digger was used to join the trenches and to extend the excavation northwards by 10 m, creating a single trench 30 m x 2 m (T1/03). This provided an opportunity to examine features north and south of the building as well as any surviving internal floor surface (Fig. 4, plan and section of T1/03). The widths of the walls were c.72–77 cm. The internal measurement between walls was 7.72 m, making the total width of the building 9.20 m. Two courses of shaped and random limestone blocks (10–12 cm thick) lay on top of a mixed foundation layer of stones, some of which were diagonally laid. A section taken within the building adjacent to the south wall revealed 20 cm of topsoil, overlying a thin band of yellowish clay with limestone fragments. Below this a cream-grey mortar floor 14 cm thick overlay a reddish 9–14 cm band of clay, which covered the limestone bedrock.

The stratigraphy on the south side of the south wall showed 20 cm of topsoil and limestone pieces overlying a layer of small flat stones (interpreted as a verandah walk way) on top of a 6 cm thick bed of gravel, which contained no finds. Below this was a 9 cm layer of dark friable loam interspersed with some limestone blocks. Contained in this layer was the rim and side of a Form 24/25 cup (pre-Flavian) together with a mixed assemblage of animal bone.

Within the room of this building a copper alloy enamelled oval brooch was located a few centimetres above the floor surface (Fig. 10, no. 12). The floor, which appeared to be a composite of limestone pieces and a creamy white mortar, had survived well in places, but ploughing and other agricultural activity had inflicted some damage. Along the western edge of the trench and elsewhere, the mortar showed as pink patches where burning had taken place. There was no layer of charcoal, suggesting that the fire was not caused by the collapse of a burning roof.

Five metres north of the building a section of a ditch, shown on the survey as running parallel to the wall of the villa, was partially excavated. This was a 'V'-profiled feature, 1.25 m deep and 2.90 m wide, cut into the limestone cornbrash. The fill consisted of layers of limestone pieces and clay loam, interspersed with animal bone, grey ware and some shell-tempered pottery sherds.

Bordering the northern side of the ditch was a compacted pathway of small stones and glacial pebbles. One metre from the southern side of the ditch, lying parallel to it and 3 m north of the villa, was a laid pathway of irregular limestone slabs. Sealed beneath the stones was a decorated sherd of a South Gaulish Form 29 bowl (Fig. 20, no. 2). Adjacent to the north wall was a gully containing an infill of pottery sherds and animal bone. Banked on its northern edge was a 0.75 m wide impervious layer of green clay, which appears to have been placed on top of the underlying brownish-red clay.

At the southern end of the trench, south of the villa, was an area of stone spillage or collapse; some of the stones had dressed faces. It is assumed that the stone had belonged to the villa building. Evidence of industrial activity south of the villa was indicated by a layer of charcoal and carbonized earth. This layer also contained a large storage jar rim, body sherds and grey ware and overlay a consolidated surface of limestone pieces.

The walls of the building were subsequently covered in protective sheeting and the trench refilled in October 2003. No excavation took place in 2004 but fieldwalking on the ploughed area south of Building 1 did yield several surface finds, a worn coin of Domitian and a follis of Constantius II (c.337 AD). A more spectacular discovery was that of a copper alloy crescentic terret with enamelled decoration (Fig. 12, no. 23).

Excavation Strategy, 2005–09

In discussion with the Blenheim Estate it was agreed that further investigations were justified. The main objectives were to establish the character of a selection of the features identified from the geophysical surveys and to provide information on the extent, character and date of the archaeological deposits with a minimum of disturbance to the site.

Of the 12,000 sq m covered by the geophysical surveys, only 490 sq m (4%) have subsequently been investigated archaeologically with topsoil removal. Interpretation of the site has been based on the excavation strategy of trial trenching. Open-plan excavation was not an option as the constraints of time and a limited labour force did not allow for larger areas to be exposed. The areas of excavation were thus restricted to a series of 'keyhole' trenches. Mostly these trenches were cut through the layers of plough soil, which contained many unstratified finds. Excavation was therefore accompanied by careful fieldwalking and collection of finds from the topsoil. The total excavation time from 2003 until 2009 amounted to twelve weeks.

Three main areas were selected for excavation. The first and primary area was the villa building (Building 1, or B1) and its forecourt. A second area of focus was to the south-west, where further stone structures (B2) were identified. A third group of trenches were sited across parts of the enclosure to the west of the villa to examine suspected Iron-Age features and possible geological anomalies detected on the magnetometer survey.

The Villa (Building 1)

Excavations began in April 2005. The opportunity to locate more of Building 1 was aided by the decision of the Blenheim Estate to remove conifers considered too large for the Christmas market, allowing for investigation of an area where geophysical survey had not been possible. The exposed walls in T1/03 clearly showed that the south wall continued and would pass between fence posts numbered 16 and 17 (counting from Dog Kennel Hill), with the north wall passing between fence posts 19 and 20, but it was unknown how far the south and north walls might extend beyond the fence line.

Three trenches were laid out with the objective of clarifying this uncertainty: Trench 1/05 (15 m x 2 m), 2 m east of the fence, parallel to it and 4.5 m east of the 2003 evaluation trench; Trench 2/05 (10 m x 2 m), 8 m east of the fence; Trench 2A (4 m x 2 m), at right angles, connecting the top of T1/05, to the western side of T2/05. Trench 2B (4 m x 2 m) was an extension of T2A/05, continuing 4 m east of T2/05. Within these areas a mechanical digger removed 15 cm of topsoil, together with the stumps and roots of sawn-down Christmas trees. Subsequent excavation by hand trowels showed that in places roots had penetrated into lower lying archaeological deposits.

T1/05 and T2A. In T1/05 and extending into T2A, at a depth of 20 cm, a 5 m length of the north wall of the villa building was uncovered. This was between 75 cm and 80 cm wide and consisted of a single layer of well-laid mortared limestone slabs, c.18 cm thick with straight outer faces, and smaller limestone as a rubble core fill. The stones were bonded with mortar containing fine gravel. There was not a foundation layer of pitched stones, only a layer of gravel above a band of reddish clay. The north-east corner of the building appeared to be rounded and was located 7 m from the fence (measured from between fence posts 19 and 20).

The line of the south wall was exposed towards the southern end of T1/05. There were no horizontally laid limestone slabs; only the smaller, diagonally pitched limestone blocks of its foundation had survived. Beneath part of the wall was a laid surface of small limestone pieces and glacial pebbles, covering a 6 cm thick clay layer on top of the limestone bedrock. The pebbled surface was detected inside the building beneath the mortar floor, close to the inner face of the south wall at the western section of the trench. Whilst the footings towards the eastern section of the trench consisted of a disturbed mix of mortar, pebbles and stone, the evidence of the intact foundation layer clearly demonstrated that the south side of the building overlaid a chronologically earlier pebbled surface, a cobbled yard area or path.

T2/05. A length of the eastern wall of the building was exposed in Trench 2/05. This consisted of the disturbed foundations of pitched and random limestone, with larger laid stones surviving in places. Of particular relevance for the plan of the building was the discovery of the limestone foundations of an internal wall 70 cm wide within Trench 1/05. This was parallel to and 3 m west of the eastern wall. The soot-stained sherds of an almost complete domestic pot were recovered from the floor surface of this small room within Trench 1 (Fig. 23, no. 24). The floor surface of Room 2, west of this internal wall, was a chalk mortar floor, with stone packing, burned pink in several areas.

The external ground surface, bordering the north and east walls, was made of a compacted, level layer of glacial pebbles, small pieces of limestone and occasional sections of animal bone embedded in a clay

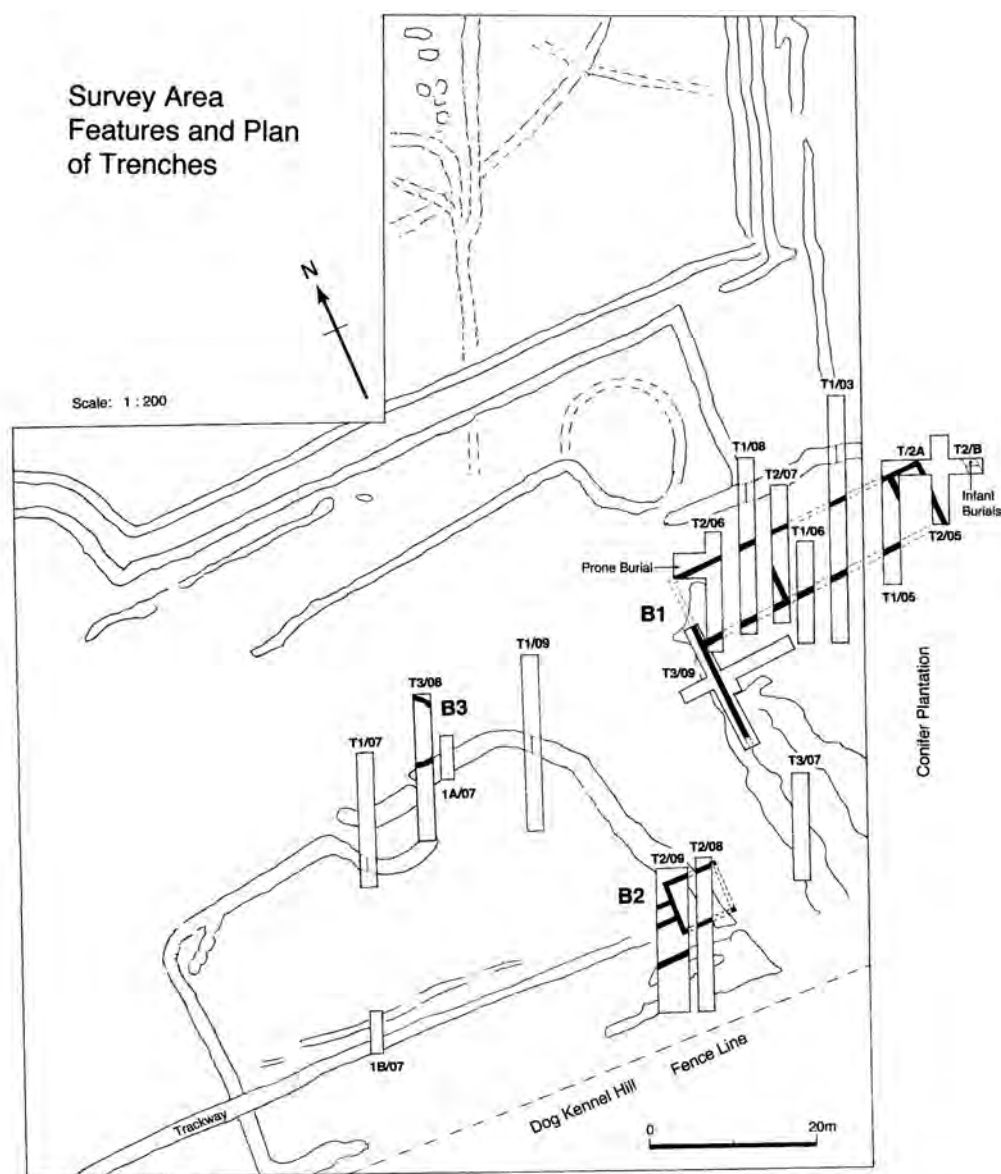


Fig. 5. Survey area features and plan of trenches, with location of buildings.

base. This extended east as a uniform surface for 5 m and had evidently been maintained as a well-swept surface, producing very few finds. Just north of the villa wall and 2 m west of the corner a 6 cm deep layer of pinkish mortar had been deposited in a concave depression lined with limestone pieces. No finds were associated and it is difficult to explain its purpose, other than some consolidation of the area with unused, surplus mortar following possible repairs elsewhere within the building.

T2/B. Beyond the pebbled surface was a ditch capped with irregular lumps of limestone. The alignment of the ditch was parallel to the eastern wall of the villa and was located 5 m to the east. A 1 m wide section

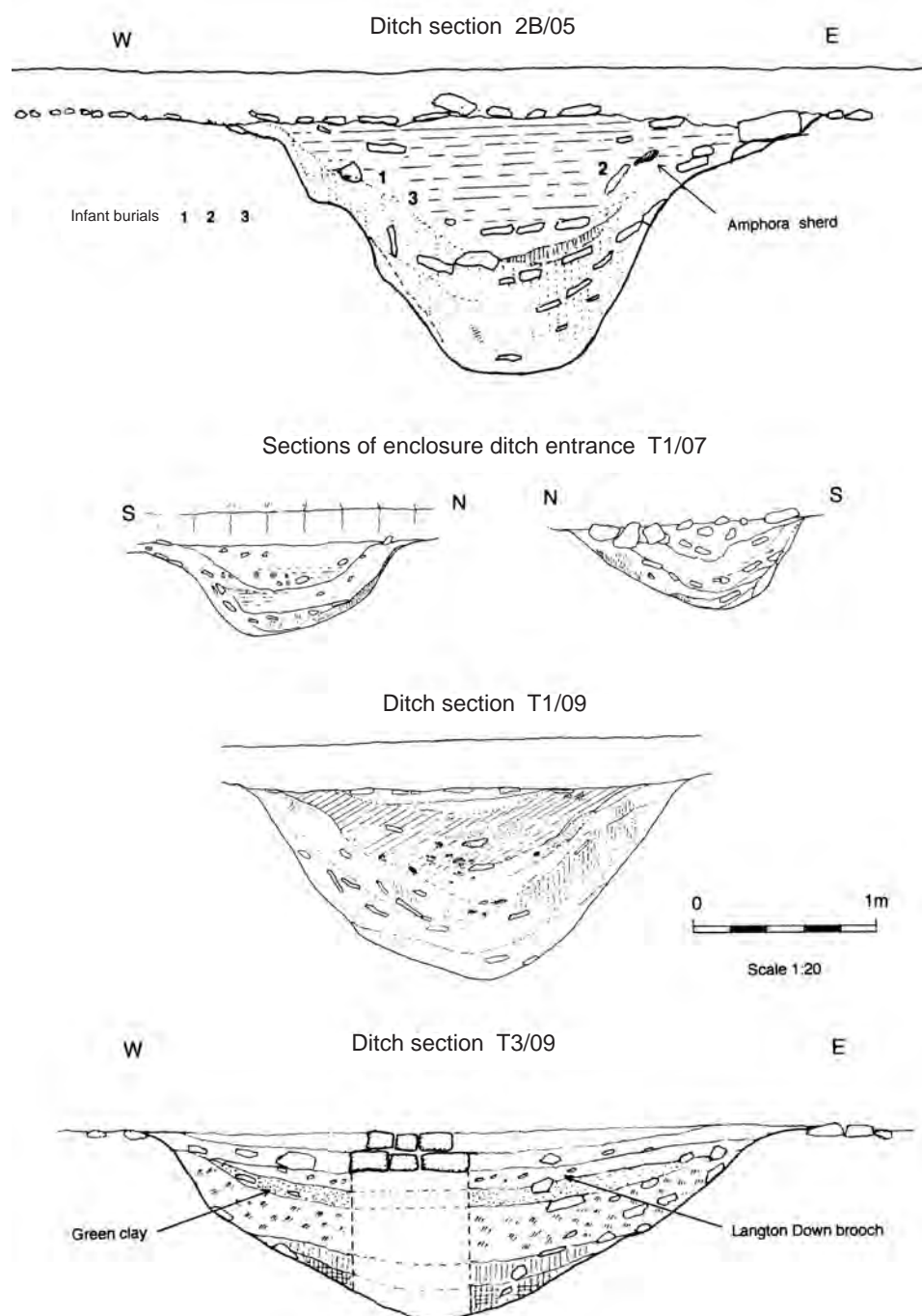


Fig. 6. Ditch sections: a) ditch east of Building 1, T2B/05; b) enclosure ditch entrance, T1/07; c) enclosure ditch, T1/09; d) enclosure wall above late Iron-Age ditch, T3/09.

was excavated. The 'U'-bottomed ditch was 2.40 m wide and 1.5 m deep (Fig. 6, T2B/05). The stone rubble capping to the ditch contained a few sherds of Oxford ware. Beneath the ditch capping, in the dark loamy silt of the upper layers of the ditch, the skeletons of three neonates were found. Two lay on the west side of the ditch at depths of 63 cm and 67 cm and a third lay 110 cm to the east, on the sloping eastern side, at a depth of 47 cm. Adjacent to this skeleton was part of the shoulder with handle base from a Dressel 20 amphora. Each infant was lying on its left side in a crouched position, head to the north and facing east. It could be deduced that some care had been taken in the placing of these infants and the stratigraphy of the ditch would suggest that all three burials took place within a relatively short period of time. It is possible that given their proximity, the infant inhumations on the west side of the ditch were contemporary. No artefacts were associated with the burials. The depth of the burials in all likelihood was determined by the nature of the ditch fill.

Beneath the skeletons, the ditch contained a substantial layer of stone rubble, which would have made it difficult to increase the depth of the graves. Underlying the compacted layer of limestone pieces the ditch fill consisted of yellowish clay loam, interspersed with a layer of charcoal and dark earth. The eastern berm of the ditch was edged by a row of three substantial limestone blocks (c.30 cm x 30 cm x 14 cm) following the alignment of the ditch, and overlying a base of limestone rubble and clay. It is tempting to see this ditch as a boundary feature to B1 and connected to the ditch situated 5 m north of B1 identified in T1/03, but this is unconfirmed.

Additional trenches, 2006–9. Six further trenches investigating the villa building were opened between 2006 and 2009. Trench 1/06 (12 m x 2 m) was located parallel to and 6.5 m west of the fence. Its position was chosen to gain further information about the villa interior and to look at any external features such as paving or a verandah structure located on the south side. The trench was 1 m west of the trench opened in 2003, with the southern end of the trench level with fence post 13 and the northern end of the trench level with post 17. The topsoil was removed with a digger and deposited east of the trench on top of the area opened in 2003.

The 77 cm wide southern wall was well constructed, with two surviving courses of laid, straight-edged pieces of limestone, and a central fill of limestone rubble bonded with a sandy mortar. Three upper stones on the inner face of the wall, on the west side of the trench, had been dislodged by ploughing and pushed diagonally towards the centre of the wall. Little evidence of the mortar interior flooring survived, other than some limestone rubble foundations.

Investigation to the south of the wall revealed a consolidated surface of packed stone rubble with occasional cobbles. One metre south of the wall on the western side of the trench was a posthole, 43 cm in diameter and 30 cm deep, with a pad stone base. This has been interpreted as tentative evidence for a verandah support or covered walkway on the south side of B1.

Trench 2/06 was located 18 m west of the fence and measured 16 m x 2 m. Its purpose was to supplement information gained from the resistivity survey of 2003 by crossing both the north and south walls of the villa building. The resistivity survey also indicated a possible ditch by the south-west side of the building. Topsoil was removed with a digger and deposited east of the trench.

Trench 2A/06 was a spur to Trench 2 and positioned at right angles 2 m south of its northern end, projecting from its western side. It measured 4 m x 3 m and its purpose was to locate the north-western corner of the building.

Trench 2B/06 was a second spur to the western side of Trench 2, located 3 m north of its southern end. It was smaller in scale, measuring 2 m wide and 3 m long. Its purpose was to trace the footings of the south wall of the villa towards the south-west corner of the building. Part of this small trench (not shown on Fig. 5) was re-exposed in the northern end of T3/09, showing the south-west corner of the building butting the later built wall of the villa forecourt.

The pitched, rubble-limestone footings of the north wall were uncovered in T2/06, beneath 20 cm of topsoil. The wall footings were c.80 cm wide with no horizontal laid stone course surviving. This wall lay adjacent to traces of an earlier wall, c.77 cm wide on its southern edge. On its inner face a row of flat laid stones survived. It is possible, however, that this second wall was part of an internal feature in what may have been a kitchen area – traces of burning, charcoal and pink earth were detected south of the north wall.

The north-west corner of the building was located at E 4424 589.6, N 215 342.5. The west wall of the building was not exposed. An unexpected discovery, close to the outer edge of the north wall, was the shallow grave of a double burial of an adult and infant. The adult was male and was buried in a prone position with his hands beneath his chest. The skull lay on its right side, looking south, and the lower limbs were bent backwards with the heels level with the pelvis. The head was at the western end of the grave, approximately 70 cm from the north-west corner of the villa and only 26 cm below ground level. The neonatal infant was placed upside down on its side, over the male's left scapula. Although double

prone burials do occur, most are adult female prone burials with neonates.⁴³ No grave goods were associated with the burial, other than a sherd of shell-tempered black ware, found beneath the adult skeleton.

At the southern end of T2/06 a consolidated stone surface was exposed which abutted the rubble and pitched stone foundations of the south wall. On both the magnetometer and resistivity surveys, the south-west corner of the villa appears to overlie a suspected Iron-Age ditch. This was confirmed in excavation. Part of this ditch, running north-south, was revealed in the south-west corner of Trench 2 and was estimated to be c.320 cm wide.⁴⁴ The sloping east side was exposed, and the ditch was 90 cm deep in the south-west corner of the trench.

Two further parallel trenches, T2/07 and T1/08, have provided supplementary evidence about Building 1. Trench 2/07 measured 16 m x 2 m and was aligned parallel to the fence and 10 m west of it. It was located to provide further information on the construction and chronology of the villa's north and south walls, and to locate the junction of an internal wall with the south wall of the villa.

The north wall survived as a single 78 cm wide layer of flat-laid limestone blocks, resting on a rubble foundation that extended 30 cm beyond the edge of the first course of stone. Beyond this a small bank of green-yellow clay lay parallel to the wall, a feature noted in the excavation of the north wall in 2003. Late Iron-Age pottery and some black burnished sherds and bone lay beneath the bank of clay with the lower layer of the section showing a layer of small cobbles of a probable earlier floor surface.

South of the north wall, the mortar floor of the villa survived in places but had been mostly ploughed away, revealing a stone rubble base. The pitched stone foundations of the internal wall (c.50 cm wide) emerged from the west side of the trench. Lying against the east side of the internal wall was the iron share of a bow-ard plough (Fig. 15, no. 1). The southern end of the internal wall where it butted the south wall of the villa had been disturbed by recent agricultural activity. The south wall survived as a single layer of mortared limestone blocks, 78 cm wide, but at the east side of the trench two courses were extant.

On the west side of the internal wall, close to its junction with the south wall, was a disturbed area which cut through the rubble base of the floor. Below this was an area of burning, interpreted as a hearth. An arc of slag and charcoal formed a rim on its southern side. Large flat stones and a friable loam had subsequently covered the hearth. Given that the area had been disturbed it was not clear whether this hearth predated the construction of the villa floor, or if the hearth had subsequently been cut through the floor.

To the east of the internal wall and abutting the north side of the south wall of the villa a section was cut through the rubble base of the floor. This revealed an earlier ground surface of a 10 cm thick layer of dark friable loam. On this lay two sherds of a brown-buff girth beaker, decorated with an incised band of diagonal lattice, dating probably to c.50–70 AD (Fig. 21, no. 11).

Outside the south wall was a layer of limestone rubble, interpreted as the foundation to a verandah or covered walkway, a suspected post-hole for which was found in T1/06. Traces of white mortar indicated that this had been surfaced. Several fractured square terracotta tiles 1 m south of the wall may have been part of a porch or the base pad for a verandah post, but no post hole was detected.

Trench 1/08 measured 2 m x 20 m and was located 14–16 m west of the fence, the lower end being level with FP14. The evidence supports much of that gained from the 2003 evaluation trench, but, in spite of there being an apparent greater depth of topsoil, deep ploughing had caused more damage than on the better-preserved sections of wall and floor traces uncovered in 2003. No courses of laid stone survived, only the foundation stones of the walls, some pitched and some more randomly placed. The foundations of the north wall appeared to be more systematic, with a higher percentage of diagonally pitched stonework. The width of walls was c.76 cm. Traces of a creamy yellow mortar floor existed in several places, the flooring having stonework embedded in the mortar. Patches of burning, where the mortar floor had turned pink, were noted in two locations.

At the north end of the trench, parallel to the villa wall and c.4 m north of it, a 1 m wide section of the ditch was excavated. It was a shallow-sided, 'U'-shaped ditch, 340 cm wide and 100 cm deep, with the south side having a slightly steeper slope. Flat stones had been placed at the base of the ditch above the natural clay. It was slightly wider than the more 'V'-sectioned profile of the section of ditch in T1/03, c.13 m to the east. The few finds recorded would indicate that there had been activity here in the fourth century, but the stratigraphy is ambiguous. A small minim coin was recorded as being found near the base of the ditch.⁴⁵ In the ditch fill there was also a fragment of a rib of yellow/green glass, identified as being fourth

⁴³ R. Philpott, *Burial Practices in Roman Britain*, BAR BS, 219 (1991), p. 72.

⁴⁴ Excavation across a section of this ditch in 2009 (T3/09) showed the ditch to be 340 cm wide.

⁴⁵ It is possible that the minim had been deposited in an upper layer, as it was found in loose earth when clearing the base of the ditch. However, the glass fragment from the handle of a fourth-century bottle gives support to the interpretation that the ditch had been re-cut and was in use in the fourth century.

century in date (glass report, below, no. 15), the base of an Oxford beaker, some second-century grey ware, animal limb bones and a crescentic iron mount (Fig. 14, no. 13).

A very compacted stone and clay pathway lay between the southern edge of the ditch and the villa. On this surface, a first-century Colchester-type two-piece brooch (Fig. 9, no. 6) was found 2 m south of the ditch.

Villa Forecourt

Aspects of the area south of Building 1, termed the villa forecourt, were investigated in 2007 (T3/07) and 2009 (T3/09). Here deeper ploughing had brought charcoal and mortar to the surface, and the areas were photographed and the surface finds recorded. The trenches revealed both late Iron-Age and Romano-British activity.

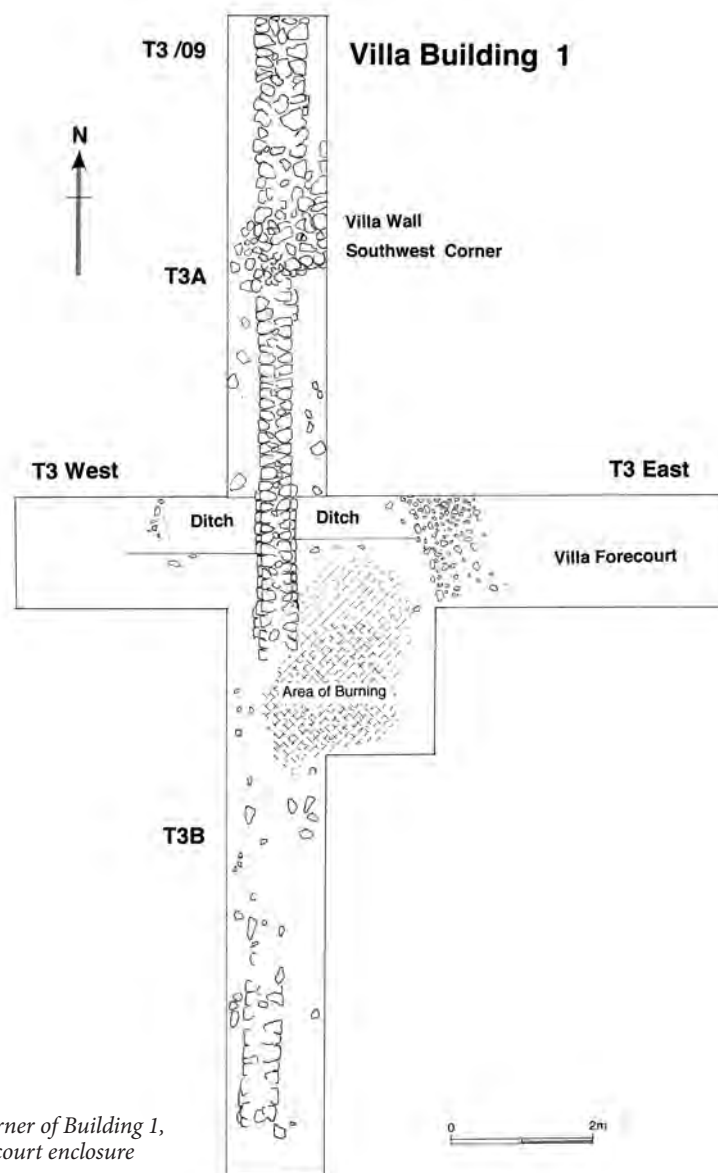


Fig. 7. South-west corner of Building 1, with junction of forecourt enclosure wall, T3/09.

Trench 3/07. Trench 3/07 was 12.5 m long and 2 m wide and located 8 m west of the fence. This area was only partially covered by the resistivity survey, but the magnetometer survey showed what appeared to be areas of pitting and a section of a presumed Iron-Age ditch running north–south.

In the central area of the trench, excavation revealed two consolidated surfaces of paved stone, but no walling was identified. Polish and wear were visible on some stone surfaces that lay 50 cm below ground level. Ceramic finds were minimal but dating evidence came from an iron 'Nauheim' derivative brooch found on the surface of the paving. Excavation was unable to confirm whether or not the paved area had once been covered by a structure.

At the eastern side of the trench part of a ditch or soak-away was detected. The fill consisted of flat stones with an overlying layer of soft black loam, 15 cm deep. At the southern end of the trench, an accumulated mix of dressed stone and rubble with orange coloured mortar was exposed. The evidence of the resistivity survey would suggest that here were the remains of the enclosure wall extending from the south-west corner of the villa B1, or demolition debris from elsewhere on the site. Small finds from this area included a double-eyed bone needle, and some first-/second-century glass.

Trench 3/09, 3A and 3B. The existence of the western wall to the villa forecourt was confirmed in T3/09, where it joined the south-west corner of the villa (B1). In contrast to the alignment of previous trenches T3/09 was planned to be parallel to the south wall of the villa, with the intention that it would cross the suspected enclosure wall at right angles and provide more information on its stratigraphic relationship with a ditch which had been identified at the south end of T2/06.

Trench 3A traced the enclosure wall to its junction with the south-west corner of the villa, extending along a 4 m length of the west wall of the building. Trench 3B was planned to reveal the remains of the enclosure wall south of Trench 3. In T3A, beneath 30 cm of topsoil, the wall survived as two courses of dressed limestone blocks; a 45 cm wide upper course above a carefully laid 60 cm wide foundation course, held in place with a light brown sandy mortar containing lentil sized gravel. The average stone size was 15–20 cm long and c.8–9 cm high. Two courses of stonework survived intact over a 6 m length, whereas south of Trench 3, in 3B, there had been evident robbing with only a few stones remaining in situ. Where the wall butted the south-west corner of the villa its construction differed markedly from the wider west wall of the villa, which survived in places only as a rubble base. It is clear that there were distinct phases of building, with the forecourt/enclosure wall being later in date. At the junction with the villa, and to the east of the wall, patches of white lime mortar were noted, consistent with the notion that the villa had an open verandah with a stone and lime-mortared surface. On the west side of the enclosure wall, beneath the topsoil layer, was a mixed layer with a spread of stone and terracotta roof tile and animal bone.

In T3B, south of the crossing with T3/09, considerable traces of industrial activity were observed. A layer of charcoal spread over the remains of the enclosure wall (Context 002) together with quantities of slag and small pieces of bone and pottery. In this section the stones of the wall had been robbed. The wall was traceable by a line of ochre coloured mortar and was picked up again by a 1.5 m length of laid stone and rubble at the south end of the trench. Amongst the wall and mortar debris was a concentration of fragments of painted wall plaster (see 'Painted Wall Plaster', below, Context 006). Other finds from this context were a repoussé fragment (Fig. 14, no. 40) and spoon-probe (Fig. 12, no. 22).

Examination of the wall, where it crossed T3/09, gave an opportunity to look at the stratigraphic relationship with the earlier ditch, on which it had been constructed. The 'U'-shaped ditch, 3.6 m wide and 1 m deep, had been cut into brown-red clay containing large stone inclusions. Below the wall foundations were five identifiable layers of ditch fill (Fig. 6, west–east section). It appears that a 10 cm layer of green-grey compacted clay lined the half-filled ditch, sealing layers 013–014. Above this was a dark brown loose loam with charcoal flecks, but few other inclusions (011) and it was on this that the enclosure wall had been built, apparently following the line of the earlier ditch. A copper alloy Langton Down brooch (Fig. 10, no. 9) was found in the eastern fill of the ditch, level with the foundation course.

Building 2

Trench 2/08. Trench 2/08 measured 19.5 m x 2 m and was located 20 m west of the fence, with the south end of the trench 3 m north of the fence boundary to Dog Kennel Hill. Its purpose was to trace a rectangular feature, thought possibly to be a gatehouse or outbuilding, identified on the magnetometer survey, which appears to straddle the eastern section of the Iron-Age enclosure ditch. The trackway, which crosses the enclosure, appears to be aligned towards this feature. This area was not been covered by the resistivity survey.

Excavation exposed two parallel stone walls of a well-constructed stone building, 28 m south-west of Building 1 and sharing the same alignment. The south wall was 50 cm wide; two courses of mortared stone survived, above a foundation of stone rubble. The building was 6.75 m long along its north-west to south-east axis. In the area between the two walls there was considerable evidence of burning. The north

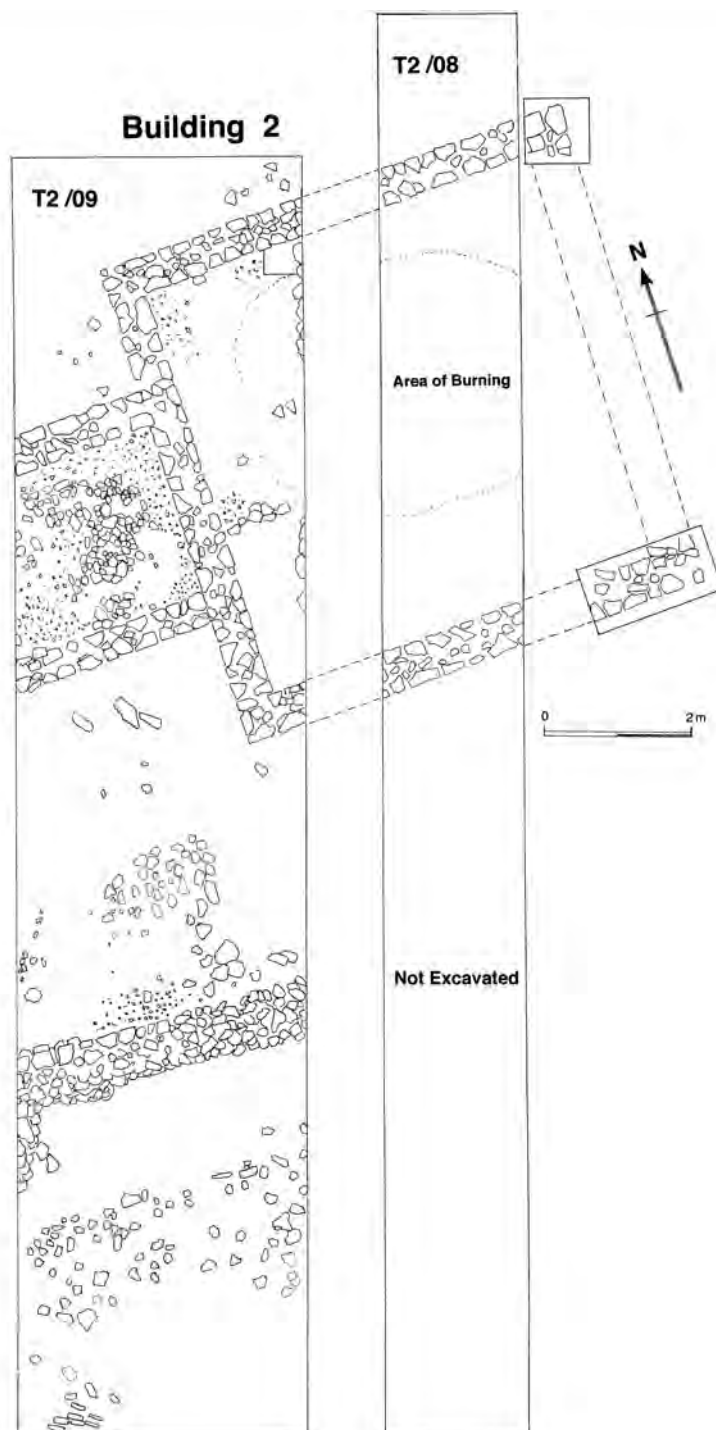


Fig. 8. Excavation trenches T2/09 and T2/08, with plan of Building 2.

wall had a foundation base 60 cm wide, supporting a 45 cm wide wall. The carefully constructed foundation footings project 15 cm on the north side. Butting the internal base of this wall was a well-preserved floor surface, consisting of a pale ochre mortar embedded with small glacial pebbles measuring c.1–2 cm. At the western side of the trench the floor sloped, creating a concave hollow, before it banked upwards towards the central area where the floor showed dramatic evidence of burning, the mortar having turned pink. The floor was covered with a concreted conglomerate of stone, mortar and roof tile. Some of the stones were blackened with carbon and also reddened by fire. The evident subsidence of the floor near the north wall could be explained by having been constructed over a filled-in Iron-Age ditch. However, no trace of subsidence was apparent in the north and south walls.

Beneath stone collapse and within the dark layer of carbon-black earth there were the sherds of a large grey ware storage vessel, sherds of a white-slipped flagon and a group of white ware sherds from an Oxfordshire ware vessel. The ceramic evidence, together with the discovery of a bronze needle amidst the collapse in the centre of this building, suggests that its function was probably domestic.

Outside the building, on its northern side, was a composite surface of limestone pieces mixed with mortar and loam, most probably from the collapse of the north wall. At the southern end of the trench, time constraints limited investigations. A photographic record was made of the surface after the topsoil had been removed, with most of the area south of the building remaining unexcavated.

Trench 2/09. Trench 2/09 measured 17.5 m x 4 m and was located one metre west of Trench 2/08 (Fig. 8). It was parallel to and 40 m west of the fence. Its purpose was to determine the scale of Building 2 and its chronological relationship to Building 1. On the removal of the topsoil and with minimal trowelling, fragments of painted wall plaster began to emerge at the southern end of the trench.⁴⁶ This was the first evidence of painted wall decoration associated with the Combe villa complex.

At a distance of 9.5 m from the lower end of the trench, on its eastern side, the south-west corner of Building 2 became visible (N 5150059, W 0122923). Its western wall (50 cm wide) went diagonally across the trench to the north-west corner of the building 6.75 m away (N 5150061, W 0122923). The walling of the structure consisted of regular-shaped limestone blocks in two parallel courses, with small stone and mortar filler between the courses. The limestone blocks had been dressed and ranged in size from 15 x 20 cm to 30 x 50 cm. Projecting from the west side were two further walls enclosing a partially paved area of limestone blocks, pebbles and gravel. Traces of mortar flooring were visible in places, but most of the mortar layer had been destroyed exposing the floor's stone rubble foundation. The width of this projecting area was 3.3 m, its internal width 2.4 m. Excavation did not reveal how far this walled area extended beyond the west side of the trench.

The positions of the north-east and south-east corners of Building 2 were located by trial excavation. In studying the plan of the structure on the survey, an assumption was made that the building plan was a square with a projecting room on its west side. This was confirmed when two 1 m sq sondages were dug, revealing, directly beneath the topsoil, the north-east and south-east corners of the building, 6.75 m apart. The east wall of the building was not exposed.

There was evidence of burning and some charcoal on the mortar floor surface on the eastern side of the trench, but this was not as substantial or extensive as the layer of burnt debris uncovered from the centre of this structure in Trench 2/08. Clarification was sought for the subsidence of the mortar floor, which was apparent adjacent to the north wall (Trench 2/08), by excavating a 50 cm x 50 cm sondage to examine the foundations of the wall. This confirmed that the wall had been constructed above the fill of an Iron-Age ditch, and that the builders of the wall must have been aware of its existence. Excavation showed that the foundation ditch of the wall was dug through clay to a depth of 40 cm below the floor level (1 m below the modern field level). This foundation trench was filled with flat limestone slabs to a depth of 30 cm before the first course of the wall was laid. This course consisted of large rectangular worked blocks. The floor of mortar and gravel was 5–7 cm thick and had been laid on a rough layer of flat slabs, which in turn covered a 5 cm thick layer of clay (possibly a damp proof course). Below the clay was a deposit of stone blocks and soil, containing several iron nails, overlying a fill of stone and clay with a single sherd of Roman pot. Below this lay more clay and pieces of animal bone.

Outside this structure, on its north side, was a compacted ground surface, which produced a few small sherds of pottery of little diagnostic value. On the south-west side, excavation revealed a patch of broken terracotta and stone roof tile as well as occasional pieces of painted wall plaster. To the south, a consolidated surface of stone and pebbles was exposed. This surface can be plausibly interpreted as a pathway leading into the forecourt of the villa, following the alignment of the trackway from the south-west. South of the pathway the foundations of a substantial wall (c.70 cm wide) were exposed across the

⁴⁶ No fragments of painted plaster were discovered in 2008 as the south end of T2/08 was not fully excavated.

width of the trench. This was covered by 34 cm of topsoil. Its alignment was not quite parallel to the south wall of Building 2 (B2). In construction it was notably wider than the walling of B2, with a single laid course of faced stone surviving on its northern face.

Only future investigation can ascertain whether this wall was part of a building adjacent to B2 or a boundary enclosure to the south of the villa complex. The discovery of some overlapping stone roofing tiles, one with a securing nail still attached, lying amongst the wall collapse on its south side would support the view that the wall was part of a roofed structure. Close to the base of this wall were several sherds of a Form 27 samian cup. At the west side of the trench the collapsed stone and slate were contained within a dark friable loam, suggesting that in this section destruction occurred over a protracted period, allowing decayed organic material to build up between individual collapses of the wall. The tilt and bulge of the foundation stone clearly showed that the wall fell southwards, with faced and dressed stone blocks being found in the rubble.

On the south side of the wall, in the middle and central sections, deposits of painted and plain wall plaster were found. The distribution extended to fragments found 3 m south of the wall. No trace of decorated plaster or render survived still fixed to the base of the wall, so there is no conclusive evidence that the plaster had once been attached to this wall. It appears more likely that the material had been dumped and spread here from elsewhere on the site. A coin of Trajan was found stratified beneath the layer containing painted plaster.

A spread of limestone rubble in a compacted orange sandy conglomerate extended from c.180 cm south of the wall to the south end of the trench. In places this layer was 18 cm thick. Initially interpreted as a much disturbed floor, the presence of some lumps of mortar with the impression of wood preserved on their surface suggested that this was building material, the remains of a timber stud and mortar wall that appears to have been dumped here. A floor surface was not found beneath this layer of wall debris and plaster, but a dark occupation layer of soil with traces of charcoal. This might suggest that the wall did not enclose a room but may have been part of a boundary feature to the villa complex, linked to villa Building 2. Further investigation is needed to clarify this issue, as the discovery of the roofing slates would imply the presence of some covered structure.

Area 3: Enclosure Ditch

T1/07. This trench was used to examine an area west of the villa building, covering a part of the ditched enclosure entrance. This area had not been under cultivation for several years and was covered with turf. In addition, two small evaluation trenches (T1A/07 and T1B/07) to the east and south of T1/07 were opened at the end of the season's work, but lack of time prevented more detailed investigation.

Trench 1/07 provided a 16 m x 2 m exposure across the incurved entrance to the ditched enclosure south-west of the villa. The east side of the trench was 60 m west of the fence. The intention was to investigate a section across the lower loop of the ditch (the clavicle entrance) and to clarify the nature of the ambiguous parallel bands on the magnetometer survey. An initial assumption was that they were the traces of mole ploughing across the site, carried out in the twentieth century to improve drainage.

Prior to topsoil removal two low parallel banks c.9 m apart were visible crossing the proposed trench, but these disappeared when entering the ploughed area of the site to the east. A section cut across the southern bank demonstrated that the feature was not evidence of mole ploughing. A disturbed assemblage of stones was revealed in the raised section, and whilst no mortar was detected, it was interpreted as being either the remnant of a wall or the consolidation of a bank. To the north of this was a cut of dark, greyish-brown, fairly compact, silty clay. This cut into subsoil running north-east to south-west to a depth of 20–30 cm, with a top width of 40–50 cm. This possible drainage gully contained stones of varied size (up to 20 cm) and some charcoal, burnt and unburnt bone and pottery. A fragmented animal skull was beneath rocks at the base of the fill.

A section across the northern bank, unlike its southern counterpart, showed an absence of stones. At the base of the section was a 70 cm wide layer of red clay, abutted either side by areas of limestone substrate, which appeared to be the natural Forest Marble. Between these two banks on the eastern side of the trench, a mixed compacted area of cobbles and limestone was exposed, containing a number of middle Iron-Age sherds, together with a possible hearth, shown by traces of burning, charcoal and reddish earth.

Excavation of the lower loop of the entrance to the enclosure was carried out at the southern end of T1/07. The curved ditch had been capped with rubble limestone. A 90 cm wide section was excavated on the west side of the trench. The ditch was a flat-bottomed 'U'-shape, 130 cm wide and 60 cm deep, cut into green/yellow clay (Fig. 6). Considerable evidence of burning was seen on the north side of the ditch, which was coloured a deep red. Some amorphous lumps of fired clay, the fragmentary evidence for the superstructure of a hearth or oven, were in the ditch fill, together with a pig's jaw. Pieces of burnt stone and flecks of charcoal were recorded in the section.

1A/07. This small evaluation trench, 1.5 m wide and 3 m long, was positioned 8 m to the east of T1/07. Its purpose was to locate and confirm the edges of the enclosure ditch. Having removed the topsoil, a layer of occupation was exposed (comprising blackish charcoal fill) containing five samian sherds, oyster shell fragments and a number of nails. The assumption was that this material overlay the ditch fill.⁴⁷ Given the limited time available a decision was taken not to proceed with further excavation.

1B/07. This 1.5 m x 5 m trench was in the same alignment as and due south of T1/07. It was positioned to bisect a banked and ditched trackway that was evident on the magnetometer survey. This feature extended from the south-west corner of the survey, running parallel to the fence of Dog Kennel Hill, to meet the eastern side of the enclosure ditch. Excavation confirmed a surface of small compacted stones up to 3 m wide, bordered by a shallow gully either side. A fragmentary copper alloy chain was recovered from the southern gully (Fig. 11, no. 16).

T3/08. This 2 m x 18 m trench was located 5 m east of T1/07 and 55 m west of the fence. Its purpose was to investigate an area bordering the enclosure ditch and to explain the anomalous banded features shown on the magnetometer survey. This trench unexpectedly revealed part of a third stone-built structure with a mortar floor, Building 3. At the north-west corner of the trench was a curved wall of two courses, bonded with an ochre-coloured mortar. At the west side of the trench the wall's width was 90 cm and at its curve between 79 and 84 cm. A thin creamy yellow mortar floor, no more than 3 cm thick, survived on the south side of the wall. This overlay a 16 cm layer of clay and some pebbles. Beneath this was an earlier floor surface of carbon blackened glacial cobbles and small pieces of limestone. Cutting through the mortar floor layer was a pit containing a jumbled mass of sheep bone (see 'Animal Bones', below). External to the curving wall in the north-east corner of the trench was a grey ware pot containing several oyster shells and the shell of a marine mussel.

Crossing the trench 8.5 m to the south were the foundation stones of a second wall (70 cm wide). In places a course of laid facing stones enclosed a rubble fill. As the wall emerged from the west side of the trench it appeared to be straight, but then arced in a curve to the north as it met the east side of the trench. Traces of burning were visible on the north side of this wall.

It is clear that both walls belonged to a structure, which from the evidence of the trench could be either a 'D'-shaped apsidal building or a circular structure with an external diameter of c.10m. As no trace of walling had emerged in the section of T1/07, it is most probable that this structure was roughly circular, following the form of an Iron-Age roundhouse and well attested on Romano-British sites elsewhere in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire.⁴⁸ The dating of this building is open to debate. It overlay the cobbled floor of an earlier structure but evidence for dating this floor surface remains elusive. How this structure was roofed also remains uncertain. The absence of tile or slate in the trench would perhaps indicate that thatch was the most likely material. That its function was probably domestic is suggested by the deposit of sheep bone, the ceramic evidence and the lack of any indication of industrial activity.

Two metres to the south of this building, on the west side of the trench, clustered a spread of quartzite cobbles, c.8–12 cm in size, covering approximately 1.5 m sq. What initially appeared to be the foundations of another wall, 2.5 m south of the cobbles, turned out to be the deliberate stone capping above an emergent band of yellow-green clay. Capping with lumps of limestone had been used to cover the section of the 'clavicula' entrance excavated in 2007, but in this trench a section of the stonework was removed to expose the undisturbed natural clay, which was demonstrably not ditch fill. It is assumed that this feature caused the white banding on the magnetometer survey. This area was devoid of finds.

Trench 1/09. This 11 m x 2 m trench was used to section the north-east corner of the enclosure ditch west of the villa. It was also intended to provide further information about the two white parallel bands shown on the magnetometer survey, which when investigated in 2008 appeared to be natural geological features.

The northern section of the trench revealed the natural Forest Marble and limestone blocks embedded in yellow ochre clay. Traces of burning were observed on a patch of stones, but no other traces of human activity were recorded. The edges of the ditch were readily apparent against the stone and colour of the undisturbed Forest Marble clay. Occupation traces on the surface of the ditch took the form of burning and fragments of pottery. The striated walls and base of an upturned pot (Fig. 22, no. 21), broken into three pieces and surrounded by charcoal, lay on the upper surface of the ditch, close to the north edge. Excavation showed the ditch to be 'U'-shaped, 230 cm wide and 115 cm deep (Fig. 6). The ditch fill shows

⁴⁷ It is possible that this 'occupation' layer was associated with building B3 (T3/08), the existence of which was unknown in 2007.

⁴⁸ Keevill and Booth, 'Roundhouses at Redlands Farm'.

activity from the middle Iron Age and confirms the transition from late Iron-Age to Romano-British occupation on the site.

A copper alloy 'late La Tène' brooch was found c.40 cm beneath the ground surface, in the upper section of the north side of the ditch (Fig. 9, no. 3). A broken late Iron-Age pot of very friable material, embedded in the clay upper fill, was block-lifted. A black ware platter lay face down on the south side of the ditch c.55 cm beneath ground level. This level also contained cattle jaw bones, scapula and some limb bones. There were several sherds of middle Iron-Age pottery, some with lightly burnished linear decoration and some with stabbed decoration paralleled by that on a classic Frilford bowl type, found commonly on the western side of the Oxford region, including at Stanton Harcourt and Cassington.⁴⁹ A band of charcoal with amorphous lumps of baked clay fragments, some with perforations, would suggest the mixed remains of part of the superstructure of a hearth or oven.⁵⁰ This sloping band, 10 cm thick, extended from the northern edge to the centre of the ditch.

No significant features were recorded south of the ditch. The double linear feature noted on the survey would appear to be geological.

SMALL FINDS

Brooches

1. Iron bow brooch (T3/07). Length 55 mm. Complete Nauheim-derivative brooch found 4 m from north end of trench and 0.20 m from west side of trench, beneath clay 'capping' layer, above stone paved surface, several layers of which were noted. The brooch was located on this stone paved area, which was part of the enclosed area south of Building 1. Pin fractured during excavation, but now united. Although badly corroded, the spring appears to have three coils with an internal chord.
2. Iron bow brooch (T1/05). Surviving length 52 mm. Found adjacent to north wall of Building 1. A fragmentary Nauheim-derivative brooch, of which the catch plate and a section of the bow and the pin survive intact. Spring missing. Further fragments of the bow were recovered. These two iron Nauheim-derivative type brooches provide evidence for a late Iron-Age/early post-conquest occupation phase.⁵¹
3. Brooch (T1/09). Length: 48 mm. Found in the upper level of the enclosure ditch. A carefully crafted one-piece copper-alloy 'late La Tène' brooch, with a four-coil, internal chord, integral spring system. Thin tapered bow decorated with an engraved line bordering its edge. The underside is plain. The folded catch-plate has a small circular hole close to its end. Bow broken during excavation, but now united. A section of the pin is missing; patina on the pin would suggest that this loss happened in antiquity. Footplate partially fractured.
4. Brooch pin fragment (T1/05). Length 30 mm. Found in the east end room of Building 1, adjacent to the north-east side of the dividing wall.
5. Brooch pin (T1/05). Length 37 mm. Found on floor in Building 1, room 1. Bent pin shaft, detached from brooch, with looped remnant of the spring.
6. Brooch (T1/08). Found 2 m south of ditch on pathway north of Building 1. Length 53 mm; width of spring 15 mm; length of pin 45 mm. Colchester type, two-piece brooch.⁵² Oval-sectioned bow tapers towards the catch-plate, but is otherwise undecorated. Pin and double-coiled spring intact. Pin swivels around a central bar held secure by a tightly coiled extension from the bow, which is anchored by a short rear hook, before coiling around the central bar. Some damage to footplate. It seems likely that there were originally three rectangular perforations, of which two survive in a stepped arrangement. Mackreth dates the manufacture of this type to his Phase 2, c.20–40 AD.⁵³

⁴⁹ G. Lambrick and T. Allen, *Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt: The Development of a Prehistoric and Romano-British Community*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 21 (2004), Fig. 7.9, 158; personal communication from Lisa Brown, Oxford Archaeology.

⁵⁰ Such clay fragments were identified as the superstructure to a kiln at the Romano-British settlement at Frocester: Price, *Frocester*, pp. 170–1, fig. 8.15.

⁵¹ Mackreth has discussed the dating of this brooch type in Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 2, pp. 53–4 and in Trow et al., *Ditches Hillfort*, pp. 132–5.

⁵² R. Hattat, *Ancient Brooches and Other Artefacts* (Oxford, 1989), fig. 155.

⁵³ D.F. Mackreth, *Brooches in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 2011), pp. 36–40, plate 22.

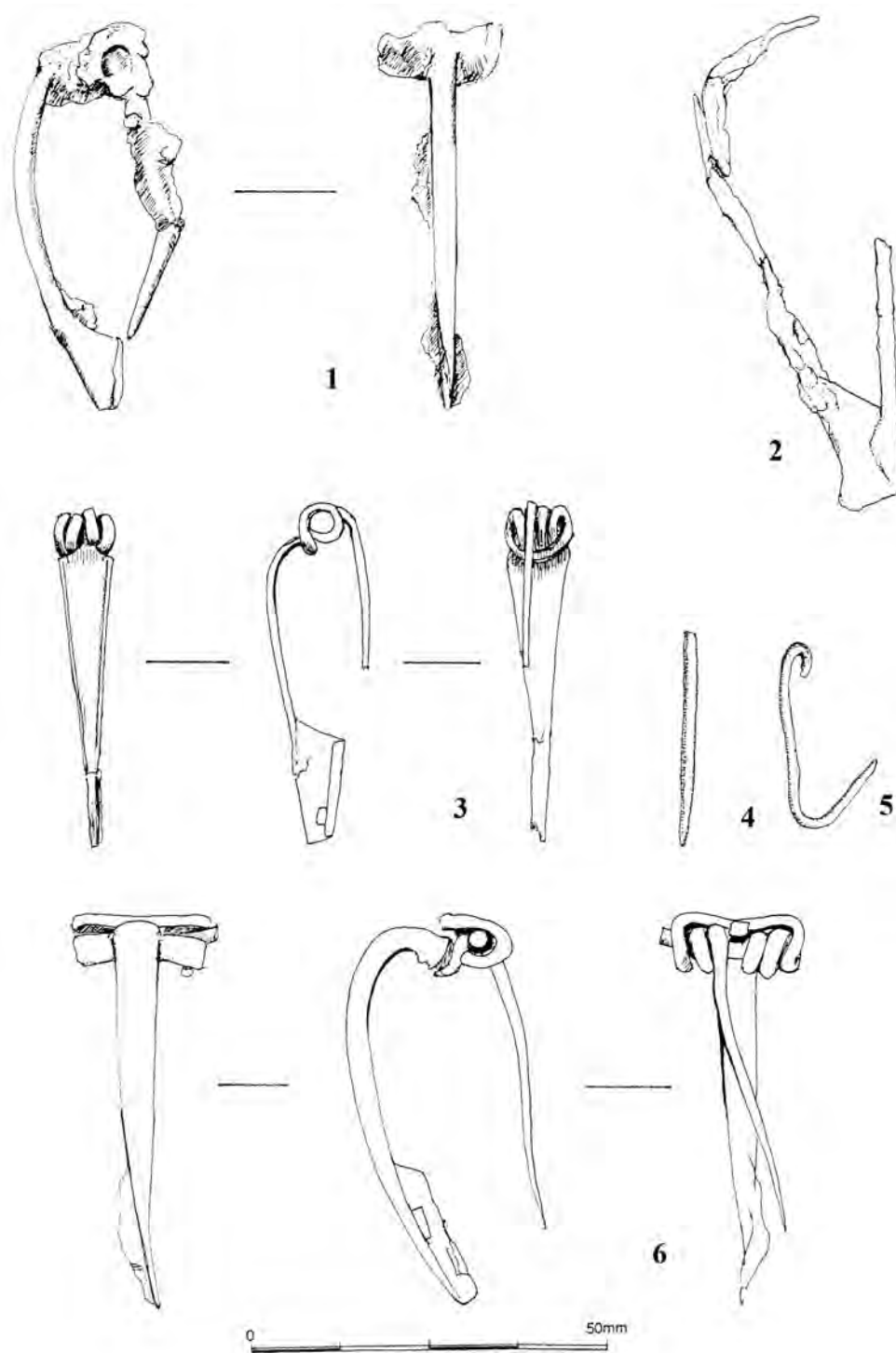


Fig 9. Iron brooches (1–2). Copper alloy brooches and pin fixtures (3–6). Scale 1:1.

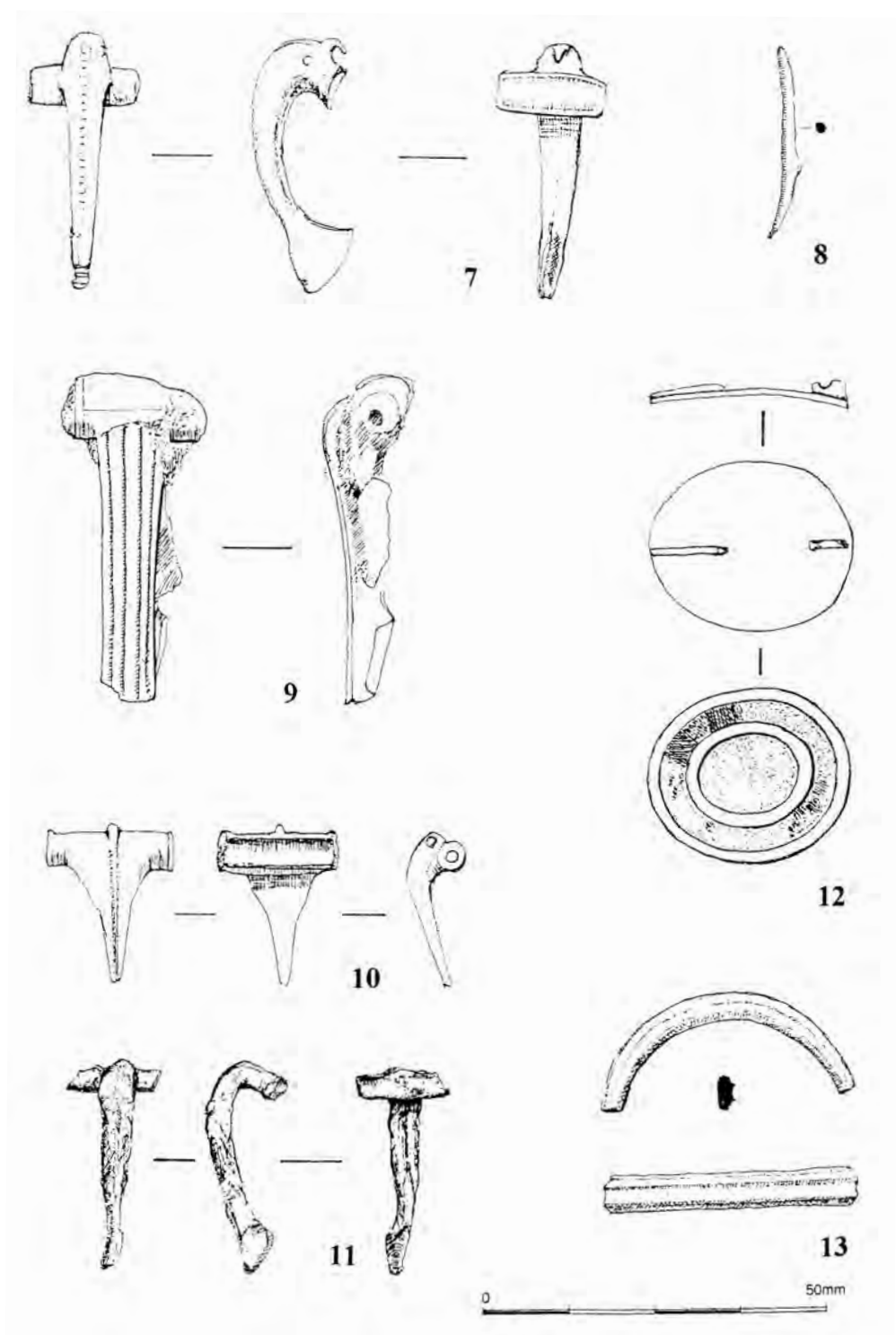


Fig. 10. Brooches (7–12); all copper alloy, except 11 which is iron. (13) is a fragmentary ring handle. Scale 1:1.

7. 'Dolphin' type brooch – Colchester derivative (T2A/06). Length 37 mm. Found in the west room of Building 1, in a bed of clay adjacent to north wall. Cast copper alloy body of brooch survives, minus spring and pin. Catch-plate has lost its upturned fold for securing the pin. Body of brooch is zoomorphic with an eye on each side of the head above the wing plate (width 16 mm). Ribbed spine runs the length of the upper body. The snout of the creature has a pointed, down-turned projecting fixture to secure the missing spring. Colchester derivatives had a very inefficient method of attaching the separate spring: it is only held by a hook projecting from the back of the head and consequently most examples, including this one, have lost their spring.⁵⁴ The type appears in post-conquest groups dated 49–65 AD at Colchester.⁵⁵

8. Brooch pin fragment (T2/09). Length 28 mm. From south of Building 2, beneath stone collapse.

9. Brooch, Langton Down type (T3/09). Found in ditch east of enclosure wall. Length 48 mm; width of spring cover 20 mm. Copper alloy bow and spring plate, iron pin and spring. Traces of mineralized textile/fibre evident on bow and spring. Bow, which tapers slightly towards the foot, decorated with six longitudinal ridges. Transverse median groove also visible on the upper face of the spring cover. Catch-plate slightly buckled, with some damage. Grooving on plate suggests some affinity with a brooch from the Shakenoak villa.⁵⁶ Like the Combe brooch, the bow was finely reeded and also has incised lines on the spring cover. Both brooches belong to Hull's class A. These brooches started to arrive before the conquest but came in greater numbers afterwards with the Claudian armies. Their life, however, seems to have been short and it is likely that they should all be dated before AD 65, apart from the odd survivals.⁵⁷

10. Polden Hill brooch (Colchester derivative). Surface find, from the slope west of Dog Kennel Hill, c.100 m south-west of villa buildings. Length 32 mm. Cast copper alloy. Spring, pin and catch-plate are missing. This is the smallest of the copper alloy brooches found at Combe. Spring was secured to the brooch by the Polden Hill method. Bow of the brooch above the wing-plates is flared, tapering to a narrow bow with a central ridge leading to the securing loop for the spring chord. Underside of bow is flat and undecorated. On either side of the shoulder are two parallel grooves decorating the wing-plates.

11. Iron 'Colchester' type brooch (T2/06). Unstratified, at western end of Building 1. Length: 30 mm; head width 12 mm; weight 4 g. Small brooch with oval-sectioned tapering bow, and a sharp angle at the head. Spring and pin missing.

12. Oval plate brooch (T1/03). Found 14 cm below surface in topsoil, Building 1. Length 30 mm; width 26 mm. Recessed central setting (missing) measures 15 mm x 11 mm, framed by a 3 mm wide plain border. Bordering this a 4 mm wide band of alternating red and blue rectangular segments of enamel, of which a small section survives. The enclosing outer border is 2 mm wide. On the back-plate 12 mm of catch-plate survives and part of pierced lug which held the now missing pin. Hattat sees this brooch as an uncommon native British type, the central element usually in Celtic style.⁵⁸ Butcher and Bayley noted that most examples come from southern and eastern Britain. There has been a tendency to regard these as later than most enamelled brooches, but none are securely dated late contexts.⁵⁹ The example from Kidlington was in a deposit not later than AD 300.⁶⁰ Fifteen of the 17 brooches analysed by Bayley were of leaded bronze.

13. Ring-handle. Topsoil find, south of Building 1. Weight: 6 g. Half of a cast copper alloy ring survives, decorated with longitudinal ridging. The original diameter was c.40 mm. Ring has a complex moulded

⁵⁴ J. Bayley and S. Butcher, *Roman Brooches in Britain*, London Society of Antiquaries Research Report, 68 (2004), p. 157, fig. 127, T94A.

⁵⁵ C.F.C. Hawkes and M.R. Hull, *Camulodunum: First Report on the Excavation of Colchester 1930–39*, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, 14 (1947), p. 311.

⁵⁶ Brodribb et al., *Shakenoak*, fig. 1.27, 6. A further parallel to this type was found at Old Shifford Farm: *Oxoniensia*, 60 (1995), SF 132, fig. 22. See also R. Hattat, *Iron Age and Roman Brooches* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 35–7, fig. 15.

⁵⁷ Hawkes and Hull, *Camulodunum*, p. 319, plate XCV, 101.

⁵⁸ R. Hattat, *Brooches of Antiquity* (Oxford, 1987), p. 252. However, metal detectorists have found many more of these brooches since 1987.

⁵⁹ Bayley and Butcher, *Roman Brooches*, p. 178.

⁶⁰ A.G. Hunter and J.R. Kirk, 'Excavations at Campsfield, Kidlington, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, 17/18 (1952–3), pp. 59–60, fig. 26, 1.

section, a feature taken to be characteristic of furniture ring-handles. A ring-handle from Colchester has an identical diameter.⁶¹

Copper Alloy Objects

14. Tubular ferrule. An unstratified topsoil find, south of the villa and north of T3/09. Length 37 mm; diameter 9–10 mm; weight 10 g. Outer face of cast copper alloy cylinder has 24 grooved rings with a broader band 5 mm in width at one end. Cylinder hollow and open at both ends. Irregular-shaped perforation in one section of the tube; uncertain whether this is a casting flaw or subsequent damage. Inner surface of the tube has traces of corrosion. In form the ferrule can be paralleled by similar examples from early contexts on several Roman sites, suggesting that they all served a very particular function, but that remains obscure.⁶² Williams suggests that certain of these ferrules (Group A) are military in origin and possibly they were used as either a plume holder for a helmet or a plume holder for horse trappings. Closest in form to the Combe ferrule, although slightly smaller, is an example from the small town of Wanborough (Wilts.).⁶³ Also some similarity with the ferrules identified as sceptre handles from the plundered temple site at Wanborough, Surrey.⁶⁴ But whether the Combe ferrule was once a plume holder, part of a wand/sceptre, or had some more mundane function such as a toggle, remains open to debate.

15. End-looped cosmetic pestle. Topsoil find, north-west of villa building. Cast copper alloy. Weight 6 g; length 59 mm; diameter of loop 12 mm. This object type discussed in detail by Ralph Jackson, who has convincingly identified such objects as being part of cosmetic sets, which had their origin in the British late Iron Age, with their distribution being almost exclusively within Britain. In date their contexts range from the first century BC to the fifth century AD, though most fall within the period second to the third century AD. Tentative association with females, though male use cannot be ruled out.⁶⁵ It is also been suggested that in terms of their relative chronology, the end-looped cosmetic sets are more frequent at the start of the series, with more centre-looped sets towards the close and mixed sets clustered in the main *floruit* of late first to mid to late second century AD.

16. Linked chain (T1B/07). Found in a gully by trackway leading west of Building 2. Length 50 mm; weight 2 g. Section of chain composed of three figure-of-eight links to which are attached three pendent hooks, one at each intersection. These looped hooks are not identical in scale and may have had fixtures such as small beads attached to them. Almost certainly part of some personal adornment.

17. Folded wire strips (T1/03). Found on pathway north of villa, beneath area of stone paving. Weight 2 g; folded length 60 mm. Two folded lengths of thin copper alloy strips secured together by a single loop of a third shorter strip. Purpose of the strips debatable. One edge on each of the folded strips is serrated, produced by small snips. This gives the impression of the sloping teeth of a fret-saw blade. Their use as fret-saw blades to cut perforations in thin wood, or bone, is a possibility to consider, but the object is more likely metalworker's scrap.

18. Perforated mount. Topsoil find north of Building 1. Diameter 28 mm; weight 5 g. A concave, double-layered disc of folded sheet copper alloy. The concave face has four circular perforations, plus a central rectangular perforation. Two perforations penetrate both surfaces, implying that these are secondary. In places the underside sheet has become detached from the folded rim.

19. Folded strip. Unstratified. Length 40 mm; thickness 1 mm; weight 5g. Strip folded into two uneven lengths, one end showing an incomplete angled bar. Opposite end appears to have been clipped, with the underside face showing two diagonal grooves. Function uncertain.

20. Stud head (T2/05). Found on the cobbled surface to the east of Building 1. Domed stud head, diameter 9 mm. Concave underside contains corrosion accretions.

⁶¹ N. Crummy, *The Roman Small Finds from Excavations in Colchester, 1971–89*, Colchester Archaeological Report, 2 (1983), p. 80, fig. 85, 2116.

⁶² S. Williams, 'Tubular Ferrules', *Lucerna Newsletter*, 29 (2005), pp. 9–11.

⁶³ A.S. Anderson et al., *The Romano-British Small Town at Wanborough, Wiltshire*, Britannia Monograph, 19 (2001), p. 112, fig. 47, 239.

⁶⁴ D. Bird, *Roman Surrey* (Stroud, 2004), plate 12.

⁶⁵ R. Jackson, 'Colchester, Cosmetic Sets and Context', in P.J. Ottaway (ed.), *A Victory Celebration: Papers on the Archaeology of Colchester and Late Iron Age Roman Britain Presented to Philip Crummy* (Colchester, 2006), p. 110.

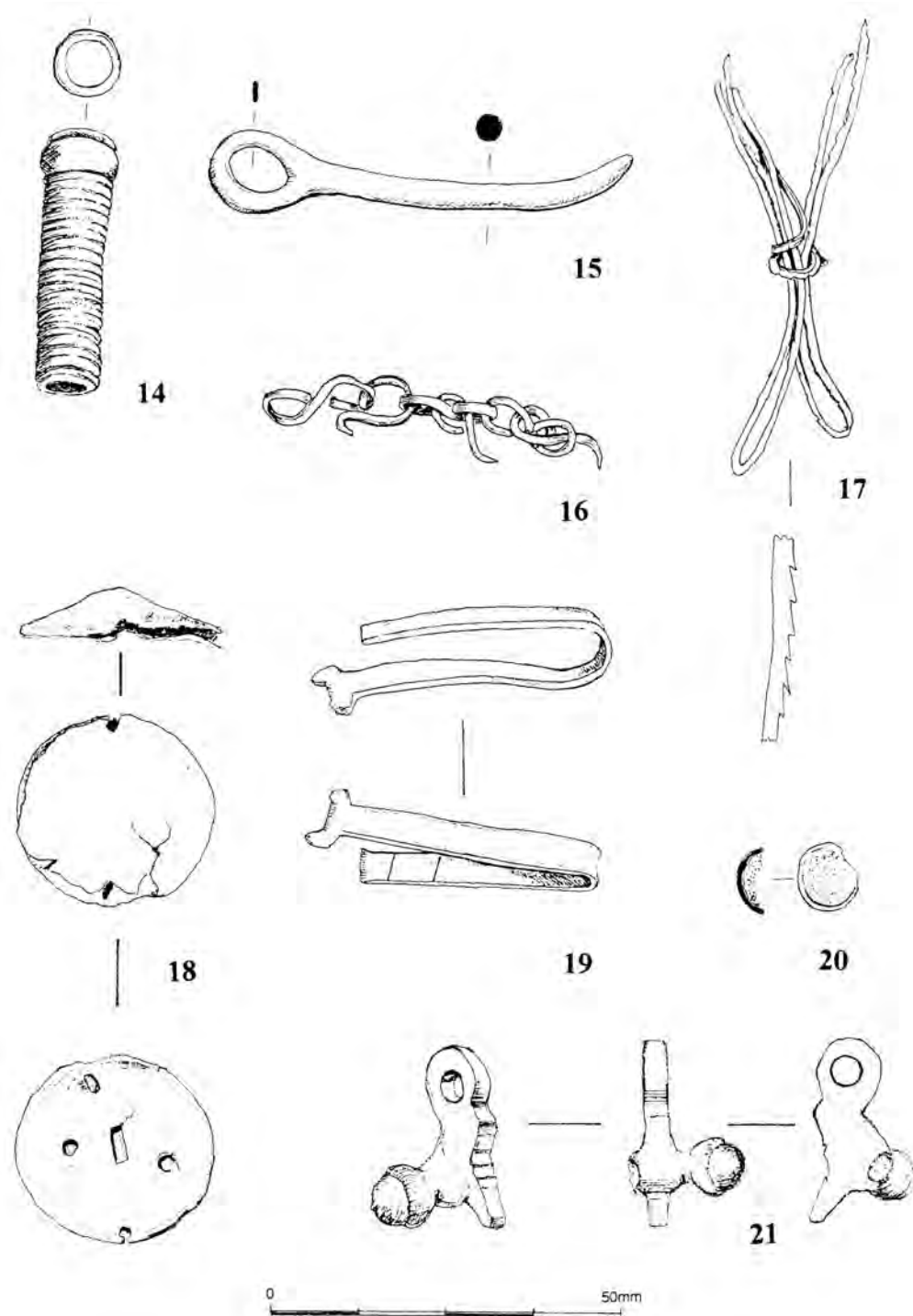


Fig.11. Copper alloy small finds (14-21). Scale 1:1.

21. Acorn amulet pendant. Unstratified. Found in topsoil south of the villa. Length 27 mm; weight 10 g. A 5 mm wide hole perforates an irregular-shaped piece of bronze 3 mm thick, of which the underside edge has five parallel shallow ridges or serrations. Projecting diagonally outwards from the body is a rounded acorn, nestling in its cup. Its twin has been broken off, leaving an ovoid-shaped base. Parallels are difficult to find but a terminal in the form of an acorn (length 23.5 mm) can be cited from the King Harry Lane site, Verulamium.⁶⁶ Another was found in a Neronian context from Baldock.⁶⁷ Excavations at Cirencester recovered three acorn-mounts, which appear to have been attached to leather. Webster suggests they are military in origin,⁶⁸ possibly from a belt or apron. Whilst there might be military associations, the acorn pendant can be seen as a protective symbol with suggestive associations of both virility and fertility.

22. Spoon-probe (T3/09). Found outside Building 1, adjacent to the spread of charcoal, east side of villa forecourt wall. Length 151 mm; weight 6 g. Slight distortion to the shaft at the base of the bulbous terminal, where it is bent out of alignment. This is a well-crafted artefact, of cast copper alloy. It consists of a banded and spirally grooved central grip, 59 mm long. The banding contains a shallower groove, which has traces of an inlay. One terminal is a narrow, shallow-scooped spoon bowl 27 mm long and 5 mm wide. Between the grooved grip and the spoon is a 9 mm section of 'bead and reel' decoration. Extending from this is the faceted, lozenge-sectioned shaft of the spoon. The opposite terminal is a solid, bud-like expansion 20 mm long with a single bead separating it from the central grip. The spoon-probe was a common general-purpose implement, which had medical and toilet applications, but was not restricted to either. The scoop could also have been used to extract the contents from small unguent jars and flasks.

A geographically close parallel is provided by an example from Wilcote.⁶⁹ It is not as finely made as the Combe example and the spoon/scoop is slightly larger (45 mm long). Closer in design is an incomplete spoon probe from Colchester, which also has twin spiral grooves on the central shaft and a lozenge-sectioned shaft to the spoon terminal.⁷⁰ Parallels are dated to the first and second centuries AD.⁷¹

23. Enamelled terret. Surface find, topsoil area of T 3/07, south of villa. Width 69 mm; height 55 mm; weight 75 g. The terret is a one-piece casting, consisting of an 11 mm wide suspension bar sandwiched between the trumpet terminals of a crescentic flange. Each face of the flattened flange is decorated with eleven shallow, recessed triangles. The triangles are not consistent in scale. Several contain traces of red enamel, but residual traces of a green glassy material exist in the remainder, most likely being 'decayed' red enamel. The triangles point inwards, with their bases forming an outer arc opposite the suspension bar.

Terrets, or rein rings, were used on horse-drawn vehicles to guide the reins. They are distinctive late Iron-Age artefacts with a distribution concentrated in Britain.⁷² The rectangular-sectioned bar, between the opposed terminals, would have been fastened to the vehicles yoke and reins passed through the loop. The design of the Combe terret stands in marked contrast to its nearest geographical parallel, the lipped terret of Leeds Class 3 from the burnt fill of Room 7 in the Ditchley villa,⁷³ which can be compared with the type of terret in the Polden Hill hoard.

In its form and shape the Combe terret has closer affinities with terrets in the hoard from Westhall and with an example from Lakenheath (both Suffolk), presumed products of Icenian workshops.⁷⁴ The

⁶⁶ I.M. Stead and V. Rigby, *Verulamium: The King Harry Lane Site*, English Heritage Archaeological Report, 12 (1989), fig. 16, no. 139.

⁶⁷ I.M. Stead and V. Rigby, *Baldock. The Excavation of a Roman and Pre-Roman Settlement 1968–72*, Britannia Monograph, 7 (1986).

⁶⁸ J. Wachter and A. McWhirr (eds.), *Early Roman Occupation at Cirencester* (Cirencester, 1982), fig. 38, nos. 123–5. It is tempting to see the acorn pendant as a parallel to the phallic amulets of metal, particularly pendants, which are often found on military sites, though there is no good reason to preclude their use in civilian life.

⁶⁹ Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 3, fig. 20, 130.

⁷⁰ Crummy, *The Roman Small Finds in Colchester, 1971–89*, fig. 65, 1927.

⁷¹ British Museum, accession numbers PRB DR 1–25 and 26 (from London), and PRB 1856. 7–1.1158 (from Colchester).

⁷² Most have been found in East Anglia in Icenian territory. The Portable Antiquities Scheme records 40 from Norfolk, 28 from Suffolk, 12 from Lincolnshire, 7 from East Yorkshire and smaller numbers from other counties: S. Worrell, 'Detecting the Later Iron Age', in C. Haselgrove and T. Moore (eds.), *The Later Iron Age in Britain and Beyond* (2007), p. 379, table 3.

⁷³ E.T. Leeds, *Celtic Ornament in the British Isles down to A.D. 700* (Oxford 1933), p. 119.

⁷⁴ E.M. Jope, *Early Celtic Art in the British Isles* (Oxford 2000), p. 311, plates 292–3. See also an additional parallel, one of three terret rings from King's Lynn, Norfolk: *Portable Antiquities Scheme Annual Report 2004/05*, p. 32.

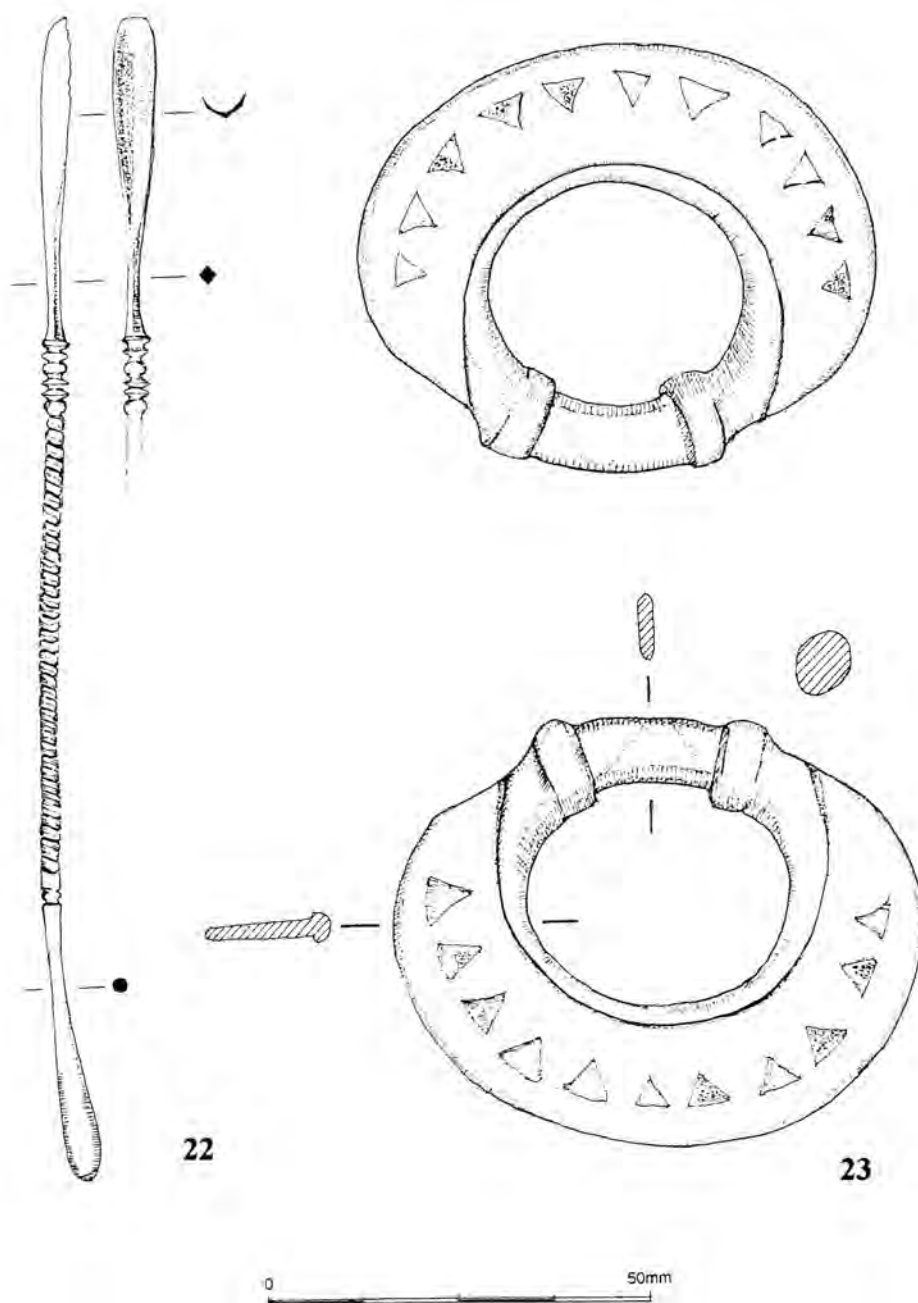


Fig. 12. Copper alloy spoon probe (22). Enamelled terret (23). Scale 1:1.

Westhall terrets have been dated between AD 1–70, although from coins in the hoard must have been buried AD 138 or later. In comparison to the more complex ornament on the Westhall terrets, the Combe find lacks the sophistication of the *champlevé* enamelwork and the symmetry of their Celtic designs. The uneven line and different sizes of the triangles holding the red enamel is technically less accomplished, lacking the artistry of the scroll ornament on the Westhall terrets. Yet the largest of the Westhall terrets has a small row of triangles beneath the scroll decoration, and it is this feature alone, aligned more prominently near the outer edge on each face, that provides an echo of the decoration on the Combe example.⁷⁵

24. Decorated hair pin (T2/08). Found within Building 2, in the central area, adjacent to the southern wall. Length 93 mm. Head of pin crowned with a three-faced pyramid. Three closely spaced grooves 6 mm below the head. This type of pin belongs to Cool's Group 3, examples of which primarily belong to the second century. It has been demonstrated that early pins tend to be longer than the later ones. Ninety per cent of pins from first- and second-century contexts more than 80 mm long; eighty-five per cent of fourth-century pins shorter than this.⁷⁶

25. Dome-headed stud (T1/05). Found on floor surface, interior of Building 1, east room by north wall. Weight 1 g; diameter of head 22 mm; shank length 20 mm. The stud head of thin copper alloy sheet has been shaped to make an outer rim ring with a domed centre. A section of the perimeter ring is missing. Inner face of stud has a shank with a tapering rectangular section. This carefully fashioned stud was most likely used as a fixture, to secure leather or textile on some item of furniture. Close parallels, with the same convex centre and outer rim and of comparable dimensions, can be cited from Colchester.⁷⁷

26. Circular stud. Unstratified; topsoil adjacent to trackway. Weight 5 g; diameter 25 mm. Cast copper alloy circular stud of convex form. On concave underside, projecting from base, a broken square-sectioned stem 4 mm long.

27. Needle (T2/09). Found in a friable layer of dark loam, adjacent to the wall, south of Building 2. Length 108 mm; eye of needle 10 mm long. Comparison can be made with the copper alloy needles from Wilcote.⁷⁸ Above the eye, on both sides, is a groove to allow the thread to lie flush with the needle shaft, making stitching easier. This feature would make such a needle appropriate for leather working. Crummy Type 3.⁷⁹ Examples listed by Crummy all derive from third- and fourth-century contexts.

28. Perforated copper alloy disc. Unstratified topsoil find. Diameter 20 mm. Weight 1 g. Disc slightly ovoid in shape, with clipped perimeter and off-centre rectangular hole. On the underside, the hole has three folded back edges.

29. Binding strip. Unstratified find, north of the enclosure ditch. Length 34 mm. Fragmentary piece of sheet copper alloy. Folded edges, with one circular securing hole 1.5 mm in diameter.

30. Toilet implement? Unstratified topsoil find. Length 38 mm. Twisted, tapered fragmentary strip with a partial longitudinal central groove. Possibly part of toilet implement, such as a nail cleaner.

31. Folded strip. Unstratified; west of T2/09. Width 26 mm; weight 2 g. Folded rectangular strip, two rounded corners.

32. Rim fragment (T1/07). Found in loam layer above enclosure ditch entrance. Part of a curved, copper alloy band, possibly from the rim of a vessel, c.60 mm in diameter.

33. Thimble (T1/05). Spoil heap from east end of Building 1. Weight 2 g; length 20 mm. Thimble of thin copper alloy in fragmentary condition. Perimeter of the domed head has irregular arrangement of punched indentations. External wall of thimble has a band of fine, regular, *pointille* dots between an upper

⁷⁵ S. James and V. Rigby, *Britain and the Celtic Iron Age* (London, 1997); I.M. Stead, *Celtic Art in Britain* (London, 1987), p. 97.

⁷⁶ H. Cool, 'Roman Metal Hair Pins from Southern Britain', *Archaeological Journal*, 147 (1990), pp. 148–82.

⁷⁷ Crummy, *Roman Small Finds in Colchester*, fig. 120, 3140, 3148.

⁷⁸ Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 3, figs. 19–20, 122–8.

⁷⁹ Crummy, *Roman Small finds in Colchester*, p. 67, fig. 70.

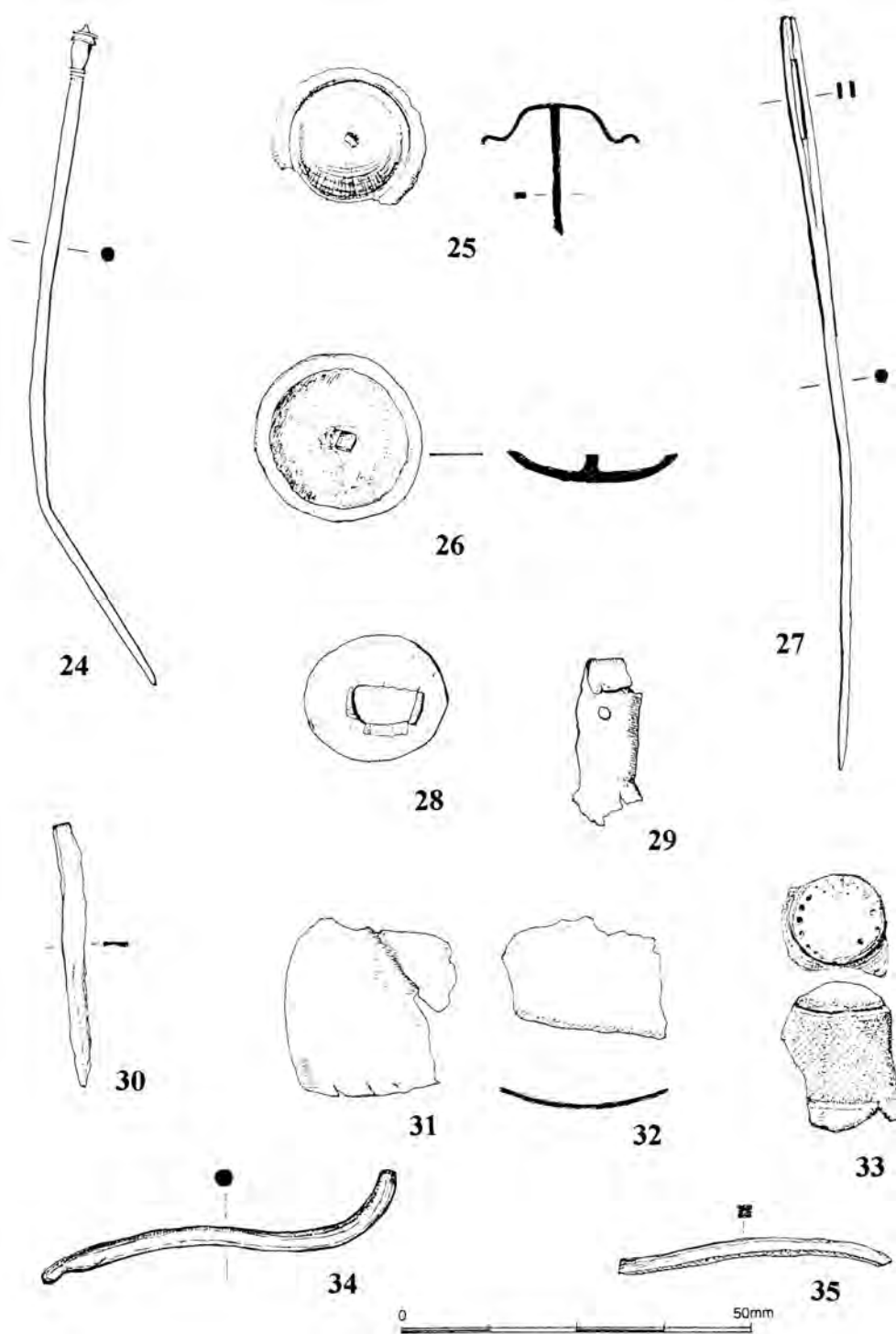


Fig. 13. Copper alloy small finds (24–35). Scale 1:1.

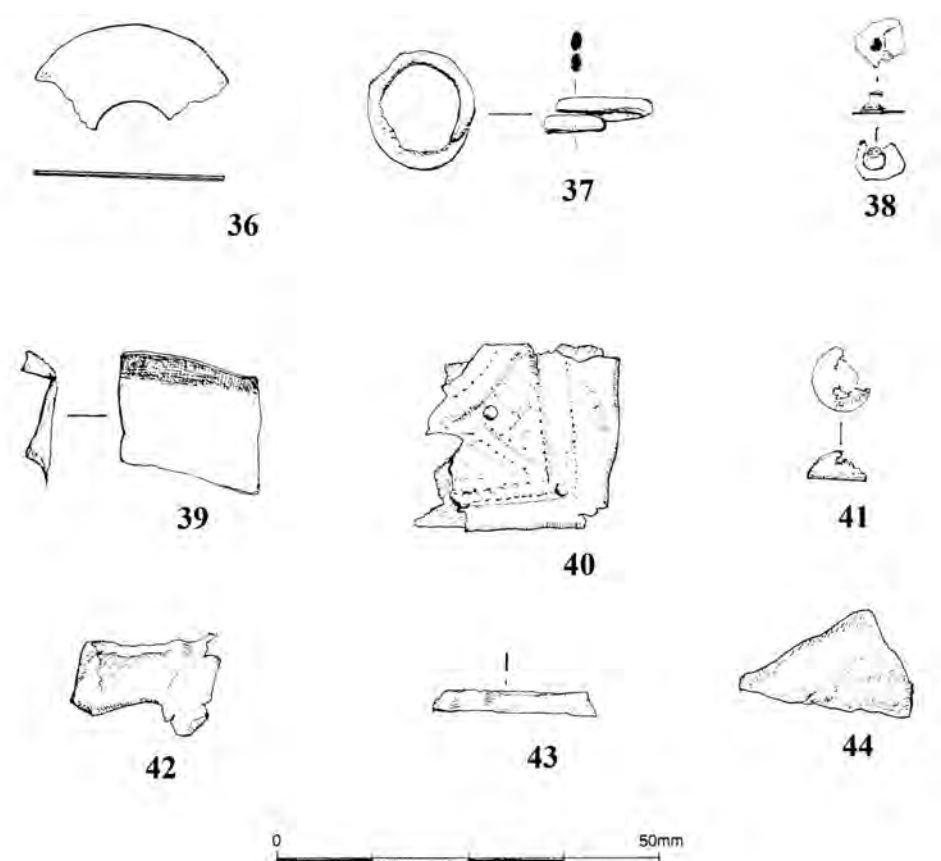


Fig. 14. Copper alloy small finds (36–44). Scale 1:1.

and lower groove. Thimbles are known from Romano-British contexts at Fishbourne and Shakenoak.⁸⁰ However, given its form and its uncertain archaeological context, this find may be post-medieval.

34. Copper alloy rod (T2/07). Verandah area, south side of Building 1. Weight 3 g; length 52 mm; thickness 2 mm. A bent length of round-sectioned copper alloy rod, one end of which is tapered and rounded, the other cleanly severed.

35. Copper alloy rod. Topsoil find. Length 39 mm; weight 2 g. A small length of square-sectioned rod.

36. Annular disc. Topsoil find. Weight 1 g. Fragment of a flat annular disc of copper alloy with a tinned surface. Outer diameter would have been 30 mm. Original purpose uncertain.

37. Ring (T1/06). Found south of verandah of Building 1. Diameter 16 mm; weight 1 g. Made from a thin oval-sectioned rod, folded into roughly circular form with overlapping ends. Possibly made as a child's finger ring.

⁸⁰ B. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Fishbourne, 1961–1969* (London, 1971), vol. 2, pp. 147–8, fig. 51; Brodrick et al., *Shakenoak*, p. 483, no. 234; J. Liversidge, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (London, 1968), fig. 72e.

38. Rivet. Unstratified. Topsoil find, east of Building 2. A small copper alloy rivet with a head of thin sheet 8 mm in diameter and with a stem 3 mm long.

39. Folded strip. Topsoil find. Weight 2 g. Dimensions c.2 cm x 2 cm. A sub-rectangular sheet of copper alloy, with an angled fold.

40. Stamped decorative strip. Found on east side of the wall of villa forecourt (T3E/09), beneath charcoal layer. Length 26 mm; width 24 mm. Fragment of a folded strip of a double-layered copper-alloy sheet with stamped decoration. Within a bordered rectangular panel of dot punch ornament is a sub-triangular inner panel with some barely discernible hatched diagonals. Two repoussé bosses, possibly imitating rivet heads, one at corner of punched border and the other at apex of sub-triangular panel, form part of decoration. Traces of an arc of dots adjacent, extending to torn edge of strip. Strip may have enclosed a band of leather; possibly part of a strap fitting.

41. Domed mount. Unstratified topsoil find, south of Building 1. A fragment of a hemi-spherical mount, 8 mm in diameter, of very thin sheet copper alloy, possibly from an item of furniture. Close in form to the domed stud (20), but contains none of the paste-like filling.

42. Strip. Unstratified. Length 21 mm. A much distorted and folded fragment of sheet copper alloy.

43. Copper alloy strip. Unstratified. Length 22 mm; width 3 mm.

44. Copper alloy sheet (T3/07). From rubble area at south end of trench. A triangular-shaped fragment 23 mm long and 14 mm wide to the apex.

Ironwork

1. Iron ploughshare. Found on floor surface within the villa building, adjacent to and on east side of pitched stone foundations of an inner dividing wall (T2/07). Length 24 cm; weight 719 g. A heavily corroded, 'D'-sectioned, tapered iron bar, 28 mm wide; the ploughshare of a bow-ard plough. Blunt end appears to have a folded or hammered edge. Considerably shorter than the ploughshare with its coulter from Dorchester (Ashmolean Museum, AN 1967.12.44) and a comparable example from Silchester on display in Reading Museum.⁸¹ At Gatcombe Roman villa a 22 cm long ploughshare was found,⁸² and Manning lists two shares from Great Chesterford, Essex (BM 1964. 7-2.47, 1964. 7-2.48) which have bar lengths of only 9.7 cm and 6.7 cm.⁸³ That they can be recognized in fragments as small as these depends entirely on the characteristically asymmetrical pattern of wear seen on their tips which parallels that on the Combe example.

2. Round-headed rivet with securing plate. Found within Building 1 (T1/08). Length 47 mm; diameter of head 29 mm; diameter of securing plate 18 mm. Possibly a securing fixture from an item of furniture, but no traces of mineralized wood or textile visible in the corrosion on the rivet shaft or head.

3. Chisel. Found in Building 3 (T3/08). Length 83 mm; weight 14 g; width of blade 12 mm. The tool has a square-sectioned haft narrowing into a short blade with a splayed edge. This was presumably hafted and was most likely a mortise or firmer chisel to be used for carpentry rather than masonry. Parallels in Manning's catalogue of ironwork in the British Museum.⁸⁴

4. Spike. Found on the mortar floor of Building 1 (T 1/03). Round-sectioned, tapered spike, 14 cm long, badly corroded.

5. Found with dumped wall plaster, south of Building 2 (T2/09). Round rivet head. Diameter 28 mm. Head of rivet with trace of round-sectioned shaft on one face.

⁸¹ W.H. Manning, 'The Plough in Roman Britain', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 54 (1964), p. 60, fig. 5A.

⁸² K. Branigan, *Gatcombe: The Excavation and Study of a Romano-British Villa Estate, 1967-1976*, BAR, 44 (1977), plate 19.

⁸³ W.H. Manning, *Catalogue of Romano-British Iron Tools, Fittings and Weapons in the British Museum* (London, 1985) pp. 43-4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 22-3, plate 10, nos. B33, B38.

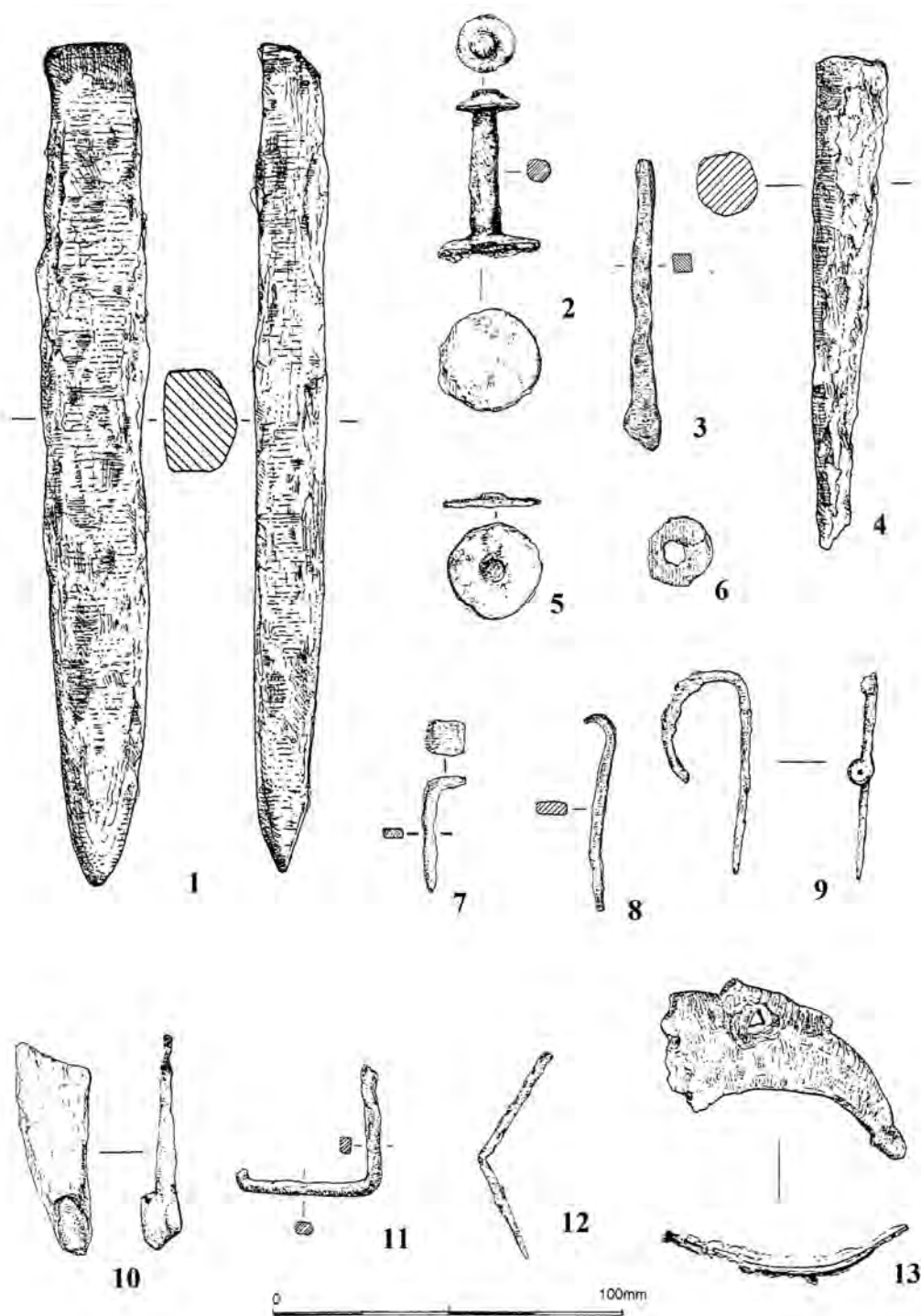


Fig. 15. Ironwork (1-13). Ploughshare (1). Scale 1:2.

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6. Perforated disc (T2/09). Diameter 20 mm. The disc has an off-centre circular perforation 6 mm wide.
7. Small bracket (T1/06). Length 30mm. Rectangular-sectioned tapered stem with expanded head bent over at 90 degrees. Identical examples found at Shakenoak.⁸⁵ Function uncertain.
8. Iron strip; unstratified. Length 56 mm. Fragment of iron strip with furled end.
9. Looped iron pin. In late Iron-Age ditch fill (T2/06). Weight 3 g; length 60 mm. Folded head has a looped-eye terminal and tapered iron stem, which was broken when found. No close parallels found.
10. Horseshoe. Unstratified; from forecourt of Building 1 (T1/06). Length 6 cm; maximum width 24 mm; thickness at terminal 8 mm. Part of a horseshoe of uncertain date. On the upper face, the outer curved edge is bevelled and the end is expanded by an ovoid thickening, creating the calkin of the shoe. It would appear that the shoe has been broken at the lowest of the securing holes. Whether this came from a Romano-British context is uncertain.⁸⁶
11. Fixture bar. Floor surface, Building 2 (T2/09). A rectangular sectioned iron bar, bent at 90 degrees, with one end furled inwards.
12. Iron pin. From verandah, south side of Building 1 (TB/03). Weight 2 g. Uniform taper to point, but no terminal. Bent at mid-point during excavation.
13. Crescentic mount. Found within the ditch fill north of Building 1 (T1/08). Length 70 mm. Fragmentary and corroded with a triangular perforation in the expanded section and above this a downward-curved lip. Concave mount. At the narrow end is an acorn-like terminal, which might indicate a military association.
14. Clamp. Length 150 mm with in-turned pointed ends. Width 15 mm. Found on the paved area of the courtyard, south of Building 1 (T3/07).
15. Corner Mount. Unstratified. Length 58 mm; width 20 mm. Fragmentary corner mount with curved sloping shoulder. On flat upper surface is a 5 mm diameter perforation, possibly a securing point.
16. Folded binding strip. Found on the paved area of the villa forecourt (T3/07). Length 54 mm. An ovoid aperture at the fold.
17. Mounting strip. Unstratified. Length 80 mm; width 60 mm. A fragmentary strip of iron sheet, with two small circular perforations.
18. Mount. An unstratified find, from within Building 1 (T2/07). Length 28 mm. Remains of two small nails evident on both sides of mount.
19. Drill bit head. Building 1, south side (T 1/06). Length 37 mm. Bit has an expanded central section with four faces tapering to a point. Identification follows Manning.⁸⁷
20. Drill bit head. Unstratified, from the eastern end of Building 1 (T1/05). Length 43 mm; weight 10 g. Four tapering faces either side of a central waist. That drill bits were used in constructing the timber sections of the villa is implied by the size of some of the larger nails. In form, the two bits from Combe are close to examples from Hod Hill (Dorset), dated to the mid first century.⁸⁸
21. Penannular ring. Building 1, on floor surface (T1/05). Width 27 mm; thickness 5 mm.
22. Knife blade. Found in ditch fill (T3B/09). Incomplete. Length 62 mm; width 10 mm.

⁸⁵ Brodribb, et al., *Shakenoak*, fig. III, 47, 250.

⁸⁶ Manning, *Romano-British Iron Tools*, p. 63.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 27, plate. 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid. plate 12, nos. B65–B73.

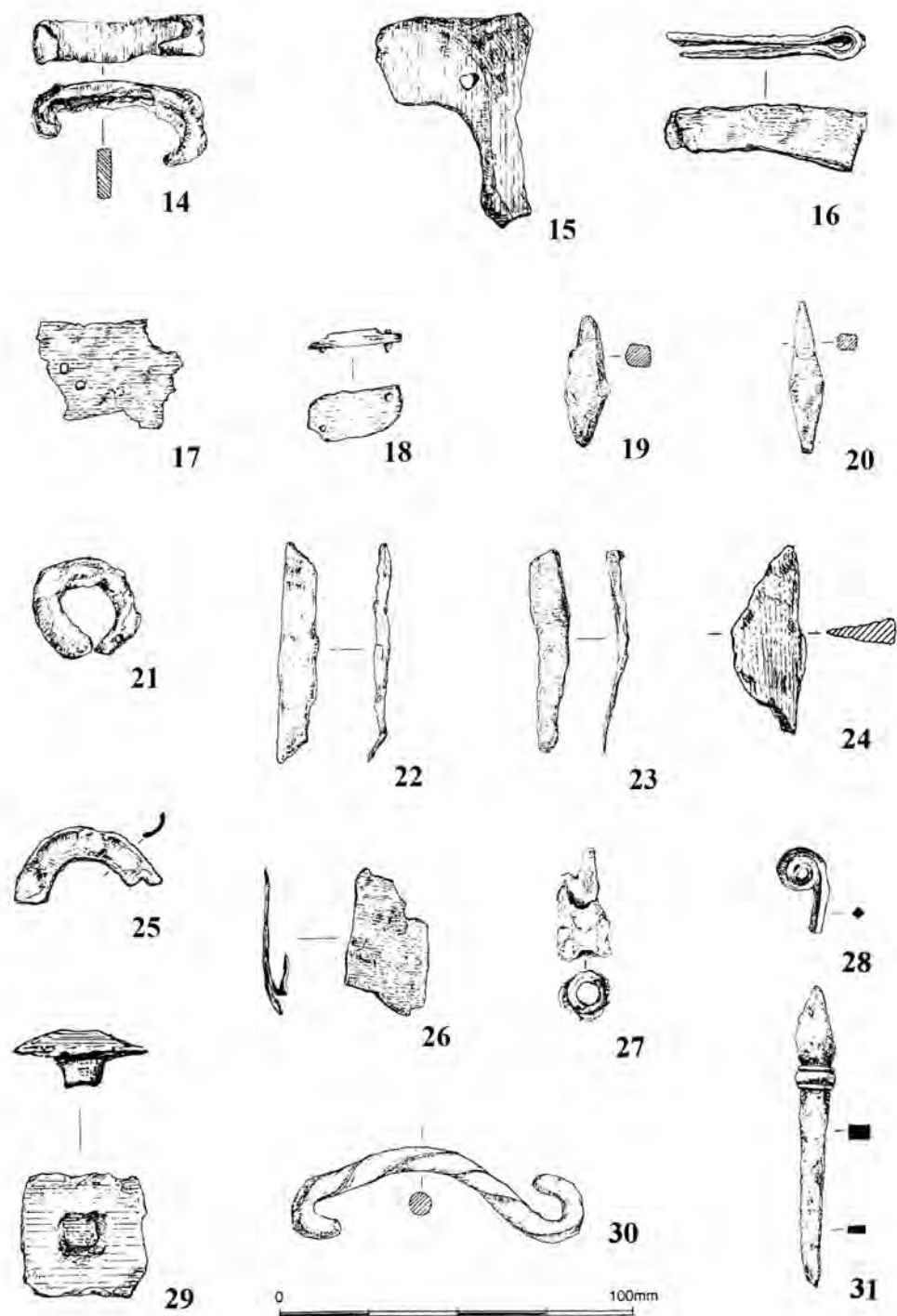


Fig. 16. Ironwork (14-31). Scale 1:2.

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23. Knife tang. Unstratified. Length 58 mm. Thicker end has been hammered, suggesting a secondary use.

24. Knife blade. Found in Building 2 (T2/08). Length 54 mm; width 20 mm. Part of a more substantial knife blade with a distinctive wedge-shaped section.

25. 'C'-shaped mount. Found within Building 1 (T1/06). Width 42 mm. Concave underside. At the broken end is the trace of a hole. Two other holes have the fused and corroded flattened sections of nail/rivet heads. Function uncertain.

26. Folded strip. Found on cobbled area at east end of Building 1 (T2/05). Section of strip 41 mm long and 22 mm wide, fractured across a securing hole.

27. Ferrule. Building 1 (T1/05). Fragment of a corroded section of iron tube, possibly an ox goad. Mineralized wood traces evident on inner face.

28. Decorative terminal. Found in west room of Building 1 (T2B/06). Length 23 mm. Carefully forged, scrolled-terminal of square-sectioned rod, in the form of a miniature crozier. It is uncertain what artefact this fragment once enhanced.

29. Nail. Unstratified. Large rectangular nail head, 35 mm x 35 mm. In profile it has the form of a flattened pyramid. The underside has the 7 mm long remnant of the rectangular-sectioned shank. The gauge of the shank is 11 mm x 9 mm.⁸⁹

30. Twisted 'S'-link. Unstratified. Length 80 mm. Forged from a 7 mm square-sectioned iron bar. The central section twisted, each end terminating in a tapering open hook. Possibly a suspension hook, but there is a compelling similarity to a bit-link from Hod Hill, Dorset, dated to the mid first century,⁹⁰ which at 11.2 cm is slightly larger than the link from Combe.

31. Modelling tool? Unstratified. Length 86 mm. An enigmatic implement with a tapered rectangular shaft surmounted by a banded collar, above which is an expanded, cone-like terminal. The tapered shaft or tang suggests that this tool once had a wooden or bone handle, although no mineralized organic traces survive. Banded collar above tang similar to decorative bands on several artefacts identified by Manning as modelling tools for clay or plaster, from the Walbrook, London.⁹¹

ROMAN VESSEL GLASS by HILARY COOL

The assemblage of vessel glass has a curious composition, which has possibly arisen from the collecting policy. This will be returned to later. The closely dated fragments would all fit within a mid to later first-century AD date range with the exception of no. 15, which is more likely to be of fourth-century date.

Fragments were found from at least four pillar-moulded bowls (nos. 1–4). This is a very common type of vessel which entered the province in large numbers following the invasion in AD 43.⁹² The colour of these vessels is very strongly correlated with the date when they were used. Bowls in strong colours such as very dark brown (no. 1) and deep blue (no. 2) are typical of the Claudio-Neronian period. They occur much less frequently on sites occupied first during the Flavian period, such as the military sites occupied during the expansion to the north in the 70s. Blue/green bowls (nos. 3 and 4) were dominant then but had virtually all had gone out of use by the late first century. An assemblage evenly divided between blue/green and strongly coloured bowls indicates that the site was being occupied within the first 25 years of the Roman occupation, most probably within the earlier part of that period.

Jugs are the second most common element within the assemblage with four certain (nos. 5–8) and two possible (nos. 9–10) fragments identified. No. 6 comes from the very diagnostic form of lower handle attachment found on conical jugs of the last third of the first century to the mid second century.⁹³ The

⁸⁹ See comparative type from Shakenoak, Site C, in Brodribb et al., *Shakenoak*, fig. IV, 62, 442.

⁹⁰ Manning, *Romano-British Iron Tools*, plate 29, H16.

⁹¹ Ibid. pp. 30–2, plate 13, C16, 17.

⁹² J. Price and S. Cottam, *Romano-British Glass Vessels: A Handbook*, CBA Practical Handbook in Archaeology, 14 (1998), pp. 44–6.

⁹³ Ibid. pp. 152–6.

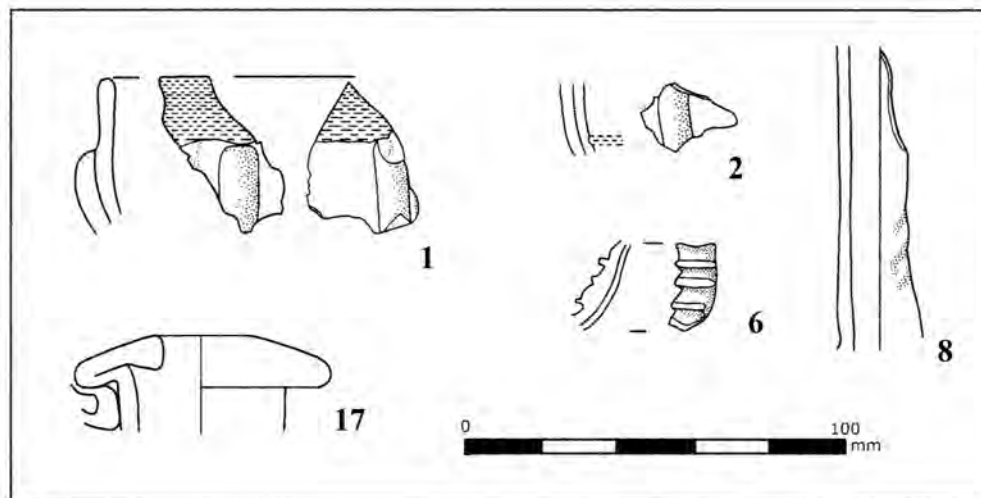


Fig. 17. Glass fragments. Scale 1:2.

handle attachment fragment no. 5 is also likely to come from this form of jug or from the contemporary globular form, which went out of use early in the second century.⁹⁴ Both of these jug forms have long narrow cylindrical necks, and the deformed neck fragment no. 8 could well have come from one of them. The neck currently tapers towards the upper part, but this is probably a function of the deformation. The light green colour is certainly one of the shades used to make these jugs. Body fragment no. 10 has the typical ribbed decoration seen on the bodies of the globular jug form. As this decoration and body shape is also seen on the contemporary collared jar,⁹⁵ the identification of form is not secure but the later first to early second century date is.

Another small jug is represented by handle fragment no. 7, but the fragment is not sufficiently diagnostic to identify the form. The colour indicates a first- to third-century date. Deep blue fragment no. 9 seems most likely to come from the edge of a handle. The colour would indicate a first-century date as strong colours such as this had disappeared by the end of the century.

Blue/green bottles are represented by nos. 16–22 and, where there is any evidence of the shape (nos. 18–22), it can be seen that the fragments came from prismatic and most likely square bottles.⁹⁶ These become common towards the end of the first century AD and continued in use into the third century.

The final fragment requiring discussion is no. 15. This is made of the typical pale green bubbly glass of the fourth century. The features it exhibits, flat with a straight rib and elongated bubbles, would be consistent with it coming from a handle. Handles from fourth-century jugs tend to be curved, so it most likely came from one of the bottle forms.

As noted at the beginning of this report, the composition of this assemblage is very unbalanced. Normally, for example, if a site produces so many pillar-moulded bowls, it is likely to produce some of the distinctive contemporary blown forms. Here the blown forms such as the long-necked jugs would only be contemporary with the blue/green pillar-moulded bowls, not to any great extent with the strongly coloured ones. What is noticeable is that all the fragments tend to be substantial. That is normal for pillar-moulded bowls and bottles, but blown assemblages may be expected to have thin-walled body fragments from tablewares. Here the blown fragments are thicker elements such as handle, neck and ribbed body fragments. This is very much the sort of assemblage to be expected in the plough or topsoil where fragments need to be substantial to survive. The glass shown to me did include thin-walled fragments of later date including some eighteenth-century window glass from the topsoil (G26), but most of the post-medieval and modern glass fragments were also thick and substantial.

With this sort of bias it is very difficult to use the vessel glass as more than an indicator of dates of

⁹⁴ Ibid. pp. 150–2.

⁹⁵ Ibid. pp. 137–8.

⁹⁶ Ibid. pp. 194–8.

activity, because it is the composition of the complete assemblage that can give indications of the nature of the occupation on a site. Here it is not possible to gauge this. In a normal fourth-century assemblage, for example, bottles and jugs form a very small proportion of the total. It is thin-walled beakers and cups that dominate and evidence for these is entirely lacking in this assemblage. What may be said is that normally a site with the pillar-moulded bowl composition seen here would be military. Rural populations did develop a preference for large glass bowl forms in the later first to second centuries, but the strong colours of nos. 1 and 2 point to currency before that phenomenon. So though there is a definite limit to the information about the site that the glass can provide, it does raise interesting questions about the nature of the occupation at Combe.

Catalogue of Vessels:

Pillar-moulded bowls:

All the fragments are ground internally and on the exterior of the rim, the rest of the exterior is fire polished.

1. Two rim and body fragments and one lower body fragment. Deep yellow/brown. Parts of at least two narrow ribs. Present height 41 mm. EVE 0.6. Unstratified.
2. Lower body fragment. Deep blue. Part of one rib, abraded band on interior. Dimensions 19 x 25 mm. EVE 0.2. Unstratified, ploughsoil (T2/08).
3. Three body fragments. Blue/green. Parts of three narrow ribs, one retaining lower part of abraded zone below rim edge. Dimensions (largest fragment) 30 x 11 mm. EVE 0.4.
4. Body fragment. Blue/green. Part of one rib. Dimensions 28 x 11 mm. EVE 0.2. Topsoil (T3/09).

Blown vessels:

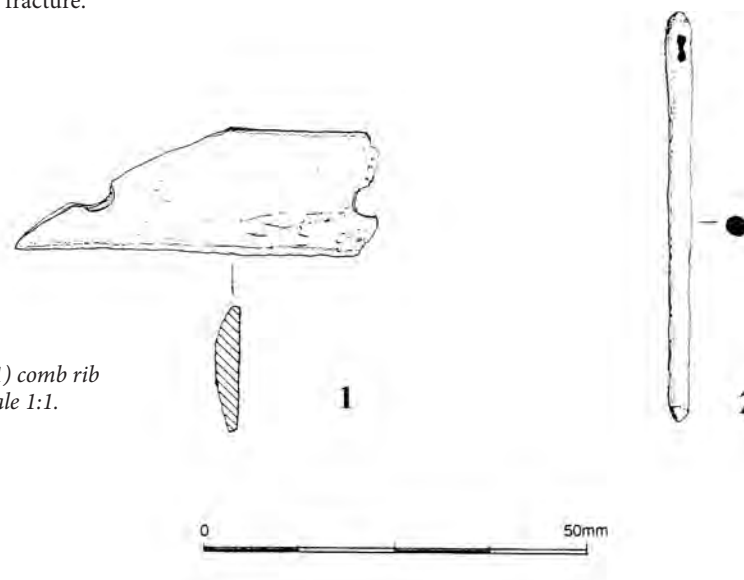
5. Jug; handle fragment. Blue/green. Folded upper attachment of ribbon handle with small scrap of neck. Handle section 20 x 3 mm. EVE 0.14. Topsoil find, Building 1 forecourt.
6. Jug; handle fragment. Blue/green. Lower part of lower handle attachment retaining body wall; fragment from pinched trail, upper parts of pinched projections chipped. Dimensions 27 x 11 mm. EVE 0.14.
7. Jug; handle fragment. Blue/green with many elongated bubbles. Straight ribbon handle. Section 15.5 x 3mm, present length 21 mm. EVE 0.14. Unstratified.
8. Jug; neck fragment. Light green with elongated bubbles. Originally cylindrical neck broken at junction with body, now tapering upwards with side of neck deformed. Maximum neck diameter 23 mm, neck thickness 3 mm, present length 81 mm. EVE 0.14. Surface find south of Building 1.
9. Jug (?); handle fragment. Deep blue. Edge of straight handle. Dimensions 18 x 4 mm. In wall collapse, south of Building 2 (T2/09).
10. Globular jar or jug; body fragment. Light yellow/brown. Part of one vertical rib. Dimensions 52 x 18 mm, wall thickness 2.5 mm. G6. From north-east corner of trench adjacent to B3, circular building (T3/08).
11. Body fragments (6). Blue/green.
12. Body fragment. Blue/green. Unstratified.
13. Body fragments (2). Blue/green. South of wall in rubble collapse (T2/09).
14. Chip; blue/green. From south side of Building 1 (T1B/03).
15. Body fragment. Light green with many small bubbles. Flat with one rib. Dimensions 32 x 8 mm, wall thickness 1 mm. From ditch fill north of Building 1 (T1/08).

16. Bottle, rim fragment. Blue/green. Rim bent out, up, in and flattened; fracture on underside might be scar from handle attachment. EVE 0.14. Rim diameter 85 mm. From rubble area, south end of trench (T3/07).
17. Bottle, rim fragment. Blue/green. Rim bent out and down, up and in and flattened; cylindrical neck; part of folded upper handle attachment on neck and underside of rim. Rim diameter c.65 mm, present height 26 mm. EVE 0.14 (T 3/07).
18. Prismatic bottle; shoulder and side fragment. Blue/green. EVE 0.28. From floor surface of Building 1 (T1/05).
19. Prismatic bottle; body fragment. Topsoil find.
20. Prismatic bottle body fragments (2). Blue/green. Unstratified.
21. Prismatic bottle; body fragment. Unstratified.
22. Prismatic bottle; body fragments (3).

BONE ARTEFACTS

1. Comb rib? Found with charcoal, pottery and slag (T3B/09, context 002). Length 46 mm; width 17 mm. This fragment of animal bone is plano-convex in section, smooth and polished on the upper and lower surfaces. At each broken end shows the trace of a drilled hole, 4 mm in diameter and 31 mm apart. On the underside, adjacent to one hole, is a small concavity, an initial misplaced drilling attempt. Whilst comb ribs sometimes show traces of sawing from the creation of comb teeth, fragmentary comb ribs without saw marks were recovered from Shakenoak villa.⁹⁷ An alternative possibility is that such a fragment could have been utilized as bone inlay, as casing for a wooden box or casket, as recorded at Colchester.⁹⁸
2. Needle. Found in a layer of debris in the villa yard (T3/07). Length 53 mm; round section, maximum thickness 3 mm, with a slight taper towards the point. Figure-of-eight eye. Shaped conical head and blunt faceted point. The needle, which belongs to Crummy Type 1, is relatively short.⁹⁹ Most likely this has been re-pointed after a fracture.

Fig. 18. Worked-bone: 1) comb rib fragment; 2) needle. Scale 1:1.



⁹⁷ Brodribb et al., *Shakenoak*, p. 244, fig. III, 58, 48, 56. It should be noted, however, that most of the Shakenoak combs came from Period F. 4 deposits, which included Anglo-Saxon finds.

⁹⁸ Crummy, *The Roman Small Finds in Colchester*, fig. 87.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* fig. 70, 1974.

STONE ARTEFACTS

Quernstones

There are four recognizable fragments of quernstones, from either the upper or lower stones of rotary querns. Three were found in contexts relating to Building 1 and one adjacent to the enclosure ditch entrance, in the upper level of the ditch (T1/07). The largest fragment weighed 1.0 kg. Philip Powell (University Museum, Oxford) has identified them all as being of coarse feldspathic grit. This is not local material, but sourced possibly from the Old Red Sandstone (ORS) beds, somewhere along the Welsh border.¹⁰⁰ The colour and the structure of the stone in the samples retrieved would suggest the presence of at least three separate querns. Shaffrey has listed more than 1,200 ORS querns from nearly 200 sites, of which 21 sites are in Oxfordshire.¹⁰¹

S1. Found as part of pathway 3 m north of Building 1 (T1/03). Thickness 40 mm; weight 200 g.

S2. Found within villa, on floor surface, near south wall (T1/05). Part of upper stone. Thickness at outer edge 70 mm; weight 1.0 kg.

S3. In villa courtyard, 4 m south of Building 1; below topsoil layer, in section of trench (T3/09). Thickness 55 mm; weight 470 g.

S4. In enclosure ditch (T1/07). Part of the upper stone of a rotary quern. Coarse feldspathic grit. Thickness at outer edge 55 mm.

Whetstones

The six whetstones (or hones) all appear to date from the Romano-British phase of the site. One was a surface find, the rest were all found within sealed contexts.

1. An incomplete whetstone of pale, ochre-coloured, coarse feldspathic grit; source uncertain, possibly from the ORS series. Unstratified surface find. Round section, tapering to a domed terminal. Length 56 mm; diameter at broken section 15 mm; weight 20 g.

2. An oval-sectioned whetstone of fine grey calcareous grit, most likely from the lower Corallian beds of the Cumnor ridge. Found within villa building at eastern end, Room 2 (T1/05). The stone is worn with use and has been broken. There is some iron staining on the surface. Length 58 mm; width 33 mm; weight 45 g.

3. A tapering rectangular-sectioned whetstone of grey, feldspathic grit; source not Oxfordshire, probably from the ORS series. Found amongst animal bone and tegulae to west of forecourt wall, 3 m south of the south-west corner of Building 1 (T3/09). This stone may also have been used as a hammer stone, as there is some wear in the form of pitting and abrasion at the narrower end. Length 102 mm; weight 245 g.

4. A round-sectioned whetstone of calcareous grit; source possibly from the lower part of the Corallian formation, somewhere along the Oxford-Faringdon ridge, or could be from gravel deposits. Found in silt and wall collapse with stone roof tile, south of wall section crossing trench (T2/09). Central section is more worn and abraded. The smoothness at each end would suggest that the whetstone had a secondary use as a pestle. Length 66 mm; diameter at end 30 mm; weight 90 g.

5. A rectangular-sectioned, broken whetstone of fine, grey calcareous grit, probably from the lower Corallian beds of the Cumnor ridge. Found in occupation layer in Building 2 (T2/08). Well worn with a central groove on one face, from sharpening a needle. Traces of a second groove are on a side face. Width at end 24 mm; weight 40 g.

7. An irregular-shaped fragment of reddish grey feldspathic grit, with a smooth underside and a recessed upper face; source not Oxfordshire, possibly from the ORS series along the Welsh border. Found just

¹⁰⁰ R. Shaffrey, *Grinding and Milling. A Study of Romano-British Rotary Querns and Millstones Made from Old Red Sandstone*, BAR BS, 409 (2006).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* pp. 87–8.

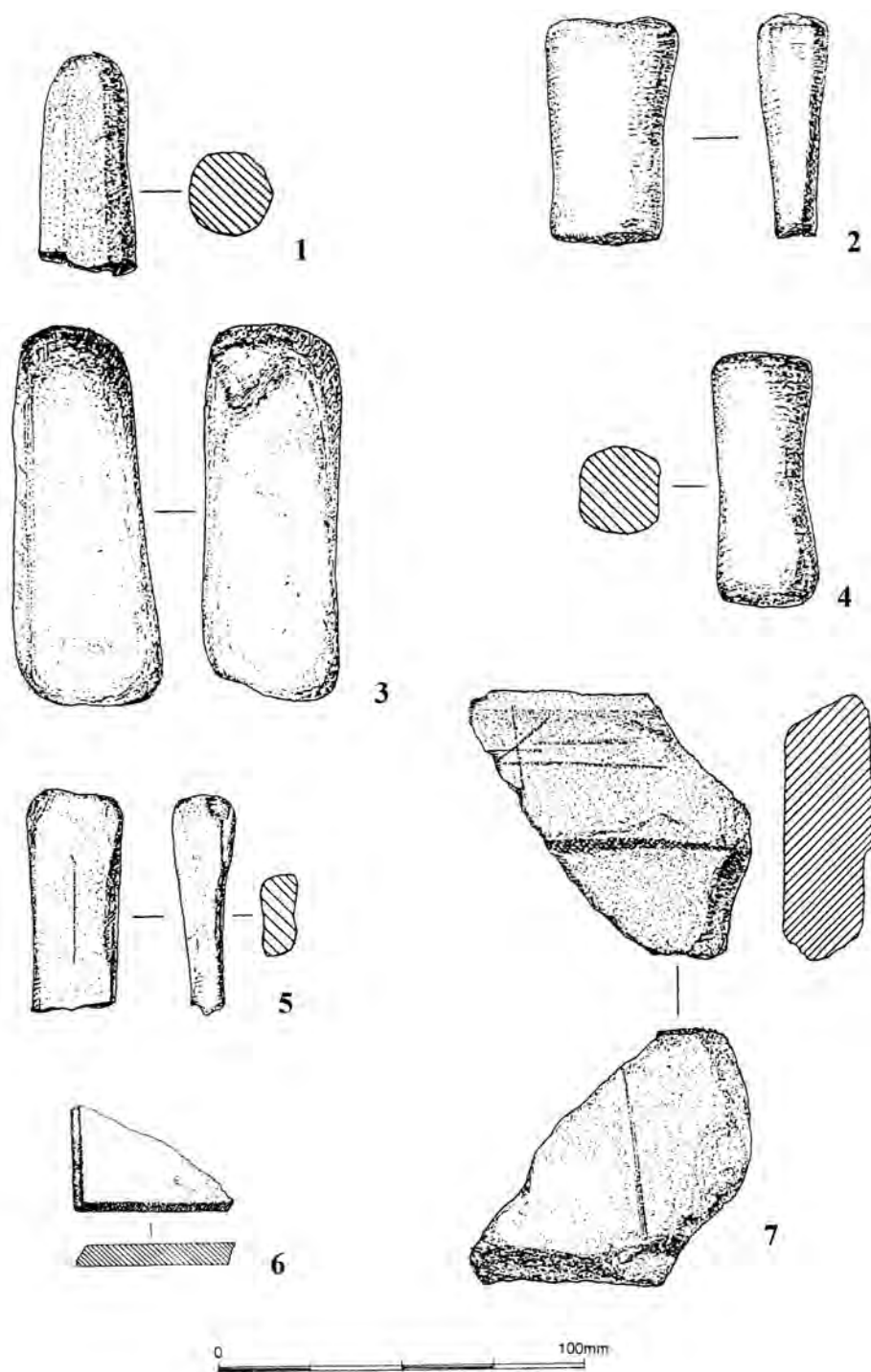


Fig. 19. Whetstones and cosmetic palette (6). Scale 1:2.

south of Building 1, in villa yard (T2/07). Upper face has a 40 mm wide raised band with a shaped bevelled outer edge. Four lengths of scoring or grooving in opposing directions on this surface suggest its likely use as a hone for sharpening needle tips. The smooth underside perhaps might indicate that the stone was originally part of a small quern, having some geological similarity with the quernstones found at Combe, but a single scored groove across its surface suggests a secondary use as a honing stone. Length 59 mm; width 71 mm; thickness 26 mm; weight 197 g.

Cosmetic Palette (Fig. 19, no. 6)

6. This corner fragment can be identified as part of a rectangular cosmetic palette of smooth, fine-grained limestone, dark grey in colour. The most likely source of the stone is from a band of the Lower Lias, in the Banbury region.¹⁰² Found in ditch fill, on east side of villa yard wall, near the south-west corner of Building 1 (T3B/09). Length 42 mm; width 28 mm; thickness 7 mm.

Palettes have distinctive smooth surfaces and bevelled sides. It seems that the upper and undersides could be used as surfaces on which to grind medicaments or cosmetics. On the smoother underside a small area of abrasion is evident halfway along the break, where the grinding of materials on its surface took place. The longitudinal side has a sloping bevel. The shorter side has a 2 mm wide vertical face below the sloping bevel. A geographically close but slightly larger parallel, also fragmentary, was found at Wilcote in level 3 of the stone quarry, a deposit dated to within the third quarter of the second century.¹⁰³ This palette shows no scratches or wear, which has led the excavator to suggest it may have been a stone inlay for furniture. A complete cosmetic palette and fragmentary example were found at Alcester, Warwickshire.¹⁰⁴ Two fragmentary palettes have also been found in Colchester.¹⁰⁵

Stone Roof Slates

In addition to terracotta tegulae and imbrices, fragmentary stone roof tiles were found in the villa trenches. Two complete stone slates, one with its securing nail still in situ, were found in Trench 2/09 south of Building 2. Some of the slate fragments in Building 1 would appear to have been part of rectangular slates, but the slates retrieved from Building 2 (T2/09) were pentagonal. No complete stone roof slates were recovered from Building 1. Two kinds of stone slate were also recorded at Shakenoak. Philip Powell described the Combe slates as having 'typical Stonesfield Slate lithology, being of calcareous sandstone with the appearance of unfrosted Stonesfield slates. They were presumably collected from weathered rock at the outcrop.' In his discussion of the stone roof tiles from the Shakenoak villa, Powell suggests that 'the slates would probably come from the outcrop of the bed in Stockey Bottom, or around Stonesfield Ford, since this was the main outcrop and the nearest to Shakenoak.'¹⁰⁶ Identical stone roof tiles have been found on the site of the Stonesfield villa, 3 km north-west of the Combe villa.

Dimensions of recovered stone roof slate: length 350 mm; width 280 mm; thickness 20 mm. Weight 3.9 kg. Second slate left in trench because part of section.

Shale

A piece of shale 60 mm long, 30 mm wide and 9 mm thick (weight 16 g) was recovered from the enclosure ditch entrance (T1/07). The source of this organic-rich, laminated clay is uncertain. Whilst it may be from the Lower Oxford Clay,¹⁰⁷ the Kimmeridge clays of the Dorset coast cannot be excluded. There are no identifiable features to indicate whether this had been part of a box, or a piece of furniture (for which the use of shale is well attested in the Roman period). Traces of several scored lines cross the scale-like, dark brown upper surface, but otherwise it appears to be a fragment of unworked shale. Its discovery within the enclosure ditch entrance, however, would suggest that it could be from an Iron-Age context.

¹⁰² Identification by Philip Powell, University Museum, Oxford.

¹⁰³ Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 2, p. 77.

¹⁰⁴ The complete palette is described as 'fine grained grey stone, most certainly a Blue Lias Limestone of the Lower Lias, Lower Jurassic and could well be of local origin': P. Booth and J. Evans, *Roman Alcester: Northern Extramural Area. 1969–1988 Excavations*, CBA Research Report, 127 (2001).

¹⁰⁵ Crummy, *The Roman Small Finds*, fig. 61, 1865 and 1867.

¹⁰⁶ Brodribb et al., *Shakenoak*, p. 19, fig. 11.

¹⁰⁷ Personal comment from Philip Powell.

THE POTTERY by PAUL BOOTH

The excavations at Combe produced some 3,271 sherds of pottery (38,693 kg, 44.91 REs), mostly of late Iron-Age and Roman date but including a small component (189 sherds, 2,064 g, 1.84 REs) of handmade pottery assigned to the middle Iron Age. The material was recorded quite rapidly using the approach set out in the OA later prehistoric and Roman pottery recording system,¹⁰⁸ which by applying standardized codes for fabrics and forms allows easy comparison between assemblages from different parts of the region. Aspects of this are amplified below. Each context group was recorded in terms of fabric and form. Initial sorting of fabrics was done by eye, with subsequent use of a binocular microscope and a hand lens at x10 and x20 magnification to assist identification/define the inclusion types of individual sherds. Quantification was by sherd count, weight and rim equivalents (REs, based on the percentage of rim circumferences surviving), with an additional more subjective count of vessels based on individual rim sherds. Details of rim, base, handle, spout and decorative types and other characteristics were recorded as appropriate. The full record of the pottery is in the project archive.

The condition of the pottery was variable. The overall mean sherd weight was 11.8 g, with that of the middle Iron-Age material (10.9 g) only a little less than the overall value. There was some variability in sherd size from group to group, but this was not particularly notable. Variations from the mean sherd weight were seen for example in the samian ware, a relatively high proportion of which was unstratified, contributing to a low mean sherd weight, while a few substantial amphora sherds (some again unstratified) inevitably enhanced the mean figure. The surface condition of sherds was also variable, but soil conditions on the site were generally conducive to the preservation of surfaces, so erosion was only a problem in a limited number of cases. A few sherds were clearly quite heavily worn as a result of redeposition.

Iron-Age Pottery

Fabrics. Iron-Age fabrics were defined in terms of (usually) their two most common inclusion types and an indicator of fineness on a sliding scale of 1 (very fine) to 5 (very coarse). The definition of fabrics using this system does not necessarily serve to identify production sources, since these are generally unknown for Iron-Age material within the region. Nor does it automatically follow that identically coded sherds were from the same (unknown) source, merely that their makers exploited very similar clay and tempering resources, indicating a uniformity of potting tradition. Quantification of the material by individual fabric is shown in Table 1. The identifying letters of the inclusion types present are as follows:

A	quartz sand
C	Calcareous (limestone) grit, rounded
I	oxide minerals, mainly Iron oxides
L	Limestone (angular)
M	Mica
N	None visible
S	Shell
V	Vegetable/organic (sometimes voids)
Z	indeterminate voids

Table 1. Quantification of Iron-Age fabrics

Fabric	Nosh	Weight	REs	Comment/vessel types
AI3	1	4		
AIL3	59	420	0.48	CB
AL3	2	33		
AL4	1	5	0.03	CB
AN2	3	32		(HG)
AZ2	1	16		
CL4	5	44	0.08	C
CN3	3	38		
CS4	2	15	0.12	C, CB
LA3	1	7	0.04	C
LC5	1	3		
LN3	2	9		
LN4	22	442	0.05	CN
LN5	22	230	0.20	C (x2), CB
LS4	13	103	0.15	C (x4), D
LZ5	2	14		
SC4	4	54	0.06	C
SG4	1	35	0.10	C
SL4	9	85	0.18	C (x4)
SL5	2	26	0.05	C
SN4	21	251	0.09	C (x2)
SN5	11	189	0.21	C
Z5	1	9		?leached calcareous inclusions
Total	189	2064	1.84	

¹⁰⁸ P. Booth, 'Oxford Archaeology Roman Pottery Recording Guidelines', unpublished Oxford Archaeology document (revised December 2008).

The principal elements of the Iron-Age assemblage were sand-tempered and, particularly, calcareous-tempered fabrics. Components of the latter included angular limestone, rounded calcareous 'grit' and shell. Much of this last may have been fossil shell, derived from crushed limestone, so the distinction between S and L inclusions was probably not always very meaningful. In the most abundant single fabric (by sherds count), AIL3, limestone was a secondary inclusion, and when it is considered that Z (uncertain voids) probably represent leached out limestone/shell the overall proportion of this assemblage with no calcareous component in the fabric was tiny, consisting of four sherds in fabrics AIL3 and AN2. The dominance of the calcareous fabrics of course reflects local production on basic limestone geology, and the relative homogeneity of the material in terms of simple vessel forms across an apparently broad spectrum of fabric variants is a further aspect of this. The only distinctive fabric which is not likely to have been of immediately local origin is AN2 (see below).

Vessel forms and decoration. Twenty-five vessels were represented by rim sherds, but with the exception of a barrel-shaped jar in fabric AIL3 most of these were small, 24 rims with a total RE value of 1.36 indicating that on average less than 6% of the rim circumference of each vessel was present. Consequently, close identification of vessel type was usually not possible. The rims were all simple types, either upright or slightly in- or out-sloping, even-sided or slightly tapering or thickening, which also restricts identification of specific vessel types. All of these variants are consistent with the identification of the vessels as general-purpose jars, although insufficient of the profiles survived for this to be absolutely certain. The generic middle Iron-Age character of the group is clear, however, and the identification of these vessels as jars has therefore been followed here. The form of these vessels is likely to have been either barrel-shaped or slightly ovoid, the barrel-shaped form (CB) being specifically identified in fabrics AL4, CS4 and LN5, as well as the rather larger surviving parts of the vessel in fabric AIL3, although this vessel seems to have been slightly more globular than is usually the case in this type.

The repertoire of simple vessel forms in the Iron-Age fabrics was matched by the lack of evidence for decoration. The latter was almost exclusively confined to the use of burnishing, which may in any case be regarded as a surface treatment as much as a form of decoration, and even this was only noted on 23 sherds, 12 of which were fragments of the type CB jar in fabric AIL3. Only two vessels in the assemblage had other types of decoration. One of these was on one of three sherds in fabric AN2, notable not only for its fabric but also for the presence of linear decoration (Fig. 21, no. 1). This piece is from a globular bowl, a characteristic type in the upper Thames valley region, particularly in the later part of the middle Iron Age. However, while the decoration of these vessels typically takes the form of swags defined by burnished or lightly incised lines,¹⁰⁹ on the present piece the decoration consists of oblique lines in the form of broad shallow grooves, beneath horizontal grooves of the same character. Oblique linear decoration does occasionally appear on these vessels, however, as at Blewburton Hill and Yarnton,¹¹⁰ though neither is an exact parallel for the present piece. Nevertheless, the combination of fabric, form and decoration indicates an origin within the upper Thames valley rather than in the near vicinity of Combe, although it is unlikely that the vessel had been brought to the site from any great distance. Combe does, however, lie at the northern limit of the distribution of vessels of this general type.¹¹¹

Incised curvilinear decoration, again quite roughly executed, is found on two joining sherds in fabric SC4 (Fig. 21, no. 5). Unfortunately, insufficient survives for the orientation of the decoration to be completely certain. The general appearance of this decoration is seen for example at Gravelly Guy,¹¹² but that vessel is in a sand-tempered fabric. The two Combe sherds, in a coarser fabric, might possibly be earlier in date, with the decorative style matched on sherds from Standlake,¹¹³ but in the absence of other evidence a middle Iron-Age date seems more likely.

Finally, the linear decoration on two sherds from the same vessel recorded as fabric C10 (Fig. 21, no. 2 and Fig. 21, no. 3) should be noted, as this has some similarities with scored ware decoration.¹¹⁴ Local

¹⁰⁹ D.W. Harding, *The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin* (Oxford, 1972), plates 67 and 68.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. plate 68j; P. Booth, 'Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in G. Hey et al., *Yarnton. Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement and Landscape*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 35 (2011), pp. 394–5 (no. 125).

¹¹¹ G. Lambrick with M. Robinson, *The Thames through Time: The Archaeology of the Gravel Terraces of the Upper and Middle Thames. The Thames Valley in Later Prehistory: 1500 BC–AD 50*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 29 (2009), p. 204.

¹¹² D. Duncan et al., 'Final Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age Pottery', in Lambrick and Allen, *Gravelly Guy*, pp. 299, 302 (no. 18).

¹¹³ Harding, *The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin*, plates 46F and G and 47H.

¹¹⁴ S.M. Elsdon, 'East Midlands Scored Ware', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 66 (1992), pp. 83–91.

aspects of this decoration, of middle Iron-Age character, which is rare in the Oxford region, have been discussed previously.¹¹⁵

Chronology. The lack of diagnostic vessel forms makes close dating of this material very difficult. In this part of the region calcareous tempering traditions are likely to have been maintained over a long period including both the early and middle Iron Age,¹¹⁶ in contrast to the situation in the adjacent part of the Thames valley, where shell tempering dominates in the early Iron Age but is largely replaced by sand tempering and other traditions in the middle Iron Age.¹¹⁷ The continuation of calcareous tempering potting traditions into the late Iron Age and the early Roman period is indicated here by the presence of sherds in 'Roman' ware groups E50 and C10 below, and the fact that in some cases there was a lack of clarity about whether sherds should be assigned to the handmade middle Iron-Age traditions or to ostensibly later ones (see, for example, Fig. 21, nos. 2–3, and discussion above). However, the range of shell- and/or limestone-tempered vessel forms at Combe lacks distinctive early Iron-Age examples, while the rather undiagnostic jars are typical of the middle Iron Age. The globular bowl, dated to the later part of the middle Iron Age, is consistent with this range. The close association of the middle Iron-Age material with later pottery and features is suggestive of an unbroken sequence of occupation. On this basis, the middle Iron-Age pottery might all belong to the latter part of that period, suggesting that the earliest features need not date before perhaps the second century BC at the earliest, a similar pattern to that seen, for example, in the recently examined assemblage from Tubney,¹¹⁸ and perhaps at Watkins Farm, Northmoor.¹¹⁹ In contrast to the situation at these sites, however, at Combe it seems likely that the 'middle' Iron-Age pottery forms a continuous sequence with late Iron-Age/early Roman traditions (see below).

Roman Pottery

Fabrics/wares. The fabrics can be placed in major ware groups, defined on the basis of significant common characteristics. The ware groups can be combined to constitute two main classes of material, fine and specialist wares on the one hand, and coarse wares on the other. The fine and specialist ware groups (identified by the initial letter of the fabric code) are: samian ware (S), fine wares – colour-coated, lead-glazed, mica-coated (F), amphorae (A), mortaria (M), white wares, other than mortaria (W), and white slipped wares (Q). The remaining coarse ware groups are: 'Belgic type' usually grog-tempered, fabrics (E),¹²⁰ 'Romanized' oxidized coarse wares (O), 'Romanized' reduced coarse wares (R), black-burnished ware (B), and calcareous- (particularly shell-) tempered wares (C).

Within these classes are hierarchically arranged sub-groups, usually defined on the basis of inclusion type, and individual fabrics/wares are then indicated at a third level of precision, both levels of subdivision being expressed by numeric codes. Thus R30 is a general code for fine-medium sandy reduced coarse wares, while R37 is a specific sandy reduced product of a probable 'west Oxfordshire' industry (see further below). For the bulk of the present assemblage fabric identification was at the intermediate level of precision. Quantification of the pottery by fabric/ware is set out in Table 2. Only summary fabric descriptions are given here, but where appropriate these are cross-referred to codes in the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection,¹²¹ placed in brackets in bold type. More complete descriptions are contained within the project archive. After a general discussion of the ware groups, samian ware and amphorae are treated separately in a little more detail.

The fine and specialist wares form a moderate proportion of the assemblage (10.7%) by sherd count, and are rather better represented by weight (as a result of the contribution of a relatively small number of

¹¹⁵ P. Booth, 'The Iron Age Pottery', in C. Cropper and A. Hardy, 'The Excavation of Iron Age and Medieval features at Glympton Park, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 62 (1997), pp. 105, 107.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 106.

¹¹⁷ See G. Lambrick, 'Pitfalls and Possibilities in Iron Age Pottery Studies – Experiences in the Upper Thames Valley', in B. Cunliffe and D. Miles (eds.), *Aspects of the Iron Age in Central Southern Britain*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph, 2 (1984), pp. 162–77; P. Booth, 'Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in Hey et al., *Yarnton*.

¹¹⁸ P. Booth, 'Iron-Age and Roman Pottery', in A. Simmonds et al., 'Excavations at Tubney Wood Quarry, Oxfordshire, 2001–2009', *Oxoniensia*, 76 (2011), pp. 148–64.

¹¹⁹ T.G. Allen, 'The Iron Age Pottery', in idem, *An Iron Age and Romano-British Enclosed Settlement at Watkins Farm, Northmoor, Oxon.*, Thames Valley Landscapes, Windrush Valley, 1, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology (1990), pp. 32–46.

¹²⁰ I. Thompson, *Grog-Tempered 'Belgic' Pottery of South-Eastern England*, BAR BS, 108 (1982), pp. 4–5.

¹²¹ R. Tomber and J. Dore, *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: A Handbook*, Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph, 2 (1998).

Table 2. Summary description and quantification of Roman pottery fabrics

Ware code	Summary description	Sherd count		Weight (g)		REs	
		No.	%	No.(g)	%	No.	%
S	Samian ware source uncertain (burnt)	1	+	7	+	0.06	0.1
S20	South Gaulish samian ware, including (LGF SA).	82	2.7	296	0.8	2.31	5.4
S30	Central Gaulish samian ware, including (LEZ SA 2).	106	3.4	542	1.5	1.84	4.3
S31	Central Gaulish (Les Martres de Veyre?) samian ware	13	0.4	36	0.1	0.27	0.6
S40	East Gaulish samian ware?	1	+	2	+	0.03	0.1
<i>S sub-total</i>		203	6.6	883	2.4	4.51	10.5
F34	'mica-coated' sandy oxidized fabric	1	+	37	0.1	0.15	0.4
F38	sandy oxidized mica-coated fabric, ?Oxford region	1	+	11	+	0.07	0.2
F40	Fine white fabric, colour-coated, import?	1	+	1	+		
F41	(LYO CC). Lyons colour-coated ware	1	+	6	+		
F45	(KOL CC). Cologne colour-coated ware	4	0.1	37	0.1	0.16	0.4
F50	Red-brown (etc) colour-coated fabrics, uncertain	3	0.1	6	+		
F51	Oxfordshire red-brown colour-coated ware (OXF RS)	17	0.6	215	0.6	0.28	0.7
OF	?Oxfordshire red-brown colour-coated ware, surfaces lost	2	0.1	3	+	0.01	+
F52	Nene Valley colour-coated ware (LNV CC)	4	0.1	87	0.2	0.09	0.2
F55	?Colchester colour-coated ware (COL CC 2)	1	+	2	+		
F59	Nuneham Courtenay red colour-coated ware	1	+	3	+	0.06	0.1
F60	fine sandy oxidized, red-brown colour-coat	4	0.1	32	0.1	0.13	0.3
<i>F sub-total</i>		40	1.3	404	1.1	0.80	1.9
A11	(BAT AM 1) and (BAT AM 2). South Spanish (Dressel 20 etc)	13	0.4	2489	6.8	0.09	0.2
A13	(GAL AM 1). South Gaulish (Gauloise 4 etc)	1	+	22	0.1		
A20	fine oxidized	2	0.1	29	0.1		
A22	fairly fine sandy oxidized (?Gauloise 4)	1	+	16	+		
<i>A sub-total</i>		17	0.6	2556	7.0	0.09	0.2
M21	Verulamium region white mortarium fabric (VER WH)	1	+	34	0.1	0.07	0.2
M22	Oxfordshire white mortarium fabric (OXF WH)	7	0.2	280	0.8	0.37	0.9
M31	Oxfordshire white-slipped mortarium fabric (OXF WS)	2	0.1	30	0.1	0.05	0.1
M41	Oxfordshire red colour-coated mortarium fabric (OXF RS)	3	0.1	74	0.2	0.09	0.2
<i>M sub-total</i>		13	0.4	418	1.1	0.58	1.3
W10	fairly fine white fabric(s), source uncertain	5	0.2	17	+	0.05	0.1
W12	Oxfordshire fine white ware (OXF WH)	14	0.5	92	0.3	0.06	0.1
W20	sandy white fabric(s), source uncertain	6	0.2	34	0.1		
W35	very fine white fabrics (generally thin walled and no/few inclusions)	2	0.1	16	+	0.11	0.3
<i>W sub-total</i>		27	0.9	159	0.4	0.22	0.5
Q10	Fine oxidized white-slipped wares	1	+	2	+		
Q21	Oxfordshire oxidized white-slipped fabric WC (OXF WS)	28	0.9	176	0.5	1.00	2.3
Q22	'Cirencester/south west white-slipped ware', sandy (SOW WS)	1	+	3	+		
<i>Q sub-total</i>		30	1.0	181	0.5	1.00	2.3
<i>Fine & specialist sub-total</i>		330	10.7	4598	12.6	7.20	16.7

Table 2. Continued

Ware code	Summary description	Sherd count		Weight (g)		REs	
		No.	%	No.(g)	%	No.	%
E20	'Belgic type' fine sand-tempered fabrics	37	1.2	253	0.7	0.47	1.1
E29	'Belgic type' fine sand-tempered fabric with white ?calcareous inclusions	3	0.1	16	+	0.07	0.2
E30	'Belgic type' sandy fabrics	52	1.7	524	1.4	0.29	0.7
E38	coarse sand and limestone/calcareous gravel	1	+	19	0.1		
E40	'Belgic type' shell-tempered fabrics	26	0.8	192	0.5	0.42	1.0
E50	'Belgic type' limestone-tempered fabrics	113	3.7	1182	3.2	1.10	2.6
E80	'Belgic type' grog-tempered fabrics (SOB GT)	790	25.6	7932	21.7	9.08	21.1
<i>E sub-total</i>		<i>1023</i>	<i>33.2</i>	<i>10138</i>	<i>27.7</i>	<i>11.43</i>	<i>26.5</i>
O10	fine oxidized coarse wares, mainly Oxfordshire	82	2.7	572	1.6	0.60	1.4
O11	Oxfordshire fine oxidized 'coarse' ware	3	0.1	10	+		
O19	very fine sand inclusions, oxidized, cf. R19	2	0.1	11	+		
O20	coarse sandy oxidized wares	18	0.6	120	0.3	0.24	0.6
O30	common fine/medium sand-tempered coarse wares	19	0.6	113	0.3	0.11	0.3
O37	fine sandy, fairly soft (= R37)	55	1.8	464	1.3	0.77	1.8
O38	common medium sand-tempered coarse fabric, local	5	0.2	34	0.1	0.22	0.5
O40	Severn Valley ware	12	0.4	86	0.2	0.25	0.6
O41	Severn Valley ware, early organic-tempered fabric	2	0.1	24	0.1		
O51	fairly fine oxidized, common clay pellets/grog	1	+	31	0.1	0.18	0.4
O60	calcareous oxidized fabrics	1	+	8	+		
O80	coarse grog-tempered oxidized wares, Oxfordshire	13	0.4	757	2.1	0.17	0.4
O81	pink grogged ware (PNK GT)	2	0.1	43	0.1		
<i>O sub-total</i>		<i>215</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>2273</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>2.54</i>	<i>5.9</i>
R10	fine (slightly sandy) reduced coarse wares, mainly Oxfordshire	53	1.7	334	0.9	1.38	3.2
R11	fine Oxfordshire reduced ware (OXF FR)	23	0.7	164	0.4	0.53	1.2
R19	very fine sand inclusions, reduced, cf. O19	1	+	1	+		
R20	coarse sandy reduced wares, mainly Oxfordshire	72	2.3	935	2.6	0.96	2.2
R30	medium sandy reduced wares, mainly Oxfordshire	97	3.1	1068	2.9	1.02	2.4
R37	fine abundantly sandy, ?west Oxfordshire	606	19.7	6547	17.9	10.21	23.7
R38	as R37 with additional grog inclusions	76	2.5	1078	2.9	0.81	1.9
R40	miscellaneous reduced coarse ware fabrics	1	+	12	+		
R41	sparse-moderate sand, grog, organic and mica inclusions	7	0.2	47	0.1		
R50	dark surfaced reduced sandy fabrics (Young 1977 reduced fabric 5)	2	0.1	16	+		
R60	reduced coarse ware with organic inclusions	9	0.3	111	0.3	0.15	0.3
R70	reduced coarse wares with calcareous inclusions	7	0.2	49	0.1	0.19	0.4
R76	reduced fabric with mid grey core, margins and surfaces with common-abundant sub-rounded limestone and sand inclusions	14	0.5	110	0.3	0.19	0.4
R80	miscellaneous fine reduced fabrics	4	0.1	119	0.3		
R90	coarse grog-tempered reduced wares, Oxfordshire	108	3.5	2742	7.5	0.89	2.1
R95	Savernake ware (SAV GT)	15	0.5	345	0.9	0.03	0.1
R99	coarse hard fired grog-tempered reduced fabric, some Hanborough	145	4.7	2439	6.7	2.31	5.4
<i>R sub-total</i>		<i>1240</i>	<i>40.2</i>	<i>16117</i>	<i>44.0</i>	<i>18.67</i>	<i>43.3</i>
<i>B11 (sub-total)</i>	<i>Dorset BB1 fabric (DOR BB 1)</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>642</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>0.97</i>	<i>2.3</i>
C10	shell-tempered wares, various	146	4.7	1981	5.4	1.80	4.2
C11	late Roman shell-tempered ware, Harrold?, includes (HAR SH).	3	0.1	25	0.1	0.14	0.3
C20	limestone-tempered fabrics	44	1.4	591	1.6	0.31	0.7
C22	Malvernian limestone-tempered fabric	1	+	261	0.7	0.01	+
<i>C sub-total</i>		<i>194</i>	<i>6.3</i>	<i>2858</i>	<i>7.8</i>	<i>2.26</i>	<i>5.2</i>
Total		3082		36629		43.07	

amphora sherds) and particularly in terms of REs. The latter characteristic is striking, and much of the difference occurs in the samian ware; in particular South Gaulish samian ware is (unusually) twice as common by REs as by sherd count. As a component of the total of fine and specialist wares, however, the samian ware fabrics combined form an almost identical proportion of both measures (roughly 62%). This is an unusually high proportion (see further below), and is clearly significantly inflated by the addition of unstratified sherds (see Table P4* below). This would not be a problem if all unstratified pottery had been collected, but the apparently preferential collection of unstratified samian ware and amphorae, entirely understandable in terms of the intrinsic significance of this material, has inflated the overall fine and specialist ware values. Other aspects of the samian ware assemblage, which are of considerable interest and are not affected by this issue, are discussed separately below.

The quantity of other fine wares is small. This reflects the low level of activity on the site in the late Roman period, when Oxford colour-coated ware (fabric F51) would usually be relatively common. Instead, a range of early Roman fine wares is represented by occasional sherds. These included imported fabrics such as F45 (Cologne colour coated ware – probably also including the fragment only recorded as F40) and, most notably, Lyon colour-coated ware (F41), of pre-Flavian date and very rare on sites in the region (for example, a single cup was noted in the huge pottery assemblage from Wilcote).¹²² Both F41 and F45 occurred as roughcast beakers. Certain and probable regional products include the two mica-coated fabrics (F34 and F38) and early Oxford colour-coated ware (F59), known from the production site at Lower Farm, Nuneham Courtenay,¹²³ and present in modest quantities at Wilcote, only 6 km to the west.¹²⁴ These were supplemented by fabrics W35, O19 and R19, all components of a pre-Flavian fine ware industry, thought to be located in the Abingdon/Dorchester area.¹²⁵ O19 and R19 were typically used for beakers, while the W35 sherds here, from the south-east courtyard area, were from a wide-mouthed flagon similar to one from Yarnton,¹²⁶ the fabric and form both imitating north Gaulish white ware, but probably not from that source. It is possible that further sherds of O19 and R19 were recorded under their respective sub-headings, O10 and R10. Fabric F60, a fine sandy oxidized fabric typically with a black core and a red slip, was also of early Roman date, with rims from an uncertain jar or bowl and from a probable carinated bowl (Fig. 23, no. 26), the fabric of which also contained fine organic inclusions. The source of this distinctive material is unknown, but the form is likely to be of pre-Flavian date. Late Roman Oxfordshire and Nene Valley colour-coated wares were poorly represented; sherds recorded as OF were probable Oxford pieces with their surfaces eroded away, while F50 sherds were also possibly Oxford products.

The modest assemblage of amphorae was dominated by sherds of South Spanish, Dressel 20 olive oil amphorae, including one rim and a stamped handle. Smaller fragments were also present in other fabrics, however. Of these, both A13 and A22 were probably from southern Gaul and were probably from wine containers. Mortaria were all from the Oxford industry except for a single Verulamium region vessel, the only first-century mortarium on the site. The earliest dated Oxfordshire vessels were of Young types M11 and M12, dated AD 180–240. Other identifiable Oxford pieces were of mid/late third-century or later date. The Oxford industry was also the source for the majority of white and white-slipped ware vessels, particularly as sherds assigned to W10 and the sandy fabric group W20 might also have been Oxford products. Vessels were chiefly flagons, of which the most notable was a composite flagon (Fig. 24, no. 35) from Building 2. The body of this vessel was in fabric Q21, but the neck and rim were of standard white ware fabric W12, thrown separately. Other white ware forms (in fabrics W10 and W12) were a butt beaker (body sherd only), an angled everted rim jar or large beaker, and a probable carinated bowl with a simple flat rim.

'Belgic type' fabrics were a major component of the coarse ware element of the assemblage, contributing one third of all the late Iron-Age and Roman sherds. The chronology of these fabrics remains debatable,¹²⁷ and in any case the date of their introduction may have varied across the region. In the present case they are thought to date entirely to the first century AD, but it is accepted that there is no completely conclusive evidence for this start date rather than an earlier one. Either way, they were the dominant coarse ware group perhaps up to about AD 70, and possibly even a little later. Limestone-tempered fabrics of the E50 group may, along with fabrics in the C20 group (see below), from which they are not easily distinguished, represent a development of the middle Iron-Age calcareous tempering traditions discussed above. It is

¹²² Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 3, pp. 149–50, no. 3351.

¹²³ P. 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*, 58 (1993), pp. 170–1.

¹²⁴ Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 2, pp. 204–5, no. 2486 and cf. nos. 2487–91.

¹²⁵ J.R. Timby et al., 'A New Early Roman Fineware Industry in the Upper Thames Valley', unpublished Oxford Archaeology report (1997).

¹²⁶ Booth, 'Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in Hey et al., *Yarnton*, pp. 401–2, no. 259.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 370.

notable, however, that rather than dominating the late Iron-Age/earliest Roman coarse wares in the way that their probable ancestors had dominated the middle Iron-Age assemblage, the E50 fabrics were significantly outnumbered by sherds in the grog-tempered E80 tradition, which accounted for 77% of all the E ware sherds. Sand-tempering traditions (E20 and E30) were also represented amongst the E wares. Vessels in all the E ware sub-groups included both handmade and wheel-thrown pieces, but the distinction was not recorded systematically. These vessels represent a diversification of the form repertoire compared to the preceding period (see below), but the range is still dominated by jars and related forms.

Reduced coarse wares were, as usual in this region, the single most important ware group, amounting to just over 40% of sherds, with slightly higher representations by weight and REs. These were principally sand-tempered fabrics, of varying degrees of fineness, dominated by products of a probable 'west Oxfordshire' industry, particularly fabrics R37 and R38, the former alone accounting for almost half of the reduced coarse ware sherds from the site and almost a fifth of the entire assemblage. These fabrics dominate coarse ware supply at the settlements of Wilcote and Asthall on Akeman Street to the west of Combe,¹²⁸ and the substantial nucleated site at Gill Mill, Ducklington,¹²⁹ in the lower Windrush valley south of Akeman Street, and it is likely that the source lies somewhere within the triangle defined by those three sites. Fabrics O37 and O38 are the oxidized equivalents of R37 and R38, from the same source. Products of this industry were important at Asthall and Wilcote from an early date and a pre-Flavian origin seems likely, production then continuing at least to the end of the third century. Some of the pottery from the nearby first-century kilns at Tuckwell's Pit, Hanborough, particularly that defined as fabric 6 there,¹³⁰ is also very similar in character to fabrics R37 and O37, and it is possible that some of the sherds assigned to these codes were in fact Hanborough products. Sherds akin to some of those recorded as fabric R38 are also present amongst the Hanborough material.

The more generically coded sand-tempered fabrics in the R10, R20 and R30 groups, and the coarse-tempered fabric group R90, will have included, and may indeed have been dominated by, products of the Oxford kilns, but the undiagnostic nature of these wares means that other local (but unlocated) sources could have contributed some. The fine reduced fabric R11, however, was certainly an Oxford product. The only other noteworthy reduced fabrics were specific components of the R90 group. The first of these was Savernake ware (R95), from north Wiltshire, only an occasional component of the Combe assemblage. More important was fabric R99. This was a generally hard-fired mid grey fabric with a characteristic lumpy surface resulting from the presence of quite large grog inclusions. In this respect it is comparable to Savernake ware, but the two fabrics nevertheless appeared to be distinct, though separation of them was not entirely straightforward. There was also some similarity between fabrics R99 and R38, although the latter should be consistently separated because of its greater sand component. The source of fabric R99 is likely to be relatively local, and again there are close parallels amongst the Hanborough kiln material, particularly with fabric 5 there. A Hanborough source is likely for some if not all of the R99 sherds. With the exception of a single dish, vessel types in this fabric consist entirely of jars (for example, Fig. 24, no. 44).

Oxidized coarse wares comprised 7% of the assemblage by sherd count. This disparate group included likely Oxford products, such as some of the O10 and O80 sherds. Medium sand-tempered sherds such as those in the O30 group are less likely to have been Oxford products, and O37 and O38 have been mentioned above. Small quantities of Severn Valley ware (fabrics O40 and O41) were present. Sites in the vicinity of Oxford are very much at the eastern limit of distribution of these wares, although they are more common in the upper Thames valley. Forms present were single examples of a narrow-mouthed jar and a tankard, a 'trademark' Severn Valley ware type.

Calcareous (shell- and limestone-tempered) fabrics were almost as numerous as the oxidized wares and were typically used for simple jar forms. Most sherds in these fabrics will have been of early Roman date, and merge seamlessly with both Iron-Age fabric traditions and, in the case of the limestone fabrics, sherds assigned to the E50 ware group. Malvernian limestone-tempered fabrics are, like Severn Valley ware, regularly found in early Roman contexts in the upper Thames valley, with recorded examples from as close as Yarnton,¹³¹ and it is possible that sherds from this source were unrecognized amongst the C20 fabric group at Combe. One very distinctive vessel, a fragmentary rim from a large club-rimmed bowl,¹³² was

¹²⁸ P. Booth, *Asthall, Oxfordshire: Excavations in a Roman 'Small Town'*, 1992, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 9 (1997), pp. 117, 133; Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 1, p. 77, fabric 2.

¹²⁹ 'Gill Mill, Ducklington and South Leigh, Oxfordshire, Post-Excavation Assessment and Project Design', unpublished Oxford Archaeology report (2011).

¹³⁰ Sturdy and Young, 'Two Early Roman Kilns at Tuckwell's Pit, Hanborough', p. 61.

¹³¹ P. Booth, 'Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in Hey et al., *Yarnton*, p. 367, where it is recorded as fabric G25.

¹³² J. Timby, 'The Pottery', in D. Jennings et al., *Thornhill Farm, Fairford, Gloucestershire. An Iron Age and Roman Pastoral Site in the Upper Thames Valley*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 23 (2004), pp. 103–4, no. 49.

certainly from this source and was recorded as fabric C22. Amongst the shell-tempered material three sherds were assigned to fabric C11 and were probably from the Harrold industry in Bedfordshire,¹³³ a fabric which is a late Roman arrival in this region. The final coarse ware group, black-burnished ware, amounted to a mere 2.6% of sherds, all the vessels deriving from the Poole Harbour industry. This figure in part reflects the early Roman emphasis of the assemblage (black-burnished ware did not reach the region in any quantity before c.AD 120), but is not unusual for a rural site; at Yarnton, for example, a site with continuous occupation through the Roman period, black-burnished wares only totalled 1.8% of sherds,¹³⁴ while at nucleated centres a greater quantity would be expected (for example 13.4% of sherds at Asthall).¹³⁵

Samian ware. The samian ware recovered from the excavations amounts to 203 sherds, weighing 883 g, giving an average sherd weight of 4.3 g. The majority of sherds were unstratified, recovered from the topsoil south of Building 1. The contexts for the stratified sherds were both within Building 1 and on the external pathways, surfaces and gullies adjacent to the building. South Gaulish sherds (S20), probably all from La Graufesenque, constituted 40% of the total. Fourteen sherds were tentatively assigned to Les Martres de Veyre (fabric S31) while the remainder were assigned the general Central Gaulish code S30 but were Lezoux products. A single sherd was (again very tentatively) identified as East Gaulish, and a burnt sherd was unassigned to source. Only ten sherds bore any decoration (three South and seven Central Gaulish) and five vessels were stamped, the surviving pieces being mostly very fragmentary.

Stamps (5):

- Form 27, diam. 80 mm. South Gaul. Five sherds conjoined (15 g). –]RCAO, blurred with fingerprint (not illustrated). Context: T2/09 in friable black earth, south of wall, near building B2.
- Form 18/31, 10 g. Central Gaul, Lezoux. REGINI O. (Fig. 20, no. 8). Context: topsoil south of villa building B1.
- ?Form 18/31, 2 g. Central Gaul, Lezoux. ?RO[— (Fig. 20, no. 7). Context: topsoil.
- ?Form 27, 2 g. South Gaul. —]VAN. Possibly SILVANUS? (Fig. 20, no. 9). Context: topsoil.
- ?Form 18/31, 25 g. South Gaul. Fragmentary end of stamp, illegible (not illustrated). Context: T1B/03, lower topsoil over building B1.

Decorated sherds. The total weight of the decorated sherds was 36 g; meaningful identification of decorative schemes was therefore impossible, but brief descriptions are given here and six sherds are illustrated.

1. Form 29 (Fig. 20, no. 1), South Gaulish, rim, 2 g. The external face has triple grooving on top of a faint rouletted band. Below is a section of a beaded border. On the inner face, double grooves create a ridge below the lip. Context: unstratified.
2. Form 29 (Fig. 20, no. 2), South Gaulish, 5 g. Part of a lanceolate vegetal scroll, above a beaded border, in the style of CARUGAT1 (AD 65–80).¹³⁶ Very crisp and fresh. Context: beneath paved pathway, north of villa Building B1 (T1/03).
3. Form 37 (Fig. 20, no. 3), Central Gaulish, 2 g. Part of a roundel containing an open petal rosette with central spot, not closely matched in Rogers. Context: unstratified adjacent to north wall of building B3.
4. Form 37? (Fig. 20, no. 4), ?Central Gaulish, flake, 1 g, showing part of an abraded ovolo (similar to Rogers B85 and B206)¹³⁷ above a horizontal wavy line. Context: topsoil.
5. Form 37 (Fig. 20, no. 5), Central Gaulish, rim, 16 g. Ovolo Rogers (1974) B24, blurred in places, above an indistinct beaded border. Below this part of a roundel with an outer spotted border. Context: within east end of Building 1 (T1/05).
6. Form 37? (Fig. 20, no. 6), South Gaulish, flake, 1 g. Ovolo over wavy line border and leaf tips on side. Form? ?Central Gaulish, body fragment, 1 g. Horizontal bead row (not illustrated). Context: unstratified.

¹³³ A. Brown, 'A Romano-British Shell-Gritted Pottery and Tile Manufacturing Site at Harrold, Beds.', *Bedfordshire Archaeology*, 21 (1994), pp. 19–107.

¹³⁴ Booth, 'Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in Hey et al., *Yarnton*, p. 367.

¹³⁵ Booth, *Asthall*, p. 115.

¹³⁶ F. Hermet, *La Graufesenque (Condatomago)* (Paris, 1934), plate 39, 30.

¹³⁷ G.B. Rogers, *Poteries Sigillées de la Gaule Centrale I: Les Motifs non Figurés* (Paris, 1974).

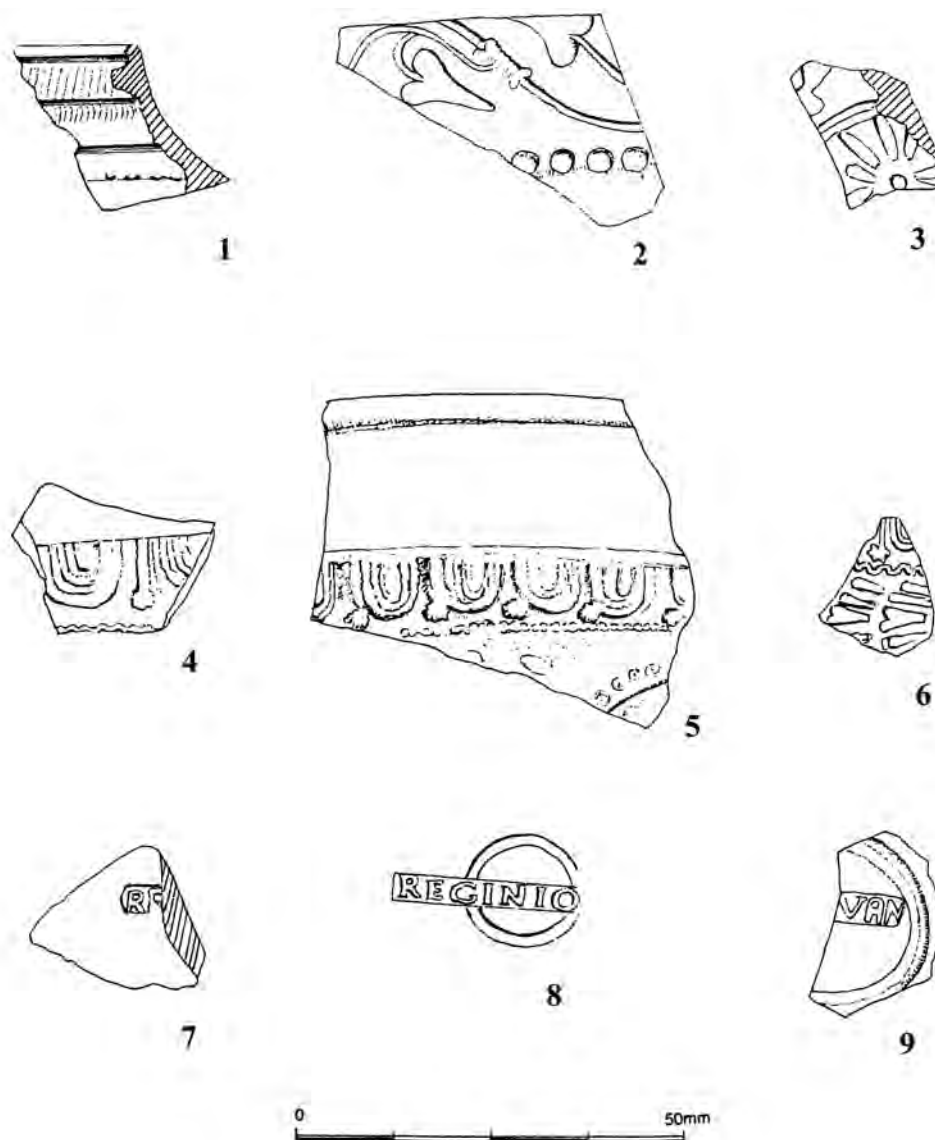


Fig. 20. Decorated and stamped samian ware (1-9). Scale 1:1.

7. Form 37 Central Gaulish 2 sherds, 7 g. Very blurred ovolo (not illustrated). Context: unstratified.

8. Form?, Central Gaulish, body fragment 2 g, decoration uncertain (not illustrated). Context: unstratified.

The relatively small quantity of decorated samian demands some comment. This may reflect the relatively small area of the site that has been excavated, but as recent work by Willis has shown, 'rural sites that

might by other indicators be considered high status, including villas, often have low proportions of decorated samian, with the proportions not higher than at farmsteads.¹³⁸ One explanation proposed is that at villas and other high-status sites in the countryside, alternatives were in use such as glass vessels and silver. The occurrence of all samian ware forms is tabulated below.

Table 3. List of samian ware forms

Form	SG		CG		Total		Comment
	No. egs	REs	No. egs	REs	No. egs	REs	
<i>Cups</i>							
Ritterling 8	1	0.10			1	0.10	
Drag 24/25	1	0.11			1	0.11	
Drag 27	13+	0.92	4+	0.29*	17+	1.21	*Includes 2/0.16 REs ?Les Martres
Drag 27g	1+	0.16			1+	0.16	Other examples
Drag 33			16+	0.98	16+	0.98	
Drag 33a	1	0.19			1	0.19	
Drag 35	1	0.09	+		1	0.09	
<i>Dishes</i>							
Drag 15/17	1	0.03			1	0.03	
Drag 18	11	0.56	1	0.04	12	0.60	
Drag 18R	+				+		
Drag 18/31	1+	0.01	3+	0.14	4+	0.15	Other examples
Drag 31			3+	0.16	3+	0.16	
Drag 36			1	0.07	1	0.07	
Curle 15			1	0.08	1	0.08	
Uncertain	3	0.08	2	0.09*	5	0.20	*Includes 1/0.05 Res ?Les Martres; total includes 1/0.03 REs ?East Gaulish
<i>Bowls</i>							
Drag 29	1+	0.03			1+	0.03	
Drag 37			2+	0.11	3+	0.17	Total includes 1/0.06 REs uncertain source
Drag 38			+		+		
Uncertain	1	0.03	4	0.12*	5	0.15	*Includes 2/0.06 REs ?Les Martres
<i>Other</i>							
Closed form			+		+		
Drag 45			1	0.03	1	0.03	
Total	2.31		2.11		4.51		

¹³⁸ S. Willis, 'The Samian', in Trow et al., *Ditches Hillfort*, p. 92.

Amphorae. Seventeen amphora sherds were found (weighing 2,556 g). Thirteen of these (2,405 g) were of the southern Spanish globular form Dressel 20, with a date range of first to mid third century, used to transport olive oil from the region of the River Guadalquivir in the Roman province of Baetica.¹³⁹ This is always the most common amphora type found in Britain. Four smaller amorphous fragments in three different fabrics (A13, A20 and A22) were probably or possibly from southern France, from wine amphorae such as Gauloise 4.

The Dressel 20 sherds include a rim, two handle fragments and two further sherds with handle scars. Slight variations in the fabric indicate the presence of several different vessels. One of the handles has an incomplete stamp]\AELU or]\AELLI, the first (incomplete) character probably being part of an M. This stamp, which would typically name the owner of the estate which produced the olive oil carried in the amphora, does not appear amongst the examples listed from Britain by Funari,¹⁴⁰ or in the corpus of Callender.¹⁴¹ Although not a perfect match, it is possible that it came from the estate of M.AELI SEVERI, listed by Étienne and Mayet.¹⁴² The single vessel rim cannot be closely dated. It is paralleled by an example from Wanborough (Wilts.).¹⁴³ A similar example came from a context of the late first or early second century AD at Cirencester.¹⁴⁴ But as Williams has observed in his discussion of Dressel 20 finds from Alchester,¹⁴⁵ the danger of trying to restrict too closely the date of certain Dressel 20 rims is apparent if one looks closely at the Vespasianic Cala Culip shipwreck, which carried a cargo of Dressel 20 amphorae displaying a very wide range of rim forms. Whilst a first-century date for the Combe amphora rim cannot be excluded, it would be more prudent to place it, along with the Alchester rims, within the second century, when Dressel 20 imports into Britain were at their peak.¹⁴⁶

Six of the Dressel 20 sherds come from unstratified contexts in the area south of Building 1. A shoulder sherd was located in the upper fill of the ditch to the east of Building 1 (T2B/05), which contained three infant burials. The remaining Dressel 20 body sherds were all found within Building 1. In complete contrast, the sherds in other amphora fabrics were all from the area of Building 2. It is well known that Dressel 20 vessels, in particular, were often reused,¹⁴⁷ but there is no indication of such reuse amongst the present pieces.

Vessel forms. Vessel forms were grouped in classes relating to their general shape. The classes are defined by commonly used labels (jar, bowl, dish and so on) with a perceived relationship to the function of the vessels, although the latter association has to be treated with caution. In those cases where distinction between broad classes, such as jars and bowls or bowls and dishes, is dependent upon the ratio of the vessel height to its rim diameter,¹⁴⁸ intermediate categories are sometime employed for vessels where there is significant doubt about the likely height:diameter ratio. Class D therefore comprises uncertain jars/bowls, and class I comprises uncertain bowls/dishes. In the present case class D vessels are relatively numerous because of the potential frequency of high shouldered 'bowls', particularly in the repertoire of the E ware potters, although it is arguable that these relatively shallow types,¹⁴⁹ are general purpose vessels and in this sense better regarded as jars, despite their proportions.

Most of the major classes in the present system are divided into subclasses, and further definition is provided by a detailed coding system for rim type, while reference was also made to detailed typologies such as that of Young for the Oxford industry.¹⁵⁰ This level of detail is not used extensively here, but the data are available in the project archive. The correlation of broad vessel classes with individual fabrics is shown in Table 4, which shows the composition of vessel classes for each fabric.

¹³⁹ D.P.S. Peacock and D.F. Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman Economy* (London, 1986).

¹⁴⁰ P.P.A. Funari, *Dressel 20 Inscriptions from Britain and the Consumption of Spanish Olive Oil*, BAR BS, 250 (1996).

¹⁴¹ M. Callender, *Roman Amphorae* (London, 1965).

¹⁴² R. Étienne and F. Mayet, *L'Huile Hispanique, Vol. 1* (Paris, 2004), p. 166.

¹⁴³ S. Keay, 'Amphorae', in Anderson et al., *The Romano-British Small Town at Wanborough*, fig. 75, 5.

¹⁴⁴ J.S. Wachter and A. McWhirr, *Early Roman Occupation at Cirencester* (Cirencester, 1982), fig. 54, 161.

¹⁴⁵ P. Booth et al., *Excavations in the Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester, Oxfordshire, 1991*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph, 1 (2002), p. 299.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ J.H. van der Werff, 'The Third and Second Lives of Amphorae in Alphen Aan Den Rijn, The Netherlands,' *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, 10 (2003), pp. 109–16.

¹⁴⁸ G. Webster (ed.), *Romano-British Coarse Pottery: A Student's Guide*, CBA Research Report, 6 (1976), pp. 17–19.

¹⁴⁹ Exemplified by Harding, *The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin*, plate 69.

¹⁵⁰ C.J. Young, *The Roman Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region*, BAR, 43 (1977).

Table 4. Quantification of Roman vessel classes by fabric/ware (row % of RE totals)

Ware Code	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	Z	Total	%
S								100						0.06	0.1
S20						68.0		2.6	3.5	26.0				2.31	5.4
S30						60.3		9.2	2.2	26.6	1.6			1.84	4.3
S31						59.3		22.2	18.5					0.27	0.6
S40									100					0.03	0.1
<i>S sub-total</i>						63.0		7.8	4.4	24.2	0.7			4.51	10.5
F38								100						0.07	0.2
F45					100									0.16	0.4
F51				14.3				25.0	3.6	57.1				0.28	0.7
OF													100	0.01	+
F52					33.3			66.7						0.09	0.2
F59					100									0.06	0.1
F60				15.4				84.6						0.13	0.3
<i>F sub-total</i>				7.5	31.3			38.8	1.3	20.0			1.3	0.80	1.9
<i>All sub-total</i>	100													0.09	0.2
M21											100			0.07	0.2
M22											100			0.37	0.9
M31											100			0.05	0.1
M41											100			0.09	0.2
<i>M sub-total</i>											100			0.58	1.3
W10									100					0.05	0.1
W12			100											0.06	0.1
W35		100												0.11	0.3
<i>W sub-total</i>		50.0	27.3						22.7					0.22	0.5
<i>Q21 sub-total</i>		100												1.00	2.3
<i>Fine/specialist sub-total</i>	1.3	15.4	0.8	0.8	3.5	39.7		9.2	3.6	17.1	8.5		0.1	7.20	16.7
E20			70.2	19.1								10.7		0.47	1.1
E29								100						0.07	0.2
E30			72.4	27.6										0.29	0.7
E40			47.6	52.4										0.42	1.0
E50			63.6	36.4										1.10	2.6
E80			58.9	21.9	1.1	1.4		3.1	1.8	10.7		0.8	0.3	9.08	21.1
<i>E sub-total</i>			59.4	24.3	0.9	1.1		3.1	1.4	8.5		1.0	0.3	11.43	26.5
O10		30.0		41.7	26.7								1.7	0.60	1.4
O20		62.5		37.5										0.24	0.6
O30			100											0.11	0.3
O37			28.6	37.7	10.4			6.5		7.8		9.1		0.77	1.8
O38			100											0.22	0.5
O40			56.0				44.0							0.25	0.6
O51			100											0.18	0.4
O80			100											0.17	0.4
<i>O sub-total</i>		13.0	40.9	24.8	9.4		4.3	2.0		2.4		2.8	0.4	2.54	5.9

Table 4. Continued

Ware Code	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	Z	Total	%
R10			21.0	23.2	28.3			13.0	14.5					1.38	3.2
R11				11.3	64.2				24.5					0.53	1.2
R20			51.0	26.0				4.2	9.4	9.4				0.96	2.2
R30			93.1	8.7										1.02	2.4
R37			59.1	10.9	4.1		6.9	9.6	6.9	1.6		1.0	0.1	10.21	23.7
R38			100											0.81	1.9
R60			100											0.15	0.3
R70				73.7					26.3					0.19	0.4
R76			100											0.19	0.4
R90			100											0.89	2.1
R95			100											0.03	0.1
R99			96.5							3.5				2.31	5.4
<i>R sub-total</i>			64.6	10.4	6.2		3.7	6.4	6.3	1.8		0.5	0.1	18.67	43.3
<i>B11 sub-total</i>			52.6					4.1	3.1	40.2				0.97	2.3
C10			94.4	3.3						1.1			1.1	1.80	4.2
C11			100											0.14	0.3
C20			100											0.31	0.7
C22								100						0.01	+
<i>C sub-total</i>			95.1	2.7				0.4		0.9			0.9	2.26	5.2
Total	0.09	1.44	22.61	5.48	1.74	2.99	0.81	2.31	1.62	3.00	0.61	0.29	0.08	43.07	
%	0.2	3.3	52.5	12.7	4.0	6.9	1.9	5.4	3.8	7.0	1.4	0.7	0.2		

Note: A. Amphorae; B. Flagons; C. Jars; D. Jars/Bowls; E. Beakers; F. Cups; G. Tankards; H. Bowls; I. Bowls/Dishes; J. Dishes; K. Mortaria; L. Lids; Z. Unstratified.

Jars were, as usual, the dominant vessel class, but they formed only just over half of the total vessels (52.5% of REs), and while addition of the class D jar/bowls brings this figure to about 65% this is still not particularly high for what is a largely early Roman assemblage (see further below). Behind these two categories, however, none of the other classes amounts to more than 7% of the whole assemblage. This is more striking than might appear, since bowls and dishes, while always less common than jars, are typically rather more numerous than other classes. Here, by contrast, there is an impression of a mixed assemblage, in which beakers and cups occurred as frequently as bowls and dishes, with flagons a little further behind.

Jars dominated the typological range in all the coarse ware groups. They amounted to rather less than half of the oxidized wares, but these included an unusually high proportion of the uncertain jar/bowl class (D), and the combined figure for classes C and D in oxidized wares, 65.7%, was not radically different from that for reduced wares (75%). 'Belgic type' wares and calcareous fabrics repertoires were more completely dominated by jars and jar/bowls (83.7% and 95.1% respectively), while only just over half of all black-burnished ware vessels were of this type, reflecting the importance of bowls and dishes in the output of that industry, although the sample size of these from Combe is quite small. In addition to the 'coarse ware' examples the single vessel in fabric W12 was a jar.

Because of their relative scarcity bowls did not form a significant part of the range of forms in any ware group except fine wares, where they amounted to 38.8%, but of a very small total. Like some of the other principal vessel classes, however, bowls occurred in a wide range of fabrics across the fine and specialist ware and coarse ware spectrum. The same was true of dishes and also, up to a point, of beakers, the majority of which (by RE measurements) were in reduced fabrics, fine fabrics R10 and R11 and the more sandy R37 contributing roughly equal quantities together amounting to two thirds of all the beakers

from the site. The overall range of beaker types included the imported roughcast bag-shaped beakers (and a probably comparable vessel in fabric F59) and butt beakers in fabrics W12 (body sherds only), E80, O10, R10 and R11. Later Roman beaker forms were effectively absent. With cups, by contrast, the only example not in samian ware was in fabric E80. The samian ware examples included not only Dragendorff forms 27, 33 and 35, but also one each of forms 24/25 and Ritterling 8, both probably of pre-Flavian date. The range of drinking vessels was also supplemented by a small number of tankards. This form was not part of the repertoire of the Oxford industry, but occurred regularly in the 'west Oxfordshire' fabric R37 as well as in Severn Valley ware. Flagons, potentially complementary to the cups in terms of use, were provided in white, white-slipped and oxidized fabrics. The example in W35 would have been in contemporary use with the early cups, while vessels in W12, Q21, O10 and O20 were perhaps all of second-century date.

Lids were only of very minor importance in this assemblage, amounting to 0.7% of all vessels, with single examples in fabrics E20, E80 and O37 and two in R37. Mortaria were slightly better represented, at 1.4%, while amphorae barely registered (0.2%), with a single rim sherd recorded, although it is clear that several different fabrics, and therefore originally multiple vessels, were present (assuming that the sherds were not simply recycled).

Vessel Use and Re-Use

There was limited evidence for use and re-use. A few sherds were specifically recorded as heavily worn, but these cases are likely to have resulted from post-use abrasion or re-deposition. No instances of, for example, internal wear, were noted. A very few sherds were recorded as having been burnt. Again the significance of this is fairly debatable, but it is notable that these included an Oxfordshire mortarium of Young type M17. Unusual frequency levels of burning on mortaria have been noted at a number of rural sites in this region,¹⁵¹ and increasingly further afield.¹⁵² This seems to be more than just an accidental characteristic and may reflect a form of use not expected in the context of traditional understanding of the function of these vessels. Use of vessels as cooking pots is more clearly indicated. External sooting was recorded on 19 sherds, with a disproportionate occurrence on jars of fabric C10 (10 sherds) and the only anomalous incidence being on a bowl/dish in fabric W10 (the other fabrics were B11, C20, E50, R90 and R99). Internal burnt residues, also probably resulting from cooking activities, were recorded on a broadly similar range of fabrics but also including middle Iron-Age sherds in limestone and shell-tempered fabrics (two of each). A number of the sherds of one vessel (Fig. 23, no. 24), in fabric R90, had internal burnt residues. Single sherds in fabrics C10, E80 and Iron-Age fabric A13 had internal limescale deposits resulting from their use for boiling water. Together the evidence, although limited in quantity, was consistent in indicating the use of jars – particularly in calcareous fabrics – for cooking in a variety of ways.

Other aspects of use are indicated by the marks made on vessels. A jar or bowl in fabric E80 had three small nicks in the rim, possibly an indication of ownership, while two sherds had incised X graffiti – one beneath the base of a ?jar in fabric R37, the other on the shoulder of a storage jar in fabric R90. Three vessels showed signs of repair. Unsurprisingly these were all of samian ware; a Central Gaulish Drag 38 sherd and a ?Les Martres de Veyre body sherd had a rounded rivet hole and a cleat hole respectively, while a burnt bowl rim from within Building 1 also had a rivet hole. Reuse was indicated by a trimmed and pierced R37 sherd, presumably for use as a spindle whorl. By contrast, the base of a medium-mouthed jar in fabric R30 (Fig. 23, no. 23) had been completely knocked out; the reason for this is uncertain.

Spatial Distribution of Material

An understanding of the development of the site is clarified to some extent by consideration of the variations in the pottery from different zones. A very simple breakdown is presented in Table 5, based on four spatially discrete zones and identifying as a further separate group the selectively collected unstratified material, a group composed entirely of samian ware and amphora sherds, as discussed above. The zone groups are inevitably unequal in size, the great majority of material deriving from Building 1 and its immediate surroundings, but still show some significant variation. Middle Iron-Age pottery is confined almost entirely to the area of Building 1 and the enclosure to the west, but while it amounts to only 2.6% of sherds in the former zone, it is almost 28% of sherds in the latter, underlining the primary importance of this area. It is less clear if the middle Iron-Age material from the vicinity of Building 1 is significant in terms of occupation of this date, or was simply re-deposited 'background noise', but the almost identical mean sherd weight of this material from the two areas does not suggest a significant difference in the

¹⁵¹ E. Biddulph, 'Roman Pottery', in P. Bradley et al., 'Prehistoric and Roman Activity and a Civil War Ditch: Excavations at the Chemistry Research Laboratory, 2–4 South Parks Road, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 70 (2005), p. 163.

¹⁵² J. Evans, personal comment.

nature of its deposition. The more or less total absence of Iron-Age pottery, however, from the zones east and south-east of the enclosure is likely to be significant.

More notable, however, is the distribution of E wares. These form a further quarter of the enclosure/Building 3 assemblage, and are reasonably well represented in the south-east 'yard' zone, but they are most prominent in Building 1 zone, where they amount to 40.3% of sherds and are the single most important ware group in that zone by this measure (they are slightly less well represented, at almost exactly one third of the zone assemblage, by weight and REs). This underlines the importance of this particular zone as a focus for activity in the middle of the first century AD, although without necessarily indicating the nature of that activity. Further aspects of the broad chronological development of the site are suggested by the relative proportions of reduced coarse wares. Again the enclosure/Building 3 zone and Building 1 progress roughly in parallel, with 31.3% and 36% of their respective assemblages in these fabrics. By contrast, the Building 2 and south-east yard zone assemblages are dominated by reduced wares, at 66.3% and 60.2% respectively. It seems clear that activity in these areas (or, at the very least, pottery deposition) commenced later than elsewhere.

The significance of other aspects of fabric distribution is less clear because of the relatively small numbers of sherds concerned. In terms of sherd count, fine and specialist wares are most prominent in the vicinity of Building 2, although this figure is perhaps inflated by a cluster of sherds in white-slipped fabric Q21. However, these sherds are accompanied by white ware sherds and fragments of three different amphora fabrics. None of these fabrics were recorded elsewhere, so they may indicate a particular characteristic of use of this area. This suggestion is supported by the fact that white and white-slipped wares, relatively poorly represented in the Building 1 zone assemblage, occurred disproportionately in 2009 Trench 3, closest to Building 2 and the south-east yard, with all the Q21 sherds from Building 1 located just north of Building 2 west of the west wall of B1. Samian ware distribution, by contrast, concentrated in Building 1 zone, and while fine wares were relatively evenly distributed overall, early fabrics (for example, F34, F38, F40 and F45) were found in the enclosure/Building 3 zone. Some early fine wares also occurred in the B1 zone, but this area also saw a concentration of the later fine wares, in Oxfordshire and Nene Valley fabrics F51 (and OF) and F52. It is probably significant that this material occurred almost exclusively outside the building to the north and east, and the few other distinctive late Roman indicators, such as the three sherds positively assigned to fabric C11, were from the same contexts.

Discussion

The pottery indicates a continuous sequence of occupation of the site from (most probably) the later part of the middle Iron Age – perhaps the second century BC – through to the mid to late second century, with activity apparently at a rather reduced level thereafter. The later Roman evidence can be dealt with first. Pottery specifically of the period from the mid third century onwards comprises Oxfordshire products: 19 sherds of fabrics F51 and OF; three rims of white ware mortaria of type M17 (specifically a later third century type, rather than later) and five sherds of M31 and M41; a single flanged bowl of Nene Valley colour-coated ware (F52); three sherds of late shell-tempered ware (C11); a few sherds of black-burnished ware cooking pots with later-style lattice decoration, and possibly some of the simple dishes in this fabric, although this type was in circulation from the later second century onwards, if not even earlier,¹⁵³ and it is notable that there were no examples of the late flanged bowls common in the region from about AD 270. Indeed bowls of this type in any fabric were completely absent, apart from the single Nene Valley example already mentioned. Other distinctive fabric types common in the region in the late Roman period include pink grogged ware, O81, only represented by two sherds at Combe. Overall, therefore, some late Roman material is present on the site, and in the absence of particularly distinctive forms it is impossible to quantify the extent to which vessels in fabric R37 might have been of this period rather than earlier, but specifically fourth century pottery, in particular, appears to be in very short supply. What there is comes from entirely predictable sources.

The character of the later Roman assemblage is therefore radically different from that of more 'typical' late Roman villas in the area, such as Barton Court Farm and Shakenoak,¹⁵⁴ with their substantial contemporary groups, but the distinction is essentially one of quantity. The earlier Roman assemblage at Combe, however, is rather different and it is important to try and characterize it as precisely as possible in order to shed light on the nature of the site at this time. This can be done in a number of ways, placing the assemblage against datasets from other sites in the region. The importance of the fine and specialist

¹⁵³ N. Holbrook and P.T. Bidwell, *Roman Finds from Exeter*, Exeter Archaeology Report, 4 (1991), pp. 99–100.

¹⁵⁴ D. Miles et al., 'The Pottery', in D. Miles, *Archaeology at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, Oxon.: An Investigation of Late Neolithic, Iron Age, Romano-British and Saxon Settlements*, CBA Research Report, 50 (1986), fiche 7:A1–7:G6; Brodrick et al., *Shakenoak*.

Table 5. Spatial distribution of all pottery fabrics (% sherd count of area totals)

Fabric/ Ware code	Enclosure/B3		B1		B2		SE courtyard		General/US		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
AI3	1										1	
AIL3	59										59	
AL3	2										2	
AL4			1								1	
AN2	1		2								3	
AZ2			1								1	
CL4			5								5	
CN3			3								3	
CS4			2								2	
LA3			1								1	
LC5			1								1	
LN3			2								2	
LN4	11		10				1				22	
LN5	16		6								22	
LS4	10		3								13	
LZ5			2								2	
SC4	4										4	
SG4			1								1	
SL4	3		6								9	
SL5	2										2	
SN4	17		3				1				21	
SN5	5		6								11	
Z5			1								1	
<i>IA sub-total</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>27.9</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>-</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>-</i>		<i>189</i>	<i>5.8</i>
S			1								1	+
S20	1		18		5		1		56		81	2.6
S30			30				1		75		106	3.4
S31			4		1				9		14	0.5
S40									1		1	+
<i>S sub-total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>95.9</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>6.6</i>
F34	1										1	+
F38	1										1	+
F40	1										1	+
F41			1								1	+
F45	1		3								4	0.1
F50			3								3	0.1
F51	1		14		1		1				17	0.6
OF			2								2	0.1
F52			3				1				4	0.1
F55					1						1	+
F59							1				1	+
F60			4								4	0.1
<i>F sub-total</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1.6</i>			<i>40</i>	<i>1.3</i>
A11	1		4				2		6		13	0.4
A13					1						1	+
A20					2						2	0.1
A22					1						1	+
<i>A sub-total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4.1</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>0.6</i>
M21	1										1	+
M22			6		1						7	0.2
M31	1		1								2	0.1
M41			3								3	0.1
<i>M sub-total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.3</i>					<i>13</i>	<i>0.4</i>
W10			1		2		2				5	0.2
W12	6		4		3		1				14	0.5
W20	1		5								6	0.2
W35							2				2	0.1
<i>W sub-total</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1.6</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2.7</i>			<i>27</i>	<i>0.9</i>

Table 5. Continued

Fabric/ Ware code	Enclosure/B3		B1		B2		SE courtyard		General/US		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Q10							1				1	+
Q21			8		20						28	0.9
Q22					1						1	+
<i>Q sub-total</i>			8	0.4	21	6.9	1	0.5			30	1.0
<i>Fine & specialist sub-total</i>	17	3.6	113	5.2	39	12.8	13	7.1	147	100	330	10.7
E20	4		34								37	1.2
E29			3								3	0.1
E30	5		40				7				52	1.7
E38			1								1	+
E40			26								26	0.8
E50	8		103				2				113	3.7
E80	100		665		1		24				790	25.6
<i>E sub-total</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>24.9</i>	<i>872</i>	<i>40.3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>17.9</i>			<i>1023</i>	<i>33.2</i>
O10	19		55		2		6				82	2.7
O11			2		1						3	0.1
O19			2								2	0.1
O20	3		11		2		2				18	0.6
O30	4		11		1		3				19	0.6
O37	5		39		5		6				55	1.8
O38			5								5	0.2
O40	1		9		2						12	0.4
O41			2								2	0.1
O51	1										1	+
O60							1				1	+
O80	2		8		2		1				13	0.4
O81			2								2	0.1
<i>O sub-total</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>10.3</i>			<i>215</i>	<i>7.0</i>
R10	15		28		5		5				53	1.7
R11	1		17		1		4				23	0.7
R19			1								1	+
R20	12		43		6		11				72	2.3
R30	7		79		3		8				97	3.1
R37	51		338		156		61				606	19.7
R38	7		48		10		11				76	2.5
R40	1										1	+
R41			5		2						7	0.2
R50					2						2	0.1
R60			9								9	0.3
R70	4		2		1						7	0.2
R76			14								14	0.5
R80			4								4	0.1
R90	6		94		4		4				108	3.5
R95	3		10				2				15	0.5
R99	40		88		12		5				145	4.7
<i>R sub-total</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>31.3</i>	<i>780</i>	<i>36.0</i>	<i>202</i>	<i>66.2</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>60.3</i>			<i>1240</i>	<i>40.2</i>
<i>B11 sub-total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>6.6</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1.6</i>			<i>80</i>	<i>2.6</i>
C10	12		103		28		3				146	4.7
C11			3								3	0.1
C20	2		42								44	1.4
C22	1										1	+
<i>C sub-total</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1.6</i>			<i>194</i>	<i>6.3</i>
Total	469		2166		305		184		147		3271	

wares as one means of comparison has already been referred to. An earlier survey established a range of variation in the quantity of these wares in relation to site type, and also demonstrated a major shift in the base level of fine and specialist ware representation in the later Roman period, essentially reflecting the impact of late Oxfordshire products, particularly fabric F51.¹⁵⁵

Table 2 shows that the fine and specialist wares amount to 10.7% of the total sherds. As already noted, however, this figure is inflated in particular by the inclusion of unstratified samian ware sherds. If the unstratified material (also including a few amphora sherds) is completely discounted, fine and specialist wares are reduced to 6.2% of the sherd total. This value is above those recorded for early Roman basic level rural settlements in the region, which range from as little as 0.2% of sherds to about 5%, but is not outstanding.¹⁵⁶ For example it lies between figures for the roadside settlements of Asthall and Middleton Stoney, and a little below the values of 7.5% recorded for an early second- to third-century group from the villa at Roughground Farm and 7.2% for the potential proto-villa site (mid first-early second century) at Appleford.¹⁵⁷ It should be noted that the latter figure is substantially different from that quoted previously,¹⁵⁸ which was based only on the small sample of pottery from the evaluation of Appleford, which turned out not to be fully representative of the larger assemblage. The general similarity between the revised Appleford figure and that for Combe is of interest. It is unfortunate that there are no comparable data for sites such as Ditchley and Callow Hill, both close by and with early stages of villa development.

Of equal interest to the fine and specialist ware value at Combe are aspects of the composition of this group – the range of fabrics involved. Despite the relatively modest numbers, some of these fabrics are not common in the region, early Lyons colour-coated ware (fabric F41) being the most obvious example. The variety of amphora fabrics is also of note, even if the identification of forms (and therefore of possible contents) is uncertain except in the case of the south Spanish olive oil containers. The assemblage does not, however, include sherds of distinctive early ‘carrot’ amphorae, a type often with military associations but noted at other early villa sites in the immediate area, Shakenoak, Fawler and Ditchley,¹⁵⁹ although the significance of its presence at these sites remains uncertain.

The diverse but individually poorly represented (except for samian ware) early fine and specialist wares suggest a sample of a wide range of material. There are some notable absences, most particularly Gallo-Belgic wares (with the possible exception of the W35 flagon). Terra Nigra and Terra Rubra are entirely missing. Regional data on the contexts of these wares are admittedly scarce, but they do occur at Abingdon and Dorchester-on-Thames,¹⁶⁰ and occasionally elsewhere – there is even a TN cup from Yarnton.¹⁶¹ In contrast to Combe, Gallo-Belgic wares are relatively common at the early villa site of Ditches.¹⁶² Their occurrence there and at the nearby sites of Middle Duntisbourne and Duntisbourne Grove,¹⁶³ is convincingly related by Rigby to their association as elements of the Bagendon oppidum complex.¹⁶⁴ This broad type of context also explains concentrations of Gallo-Belgic wares, however modest, at Dorchester and Abingdon, sites sometimes interpreted as ‘enclosed oppida’, and suggests that such centres may have been the principal centres from which these wares were distributed, at least in the upper Thames region.¹⁶⁵ Such a distribution pattern might explain the absence of Gallo-Belgic wares at Combe. The north Oxfordshire Grim’s Ditch, however it is interpreted, seems to have differed in character from the other late Iron-Age to early Roman centres.

Leaving the more esoteric components of the fine and specialist wares aside, the great majority of the pottery at Combe was either from standard external sources, such as the South Gaulish samian ware industry, or was produced quite locally. A degree of continuity in ceramic tradition, presumably indicative of local production, has been suggested in relation to the calcareous-tempered fabrics, which span the

¹⁵⁵ P. Booth, ‘Quantifying Status: Some Pottery Data from the Upper Thames Valley’, *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, 11 (2004), pp. 39–52.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 43–6.

¹⁵⁷ P. Booth and A. Simmonds, *Appleford’s Earliest Farmers: Archaeological Work at Appleford Sidings, Oxfordshire, 1993–2000*, Oxford Archaeology Occasional Paper, 17 (2009), pp. 76–7.

¹⁵⁸ Booth, ‘Quantifying Status’, p. 45.

¹⁵⁹ Booth, ‘Ralegh Radford at Ditchley’, p. 48.

¹⁶⁰ Timby et al., ‘A New Early Roman Fineware Industry’.

¹⁶¹ Booth, ‘Iron Age and Roman Pottery’, in Hey et al., *Yarnton*, p. 368.

¹⁶² V. Rigby, ‘Gallo-Belgic and Local Finewares’, in Trow et al., *Ditches Hillfort*, pp. 76–8.

¹⁶³ J. Timby, ‘Late Prehistoric and Roman pottery’, in A. Mudd et al., *Excavations alongside Roman Ermin Street, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire: The Archaeology of the A419/A417 Swindon to Gloucester Road Scheme*, vol. 2, Oxford Archaeological Unit (1999), pp. 329–32.

¹⁶⁴ Rigby, ‘Gallo-Belgic and Local Finewares’, p. 77.

¹⁶⁵ T. Allen, ‘The Iron Age Background’, in Henig and Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire*, pp. 1–33.

middle Iron Age and late Iron Age to early Roman period. However, the grog-tempering tradition represented by the E80 ware group came to dominate the pottery of the latter period, before being in turn supplanted by more 'Romanized' sand-tempering traditions exemplified by the putative west Oxfordshire industry as well as by the Oxford industry. The contribution of even more local kilns, such as those at Cassington,¹⁶⁶ is unclear, but some products of the Long Hanborough kilns are certainly present.¹⁶⁷ The latter were only just over 2 km distant from Combe (to the south) and so some of their products would be expected here, particularly as the middle part of the first century AD appears to be a time of fairly intensive activity at Combe. To the present writer the most striking aspect of the extant pottery from Hanborough seems to be the fine sand-tempered fabrics, including fabric 6 as defined by Young and Sturdy,¹⁶⁸ but also including fabrics 2 and 3, which appear only marginally different. These are not the same as fabric R37 (see above), but can perhaps be seen as having an ancestral relationship to it particularly since, notwithstanding the description of fabric 6 as 'typical of the numerous grey wares used for coarse pottery throughout the Roman period', the fine sandy nature of these sherds is much closer to that of the 'west Oxfordshire' industry than, for example, typical Oxford fabrics, which tend to be less intensely sandy. Parallels between Hanborough fabrics and some R38 sherds strengthen the connection. What might be considered the 'coarse end' of a spectrum of these fabrics, R99, does appear distinct from the later west Oxfordshire fabric range and can probably be considered to be a particularly Hanborough product, but it should be noted that vessels assigned to fabric R99 at Combe were of types not necessarily confined to the early post-conquest period to which Hanborough is dated.¹⁶⁹ This raises the possibility of continued production in a similar tradition at other unknown locations in the vicinity.

A further approach to comparative analysis of assemblages is through consideration of the breakdown of vessel classes.¹⁷⁰ As with the representation of fine and specialist wares, a broad evolutionary trend is evident (in this case across southern Britain rather than confined to the upper Thames region), in which assemblages of late Iron-Age to early Roman date are dominated (sometimes completely) by jars, but then diversify typologically through time. Low-status rural settlements almost invariably have a higher proportion of jars than other settlement types at any point in the Roman period. This is shown in a comparative analysis of a number of regional assemblages with suitable data (based on quantification by EVEs or REs) presented in relation to a number of sites in the Cotswold Water Park.¹⁷¹ The data are summarised in terms of a three-way split between jars (and jar/bowls), bowls and dishes (and the indeterminate intermediate form) and drinking vessels and liquid containers (flagons and so on), omitting other types. On this basis the Combe assemblage divides 71.7%, 14.7% and 13.6% if the skewing effect of the unstratified vessels is factored out (their inclusion gives a 66.7%, 16.5%, 16.8% breakdown). On the three-way graph,¹⁷² the adjusted figures fall at the margin of the plot between the 'early Roman' assemblages of Kempford Stubbs Farm and Whelford Bowmore, Gloucestershire (both in fact essentially sites of second- to third-century date) and closely adjacent to the point for the late Roman villa and related settlement of Claydon Pike. The comparative data are not as numerous as could be wished, but they serve to demonstrate the position of the Combe assemblage as somewhat unusual when compared with strictly contemporary groups. The emphasis on drinking and related vessels is its most notable characteristic, and would have been further emphasized if the unstratified vessels had been included in the plot. The latter underline a particularly striking aspect of the Combe samian ware, which is the preponderance of cups amongst these vessels. Again comparative analysis is informative. A review of samian ware use in a sample of 42 sites from the region (Booth forthcoming) yields 13 assemblages with data which can be treated in a similar way to the overall vessel class quantification examined above, but based in this case on a three-way split between cups (and beakers if present), bowls and dishes. Addition of the Combe

¹⁶⁶ C.J. Young, 'Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery', in H.J. Case and A.W.R. Whittle (eds.), *Settlement Patterns in the Oxford Region: Excavations at the Abingdon Causewayed Enclosure and other Sites*, CBA Research Report, 44 (1982), pp. 139–47.

¹⁶⁷ Sturdy and Young, 'Two Early Roman Kilns at Tuckwell's Pit, Hanborough'.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 61.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 63.

¹⁷⁰ M. Millett, 'An Approach to the Functional Interpretation of Pottery', in idem (ed.), *Pottery and the Archaeologist*, University of London Institute of Archaeology Occasional Publication, 4 (1979), pp. 35–48; J. Evans, 'Material Approaches to the Identification of Different Romano-British Site Types', in S. James and M. Millett (eds.), *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda*, CBA Research Report, 125 (2001), pp. 27–32.

¹⁷¹ P. Booth, 'Cotswold Water Park Roman Ceramic Assemblages in their Regional Context', in D. Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement in the Upper Thames Valley: Excavations at Claydon Pike and other Sites within the Cotswold Water Park*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 26 (2007), pp. 331–4.

¹⁷² Ibid. p. 334.

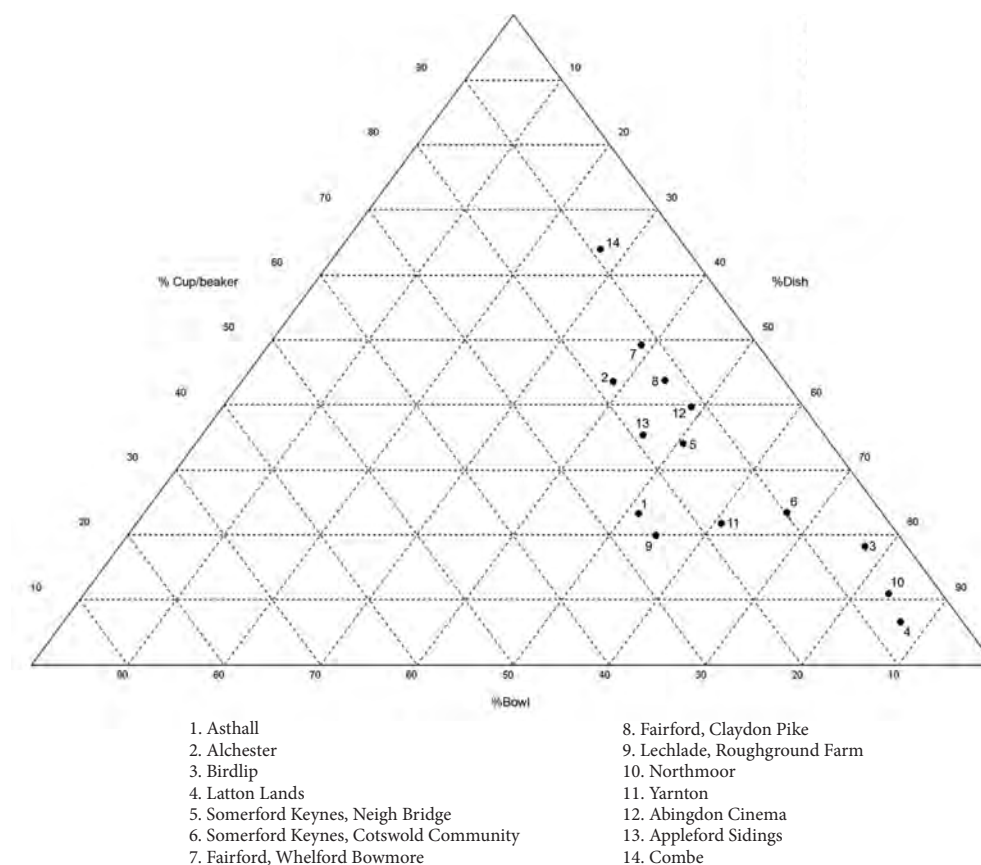


Table 6. Samian ware triangular plot

evidence to this plot (Table 6) shows a most unusual assemblage, with a much stronger representation of drinking vessels (almost 64% of REs) than at any of the other sites, and a correspondingly lower proportion of dishes, the class which dominates the lower-status rural settlement samian ware assemblages in particular, but which is most common in the majority of sites. In view of their similarity in the overall vessel class comparison above, it is no surprise that the site that comes closest to Combe in the samian ware analysis is Whelford Bowmore. This site, unfortunately subjected only to relatively limited excavation, is of rather uncertain, but potentially unusual, character,¹⁷³ indicated in part by the distinctive typological composition of its pottery assemblage, but of the two, Combe has a considerably more striking breakdown of samian ware types. In this regard the potentially comparable site at Ditches is quite different from Combe and falls within the range demonstrated by the other sites discussed above.¹⁷⁴

The Combe samian ware assemblage is not particularly large, but it is large enough for its composition to be considered reliably representative. This certainly suggests an unusual emphasis on drinking within the range of pottery used at the site, and the quantity of South Gaulish material, and of Drag 27 (and occasionally other cup forms) within that range, further indicates the likely importance of this activity in the first century. The Lyons ware beaker makes an interesting addition to this early group. Other aspects of the pottery assemblage are less distinctive, but indicate the broadly higher-status character of the site.

¹⁷³ A. Smith, 'Discussion [of Whelford Bowmore]', in Miles et al., *Iron Age and Roman Settlement in the Upper Thames Valley*, pp. 293–4.

¹⁷⁴ Willis, 'The Samian', in Trow et al., *Ditches Hillfort*, pp. 79–95.

Illustrated Vessels

1. AN2, handmade, black. Shoulder of globular jar, roughly burnished on exterior and interior. Uneven and irregular horizontal grooving above a section of opposing diagonal grooves. Later middle Iron Age. Lower level of enclosure ditch (T1/09).
2. C10, handmade, exterior a buff ochre, interior unoxidized. Traces of roughly vertical scored decoration. Interior surface black with cooking residues. Late Iron Age? From enclosure ditch (T1/09).
3. C10, handmade, body sherd from same vessel as above. From enclosure ditch (T1/09).
4. SL5, possibly wheel-finished, medium grey core, black exterior, inner surface a mottled dull red ochre. Jar with everted slightly double-lipped rim. Late Iron Age? From upper layer of enclosure ditch (T1/09).
5. SC4, handmade, exterior buff ochre, core and interior surface unoxidized. Bowl sherd with an ovoid band of stabbed decoration defined by incised lines. Middle Iron Age. From middle level of enclosure ditch (T1/09).
6. E80, orange-red with unoxidized core. ?Jar sherd with shoulder grooves above a row of finger tip depressions. First century AD. Found in the upper layer of the enclosure ditch (T1/09).
7. O37, orange. Body sherds of beaker, with decoration of two broad cordons enclosing a central panel of eight horizontal narrower cordons which have been impressed subsequently with a sequence of parallel, off-vertical grooves, creating a pattern of miniature brickwork. From villa yard by enclosure wall. ?Mid to late first century (T3B/09).
8. E80, red/brown core with brown/black surfaces. Carinated bowl with burnished surfaces. Below a horizontal groove the waist of the vessel is divided by vertical bands of triple combing. Mid first century AD. Found in gully between clay areas at the entrance to the enclosure (T1/07).
9. F60, with very fine sand grains, dull, orange-pink, highly micaceous, with abraded red slip on inner and outer surfaces. Beaker sherd with a distinctive rouletted pattern of diagonal braiding and two horizontal grooves. ?Late first to second century. Found south of pathway on the north side of Building 1 (T1/03).
10. O37, cream-ochre. Beaker sherd with burnished shoulder and two parallel grooves below which are three rows of lightly incised zig zags. ?Mid/late first to early second century. Found within Building 1 near south-west corner (T2B/06).
11. O19, brown-buff. Two body sherds of a probable girth beaker, two horizontal grooves defining a central ridged cordon separate a burnished zone from a panel of diagonal lattice of opposing double and triple lines formed with fine combs. Dating c.AD 50–70. Found beneath mortar floor at the junction of the dividing wall with the south wall of Building 1 (T2/07).
12. R37, light grey with dark grey burnished outer surface. Tankard (or possibly carinated bowl) with upright rim, vertical burnished lines beneath burnished upper part. ?Late first to mid second century. From within Building 1, by hearth area (T2/07).
13. E80, grey core and dark grey/black surfaces. Bead rim jar. Mid first century. From enclosure ditch (T1/09).
14. E80, dark grey core and black surfaces. Dish with foot ring base. Variable exterior burnish, good at base of (missing) sides, and radial burnishing marks on inner surface. Mid first century? From lower level of enclosure ditch (T1/09).
15. E80, pinkish fabric with pale brown surface, Jar with out-curved rim and cordon at base of the neck. Burnished on exterior and top of rim. Mid first century or a little later. From lower level of the enclosure ditch (T1/09).
16. C10, dark grey but exterior irregularly fired. 'Cooking pot type' jar with short rounded everted rim. Localized blackened cooking residues on the interior surface. Mid to late first century. From enclosure ditch (T1/09).

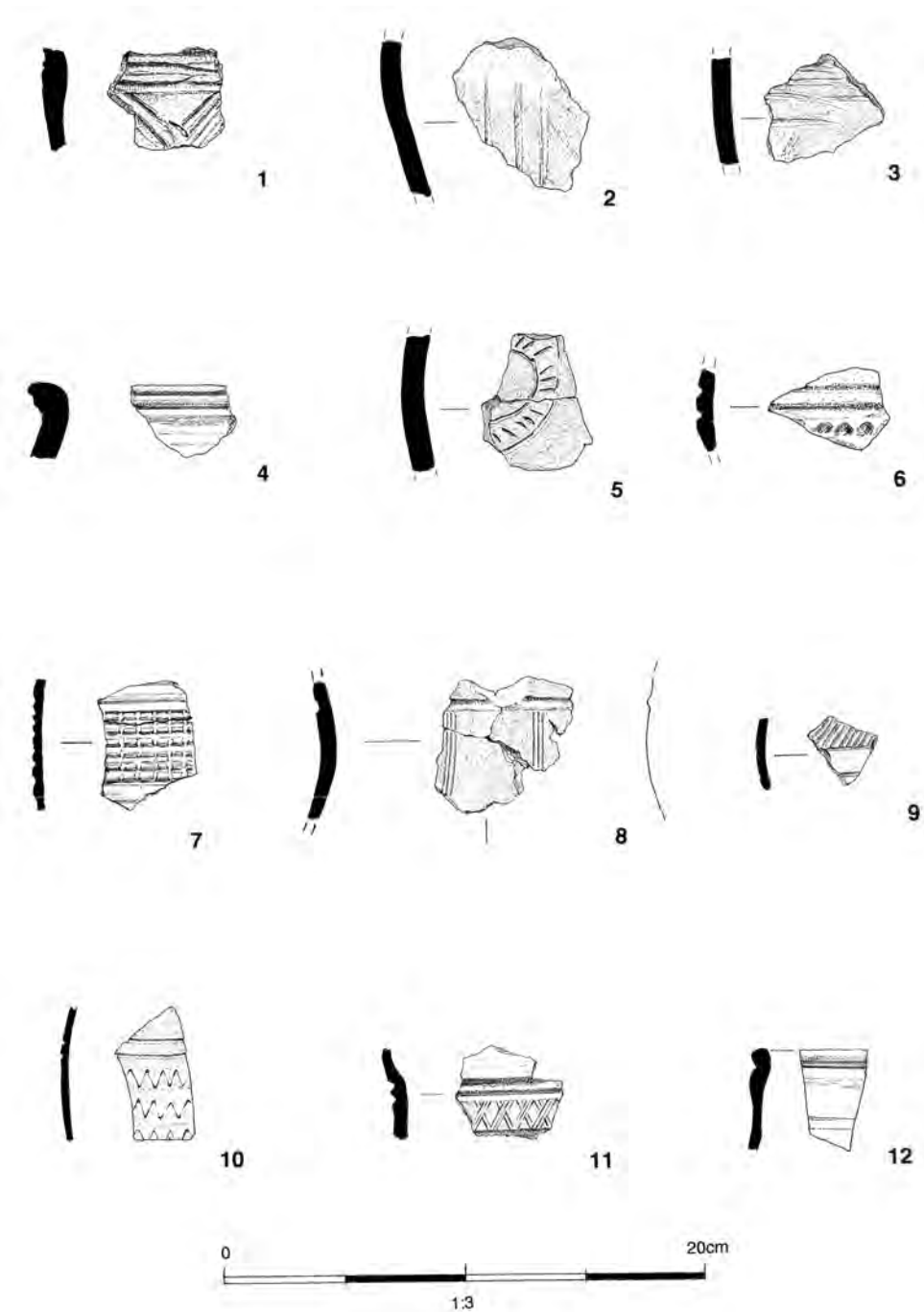


Fig. 21. Iron-Age and later decorated pottery sherds (1-12). Scale 1:3.

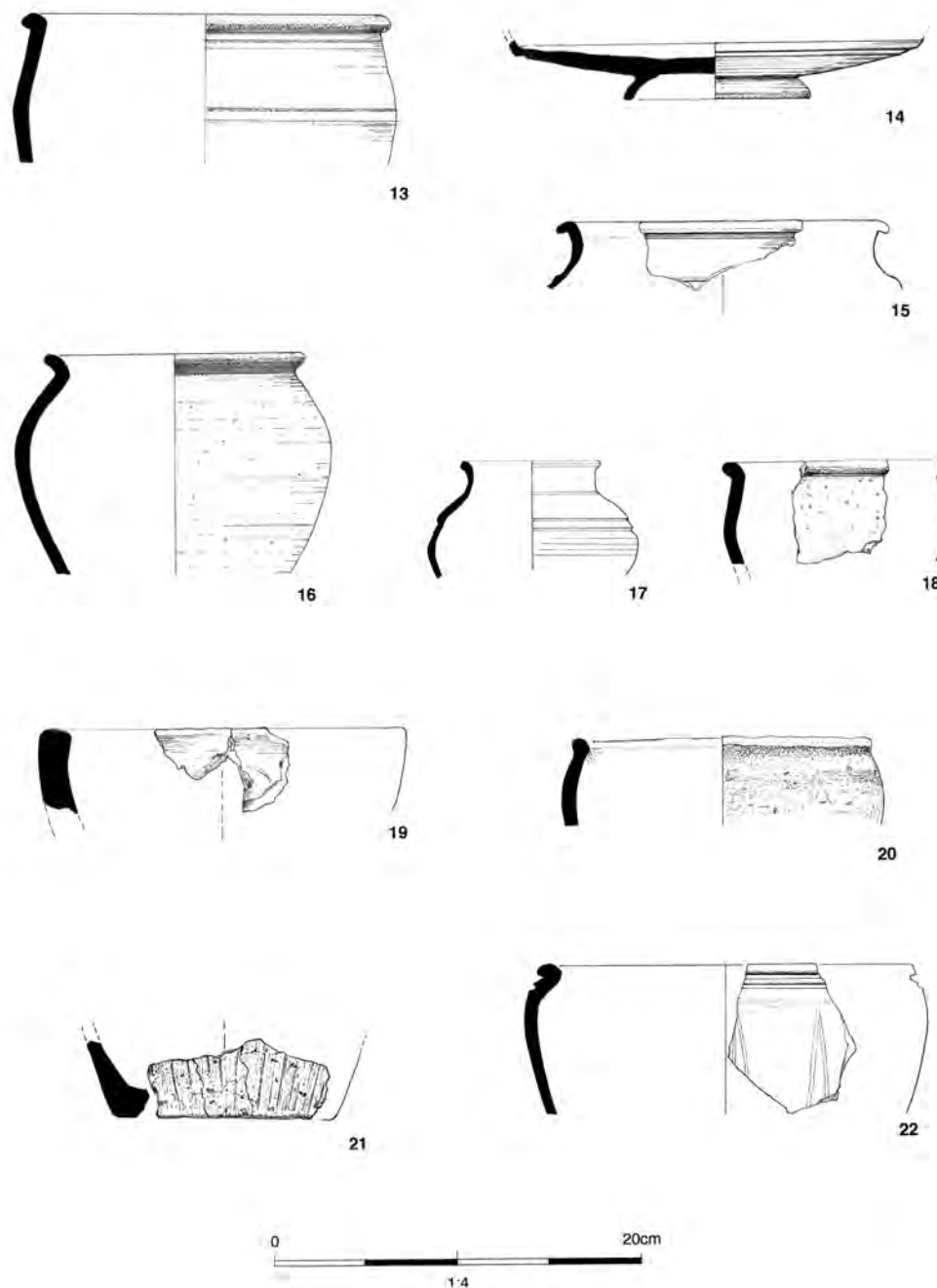


Fig. 22. Iron-Age and Romano-British pottery (13–22). Scale 1:4.

17. E80, grey core and black surfaces. Small medium-mouthed jar with collared neck, everted rim and shoulder grooves. Burnished on shoulder and top of rim. Mid to late first century. From enclosure ditch (T1/09).
18. C10, handmade, black. Bead rim jar. First century AD. North side of enclosure ditch (T1/09).
19. LN5, handmade, grey, hard fired. Extraordinarily thick-walled barrel-shaped jar. Middle to late Iron Age. From ditch by south-west corner of Building 1 (T2/06).
20. AIL3, handmade, buff. Barrel-shaped jar with expanded rim, with eroded burnished surface. Middle Iron Age. From cobbled area, north of enclosure entrance (T1/07).
21. E80, dark grey core, with mottled red to dark grey surfaces. Jar base with rough vertical combing. ?Early to mid/late first century. Topmost level north side of enclosure ditch (T1/09).
22. R37, light grey with dark grey surfaces. Bead rim jar with double grooving at the neck. Burnished on rim, and with vertical burnished hairpin lines. Late first to mid second century? Found south-west of Building 1, in ditch fill (T3/09).
23. R30, grey with grey black surface. Jar with out-curved rim with hole knocked in the base perhaps for secondary use as a plant pot. Burnished on shoulder and top of rim, with horizontal burnished lines and then a burnished zone below the girth groove. Late first to mid second century? From room 2 of Building 1 (T1/05).
24. R90, grey. Cooking-pot with thickened everted rim and single groove on shoulder. Black cooking residues survive on inner surfaces. Mid to late first century? From Room 1 of Building 1 (T1/05).
25. R37, mid grey. Jar with out-curved, slightly thickened rim. Late first to second century. Found within room 2 of Building 1 (T1/05).
26. F60, grey-buff with fine sand and organic inclusions, oxidized margins and a dull red slip. Probable carinated bowl with upright thin-walled rim. Double cordon and grooving on the neck. ?Mid first century or a little later. Within Building 1, by south-west corner (T2B/06).
27. R20, light grey with grey black surfaces. Straight-sided dish with tapered upsloping rim and chamfered base. Second century. Found in rubble layer south of Building 1 (T1/06).
28. O80, buff. Storage jar with out-turned rounded rim. Burnished on neck and top of rim. First to second century. From rubble layer south of Building 1 (T1/03).
29. F45. Bag-shaped beaker with cornice rim and roughcast surface. Early to mid second century. Exterior to Building 3 (T3/08).
30. E80, grey brown with grey black surface. Medium-mouthed jar with short thickened everted rim. Mid to late first century. Found south of Building 1 (T1/03).
31. E80, grey but irregularly fired. Straight-sided dish with tapering rim, groove on underside at base of rim and a further groove to define the centre of the base. Interior of the centre of the dish has a circular band of rouletted decoration defined by grooves. Mid first century or a little later. Found north of villa and south of paved pathway (T1/03).
32. R99, dark grey with grey-buff surfaces. Medium-mouthed jar with out-curved thickened, double-lipped rim. Grooves on shoulder. Oyster shells and mussel shells found in the body of the pot. Late first to second century? From exterior of Building 3 (T3/08).
33. R37, light grey with mid grey surfaces. Wide-mouthed jar with out-curved thickened rim. Second to third century. From yard surface west of Building 2 ((T2/09).
34. R37, mid grey. Narrow-mouthed jar with rounded rim. Burnished on rim and lower neck down to a cordon, below which is a broad band of diagonal burnished lines. Below again is a shallow groove, a narrow burnished zone and further horizontal burnished lines. Early to mid second to ?mid third century. Associated with the white slip flagon (no. 35) in the Building 2 (T2/08).
35. Q21, orange fabric with thin white slip for the body; the neck and (presumably) the handle are in a different, cream-pink fabric (W12). Flagon, cf. Young type W18, but not an exact parallel, so perhaps

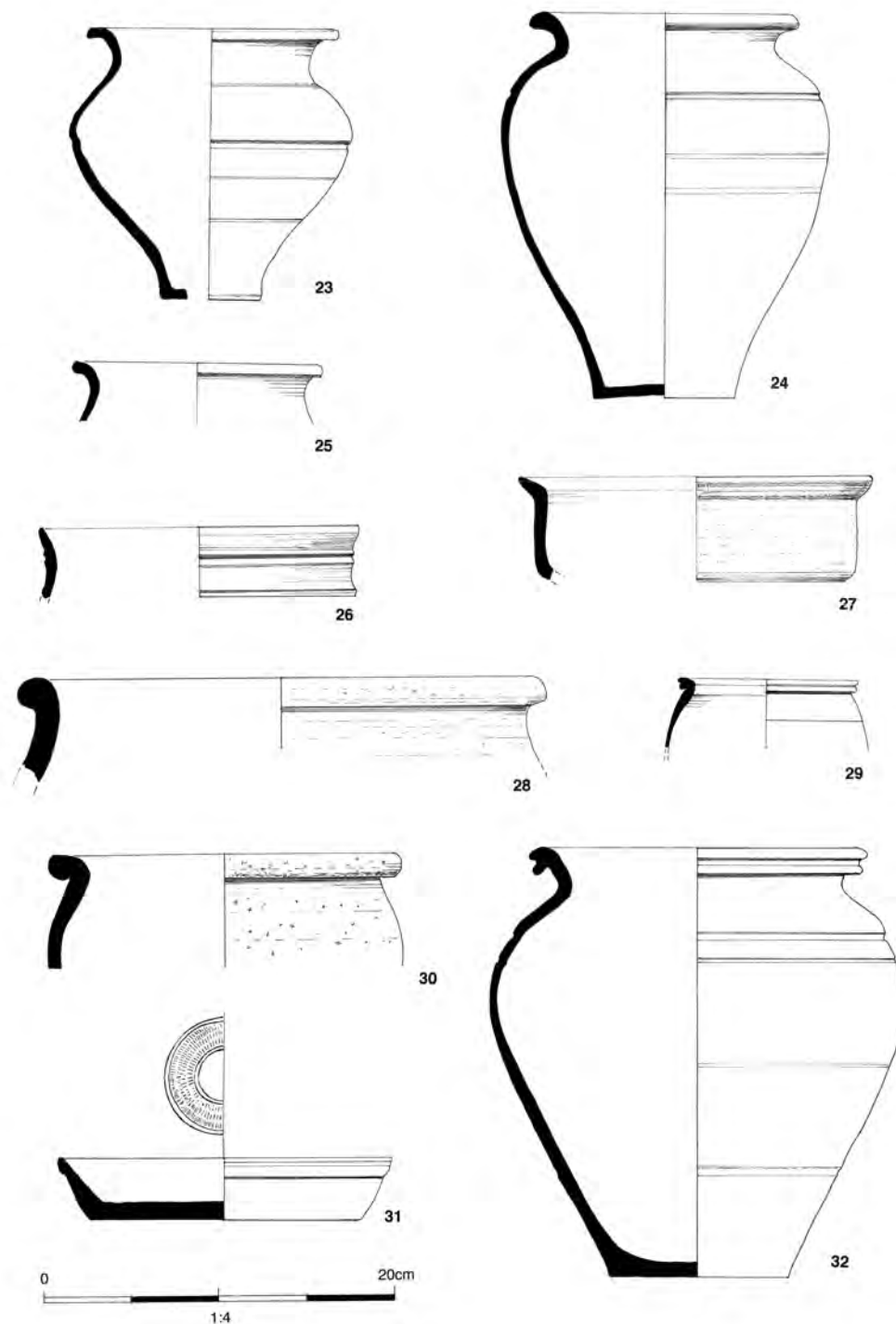


Fig. 23. Romano-British pottery (23–32). Scale 1:4.

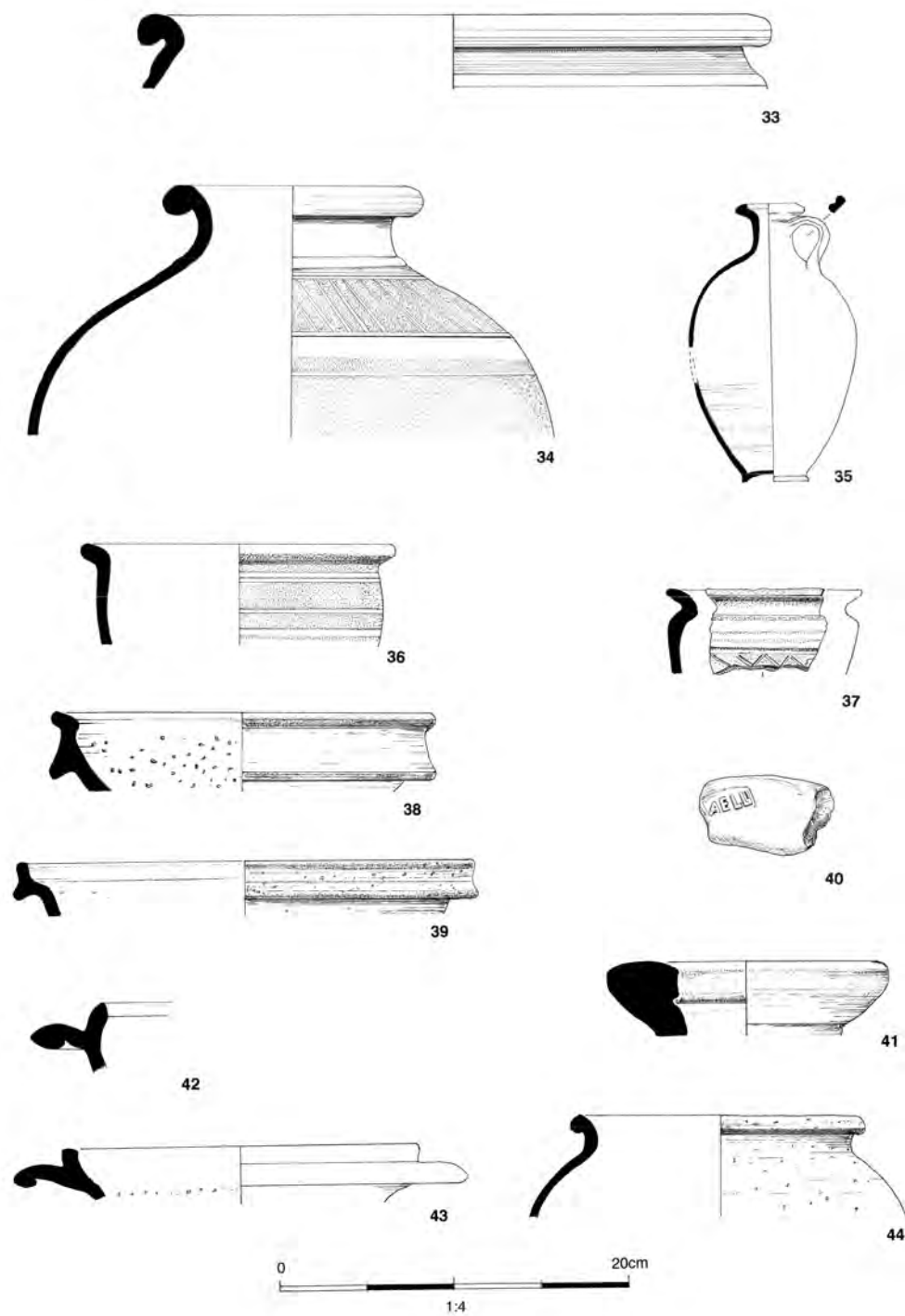


Fig. 24. Romano-British pottery (33–44); amphorae (40–1). Scale 1:4.

earlier than the range assigned to that form. AD 180–300. From burned area in centre of Building 2 (T2/08).

36. R37, grey. Curving-sided bowl with flattened out-turned rim. Burnished on top of rim and lower body wall, with horizontal burnished lines between. Second to third century. From south side of Building 2 (T2/08).

37. B11, handmade, light grey, darker grey on shoulder. 'Cooking pot type' jar with fairly short everted rim. Small section of obtuse angle lattice survives below a horizontal groove on the shoulder. Early to mid third century? From rubble layer within Building 2 (T2/08).

38. M22, cream. Mortarium of Young (1977) type 12.1. AD 180–240. From villa yard, adjacent to south-west corner of Building 1 (T3B/09).

39. C20, ?handmade, grey with buff-brown surface. Jar with upright rounded rim with short, round-ended, down-sloping flange. Mid to late first century? From upper layer of ditch east of Building 1 (T2B/05).

40. Dressel 20 handle with name stamp –]AELLI. Topsoil find, south of Building 1.

41. A11. Dressel 20 amphora rim. Surface find.

42. M22, buff white. Mortarium of Young type M17. Burnt. AD 240–300. From base of revetment, on east side of ditch, east of Building 1 (T2B/05).

43. M22, white. Mortarium of Young type M17. AD 240–300. Found north of Building 1, south of paved pathway (T1/03).

44. R99, mid grey. Medium-mouthed jar, with thickened out-curved rim. Mid/late first century to second century. From ditch, east of Building 1 (T2B/05).

45. R11, light grey. Small fine beaker (3 sherds) with thin everted rim. Sharply defined shoulder, below which are three horizontal grooves. The body has two ribbons of barbotine dots between vertical barbotine lines. Perhaps an Oxford product, but not paralleled in Young's corpus. AD 70–150? From floor level of room 2, eastern end of Building 1 (T1/05).

46. R11, light grey with eroded darker surfaces. Base of dish (perhaps Young type R60) with illiterate maker's stamp. AD 70–150. From clay layer within room 2 of Building 1 (T1/05).

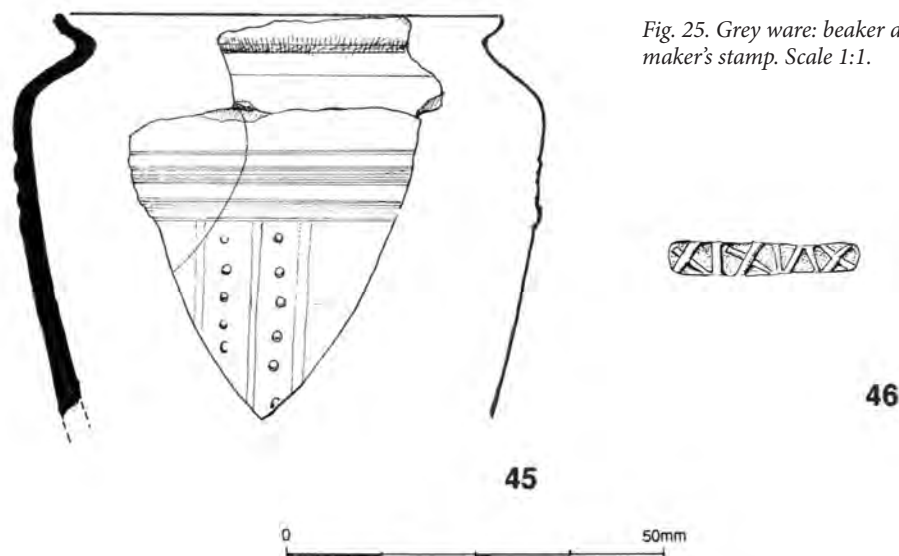


Fig. 25. Grey ware: beaker and maker's stamp. Scale 1:1.

FIRED CLAY BUILDING MATERIALS

Just over 36 kg of fired clay building material was recovered from the excavation trenches, mostly in association with Buildings 1 and 2. Of the 231 pieces, the majority were fragments of roof tile (imbrices and tegulae), with an average weight of 156 g. A few bricks (bessalis) were found ranging in thickness from 34 mm to 45 mm. A larger brick, an incomplete pedalis 47 mm thick, bearing a signature of three semi-circles and the impression of a dog's paw, interpreted as acting as a verandah post support, was found in T2/07. Fragments of a small number of combed box-tiles (tubuli) were also recorded. As no hypocaust system was identified in Buildings 1 and 2, it is probable that these combed tiles were not utilized as flue tiles, or they came from another structure outside the excavated area.

Roof Tile/Tegulae

No complete tegulae were found. A distinctive feature of the fragments, however, was the range of fabrics and differences in firings. Furthermore, there was a variety of flange profiles from a thin rounded profile, with a flange width of 16 mm, to a squat square sectioned flange 30 mm wide, which might suggest that the tegulae were from more than one source and from a range of tile-makers. Whether these differences in form and fabric also imply chronological differences is unclear.

Following the detailed research of Peter Warry,¹⁷⁵ building on the pioneering work of Gerald Brodribb,¹⁷⁶ the fragmentary examples from Combe all belong to Warry's Group C, identified primarily by the typology of the cutaway on the flanges. Warry has identified 13 different cutaway types that he has placed in four groups, A–D. Warry's detailed analysis has proposed a link between the length of the cutaways and the dating of the tiles, longer cutaways being earlier and shorter ones later.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, Warry has observed that 25% of Group C tegulae had preformed nail holes, but no nail holes were noted on any of the Combe fragments.

Warry suggests that the Group C tegulae were introduced during the second century, but as he has acknowledged, 'Group C presents the greatest difficulty and the date range of AD 160–260 must be regarded as tentative. Whilst it seems unlikely that Group C persisted beyond AD 260, it is possible that adoption on some civilian sites took place before AD 160'.¹⁷⁸ The problem of dating Group C tegulae is of some relevance. The first-century dating for Building 1 at Combe (if it was initially roofed with tile) is difficult to reconcile with Warry's proposed chronology and suggested evolution for the Group C cutaways. The possibility that Group C tegulae were manufactured well before 160 AD should be considered. The excavated evidence from Colchester would give some support to this possibility. Crummy has recorded Group A, B and C tiles apparently co-existing and firmly stratified from Boudican destruction levels at Lion Walk, Colchester,¹⁷⁹ although at St Mary's Colchester Site G, nearly all the tiles from buildings destroyed in the Boudican revolt are Type A.

Whilst there are ambiguities about the relative dating of tiles with Group C lower cutaways, it would seem logical that the source(s) of the Combe roof tiles were local, to minimise transport costs. The same form of cutaway has been identified on tegulae recovered from the site of the North Leigh East End tile kiln, only 2.5 km distant from the Combe villa. This kiln was the most likely source for the tegulae for the villas at Combe, Ditchley and Shakenoak, although excavations at Wilcote have suggested the probable presence of another brick and tile kiln nearby.¹⁸⁰

Imbrices

Only fragments of imbrex were excavated or retrieved from the ploughsoil. This tile, of tapered form and semi-circular in section, was used mostly to cover the flanges of two adjacent tegulae, providing a rain resistant seal, allowing rainwater to run down the overlapping tiles. There are no examples to indicate either complete length or width. Their thickness ranged from 18 to 21 mm.

Relief-Patterned Flue Tile

One fragment of a relief-patterned tile (weight 34 g, thickness 15 mm) was recovered in the topsoil south of the villa (Fig. 26, no. 2). The design of the die is not readily identifiable in the corpus published by

¹⁷⁵ P. Warry, *Tegulae – Manufacture, Typology and Use in Roman Britain*, BAR BS, 417 (2006).

¹⁷⁶ G. Brodribb, *Roman Brick and Tile* (Gloucester, 1987).

¹⁷⁷ Warry, *Tegulae*, fig. 9.1.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 64.

¹⁷⁹ I am grateful to Philip Crummy and to Stephen Benfield for checking this evidence for me. The numbers of tiles with identifiable lower cutaways from Building 8 at Lion Walk are: 5 Type A; 3 Type B; 8 Type C.

¹⁸⁰ Hands, *Wilcote*, vol. 3, p. 63.

Betts and others,¹⁸¹ but it would appear to be part of a design showing a band of three grooves on either side of which are opposed chevrons. It differs from die 51 found at Shakenoak and die 85 from the Stonesfield villa.¹⁸² If it is part of a flue tile, its presence at the Combe villa is unexpected, as no evidence of a hypocaust system has been detected in the villa complex. Whilst it has been claimed that the North Leigh East End tile kiln has produced tiles in the same fabric as the relief-patterned examples from nearby villas Dies 51 and 85,¹⁸³ it should be noted that no relief-patterned tiles are currently known from the North Leigh kiln.¹⁸⁴

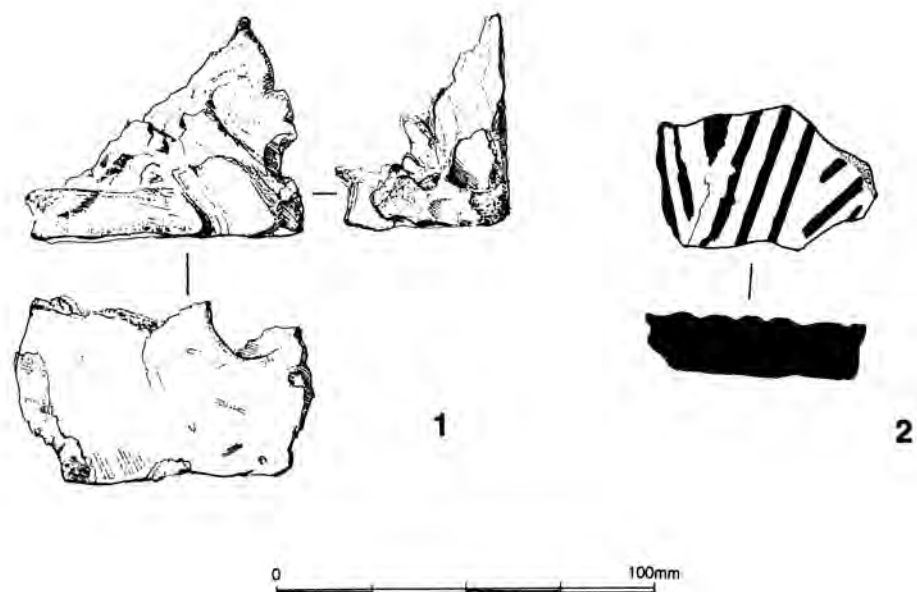


Fig. 26. Fired clay (1); roller-stamped tile fragment (2). Scale 1:2.

Fired Clay Slab

This longish slab of fired clay was found in two pieces, 3 m south of Building 1, in a layer of loam and rubble (T1/06). The fragments were evidently part of a larger rectangular slab (length 136 mm; thickness 52 mm; width 55 mm; weight 610 g). Three of the outer surfaces have been smoothed, and on one face is a small cloven-hoof impression. The yellowish grey fabric is hard and gritty with an even colour across the section. It is possible that this find has some affinities with the category of clay discs and slabs found quite widely in the upper Thames valley whose function is not fully understood. Their use in cooking as stands for pottery vessels has been suggested,¹⁸⁵ but apart from the slightly pink outer surface, the Combe slab fragments show no marked evidence of sooting or burning. Its possible use as an architectural feature of the villa building, such as a door or windowsill, should also be considered.

¹⁸¹ I. Betts et al., 'A Corpus of Roman Relief-Patterned Tiles in Roman Britain', *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, 7 (1994).

¹⁸² Ibid. pp. 116, 137.

¹⁸³ Ibid. p. 16.

¹⁸⁴ The kiln site referred to (SP 402144) is just within the parish of North Leigh, but is closer to Long Hanborough than to the village of North Leigh. A magnetometer and resistivity survey of the site was undertaken by Roger Ainslie and George Speake in September 2004. The results have been deposited in the Oxfordshire HER.

¹⁸⁵ P. Booth and A. Simmonds, 'An Iron Age and Early Romano-British Site at Hatford Quarry, Sandy Lane, Hatford', *Oxoniensia*, 69 (2004), pp. 344–5.

Fired Clay Fragments

Fragments of fired clay, most likely part of kilns or ovens, were also found. Thirty-two pieces (1 kg) were located in two sections of the late Iron-Age enclosure trenches (T1/07 and T1/09) and two further examples were located in the vicinity of Building 2. These were of a coarse cream fabric, fired a marbled pink and cream on the inner surfaces. Some had traces of circular perforations, possibly ghosts of a wattle structure for supporting the clay body of an oven or kiln (Fig. 26, no. 1). Other fragments of a more robust reddish fabric, with smooth angled outer faces, showed a perforation to the outer face, which might indicate that they were used as vents.¹⁸⁶

PAINTED WALL PLASTER

The excavations in 2009 recovered painted wall plaster in two locations. Nine hundred and nine grammes of painted plaster were recovered from T3B/09, in a destruction layer by the boundary wall of the villa yard. Of greater visual interest are the 5,757 g of painted plaster recovered from the southern end of T2/09. Both contexts are external to villa buildings, implying that the plaster had been dumped. No painted plaster was discovered within any of the buildings. It is tempting to assume that material from Trench 3/09 came from Building 1 and the plaster from Trench 2/09 from Building 2. This is not certain since there are visible variations in the composition of the mortar/plaster retrieved from south of Building 2.

Just over 50 fragments of much-abraded painted plaster were recorded from the south end of T3/09, with the paint layer on the fine top coat of plaster only surviving in parts. One fragment bore scorings of a grid structure, which possibly indicates some planning of the decorative scheme. The three largest fragments were 7 cm long. Most of the pieces had a mortar base of an ochre colour with grit inclusions. The majority had a cream/white topcoat, but some bore traces of polychrome decoration. One piece showed part of a pale pink decorative panel crossed by an 8 mm wide green/blue stripe and another had the same pale pink background but with part of a curved reddish brown stripe. Three fragments were of a dull maroon on top of a pale grey finishing coat, bonded to a calcareous gritty base mortar. Some fragments had a whitish base mortar, and it is possible that these were not part of a wall decoration but ceiling plaster, one piece bearing the impression of a timber lath.

The plaster from T2/09 is in a much better state of preservation and presents a richer range of decorative elements, but not enough to make any reconstruction of the overall decorative scheme. The plaster fragments can be placed into four main groups:

- A. Splatterings of maroon, dark grey and white paint on a cream background (51)
- B. Maroon and cream panels juxtaposed (24)
- C. Mustard yellow and maroon (16)
- D. Plain cream (74)

In addition there are two fragments with polychrome parallel banding of green, white, black and red stripes of differing width. The most substantial pieces were in Group C. The mortar and plaster was harder, paler and more calcareous than the more friable ochre mortar of the other samples. The mortar thickness on one fragment of yellow-coated plaster was 6 cm, and bore on the reverse the clear impression of timber studwork.

The splattered blobs of paint of Group A, created by flicking of the brush, can be paralleled on the wall decoration of Insula XX1, 1 Room 7 at Verulamium, possibly part of the dado decoration of the cellar wall, dated to the fourth century.¹⁸⁷ But as Davey and Ling have noted, splattering or spirtling occurs at all periods, from the first to the fourth century, with more elaborate forms of marbling appearing alongside it, at least from the second century.¹⁸⁸ In terms of the chronology, the observations of Davey and Ling are worth quoting:

One very general rule is that the most technically accomplished decorations, with coloured ground-surfaces in which pigments are evenly applied and the surface highly burnished, are typical of the

¹⁸⁶ Price, *Frocester*, p. 171, fig. 8.15.

¹⁸⁷ S. Frere, *Verulamium Excavations: Volume III*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph, 1 (1984), p. 118, plate V11.

¹⁸⁸ N. Davey and R.J. Ling, *Wall Painting in Roman Britain*, Britannia Monograph, 3 (1982), p. 31.

first and second centuries; while rather coarser work, in which the surface is comparatively roughly finished and much of the background is left in the natural white of the plaster, becomes more common, even for relatively elaborate decorations, in the third and fourth centuries.¹⁸⁹

The largest quantity of plaster is undecorated cream/white, and this may be ceiling plaster. Yet the evidence of the Combe painted plaster, which shows some trace of burnishing, suggests that the decoration belongs to the earlier period, rather than the third or fourth centuries, which would be consistent with the pottery evidence for the use of the Combe villa buildings.

COINS

Five coins were recovered from the site during excavation. Only one, a coin of Trajan, was from a stratified context.¹⁹⁰

1. Celtic Coin (1.14 g). Unstratified. Topsoil south of villa. Comments by Philip De Jersey: This is a (nominally) silver unit of the Dobunni, though to all intents and purposes it is bronze; it might have a few percent of silver in it. The exact type is quite difficult to decide in this condition. It is an inscribed issue, as traces of the 'TED' of ANTED are visible over the horse on the reverse. The obverse is not much help since the stylized head is broadly the same across several different types. The catalogue references would be VA 1082,¹⁹¹ or BMC 3032–38.¹⁹² It does not appear to have the sort of winged pellet design above the horse which I would expect if it were uninscribed. As an Anted type it probably dates to c.20–43 AD, although the dating of the Dobunnian coinage is still problematic.
2. Domitian Dupondius (9.21 g). Obverse: very worn, head to the right. Reverse: worn smooth, nothing legible. Found in topsoil south of villa, close to enamelled terret. The coin was possibly minted under Titus, as it looks like a young portrait.
3. Trajan Dupondius (12.78 g). Found south of wall bordering roadway, 60 cm west of trench baulk and 535 cm south of south-west corner of Building 2 (T2/09). Found in dark friable soil, the upper surface tainted with charcoal and beneath a layer of painted wall plaster fragments and yellow/orange mortar. Obverse: Worn, only legible letters are ...NERVA TRAIAN AVG GERM...[PM]. Reverse: Very worn, the seated female figure is no longer visible.
4. Constantius II as Caesar, c.336 AD; AE3/4. Found in topsoil above Building 1. Mint: Arles, 2nd officina (1.2 g). Obverse: diademed, cuirassed and draped bust [FL.IVL.] CONSTANTIVS NOB C. Reverse: two soldiers; each holding spear; resting arm on shield; between; one standard [GLORIA EXERC] ITUS; in exergue: [S] CONST. Ref: RIC VII, I., 276 no. 396.
5. Minim. (0.27 g). Approximate date, AD 260–286. Portrait on obverse could be Claudius II. Found near base of ditch north of Building 1 (T1/08), not a sealed context. This may have dropped down to the base from a higher level during the excavation.

LEAD

Five pieces of lead (390 g) were found in T1/05 within Building 1. They consist of some clipped waste fragments, a thin folded piece (4 g), part of a small ingot (118 g), and a hemi-sphere of lead (38 g) with scoring on the flattened face. The waste fragments appear to have been poured in a liquid state onto a stone surface, having a smooth upper surface and a gritty rough texture on the underside. Evidence for metal-working within the villa is implied but not conclusive.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 30.

¹⁹⁰ I am grateful to Cathy King of the Ashmolean Museum Coin Room for examining the coins and confirming their identification.

¹⁹¹ R.D. Van Arsdell, *Celtic Coinage of Britain* (London, 1989).

¹⁹² R. Hobbs, *British Iron Age Coins in the British Museum* (London, 1996).

HUMAN BONE

Double Inhumation

An unusual double inhumation burial in a shallow, irregular grave was positioned near the north-west corner of the villa (T2A/06). The grave was that of a prone adult male, head at the west end, with his hands in front of his chest. The lower limbs had been bent back with the heels level with the pelvis. A perinatal infant had been placed upside down on its side over the male's left scapula.¹⁹³ No identifiable grave goods accompanied the burials.

For the adult skeleton:

- Sex was determined using dimorphic aspects of the pelvis and femoral head size.¹⁹⁴
- Stature was estimated based on humerus length.¹⁹⁵ Mean stature is approximated at 173 cm, between 169 cm and 178 cm. Large muscle attachments to the ulna and large solid mandible indicate that this was a robust individual.
- Age at death was estimated based on epiphysis fusion and dental wear patterns.¹⁹⁶ All epiphyses present were fully fused, indicating that the adult was over 25 at death. Tooth-wear estimates age at death between 33 and 36.
- Osteoarthritic change was observed on the calcaneus and talus of the right foot. Possible osteoarthritis of the spine was visible on various vertebral bodies, namely two lumbar vertebrae and two thoracic vertebrae.

For the infant skeleton:

- Age at death of the infant was between 38 and 40 gestational weeks and was estimated using linear regression of the femur and humerus and basiocciput osteometrics.¹⁹⁷

Prone burials have been classed as 'deviant burials'.¹⁹⁸ Certainly there are suspicious features and aspects to the Combe skeletons, which suggest hasty or careless burial, but interpretation of the circumstances of the burial must remain speculative. As Philpott has commented, 'no single all embracing interpretation covers the disparate features of prone burials in Roman Britain'.¹⁹⁹ The folded back lower limbs of the Combe male might indicate that his legs had been bound prior to burial as a ritual act to prevent the dead man from walking as a malevolent spirit to haunt the living, but a more mundane interpretation might be that less effort would have been expended digging a shorter grave. The proximity of the grave to the villa would suggest that there was an intimate connection between the grave occupants and the villa. In the absence of any DNA analysis the relationship of the infant to the adult male remains uncertain. Nor has any genetic relationship been established between the three neonates buried in the ditch to the east of the villa and this double burial. Burials of children with adults are not unknown. Simultaneous burial of an adult and infant might be expected of a mother and child who died through disease or complications in childbirth, although the burial of a child with an adult male would appear to be rarer.

In the absence of any clear evidence, the dating of the Combe prone burial is difficult to determine. The alignment of the Combe burial and its proximity to the north-west corner of the main villa building would suggest that this double inhumation post-dates the building of the villa. The single sherd of shell-tempered pottery found in the burial does not aid a more precise dating.

Infant Burials

Philpott has noted that

the disposal of infant burials in ditches and other negative features which is a common feature of rural sites in the Iron Age in southern Britain continues into and through the Roman period over a very wide area... The overwhelming impression of the wide variety of locations and the broad

¹⁹³ I am grateful to Jane Masters at Cardiff University for her examination of the skeletal remains.

¹⁹⁴ S. Mays, *The Archaeology of Human Bones* (London, 1997), pp. 33–6; W.M. Bass, *Human Osteology. A Laboratory and Field Manual*, 4th edn (Missouri, 1995), p. 231.

¹⁹⁵ Bass, *Human Osteology*, p. 162.

¹⁹⁶ Mays, *Human Bones*, p. 48; D.R. Brothwell, *Digging up Bones*, 3rd edn (New York, 1981), p. 72.

¹⁹⁷ J.L. Scheuer et al., 'The Estimation of Late Fetal and Perinatal Age from Limb Bone Length by Linear and Logarithmic Regression', *Annals of Human Biology*, 7 (1980), pp. 257–65; M.W. Tocheri and J.E. Molto, 'Ageing Fetal and Juvenile Skeletons from Roman Period Egypt using Basiocciput Osteometrics', *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, 12 (2002), pp. 356–63.

¹⁹⁸ Philpott, *Burial Practices in Roman Britain*, p. 302. See also A. Taylor, 'Aspects of Deviant Burial in Roman Britain', in E.M. Murphy (ed.), *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 91–114.

¹⁹⁹ Philpott, *Burial Practices in Roman Britain*, p. 74.

chronological span represented is that the main concern in the burial of infants at rural sites was disposal of the body with little ceremony, without grave goods.²⁰⁰

Whilst the evidence of infant burial at Combe would broadly support this view, the bodies of the three neonates found in the ditch to the east of the villa had not been thrown into the ditch in a haphazard manner. The excavation record states that each infant was lying on its left side in a crouched position, head to the north and facing east. The stratigraphy of the ditch would suggest that all three burials took place within a relatively short period of each other. The proximity of the two infant skeletons on the west side of the ditch might indicate that their burial was contemporary.²⁰¹

ANIMAL BONES by JULIE HAMILTON

This bone report is based on the sample of bones (933) recovered from all excavated areas between 2007 and 2009. A much smaller sample of animal bones (324) was found during excavation of the evaluation trench (T1/03) and further trenches located over Building 1 in 2005 and 2006. The latter sample was examined by Julia Best and Jennifer Jones, under the supervision of Jacqui Mulville, at Cardiff University. Their report, which forms part of the excavation archive, almost mirrors the results in the proportion of species identified. A decision was made to utilize the findings from the larger sample, thereby avoiding duplication of tables and text.

Species and Species Proportions

Of a total of 933 fragments, 432 (46%) were identified. By number of individual specimens (NISP) sheep/goat was the most common species, followed by cattle and pig. There was also an equid, which was probably a horse but could have been mule or even a donkey (see Table 7). There were two bones identified as fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), a radius and a damaged portion of mandible. This species is likely to have been wild in the locality but these bones could have been intrusive. Eight bird bones were also found which might belong to a galliform, either a pheasant or a domestic fowl (see Table 8).

Species proportions were fairly similar across the site except for Building 3 where a partial sheep skeleton was found, so the data was combined for further analysis. Sheep are still the most common by minimum number of individuals, a measure which attempts to offset better survival or recovery of large bones, while pigs are commoner than cattle. However, NISP is barely high enough for this to be meaningful (see Table 7). As noted, these results are very similar to those collected in 2003–6.

Table 7. *Species proportions for Combe, 2007–2009*

	TOTAL				TOTAL			
	Including sheep skeleton				Not including sheep skeleton			
	NISP	%	MNI	%	NISP	%	MNI	%
Cattle	128	30.2	4	21.1	128	32.0	4	22.2
Sheep	194	45.8	8	42.1	170	42.5	7	38.9
Pig	95	22.4	5	26.3	95	23.8	5	27.8
Equid	5	1.2	1	5.3	5	1.3	1	5.6
Fox	2	0.4	1	5.3	2	0.4	1	5.6
Bird	8				8			
Total identified	432	46.3	19		408	44.9	18	
Unidentified	501				501			
Total	933		19		909		18	

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 98.

²⁰¹ The number of infant burials recovered from this small section of ditch is modest in contrast to the 26 found in one corner of the late Roman villa enclosure at Barton Court Farm. Even more numerous were the 97 infant burials found within the villa complex at Hambleden, Bucks.: A.H. Cocks, 'A Romano-British Homestead in the Hambleden Valley, Bucks.', *Archaeologia*, 71 (1921), p. 150.

Table 8. Bird bone from Combe

Feature	Taxon	Element	Notes
Tr 2 2009 (J47)	Cf. partridge	Tibiotarsus proximal	Or similar sized gamebird
	Cf. partridge	Tibiotarsus distal	Or similar sized gamebird
Tr 1 2009 (J35) Enclosure ditch	Corvid, cf. crow?	Coracoid	
	Corvid, cf. crow?	Tarsometatarsal	
	Corvid?	Ulna	Large – possibly raven?
TR1 2009 (J38) Enclosure ditch	?	Humerus proximal	Large – swan/goose sized
	?	Humerus distal	Large – swan/goose sized
Tr 1 2008 (J25) Villa Bldg 1	Not identified	Long bone shaft fragment	

Skeletal Representation and Fragmentation

For the three major domestic species all elements of the skeleton are represented including both meat-bearing bones (for example, femur and humerus) and waste from primary butchery (cranial parts and feet). This suggests that the animals were butchered and processed on site and the bone material probably also includes remains from meals. Cattle in particular had a wide range of elements present, perhaps owing to the robust nature of these larger bones, or different processing/cooking practices based on larger meat yield. When the MNE (taking side into account) is compared with the NISP for each element of the three main species it suggests that the cattle may have been more fragmented than sheep or pig. The number of zones recorded per specimen for each species also suggests this, with 44% of the cattle specimens only having one zone recorded. This trend may also reflect the greater chance of recovering a single zone of a cattle bone due to its larger size. This recovery bias could also have influenced the greater range of cattle elements retrieved, although since some sheep and pig phalanges were present this is not necessarily the case. The two horse bones in the assemblage were from the lower leg (a metacarpal and a lateral cuneiform).

Overall, 20–25% of NISP is accounted for by loose teeth, which indicate some fragmentation and reasonable preservation – in poorly preserved assemblages the proportion of loose teeth is much higher, because teeth are both robust and identifiable. The NISP/MNI (NISP excluding teeth), another index of fragmentation, is 25 for cattle, 15 for sheep and 13 for pig. Cattle often tend to have more fragments per individual, perhaps because their larger bones survive better and are more easily recognized and recovered than those of smaller species. The percentage of complete bones is 13% for cattle, 8% for sheep and 3% for pig, but they are all peripheral elements, such as tarsals and phalanges, suggesting that meat-bearing bones may commonly have been broken. This could be for convenience in cooking or to obtain marrow, or could have happened after disposal and reflect scavenging by dogs (see below). The higher percentage of complete bones for cattle is again probably due to their greater size and better recovery.

Another way of looking at fragmentation is to count the number of zones (out of 8) recorded for each identified specimen.²⁰² The pattern for Building 1 is different from that in the enclosure ditch, with more of the smaller fragments, especially for sheep. Overall the number of cattle bones with only one zone recorded is greater than for sheep or pig, in line with higher fragmentation. There are enough specimens to compare Building 1 and the enclosure ditch, and it seems that fragmentation is greater in the building than in the ditch, especially for sheep. This could reflect disposal of larger fragments in the enclosure ditch, and/or the more protected nature of the ditch burial environment so that bones were less exposed to post-disposal destruction.

²⁰² D. Serjeantson, 'The Animal Bones', in S. Needham and A. Spence, *Refuse and Disposal at Area 16 East Runnymede, Research Excavations, Volume 2* (London, 1996), pp. 194–222.

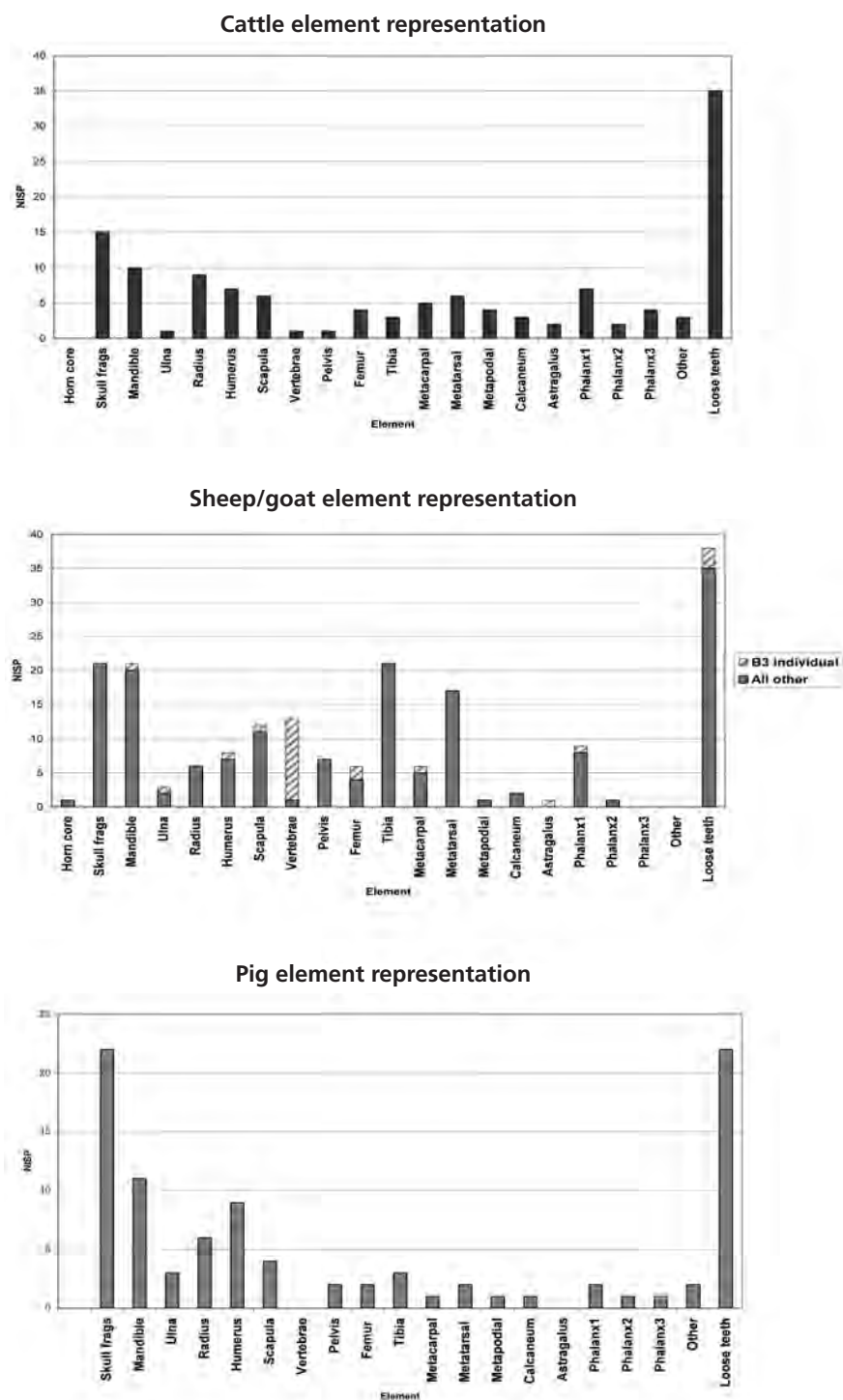


Fig. 27. Skeletal element representation for the three major domestic species.

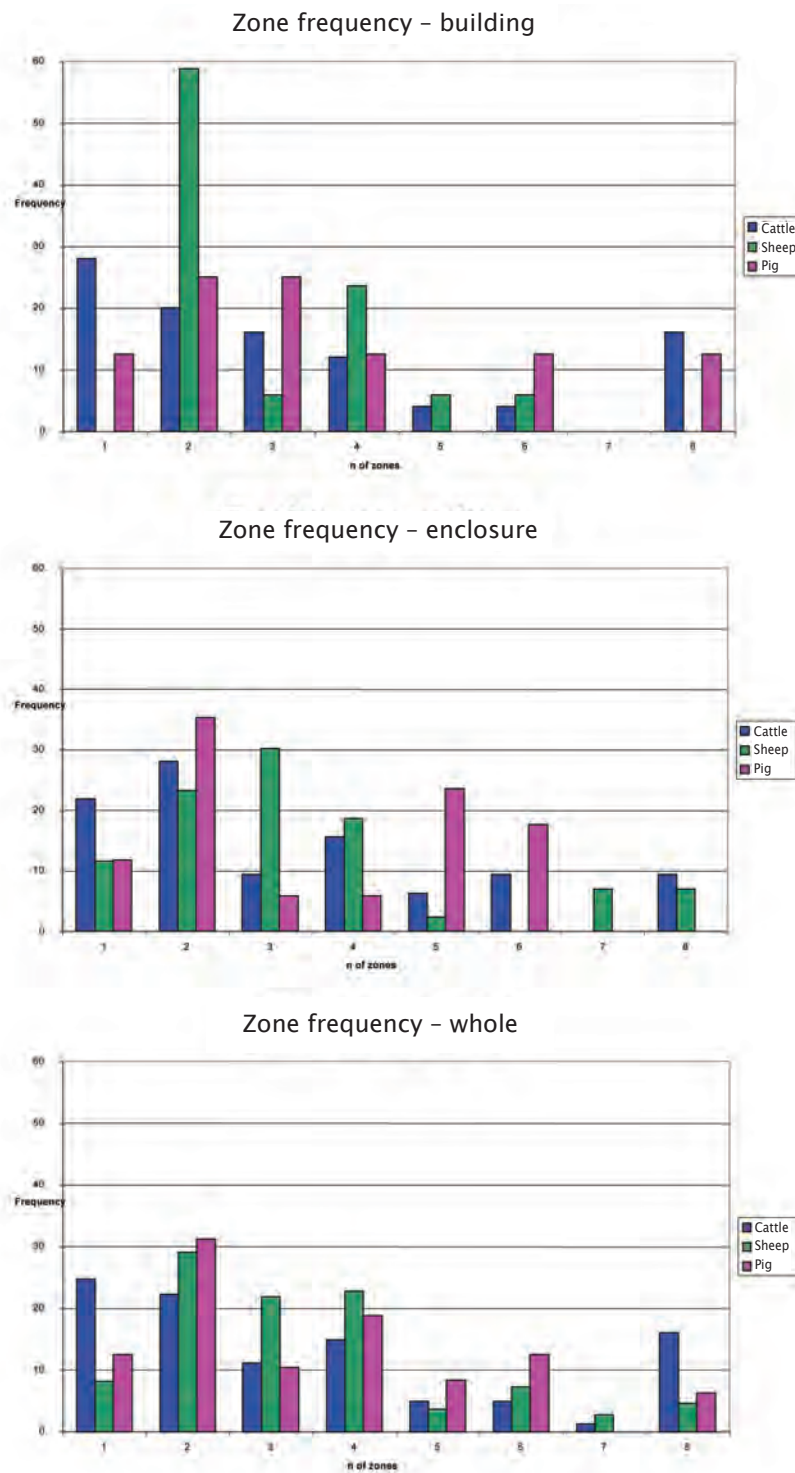


Fig. 28. Percentage of specimens with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 zones recorded for the three main species.

Surface Preservation

Surface preservation was scored on a 5 point scale, where '1' meant 80–100% of surface affected and '5' meant 0–20% of surface affected. Different types of surface alteration were recorded as E – erosion (non-specific), R – rootlet erosion, and W – weathering.

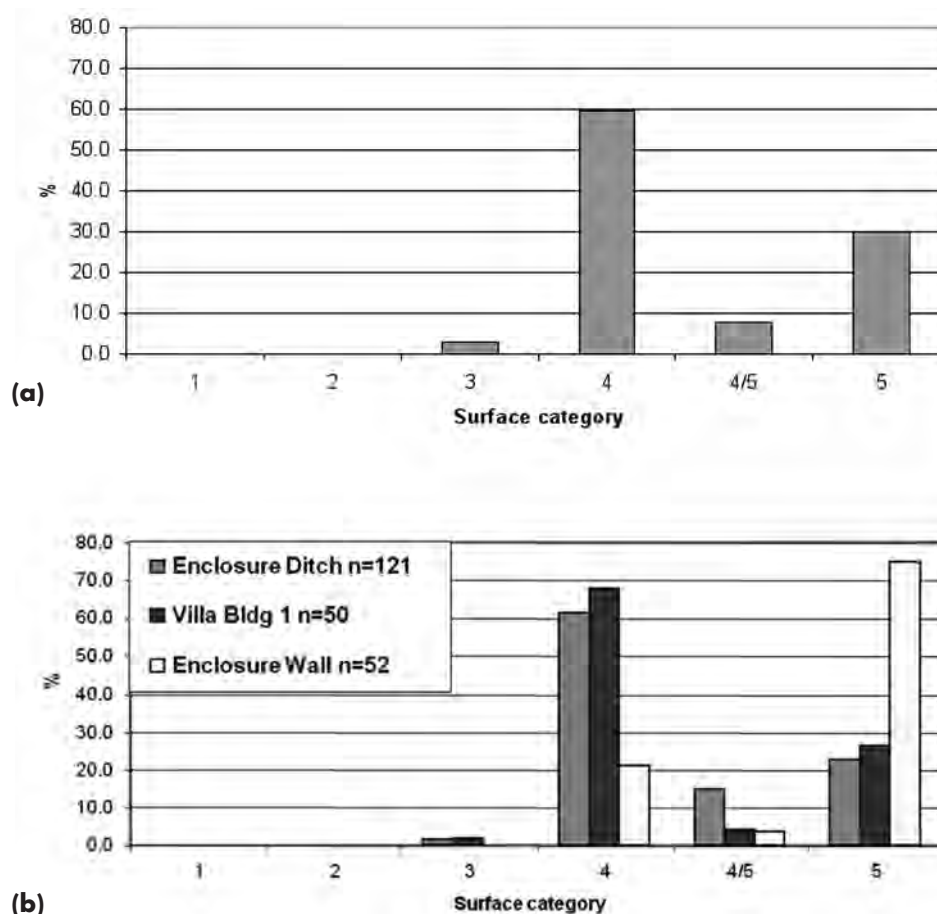


Fig. 29. (a) The proportion of identified bones in each surface category. (b) The proportion of identified bones in each surface category for features with NISP > 50. Surface preservation is better for fragments from the enclosure wall. Most '4/5' fragments come from the enclosure ditch.

Overall surface preservation was good, with less than 5% of bone in category 3 or below (see Fig. 29a). This means that signs of other alteration such as butchery or gnawing had not been greatly obscured by later surface alteration. There is some variation in the pattern between features: Building 1 and the enclosure ditch have 60–70% in category 4 and c.20% in category 5, while the enclosure wall has 75% in category 5 and 20% in category 4, suggesting that bones disposed of here were more protected from surface alteration (see Fig. 29b).

A particular type of surface alteration was recorded as 4/5, which meant that one surface of the bone was weathered with poorer surface preservation and the other was more or less pristine. This was seen on flat bones, mainly cattle mandibles, and suggested that after disposal the bones had lain on the surface long enough to acquire this pattern without being further altered, for example by scavengers. This type was commonest in the enclosure ditch (see Fig. 29b).

Table 9. Butchery, burning and gnawing on bone from all features

Alteration							
Species	NISP	n Butchered	%	n Burnt	%	n Gnawed	%
Cattle	98	9	9.2	1	1.0	28	28.6
Sheep/goat	135	12	8.9	2	1.5	27	20.0
Pig	73	9	12.3	1	1.4	14	19.2
Horse	4	1	25.0		0.0		0.0
Dog	1		0.0		0.0		0.0
Cat	1		0.0		0.0		0.0
Total I	312	31	9.9	4	1.3	69	22.1
Bird	8	0	0.0		0.0		0.0
Total NI	501	12	2.4	4	0.8	8	1.6
Total	821	43	5.2	8	1.0	77	9.4

Note: excludes sheep skeleton (no alteration observed) and loose teeth

Table 10. Butchery, burning and gnawing on unidentified bone

	Butchery	Burning	Gnawing
Rib	8		1
Vertebra	4		1
Long bone		2	1
Fragment		2	5
Total	12	4	8

The frequency of alterations seen on fragments from different features is different – most frequent on bones from Building 1, less on bones from the enclosure wall and least on bones from the enclosure ditch – but the pattern is similar. This could not easily be explained by differential preservation or surface alteration, so it may reflect different taphonomic histories for the bone in different features. For instance, perhaps bone from Building 1 includes more bone that has been through all stages of processing, including the final one of being fed to dogs, and therefore carries more butchery marks and gnawing marks, while bone from the enclosure ditch includes more disposed of at an early stage of carcase processing, with fewer butchery marks, that has been inaccessible to dogs.

Overall, about 10% of identified fragments showed butchery marks – the figure is lower for unidentified fragments, but these were less carefully examined and so are not directly comparable. Butchery marks were commoner on the bones of pig than on cattle or sheep but the difference is not great. Butchery marks reflected various stages of carcase processing from primary butchery/carcase division to meat removal, marrow removal (fracture types were not systematically recorded, but some spiral fractures, indicative of fresh bone breakage rather than trampling, were also seen) and removal/discard of peripheral elements such as feet (see Table 11). One of the four equid bones (an innominate) had chop marks suggesting meat removal and there is no reason to suppose that this meat was not eaten by people, though it is unlikely to be the primary reason to keep horses. The butchery evidence agrees with the element representation in suggesting processing of whole carcasses on site.

Burning was rather rare over all features and types of bone – it is not clear whether burning results from cooking or reflects accidental contact with fire after disposal. Gnawing, most or all by dogs, was seen on over 20% of identified fragments. Bones may have been deliberately fed to dogs, or scavenged by them after disposal, and this level of gnawing suggests that some of the difference in survival of different elements may be due to dogs.

Table 11. Details of butchery on identified bone

Alteration			
Species	Element	Type	Interpretation (?)
Cattle	Femur	Cuts	Disarticulation, meat removal
Cattle	Humerus	Chopped/broken	Marrow
Cattle	Mandible	Chops, cuts	Meat removal, marrow
Cattle	Mandible	Cuts, chopped through	Meat removal, marrow
Cattle	Mandible	Chopped through	Meat removal, marrow
Cattle	Phalanx1	Cuts	Carcase division,
Cattle	Astragalus	Cuts	Carcase division,
Cattle	Tibia	Chopped through	Carcase division, meat removal, marrow
Pig	Humerus	Cuts, spiral break	Meat removal, marrow
Pig	Innominate	Cuts	Meat removal
Pig	Innominate	Chopped through	Carcase division, meat removal
Pig	Scapula	Cuts	Meat removal
Pig	Scapula	Cuts	Meat removal
Pig	Skull (zygomatic)	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Femur	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Humerus	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Humerus	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Humerus	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Innominate	Chopmarks	Disarticulation, meat removal
Sheep	Innominate	Chopmarks	Disarticulation, meat removal
Sheep	Mandible	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Scapula	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Scapula	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Skull (cranial)	Cuts	Meat removal
Sheep	Tibia	Chopmarks	Meat removal
Sheep	Tibia	Chopped	Carcase division, meat removal
Equid	Innominate	Chopmarks	Meat removal

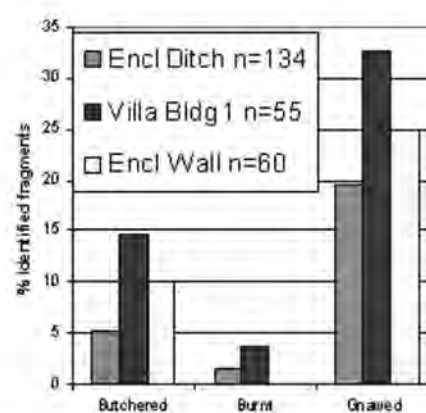
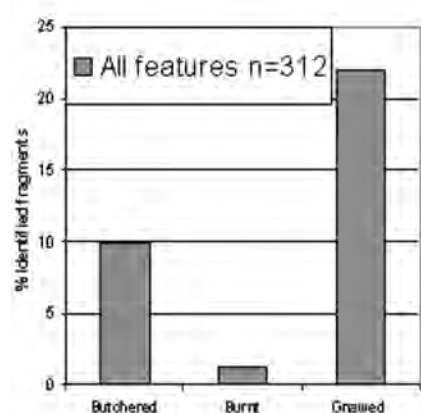


Fig. 30. Frequency of alterations on identified bones, (a) overall (b) for features with NISP>50.

Age of Animals at Death

Cattle. There were 7 stageable mandibles,²⁰³ only one of which could have come from an animal less than 2 years old, and 4 of which were >stage 45, from fully developed animals at least 5 years old. All epiphyses observed were fused (n=28). This emphasis on older animals is typical where secondary products such as milk or services such as traction are more important than meat production. The 'step' in the kill-off curve should perhaps not be taken too seriously with such low numbers, but may represent slaughter of some young animals – presumably surplus males – for meat at an economic age (cf. pigs), with others being kept for secondary products.

Sheep. There were 13 stageable mandibles,²⁰⁴ with no very young ones and a fairly steady kill-off pattern with age – c.50% would have been more than three years old at death. The results from epiphyseal fusion are similar (see Table 12), with none from sheep less than 1 year old, and around 55% older than 2.5–3 years at death (17/25 epiphyses fused). Again, this suggests that secondary products such as milk and wool were more important than meat production.

Pig. The picture for pig is quite different with the great majority of animals dying in their second year (see Fig. 33). The epiphyseal fusion evidence is similar – 10 of 15 epiphyses observed were fused but 9 of these would have been fused by 1 year old, and the majority of pigs were 1–2 years old at death. This is a typical pattern where animals are mainly managed for meat production: a few adults will be kept for breeding, and most animals will be killed at an age when further feeding will not greatly increase meat yield.

Species comparisons. Both sheep and cattle seem to have been managed for secondary products rather than meat production, but it should be borne in mind that there could be a bias against recovery of juvenile remains, which are smaller and more fragile and which may be missed during hand collection. In the absence of sieved contexts there is no way to check this. Another possibility is that younger animals were killed for meat, but their remains do not appear at the site – in other words, they were produced at the site for consumption elsewhere, in military or urban contexts.

On the basis of the animal bone remains reported here, and assuming that these are representative (not heavily biased in terms of species proportions or age and represent food remains), it is possible to estimate the proportion of meat contributed by the major domestic species at Combe. Taking into account the different sizes, and therefore meat yields, and the age profiles, cattle would have contributed around half the meat, pigs a third and sheep the remainder. If horse was eaten, this might have provided about 1% of the meat. It is difficult to put any figures on milk yields, but potentially cattle could have contributed around three-quarters of milk produced at the site and sheep one-quarter.

Conclusions

The bone from the site was overwhelmingly from the three major domestic mammals: cattle, sheep and pigs. The distribution of skeletal elements suggests that these were slaughtered and processed on site and were therefore likely to have been produced at Combe as well as consumed there. However, the production of meat and other carcass products (offal, fats, and hides, bone and horn as raw materials for manufacture) is only part of the importance of these animals to agriculture. All of them can provide manure, essential for maintaining fertility on cropped fields. Whether as meat or manure, all can recycle waste products from crop processing (and food processing and other waste in the case of pigs), import nutrients from

Table 12. Sheep epiphyseal fusion

Element/fusion age	Unfused	Fused	% fused
Humerus D 10 m	0	3	100.0
Phalanx 1 P	2	6	75.0
Phalanx 2 P	0	1	100.0
TOTAL 13-16 m	2	7	77.8
Tibia D	1	5	83.3
Metatarsal D	2	0	0.0
Metapodial D		1	100.0
TOTAL 18-28m	3	6	66.7
Calcaneum P 2.5-3 y	1	1	50.0
Femur D 3-3.5 y	1	0	0.0
Total	8	17	25.0

²⁰³ A. Grant, 'The Use of Tooth Wear as a Guide to the Age of Domestic Ungulates', in B. Wilson et al. (eds.), *Ageing and Sexing Animal Bones from Archaeological Sites*, BAR BS, 109 (1982), pp. 91–108.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. pp. 91–108.

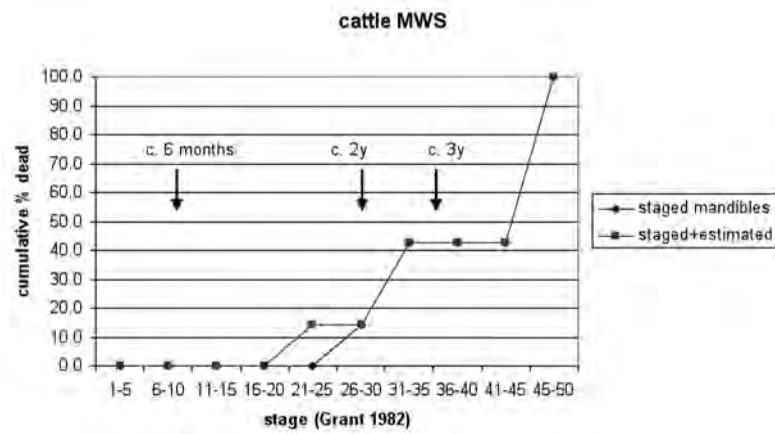


Fig. 31. Cattle kill-off pattern based on mandibles ($n=7$), cumulative %.

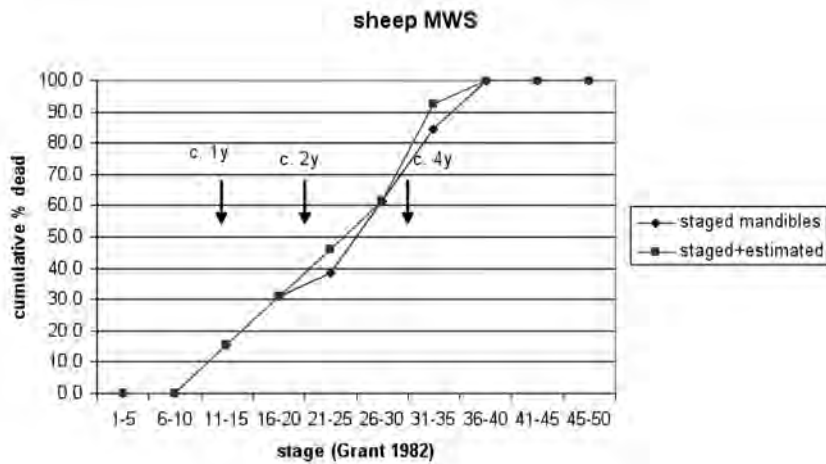


Fig. 32. Sheep kill-off pattern based on mandibles ($n=13$), cumulative %.

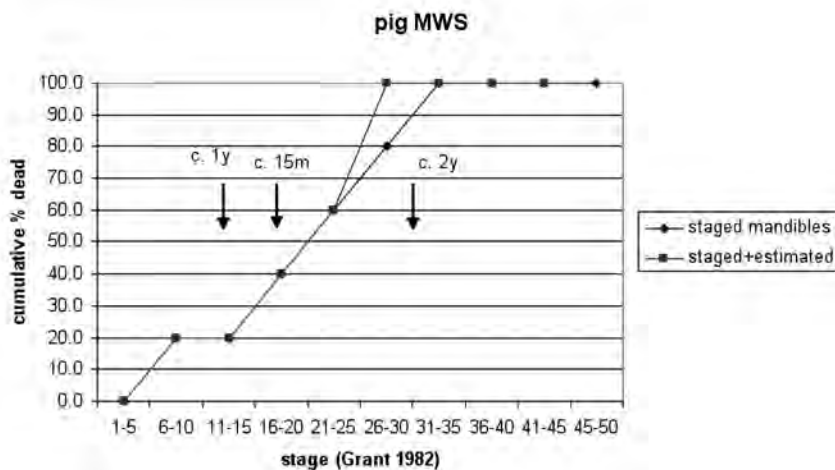


Fig. 33. Pig kill-off pattern based on mandibles ($n=5$), cumulative %.

uncropped areas such as grassland, field margins and woodland, and act as 'walking larders.' In addition each has its particular role to play in the villa economy as a whole.

Cattle provided milk, a good source of fat and protein and storable as cheese. If this was an important facet of the villa economy one would expect some calves to be slaughtered young, to free up their mothers for milk production, but there is no evidence for this. The possibility of recovery bias or export makes it difficult to be definite, but it seems unlikely that there was a strong emphasis on dairy production. Similarly, there does not seem to have been a strong emphasis on the use of cattle for meat at the villa, though it could have been a producer site where prime-age beef animals were exported. The other reason to keep cattle well past the economic age for meat production was their use for traction (ploughing and transport). Sex data could help to illuminate this: if dairy farming was important more cows should be present, while for traction castrated males would be more suitable, but the assemblage is too small to resolve this. Cattle are particularly suited to exploit wetter habitats such as floodplain pastures and marshes that may be unsuitable for sheep, and also wood-pastures and coarser grazing.

Sheep may also be milked, but their major secondary product is wool. At some sites, such as Alfred's Castle, there is material evidence for wool processing. Sheep are particularly suited to drier pastures, like the limestone grasslands of the Cotswolds, and are less dependent on being close to water than cattle. They can also be grazed on cereal crops at an early stage of growth where they eat weeds and promote tillering while manuring the field.

Pigs are perhaps most important as 'walking larders.' They can use wild resources such as roots, nuts, berries and fungi, and with their prolific breeding can take advantage of irregular high mast production (acorns, beechnuts). They can thus effectively import nutrients from woodland and other uncultivated habitats. They can also consume various kinds of agricultural and domestic waste and convert all these to meat and fat. The age profiles at Combe suggest that pigs were slaughtered at the best age for meat production.

The proportion of sheep and pigs compared to cattle is relatively high at Combe. It is likely that wool production was important, and that cattle were important in cereal production as traction animals. Perhaps a third of the meat consumed at the villa was from pigs, which may have been as much for cultural as economic reasons. It is not certain whether prime-age beef or lamb/mutton animals were exported from the villa, or whether there was little emphasis on meat production.

Horses were probably important for transport rather than ploughing or meat, and possibly reflect a certain status. The fox probably occurred locally. It is possible that the two partial bones found were intrusive, so it would be unwise to make too much of them. The birds seem mainly to be wild species, possibly hunted for consumption or killed as pests.

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