

Summary

The archaeological remains at Roughground Farm cover an area of *c* 8 hectares on the second gravel terrace just north of Lechlade between the rivers Leach and Thames (SP 216/009 to 221/005). The site was investigated by Margaret Jones in advance of gravel extraction between 1957 and 1965. These excavations revealed evidence of occupation from the Late Neolithic to the end of the Roman period and represent one of the first landscape studies undertaken in this country. The work was stimulated by the discovery of a Roman villa, whose buildings were partly investigated in 1957 and 1959. Further excavations on the villa buildings were carried out by Tim Allen in 1981–2 and in 1990 prior to a housing development.

The Neolithic occupation consists of a small cluster of pits containing Grooved Ware, contrasting with a dispersed scatter of pits with Beaker pottery. The Earlier Bronze Age is only represented by a stray sherd, but there is a wide scatter of Later Bronze Age pits, which tend to congregate in small groups. In the Early Iron Age the landscape was divided by large boundary ditches, roughly parallel to one another and at right angles to the river Leach, with smaller ditched subdivisions. This land-division appears to respect established trackways, which met within the excavated area. Pit groups indicate an arable economy and occupation, including posthole groups and burials, was concentrated at the east edge of the site.

The Middle and Late Iron Ages are hardly represented, but an Early Roman native settlement was established just west of the trackways. This included an oval house-enclosure with accompanying pit-group, small stock enclosures, and pens, lying within a larger rectilinear enclosure. Between the trackways and the settlement was an open 'green'-like area. The economy was similar to that of the Iron Age and this settlement persisted until the early 2nd century AD, when it was replaced by the building of a villa.

At least two masonry buildings were put up in the mid 2nd century and were surrounded by an enclosure ditch. One of these was an aisled building, with an apsidal end unique in Roman Britain. Outside this was a regular system of paddocks and larger fields laid out to a standard unit of length. The villa occupation area, however, kept within the limits of the preceding native settlement. Trackways and droveways approaching the villa were delineated by boundary ditches.

In the 3rd century another large domestic building was constructed, while the ends of the trackways east of the villa were overlaid by two groups of enclosures facing each other across the 'green', which were used for various agricultural and semi-industrial activities and may also have been occupied. These may represent centralisation of the villa's estate management. Small groups of late Roman burials were found in and around these enclosures. In the 4th century, if not before, another domestic building was added to the villa. Occupation of the villa and adjacent enclosures continued beyond 360 AD, but possibly not as late as the end of the 4th century.

There was very little evidence of Saxon activity, although the villa buildings were robbed for stone for graves in this period. The east part of the site was overlaid by ridge and furrow in the medieval period and the west appears to have been pasture; both parts remained open fields until gravel extraction began in the 1930s. Virtually the whole site has now been destroyed.

Acknowledgements

The 1957–65 excavations

by Margaret Jones

The excavations and watching briefs were initiated, financed and administered by the then Ministry of Works through Assistant Inspector Sarnia Butcher. The Ancient Monuments Laboratory handled some finds and some drawings were produced by the Inspectorate Drawing Office. The Ashmolean Museum, which received the finds, contributed finds conservation and other post-excavation support.

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The 1981–90 excavations

by Tim Allen

For permission to undertake the 1981 and 1982 trenching I would like to thank ARC Estates and Mrs Nightingale, the former occupant of 'Woodlands', the modern house which overlay Building IV. The work was carried out at weekends by members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society. I am grateful to all who gave their free time.

The 1990 excavation was only made possible by the enlightened interest and financial support of the developer Venymore Homes, a joint venture by ARC and Westbury Homes plc. In this connection I would like to thank Chris Hall and Roger Hart for their prompt support in enabling the excavation to take place and Paul Wood for his ready assistance with machinery on site. I am also grateful to Tony Fleming of English Heritage for augmenting the excavation budget and for funding the post-excavation work.

The excavation was supervised by Mick Parsons, assisted by John Hiller, and thanks are due to all of the team for their hard work when facing a tight time deadline.

Post-excavation work

by Tim Allen, Timothy Darvill and Sarah Green

Leigh Turner and Elinor Beard drew the plans for the printed publication and Wendy Page most of the finds. Jane Timby drew the illustrations for Ch. II and the Later Bronze Age flintwork, Richard Hingley the later prehistoric pottery and Maggie Sasanow some of the copper alloy and iron Roman finds. Danyon Rey compiled the detailed site plans in the microfiche. Many people contributed to the section drawings, chief among whom were Rachel Brak, Elizabeth MacRobert and Tim Allen. Elinor Beard made the final alterations to the drawings and paged-up.

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For the 1990 excavation the plans, sections, and finds

were mostly drawn by Simon Chew. Danyon Rey drew the reconstruction drawings of Building IV. The cover illustration was drawn by Karen Nichols.

Some of the original drawings have been amended to incorporate new information. This work was carried out by Tim Allen and Danny Hacker.

The whole publication report was streamlined in the final editing stages by Michael Roaf.