

Chapter 2: Prehistoric and Roman activity

SUMMARY

A pit was found which was interpreted as the remnants of an early Bronze Age pond barrow. A cremation in association with a Deverel-Rimbury vessel, possibly a satellite burial, was uncovered to the N of this feature.

In the Roman period the site seems to have been part of a larger system of enclosures defined by ditches and gullies orientated on N-S and E-W axes, and excavated to the S in 1960 by Sutton (1961/2). The enclosures seem to have been in use from the later first century AD until the later fourth century, contrasting with Sutton's conclusions that activity to the S was relatively shortlived and confined to the later Roman period. A thin scatter of pits and a late Roman well were the only other Roman features detected on the site. The only evidence of any associated structures consisted of occasional Corallian Ragstone blocks reused in Anglo-Saxon graves, although it is equally possible that these may have been derived from the well.

PREHISTORIC FEATURES

by Alistair Barclay and Roger Thomas

Pond barrow F116 (Figs 6, 7 and 8)

The feature was visible as an oval soilmark 4 x 5 m in extent located 5 m W from gully 99. It was sectioned by quadrants.

The profile of the excavated feature (Fig. 7) suggested a large pit 4 x 5 m and up to 1.2 m in depth. The fragmentary remains of two red deer antler picks were found near the base of the pit. The primary fill 116/5 was represented by a layer of sand, gravel and loam up to 0.2 m in depth. A layer of loamy gravel (116/3) was found against the pit sides and is likely to represent collapse of the edges during the initial weathering of the pit. The lower fills of the pit were of stone-free clay (116/2 and 116/4) which probably resulted from natural weathering/silting. The silting appears to have stabilised after the deposition of layer 116/2. Above this stable horizon an accumulation of sandy loamy gravel may indicate cultivation disturbance to the feature and its probable surrounding bank. The upper fill (116/1) a layer of sandy loam with some gravel (5%) may represent the accumulation of ?Roman ploughsoil and the final silting of the hollow. Four All-Over-Cord Beaker sherds (P1) from different parts of the same vessel were found in layer 116/1 and are likely to have been redeposited from a plough-destroyed feature.

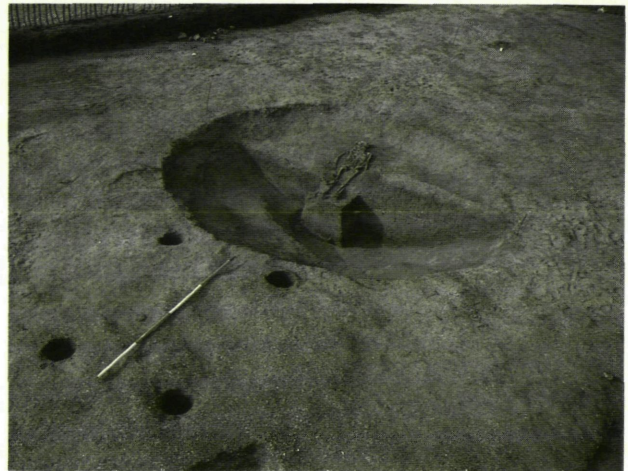


Figure 8 Feature 116, with Anglo-Saxon grave 134 in the centre of the feature, four post structure in the foreground and prehistoric feature 97 in the background

Satellite burial F97

Four metres to the N of pit 116 was a small circular feature (F97) with a very black loamy fill (Fig. 6). Feature 97 represented a plough-damaged cremation deposit and contained sherds of a Deverel-Rimbury bucket urn and cremated bone. The fragmentary vessel contained a small amount of cremated bone (46 g) which consisted of many skull and long bone fragments from a child of less than five years of age. It was not possible to identify the charcoal found in association with the deposit, which had exploded and possibly resulted from a green piece of wood falling into a very hot part of a fire (Dr M Robinson pers. comm.).

THE FINDS

Flint and stone

by Roger Thomas and Philippa Bradley

Eight pieces of worked flint were found during the excavations only one of which, a flake, was recovered from a prehistoric context (F116). The remaining flints represent redeposited material in Roman and Saxon features. The assemblage is too insignificant to warrant further comment and a catalogue of the material can be found in the archive.

The quantity of worked flint is remarkably small. The material does not attest any substantial Neolithic or Bronze Age activity on the site, despite the presence of prehistoric features; however, the circumstances of the excavation may have militated against the recovery of worked flint.

A single piece of schist, possibly a whetstone fragment, was recovered from the Romano-British ditch 153.

Antler

by Jonathan Wallis

Twenty six pieces of antler were recovered from context 116, layer 5. The pieces come from at least two red deer antlers, possibly from the same individual.

There is only one beam, which has had its bez and trez tines removed. The detached crown was probably removed by bashing alone, as there is no evidence of burning. The brow tine was broken off in antiquity. The tine's tip is missing but at the break edge there is damage which can be seen on other antler picks and could have been caused by heavy downward blows. The brow tine had been broken from the beam and hollowed from both ends for an unknown purpose. The burr clearly shows that the antler had been shed rather than cut from a slaughtered animal.

There is another almost complete brow tine, the tip of which is very worn and badly scratched suggesting that it had been used as a pick; the tip of an unused brow tine being normally hard and pointed (Clutton-Brock 1984). The other fragments of antler are from the beams and crowns of the two mentioned above and their presence would suggest that the antler picks were made close by.

Beaker and Deverel-Rimbury pottery

by Alistair Barclay and Roger Thomas

A small quantity of pottery (267 g) was excavated from features 97 and 116 and the Roman ditch 138.

Fabrics

GA1: soft fabric with 5–10% sub-angular grog (G) <2 mm and 5% sub-round quartz (A) <1 mm inclusions in a micaceous clay matrix.

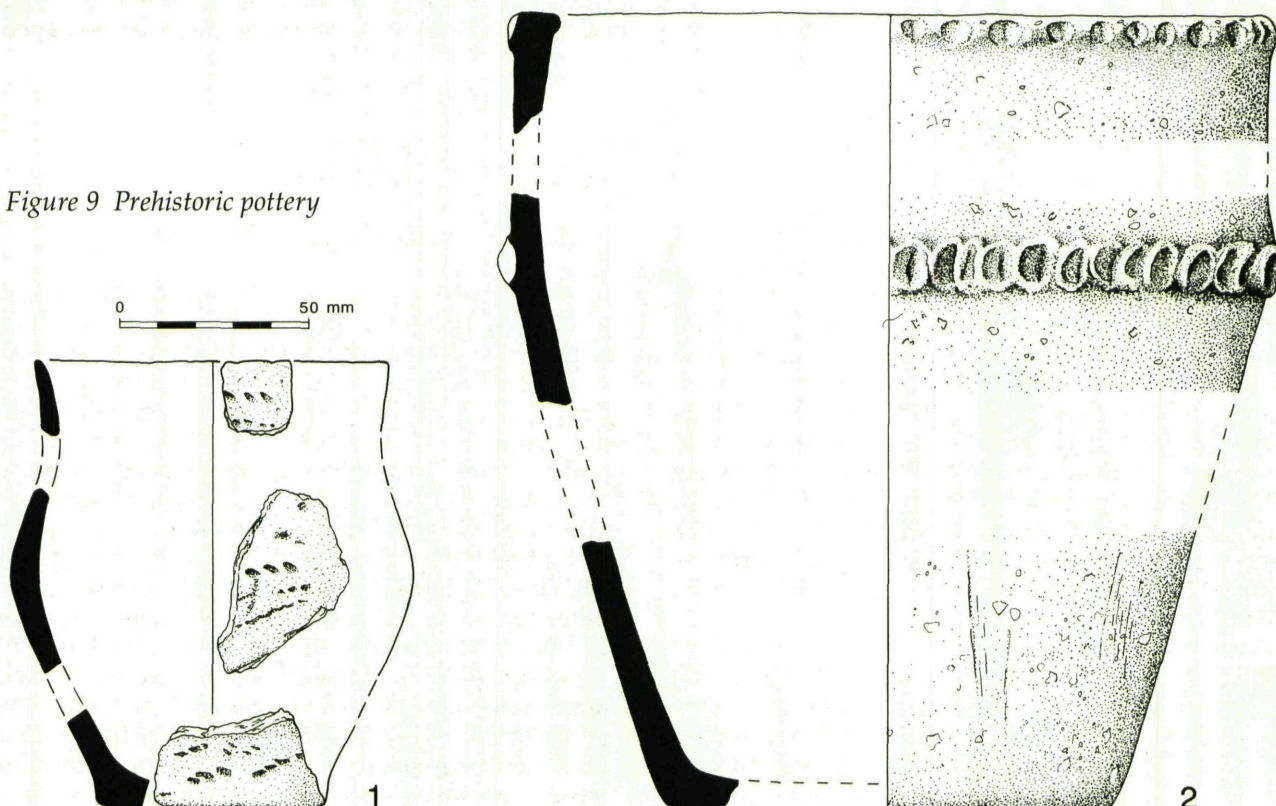
GA2: hard fabric with 10–15% sub-angular grog (G) 0.5–3 mm and <3% sub-round quartz (A) <2 mm inclusions in a micaceous clay matrix.

F1: hard fabric with 15–20% calcined flint (F) inclusions up to 5 mm.

Catalogue

P1 (Fig. 9.1) (Feature 116/1) Four sherds (23 g) all from the same Beaker vessel. One recent break may suggest more of the vessel was present during or after excavation. Enough of it survives to suggest a slender biconical vessel with slight recurving rim. The exterior has been crudely decorated with impressions of short lengths of twisted cord. Fabric GA1. Colour: ext: pale buff/ core: grey/ int: pale buff. Wall thickness 3–7 mm.

Figure 9 Prehistoric pottery



P2 (not illustrated) (Feature 138) A single sherd (19 g) from the waist of a large Beaker vessel with a raised horizontal cordon and impressed oblique finger-tip and finger-tip pinched decoration. Both the inner and outer surfaces show signs of smoothing. Fabric GA2: ext: brownish red/ core: dark grey brown/ int: dark reddish brown. Wall thickness 12 mm.

P3 (Fig. 9.2: reconstructed profile) (Feature 97) A fragmentary vessel with applied horizontal cordon on exterior (225 g). There is finger-tip decoration on the exterior of the rim and on the cordon. Fabric F1: ext: light brown to dark grey/ core: dark grey/ int: dark grey to light grey.

Date and affinities

The four All-Over-Cord (AOC) Beaker sherds from pit 116 represent part of an Early style vessel (Case 1977, 75). Similar vessels have been excavated at several sites approximately 20 km to the NW in the parish of Stanton Harcourt where an example with continuous cord impressions was found in the central grave of a ring-ditch (Hamlin 1963, 6); AOC sherds associated with a Middle style Beaker were found in flat grave 2 at the Vicarage Field excavations (Case 1982, 105), and an AOC sherd was excavated from a pit, which also contained Middle and Late style Beaker sherds at the site of Gravelly Guy (Cleal forthcoming a). At Barrow Hills, Radley, approximately 7 km to the NW (Fig. 1), an Early style 'bottle-shaped' AOC Beaker was found in an inhumation flat grave (Cleal forthcoming b).

AOC Beakers are generally accepted as one of the earlier Beaker styles and date from around 2500 cal BC (Case 1977, 73). However, AOC decorated Beakers had a long currency and would appear to span much of the Beaker phase, a point which may be reinforced given the question mark placed over the existing stylistic schema by the British Museum dating programme (Kinnes *et al.* 1991, 38–9).

Wally Corner is situated c 1 km NE from the main Dorchester-on-Thames cursus and can be considered as peripheral to this monumental complex (Fig. 3). Only limited Beaker material has been recovered from this immediate area and it tends to belong to Case's (1977) Middle and Late styles. Middle style Beakers have been excavated from a ring-ditch near the NW entrance of the Big Rings henge monument (Fig. 3) and from the fill of the henge ditch (Bradley and Chambers 1988, 283), and from a secondary burial in an oval barrow at Mount Farm (Lambrick forthcoming), c 600 m to the N of Wally Corner.

The sherd P2 comes from a large coarse ware vessel. Such vessels often decorated with horizontal cordons and finger-tip impressions are more characteristic of Beaker domestic assemblages (Gibson 1982) and tend not to be selected as grave goods. The sherd can be compared with similar

Beaker material excavated from pits at Cassington (Case *et al.* 1964/5, 60–1) and from the recent excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on the Yarnton Flood plain.

The vessel (P3) from pit 97 is a bucket urn which is typical of the Deverel-Rimbury complex in the Upper Thames valley and close to Wally Corner finds have been made at Pearith Farm, Long Wittenham, Blewbury, Wallingford, Sutton Courtenay (Case *et al.* 1964/5, 75, Fig. 28), Radley (Leeds 1936b, 12–13, pl. IIA Barclay and Halpin forthcoming), Appleford (Hinchliffe and Thomas 1980, 26, Fig. 8 no. 7), Mount Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames (Lambrick forthcoming), Dorchester-on-Thames (Bradley and Chambers 1988, 284) and Corporation Farm, Abingdon (Unpublished report: P Shand).

The Deverel-Rimbury complex has conventionally been assigned to the middle Bronze Age (Smith 1959), but recent work has shown it to have early Bronze Age origins (Barrett *et al.* 1981, 232, 234). Thus only metalwork associations or C14 determinations can provide more precise dates for particular finds of Deverel-Rimbury material.

Middle Iron Age pottery

by Paul Booth

There were 21 (190 g) handmade sherds assigned to the middle Iron Age, tempered with fine sand and usually also containing fine shell inclusions. With one possible exception they occurred in contexts of Roman and later date and they probably do not represent Iron Age occupation on the site. There were two simple rims, from roughly barrel-shaped forms.

DISCUSSION OF THE PREHISTORIC EVIDENCE

by Alistair Barclay and Roger Thomas

In its original form, feature 116 was probably a small embanked hollow of similar appearance to other regional types of pond barrow. Three similar examples have been excavated at Barrow Hills, Radley (Barclay and Halpin forthcoming) which date from the late 3rd–early 2nd millennium cal BC, and a fourth example may have been partially excavated at Vicarage Field, Stanton Harcourt (Thomas 1955, 10). These barrows tend to be smaller and deeper than those recorded from Dorset and Wiltshire (Ashbee *et al.* 1989, 139–141) and like many other categories of monument show some regional distinction. Similarities in form and function may also exist with the ring-cairns of SW Britain, which appear to have acted as areas for the possible performance of public ceremonies (Ward 1988, 153) and as with the sites of the Upper Thames appear to have a general absence of primary formal burials.

The pond barrows at Radley had no surviving banks. However, the placing of seven inhumation graves of earlier Bronze Age date in an arc around one of these barrows suggested the presence of an enclosing bank. Similarly at Wally Corner the Deverel-Rimbury cremation deposit (F97) could have been placed as a satellite deposit near a bank enclosing F116.

The original function of the monument could have been ceremonial rather than funerary with some ritual formality being attached to the discarding of the antler picks. Further fragmentary animal bones were recovered from Feature 116 but their precise contexts were not recorded (Wilson, this volume and Table 31). It could be tenuously suggested that the Beaker sherds derive from a formal deposit placed near to Feature 116 and the finding of extraneous human bone (Harman, this volume) may hint at the later destruction of a grave or funerary deposit. Placed deposits of antler have been recorded from a number of sites in the Upper Thames valley, most notably the later Neolithic ring-ditches at Dorchester (sites II, IV and XI Atkinson *et al.* 1951), the ditches of the oval barrow at Barrow Hills and ring-ditch 611 at Barrow Hills (Barclay and Halpin forthcoming). At the latter site up to eight antlers and articulated cattle limbs were placed on the ditch floor, which was later developed into a pond barrow.

The pond barrow would appear to have been part of a small dispersed barrow group 500 m N from the Dorchester cursus and the Big Rings henge (Fig. 3). Four further possible barrows are visible as cropmarks close to Wally Corner Field (Fig. 5: Cambridge AFU 46–8). These cropmarks could however represent later features, and as suggested in the introduction one of these features may have been an Anglo-Saxon ring-ditch. Three of these cropmarks are rather small (c 10 m) and are comparable in size to other Beaker barrows in the region (Case 1986, 33).

The majority of Deverel-Rimbury cremations have been found in barrows (as either primary or secondary deposits, singly or in groups) or in flat cemeteries often containing between 20–30 cremations (Ellison 1980). Given the box-scraping which had occurred across the site and the shallowness of the feature, it may be that Feature 97 was the only surviving element of a larger burial group. However, the apparently strong emphasis in Deverel-Rimbury funerary practice on cremation cemeteries rather than single, isolated deposits may be partly a reflection of recovery factors. Most cemeteries have come to light in circumstances which favour the recovery of groups of urns rather than single cremations. The Deverel-Rimbury urn found in Feature 97, a small scoop in the gravel, contained or accompanied the cremated bones of an infant and could be an isolated single cremation, possibly post-dating the pond barrow. This find and another apparently unassociated urn ploughed-up at East Harting, Sussex (Aldsworth 1983) could indicate that the deposition of

Deverel-Rimbury cremations singly rather than in groups was a practice more common than our present evidence would suggest.

THE ROMANO-BRITISH FEATURES

by David Miles

Introduction

Only a small proportion of the Romano-British enclosure system visible on aerial photographs (Fig. 5) was included within the excavation area. The features consisted of linear ditches, gullies and a stone-lined well. The area had been heavily scraped by the drag-line prior to archaeological investigations and if timber buildings existed their traces would almost certainly have been destroyed. Corallian Ragstone blocks found in the Saxon graves (11, 24, 29, 34, 61, 73, 76, 122, 125 and 152) suggest that Romano-British stone-based buildings may have existed in the vicinity, although no evidence was found as to their exact location. Alternately they may have been derived from a well-structure associated with the stone-lined well located during the excavations.

As the purpose of this salvage excavation was to record the Saxon cemetery only a minimum amount of excavation was carried out on Romano-British features. The well was completely excavated and ditches were sectioned in order to obtain dating evidence. Unfortunately many of the smaller gullies were almost completely scraped away by the drag-line. Only the basic results are presented in view of the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence and the limited area of excavation. The detailed data is available in the site archive.

Romano-British well, F9 (Figs 6 and 10)

A stone-lined well, in the SE corner of the excavation, was constructed within a clay-lined foundation pit c 2.20 m in diameter. Inside, a dry-stone shaft 0.70–0.90 m in diameter was built up, of which a dozen courses survived to a depth of about 1.45 m. The bottom of the well was about 1.85 m from the surface of the gravel and it is estimated that about 0.65 m of topsoil had been removed in this area.

The stone shaft was made up of worn blocks of Corallian Ragstone. Two vertically-placed slabs (approximately 0.87 x 0.50 x 0.05 m) were set on the E and W sides of the base. On the N and S sides two large slabs were wedged at an angle of about 60° to one another, meeting across the centre of the base. These appeared to have been deliberately placed in this way to act as a wedge in the bottom of the well to prevent it being undermined by the pressure of water in the soft, sandy material through which the well was cut.

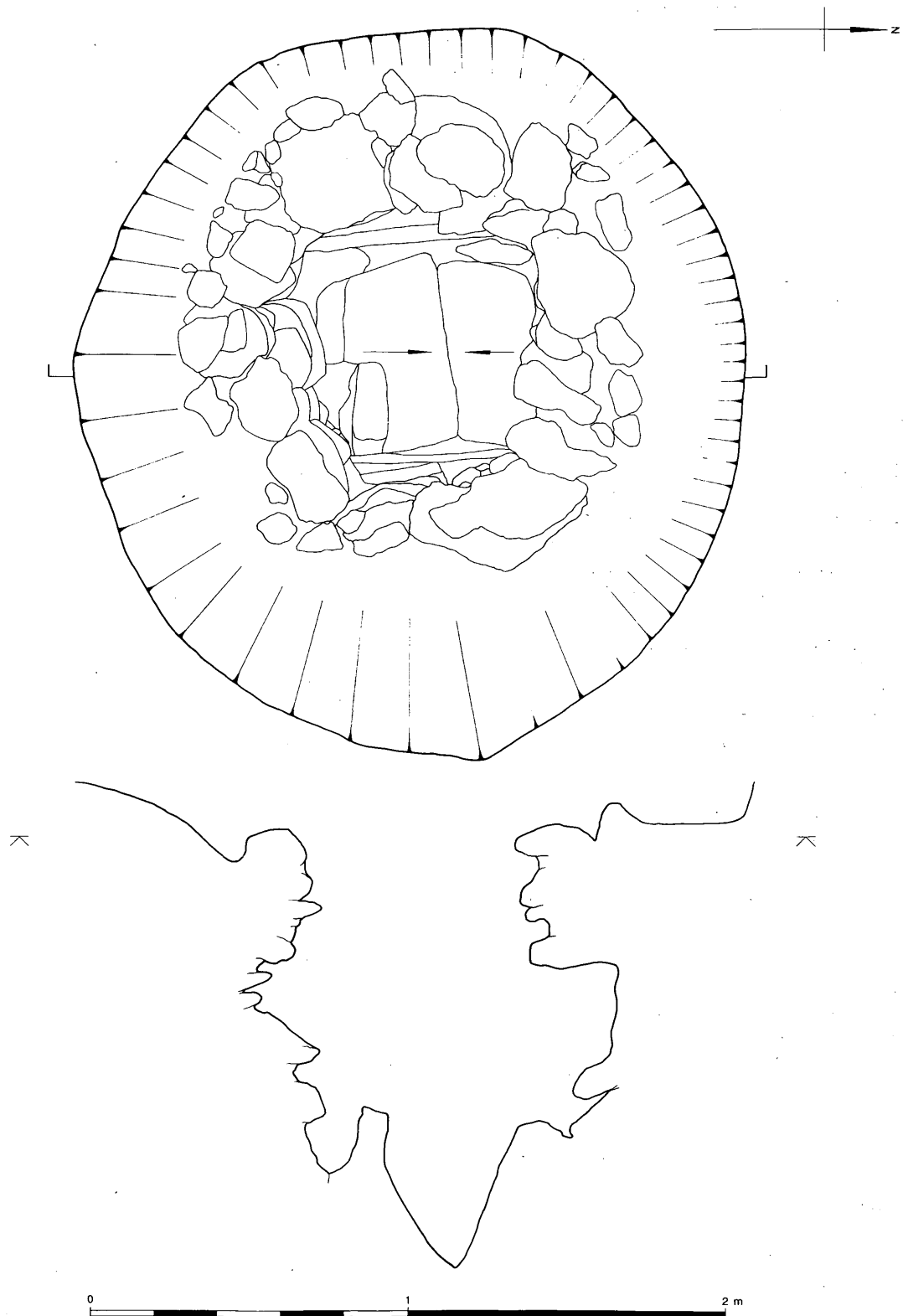


Figure 10 Plan and profile of the Romano-British well

The upper fill of the well consisted mainly of dark brown sandy loam and stone fragments. A layer of clean fine sand and gravel was found 0.80 m from the top of the stone shaft on the S side, dipping to the N to 1.00 m from the top of the stone shaft. The sand layer was approximately 0.05 m thick and a 'large pot' rested on its surface. Below it the sandy loam showed evidence of waterlogging, though preservation within it was poor owing to the fluctuation of the water-table, lowered in the years immediately prior to excavation by pumping for gravel extraction and the creation of lakes to the S. As a result the waterlogged remains solely consisted of a few decayed *Sambucus* seeds (Dr M Robinson pers. comm.)

Pottery provided the only dating evidence for the construction and use of the well. This is summarised in the pottery report (Booth, this volume) and points to building and use in the late 3rd and 4th centuries AD. The well was probably infilled by the later 4th century but a slight depression may have been visible in the early Saxon period.

Ditches (Fig. 6)

Although Romano-British ditches were found across the entire area of the excavation, aerial photographic evidence shows that these formed only a small proportion of an enclosed block of landscape covering at least 7 ha (Figs 4 and 5).

The ditches were extensively damaged by the gravel-quarrying operations and in many areas the drag-line had gouged along the ditches in order to remove the veins of dark soil which contaminated the clean, natural gravel. In view of this, excavation was kept to a minimum. The ditches showed evidence of several phases and traces of recutting. The basic layout was of small, rectangular enclosures orientated N-S.

The linear features were of two kinds: substantial ditches mostly running N-S and smaller gullies predominantly orientated E-W.

Feature 36/46 (also numbered 39, 100 and 137) was the largest ditch in the excavated area. It was traced running for 62 m through the centre of the excavation on a N-S orientation, turning to the W on the edge of the extracted gravel pit (Fig. 6). The ditch was sectioned between graves 107 and 136 (Fig. 35) where it was 2.05 m wide and up to 0.65 m deep. The feature was made up of an earlier ditch 100/1 with a uniform fill of brown sandy loam flecked with clay and a recut ditch 100/2 on the W side. The recut had been dug when 100/1 was largely silted up. The fill of the recut was very similar to that of 100/1 except for a burnt layer of sandy loam and clay 0.24 m from the base. The later recut could be seen in plan on the southern edge of the site where it cut across the angle of the original corner of the enclosure. Graves 24 and 25 were inserted into the upper fill of the ditch in this area.

The smaller gullies survived in places only as stains in the gravel and were usually truncated by drag-line digging. Gully 70 was one of the better preserved, running N-S to the E of ditch 36/46. The gully was 0.60 m wide, 0.16 m deep with a flattened U-shaped profile and a fill of brown sandy loam. Grave 77 and cremation 31 were cut into it.

Pits

A number of pits lay to the E of the main N-S ditch (36/46). Pits 38, 40 and 17 were in the southern part of the main area. The first of these contained Roman pottery, nails and a sheep burial. The scattered remains of a neonatal inhumation in its upper fill were associated with a single Saxon sherd which presumably indicated the date of the burial. The adjacent pit 40 was also cut by a Saxon grave (35), whereas pit 17 was stratigraphically related to the gullies 16 and 45. Further N a larger pit, 142, also lay to the E of the N-S ditch. Pit 38 contained a well-dated group of pottery of the late 2nd century and all of these other pits were dated by pottery to the later 2nd century or after.

Dating

Dating depended on the association of pottery with the features, as few stratigraphic relationships survived. Although the author of the 1960 excavation report believed the pottery evidence to point to 'activity of a short duration' (Sutton 1961/2, 13), in this part of the site there seems no doubt that Romano-British occupation ranged from the later 1st to 4th centuries AD.

The gully 99 produced only early Romano-British material but it ran roughly parallel to the large ditch 100, 4 m W of it, and the easternmost large N-S ditch 123, which also contained early Roman pottery. This suggests that the basic layout of land divisions may have begun at that time. The majority of the pottery pointed to occupation in the 2nd to 4th centuries, during which time the large N-S ditch, 100, was in use. A single coin from the upper fill of Ditch 100 was possibly a copy of a type minted c AD 330-340. Two other coins were found in an unstratified position in disturbed spoil. One was a mid 4th-century *aes*, the other an *aes* of Valentinian (*Salus Reipublicae*) minted c AD 388-398.

ROMAN POTTERY

by Paul Booth

A total of 2319 sherds of Roman pottery weighing about 37 kg were recovered from the excavations. They comprised about 95% of the entire pottery assemblage from the site (2438 sherds, c 40 kg). The

bulk of the Roman assemblage was from features of Roman and Saxon date (c 71% and 16% respectively), with some 13% in unstratified groups, and spanned much of the period from the 1st–4th century.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the pottery by context type, divided into major ware groups (see below). Quantification was by number of sherds and weight (vessel counts are discussed below). The advantage of using these two measures is that it allows assessment of the character of the pottery in different types of deposits. For example it is clear that the majority of the pottery recovered from the Saxon graves (including sherds of Saxon date see Chapter 4: Table 25) is fragmentary and was accidentally incorporated in the fills, since the average weight of these sherds was less than one third of those from the other features. Apart from Anglo-Saxon vessels incorporated as grave goods, c 89% of the sherds in the fills of the Saxon graves were of Roman date.

Table 1: Quantities of Roman pottery by context type: numbers of sherds (and weight in g)

Context/ Fabric	All features except graves	Anglo-Saxon graves	Unstratified	Totals
S	23 (269)	4 (20)	7 (42)	34 (331)
F	102 (1805)	36 (151)	35 (543)	173 (2499)
A			3 (163)	3 (163)
M	21 (1308)	3 (113)	7 (290)	31 (1711)
W	75 (1022)	17 (92)	8 (63)	100 (1177)
Q	12 (254)	1 (1)	3 (27)	16 (282)
E	42 (534)	9 (47)	2 (23)	53 (604)
O	75 (1257)	29 (221)	12 (130)	116 (1608)
R	1217 (22387)	258 (1366)	212 (3713)	1687 (27466)
B	52 (590)	17 (93)	5 (128)	74 (811)
C	23 (357)	5 (44)	4 (27)	32 (428)
Totals	1642 70.8% (29783) 80.3%	379 16.3% (2148) 5.8%	298 12.9% (5149) 13.9%	2319 (37080)

The pottery was divided into fabrics and recorded on standard forms which have been placed in the site archive. Limitations on resources meant that fabrics were only defined at a low level of precision, usually that of the principal subdivisions of a number of major ware groups (see below). Sherds were defined macroscopically; only a very few were checked under a binocular microscope at x20 magnification. The vessel forms were paralleled with published material, particularly the corpus of Oxfordshire Roman

pottery (Young 1977), and the material from Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986).

Many of the sherds were extensively abraded, though it is uncertain if this was a result of continual circulation before their final deposition, or was a function of soil conditions. The problem of abrasion was particularly relevant to the identification of colour-coated sherds. In several cases the colour-coated surfaces of probable Oxfordshire fine wares had completely eroded away.

Fabrics

The material was divided into a number of major ware groups, in line with the system now used for later Iron Age and Roman pottery from all current OAU sites in Oxfordshire. These groups were: samian ware (S), fine wares (here exclusively colour-coated wares) (F), amphora fabrics (A), mortarium fabrics (M), white wares (W), white slipped wares (Q), 'Belgic type' (usually grog-tempered) fabrics (E), oxidised coarse wares (O), reduced coarse wares (R), black burnished wares (B), and calcareous-tempered (usually shelly) wares (C). Groups S, F, A, M, W and Q make up the so-called 'fine and specialist wares', which can be used as an indication of site status (Booth 1991) and are discussed further below.

Most of the ware groups were subdivided. In the case of reduced and oxidised coarse wares these divisions were defined by the nature of tempering material. For example R10 fabrics were very fine reduced fabrics with no added tempering, R20 fabrics were distinguished by extensive use of sand tempering, R30 fabrics contained a little sand and occasionally other inclusions, and R90 fabrics had very coarse inclusions, usually of grog, reflecting the use of these fabrics for large vessels such as storage jars. All of these groups can be subdivided into individual fabrics, but this level of definition was not appropriate in the circumstances of the project. In the case of some of the other ware groups definition at the level of individual fabric (eg Oxfordshire or Nene Valley colour-coated ware (F51 and F52)) was possible, particularly with distinctive products.

The quantities of individual fabrics (by number of sherds) occurring in contexts probably of Roman date, in the Saxon graves and in unstratified deposits are listed in Table 2, with summary descriptions (full descriptions, where appropriate, can be found in the excavation archive). Differences in fabric proportions between the Roman pottery assemblages from Roman, Saxon and unstratified contexts were relatively slight and their possible significance is discussed below. The differences in fabric proportions as expressed by sherd count and weight were also relatively insignificant (figures for weight can also be found in the archive). In the following discussion percentages given are of the overall Roman sherd total unless otherwise specified.

The Roman assemblage was dominated by reduced wares (72.7%). Fine and specialist wares (see above) accounted for 15.4% of the assemblage, of which the principal components were Oxfordshire colour-coated and white wares.

Table 2 Quantities of Roman pottery (Numbers of sherds and percentages)

Fabric name		Features except graves (Roman?)		Saxon graves		Unstratified		Totals	
S	Samian	23	1.4%	4	1.1%	7	2.3%	34	1.5%
F50	Brown CC					1	0.3%	1	-
F51	Oxon CC	93	5.7%	35	9.3%	34	11.4%	162	7.0%
F52	Nene Valley CC	1	0.1%					1	-
F60	Brown CC	7	0.4%	1	0.3%			8	0.3%
F70	Brown CC	1	0.1%					1	-
A11	Dressel 20					2	0.7%	2	0.1%
A30	?Carrot Amphora					1	0.3%	1	-
M21	Verulamium	1	0.1%					1	-
M22	Oxon White	13	0.8%	3	0.8%	5	1.7%	21	0.9%
M31	Oxon White Slip	3	0.2%			1	0.3%	4	0.2%
M41	Oxon CC	4	0.2%			1	0.3%	5	0.2%
W11	Oxon Parchment	4	0.2%					4	0.2%
W12	Oxon Fine White	49	3.0%	9	2.4%	6	2.0%	64	2.8%
W21	Verulamium	2	0.1%					2	0.1%
W22	Oxon Sandy White	18	1.1%	7	1.9%	2	0.7%	27	1.2%
W23	Oxon Burnt White	2	0.1%	1	0.3%			3	0.1%
Q20	Oxid. White Slip	11	0.7%	1	0.3%	2	0.7%	14	0.6%
Q21	Oxon White Slip	1	0.1%			1	0.3%	2	0.1%
E	'Belgic Type'			2	0.5%			2	0.1%
E30	Belgic Type Sandy			1	0.3%			1	-
E50	Belgic Type Limestone			1	0.5%			1	-
E60	Belgic Type Flint	2	0.1%	1	0.3%			3	0.1%
E80	Belgic Type Grog	40	2.4%	4	0.8%	2	0.7%	46	1.9%
O	Oxidised	1	0.1%					1	-
O10	Fine Oxidised	48	2.9%	12	3.2%	10	3.4%	70	3.0%
O20	Sandy Oxidised	5	0.3%	11	2.9%	2	0.7%	18	0.8%
O21	Oxon Oxidised			1	0.3%			1	-
O80	Coarse Oxidised	17	1.0%	5	1.3%			22	0.9%
O81	Pink Grogged	4	0.2%					4	0.2%
R10	Fine Reduced	22	1.3%					22	0.9%
R20	Sandy Reduced	611	37.2%	109	28.8%	83	27.9%	803	34.6%
R30	Fine Reduced	483	29.4%	135	35.7%	118	39.6%	736	31.8%
R90	Coarse Reduced	101	6.2%	14	3.7%	11	3.7%	126	5.4%
B11	Black-Burnished	52	3.2%	17	4.5%	5	1.7%	74	3.2%
C10	Shell-Tempered	5	0.3%	4	1.1%	2	0.7%	11	0.5%
C11	Shell-Tempered	18	1.1%	1	0.3%	2	0.7%	21	0.9%
TOTALS		1642		379		298		2319	

Samian ware

Samian ware comprised only 1.5% of the total number of sherds. A large amount of this material was Central Gaulish and tended to occur in late Roman contexts. The forms represented by rims included 18 (1), 31 (3), 33 (4) and possibly 38. There were four decorated sherds, all from form 37, and a single fragmentary stamp of Cotto, from La Graufesenque.

Fine wares

Fine wares, which amounted to 7.5% of the site sherd total, consisted almost entirely of Oxfordshire products (fabric F51, 93.6% of fine ware sherds). A single sherd of Nene Valley ware (F52) was the only certain non-Oxfordshire fine ware. A small roughcast indented beaker in fabric F60 is from an uncertain source, but the fabric might suggest a relatively local origin. Other vessels in fabrics F60, F70 and F50 were all oxidised wares with brown colour-coated surfaces. Many were in poor condition and attribution to known sources was not considered possible.

Amphorae

There were only three amphora sherds from the site, all in unstratified contexts. Two were in buff wares (A11) characteristic of South Spanish Dressel 20 types. The third was in a sandy oxidised fabric (A30), possibly from a carrot amphora (Peacock and Williams 1986, class 12), though such a type seems out of place in the rest of the assemblage.

Mortaria

The mortaria were all Oxfordshire products apart from a single Verulamium region sherd (M21). The local vessels were mainly in the white fabric (M22), but white slipped (M31) and red colour-coated fabrics (M41) were also represented. M31 and M41 supplemented M22 in the late Roman period, since the only identifiable forms in fabric M22 were 2nd- and 3rd-century types.

White Wares

White wares paralleled the mortaria in terms of their sources. There were two sherds probably from the Verulamium region (W21) and the remainder were local products. These included parchment ware (W11) and fine (W12) and coarse sandy (W22) fabrics as well as a few sherds of burnt white ware (W23). W12 accounted for c. 70% of all the white wares. These wares were used for a wide range of vessel types; flagons, jars, bowls and dishes were all represented but none was particularly dominant (Table 3).

White slipped wares

These wares were poorly represented, perhaps in part owing to the soil conditions which tended to remove slipped surfaces from the sherds. There were two sherds of the Oxfordshire white colour-coated ware (Q21, Young (1977) fabric WC) and 14 sherds of a fine oxidised fabric, 11 from a single vessel (probably a flagon). These sherds were also probably Oxfordshire products, though this cannot be certain.

'Belgic type' fabrics

These wares were not common at Berinsfield. There was no definite evidence for a late Iron Age phase on the site and sherds assigned to this group are likely to be of early Roman date. The majority (87%) were in grog-tempered (E80) fabrics, though many of these sherds belonged to a single everted rim jar from ditch 99, a context probably of early 2nd-century date. The only other vessel in this group was a bead-rimmed jar also in fabric E80. The remaining sherds, in sandy (E30), limestone (E50) and flint-tempered (E60) fabrics all occurred as small fragments and there were no diagnostic feature sherds.

Oxidised coarse wares

These were divided into three main groups: O10 fabrics, the most common, were fairly fine, O20 fabrics were characterised by common sand temper and O80 fabrics had coarse tempering, usually of grog. All were almost certainly locally produced, though only fabric O21 is definitely ascribed to the Oxfordshire industry. The one exception was fabric O81, 'pink grogged ware', with a source NE of the region (Booth and Green 1989), four sherds of which occurred here. Identifiable vessels were only found in O10 and O20 fabrics. The latter occurred solely as jars, the former was also used for beakers and bowls (Table 3).

Reduced coarse wares

There were four groups of reduced fabrics probably all from local sources. The smallest, R10, approximately analogous to Young's reduced fabric 4 (Young 1977, 203), consisted of fine fabrics with few visible inclusions. Almost all of these sherds were from a single folded beaker with an overall grey slip (no. 10). This vessel is unparalleled in the Oxfordshire industry, but may nevertheless be a local product. The two principal reduced ware groups, R20 and R30, were respectively sandy and relatively fine fabrics, the latter not markedly different from R10. These were roughly of equal importance, constituting 47.6% and 43.6% of all the reduced wares. R20 included some examples of Young's reduced fabrics 2, 3

Table 3 Correlation of Roman pottery fabrics and vessel types: quantification by rim count

Types		Fabrics																					Total	
		S	F51	F60	M22	M31	M41	W11	W12	W22	W23	Q21	E80	O10	O20	O21	R10	R20	R30	R90	B11	C10		C11
Flagons	BA		1																					1
	BB								1	1														2
	BC																		1					1
	Total B		1						1	1									1					4 1.4%
Jars	C		2						1						5	1		45	44			1	5	104
	CC																	5	4					9
	CD										1							18	8					27
	CE																		3					3
	CF																		1					1
	CH												1					1	1					3
	CI												1					1	1					3
	CK																	2	1		9			12
	CM													1				1						2
	CN																				3			3
	Total C		2						1		1		2	1	5	1		73	63	3	9	1	5	167 58.6%
Beakers	E		2																1					3
	EC												1						3					4
	ED																							
	EE			1													1							2
	EG																		1					1
	EH												1						9					10
	Total E		2	1									2				1		14					20 7.0%

Table 3 (cont.) Correlation of Roman pottery fabrics and vessel types: quantification by rim count

Types		Fabrics																						Total
		S	F51	F60	M22	M31	M41	W11	W12	W22	W23	Q21	E80	O10	O20	O21	R10	R20	R30	R90	B11	C10	C11	
Cups	FC	4																						4
Total	F	4																						4 1.4%
Bowls	H	1	8							1		1		1				3	1					16
	HA							1																1
	HB																	1	4	1	1			7
	HC	3	17											1				3	1					25
Total	H	4	25					1		1		1		2				7	6	1	1			49 17.2%
Bowl/ Dish	I								1								1		4					6
	IA																				2			2
	IB																							
Total	I								1								1		4		2			8 2.8%
Dishes	J								1															1
	JA																	6	5		3			14
	JB	1																						1
Total	J	1							1									6	5		3			16 5.6%
Mortaria	KA				8																			8
	KB				1																			1
	KD																							
	KE					2	1																	3
Total	K				9	2	1																	12 4.2%
Lids	L																							
Misc.	M																							
Uncert.	Z								1	1								1	2					5 1.8%
Totals		9	30	1	9	2	1	1	5	3	1	1	2	5	5	1	2	87	95	4	15	1	5	285

and 5, whereas R30 seemed to correspond to the fine end of the range covered by fabric 2 (Young 1977, 202–203). It is paralleled by material in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, from the kilns at Sandford, near Littlemore.

These fabrics occurred in a wide variety of vessel types (Table 3), including jars, bowls and dishes, but the finer R30 was also used for beakers and a jug. R20 was probably in use from the mid-late 1st century onwards, the R30 fabrics may have appeared a little later, but were certainly in use by the end of the 1st century. Both were probably current through the Roman period, though the most heavily sand-tempered fabrics may only have been current in the 1st–2nd centuries. The remaining group, R90, was of coarse (usually grog-tempered) fabrics used principally for storage jars, though there was also a flanged bowl in this fabric. Despite technical affinities with the late Iron Age to early Roman 'Belgic type' fabrics, R90 was probably in use for much of the Roman period (cf. Young 1977, 202).

Black-burnished ware

Black-burnished ware amounted to 3.2% of the sherd total, and only 2.2% of the total weight of the Roman pottery. Many of the sherds were small and it is possible that in a few cases black sandy reduced wares of local origin have been misidentified as black-burnished ware. This problem apart, all the black-burnished ware appeared to be the normal Dorset product (BB1, here coded B11). The fabric was probably reaching the area from the early 2nd century. All the common types were represented, but jars were dominant. There were few examples of very late forms or decoration.

Calcareous-tempered fabrics

These fabrics were only a very small component of the assemblage. All were shell-tempered, and C11 was the typical, widely-encountered late Roman shell-tempered ware. C10 was used when there was some doubt that C11 was definitely represented (the sherds were usually small), but many of the sherds assigned to C10 may have been of C11. Jars were the only vessel type represented in either fabric (Table 3).

Vessel types (Table 3)

Two hundred and eighty five vessels in the Roman assemblage were represented by rims of which 168 were in Roman contexts, 63 in Anglo-Saxon graves and 54 in unstratified deposits. The vessels were divided into major classes, most of which were subdivided. The correlation of these vessel types with the fabrics is shown in Table 3 and more detailed descriptions of individual vessel types can be found in the site archive. The relative proportions of the major classes followed the normal trend for this area, with jars dominant at 58.6% of the group, followed by bowls (17.2%), beakers (7%) and dishes (5.6%). Mortaria were well represented in terms of vessels (4.2% as opposed to 1.3% of sherds).

Jars occurred in most fabrics, but as expected were commonest in reduced wares (73.9% of all jars were in these fabrics). Bowls were also found in a wide range of fabrics, including samian, but half were of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware. Further local bowl types were carinated bowls in parchment ware (W11), Young (1977) type P24, and the imitation of this form in white slipped fabric (Q21), Young's type WC3. Many of the remaining bowls were in reduced fabrics showing a wide variety of form. Straight-sided bowls of black-burnished ware type were relatively rare, and there was only one certain example in black-burnished ware itself. There was a clear contrast between bowls and dishes in that a large majority of the latter occurred in reduced wares, with further examples in black-burnished ware and single vessels in samian and white fabrics. A small number of vessels fell into an uncertain intermediate category between bowls and dishes. Their breakdown by fabric follows the pattern observed for dishes rather than that for bowls.

The overall representation of beakers was quite high, but half of the total was made up of small reduced ware vessels for which a beaker function was considered likely. In total, reduced wares accounted for 75% of all beakers and there were only three beakers in fine ware fabrics. Cups were limited to occurrences of Drag. 33 in samian ware, Drag. 27 being notable for its absence. Also noteworthy was the complete absence of lids in the assemblage.

Principal features

The establishment of securely-dated phases of Romano-British activity is difficult owing to the character of the site and the limited excavation of the relevant features. In addition it is clear that the date of infill of a ditch need bear little relationship to the date of its initial excavation. Moreover, ditch fills are precisely the type of deposits which may contain high proportions of redeposited finds of much earlier date than that of the infill process. It is thus difficult to assess the extent to which the pottery can be relied upon to provide a framework for phasing and dating the Roman features. Only those assemblages consisting of more than 20 sherds/250 g of pottery were thought particularly likely to reflect the date of the fills from which they came. Only nine ditches and two gullies produced assemblages which fulfilled these criteria, and of these four lay in the subsidiary trenches at the southern end of the site (Fig. 6). Nevertheless, all the datable Roman assemblages were divided into five groups (1–5), which were defined with varying degrees of precision.

Two contexts were assigned to the late 1st/early 2nd century AD (group 1), though only one of these, ditch 123, was unambiguously of this date.

Thirteen contexts (group 2) contained pottery which could only be dated to the 2nd century or later, despite the fact that five of these assemblages easily fulfilled the size criterion mentioned above. Such assemblages tended to contain a high proportion of reduced wares which were not closely datable, although in the largest the absence of diagnostic late Roman products such as Oxfordshire colour-coated wares may be significant. These assemblages are thus more likely than the smaller ones to

be genuine 2nd-century deposits, but there is a danger in arguing from negative evidence unless very large quantities of material are involved.

Three contexts (group 3) were assigned to the later 2nd century. All of these groups were sufficiently large to suggest that this was their likely date. They were characterised by products like black-burnished ware of later 2nd-century types or Antonine samian ware.

A larger number of contexts (group 4) were dated after *c* AD 240, a date dependent on that proposed by Young (1977) for the commencement of production of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware, parchment ware and most white slipped ware. Many of these were relatively small assemblages, the presence of a single Oxfordshire colour-coated sherd being sufficient to indicate the date. Some of these assemblages could have considerably postdated AD 240, but this cannot be proven.

The final group of six contexts (group 5), dated to the early 4th century or later, consists of those which either contain diagnostically late Oxfordshire products (eg Young type C78 dated after AD 340) or relatively high proportions of colour-coated and other late fabrics such as shell-tempered wares. This kind of assessment depends on the groups in question being of reasonable size. Thus five of the six groups assigned to this date bracket are among the larger ones in the assemblage.

As regards the phasing of the Roman features, groups 1, 3 and 5 above are the most closely datable. Contexts of group 2 could belong to any of the subsequent phases, and some could even belong to the early 2nd century. Contexts of group 4 could date from any period after *c* AD 240 or belong to the purely 4th-century group 5. A broad division into early, middle and late Roman phases is possible, but many of the assemblages cannot confidently be assigned to one of these phases.

Early Roman (Group 1)

Ditch 123 produced a substantial group of pottery (302 sherds, 5.7 kg). This mainly consisted of reduced wares, but white wares were also present, together with small quantities of white slipped, oxidised and samian fabrics, all of the latter being South Gaulish and including a stamp of Cotto. This was the only feature on the site to produce Verulamium products, both white (flagon) and mortaria sherds being present. The latter are not likely to have been used in the area once Oxfordshire mortarium production was under way in the early 2nd century. The assemblage is probably large enough for the absence of black-burnished ware to be significant, and a date before *c* AD 120 seems certain. The assemblage was notable for producing several vessels not closely paralleled in Young's (1977) corpus, which are illustrated with more typical pieces from the same assemblage (Fig. 11.1-9).

Gully 99 may also have belonged to this phase on the basis of material from the N end of the feature. Further pottery from the S end, however, included two small sherds of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware. It is possible that these were intrusive from the fill of the overlying Saxon grave 4, but this is not certain. Feature 99 was parallel to 123, which may support the suggestion that the two features were contemporary.

Mid Roman (Group 2 ? and Group 3)

Two pits (23 and 38) and the E-W gully 41 were the only features confidently assigned to this phase. Pit 38 contained examples of Young types W4 and M3 as well as a roughcast indented beaker in fabric F60. All these are consistent with a date for the assemblage in the later 2nd century. The feature also contained a single small Saxon sherd, which was presumably intrusive.

The addition of the group 2 contexts to this phase would indicate that most of the Roman ditch system was in existence by this time, if indeed it was not rather earlier in date. Ditches 46, 139 and 140 all had pottery assigned to this group, as did gullies 16 and 70 located to the E of the main N-S ditch 36/46, and pits 17, 40, 79 and 142. In the S part of the site ditches 153, 157, 160 and gully 158 all had pottery of group 2. The size of these groups was sufficient to suggest that they genuinely predated the late Roman period.

Late Roman (Groups 4 and 5)

The principal features in this phase were the later elements in the Roman field system, the associated gullies and the well (9). Contexts 100 and 137, both components of the main N-S ditch through the centre of the site, provided the main assemblages for this phase. The latter only produced a single vessel (Fig. 11.10) probably datable to the later 3rd century, and can thus be seen as broadly contemporary with the material in ditch 100. The earlier phase of feature 36, a ditch at right angles to the central N-S axis, and other E-W gullies 37/71, 16/45 and 132, E of this axis; also produced groups of this date.

Ditches and gullies 156, 159, 162 and 163 in the southern trenches (Fig. 6) all contained late 3rd-4th century assemblages, including the uncommon Oxfordshire colour-coated form Young C88 (Fig. 11.11).

The isolated well (F9) was also constructed at about this time. The construction pit produced 69 sherds (*c* 1.54 kg). These included only a single fragment of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware, but there were also a black-burnished ware straight-sided dish of 3rd-4th-century type and rims of two shell-tempered jars of late Roman type. A terminus post quem of at least the late 3rd century seems certain. The deposits from the fill of the well appeared to be of later date, though like the construction pit they still contained redeposited material. The lower fill (9/2) produced 15 sherds of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware, amounting to 13% of the sherds in the group, but constituting 23.2% of the total weight (1.8 kg). These figures suggest a 4th-century rather than an earlier date. The uppermost fill (9/1) contained a lower proportion of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware, but included a mortarium of Young type WC7, principally a 4th-century type (Young 1977, 122).

Distinctive late Roman groups concentrated in the southern part of the main area and in the additional trenches to the S. Ditches 36/1 and 39 represented a late phase of part of the main N-S ditch and the E-W ditch running westwards from it. Both produced good-sized groups, particularly ditch 39, which contained a high proportion of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware (13.9% sherds) and a sherd of Nene Valley colour-coated ware. The

distribution of the latter fabric is widespread in the 4th century, but its appearance in assemblages dominated by Oxfordshire products tends to be a feature of the second half of the century. The Oxfordshire forms, which include C45, C51, C55 and C75, also suggest a date at least after AD 325 (Young 1977, 166). Another characteristic late Roman component of the group is shell-tempered ware. This was never common at Berinsfield, but 5 of the 21 sherds occurred in this group. There were also 8 Saxon sherds in the top of the late Roman ditch fill, which may have been intrusive (particularly since this area was cut by graves), but it is possible that at least part of this fill accumulated in the Saxon period.

The trenches at the extreme southern end of the site produced two further late Roman assemblages, in ditches 154 and 155. The assemblage in ditch 155 was more certainly of this date than that from ditch 154. It had a very high proportion of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware (21 out of 32 sherds, including one mortarium sherd), which included an example of Young type C78 (Fig. 11.12) dated after AD 340. This assemblage, which also included a shell-tempered jar rim, is the latest identifiable Roman deposit on the site.

Illustrated catalogue (Fig. 11.1–12)

- 1 Context 123, fabric W22. Wide-mouthed flagon not paralleled in Young (1977).
- 2 Context 123, fabric W22. Vessel of uncertain form, but probably a bowl, although the rim is reminiscent of the flagon type W17 (dated AD 240–300; Young 1977, 102).
- 3 Context 123, fabric R20. Medium-mouthed jar in a white/grey-black sandy fabric, one of two identical vessels. A rough hole has been made in centre of the base after firing.
- 4 Context 123, fabric R20. Medium-mouthed jar. The fabric is less sandy and more 'romanised' than that of no. 3, but the form is similar.
- 5 Context 123, fabric R30. Small medium-mouthed jar with rounded profile.
- 6 Context 123, fabric R30. Medium-mouthed jar.
- 7 Context 123, fabric R30. Beaker of Young type R34, with traces of poorly-preserved barbotine dot decoration.
- 8 Context 123, fabric R30. Dish or shallow bowl not exactly paralleled in Young but perhaps of his type R41.
- 9 Context 123, fabric R30. Dish with flanged rim and footring not paralleled in Young. The closest forms are R60 and R72, though the 4th-century date range of the latter can have no bearing on the date of the Berinsfield vessel.

These vessels are from a group likely to date in the period c AD 80–120 (for further discussion see above).

- 10 Context 137, fabric R10 with grey slip over exterior. Tall folded beaker with upright, slightly beaded rim. The form is not paralleled in Young or in the Nene Valley. The Oxfordshire reduced ware folded beakers R36 and R37 have curving everted rims (Young 1977, 217–218). Nene Valley examples occur with both everted and straight rims, but the latter do not seem to appear with beaded tops until the 4th century, by which time the body form has circular indentations rather than tall folds (cf. Howe, Perrin and Mackreth 1980 nos 40–43 with nos 51 and 52). The present vessel is almost certainly a local product and is likely to date to the later 3rd century.
- 11 Context 159/2, fabric F51. A colour-coated imitation of Drag. 33 (Young 1977 type C88).
- 12 Context 155, fabric F51. Young type C78, with decoration of rosette and demi-rosette stamps.

Pottery discussion

The Roman pottery assemblage from Berinsfield, situated within the area of the Oxfordshire pottery industry (and less than 1 km to the SE of the known production site at Allen's Pit [Harden 1936, 82–94]), is dominated by locally produced vessels, which accounted for up to c 93% of the material. Samian and black-burnished wares were the only significant imports from outside the region, and the only other identified non-local wares were three amphora sherds, Verulamium products (white wares and mortaria), Nene Valley colour-coated ware, pink grogged ware and late Roman shell-tempered ware, all the British products being introduced in very small quantities from the E and NE. It may be significant that all the British sources, apart from black-burnished ware, probably lay within the civitas of the Catuvellauni.

The pottery indicates Roman activity from at least the later 1st century AD, with the possibility that a few vessels may have been of earlier date, up to the later 4th century. Diagnostic very late Roman groups, characterised by the latest Oxfordshire products and by large quantities of shell-tempered wares are, however, absent, though they seem to have been present no more than c 100 m to the S in the area examined in 1960 (Sutton 1961/2, 14–18). At both Appleford (Saunders 1980, 81) and Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986, fiche 7 C1) it was suggested that shell-tempered wares became more significant in the second half of the 4th century. This is consistent with the picture from Berinsfield. The chronological breakdown of the pottery between

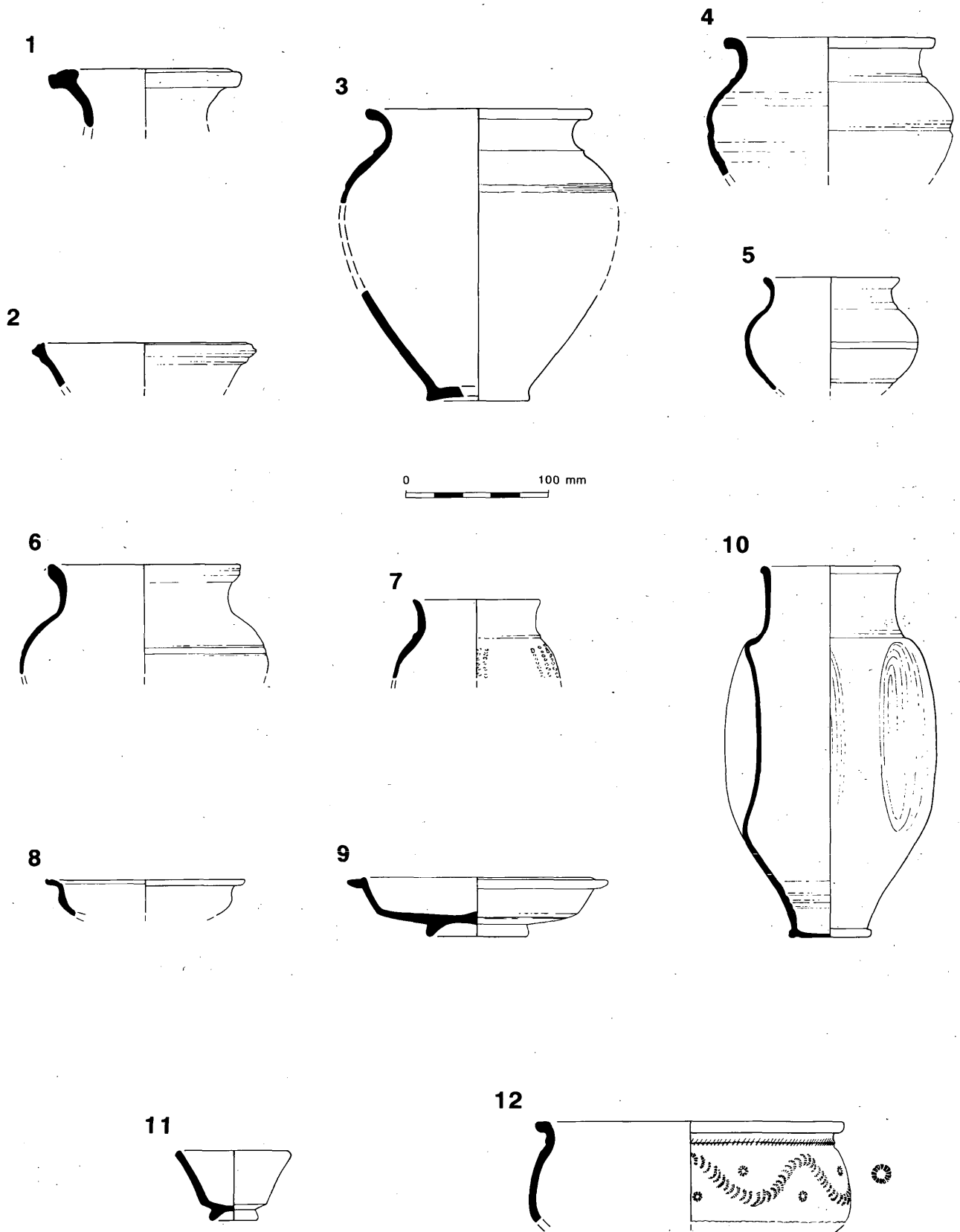


Figure 11 Romano-British pottery

early and late Roman is almost even, with 39.5% of all the Roman sherds occurring in contexts assigned to the phase groups 1–3 (see above), 47.6% in groups 4 and 5 and 12.9% in unstratified deposits. The fact that some of the phase 2 groups might have been of later Roman date can be offset by the occurrence of redeposited early material in the later deposits. The pottery therefore suggests a relatively uniform level of activity through the Roman period, perhaps with a slight increase of activity in the later 3rd and early 4th centuries.

The suggestion of more intensive later Roman activity is borne out by the evidence of the vessel types which, while dominated by jars, is not overwhelmed by them to the extent that would be expected in an assemblage with a heavy emphasis on the early Roman period. The relatively wide spread of vessel types, with quite high representation of bowls and beakers, for example, indicates, in the absence of evidence for functional peculiarities in the assemblage, a substantial later Roman component.

This picture contrasts somewhat with that derived from the area to the S examined in 1960, where the Roman assemblage was primarily late and probably contained groups later than any of those found in the 1974–5 excavation. Since the highest density of later Roman features in the 1974–5 excavation lay at the S end of the area it is clear that the latest Roman focus lay still further S, probably in or very close to the area of the 1960 work, though here also there were no identifiable structures (Sutton 1961/2, 14).

The assemblage appears to be of low to middling status, though it may have changed in the course of the Roman period. The representation of 'fine and specialist' wares, 15.4% of the total sherds, is quite high, but is probably inflated because of the easy access to sources of fine (colour-coated) and white wares. It is notable that the representation of samian is at a low level and early Roman fine wares are almost entirely absent. The very low incidence of amphorae is also significant. In the later Roman period the occurrence of quite large quantities of local colour-coated wares is what would be expected on almost any site in the region, particularly one as close as Berinsfield to known kiln sites and the market centre of Dorchester, but the increase in fine wares might also suggest some change in status. Figures from Barton Court Farm are not directly comparable since the material was only quantified by weight, but in the late Roman phase 20.5% of the Roman assemblage was described as Oxfordshire ware (including colour-coated, white slipped, mortaria and other oxidised fabrics; Miles 1986, fiche 7 C3). This is broadly comparable with the representation of these wares at Berinsfield. It is going beyond the evidence, however, to postulate the presence of a small-scale villa in the later Roman period at Berinsfield on the basis of this comparison. A parallel situation can be seen at Appleford, where the published pottery superficially suggests that the

substantial late Roman component of the assemblage contained a fairly high proportion of fine and specialist wares (Saunders 1980). Here the nearest known likely villa site lay c 800 m from the excavations, though there was a suggestion that there could have been another romanised building even closer (Hinchcliffe and Thomas 1980, 110). The lack of quantification of pottery for this and other nearby sites is regrettable.

It should be noted that there are no peculiarities of the Roman assemblage from the Anglo-Saxon graves which might suggest that sherds were being selected for inclusion in the grave fills. The average sherd size was very small (less than 6 g). There was a relatively high proportion of Oxfordshire colour-coated sherds, but these were on average even smaller than the rest of the group and do not indicate that this fabric was singled out for collection and redeposition.

DISCUSSION OF THE ROMAN EVIDENCE

by David Miles

The salvage excavation does not in itself throw substantial new light on the Romano-British rural settlement in the Thames valley. The complex of enclosures must be seen as a small part of the rural hinterland of Dorchester where trackways connect enclosures, farmsteads and small villas (see Rowley 1985, 22). The most extensive block of contemporary landscape can be reconstructed from cropmark evidence between Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham and Appleford (Benson and Miles 1974, Maps 34–35; Miles 1977) across the river Thames, W of Dorchester. The cropmarks to the N of the Roman town form less coherent and extensive patterns owing to geological variation, soils less conducive to cropmark formation and the presence of modern development.

The rectilinear block of enclosures, orientated N-S, probably represent a continuation of the block of similar features recorded by Sutton (1961/2, Fig. 1). Sutton's Wally Corner site was uncovered during gravel extraction S of the Wally Corner road to Berinsfield and covered approximately 100 x 70 m. Sutton believed that the enclosures were shortlived and dated to the later Roman period, which is supported by the ceramics which he published. However, the aerial photographic evidence indicates that some of the N-S linear features which he observed continued across the modern road into the present site.

Sutton found no trace of buildings though fragments of clay roofing tile may indicate the presence of a Romanised farmhouse in the area. A structure of this kind would explain the presence of Corallian Ragstone in the Anglo-Saxon graves. Similar reuse of Romano-British building material was observed by the author during excavations at Butler's Field, Lechlade in 1985 (Miles and Palmer 1985, 13; Boyle *et al.* forthcoming).

Almost 1 km due N another cropmark complex was excavated at Mount Farm in 1934 by J N L Myres (1937) and more extensively in 1977–78 by G Lambrick (forthcoming) of the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Between this site and Wally Corner the relatively heavy soils have not produced clear cropmarks. The N-S orientation of the Mount Farm cropmarks, particularly the trackway systems, suggests that we are seeing fragments of a landscape which may be much more extensive than indicated by the keyholes provided by aerial photography. However the Mount Farm trackways and enclosures appear to have their origins in the Iron Age (Lambrick 1979, Fig. 30), though they continue into the Roman period.

Because of the presence of perched water tables waterlogged biological deposits were quite well preserved at Mount Farm (Robinson forthcoming). These complemented the remains of carbonized plants (Jones forthcoming) to provide a picture of the changing environment N of Dorchester from the Bronze Age to the Anglo-Saxon period. In the Roman period the landscape around Mount Farm appears to have been open, with relatively little grassland. Dung beetles, indicators of grazed pasture, were few: 2.3% of Coleoptera compared with 21% at the riverside site of Farmoor, 16% at the

second terrace farmstead at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon and 9.8% at Appleford.

Spelt wheat predominated in the Roman period at Mount Farm (Jones forthcoming) and there are clear indications of intensification and specialisation in cereal farming as observed at Ashville, Abingdon (Jones 1978, 109). Flax capsules in both waterlogged samples suggests that this crop was grown on the clay slopes between Mount Farm and Wally Corner. The excavators of Mount Farm suggest, on the basis of evidence of celery (*Apium graveolens*) that market gardening may have been practised, encouraged by the proximity of the Roman town of Dorchester. Similar use may have been made of the enclosures at Wally Corner.

As at Wally Corner there was little evidence of contemporary occupation at Mount Farm. This was supported by the biological evidence, with no synanthropic beetles and few perennial weeds. It is possible, therefore, that the land up to 2.5 km N of Dorchester was being cultivated by farmers who had their permanent houses in the Roman town, or from farmsteads closer to the rivers Thames and Thame. Unfortunately the piecemeal salvage excavations at Wally Corner do not allow us to interpret the character of these typical Thames valley cropmarks with confidence.