

THE ROMAN SITE AT HILL FARM, HAVERSHAM: EXCAVATIONS AND WATCHING BRIEF 2002–2004

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A small-scale excavation at Hill Farm, Haversham, Milton Keynes, revealed evidence of Roman occupation from the mid 1st through to the 3rd or 4th centuries AD. The earliest feature was a ditch of a probable late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure. This was succeeded in the later 1st/2nd century by stone-founded buildings. It appears that the buildings were abandoned during the 3rd century and little material was subsequently deposited on the site. The finds recovered indicate particularly intense activity in the 1st and 2nd centuries. The unusual abundance of fine wares suggests that a dining area lay nearby. While little building material was present, and it was not clear what sort of buildings the remains represented, the occasional roof tile, box flue tile and painted wall plaster suggest the presence of a villa in the vicinity.

Features found over a wider area during building work confirm earlier records of widespread but poorly defined occupation here in Roman times.

INTRODUCTION

An archaeological excavation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology for Bastion Build Ltd on land at Hill Farm, Haversham, Milton Keynes, in advance of the conversion of farm buildings to residential accommodation (NGR SP 837437; Planning Application ref. 02/00914/FUL). The excavation was undertaken in December 2002 and covered an area of about 260 sq m in an area proposed for a new accommodation unit. This lay to the rear of a building formerly used as a granary. The work was undertaken as part of a watching brief on the development site in accordance with a specification issued by the Archaeological Officer for Milton Keynes City Council, Mr Brian Giggins, in August 2002. The discovery of Roman remains during the watching brief prompted a limited open area salvage excavation, the scope of which was agreed with the Archaeological Officer in a meeting on 27th November.

It was proposed to excavate archaeological deposits as far as building formation level (around 300 mm) within the footprint of the accommodation unit, with deeper excavations along the wall footings. Substantial excavations were not to be undertaken below this level to avoid compromising the competence of the ground from an engi-

neering point of view.

After the excavations the watching brief continued alongside construction work and was finally completed in July 2004. Other Roman features were also recovered and a summary is included in this report.

The site archive, comprising the field records, synthesised records, finds and unedited specialist reports, is to be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum, Aylesbury, under the Accession Code AYBCM 2003.1.

SITE LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

Hill Farm is situated on the upper, south-east facing slope of the valley of the Ouse at 70–75 m OD (Fig. 1). The underlying geology is mapped as Upper Lias clays with areas of Cornbrash and Blisworth limestone (NCC digital mapping data).

Hill Farm and the surrounding area have been known to be rich in Roman remains since the later part of the 19th century, with reports of coins, brooches and other metal objects as well as pottery and building material. Modern investigations, all on a small and opportunistic scale, have taken place particularly from the 1950s with the involvement of the Wolverton and District Archaeological Society. The Milton Keynes Sites and Monuments Record con-

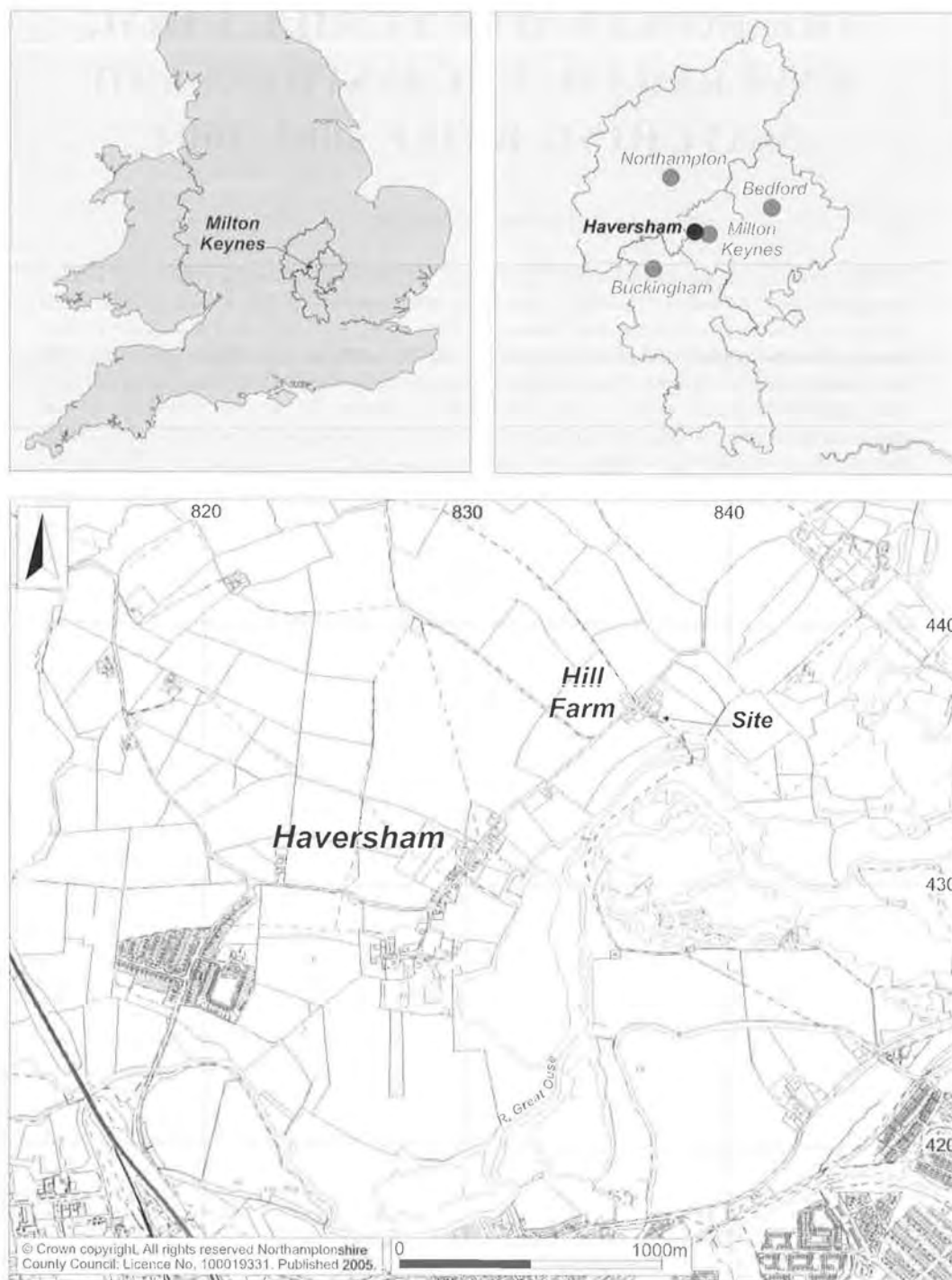


FIGURE 1 Hill Farm, Haversham, site location.

tains extracts from the Society's Newsletters, as well as notes and correspondence relating to the discoveries, from which the background to the present excavations has been collated. A plan of Hill Farm by the late Robert Harris, showing the locations of several of the observations, is part of the SMR archive. The plan is dated 1957 although it has later annotations. The principal archaeological trenches, excluding many scattered findings, are shown on Figure 2.

In 1962 an archaeological exploration was undertaken on the site of the present excavations (Fig. 2) when two trenches, each 8 ft by 6 ft in size, were opened to the rear of the granary (Cockerill and Harris 1962); this was in response to the discovery of a substantial Roman wall and mortar floor within the granary during alterations to the floor in July 1960. The Roman building appears to have been the same as that revealed in a pit dug next to the granary in 1956, when a thick layer of oyster shells and a coin of Gallienus (AD 253–68) were also reported. The archaeological trench exposed a spread of occupation material containing 2nd–3rd century pottery, roof tiles, glass vessels and oyster shells overlying, in the southern trench, what was interpreted as a floor with a spread of 1st-century material. This sequence largely accords with the present findings. Under this was found a feature whose upper levels yielded a coin of Cunobelin and a bronze fibula of a similar mid 1st century date (*ibid.*). Of relevance to the present excavations were the former cottages immediately north-east of the 1962 trench, which were still standing at that time, but which have since been demolished (Fig. 3). The disturbance to this part of the site left little Roman material surviving and this is reflected in the site plans presented here.

EXCAVATION METHODS

The total area of the new accommodation unit, approximately 10 m wide and 26 m long was stripped of overburden by a JCB fitted with a toothless 1.5 m wide ditching bucket as far as archaeological deposits. The 10 m length adjacent to the farm building was then cleaned by hand. Most of the remaining part of the plot had been heavily disturbed during the construction and later demolition of the farm cottages and was cleaned and planned selectively. The area of archaeological interest was planned at 1:50 and excavated. It was selectively machine stripped twice more, exposing features at each subsequent level, which were further exam-

ined by excavation. The whole site was reduced by about 300 mm exposing the natural clay substrate in the area of about 10 m by 7 m, the area of most archaeological interest.

SITE DESCRIPTION (Fig. 4)

Phase 1: mid 1st century AD

Ditch 62

The earliest feature on the site was a ditch, two arms of which were revealed (62 and 64) turning a sharp angle from an approximately south-east to north-east alignment (Fig. 4). It was about 2 m wide. It was only excavated as far as the formation level for the new building, although a later inspection of the new wall footings showed that the ditch was over 0.8 m deep, and a projection of the ditch edges suggests that it would have been about 1.2 m deep below the stripped surface. Despite limited excavations, the upper fill (63 and 65) yielded an assemblage of 13 sherds all largely dateable to the third quarter of the 1st century AD. These included a decorated sherd of South Gaulish samian (Dragendorf 29) and several grog-tempered sherds of the Iron Age tradition.

To the south of the ditch were several small pits and post-holes (51, 53, 55, 57 and 59). It is not clear whether any of these were contemporary with Ditch 62 although they were stratigraphically early. No dateable finds were retrieved.

Phase 2A: late 1st – 2nd century AD

Ditch 32

To the north of Ditch 62, a short section of another ditch (32) was found running NW–SE. This was about 1.2 m wide. Its interpretation is uncertain but it may have been a robber trench for an early phase of wall. It was clearly sealed by the Phase 2B floor (37) of the later building and cut by the wall robber trench (30). Pottery from its fill (33) was of 1st–2nd century type, possibly all pre-dating the mid 2nd century. The pottery makes it seem unlikely that the ditch was contemporary with Ditch 62.

Phase 2B: late 1st – 2nd century AD

Layer 38

When Ditch 62 had been completely filled it was at

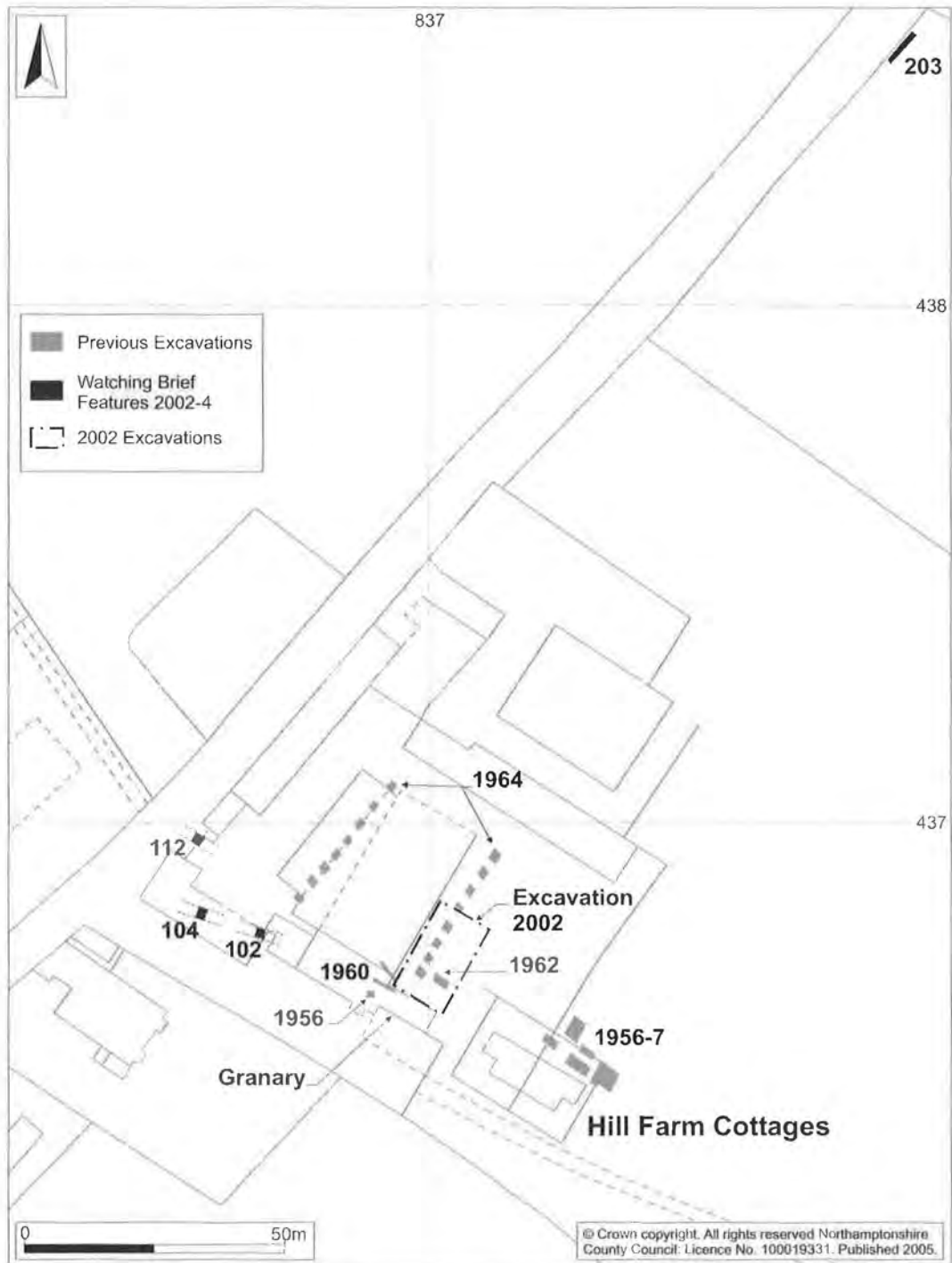


FIGURE 2 Trench location (2002), previous excavations and watching brief features.

least partly sealed by a crushed limestone and clay surface (38). This survived intermittently in the southern part of the site and was probably part of a more general spread which may have been intended as an external floor surface. Alternatively, it may have been a more *ad hoc* spread of redeposited natural derived from building activities. A number of the earlier (Phase 1) pits and post-holes were also sealed by this layer.

Wall 2

Layer 38 was cut by, or possibly contemporary with, a stone wall forming a corner in the south-

western part of the site. It was about 0.60 m wide and survived to just one course in height. It was constructed of roughly squared limestone facing-blocks with some smaller rubble in the core and bonded with a clay and sand mortar (Plate 1). The wall was bedded on a shallow foundation of pitched limestone rubble, set directly into the natural substrate of mixed limestone and clay.

Although probably the corner of a building, there did not appear to be a surviving internal floor surface. A dark silt deposit (3) within the building is perhaps more likely to represent an accumulation of material after its use (Phase 4).



FIGURE 3 Trench location (2002) and 1881 OS map transcription.



PLATE 1 Wall 2 with building rubble in foreground (looking south).



PLATE 2 Excavation area after cutting of wall footings, with granary to rear (looking south).

Wall 50

To the north of Wall 2 was a partly-surviving length of stone wall in the same east-west alignment and of similar construction. As its eastern end had been removed, it is not clear whether it would have once aligned with the north-south arm of Wall 2. It was not attached to any other structure in the excavated area and there were no associated robber trenches. Its purpose remains unknown.

Wall 22

To the north of Wall 50, there was evidence of three lengths of largely-robbed wall on the same alignments as Walls 2 and 50. It was of a similar construction to the others, again surviving to just one course. It would have formed the end of a small building about 4 m wide. There were no finds from the wall itself. Inside this building there was a rudimentary floor of clay and limestone fragments (37), 120 mm thick, which butted the walls. This sealed the earlier ditch 32. The floor contained a small sherd of Terra Nigra derived fabric of the 1st or 2nd century.

Phase 3: 1st – 2nd century AD

Layer 5

Over layer 38, this grey-brown clay loam layer, to the east of Wall 2 and appearing to abut it, contained a large assemblage (311 sherds, 3560 g) of Roman pottery. This represents about 55% by number and weight of the entire Roman assemblage from the site. The vast majority of the material dates to the 1st and 2nd centuries, although there were two sherds of black-burnished ware (BB2) probably of the 4th century, which may be intrusive, and a small quantity of post-medieval pottery, which certainly is intrusive.

The pottery forms comprised a high proportion of bowls, dishes, beakers and cups, suggesting that the assemblage represents waste specifically from dining (see on).

Layer 23

This was a mixed layer of clay, crushed limestone and small pebbles which appeared to be part of a floor between Walls 2 and 22 and sealed Wall 50. It was without finds and had an uncertain relationship with Layer 5, but was probably contemporary with it, as well as with Walls 2 and 22.

Pit 68

This was a sub-oval feature a little over 1 m long and about 1 m wide. Only the top fill (69) was examined and was found to be a mixed deposit of grey-brown loam with clay and weathered limestone fragments. It contained a few sherds dateable to the 2nd century.

Phase 4: 3rd – 4th century AD

Robber Trench 30

Wall 22 had largely been removed by this trench which had been cut to a depth of 0.33 m and back-filled with a mixed deposit of very dark soil and limestone (31). It contained 14 sherds (153 g) of undiagnostic pottery, including a BB1 rim of late 3rd-4th century type.

Pit 34

This pit cut Robber Trench 30 at the edge of the excavated area. It had a similar fill (35) which contained an assemblage of pottery (20 sherds, 179 g) all dating to 2nd to 3rd centuries.

Layer 3

This occupied the interior of the structure represented by Wall 2. It was a mixed layer of dark clay loam, with small and medium sized limestone fragments and some fine gravel. It yielded a total of 45 sherds (365 g) of pottery with a date range from the 1st to 3rd centuries. This wide date range and the small sherd size suggests that the material was largely redeposited from later disturbances.

Layer 4

This abutted Wall 2 on its northern side. It was a deposit of small and medium limestone fragments in a dark soil matrix and is interpreted as a destruction deposit. A small collection of 13 sherds (100g) of pottery is dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries, their fragmented state suggesting that they were redeposited.

Layer 39

This layer, similar to 4, was in the south-eastern part of the site and was a deposit of limestone rubble and pebbles was without finds.

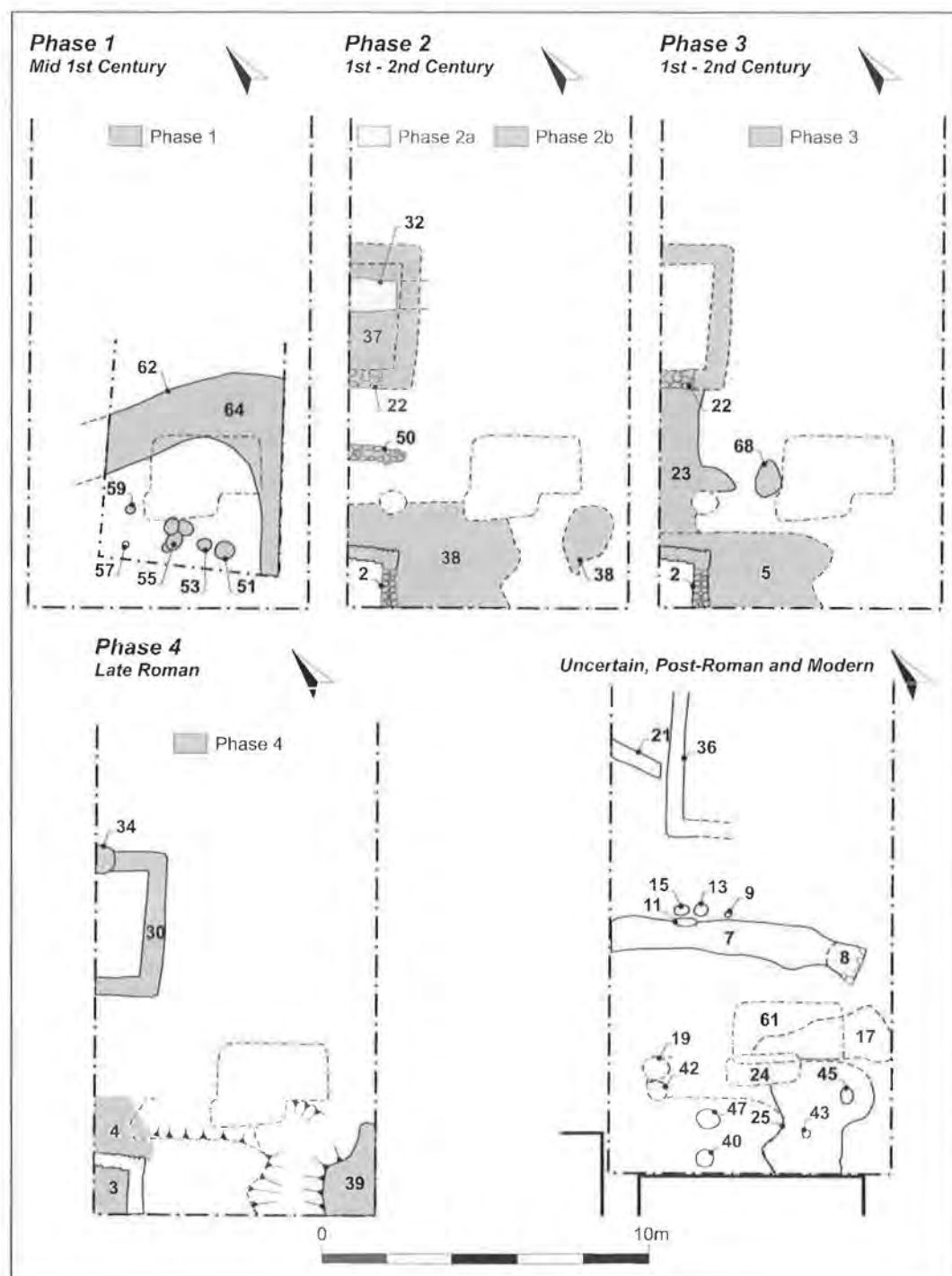


FIGURE 4 Excavation phase plans.

Undated, medieval and later features

Pits and post-holes

A number of small pits and post-holes (19, 40, 42, 43, 45 and 47) cut the Roman layers 4, 5 and the natural substrate 70. Some Roman pottery was recovered from 40 (Fill 41), 47 (Fill 48), 45 (Fill 46) and 43 (Fill 44), dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries, but it appears likely that all is redeposited.

Pitched Stone Surface 7

This shallow-bedded construction of pitched limestone incorporated some post-medieval brick and tile. It was 1.7 m wide. The eastern end terminated in a drystone construction of limestone blocks (8) which survived to a single course. The feature was directly overlain by modern soil. It was not excavated, but appears likely to be a post-medieval farmyard feature such as a path. Several small features cut its northern edge.

Wall 36

A narrow (0.62 m wide) wall in the northern part of the site, apparently largely of drystone build. The use of large interlocking blocks of stone without a rubble core, distinguishes it from the typical Roman constructions on this site. Its position ties in precisely with a small building depicted on the 1881 OS map (Fig. 3).

Stone surface 21

Remnants of a possible path in the much-disturbed northern part of the site. It consisted of a linear arrangement of limestone and pebbles. There was no dating evidence but the feature is likely to be post-medieval.

Hollow 25 containing pig burial

This shallow and irregular hollow contained the skeleton of a pig in its centre. The fill (26) contained 19th–20th century Staffordshire ware as well as some Roman sherds.

Pit 61

The position and size of this pit coincides closely with the archaeological trench excavated by E G Cockerill and R S Harris in 1962 (Fig. 2) and there is little reason to doubt that this is that trench.

Pit 24

A vertically-sided and flat-based pit, about 0.25 m

deep. Its purpose is unknown. Its relationships with 25 and 61 were unclear, but the fact that it was not recorded in the 1962 excavation indicates that it is the latest feature. It contained pottery dating to the 18th–20th centuries as well as a Roman sherd (Fill 6).

Watching Brief; December 2002 – July 2004 (Fig. 2)

The watching brief was maintained intermittently during the excavation of wall footings and drainage trenches. A number of other features, some of which contained Roman pottery, were recorded, although within the narrow construction trenches (normally 0.5 m or less in width) these were difficult to characterise. Trench depths were generally limited to about 0.4 m below modern soils although some were deeper.

In the area of the existing farm buildings, 25 m west of the excavation area, there were three probable ditches on NW–SE alignments (Fig. 2). Ditches 102 and 104 seem likely to have been the same feature. Ditch 104 showed two possible earlier cuts (106 and 108) on its southern side which made a total combined feature width of around 4.5 m. These were not evident on the southern side of Ditch 102 and it is possible that the earlier features were unrelated to the later ditch. Ditch 104 itself was over 2.5 m wide and had an upper fill of very dark silt containing three sherds of pottery of 2nd to 3rd-century date. There were no other finds from these features. The retention of an existing wall to the west of 104 gave no opportunity to see whether the ditch extended further in this direction.

Ditch 112 to the north appeared to be on a similar alignment to 104 and 102, although it was not possible to be sure of this. It showed in section as a single, steep-sided cut about 2.5 m wide. An *imbrey* of probable 3rd or 4th century date was the only find.

A group of three features lay beyond the northern boundary of the site, 5 m from where a new drain discharged into the field ditch (a former stream). Pottery and stone had already been recorded, by Robert Harris, from this area. The principal feature was a probable ditch (203 – Fig 2) the upper fill of which (202) contained a mixed assemblage of 17 sherds dating to the 1st/2nd and 3rd/4th centuries and some oyster shell. The ditch was traced for a length of over 7 m and it is likely that the drainage trench had intercepted it at an

acute angle, although its orientation was not clear. Close-by to the south-west were two smaller features, 205 and 209, which may have been ditches or pits. Feature 209 contained three small sherds of Roman pottery.

The lack of positively identified Roman features over the remainder of the development site is probably largely due to the extent of more recent construction on this plot. Disturbances were noted frequently in the other wall footings and drainage trenches. A stone-lined well, uncovered in the northern part of the site, is depicted on the 1881 edition of the Ordnance Survey's 1:2500 map (Fig. 3) and is undoubtedly post-medieval.

ROMAN POTTERY by D F Mackreth BA FSA

Introduction

A moderately large assemblage of 556 sherds (6077 g) of Roman pottery was recovered from the excavations. Most came from contexts of Roman date, although there was also a small collection of unstratified and residual material. The majority of the pottery has a date of manufacture in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, with a smaller group of 3rd-century pottery and very little, if any, which need be of the 4th century.

The following report, contains comments on the pottery from individual contexts. This is abstracted from a more detailed report retained in archive. A quantification of wares by context is presented in Table 1. Reference is made to the fabric series in Marney (1989) where correlations are possible.

Pottery by context

- 2 A rim sherd of shelly ware storage jar and two fragments of grey ware were all that came from this wall.
- 3 This layer yielded 45 sherds, of generally small size. They include Central Gaulish samian (two or three sherds of cup form Dr. 33), a pie-dish in Terra Nigra derivative fabric, an imitation Dr.18/31 in Oxfordshire colour-coated fabric, and a sandy grey ware folded beaker. The date range is basically from the later 2nd century to c AD 200, if not into the mid 3rd century.
- 4 This small mixed collection consisted mainly of Central Gaulish samian, including a Dr. 45 mortarium and Dr. 18/31. There was also a sherd burnished beaker with a bead rim in

Orange ware. The assemblage is of later 1st to 2nd century date.

- 5 This layer contained 311 sherds, more than half the site assemblage. It includes a high proportion of bowls, dishes or plates and drinking vessels. An estimate of the numbers of vessels is shown in Table 2. The samian (107 sherds) includes ten or eleven drinking cups in forms Dr. 33 and Dr. 27, and a similar number of uncertain form. There are over 30 plates/dishes in forms Dr. 18 and/or Dr.1, Dr.36, Walters 79, Curle 11, and of unidentified form. The five bowl sherds include at least one in form Dr. 37, and there is one large decorated drinking vessel (form Dr.30).

The Orange ware sherds comprised 21–23 beakers or cups and a similar number of other forms (bowls, jars and plates). There were a further four colour-coated beakers, and 'pie dishes' in colour-coated and *Terra Nigra* derivative wares. Two sherds of amphora were also present (not shown in Table 2) and several fragments of jug/pitcher in grey sandy fabrics.

A few storage jar sherds were present in shelly and grog-tempered fabrics. Cooking pots were represented in shelly ware (four sherds), black-burnished ware (two sherds) and possibly also grogged ware (one sherd).

The quantity of samian from this layer is remarkably large. It forms over two-thirds of the total weight from the site. The whole is equal to the weight of grogged wares, and they are second only to the amount of shell-tempered wares. This, coupled with the make-up of the rest of the deposit, argues that this is not a random rubbish collection but derives from a specific functional area. On a high status site one might argue that the specific function was dining. However, without any indication of what the status was, all one can point to is that it represents in some way a communal eating area.

The general date range for this material is the 1st to 2nd centuries with the Oxfordshire and black-burnished wares probably of the later 3rd century. A few post-medieval sherds from this layer indicate some intrusive material, probably derived from Pit 25.

TABLE I Quantification of Roman pottery by ware and context.

ctx	TS		Amp		BB		CC		Grey		Grog		NVCC		Or		Oxf		self		Shw		TN der		white	
	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt
2									2	10											1	150				
3	7	15			2	15	5	10	16	200	3	9			2	21	1	30			6	50			3	15
4	8	50							1	10					1	10					1	10	2	20		
5	107	714	2	—	2	18	2	5	34	413	22	700	3	15	53	520			1	30	54	835	22	245	9	65
10															1	10										
12									1	4											1	55				
14	1	10																							1	1
18	3	30							2	10													3	20		
21	2	20													1	5							1	15		
25																					1	10				
27	6	—																								
31					1	10			2	28	2	25									9	90				
33									3	30	5	55	1	8							15	125	4	70		
35	1	15					1	15					9	65	6	25	1	22			2	37				
37									1	5													2	10		
41	3	10							3	16																
44	3	34							1	4											1	18				
46									1	2	1	3														
48	7	55							4	25											1	5				
52									3	10																
54									1	5	3	50														
63	1	12							1	5	7	105									9	190			1	5
65									2	40	5	68									4	15				
67											1	10									1	3				
69									3	5			1	5	1	10					3	30	1	5		
U/S	3	70	2	—			2	45	4	45					2	6					1	55	6	100		
TOT	152	1035	4	—	5	43	10	75	85	867	51	1026	14	93	67	607	2	52	1	30	110	1678	41	485	14	86

Abbreviations and comments

TS *Terra sigillata* or samian. Fine body, fairly hard fired and given a high gloss through the properties of the special slip used. SG (South Gaulish) has white specks. CG (Central Gaulish) has none. No other distinctions made. Nothing obviously East Gaulish was seen although one in context 18 might be. The forms given (f) are usually from Dragendorff's series.

Amp Amphora. Manufacturing area not established.

BB Black-burnished ware

CC Colour-coated, manufactory unidentified

Grey Sandy grey ware.

Grog Crushed baked clay with little sand

NVCC Nene Valley colour-coat. The only Nene Valley fabric and style exported outside the manufacturing area and the Fens. Main series begins after c. AD 150. Fabric 6.

Or Orange ware

Oxf Oxford ware

Self Self-slipped ware

Shw Shelly ware

TN der *Terra nigra* derived ware

White White ware

TABLE 2 Estimated number of vessels by form and ware from Layer 5.

Ware	TS	Orange	CC	TN der	Shw	grog	grey	BB2	Total
Form									
cup/beaker	22-24	20-22	4						46-50
bowl	5	4				1			10
dish/plate	30								30
'pie-dish'			1	5	1				7
'dog-dish'				4					4
jug/pitcher							1?		1?
storage jar					1	2?			1-3
cooking pot				1?	4	1?	1?	2	6-9

33 A moderately large assemblage, mainly of cooking pots and bowls. It comprised mainly shelly ware, one a bowl with a grooved rim. The grog-tempered vessels included a cooking pot with an upright rim, while among the *Terra Nigra* derivative sherds was a bowl with an everted rim and rilling on the body. The pottery is all of 1st and 2nd century date and would seem to represent a group accumulated over time rather than deposited as a single event. Nothing need date later than the mid 2nd century.

35 The assemblage included a relatively high proportion of Nene Valley colour-coated wares, including three sherds of black folded-with-scales beaker, five sherds of fine folded funnel top beaker and a large coarse folded beaker. There were also folded beaker sherds in Orange ware. The assemblage is broadly dateable to the later 2nd into 3rd centuries, although a sherd of possible Oxfordshire parchment ware may be slightly later.

37 Only two small sherds, one of *Terra Nigra* derivative.

41 This fill contained three small sherds of samian including a mortarium and a cup (Dr. 27). There were also sherds of sandy grey ware. Possibly all date to the 1st century.

44 This fill also contained small scraps of samian, including a sherd from a decorated bowl (probably Dr.37). There were a few other sherds of sandy and shelly ware.

46 Two scraps of pottery only.

48 The quantity of samian (seven sherds, 55 g) is exceptional in proportion to the rest of the pottery (five sherds, 30 g). It includes South Gaul-

ish and Central Gaulish plates or dishes (Dr.18/31) and cups (Dr.27? and Dr.33).

52 Three scraps of sandy coarse pottery.

54 Four sherds (55 g) of shell, shell and grog, and sand and grog-tempered pottery. All of 1st century date.

63 This fill contained predominantly shelly (nine sherds) and grogged (seven sherds) pottery. The shelly ware included a hand-made cooking pot with a grooved rim, and a grog-and-sand tempered pot made on a slow wheel. These are all 1st century types. A sherd of decorated South Gaulish samian can be dated to around AD 60-80. The assemblage as a whole is probably Neronian-Flavian in date.

65 This assemblage of 15 sherds is also predominantly in shelly and grog, or grog-and-sand fabrics. It includes a sherd of possible scored ware in the Iron Age tradition, and a fragment of cordoned bowl/jar traditionally classed as 'Belgic'. The group as a whole is of mid 1st century date.

67 Scraps of shelly and grog-with-sand wares.

69 A small collection (nine sherds) of shell-tempered, *Terra Nigra* derivative, Orange, sandy and Nene Valley colour-coated wares. All probably dating to the 2nd century, although the Nene Valley beaker would be later 2nd century at the earliest.

Discussion

From the pottery, there is little that can be said about the site as a whole as so little was excavated. However, the assemblage recovered shows occupation from around the middle of the 1st century AD, with fairly intensive activity in the 1st and 2nd cen-

turies in particular. The types of pot represented are biased towards the table wares, with more samian than is common from such a small sample of the site. The general absence of 4th-century pottery points to this area having ceased to be intensively occupied in the 3rd century, and this is borne out when the residual material is taken in to account. There is however enough later material from the site as a whole to suggest that the site was redefined in some way towards the end of the 3rd century rather than abandoned.

Pottery from the later watching brief

A further 34 sherds were recovered. The date range points mainly to the 2nd and 3rd centuries with some 4th-century material.

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unstratified | A collection of eleven sherds including fragments of Central Gaulish samian, a probable Oxford Ware vessel, a folded beaker, and shelly and grogged ware storage jars. There were also 11 sherds of tile, all but one probably tegulae, the other possibly a pila. |
| 103 | Three greyware sherds, probably 2nd–3rd century. |
| 111 | Shell-tempered <i>imbrex</i> , probably 3rd–4th century. |
| 202 | Seventeen sherds including fragments of Central Gaulish samian, a white flagon, possible Oxford Ware vessels including a mortarium, and nine miscellaneous sandy and shelly wares. |
| 208 | Two scraps of sand-and-grog-tempered pottery and one of shelly ware. |

OTHER FINDS by Tora Hylton

The excavations produced a small collection of non-pottery finds spanning the Roman and post-medieval period. Most of the Roman material was retrieved from stratified deposits associated with the remains of a limestone structure represented by Wall 2 in the south-west corner of the site (Contexts 3, 4, 5), while smaller quantities were residual within features of post-medieval, modern or uncertain date.

In total there are 23 individual or group recorded small finds in four material types, copper alloy (5),

iron (10), bone (1) and glass (7). Bulk finds are represented by a small quantity of ceramic building material. A catalogue of the finds is retained in the archive.

Small finds

The assemblage is small and there is little of intrinsic interest. Objects worthy of note include, a copper-alloy coin and pin, a bone needle and two sherds of vessel glass.

The coin was residual within a modern layer (20), it has been identified (Ian Meadows) as a 4th-century coin of Gratian, AD 367–375 (ref: Carson, Hill and Kent 1960, 296–99).

A copper-alloy pin and bone needle came from Layer 5. The pin measures 89 mm in length and it displays similarities to Hilary Cool's Group 3, Sub-group A (1990, fig 4, 6). The head of the pin is cut into the top of the shank and comprises a curved unit between cordons. Cool suggests that pins of this type generally appear to be of 1st and 2nd century date. The bone needle is incomplete, just a vestige of the eye is evident at the top of the shank. The shank has an oval cross-section and tapers to a rounded point, for a similar example see Crummy 1983 (fig 70, 1954–1975).

There are seven small fragments of glass; two sherds were retrieved from Roman deposits while the remainder are residual. Diagnostic forms include, a vertical rim sherd from a ?hemi-spherical bowl and a sherd from the shoulder of a small jar, both are in colourless glass.

Other small finds include two copper-alloy nodules, an iron staple, a wedge and a small collection of nails. Most of this material was residual in later deposits.

Tile

Over three kilos (3.6 kg) of tile, comprising 28 individual fragments, were found in the excavations, and a further 12 fragments, nearly all unstratified, were retrieved during the watching brief. The majority of excavated material was retrieved from Roman deposits (Contexts 2, 4 and 5), while smaller quantities were residual within later deposits. Much of the assemblage is worn and abraded, suggesting that it had been lying around for some time prior to deposition.

Three fabric types are represented and these may be compared with similar fabrics from Milton Keynes (Zeepvat 1987, 120). The predominant fabric

TABLE 3 Animal taxa by context.

Context	<i>Bos</i>	<i>Ovicaprid</i>	<i>Sus</i>	<i>S. ungulate</i>	<i>L. ungulate</i>	Indet.
Layer 3	3	1	1	3	1	3
Layer 4	1				16	
Layer 5	10	6	1			33
Ditch fill 33				1		
Pit fill 52						1
Ditch fill 63	1	2	1			4
Ditch fill 65	1	1				1
Total	16	10	3	4	17	42

Key: S = small, L = large

type is a shell-tempered fabric that fires to a buff/brown (MK Fabric 1). Other fabric types include, a fine sandy fabric which generally fires to an orange colour (MK Fabrics 2 and 3) and a grog-tempered fabric, with pale pink surfaces and a grey core (MK Fabric 5).

Where possible the tiles have been quantified by identifying features unique to specific tile types. The forms identified can be divided into two broad functional groups: roofing tile and hypocaust material; the former predominates. In total there are 13 pieces of roof tile, represented by eight fragments of tegulae and five of imbrex. Two fragments of box flue tile represent hypocaust material, these are distinctive because of the presence of combed keying lines, which occur in both curved and straight decorative styles.

Wall Plaster

Four fragments of painted wall plaster were retrieved from modern deposits (Context 18, 27). Three fragments are coated in red paint and one retains vestiges of a beige paint.

ANIMAL BONE by Karen Deighton

A total of 2936 grams of animal bone were hand collected from the excavation. Of these, 2287 grams (92 fragments) derived from a range of Roman contexts including pits, ditches and layers. This Roman material was identified to species where possible with the aid of Schmid (1972) and recorded.

Preservation

Fragmentation was high, the result of old breaks which were possibly caused by compaction or

trampling, as fractures (where detectable) tended to be spiral and in the mid-shaft region. The frequent nature of fragmentation rendered approximately 55% of the assemblage unidentifiable to taxon. The occurrence of surface weathering was low and homogeneous throughout the contexts under consideration, with bone exhibiting smooth hard surfaces. No evidence of burning was observed, suggesting this was not a preferred method of disposal.

Canid gnawing was noted on nine elements. Butchery was noted on five elements (*Bos* and *Ovicaprid*) and was possibly indicative of both chopping and dismemberment. Concretions of minerals were noted on two elements. A single example of green staining was present suggesting the proximity of the bone to cuprous material.

Species present

The species present were limited to cattle (*Bos*) sheep/goat (*Ovicaprid*) and pig (*Sus*). *Bos* formed the largest identifiable group with sixteen fragments. It should be noted that the dearth of pig remains could be the result of differential preservation (Stallibas 1985). No neonates were present, and again this could be the result of differential preservation. One unfused element (*Bos* distal tibia) was noted indicating a sub-adult animal. A single ageable *Ovicaprid* mandible was present; from which tooth eruption and wear suggested an animal of 6–12 months (Payne 1973).

The bone fragments seemed to derive largely from waste elements such as mandibles, ribs, metapodia and phalanges. This fact in turn suggests the assemblage was generated from the discarding of butchery waste into ditches and pits.

Conclusion

The assemblage was too small to draw any viable conclusions with regard to site economy or animal husbandry. However, it does confirm that a small range of domesticates typical for the period were butchered at or near the site.

OYSTER SHELL by Andrew Mudd

A total of 1754 g of oyster shells was recovered from the excavations. Most of this (1397 g) came from phased Roman deposits, with the rest from uncertain and modern deposits where it was undoubtedly residual. By far the most productive context was Layer 5 which accounted for 1141 g of shell, 65% of the entire assemblage.

DISCUSSION

Date and phasing

The area of excavation was too limited to provide conclusive interpretations of the date and sequence of activity at Hill Farm, and much remains uncertain. However, it seems clear that in Phase 1 a large ditch (62), probably forming the corner of an enclosure, predated the main phases of occupation associated with the stone-founded buildings. Only the upper levels of it were excavated by hand, but the pottery suggests that it had been infilled in the mid to late 1st century. To this early group can be added the coin of Cunobelin and the 'Colchester-derivative' fibula found in 1962 which the published section shows to have come from the upper levels of a feature which is in all probability the same ditch (Cockerill and Harris, *op. cit.*). Small features within the enclosure are stratigraphically early, but there is no way of telling whether they were contemporary with the ditch.

Outside of the enclosure to the north, Ditch 32 was also stratigraphically early, pre-dating the Phase 2 structure here. However, the pottery (10 sherds) appears to be later 1st and 2nd century in date and the ditch would seem to make more sense as a slightly later feature in some way related to the overlying structure, and possibly the robber trench of an earlier wall. The overlying floor (37) and wall (22) are no later in pottery terms, but it seems likely that this group of features related to a building which post-dated the enclosure ditch.

To the south, a compacted 'floor' of clay and

crushed and weathered limestone (38) sealed the Phase 1 features, probably also including Ditch 62, although the nature of the overlying deposit here was less clear. Layer 38 was probably the same layer (of 'greenish-grey clay and yellow mortar') that was found in the 1962 trench (*ibid.*). While possibly deliberately laid, the current excavations show that this was external to the buildings and is perhaps best interpreted as a yard surface. Wall 2 would appear to have been contemporary, indicating the existence of a late 1st/early 2nd century building to the south-west. Its alignment with Wall 22 suggests that both structures were part of the same phase of construction. Wall 50 also fits into this phase although neither it, nor the overlying layer (23) contained dating evidence.

In Phase 3 the building represented by Wall 2 is judged to be still in use since Layer 5, containing the bulk of the occupation material from the site, abutted it. The building therefore appears to have been in use in the late 1st and 2nd centuries, but perhaps no later. There is no secure dating evidence from inside the building where Layer 3 appears to have been a mixed soil both in terms of its composition and the pottery it contained. The fact that Layer 3 overlay the clay geology rather than a floor surface supports the suggestion that was deposited subsequent to the disturbance (probably robbing) of the interior.

The date of abandonment of the building is not clear although the general lack of pottery dating to after the 2nd century from Layer 5 suggests that it may have been in the later 2nd or 3rd centuries. The late 3rd-4th century pottery from Robber Trench 30 would appear to give an indication of the general demise of this part of the site by this period, but perhaps carries the implication that building material was required elsewhere. The lack of late Roman material from the pits cutting the demolition layers 4 and 39 also suggests the absence of activity at this time.

Nature of the site

The excavations investigated only a small part of a site which is both extremely extensive and poorly understood. Of particular interest was the discovery of a substantial ditch predating the buildings, which was filled in around the third quarter of the 1st century. There has never been any suggestion of a military presence at Hill Farm and it seems more likely that there was a late Iron Age settlement

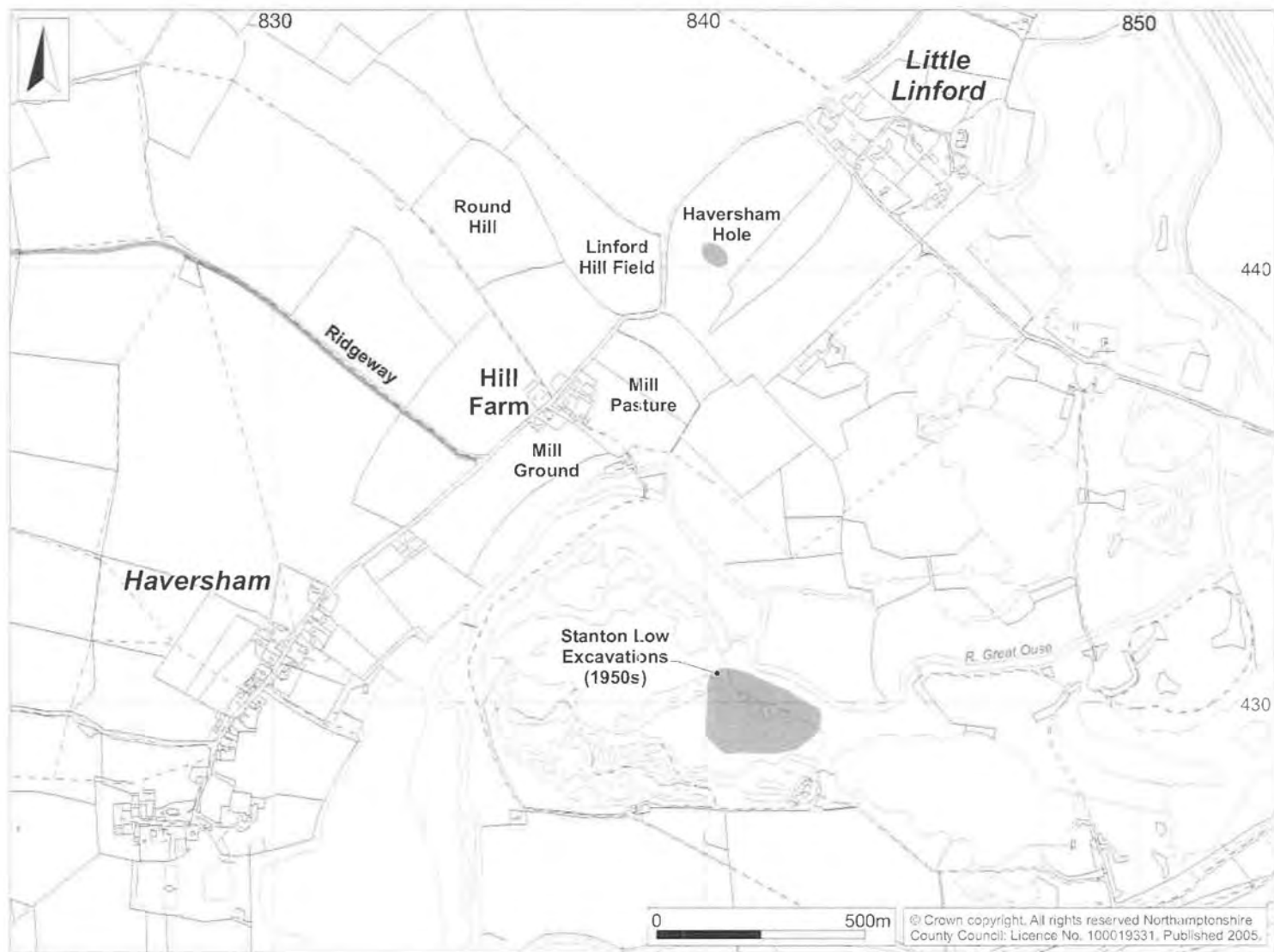


FIGURE 5 Hill Farm and Stanton Low excavations.

here, a development of occupation similar to that discovered at the massive Iron Age and Roman site at Stanton Low, lying to the south-east on the opposite bank of the Ouse less than a kilometre away (Woodfield with Johnson 1989).

The expectation of revealing a Roman stone building in this area was only partly realised and it seems clear that the substantial walls, with mortar and/or limestone floors, revealed in the trenches within and next to the granary in 1956 and 1960, did not extend into the present excavation area, at least in that form. To judge by Harris's sketch plan, the building he noted lay within 10 m of Wall 2 and on the same alignment, so it is possible that Wall 2 represents a different room of the same building. The building can probably be called a 'villa', however that term may be defined. The unusual profile of the pottery assemblage suggests that it to be domestic, with dining a major component of the activities carried out nearby. The quantity of tile suggests that the building was so roofed, but there were insufficient amounts of other Romanised building debris (two fragments of box-flue tile, one tessera, two fragments of wall-plaster) to indicate that these related to the structures revealed rather than coming from a little further away. The poor survival of all three walls and the absence of an identifiable floor associated with Wall 2, indicate that much of the evidence of buildings here has in any case been lost. Wall 22 may have formed part of a smaller outbuilding to one side of the main building, whether the front, rear or side it is not possible to say.

Roman features discovered during the watching brief indicate that the site extended to the boundaries of the present development and beyond. Four features, each probably 2.5 m or more wide, are plausibly boundary ditches. Ditch 203, lying 150 m north-east of the farm buildings, contained abundant domestic debris, suggesting another occupation area close by.

The potential size of the settlement at Hill Farm can be re-iterated. While an assessment of the findings from this area is beyond the scope of this report, the immediately available records indicate that Roman building material has come from Haversham Hole, Linford Hill Field, the eastern side of Mill Pasture, Mill Ground behind the farmhouse, and the junction of Ridgeway with the Linford-Haversham Lane (Fig. 5). This covers a linear distance of about 600 m in a north-east to south-

west direction. Pottery and other finds have come from these areas and also from trenches (excavated in 1956–7) behind the present cottages south-east of the site (Fig. 2). Roman coins have additionally been reported from Round Hill Field. This suggests that the settlement at Hill Farm was of a similar size and complexity to that across the river at Stanton Low where at least four and possibly six buildings 'of villa quality' were investigated under conditions of salvage excavation. The site would appear to have been an estate centre of some sort, but it is a type of settlement which so far lacks a clear definition (Woodfield with Johnson, op. cit.).

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