

East Horton Farm Fair Oak & Horton Heath, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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EAST HORTON FARM, HANTS

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ABSTRACT

In February of 1989 a watching brief of topsoil stripping revealed a system of ditches in an area already thought to be the site of a Romano-British farm. A limited excavation supported this interpretation and identified the date of occupation as C1 to early C2 AD, although no dwelling was found. A prehistoric presence during the Bronze Age was also noted. Sand extraction will destroy all archaeological features in the immediately foreseeable future.

INTRODUCTION

Location

East Horton Farm lies in undulating countryside about 1.5 kilometres east of Fair Oak town centre. The predominant land use is mixed arable/pastoral farming, though substantial areas of deciduous woodland still stand as isolated copses. A small tributary of the River Hamble flows south-west through the farm just east of the site itself which is located at about 50m above sea level facing east on a gentle slope. The underlying geology is tertiary sand, the extraction of which is gaining in economic significance and is currently being undertaken by the Grundon Group, the developers who commissioned this report. As a result of this all of the archaeological features will in due course be destroyed.

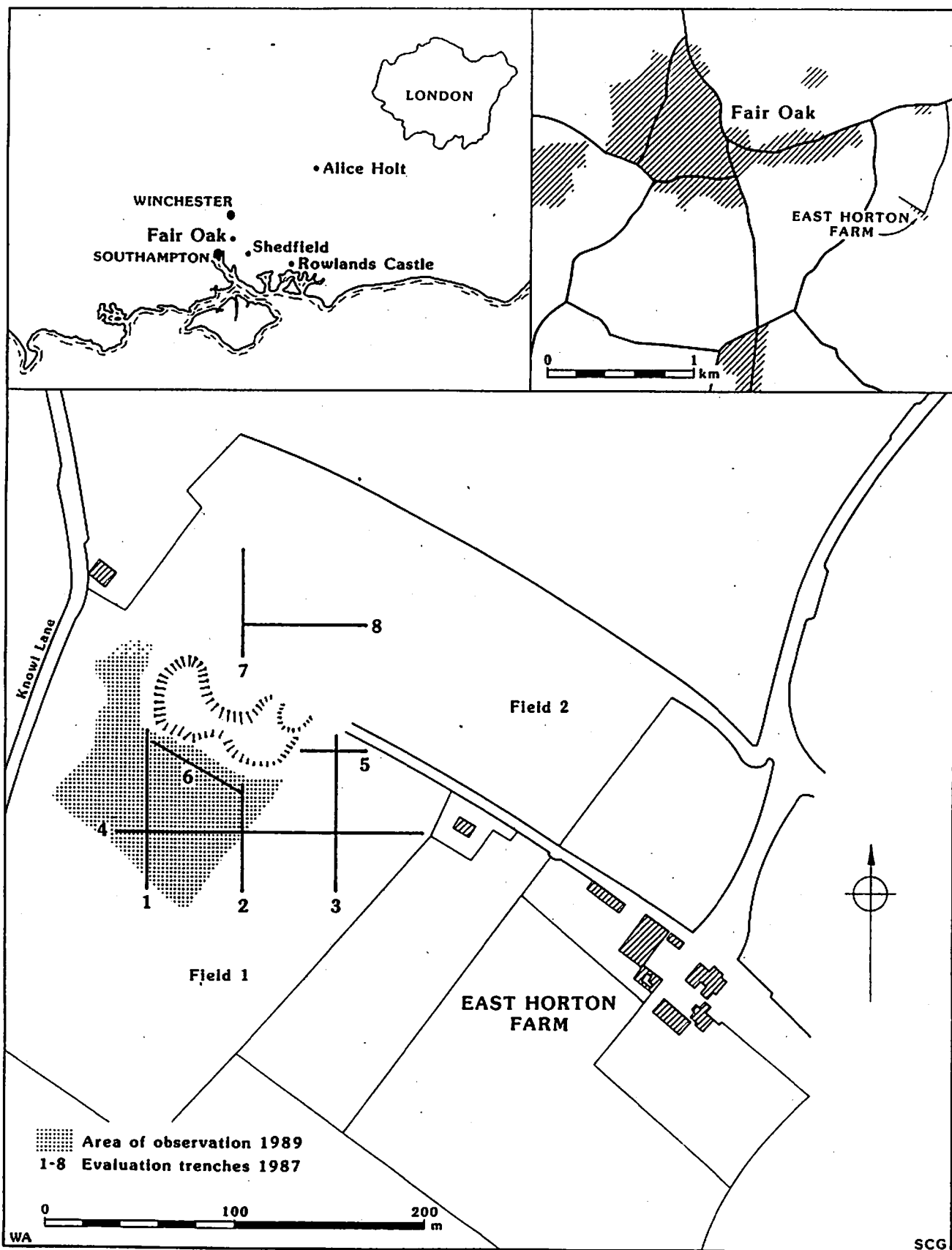


Fig. 1: The location of East Horton Farm

Until 1988 access to the farm was via a track which ran south-east from Knowl Lane. This track has now been closed and a new way in from the north has been built. The sand pit was, according to local information, first opened in about 1960 on the south side of the farm track. The field which surrounds the pit is referred to below as Field 1, and the meadow on the north side of the track as Field 2. On Fig. 1 the outline of the sand pit as it was until recently is portrayed by hachures.

Background

The archaeological significance of East Horton Farm was first intimated in 1963 when a group of Neronian or early Flavian pottery was unearthed from a "patch of dirty sand" in the middle of the south side of the newly-opened sand pit. The discovery was made by two of the local residents when they were schoolboys (Collis 1974). Whether they attended Richard Taunton School in Southampton has not been ascertained, but in July of 1965 Messrs. D. Pearson and C. Gill and several other sixth-formers of that school carried out some small excavations at the site and revealed a complex of ditches running into the field to the south. The finds were mainly early Roman, including some sherds of samian and of a terra nigra platter (Collis 1974). They left behind a message in a bottle referring to the site as an "early Roman settlement" and inviting "enquiries via school". This message was discovered during the 1989 watching brief and enquiries led back to Christopher Gill, an Old Tauntonian who had been a member of the team, and who had gone up to university to study archaeology the following autumn.

Fortunately the original records were soon located and allowed the two main ditches excavated by the schoolboys to be

identified as extensions of the north and east sides of the rectangular enclosure - features [1008] and [1006] in the terminology of the 1989 work.

A description of the pottery found in 1963 and the fact of the subsequent excavation were eventually published by John Collis about 10 years later (Collis 1974), following which there were no further developments until January 1987 when planning permission for large scale sand extraction was sought by D.K.Symes Associates on behalf of S.Bastian, the owner of East Horton Farm. It seems that the original pit had been closed for many years at that time. In the light of the known Roman activity, the County Archaeologist, M.F.Hughes, requested that an archaeological evaluation be carried out before the planning permission should be granted. The evaluation was to determine:-

1. The extent of the Roman site,
2. The date range of the site, and
3. The integrity of the archaeological deposits.

The Trust for Wessex Archaeology was asked to undertake this work, which was carried out in May of 1987 by field-walking and the excavation of a sample of the site by the machine removal of topsoil in trenches 1.6m wide on north-south and east-west axes along a 50m grid.

The evaluation recorded a ditch containing pottery of the 1st Century AD, a pit, a posthole and an area of cobbling all immediately south or east of the sand pit - and so confirmed that an early Roman site of small size and apparently limited duration had once existed at East Horton Farm and that a large part of it had already been destroyed by sand extraction. These are the same conclusions that the Old Tauntonians had arrived at quite independently in 1965 (C. Gill n.d.). In addition a small number of worked flints recovered during field-walking were taken as

evidence of pre-Roman settlement but the distribution of the finds gave no indication of a settlement focus (Keevil and Davies 1987).

Arrangements were subsequently made for a watching brief to take place when sand extraction began on the site. The Trust for Wessex Archaeology was again asked to undertake the work. The first part of which took place in September 1987 when 10000m² of topsoil was stripped from Field 2 with an earth-moving machine. This resulted in the discovery of a single sherd of early Roman pottery and an indistinct prehistoric feature which besides a low concentration of charcoal and burnt flint yielded 24 pieces of worked flint including a scraper, a flake tool and several blades (Farwell 1987).

THE WATCHING BRIEF

Methods

In February and March of 1989 about 6000m² of overburden was removed from Field 1 in a band 40m wide immediately south of the original sand pit workings. So as to maximise speed without obscuring the surviving features the topsoil was stripped down to the underlying sand by a mechanical shovel equipped with a toothless bucket. Where clay underlay the topsoil, this too was removed in the same way. The spoil was taken away for building safety bunds or dumping without close examination, although all artefacts which were observed during the operation were retrieved. The definition of the features exposed was improved by shovel-scraping and trowelling, following which they were mapped by tacheometry at a scale of 1:200 from an arbitrary datum point which has not survived. As many features as possible were sectioned or otherwise partially excavated within the limits of

East Horton Farm 1989, Site Plan

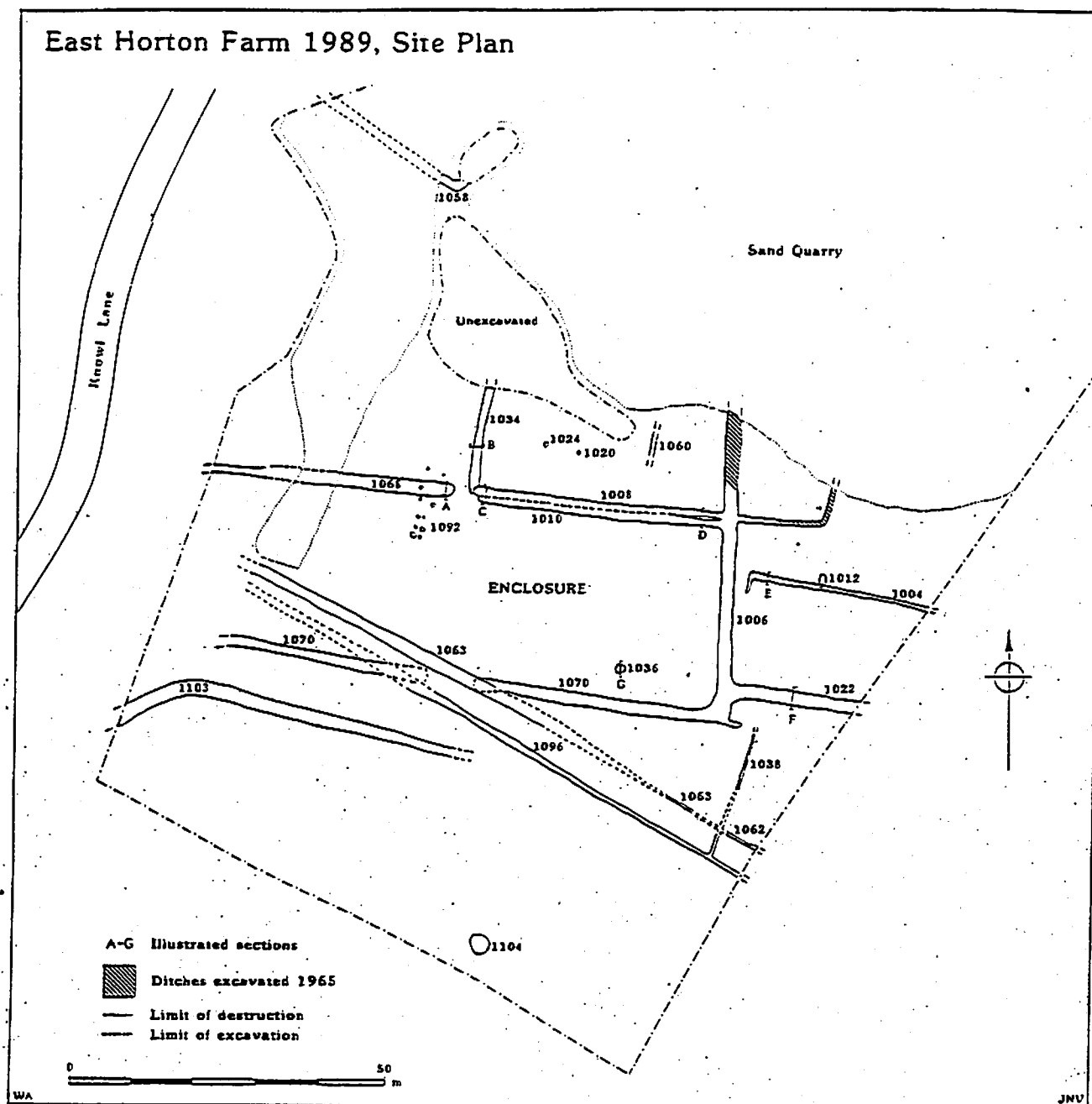


Fig. 2: The archaeological features

the manpower available. Inevitably several potential "pits" turned out to be natural phenomena and are not reported on here.

An area of about 35 m² on the south-west of the original sand pit was left unstripped as it contained the sets of a number of breeding badgers.

The following July further topsoil stripping took place extending the area of observation by 20m to the south and by 6m to the west. The features exposed were again mapped at 1:200 but little excavation was possible on this occasion and fortuitous section drawings were made at the edges of the site.

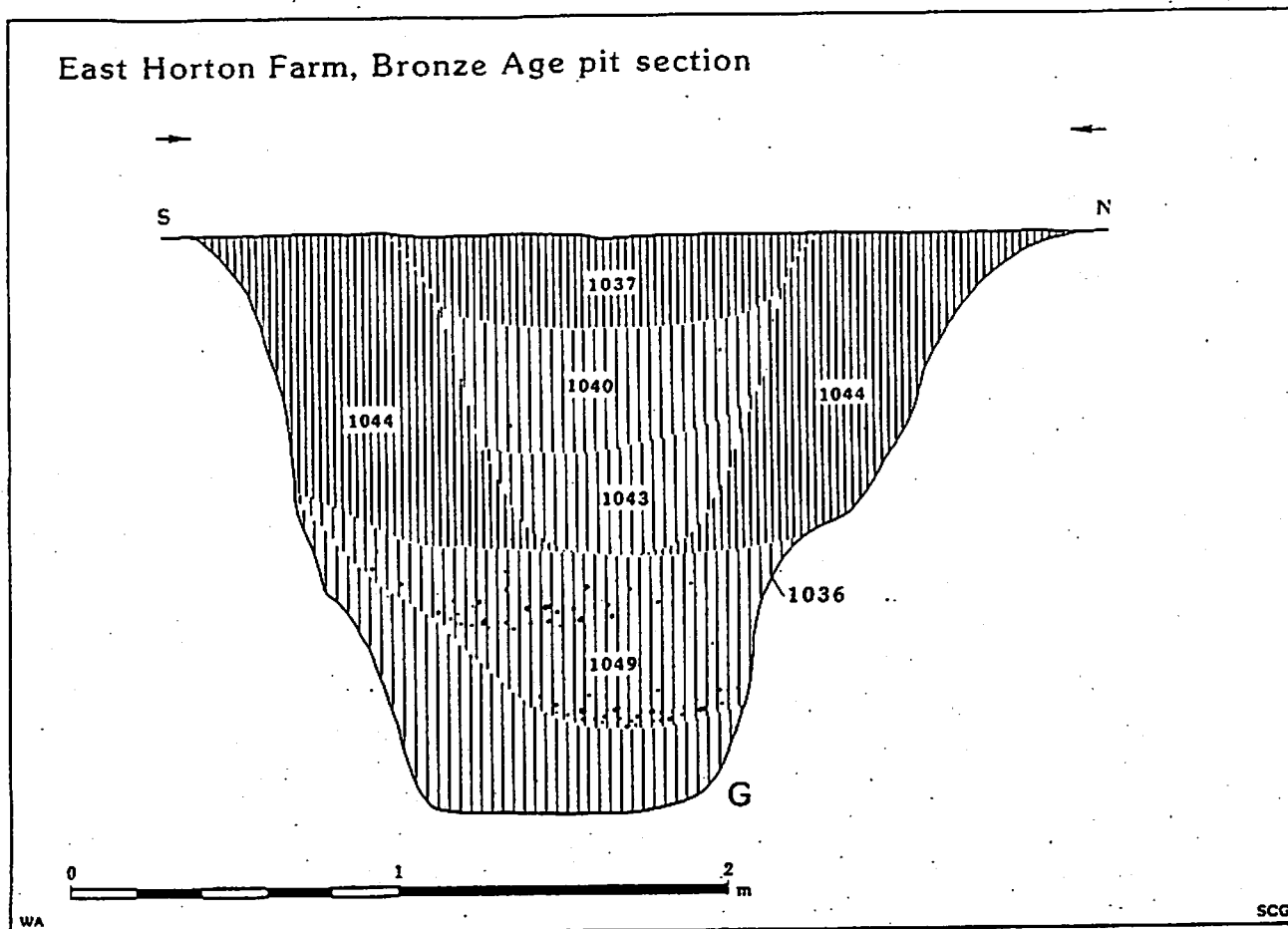


Fig. 3: Cross-section of the main prehistoric pit

Archaeological Observations

Previous to its present pastoral use the site shows evidence of two distinct periods of human activity in ancient times. A comparatively brief but intense presence in Roman times is clear all over and beyond the areas studied, but in prehistoric times - as long before the Romans as we are after them - another much fainter mark was made.

The Prehistoric Features

There was on the site just one steep-sided, flat-bottomed pit, [1036], 1.8m deep and slightly oval rather than circular in plan. The artefacts within the pit were far too few and dispersed to have been deliberately deposited, and comprised only three sherds of pottery and a few struck flints. What is more likely is that they were lying around as rubbish at the time when the pit was filling up and became incorporated accidentally.

A second smaller pit [1012], bowl-shaped and oval 1.4m x 1.2m x 0.25m deep contained no datable artefacts but must predate the Roman ditch [1004] by which it is cut. The similarity of this feature to some of the animal disturbances at the site asks for a cautious interpretation, and suggests that it may not be man-made at all, but an example of a prehistoric burrow.

More certainly man-made, but of less certain date, is pit [1104]. It is also bowl-shaped and oval, 2.6m x 1.5m x 0.2m deep, but the fire-reddened sand in the bottom and the lens of charcoal around the east side preclude the possibility of a natural origin. It is assumed to be prehistoric only because of its simplicity, its similarity to the pit in Field 1 found previously, and the lack of an indicator to any other period.

The Romano-British Features

Dominating the archaeology of the site is a set of linear intersecting ditches most of which run either east to west or north to south. At the time of their discovery the ground surface had long since reverted to its original contours. The associated banks had been levelled, and the ditches themselves were visible only beneath the topsoil where the dark humic sand contrasted with the pale undisturbed geological deposits. The general layout is that of a rectangular enclosure with an associated field system which on the evidence of the pottery found in the ditches can be said to have been constructed over a few generations after the Roman invasion of 43 AD. Overlying these is a second set aligned at about 20° to the first, which are more likely to have been dug after the first ones silted up than to be contemporary.

The enclosure is to some extent presumptive since only three sides of it were revealed, yet it is known to be 30m wide and at

least 80m long (east to west), to have one entrance on the north side, and possibly another on the opposite side.

The north side of this enclosure is formed on the east of the entrance by two very similar and contiguous ditches [1008] and [1010]. Given the softness of sand they are both remarkably steep-sided, about 1.2m deep and only 1.0m wide where first observed at the bottom of the ploughsoil. It is not certain that they were both open at the same time for one may be a recutting of the original feature. [1010] merges into the east side [1006] of the enclosure while [1008] was recorded by the schoolboys in 1965 as continuing to the east for 12m then turning north for 3m where it was lost to the sand quarry. West of the entrance the north side is formed by a single V-shaped ditch [1068] of about 1.5m wide and 0.6m deep and a rather different profile. Its sides were angled at about 45°, the bottom was rather rounded, and there was no indication that this ditch had been recut. The fill was as dark as elsewhere in the enclosure ditch with only a slight gradation to a lighter shade at the bottom. This feature continued west for at least 40 metres from the entrance on exactly the same alignment as its eastern counterpart and must therefore have been in use at the same time despite its different manner of construction.

Eighty metres of the south side [1070] of the enclosure were disclosed. This ditch ran parallel with the north side at a distance of 24m south of it. It was 1.6m wide but of unknown depth and profile. At its eastern end it also curved into [1006]. A short 2m spur [1048] projecting from the south-east corner of the enclosure with no obvious function may none-the-less be an original and integral part of [1070] and not a later addition. It does not join with [1038].

The east side [1006] began at the south-east corner and ran due north to intersect with and continue past [1008]. The course of this ditch also had been destroyed by sand quarrying a few metres from the enclosure. Its position and dimensions (1.8m wide, V-shaped and 1.2m deep) make it likely that this is the "ditch about 4 feet deep...in the middle of the south side of the [sand] pit" referred to by Collis (1974). The site plan which the schoolboys made allows it to be positively identified as the main ditch investigated during their excavations.

Four metres north of the south-east corner branching out at right angles to the enclosure is ditch [1022]. This runs due east for 20m and continues out of the area of observation. Two metres wide V-shaped and 1.0m deep, this is presumably the ditch recorded as context [002] in 1987. Running parallel 16m to the north is a smaller ditch [1004] of 1.0m width and 0.4m in depth, with a rounded rather than a V-shaped profile. This ditch does not join with the enclosure, it approaches from the east to within two metres and then turns sharply to the south for a further one or two metres.

From the eastern side of the northern entrance a ditch [1034] ran almost due north for 15m. It was 1.2m wide and only 0.5m deep with a shallow round-bottomed profile like that of [1004]. It appeared to be cut by rather than join with [1008], one of the ditches forming the north side of the enclosure, though this was far from certain and the possibility remains that [1034] and [1008] represent the southern end of a smaller enclosure which overlapped in time with the main one.

Three small features (two postholes and a short length of ditch) lie between 5 and 10m north of the main enclosure within the smaller one. The postholes, [1020] and [1024], are about 0.8m across, and penetrate only 0.1m into the sand. Fragments of

half of a broken Roman roof tile were used as packing in the eastern one. The ditch [1060] was shallower than the topsoil and traceable over 3-4m only by its fill of abundant pieces of broken Roman tile. None of these three features can be tied in with any of the others, although the finds show that they must be contemporary.

Postholes

A group of postholes [1092] lay across the north ditch of the enclosure five to six metres west of the northern entrance. Two members of the group lay outside the enclosure, one was cut into the fill of the enclosure ditch, and the remainder lay within the enclosure. They align with [1038], [1063] and [1096] better than with the enclosure, and within them can be seen as a set of six with packing of flint nodules having overall dimensions of 3.5m x 1.5m. One of this group was sectioned and found to cut 0.36m into the natural sand. The hole was 0.8m in diameter and contained a great number of flint nodules surrounding a post pipe with a diameter of about 0.2m. Since at least 0.3m of ploughsoil had been removed at this point, the implication is that the posts were closely spaced, deeply set and firmly packed for the purpose of bearing a considerable load. Such six-post structures are generally interpreted as granaries which were built with raised floors so as to keep out dampness and vermin.

There is no clear pattern to the remaining post-holes of the group, which were packed with chalk pieces, flint nodules or both. Their proximity and similarity of size and fill to the group of six can hardly be coincidental and all must be fairly contemporary. A section of one of the chalk-filled postholes showed it to be equally substantial, equally well packed and also

to have held a post of about 0.2m diameter. The chalk and flint seems to have been brought to the site specifically for this purpose, since the material does not occur there naturally and neither was it found in any of the other features. The entire group seems to date from after the silting up of the the ditch, but the numerous pieces of broken tegula in one of the holes still tie the event to the Roman period.

At the south-eastern limit of the area of observation two features were recorded which were taken at first to be beam slots set at roughly 90° to each other. When however the stripped area was extended it became clear that these were the bottoms of ditches which were indistinguishable from the topsoil. Two ditches [1063] and [1096] ran parallel to each other about 5m apart and a third [1038] intersected them. The two main ditches ran for 90m across the site, but were rather hard to distinguish in many places. They intersected the enclosure at about 20° at the point where the southern entrance was thought to be, and appeared to be later, rather than earlier, but the depth of the topsoil here made it impossible to be certain. Neither was the profile of these ditches very well ascertained.

Perhaps contemporary with and related to these parallel ditches was the similarly aligned feature [1058] on the very edge of the quarry and mostly destroyed before it was noticed. It was 2m deep, V-shaped and turned north-east just as it was lost from view. Samian pottery seen on the spoil heap was the first sign of Roman activity to be observed in 1989. This pottery almost certainly came from feature [1058].

A Large Isolated Feature

A. length of ditch [1103] ran for 40m almost parallel with the

western part of south side of the enclosure at a distance of about 10m south of it. At the western end it turned to the south-west and passed out of the area of observation, and in the east it gradually became indistinguishable from the deepening topsoil. It was 3.2m wide, 1.5m deep and V-shaped. No artefacts were recovered from it, but its similarity to and alignment with the other ditches make it unlikely to belong to any other period.

Three Smaller Isolated Features

Two more postholes lay outside the enclosure, five metres apart, north-east of the northern entrance. One contained pieces of Roman tile in the fill as post packing, the other contained neither stones nor tile; and a post pipe was visible in neither. Their relationship to each other, to the ditches, or to the other postholes is obscure - and they may have belonged to a set which lay mostly to the north and has long since been destroyed. The broken tegula forces comparison with the other similarly filled posthole within group [1092] and strongly suggests contemporaneity but they cannot be more closely dated than the Roman period.

An Indistinct Feature

During the stripping a pile of limestone pieces [1057] 0.2m high and 0.3m across was encountered within the enclosure near to the junction of the east side [1006] with the field boundary(?) [1022]. They had been laid horizontally one upon another in a deliberate fashion. Some pieces appeared to have been shaped into tiles, but they were not in good condition, for the stone was soft and flaked easily. They were entirely contained within the topsoil and the pit or ditch into which they had been put was quite indiscernible, nor were structural features of any kind

found nearby.

A Feature to be Discounted

The area of cobbling reported in 1987 would have been located towards the north-east corner of this enclosure, but it was not observed again during the 1989 watching brief. On the other hand river-rolled pebbles were found to be distributed throughout the area of observation at the bottom of the ploughsoil, and to occur naturally at the interface of the geologically deposited sands and clays. The layer was patchy, never more than one stone thick, nor associated with any man-made objects. It is therefore taken to be a result of agriculture and worm sorting and not to represent an ancient floor after all.

THE FINDS

by L.N. Mephram

The pottery assemblage from East Horton, collected during the watching brief on the site in 1989, consists of 1915 sherds (47878g), and includes a range of material of early Romano-British date, together with a small group of prehistoric sherds.

This report summarises the results of a study of the pottery aimed primarily at assessing the nature and date range of the assemblage. Only limited fabric and form analysis was undertaken at this stage. Known fabrics were identified, e.g. samian ware, Alice Holt wares from Farnham, and the remainder of the assemblage was divided into broad fabric groups, e.g. flint-gritted wares, grey sandy wares, etc. These pottery fabric groups have been quantified by number and weight of sherds from each context on the site, and this information is summarised in Table

1. A more detailed pottery report can be found with the site archive.

Fabrics and forms

Prehistoric

Nine sherds of prehistoric pottery (81g) were identified. These comprise three sherds of Beaker pottery, two with comb-impressed decoration (Fig. 5, 1) and one with fingernail-impressed decoration; and six plain body sherds in a similar fabric, which may be either Beaker or Early Bronze Age.

Romano-British

The coarse wares from the site include flint-gritted, grog-tempered and sandy wares. The sandy wares are dominated by products of the Alice Holt kilns at Farnham (35km distant), which form 22.4% by weight of the total assemblage from East Horton. Recognised vessel forms include jars with everted (Fig. 5, 2) and beaded rims, jars with shoulder cordons (Fig. 5, 3), bowls (Fig. 5, 4), flagons and lids. These vessel forms are dated from AD 60 to the mid-2nd century at Farnham. Some of the vessel forms, e.g. beaded rim jars, cordoned jars and carinated jars, show close links with the indigenous pottery traditions of the region, but the influence of Gallo-Belgic and other Roman types can also be seen, for example in the bowls and flagons.

Other grey sandy wares are found in similar forms, and some of these wares may in fact include unrecognised Alice Holt products. Jars with everted rims and shoulder cordons are particularly numerous, as are platters imitating Gallo-Belgic types (Fig. 5, 5). Other Gallo-Belgic imitations include a small number of butt beakers. Gallo-Belgic wares were imported from the continent from the early 1st century AD, and were widely imitated in this

country.

The sources of these grey sandy wares are uncertain, but Romano-British kilns are known at Shedfield (7km distant) and Rowlands Castle (25km). Both kilns were producing vessels very similar to those found at East Horton in the early Roman period.

The other major group amongst the coarse pottery fabrics is the flint-gritted group (47.8% by weight of the total assemblage). Flint-gritted vessels are generally thick-walled, hand-made storage jars, with everted or beaded rims (Fig. 5, 6). Beaded rim bowls (Fig. 5, 7) and lids (Fig. 5, 8) are also present.

Jars of this type, in flint-gritted fabrics, are well known in the early Roman period in southern England, for example in the Silchester area, where such vessels were produced from the mid to late 1st century AD. These flint-gritted wares appear to represent a continuation of the local pre-Roman pottery traditions; all the vessel forms described above can be seen to have their origins in the indigenous forms of the Late Iron Age.

Of the fine wares, white wares are the most common. Recognised forms include flagons (Fig. 5, 9), and butt beakers (Fig. 5, 10), both of 1st century AD type. In addition, two colour-coated vessels were identified, one with roughcast decoration, formed by the application of tiny clay particles to the surface of the vessel, and the other with barbotine 'hairpins', formed by trailing semi-liquid clay (Fig. 5, 11). Both vessels have a matt orange-brown slip coating, and are probably Central Gaulish products. Apart from two sherds of New Forest ware, the sources of the other white wares are unknown.

Fine orange wares occur in similar forms. Again, the sources are largely unknown, although one sherd of Oxford ware, of

unknown form, was identified. A second, very abraded sherd in a very micaceous fabric, with barbotine decoration and traces of colour coat, may be of Central Gaulish origin.

Samian ware, which was imported into this country from France in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, occurs in various plain and decorated bowl forms, ranging in date from the mid-1st century to the late 2nd century AD.

A small number of sherds of amphora were identified; types recognised include Dressel 1, which has a date range of 2nd century BC-1st century AD; and Dressel 20, usually of 1st century AD date.

Discussion

The Romano-British assemblage from East Horton appears to cover a fairly narrow date range, from the mid 1st to early 2nd century AD. Some of the vessel forms, for example the hand-made storage jars in the coarse flint-gritted fabrics, would not be out of place in an immediately pre-conquest context, but their consistent association with wheel-thrown vessels in Alice Holt grey wares would place them rather in the period after AD 60. There is very little material which is demonstrably later than the early 2nd century..

The East Horton material fits well within the known range of early Romano-British pottery from the area; comparable assemblages have been excavated, for example, at Winnall Down near Winchester, and Old Down Farm near Andover, and most of the East Horton vessel forms can be paralleled within the first period assemblage at Fishbourne Roman palace near Chichester, dated AD 43-75. Pottery of a very similar nature has already been noted from the site, in 1963 (Collis 1974) and 1987 (Keevill and Davies 1987).

TABLE 1: POTTERY FABRIC TOTALS

All percentages are calculated by weight

Fabric	Number	Weight	% of total
Alice Holt	548	10710g	22.4%
Misc. grey wares	449	6903g	14.5%
Coarse oxidised sandy	83	1281g	2.6%
Coarse white ware	11	196g	0.4%
Black sandy	52	999g	2.1%
Flint-gritted	458	17846g	37.4%
Sandy flint-gritted	143	4945g	10.4%
Grog-tempered	12	288g	0.6%
Sandy grog-tempered	10	1559g	3.3%
Fine grey ware	3	108g	0.2%
Fine oxidised sandy	41	507g	1.1%
Fine white ware	58	590g	1.2%
Samian	26	494g	1.0%
New Forest	2	31g	0.1%
Oxford ware	1	76g	0.2%
Amphora	9	1264g	2.4%
Prehistoric	9	81g	0.1%
TOTAL	1915	47878g	

OTHER FINDS

Ceramic building material

A total of 76 pieces of ceramic building material (14656g) was recovered from the site. The majority of this is likely to consist of fragments of roof tile. Ten tegulae (flanged roof tiles) and one imbrex (curved roof tile) were recognised, none of them complete. There is also evidence for the use of stone for roofing tiles on the site (see below).

Fired clay

The fired clay from the site includes all ceramic material which cannot be identified either as pottery or ceramic building material (55 pieces; 3152g). This total includes one almost complete triangular loomweight (Fig. 5, 15), and fragments of at least two others; and a small group of daub, used as infill in wattle structures. The impressions of the wattles are still visible.

Stone

Four fragments of quern stone were identified, all from small hand querns of normal Romano-British type. Two of the fragments are from top stones (Fig. 5, 13) and the other two from bottom stones (Fig. 5, 14). All are of sandstone.

One complete sandstone 'doughnut'-shaped weight was also recovered (Fig. 5, 12). This circular object is 210mm in diameter, with a central hole of 15mm diameter.

In addition 46 fragments of limestone were recovered, all from a single feature (1057). These are almost certainly fragments of roofing tiles.

Flint

Sixty pieces of struck flint were identified; all are waste flakes from flint knapping, and none appear to show any signs of retouch or subsequent utilisation. The flint is essentially undated, but none of the technological features generally associated with early prehistoric (Mesolithic and Neolithic) flintworking are present, such as narrow, blade-like flakes, and a later prehistoric date is suggested.

The incidence of burnt flint on the site was also noted (a total of 1478g). Although burnt flint is intrinsically undatable, it is often associated with prehistoric material. In this case it is notable that all the burnt flint derived from features which also contained struck flint.

Illustrated finds from East Horton Farm (Fig. 5, 1-15)

Pottery

1. Base sherd of Beaker; comb-impressed decoration. Context 1044; fill of pit 1036. Early Bronze Age, approx. 2000 BC.
2. Jar with everted rim; Alice Holt ware. Context 1005; fill of ditch 1004. Late C1 - early C2 AD.
3. Jar with shoulder cordon; Alice Holt ware. Context 1001; topsoil. Late C1 - early C2 AD.
4. Bowl; Alice Holt ware. Context 1007; fill of ditch 1006. Late C1 AD.
5. Imitation Gallo-Belgic platter; grey sandy ware. Context 1023; fill of ditch 1022. Mid - late C1 AD.
6. Large storage jar with beaded rim; flint-gritted fabric. Context 1023; fill of ditch 1022. Mid C1 AD.
7. Shallow bowl with beaded rim; flint-gritted fabric. Context

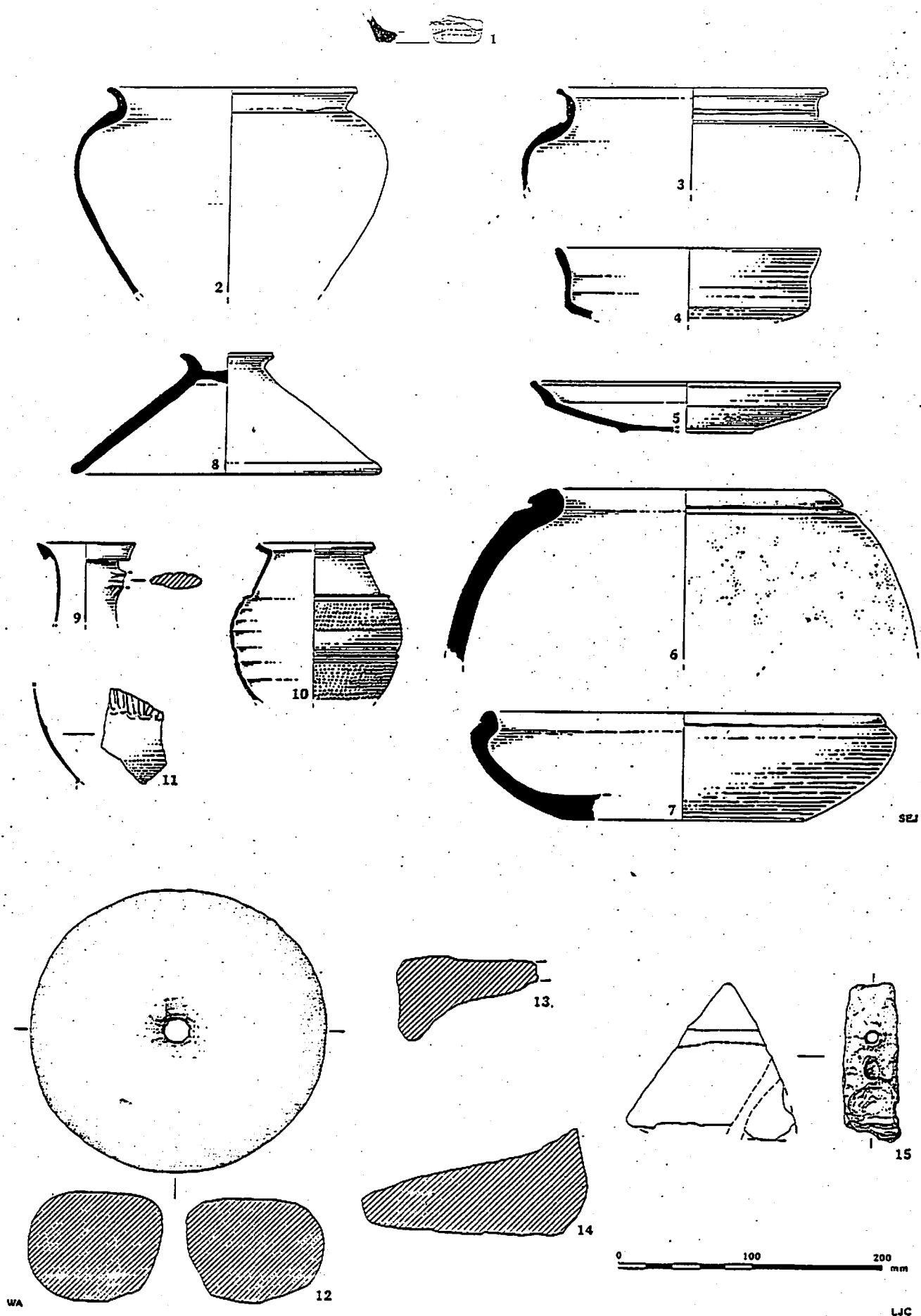


Fig. 5: Selected finds from East Horton Farm

1023; fill of ditch 1022. Mid C1 AD.

8. Lid; flint-gritted fabric. Context 1023; fill of ditch 1022.

Mid C1 AD.

9. Flagon; fine white ware. Context 1023; fill of ditch 1022.

Mid - late C1 AD.

10. Imitation Gallo-Belgic butt beaker; fine white ware; rouletted decoration. Context 1005; fill of ditch 1004.

Mid - late C1 AD.

11. Body sherds of 'hairpin' beaker; fine white ware with matt orange-brown colour-coat; barbotine decoration. Context 1107; fill of ditch 1106. Late C1 - early C2 AD.

Stone objects

12. Sandstone ?weight, complete. Unstratified. Probably Roman, date uncertain.

13. Sandstone quern fragment; top stone. Unstratified. Roman, date uncertain.

14. Sandstone quern fragment; bottom stone. Context 1023; fill of ditch 1022. Roman, date uncertain.

Fired clay object

15. Triangular loomweight; complete but abraded. Two perforations. Context 1023; fill of ditch 1022. C1 - C2 AD.

CONCLUSION

The earliest signs of human activity at the site date from the Bronze Age, about 4000 years ago. A few pits were dug and fires were lit; but these events may have been separated by generations. If there had been a settlement at the site in those days we should have found circles of postholes marking where the houses were, broad scatters of flint-knapping debris, and lost and

broken arrowheads. In the absence of any such material we must conclude that the site was not very important to the Bronze Age people. Perhaps hunting parties rested here occasionally.

Two thousand years (including the whole of the Iron Age) passed before anyone came to live here. Then soon after the Roman invasion a small farm was established. So soon afterwards that there is probably a connection - an economic one.

The quantity of pottery dumped and the size of the sherds, especially at the intersection of the ditches at the north-east of the enclosure, can only mean that one or more dwellings once stood very nearby - presumably within the enclosure. No foundation trenches were found though, and comparatively little building or roofing material. Nor was there a ring of postholes such as is made when a round-house is built. With these possibilities discounted the most likely kind of structure still feasible is a timber-framed building with wattle and daub walls and a thatched roof. Eventually it was demolished or allowed to collapse and rot away, for if it had burned down it ought to have left signs of its passing in the form of charcoal, ash and fired clay.

Because there are no later Roman finds it looks as though the inhabitants moved away during the second century AD. They would have taken all their useful and valuable items with them, but the lost and discarded items they left behind can give us a faint picture of some aspects of their life-style.

Rotary querns as mentioned in the finds report are a form of hand mill which were once used for grinding corn. They consisted of a lower stone with a central spindle set in it, usually of metal, and an upper stone which fitted over the

spindle and was supported by the "rynd" (of metal or wood) which rested on top of the spindle. The upper stone was turned by means of a wooden handle, and opinions differ as to whether a back-and-forth or a round-and-round motion was employed. The presence of quernstones at East Horton shows that the early inhabitants almost certainly grew their own corn and baked their own bread too. The grain was probably wheat, which the Romans used to import from Britain.

The single loomweight also implies a chain of activities in a simple economy. It tells us that this family produced homespun yarn, and probably wore woollen clothes and bred sheep (unless they grew flax for linen). The most common form of loom in antiquity was the vertical loom. It stood outside the house and was worked in a standing position. It consisted of two wooden uprights with a horizontal beam across the top and a "shed" rod further down to separate alternate warp threads. A "heddle" rod moved the warp backwards and forwards to allow the weft to be passed through in a single movement of the shuttle. The warp threads were weighted by loomweights, and these too have caused differences of opinion among experts. Triangular loomweights such as this example have also been found with perforations through all three corners and sometimes through only one. Which way they hung and how many strands passed through each hole, are still something of a puzzle.

It is quite impossible to tell now whether livestock, crops or mixed farming was most important but whichever it was, enough was produced to exchange for items from elsewhere. The quernstones and the flints in the postholes are not local rocks. Some of the pottery, such as that from France and Oxford would have been comparatively costly and probably not for everyday use. (Wooden bowls may well have sufficed for that but are very

unlikely to survive.)

The significance of the fragments of amphora is not so clear-cut, since redistribution was common and "empties" are known to have been traded. Only a few pieces were found, they cannot even be called partial vessels. Dressel's type 1 is one of the more common forms (Dressel was a 19th century German scholar) and it is found all over the Roman world.. Many were made in central Italy, but they were also produced in southern Italy and Spain. Inscriptions and drawings on well-preserved examples show that they were mainly used for transporting wine, sometimes for olive oil and occasionally for olives. Dressel's type 20 is more distinctive. They had a large globular body, a short neck and a very small knob at the bottom. They were produced along the banks of the River Guadalquivir between Cordova and Seville in southern Spain to contain the olive oil which was and is still produced there.

Perhaps these farmers had a taste for wine and olive oil, or maybe old amphorae were handy for storing water in.

It is tempting to see this farm as involved in the vast Roman economic system which subsidised bread and circuses and supported the legions and the civil service. The imported material is not voluminous, though, and a subsistence economy with a small marketable surplus may be nearer the truth.

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