5. THE MIDLANDS

By PETE WILSON

BEDFORDSHIRE

- (1) Biggleswade, Land to the north of Dunton Lane, (TL 2161 4422): excavation on a 15 ha site for a new electricity installation revealed a triple ditched enclosure, an earlier D-shaped enclosure with internal rectangular enclosure, and a separate area of settlement features. Subject to ongoing pottery analysis, all of the features associated with the enclosures appear to date to the later Iron Age and Roman periods. Post-excavation work is under way.⁶⁸
- (2) **Dunton**, **Potton**, *Dunton to Potton burst main* (TL 24115 44819):⁶⁹ evaluation and excavation across a linear scheme, required for the replacement of a burst water main, comprised the excavation of 21 trenches of various lengths and an open area excavation measuring 145 m by 15 m.

The works followed geophysical survey which presented the possibility of settlement activity in the form of several linear and discrete anomalies. This included two ring ditches, one of which was also confirmed from cropmarks noted on the Central Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record.

Limited archaeological features were observed in trenches 10–21, with more concentrated features recorded in trenches 01-09. The densest concentration of archaeological features was recorded in the open area excavation, which was located between Trench 02 and Trench 03. This was characterised by linear field boundaries, a large ring ditch enclosure and three areas of occupation represented by possible sunken featured buildings. Finds recovered from the site suggest activity in the area from the Romano-British period through to the early medieval period.⁷⁰

(3) Keysoe, Land at X-Country Arena (TL 0729 6140): investigations revealed a series of boundary ditches and rectangular enclosures dating to the late Iron Age and Roman periods. One ditch, in the northernmost trench of the evaluation, was a continuation of a complex of sub-circular enclosures and boundary ditches, visible as cropmarks, 71 that may represent a settlement to the north of the site. The excavated features contained a small amount of pottery, dating to the late Iron Age and early Roman period and comprising utilitarian domestic vessels, predominantly jars. A few sherds date to the mid-second to mid-third centuries, suggesting some continuity of occupation. Also of note is a small and very abraded copper-alloy antoninianus dating to the mid- to late third century. Animal bone and environmental remains were, unfortunately, poorly preserved and add little to the interpretation of the site. Overall, the features and finds assemblage represent an area of agricultural enclosures on the periphery of the settlement to the north.⁷²

Work by J. Pine of TVAS East Midlands. S. Preston sent information.

Work by D. Harrison and S. Milby of Headland Archaeology UK (Ltd) for Anglian Water. Project Code DUPO22. E. West sent information.

Headland Archaeology, Dunton to Potton burst main, Central Bedfordshire: Archaeological trial trenching and excavation assessment report (2022).

Bedford Borough HER MDB 16633.

The work was supervised by T. Nica and managed by C. Meckseper, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. Work was commissioned by RPS Consulting, on behalf of Bourne Rural. Summary by K. Boughton. Dr A. Lyons sent information.



FIG. 19. Milton Keynes log ladder from Waterhole 1671.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

(1) **Milton Keynes West**, *Land north-east of Milton Keynes* (SP 8904 4218): excavations encompassing 385 ha were undertaken between Milton Keynes and the village of Moulsoe over multiple fields located on the west side of the River Ousel. A farmstead, which was occupied throughout the Roman period, with an associated field system was identified. The field system comprised a series of rectangular enclosures, aligned NNE–SSW. It is of interest that parts of the Roman enclosure system are still referenced in today's landscape with modern hedge lines running in the same position. An assemblage of early Roman pottery discovered in a shallow enclosure ditch was indicative of the immediate proximity of a house, located within the rectangular enclosure in which the pottery was found. Several waterholes and one well were also found nearby; a log ladder discovered in waterhole 1671 in Area 4 is currently awaiting radiocarbon dates (FIG. 19). In addition to settlement evidence, three cremation burials were found near one another in part of the field system: cremation 1014 was radiocarbon dated to 126–248 A.D. (95.4 per cent probability). Also found were two 'deviant-type' inhumations with their skulls placed near the pelvis area, both bodies in a prone (stomach down) position: inhumation 1876 was radiocarbon dated to 338–427 A.D. (86.2 per cent probability).

The work was supervised by J. Mlynarska and managed by M. Hinman, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. Work was commissioned by RPS Consulting Ltd on behalf of the St James Group, a member of the Berkeley Group. Summary by J. Mlynarska. Dr A. Lyons sent information.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

- (1) **Haddenham**, *Land southwest of 49 Aldreth Road* (TL 4601 7466): late Iron Age to early Roman north-west to south-east ditch alignments were found which continued in use into the early Roman period. The ditches formed boundaries and a number of small, pastoral enclosures for grazing livestock which were part of an infield system for a settlement located to its immediate north. A second-century coffin burial of a child/adolescent person in the western boundary ditch and the mass burial of a diseased, articulated sheep flock (FIG. 20) in the northern boundary exhibit a range of mortuary behaviours. The shift of the farming activity in the middle Roman period was corroborated by the remains of a 9 m wide trackway which expanded from the western to the eastern part of the site. The diverse nature of pottery sherds and several alterations of boundary ditches demonstrate a site of continuous use until a dramatic decline in the third century A.D. 74
- (2) **St Neots**, *Monksfield* (TL 2071 6075): excavation of a *c*. 18.9 ha area revealed a small agricultural settlement concentrated in the north of the investigation area (FIG. 21), consisting of a large rectangular enclosure with associated stock enclosures, trackways and a small cemetery. The settlement continued without hiatus from the late Iron Age, with Roman activity peaking in the first and second centuries A.D. but continuing to a lesser degree until the fourth century A.D., when the site fell from use. Within the large rectilinear enclosure four rectangular post-built structures were identified with associated pits, post-holes and waterholes, with the cemetery located to the south-west, outside the main settlement area and consisting of both inhumation and cremation burials. The site is part of a broader clay landscape with trackways linking the subject site to more extensive Roman settlements immediately to the west and south of the investigation area.⁷⁵

HERTFORDSHIRE

(1) East Hertfordshire District, the Roman Road from Harlow to Stane Street (for Braughing), Margary 329: the northern section of this road was recorded by Ivan Margary, where he reported seeing traces of the agger between Stane Street and Much Hadham. He was working north to south and lost the course of the road at Much Hadham, but noted beyond that village that the modern road through the village of Perry Green appeared to share the alignment (FIG. 22). He surmised that Harlow would have been the road's destination, although he appears to have been unaware of the temple there.

Starting at the Harlow end, the road would have had to cross the River Stort, no doubt sharing a common bridge with that to Bishop's Stortford. Because of modern disturbance, primarily the construction of the River Stort Navigation and its associated locks, there are no obvious signs of the crossing having survived.

Beyond the river, the road initially had to negotiate a couple of valleys. Here it adapted to the contours (TL 46812 13125 and TL46194 13808) with the first main alignment to Hadham beginning at TL 45776 14353. This is clear in the LiDAR imagery and heads through Perry Green towards Hadham, just as Margary suspected. The alignment wobbles a little bit through Perry Green due to two valleys there. In the village the modern road there is clearly built on

⁷⁶ I. Margary, Roman Roads in Britain (1957).

The work was supervised by T. Learmonth and managed by C. Meckseper, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. The work was commissioned by Mizen Built Ltd. Summary by P. Ivanova. Dr A. Lyons sent information.

The work was supervised by T. Revell and I.J. Anderle and managed by M. Hinman, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, for for EDP on behalf of L&Q Estates. Summary by T. Revell. Dr A. Lyons sent information.

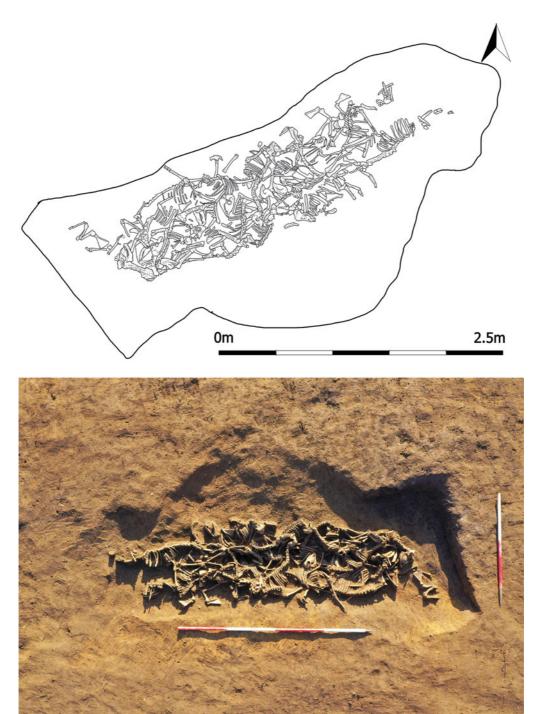


FIG. 20. Haddenham sheep burial photo and plan (drawing: Rita Pedro PCA).



FIG. 21. Monksfield, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, whole site view (looking west).

top of the Roman agger, well above ground level with a western ditch surviving in places (TL 43674 17861).

Margary could not trace the road across Much Hadham, but LiDAR does enable the route to be interpolated with reasonable confidence (FIG. 23). It was impractical for the road to continue on its straight alignment here due to the presence of the River Ash directly on that line. Margary had noted the Daneswood valley on the south side of the village and suspected it could be the route the Roman road took to get down to the river from the higher ground south of the village. The alignment from Harlow revealed by LiDAR shows it was clearly targeting this valley (TL 43399 18345). It appears to be a natural valley adapted by the Romans with engineering only required to provide an easy and consistent gradient (FIG. 23, inset). At the bottom of the valley the modern road swings off line leaving a length of the Roman agger visible (TL 43092 18545). This is carrying straight on to a crossing of the River Ash (TL 43000 18670) and is today marked approximately by a modern footpath.

Across Much Hadham, the Romans adopted a fairly common solution of theirs by diverting the road to the west for a short distance, where it would have run approximately parallel to the original alignment. Once the obstacle, i.e. the River Ash, was cleared then the road switched back on line.

The main alignment was probably regained around TL 42832 19490 although this is an interpolated position. This line continued on through the village of Wellpond Green (TL 41403 22229). It then crossed the A120 main road where the *agger* is particularly clear (at least in LiDAR imagery) and headed on to join Stane Street (TL 40868 23398). We are fortunate that



FIG. 22. LiDAR Image showing the route of the Roman road from Harlow to Stane Street (for Braughing). (Base LiDAR data © Crown Copyright. Inset Location Plan – base mapping Ordnance Survey Opendata)

the junction has survived and shows the Romans chose to turn the road so as to form a near right-angled junction with Stane Street (FIG. 24). From here it was around 2 km along Stane Street to reach the Roman settlement at Braughing, located just to the east of Ermine Street.⁷⁷

LEICESTERSHIRE

(1) **Gaddesby**, *Land north of Pasture Lane* (SK 6909 1358):⁷⁸ following an evaluation in 2021 which revealed evidence for late Roman activity, a subsequent watching brief recorded a series of ditches and gullies, one of which had been recorded in the earlier evaluation across the south-east part of the site. The character of the ditches and features in both phases of work suggests they were boundaries for fields or enclosures, with evidence for recutting suggesting they were in use for some time.

Research by D. Ratledge, who sent information.

Work by R. Jones of Archaeology Warwickshire on behalf of Cadeby Homes Ltd.

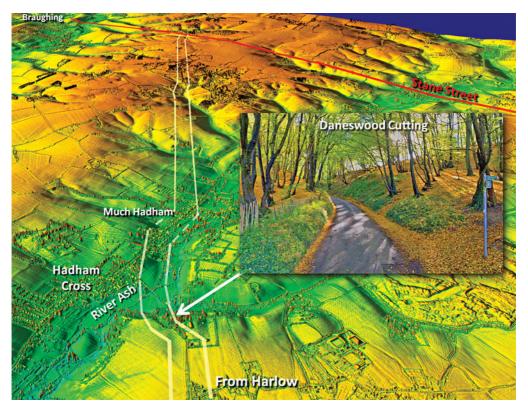


FIG. 23. Oblique 3D LiDAR image looking towards Stane Street from the Hadhams. (Base LiDAR data © Crown Copyright) Inset: The bottom of Daneswood Cutting looking south. (Image – Google Streetview)

Animal bone fragments recovered from several features were mostly cattle, with some pig bones also recorded, suggesting pastoral agriculture formed at least part of the site's economy and supporting the interpretation of the ditches and gullies as enclosure boundaries.

A relatively small finds assemblage was recovered during the two phases of work, with the pottery giving a clear late fourth-century date for the main period of use. The small amount of material recovered suggests the site was positioned away from the main area of settlement, which is thought likely to have been south or east of the site based on previous work in the area. The pottery included a surprisingly high quantity of finewares, including vessels from the Nene Valley and Oxford industries, both of which are some distance from the site, which sits towards the edge of their distribution areas. The character of the pottery assemblage is of higher status than a basic level rural site.⁷⁹

(2) **Leicester**, *Cathedral* (SK 58519 04448): an archaeological excavation was undertaken on the site of the Old Song School, at the east end of the Cathedral, in advance of a proposed new Heritage Learning Centre. The site lies within the former St Martin's churchyard. Below burial

⁷⁹ B. Morgan and A. Szulfer, Land North of Pasture Lane, Gaddesby, Leicestershire: Archaeological watching brief, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 2304 (2023).

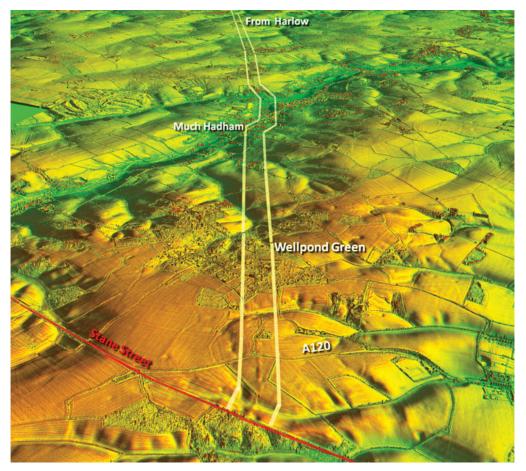


FIG. 24. Oblique 3D LiDAR Image looking back from Stane Street. Note how the road turns to form a square junction. (Base LiDAR data © Crown Copyright)

soils containing over 1,100 burials dating from the eleventh century through to the mid-nineteenth century was a cellar from part of a Roman building and yard surfaces.

The cellar was found around 3 m below the modern ground surface, and consisted of a well-made semi-subterranean structure with painted stone walls and a concrete floor. The decorative paintwork suggests that the space, measuring about 4 by 4 m, was used as a reception room rather than as a place of storage, potentially within a larger building which is mostly to the west of the cellar. The sunken room was probably built in the second century A.D. and was accessed in the south-west corner via an external passageway. This had timber walls and a flagstone floor. The cellar was deliberately demolished and infilled, probably in the late third or fourth century.

Within the room, lying broken and face down amidst rubble, was a base to an altar stone. Carved from local Dane Hills sandstone and measuring 25 cm by 15 cm, the altar has decorative mouldings on three sides. The back is plain, showing that it would have been placed against a

- wall. Originally, it would have stood higher than it was wide, perhaps around 60 cm tall, but it is broken mid-shaft and the upper part of the pedestal and the capital are missing. Given the combination of a subterranean structure with painted walls and the altar, one interpretation could be that this was a room linked with the worship of a god or gods, perhaps a private place of worship, either a family shrine or a cult room where a small group of individuals shared in private worship.⁸⁰
- (3) **Medbourne**, Land to the rear of 7 Ashley Road (SP 79730 92914): evaluation trenching identified pits and a ditch of late Iron Age/Roman date. The finds assemblage from the features is suggestive of the disposal of waste from domestic and small-scale industrial activity, which is probably associated with the known Roman villa at Saddlers Cottage and Gardens, 100 m north-east of the site.⁸¹
- (4) **Wigston**, *Land west of Welford Road* (SP 60996 97660): an evaluation identified the remains of a late Iron Age/early Roman settlement, comprising enclosures, field boundary ditches and pits. The finds assemblage indicates that occupation lasted into at least the second century.⁸²

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

(1) **Rushden**, *Land off Prospect Avenue* (NGR 495940 267524): an evaluation identified Roman ditches and pits, including the remains of a rectangular enclosure, with evidence for internal sub-divisions. as well as a limestone surface. Pottery suggests a decline in activity from the late third century onwards. The features probably represent settlement activity which is a continuation of roadside fields and enclosures identified during previous trial trenching immediately to the north and east.⁸³

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

(1) **Retford**, *Tiln Farm Solar* (SK 7048 8372): two phases of archaeological evaluation followed a geophysical survey of the site which identified anomalies of undetermined and natural origin and a previous phase of archaeological trial trenching. Phase 1 of trenching was carried out in early 2021, and Phase 2 was completed in January 2022. In Phase 1, one evaluation trench contained a ditch, possibly related to a former enclosure, which contained pottery dated from *c*. 350 to *c*. 50 B.C. Evidence for former field boundaries and furrows was identified throughout the remaining excavation area along with the remains of ridge and furrow.

Phase 2 of the trenching revealed two defined areas of archaeological activity. One, located to the south-east of Tiln Farm and relating to cropmarks seen on aerial photography of the site, contained large linear ditches of considerable width and depth, and appeared to be the possible remains of a large Romano-British enclosure. Pottery dating to the second century A.D. was recovered from some of these ditches. The second area, located to the south of Tiln Farm on an elevated platform surrounded by trees, was identified in the previous geophysical survey carried out on the site. Features recorded here included ditches and pits containing pottery dated from late Iron Age to early-Roman, with these features part of a small defined rectilinear enclosure.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Led by Mathew Morris of University of Leicester Archaeological Services. Project Code Y.A21.2021. Dr G. Speed sent information.

Work by Cotswold Archaeology, J. Cook sent information.

Work by Cotswold Archaeology, J. Cook sent information.

Work by Cotswold Archaeology, J. Cook sent information.

⁸⁴ Work by CFA Archaeology Ltd. Project Code TILN2. Summary by G. Beardow and R. Howard. Kathleen O'Donnell sent information.

OXFORDSHIRE

- (1) **Broughton**, *Broughton Roman Villa* (SP 40299 38800): an evaluation of Broughton villa identified walls, features and deposits indicating the villa was in use from the earlier part of the second century and was abandoned by the middle of the fourth. The villa was probably more modest than was suggested by earlier surveys and comprised two main ranges of buildings. The artefactual evidence indicates the presence of a bathhouse with a tessellated floor, heated by a hypocaust, and a tower with painted plaster walls, possibly built to take advantage of the views down the valley. Other features included an undated ditched enclosure predating the villa and a series of terraced ponds, suggesting that the economy of the estate was at least partially concerned with fish farming or some other activity involving water and ponds. A previously investigated inhumation burial in a stone sarcophagus was subject to detailed recording.⁸⁵
- (2) **Eynsham**, *A40 Smart Corridor* (between SP 38555 10050 and SP 48999 10675): evaluation trenching identified a probable Roman kiln/corn dryer which was left *in situ*. Associated small pits and post-holes, of second- to fourth-century date, suggest that other structures may have been present in the immediate vicinity, which was potentially demarcated by a series of small ditches possibly defining a working area. Contemporary activity was identified to the east, comprising ditches and large pits. ⁸⁶
- (3) **Thame**, Land north of the A40 (SP 66814203530): an evaluation identified an enclosed early Roman settlement comprising ditches, pits and post-holes, associated with plentiful artefacts.⁸⁷

RUTLAND

(1) **Ketton**, *Stamford Road* (SK 967 031):⁸⁸ excavations in 2022 expanded on previous work.⁸⁹ The project followed the chance discovery in 2020 of a Roman mosaic depicting scenes from stories of the Trojan War that was the focus of work in 2021.

Work in 2022 saw nine trenches opened to investigate the wider villa complex. Trenches were located in reference to an extensive magnetometer and GPR survey undertaken by SUMO Geophysics, which indicated a series of structures located around a potential courtyard area.

In a trench towards the south of the complex, an aisled building with stone walls and timber aisle posts had a small bath suite added in the west end of the south aisle. Later, a square feature with a double furnace flue was built within the structure. In contrast the east end of the structure remained an open area.

A second bath suite with accompanying drainage was discovered at the southern end of the building containing the possible *triclinium* with its Trojan War-inspired mosaic. West of the bath suite, a 6 m diameter rubble-lined pit was excavated to 1.80 m but not bottomed. Both bath suite and pit disturbed an earlier stone building.

Within a trench excavated around the northern end of the *triclinium* a further small area of patterned mosaic with a geometric design was found in a corridor to the east, while evidence of a heating system was found immediately west of this room.

Work by Time Team and Cotswold Archaeology, J. Cook sent information.

Work by Cotswold Archaeology, J. Cook sent information.

Work by Cotswold Archaeology, J. Cook sent information.

Work by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in June and July 2022 and by Historic England in collaboration with ULAS in August and September 2022. Compiled by I. Barnes on behalf of Historic England.

⁸⁹ Lyons, A., 'The Midlands', *Britannia* 53 (2022), 452–4.

A trench located near the western edge of the complex revealed an enigmatic rectilinear building, partly sunk below ground level. There were no structural or artefactual clues to its use, but it was securely Roman in date and possibly post-dated a second timber-aisled building (dating results are required to confirm the construction sequence). A small ditch crossing the trench was the earliest feature here.

To the south-east an intense magnetic anomaly, thought before excavation to be a sign of industrial activity, signified the remains of a collapsed structure terraced into the valley side. Its walls had collapsed inwards onto a clay surface with much of two walls remaining intact, including many fine dressed stones. The collapse was covered, perhaps rapidly, by a deep homogeneous deposit containing much debris.

A series of ditches were uncovered outside and to the south-east of the villa complex: one large ditch ran on the edge of the floodplain parallel with the river.

Initial assessment of the finds dates activity to around the mid-late third to late fourth centuries, though there are hints of earlier activity. The villa complex, as predicted by the geophysics, proved to be substantial and to have been continually updated. The occupiers were no doubt wealthy with influence and extensive connections, as evidenced by the Trojan War mosaic. The project is now moving into its post-excavation assessment and analysis stages.⁹⁰

SHROPSHIRE

(1) **Hollinswood and Randlay; Madeley; Stirchley and Brookside**, *The Hem, Telford* (SJ 7154 0683): phase 1 of an archaeological evaluation was undertaken ahead of residential development. An archaeological assessment had established that the site lies in an area of moderate archaeological potential in proximity to prehistoric and Roman areas of activity.

The Phase 1 evaluation was able to ground truth a probable ditched enclosure suggested by a preceding geophysical survey which yielded pottery of second- and third-century date with affinities with pottery from nearby Uxacona. A Roman period gully terminus not depicted on the geophysical survey suggests that other features may be present that are not indicated on the geophysical survey. Other linear geophysical anomalies were demonstrably post-medieval field boundaries.

A subsequent mitigation programme involving open area excavation revealed more of the enclosure in addition to discrete internal features.⁹¹ The results of this second phase will be detailed in a forthcoming report.⁹²

WARWICKSHIRE

(1) **Bishop's Tachbrook**, *The Asps* (SP 2977 6269): an excavation was undertaken to assess the survival of the Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) of The Asps.⁹³

Settlement remains dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods were also observed, the prehistoric and Roman settlement foci located to the south of the DMV core. Prehistoric activity was focused on a series of concentric ring gullies bounded by a square enclosure; these features were associated with further prehistoric settlement remains. Evidence for agriculture/industrial activities was also present in the form of boundary/enclosure ditches and multiple cobbled working surfaces. Up to three possible cremations were also recorded within the prehistoric settlement.

⁹⁰ M. Jecock sent information.

⁹¹ E. Boot, *The Hem, Telford, Shropshire, archaeological evaluation*, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 2261 (2022).

Work by E. Boot of Archaeology Warwickshire on behalf of RPS Heritage.

Work by M. Jones of Archaeology Warwickshire on behalf of Taylor Wimpey and Bloor.

This prehistoric settlement displayed continuity into the Roman period, with the Roman settlement supplanting the prehistoric one. The settlement was fairly large, consisting of a rectilinear complex of enclosures and boundaries which became enclosed as the settlement developed. Evidence for robbed-out buildings were observed, these associated with further cobbled surfaces and a cobbled trackway. The Roman settlement at The Asps represents the closest recorded Roman settlement to Warwick with the exception of an aisled barn excavated on the banks of the Avon by Archaeology Warwickshire in 2017/18.

A small amount of early medieval archaeology was recorded in the form of a single enclosure ditch containing a small assemblage of pottery and a coin.⁹⁴

(2) **Rugby**, *Units 1 and 2 Symmetry Park* (SP 4643 7189): excavations recorded a multi-phase site with enclosures of Iron Age date across the development area, and later Roman enclosures. Other archaeological features comprised ring gullies, ditches, pits and burnt mounds. The features and finds suggest most of the land-use on site was small-scale agricultural activity, typical of an Iron Age farmstead. This was followed by later Roman activity which suggested an intensification of animal husbandry and enclosure ditches which functioned as stock pens.

Evidence of transitional and early Roman pottery was recovered from several areas on the site. A large north-east to south-west oriented ditch returned pottery dated to the first century A.D. The ditch appeared as a discrete Roman era boundary ditch in the southern part of the site, and terminated close to the Iron Age activity at the southern edge of the site. The ditch may have been constructed in the early Roman period while the later Iron Age enclosures were still in use, and suggests possible continuous use of the area for agricultural practices. A discrete square-shaped enclosure was also recorded which returned pottery of Roman date, comprising a single sherd of Roman greyware pottery, identified as a probable Mancetter industries specimen. Due to the lack of internal features, it is likely that the enclosure related to the keeping of livestock. 95

WORCESTERSHIRE

(1) **Droitwich Spa**, *Land off Vines Lane* (SO 8979 6380): nine evaluation trenches were excavated close to the Scheduled Monument of Bays Meadow, which includes a villa. The trenches showed an extensive area of Roman pits, ditches, gullies and a possible foundation with a large area of metalled surface. The ceramic dating points to a later Roman date and the proportion of finewares suggests a site of above average status for a rural setting, in keeping with the presence of the villa.⁹⁶

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

For supplementary material for this article please visit https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068113X23000302

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doi:10.1017/S0068113X23000302

⁹⁶ J. Pine of TVAS East Midlands. S. Preston sent information.

M. Jones, *The Asps, Warwick, archaeological excavation*. Archaeology Warwickshire (forthcoming).

⁹⁵ Work by CFA Archaeology Ltd for Tritax Symmetry. Project Codes RUGY2+RUGY3. Summary by A. Auricchio-Bund and M. Bell. Kathleen O'Donnell sent information.