

A ROMANO-BRITISH SITE AT SHEDFIELD, HANTS

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ABSTRACT

The partial excavation of a 1st–2nd century AD Romano-British ditched enclosure is described, together with several ancillary features. The extent of the excavation was limited owing to the number and close proximity of large trees and the fact that the site forms part of the garden and grounds of a private residence. Little direct evidence for associated buildings survived. However, a large amount of occupation material, primarily consisting of pottery, tile and daub-like material was obtained. The publication of this site is considered important for two reasons; firstly it is one of the few rural Romano-British sites to be excavated off the chalk downlands in Southern Hampshire, and secondly the pottery forms a valuable corpus of early Romano-British material for an area in which little published material exists.

It is suggested, in the absence of other published local evidence, that this site might be connected with the supposed vicus at the junction of Roman road routes 420 and 421.

virtually impossible and all trial trenching had to be done manually. Most features were 0.5 to 1.0m below present ground level and this coupled with the geological nature of the site – heavy clay with gravels – made digging conditions in dry and wet weather very arduous. Regrettably the acidic nature of the soil has destroyed all traces of any organic material that might have otherwise survived from the Romano-British period.

The site notebooks, plans and excavated material have been deposited with Winchester Museums Service under Acc No ARCH 3651. An interim report of the excavations was published in the *Hampshire Field Club Newsletter* (Soffe 1985), which is now superseded by this report.

INTRODUCTION

During the construction of a colonnade on the tennis court in the grounds of Shedfield House on 1st September 1910, Romano-British pottery was unearthed at a depth of about 0.6m by Professor J S Phillimore, uncle of the present owner Cdr R A B Phillimore RN (ret'd). In 1984, the now disbanded South Hampshire Archaeological Rescue Group (SHARG) was invited by the owner to conduct excavations with a view to establishing what archaeological features, if any, existed in the grounds adjacent to the tennis court.

Excavations led by the author were carried out at weekends from early 1984 until the end of 1987. The nature of the site, which is covered by many trees, severely limited the excavations. Access for machinery was

THE SITE (Fig 1)

The site (NGR:SU 5530 1355, approx 40m OD) lies at the western edge of the grounds of Shedfield House. It is bounded by Sandy Lane, the tennis court and the kitchen garden. A Roman road (Margary route 420) passes approximately 150m to the east and about 1km to the south-west is the site of the Romano-British pottery kilns in Hallcourt Wood excavated in 1960 (Cunliffe 1961). Two km to the south is the supposed vicus and junction of Roman road routes 420 and 421 near Coldharbour or Park Place on the outskirts of Wickham. In addition, 3.75 km to the west is the site of the Roman building in the grounds of Fairthorne Manor on the banks of the River Hamble. The site therefore, can be seen to occupy a position very close to several

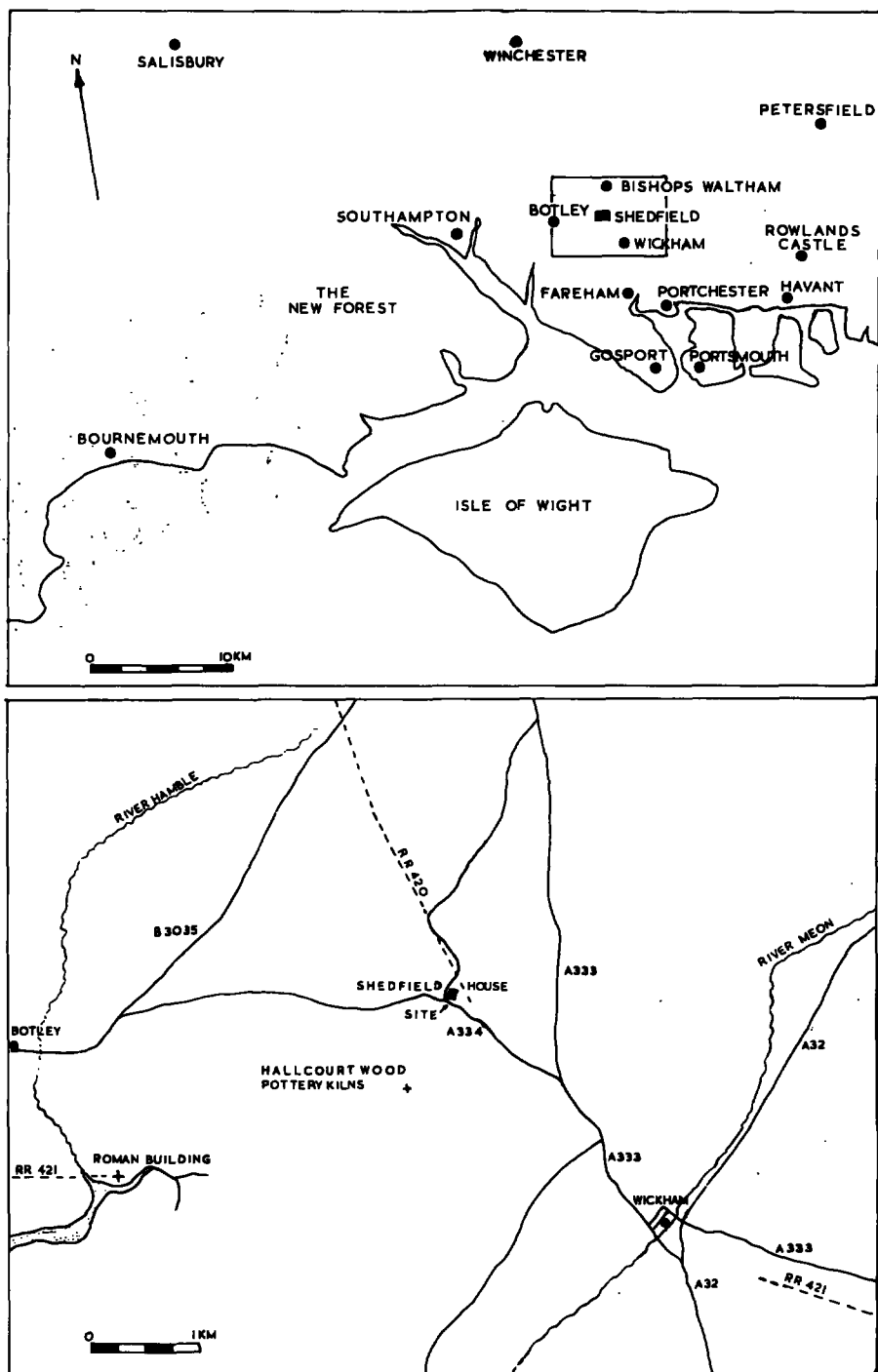


Fig 1. Shedfield: location plans of site.

important Romano-British occupation sites and lines of communication.

The geology of the site is composed largely of Bagshot pebble beds and Bracklesham clays and sands. Most of the site is covered with about 1m of sandy soil mixed with clay and pebbles, much of which appears to have been re-deposited, probably during levelling of the site when the tennis court was constructed. Unfortunately the tennis court has been levelled into the natural west facing slope of the grounds and this has truncated several features and probably completely obliterated others.

THE EXCAVATION (Fig 2)

Some trial excavations had been carried out by the owner and others prior to 1984. These were largely confined to Area B and had uncovered the terminal of ditch F1. These excavations were the focal point from which all subsequent trial trenching emanated.

The line of F1 was excavated westwards and it was established that the ditch terminated in Area B in what appeared to be a large post hole or pit, the fill of which amongst other things, contained large amounts of pottery and daub. The eastward course of the ditch was traced by cutting several trial sections across its projected line. Some sections were fully excavated, others merely observed as a ground plan to confirm its course. The ultimate length and direction could not be confirmed because of the inability to project its line accurately and carry out trial trenching in dense undergrowth near to large trees. Several speculative trial trenches were dug at various points in the hope of picking up the ditch but to no avail.

A small gully, F2, was found crossing ditch F1 in Area H. In an attempt to ascertain the length and direction of F2 a trial Area K was opened close to the southern side of the tennis court. Another gully, F5, with a larger section than F2 was uncovered. Further trial trenching in Areas M and N established the line of F5. Beyond Area N it was apparent that F5 had been truncated by the levelling carried out

during the laying out and construction of the tennis court. The alignments of F2 and F5 did not coincide and it was concluded that they were two different features. Unfortunately the area in which they might have been connected could not be excavated because of the presence of large tree roots.

Further trial trenching in and around the areas of the tennis court only produced two other features. A pit like feature, F7, was found in Area J on top of which was a single fragment of sarsen stone. On balance this feature was considered to be natural, probably caused by a tree, there being no other evidence to suggest it was artificial. In area FF a small hearth, F14, was uncovered but disappointingly no other features were located in the immediate area.

In an attempt to discover whether there were any ancillary features connected with the terminal of F1, such as a gateway, further trial trenches were established in Area D. Two slot-like features, F4 and F8, were uncovered, whose fill was devoid of any evidence to confirm whether they were natural or man-made. On balance the probability is that they were natural, tree roots being the most likely cause.

Trial trenching in Area Q revealed another ditch, F9, the line of which was established in a similar manner to that of F1. In areas Q, R, Y AA, BB, CC and HH it can be seen to run roughly parallel with F1, while in Area T/U it turns through approx 45° to run northward around the end of F1. Trial trenches in Areas V, W and Z established its line in that direction but it appeared to terminate under a large tree, trial trenches around the base of which failed to show any sign of its re-emergence or any other associated features. However, during the severe storm of October 16th 1987 the tree was blown down and in the root system was observed the ditch terminal together with a small oven-like feature, F25.

Several small features were found in the turn of ditch F9. F10 appeared to be a small post hole that had been cut through by the ditch. Further excavation of F10 could not be undertaken owing to the proximity of a large tree. F11 appeared to be another natural feature probably caused by tree roots, there being

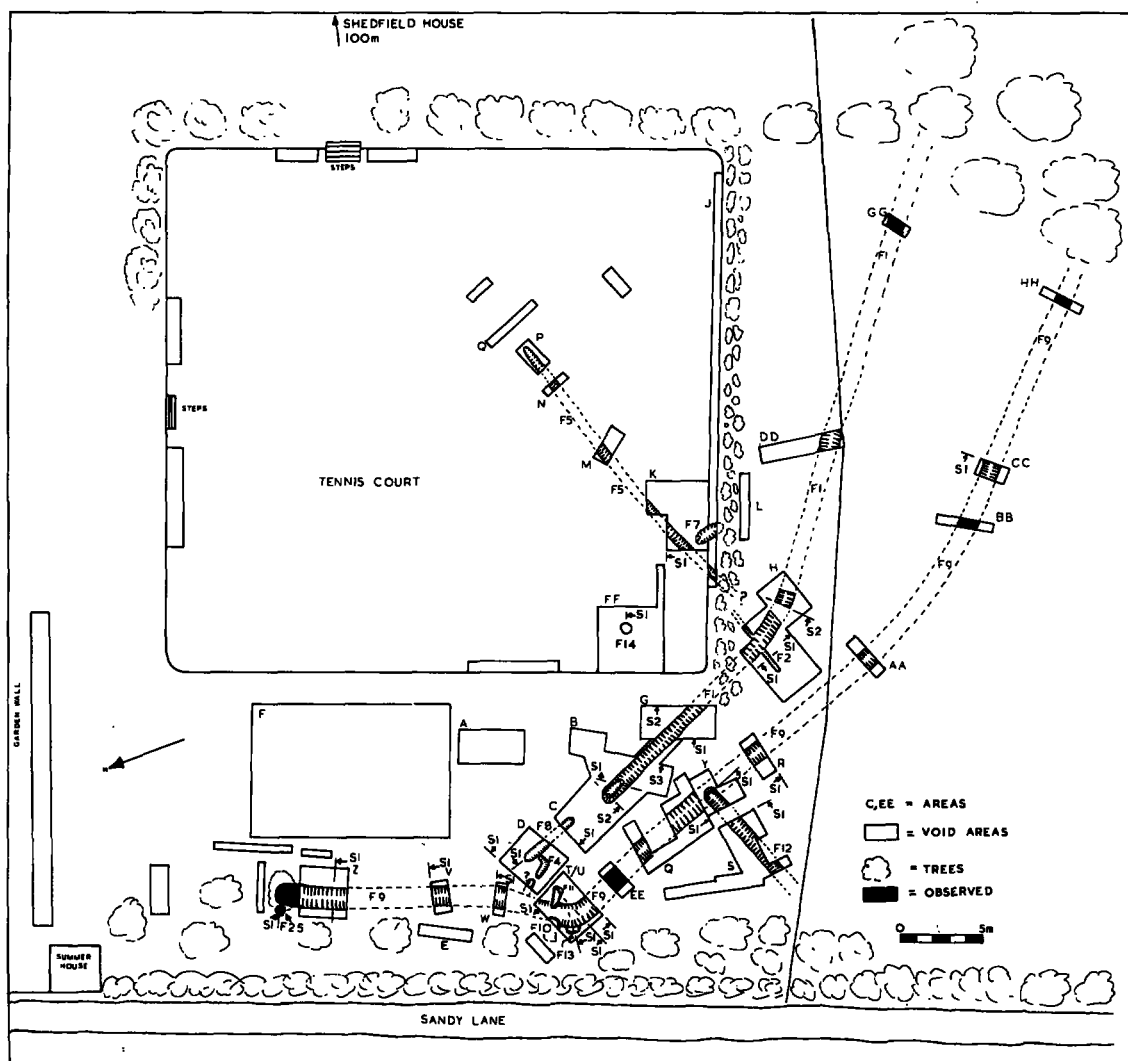


Fig 2. Shedfield: site plan.

nothing in its fill to indicate otherwise. In the outermost corner of the ditch the natural clay had been fired hard to an orange-red colour around a small hearth F13.

Further trial trenching on the outside of ditch F9 in Area S revealed another small gully which was found to terminate, by accident or design exactly in the middle of ditch F9. In the opposite direction it was traced to the edge of

the garden but yet again the presence of trees prevented further investigation.

In a final attempt to determine the line of the ditches and to locate any associated occupation features several speculative trial trenches were dug at a number of locations within the grounds which are shown on the site plan. No additional evidence was obtained.

Description of the Principal Excavated Features (Figs 2-4; microfiche Figs 8-12)

Ditches F1 and F9

These are the two most significant features of the site. Fig 2 shows their direction and extent, while Figs 3 & 4 (see key on microfiche Fig 8) show sections taken at various points along their length. From these it can be seen, that with the exception of the terminal of F1 in Area B, they are all generally V shaped and similar, that is about 1m wide and with a depth approximately 0.8m below present ground level. Visible stratigraphy was generally limited to two layers, usually comprised of sandy soil with a variable mix of pebbles. In all the excavated sections considerable quantities of pottery were recovered.

Both ditches were found to run roughly parallel to each other, with F1 terminating just inside the turn of F9. Excavations in and around this area failed to reveal any evidence of entrances or gate structures, except for the enigmatic slot like features F4, F8 and F11 (Fig 2). Very little evidence was recovered to suggest that these were man-made, except for small pottery fragments which may have intruded naturally or by rodent action. On balance it is believed they were probably caused by tree root systems.

Of particular interest is the fact that F1 terminated in a pit-like feature (Fig 3, top section). The stratigraphy gives every indication that the terminal was subsequently used as a rubbish pit, for which the evidence is the large amounts of pottery, daub, tegulae and charcoal that it contained. No other features were found in the ditch.

Ditch F9 terminated without any obvious signs of structural features and trial excavations around the termination failed to reveal any evidence of an entrance or other associated structures. Its fill, however, was characterised by large amounts of occupation evidence similar to that recovered from F1, with the addition of many fragments of thick building tiles and iron working slag. On the outer edge of the turn of the ditch was set a small hearth F13 (Fig 12), filled with charcoal and around which the natural clay had been baked hard to a deep orange-red colour. Scattered around the bottom of the ditch adjacent to the hearth were numerous pieces of slag and vitrified clay. This evidence seems to suggest that some form of iron working, probably smithing, was taking place on the site while the ditch was open. The size and position of the hearth on the side of the ditch together with the lack of any associated structural evidence probably

implies that the hearth was constructed and used by an itinerant smith.

No evidence of a bank was seen adjacent to F1 or F9 and there is no evidence that the ditches were defensive; they probably served as a boundary or an enclosure.

Gully F12 (Fig 4)

This small gully was found to cut through and terminate in the middle of ditch F9. Whether this was by accident or design is not clear. Finds of pottery from this feature appear to be contemporary with those from F9. The full westerly extent of the feature could not be determined owing to the close proximity of trees. The function of the gully is unclear, it could have been constructed for drainage purposes, however there is no direct evidence to support this supposition.

Gully F2 (Fig 2)

This very small gully cut through F1. No finds were recovered from it and its purpose is unclear. Its eastwards extremity could not be established as it appeared to terminate under the trees at the southern boundary of the tennis court.

Gully F5 (Fig 12)

This gully runs approximately at right angles to both ditches F1 and F9. At its eastward end it has been truncated by the levelling for the tennis court. Its western end was not established as it also appeared to terminate under the trees at the boundary of the tennis court. Although it appeared to lie on approximately the same alignment as gully F2, they seemed not to be the same feature as their sections were different and unless they changed their form and direction and connected under the trees they cannot be the same feature.

Hearth F14 (Fig 4)

This was the only feature found in Area FF. A small iron object later identified as a linch pin was recovered from the charcoal fill (see below; Fig 7).

Oven F25 (Fig 4)

This feature was observed in the root system of a large tree which blew down in the severe storm of

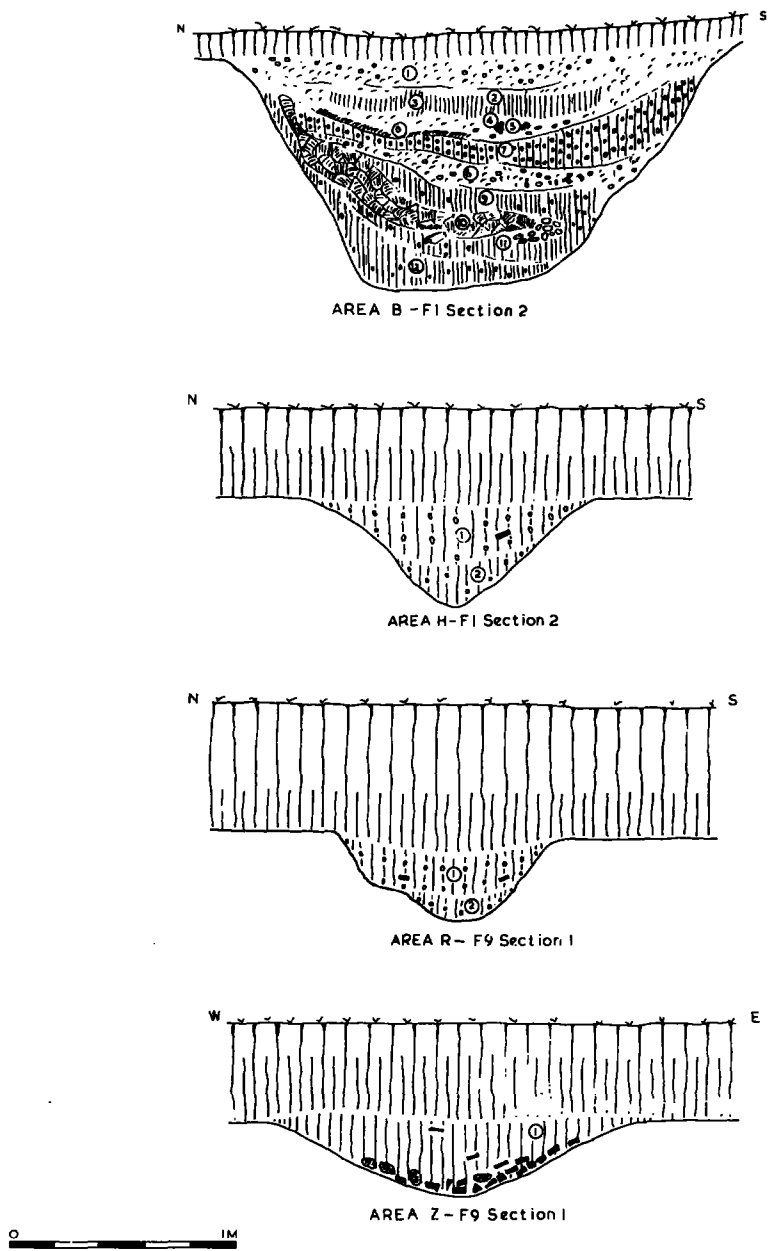
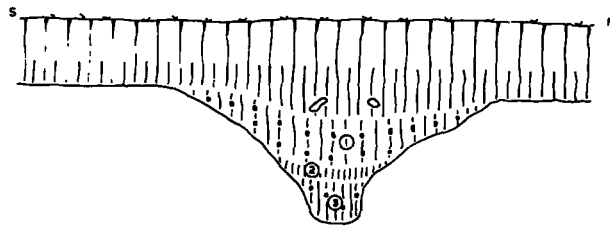
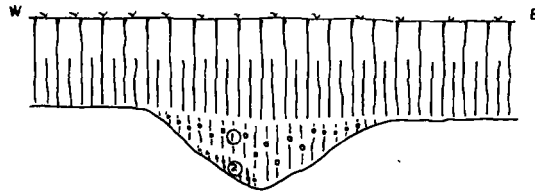


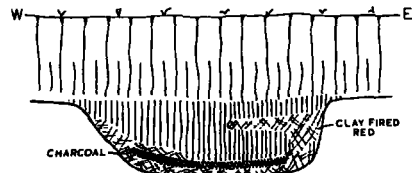
Fig 3. Shedfield: sections of ditches.



AREA C-F8 Section I



AREA S F12 Section I



AREA Z F25 Section I



AREA FF F14 Section I



Fig 4. Shedfield: sections of other features.

October 16th 1987. A proper excavation was not possible. A section drawing was made and this together with observation of the debris in the root system suggests that this was in fact a small circular oven composed of moulded clay which after abandonment collapsed. From the drawing it can be seen how the original void inside the oven silted up with clean soil before final collapse. A large amount of fine charcoal ash had accumulated outside the oven, sampling of which provided no evidence to date the feature.

THE FINDS

Pottery

Full descriptions of fabrics and forms are given in the microfiche, together with the comments made by Mr Malcolm Lyne after examining the assemblage. The text below discusses the more significant features of the pottery group, and its date.

1. None of the fabrics are the same as those from the nearby Hallcourt Wood kilns (Cunliffe 1961), yet several of the forms found at

both sites are similar, notably the storage jars with rope-twist rims and everted rim storage jars. Both forms are commonly found throughout the Romano-British period and therefore provide little positive dating evidence. It is difficult to visualise both sites co-existing but with none of the Hallcourt Wood material finding its way to Shedfield.

2. All the fabrics and forms recovered from Shedfield were distributed throughout most of the features and intermixed with little or no obvious stratigraphical separation (Table 1), thus indicating all the Shedfield forms and fabrics as being relatively contemporary.

3. The most positive dating evidence is provided by the imitation Butt-beakers, the most significant of which (Fig 5.1-2) have parallels at a number of other local sites, notably Fishbourne (Cunliffe 1971, 186 Type 59), Chalton (Cunliffe 1976, 61, Nos 54 & 56), Chichester (Down & Rule 1971, 33, Nos 5, 40 & 97) and Clausentum (Cotton & Gathercole 1958, 97, Fig 21.3). All the foregoing have invariably quoted types from Camulodunum (Hawkes & Hull 1947, 238, Form 113) as their parallel, and these vessels are generally

Table 1. Weights of pottery recovered, in kilograms (% of total).

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Feature</i>					
	F1	F5	F8	F9	F10	F12
A	3.25 (2.67)	0.2 (0.16)	0.01 (0.008)	1.1 (0.9)	0.05 (0.04)	0.01 (0.08)
B	4.72 (3.87)	0.375 (0.3)	0.04 (0.032)	6.6 (5.42)	0.16 (0.13)	0.71 (0.58)
C	36.915 (0.36)	0.775 (0.63)	—	9.6 (7.88)	—	0.425 (0.34)
D	0.9 (0.73)	—	—	0.175 (1.96)	—	0.01 (0.008)
E	6.0 (4.93)	1.14 (0.93)	—	9.05 (7.46)	0.04 (0.03)	0.6 (0.49)
F	15.2 (12.49)	—	0.01 (0.008)	16.8 (13.8)	—	0.6 (0.49)
G	1.96 (1.61)	—	—	0.35 (1.64)	—	0.2 (0.16)
H	2.0 (1.64)	—	—	0.375 (0.04)	—	0.05 (0.04)
J	—	—	—	0.2 (0.16)	—	—

Total 21.69kg

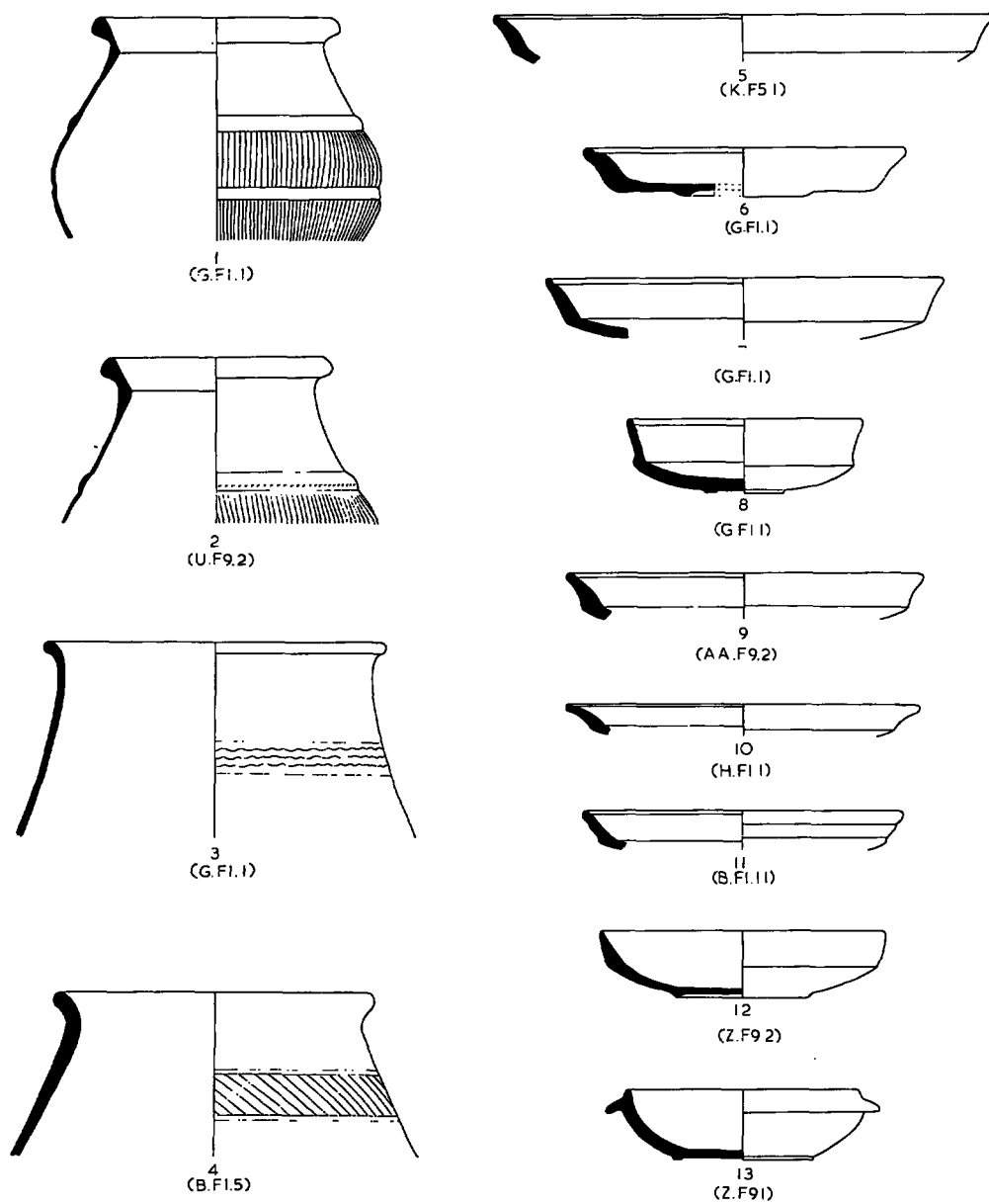


Fig 5. Shedfield: pottery. (Scale 1:4)

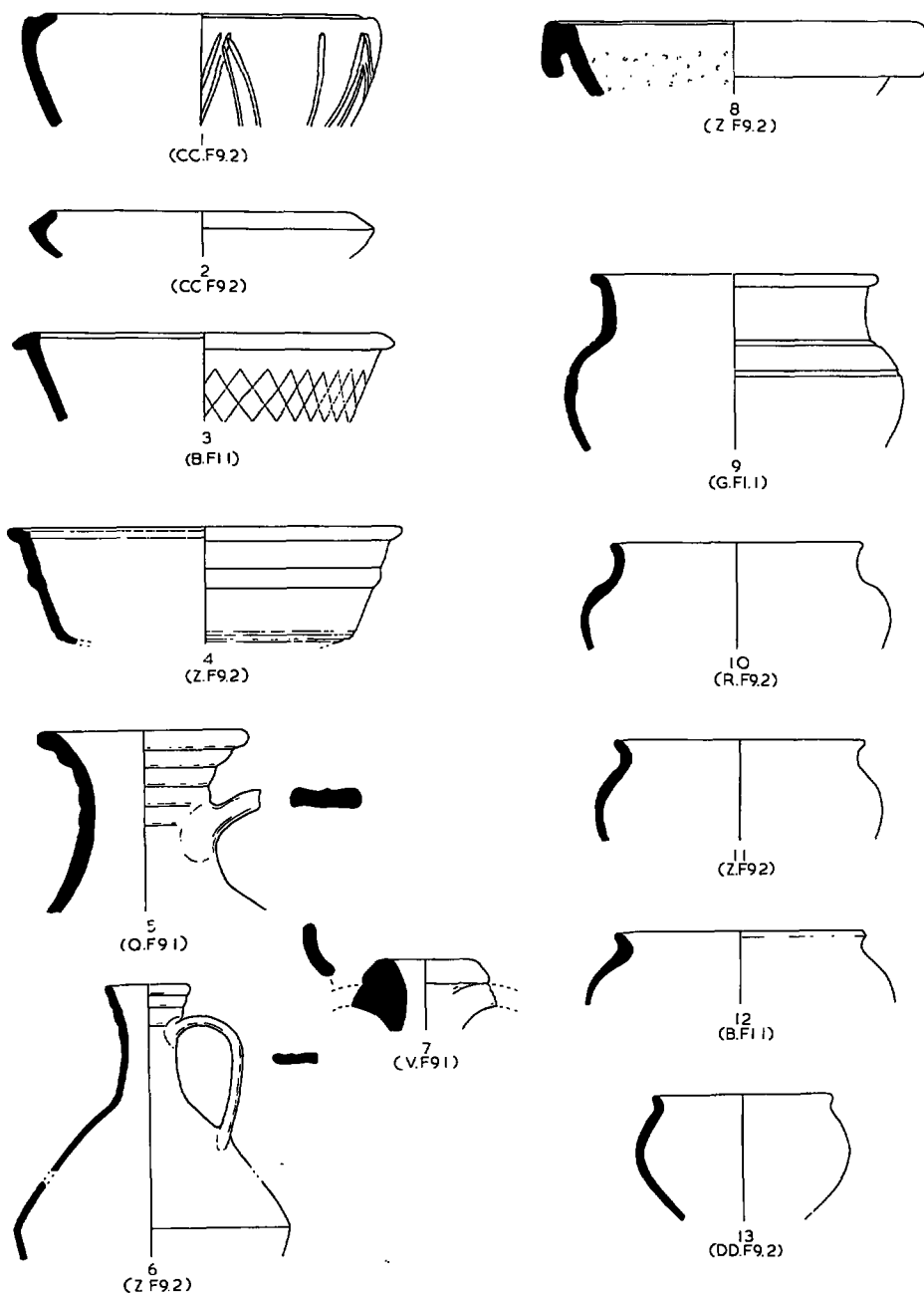


Fig 6. Shedfield: pottery. (Scale 1:4)

regarded as having been made at Colchester from Tiberian to Neronian times. The quality of the Shedfield vessels implies that they were imported to the site and they also bear a very strong resemblance to Form 113 from Camulodunum. In the absence of any earlier dating evidence from this site and having regard to the dates proposed for the other local sites, it is tentatively suggested that a mid- to late-first century date is appropriate for these vessels. Fig 5.3-4 probably represent cruder imitations of Butt-beakers.

4. The dating evidence provided by the Butt-beakers is supported by the next most significant group of pottery forms, the imitation Gallo-Belgic platters and dishes (Fig 5.5-12). These forms seem to resemble the sub-Belgic forms 21B/C from Camulodunum (Hawkes & Hull 1947, 222) where they are said to occur in contexts dating from AD 10-65. Locally they can be paralleled at Chichester (Down & Rule 1971, Fig 3.8 No 54, Fig 3.9 No 89, Fig 3.10 No 93) where they are said to occur in a pre-Flavian context of AD 43-60. Similar parallels in form but usually with some form of wavy line decoration, occur at Clausentum (Cotton & Gathercole 1958, Figs 19.13, 20.3, 21.4 and 5, 24.1 and 27.3) where they were found in contexts dated from the Flavian (AD 70) to the Antonine periods (AD 170/180). The Shedfield vessels bear a closer resemblance to the Chichester material and to the undecorated Flavian example from Clausentum (*ibid*, Fig 20.3) than to the remainder of the Clausentum material. A mid-first century to early second century date for these vessels seems appropriate.

5. This date range is supported by the samian ware from the site. All the sherds are South Gaulish, with the identifiable forms being typically Flavian to early second century Dr 18s and Dr 27s.

6. A similar date range can probably be assigned to the bowls and dishes. Fig 6.3, classified as Black Burnished ware (BB1), has parallels at Clausentum (*ibid*, 23.3, 25.6) where these have been assigned to the Antonine period. Fig 6.1-2 have parallel forms at Chichester (Down & Rule 1971, Fig 5.12 No 43, Fig 5.20 No 26c)

the dating there being a little uncertain but said to be probably not pre-Flavian. Fig 6.4 appears to resemble the Sub-Belgic Form 43B at Camulodunum (F223) where a date in the range AD 43-61 is postulated. Similar confirmation has been provided by Malcolm Lyne who identified this vessel as Alice Holt ware dating from a pre-Flavian context. Fig 5.13 appears to imitate form Dr 38 and is probably Terra-Nigra or a good imitation of it.

7. The distinctive conical ringed necked flagons (Fig 6.5-6) and double-handled jug (Fig 6.7) have parallels in Flavian contexts at Clausentum (Cotton & Gathercole 1958, Fig 19.5 and p 69 type J3 respectively) and in the flagons with forms 154 and 155 at Camulodunum (Hawkes & Hull 1947, 245-6) where again a date range from AD 43-61 is postulated. The hammer-headed mortarium (Fig 6.8) has a late 2nd century parallel, also at Clausentum (Cotton & Gathercole 1958, Fig 25.12) but a similar date applied to the Shedfield example would appear to be at variance with the dates assigned to other material found in ditch F9. Similar examples also occur at Chichester (Down 1978, Fig 71, No 56; 1979, Fig 10.16, No 45 and p 247-8 Types 10 & 16) where a date in the range AD 55-80 is postulated, which closely aligns with the date-range assigned to most of the Shedfield material, especially the imported Terra-Nigra bowl (Fig 5.13).

8. The remaining forms, mainly characterised by bead and everted rim jars, bowls and necked beakers (Fig 6.9-13) seem to bear a close resemblance in form and fabric description to the majority of the assemblage from Chalton (Cunliffe 1976, Fig 9.28-35) where it was suggested that these were local copies in the 'Atrebat' style but with precise dating being difficult, as it is known that these styles continued in use into the late first and second century AD. Some substantiation of this view and date range is provided by several examples from Clausentum (Cotton & Gathercole 1958, 59-78, Types BBR1, 2, 4 & 5, -BER1 -JN1 -JSB1 -JER1 & 3, -JCR1a, 1b & 2a -JBR1) which also closely parallel the Shedfield material but where the date range is set wide, between AD 70-200.

Tiles

As can be seen from Table 2, most of the tiles were recovered from ditch F9 (terminal area). All were fragmented, presumably as a result of building alterations or demolition. The building tile was fired dull red with a greyish core and was of relatively uniform thickness (6cm) and showed no signs of mortar or other architectural use. Two types of *tegulae* were present, one in fairly soft orange-red fabric with haematite inclusions with vertical flange and body of uniform thickness between 2–3cm, and the other of hard dull red fabric with the vertical flange about twice as thick (4cm) as the body. Several tiles had the paw prints of small dogs, and others displayed finger marks where the tiles had been wiped by hand.

Daub, Oven and Kiln Material

Most of this material was recovered from the terminal of Ditch F1 in lumps of about 15 sq cm or less (the material from F9 being very similar). It was composed of soft red clay that appeared to have been slightly oxidised possibly by the application of fairly low temperature but sustained heat. There

were no signs of vitrification usually associated with high temperatures. One surface, probably the inner, had been finished flat and smooth and was creamy buff in colour. Whether this was some form of slip designed to give a plaster-like finish or due to the effects of heating cannot be stated. This material could be daub, or part of some oven or clamp-like pottery kiln.

The Querns and Other Stones by G Soffe

The total of 36.96kg of sandstone fragments were recovered during the excavation (Table 3). They fall into three main stone types: ferruginous sandstone, Lower Greensand and sarsen. The total sample is perhaps too small to allow firm conclusions to be drawn from the proportions of stone type present in individual features, but the overall predominance of sarsen is noteworthy. The other types are present in much smaller amounts. The absence of Lower Greensand from F5 and F18 may also be significant.

The ferruginous sandstone is a dense, hard, dark brown rock known locally as ironstone or heathstone. It occurs in the Bagshot formation over which the site lies, and in the upper part of the Bracklesham Beds, situated immediately west of the

Table 2. *Weights of building materials recovered, in kilograms.*

Feature								
	F1	F2	F5	F6	F8	F9	F10	F12
<i>Material</i>								
Tiles	0.86	0.15	0.46	0.4	—	30.0	0.26	0.25
Daub/Oven Kiln Material	11.25	—	—	—	—	1.0	—	—

Table 3. *Stone types by feature. Weights in kilograms.*

Feature	Ferruginous sandstone	Lower Greensand	Sarsen	Total
F1	2.94	0.90	7.70	11.54
F5	2.83	—	0.45	3.28
F6	—	0.60	—	0.60
F8	—	0.10	—	0.10
F9	—	2.26	11.77	14.03
F10	—	1.20	—	1.20
F12	—	0.45	4.07	4.25
F18	—	—	1.69	1.69
Totals	5.77	5.51	25.68	36.96

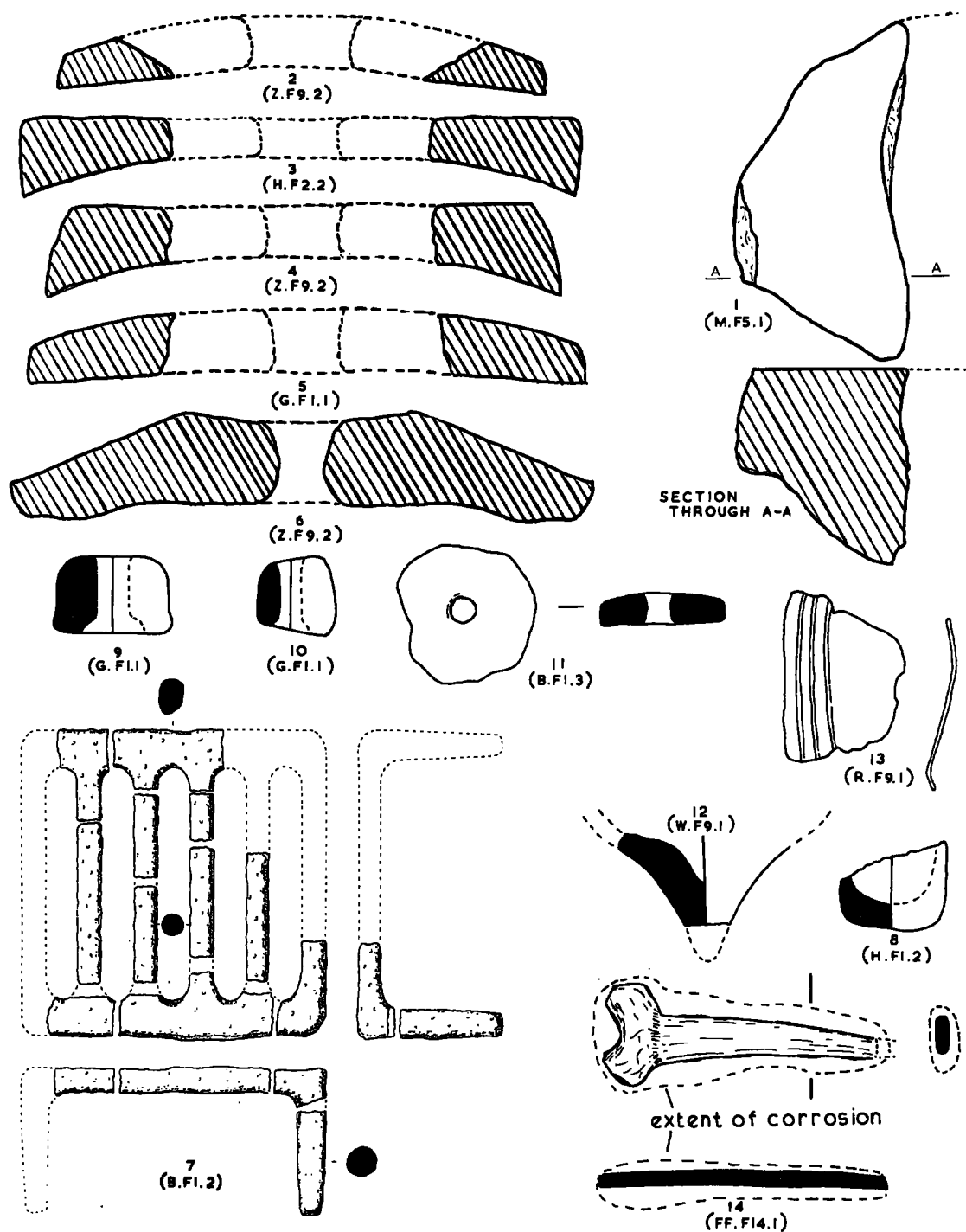


Fig 7. Shedfield: other finds. (Scale 1:3 for Nos 1-6, scale 1:2 for Nos 7-14)

site (Reid 1902). Similar rocks are found in the lower Greensand and Wealden Beds adjacent to the Chalk of East Hampshire, Sussex and the Isle of Wight, and it is the Wealden sources which provide the main centre for the Roman iron industry (Cleere 1975). A much softer variety of ironstone also occurs in the lower horizons of the local Shedfield Series sandy soils through infiltration and oxidation of iron (Kay 1939, 29–34). It is probable that both local types were collected as ores for the smelting of iron on a relatively small scale during the period of occupation of the site (see below).

One butt-end of a saddle quern in ferruginous sandstone was found (Fig 7.1). It has deliberate surface pecking to bring it to the required form and the grinding surface is very smooth. Saddle querns of this form are more frequent in Iron Age than in Roman contexts in the area. Its occurrence alongside the rotary querns described below may suggest that each quern type was used for a different purpose. The stone of this quern may derive from a local Tertiary or a Wealden source.

Most of the Lower Greensand fragments appear to be from rotary querns although no complete quernstone and few utilized fragments were found. The stone can be identified as an unusual but characteristic type of Greensand from the Midhurst region of West Sussex. At Lodsworth, near Midhurst, Peacock has recently identified a quern quarry and manufacturing site of late Iron Age and Roman date (Peacock 1987). He has indicated that many Roman rotary querns, particularly those of Curwen's 'Sussex style' (Curwen 1937), found on sites in central southern England, are of Lodsworth rock. The three upper (Fig 7.2–4) and two lower stones (Fig 7.5–6) illustrated from Shedfield are all of this stone type and Shedfield lies well within the main area of their distribution as defined by Peacock. The form of the Shedfield rotary querns would fit well with a late 1st-century date.

The majority of stone fragments from the site are from durable boulders of silicated sandstone known as sarsen. The boulders occur naturally upon the Chalk in parts of Wessex and in the Tertiary beds overlying the Chalk. They also occur in other deposits such as the Greensand. In some cases they appear to have been naturally transported but the method of transportation and origin of these erratics is a matter of controversy (Bowen & Smith 1977; Kellaway *et al* 1975). Although Iron Age and Roman querns of sarsen sometimes occur elsewhere, none of the Shedfield sarsen fragments appear to be worked. Some show signs of burning and it is

possible that these were used as 'pot-boilers' or in the construction of hearths or ovens.

Evidence of Metalworking

4.05kg of iron slag in small lumps of vitrified cinders was recovered from the site. The majority (1.85kg) came from the area of ditch F9 immediately surrounding the small hearth F13 described previously. The other significant quantity (1.75kg) came from the terminal of F9 in Area Z together with several fragments of vitrified red clay.

A fragment of what appeared to be a small crucible (Fig 7.8) was found in Area F. This was examined by Mr P Andrews of Southampton City Museums who, after sectioning the sample, confirmed that it was man-made ceramic and opined that it could have been used for smelting precious metal, although the interior contained no traces of it having been used for that purpose.

Iron Object by G. Soffe (Fig 7.14)

Length 9.3cm, very corroded. The drawing is based on X-ray photographs provided by the Ancient Monuments laboratory, HBM (AM 6726).

The object consists of a slightly curving tapering stem of sub-rectangular cross-section with a T-shaped flattened head. The stem is broken off at its tip. It is difficult to identify this object positively but it is probably a linch pin of standard type. If this is correct, the tapering stem and form of head may suggest a type originally having a loop head and a slightly longer stem than that which survives on this example. A 1st-century date would be possible for this type. On the other hand, a crescentic or spatulate head might be expected in a pin from a Romano-British context. These types often have a rebated end which may explain the narrowing of the stem in this example. Linch pins of similar form are known locally from the Hayling Island temple (King & Soffe, forthcoming), and Manning (1985, 72.4) gives a selection of examples from other British contexts.

Other Finds (Fig 7)

7. Trivet or gridiron. Conjectural reconstruction from 12 sherds. Similar to pottery fabric F. The material was examined by Vivien Swan of the RCHME who opined that it was not kiln furniture. A similar example has been found at the Alice Holt pottery production site AH52 (Lyne, forthcoming, Fig 24).

9 & 10. Bun shaped loomweights or spindle whorls. No 1 of fired clay, while No 2 has been cut from stone.

11. Spindle whorl cut from a potsherd.

12. Reddish-brown sandy fabric. Confirmed as the pointed base of an amphora by Dr D P S Peacock of the University of Southampton. Date and provenance unknown.

13. Fragment of sheet bronze. Slightly curved with one end turned up. Slight traces of concentric shallow grooves. Use unknown.

Charcoal by N D Balaam

A sample from ditch F1, section 1 yielded identifications of Broom (*Sarothamnus scoparius*) and one of the Rosaceae (pomoideae) family. The full report is given in the microfiche.

DISCUSSION

This site is one of the few Romano-British rural settlements to be excavated off the chalk downland in southern Hampshire. Others are known from Church Green in the New Forest (Pasmore & Fortescue 1983) and Hook, Walsash (Ashbee 1987). The ditches at Shedfield probably enclosed a rural settlement whose activities included agriculture, smithing and possibly pottery production. Both F1 and F9 were probably open at about the same time, as attested by examples of the same types and fabrics of pottery occurring in the upper level of F1 and the lower level of F9. This may indicate that ditch F1 had been open at some time before F9, being allowed to silt up, with rubbish accumulating in the top. F9 may then subsequently have been cut to either re-establish the existing boundary or create a new one, with similar material to that in F1 rapidly accumulating in the bottom. This implies that F9 may have been in use for a shorter period than F1.

Based solely on the dating evidence provided by the pottery, it is suggested that occupation of the site commenced in the latter half of the 1st century AD and continued up to the mid-2nd century, when the site was either abandoned or more likely, the ditches levelled

and occupation re-located elsewhere in the immediate vicinity on a site as yet unknown.

Judging from the amount and variety of occupation material recovered, especially the fragments of large building tiles recovered from F9 and F1 respectively, it is reasonable to assume that a fairly substantial building(s) existed somewhere in the close vicinity. This suggestion is backed up by the quantity and quality of the locally produced imitation Gallo-Belgic wares, imported Butt-beakers and samian ware present on the site. It is doubtful whether the building(s) lay within the supposed enclosure, since no *in situ* structural evidence of any kind was obtained from numerous trial trenches nor from casual observations of freshly turned soil in the kitchen garden or grounds. It is possible, however, that its site lies nearer to the Roman road.

The positioning of the site immediately adjacent to the Roman road (Margary route 420) cannot have been accidental, and this would have ensured good communication links. The Roman road is generally agreed to have been constructed in the latter part of the 1st century (Soffe & Johnson 1974, 110 & 118) as part of the post-conquest military communications network, so it may not be unreasonable to assume that this site was established at about the same time to exploit or serve the road, there being no evidence to suggest earlier occupation on the site.

However remote, the possibility must be considered that Shedfield is the site of the *vicus* (or some part of it) generally supposed to have existed at the junction of routes 420 and 421 somewhere near Wickham (Fig 1). Strong evidence for this is provided by the Antonine Itinerary itself, and Rivet and Smith (1979, 66–7, 308–9) postulate that this settlement could be the *Claesentum* referred to and not Bitterne. Additional unpublished evidence in the form of casual finds of Romano-British pottery and tiles on the west bank of the River Meon in and around Wickham at least lend credence to this view. As the route of 420 is largely unknown between the River Hamble and Wickham, Soffe and Johnson (1974, 106) have used the quite logical argument that by

projecting known alignments, the junction of routes 420 and 421 is probably at Coldharbour or Park Place some 2km to the south-east of Shedfield. However, if the suggested alignments for route 420 eastwards from the Roman building at Fairthorne Manor are examined in detail, they would seem to require several additional crossings of the Curbridge Creek tributary of the River Hamble, unless dog-legs in the route were made around the creek – surely not a prospect relished by the road builders. Alternatively, route 421 could easily have passed north of Wickham to align with the present A334 at Shedfield Common, deviating little from its known alignment on the A333 near North Boarhunt. Even if the road passed south of Wickham, then the supposed junction at Park Place might be no more than a northerly change of direction, still permitting the possibility of a junction elsewhere in the vicinity. If a line is projected from the Roman building at Fairthorne Manor (SU 5208 1182) to the site at Shedfield House (SU 5540 1355) it will be seen that this alignment for route 421 travels midway between the Shawford Lake and Curbridge Creek tributaries of the River Hamble and avoids the need

to cross either of them. It climbs in a relatively shallow gradient of about 1% to make a right angled junction with route 420 at Shedfield. In the absence of other documented sites in the Wickham area this must make the Shedfield area, at the very least, a contender for the site of the road junction and *vicus*, or an extension of it.

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