

Romano-British settlement on the North Somerset Levels: new evidence from Kingston Seymour

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ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT ON THE NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS: NEW EVIDENCE FROM KINGSTON SEYMOUR

STEPHEN RIPPON

with contributions by Laura Burnett, Julie Shoemark and Jane Timby

SUMMARY

Recent earthmoving on the banks of the Congresbury Yeo river in Kingston Seymour has destroyed a Romano-British settlement without professional archaeological recording. Thankfully, local resident Jane Bell, along with members of her family, have collected a large assemblage of material from the site which is reported here, along with the pottery from five nearby sites (also in Kingston Seymour). All together they suggest that the coastal parts of the North Somerset Levels were densely settled in the Roman period.

INTRODUCTION

Somerset's is a landscape that is dominated by wetlands, and the spectacular prehistoric remains in the peatlands of the Brue Valley remain some of the most important finds in British archaeology. During the prehistoric periods, human communities simply exploited the rich natural resources that Somerset's extensive wetlands had to offer, but in the Roman period that pattern of landscape utilisation started to change as the coastal marshes were transformed through embanking and drainage (Rippon 1997; 2000a). Between 1993 and 2000 three Romano-British landscapes on the North Somerset Levels surviving as earthworks – Banwell Moor, Kenn Moor, and Puxton Moor – were explored through a programme of survey, excavation, and palaeoenvironmental analysis which studied this change from an intertidal through to a freshwater reclaimed landscape (Rippon 2000b; 2006). Those three sites all lay in the relatively low-lying inland backfens of the Somerset Levels, and although Romano-British material had previously been found much closer to the coast – near Ham Lane in Kingston Seymour – contemporary records suggested that it was buried beneath a thick layer of later alluvium (Usher 1967; Lilly and Usher 1972).

In 2015 a Romano-British settlement was discovered

close to the mouth of the Congresbury Yeo river in Kingston Seymour (Fig. 1). Despite Romano-British material having been found in this area (Usher 1967; Lilly and Usher 1972), the Environment Agency dug a large lake in the field called 18 Acres in order to produce clay to reinforce the Congresbury Yeo's embankments. Inexplicably, adequate archaeological evaluation was not carried out, and an extensive Romano-British settlement was destroyed without record. Thankfully, the landowner's sister – Jane Bell – and members of her family – regularly visited the site and collected a large amount of material, reporting it both to the author and the then Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer for Somerset and Devon (Laura Burnett). This paper reports on that material, as well as several other pottery assemblages found by Jane Bell nearby (Ox House, Pugg's Pit, Bramble Farm, and Spencer's Field), and then considers their implications.

18 ACRES

The digging of the lake in 18 Acres revealed a dark, organic rich horizon c. 0.75-1.0m below the present ground surface, whose description is the same as that recorded elsewhere on the Somerset Levels and which palaeoenvironmental analysis and soil micromorphology has shown is a buried soil. It overlay, and was overlain by, sterile blue-grey alluvium that was laid down in mudflat/saltmarsh conditions. This land surface at 18 Acres was associated with a scatter of stone rubble (comprising Carboniferous Limestone and a red sandstone) and abundant Romano-British material culture, as well as traces of several possible structures. A cobbled surface measured c. 2.0-2.5m across, while what appeared to be a T-shaped structure was badly disturbed by earthmoving machinery, but was clearly associated with both upright and horizontal stone slabs and was filled with a layer of ashy material c. 0.25m thick (containing Romano-British pottery). This is

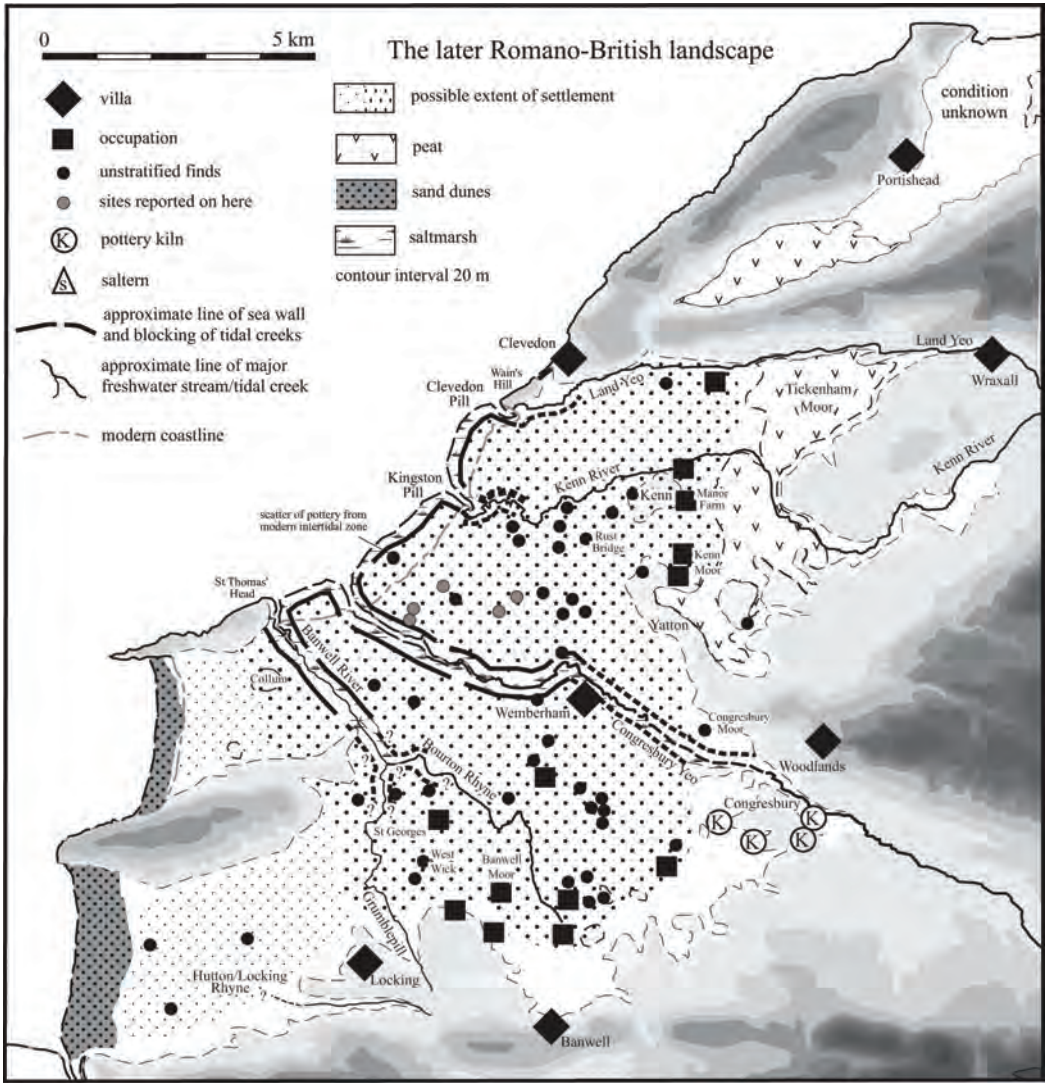


Fig. 1 The North Somerset Levels in the later Roman period (Rippon 2006, fig. 5.4) updated with the six sites discussed in this paper.

most probably a corn-drying oven. The main part of this structure measured c. 2.6m by c. 1m, with what appeared to be stone-lined flue running at right angles to it. The assemblage of Romano-British material from 18 Acres is dominated by pottery (see Timby below), along with some metalwork (see Burnett and Shoemark below), animal bone, oyster shell, burnt clay, a quern stone, and possible whetstone. It is worth noting that no ceramic roof tile was recovered.

OTHER SITES

The earliest discovery of Romano-British pottery from this area was in 1967 at Ox House beside Broadstone Rhyne, when a dark, organic-rich buried land surface was recorded associated with stone rubble and Romano-British pottery at c. 5.4m OD, around 2.5 feet below the present ground surface (Usher 1967; Lilly and Usher 1972): the pottery is mostly later Roman (see Timby below). Over the past few years Jane Bell and members

of the local historical society have once again recorded Romano-British pottery from the vicinity of Ox House, as well as four other locations in the vicinity. In 2011 ditch digging in a field called Pugg's Pit (immediately east of 18 Acres) revealed a dark, organic-rich buried land surface c. 1.0-1.5m below the present ground surface associated with stone rubble, Romano-British pottery, and a fragment of fired clay that appears to be part of a briquetage pedestal used in the salt production process (see Rippon 2006, 43-6 for a discussion of similar material from Puxton Dolmoors). A sherd of late prehistoric pottery (identified by Vince Russett) was also found at Pugg's Pit. In 2014 Romano-British pottery was found at a similar depth at Bramble Farm, while in 2015 unstratified stone rubble and Romano-British pottery from the spoil heap created during the construction of a solar farm near at Spencer's Field near Pool Farm. In 2017 Romano-British pottery was found in the spoil from the cleaning out of a ditch by Great Thornworth.

THE POTTERY

Jane Timby

Introduction and methodology

Up until 2017, 1,345 sherds weighing c. 13kg had been collected by Jane Bell dating to the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. The pottery was sorted into fabrics based on macroscopically visible inclusions in the clay paste, and sub-divisions were made on the size and frequency of the inclusions using a x20 binocular microscope. The Roman material has been divided into four categories:

- A: Native wares
- B: Imported continental wares
- C: Regional imported wares
- D: Source unknown, probably local

The category A wares are defined as handmade wares showing traits typical of the pre-Roman late Iron Age (PRLIA), although such wares frequently continued in use well into the early Roman period. Groups B and C largely relate to named regional and traded type wares which can be found in the National Roman fabric reference collection (Tomber and Dore 1998; <http://www.romanpotterystudy.org/>). Local or unsourced wares (Group D) are coded more generically according to their principal firing characteristics, namely GY/BW for reduced black or grey wares and OXID for oxidised, orange wares; the texture (fine/ medium/coarse) and surface finish where present. A description of the Roman fabrics defined and the associated forms can be found in

Appendix 1. The sorted fabrics were quantified by sherd count and weight for each location and the data entered on to an MS Excel spreadsheet. Rim sherds were coded to basic form type or to established published typologies where these exist. The pottery from each of the locations is briefly described followed a general summary of the conclusions.

18 Acres (Table 1)

This assemblage comprises some 1,018 Roman sherds. The earliest pottery consists of five sherds of handmade native limestone and calcite-tempered ware which presumably reflects a later Iron Age or early Roman presence in the area. Most of the pottery, however, is more firmly of mid- to later Roman date. Samian is moderately well-represented accounting for 3.4% of the total recovered assemblage and includes sherds from both Central and Eastern Gaul. In an excavation assemblage, this percentage would be reasonably typical of a rural settlement site for the region. The group includes a moderately small percentage (9% count) of regional traded wares largely from either the large later Roman industries operating in Oxfordshire, the New Forest or longer-lived regional industries such as those based in the Severn Valley and Poole Harbour, Dorset (black burnished ware 1 (BB1)). The remaining 87% of the collected finds appear to relate to largely local wares dominated by North Somerset grey wares (55.5%) followed by grey and black sandy ware copies of BB1 vessels (18.9%).

Bramble Farm (Table 2)

This assemblage comprises 70 sherds of Roman pottery. Although the group is small most of the pottery would probably date to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. There are eleven small sherds of native limestone and calcite-tempered wares present which may intimate some earlier activity in the locality. Amongst the 2nd-century ware is an oxidised copy of a samian bowl (Dragendorff 30) and a black micaceous ware jar. A Severn Valley ware bowl (Webster 1976, type 47) is typical of the 2nd-3rd centuries. Possibly of later Roman date is an oxidised dish with a footing and part of a centrally placed illiterate potter's stamp. There are no other typically late Roman wares present. The fired clay comprises 14 amorphous lumps weighing 67g which may be briquetage, but this is uncertain.

TABLE 1 POTTERY FROM 18 ACRES

	Fabric	Description	number		weight		EVE	
				%		%		%
Native	PREH LI	limestone and calcite-tempered	5	0.5	20	0.2	0	0.0
Imports	LEZ SA	Lezoux samian	27	2.7	196	2.4	0.48	4.9
	LMV SA	Les Martres-de-Veyre	1	0.1	12	0.1	0.07	0.7
	EG SA	East Gaulish samian	6	0.6	36	0.4	0.16	1.6
Regional	DOR BB1	Dorset black burnished ware	70	6.9	899	11.0	1.48	15.1
	NFO CC	New Forest colour-coat	1	0.1	3	0.0	0	0.0
	OXF RS	Oxon red-slipped ware	16	1.6	51	0.6	0.25	2.5
	OXF WH	Oxon whiteware	3	0.3	89	1.1	0.1	1.0
	SVW OX	Severn Valley ware	1	0.1	12	0.1	0	0.0
Local/	BB1 IMIT	Imitation black burnished wares	192	18.9	1425	17.4	1.75	17.8
unknown	BSGY	black surfaced grey ware	12	1.2	137	1.7	0.05	0.5
	BUFFSY	buff sandy ware	6	0.6	29	0.4	0	0.0
	BW	misc. black sandy ware	4	0.4	45	0.6	0	0.0
	BWMIC	micaceous black ware	2	0.2	22	0.3	0	0.0
	GY	misc. grey sandy ware	12	1.2	119	1.5	0	0.0
	GYFSY	fine grey sandy	1	0.1	6	0.1	0	0.0
	OXFMIC	fine oxidised micaceous	1	0.1	27	0.3	0	0.0
	OXIDF	fine oxidised	29	2.8	101	1.2	0.23	2.3
	OXIDFSY	fine oxidised sandy	2	0.2	18	0.2	0	0.0
	OXIDSY	oxidised sandy	8	0.8	55	0.7	0	0.0
	OXMIC	oxidised micaceous sandy	16	1.6	56	0.7	0	0.0
	SOMRE	Somerset grey wares	565	55.5	4534	55.5	5.07	51.6
	SOW BB1	South-west black burnished ware	33	3.2	271	3.3	0.17	1.7
	WSOXIDF	white-slipped fine oxidised	2	0.2	12	0.1	0.01	0.1
	OO	crumbs	3	0.3	1	0.0	0	0.0
Total Roman			1018	100.0	8176	100.0	9.82	100.0

TABLE 2 POTTERY FROM OTHER SITES

	Fabric	Description	No		Wt		EVE	
				%		%		%
BRAMBLE FARM								
Native	PREH LI	limestone and calcite-tempered	11	15.7	47	6.5	0	0.0
Regional	DOR BB1	Dorset black burnished ware	2	2.9	38	5.3	0	0.0
	SVW OX	Severn Valley ware	7	10.0	115	15.9	0.27	27.8
Local/	BB1 IMIT	Imitation black burnished wares	1	1.4	13	1.8	0.11	11.3
unknown	BSGY	black surfaced grey ware	1	1.4	8	1.1	0	0.0
	BW	misc. black sandy ware	1	1.4	23	3.2	0.07	7.2
	BWFMIC	fine micaceous black sandy ware	34	48.6	218	30.2	0.27	27.8
	GYFSY	fine grey sandy	1	1.4	105	14.5	0	0.0
	OXIDF	fine oxidised	4	5.7	74	10.2	0.07	7.2
	SOMRE	Somerset grey wares	8	11.4	82	11.3	0.18	18.6
Total Roman			70	100.0	723	100.0	0.97	100.0
OX HOUSE								
Regional	DOR BB1	Dorset black burnished ware	9	11.5	115	8.2	0.05	4.2
	OXF RS	Oxon red-slipped ware	5	6.4	39	2.8	0.14	11.7
	SVW OX	Severn Valley ware	1	1.3	4	0.3	0.05	4.2
Local/	BB1 IMIT	imitation black burnished wares	17	21.8	314	22.3	0.65	54.2
unknown	BWNSY	misc. brown sandy ware	1	1.3	14	1.0	0	0.0
	GY	grey sandy	2	2.6	3	0.2	0	0.0
	GYFSY	fine grey sandy	1	1.3	7	0.5	0	0.0
	OXIDSY	oxidised sandy	1	1.3	22	1.6	0.05	4.2
	SOMRE	Somerset grey wares	41	52.6	891	63.2	0.26	21.7
TOTAL Roman			78	100.0	1409	100.0	1.2	100.0
PUGG'S PIT								
Local/ unknown	BSGY	black surfaced grey ware	2		121		0.15	
	BWFMIC	fine micaceous black sandy ware	16		45		0.02	
	OXIDF	fine oxidised	1		0.5		0	
TOTAL Roman			19	0.0	166.5	0.0	0.17	
SPENCER'S FIELD								
Imports	LEZ SA	Lezoux samian	2	4.7	8	2.0	0	0.0
Regional	OXF RS	Oxon red-slipped ware	1	2.3	16	4.1	0	0.0
Local/	BB1 IMIT	imitation black burnished wares	17	39.5	129	32.8	0.06	12.5
unknown	BSGY	black surfaced grey ware	1	2.3	10	2.5	0.07	14.6
	BW	misc. black sandy	1	2.3	30	7.6	0.05	10.4
	SOMRE	Somerset grey wares	21	48.8	200	50.9	0.3	62.5
TOTAL Roman			43	100.0	393	100.0	0.48	100.0

Ox House (Table 2)

The assemblage from Ox House include 78 Roman sherds, 32 sherds of post-Roman date and six fragments of post-Roman ceramic building material. The Roman assemblage appears to largely date to the later Roman period with just over half the sherds comprising North Somerset grey wares. Regionally traded wares include five sherds of Oxfordshire red-slipped ware including a bowl (Young 1977, type C51) and two late Roman Dorset black burnished ware jars decorated with oblique laticing.

Pugg's Pit (Table 2)

A very modest group of pottery came from Pugg's Pit comprising 19 sherds of Roman date that are difficult to date closely. Two large sherds came from a black-surfaced, grey sandy ware handmade jar. The vessel was sooted from use and had a post-firing hole drilled through the upper wall. There are no distinctively early or late Roman wares present.

Spencer's Field (Table 2)

An assemblage of 43 Roman sherds were recovered from Spencer's Field suggesting occupation from the 2nd through to the 4th century with two sherds of Central Gaulish samian and one of Oxford red-slipped ware (Young 1977, type C51). North Somerset grey wares dominate, accounting for just under half the assemblage.

Discussion

Pottery was collected from a total of six locations with most of the material, 78% by sherd number, coming from 18 Acres. The small size of the remaining groups means that any conclusions made can only be regarded as very provisional. Despite this some comments can be made. Pre-Roman native wares are present on two sites: 18 Acres and Bramble Farm suggesting some early activity at these locations. It is difficult to know if this pottery represents discrete pre- or early Roman activity or was still current later in the Roman period as the sample is so small. A scattering of similar early material came from both Kenn Moor and Banwell (Timby 2000, 181), taken to indicate 1st-century activity. However, in both these cases the spectrum of wares was larger with grog-tempered ware as well as the limestone and calcite-tempered wares. At Shapwick the early PRLIA and early Roman activity encapsulated all these wares along with rock-tempered wares and Durotrigian pottery (Timby 2007, 598) and in the early

Roman period Savernake ware. Miles and Miles (1969) noted that in North Somerset Durotrigian pottery was nearly always found in association with early Roman pottery. No Durotrigian ware was recognised from these sites. It should also be noted that handmade, low-fired, pre-Roman native wares are less robust and not likely to survive well in a ploughsoil environment and thus may under-represented.

The pottery from Bramble Farm suggests that occupation here was limited chronologically to the 2nd and 3rd centuries with no obvious 4th-century sherds present. There was also a notably low incidence of North Somerset grey wares. By contrast, the assemblages from 18 Acres, Ox House and Spencer's Field suggest slightly longer episodes of use spanning the 2nd through to the 4th centuries, largely seen in the higher frequencies of later grey wares.

The larger assemblage from 18 Acres is not surprisingly the most diverse, with continental and regional imports present. The quantity of samian is quite modest, mainly comprising Central and East Gaulish wares, and is at a level commensurate with that to be expected from a rural settlement. At other sites in the general area quantities range between 1.3% at Shapwick, 2% at Kenn Moor and 2.8-3.2% at Catsgore (Timby 2007, figure 13.17). There are no other imported continental finewares, mortaria or amphorae present. The level of regional imports is also quite low but in keeping with what might be expected in the area in the later Roman period. Apart from the samian, evidence for 2nd-century activity is very slight with just a small number of vessels, for example, a flat-rimmed BB1 bowl/dish. It is thus not possible to pinpoint very closely a starting point for the activity other than likely to be mid-later 2nd century at 18 Acres. North Somerset grey wares dominate the assemblages from 18 Acres, Ox House and Spencer's Field accounting for nearly half the pottery in each case. This was similarly the case at Kenn Moor where various grey wares account for just over 50% of the assemblage (Timby 2000, 179). The dominance of this ware is likely to reflect a main phase of occupation in the 3rd and 4th centuries. The levels of BB1 are perhaps lower than might be expected compared to other Somerset sites but this may be a quirk of the sample. There are no particularly late Oxfordshire ware forms present at 18 Acres to indicate occupation in the second half of the 4th century but there is at least one New Forest ware sherd (and one other noted although not present), which are unlikely to be much earlier than c. AD 330. Late Roman shelly ware is also absent although present at other Somerset sites such as Catsgore (Leech 1982), Bradley Hill (Leech 1981), Henley Wood (Watts and Leach 1996) and Ilchester

(Leach 1982) where the occupation continued into the later 4th century or beyond. This would suggest, on the basis of the collected sample, that activity had ceased around the early-mid 4th century.

The evidence at present would thus not support any direct access to, or suggest any nearby coastal trading links, which might have provided a more exotic or diverse assemblage. However, it is possible that coastal or riverine trade did provide the means by which small quantities of continental and regional imported wares from other parts of Britain were getting distributed to the West Country. The character of the assemblages suggests fairly modest rural-type settlements rather than higher status establishments. The nature of the pottery used at such rural sites tends to be more conservative and, in the absence of fine wares, more difficult to date with precision.

NON-CERAMIC FINDS

Laura Burnett and Julie Shoemark

Objects for personal adornment

1. Roman copper-alloy developed T-shaped brooch, AD 75-150 with headloop and incised V decoration. Mackreth (2011, pl. 65) type 16a. A type distributed mainly in Somerset. 23.4mm long, 14.7mm thick, weighs 7.15g. PAS record: SOM-E09A7B
2. Roman glass intaglio, c. AD 200-300. Oval, in plain, translucent aqua glass. Engraved design depicts a simplified figure with a staff standing on a base line. Chipped in places on the front, sides and reverse. Romano-British type mostly found in southern England (M. Henig pers. comm.). 14.7mm long, 12.6mm wide, 5.3mm thick, weighs 1.44g. PAS record: SOM-E53602
3. Roman copper-alloy finger-ring of Henig type III/Guiraud Type 2d, dating to AD 50-150 (Henig 1974, 38). The ring is broken across the oval bezel which has a central recess for a large intaglio. Traces of a white substance, possibly an adhesive, are visible at the bottom of the recess. The recess is encircled by a raised reserve collar which tapers into a relief triangle which itself tapers down the shoulder. The shoulder narrows from the bezel into the loop and terminates in an old break. 19.94mm in length, 16.16mm maximum width (across the bezel), tapering to a minimum width of 3.47mm, 4.62mm thick and weighs 3.84g. PAS record: SOM-F70658

Objects for the household

Glass vessels

4. A fragment from the handle of a Roman flagon dating to the period c. AD 43-410 similar to Price (2009, fig. 50) no. 55. The glass is a translucent turquoise colour and includes several large air bubbles. The surviving edge of the handle has been rolled upwards and there is a series of longitudinal ridges visible running down the surviving length of the body. The sherd is irregularly shaped with relatively fresh breaks. 42.2mm in length, 29.1mm maximum width, 6.2mm minimum width, 8.3mm thick, weighs 7.50g. PAS record: SOM-9F8A41
5. One body sherd of translucent pale blue glass, probably Roman in date. The piece seems to be from a large cylindrical vessel, but the amount surviving and irregularity of the curve makes it hard to estimate the original diameter. Some shallow chips on the outer side, breaks around all edges and some laminar corrosion. 48.3mm by 47.9mm, 4.0mm thick, weighs 12.67g. PAS record: SOM-CC637E

Vessel repairs

Seven lead pieces in total:

Three typical lead 'pot mends' for repairing holes in vessels, irregular in plan with expanded faces sandwiching a thinner joining section.

6. 57.3mm by 35.1mm by a maximum of 12.9mm thick and has repaired a vessel about 3.8mm thick; it weighs 57.70g. PAS record: SOM-E13ADB
7. Ridges on one plate, possibly caused by cloth or another substance pushed against the inner side of the pot to cast against. 30.3mm in length, 28.8mm in width, is 11.8mm thick and weighs 24.9g. PAS record: SOM-CC1335
8. Concentric cooling lines visible on one face. There are small traces of ceramic around the plug in this piece but too small to identify as more than a very high fired grey-black sand tempered ware. 43.7mm in length, 27.1mm in width, is 11.9mm thick and weighs 59.3g. PAS record: SOM-CC1335

Two staples for fixing ceramic vessels. Long, narrow strips with convex curved top and sides which expand towards the wider base.

Casting seams on the underside from which project regularly spaced integral circular sectioned pegs.

9. 46.7mm long, 14.6mm wide, 7.2mm thick and weighs 13.36g; the two pins are 32.9mm apart. PAS record: SOM-CBE9CA (Fig. 2)
10. 46.8mm long, 11.6mm wide, 5.8mm thick excluding the expansions, 8.0mm including them and weighs 10.64g. PAS record: SOM-E13ADB
11. A strip with a coarse cylindrical peg extending up from it but not as neat as the examples above and is probably casting waste. PAS record: SOM-E13ADB
12. Probably a repair to a seam or crack with smooth topped sheet upper face and a distinct ridge running across the lower face. It is curved in profile suggesting it sat within a curve based dish. 50.6mm by 29.0mm, 4.1mm thick excluding the ridge 11.8mm including it and 45.22g in weight. PAS record: SOM-E13ADB

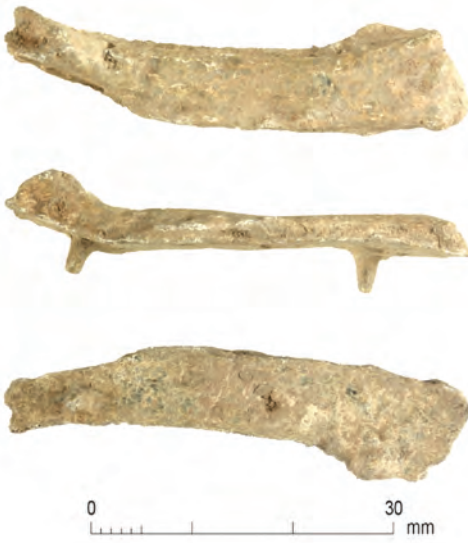


Fig. 2 Lead staple for fixing ceramic vessels (SOM-CBE9CA)

Objects for trade

Coins

That all five coins represented are of the 4th century is not unusual for North Somerset where

59% of over 500 coins recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme by 2018 are 4th century in date. While contemporary copies are not unusual the proportion found here, and in particular the potential copies of Reece period 15 and period 17 coins is unusual and may suggest parallels to the known use of saltern sites elsewhere on the levels to copy late 3rd-century radiates.

13. Roman silvered copper-alloy nummus of Constantine I dating to AD 309-310 (Reece period 15). SOLI INVICTO COMITI reverse type depicting Sol standing left, right hand raised, left holding globe. Mint of Lyon. 4.15g. Sutherland and Carson 1967, RIC Vol. VI, p. 265, no. 307. PAS record: SOM-F5CBA1
14. Roman copper-alloy nummus, possibly a contemporary cast copy, of Constantine I dating to AD 307-318 (Reece period 15). SOLI INVICTO COMITI reverse type, depicting Sol, probably with chlamys falling from left shoulder, with right arm raised and holding a globe in left hand. Uncertain mint. 2.26g. PAS record: SOM-E0C82A
15. Roman copper-alloy contemporary copy of a nummus of the House of Constantine, dating to AD 335-341 (Reece period 17). GLORIA EXERCITVS reverse type, depicting two soldiers with one standard. Copying unclear mint. 0.56g. PAS record: SOM-E0E5E8
16. Roman copper-alloy contemporary copy of a Roman nummus of the House of Constantine dating to c. AD 337-341 (Reece period 17). GLORIA EXERCITVS reverse type depicting two soldiers and one standard. Uncertain mint. 0.56g. PAS record: SOM-F609A6
17. Roman copper-alloy, possibly contemporary, copy of a nummus of Valentinian I (AD 364-375) dating to AD 364-375 (Reece period 19). SECVRITAS REI PVBLICAE reverse type, depicting a Victory advancing left with a wreath and palm branch. Uncertain mint. The coin fabric has an unusual laminar structure visible on the surfaces but particularly in the cracks that have formed on the rim. This suggests it is a contemporary copy. 2.26g. PAS record: SOM-AF5E90 (Fig. 3)



Fig. 3 Roman copper-alloy, possibly contemporary, copy of a nummus of Valentinian I (AD 364-375) dating to AD 364-375 (SOM-AF5E90)

Weights

18. Cast lead globular steelyard weight with the stubs of corroded iron suspension loops embedded at the top and bottom. The weight is now sub-spherical with damaged areas at the base and top covered with iron corrosion product. The stubs of loops appear to be made of circular sectioned wire which may run completely through the weight. The weight is 26.9mm in diameter, 22.3mm thick, excluding the loop, 26.1mm including and weighs 83.41g, just under three ounces. Possibly Roman, although not of the typical biconical form (see Crummy 1983, 101; no. 2510). A later, medieval or post-medieval date cannot be ruled out. PAS record: SOM-4C6441

Objects for production

19. Roman hand-turned rotary quern of the 3rd to 4th century. About half of the upper stone (in two fragments) and a quarter of the lower stone survive. The upper stone has a convex upper face with rounded outer edge. Concave lower face rising towards the centre. On the upper face there is a slight raised lip around the central hole and around a U-shaped handle indent. The lower stone has a convex upper face with rounded corners and flat lower. Considerable wear on both grinding surfaces with no dressing evidence left. Mix of fresh and older breaks. Pinkish coloured coarse-grained Old Red Sandstone conglomerate with common poorly sorted rounded white quartz pebbles measuring up to 25mm from the Mendip or Bristol deposits (Shaffrey 2015, 59). Estimated 430mm diameter, upper

stone 54mm thick at centre, 41mm at rim, lower 86mm thick. Handle indent 78mm by 48mm and 26mm deep with the stone 62.2mm thick at the raised edge. The central hole is irregular and possibly damaged, now a maximum of c. 59mm across. PAS record: SOM-A00AD6 (Fig. 4)

20. Roman hand-turned rotary quern. About one eighth of the upper stone survives, including part of the outer edge: the inner point of the wedge may be at the central hole but is too incomplete and abraded to be certain. Assuming this is the central hole, and given the curve of the outer edge, the complete diameter is estimated to be at least c. 500mm. Convex upper face with rounded corners, flat lower face. Well cemented, poorly sorted coarse grain buff sandstone with sparse rounded white quartz pebbles up to 20mm and sub-rounded small pebbles of various minerals including shale up to 4mm. Probably an arkosic sandstone which elsewhere has been linked to widely distributed millstones of 500mm diameter or greater and turned by mechanical means (Reniere *et al.* 2016), although in this case the size would suggest a probable hand turned mill by the criteria used by Shaffrey (2015). 230mm from edge to inner point, 250mm at right angles to this, 71.3mm thick. PAS record: SOM-F873CA (Fig. 5)
21. A water worn, sub oval pebble of Devonian sandstone deliberately brought into the area, possibly from the Quantocks (D. Parsons pers. comm.). One side is completely worn flat, probably from use as a smoother, polisher or possibly whetstone. It is 54.6mm long, 43.6mm wide, 30.4mm thick and weighs 106g. It is not closely datable and may be prehistoric to post-medieval in date. PAS record: SOM-CC2754
22. 32 amorphous pieces of cooled melted lead, mostly small, total weight 466g. Two are small flattened circular discs which were examined in detail in case they were tokens or counterfeit coins, both known in lead, but the raised markings on them do not appear to create a pattern, and on one side of one of them a series of linear impressions with another set at right angles suggests an impression from an organic material. It is likely therefore they are both flattened splashes. One is 14.5mm in diameter and 0.9mm thick, the other 11.0mm in diameter and 0.9mm thick, 1.63g. There is also one possible casting jet with a circular upper part, the edges of which are bent up and circular stub of the casting well; now 18mm



Fig. 4 Roman hand turned rotary quern of the 3rd to 4th century (SOM-A00AD6)



Fig. 5 Roman hand-turned rotary quern (SOM-F873CA)

by 11.4mm wide by 8.3mm thick, 6.88g. PAS records: SOM-E13ADB, SOM-CBE9CA

23. A circular sectioned rod with one pointed and one blunt end, sometimes called lead 'pencils'; in this context it may also be to do with vessel repairs. This example is bent in half and 5.8mm in diameter and weighs 11.67g. PAS record: SOM-E13ADB
24. Six off-cuts of sheet lead, all showing evidence of neat straight cuts on at least one edge and are 1-1.5mm thick, one is folded widthways, total weight 45g. PAS record: SOM-E13ADB

Objects for construction

25. Roman ceramic object, possibly a tessera dating to the period c. AD 43-410. The object is trapezoidal. The fabric is buff shading to off-white in colour with a reduced light-grey

core. It exhibits abundant quartz, mica and grog temper. 24.0mm in length, 23.1mm in width, is 14.5mm thick and weighs 12.16g. PAS record: SOM-89D493

26. Post-medieval lead window came. The typical H-shaped cross-section has been crushed flat but is still visible at the ends. Parallel lines running down the length suggest it was extruded. Length: 52.3mm, Width: 14.2mm, Thickness: 7.7mm, Weight: 20.82g. PAS record: SOM-CBAB73

Discussion

The dress accessories appear to be examples typical of the area. The coinage similarly reflects the generally very high frequency of 4th-century material on sites in the region (compared to other material recorded by PAS from North Somerset) although the two finds of Reece period 15 coins is slightly unusual. These are larger coins than those preceding them or following and their retrieval might reflect the collection method. One half quern stone is unusually large and complete. The other piece might be part of a mechanical mill but it is too fragmentary to be firmly identified as such. The large amount of small lead casting waste is not unusual on Roman sites and here appears to reflect vessel mending as well as other potential domestic uses.

DISCUSSION

The Roman assemblages from these sites add considerably to our understanding of the North Somerset Levels in the Roman period in showing that the very high density of sites previously identified in the lower-lying

inland areas (Rippon 2000b; 2006) also extended further west into areas where the Romano-British landscape is now buried by later alluvium. Although today the site at 18 Acres lies close to the coast, in the Roman period it would have been at least c. 0.5km from the contemporary shoreline that all around the Severn Estuary is known to have retreated inland during the medieval period leading to Romano-British settlements now being in the intertidal zone (e.g. Rippon 1996; 1997). Off the coast of the North Somerset Levels, for example, a scatter of Romano-British pottery has been recorded south west of Kingston Pill c. 0.5km from the present sea wall (North Somerset HER 40550; Rippon 2006, 64, figs 5.1 and 5.4). In lying on the banks of the Congresbury an obvious possibility was that the site at 18 Acres was a small port, but there is no support for that hypothesis in the pottery assemblage. The other finds are also typical of ordinary rural settlements. Although one small fragment of possible briquetage was found, far more would have been expected had salt production been going on. Instead, the evidence points to a farming community and therefore a reclaimed landscape.

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APPENDIX 1 DESCRIPTION OF ROMAN FABRICS AND ASSOCIATED FORMS

Group A: Native ware*Limestone and calcite-tempered* (PREH LI)

A reduced, handmade ware tempered with fragments of Palaeozoic limestone and calcite, possibly sourced from the Mendips. Form: No featured sherds
Date: 1st century BC-AD
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm

Group B: Imported continental wares*Central Gaulish samian (Les Martres-de-Veyre)* (MDV SA) (Tomber and Dore 1998, 30)

Form: A single dish Dragendorff (Drag) 18/31.
Date: early 2nd century
Site: 18 Acres

Central Gaulish samian (Lezoux) LEZ SA2 (ibid., 32)

Forms: Dishes Drag. 31 (x5); Drag. 18/31; bowls Drag. 37 (x3) and possible a Drag. 30 and cups Drag. 33 (x3)
Date: 2nd century
Sites: 18 acres, Spencer's Field

East Gaulish samian (various)

Forms: Dishes Drag. 31 (x2), bowl Drag. 38 and a mortarium Curle 21.
Date: 2nd-4th century.
Site: 18 Acres

Group C: Regional imported wares*Dorset black burnished ware* (DOR BB1) (ibid., 127)

Forms: Flat-rimmed bowl; flanged-rim, conical bowls (x10); plain-walled dishes (x13) and flared rim jars (x8)
Date: 2nd-4th century
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm, Ox House

New Forest colour-coated ware (NFO CC) (ibid., 141)

Form: A single bodysherd decorated with an incised wavy line.
Date: 4th century
Site: 18 Acres

Oxfordshire red-slipped ware (OXF RS) (ibid., 176)

Forms: Beakers (Young 1977, types C20, C22); dishes (ibid. C45); bowls including one decorated with impressed crescent stamps; flanged bowls C51 (x2) and mortaria bodysherds.
Date: mid-3rd-late 4th century
Sites: 18 Acres, Ox House

Oxfordshire white ware (OXF WH) (ibid., 174)

Forms: Mortaria (ibid. M22)
Date: 3rd-4th century
Site: 18 Acres

Severn Valley oxidised ware (SVW OX2) (ibid., 149)

Form: A single jar and hammer-rim bowl (Webster 1976, type 47)
Date: 2nd-4th century
Site: 18 Acres

Group D: Source unknown, probably local*Imitation black burnished wares* (BB1 imit)

Wheel-made and handmade black sandy wares
Forms: Copies of BB1 forms included flared rim jars, flanged-rim conical bowls and plain-rimmed dishes. Other forms include a single tankard and a sharply everted rim jar decorated with an acute lattice.
Date: later 2nd-4th century
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm, Ox House, Spencer's Field

Black surfaced grey sandy ware (BSGY)

A mid grey, medium textured sandy ware with a black-slipped surface
Forms: Everted rim jars
Date: ?later 2nd-4th century
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm, Pug's Pit, Spencer's Field

Buff sandy ware (BUFFSY)

Medium to fine textured, buff sandy ware
Form: Bodysherds only
Date: Roman
Site: 18 Acres

Black sandy ware (BW)

Generic group for other black sandy wares
Form: Jars
Date: Roman
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm, Spencer's Field

Black sandy micaceous ware (BWMIC)

Hard, black sandy ware with a red core. Frequent white mica is visible on the surfaces.
Form: Bodysherds only
Date: Roman
Site: 18 Acres

Grey sandy ware (GY)

Generic group for grey sandy wares not classified elsewhere.
Forms: Jars and at least one colander
Date: 2nd-4th century
Sites: 18 Acres, Ox House

Fine, grey sandy ware (GYFSY)

Fine grey ware with an oxidised core
Forms: Bodysherds only. One sherd is decorated with spaced, horizontal, burnished lines.
Date: Roman
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm

Fine, oxidised micaceous ware (OXFMIC)

Forms: Bodysherds only
Date: Roman
Site: 18 Acres

Fine oxidised ware (OXIDF)

Possibly includes colour-coated wares which have lost their surface finish.
Forms: Bowls including a copy of a Drag. 30 form, and the base of a dish with a footring with part of an illiterate potter's stamp (Bramble Farm).
Date: 2nd-4th century
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm, Pugg's Pit

Fine sandy oxidised (OXIDFSY)

Slightly sandy textured oxidised ware
Forms: No featured sherds
Date: Roman
Site: 18 Acres

Oxidised micaceous sandy (OXMIC)

Forms: No featured sherds

Date: Roman
Site: 18 Acres

North Somerset grey wares (SOM RE)

These grey fine and slightly sandy grey wares belong to a widespread grey-ware tradition based around the Bristol Channel with kilns known to date at Congresbury (Lilly and Usher 1972) on the Somerset side of the channel and at Caldicot and Llandeyrn in South Wales (Spencer 1988). The Congresbury kilns have not been published in detail and it is likely they are part of a more widespread production area.
Forms: Various jars with everted, flared, thickened triangular and bifid rims; hemispherical bowls; plain-walled dishes; bifid-rim, handled jugs; lids and tankards. One jar has comb-impressed decoration.

Date: late 2nd/3rd-4th century
Sites: 18 Acres, Bramble Farm, Ox House, Spencer's Field

South-west black burnished ware (SOW BB1)
(Tomber and Dore 1998, 129)

Forms: Jars and plain-walled dishes
Date: 2nd-4th century
Site: 18 Acres

White-slipped fine oxidised ware (WSOXIDF)

Forms: Bowl
Date: Roman
Site: 18 Acres