

# THE ROMAN SETTLEMENT AT FOSSE LANE, SHEPTON MALLET: THE TESCO EXCAVATIONS, 1996–7

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

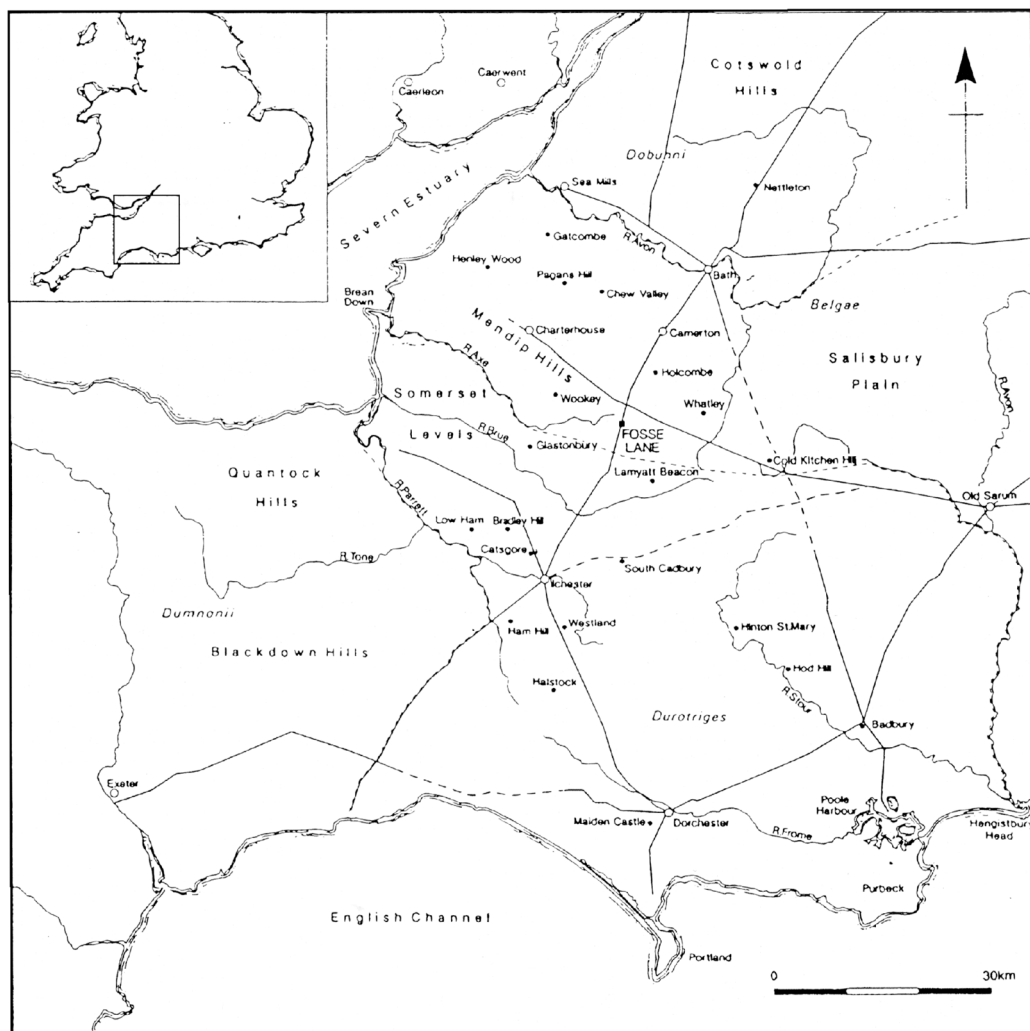
The excavations reported on here took place in 1996–7 on the east side of the Roman Fosse Way at Shepton Mallet. This was one of a series of major excavation sites undertaken in advance of comprehensive redevelopment. It lay directly to the north of an earlier excavation in 1990 (Leach with Evans 2001) which had demonstrated that a small town lay beside the Fosse Way south of the crossing of the River Sheppey (Figs 1 and 2). A ‘grey literature’ publication followed (Ellis and Leach 2000) but full publication was never achieved. The report published here is a slightly shortened version of the 2000 report with an updated version of the discussion. The finds reports – details of which are tabulated (Table 1) – are all available at <http://www.sanhs.org/Documents/SheptonMallet.pdf> with short summaries provided here. Page references cited here as W1–52 are to the website paper. Finds numbers refer to the finds lists to be found there.

The excavation, undertaken by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) under the joint direction of the authors took place in advance of construction of a Tesco superstore and garage. It was preceded, in 1990, by a programme of geophysical survey and evaluation trenching which covered the site excavated in 1996 and further areas to the north (Leach 1990; Fig. 3). Details of both these pieces of work, and of a later watching brief have been amalgamated with the main excavation results.

Roman remains at Fosse Lane had first been recorded in the 19th century when railway construction revealed stone buildings to its west, together with numerous finds. The 1990 excavation, in advance of a Showerings warehouse development, revealed ditched and walled enclosures laid out on either side of trackways, within which were buildings, both domestic and agricultural, and areas

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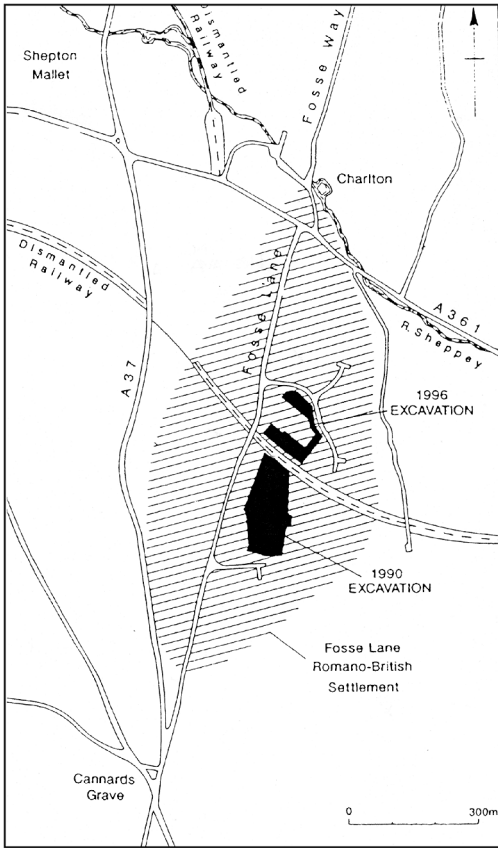


*Fig. 1 Location maps with principal Romano-British roads and sites*

of industrial activity. These lay to the rear of what was assumed to be much denser occupation along the Fosse Way itself. These features were followed by burial plots suggesting that occupation had contracted but still continued close to the road. The evidence as a whole demonstrates that the settlement was occupied between the late 1st century and at least the 5th/6th centuries AD.

At the Tesco site, the geophysical and trial trenching results (Fig. 3) informed decisions on the layout of the development and mitigation strategies (Leach and Ellis 1996). As was the case at other

nearby sites, the development plan foresaw the major impact of buildings as lying away from Fosse Lane, the modern route more or less replicating the line of the Roman road, and this meant that the archaeology of the Roman road frontage could be protected. To the rear of the frontage at the Tesco site, Roman archaeology was found to be present across the whole proposed development area either in the trial trenches or appearing as geophysical anomalies. However, the impression was given that a greater density of features was located in the central area with a slight decrease of features



*Fig. 2 Location of 1990 and 1996 excavations and hypothetical limits of Roman settlement*

to the north and south. In response to this, the new buildings were sited north and south of the central area which was designated for use with a minimum of disturbance. The excavation thus took place within the footprint of two structures, Area A to the north (to be the site of the Tesco garage) and Area B to the south (the site of the store itself), and along their respective access routes, leaving the frontage on Fosse Lane and the central area protected from development through scheduling as part of the Ancient Monument SM 22803.

### Excavation methods

Topsoil and subsoil was stripped by a 360-degree tracked machine under archaeological supervision.

It was apparent relatively early following the start of cleaning that a larger area of archaeology was available for excavation and recording than could be undertaken given the available resources, and a strategy was adopted of more intensive cleaning of alternate 10m square areas. In the event about two thirds of the surfaces were carefully trowelled. The exposed features were then sample excavated, including all types of feature recognised, with all ditches sectioned in at least one place, and many of the building walls and floor surfaces also sectioned. Finds collected from overall surfaces were separately bagged by 5m square. Extensive environmental sampling was undertaken from ditches, pits, layers sealed under colluvium and from colluvial deposits.

The widespread areas of intact archaeology exposed by the machine together with the limitations on resources led to the decision to record much of the plan of the area by means of photography rather than on-site drawings. Some areas were photographed by quadropod (a movable camera structure developed at Wroxeter) but the bulk of the photographic recording was by means of a wheeled hoist vehicle, a 'cherry picker'. Access to the central areas required that the vehicle was driven onto the site, and the programme of recording was therefore arranged so that the areas to be tracked across were recorded first. This radical approach to the time-consuming process of on-site drawing had therefore the disadvantage of writing off some areas simply with a photographed record after cleaning. A 1:200 outline plan of all features was rapidly prepared to provide a working record and reference for the photographs.

The underlying natural surface comprised Lias limestone bedrock, bedded almost horizontally and fractured towards the surface. In the south-west corner of Area B this was located directly beneath the topsoil and subsoil, but in most areas it lay beneath a blanket of orange natural clay up to 0.4m deep. An additional watching brief was undertaken in 1997 during the early stages of the site's development, from which further information was obtained to complement that from the excavations.

The excavation results emphasised remains of the latest levels of Romano-British settlement, dating to the later 4th or early 5th century. Arising from the Showerings excavations of 1990 to the south (Leach with Evans 2001), evidence, particularly from burials, suggested settlement continuity or a reuse of areas to the rear of the Fosse Way frontage in the

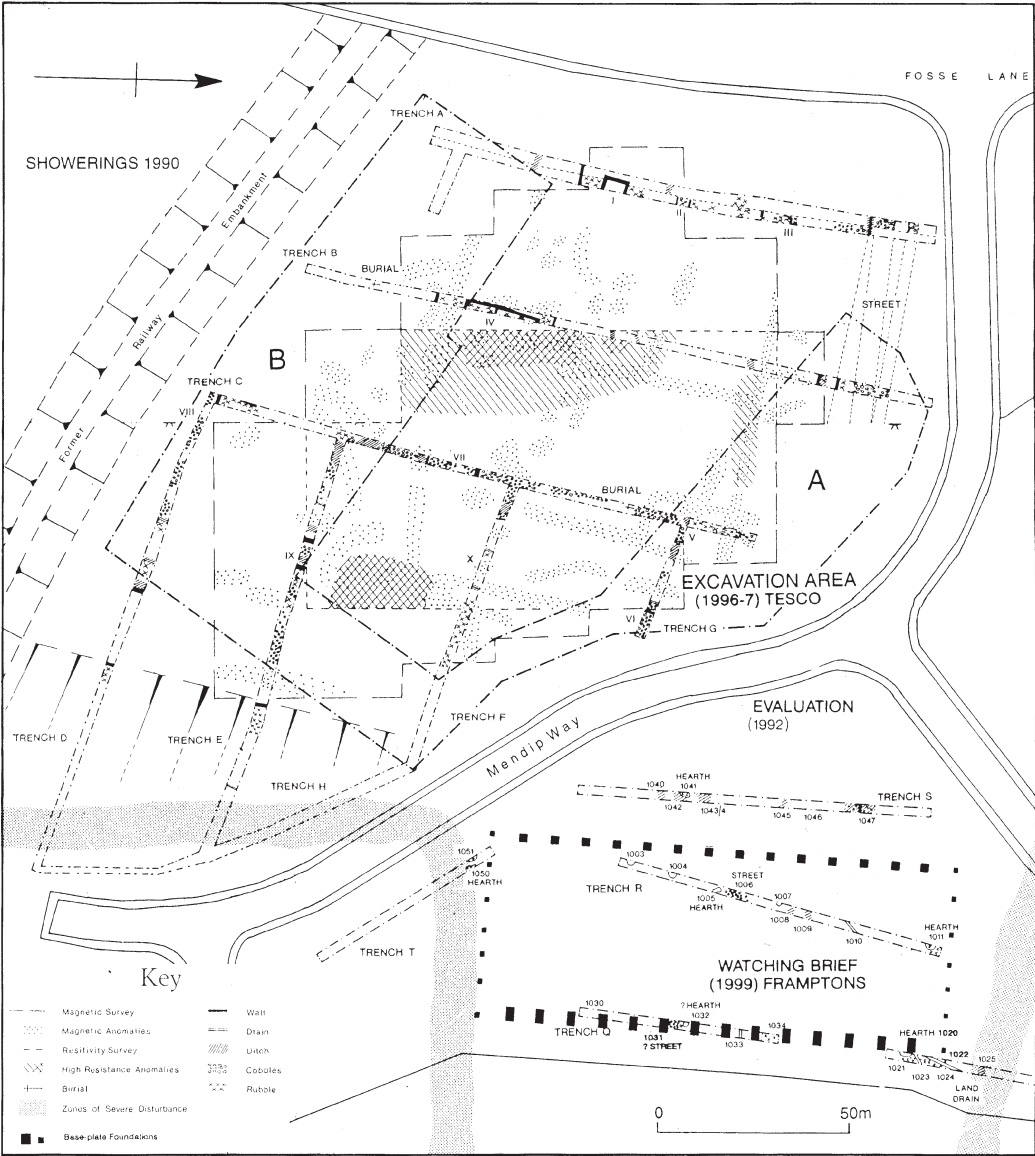


Fig. 3 Relationship of the 1996-7 excavation site with earlier trial trenching and geophysical survey

post-Roman period up to the 6th or 7th century. In 1996, the discovery of similar burials may reinforce this hypothesis. Nevertheless, it was also possible to excavate substantial portions of earlier Roman levels, notably some in Area A, which had been later abandoned as a result of flooding and only partly reoccupied.

**Post-excavation**

The periodisation established for the 1990 excavation has been used for the Tesco site, with the exception of an additional post-Roman phase dividing the 1990 Period 5 into Periods 5 and 6. The phasing is as follows:



- Period 1 *c.* AD 80 to *c.* 150  
boundary ditches, Structure 1, road F101
- Period 2 *c.* AD 150 to *c.* 250  
walled areas, Structure 8
- Period 3 *c.* AD 250 to *c.* 300  
flooding, colluvium deposits, ditching
- Period 4 *c.* AD 300 to *c.* 350  
Structures 2, 5, 6, 11–13, 15–18
- Period 5 *c.* AD 350 to *c.* 400  
Structures 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 14, child burial
- Period 6 Early post-Roman centuries  
burials
- Period 7 Nineteenth century

The excavated areas were found to have been divided in the Roman period into plots marked by banks, ditches and, later, walls. These are described here as Compounds and have been allocated a numerical system as Compounds 1 to 10 (Table 2). The buildings were allocated Structure numbers from 1–18. Their lifespan and that of the buildings on the Showerings site have been tabulated (Table 3). Apart from a handful of portable finds comprising prehistoric pottery fragments and flint artefacts located in later layers, there was no evidence of pre-Roman activity. The majority of the finds came from the lengthy process of cleaning the machine-cleared levels. These were collected in 5m and 10m squares according to a grid system common to both excavated areas. In the finds reports the small find (SF) number is followed in these cases by the grid reference, which is then roughly located eg SF1, 100/260, east of Structure 12. Where the site text refers to an object the reference is to the catalogue number in the finds report.

The dating evidence is presented at the end of each section following an interpretation of the data outlined initially. Pottery provided the great majority of the datable material with some additional evidence from stratified coins.

## THE EXCAVATIONS

### Period 1 *c.* AD 80 to *c.* 150

#### *Area A*

Two parallel ditches, F152 and F116/F166, 15m apart were recorded running east–west (Fig. 4). The ditches were *c.* 1.4m wide and 0.4m deep (Fig. 7). A bank of clay revetted with limestone fragments, F148, was recorded to the south of F152 (Fig. 4),

and the presence of stone in a recutting of the ditch suggested the upper part of the bank may have been of stone subsequently collapsed into the ditch. A shallow cut, F160, filled with soft clay with charcoal flecks, may have been a stone-sided drain running into F152.

A building, Structure 1, was laid out across the northern of the two ditches (Fig. 5). The building measured 5.8m by at least 10.4m internally with its walls marked by large stones set on the natural clay ground surface. The east wall, F109, differed from the south and west walls in having faced stones and a rubble core. The south, F108, and west, F107, walls were made up of large horizontally laid closely set stones. A 2.8m wide entranceway lay on the west side with a doorpost socket, F165, sited on its north side. Within the building, its southern end was floored with large flagstones and blocks, F110. This overlay an earlier hearth. The paving came to a ragged end possibly forming a distinct floor area within the building. To the north a possible wall line, F164, was marked by a line of small stones with two slight depressions marked by light grey clay, perhaps marking the former position of posts. In the angle made by F164 and the west wall of the building was a pit, F117, containing the broken lower sherds of three pots.

On the exterior of the building a stone culvert, F120, had been built as one with the east wall. This had a stone base and sides and was 0.2m deep. To the west was stone cobbling, F112, with varying surfaces suggestive of different uses (Fig. 5). Directly to the west of the building a rectangular area, F157, marked by larger stones and distinctive pitching suggested a possible covered area. Part of a second entranceway into the building from it was indicated by worn threshold stones. Further south a line of single large stones, F155, was possibly a wall running northward for a short distance. To its west were three vertically set stones in a line. Yard F112 overlay a spread of clay with a large quantity of burnt material. This overlay the line of ditch F116/F166 and was not excavated. To its east were further areas of burning around a hearth.

A road, F101, was recorded running eastward from the Fosse Way within the area defined by ditches F152 and F166 but on a slightly different alignment (Figs 4 and 6). This route was partially retained through subsequent periods. Two sections were cut across it (Fig. 8) and evidence for the initial road was best defined to the east where later changes were not present or had been removed. Here the road was sited between two ditches within

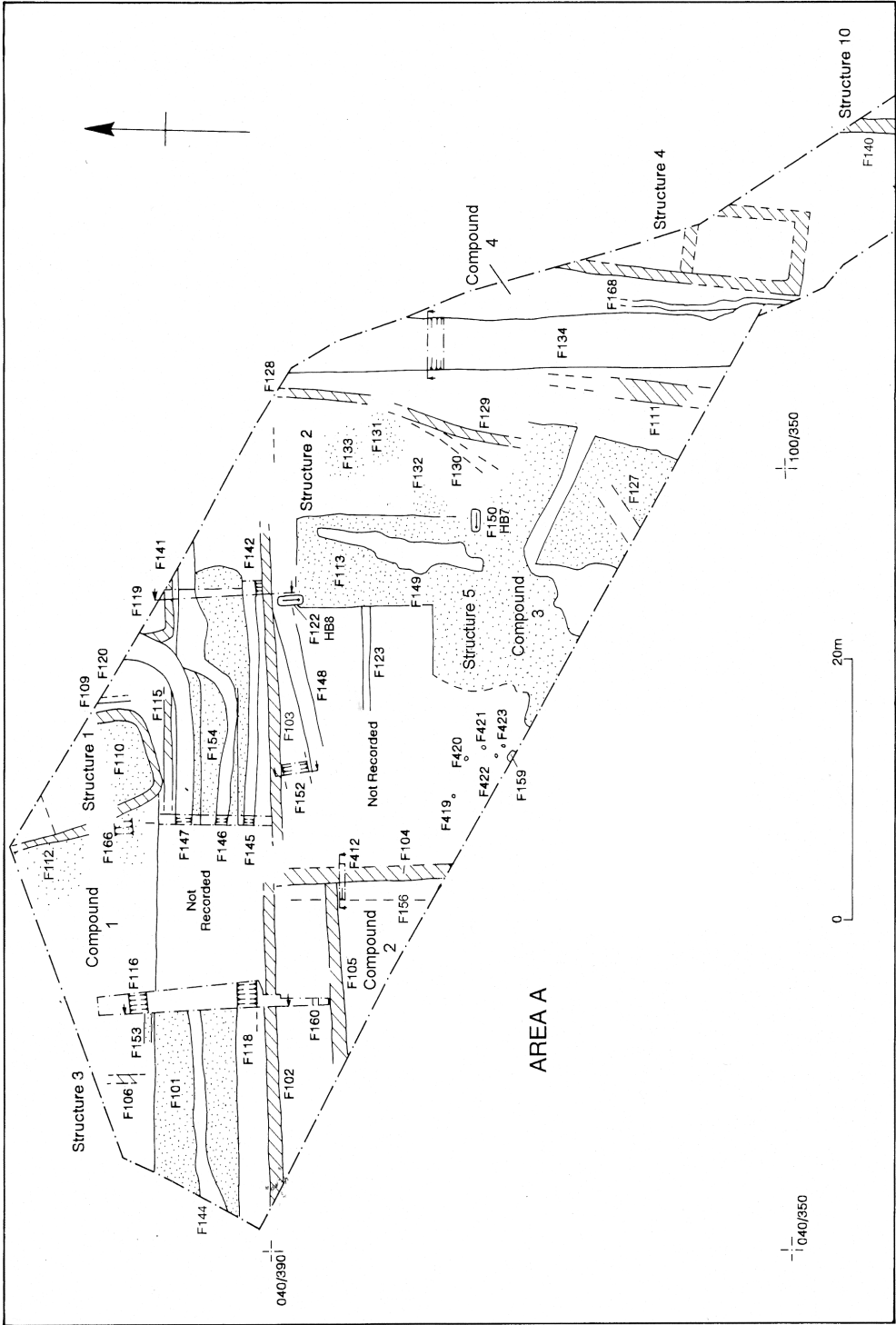


Fig. 4 Area A; scale as shown

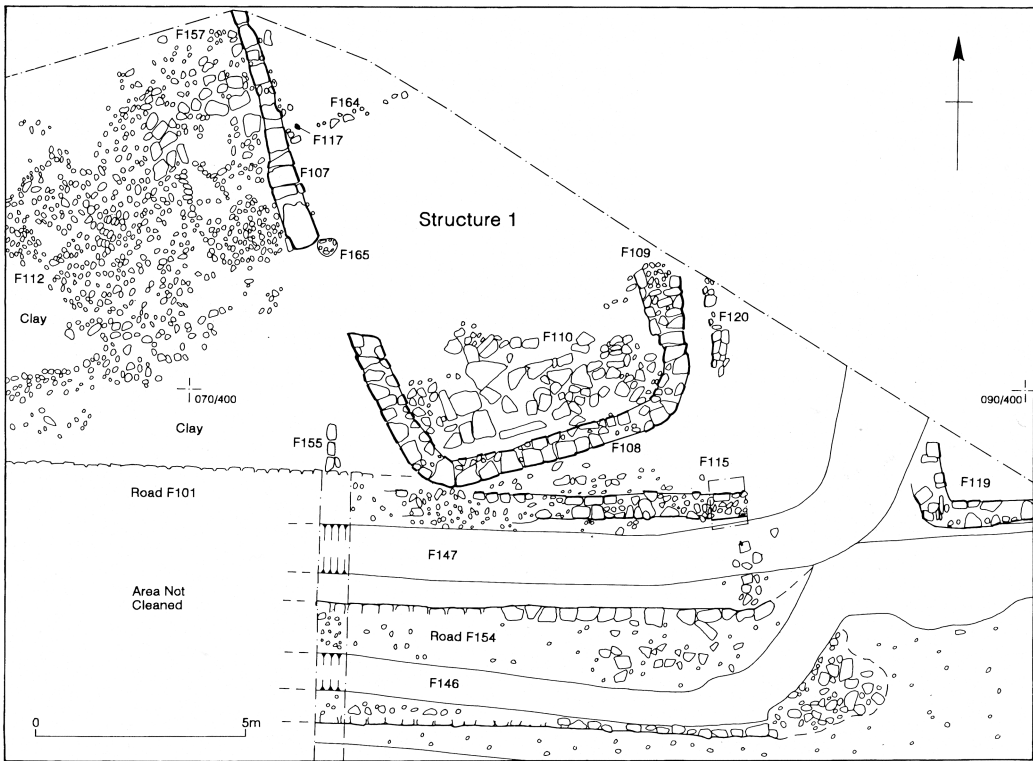


Fig. 5 Area A: Structure 1

an area 5.4m wide. Its lowest gravel metalling, layer 1030, had been set directly onto the natural clay, the absence of a buried soil suggesting that the road line had been cleared to the clay at the outset. The metalling comprised large stones rather than gravel, generally flat fragments about 0.1m across and grey brown in colour. These lay within a grey-brown clay matrix. The two ditches, F141 and F142, on either side were similar in profile with sloping sides and flat bases, the latter represented by bedrock.

In the west section the lowest layer, 1052, was again of flat stones set on natural clay with no sign of a buried soil (Fig. 8). The stone was in a matrix of brown clay which was thicker than in the section to the east. The stone element was particularly marked to the south where there may have been a kerb. The road width may have been similar to that to the east with a spread of looser stone, 1082, further to the north. The larger size of stones and the higher proportion of clay marked a difference between 1052 and 1030, and this difference was emphasised by the absence of side ditches.

South of the road a ditch, F156, was excavated running north-south toward the road. This had been cut through the clay and then into rock (Fig. 7). Its fill was principally of rubble. The ditch was traceable northward as far as the road.

The two earliest parallel ditches may have defined an access corridor or track between properties out to fields to the east. The possible stone-lined culvert, F160, may be an indication of contemporary settlement along the Fosse Way. The later Structure 1 may have functioned as a combined dwelling and storage barn for agricultural produce and for related activities. It is possible that there was an entrance on its east side to match that to the west. The doorpost socket indicates a heavy door. There may have been a paved southern area and a partitioned off northern room. Its alignment suggests that it may belong with the early layout and predate road F101, the well-defined formal road layout set out at a right angle to the Fosse Way to replace the primary access corridor. Ditches F141 and F142 marked either side of the road to the east but did not continue as far as the western section. It is possible that F142 ran as

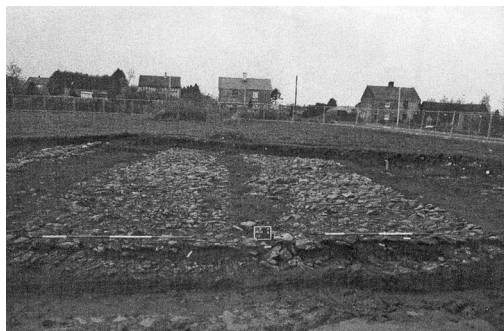


Fig. 6 Road F101; view west

far as a junction with ditch F156 and that the latter might have defined an area of backplots to the rear of buildings fronting the Fosse Way.

Compounds 1 and 2 (Fig. 4) were therefore formed fronting the Fosse Way on either side of road F101 (Fig. 8). To the south Compound 2 was divided by ditch F156 from Compound 3.

Sherds of a late 1st or early 2nd-century date came from the early southern ditches F152 and F160, and early 2nd-century samian and other late 1st/early 2nd-century pottery from bank F148. There was no dating evidence from the northern ditch and thus no *terminus post quem* for Structure 1. The dating evidence for the occupation of the building is

described under Period 2. Ditch F142 contained late 1st/early 2nd century pottery. Ditch F156 contained Hadrianic/Antonine samian and pottery of a 2nd-century date. Fragments of a child's shale bracelet, no 4, came from F160.

#### Area B

Parts of three east-west running boundaries were recorded (Fig. 9). To the north was a bank of red redeposited natural clay, F400, with a second clay bank, F210, 1.5m wide and 0.2m high, parallel to it to the south. Further south were the remains of a clay bank, F401, similar in character to F210 but on a different alignment. This was accompanied immediately to the south by a ditch, F246, cut slightly into bedrock (Fig. 15). These were probably associated with a north-south running boundary marked by a bank of clay, F304, with a ditch, F245, to its east (Fig. 15). While the bank ran southward beyond the excavation, ditch F245 did not and may well have been physically linked with ditch F246 westwards which it resembled in terms of depth and fill. The north-south running boundary, F304/F245, terminated short of bank F210 to the north at a slight eastward turn suggesting an entry and thus contemporaneity with F210. Here, as F320, the ditch was narrower and slightly deeper than F245, perhaps representing a terminal. At the south

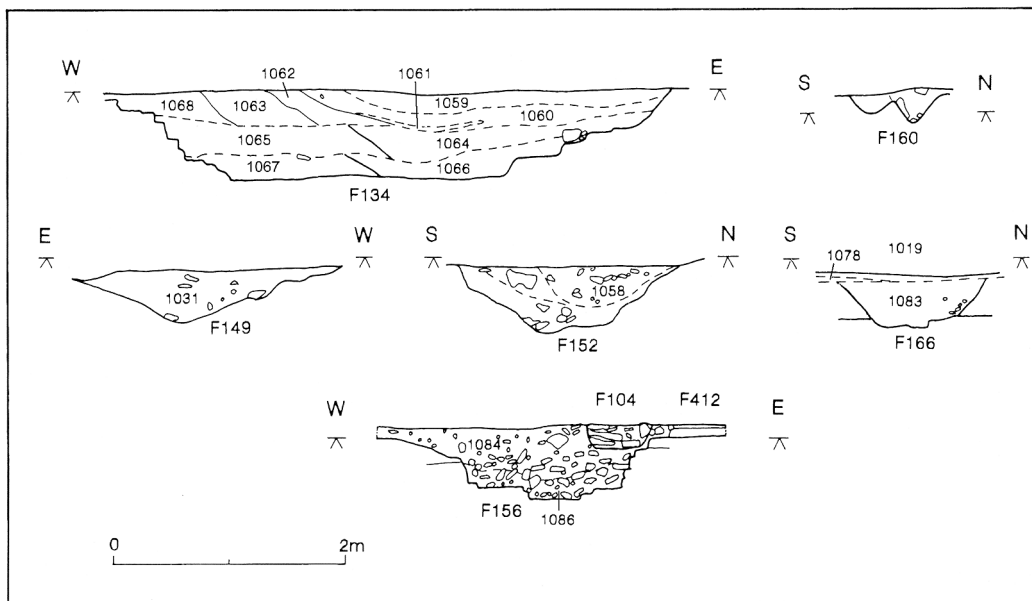


Fig. 7 Area A sections

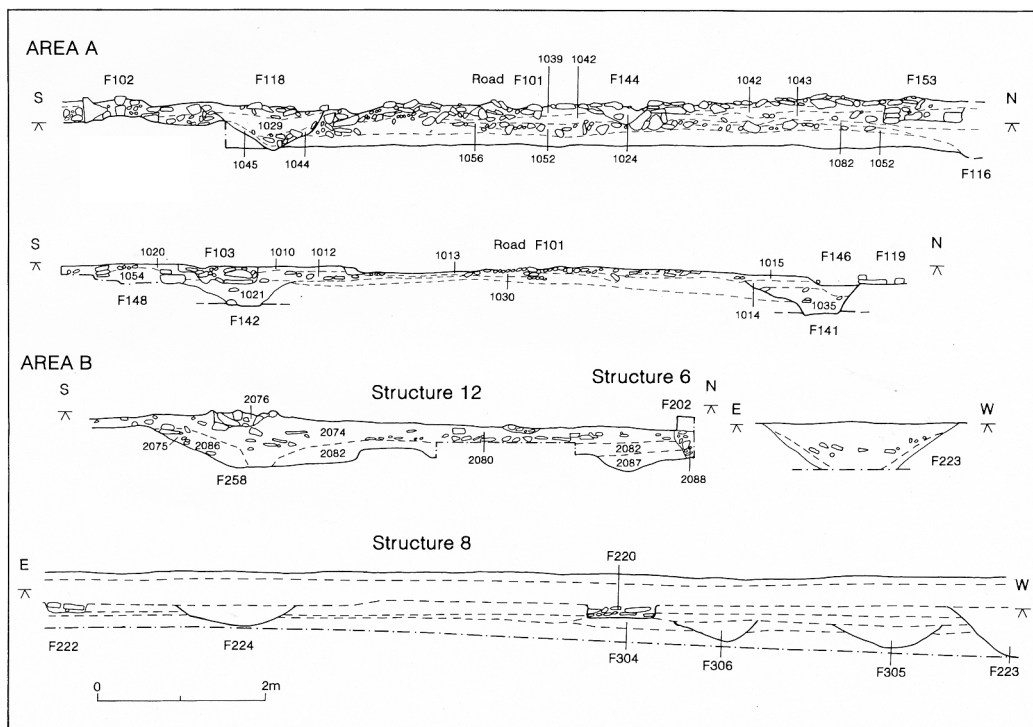


Fig. 8 Area A sections across road F101 and Area B sections

end of this boundary two gully like features, F305 and F306, were seen in section on the west side of bank F304 (Fig. 8).

A lead casket, 180mm square and 150mm deep, containing a cremation had been placed in a small pit, F242, set into the back of the boundary bank F210 (Fig. 10). This had a pipe and collar funnel to receive libations, the top of which was apparent following machining. At this surface the pipe was set round by small horizontally laid stones.

The east-west running boundary banks, F210 and F400, may have had ditches to their north in positions occupied by later ditches or boundary walls. The clay banks of F210 and F400 were absent toward the main road frontage as was ditch F246. This absence may have been more apparent than real for the ditches toward the Fosse Way may not have been cut into bedrock their line having disappeared through later truncation. The boundary to the east may have been formed initially by ditch F246 turning northward as ditch F245 and then by bank F304.

Four Compounds, 5, 6, 7 and 10, were defined (Fig. 9). The sharp contrast in alignments between

F210 and F401 can be interpreted in different ways. It may suggest that Compounds 5 and 6 were the product of a different layout to Compound 10. Compound 7 would then represent an anomalous area between two blocks. If Compound 7 is seen in this way then the cremation deposit was perhaps a dedicatory foundation burial at the southern limit of a layout of enclosures to the north. Alternatively Compounds 7 and 10 may originally have been one enclosure with ditch F246 making a later subdivision.

Pottery from F246 was of late 1st/first half of 2nd century date and included late 1st-century samian. Gullies F305 and F306 were similarly of late 1st/early 2nd-century date with decorated samian of Flavian date (no. 13) and AD 85-110 (no. 22) from F305. Pottery from early layers overlying natural beneath a later building (Structure 6) was 1st-century in date including two sherds of decorated samian of Neronian or early Flavian date (no. 5), and of Flavian date (no 19). Material associated with the cremation burial F242 in its lead ossuary, suggested a 1st or 2nd-century date. Later material was present in the primary fill of F245 suggesting a later recutting. A

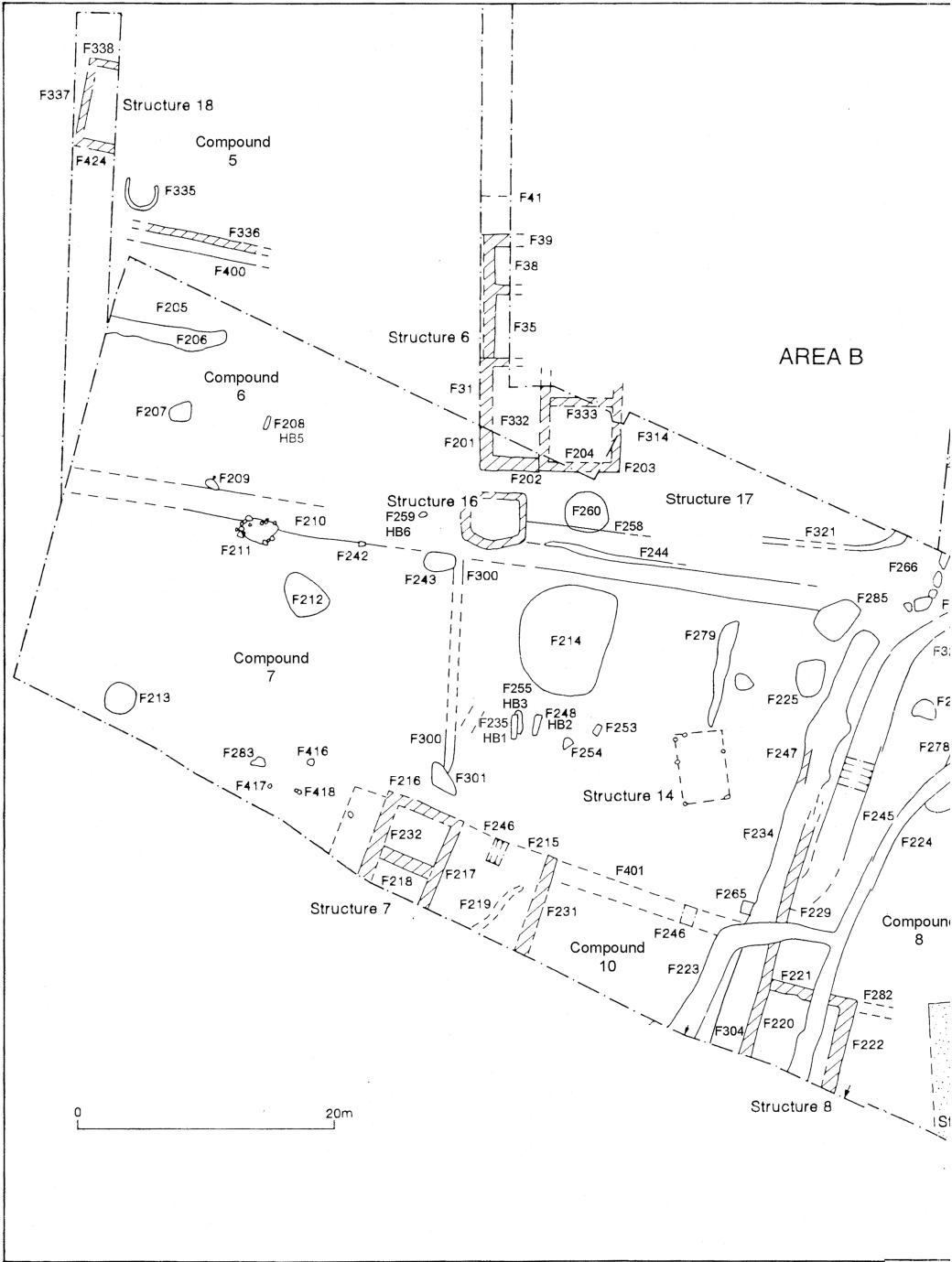


Fig. 9 Area B west



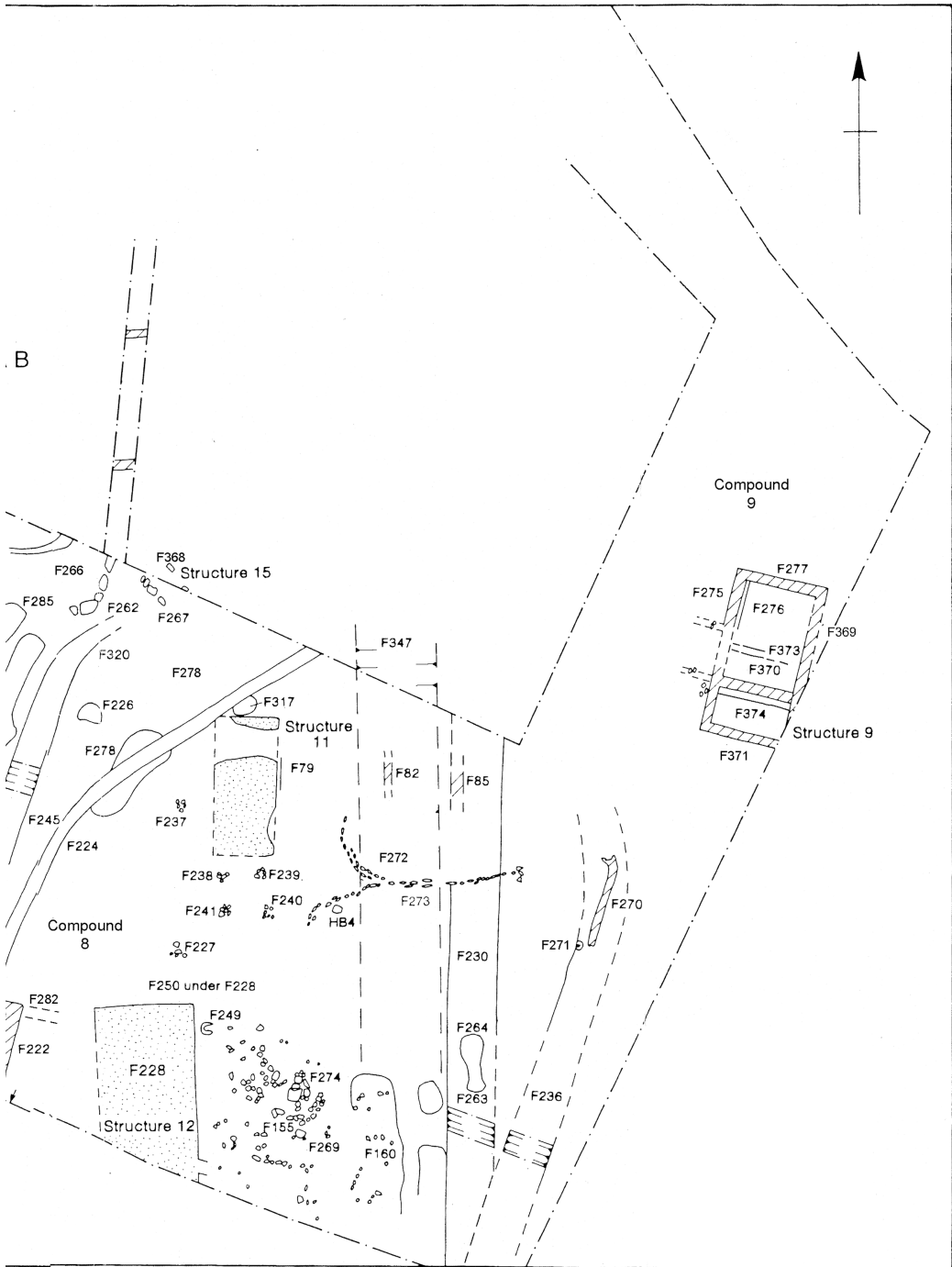


Fig. 9 Area B east



*Fig. 10 Area B, lead ossuary in pit F242*

copper-alloy fitting came from F245. Plant remains were analysed from F245 and F246.

The dating evidence taken together suggests an initial layout which cannot be more closely dated than the later 1st or early 2nd century.

## **Period 2 c. AD 150 to c. 250**

### *Area A*

The Period 1 road, F101, was defined by stone walls and re-metalled in places (Fig. 4). A new road surface, 1013, was seen in the eastern section (Fig. 8) and in plan to its east comprising pitched flattish stones, between 0.05 and 0.10m across, packed round with smaller stones. Wear on the road was marked by the rounded surfaces of the upper stones. The south side of the road was defined by well-built stone walls set on stone footings. To the west, wall F102 was set on a foundation of large stones 0.9m wide. The wall was the same width as its footings and was made of faced stones with a rubble core. At one point on its east side toward the road there was an addition to the wall widening it slightly for a length of 4m, the additional stones slightly oversailing the wall edge and presumably representing an entranceway. Wall F102 came to an end to the east in an area of later disturbance but was continued further on a slightly offset line by wall F103. This was built along the line of, and replaced, ditch F142. Its wall footing in the east road cutting

was just under 1m wide and had been cut into the silted upper fill of the ditch. The foundation comprised stones set flat in a clay matrix. F103 was well built with stones trimmed to form a face on both sides and with the wall core composed of smaller stones. A third wall, F104, running north-south, seems likely to have joined with F102. Its foundation of large stones laid flat had been cut into the fill of the Period 1 ditch F156 (Fig. 7). The wall itself had faced stones only on the west side. To its east it was set into a clay bank, F412, of which only a depth of about 0.06m survived and only a width of 0.5m was excavated. The east side of F104 was therefore not faced, except in one area where the wall widened to 1.2m and where there were large facing stones to the east. This again would have marked an entranceway.

North of the road, further lengths of wall were recorded. To the west in the western road cutting a probable wall line was marked by a foundation of flat stones, F153, 0.9m wide. Further east wall F115 followed a similar, slightly offset, line. This was set on rubble footings and was 0.76m wide with slightly more substantial facing stones on its south side. Later disturbances severed any relationship with a third section of wall, F119, to its east. This was 0.9m wide and set on a 1m wide foundation of flat stones. The foundation trench was cut into the fills of the Period 1 ditch F141. The wall turned northward, possibly marking an entry from the road.

To the south of the road was a spread of burnt material, F133. This comprised charcoal, black silty material, lumps of burnt clay and some stone, covering a roughly circular area possibly representing a hollow over the natural clay. This layer was nowhere more than 0.04m thick. The area may have been enclosed to the east by two lengths of wall, F128 and F129. F128 came to a clear end to its south suggesting that there was an entrance way which was also marked by the differently aligned sections of wall. Both walls were of faced outer stones with rubble cores, although the south end of wall F128 was different in character with pitched stones sloping down to the south. The northern part of wall F129 had been robbed in later activity but its surviving footings showed an east side of well-built courses of flat stone set within a foundation trench. It is possible that these marked a culvert built as one with the wall. At its southern end, F129 turned westward but was only traced for a few metres. Running toward the suggested entranceway between F128 and F129 were rough stone paths, F131 and F132, and areas of pitched stone and less

well-defined stone spreads. F131 overlay the burnt area, F133, but may well have been contemporary with activities associated with its deposition.

The wall layouts alongside the road followed existing boundaries judging by the coincidence of walls and Period 2 ditches. Wall F103 was added to walls F102 and F104 underscoring the Period 1 suggestion that the earlier ditch marked the rear of plots associated with properties on the Fosse Way. There seems to have been an entrance between this southern plot and the road. Further east in Compound 3 there was evidence of a closed yard with paths and an entrance access eastward. Another entrance may have lain between walls F115 and F119 giving access to Compound 1 and Structure 1, which continued in use to be abandoned at the end of the period.

Wall F104 contained 2nd-century pottery including Hadrianic/Antonine samian. Pottery from spread F133 gave a date from the samian in the later 2nd century but with the latest 2nd-century diagnostic forms absent. Much of the samian was burnt, but not the other pottery. Pottery dated late 1st/early 2nd century came from wall F103. A copper alloy pin, no. 2, came from F131, and a rod fragment, no. 49, from F133. A fragment of sheet, no. 56, came from a layer south of road F101. An iron shoe cleat came from F133. Two fragments of a shale bracelet, no. 3, also came from F133. Grain processing, principally of barley, was indicated by the evidence for a cleaned crop in F133 which had then become burnt.

The dating evidence from Structure 1 is discussed here rather than under Period 1. Pottery from the building was dated to the 2nd century with later pieces from culvert F120 which contained pottery of late 2nd/early 3rd-century date. The building clearly continued in use into Period 2. Layers from yard F112 to its west contained Antonine samian as well as two fragments of possibly 1st-century glass, nos 3 and 3a, a decorated samian sherd of Trajanic date, no. 29, and one of Hadrianic or Antonine date, no. 67. Fragments of a millstone, no. 1, had been reused in the yard. The areas of burning F143 and F163 contained 2nd-century material with Black Burnished ware present and Hadrianic samian in F163. A quern fragment, no. 6, had been reused in floor F110 in Structure 1. Plant remains were analysed from F143.

#### *Area B*

The Period 1 boundaries were refurbished (Fig. 9). A wall, F336, was added on the north side of F400

between Compounds 5 and 6. Its footings of small stone rubble were set within a construction trench and cut into the side of the earlier bank. The wall was faced to the north. Bank F210 to the south was also revetted with a drystone wall, F244, again on its north side. This had been set directly on the ground surface with only its lower course of horizontally set flat stones surviving. To the north of the footings was a ditch, F258, cut down to and slightly into, the natural rock (Fig. 15). Ditch F258 had itself been cut by later features. A north–south running ditch, F300, divided Compound 7. This had been cut rather deeper into the bedrock than the other Period 1 and 2 boundaries.

Ditch F246 was replaced by a wall, F215, added to bank F401 with its base courses at a sharp angle having subsided into the upper fill of the ditch. Butted against F215 on its south side was a wall, F231, made of flat unmortared slabs to the south, with a better built northern end of stone slabs and a rubble core. The wall was laid directly on the ground surface and across ditch F246. It bounded a cobbled yard into which was cut a stone-lined drain, F219. To the east of F231 was a spread (2092) of ash, charcoal and burnt clay together with quantities of pottery and animal bone also filling the upper part of ditch F246.

Two pits, F207 and F209, sited in Compound 6 are the only features there attributed to this period.

A wall, F220/F229, had been cut into the east side of bank F304 facing eastward and perhaps marking the west side of a new enclosure, Compound 8. To the north, as F229, the wall was 0.95m wide and 0.2m high. Three courses had survived, with the upper two of thinner flat stones than the lowest course. The wall followed the line of the Period 1 bank northward, terminating at the entranceway curve. To the south, as F220, its construction was more substantial. Here it comprised facing stones with a rubble core set on a foundation of pitched stone (Fig. 8). Although no mortar was seen, the construction type suggested a mortared wall in contrast to the drystone construction of F229. Ditch F245 was recut (Fig. 15).

A building, Structure 8, was constructed on the east side of wall F220 (Fig. 11). Its north wall, F221, had been butted on to wall F220 and was bonded with the east wall, F222. The wall footings of unmortared pitched stone were set in a slight construction trench. Above, the wall proper comprised a maximum of three surviving courses of horizontally laid mortared facing slabs with a rubble core. In the centre of the room a complete greyware



*Fig. 11 Area B, Structure 8; view north-east*

jar had been set upright within a steep-sided pit, F252, large enough to accommodate the pot. The lip of the pot was set exactly at the level of natural clay, and both pit and pot had been sealed by a small, rough, unshaped stone slab. The lowest floor level of the building sealed the slab. This comprised a layer of mortar beneath a mixed layer in turn sealed by a floor level of stone slabs and rubble with soil and mortar patches. East of Structure 8, a wall, F282, was butted on to the corner of the building and continued the line of F221 eastward. The wall was 1.1m wide and made of unmortared flat slabs.

To the east of Structure 8 were extensive spreads of stone rubble associated with a group of industrial features and other possible structures (Fig. 19). These were only partly excavated. A hearth, F250, comprised two adjacent rectangular areas of heavily burnt stone blocks and vertically set surrounding stones. Within was a layer of soil with ash, burnt clay and charcoal. A second similar structure close by, F249, was marked by a horse-shoe shaped wall of unmortared facing stones (Fig. 12). Three courses of these survived and were heavily burnt on their interior. The base of the feature was of burnt clay, possibly the natural clay surface. A large flat burnt slab was set at the mouth of the structure. To the east was a spread of large worn cobbles and large flagstones with burnt surfaces. Within F249 was a fill of ashy soil, burnt clay and rubble. In the entrance and spread out beyond it was a layer of soil, charcoal and burnt clay thinning out away from F249. These layers were sealed by an overall deposit of burnt material, burnt stone rubble and dark charcoal-rich soil. Nearby was an area of massive limestone stone blocks, F274, forming a roughly semi-circular area. Alongside was a further burnt stone hearth, F269, and a rectangular stone setting, neither of which

were excavated. In the 1990 evaluation trench (D) here a further burnt setting was found in which the floor utilized the broken base of a large amphora held together with lead rivets. Around this setting were further extensive spreads of stone rubble which included several fragments of querns and millstones.

As in Area A, ditches and banks were added to or replaced by drystone walls. Compounds 6 and 7 may have been fields and enclosures. Compound 10 to the south, however, was used for other purposes with a wall enclosing a cobbled yard with a midden deposit to its east. Further east was an extensive layout of new buildings and other features in a new compound, Compound 8. Structure 8 may have been two-roomed, but was incompletely exposed. Of the features to the east the burnt stone settings are likely to represent ovens and kilns. The semi-circular stone-floored area F274 may have been a threshing floor perhaps contained within a roofed structure. The area appears to have been involved in a variety of agriculturally based industrial and processing activities, perhaps including crop-threshing, drying, milling, and bread-making. Structure 8 may have been associated with the area to the east, its function perhaps emphasised by the foundation pot beneath its floor.

Pottery from midden 2092 in Compound 10 was generally of late 1st/early 2nd century, but included Antonine samian and two samian stamps dated 100–120 (no. 1) and c. 160–190 (no. 8). Layers associated with F249 contained pottery datable to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Hearth F250 contained 2nd-century pottery. Associated layers contained 2nd-century pottery including mid to late Antonine samian, decorated samian dated 150–190 (no. 50). The foundation deposit pot in Structure 8 was dated to



*Fig. 12 Area B, oven F249 and rubble surfaces; view north-east*



the 2nd century. The overlying floors contained 1st and 2nd-century pottery, including decorated samian of Hadrianic/early Antonine date (no. 65), a samian stamp dated *c.* 160–190 (no. 10), and a decorated samian sherd dated 100–120 (no. 40). Of the pits in Compound 6, F207 contained 2nd-century pottery including Hadrianic/Antonine decorated samian (no. 68), and F209 late 1st/early 2nd-century pottery. The fills of ditch F258 contained late 2nd/early 3rd century pottery. The primary fills of the recut of F245 contained 2nd-century pottery including mid-Antonine samian. Pottery from wall F336 was 2nd-century in date. Bank F304, continuing from Period 1, contained late 2nd/early 3rd-century pottery. Fragments of an undated brooch, no 23, came from F258. A copper alloy bracelet, no 11, came from the floor of Structure 8. There was a considerable amount of residual material. Ditch F246 contained a decorated samian sherd dated Flavian/Trajanic (no. 23). Layers in Compound 10 contained decorated samian sherds of Flavian/Trajanic date (no. 24) and of 100–120 (no. 38), and a brooch (no. 2) dated late 1st to mid 2nd century.

Plant remains were analysed from Compound 10 and oven F249.

### Period 3 *c.* AD 250 to *c.* 300

#### *Area A*

Extensive flood-deposited layers of colluvium were recorded. North of road F101 this was a grey brown clay with occasional red brown flecks *c.* 0.2m thick which overlay all the earlier features north of the road including, from west to east, yard surface F112, Structure 1, and the roadside walls F119 and F115. It was also present across the east end of road F101, sealing the Period 2 cobbling. South of the road the same layer had been deposited over an area of 20m north–south and for 40m from the easternmost excavated area. Here it was as much as 0.28m deep over the Period 2 spread F133 and the walls to its east, thinning out southward. It was not present in the areas examined further to the south-east.

The western part of the road, F101, was resurfaced and enlarged. A sandy silt, 1043, containing charcoal and a few small stones overlay the Period 2 road (Fig. 8). This was in turn intermittently overlain by a layer of stiff brown clay, 1042. A new road surface, 1039, was then laid. This was around 0.14m thick and made up of large stones up to 0.2m across with

smaller stones and gravel in their interstices. The south side of the road was marked by a ditch, F118/F145 although the Period 2 walls still remained. The north side of the road was particularly well made to the east. Here an area of pitched stones carefully selected for size and compactly placed, formed the eastern side running across the top of the northern wall F115 and the south wall of Structure 1, here buried beneath a thin skim of colluvium. There was a drop of around 0.15m from the road surface to the surface of the colluvium further west. Further east there was no evidence for the road. A slight scoop in the Period 2 road in the east section may mark the continuation of F145.

The colluvial deposits must have derived from flooding of an area centred to the east and north of the excavation. One explanation might be that an increased number of roofed buildings and metalled areas in the roadside settlement exacerbated rainwater run off and overtaxed the existing drainage system. Judging from the uniformity and depth of the colluvium it would appear that the area was abandoned. The road itself may not have been. Its western end was resurfaced while the eastern end was not. It is possible that gravels from the eastern end were removed at a later date.

Pottery from the colluvium was dated to the 2nd century and included mid to late 2nd-century samian. A later date, in the early 3rd century, was suggested by pottery from the culvert alongside Structure 1 which was sealed by the colluvium. Pottery from Period 3 road metalling was of 2nd-century date including Hadrianic/Antonine samian. Layer 1055 contained a samian stamp, no. 9, dated *c.* 140–170. Layer 1053 contained a Hadrianic/Antonine stamp frame, no. 13. Layer 1040 contained decorated samian sherds of 1st-century date (no. 27) and of Antonine date (no. 76). The evidence all suggests almost entirely residual material from an abandonment of the area, except presumably its road frontage and the street to the west, in the early 3rd century.

#### *Area B*

In Compound 6, a large rock-cut pit, F260, was cut into the Period 2 ditch F258. In Compound 7 two similarly rock-cut pits, F211 and F243, were cut into the south side of bank F210 (Fig. 15). Both had a vertical drystone-revetted edge to the north with a more gently sloping side facing into the compound to the south, and F243 cut the Period 2 cross ditch F300. Rubble in its fill may have derived from a

possible stone culvert which was suggested by pitched stones surviving at the edge of the pit. The base of F211 was roughly lined with stone. Two elongated pits, F253 and F254 to the south-east were also excavated. Both were grave-like with steep sides and flat bases. They were filled with brown claysoil with charcoal and contained large stone blocks.

The north-south running boundary, F304, was augmented by the addition of a stony clay bank, F234, replacing wall F229. This latter may have been slighted, with stone from it filling the upper fills of ditch F245.

To the east an extensive deposit of clay silt sealed the Period 2 hearths and stone spreads in Compound 8. This layer of colluvium was *c.* 0.1 to 0.15m deep and probably indicates flooding problems similar to those seen in Area A.

Pit F260 may have been a stone quarry initially partly backfilled and then subsequently silted up. Pits F211 and F243 may have been watering holes for stock kept in Compound 7, perhaps receiving culverted water from within it. The two similar pits F253 and F254 had been backfilled with rubbish including building stone and charcoal. Their shapes suggest that they were unlikely to have been rubbish pits originally and would have been intended for another purpose, perhaps shaped to fit an object such as a shallow stone trough, or alternatively be associated with the nearby burials of Period 4.

The latest pottery from bank F234 was uniformly of 2nd-century date, with the latest material mid to late Antonine samian. For the colluvium layers the majority of the pottery was of 2nd-century date including late Antonine samian, but there was also a BB1 sherd of a date later than 240. The datable samian comprised sherds of decorated samian dated 70–90 (no. 8), Flavian (no. 17), 100–120 (no. 30), 150–190 (no. 50) which joined with sherds from the Period 2 midden, and Antonine (no. 73). Pit F243 contained late 2nd/early 3rd-century pottery including decorated samian dated 160–190 (no. 61), and pit F211 contained 3rd-century material. Pit F260 contained 2nd-century pottery including Hadrianic/early Antonine samian. Pit F253 contained 2nd and 3rd-century pottery including a BB1 vessel dated mid 3rd century. Decorated samian sherds dated 160–190 (no. 62) and of Antonine date (no. 75) were also found. Pit F254 contained 3rd-century pottery and a samian stamp (no. 7) dated *c.* 150–180.

Two 4th-century coins, nos 316 and 317, and three coins, no. 325, dated 260–8, no. 326, dated 364–75, and no. 323, dated 364–78, from the colluvium

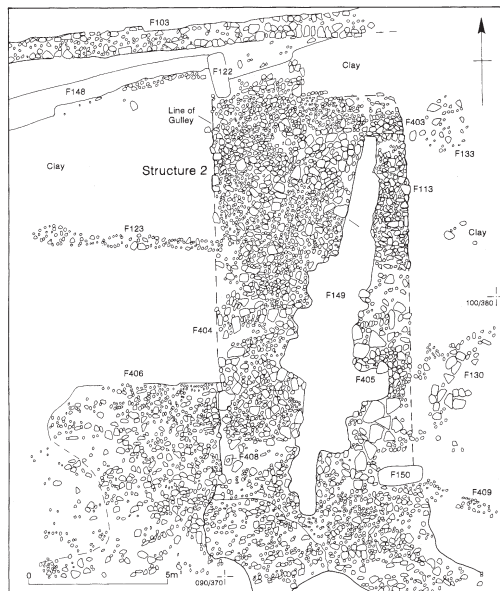
layers. All these are later than the suggested date of the colluvium layers and must be seen as deriving from later re-occupation of the area.

The two grave-like features, F253 and F254, yielded a number of finds. Two fragments of late 1st/2nd-century glass, nos 2 and 15, and a late 1st-century glass bangle fragment, no. 19, came from F253. From the same feature also came an undated brooch fragment, no. 20, a copper alloy bracelet fragment, no. 17, a fragment of copper alloy rod, no. 34, and a fragment of wire, no. 43. A brooch dated later 1st century to 150/75 came from F254. A fragment of copper alloy sheet, no. 57, came from wall F234. A bone pin fragment, no. 2, came from F243 and a whetstone, no. 11, was found in the colluvium. Plant remains were analysed from F243.

#### Period 4 *c.* AD 300 to *c.* 350

##### *Area A*

Renewed occupation followed the deposition of colluvium (Fig. 4). To the south of the road a rectangular stone surface or floor, F113, measuring 14.4 by 7m is taken to suggest the site of a building, Structure 2 (Figs 13 and 14). The surface was built of pitched stone set into the Period 3 colluvium, overlain in places by a layer of crushed



*Fig. 13 Area A, Structure 2*





*Fig. 14 Area A, Structure 2; view north*

yellow Douling stone. Part of the west side of the surface was revetted by edge-set blocks. Stone concentrations suggested two entrance features, F404 and F405, on the east and west sides. On the west side was a stone with a hollowed-out spherical depression, F408, perhaps the setting for an upright. The character of the floor changed to the south where there were areas of pitching. The surface was partially extended to the north. Reused stone was evident including a quernstone fragment, no. 4.

To the west were two east-west running stone walls. Wall F123 was butted against Structure 2 and formed of large stones set in orange-brown clay with occasional edge-set stones on its south side. Further west, wall F105, to the south of F102, was constructed of vertically pitched stones. This stopped short of wall F104 from Period 2, suggesting an entrance.

The direction of road F101 was radically altered. Following its former course from the west it now turned sharply northward towards its east end, at the site of an earlier entry into Compound 1. The turn itself and a distance at least 12m to its west was

marked by a well-built but narrow stone surface, F154, set out on the upper levels of the earlier road (Fig. 5). The track was 2.7m wide with both sides marked by large stone blocks. Larger blocks than were used on F101 were also present within the two kerbs, some pitched, with Douling stone fragments and gravel apparently forced into the interstices. This road layer was 0.3m deep and set directly on the Period 3 colluvium. Its turn northward was marked by the final two kerb stones to the east on the north side which commenced a definite curve northward (Fig. 5). The south side of F154 was set alongside ditch F145 from Period 1. The kerb line was a continuation eastward of the south edge of road F101.

The change of direction is likely to relate to a major ditch, F134, apparently continued south across Area B, which cut the colluvium and may itself have been recut several times (Figs 4 and 7). Its upper fill could be seen as a surface feature running intermittently for 30m. The ditch was 3m wide where sectioned and had been cut into the limestone bedrock to a total depth of 1m of which

0.9m had involved the removal of rock. The base of the ditch represented the surface of the bedding plane of a limestone layer while the sides were stepped reflecting the way stone had been quarried. The lowest ditch fill, 1067, was a light brown clay with charcoal flecks containing some large stones, and this may have been cut by a redefinition of the ditch filled with a layer of clay, 1066, with streaks of orange clay with charcoal and shell inclusions. Both layers were then sealed by a hard lumpy grey clay, 1065, which may have been a dump rather than a gradually accumulated silt, and which lay beneath 1068 a further layer of grey clay. A second recutting was then apparent filled with layers 1062, 1063 and 1064, all mottled grey clay silts, which lay beneath a thick layer of dark grey claysoil with charcoal and stones, 1060, within which was a band of charcoal, 1061.

South of Structure 2 were extensive spreads of rubble overlying its southern end. These were not excavated. Two culverts, F130 and F411, ran northward across the area. F130 was marked only by a line of pitched stone while F411 survived better with sloping sides of flat stone slabs and a base of similar stones laid flat. F130 cut wall F129 from Period 2. This may have been replaced by wall F111 comprising a 1m wide wall course built of outer facing stones with a rubble core, different in style to the Period 2 walls in its size and the small size of the outer facing stones. The area defined by F111 to the east and Structure 2 to the north was not excavated beyond an overall clearance. The possibility exists that other structures may have been set here and a number – Structure 5 – was designated. The burnt base of a sandstone hearth, F159, was recorded as well as a group of stone-packed postholes, F419–423.

The siting of Structure 2 suggests that road F101 and its roadside walls were maintained through Period 3 with Structure 2 set on the surrounding Period 3 flood deposits. The two walls on the south side of the road suggest more intensive use of the area. The different lines of the walls indicate that the distinction between Compounds 2 and 3 was maintained. Ditch F134, traceable through Area B as F347, as well as across the 1990 Showerings' excavation site to the south, was presumably cut to deal with the problem of flooding. This drained northwards and probably necessitated the realignment of road F101.

There was no close dating evidence for the Period 4 features. However pottery suggesting a 3rd and 4th-century date came from the overall cleaning layers as this upper horizon was exposed. Pottery of

3rd-century date came from the upper fill of F134. An iron shoe cleat was also found in the ditch.

### *Area B*

In Compound 5 part of a stone-founded building, Structure 18, was exposed, comprising the west end of what may have been a two-celled unit (Fig. 9). Parts of a mortared, horizontally laid plinth course survived above at least two courses of pitched drystone foundations marking three bonded walls, F337, F338 and F424. These enclosed part of a room with a floor of cobbles, mortar and Pennant sandstone chips. To the south an extensive spread of lightly worn rubble contained a well-laid stone flag floor bounded to the south by a semi-circular setting of vertically set stone slabs, F335.

To the west of Structure 18 evidence was briefly revealed during subsequent construction work of buildings close to the Fosse Way frontage (not illustrated). Structure 13 there was marked by two wall lines of partially robbed pitched stone footings with the remains of a flagstone floor bounded to the south by a rock-cut ditch coming to a butt end to the east.

In Compound 10 and to its north were a series of rock-cut pits, F251, F256, F301 and F312 (F301: Fig. 9, F251 and F256: Fig. 15). These had been cut into the rock with steep sides and flat bases and filled with tips of stone rubble and debris which included mortar, ash and charcoal, and occupation/midden material.

Straddling Compounds 5 and 6 to the east of Structure 18 was a rectangular building with substantial stone foundations, Structure 6 (Fig. 16). A core building had an initial addition on its west side to which was added a further block to the north. These may have been additions of Period 5 but are described here. The core building was seen as walls F203, F204 and F332. Wall F203 was a single course of horizontally set mortared stone set on pitched foundations. Its foundation trench had been cut into layers associated with Structure 17 to the east (see below). The wall was bonded with F204 of a similar build. The west wall, F332, was of large mortared facing stones with a rubble core set on pitched footings. A southern room was marked by an internal wall, F333, of flat slabs. A mortar floor beneath a gravel floor survived to the west set on clay with no evidence of earlier layers. An added room to the west was marked by walls F201/F31, F202 and F33, with wall F202 butted on to the core building. These walls were of horizontally

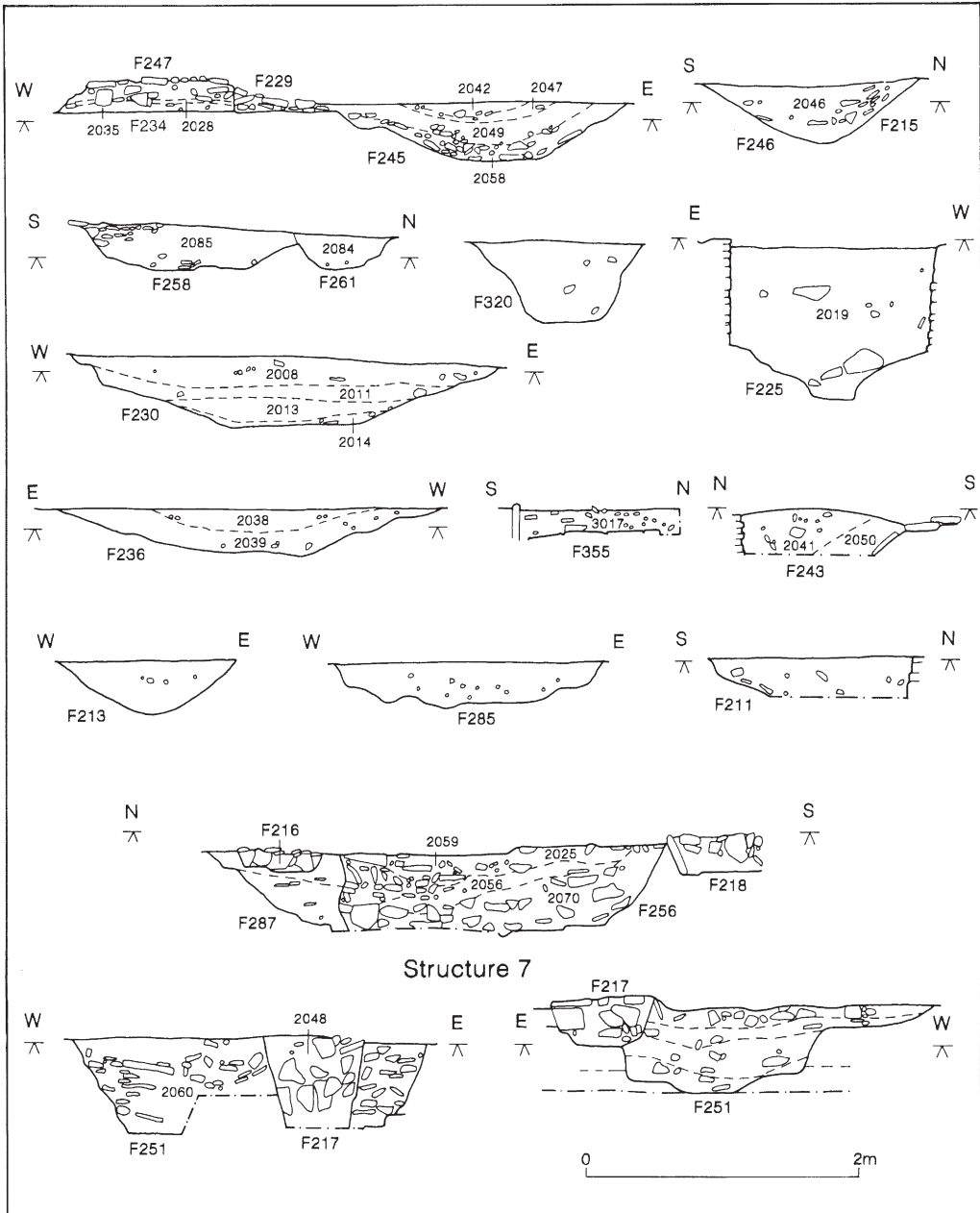
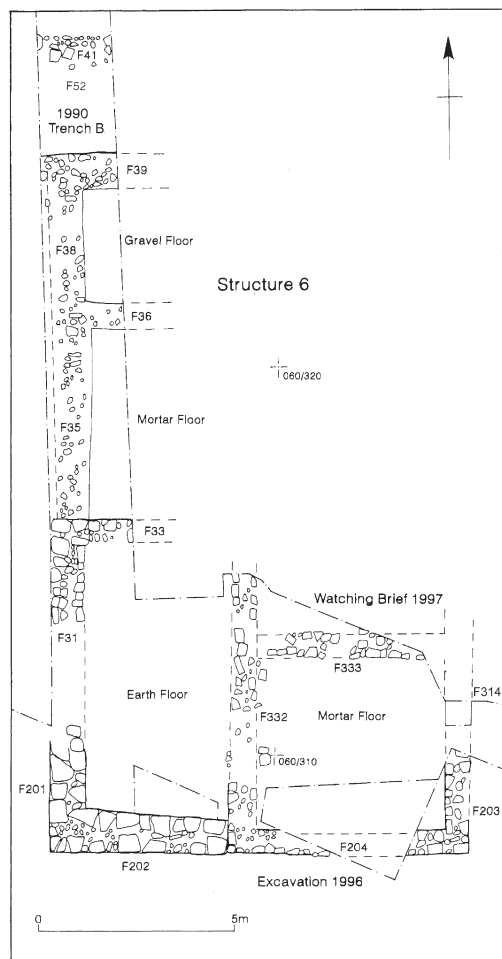


Fig. 15 Area B sections

laid mortared facing stones with a rubble core set on pitched stone foundations in foundation trenches. A floor level of pitched small lias stones underlay a soil, mortar and stone surface. Further additions were marked by walls, F35, butted on to F33, F36

and F39 seen only as upper foundations of pitched stone in a 1990 evaluation trench (Leach 1990, Trench A). Within the two new rooms to the north were layers of soil with mortar, stone, and fragments of Pennant sandstone.



*Fig. 16 Area B Structure 6*

Beyond the north exterior wall F39 was a 3m wide cobbled area, F52, bounded to the north by a slight wall footing, F41. This was made of angular rubble with a clear face to the north and with no foundation trench. The cobbled area was at a higher level than wall F41 and layers to the north. To the south of Structure 6 an area of pitched stone was bounded by a rough line of stone blocks to the south. Both these surfaces were butted against the exterior north and south walls of the building and could represent outhouses or external walkways, perhaps porticoed. Two walls recorded over 20m east of Structure 6 in an evaluation trench might have been associated with it, the southern wall being aligned with the south wall of the building.

To the south of Structure 6 a spread of stone rubble bounded by a rough drystone wall foundation defined a roughly rectangular area, Structure 16. An infant burial, HB6 in grave F259, lay just to its west.

The access from Compounds 6 and 7 into areas to the east and into Compound 8 was marked by a cobbled track, F266, set on stone rubble made up of large stones to a depth of at least 0.3m. On the north side was a line of pitched stone, F321, perhaps marking the base of a culvert. On the other side was a large stone-lined drain, F262, with stone block side walls set on a flagstone base and sealed by massive cap stones (Fig. 17). Wear on the cap stones witnessed heavy traffic from the track over F262 into Compound 8.

On either side of trackway F266 were two possible buildings. To the north Structure 17 was marked by an area of pitched stone cobbles, Pennant stone fragments and mortar associated with culvert F321, representing an incompletely exposed stone building complex. To the east on the further side of the track were two parallel lines of large Douling stone padstones, F267 and F368, suggesting the supports for the south and north walls of a small timber-framed building, Structure 15, fronting onto the access track.

In Compound 8, Structure 11 comprised a rectangular platform made up of closely packed small stones, some yellow, with a square setting of four large post pits, F238–F241, to the south (Fig. 18). These rectangular pits had vertically set stone slabs marking their sides with pitched stone packing within. No evidence survived of the post pipes. To the west, two areas of large sandstone blocks, F227 and F237, were recorded. To the east was a possible gully, F79. Between Structure 11 and access track F266 was an area of crushed limestone gravel set in mortar forming a yard F278. A large pit, F226, over 2m wide and 1m deep, was cut to the south-west of the cobbles. Further south were



*Fig. 17 Area B drain F262; view east*



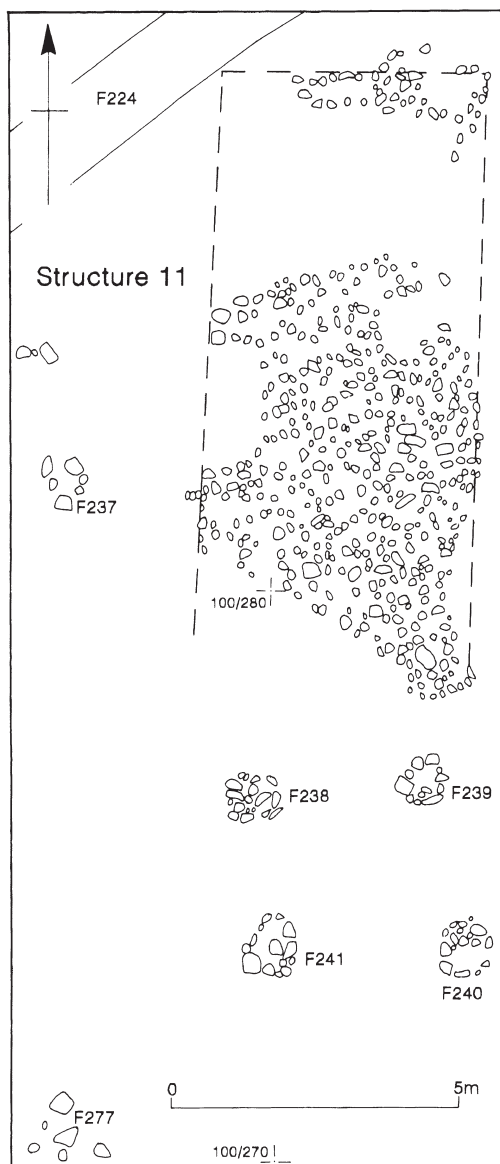


Fig. 18 Area B Structure 11

the partly exposed remains of a second platform, Structure 12, on the same alignment as Structure 11 (Fig. 19). This comprised a large rectangular platform of fragmented Douling stone set on pitched limestone blocks, F228. Along the north side was a shallow gully, F311.

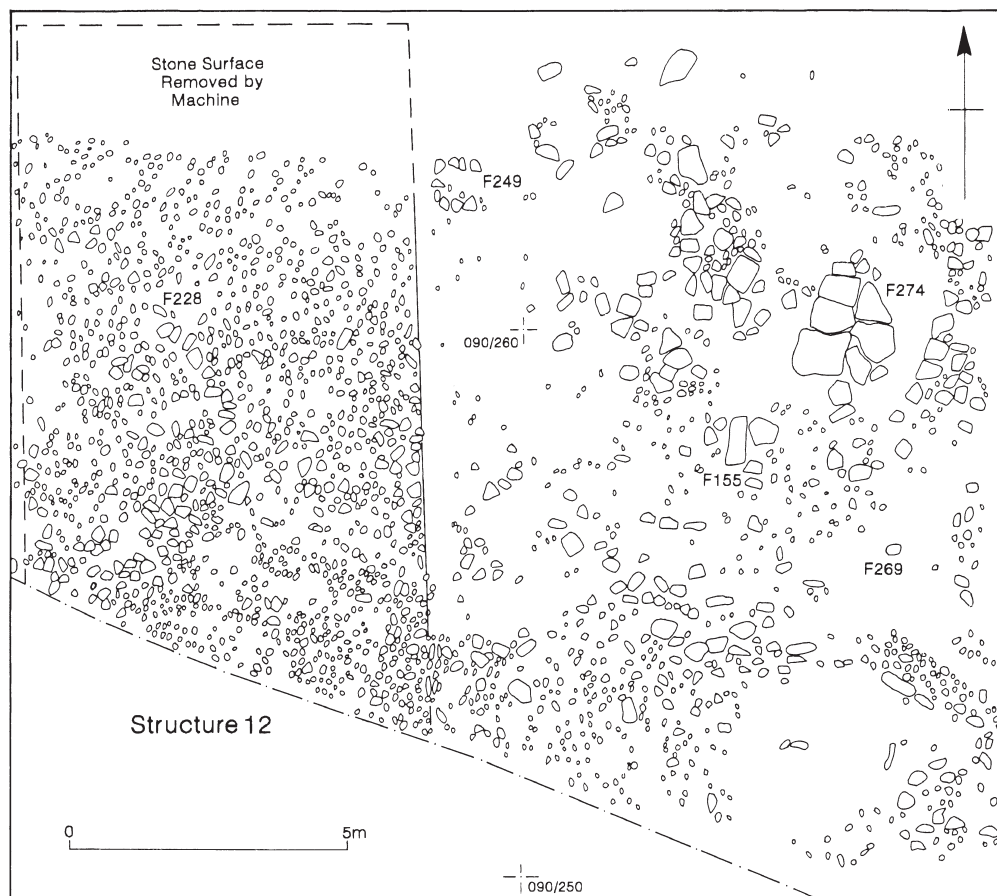
To the east of these buildings were stone spreads set on the colluvial deposit overlying the Period 2 industrial features. Further east a major ditch,

F347, continued the line of F134 from Area A. No complete profile was seen but by putting various sightings together a width of 5m and a depth of at least 1.5m can be suggested. Within Period 4 this silted up and was replaced by ditch F230, a much shallower feature sited parallel to it and a few metres to its east (Fig. 15). Traces of a drystone wall boundary, F85, were observed on its west side following the line of F347.

Buildings were suggested toward the road frontage but could not be adequately defined. The circular stone setting F335 may have been a threshing floor and indicate a lower status building on the frontage. Structure 6 to the east was better understood, suggesting a building of more sophistication and perhaps two stories. This was successively enlarged and may in its final stage have been surrounded by a floor beneath a porticoed verandah. The east wall of the building was aligned with boundary wall F104 in Area A. The additions on its west side could indicate that the building was given a more impressive façade where it faced the Fosse Way frontage.

The elements making up Structure 11 in Compound 8 suggest a timber-framed building with a hard standing floor to the north and perhaps a raised floor or even a two-storey unit to the south. The two areas of stone to the west may have been post pads associated with a porch or extension in that direction. The ill-defined ditch, F79, may mark an eaves drip gully. Structure 12 looks like the site of another timber-framed building in this compound, similar to Structure 2 in Area A.

The upper fill of the Period 2 ditch F245 contained late 3rd/early 4th-century pottery. Pottery from beneath Structure 12 was 2nd-century in date and included Hadrianic/Antonine samian. Pottery from F335 was 2nd-century in date including late-Antonine samian. Layers and features of Structure 16 contained late 3rd/4th-century pottery as well as 2nd-century pottery. From the exterior surface around Structure 6 came 2nd-century pottery including decorated samian dated 100-120. Ditch F230 contained late second and 3rd-century pottery including late-Antonine samian and a BB1 sherd dated later than 225. Amongst earlier material was a sherd of decorated samian, no. 6, dated 70-85. An iron object, no. 11, also came from F230 and a quern stone, no. 3, was set in the surface above it. Pottery from pits F251 and F256 in Compound 10 was dated to the 3rd century and included BB1 dated later than 225. Pit F301 to the north contained late 1st/2nd-century pottery.



*Fig. 19 Area B Structure 12 and Period 2 features to the east*

Coin no. 314, dated 330–340, came from Compound 10 beneath the Period 5 Structure 7 and two coins, nos 321 and 327, of the same date came from pit F251. A Structure 16 layer contained a coin, no. 383, dated 337–40.

Fragments of copper alloy, nos 44, 47 and 48, came from F335. Late 1st/2nd century glass, no. 18, came from pit F251. Drain F262 yielded a brooch, no. 9, of Iron Age date.

#### **Period 5 c. AD 350 to c. 400**

##### *Area A*

Structure 2 was maintained through the 4th century as was the road F101 (Fig. 4). Possible building remains, Structure 3, were recorded to the north of

the road, comprising a wall, F106, and fragments of a drain, with building debris. To the east of the main excavated area, the construction of a stone building, Structure 4, suggested the establishment of a further compound here, Compound 4, beyond Compound 3, though not necessarily originating as late as this period. The division between the two was marked by the retained wall F111 rather than ditch F134 which was presumably by then infilled. The walls of Structure 4 were of coursed, mortar-bonded stone with facing stones and cores of small rubble (Fig. 20). A cross wall F136 divided two rooms, the southern one having an earth floor. A doorway at the west end of the partition wall led to a second room with a bin base or bench against the west wall (F406). Outside the building to its west was a stone culvert, F168, draining to the north. Further east, Structure 10 was marked by two walls meeting at



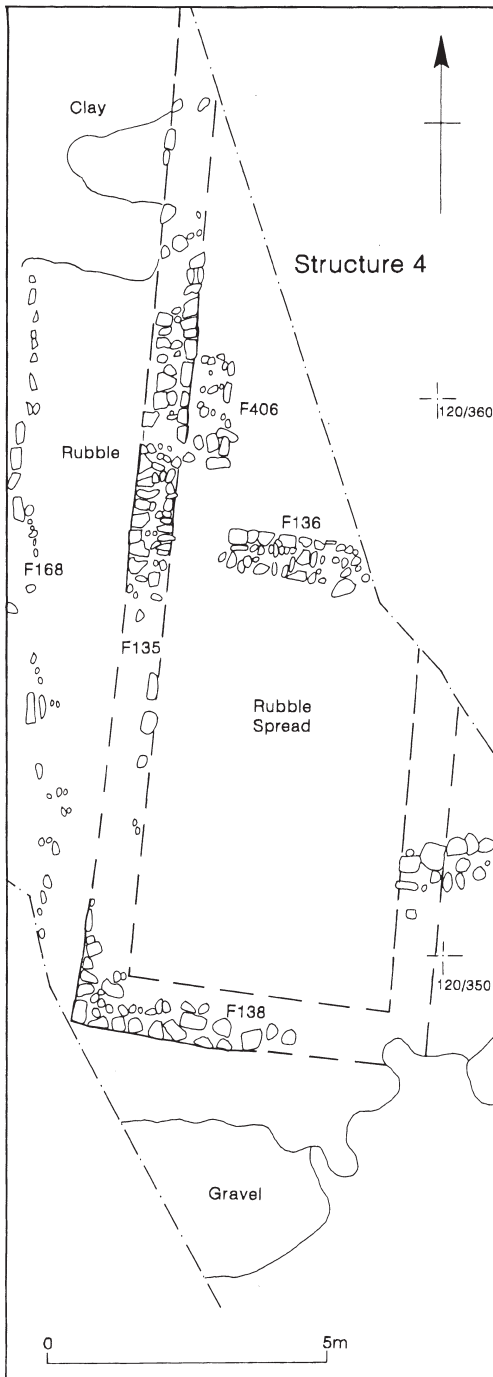


Fig. 20 Area A Structure 4

a right angle. The west wall, F140, was built in a similar fashion to wall F111 with small outer stones marking a wide wall principally represented by its rubble core. A second wall to the east was butted against F140 and was made of a rough linear arrangement of large stone blocks.

Structure 4 may be interpreted as a farm building, perhaps a byre, but probably doubling as a dwelling, with a family living in part of the building or on an upper floor. The similarity between walls F111 and F140 may indicate that they were part of a yard around the building, perhaps with lean-to structures on the further side of F140. Period 4 structures and features in Compound 3 would have been retained in Period 5.

Third-century pottery, dated later than 225, came from the floor of the southern room in Structure 4 but other datable finds were sparse.

#### Area B

Late buildings were also found to the south (Fig. 9). The Period 4 pits in Compound 10 were sealed beneath a further stone-founded building, Structure 7 (Fig. 21). The building's walls, F216, F217, F232, were of horizontally laid mortared plinth courses surviving in places above unmortared pitched foundations. These were generally in shallow foundation trenches with one pitched course, except over pits F251 and F256 where they had been set in trenches cut deeply into the fills of the underlying pits (Fig. 15). Walls F216 and F217 were bonded together. The junction between F232 and F216 was not clear, suggesting that the walls had been set directly on the surface at this point without a foundation trench. The building was divided by an interior wall, F218, again with pitched stone footings. The northern room contained rake-out layers from a possible hearth against the east wall. A rough dirt and stone surface floored the southern room overlying an area of burning. To the west of Structure 7, a burnt, stony, clay floor, was overlain by dark soil and mortar. Overlying layers contained burnt daub perhaps indicating a timber and daub pentice or annexe building.

West and north of Structure 7 were unexcavated rubble layers. Postholes, F283 and F416-F418, may indicate a timber-framed building. To the east in Compound 7, Structure 14 was marked by a rectangular setting of post pits and pottery vessel deposits sunk into a clay floor. North of Structure 14 a large, sub-circular, drystone lined pit, F225, was cut almost 2m into clay and bedrock and may have

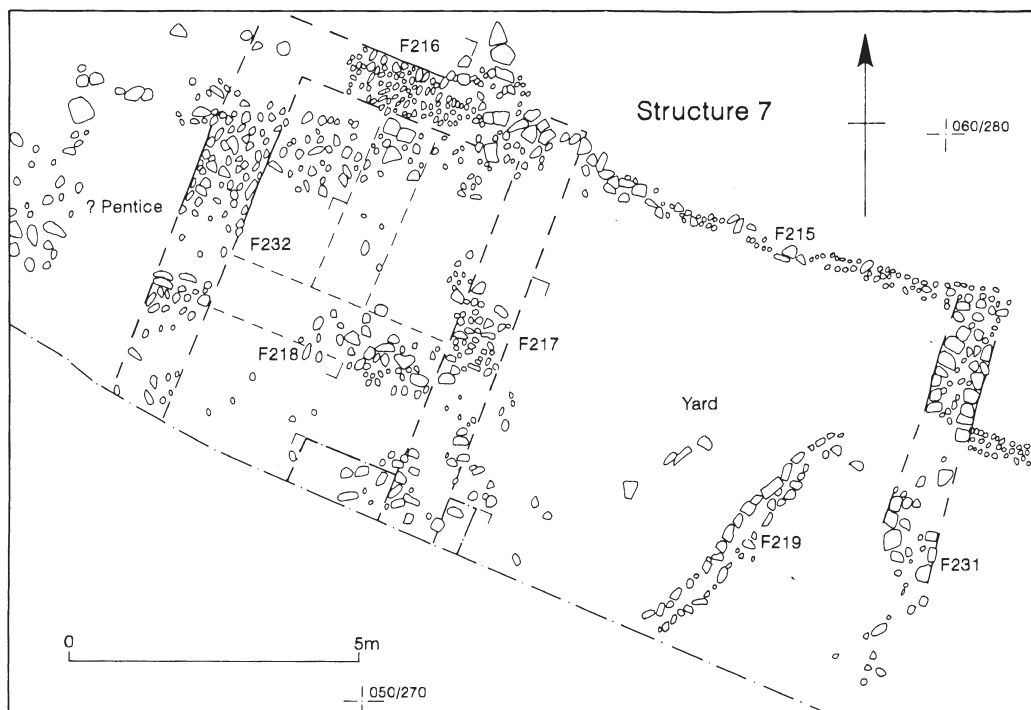


Fig. 21 Area B Structure 7

functioned as a water cistern. An elongated rubble spread, F279, to its west, may represent remains of a structure. To the north of F225 a pit, F285/F313, also penetrated to bedrock, blocking an earlier access to Compound 7.

In Compound 6, toward the road frontage, a stone coffin with a lid of Douling stone, F208, had been set in a slight pit. It contained the skeleton of a child, HB5 (Figs 22 and 23).

The boundary separating Compounds 7 and 8 was refurbished with a clay bank set on the Period 4 bank, F234, into which were set an alignment of large Douling stone blocks, F247, presumably as the base for a drystone wall. To the south was a short length of wall footing or stone plinth, F265, on the same alignment. The boundary terminated to the north, as in previous periods, where the access track, F266, linking Compounds 6 and 8 was still maintained.



Fig. 22 Area B stone coffin F208; view north



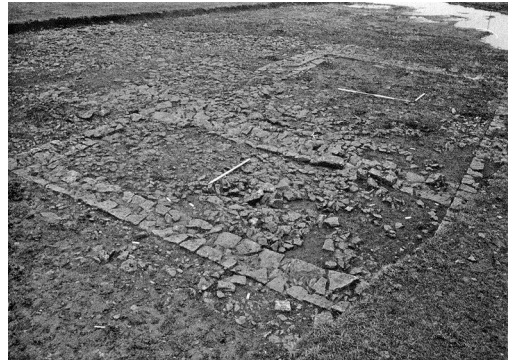
Fig. 23 Area B coffin with infant burial

To the east of the maintained Structure 11, was a broad band of rough cobbling crossing the excavated area from north to south and marking a trackway, F272. This overlay the infilled ditches F230 and F347. Material incorporated within it included several portions of millstones and quernstones, the latter possibly obtained from the Periods 2 and 4 industrial areas behind Structure 12. The track was crossed by a stone-lined culvert, F273, with branches on the west side draining from Structure 11. Set into the top of the infilled ditch F230 were the remains of an oven with an elongated, stone-lined chamber, F263, and a circular stokehole, F264, to the north. The Period 4 ditch, F230, had been cut by a ditch to its east, F236 (Fig. 15) which re-established an eastern limit of Compound 8 parallel to its west side. A drystone boundary wall F270 ran along the western edge of the ditch.

To the north-east, in Compound 9 to the east of Compounds 6 and 8, was a substantial stone-founded building, Structure 9, of two rooms, defined by a horizontal plinth course of mortared stone set upon pitched stone foundations (Fig. 24). The east, F369, north, F277, west, F275, and south, F371, walls were bonded together. An internal partition wall, F370, marked a smaller southern room. This had a cobbled interior floor cut by a stone-lined posthole, and by a possible culvert, F374, alongside the north wall. The north room had a bench, F276, butted against the west wall, with a wide entrance to its south. The room had a floor of stony soil with a square hearth. A culvert, F373, crossed the room from east to west. Outside to the south and west was an extensive yard of stone cobbling and rubble.

Later in the period ditch F236 became redundant and the boundary between Compounds 8 and 9 was represented by wall F270 with a rectilinear setting of pitched stone cobbles to its west. Nearby were the remains of an elongated, rectangular stone hearth, F271.

The contents of the pits beneath Structure 7 suggested that a building had stood nearby which was now replaced by the new building. This was the same width as the core Structure 6 building and is likely to have been another two-celled structure. Its stone walls were set on bedrock in places but in deep foundation trenches over the pits, suggesting a stone-walled building to eaves height. It may have been two-storied. A pentice timber-framed building may have lain to the west. The stone confined child burial F208 may be associated with Structure 6 or with a family from another high status establishment beside the Fosse Way.



*Fig. 24 Area B Structure 9; view north-west*

The pottery dating evidence underlined the extent of residuality after 2–300 years of continuous occupation in this part of the Fosse Lane site. The late ditch F236 contained 2nd and 3rd-century pottery including Hadrianic/early Antonine samian. Oven F264 contained 2nd-century pottery including Hadrianic samian. Pottery from Structure 7 was dated to the 3rd-century with some 4th-century sherds. Wall F232 from the building contained 3rd-century pottery, wall F216, late 2nd/early 3rd-century pottery including samian later than 160, wall F218, 2nd-century, and wall F217, 3rd-century material. Pottery from a floor layer was of late 2nd/early 3rd century date and included decorated samian nos 39, dated 100–120, and 55, dated 130–160. Layers in Structure 9 contained late 3rd/4th century pottery. A samian stamp, no. 4, dated *c.* 135–160 came from pit F208 holding the stone coffin. A decorated samian sherd, no. 11, dated 75–95, came from wall F217.

The coin evidence was clearer. Layers within Structure 7 yielded three coins, no. 299 dated 305–7, no. 307, dated 367–75, and no. 300, 4th-century. A floor level yielded coin 371, dated 364–78 and a layer in the pentice on its west side contained coin 303, dated 388–402. Oven F264 contained a coin, no. 417, dated 364–78. From the floor of Structure 9 came two datable coins, no. 424 dated 260–80 and no. 423 dated 350–60.

Fragments of a wire bracelet, no. 21, came from Structure 9, a silver ring from Structure 7, an iron pin shank from F208, a shoe cleat from Structure 7 and a 2nd-century brooch, no. 5, from the pentice west of Structure 7. Floors in Structure 7 contained a fragment of a rotary quern, no. 5, and three fragments of building stone, no. 13. The cistern or well, F225, yielded a fragment of copper alloy, no.



40, and painted wall plaster, no. 2. A whetstone, no. 12, came from the rake-out layer from F264. The child's coffin, nos 15 and 16, was of local Doulling stone. Plant remains from F236 were analysed.

Coins from the Period 4 features beneath Structure 7 provide a *terminus post quem* for the building of 330–40. Its reflooring can be dated later than 367–75. The coin of 388–402 may well therefore have been lost when the building was in use. The other structures cannot be as closely dated. The coin evidence might suggest that Structure 9 was from Period 4 continuing into the later 4th century.

### Period 6 Early post-Roman centuries

#### *Areas A and B*

In Area A, two graves, F122 and F150, were cut into the floor of Structure 2 (Figs 4 and 13). F122 was aligned north–south with the adult burial HB8 placed with its head to the south (Fig. 25). F150 was aligned east–west with the head of the adult burial HB7 to the west (Fig. 26). In Compound 7, in Area



Fig. 25 Area A burial HB8 in grave F122



Fig. 26 Area A burial HB7 in grave F150

B, a group of three burials, two intercutting, were set close together on a north–south alignment. All three were adults, the deepest grave F255, HB3, cut by grave F235, HB1, with grave F248, HB2, nearby (Figs 9 and 27). These are undated but could alternatively belong to Periods 4 or 5. A badly disturbed adult burial, 2077, HB4, had been cut into the Period 5 track F272, close to the drain F273 in Compound 8 (Fig. 9).

A complex of ditches in Area A was associated with the earlier road, F101 and its Period 5 addition F154. To the west ditch F144 ran almost centrally down F101 (Figs 4 and 8). This was a shallow V-shaped cut which may have been a stone lined-culvert. Ditch F147 to the east was not replicated in the west section. It ran down the side of the Period 5 road F154 and then swung northward to respect its turn. Despite this it appeared to have removed F154 further north. It had been recut on three occasions. A third ditch, F146, also not seen to the west, was cut deeply into F154, followed its turn to the north, and then, after a zig-zag, retook its former alignment to continue to the east. A further shallow ditch or later



Fig. 27 Area B intercutting burials HB1–3

disturbance, F149, was cut across the stone surface F113 of Structure 2 (Fig. 13). All these features were filled with uniform dark soil.

In Area B, a substantial ditch, F224 drained from south to north, with a feeder ditch, F223, joining it to the south. Both ditches cut Structure 8 and crossed Compound 8. The ditch fills all comprised a dark loamy soil.

The burials found in Areas A and B were more infrequent and scattered than those found to the south in 1990 (Leach with Evans 2001, fig. 5). The only possible cemetery group was in Area B where the intercutting graves suggest the absence of markers or some pressure on space. A large area directly north and east of the burials had been removed in later activity and other burials may have lain there. All except one were aligned north–south as were many of the 1990 individuals. Unlike their counterparts to the south none of these burials were radiocarbon dated, but some almost certainly belong to the early post-Roman centuries.

It is likely that the evidence in Area A represents different episodes of activity. While F144 may have been associated with road F101 and an early cutting of F147 with F154, the later recutting of F147 and

F146 were clearly from a time when the road was out of use. Similarly F149 would belong to a post-occupation phase. The two burials may have been associated with continuing settlement on the road frontage, but at a time when the yards and buildings to the rear were no longer in use.

The dating evidence was of no help in understanding the sequences in either area. In Area A, F144 contained late 2nd/early 3rd-century pottery and F146 and F147 only 2nd-century material. Ditch F149 contained late 3rd and 4th-century pottery. The Area B ditches, F223 and F224, yielded much late 3rd/4th-century pottery. Grave F150 contained late 3rd/4th century pottery. Graves F235 and F248 both contained 2nd-century pottery and grave F255 3rd-century pottery. A decorated samian sherd, dated 135–170, came from F235.

From the fills of ditch F223 came eight coins, nos 243, 254, and 287, dated 270–90, no. 289, dated 321, nos 251, 252, and 286, dated 330–340, and finally no. 244 dated 388–402. Ditch F224 yielded coin no. 240, 270–4, and nos 265 and 284, 270–90. Coin 295, dated 270–90, came from F235. Coin 318, dated 270–90, came from F255. Grave F150 contained a fragment of an iron stylus, no. 3, and 15 hobnails. A number of other objects came from F223 and F224. A fragment from a copper alloy vessel, no. 35, a rod fragment, no. 50, and a brooch, no. 3, dated 1st–2nd century, came from F223. A fragment of possibly 2nd-century glass, no. 5, a brooch fragment, no. 16, a bone pin fragment, no. 1, and a fragment of painted wall plaster, no. 1, came from F224. Finally a quernstone fragment came from rubble within Structure 7.

The contents of the two Area B ditches suggested the former presence of a rich cultivation soil formed across the Roman settlement which had subsequently silted into the ditches. The ditches and the soil can be given a *terminus post quem* by the coin of AD 388–402 from F223. The actual date of the ditches and their subsequent fills could be much later.

### Period 7 Medieval and post-medieval

In both areas stone robbing is likely to have taken place, with subsequent plough damage. This was most apparent in Area B where the top of the Period 5 wall F247 had been scored by the plough. More recent activity was apparent alongside the railway embankment which had been provided with a deep ditch, F329, at its base. A large rock cut pit,



F213, incompletely excavated, was sited near the embankment and might have been dug for water. Further north was a large stone-filled hollow, F214, perhaps a quarry (Fig. 9). This latter may have removed burials from Period 6.

Pit F213 contained a sherd of post-medieval pottery and clay pipe stems as well as late-Roman material including a 3rd-century coin, no. 256, and three 4th-century coins, nos 236, 237, and 246, and a glass gaming counter, no. 27.

## DISCUSSION

### Structural elements

#### *Boundaries*

Boundaries were maintained through at least 300 years. Most ran from the Fosse Way roughly at right angles to the road defining back plots to the rear of postulated activity on the road frontage. Banks were recognisable as lines of red/orange clay resting on natural rock and clay – probably a buried soil rather than the bank structure itself. However, in some cases the banks themselves survived, the best example being bank F234 lying between Compounds 7 and 8 (Fig. 15). Here deposits of clay and stone overlying the buried soil were fronted by a wall to the east, a length of kerbing to the west and topped with what looked like the base course of a wall, F247. The dating evidence gave a neat progression with late 1st-century pottery in the buried soil, 2nd-century in the layer above and 3rd-century for the layer beneath F247. Although this may not have been a genuine reflection of the process of construction, on the face of it the process would seem to be one of dumps of material added to the bank from time to time. The slightness of scale, even allowing for slumping and degradation, would suggest that the walls played a more important part in defining the boundary, perhaps supplemented by hedges.

Walls were added to banks and replaced silted or infilled ditches across the excavations. Their surviving base courses were just under 1m wide and for the most part well made. Some of the better built walls may have stood to almost person height and be seen more in terms of 18th and 19th-century urban contexts as garden and yard boundary walls. The remains of the walls alongside the street F101, for example, seem too well made to represent merely

the base of a low field wall. However, the majority can be interpreted as field boundary walls built no higher than would be necessary to control stock, similar to those still to be seen around fields of the 18th and 19th-century layout in the locality today. Both types of boundary wall are closely paralleled by those in excavations to the south, where similar conditions and layouts occur (Leach with Evans 2001).

Most of the banks seen were accompanied by ditches. Two types of ditch were recognisable. The first, those accompanying the banks, barely penetrated into the bedrock while the second, those running north–south further to the east were deeply rock cut. Because the former were cut only in natural clay or soil, they could no longer be traced where bedrock rose towards the road frontage, although the boundaries themselves presumably continued westward to the road. There was no evidence that the deeper north–south ditches had banks alongside them. Instead walls seem to have been sited on their west side, a particularly wide wall footing, F111, being present in Area A. Even if accompanying banks have been totally removed there are no clearly defined locations for them. Stone from these ditches is likely therefore to have been used for boundary walls, and may indeed have been the source for other structures. The succession of ditches in Area B may reflect pressure on space in Compound 8. The settlement's boundaries were thus defined initially as banks and ditches, subsequently reinforced or sometimes replaced by drystone walls. What can no longer be assessed is the role of hedges, a likely component of field banks.

After the settlement was well established a broad, deep-cut ditch was cut across several compounds and the road line in Area A, causing its relocation. Ditch F347 in Area B and ditch F134 in Area A were both dug following the deposition of colluvium, evidencing serious flooding, and were presumably intended to bring water down from higher parts of the settlement to the south. The ditch line seems likely to represent the continuation of a similar and apparently contemporary ditch F318 excavated to the south in 1990 (Leach with Evans 2001, 66). That ditch ran east–west from the road frontage, cutting through Structure VII, a Period 2 building, before turning northward on a course which would align it with ditch F347 (Fig. 28). Even though ditch F347 was replaced by the slighter F230 these major drainage features did not remain in use for long with Period 5 activity spreading across their silted lines.

## Compounds

The basic layout defined by the boundaries was a series of plot holdings running back from the Fosse Way. These were not regular. Including the 1990 data (Leach with Evans 2001), the layout of at least eight primary compounds from that frontage can be suggested between street F101 and the obliquely angled road at the south end of the 1990 site (Fig. 28). In the 1996 area a total of ten numbered Compounds could be identified (Table 2). Compound 1 of unknown width lay north of street F101. Directly south of it Compound 2 may have been only 20m wide with a southern boundary suggested by the geophysical survey. The next, Compound 5, would be 40m wide between this and F400, then Compounds 6 and 7, 25m and 20m wide respectively. To the south the next plot, Compound 10, could have been 60m wide since the layout at the north end of the 1990 site suggests that Structure IX there lies within the same holding as Structure 7, although another boundary in between could be concealed by the former railway embankment. Thereafter two further compounds of 35m and 60m width can be suggested in the 1990 area, with a final 50m wide enclosure in the angle formed by the southern street and the Fosse Way.

In the 1996 areas the compounds ran back to strongly marked eastern boundaries. One was recorded in Area A as ditch F156 and later wall F104 and was also noted in the geophysical survey continuing south to the north-east corner of Structure 6. This boundary therefore was common to Compounds 2 and 5, with Compound 3 to the east, and may also have continued on a similar line across Compound 7 as F300. Further back a second strong north–south running boundary was seen in the geophysical survey continuing the line of wall F129 southward as the eastern boundary of Compounds 3

and possibly 6, separating them from Compounds 4 and perhaps 9 further east. This would have run as far as the north-east corner of Compound 7 and then have been continued southward between Compounds 7 and 8 to Structure 8, and possibly on into the 1990 site outside the west wall of Structure IX (Fig. 28). Following the disuse of the Period 3/4 site drainage ditch crossing the 1990 and 1996 sites, a further eastern boundary line was marked in Area B by ditch F236. One final boundary was seen only in the geophysical survey, apparently just to the east of Structure 9 and possibly an eastern boundary to Compound 9. Additional compounds were probably laid out even further to the east based on the evidence of stone features, hearths, streets, ditches and other occupation evidence obtained in other watching briefs and evaluations extending for 250m or more in places east of the Fosse Way (Leach 1991; 1992).

## Buildings

The earliest building, Structure 1, is suggested to have been a timber-framed building with base plates set on roughly placed walls of large stones (Table 3). The plan was not a regular rectangle and the rounded corners, misalignment of the west side either side of the entrance, and varying wall widths hint at native British influences. The wide entrance suggested it functioned as a barn but its interior foundation deposit and the domestic pottery associated with the building indicate that it may also have been inhabited. The building lay alongside a later road and would thus have occupied a position closely articulated with the communications system. Outside the building to its west were floors belonging to pentice structures with a yard beyond. Building X, partly exposed in 1990 to the south, appears to have been a comparable and contemporary establishment (Leach with Evans 2001, 73–7). More completely examined by excavations in 2004 were a set of three apparently contemporary and comparable structures with accompanying exterior yards along the western frontage of the Fosse Way (Bagwell and Webster 2005, 114–15).

The next building in the sequence, Structure 8, though apparently of more regular plan and mortared stone construction, differed from the later stone buildings in having made use of an existing boundary wall. A foundation pot burial centrally placed showed the building to have been dedicated in some way at the outset suggesting a predetermined function. It may have faced east onto a yard and

TABLE 2: LOCATION AND PERIODS OF COMPOUNDS

| No. | Area | location           | Periods |
|-----|------|--------------------|---------|
| 1   | A    | north of road F101 | 1–3     |
| 2   | A    | south of F101      | 1       |
| 3   | A    | east of 2          | 2–5     |
| 4   | A    | east of 2          | 5       |
| 5   |      | north of Area B    | 1–2     |
| 6   | B    | west end Area B    | 1–5     |
| 7   | B    | south of 6         | 1–5     |
| 8   | B    | east of 6 and 7    | 2–5     |
| 9   | B    | east of 8          | 4       |
| 10  | B    | south of 7         | 1–5     |

TABLE 3: LIFESPAN OF BUILDINGS AND MAIN FEATURES, 1990 AND 1996/7

**Tesco site**

|              | <i>Period</i> |
|--------------|---------------|
| Structure 1  | 2–4           |
| Structure 2  | 4–5+          |
| Structure 3  | 5–5+          |
| Structure 4  | 5–5+          |
| Structure 5  | 4–5+          |
| Structure 6  | ?4–5+         |
| Structure 7  | 5–5+          |
| Structure 8  | 2–?early3     |
| Structure 9  | 5–5+          |
| Structure 10 | 5–5+          |
| Structure 11 | 4–5+          |
| Structure 12 | 4–5+          |
| Structure 14 | 5–5+          |
| Structure 15 | 4–5+          |
| Structure 16 | 4–5+          |
| Structure 17 | 4–5+          |
| Structure 18 | 4–5+          |
| flooding     | late 2        |
| road F101    | 1–5+          |
| F134/F347    | 4             |

**Showerings site**

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| F138           | 1–5+         |
| F318           | late2/early3 |
| Structure I    | 4–5+         |
| Structure VII  | 2            |
| Structure VIII | 4–5+         |
| Structure IX   | 3–5+         |
| Structure X    | later 2      |
| Structure XI   | 2–4          |
| road F7        | 1–5+         |
| Struct A and B | 4–5+         |

have been associated with semi-industrial activity there, while still functioning in part as a dwelling.

Three of the later structures, 2, 11, and 12 were seen only as similarly defined floor platforms. Structures 2 and 12, both 7m wide, are comparable with other stone building widths. Structure 11 was about 4m wide, and with the four-post structure to its south may have served a slightly different function, perhaps with a granary attached, raised above ground level on four posts marked by stone settings. The layout of Structure 2 suggested internal features and floors as well as the position of possible entrances, whereas the floor of Structure 12 was more uniform than the others. Despite this it would seem that all three functioned as storage barns, having well-laid floors and spacious working areas nearby. It is possible that Structures 11 and

12 were attached by a veranda or covered walkway marked by posts F227 and F237, while dual domestic occupation in some or all cannot be ruled out. All three were aligned side-on to the drainage ditch line running through from the south – F347/F230 and F134. The floor plans of these structures are comparable to Structures A and B on the 1990 site (Leach with Evans 2001, 41–3). They are similar to a building excavated at Scole (Rogerson 1977). Structure 12 was built over the yard to the east of Structure 8 and was not aligned onto it, perhaps indicating that Structure 8 had by then been demolished.

A further seven buildings were of mortared stone and readily recognisable as of a classic two or three-room type. One of these, Structure 7, was not built until the second half of the 4th century. The others could not be closely dated although Structures 4 and 9 might represent a 4th-century eastward expansion of the settlement, along with the Structure 10 fragment. They are all widely separated from each other and seem to be associated each with a single compound, or, in the case of Structure 6, to straddle two. Structure 6 was the highest quality building excavated, primarily a house with a suite of rooms, carefully laid floors and some evidence of plastered walls. It appears initially to have been a long narrow building, not dissimilar to Structure 4. It was then provided with further rooms along its west side, with perhaps a façade of some kind here to give the building a more imposing appearance seen from the Fosse Way. Structure 7 may also have been primarily domestic, although its interior was poorly preserved and it may have shared this function with small-scale agricultural or industrial processing activities. Structures 9 and 4 are somewhat similar and may also have had a dual function similar to rural peasant dwellings, with part of the building a byre used for animals. Little was seen of Structures 3 and 18, the nearest buildings to the road frontage, appearing in salvage work and an evaluation trench respectively.

Structure 14 marked by postholes, and 15 marked by post pads were presumably slighter outhouse-type buildings of timber. Structures 5 and 17 were defined simply by spreads of building material and not capable of further interpretation.

Structure 16 defied ready interpretation. This small rectangular building, presumably of stone, could be associated with infant burial HB6, another in a nearby stone coffin, F259, and possibly the group of three to the south, HB1–3, implying a specialised function such as a shrine or mausoleum.

The presence nearby of the earlier pipe burial, F242, may support this interpretation, although no burials were found within Structure 16. The absence of infant burials from structures elsewhere across the site may simply reflect that virtually none of the wall lines and few floor levels were excavated. Dedicatory pot deposits reflecting other ritual practices among the settlement's inhabitants were found in Structures 1, 8 and 14.

#### *Other stone features*

A variety of other stone structures was excavated. Ovens were marked by their burnt sides and areas of raked out charge. There were also stone-floored and stone-sided areas which may have been storage bins. Threshing floors were perhaps represented by the areas of heavy stone slabs. The largest of these was a semicircle of stone walling, F274, in Compound 8, found within an area of ovens and kilns. This may have had an industrial function, although other uses, such as a dovecote, are possible. Stone-lined culverts were plentiful.

#### *Roads and tracks*

In Area A, this part of the settlement was accessed from the Fosse Way by a major side street that was constructed in Period 2 to replace an earlier entry between compounds, and then maintained through until at least the late 4th century. It differed from those found in 1990 in the quality of its construction, the regularity of its layout and its maintenance over a long period of time, and would not have been out of place in an urban setting. In a less well-defined form it may have continued for at least 180m to the east of Fosse Lane as located in trial trenching (Fig. 3). Its turn northwards in Period 4 may relate to flooding problems here and perhaps provision of the major east–west drainage ditch F134/F347. In Area B the track F266, at the junctions of and accessing Compounds 6, 7 and 8, was locally well-defined and drained in the small area examined. Further east another trackway with drainage, F272, that postdated the drainage ditches F230 and F347, may have linked Compounds 8 and 9.

#### *Pits*

Only a small number of pits were excavated, and pitting was relatively uncommon across the settlement area, perhaps a reflection of the relatively intractable limestone bedrock close to the surface

in most places. None could be securely identified as intended for rubbish. Two in Compound 7, F211 and F243, seem to have been provided for watering animals and two others may have held troughs. The large stone-lined pit, F225, in the same compound appears to have been a water cistern, fed by local drainage and intended for watering stock. Two small pits in Compound 6 seem to have been early, and one other of similar size, F226, was seen in Compound 8.

Some rubbish was disposed of in middens, with spreads of burnt and waste material recorded in both areas. Much of this was evidently associated with nearby structures or industrial processing and it was not clear that very much waste material from domestic occupation had been dumped or disposed of in the back plots.

#### **Phasing the structural elements**

The commencement of occupation at the Tesco site was suggested, by the samian, to lie in the later 1st century AD. The profile and proportions of the early samian here differed little from the 1990 assemblage and prompted a suggested start date in the 80s (Dickinson 2001). However, a possible development southward of the town can be suggested by phasing in the provision of the compounds, suggesting that the earliest samian should not be seen as an indication of a uniform start date throughout.

The earliest features found were the two parallel ditches with accompanying banks, F152 with F148 and F116/166 of Period 1 from Area A (Fig. 4). These define an area less than 20m wide probably running back at least 100m east from the Fosse Way, perhaps the earliest definition of a track or driveway through the first defined enclosures along the Fosse Way frontage, and providing access to contemporary back plots or fields. They are markedly out of line with the boundaries to the south, none of which, from excavations in 1990 and 1996 or from geophysical survey, are comparable. Geophysical survey results to the north have revealed a large enclosure on a comparable alignment lying 30m to the north (GSB 1990, Area A). This measured 40m east–west by at least 40m north–south and may well be associated. Excavation across that enclosure in a 1990 site evaluation revealed its north side beneath silt levels, then identified as post-Roman but now more likely to be equated with the Period 3 colluvium deposits (Leach 1990, Trench M). The evidence might be interpreted as an early enclosure set back

from the Fosse Way that was served by a trackway between the two Area A ditches. It is however more likely that the enclosure's layout was dictated by a primary layout of plots closer to the Fosse Way, in which case the two excavated ditches could mark the orientation of the earliest land allotments along the east side of the Fosse Way as far north as the river crossing. Further south the 1990 excavations located a possible boundary wall foundation on the same alignment beneath Structure VII (Leach with Evans 2001, 56), which might further support this hypothesis.

The line of the two ditches influenced the layout of Structure 1 even though it was set out across one of them. However the alignment was then abandoned and replaced by that of road F101. Does this represent work organised and financed by the town administration, part of a more extensive reorganisation of the settlement? The very fact that it cuts across existing layouts would support this, its structure and size suggesting an imposition. No streets of similar quality have been recorded elsewhere in the Fosse Lane settlement. Was this another imposed rationalisation, perhaps to replace an earlier and more random system of access paths or tracks to the Fosse Way from outlying fields or properties?

Compounds to the south respect the street, suggesting that they were laid out with or after its construction. Within the excavation it can be seen that this layout ended on the south side of Compound 6. That boundary was marked on its further side by a cremation burial, F242, perhaps marking the southern limit of occupation or ownership when deposited, although the boundary ditch lay on its north side. The south side of Compound 7 then apparently replicates the alignments revealed in 1990 further to the south, and the compound can therefore be seen either as the first of a new block of holdings continuing to the south or as an anomalous area subsequently infilled (Fig. 28).

All these events, the primary layout to the north, the street, the layout south of the street, and then the layout south of Compound 7 down to the diagonal track running across the 1990 site (Leach with Evans 2001), belong within the timeframe of Period 1. Recognition of settlement expansion southward fits with a predictive model of initial settlement at the river crossing, with later additions at a greater distance from the river as it developed.

In parts of the settlement there was evidence for a breakdown in surface water drainage management and abandonment of some earlier occupied zones.

This was most apparent over much of Area A, where extensive flood deposits sealed Structure 1 and parts of the road in the middle of the 3rd century. The large ditches F347 and F134 represent a response to the flooding and can be linked with F318 on the 1990 site. That ditch, cut through an existing property and, indeed, through the ruins of an earlier structure, Building VII, was apparently draining water downhill from the Fosse Way and properties along its east side (Leach with Evans 2001). These deposits suggest a failure to cope with increased run off from roofs, streets and other impervious surfaces within the expanding settlement. Although the dating evidence is not wholly in agreement, the colluvium deposits in Areas A and B are seen as contemporary. There is little doubt that parts of Area A were abandoned for a while, along with a major side street. The same may have been the case in Area B, although the colluvium there could represent another event, whose effects were relieved by cutting of the later ditch F230. These drainage ditches are perhaps another indication of some overall municipal planning. The town's administration clearly wanted to bring abandoned areas back into use toward the end of the 3rd century. The excavation evidence from both 1990 and 1996 can be read as indicating mid-term decline and then recovery in the later town's economy. The three possible timber-framed buildings, Structures 2, 11 and 12, were all set out on the same alignment respecting the drainage ditches, and they too might have been the product of a local government initiative. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how short-lived the new drainage system was. Presumably activities in the separate adjacent compounds soon superseded more far-sighted concerns with drainage overall, though Structures 2, 11 and 12 continued in use with no evidence of further flooding.

Can the north-south running boundaries be phased? It cannot be proven but it is likely that the further eastward a boundary lies the later it is likely to be. Wall F104 and ditch F156 beneath it in Area A may well have run across to Area B, to follow the east side of Structure 6 as a later sub-division of Compound 2 from 3, and so of Compounds 5 and 6 in Period 4. Compound 7 may have had a later subdivision but its eastern boundary was long maintained, its alignment reflected in the earlier Structure 8 within the adjacent Compound 8. The latter's eastern boundary may have been ditch F236 and wall stub F270 sealed below Period 3 colluvium. Furthermore, Structures 4 and 9 in compounds to the north appear to respect



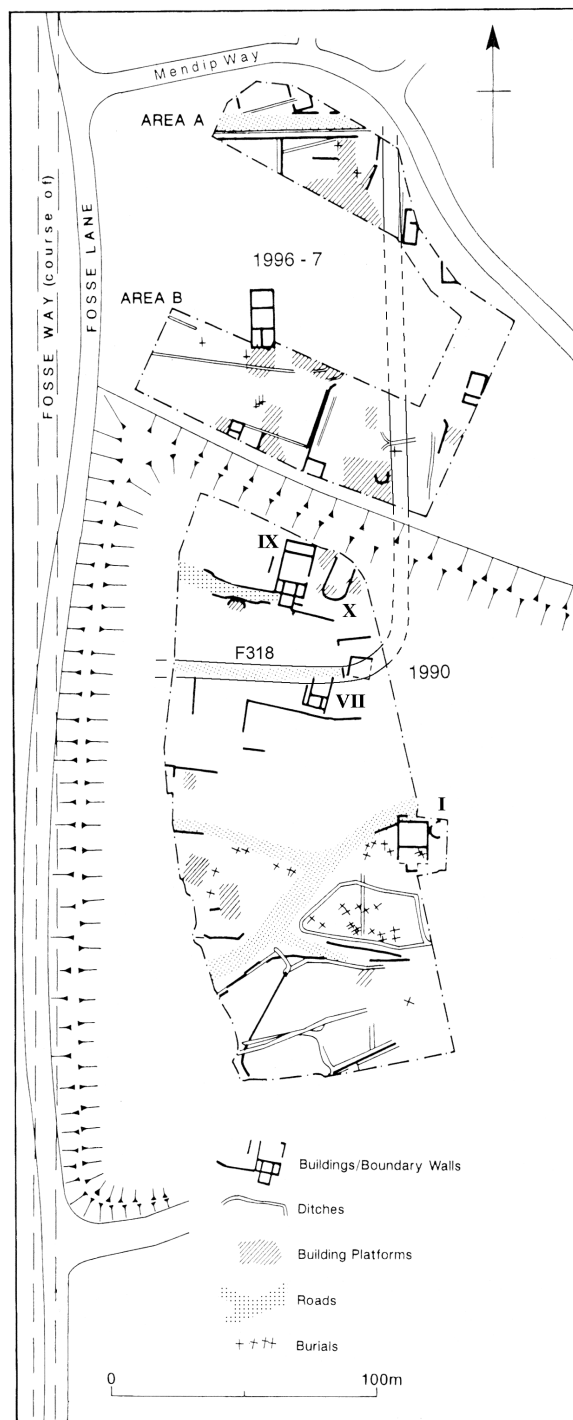


Fig. 28 The Fosse Lane settlement: excavation results from 1990 and 1996/7

this alignment, though otherwise assigned to Period 4.

Structure 4 itself and Structures 11 and 12 in Compound 8 were later than the colluvium deposit dated to the mid 3rd century in Area A. Both were laid out to respect the eastern drainage ditches, as was Structure 2, similarly aligned at right-angles to the street and parallel with the ditch line. Although only superficially dated and examined, the eastern Structures 4, 9 and 10, may well reflect late-Roman expansion of the settlement eastward, although their possible earlier origins should not be discounted.

The buildings indicate changes through time (Table 3). Throughout the lifespan of the town it must be assumed that there were buildings on the Fosse Way street frontage, none of which are known on this eastern side. It is interesting to note that apparently domestic buildings of relative sophistication start to appear in the later Roman period set back from the road – Structures 6 and 7 on the Tesco site and Structures I and IX on the 1990 site (Leach with Evans 2001). Of these Structures 6 and IX to the south were added to and enlarged through time. Both interrupt the previous layout, Structure 6 crossing a boundary of perhaps 200 years standing and Structure IX a track of similar age. Later 3rd and 4th-century activity on the Tesco site seemed to be particularly focused to the east in Compounds 3, 8 and 9. It is possible that Structures 6, I and IX mark the houses of successful families who had prospered from commercial enterprises on the main street frontage. These may then have been leased out or run by junior family members while the owner enjoyed a more luxurious and better appointed home away from the street. It is also possible that the focus of businesses and commercial activity moved away somewhat from the street frontage towards the new houses set more sparsely in compounds back from the road. Whatever the explanation, it is clear from both the 1990 and 1996 excavation evidence that areas of settlement to the east saw an intensification of activity and occupation from Period 4 onwards.

Analysis of the coin profiles on both sites (Minnitt, this report; Esmonde Cleary 2001) supports the excavation evidence that the Shepton Mallet site flourished in the later Roman period. This trend has been noted as uniformly the case on sites in the western part of the Province and is attributed largely to the late Roman administrative system. Fosse Lane lay within the Diocletianic province of *Britannia Prima*, probably governed from Cirencester (White 2007). The success of *Britannia Prima* is expressed

in coins, small finds and domestic decoration, particularly mosaics. There was clearly a revitalised administration concerned with the collection of taxes, particularly the *annona*, and there is evidence of a special class of administrator and of dedicated sites as at Cunetio, Mildenhall, Wilts (Corney 1997, 349). Both sites have evidence of late building works, as for example Building 7 from the last half of the 4th century.

Turning finally to burial, radiocarbon dates from the 1990 excavations demonstrate its practice over a lengthy period of several centuries, and well into the early post-Roman period. None of a much sparser group on the Tesco site was dated by this method although some of the burials are clearly Roman in style, the infant stone coffin burial in F208, the lead pipe cremation, and the lead and stone coffined burials on the 1990 site (Leach with Evans 2001). The F208 infant, HB5 did not act as a focus for a small cemetery of a type seen further south in 1990, although from its implied quality, an association with Structure 6 is possible. The only other grouping was that of the three inhumations in Compound 7. Others like that with hobnail boots in F150, Area A, also have Roman affinities, although this grave and F122 further north were cut into the floor and wall lines of the Period 4–5 Structure 2, presumably after its abandonment. These are potentially of early post-Roman date and might imply that they were placed after occupation of the settlement had ended. However, thermoluminescence dating evidence from hearths excavated on the west side of the Fosse Way in 2004 demonstrated activity and occupation continuing there into the 5th and 6th centuries, along with further scattered burials (Bagwell and Webster 2005, 114–15). Some burials may have been located beside still occupied areas, such as the groups south and west of Structure I (Leach with Evans 2001), while others more scattered were placed in presumably abandoned parts of the settlement.

### Function of compounds

Whatever the original arrangement and purpose of the compounds it is clear that most were subject to change through several centuries in the context of a dynamically evolving settlement. An agricultural function for some of the compounds as settlement infields is likely. In some areas stock would have been kept at certain times of year, some perhaps in transit to be marketed elsewhere, with others brought in for their meat or secondary products – hides, fleeces,

bone and horn, milk products, etc – generating further processing and production of animal-derived products nearby. This impression is supported by the animal bone assemblages, particularly from the 1990 excavations, where the predominance of mature species and butchery evidence suggests that the population of the settlement were predominantly consumers rather than producers, and more typical of an urban society. The clearest indicators of use by livestock were the watering holes and cistern in Compound 7. The remains themselves came from relatively unimproved local stock, with sheep/goats most common, and evidently having multi-purpose roles prior to slaughter.

Dunging of certain compounds could also have encouraged periodic market garden type cultivation. Other evidence of crops or cultivation was limited, although carbonised cereals – oats, barley, spelt and bread wheat, as well as weeds of cultivation – have been recognised, once again probably more a reflection of produce brought into the settlement for further processing, distribution and consumption. There was also significant evidence of other activities. Two areas of burning recorded in Area A could signify crop-processing or malting in Period 2. Later, Compound 8 in Area B was devoted to industrial activity, with a number of kiln or oven features recorded in Periods 4 and 5. These may also have been corn dryers or associated with malting, while associated stone floors may have been those of large barn-like structures. Such evidence is witness to the use of these compounds to the rear of the Fosse Way frontage as sites for storage and processing of agricultural produce from the town's hinterland.

As has been noted above, the functions of some of the compounds changed in the later Roman period. The position of Structure 6 laid out across two compounds is the best indication of their altered use as the setting for domestic buildings. Some compounds may thus have become private gardens subordinate to a dwelling. The 1990 excavation suggested that some new compounds were laid out across earlier arrangements and that important buildings and the ground around them may have been somewhat detached from the settlement, becoming more self-sufficient units.

### **The status of the settlement**

If indeed the Fosse Lane settlement had its inception at the crossing of the River Sheppey by the Fosse

Way, its expansion southwards, at least along the east side of the road, was rapid. The samian evidence for the beginnings of occupation on both the 1990 and 1996 sites in the later 1st century is to all intents contemporary, suggesting occupation and plot layouts extending out at least 800m on that side. Expansion to the west may have been slightly later, excavations near Cannards Grave suggesting that the limit of settlement at approximately 1km south was reached in the early to mid 2nd century (Birbeck 2002). The primary eastern compounds average 40m in width across the excavated areas, which could mean 20 compounds laid out from the river crossing to the south end of the 1990 site. If this is equated with 20 family holdings initially, and there was an equivalent development to the west, it gives some idea of the scale of the settlement established here by the beginning of the 2nd century. Whatever its origins the settlement could earn a living servicing traffic on the main road, supplying the new towns of Bath and Ilchester, equidistant to north and south, as well as forming a controlled collection and distribution point for farms from its hinterland.

The same pattern of occupation need not necessarily have occurred on the west side of the road. The street grids at Mildenhall and Wanborough in Wiltshire are laid out on one side only of a major through route (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 160–4; Corney 1997, 347), and it may have been the case that differences in function or status would have been apparent on either side of the road. Only one area west of the road, the Focus site in 2004, has been examined on a scale sufficient to reveal whole plots and their structural development, where the primary plots set along the road frontage were 30m wide. Their occupation was then apparently continuous from the end of the 1st century through to the end of the 4th and beyond (Bagwell and Webster 2005, 114–15). Further south there is evidence for more substantial properties from geophysical surveys, and the discovery of a major stone building found when the Somerset and Dorset Railway was built in 1887, but no information relating to boundaries beyond that marking the early 2nd-century southern limit of the settlement (Birbeck 2002).

There are similarities in compound size between those at Shepton Mallet and those on road frontages at Catsgore (Leech 1982) or in the southern suburbs of Ilchester (Leach 1982). The number of compounds may vary but many are comparable in terms of their buildings, other associated structures and activities in the dependent compounds. What

is different at Shepton Mallet is the development of further areas to the rear of the road frontage properties. Whether this was expansion by the original owners or development by new owners or tenants is unknown. In some instances changes of use are apparent over time, as in Compound 8, where a new industrial use looks to have been imposed on it. Ultimately the status of the individual property holders cannot be known, although the allocation by a single owner to tenants or slaves is most likely, given the evidence of plot layout and the rapid development of the frontage. If so the initiative for a settlement foundation could be a local native aristocrat or an entrepreneurial outside owner/immigrant.

In the Shepton Mallet area, different pottery styles in the Iron Age suggest that the tribal groups, so far as they can be reconstructed, could be distinguished by their pottery use (Evans 2001). The pottery has been suggested to indicate the location nearby to the south, of the pre-Roman tribal frontier and the *civitas* boundary. The fall off of Dorset BB1 may indeed mark an ethnic difference ceramically in the Roman period. A connection is also suggested by the pottery with the Mendip and Chew Valley settlements to the north and west, with, possibly, some connections across the Bristol Channel with south Wales. It may be possible to define the connections and hinterland of the Shepton Mallet settlement more closely. In the medieval period the agricultural and economic interdependency of lowland and upland on both sides of the Mendip plateau can be demonstrated by the documentary evidence (Neale 1976). It is increasingly the case that medieval dispositions are found to reflect those in the pre-Roman Iron Age, with more emphasis upon searches for evidence of continuity, as has been well demonstrated recently for South Cadbury (Davey 2005). The early medieval arrangements in the Shepton Mallet area suggest a central place at Shepton Mallet itself with upland and lowland territories mutually dependent. Some kind of transhumance was practised. The Iron Age system may similarly have seen summer grazing on the hills, together with cultivation of the lowland fields, which themselves had benefited from the overwintering of stock. The insertion into this scheme of the Roman road and of administration and taxation systems were the impetus for roadside settlements like Fosse Lane to operate, as an additional element to longstanding agricultural practice linking high and low ground. Another new element was increased exploitation of the Mendip metal mines by the Romans, adding a

mining population and their needs, in addition to the town communities along the Fosse Way.

Perhaps the prime function of the Fosse Lane settlement would thus have been to take farming surpluses produced by an age-old practice, one that was to continue into the medieval period, and to integrate them into the Roman system by bringing them physically to the road network. This would also have been a place to market livestock, process and store foodstuffs, plant and animal byproducts, and to undertake small-scale metalworking and manufacturing, for the benefit of local communities. It may even be that the settlement had some administrative functions, where taxes in cash or kind were collected and a central place developed, re-emerging later in documented history as Shepton Mallet itself. The position of the settlement on the Sheppey may also have been significant, although the river here is too small to have operated as a waterway. Black-burnished ware pottery was probably carried by river via Ilchester down to the Bristol Channel (Allen and Fulford 1996), and it may have been that materials such as products of the pottery kilns or the nearby Beacon Hill mill and quernstone industry went that way, via the Fosse Way.

### **The Fosse Lane settlement in its Romano-British context**

There is no evidence that the Fosse Lane settlement had a defensive perimeter, although the well defined and long maintained southern boundary on the west side of the road suggests a control point for entry, perhaps where tolls were levied (Birbeck 2002). No urban-style street grid developed, although at least one of the side streets was well built and maintained as part of a re-planned area of property holdings. The archaeology of the settlement approaching the river crossing is unknown – destroyed or inaccessible, as are large parts of its west side. So far there is no evidence for a large focal building or market area. Well-appointed town houses are not common in small towns in Britain but evidence for at least two large establishments west of the road at Fosse Lane were the imposing buildings destroyed by 19th-century quarrying for the railway, and another suggested by geophysical survey nearby (GSB 1990b). Pottery production, of specialised Severn Valley ware forms, began nearby at around the time the settlement was founded, and may have continued producing coarser local wares for much longer (Evans 2001). The settlement may have had

some role in servicing the Mendip silver and lead mines and probably functioned as a distribution centre for the local pottery and stone quarrying industries. Within its local context Fosse Lane is perhaps most comparable with Camerton, the next major settlement along the Fosse Way to the north (Wedlake 1958). This had an Iron Age precursor; there were villa-like buildings on site, small-scale industry, side streets and, as at Fosse Lane, wide-spaced buildings within large road-side compounds (Wedlake 1958, 292). The site may have been dependent on a local farm estate. Although differing in many respects both it and Fosse Lane are regularly spaced between Bath and Ilchester, though evidently of inferior status to both. These latter were towns proper, with defences, public buildings, street grids, and probably functioned as local administrative centres (Leach 2001, 34–51, 52–64). Ilchester may have had buildings associated with the *cursus publicus* (Ellis and Leach 1998) and perhaps subsequently *civitas* capital status, while Bath was famed for its baths and temple complexes.

The origin of the settlement at Fosse Lane appears to have no connection with the military although further discoveries could change this. At Charterhouse-on-Mendip the army was certainly involved with the metal extraction industry soon after the Conquest, and perhaps the foundation of the township there (Todd 2007). The Field Farm locality does have evidence for long-established prehistoric occupation. Recent excavations have suggested later Bronze Age land division and settlement, with Early Bronze Age and Neolithic antecedents (Leach 2009). An Iron Age farm was abandoned before the Fosse Way road was built at Cannards Grave (Birbeck 2002). Further Iron Age occupation followed the Bronze Age activity at Field Farm, and there is occasional later Iron Age pottery and metalwork from the Fosse Lane excavations. Whether or not there was some kind of Iron Age settlement focus in the Shepton Mallet area, there can be little doubt that the Roman occupation brought an entirely new kind of settlement. A suggested start date in the 80s would conform to the beginnings of civil urban development at centres like Bath, Ilchester or Charterhouse. Thereafter Fosse Lane seems to have flourished solely for economic and industrial reasons within a local and essentially agricultural economy. There is as yet no evidence of an official, religious or cultural focus, and, despite the hint in certain elements on site suggesting some central administrative control – the road F101, the drainage ditches, changes in street

and compound layouts – most of the archaeology points to organic development around individual holdings with the Fosse Way at its core. The layout is paralleled widely in Britain by the linear or ribbon development settlement types noted by Burnham and Wachter (1990).

Despite some suggestion of a decline in activity and the prosperity of the settlement in the 3rd century there was renewed expansion in the 4th century. New structures and layouts appeared or reached maximum development, as in the case of Building 6, or Building IX on the Showerings site. The prosperity of the inhabitants was reflected in material culture and coinage was in circulation through to the end of the century. Although difficult to demonstrate by dated material evidence, a continuation of occupation well into the 5th century seems likely. Evidence from the 1990 excavations of timber-frame structures, ovens and hard standings, some overlying demolished 4th-century buildings, can be placed late in the sequence, while radiocarbon dated burials extend the timeframe into the 6th century (Leach with Evans 2001). As noted above, 5th–6th-century thermoluminescent dates from the Focus development site west of the Fosse Way demonstrate that hearths were in use among the remains of the latest phase of occupation there (Bagwell and Webster 2005, 114–15). Although the structural evidence at the Tesco site is less clear, and neither it nor the burials there are dated, some, like the two cut through the floor of Structure 2, could be of post-Roman date. The latest Fosse Lane burials as a whole can be paralleled at Camerton, where the cemetery has a similarly late time span, from the 4th to the 7th century, and more widely across the West Country and Somerset in particular (Rahtz 1977).

Some light is thrown on the centuries from the 5th to the mid 7th by the emergence in the 7th century in land charters of defined territories often granted to the church. One such territory can be reconstructed around Shepton Mallet, appearing as part of the holdings of Glastonbury Abbey. The Charlton place-name is often an indication of the proximity of a central place (Hooke 1989), while Doulting with its St Aldhelm connection may have emerged at this period (Costen 1992, table 4.1). Whether or not these estates, or indeed the Anglo-Saxon Hundred of Whitstone here, preserve some echo of their Roman predecessor, they would not have been centralised on anything resembling the former Fosse Lane settlement. Towns were not to emerge again in England until the 9th and 10th centuries and it must be assumed that the network of buildings,



compounds and tracks recognised by fieldwork and these excavations, cannot have outlasted the 6th or early 7th century.

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