

Home Farm, Bishop's Cleeve, Excavation of a Romano-British occupation site 1993-1994

By ALISTAIR J.BARBER and GRAEME T.WALKER

With contributions by John Conway, Mark Maltby, Richard Reece,
Fiona Roe, Chris Salter, Jane Timby, and Linda Viner

Introduction

In 1993 Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) carried out a desk-based assessment and field evaluation on land at Home Farm, Bishop's Cleeve (O.S. Nat. Grid SO 95802775; King 1993). This led to an excavation and a watching brief between April and September 1994, prior to the construction of a supermarket and associated buildings.

The site lies in an area of considerable archaeological interest. A number of excavations, evaluations and recorded observations in the village and its immediate environs have yielded evidence for occupation over several millennia (Fig. 1, sites 1-13). Mesolithic and Neolithic/early Bronze Age flint has been recorded from Haymes (Rawes 1986) whilst three Neolithic polished stone axes have been recovered at Oakfield Road, Bishop's Cleeve (Kilminster 1990). Occupation dating from the mid-late Iron Age has been identified at Gilders Corner and Bishop's Cleeve Mill (Parry 1991; 1993). Romano-British pottery from a number of sites around the village spans the 1st-4th centuries, suggesting a landscape of small dispersed late Iron Age and Romano-British settlements (Rawes 1986; Rawes and Rawes 1989; 1990; Wills 1990; Hart 1992; Ings 1995).

No archaeological remains had been recorded from the site prior to the 1993 evaluation, which identified a complex of late Roman boundary ditches. Earlier evaluation work by the Archaeology Section, Gloucestershire County Council (AS/GCC) on an adjacent site (Hart 1992) revealed Romano-British ditches on similar alignments, a

possible pond, and undated postholes and masonry wall foundations. A dense scatter of *opus signinum* and building rubble, along with fine, unabraded, late Roman pottery, suggested the small masonry structure formed part of a larger Roman building.

Saxon pottery from the CAT evaluation suggested sub-Roman occupation in the area, perhaps focused around a villa site. Saxon occupation at Bishop's Cleeve has previously been demonstrated by the discovery at Lower Farm (O.S Nat.Grid. SO 94852708) of 26 inhumations probably dating to the 6th century (Brown 1970; Heighway 1987). Structural evidence remains elusive.

The earliest recorded name for Bishops Cleeve is *Timbingctum*. This was applied to a small settlement associated with a Saxon monastery to which lands were granted by King Offa of Mercia c. 768-79 A.D. That estate passed in the early 9th century as a manor to the bishop of Worcester and was known as the manor of Cleeve in 1096. Later the prefix 'Bishop's' was added and the name applied to the whole parish. References to a parish church first emerge in the Domesday Book (Elrington 1968).

The medieval landscape appears to have been dominated by open-field cultivation. Earthworks, resembling ridge and furrow patterns, are to be seen in fields adjacent to Home Farm. Medieval ditches, some interpreted as property boundaries, have been recorded during recent fieldwork in the village (Isaac 1986; Parry 1991; King 1993).

Topography, Geology and Land Use

Bishop's Cleeve lies below Cleeve Hill, approximately 7km north of Cheltenham, where the Cotswold escarpment gives way to the low-lying Severn Valley. The village has developed on an extensive deposit of Triassic sands and gravels overlying heavy blue Lias clays. The light, free-draining nature of the sandy soils of the area has long encouraged settlement and farming and much of the ancient parish was under open-field cultivation until the 19th century (Elrington 1968).

The growth of the village has recently accelerated following the construction of a by-pass road and there have been several large residential developments. Home Farm, first recorded from cartographic sources as 'Home Leys' in 1839 (Smith 1963), lies within this focus of development. The area investigated in 1994 contained a farmyard in the eastern part of the site, with paddocks and part of an adjoining pasture field to the west. Ploughing had truncated archaeological remains on the site above the level of the natural sands and gravels. In addition, post-medieval and modern features associated with the construction and use of farm buildings had removed most archaeological remains within the eastern half of the study area (Figs. 1-4).

Excavation Methodology

Machine removal of approximately 0.20 m of humic topsoil under archaeological supervision revealed a homogeneous grey, silty, subsoil 0.30 m thick. The subsoil showed a considerable degree of mixing from past cultivation and no horizontal layers survived except where they had slumped into underlying features. Archaeological remains were recorded in plan and sampled to assess their character and date. A watching brief was subsequently undertaken within the much disturbed area of demolished farm buildings.

SITE DEVELOPMENT

The site development has been divided into eight periods. The Romano-British periods are necessarily broad, due to domination of the pottery assemblage by Severn Valley and Malvernian wares which have a conservative typological development.

Period 1 Prehistoric

No prehistoric features were encountered. The recovery of a small quantity of residual worked flint during the excavation alludes however to a probable neolithic presence in the immediate area. The extent and focus of this remains unknown, but the discovery of a hoard of three polished stone axes at nearby Oakfield Road in 1989 (Kilminster 1990) is noteworthy as an indicator of significant neolithic activity locally. The material from Home Farm lies too distant to be part of the same site but, given that it seems to represent broken and discarded domestic waste, occupation in the vicinity of Home Farm should not be discounted.

Period 2 2nd century A.D. (Fig.2)

Linear boundaries

The earliest recognisable feature consisted of a repeatedly recut linear ditch, some 35 m in length and running on a SW-NE orientation. The latest ditch of the sequence, 378, contained abundant pottery dating to the mid 2nd century, and had been cut centrally along the line of four earlier silted ditches. The ditch-line had migrated westwards with each recutting.

Ditches cut into well-drained sands are unlikely to have had a significant drainage role and, given its limited extent and the absence of associated features, the function of the ditch investigated is unclear. There was no pairing to suggest a track or driveway, and the ditch may rather have formed part of a boundary to a compound or other enclosed early Roman activity to the east since removed by the farm buildings and quarrying.

A series of shallow, parallel, ditches aligned ESE-WSW (122, 279, 238 and 478) was then dug perpendicularly to the NE-SW ditch-line to create small linear strips (Fig. 2). This design was gradually extended with the digging of ditches 476 and 247 and ditches

1074, 1089 and 1099, the latter recorded to the south during the watching brief. An extensive network of regular, rectilinear, enclosures, the smallest measuring 17 m by 27 m, dating from the later 2nd century has been excavated close to the Roman villa at Roughground Farm, Lechlade (Allen, and others 1993). Whilst the more narrowly-spaced ditches at Home Farm form no precise parallel with those at Roughground Farm they may similarly represent elements of ditched garden plots or paddocks developing around a settlement.

No evidence was encountered for any associated contemporary domestic structures.

Pits and gully complex

To the south-east of the ditched linear plots further 2nd century activity was noted. This took the form of a complex feature with a specialist processing role, although the exact nature of the activity remains uncertain.

A wide, shallow, linear channel (467) ran NE-SW to link with sub-circular pit 613 which was cut across the earlier NE-SW boundary ditch-line. The channel had a thick, yellow, clay lining within which lay three narrow, parallel, vertical-sided channels (486, 488 and 627). These channels drained eastwards towards pit 613, which contained a level primary fill of clean blue clay (659). The full extent and function of the pit is uncertain since it was partially removed by two later pits (126, 132). Clay 659 was distinct from overlying loamy upper fill 614 (more typical of fills across the rest of the site) and may represent a thick, waterproof, basal lining to facilitate some manner of processing.

The three parallel slots were linked, at their western ends, to a second sub-circular pit (357), approximately 5 m in diameter and 1.2 m in depth. It contained a limestone slab-built chamber (391), since deformed by soil pressure on abandonment (Fig 5). Two layers of fine, grey, lime-rich concretion (421, 466) lapped around the stone slabs and across the

pit base, acting to set the stone structure in place. An upturned limestone trough had been set within the structure, probably to act as a step down into the pit.

Lacking a deliberate clay lining, the efficiency of pit 357 to retain water is uncertain, although the hard, lime concretions 421 and 466 were relatively impermeable. The pit had cut through an earlier ditch, 476, the lowest fill of which contained a similarly fine, lime-rich sediment also of uncertain origin. Overlying the lime-rich horizon within pit 357 were gravelly clay loams (392, 393) containing abundant animal butchery-waste. Two final siltings (390, 358) of green-brown cess-tinged clay loam were noted.

The construction and use of the pit and channel complex is dated to the 2nd century. Whilst its function is uncertain the fine, lime-rich, primary sediments within pit 357, the three clay-lined channels 486, 488 and 627 and the ?clay-lined pit 613 together suggest that liquids played an integral part of whatever process was carried out in this area.

Metal working

Whilst excavation revealed no working floors, evidence of further specialist activity was noted in the form of two pits containing iron-working debris. Pits 126 and 132 were cut through pit 613 at the eastern end of channel 457 and yielded iron slag, fired clay, coal, charcoal and fragments of a probable brass-casting crucible. The presence of hammer-scale suggests that the waste had not moved far from its original source. Residual vitrified material and further crucible fragments were recovered from other parts of the site. Along with an undated coal and slag-filled feature noted during the evaluation they reflect small-scale blacksmithing and probable brass-casting in the immediate vicinity.

Other features

Additional evidence of 2nd-century activity came from two isolated sub-circular rubbish pits (342 and 520), an amorphous shallow scoop (260) and a loam-filled linear slot or gully (263). A shallow scoop (269) cut into that gully contained a small deposit of mid 2nd-century pottery and scorched stone, including a cylindrical stone ?scale-weight. A series of circular postholes was noted close to pits 126 and 132. Although dating evidence is absent the holes conceivably represent remains of fencing, windbreaks or other temporary, post-built, structures associated with the metal-working activity.

Period 3 Late 2nd-3rd century A.D. (Fig. 3)

Linear ditch

During Period 3 a sinuous boundary ditch, (273), was dug across the site. Within its southern terminal a large posthole (646) may have supported a gatepost although no pairing could be traced. The ditch contained a relatively sterile, homogeneous, clay loam fill suggesting gradual silting. It ran on a SW-NE alignment along the western side of the excavation area (broadly corresponding with the orientation of the major Period 2 boundary line that preceded it to the east) before turning, in succession, south-eastwards, north-eastwards and north-westwards.

Period 4 Late 3rd-late 4th centuries A.D. (Fig. 4)

The excavation revealed considerable evidence for late Roman domestic activity on the periphery of the putative building to the south of the excavation (Hart 1992). This took the form of ovens, ditched garden plots, refuse pits, wall remains and spreads of demolition debris.

Ovens

During Period 4 the boundary ditch 273 was recut as ditch (204) and ditches (152) and (629) appended to it. Following the partial silting of ditch 204 two circular bread ovens (208 and 328) were set into its side close to the southern terminal. Charcoal from the ovens had been raked down into the recut ditch, prior to it silting over. The absence of scorching on the oven bases suggests they were once stone-lined. A *tegula* fragment partly lined one side of oven 328.

Linear ditches

A dense pattern of superimposed narrow ditches, predominantly aligned SW-NE and SE-NW, developed in the area immediately north-east of the putative late Roman building. Being too insubstantial to have formed stock boundaries they may represent a new complex of garden plots. Many of them seem to focus on the terminal of ditch 204 but they otherwise lack a coherent plan.

Pits

Following the abandonment of the ditched plots in the late 4th century the same area was used for disposal of refuse, presumably from the putative late Roman building to the south. A pit group (627) indicated by an extensive area of amorphous fill was noted along with a second amorphous group (628) some 20 m to the south-east. Sampling identified a number of individual shallow, intercutting, pits (337, 339, 418, and 471) and two sand-

capped cess-pits (629 and 430) within group 627. Further, more dispersed, pitting was noted to the north-east.

Walling

The only *in-situ* evidence of masonry structures on the site consisted of two abutting lengths of unbonded limestone wall, 139 and 140, each 0.60 m in width and 0.45 and 1.4 m long respectively. These butt-jointed remnants survived only a single course high and consisted of flat, irregularly shaped, limestone fragments associated with 3rd to 4th-century pottery. The absence of a foundation trench suggests that the original structure was relatively slight, possibly a boundary wall or, alternatively, a minor building associated with the putative late Roman building to the south.

Building debris

Whilst no major structural remains were encountered, two spreads of Roman demolition material (104/106,105/107) were recorded. These were tipped across the terminal of ditch 204 and over pit group 628 to the east, both surviving plough damage by having slumped into underlying features. Artefacts found within the rubble spreads included quern and millstone fragments, whetstones and other late Roman objects, all highlighting a range of domestic activities associated with occupation nearby. A rectangular stone lamp from this layer is most closely paralleled in the Anglo- Saxon period.

Clay tile, mortar and masonry fragments were also noted amidst the rubble spreads. Together with fine, late 4th-century pottery, the relatively unabraded condition of which suggested domestic waste not far removed from its origin, the finds suggest that the building to the south was part of a substantial and well-appointed late-Roman complex.

Further rubble was encountered within late Roman ditch fills investigated during a subsequent evaluation at Cleeve Hall, immediately south of Home Farm (Ings 1995).

Period 5 Early Anglo Saxon (5th-7th centuries)

Whilst no structural evidence was encountered for Saxon occupation eighteen sherds of handmade Saxon pottery were found during the evaluation and excavation. These have been tentatively dated to the 5th-7th centuries. The sherds were recovered from the interface between the cultivated subsoil and the upper fills of several late Roman ditches, and as intrusive material within the upper fills (390 and 358) of pit 357.

Period 6 Medieval

Medieval remains were limited to several narrow, principally E-W aligned, gullies. Unstratified medieval pottery was recovered from the subsoil, and included sherds from cooking pots and glazed pitchers dating between the 12th to 14th centuries. The watching brief also yielded a small quantity of late medieval pottery, but extensive post-medieval and modern disturbance may have removed any further medieval remains within this area.

Periods 7 and 8 Post-medieval and modern

Extensive post-medieval and modern disturbance was noted beneath, and adjacent to, the demolished farm buildings. This took the form of sand-quarrying (also noted at Gilders

Corner and Bishop's Cleeve Mill), refuse-pitting, several animal burials, building footings and three infilled circular shafts, possibly ovens, along with a modern sewer trench.

THE FINDS

PREHISTORIC (Period 1)

Struck Flint by Graeme.T.Walker

A small assemblage of residual prehistoric flint was recovered from the excavation. The assemblage comprised 10 flakes (of which three may have been utilised as tools), a possible core fragment, and fragments of two scrapers. None of the pieces are diagnostic. Mostly the pieces appear quite fresh and undamaged, and breakages do not appear to be post-depositional. The technical details of the struck pieces would suggest that the assemblage, although perhaps not all the result of one knapping episode, may belong to the neolithic period.

ROMAN (Periods 2-4)

Pottery (and Fired Clay) by Jane Timby

The Roman pottery ranged in date from the late 1st or early 2nd through to the later 4th century A.D., the greater emphasis being towards the late Roman period. In total 2007 sherds, 97% of the whole assemblage (which weighs c. 31 kg) are Roman. Type fabrics referred to below in the catalogue of illustrated fabrics refer to the Gloucester type series. The assemblage is moderately conservative, with relatively few fabrics considering the

chronological range. Taking the group as a whole the assemblage is dominated by Severn Valley wares (46% by weight), Malvernian wares (21%), Dorset black-burnished ware (12%), and Oxfordshire products (4%). The remaining 17% comprise a variety of wares. Imported wares consisted of Dressel 20 amphorae, samian and "Rhenish" wares. Most of the vessels are local products and the proximity of Bishop's Cleeve to the Malverns is reflected in the large number of products from the Malvern industries.

The Roman fabrics recovered from the evaluation and excavation were generally well preserved. They show some edge abrasion and are mainly fairly well-broken sherds typical of material from rubbish deposits of a primary nature. The range of Roman wares is typical of those found in "villa" type domestic assemblages, and continuity into the Saxon period serves to emphasise that this is probably the type of site present here.

Period 2

The earliest Roman activity produced 21.5 % of the total Roman assemblage by weight (21% by count). Good groups of material were recovered from pit 126. This appears to have been filled by the mid-late 2nd century although some residual earlier material, possibly of 1st century currency was present. A smaller group from pit 133 is probably contemporary and includes a flat-rimmed BB1 dish.

Other 2nd-century groups were recovered from rubbish pit 269, slot 263 and ditch 513. Several contexts produced very small amounts of material (less than ten sherds each) including numerous boundary ditch fills and many of the pits and postholes. In such cases unless there is a particularly diagnostic sherd present dating has to remain very tentative. The fabrics are dominated by sherds of Severn Valley and Malvernian wares, both typologically conservative, long-lived, industries.

Period 3

Pottery associated with Period 3 activity was recovered from the fill of the major, meandering, agricultural boundary ditch 273. There was very little easily datable material from its fills 379 and 387, which were again dominated by Severn Valley and Malvernian wares, and the material could equally date to the 2nd or 3rd centuries. A sherd of a samian cup (Dragendorf form 27) suggests earlier, residual, material in 387.

Period 4

Most of the Roman pottery (54% by weight, 51% by count) was recovered from Period 4 deposits. The assemblages are characterised by the presence of Oxfordshire colour-coated and parchment wares dating from A.D. 240 and later. Oxfordshire sherds and later forms of BB1 indicate a date from at least the later 3rd century associated with contexts 309, 343, 394, 415, 420 and ditch 478. In many cases sherds of shell-tempered vessels were also present, generally considered to date to the later 4th century. This particular fabric was associated with rubble spreads 104/106, 105/107, ditch fills 204, 345, 396, 402, 478, 522 and pits 337 and 357.

Catalogue of Illustrated Sherds: Romano-British and Sub-Roman Pottery (Figs. 6-7)

- 1 Large hemispherical bowl with a flat rim. Grey sandy, slightly micaceous ware. (127), Period 2.
- 2 Flanged bowl, fine Malvernian grey ware (TF19). (127), Period 2.
- 3 Dish, fine grey micaceous ware. (127), Period 2.
- 4 Handmade jar, sooted on the upper exterior surface. Malvernian ware (TF19). (514), Period 2.
- 5 Base from a cup or small bowl with a carinated lower wall. Orange sandy ware. (514), Period 2.

- 6 Flanged bowl with red-painted decoration on the flange. Orange sandy ware (TF232).
- 7 Straight-sided tankard. Severn Valley ware (TF11B). (264), Period 2.
- 8 Flat-rimmed bowl, Wiltshire grey sandy ware. (TF231). (264), Period 2.
- 9 Large everted rim jar. Grey Severn Valley ware (TF11B). (264), Period 2.
- 10 Handmade, everted rim, cooking pot with acute lattice decoration. South-east Dorset black-burnished ware. (270), Period 2.
- 11 Thin-walled everted rim jar. Grey Severn Valley ware variant. (TF11v). (270), Period 2.
- 12 Wheelmade jar decorated with a burnished lattice. Fine black, slightly micaceous ware. (270), Period 2.
- 13 Handmade dish. Malvernian ware (TF19c). (532), Period 2.
- 14 Beaded rim bowl. South-east Dorset black-burnished ware (BB1). (379), Period 3.
- 15 Everted rim jar decorated with acute lattice decoration. South-east Dorset black-burnished ware. (379), Period 3.
- 16 Large jar, later Roman shell-tempered ware. (TF22). (523), Period 4.
- 17 Beaded rim handmade jar. Malvernian ware (TF19c). (151), Period 4.
- 18 Oxfordshire colour-coated ware (TF12A) with an illiterate potter's stamp. (139), Period 4.
- 19 Flanged bowl, Severn Valley ware. (TF11B). (139), Period 4.
- 20 Bowl with downward pointing flange decorated with two lines of rouletting. Finely micaceous grey ware. (236) unstratified.
- 21 Handmade storage jar with thumbled irregular rim. Malvernian ware (TF19). Unstratified.
- 22 Base probably from the same vessel as no. 21. Oblique smoothing marks on body. (TF19). Unstratified.

23 Handmade jar, organic-tempered ware. Saxon. (390).

A pottery disc was also recovered from ditch (204). It was roughly-shaped with an off-centre drilled hole (precluding its effective use as a spindle whorl) and its function remains uncertain.

Roman Tile by Alistair Barber

A small quantity of abraded clay tile was recovered. Whilst little was identifiable to type several fragments of *tegula*, *imbrex* and *pilae* were noted. No flue tiles, stamped or decorated examples were encountered. Old Red Sandstone tiles, in common use in the Severn Valley, were absent at Home Farm. This may reflect the distance from sources in the Forest of Dean, and the readier availability of clay tiles although worked stone was clearly being transported some distance to the site.

Worked Stone by Fiona Roe

Of thirteen worked stone pieces recovered eight had been imported from a considerable distance, perhaps by sea and then up the Severn to Gloucester or otherwise transported along the Thames. One rotary quern of Old Red Sandstone came from readily available sources in South Wales or the Forest of Dean. Three fragments of Millstone Grit were encountered (including Fig. 8, 4), one of which may have come from a millstone rather than a quern. Millstone Grit has yet to be confirmed from other Gloucestershire sites, although it occurs in Roman contexts in Worcestershire and Oxfordshire.

A third imported material was a lava quern fragment, thought to be of the Niedermendig variety. An ?Old Red Sandstone disc (Fig. 8, 5) had a conical upper surface and slightly convex underside with a chipped rim suggesting utilisation. Two whetstones

in Coal Measures Sandstone (Fig. 8, 1) and unidentified grey slate (Fig. 8, 3) were also recovered.

Local oolitic limestone was adapted for a small rectangular container (Fig. 8, 2) which may be a lamp. Parallels at Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire, Poundbury, Dorset and Cheddar, Somerset, all come however from Saxon rather than Roman contexts. It is interesting that the artefact was found amongst the rubble of destruction debris (105/107) and a Saxon date for this deposit is conceivable.

A stone trough was carved from local shelly limestone (Fig. 8, 7) whilst oolitic limestone had been used for a cylindrical ?scale-weight. The latter object is uncommon although a comparable example is known from the Roman settlement at Meole Brace, Shropshire. A large oolitic slab (Fig. 8, 6), found in pit 357, had previously been used as a threshold stone.

Small quartzite pebbles may have come from local Pleistocene drift deposits and are best interpreted as slickstones for working leather, whilst a large highly polished example might be connected with the working of flax in linen production.

Catalogue of Illustrated Worked Stone (Fig 8)

- 1 Whetstone, in brown, banded, ?Coal Measures sandstone. (124).
- 2 Small, rectangular container, in oolitic limestone, possibly a lamp. (107).
- 3 Whetstone fragment, in grey slate. (102).
- 4 Rotary quern fragment, with traces of pitted grinding surface, in Millstone Grit. (270).
- 5 Disc, slightly conical, worn round edge, in grey brown sandstone. (102).
- 6 Threshold stone, in oolitic limestone. (421).
- 7 Stone trough, broadly rectangular with flat internal base, in shelly oolitic limestone. (391).

Metal Objects by Linda Viner

A small assemblage of 31 metal objects was recovered. The metalwork illustrates a variety of functional types, the dominant group comprising structural elements such as nails and two iron keys. Both of the latter are long-lived and not closely datable. Similarly two plates of iron from Period 2 are probably strap bindings or fastenings for structural elements, or furniture fittings. Personal adornments were represented by a single copper-alloy brooch, dating between the late 1st to mid 2nd century, and the corrosion-encrusted remains of hobnails from a Period 2 context. Household objects are rare, being represented by an iron knife with bone handle and by several fragments which may form part of a pewter dish. An iron rod encasing copper-alloy wire may have been used in a craft role for pricking leather or may have acted as a stylus. One shallow-lipped fragment may have come from a pewter plate.

Glass by Linda Viner

The only glass fragments recovered were a blue-green sherd from a square early Roman glass bottle and a piece of pale blue dimpled glass, both from late Roman ditch fills.

Worked bone by Linda Viner

Two fragments of worked bone were recovered, a longbone fragment, fractured and subsequently smoothed from use and of uncertain function and the shaft from a bone pin/needle.

Of 10.86 kg (253 pieces) of material examined 10.55 kg (221 fragments) directly related to small-scale metallurgical activity, predominantly iron-working. The assemblage was dominated by larger slag pieces detached from their origin and found within fill contexts, although small pieces of slag and hammer-scale from pit 132 suggested primary dumping from working floors in the immediate vicinity.

Partial or complete smithing hearth bottoms indicated at least 24 episodes of artefact manufacture or major repair involving welding. This probably represents little more than three weeks blacksmithing activity and the processing of between 20 and 100 kg of iron, depending on the balance between forging and welding operations and whether charcoal or coal fuelled the blacksmithing.

The presence of coal at Bishop's Cleeve suggests that hearths would have required clearing out more frequently for a given number of smithing operations. Coal, available from the Forest of Dean some 30 km away, is known from at least seventeen urban and rural Roman sites in Gloucestershire between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D. (Dearne pers.comm.). Both coal and slag have been noted from the nearby late Roman rural settlement at Haymes (Rawes 1986).

Fragments were found of one or possibly two bag-shaped triangular necked crucibles, estimated to be capable of holding at least 1.5 kg of molten alloy. The pattern of vitrification showed that the crucible(s) was heated on the lower part of the side. Heavy contamination indicated it had been used to melt a zinc containing non-ferrous alloy, probably brass. No other direct evidence of copper-working was found, although possible traces of copper corrosion on the surfaces of two pieces of iron-working slag indicate that they may have been close to copper-alloy objects.

1. Bag-shaped crucible, with a triangular rim form. The crucible fragments fitted together to form two sections, one representing two sides of the rim, the other a base section and lower part of one side. These appeared to be, and have been drawn as, pieces forming a single crucible.

The upper surfaces show a yellow discolouration, probably due to zinc oxide as X-ray fluorescence shows that the inner surface has a high concentration of zinc. The darker base fragments also show zinc contamination. The external surfaces are vitrified on the lower parts of the crucible. The remains reflect copper/non-ferrous alloy casting, possibly of brass.

Roman Coins by Richard Reece

Seven coins were recovered during the excavation, dating to the period A.D 270-348. Although a very small assemblage the date-span of the coins broadly correlates with a rise in the quality of pottery on the site during this period, alluding to a possible villa-style settlement having been established by the later third century and perhaps declining in status from the mid 4th century.

Context	Period	Type	Date range
105	4	Barbarous radiate	270-90
203	4	Constantine II	330-5
222	4	Constans	345-8
u/s	-	Constantinopolis	330-45
u/s	-	House of Constantine	337-45

u/s	-	Barbarous radiate	270-90
u/s	-	House of Constantine	335-45

ANGLO-SAXON (Period 5)

Pottery by Jane Timby

In total seventeen sherds of putative Saxon wares were present in a variety of different fabrics, all handmade. Apart from eight sherds from the upper fill (390) of putative processing pit 357, all of which may derive from one vessel, each sherd was slightly different in fabric composition. Only one rimsherd was present, part of that from 390. Such diversity of fabric type is not unusual in the Saxon period when production, particularly in the early Saxon period, was essentially domestic. This combined with the lack of stratigraphical association makes it impossible to establish whether these sherds are all contemporary. The organic-tempered wares are typical of early Saxon periods dating to the 5th-7th centuries. Comparable material has been found at a number of sites to the south-east of Bishop's Cleeve, for example Wycomb, Barnsley Park, Bourton on the Water, Guiting Power and Frocester. The presence of the sherds could suggest continuity of use of the site, but may equally represent later re-use.

Limestone-tempered and sandy fabrics have been found at the 5th-7th century Butlers Field cemetery site, Lechlade (Keevil pers. comm.) and from Cirencester (Grove Lane, unpub.). A few sherds of pottery were found adjacent to the late 6th-century inhumation cemetery at Lower Farm, Bishop's Cleeve (Brown 1970), although details of the fabric are not known. A sand- and oolitic-tempered fabric was also recorded from Gloucester castle, tentatively dated to the 5th century. Future petrological work may well help refine the chronology for these wares.

THE ECONOMIC EVIDENCE

ROMAN

Animal Bone by Mark Maltby

A relatively small bone assemblage, comprising 947 fragments, was recovered. This yielded information on species representation, butchery practice and ageing data and adds to the rapidly accumulating database of Romano-British assemblages for the area.

Overall species representation across all Roman periods was cattle (55%), sheep/goat (23%), horse (9%), pig (8%) (not untypical for non-urban sites), dog (2%), cat (1%), fowl (1%) and red deer, hare and goose under 1% each. Bird bones are likely to be under represented due to recovery biases and preservation factors.

Butchery marks were mainly observed on cattle bones but were also present on sheep/goat and pig bones, although not on horse bones. Knife, cleaver and, occasionally, saw marks were noted. In terms of anatomical representation there was an unusually high number of cattle mandible fragments and other large bones from fill 390 of ?processing pit 357, indicating the dumping of butchery waste. Low bone-fragmentation levels suggests that breakage of bones to extract marrow was not carried out intensively.

Measurements taken from cattle mandibles showed animals of good size by Romano-British standards, living to four or more years of age as working or dairy animals. Half of the measurable sheep/goat mandibles could be aged to between 18 and 24 months, a peak common in Romano-British samples and reflecting the raising and culling of sheep, principally for meat. Pig ages ranged from under 12 months to over 24 months, whilst horses were mostly adult.

Animal bones were also examined from ten sieved samples, most from the later fills to processing pit 357. A few bones of short-tailed vole, frog and toad were identified.

Short-tailed voles have a wide tolerance of habitats and have been commonly found on rural sites in southern England. Both frogs and toads can travel large distances from water and their presence does not necessarily imply wet conditions. They and the rodents could have been trapped in the features prior to their infilling.

Phosphate Analysis by John Conway

Analysis of soil samples was undertaken to compare phosphate levels through the fills of ?processing pit 357 with a control sample taken from a ditch fill on another part of the site. Phosphate levels from the ditch gave a background level that contrasted sharply with substantially higher levels throughout the pit. It was not possible to ascertain whether the higher phosphate levels could be attributed to materials used in a processing activity, such as tanning, rather than to the large amounts of animal bone deposited as secondary waste within the pit, the decaying remains of small mammals and the possible dumping of cess-material.

INTERPRETATION

Site Layout and Structures

The Romano-British deposits noted at Home Farm reflect sustained occupation over several centuries or more. Despite the limited view afforded by excavation, the fieldwork results and findings from adjacent sites have highlighted an extensive, evolving, settlement pattern within the study area environs.

Occupation dating from the mid to late Iron Age has been attested from investigations at Gilders Corner and Bishop's Cleeve Mill (Parry 1991; 1993). However, high levels of post-medieval and modern disturbance at Home Farm have precluded an

understanding of whether there was spatial continuity between the Iron-Age occupation at Gilders Corner and Bishop's Cleeve Mill and the Roman settlement some 100m to the west at Home Farm.

The earliest features at Home Farm indicate activity was well-established by the early-mid 2nd-century, with the repeated cutting of a NE-SW aligned linear ditch indicating the maintenance of an important boundary; perhaps part of a plot or compound within the eastern part of the site. It remains uncertain but probable that the focus of 2nd century occupation lies in the vicinity of the putative late Roman building immediately south of the excavation. This is most clearly suggested by the dense network of shallow 2nd-century linear ditches, probably associated with several undated ditches on shared alignments further east recorded during the watching brief.

These small ditched areas may have been garden plots and/or other areas of activity positioned between the main house and outlying field systems to the north and west. That some of these plots may have served as discrete functional zones is suggested by the recovery of both structural remains and artefactual evidence of small-scale industrial and craft activities.

A discrete cluster of postholes beside the two pits containing iron-smithing waste may indicate a fence-line, crude structure or windbreak surrounding a metalworking area. Although no *in-situ* hearth bases were found, slag and hammer-scale suggests that working floors lay nearby, probably immediately to the east in the area since disturbed by farm activity and buildings.

Of particular interest was the large pit 357 and associated channels. Whilst the function of the pit remains uncertain the depilation of animal hides in an alkaline lime solution, softening of them with dung or urine or a vegetable- or mineral-based tanning is one possible explanation (White 1994). Relatively few published examples of tanning pits are known from Britain. An early 2nd century tanning vat was noted at a fortlet at Brithdir, Gwynedd (Goodburn 1976, 292-6), and a mid 4th century example was

excavated in the courtyard of Frocester villa (Gracie and Price 1979). However both were rectangular in form with partially surviving timber frames or flooring, packed around with a waterproof clay lining. Given dissimilarities between pit 357 and published examples of tanning pits, such as those recently excavated at Scole in Norfolk (Flitcroft, pers.comm.), which yielded high levels of water-logged bark, possibly used as tannins, alternative functions cannot be discounted.

Flax-retting is another possible interpretation, pit 357 perhaps having been used to immerse flax plants in stagnant water and, through the action of bacteria, to separate usable fibre from the rest of the cellulosic plant. The fibrous stems would then have required drying and splitting open by being beaten on a flat surface (perhaps the upturned trough) prior to combing. No published examples of flax-retting pits of Roman date are known from Britain. Examples of Bronze Age date are known from Reading Business Park, Berkshire, (Moore 1992) and possibly also Shorncote Quarry, (Hearne and Heaton 1994). Conditions at Home Farm precluded the survival of plant or seed remains to test for the presence of either flax or tannins, although textile working is suggested by the recovery of several pounding-stones and leather-working by finds of polishing stones.

Excavation has also highlighted a major late 2nd- to 3rd-century agricultural boundary, and subsequent late Roman ditched ?garden plots, ovens and refuse-pits. Small lengths of drystone wall form the only *in-situ* late Roman structural evidence but late 4th-century demolition spreads yielding masonry, hypocaust tile fragments, *opus signinum*, mortar and fine quality pottery suggest the probable late Roman building seen immediately to the south in 1992 is either part of, or associated with, a well-appointed building, most probably a villa. The Home Farm findings suggest adjoining garden plots and agricultural boundaries spreading outwards from such a settlement focus.

The evidence points to late Roman rural settlement developing from, or in close proximity to, occupation of mid 2nd-century or earlier date, and in turn becoming the focus for sub-Roman activity. This is paralleled at the villas of Frocester Court (Gracie

and Price 1979) and Barnsley Park (Webster and others 1985) where land associated with the villa continued to be worked even though parts of the house were no longer maintained.

Economy

Whilst the putative villa at Home Farm may have practised a diversified agricultural system the surviving economic evidence precludes an understanding of the balance between stock-rearing and cereal cultivation.

Sites and artefacts identified and recovered by Bernard Rawes

A collection of site notes, finds and other archive material resulting from archaeological observations in the Bishops Cleeve area were donated to CAT by the late Bernard Rawes. The archive stems from surface artefact collection by GADARG members during observation of groundworks connected with the construction of the Bishop's Cleeve by-pass road and several other developments around the village.

Romano-British sites previously identified at Stoke Orchard Road, The Grange, Field Farm and Dean Farm have been previously summarised (Rawes & Rawes, 1989; Rawes, 1990). Further Romano-British settlement in the wider locality has now been identified at Uckington Fields (SO 927248) where 35 sherds, including Severn Valley, samian and Oxfordshire colour-coated wares, were noted. These suggest occupation of 2nd to 4th century date. At Gotherington (SO 949292) seven sherds of Severn Valley ware were recovered. An additional site has been identified at Kayte Farm, Southam (SO 963257) where Romano-British material of later 3rd- to 4th-century date was recovered, including grey ware, Severn Valley ware and Oxfordshire mortarium sherds.

DISCUSSION

The archaeological fieldwork carried out at Home Farm provides a rare opportunity to investigate a Romano-British rural settlement in the Severn Valley. Although a considerable amount of fieldwork has recently been conducted in the Bishops Cleeve area attempts at establishing the relationship of the archaeological deposits on the site to others known in the immediate vicinity, particularly a probable Romano-British building to the south, remain problematic.

As no buildings were uncovered during the excavation the precise relationship between the complex pattern of ditches and the putative villa to the south remains unclear. However the intense occupation activity, large quantities of domestic rubbish, building debris, and the suggestions of craft specialisation on the site appear to confirm that the excavations lay adjacent to a significant building. The scale of excavations were unfortunately too limited to appreciate the wider picture of landscape division and settlement form suggested by previous work in the immediate area. However correlation between the alignments of ditched boundaries within the site and those encountered at Cleeve Hall to the south (Ings 1995) and during trenching to the west (Hart 1992) suggest an extensive field system surrounding the focus of settlement. It is now clear that Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Bishop's Cleeve covers an area of at least 4 ha with a probable east to west progression over time.

Rural settlement in the vicinity of Home Farm should be seen in conjunction with a growing number of Romano-British sites now known from its wider environs (Fig. 1). Settlement sites within 1 km of Home Farm have been identified around Field Farm, The Grange, Dean Farm and Stoke Orchard Road. Pottery from these sites suggest occupation from the 2nd century or, at The Grange and Dean Farm, from the 1st century continuing

into the 4th century. One sherd of Saxon pottery from The Grange again indicates sub-Roman activity. Further Romano-British material, indicating 2nd- to late 4th-century occupation, has been recovered at Southam, Uckington and Gotherington. A number of sites are also known from the wider locality, several of which have been investigated in some depth, as at Haymes (Rawes 1986), Tredington Rise (Rawes 1971), Vineyards Farm (Rawes 1982), and east of Tewkesbury (Thomas and Walker, in prep.).

Taken together the accumulating evidence points to a well-populated landscape of small, dispersed agricultural settlements on the edge of the Cotswold scarp and on the valley floor below it. Most appear to have been established by the 2nd century A.D and many were apparently occupied through the 4th century. Local geological conditions may frequently have been a significant or determinant factor in the evident disparities in the development of settlements in the Severn Valley region. This is particularly suggested by an apparent correlation between well-drained, fertile, farmland and the location of higher-status Romano-British sites such as Southwick Park (Marshall 1976) and Tewkesbury Park (Rawes 1973).

In this respect the settlement evidence around Home Farm appears amongst the most developed, with artefactual material pointing to a well-appointed building incorporating *opus signinum* flooring, wall-plaster, and a possible hypocaust system. The evidence suggests villa style occupation close to the excavation area, and a relatively dense settlement network in the wider neighbourhood including both small farms and higher status sites.

It is hoped that the rapidly expanding database of Romano-British sites in this part of the Severn Valley will continue to grow, and that opportunities will occur in the future to examine further the character, economic basis and inter-relationships between these settlement sites.

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EXCAVATIONS AT HOME FARM, BISHOP'S CLEEVE

Summary

Excavation at Home Farm revealed Romano-British agricultural boundaries, garden plots and industrial/craft remains dating from the mid 2nd century. From the late 2nd century the site was incorporated within a field system, reverting to smaller garden plots in the late 3rd-4th centuries. By the late 4th century rubbish and cess pits were being dug across the site. Finally demolition material from a Roman building was dumped on top of two of the pit groups. Grass-tempered pottery, tentatively dated to the 5th-7th centuries, and a possible Anglo-Saxon stone lamp may indicate continuity of occupation on or near the site in the sub-Roman period.

EXCAVATIONS AT HOME FARM, BISHOP'S CLEEVE

List of Captions

Fig. 1 Home Farm, Bishop's Cleeve, showing identified Romano-British sites in the study area vicinity

Fig. 2 Period 2 features

Fig. 3 Period 3 features

Fig. 4 Period 4 features

Fig. 5 Plan and sections across pit 357 and associated channels

Fig. 6 Pottery

Fig. 7 Pottery and reconstructed crucible fragments

Fig. 8 Stone objects

"Report of the excavation of an enigmatic site in South Gloucestershire, which contained a decorated cellar with a cruciform setting of channels beneath its floor, almost certainly of 'ritual' significance, and a very large bath-house which included a swimming pool some fourteen metres long. Both the cellar and the bath-house had painted wall plaster, and the bath-house contained a small area of tessellated floor. No other rooms were decorated in any way. The site dates from the late 1st century AD, and there was no evidence of any earlier activity apart from a number of randoml