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**Iron Age and Romano-British Activity at Arle Court Cheltenham
Gloucestershire 1999**

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Iron-Age and Romano-British Activity at Arle Court, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, 1999.

By RICHARD CUTTLER

With contributions by Umberto Albarella, Lawrence Barfield, Pam Grinter, Annette Hancocks,
Rob Ixer and Jane Timby

INTRODUCTION

Arle Court lies on the south-western edge of Cheltenham (Fig. 1), to the north-east of Hatherley. A desk-based assessment (Borthwick and Chandler 1998) and trial trenching were undertaken in August 1999 (Nichols 1999) in advance of a residential development by Bryant Homes, as a condition of planning permission. As a result of this, further work was recommended according to Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Parry 1999a) and the University of Birmingham carried out an excavation in October 1999. This excavation was a roughly rectangular shaped plot close to the south-east corner of the development. The excavation, centring on OS Nat. Grid SO 9163 2130, totalled an area of approximately 2840 square metres, with a second area on the route of an access road, constituting a further 600 square metres.

The site, located in the Severn Vale, lies on lower lias clays overlain by alluvium and slopes gently from south to north towards the valley of the Hatherley Brook at approximately 53m above O.D. The late Victorian house and gardens of Arle Court lie to the west with Redgrave Park to the east and Hatherley Lane to the south (Fig. 2).

There are no known early prehistoric sites within the immediate vicinity of the development. However, the frequency of find spots of Iron Age pottery has led Saville (1984) to conclude that settlement in the Severn Vale was extensive at that time. Probable late prehistoric activity has been recorded at Chester Walk, Cheltenham (Wills 1987) and Romano-British activity at St. James's Car Park, Cheltenham (Coleman and Watts 2001).

There are other excavated late prehistoric and Romano-British sites in the wider area, including the sites at Bishop's Cleeve (Barber and Walker 1998; Parry 1999b), Haymes, Cleeve Hill (Rawes 1986), Tredington Rise, Stoke Orchard (Rawes 1971), Vineyards Farm, Charlton Kings (Rawes 1982), Birdlip (Parry 1998) and Birdlip Quarry (Parry, 1998; Lupton and Williams 1997).

It has been suggested that the present-day Arle Court may have been built on, or near, the site of a minor grange held by Llanthony Priory in the mid-12th century (Borthwick and Chandler 1998). The surrounding land appears to have been one of the open fields of Arle, and map evidence indicates that the development area remained open in the later post-medieval period, forming part of the parkland of Arle Court. Prior to the excavation, the land was largely given over to playing fields.

Sites and Monuments Record entries indicate that Romano-British pottery was recovered from a trench at 16 Coberley Road, Benhall, 500 m to the northeast of Arle Court House (SMR No

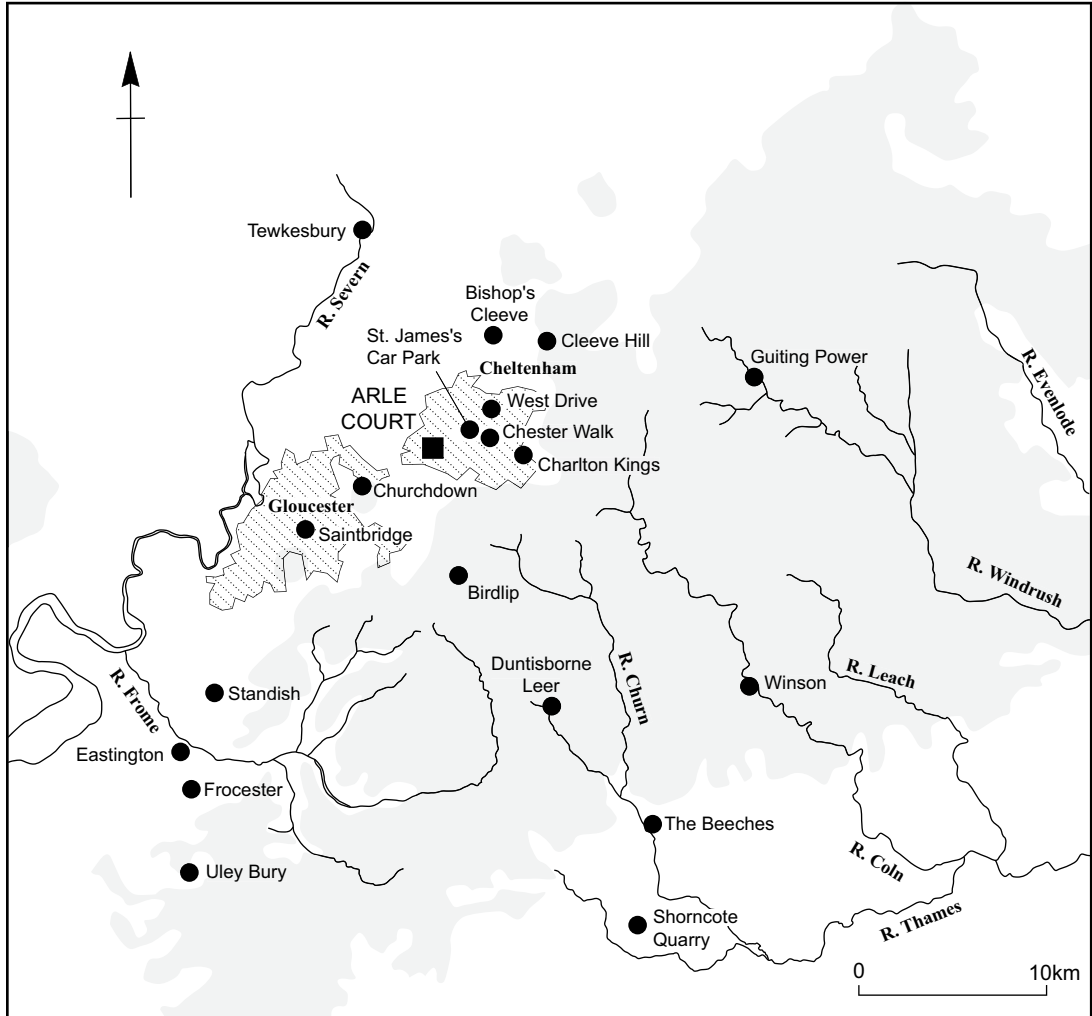


Fig. 1. General site location.

6657). Further Roman activity was indicated by the discovery of 22 Roman coins at 5 Unwin Close, 250 m south of the house (SMR No 6645). Trial trenches (Nichols 1999) revealed the presence of features dating to the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, within the south-eastern corner of the development area. Trial trenching was also carried out to the south of the excavated area but no archaeological remains of any period were identified.

RESULTS

The area of excavation and the access road to the south were stripped of both topsoil (1000) and a 'B' horizon of alluvium (1001) to the top of the archaeological deposits. From analysis of the

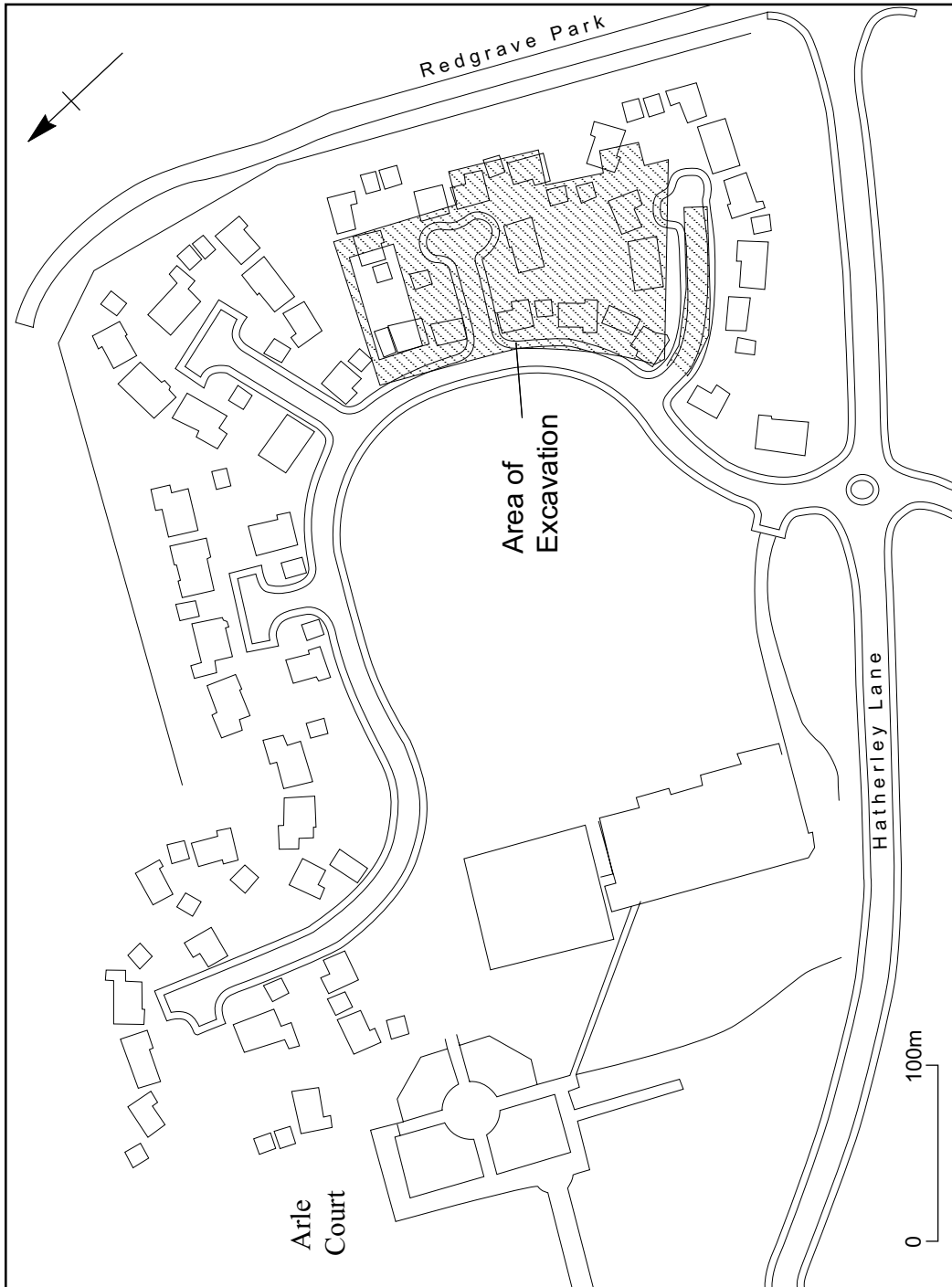


Fig. 2. Area of excavation.

stratigraphic relationships and the pottery most activity can be placed into four phases. Phase 1: mid-later Iron Age (3rd–1st century BC), Phase 2: Roman, 2a (late 1st/2nd) and 2b (late 2nd–3rd century) and Phase 3: Saxon (6th–8th century). A few features cannot be phased, due to the lack of stratigraphic relationships and diagnostic pottery.

Phase 1: mid-later Iron Age (3rd–1st century BC)

The earliest feature was a small V-shaped ditch (F105, Figs. 3, 4), aligned north-west to south-east. This ditch (F105) was filled with dark-grey, sandy clay, heavily flecked with charcoal, which produced 226 pieces of fired clay/daub. The uppermost fill produced 10 small sherds of Jurassic limestone ware and 220 sherds of Palaeozoic limestone-tempered pottery (all appearing to derive from a single vessel), dated to the mid-later Iron Age.

To the south of F105 was a small curvilinear gully (F119, Fig. 3) producing 11 small sherds of Jurassic limestone-tempered ware. This gully terminated with a post-hole (F118) at the north-eastern end. A second gully (F33) aligned approximately north-south at the southern end of evaluation Trench 2 also contained late Iron Age pottery.

In the western corner of the excavated area was a north-south aligned, V-shaped ditch (F109/F114) with a depth of 0.79 m. The upper fill of this ditch, which was very similar to the overlying alluvium and contained seven small crumbs pre-Roman pottery.

Phase 2: Roman

PHASE 2a: LATER 1st CENTURY, EARLY 2nd CENTURY

During the 1st century, early 2nd century a possible enclosure (Ditch F106, Fig. 3) was established, two sides of which were in the area of excavation. This would have measured almost 2 m in width, with a V-shaped profile, and appeared to truncate the ditch (F105) from Phase 1. With a depth of 1.2 m at the southern extent (S1, Fig. 4), the ditch became gradually shallower, measuring only 1m in depth at the northern extent (S8). The ditch had two fills, both of blue-grey clay and charcoal flecks. The earliest fill also contained sand and produced 44 sherds of 1st century AD pottery, mostly from one vessel. Animal bone samples from the earliest fill were sent for radiocarbon dating but the condition of the bones precluded secure dates.

PHASE 2b: LATE 2nd TO 3rd CENTURY

The possible enclosure ditch (F106) was later redefined with a shallower, more rounded cut (F111), which truncated both the Phase 1 ditch (F105) and gully (F33). This re-cut (F111) produced 101 sherds of 2nd–3rd century pottery, suggesting the ditch was probably abandoned by the 3rd century.

Adjacent to the Phase 1 gully (F33) was a north-east to south-west aligned ditch (F16), and while sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from cleaning layers associated with this ditch (F16), the stratigraphic relationship with the Roman recut of the possible enclosure ditch (F111) could not be established (Nichols 1999).

Phase 3: 6th–8th century

A shallow scoop (F123, Section 7) was dug into the upper fill of the enclosure ditch (F111), measuring approximately 1.2 m in width and 0.2 m in depth. Filled by blue silty clay with charcoal

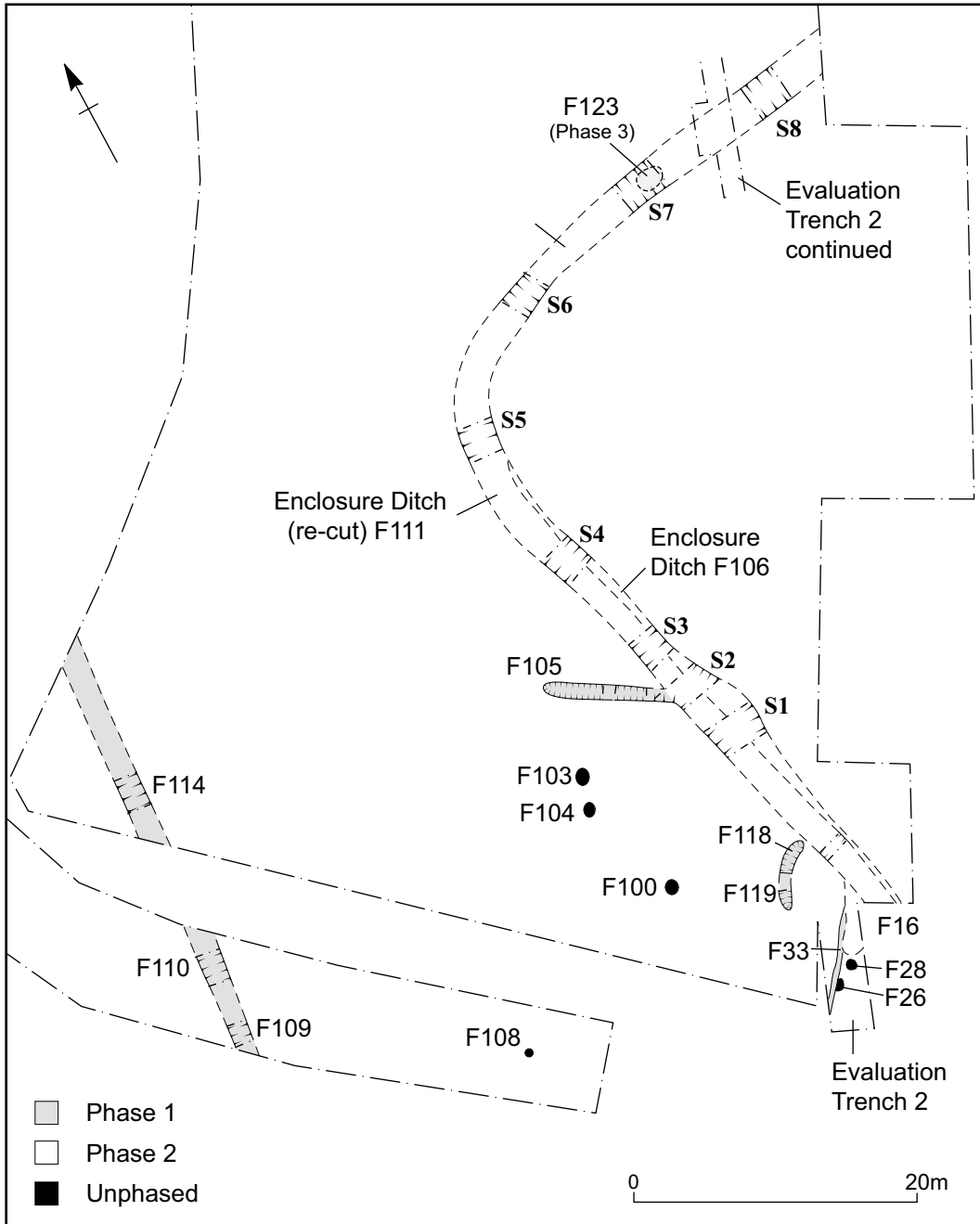


Fig. 3. Plan of the excavations.

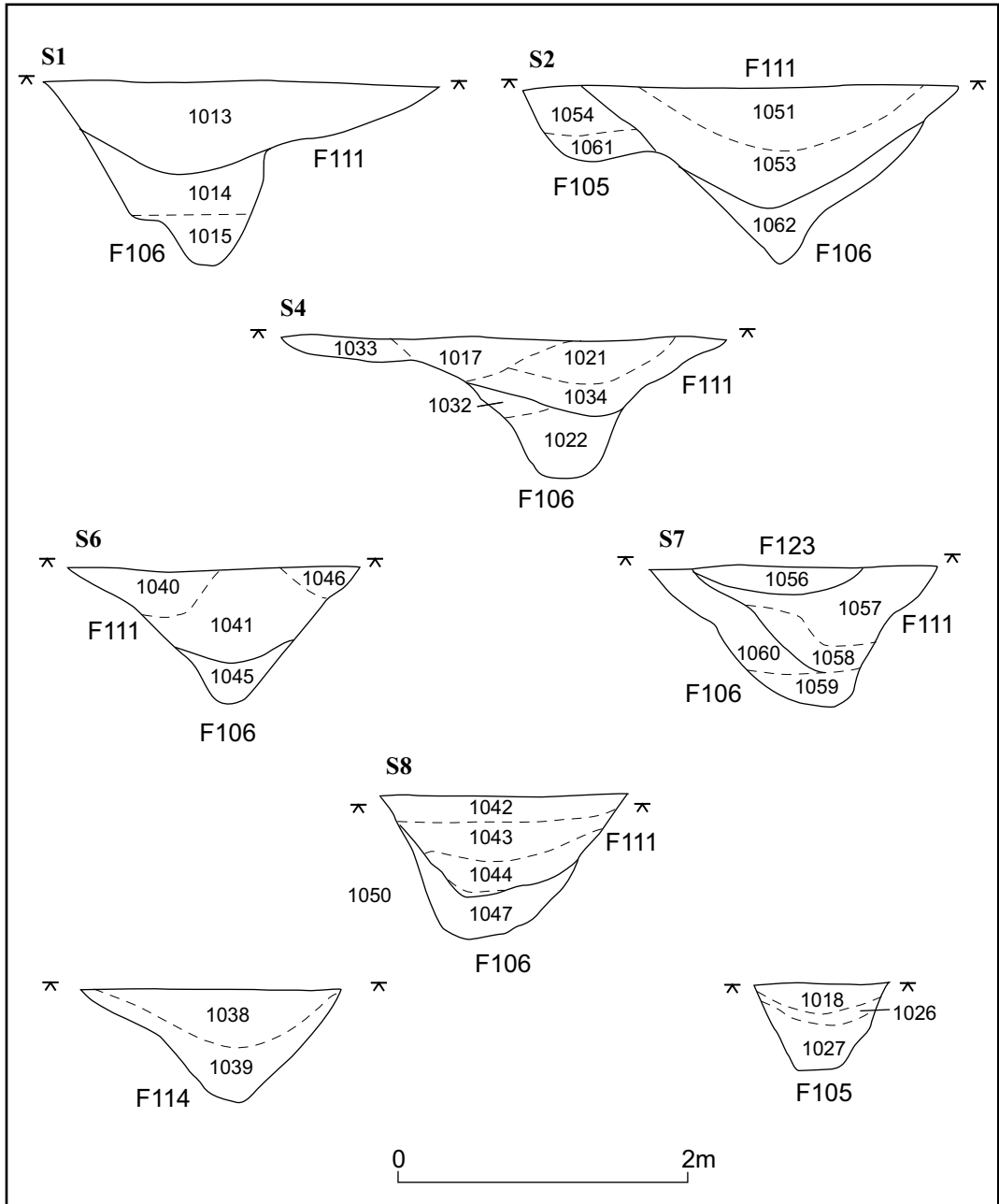


Fig. 4. Sections through excavated features.

(1056) the feature produced seven Saxon sherds. It was unclear if this was a deliberate cut, or the result of later slumping into the upper fills of the possible enclosure ditch.

Unphased

Due to the lack of datable artefacts it was not possible to assign all features to a phase. Unphased features include six post-holes (F26, F28, F100, F103, F104 and F108, Fig. 3) to the south of the main enclosure ditch.

THE FINDS

Flint by Lawrence Barfield

Two worked flints were recovered from an alluvial horizon (1001). The first is a flake knife (SF1, Fig. 5) of rich black flint with off-white cortex. The flake has been struck with a hard hammer and modified slightly by retouch at its distal end. The left side has been probably marginally trimmed with a fine continuous retouch. The second is a flake of brown black flint with white chalky cortex.

The 'knife' would appear to have been a minimally prepared tool. Both pieces are in good quality 'mined' flint derived directly from the chalk and imported from some distance. Both can be regarded as being of Neolithic origin.

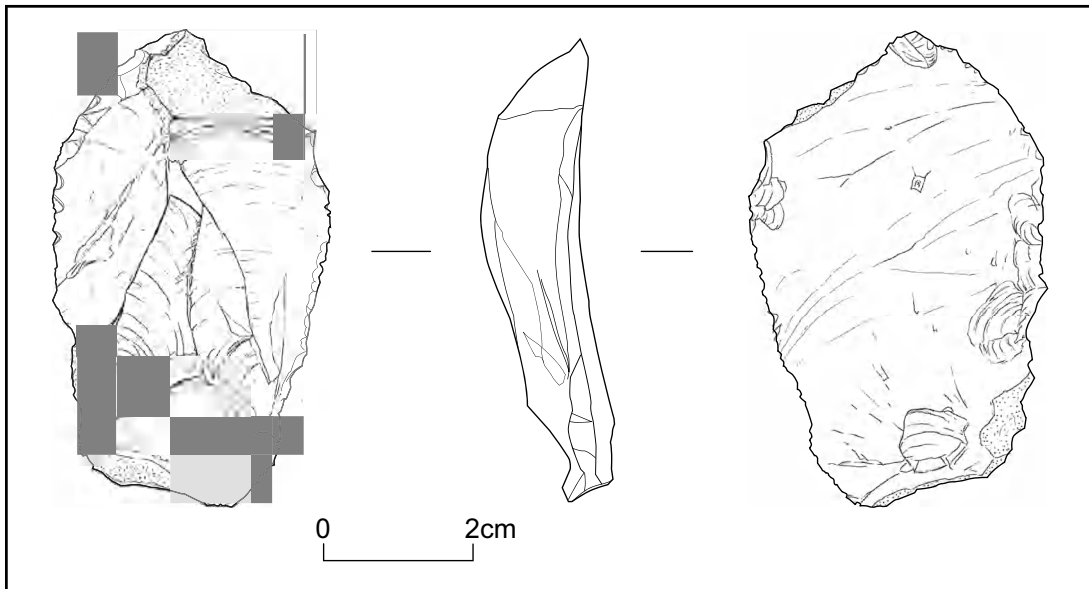


Fig. 5. Worked flint.

Worked stone by Rob Ixer

A small quern stone (Fig. 6) was recovered from a north-east to south-west aligned ditch (F16, evaluation Trench 2). This consisted of an upper quern fragment made from a pale-coloured,

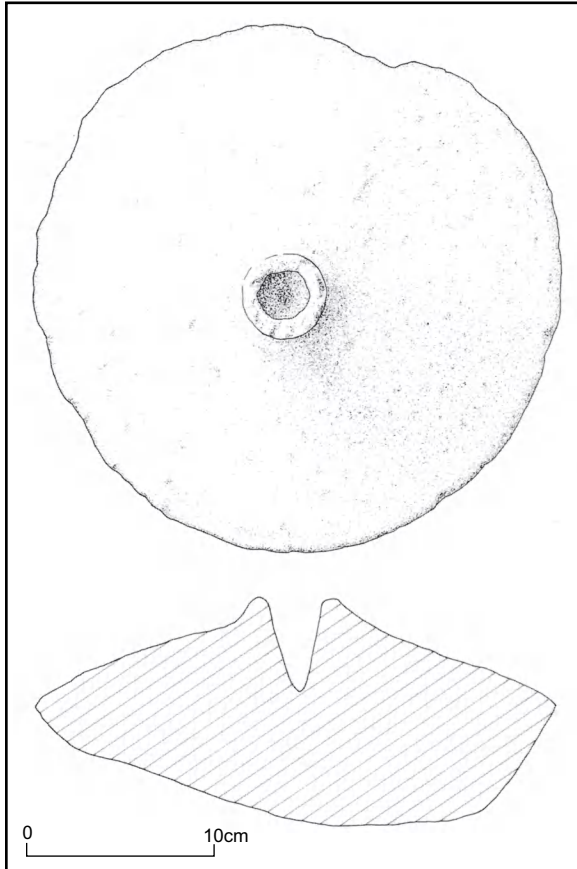


Fig. 6. Stone quern.

arkosic (feldspathic) sandstone. It has a diameter of 280 mm and a height of 120mm and part of the central channel for the spindle is visible. Symmetrical wear traces indicate that it has been used.

The Pottery by Jane Timby

Introduction

A moderately small assemblage of 424 stratified sherds (1158 g) was recovered from the evaluation and subsequent excavation. Of these at least 220 sherds belong to a single vessel. The material is well fragmented with an overall average sherd size of just 2.7 g, although it is clear that in some cases multiple sherds derive from single vessels. Although a small group, at least four distinct chronological phases can be identified from the pottery: Phase 1: mid-later Iron Age (3rd–1st century BC), Phase 2: Roman, 2a (late 1st/2nd) and 2b (late 2nd–3rd century) and Phase 3: Saxon (6th–8th century). In addition a stray prehistoric sherd was noted.

The assemblage was sorted into fabrics based on the principal aplastic inclusions visible in the pastes. Where relevant reference is made to the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes (Tomber and Dore 1998) cross-referenced to the Gloucester type fabric (TF) series (Ireland 1983). The sherds were quantified by sherd count and weight. The resulting data is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Quantified summary of pottery

Period	Fabric	Glos TF	Description	No	Wt
Epreh	FL1		hm coarse, flint-tempered	1	2
<i>sub-total</i>				1	2
LIA	LI1		hm, Jurassic limestone	28	48
	LI2	33	Palaeozoic limestone-tempered	245	487
	GR1	2A	hm grog-tempered	83	278
<i>sub-total</i>				356	813
Roman	SVW				
	OX1	11B	Severn Valley ware	6	72
	SVW RE	11B	SVW grey variant	9	32
	DOR				
	BB1	4	Dorset black burnished ware	38	184
	BWMIC	(5)	black micaceous ware	6	18
	GREY		misc greyware	1	2
<i>sub-total</i>				60	308
Saxon	OR1	46	hm organic (chaff) tempered	7	35
<i>sub-total</i>				7	35
TOTAL				424	1158

In the following report the pottery is described chronologically by fabric and form. This is followed by a discussion of the assemblage in relation to the site and in its local and regional context.

Prehistoric

A single handmade, calcined flint-tempered sherd was recovered from evaluation Trench 2 (21) weighing just 2 gm. This is probably a residual earlier prehistoric sherd of Neolithic or Bronze-Age date.

Later Iron Age

A total of 356 sherds, 813 gm comprise handmade wares of Iron Age type. Three main fabrics are present:

Jurassic limestone-tempered (LI1): Represented by 28 sherds, mainly from closed forms. The fabric includes moderately well-sorted limestone, fossil shell and other fossiliferous detritus suggested of a local source in the Cotswolds. The fabric is one familiar in the Cotswolds throughout the Iron Age but appears to tail off in the later Iron Age.

Palaeozoic limestone-tempered (LI2) (Glos TF 33): This is the commonest late Iron Age fabric with 245 sherds, although 220 from ditch F105 (1012) appear to derive from a single vessel. The fabric equates with Peacock's (1968) fabric B1. Vessels are well documented from the area south of the Severn from the mid-later Iron Age continuing into the Roman period. Featured sherds are restricted to a large jar (Fig. 7.1). (see Ixer Appendix 1 for thin-section analysis).

Grog-tempered ware (Glos TF 2A): A handmade grog-tempered ware featuring as jars. Represented by 83 sherds (278 g) most of which come from just two contexts, F106 (44 sherds) and F111.

The former group appear to largely derive from a single vessel (Fig. 7.2). This fabric appears in Gloucestershire alongside Palaeozoic limestone-tempered wares in the early 1st century AD again continuing to feature in 'native' contexts well into the Roman period. (see Ixer, Appendix 1 for thin-section analysis).

Romano-British

Roman wares account for 14% of the assemblage by sherd count, a total of 60 sherds. Four fabrics can be identified, three of which are probably local and one, Dorset black burnished ware, a regional import. Overall the group suggests a phase of occupation spanning the 2nd–3rd centuries.

Severn Valley ware (Tomber and Dore 1998: SVW OX1): At least six oxidised and nine reduced sherds of this ware are present. Forms include a small beaded rim jar from (20), the base of a tankard from F111 (Fig. 7.5) with a second tankard handle from F106 (Fig. 7.4)

Dorset black burnished ware (Tomber and Dore 1998: DOR BB1): This is the commonest Roman fabric with 38 sherds. Forms are limited to jars decorated with both right-angled and oblique burnished lattice (Fig. 7.3).

Black micaceous ware: Six sherds from a wheel made jar in a thin-walled black sandy micaceous ware with a brown interior surface came from F111 (1043). The fabric is loosely comparable with the broad group of micaceous fabrics found in the Gloucester area (Gloucester TF 5) which may be a conflation of material coming from the Forest of Dean and from south of the Severn towards Bristol. The ware usually appears from the later 2nd century (see Ixer, Appendix 1 for thin-section analysis).

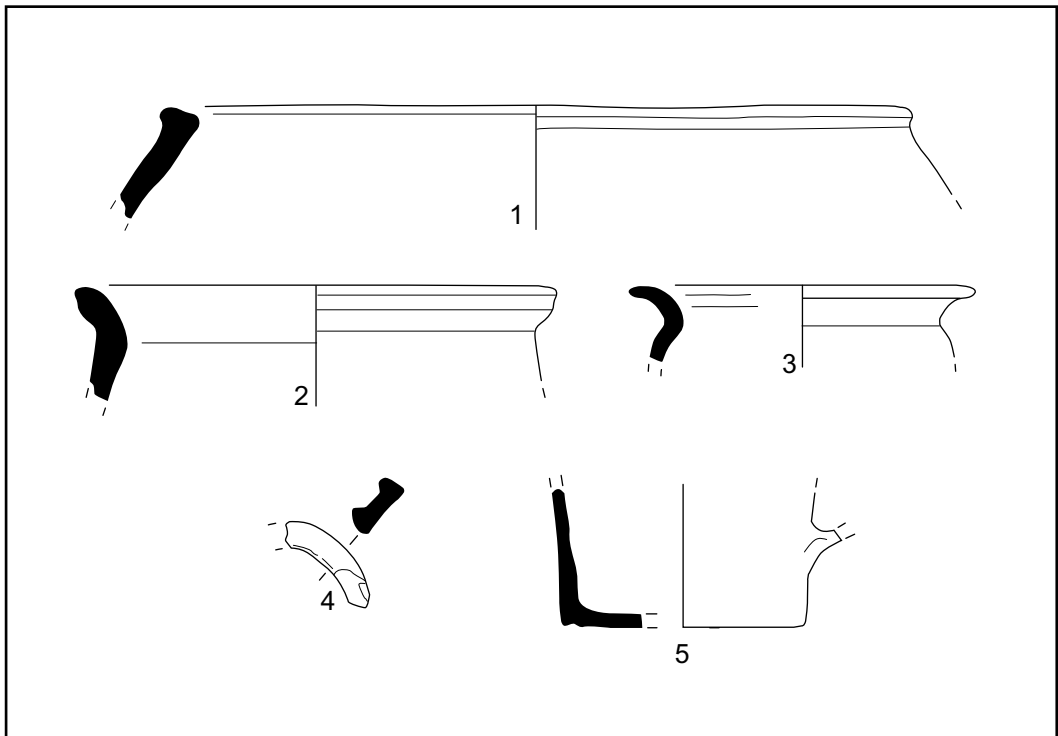


Fig. 7. Illustrated ceramics.

Miscellaneous grey wares: A single very small fine greyware with sparse fine limestone in the fabric came from Trench 2 (10).

Saxon

Organic-tempered ware (Glos TF 46): Seven body sherds of handmade organic-tempered ware came from F123 (1056). The sherds are plain with a red-brown exterior surface, brown to black interior and black core. The paste is finely micaceous and contains a moderate to common frequency of quite coarse linear organic matter. The pieces are sufficiently similar in firing to suggest they are probably from a single vessel (see Ixer Appendix 1 for thin-section analysis).

Catalogue of illustrated sherds (Fig. 7)

1. Globular, neckless jar with an externally expanded rim. The upper rim surface has a lightly tooled groove. Fabric: Glos TF 33. Ditch F105 (1012).
2. Necked jar. Fabric: Glos TF 2A. Ditch F106 (1022).
3. Jar. Fabric: DOR BB1. Ditch E0035 F111 (E0017).
4. Handle from a tankard. Fabric: SVW OX1. Ditch F111 (1019).
5. Base of a handled tankard. Fabric: SVW OX1. Ditch F111 (1043).

Discussion

Pottery was recovered from five discrete features from the excavation: ditches F105, F106, F110, F111 and feature F119 and associated with five contexts from evaluation Trench 2. Apart from the stray earlier prehistoric sherd, the earliest features with ceramic material are F105, F110 and F119. Ditch F105 produced over 200 sherds of Palaeozoic limestone-tempered ware, probably all from a single vessel and 10 very small sherds of Jurassic limestone ware. This feature could potentially be of middle-later Iron Age date. Ditch F109 produced seven very small leached crumbs of indeterminable date other than pre-Roman whilst F119 produced 11 small sherds of Jurassic limestone-tempered ware. It seems likely that these three features are broadly contemporary (Phase 1).

Ditch F106, the earliest cut of the enclosure/field ditch contained 44 sherds of TF2A, again largely one vessel dating to the 1st century AD. The later field ditch F111/113 yielded 101 sherds amongst which are SVW OX and DOR BB1. The material appears to span the 2nd–3rd century the latest Roman sherds being a DOR BB1 jar decorated with an oblique lattice suggesting the ditch had been backfilled by the 3rd century (Phase 2b).

A small scoop (F123) in Section 7 produced seven Saxon sherds from the upper fill (1056). This can only be broadly dated to the 6th–8th century (Phase 3).

Conclusions

The Phase 1 assemblage comprising the Jurassic limestone and fossil shell tempered wares and Palaeozoic limestone wares (TF 33) can be paralleled on a number of sites in the locality, notably Birdlip (Parry 1998), Guiting Power (Saville 1979), Uley Bury (Morris 1983), Saintbridge, Glos (Timby forthcoming) and more recently Standish, Glos. Palaeozoic limestone ware appears in the middle Iron Age in Gloucestershire from around the 3rd century BC. The MIA assemblage recovered from Birdlip, comprising the two limestone-tempered fabrics as found at Arle Court was dated by radiocarbon to between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC (Parry 1998, 74).

From the early 1st century AD grog-tempered wares (TF 2a) start to accompany the limestone wares, often in the same forms. Moving towards the conquest period these wares are accompanied by early Severn Valley wares, initially in handmade and then wheel made forms (Timby 1990). The handmade Palaeozoic limestone wares and grog-tempered wares continue to feature on sites dating to the post-conquest period up to the end of the 1st century AD but the Jurassic wares start to disappear from the ceramic record. The absence of grog-tempered wares from features F105, F110 and F119 might suggest these features date somewhere between the 3rd–1st centuries BC. There may be a chronological gap between these features and ditch F106. However, the grog-tempered sherds from ditch F106 could date to anywhere in the 1st century AD, thus raising the possibility of a continual phase of occupation from Phase 1 to Phase 2a.

Gloucester type fabrics (TF) 33 and 2A have also been recorded from West Drive and Rose Cottage, Cheltenham hinting at a wider spread occupation in the town dating to the 1st century AD (Timby 2002). On present evidence the Arle Court assemblage might suggest a slightly earlier phase of occupation.

The Phase 2b Romano-British pottery dating to the later 2nd–3rd centuries is quite limited but also finds parallel with other material excavated in Cheltenham, for example, West Drive (*ibid.*). The Arle Court assemblage is too small to compare statistically but is quite typical of the region.

Saxon pottery has also been documented at other sites within Cheltenham, in particular there is a sherd from Station Road (GSMR 22102) and six sherds from West Drive (*ibid.*). Increasing quantities of such material are now being documented from the local area, notably from Bishop's Cleeve to the immediate north (Timby 1998a), Churchdown to the south-west (Timby 2001) and Wycomb to the east (Timby 1998b). Although there are several fabrics now documented, the organic ware from Arle Court matches well with material from the lower Severn Valley with similar material from Eastington and Frocester Court (Price 2000).

Fired clay/daub by *Annette Hancocks*

The earliest phase (Phase 1) of the excavation produced a total of 287 fragments of fired clay/daub, none of which was diagnostic. Phase 1 ditch (F105) produced the largest assemblage (226 pieces).

Animal bone by *Umberto Albarella*

Most of the animal bones were collected by hand, although bulk soil samples were also collected. The preservation of the Phase 2a material was poor, whereas the Phase 2b bone is generally in good condition. The higher proportion of teeth in Phase 2a also attested the poorer preservation of the earlier material. Teeth are very durable and tend to survive even in harsh soil conditions. This has also caused a stronger recovery bias for the Iron Age material, as loose teeth often overlooked during the excavation, are more often recovered in the soil samples. Cattle foot bones from the enclosure ditch (Context 1041, F111) were articulated and therefore suggest a primary deposit.

As is typical for the period, cattle and sheep/goat were the dominant species, but pig, equid (probably horse), dog and cat bones were also present. The predominance of cattle over sheep/goat in the hand-collected assemblage is probably due to a recovery bias. Two caprine bones from Phase 2b can be attributed with certainty to the sheep. In Britain sheep have always been much more common than goats. Butchery marks were noted on a few bones; ageing and metric data were taken but are of little use for such a small assemblage. However, some of the cattle bones belonged to very small animals normally associated with native rather than fully Romanised settlements.

Charred plant remains by Pam Grinter

Survival of charred plant remains was very poor. Three soil samples were assessed and only one, from a Phase 1 ditch (F105) contained charred plant remains. These consisted of a few cereal grains and rachis fragments, and these were badly eroded and poorly preserved.

DISCUSSION

Arle Court is the third Romano-British site to be recorded in Cheltenham (*cf.* Catchpole 2002; Coleman and Watts 2001), revealing activity from the mid-late Iron Age (3rd century BC to 1st century BC) extending into the Romano-British period between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D. There is also some evidence for the re-occupation of the site during the Saxon period (6th–8th centuries AD), a phenomenon also recorded at West Drive, Cheltenham (Timby 2002, 93) and a limited number of sites elsewhere in Gloucestershire such as Bishop's Cleeve (Barber and Walker 1998, 116). A flint flake knife (SF1) and a sherd of prehistoric pottery dating to the Neolithic or Bronze-Age indicate an early phase of ephemeral or transitory settlement in the locality.

Phase 1: mid-late Iron Age (3rd–1st century BC)

Two gullies of mid-late Iron Age may indicate the earliest sustained phase of settlement (Phase 1). A posthole within one gully (F119) and burnt daub in another (F105) suggest a structural function for these features. Gullies serving as both drainage features and foundations have been recorded for Iron Age structures in the Upper Thames Valley to the south-east (Brossler et al. 2002, 81), particularly Shorncote Quarry (*ibid.* 46–49). While it is possible that some of the undated postholes are contemporary, none appear to define a single structure.

A north-south aligned boundary ditch (F109) containing small crumbs of pre-Roman ceramics may be contemporary with the gullies. The boundary ditch may belong to a wider system of enclosure and agricultural settlement such as that recorded in the Upper Thames Valley (*ibid.*). While the presence of cereal grains within gully F105 attests to the cultivation of cereals in Phase 1, the chronological relationship between the gullies (F105 and F119) and the boundary ditch is not secure enough for a firm association to be made between these features. The paucity of finds from the boundary ditch also makes it difficult to place with certainty into any phase, and it is equally possible that this is contemporary with later phases of activity.

Phase 2: Roman

In the absence of further excavation to the east, the exact function of ditch F106 is unclear. Given that the ditch turns a right angle it is not unreasonable to suggest that this is the western corner of an enclosure. Repeated phases of enclosures are a noted feature of Iron Age and Romano-British settlement sites in the Upper Thames Valley (*ibid.* 81–2). Extensive systems of enclosures associated with Romano-British farmsteads (e.g. Brossler 2002) could suggest that the Arle Court enclosure acted as an agricultural compound or field rather than defining domestic space. The presence of butchered animal bone, further domestic species such as dog, and a quern stone for example, reiterates that the enclosure was in close proximity to some form of settlement and domestic consumption and production.

The absence of settlement structures associated with the ditch (F106), may suggest a shift in the focus of domestic occupation in the 1st century AD, as at Birdlip in the Cotswolds (Parry 1998,

51–52). To what extent this shift represents a renewed phase of settlement following abandonment (as opposed to continued occupation) remains ambiguous. Some continuity from the late Iron Age with the earliest phase of the ditch (F106) is implied by the presence of early 1st century AD grog tempered ware jars from the lower fills, suggesting pre-Roman re-organisation. Nevertheless, comparable settlement sites in the Cotswolds do not suggest continuity between the mid–late Iron Age and the Romano-British period (Parry 1998, 55–7).

As with Romano-British enclosures at St. James's Car Park, Cheltenham (Coleman and Watts 2001), no clearly defined settlement structures were associated with the Phase 2 enclosure at Arle Court. This suggests that the focus of settlement lay elsewhere, a common theme for late prehistoric and Romano-British settlements in the region, and problematic for the interpretation of the nature of occupation at such sites. None of the enclosures investigated to date in the Cotswolds, have demonstrated an obvious focus of domestic occupation, nor have they provided much evidence relating to their internal structural arrangements (Parry 1998, 55). Neither of the Duntisbourne late Iron Age/early Roman sites, which, on the basis of the finds recovered, have been interpreted as relatively high-status enclosures, showed any trace of internal features and there was no obvious focus of occupation (Mudd *et al.* 1999, 97).

The focus of settlement associated with the ditch at Arle Court is unclear. At West Drive, Cheltenham, it was suggested from the distribution of finds that the main focus of settlement was to the north-east of the enclosures (Catchpole 2002, 100–101). The recovery of Romano-British ceramics 500 m to the north-east seems too remote to be part of an associated settlement, however, the discard pattern of ceramics and animal bone in the northern part of the enclosure ditch (F106 and F111) does imply increased activity to the north. Alternatively the presence of a quern stone from a Romano-British ditch (F16) may suggest a degree of domestic continuity from the Iron Age.

The ceramic evidence suggests that the ditch was re-cut in the 3rd century AD (Phase 2b). At West Drive, Cheltenham, the enclosure system established in the late 1st century AD underwent significant changes in the later 2nd century AD (Catchpole 2002, 98). The ceramic evidence at West Drive, Cheltenham (*ibid.*), St. James's Car Park, Cheltenham (Coleman and Watts 2001, 69) and Bishop's Cleeve (Barber and Walker 1998), suggests these settlements continued into the 4th century, echoing the recorded duration of occupation at other sites in the region (*ibid.* 137). The redefinition of the enclosure at Arle Court suggests continuity rather than any 2nd century reorganisation, with nothing to suggest continued activity into the 4th century AD.

A clearly domestic assemblage of animal bone is represented from both phases of the enclosure ditch F106/F111. Cattle and sheep predominate in the assemblage with some limited evidence for butchery being recorded. This small assemblage compares well with other sites in the region such as Home Farm, Bishop's Cleeve (Barber and Walker 1998, 134). Evidence from other sites in the region such as Guiting Manor Farm, The Beeches and Birdlip indicate that a mixed arable/pastoral farming regime was generally practised, with an emphasis on sheep and cattle (Parry 1998, 55).

In contrast to cattle at West Drive, thought to be part of a highly Romanised settlement (Baxter 2002, 97–98), the cattle at Arle Court were small, possibly indicative of native rather than fully Romanised breeds. Whether this difference represents a chronological bias in the sample from Arle Court, or a genuinely contrasting agricultural regime is uncertain. However, the level of activity at West Drive implies a more intensive stock rearing regime associated with a settlement of differing economic status. The limited range of the pottery assemblage from Phase 2 at Arle Court certainly implies only local and regional trade networks, which generally reflect a low-status settlement, like that at Birdlip in the 1st century AD (Parry 1998, 57).

The geology of the Severn Valley appears to have played an important role in the development and location of settlement. Certainly there seems to be a correlation between well-drained land

and the location of higher-status Romano-British sites such as Tewkesbury Park (Barber and Walker 1998, 137). At Arle Court all features were sealed by alluvium, probably the result of several flooding episodes from the Hatherley Brook to the north. If the area around Arle Court was been poorly drained during the Late Iron Age and Romano-British periods, occupation may have been seasonal. While there is insufficient evidence to confirm this, the seasonal occupation of poorly-drained sites is well-attested in the Upper Thames Valley (Charles Parry pers. comm.). At sites such as Farmoor in Oxfordshire, middle Iron Age compounds have been associated with the short-term seasonal grazing of the Thames floodplain (Miles 1986, 52). Seasonal occupation is also indicated in Northamptonshire, at sites such as Crick Covert Farm (Hughes 1998).

It should be noted that this excavation examined only a small area with a low density of features. This should be taken into account when drawing conclusions regarding settlement continuity and shifts in focus. However, despite these limitations the excavations at Arle Court are significant because so few sites of this period from the Severn Vale have been excavated to date. This is in sharp contrast to the Upper Thames Valley, which is one of the most systematically examined Iron Age landscapes in Britain (Cunliffe 1991, 228). To some extent this paucity of information is also true of the Cotswolds, although a gradually accumulating body of work is providing a picture of a relatively extensively settled landscape of dispersed farmsteads (Barber and Walker 1998, 137, Cuttler and Colls forthcoming). Arle Court, especially the pottery assemblage, has provided a useful addition to the corpus of information on late prehistoric and Romano-British settlement in the region and contributes significantly to the debate on the continuity of occupation at settlement sites during this period. However, a considerable amount of further research is needed in order to begin to interpret both the development of individual settlements and patterns of settlement in the wider landscape.

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APPENDIX 1: PETROGRAPHY OF SELECTED SHERDS BY ROB IXER

Palaeozoic limestone tempered pot (Peacock, 1968) fabric B1). 1012 (sample 1)

The sherd is coarse-tempered, with white, angular limestone-calcite clasts, up to 5 mm in diameter, set in a clay with a strong planar fabric. One surface is burnished black. The cut surface showed a thin, 1 mm wide, outer and inner reddened (light brown, 5YR 6/4 on the GSA rock-color chart) surface, enclosing a light grey (N6) core. Visual inspection of the thin section showed up to 3 mm diameter clasts of limestone-calcite and rare, black, organic matter, up to 2 mm in length, to be present in a moderate yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) clay. In thin section, the clay matrix carries abundant, small quartz grains and trace amounts of white mica. Larger, single grains of quartz and feldspar laths, including microcline, are associated with rare chert and polycrystalline quartz rock fragments. The main temper is recrystallized, micritic, fossiliferous limestone. Although most fossils are indeterminate, brachiopod spines, crinoid ossicles and bryozoans/algae are present. Other carbonate clasts comprise micrite or single, coarse-grained, calcite crystals. Rare, rounded, darker-fired areas are interpreted as mud balls.

Grog-tempered pot (Gloucester TF 2A). 1017 (sample 2)

A grey sherd that is very gritty to the touch. Grey grog clasts are up to 3 mm in diameter and are fairly uniform in their distribution on the black (N1 on the GSA rock-color chart) surface. The cut surface shows the body colour to be dark grey (N4) and clasts to be up to 3 mm across. Visual inspection of the thin-section showed grog clasts, up to 2 mm in size, set in dusky yellowish-brown clay (10YR 2/2). The thin section shows the clay to be very clean; carrying a little angular quartz that shows strained extinction. There is very little mineral matter in the pot; instead it is tempered with a number of different grog-types. The two most abundant grogs comprise a dark red clay, very lightly tempered with a little quartz, white mica, plagioclase, potassium feldspar and a densely packed isotropic clay with a strong fabric. The non-plastics of the latter grog are quartz, potassium feldspar, plagioclase and a little white mica. Other grogs are rare and include a pale-fired variety. Trace amounts of burned out plant material are present.

MICBW – A quartz-white mica tempered pot. 1043 (sample 3)

Small, white quartz, up to 0.5 mm in diameter, and minor amounts of mica are visible on the burnished surface of the sherd. The cut surface shows the pot to be evenly tempered and fired to a medium dark grey (N4 on the GSA rock-color chart), however, the burnished surface is dark grey (N3). A visual inspection of the thin section shows a 1 mm thick, light brown (5YR 5/6) rim above a 4 mm thick, black (N1) body. In thin section, a clean clay has flattened void spaces and locally silty lenses; these comprise densely packed, single quartz grains, plus some feldspar. The main non-plastics are angular quartz with strained extinction, feldspars including altered and unaltered, zoned plagioclase, angular altered and unaltered potassium feldspars, including microcline and perthite, laths of muscovite lying along the main fabric of the pot and altered biotite laths. Rocks include angular clasts of arkosic sandstone plus rare, rounded chert, quartzite and quartz-white mica metamorphics. Local rounded areas that have a darker firing colour than the main clay may be mud balls or grog – but are too few to have been intentionally added. The arkosic sandstone clasts have the same mineral composition and grain size as the quartz and feldspar grains and may represent the source of those minerals.

Saxon organic-tempered pot. 1056 (sample 4)

Small, white rounded quartz grains, less than 1 mm in diameter and up to 3 mm long, and cut plant material are seen on the surfaces of the sherd. The impressions of the plant matter show it to be hollow and conical in shape, all to have the same size and to be cut at one end. The reddened surface is light brown (5YR 6/4 on the GSA rock-color chart) whilst the inner surface is dark grey (N3). The body colour of the pot, as displayed by the cut surface, shows a 3mm thick light brown (5YR 6/4) edge next to a greyish black (N2), 7mm thick, main body. Visual inspection of the thin section shows 3mm long voids after organic matter. In thin section, a very clean clay carries small grains, muscovite laths and feldspars alongside rarer, coarser-grained, strained quartz and potassium feldspar, including orthoclase and microcline. Rock clasts are rare but include chert, quartzite and metasandstone. Trace amounts of plagioclase and green-blue tourmaline are present. None of these non-plastics are temper but they are part of the clay component. Chopped organic matter now burned out so leaving thin opaque material in the centre of the linear void spaces is present in sufficient amounts to suggest it was intentionally added. It does not have the shape of straw.