

Prae Wood - 3 Main earthworks, including Wheeler's 'primary levels' Pages 923 to 933

Cam.13 (NONICO, Zero Ditch, and XXII): from 20 AD at Braughing; I (just) to IV at Sheepen, i.e. up to AD 61.

Cam.14/28 (Black Ditch/S.D.): from AD 43 at Braughing; I (just) - VI at Sheepen, AD 43 onwards.

TIOTAG (Zero Ditch Q): 'AD 20-45' (Wheeler, 176): TIOT at Sheepen is periods IV and VI, post-43.

Cam.53 (Zero Ditch): usually pre-conquest at Sheepen.

Cam.56 (Black Ditch): I-IV/VI at Sheepen, AD 10-65.

Cam.113 (most features): from Tiberian at Sheepen.

Cam.155 (XXII): AD 49-65 at Sheepen.

Cam.165 (Group C): I-IV at Sheepen, AD 10-61.

Copies:

G2-3 now has more angular flanges, and sometimes looks more like the Roman type.

G6 includes copies of Cam.155 as well as Cam.161/165.

I have assigned a date of c.AD 30-50 to Area XXII-XXIII, which takes account of these indications above; the imports are slightly later on average than those of the enclosure ditch, with later platter and jug forms; one or two Roman pieces have been noted in the features above. The native wares are slightly limited in range with large numbers of a few forms, and the colouring is consistently more orange, in contrast to the grey and grey-brown of the Group B pottery. This colour change is also present in the early Roman levels above the Group B pots in the enclosure ditch.

### 3 Main earthworks and 'primary levels'

Wheeler (1936, 41) saw as belonging to the first phase of the site the inner part of the main dyke with the enclosure A, of which the main dyke forms one side; also the cobbled causeways at each end of the eastern ditch of the enclosure, and a hearth abutting the inside of the main dyke. Phase 2 (1936, 47) comprised the additional outer ditch of the main dyke and an extension NW and partial recut of the earlier main ditch seen in the various sections of it on the plan (pl.XI). A palisade ditch on the inside of these cut through the hearth and the cobbled causeway.

Wheeler's pl.XVII shows the section of the main earthworks at I on pl.XI (the only complete section of this area) and the hearth is visible on it, but by the palisade trench, and underlying the slight 'Red Clay' bank which was the upcast from the original main ditch (pl.LXXIVb, and p.151: the date of the upcast apparently uncertain). From this hearth came three of the four vessels illustrated by Wheeler as from the site's 'primary levels'.

The hearth is certainly earlier than the palisade ditch, but does not itself date the original main ditch, with whose upcast, the 'Red Clay', it was covered. Wheeler states (1936, 45) that 'in the earliest or "rapid" silt of the main dyke, sherds of about 25 vessels were found... In so far as they were recognizable, these sherds represented the coarser Belgic fabrics and did not include either Italic wares or Belgic imitations of such wares'; and goes on to use the dating of the eastern ditch of enclosure A to argue that the main dyke should be contemporary with group A from the enclosure ditch. Also, the layers above the rapid silt of the main dyke 'contained a sufficient quantity of Italic or sub-Italic fabrics'

to date them to the first half of the 1st century AD. None of the pottery from the main dyke is further described; the extant pottery is mixed and shows that the main ditches were filled with native and Roman rubbish, in no large quantity. No homogeneous native groups come from the main ditches, in marked contrast to the groups described above.

Extant material (fig.117):

Nos.1-3 in fig.117 are unpublished vessels from the hearth in section I on Wheeler's pl.XI:

1 C7-1 [285], pale grey grog, buff surfaces, tooled inside and on rim, rough horizontal and vertical rilling below.

2 B3-1 [287], pale grey grog, tooled smooth pale grey surfaces.

3 E2-2 [286], grey-brown grog, smooth grey surfaces. Small hole below rim drilled after firing. Temper shows red on surface.

These are in addition to Wheeler's fig.9 nos.2-4, also from the hearth:

2 C8-1. Grey grog, smoothed buff-brown inside, combed reddish outside, buff-brown on top half, well tooled rim.

3 D2-5. Thick coarse grey grog, grey-brown surface worn to pink at rim; well-defined, sharp grooves.

4 C7-1. Grey-brown grog, buff inside worn to red, smooth and tooled, grey over rim and neck, well burnished, and reddish finely rilled body.

None of these is necessarily very late, and the assemblage although small, appears similar to later 1st century BC ditch groups at Braughing, Wheathampstead, Brickwall Hill and Grub Barn.

Section I does not appear on the sketch plan in the site notebook; its position in pl.XI shows that it is not the same as the cuts labelled LXX and LXXa on the sketch. There is some pottery from LXXa, unstratified mixed grog-tempered (butt-beaker and storage-jar rims) and Roman, and a few sherds from 'Red Sand filling of Inner Ditch'. Apart from one small grog-tempered sherd these are Roman, notably a later 1st century reeded flanged-rim bowl, and a mortarium rim:

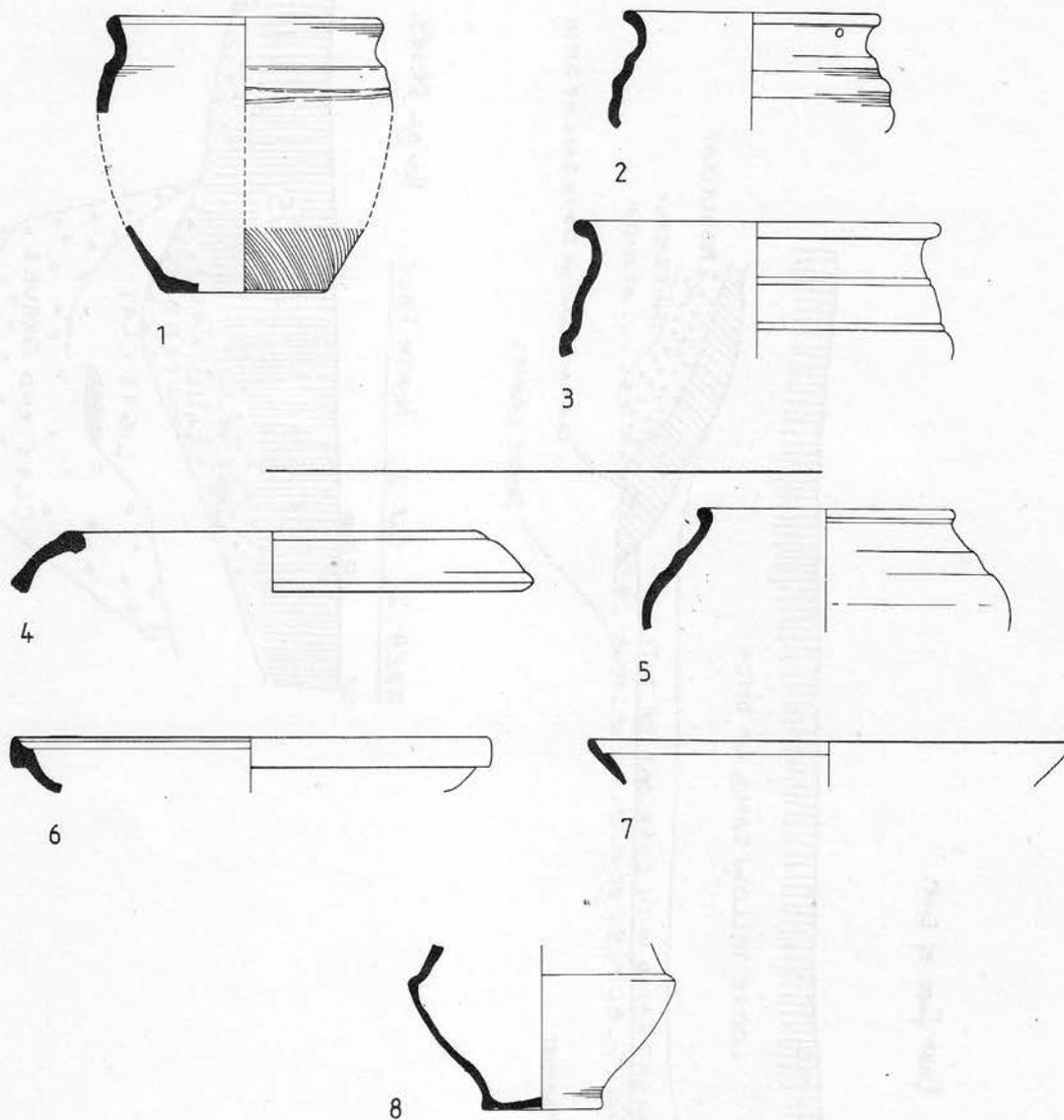
fig.117 no.4: [1266], LXXa Red Sand. Cream with large red inclusions; worn.

The filling of the main inner ditch thus has an admixture of Roman material; but from the earlier silting of the ditch came Wheeler's fig.10 no.9:

D3-4, but a unique form; restored, grey-brown grog, once burnished.

Area Z

This is XXIX on Wheeler's pl.XI, where the main inner ditch turns to form the NW corner of enclosure A. The notebooks show that several small trenches were cut here to find the relationship between the enclosure, main ditch, and the smaller ditch leading off to the SW (see fig.86); the contents of each trench are listed briefly. For section 1, for example (fig.118), the contents can be summarised as:



**Fig.117: Pottery from the area of the main earthworks. 1:4**

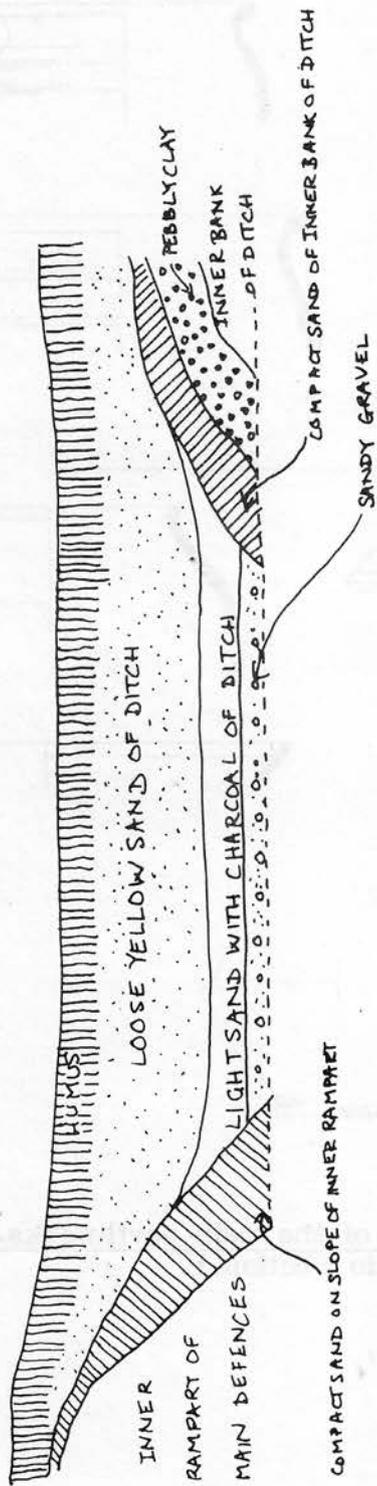
Nos.1-3: from the hearth in Section I.

No.4: from LXXa.

Nos.5-7: from Area Z.

No.8: from the 'Main Bank'.

Section - 1. Area Z. East face of cut.



6.10.33.

Rough sketch

AREA Z. Cut 2. NORTH FACE

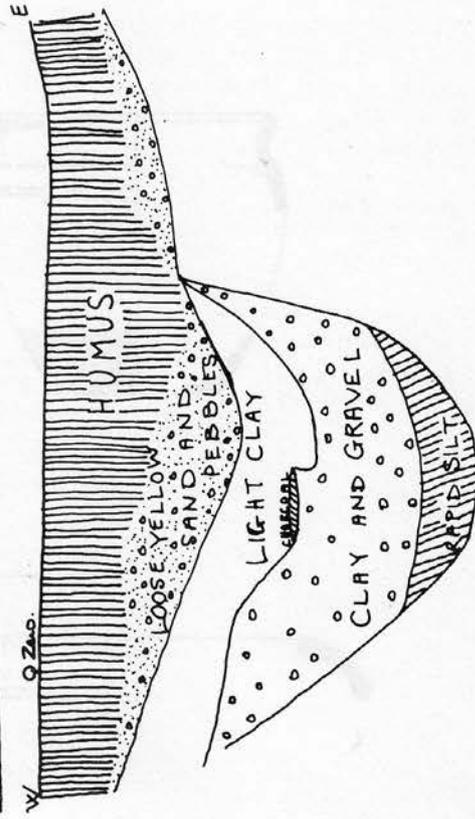


Fig.118: Sketch sections of Area Z, cuts 1 and 2.

Loose Yellow Sand of Ditch: Roman pottery and brick; a little 'prehistoric brick' and native pot.

Light Sand with Charcoal of Ditch: Roman brick and pottery, native brick and pot.

Sandy Gravel of Ditch: pot, '?native'; glass and brick.

Compact Sand on Slope of Inner Rampart: mortarium; Roman pot and brick, ?prehistoric brick and pot.

Gravel (Pebbly Clay) of Inner Slope of covered Rampart: bones, prehistoric brick, Roman brick?

In cut 2 (fig.118):

Loose Yellow Sand and Pebbles: Roman brick and possible native pot.

'Flint causeway': native pot.

'Grey clay near hearth': soft red brick, native pot.

In Compact sand of outer bank: fragments of native pot and base.

In Pebbly gravel: native, 'Belgic pot', 'Samian', Roman pot.

In Grey sand: native and Roman pot.

This mixture of native and Roman pottery is found in the ditch fill in each of these sections. Roman brick is also frequent. The 'compact sand' on the banks of the ditches contains the same mixture. Much of this material seems not to have been kept, but three pieces are identifiable (fig.117):

5 B2-1 [778] Z4 Original Ditch [i.e. the inner ditch of the main earthworks]. Dark grey grog, matt surfaces, tooled on shoulder and over rim, now worn. Rougher below.

6 [1346], Arretine, Loeschke Ia/Ib.

7 [1264], Cam.13, very worn TN.

The last two are labelled Z6, which is wrong; there is no such cutting. 'Samian' was found in cuts 2 and 3, in both cases mixed with native and Roman in the ditch fill.

The sketch plan (fig.86) shows another trench, LXXI, across the 'triangular plateau' outside the main defences. There is a section drawing but no extant finds, and only one undifferentiated ditch fill. This was across the word 'defences' in pl.XI. The absence of any material means that very little is known about the outer ditch of the main earthworks, which Wheeler assigned to his phase 2. There is one vessel labelled 'Main Bank' but exactly what bank remains unclear; the pot is Roman.

Fig.117 no.8: [865]. Dark brown, no grog; pale buff-grey inside, matt dark grey outside. Brittle.

A little pottery survives from the section of the additional ditch at XIII on Wheeler's pl.XI: two very worn samian sherds including a fragment of a large plate base.

#### 4 Prae Farm and Pond Field

This area was an integral part of Wheeler's conception of the sequence of construction. The palisade ditch A, on the S side of Pond Field (Wheeler's pl.CXVIII) divided the whole site into Regions I and II. The palisade ditch meets the main earthwork, and Wheeler regarded it as part of his first phase, contemporary with the main inner ditch and prior to the addition of the outer main ditch which curves to meet the junction of inner ditch and