

Prae Wood - 4 Prae Farm and Pond Field pages 933 to 934

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

palisade (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936, 41). A series of cuttings traced these ditches and the palisade trench.

The only published pottery is Wheeler's fig.9 no.1 (C7-1), 'from the packing inserted to support the original intermediate palisade A in Pond Field'.

Also from 'the palisade ditch' is, fig.119:

1 E3-1 [858]. Hard pale grey-brown grog, patchy darker outside. Regular and wheel-made. This was from 'Cut D' with a scrap of samian and a Cam.113 butt-beaker rim.

The notebooks provide some circumstantial detail. The two main 'sites' are V and VII: these apparently represent a series of cuts along the palisade ditch A, and the continuation of the inner ditch of the main earthwork, 'palisade C' on Wheeler's pl.CXVIII. Neither of these is more substantial than the sort of field boundary ditches common on sites of the period: both contained scraps of grog-tempered native ware, samian sherds, Roman sherds and tile fragments, and a few medieval sherds, all apparently mixed together. The only vessels of any substance from this area are a small Roman grey ware jar with white paint, from 'Prae Farm I', and a 2nd century amphora rim from V.

Note that Pond Field VII is not to be confused with 'VII' on Wheeler's pl.XI, at the W end of the 'prehistoric defences'.

5 Additional and unknown sites

Transverse A ditch: a boxful of sherds from a ditch whose location is unknown includes, fig.119:

2 G6 [867], grey grog, worn pale orange surfaces.

3 Cam.113 [1270], soft, very white, worn and finely sandy.

The remaining sherds comprise the mixture of native and Roman that fills the ditches of the main earthworks: Roman ring-necked jug sherds, tile, storage jar and butt-beaker sherds, Roman coarse ware sherds, a very hard orange B1-6 rim, and a cream amphora handle and neck.

K: these vessels may belong to the South Ditch/Black Ditch area. Fig.119:

4 G1-2 [1277], K.A. Sandy pale grey grog, orange below worn dark grey-brown surfaces.

5 G1-1 [1309], K.3. Worn sandy grey-orange grog.

6 G3-1 [1339]; K.G. ?fabric: pale buff, dark grey badly flaking surfaces.

Ford A: the ford is on the other side of Verulamium where the river Ver crossed St Michael's Street (Wheeler's pl.1); fig.119:

7 D1-2 [1240], hard rather sandy grey grog, red below buff inside, dark grey coarse outside.

All the other pieces with this mark are worn and mostly Roman scraps.

Cross Country Dyke should be the main 'Belgic' ditch extension of Region II, since a note describes it as having one end in Watford Road Field; sherds from the 'entrance' are unstratified Roman.