



ROMAN SANDY

ROMAN SANDY



When I first wrote to the Managing Director of Redland Aggregates asking if they would care to contribute towards a booklet about Sandy's Roman Finds, little did I dare to hope that they would sponsor its production.

On behalf of Sandy, I thank Redland for their generosity and for their very positive attitude in supporting the venture.

I cannot allow the occasion to pass without mentioning the dedication of the archaeological team at Bedfordshire County Council, led by Mike Dawson under the direction of Evelyn Baker, without whom the excavations would have been impossible.

Our thanks too must go to Bedfordshire County Council and English Heritage for assisting with the cost of the excavation of the site over three years.

Finally, I must pay tribute to earlier Town Councils who had the vision to pursue the excavation for the benefit of us all and, in particular, David Jaeger, who was Mayor when it all started and who did so much to support the venture in its infancy.

I am delighted to have played some small part in bringing this production into existence.

M J McMurdo
(Town Mayor of Sandy)



Coin of the emperor Antoninus Pius, minted in Rome in AD 140-144. The reverse, illustrated here, celebrates the *genius*, spirit, of the Roman senate or council.



Copyright BCAS 1997
ISBN 1-85351-261-3

Cover caption: Roman Sandy as it may have looked in the 3rd century, looking northeastwards.

Acknowledgements: Roman Sandy was produced by Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service, which is in the Consultancy Services Division of the County Council's Department of Environment and Economic Development. It was written by Mike Dawson with contributions by Holly Duncan and Anna Slowikowski. The three reconstructions in oils were by Peter Froste. The line illustrations are by Cecily Marshall, Lisa Padilla and Jo Richards and the photographs by Dave Stubbs of Image Maker. The photos of Butser Ancient Farm are by Cecily Marshall. Bedford Museum generously helped by giving access to objects from its 19th century collection of material from Sandy - the cremation assemblage, Nene Valley beaker and brass bowls. All the remaining artefacts were recovered by BCAS from excavations between 1988-1991. 'Roman Sandy' has been designed and printed by Stanley L. Hunt (Printers) Ltd, Rushden, Northants NN10 9UA.

INTRODUCTION

Sandy was first described as the source of Roman objects by John Aubrey in *Monumenta Britannica* in 1666. The name Chesterfield however, goes back much further and derives from the Saxon words for forts or ruins; and of course Caesar's Camp is an Iron Age hillfort. The major finds from Sandy came in the 19th century when the railway to London and the branch line to Cambridge were built. Captain Peel who bought the land for the railway 'formed quite a museum from the antiquities then found. Among the rest was a Roman sword in fine preservation, and he being a fighting man, had one made from it for his own use, which he used in India during the mutiny, where he fell at Lucknow'. A hoard of iron work was found between 1893 and 1895 and is now in the British Museum. Meanwhile Sandy had gained a reputation for producing 'an immense number of coins . . . vases, urns, *lachrymatories*, lamps'. Most of this material has now been lost, only some of it reaching Bedford and other museums. Between 1850 and 1911 the construction of the main railway line involved quarrying away Tower Hill. This used to be where the present railway station is and during the quarrying the remains of a cemetery, including Roman cremations, sarcophagi (stone coffins) and Saxon cremation urns were found. The latter are in Bedford Museum.

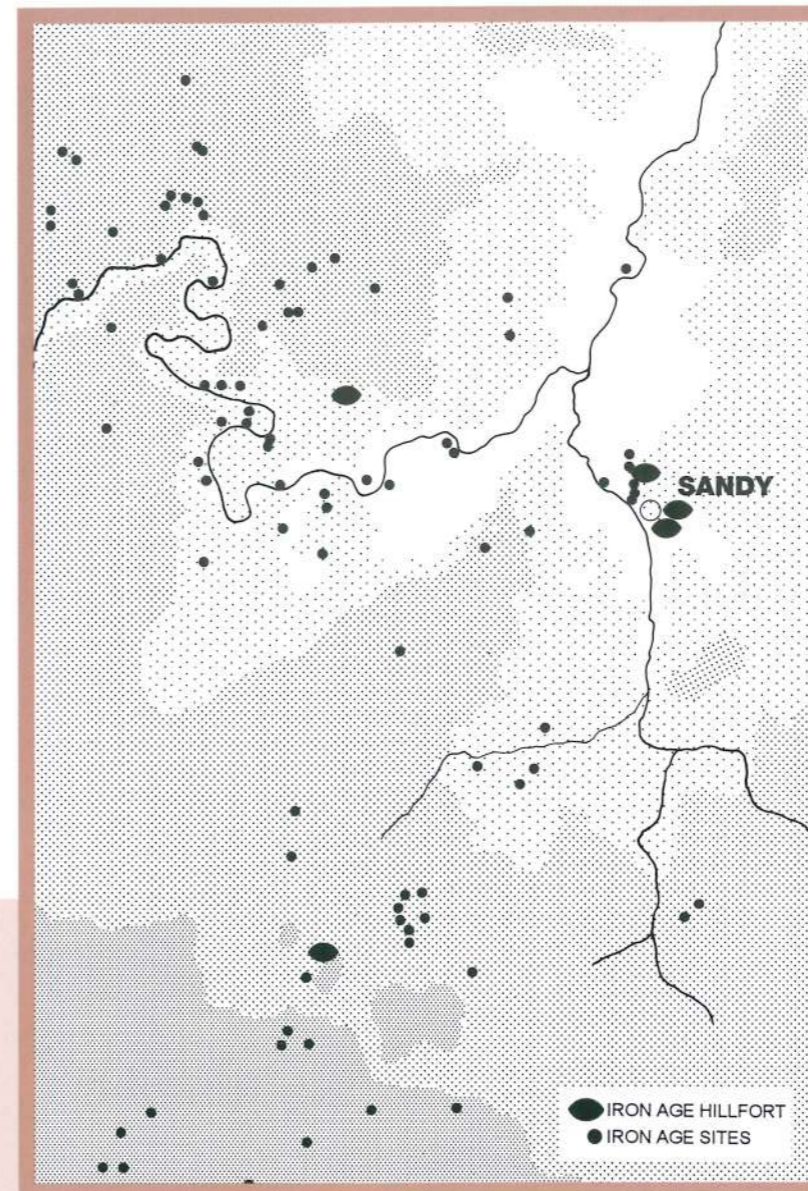
In the 20th century most of the finds have come from the cemetery. Up to the 1960s the cemetery keeper Mr Gurney amassed a large collection of bronze objects, coins and pottery fragments. Some of these items were given to local schools, others stored in his garage at the Cemetery Lodge. In 1974 his collection was listed by David Johnston, a local college lecturer, together with a report on a small excavation in Chesterfield in the late 1950s. Unfortunately when Mr Gurney died his collection was cleared out of his garage and lost. It was not until a gravedigger discovered the remains of a skull, in a new area of the cemetery, and reported it to Sandy Town Council that modern archaeological recording of Sandy's Roman past began. This booklet draws heavily on the results of the excavations carried out in the town's cemetery between 1988 and 1991 by the County Council's Archaeology Service in collaboration with Sandy Town Council and English Heritage.

IN THE BEGINNING

The origins of Roman Sandy probably lie in the earlier Iron Age, possibly with settlement in the 7th century BC. The first clear evidence comes from two areas. At Sandy Lodge a promontory of the greensand ridge was blocked by the construction of a rampart in the middle Iron Age. Occupation cannot have been dense at this site as only a few sherds of pottery were discovered during excavations in 1968 and 1969. Nearby, pottery of similar age has been found at Caesar's Camp. This 'camp' has a single bank and ditch which would have enclosed the whole of the hill, but it is apparently unfinished. The pottery recovered from this site is much older than the mid 1st century BC when Caesar invaded Britain and it is unlikely the two are connected. The direct precursor of the Roman town at Sandy is likely to have been an unenclosed settlement somewhere in the vicinity of Chesterfield.



The Iron Age settlement at Sandy may not have been very large. Excavations, in the 1990s, found the remains of a round house and a near complete urn, suggesting human cremations. This reconstruction shows what the area now occupied by the northern part of the modern cemetery, and the allotments, may have been like in the early 1st century AD.



This map shows the number of places which were occupied during the Iron Age. The sites seem to cluster along the river valleys. In these locations there was not only a plentiful water supply but regular flooding replenished the light, easy-to-work soils.



Early Sandy would have depended upon farming. Animals like this soay sheep are very similar to those known from the Iron Age. Like many Iron Age settlements Sandy would have been self-sufficient, mixing arable farming with grazing.



In the late 1st century BC, not long before the Roman invasion, Sandy may have been a political centre where coins were struck. These four coins are part of a series that extends across Essex, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, as well as Bedfordshire, and show the county was probably part of the kingdom of the Catuvellauni.



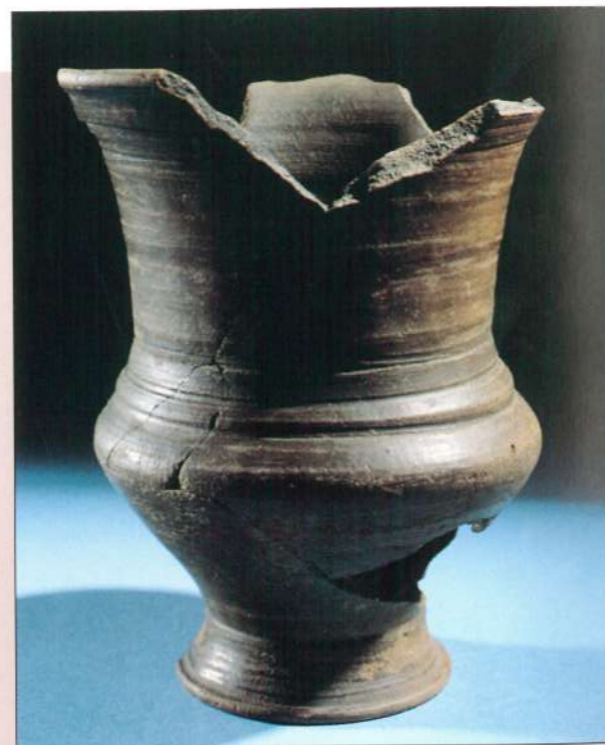
This coin with the rearing horse was minted at or near Sandy in the late 1st century BC.



Before the Roman invasion, coins, like this of Andoco (10 BC–AD 10) a short lived king of the Trinovantes, often imitated Roman types.



This coin minted by Cunobelinus also includes the name of his predecessor, Tasciovanus, emphasising their dynastic ambitions.



This large pedestal urn is all that remains of an Iron Age cremation. The ashes of the dead would have been placed inside before burial in a small pit. This type of pottery is the earliest example of the wheel-throwing technique in Britain. Before the mid-1st century BC all pottery was hand-made by coiling rolls of clay.



Pottery was used mainly for storage, preparation and consumption of food. Even before the Roman invasion local and imported pottery was in use at Sandy. In the early 1st century AD, storage vessels and cooking pots were made by local potters, while fine tablewares such as flagons, cups and platters, were either imported from the continent or copied by local craftsmen.

SANDY NEW TOWN

Roman Sandy grew up around a *mansio* or imperial posting station. It was probably formally laid out with a small area of streets running south, away from the main road. Behind the *mansio*, houses were built fronting the streets and several had workshop areas behind or to one side of them. These houses, workshops and ash dumps were interspersed with small gardens, and some human burials. Beyond the *mansio* were larger buildings probably including several farms or urban villas. The variety of life in the town reflected a new style of living in Britain. Before the Roman conquest towns were rare. They were more spread out, although often enclosed within long stretches of banks and ditches. These were called *oppida* by classical authors like Tacitus who wrote about them. Roman towns were quite different: larger, often with a council, some were administrative centres; others like Sandy developed around the need to provide services to the imperial post system.



The earliest Roman coins to reach Sandy date to AD 41-54, indicating how rapidly Roman influence spread. This coin of Nero, struck in AD 65, was minted in Lyons.

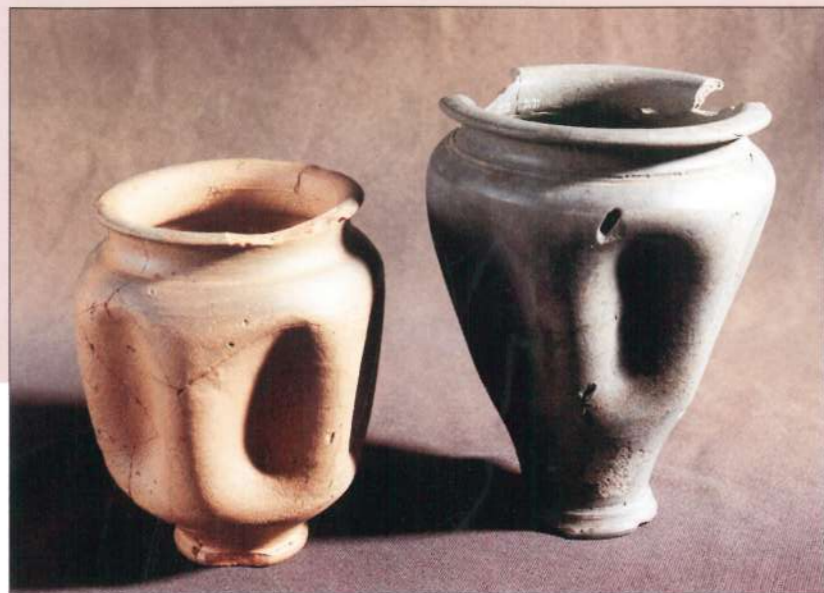


The emperor Hadrian, is best known in this country as the builder of the great wall from the Tyne to the Solway. This *sestertius* was minted in Rome in AD 117-18.



Antoninus Pius was the adopted successor to Hadrian. During his reign (AD 138-61) the Roman empire enjoyed a period of tranquillity and prosperity.

Coinage is basically a standard for measuring values, providing a means of exchange and a way of storing wealth. The rapid and widespread use of Roman coins in Britain mirrors the expansion of the Roman empire and the adoption of Roman ways by the local population. For the Romans it was a convenient way to collect taxes and the authorities will have encouraged its use.

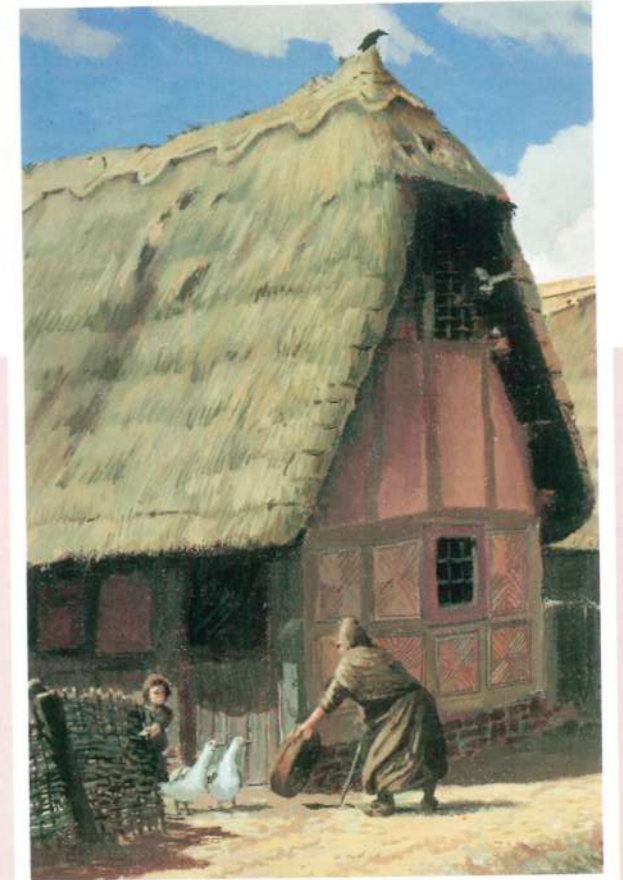


Folded beakers are typically Roman and are found all over the empire. The number of indentations in the wall varied depending on its size. A large number of these vessels have been found at Sandy, and they may have been used for drinking, the indentations making them easier to hold. Most of them were locally made, but the orange beaker (left) may have been imported from Cologne.



Sandy is in what archaeologists and geographers call a preferred location. It is in a natural break in the greensand ridge; there is a river nearby and good soils provide the basis of food production. These factors no doubt influenced the Romans' decision to route the road from Baldock to Godmanchester through Sandy. The possibility that there might have been a tribal mint here in the late Iron Age may also have been influential. The distance from other Roman centres was equally important. A small excavation in 1994 and geophysical survey in 1995 showed the possible location of a *mansio*. It was around this station that Roman Sandy developed.

The variety of building types at Sandy reflected the diverse background of the population. This example was timber framed, rectangular and probably thatched.



This building is a detail taken from the reconstruction of Sandy in the 3rd century, and shows one possible way in which the building on the left might have been built.



Although a wide range of goods would have been available to buy in a Romano-British market, it is likely that most clothing was made at home. Sandy is no exception.



Spindle whorls, used to weight the spindle when spinning wool, weaving tablets and needles all came from the town. However, as no shears or woolcombs were found, it is probable that combed wool was being brought to Sandy from nearby farms.

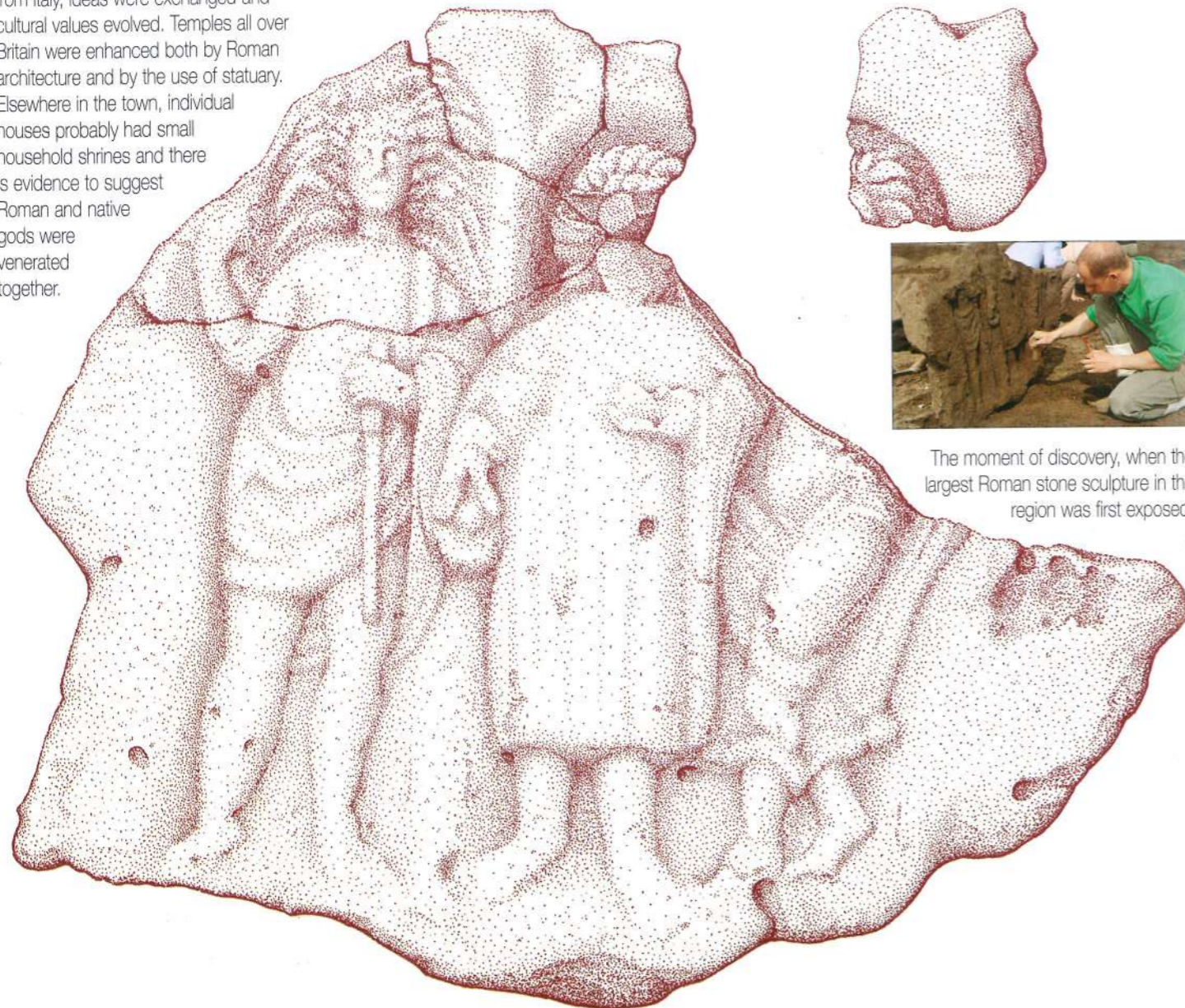


A popular building technique was to construct timber framed houses on a low wall of stone. This had the advantage of reducing the damp in the walls and preventing the lower timbers from rotting. The width of many of the town houses at Sandy was 3 to 4m, about the same as that of a Victorian terraced house. In this example a clay grate or fireplace was built inside the front room on the gable end.

PRIVATE LIVES

With the conquest of Britain many changes, such as taxation, the census and the imposition of a large garrison, were forced on the local population. Some changes, however, were adopted by the local people, either because they would improve their standing with the Romans, or because the changes enhanced their position within their own communities. This process of social and political give and take, 'negotiation', results in acculturation: the adoption of a common culture by two once distinct groups. It is not clear how far this process, called Romanisation, went at Roman Sandy. There are many Roman artefacts and by the 3rd century coinage was commonly used, probably by everybody, to buy and sell goods, pay taxes and as savings. Brooches and tools of Roman style are also common but their designs are similar to pre-Roman types. By the middle of the Roman period, the 3rd century AD, the population of Sandy began to bury their dead in a Romanised way and to portray their religious figures as sculptures. There is also an *occulists* stamp, whose owner had a Latin name, which was used for marking cakes of eye ointment.

In the 1st century BC, the southern part of Sandy had probably been a place of veneration. Offerings of coins were thrown into the course of a slowly running brook close to Stratford Road. You can see these on page 2. Later a shrine or temple may have been erected in the town, and a large sculpture may have been placed inside. The appearance of ritual sculpture is typical of the religious changes which took place after the conquest. As the population of Britain mixed with Roman immigrants, not all from Italy, ideas were exchanged and cultural values evolved. Temples all over Britain were enhanced both by Roman architecture and by the use of statuary. Elsewhere in the town, individual houses probably had small household shrines and there is evidence to suggest Roman and native gods were venerated together.



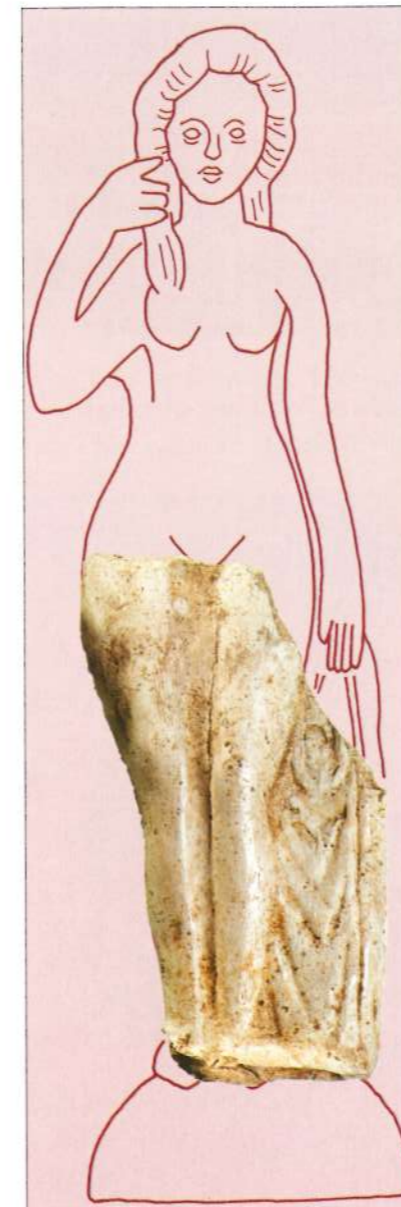
The moment of discovery, when the largest Roman stone sculpture in the region was first exposed.



The shrine at Sandy may have been separated from the rest of the town by an enclosure or precinct. Its link with the earlier Iron Age tradition may have been explicit in the inclusion of oak trees.



This fine gilded brooch of the early 3rd century has a winged Victory engraved on a black glass *intaglio*. Engravings of goddesses and heroes are known on both brooches and signet rings and were designed to reflect the character, aspirations and beliefs of their owners. Victory was not only a popular attribute in the army, but also has equal claim to be regarded as a goddess, consort of Mars. It's not surprising that Mars and Victory are often found on military sites or associated with military personnel.



Religious figurines, depicting various Roman deities such as Minerva and Bacchus, were made in both pipe clay and terracotta. The most commonly found clay figurine in Roman Britain is thought to represent Venus, although her origins may lie with an earlier Celtic goddess. The Sandy figurine is likely to have been part of a household shrine.



The depiction of religious images on personal possessions continues throughout the Roman period. The advent of Christianity in Sandy is reflected in the engraving of the *Chi Rho* on this 4th century nail cleaner. The '*Chi Rho*' is a monogram of *chi* and *rho*, the first two letters of the greek *Kristos*, Christ; a sign of early Christianity.



This rare ivory panel was once part of a small casket. It shows a human arm and drape with oak leaves and an acorn. This has enabled the figure to be identified as the god Bacchus, god of wine and feasting. The piece has been described as the finest piece of Roman carved ivory found north of the Alps.

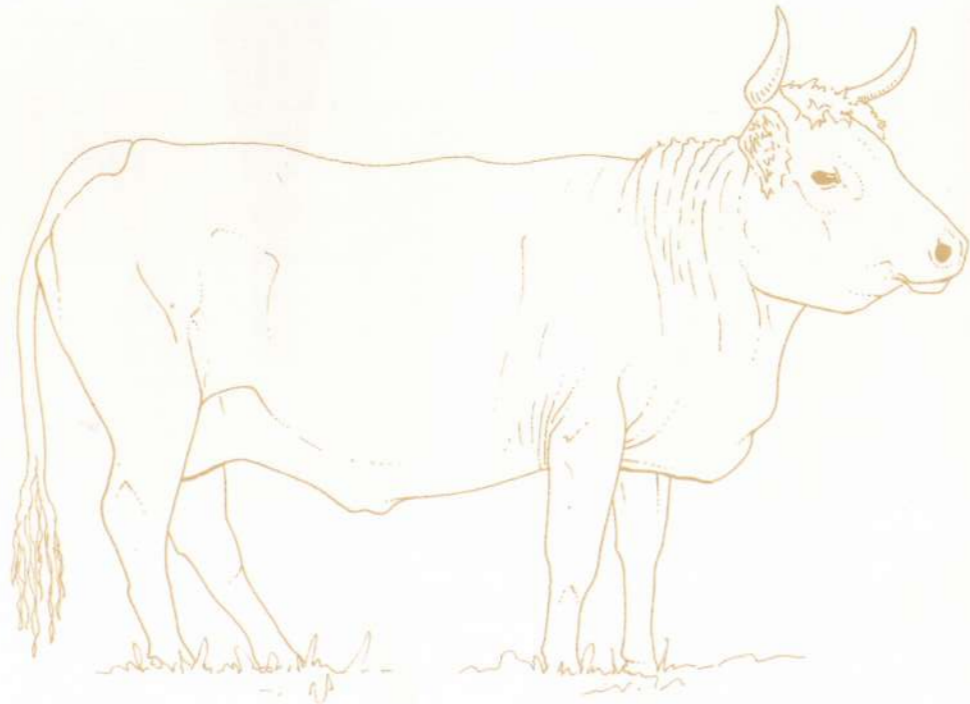
DAILY BREAD



A very significant change which is often thought to have affected a large proportion of the population in Britain was the introduction of Roman culinary traditions. However, in rural areas the most significant change may have been fluctuations in demand brought about by the imposition of taxation and the need to supply the army. This forced the largely agricultural population to consider ways of making a surplus for more than just poor years and to consider cultivating new species.

Small enclosures on the outskirts of the town belonged to farms which probably surrounded Sandy. Here animals will have been raised to supply both *mansio* and market.

At Sandy the *mansio* is likely to have led to significant new demands for food supplies and food types. Imperial messengers, many of them military, are quite likely to have expected wine and other Roman foodstuffs. How soon this had an impact on the civil population of Sandy depends on the early make-up of that population. Amongst the seed remains at Sandy were grape pips suggesting a vineyard was soon established nearby.

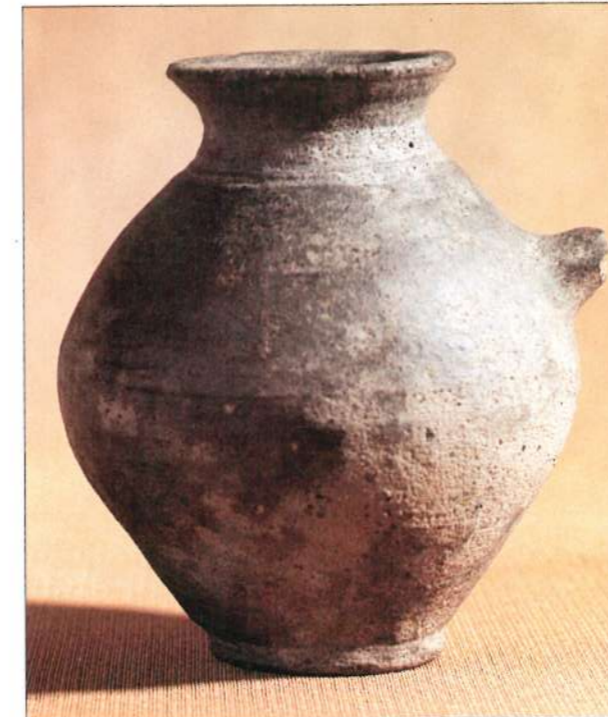
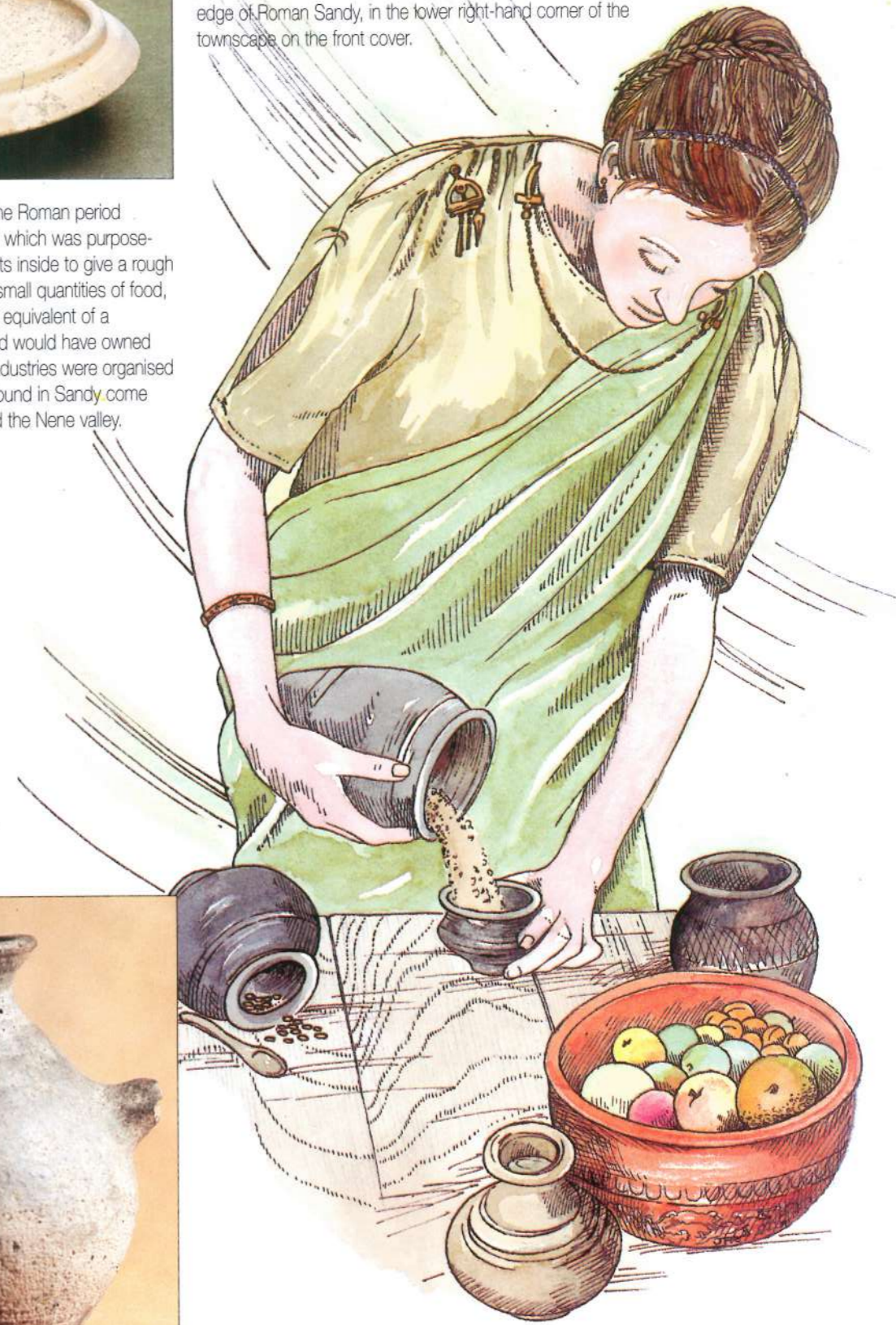


This Dexter cow is probably the closest living relation to the celtic shorthorn. This type will have been familiar to the early farmers at Roman Sandy.



An indispensable part of the equipment of the Roman period kitchen was the *mortarium*. This was a bowl which was purpose-made with a spout at the rim and coarse grits inside to give a rough surface. It was used to grind spices or mix small quantities of food, such as meat for meat patties, and was the equivalent of a liquidiser or food processor. Every household would have owned one or more of these *mortaria*, and whole industries were organised to manufacture and supply them. *Mortaria* found in Sandy come from factories in Oxfordshire, St Albans, and the Nene valley.

This reconstruction shows a woman preparing food in the Roman style, a scene which might have taken place in a wealthy town farm. You can see where farms of this type might have been on the edge of Roman Sandy, in the lower right-hand corner of the townscape on the front cover.



This small spouted jar, called a *tettina*, was used as a baby's feeding bottle. This type of pot is frequently found in child burials.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

The Roman invasion introduced soldiers and settlers to the new province who brought with them different and new standards of dress. Sandy's inhabitants, living on a main road, will have seen a great variety of new styles. For those members of the population who joined the army, or who became rich under Roman rule, these new styles will have been part of their success, and they will have been the first to adopt Roman fashion. Many people in Sandy and the immediate environs, however, will have remained in near subsistence level occupations. They will have continued many early traditions of dress and attitudes to fashion from pre-Roman days and the appearance of uniforms and togas will have been yet another symbol of their oppression.



This brooch dates to the 1st century AD. It is called a thistle brooch because of its shape. The foot panel has a gladiator with plumed helmet and small circular shield, facing a crouching long-necked beast.



This small, 2nd century brooch was a popular British form. The central disc is inlaid with silver wire; the foot of the brooch would have been enamelled.



It was fashionable to wear paired brooches, and the loop at the top of this brooch would have carried a fine, linking chain.

Roman taste, Roman style and Roman fashion were reflected in the lifestyles of the rich, both in the countryside and in the new towns which grew up in Britain. The towns were the basis of Roman administration. They were also a focus for Roman life and many believe there was a distinct division between the Britons and the Romans. In the earliest years of the Roman province this was certainly the case for, although Roman coinage was introduced, it did not penetrate into the countryside. Barter must have remained the principal mechanism of exchange in many rural areas. Another example of the distinction between Romans and Britons was the attitude of the Romans, as recorded in documents found on Hadrian's wall. Here the local population are described as *Britunculi*: 'nasty little Brits'. It is worth remembering this when trying to imagine the impact the Romans had upon the British Isles, and the relationship between the two populations.

These coins found at Sandy were a direct link between Sandy and the metropolitan fashions of Rome. The people of Sandy no doubt took their lead from the imperial portraits found on the reverse of coins. These imperial women lived during the 3rd and 4th centuries.



Julia Soaemias AD 218-22, the mother of the emperor Severus Alexander.



Comelia Salonina AD 260-8, wife of the emperor Gallienus.

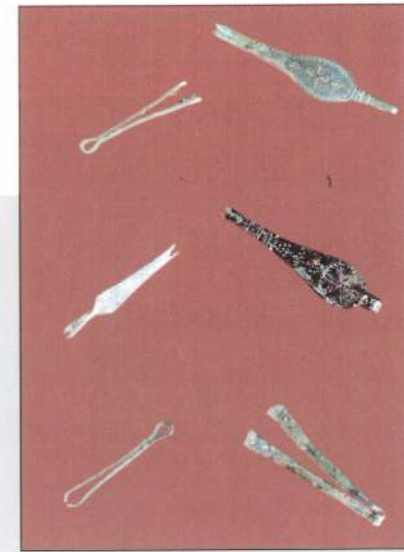


Coin of Theodora AD 337-40 second wife of the emperor Constantius. It was minted as a memorial after her death.



Combs such as this boxwood example from Sandy, with both fine and coarse teeth, were in use throughout the Roman period. Although they are generally associated with fashionable women's hair, examples from other sites have been found with coarse textured animal hair still remaining between the teeth. This suggests they were used for grooming.

These carved bone pins were used to secure and decorate the hair styles of women and girls. The habit of using pins to help arrange hair was a custom introduced after the Roman invasion.



Romans held personal appearance and cleanliness in high regard. They used a wide variety of toiletry and cosmetic implements, many of which were found at Sandy. Fragments of mirrors and implements for mixing and applying cosmetics were recovered, as well as numerous tweezers and nail cleaners.



These moulded pottery faces were once part of larger vessels. They depict women with their hair elaborately braided and arranged in Roman styles. These face-pots were made at workshops in the Nene valley (left) and Hadham, Hertfordshire (right), in the 4th century. They are an indication of the extent to which Roman influence had spread by that date.



DEAD AND BURIED



In the later 4th century changes in burial practice were clearly seen at Sandy. Not only were burials now in graves amongst the houses, but in some cases more than one individual was placed in the same grave.

Attitudes to the dead are often the most conservative of all. In the first years of the Roman invasion the tradition across much of Europe was to cremate the dead. This continued in the Sandy area as elsewhere for at least a century. Few Roman period cremations have been found at Sandy, but this probably reflects the areas of excavation. There are cremation burials nearby at Deepdale, on the greensand, and at Warren Villas further up the River Ivel near Caldecote.

In the 2nd century a major change in burial tradition swept the Roman world as inhumation replaced cremation. At Sandy inhumation burial accompanied by grave goods became commonplace. There was a Roman cemetery outside the town probably on Tower Hill, the site of the present railway station, where in the 19th century Roman *sarcophagi* were recovered. Unusually, though, there were many burials at Sandy in amongst the houses rather than in the cemetery outside the town. These might have been part of small family plots, and were found during the recent excavations.

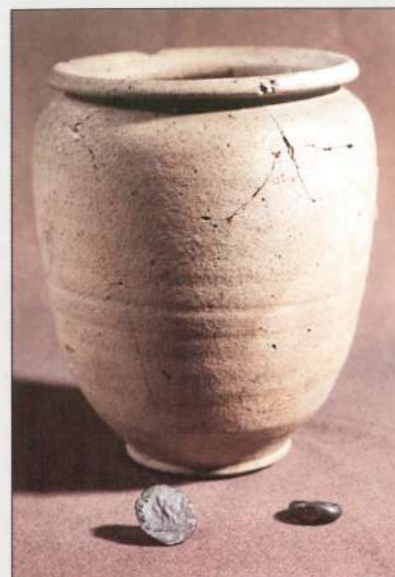


Bracelets are the most common type of ornament worn in inhumations and can occur singly or in groups. This custom is particularly common in rural cemeteries, suggesting a prevailing native custom. Although bracelets were in use throughout the Roman period, the fashion seems to have gained popularity in the late 3rd and especially in the 4th centuries. You can see this in the burial evidence. Bracelets, although commonly associated with female burials, are also known to accompany males.

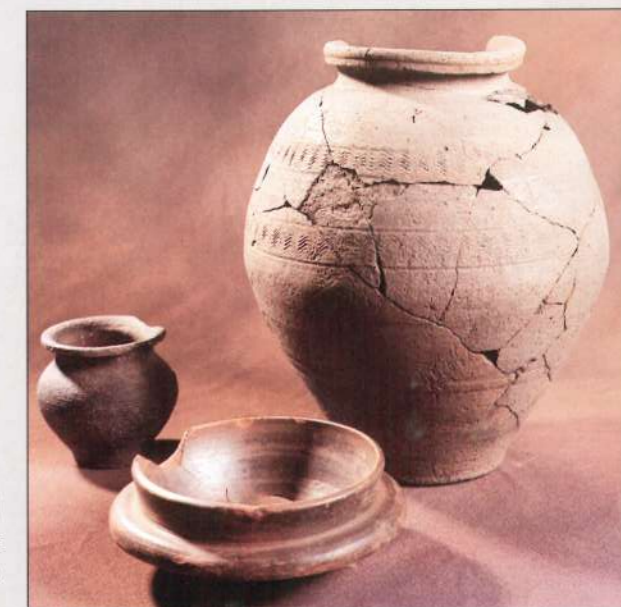


Coins were often placed as grave goods, providing the dead with the fare to pay Charon as they were ferried across the river Styx into the underworld.

In the Roman period, during the 1st and 2nd centuries, cremation was the customary way of disposing of the dead. When death was imminent the family gathered and the closest relative gave the last kiss to catch the soul, and the eyes were closed. Later the body was laid out and dressed. At night, by torchlight, the corpse was carried to the place of cremation on a bier. Everyone wore black. Before the pyre was lit, a little piece was cut off the corpse and was buried later. Once on the pyre, the eyes of the dead were opened and gifts placed around them. The wood was then lit by torchbearers. After the cremation ceremony, the ashes of the dead were gathered together and placed inside a pottery urn. This urn was then buried. Together with the cremation urn, it was usual to bury food and drink to sustain the soul on its long journey to the underworld. This pot, ring and coin is a cremation assemblage and was found during construction of Sandy railway station when Tower Hill was quarried away.



The portrayal of eagles and standards on gems is frequently associated with legionary soldiers, who wore them as amulets. Finger rings, and in particular signet rings, are unusual finds in cremations of this date, perhaps because intaglio rings were important in establishing inheritance and hence were usually retained by a family member.



Pottery vessels were frequently buried as grave goods. They may have contained food or drink. These were not vessels made specially for use in burial rites, but every day objects in common use while the person was alive. Some may have been 'seconds' used for burial, others may have been personal possessions.

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

The working of copper alloys such as brass and bronze, silver and iron all took place at Sandy. Many of these processes were relatively small scale and were located in amongst houses, suggesting that Sandy, like other small towns, had a metalworking quarter. It is tempting to see this as the basis of a small market centre, but the scale of the workshops may have been sufficient only to supply the needs of normal traffic and the *mansio*.



Smithing can be carried out anywhere as it does not need a purpose built structure; a smith could even use a domestic hearth. What the smith required was fuel, charcoal, or, from the Roman period onwards, coal, and an air blast from the bellows to obtain high temperatures. Excavated evidence suggests at least two forms of ironworking hearths were in use in the Roman period, a bowl or pit in the ground into which a 'tuyere', or air inlet, was directed, and a waist high platform on which a fire was built.



Evidence of ironworking hearths are rarely found on excavations, perhaps because the above ground structures have been eroded away. What frequently survives, however, is the fire reddened clay lining and ironworking debris, known as slag. Hearth bottoms are formed by the accumulation of slag droplets and hammer scale, tiny flakes broken off the iron during hammering. All this debris lodges at the base of the hearth where it forms a thick layer of waste material. These hearth bottoms are bowl shaped, and vary greatly in size and weight. They are often found in pieces, the result of cleaning out a hearth.



Casting of non-ferrous metals at Sandy was evident from fragments of crucibles and moulds found amongst industrial tips behind the houses. Crucibles are ceramic vessels which were used to hold molten metal before it was poured into clay moulds. That the coppersmith was not always successful is indicated by a broken mould which still retains the failed bronze object within it.

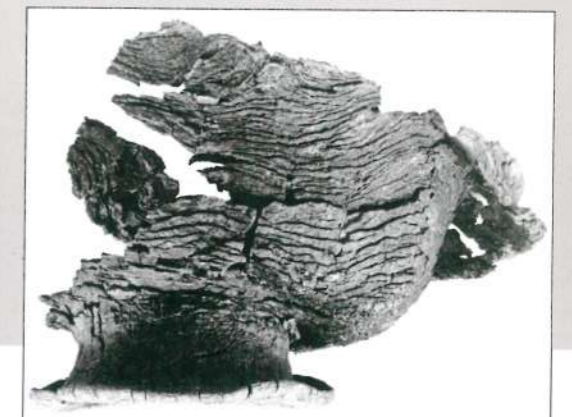


These twisted and partially melted silver rings were probably being prepared for recasting. Much silver had to be refined before re-use as it was often debased, and evidence of silver refining was found in the form of a *litharge* cake, produced when the lead used to remove base metal from silver is oxidised and absorbed into the bone ash lining of a ceramic vessel.



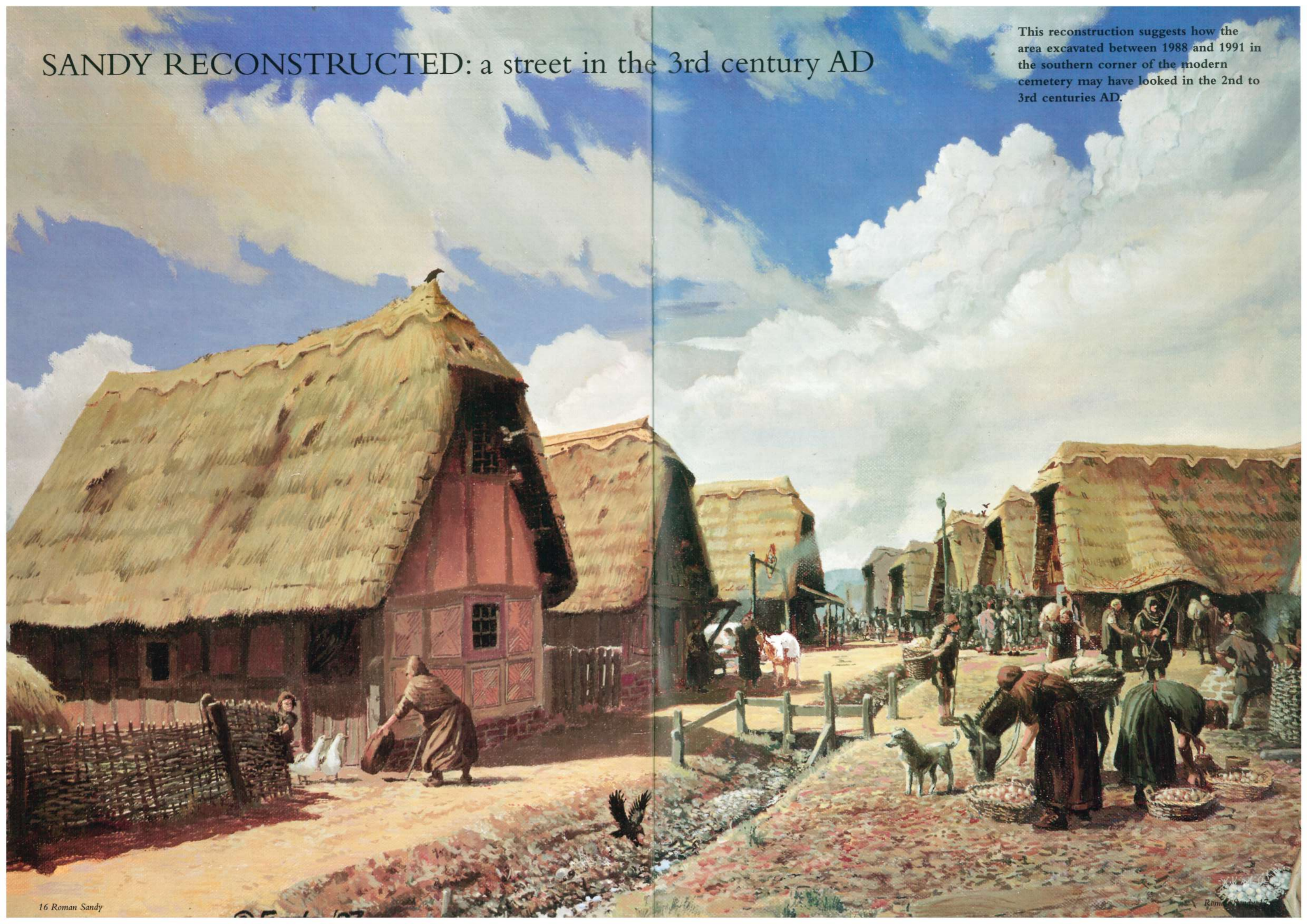
In 1856 these three late Roman brass bowls were recovered during the construction of the branch line to Potton. The bowls are paper thin and were made by highly skilled craftsmen. Bowls of this type could have been made in Sandy by sheet metal workers supplying not only Sandy and the passing trade, but the inhabitants of the nearby villas.

A second example of a metal vessel found at Sandy is this once elegant pewter bowl. It was found in 1990 and is in much worse condition than the brass bowls. It was found in a roadside ditch and had probably been damaged before it was discarded.

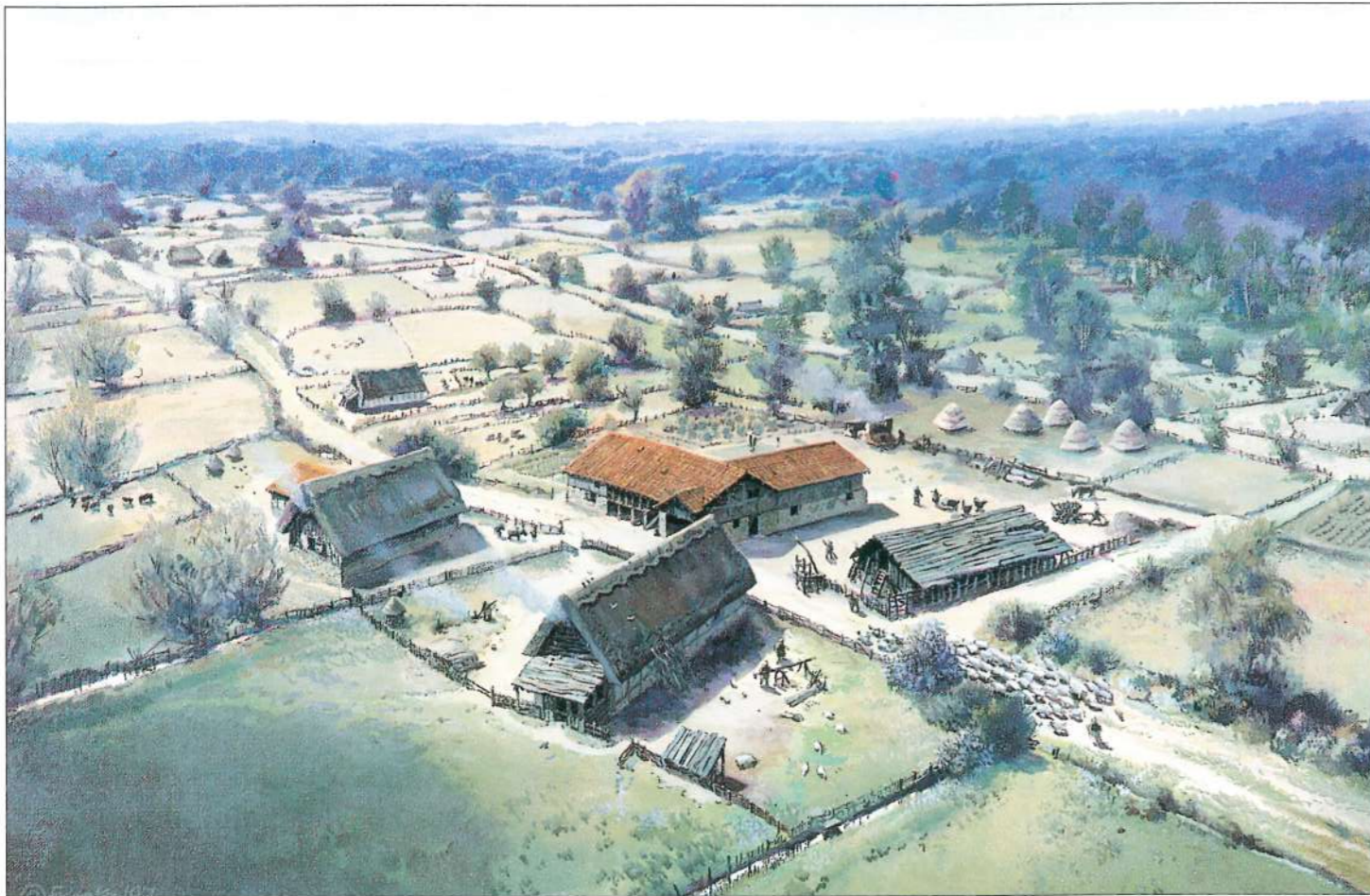


SANDY RECONSTRUCTED: a street in the 3rd century AD

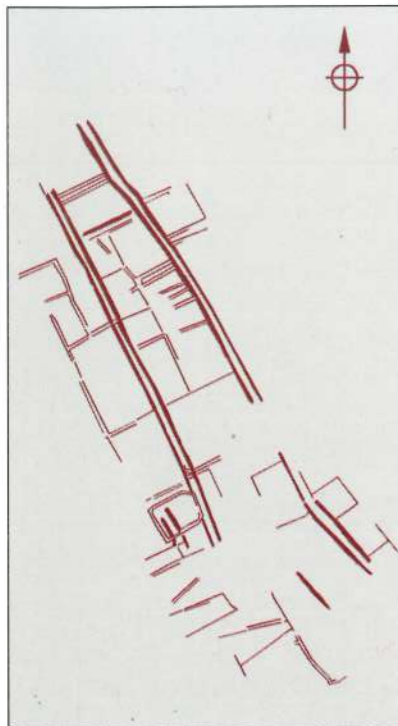
This reconstruction suggests how the area excavated between 1988 and 1991 in the southern corner of the modern cemetery may have looked in the 2nd to 3rd centuries AD.



UP COUNTRY: the hinterland of Roman Sandy



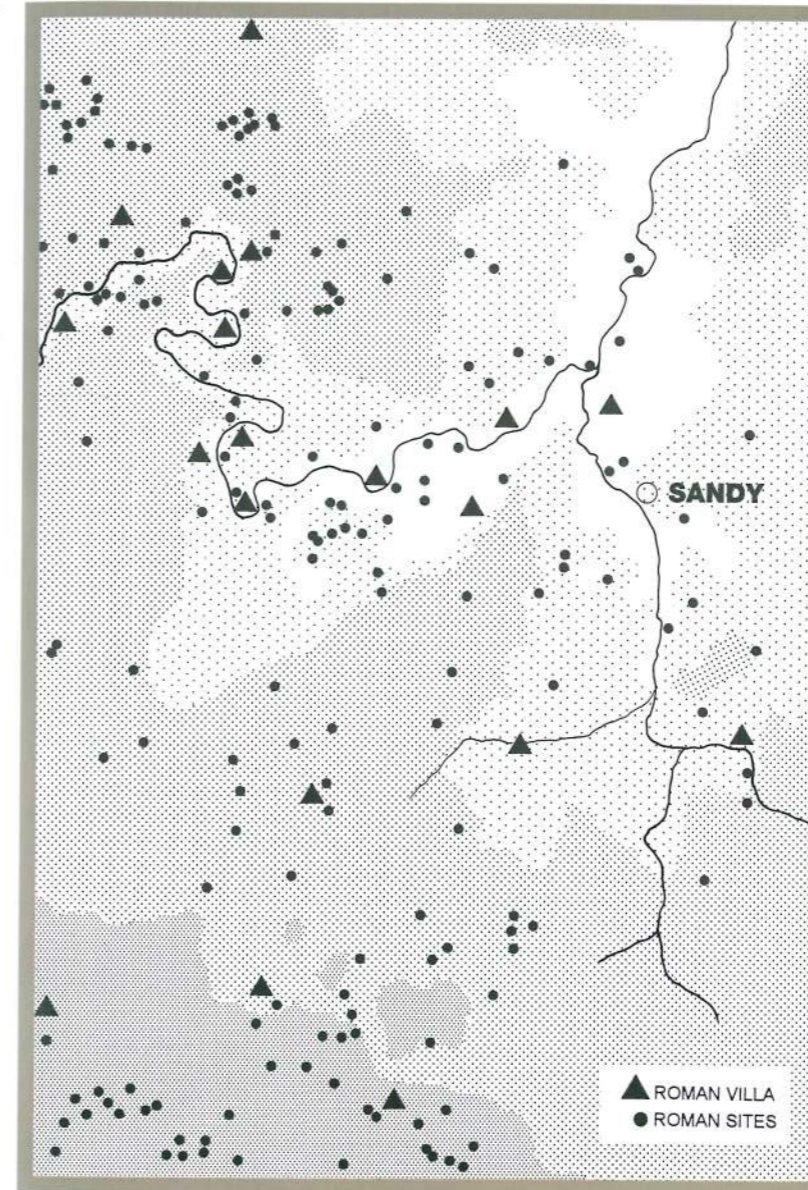
This reconstruction of a farm settlement at Kempston indicates how the character of rural settlement changed in the Roman period. Contrast this picture with the illustration on page 2 showing how Iron Age Sandy might have looked.



With the growth of Sandy we might expect some developments in the settlements around the town as they jostled for business brought by the road. However the proximity of the road may have brought with it the unwelcome demands of tax collectors, military factors, land agents as well as thieves and conmen. For farmers used to relatively slow change, and probably limited by agricultural techniques, soil type and topography as well as the size of their farms, the development of Roman Sandy may have been anything but welcome.

Changes did occur however. At Warren Villas the settlement embarked on an extensive programme of land drainage in the early Roman period, but there are few coins here and the site never grew rich. Further away from Sandy the hinterland was divided amongst several great estates. At the centre of these estates were large Roman style houses which we commonly call villas. The creation of the estates may have involved widespread emparkment and enclosure and have led to the creation of new 'model' estate villages such as that at Kempston. Sandy and the new settlements will have attracted people away from the earlier small farms. Sandy in particular may have offered opportunities of a better standard of living through trade or service at the *mansio*. Some may have come to Sandy with the hope of joining an auxiliary regiment in the army or of advancement through service in a richer household, or as a craftsman.

This plan of Kempston and the evidence from the Roman cemetery suggests this was a planned settlement where veterans, ex-soldiers, were settled in the late 1st century AD.



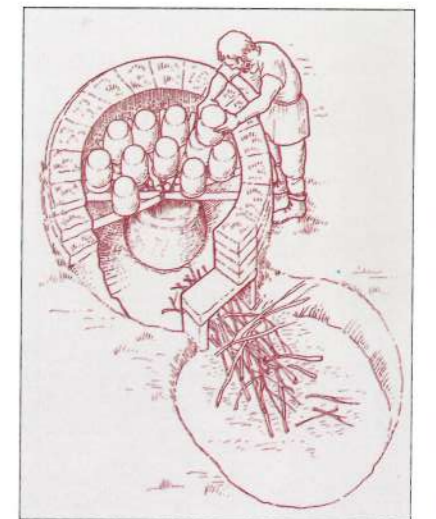
In the Roman period the area around Sandy was densely populated. This map gives an idea of just how many small farms and villas there were in the area.

With the development of Sandy came some opportunities for the surrounding farms. At Warren Villas, less than 20 minutes walk away, not only was a kiln established by the farmers to supply the town with pots, but they probably supplied Sandy with cereals and vegetables. Unfortunately the increased amount of farming in the area which seems to have taken place after the establishment of Sandy also resulted in a rise in the water table. As more land had been cleared so rainwater run-off had increased. These ploughmarks from Warren Villas were excavated and found to be full of waterlogged seeds dating to the early 2nd century AD.



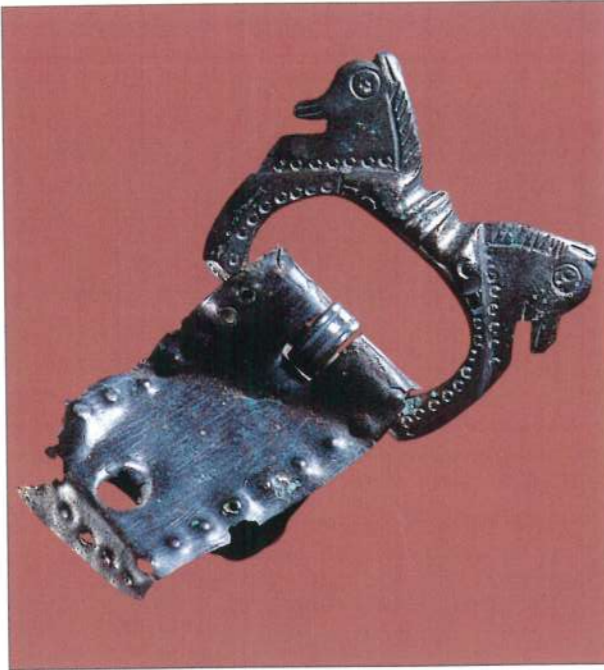
There is no evidence that pottery was manufactured in Sandy, although kilns have been discovered nearby, at Warren Villas Quarry. In fact, it is likely that the potters established their workshops outside the town because the smell and fumes from their kilns would have been a nuisance. The local potters either directly supplied specialist shops in the town, or, more likely at Sandy, brought their pots to sell at periodic markets. Pottery from more distant kilns, such as those in Oxfordshire or St Albans, would have been distributed through middle men or agents in a highly organised network. The pots will have been transported either along the new roads, on the rivers or along existing droveways.

The pottery kiln found at Warren Villas Quarry was in production in the late 1st or early 2nd century. A dump of almost complete vessels was found inside the collapsed firing chamber, a representative sample of the potter's repertoire, which ranged from orange-coloured flagons and platters to a variety of grey jars. Elements of the pre-Conquest, native tradition can be seen in the shape of the pots, but the sand and clay mixture from which they were formed and their firing in a kiln, rather than a bonfire, suggest strong Roman influence.



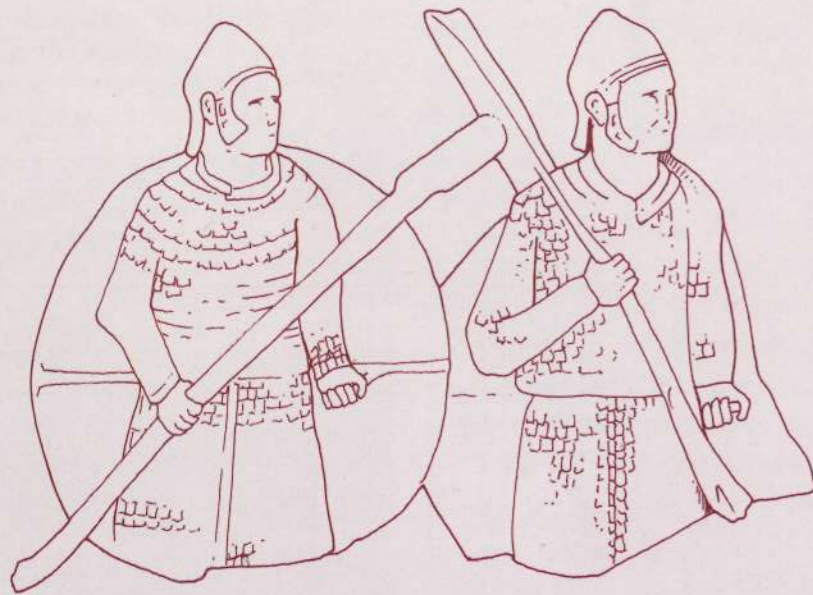
THE TWILIGHT YEARS: the end of Roman Sandy

This tinned bronze buckle with confronted horses' heads is of British manufacture and dates to the late 4th to early 5th centuries. It may have been worn by an official at the end of the Roman period to denote his rank.



The end of Roman Sandy may have come quickly. In the early years of the 5th century AD the western Roman empire was faced with a series of crises as Germanic tribes crossed the River Rhine and invaded Gaul. In Britain three military revolts followed in quick succession. The last pretender to the throne led the Roman army of Britain to Gaul, never to return. Meanwhile some members of the civil administration were expelled for corruption. It was the latter which marked the end of Roman rule in Britain in AD 410. There is no indication that in the countryside things changed overnight, but small towns like Sandy may have suffered as traffic on the road was reduced and the imperial postal system broke down.

It is unclear when or if occupation at Sandy actually ceased. Roman objects such as pottery may have continued in use for some time. The settlement area had certainly shifted by the 5th century when cremations in distinctively Germanic ceramics were buried in the area of Tower Hill. It is clear that the area of the cemetery, and the *mansio* to the south had been abandoned. The area remained farmland until the 20th century.



Troops like this will have been a regular feature in a roadside town like Sandy in the late 4th century AD.



This bronze of Valentinian I was minted in AD 375. The emperor Valentinian had been born in Pannonia, modern Hungary. He was senior emperor and ruled the western part of the Roman empire from Trier. During his reign Britain was overrun by Picts, Scots, Franks and Saxons and it took two years and all the skills of Count Theodosius to restore order.



At Sandy several cremations from the 5th century were found close to the present railway station. The pots which contained the ashes are very different from the preceding Roman vessels, in their manufacturing technique, shape and decoration. They are hand-made, and decorated with zones of stamped ornamentation or protruding bosses. The stamps had a symbolic significance to the community and are particularly common on cinerary urns. These decorated pots would have been specially made for use in the burial rite. The small plain jar is of a type normally found on settlement sites.

In the Saxon period Sandy will probably have been much smaller than its Roman ancestor. Visually the town will have changed with the transformation to a village. But the memory of the Roman past will have remained. The *mansio* and the larger farms became derelict and the land gradually returned to agriculture. In time stories of Sandy's Roman past will have become part of local legends and the field became Chesterfield as the ruins of the town became those of an earlier fortress.



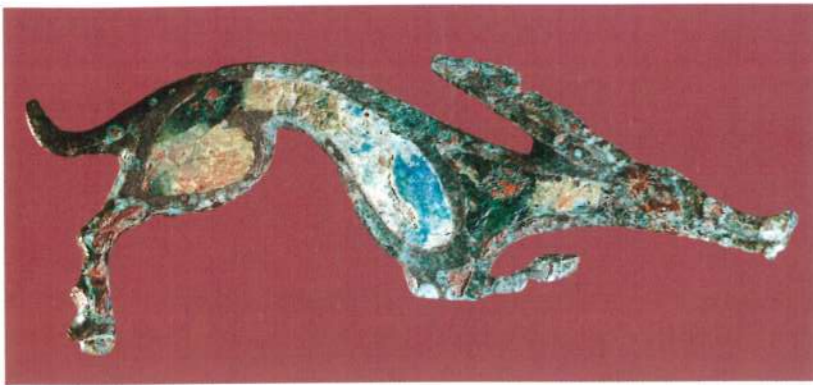
In the 5th century, the collapse of the Roman provincial government led to a period of settlement by tribal groups from northern Europe. The dominant tribes were the Angles and Saxons, and they brought with them their own ritual and traditions. They were pagans believing in gods such as *Nerthus*, the Mother Earth, and *Tiw*, *Woden*, and *Thunor* which have given us Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Frig was the equivalent of Venus. The Angles and Saxons believed in the afterlife and, for warriors, this meant joining the ancestors in Valhalla, or serving *Woden* in his perpetual battle against the Giants. A complex system of beliefs therefore underlay the burial rituals of early Anglo-Saxon England. In the Ouse valley area cremation was the dominant rite. The ashes of the dead were placed in an urn, possibly supplied specially for an individual,

and made by the women of a particular family. The cremation may also have been accompanied by grave goods to help the soul in the afterlife and to reflect the status of the dead. Cremations remained popular for only a short period before being replaced by inhumation.

In the years after the Roman withdrawal Sandy returned to agriculture alone as a way of life. Once again sheep, goats, cattle and pigs as well as cereals were the mainstay of the community. All domestic pigs have descended from the wild boar. Since pigs' main requirements are sleep and food they are relatively easy to control. Their willingness to eat refuse meant that they will have had a large part to play in everyday life at Sandy.



MORE ABOUT SANDY



Roman hunting dog brooch, 2nd century AD.

Where to see more of Roman Sandy:

There will be a display of finds and pictures in the new offices of **Sandy Town Council** in Cambridge Road.

In **Bedford Museum** finds from the 19th century are on permanent display in the archaeology gallery: 01234-353323.

In the **Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology**, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge. Enquires: 01223-333516.

In the **British Museum**, London where the ironwork hoard and oculists stamp are part of the collections: 0171 323 8454.

If you're going to visit one of these museums to see material from Sandy, make sure you enquire beforehand, whether the displays include objects from Sandy.

Where to read about Roman Sandy:

On the sculpture: Graham Appleton and Mike Dawson '**A large Stone Relief from the Roman Small**

town of Sandy, Bedfordshire' published in the journal *Britannia* volume XXVI, pages 303-306. Published in 1995 by the Roman Society, Senate House, Mallet Street, London WC1E 7HU.

For a summary of Sandy's pre-Roman and Roman history: an article by Mike Dawson just called '**Sandy**' is in *Roman Small Towns in the East Midlands and the east of England* published in 1995, edited by Tony Brown, pages 167-176. Available from Oxbow Booksellers, Park End Place, Oxford.

For an earlier view of Sandy: David Johnson '**The Roman settlement at Sandy, Bedfordshire**' in *Bedfordshire Archaeology* volume 9, 1974, pages 35-55. Available from the Sales Officer, Bedfordshire Archaeological Council, Peter Woods, 14 Glebe Road, Flitwick MK45 1HS.

On the hinterland, the area around Sandy:

On the site at Warren Villas Quarry, Sandy. Mike Dawson and Anthony Maull '**Warren Villas Quarry, Upper Caldecote. Excavations 1989-1994**' *Bedfordshire Archaeology* volume 22, 1996 (see above for how to get a copy).

On the site at Kempston: '**The archaeology of the Bedford region**' edited by Mike Dawson and published by Bedford Archaeological Council and Bedfordshire County Council 1998.

On Roman Bedfordshire:

Angla Simco wrote a '**Survey of Bedfordshire: the Roman period**' in 1984 which was published by Bedfordshire County Council.

You can read more about Roman Britain in:

'**Britannia**' by Prof S S Frere, in paperback from any good bookshop.

'**Roman Britain**' by Prof P Salway, in paperback from any good bookshop.

'**The Romanisation of Roman Britain**' by Martin Millet, published in paperback by Cambridge University Press.

More on Roman small towns:

Burnham B, Wacher J, 1991 '**The "small towns" of Roman Britain**' Routledge, London.

Smith, R F 1987 '**Roadside Settlements in Lowland Roman Britain**' British Archaeological Reports, British Series No. 157. Available through the library.

Glossary

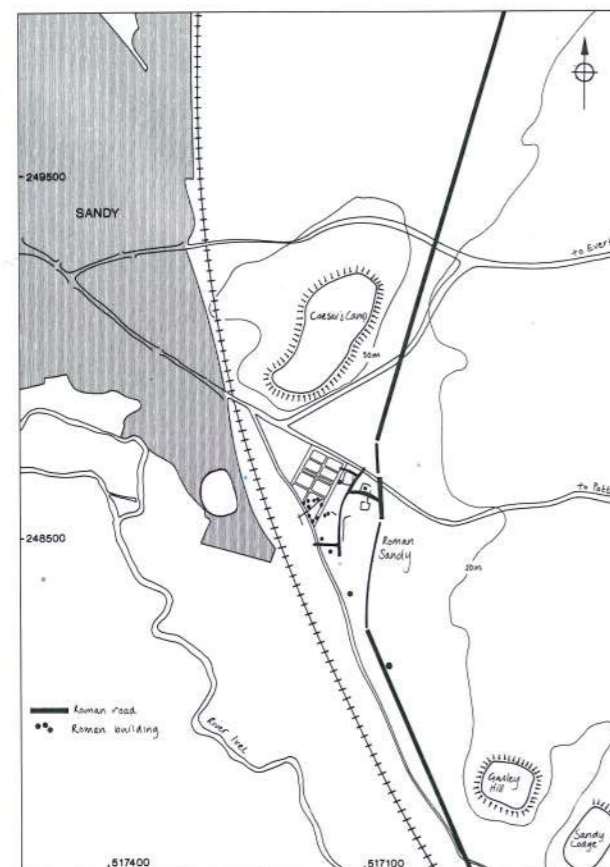
lachrymatories - small glass phials in Roman tombs, thought to contain the tears of the dead.

litharge - the metal to be refined was melted with an excess of lead which was oxidised, forming litharge (lead oxide).

mansio - an establishment which provided horses and accommodation for the imperial post.

oppida - a large Iron Age settlement, often enclosed within ramparts. Considered to be the earliest form of towns in some parts of Europe.

sestertius - an early type of Roman coin.



Map of Roman finds in Sandy.

ABOUT THE SPONSOR

Redland Aggregates is a division of one of the world's largest construction materials groups, Redland PLC, which has operations in over 35 countries. The Company operates from over 200 locations throughout the UK including Europe's largest granite quarry at Mountsorrel in Leicestershire.

Redland Aggregates supplies about 10% of the country's demand for aggregate, providing the raw materials from which society builds its houses, schools, hospitals, offices and shops and constructs its roads, railways and airports.

Redland Aggregates also manufactures value added products, chiefly in the form of coated stone, ready-mixed and precast concrete, speciality mineral and magnesia products.

Redland's link with Sandy goes back over 40 years when sand extraction was started on the north-east side of the Town along Cambridge Road.

Redland Aggregates currently operate at Sandy Heath Quarry, which was started in 1966. The Company have developed an important and large scale landscape initiative to re-establish heathland at the site. Heathland habitats are now scarce in Bedfordshire and Sandy Heath Quarry is providing an important contribution towards their conservation.

As well as having a commitment to plan future environmental improvement through mineral working, Redland Aggregates has also provided significant resources throughout its United Kingdom operations to study the past.

The Company has undertaken extensive and detailed archaeological research and exploration throughout the country. Many projects have revealed important and unexpected finds in association with mineral development programmes.

Redland Aggregates are therefore pleased to be able to sponsor the release of this publication, bringing together the treasures of Sandy's Roman History for the first time.



Tim Deal

Tim Deal,
Area, Lands and Planning
Manager,
Redlands Aggregates,
Six Hills,
Melton Mowbray,
Leicestershire LE14 3PD

Redland
AGGREGATES

ISBN 1-85351-261-3



9 781853 512612



© Froste 1997