

CCLM03, 04 and 05

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST PITS AT
CARNARVON PRIMARY SCHOOL,
BINGHAM**

BY

BINGHAM HERITAGE TRAILS ASSOCIATION

APRIL-MAY 2012

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT ON
CARNARVON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

CCLM03, 04 AND 05

CONTENTS

HISTORY OF SITE
INTRODUCTION
REVIEW OF PREVIOUS WORK

LOCATION AND PROTOCOL CCLM03
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CCLM03

LOCATION AND PROTOCOL CCLM04
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CCLM04

LOCATION AND PROTOCOL CCLM05
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CCLM05

**CCLM03,04 and 05
CARNARVON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

SITE HISTORY

The presence of a Roman “villa”, or more likely a Romano-British farmhouse on this site is well known. Recent extensions to the school have revealed further Roman remains; a well was found



The top picture is an aerial photograph taken in the 1950s showing Crow Close from the north east. Cogley Lane is at the top. The image has been manipulated to give greater contrast. It shows the ditches marking the internal field boundaries, ridge and furrow, the hollow way and the house platforms.



The lower aerial photograph is taken from the east. The fragment of a field in the bottom left corner is the site of the Carnarvon Primary School. Note the circular structure that may be related to activity during WWII

under the extension that now holds the computer suite. Skeletons and other finds have been made in more recent works.

The 1586, 1776 and 1841 maps and surveys do not indicate any built development on the school site itself.

In the 1500s the site was almost certainly part of the minor manorial holding of Robert Porter, who held about 10% of

the parish. Geophysical and laser topographical surveys were done by BHTA in Crow Close, which adjoins the school site on the west. They indicate the possibility of house platforms including the large one that the Porter family lived in, small cottages, small enclosures, roadways and ridge and furrow in ploughed areas. All these have been interpreted as indicative of activity in this area in the medieval and early post-medieval periods.

The 1776 survey refers to the area merely as “sundry freeholds”, implying that part of the Porter freehold had been sold off to a number of individuals.

By 1841 the whole of Crow Close, the school site and the field to the east were freehold in the



Barn near the gate to Carnarvon Primary School with the carved initials JW and the date, 1898, near the door.

ownership of William Pacey. His farmhouse was what is now Beauvale House in the Market Place. The small barn still standing near the main entrance to the school carries the date 1898 and the initials JW, so the land had clearly passed out of the Pacey ownership by then. This might have been John Wall, a cottager, who lived in Long Acre East but had passed from the censuses by 1901. More likely, perhaps, it could have been Joseph Walker, the butcher in Union Street (before Mr Butler). Crow Close had long been used by local butchers to run cattle – indeed it still is used for cattle grazing. Maybe John Walker used it for this purpose. The last local butcher to do this was Mr Hopkinson who lived at East Cottage, on the corner of Long Acre East

and Cogley Lane – his shop is now part of the Handicentre in Market Street.

Aerial photographs of Crow Close show a number of circular features as well as tracks, boundaries and platforms. One such feature at the west end of Crow Close has been shown to be the remains of a Second World War searchlight emplacement. There is a similar feature on land now occupied by the school, which is likely to have been one too. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the field was used throughout the Second World War as part of the defensive ring around Newton airfield and as part of the outer defences for Nottingham.

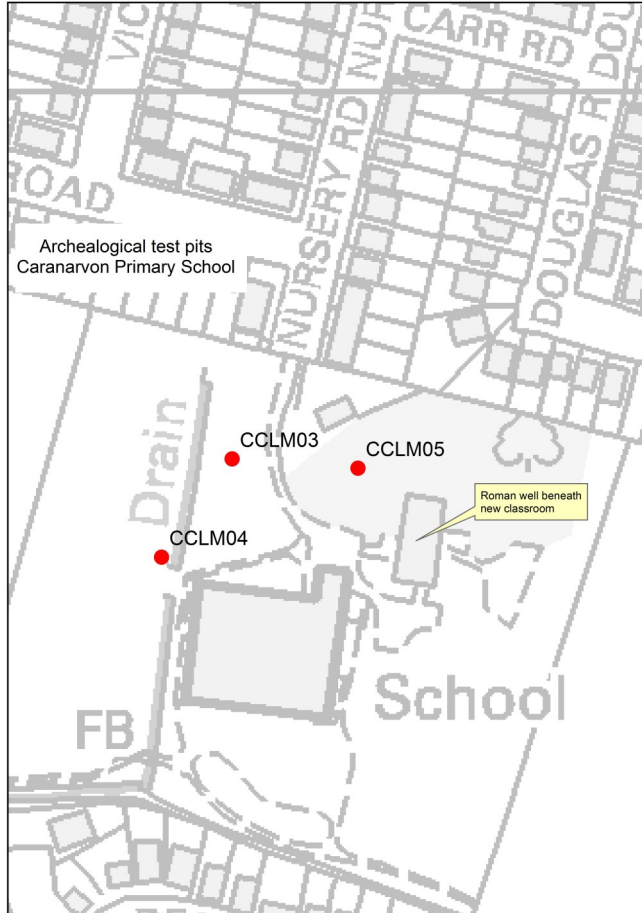
The site remained as farm land until the school was built in the 1960s.

Full details about the history of Crow Close can be found on the BHTA website.

CCLM03, 04 and 05

INTRODUCTION

Carnarvon Primary School was built in the late 1960s on a green field site to the east of an enclosure called Crow Close. Crow Close had long been regarded as the site of a deserted medieval vil-



lage, but research carried out by BHTA (see the BHTA website) has shown it to be the site of an estate house and associated buildings owned by the Porter family, notable freeholders in the parish from at least the mid 15th century.

While building the school evidence was collected of a Roman villa and later medieval activity.

Three test pits were dug as a school project between 30th April and 3rd May 2012 to explore these findings further. This was the first of the three school projects done by BHTA. The children did the digging, sieving and finds washing and some of the database entry under supervision by BHTA and Trent & Peak Archaeology.

Two of the three pit sites were located close to the school building near where the Roman sherds were located. The third was at the edge of the playing field and sited to test the extension of the active area in the Roman period.

Location of pits. Map by permission of OS Licence No 0100031673

The place where the Romans built their house was determined by the geology of the site. The



The site before the new classroom was built. The well is in front of the far building



The Roman well, now concealed beneath the floor of the classroom.

modern school is built across the boundary between Triassic sandstone and clays that were laid down in a lake that formed about 20,000 years ago. By the time of the Roman occupation most of the lake had silted up and the land in the area of the school was probably boggy. Building work in the 1960s revealed here a layer of black and grey clay, probably the remains of the marshland and a lot of the Roman rubbish had been dumped in it. The villa site was probably on the sandstone that would have been slightly raised above the lake. Work on the classroom extension in 2002/2003 showed the boundary between the clay and the sandstone and a well was situated on it. This suggests that the well may have been built around a natural spring. Overlying the well was a deposit 50 cm thick of clay mixed with sand, pebbles, and bits of rock that was probably laid down in a flood at some time after the Roman period..

**PICTURES OF FINDS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE FIRST EXCAVATION
IN THE SCHOOL GROUNDS**



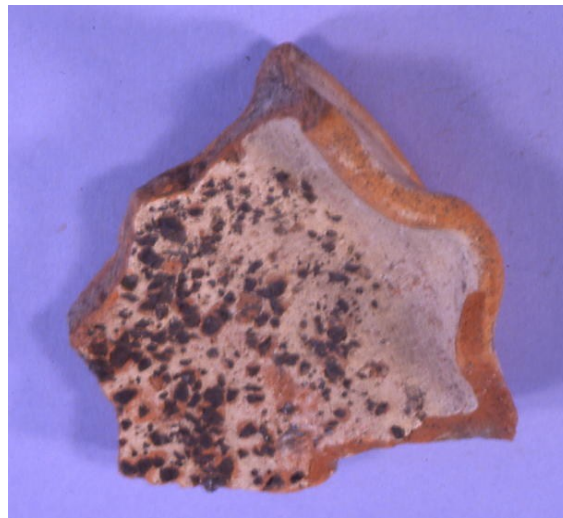
These are all colour-coated sherds of beakers, dishes and jars made in the Nene Valley, Peterborough from 2nd to 4th C. Nottingham Castle Museum



This is the base of a grey ware jar with holes in it to be used as a colander. Nottingham Castle Museum



Two sherds, the small one a badly burnt 1st or early 2nd C, the larger one a distorted rim from the 2nd or early 3rd C. Both are likely to have been misfired in a kiln. Nottingham Castle Museum



A fragment of a mortarium used for grinding food to make a paste. This was made in Swanpool near Lincoln in the late 3rd and 4th C. Nottingham Univ. Museum.

CCLM03,04 and 05

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS WORK

Before the school was built in the late 1960s contractors discovered a lot of Roman pottery and two skeletons in trenches dug prior to building. The finds were brought to the attention of Mr C Ashton at Toot Hill School and he began excavations on the site in advance of further building. Later, he was joined by the late Tony Gregory who published an account of the finds within a year of excavating them, while still at university (A. Gregory: *A Romano-British site in Bingham*, Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire, 1969, 73, 105-110). They were re-examined by Ruth Leary in 2005. Full details of her re-examination can be found on the BHTA website.

This work revealed fragments of a ruined wall and some stone paving possibly part of a Roman house. Red clay roofing tiles and fragments of box tiles from a hypocaust, the Roman central heating system, indicated that a building of status with a bath house, possibly a villa, was located here. There was a wide range of pottery dating from the whole of the period of Roman occupation. Much of it was fine quality, including samian ware and high quality British-made wares, a further indication that the site might have been a villa. There is also some evidence that there may have been a kiln on the site.

Later, while building classroom extensions in 2003 and a new reception area in 2008 more evidence of Roman activity was revealed including finding a Roman, stone-lined well. The artefacts found on the site were examined by Tony Sumpter, a consultant archaeologist, but no report was ever filed. The well was covered over without being excavated and a new classroom built on it.

Evidence was also found of medieval activity and when the new reception area was being built in 2008 a possible medieval skeleton was found and examined by Trent & Peak Archaeology. There is at present no report of this either.

CCLM03

LOCATION AND PROTOCOL

NGR	471511.339880
Height OD (mid point rim of N face)	20.369 m [error 0.018 m]
Dig dates	30 th April – 3 rd May
Pit site	Carnarvon Primary School near the front gate.
Pit protocol	<p>1-metre pit, 10 cm spits, all sieved. Pit dug, soil sieved and finds washed by the children with BHTA and parent supervision. The pit was dug to rockhead, which was about 60 cm on the north sloping to 80 cm on the south side. The pit was deepened another 10 cm in the NE corner, but was abandoned at 90 cm because the hole began to fill with water.</p> <p>Pit orientated N-S. North face sections only described and measured unless otherwise stated. Photographs taken facing north unless otherwise stated.</p>

CCLM03

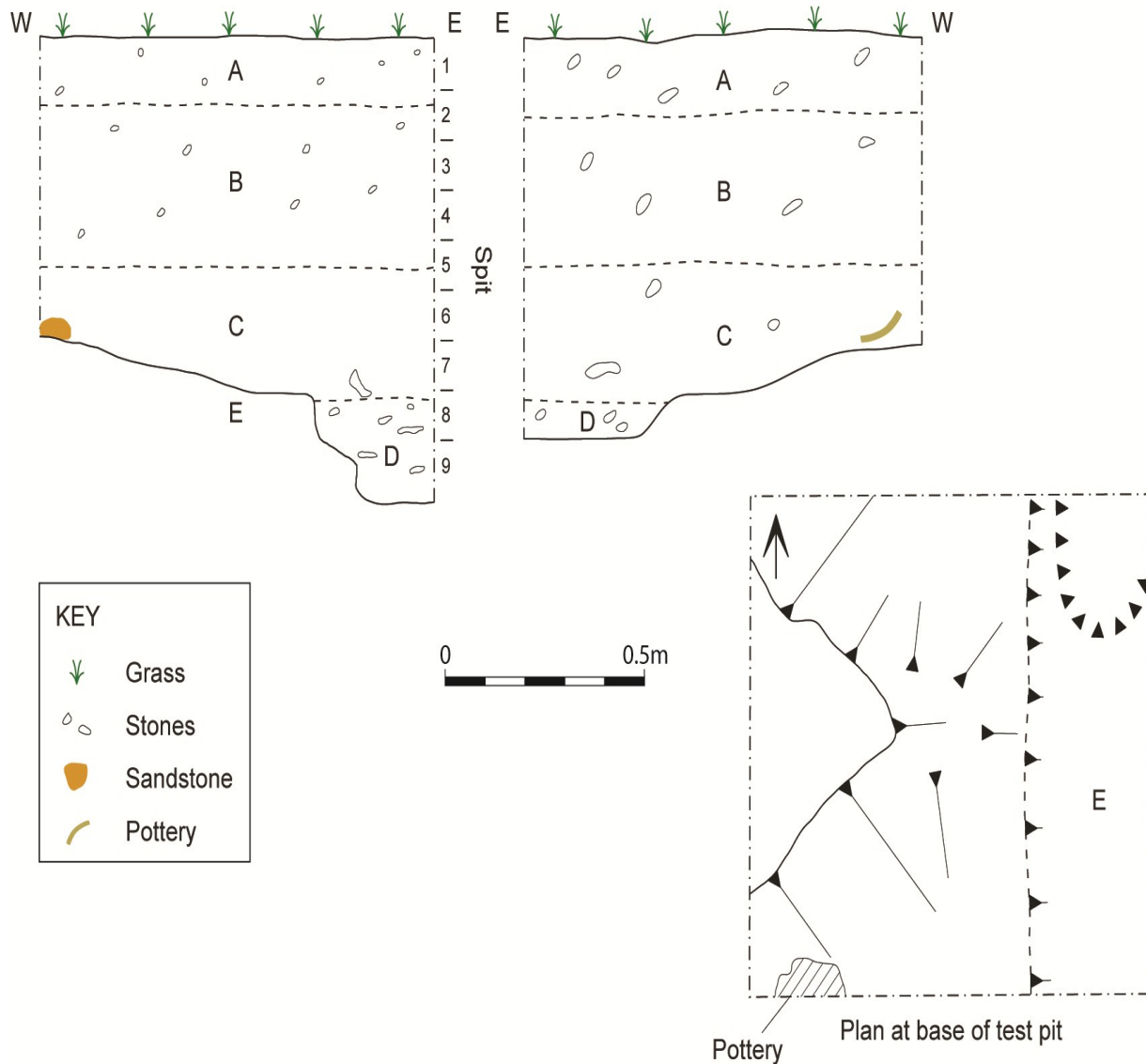
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Description of pit

The succession revealed in the pit is:

- Topsoil (context A)
- Subsoil (contexts B and C)
- Flood deposit (context D)
- Basal clay (context E)

CCLM03



- A* Topsoil of dark brown-black loam with small pebbles
- B* Subsoil of dark brown loam, chalky pebbles
- C* Subsoil of lighter brown-grey clay with red-brown clay streaks and mottles. Shell fragments and skerry stones near base.
- D* Grey sticky clay with sparse mottles, sandstone and skerry stones to 10 cm, Roman pot sherds.
- E* Mottled grey and brown sandy clay

The succession did not appear to be much disturbed by the building activity when the school was built except for the presence of small pieces of brick, nails, glass and wood found mainly between 40 and 60 cm depth. They may be there as a result of animal activity, but the effects of landscaping or other ground disturbance during the building of the school cannot be ignored.

The topsoil of dark brown-black loam with pebbles is about 14cm thick.

The subsoil is dark brown loam with some chalky pebbles in the upper part (context B) and lighter brown-grey clay (context C) beneath. The clay is mottled and has shell fragments, but also pot sherds.

The basal clay is very irregular dropping from 60 cm to over 90 cm. It is unclear whether there is a man-made trench across the east of the pit. A deposit in the deeper part of the trench consists of grey sticky clay with sparse mottles, sandstone and skerry (very hard, fine sandstone) stones to 10cm and Roman pot sherds. It has the qualities of a deposit formed in a flood, though there is no certainty about this.

The basal clay is mottled grey and brown and sandy. It is unclear whether this is a lake deposit or formed during the ice age. The mottling occurs in subsoil as well as the basal clay and is a secondary effect, not to be used to help identify the origin. The lower part of the subsoil sequence (context C), though it contains pottery, also contains one or two shell fragments like the lake deposit and it could be lake mud into which rubbish, like broken pots, could have been thrown and settled in.

In conclusion, the sequence in this pit is difficult to interpret, but is most likely to be a soil profile (contexts Q and B) developed above mud deposits laid in the margins of a lake.

Finds

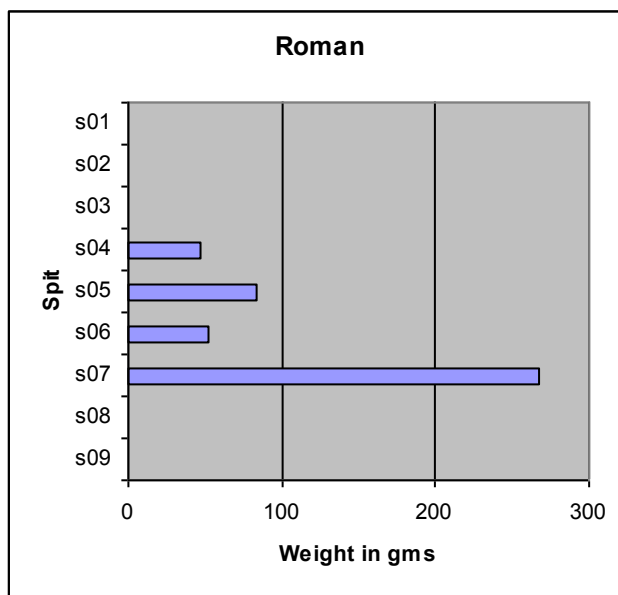
There was a floor tile, two small pieces of white ceramic tile, modern nails and coal in the topsoil. Small pieces of brick, a felt tack, a small piece of clear bottle glass, bits of wood and a piece of bitumen were found mostly between 40 and 60 cm depth; that is at the colour change within the subsoil (contexts B and C)

Animal bones and teeth were found at all depths in the pit to 80cm

There were no sherds of Modern pottery in this pit. All the sherds recovered from this pit were Roman or Iron Age. They were recovered from below 30 cm depth down to the flood deposit in spit 8. The most were from between 60 and 70 cm depth.

One small piece of pot found in spit 3 (60686) is thought to be late Iron Age. A very large fragment found in context C just above the basal clay is a 1st century Shelly Ware pot (60617).

Most of the Roman pottery was grey ware (e.g. 60683) and cannot be dated. A few pieces were





IMG_1346 Basal clay with a trench on right, thought to be manmade. Boundary between contexts B and C is clearly seen



IMG_1342 Close-up of 1st C sherd of Shelly Ware (60617) in situ.



The Shelly Ware sherd washed and cleaned.

Shell-tempered Ware (50-150), but there is some uncertainty about their age. A nice base of a Nene Valley Colour Coat pot (170-400) (60692), fine grey ware and Parisian Ware (70-130) (60712 and 60713) and Lincoln White Ware (70-200) (60716) were found. Several pieces of Sandy Ware (60706) were also found. The majority, therefore, dates from the 1st and 2nd centuries with the emphasis on mid 1st to mid 2nd.

Interpretation

While disturbance during the 1960 building of the school is likely the soil profile below 50-60 cm depth can be interpreted as natural.

The geological map shows the whole of the school site as being built on deposits laid down in the lake that existed across most of the northern half of the parish. On the ground, however, the lake margin is quite intricate. There is evidence that the lake was silted up before the Roman period and it is most likely that this test pit was dug into deposits that were marginal to the lake deposits, though if the trench in the eastern side of the test pit was man-made then the ground would have had to be emerged as dry land at the time. The villa site is likely to be nearby.

The best dates for the Roman pottery indicate activity from the 1st to mid/late 2nd centuries. This is an early settlement, dating to immediately after the arrival of the Roman army into the Trent Valley.

The absence of any medieval and post-medieval pottery probably signifies that the area was not in use through that period.

CCLM04

LOCATION AND PROTOCOL

NGR	471487.339847
Height OD (mid point rim of N face)	20.549 m [error 0.03 m]
Dig dates	30 th April – 3 rd May
Pit site	Carnarvon Primary School in the playing field to the west of the Reception area.
Pit protocol	1-metre pit, 10 cm spits, all spits sieved. Pit dug, soil sieved and finds washed by the children with BHTA and parent supervision. Pit stopped at 80 cm then a downward extension was dug 30 cm wide and 10 cm deep along the W side. Pit orientated N-S. North face sections only described and measured unless otherwise stated. Photographs taken facing north unless otherwise stated.

CCLM04

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Description of pit

The sequence of the pit is:

Topsoil (context A)

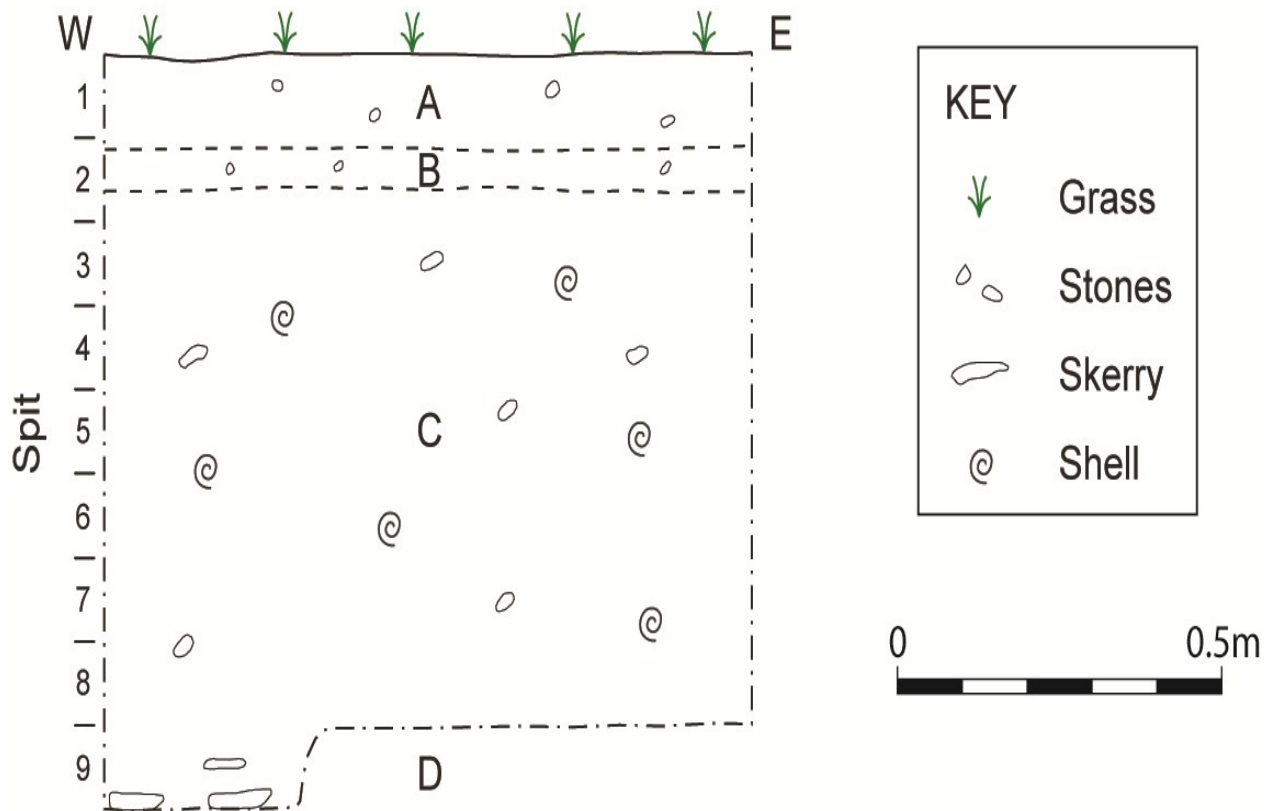
Subsoil (context B)

Clay (contexts C and D)

The topsoil is about 12 cm thick and the underlying subsoil is no more than 5 cm.

Beneath this is clay. Most of the pit section from c18cm to nearly 90 cm is stiff brown clay with

CCLM04



A Topsoil of dark brown loam with a few small pebbles

B Subsoil of dark brown loam, smooth.

C Stiff brown clay with small (2 cm) pebbles, plenty snail shells 4 to 15 mm. A layer of skerry stones at base with stones up to 14 cm long.

D Plastic grey-brown clay, smooth sticky

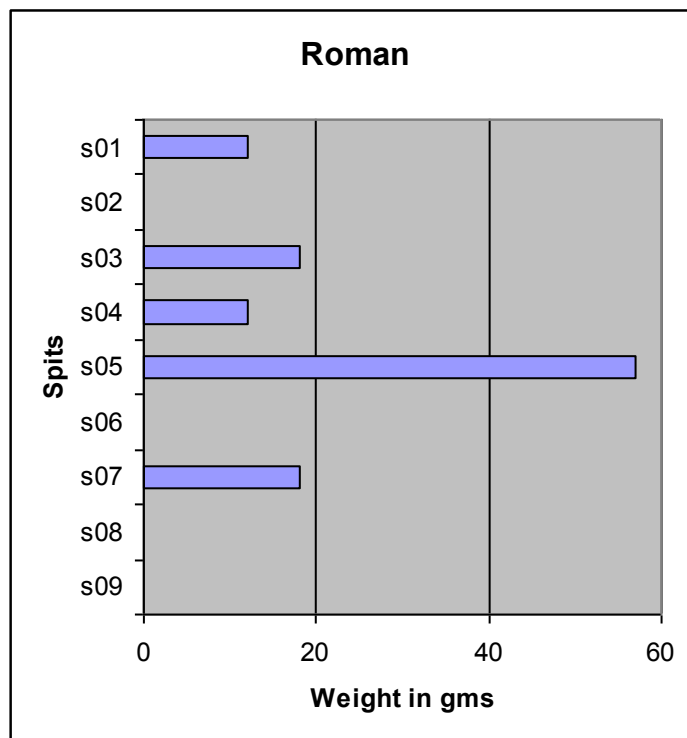
small pebbles, plenty of snail shells and some pottery sherds. The snail shells suggest a natural lake deposit. At the base of this is a layer of skerry stones up to 14cm long overlying a smooth, sticky, plastic grey-brown clay.

Finds

Only 51 finds were recorded from this pit.

Three pieces of brick, none measurable, were recovered from the topsoil. Clinker and a clay pipe stem were recovered from spits 5 and 7 respectively, that is within the unit of stiff brown clay. Three flints, possibly man made were found in the topsoil and in spit 5.

Bones and teeth were recovered at all depths in the pit down to spit 8.



One sherd of White Ware (1830-2000) was found in this pit. There was also one Nottingham Light-bodied Green Glaze and another of Derbyshire-made stoneware. All were found in the topsoil.

All the other pottery was Roman, most of it found between 40 and 50 cm depth. Except for a single sherd of grog-tempered ware (70-150) (60768) it was all grey ware. One of these pieces was a long everted rim piece (60765) from a jar that could be dated to 125 to 150. Some other pieces were distinctive enough to date, all in the 2nd to 3rd C. A single piece of white ware (180-200) was found.

One flint was recovered. It is honey coloured and shows signs of having been re-touched around the rim to make a sharp edge for a scraper. The quality of the tool

is poor and it is worn. It was found in the topsoil.

Interpretation

The thin topsoil and subsoil is probably undisturbed and original. All the pottery younger than Roman is from within it. The quantity is low and in keeping with an agricultural origin, possibly from manure.

The grey-brown plastic clay at the bottom of the pit is likely to be a lake deposit, with the layer of stones above it marking a littoral feature. The stiff brown clay, which is the bulk of the section, contains a range of pottery, clay pipe, clinker and bones, but it also contains shells. These shells have been examined elsewhere and found to be from a range of species that inhabit the marginal parts of freshwater lakes. It is likely that this, as in CCLM03, is a bog at the margin of the lake, which has had rubbish dumped into it. The dominance of late 1st to end 2nd C pottery is similar to CCLM03. Also the absence of any later pottery than Roman except in the topsoil suggests that there was no activity here after the Roman period.

CCLM05

LOCATION AND PROTOCOL

NGR	471553.339877
Height OD (mid point rim of N face)	20.488 m [error 0.013 m]
Dig dates	30 th April – 3 rd May
Pit site	Carnarvon Primary School to the SE of the front gate.
Pit protocol	<p>1-metre pit 10 cm spits, all spits sieved. Pit dug, soil sieved and finds washed by the children with BHTA and parent supervision. Great amount of builder's rubble slowed the children down and the pit was not bottomed at a natural surface. Stopped at 50 cm, but a downward extension was dug to 70 cm in the SE corner of the southern face to test thickness of the RB pottery layer.</p> <p>Pit orientated N-S. North face sections only described and measured unless otherwise stated. Photographs taken facing north unless otherwise stated</p>

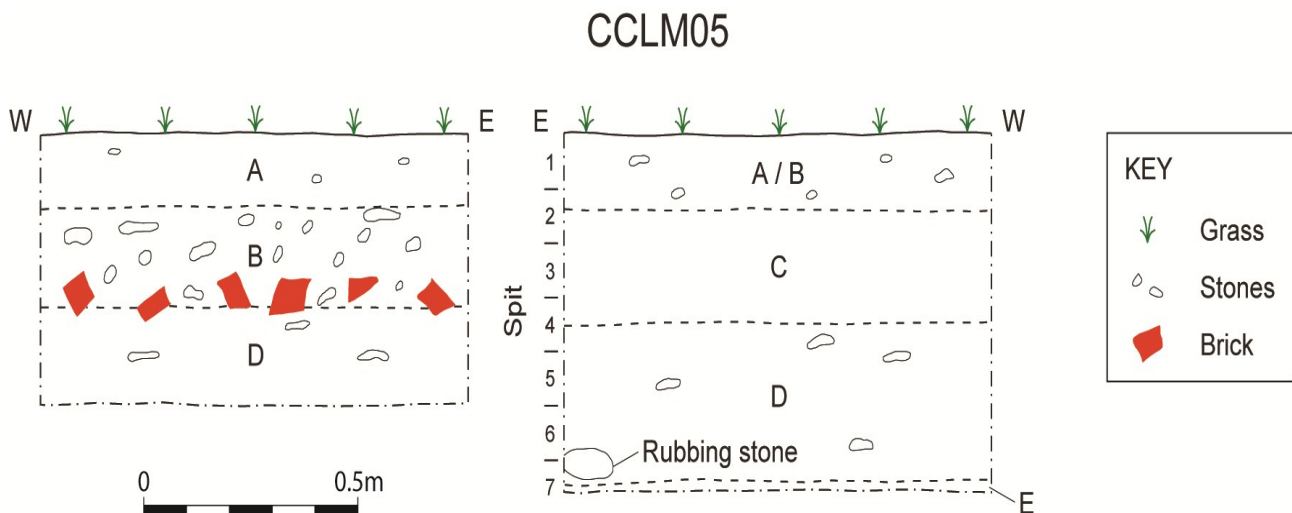
CCLM05

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Description of pit

The succession can be interpreted as:

- Topsoil (context A)
- Building rubble and re-deposited clay soil (contexts B and C)
- Undisturbed clay subsoil
- Basal clay



- A* Topsoil of dark brown loam beneath turf. Few pebbles.
- B* Building rubble: sandy loam containing abundant sandstone, skerry, limestone and shale, some bitumen covered. Bricks mostly at the base. Layer thins to the south and merges with context A.
- C* Brown-grey clay, thins to the N.
- D* Grey-brown clay with some sand, sparse skerry and abundant Roman pottery. Dark, or ganic triangular patch in base. Pit extended downwards in south to base at 66 cm. Rubbing stone beneath a mortarium base.
- E* Grey, sticky clay with sand and grit

The topsoil is about 12 cm thick and consists of dark brown loam with a few pebbles.

The topsoil overlies a layer of builder's rubble nearly 20 cm thick in the north of the pit, but it thins to the south to near zero and is replaced by brown-grey clay. These two contexts probably represent ground disturbed during the building phase in the 1960s.

Beneath the disturbed ground is grey-brown clay with some sand, sparse skerry stones and plentiful Roman pottery. It forms a layer nearly 30 cm thick resting on grey, sticky clay with sand and grit.

Finds

There is little in the topsoil except for small pieces of brick and tile and a clay pipe stem. There is no pottery at all.

The builder's rubble consists mainly of modern material and is presumed to be debris created during building the school. There was no other building on this site that was demolished. The material consists of bricks, including engineering brick, mortar, plaster, ceramic tile, floor tile, roof tile, slate and modern drain with bits of wood, coal and two fragments of clay pipes. One is a 19th C stem, the other a mid to late 19th C fluted clay pipe bowl fragment.

Some glass was found in the lower part of the rubble layer and just beneath it. It was mostly clear, window glass 1/8th inch to 1/4 inch thick and including ridged bathroom window glass. There was a white opaque piece and a fragment of a mirror. All of the is 20th C, probably mid.

There was very little metal, but a couple of nails and some lead strip were found.

Bone and teeth are present at most depths.

Some pottery was recovered at the interface between topsoil and the rubble, including 18th C stoneware, coarse earthenware and modern earthenware. The three modern sherds are White Ware (1830-1950) and a piece of Late Brown Glaze. The last cannot be dated accurately, but is likely to be 19th-20th C. It was widely used for tea pots.

Five sherds of medieval pottery were found immediately beneath the rubble layer. They were eroded and two could not be identified with any certainty. The other three are Nottingham Reduced Green Glaze (60642), Medieval Sandy Ware (60645) and Nottingham Coarse Pink Sandy Ware (60646). They range in age through the 13th to end 14th C and are probably remnants of sherds left on the ground surface before it was covered with rubble.

73 Roman or possibly Roman sherds were found. Nearly all were found below the layer of building rubble, but two of the Nene Valley colour-coated ware sherds including the one with the youngest date range was found among the rubble and clearly had been dumped here. This is a high concentration and possibly indicative of a rubbish dump. The range of types is limited.

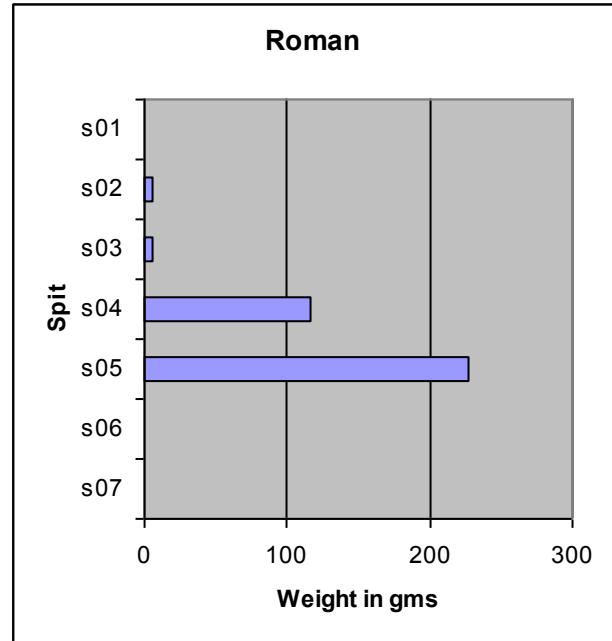
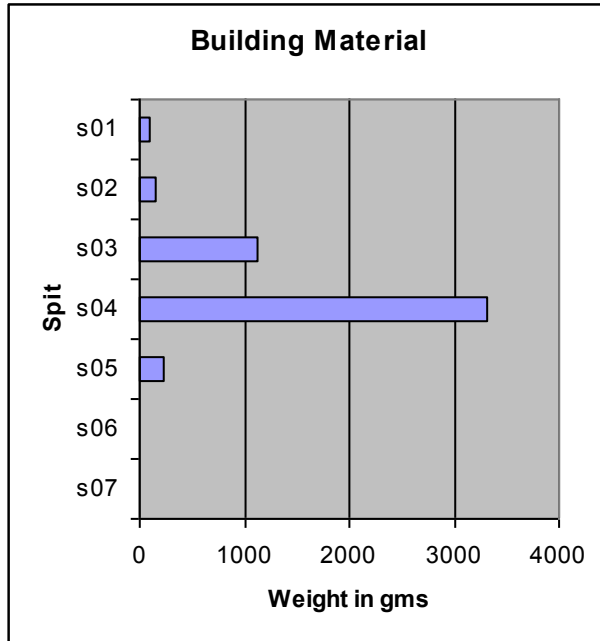
The majority of the sherds are grey ware (72%). Most of them cannot be dated, though there were some decorated forms that could. One is a Swanpool-type of fabric (60632). Others, which include a rim piece have been burnished (60597, 60615). Among the decorated forms (60566, 60583, 60587, 60592 and 60618) some can be dated.



There are seven pieces of Nene Valley Colour-coated Ware. One of these is a Hunt cup (60573) with *en barbotine* decoration showing the back of a head and ear of an animal. [*Barbotine is a ceramic slip, or mixture of clay and water, used for making relief decorating pottery.*] The ear on the decoration is short, but a raised curving area besides it could be an antler so it could be a deer. A

IMG_1352 South face showing the builder's rubble (context B) thinning to the south, the dark soil layer beneath it and rubbing stone in the small slot in the SE corner.

single piece of Fine Orange Ware (60567) was found. It has white and red/brown inclusions, similar to Severn Valley ware texture, but is probably a fine micaceous Lincoln ware type. Of the several pieces of Shell-tempered ware found some could not be distinguished from medieval ware types. Of those that could be dated they are early types. One piece is a rim of a hooked rim jar



made in Bourne or Greatham (60629). This has a long date range of late 1st C to 4th C. Others are earlier dating from mid 1st to mid/late 2nd C. The forms that can be identified are beakers, narrow-necked jars, dishes, wide necked jars and unidentifiable enclosed forms.

One large piece of a mortarium (60654) was found resting on a stone (60655). The stone is hand-sized and would fit into the palm of a hand. It was severely abraded on the two opposing flatter sides, suggesting that it may have been a rubbing stone that had been used in the mortarium.

A single sherd was identified as Iron Age (60605).

The date range for the Roman pottery is broad, ranging from the late 1st C to late 4th C.

Interpretation

The topsoil was probably laid during landscaping after the school building phase. There was little of significance in it. Sherds of pottery were found at the interface between the topsoil and the rubble beneath it. They include stoneware and coarse earthenware. The soil was probably stockpiled during the building phase having been scraped up from the site in general and nothing can be interpreted from the content.

The building rubble and the window glass clearly represents activity associated with building the school and it is laid on an existing ground surface. One or two sherds of Roman pot were found within the rubble which indicates that some of the contemporary soil was scraped up and mixed with the rubble when it was re-deposited on this site.

All the medieval and Modern pottery sherds were found immediately below the layer of rubble within the upper part of the original soil layer. Their presence is probably indicative of little other than agricultural activity. There is neither the concentration nor the closeness in age to suggest a possible medieval habitation hereabouts.

The Roman sherds that can be dated range through late 1st to end 4th C. They appear to lie in three age range groups. A small number of Shell-tempered and some Grey Ware has an overlapping date range of c100 to 130. This would be an indication of the earliest period of settlement here. The second overlapping date range is 170 to 230 and contains the largest part of the collection. Lastly, a single sherd of Nene Valley colour coat has a date range of late 3rd to late 4th C (270 to 400). Other finds from elsewhere on the site and described in the BHTA website show a similar long range. However, dating is not so precise that it is possible to postulate occupation in those three periods only. It is probably more likely that there was more or less continuous occupation throughout the Roman period. The abundance of 2nd to early 3rd C finds fits well with the pattern elsewhere in Bingham. This seems to have been a time when there was the most agricultural activity in the whole parish.

The abundance of Roman pottery in a highly concentrated layer suggests that the site is close to the villa. Some of the sherds, for example the Hunt cup, are from good quality wares, which might be expected in a villa, but the majority (72%) are grey ware sherds, generally the ware type used by the lower status members of the household.

The single Iron Age sherd cannot be dated more closely than that. The fact that Iron Age sherds were also found in one of the other pits suggests some sort of activity during that period at this site. The sherd was found at the same level as many of the Roman sherds, which might suggest that it is from a late Iron Age pot. It was not uncommon for the Romans to set up their camps close to existing British settlements during the invasion.