

Excavation work on the multi-period archaeological site in Weston Road has progressed slowly during the past months, due to extremes of weather conditions. Work took place mostly on the processing of the very large quantity of finds in our workrooms at St. Georges Centre.

On site, work in-between storms has revealed a virtually intact kiln/oven or furnace, possibly of a beehive shape. As far as we can tell at this stage, the dome appears to be complete, ie. it is not shattered even though it may have subsided downwards. This would present an excellent study opportunity for any research worker interested in this type of structure. A number of small interconnected circular or sub-circular features are immediately adjacent the furnace and may be bread ovens or corn-drying kilns for which indirect heat would have been supplied through ducts or flues from the large furnace. We have found a large quantity of animal bones, fish vertebrae and winkle, limpet, oyster and other shells surrounding this feature, indicating that at least one of the purposes of the furnace was also the preparation of meals.

However, there are also indications that sometimes the furnace was used for small craft activities or repairing domestic items. A quantity of copper alloy pieces and some broken iron or other metal objects have been found as well as pieces of shale. A sizeable subcircular piece of shale, about 9 or 10cms diameter, shows clear signs of having been worked and it appears likely that shale bracelets or other jewelry were made on the site.

Immediately south of the furnace and small circular features the foundations of another larger circular building have been revealed during the past few days of work. It has a diameter of nearly 6 meters and is therefore approximately of the same size as the circular building (now referred to as Circular Building One) which is in the centre of the excavation area and has been visible since the removal of the topsoil. See leaflets 1 - 3. Most of this new circular building (No. 2) is still under the grassed-over field forming the edge to the site available to us for research. The pottery sherds associated with these features consist (so far) almost exclusively of black burnished ware with some Samian of very red colour as well as orangey or even brownish-red colour, indicating that we have imported ware as well as 'imitation Samian' possibly produced somewhere in England.

Because of the limited time and resources available to us for work on the site, it has been decided that (weather permitting) all our efforts will be concentrated on completing the excavation of the second quadrant of the first round building (No. 1) and excavating and sectioning the furnace/oven and the associated areas round it and between the small circular features. We are hoping that by concentrating on this part of the site, we will be able to gain enough information to enable us to understand what the nature of the rest of the site is.

We are now in a position to say that the site at our disposal is on the northern edge of a substantial Roman settlement with buildings and structures of a diverse nature, including probably a religious structure, cooking places and at least one oven or furnace. The population included some craftsmen who sometimes worked small metal items and made shale objects and women who spun wool on looms. They were almost certainly under control of a rich overseer who could afford to import items and material from abroad; his home was possibly the Roman building which we know is under the medieval building (and later formed the base for the large medieval building). Their food included meat from cattle, sheep, fish, molluscs and corn.

