

WALL (Letocetum) Staffe. Grid Ref. 580960

Summary report on excavations carried out during 1980/1981 in advance of development by Lichfield District Council at the west end of the village where the road known as Watling Street joins the by-pass.

Two areas were examined - one to the east and one to the west of the main entrance to the site from Watling Street.

To the East were found - the remains of two wall foundations running north/south parallel to each other for a distance of 18 metres, 3 metres apart, 1 metre wide and 1.5 metres deep. They were composed of coursed river cobbles, sandstone and limestone, bonded by a gypsum mortar.

2 metres north of the south end of the area was an east/west foundation of similar construction, commencing at the west wall, crossing the east wall and continuing to the east.

Earlier beam slots cut into the natural sand had been cut by these later foundations.

A partially robbed drain/aqueduct 350 mm. wide with dressed sandstone still in place was traced for a distance of 15 metres north/south, 13 metres east of the stone foundations, and a larger drain 500 mm. wide and 5 courses of dressed sandstone deep, 2 metres east of the foundations was uncovered by the builders during their operations.

The following small finds were recovered and have been reported on:-

2 brooches	-	D.Mackreth
1 coin	-	Dr.G.Webster
part military bronze	-	Dr.G.Webster

To the West were found - the remains of two pitched re-used sandstone wall foundations running north-west/south-east, 1 course deep, with four associated sandstone pads (north-east/south-west), together with a gravel layer which appeared to represent a road and contained a substantial amount of R.B. pottery. This had been preceded by an earlier gravel layer which also contained a large amount of R.B.pottery, and had associated with it the remains of wooden posts representing a wooden structure, possibly a revetment. These gravel layers were separated by a peaty-sandy layer.

One of the sandstone pads was sectioned and found to be of little depth.

A sample of the underlying peat was taken by Dr.J.Grieg, who also interpreted what was previously considered to be gley soil as, in fact, podsol.

One of the sandstone foundations carried a cursive inscription "EQIIS" (report by Mr.M.Hassell).

No other special finds were recovered from this area in a stratified context, but during the building operations a large sandstone column capital and part of a human jaw-bone with teeth were found. The jaw-bone has been reported

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on by Dr. Elizabeth Corbett of Birmingham Dental Hospital, and the capital is to have a specialist report prepared. It is hoped that the processing of the pottery will establish dating evidence. Initial examination of this indicates occupation from the 1st to at least the 4th century. The initial occupation to the east (Period 1) was in the form of timber buildings, followed in the later 1st/early 2nd century (Period 11) by substantial stone structures, most possibly with architectural detail (viz. column capital), water supply and drainage of a type common to Romano-British small towns. To the west the early occupation associated with the timber posts and R.B. pottery was followed by a later road and a building with shallow foundations of re-used sandstone which could, on further examination of the artefacts and recorded evidence, conceivably be found to be early Mediaeval.

Attempts to link the two areas under examination failed due to the large pits dug during the by-pass construction in 1965 when the area was used as a heavy vehicle park for earth movers and graders.

The nature of the evidence makes interpretation extremely difficult, but it is apparent that the area examined had been occupied from early in the 1st century through to the 4th and most probably later.

Plans and sections have been drawn and photographs taken where necessary. These are now being put together in preparation for publication.

Frank and Nancy Ball.

April 1982.