

4. Spatial distribution of the artefacts

One of the stated aims of the project was to investigate 'the rate at which the intensity and nature of Roman activity changed away from the road' (see 1.3, remembering that the west end of the trench is nearest to Stane Street). This aim is partly met by the structural evidence (see chapter 2), but also by the patterns of distribution of artefacts along the trench. Although locations were recorded in metre squares, this is too fine a division for this sort of analysis, and instead zones of 5 m length were used, e.g. 200/ to 205/, called 200+.

The classes of artefact chosen for this analysis were Roman pottery, Roman building material, and Roman coins; animal bones and metalwork were also included as they are likely to be predominantly Roman in date. Flints and post-Roman building material were chosen as 'controls', since their distribution should not be affected by the presence of Stane Street. No other class of artefact is sufficiently abundant for this analysis.

The counts of objects and weight in grams of animal bones are given in table 4. The term brokenness means sherds/eves.

	200+	205+	210+	215+	220+	225+	240+	260+
Roman pottery	202	341	348	296	419	279	494	112
" " (eves)	1.64	3.39	3.64	1.90	3.35	1.71	4.32	0.66
" " (brokenness)	123	101	96	156	125	163	114	170
Roman building material	10	25	22	40	48	15	12	1
Roman coins	3	4	3	6	2	3	4	1
Animal bone	18	62	94	60	81	27	65	5
Animal bone (g)	226	833	668	1049	1251	1855	1047	95
Animal bone (average wt in g)	13	13	7	17	15	69	16	19
metalwork	49	78	78	41	40	16	39	8
flint	14	5	16	17	10	1	4	7
Post-Roman building material	15	13	21	17	10	2	13	9

Table 4

There is no consistent pattern across the artefact types. There is generally least material in the extreme east of the trench (260+) and, to a lesser extent, in the extreme west (200+). Apart from this, Roman pottery maintains a fairly steady level, peaking in the east (240+), where a concentration, noted during excavation, may represent an otherwise undetected pit. The pottery appears to become more broken to the east, except for this zone, which again suggests the presence of a 'protective' feature such as a pit or ditch. Roman building material is concentrated between 215/ and 225/, in the general area of the deposits of phase 3. Roman coins show no obvious pattern, perhaps because of the small numbers of them. The numbers of animal bones are fairly level, except for a fall in 225+ which, however, has the greatest weight of bone, due to the much higher average weight of bones here. Metalwork shows a contrasting pattern, being concentrated more to the west than the other categories, between 205/ and 215/. The post-Roman building material shows (as one might expect) a fairly steady pattern, except for a drop in 225+. This may be because this zone was an extension to the original trench, and the topsoil layers may have been dug rather faster here than elsewhere. In which case, the declines in Roman pottery, building material, metalwork and flint here may be more apparent than real.

It is clearly simplistic to talk about fall-off rates here, but perhaps a series of zones can be identified:

1. 200/ to 204/: no features, relatively few finds
2. 204/ to 210/: phase 1 features, more finds, especially metalwork
3. 210/ to 215/: phase 2 features, finds as zone 2.
4. 215/ to 225/: phase 2 cut features and phase 3 laid/dumped features, more Roman building debris.

5. 225/ to 229/, 240/ to 245/: no obvious features, but concentrations of large bones and pottery fragments, possibly indicating unrecognised cut features. Burial from 244/ to 245/.
6. 260/ to 265/: no obvious features and a marked reduction in finds.

This pattern can be tentatively interpreted as follows:

1. Early (phase 1) building alongside Stane Street, represented by a chalk-block floor <117> laid on a foundation of flint pebbles <112> and <121>, and seriously damaged by later activity, probably ploughing. Alignment unknown. Late 1st to early 2nd century.

2. Second (phase 2) building, extending further away from Stane Street, represented by a possible beam slot <113>, wall <110> and post-hole <126>, all damaged by later activity. Aligned at about 110° clockwise to Stane Street. Feature <110> may be an external (back?) wall and <113> may be an internal partition. Evidence for pitting further east. Mid- to late 2nd century.

3. Phase 3 ditch <125>, apparently demarcating the phase 1 and 2 buildings from an area of laid surfaces, composed of re-used building material, <105> to <108> and <127>, including a possible hearth. These areas are interpreted as parts of a floor, the rest of which consisted of beaten earth. All damaged by later activity. Alignment unknown. Late 3rd or 4th century.

This evidence suggests the presence of relatively insubstantial buildings alongside, but not necessarily aligned on, Stane Street. They appear to move away from Stane Street over time, but it is possible that later phases alongside Stane Street have been destroyed, e.g. by ploughing. The burial <113> is likely to be part of a cemetery beyond the limits of the settlement, which here appears to consist of a narrow 'ribbon' alongside Stane Street.