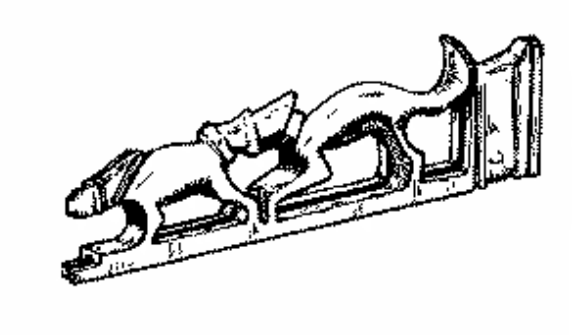
Ampthill & District Archaeological



& Local History Society

Report on Romano British artefacts found on the surface of Ruxox Farm in the County of Bedfordshire.

TL 047359

Kevan J Fadden

Summary of important artefacts found on the surface in the area of Ruxox Farm Maulden TL047359

Ruxox Farm straddles the parish border between Maulden and Flitwick and lies on the Lower Greensand Ridge. The area is drained by the river Flit which runs in the valley below the dip slope. The light fertile soil has encouraged intensive market gardening from the 1920's until the 1970's. Since that time, due to changes in the economy, deep ploughing and corn growing has been practised. The tenant farmer through the 1960's was Mr. J. Course, who took a great interest in the archaeology of the area. He was extremely observant and while performing his work found and collected artifacts from many periods. He left Bedfordshire in the early 70's and deposited most of his collection with Longsands School in St. Neots where his children were educated. Before he moved however, he allowed the Ampthill and District Archaeological and Local History Society to record some of the items. The flints were reported at that time. (See B ARCH J Vol. 5 P1.). When the Longsands School dismantled their Museum most of the finds were transferred to Bedford Museum where the pipe clay fragments were photographed for this report.

Finds made by Mr John Course following the laying of a water pipe across the farm in 1965

The pipe was laid during the Winter months and the operation was not observed by this Society. The finds described below were picked up from the plough soil or from the surface following the installation of the water pipe line. Four Gemstones were passed to Dr. M. Hennig and the following is a report he kindly provided.

Descriptions of Intaglio Gemstones found at Ruxox Farm.

1. BONUS EVENTUS: Depicted partially towards the front but facing right. His left leg is crossed behind the right although he seems to be walking rather than standing. A bunch of grapes or a bundle hangs from a lagobolon, which he supports on his left shoulder. In his right hand are two corn ears. The figure wears a tunic but no chlamys. Red Jasper, slight wear on upper surface. 15 x 10.5 x 2 mm. Flat, Oval. For other examples of the type BAR 8(2) Nos. 200, 201.

2. Adult Satyr: Seated on a rock, left. In his right hand he holds a bunch of grapes with which he teases a baby satyr who stands in front of him. Beyond the baby is a pillar, supporting a statue of PRIAPUS. Yellow carnelian, surface slightly scratched. 9.75 x 7 x 2 mm. Flat, Oval. No parallel from Britain. For the type P.Zazoff in Antike Gemmen in Deutschen Sammlungen III (Wiesbaden 1970). Die Gemmen sammlung der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Kassel. No 38.

3. MERCURY: Standing towards the front, holding a caduceus and moneybags. Sard, chip on upper surface and some wear. 11.75 x 8.75 x 3 mm Convex, Oval. For other examples of the type cf BAR 8(2) Nos. 38, 40-49.

4. BACCHUS: Reclining on rock left, his body towards the right. He faces front and holds a thyrsus vertically in his left hand. Below him are four Cupids and on the right a figure of MINERVA, a victory in her right hand, a spear in her left hand and a shield at her feet. Minerva and the Cupids seem to be shown on a smaller scale than Bacchus. Yellow paste, surface slightly worn. 11 x 9 mm. Flat, Oval with bevelled edge. Set in an iron bezel. No parallel from Britain. For the type cf H.B.Walters, Catalogue of engraved Gems, Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the Departments of Antiquities British Museum (London 1926) No 2936

Note. Descriptions are of impressions rather than of actual gems.

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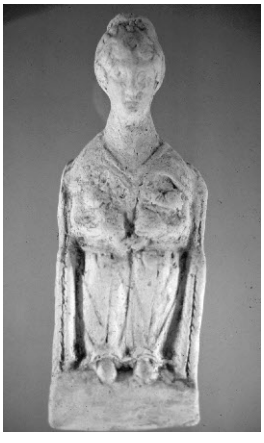


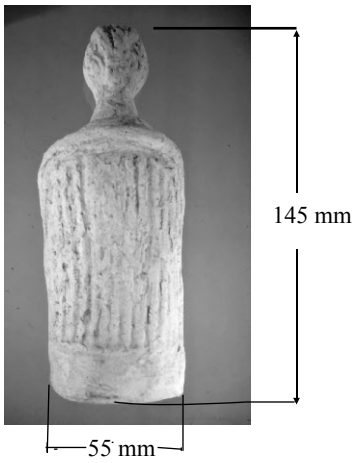
Photographs of impressions above and actual gems below. The gems were photographed by Brian Lazelle.
No image of 4 is available for illustration

White Pipe Clay figurine fragments.

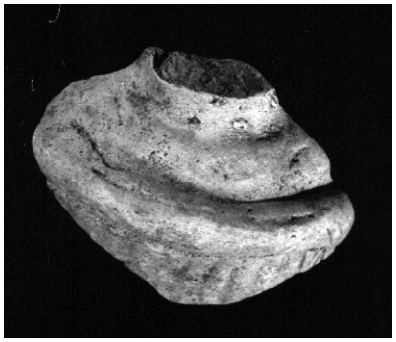
A large collection of pipe clay figurine fragments was turned up when the water pipe line went through Ruxox farm in 1965. Examination of the fragments suggested at least 72 different objects. Most were parts of Venus type figurines normally said to have been produced in Central Gaul in the first and second century. At least five were fragments of different Roman Nursing Goddess figures or *dea nutrix*. These comprise a mother sitting in a basket weave chair with a baby feeding from each breast. There was also a head believed to represent Bacchus. Many of the fragments give the impression that they have been immersed in water or at least in very damp earth. This is suggested by the accretions on the surface of some of the fragments when they were first found. If this is a fair assumption then it supports the suggestion that they were votive objects broken and thrown in a stream or boggy area. All the fragments appear to have been broken before they were deposited and very few parts fit together.

A parallel pipe line installed in 1990 revealed the bed of an ancient stream in the area where two further pseudo Venus figurines were found during the excavations carried out prior to the excavation. (see *Archaeology in the Bedford Region*, Michael Dawson 2004).





Modern reproduction of a typical dea nutrix figure from Baldock Hertfordshire.



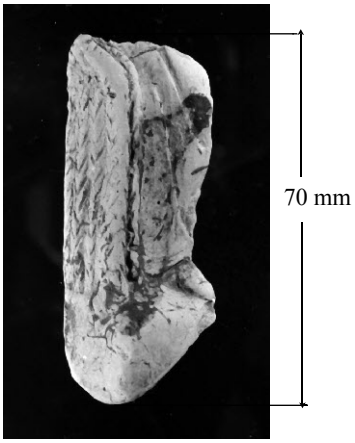
Neck of Nursing Goddess & top of wicker chair



Fragment of wicker chair



Neck of Nursing Goddess & fragment of chair



Part of wicker chair & Mother Goddess leg.

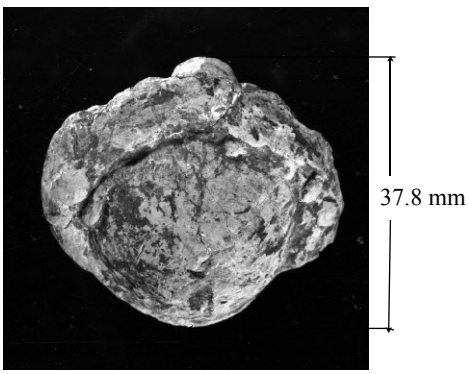


Magnified small fragment of baby suckling at mothers breast.

Head thought to represent Bacchus



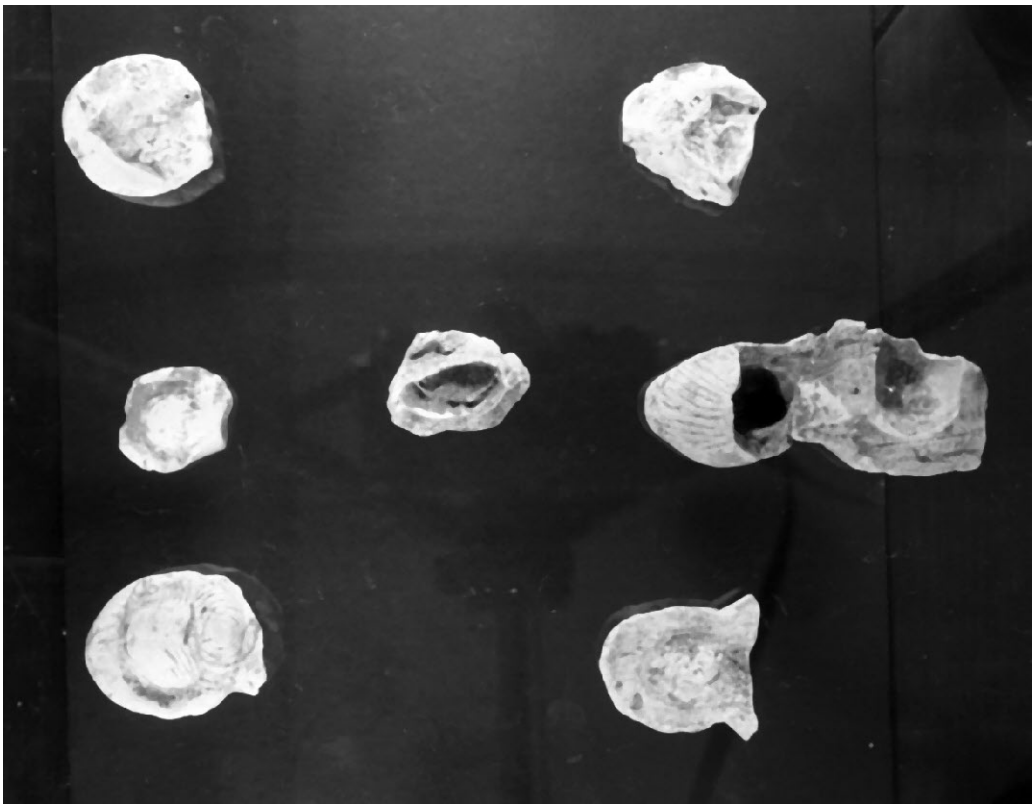
Front



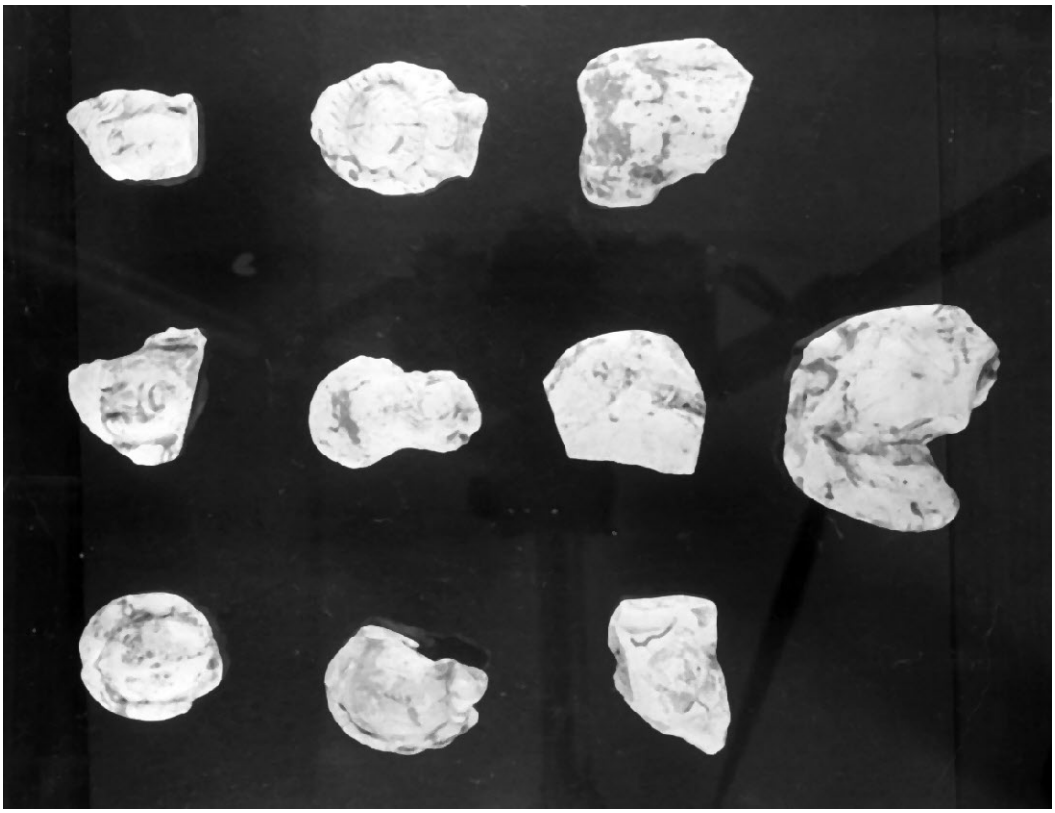
Back



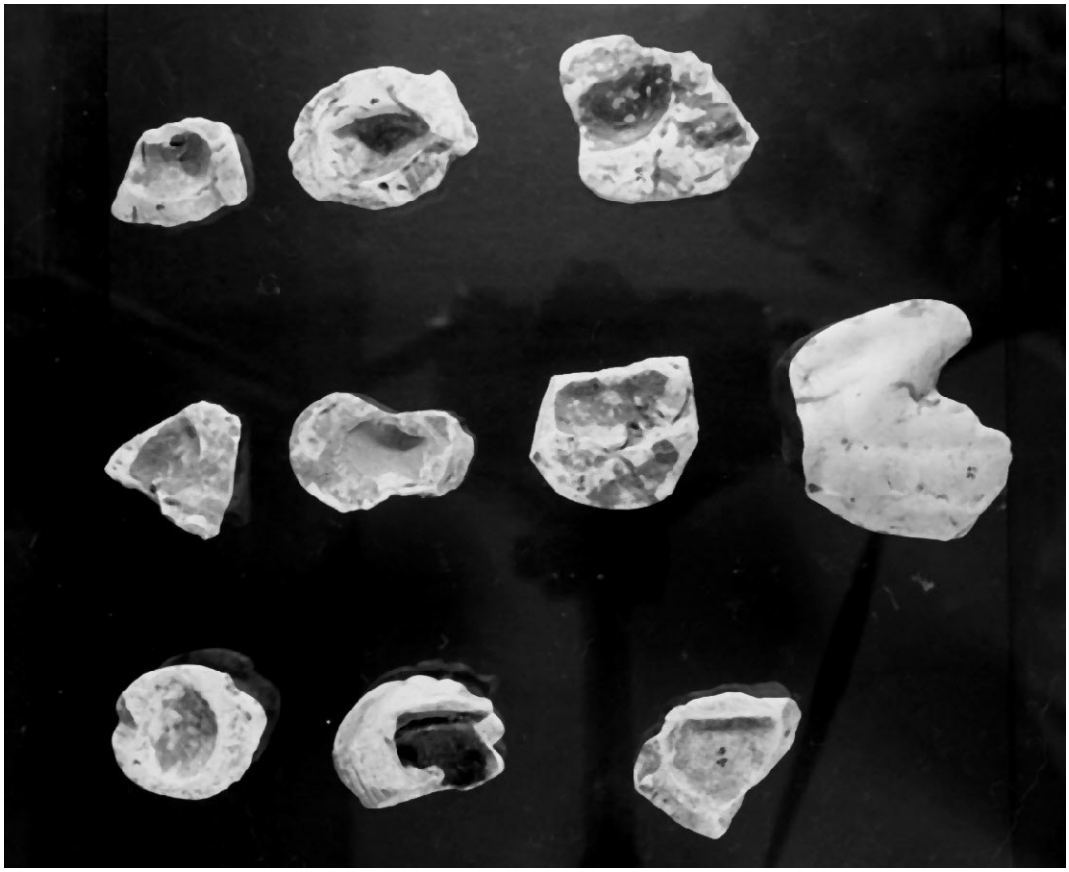
Collection of Venus figurine heads front.



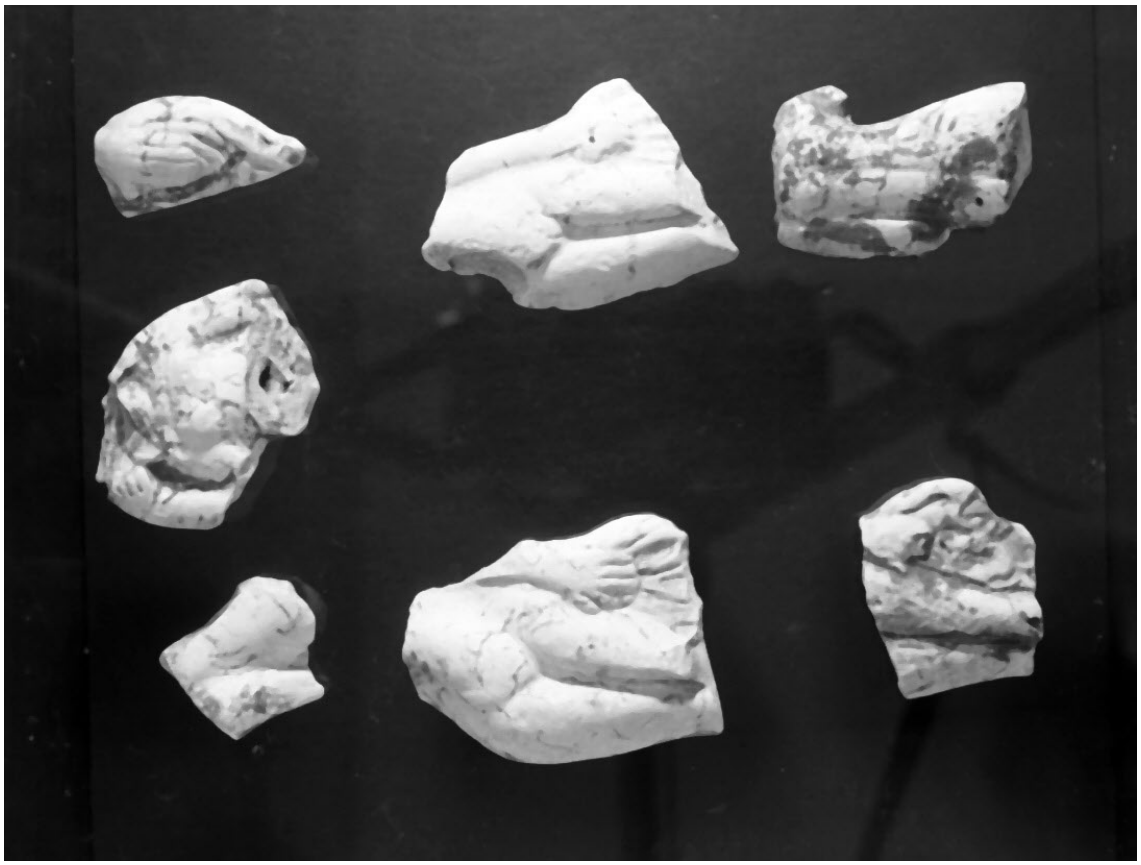
Same collection of heads as above, rear view.
The fractures clearly show the double mould construction.



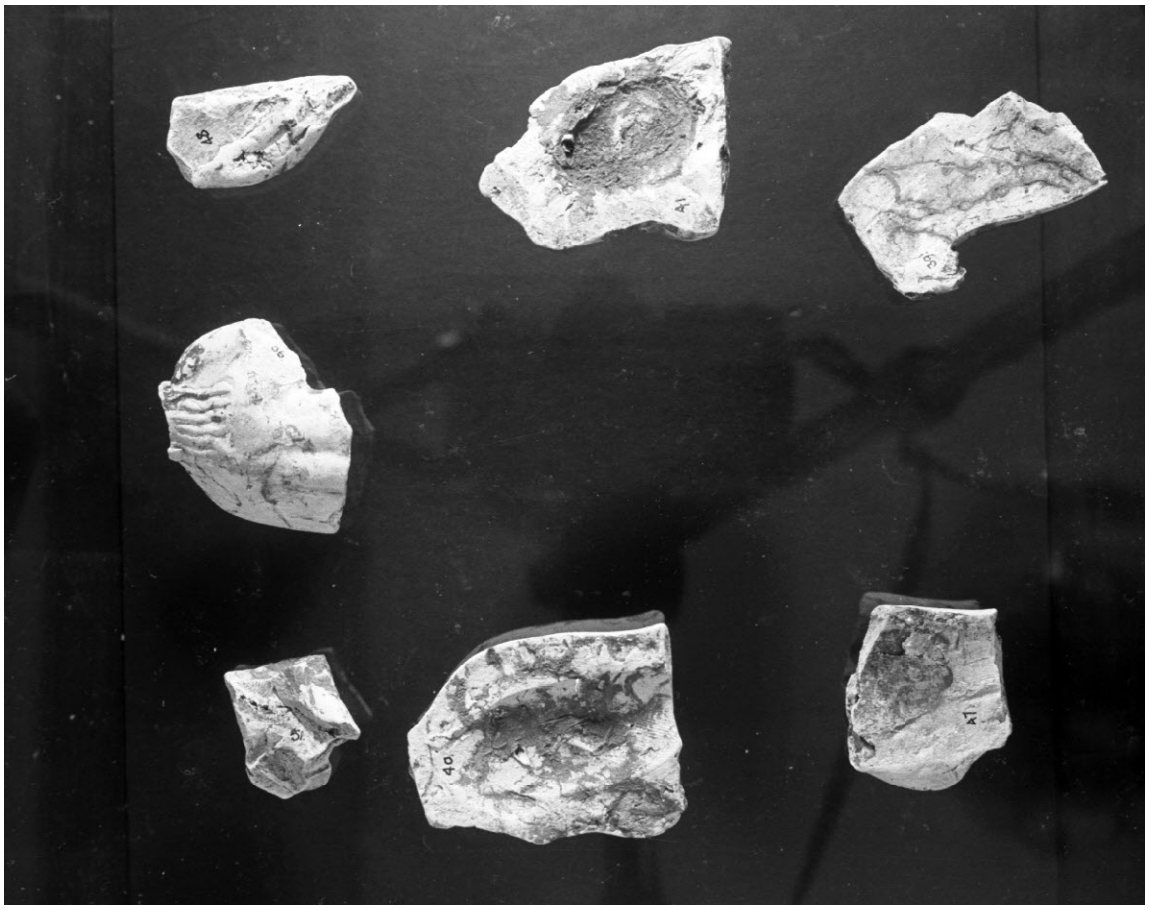
Six heads & other body parts



Six heads & other body parts rear



Identifiable body parts front



Body parts rear



Fragments front



Fragments rear



Figurine legs front



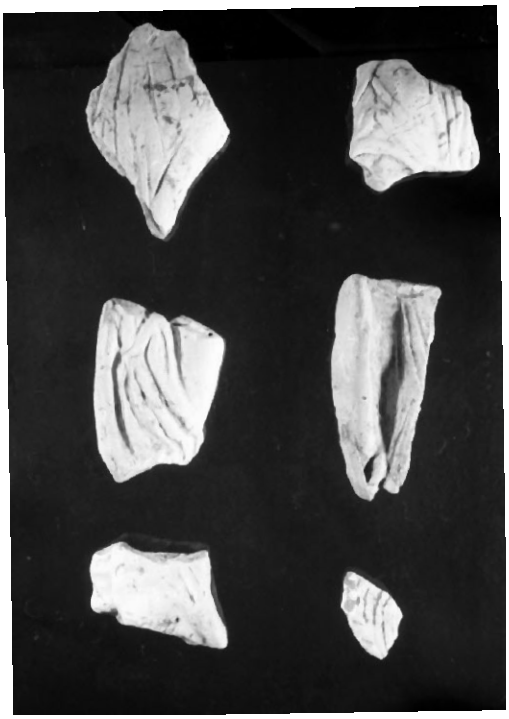
Figurine legs rear



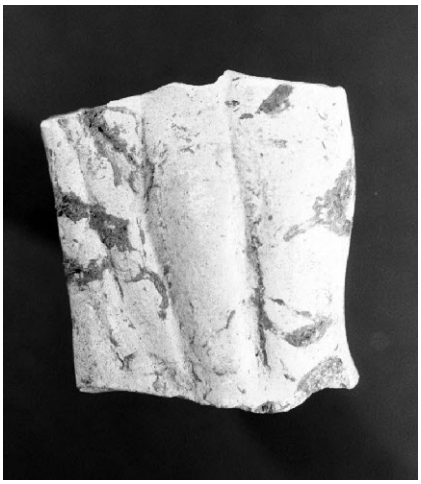
Assorted fragments



Assorted fragments



Clothing fragments



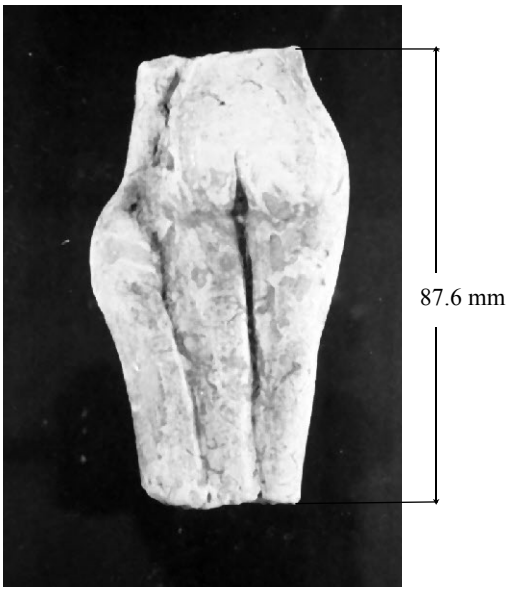
Legs with algae patches



Legs with algae patches



Legs with left hand holding back cloak



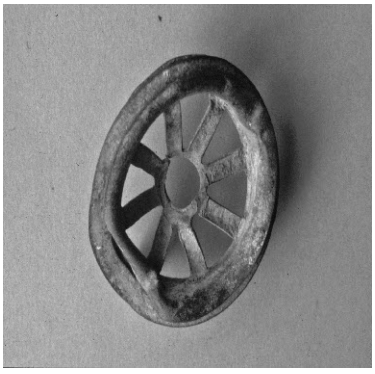
Rear view of figure *left*

All the fragments of dea nutrix and Venus figurines in the collection were fabricated from "white pipe clay" and most had a hard semi polished surface. They were made from a double mould as can be seen by the fracture. Although we believe they were disturbed by the diggers excavating for the water pipeline and became surface finds, they show signs of immersion in water or wet soil (accretion build up) and almost certainly came from the area where the first pipe line crossed an ancient river. There was no obvious modern damage consistent with long periods on the surface of a ploughed field.

Artefact found on the surface by this Society during the construction of the Ampthill By -Pass through Ruxox



Wheel of Taranis front



Wheel of Taranis reverse



Celtic Wheel God - Corbridge Museum

Wheel of Taranis

Symbol of the Celtic God Taranis or "Thunderer", equivalent of Jupiter.

The wheel badge or token illustrated was fabricated from three component parts, each of sheet bronze. They were either pressed or punched out with a die that formed and sheared the bronze into its finished shape. This was obviously possible in the early Roman period as a natural development of coin stamping.

Components

a/ The Wheel itself, formed in one piece from sheet bronze with the rim and spokes rounded to give the impression of depth.

b/ A sheet bronze tube or open thimble with one end diameter slightly larger than the distance across the spokes.

c/ A sheet bronze washer with the internal diameter large enough to fit loosely over component b/ and the outside diameter similar to the outer diameter of the wheel.

Construction

Component b/ was soldered on to the wheel matching up the end of the tube to the inner rim at the end of the spokes. When the badge was to be worn, the tube would have been pushed through a leather garment or belt, the washer placed over the tube and then the tube peened out. A hole of 26 mm would be required in the host material to accommodate the badge.

We wish to acknowledge the help of Bedford Museum staff while photographing and compiling this report.

The items illustrated are available for study and comparison by the public in Bedford Museum. We recommend however that the Museum should be contacted prior to a visit to view particular objects.

The photographs except where stated otherwise in the text were taken by the author.

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