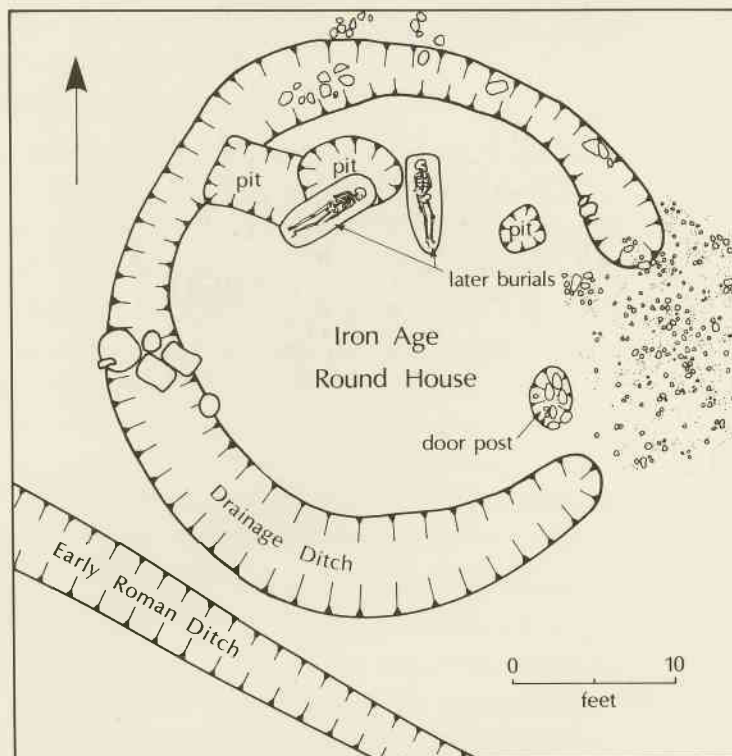

Hartlepool Archaeological Leaflet

Catcote Iron Age and Roman Farm



Plan of part of the settlement

In July 1963, pottery, coins, a leather sandal and other objects covering a period of more than five hundred years, from the end of the Iron Age and right through the four centuries of the Roman occupation, turned up in a field off Catcote Road. The field was being levelled by bulldozers to make playing fields behind the new Catholic secondary schools. When human skeletons were uncovered, the bulldozers stopped and an emergency excavation was hurriedly organised. The following spring the then Ministry of Public Buildings and Works funded a ten week excavation. Clifford Long, now an Inspector in the Norwegian Historical Monuments Office at their Trondheim office, directed the excavations in 1964.

The Discovery



The digging team

There were no traces on the surface to show that a prehistoric settlement had once existed at Catcote. Nothing of archaeological interest had ever been found on the site and even aerial photographs which often show features not visible at ground level had not revealed any traces of this settlement. The finds and the features which turned up when the new playing fields were being laid out were therefore quite unexpected.

A large amount of Romano-British pottery was collected from the area which had first been disturbed by the bulldozers, but there was also an equally large amount of coarser, hand-made pottery of the type made by the native inhabitants before they came under the influence of the Roman invaders. Relatively little of this type of pottery had been found previously in the area between the Tees and the Tyne.

Buildings and Boundaries

The excavations that took place in 1964 produced much more information about this important settlement. The earliest features, perhaps taking us back a couple of centuries before the Romans invaded Britain, included a number of shallow ditches or gullies which had been allowed to silt up. Exactly what their function had been is difficult to say. Some may have been the foundation trenches for timber structures, others may have been drainage ditches. A few of them contained scraps of Iron Age pottery.

One of these ditches formed an almost complete circle and was presumably the drainage channel around a building some 28' (9 metres) in diameter with an entrance on the east where there was a gap in the ditch. As there were no traces of a hearth, it can be assumed that the building had not been a house, but had some other use such as a storage building or perhaps a workshop. Part of another curving ditch probably belongs to a second structure and a hard clay floor suggests a third building of a slightly later date. A large pit had later been dug here and in the filling scraps of basketry



Romano-British burial



Both sides of a sestertius of Antoninus Pius, mid-second century A.D.

and charred grain were found. A few fragments of pottery suggests that the pit had been filled in by the middle of the first century A.D. Two graves were also found here, one for an adult, the other for an adolescent.

A long straight deep ditch ran across the whole site, probably forming a boundary between two areas. Exactly when it was dug is not known, but it presumably marks a later phase in the history of the settlement: the pottery and finds in the fill show that it was not filled in until the fourth century A.D.

The Finds

Several hundred pieces of pottery were recovered from the site in 1963 and 1964, including both the coarse, hand-made pottery of the Iron Age inhabitants and the finer, wheel-thrown, vessels from the Roman period. Very few sites in the North have produced so much Iron Age pottery and vessels of various types and function were found, including jars and pots for storing or preparing food, and cups and bowls used for eating and drinking. Only one vessel was more or less complete.

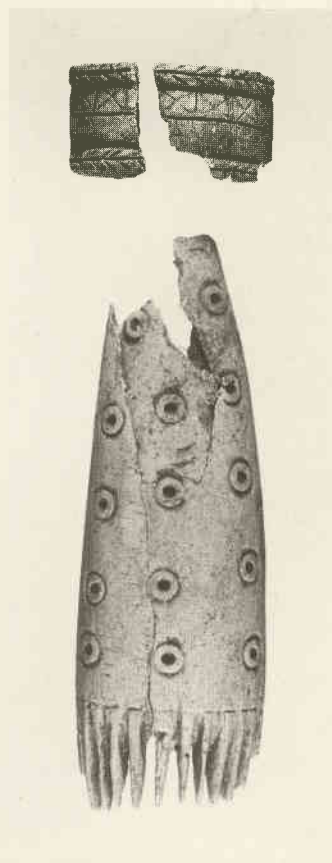
The pottery from the Roman period was of a higher quality and many new forms were introduced. Examples of most of the usual types were found, and some unusual ones also, such as the delicate beaker in a fine hard fabric which was probably imported from Southern Europe in the first century A.D.



Lucky charm made from a drilled tooth.

The half-dozen Roman coins found at Catcote are from the third and fourth centuries A.D. Among the many personal objects that were found were fragments from three glass bangles, a leather sandal and a lucky charm or amulet made from a drilled tooth. Finds of several spindle whorls and a bone weaving comb show that the inhabitants at Catcote in Iron Age and

Roman times spun and wove their own cloth; the fragments of quern stones show that they also ground their own flour.



Bone weaving comb.

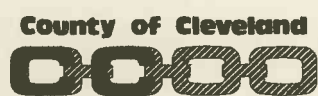
In a small pit were the broken fragments of a furnace or oven which had been used for preparing iron, but this was almost certainly only for local use and the overall picture of the settlement at Catcote is of a self-supporting farming community whose history spans some five or six hundred years from the closing centuries of the Iron Age and on through the whole period of the Roman occupation.

CLIFFORD LONG



Fragments of a goblet probably imported from Southern Europe in the 1st century A.D.

Finds from the Catcote excavation are on display in the Gray Art Gallery and Museum, Hartlepool



County Archaeology Section
Old School
Victoria Road
Middlesbrough
Tel. 248155 Ext. 3292



University of Durham
Department of Archaeology
46 Saddler Street
Durham Tel. 64466



**Borough of
Hartlepool**

Department of
Leisure & Amenities
Gray Art Gallery and Museum
Clarence Road
Hartlepool
Tel. 68916 Ext. 259