

SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY MANCHESTER

J Walker

INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this report the majority of conclusions reached in the previous chapters are accepted at their face value. This chapter is designed to provide an overall view of the development of Roman and later Manchester in the Castlefield area.

PERIOD 1 cAD 79 - cAD 90 The First Fort

Towards the last quarter of the 1st century AD the first fort was built. This was a simple square 3 acre (1.2ha) fort with a double portal Northgate and a small turf rampart, probably designed to hold a 480 man infantry unit.

Belonging to, or slightly preceding, this phase, a series of large pits was dug at Duke Place. To the north of Area C Professor Jones uncovered a group of ditches that were contemporary with the building of the fort and which were interpreted as possibly marking out a group of military enclosures (Jones and Grealey 1974). Further to the north, in 1978, an extension to this system was found (Jones and Reynolds 1978, 7), and it was suggested that elements of this ditch system formed an "early defended enclosure". Precisely what was happening inside this enclosure is not clear; some of the ditches have been interpreted as representing property divisions, and indeed, some of the ditches bear a remarkable similarity to what have been interpreted elsewhere as construction trenches for buildings (Jones and Grealey 1974, 45, 47; Hanson et al 1979).

Nearer to the fort in Area C non-ferrous metal-working was taking place, and although no early northern exit road was discovered within this area, it has been found to the north (Jones and Reynolds 1978; Jones and Grealey 1974). From the very beginning of this phase large quantities of imported pottery were reaching the site from as far away as Southern France (Chapter 6b) and Spain (Chapter 6a). Brick and tiles, however, were

hardly used (Chapter 6c).

In the neighbouring region there were quite extensive areas of mature deciduous woodland (Chapter 5h), and as the sea-level was rising (Tooley 1980, 84) there were probably quite extensive bogs and mosses to the south and west of the fort around Carrington and Chat Moss. Judging from documentary evidence (Chapter 5h) the woodland was still largely uncleared by 1086 when the Salford Hundred probably contained around 276 square kilometres of forest.

This fort was probably founded as part of Agricola's campaign that was designed to capture the remaining territory of the Brigantes. Founded on a sandstone bluff that overlooked two rivers this first fort guarded the crossing of the strategic road from York to Chester with that of a road running from the Fosse Way to the north. The refurbishment of this fort was probably due to a single need for repairs and is typical of repairs to forts throughout the North-West in this period.

PERIOD 2 cAD 90 - cAD 160 The Second Timber Fort 114.3 mean 42.1 yrs sd

Towards the end of the 1st century AD and the beginning of the 2nd, the fort was improved, the rampart strengthened, the gateway replaced and the ditch system altered.

Outside of the fort ditches to the north a number of large pits were dug (Area C, Phase 2a; Jones and Reynolds 1978). Slightly later than these, in the area immediately to the north of Area C, buildings and iron furnaces were constructed (Jones and Grealey 1974). In the area of Byrom Street the end of this phase was marked by the filling of a ditch running at an angle to the main road (Jones and Reynolds 1978), whilst within the fort the end of this is marked by large scale demolition work that included the slighting of the ramparts and the burning of the gate. A similar demolition deposit was discovered in 1972 to the north of Area C (Jones and Grealey 1974, 34);

however, in 1978 no trace of such a layer was discovered. This deposit clearly represents the wholesale demolition of the fort and one suspects the abandonment of the northern vicus. The trading patterns established in the earlier period continued largely unchanged. Cereal production is likely to have continued, as shown by the quernstones from the various sites.

It is impossible to tell to what degree the iron-working in the vicus was under military control; however, the occurrence of beads (Chapter 5f) and other finds suggests that civilians were in the area.

During this period a tight military grip was maintained upon western Brigantia and Manchester became, like Walton-le-Dale, Wigan, Corbridge and Fishbourne, a supply base, in the sense that large scale iron-working took place under military control. The destruction of the fort may have been due to the movement of the garrison northwards to play its part in the new deployment brought about in the AD 140s by the Emperor Antoninus Pius's decision to occupy southern Scotland.

PERIOD 3 cAD 160 - cAD 200

The Larger Timber Fort 125.8 mean 47 yrs sd

This period opened with the construction of a new larger fort covering five acres (2ha). This fort may have had barrack blocks with stone footings (Area A, Phase 4 discussion). Atkinson (1952) also apparently found in the interior of the fort at Ivy Street stone barrack block footings overrunning earlier timber buildings. The fort with its stronger ramparts and gates was probably designed to hold a mixed force of 480 infantry and 128 cavalry.

It is more difficult to understand what is taking place in the vicus at this time. The 1972 excavations revealed a series of furnaces and buildings as well as a road at right angles to the northern exit road (Jones and Grealey 1974). In the Byrom Street area during this period was a series of small rectangular buildings contained hearths or furnaces and a single pottery kiln (Jones and Reynolds 1978). The Phase 3 vicus building from Area C also belongs to this phase. A detailed analysis of all the evidence is needed before a true picture of developments within the vicus can be drawn. The suggested linking of the buildings in the Byrom Street area, with those found in 1972 further to the south is based upon the following factors:-

- (a) The similarities in construction technique;
- (b) The advent of iron-working on a large scale;
- (c) A reinterpretation of the significance of the relationship between building R and an underlying ditch;
- (d) The assumption that the demolition layers 233 and 33 (Jones and Reynolds 1978) are equivalent to those identified by Petch in Areas A and B.

If this hypothesis is accepted then the first building belonging to this phase is building A (Jones and Grealey 1974, 49) a relatively short-lived flimsy structure from which came

gaming counters and objects. Overlying this were buildings B and C1/2 which are typical of those associated with the industrial workings. This phase begins then with civilian buildings which are rapidly replaced, in the northern vicus, by semi-industrial structures and the dominant feature in the area is the iron-working hearth; pieces of tap slag and heavy cinder recovered from the area are indicative of the existence of a blooming hearth.

From this phase also comes the greatest number of small objects (see Chapter 5) from the vicus and the largest number of bones (see Chapter 5h). With this phase sandstone is also more frequently used as a building material and the evidence from the building in Area C (Phase 3a) would suggest that the method of sandstone footings overlying shallow clay-filled foundation trenches was becoming more common. Changes in the trading patterns took place as the quantity of samian declines and the variety of locally made pottery increases. In general the evidence can be seen to suggest that the economy was becoming more complex and mature.

As discussed above (Chapter 2) the new fort may have been built as a response to a Brigantian revolt. There is, however, some doubt about whether the revolt took place and the evidence from the site indicates that the period of abandonment was so short as to have no appreciable effect on the pattern of deposition of objects.

Together with the new fort came a variety of changes in military dispositions in the North-West, as the frontier came to be finally stabilised along Hadrian's Wall.

PERIOD 4 cAD 200 - cAD 400/420

The Stone Fort

This period is marked by the construction of the stone fort. The details of the fort and its gateway are discussed above (Area A, Phase 4). The date suggested there is Severan, so that the fort was thoroughly refurbished, together with many others, under the Emperor Severus when he was revitalising and re-establishing the province.

Like the preceding fort it was oblong in shape and covered about five acres (2ha) (Bruton 1909; Petch 1952). Within the vicus itself some changes occurred. A new road was laid down (Area C, Phase 4) and over the next few years there was a growing trend towards variation in building types and functions (Jones and Reynolds 1978). There is a considerable fall in the number of pottery sherds from the period after cAD 250 from the vicus and fort area as a whole (fig 6.4). However, later sherds and remains are known (Jones and Reynolds 1978; Jones and Grealey 1974) and the histogram of coins found is not statistically different to those from fort sites in the North-West known to have continued to the end of Roman rule. All that can be safely said is that the northern vicus of Manchester experienced a considerable decline but the extent of the decline is not clear due to the damage caused by later development. The fort seems to have continued in use until the end of the Roman period although the northern exit road had by this time been cut through by a defensive ditch

(Area B, Phase 4 discussion).

In the middle of the 4th century the mean sea-level probably reached its greatest height (Tooley 1980, 84). This should have had the effect of impeding the drainage of the mosses and bogs that surrounded Manchester to the south and west and would consequently have hindered communications. It seems reasonable to suggest, that with the demise of the fort came the demise of the town, so that the very nature of settlement changed radically. The end of the fort marks the end of Roman rule in the area, and the beginning of the Celtic kingdoms.

PERIODS 5-8

The dating of these periods is very difficult because of the lack of artefacts from the deposits; equally, the wider significance of these periods is open to question as they are, indeed have to be, based largely upon the Northgate excavations alone.

PERIOD 5 5th TO 10th CENTURY AD

Anglo-Saxon Occupation

The next development to take place on the site was the erection of four possible sunken floored huts, and the creation of a yard surface covered with scattered bones outside the Northgate.

These types of huts are found both in rural and semi-urban environments, but as they were found here together with gravel yard surfaces and in an area where no evidence for urban survival has been found it seems clear that life in Manchester had become rural rather than urban. The dating of these structures is open to question; however, they must lie somewhere within the Anglo-Saxon period (Area B, Phase 5 discussion).

There are a number of Anglo-Saxon finds from the Manchester area (Morris 1983). The earliest of these consist of a late 6th century cremation urn from Red Bank near the Cathedral, possibly another urn from Broughton (Roeder 1889), and some pre-AD 800 sceattas which, if they are those illustrated in Morris (1983, 12), are similar to others found much further west at Moels (Bu'lock 1960). There is also a report of a coin of Anastasius (AD 491-518) from Higher Broughton (Roeder 1889, 175). Throughout the country as a whole a growing pattern of Anglo-Saxon settlement is being revealed; early Germanic settlement of the late Roman period is being discovered in many areas, especially urban ones, and this has been seen as evidence of Germanic mercenaries being brought into the country and stationed under Roman control. In many areas this early foreign settlement is swept aside on the collapse of Roman rule only to re-occur later when areas fall permanently into Anglo-Saxon hands (Faull 1974). Given this and the historical outline already presented (Chapter 2) these huts, if they are Anglo-Saxon grubenhauser, are either late Roman or date to after the mid 7th century, when the fall of Elmet and Mercian expansion opened up the area

to the Anglo-Saxons.

However, the date of the Red Bank urn argues for an Anglo-Saxon presence before the 7th century, and therefore against the historical viewpoint, so that only the arguments presented in the discussion of Area B, Phase 6 are relevant. Put simply, they are that these features were in use before the wall had collapsed and after the fort had been abandoned.

PERIOD 6 10th TO THE 11th or 12th CENTURY The Robbing of the Walls

This period is marked by an absence of permanent occupation and the collapse and robbing, or perhaps even deliberate toppling, of the stone wall. The date of this has been debated extensively (above Area B, Phase 6), and from Castlefield or Aldport itself have come the following late Anglo-Saxon finds: a coin of Edward the Elder (Morris 1983, 13), a silver penny of Canute 1016-35 (ibid 13-15) a Normandy denier c1000-25 (ibid 13-15), a late Anglo-Saxon gold finger ring (ibid 8; Bruton 1907), and a possible 10th century brooch (Bruton 1907).

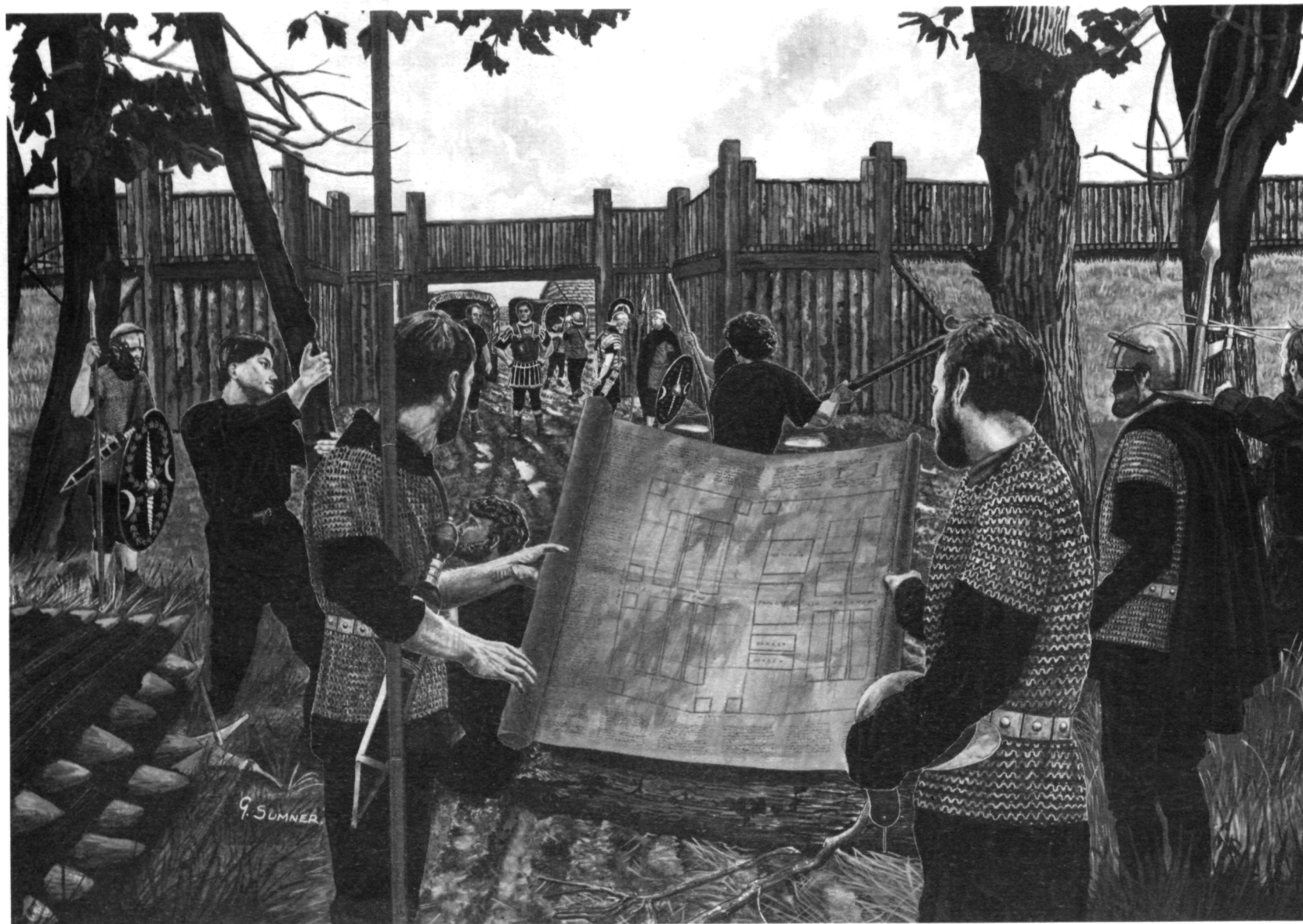
The late Saxon date suggested for the robbing and toppling of the wall is based upon tenuous evidence but as the purpose of this report is, partly, to suggest a framework on which future research can be based, it is suggested here that this period is marked by a late Saxon use of the area as either a stone quarry or, less likely, as part of a burh founded by Edward in 919 to curtail Norse and Danish incursions.

PERIOD 7 11th OR 12th CENTURY TO 1759 The Deer Park

This period incorporates Phases 7 and 8, which consisted of the post hole building outside the Northgate and the gradual silting of the ditch system. During this period much of the area of Roman settlement lay, according to Camden, inside Aldport Park, which may have consisted of a large wood, heath, rough pasture, a small area of meadow and may have contained eagles, hawks, herons and honeybees (Wright-Procter 1874). Clearly by now the site was a tract of rough country, in stark contrast to the time when it contained both a fort and town.

PERIOD 8 (PHASE 9) 1759 TO PRESENT The Industrial Age

The building of the Duke of Bridgewater's Canal, 1759, (Clegg 1955) in the area now known as Castlefield, opened up an era of new building. By 1750 housing had spread over large areas of the civilian settlement, whilst the canal was opened in 1761 and the wharves c1764 (Clegg 1955). In 1805, the Castlefield area contained the junction of the Bridgewater Canal with the Rochdale Canal, and in 1830 the world's first purpose-built railway passenger station.



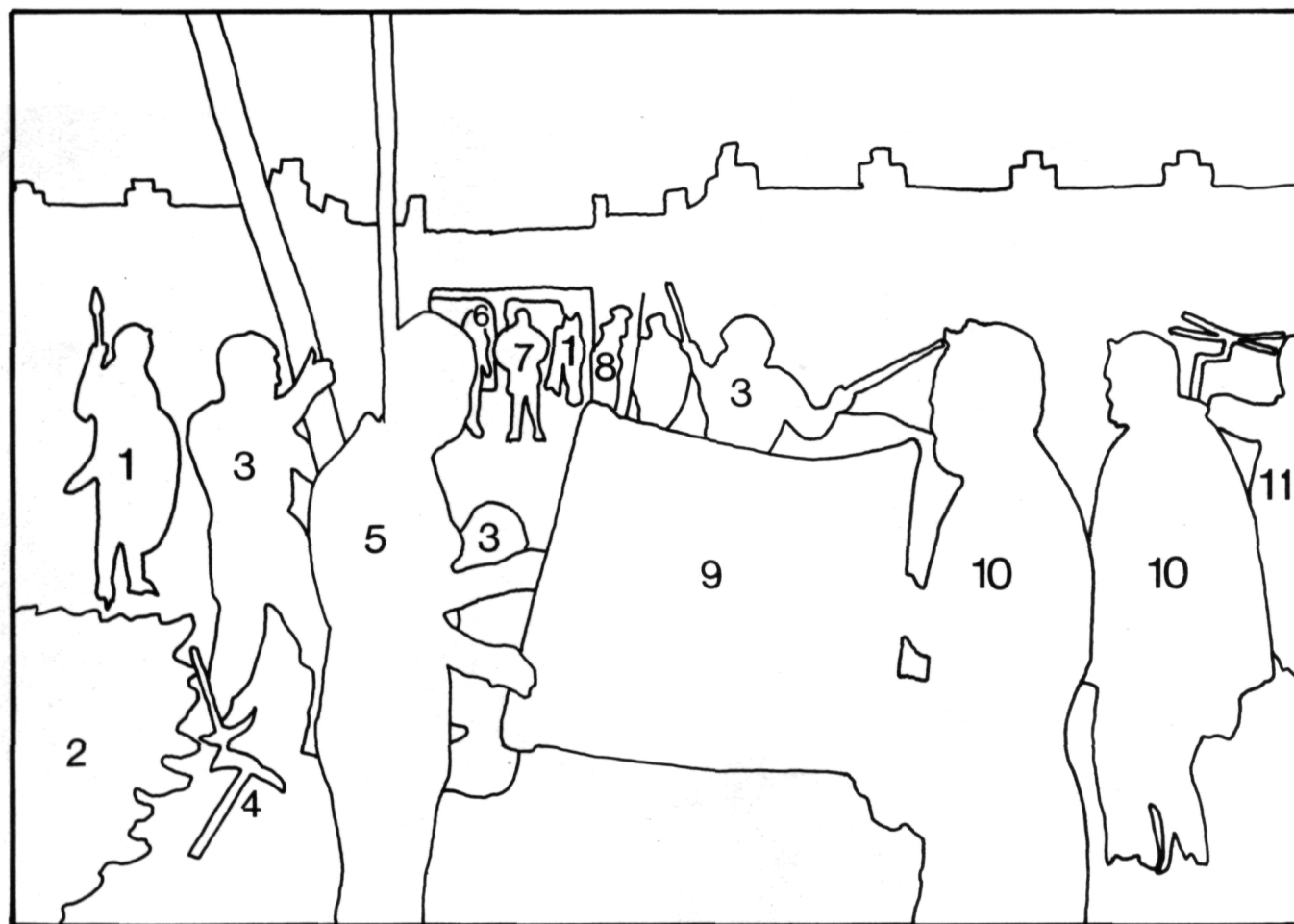


Plate 8.1
Reconstruction painting of the first timber fort during construction.

1 Typical auxillary infantryman on guard.

2 Stockpiled timber as illustrated on Trajan's Column.

3 Legionaries engaged in building work. Legionaries were usually responsible for engineering works.

4 Dolabra - Roman entrenching tools.

5 Auxillary soldier with measuring rod in Roman feet.

6 Legionary centurion, in command of a company.

7 Prefect - commanding officer of an auxillary regiment such as the Manchester garrison.

8 Legionary optio, centurions second-in-command.

9 Scroll depicting plan of a standard fort. A soldier on Trajan's Column can be seen holding such a scroll.

10 Auxillary infantryman.

11 Legionary with a groma, as found at Pompeii, used in surveying.



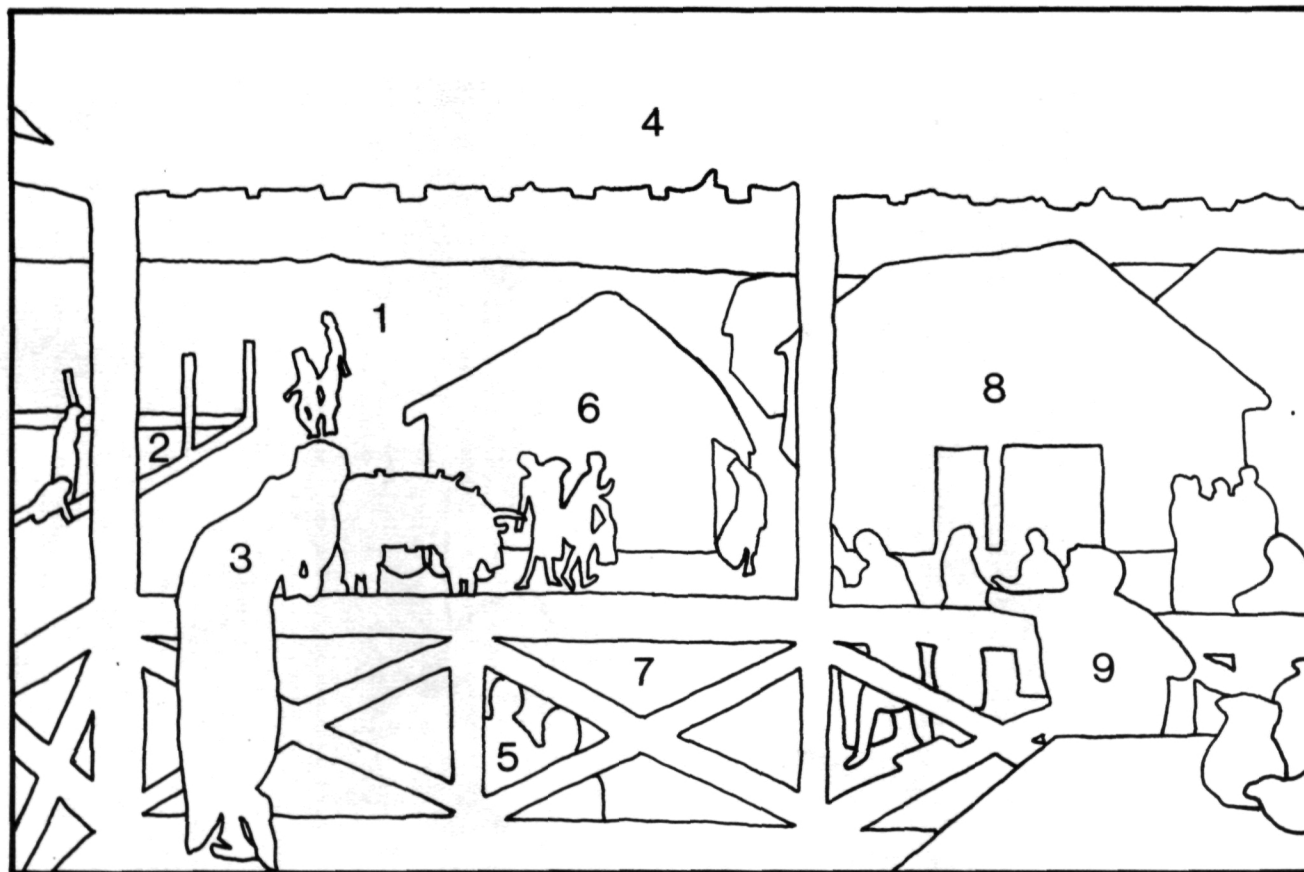


Plate 8.2

Vicus street scene cAD 200-250 based on Jones and Grealey's findings.

1 Fields associated with buildings, probably used as market gardens.

2 Typical timber frame building under construction.

3 Camp follower

4 Inn with upper storey and construction details based on examples from Italy.

5 Typical civilian couple.

6 Store and house.

7 Northern exit road from fort.

8 Home and shop; note difference in constructional details and materials between the building and 6.

9 Off-duty soldier.



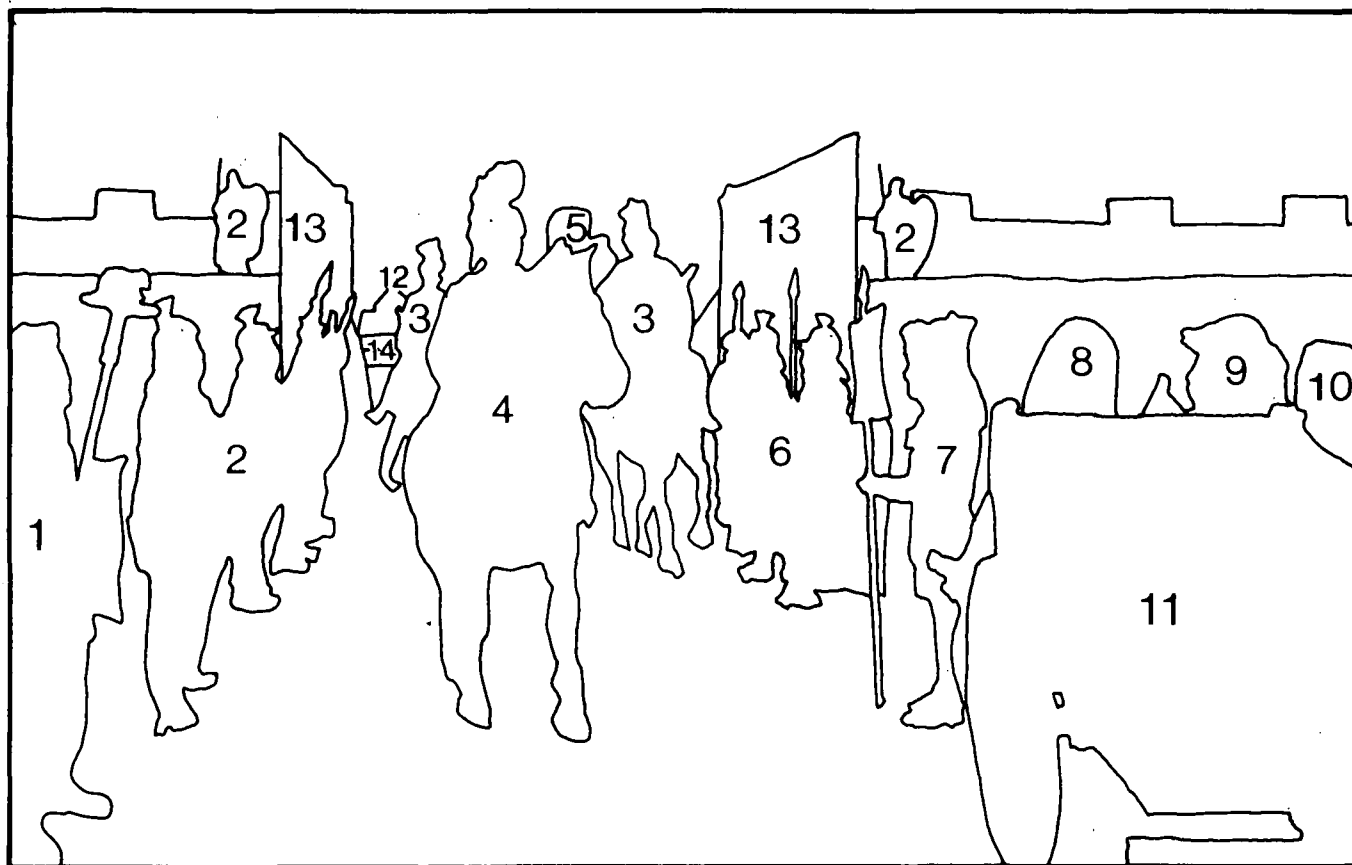


Plate 8.3

The reconstruction painting of the fort showing the North gateway from the interior.

Arrival of a provincial governor.

Phase 3 timber fort, North Gateway from the south

1 Auxilliary standard bearer carrying the regimental cohortes insignia, here conjectural.

2 Auxilliary soldiers wearing the uniform of a cohortes equitata believed to be in Manchester at this date.

3 Legionary legates, or commanding officers, possibly from the II and XX legions.

4 Sextus Calpurnius Agricola, Governor of Britain 162-165 AD.

5 Imagenifer:- standard bearer carrying the image of the ruling emperor, in this case Marcus Aurelius.

6 Legionary soldiers - part of the governors escort from the XX legion and the century of Nepos, whose tombstone was found in Chester, and whose name appears on the shield covers.

7 Vexillarius, or standard carrier, holding the vexillum with his units number.

8 Procurator, the official in charge of provincial finance:- possibly Caius Valerius Pansa, the only known Procurator near this date cAD 162, but whose own term of office is not known. One of his duties was the responsibility of paying the garrisons wages.

9 Cornicern - legionary musician who played the cornu.

10 Procurator's wife:- reliefs sometimes show officials accompanied by their wives.

11 Roman cart:- based on a relief found in London. This is almost certainly a civillian cart used for transporting grain etc to the forts.

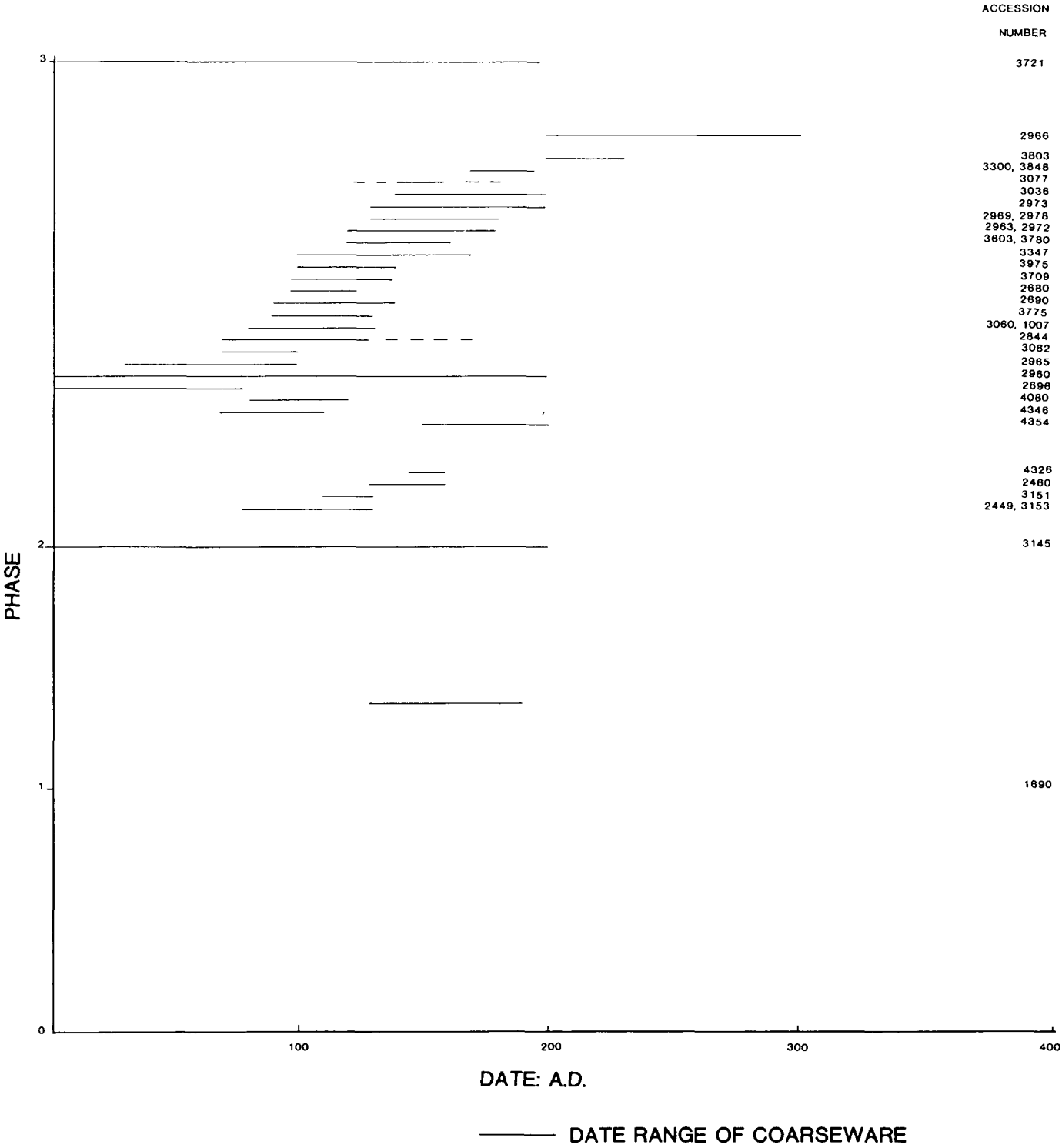
12 Part of the vicus.

13 The Northgate:- at this stage Period II first phase.

14 Defensive ditch system.

GRAPH OF DATABLE COARSEWARE, PHASES 1 AND 2

Fig 8.1



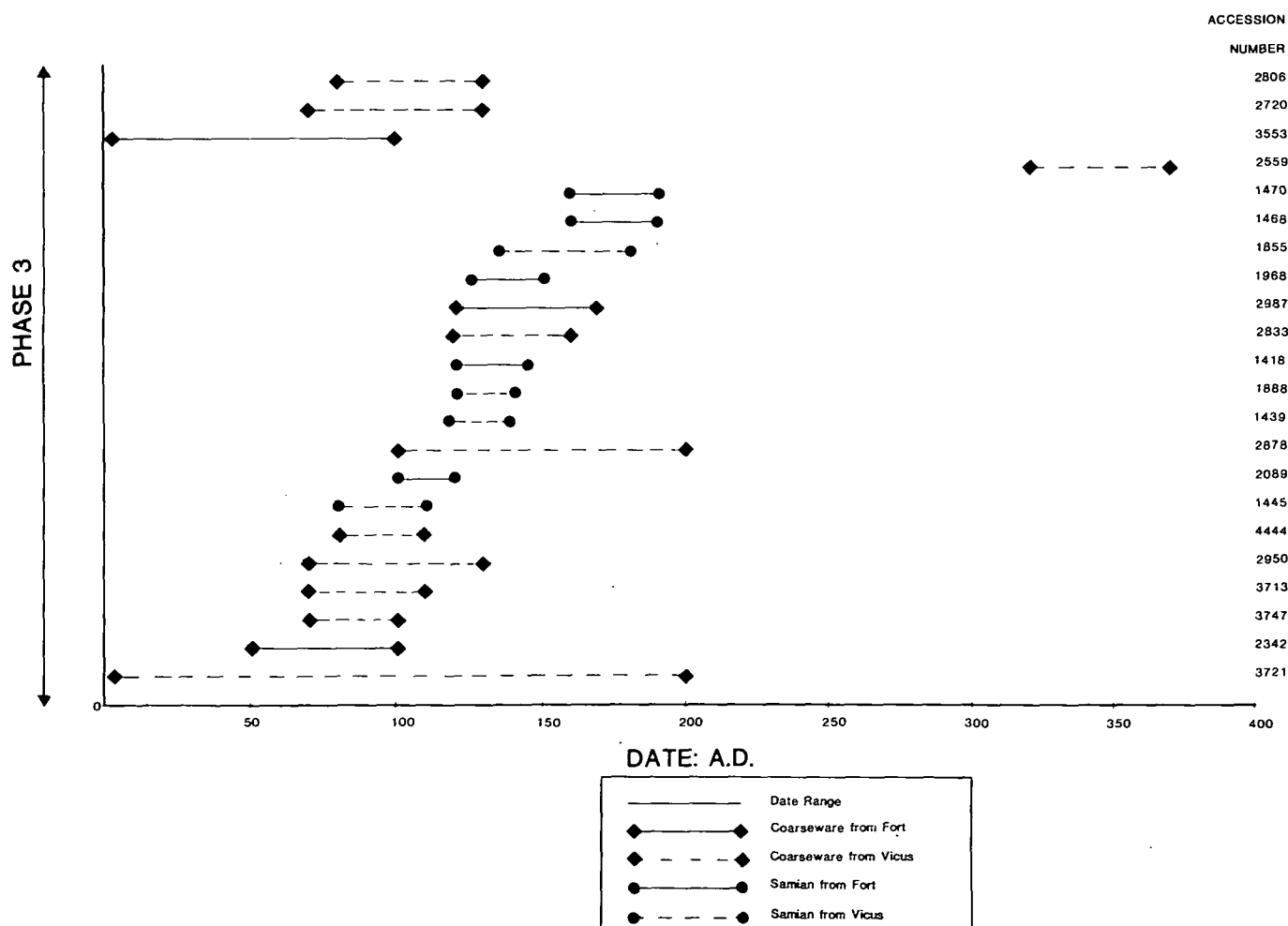
Dating (figs 8.1 - 8.4)

These graphs summarise the information available to establish the absolute dates of the various phases of occupation of the Northgate site. It has, in the past, been a common practice to date phases of Roman military occupation by reviewing the dating evidence and relating this to known historical events. In this case it was felt that it would be better to present the raw data, with all its imperfections, and to assign a statistically derived mean date and standard deviation to periods (phases) 1 - 4 as they appear in this chapter.

A comparison between figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.4 reveals that the dating material from phase 3 is not markedly different to that from phase 2. However, phase 3 clearly existed as a separate stratigraphic phase and this lack of differentiation must be due either to a mis-dating of the coarseware or a high degree of residuality.

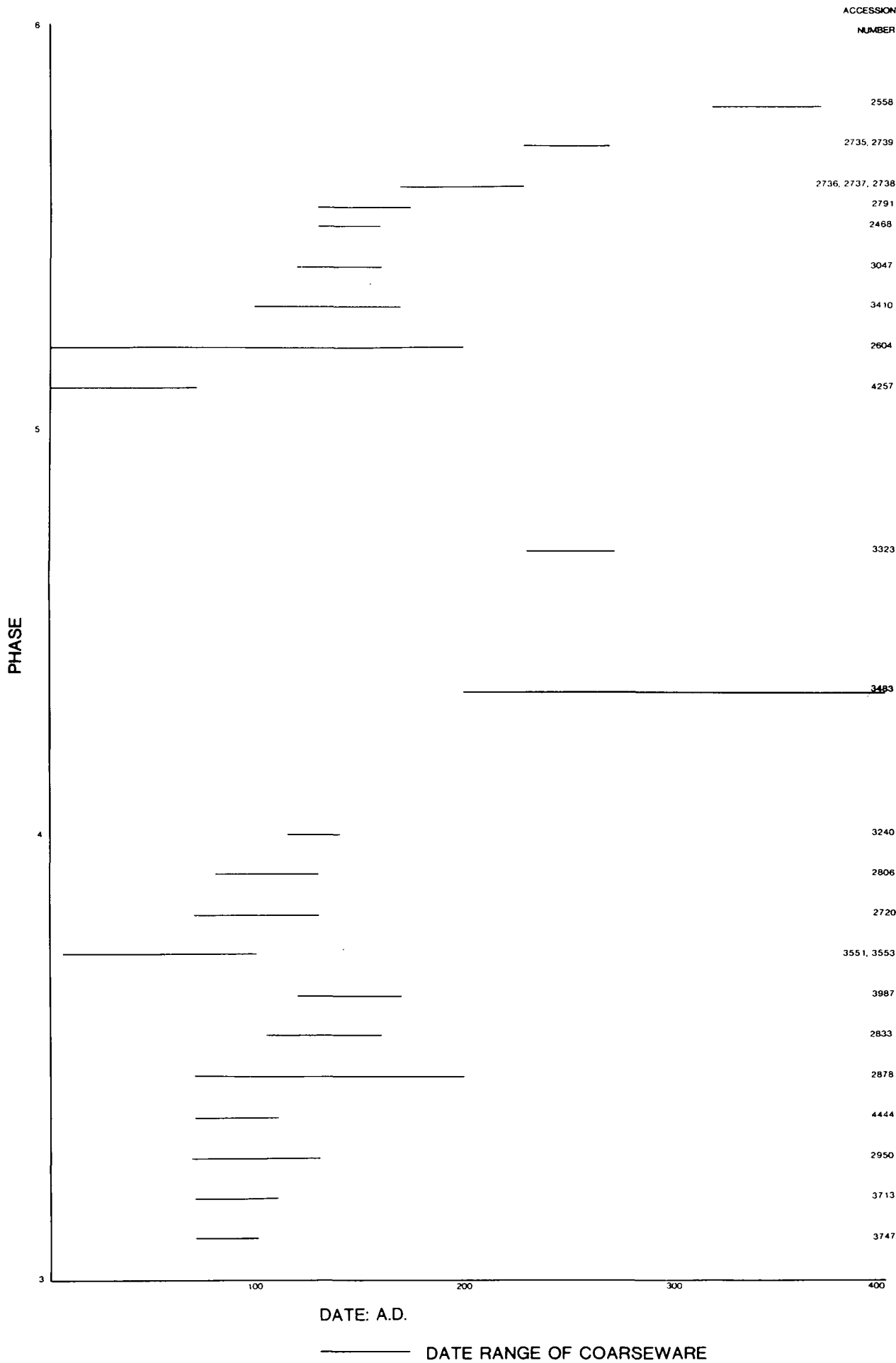
GRAPH OF DATABLE SAMIAN AND COARSEWARE, PHASE 3

Fig 8.2



GRAPH OF DATABLE COARSEWARE, PHASE 5

Fig 8.3



GRAPH OF DATABLE SAMIAN, COINS AND BROOCH

Fig 8.4

