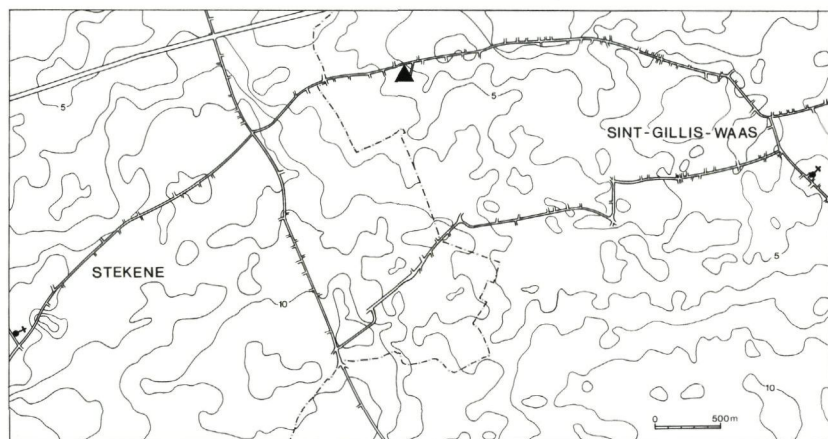


## Germanic Settlers at Sint-Gillis-Waas ? (Prov. of East-Flanders)

Yann Hollevoet & Jean-Pierre Van Roeyen <sup>1</sup>



1 Location map.

### 1 Introduction

In April 1990, J. Bourgeois (Ghent University) noticed a few pits and post-holes of different size within the limits of a new clay extraction pit along the Reepstraat at Sint-Gillis-Waas. The distribution of some of the post-holes suggested the distinct plans of timber buildings and one of the pits contained hand-made pottery very

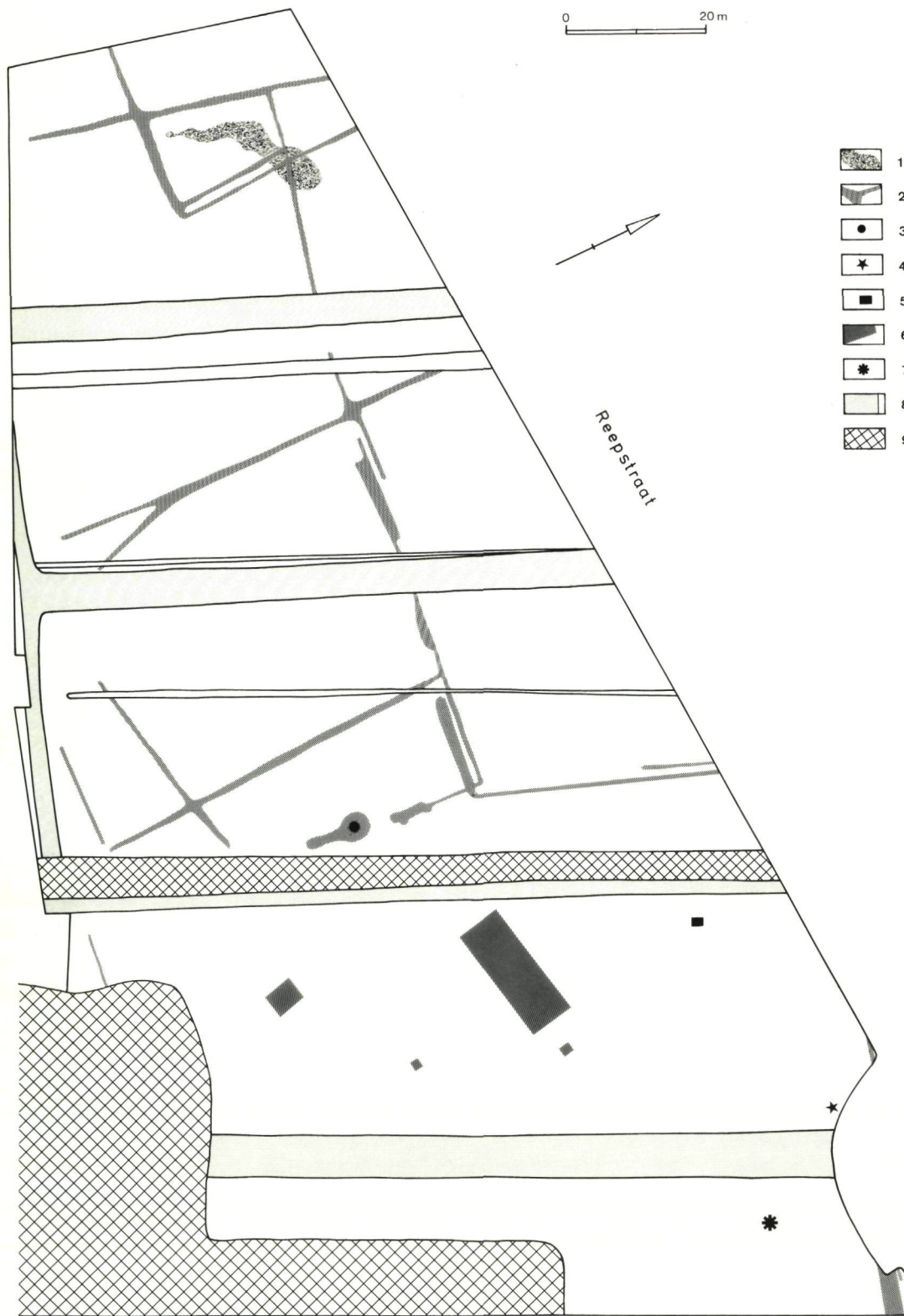
similar to Migration Period ceramics recovered from the northern parts of Germany and the Netherlands, and to some early Anglo-Saxon pottery of eastern Britain. Consequently the *Archeologische Dienst Waasland* decided to set up a rescue-excavation in advance of further clay-extraction. Financial support from the NV SIDMAR enabled the investigation of approximately 15.000 m<sup>2</sup>.

### 2 The Site

The area where the 1990 excavations took place is situated nearby 't Hol, some 3 km northwest of the village centre (fig. 1) <sup>2</sup>. During the first phase of the extraction activities less than 2 ha were brought into exploitation along the Reepstraat <sup>3</sup>. In the past this road was presumed to be of Roman origin <sup>4</sup> but recently this hypothesis has been re-examined <sup>5</sup>. The new pit bordered to the south on a former claypit where wooden remains had been found in 1969; despite the paucity of evidence these remains were identified as parts of a Roman square timber-lined well <sup>6</sup>.

The site is located on late glacial sand deposits, east of the drift-sand ridge which marks the limit between the Polders and Sandy Flanders. The Polders are situated less than 2 km to the north of the site. A roughly NS-orientated drift-sand ridge, on which the village of Kemzeke is located, lies less than 2 km to the west. The soils at 't Hol

1 Archeologische Dienst Waasland, Regentiestraat 63, B-9100 Sint-Niklaas.  
 2 Sheet 15/1 Sint-Gillis-Waas: 130,08/212,86 km. Until 1977 this area was part of the territory of the former municipality of Kemzeke (now municipality of Stekene).  
 3 1st division, section C, no. 1441c, 1442a, 1443a, 1444a and 1445a.  
 4 Mertens 1957, 24.  
 5 See also Thoen 1966, 11 note 31; in 1989 the so-called *Antwerpse Heirweg* was investigated by the ADW, in the Brugstraat at Vrasene, but clear evidence for a Roman origin was not found (Annual Report ADW 1989, 14).  
 6 Dewulf 1969a; the find is located on the territory of Kemzeke.



- 2 The excavated area.
- 1: Iron age depression.
  - 2: Roman field system.
  - 3: Roman wattle-lined well.
  - 4: Roman cremation burial.
  - 5: Rectangular pit with hand-made pottery.
  - 6: Building remains.
  - 7: Tenth-eleventh century charcoal pit with fire traces in situ.
  - 8: Late and post-medieval field system
  - 9: Recent disturbance.

are mainly composed of loamy sand or sand and are mostly wet or slightly wet<sup>7</sup>. The tertiary substrate in the area is composed of Rupelian clay which, locally, reaches a thickness of several metres.

Before clay extraction began the fields were used as arable and had a slightly convex surface as a result of the application of specific agricultural techniques, which created the characteristic so-called rounded fields

<sup>7</sup> Sheet 27W Sint-Gillis-Waas.

or *bolle akkers*<sup>8</sup>. The archaeological remains were more deeply disturbed at the edges of each field, than in the middle. Shallow features may have been overlooked as the topsoil layers were removed mechanically, prior to the extraction of the clay. Virtually no vertical stratigraphy was encountered.

The excavations revealed traces of several periods. With the exception of a few scattered flint artefacts, the earliest finds are pottery sherds, dating from the late Iron Age. These sherds were found in the filling of a small depression (fig. 2: 1).

The Iron Age depression was cut by the ditches of a Roman field system, traces of which were discovered throughout most of the excavated area; these consisted of two complete fields as well as parts of others (fig. 2: 2). The entire system may have been connected to a larger ditch, parts of which were uncovered near the Reepstraat. A wattle-lined well was situated at the eastern part of the field system (fig. 2: 3). Pottery from these features is dated to the second to third century. A cremation burial, found east of the field system (fig. 2: 4), dates to the same period.

Several settlement features were uncovered east of the Roman field system. They can be divided into two main zones. The first concentration was situated close to the Roman field system (fig. 2: 5-6) and is discussed in detail below. The second zone lay further to the east, near the edge of the excavated area; a pit and a few scattered post-holes were found but none yielded datable finds. The charcoal filling of a nearly circular feature with fire traces *in situ* (fig. 2: 7) was radiocarbon-dated to the tenth-eleventh century: AD 1015 ± 40 (IRPA 894)<sup>9</sup>.

The younger features consisted exclusively of the remains of a late- and/or post-medieval field system (fig. 2: 8). In some places this field system corresponded closely to the present one.

### 3 The 'Germanic' settlement

Settlement traces were found east of the Roman field system, over an area of approximately 2.000 m<sup>2</sup> (fig. 3). These may have been more numerous originally, as the zone was delimited by more recent ditches and disturbances both to the east and to the west.

#### 3.1 THE SETTLEMENT FEATURES

Apart from a few pits the settlement traces comprised only individual post-holes. The majority were rather small; however several larger post-holes were discovered, some with the post-pipe clearly visible.

##### 3.1.1 *The post-holes*

The distribution of the post-holes allows us to identify the remains of four post-built structures, namely one main building – probably a house – and three smaller constructions; of the latter, two had identical ground-plans. No further conclusions can be drawn from the remaining post-holes.

##### 3.1.1.1 The house-plan

Several post-holes indicate the ground-plan of a large, more or less EW-orientated, rectangular, timber building, approximately 18 m by 7 m in size (fig. 4-5). The presence of very large post-holes, regularly spaced over the entire plan and situated next to smaller ones, is of particular interest. The asymmetric configuration of the ground-plan is also noteworthy. While three large post-holes were found on the west side of the building, the east side consisted solely of small post-holes; apparently this part of the construction had slightly rounded corners.

The asymmetric plan may indicate a different roof-construction at each end, namely a hipped roof to the east and a gabled roof to the west<sup>10</sup>. The weight of the roof probably rested on the walls. The interior of the building contained some occasional post-holes but none of these could be interpreted as roof-bearing posts. These spare posts in the interior space of this single-aisled building might be elements of an internal partition. The function of two small posts, near the middle heavy post at the western short gable of the building, remains obscure.

The configuration of the post-holes seems to indicate that entrances were probably situated only in the long sides of the building (fig. 4: 1). The two zones west of the middle, heavy post may be regarded as entrances. The western sides of both zones were each characterized by a coupled pair

8 Concerning the origin and significance of the *bolle akkers*, see the contribution of R. V(an) H(ove) in the *Verklarende Woordenlijst van de Bijdragen van de Archeologische Dienst Waasland I*, 1988, Sint-Niklaas, 13-14.

9 A similar feature was found between the Roman field system, approximately 100 m southwest of the first one.

10 Zimmermann 1992, 103-104.

of posts, one of which may have been a door-jamb. Apart from these two opposing entrances, the building probably had a third entrance at the eastern end, near the northern corner; there one more post-hole was uncovered compared with the other side.

Very little is known about the internal partitioning of the house, since both the original habitation level and the hearth had been destroyed by intensive ploughing. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that the building was a multipurpose dwelling, combining a stable and a living quarter separated by a cross passage<sup>11</sup>. An area in the eastern half of the construction showed a divergent mole activity pattern (fig. 4: 2). In this zone more galleries were noticed, most of them with a characteristic dark grey-black fill differing from the recent ones. This phenomenon may have been caused by a higher phosphate content, resulting from the use of this part of the building as a stable<sup>12</sup>.

### 3.1.1.2 The plans of the outbuildings

Two different types of buildings have been identified among the other constructions. The ground-plans of two of the buildings are identical and each consists of four post-holes delimitating a space of 2 m by 2 m (fig. 6). These have been interpreted as the remains of granaries or haystacks with four posts. The first four-post granary stood some 4 m east of the house; the second was found approximately 16 m south of the first. The third ground-plan consists of three rows of three substantial post-holes, defining a rectangle of 4,5 m to 3,5 m (fig. 7-8). This plan indicates the presence of a nine-post granary, located approximately 28 m southwest of the main building.

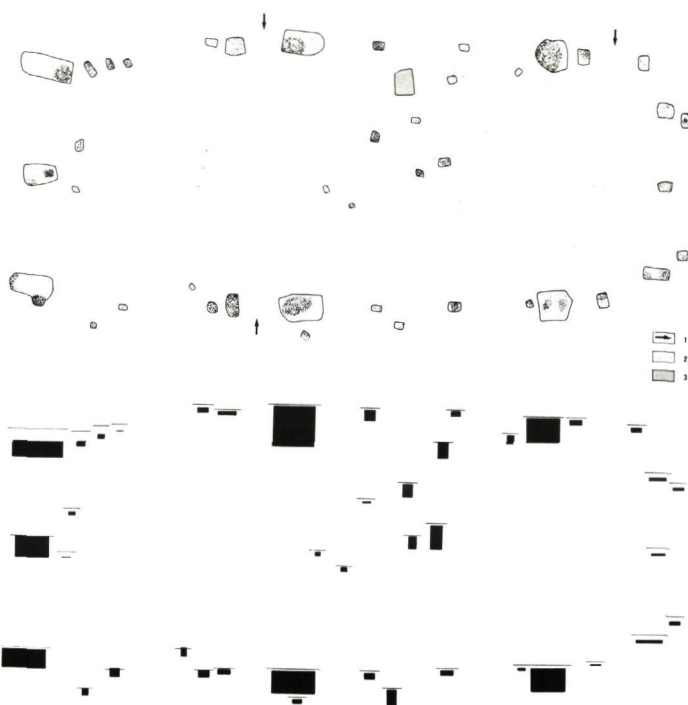
### 3.1.1.3 The remaining postholes

In the area between the remains of the four timber constructions and in the zone north of these, other post-holes were found. These were almost exclusively small. At first sight the traces apparently did not conform to any recognisable configuration; most of them were probably related to semi-permanent constructions or small



3 The area of the main settlement traces.

11 Waterbolk 1975.  
12 Zimmermann 1986, 81-82.



**4** *The main building :  
plan and depth of the post-  
holes:*

- 1: assumed entrances;  
2: area with intensive  
non-contemporary mole  
activity;  
3: shallow pit.

corrals. However, some post-holes, north of the house-plan, were arranged more or less linearly (fig. 3). These alignments have been interpreted as the remains of fences.

**3.1.2** *The pits*

Four pits were uncovered, scattered over the area. Their exact function remains unknown, but one of them was reused as a rubbish pit. It is not even clear whether two of the pits were associated with the settlement<sup>13</sup>; the only finds recovered from

their fills are single sherds, differing from the other pottery-finds<sup>14</sup>. A small rectangular and rather shallow pit was discovered amidst the remains of the main building (fig. 4: 3) and can be directly linked to its occupation. The largest pit – a more or less rectangular feature of 130 by 95 cm with flat bottom (fig. 9) – was situated some 20 m north of the house-plan (fig. 2: 5).

**3.2** *THE FINDS*

In general, the finds are scarce and highly fragmentary. Most of them originated from the large post-holes of the main building and from the rectangular pit to the north of it. Apart from a fragment of a cow-molar<sup>15</sup> and a segment of a small blue-green glass bead, the finds consist exclusively of pottery sherds. These sherds include fragments of wheel-thrown vessels manufactured in the Roman tradition as well as hand-made pottery, differing from the native Roman products.

The wheel-thrown pottery from the post-holes is represented by two body sherds and a rim fragment. One body sherd is grey in colour and tempered with irregular quartz, which occasionally breaks through the surface. The other body sherd and the rim fragment probably originate from the same vessel: a pot with an everted rim in a brown-grey rather fine-tempered fabric. The wheel-thrown pottery from the rectangular pit consists of at least three different vessels. A few sherds, in a sandy grey fabric with lighter core, probably belong to a pot or bowl. A second group of sherds originates from a small, thin-walled beaker in a grey-buff sandy fabric. Several very fine-tempered body sherds and a small rim fragment come from another beaker; the fabric is very similar to the so-called *terra nigra* and is characterized by a brown core and a black glossy external surface.

Amongst the hand-made pottery several different fabrics can be discerned<sup>16</sup>. The first fabric is mainly grog-tempered and most of the finds can be ascribed to this group. This is particularly the case for the majority of the sherds from the rectangular pit north of the house-plan, which derive from a wide-mouthed vessel with slightly everted rim (fig. 10); the junction between neck and shoulder is accentuated by rillings and the shoulder itself carries a simple,

<sup>13</sup> The first pit, an oval structure with irregular profile, was located near the southern four-post granary while the other pit, a round feature with more or less straight sides and a rounded bottom, was found approximately 16 m northeast of the main building.

<sup>14</sup> In one pit we found a base sherd in a grey, very fine tempered, smooth fabric. The filling of the other pit contained a shoulder fragment with rilling in a rather sandy fabric.

<sup>15</sup> Determination Dr A. Eryvnyck, for which special thanks.

<sup>16</sup> This is clearly apparent from the thin-sections of 5 sherds (AR4318 - AR4322); special thanks to Prof. Dr P. De Paepe and Mr. H. Mestdagh (Ghent University) for the petrological analysis of the hand-made pottery.

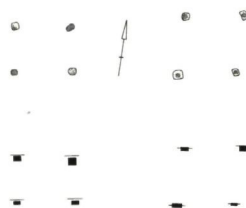


5 *The remains of the main building under excavation (Copyright ADW).*

linear, chevron decoration (fig. 11). As negative grass or chaff-impressions occur on the external surface of some grog-tempered sherds, small quantities of vegetable temper seem to have been used as well. The second fabric is more sandy and mainly characterized by the presence of organic temper, probably chaff, in some cases together with small amounts of grog. A single sherd, recovered from one of the large post-holes of the main building, is almost exclusively tempered with vegetable material and shows a certain affinity with the so called grass-tempered wares although it must probably be identified as a fragment of an iron smelting furnace <sup>17</sup>.

#### 4 The finds in their wider context

Despite the scantiness of the evidence, the settlement from Sint-Gillis-Waas can be related to the presence of a small group of Germanic immigrants in late Roman times. The hand-made pottery is different from that found in native Roman contexts. The chevron decoration was a very popular and widespread decoration pattern throughout the Migration Period on both sides of the North Sea. It is frequently found on the cremation urns and settlement pottery in the Elbe-Weser region <sup>18</sup>, the northern part of the Netherlands <sup>19</sup> and eastern England <sup>20</sup>. Vegetable temper was



6 *The four-post-granaries: plan and depth of the post-holes.*

known in western Flanders from the Iron Age onwards but it seems to have been restricted to the production of specific ceramics for iron-working or salt-making. For later periods domestic earthenwares with vegetable temper are well known from several Anglo-Saxon settlements <sup>21</sup> but have also been found in the northern Netherlands <sup>22</sup> and the Flemish coastal area <sup>23</sup>. Sherds with grass-tempering, however, have recently been recovered in late-Roman Germanic contexts southwest of Ghent <sup>24</sup>.

Even the building remains – apart from the four-post granaries – differ from those of the native Roman traditions of the second-third centuries <sup>25</sup>. Nine-post granaries did exist in northern Gaul during the late Iron Age but until now examples from native Roman contexts are unknown <sup>26</sup>. Conversely, this type of structure has been found frequently in pre-Migration Period settlements of the northern Netherlands and adjacent region of Germany <sup>27</sup>. The house-plan shows general similarities to some

17 See for example De Laet & Van Doorselaer 1969, 4-5.

18 Brandt 1965, 398 & Abb. 4, 1; Plettke 1921; Röhrer-Ertl 1971, 67-68; Schmid 1969, 128 & Abb. 2, 11; Von Quillfeldt & Roggenbuck 1985; Zimmer Linfeld 1960; Zoller 1969, 142 & Abb. 8, 5.

19 Myres 1948, 459-461.

20 Myres 1977, 44-52.

21 Hamerow 1987, 249-251; West 1985, 129-130.

22 Van Es 1969, 132

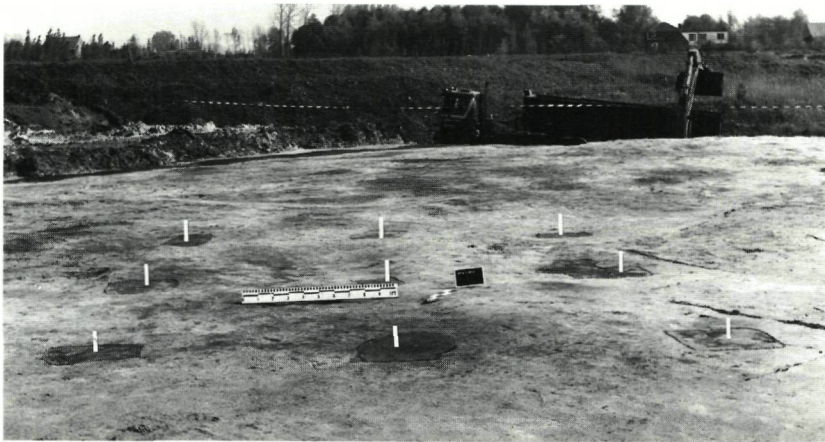
23 Hollevoet 1992, 218-219.

24 Vermeulen 1992b, 288.

25 De Boe 1988.

26 De Boe 1982, 70; Lodewijckx 1991, 46.

27 Haarnagel 1979, 148; Van Es 1973, 277; Van Es, Miedema & Wynia 1985, 626-629; Zimmermann 1992, 241; Zoller 1969, 134.



7 The remains of the nine-post granary under excavation (Copyright ADW).

single-aisled plans of late Roman, timber buildings in Germania Libera; however, in the latter cases the remains are often of smaller outbuildings<sup>28</sup> as opposed to the three-aisled longhouses<sup>29</sup>. Nevertheless, the main building of Sint-Gillis-Waas seems to conform to a building tradition which was relatively widespread around the North Sea<sup>30</sup>.

The absence of so-called sunken-featured buildings or *Grubenhäuser* should be noted. These features, already present in the earlier settlements of Germania Libera<sup>31</sup>, are regularly found in late Roman Germanic settlements within the frontiers of the Empire<sup>32</sup>, including western Flanders<sup>33</sup>. Their absence at Sint-Gillis-Waas may have been due to a high ground water level<sup>34</sup>.

Several settlements have been identified during the last few years which illustrate a Germanic presence within the frontiers of the Empire during the late Roman period<sup>35</sup>. Previously this presence was known primarily from written sources, in which *Foederati*, *Laeti* as well as *Gentili* are mentioned<sup>36</sup>, and a number of remarkable finds from graves<sup>37</sup>. Generally, occupation on most of these Germanic settlements seems to start only after the middle of the 4th century and often their appearance is linked to the arrival of Frankish settlers<sup>38</sup>. The Franks are first mentioned in the middle of the 3rd century but, in 358, the so-called Salian Franks – the Franks originating from Salland – were granted permission to settle in *Toxandria* by the emperor Julianus<sup>39</sup>. The centre of *Toxandria* is situated in the sandy region of the Kempen and a few sites in this area can probably be linked with this event<sup>40</sup>. Other Germanic settlements are known outside the Kempen, e.g. in the Meuse-Rhine area<sup>41</sup> and in the region between Scheldt and Leie<sup>42</sup>; however in most cases identification with the Salian Franks remains problematic<sup>43</sup>.

A possible link between the site of Sint-Gillis-Waas and the Frankish *Landnahme* is also problematic. The building remains and the hand-made pottery both differ from those from the other Germanic settlements<sup>44</sup>. On the other hand, the hand-made pottery shows certain similarities to that found in the coastal area of the northern Netherlands and northwestern Germany, the homelands of the Frisians and Saxons. The latter appeared mainly after the middle of the 4th century; however, even before this time they had already threatened the coastal area, perhaps together with Franks and other people<sup>45</sup>. The coastal defence system on both sides of the Channel was reorganised from the last quarter of the 3rd century onwards with Oudenburg representing an important stronghold on the continent<sup>46</sup>. In the late 4th or the beginning of the 5th century this coastal defence sys-

28 See also the similarities with the ground-plan of a smaller construction at Geldrop-Genoehuis (Bazelmans 1991).

29 Haarnagel 1979, 91; Van Es 1967, 51; Van Es, Miedema & Wynia 1985, 543; Zimmermann 1992, 42.

30 Zimmermann 1988.

31 Chapelot 1980; Zimmermann 1982.

32 Henning 1989; Van Es 1991.

33 See for example Vermeulen 1992a, 243 & fig. 157.

34 Besteman 1990, 104.

35 Henning 1989; a Germanic sanctuary dating from 370-380 was found in Arras (Jacques & Tuffreau-Libre 1991). See also Van Ossel 1992, 165-168, for the presence of Germanic objects on native Roman rural settlements in northern Gaul.

36 Gunther 1971; concerning the presence of these different groups in Belgium see also Roosens 1968.

37 Böhme 1974; the Germanic character of these graves has recently been contested (Halsall 1992).

38 Nouwen 1988, 25; Van Es 1991, 7-8.

39 De Boone 1954, 90-91.

40 Bazelmans 1990a, 1990b and 1991; see also Roosens 1987.

41 Bloemers & Thijssen 1990, 141; De Boe 1986; Heidinga & Offenbergh 1992; Panhuysen, Boyens, Dijkman & Hulst 1990, 224-225; Reichmann 1987, 518; Willems 1986, 148-149.

42 Vermeulen 1992, 239-249.

43 De Boe, 1986, 104-105; Heidinga & Offenbergh 1992, 66-67; De Paepe & Van Impe 1991, 171.

44 The pottery of some inland sites is discussed at length in De Paepe & Van Impe 1991 and Brulet 1992, 61 & Pl.17; see also Piena 1991 concerning the ceramics of some Dutch sites. So-called Germanic pottery from northern France is discussed in Tuffreau-Libre 1992, 98-101.

45 Haywood 1991, 37-45; the scale and impact of Saxon piracy before the end of the 4th century have recently been contested (Wood 1991).

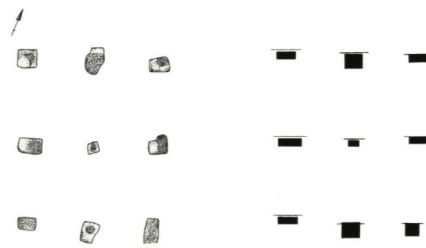
46 Mertens 1987, 87.

tem was mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, under the name *Litus Saxonicum*, the Saxon Shore<sup>47</sup>. As with the Franks it is quite possible that small groups of Saxons or other northwestern Germanic seafaring tribes settled down within the limits of the *Imperium*. The North Sea continental litoral may have been the scene of this alternative *Landnahme*, before the *Adventus Saxonicum*<sup>48</sup>. For later periods, the presence of Saxon or related settlers is presumed on several coastal regions of France<sup>49</sup>, as well as the Flemish coastal area, near Oudenburg<sup>50</sup>.

Only indirect evidence is available to suggest a Germanic presence south of the Waasland during late-Roman times<sup>51</sup>, namely, some of the decorated, wooden, ships' figure-heads found in the Scheldt basin<sup>52</sup>. None of the finds have yielded data concerning the archaeological context but at least two heads have been radiocarbon-dated to late Roman times: circa 400 AD for a head recovered from Appels and circa 350 AD for another one from Moerzeke-Mariekerke<sup>53</sup>. The figure-head from Appels was found less than 3 km from the important, early medieval cemetery of Sint-Gillis-Dendermonde. Large numbers of hand-made so-called Saxon or Anglo-Saxon pots have been recovered from this cemetery and recently the site has been associated with the head from Appels<sup>54</sup>. Some of the wooden ships' figure-heads from the Scheldt basin may be linked to the presence of Saxon or related raiders in the region from late Roman times onwards<sup>55</sup>.

## 5 Conclusions

The excavations at 't Hol in Sint-Gillis-Waas shed new light on a problem which has been a matter of debate over recent years. The building remains and associated finds indicate the presence of a small group of Germanic immigrants in the late Roman period in the immediate vicinity of an older, native Roman rural settlement. Little of the Roman field system itself was probably visible by that time, although there may have been a slight depression or pool at the site of the well. Unfortunately, it is not known whether the Roman settlement itself, presumably located to the south, was already deserted.



8 The nine-post granary: plan and depth of the post-holes.



9 Plan and section of the rectangular pit. Scale 1:25.

47 Concerning the *Litus Saxonicum* see Johnson 1976 and Maxfield 1989.

48 Myres dated the first arrival of Anglo-Saxon invaders in Britain circa 380, at least one generation before the complete collapse of Roman rule (Myres 1969, 72); however, according to Böhme this arrival did not occur before the early fifth century (Böhme 1986, 558)

49 James 1977, 202; Lorren 1980; Rouche 1977.

50 De Cock, Rogge & Van Doorselaer 1987; Hollevoet 1991.

51 Böhme 1976, 291 refers to late Roman so-called Germanic metal finds from Hamme in the *Oudheidkundig Museum* at Antwerp: a fragmentary *Stützarmfibel*, a belt-buckle, strap-fittings and two hairpins of the Wijster-type. These pieces probably belong to the Van Bogaert-Wauters collection from Hamme (Werner 1957, 322) and have to be handled with circumspection.

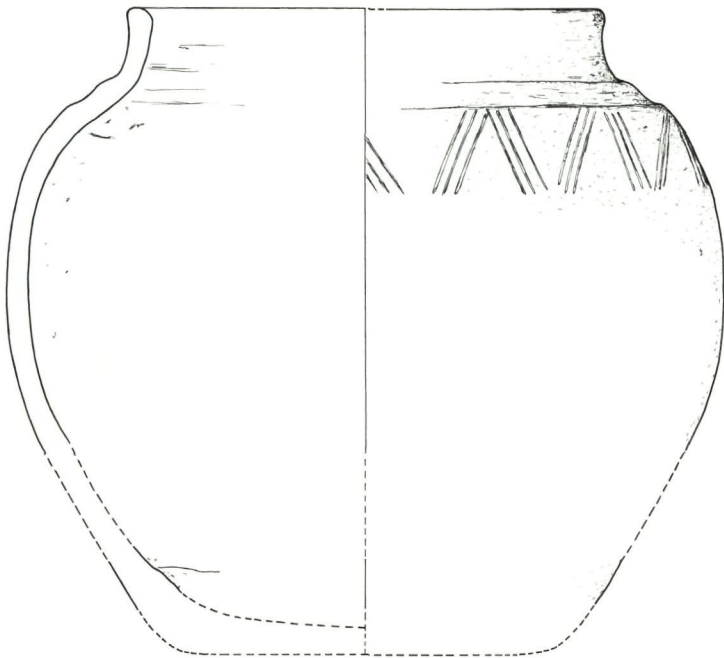
52 De Laet 1956; Bruce-Mitford 1967.

53 Bruce-Mitford 1970, 147; for a dating of the find from Moerzeke-Mariekerke on stylistic grounds see also Vierck 1970.

54 Van Doorselaer & Rogge 1991, 115; concerning the cemetery of Sint-Gillis-Dendermonde see Van Doorselaer 1958.

55 See also Segers 1987-1988, 22-23 for the adjacent region of *Klein-Brabant*, between the rivers Scheldt and Rupel, where several sites yielding late-Roman Eifelware and grass-tempered ware have been detected; as the only available information for these sites consists almost exclusively of surface finds, they have to be handled with care.





10 *Hand-made pottery with chevron decoration (scale 1:3).*

It is difficult to determine the precise date of arrival of the new settlers, as no well-dated finds were recovered. It probably dates to the 4th or the 5th century. However, this remains in question as certain types of imported Roman pottery characteristic of this period were not found<sup>56</sup>: namely Samian Ware from the Argonne and the coarse Eifelware of the Mayen type,



both of which are generally well represented on most Germanic sites in the region<sup>57</sup>. The remains found at Sint-Gillis-Waas may, instead, belong to an earlier phase of immigration which was simultaneous with or shortly after the first wave of Germanic intrusions during the third quarter of the 3rd century. It is only recently that evidence concerning this early phase of colonisation has come to light<sup>58</sup>.

The raids of the third quarter of the 3rd century brought an end to prosperity in many parts of the Empire, including the Waasland<sup>59</sup>. The region was probably largely devastated by Germanic intruders, as is testified by the coin hoard of Belsele, buried in or shortly after 263, during the usurpation of Postumus<sup>60</sup>. Some settlements, however, seem to have resisted until circa 275, as clearly indicated by the numismatic evidence<sup>61</sup>. Nevertheless, the Waasland was not completely depopulated after this turbulent period. Coins, dating back to the 4th century have been recovered from several sites. These finds indicate a revival, especially during the first half of that century<sup>62</sup>. Unfortunately, these coins are stray finds and there is scant evidence for settlement during this period. A late Roman square timber well was discovered in Temse at Hollebeek in 1956. The fill contained sherds from two ceramic vessels: a body sherd of a so-called indented beaker and fragments of a nearly complete, pedestal cup Chenet 329 of grey-black burnished fabric, dating from the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century<sup>63</sup>.

The finds of Sint-Gillis-Waas are the first in the Waasland which may be linked to the arrival of Germanic settlers during the late Roman period. At this time the area bordered on flooded marshlands and was probably connected to the river Scheldt by small, tidal channels<sup>64</sup>. Unfortunately the precise chronology of the settlement, which was apparently inhabited for a brief period, remains unclear. The reasons for which the site was deserted are unknown. The inhabitants may have moved west, perhaps to somewhere on the blown sand ridge, near to Kemzeke. The place-name Kemzeke is supposed to be of Roman origin (*Camasia-*

56 The same problem is present at a site in Lierop (Verwers 1991, 140-142).

57 Bazelmans 1990a, 29; De Boe 1986, 104; Heidinga & Offenbergh 1992, 96-98; Van Impe 1983, 88.

58 De Paepe & Van Impe 1991, 171.

59 Thoen 1966 and 1975.

60 Thirion 1967, 51-52.

61 Rogge, Thoen & Vermeulen 1989, 59.

62 Thoen 1966, 113-116.

63 Thoen 1989, 74-75; for a description of the well see also Mertens 1957.

64 In contradiction to what has been suggested in the past, recent palynological research has shown that in the basin of the river Scheldt marine and tidal influences already existed before Roman times; Minnaert & Verbruggen 1986, 206).

11 *Detail of the chevron decoration. Scale 1:1.*

*cum*)<sup>65</sup> and its survival may indicate continued occupation in the early Middle Ages<sup>66</sup>. Further research, however, is needed to confirm this.

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65 In the past *Camasiacum* has been associated with the recovery of Roman pottery near the deserted castle of Voorhout (Dewulf 1969b). Remains of a Roman settlement with adjacent cemetery were recorded in the vicinity of this castle during road construction in 1991 (Annual Report ADW 1991, 30-32).

66 Gysseling 1956, 80.

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