Late Prehistoric and Romano-British Land-use at Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Yeovilton, Somerset

By Lorrain Higbee
with contributions from Elina Brook, Kirsten Egging Dinwiddy,
Inés López-Dóriga and Alistair Barclay

wessexarchaeology

Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

www.wessexarch.co.uk

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INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological works was carried out by Wessex Archaeology in advance of development proposals for new buildings, car parks and an all-weather sports pitch at Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Yeovilton (Fig. 1). The works comprised evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2012), followed by, between July 2014 and 2015, excavation of three areas on the north side of the B3151 Ilchester to Sparkford road (NGR 354825 124140, 354825 124140 and 354747 124272), as well as watching brief areas to the west. The excavation areas covered approximately 16.8 ha and the watching brief a further 1.5 ha.

Topography and geology

RNAS Yeovilton is located within the Yeo valley on the edge of the upland area fringing the Somerset Levels to the north-east of Ilchester. The excavation and watching brief areas lie at between 17 m and 19 m above Ordinance Datum (OD). The underlying geology is undifferentiated River Terrace Deposits overlying Lias Clay and Lower Lias Limestone of the Jurassic Period (Geological Survey of England and Wales 1973, Sheet 296, 1:50,000). The overlying soils are calcareous and non-calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone gravel, with the water table lying very close to ground level.

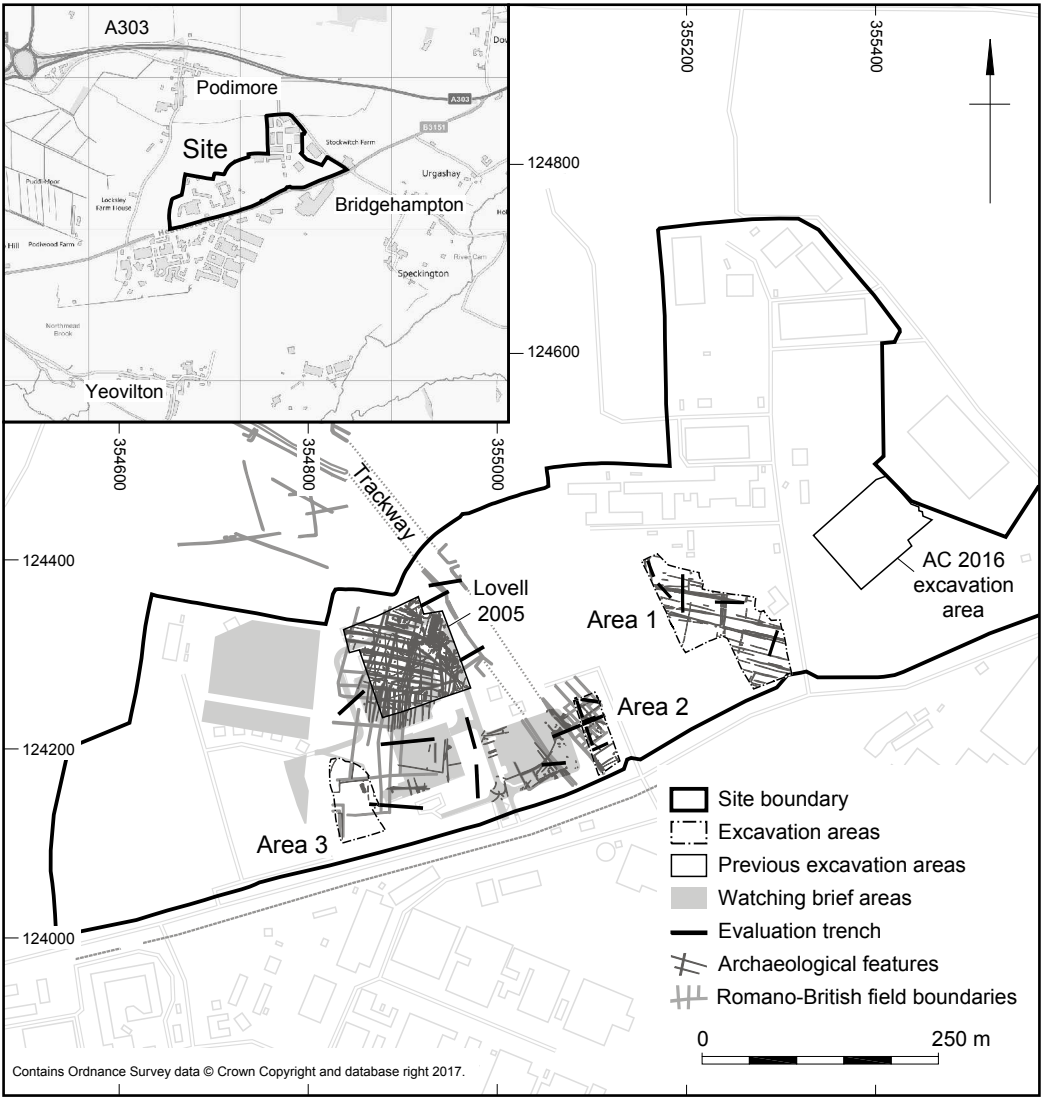


Figure 1: Location of site and investigated areas

Archaeological background

There is some evidence for Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age activity within the Yeo Valley (Wessex Archaeology 2010 and 2015; Newton 2017) but evidence within the local area is limited to a few Bronze Age pits to the north of Stockwitch Cross in Yeovilton (Broomhead 1999) and a ditch to the east of Area 1 (AC Archaeology 2016; Robinson 2016). In contrast, there is extensive evidence for Iron Age and Romano-British activity in the immediate area around RNAS Yeovilton, as recorded in the Somerset Historic Environment Record (SHER). A network of field systems, enclosures and trackways has been identified from aerial photographs to the north (SHER 54793), north-west (SHER 54794) and east (SHER 54805 and 55111) of RNAS Yeovilton (Leech 1975), and these have been subject to limited investigation (Clements 1975).

RNAS Yeovilton lies within the suggested *territorium* of Roman Ilchester which extended within a radius of approximately 6.5 km of the town. The town developed from an established military presence in the early Roman-British period which stimulated civil settlement and urbanisation, and eventually expanded to cover an area of around 20 ha, encompassing the junction of the Fosse Way, the Roman road to Dorchester and the crossing point on the River Yeo. At least six villas, of 1st to 2nd century AD date, are known within a 5 km radius of Ilchester (Leech 1982), the closest known site is at Ilchester Mead approximately 1 km south-west of the town (Hayward 1982).

Previous excavations and watching briefs at RNAS Yeovilton (Lovell 2005; Fig.1) recorded a dense array of archaeological features, evidence of an Iron Age and Romano-British farmstead associated with an extensive network of ditches defining fields and paddocks, partially arranged around a major trackway (SHER

54793). The excavation also revealed roundhouses, stone-built rectangular houses, cobbled surfaces, several inhumation burials and a well, and provided limited evidence of earlier, Middle to Late Bronze Age enclosures as well as later, post-medieval landscape use.

More recent excavations (AC Archaeology 2016; Robinson 2016) approximately 200 m to the north-east of Area 1 (Fig.1) have confirmed the survival of archaeological features previously identified from aerial photographs and a geophysical survey. The excavations recorded evidence of Late Bronze Age possible enclosure ditch, a Middle to Late Iron Age settlement with probable roundhouses, post-built structures and associated fields/enclosures, as well as part of Romano-British field systems, two stone-lined wells, and pits. Six inhumation burials and two cremation burials were also unearthed, provisionally at least two of these are thought to date to the Romano-British period.

RESULTS

Introduction

An initial evaluation within Areas 1 and 2 (Wessex Archaeology 2012) confirmed the presence of Romano-British field features associated with the near-by farmstead (Lovell 2005) and recorded post-medieval ditches. Subsequently, Areas 2 and 3 were excavated immediately south of the farmstead, and Area 1 approximately 200 m to the south-east (Fig. 1). The focus of activity is in the Romano-British period with features of this date, primarily field ditches, uncovered in all three excavation areas. Archaeological features relating to landscape use during the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods was also recorded in Areas 1 and 3. Evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation of probable post-medieval date and modern drainage features were also found. The results are presented below, by chronological phase.

Late prehistoric: Bronze Age

Part of a field system of possible Bronze Age date survived in the north of Area 1 (Fig. 2). This comprised two north–south gullies (1335 and 1698), and five east–west gullies (1366, 1691, 1693, 1700 and 1760). The gullies were between 0.35–1.00 m wide with shallow (0.22–0.40 m deep) 'U'-shaped profiles (gully 1691, Fig 3a) and rounded termini. A small amount of Bronze Age pottery (11 g) came from the termini of gullies 1691 and 1698. Animal bone (164 g) and charred plant remains was also recovered. An Early to Middle Iron Age four-post structure (1692) blocked the slightly off-set entranceway in the south-west corner of the westernmost field.

Undated pit 1337, which although cut gully terminus 1335 (part of the Bronze Age field system) is likely to be broadly contemporary with this phase of activity. The buff coloured fill was like that of the gully and distinct from the darker fills of the later field system ditches. A scrap of possible Bronze Age pottery (1 g) from pit 1449 near the south-west edge of the excavation area, suggests that this features also belongs to the earliest phase of activity.

Further evidence for Late Prehistoric landscape use was recorded in Area 3 (Fig. 2). A heavily truncated 0.50 m wide south-west to north-east orientated gully (4051) extended across the north-west corner of the area. A single sherd (7 g) of possible Bronze Age pottery was recovered from the base of this feature.

Figure 2: Plan of Area 1

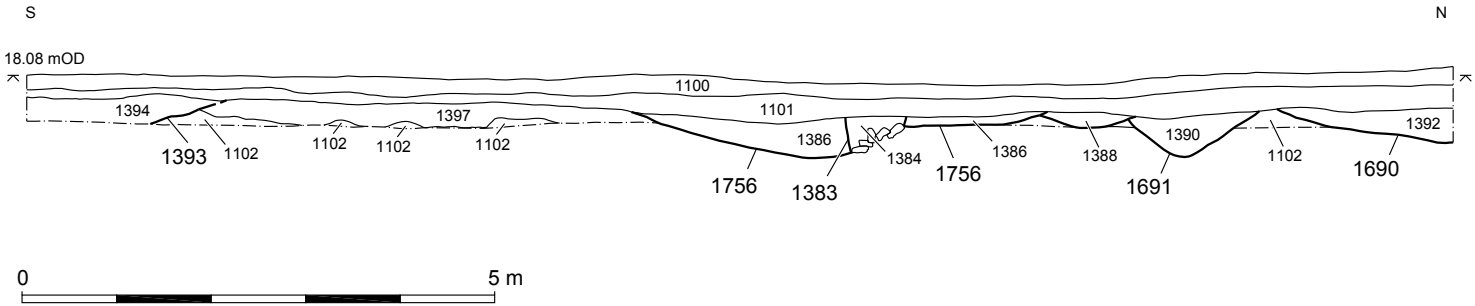


Figure 3a: East facing section ridge and furrow 1393, post-medieval ditch 1756 and drain 1383, Romano-British gullies 1387 and 1690, and late prehistoric gully 1691

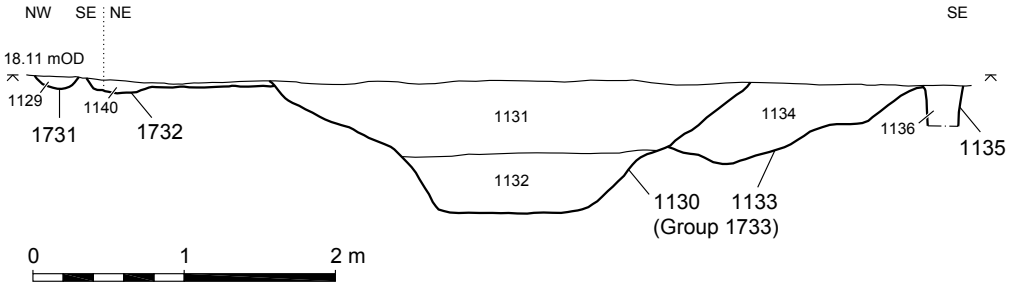


Figure 3b: NW facing section Romano-British gullies 1731 and 1732, and trackway ditch 1733

Late prehistoric: Middle Iron Age

In Area 1, four-post structure 1692 comprised postholes 1345, 1347, 1349 and 1357; the latter cutting the terminus of gully 1691 (Fig. 2). The postholes were between 0.40–0.50 m in diameter and 0.14–0.32 m deep, and all four contained sub-angular flint inclusions. A sherd (34 g) of possible Iron Age pottery and fragments of cattle skull and pelvis (264 g) was recovered from posthole 1347. Further cattle bones (253 g) were also recovered from postholes 1345 and 1349, and hulled wheat grains from posthole 1345. The vertical position of some of the larger flints and cattle bones suggests that these materials might have been used as packing material. A cattle mandible from posthole 1349 provided a radiocarbon date that falls within the early part of the Middle Iron Age (360–160 cal. BC, 2185±31 BP, SUERC-75686).

Romano-British

The nature and density of the Romano-British features reflects a much greater intensity of landscape use than in earlier periods. A regular pattern of small fields or paddocks and possible trackways was revealed across all three excavation areas. A small number of discrete features were also present, including pits, postholes and two inhumation burials. Phasing of the field system proved problematic largely due to low finds densities and the undiagnostic nature of much of the pottery assemblage, however dateable sherds suggest an emphasis in the Late Romano-British period.

The extensive network of ditches and gullies identified formed a co-axial system of small rectangular fields or paddocks and possible track- or drove-ways. These were aligned on both a roughly north-south alignment: 1315, 1474, 1690, 1704, 1707–10, 1712, 1716, 1720, 1727 (Fig. 2), 1735, 1736, 1741, 1745, 1746, 1747 (Fig. 4), 1759, 4008, 4013, 4014, 4036 and 4049 (Fig. 5); and east-west alignment: (1313, 1387, 1403, 1413, 1417, 1421, 1445, 1517, 1603, 1650, 1652,

1674, 1694–7, 1699, 1701–1703, 1705–6, 1711, 1713–15, 1718–19, 1721–26, 1728–29 (Fig. 2), 1730–1732, 1734, 1737–1740, 1743, 1749, 1751, 1757 (Fig. 4) and 4039 (Fig. 5). The profiles of these features varied from 'U'-shaped, to straight-sided and flat-bottomed, and the widths from 0.30 m to 1.70 m, depending on the degree of truncation which was most severe in Area 3 where the ground had previously been reduced as part of a flood alleviation scheme.

Over time some boundaries had shifted slightly as illustrated by the number of parallel gullies in Area 1 (e.g., 1707–10 and 1711; and 1603, 1713–14; Fig 2). There was also evidence that some elements of the field system had been dug as short inter-cutting segments, for example 1720 and 1724 in Area 1 (Fig. 1) and 1737–40 in Area 2 (Fig. 4).

The small pottery assemblage (1.309 kg) recovered from these features includes some more closely datable sherds of Late Iron Age/early Roman (from gully 1690, Area 1) and late Roman pottery; however, the majority is undiagnostic. Residual prehistoric sherds (from 1703 and 1704) and an intrusive sherd of medieval pottery (also from 1703) was also recovered. Other finds recovered from the field system include small amounts of animal bones (303 g), ceramic building material (6 g), an iron nail and a residual piece of struck flint. Environmental evidence includes cereal grains and chaff from hulled wheat.

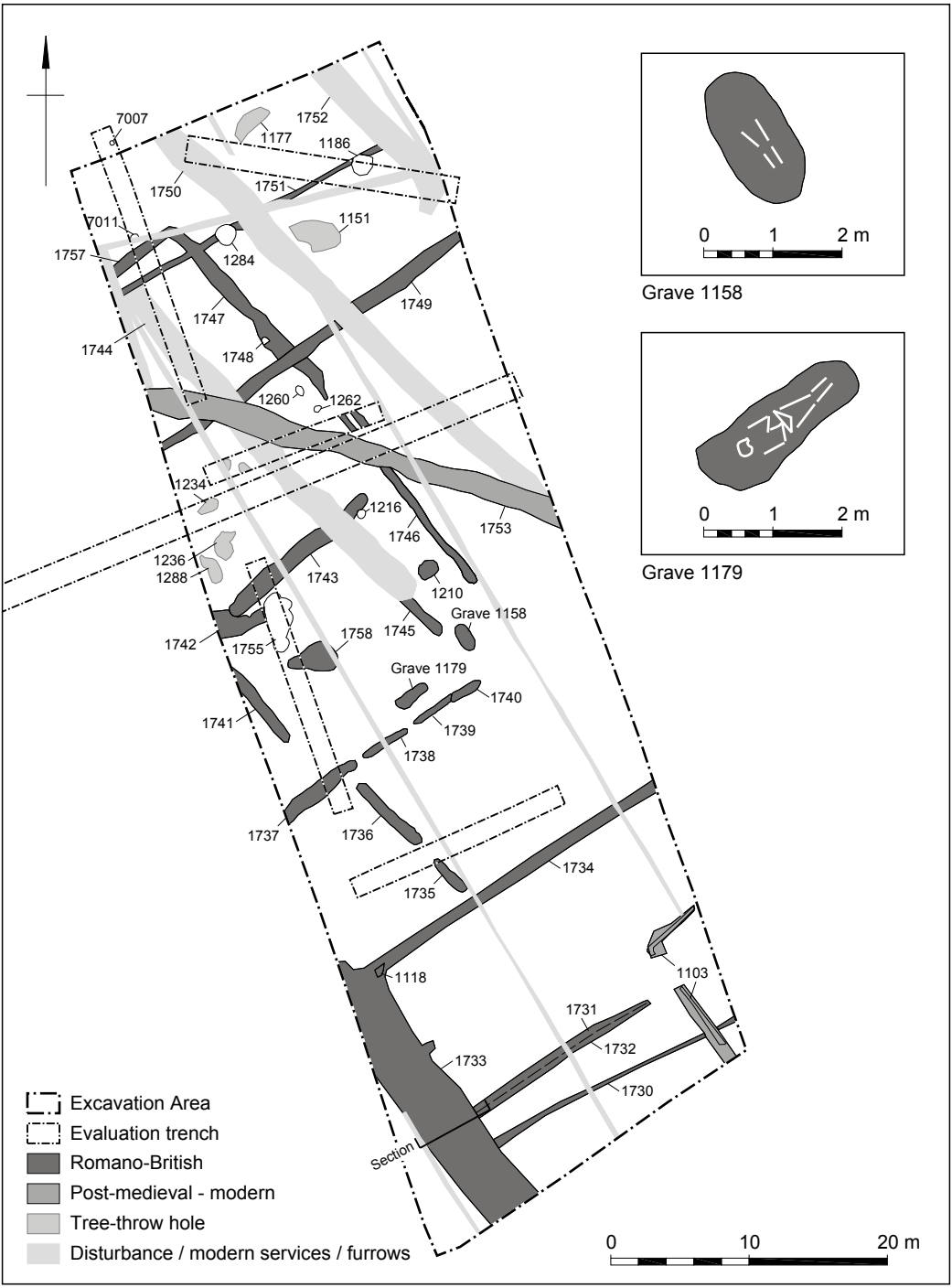


Figure 4: Plan of Area 2 with inset showing graves 1158 and 1179

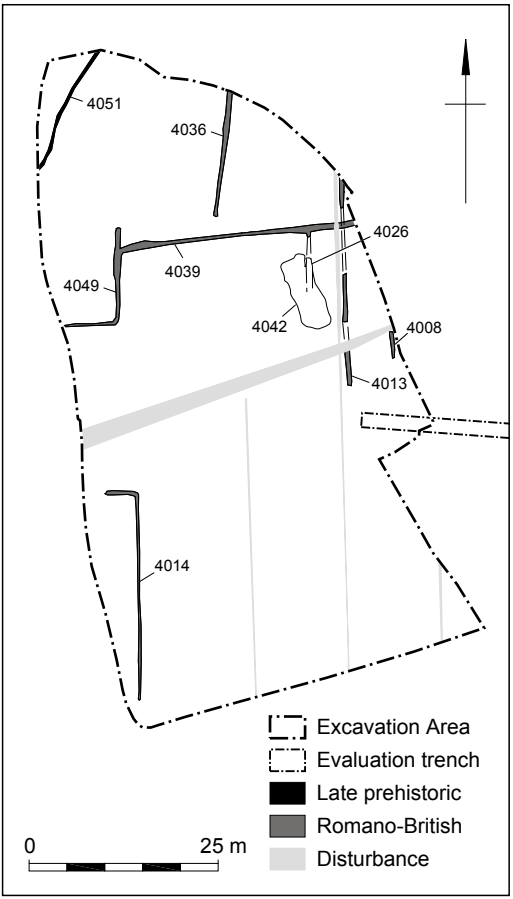


Figure 5: Plan of Area 3

A few of the gullies forming the field system in the south of Area 2 were cut by north-west to south-east orientated ditch 1733 which runs parallel with the projected line of a proposed track- or drove-way that connected the farmstead with Podimore to the north and the road to Ilchester to the south (Lovell 2005, 20 and 63; Figs 1 and 4). The ditch was maintained over a prolonged period having been recut once on roughly the same alignment. The original ditch (1133) was 2.00 m wide and 0.51 m deep, with a wide 'U'-shaped profile (Fig. 3b). It contained a mid-greyish-brown silty clay fill (1134) from which a small quantity (96 g) of animal bone was recovered. The ditch was recut as a much larger (3.14 m wide), deeper (0.87 m) feature (1130), slightly to the north-east of the original. The recut ditch (1130) had a wide flat-bottomed 'V'-shaped profile. The lower fill (1132) contained a small quantity of late Roman pottery (39 g), ceramic building material (29 g), animal bone (25 g), and a copper alloy coin (ON. 1), also of late Roman date. The coin was found very close to the base of the ditch and provides a *terminus post quem* of AD 364–378 for the recut. Environmental evidence from the lower fill (1132) includes cereal remains of hulled wheat, dock, sloe, and mollusc species characteristic of open countryside and the presence of standing water within the ditch. The upper fill (1131) also contained a small quantity of late Roman pottery (42 g) and ceramic building material (7 g).

Several pits were identified in Areas 1 and 2 (Figs 2 and 4), but only three of these in Area 2 (1118, 1210 and 1758) contained dating evidence in the form of late Roman pottery. Most of the undated pits cut elements of the field system, while pit 1118 cut trackway ditch 1733 and gully 1734 at their junction. Pit 1210 was sub-circular in plan, approximately 1.40 m in diameter and 0.62 m deep. The upper fill (1211) contained flecks of charcoal and fired clay, a small quantity of late Roman pottery (139 g), animal bone (199 g), and an iron nail (ON. 6). Pit 1758,

approximately 8 m to the west of 1210, had a distinct ‘key-hole’ shape, was 3.5 m in length by 2.3 m wide and 0.35 m deep, and contained a sequence of three fills, all of which were finds-rich. A total of 2.722 kg of late Romano-British pottery was recovered from the pit together with animal bone (530 g) and oyster shell (38 g), two shale spindle whorls (ON. 5 and 7), part of a copper alloy brooch (ON. 8) and an iron nail. Both pits contained large amounts of charred plant remains including grains of barley, spelt, and emmer wheat. The remains of other crops, such as broad bean and rape/mustard, were also recovered from pit 1758, together with hazelnuts and plum/sloe/cherry.

Two inhumation burials were located 4 m apart in the central part of Area 2 (1158 and 1179; Fig. 4 and Plates 1 and 2). These were aligned parallel with elements of the adjacent field system (1745 and 1737–40). Grave 1158 was orientated north-west to south-east and was sub-rectangular in shape (2.06 m long by 1.02m wide). It had been heavily truncated by furrow 1744 and only survived to a depth of 0.09 m. The skeleton of an adult male, lay in a supine position with the head at the north-west end of the grave. An iron coffin nail (ON. 2) was recovered from backfill 1160. Grave 1179 lay to the south-west of 1158 and was differently orientated, north-east to south-west. The sub-rectangular grave was 2.52 m long and 0.85 m wide but only 0.11 m deep. The skeleton, also that of an adult male, lay in a supine position with the head at the south-west end of the grave. Eight iron coffin nails were recovered from the grave, most coming from the backfill, but two (ONs. 3 and 4) were found adjacent to the left-side of the skull. Mineral-replaced wood was visible on the shank of one of the nails confirming the previous existence of a coffin. The backfill of the grave also contained a small quantity of late Roman pottery (25 g). Radiocarbon dating confirms the late Romano-British date of these burials (cal. AD

250–420, 1693±31 BP, SUERC-75684; cal. AD 260-430, 1665±31 BP, SUERC-75685).

Undated

Four undated pits were recorded in Area 1 (1459, 1607, 1609 and 1717; Fig. 2) and in Area 2 there were a further three undated pits (1186, 1284 and 1748; Fig. 4), a group of intercutting pits (1755) and five postholes (7007, 7011, 1216, 1260 and 1262). Most of the pits were between 1.0 m and 1.5 m in diameter and shallow. One exception was pit 1717 located in the north-east of Area 1, a large oval feature (4.3 m in length by 2.0 m wide and 0.6 m deep) which was cut into Romano-British gullies 1715 and 1716. It contained a thin primary fill and a secondary fill from which a small amount (44 g) of animal bone was recovered. The feature is of uncertain function but may represent a quarry pit or waterhole. Several of the other pits cut elements of the Romano-British field system and trackway ditch indicating that these features are late in the sequence.

A large, deep undated sub-rectangular pit (4042) on the north-east side of Area 3 (Fig. 5) has been interpreted as a possible waterhole. The outer edges of the feature (which measured 10.0 m by 3.9 m) formed a shallow basin around a deeper, central pit (1.4 m deep) which contained a sequence of four distinct fills. Fragments of waterlogged wood (thorns, sloe and dogwood) were recovered from the lower fill, a humic-rich waterlogged deposit that also contained weed seeds and glume base fragments of emmer wheat. The environmental evidence indicates an environment of long grass, scrubby vegetation and hedgerows. The upper deposits formed in drier conditions and contained flecks of charcoal and fired clay. A few scraps (8 g) of residual Late Prehistoric pottery and a sherd of Roman pottery came from the upper fill and therefore do not provide secure dating. The waterhole is cut by one of the

gullies (4026) forming the Romano-British field system suggesting it may be of either early Roman or late prehistoric date.

Several tree-throw holes were identified in Areas 1 (3009, 1330 and 1576, Fig. 2) and 2 (1234, 1236 and 1288, 1151 and 1177, Fig. 4) also remain undated.

Post-medieval and modern

Evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation and later landscape divisions (e.g. ditches 1514 and 1756, Fig. 2; 1753 and 1756, Fig. 4; also Fig. 3a) was recorded in Areas 1 and 2, and the northern part of the watching brief area (Fig. 1). Residual Roman and medieval pottery was recovered from two of the ditches together with a sherd of modern pottery, animal bone and slag. Modern drainage features such as stone-lined drain 1383, followed the alignment of these features (Fig. 3a). A further stone-lined drain (1103) was also recorded in the south-east corner of Area 2 (Fig. 4).

POTTERY by Elina Brook

The investigations produced a total of 608 sherds of pottery (5904 g) derived from 80 contexts within 53 features/feature groups. The assemblage ranges in date from Bronze Age to modern, although the focus is primarily on the Romano-British period.

The assemblage has been recorded in accordance with the current guidelines (PCRG, SGRP and MPRG 2016) and includes a characterisation of the fabrics by use of a x10 microscope, and the forms present. A breakdown of the fabric totals by period is presented in Table 1. The South-east Dorset Black Burnished wares and Oxfordshire wares were catalogued using standard corpora (Seager Smith and Davies 1993; Young 1977) whilst the South-western greywares A and B were recorded using the Exeter type series (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991). For the remainder of the assemblage, rims were catalogued using broad form types (e.g.,

everted rim jar and dropped flange bowl). Other variables, including decoration and evidence for use and repair, were also noted.

Overall, the condition of the assemblage is poor, with a mean sherd weight of 9.7 g. There is some variation between chronological periods, for example 1.1 g for the prehistoric and 12.8 g for the post-Roman material (Table 1). Many pieces have suffered surface abrasion and edge damage is visible, particularly amongst the softer, more lightly fired sherds.

Table 1: Quantification of pottery by chronological period and ware type

Period	Ware type	Number	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
Bronze age	Grog-tempered ware	1	7	7.0
Prehistoric unspecified	Grog-tempered ware	17	15	
	Leached calcareous ware	5	10	
Prehistoric unspec sub-total		*22*	*25*	*1.1*
Late prehistoric unspecified	Calcareous ware	17	41	
	Quartzite-tempered ware	2	6	
	Flint-tempered ware	1	6	
Late prehistoric unspec sub-total		*20*	*53*	*2.7*
Late Iron Age to Romano-British	Central Gaulish samian	1	9	
	New Forest colour-coated ware	8	24	
	Fine greyware	1	1	
	Fine micaceous greyware	3	5	
	Oxon colour-coated ware mortaria	2	38	
	Oxidised ware	14	31	
	SE Dorset Black Burnished ware	299	2577	
	SW Black Burnished ware	1	10	
	SW greyware A	54	1705	
	SW greyware B	16	292	
	Sandy greyware	77	550	
	Greyware	46	222	
	Sandy ware	12	32	
	Micaceous greyware	9	54	
	Fine sand and black grains	10	150	
	Sand and calcareous-tempered ware	3	10	
	Grog-tempered ware	3	32	
LIA to RB sub-total		*559*	*5742*	*10.3*
Post-Roman	Medieval sandy ware	1	44	
	Medieval glazed ware	1	5	
	Post-medieval Redware	3	20	
	Modern Industrial ware	1	8	
Post-Roman sub-total		*6*	*77*	*12.8*
Total		**608**	**5904**	**9.7**

Prehistoric pottery

A small quantity (43 sherds, 85 g) of prehistoric pottery was recovered. This includes a single coarse, grog-tempered rim sherd from gully 4051 within Area 3. Its profile is flat and slightly externally thickened. Grog-tempered ceramics have been found during previous excavations at the site and have been tentatively identified as Bronze Age (Seager Smith 2005, 25). They are characteristic of Trevisker-related assemblages from other sites in Somerset, such as Norton Fitzwarren (Woodward 1989) and more locally at Queen Camel (Jones 2018).

The other 42 sherds (78 g) could only be broadly, and somewhat tentatively, assigned to the late prehistoric and prehistoric (Table 1). The majority are undiagnostic, plain, abraded body sherds in calcareous (shell and/or limestone), leached calcareous, grog-, flint- and quartzite- tempered fabrics. The only featured sherd is a grog-tempered surface flake decorated with finger-nail impressions (ditch 1691, Area 1), suggesting a possible Bronze Age date. The largest group of late prehistoric material (9 sherds, 34 g) came from posthole 1347, part of four-post structure 1692 in Area 1. They are in a coarse calcareous fabric containing limestone and fossil shell and likely to be from the same vessel. They may possibly be of Iron Age date, fabrics containing crushed limestone and/or fossil shell having previously been identified amongst the Iron Age ceramics from the site (Seager Smith 2005, 26, fabric C1). However, the absence of any other diagnostic sherds or (in many instances) surfaces, hinders any further identification of the remaining material to specific periods.

Late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery

The majority of the pottery (92% by sherd count of total assemblage) dates to this period. The collection is dominated by coarsewares which amount to 97.3% of the

Late Iron Age to Romano-British sherds, with only a single sherd of imported ware and very small quantities of British fine or specialist wares (2.5%). In general, the low numbers of identifiable forms amongst this collection makes precise dating difficult. However, the range of fabrics and forms are comparable with those previously documented from the site (Seager Smith 2005).

Fine and specialist wares

The one imported sherd is a piece of Central Gaulish samian found in ditch 1709 (Area 1). It is part of a footring base from a probable bowl and is likely to date to the 2nd century AD. British finewares include three rejoining rim fragments of possible fine south-western micaceous greyware (ditch 1715, Area 1). This ware is thought to have been produced in the Yeo valley (Leech 1982, 141–2) from the late 1st to 2nd centuries AD, possibly extending into the 3rd century. A small number of New Forest brown colour-coated ware indented beaker body sherds dating to the late Romano-British period were found (Table 1). Six of the eight fragments are from a single vessel (ditch 1733, Area 2) and a further sherd was residual within medieval furrow 1744. A single unsourced fine greyware beaker rim came from pit 1758, Area 2. Mortaria are also poorly represented comprising just two fragments from Oxfordshire red colour-coated ware wall-sided forms (Young 1977, 173, fig. 67, type C98) which date to AD 240–400.

Coarsewares

The remainder of the Romano-British assemblage comprises coarsewares, including a small number of oxidised wares (Table 1), all likely to be local products. With the exception of two rejoining base fragments (ditch 1709, Area 2), all the oxidised coarseware pieces are abraded body sherds found in ditches and gullies forming parts of the Romano-British field system.

The unoxidised coarsewares are dominated by Black Burnished wares from the Wareham/Poole Harbour area of South-east Dorset. The range of identifiable vessel forms (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, types 1, 2, 3, 20 and 25) indicate that these wares spanned the entire Romano-British period, although there is an emphasis on 2nd to 4th century AD forms. In addition to the later jar and bowl forms (*ibid*, types 3 and 25), many body sherds have late surface treatments, in particular coarse wiping on both internal and external surfaces.

A single body sherd with a handle scar in South-western Black Burnished ware was found in gully 4039 (Area 3). This ware is thought to have been produced between the 1st to mid-3rd centuries AD in the area to the east of Devon/West Dorset (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 91–93; Williams 1991, 114). Other South-western fabrics include South-western greywares made by a series of inter-related industries that manufactured coarsewares for markets in Somerset and East Devon between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 19). The South-western greyware A fabric is characterised by very soft, flaky, sparkly inclusions (*ibid* 175, fabric 107) whilst the South-western greyware B fabric (Seager Smith 1999, 310–311) is defined by rounded quartz and mica, sometimes with additional rock-temper. The only identifiable forms present in these fabrics are three storage jar rims found in late Romano-British pit 1758 (see below). In this region, storage jars are generally thought to date from the latter part of the 2nd through to the 4th centuries AD. The sandy greyware fabric (Table 1) is characterised by well-rounded quartz with common black grains and fine mica. It is possible that this ware may also belong to the same South-western group of industries but diagnostic pieces are limited to two flagon rims and one everted jar rim.

Other unoxidised coarsewares (Table 1) are likely to be from a range of local sources. With the exception of three grog-tempered body sherds, they are present in a range of fabrics predominantly tempered with quartz sands with varying quantities and combinations of micaceous or calcareous (shell or limestone) inclusions, or black grains. Fragments from just four rims are present. They include two possible bowl/tankard rims (tree-throw 1576 and ditch 1690, Area 1), an upright rim (gully 4039, Area 3) and one everted rim (ditch 1709, Area 1).

Distribution

The Late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery derived from 64 contexts within 43 features/feature groups. The assemblage was recovered from a broad range of feature types including ditches, gullies, pits, medieval furrows, the backfill of a grave, one tree-throw hole and a possible waterhole. However, most of this material was found in small quantities with only four feature groups containing more than 25 sherds; a brief summary of these is outlined below.

Chronologically, one early group of material came from ditch 1690 located in the north-western corner of Area 1 (37 sherds, 240 g). This contained a South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware jar (Fig. 6, 1) with a slightly everted rim (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 1) with burnished lattice decoration, along with several other South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware sherds from two footring bases (probably from bowls), one of which is nicely burnished on the interior as well as the exterior (Fig. 6, 2). Both forms suggest a Late Iron Age or early Romano-British date. However, the low mean sherd weight (6.5 g) for this group indicates that this material may be residual within the ditch in which they were found. The ceramic assemblage from nearby excavations (AC Archaeology 2016) was dominated by material of

comparable date, suggesting that this earlier phase of Late Iron Age-Early Romano-British activity was more focused to the east of the excavations discussed here.

The remaining large groups all came from features within Area 2. By far the largest group of pottery recovered came from late Romano-British pit 1758 (267 sherds, 4022 g). Regional imports and specialist wares include an indented beaker body sherd of New Forest colour-coated ware and a rim fragment from an Oxfordshire red colour-coated ware wall-sided mortaria (Fig. 6, 3; Young 1977, 173, fig. 67, type C98), dated to AD 240–400. Other fine wares consist of an unsourced fine greyware beaker rim. However, the group is dominated by South-east Dorset Black Burnished wares which amount to 54% of the group by sherd count. These include 15 rim fragments from at least five straight-sided dishes (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, Type 20), one of which is decorated with burnished intersecting arcs on the vessel wall, a possible scrolling motif on the exterior base and an unidentifiable motif on the inner base (Fig. 6, 4). Everted rim jars (*ibid*., types 2 and/or 3) are also well represented including fragments from at least three vessels (e.g., Fig. 6, 5), several of which are decorated with lattice motifs typical for the ware type. The illustrated example (*ibid*. type 3) also displays the characteristic late surface treatment of coarse wiping on the interior and dates from the late 3rd century AD onwards (*ibid*. 231). Several other lattice-decorated body sherds with coarse wiping are also likely to belong to further jars. Pieces from at least three late 3rd–4th century AD bowls/dishes with dropped flanges include one decorated externally with intersecting arcs (Fig. 6, 6).

Both South-western greyware A and B industries are well represented within pit 1758 (20.2% by sherd count). The majority of these are South-western greyware A (44 sherds, 1631 g) and predominantly derive from large storage jars. Thick,

slightly everted rims from two vessels are present. The first illustrated example (Fig. 6, 7) has tooled/stabbed marks on the inner edge of the rim and thumb-impressed decoration on the shoulder; both are typical characteristics for vessels in this fabric and find parallels from both Exeter (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 176, fig. 68, 3.1) and in fabric CW at Ilchester (Leach 1982, 159, fig. 73, 289). The second illustrated storage jar rim (Fig. 6, 8) has slashed decoration on the top and an external applied cordon below the rim; it is also comparable to storage jars from Ilchester (Leach 1982, 159, fig. 73, 271 and 273) dating from the late 2nd century AD onwards.

Diagnostic pieces amongst the remainder of the unoxidised coarsewares within pit 1758 are limited to rim fragments from two flagons (e.g., Fig. 7, 9) and a wide-mouthed everted rim jar (Fig. 7, 10). All are in a sandy greyware which may be related to the South-western greyware industries. The upright, moulded flagon rim is comparable to a narrow-necked flagon/jug from the previous excavation area (Seager Smith 2005, 70, fig. 12, 3) whilst a similar form in miscellaneous greyware from Exeter (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 185, fig. 75, 1) was found within a 4th century AD context. The everted rim jar is similar to a jar from Ilchester in a grey local coarseware (Leach 1982, 159, fig. 71, 195).

Ditches 1743 and 1737 both formed east-west elements of the co-axial field system and were located close to pit 1758; ditch 1743 lay 5.3 m to its north, whilst ditch 1737 was 8.1 m to the south. Ditch 1743 contained a total of 44 sherds (354 g) whilst 32 sherds (225 g) came from ditch 1737. With the exception of three abraded flakes (2 g) of oxidised ware from ditch 1737, unoxidised coarsewares dominate both groups. Identifiable forms are limited to one straight-sided dish, three everted rim jars and four dropped flange bowls; all in South-east Dorset Black Burnished wares (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, types 2 or 3, 20 and 25). Ditch 1743 also contained

a possible flagon rim in a sandy greyware, whilst a wide-mouthed, jar/bowl with an everted rim and cordon on the shoulder (Fig. 7, 11) came from ditch 1737. The form of this vessel is not too dissimilar to a miscellaneous greyware jar from a 4th century context at Exeter (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 187, fig. 75, 18).

Illustrated pottery (Fig. 6, 1–8 and Fig. 7, 9-11)

1. Everted rim jar (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 1); South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware. Area 1, context 1321, ditch 1690
2. Footring base; South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware. Area 1, context 1321, ditch 1690
3. Mortarium (Young 1977, type C98); Oxfordshire colour-coated ware. Area 2, context 1195, pit 1758
4. Straight-sided dish (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 20); South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware. Area 2, context 1195, pit 1758
5. Everted rim jar (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 3); South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware. Area 2, context 1195, pit 1758
6. Dropped flange bowl (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 25); South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware. Area 2, context 1195, pit 1758
7. Storage jar (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, type 3.1); South-western greyware A. Area 2, context 1195, pit 1758
8. Storage jar; South-western greyware A. Area 2, context 9010, pit 1758
9. Flagon rim; sandy greyware. Area 2, context 1195, pit 1758
10. Wide-mouthed, everted rim jar; sandy greyware. Area 2, context 1195, pit 1758
11. Wide-mouthed, everted rim jar; sandy greyware. Area 2, context 9012, ditch 1737

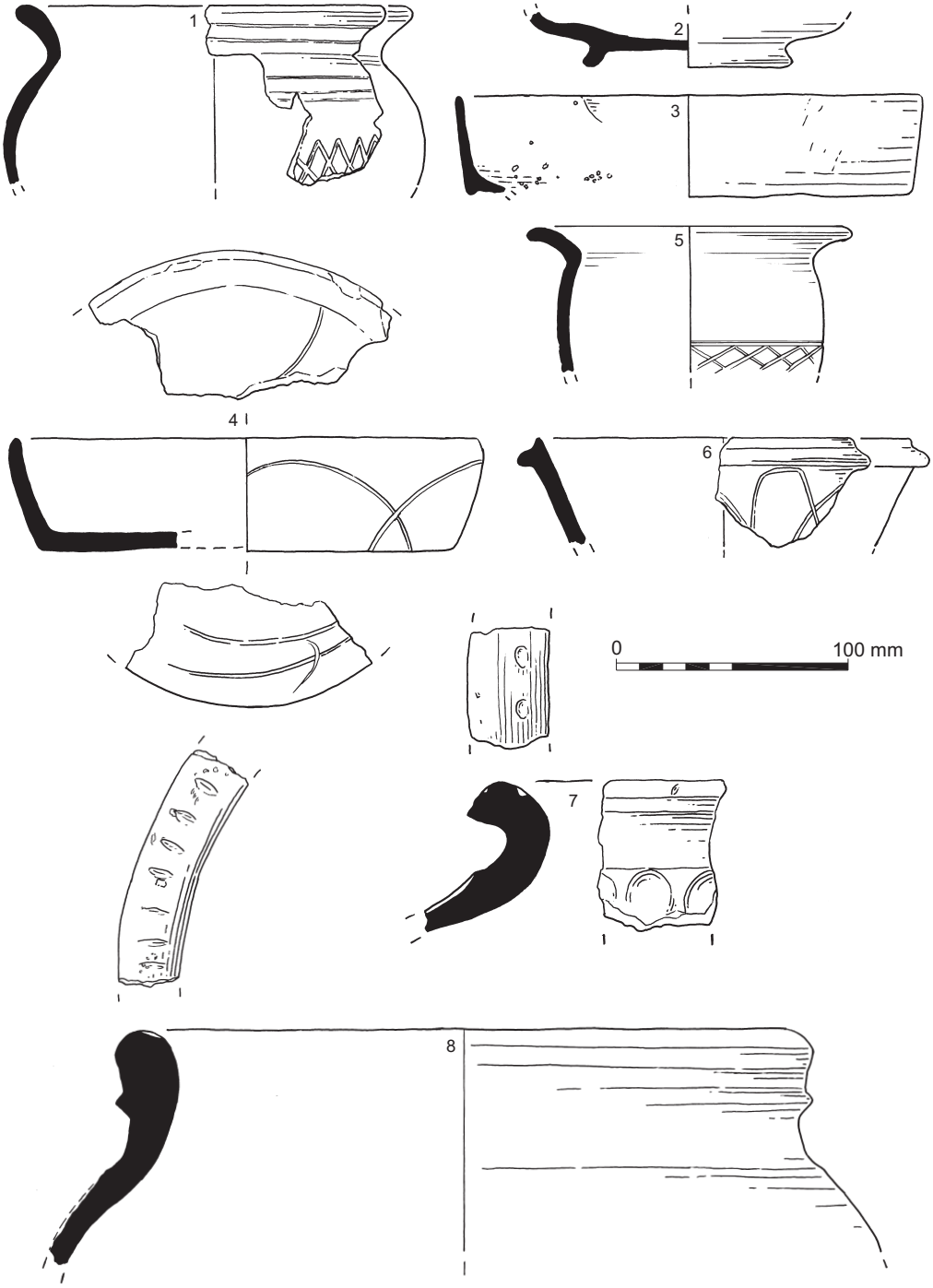


Figure 6: Late Iron Age-Early Romano-British pottery (1-2); Romano-British pottery (3-8)

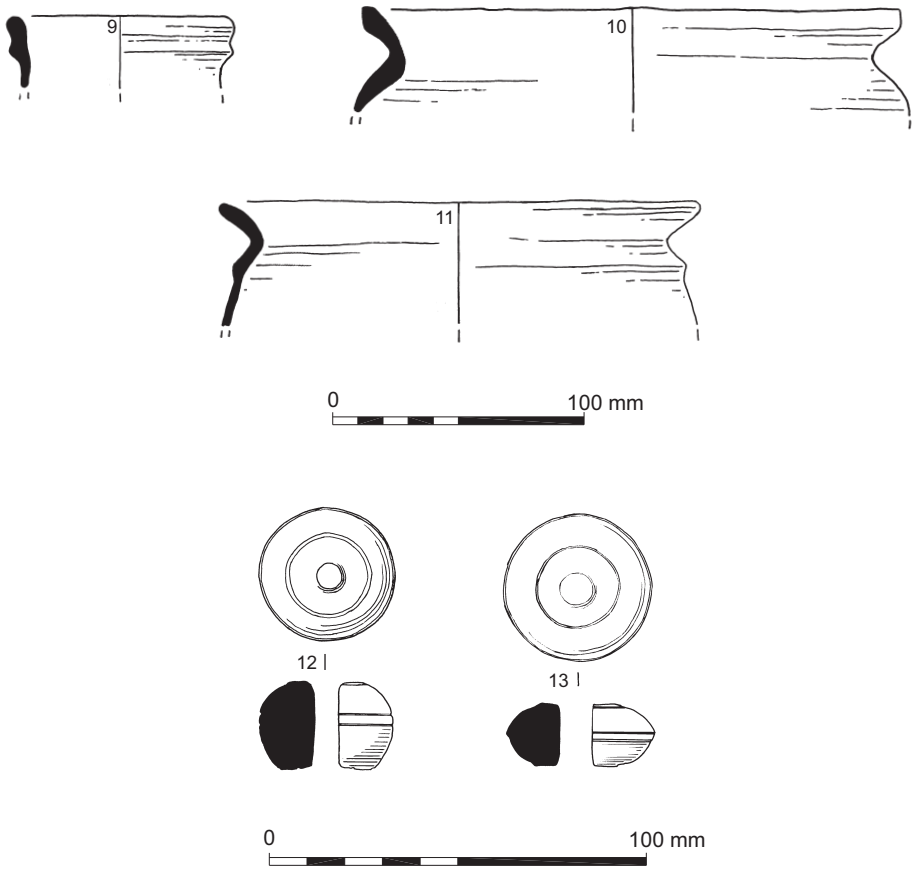


Figure 7: Romano-British pottery (9-11); Shale spindle whorls (12-13)

Discussion

The low numbers of large, securely stratified feature groups, diagnostically datable forms and problems with residuality hinders establishing a closely dated ceramic sequence for the activity taking place within the site. However, the range of fabrics and forms present within the assemblage indicates occupation from the Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British period to the 4th century AD. Some elements of the assemblage, such as the Central Gaulish samian and possible fine south-western micaceous greyware for example, indicate activity within the 2nd into the 3rd centuries AD but the main focus appears to have been within the later 3rd–4th century. This reflects the nature of the ceramic assemblage previously recovered from the adjacent excavation area to the north (Seager Smith 2005).

The paucity of continental imports, which are generally early Romano-British, is not surprising given the late Romano-British focus of the assemblage. However, their presence (albeit very limited) demonstrates some access to vessels, and possibly other products, from other parts of the Empire. Regionally imported finewares such as the products from the Oxfordshire and New Forest industries further indicate the wider trading links present between the occupants of this settlement and elsewhere. The low incidence of oxidised wares is also typical of the pattern identified at other sites in Somerset (Evans 2001, 159). The dominance of the South-east Dorset Black Burnished wares (53.5% of the Roman pottery assemblage by sherd count) is entirely to be expected as the site lies within the Polden Ridge corridor distribution zone identified by Allen and Fulford (1996, 243). The proportions are comparable to other sites in the region including Ilchester (Leach 1982, 143), Queen Camel (Jones 2018), Lyde Road (Wessex Archaeology 2010 and 2014) and Steart Point (Brook and Seager Smith 2017, 38) for example.

Further trading links with the south and west of Britain are demonstrated by the presence of South-western greywares A and B (12.5% by sherd count) whilst small amounts of other coarsewares represent products of more local industries. Overall, the Late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery is typical of small rural farming settlements from across southern Britain.

Post-Roman pottery

Two medieval sherds were recovered – a base fragment in a moderately coarse sandy ware (gully 1703, Area 1) and a glazed body sherd (post-medieval ditch 1753, Area 2). Both date to the 13th to 14th centuries. Two post-medieval green glazed redware sherds were found, one intrusive within late Iron Age/early Romano-British ditch 1690 (Area 1) and the other from furrow 1754. A single fragment of industrial ware with sponged decoration (post-medieval ditch 1753, Area 2) dates to the 19th to 20th centuries.

OTHER FINDS by Elina Brook

Metalwork

Iron

Eighteen fragments of iron (136 g) were found, thirteen of which are from flat, round-headed nails with square-sectioned tapering shanks (Manning 1985, 134, type 1). Nine of these were found in the two graves of late Romano-British date; one from grave 1158 and the others from grave 1179. All are likely to represent coffin nails: mineral-replaced wood being visible on a shank fragment from grave 1179. The remaining nails/nail fragments (seven pieces) were from features containing Romano-British or late Romano-British pottery, including pits 1758 and 1210 (Area 2), and gully 4039 (Area 1).

Late Romano-British pit 1758 also contained part of a smaller nail/tack, which may have derived from a nailed boot or shoe, although similar nails were also used in upholstery and to decorate woodwork. A sub-rectangular, flat fragment with a square perforation was also found in this pit and is possibly part of a fitting.

Copper alloy

Two pieces of copper alloy were found. One is a late Romano-British coin recovered from trackway ditch 1733, a nummus of the House of Valentinian dating to the period AD 364–378 (*pers. comm* Richard Henry). The other piece is a fragment of a hinged pin from a brooch found in late Romano-British pit 1758.

Shale

Two complete, lathe-turned spindle whorls were found within late Romano-British pit 1758. One (deposit 1195; Fig. 7, 12) is almost spherical in shape, with a sub-oval cross section and measures 37 mm in diameter. The other (deposit 1226; Fig. 7, 13) is bi-conical with a D-shaped cross-section and measures 40 mm in diameter. Both have cylindrical perforations and are decorated with double grooves around their maximum girth, as well as single grooves surrounding the perforation. These items are likely to have originated from the Kimmeridge industries in Dorset. It is possible that cores produced in the manufacture of shale bracelets were modified and utilised as spindle whorls (Lawson 1976, 272). Shale spindle whorls are common finds on many Romano-British sites, but are not intrinsically datable (*ibid*). Several comparable turned and grooved examples were found at Ilchester (Leach 1982, 217, fig. 103, 6 and fig. 104, 19, 20 and 22).

<u>Illustrated shale</u> (Fig. 7, 12–13)

12. Spindle whorl, context 1195, late Romano-British pit 1758

13. Spindle whorl, context 1226, late Romano-British pit 1758

Miscellaneous finds

Two pieces of flint were recovered. One is a broken flake found residually within Romano-British gully 4049 (Area 3), whilst a trimming flake from a bladelet core of possible Mesolithic date was found unstratified.

Other finds include two abraded fragments of ceramic building material, one each from medieval furrow 1750 (Area 2) and Romano-British ditch 1690 (Area 1). Based on their condition, these are probably of Romano-British date. Two featureless fragments of fired clay in a slightly sandy, predominantly oxidised fabric were found within the backfill of grave 1179 and post-medieval ditch 1756. One piece of possible smithing slag came from post-medieval ditch 1753 (Area 2). Late Romano-British pit 1758 contained a piece of oyster shell (most probably representing food waste). A plain stem fragment from a post-medieval clay tobacco pipe came from post-medieval drain 1383.

HUMAN BONE by Kirsten Egging Dinwiddy

Introduction

The skeletal remains of two coffined inhumation burials were subject to osteoarchaeological analysis. A sample of bone from each was submitted for radiocarbon dating; a late Romano-British date was returned (below), confirming their association with the surrounding Romano-British rural landscape.

The remains of several late Romano-British burials have been discovered in the immediate vicinity (Lovell 2006; AC Archaeology 2016); most have been analysed and the results published (McKinley 2006).

Methods

An assessment of the condition of the bone was based on McKinley (2004). Estimations of age and sex were made using standard methodologies (Bass 1987; Beek 1983; Scheuer and Black 2000, Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994). Non-metric traits were recorded (Berry and Berry 1967; Finnegan 1978) and notes were made describing pathological lesions and regarding morphology.

Results

The presented results are a necessary summary, further details are with the archive. In-depth comparative analysis was not deemed appropriate due to the small size of the assemblage.

The two closely situated graves, found in the corner of a Romano-British field (Fig. 4), had been cut deep enough to reach the natural gravel. Each was infilled with a gravel-rich silty/sandy clay and had subsequently been truncated by agricultural activity; both survived to depths of around 0.10 m.

Although the surface condition of the bone is generally good (grades 1–3), little trabecular bone survives – as was the case in the previously analysed assemblage (McKinley 2006). Much of the bone is heavily fragmented, having been damaged in antiquity. Around 45% of the skeletal remains were recovered from burial 1180 (from all skeletal regions) and 20% from burial 1159 (axial, upper and lower limb regions only); truncation and deterioration were the primary causes of bone loss.

The remains are those of a large adult male approximately 30 to 45 years of age at death (1180) and a possible male aged at least 30 years (1159).

The single calculable index – the platycnemic index, which reflects the degree to which the tibia shaft is flattened – demonstrated that the right tibia of 1180 falls

within the eurycnemic range, i.e., broad or wide (74.0), corresponding with McKinley's findings (2002; 2006).

Most of the teeth (25 of 31) from the single, near complete dentition (1180) have slight to moderate deposits of dental calculus, i.e., calcified plaque, adhering to the former gum line. Two of 17 tooth positions exhibit signs of periodontal disease (gingivitis). Both conditions were also observed by McKinley (2006). Chipping of the maxillary right canine and second incisor is almost certainly the result of malocclusion.

Linear defects in the tooth enamel are caused by an interruption in enamel formation – hypoplasia (Lewis & Roberts 1997), usually due to periods of physiological stress during childhood (e.g., malnutrition or disease). Both mandibular canines have at least two defects which formed between the ages of four and seven years, coinciding with the end of the traditional weaning period and the maturation of an individual's immune system.

Moderate enthesophytes are present on the finger phalanges of both individuals and on the left femur and patella of 1180. Such bony protrusions often form at connective tissue attachment sites, a result of strenuous and/or repeated muscle use, though advancing age, certain conditions and/or a natural predisposition to bone over-production may also factor in their development.

The osteoarchaeological findings suggest that the remains are those of two individuals whose physical lives would have been broadly comparable to their contemporaries. The results contribute to the growing corpus of data gathered from sites in the vicinity, and region, aiding a better understanding of rural burial rites and populations in the Late Romano-British period.

ANIMAL BONE by L Higbee

Introduction

The assemblage comprises 291 fragments (or 2.361 kg) of animal bone and is quantified in Table 2. The overall total takes account of conjoins and is therefore less than the raw count given above.

Table 2: Animal bone: number of identified specimens present (or NISP) by period

Species	Prehistoric	Romano-British	Post-medieval	Total
cattle	7	19	1	27
sheep/goat	-	10	-	10
pig	-	1	-	1
horse	-	1	-	1
Total identified	7	31	1	39
Total unidentifiable	23	94	-	117
Overall total	30	125	1	156

Methods

The assemblage was recorded following established methods (Boessneck 1969; Cohen and Serjeantson 1996, 110–12; Grant 1982; Halstead 1985; Halstead *et al* 2002; Hambleton 1999; Lauwerier 1988; O'Connor 1989; Payne 1973 and 1985; Payne and Bull 1988; Serjeantson 1996, 195–200; Silver 1969; Sykes 2007; Vann and Thomas 2006; von den Driesch 1976) and guidelines (Baker and Worley 2014).

Results

Bone preservation varies from good to poor, but is generally consistent within individual contexts. The number of gnawed bone fragments is extremely low and this suggests that the assemblage has not been significantly biased by the bone chew habit of scavenging carnivores. Identified bones account for just 25% NISP and

include bones from four domestic species. Cattle and sheep/goat bones are common, while both pig and horse are represented by just one fragment each.

Seven cattle bones were recovered from late prehistoric features in Area 1 including possible Bronze Age gullies 1691 and 1700, and Middle Iron Age four-post structure 1692. Several of the larger more complete bones were vertical within the postholes of 1692 and therefore might have been used as packing material. The cattle bones include fragments of proximal radius from 1691 and 1700, and fragments of skull, horn core, mandible, pelvis, femur and metatarsal from three (1345, 1347 and 1349) of the four postholes forming structure 1692. The mandible from 1349 is from an immature animal aged between eight to 18 months (mandible wear stage, or MWS, C after Halstead 1985) and provided a calibrated radiocarbon date in the early part of the Middle Iron Age (360-170 cal. BC, 2185±31 BP, SUERC-75686). The complete metatarsal provided an estimated withers (or shoulder) height of just 0.92 m.

Fragments of animal bone were recovered from five gullies (1733, 1737, 1738, 1743 and 1690) and two pits (1194 and 1210) of late Romano-British date. Over half of the animal bones came from pit 1194. Most of the identified bones belong to cattle and sheep/goat. They include the mandible from an old adult cattle (MWS H), a complete cattle metacarpal which provided a withers height estimate of 1.18 m and a sheep/goat atlas vertebra that had been split in half. A pig second molar and a horse carpal were also identified. A fragment of cattle distal tibia came from post-medieval ditch 1753.

Conclusions

The animal bone assemblage is small and provides limited information about the livestock economy of the area during the late prehistoric and Romano-British periods. Sheep-farming was the mainstay of the pastoral economy at the nearby

farmstead (Hambleton 2005) and settlement (Coles 2016), while the assemblage from the outlying field system is dominated by cattle bones. It is possible that this spatial patterning reflects differences in the location of butchery sites for different livestock, with cattle more likely to be slaughtered out in the fields and sheep within settlements (Wilson 1996).

CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by Inés López-Dóriga

Introduction

A total of twenty-five sediment samples were taken during the investigations. Fourteen of the samples were taken from inhumation burials and processed by wet-sieving for the recovery of human skeletal material and artefacts. Eleven bulk sediment samples from features such as ditches and pits were processed by flotation and assessed for environmental evidence. A selection of four samples of charred plant remains from two pits was analysed. This report incorporates the results of both the assessment and the analysis of the four samples.

Methods

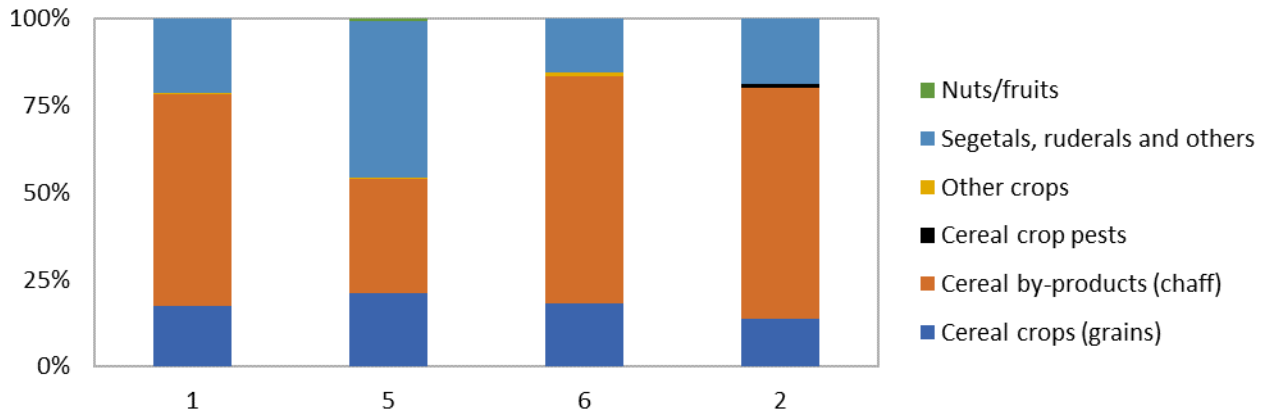
Eleven bulk sediment samples of volumes between 9 and 40 litres (on average 23 litres) were processed for the recovery of environmental evidence. Sample processing was carried out manually by an initial wet-sieving on a 0.5 mm mesh and a subsequent bucket flotation; with the flots retained on a 0.5 mm mesh generally, or a 0.25 mesh in the case of the waterlogged sample. Dried residues were fractionated into 5.6 mm, 2 mm and 1 mm fractions. The coarse fractions (>5.6 mm) were sort-ed at the naked eye and discarded. All identifiable charred plant remains were extracted from the flot using stereo incident light microscopy at magnifications of up to 40x. Identifications follow the nomenclature of Stace (1997) for wild plants, and traditional

nomenclature, as provided by Zohary *et al*. (2012), for cereals and with reference to specialised atlases and modern reference collections where appropriate. Assessment quantifications are semi-qualitative, given as scale of abundance from C (<5 items) to A** (>100 items). Full analysis quantifications are given as MNI (minimum number of individuals) and are based on anatomy (whole items or the highest type of anatomical fragments (cereals, based on Antolín and Buxó 2011; legume cotyledons divided by two), or size (hazelnut pericarp fragments, based on Antolín and Jacomet 2015). The analysis data has been recorded with the software Arbodat (Kreuz and Schäfer 2002) for the purpose of data sharing.

Results

Relatively rich assemblages, which include cereals, pulses, fruit/nuts and a range of wild plants, were analysed. Around 3,000 fragments of charred plant material, amounting to a total of 1671 plant macroremains from 32 different taxa, were fully quantified (Appendix 1). The generally high indices of fragmentation (number of remains by minimum number of items) are difficult to relate to depositional processes, such as specific cereal processing activities (dehusking, milling), since the type of sample processing (initial wet-sieving followed by flotation) would have certainly increased the fragmentation rate. The density of charred plant remains per litre of sediment is generally low but relatively variable among contexts, indicating different formation processes and deposition rates.

Figure 8: Charred plant remains categories in the analysed samples



The assemblages were dominated by cereal remains (Fig. 8). The taxa include wheat, which could be identified to spelt (*Triticum spelta*) and emmer (*Triticum dicoccum*) in some cases, and barley (*Hordeum vulgare*). Unfortunately, poor preservation did not allow to identify the hulled/naked variety or subspecies of the latter. In addition, a high number of wheat chaff and cereal grains remains were not identified to species level due to poor preservation. The dominance of cereal chaff over grains and the abundance of segetal weeds probably indicated that the assemblages resulted from the initial stages of crop processing activities (van der Veen 2007), such as dehusking and screening, and were probably by-products discarded into domestic fires as fuel. Most of the spelt grains identified were sprouted, and that would explain why they were discarded too. A number of detached sprouted embryos and coleoptiles present in the assemblages from pit 1758 belonged almost certainly to the same number of spelt wheat grains with signs of germination, only becoming split post-depositionally. Unfortunately, no clear germinated grains were recovered from pit 1210 and therefore it is not possible to link the coleoptiles of that assemblage to any specific crop.

The second most numerous category of remains were the wild plants, many of which were probable segetals acting as weeds in crop fields (Fig. 8). A variety of

taxa were included in this group, such as buttercups (*Ranunculus* sp.), knotgrass (*Polygonum* sp.), docks (*Rumex* sp.), cinquefoil (*Potentilla* sp.), trefoil/medick (*Trifoliae*), grass vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), mints (*Lamiaceae*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), bedstraw (*Galium* sp., *Rubiaceae*), composites (*Asteraceae*), sedges (*Carex* sp., *Cyperaceae*) and a variety of grasses (*Poa/Phleum*, *Lolium/Festuca*, *Bromus* sp., *Avena* sp., *Poaceae*). Oat (*Avena* sp.) could have been a crop (A. *sativa*) or a weed (A. *fatua*), but in the absence of chaff (lemma bases) which allow the identification to species level, it was grouped as a wild plant. Equally, some of the pulses could have been cultivated (Trifoliae, Viciae) but the imprecise taxonomical determination does not allow to establish this with any reasonable certainty.

Less numerous remains were other crops such as broad bean (*Vicia faba*) and rape/mustard (Brassica/*Sinapis*). This latter has been tentatively considered as a crop, since identification to species level is not possible on the basis of seed morphology alone when the testa is not well preserved and both wild and domestic species could be represented. Remains of hazel (*Corylus avellana*) nuts were also pre-sent. Unfortunately, again poor preservation did not allow to identify the plum/sloe/cherry endocarp further than genus *Prunus*, and this does not permit to establish whether it was a domestic or wild tree.

The generally poor preservation of the assemblages could indicate that the remains were kicking around for a while before being deposited (Fuller *et al.* 2014), although the processing technique (wet-sieving followed by flotation) again might have introduced an additional erosion factor difficult to quantify. Although the assemblages have some similarities to those encountered in the well-known corn-dryers typical of the period, in which the cereal chaff mostly recovered in the flue is

the fuel and the germinated grain the crop aimed to be salvaged (Campbell 2016), the feature in which they were recovered (pit 1758) indeed have a certain key-hole shape in plan slightly reminiscent to some less sophisticated corn-dryer features but there is no other evidence to support the possibility of their use as such.

Discussion

The main crop in the charred assemblages was spelt wheat. This is consistent with current knowledge about Romano-British agriculture in Southern England (Campbell 2016). Emmer was also present, although in such small numbers that it is not possible to establish whether it was a cultivated cereal on its own right or just a relict population growing as a, possibly tolerated, weed in spelt crop fields. Assemblages with these two species of hulled wheat have also been recovered at other areas of the site previously investigated and the wider area (Pelling 2005). Barley too was cultivated, although it was less numerous in the charred assemblages. Although poorly preserved and not identified to hulled or naked variety, the evidence from other areas of the site (Pelling 2005) and the wider region suggests (Campbell 2016) it could have been hulled barley. This relative rarity does not necessarily mean that it was a minor crop. Barley could have simply been processed differently, possibly because it was given other uses, such as fodder or for malting. These uses would not require dehusking of the grain and roasting to aid dehusking is one of the most common pathways for cereals to enter the charred archaeobotanical record. Although there are some spelt sprouted grains in the assemblages, it is not possible to ascertain the practice of malting on site, since the grains could have accidentally germinated while in the ears in wet summers, or during storage. Oat was present, but since it was not possible to identify it to species level, both wild oat grass or domestic oats are possible. This determination problem is frequent in most Romano-

British sites in Southern England (Campbell 2016), and as such it is not possible to safely ascertain the cultivation of oats in the period. The number of grains, a fact that has in some other instances been used as an argument to support the hypothesis of cultivation, is too small in this assemblage to neither lead to suppose that oat was a crop.

Another crop processed on site was broad bean. The cultivation of a large seeded pulse had already been suggested for the local area (Pelling 2005) but poor preservation did not allow then to precise the species. The lower numbers in which pulses generally are recovered on charred assemblages do not necessarily mean a smaller importance in past diets, but rather a taphonomical bias: pulses are often processed in a different way (e.g. boiled or even green, rather than roasted) that makes them less likely to be preserved by carbonisation as a result of processing accidents. This could also explain the absence in the assemblage of other pulse crops common in the Romano-British period (Campbell 2016), together with broad bean, such as gar-den pea (Pisum sativum) and lentil (*Lens culinaris*). Equally, some pulses could have been cultivated for animal fodder (*Trifoliae*) or human consumption (Vicia*e*) as is the case in other areas of the Roman world, but poor preservation and lax identification does not allow to hypothesise about this further. Mustard or rape (*Brassica/Sinapis*), if cultivated, is another possible crop which could have been grown for the exploitation of the oil, as well as a flavouring or as a green vegetable, is a well-established crop in the Roman world (Campbell 2016), although again its cultivation on site cannot be established with certainty since it could have well been growing as a weed.

The presence of hazelnuts and possibly sloe/plum/cherry indicates open woodland or hedge exploitation and could originate from some sort of management

or pomiculture, particulary in the case of the Prunus, which remains might have originated on a domestic species (which the poor preservation did not allow to specify). Although fruits and nuts probably had an important role in the subsistence regardless of their wild or domestic status, it is not uncommon for these taxa to be poorly represented in charred assemblages resultant from the discard of crop-processing by-products. Hazel nutshell remains were also found at previous phases of archaeological investigation in the area, preserved by waterlogging (Pelling 2005), suggesting this resource could be more intensively exploited than only the charred remains may lead to think.

Finally, the assemblages included a large list of wild plants. Again, many similarities can be found with other assemblages from the local area (Pelling 2005). Whilst many of these plants are clearly weeds of agricultural fields with no wild populations (e.g. grass vetchling, Preston 2004), others, in addition to having been acting as arable weeds or ruderals, could have been intentionally exploited for a variety of uses, including medicine, green vegetables and dye (Fern 1992-2010).

SCIENTIFIC DATING by Inés López-Dóriga and Alistair Barclay

Introduction and Methods

A total of six radiocarbon samples from human and animal bone were submitted to the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC), University of Glasgow. Reporting of the radiocarbon dating (see Table 3) results follows international conventions (Bayliss and Marshall 2015; Millard 2014). Detailed descriptions of the methods employed by the SUERC Radiocarbon Laboratory can be found in Dunbar et al. (2016). The dates were calculated using the IntCal13 calibration curve (Reimer et al. 2013) and the computer program OxCal (v4.2.4)

(Bronk Ramsey and Lee 2013) and cited at 95% confidence with the end points rounded out by 10 years. The degree of reliability of the radiocarbon date and the event which is aimed to be dated is assessed following Waterbolk (1971).

.Results

Three of the submitted samples were successfully measured, whilst the other two failed due to insufficient carbon (Table 3: GU45759 and 45760).

Table 3: Radiocarbon dating results on bone samples (OxCal v4.2.4 and IntCal13)

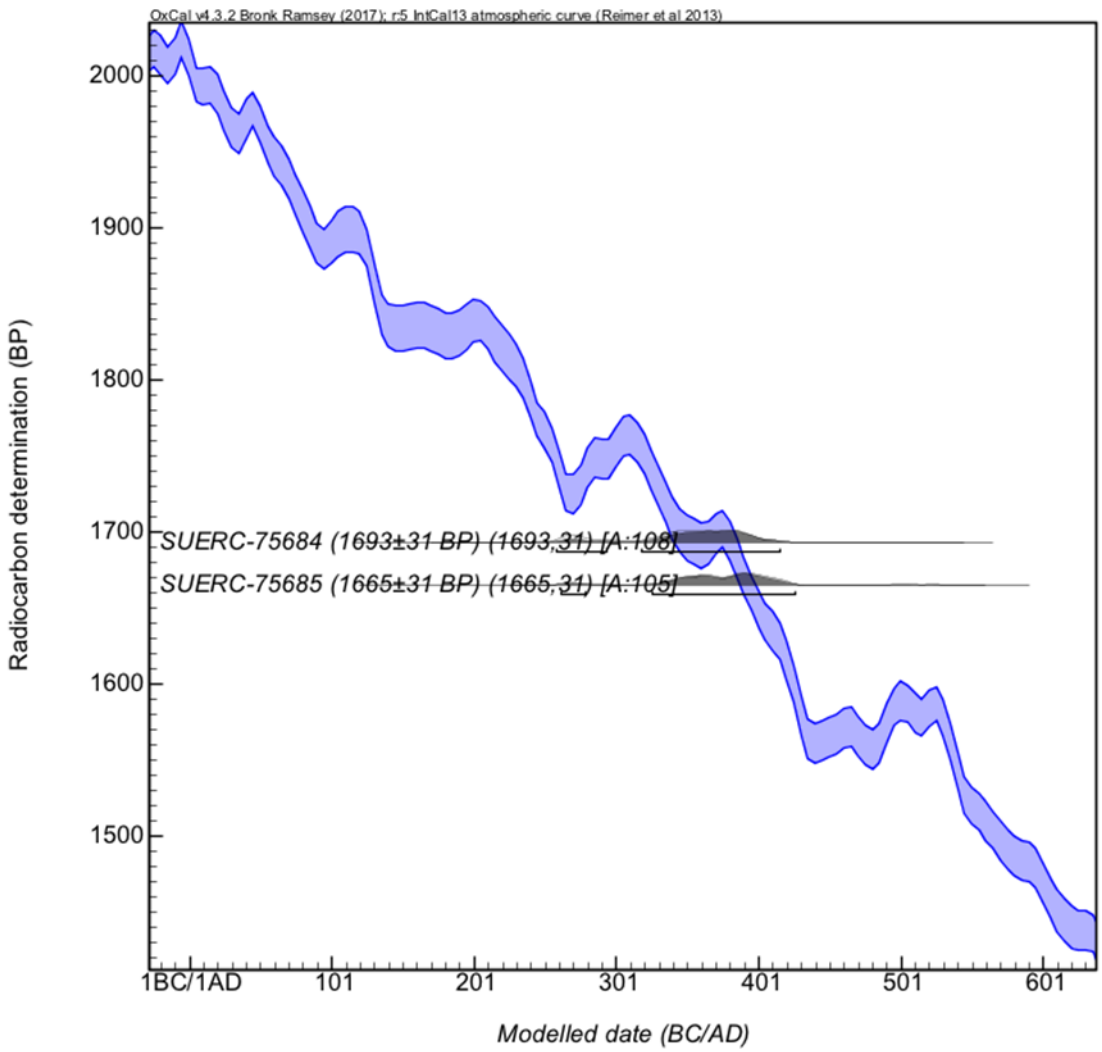
Lab ref.	Feature	Material	Date BP	δC13‰ (IRMS)	δN15‰	C/N	calibration BC (2 sig. 95.4%)
SUERC-75684 (GU45757)	Inhumation grave 1179, burial 1180	Human bone, left femur	1693±31	-19.9‰	10.9‰	3.4	cal. AD 250-420
SUERC-75685 (GU45758)	Inhumation grave 1158, burial 1159	Human bone, left femur	1665±31	-20‰	11.9‰	3.4	cal. AD 260-430
GU45759	Ditch 1389, fill 1390	Cattle right radius	Failed	-	-	-	-
GU45760	Posthole 1347, fill 1348	Cattle left pelvis	Failed	-	-	-	-
SUERC-75686 (GU45761)	Posthole 1349, fill 1350	Cattle right mandible	2185±31	-21.8‰	8.6‰	3.4	360-160 cal. BC
GU46134	Ditch 1501, fill 1503	Cattle radius	Failed	-	-	-	-

Discussion

The date (SUERC-75686) obtained on the cattle mandible from the fill of posthole 1349, part of a four-post structure, falls within the early part of the Middle Iron Age (360-160 cal. BC). The mandible was in good condition, retained its teeth, and is unlikely to have been redeposited. Therefore, the measurement should provide an accurate date for the structure. It also indicates that the silted ditch (1691) into which

the post was dug probably predates the 4th or 3rd century BC. This does not preclude the suggested Bronze Age date for the construction of the ditch.

Figure 9: Plot of the radiocarbon dates modelled as a phase on the calibration curve



The results on the human remains from the two inhumation burials date to the Late Romano-British period, probably the 4th century AD, but due to the nature of the calibration curve for that period the date range is rather imprecise (Fig. 9). These results are unlikely to be significantly affected by the consumption of aquatic resources that could cause a dietary offset (ie, make the dates appear older than their true age), as the δ13C and δ15N values fall within the expected ranges for a

terrestrial diet (Pollard et al. 2011); the slight difference between the cattle and the human bones probably just reflecting fractionation. The late Roman dates fit well with our knowledge about Romano-British burial practices from rural sites and the previous dates obtained for the area (Lovell 2005).

DISCUSSION

The excavations revealed evidence for landscape use from the Bronze Age to the post-medieval period. The later activity has erased much of the earlier evidence however a remnant of possible Bronze Age field system survived in the north-west of Area 1. The arrangement of gullies indicates the land was divided into small fields or paddocks with off-set entranceways producing a narrowing effect that is likely to have been useful in stock handling (Pryor 1996, 318–9). Traces of Middle to Late Bronze Age activity, including enclosures (Lovell 2005, 9; AC Archaeology 2016) and pits (Broomhead 1999) have been identified to the east and west of Area 1, however to date no associated settlement has been discovered in the immediate area. The closest known sites are at Queen Camel and Lyde Road in Yeovil (Newton 2018; Wessex Archaeology 2010 and 2015).

The Early to Middle Iron Age four-post structure (1692) in Area 1 is likely to have functioned as a raised granary for cereal crops such as hulled wheat, the grains of which were recovered from one of the postholes. Small agricultural structures like this example are common on settlement sites and are often found in association with outlying field systems. A small number of similar structures were identified in the excavation area to the north-east of Area 1 (AC Archaeology 2016, 6), where the focus of settlement activity was located during the Middle to Late Iron Age period.

In all three excavation areas, the Romano-British phase of landscape use is defined by a system of small rectangular fields and paddocks which extend across the wider landscape and are associated with the nearby farmstead (Lovell 2005; AC Archaeology 2016; Leech 1975; see Fig. 1). Both the farmstead and field system were aligned with a trackway, as defined by ditch 1733 in Area 2, and with the Roman road (B3151) to Ilchester. Field systems are difficult to phase due to a lack of associated dating evidence, and the one at Yeovilton is no exception. The main elements of the field system remained consistent overtime, albeit with minor adjustments to re-establish boundaries on the same alignment (Lovell 2005, 60 and 64). Continuity in the arrangement and alignment of field systems within major river valleys has been demonstrated elsewhere in Somerset (Davey 2004; 2005).

The numerous small fields that make-up the field system at Yeovilton suggest that the landscape was intensively managed and likely to have involving a rotational system of crop husbandry alongside the seasonal pasturing of livestock (Allen 2016, 119). Agricultural intensification and expansion during the Romano-British period (van der Veen and O'Connor 1998) transformed the rural economy and ensured food security for the military and growing urban population in towns such as Ilchester.

Finds densities significantly decrease with distance from the farmstead, indeed much of the relatively small finds assemblage came from features located in Area 2, directly adjacent to trackway ditch 1733 which ran along the eastern side of the farmstead. The largest single concentration of finds came from pit 1758 and includes a large amount of late Roman pottery, two shale spindle whorls and part of a brooch. This unusually shaped pit also contained a rich assemblage of charred plant remains, and appears to be centrally located within a small field or enclosure formed by gullies 1743 and 1737. A complex of intercutting pits with dark, finds-rich

fills was recorded in north-west corner of the previous excavation area, a short distance from building 2078 (Lovell 2005, 15 and 17). These were interpreted as quarry pits reused for the disposal of domestic refuse including pottery, ceramic building material, glass, iron, animal bone, charred plant remains and charcoal.

The small field or enclosure associated with pit 1758 was also used for inhumation burial. The two graves were in the south-east corner of the field and aligned with adjacent elements of the field system. Twelve graves, including six coffined inhumation burials, were recorded in the previous excavation area (Lovell 2016). Most of these graves also occurred in or near ditches and a similar pattern had been recorded in the wider landscape, for example at Little Spittle and Townsend Close near Ilchester (Leach 1982).

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The archive is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's offices in Salisbury, Wiltshire, and will be deposited in due course at Taunton Museum under accession code TTNCM 89/2012.

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Other resources

Aerial photograph. RAF CPE/UK/1924 2204-5. (16/01/1947), copy in Local Studies collection at Somerset Heritage Centre

Aerial photograph. RAF CPE/UK/1924 2203. (16/01/1947), copy in Local Studies collection at Somerset Heritage Centre

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Appendix 1: Results of the charred plant remain analysis

	Group	**1758**[1]			
	Feature	**9009**	**1194**		**1210**
	Context	**9010**	**1195**	**1226**	**1211**
	Sample	**1**	**5**	**6**	**2**
	Vol (L)	**25**	**36**	**19**	**19**
	Flot size	**60**	**80**	**200**	**90**
	Subsample			**50%**	
	Bioturbation (Roots %, etc)	**40%**	**50%**	**20%**	**50%**
	Fragmentation index (NDR/NMI)	**0.51**	**0.70**	**0.57**	**0.61**
	Density (NMI/l)	**30**	**8**	**56**	**37**
Cereal crops					
Hordeum vulgare grain MNI	Barley	5	8	4	3
Triticum spelta grain MNI (germinated)	Spelt	6 (9)	7 (1)	5	
Triticum spelta spikelet MNI	Spelt	107	39	31	19
Triticum dicoccum spikelet MNI	Emmer	8	7	15	1
Triticum sp. grain MNI	Wheat	69	34	17	6
Triticum sp. spikelet MNI	Wheat	390	56	123	41
Triticum sp. rachis segment fragment	Wheat			1	
Triticeae grain MNI	Cereal	60	27	23	4
Triticeae detached embryo	Cereal	1	2	3	2
Triticeae detached sprouted embryo	Cereal	14	2	1	
Triticeae coleoptile	Cereal	9	2		2
Triticeae culm fragments	Cereal	21	18	5	2
Cereal crop pests					
Claviceps purpurea sclerotium	Ergot				1
Other crops					
Brassica/Sinapis seed MNI	Rape/mustard			3	
Vicia faba seed MNI	Broad bean	2	1		
Segetals, ruderals and others					
Ranunculus sp. seed	Buttercup		3		
Polygonum sp. achene coat	Knotgrass		1		1
Rumex sp. fruit MNI	Docks	30	48	7	4
Potentilla sp.	Cinquefoil	1		1	
Trifoliae seed MNI	Trefoil/medick	13	36	3	2
Lathyrus nissolia seed MNI	Grass vetchling	2			1
Viciae seed MNI	Vetches	19	13	4	
Fabaceae seed fragment	Pulses	7	1		

[1] The heterogeneous numbering of feature group 1758 is explained as the feature was first sampled during the evaluation (sample 1) and was later sampled (samples 5 and 6) again during the excavation.

	Group	**1758**[1]			
	Feature	**9009**	**1194**		**1210**
	Context	**9010**	**1195**	**1226**	**1211**
	Sample	**1**	**5**	**6**	**2**
Hyoscyamus niger seed	Henbane				1
Lamiaceae seed	Mints		3		
Plantago lanceolata seed MNI	Ribwort plantain	2	2	1	1
Galium sp. seed	Bedstraw	1	1		
Rubiaceae seed MNI	Bedstraw/field madder	1	1		
Asteraceae seed MNI	Composites		1		
Carex sp. fruit MNI	Sedges	1	6	2	1
Cyperaceae seed	Sedges	17		1	
Lolium/Festuca grain MNI	Rye grass/fescue	79	28	2	2
Poa/Phleum grain MNI	Meadow-grass/cat's tail		10	3	1
Avena sp. awn fragment	Oat grass	9		17	2
Bromus sp. grain MNI	Brome		11		
Avena/Bromus grain MNI	Oat grass/brome	1			
Poaceae grain MNI	Grasses	1	1	1	2
Nuts/fruits					
Corylus avellana fruit MNI	Hazel		1		
Prunus sp. endocarp	Plum/Sloe/Cherry		1		
Indeterminata					
Indet fragment		4	7	3	6
Indet fruit				1	
Indet seed		7	3	4	6
Indet stem			1		
NDR		**1747**	**543**	**490**	**181**
NMI		**897**	**382**	**281**	**111**

Plate 1: Skeleton 1159, grave 1158, view from SSE

Plate 2: Skeleton 1180, grave 1179, view from NE

Wessex Archaeology Ltd registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB
Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk