A Bronze Age enclosure at land off Taunton Road, Bishops Lydeard, Somerset

Jonathan Orellana with contributions by Sheila Boardman, K. Marsden, E. R. McSloy, Ruth Shaffrey, J. Sommerville and Sarah F. Wyles

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A BRONZE AGE ENCLOSURE AT LAND OFF TAUNTON ROAD, BISHOPS LYDEARD, SOMERSET

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SUMMARY

Archaeological excavation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in March and April 2019, on c. 4,000m² of development area land off Taunton Road, Bishops Lydeard. The excavation recorded an area of Late Bronze Age settlement, comprising a ditched, sub-oval enclosure which occupied high ground at the summit of a small ridge, overlooking the Quantock Hills to the north, the Blackdown Hills to the south, and Exmoor National Park to the west. It contained the remains of three possible roundhouses and other associated features including pits. Three radiocarbon dates are statistically consistent and indicate a main period of occupation in the 9th century BC.

Material remains indicate that the landscape around the site was visited and utilised, probably from earlier prehistoric times until at least the Late Bronze Age period. There was a distinct lack of evidence for Iron Age or Roman-period activity on and around the site, but a probable storage pit was radiocarbon-dated to the later Saxon period (late-8th to mid-10th centuries). An undated, but probably prehistoric, rectilinear field system was also found.

INTRODUCTION

In March and April 2019 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological excavation, on land off Taunton Road, Bishops Lydeard (centred at NGR ST 17193 28689; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken at the request of CgMs Consulting Ltd (now RPS), acting on behalf of David Wilson Homes South West. The excavation was undertaken in response to an archaeological condition in advance of residential development of the site. Detailed results

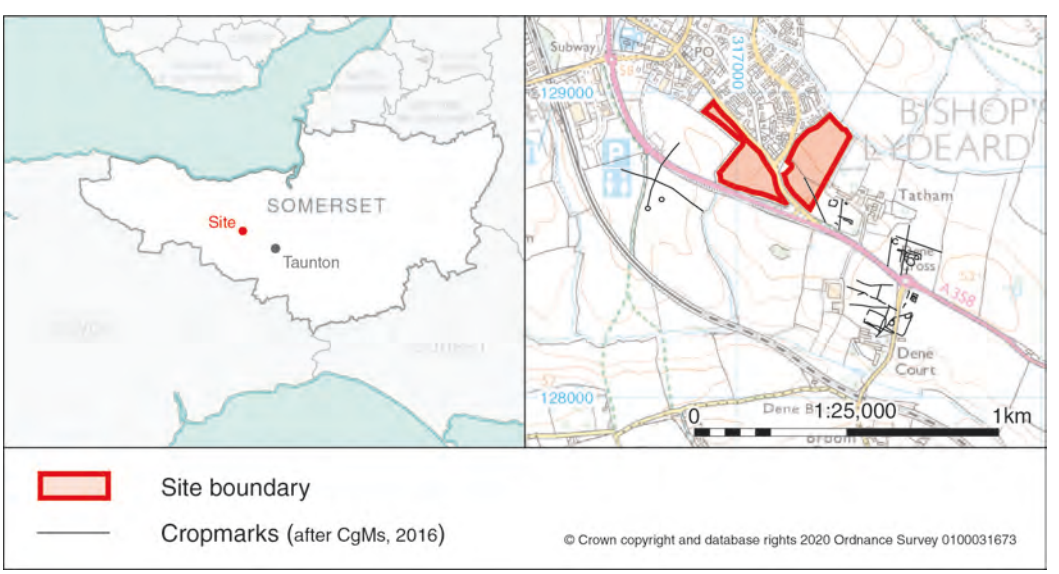

Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)

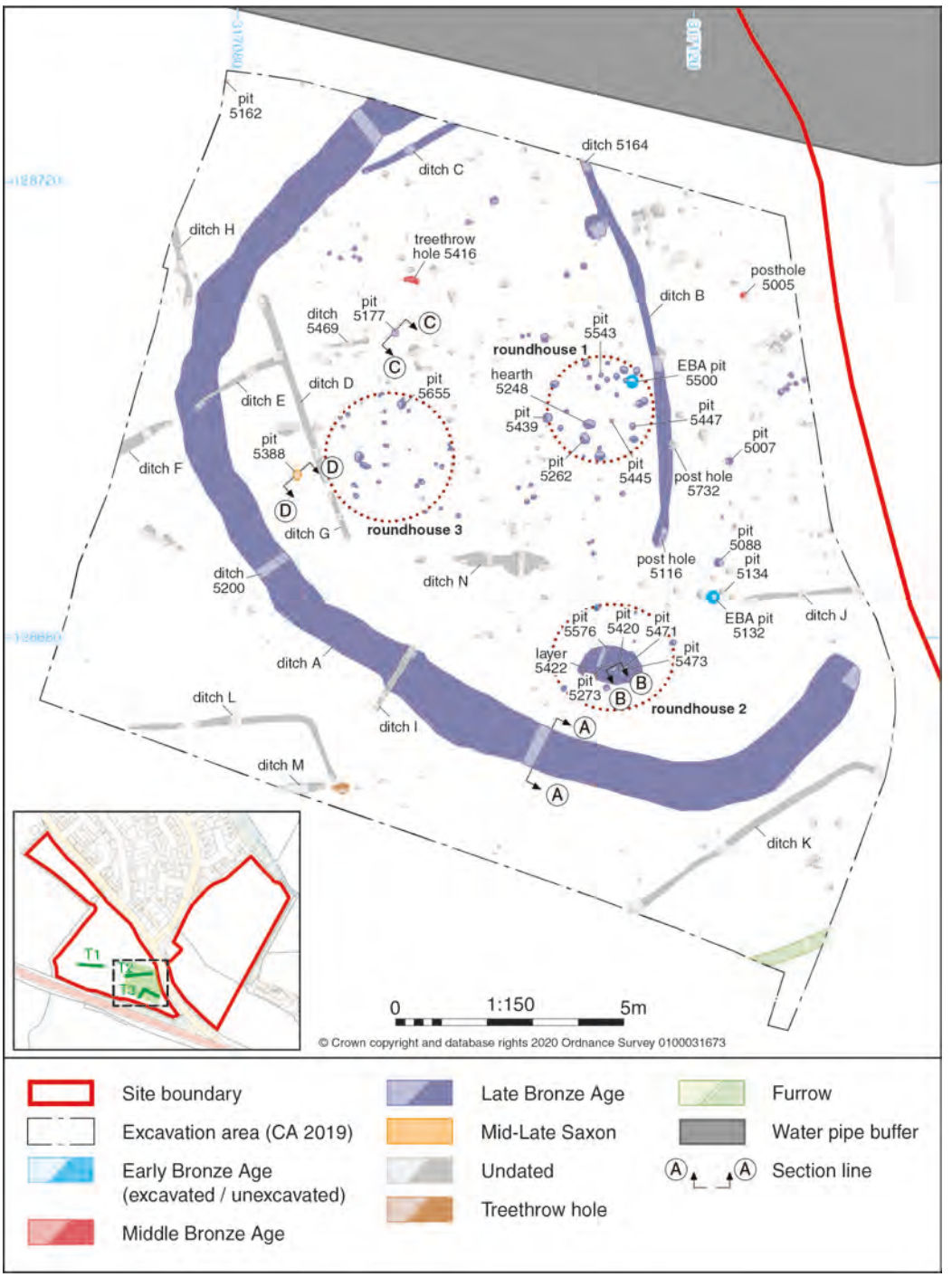

Fig. 2 The site, archaeological features, by phase (1:150)

were presented in a Cotswold Archaeology report (CA 2020, available via Cotswold Archaeology's archaeological reports online library, https://cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk) and this report presents a summary of the results.

The overall development site comprised an area of some 8ha and is situated on the south-eastern fringes of Bishops Lydeard, to the north-west of Taunton. The site is divided by Taunton Road, and at the time of excavation was comprised of a series of pasture fields. It is bounded to the north by a residential estate, to the south by the A358, and to the east by Tatham Farm Cottages. Further fields lie in the wider area and a stream forms the north-eastern boundary. This report deals with features to the west of Taunton Road.

Topography and geology

The site occupies a prominent point in gently rolling landscape on the southern margins of the Quantock Hills. From a high point of 52m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at its south-western corner, the site falls northwards to approximately 50m aOD, and north-eastwards to 45m aOD at the stream. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as mudstone and halite-stone of the Mercia Mudstone Group, which formed in the Triassic Period. River Terrace sand and gravel deposits overlay this in the south-eastern part of the site. No superficial deposits are recorded in the remainder of the site (BGS 2019).

Previous work on the site

A number of cropmarks have been noted in the broader area to the south-east and south-west of the site (Fig. 1). The excavation location and extent were informed by a desk-based assessment (CgMs Consulting 2016), a geophysical survey (Sumo Survey 2017) and an archaeological evaluation (CA 2017). A large, oval ditched enclosure was identified in the south-central part of the site, with a suggested a Late Bronze Age date (Fig. 2). The evaluation also identified postholes within the enclosure, and two apparently complete, (albeit truncated), urns buried in pits. A possible third urn was also noted. These three features were left unexcavated during the evaluation as it was thought possible that these finds represented cremation burials.

METHODOLOGY

By agreement, an area of 4,000m² within the southern part of the site was targeted on features identified in the earlier works and stripped of topsoil and subsoil by mechanical excavator under constant archaeological supervision. This was followed by hand excavation of features. The methodology is further explained elsewhere (CA 2020).

RESULTS

All archaeological features were cut into the natural substrate and were sealed by a subsoil (0.08-0.2m thick), over which lay topsoil (0.25-0.3m thick). Apart from the enclosure ditch, many of the features as preserved were shallow and most had single fills.

Beaker pottery was recovered from two Early Bronze Age pits (5132 and 5500; Fig. 2). The single-fill pits were sub-circular, measuring 0.55m to 0.7m in width and 0.18m to 0.3m in depth, with steep sides and concave bases. Fill 5133, of pit 5132 produced eight sherds (155g) from a single vessel. Pit 5500 was located within Roundhouse (RH) 1 (Fig. 3), but produced exclusively Beaker pottery representing a small, thin-walled vessel with all-over comb impressions (eleven sherds, 101g). It is thought to be characteristic of the earlier Beaker styles of the mid to late 3rd millennium BC, and could therefore be residual within a later feature, or indicative of earlier activity in an area upon which a roundhouse was later constructed. A small number of Beaker sherds were also recorded as residual material in later Bronze Age features, including within enclosure Ditch A.

Middle Bronze Age Trevisker-style vessels were recovered from three deposits. Tree throw hollow 5416 (fill 5417) was the only feature to produce exclusively Middle Bronze Age pottery. Amongst a mix of fabric types were 25 sherds (261g) of Fabric 1.1, displaying decoration similar to material from Brean Down (Woodward 1990), and Queen Camel, Yeovil, to the east (Jones 2018). Similar decoration was present on a single sherd (41g) from posthole 5005 (fill 5006), and from amongst a mix of material in pit 5655 (fill 5657) of Roundhouse 3 (Fig. 2).

Late Bronze Age features principally comprised a ditched enclosure, which occupied a prominent high point in the surrounding area, and which contained extensive settlement remains within its interior. The enclosure was defined by Ditch A, which extended beyond the excavation area to the north-east, where it has probably been truncated by the construction of Taunton Road and by a water main pipeline. The enclosure was of sub-oval or sub-circular plan, and measured 60m in length by at least 50m in width. The exposed ditch circuit was continuous, except for a gap along its south-eastern part defined by a concave ditch terminal, possibly an entranceway. The probable entrance extended beyond the excavation area and was at least 4.5m in width.

The enclosure ditch itself (Ditch A) was typically

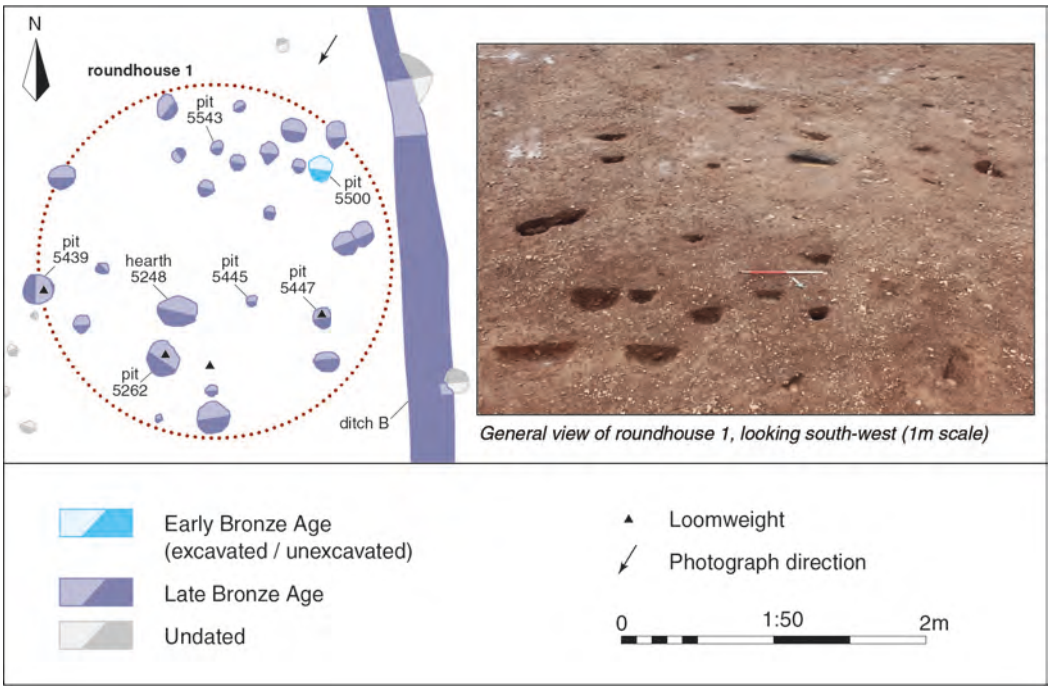

Fig. 3 Detail of roundhouse 1 (1:50) and general view of Roundhouse 1, looking SW (1m scale)

3m to 3.8m in width, and 0.45m to 0.9m in depth, and generally displayed moderately sloping sides and a flat to concave base (Fig. 4, Section AA). It contained up to eight fills, from which a substantial proportion of the site's pottery assemblage was recovered. The sequence of fills comprised lower sedimentary fills, overlain by charcoal-rich deposits with pottery of Late Bronze Age date, which appear to represent dumps of domestic waste from settlement activity within the enclosed area. The pottery included a minimum number of 20 vessels (MNV), comprising mostly jars with plain, upright or everted rims. The remains of a fired clay weight were recovered from ditch fill 5204 as was a retouched flint flake; two flakes were recorded from other fills of the same ditch. A scraper from ditch fill 5616 may be an Early Bronze Age type, and the condition and technology of other items suggests that at least some were redeposited. The upper fills of Ditch A were silting deposits. No tip-lines were identified that could indicate the former presence of a bank, although most of the circuit displayed a noticeable dearth of features where an internal bank could have been. There was no evidence of any re-cutting of Ditch A. A piece of alder/hazel (*Alnus/Corylus* sp.) charcoal from the fourth fill, 5204, of the ditch, section 5200 (Fig. 2) produced a Late Bronze Age radiocarbon date of 901-810 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-90597). The charred plant remains from the ditch were generally quite sparse and may be indicative of wind-blown/dispersed material. Context 5204 produced the most varied wood charcoal remains from the site.

Ditch B, revealed in the central part of the enclosed area, was roughly north/south-aligned, and slightly curvilinear. It was 0.6m-0.9m wide and 0.2m-0.4m deep, with moderately sloping sides to a flat base. A small amount of pottery of Late Bronze Age date was recovered from its single fill. It cut a large irregular pit, 5396, from which a substantial amount of Late Bronze Age pottery was recovered. Ditch B was cut by two postholes (5116 and 5732) which contained evidence of post pipes, but no finds. Ditch B may represent an internal division within the enclosure. Ditch C was partially exposed within the enclosure in the northern part of the excavation area on a north-east/south-west alignment. It was 0.6m wide and 0.13m deep, and a single sherd of Bronze Age pottery was recovered from its single fill. The function of this ditch is unclear. Given the limited dating evidence, it is possible that it relates to the later Ditches D, E, F etc., with which it appeared to share a common alignment.

The area enclosed by Ditch A contained pits,

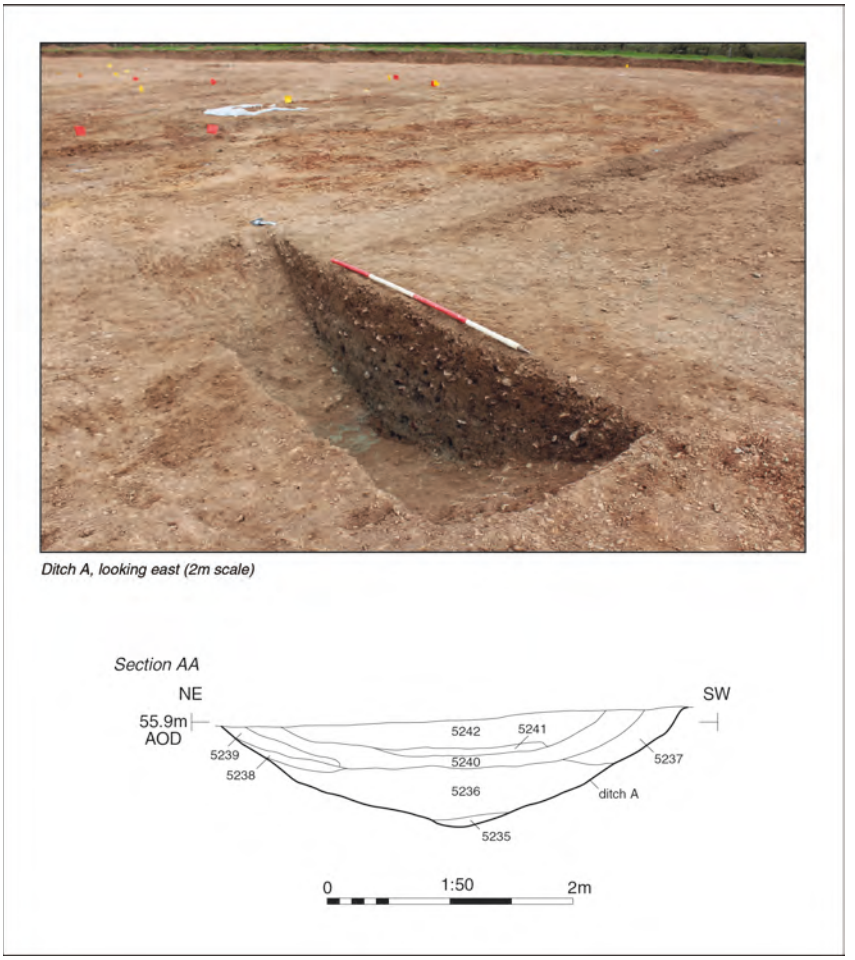

Fig. 4 Ditch A: section (AA; 1:50) and photograph of looking E (2m scale)

postholes, and stake-holes. Three concentrations of these features were identified in the central, western, and southern parts of the enclosure and have been tentatively interpreted as the remains of roundhouses.

The most clearly defined structural ground plan was represented by possible Roundhouse 1 (Fig. 3), which measured 8m in diameter and was defined by substantial postholes (see Table 1), some of which contained disturbed packing stones. No obvious entrance was identified. Postholes 5547 and 5543 produced Late Bronze Age plainware sherds, representing a straight-sided jar and a dish respectively. A sub-oval pit (5248, 1m long, 0.6m wide and 0.13m deep) was interpreted as a hearth. Although the surrounding substrate showed no traces of burning, an upper fill (5250) of the feature contained abundant charcoal. It might have been a pit with the cleanings from a hearth in its top fill rather than a sunken hearth structure. A charred hazelnut shell fragment from this fill was radiocarbon dated to 897-806 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-90601). A large pyramidal fired clay loom weight was recovered from sub-circular pit 5262 within the floor plan of Roundhouse 1. Pits/postholes 5262, 5445, 5447 and 5439, from which four of the fired clay objects from the site were recovered, were associated with the roundhouse, and suggest that weaving was undertaken within this structure. Pit 5007 (fill 5008) located a short distance to the east of Roundhouse 1, but on the other side of Ditch B, produced 15 bodysherds (308g) from another vessel, of a Late Bronze Age date.

TABLE 1 DIMENSIONS OF FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH POSSIBLE ROUNDHOUSE STRUCTURES

Roundhouse 1									
	Min length (m)	Max length (m)	Min width (m)	Max width (m)	Min depth (m)	Max depth (m)	Mean length (m)	Mean width (m)	Mean depth (m)
Postholes (18)	0.20	0.76	0.20	0.71	0.07	0.34	0.45	0.39	0.19
Pits (9)	0.42	1.01	0.42	0.83	0.13	0.23	0.71	0.56	0.16
Stakeholes (1)							0.18	0.13	0.14
Roundhouse 2									
Postholes (8)	0.20	0.60	0.2	0.42	0.04	0.30	0.33	0.28	0.14
Pits (2)	0.27	0.35	0.11	0.35	0.09	0.13	0.31	0.23	0.11
Stakeholes (2)	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.15	0.08	0.09	0.14	0.14	0.085
Roundhouse 3									
Postholes (24)	0.12	0.40	0.12	0.40	0.05	0.17	0.26	0.24	0.10
Pits (3)	0.75	0.93	0.47	0.68	0.11	0.28	0.86	0.61	0.17
Stakeholes (3)	0.13	0.23	0.11	0.20	0.06	0.15	0.17	0.14	0.10

In the southern part of the enclosure the presence of a layer (5422) suggested the remains of another possible structure (Roundhouse 2). The layer overlay the natural substrate, measured 5.5m long, 3.2m wide and 0.05m thick, and was a compact, grey/brown silty clay, containing sherds of Bronze Age pottery. It was interpreted as a floor surface or trample layer within a structure. It had been partly exposed during the evaluation, when three features cut into it were left unexcavated – as possible urned cremation burials. It was subsequently demonstrated that five discrete features (5273, 5420, 5471, 5473 and 5576) were cut into layer 5422, but none proved to be cremation related.

The complete base of a vessel was found *in situ* within small, circular, shallow pit 5273 (0.35m diameter and 0.13m depth), located centrally within layer 5422 (Fig. 5, Section BB). The vessel (5274, Ra. 4) was a large, straight-sided vessel of the Late Bronze Age plainware tradition and it contained no bone. The charcoal recovered from the fill of this vessel, was most similar to the dumped deposit in enclosure Ditch A, with a high proportion of roundwood or immature timber. It may have been an accidental inclusion from the surrounding layer (5422) and has been interpreted as a probable domestic deposit rather than a cremation burial. A single oat grain (*Avena* sp.) was recovered from the fill 5276 of the vessel. A piece of Pomoideae roundwood from this sample was radiocarbon dated to the Late Bronze Age – 973-829 cal. BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-90602). Within possible Roundhouse 2, three postholes (5471, 5473 and 5420) were cut into layer 5422, immediately to the east of pit 5273. Small amounts of Bronze Age pottery and flint were recovered from these postholes.

The footprint of a further roundhouse (Roundhouse 3) was identified in the western part of the enclosure, 10m west of Roundhouse 1. Here, a roughly circular concentration of pits and postholes of 9.5m diameter suggested a structural plan. Some of these postholes and pits contained Bronze Age pottery. Some 4m to the north of Roundhouse 3, sub-oval pit 5177 was 0.6m wide and 0.09m deep. Its upper fill (5175) contained a substantially complete, but well-fragmented, large Late Bronze Age vessel (5175; Ra. 2; 365 sherds, weighing 3,626g). This may have been a deliberate deposit, which covered the base of the pit (Fig. 5, Section CC).

Evidence for the interpretation of these features as roundhouses is slight, although a lack of surviving wall posts has been seen on numerous sites in Somerset. Evidence from Glastonbury Lake Village has recently been reviewed (Marshall *et al.* 2020). There, surviving wall posts were small and had been inserted to a shallow depth below ground, which could explain poor preservation of evidence, in less than ideal circumstances.

Outside the enclosure, the only dateable feature assigned to the Bronze Age period was a small shallow pit (5162, 0.16m diameter and 0.12m depth) located 10m to the north-west of the outer edge of Ditch A, close to the north-western corner of the excavation area. It was circular with steep sides and a concave base. It contained a single charcoal-rich fill

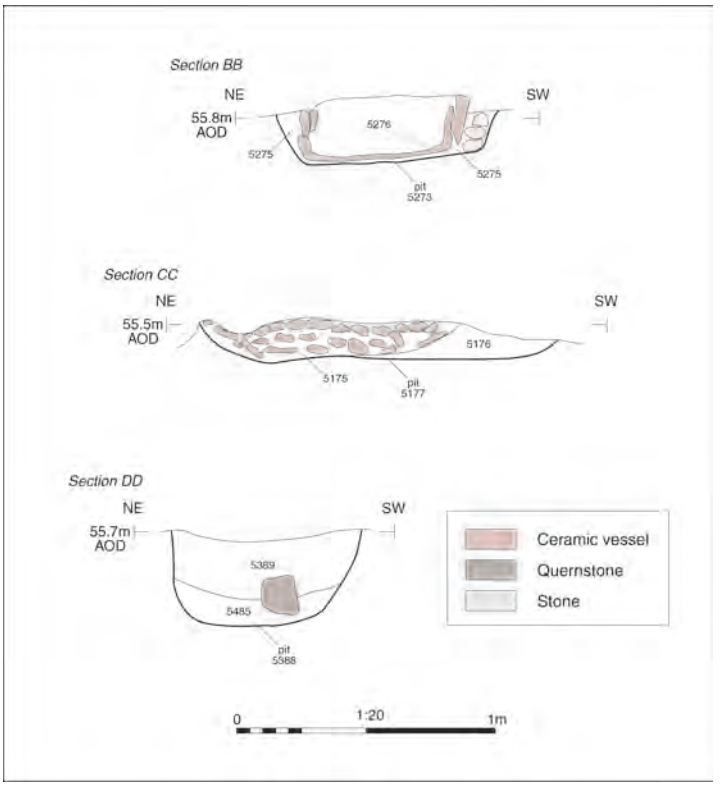

Fig. 5 Pit 5273: section (BB), pit 5177 section (CC) and pit 5388 section (DD) (1:20)

(5163), from which five pieces (24g) of copper alloy were recovered. The group comprises amorphous waste pieces, or items subjected to heat. A single small fragment (7g) of amorphous fired clay was also recovered from the pit.

A single pit (5388) identified in the western part of the excavation area was dated to the Mid to Late Saxon period. This pit was circular, measuring 0.8m in diameter and 0.36m deep, with steep, near-vertical sides to a flat base. It contained two charcoal-rich fills from which two fragments of stone quern, probably representing an upper rotary quern, were recovered (Fig. 5, section DD). The quern may be of Saxon date or a residual item derived from nearby Roman activity. The pit also contained part of a square stone vessel which may have been a lamp or a lamp holder. A charred hazelnut shell recovered from lower fill 5485 was radiocarbon dated and produced a Mid to Late Saxon date (771-950 cal. AD, at 95.4% probability; SUERC-90603). A small amount of calcined and burnt animal bone was also present. Many charred plant remains were recovered from fill 5485, and a moderately rich assemblage from fill 5389. Cereal taxa included rye, free-threshing wheat, and barley. Relatively large quantities of oats were present, and a number of these may be of the cultivated species. There were also remains from other possible crops or food sources, including hazelnut shell, sloe stone and flax seeds. A variety of weed seeds was also present. These assemblages may represent waste from food preparation/consumption and crop-processing.

The remains of a rectilinear field system were identified in the western and southern part of the excavation area. It was defined by shallow Ditches D, E, F and G, and was based on a north-west/south-east and north-east/south-west alignment, with Ditch F extending west beyond the excavation area. These features remain undated, although Ditch E truncated infilled enclosure Ditch A. The ditches themselves were typically 0.5m wide and 0.2m-0.3m deep, with steep sides and concave bases and contained single sedimentary fills. Ditch D produced two sherds (9g) of pottery of Late Bronze Age date. A well-defined 2.5m wide gap between Ditches E and F seems to

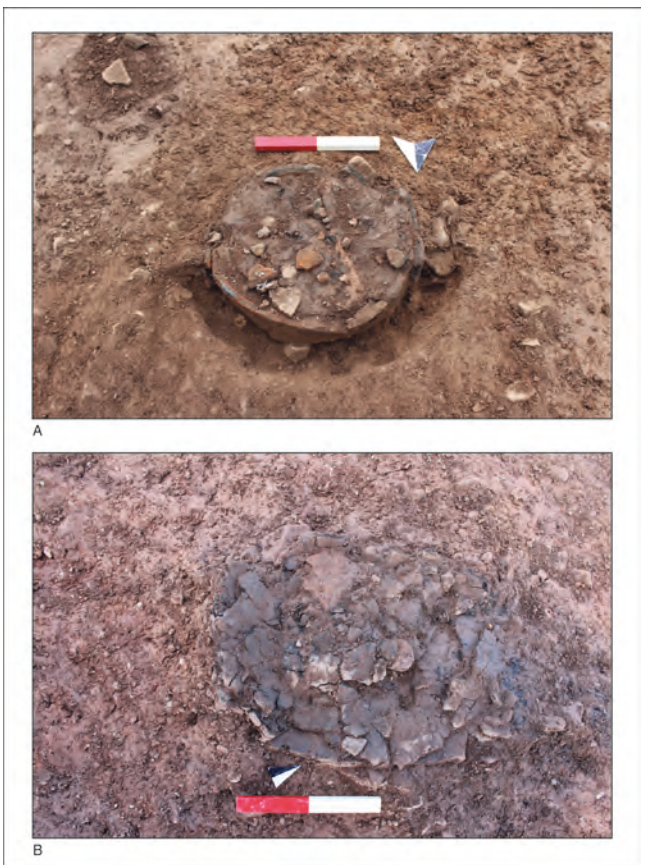

Fig. 6 Vessel 5274 within pit 5273, looking S (0.2m scale) and Vessel 5175 within pit 5177, looking NW (0.2m scale)

represent an entranceway into the field system.

Six shallow ditches (Ditches I, J, K, L, M and N) recorded in the southern part of the excavation area remain unphased, as they lacked dateable finds and obvious spatial relationships with other features. Of these, only Ditches I and N had stratigraphic relationships with other features. In general, these ditches had moderately sloping sides and concave bases, and, although different sections showed some variability, they ranged between 0.24 and 0.7m in width and 0.04 to 0.25m in depth. A further short length of undated ditch (5469) aligned north-west/south-east, with a U-shaped profile and a flat base, may also have been of Late Bronze Age date, or later. A small, charred plant assemblage was recovered from it, which included cereal grains and seeds of wild plants, as well as a moderate quantity of tar/resin fragments with occasion stem impressions. These may be birch bark tar fragments, and the stem impressions may have been made by plants such as nettles.

A number of pits and postholes found across the excavation area remained unphased. There is a strong likelihood that the majority of these features are of Late Bronze Age date and associated with settlement activity, although the pottery, plant remains and radiocarbon results have demonstrated that both earlier and later dates are possible.

POTTERY

Katie Marsden and E. R. McSloy

A total of 1,237 sherds (18.4kg) of prehistoric pottery was recovered from 78 deposits. Most material dates to the Late Bronze Age, with some earlier activity in evidence from small quantities of Beaker pottery. The majority of the assemblage was hand recovered, with

four sherds (49g; 0.3%) coming from the bulk soil sample taken from one feature.

Methodology

The pottery was fully recorded in accordance with the guidance issued by Historic England (Barclay *et al*. 2016). Recording was directly to an MS Access database and details include fabric, vessel form (profile)/rim morphology and decoration. Sherds were assessed for evidence for vessel use, although carbonaceous or other residues were not seen, possibly due to the surface concretions that were a feature of the assemblage.

Condition

Overall, the pottery was well broken-up, although the mean sherd (16.9g) is high for a prehistoric group, due in part to the presence of partly reconstructable, thick-walled vessels. Among the latter are two Late Bronze Age vessels (vessels 5175 and 5274), deposited seemingly upright and intact in pits 5177 and 5273 respectively (Fig. 6). Additionally, one of the two recorded Beaker vessels (Fig. 7, no. 1) was also substantially complete. A feature of the assemblage affecting a large proportion of the pottery, from a range of features, was the heavy concretion, a mix of sand and small stones. It affected sherd surfaces and breaks, hindered recording and may have obscured some surface treatments and/or evidence for use.

Beaker

The pottery of this type was recorded from two features in the vicinity of post-built Roundhouse 1, though clearly pre-dating the construction and use of the structure. All occurs in a similar, fine, grog-tempered fabric, typical for this tradition the dating for which spans the period c. 2600/2500 to 1800/1700 BC.

Pit 5500

Eleven sherds (101g) were recorded from a single, small Beaker fineware vessel in fabric 1.3. The vessel is partially re-constructable (Fig. 7, no. 1), its profile sinuous with a relatively short, slightly everted neck and slender, rounded body. It is decorated with uneven rows of square-toothed comb impressions, which are indistinct in places, but which probably extended over the full height of the vessel. Stylistically no. 1 is dissimilar to later Beaker forms, characterised by straighter, deep necks and low set bellies or carinations (Needham 2005, 179, fig. 13), and fits best within the earlier Beaker tradition, though not the primary, all-over corded series. It most likely then dates to later within this 'early' range, probably to the final quarter of the mid to late 3rd millennium BC.

Pit 5132

Beaker pottery amounting to eight sherds (155g) from a single vessel in fabric 1.3 was recovered from fill 5133 of pit 5132. The vessel comprises joining sherds from the base and lower body (Fig. 7, no. 2). Decoration consists of fairly evenly spaced aplastic fingernail impressions arranged in a horizontal herringbone pattern. As with that from 5501, the vessel is relatively small and its form slender. Dating comparable to no. 1 is possible, suggested by the form of no. 2 as well as its decoration (ApSimon 2000, 69).

Discussion

Although a small group, this material is of some regional significance. Beaker pottery remains relatively rare from this area, which lies well to the west of concentrations from Wessex and the Upper Thames Valley (Clarke 1970; Gibson 1982). Neither vessel was associated with human remains and it is probable that this material relates to truncated phase of domestic activity. Although a smaller group, comparisons can be made with 'Bell Beaker' material from Brean Down, where similar comb-decorated and fingernail-impressed vessels were recorded from a domestic group (Harrison 1990, 117, fig. 84; ApSimon 2000, 69-70 and fig. 5). Absence of rusticated pottery such as that seen with other groups from Brean (Compton 2000, 20 and fig. 6) and from Gorsey Bigbury (Gibson 1982, 409) may imply slightly earlier dating.

Late Bronze Age

Pottery of this period makes up the large majority of the assemblage. Most was derived from pits or postholes (682 sherds; 56%) and ditches (479 sherds, 39%), with small amounts recovered from irregular features interpreted as tree throw holes (56 sherds, 4%). The larger portion corresponds to the Plain ware style commonly characterising Late Bronze Age pottery from southern Britain (Barratt 1980). The assemblage is of significance as one of few such groups from the South West and associated with an enclosed settlement with limited evidence for earlier or later activity. Discrete Late Bronze Age dating is supported by three radiocarbon determinations, centring on the 9th century BC (SUERC-90597, 90601) or possibly a little earlier (SUERC-90602).

Fabrics (Table 2)

The assemblage is dominated by coarse or finer fabrics containing polycrystalline inclusions identified as sandstone (Group 4); these types make up 65% by sherd count. A further 67 sherds (5.5% by count) occur in fabrics containing quartz sand (Group 3) which may also be derived from sandstones. Next most common are fabrics containing quartzite (Group 2), which account for 20% of the assemblage by the same measure. Grogged types, other than the Beaker material already described, comprise only 6.1% of the assemblage. Other types containing organic (Group 7), fossil shell inclusions (Group 6) and a ferruginous type (Group 5) are sparsely represented. Only the shell-tempered type, represented as sherds from a single vessel from tree throw feature 5416, can be suggested as having non-local origins. The mineral inclusions characterising the common fabric groups 2 and 4 were probably derived from the Sherwood Sandstone formations and Budleigh Salterton pebble beds, both running through north Somerset (BGS 2019). Use of both sandstone and quartzite tempering is a feature of other Late Bronze Age groups from the area, including material recently excavated from Hinkley Point, near Bridgwater (Quinnell in prep.)

Vessel forms

Rim sherds from 25 vessels were recorded, some too small to determine the form of vessel. The single vessel preserving its full profile was a cup-like, miniature vessel (Fig. 7, no. 8) from posthole 5544 (part of RH 1). Where identifiable with a degree of confidence, vessel forms are described.

Jar profiled

JS1. Neckless, straight-sided form (Fig. 7, no. 4). Simple rims. One vessel (0.07 EVEs). Deposit 5448.
JO1. Neckless, ovoid or barrel-shaped forms typically with in-curved rims (Fig. 7, nos 5 and 7). Simple rounded or squared rim tops. Corresponds to South Cadbury hinterlands jar forms 3/4 (Tabor and Jones 2021, 45). Eleven vessels (0.89 EVEs). Ditch A fills 5188, 5189, 5204; 5206; 5236; Pit 5003 fill 5004; Pit 5668 fill 5669; Pit 5253 (part of RH 1) fill 5254; pit 5697 fill 5698; tree throw 5416 fill 5417.
JO2. Ovoid vessels with short, everted or bead-like rims (Fig. 8, no. 14). Four vessels (0.21 EVEs). Pit

TABLE 2 POTTERY FABRIC CONCORDANCE

Fabric Group	Fabric Code	Fabric Description	Ct.	Wt.(g))
BkrG	B1.3	Beaker grog. Common fine grog, moderate soft black rock	19	256
1. Grog	1.1	Common medium grog; some sandstone	47	122
	1.2	Common grog in a fully oxidised fabric	3	9
	1.3	Common or sparse grog, sparse soft black rock	5	81
	1.4	Common grog and sparse quartzite in black-firing fabric	14	118
2. Quartzite	2.1	Common/sparse quartzite (breaking surface), sparse other	81	703
	2.2	Moderate quartzite, moderate quartz	165	1,515
3. Quartz	3.1	Moderate quartz in a fully oxidised fabric, sparse soft black rock	7	109
	3.2	Moderate quartz and rare limonite in reduced fabric	60	665
4. Sandstone	4.1	Common coarse/poor sorted sandstone	485	8,932
	4.2	Common fine/medium sandstone	306	4,794
	4.3	Sparse fine sandstone	11	119
5. Iron rich	5.1	Common iron/streaks	4	29
	5.2	Common iron/streaks and sparse soft rock	21	811
6. vesicular	6.1	Common plate-like (leached shell)	4	61
7. organic	7.1	Organic inclusions	5	34
		Total	**1,237**	**18,358**

5007 fill 5008; pit 5396 fill 5398; pit 5461 fill 5462.

Jar or bowl profiled

JBS. Round shouldered or carinated vessels with upright or slightly everted necks and simple rims (Figs 7 and 8, nos 10-13). Corresponds to South Cadbury hinterlands jar class JB (Tabor and Jones 2021, 48-49). 5 vessels (0.20 EVEs). Ditch A fills 5189 (x 3), 5206 and 5242.
BB. Bipartite (?carinated) vessels, probably bowls (Fig. 7, no. 9). Simple rims. Corresponds to South Cadbury hinterlands bowl form BA1.1 (Tabor and Jones 2021, 49). Two vessels (0.05 EVEs). Ditch A fill 5206 (x 2).

Miniature vessel/Cup

CS. Straight-sided small vessel; simple rim (Fig. 7, no. 8). One vessel (0.11 EVEs). Posthole 5543 (part of RH 1) fill 5544.

Decoration and surface treatments

A total of 26 sherds, representing a minimum of eleven vessels, exhibit decoration of varying forms. An additional five vessels (512 sherds) feature 'finger wiping', a surface treatment sometimes associated with Late Bronze Age assemblages and characterised by vertically oriented shallow grooves or irregularities.

Plain applied strip/cordon (Fig. 7, no. 3). One/two vessels Pit 5007 fill 5008.
Finger-impressed applied strip. Two vessels Ditch A fills 5189, 5206.
Fingertip impressions (horizontal rows to shoulder zone; Fig. 7, no. 6). Three vessels Ditch A fills 5189, 5204 and 5206.
Fingernail impressions (horizontal rows to shoulder zone; Fig. 7, no. 10). Two vessels Ditch A fills 5190 and 5206.
Fingernail impressions (rim top; Fig. 7, no. 5). One vessel. Tree throw 5416 fill 5417.
Slashed/impressed (horizontal rows to shoulder zone; Fig. 7, no. 6). Posthole 5005 fill 5006; Tree throw 5416 fill 5417.

Stylistic affinities and dating

The majority of featured sherds are consistent with identification as a plain assemblage in the post-Deverel Rimbury, Late Bronze Age style. This tradition was first described by Barratt (1980) based largely on material from south central or south-eastern England. Comparable material from sites in the South West is less well-known but includes sizeable groups from Brean Down (Woodward 1990), South Cadbury (Alcock 1980; Tabor and Jones 2021) and Field Farm, Shepton Mallet (Morris 2009a). The style would seem to span the 12th or 11th to the 9th centuries BC; the radiocarbon dating obtained for this site suggests that at least some of the assemblage falls late within this range. As the name implies, decoration among Plain ware assemblages is sparse but can occur as impressed finger ornament to the rim and/or shoulder and sometimes as plain or fingertipped applied strips – the latter possibly a survival from Middle Bronze Age styles. 'Finger wiping', of the kind described for this group, is also a feature of the style, possibly intended as a means of assisting handling. A narrow range of vessel forms is typical, commonly with coarseware jars of varying sizes predominating. At sites in the area it appears that neckless, ovoid form vessels, commonly with in-curving rims are most prominent, and this pattern is repeated in this group, seen in the abundance of form JO1. Such vessels are suited to a range of utilitarian tasks, with larger vessels, including those deposited seemingly intact in Pits 5177 and 5273, probably intended for storage. In this group there were few of what might be classed as fineware vessels, although bipartite (Fig. 7, no. 9) and some among the shouldered/carinated vessels might qualify (Fig. 8, nos 11-14). As noted, the use of applied strips/cordons might be a survival from earlier styles but are paralleled from among Late Bronze Age groups elsewhere in the region, including from Field Farm, Shepton Mallet (Morris 2009a, fig. 14, no. 41) and Brean Down (Woodward 1990, fig. 96, no. 109). There is no clear evidence that such features (Fig. 7, no. 3 and Fig. 8, no. 11) imply relatively earlier dating, although this remains possible. Nor is there a clear suggestion for a preceding Middle Bronze Age phase of activity such as was evidenced at both Brean Down and Field Farm, Shepton Mallet, by differences in fabrics and vessel form/thicknesses.

Stratigraphy/distribution

Comparisons across the major features (Table 3) are hindered greatly by the small quantities deriving from all but the main enclosure (Ditch A), which itself was only excavated in five, narrow interventions. It is unclear whether the compositional differences described below for particular feature groups reflect differences in relative dating, though all material can be accommodated within the Late Bronze Age Plain ware tradition.

TABLE 3 MIDDLE/LATE BRONZE AGE POTTERY DISTRIBUTION BY FEATURE

	Ditch A		**RH 1**		**RH 2**		**RH 3**		**Ditch B/C/ D/K**		**Pit 5177**		**Pit 5396**		**Tree 5416**		***Other***	
Fabric	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***	***Ct.***	***Wt.(g)***
1.1	42	129											1	17			5	31
1.2	3	9																
1.3	5	81																
1.4	9	97															5	21
2.1	51	461			1	7	6	48	1	2					9	77	13	108
2.2	120	1,147	5	22			1	7	1	3					23	224	15	112
3.1	1	6					1	4					5	93			1	6
3.2	13	81	3	17			4	46					37	465			3	56
4.1	50	2,287	3	94	47	2,580	4	53	1	48	327	2,834					53	1036
4.2	170	2,802	14	198	14	151	51	570	3	12			6	297	2	80	45	846
4.3	1	5					2	19									8	95
5.1																	4	29
5.2																	21	811
6.1															4	61		
7.1	3	11													2	23		
Total	**468**	**7,116**	**25**	**331**	**62**	**2,738**	**69**	**747**	**6**	**65**	**327**	**2,834**	**49**	**872**	**40**	**465**	**173**	**886**

Ditch A

Some 38% (by sherd count) of the assemblage was recovered from enclosure Ditch A; this feature also associated with a single radiocarbon determination (901-810 cal. BC at 95.4% probability; SUERC-90597). Pottery from this feature was well fragmented, though it produced the largest number of featured (rim or decorated sherds) from the site (Figs 7 and 8, nos 7, 10-12). The range of fabrics represented is comparable to that for the site overall, with sandstone-tempered and quartzite-tempered types similarly dominant.

Roundhouses 1, 2 and 3

Only relatively small quantities were recorded from these features, including from RH 2 feature pit 5273, some 38 sherds (2,433g) from the base portion of a large, straight-sided and finger-wiped vessel. This vessel, measuring 260mm at its base, appears likely to have been deposited intact, the upper portion probably lost as the result of truncation. The manner of deposition may suggest use for storage, plausibly within the roundhouse structure, although a votive/ritual deposit is a further possibility. Late Bronze Age dating is confirmed by a radiocarbon determination (973-829 cal. BC at 95.4% probability; SUERC-90602). Fabric types represented in RH1-3 are comparable to those from Ditch A and elsewhere, again with Groups 4 and 5 dominant. The vessel from pit 5273 aside, few featured sherds were recorded, though these are of Late Bronze Age type. A further notable find is the complete miniature vessel (Fig. 7, no. 8) from RH 1 posthole 5543. Substantially complete, its recovery again hints at ritual deposition.

Pit 5177

This feature produced 327 sherds (2,834g), which, in common with that from feature 5273, comprised the lower portion of a large, probably ovoid-profiled vessel in fabric 4.1, seemingly deposited upright and its upper part lost to truncation. The vessel measures 280mm at its base and as with that from feature 5273 was most likely vessel utilised for cold storage, although a structured, 'ritual' deposit cannot be discounted.

Tree throw feature 5416

The fill (5417) of this irregular feature produced some 40 sherds (465g) in a mix of fabrics, unusually including leached shell-tempered type 6.1 and organic-tempered 7.1. A vessel in the latter fabric was the only example recorded with fingertipping to its rim (Fig. 7, no. 5). Similarly, a sherd with impressed/slashed decoration is unusual in this assemblage (Fig. 7, no. 6). These peculiarities are suggestive of different, possibly earlier, dating compared to the main assemblage, although all find parallels within the Late Bronze Age plain ware tradition.

Pit 5396

This feature produced a further large group, the larger part comprising (37) joining sherds from a jar-proportioned vessel of form JO2 in sandy fabric 3.1 (Fig. 8, no. 14). In addition, were base sherds from a large, thick-walled vessel in sandstone-tempered type 4.2.

Ditches B, C, D and K

These features, their alignments and general form at odds with the main phase of Late Bronze Age activity, produced only very small quantities of material (six sherds; 65g). Although consistent with the Late Bronze Age dating of the majority, the quantities are insufficient for dating with confidence and all might be redeposited.

Other

The remainder of the assemblage was recovered from dispersed features, primarily pits. Most features produced small groups of under ten sherds, rising to 27 sherds from pit 5007. The range of fabrics and vessel forms is comparable to the main groups described above and broad contemporaneity would seem likely. Pit 5248, which produced a single sherd in fabric 3.2, was associated with a radiocarbon determination (897-806 cal. BC; SUERC-50601).

Catalogue of illustrated pottery (Figs 7, 8)

Fig. 7

1. Fabric B1.3. Beaker fineware vessel; comb impressed decoration. Pit 5500, fill 5501
2. Fabric B1.3. Lower portion of Beaker with fingernail impressed decoration. Pit 5132, fill 5133
3. Fabric 5.2. Thick-walled vessel with applied plain cordon. Pit 5007, fill 5008
4. Fabric 4.2. Straight-sided vessel (form JS1). Posthole (part of RH 1) 5447, fill 5448
5. Fabric 7.1. Ovoid vessel (form JO1). Fingertip-impressed decoration to rim top. Tree throw hole 5416, fill 5417
6. Fabric 4.2. Thick-walled vessel. Slashed/

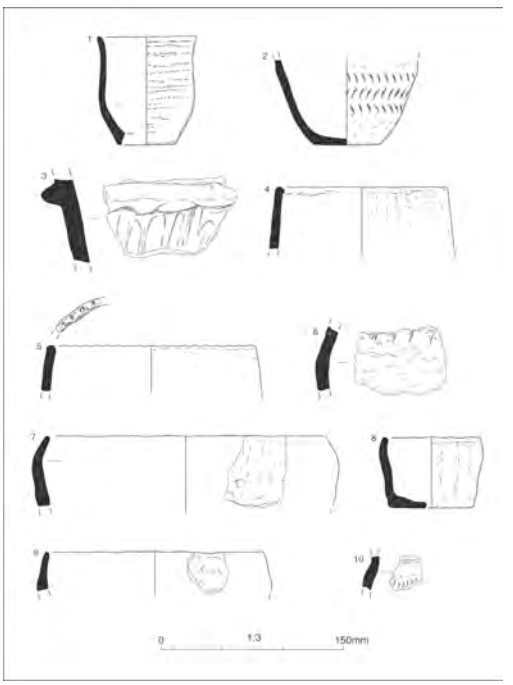

Fig. 7 Pottery 1-10

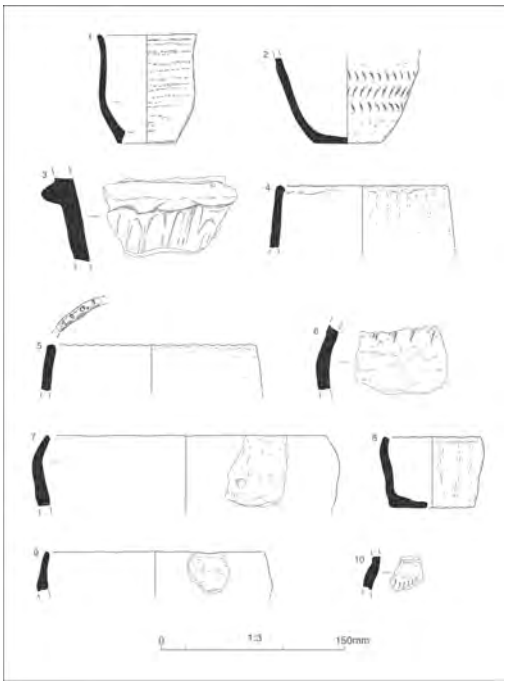

Fig. 8 Pottery 11-14

impressed decoration at shoulder. Tree throw hole 5416, fill 5417

7. Fabric 4.2. Ovoid vessel (form JO1). Ditch A, fill 5204
8. Fabric 4.2. Cup/miniature vessel (form CS). Posthole (part of RH 1) 5543, fill 5544
9. Fabric 2.2. Bipartite vessel (form BB). Ditch A, fill 5206
10. Fabric 5.1. Shouldered vessel (form JBS). Fingernail decoration at shoulder. Ditch A, fill 5206

Fig. 8

11. Fabric 2.1. Shouldered vessel (form JBS). Applied and finger-impressed cordon at shoulder. Ditch A, fill 5189
12. Fabric 2.1. Shouldered vessel (form JBS). Finger-impressed decoration at shoulder. Ditch A, fill 5189
13. Fabric 4.2. Shouldered vessel (form JBS). Ditch A, fill 5189
14. Fabric 3.2. Ovoid vessel, everted rim (form JO2). Pit 5396, fill 5398

THE FIRED OR BURNT CLAY
E. R. McSloy

A total of 110 fragments weighing 3,131g was recorded, this material deriving from 13 separate deposits (CA 2020, Appendix E, Table 1). The assemblage is well-fragmented although many of the breaks appear to have occurred at the time of, or following, recovery and due to the softness of this material. The majority of the fragments have come from fired clay objects, representing a minimum of seven. Although fragmented, one object, 'weight' Ra. 3, was re-constructable to its full height.

Objects (clay 'weights')

Fragments from seven objects were recorded. Ra. 3 was substantially complete and identifiable as clay 'weight' of pyramidal form, with a single perforation at its apex. The remaining six objects are represented as small fragments only, although all appear likely to derive from weights of similar form. The majority of fragments occur in a similar fabric, which appears to be 'untempered' but includes sparse iron oxide pellets and small rounded stones (quartzite), up to 8mm in size. The fragments from posthole fill 5440 are in a different, harder-fired fabric containing common fine

(<0.2mm) sand.

Perforated fired clay objects are known from the Neolithic and periods up to the Early Medieval, the generally accepted use being with vertical, warp-weighted looms. Alternative uses, certainly for those of the later prehistoric examples, have been advanced, including as thatch weights or oven or kiln furniture (Woodward 2009, 299). The pyramidal forms identified here are known to be associated with the Late Bronze Age period (c. 1200-800 BC), dating which is supported here by the pottery. Such forms occur widely at sites of this period across southern and eastern England (Needham and Longley 1980, 411) and more rarely in northern England and Wales (Woodward 2009, 298). Their occurrence in the South West appears to be uncommon, although a fragmentary example was identified from Field Farm, Shepton Mallet, Somerset (Morris 2009b). The height of Ra. 3 as reconstructed (190mm) is at the upper end of the examples listed by Woodward, although larger examples (up to 224mm) are those from Willington Derbyshire and The Breiddin, Powys (*ibid*., 298, table 93).

Other

A quantity (146g) of material from unphased posthole 5707 (not illustrated) which occurred in a soft, friable fabric, is probably burnt structural daub. Several pieces preserve a smoothed surface and one piece a rounded 'wattle' impression, approximately 15mm in diameter. A number of fragments lacking surfaces or other features permitting identification to type were also recorded (CA 2020, Appendix E, Table 1).

LITHICS

Jacky Sommerville

Introduction and raw material

A small assemblage of 39 worked lithics (553g) and four burnt, unworked flints (61g) was recorded. Seven items were made using Greensand chert, which outcrops in the region of the Blackdown Hills c. 15km to the south, and the rest were flint. Cortex, which was present on 18 of the flint pieces, indicates the predominant use of primary chalk or clay-with-flints sources. Four pieces with thinned/abraded cortex indicated minimal use of flint from gravel or marine sources. The underlying geology is Triassic mudstone partially overlain by river terrace sands and gravels. The nearest potential flint source is clay-with-flints c. 5km to the west/northwest (BGS 2019). The Blackdown Hills, feature areas of chalk, but these are at least 22km south-east of Bishops Lydeard.

Assemblage range

The larger part of the assemblage comprised debitage, including 25 flakes and one blade (Table 4). A core, from unphased pit 5196, is a multiplatform type, which has been used to remove flakes from at least four striking platforms. The eleven pieces with secondary working make up a relatively high proportion of the total (28%). Handaxe Ra. 1, a notable find, is described below. The remainder comprise three scrapers, and single examples of piercer, awl and spurred pieces made using flake blanks. Most of these, along with the retouched flakes and miscellaneous items, are not closely dateable types. Two among the scrapers, from Ditch A and unphased pit 5504, may represent thumbnail scrapers, a class commonly found among Beaker/Early Bronze Age assemblages (Butler 2005, 168).

Stratigraphy: Beaker/Early Bronze Age

The lithics from this phase, dated by the presence of Beaker pottery, were limited to two flakes and a piercer (made on a flake blank) from pit 5132. None is chronologically diagnostic.

Late Bronze Age

A total of 16 worked items (and the four burnt, unworked flints) were recovered from six features (Table 4). It is unclear whether any of this material represents evidence for Late Bronze Age flintworking, though its mixed condition does not suggest this. A medial fragment from a blade from Ditch A, a type most often associated with much earlier (Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic) reduction strategies is moderately edge damaged and heavily recorticated. There are four tools, including the possible thumbnail scraper from Ditch A (Fig. 9, no. 2). The two miscellaneous items do not conform to any standard tool types – such items are relatively common in Bronze Age assemblages as there was a decline in knapping technology from the Late Neolithic period onwards (Butler 2005, 157).

The Handaxe

The handaxe (Ra. 1; Fig. 9, no. 1), made from Greensand chert, was recorded from fill 5331 of unphased posthole 5330. It is a pointed type but the butt end is missing, which probably represents at least a third of the tool. The break has also removed a substantial area of the ventral face. It has been made using raw material featuring flaws and there is an area of thick cortex (up to 7mm) on the lower portion of

TABLE 4 BREAKDOWN OF THE LITHIC ASSEMBLAGE BY PERIOD

Type	**Early Bronze Age Pit 5132**	**Middle and Late Bronze Age**						**Unphased deposits**	**Total**
		Ditch A	**Pit 5177**	**Posthole 5473 (Roundhouse 2)**	**Pit 5655**	**Tree throw 5416**	**Vessel 5274 (Roundhouse 3)**		
Burnt unworked		1					3		4
Primary technology									
Blade		1							1
Core								1	1
Flake	2	5	4	1		1		12	25
Secondary technology									
Awl								1	1
Handaxe								1	1
Miscellaneous		1			1				2
Piercer	1								1
Retouched flake		1						2	3
Scraper		1						2	3
Spurred piece								1	1
Total	**3**	**10**	**4**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**20**	**43**

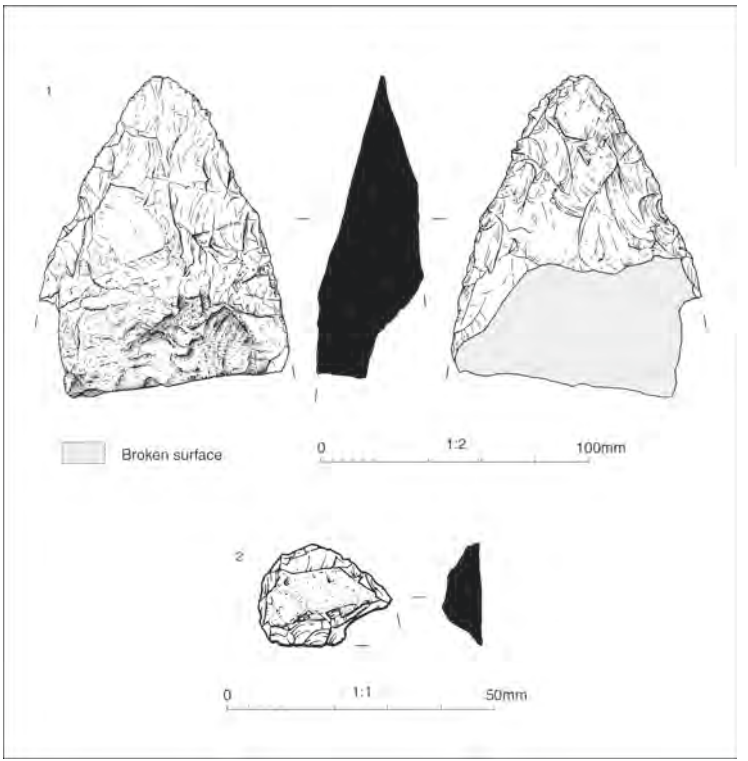

Fig. 9 Worked flint

the dorsal face. Handaxes of this type were in use during the Lower Palaeolithic period, which spans c. 500,000 to 150,000 BC in Britain. Other Lower Palaeolithic tools recorded in the area (all of which are surface finds) include: a handaxe of Greensand chert at Norton Camp Hillfort, Norton Fitzwarren, c. 5km to the south-east (Somerset Heritage Environment Record (SHER) 44292); a chert handaxe at Cheddon Fitzpaine, c. 8km to the east (SHER 43163); and flint and chert tools including ovate handaxes at Orchard Portman, c. 11km south-east (SHER 43444). Fieldwork in the centre of Norton Fitzwarren hillfort in 1993 produced a further 16 handaxes of Greensand chert (Norman 2000, 55).

Catalogue of illustrated lithics (Fig. 9)

1. Handaxe. Ra. 1. Unphased posthole 5330, fill 5331.
2. Scraper (end-and-side or thumbnail). Later Bronze Age Ditch A, fill 5617.

THE STONE OBJECTS
Ruth Shaffrey

Pit 5388 produced three fragments of worked stone, two fragments of quern from the second fill (5389, Ra. 6 and Ra. 8)) and one portion of a vessel from the first fill (5485). The two quern fragments are sufficiently similar in profile, dressing and lithology that it is highly likely they are from the same quern, although the fragments do not join. This is about a third of an upper rotary quern with a slightly dished grinding surface and gently rounded top. It is made from a non-megacrystic tourmaline granite of a type consistent with exposures in Devon and Cornwall. Querns of granite and other igneous rocks from the South West do not appear to have been commonly exported eastwards at any time, but a fragment of granite rotary quern and another of quartz porphyry were found at Meare Lake Village (Watts 2017, 174). The quern might be Saxon as indicated by the radiocarbon dating, or residual from Roman activity nearby.

A large portion of a square vessel is also made

Fig. 10 Stone objects

from igneous rock, this time a vesicular basalt, probably from the Exeter volcanics (Ra. 7). It is crudely finished and its function is not certain but it seems likely to have been a lamp (or lamp holder). Block lamps of this type are not especially common but do occur in contexts of Saxon date, for example at Eynsham Abbey in Oxfordshire (Roe 2003, 307) and in Winchester (Shaffrey 2011) as well as in contexts of Roman date, for example at Cheddar Gorge (Rahtz 1979, 228).

Catalogue of stone objects (Fig. 10)

Ra. 6. Rotary quern**.** Non-megacrystic tourmaline granite. Edge fragment of quern with flat grinding surface. Dressed with pecking but with some rotational wear on the grinding surface and a little smoothing at the circumference. The top face is roughly shaped. Measures 165mm wide x 57mm max. thickness. Weight 1,029g. Ctx 5389. Second fill of pit 5388.

Ra. 7. Vessel/lamp**.** Dark grey porphyritic lava with some black phenocrysts, probably from the

Exeter volcanics. Large portion of square vessel with approximately vertical internal and external walls and flat base internally and externally. The inside is rough with some vertical tool marks evident and the outside is just worked with the natural porphyritic texture of the rock showing. Measures 110 x >77mm and 87mm high. Inside it is 47mm deep x approximately 50mm square. Weight 659g. Ctx 5485. First fill of pit 5388.

Ra. 8. Upper rotary quern. Non-megacrystic tourmaline granite. Third of simple flat quern with slightly dished grinding surface and wide eye indicating it is an upper stone, despite the only roughly shaped upper surface. The grinding surface has been finished with pecking and has some rotational wear. The eye measures 70mm diameter. Measures 440mm diameter x 63mm max thickness in between circumference and eye. Ctx 5389. Second fill of pit 5388.

PLANT MACROFOSSILS

Sarah F. Wyles

Introduction

A total of twelve samples were analysed from eight Late Bronze Age deposits, two possible Late Bronze Age deposits and two from a Saxon pit. The samples were processed and analysed following standard methods (full details available in CA 2020) and the results are recorded in Table 5**.**

Results

Late Bronze Age

The moderately rich assemblage recorded from hearth 5248 in Roundhouse 1 was dominated by hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) shell fragments; the cereal remains included those of barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), emmer (*Triticum dicoccum*) and spelt (*Triticum spelta*). Hazelnut shell fragments represented 97% of the large assemblage noted from pit 5177.

Very few charred remains were recovered from Enclosure Ditch A, vessel Ra. 4 in Roundhouse 2, pit 5655, and posthole 5366.

Possible Late Bronze Age

A small, charred plant assemblage was recovered from ditch 5469, including cereal grains and weed seeds. There was also a moderate quantity of tar/resin fragments with occasional stem impressions. These may possibly be birch bark tar fragments and the stem impressions may have been made by plants such as nettles. Birch bark tar has a number of uses such as an adhesive for the repair of pottery and has been seen on pottery of Iron Age and of Roman date (Seager Smith *et al*. 2011) or recovered from features of this date in Southern Britain. It is formed by heating birch bark fragments to temperatures in excess of 300-400˚C (*ibid*., 125). Although very little birch was recovered in the charcoal assemblages from this site, it has been suggested elsewhere that birch may not have been used as fuel if bark was being removed from the tree for tar extraction, as this might have been done in a sustainable way rather than felling the tree (Challinor pers. comm.).

The sample from pit 5088 produced a moderately small assemblage dominated by cereal remains and would be compatible with a Late Bronze Age date.

Saxon

A large number of charred plant remains were recovered from pit 5388. The cereal remains included those of rye (*Secale cereale*), free-threshing wheat (*Triticum turgidum/aestivum* type), and barley. There were also relatively large quantities of oats and a number of these maybe of the cultivated oat species (*Avena sativa*). Other potential crops/food source remains included hazelnut shell fragments, sloe (*Prunus spinosa*) stone fragments and seeds of flax (*Linum usitatissimum*).

Summary/Discussion

The presence of spelt and emmer wheat together with barley in the Late Bronze Age assemblages is compatible with local other assemblages of this date. Spelt wheat has been dated to the end of the Early Bronze Age at Monkton Road, Minster, Thanet (Barclay *et al.* 2011; Martin *et al.* 2012) and became more common in Southern Britain by the Late Bronze Age (Greig 1991). It has been recovered, together with emmer wheat and barley, from a number of Middle Bronze Age and Middle/Late Bronze Age deposits in the area including some at Brean Down (Straker 1990), Queen Camel (Wyles 2018) and on the A30 Exeter to Honiton improvement DBFO scheme (Clapham and Stevens 1999). The weed seed species are generally those typical of grassland, field margins and arable environments. The presence of a few seeds of mallow (*Malva* sp.), curled dock (*Rumex crispus*) and club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) provide an indication of the occasional exploitation of damper soils alongside lighter, drier soils favoured by species such as vetch/wild pea (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.), knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*) and black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), while the remains of hazelnuts, sloes

TABLE 5 CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

Phase		Late Bronze Age								?LBA		Saxon	
Grouph		Enclosure Ditch A		Roundhouse 1	Roundhouse 2								
Feature type		Ditch	Ditch	Hearth	Vessel fill	Pit	Pit	Posthole	Posthole	Ditch	Pit	Pit	
Cut		5200	5234	5248	5274 Ra. 4	5177	5655	5366	5439	5469	5088	5388	
Context		5204	5236	5250	5276	5176	5677	5367	5440	5470	5090	5389	5485
Sample		3	12	4	5	2	9	11	10	6	1	7	8
Vol (L)		26	25	17	4	16	13	6	6	9	31	35	26
Flot size		65	25	1100	20	35	25	5	10	60	725	85	90
%Roots		15	10	1	15	30	10	30	30	15	5	10	8
Cereals	**Common Name**												
Hordeum vulgare L. *sl* (grain)	barley	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	-	2
Hordeum vulgare L. *sl* (rachis frag)	barley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Triticum cf. *dicoccum* (Schübl) (grain)	emmer wheat	1	-	3	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum dicoccum (Schübl) (glume base)	emmer wheat	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum dicoccum (Schübl) (spikelet fork)	emmer wheat	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum spelta L. (grain)		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum spelta L. (glume bases)	spelt wheat	1	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum dicoccum/ spelta (grain)	emmer/spelt wheat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	-	-
Triticum dicoccum/ spelta (glume bases)	emmer/spelt wheat	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum turgidum/ aestivum (grain)	free-threshing wheat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	6

Phase		Late Bronze Age								?LBA		Saxon	
Secale cereale (grain)	rye	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	12
Secale cereale (rachis frag)	rye	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Cereal indet. (grains)	cereal	-	-	9	-	1	-	-	-	-	8	6	8
Cereal frag. (est. whole grains)	cereal	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	8
Other Species													
Corylus avellana L. (fragments)	hazelnut	-	-	59	-	196	-	-	-	-	6	16	21
Agrostemma githago L.	corncockle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Polygonum aviculare L.	knotgrass	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Fallopia convolvulus (L.) Á. Löve	black-bindweed	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Rumex sp. L.	docks	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	6
Rumex crispus L. Type	curled dock	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Malva sp. L.	mallow	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
Brassica sp. L.	brassica	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Raphanus raphanistrum L.	runch	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Prunus spinosa L.	sloe stone	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1
Crataegus monogyna Jacq.	hawthorn	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Vicia L./*Lathyrus* sp. L.	vetch/wild pea	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	3
Lathyrus cf. *nissolia* L.	grass vetchling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Medicago/Trifolium sp. L.	medick/clover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Linum usitatissimum L.	flax	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-

TABLE 5 CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

Phase		Late Bronze Age								?LBA		Saxon	
Lapsana communis L.	nipplewort	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Anthemis cotula L. (seeds)	stinking mayweed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Schoenoplectus lacustris Palla	club-rush	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poaceae culm node	grass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Lolium/Festuca sp. L.	rye-grass/fescue	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Poa/Phleum sp. L.	meadow grass/ cat's-tails	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Avena sp. L. (grain)	oat grain	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2	1	35	65
Avena sp. L. (spikelet) cf. cultivated	oat spikelet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Avena L./*Bromus* L. sp.	oat/brome grass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	23	60
Bromus sp. L.	brome grass	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Monocot. Stem/rootlet frag		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Parenchyma/Tuber		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Pieces of ?tar/resin with stem fragments		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	***	-	-	-

and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) stones suggest the use of hedgerow/scrub environments as a wild food resource during this period. The possible birch tar fragments are noteworthy if the deposit is Late Bronze Age.

The cereal and possible crop remains from the Saxon deposits are compatible with the Saxon date for this pit. Free-threshing wheat is the predominant wheat species in Southern Britain from the Saxon period onwards (Greig 1991) and there are similarities between these assemblages and some assemblages from Saxon deposits at Aller (Simmons 2012) and Pin Brook, Broadclyst (Wyles 2020). Again, the weed seeds are generally those typical of grassland, field margins and arable habitats. Some of the species, such as corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*) and stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*) are typical of Saxon assemblages. Corncockle is a weed very closely associated with the rye crop (Godwin 1984, 479) and stinking mayweed becomes more common in assemblages of Saxon and medieval date (Greig 1991). This is thought to be linked with the increased cultivation of heavier clay soils (Green 1984) associated with the change to mouldboard ploughs from ards (Jones 1981; Stevens with Robinson 2004; Stevens 2009). There is an indication of the exploitation of different environments, with species such as stinking mayweed favouring heavier clay soils, species such as curled docks favouring damper soils, and species such as corncockle favouring lighter dry soils, alongside hedgerow/scrub species such as blackthorn and hazel.

WOOD CHARCOAL

Sheila Boardman

Nine samples were selected for wood charcoal analysis, five of which came from Late Bronze Age deposits, two from possible Late Bronze Age deposits and two from a Saxon pit. More than 800 charcoal fragments were examined, and, while the quantities of material varied, the deposits produced a rich, varied wood charcoal assemblage. Full methods and results are available in the excavation report (CA 2020).

Results

At least 13 tree and shrub taxa were identified in these samples (Table 6): yew (*Taxus baccata*), gorse/broom (*Ulex/Cytisus*), bird/wild cherry type (*Prunus avium/padus*), blackthorn/plum type (*Prunus spinosa/domestica*), blackthorn/cherry (*Prunus sp.*), hawthorn group (includes hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*), crab-apple (*Malus sp.*), pear (*Pyrus sp.*) and rowan, whitebeam and/or service (*Sorbus sp.*), elm (*Ulmus sp.*), oak (*Quercus spp.*), birch (*Betula sp.*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), willow/poplar (*Salix/Populus sp.*), field maple (*Acer campestre*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

Late Bronze Age and possible Late Bronze Age

The sample from Enclosure Ditch A produced the most varied assemblage and was dominated by alder and oak fragments, with smaller concentrations of hawthorn group and gorse/broom. These were followed by blackthorn/plum type, alder/hazel, and a few fragments of blackthorn/cherry, willow/ poplar, birch and ash charcoal. Up to half of the remains in this sample were from roundwood or immature timber. The wide range of material and absence of one dominant taxon overall is consistent with different episodes of dumping of fuel waste.

The remains from hearth 5248 in Roundhouse 1 were also varied, but they were dominated by oak and hazel. The other taxa, represented by a few fragments each, were hawthorn group, alder/hazel, probable gorse/broom, blackthorn/cherry, elm and birch. The remains in this sample may represent final use of the hearth. Again, many of the fragments were from roundwood or immature timber.

The main taxa present in Vessel Ra.4 from Roundhouse 2 were alder/hazel and oak, followed by hazel, willow/poplar and gorse/broom, hawthorn group and blackthorn/cherry, most similar to the dumped deposit in Enclosure Ditch A.

The samples from pits 5177 and 5655 produced similar remains to those in the samples above but both were dominated by oak followed by hazel. Pit 5177 also produced three fragments of yew, the only such find from the site. The samples from ditch 5469 and pit 5088 produced narrower ranges of material; in the former this included hazel, alder, oak and gorse/broom, and in the latter, oak, alder and alder/hazel. The material in both deposits may represent refuse from single (or few) burning episodes.

Saxon

Over 90% of the material in the two samples from Saxon pit 5388 was from a combination of oak (dominant in both cases), hazel, alder and alder/hazel charcoal. There was a small deposit of bird/wild cherry charcoal and the other remains were blackthorn/cherry, hawthorn group, field maple and ash. Alder is a poor wood fuel but it makes excellent charcoal (Gale and Cutler 2000). There was no evidence for an increased reliance on firewood from hedgerows or scrub.

TABLE 6 WOOD CHARCOAL IDENTIFICATIONS

Phase		LBA					?LBA		Saxon	
Group		Enc. ditch A	Roundhouse 1	Roundhouse 2						
Feature type		Ditch	Hearth	Vessel fill	Pit	Pit	Ditch	Pit	Pit	
Cut		5200	5248	5274	5177	5655	5469	5088	5388	
Context		5204	5250	5276	5176	5677	5470	5090	5389	5485
Sample		3	4	5	2	9	6	1	7	8
Sample vol (L)		26	17	4	16	13	9	31	35	26
Taxaceae										
Taxus baccata L.	yew	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Fabaceae										
Ulex/Cytisus	gorse/broom	10r	-	4r	5r	-	2r	-	-	-
cf. *Ulex/Cytisus*	cf. gorse/broom	3r	2r	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rosaceae										
Prunus avium/padus type	wild/bird cherry type									7
Prunus spinosa/domestica type	blackthorn/plum type	8r	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Prunus sp.	blackthorn/cherry	4r	1	2	1	1r	-	-	1r	2
Pomoideae	hawthorn group	14r	4r	3r	4	3	-	-	1	-
Ulmaceae										
Ulmus	elm	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fagaceae										
Quercus	oak	24shr	63shr	13srh	63shr	28hsr	18s	70hs	90hs	63hsr
Betulaceae										
Betula	birch	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alnus glutinosa (L.) Gaertn.	alder	26r	-	-	-	-	8r	29r	-	11r
Corylus avellana L.	hazel	-	25r	8r	28r	7r	24r	-	5r	17r
Alnus/Corylus	alder/hazel	5r	4	15	2	5	-	6	3	7
Salicaceae										
Salix/Populus	willow/poplar	3	-	5r	-	-	-	-	-	-

TABLE 6 WOOD CHARCOAL IDENTIFICATIONS

Phase		LBA						?LBA		Saxon	
Sapindaceae											
Acer campestre L.	field maple	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3r	-
Oleaceae											
Fraxinus excelsior L.	ash	1	-	-	2	6	-	-	-	2r	-
Indeterminate charcoal		6br	6b	5b	5b	5	2b	2	2	2	2
Fragments analysed		106	108	55	115	55	54	107	107	107	109

KEY: Counts include h - heartwood; s - sapwood; r - roundwood; b- bark. LBA - Late Bronze Age. Pomoideae may include Pyrus (pear), Malus (apple), Crataegus (hawthorn) & Sorbus (rowan, service, whitebeam) species.

Summary/Discussion

The wood charcoal from the site appears to include remains from mixed deciduous woodlands (oak, hazel, ash), heathlands (gorse/broom, birch) and damp, low lying areas (alder, willow/poplar). Shrubby taxa and remains, including roundwood of probable blackthorn and hawthorn, also indicate the use of hedgerows or scrub for wood fuels. The presence of yew in a single sample may point to the growth of this tree in the nearby Quantocks. The Saxon wood charcoal hints at a reliance on fewer species, largely taxa associated with woodlands and damper areas.

DISCUSSION

The Palaeolithic handaxe provides the earliest evidence for human activity in the area of the site. Although it was not found in situ, it will add to the corpus of Palaeolithic finds recovered from the region, which has recently been increased by finds from Cotlake Hill (south of Taunton) and Norton Fitzwarren (Norman 2000, 55), and the handaxe from West Monkton (PAS Find ID SOMDOR-505D12). The lithic assemblage from this site adds to a picture of occasional, often isolated, finds of Mesolithic and Neolithic worked stone artefacts, implying activity across the wider Somerset landscape in earlier prehistoric periods. Small numbers of residual prehistoric worked flints were recovered as part of the works associated with the water pipeline (HER 32061) c. 170m north of the site (Ellis 1978, 148-49).

There is considerable evidence from aerial photography for later prehistoric activity within the area surrounding the current site. Bronze Age funerary activity is suggested by cropmarks of a possible ring ditch to the south-west, just beyond the A358 (HER 44364), (CgMs Consulting 2016, Appendix 1: HER data plot). Additionally, a possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery has been identified to the south-east, amongst an extensive area of cropmarks which include enclosures, trackways and other ring ditches, located to the north-east of Longlands Farm (HER 22819), south-east of the current site. Closer to the site, a further extensive complex of settlement enclosures, ring ditches and associated field systems lies to the south-east, at Dene Cross. Archaeological evaluation of some of these cropmarks has indicated an Iron Age and Roman date (Wessex Archaeology 2001/2). Part of this complex lies immediately to the south-east of the site, to the south of Tatham Cottages. Such cropmarks are probably indicative of settlement and farming activities.

Further to the east lay an important Iron Age hillfort at Norton Fitzwarren, which may represent

an early 'central place', confirming that the Vale of Taunton was occupied and of some importance in the later prehistoric period. It may have been situated on the boundary between two tribal landholdings (Gathercole 2002, 2). Pottery (of late 1st- and early 2nd-century date) recovered from cropmarks at Dene Cross during evaluation works (HER 15326) has shown that activity within the vicinity of the site continued into the Roman period (Wessex Archaeology 2001/2).

The site lay some distance to the south-east of the historic settlement core at Bishops Lydeard. It is likely to have occupied an area of associated agricultural land, either under cultivation or forming part of extensive meadows. Cartographic sources show that the site remained predominantly as an area of enclosed agricultural land, though maps from the 19th and 20th centuries document the gradual loss of some internal field boundaries.

The lithic assemblage from the site is small, and with the exception of a single handaxe, largely temporally undiagnostic; it includes very few tools, and the condition of many of the items suggests that these have been redeposited. The lithic assemblage demonstrates the use of moderately, but not necessarily immediately local, raw materials, including Greensand chert, which outcrops in the Blackdown Hills some 15km to the south, together with river gravels and chalky flints that were possibly sourced from clay-with-flint or chalk deposits. An edge-damaged and rolled blade fragment was recovered from Ditch A. Although some blades are found in Bronze Age assemblages, blade technology is typically a feature of Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Early Neolithic reduction strategies. A possible thumbnail scraper, from Ditch A, may be typologically dateable to the Early Bronze Age, although this is tentative, due to breakage.

No Neolithic pits or pottery were found, nor other definitively earlier Neolithic artefacts. However, beaker pottery provides limited evidence for Early Bronze Age (possibly Chalcolithic) activity on, or close to, the site. A very small number of features produced this material. Where the material was exclusively of this date (and not demonstrably residual like that from enclosure Ditch A), those features have been classed as representing an archaeological phase. One vessel is thought likely to fit slightly later within the earlier beaker styles of the mid to late 3rd millennium BC. The evidence is not extensive enough to confirm whether the site was occupied before the Middle to Late Bronze Age, or if it was used on a more casual or periodic basis. Dispersed material derived from intermittent or seasonal activities in the area, or from a settlement (presumably close by) might have been incorporated when later features such as the enclosure ditch and postholes to support timbers for roundhouses were dug. Sparse and very fragmented beaker-style pottery assemblages were also found at the Middle and Late Bronze Age sites excavated at Field Farm, Shepton Mallet (Morris 2009a, 41), some 35 miles to the north-east. Beaker pottery is still relatively rare in the South West, so this material adds to the limited corpus of knowledge.

Evidence for definitive Middle Bronze Age occupation at the site is also limited. Features could fit with the 'typical' settlement model for the Middle Bronze Age as seen in sites such as Trevisker (ApSimon and Greenfield 1972), and in Wessex and Devon. This model envisages small-scale, enclosed or unenclosed settlement units, incorporating a principal dwelling house, sometimes with an ancillary building and a few storage and other structures, all of which could leave many postholes which are difficult to interpret structurally (Fitzpatrick 1999, 217). Such sites probably represent the remains of individual households (Ellison 1981; Brück 2007, 2). Middle Bronze Age settlements were often relatively short-lived (Brück 2007, 3), and a lack of stratigraphic relationships can hamper their interpretation. A recently published Middle Bronze Age D-shaped enclosure at Newtown Park, Langport (c. 20 miles to the east of this site) was considerably smaller at some 19.80m at maximum width and a minimum of 21.20m in length (Tabor 2020, 105). It too provided hints of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age activity at the site (*ibid*., 120), but it lacked a demonstrable Late Bronze Age phase and did have Middle to Later Iron Age pottery and features.

Evidence from other Somerset sites suggests more than one possibility for the manner in which the site at Bishops Lydeard developed. In most cases at Bishops Lydeard, the 'Trevisker-related' decorated Middle Bronze Age pottery was found mixed with Late Bronze Age vessel types, or with generic, undatable sherds. These vessels may indicate a transitional phase to the adoption of Late Bronze Age plain wares. This would in turn suggest some continuity of occupation between the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age. Middle Bronze Age settlements in southern England are characterised by a relatively restricted and uniform set of objects (Brück 1997); this does appear to be the case for the Bishops Lydeard site. Given the lack of artefacts from many pits and postholes, it is possible that this phase of activity may be under-represented.

However, many Late Bronze Age sites were also relatively short-lived (Brück 2007, 3), and small-scale sites are also found in the Late Bronze Age, for example at Furze Platt, Berkshire (Lobb 1980). At the

Late Bronze Age site of Shorncote, Gloucestershire, a lack of intercutting features and a low level of finds, was interpreted as a result of short-term, non-intensive settlement (Hearne and Heaton 1994). At Bishops Lydeard, the majority of the pottery (including that from the main enclosure ditch) indicates a Late Bronze Age date, and the three radiocarbon dates, one each from the enclosure ditch and Roundhouses 1 and 2, confirm this dating. The dates are statistically consistent and indicate a main period of occupation during the 9th century BC.

At Bishops Lydeard, the ditch of the sub-oval or sub-circular enclosure (Ditch A) provided no evidence of having been recut. Three possible structures were identified as remains of roundhouses among the mass of postholes, stake-holes and pits within the enclosed area; two (Roundhouses 1 and 3) were identified from arrangements of cut features, and one from a partially preserved layer interpreted as a floor (Roundhouse 2). Both Roundhouses 1 and 2 produced Late Bronze Age dating evidence and environmental remains. A concentration of loom weights from the vicinity of Roundhouse 1 suggests that weaving might have taken place there.

Other ditches on the site produced either no dateable material, or only very small amounts. Of the two ditches producing Late Bronze Age pottery (B and D), Ditch B could represent an internal division within the enclosure. Other, generally narrower and shallower ditches, E, F and G, I, J, K, L, M and N remain largely unphased, although two of them (Ditches E and I) clearly post-dated the main enclosure Ditch A. These ditches had different alignments, and they appear to have formed parts of a series of enclosures, possibly paddocks, or at least one phase of a field system. Ditches E and F and K shared a broadly similar alignment, but while E and F lay approximately perpendicular to Ditches D and G (with E meeting D at its eastern end), Ditch K turned to the south at its eastern end. The two ditches with characteristically 'hooked' plans (K and L) were aligned at different angles to each other. A Late Bronze Age or later date seems likely for these ditches, which may form only a small part of a larger agricultural landscape beyond the excavation area.

The Trevisker style pottery is of regional interest and contributes to our understanding of the range of this characteristic style of pottery across the South West (Newton 2018, 86). Similarly, the Late Bronze Age plain ware assemblage is significant for the area, where few other plain ware assemblages have been recorded. The remains of at least two deliberately deposited Late Bronze Age vessels were found in separate pits. Pits containing placed deposits of complete storage vessels are known from other Bronze Age sites, for example at the Middle Bronze Age settlement at Hodge Ditch, Chard Junction Quarry (Taylor and Preston 2005), and Middle and Late Bronze Age phases of activity at Groom's Farm, Frithend, Hampshire (Cooke and Powell 2012).

There is little surviving evidence on the site for craft activities on the site other than the fired clay loom weights, four of which were recovered from the vicinity of Roundhouse 1. Such objects are found at many Late Bronze Age sites, and they demonstrate the importance of animal husbandry to the Late Bronze Age economy (Brück 2007, 9). A tiny amount of copper-alloy waste was recovered from a single posthole fill, but no metalworking residues were recovered. No bone objects were recovered, although bone preservation at the site was very poor, with only very small quantities of burnt or calcined material recovered.

The charred cereal remains suggest arable cultivation in the vicinity and are compatible with other assemblages of Middle and Late Bronze Age date in the region. Remains, particularly from Roundhouse 1 suggest that small-scale crop processing was taking place as the grain appeared to have been stored in semi-cleaned condition. Significant numbers of hazelnut shells suggest people were foraging for wild foods, and hedgerows or scrub were also used for wood fuels. The wood charcoal included remains from mixed deciduous woodlands, heathlands, and damp, low-lying areas, again suggesting the exploitation of a wide range of locally available resources. The possible birch bark tar fragments from ditch 5469 are interesting and would require chemical analysis to confirm this identification. Birch bark tar has a number of uses, including as an adhesive for the repair of pottery, and has been identified on sherds of Iron Age and Roman date (Seager Smith *et al*. 2011).

The site is surrounded by cropmarks that suggest an extensive use of the local landscape from at least the Bronze Age period onwards. Some of the cropmarks located south-east and south-west of the site are characteristic of Bronze Age funerary activity (ring ditches presumed to be the remains of round barrows), although no evidence for such activity was found at the site. There is an expectation that much of the cropmark evidence of field systems and enclosures is of Iron Age and Early Roman date and may indicate more intensive settlement and associated activity during these periods (CgMs Consulting 2016). Only limited archaeological fieldwork has been carried out in the surrounding area, but within closer proximity, for example at Denes Cross and slightly further away at Longlands Farm, Norton Fitzwarren, this has confirmed that some of these cropmarks do indeed relate to Iron Age and Roman activity (Foundations

Archaeology 2000; Wessex Archaeology 2001/2). However, the results from this excavation also suggest that more archaeological fieldwork in the area might provide further evidence for Bronze Age settlement with continuous or intermittent occupation and exploitation of the land for food production.

A single pit produced a charred hazelnut shell (from the lower fill) of Mid to Late Saxon date (771-950 cal. AD at 95.4% probability; SUERC-90603) as well a significant quantities of plant remains and worked stone objects suggesting some use of the site during the Saxon period. The plant remains included rye, free-threshing wheat, barley, oats, hazelnuts, sloes and flax. The pit also contained weed seeds which are generally those typical of grassland, field margins and arable habitats. The majority of the wood charcoal from the pit was from a combination of the dominant oak with hazel and alder. This material hints at a reliance on taxa associated with broadleaf deciduous woodlands (oak, hazel, cherry and ash) and damper areas (alder). The stone objects were imported from some distance (possibly Devon or Cornwall). Two are fragments from an upper rotary quern which might be of Saxon date, as indicated by the radiocarbon dating, or residual from Roman activity nearby. The basalt lamp (or lamp holder) is not a common find, although both Roman and Saxon examples are known. The lack of pottery from the pit or from the site as evidence of Saxon activity is not surprising as the lack of Saxon pottery before the mid 10th century in Somerset means that pre-950 AD sites in the county are typically revealed by radiocarbon dates. There is relatively little other evidence of Saxon activity in the immediate vicinity of the site, although a 7th-century cemetery was excavated at Stoneage Barton Farm, Cothelstone, approximately two miles to the north of Bishops Lydeard (SHER 11697). Documentary and place-name evidence suggests that Bishops Lydeard itself dates back to at least AD 854 (Poulton-Smith 2010, cited in CgMs Consulting 2016). Taunton and its Vale have a rich Saxon history, with a reference to Taunton in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for AD 722 (Gathercole 2002, 2).

Excavation at the site has yielded new information which implies that the area was visited and utilised from early times and has provided evidence for what appears to have been a relatively short-lived enclosed settlement in the 9th century BC. The very small assemblages of artefactual and environmental remains are not incompatible with other excavated rural settlements of the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age in Somerset and Devon. The Mid-Late Saxon storage pit was not predicted by pre-excavation work and demonstrates a presence in the landscape at that time.

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