

SOMERSET ARCHAEOLOGY 2001

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COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

This year will long be remembered because of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease that swept the country. The impact of the disease was very dramatic for the largely rural county of Somerset and its effects were felt throughout society. Access to the countryside was severely restricted and, because of this, a wide range of field surveys and excavation projects was cancelled. Many heritage and tourism sites were closed and their income was severely curtailed. Two significant effects on the heritage work of the County Council were the cancellation of the South East Quantocks Archaeological Survey fieldwork and the postponement of our guided walks programme for the spring and summer months. Access to the countryside also affected the countryside archaeological service provided by SCC and English Heritage to the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This part of our archaeological service is becoming increasingly important with the increase in Countryside Stewardship Schemes affecting a wide range of archaeological sites across the county. During the year Jan Grove dealt with 134 applications but site visits and checking of sites had to be postponed until the autumn. The long-term conservation and management of many key sites around the county relies on the good will and interest of private landowners, and joint working with countryside colleagues, Wildlife Trusts and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group has secured better management for sites such as Dowsborough Hillfort.

Development control archaeology continues to require constant vigilance and nearly 1500 applications received archaeological comment from the group. This service is provided to all the District Councils in Somerset and it is also given to the 'statutory undertakers' such as the water, gas and electricity companies. A particularly well preserved site that was recorded on a water pipeline was the remains of the deserted medieval settlement of Bineham near Long Sutton. Steven Membery specified a programme of archaeological recording and the work was carried out by AC archaeology (*see under Medieval below*). Both Steven and Nic Wall give advice on the Historic Environment and their work is having an increasing affect on managing and preserving important archaeological sites and historic buildings across the county.

Richard Brunning continues to coordinate work on the Somerset Levels and Moors and carried out a number of projects with the Environment Agency. A major study of the effects of peat wastage in Somerset was published which identified the need for further analysis and study to try to control some of the affects of peat shrinkage and how it is affecting archaeological sites. The group also provided input into the Parrett Catchment Project a wide-ranging study of the effects of drainage and water management affecting a large part of central Somerset.

Research into the heritage of the county continues and Chris Webster is responsible for adding new material to the County Sites and Monuments Record each year. Over 550 new entries were

added giving a total of 20,000 entries in the SMR. One of the key tasks of the year was to prepare a proposal to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to make SMR information more accessible to the public. A proposal to give access to the SMR over the internet will be submitted to the HLF and it is hoped that the project will start in 2002.

The final report on the Historic Landscape Character (HLC) of the county was completed by Oscar Aldred for Somerset and Exmoor and circulated to a number of bodies and authorities. The implications of this report for a wider landscape strategy for the county have yet to be realised. Following on from the Somerset study, Oscar carried out a review of all the HLC methodologies in England and a report is being prepared for English Heritage for completion in 2002.

In spite of our increasing efforts using the planning system given in PPG 16 and PPG 15, new and often startling discoveries are made each year that have not been picked up as part of the planning process. Three examples will suffice to illustrate this point. In Bridgwater the enhancement of the Cornhill area included repaving works during which the medieval cross base was identified and recorded. In Taunton the construction of new buildings within the former prison yard disturbed the skeletal remains of an execution victim. SCC carried out the excavation and the project was filmed as part of the BBC2 series *Meet the Ancestors*. One of the key finds of the year, however, was the discovery of a large 4th-century mosaic at Mill House, Lopen. The mosaic was found during the construction of a driveway, and English Heritage and SCC jointly funded an excavation, which was carried out by Terrain Archaeology. The site vividly demonstrated the public interest in archaeology with over 5000 visitors in a week and worldwide press coverage. Of all the archaeological events of 2001 perhaps the most important for the county was the publication of the excavations at Wells Cathedral by Dr Warwick Rodwell. The archaeological work was carried out over 20 years ago but thanks to the determination and scholarship of Warwick, with financial support from English Heritage and encouragement from SCC, this report is now available, albeit at a very high price. There is no substitute for the publication of reports and both English Heritage and the author are to be congratulated on a model piece of work.

The archaeological team works in conjunction with the County Museum service on a variety of projects; this year saw work at West Bagborough where a metal detector user discovered a large hoard of 3rd-century silver coins. The demands for more outreach and publicity for the archaeological and wider heritage service continues and all members of the team are involved with public events, walks and talks throughout the year. Venues have ranged far and wide including Cheddar, Yeovil, Bristol, Oxford, London and the European Archaeological Association meeting in Germany.

A more strategic approach to archaeological research is needed both for county and region, and seminars were held to prepare the ground for a South West Regional Strategy. Further work is planned on this in 2002. In addition to regional strategies, 2001 saw consultations on a countywide Cultural Strategy, which will include heritage and archaeological matters. The results of that consultation will appear in 2002. As the year ended a major review of the cultural and heritage services of the County Council was underway and a new look heritage service may emerge in the year ahead. This review will look in particular at our outreach and public services through projects such as the Peat Moors Centre and public satisfaction with the County SMR. The subject of the Historic Environment continues to have an increasingly high profile and government have now issued guidance in the form of a report *The Historic Environment – A Force for the Future* (DCMS and DTLR 2001). There are many pointers in this document on what local authorities should do to work with government and it is with these challenges in mind that we look forward to continuing and developing the County Council's heritage services for the people of Somerset.

(R.A. Croft)

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK ARCHAEOLOGIST'S REPORT

During 2001 baseline archaeological survey work continued on Exmoor National Park Authority owned land. On the moorland estate English Heritage's Exeter Office completed fieldwork at Larkbarrow, and commenced work at Cosgate Hill (just in Devon). In the woodlands Richard McDonnell and Keith Faxon continued fieldwork at Culbone. Oliver Blackmore, on a work placement from the University of Exeter, completed a condition survey of standing stones on Exmoor National Park Authority owned land. A geochemical survey of the presumed Iron Age enclosure at Timberscombe was carried out by Chris Carey (University of Exeter).

Under the Monument Management Scheme (joint funded by English Heritage and the Exmoor National Park Authority), the Bronze Age cairns on Dunkery Beacon were surveyed by Genna Cutler with support from the National Trust. The survey was designed to assess the condition of the monuments and to establish the effect of visitor pressure on the site. Also under the Monument Management Scheme, conservation of the stonework was carried out at Burgundy Chapel (near Minehead), and building recording was completed by Exeter Archaeology at Barlynch Priory.

In June, the Exmoor Archaeology Forum was held at Dulverton. The subject was 'Exmoor's Farms and Fields' and over 90 people attended. The proceedings of the day have been circulated to delegates. In September English Heritage launched its '*Field Archaeology of Exmoor*'. This publication is a milestone for Exmoor's archaeology, and is the first major publication of Exmoor's field monuments and landscapes since Leslie Grinsell's '*Archaeology of Exmoor*' (1970). It is hoped that the results of the fieldwork will provide a platform for other project work on Exmoor.

The Exmoor Air Photography Programme (funded by English Heritage and the Exmoor National Park Authority) continued with a selection of targets for monitoring purposes including Porlock Marsh, Road Castle (Exford) and Cow Castle.

During the year a small scale excavation was carried out on Porlock Beach by Richard McDonnell, assisted by Vanessa Straker (English Heritage), Rob Wilson-North (Exmoor National Park Authority), Keith Faxon and Jen Heathcote (University of Southampton/English Heritage). The purpose of the excavation was to gather samples to shed light on the environment at Porlock in the Bronze Age, following the discovery in 1998 of the bones of a bull aurochs. The excavation was located close to the aurochs site and involved the sectioning of the palaeochannel in which the aurochs bones were found. A report of this work will be published when the samples have been processed. The bones of the aurochs were returned to Porlock in 2001 following analysis at Southampton University, and are now on permanent display in the Porlock Visitor Centre.

Exmoor Iron – an English Heritage funded four-year project – began in September 2001. Excavations, directed by Dr Gill Juleff (University of Exeter), were carried out on a Roman smelting site at Brayford in Devon. Fieldwork will begin on sites in Somerset in 2002.

(Rob Wilson-North)

MULTI PERIOD

Ash, 35 Back Street, ST 477 208

An archaeological evaluation undertaken within an old orchard at 35 Back Street, Ash, recorded features dating from the Neolithic/Bronze Age, Iron Age, medieval and post-medieval periods. The earlier prehistoric features included a shallow scoop or gully of probable Neolithic date and a circular pit, possibly of the late Bronze Age. Iron Age features comprised a series of narrow ditches or gullies and possibly a large ditch c. 3m wide and 1.5m deep.

Medieval pottery sherds within deposits and features suggest that occupation on the site had commenced by at least the 12th century and continued through the medieval period. A substantial

?late-medieval stone building foundation was recorded. This building continued in use until about the mid-18th century after which the structure appears to have been robbed or dismantled. The site has remained unoccupied since.

The desk top study undertaken for the site suggests that Ash was a planned settlement laid out by the 12th/13th century if not earlier.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Glastonbury, Somerset House, Magdalene Street, ST 4982 3875

An archaeological evaluation situated between Somerset House, on Magdalene Street, and Safeways supermarket, recorded evidence for Roman occupation of the area, including a buried Roman soil horizon, and for intensive medieval settlement between the 12th and 14th centuries. The area is adjacent to the medieval deer park and items of cut antler waste were recorded within the medieval deposits.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Wedmore, Blackford to Mark pipeline, ST 435 475 – ST 375 475

A watching brief was undertaken during the laying of a new sewage pipeline between the villages of Blackford and Mark. Romano-British pottery was recovered close to the village of Mark, medieval pottery, ox and horseshoes were recovered from locations in Blackford, and a section of undated bank and ditch was located to the north of the Wedmore road at Poolbridge Farm.

Shallow peat deposits were observed between the villages and three fragments of bog oak were retrieved for possible dendrochronological dating.

Metal detecting located many ox and horseshoes. Post-medieval coins were recovered from Blackford and an Elizabethan silver penny from near to Mark.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Wells, Becket Place, ST 547 454

A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of service and building foundation trenches on a development at Becket Place, between Priory Road and St. John's Street, Wells. This was the follow-up to discoveries made during an evaluation of the site in 2000, which is located within the former medieval precinct of St John's Priory.¹

The watching brief revealed a pair of late-Roman boundary ditches and the termination of a third at the south end of the site. Sections of two more ditches of medieval date (one also found in 2000) were also recorded, along with two suspected contemporary postholes.

The Romano-British remains complement those found in the evaluation, and suggest the layout of enclosed plots belonging to a late-Roman farm located somewhere nearby on the well drained gravel of the St Andrew's stream valley. The medieval remains probably relate to the location of this area within the precinct of St John's, although, except for the two postholes, there was no evidence for any buildings of the priory here.

¹ Leach, P, 2000. 'Wells, Becket Place', in Webster, C.J., 'Somerset Archaeology, 2000', *SANH* 144, 229.

(Peter Leach)

PREHISTORIC

Alford, Dimmer Landfill Site – Southern Extension, ST 612 308

As part of ongoing archaeological works connected with the extension to the existing landfill site, Wyvern Waste Services Ltd funded an archaeological excavation of a natural palaeochannel. This had been identified during an earlier watching brief in 1998 and lay within an area where

new waste cells were to be created. Archaeological excavation of the various deposits within the channel recorded a series of artificial recuts containing potsherds and animal bone fragments, the pottery indicating that the environs of the palaeochannel were being exploited from at least the middle Iron Age. The natural channel appeared to have been recut in the middle Iron Age and by the end of the Iron Age the channel had silted up again and new drainage ditches were being dug through its surface. The course of the palaeochannel, which was c. 22m wide and up to 2m deep, was within the flood plain of the River Cary which seems to have been sealed by extensive alluvial flood deposits in the early Roman period. A second, smaller excavation to the south-west recorded areas of burnt clays and an undated ditch or gully, all probably dating to the prehistoric period.

The channel silts were sampled for environmental evidence, and geoarchaeology consultants TerraNova surveyed and reported upon the depositional history of the flood plain and of the palaeochannel. Interim conclusions were that increased agriculture by at least the Middle Iron Age produced run-off from the surrounding hills, the resulting silting requiring constant recutting of the palaeochannel to ensure adequate drainage. By the early Roman period further agricultural exploitation produced so much run-off that increased silting of the natural watercourses resulted in severe flooding and the deposition of so much alluvium within the flood plain that the early channels were buried. New watercourses were subsequently dug, possibly during the medieval period, these including the existing channels of the Back Brook and Dry Brook.

Assessment of the environmental samples continues and it is hoped that radiocarbon determinations will be taken from samples recovered from the base of the channel. Work will continue in 2002 or 2003.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Doultling, Abbey Quarry, ST 653 438

Two of a series of five probable Neolithic ritual pits were excavated in 2000. They contained sherds of probable Grooved Ware pottery, flint tools and flakes, animal bone, deer antlers and stones. The remaining three pits were excavated in 2001. All proved to have been severely truncated by ploughing and contained no prehistoric finds. A long ditch that runs obliquely through the area containing the pits was sectioned repeatedly in order to obtain dating evidence. One section contained a single sherd of late Romano-British pottery suggesting that it is associated with the Romano-British enclosures situated immediately west of Abbey Quarry which were investigated in 1999.

A full report is in preparation including papers on the pottery sherds and the bone and stone assemblages.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

East Cranmore, Torr Works, ST 6890 4360

An incoherent scatter of 19 unstratified flint flakes and debitage, and one potsherd which is probably of Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age date, were recovered from topsoil during a watching brief of the initial phase of construction of a reservoir. The flints included one scraper of probable Neolithic or Bronze Age date. The area under observation was irregular, with a maximum length of approximately 750m and maximum width of about 675m.

(L. and R. Adkins)

Montacute, Hamdon Hill, ST 484 165

A gradiometer survey was carried out by GSB Prospection on Hamdon Hill, immediately to the east of the Ham Hill Stone Company. An application has been made for an extension of the quarry and the work was undertaken for Jefferson Consulting Ltd as part of an archaeological assessment. Gradiometry was carried out in two areas of an arable field that were separated by

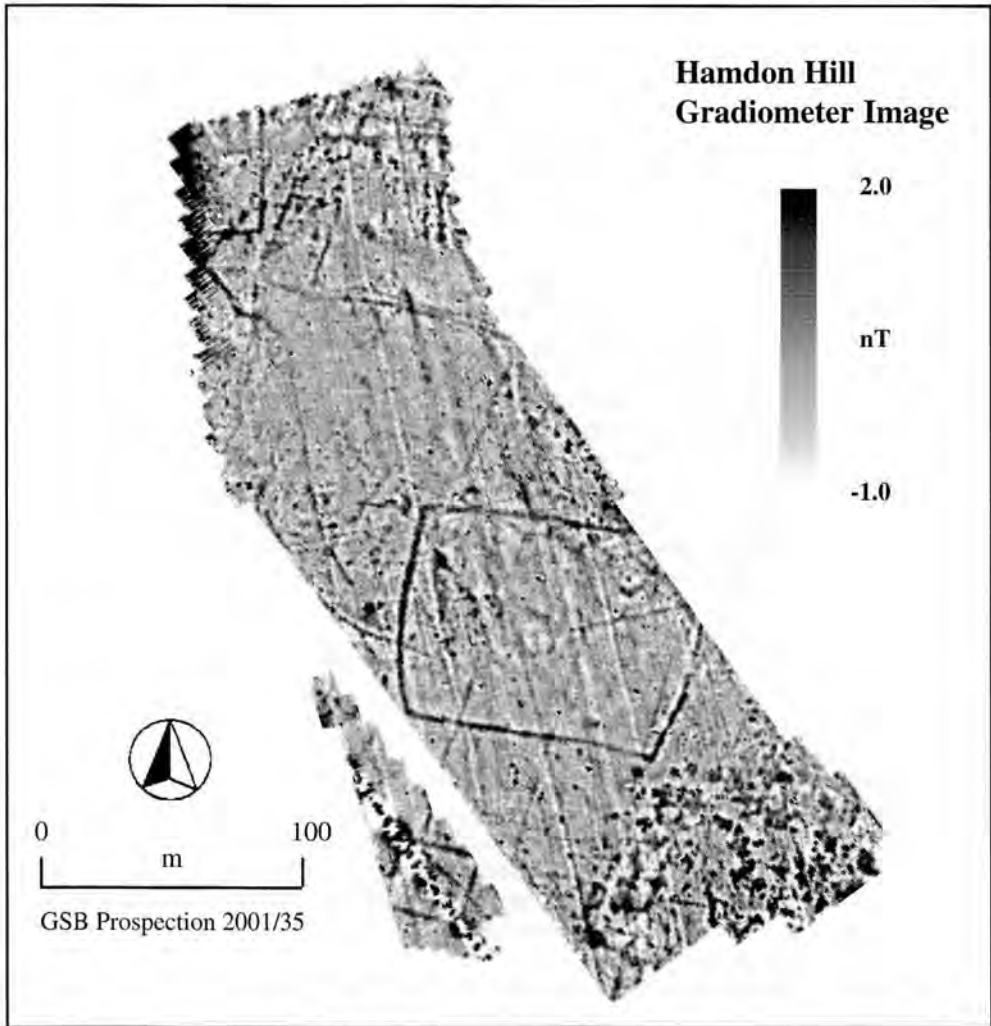


Fig. 1 Hamdon Hill: geophysical survey results

an earth bund. The gradiometer survey (Fig. 1) has successfully identified remains of intensive enclosed settlement. In particular, a large and well-defined rectangular enclosure was detected at the centre of the site. This pattern of enclosures and pit responses has been recorded elsewhere in previous surveys and dated largely to the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. A dense cluster of magnetically strong anomalies is present in the southernmost part of the survey area. The interpretation is less certain due to known disturbance from medieval quarrying. However, an archaeological interpretation cannot be discounted as dense settlement has been detected in neighbouring fields adjacent to the hillfort ramparts.

(Dan Sheil)

North Perrott, Perrott Hill School, ST 4670 0960

Proposals to construct tennis courts on the edge of sloping ground south-west of the school buildings and immediately south of the 1997 excavation site resulted in the excavation of two

archaeological evaluation trenches within the area of the proposed development. A trench running down the slope found no evidence for Romano-British or Iron Age occupation apart from a few abraded, residual pottery sherds but a trench running along the crest of the slope contained a buried soil of Iron Age/Roman date and two small Iron Age gullies. The density of archaeological deposits was far less than was recorded in the 1997 excavation situated 30m to the north and the assumption was that these slopes marked the edge of the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement area.

An archaeological watching brief was subsequently undertaken when the new tennis courts were constructed. Results included one further, disturbed, Iron Age burial (three Iron Age burials were recorded in the 1997 excavation) and a small number of pits and gullies of Iron Age or Romano-British date. No boundary or enclosure ditch was seen during the watching brief suggesting that this might have been an unenclosed Iron Age settlement.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Pawlett, Walpole Landfill Site, Northern Extension, ST 315 435

The environmental assessment of the samples recovered during the evaluation of a buried Lias island and the surrounding alluvial deposits in 2000 continues. A number of samples were chosen for a series of carbon 14 determinations (Table 1). Four bands of peat were recorded, band 1 being the lowest and earliest and band 4 being the highest and latest in date. Heights are in metres above Ordnance Datum.

Table 1 Carbon 14 results: Walpole landfill site, Pawlett

Height	Result	2 sigma range	origin
4.74–4.75m	2090±150BP	50BC– 650AD	snails in alluvial clays above the Lias Island
3.97m	3870±70BP	2558–2138BC	charcoal from buried soil 05 Lias island
3.97m	3920±70BP	2578–2200BC	"
2.90m	2607±103BP	1000–400BC	macros from bulk sample 05 Lias island
2.82–2.83m	3190± 60BP	1603–1318BC	base of higher peat deposit, 4th band
2.94–2.95m	3220±70BP	1682–1320BC	"
2.28–2.29m	4160±80BP	2912–2475BC	base of peat deposit, 3rd band
2.19–2.20m	3710±70BP	2296–1888BC	"
1.88–1.89m	4570±60BP	3503–3094BC	base of peat deposit, 2nd band
0.91–0.93m	5580±100BP	4672–4245BC	top of peat deposit, auger, 1st band
0.62–0.64m	5750±80BP	4781–4370BC	base of peat deposit, auger, 1st band

Assessment of the bulk and column samples recovered from the alluvial and peat deposits continues in order to determine the environmental changes within Pawlett Level from the early-Neolithic through to the Roman period and beyond.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Sharpham, Sharpham Drove, ST 474 390

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in connection with a planning application for peat extraction. Approximately 700m of evaluation trenches were cut along existing field rhynes in order to determine whether any prehistoric trackways might cross the evaluation area and to measure the depths and types of peat deposits and the depth of the basal marine clay. Environmental column samples were taken through the deepest section of the peat deposits by Julie Jones of the University of Bristol and material was removed from the peat for carbon 14 determinations. No trackways were seen in the evaluation trenches but several samples of bog oaks were retrieved for possible dendrochronology dating.

Two carbon 14 determinations were processed at the Waikato Laboratory in New Zealand (Table 1). They were obtained from the highest and lowest peat deposits; depths are in metres above Ordnance Datum. Ground level was at 4.39m OD.

Table 1 Carbon 14 results: Sharpham Drove

Height	Code	Date
3.57m–3.58m	WK9997	3112 ± 54 BP, 1520–1250 cal BC (93.9% probability)/1240–1210 cal BC (1.5% probability)
0.13m–0.14m	WK9996	5867 ± 113 BP, 5000–4450 cal BC

The sample for the lowest peat (WK9996) was taken from the base of the peat just above the surface of the marine clay deposit. The interface between the lowest peat and the surface of the clay was at 0.07m OD.

The date from the highest peat deposit indicates a mid to late Bronze Age date and demonstrates the amount of peat that must have been removed.

A pollen assessment of samples from the peat deposits was carried out by Dr Heather Tinsley and her report is held at the archaeology department of Somerset County Council and within the site archive.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Stoke St Michael, Moons Hill Quarry, ST 671 458

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken when topsoil stripping and associated works were carried out prior to the extension of Moons Hill Quarry into pasture land to the east of the existing quarry site. Scatters of Neolithic and Bronze Age flints were recorded at various locations. Post-medieval pottery was collected but no medieval or earlier sherds were recovered.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Stoke sub Hamdon, St Mary's church, East Stoke, ST 4840 1727

An archaeological watching brief on a service trench cut for new electrical cables recovered finds including a pottery rim sherd in a sandy fabric of Late Iron Age date, possibly associated with the adjacent Iron Age hillfort on Ham Hill.

See also Post-medieval.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Taunton, Site A, Crown Industrial Estate, ST 2435 2620

An archaeological evaluation, by C. and N. Hollinrake, on the Crown Industrial Estate immediately west of the new housing development at Maidenbrook Farm, recorded a number of small gullies or ditches and a scoop or pit containing burnt stone, charcoal and flint. These features were cut into a soft, pale orange clay, possibly a buried soil or subsoil, and sealed by a relatively deep alluvial deposit up to 0.7m deep, the alluvium deepening towards the edge of the floodplain of the River Tone. The only finds were prehistoric flint flakes and a charcoal sample from the pit was chosen for a carbon 14 assessment which was processed at the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre.

Sample AA-43640 (GU-9455)

Material: charcoal – *Prunus* sp.

1 sigma – cal BC 1206–1002 – cal BP 3155–2951

2 sigma – cal BC 1258–924 – cal BP 3207–2873

This sample indicates a date in the later Bronze Age for the prehistoric features and also provides a date after which the alluvial deposits in this part of the Tone valley were formed.

An earlier archaeological evaluation south of Maidenbrook Farm,¹ situated some 200–300m east of this site, also recorded similar but undated features that were also sealed by alluvium suggesting fairly dense Bronze Age occupation within this area on the margins of the floodplain.

Subsequent monitoring, by R.A. Broomhead, of the construction of a new medical centre recorded no further archaeological features or finds.

¹ Ellis, P., 1997, *Maidenbrook Farm, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Somerset: an archaeological desk-top study and evaluation*, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, report 503

(C. and N. Hollinrake and R. A. Broomhead)

ROMAN

Bath, 12 Sion Road, Lansdowne, ST 7452 6622

Deposits revealed in three mechanically excavated trenches encompassing the entire footprint of a proposed domestic extension revealed largely natural topsoil and subsoil deposits over a shallow terrace containing humic soils and some Romano-British pottery of 3rd-century date. It is suggested that the feature is an agricultural terrace (possibly a vineyard) of Roman date and probably part of a more extensive landscape of terraces on the south-facing slopes overlooking Aquae Sulis.

(Michael Heaton, Bill Moffat and Mark Corney)

Cheddar, Kings of Wessex School, ST 4575 5305

The buildings and grounds of Kings of Wessex Community School lie within an area designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument – SAM 29673. The recent scheduling of the school and its grounds requires Scheduled Monument Consent and the approval of English Heritage for all construction or earthmoving projects within the scheduled area.

A series of archaeological watching briefs was undertaken when groundworks were carried out prior to a new school building being constructed upon a rafted foundation. The area of the new classroom had been the subject of an archaeological evaluation in September 2000 when the levels of the archaeological horizon were established. The watching brief monitored the removal of soil to just above the archaeological horizon after which a membrane was laid down and covered by red scalplings; the construction raft was then constructed above the scalplings. The membrane was at exactly the same level as the one below a new school building immediately to the east, building K, which was built on a similar raft in 1999. Further watching briefs followed when new paths were cut through the turf and topsoil and on the subsequent relaying of the stripped topsoil. Romano-British pottery was recovered as well as some medieval sherds. Metal detecting recovered many fragments of lead slag and lead waste.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Chilton Polden, ST 382 385 – ST 385 384

Archaeological monitoring by AC archaeology during the construction of a new water supply main along the current A39 trunk road near the village of Chilton Polden, Somerset uncovered road metalling which probably represents a portion of the Roman road from Ilchester to a possible trading port at Crandon Bridge. There was no evidence for repairs or resurfacing. The alignment of the earlier road broadly follows the line of the existing trunk road.

(Neil J. Adam)

Glastonbury, Somerset House, Magdalene Street, ST 4982 3875

An archaeological evaluation between Magdalene Street and Safeway supermarket recorded an extensive, Roman period, cultivated soil sealed below medieval deposits. Roman pottery

was recovered and a 4th-century coin of Constans. The buried soil was examined by personnel from TerraNova who reported that it had been cultivated.

The Roman period finds complement those recovered during the Safeway excavations of 1986 when pottery and coins were found within the area of the present supermarket complex.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Hemington, Upper Row Farm, ST 7682 5411

As a follow up to fieldwalking and geophysical survey on the eastern end of the field known as 'Blacklands' to the north of Upper Row Farm an evaluation trench measuring 2 x 5m was excavated in April 2000 to expose the external ditch of a rectangular enclosure and the walls of a building within the enclosure. This was followed in September 2001 with a further excavation of the building and features within a 20m square adjacent to and including the evaluation trench. An area of c. 160m² was excavated to reveal a probable corridor style building of Roman date. The enclosure ditch was excavated, revealing a feature c. 1.25m deep by 2m wide, backfilled in antiquity with building debris. To the south-west of the building a drystone well was also located and partially excavated. Work will continue on the site in 2002.

(Jayne Lawes)

Ilchester, Northover Manor, ST 523 230

An archaeological evaluation undertaken within the yard of Northover Manor Hotel, situated to the north of Ilchester, recovered finds and features of the Romano-British and medieval periods including 1st-century Durotrigian pottery sherds and a coin of Vespasian. A Romano-British, west-east oriented, infant burial marked by a small headstone was also recorded but not unduly disturbed.

This area of Northover, in the vicinity of St Andrew's church, might be the location of the earliest Roman settlement at Ilchester, either focused upon the possible early fort site, visible as crop marks in Kings Hams some 200m south-east of the church, or on the later Roman fort and settlement beneath the modern town. Work will continue in 2002.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Long Sutton, Bineham Farm, ST 4915 2498

Archaeological investigations were undertaken by AC archaeology prior to and during the replacement of a section of water main by Wessex Water in Long Sutton parish, near Somerton, which discovered extensive remains of a medieval village (*see under Medieval*).

Monitoring of the scheme further to the west at ST49152498 uncovered part of a Romano-British site. Investigation of this area revealed a stone surface and two stone oven-type structures, although no evidence for an associated building was revealed. Large quantities of finds were present in this area which are mainly of 2nd to 3rd-century date. These include native (Black-Burnished ware) and imported (Samian and amphora) pottery, coins, glass vessel fragments and a copper alloy brooch.

(S. Robinson)

Lopen, Hinton Mill, ST 4275 1395

The construction of an access drive to the rear of Bridge Farm, Lopen, revealed the unexpected remains of a Roman villa containing a mosaic. Subsequent excavation by Alan Graham and Terrain Archaeology (funded by English Heritage and Somerset County Council) uncovered eight rooms; an initial phase of four rooms arranged along a corridor with four, more lavish, rooms added to the east. Two of the second phase rooms contained hypocausts and the other two had mosaic floors, the largest being from a room measuring c. 12m by 7m. The pottery suggests occupation from the late 3rd to the early 5th centuries

AD. The mosaic is dated to c. 360 AD. After recording, the site was reburied and is now preserved *in situ*, partially under the new drive. A geophysical survey aimed at defining the extent of the villa proved inconclusive.

(Richard Brunning)

Mark, ST 410 517

Romano-British Black-burnished ware pottery sherds were recovered from this field during a watching brief on a Wessex Water renewal pipeline between Blackford and Mark villages.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Pilton, 'Wenlock Edge', ST 585 407

A small archaeological excavation and its recording was undertaken in advance of the erection of a shed in the garden of Wenlock Edge, Pilton, at the western extremity of the village. Two segments of a rock-cut ditch were uncovered, set at right-angle, and containing late Roman pottery, including substantial parts of several South Dorset Black-burnished ware cooking pots inverted together within the fill of one ditch, and occasional fragments of animal bone. A small radiate coin of Allectus was also recovered from a suspected continuation of this ditch within an adjacent vegetable plot. These remains could be interpreted as part of a series of enclosures belonging to a nearby late Roman farmstead, located on the south-facing slope overlooking the valley within which much of the village is now located.

(Peter Leach)

Stawell, ST 373 383

Excavations of a cropmark enclosure and its environs in 2000 showed that a high-status Romano-British building lay nearby, but agricultural requirements, both in 2000 and in 2001, curtailed investigations. In 2001, part of the site was examined in detail – sufficient to identify it as the southern wing of a Romano-British building constructed on a late Iron Age occupation site.

A series of five walls of local Lias construction were found. They were all between 0.53m and 0.63m thick and most were raised upon Lias plinths between 0.66m and 0.73m wide: the upper surfaces of the concrete floors coincided with the tops of these plinths. These walls were not contemporaneous: it was evident that the building had been subjected to a series of extensions and from the layout of the walls it was deduced that, in its final phase, a minimum of five rooms had existed in this part of the building. One of these rooms contained a furnace and some pottery. It was seen that the building had been embellished with a grand porticoed entrance. An exceptionally large floor-slab, over 2m long, was set immediately in front of the entrance portal: it covered a conduit conveying waste water from the roofs of the building etc. East of the porch and entrance slab, a paved area consisted of seven or eight rectangular Lias slabs, beyond which was a hard standing made of two to three inches of stone chippings in a limey clay marl.

Although only part of the building was investigated, enough evidence was found to conclude that it had been constructed initially as a rather simple structure, probably in the late 1st century. Later, it had become a high-status corridor-type villa with a stone-tiled roof (some nails extant) and frescoed walls, surviving into the 4th century. Further excavation may show the extent of the buildings as a whole. Tessellated flooring, a bath-suite and one or more heated rooms may lie to the north and west of the rooms described above.

A full report is lodged with the County Sites and Monuments Record (PRN 11082) at County Hall, Taunton. The Society expresses its gratitude to the landowner, Mr Richard Graham, for his encouragement and help in this project.

(Peter Ellson)

West Huntspill, Bleak Bridge, ST 3067 4486

A stone wall associated with Roman pottery was discovered by the Environment Agency on the banks of the Huntspill River during bank clearance. A subsequent geophysical survey did not succeed in identifying Roman features but a small excavation, directed by Richard Brunning and funded by the Environment Agency and Somerset County Council, located occupation material and ditches thought to represent the edge of a small settlement which had mainly been destroyed by the construction of the river in the 1940s. A column base had been reused upside down as part of an area of hard standing.

(Richard Brunning)

MEDIEVAL

Axbridge, 'Medieval House', ST 4309 5450

Archaeological observations were made during the excavation of footings for an extension to the Medieval House lying on the south side of The Square in the town of Axbridge. The site demonstrated well preserved archaeology and produced evidence of a possible east–west ditch, pit or foundation trench backfilled with material datable to the later 12th or early 13th centuries. The site also produced residual Romano-British material and evidence of extensive post-medieval activity

(R.A. Broomhead)

Batcombe, Spargrove Manor, ST 671 379

A watching brief and further recording was carried out on the east arm of the moat at Spargrove Manor, Batcombe – a scheduled ancient monument (AM 438), in the course of its restoration and rewatering. This was the follow-up to an evaluation of its remains in 2000 and recommendations made then for future conservation and management (see *SANH* 144, 230). Having previously established the survival of waterlogged medieval levels within the moat, excavation to permit rewatering was restricted to the removal of deposits of 18th-century and later date. Trenches for supplying water to the moat and for an overflow from it were also seen and recorded.

Monitoring of the restoration and clearance programme revealed new evidence for a suspected early 17th-century stone bridge crossing, and for another stone bridge, which may be of the later 17th century. The presence of five successive crossings of the moat, giving access to the manor house, has now been established, commencing with the timber bridge remains of c. 1289 (established by dendrochronology in 2000) and ending with the present stone bridge of mid 18th-century construction. Further details of the construction and sequence of stone structures lining the moat was also revealed, including the dam fronting the latest bridge and the 18th-century grotto which now terminates its south end. A section through the outer bank remains at the north-east corner of the moat revealed some undated archaeological features beneath it.

A further programme of geophysical prospection is planned for the moat interior and to investigate the possible location of the documented medieval chapel of St Lawrence nearby.

It is proposed that the results of all recent archaeological investigation and recording works at Spargrove be drawn together as a single report for publication

(Peter Leach)

Bath, 21–22 High Street, ST 7509 6488

Investigative inspection of the fabric of Nos 21–22 High Street in Bath – now Coffee Republic – augmented by background historic assessment and consultation with Bath Archaeological Trust, indicates that the present structure is the amalgam of at least three separate building

plans and that, in addition to evidence of change throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, it encompasses interpretable *in situ* timber framing of late medieval date.

The timber work, comprising two collar and tie-beam roof frames and a jettied gable wall frame, are 16th century, or perhaps latest 15th century in form, and all have been retained within the modified building.

This appears to be the only example identified so far within the historic core of Bath and is, therefore, of considerable archaeological and historic significance.

(Michael Heaton and Peter Davenport)

Bridgwater, High Street and Cornhill, ST 2982 3708

Archaeological observations were made during excavations undertaken as part of the redevelopment of the High Street and Cornhill in the town of Bridgwater. Features probably representing the former High or Market Cross demolished in the 18th century were identified and recorded and evidence of a possible northern extension of the graveyard of St Mary's church was noted.

(R.A. Broomhead)

Brompton Regis, Barlynch Priory, SS 9187 2896

A programme of archaeological recording and interpretation was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology at Barlynch Farm in August 2001. The work was carried out in advance of consolidation works aimed at arresting the decay of a ruined building which lies to the west of Barlynch Farmhouse. This building is one of a number of upstanding fragmentary structures which survive from the former Augustinian Priory of St Nicholas, founded c. 1150 and dissolved in 1536. The archaeological work consisted of the production of a drawn and photographic record of the building, with a written description, and aimed to provide a basic outline record of the structure to aid the targeting of future repairs.

The ruined structure is aligned east–west and consists of the south wall of three buildings forming a continuous range. No dating evidence remains as all the dressed stone detail has been robbed. The eastern building is supported by deep, rectangular buttresses externally and was two storeys high. A scar in the surviving internal plaster shows the former first-floor level and also reveals that the majority of the lower storey is now buried. The central building is offset to the south and was also of two storeys; traces of two blocked openings were observed. The western section of the building has been largely rebuilt to form a post-medieval boundary wall and privy, however it is likely that parts of these structures retain medieval fabric. The buildings do not appear to have been one of the main claustral ranges, which lay further north, and it is likely that they were ancillary buildings associated with the monastery court. The buildings have been provisionally interpreted as the remains of a guest range containing a hall, lodgings and garderobe tower

(R.W. Parker)

Castle Cary, Manor Farm, ST 642 323

As a follow-up to the programme of excavation and watching briefs during 1999, further watching briefs and recording were undertaken in 2001 in the course of the 'Castle Rise' development on the site of the Manor Farm farmyard.¹ Sequences of structures and occupation horizons were encountered and recorded in the later medieval moated manor site on the west side of the 12th-century Inner Bailey of the castle. Further remains of the large stone-founded, 13th-century building (originally located in 1998) were found, possibly the earliest hall of the manorial complex. This was replaced by later medieval structures, floors and occupation deposits (Fig. 1).

Landscaping in the north-eastern corner of the development exposed a segment of massive stone rubble foundations, associated with some disturbed occupation deposits (including 12th-

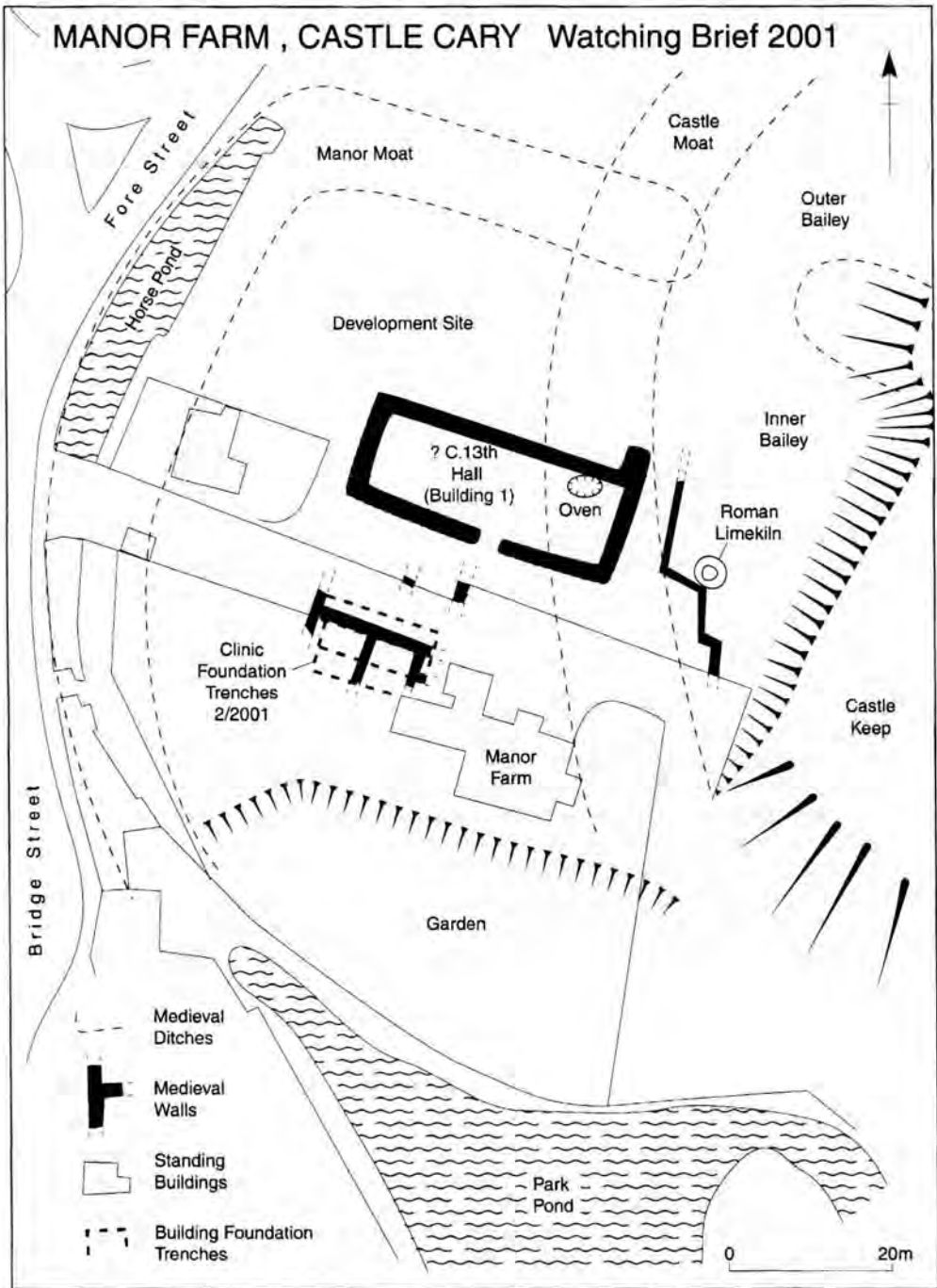


Fig. 1 Castle Cary, Manor House: principal archaeological features, 1998–2001

century pottery) and evidence of burning, along the west edge of the surviving Outer Bailey earthwork. This may be the remnant of a demolished curtain wall along this side of the castle.

along with evidence for its mid-12th century slighting. A buried horizon beneath these remains contained some Romano-British pottery.

A separate watching brief was carried out for a development involving an extension to the west end of the present Manor Farm house. This revealed up to 2m of stratified archaeological deposits relating to the remains of the medieval manorial complex and its demolition at the end of the 18th century (as recorded by Collinson in 1791). Despite the limitations of recording in the context of this development, it has demonstrated the survival of relatively well preserved remains of manorial building and other occupation deposits beneath a platform of rubble from their demolition, upon which the present Manor Farm house was then built. This was almost certainly the site of a later medieval manor house, possibly replacing the 13th-century ?hall; parts of its surrounding moat still represented today by Park Pond to the south, and by the Horse Pond to the west.

¹ Leach, P. 1999. 'Castle Cary, Manor Farm', in Webster, C.J., 'Somerset Archaeology 1999'. *SANH* 143, 168-9.

(Peter Leach)

Frome, Garston Lodge, ST 7793 4780

An archaeological excavation within a waste plot adjacent to Garston Lodge, at the eastern end of Vicarage Street, recovered a possible prehistoric pottery sherd and recorded medieval deposits and features. Large quantities of medieval coarseware pottery sherds indicate that the site was occupied between the 11th and 14th centuries and then from the 17th or 18th century onwards. Archaeological work will continue on the site in 2002.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Glastonbury, Archers Way, new library site, ST 5005 3907

Bone from an undated ditch recorded during an archaeological watching brief provided a radiocarbon date within the Saxon period (Sample AA-440742) (GU-9191). A second sample was chosen from slightly higher in the burnt deposits at the base of this ditch and this was also assessed at the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre (Sample AA-43639) (GU-9494).

Sample AA-40724 (GU-9191)

Material: sheep or goat femora.

1sigma – cal AD 721–887, cal BP 1229–1063

2sigma – cal AD 685–956, cal BP 1265–994.

Sample AA-43639 (GU9454)

Material: pig's thoracic vertebrae

1sigma – cal AD 990–1034, cal BP 960–916

2sigma – cal AD 901–1159, cal BP 1049–791

These two dates suggest a long life for the ditch which might have gone out of use during the 11th or 12th century, possibly when the town was replanned after the Norman conquest. A short paper is in preparation detailing the possible pre-Norman planned elements in Glastonbury's street plan.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Glastonbury, Somerset House, Magdalene Street, ST 4982 3875

An archaeological evaluation between Somerset House, on Magdalene Street, and Safeway supermarket recorded extensive medieval occupation between the 11th/12th century and the 14th century represented by large quantities of pottery sherds and animal bone. Features included boundary ditches or gullies and postholes. The boundaries are aligned on Benedict Street and suggest regular burgage plots. These plots appear to have been abandoned in the later medieval

period after which the area was used for extensive tanning activities; deposits of cattle horn cores were recorded in the post-medieval deposits. Cut antlers and fragments of carved antler were recovered from medieval deposits, these probably connected with the adjacent abbey deer park.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Hemington, Upper Row Farm, ST 7655 5372

As a follow-up to the survey of earthworks surrounding Upper Row Farm, a small evaluation trench, 5 x 2m, was excavated in the 'Homefield' on parch marks seen in drought conditions to the north of the stream that runs east towards Lower Row Farm. The trench revealed the corner of a drystone building, orientated roughly north-south. The associated pottery appears to be of medieval date and probably dates between the 12th and 14th centuries. Further work will continue in this area in the hope of achieving some dating sequences for the period as little is known of the pottery in this area.

(Jayne Lawes)

Langport, North Street, ST 420 270

A watching brief (continuing into 2002) has been maintained during construction works on behalf of Tesco Ltd for a supermarket development at North Street, Langport. Major earthmoving operations were required in the early stages to level the site, revealing sequences of earlier occupation. The primary evidence relates to medieval properties that fronted onto North Street from at least the 12th century here, comprising pits, ditches and a horizon of occupation soil towards the eastern boundary of the site. Further west were some remains of post-medieval plots and structures, but nothing of earlier date. Archaeological observation and recording was hampered in places by areas of petroleum contamination, which had to be removed from the site. The medieval remains were sealed or cut into by post-medieval building remains, occupation layers and other features along the North Street frontage, some of which can be traced on the earliest detailed maps of Langport from the 19th century. Further areas in this part of the site remain to be recorded towards the end of the development programme.

(Peter Leach)

Long Sutton, Bineham Farm, ST 4929 2500

Archaeological investigations were undertaken by AC archaeology prior to and during the replacement of a section of water main by Wessex Water near Somerton in Long Sutton parish. The site is located c. 700m west of earthworks and building foundations representing the remains of the former medieval village known as Bineham City.

During the laying of the original pipe in 1978 medieval pottery was found which indicated that settlement of this date may have been present.¹ The County Archaeology Service had identified a c. 650m length of the scheme where archaeological remains might be expected.

Excavations at ST4929 2500 revealed extensive evidence for medieval activity alongside the lane leading to Bineham City Farm, indicating that the alignment of this road almost certainly corresponds with an ancient lane. Parts of five stone buildings and a probable malting or corn-drying oven were identified. In addition, associated yards, internal floors and fireplaces were revealed. Because the remains were so well preserved and of such high quality, investigation was limited to cleaning and recording the total site in plan, and full excavation was only carried out along the line of the pipe trench. At least two phases of construction were identified, including evidence for a substantial barn-type structure

Historic records indicate that Bineham City is *Esterbineham* known to have been founded c. 1280. Little Bineham, the site of the present investigations is recorded from 1249. Despite this recorded early date, little of the pottery recovered appears to date to the earliest years of the

settlement. Much of the assemblage may be better regarded as late medieval or even Tudor, with an end date for settlement possibly as late as the 18th century. Sherds of this date were recovered from overlying demolition or clearance horizons.

See under Roman for another site on the pipeline.

¹ Ellis, P., 1985. 'Notes on watching briefs and fieldwork in South Avon and Somerset, 1978-1983', *SANH* 129, 97.

(S. Robinson)

Wedmore, Sexey's Arms, Blackford, ST 410 517

A large quantity of 11th–14th century coarseware pottery was recovered from the grounds of the public house during a Wessex Water renewal pipeline project running between the villages of Blackford and Mark.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Wells, 2 Priest Row, ST 547 565

An archaeological evaluation within a redundant builders yard at 2 Priest Row, Wells, recovered evidence for medieval occupation on the site from at least the 12th century. Archaeological features included a property boundary ditch dating from the 12th century and medieval cultivated soils. Houses on the north side of Wells High Street appear to have encroached on the original road line.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Wells, 54–58 St Thomas Street, ST 5548 4610

A limited desktop study and small-scale site evaluation were undertaken to provide an archaeological assessment of development proposals at nos 54–58, St Thomas Street, Wells, formerly the site of Pullins Dairy depot and a public house known as the 'Coach and Horses'. The desktop study indicated that the proposed development site lay within an area of historic importance where archaeological features and finds could reasonably be expected, St Thomas Street comprising one of the assumed early developmental areas of the city and the site having documented evidence of occupation from the early 18th century. The field evaluation identified a substantial late-medieval boundary ditch and the remains of buildings known to have stood on the site since the 19th century. Evidence of earlier occupation could not however be confirmed.

(R.A. Broomhead)

Wells, Market Place Hotel, ST 5501 4570

A small-scale site evaluation was undertaken on land to the rear of the Market Place Hotel in the city of Wells, a prior desktop study having indicated that the site lay within an area of historic importance where archaeological features and finds could reasonably be expected. The field evaluation showed this to be the case producing evidence for the existence of a series of medieval drains, pits and postholes together with the foundations of a post-medieval building.

(R.A. Broomhead)

Wells, New Street, ST 5492 4592

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during development of land lying within the Liberty of St Andrews on the east side of New Street. The site, formerly occupied by the Provincial Garage displayed considerable disturbance resulting from recent usage although several post-medieval walls noted on 19th-century maps remained identifiable. No evidence of any earlier activity was recorded despite documentary evidence indicating occupation of the southern area of the site from the 15th century.

(R.A. Broomhead)

Wells, Wells Museum, ST 5506 4595

Archaeological observations were made following the removal of floor levels within Wells Museum. Two medieval floor levels were recorded together with a well, pit, wall and postholes. The area was recorded prior to being sealed for redevelopment.

(R.A. Broomhead)

West Huntspill, Blackberry Barn, ST 305 455

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in the grounds of Blackberry Barn, adjacent to the Old Rectory, during the demolition of a stone outhouse and the excavation of foundation trenches for a new garage. Despite the small-scale nature of the works, a number of archaeological features and deposits were recorded. Occupation debris was present, including large sherds of 11th–13th century coarseware pottery types, probably of local origin.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Yeovilton, St Bartholomew's Churchyard, ST 5467 2295

Wessex Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation of land near St Bartholomew's churchyard, Yeovilton, for the provision of a new naval cemetery. The site lies in the village of Yeovilton on the south side of the church cemetery, and to the east of Manor Farm. Yeovilton is documented from the 9th century and is recorded in the Domesday Book with relatively extensive pasture and meadowland.

Two 10m machine-excavated trial trenches were dug on land immediately to the south of the existing naval cemetery. Three shallow features were recorded: two probably natural hollows resulting from tree root disturbance incorporated probably redeposited abraded material from a dark charcoal-flecked horizon above. A more substantial pit contained medieval pottery and fragments of animal bone probably indicative of domestic activity of 12th–14th century date. Although the site is situated close to the presumed centre of the medieval settlement of Yeovilton, the extent and nature of the features located suggest peripheral, rather than intense, activity.

(Julie Gardiner)

POST-MEDIEVAL

Camerton, Radford Bridge, ST 6730 5782

A record survey of the rail bridge at Radford in north-east Somerset was made prior to and during partial demolition in the spring of 2001. The bridge was built as part of the Camerton–Limpley Stoke branch line of the GWR between 1906 and 1909 to replace the Somerset Coal Canal. As well as recording the structural details of the bridge, including its contractor and materials suppliers, observation confirmed that the Coal Canal had not reached as far as Radford. The report will be deposited with the Bath & North East Somerset SMR, the National Monuments Record Centre and Radstock Museum.

(Michael Heaton)

East Cranmore, Torr Works, ST 6890 4360

An incoherent scatter of two potsherds, one fragment of bottle glass and one fragment of slag were recovered from topsoil during a watching brief of the initial phase of construction of a reservoir. The area under observation was irregular, with a maximum length of approximately 750m and maximum width of about 675m.

(L. and R. Adkins)

East Cranmore, Torr Works, ST 6885 4352

Remains of two systems of field drains were recorded during a watching brief of the initial phase of construction of a reservoir. The drains extended over an area of approximately 400m by 300m, but were largely centred around the above NGR. One system of drains consisted of stone-filled trenches, while the other was constructed with ceramic tile pipes. There was no direct dating evidence for either system, but both are likely to be of post-medieval date and are probably related to other drains previous recorded on the site.

(L. and R. Adkins)

Frome, Black Swan Arts Guild, Bridge Street, ST 7775 4200

Observations maintained during excavation of shallow foundations and service trenches for construction of an extension at the rear of the Black Swan Guild at Bridge Street, Frome, revealed two rubble-built wall foundations within shallow deposits of buried topsoil and made-ground, over mineral subsoils. Though essentially undatable, the presence of tile fragments in the soils and a lime/ash mortar within one of the walls suggest post-17th century dates, whilst the walls appear to correspond to buildings recorded on early 19th-century surveys of the site. No interpretable *in situ* deposits indicative of medieval activity were revealed.

Though observations were restricted to a relatively shallow depth within what is an alluvial site in the bottom of the Frome Valley, the shallow depth of cultural deposits suggest the site has possibly been truncated during earlier building episodes.

(Michael Heaton)

Frome, YMCA Building, Palmer Street, ST 7759 4791

Redevelopment of buildings formerly occupied by part of the Frome Sellwood Iron Foundry, revealed evidence of opportunistic adaptation of open spaces to industrial use during the early 19th century, and the survival of pre-industrial land surfaces beneath considerable depths of industrial waste deposits. The monitoring suggested that, whilst the works themselves appear to have not had a deleterious archaeological impact, archaeological deposits related to the medieval and early industrial development of the town may survive at adjacent sites, albeit in a highly dissected form.

(Michael Heaton)

Lympham, St Christopher's church, ST 336 543

An archaeological watching brief undertaken, by C. and N. Hollinrake, during the excavation of a service trench for new toilet facilities, recorded only layers of modern make up. No human remains were exposed due to the shallowness of the trench and only artefacts of post-medieval date were recovered. The most interesting of these was a Bath trade token of 1670 of farthing value. It was inscribed 'The ARMES OF BATHE' with 'THE FARTHINGE' and 'CB 1670' on the obverse.

(David Mullin)

Mark, ST 382 481

Early post-medieval artefacts including a silver penny of Elizabeth I were recovered from a field during a watching brief on the Blackford to Mark renewal pipeline carried out by Wessex Water. The finds may represent shrunken settlement.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Martock, Bower Hinton, ST 455 178

An archaeological evaluation within a small paddock on the southern edge of Bower Hinton recovered structural evidence and finds relating to 18th and 19th-century occupation on the site and a few small and abraded medieval pottery sherds.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Meare, 54 Main Road, Westhay, ST 4375 4125

An archaeological watching brief undertaken during excavations for the foundations of a new house and garage in Westhay, adjacent to the site of a watching brief in 2000, recovered post-medieval pottery sherds.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Somerton, St Cleers Lodge, ST 4805 2822

An archaeological evaluation carried out by AC archaeology on the site of a proposed development of three new houses and associated garages at St Cleers Lodge, Somerton, comprised the machine excavation of three trenches totalling 51m².

Trenching in the western portion of the site, close to the current street frontage, located an area of hard-standing dated to the 17th century or later. It was cut by a shallow east-west aligned ditch which contained modern artefacts. Deep soils up to 1m in depth were encountered in the central portion of the site, where a small linear feature and a shallow pit were found to contain animal bone fragments and a sherd of medieval pottery.

(Neil J. Adam)

Stoke sub Hamdon, St Mary's church, East Stoke, ST 4840 1727

An archaeological watching brief on a service trench cut for new electrical cables uncovered the remains of two buried grave memorial stones and the buried kerb of a third stone. The buried memorials demonstrate the use of the churchyard over many years; and the continual rise in ground level – the churchyard surface is now some 2m higher than the adjacent road level.

Finds, including 17th to 19th century pottery associated with the use of the churchyard, were also recovered.

The evidence and associated map studies suggest that the church might lie within a curved enclosure which also contains the adjacent Church Farm and which might be connected to a series of springs and ponds which formerly lay immediately west of the church.

See also Prehistoric.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Taunton, Police Station, ST 224 242

Development at the rear of Taunton Police Station disturbed the remains of a human burial in the inner courtyard area. The police station now occupies the site of the former prison which was opened in 1754, enlarged in 1815 and again in 1843 when it became the county gaol. The prison was in use until Shepton Mallet prison opened in 1884. The discovery of the burial was reported to SCC and Oscar Aldred supervised a rapid excavation of the coffin and body. They had been buried in a thick layer of quicklime and this had speeded up the decay of parts of the skeleton. Parts of the coffin and other personal items such as shoes and cloth fragments were recovered from the grave. There is some documentation covering the burial of criminals in the prison and it is likely that this burial of a male could be narrowed down to one of three or four individuals. Further analysis of the skeletal remains and the historical background is planned for 2002. The excavation was filmed as part of the BBC2 series *Meet the Ancestors*. SCC would like to thank Taunton Police for reporting and assisting with this excavation.

(R.A. Croft)

Washford, Cleeve Abbey, Torre Wall, ST 046 402

A watching brief was carried out by Exeter Archaeology in September 2001 during groundwork to rebuild a 30m long section of highway retaining wall which had collapsed into the adjacent canalised stream during a previous winter's flooding. The site is located just south of Cleeve

Abbey which was founded in the late 12th century and is a scheduled Ancient Monument. A sherd of 18th-century pottery was retrieved from the deposit exposed by the collapsed wall by SCC's Development Control Archaeologist during an initial assessment of the site. Observations made during excavation of the first section indicated that the deposit from which the 18th-century pottery sherd was recovered was in fact the backfill of the construction cut for the wall which dates to the same period. Subsequent groundwork on the second section did not yield any additional information. A few abraded sherds of 19th-century pottery were retrieved from the riverbed silts adjacent to the rebuild.

(L. Higbee)

Wincanton, High Street, ST 7159 2854

An archaeological field evaluation carried out by AC archaeology on the site of a proposed housing development at the former Youth Centre site, Wincanton, comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches totalling 24m in length. The work revealed evidence for two episodes of extensive landscaping on the site; the first was seemingly carried out during the 17th or 18th centuries, where part of a buried soil horizon was sealing the surviving lower levels of a medieval pit. More extensive truncation on the site occurred during the construction of the existing Youth Centre building and surrounding tarmac surface.

(S. Robinson)

Yeovil, South Street, ST 5561 1585

Archaeological monitoring by AC archaeology was carried out during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of land surrounding the former Baptist Chapel, South Street, Yeovil. South Street lies within the boundaries of the medieval borough of Yeovil. The current Baptist chapel was constructed in 1828, but succeeded two earlier Baptist meeting places on the site, the first built in 1668. Across the whole site the monitoring has identified either modern truncation or has established with confidence where archaeological deposits may survive. The work has revealed no evidence for activity predating the medieval period, with no features earlier than the 17th or 18th century.

(P. Axtell)

INDUSTRIAL

Bath, Combe Down, ST 77 62

In September 1999 Oxford Archaeology (formerly the Oxford Archaeological Unit) was contracted to carry out an archaeological assessment and a series of watching briefs during 'enabling works' in advance of a proposal to stabilise some 43 acres of underground quarries at Combe Down, Bath. The investigations, carried out by international mining archaeology consultant Dr Lynn Willies and OA staff, have given an opportunity to examine, plan and photograph significant areas of the underground workings. The information gathered has allowed the development of the mines to be established and it has already identified several areas of high archaeological importance and/or potential.

The mines are of particular note because of the industrialised methods of working and handling introduced from Durham and Northumberland, and the Shropshire Coal Fields, under Ralph Allen of Prior Park, a man who had made a substantial fortune during the 1720s by reforming the Royal Mail system. By 1730 he had invested in a substantial estate at Combe Down, which he proceeded to develop and exploit. One of the estate's assets was the high-quality Bath stone that lay just beneath the surface and he started to develop the underground quarries (stone mines) from 1729. His highly capitalised workings were manifested on the surface by a 2km

wooden gravity-powered railway and by sophisticated cranes that were used for loading the stone onto trucks and transhipping it onto barges. As well as supplying his stoneyard and building projects in Bath, he intended to develop a substantial stone export business by using the newly completed Avon navigation to connect his 'mines' with the Severn and the sea. Unfortunately the 'export' venture was less successful than he had hoped.

The workings are found only some 4–8m below the surface of the Down. Archaeological examination has shown that some small areas of the underground workings almost certainly predate Allen's tenure, one of these areas being reached by a short slope-access or decline. Documentary and archaeological evidence shows that Allen initially developed his underground quarries by working horizontally under the Down from two existing surface quarries. From these he developed three level accesses from each, radiating from the original quarry faces. These 'adit'-type entries, some 3m wide and up to 7m high (prior to partial backfilling), penetrated some 70m before shafts were sunk for ventilation.

From the sides and ends of these 'adits', 'rooms' up to 15m long, 8m high and 4–5m wide were excavated. The process of extraction was that the topmost layer (the 'picking-bed') was removed first, for several metres ahead, to give access to the stone beds below. These seem to have then been removed using picks and bars by taking advantage of natural fractures in the rock, usually by working a near vertical face. The separate 'rooms' were initially separated by 3–4m thick walls ('pillars') of virgin rock. These 'pillars' were then partially extracted on the retreat, by piercing through to the next and previously worked-out 'room', leaving a typical 'pillar and room' system. This method gave substantial numbers of working faces, from which it was possible to fairly readily pry boulders from the open and well-jointed rock. The trapezoidal blocks thus removed were subsequently squared or 'scappled' using an axe, before removing from the mine.

The major problem was waste and its disposal defines what can be seen in much of the workings. Probably well over 50% of extracted rock was left below ground as waste and its disposal was very systematic. About 3m was left on the floors behind the faces, separated from the face by a narrow working slot or 'gullet'. This waste was also used to build up the floors of the temporary and permanent roadways. On retreat, waste from the sides was piled in transverse heaps over the roadways, and picking bed waste from the next room was dropped through openings on top of this, or barrowed over it. In the vicinity of permanent roadways, the adjacent rooms were filled to the roof with waste, supporting the roof but restricting access today. The most visible features throughout the 'mines' are the remaining pillars, which have wide variations, often fanning outward at the top in order to increase the width of roof support under the jointed roof blocks.

Subtle variations in techniques have been noted, some possibly resulting from the preferences of different master-quarrymen. Other variations appear to have been developments over time. One object of changing technique was clearly to reduce the amount of waste. This was done by ending the practice of 'picking bed' removal, and substituting first chamfered pick-cut slots to open the bed below to the next joint, then by cutting or 'holing' (a coal mining term) a 0.15m high 'jad' slot under the roof for a metre or more forward for the same purpose. Eventually these picked slots were used in conjunction with vertical 'jad' slots, which leave tooling marks over the entire surface of whole pillars. Further economies were effected later through the use of long stone saws. Both these latter techniques were in general use in the 19th century and they appear to define that period of working. These later workings are thus distinguished by the lesser quantities of waste rock and their high, regular 'pillars'.

Other features noted and recorded have included stone-vaulted passages, cart ruts, barrow-ways, loading platforms, crane sites, stone saw-sharpening blocks, partially worked stones and graffiti.

In summary, whilst it would appear that the haulage and extraction methods used at the Combe Down underground quarries in the 18th century were not revolutionary in the

sense of the invention of the steam engine, it seems likely from both documentary and archaeological evidence that innovatory use was made of winches and cranes underground as well as at the surface. It would also appear that the most significant technical development was probably the systematic and planned way in which the workings were developed. It seems that the Combe Down underground quarries are thus a very early example, if not the first instance, of industrial-type techniques being applied to the stone mining industry. The investigations remain ongoing.

(Lynn Willies and Rob Kinchin-Smith)

Frome, The Feather Factory, Willow Vale, ST 7782 4812

Observations recorded during rebuilding and conversion of No. 5 Willow Vale, also known as the Feather Factory, together with rapid background research, indicate the building to be of mid to late 19th-century origin. Though enjoying a varied history of occupancy and use since then, the essential structure of the building appears to have not been changed, except for the insertion of new openings.

The roof structure, ostensibly a gabled mansard of the form common in early 19th-century buildings in Bath, is of gambrel form that does not utilise the queen post truss necessary for a true mansard. As well as representing an adaption of vernacular building techniques to more 'polite' forms, its existence at Frome suggests that the, hitherto, south-eastern published distribution of gambrel roofs may simply be the result of misidentification based on exterior inspection.

The small archive of drawings, photographs and written records will be deposited with Taunton Museum and, in microfilm format, the National Monuments Record at Swindon.

(Michael Heaton)

Langport, Silkolene Works, Bow Street, ST 4160 2665

Cartographic and documentary sources together with analysis of the historic fabric of the former Silkolene works suggests there is reason to doubt the 18th-century date and historical associations ascribed by the Department of Culture Media and Sport in the 1998 assignment of Grade II listed status.

The evidence, including stamped bricks made by a manufacturer not registered until 1855, indicates that the buildings cannot be of late 18th-century date and there appears to be no documentary or cartographic material linking the firm of Stuckey and Bagehot with the site after that date. It is possible that the considerable complexities and contradictions evident could be explained by a rebuilding of the site, possibly after the widening of the Bow Bridge in 1841.

Notwithstanding the doubtful accuracy of the listing entry, the buildings embody functionally-specific historic features worthy of investigation and record and occupy a site of considerable archaeological potential within the Langport Conservation Area.

(Michael Heaton)

Radstock, Co-operative Dairy, ST 6940 5510

Building recording prior to and during residential conversion of the former Co-operative Dairy at Tynning Hill, Radstock, identified evidence of significant change in the layout and use of the buildings.

Initiated in 1898 and converted to dairy bottling in 1914, the building also contained features showing its use, in part, as a stable, a bakery and – unexpectedly – a piggery.

The archive of written, photographic and drawn records, and the resultant report, will be deposited with Radstock Museum and, in microfilm format, the National Monuments Record Centre.

(Michael Heaton)

OTHER REPORTS

Baltonsborough, Ham Street/Martin Street, ST 542 349

An evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken on a plot of pasture, formerly an orchard, lying to the north of the junction between Ham Street and Martin Street, in the centre of the village of Baltonsborough. The surface of the plot retained the shallow remains of probable medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation earthworks, and there was domestic refuse of 18th to 20th-century date within the topsoil – probably midden spread. No other remains of archaeological significance were encountered.

(Peter Leach)

Bridgwater, A39 Wembdon, ST 2719 3746

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology during construction of a 300m length of water pipeline alongside the A39 Quantock Road west of Bridgwater. No evidence for archaeological activity was identified.

(S. Worrall)

Castle Cary, former BMI site, ST 6440 3250

An archaeological desktop study was carried out on the former BMI site prior to redevelopment plans for the factory complex. The site was formerly John Boyd's Horsehair Factory, established by the mid 19th century, and the existing buildings and factory complex comprise a unique survival in England of this trade. The study indicated that the factory site stands within a block of planned tenements probably dating to the medieval period with indications of earlier settlement of the prehistoric and Roman periods within the vicinity.

A watching brief was also carried out when the main drainage lines within the factory needed to be located. No archaeological finds or features were noted during this exercise which only occurred in disturbed ground.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Castle Street, Tangier, Taunton, ST 221 246

An evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken on a site at the junction of Castle Street and Wellington Road in Taunton, on behalf of Tesco Stores Ltd. Prior to its recent vacation, the area had been the site of a garage and other light industry since the earlier decades of the 20th century, extensive remains of which were encountered during the evaluation. No significant archaeological material was found, although geotechnical surveys suggest the presence of waterlogged organic remains above river terrace gravel at lower levels. These were unlikely to be affected by the proposed superstore development and were not evaluated further.

(Peter Leach)

Chard, Avishayes County Primary School, ST 3340 0970

Archaeological observations were made during the removal of a field bank and the reduction of levels prior to the construction of a new classroom block on land adjacent to Avishayes County Primary School, Chard. Documentary evidence indicated the site to have comprised open fields prior to development of the area in the mid 20th century and, whilst a single pottery sherd indicated a possible date for the boundary that bisected the site, no other significant archaeology was noted.

(R. A. Broomhead)

Chard, Manor Court Community School, ST 3220 0820

A small-scale site evaluation and limited desk based study was undertaken to provide an archaeological assessment of plans to erect a new classroom block within the playground area

of Manor Court Community School, Chard. The desk-based study indicated that the site had comprised an orchard in the historical past whilst the evaluation produced no clear evidence of any significant archaeological activity.

(R.A. Broomhead)

Charlton Hawthorne, Robert Penny Cottage, ST 6642 2371

An archaeological watching brief undertaken during the construction of four new houses within an empty plot towards the north end of the historic settlement of Charlton Horethorne recorded no archaeological features as the development appeared to be within an old quarry area. Study of the village plan during the desktop survey suggests that the village is a planned settlement of three or four compartments with the church and manor house within a smaller (and later?) block.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Cheddar, Draycott Road Caravan Site, ST 4601 5292

A small-scale site evaluation was undertaken to provide an assessment of the likely archaeological implications of proposals to construct a new garage, shower and toilet block on land currently partially occupied by an existing structure, lying within the area of Scheduled Ancient Monument 29673 in the village of Cheddar. The evaluation demonstrated the area to have been subject to substantial modern disturbance and recorded no archaeology.

(R. A. Broomhead)

Combe Florey, Combe Down Farm, ST 149 311

An evaluation by means of four trial trenches was made of the former farmyard of Combe Down Farm, Combe Down Lane, within the village of Combe Florey, in response to proposals for a residential development. The only archaeological remains encountered related to its use as a farmyard, including several animal burials, of late 19th and 20th-century date.

(Peter Leach)

Curry Rivel Primary School, ST 390 252

An evaluation by means of a single trial trench was made of a site within the school playground, scheduled for an extension of the school. Despite its location close to the centre of the village, there was slight evidence only of past agricultural land use here – in the form of midden spread and land drains – from the medieval and post-medieval periods, up to the early 20th century.

(Peter Leach)

Dunster, Dunster Castle, SS 991 434

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AC archaeology on the driveway to Dunster Castle. The presence of a stone retaining wall, possibly of two-phase construction, was noted in one area, but this was undated. No deposits exposed could be demonstrated to be of medieval or earlier date.

(Neil J. Adam)

East Lyng, ST 3335 1290

An archaeological watching brief on a Wessex Water mains rehabilitation project at East Lyng (SAM 379), Balt Moor Wall (SAM 33709) and south of Athelney recorded modern, made-up ground along Balt Moor Wall, alluvial deposits south of Athelney and natural red clay deposits in East Lyng.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Glastonbury, Bere Lane, ST 5021 3855

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken when building foundations were cut into an empty plot in Bere Lane. However, earlier construction work on the site when the plot was cleared a few years ago appears to have completely removed all archaeological deposits and as a result no archaeological finds or features were recovered or recorded.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Glastonbury, Glastonbury Tor, ST 512 386

An archaeological desktop survey was carried out for Glastonbury Tor and St Michael's Tower prior to remedial works being undertaken on the tower and the summit area. A previously unrecorded excavation of the church exposing its foundations was traced to 1879, this excavation possibly being responsible for the lack of foundations recorded during the 1962 excavations by Philip Rahtz. Re-evaluation of the summit excavation of 1962 suggests that some of the finds, including hundreds of ammonite fossils, plus a curved foundation trench apparently predating the medieval church foundations, might relate to a Romano-British shrine on the summit.

A watching brief on the creation of new paths on Tor Hill has recorded the depths of the various surface deposits and recorded a series of potholes towards the base of the western spine. Work continues through 2002.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Glastonbury, Magistrates Court, ST 498 388

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the construction of foundations for the new Merlin ICT Centre on Benedict Street. No significant archaeological features or finds were recorded but a small amount of animal bone and post-medieval pottery sherds was recovered.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Highbridge, land off Worston Road, ST 322 478

Deposits revealed in three mechanically excavated trial trenches located across a proposed residential development site behind Worston Road, Highbridge, revealed largely natural soil and subsoil deposits, including a hedge line and the base of a shallow palaeochannel, to depths of 2m below ground level, derived from the alluvial base of the area.

Small amounts of heavily abraded artefactual material – a single sherd of Romano-British Black-burnished ware pottery and individual fragments of ceramic building material recovered from the upper layers of the sequence – are considered to have been transported alluvially to the site from *in situ* deposits distant from the site.

(Michael Heaton and Bill Moffat)

Ilchester, Fosse Way, ST 516 221 – ST 518 222

Archaeological monitoring was carried out by AC archaeology during construction of a gas pipeline adjacent to the Fosse Way, south of Ilchester. No archaeological evidence was observed, and no artefacts recovered.

(J. Whelan)

Kingsbury Episcopi, West Moor, ST 42 22

Archaeological monitoring of a series of bore holes carried out by the Environment Agency in West Moor, resulted in the recording of alluvial, peat and high clay deposits. The accompanying desktop survey highlighted the problems of drainage within this area of moorland.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Minehead, Lillycombe Estate, SS 827 474

Archaeological monitoring during the construction of a communications tower at Quarterbarrow, Lillycombe Estate, was carried out by AC archaeology. No evidence for archaeological activity was encountered.

(J. Whelan)

Pilton, Worthy Farm Quarry, ST 596 402

An archaeological evaluation on the site of a small quarry at Worthy Farm, Pilton, produced no archaeological features or finds. Study of the documents and aerial photographs allowed a sketch map to be drawn of the prehistoric field system surviving on the farm and its relationship to neighbouring Pilton Park.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Shepton Mallet, Cannards Grave, Cannards Farm, ST 627 416

A watching brief monitored the area excavation of foundations for a commercial development in the yard at Cannards Farm, Cannards Grave. No significant archaeological remains or deposits were found apart from 19th and 20th-century structures and debris relating to the former farmyard. Lias limestone bedrock was observed lying close to the surface throughout, heavily disturbed or truncated in places.

(Peter Leach)

Shepton Mallet, Field Farm, ST 625 430

A watching brief was maintained on soil-stripping operations and the excavation of building foundation trenches during a new phase of this large residential development on the edge of Shepton Mallet. The plot, at the southern extremity of the Field Farm development, was formerly part of a pasture field alongside Cannards Grave Road. No remains of archaeological significance were found, beyond evidence for post-medieval midden spreads within the topsoil.

(Peter Leach)

Somerton, Ashen Cross Quarry, ST 496 273

An archaeological watching brief undertaken in response to a quarry extension recorded no archaeological features although fieldwalking of the ground prior to topsoil stripping did result in the collection of pottery sherds and other artefacts. One Romano-British sherd was recovered plus a small amount of abraded 12th–14th century coarsewares as well as later-medieval and post-medieval types. A clay pipe bowl with a stamp of 'Will Pitcher' was also found.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Somerton, Melbury Villa, ST 479 275

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AC archaeology during trenching for a gas mains replacement scheme along the B3615 Sutton Road, Melbury, south of Somerton. The watching brief was maintained where the carriageway passed through the scheduled area of a probable Roman villa, evidence for which has been recovered from the adjacent fields over a number of years. No evidence for archaeological activity was encountered.

(J. Whelan)

Stoke St Gregory, Lower Salt Moor, Parrett river bank, ST 348 314

An archaeological watching brief monitored a series of exploratory test pits and cores carried out by the Environment Agency within the west bank of the River Parrett north of Burrow Bridge. Stratigraphy revealed within the cores included peat deposits and riverine and marine clays. The associated desktop study suggests that part of the river north of Burrow

Bridge is contained within an artificial channel that might have been cut before the mid 13th century.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Stoke-sub-Hamdon, North Street, ST 4737 1751

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on two Wessex Water service trenches along North Street, in the centre of the village. No archaeological finds or features were recorded although local workmen stated that an earlier gas service trench had exposed numerous wall foundations opposite 'The Priory' c. 1999.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Ham Hill, ST 479 168

A watching brief was undertaken in response to development at the 'Prince of Wales' public house on Ham Hill. A trench for services across the garden and for extensions to the north side of the building were watched and recorded. All were cut into redeposited stone rubble waste of unknown date from earlier quarrying, and no other remains of archaeological significance were discovered.

(Peter Leach)

Wedmore, Hill House, Blackford, ST 412 478

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken when a new house was constructed to the rear of Hill House, Blackford. No archaeological features were recorded and finds comprised only a few sherds of 18th/19th century pottery.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Wellington, High Street, Kwik Save, ST 1410 2060

An archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of Kwik Save Supermarket, High Street, Wellington, was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology during August 2001. Robert Jones Chartered Surveyors commissioned the work. The specific areas subject to evaluation by test pitting were dictated by the necessity to minimise disturbance to activity in the carpark. The results of the evaluation proved to be largely negative. The sequence of deposits revealed in test pit A indicates that the area has been significantly built up by almost 1m in more recent years probably when the area was levelled for the car park. The results from test pit B suggest that no archaeological remains survive in this area of the car park.

(P.J. Weddell)

Wells, Palace Farm, ST 550 453

A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of foundations for a new house within a grass paddock adjacent to Palace Farm, on the south side of Silver Street, Wells. The only discoveries were finds of 19th and 20th-century date in the topsoil, probably derived from midden spread. A stratum of clean alluvial gravel was reached at the base of the trenches.

(Peter Leach)

Wells, St Cuthbert's churchyard, ST 5467 4566

Installation of new cable trenches around the south-east corner of the church recorded post-medieval vaults. The position and depth of burials along the cable trench was recorded. The disturbed bone was reburied in the churchyard.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

West Huntspill, Grove Farm, ST 3099 4561

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the demolition of a brick cowhouse and the excavation of foundation trenches for a new bungalow and garage. No archaeological features or finds were recorded.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

West Monkton, Hyde Lane, ST 257 258

Three evaluation trenches positioned in the eastern and western extremities of the new Taunton Rugby Club ground at Hyde Lane, on the northern outskirts of Taunton, recorded the depth of alluvial silts overlying natural clays and gravels. No pre-modern finds or artificial features were recovered or recorded.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Wiveliscombe, Style Road, ST 0815 2810

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 2–4 Style Road, Wiveliscombe, during the laying of a replacement sewer pipe by Wessex Water. No archaeological features were noted during the monitoring, though a small number of artefacts attributable to the post-medieval period were recovered.

(C. and N. Hollinrake)

Yeovil, Old Station, ST 5630 1585

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during various phases of the development of the Old Town Station Car Park in Yeovil. The site, formerly that of the Town Station itself, contained substantial evidence of its former usage but produced no evidence of other archaeological activity.

(R.A. Broomhead)

Yeovil, Preston Road, ST 5368 1633

A trench evaluation carried out by AC archaeology on the site of a proposed extension to an office building at 'The Abbey', Preston Road, Yeovil, comprised the machine excavation of two trenches, one 5 x 1.5m in plan and one 3.4 x 1.5m. The area of proposed development lies within Abbey Farm, a complex of buildings containing elements of a medieval manor farm founded c. 1420. The two excavated trenches uncovered a series of modern infilling layers that may have been brought onto site and dumped across wet ground to provide a firm dry base.

(Neil J. Adam)