

## A ROMANO-BRITISH BUILDING AT QUEEN CAMEL

The site of a Romano-British building in the parish of Queen Camel was first recognised in 2007 with the brief exposure of a small area of a mosaic pavement. In November 2008 a geophysical survey of the location was carried out by English Heritage, showing that the pavement lay in the western end of a rectangular building, that itself lay within a set of ditched, rectilinear enclosures and trackways. In November 2009, excavations were carried out to establish the size of the mosaic pavement, the nature of the building in which it lay and the extent of the surviving remains beneath what is now a modern arable field.

Trench 1 (Fig. 1) revealed the whole of the western end of the building with the mosaic pavement and wall foundations directly beneath the ploughsoil (Fig. 2). It comprised a large, bipartite room with a mosaic of three panels; panel A in the main body of the room; panel B between the responds; and panel C paving the narrow part of the room, which reflected the line of a corridor to the east, from which it was probably entered. This corridor ran along the south side of a range of smaller rooms forming the middle part of the building. Two smaller trenches were opened to investigate strong anomalies on the

geophysical survey. Trench 3 revealed the top of the stone pillars of a hypocaust in the room at the east end of the building. Though the floor itself had been destroyed, large numbers of tesserae in the infill suggest that it may have been a mosaic pavement. Trench 2 revealed the walls and quarried-out sub-floor area of a small rectangular building to the south-west of the main structure. Its form and the presence of *opus signinum* in the infill suggest that it was a small bath-house.

The work revealed a corridor-type villa building with its largest rooms at each end. Both probably had mosaic floors with the eastern room heated and the western a bipartite room. The scheme of the mosaic (Figs 2 and 3), its treatment and motifs are closely matched on mosaics from Halstock, Dorset (II, 170.2), Lopen, Somerset (II, 206.2) and Old Broad Street, London (III, 370.76) and is therefore another example of the work of the Ilchester subgroup of the Corinthian Saltire School, probably dating to the third quarter of the 4th century (Cosh and Neal 2010).

The building had been extensively quarried for building materials in the past and pits and trenches to remove foundations were evident. There was

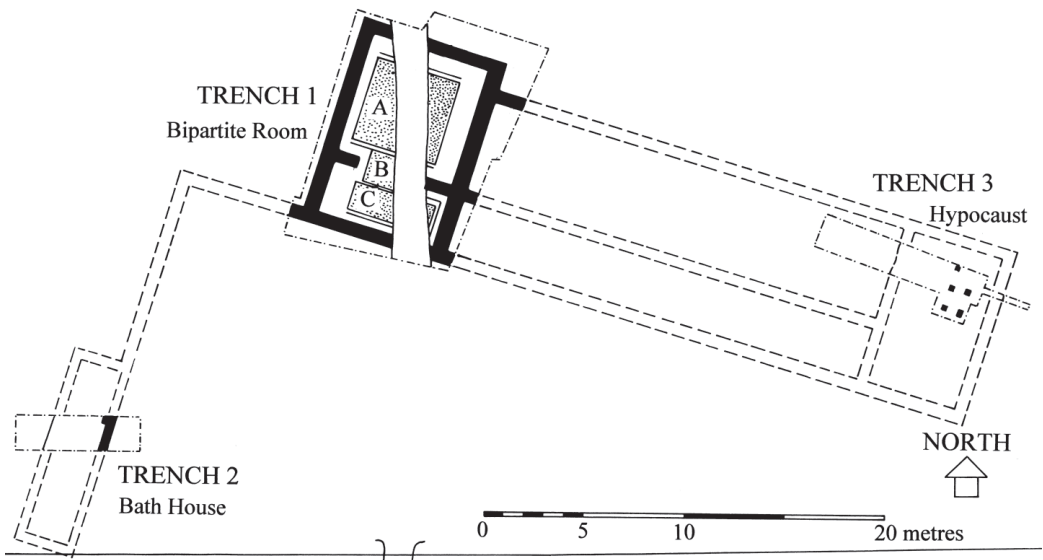


Fig. 1 Location of trenches

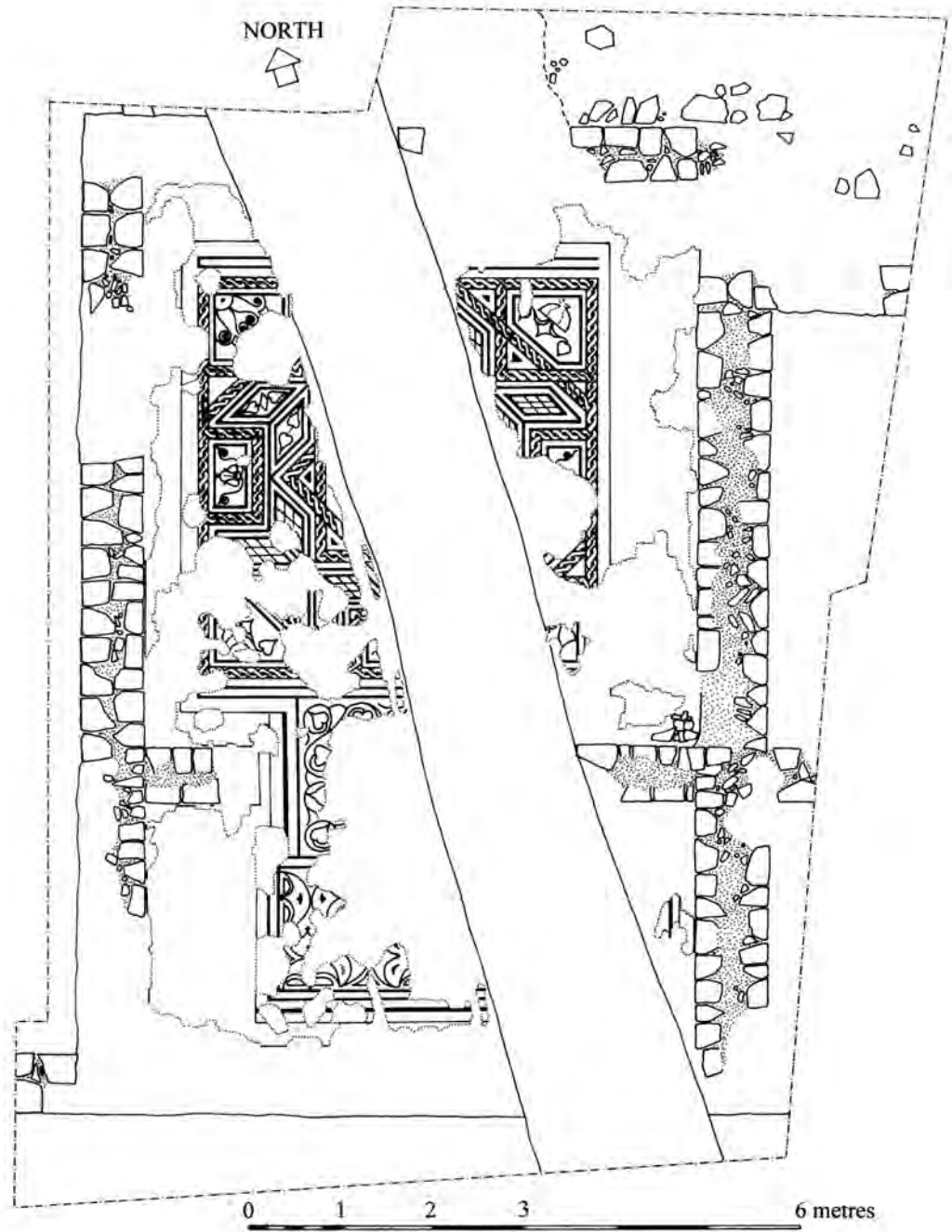


Fig. 2 Panels A, B and C of mosaic floor in Trench 1



Fig. 3 Mosaic floor under excavation; view north

minimal overlying debris of any sort. The clearance of the site was probably ancient as it lay within the medieval open strip fields of the parish, of which the pronounced ridge and furrow remains are visible

in an adjacent field. Plough damage to the mosaic appears to be from this period rather than modern, with the destruction of a wide swathe of the pavement where it lay beneath one of the deep furrows between the cultivated medieval strips. The line of this furrow may also have been a post-enclosure boundary marked by a ditch.

### References

Cosh, S.R., and Neal, D.S., 2010. *Roman Mosaics of Britain. Vol VI Western Britain*. The mosaic from Queen Camel will appear in Appendix 1 as Mosaic 492.1.

Note: Mosaic numbers refer to volumes, sites and individual pavements assigned to them in Cosh and Neal's corpus of Romano-British mosaics.

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