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A303 SPARKFORD TO ILCHESTER ROAD IMPROVEMENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

W530.04

September ~~June~~ 1993

Prepared on behalf of:  
Department of Transport  
Southwest Regional Office  
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## **1. HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE AREA**

### **1.1 Assessment sources and methodology**

The proposed road improvement for the A303 between the Sparkford and Ilchester bypasses, would inevitably effect some sites of historical and archaeological interest. The assessment of the impact of this road scheme on local historical and archaeological sites was compiled using a range of sources. Initially a report was written based on the county Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). This was examined for known sites and a pre-defined study area was visited, by means of public rights of way only, to determine the condition of the sites located (Chowne 1990). A series of aerial photographs could not be consulted due to restrictions imposed on aerial reconnaissance in the area, as a consequence of the close proximity of the Royal Naval Air Station at Yeovilton. At the time of the initial report's writing site specific proposals were advanced for each site identified within the study area (Chowne 1990).

**1.1.1** Subsequently, and following the decision upon the preferred route, it was advocated by Wessex Archaeology that a watching brief and field observations should be carried out during the geotechnical investigations. These observations, combined with the proposals for site specific field evaluation, led to targeted fieldwork being undertaken along the preferred route. This involved examination of the geotechnic trial pits during excavation, by a representative of AC archaeology. At the same time AC archaeology scanned any ploughed fields along the preferred route to retrieve any surface artefacts, and visually inspected the remainder of the preferred route to detect any previously unrecorded earthworks (Cox 1992).

**1.1.2** At OS reference ST580253, near Conegore Corner, cropmarks noted from aerial photographs were listed in the SMR. As a result this site was subjected to a geophysical survey in an attempt to glean more information about the site's nature and extent (Ovenden 1992). For the purposes of this current assessment report a documentary search was also carried out using maps and records held at the Somerset County Records Office in Taunton and relevant published sources.

**1.1.3** Following the submission of a draft impact assessment report its results and recommendations were discussed with the Department of Transport, English Heritage and the County Archaeological Officer for Somerset. As a result it was decided to implement some of the recommendations for further evaluation in order to reduce the uncertainty concerning the nature of some of the sites identified. In the winter of 1993, therefore, further geophysical survey was carried out at selected sites (GeoQuest Associates 1993) and following analysis of these results field evaluation of selected sites was undertaken by Wessex Archaeology. This last work involved the excavation of machine trenches followed by the recording of any archaeology observed (Fig 1). This work was inspected in the field by representatives of English Heritage and Somerset County Council.

**1.1.4** Although the initial preliminary SMR based study and the later documentary search, covered a study area that included both the preferred route and the alternative green and orange routes, all the fieldwork has been concentrated on the preferred route. This has produced an inevitable and obvious bias in the levels of data known for each route.

## 1.2 Archaeological Background

This part of Somerset has not been the subject of intensive research into the remains of our prehistoric past and this is reflected in the relative paucity of the archaeological record for these periods. Overall most of the available detailed evidence for prehistoric remains comes from or within the vicinity of a single site, South Cadbury Castle, approximately 3km to the south-east of Sparkford. A number of artefacts including Mesolithic (c. 8000-4500BC) flint tools, a series of Neolithic (c. 4500-2500BC) flint axes and a bronze axe and beaker of the Early/Middle Bronze Age (c. 2500-1200BC), have been found within the vicinity of South Cadbury (Aston & Burrows 1982). Some Neolithic or Bronze Age worked flints have also been found at Ilchester. In the Later Bronze Age (c.1200-800BC) the hilltop at South Cadbury was more intensively occupied. In the Iron Age (c. 800BC-AD50) South Cadbury Castle remains the principal settlement in the area although the character of the site changes dramatically, with a series of large defensive ramparts constructed around the hilltop and a more permanent and substantial settlement established within the defensive circuit (Alcock 1975). This hillfort was probably the tribal centre for the locality. More minor sites have been found elsewhere in the vicinity at Bos House, Ilchester approximately 4km to the south-west of the study area (Leach 1982), and nearer to the study area at Podimore. Here evidence for an Iron Age settlement exists to the south of the village (SMR 54794), and Iron Age and Romano-British occupation has been recorded near the church (Leech 1975).

1.2.1 During the Roman period (AD43-c.400) the centre of activity moved to Ilchester which was located at the cross-roads of the Roman road network in the area and has been equated with the town of *Lindinis* recorded in the *Ravenna Cosmography*. The small town at Ilchester was surrounded by a number of Romano-British rural settlements, indeed Ilchester's hinterland is well known for its high concentration of Romano-British villages, villas and more lowly farms (Aston & Burrows 1992). The settlement at Podimore would have been one of these. A number of other similar Romano-British sites were recently located by Wessex Archaeology to the south of the study area during the construction of a pipeline in 1990 (Rawlings forthcoming).

1.2.2 In the early medieval period (c.400-1066), the known archaeology of the area again becomes very sketchy. Prior to c. AD660 the area remained part of the "Celtic West" and at South Cadbury Castle it contains one of the most famous sites for the period. The Iron Age hillfort there was re-fortified and re-occupied and appears to be the centre of a local ruler or warlord (Alcock 1975). Also it was possibly a border fortress close to the 5th century frontier with the Anglo-Saxons, which may have lain to the east along the ridge of Selwood forest (Costen 1992). A small number of finds of this sub-Roman period have been found around Ilchester. By the 8th century the area was under the control of the West Saxon kingdom (Costen 1992). The period AD700 - 1066 is again poorly represented in the archaeological record, but many of the surviving settlements probably originate from this period. At West Camel church are the remains of a 9th century cross shaft (Atkins 1992). The settlement appears to have related to an estate known in the 10th century as *Cantmell* (VCH 1974). By 1086 there were two estates which probably derived from the original *Cantmell*. Domesday Book records *Camelle* as held by Muchelney abbey, hence its later name of Camel Abbots which, along with the alternative name of West Camel, distinguished it from Queen Camel (VCH 1974). This latter settlement was a royal holding by 1066 (Aston & Burrows 1982). By the 10th century Ilchester was again

established as a local centre with a mint having been established there from the reign of Athelstan, 924-939 (Leach 1982).

1.2.3 The medieval period (1066-1500) sees a vast increase in the number of known archaeological sites in the locality. In particular there are a large number of deserted or shrunken settlement sites close to the study area, which indicate the intensity of occupation in the vicinity during the Middle Ages. These sites include Podimore Milton, Little Marston, West Camel and Hazlegrove in Queen Camel (SMR and Aston 1988). In addition to these settlements at least six moated sites are known from within and near to the study area. These were probably the locations of manors or freehold farms. One of these sites appears to be associated with Coages deer park, a medieval hunting reserve in the north of the study area.

1.2.4 The archaeology of the area from the post-medieval period (1500-1950) consists of further settlement remains, such as at Yeovilton; numerous abandoned field boundaries; and the remnants of former industrial activity, of which quarrying was the dominant local extractive industry. There are many examples of seventeenth and eighteenth century houses, particularly in Queen Camel, and some examples of landscaped grounds such as at Hazelgrove House (Aston 1988).

### 1.3 Planning policies relating to archaeological and historic sites

The requirement to consider archaeology as part of an environmental impact assessment was defined in the EC *Council Directive 85/337/EEC*, where under article 3 the cultural heritage is listed as one of the factors for which the direct and indirect effects of a development project should be assessed. This was enforced for the DTp's road schemes in the *Highways (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988*.

1.3.1 The principal legislation and national policies relevant to the consideration of the effects of developments on the archaeological and architectural heritage are the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*, *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* and *Planning Policy Guidance 16 Archaeology and Planning* (November 1990). The latter makes it clear, at least in planning matters, **'where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation'** (item 8).

1.3.2 One site within the study area is scheduled as a site of national importance under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*. This is a medieval moated site and fishpond (SMR 54435) located within Coages deer park. There are five other sites which are listed under the South Somerset District Council Policy, as areas of constraint, these are Areas of High Archaeological Potential as defined in the policy statement for the Somerset County Structure Plan. The South Somerset District Council Policy states in relation to these areas of constraint that:

**"if there should be a proven, overriding need for development, archaeological observation and recording prior to and/or during development will be required."**

1.3.3 One of these constraint areas, at ST567260, is not listed in the County Sites and Monuments Record and in the opinion of the County Archaeological Officer has probably been deleted (Chowne 1990).

1.3.4 There are eleven structures categorised as listed buildings within the study area, all are grade II. There is one further grade II listed structure, a milestone, to the

immediate south of the study area, and unaffected by the re-routing and improvement of the B3151 at its junction with the proposed A303 at Camel Cross.

**1.3.5** Both national and local policies make it clear that there should be in dealing with the impact of development proposals on remains of archaeological and historical importance, a presumption in favour of preservation where those remains are sufficiently important. Where it is not possible to preserve sites *in situ* it is clear that steps should be taken to investigate and record them prior to their whole or partial removal

#### **1.4 Gazetteer (Fig 5)**

All the sites recorded on the SMR and as a result of documentary research and fieldwork are listed in the following gazetteer. No attempt is made to grade the sites within the gazetteer, which is intended as a summarised statement of the evidence only. A grading of sites is included in section 2, where the impact of the road scheme proposals is assessed. The sites in the gazetteer have been listed in order from west to east, with the exceptions of site 34, an area of constraint which was not included in the draft report and site 33 which was discovered after the compilation of the draft list.

##### **A303.01 - (ST 5610 2496)**

Good quality, clearly visible ridge and furrow survives in this field, this is aligned east-west.

##### **A303.02 - (ST 5600 2490)**

An undated deposit containing ash, burnt clay and burnt flint was observed in trial pit 105. A linear earthwork aligned north-south also survives in this plot (Cox 1992). The Tithe map of 1840 shows that this field was previously sub-divided into six narrow plots roughly aligned north-south. This earthwork is probably a remnant of one of the former field boundaries.

##### **A303.03 - (ST 5638 2407)**

A milestone, listed grade II, survives next to the B3151 at this point.

##### **A303.04 - (ST 5650 2490)**

A single flake of chert was found in this plot (Cox 1992).

##### **A303.05 - (ST 5665 2560)**

This is the site of the shrunken medieval settlement of Downhead. Listed on the SMR No 54640, it is also defined as an area of constraint by South Somerset District Council. High quality earthworks are visible in the fields surrounding the current farm and these extend beyond the constraint area marked on the county map (Wessex Archaeology 1990). The constraint area lies to the west of Mead Lane and covers the land to the south of Newclose Farm extending to the Glebe Farm lane, but the area of earthworks extends across the Glebe Farm lane into the plot of land to the immediate north of Downhead Manor Farm. The settlement appears to have been part of a sub-manor held off Muchelney Abbey. It probably originated in the estate held by Dodeman in 1086 (VCH 1975). The settlement may have undergone partial desertion in the 14th century, when in 1354 the manor was reabsorbed into West Camel, with the lands of which it descended until 1825 (VCH 1975).



**A303.06 - (ST 5660 2560)**

This is the site of a destroyed chapel which was recorded in 1791 as derelict. Noted on the SMR, No 50642, the chapel may have originated in the 14th century when Downhead was reabsorbed into the direct holdings of Mulchelney Abbey in order to provide a chaplain to celebrate in the Abbey church (VCH 1975). The chapel probably had an associated cemetery nearby (Wessex Archaeology 1990).

**A303.07 - (ST 5665 2525)**

A group of grade II listed buildings survive around the site of the chapel. These are Glebe Cottage, Downhead, Glebe Farmhouse and Hendersons Cottage.

**A303.08 - (ST 5695 2505)**

This field contains surviving some surviving linear earthworks roughly aligned north-south (Cox 1992). It is possible that these represent ridge and furrow but it is more likely that they are the remnants of field boundaries shown on the 1840 Tithe map.

**A303.09 - (ST 5720 2520)**

Two adjacent fields contain surviving ridge and furrow orientated north-south (Cox 1992). In the eastern field this is in very good condition.

**A303.10 - (ST 5742 2560)**

An 18th century reference records the discovery of skeletons in this area. These were aligned north-south in rows at a depth of 5 feet (Collinson 1791). They are probably pagan burials and a Roman date is suggested by the county record, SMR 54634 (Wessex Archaeology 1990). There is a possibility that they could be late 7th-8th century Anglo-Saxon burials, particularly if the description of the grave alignment is taken to include north east-south west burials.

**A303.11 - (ST 5755 2335)**

Ten sherds of medieval pottery, seven flint flakes and one lump of slag were recovered from the surface of this field (Cox 1992).

**A303.12 - (ST 5775 2525)**

A linear earthwork aligned north south survives on the western side of this field (Cox 1992). This is probably the remnant of a field boundary shown on the 1840 Tithe map.

**A303.13 - (ST 5773 2583)**

Parsons Steeple, a grade II listed building.

**A303.14 - (ST 5787 2540)**

A milestone, listed grade II, survives alongside the northern edge of the A303 at this point.

**A303.15 - (ST 5709 2517)**

A group of four Peter Nissen experimental houses with curving roofs as used in Nissen huts, listed grade II.

**A303.16 - (ST 5795 2530)**

Cropmarks have been recorded by aerial photography in this field, SMR 54635, and the field is cited as a constraint area by South Somerset District Council. One of the marks appears to be a natural feature associated with a spring; the other possibly represents an enclosure (Wessex Archaeology 1990). A geophysical survey was carried out in this plot to test the aerial photographic evidence. Whilst little indication of the enclosure was found during this survey, possible evidence of a ring ditch, a sub-rectangular feature and several linear features were found at the northern end of the plot (Ovenden 1992). A shallow ditch or gully running north-west south-east was observed in trial pit TT122 in this field. This feature may correspond to the results of the geophysical survey.

To clarify the nature of this evidence a total of five trenches totalling 86m<sup>2</sup> were excavated across this field in the spring of 1993 (Fig 1). Apart from post medieval land drains located in trenches 2 and 4 no deposits of certain archaeological origin were encountered. A calcareous deposit was found in trench 4 which was also considerably deeper than the other trenches in this area. The origins of this deposit are unknown but the fact that it is cut by a field drain suggests that it is not modern. A linear earthwork, possibly the remnant of a former field boundary, also survives in this field (Cox 1992). The evaluation of this field indicates that the previously observed features were either field drains or a result of the fields complex localised geomorphology. The place name Conegore Corner, however, suggests the presence in the vicinity of a Coneygarth (a rabbit warren) probably of medieval origin.

**A303.17 - (ST 5820 2540)**

In the north-east corner of this field a roughly square area of slightly raised ground has been recognised (Cox 1992). In the spring of 1993 a machine trench (607) was excavated across and along the edge of this rise (Fig 4). Fifteen metres from the eastern end of this trench was encountered a terrace with a maximum width of 6 m and cut to a depth of 0.35 m through the natural limestone bedrock. A narrow section (0.5 m wide) excavated by hand through this feature indicates that its eastern edge is almost vertical but it becomes shallower to the west finally disappearing with the downhill slope. The line of this feature was followed for approximately 50 m downslope from which point a visible break in the slope of the field indicates that it continues southwards for a further 50 m before turning at right-angles to the east and running for approximately 90 m to meet up with the existing field boundary (Wessex Archaeology 1993b). The 1840 tithe map shows that the current eastern boundary of this plot had not yet been created. However, a field aligned east-west along the road is shown. The western and southern boundaries of this plot coincide with the earthwork which can be interpreted, therefore, as a field boundary lynchet.

**A303.18 - (ST 5835 2525)**

A linear earthwork survives in this field (Cox 1992). This can be seen to part of the field system shown on the 1840 Tithe map (See A303.12 above). In the spring of 1993 a machine trench (601) was excavated in this field, no deposits or objects of archaeological origin were encountered (Wessex Archaeology 1993b).

### A303.19 - (ST 5830 2550)

A linear north-south aligned rock cut ditch was recorded in trial pit 125. This was 1.25m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.25m below bedrock. This feature produced pottery of early Iron Age date as well as fragments of copper alloy objects. Seven sherds claimed to be of late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, a flint flake and two fragments of fired clay were recovered from the surface of this field by AC Archaeology. These were all found in the vicinity of the feature (Cox 1992). The results of the machine trenching carried out subsequently, indicate that these finds were not isolated and that this site was occupied during the early Iron Age and later Romano-British periods (Fig 1). The nature of the Iron Age settlement is uncertain nor is its extent to the north known (Wessex Archaeology 1993a) but to the west a geophysical survey indicates a tailing off of activity and to the east it suggests that later prehistoric activity may be associated with a 16m diameter ring ditch (Noel 1993). To the south further machine trenching on the southern side of the present A303 (trenches 602, 603 and 605) showed that early Iron Age activity did extend into that area for about 30m from the present course of the A303 (Wessex Archaeology 1993b). The evidence for this activity is discussed under gazetteer site entry A303.33.

The Roman site located on Camel Hill was certainly a substantial one covering an area approximately 130m in length along the northern side of the A303. At least three buildings were recorded during the evaluation and the evidence from the geophysical survey indicates that the main building, in trench 102, consisted of several rooms (Figs 2 & 3). Most of the walls recorded appeared to be in fairly good condition being built of lias limestone with some evidence for mortar bonding. Whilst some building rubble was located, this was not found in large quantities. It is possible that the remains were dwarf walls upon which timber structures would have stood but the lack of rubble can equally be explained by the robbing of the walls *in situ* before final levelling. The presence of a stone roof tile covering a cremation vessel may indicate that this was the roofing material used on these buildings. However, whilst some flat stones found around the site may indicate the presence of further stone roof tiles, no other roof tiles with peg holes were found. The cremation vessel and the other fragments of pottery found in association with the excavated features were of late 2nd to 4th century AD date. It is likely that the previously collected sherds of Romano-British pottery were also of this date but were wrongly identified, since there was no sign during the machine trench evaluation of any material which spanned the period between the early Iron Age and the later Roman phases. The Romano-British site at Camel Hill can then best be seen as a new settlement founded in the 2nd century AD perhaps as a result of an improving local economy (Costen 1992, 34).

The nature of the Roman settlement on this site is open to debate.. The apparent substantial nature and multiple room form of the main building may lead one to the conclusion that this is a 'Villa' site, but recent opinion has swung away from applying this term to all rural Roman sites of this type (Hingley 1989). The absence of any obvious wealth on the site, in the form of coins, metalwork, fine pottery and elaborate architectural features, suggests that this might be regarded as a 'non-villa settlement'. This is reinforced by the lack of hypocaust fragments, or any evidence for painted wall plaster or mosaic 'tessera'. However, it is well known that metal objects in particular are often difficult to identify during machine trenching evaluations and work elsewhere has shown that many ordinary non-villa sites have a wealth of metal artefacts including coins. The presence or absence of such in an

evaluation of this type should not be taken to be significant therefore (Wessex Archaeology 1993a). On balance the main building is perhaps best seen as being more akin to the multi-room 'cottage' type of structure rather than a 'Villa'. This should not detract from the sites importance however, the presence of a site of this nature within the Ilchester hinterland, an area already well known for the density of its Romano-British rural settlement pattern (Aston and Burrows 1992), increases the potential importance of this site.

The cremation burial is likely to be a representative of a wider cemetery. Such burials are quite rare in Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire, but where they do occur they are invariably simple in form. Some of these occurrences are like this example and that from nearby Sparkford Hill, late in date for Romano-British cremations (Philpot 1991, 41).

Despite the present ploughing of the site, the farmer uses only shallow ploughing techniques because of the stony nature of the field, the surface of the bedrock being only 0.20m beneath the turf towards the crest of the hill (Wessex Archaeology 1993a). Both the early Iron Age and Romano-British sites are thus well preserved and little damaged by recent ploughing.

**A303.20 - (ST 5855 2540)**

Very slight ridge and furrow has been recognised in this field (Cox 1992).

**A303.21 - (ST 5865 2555)**

A series of possible quarries and undefined earthworks survive in this field (Cox 1992).

**A303.22 - (ST 5865 2545)**

A series undefined earthworks, probably quarrying, survive in this field (Cox 1992). The field had been a stone quarry within living memory according to the present farmer (Mr. Hewlett, pers. comm.). A machine trench (604) was excavated within the field to assess the likelihood for the extension of Iron Age and Romano-British activity from Camel Hill southwards, across the present A303 (Fig. 4). A layer of limestone fragments, many burned, from 0.05 m deep in the east to 0.2 m in the west, was located immediately beneath the topsoil and overlying a buried subsoil layer. Fragments of 20th century pottery were found, although not collected, in the buried subsoil. It is likely that the layer of limestone fragments represents levelling material spread over the area within the last 50 years since the abandonment of the quarry.

**A303.23 - (ST 5807 2503)**

Eyewell House, its outbuildings and its eastern boundary wall and gateway are all grade II listed structures.

**A303.24 - (ST 5880 2550)**

Earthworks of terraces and platforms possibly representing the sites of former buildings survive in this field (Cox 1992). However, trial pit 128 excavated through one of these platforms produced no artefacts or evidence of structures. There is no documentary evidence to indicate a settlement nucleation at Camel Hill, although the hilltop location and close proximity of a possible Anglo-Saxon cemetery at the Happy Eater (A303.28) and nearby presence of earlier Romano-British settlement make the

site a possible candidate for the location of sub-Roman or Anglo-Saxon settlement. To test the nature of the noted earthworks three machine trenches were located in this area totalling 48m<sup>2</sup> (Fig 1). These trenches were placed across the earthworks but despite this no deposits or artefacts of archaeological origin were encountered. It is concluded, therefore, that the observed undulations are of a natural origin.

**A303.25 - (ST 5890 2550)**

A linear earthwork, possibly the remnant of a former field boundary, survives in the Ministry of Defence signalling station (Cox 1992).

**A303.26 - (ST 5900 2650)**

Coages park deer park pale survives in this area, SMR 54434. This consists of a bank and ditch found in varying degrees of preservation (Wessex Archaeology 1990). It is an area of constraint as defined by South Somerset District Council.

**A303.27 - (ST 5910 2640)**

Medieval moated site within Coages deer park, consisting of a roughly rectangular area 15 x 20m surrounded by a ditch 4m wide and 0.03m deep, SMR 54435. A possible fishpond is separated from the moat by a dam. This is a scheduled monument (Wessex Archaeology 1990).

**A303.28 - (ST 5920 2555)**

Several burials were found in this area during quarrying in 1931. One of these was found with a sword of Anglo-Saxon type. The area has been heavily disturbed by quarrying and dumping (Wessex Archaeology 1990) and on the north by the Happy Eater services. Part of the cemetery may survive to the south of the services and Gasons Lane.

**A303.29 - (ST 5930 2570)**

Two worked flints, one fragment of burnt flint and one sherd of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the surface of this field at its western end (Cox 1992). A subsequent geophysical survey of this site and the land to the immediate west suggested the possible presence of ring ditches at the site with a further possibility to the immediate south-west of Pepper Hill Copse. As a result three areas of machine trenching were undertaken totalling 275m<sup>2</sup>, two were in the location of the putative ring ditches at A303.29 and another adjacent to the south-west corner of Pepper Hill Copse (Fig 1). No deposits or artefacts of archaeological origin were encountered in any of the trenches. It is concluded, therefore, that the tentative interpretations placed on the geophysical results are false and that there is no evidence for a site of archaeological significance in this area.

**A303.30 - (ST 5955 2575)**

A trackway with a ditch and bank on either side runs north-south through this small plot of woodland (Cox 1992).

**A303.31 - (ST 5965 2580)**

Linear earthworks survive in this woodland (Cox 1992). These are probably former paddock boundaries or woodland banks.

**A303.32 - (ST 5975 2585)**

A shallow linear feature, 0.20m wide and 0.20m deep, running north-west south-east was recorded in trial pit 140. A linear earthwork, possibly the remnant of a former field boundary, also survives in this field (Cox 1992).

**A303.33 - (ST 5860 2530)**

As elsewhere on the south side of the present A303 to the immediate west of Camel Hill Farm, machine trenching was carried out to assess the likelihood of the early Iron Age and Romano-British activity, noted at A303.19, extending to the south (Wessex Archaeology 1993b). In trench 602, 6m from its northern end, was a single linear feature, 0.40 - 0.50 m wide, aligned approximately north-east to south-west and cut into the limestone bedrock (Fig 4). Fragments of animal bone and sherds of shell-tempered pottery directly comparable with that of early Iron Age date recovered on the north side of the A303 (Wessex Archaeology 1993a), were recovered from the surface of this feature. The farmer (Mr Hewlett, pers. comm.) pointed out that during the laying of an electricity cable in this area, in the early 1940's, the Italian prisoners of war who were digging the cable trench found human remains, presumed to be of ancient date. Consequently, a short section (approximately 0.50 m long) was excavated by hand in order to investigate the nature and date of this linear feature.

It was found to be approximately 0.60 m deep with steep, almost vertical sides and a flattish but irregular base. Further sherds of early Iron Age pottery and animal bone were found but a cable was not located. This feature is therefore likely to be of early Iron Age date, possibly representing a palisade or boundary ditch. It is clearly indicative of the continuation of the early Iron Age activity recorded on the north side of the present A303 in this area. The line of this ditch was followed downslope for a total length of 7 m and was found to terminate in a clear butt end. No continuation of the line of this feature occurred in the two trenches (605 and 606) that were excavated further south, and thus the butt end of the ditch would appear to represent a true terminal, rather than one side of an opening through the line of this ditch. However, the possibility that the butt end represents one side of an opening at right-angles to the line of the ditch cannot be ruled out.

Very small quantities of artefacts were recovered. A total of 32 sherds of early Iron Age shell-tempered pottery comparable with that found on the north side of the present A303, together with 17 fragments of animal bone and one piece of flint.

**A303.34 - (ST 5670 2600)**

This is marked as an area of constraint by South Somerset District Council but there is no record of it within the SMR and it is presumed by the County Archaeological Officer to be erroneous.

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*Effects*

## 2 THE ~~IMPACT~~ OF THE PROPOSED ROAD

*effect*

### 2.1 The ~~impact~~ of the preferred route

A total of 23 of the sites recognised either lie on the path of the preferred route or immediately adjacent to it. Of these eight (A303.08, A303.12, A303.17, A303.18, A303.25, A303.30, A303.31 and A303.32) are the sites of linear earthworks which are almost certainly of post-medieval origin, two (A303.21 and A303.22) are probably modern quarries, three of the sites (A303.01, A303.09 and A303.20) are locations of surviving ridge and furrow of unknown date, three of the sites (A303.04, A303.11 and A303.29) were located by the discovery of small numbers of artefacts on the field surface, five sites (A303.02, A303.16, A303.19, A303.32 and A303.33) were the location of archaeological features and deposits, one site (A303.24) is the location of earthworks probably of natural origin, one site (A303.14) is the site of a listed milestone and two sites (A303.16 and A303.28) have been recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record.

### 2.2 Classification of areas of archaeological significance

2.2.1 In order to assess the relative importance of the sites identified along a road route it is necessary to classify and rank them. This is done by defining a site's status at the time of undertaking the archaeological study and then attributing relative significance.

2.2.2 The definition of status is a matter of fact, but the attribution of significance is largely based on professional judgement. Certain levels of status, however, ensure a minimum level of significance, hence world heritage sites would be automatically considered of international significance and scheduled monuments automatically considered to be of national significance.

2.2.3 Lesser definitions of significance are local, limited and none. Local implies importance at a county or district level. Limited implies that whilst a site has some archaeological potential it is of limited value as a local landscape feature and/or as a research resource. Sites having no significance would be SMR entries which are erroneous or refer to sites which no longer exist. There also may be places which are recorded due to the presence of a few finds or poorly defined earthworks, but which on evaluation do not have unusual levels of artefacts above that to be expected as a general background level and where no corroborative evidence for archaeological interest can be found.

### 2.3 Ranking of sites of archaeological significance along the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester road improvement preferred route

2.3.1 Sites of international significance: there are no such sites known along the line of the preferred route

2.3.2 Sites of national significance: there are no such sites along the preferred route.

2.3.3 Sites of local significance: there are three such sites along the preferred route and these are described in detail in the following list.

A303.14 - Site of a listed grade II milestone.

A303.19/33 - The discovery of an early Iron Age site and a seemingly unrelated, well preserved, later Roman group of buildings probably with an associated cemetery (A303.19), led to discussion with the County

Archaeological Officer and English Heritage. It was agreed that the area to the north of the A303 immediately to the west of Camel Hill Farm contained previously unknown archaeological remains of national significance and schedulable quality. As a result the possibility of rerouting the road to the south was considered and archaeological investigations in that area revealed a much lower level of archaeological activity. An early Iron Age ditch was all that was recorded (A303.33) and it would seem that this is an area of agricultural rather than settlement activity. Because the archaeology to the south of the present road appears to relate to the periphery of the early Iron Age occupation site, and as there is no evidence for later Roman activity, it is considered to be of only local significance.

**A303.28** - The presence of burials of Anglo-Saxon date on this site recorded on the SMR clearly indicates this to be a site of significance, however the considerable disturbance of the site adjacent to the present A303 greatly reduces the potential for the survival of archaeological remains. The burials were found on an area not directly effected by the preferred route, which lies outside the area of constraint. Nevertheless, the chances that the cemetery, or related activities such as settlement, extend beyond this area must be considered.

**2.3.4 Sites of limited significance:** there are eleven such sites along the preferred route and these are described in the following list.

**A303.01 and 09** are previously unrecorded areas of surviving ridge and furrow of unknown date. It is possible that they represent the preserved remnants of medieval field systems, but they maybe of more recent origin.

**A303.08, 12, 17, 18, 25, 30, 31 and 32** are all areas containing linear earthworks which in most cases can be related to boundaries extant in 1840 and depicted on the tithe map, although none of which were previously recorded in the SMR. At the earliest they probably date from the late medieval period when enclosure of the local open common fields was taking place (VCH 1975). Many are likely to be more recent in origin.

**A303.16** - This area was recorded on the SMR as being a cropmark site. Although geophysical survey carried out on the site could not confirm the aerial photo plots, it did indicate that there was some archaeological activity in this area. This was further confirmed by the discovery of an archaeological feature in one of the trial pits. Subsequent machine trenching, however, indicated that the only remains were post-medieval field drains.

**2.3.5 Sites of no significance:** there are six such sites along the preferred route and these are described below in the following list.

**A303.04** - The location of a single piece of worked chert noted by AC archaeology, this cannot be considered to be a site of particular significance.

**A303.11** - A scatter of medieval pottery and prehistoric worked flints were found in this field by AC archaeology. The quantities were not large and subsequent geophysical survey did not indicate the presence of archaeological remains in this area.

**A303.21 and A303.22** - Surviving, previously unrecorded, earthworks in these plots almost certainly relate to relatively recent quarrying activity. Machine trenching in A303.22 confirmed this impression. Following a site visit the County Archaeological Officer considered that a visual inspection

*A303.20 - Very slight ridge and furrow was noted here, subsequent machine trenching did not reveal anything of archaeological significance and indicated that the ridge and furrow were insubstantial.*

was sufficient assessment of A303.21 (letter ref. AH/ARP7/1/01 5th March 1993)

**A303.24** - Considered initially to be a possible previously unrecorded settlement site, no definite archaeological evidence was found in machine trenches to justify this speculation.

**A303.29** - A small concentration of artefacts and the possibility of ring ditches suggested by geophysical survey indicated a possible, previously unknown, area of prehistoric activity. Subsequent machine trenching did not reveal any archaeological evidence.

**2.3.6 Sites of undefined significance:** only one such site was noted along the route.

**A303.02** - The presence of a deposit of ash, burnt clay and burnt flint was noted at a depth of 0.8m below the ground surface within geotechnical trial pit 105. This is indicative of some past activity, but the nature of these deposits and their extent has not been defined. The proposed road, which would be constructed on an embankment in this area, is unlikely to have any effect on these deposits so no further clarification of their nature was considered necessary.

## **2.4 The effect of the construction proposals on significant sites along the proposed route**

**2.4.1** As discussed in the previous section, the realignment of the preferred route was investigated to avoid site **A303.19**. This is a site of national significance. The resultant southern adjustment to the alignment has now been incorporated in the route proposals leaving site **A303.19** unaffected. bald.

**2.4.2** The three sites of local significance may all be partially affected by the construction of the proposed route. The grade II listed milestone, **A303.14**, appears to lie outside the area of land take for construction, but its location immediately adjacent to the present road may endanger it during initial works. It would also be left isolated, out of context and no longer visible to traffic following the realignment of the A303. bald

The cemetery at **A303.28** is apparently left unaffected by the construction proposals, since the new road is to move slightly to the north away from the known site. It is unlikely that the full extent of the site is known, however, and the possibility exists for the disturbance of burials particularly during the realignment of services. The construction of the new road at ground level to the south, on the line of the present road, and on an embankment to the north makes it very unlikely that burials would be encountered during road construction in this vicinity.

At **A303.33**, the periphery of an early Iron Age site, the inevitable construction of the proposed route through a cutting would remove the surviving archaeology.

**2.4.3** All eleven sites of limited significance would be adversely affected by the preferred route. Sites **A303.09, 12, 16, 17, 18, 30, 31, and 32** would all be affected by a cutting removing any archaeological evidence. Site **A303.16** would also be overlain with excavated material in the form of a landscape screening bund and earth shaping mitigation measures. Site **A303.01** will have its south-east corner buried under an embankment and preparatory topsoil stripping will remove any existing evidence for ridge and furrow. Site **A303.25** will be affected by road construction at present ground level in an area of already disturbed current road verge. It is highly unlikely that anything of archaeological value would be encountered here. bald

Effects

## 2.5 The impact of the alternative routes

As has already been stated the concentration of fieldwork along the proposed route has produced an inevitable bias in the level of known sites when compared with the alternative green and orange routes. It cannot be definitely stated whether more or less sites of archaeological and historical importance would be found on these routes if a similar level of fieldwork was carried out along them. It is obvious, however, that the greater length of the orange route, across a previously undisturbed area, is likely to lead to the disturbance of many new sites, some of which would be of local significance. It is usually estimated that at least one site of this quality would be encountered per kilometre of road length.

2.5.1 It is clear that the Green route would have a major impact on site A303.05, the Shrunken medieval settlement at Downhead. The route runs across the centre of this site and would destroy very high quality earthworks. This is a site defined as an area of constraint within local planning policies. The site falls within the category of medieval settlement currently being studied by English Heritage as part of their Monuments Protection Programme. This programme is likely to lead to the scheduling of new sites. The high quality of the earthwork remains, their relative lack of disturbance and the availability of documentation relating to the settlement's history are likely to make this site a good candidate for scheduling. This site is considered to be of national significance. The construction of this route at ground level would destroy valuable archaeological deposits at Downhead. Even if the route were to be built on an embankment the integrity of the site and its setting would be ruined.

2.5.2 Both the green and the orange routes pass very close to the park pale of Coages park, A303.26, and may be said to directly impinge on this monument's setting. The pale is a rare relict landscape feature, an area of local constraint and an integral part of a landscape containing a scheduled moated site, as such it can be regarded as being of national significance. Both routes also encroach on the landscaped grounds of Hazlegrove House, adversely affecting the setting of these grounds.

Effect

### 3 MITIGATION OF HERITAGE IMPACTS

Specific mitigation proposals can be put forward at this stage for the proposed route. Unless a more detailed desk-based study and fieldwork is carried out, however, the same cannot be achieved for the alternative routes. In all instances the avoidance and thus preservation of a site, through route adjustments or engineering measures, is preferable to archaeological mitigation. Where preservation *in situ* is not a viable option mitigation measures designed to preserve the sites by record or to limit the effects of road construction are proposed.

#### 3.1 Mitigation proposals for the preferred route

A303.14 - The milestone on the A303 would be removed and stored during construction and returned as close as possible to its original position, but visible to travellers on the new road, on completion of the road scheme.

A303.19 - The preferred route would have had a serious effect on this site. The proposed route has since been carefully realigned at this location to avoid this site of national significance..

A303.33 - The peripheral remains of an early Iron Age site would be archaeologically excavated in advance of the implementation of the construction programme.

A303.01, and A303.09 - Areas of surviving ridge and furrow would be accurately surveyed before road construction starts in order to preserve them by record.

In addition to these specific areas of the route there would be a full watching brief carried out during construction of the entire road. This would allow the recording of any sites not previously recognised, always a possibility no matter how detailed the assessment work. It would also allow some examination of those sites considered to be of limited significance.