

LAND AT AND ADJACENT TO FAIRFIELD HOUSE, ST LOYES, TOPSHAM ROAD, EXETER, DEVON

NGR SX 9375 9080

Summary results of archaeological excavation and
proposals for further work

Prepared by:
Peter Stead and Dr Naomi Payne

On behalf of:
Helical (Exeter) Ltd

Document No: ACD649/3/0

Date: 18th June 2013



AC archaeology

LAND AT AND ADJACENT TO FAIRFIELD HOUSE, ST LOYES, TOPSHAM ROAD, EXETER, DEVON

(NGR SX 9375 9080)

Summary results of archaeological excavation and proposals for further work

CONTENTS

	<i>Summary</i>	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Methodology	1
3.	Results	2
4.	The finds	4
5.	Discussion	4
6.	Further work	4
7.	References	5

List of figures

Fig. 1: Results from Fairfield House in relation to previous findings

Fig. 2: Detailed plan of archaeological features exposed following removal of Fairfield House

List of plates

Plate 1: Buildings 154 (left) and 108 (right). Looking northeast

Plate 2: Building 237 (centre), looking northeast

Plate 3: Overview of site showing all four buildings. Building 238 is in foreground. Looking east

Plate 4: Section across post-medieval feature 53. Looking northwest

Appendix 1: Finds quantification

SUMMARY

Further archaeological excavation on the site of a probable Roman military supply depot at and adjacent to the former Fairfield House, St Loyes College, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon (NGR SX 9375 9080), was undertaken by AC archaeology during April and May 2013. An open area excavation of the wider development site was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology in 2010, which exposed two phases of a late Iron Age enclosure and parts of the northwest and southwest defensive circuit of a subsequent Roman military establishment, together with extensive evidence of internal buildings.

The present work has identified further evidence for military occupation in the form of all or parts of four timber-built Roman military buildings. In addition, a late Iron Age ditch and a small number of pits and postholes of late Roman military and Roman civil date were identified. A large post-medieval ditched feature partially excavated during the 2010 investigations, was also further examined. The excavation produced small quantities of artefacts, including Roman pottery, glass and brick/tile.

This document describes the archaeological results from the site and proposes a programme of post-excavation; this will lead to publication of the results in conjunction with those from the 2010 excavation, as well as amalgamation of the two site archives.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological excavation at and adjacent to the site of the former Fairfield House, St Loyes, Topsham Road, Exeter, was carried out by AC archaeology during April and May 2013. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Helical (Exeter) Ltd. Fairfield House has recently been demolished and a planning application has been registered for the redevelopment of the site to provide a three/four storey comprising seven retirement apartments, which will form part of the wider Millbrook Village development scheme. The archaeological work was undertaken in order to enable the full discharge of an associated planning condition that will be attached to the planning permission.
- 1.2 An open area excavation of the wider development site was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology in 2010 (Steinmetzer and Salvatore 2010). This exposed two phases of a late Iron Age enclosure settlement and parts of the northwest and southwest defensive circuit of a subsequent Roman military establishment, together with extensive evidence of internal buildings. Cut features, predominantly associated with later Romano-British land division were also identified, as well as a large post-medieval ditched feature of unknown function. The phased results from that investigation are included on Fig. 1.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Investigation and recording of archaeological features and deposits was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology in consultation with CgMs Consulting Ltd (Valentin 2013) and agreed with Exeter City Council's Archaeology Officer prior to the start of works. Following the demolition of Fairfield House, overburden was removed from site using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket, working under direct archaeological supervision. Excavation continued until either significant archaeological deposits or natural subsoil was reached, at which point machining ceased, the site was cleaned back and investigation continued by hand.

2.2 All artefacts or deposits revealed will be recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2 (revised August 2012)*.

3. RESULTS

3.1 There was no complex or deep archaeological stratigraphy on the site, probably as a result of successive episodes of ploughing from the Roman civil period onwards, which had effectively removed all archaeological deposits above natural subsoil. Although Roman military building remains were present, no internal or external surfaces had survived the subsequent agricultural use of the site. Surviving archaeology deposits consisted entirely of cut features (ditches, post-trenches, pits, postholes) and their fills. No evidence was found to indicate the presence of stone buildings.

3.2 The construction of Fairfield House had had a less damaging impact upon the underlying archaeology than had originally been anticipated; the building having been constructed on top of a considerable amount of imported fill material associated with the construction of Fairfield House, which was up to 2m thick along the building's southwest frontage.

3.3 Exposed features comprised a late Iron Age ditch, four timber-built Roman military buildings, as well as a small number of pits and postholes of late Roman military and Roman civil date. A post-medieval ditched feature partially excavated during the 2010 investigations, was further examined.

3.4 Summary results from this phase on investigation are shown in relation to the previous findings on Fig. 1, with a detailed plan of the present work included as Fig. 2. Relevant photographs are included as Plates 1 – 4.

3.5 Late Iron Age ditch

Part of a linear ditch (226) was exposed towards the east edge of the site, beneath a Roman timber building (108). Aligned northeast-southwest the ditch survived over a distance of 6.1m. It featured a rounded terminus to the northeast, but had been completely removed to the southwest by the insertion of a sunken boiler room associated with Fairfield House. It measured between 0.8 – 1m wide by up to 0.55m deep, with steep sides and a rounded base. The ditch had been infilled predominantly with very compacted gravel, which contained no dating evidence. Roman pottery was recovered from its upper two fills, suggesting that final infilling of the ditch occurred immediately prior to the construction of building 108 (see below).

3.6 Roman military buildings

Four buildings were exposed (108, 154, 237 and 238). All were of post-trench construction with trenches typically measuring 0.35m-0.45m wide and 0.20m-0.25m deep, with steep sides and a flat or slightly rounded base. All had been backfilled with clean redeposited natural subsoil comprising a mix of red breccia clay and river terrace gravels. A large number of silt-filled post-pipes were identified within the trenches, indicating the positions of the wall posts. Spacing between posts varied, but was generally 0.45m-0.70m.

Building 154 (Plate 1)

Located towards the east edge of the site, this building was rectangular in plan and measured 14.6m long by 4.5m wide, with its long axis aligned NE-SW. A doorway set centrally within its southwest end wall gave access to a square room (4.5m x 4.6m) within the southwest end of the building. A line of five postholes marked the position of an internal structure built against the northwest wall of the room (64, 66, 68, 239 & 241). Virtually all of the northeast half of the building had been removed by a cellar associated with Fairfield House, thus preventing the

recovery of the full plan of the building. No significant dating evidence was found, although a flint scraper and a possible tessera were recovered from the fill of a post-trench.

A 4m long post-trench (45) was exposed 2m to the southwest of the building, parallel to it. It projected beyond the southwest end and does not appear to be associated with building 154.

Building 108 (Plate 1)

This building lay parallel with, and immediately to the southeast of building 154; their rear walls set 1.1m apart. Rectangular in plan, it was significantly shorter and wider, measuring 12.2m long by 5.8m wide. The entrance was via a probable doorway in the northeast wall that gave access to a short, 2.4m wide corridor with a room to the northwest, measuring 3.5m x 5.1m. Two further rooms lay to the southwest, measuring 2.2m x 5.8m and 5.7m x 5.8m in plan. No internal features within the building were present; a small number of amphora sherds were retrieved from one of the post-trenches.

Building 237 (Plate 2)

This building lay 4.6m to the southwest of 108, on the same northeast-southwest alignment. It consisted of two parallel post-trenches (179, 180) defining a building 12m long by 1.9m wide. There was no evidence of post-trenches indicating fixed end walls. A number of amphora sherds was recovered from post-trench 179.

A single post-trench (161), in which at least two post settings were identified, appeared to link buildings 108 and 237. The function of this wall is unclear as it divides what could otherwise be considered an open area between the two buildings.

Building 238 (Plate 3)

Orientated northwest-southeast, building 238 was aligned perpendicular to buildings 154, 108 and 237. It measured 5.1m wide by at least 5.2m long (its full length could not be established as it extended beyond the eastern limit of the site). It was entered via a doorway at the northeast end of its northwest end wall and contained at least two rooms, the first measuring 5.1m x 3.2m.

Buildings 238 and 237, were set perpendicular to each other and were physically attached at one corner, possibly defining northeast and northwest building ranges with an open area between.

3.7 Pits and postholes

A total of six postholes (1, 8, 32, 38, 232 and 238) and three pits (9, 12 and 155) was exposed.

Pits 32, 38, 232 and 235 together formed an associated, equally spaced linear group aligned northwest-southeast. Each represents an opposing posthole to elements of a posthole group originally exposed during the 2010 excavation and re-exposed during this investigation (18, 16, 14, and 28 respectively). Postholes 1 and 8, although both located within a Roman military building, were found to contain brick fragments in post-medieval breccia derived fabrics.

Pits 9 and 155 both contained Roman pottery ascribable to either the Roman military or later civil period. Pit 12 was undated.

3.8 Post-medieval ditched feature 53 (Plate 4)

This was a large, broadly circular feature measuring approximately 18m in diameter and located at the northern corner of the site. It had previously been investigated by evaluative trenching during the 2010 excavations. In order to more fully understand its form and likely

function, further trench investigation of it was therefore carried out. It was found to comprise a continuous and circular steep-sided and flat-based ditch measuring 2m deep and 5.6m wide, tapering to 1.6m wide at its base, with a central island of natural subsoil. The upper part of the outer edge of the ditch featured a narrow near-level ledge, just wide enough to walk around. Fragments of tobacco pipe stem were found on the base of the ditch. It had been infilled with clean re-deposited natural subsoil.

4. THE FINDS

- 4.1** A total of 153 sherds of pottery was recovered from 12 contexts, representing the fills of 10 features. All but one sherd are of Roman date and were found within the fills of post-trenches, pits, postholes and the late Iron Age ditch. Other finds comprised a small assemblage of iron, copper alloy, slag, clinker, worked flint and stone, glass, clay tobacco pipe and ceramic building material. The finds assemblage is summarised in Appendix 1.

5. DISCUSSION

- 5.1** The investigations have produced better than anticipated results, including a complete floor plan of one Roman military building and the partial plans of three more, representing a significant addition to our understanding of the layout of the military establishment. Other than their common form of post-trench construction, the buildings show little uniformity of design with no evidence for barracks. The absence of industrial features such as hearths or furnaces, suggests that the excavated buildings are perhaps more likely to represent stores and/or offices. The positions of the doorways indicate open areas both to the northeast and southwest of the buildings.
- 5.2** The linear post settings to the northeast cannot represent a building or structure contemporary with military buildings as one posthole cut through a post-trench forming part of building 238. The current view that they fall within the immediate post-military period therefore remains valid.
- 5.3** No further evidence has been found for the occupation or use of the site during the later post-military Roman period other than (possibly) the three identified pits.
- 5.4** The function of post-medieval feature 53 has still not been established by this work, but its form has; the feature probably comprises a circular ditch surrounding a central mound. It is clearly not a quarry pit and it is conceivably a large feature perhaps dating from the civil war period, being located strategically adjacent to Topsham Road and close to the River Exe.

6. FURTHER WORK

- 6.1** The project archive will be collated and prepared for inclusion with the existing material from the previous investigations. The Roman pottery assemblage will be examined by specialist Paul Bidwell and the glass by Hilary Cool, with the material from this investigation amalgamated into their specialist publication reports. Other classes of artefacts will be reported on by AC archaeology's Finds and Archive Manager, Dr Naomi Payne.
- 6.2** The results from this investigation are a significant addition to what was previously known about the site. It has been agreed with the Exeter City Archaeology Officer to incorporate the results with those from the 2010 excavation of the wider St Loyes site, the publication of which is currently being finalised by Dr J.P. Salvatore. AC archaeology will integrate the results from this work into the publication draft text, with final collation and editing to be undertaken by Dr Salvatore.

6.3 Table 1 below lists the main tasks involved in updating and adding to the existing publication draft text, as well as collating the archive for inclusion with that from the 2010 excavation. It also states the personnel who will complete each task.

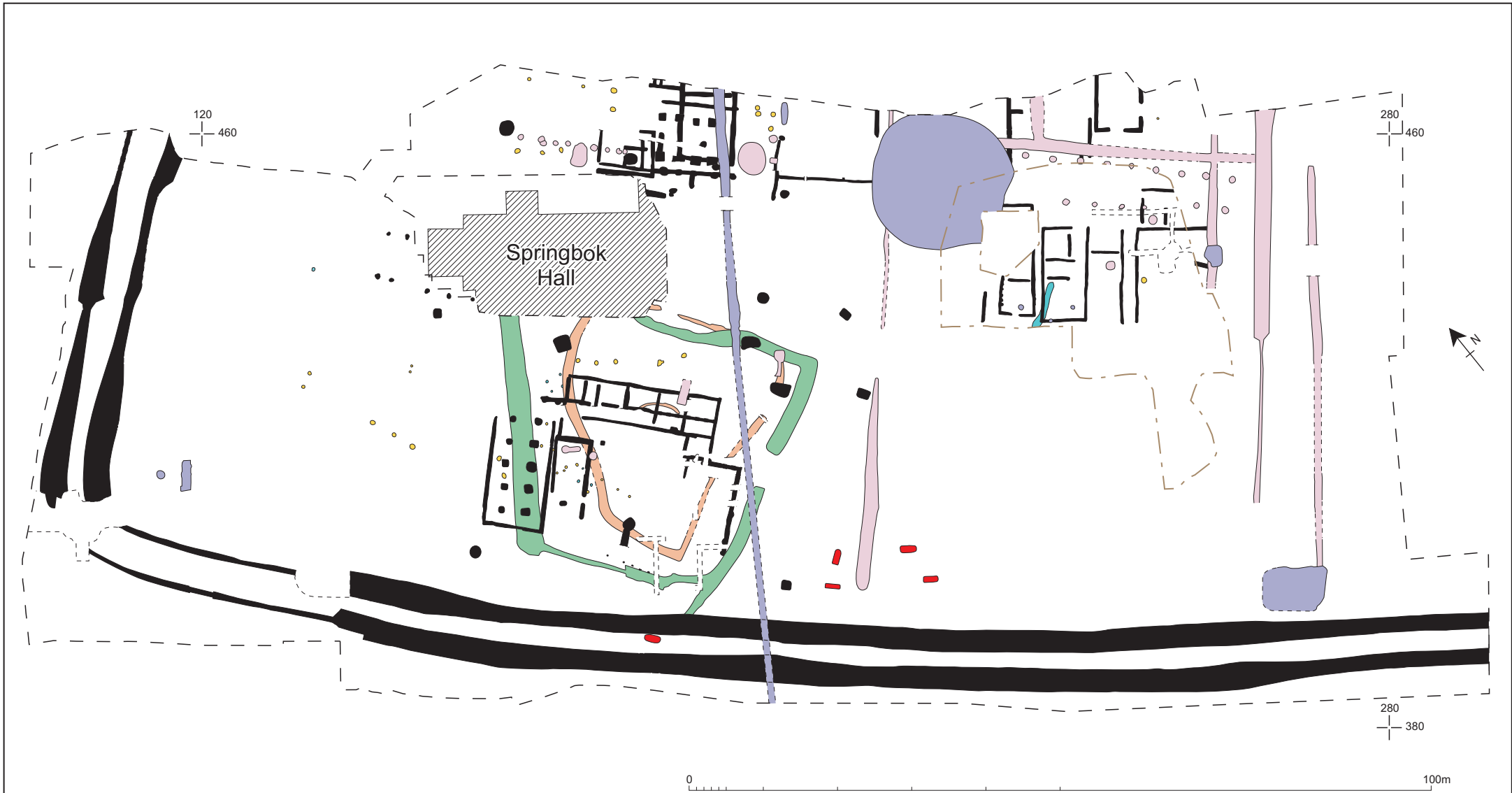
6.4 Table 1

TASK	PERSONNEL
Updating results into existing publication text	Peter Stead, AC archaeology
Collation of publication	Dr J.P. Salvatore, freelance archaeologist
Updating publication graphics	Tony Ives, freelance illustrator
Updating existing Roman pottery text	Paul Bidwell, freelance specialist
Updating existing Roman glass text	Hilary Cool, freelance specialist
Updating other finds reports	Dr Naomi Payne, Finds Manager, AC archaeology
Liaison	Dr Naomi Payne, Finds Manager, AC archaeology
Archive preparation	AC archaeology in house, to be added to existing archive










7. REFERENCES

Steinmetzer, M. and Salvatore, J.P., 2010, *Archaeological excavation of an Iron Age Enclosure Settlement and a Roman Military Establishment at the former St Loyes College, Topsham Road, Exeter, 2010, a Summary Report: Post-Excavation Assessment Report and Updated Project Design*. Exeter Archaeology unpublished report for client, ref. 11.39

Valentin, J., 2013, *Land at and adjacent to Fairfield House, St Loyes, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon: Written scheme of archaeological work for strip, map and sample excavation*. Unpublished document for client, ref. ACD649/1/1



Legend

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  undated |  Roman military |  AC archaeology edge of excavation |
|  Iron Age |  Roman civil | |
|  Iron Age: enclosure A |  Roman burials | |
|  Iron Age: enclosure B |  post-medieval | |

PROJECT
Land at and adjacent to Fairfield House,
St Loyes, Exeter

TITLE
Fig. 1: Results from Fairfield House
in relation to previous findings





PROJECT
 Land at and adjacent to Fairfield House,
 St Loyes, Exeter

TITLE
 Fig. 2: Detailed plan of archaeological
 features exposed following removal of
 Fairfield House



Plate 1: Buildings 154 (left) and 108 (right). Looking northeast



Plate 2: Building 237 (centre), looking northeast (scales 2 x 1m)



Plate 3: Overview of site showing all four buildings. Building 238 in foreground. Looking west



Plate 4: Section across post-medieval feature 53. looking northwest (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Finds quantification



Context	Context Description	Roman pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Iron		Copper alloy		Slag		Clinker		Worked flint/chert		Worked stone		Glass		Clay tobacco-pipe		CBM		Plaster		Coal		Comments	Phase	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt			
2	Fill of posthole 1																					1	12					Probable brick fragment in local breccia-derived fabric	Post-medieval	
5	Fill of posthole 8					2	9																	2	1	1	1	1 Iron object appears to be a rod of metallic iron embedded in a piece of slag (?)	Post-medieval?	
10	Fill of pit 9	26	918																			14	882					14 undiagnostic tile fragments; 15 amphora sherds including two rims and one handle stub, in at least 4 fabrics; 12 sherds of ?1st century pottery including 3 sherds from a bead-rim bowl	Roman civil	
17	Fill of pit 18			1	5																						Body sherd from 1/17th century vessel. Intrusive within re-exposed feature	Roman military		
23	Fill of posthole 22																					4	549					Brick fragments in local breccia-derived fabric	Post-medieval	
24	Fill of posthole 22									2	12											4	25					Small brick fragments in local breccia-derived fabric; undiagnostic ironworking slag	Post-medieval	
27	Fill of posthole 25														1	4						4	52					Brick fragments in local breccia-derived fabric; possible stone tessera	Post-medieval	
29	Fill of pit 28	6	11							1	16																6 small abraded sherds of Roman pottery including 2 sherds of samian ; fuel ash slag	Roman military		
31	Fill of pit 30											1	3								1	2	2	76				Brick fragments in local breccia-derived fabric; clay tobacco-pipe fragment (part of stem and unmarked heel)	Post-medieval	
37	Fill of pit 38	4	160																			1	38					4 amphora body sherds; fragment of undiagnostic light-coloured CBM	Roman military	
60	Fill of post trench 45	1	1																			3	4					Small body sherd of South West Black Burnished 1 pottery; 3 small fragments of undiagnostic CBM	Roman military	
54	Fill of cut feature 53																				2	10						2 x clay tobacco-pipe stem fragments	Post-medieval	
123	Fill of post trench 52	4	199																									2 adjoining amphora handle sherds plus two small body sherds in a similar fabric	Roman military	
156	Fill of pit 155	64	78			15	87																					63 sherds probably all from a single fine-walled vessel with light colour fabric, plus 1 samian rim sherd from Dragondorff 27 cup (AD50-150); two sherds from base of Roman glass vial (1st century) plus 4 other fragments from glass vessels including 1 rim	Roman civil	
133	Fill of post trench 106	1	4																									Single grey ware body sherd	Roman military	
156	Fill of pit 155	25	60						1	3.6																		25 small abraded pottery sherds including at least 9 pieces of Samian and 7 South West Black Burnished 1 sherds; incomplete copper alloy coin. Extremely worn and friable and unlikely to be closely identifiable, but broadly Roman.	Roman civil	
165	Fill of post trench 42															1	4												Worked slate cuboid (15mm by 14mm by 10mm), most likely a tessera	Roman military
166	Fill of post trench 41															1	6												Flint scraper	Roman military
225	Fill of post trench 209	1	13																										Rim sherd from grey ware jar	Roman military
227	Fill of ditch 226	14	1735																										14 amphora body sherds in two fabrics; Whetstone fragment	Late Iron Age
228	Fill of ditch 226	4	8													1	4												Four small body sherds, possibly amphora; Broken flint flake	Late Iron Age
236	Fill of post trench 179	3	392																										3 amphora sherds including 2 adjoining rims and a body sherd with a handle stub	Roman military

Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops
Bradninch
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
Nr Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581
Fax: 01747 820440

www.acarchaeology.co.uk