

Weston-super-Mare Technical College & School of Art,
Hans Price Building, South Terrace,
Weston-Super-Mare,
North Somerset.

Archaeological Evaluation Project

North Somerset HER: 47422
Accession Number: WESTM 2008.72



Report prepared for

Weston-super-Mare Technical College
& School of Art

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Avon Archaeological Unit Limited
Bristol: December 2008

Summary

An archaeological evaluation involving the excavation of one 13 m long archaeological trench was undertaken within the grounds of Weston-Super-Mare Technical College and School of Art, close to the modern waterfront, at Weston-s-Mare, North Somerset. The trench was sited off South Terrace, immediately east of No.1 Park Villas at NGR ST 317 618, adjacent to the Hans Price Building, a large Victorian college building requiring extensive renovation, modernisation and extension, approximately 100m to the southwest of St John's parish church.

The trench was sited within the footprint of a proposed extension to the Hans Price Building, in an area where amateur archaeologist Sergeant George Rodgers identified the remains of buried Roman buildings and Roman finds, preserved within a deep sequence of wind-blown sands during excavations for new services in 1959. Although the results of the 1959 work were not published photographs taken at the time enable the location of the Roman remains to be located with some confidence.

The 2008 trench revealed a sequence of blown sands in excess of 1.8 m deep interpreted to reflect at least three separate blown sediment units. The sands were preserved directly beneath modern surfacing and bedding material and examined as far as the top of the local water table and saturated sands at 6.3m above Ordnance Datum. The sequence of sands were interrupted at two levels by stratified deposits and structures representing two episodes of late Romano-British settlement related activity on the site. The earlier Roman activity was represented by a localised horizon of burnt material and pottery sherds of late Roman date, provisionally interpreted to reflect a hearth or hearth waste. This horizon was sealed by some 300 mm of clean blown sands that were in turn overlain by the masonry foundations of a substantial Roman building at approximately 7.5 m OD. The building was indicated in the trench by the remains of two sections of roughly faced limestone rubble wall foundation set at an approximate right angle. A ditch of the same date was located outside and parallel to the northern of the two Roman walls, possibly indicating that the building was erected inside a small raised enclosure defined by drainage ditches. The Romano-British wall foundations and the ditch were ultimately abandoned and sealed by further deposits of clean wind-blown sands.

The range of finds recovered from the Roman deposits is fairly standard although it is noted that other personal artefacts including coins appear to have been recovered during the 1959 excavations. The majority of the assemblage is represented by standard domestic pottery sherds, animal bone, including cattle and sheep/goat, and marine gastropod shells, mainly limpets. A small number of unidentified iron objects were also present. The specialist environmental assessment of samples of the wind-blown sands identified small numbers of brackish, possible dune grassland and, perhaps surprisingly, species indicative of estuarine silts or sands alongside limpet and land snails. Despite low numbers the molluscan assemblage indicates some further potential to elucidate both the local environment and economy during the period of Romano-British settlement and how that may have altered or developed during the post-Roman period.

It is concluded that significant archaeological remains are preserved on the site in the form of buried structures, deposits and artefacts of later Romano-British date, broadly the 3rd to 4th centuries AD. Collectively the Roman archaeology appears to reflect settlement of modest rural type and lower social status that, in view of its shoreline location, is quite likely to have incorporated the utilisation of abundant local marine and saltmarsh resources as part of a mixed agricultural economy. In this respect the site represents a rare survival in the region and one that has significant further research potential.

The quality and importance of the archaeology identified on the site, whilst of considerable local and potentially some regional significance, is not judged to be of National Importance, and therefore is not considered to justify *Preservation in-situ* at the expense of future development. That said, if preservation in-situ of the archaeology is not possible through design, the archaeology identified is of sufficient merit to justify further detailed archaeological recording prior to destruction, in order to ensure its *Preservation by Record*, in accordance with the guidelines set out in PPG16.

CONTENTS

Summary	3
Acknowledgements	6
Copyright	6
1 Introduction & Background	7
2 Historical & Archaeological Background	7
3 Methodology	8
4 Description of the Evaluation Trench	9
5 Summary of the Finds	11
6 Summary & General Conclusions	12
7 References	14

APPENDICES

- 1 Assessment of the Pottery by Dr J Timby FSA
- 2 Assessment of the Animal Bone by Lorrain Higby
- 3 Assessment of the Molluscs by Dr Paul Davies
- 4 General Catalogue of the Finds

FIGURES

- Figure 1..... Location of the Site, scale 1:25,000
- Figure 2..... Boundary of the Study Area with the Location of Evaluation Trench 1, scale as shown
- Figure 3 Trench 1, Plan as Excavated, and section drawings. Scale as shown

PLATES

- Cover..... The evaluation trench as excavated, looking south
- Plate a..... Machine excavation in progress, looking north
- Plate b..... Ditch 106 prior to excavation, looking northwest, scale 1m
- Plate c..... Wall 109 during excavation, looking west
- Plate d Wall 109 and Ditch Cut 118 after cleaning, looking northwest, scale 3No. x 500mm
- Plate e Ditch 118 sondage, looking south, scale 2No. x 500mm
- Plate f Ditch 118 cutting Wall 104, facing west, scale 2No. x 500mm

- Plate g Sondage showing Wall 109 and Deposits 108, 128 and 129 separated by blown sand, looking north, scale 2No. x 500mm
- Plate h Sample Column 1 through blown sands at the southern end of the trench, facing west, scale 1m
- Plate i Ditch 106 during excavation, looking south
- Plate j The study area and evaluation trench, looking north

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Avon Archaeological Unit Limited wishes to thank Weston College for commissioning and funding the archaeological project and Nicholas Vater of BBA Architects. Further thanks are due to Vince Russett, Archaeological Officer for North Somerset Council and Vanessa Straker, of English Heritage for helpful advice during the course of the fieldwork. Finally, thanks to the specialists, Jane Timby, Lorrain Higbee and Paul Davies for producing their assessment reports at short notice.

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PROJECT HEALTH & SAFETY STATEMENT

In all matters pertaining to this fieldwork and research project Health and Safety has taken priority over all archaeological matters.

All archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (SCAUM 2002, *Health & Safety in Field Archaeology*).

NOTE

Whereas Avon Archaeological Unit Limited have taken all care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

1 Introduction & Background

The Study Area is centred at NGR ST 3171 6184 (figures 1 and 2), within the grounds of Weston-super-Mare Technical College and School of Art, Weston-Super-Mare. The archaeological trench was sited to the north of the main college building, between the Hans Price Building and Number 1 Park Villas (South Terrace) in an area that at the time consisted of hard surfacing used for access and staff car parking.

The site is located at the base of the south flank of Worlebury Hill, close to the junction of the Carboniferous Dolomitic and Oolitic limestone bedrock and Holocene alluvium of the Wentlooge formation and overlying blown sands that are recorded to extend up to 1km inland. Recent geotechnical boreholes and pits opened on the site by consultants Structural Soils Limited (Structural Soils 2008) indicate that the blown sands underlying the site are up to 3.2 m deep in places and in part interbedded with thin horizons of estuarine alluvium that contains animal bone (*ibid*, Boreholes 1 and 2). The local topography slopes gently towards the south between 7.76m and 8.26m above Ordnance Datum in the study area whilst the strip of land between the base of Worlebury Hill and the modern sea front bounded by Knightstone Road is roughly level at approximately 8m aOD. Here, prior to the 19th century, the local natural environment consisted of a deep wind-blown dune bank that separated the inland saltmarsh from the sea (see figures 2 and 3).

The Archaeological Officer for North Somerset required that a programme of intrusive archaeological investigation be undertaken on the site and the results made available prior to the determination of a planning application for redevelopment and extension of the Hans Price Building. In particular, the trenching was designed to confirm the presence of buried Romano-British archaeological deposits identified in 1959 during small scale excavations for a sewerage inspection chamber (see below). Avon Archaeological Unit Ltd (AAU) were commissioned to undertake the evaluation project by BAA Architects, on behalf of Weston College. The objective of the project was to establish the presence or absence of significant subterranean archaeological features, structures and deposits and, if present, to assess their character, extent and importance. The work was undertaken in accordance with general guidelines set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE; 1990, PPG16) and a Scheme of Work prepared by AAU (Young 2008) and approved by the Archaeological Officer for North Somerset. The archaeological site work was carried out over a period of two working weeks, commencing on the 22nd September, 2008 and followed by a further two weeks of post-excavation archive work, assessment and reporting.

The project archive, which includes all site records, drawings, photographs and finds will be temporarily stored at the premises of the Avon Archaeological Unit Limited, Avondale Business Centre, Woodland Way, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 1AW. The archive will ultimately be deposited at the North Somerset Museum, Weston-Super-Mare under the accession number WESTM 2008.72.

2 Historical & Archaeological Background

The North Somerset Levels and Weston-s-Mare area have a rich archaeological heritage and have produced evidence for a continuous sequence of past human activity and settlement that stretches back to the Pleistocene Ice Age era. In particular the historic wetland of the Levels, intermittently drained since the Romano-British period, provide conditions conducive to the preservation of waterlogged organic archaeological material that does not normally survive on terrestrial sites.

No formal desk-based study had been previously undertaken for the site although its general archaeological setting is evident from the North Somerset HER. The record indicates large scale and long-lived human activity in the environs of the site during the later prehistoric period at Worlebury Camp (see figure 1), a stone-built late prehistoric hillfort located at the western end of Worlebury Hill that was defended on the north and west sides by steep sea cliffs, by a single rampart and ditch on the south side, and by two stone ramparts and a sequence of five ditches to the east. Excavations at the site in the 1850s identified over one hundred rock-cut storage-pits within the interior, eighteen of which contained human skeletons. In all, the remains of over one hundred individuals have been found, some showing signs of having met with a violent end - such as sword cuts to the skull. A number of modern archaeological evaluations and excavations in the St Georges area, to the east of Weston-Super-Mare, have uncovered abundant evidence for late Iron Age/early Roman occupation and drainage of the North Somerset Levels, some associated with an important late prehistoric salt production industry. Salt production appears to have ceased around by the end of the 1st century AD when the moors were extensively drained for settlement and agriculture (Webster, 2004).

A number of archaeological sites and find spots are recorded on the North Somerset HER within a relatively small area around the Study Area. These include records of Iron Age burials (SMR41387), Roman coins and pottery (SMR41390) and other traces of Roman occupation (SMR00126) recorded during the building of nearby Royal Crescent and Crosby Hall in the 19th century.

In addition archaeological finds were identified on the site in 1959 (or 1964 according to some of the records) by a well known local amateur archaeologist, Sergeant George Rodgers, during the digging of a sewer inspection chamber. Rodgers noted that the Roman remains were preserved within a deep sequence of blown sands although the results of his excavation and recording were unfortunately never published. The few records and photographs of his work that have been traced indicate that he located evidence for one and possibly two Roman buildings (SMR00126) in association with significant numbers of Roman finds including pottery and coins.

More recently human remains and Roman pottery (SMR45793) were located nearby in 1992, to the rear of the Royal Crescent whilst in 2002 works at the Crosby Hall identified traces of late prehistoric occupation. More recently in 2006, a late prehistoric crouched inhumation burial was located by archaeologist Richard Broomhead during archaeological monitoring of development work at Weston-Super-Mare church and evidence for .

3 Methodology

The evaluation trench was sited within the footprint of the proposed extension to the Hans Price Building (Figure 2) and sited to confirm the presence or absence and character of archaeological deposits of Roman date recorded on the site by Sergeant George Rodgers (above). A secondary objective was to examine the sequence of blown sands on the site and, if possible, the junction between the sands and the underlying estuarine alluvium of the Wentlooge formation. In the event the latter was not possible due to the presence of completely waterlogged and unstable sands at c. 6.3m OD. Other practical considerations included the avoidance of a pair of buried live services for gas and sewerage that run through the study area.

The existing concrete surface was scanned for services and subsequently cut with an industrial floor saw before being broken up and removed by a 5-ton slew tracked machine. Following the removal of the concrete a toothless grading bucket was used to excavate undifferentiated modern deposits to the top of the archaeology. The southern end of the

trench was excavated to a maximum depth of approximately 1.8 m to establish as full a sequence as possible through the wind-blown sands. Here the trench was shored and stepped at a depth of 1 m. Excavation ceased in the southern part of the trench at 6.35 m OD where the local water table was reached.

The location of the trenches was related to the National Grid using the appropriate Ordnance Survey sheet for the area and levelled to a benchmark located on a boundary wall of Number 19 Lower Church Road, on the corner of the Lower Church Road and South Terrace junction (8.95m aOD, figure 2).

Archaeological recording was undertaken using standard Avon Archaeological Unit Limited context-based record sheets with significant archaeological features, structures and deposits also photographed and scaled drawings made as appropriate. All recovered artefacts were bagged and marked with the appropriate context number and subsequently removed for specialist and in-house processing.

Bulk soil samples were collected from significant stratified deposits, and column samples were taken at three locations (Column Samples 1-3) through sequences of blown sands and archaeological material on the advice of Vanessa Straker, English Heritage's South West Regional Science Advisor.

At the conclusion of the fieldwork, the trenches were backfilled with the excavated material, consolidated using a vibrator plate and the concrete surface reinstated.

4 Description of the Evaluation Trench

Figure 3, Plates a-j, Appendices 1 - 4

The evaluation trench (figures 2 and 3) was orientated north to south, aligned roughly parallel with the western end of the Hans Price Building. The trench was 13.06 m long, 1.36 m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.8 m below the modern ground surface. The local water table represented by saturated sands was reached at the maximum trench depth, 6.35m aOD. The deposits and structures identified in the trench are described below in the approximate order in which they were revealed.

Modern Stratigraphy

Up to 400mm of modern concrete and underlying bedding material, which increased in thickness from south to north, was removed across the trench by machine. The concrete and bedding layer sealed Deposit 103, a uniform and mixed sandy clay soil horizon, that extended throughout the trench up to 200 mm deep. The layer (103) sealed a series of underlying archaeological deposits (below) and was cut by a modern foundation trench (110) and modern service pipe trenches (111 and 112).

Archaeological Deposits and Features

The removal of mixed Layer 103 revealed a number of features and deposits in the central area of the trench including a short section of rubble wall foundation, Wall 109, a linear soil feature, Cut 118, and further limestone rubble denoting the location of a second narrower section of wall foundation, Wall 104. In addition, part of a modern concrete foundation (110) and a series of modern service pipe trenches (Cuts 111 and 112) were revealed at the base of or immediately below the modern concrete bedding.

Wall 109 was 2.23m long and up to 640 mm wide and formed of a single course of small to medium sized limestone rubble that was roughly faced on both sides. Although the

masonry appeared to be of drystone construction a deposit of darker sand (115) butting either side of the wall contained patches of dark reddish-brown sandy clay and sparse limestone rubble that appeared to represent material derived from the demolition of the wall and the approximate contemporary ground surface. The patches of clay possibly represented remnants of original bonding material from the wall although the same horizon (115 etc.) was not evident in the sequence of blown sands revealed immediately to the south, sampled by Sample Column 1. The southeastern end of Wall 109 ended as slightly irregular masonry although this appeared to be due to one end stone having been removed; certainly there was no evidence that the masonry originally extended further to the south or that it had been disturbed at this point by a later cut feature.

The northern end of Wall 109 was cut obliquely by a later ditch, Ditch 118, that was aligned southwest to northeast. The ditch fill (119) was excavated in a single cutting (photograph e) where it consisted of a single homogeneous mixed deposit of dark brown clayey-sand with frequent patches of cleaner brownish-yellow sand throughout. The profile of the ditch (figure 3) was steep sided, up to 920mm wide and 830mm deep, cut into a sequence of earlier clean and archaeological sands. Pottery from the ditch included a large number of Romano-British pottery sherds plus sherds of post medieval type including red wares and yellow slipware, indicating that the Roman sherds residual and providing an 18th century *terminus post quem* for the digging of the ditch. The archaeological cutting excavated to sample the ditch fill also revealed a large limestone block set edge-on in the southern side of the ditch cut. The purpose of the block was not ascertained although it was set on a thin layer of very dark sand that produced a single sherd of Romano-British grey ware pottery and which appeared to represent a buried surface.

The north side of Ditch 118 truncated the eastern end of a second earlier wall foundation, Wall 104. The wall was aligned WSW to ESE, at approximately 90 degrees to Wall 109, and formed of a single course of roughly faced subangular limestone rubble up to 460 mm wide of seemingly drystone construction. The portion revealed in the trench was only 870mm long although the structure clearly continued beyond the trench to the southwest. Finds from a layer (117/121) of darker sand to either side of the wall produced a significant number of 3rd – 4th century Romano-British pottery sherds.

A deeper sondage was excavated by hand immediately to the south of Wall 109 to establish the full depth of the masonry and its relationship to a small patch of possible burnt material, Deposit 128, revealed in the deeper cutting excavated by machine to the south. The hand-dug cutting confirmed the presence of a thin and patchy layer of burnt material and blackened sand, Layer 128, preserved within cleaner blown sands (108) at a depth of approximately 6.8m OD. The burnt deposit was variable and nowhere more than 20 mm thick but was associated with a further patch of limestone rubble (129) that overlay a single sherd (SF2) of 3rd – 4th century Roman pottery. Deposit 128 was sealed by a deposit of clean blown sands, Layers 107/108 (see Photograph g), that separated the deposit from Wall 109 above. These clean sands separating the two archaeological horizons were sampled at 100mm intervals (Sample numbers 511-513) via Sample Column 2.

The southern third of the trench also revealed the upper surface of mixed sandy Layer 103 immediately below the modern concrete bedding. The deposit in turn sealed a sequence of undisturbed blown sands (Layers 115, 107 and 108) that extended undisturbed to the level of the water table where Deposit 108 was entirely saturated at 6.35 m OD. The sequence of blown sands was recorded in section and sampled by Column Sample 1 at 100 mm intervals (Sample Numbers 500 to 510) between 7.46m OD and 6.39m OD, the lower samples of which, from Deposit 108, which also contained Deposit 128/129, producing abundant mollusc shell fragments.

The archaeological and natural stratigraphy revealed at the northern end of the trench was considerably more varied and complex than elsewhere. The full sequence present in this part of the trench was excavated and recorded by hand in both plan and section although the section revealed in the south and west facing side of the trench (figure 3.2), provides the clearest depiction of the archaeological deposits and features present. The earliest feature revealed represented a narrow ditch (Ditch 106) aligned approximately east to west and cut into clean underlying blown sands. The ditch clearly extended beyond the trench in both directions and contained a primary fill, Fill 125, of greyish-yellow sand that contained sparse to moderate small lumps of red clay, a few small pebbles and produced pottery sherds of 3rd to 4th century AD date. The ditch fill was sealed by a secondary deposit, Layer 105, also possibly a fill, whose profile indicated that at least some of the material was derived from a higher point to the south. The deposit (105) consisted of black to brown sand containing sparse pebbles, fragments of fire-hardened clay and sparse charcoal flecks. The deposit produced a significant amount of cultural material including sherds of Romano-British grey ware, fragments of animal bone, limpet shells and two unidentified iron fragments (SFs 201 and 203) (plates b and i). Deposit 105 was overlain by a further deposit of brown sand, Deposit 114, that had an irregular surface profile in both the south and west facing trench sections and possibly representing contemporary surface topography. The deposit produced a single sherd of generic Roman pottery plus a sizeable collection of Limpet and marine gastropod shells and two fragments of animal bone. This sequence of archaeological deposits was sealed by a thick wedge-shaped deposit of very clean yellow blown sand, Deposit 113. A column of environmental samples, Sample Column 3 – samples 514 to 522, was taken at 100mm intervals through this sequence of deposits between 7.49m and 6.61m above Ordnance Datum.

5 Summary of the Finds

Pottery (see also Appendix I)

An assemblage of 138 sherds weighing 1.13 kg was recovered from the trench. Of this total some 29 sherds, approximately 25% by weight, were recovered from uppermost unstratified and highly mixed contexts. The assemblage is dominated by Romano-British wares of 3rd to 4th century date (see Appendix I) but also includes a very small number of medieval and post medieval sherds, in particular from the fill of Ditch 118. Due to their importance for dating the archaeology present the assemblage was assessed by specialist Dr Jane Timby.

Clay Tobacco Pipe

Just 2 pieces of clay tobacco pipe stem, weighing 2g were recovered from unstratified context 100.

Glass

Two fragments of vessel glass weighing 4g were recovered during the evaluation. The two vessel sherds were recovered from Layers 103 and Deposit 119, both dated by pottery to the post medieval period.

Animal Bone (see also Appendix II)

A small assemblage of 61 fragments of animal bone weighing 313g were recovered during the evaluation, a proportion from stratified Romano-British contexts. The assemblage was examined and assessed by specialist Lorrain Higbee (Appendix III).

Metal Objects)

Three metal objects were recovered from the evaluation, two objects, recovered from a context dated to the Roman period, were recorded as small finds and the other was recovered from a very mixed post medieval deposit (103).

Small Finds 201 and 203 were recovered from context 105 and consisted of two fragments of iron nails, one a nail head the other a short piece of rectangular shank. A large curved Fe object, part of a post medieval horseshoe, was recovered from Layer 103.

Environmental Evidence (Appendix III)

As required in the Brief advice was provided by Vanessa Straker of English Heritage concerning the environmental potential of the various archaeological deposits that were located. As a result samples of Romano-British deposits and later blown sands were assessed for mollusc evidence. The results of the assessment indicate the presence of brackish and possible dune grassland species and, perhaps surprisingly, species indicative of estuarine silts or sands alongside limpet and land snails, the latter possibly foodstuff. Although present in relatively low numbers the molluscan assemblage indicates some further potential to elucidate both the local environment and economy during the period of Romano-British settlement and how that may have altered or developed during the post-Roman period.

6 Summary & General Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation trench was opened at the agreed location inside the footprint of the proposed Hans price Building extension and in accordance with a written Scheme of Work compiled by Avon Archaeological Unit Limited (Young, 2008) and approved by the Archaeological Officer for North Somerset Council.

The trench was located to confirm the presence or absence of significant buried archaeological deposits and structures on the site, in particular deposits of Romano-British origin identified by George Rodgers in the 1950s immediately adjacent and, if present, to determine their character and importance, and the potential impact future development would have on such remains.

As suggested by the unpublished excavation work undertaken by George Rodgers, the trench revealed a shallow upper sequence of modern surfacing and disturbance that overlies a deep and stratified sequence of wind-blown sands. The total vertical sequence of wind-blown sands present was not ascertained as the deposit extends below the local water table at around 6 m aOD although above this horizon, the upper 2 m or so of blown and reworked sands above the water table, appear to reflect at least three distinct sedimentary episodes that are either separated by or overlie two episodes of archaeological activity, both of which are dated by pottery sherds to the later Romano-British period.

The earlier phase of Roman activity was represented by a distinct horizon within cleaner sands that produced evidence of burning, probably a hearth, and sherds of generic Roman grey ware pottery with calcareous concretions indicating use as a kettle. The sherds are dated by Dr Timby to the later Roman period, broadly the 3rd to 4th centuries AD (see Appendix 1). This activity was in turn sealed by an accumulation of cleaner wind-blown sands prior to a later, more substantial, phase of Roman activity that included the construction of at least one building. This activity was indicated in the trench by the remains of two sections of roughly faced limestone rubble wall foundation with traces of sandy clay bonding material. The two foundations were set at approximate right angles and were preserved at around 7.5 m OD. A ditch of the same date was located outside

and parallel to the northern of the two Roman walls, Wall 104. The ditch may indicate that the building was erected inside a small elevated enclosure defined by drainage ditches although this would require further investigation to confirm. The molluscan assemblage hints at some estuarine influence on the site and this may relate to the implied position of the Roman settlement, established on sands close to the estuary foreshore and alongside the course of a former river channel, the River Barrow, whose route followed the base of the hillside and which was filled during the early 19th century.

British wall foundations and the ditch were ultimately abandoned and sealed by clean wind-blown sands although we will need to wait for the dating of the pottery that accompanied the latter to establish a date for the abandonment. Certainly the Roman structures, deposits and finds located in the trench are consistent with the conclusions drawn by George Rodgers in the 1960s.

The range of finds recovered during the course of the evaluation is fairly standard with the majority represented by domestic Roman pottery sherds, evidence for a standard range of domesticated animals and gastropod shells, mainly limpets, the latter certainly indicating the unsurprising use of local marine resources as part of a mixed economic base. In addition to these finds a single sherd of glazed medieval Bristol Ham Green ware is worth noting, at the very least reflecting some unspecified and possibly transient activity on the site during the 13th century.

In combination the evidence indicates that significant archaeological remains are preserved on the site in the form of buried structures, deposits and artefacts of later Romano-British date, broadly the 3rd to 4th centuries AD. Collectively the Roman archaeology does not appear to reflect habitation of particularly high status but is indicative of a later Roman rural settlement whose mixed economic base may have specialised in the utilisation of abundant local marine and saltmarsh resources in a very particular natural environment. In this respect the site represents a rare survival in the region and one that has significant future research potential, in particular to address a range of key research aims recently identified for the period by Webster (Webster, 2008; research aims 23, 26, 29, and 41).

In view of the results of the evaluation it is concluded that the buried Romano-British archaeology identified on the site, whilst of considerable local and probably regional significance, is not of National Importance, and therefore does not justify *Preservation in-situ* at the expense of future development. However, if the archaeological deposits cannot be preserved in-situ through design, they are judged to be of sufficient merit to justify further detailed archaeological investigation and recording prior to destruction, in order to ensure their *Preservation by Record*, in accordance with the guidelines set out in PPG16.

7 References

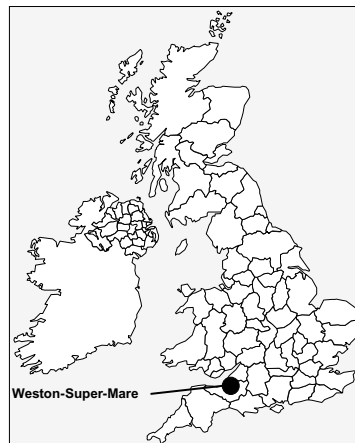
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Figure 1

Location of the Study Area

The Study Area ←

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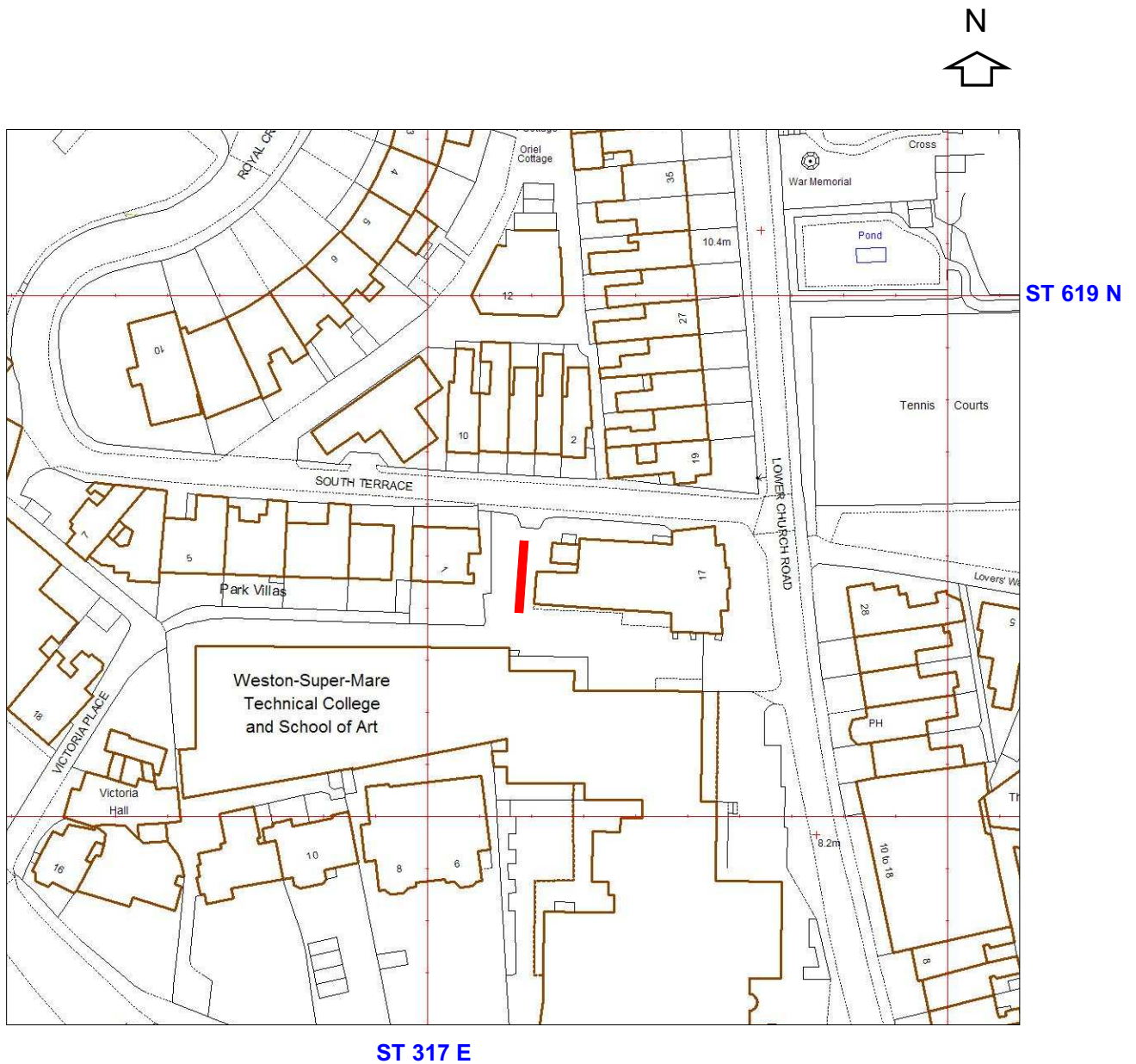


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Figure 2

Evaluation Trench Location Plan Footprint of the Evaluation Trench in RED

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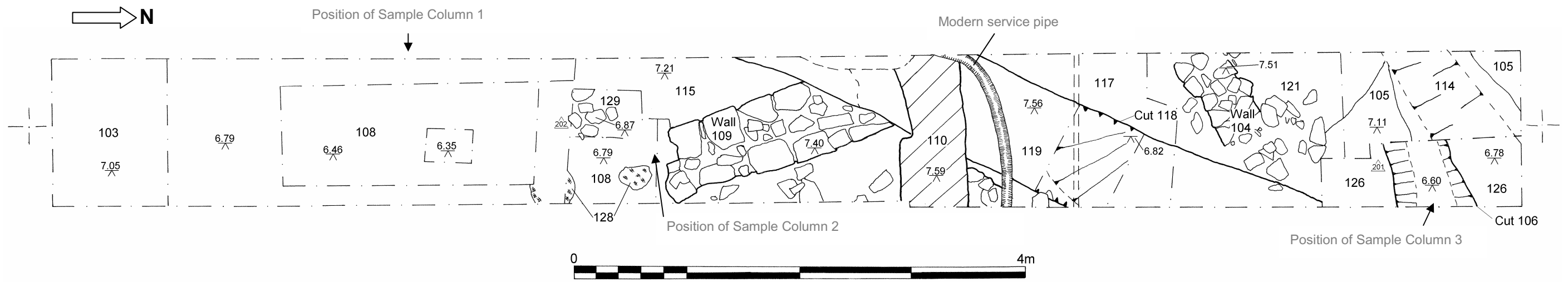


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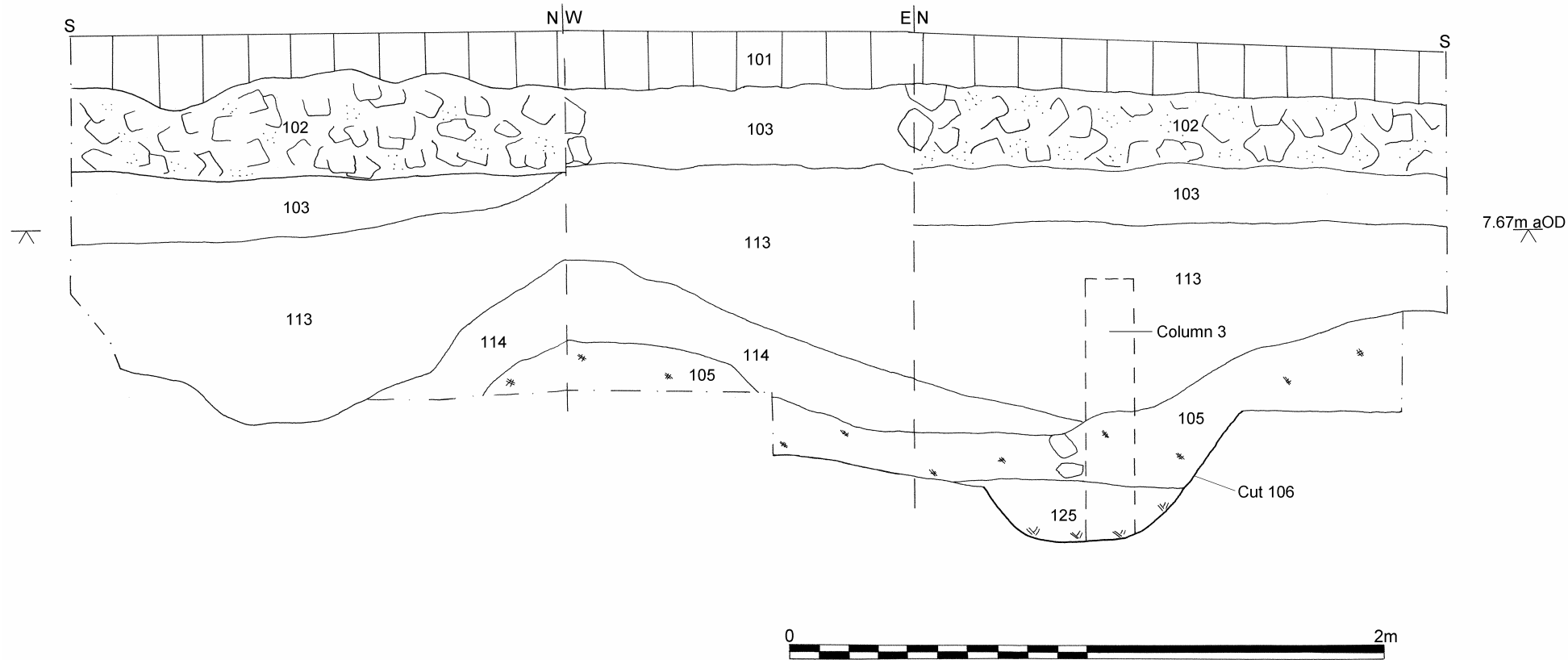
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Figure 3

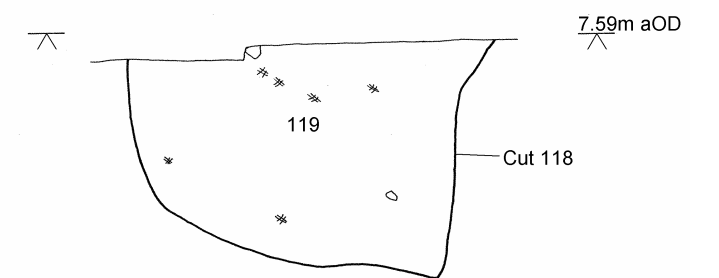
Plan of Evaluation Trench as excavated



Section at north end of trench showing Ditch 106 & associated deposits



Northeast Facing Section of Ditch 118



For: Avon Archaeological Unit
Site: Weston College 2008, Weston-super-Mare
Site Code: NSHER 47422
Status: pottery assessment
Author: J R Timby
Date: November 2008

Appendix 1

THE POTTERY

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 134 sherds weighing 1134 g, dating to the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 1.2 Pottery was recovered from 14 recorded contexts.
- 1.3 Several of the sherds were generally quite fresh with unabraded edges accompanied by some more abraded pieces. The pieces are quite fragmented, with a mixture of larger and smaller pieces. Featured sherds were sparse. The overall condition is reflected in a relatively low average sherd size of 8.5 g.
- 1.4 The material was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd weight and count for each recorded context. The resulting data is summarised in Table 1.
- 1.5 No comparative or library research has been carried out in conjunction with this assessment.

2 Roman : description

- 2.1 Most of the assemblage, 90% by count, comprises wares of later Roman date. These are a mixture of regional imports and local wares.
- 2.2 The regional imports are largely sherds of Dorset and South-west black burnished ware; mainly jar sherds, several decorated with oblique burnished lattice and plain-sided dishes. Black-burnished ware accounts for 30.6% by count of the total assemblage.
- 2.3 Also present are two sherds of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware, one sherd from a beaker.
- 2.4 Most of the remaining sherds appear to be of local origin comprising mainly grey wares probably from the North Somerset kilns.

2.5 Where sherds could be dated the emphasis appears to be more towards the later Roman period, in particular the 3rd to 4th century.

3 Medieval and post-medieval wares

3.1 Eight sherds of probable medieval date are present, two from context 115 and six from 100. Most of the sherds are plain pieces from jars/ cooking pots but cxt 115 also produced a sherd from a Ham Green glazed jug with impressed decoration. This is probably from a vessel dating to the 13-14th century.

3.2 Five post-medieval sherds were also recorded, from contexts 100 and 103. Four of these are pieces of glazed 'china'; one is from a plain red earthenware flowerpot. This latter sherd has part of a stamp 'ROYAL POT....'. The Royal pottery, Weston was in operation from 1836 to 1961.

4 Potential and further work

4.1 This is a very small group of material but it does appear to confirm the presence of later Roman occupation at the site.

4.2 The small size of the assemblage precludes any further detailed work on the pottery itself unless further work is undertaken at the location in which case it should be added to an overview.

Appendix 2

WESTON COLLEGE EVALUATION: ANIMAL BONE ASSESSMENT

L. Higbee

WESTM: 2008.72

Date sent: 28/11/08

Quantity and provenance

A total of 62 bone fragments were recovered from the evaluation. All of the material was retrieved by hand during the normal course of excavation. The assemblage is from contexts broadly dated to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD.

Methods

This report follows general guidelines for the assessment of environmental remains outlined by English Heritage (2002). The following information was recorded: species, skeletal element, age and biometric data, butchery, taphonomy, pathology and non-metric traits. The standard methods used to distinguish between related taxa, record age and biometric data, and other relevant information are as follows: Boessneck (1969); Grant (1982); Lauwerier (1988); O'Connor (1989); Silver (1969) and Von den Driesch (1976).

Quantification methods take into account the recommendations of Davis (1992). In summary, a selected suite of skeletal elements was counted in order to assess the potential of the assemblage for further analysis. These elements are generally those which show a good survival and recovery rate in most assemblages, and also provide detailed information (e.g. age and biometric data). Bones that could not be assigned to species, mostly fragments of long bone shaft, rib and vertebra, have been quantified into general size categories and small splinters into more general taxonomic categories. This information is presented in order to provide an overall fragment count.

Results

Condition of material

A few fragments display signs of deterioration but in general bone preservation is quite good. The poorly preserved bones have pitted cortical surfaces and although this has not affected identification to species or element, it may have effaced surface details such as butchery marks. Three bones were recorded with gnaw marks and one fragment from (103) had been burnt at a high temperature (i.e. calcined).

Range and variety of assemblage

Bone was recovered from ten separate contexts and the largest concentrations are from (105) and (119). Only 26% of fragments could be identified to species and element (Table 1). All of the identified fragments belong to cattle and sheep/goat, and

the former is slightly more abundant than the latter. Both species are represented by waste elements from primary butchery (e.g. cranial fragments and limb extremities) and meat bearing elements, and this suggests that animals were slaughtered and consumed locally. Unfortunately the assemblage is too small to draw any firm conclusions about the economy or status of the site.

Table 1. Number of specimens identified to species (or NISP) and element.

Skeletal element	cattle	sheep/goat	Total
skull	-	1	1
loose tooth	2	1	3
scapula	1	-	1
radius	-	2	2
ulna	1	-	1
metacarpal	2	-	2
femur	1	-	1
tibia	1	1	2
calcaneus	-	1	1
metatarsal	1	-	1
metapodial	1	-	1
Total identified	10	6	16
large mammal			10
medium mammal			9
mammal			26
ave			1
Total unidentified			46
Grand total			62

Statement of potential

Bone survival is generally quite good therefore any further investigations at the site have the potential to produce additional material. It is only with a substantially larger assemblage that an interpretation of the sites economy will be possible.

References

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Appendix 3

WESTON COLLEGE – MOLLUSCAN ASSESSMENT

Dr Paul Davies

Preamble

Three samples (sample numbers 516, 519 and 522) were provided by Avon Archaeological Unit from sample column 3 taken through Roman age ditch-fill deposits. Sample 516 was from the upper ditch deposits, sample 519 from mid-ditch and sample 522 from near the base of the ditch. In addition 3 samples of handpicked shells from Contexts 105, 113 and 114 were provided.

Methods

1.5kg of air-dried sand from each of the three samples were sieved through 2mm, 1mm and 0.5mm sieves and shells extracted under a binocular microscope using pelican forceps. Identifications were made using reference collections, Kerney (1999) and Kerney and Cameron (1979).

Results

The shell was not well preserved in any of the three samples. Numbers of shell were also low to very low given the volume of material processed. The shells identified are given as Table 1.

Sample/ Species	516	519	522
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	5	-	-
<i>Vallonia</i> sp	6	-	3
<i>Oxychilus</i> sp	1	-	-
<i>Trichia hispida</i>	5	2	1
<i>Hydrobia</i> sp	23	15	12
Total	40	17	16

Table 1 – shells recovered from Weston College

The handpicked shells from context 105 consisted of some limpet (*Patella* sp.) specimens. The handpicked shells from context 113 consisted of limpet plus the land snails *Cepaea nemoralis* (1 specimen) and *Trichia hispida* (8 specimens). The

handpicked shells from context 114 consisted of limpet plus the land snail *Trichia hispida* (10 specimens).

Preliminary assessment

Numbers of shells are too low to allow any meaningful interpretation by full analysis. From the assessment it can be seen that all 3 samples from column 3 contained *Hydrobia* sp., which are characteristic of weakly-strongly brackish conditions dependent upon which species are represented (Kerney 1999). Several *Hydrobia* sp are characteristic of estuarine silts or sands. The deposits would therefore seem to represent accumulation of estuarine sands (either naturally or by deliberate in-filling) rather than blown or re-mobilised terrestrial sands. The terrestrial species represented (particularly *Vallonia* sp., *Pupilla* sp., and *Trichia* sp.) may be representative of dune grassland, often being present on early dune grassland seral stages (Davies 2008) but can also be representative of non-dune grassland too. On this basis, and considering the very low numbers, it would not be advisable to deduce any general inferences on the surrounding environment.

Numbers of handpicked shell from contexts 105, 113 and 114 are too low for any meaningful interpretation and potentially biased against smaller species.

Further work

No further work is recommended.

References

- Davies, P. 2008. *Snails: Archaeology and Landscape Change*. Oxford: Oxbow
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Table 1: Summary of pottery from Weston College 2008, NSHER 47422

Context	NSOMRE	BB1	OXFRS	MISC CW	Med	PM	Tot No	Tot Wt	Date	fired clay
100	4	3	1	1	6	4	19	215	C19th	
103	3	3	0	3	0	1	10	73	Pm/late Roman	
105	21	10	1	2	0	0	34	271	4th	
107	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	9	Roman	
108	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	120	Roman	
113	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	Roman	
114	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	13	Roman	
115	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	46	C13th	1
116	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	Roman	
117	10	8	0	4	0	0	22	79	3rd-4th c	1
119	7	13	0	3	0	2	25	218	C18th	
121	1	2	0	2	0	0	5	21.5	3rd-4th c	
125	6	1	0	3	0	0	10	48	3rd-4th c	
131	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	12	3rd-4th c	
TOTAL	59	41	2	21	8	7	138	1134		