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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS DURING THE
LAYING OF AN OUTFALL DRAIN AT WINT HILL,
NEAR BANWELL, AVON**

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ST 400 580

INTERIM REPORT - DRAFT

March 1996

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archaeology

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS DURING THE LAYING OF AN OUTFALL DRAIN AT WINT HILL, NEAR BANWELL, AVON

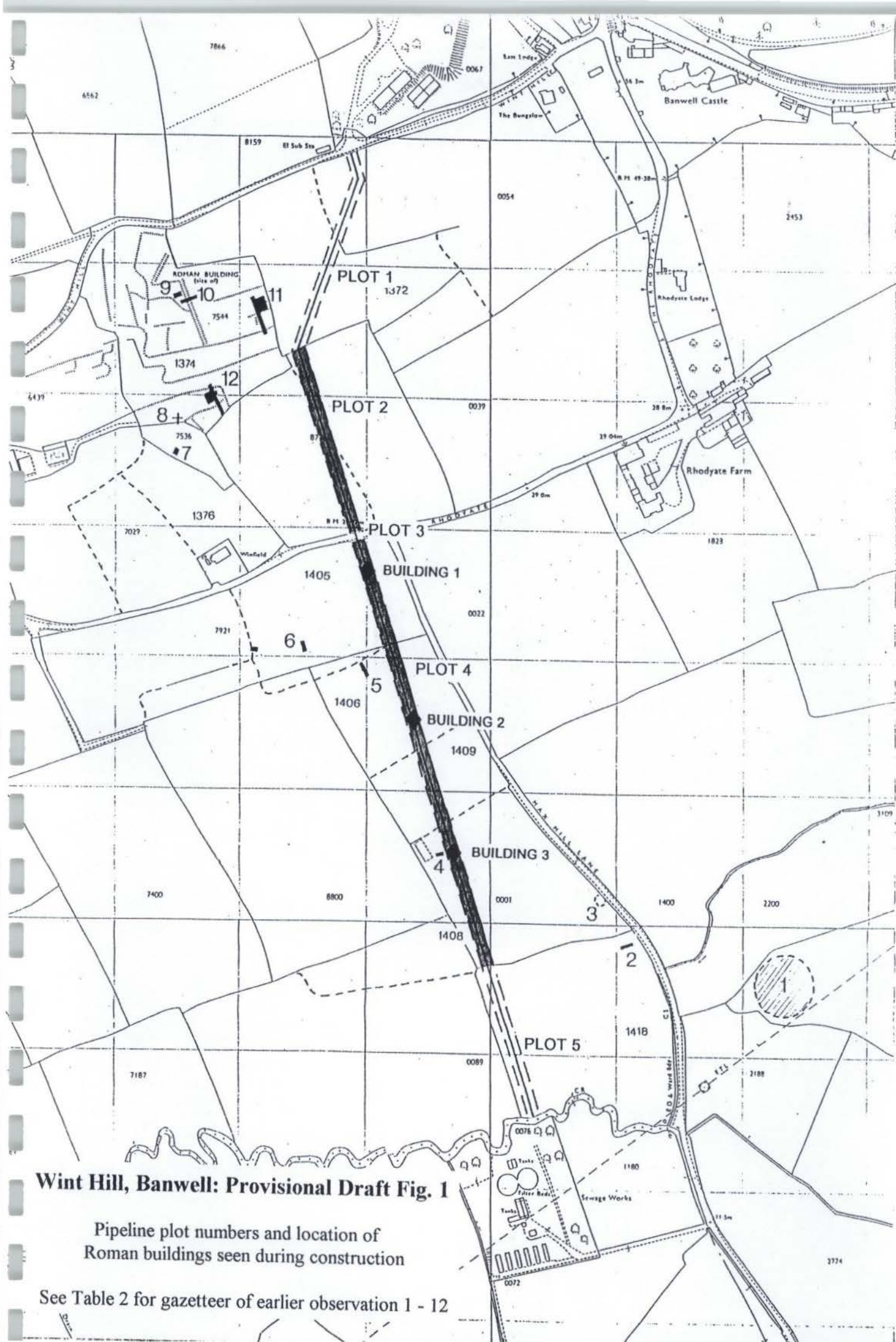
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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of observations maintained by AC *archaeology* during the laying of an outfall drain from the Banwell Treatment Works, Avon, by Bristol Water plc in August and September 1994. The scheme runs within 50m of the boundaries of a probable Roman Villa (a designated scheduled ancient monument ASMR 105) and lies within an area of generally high archaeological potential. As a consequence, English Heritage and the Avon County Archaeological Department requested that the scheme be archaeologically monitored

The drainage scheme involved the laying of a 225mm diameter pipe from the existing treatment works at Banwell (grid reference ST 3989 5859) to the Loxley Yeo river adjacent to the sewage works at ST 4003 5785; in all some 750m of trenching. The site works were undertaken by Bristol Water's contractor in the presence of an archaeologist. Within a 10m working width, a 3m-wide easement was machine-stripped of topsoil, and a trench excavated some 400mm wide to a depth of between 1m and 1.20m.

Monitoring of the early stages of the work, which proceeded from south to north, revealed high concentrations of archaeological material, including the *in situ* remains of masonry buildings of Roman date. Through discussions involving Bristol Water and the Avon County Council Archaeological Officer, a strategy was evolved to maximise the archaeological information recovered within the context of a watching brief. Additional staff were deployed on site, and the scope and scale of the fieldwork was considerably enhanced by local volunteer help. The site work and subsequent analysis, finds conservation, and report preparation have been wholly funded by Bristol Water plc. A final, fuller, report is in preparation.



Wint Hill, Banwell: Provisional Draft Fig. 1

Pipeline plot numbers and location of Roman buildings seen during construction

See Table 2 for gazetteer of earlier observation 1 - 12

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The pipeline runs down the south-facing slope of Banwell Hill from Wint Hill Lane to the Loxley Yeo river. The gradient of the slope varies considerably along the route, but overall falls by some **m from north to south. Subsequent to the most recent Ordnance Survey revisions a number of field boundaries have been removed, leaving effectively four parcels of land separated by hedged boundaries. These divisions were found to closely correspond with geology boundaries. A concordance of plot numbers used in the archaeological recording and Ordnance Survey parcel numbers is given in Table 1, which also summarises underlying geological deposits.

Plot	OS Parcels	Subsoil Geology
1	1372 / 0054 now combined	Black Rock Limestone
2	Field 873	Dolomitic Conglomerate
3	The Rhodyates - road crossing	-
4	1405 / 1406 / 1409 / 1408 / 0001 now combined	Mercia Mudstone (Keuper Marl)
5	Field 1418	Alluvium

Table 1: Banwell Outfall Pipeline: Archaeological Plot Numbers

SCOPE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING EXERCISE

Groundworks on the scheme were initially monitored by a single archaeologist. However, at an early stage in the programme trenching revealed the presence of significant quantities of finds from the topsoil stripping in Plot 5, and following on-site discussions involving AC archaeology, Bristol Water plc and the Avon County Archaeological Officer it was determined that the archaeological presence on site should be increased to allow for an enhanced level of recording. The nature of the archaeological response as a watching brief was maintained, however, and no excavation prior to site stripping and trenching was carried out.

Throughout Plot 4, where the greatest concentration of archaeological finds and features were encountered, the sides of the trench were cleaned by hand and drawn to scale. Finds were collected from the stripped topsoil surface and from the machine-excavated spoil in 10m stints in order to provide an assessment of the variation of archaeological activity along the length of the trench. All finds except those of evidently modern date were collected and retained. Other than the cleaning back of exposed trench sections, no invasive excavation of archaeological deposits was carried out.

PREHISTORIC ACTIVITY

No certain or probable features of early prehistoric date were identified. Twenty four pieces of worked flint were recovered; none was diagnostic, and these waste flakes may date to any time within the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods (roughly within the range 4000 - 1000BC or later). Twelve flakes were collected from the topsoil heaps adjacent to the trench through Plot 4, the remainder occurring residually in layers associated with later, Roman, activity. Earlier archaeological observations in the field comprising Plot 4 have also recovered worked flint, possibly of earlier, Mesolithic date (10000 - 4000BC). The density of prehistoric flint from the pipeline working is comparatively low and is not necessarily indicative of any nearby settlement.

Within Plot 5, the field closest to the river, 43 sherds of late prehistoric pottery weighing 809g were recovered. This material, tempered with small fragments of limestone and occasionally with sparse quantities of very fine flint, is probably later Iron Age (c150BC - AD43) in date. It appeared that the pipe trench had cut through a small ditch from which the pottery had been disturbed; no other indications of contemporaneous activity were noted in the workings.

ROMANO-BRITISH ACTIVITY

There have been numerous reported finds of Roman date from the Wint Hill area; enquiries have revealed twelve previous excavations or observations of building debris, stone structures,

Table 2: Banwell Outfall Pipeline: Previous Archaeological Observations

1. ST 40235794c ASMR 227

Romano-British pottery and building debris was recovered by the Banwell Society of Archaeology during field walking in the mid 1960s. Initially from an area of c30m × 20m, more recent field walking has shown the scatter to be of a greater extent and to contain Romano-British industrial debris, slag and building material. (Forbes, M., pers comm.)

2. ST 40115798

Excavations in 1959 and early 1960 by the Banwell Society of Archaeology of a series of test-pits and two parallel trenches adjacent to Max Mills Lane produced evidence of Romano-British paving, containing pottery, bone, tile and several coins of the 3rd and 4th centuries. The Romano-British material was sealed by up to 0.4m of topsoil, clay and dense charcoal. An investigation of drainage ditches in the same field showed a widespread distribution of Romano-British material throughout the area (Search 1, 1961).

3. ST 40095802 ASMR 226

Construction of a silage pit at this location in about 1954 was observed by Axbridge Caving Group and Archaeological Society who found a quantity of Roman pottery, several 3rd - 4th century coins, a sun disc and a bronze brooch from cobbling at approx. 0.4m. The correct grid ref. for this feature is supplied above (Forbes, A., pers comm.).

4. ST 39965804

A small trench was excavated by the Banwell Society of Archaeology in 1961. The excavation found a mortared Roman Wall, Romano-British pottery and flue tiles were also found. (Search 2, 1962).

5. cST 39913820

Between December 1961 and March 1962, a trench approx. 8m × 1.2m was excavated by the Banwell Society of Archaeology. The excavation uncovered extensive cobbling and a post-hole. Romano-British occupation material was prolific, finds including 10 coins and many potsherds from a depth of approx. 0.5m. Several flints "possibly microliths" were also recovered. (Search 2, 1962).

6. ST 39855821

Romano-British pottery and flint tools were recovered from a trench measuring approximately 5m × 1.2m, excavated by members of Banwell Society of Archaeology between October 1959 and January 1960. The finds were derived from between 0.2m and 0.4m of topsoil and subsoil overlying solid Dolomitic Conglomerate. A second trench, approx. 3m in length was dug slightly to the west at ST 39825821 and produced further abraded Romano-British pottery shards. Neither trench produced any distinctive features. (Search 1, 1961)

7. ST 39745836

A trial excavation was made by Mr Ian Tabrett near the top of Field 1376, in the intriguing embankment running roughly north-south in that field. This revealed large 'kerb-stones', on the edge of this bank, with potsherds, bones and a Roman coin in the debris." (Search 1, 1961. Positive location provided by D. Bromwich pers comm.).

8. ST 39755837 Part ASMR 105, SAM 81

Discovered in a hedge at the bottom of Field 1374 was a large jar containing animal bones, and two late third century coins (Search 3, 1963) The coins may represent the remains of a hoard recovered in antiquity (Bromwich, D., pers comm.).

9. ST 39745848 Part ASMR 105, SAM 81

A small excavation was conducted by Weston-Super-Mare Grammar School near the top of Field 1374 (Chapel Close). A rough cobbled floor overlain by an occupation deposit was located. Finds included pottery, nails, pins and a bronze needle. The deposits had been disturbed by later medieval activity (Search 1, 1961).

10. ST 39755847 Part ASMR 105, SAM 81

An east-west trench was excavated through the north-south earthwork just below the last noted excavation (9). This proved to be medieval and to form the continuation of an extant field-boundary. Romano-British material including pottery and bronze fragments were located in the eastern part of the trench but had been disturbed by late Saxon (?) and medieval activity (Search 4, 1964)

11. ST 39825847 Part ASMR 105, SAM 81

A north-south trench, 1.5m × 30.5m was excavated by the Axbridge Caving Group & Archaeological Society in 1954/5 and extended in 1956 by six 2.1m squares in the eastern part of Field 1374 (Chapel Close). The initial excavations uncovered a rectangular stone building together with additional walls and a deep pit. Finds included Romano-British pottery, coins, plaster and bronze ornaments. This trench contained thirty east-west inhumations post-dating the Roman occupation. Of these, 28 were adults and 2 were children. The 1956 extensions to the previous excavation revealed the ground plan of the building to comprise a series of rooms cut through by an unspecified number of later burials. Much additional Romano-British material was recovered including a complete late Roman glass bowl depicting a hunting scene and bearing the inscription "VIVAS CVM TVIS PIES". A hearth, post-dating the Roman occupation but pre-dating the burials was also uncovered. (Search 1, 1961).

12. ST 39775839 Part ASMR 105, SAM 81

Between 1964 and 1967 a series of excavations were undertaken by the Banwell Society of Archaeology in the lower part of field 1374 (Chapel Close). This revealed an almost square room with additional walls to the east and south and an infant burial inside the door. North and west lay gravel paths. Within the room was found a small coin hoard of the late 280's together with pottery, bones, nails, iron working slag and a spindle whorl. Post Roman and medieval material was also recovered. (Search 5, 1965. 6, 1966. 7, 1967. 8, 1968).

pottery and other material within or adjacent to the fields across which the present pipe trench runs. Those sites are shown on Fig. 1, with a brief gazetteer included as Table 2.

The complex around Sites 9 and 10 adjacent to Plot 1 is a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument, comprising earthworks and remains of Roman buildings, thought likely to have been of high status on the basis of associated finds of pottery and metalwork recovered by excavations in the 1950s. Comparatively little Romano-British material has been revealed by the pipeline trenching in this area: two small pits [contexts 157 and 174] and a probable boundary ditch [165] all contained Roman pottery (a total of 47 sherds weighing a little in excess of 1000g). Not all of these features need be Roman, however: the area also contains evidence for intensive medieval activity, and pit [174] at least - which contains later pottery as well as Roman - is better regarded as post-Roman.

Within Plot 2 a ditch [context 146] and a patch of compacted charcoal both contained small quantities of Roman pottery. However, neither the present trenching programme nor earlier observations have produced any significant volume of finds or evidence for structures within this plot. It is probable that the steepness of the gradient has inhibited any expansion of settlement or related activities in this field.

The majority of the Roman material recovered as part of the pipeline recording exercise came from the more gentle slopes of Plot 4. On the basis of early indications for the presence of structures and high densities of Roman pottery from the preliminary topsoil stripping, a more comprehensive recording exercise was mounted to monitor the groundworks. This revealed the presence of three masonry buildings, a possible ditched boundary wall, and some evidence for yards or external surfaces associated with industrial activity. Investigation of these features was limited, however, and the full extent, nature, date and development of the settlement remains unclear.

The three buildings are each known only from single walls made of limestone blocks revealed in the sides of the pipe trench, and it is therefore not possible to determine the dimensions or ground plan of any of the structures.

The complex archaeology within Plot 4 is here described in three zones, from north to south. Chainages are measured distances along the pipe trench from the southern boundary of the plot:

Northern End - from chainage 220m to 355m: from this area the remains of a masonry building (Building I) were recorded, not directly dated but in part sealed by layers containing only Roman material. Two pits (at least one almost certainly of Roman date) and an undated posthole were also observed. Significant quantities of Roman pottery were retrieved from the spoil heap and easement.

Central Area - from chainage 100m to 220m: three ditches (undated), a probable Roman pit, and remains of an undated masonry building (Building II) were recorded. Trench collapse is likely to have lead to an under-recording of archaeological features in this area, although the spoil heap collections produced comparatively little Roman material.

Southern End - from chainage 0m to 100m: to the north of a probable boundary structure comprising masonry wall, bank and ditch, the remains of a masonry building (Building III) were revealed in the pipe trench. Although not directly dated, Building 3 - possibly apsidal - is located in an area where collection of unstratified pottery suggests a high level of Romano-British activity. Other undated but possible or probable features in this zone include two pits, two ditches, two postholes, and a possible cupelation hearth.

As indicated on Table 3, in addition to the three identified buildings a number of other features (small pits, ditches and post-holes) were also noted in the trench sides. In general, these were most frequent in the areas where the buildings had been encountered, and particularly so in the vicinity of Building III, where two hearths of burnt limestone and dense deposits of charcoal with fragments of copper alloy waste are likely to be associated with metalworking. Elsewhere along the Plot 4 pipeline easement pieces of iron slag were also recovered.

South of Building III the remains of another limestone wall [context 13] were found, set on a substantial bank [context 17] of compacted clay, with a substantial depth [context 24] some 1.50m wide and at least 1.20m deep on its southern side. These features are interpreted as forming the southern boundary to the settlement activity in Plot 4. No archaeological features were on the south side of the ditch, and the distribution of pottery from the topsoil and trenched spoil also shows a marked fall off in this direction (see Table 4).

Dating the structures and their associated activities is difficult; despite the fact that 1,817 sherds of Romano-British pottery weighing just over 13kg was recovered from systematic collection from the trench sides and excavated trench spoil throughout Plot 4. Over 65% by weight of that pottery came from unstratified (topsoil) contexts, and of the structures and subsoil features only a very few (indicated on Table 3) can be dated with any level of confidence. Table 4 shows there to be no convincing separation in the distribution of obviously early and late elements within the assemblage.

Further scrutiny of the data contained on Table 4 suggests that any attempt to infer the relative levels of archaeological activity along the length of Plot 4 on the basis of the distribution of the finds alone should be undertaken only with caution. Although the distribution of Roman finds accords well with the distribution of observed archaeological features, a broadly similar pattern can also be seen in the varying intensity of post-medieval sherds along the plot. A conscious effort was made on site to ensure an even and unbiased collection strategy, and there is no obvious reason why the distribution of post-medieval material should not - as might be expected - have been more even.

Other non-pottery finds from Plot 4 include: twenty-five coins (to be assessed); thirty-seven copper alloy fragments (mostly unidentified, but including two fragmentary brooches, one fragment of a bracelet and three pins); sixty pieces of iron - all but seven being nails - and a small (79g) piece of iron slag; fragments of plaster and tile, including flue tile, all of which was generally distributed along the trench. A small (2 - 3mm diameter) gold bead was retrieved from the surface of the stripped easement adjacent to Building I.

MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY

Previous archaeological observations in the area have indicated a density of medieval material at the northern end of the pipe trench immediately south of Wint Hill Lane. In addition to pottery, finds have included crested roof tile and other debris which may suggest the presence of buildings.

Stint	Chainage		Wt g.	Samian	Amphora	Oxford	NF	Med	P-Med
33	320+		184	2g			5g	✓	✓
32	310-320		219	11g		11g			✓
31	300-310		189			3g			✓
30	290-300		1,179	2g	195g	1g			
29	280-290		421	1g				✓	✓
28	270-280		133	1g					✓
27	260-270		100						✓
26	250-260		425	4g		26g			
25	240-250		352	2g		8g	3g		
24	230-240		187						
23	220-230		41						
22	210-220		Nil						
21	200-210		Nil						
20	190-200		142						
19	180-190		16	16g					
18	170-180		96	2g					
17	160-170		138						✓
16	150-160		83						
15	140-150		273	2g		2g		✓	✓
14	130-140		298			18g			✓
13	120-130		787	1g			3g		✓
12	110-120		216	4g					✓
11	100-110		458	1g	65g	2g		✓	✓
10	90-100		1,928	83g	30g	73g			✓
9	80-90		135						✓
8	70-80		72	5g					✓
7	60-70		172						✓
6	50-60		142	1g					✓
5	40-50		97			2g			
4	30-40		29						
3	20-30		20						✓
2	10-20		38			2g			✓
1	0-10		55	1g			1g	✓	✓

Table 4: Plot 4 - Unstratified Romano-British Pottery by Stint

Oxford = Oxford Ware

NF = New Forest Ware

	100 - 200g
	201 - 500g
	501 - 1000g
	1001g +

✓ Medieval /
post-Medieval
pottery also present

Seven sherds of medieval (probably 13th-century) pottery weighing 93g were recovered from a small charcoal-filled pit [context 174] within the pipe trench. Although no evidence for structures was obtained, three graves were recorded in the part of Plot 1 known as Chapel Close. In each case the graves were only clipped by the trenches, and, although bones were observed within the grave fill, it was decided to leave the skeletal remains *in situ*.

It has not been possible to date these features, but they are almost certainly an extension of the cemetery of 30 graves excavated in the 1950s within 50m of the present trench. Those burials were also orientated east to west, contained no grave goods or other items, but could be demonstrated to post-date the adjacent Roman settlement activity. The balance of evidence suggests this to be a small Christian cemetery, possibly associated with the medieval hamlet of Winthill.

Elsewhere, only very small quantities of medieval material were noted: a single pottery sherd (12g) from the upper fill of a Plot 4 pit [context 142] which also contained Roman material; eight sherds of pottery (46g) from the spoil adjacent to the pipe trench, also in Plot 4.

ADDENDUM: PROVISIONAL DESCRIPTIONS OF ROMAN STRUCTURES WITHIN PLOT 4

Building 1: Feature [37] [54] [55]

This feature was situated between c.298.00m and 352.50m along the pipe trench. It was a wall [54] located on the western side of the trench, which crossed the trench at an oblique angle SSE where it again occurred as [55] in the eastern side of the trench. At this point it then returned at a right angle SSW, crossed the trench and was recorded as [37] in the east facing section.

[54] comprised large angular faced dolomitic conglomerate and limestone of up to 0.20m - 0.40m in a linear arrangement, NNW to SSE. In plan they formed a herring bone configuration with a rubble and clay core. This feature measured 3.90m in length and varied in width from 0.10m at the northern end where it survived as a single course, to 0.35m at the southern end where several courses remained along with the rubble core foundations.

[55] comprised large angular faced dolomitic conglomerate and limestone blocks up to 0.35m with a rubble and clay core. At the southern end of this feature, the blocks appeared to have been pitched. Here the wall measured 2.30m in length and varied in depth from 0.55m at its northern end to 0.25m at the south where only the pitched stones remained.

[37] comprised faced dolomitic conglomerate and limestone blocks up to 0.35m. This return of the wall was tightly packed with yellowish mortar and purple brown clay. It measured 0.80m in width by 0.40m in depth.

A possible floor surface (34) consisting of a 0.07m thick layer of small dolomitic conglomerate, limestone and pennant stone fragments, was identified between [37] and [54], (to which it abutted). This layer also occurred in the eastern section although here in context, it could not be so clearly defined as a surface or possible floor.

Building 2: Feature [93]

Feature [93] was a wall located between c.185.00m to 193.50m along the western side of the pipe trench. It comprised faced dolomitic conglomerate stone and limestone blocks with a rubble core, and was oriented north - south. It was c. 9.00m in length and varied from 0.15m to 0.25m in depth. The wall had been truncated by the pipe trench at its southern most point. A possible wall butting up to [93] was noted in plan to the northern end of this feature at c. 192.00m but no further details were recorded.

Building 3: Features [118] [119] [125]

These features were noted in the western side of the pipe trench extending from c. 87.00m to 98.00m. Three walls were noted in this area, two of which [118] and [119], appeared to be associated, whilst the third [125] was possibly linked with a feature in the eastern side of the trench.

Feature [118]

Feature [118] lay between c. 94.00m and 96.00m along the western side of the pipe trench, and butted on to the apsidal wall [119]. This wall [118] comprised a short section of faced dolomite and limestone stones, oriented north - south, with a distinct curve to the east. Traces of a pink mortar were noted bonding the stones. The wall measured c. 2.00m in length, with an average depth of 0.15m. Only one course was shown clearly in section.

Beneath this feature lay a rubble layer, context (120). It consisted of large and apparently burnt angular and rounded dolomitic conglomerate and limestone, varying from 0.10m to 0.30m in size. The dolomite stones appeared pitched at the base of this layer, and so possibly this represents foundations for [118] or another wall. To the south, this feature appeared truncated by a feature which could be the trench excavated during 1962, by Axbridge Archaeological Society.

Feature [119]

Feature [119] was situated between 95.40m and c. 98.00m along the western side of the section, and between c. 97.00m and c. 98.00m on the eastern side. [119] comprised very substantial rubble wall of yellow dolomitic conglomerate with mortar bonding, and facing to north and south. The northern face was oriented east-west, whilst the southern face curved NE - SW. Both orientations could be traced through into the eastern section. i.e. an 'L' shape was formed in plan, with an internal curve giving the apsidal appearance. On the western side of the trench [119] measured 2.00m at its maximum width, whilst on the eastern side it tapered from 1.00m to 0.50m. At the base of the feature the stones had been pitched into naturally occurring compact red/purple clay. A very large ditch was located to the northern end of this wall, whilst the southern end was butted by [118].

Feature [125]

Feature [125] was located between c. 87.00m and 92.00m along the western section of the pipe trench. It comprised of angular and faced red and yellow dolomitic conglomerate and limestone blocks bonded by a pinkish mortar above footings of pitched stone. The stones were oriented north - south, ran for a total of 5.00m in length, and varied in width from 0.60m at the northern end to 0.15m at the southern end. A possible return of this wall was noted in the eastern side of the trench at c.92.50m, but no further detailed records were made of this feature.

No obvious floor surfaces were recorded associated with any of the above features in the east or west facing sections of the trench.

