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No. 1 Boscombe Road,  
Amesbury,  
Wiltshire:

archaeological watching brief

*Wessex Archaeology*

Ref. 47351.1

*November 1999*

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**NO. 1 BOSCOMBE ROAD, AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Prepared for:

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Report No. 47351.1

## SUMMARY

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by L.H. Mundy to carry out an archaeological watching brief on the plot of land previously occupied by the bungalow, 'Dun Servin', at 1 Boscombe Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire (SU 1665 4090).

A previous archaeological excavation immediately to the east of the present site, revealed a square enclosure of Romano-British date which was probably a field or garden plot. The enclosure was replaced by two trackways between which lay a series of quarry pits or working hollows. These features were also Romano-British in date.

Another length of the southernmost trackway was observed during the watching brief. Ditches, which probably belong to the extensive prehistoric or Romano-British field system known to exist in the area, were also identified. Other features included probable pits or ditch terminals likely to be of Romano-British date.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

L.H. Mundy commissioned the project. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Graeme Mundy and the groundwork contractors, Kevin Turner and Paul O’Gorman, for their co-operation during the course of the project. The collaborative role of Helena Cave-Penney of Wiltshire County Council is also acknowledged.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Rachael Seager Smith who also compiled this report; the illustrations were prepared by S.E. James. A.P. Fitzpatrick managed the project for Wessex Archaeology.

**'DUN SERVIN', 1 BOSCOMBE ROAD, AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by L.H. Mundy to carry out an archaeological watching brief on the plot of land previously occupied by the bungalow, 'Dun Servin', at 1, Boscombe Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire (SU 1665 4090) (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 The watching brief was requested by Salisbury District Council acting on the advice of the County Archaeological Officer as the site lies within an *Area of Special Archaeological Significance* identified by the Salisbury District Local Plan.
- 1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken during the groundwork on the site from the 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1999. These included the breaking out of the old foundations, cutting the footings for the two new semi-detached houses and the excavation of a soakaway to the rear of the new building.
- 1.1.4 Any further groundwork associated with the redevelopment (e.g. for drainage or alterations to access) will not be undertaken until the new building is completed and will, therefore form a separate stage of works.

**1.2 Location, Topography and Geology**

- 1.2.1 The site lies within a ribbon of houses on the south side of Boscombe Road, at SU 1665 4090. It was previously occupied by a bungalow with a patio and garden to the rear and is situated towards the top of a north-west/south-east aligned ridge at a height of around 109 m above Ordnance Datum. The land rises very slightly to the south. The underlying geology of the area comprises Upper Chalk of the Cretaceous period (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1:50,000 Drift Series sheet 298).

**1.3 Archaeological Background**

- 1.3.1 The site is located within a well-documented archaeological landscape. On the north side of Boscombe Road, archaeological investigations in advance of an ongoing residential development identified an unenclosed Romano-British settlement as well as activity of Neolithic and Bronze Age date (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996).
- 1.3.2 A detailed archaeological appraisal of a large area to the south (Wessex Archaeology 1993) was also undertaken in conjunction with proposals for residential development. Excavations by Wessex Archaeology in 1997 indicated that the Romano-British settlement extended across to the south side

of Boscombe Road and at its height in the Late Romano-British period may have covered at least 10 hectares.

- 1.3.3 One of these excavations, almost immediately east of the present site, revealed a square enclosure, probably a field or garden plot, which was replaced by two trackways between which were a series of quarry pits or working hollows. Several post-built structures, possibly buildings, were located further south. All the features were of Romano-British date.

## 2 METHODS

### 2.1 Removal of existing foundations

- 2.1.1 The foundations of 'Dun Servin' consisted of two pairs of concrete beams laid at right-angles to each other across the centre of the former bungalow, with a single beam supporting the outer walls. A shallow 'raft' of concrete, 0.05-0.1 m thick had been laid between them with the wooden floors of the structure suspended above.
- 2.1.2 The concrete beams were each approximately 0.6 m wide and 0.4 m thick; the central pairs had a gap c. 0.3-0.4 m wide between them.
- 2.1.3 These footings were only removed in areas where they interrupted the line of the new foundation trenches and consequently the old footings were broken out and the new trenches dug in a single operation. In general the old footings were pulled out by the mechanical excavator, which occasionally resulted in disturbance beyond the limits of the new trenches. These areas were 'patted' back into place by the mechanical excavator and/or filled with the next bucket-load of excavated spoil, leaving no opportunity for archaeological observation.

### 2.2 Foundation trenches

- 2.2.1 The new foundation trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with toothed bucket. The trenches were approximately 0.8 m wide and varied from 0.56-1.05 m deep.
- 2.2.2 Where archaeological features were apparent, the trench sections were rapidly hand-cleaned and, using plans provided by the builders, planned at a scale of 1:50 and photographed. No additional hand excavation was undertaken.
- 2.2.3 All the archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's standard *pro forma* recording system. Where time and conditions allowed, section drawings were prepared at a scale of 1:20, while the photographic archive consists of monochrome negative and colour transparencies in 35 mm format.

## 2.3 The Soakaway

- 2.3.1 The soakaway was excavated using a mini-mechanical excavator with toothed bucket. The soakaway was approximately 2.4 m long, 1.8 m wide and 1.4 m deep.
- 2.3.2 The location of this feature was recorded (Figure 2) but as no archaeologically significant features, deposits or artefacts were observed, no further recording was undertaken.

## 3 RESULTS

- 3.1.1 Detailed descriptions of the archaeological features revealed (Figure 2) are presented in Appendix 1 and summarised below.
- 3.1.2 The area formerly occupied by 'Dun Servin' itself had suffered considerable disturbance during both the construction and demolition of the bungalow. The original soil profile seems to have been removed to roughly the surface of the chalk during construction and, between the foundations, replaced by a layer of dirty soil, weathered chalk and rubble fragments (1, 13 and 16). Material that was indistinguishable from these deposits was also deposited during the demolition process.
- 3.1.3 Within the garden area, the topsoil (6) and subsoil (7) survived to surprising depths, 0.2 m and 0.5 m respectively, lying directly above the weathered surface of the natural chalk.
- 3.1.4 Nine archaeological features were identified, all cut into the natural chalk. One of these (35) contained the burial of a small dog in a wooden coffin and is of fairly recent date. Two stakeholes (19 and 20) probably also relate to the construction of 'Dun Servin'.
- 3.1.5 The new foundation trenches revealed a probable field boundary ditch (40). The ditch was approximately 1.5 m wide and at least 0.36 m deep. Its full depth was not established but the straight, steeply sloping sides suggest that it had a V-shaped profile, perhaps with a narrow, flattish base. It was filled with a compact, dark beige silty loam with small weathered chalk pieces (17, 23 and 26). The ditch continues to the south of the new houses but it was not traced to the north; either it terminated here or perhaps more probably, it turned and the upper part of its profile was cut away by feature 4 or 12.
- 3.1.6 At its southern end, ditch 40 was cut by trackway 41, indicating that it was earlier in date than the trackway. The trackway varied from 2.4 m to 2.8 m wide and was up to 0.4 m deep. The base of the trackway was characterised by deep wheel-ruts, approximately 2 m apart. The main part of the trackway was filled with grey-brown silty loams with sparse chalk and flint pieces (9, 28, 34 and 39). Three iron objects were found close to the westernmost section (34). The base of the wheel-ruts were filled with a hard, compact layer containing many flint chips (10, 29, 30), which may have been deliberately deposited to

prevent the track becoming impassable in wet, muddy conditions. This trackway was also identified during the earlier excavation to the east of the present site and probably ran into the heart of the Romano-British settlement.

- 3.1.7 Features 4 and 12 are difficult to interpret. Both have the straight, steeply sloping sides characteristic of boundary ditches in this area but their edges do not line up and 4 was much wider than 12. However, the fill of 12 (context 14) was very similar to the material filling the southern side of feature 4 (context 3). Although the material on the northern side of feature 4 (context 2) was of a different character to the fill of ditch 40, the northern edge of feature 4 continues the line of it. It is probable then that at least two ditches, perhaps recut on the same alignment, intersect in this area. A single horse tooth was found in context 2.
- 3.1.8 Features 5 and 31 may have been shallow pits or ditch terminals; neither extended across the whole width of the foundation trench. Feature 5 was at least 0.88 m wide and 0.3 m deep. One small piece of Romano-British pottery was found in its fill (8). Feature 31 was at least 2.3 m wide and 0.4 m deep. The natural chalk at the northern end of this feature was degraded, loose and friable, perhaps suggesting that this was a natural tree-throw hollow, although elsewhere the edges were clear and well-defined.

#### 4 FINDS

- 4.1.1 Very few artefacts were recovered from the features exposed during the groundwork; a sandy coarseware body sherd of Romano-British date from feature 5, a horse tooth from feature 4 and three iron objects from trackway 41. The iron objects comprise a large-headed nail, part of a ring approximately 50 mm in diameter and a corroded, unidentifiable, lump.
- 4.1.2 It is probable that the small number of finds reflects the very small proportion of each feature examined archaeologically rather than a genuine absence of finds across the site. The sections of the features were only examined during very rapid hand cleaning and no excavation was undertaken. It is probable that a far greater quantity and range of artefacts would have been recovered had excavation taken place.

#### 5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 Although the northern half of the plot had suffered considerable disturbance during the construction and demolition of 'Dun Servin' archaeological features were observed in this area (i.e. 4, 12 and segment 15 of ditch 40). The soil sequence in the rear of the plot, in the garden area, appears to survive undisturbed. This indicates the potential for the survival of further archaeological features both to the north, where they may be slightly truncated, and to the south of the house foundations, where they are likely to survive intact.



- 5.1.2 The features revealed were directly comparable with those exposed during the excavation located almost immediately east of the present site (Wessex Archaeology in prep.). A further length of the Late Romano-British trackway was examined while the ditches probably belong to the extensive system of field boundary ditches of prehistoric or Romano-British date that are known from aerial photographic surveys of the area (RCHME 1994) and excavations in the vicinity (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996; Wessex Archaeology in prep.).
- 5.1.3 The absence of direct dating evidence hampers the interpretation of features 5 and 31 but it is probable that these too are of Romano-British date. They are most likely to be pits, quarries or ditch terminals although it is conceivable that feature 31 represents a tree-throw hollow.
- 5.1.4 It should also be noted that the concentration of artefacts in the area immediately east of the present site was also less dense than in the other areas of excavation on both sides of the Boscombe Road. The features revealed there and on the present site indicated that the area was initially used for crop processing or stock keeping and later on, for a trackway and for quarrying. These activities would have produced less domestic, industrial or agricultural waste, which today we recognise as archaeological finds, than those undertaken closer to the heart of the settlement.

## 6 THE ARCHIVE

- 6.1.1 The project records have been compiled to form an indexed and internally cross-referenced archive which is currently stored at the offices of Wessex Archaeology under the project code 47351 but which will be deposited with The Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, 65 The Close, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2EN in due course.

## 7 REFERENCES

Rawlings M., and Fitzpatrick A.P., 1996, 'Prehistoric sites and a Romano-British settlement at Butterfield Down, Amesbury', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 89, 1-43.

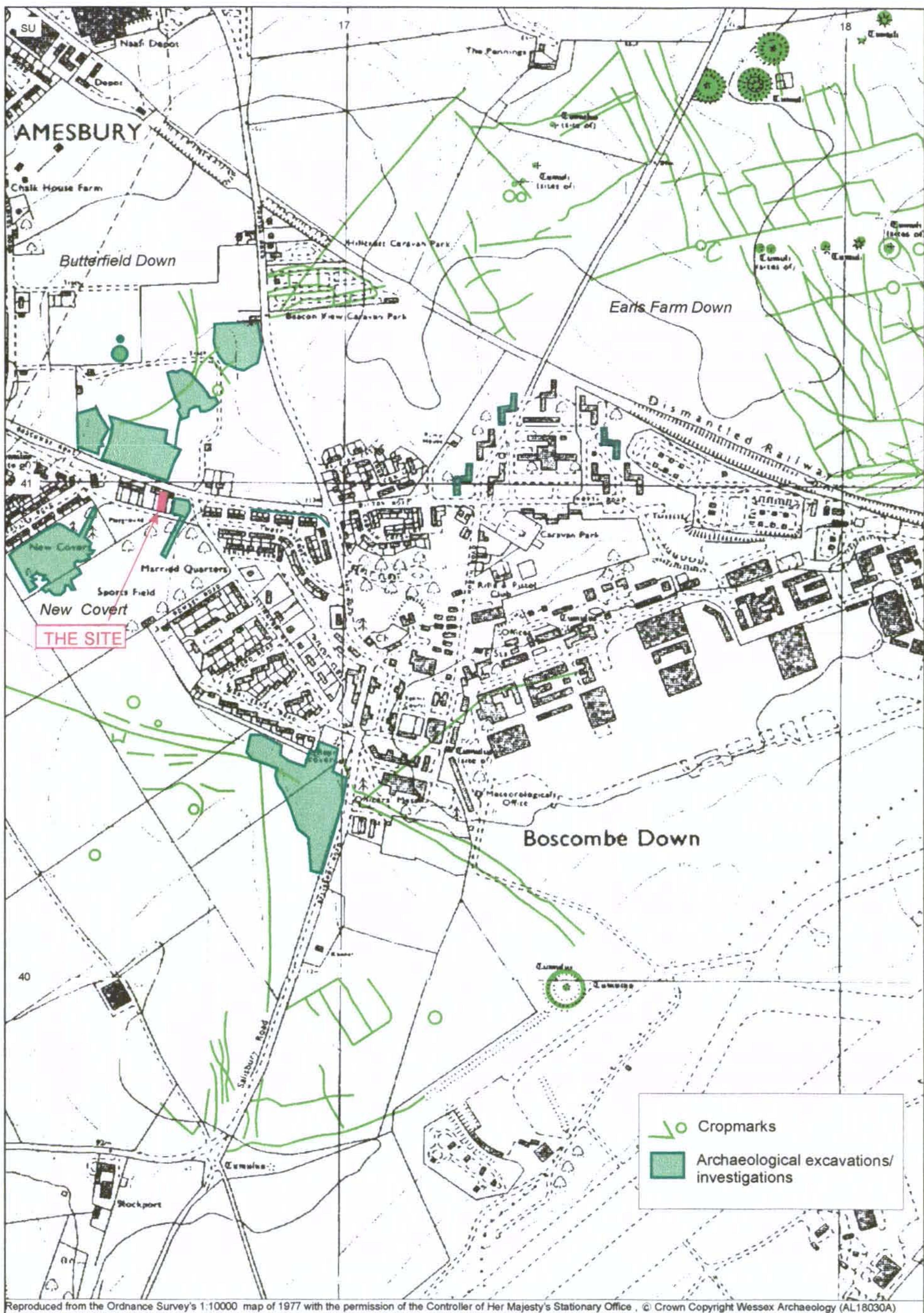
RCHME, 1994, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *Land South-east of Amesbury: air photographic transcription and analysis*, Swindon, unpublished client report, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.

Wessex Archaeology 1993, *Land South-East of Amesbury, Wiltshire, archaeological desk-based assessment*, Salisbury, Wessex Archaeology unpublished client report 36872.1.

## APPENDIX 1

Feature no.	Segment no.	Context no.	Description
		1, 13, 16 and 24	Present ground surface across the northern part of the site, much disturbed. Dirty grey-brown sandy loam with loose brick and concrete lumps, wood fragments, lino chips etc. and rare flints < 0.1 m across. Depth variable 0.15 m-0.36 m.
4		2 3	Feature type uncertain but probably part of a ditch. Straight, moderately sloping sides; 0.34 m deep (min. - not fully excavated). Southern edges approximately parallel in both sections of the foundation trench but longer in the west facing section (3.4 m) than the east one (2 m) Upper fill, present of north side of the feature, overlying 3. Mid grey-brown sandy loam with rare chalk and flint lumps <0.08 m across. 1 horse tooth recovered. 0.34 m deep (min.). Lower fill, present on south side of feature, below 2. Mid grey-brown sandy loam with moderate to common chalk <0.05 m across. 0.3 m deep (min.). Very similar in appearance to context 14 (feature 12).
5		8	Feature type uncertain but probably a pit or ditch terminal. Northern side was almost vertical, the western edge gently sloping, flattish base. 0.88 m (min.) wide and 0.3 m deep. Fill. Light grey-brown silty loam with rare flints <0.1 m across and common chalk flecks. One tiny fragment of Romano-British pottery – a sandy coarseware fabric.
		6	Topsoil. Very dark grey-brown, virtually stone-free, silty loam. Up to 0.2 m deep. Only present across the southern, garden area of the site and partially removed so that machines can move around.
		7	Subsoil. Mid grey-brown silty loam with moderate chalk flecks <15 mm across, rare to sparse flints and chalk lumps <0.1 m across and occasional rubble fragments. Up to 0.5 m deep. Only present across the southern, garden area of the site.
12		14	Feature type uncertain but probably part of a ditch. Straight, steeply sloping sides, c. 1.7 m wide and 0.4 m (min.) deep – not bottomed. Fill. Beneath 13. Mid grey-brown silty loam with common to abundant weathered chalk pieces <0.05 m across and occasional charcoal flecks. Visually similar to context 3 (feature 4).
19		18	Feature of uncertain shape with a stake hole in the base; 0.44 m wide and 0.4 m deep. Cut from a high level so likely to be of recent origin, perhaps associated with the construction of 'Dun Servin'. Fill. Dark grey-brown silty loam with rare to sparse chalk flecks <10 mm across and charcoal flecks, especially near the base of the stakehole. Probably derived from the topsoil (context 6).
20		21	Stakehole seen only in plan in the base of the foundation trench. Circular, 0.04 m in diameter, not excavated. Fill. Dark grey-brown silty loam with rare to sparse chalk flecks <10 mm across.

Feature no.	Segment no.	Context no.	Description
31		32	Feature type uncertain but probably a pit or ditch terminal; did not extend across the width of the footing trench. 0.4 m deep and 2.3 m (min.) wide with straight moderately sloping sides and a flat base. Natural chalk at northern end was weathered and degraded (although elsewhere they were reasonably well defined) indicating that that feature just might be a tree-throw hollow. Fill. Mid brown silty loam with common chalk pieces up to 0.05 m across and rare charcoal flecks <10 mm across.
35		36	Dog grave. Cut from a high level. Stepped in cross section (a compacted T shape), 0.6 m wide at the top, 0.4 m wide below the level of the natural chalk and 0.43 m deep.
		38	Wooden coffin made from nailed planks. Only survived below the surface of the chalk. 0.4 m wide, 0.2 m deep.
		37	Skeleton of a small dog. Fill. Mid grey-brown silty loam with common chalk flecks <10 mm across and rare chalk and flint pieces <0.08 m across.
40	15	17	Ditch running SW-NE across the site. 1.5 m wide, 0.36 m deep (min. – not fully excavated. Straight, steeply sloping sides – probably a V-shaped profile. Probably turns at its northern end and recut on the same alignment or cut by feature 4 or 12. Three segments exposed: Upper part of the profile survived in the gap between the E-W concrete foundations of 'Dun Servin'. Filled with dark beige silty loam with common weathered chalk pieces <0.05 m across. 17 stratigraphically below 16.
	22	23	Central segment. Filled with dark beige silty loam with abundant weathered chalk pieces <0.05 m across and rare charcoal flecks <10 mm across. 23 stratigraphically below 24.
	25	26	Southernmost segment exposed but continued beyond to the south. Upper part of profile cut away by trackway 41. Filled with dark beige silty loam with abundant weathered chalk pieces <0.05 m across.
41	11	9	Trackway running for c. 13.5 m across the site, just north of SE-NE. 2.4 m - 2.8 m wide and 0.23 m - 0.4 m deep. Main fill of 11. Pale grey-brown silty loam with sparse chalk and flint <0.1 m across. Same as 28.
	27	10	Lower fill of 11, apparent on eastern side only – may be fill of a rut. Pale creamy brown silty loam with common blue-grey flints <0.05 m across. Hard, compact material. Similar to 29. Centre of the two main ruts was 2.07 m apart (inner edges of ruts 1.64 m apart). Southern rut – 0.5 m wide, 0.15 m deep; northern rut – 0.45 m wide and 0.1 m deep with a deeper central groove 0.12 m wide in its base. Cuts segment 25 of ditch 40.
	33	28	Main fill of 27. Same as 9 – pale grey-brown silty loam with sparse chalk and flint <0.1 m across.
		29	Located in the base of 27, just above natural chalk, to the north of the southern rut. Pale brown silty loam with moderate to common blue-grey flint pieces. Similar to 10.
		30	Fill of northern rut. Pale red-brown silty loam with common blue-grey flint chips <20 mm across. Very hard and compact.
		39	Basal fill of southern rut. Dark grey silty loam with common chalk flecks <10 mm across.
		34	Westernmost segment observed. Deep wheel ruts on southern and northern edges (0.5 m - 0.6 m wide and 0.3 m deep) with a narrower (0.3 m), shallower (0.28 m) one slightly off-centre between them. Fill of 33. Pale brown sandy loam with moderate to common flints <0.1 m across and rare to sparse chalk <0.05 m across. 3 iron objects found in the base of the southern rut.



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Figure 1: Site location showing archaeology in the area.

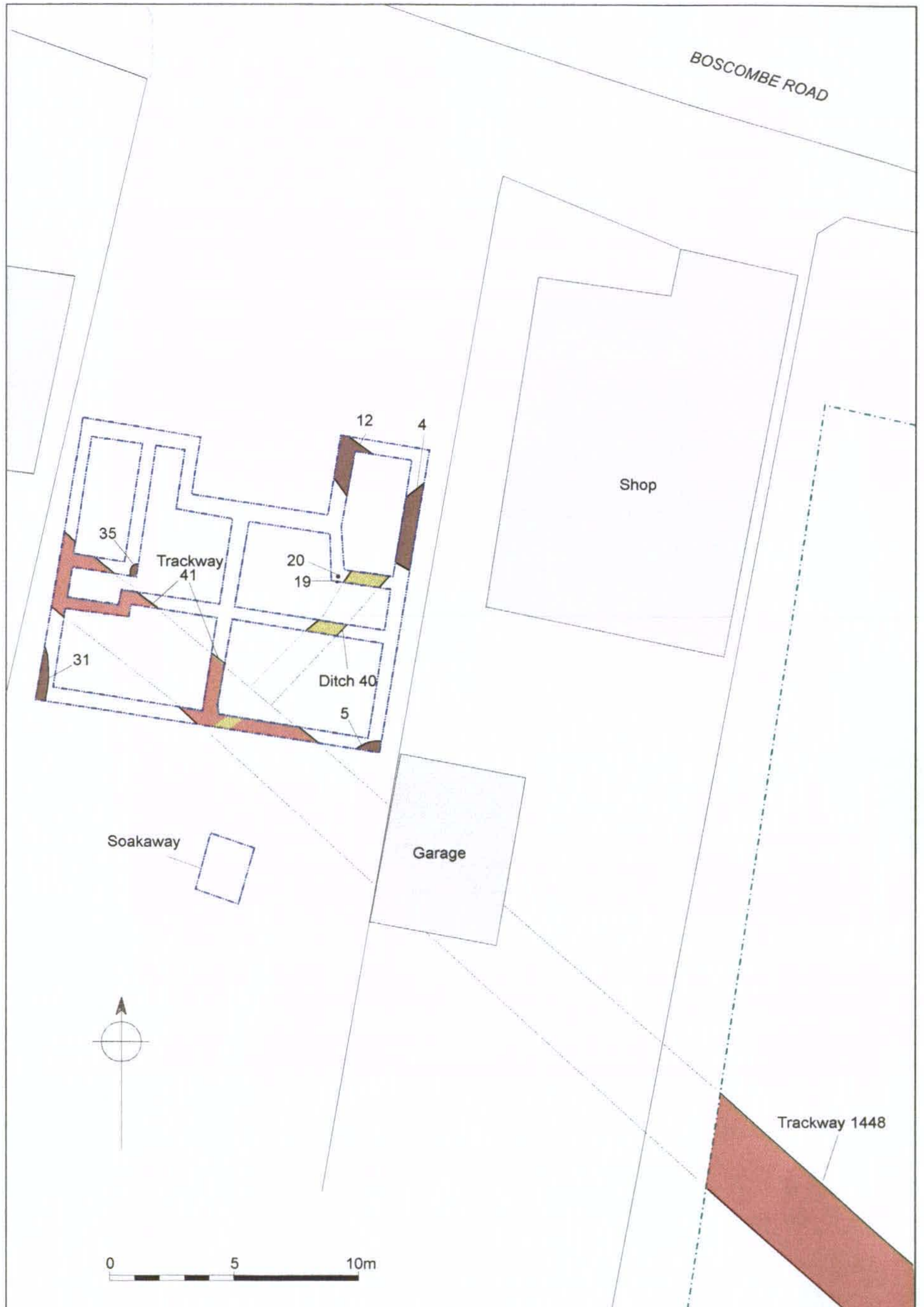
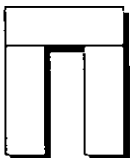


Figure 2: Building footprint showing archaeological features



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