THE FORMER ALLOTMENTS, CHURCH KNAPP, WYKE REGIS, WEYMOUTH
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

1 SUMMARY

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group on behalf of Trencherwood Homes Limited prior to the proposed development of the former allotments at Church Knapp, Weymouth. This development involved the proposed construction of 39 domestic dwellings with an associated access road.

An initial evaluation, involving the excavation of 11 trenches totalling 265 linear metres, revealed the focus of activity to be confined to the central and south-western part of the investigation area. This activity took the form of six features, clearly predating allotment usage, the most extensive of which was a layer of stone, packed into a wide slot cut into the natural clay. This was bounded by a kerb on two sides and had an apparent length of 16m. No burials were exposed during the evaluation.

The excavation phase of these investigations concentrated on the southern half of the north-south arm of the development area. This related to the area to be directly affected by the housing development. This revealed a sequence of activity spanning many centuries. The majority of this activity occurred between the 8th century BC (Early Iron Age) and the 3rd century AD (Romano-British), although there was residual lithic evidence of this site being used during the Neolithic period.

Although the archaeological resource was divided into four geographically discrete areas, it was possible to assign these areas to two distinct phases of activity. Whilst the purpose and date of a number of features, especially those around the periphery of the excavation area, remain subject to speculation, the function, date and overall significance of the site and its environment have been clearly demonstrated.

The earliest activity recorded took the form of a terrace, cut into the south-facing slope of the hill known as Church Knapp. In the flat base of this terrace were features attributed to the eighth century BC that appear to have been in use when the terrace was consolidated. This consolidation involved laying a packed surface of small stones into the base of the terrace and revetting the terrace cut itself with a low wall of 'beach-boulders'. These are most likely to have been carried up from the beaches along the West Fleet or the rocky outcrops of Western Ledges around what is now Sandsfoot Castle. It is likely that this consolidation took place around the first century BC. Unfortunately this phase had been heavily truncated, and in part completely cut away by activity associated with the second phase of occupation.

The second phase was similar to the first in that the major structural element consisted of a relatively shallow cut in the natural that had been consolidated and accentuated by the use of small-stone metalling and beach-boulder retaining walls. This phase was constructed on a much grander scale taking the form of a trackway, most likely used as a processional avenue leading to just below the crest of Church Knapp. The layer of stone recorded in Evaluation Trench 2 proved to be part of this trackway. The consolidation and quite possibly the construction of this linear feature appear to have taken place during the first century AD with evidence for continued use through to the third century.

This possible processional avenue was thought to be directly associated with a group of burials, pits and postholes which were excavated to the east. A total of five inhumations were identified, displaying varying burial techniques thought to represent a transition from so-called 'pagan' burial practices through to the gradual adoption of early Christianity. All the discrete burials recovered during this work were female whilst the disarticulated assemblage also contained the remains of juvenile and neonatal/foetal skeletons. The absence of male interments may be a function of their burial elsewhere, possibly in a higher status area nearer the summit of the hill.

To the south of these graves was a group of postholes showing little evidence of structural regularity which clearly relate to activity immediately beyond the eastern limit of excavation in this area. Although these post holes remain undated it is possible that they represent some ceremonial shrine or elaborate grave marker, most likely from the second phase of archaeological activity.

A heavily truncated but nonetheless major boundary ditch running east-west across the southern part of the site was thought to have enclosed the ceremonial area during the second phase of occupation and acted to delimit the proximity of domestic activity to the monument. This theory is borne out by the presence of boundary ditches and domestic structural elements immediately to the south of the burial ground boundary. The easternmost end of this latter feature showed signs of an entrance into the burial ground from the southeast and this part of the site produced evidence for continued maintenance of the boundary line.

Around the third century AD, the burials were capped by a protective layer of packed stone. This stone capping is likely to have been robbed from one or more of the other stone structures on site and was thought to denote the cessation of use or importance of both the structure from which it was robbed and the burial ground itself

In summary, it would appear that this area, the crest and southern side of Church Knapp, was utilised as a burial ground or sacred area for around 1100 years between the Early Iron Age and the third century AD. The information recovered during these works show a consolidated Iron Age platform below the brow of the hill giving way to a processional avenue

leading to a hilltop burial-ground during the first half of the Roman occupation of Britain. During this time, occupation of the hillside immediately outside the cemetery became established. The abandonment of this ritual site was a deliberate action in which graves and other funerary features were protected from desecration before the site was abandoned.

Quite possibly, the use of this hilltop promontory, along with the neighbouring hilltop, as elements of a ritually important landscape extends a good deal further back in time than the Early Iron Age. Given that the eastern site boundary is shared with an overflow cemetery for a neighbouring church it seems likely that this hilltop promontory continued as a ritual site onward from the third century to the present day.

2 INTRODUCTION

Site Location (Figure 1)

2.1 Wyke Regis lies to the south-west of Weymouth in the district of Weymouth and Portland, Dorset. The proposed development was to take place in an area which at the time of this investigation was occupied by allotments, most of which were out of use and which occupied an 'L' shaped area around the crest of a hill known as Church Knapp, the ground surface falling from 69.00mOD in the North to 57.00mOD in the south-west.

2.2 The site lies to the south of Wyke Road (NGR SY 6707 7828). A covered reservoir occupies the crest of the hill to the north-east. The ground falls a little to the east but mainly to the south and west. The underlying Jurassic geology consists of Corallian Series Grits and Clays (Sandersfoot Grit/Sandersfoot Clay).

Planning Background

2.3 A planning application (No. 4/98/309) was made by Trencherwood Homes Ltd to Weymouth and Portland District Council for development of the allotments to provide 39 residential units.

2.4 The District Council, taking into account the potential archaeological importance of the site, requested that the developer commission an archaeological evaluation of the area. AOC Archaeology Group was commissioned to submit a Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 1998a) for this initial investigation to the Council's Archaeological Advisor, in line with Government Planning Guidance PPG 16 (DoE 1990).

2.5 Following approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation by the Development Control Archaeologist (Mr. Steve Wallis), AOC Archaeology carried out an archaeological field evaluation, the results of which were laid out in an archive report (AOC 1998b). This report was submitted to the Development Control Archaeologist, the local planning authority and the developer.

2.6 The Planning Department of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, following advice from Mr Wallis, granted planning permission for the redevelopment on the condition that further archaeological work be carried out prior to the commencement of any intrusive groundworks. AOC Archaeology was commissioned to submit a second Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 1998c) for approval by Mr. Wallis. This investigation took the form of an open area excavation and the results of that work are contained within.

Historical Background

2.7 The Dorset County Sites and Monuments Record contains a number of records for the site and its immediate vicinity. Two burials, each with a pottery vessel, were found in the Glebe Allotments in 1858. One of these was in a cist and slabs associated with two other possible cists were also recorded.

2.8 During the c.1900 construction of the original part of the reservoir, to the immediate north-east of the application site, a bead-rimmed jar containing a samian cup and a coin of Faustina were recorded. Construction of the second part of the reservoir in 1936 revealed at least three further burials, one of which was in a stone cist. One skeleton is recorded as having been discovered at a depth of 4 ft (1.22m) below the ground surface. This was also recorded as having been disturbed, and being in poor condition (PDNHAS 1949)

2.9 Further burials were also discovered some 400m to the west of the application site. In 1937, a cist burial was found during the digging of drainage ditches in Overlands Road.

2.10 In 1975 four burials were discovered during the digging of service trenches for a new housing estate to the west of Lea Road. These were excavated and recorded by archaeologists (Dockrill 1981). There appeared to have been two phases of activity here, with earlier burials disturbed by excavation for later ones, and a date range spanning from the late Iron Age to the early Roman period.

2.11 The two grave groups occupied small areas above the 60.00mOD contour on adjacent hilltops and would have both commanded excellent views inland and over the sea.

Archaeological Background

2.12 A Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 1998c) was submitted by AOC Archaeology Group to the Development Control Archaeologist for Dorset County Council. This proposed the removal by mechanical excavator of overburden down to the underlying Jurassic clays except where archaeological deposits survived overlying this material. This was carried out over the south-western third of the development area (Area A, Figure 2), following which a review of the site was made by Trencherwood Homes Ltd. and AOC Archaeology Group in conjunction with Dorset County Council Environmental Services and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council.

2.13 This review was to take into account the quantity and type of archaeological remains present on site and the resources necessary to meet the aims of the excavation.

2.14 If the decision was made not to proceed with the development, the exposed remains were to be reburied in such a way that they would not be damaged by the process.

2.15 If, however, the decision made was to continue with the development, the area immediately to the north (Area B, Figure 2) was to be stripped in the same way in order to expose the full extent of the large stone structure identified during the archaeological evaluation. A minimum of 5m around the edge of this structure was to be cleared of overburden in order to determine the presence or absence of any associated features. Should any such remains exist and extend beyond this area, the extent of machine clearance was to be determined in consultation with Dorset County Council, taking into consideration the proposed extent of the impact of the development.

2.16 Areas where definite or possible archaeological features were observed were to be hand cleaned and all features planned. They would then be fully or partially excavated and recorded in order to establish their date, character and extent.

2.17 Provision was made for post excavation analysis and a report to Level 3 as outlined by English Heritage in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 1998c). Work was carried out to the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994). An interim report was issued *pro temps* (AOC 1999).

2.18 As a result of unforeseen circumstances post-excavation, the project was put on hold indefinitely. Now reactivated, this document comprises the archive report to be followed up subsequently with a published report in the form of an article for the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society.

3 STRATEGY

Research Design

3.1 The aims of investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 1998c) were:

- to recover sufficient data for the site to be preserved by record in advance of the remains being disturbed by the proposed development. The collection of data leading to appropriate analysis of the contextual data, artefacts and samples in order to provide a suitable level of publication of the results of the investigations.

- to record data on the 'ritual platform', any related features and the settlement site in order to understand the chronological development of the two elements and their interaction over time.

Specific aims relating to the platform included:

- Is the platform isolated or are there contemporary related features?

- When was the platform constructed and for how long was it in use?

- What was the purpose of the feature? Was it ritual or do other related features indicate an alternative function?

- The evaluation revealed the presence of significant amounts of animal bone in/on the surface of the platform. Do these derive from funerary feasting? If so, were particular animals used for this purpose? Were whole animals used or did slaughter and butchery occur elsewhere?

- Is the axis of the platform related to other features, the natural topography or indeed the vista from the site?

Specific aims relating to the settlement included:

- What type of settlement was present on this slope? Was it an established settlement site or was it used only occasionally for more specific activities?

- Is the main part of the site within the development area or are the remains peripheral to the main activity focus?

- When was the settlement established and when was it abandoned? Was occupation continual or are there two distinct phases of occupation (early 1st century AD, and 3rd-4th century) as was indicated by the results of the evaluation.

- If the site was only used for specific activities, what were they?

- If the site was a permanent settlement what was the agricultural base? Were specific craft activities undertaken at the site?

- What was the status of the site? The evaluation found that 93.8% of the pottery fabrics were black-burnished wares, mostly of local origin. However, a narrow range of fine and specialist wares were present as well. Is this proportion confirmed by the further work on the site and how does it relate to other types of contemporary sites in the region? Can the probable black-burnished wares that were generally rather finer than the 'typical' Poole harbour fabric be tied to a particular production centre?

- Is it possible to determine the character of the general landscape during the period(s) of occupation through the recovery of palaeoenvironmental remains, e.g. carbonised seeds, and snails?

- Do the ditches represent a field system that was either contemporary with the settlement activity (which was peripheral to the main activity focus) or in use at a time when 'settlement activities' were not active at the site? Alternatively, do the ditches represent boundaries to paddocks immediately adjacent to areas of buildings/other activity areas?

- If building remains are present, what form did they take and did the style differ over time?

3.2 An aim was to recover artefacts other than pottery that may provide information on trade patterns, economic and craft activities and status.

Methodology

3.3 The area of initial stripping (Area A) totalled c. 5000m^2 and was located so as to expose all parts of the development area identified by the archaeological evaluation as containing archaeological remains excepting (at that stage) the part of the stone structure which lay outside the main impact area.

3.4 Initial excavation was carried out using a 13 ton, 360° mechanical excavator operated by a qualified driver. The machine was equipped with a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket. Excavation extended to the surface of the natural deposits under constant archaeological supervision. This overburden was removed from the area of excavation by two 5 tonne dumpers also driven by qualified operators. On instruction from the developers there was no separation of the topsoil and subsoil.

3.5 The proposed development area extended in the west across a public right of way and well-established hedge into a thin strip of allotment land. In order to maintain the right of way it was agreed with the Development Control Archaeologist to investigate this western extreme of site by a series of four trenches lettered from C through to F. All were 10m in length, orientated north-south and located along the western perimeter of the development area.

3.6 The thickness of this overburden varied from 0.32m in the northern part of the access road to 1.35m in the south-east of site and in Trench F. In both the open area and the trenches the overburden was machined in spits of not more than 0.15m, down onto the surface of the underlying natural clays except where archaeological remains existed. In the north this overburden consisted of topsoil and a thin, patchy subsoil. In the south-east, south-west and west this also included a deposit of colluvium which increased in thickness away from the crest of the hill.

3.7 All archaeological remains encountered were hand-cleaned and planned at a scale of 1:50. At this point a decision was made that the amount and type of exposed archaeological remains and the resources needed to meet the aims of investigation did not exceed those anticipated by the developer and as a result Area B, along with the access road and Trenches C-F were to be stripped of overburden in the same manner as area A.

3.8 Mechanical reduction of overburden in the immediate vicinity of the stone structure was halted immediately above its curbing stones leaving the fill of the sunken feature between these curbs *in-situ*. A series of four test pits (sondages) perpendicular to the long axis of the structure were excavated by hand through this material. These extended down to the metalled surface below, in order to record the stratigraphy of this infill. On completion of the excavation and recording of these sondages, the bulk of the fill material was removed by means of mechanical mini-excavator equipped with 1m and 0.45m toothless buckets. The decision to use such a machine was made in response to the amount of material to be removed in order to expose the entire length of the structural remains. This work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision and in such a way as to avoid the machine tracking across either the exposed metalling or any other exposed archaeological remains. The exposed structure was then cleaned by hand and recorded.

3.9 A proportion of all archaeological deposits exposed were excavated and a written record of all deposits was produced, supported by both section and plan drawings.

3.10 Levels for each context were established relative to Ordnance Datum (OD) using the benchmark located on a stone wall (NGR SY 6635 7911) along the northern perimeter of the covered reservoir. The value of this benchmark was shown on the Ordnance Survey Superplan as being 69.81m OD. Temporary benchmarks (TBM) were established at 63.63m OD and 61.01m OD.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Contexts from the evaluation are shown in italics.

4.2 The dating evidence recovered from artefactual analysis shows two main periods of activity with some residual Neolithic activity and an abandonment phase.

Period 1 - Natural deposits

4.3 The natural deposits uniformly consisted of a pale yellow clay across the site with occasional patches of reddish-brown silty-sand (013, *1/007, 2/008, 3/013, 4/005, 5/008, 6/003, 7/002, 8/003, 9/003, 10/010, 11/003*). In circumstances where (013) was burnt, such as in pit [187], it was recorded as being a dark reddish-purple.

Residual Neolithic/Early Bronze Age

4.4 The primary phase of activity was characterised exclusively by the assemblage of worked chert and flint (see Appendix I). The majority of the worked stone recovered from the site was chert with only 12.5% of the artefacts being flint. No diagnostic pieces were recovered but the retouched types present and the technology employed would suggest a Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date. One single platform core and a core fragment were recovered. The former had been carefully worked with some traces of platform edge abrasion. The retouched forms include scrapers and two miscellaneous pieces which may be scrapers or knife fragments.

4.5 The earliest deposit to produce worked stone was (176), the secondary fill of pit [177], thought to have been infilled around the 1st century BC (Period II). A little over two thirds of the assemblage derives from contexts of the third period of occupation (1st century BC/AD to 3rd/4th century AD) whilst the remainder derive from even more recent deposits.

4.6 On the basis of these results it seems probable that the assemblage of worked stone is residual in nature.

4.7 The worked stone assemblage was concentrated to the north of the site. It is possible that as this area had the highest concentration of features, it consequently had a higher potential for the containment of such residual material. However, the distribution in the north would imply that if Neolithic/early Bronze Age activity were widespread across the excavation area, a higher proportion of the features in the southwest would also contain such artefacts.

4.8 For the reasons given above and because of its obvious importance, the hilltop area is thought to be the most likely site for Neolithic activity with artefactual material being moved downslope and diminishing in density away from the focal point. Although this material is residual across the excavation area, the

Neolithic/early Bronze Age activity cannot be disregarded as being in no way related to the later land use. It is reasonable to speculate that burial rituals and indeed ceremonies of all kinds, took place on such a prominent hilltop long before the 7th century BC.

4.9 In many ways it seems unlikely that a site with the surrounding topography and vista of Church Knapp would not have been valued by earlier occupants within the area. It is not unreasonable to postulate that the Iron Age and Romano-British remains described below were an elaboration of a smaller Neolithic/early Bronze Age hilltop burial ground or ritual site.

Period II (7th Century – 1st Century BC)

4.10 The second period of activity at Church Knapp comprised the earliest archaeological features on site. The dating for these features came predominantly from the pottery recovered although some contexts that did not produce pottery were placed in this phase as a result of their relationship with later features that could be dated.

4.11 Of the features within this period, the two apparently earliest were [153] and [177]. [153] constituted a very shallow linear cut with concave sides and base. Terminating in the central part of the northern area of the site, it ran for 15.35m to the south-west where it turned sharply to the south before being completely truncated by later features. The feature was a consistent 1.50m wide and did not exceed 0.09m deep. From this it was assumed that this represented the remnants of a ditch that was originally cut from higher up and was subsequently truncated by later activity. [153] was filled with (154), a very stony deposit in a matrix of pale grey brown silty clay. Pressed into the base of the ditch and in the lower levels of the fill were a number of artefacts including pottery dating to the early-Middle Iron Age (7th-4th centuries BC).

4.12 [177] took the form of a roughly circular cut, 2.20m in diameter with irregular, generally steep concave sides and an irregular but level base. The sides of this pit had collapsed, probably whilst it was still open, with the result that the primary fill (178) consisted solely of slumped natural clay. This material did contain the fragmented remains of a pottery vessel dating to the 7th–4th century BC. The sides of the cut were so weathered in places that it was postulated that the feature could represent an infilled tree bole. Overlying (178) a secondary fill (176) of dark grey brown silty clay also produced a number of artefacts such as animal bone and pottery dating from the 7th–5th century BC. Although this feature was considerably deeper than [153], it had also been truncated from above. Indeed its northern edge coincides with, and forms part of, the back edge of a terrace cut [022] which has most likely reduced the top edge of both [153] and [177] by approximately 0.3-0.4m.

4.13 This terrace cut [022], filled with packed stone (167), had a very irregular shape in plan and it was thought likely that it was associated with another, similarly irregular, terrace cut [208] to the south-east. [208] was similarly

filled with packed stone (200). [208] and [022] were divided by a large linear cut [189] from a later period but the similarities in both form and construction cannot be dismissed. The larger and better preserved of the two features was [022] which occupied an area 15.30m long and a maximum of 4.60m wide. The 'back edge' of the terrace, where the flat base cuts most deeply into the surrounding hill formed a large, rounded right-angle. A roughly straight east-west edge, cut through by later activity in the east, ran for 4.60m and turned in a broad curve to run generally south for 14.3m before once again being cut through by the same later feature. This edge showed no evidence of being revetted with stone and as a result the cut edge had lost definition through weathering and slumping. This may account for much of the irregular shape. As already mentioned, although the terrace was recorded as being a maximum of 0.28m deep, it can be assumed that horizontal truncation in the form of agroturbation during allotment usage has also removed upwards of 0.10m, possibly more.

4.14 The base of terrace cut [022] had been consolidated with a metalled surface of small angular stones (167). This stone was comprised predominantly of limestone. It was thought that this material constituted water-worn beach boulders that had been broken into fragments most probably at the collection point for ease of transport. The metalling was compacted directly onto the natural clay base and also sealed (176). For this reason it was assumed that this pit was already partially if not totally infilled when terrace [022] was cut. Conversely, ditch [153] was filled with material almost identical to metalling (167) and consequently the ditch was thought to be empty and still in use prior to the cutting of the terrace. The metalling was an average of 0.10m thick. Contained within (167) were a small number of limestone-tempered Iron Age sherds, and two sherds of *Durotrigian* type Black Burnished ware, which hints at later Iron Age. With no further information regarding where these later sherds were found, it is difficult to assess whether, for example, they were intrusive as a result of later use. This may hint at a prolonged period of use for the terrace throughout the Iron Age period.

4.15 Some 8.00m to the south-east of [022] a similar terrace was recorded as [208]. This also comprised a heavily weathered 'back edge' and flat base containing a metalling of small stones (200). As with [022], this cut edge was not revetted although it had been dissected by water-cut run-off gullies. The area of this terrace and the metalling in the base measured 4.80m northeast–southwest and 3.60m east-west. In addition to being cut through in the north and west, the metalling and a considerable amount of natural deposition (013), had been removed to the south by a late robbing event [199]. The cut and consolidation of this terrace closely resembled [022] and (167) to the north-west and it seems very likely that the two features were parts of the same structure.

4.16 Also considered to belong to this period of activity were two inhumation burials (113) and (120). (113) comprised the crouched, largely complete remains of an adult female aged between 25 and 35 whom appeared to be in relatively good health (see Appendix F). (113) was buried in a rounded rectangular cut [112] with moderately steep concave sides and a slightly

concave base. The fill of the grave (114) was a mottled orange brown sandy silt which produced pottery dating to between the 7th and 2nd century BC. The long axis of the grave was aligned northeast–southwest, measuring 1.56m, with the head at the north-eastern end. No grave goods were recovered although it is probable that these, if present, would have been removed or destroyed during later activity on site.

4.17 (120) comprised the half crouched remains of another adult, probably a female, with developed osteoarthritis and spinal pathology, aged between 33 and 45 at time of death (see Appendix F). This individual had been laid in the grave with the legs drawn up to the abdomen but with the back and neck straight. The grave cut [121] for this burial was a rounded rectangular cut with moderately steep slightly concave sides and flat base. The long axis of this grave was aligned north–south with the head at the northern end. The grave was 1.90m long, 0.94m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.32m. The fill of this grave (119) was a dark orange brown silty clay which produced pottery dating to between the 7th and 2nd centuries BC. As with [112], no grave goods were recovered although the greater depth of this grave would suggest that if grave goods were originally laid with the body at least a trace of them might have survived.

4.18 Only four other unrelated features were identified as belonging to this period of activity. Two of these were thought to be pits [133] and [143] infilled with rubbish deposits. The remaining two, based on their size and shape, were described as post holes/pits [131] and [191].

4.19 Pit cut [133] measured 1.49m in length by 1.30m wide, with a maximum depth of 0.27m. The sides were nearly vertical in places and the base of the feature more or less flat. The primary fill (137) of this feature was a very thin layer of fine black silty clay of uncertain origin containing no datable evidence. (137) occurred in patches across the central area of the base and may simply have been root staining, as there was no evidence of any burning activity. The main fill (132) was a dark brownish-grey fine sandy clayey-silt containing occasional charcoal flecks, small clasts of sandstone and limestone, animal bone, and a small quantity of pot dating to the first millennium BC.

4.20 Pit [143] was roughly circular with a diameter of 1.32m and 0.21m deep. The base of this feature was more concave than [133], but the sides were similarly steep. The fill (144) was a firm black clay mixed with reddish-orange clay, and appeared to be largely comprised of burnt material, including charcoal, animal bone and degraded cobble-sized limestone clasts.

4.21 Oval pit [131] was cut through the south-eastern edge of (132) but appeared to be more or less contemporary. It measured 0.64m by 0.45m and was 0.15m deep. The sides were moderately steep with a slightly concave base. The fill (130) was a dark greyish-brown clayey-silt containing two sherds of Iron Age pottery and a moderate amount of medium-large stones, which were concentrated towards the southern part of the cut. These did not appear to represent packing material, and it was concluded that this feature was more

likely to be a pit than a post pit, the shallowness being the result of later truncation.

4.22 [191] was an oval pit measuring 1.5m by 1.15m by 0.16m deep, and was almost completely truncated on its west side. The remaining sides were steep and the base nearly flat. [191] contained fill (156), a dark brown silty clay containing occasional small stones, charcoal flecks, small limestone clasts, animal bone and a single sherd of Iron Age pot.

Period III (1st Century – 3rd Century AD)

4.26 Period III was divided into three discrete groups within the confines of the excavation. These were defined as follows:

- Running north-south across the northwest part of the excavation area, a stone structure, identified during the evaluation as a 'ritual platform', was found to more closely resemble a metalled hollow-way, flanked by a group of archaeological features represented Group 1.

- A second group, located in the northeast corner of the site, consisted of four graves and a number of pits and post holes, over a proportion of which a capping of fragmented stone had been laid. The terminus of a ditch entering the excavation area from the east was also present within this group.

- The third group of features in the southeast of the site consisted of several heavily truncated ditches, pits and postholes forming no obvious function.

<u>GROUP 1</u>

4.27 [189] was a trench, 44m long, 8.15m wide and up to 0.5m deep running northeast-southwest across the site, recorded during the evaluation work as [2/010]. The feature had a concave base and stepped sides to accommodate curbing stones. At its southwest extreme this cut has been completely truncated away. The base of the trench was lined with (069)/(2/007) (henceforth refered to as (069), a metalling of small angular stones (predominantly Portland Limestone) and rounded, water-worn pebbles, pressed into the soft clay (013) and bonded together in a matrix of dark grey/brown sandy clayey silt. (069) contained a number of artefacts including pottery dating to the 1st century AD, iron and rolled lead. It became clear during the investigations that this linear feature more closely resembled a consolidated track than an isolated ritual platform as originally postulated on the basis of the evaluation work. However, there was no evidence for rutting or wear in the metalled surface (069). It is therefore probable that either the track was not heavily trafficked by laden wheeled vehicles or (069) was only in use for a relatively brief period of time. The metalled surface was sealed beneath a trample layer (068)/(2/009) that contained frequent fragments of stone within a matrix of grey brown silt clay and varied in thickness from 0.05m to 0.3m. There was no noticeable variation in the compaction or

distribution of stones in this layer as would be expected from linear movement zones (LMZ) within the confines of the track.

4.28 On the northwest side of this feature ran a curb (168) of larger stones, again a mixture of angular and rounded predominantly Portland limestone. (168) had previously been identified during the evaluation and recorded as (2/005). In the far northeast of site, the stones of (168) become considerably larger, up to $0.75m^3$. The alignment also changed from the straight northeast-southwest line it held for 32m with a short length running north followed by a right angle, the curb leaving the excavation area running east. The step cut [196]/[2/006] in which these curbstones were laid varied in width dependent upon the size of stones that it accommodated.

4.29 A similar step [197] existed on the southeast side of (069). However, on this side the curbing (183) set into [197] more closely resembled a retaining wall. While (183) was recorded as (2/011) during the evaluation work, [197] was not identified at this stage as (2/011) was left *in-situ*. As with (168), (183) comprised mixed sub-angular and sub-rounded stone laid in irregular courses. Noticeably different was that curbing (168) consisted largely of a single row of stones whilst (183) frequently comprised smaller rocks layered together with occasional massive sub-rounded boulders. The suggestion that (183) represented a wall rather than a curb is supported by the presence of substantial collapse deposits (184) of medium to large stones ($100mm^3$ to $200mm^3$), similar in composition to (183), overlying the metalling (069) and butting the lower part of (183). It is likely that if this collapse was indeed the upper part of (183), the wall would have stood some feet above the ground surface, possibly screening off the view to the east for anyone standing in the centre of (069). This screening may have been to obscure the view toward the main burial ground, in general to the northeast, or possibly to conceal activities associated with a large fire pit [187] located 1.5m to the southeast of (183).

4.30 The trench comprised of cuts [189], [196] and [197], metalling (069), and curbs (168) and (183) were collectively allocated a group number of 202. To the south of this group two postholes were excavated during the evaluation work. [3/009] was heavily truncated and almost circular in plan, measuring 0.93m in diameter and 0.26m deep. [3/009] had subsequently been backfilled with an homogenous deposit of mid grey/brown silty clay (3/008) containing sherds of 1st Century AD pottery, bone and shell. It therefore seems likely that this feature represents a posthole that was used as a rubbish pit once it ceased to perform its original function. [3/007] was not excavated during the evaluation and was not identified during the excavation works. It was, however, considerably smaller in size (0.20m in diameter) and filled with very similar material (3/006) to that of [3/009].

4.31 At some point in the first half of the Roman period, (183) and terracing (200) were heavily truncated by [199]. [199] was an irregular, shallow cut that failed to observe the limits of these earlier features. Indeed, it appears likely that [199] represents a deliberate phase of robbing, more likely to be for the

smaller stone of (200) than the larger boulders of (183), given its location to the southeast of (183). [199] was subsequently backfilled with (115), a loosely compacted dark grey/brown clayey silt. A small amount of water-worn and sub-angular stone was noted at the base of the fill, probably the remnant of (200). Three further fills overlay (115): (064, 118) and (117). The latter numbers were similar to (115) and contained pottery dating to the 3rd century AD. (064) contained stone originally thought to be part of a wall. In likelihood it would appear, therefore, that (064) represents the dumping of unwanted robbed stone, possibly stone robbed from (183) as collateral damage from the intended robbing of (200). The presence of (064) between fills (118) and (117) suggests that [199] was infilled over a period of time. Possibly (064) was dumped to compact the subsiding (115), and subsequently covered with 'cleaning' layer (117).

4.32 It is not clear from these investigations which phase of activity pit [187] is associated with. A small footing wall [209], present to the immediate northeast of the pit, may well have served to conceal this feature from the North and northeast, principally, the focus of burials on site. The footing consisted of a slot [209], 5.5m long, 0.65m wide and approximately 0.11m deep, filled with (210), a deposit of angular stone fragments held in a matrix of redeposited natural clay. No relationship could be found with [197] although its proximity would suggest they may well be contemporary.

4.33 [187] itself was circular in plan with a diameter of 3.35m and a depth of 0.8m with regular concave sides and a slightly concave base, the lowest point of which was measured at 61.34m OD. The natural clay into which it was cut was discoloured to a dark red by the heat action. This had also reduced the plasticity of the clay resulting in a friable red clay deposit (given the number (186)) highlighting the base and sides of the pit.

4.34 [187] was lined across the base and sides with large fragments of Portland limestone (188) laid flat against the clay edges. (188) was almost completely heat altered, being a dark red colour and having a crumbly, sandy texture. This lining was overlaid by a thin deposit of ash (181), occupying the base of [187]. (181) was in turn overlain by a deposit of grey silty sandy clay (180). A second cut [089] was recorded cutting (180) and appears to represent the latest phase of activity before disuse as it is filled primarily with a collapse deposit (175) comprising heat altered stone, probably deriving from the upper part of lining (179) and/or any roof that may have covered the feature. Due to the friable nature of the stone, the collapse had caused the breakdown of many of the individual stone outlines to produce a homogenous deposit. Overlying the collapse on the Eastern side of the pit was a deposit of dumped stone (174), similarly altered by the action of heat but held in a matrix of grey/brown sandy clay. The difference in composition between (174) and (175) may be indicative of differing methods of deposition, possibly (175) representing deliberate demolition of the structure with (174) representing a more gradual infilling with material lying on the ground surface around the disused feature. The latest fill of the pit, sealing (174), was a thin deposit of grey/brown sandy

clay (173) containing small stones. This may represent an accumulation of topsoil over the filled feature.

4.35 As already mentioned, group 202 was truncated to the south-west, most probably by terracing associated with the allotments. It was clear, however, that a later feature [203], entering the excavation area from the southwest and running up to the southwest limit of 202, partially overlay this earlier 'track'. The most probable interpretation for [203] would appear to be that it was a 'path'. It measured 48m long, 0.3 - 0.4m deep but only 3.25m wide. Constructed in a similar way to 202, the path consisted of a trench cut [085] with a concave base and stepped south-east edge [203], metalled surface (198) laid into the base and a wall (185) occupying the aforementioned step with collapse present to its north-west.

4.36 Investigations in the area where [203] met group 202 showed no clear difference between the two metalled surfaces. Although it was noted that layers (069) and (198) were characterised by the inconsistency of their component stone sizes, the matrix between the stones did differ slightly. (198) contained less sand than (069) and so the relationship between the two features was resolved. The yellow/brown clay silt fill (084) overlay the trample layer (068) of trackway [189] but directly overlay the metalling (198) of path [203]. In addition, eastern wall (185) extended over (068) in the form of a curb of very large and rounded boulders running approximately 0.75m to the northwest of (183). In a number of places (183) is intermittent, possibly as the result of robbing for (185). This curbing extended 15m northeast – southwest, the width being determined by the size of the single row of boulders to approximately 0.35 - 0.55m.

4.37 [203] continued in a southerly direction as it left the excavation area. It was hoped that it could be picked up running through Trench C or D. However, this did not prove to be the case as Trenches A, B, and C extended through allotment topsoil (001), 0.2m - 0.35m thick to expose sterile natural clay (013). Trench D extended through a similar quantity of topsoil but gave way to a colluvial deposit of yellow/brown clay silt(NUMBER???), which extended to a depth in excess of 2.0m with no visible change in composition. Mechanical excavation was halted at this depth as substantial collapse of the vertical section was imminent. The colluvium was immediately reinstated until the trench edges were stabilised at 1.2m (55.55mOD) from the ground surface.

4.38 Running parallel to [203] approximately 0.60m to the northwest, [087] was recorded as a possibly naturally formed feature filled with a firmly compacted yellow/brown sandy clay (086). This interpretation was based largely on the irregular nature of the cut. However, given the depth (the maximum recorded being 0.45m) and the alignment (being too well aligned with [203] and [189] to be simple coincidence) this seems unlikely. [087] petered out 0.40m shy of group 202, possibly as the result of later, horizontal truncation (the consequence of the aforementioned allotments). It seems quite possible that this feature was either associated with, or preceded, [203] and group 202. When [087] became redundant, it initially silted up with (111), a

yellow/brown clayey silt, to a depth of 0.04m before being infilled with (086). (086) did contain moderate amounts of large sub-rounded and sub-angular pebbles, possibly resulting from infilling at the same period (069) and/or (185) were being laid down. Alternatively, [087] may have been an earlier attempt to construct what later became [203], the larger stones being robbed for (198) resulting in the irregular cut. However, without a direct, physical relationship between [087] and either of the other features this will remain as speculation. On the basis of the pottery retrieved from (086) it is fairly certain that this feature was, at least, contemporary with (185) and (069) (1st century BC/AD).

4.39 [136] was a circular cut, 1.55m in diameter. Three fills (138, 135 and 134) contained within [136] were all loosely compacted and contained moderate amounts of limestone, suggesting some form of packing material. However, there were no structural elements within the vicinity of this feature and it is reasonable to infer from the relative shallowness of [136] (0.26m deep) against its width that it really could not have functioned as a posthole or any similar such element.

GROUP II

4.40 A number of features were recorded in the northeast corner of the site. These were all 1st or 2nd century AD in date and had been sealed beneath a stone capping layer (079) shortly after being filled (2nd century AD).

4.41 Five pits were identified. Of these, four were similar in shape, size, depth and fill. Most notably [149], [147], [145] and [128] were all very shallow (no greater than 0.09m deep). As they were sealed below capping layer (079), this evidently cannot be attributed to modern allotment truncation. These pits were hazarded as being 'scoops' within the natural deposit, the fills being silty clays or clays, not dissimilar to the natural deposit (013). However, the presence of 2nd century AD pottery sherds in fills (129), (146) and (148) would suggest otherwise. Although no cut was identified for (079), it seems quite possible, if not likely, that the ground would have been levelled in preparation for the capping layer, consequently horizontally truncating these pits in the process.

4.42 The fifth pit recorded, [151], would further support this interpretation, being deeper (0.45m) and outside the area covered by the capping layer (079). In plan [151] was slightly larger than the above pits (1.29m x 1.33m) but this is not unsurprising given the fact that it survived to a greater extent on its vertical axis. It should be noted, however, that the pottery sherds retrieved form the three fills of [151]; (166), (152) and (165), were earlier in date than those found in the above pits (the latest being 1st century BC/AD, (see Appendix ?)) and may therefore have performed an altogether different function and been of different size. The fact remains, however, that with no obvious pattern or organisation to their layout, the function of these pits is not clear.

4.43 Two postholes were recorded sealed below (079). [142] and [126] were approximately the same depth (0.16m deep) and size ([142] being slightly larger). Both features contained stone packing within their respective fills

(141) and (127). However, beyond these similarities there was little to be gleaned from the two features, being 5.43m apart and the vicinity being otherwise barren of structural features. It is reasonable to assume that there probably were more structural features but that these were lost to horizontal truncation.

4.44 [081] was a linear feature aligned east-west in the northeast corner of the site. [081] was excavated in three slots, recorded as [012], [083] and [081], with [081] being used as the overall feature number. [081] was 3.00m long (to the eastern limit of excavation) and 0.80m wide, and, as with other features in this area, [081] was quite shallow (no more than 0.25m deep), presumably the result of the horizontal truncation refered to above. Pottery retrieved from the fill (080) dated to the 2nd century AD, making the feature redundant at a later date to the pits and postholes in the area. The dating more closely ties in with the pottery sherds found in grave fill (017). From the remains of the cut it seems unlikely that this feature could have performed any other function than that of a boundary ditch. The cut [081] was moderately sloping with a concave base, making it unfeasible for defensive purposes. The alignment, against the slope of the hill, and largely level base (only dropping by 0.12m from the east end to the west) renders it unlikely to be of any use as a drainage ditch.

4.45 Aligned northwest-southeast was an area of closely-packed stones. Although this was recorded as being two contexts, (140) and (139), it is likely that they were one feature, truncated by later activity associated with the installation of the capping layer (079). Were this the case the feature would have measured 4.50m long and 1.00m wide. The stones used for the structure varied in shape (from sub-angular to sub-rounded) and type (being of limestone and sandstone). Overlying the stones at the northwest end (140), was a slab measuring 350mm x 470mm x 48mm. The slab was laid flat and seems likely to have formed part of a foundation slab for a wall, subsequently lost or robbed.

4.46 Two burials and a spread containing disarticulated human bone were recorded. Only one of the burials, skeleton (109), was recorded as being below the capping layer (079). [110] was a shallow cut containing only 25% of skeleton (109) (see Appendix ?). [019] contained the skeleton (018) of a 45-year old female aligned east-west. Pottery sherds from the fill (017) dated the feature to the 2nd century AD, The spread of disarticulated bone (124) was recorded as being within layer (125). On excavation it became apparent that, rather than being a feature in its own right, (125) was in fact part of the capping layer (079). The number was maintained for the purposes of recording (124), all of which remained was the left foot.

4.47 (079) was recorded as being a capping layer for a disused burial ground, immediately overlying an thin (no more than 0.09m thick) interface layer (116) of green/brown silty clay. (079) comprised irregularly packed stone with pottery sherd inclusions dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The full extent is not known as (079) continued beyond the eastern and northern limits of excavation. That recorded measured 15m long by 6m wide. Given only two

burials were actually identified beneath (079) and the presence of disarticulated bone (124) within the matrix of the capping layer, this interpretation is not iron-clad. Possibly (079) represents further terracing, such as that recorded as (200) and (167)? If this were the case, though, it seems highly unlikely that they were in any way related; although no datable evidence was retrieved from (200), (167) was readily dated to the 1st century BC/AD and seems almost certainly to represent the other half of (200) despite the lack of physical relationship due to the truncation of (202). Furthermore, there is over a metre drop in level from (079) (at 64.25mOD) to (200) (at 63.22mOD). If (079) really was a related terracing event, surely the ground would have been reduced to the same level as that of (200)? A 'cut' at the north end of (079) was assigned a number [066], but on excavation it became clear that [066] was a natural depression, the 'fill' (065) being, in fact, the same as (079). (079) was overlaid by a trample layer (067) of dark grey/brown clayey silt, 0.12m thick.

GROUP III

4.48 One skeleton (070) was excavated. This was classed as an adult female (see Appendix F) but no further interpretation was possible. (070) was buried in [071], an oval, gradually sloping cut with a flat base measuring 1.00m east-west by 0.75m north-south (the southern extent being truncated away by later activity). The fill (072) was similar to natural deposit (013), being a reddish brown clayey silt. Not surprisingly [071] was immediately backfilled with the originally excavated material. No datable evidence was retrieved from (072).

4.49 (072) was truncated at its south end by [032], an oval pit measuring 1.67m by 0.92m. No datable evidence was retrieved from the fill (033). Two further pits, [054] and [024] were also excavated in this area. Both cuts were approximately the same shape (sub-circular) and neither fills ((055) and (025) respectively) contained any datable material. However, (055) was truncated by later feature [044] which was dated to the 3rd century AD. There did not appear to be any pattern to the layout of these pits and the function of them remains unclear.

4.50 Six linear features were excavated in sondages. Of these the most substantial was [044], a 35m long by 1.66m wide ditch aligned east-west. [044] petered out to the west end, probably as the result of later, horizontal truncation. The primary fill (095) was evidently a natural build-up of grey silt to a depth of 0.09m along the flat base. Once redundant, [044] was deliberately infilled with a soft dark brown clayey silt (045) containing pottery sherds dating to the 3rd century AD. The function of this feature was recorded as being a boundary ditch. Given the alignment of [044] and its flat base, this seems a likely interpretation. However, the presence of features to both its north and south does put a question mark over this speculation. A ditch recorded during the evaluation [5/005], was recorded in approximately the same location, on the same alignment as [044] and also contained two fills, (5/004) and (5/003). However, at 7.00m wide [5/005] was 5m wider than [044]. Conceivably, it could be argued that the ditch lost some of its width during the machine

stripping of the area for the excavation stage but as the difference in depth between the two features was only 0.10m, this seems unlikely. Nevertheless, no other substantial features were identified during the excavation that correspond in anyway to this feature.

4.51 A further trench, Trench 10, was excavated to locate other features associated with [5/005] at the eastern edge of Area A. Two features recorded were dated to the late Roman period. [10/006] was a ditch aligned north-south, measuring 0.50m wide. The fill (10/005) was left in-situ as pottery on the surface readily dated [5/005]. [10/006] was not identified during the excavation stage. Most probably this was because the other north-south linear features in this area were very shallow and [10/006], being of similar size, was lost during the machine-strip.

4.52 3.5m to the east of [10/006] an ovoid feature [10/009], containing large, uncut blocks of red sandstone was found. On further investigation the clay in the base and sides of the feature were burnt to a dark purple red and it was thought likely that this represented a collapsed hearth or oven. It measured 1.5m in diameter and 0.28m in depth. The feature was disturbed, possibly by allotment activity and the sandstone seen on the west side of [10/009] had been pulled out, the resulting void being filled with topsoil (10/007). Pottery recovered from the remaining fill (10/008) was late Roman in date.

4.53 Two more linear features were recorded on the same east-west alignment. [049] was excavated in three sondages labelled [158], [162] and [164]. [049] was located to the northeast of [044] and measured 15m long by 0.80m wide. The fills (157), (161), (163) and (048) respectively were all firmly compacted dark brown clayey sandy silts, dating to the 1st/2nd centuries AD, apparently deposited through a natural silting process. It was thought that [048] was a gully. Along its south edge (048) was truncated by a shorter (7.00m long) linear cut [160], an attempt to redefine the original silted cut [048]. There are, however, two problems with this interpretation: the first arising over the 'recut' [160]. If this were the case then it would surely be more logical, not to mention easier, to dig out the fill (048) of the original cut [049] than excavate the natural clay (013) to the south. The second problem is the presence of posthole [211] at the east end of [049]. The fill of [211], (212) was also dated to the 2nd century AD, and its location, conveniently at the end of [049] and forming a right-angle with postholes [170], [171] and [172] seems to be a remarkable coincidence. The main factor in favour of the original interpretation is the concave base of [049] which would seem to rule out the feature as being a structural element. [160] also seemed to have silted up naturally with (159).

4.54 Three remaining linear features, [034], [074] and [076], were all very shallow (no more than 0.10m deep) and aligned on a roughly northwest-southeast axis (although these were slightly irregular). The fills (035), (073) and (075), were all naturally silted, concurring with the on-site interpretation that these features represented drainage ditches. The shallowness of these features again being attributed to horizontal truncation, most readily demonstrated by the

narrowing of [076] towards the south. [034] was identified in Trench 4 of the evaluation stage of works and recorded as [4/004]. During this stage of works, pottery sherds dating to the Roman period were retrieved from the fill (4/003).

4.55 Four postholes (mentioned in 4.51) and a fifth, [169], formed a dog-leg at the eastern extent of the site. All these postholes were shallow (no more than 0.13m deep) and all bar [171] were stone packed rather than driven. It was postulated that as they were stone-packed, these features did not require any great depth. However, the dimensions in plan would suggest otherwise. With an average diameter of 0.8m, it would appear that these postholes were designed to hold a fairly substantial structure and would therefore require greater depth than was encountered to support it satisfactorily. No further evidence was identified for the structure. As mentioned above, 'gully' [049] formed a convenient right-angle with [211], [170] and [171], but the profile and dating indicate that it is unlikely to have a relationship with this group of postholes.

4.56 Three further postholes were recorded clustered closely together at the northwest end of [034]. [093] and [046] both actually truncated (035). However, despite their proximity, the three postholes did not form any obvious pattern, were of different sizes and while the fill of [056], (057) contained stone packing, (094) was barren of packing material. Datable evidence was only retrieved from the fill of [093], (094), so it is not possible to discount the possibility of a relationship between them completely.

4.57 Three further postholes were recorded midway between Group I and Group II [098], [101] and [104] were similar in shape and size (approximately 0.55m in diameter and 0.46m in depth) and were all stone packed with (097), (100) and (103) respectively. No datable evidence was recovered from any of the fills (096), (099) or (102), all of which were grey/brown silty sandy clays. Although in close proximity, these features do not present an obvious shape in plan and the overall function remains unclear although, given their size and packing, it seems likely they formed part of a fairly substantial structure.

Period IV (Modern)

4.58 Most features found within this period were associated with the allotment activity of the 20th Century. Five linear features, [1/004], [1/006], [3/003], [3/005] and [10/004], recorded during the evaluation work were attributed as being allotment boundary ditches. One further linear, [3/011] was identified as a modern service trench.

4.59 Four features were recorded just to the south of (079). [063], a small pit (1.00m in diameter, 0.20m deep) filled with a soft brown silty clay (062), was of unclear function, although the most probable interpretation is that it was associated with the later allotment activity on site.

4.60 Two postholes were also recorded. [061] was cut into (062), measuring 0.3m in diameter and 0.2m deep while [059] measured 0.5m in diameter and 0.06m deep. The fills of the two features (061) and (058) respectively were both grey/brown silty clays. It seems more likely, given their location, size and lack of packing, that these features were associated with the later allotment activity also.

4.61 Both these features were truncated by an irregular cut [021] measuring 1.38m by 0.60m and 0.12m deep. [021], filled with a dark brown silty clay (020), was recorded as a modern allotment feature, albeit of unknown function.

4.62 Two modern allotment linear features were recorded aligned northwest-southeast in the south-eastern corner of the site. [040] was 10.00m long by 0.22m wide while [036] was 4.15m long by 0.35m wide. Both features were very shallow (no more than 0.06m deep) and petered out to the northwest. The fills, (041) and (037), were both soft brown loams, as one would expect for agricultural purposes.

Phase V: Topsoil/subsoil

4.63 The mechanical stripping across all areas of the excavation extended through a topsoil of dark greyish-brown sandy-clay (001, *1/001-11/001*). The thickness of this layer varied greatly across the excavation area with banks of topsoil and allotment related debris reaching 0.75m high in places. In addition to this the allotment plots had partially terraced the hillside resulting in a series of lynchet features. The result of this was an accumulation of topsoil with associated sub-soil development at the front of the terrace and erosion of the substrata at the back of the terrace. Conversely, within the plot boundaries a considerable number of localised intrusions were observed. These also varied greatly in both extent and in form. Several 52-gallon oil drums had been partially sunk into the ground with the base of these excavations causing some damage to the archaeological remains below. The majority of these modern intrusions comprised of straight shallow gullies running north-south, approximately 0.25m wide and represented the base of ditches delimiting the edges of allotment plots. However, the event that proved most damaging to the underlying remains was the initial terracing and continued agroturbation of those terraces. This system of land use had left much of the north, centre and southwest of the site sterile.

4.64 Underlying the topsoil was a subsoil of grey brown silty sand/clay (002, *1/002, 2/002, 4/002-6/002, 8/002-11/002*). This for the most part was a thin and patchy deposit with local accumulations of developing horizons as described above. Once again this material had been disturbed across the excavation area by localised allotment related intrusions that had cut through the subsoil and into the underlying strata.

4.65 Over the southwest, west and south-east of the excavation area, the top and subsoil deposits overlay a substantial deposit of homogenous yellowish brown clay silt (088). This material was a colluvial build-up resulting from the

movement downslope of top and subsoil. This is likely to occur on any site with a moderate incline but here the process has been accelerated by cultivation. It was noted in evaluation Trench 6 that this build-up (6/002) reached 2.2m thick and became thinner to the west, north and east. This implies that the colluvium overlay a pronounced depression in the hillside possibly equating to the head of a valley running from east of the excavation area, down the side of the hill, southwards toward the coast. A similar feature is likely to have existed on the southwest of site producing colluvial build up (F/003) recorded in Trench F. This left a spur of natural clay running between them.

4.66 It was noted that some of the modern gullies seen in the south-east of site were sealed by the colluvial build-up implying that they were cut prior to its deposition. These gullies were identified as being modern for three main reasons. Firstly, a number of them contained artefactual evidence dating to the post-medieval period. Secondly, they truncated all other archaeological features with which they interacted. Thirdly, the majority of them respected an alignment not evident in the archaeological features but very similar to the existing allotment layout, and were all filled with a dark deposit of buried topsoil only seen in features securely dated to the post-medieval period. The fill of one of these gullies [041] produced residual pottery dating to the Roman period although this is unsurprising as the gully cuts through the fills of three roman features. However it is still possible that these gullies represent an intermediate phase of activity between the features which they truncated and the later allotment workings. If this is the case, this phase was not recorded at any other location on site.

4.67 In the west and south-east, significant archaeological deposits were recorded underlying the colluvium (088) and in the north and north-east significant archaeological remains were sealed by the subsoil (002). The remains in the north and north-east of the site comprised two discrete groups of activity, although it is reasonable to assume that these are more closely associated beyond the limit of excavation in the northeast. There was also a geographical and stratigraphic separation between the archaeological remains in the southeast and those in the rest of the site.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Evidence for Iron Age occupation throughout the Dorset area is prolific so it is no surprise to find remnants of this period at Wyke Regis. However, finds and sites from this period are concentrated more or less on the Middle Iron Age period, predominantly as hillforts such as those at Hod Hill, Poundbury, Hambledon Hill and Chalbury. Indeed, "evidence for early and Middle Iron Age activity in the area around Dorchester is extremely scarce outside the hillforts" [1]. In all, some 31 hillforts have been located in Dorset (Sharples) to date. While finds at Wyke Regis dated as far back as potentially 7th century BC, the earliest feature [177] being first infilled somewhere between the 7th – 4th century BC, such features were sparse. The majority of Iron Age features at the investigation site post-date the Middle Iron Age period of the surrounding area. They also in no way represent defensive elements, let alone the remains of a hillfort. However, being on the side of the hill it is reasonable to assume that any such structure would have been built at the summit.

5.2 The Iron Age features identified on the investigation site do not readily give themselves up to interpretation. One larger pit [177] and four small pits [133], [143], [131] and [191] were evidently not structural given their broad, shallow dimensions. However, allowance must be made for the frequently alluded to horizontal truncation brought about by later allotment-based activities. The sides of these features were uniformly recorded as being 'steep' with concave bases and evidence of burning in the fills. Were it not for the truncation these features would conveniently fit an interpretation as fires, possibly used by passing travellers. However, allowing for extra depth, these pits are less definable. Possibly they could represent rubbish pits. However, the fills, while yielding some finds, were not over-brimming with pottery sherds and animal bone as one might reasonably expect from such features. Is it possible these could represent storage pits? Excavations at Maiden Castle (Gale 2003) recorded 289 pits. "The extrapolation of this figure…. would suggest that the total number of pits could have reached several thousand, which would suggest that they formed a significant function"[2]. Most popular among theories being that their function was for grain storage. However, these pits were identified within the hillfort and the pits at the investigation site were evidently not within any such structure. It should be noted that after the early part of the Middle Iron Age, the emphasis seems to have shifted away from the defensive aspects of the hillfort. Former inhabitants were moving out of the cramped enclosures and it seems logical that they would necessarily create such storage pits in proximity to their accommodation. While no evidence was found for any form of domestic accommodation, one can infer that human habitation must have been within the locality of Wyke Regis given the presence of burials (113) and (120). The massive drop in density of the pits could be explained by the declining centralisation and reduced need to keep such valuable commodities close together for security reasons.

[1] Davies, S. 2002 P.3
[2] Gale, J. 2003 P.121

5.3 The two Iron Age burials found on the investigation site, (113) and (120), were both crouched. In this they follow set protocol as seen with burials such as 305 and 934 at Alington Avenue (Davies 2002). However, the similarities stop there. (113) and (120) were buried on a northeast-southwest and north-south axis respectively whereas the burials at Alington were both roughly east-west. Moreover the burials at Alington were male. At Wyke Regis all the burials were female (where sex could be determined). Possibly these differences reflect the importance of male versus female burial rites. The male burials were within an area of occupation, the female burials evidently outside any such area and with no grave goods (burial 305 containing one "fragmentary iron pin being a deliberate grave good"[3]). However, most notable about the burials from Alington is the grave cuts. These were almost circular in shape and had evidently been left open for some period of time before being backfilled. This would suggest the cuts originally performed a function quite different to their final use. Although it may well have been entirely practical to re-use these pits as graves, it seems probable that the occupants of these pits were not high status as surely such individuals could reasonably expect a purpose-dug grave?

5.4 Within the context of the site, however, it is not clear how these Iron Age burials fit in. The only other features dating to the period do not appear to have anything to do with the burials. It is possible to surmise that as both burials were female, the sexes were segregated and male burials were interred higher up the hill. However, such assumptions should be treated with caution. The presence of only two burials is hardly enough to make such definite declarations.

5.5 That the investigation site continued being used into the Roman period is not without precedent. "Work in the Isle of Purbeck has resulted in the discovery of nearly fifty Roman sites, many with Iron Age antecedents"[4]. Nevertheless, the nearest main Roman road, running from the Radipole area north to Dorchester (Margary 1973), was some 3 miles to the north of the investigation site. Wyke Regis cannot have been that easy to get to and was almost certainly taken over directly from its previous incumbents for the same, or similar, purposes. This obviously has direct implications for the interpretation of the metalled surface (069). To all intents and purposes, this group of features (202), at 8.15m wide, appears to be a road. However, (202) had several aspects less common with the average road; most obviously the presence of the retaining wall delineating its southeast side and large kerbing stones to its northwest. How high this retaining wall was cannot be ascertained given it only survived to one course high and much of the collapse (184) appears to have been robbed. Assuming the site was taken over with the intention of maintaining its function, it is conceivable that this was less a retaining wall and more of a screen to block visibility to the east, conveniently where the burials and other main activities are centred. This theory is corroborated to a degree by the earlier (see 4.32) interpretation of (210), the wall to the north of [187], at right-angles to (183). It was postulated that this wall screened off pit

[3] Davies, S. (2002) P.35
[4] Talyor, C. (1970) P.25

[187] from the north and northeast parts of the site, presumably as it was an unseemly, utilitarian device.

5.6 Furthermore, it was noted that the metalling (069) showed no signs of wear or rutting, suggesting it was either not heavily trafficked, was only in use for a brief period of time, or was only used by pedestrians. While any, or indeed all, of these possibilities can be entertained, it does seem to compound the notion that (202) was a ceremonial trackway, passing the burial ground to its east rather than a utilitarian road. In light of this interpretation and that of the wall (210), the site can be seen from a more coherent angle: a sacred burial area to the northeast (Group II) (and probably extending further to the east, beyond the limit of excavation) with a processional way along its west and northwest side, screened off by a wall.

5.7 Several pits and postholes were located across Groups II and III. There was no obvious function or pattern to these features other than they were clustered to the eastern part of the site. It is possible that further excavation to the east might have shed some light on these features. Although the evaluation trenches indicated the area was barren of archaeology, Area A amply demonstrates that, located in the wrong positions and that too could have been written off as an archaeologically 'clean' area.

5.8 As mentioned in the results, four postholes in Group III, [211], [170], [171] and [172] formed an obvious right-angle and were also at roughly 90º to 'gully' [049]. The size of these postholes and the roughly even distance apart would suggest a reasonably substantial structure. More than this cannot be said, however, without wandering into the realms of pure conjecture.

5.9 The most substantial linear feature in Group III [044] was postulated as being a boundary ditch. The fact that it was lost to horizontal truncation at the west end is unfortunate. Although not on a right-angle with (202), it would seal off the southern extent of the postulated 'sacred' area neatly. The fact that trackway (202) has been dated to the 1st century AD whilst ditch [044] was infilled in 3rd century AD does not necessarily preclude them from functioning at the same time. (069), from which the 1st century AD pottery was retrieved, came into being in the 1st century AD. [044] was only backfilled in 3rd century AD, after a period long enough to allow the feature to silt up by 0.09m.

5.10

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