

FURTHER PREHISTORIC AND ROMANO-BRITISH ACTIVITY AT  
POUNDBURY FARM, DORCHESTER

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# Further prehistoric and Romano-British activity at Poundbury Farm, Dorchester

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*Excavations in 2013 completed the archaeological works associated with the development of the area to the north of Poundbury Farm near Dorchester, Dorset, revealing further evidence of prehistoric and Romano-British activity. Two possible Bronze Age cenotaphs containing memento mori deposits were found not far from similarly dated cremation burials excavated previously. The work also clarified the extent and development of a series of large ditched enclosures associated with a previously identified small Romano-British settlement. Other evidence related to the settlement's agrarian, predominantly sheep and crop-based economy, and small-scale craft and industry. Thirteen Romano-British inhumation graves were revealed, adding to the thirty-three already recorded. As seen before, there were two forms of burial rite – the local Durotrigian style, and a more typical form for the period (supine, extended and coffined). Unusually, four of the individuals were buried with complete lamb carcasses. One of these was even more remarkable; a child of around 10 years of age, decapitated as part of the post-mortem rites. In general, the results from the final phase of excavation support the patterns, interpretations and discussion presented in the previously published report, whilst providing further insight into the lives of past populations in the Dorchester environs.*

## Introduction

The excavation of a 0.26-hectare area of land in 2013 marked the completion of an extensive programme of archaeological works associated with the development of the area to the north of Poundbury Farm, near Dorchester, Dorset (National Grid Reference 367291 90967; Figs 1–3). The narrow strip of land investigated during the final stage of work was situated between two large areas (Areas 4 and 5) excavated by Wessex Archaeology in 2007.

The following provides a summary of the main findings of the 2013 excavation and how they relate to the published results of the earlier phases of investigation at Poundbury Farm (Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011). For reference, the full results of the 2013 excavation and subsequent analysis, including a detailed stratigraphic narrative, radiocarbon dates and calibration information, finds and environmental assessments, tabulated data, photographs and illustrations are provided in the comprehensive report published online (Egging Dinwiddy 2018) [www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/poundbury-farm](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/poundbury-farm).

## Previous excavation results

The preceding phases of excavation undertaken to the north of Poundbury Farm in 2007 revealed a variety of prehistoric remains (see Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011 for details). These included Mesolithic

worked flint found residually in later contexts, and several pits containing Early Neolithic pottery, axe manufacturing debris (Harding 2010) and, in one example, an extensive dump of charred grain. Other prehistoric features included Beaker period pits, an Early Bronze Age ring-ditch and pits, and a grave, pits and other mortuary deposits of Middle and Late Bronze Age dates. The excavations also demonstrated that the area was settled, and the landscape farmed during the Middle and Late Bronze Age.

The paucity of features or artefacts of Iron Age date, however, indicated a hiatus in activity on the site from the end of the Bronze Age until the early Romano-British period, when a small settlement, or farmstead was established there. The settlement, which continued to be occupied during the middle and late Romano-British period, was associated with a complex of large, ditched enclosures related to stock control and arable farming (enclosures A to E; Figs 2 and 3; Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011, figs 3.1–3.5). Although it was not possible to reconstruct the developmental history of the complex in precise detail, it was determined that most of the enclosures were established early in the sequence, and later modified and extended throughout the remainder of the period.

The character and relative densities of recorded remains suggested that the south-western part of

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Figure 1: Site location within surrounding archaeological setting

the enclosure complex (enclosures D and E) formed the focus of the settlement area. This part of the site contained two successive masonry-walled semi-subterranean structures and other remains associated with both domestic and, later in the sequence, small-scale craft and/or industrial activity. Similar, although more dispersed, evidence was encountered across the wider area, represented by a scattering of crop-dryers, ovens/kilns and working hollows, pits and gullies. However, the full extent of the settlement could not be defined, as the enclosures and associated features continued beyond the excavated areas.

As was characteristic for the period, the Romano-British inhabitants at Poundbury Farm chose to bury their dead along the enclosure edges, away from the

main settlement area (particularly within, and around enclosure C; Fig. 2); the remains of the very young were more often recovered from domestic settings.

Thirty-three Romano-British inhumation graves and a relatively unusual late-phase urned cremation burial were excavated within Areas 4 and 5 (Fig. 2). Most of the burials had been made in a style widely adopted during the period: the corpse laid in an extended and supine position, often within wooden coffins (Philpott 1991). Where it was possible to tell, these burials dated to the middle and late Romano-British period.

The *Durotrigian* burial rite, which is peculiar to this region of Dorset and generally attributed to the Late Iron Age /early Romano-British period, had been

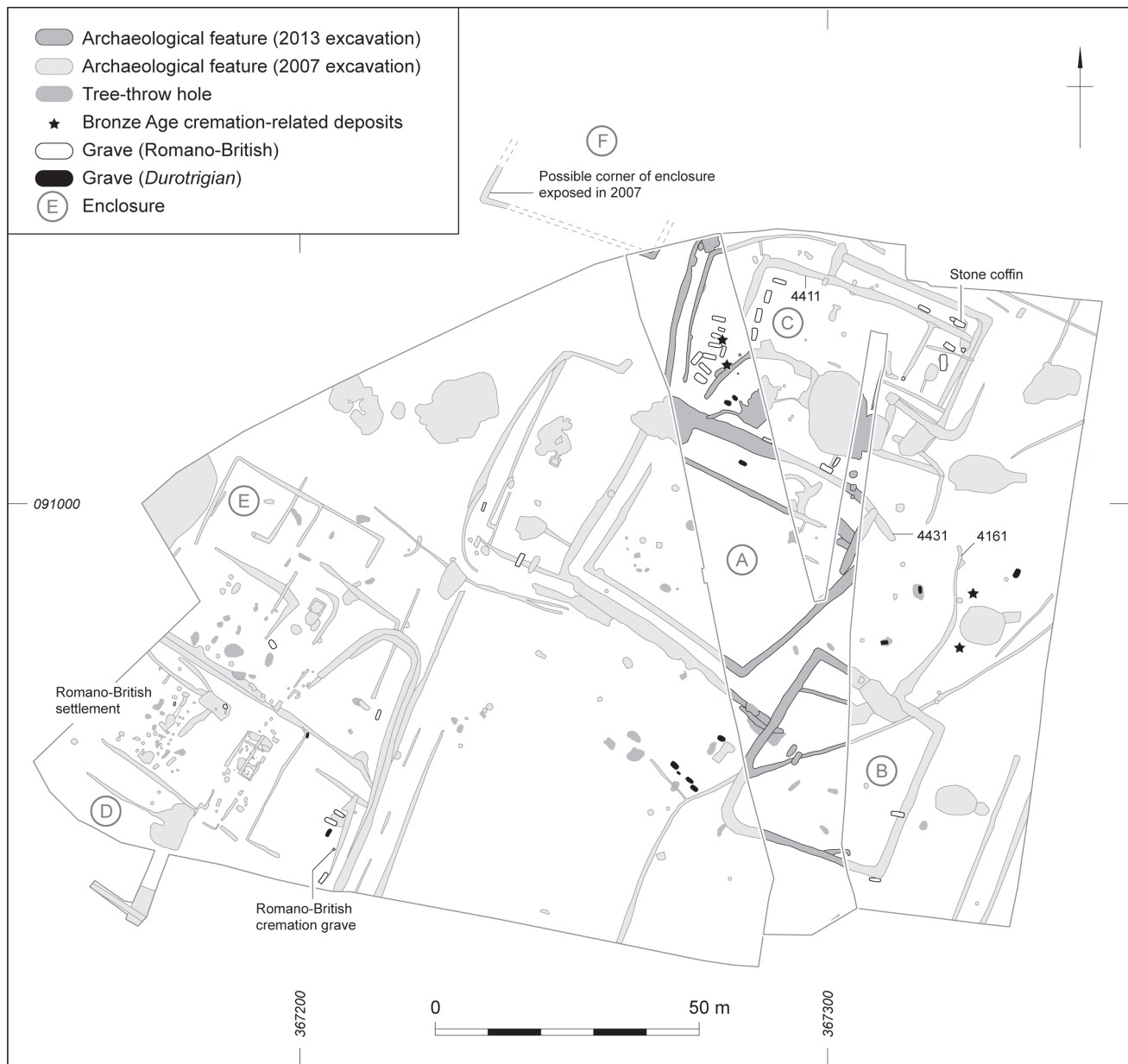


Figure 2: Plan of archaeological features excavated in 2007 and 2013

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Figure 3: Detail plan of archaeological features excavated in 2013

chosen for the remaining individuals; their bodies had been laid on one side in a flexed or crouched position, some with a ceramic vessel (Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011, 44; cf. Farwell and Molleson 1993; Smith *et al.* 1997). The majority of the *Durotrigian* burials at Poundbury Farm were considered to be of early Romano-British date. However, the late-Roman armlet worn by one of the previously recorded individuals demonstrated that adherence to local burial traditions was long-lived.

Evidence for post-Roman activity on the site was limited to a handful of artefacts and a few features relating to agricultural land use.

### Results of the 2013 excavation

#### *Prehistoric*

Two discrete and heavily truncated features, 9095 and 9104 (Figs 2 and 3), were excavated in the northern part of the site, approximately 60 m north-west of two Middle Bronze Age cremation graves found in 2007 (Fig. 2; Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011, 15–19, fig 2.8). The fill of cut 9095 (around 0.30 m diameter) contained redeposited pyre debris, including a small concentration of cremated human bone, from which a radiocarbon date was obtained, placing it in the Middle Bronze Age (SUERC-59048; 1420–1230 BC; Barclay and Wyles 2018). The other, slightly larger cut (9104) held the remains of an upright Early or Middle Bronze Age vessel, which in turn contained small quantities of cremated human bone and fuel ash throughout. Whilst the cremated bone assemblage represents a minimum of one individual (MNI) — a woman aged around 40 years — it is not possible to determine if the material in the two features relate to the same or different individuals or cremation-related events. The features themselves represent either the truncated remains of graves, or cenotaphs created to hold *memento mori* deposits (McKinley 2018). The charcoal assemblage from these deposits suggests a deliberate and specific selection of oak for cremation, consistent with patterns seen elsewhere (Gale 1997; Thompson 1999, 357). That from 9095 was, however, slightly unusual due to the quantity of bark preserved — possibly a result of the material having derived from a part of the pyre which had been subjected to less intense burning (Challinor 2018).

Other evidence of prehistoric activity was restricted to small assemblages of worked flint and pottery found residually in later features. The former provided a representative sample of Early Neolithic to Bronze

Age flintwork from the area (Harding 2018). The residual pottery assemblage consisted of eight plain body sherds in grog-tempered fabrics, similar to that of the Early or Middle Bronze Age vessel contained within feature 9104 (Seager Smith 2018a).

As with the earlier investigations at Poundbury Farm, there was a conspicuous lack of evidence for Iron Age activity on the site.

#### *Romano-British*

The majority of the evidence uncovered by the 2013 excavation relates to the multi-phase Romano-British rural landscape within which the inhabitants of the nearby settlement lived, worked and buried their dead (Figs 2 and 3). No traces of post-Roman activity were found during the investigation, mirroring the paucity of later remains found in 2007 (Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011, 166).

### Enclosure complex

The final phase of works enabled the examination of the previously unexcavated parts of three of the enclosures (A–C) that were largely exposed in 2007.

Enclosure A was confirmed as one of the earliest Romano-British enclosures on the site. The outer ditch (4407) can now be described as delineating the north, south and western sides of a sub-square area approximately 44 x 42 m. The ditch was 2.84 m wide, 0.86 m deep, and had moderately sloping, concave sides and a flat base. Within this, a trapezoidal area around 30 x 30 m was defined by ditch 4410, which was up to 2.12 m wide and 0.9 m deep with straight sides and a concave base. The resultant peripheral ‘corridor’ (there was no evidence for a bank) was between 2.5 m and 6.5 m wide and seemingly accessible from the east. Although masked by later features, it was possible to identify an entrance in the north-east corner of the internal enclosure, where there were potentially associated internal divisions.

The previously identified maintenance, necessitated by periods of neglect, of the outer ditch of enclosure A (Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011, 28) was corroborated by at least one re-cut (context 9172) and two episodes of tree/over-growth at its southern terminal. Heavily truncated feature 9016, which contained scraps of late Roman pottery, animal bone and a decorated copper alloy disc, is likely to have re-established the north-eastern entranceway. Probably during the late Romano-British period, the route into the inner enclosure was narrowed or blocked by the

insertion of a broad north-west to south-east ditch (group 9210), which encroached into the 'corridor' and truncated the outermost edge of the inner ditch. The north-eastern entrance to the same 'corridor' was then obstructed by ditch 9006 (see below).

Enclosure B (group 4400) continued more or less as predicted, and stratigraphic evidence confirms that it post-dated at least parts of enclosure A. Its defining ditch was between 1.7 m and 2.5 m wide, up to 1.04 m deep and had moderately sloping, straight sides and a concave base. A 0.5 m wide and 0.1 m deep gully (9163) recorded within enclosure B, may have been an internal division or, alternatively, a continuation of gently curving ditch 4161 (Fig. 2); later features have destroyed the stratigraphic evidence here. It was also proven that an earlier meandering landscape division (4405) continued across the area encompassed by enclosure B, although again, no finds were recovered.

Ditches 9211 (outer) and 9213 (inner) were revealed to the west and possibly the north of enclosure C, forming a 1.8–2.3 m wide peripheral corridor. The outer of the ditches varied between 0.75 m and 1.35 m in width, was up to 0.28 m deep and had steeply sloping sides and a flat base. The inner ditch was of similar depth but generally less wide. A 3 m wide break in the south-west corner, between the ends of 9213 and 4407, may have served as a point of access into the 'corridor'. Ditch 4411 (Fig. 2) probably terminated at the interface between the two excavation phases, suggesting that there had not been any substantial division between the cemetery groups in this part of enclosure C. Previously interpreted as part of enclosure C, ditch 4452 is now thought to have been associated with later working

hollow 9205 a few metres to the south (see below).

A well-defined 0.9 m wide and 0.45 m deep ditch containing residual worked flint was revealed in the northernmost part of the recent excavation area. It formed the south-eastern corner of an additional, previously unknown enclosure (9026, enclosure F; Fig. 3). A feature partially revealed during soil-management works in 2007 probably represented the south-west corner, and so enclosure F could feasibly cover an area approximately 35 m square. A fragment from a rotary quern was previously recovered from an evaluation trench positioned just beyond the enclosure's projected north-east corner.

A fairly large assemblage of pottery and much of the animal bone derived from the ditches of enclosures A and B (see below). The fills of enclosure A also contained a variety of other artefacts including two copper alloy brooches, three pieces of blue/green glass, a steelyard weight, antler-working waste, quern fragments and very small quantities of tile, brick and fired clay.

The Roman pottery assemblage from the 2013 excavation, as a whole, is broadly comparable with that from earlier phases of investigation at Poundbury Farm, as well as other sites in the Dorchester area (e.g. Davies and Hawkes 1987; Seager Smith 1997; 2002; 2008; 2011; Seager Smith and Davies 1993). It is dominated by Black Burnished wares from the Wareham/Poole Harbour region, with only a limited range of Continental and regional imports and other local wares (Seager Smith 2018b). Of note, however, is one new form (designated type 109; Fig. 4), represented by a single well-burnished example in the Wareham/Poole Harbour fabric, found within the ditch of enclosure B alongside others of mid-late first-century AD date. The form may, therefore, represent a forerunner of the standard straight-sided, flat-flanged bowl/dish (type 22).

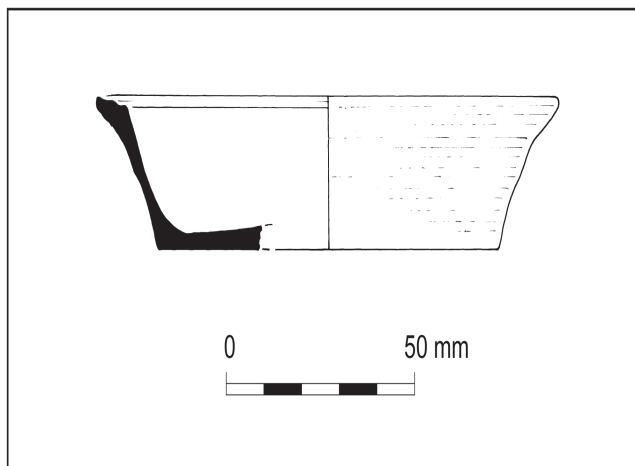


Figure 4: Straight-sided dish (or possibly lid), with flat, inward sloping rim and a flat base (WA 109). South-western Black Burnished ware. Mid/late 1st century AD. From Enclosure B ditch 4400.

### **Industry, agriculture and settlement**

The remains of a late Romano-British oven (9032) were found within enclosure B, its construction cut truncating ditch 4405. The 2.64 x 1.14 x 0.54 m keyhole-shaped construction cut was lined with rough sandstone and shelly limestone blocks and a few flint nodules. Faced, mortar-bonded blocks lined the chamber, while the flue was more roughly constructed using coarser stones. A large iron bar, positioned vertically to the left of the entrance, was probably the remains of a post for the oven-door. The base and stone

lining of the chamber were coated with fired clay and a 0.18 m thick charcoal-rich deposit containing fired clay inclusions was preserved on the floor. Deposits formed during the abandonment and decay of the structure were overlain by a final silting layer. A coin from the latter deposit suggests its formation occurred no earlier than the mid-late third century AD. There is evidence for grain-dryers and ovens being used for multiple purposes during the Romano-British period (van der Veen 1989). In this instance, the composition of the charred plant remain assemblage from the oven provided no clear indication as to the use of the structure (Wyles 2018).

Parallel to the oven, at a distance of around half a metre, was a hollow (9072) similar in shape and size to the oven, although much shallower (0.08 m) and lacking any evidence for a structure. Its fill comprised compacted chalk rubble and silty-clay with (some possibly burnt) stone and pottery. This probable working hollow is similar to others previously recorded nearby (Egging and Bradley 2011, 27, fig. 3.2).

A large sub-rectangular feature to the north (9205) – interpreted as a working hollow associated with late Romano-British industrial activity – is similar to others in the vicinity (Figs 2 and 3). A layer of dark silty-clay rich in charcoal, occupation debris and iron slag, filled the feature and extended beyond its edges. An apparently integral run-off gully was evident in the western corner, winding downslope into the partially infilled ditch delineating the northern edge of enclosure A; a similar gully was previously recorded on the opposite side, joining large quarry feature 4320. A line of three shallow pits were situated around 21 m to the south-east of the hollow (9020, 9022 and 9024), and likewise post-dated the enclosure ditch. They contained similar charcoal and finds-rich deposits, including late Roman pottery and slag (see below).

Coinciding with the reported landscape and settlement modifications, and an increase in industrial activities, the north-eastern end of the corridor around enclosure A was seemingly deliberately blocked by the addition of a 15 m length of ditch (context 9006, a continuation of 4431; Fig. 2). As well as a large quantity of pottery, this late Romano-British feature also contained possible stone roof tile, a few ceramic roof tile fragments, animal bone and a variety of copper alloy and iron objects (including a cleat and a corner bracket).

A series of four intercutting pits blocked the north-western corner of the enclosure C peripheral corridor, and also cut ditch 9213. The earliest pits (9056 and 9068) were each around 0.80 m in diameter with steep sides and a flat base; the least truncated was 0.85 m deep. Fills had generally accumulated gradually, although collapse of the sides of 9056 part-way through the infilling process was evidenced by a layer of chalk rubble. Larger pit 9030 (1.6 m diameter, 1.1 m deep) cut pit 9056 and was filled with a dumped deposit containing late Roman pottery and animal bone. An overlying tertiary deposit was then cut by steep-sided pit 9065 (1.75 x 1 x 0.65 m), whose initial fill was particularly dark but, like the subsequent fill, devoid of datable material.

An assemblage of slag (1.653 kg) was recovered from several contexts associated with late Romano-British pottery, including working hollow 9205, and pits 9022 and 9024. With the exception of one piece of possible smelting slag, all the material is likely to derive from iron smithing. However, it remains unclear whether the slag, which was broadly comparable with material recovered in 2007 (Marter Brown and Mephram 2011a, 103), indicates small-scale iron working in the immediate vicinity, or residual or redeposited material derived from activity further away (Andrews 2018). Examination of the mixed-species charcoal assemblage from associated contexts was inconclusive in determining whether the material derived from fuel associated with metal working or other, domestic-type activities (Challinor 2018).

With the principal exception of several whole sheep carcasses deposited as grave goods (see below), the modest animal bone assemblage largely consisted of disarticulated material from livestock species (Table 1). This material was mainly recovered from the enclosure ditches, particularly enclosure A. It was not possible to identify any concentrations of bone waste from different stages in the carcass reduction sequence or specialist craft/industrial activities (e.g. bone-working, tanning etc) that might suggest different zones of activity within the enclosures (Higbee 2018).

The composition of the livestock assemblage is consistent with the animal bone evidence recovered from previous excavations at the site (Buckland-Wright 1983, 129; Grimm 2011, 134). Sheep/goat were represented in greatest abundance (66% of the total livestock assemblage), confirming that sheep-farming was the mainstay of the rural economy, although cattle (27%) were clearly also of some importance.



All parts of the sheep and cattle carcass are present in the assemblage which, along with occasional butchery marks, suggests that animals were brought in from the surrounding fields to be slaughtered and butchered for local consumption. However, the overall mortality pattern for both species implies that meat production was not the primary focus of the husbandry regime. That for sheep, based on a sample of 20 mandibles, shows two main peaks of slaughter amongst older animals aged between 3–4 years and 6–8 years. The remaining mandibles, including those from graves, are from younger animals aged between birth and 2–3 years. The pattern suggests that sheep were managed primarily for wool and possibly milk. Similarly, the cattle bone largely derived from adult, old adult and senile animals that were probably maintained for milk, traction and as breeding stock. Indeed, the presence of a young calf aged just 1–8 months supports the notion that dairying was part of the husbandry strategy (Higbee 2018). Less common species including dog, cat, domestic fowl, small birds, rodents and frogs were also represented, albeit in small numbers. Of note were two pieces of red deer antler from enclosure A, which bore clear signs of having been worked, presumably reflecting some form of local craft activity.

Turning to the evidence for the plant-based economy, the charred plant remains assemblage (recovered from working hollow 9205 and oven 9032) shares similarities with those recovered from the 2007 excavations, demonstrating that cereal cultivation

Table 1: Animal bone: number of identified specimens present (or NISP). Sheep/goat count adjusted to take account of Associated Bone Groups (ABGs) (see Table 3)

Species	NISP
cattle	55
sheep/goat	133
pig	15
horse	11
dog	3
red deer	2
cat	1
domestic fowl	6
passerine sp.	2
rodent	7
frog	2
<b>Total identified</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>Total unidentifiable</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>523</b>

was practised alongside livestock farming (Pelling 2011; Wyles 2018). However, the assemblages from the most recent excavation appear indicative of general settlement waste and suggest that this part of the Poundbury Farm site was located away from the main crop processing areas seen in the earlier phase of investigation (ibid.). Weed seeds outnumbered the cereal remains, which were mainly those of hulled wheat, emmer or spelt (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*), with a few fragments of barley (*Hordeum vulgare*). The weed seed assemblages included seeds of docks (*Rumex* sp.), vetch/wild pea (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.), clover/medick (*Trifolium/Medicago* sp.) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), all typical of arable land. Other weed seeds indicative of grassland, field margins and arable environments include those of red bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), oat/brome grass (*Avena/Bromus* sp.), rye-grass/fescue (*Lolium/Festuca* sp.), curled dock (*Rumex crispus*), goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.), oraches (*Atriplex* sp.) and meadow grass/cat's-tails (*Poa/Phleum* sp.).

#### Mortuary activity

Thirteen Romano-British inhumation graves were found in the northern half of the site, all associated with the enclosure complex (Fig. 3; Table 2). Ten of the burials had been made in the 'typical' Romano-British style i.e. extended and supine, sometimes with slight leg flexion. These formed a cluster of nine graves within the western part of enclosure C, a few metres from a group of similarly dated graves discovered previously, along with an outlier to the south-east, on the northern edge of enclosure A. The three remaining graves contained the remains of *Durotrigian*-style burials – uncoffined, lying on one side, with the legs acutely flexed. These comprised a pair 5 m to the south-east of the cluster of Romano-British style graves and one within the enclosure A corridor, 10 m further south-east. The lack of intercutting and careful arrangement of all the graves indicates that their locations would have been readily apparent or recorded, perhaps by way of grave-markers for which no other evidence remained.

The *Durotrigian* graves were sub-oval in plan with concave sides and bases, and at 0.1–0.2 m deep, they were substantially shallower than their Romano-British style counterparts. In anticipation of the flexed position of the corpse, the *Durotrigian* graves were also relatively short, (1.11–1.40 m), although their widths were not very different to those of the other graves (0.70–0.90 m). The remains from the paired

Table 2: Inhumation grave summary

<i>context</i>	<i>cut</i>	<i>deposit type</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>approx. quantity</i>	<i>estimated age/sex</i>	<i>pathology</i>	<i>coffin fittings</i>	<i>grave goods?</i>
9040*	9039	inh. burial <sup>D</sup>	E-MRB	15%	adult >40 yr ??male	amtl; calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; op – C2 as	none	no
9051	9052	inh. burial	RB	5% l	juvenile/ subadult 10–15 yr		none	hobnailed footwear (ON7021 left foot; ON 7022 right foot); bone pin ON7023
9089	9090	inh. burial <sup>D</sup> a) R	RB	68% a) c. 10% l	adult 35–45 yr ??female a) juvenile/ subadult 10–15 yr (add. individual)	amtl; calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; pd; periapical void; HFI; <i>osteochondritis dissecans</i> – right distal humerus; Sch – 1T; oa – 2T ap; op – right proximal radius; pitting – L ap, left c-v, left sterno-clavicular; enth – patellae; cortical defect – ?right 1st proximal finger phalanx, right 1st proximal toe phalanx; plastic changes – radii & ulnae; MV – coalition (hallux sesamoid) a) plastic change – left tibia	none	ceramic vessel ON7024 & refitting fragment ON7025 (under pelvis); ?iron object ON7026
9093	9094	coffined	RB	65%	adult 40–50 yr female	amtl; calculus; dental caries; pd; periapical void; calcific discitis – C6–7; oa – 1T ap, 1st c-v; op – C6, T1 ap, right patella, right acetabulum; pitting – acetabulae; enth – middle finger phalanges; cortical defect – right distal radius	36 iron nails: ON7027-30, 7032-40, 7043-50, 7054-56; 7082, 7087-91, 7095-7, 7101-7103	hobnailed footwear (ON7102 left; ON7102 right; iron shoe fixtures ON7097 & 7101); ABG7104 - animal burial along right side, outside coffin, head at human hip, feet at human shoulder; appears back long coffin, legs at grave edge, skull awkwardly back/twisted round; SHEEP
9098	9097	coffined	RB	96%	subadult 16–17 yr ??female	calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; pd; <i>cribra orbitalia</i> ; endocranial capillary impressions; sinusitis; pitting – left 1st proximal toe phalanx; enth – orbital margin; MV – dental crowding; impaction; shovelled incisors, sutural ossicles, palatine torus	39 iron nails (ON7041-2, 7051, 7053, 7057-74, 7076-81, 7083-86, 7092-4, 7098-7100)	iron object -ON7075 (foot end of coffin)

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<i>context</i>	<i>cut</i>	<i>deposit type</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>approx. quantity</i>	<i>estimated age/sex</i>	<i>pathology</i>	<i>coffin fittings</i>	<i>grave goods?</i>
9115*	9114	inh. burial <sup>D</sup>	E-MRB	40%	juvenile 10–11 yr	calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; lamellar new bone/ossified ligament – sacrum, sacral body; MV – plural mental foramen	none	no
9124	9125	coffined (decap)	RB	60%	juvenile 9–10 yr	calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; pd; <i>cribra orbitalia</i> ; sharp blade trauma – mandible, C1–2 (decapitation); pnb – left rib; plastic change – radii, femora; MV – sutural ossicles	24 iron nails (ON7111-12, 7118-25, 7140-47, 7149-54, 7164);	hobnailed footwear (ON7165 – left; ON7166 – right foot); ABG7167 – animal burial placed outside coffin, along left side, head just below level of human knee, legs together at human hip; SHEEP
9127	9126	coffined	RB	18%	adult >30 yr	calculus; enamel hypoplasia; MV – shovelled incisor	6 coffin nails (ON7136-7, 7148, 7159-61); 14 iron fittings/brackets (ON7114-7, 7126-35); plus c. 50 various iron objects with no ON (from samples)	hobnailed footwear (ON7276)
9132	9133	coffined	RB	55%	adult 45–55 yr female	calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; <i>cribra orbitalia</i> ; HFI; pnb – right proximal tibia; oa – L4–S1 ap, left hip; op – L2–3 ap, 2 c-vs, sacro-iliacs, right hip, acetabulae, distal femora; pitting – temporo-mandibulars; enth – ischia, right calcaneum; cortical defect – right navicular; ?cyst – right temporal; MV – accessory sacral facets	18 iron nails grouped across coffin head end, across knee region & one or two at foot end (ON7138-39, 7185-86, 7189, 7199-207, 7213-16)	hobnailed footwear (ON7221 (left), 7222 (right))
9155	9154	coffined	RB	55% a.u.l.	adult 40–45 yr male	fracture – right talus; septic arthritis – left acetabulum, ischium, proximal femur, left fibula; op – left distal ulna, knees, 2 right, 2 left tarsals; enth – innominates, right patella, right calcaneum; exostoses – left femur shaft; plastic change – radii & ulnae, fibulae, tali; MV – accessory tibial foramen, coalition (right middle cuneiform & 3rd MtT)	c. 15 iron nails (ON7171-74, 7176-79, 7187-93) iron fitting (ON7196); plus more from samples	hobnailed footwear (ON7194 - left; 7195 - right; plus more from samples; N.B. feet crossed); ABG7197 - outside coffin, along right side, from shoulder (head of animal) to mid left femur (back legs outstretched); SHEEP

<i>context</i>	<i>cut</i>	<i>deposit type</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>approx. quantity</i>	<i>estimated age/sex</i>	<i>pathology</i>	<i>coffin fittings</i>	<i>grave goods?</i>
9196	9195	coffined	RB	90%	adult 40–50 yr male	amtl; calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; pd; periapical void; <i>cribra orbitalia</i> ; fracture – maxillary incisor, L4 ap, right talus; avulsion – T11, L1; sinusitis; pnb – left mandible, left 1st rib; ankylosis – right sacro-iliac; Sch – T9–L3; op – temporo-mandibular, T6, T8–12, L3–S1 ap, L2-3 bsm, T2-9 tp, left 6 right & 2 left c-vs, right sacro-iliac, hips, right glenoid, left distal radius; pitting – left temporo-mandibular, T1, 4, 6–10, 12 ap, T8–10 tp, 3 c-vs, acromio-claviculars, left proximal femur, 3 left tarsals; rotator cuff degeneration; enth – fingers, calcanea; cortical defect – right clavicle, left calcaneum, left talus; exostoses – right tibia; plastic change – right scapula, upper limb asymmetry, enlarged femoral foramen, femora, tibiae; cyst – hamate; MV – dental crowding, shovelled incisors, sutural ossicles, mendosal/biaterionic sutures, M3s absent, palatine tori (M2s), cranial shift (L/S; vestigial 12th ribs), accessory tibial foramen, <i>os navicularum</i> , variant cuneiform	17 iron nails (ON7198, 7208-12, 7217-20, 7252-58)	hobnailed footwear (ON7259); ABG7261 - small animal with back along grave end back along foot end of grave, head to left. Outside coffin but animal appears to have gone in first as under human foot; SHEEP
9200	9199	coffined a) R	RB	80% a) 2 frag. u.l.	adult 35–45 yr ??female a) adult <18 yr	amtl; calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; pd; periapical void; <i>cribra orbitalia</i> ; sinusitis; Sch – T11–12; ddd – L5–S1; op – T8-9, T11, L1 ap, T11–L1 bsm, 4 right & 1 left c-v, right elbow, right wrist, right 1st MtC-P; pitting – T11–12 ap; enth – innominate, right calcaneum; plastic changes – femora & tibiae; MV – dental crowding, shovelled incisors, sutural ossicles, multiple supra-orbital foramen, asymmetric nasal aperture, very narrow nasal region, pre-condylar tubercle, vertebral asymmetry	22 iron nails & fittings (ON7223-34, 7265-74)	no

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context	cut	deposit type	date	approx. quantity	estimated age/sex	pathology	coffin fittings	grave goods?
9203	9202	coffined	RB	65%	adult >45 yr female	calculus; dental caries; enamel hypoplasia; fracture – left fibula; <i>cribra orbitalia</i> ; oa – right hip; op – right acetabulum (labrum), right proximal finger phalanx, left proximal femur; pitting – temporomandibulars, right distal radius; enth – calcanea; cortical defect – left 1st MtT; plastic change – left hip, right 4th MtT	15 iron nails (ON7235-49)	hobnailed footwear (ON7250-51);

KEY: \* – C14 dated; <sup>D</sup> – *Durotrigian* style; inh. – inhumation; R – redeposited; s.a.u.l. – skull, axial, upper limb, lower limb; aml – *ante mortem* tooth loss; pd – periodontal disease; HFI – *hyperostosis frontalis interna*; pnb – periosteal new bone; Sch – Schmorl's nodes; ddd – degenerative disc disease; oa – osteoarthritis; op – osteophytes; C, T, L, S – cervical, thoracic, lumbar, sacral vertebrae; as – articular surface; ap – articular process joint; bsm – body surface margins; tp – transverse process joint; c-v – costo-vertebral joint; enth – enthesophytes; MtC- /MtT-P – metacarpo-/metatarso-phalangeal; mv – morphological variation; M – molar tooth

graves (a juvenile and an adult male) were aligned approximately north-west to south-east, respecting the outer ditch of enclosure A. The third grave (9090), which contained the remains of a woman, was similarly influenced by the enclosure, although the body had been placed in the reverse direction. The legs of all three individuals were flexed to the right; the adults were found on their right side; the juvenile's torso being found largely supine.

Grave goods were recovered from only one of the *Durotrigian* style graves, that of the adult female within grave 9090. In addition to the left forelimb of a sheep/goat, the individual was buried with a samian cup placed near the feet. The vessel bore the stamp of Tetturo of Lezoux, dating its manufacture to c. AD 135–165 (Hartley and Dickinson 2012, 53–4, die 3-a), and thus providing further evidence for the continuation of the burial rite well beyond the Late Iron Age/early Roman period (Marter Brown and Mephram 2011b, 75). Almost identical radiocarbon dates (SUERC-59047: 1856±29 BP and SUERC-59052: 1851±29 BP; cal 70–240 AD) were obtained from the unaccompanied pair of *Durotrigian* style burials, indicating that both could have been made during the early–mid Romano-British period (Barclay and Wyles 2018).

The Romano-British style graves were generally sub-rectangular in plan, with straight, steep to vertical sides and flat based. The well-defined cuts ranged between 1.73–2.73 m in length, 0.63–1.13 m in

width, and between 0.19 m and 0.85 m in depth. The burials made in the standard Romano-British style were those of male and female adults, a subadult possible female, a juvenile/subadult and a juvenile. All of these are considered to be of mid–late Romano-British date.

Evidence for wooden coffins (iron nails, brackets and fittings) was present in all of the Romano-British style graves, except one highly truncated example (9052). The coffin from grave 9126 had been of more elaborate construction than the others, with three iron angle brackets at each corner and a binding strip running across the underside of the base. Angle brackets had also been used on the upper corners of the coffin from grave 9199. As with the examples from the main Poundbury cemetery (Mills 1993, 124) and the earlier excavations on this site (Marter Brown and Mephram 2011b, 77), it is likely that these extra fittings were largely decorative, associated with the social and/or financial status of the individuals, as both graves also contained additional nails in numbers sufficient to hold the coffins together.

Clusters of iron hobnails were found at the feet of the individuals within seven of the Romano-British style graves, and a bone hair pin (probably of third- or fourth-century date) accompanied the remains of the subadult in grave 9052. A few pig bones recovered from the backfill of grave 9125, and the right foot of a sheep from grave 9154, suggest that joints of meat had been deposited with these burials.

Four of the Romano-British style graves contained the complete, articulated skeletal remains of immature sheep, positioned along the side or at the end of the coffin (Table 3). There is no obvious demographic pattern, with a juvenile and adults of both sexes afforded the rite. Whilst sheep/goat remains have been recorded in some numbers in Late Iron Age and Romano-British funerary contexts in southern England, they are most commonly found as partial skeletons, i.e. joints of meat (Morris 2011, 91). To have four examples of complete sheep from such a small group is, therefore, unusual. It has been estimated, on the basis of the relative ages of the lambs placed as offerings, that the juvenile in grave 9125 was buried in spring, while two of the adults (graves 9094 and 9195) were buried in the spring or summer, and the third adult burial (grave 9154) probably occurred in the autumn or winter months (Higbee 2018).

As well as being buried with a lamb offering, the body of the 9–10-year-old juvenile in grave 9125 was remarkable for having been decapitated, the skull plus the mandible and fragments of the atlas placed between the individual's knees as part of the burial rite. Analysis of the decapitated juvenile's remains indicates that they had recovered from a chronic inflammation of the thoracic lining, as occurs with enduring respiratory infections such as pneumonia and tuberculosis, or repeated inhalation of environmental irritants.

Romano-British decapitation burials are not an unusual find, although the Poundbury Farm example is interesting, as immature individuals are generally under-represented amongst the decapitated contingent. The incised, precise nature and location of the severance are also relatively uncommon, and the practical implications of the technique employed strongly suggests that the individual was deceased prior to decapitation (Harman *et al.* 1981; McKinley and Egging Dinwiddy 2009; Philpott 1991, 84; Tucker 2015, 53; Tucker 2015, 65–7).

The Poundbury Farm unburnt bone assemblage derives from a mostly, 'Romanised' and largely

local rural population (Egging Dinwiddy 2018). The social and economic opportunities offered within the *Durnovaria* hinterland (including Poundbury Farm) attracted people from the wider region (Redfern *et al.* 2015). The greater degree of morphological variation in male skeletons from Poundbury Farm, along with the predominance of female remains buried following the more traditional, local rites, implies that such migration was more prevalent amongst the male contingent – a phenomenon also recognised at Little Keep, Dorchester (McKinley and Egging Dinwiddy 2009).

Indicators of stress, health, diet and activity are generally comparable to their contemporaneous counterparts within the wider region, although anaemia – potentially relating to lifestyle, diet and/or pathogen and parasite load, for example – seems to have been more prevalent. In keeping with rural populations of the time, the Poundbury Farm inhabitants led physically demanding lives, which no doubt involved much traversing of the landscape and a miscellany of strenuous labouring tasks required as part of a farming community. Subtle variations in joint degeneration patterns between the sexes hint at differences in the nature of everyday activities, or the way in which they were carried out. Their way of life inevitably led to several, fairly minor injuries. However, one strongly robust man had survived at least one major traumatic event, his many injuries possibly resulting from a fall from height. Limited evidence for long-term infections includes a lung condition (decapitated juvenile) and a bacterial infection in the hip of an adult male, which may well have contributed to his demise.

## Discussion

The final phase of excavations undertaken in 2013 provided some of the missing pieces in the understanding of this part of the Poundbury Farm development site, clarifying and adding nuances to the previously published findings. In general, these support

Table 3 Summary of sheep/goat animal bone groups (ABGs) from graves

Cut	Fill	ABG	NISP	Age estimate ABG	Location and associations
9094	9109	7104	40	2–6 months	outside coffin, along right side. Female <i>c</i> 45–55 yr
9125	9153	7167	32	0–2 months	outside coffin, along left side. Juvenile <i>c</i> 9–10 yr
9154	9180	7197	57	6–12 months	outside coffin, along right side. Male ( <i>c</i> 40–45 yr)
9195	9196	7261	20	2–6 months	outside coffin, below left foot. Male ( <i>c</i> 40–50 yr)

previous patterns, interpretations and discussion, while at the same time they have revealed further insight into the lives of past populations in the Dorchester environs.

The study of the cremation-related deposits has enhanced the growing corpus of evidence for Bronze Age mortuary practices in the county. The selection of oak for the pyre associated with the cremation-related deposits (potentially *memento mori*/cenotaph type) is more in keeping with the general pattern for the period (albeit with greater quantities of bark), something that contrasts with the previously recorded cremation deposits in the vicinity, for which ash-wood was the material of choice (Challinor 2018).

The absence of Iron Age finds or features is consistent with the results of earlier phases of work on the site, indicating a hiatus in activity during the period. This appears to reflect a trend, evidenced by other excavations in the vicinity, for the abandonment of previously occupied or otherwise utilised areas, perhaps due to a shift of activity towards the nearby hillforts at Poundbury Camp and Maiden Castle during the Early and Middle Iron Age (Sharples 1991, 260; Smith *et al.* 1997, 299; Gardiner 2003, 154–6; Egging Dinwiddy and Bradley 2011, 24, 69).

The newly discovered Romano-British features and contexts have elucidated certain aspects of the sequences of activity on the site and have proven that the enclosure complex continues to the north. The results substantiate the population's reliance on a mixed agrarian economy, particularly regarding sheep — animals well-suited to the local contemporary environment. The production of secondary products such as wool and milk (probably sheep as well as cattle) was clearly important, and traction animals were used to assist with the arable aspects of farming. No doubt there was a high demand for their products in nearby *Durnovaria*.

Although we know that the settlement's inhabitants had been cultivating, harvesting and processing crops in the immediate vicinity, it was not possible to determine a specific function for the oven-type structure excavated in 2013, but it may have served several purposes. Wild floral and faunal resources were also being exploited for food, fuel and crafts; the presence of the remains of useful and/or companion animals (e.g. cat and dog) adds a touch more realism to the narrative.

As evidenced previously, various small-scale industrial activities associated with the small settlement at Poundbury Farm, including possible

iron-smithing, began to leave more obvious traces towards the end of the Romano-British period.

The recently discovered Romano-British mortuary evidence is of particular interest. A study of the burial contexts has revealed variation in this rural community's treatment of the dead. The atypical inclusion of whole lamb carcasses in several closely associated inhumation burials, for example, may reflect a particular socio-cultural importance of these animals, or perhaps what they represented — lambs have long been symbolically associated with purity, innocence and renewal, sometimes sacrificed for the atonement of sin and to assure salvation (Tressider 1997, 118; Werness 2004, 250–1). The remains of these young lambs have also enabled a broad determination of the seasons in which the burials were made. Although we cannot be certain why these particular people were afforded this unusual rite, it is likely that there was some common purpose.

Romano-British decapitation burials are a well-recorded phenomenon, and there are many recorded in the assemblages from the cemeteries of *Durnovaria* — the most abundant numbers seen at Little Keep, just to the south of the much larger Poundbury Camp cemetery limits (McKinley and Egging Dinwiddy 2009). This recent discovery at Poundbury Farm is of particular note due to the youth of the deceased. The reasons for such treatment are complex, although it is generally supposed that they address various beliefs, especially if they had somehow been identified as 'different' (positively as well as negatively perceived). A recurring theme in discussions of the rite being the prevention of the return of the dead — particularly if the death was untimely or unexplained, or if the spirit of the individual was to be feared/revered for some reason (e.g. Harman *et al.* 1981; Philpott 1991, 77–83; McKinley and Egging Dinwiddy 2009; Tucker 2015, 155–9). Perhaps in this case, it was the child's chronic lung condition that set them apart for special funerary treatment. Other variations in burial rites, morphology and some of the pathological lesions may be reflective of, for example, status, occupation and lifestyle.

The evidence gleaned from the additional burial remains confirms as well as enhances the findings of the previously published analysis (Egging Dinwiddy 2011). Detailed analysis of the skeletal remains suggests that the health and lifestyles of the Romano-British inhabitants of Poundbury Farm are fairly typical of rural populations of the

time. The evidence hints at a greater proportion of males being attracted from outside the local area by the opportunities offered by *Durnovaria*, whilst the female remains were less morphologically diverse and women more likely to have been given traditional, local style funerary rites. Childhood saw the usual stresses of weaning and juvenile diseases, and possibly the increased responsibilities as they reached the age of majority. Indicated high levels of anaemia are of interest, and may suggest that this group were particularly affected by the causative factors, e.g. diet and pathogen/parasite load. Their farming lifestyle is reflected by signs of heavy physical exertion, particularly of the lower limbs, that suggests a large amount of walking would have been involved. Men and women might have been participating in different tasks, or carrying out similar tasks in different ways. Injuries were typically minor, resulting from accidents, slips, trips and falls, with only rare examples of more serious injury. The evidence for chronic infections/inflammation remains at a low level.

As previously surmised, there is little evidence for occupation in the vicinity during subsequent periods. It appears that, from the post-Roman period until recently, the site formed part of a large expanse of land used predominantly for agricultural purposes.

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#### Location of the archives

The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology Ltd, in Salisbury, under the project code 60027. It will be deposited with the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, in due course.

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