

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE ROMAN 'VILLA' AT HINTON ST MARY

## ASSESSMENT REPORT

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The British  
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### Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this Report:

AA	Albion Archaeology
BM	The British Museum
BRA	Barbican Research Associates
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HE	Historic England

All dates in this report are A.D.

## **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

Six trenches were excavated in August and September 2021 at Hinton St Mary to evaluate the condition of the archaeological remains of the late Roman 'villa', and to provide information in advance of a possible larger-scale research project. This was the first time since 1965 that invasive archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken at the site, when the famous mosaic was lifted. The total area examined by the evaluation trenches was a very small fraction of the scheduled area.

The incentive for the evaluation is the planned redisplay of the Hinton St Mary mosaic and the permanent relocation of the Museum's stores to a new storage and research facility at Shinfield in Reading (The British Museum Archaeological Research Collection, BM\_ARC), planned for 2023. The intention is that the evaluation could be followed by a 1 or 2-year campaign of research excavations at the site, providing important new information regarding the history of the late Roman settlement and the lives of its inhabitants.

The evaluation trenches were located for two main reasons:

1. to establish the extent and condition of the underlying archaeological remains at Hinton St Mary
2. to begin to answer some of the questions regarding the context of the famous mosaic and the building complex to which it belonged;

All of the project's aims and objectives were successfully achieved.

The evaluation revealed that:

- the room containing the mosaic floor was part of a larger high-status masonry building in the north-eastern part of the scheduled area;
- the buildings identified by previous geophysical surveys elsewhere in the scheduled area were Romano-British, but were more likely to have had agricultural functions;
- there is very little evidence for occupation at the site prior to 300;
- the site seems to have been occupied until the end of the 4th or the early 5th centuries;
- Post-Roman activity in the trenches was limited to a substantial stone-built post-medieval field drain, robbing of stone from Roman walls, and other relatively recent drainage features (the adjacent property, The Forge, was built at the end of the 19th century);
- in general, the latest archaeological deposits survive well beneath the modern ground surface.

### **Project Partners and Acknowledgements**

The evaluation was a partnership project involving The British Museum, Barbican Research Associates and Albion Archaeology. The fieldwork was directed by Dr Peter Guest (BRA), Mr Mike Luke (AA) and Dr Richard Hobbs (BM). The directors would like to thank Katie Scorgie, the owner of The Forge, for permission to undertake the evaluation, as well as to Mr and Mrs Pitt Rivers and the Hinton St Mary Estate for their support during the excavations. The fieldwork was funded by The British Museum, Cardiff University, the Roman Research Trust and Dr Mike Watts, to whom we are most grateful. Finally, wholehearted thanks to the entire dig team (see Appendix 7.8) for making the month so interesting and rewarding.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This Assessment Report summarises the results of the 2021 evaluation excavation. It follows ClfA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (2014)*, and HE's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*.

The site is a Scheduled Monument (No: DO 711) and Scheduled Monument Consent to carry out the evaluation excavation was granted by HE in advance of the project (HE ref: S00241385). The excavations took place over four weeks from 15 August 2021 to 10 September 2021. An on-site monitoring meeting was held on 7 September, attended by Daniel Bashford (HE), Peter Guest and Mike Luke.

## 1.1 SITE LOCATION

The village and parish of Hinton St Mary is situated in the Blackmoor Vale in north Dorset (centred on NGR ST 786162), 1.6 km north of Sturminster Newton (see FIG. 1). It is sited on a low Corallian limestone ridge overlooking the River Stour to the west.



Figure 1 Location of Hinton St Mary

The site is currently under pasture and lies mostly within the boundary of the Scheduled Monument (FIG. 2). The scheduled area lies on a gentle west-facing slope, rising from approximately 79.50 mOD to 84.00 mOD. The land is in use as grazing and as a garden and belongs to the adjacent property known as The Forge. It is enclosed with walls, hedges and farm buildings. Several of the farm buildings are disused and increasingly dilapidated. There is no signage at or near the site to inform the public of its importance as the location of one of late Roman Britain's most significant and iconic discoveries.



**Figure 2 Scheduled Area at Hinton St Mary**

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## 1.2 PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation is to establish the extent and condition of the underlying archaeological remains at Hinton St Mary and to begin to answer some of the questions regarding the context of the famous mosaic and the building complex to which it belonged. More needs to be known, for example, about the building's layout and its dating, particularly when it was constructed and finally abandoned, as well as the activities performed there.

The principal aim of the 2021 evaluation is to inform and improve our understanding of the archaeological remains at Hinton St Mary. Further aims are to provide new and interesting material for the planned redisplay of the mosaic in 2023-4, as well as information with which to formulate further research-led excavations of the mosaics and the buildings of which they were part.

The objectives of the 2021 evaluation are to recover information about the extent, condition and nature of Hinton St Mary's archaeological remains, specifically:

- Depth of the overburden overlying the extant archaeological deposits;
- Condition of the underlying archaeological deposits;
- Extent and function of buildings and other structures exposed in the evaluation trenches;
- Date of the underlying archaeological deposits;
- Effects of any previous and on-going degradation of the archaeological resource.

### 1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first evidence of substantial archaeological remains at this site in Hinton St Mary appeared in 1963. An apprentice blacksmith, Les Card, had been tasked with digging some foundations for a lean-to, intended to be constructed to the rear of a blacksmith's forge. The labourer came down onto a tessellated floor and after the blacksmith, Mr Walter John White, had called in a local school teacher (Mr P. Moody) to assess the remains, it soon became apparent that a substantial mosaic floor was preserved *in situ* a few feet below the ground surface. The mosaic was revealed by staff from Dorchester Museum with the help of local school children during their summer holidays (FIG. 3), when it was drawn and recorded by David Neal of the Ministry of Public Building and Works.



*Figure 3 Photograph of the 1963 excavation with David Neal drawing the mosaic, watched by local schoolchildren (courtesy of Pat Moody)*

#### 1.3.1 Exploratory Excavations, 1963-5

This was followed by further limited archaeological work in April 1964, conducted by former British Museum curator Kenneth Painter (Painter 1965; Painter 1967). Consisting of some 18 narrow trenches of various lengths around the field where the mosaic had been found (FIG. 4), these excavations showed that the mosaic floor had originally furnished a pair of rooms in an apparently substantial building complex that appeared to have flourished in the 4th century, but which had been badly damaged by stone-robbing and ploughing.

Painter expected the building complex to be similar to the plan of a typical late Roman 'courtyard' villa and his excavation duly located three ranges of rooms or wings around a central courtyard, while the fourth side was either open or closed by a boundary wall and entrance of some kind. Trenches over the tessellated rooms, as well as in their immediate vicinity, uncovered the mosaics but did not



prove that these rooms were a part of a long range (Area 2), while possible evidence for a side wing was found only on the north-western side, consisting of, Painter suggested, a long stone building approximately 10m wide with more simple mosaic floors (Area 1). The corresponding wing to the southeast is less certain and Painter was not sure if a building had stood here (Area 3). Instead of a building, a wide ditch and a drystone wall seem to have closed off the southwestern side of the complex (Area 4), though the date of these features and their relationship with buildings higher up the field were all unknown. The coins from the site were mainly from the period 270-400 and the absence of samian pottery suggested that the site was occupied after the early 3rd century .

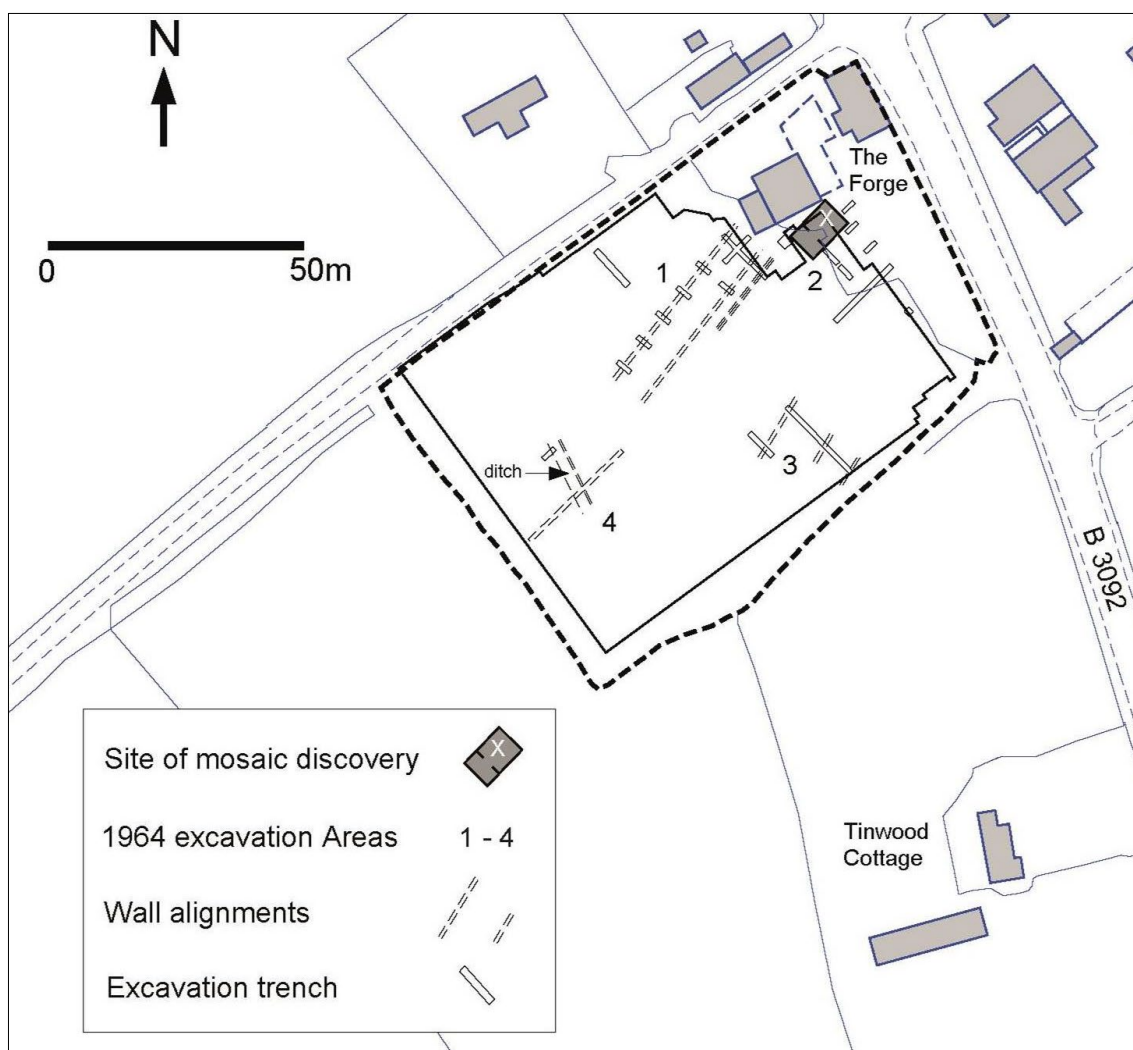


Figure 4 Painter's 1964 excavation trenches and putative Roman walls (adapted from Payne 1996)

Painter summarised the problems with the state of knowledge after his excavations at Hinton St Mary (Painter 1967: 23-4):

- The general extent of the archaeological remains was known, but the layout of constituent buildings was not (FIG. 5)
  - Were the rooms with mosaic floors connected to other rooms to form a longer building? Did the buildings constitute a courtyard villa?
- The function of the building(s) was not known for certain and its identification as a villa had yet to be confirmed.

- Did the rooms with mosaics floors serve as a *triclinium* in a Romano-British villa? Was the Hinton St Mary building a religious rather than a domestic or agricultural structure?
- The early history was almost entirely unknown, as were the circumstances of the site's eventual abandonment.

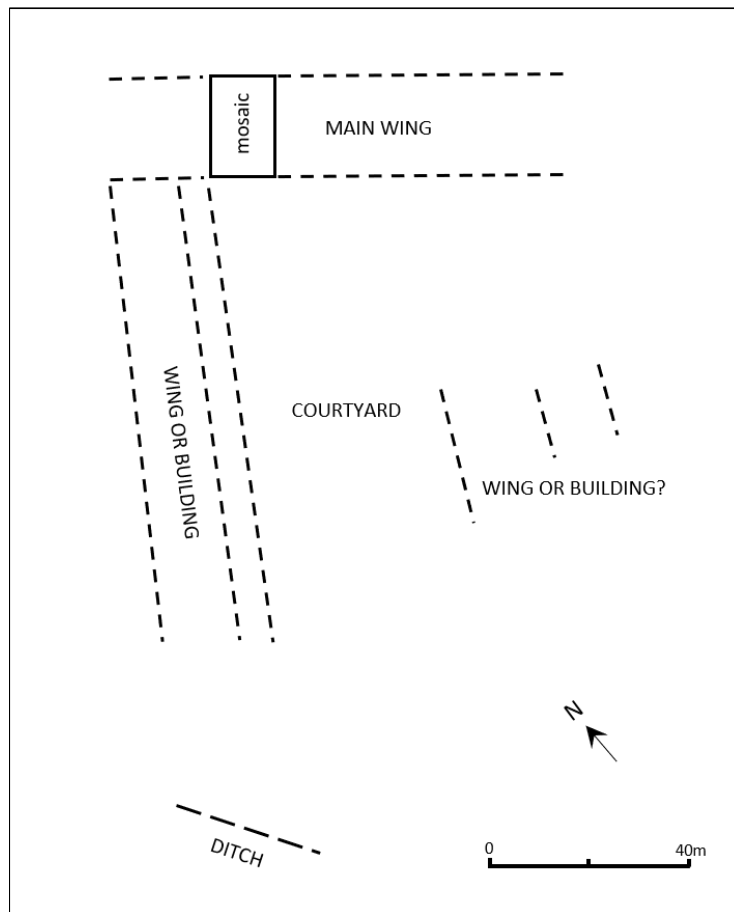


Figure 5 Painter's putative reconstruction of the villa's ground plan.

### 1.3.2 Lifting the mosaics

Such was the importance of the mosaic that a decision was taken by the British Museum to purchase it and move it in its entirety to the museum for display (the only other option would have been re-burial). Painter returned to Hinton St Mary in 1965 and the mosaic was carefully cut into sections by a private company, Art Pavements & Decorations Ltd, and removed to London (Painter 1967). The study of the mosaic and the mortar bedding suggested the floor was refabricated and laid in panels on site and there is more that could be gleaned from this material, which is kept in the British Museum's stores. Although the British Museum planned a further season of investigation in 1967, and again in 1973, these plans never came to fruition.

### 1.3.3 Geophysical surveys

Magnetometer and resistivity surveys were conducted by English Heritage (now HE) in 1996. These suggested that most of the scheduled area contains detectable archaeological remains, particularly walls and ditches, and that further archaeological activity extends beyond the scheduled area to the south-west (FIGS 6 and 7). Although interpretation of the geophysical evidence was

complicated by the interrupted coverage, particularly the presence of widespread contamination from modern activities in the northern part of the scheduled area, the resistivity survey supported the layout of Roman walls and buildings as proposed after the earlier BM excavations.

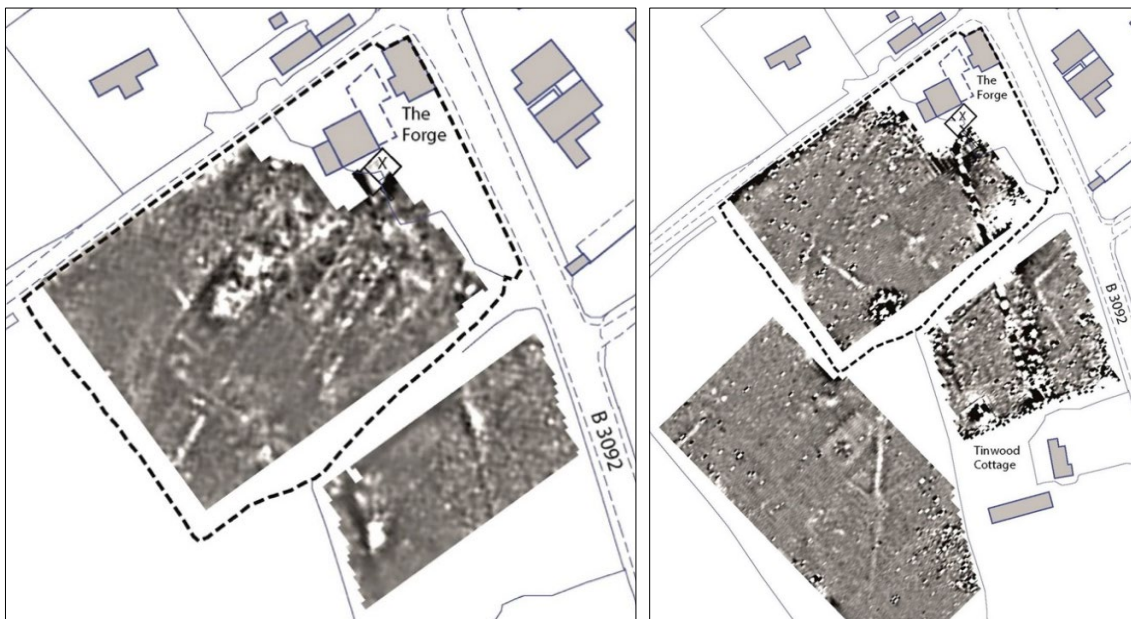


Figure 6 Geophysical survey results: L) resistivity R) magnetometry (© Historic England)



Figure 7 Geophysical survey interpretation: L) resistivity R) magnetometry (© Historic England)

There appeared to be at least three separate ranges of stone buildings aligned roughly parallel with one another on a north-east to south-west axis (A-C). South of, and at a right angle to, the main concentration of buildings, a further possible wall or double walled feature (E) was located, which might coincide with a ditched and walled boundary identified during the excavation (and the possible ditch - n - located by the magnetometer survey). Another ditch feature (F) runs alongside and follows the same alignment as the north-east side of building A, where it has also been detected as a magnetic anomaly (m). Within building (A), several areas of higher resistance (G) strongly suggest the

preservation of floor layers (perhaps further mosaic pavements), or deposits of collapsed building materials (the excavation trench on the edge of (G) recorded a building 34 feet (10.3m) wide containing a geometric pattern mosaic with partially robbed out walls and a tessellated corridor on its south-east side).

#### 1.3.4 The mosaic

The mosaic from Hinton St Mary is one of the most celebrated and iconic survivals from Roman Britain (FIGS 8 and 9). Likely laid in the 4th century, it is part of the Durnovarian Group of mosaics, all believed to have been products of a group of mosaicists working in and around Dorchester. The central roundel features a togate figure with the Chi-Rho symbol behind his head, flanked by pomegranates, a symbol of eternal life. In the four corners are further togate males, perhaps representing the four winds. In the interspaces between are hunt scenes showing hounds chasing deer, or in one case a tree with many branches. The second smaller section, separated from the main part by a threshold mosaic of relatively simple geometric design, contains a further figurative roundel depicting Bellerophon slaying the Chimaera. Further scenes of hounds chasing deer flank this central scene in large rectangular panels. The mosaic, which measures 8m by 5m, was on permanent display at the British Museum from 1965 until 1997, after which only as the central roundel has been on display with the rest in storage (a consequence of the Great Court project in 2000). The complex of buildings to which the mosaic belongs can be described as a Romano-British villa, perhaps home to a Christian family or a meeting place for a Christian community in the 4th century. This seems more likely than the mosaic being part of a stand-alone structure (for example, a later church), although this possibility cannot be completely ruled out.



Figure 8 The Hinton St Mary mosaic  
© The Trustees of the British Museum



Figure 9 The central roundel  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Much discussion surrounds the interpretation of this mosaic. Not surprisingly, the debate has been focused on the identity of the central figure in the roundel. Most scholars have concluded that it probably represents Christ himself, but this is by no means certain as it raises a number of difficult questions. If it is Christ, then why is the rest of the mosaic so 'non-Christian' in its choice of subject matter (even if the Bellerophon scene might represent the triumph of good over evil)? Perhaps more puzzling is the placement of Christ on the floor – was this appropriate as it would have been possible

to walk over Christ's head? Given that the Chi-Rho symbol was also used as a symbol of good fortune at the time, might the bust rather represent someone else, perhaps a Christianised Roman emperor, since emperors such as Constantine and Magnentius had such strong associations with the symbol?

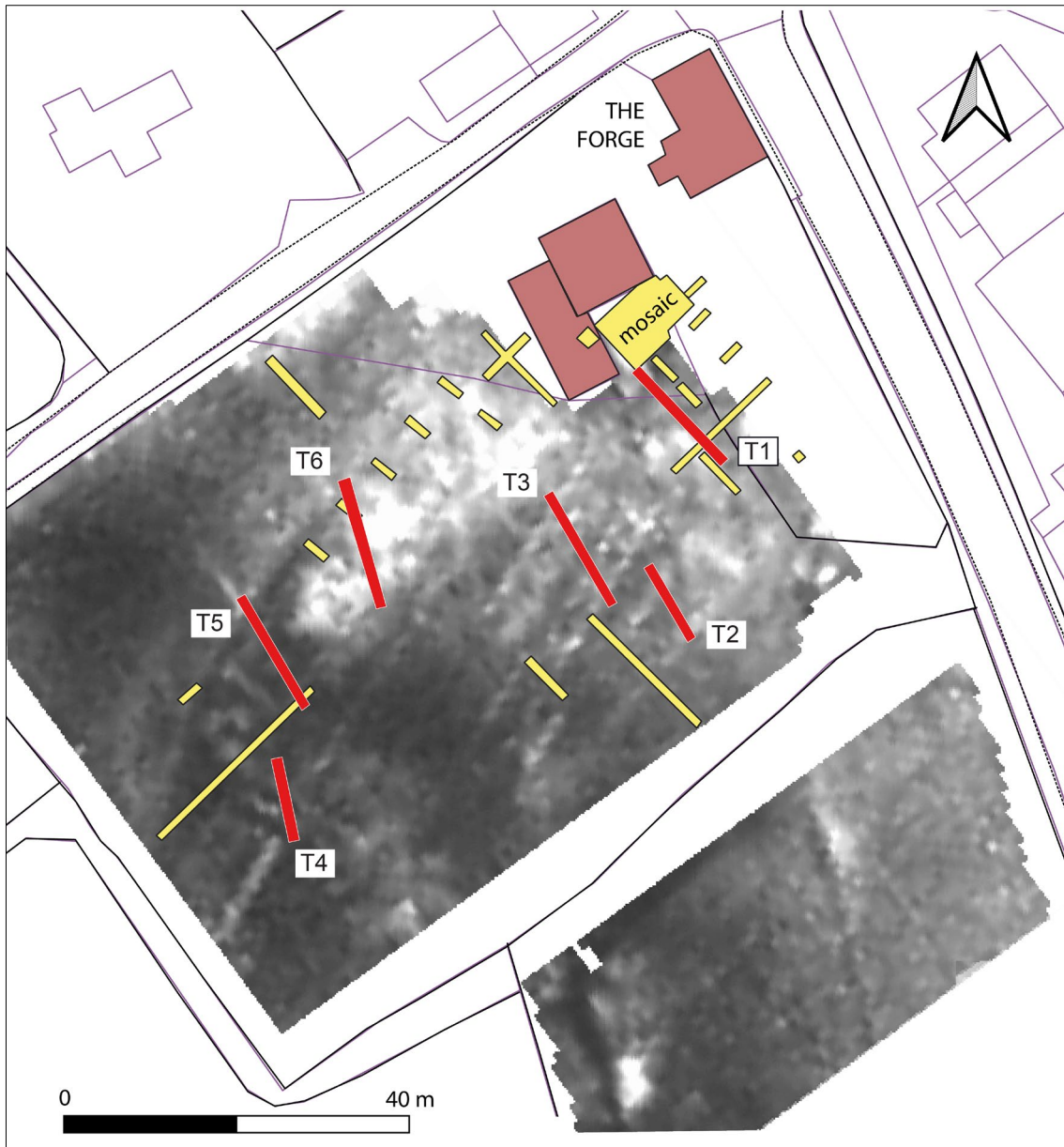
It is also unclear what the function of the room would have been, which is one of the main reasons why further investigation of the site is so necessary. Many have noted the similarity between this mosaic and the mosaic at Frampton, also a product of the Durnovarian Group. At Frampton there is a very similar bipartite room, but this is flanked by an apsed mosaic, the threshold to which bears the only other example of a Chi-Rho symbol to have been discovered on a mosaic from Britain (the Frampton mosaic also has a Bellerophon and Chimaera scene in the smaller part of its bipartite room). The apsed room would be appropriate for a *stibadium*, the curved dining couch favoured in the late Roman period, meaning that the whole complex could have been used for dining. But others have suggested a Christian chapel, which seems plausible given the positioning of the Chi-Rho symbol at the threshold to the area which presumably contained the altar. Limited excavations at both Hinton St Mary and Frampton, however, have hampered efforts to put these unusual mosaics into their appropriate archaeological contexts, which this project aims to address for one of these important sites.

The geophysical results indicate that the site at Hinton St Mary is much more complex than was originally thought when the mosaic was discovered in 1963. The building with the mosaic floor seemed to lie in front of three long rectangular structures that extended downslope. Their layout, chronologies and functions are not known, other than at least one part of the northern-most building had geometric tessellated floors. Results of the geophysical surveys close to the mosaics were hampered by modern fences and disturbances and it is still not known if the rooms were part of a larger building or stood more-or-less alone. Many of the problems Painter identified in his 1967 publication remain unresolved today, while the new geophysical results have raised more questions. The Project's Aims and Objectives (section 1.2) set out what the evaluation expected to achieve and it was anticipated that this fieldwork would provide answers to some of the outstanding questions about the Romano-British site at Hinton St Mary.

#### **1.4 METHODOLOGY**

The methodology devised for the evaluation was described in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Guest 2021) and is therefore only summarised below. The locations of the six evaluation trenches are indicated on FIG. 10.

The trenches were targeted at specific geophysical anomalies and their precise locations were agreed with the land owner and HE. The maximum total area to be excavated in 2021 was 80m<sup>2</sup>, equivalent to less than 1% of the Scheduled Monument. The objectives in these trenches were to identify the depth of topsoil over the archaeological deposits, the effects of any previous and on-going degradation of the archaeological resource, and the depth and nature of the underlying archaeological deposits.



*Figure 10 Location of 2021 evaluation trenches (red) and the 1964 exploratory trenches (yellow) at Hinton St Mary (resistivity data © Historic England)*

**Trench 1:** (15 m long by 1 m wide) extended south-eastwards from the larger room with the famous mosaic floor in order to investigate if it was part of a longer building. Trench 1 had to be repositioned at the start of the season because a metal fence, as well as large quantities of unidentified refuse filling part of the 1965 mosaic trench, interfered with its location as proposed in the WSI. A variation to the Scheduled Monument Consent (requested on 16/08/2021 and granted by Historic England on 18/08/2021), resulted in Trench 1 being moved by approx. 4.5 m to the southwest. The northern end of this trench began inside the mosaic room (excavated in 1963 and 1964, and from which the mosaic was removed in 1965), which provided the opportunity to examine the underlying archaeological deposits in this part of the building.

**Trench 2:** (10 m by 1 m) was located across the south-easternmost putative rectangular building detected on the resistivity survey ('building C' on FIG. 7). Both external walls should have appeared

within the trench, which was positioned obliquely to the building to examine as much of its internal space as possible and to increase the chances of revealing any dividing walls if these existed.

**Trench 3:** (15 m by 1 m) was positioned across the central putative long building, or buildings, identified on the resistivity survey results ('building B' on FIG. 7). The trench should have included the full width of the rectangular structure(s) and, as with Trench 2, its diagonal orientation enhanced the likelihood of uncovering internal walls and multiple internal spaces.

**Trench 4:** (10 m by 1 m) was at the southern end of the scheduled area and was located to investigate the high magnetic anomalies and resistivity readings in this part of the field. These could be ditches (shown as 'n' on FIG. 7) or masonry walls and the geophysical team in 1996 suspected that a stone building may have stood in this area (one of Painter's 1964 trenches discovered a wide ditch with a drystone wall on its inner edge to the northwest of Trench 4).

**Trench 5:** (15 m by 1 m) was located at the southern end of the putative north-western 'wing' building identified by Painter, whose masonry walls seemed to appear very clearly on the results of the resistivity survey ('building A' on FIG. 7). The trench should have included the full width of the building's rooms and corridor, while a possible ditch (shown as 'building F' and 'm' on FIG. 7) should lie at its northern end.

**Trench 6:** (15 m by 1 m) was towards the middle part of the same 'wing' explored by Trench 5. Painter trenched the north-eastern part of the building in 1964 and the northern end of Trench 6 includes one of Painter's shorter trenches. The orientation of Trench 6 increased the possibility of locating internal dividing walls and examining the floors of multiple rooms (which the geophysicists in 1996 suspected could have been very durable – 'building G' on FIG. 7).

The fieldwork took place between 15 August and 10 September 2021. The field team consisted of a core staff of 6 (directors and supervisors), 1 experienced metal detectorist, and 15 student archaeologists from Cardiff University and 2 volunteers.

All trenches were entirely excavated by hand to the first significant archaeological deposits. All obviously post-Roman intrusive features, such as robber trenches, drainage features and pits, were fully excavated. Excavated spoil was scanned by metal-detector and the bases of all trenches were checked at the end of each working day.

#### **1.4.1 Excavation and site records**

The trenches were excavated and recorded according to current best practice for university training excavations. Students were supervised at all times by professional archaeologists and the directors and supervisors were responsible for on-site and finds recording, adhering at all times to the following documents:

- ClfA: Charter and by-law (2014)
- ClfA: Code of conduct (2020 revision)
- ClfA: Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (2014)
- ClfA: Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2014)

- HE: Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2011)
- HE: Animal Bones and Archaeology. Recovery to archive (Baker and Worley, 2019)
- First Aid for Finds: Practical Guide for Archaeologists (Watkinson and Neal, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 1998)

The evaluation produced 57 Registered Artefacts and 50 kg of bulk finds, generating 136 context records, 44 plans and sections, and 208 digital photographs.

#### 1.4.2 Environmental sampling

Six samples were taken from deposits in Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. The selection and sampling of deposits for environmental remains was carried out in accordance with Historic England's *Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (HE 2011). The samples and the contexts from which they were taken are shown on Table 1. Given the limited nature of the evaluation trenches, in most cases the samples consisted of the complete deposits available. The samples were processed off-site and the nature of the recovered ecofacts they contained is described in section 2.12.

Table 1 Environmental samples

Sample#	Context	Description of sampled context	Reason for sample selection
101	(1014)	Mixed/mottled layer over entire Trench 1, containing burnt material	Charcoal and charred plant remains observed in possible abandonment / destruction deposit (late Roman?)
201	(2016)	Silty primary fill of Roman ditch [2017] in Trench 2	Potential for survival of ecofacts in ditch fill
301	(3018)	Silty fill of drain / culvert [3019] in Trench 3	Control sample: Potential for survival of ecofacts in drain fill (no ecofacts visible in the deposit)
302	(3010)	Clay-like fill of possible pit [3011] in Trench 3	Control sample: Potential for survival of ecofacts in pit fill (no ecofacts visible in the deposit)
401	(4014)	Silty second fill of Roman ditch [4010] in Trench 4	Control sample: Potential for survival of ecofacts in pit fill (no ecofacts visible in the deposit)
601	(6017)	Fill of pit [6016], containing burnt material	Charcoal observed in pit fill

#### 1.4.3 Post-excavation

The post-excavation stage of the project began while the excavation was running, following HE's 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide' (2015). The post-excavation tasks completed to date include:

- Cleaning, sorting and repackaging of all Registered Artefacts and bulk find assemblages;
- Digitisation of context records and preparation of trench stratigraphic narratives;
- Digitisation of plans and sections;
- Assessments of Registered Artefact assemblages;
- Assessments of the pottery, human remains, animal bone and other bulk finds assemblages;
- Preparation of the physical and digital Archives
- Preparation of this Assessment Report.



## **1.5 OUTREACH**

The evaluation was a valuable opportunity for university archaeology students to participate in a research excavation and develop the skills of the field archaeologist. Such opportunities are becoming increasingly rare and there are many benefits of visiting or working on an archaeological excavation, particularly for students and young people.

It was agreed with the landowner that the evaluation trenches would not be open to the general public. Permission was granted, however, for an open event for residents of Hinton St Mary on the afternoon of Thursday 2 September 2021 and over 150 people came to see the excavation in progress. Members of the project's Advisory Group also attended, including Dr Jill Cook FSA (BM), Sir Barry Cunliffe CBE FBA (University of Oxford), Prof. Mike Fulford CBE FBA (University of Reading), Cllr Pauline Batstone (Dorset Council) and Rev. David Dunning (Hinton St Mary).

Also at the landowner's request, the project did not post information that described the 2021 excavations or any finds on the internet, including all social media platforms.

## 2. EVALUATION RESULTS



*Figure 11 Aerial photograph of the evaluation trenches at Hinton St Mary  
(courtesy of Tom and Poppy Blake)*

### 2.1 TRENCH 1 (FIG. 29 in Appendix 7.1)

#### 2.1.1 Overview

Trench 1 was positioned to investigate if the Hinton St Mary mosaic was part of a larger building. It was 15m long and 1m wide, and extended south-eastwards from where the mosaic was known to have been discovered and lifted (FIG. 12). Metal fences and other recent activities associated with occupation at The Forge had interfered with the geophysical surveys in this part of the scheduled area, the results of which were very unclear.

#### 2.1.2 Roman wall and associated surfaces

The foundation trench [1018] for a wall extending south-eastwards from the mosaic room had been dug from the level of the natural (1031), at 83.20 mOD. Its footings (1017) consisted of unmortared medium-sized limestone rubble filling the trench to an unknown depth (not excavated). This wall was almost certainly bonded to the mosaic room's wall and it must have been at least 14m long and at least 0.4m wide (it continued for the entire length of the trench and beyond its SE end and its SW sides).



*Figure 12 General view of Trench 1 from the SE*

Although the wall had been mostly robbed to its footings, its lowest two courses survived c. 3 m in length in the SE part of the trench and c. 1.5 m in length in the NW part of the trench. These showed that the rubble footings (1017) were overlain by a single course of roughly cut and dressed limestone blocks (1015), above which was a single course of smaller and squarer well-dressed limestone blocks (1010), offset by c. 0.1 m in from the wider course beneath (FIG. 13). Neither the lower course nor the narrower upper course appeared to be mortared. Instead, the wall was bonded with soil mixed with small limestone pieces, as was the wall's rubble core. It is uncertain if the two courses were the lower part of a wall, or if they might have formed a supporting wall for a colonnaded portico.

An area of jumbled stones and the occasional decayed brick immediately adjacent to the wall (1019), could have been the foundations for a single step. Patches of thin flat limestone slabs found to the NE of the wall are most likely from a paved, probably external, surface (1022). Mixed sandy clays with small stones and pebbles overlying the natural and below the paved areas are likely to have been construction deposits (1020/1021/1030). A small area of burnt clay (1023), possibly a hearth, was found in the bedding for the paved surface at the SE end of the trench (left unexcavated).



*Figure 13 Central section of surviving wall (1015) / (1015), showing (1019) and (1022)*

### **2.1.3 ?Late Roman dereliction and robbing**

The possible surface (1022) and its associated construction deposits were covered with a sequence of shallow mixed layers that probably derived from the building's dereliction and decay. A mottled layer (1014) contained occasional small and medium stones, lumps of mortar or render, as well as small patches of burnt material (this produced a bronze coin of the House of Theodosius). In turn, this was sealed by a more homogenous rubble layer (1011), containing fragments of limestone slabs and several concentrations of pottery (1012 and 1016). Some of the stones that formed the probable step were removed by cut [1028] after layer (1014) but before the rubble layer (1011) had been deposited. Wall (1010/1015) was robbed after (1011) by cut [1008], the fill of which (1009) produced no post-Roman pottery. Therefore, it is possible that building's dereliction and the robbing of its walls occurred during the late Roman period, or not long afterwards.

### **2.1.4 Modern activity including 1960's excavation trenches**

The entirety of Trench 1 was covered by a firm stony layer (1007), that produced most of the trench's animal bone as well as seven sherds of medieval pottery. Two of Painter's trenches were found cutting this layer: [1004] and [1006].

At the NW end of Trench 1, cut [1004] was from the 1965 trench to lift the mosaic. It had been backfilled with very firm mixed material (1003), including a pile of stones apparently marked with the 1964 excavations site code (1013). Trench 1 intersected with the edge of the 1965 trench on the SE side of the mosaic room, where it had been dug into the underlying firm orangey clay natural (1031), surviving at 83.10 mOD (FIG. 14). The SE wall of the mosaic room (1026) had been robbed probably at the same time as (1010/1015), and [1004] also emptied the original robber trench [1026]. This robbing had removed almost all of the mosaic room's SE wall, with the exception of a single block

that survived from its external face, but it must have been at least 0.8m wide (it continued beyond the end of Trench 1). The wall's surviving footings (1027) consisted of unmortared medium-sized limestone rubble of unknown depth (not excavated), but the fact that these were bonded with those of the narrower perpendicular wall (1015/1010), demonstrates that the mosaic room existed as part of a larger building built in a single episode.



*Figure 14 NW end of Trench 1, showing the 1965 trench to lift the mosaic (from SW)*

Trench 1 also passed over a long narrow NE-SW aligned trench excavated in 1964 [1006], found to be 0.9m wide (equivalent to 3ft).

The subsoil (1002) was cut by a possibly modern land drain [1024], and Trench 1 was sealed by topsoil and turf (1001).

## **2.2 TRENCH 2 (FIG. 30 in Appendix 7.1)**

### **2.2.1 Overview**

Trench 2 was 10m by 1m, and was positioned to investigate the south-eastern part of the scheduled area where Painter thought he had located the ploughed out remains of buildings ('Area 2'). The trench was located across two linear geophysical anomalies, interpreted as external walls of a rectangular building ('building C'). Trench 2 produced no evidence for walls or floors, but did reveal a ditch and a compacted stony deposit.

### 2.2.2 Roman ditch and other pre-modern features

An approximately 2m wide U-shaped ditch [2017] cut across the central part of Trench 2, dug from the level of the redeposited or disturbed natural (2004), at 81.70 mOD (FIG. 15). The ditch was some 0.5 m deep, containing a primary clayey fill (2016) that produced late Roman pottery (an environmental sample was taken from this deposit), and a later more stony fill (2014). It is not possible to be certain about this ditch's function, but it is possible that it demarcated an enclosure of some kind. Also cut into the natural (2004), was a posthole c. 2 m from the N side of ditch [2017]. At the S end of Trench 2 was an irregular patch of compacted medium limestone fragments (2007), lying at 81.50-81.57 mOD. These fragments were only 0.08 m thick and sat directly on the natural (2015). The patch continued beyond both trench edges and it could have been part of a linear feature, possibly a base or platform of some kind (Painter located a similar feature in a trench not far away to the SW, which he interpreted as ploughed out wall footings).

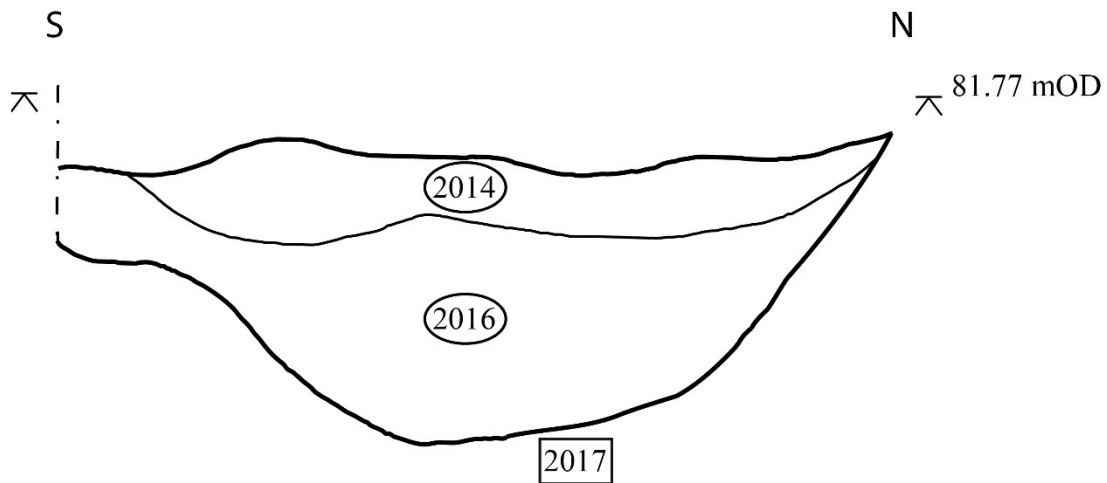


Figure 15 E-facing section of ditch [2017]

### 2.2.3 Post-Roman activity

Trench 2 was covered by firm stony layers (2006) and (2003), the latter of which produced most of the trench's animal bone, then by a more humic subsoil (2002). A 19th or early 20th century ceramic land drain [2008] cut across the NW end of the trench, which was sealed by topsoil and turf layer (2001).

## 2.3 TRENCH 3 (FIG. 31 in Appendix 7.1)

### 2.3.1 Overview

Trench 3, 15m long and 1m wide, was located in the central part of the scheduled area that had not been investigated by Painter in 1964. It was positioned to examine up to four linear anomalies in the magnetometer results, which were interpreted as walls of a long narrow building, or buildings ('building B'). Trench 3 produced no evidence for walls, but did reveal various stone surfaces, a drain and a possible second robbed drain or wall (FIG. 16).



*Figure 16 General view of Trench 3 (from SE)*

### **2.3.2 Roman surfaces and drain(s)**

Stony and cobbled layers (3005), (3012) and (3016) were found directly above the natural (3004), that probably served as surfaces, or bedding for surfaces. These were very solid and gave the impression of yard surfaces, or the hard wearing floors of stables and animal sheds: (3012) and (3016) were found in the central and S parts of trench (81.42-81.60 mOD), and (3005) was in the northern part of trench (81.90-82.10 mOD). Lying immediately adjacent to (3005), stony layer (3014) could have been part of the same surface, or was perhaps disturbed wall footings. Whether these surfaces were external, or internal, to a building or buildings (or both), is unknown, but the pebble and gravel surface with crushed CBM fragments at the N end of Trench 3 (3013), is more convincing as an internal floor (it was contiguous with (3005) but there was no sign of a wall or boundary between the two surfaces).

A NW-SE drain or culvert [3019], measuring c. 0.45 m wide and c. 0.2 m deep, was found cutting surface (3012) at the S end of Trench 3 (FIG. 17). Its sides were lined by uneven rows of roughly-cut medium-sized limestones (3017), leaving a 0.05-0.10 m wide space in-between that was filled by (3018) (an environmental sample was taken from this fill). Two roughly-cut large rectangular flat

limestone slabs (3015), approx. 1.0 m long and 0.5 m wide, capped the drain at the same level as surface (3012) (81.55 mOD). The southern ends of the capping stones had been cut into roughly triangular points, and that of the eastern stone overlapped the more rectangular northern end of the western stone.



*Figure 17 Drain or culvert in Trench 3*

A flat-bottomed trench or ditch [3007] in surface (3102/3016) formed a right angle to the drain [3019]. This was 0.65m wide and 0.23m deep, filled with a firm clean silty clay (3006). The orientation of [3007] suggests it could have been another drain whose stone linings and capstones have been completely removed, or a ditch, or perhaps the base for a robbed wall or partition of some kind.

A shallow oval cut [3011] was dug into (3005/3014) at the N end of the trench. Its fill (3010) was noticeably less stony than the adjacent surfaces (an environmental sample was taken from the fill).

### **2.3.3 Post-Roman activity**

Trench 3 was covered by general stony layer (3003) that produced the majority of the trench's animal bone, then by a more humic subsoil (3002) and topsoil / turf (3001).

## **2.4 TRENCH 4 (FIG. 32 in Appendix 7.1)**

### **2.4.1 Overview**

Trench 4 measured 10m by 1m and was positioned to investigate the magnetometer anomalies in this part of the field, which the geophysical team suspected could be ditches, or the walls of a stone building that they proposed might have stood in this area ('building n'). One of Painter's 1964 trenches located a wide ditch with a possible drystone wall on its inner edge in this



part of the scheduled area ('Area 4'). The ditch identified by Painter was located in Trench 4, although no evidence for drystone walling was found (FIG. 18).



*Figure 18 General view of Trench 4 (from S)*

#### **2.4.2 Roman ditches**

A 1.80 m wide and 0.65 m deep ditch with an asymmetrical profile [4010] was cut from the level of the redeposited or disturbed natural layers (4012) and (4018), at 79.40 mOD (FIG. 19). It was oriented NW-SE and extended beyond Trench 4's edges. The ditch's southern side was stepped to form a relatively flat ledge above the deepest part, which had a more gently rounded base. Ditch [4010] contained six fills in total, almost all of which lapped up and over the ledge. The lowest three fills (4016), (4014) and (4013), were all silty clays that contained increasing quantities of pottery and animal bone as the ditch filled up, including a subadult cat (an environmental sample was taken from the second fill). The fourth fill (4009/4011) was a firm sandier deposit containing painted wall plaster and chunks of mortar / render, whereas the uppermost two fills (4008) and (4005) were dark and loose and produced large quantities of oyster shell, animal bone and pottery. Ditch [4010] is almost certainly the same as the ditch excavated by Painter in 1964.

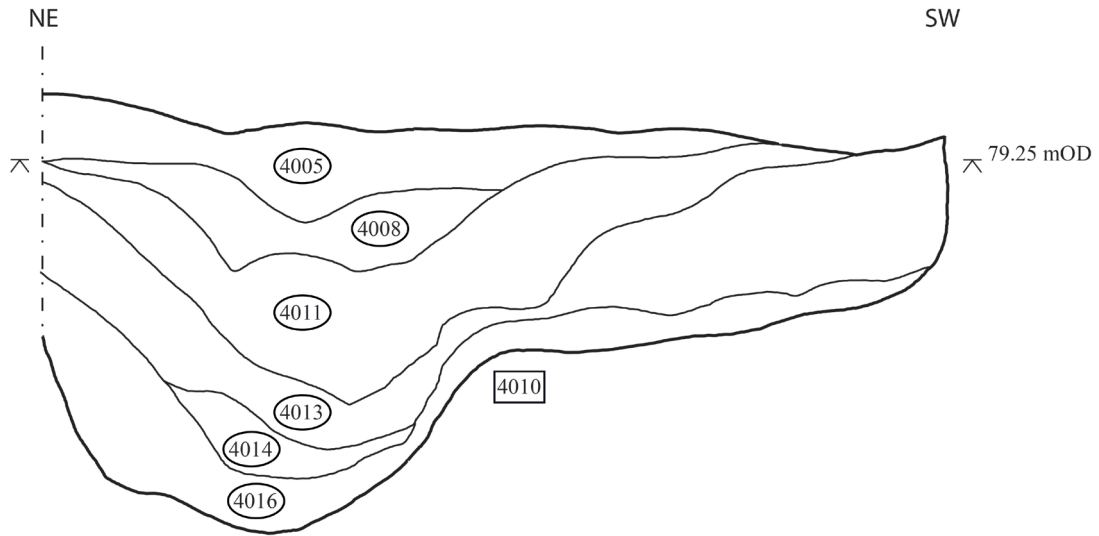


Figure 19 NW-facing section of ditch [4010]

A ditch or elongated pit [4015] was located approx. 1.8 m S of ditch [4010], also cut from the level of the redeposited or disturbed natural layers (4012) and (4018), at 78.90-79.05 mOD. This also extended beyond the edges of Trench 4 and if it was part of a linear feature it would have been on the same alignment as the neighbouring ditch. Feature [4015] was between 1.3-1.6 m wide with a flat base and gently curving sides. It contained two fills, the earliest of which (4007) comprised large to medium sized flat grey stones lining the base and sides, while larger and squarer limestones comprised the second fill (4006) (FIG. 20).



Figure 20 Stony fills (4006) and (4007) of ditch [4015]

The stones in (4006) were noticeably lighter in colour than the flat stones below and they had been placed on their narrow sides, suggesting careful and deliberate arrangement. Ditch [4015] was almost certainly a linear feature, but it seems too shallow for a ditch and the deliberate placement of the stones suggests a structural function is possible, perhaps related to the neighbouring ditch.

### **2.4.3 Other features**

A posthole [4020], 0.25m in diameter with stone packing defining a 0.1 m wide post-pipe, was found cutting the disturbed natural (4012) at the N end of the trench (not excavated).

### **2.4.4 Post-Roman activity**

Trench 4 was covered by general stony layer (4003/4004), then by a more humic subsoil (4002) and topsoil / turf (4001).

## **2.5 TRENCH 5 (FIG. 33 in Appendix 7.1)**

### **2.5.1 Overview**

Trench 5 was 15m long and 1m wide, and was positioned to test Painter's hypothesis that the villa's north-western 'wing' was located in this part of the scheduled area, including the full width of the building's rooms and the entrance corridor ('Area 1'). This seemed to be supported by the results of the resistivity survey that, it was believed, had identified the building's walls ('building A'). Painter concentrated much of his resources in 1964 in this part of the field, and he excavated at least six trenches where he believed the wing lay.

No convincing evidence for walls or floors was found and, instead, a substantial medieval or post-medieval stone field drain and other smaller features were excavated.

### **2.5.2 Possible Roman activity**

Three features cut the redeposited or disturbed natural in Trench 5 (5103), and were sealed by a general stony layer similar to those observed in other trenches (5005/5016). These produced no dateable finds, but their stratigraphic relationships suggest they could date to the Roman period.

A discrete deposit of large and medium-sized limestones (5021) in the middle part of the trench appeared to sit within a cut [5024], although as they were not excavated this could not be confirmed. These stones were cut by the trench for the later field drain to the east and continued to the west beyond the trench edge. Two other features at the S end of Trench 5 included a small shallow circular pit [5020] with fills (5019/5014), the lower of which produced several sherds of late Roman pottery, as well as a posthole [5018] and fills (5017 / 5015).

### **2.5.3 Post-medieval field-drain**

A substantial linear stone-built field drain ran along almost the entire length of the trench (no sign of which had appeared on the earlier geophysics). Consisting of two rows of large roughly cut limestones (5010), the drain was constructed in a 0.60 m wide, steep-sided, cut [5008]. The limestone blocks on the northeastern side tended to be slightly smaller and were positioned almost vertically against the edge of the drain's trench, while those on the southwestern side were larger and had been positioned obliquely with their upper edges resting on or against the vertical stones opposite (FIG. 21). Soil had been used to bond and pack the drain stones, while smaller stones were used to

fill in any larger gaps (5004/5006). A 1 m section of the drain was excavated at the NW end of Trench 5, including the two silty fills that filled the void beneath the drain stones, (5007) and (5022). The earliest of these (5022), produced a sherd of 18th or 19th century oxidised pottery with a clear glaze. The drain is on the same alignment as the neighbouring hedge and field boundary to the SE of the scheduled area.



*Figure 21 General photograph of Trench 5 (from NW)*

#### **2.5.4 Other recent activity**

Trench 5 was covered by general stony layer (5005/5009/5016) that produced most of the trench's animal bone as well as three sherds of medieval pottery, then by more a humic subsoil (5023) and topsoil / turf (5001). The edge of a cut at the southern end of the trench [5003], dug from the level of the subsoil, is probably the side of Painter's long excavation trench opened in 1964.

## 2.6 TRENCH 6 (FIG. 34 in Appendix 7.1)

### 2.6.1 Overview

Trench 6 was located towards the middle part of the same putative north-western 'wing' explored by Trench 5. It was thought that the trench should encompass the building's full width, including the floors of multiple rooms (which the geophysicists in 1996 suspected could have been very durable, i.e. 'building G'). Thick mortar deposits in the north of the trench suggest an internal space of some kind, while stony surfaces covered the southern half. Trench 6 also included one of Painter's 1964 short trenches (FIG. 22).



Figure 22 General photograph of Trench 6 (from N)

### 2.6.2 Wall footings and floors / surfaces

In the northern half of the trench, up to 0.2 m of firm yellowish-white mortar mixed with small stones and occasional tesserae (6009) lay above the natural (6024), at 80.90 mOD. A light brown silty accumulation layer (6011) was on top of the mortar, into which a circular pit [6016] had been cut.

The pit was filled with two deposits, (6017) and (6018), that contained burnt material (an environmental sample was taken from the lower fill).

Layer (6011) also sealed a linear NE-SW aligned stony deposit (6023). This consisted of a single layer of medium and small stones that were more concentrated in a 0.5m wide band to the NW and had the appearance of being deliberately laid, perhaps the remains of wall footings or a platform of some kind. Some 2 m south of (6023), and on the same general alignment, was another possibly linear arrangement of larger stones (6007). These had been laid on their sides or ends within a trench approximately 0.80m wide [6008], and the feature had been exposed in one of Painter's 1964 excavation trenches (see below), who believed it to be the remains of ploughed out wall footings (FIG. 23).



*Figure 23 Possible wall footings (6007) and edge of 1964 trench [6002] (from E)*

In the central and southern part of the trench, a silty layer (6019) appears to be the equivalent of (6011) further north. A rectangular stone plinth or platform (6015) was found on top of, or within, (6019) at the trench's southern end. This consisted of four large limestone slabs, bonded with friable yellow sandy mortar that also seems to have covered at least one of the stones. The stones measured 0.5 m by 1.1 m, but continued beyond the southern trench edge and it is uncertain if they were part of a larger feature. Stony layers (6014) and (6013) to the north of (6015) were directly above (6019). These appear to have been surfaces of some kind, perhaps for separate spaces some of which could have been external. Layer (6013) included numerous fragments of thin slabs that included a fragmentary roof slate with a nail hole.

### **2.6.3 Painter excavation trenches**

A mixed stony layer (6005/6010) covered the entire trench below subsoil (6004) and topsoil (6001). This layer produced a considerable quantity of animal bone and two sherds of possibly

medieval pottery, as well as several human bones, probably from a single adult and including parts of several bones from the upper limbs, hands and feet as well as some rib fragments and vertebrae. It is possible that this is a disturbed and redeposited Romano-British burial and it is recommended that the bones should be sent for radiocarbon dating to confirm their age. The end of one of Painter's excavation trenches [6002] was visible in the north of Trench 6 from the level of the subsoil. It was 0.9m wide (equivalent to 3ft), had a square end and was at least 2.5m long (it extended beyond the trench). It had a flat base which revealed the top of the mortar layer (6009), except where it had exposed the large stones (6007), which had been left in-situ.

The end of another possible 1964 trench was identified to the south of Trench 6 (6022). This was also 0.9m wide with a squared end, although on this occasion it had been backfilled initially with a jumble of very large stones (perhaps from the excavated stratigraphy). Painter does not record that he dug a trench in this location, although he suspected that this should have been the location of a wall belonging to the 'wing' building he thought must have existed here (perhaps its front wall or for a portico or corridor). The cut was not noticed from the level of the subsoil (6004) and the rubble fill was only visible once the general stony layer (6005) had been removed (FIG. 24). It is not certain that this is one of Painter's trenches, but its shape, size and orientation suggest it could have been.



*Figure 24 Possible wall footings (6008) (from SE)*

## **2.7 REGISTERED ARTEFACTS ASSESSMENT (Peter Guest and Richard Hobbs)**

### **2.7.1 Registered Artefacts**

The evaluation produced a limited assemblage of 58 Registered Artefacts, of which 29 are coins. Preliminary identifications of the RAs other than coins, together with recommendations for cleaning, are provided in Appendix 7.2, while a summary is shown in Table 2. Trench 1 produced the most finds overall, which is probably related to the fact that this trench was located in close proximity

to the site of the mosaic discovered in 1963. Non-coin Registered Artefacts seem to be more evenly spread between the trenches, with the exception of diagnostic ironwork (excluding nails, which are considered under bulk finds). where there is a slightly higher concentration in Trench 4 (7 or 64% of the total).

*Table 2 Overview of Registered Artefacts*

	Trench 1	Trench 2	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 5	Trench 6	Total
COINS	13	5	3	3	1	4	<b>29</b>
	45%	17%	10%	10%	3%	14%	
IRON	1	1	1	7	1	-	<b>11</b>
	9%	9%	9%	64%	9%	0%	
COPPER ALLOY	2	1	1	2	1	2	<b>9</b>
	22%	11%	11%	22%	11%	22%	
SHALE	1	1	1	-	-	-	<b>3</b>
	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%	
STONE, WORKED	-	1	-	1	-	1	<b>3</b>
	0%	33%	0%	33%	0%	33%	
LEAD	1	-	1	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	
BONE, WORKED	-	1	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>32%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	

The non-coin element of the Registered Artefacts assemblage contains very few personal items, with the only certain artefacts of Roman date being three fragments of finger-ring (two of which are copper-alloy and the third is iron). The only other significant Registered Artefact is an openwork handle of a bladed implement, which may be of Roman date but requires confirmation (FIG. 25). Some pieces of ironwork appear to be fragments of bladed implements or agricultural tools, and there is also one item (RA306) which may be a seal-box lid, but this requires further investigation (including x-radiography). The three items of shale and two of worked stone may have had some recognisable function (for instance in textile manufacture) and would also warrant further study.



*Figure 25 Openwork handle of a bladed implement*



It is recommended that the iron Registered Artefacts should be x-rayed, while another 18 of the Registered Artefacts (mainly copper alloy and shale) would benefit from conservation (cleaning and stabilisation) prior to final identification. Another 10 very fragmentary Registered Artefacts are not considered sufficiently significant to be retained in perpetuity.

## 2.7.2 Roman Coins

Twenty-nine coins were recovered from the archaeological evaluation at Hinton St Mary, of which all but one are copper alloy and date to the Roman period (the exception is a possible medieval cut silver penny, RA115). Most of the coins are in a fair to good condition, although 8 are encrusted with corrosion products and will require some cleaning to facilitate full identification. Preliminary identifications of the Hinton St Mary coins together with recommendations for cleaning are provided in Appendix 7.3, while a summary is shown in Table 3. The coin assemblage from the evaluation excavations at Hinton St Mary can make an important contribution to several of the project's aims and objectives, most notably improving our knowledge and understanding of the following main themes:

- chronology of the site, particularly when the Roman buildings were constructed and finally abandoned;
- nature of the archaeological remains at Hinton St Mary.

Table 3 Summary of Roman Coins

Date	Issue Period	Coins#
to AD 41	1	-
41-54	2	-
54-68	3	-
69-96	4	-
96-117	5	-
117-138	6	-
138-161	7	-
161-180	8	-
180-192	9	-
193-222	10	-
222-238	11	-
238-260	12	-
260-275	13	1
275-296	14	-
296-317	15	-
317-330	16	1
330-348	17	7
348-364	18	1
364-378	19	3
378-388	20	-
388-402	21	3
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>16</b>
1st-2nd c.		1
Late 3rd c.		2
Late 3rd-4th c.		9
4th c.		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>29</b>

The Roman coins include one large 1st/2nd century bronze coin (RA111), three late-3rd century *radiates* and 15 4th century coins, as well as another 9 bronze coins that must have been struck during the late 3rd or 4th centuries. The coin assemblage provides very little evidence for activity at the site prior to 300, and would seem to indicate that the most intensive period of occupation occurred perhaps from 330-340 until the very end of the 4th or the early 5th centuries.

Trench 1 produced almost half of the coins recovered during the evaluation (13 in total), indicating that coin use and loss occurred most frequently in the high-status 'villa' building(s) incorporating the mosaic. Another five coins came from Trench 2; four were found in Trench 6; three each were recovered from Trenches 3 and 4; while Trench 5 produced only one coin.

The evaluation has shown that further targeted excavations at Hinton St Mary are likely to produce relatively large quantities of stratified coins that will add important new evidence for the site's history, providing context for the famous mosaic and the building complex to which it belonged in advance of the planned redisplay of the mosaic.

The final report of the evaluation assemblage should consist of the following elements:

- full list of coins using standard works of reference for identifications;
- discussion of the coins' archaeological contexts, where possible concentrating on the nature of the deposits from which the coins were recovered;
- comparison of the assemblage with other groups of coins from excavated Romano-British villas and rural sites in Dorset and the surrounding counties.

## **2.8 BULK FINDS ASSESSMENT** (Peter Guest and Richard Hobbs)

The evaluation produced just over 50 kg of artefacts classed as bulk finds and their distributions between the trenches is shown on Table 4. This is an unexpectedly small assemblage of material and the absence of CBM, in particular, is noteworthy. Bearing in mind the limited nature of the evaluation trenches, significant concentrations of bulk finds from the trenches include:

- Trench 1: pottery (34% of total), CBM (49%), tesserae (40%), *opus signinum* (35%), bulk lead (84%), bulk iron (82%);
- Trench 2: tesserae (27%);
- Trench 3: CBM (22%), stone roof slates (30%), *opus signinum* (65%) and modern glass (39%);
- Trench 4: pottery (39%), animal bone (28%), oyster shell (65%) and painted plaster (100%);
- Trench 5: modern glass (30%);
- Trench 6: animal bone (23%), clay pipe (44%)

The pottery and bone assemblages are discussed separately below, but it is instructive to examine why the trenches produced so little material classed as bulk finds and what this might tell us.

Table 4 Overview of Bulk Finds

	Trench 1	Trench 2	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 5	Trench 6	Total
POTTERY (g)	4,624	659	1,022	5,314	695	1,196	<b>13,510</b>
	34%	5%	8%	39%	5%	9%	
ANIMAL / HUMAN BONE (g)	1,023	433	1,427	2,034	648	1,638	<b>7,203</b>
	14%	6%	20%	28%	9%	23%	
OYSTER SHELL (g)	300	154	403	1714	3	67	<b>2,641</b>
	11%	6%	15%	65%	0%	3%	
CBM (g)	4,259	935	1,864	282	895	376	<b>8,611</b>
	49%	11%	22%	3%	10%	4%	
STONE ROOF SLATES (#)	2	2	3	-	1	2	<b>10</b>
	20%	20%	30%	0%	10%	20%	
IRON NAILS (g)	404	211	205	431	124	379	<b>1,754</b>
	23%	12%	12%	25%	7%	22%	
TESSERAЕ (#)	363	242	135	38	12	111	<b>901</b>
	40%	27%	15%	4%	1%	12%	
OPUS SIGNINUM (g)	220	-	400	-	-	-	<b>620</b>
	35%	0%	65%	0%	0%	0%	
PAINTED PLASTER (g)	-	25	-	5,581	-	-	<b>5,606</b>
	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	
LEAD BULK (g)	320	17	43	-	-	2	<b>382</b>
	84%	4%	11%	0%	0%	1%	
IRON BULK (g)	1,080	20	124	6	49	40	<b>1,319</b>
	82%	2%	9%	0%	4%	3%	
MODERN GLASS (g)	66	7	105	10	81	3	<b>272</b>
	24%	3%	39%	4%	30%	1%	
SLAGS (g)	222	158	220	99	47	32	<b>778</b>
	29%	20%	28%	13%	6%	4%	
CLAY PIPE (#)	-	2	2	-	1	4	<b>9</b>
	0%	22%	22%	0%	11%	44%	

### 2.8.1 Ceramic Building Materials and stone roof slates

The surprising absence of roof tiles (imbrices and tegulae) suggests that the buildings and structures investigated in 2021 were not provided with typically Roman-style terracotta roofs. Although Trench 1 produced half of the CBM from the excavations, this comprised only 58 fragments, of which 15 were bricks and 14 were box flue tiles (another 26 were too small to be identified to bricks or tiles). Instead, it would appear that buildings could have been roofed with stone slates, fragments of which were recovered from all the trenches with the exception of Trench 4 (albeit from upper levels in most cases). Trench 3, for example, produced a near-complete hexagonal roof slate with an indented hole in the middle of its narrow head, which would have allowed it be fixed to a batten on a roof frame with a long-shafted small or medium-sized nail (FIG. 26). The stone is a type of Todber Freestone that outcrops locally in various locations, including at nearby Marnhull. Three further fragments of similar slates from Trench 6 all had the broken remains of iron nails still in situ. It is recommended that the roof slates should be retained as well as a representative sample of the CBM.



Figure 26 Hexagonal roof slate with indented nail hole from (3001)

### 2.8.2 Tesserae, *opus signinum* and wall plaster

Over 900 tesserae from tessellated floors were recovered, mainly large white chalk or limestone cubes between 10 and 25 mm in size. Very few smaller tesserae were found that might have originated in mosaics such as the example discovered in 1963. Most of the tesserae came from topsoils and subsoils, or the general stony layers found sealing the Roman archaeology in Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 6 (i.e. 123 and 156 from (1002) and (1007) in Trench 1; 67 and 163 from (2002) and (2003) in Trench 2; 33 and 100 from (3002) and (3003) in Trench 3; and 26 and 53 from (6004) and (6011) in Trench 6). The tessellated floors from which they derived must have been disturbed and these tesserae redeposited around the scheduled area, possibly long after the Roman period. It is recommended that a representative sample should be retained to illustrate the range of tesserae recovered during the 2021 evaluation excavation.

Four reasonably large chunks of *opus signinum* recovered from Trenches 1 and 3 indicate the presence of internal concrete floors nearby. All of these pieces were found in post-Roman contexts, (1001) and (3003) respectively, and, as with the tesserae, they must have been redeposited after the floors had been damaged. It is recommended that the *opus signinum* from the excavation should be retained.

A considerable quantity of small pieces of painted wall-plaster was recovered from Trench 4, particularly from ditch fill (4011). The plaster consists of fragments of assorted sizes, from c. 20 mm up to c. 60 mm. Some have red or pinky-red pigment and some white, but it is not possible to discern any figurative designs, patterns or decorative schemes (e.g. straight lines), meaning that the plaster

is of very limited value for future study. It is noteworthy that Trench 1 did not produce any wall plaster. It is recommended that a representative sample of the plaster is retained.

### **2.8.3 Iron (including nails) and lead bulk finds**

Over 80% of the iron and lead bulk finds were recovered from Trench 1, most of which was identifiably modern and presumably relates to the activities undertaken at The Forge. Iron nails show a more equal distribution between the trenches and it is likely, therefore, that the majority of nails derive from the Roman phases of occupation. It is recommended that the bulk iron objects, including the iron nails, should be x-rayed and that any obviously modern material need not be retained.

### **2.8.4 Glass**

Approximately 100 sherds of glass were discovered from all six trenches. None of the fragments are of Roman date (one large piece from Trench 3 is marked with the date 1719), and all have been included under bulk finds. It is recommended that none of the glass fragments needs be retained.

### **2.8.5 Oyster shell**

Two-thirds of the oyster shell from the evaluation excavations was recovered from Trench 4, almost all of which came from the uppermost two fills of ditch [4010]. This ditch seems to have been used as a convenient location to dispose of domestic waste in the late Roman period, including the remains of foodstuffs and the ceramic vessels used to store, prepare and consume them. It is recommended that a representative sample of the oyster shell from Trench 4 should be retained.

## **2.9 POTTERY ASSESSMENT (Jeremy Evans with a contribution by Stephanie Ratkai)**

Some 1,274 sherds were recovered, weighing 12.5 kg and including 151 Roman rimsherds. This gives an overall average sherd weight of just 9.8 g. The 1,026 Romano-British sherds weigh 11.2 kg, giving an average sherd weight of 10.9 g. In national terms, this is at the bottom end of the usual range for a lowland-zone site. The pottery has been subjected to a rapid scan and recorded according to the 12 major ware-classes used by Warwickshire Museum and Oxford Archaeology and some of the commoner individual fabric types (Tomber and Dore 1998).

### **2.9.1 Taphonomy**

Table 5 shows a breakdown of the pottery by context type excavated in the evaluation trenches. Unusually, 53% (by sherd#) derived from horizontal stratigraphy, something that is largely absent from many Romano-British rural sites. The second largest group (c. 33% by sherd#) is material from ditches, particularly from fills of [2017] in Trench 2 and [4010] in Trench 4. There is a very low quantity of pottery from pit fills, which reflects the fact that the evaluation trenches contained only a few pits, none of which were large enough to have been for the disposal of broken ceramic vessels and other refuse.

Table 5 Feature types producing Roman pottery

Feature type	% of Sherd#	% of Wt
Layers	53.0%	55.0%
Ditch/drain fills	32.7%	34.2%
Subsoils	5.5%	3.5%
Robber trench backfill	4.9%	4.1%
Topsoils	2.1%	1.2%
Pit fills	1.7%	2.0%
Natural	0.1%	0.01
Totals	1,026	11.2 kg

### 2.9.2 Chronology

The Roman pottery is almost exclusively of later Roman date (spot dates for key contexts are provided in Appendix 7.4). Only two sherds of samian ware are present: a bodysherd and a Dr45 CGS rimsherd (probably c. 170-200), both of which might have reached the site in the 3rd century. Furthermore, there is a striking lack of 2nd century BB1 material from the assemblage. The characteristic flange rimmed bowls are missing and just two bodysherds with acute lattice decoration and one jar of possibly 2nd century form were present. In contrast, there were 68 bodysherds with obtuse lattice decoration common in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

There are a few BB1 jars of the early to mid-3rd century, but the vast majority of jars date to c. 270-400. Similarly, nearly all the bowls are of the developed beaded and flanged type also dating to c. 270-400. However, while it is quite clear that the site seems to have flourished in the later 3rd and 4th centuries, unfortunately there were few diagnostic BB1 forms at this period and it is very difficult to provide more specific dating for this period of time from the pottery alone. The principal late type is the squat jar/bowl with oblique burnished lines that replaced the earlier obtuse burnish lattice band, which seems to date c. 390-430/450 (Gerrard 2004). BB1 bodysherds with oblique lines, possibly from vessels of this form, were recovered from contexts [1007], [1011] and [5002].

The best markers for chronology in the 4th century are the Oxfordshire and New Forest finewares, but the trenches produced very little of this material (together they represent only 2.6% by Sherd# from the entire assemblage). There is a New Forest(?) bowl possibly of Fulford (1975) type 50 of possibly later 4th century date from (3002), and an Oxfordshire (Young 1977) C75 bowl dated 325-400 from (3003), while (4008) produced a lid perhaps of Fulford (1975) type 87, also of 4th century date.

FIG. 27 presents the chronology of the more closely dateable rimsherds, which demonstrates that most of the pottery deposition at the site took place 270-400+, with a little preceding 3rd century activity.

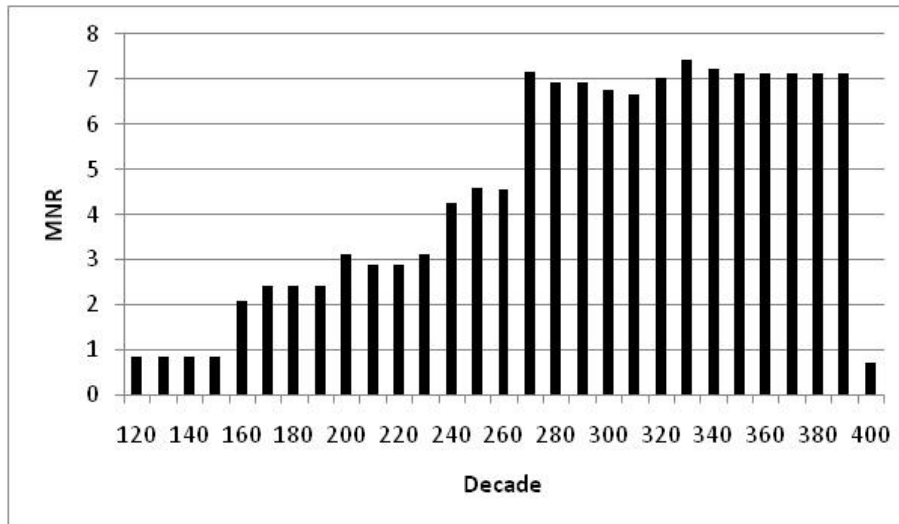


Figure 27 Date distribution plot (by MNR) for all rimsherds with a date range of 150 years or less

### 2.9.3 Supply

Table 6 shows the occurrence of major Roman ware types and fabrics in the assemblage. As might be expected for a site in Dorset, the pottery is dominated by BB1 (80.3% by Sherd#). Given that this site lies 30 miles north-west of the production sites in Poole Harbour, there is scant sign of any fall-off with distance from the kiln site, just as at Dorchester where BB1 from the excavations at Greyhound Yard, for instance, accounts for a similar 83% by Sherd# (Seager Smith 1993). Indeed, the high representation of BB1 across the core Durotrigian territory seems to suggest this distribution is not purely economic in its core area.

Table 6 The occurrence of Roman fabrics

Fabrics	Sum of Sherd#	Sum of Wt	Sum of MNR
A11	0.1%	0.3%	0%
B01	79.3%	78.7%	82.8%
B01?	1.0%	0.9%	1.3%
F00	0.2%	0.04%	0.7%
F00?	0.2%	0.1%	0.7%
F00-NF	1.5%	1.1%	0.7%
F00-OXCC	1.1%	1.1%	2.0%
G00	4.8%	7.5%	0.7%
G00?	0.2%	0.4%	0%
M00-NF	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%
O00	2.2%	1.6%	0.7%
O00?	1.3%	1.3%	1.37%
O00??	0.1%	0%	0%
OXCC	0.3%	0.1%	1.3%
R00	6.5%	6.0%	6.0%
R00?	0.5%	0.3%	0.7%
S00	0.2%	0.1%	0.7%
W00	0.1%	0.1%	0%
Totals	1,026	11.2 kg	151

Fineware levels in the assemblage are low (3.1% by Sherd#), although finewares also struggle to exceed 10% on sites in 4th-century Dorchester. New Forest and Oxfordshire colour-coated vessels are the most common finewares (1.6% and 1.1% by Sherd# respectively), with the higher level of the former reflecting the greater proximity of the New Forest kilns (40 miles to the east, compared with 84 miles to the north-east for Oxfordshire). The longer distances to both kiln sites may partly account for the relatively rare occurrence of finewares at Hinton St Mary. Greywares provide around 7% (by Sherd#) of the assemblage, with much probably being of Wiltshire origin.

Oxidised sherds represent about 3.5% (by Sherd#) of the pottery assemblage, many of which seem likely to be of late 4th century date from the Overwey/Tilford group of the Alice Holt industry, while at least some of the 5% (Sherd#) of oxidised gritted ware sherds may be from a similar source.

#### 2.9.4 Function and finewares

Table 7 shows the functional distribution of the assemblage by MNR. Jar levels are relatively low for a villa (53.9% MNR), but the significant proportion of tableware forms indicates that the site was of higher status than most rural settlement (bowls and dishes comprise 39.5%). Drinking vessel levels are lower than expected (2.0% MNR), but evidence has grown considerably over the last 20 years that ceramic drinking vessels tended to be replaced by glassware in the later Roman period. It is also worth noting that ceramic liquid pouring vessels are also in short supply.

Table 7 *Functional analysis of 151 Roman rimsherds*

Flagons	CJ	Storage jars	Other jars	Wide-mouthed jars	Beakers	Tankards	Bowls	Dishes	Mortaria	Lids
0	0.7%	2.6%	51.3%	0	2.0%	0	19.1%	20.4%	2.0%	2.0%

#### 2.9.5 Retention

Retention of the complete pottery assemblage, including unstratified material, is recommended.

#### 2.9.6 Discussion and Statement of Potential

The evidence from this fairly small assemblage is reasonably clear that, in terms of pottery supply and use, the settlement at Hinton St Mary was a high-status rural site (villa). The taphonomic indicators are surprisingly good and the functional analysis of the material is also fairly clear. The pottery indicates that the site was most intensively occupied from the later 3rd century onwards, possibly into the 5th century. Larger pot groups with more finewares would allow greater chronological precision and the site offers considerable potential to provide good, coin dated, ceramic groups of 4th century and later date, perhaps similar to that from Bradley Hill (Leech 1981).

### 2.10 HUMAN REMAINS ASSESSMENT (Katie Faillace and Richard Madgwick)

Disarticulated human remains were identified during assessment of the zooarchaeological material and they were transferred to Cardiff University's BioArchaeology (CUBA) Laboratory for identification (all analysis was conducted following established CUBA protocols). The purpose of the project was to catalogue the elements present and to recommend further work. A total of 85 fragments from four contexts was examined. All were identified as human, except two unidentified fragments from



context (6005): one likely a vertebral fragment from a large mammal, and one likely a sacral fragment. An inventory is included in Appendix 7.5, and an expanded inventory is included in the project Archive.

With the exception of small hand elements, all the remains were fragmented. Despite fragmentation throughout, surface preservation was mostly good (Score 1 or 2, Brickley and McKinley, 2004), with the cortex preserved on all elements. No weathering, gnawing, or burning was recorded, indicating that elements were not exposed prior to burial or redeposition. It was possible to articulate several of the fragments, representing multiple elements from the upper limbs and vertebrae. The Minimum Number of Elements (MNE) is 37. The assemblage is dominated by upper limb elements (41%): left and right radii and ulnae, left humerus, right carpals, and left and right hand elements, followed by other trunk elements of the ribs (33%), vertebrae (8%), and shoulder girdle (6%) (Table 8).

*Table 8. Human Remains: Number of elements and fragments by anatomical region*

Region	MNE	Fragments#	Percent NISP
Tooth	1	1	1%
Shoulder	2	5	6%
Upper Limb	21	35	41%
Ribs	5	28	33%
Vertebrae	4	7	8%
Lower Limb	4	4	5%
Human - Unidentified		3	4%
Unidentified		2	2%
Totals	37	85	

The Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI) is 1. No unique elements were repeated. Consistency in size between left and right radii and ulnae elements suggests that they came from the same individual. All present epiphyses are completely fused, indicating that the individual(s) had reached skeletal maturity. Assuming the post-cranial remains do represent one individual, they were at least 20 years of age at death, based on the epiphyseal fusion of the medial clavicle (White *et al.*, 2011). Due to the fragmented state of the remains, no other reliable age estimation methods were possible. Reliable sex estimation was also not possible based on the elements present. No trauma or pathology was recorded, although there was non-specific osteophytic activity on the endosteal surface of some humeral fragments.

The single tooth recovered from context (2003) is anomalous in the assemblage as the only cranial element, as well as being from a different trench (all other fragments recovered from Trench 6). Therefore, this tooth is most likely from another individual. It is a fully developed M3 belonging to an adult individual over 16 years old (Al-Qahtani *et al.* 2010), with wear facets exposing the dentine. Unfortunately, side and arcade are indeterminate because the crown is broken post-mortem, though possibly exacerbating an antemortem weakness.

The human remains are a well-preserved, if fragmented, assemblage from a commingled context. They represent a minimum of one adult individual, most likely two. The patterning of elements from Trench 6 is consistent with an articulated torso including extremities. Recommendations for further analyses are dependent on the relevant contexts, including the zooarchaeological remains recovered

from the same features. Age and sex estimates are unlikely unless more material is identified. The preservation suggests that remains are a good candidate for radiocarbon dating. Histological analyses would also be useful in understanding how the remains came to be commingled with faunal remains. Multi-isotope ( $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ ,  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ,  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ ) analyses would be possible if aligned with the research aims, though  $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$  and  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  analyses are only possible to perform on the tooth, which may be later in date according to the stratigraphy. Due to the fragmentation and lack of preferable elements, ancient DNA analysis is unlikely to be successful. It is recommended that the human remains should be temporarily retained for radiocarbon dating, after which they should be appropriately reburied at Hinton St Mary.

## **2.11 ANIMAL BONE ASSESSMENT (Mark Maltby)**

### **2.10.1 Methods of Analysis**

All bones and teeth recovered from the evaluation trenches were recorded individually onto a relational database (Microsoft Access). The following data were recorded where appropriate for each specimen: species; anatomical element; zones of bone present; approximate percentage of bone present; gnawing damage; erosion; weathering; concretions; burning (charring and calcification); fusion data; associated bone group (ABG) number; sieved sample number; other comments including observations of pathology. Linked tables were created for metrical, butchery and tooth ageing data. Tooth eruption and wear descriptions for cattle, sheep/goat and pig followed the method of Grant (1982). Measurements are those described by Driesch (1976). All fragments, including loose teeth, shaft fragments, rib heads and vertebral bodies were recorded to species level where possible. Bones with modern breaks that could be refitted were recorded as a single element.

### **2.10.2 Overall Sample Size and Bone Preservation**

Animal bones were obtained from 29 contexts from the six evaluation trenches (Table 9 and Appendix 7.6). Bones from the topsoil were not assessed. In total, 598 individual specimens (NISP) were recorded, of which 270 were identified to taxon. The assemblages from each context were assigned to one of five preservation grades. No assemblage was assigned to the highest grade (excellent preservation) and only two had good preservation. Twenty-two (76%) of the contexts produced moderately preserved assemblages. Most bones in these assemblages had fair surface preservation but were generally fragmentary and included bones displaying slight or moderate weathering. Quite poorly preserved assemblages were found in five contexts. These assemblages were more fragmented and included more weathered and some burnt specimens. None of the contexts produced poorly preserved assemblages. Taking account of the sizes of the assemblages, 470 fragments (79%) came from contexts whose assemblages were moderately preserved. There were no significant differences in preservation in the six trenches (Table 10).

Twenty fragments (3%) were charred or calcined, including two elements each of cattle and sheep/goat (Table 11). Amongst the identified fragments, 107 (40%) were recorded as weathered. Canid gnawing damage was recorded on 26 (10%) of the identified fragments (17 cattle; 7 sheep/goat; 2 pig). Butchery and other processing marks were recorded on 13 elements (7 cattle; 3 sheep/goat; 1 horse; 2 red deer antlers). The assemblage therefore was generally moderately preserved, which is understandable given the shallowness of the features excavated. Bones of large mammals such as cattle and horse have a better chance of survival than those of smaller species. However, bones of cat,

hare and bones were recovered, and it is likely that bones from deeper pits and ditches will survive well.

**Table 9** *Animal Bone: Taphonomic Indicators by Context and Trench*

Trench	Excellent	Good	Moderate	Quite Poor	Very Poor	Total
1			5			5
2				2		2
3			2			2
4		2	7	1		10
5			2	1		3
6			6	1		7
Totals	0	2	22	5	0	29

**Table 10** *Animal Bone: Preservation by Fragment (NISP) Count and Trench*

Trench	Excellent	Good	Moderate	Quite Poor	Very Poor	Total
1			143			143
2				42		42
3			130			130
4		63	100	18		181
5			19	1		20
6			78	4		82
Totals	0	63	470	65	0	598

**Table 11** *Animal Bone: Preservation by Trench (NISP)*

Trench	Gnawed	Weathered	Charred	Processing Marks
1	6	29	14	2
2	3	11	2	
3	4	35		6
4	11	17		4
5	1	6		
6	1	9	4	1
Totals	26	107	20	13

NISP counts for charred include all fragments; other counts are for identified taxa only

### **Trench 1**

Five contexts produced a total of 143 bone fragments, of which 60 from at least six species were identified. Ninety of the fragments were found in the stony layer (1007) including a butchered sheep humerus. The 26 fragments from rubble layer (1011) included a butchered sheep/goat thoracic vertebra and a radius of a neonatal calf. A largely complete radius of a pig was recovered from robber trench (1009) but most of the limb bones of all species were heavily fragmented.

### **Trench 2**

Only 42 bone fragments were recovered from two contexts, mainly the stony layer (2003). Twenty fragments from four species were identified including a fragment of red deer antler from clay layer (2006). The assemblages from both contexts were quite poorly preserved.

### **Trench 3**

Two contexts produced a total of 130 bone fragments in moderately preserved assemblages. Sixty-two fragments were identified from at least six species. All but five of the fragments came from stony layer (3003). Although many of the bones were heavily fragmented and weathered, butchery marks were observed on two vertebrae, a pelvis and a first phalanx of cattle and on a sheep/goat radius. A sawn fragment of red deer antler was also recorded.

### **Trench 4**

Ten contexts provided a total of 181 bone fragments including 81 identified elements from at least eight species. Seven contexts from ditch [4010] produced a total of 146 fragments. These included 11 bones of cat found in three contexts, at least ten of which (from (4013) and (4014)) belonged to the same sub-adult skeleton. A largely complete horncore of a ram was found in (4005); two teeth and a skull fragment of neonatal calves were found in the same context. A complete radius of a young lamb was found in (4011). Elements from (4013) included a largely complete specimens of a cattle metatarsal and sheep metacarpal. A shaft of a bone pin was also recovered. The bones from (4014) included a butchered cattle calcaneus and astragalus.

A severed red deer astragalus was found in stony layer (4004) and a butchered cattle mandible was recovered from fill (4007).

### **Trench 5**

Only 20 bone fragments were recovered from three contexts. Sixteen elements from at least five species were identified. Most of the bones came from stony layer (5005). These included a largely complete sheep metatarsal and the distal epiphysis of a wild boar metapodial.

### **Trench 6**

Seven contexts produced a total of 82 bone fragments, of which 31 were identified to at least six species. Layer (6010) produced 33 of the fragments including a maxilla housing a very large canine tooth, probably from a male wild boar and a butchered pelvis of a horse. Part of the upper canine of another large male wild boar was found amongst the bones from the external surface (6013). Parts of a red deer scapula and femur were found in (6010) and (6013) respectively.

#### **2.10.3 Species Presence and Abundance**

Sheep/goat and cattle elements were the most frequently identified in all six evaluation trenches with sheep/goat providing 40% of the NISP counts and cattle 37% (Appendix 7.6). Fifteen of the sheep/goat elements had morphological characteristics diagnostic of sheep. No positive identifications of goat were made. Considering the main three taxa only, sheep/goat provided 44%, cattle 40% and pig 10%. Preservation conditions are likely to have favoured the survival of the larger and sturdier cattle bones. NISP counts also tend to favour large mammals because of the greater fragmentation of their bones. Minimum number calculations showed that at least six sheep/goat were represented compared with just four of cattle (Tables 12-13).

Table 12 Cattle Element Counts (NISP)

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Total	%	MNE
Horncore			1				1	1.0	1
Skull	1	1	1	3			6	6.3	3
Maxilla				1			1	1.0	1
Mandible	1	1	4	6		1	13	13.5	3
Loose Teeth	5	4	4	6	3	1	23	24.0	
Scapula	1			1			2	2.1	1
Humerus			2	2			4	4.2	3
Radius	2						2	2.1	1
Ulna	1		2				3	3.1	2
Pelvis	1	1	3				5	5.2	4
Femur			3	2		1	6	6.3	2
Tibia		1	1	1			3	3.1	1
Carpals	1						1	1.0	
Astragalus				1			1	1.0	1
Calcaneus			1	1	1		3	3.1	2
Centroquartal	1			1			2	2.1	2
Other Tarsals	1						1	1.0	
Metatarsal		1		1			2	2.1	2
Metapodial			3				3	3.1	
Phalanx 1	4		1				5	5.2	1
Phalanx 2	1	1	1				3	3.1	0.75
Cervical V			1				1	1.0	
Thoracic V					1		1	1.0	
Lumbar V			1				1	1.0	
Sacral V				1			1	1.0	
Ribs	2						2	2.1	
Totals	22	10	29	27	5	3	96		

Table 13 Sheep/Goat Element Counts (NISP)

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Total	%	MNE
Horncore				1			1	1.0	1
Skull			1	1			2	1.9	1
Maxilla	2			1			3	2.9	1
Mandible	2			4			6	5.7	3
Loose Teeth	3	4	12	7	4	5	35	33.3	
Humerus	2		2	1			5	4.8	3
Radius	1	2	5	4	1	1	14	13.3	6
Ulna				1			1	1.0	1
Pelvis	2			1			3	2.9	3
Femur	2						2	1.9	2
Tibia	3	1	4	3			11	10.5	5
Astragalus				1			1	1.0	1
Metacarpal	2			2		2	6	5.7	3
Metatarsal	1	1			3	1	6	5.7	3
Metapodial	1			1			2	1.9	
Phalanx 1				2			2	1.9	0.5
Cervical V				1			1	1.0	
Thoracic V	1						1	1.0	
Ribs				2		1	3	2.9	
Totals	22	8	24	33	8	10	105		

Sheep and cattle usually are the dominant species represented in Roman rural assemblages (King 1999; 2019; Maltby 2016; Allen 2017) including assemblages from settlements elsewhere in Dorset (Maltby and Clark 2021). Although the percentage of pig is quite low, their elements are present in relatively higher numbers than in most rural assemblages from Wessex (Table 14). Pigs tend to be better represented in urban than in rural settlements but they sometimes occur in higher percentages on villa sites (King 2019). At Dewlish, for example, they provided over 15% of the cattle, sheep/goat and pig NISP counts (Maltby and Clark 2021).

Horse bones were found in four of the trenches, forming 5% of the identified fragments and 11% of the cattle and horse elements. Their relative abundance is fairly typical of other assemblages from rural sites in Dorset (Maltby and Clark 2021). Although only a single bone of a dog was identified, their presence as residents of the settlement is evidenced by the significant numbers of gnawed bones in the assemblage. The discovery of the partial skeleton in Trench 4 shows that cats were also kept at Hinton St Mary (Table 15). Although wild mammals (red deer; hare; wild boar) only provided 5% of the identified elements (Appendix 7.6), this is a significantly higher percentage than encountered in most Romano-British assemblages (Maltby 2016; Allen 2018) and is higher than encountered in the large assemblage from Dewlish villa (3% - Maltby and Clark 2021). Red deer are represented by both bones and worked antler. The probable presence of wild boars is particularly noteworthy, as they have not been recorded in many Romano-British sites (Allen 2018). Large porcine bones and teeth, probably from wild boar, were also recorded in small numbers at Dewlish (Maltby and Clark 2021).

*Table 14 Element Counts (NISP) Other Mammals and Chicken*

	Pig	Horse	Dog	Cat	Deer	Boar	Hare	Chicken
Antler					2			
Maxilla	2					1		
Mandible	3	1		1				
Loose Teeth	8	5			2	1		
Coracoid								2
Scapula	1				1			
Humerus			1	2			1	
Radius	3			1				
Ulna	1			1				2
Pelvis		1		1				
Femur	1			2	1			
Tibia	3						1	
Fibula								1
Astragalus					1			
Metacarpal				2	2			
Metatarsal				1				
Metapodial		1				1		
Peripheral Mp	1	2						
Phalanx 2	1							
Axis (VC2)		1						
Ribs		1						
Totals	24	12	1	11	9	3	2	5

Nine bird bones were recovered, of which seven were identified. The five galliform bones probably all belonged to chickens. These formed 2% of the identified fragments and 5% of the total sheep/goat and chicken elements (Appendix 7.6). Having been introduced into England during the Iron Age, chickens became more common during the Roman period. Their remains have been found more frequently in towns and military sites than in assemblages from rural settlements, from where they are often absent (Maltby *et al.* 2018). They have also tended to be found in greater numbers in villa assemblages. For example, at Dewlish chickens provided 7% of the sheep/goat and chicken elements (Maltby and Clark 2021).

Two other bird bones were identified. A tibiotarsus of a large duck similar in size to a wild mallard was found in Trench 5. A humerus recovered from Trench 4 was similar to redwing in its size and morphology, but other *Turdus* species (song thrush; blackbird; fieldfare) cannot be ruled out. One of the unidentified bird bones was a humerus shaft, which was similar in size and conformation to a woodcock.

We must be cautious about making too many inferences from an assemblage of such limited size but this assessment suggests that the inhabitants of Hinton St Mary villa may have enjoyed a more varied meat diet than many inhabitants of Roman Britain.

#### **2.10.4 Element Abundance**

The types of elements represented for mammals and chickens are shown in Tables 12-14. Loose teeth are prominent in the cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse assemblages. This reflects the moderate preservation conditions. Loose teeth will survive better than bones in layers that lie close to the ground surface. Amongst the bones, it is also unsurprising that larger and more robust elements such as cattle mandibles and sheep/goat radii and tibiae also feature prominently. There is no evidence at this stage for the deposition of particular areas of the skeleton associated with areas of primary butchery or other processing activity.

#### **2.10.5 Butchery and other Processing Evidence**

Processing marks were observed on 13 identified bones, including the following seven cattle bones. Fine knife cuts adjacent to a shallow blade mark were located near the distal end of an astragalus. A calcaneus bore a deep knife cut on its lateral aspect. These provide evidence for the separation of the upper hindlimbs from the feet at the ankle joint. A deep blade mark near the proximal end of a first phalanx were made when the toes were separated from a metapodial. Shallow blade marks on a mandibular ramus were made during the jaw's separation from the skull. A pelvis had been severed near the acetabulum during separation from the femur. A cervical and lumbar vertebra had both been severed near the edge of the vertebral body. These were made during the separation of the sides of the carcass from the vertebral column. The cervical vertebra had also been severed transversely. All these marks were associated with dismemberment and carcass division and the use of heavy blades as well as finer knives is characteristic of Roman cattle butchery. There is so far, however, no evidence for filleting scoops and the longitudinal splitting of upper limb bones, which are diagnostic of the presence of specialist butchers. These mainly operated in towns and other nucleated settlements (Maltby 2007), although discrete deposits of such bones have sometimes been found in rural complexes, for example at Wortley, Gloucestershire (Maltby 2014).

Fine knife cuts were observed on the shafts of a sheep humerus and a sheep/goat radius. Both were adjacent to where the shafts had been broken and were probably preparatory marks made during

the division of the limbs. Fine knife cuts were also observed running across the ventral aspect of the body of a thoracic vertebra of a lamb. A fine knife cut was also observed on the ilium of a pelvis of a horse adjacent to where it had been broken. This provides evidence that at least some of the horse carcasses had been butchered.

The stem of a red deer antler had been severed with a saw indicating that some antler-working was being carried out at the villa. An astragalus of a red deer had been severed when the feet had been removed possibly before the upper limbs of the carcass was transported to the villa.

Despite the small size of the sample and the challenges of weathering, modern fragmentation and gnawing, the assessment has demonstrated that any further excavations of sealed deposits will provide detailed information about how animals were being processed at the settlement.

#### **2.10.6 Ageing Evidence**

Only 17 jaws provided ageing data and at this stage there is insufficient evidence to determine detailed mortality profiles. Four of the five sheep mandibles and all three maxillae belonged to immature animals aged between 6 and 24 months old, which could imply that there was a focus on culling or acquisition of immature lambs and sub-adult sheep. Two of the three cattle mandibles also belonged to immature animals. The four pig jaws probably all belonged to animals killed in their second or third years. In contrast, the one closely ageable horse tooth (a lower third molar) had a crown height of 39.9 mm, which suggests it belonged to a mature adult of around 11-12 years (Levine 1982).

The trial excavations produced little in the way of epiphyseal fusion data to supplement the tooth ageing evidence. This is to be expected given the preservation conditions but it is expected that more extensive excavations of sealed deposits would provide good tooth ageing and epiphyseal fusion evidence to enable a detailed discussion of exploitation strategies to be made. It is encouraging that despite the modest preservation conditions in these shallow deposits that some bones of foetal and neonatal cattle survived. One of the chicken coracoids belonged to a fledgling, which also survived despite its porosity.

#### **2.10.7 Metrical Data**

Details of all the measured bones recovered from the excavations are listed in Table 15. Most of the measurable bones belonged to sheep and it is likely that more extensive excavations would produce a very good sample to determine the stature of the sheep kept at or brought to the villa. There are already indications that the sizes of the sheep were quite varied probably deriving from different flocks. The fragmented nature of this assemblage prevented measurements of cattle and horse bones but there is no reason to expect that future excavations would not produce good metrical data for these species as well. Further measurements of porcine bones should be able to confirm the presence of wild boar as well as domestic pigs.



Table 15 Animal Bone: Metrical Data (mm)

Context	Species	Element	GL	GLm	Bp	BFp	Dp	Bd	Dd	BT	HT	M3L
4014	Cattle	Astragalus		54.9				37.6				
1007	Sheep	Humerus								26.6	16.4	
1011	Sheep	Humerus								26.8	16.4	
3003	Sheep	Humerus								28.3	18.4	
1007	Sheep	Radius			26.4	23.4	13.6					
4008	Sheep	Radius			27.2	25.3	13.8					
1014	S/G	Tibia						25.5	18.2			
3003	S/G	Tibia						22.5	16.7			
3003	S/G	Tibia						26.6	19.5			
4013	Sheep	Metacarpal			23.3		16.9					
6005	Sheep	Metacarpal			22.0							
5005	Sheep	Metatarsal			17.5							
1007	Pig	Mandible										33.6
1007	Pig	Tibia						29.3	26.0			
4013	Cat	Humerus	93.4				19.7					
4014	Cat	Humerus						18.0	10.2	14.0		
5005	Wild Boar	Metapodial						23.6				
4013	Chicken	Coracoid	48.9	46.1								
4011	Chicken	Ulna	74.0		9.1	13.4		9.7				
4008	Thrush fam.	Humerus	26.1					6.2				

Measurements follow von den Driesch (1976)

S/G = sheep/goat; GL = greatest length; GLm = greatest length medial; Bp = greatest proximal breadth; BFp = proximal articular breadth; Dp = greatest proximal depth; Bd = greatest distal breadth; Dd = greatest distal breadth; BT = breadth trochlea; HT = greatest height trochlea; M3L = length of third molar

### 2.10.8 Pathology and Abnormalities

A cattle metatarsal had evidence for exostosis adjacent to the proximal joint surface. Such conditions tend to develop more frequently in older cattle and in some cases can be work-related. A cattle mandible had suffered severe swelling around the first molar. This was probably also a condition that developed in a mature individual. A rib head of a horse was distorted. Larger samples would inevitably provide more information about the health of the stock than is possible in this small assemblage.

### 2.10.9 Discussion and Statement of Significance

Animal bones found in the shallow deposits prevalent in the evaluation trenches have inevitably suffered from significant taphonomic deterioration, particularly weathering and modern breakage. However, there is evidence that bones from this site, particularly if they can be obtained from deeper sealed deposits, will survive in sufficiently good condition to supply valuable evidence about species abundance, element representation, butchery practices, husbandry strategies and the size and health of the stock. Future excavations have the potential to provide significant information about the diet and lifestyle of the inhabitants of the villa. This would be a valuable addition to our evidence about animal exploitation in the region and it would also provide further insights into the social life and economies of Romano-British villas. It is recommended that the animal bone from topsoil and subsoil layers in the trenches can be discarded, but that the remainder of the assemblage should be retained.

## 2.12 ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS ASSESSMENT (John A Giorgi)

Six environmental bulk soil samples were collected from the evaluation trenches to establish the potential for the survival of biological evidence at the site; from two ditch fills (2016) (4014), two pit fills (3010) (6017), a drain fill (3018) and a burnt silty-clay layer containing charcoal (1014). The samples were fairly small (less than 10 litres) and were processed by flotation onto a 0.25 mm sieve followed by wet-sieving of the residues through a 1 mm mesh. Both flots and residues were dried and the latter sorted for biological remains and artefacts.

The flots were divided into fractions using a stack of sieves for ease of assessment and scanned using a stereo-binocular microscope, with a magnification of up to x40. The presence and relative abundance of charred grain, cereal chaff and other remains (potential food remains and wild plants/weed seeds) was recorded, along with the frequency of charcoal fragments larger and smaller than 2 mm, the larger pieces being potentially identifiable and thus suitable for analysis. Other biological remains in the flots were also recorded, which included un-charred plant material, snails, small mammal bone and insect fragments.

The item frequency of the charred plant and other environmental remains was scored using the following scale: 1 = 1-10 items; 2 = 11-50 items; 3 = 51-150 items; ++++ = 151-250 items; 5 = >300 items. Provisional identification of the charred botanical remains was carried out during the evaluation although without direct comparison to reference material and seed reference manuals. Nomenclature used for these identifications followed Stace (2005). The results are presented in Appendix 7.7 and discussed below.

### 2.12.1 Charred plant Remains

Two of the six samples produced charred plant remains with robber trench/ditch fill (2016) containing a moderate-sized assemblage consisting of cereal grains of mainly wheat (*Triticum*) including both hulled wheat (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*) and free-threshing species (*T. aestivum/turgidum*) plus a little barley (*Hordeum vulgare*); a small number of chaff fragments confirmed the presence of hulled wheat including spelt (*Triticum spelta*). Spelt wheat was the dominant grain cultivated in Roman Britain followed by barley and smaller quantities of free-threshing wheat as shown by other results from this area of the country (Lodwick 2017, 26), the remains in this ditch fill mainly representing debris from the final stages of crop-cleaning/food preparation including the de-husking of hulled wheat. There was also a small number of charred wild plant/weed seeds including *Rumex* (dock) and small and large-seeded wild grasses (*Poaceae*), for example *Bromus* (brome). Charred plant remains were also found in fill (3010) of a robber pit [3011] consisting, however, of just traces of poorly preserved and unidentifiable grains.

### 2.12.2 Charcoal

The six samples produced variable amounts of identifiable charcoal fragments with good-sized assemblages in pit fill (6017) and layer (1014) and a very good amount in the robber trench/ditch fill (2016).

### 2.12.3 Uncharred plant remains

The sample from pit fill (6017) produced a few uncharred seeds including *Ranunculus* (buttercup) and *Rumex* although these remains are probably intrusive with the presence of roots and perhaps burrowing species allowing the passage of such material down the soil profile.

#### **2.12.4 Other biological remains**

Other environmental remains included varying amounts of snails in the six samples with a very large amount in robber trench/ditch fill (2016) and a moderate amount in ditch fill (4014). A small mammal bone fragment was recorded in robber trench/ditch fill (2016) and occasional very small insect (beetle) fragments in drain fill (3018).

#### **2.12.5 Discussion and Statement of Potential**

The paucity of charred plant remains in these samples does not allow any detailed examination of crop husbandry or processing activities at the site although the remains do provide an initial insight into the range of cereals that may have been cultivated/used at the villa. It is possible that our understanding of agricultural activities could be enhanced by further sampling across the site.

There were good assemblages of identifiable charcoal in three samples from pit fill (6017), layer (1014) and particularly in ditch fill (2016) although these remains probably represent re-deposited material which cannot be related to any specific activity or activities taking place on site and, therefore, can only provide general data on the range of woods used as fuel.

With regard to the other environmental remains in the samples, the very good number of snails in robber trench/ditch fill (2016) and moderate amount in ditch fill (4014) could provide information on the character of the local environment within and in the close vicinity of these two features. Little comment can be made on the basis of the few uncharred seeds and insect fragments which are likely to represent intrusive material.

### 3. DISCUSSION

Despite the relatively small-scale of the 2021 project, the evaluation trenches generated important new insights regarding the archaeological remains at Hinton St Mary. The main results are discussed below against the project's stated objectives.

#### 3.1 REVIEW OF EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

##### 3.1.1 Depth of the topsoil overlying the extant archaeological deposits

The evaluation trenches demonstrated that the overburden in the scheduled area is generally between 0.30 m and 0.35 m deep. The material overlying the extant archaeological deposits can be separated between dark humic topsoils and lighter, more compact, subsoils. The combined thicknesses of the overburden in the six evaluation trenches is shown in (Table 16). The topsoil and subsoil layers produced quantities of Roman material, mixed with some medieval pottery and larger quantities of modern finds (particularly in Trench 1 closest to The Forge).

Table 16 *Depth of overburden encountered in the evaluation trenches*

	Trench 1	Trench 2	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 5	Trench 6
Topsoil	≤ 0.2 m	0.15-0.2 m	≤ 0.2 m	0.1-0.15 m	≤ 0.15 m	≤ 0.2 m
Subsoil	≤ 0.15 m	≤ 0.1 m	≤ 0.1 m	0.15-0.2 m	≤ 0.2m	≤ 0.1 m
Total overburden	≤ 0.35 m	≤ 0.3 m	≤ 0.3 m	≤ 0.35 m	≤ 0.35 m	≤ 0.3 m

This information will be useful for the management of the archaeological resource at Hinton St Mary, as well as for the planning of fieldwork in the future.

##### 3.1.2 Condition of the underlying archaeological deposits

The uppermost archaeological deposits in all six evaluation trenches consisted of firm stony layers lying directly beneath the subsoils: (1007) in Trench 1, (2003) in Trench 2, (3003) in Trench 3, (4004) and (4004) in Trench 4, (5005) and (5009) in Trench 5, and (6005) and (6010) in Trench 6. These layers varied between 0.1 m and 0.2 m in thickness and they contained Roman material as well as most of the animal bone and the redeposited human remains, although in Trenches 1, 5 and 6 they also produced sherds of medieval pottery. The nature of these layers and the finds they contained, suggests that they are the result of medieval ploughing and manuring in the field, or the spreading out of debris from Roman buildings that perhaps were being dismantled in medieval times and their building stones reused elsewhere. Whatever their origins, these layers seal the underlying archaeological deposits associated with the late Roman occupation at Hinton St Mary, which generally survive remarkably well.

Although evidence for post-medieval and modern disturbances was found in all of the evaluation trenches, these tended to be small scale (a few pits, postholes and land drains) and damage to the Roman-period remains was limited. The stone-built field drain in Trench 5 was the only major post-medieval or modern feature encountered in the trenches (FIG. 21).

The uppermost intact archaeological deposits in Trench 1 consisted of the partially-demolished remains of a well-built wall, a possible step and a paved surface (FIG. 13). These relate to the occupation, abandonment and the robbing of the building, or buildings, associated with the mosaic.

Despite the proximity of Trench 1 to The Forge and the presence of exploratory trenches from the 1964 excavations, the in situ late Roman features survive only c. 0.5 m beneath the modern ground surface. Elsewhere, in Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 6 the uppermost archaeological deposits also derive from the Roman period, consisting of stony surfaces and associated features, as well as a few pits and at least two ditches (FIGS 15-16, 18-20 and 22-24). In all instances, the overlying firm stony layers seem to have protected the Roman stratigraphy from significant medieval and modern disturbance. There is no evidence, for instance, that the Roman-period archaeological remains have been damaged by post-Roman ploughing, as Painter suggested after his excavations in the 1960s.

### 3.1.3 Extent and function of buildings and other structures exposed in the evaluation trenches

The archaeological remains encountered in the trenches show that Painter's reconstruction of the plan of the buildings (FIG. 5), is incorrect and needs to be reconsidered. The divergence between the archaeological remains encountered in the evaluation trenches and the results of the geophysical surveys is difficult to reconcile, and it is no longer certain that the mosaic was part of a building we can safely call a 'villa' (FIG. 28).

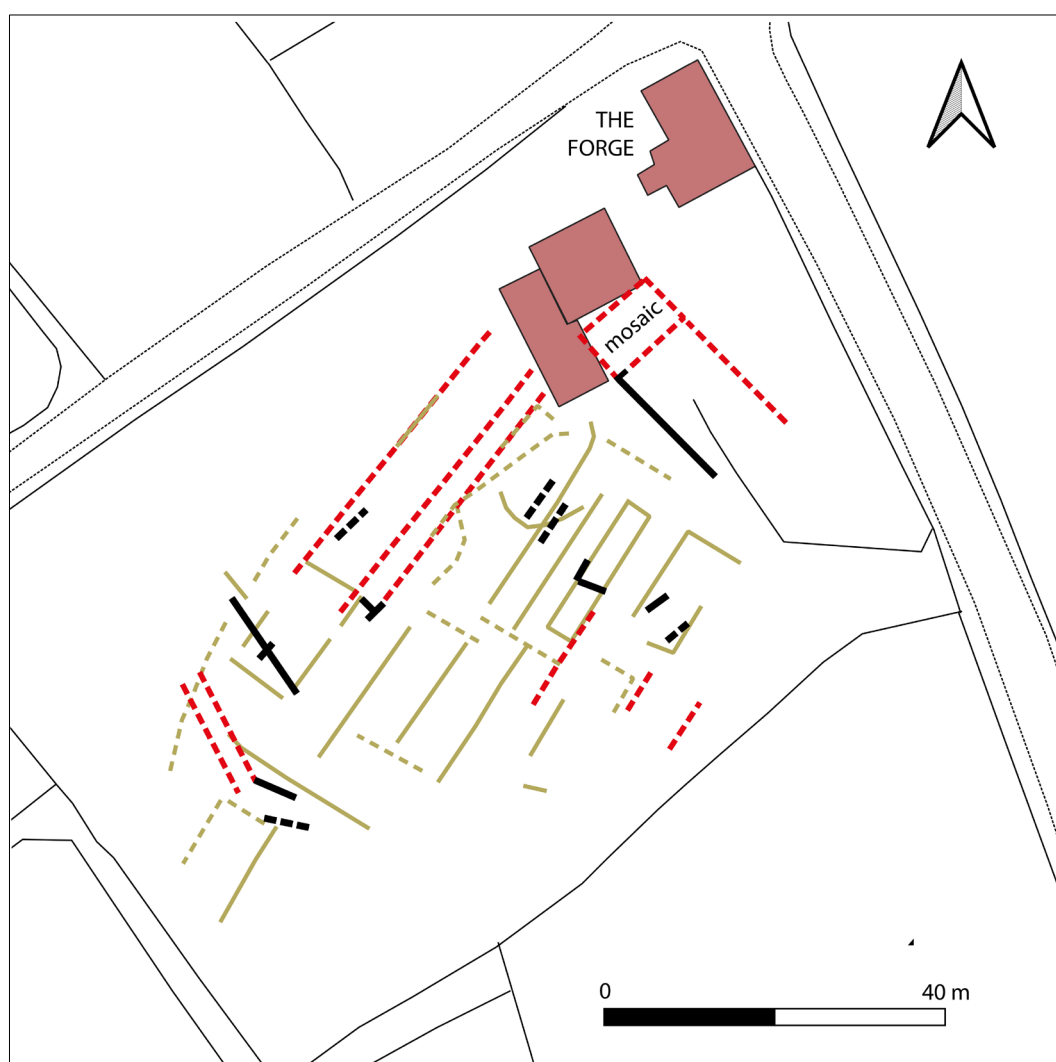


Figure 28 Walls, ditches, drains and other possible features located in the evaluation trenches (black), compared to interpretation of the geophysical results (green) and Painter's reconstructed 'villa' plan (red)

Trench 1 located the lower courses of a wall, bonded to the foundations of the mosaic room, that extended for at least 14 m to the southeast. This was probably the front wall into a long building, possibly a colonnaded portico with a step from a courtyard to the north, confirming that the mosaic existed as part of a larger building (though almost certainly narrower than previously believed). The long wall appears to be built into to the mosaic room's 'rear' wall, suggesting that if its identification as the entrance into a building or portico is correct, the mosaic decorated a room that projected forwards from the adjacent building, perhaps into an open courtyard.

The other five evaluation trenches were sited on the downward slope to the south-west of the mosaic, positioned to examine the buildings Painter had identified as possible wings. No evidence of villa-type buildings or structures was revealed anywhere, although Trench 4 confirmed the presence of a north-south ditch at the southern end of the scheduled area. Although Roman-period features were recorded in all the trenches, the most substantial evidence for Romano-British occupation was recovered from Trenches 3 and 6 where solid stony and cobbled layers were recorded that give the impression of yard surfaces, or the hard-wearing floors of stables, animal sheds and other agricultural buildings. A covered drain contemporary with these layers was excavated in Trench 3 (FIG. 17), while a thick mortar deposit in Trench 6 suggests an internal space of some kind in this part of the field, but no evidence for masonry walls was found in any of the trenches.

The evaluation trenches demonstrate that if the mosaic had been part of a 'villa' building, it was not of a courtyard villa as Painter proposed. All we can say for certain at the moment is that the famous mosaic decorated the floor of a room attached to a long narrow building that was built on previously unoccupied ground. If the building had wings, they must have been outside the scheduled area. Furthermore, the evaluation trenches show that the area to the southwest of the mosaic contained contemporary, possibly ancillary, structures rather than villa buildings around a central courtyard. It is also conceivable that the 'villa' was actually aligned the other way around, so that any wings and courtyard associated with the mosaic building could have been located to the northeast rather than the southwest (tentatively supported by the front wall and a courtyard-like surface in Trench 1).

#### **3.1.4 Date of the underlying archaeological deposits**

The stratigraphy in Trench 1 shows that the room housing the mosaic and the adjacent building were constructed *de novo* in a single episode in the later Roman period. Initial examination of the coins and pottery suggests that this took place no earlier than the late 3rd century and that occupation continued at least to the end of the 4th century. The other trenches produced similar sequences of occupation and, with the exception of some residual earlier material, there is no evidence that this part of Hinton St Mary had been occupied prior to c. 270-300.

It is possible that the robbing of the walls in Trench 1 occurred, or began, during the later Roman period or relatively soon afterwards. At present, archaeological dating of the later 4th and 5th centuries is problematic when undertaken using material culture alone, and it is not possible to state with any certainty when the Roman building(s) at Hinton St Mary might have been abandoned, or when they were robbed. The presence of sherds from BB1 vessels decorated with oblique burnished lines suggests that occupation could have continued (or destruction could have occurred), in the period c. 390-430/450 or later.

### **3.1.5. Effects of any previous and on-going degradation of the archaeological resource**

Medieval ploughing may have truncated the uppermost Roman archaeological deposits, remnants of which perhaps ended up forming the ubiquitous stony layers encountered in all of the evaluation trenches. Relatively recent disturbances seem to be largely confined to the top part of the field, close to The Forge where building and blacksmithing debris accumulated.

The corrugated animal shed adjacent to the outbuildings was erected by the previous occupants of The Forge at some point between 1965 and the early 1990s. Although this is a relatively superficial building, its floor appears to have been dug into the ground and it could have disturbed the underlying archaeological deposits. Although this building was constructed after the land had been scheduled, it was apparently erected without knowledge of the authorities at the time and there is no record that any archaeological work was undertaken prior to its erection. The building is located immediately west and southwest of where the mosaic was discovered, and its unauthorised and unsupervised construction could have irreparably damaged the remains of Roman walls and structures at the heart of the scheduled monument.

## **3.2 STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL**

The archaeological evaluation carried out in 2021 has produced several archaeological surprises that amply demonstrate how little we currently know about the mosaic and the wider settlement at Hinton St Mary in the Roman period. For instance, the layout and orientation of the ‘villa’ building(s) to which the mosaic belonged are uncertain, as is if the building(s) should be described as a Romano-British ‘villa’ at all.

Fortunately, the targeted and systematic excavation of the evaluation trenches has greatly improved our understanding of the archaeological resource within the scheduled area, providing considerable evidence for the potential for further archaeological fieldwork to answer many of the basic questions that remain about the settlement. We now know, for example, that the mosaic was part of a large late-Roman building erected c. 270-300; that the building was in use for much of the 4th century before it was abandoned and partially robbed; and that the rest of the scheduled area was occupied by farm-like structures rather than high status villa-like buildings around a central courtyard.

It is clear from the evaluation trenches that the previous geophysical surveys at the site have not produced a reliable impression of the archaeological remains in the scheduled area (FIG. 28). The experience of the evaluation project demonstrates that any future geophysical results will need to be corroborated by hand-excavated trenches, which are also highly likely to produce good evidence for the activities that took place in buildings and structures, as well as for their chronologies. The evaluation trenches confirm that Roman-period deposits in the scheduled area are sealed by a medieval stony layer (that has also protected the underlying stratigraphy), and that there is very good potential for the recovery of stratified groups of finds and ecofacts with which to elucidate the functions of buildings and their histories, as well as other questions about the economy and the nature of occupation at Hinton St Mary. Considering the difficulties in dating late- and immediately post-Roman occupation in this part of Britain, future excavations should consider a programme of radiocarbon dating to provide possible answers to important questions about the site’s occupation and abandonment in the 4th and 5th centuries.

The finds' assemblages will be important in identifying the activities that took place at Hinton St Mary in the Roman period, particularly the pottery and animal bone which are evidence for the agricultural economy of the settlement, as well as the diet and culinary practices of its inhabitants. The pottery is overwhelmingly late Roman (3rd-4th centuries), and significant groups were recovered from Trench 1 and the fills of ditch [4010] in Trench 4. The animal bone has a different pattern of recovery and the largest concentrations were retrieved from Trenches 3, 4 and 6 (like the pottery from Trench 4, bone was also abundant in ditch [4010]). With the exception of Trench 4, however, most of the animal bone was recovered from the general stony layers that sealed the Roman deposits and lay beneath the subsoils. These layers produced quantities of Roman pottery together with medieval sherds, suggesting significant redeposition of archaeological material long after the Roman period. It is perhaps most likely that these bone assemblages from the ubiquitous stony layers were largely redeposited Roman material too, although it is also possible that they derive from animals raised in the medieval period.

The results of this evaluation project will contribute to several objectives and priorities set out in the research agenda for Roman Britain (Millett and James 2001), as well as the regional research framework for southwestern England (Holbrook 2008; Straker 2008; Webster 2008<sup>1</sup>). It is anticipated that the project will assist in providing new evidence with which to address the following Research Aims set out in the research framework:

- *Research Aim 3: Address apparent "gaps" in our knowledge and assess whether they are meaningful or simply biases in current knowledge.*  
'In the Roman period the South West appears to show several unique features when compared to the rest of the country: the apparent late founding and wealth of the villas, later Roman pagan temples etc. These need to be understood, not just for our understanding of the Roman period but also to understand the way the region developed in succeeding periods.'
- *Research Aim 4: Encourage wide involvement in archaeological research and present modern accounts of the past to the public.*
- *Research Aim 10: Address our lack of understanding of key transitional periods.*  
'There has been a lot of recent discussion about the nature of the late-Roman/post-Roman period – the "Late Antiquity" model of a modified classical world continuing or a model of systems collapse into barbarism – and the South West has the potential to provide this evidence due to the late date of Germanic influence. We need to understand better just how long "Roman" sites continued in use. There is also a need to continue to seek to identify an essentially post-Roman British material culture. The influence of Christianity on these transitions also needs to be examined.'
- *Research Aim 11: Improve knowledge and study of under-utilised museum collections.*
- *Research Aim 16: Increase the use and improve the targeting scientific dating.*
- *Research Aim 26: Investigate the changes in landscape and population at the end of the Roman period.*
- *Research Aim 55: Improve our understanding of later Roman religion.*  
'The South West has some of the best evidence for later Roman paganism in the country but the relationship of this to Christianity in the region is poorly understood. The evidence for the

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/swarf/publications.html>



presence and strength of Christianity in the region needs to be reassessed, particularly in the light of the need for knowledge of the Christian basis of the Early Medieval period.’

The project also supported the ambitions set out in Historic England’s *Research Strategy* and *Research Agenda* documents (2016 and 2017).<sup>2</sup> Like this evaluation project, the impacts and benefits of any future archaeological work at Hinton St Mary should focus on the following research Themes and Topics:

- *Theme: #value*
  - Topic: Social Value. Contribute to societal well-being; role of the historic environment in place-making and place-shaping;
  - Topic: Economic Value. Contribute to regional and local economy; collaboration between various public and private project partners and stakeholders;
  - Topic: Contested Values. Appreciate diversity and hidden histories in Romano-British society and use these to challenge orthodox views of the past;
- *Theme: #understand*
  - Topic: Rural Landscape. Inspire and guide future land use, housing development and design; communicate enhanced understanding of the rural historic environment to encourage communities to engage more actively with the character of their rural places and landscapes;
  - Topic: Faith and Commemoration. Explore the spread of Christianity in later Roman Britain and how this differs from Christianity today;
  - Topic: Archaeology of the Deeper Past. Improve public understanding of the archaeology of the Roman period in ways that inspire a modern audience, and helps its protection and management;
- *Theme: #diversify*
  - Topic: Exploring Diversity. Recognise the significance of places where extraordinary things happened to engage and inspire, among others, young people;
- *Theme: #conserve*
  - Topic: Collections and Archives. Explore how can we become more selective in choosing what to retain in archaeological archives;
- *Theme: #skills*
  - Topic: Developing the Workforce. Provide practical training for university archaeologists who aim for a career in the heritage sector;
- *Theme: #inspire*
  - Topic: Inspire interest in archaeological research; explore alternative narratives that meet the needs of diverse audiences and their different perspectives.

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<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/research-strategy/> and <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/he-research-agenda/>

#### 4. UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN

The project's WSI stated that this Assessment Report would comprise the following sections:

- Introduction: project background, site location, previous archaeological investigations, etc.
- Original aims and objectives of the excavations;
- Provisional summary of results: an integrated text (combining structural / stratigraphic, artefactual and ecofactual evidence);
- Data quantification: divided by data type (structural / stratigraphic, artefactual and ecofactual);
- Statement of Potential: realistic discussion of the project's potential to address the original and new research objectives, linked to the information presented in preceding sections;
- Updated Project Design (UPD), unless it is agreed that further excavations will follow these evaluations in which case the assessment report will feed into the final UPD.

Following the successful conclusion of the 2021 evaluation excavations described here, The British Museum intends to arrange further targeted excavations at Hinton St Mary. These will be designed to answer the important questions outlined in section 3.2 Statement of Potential, building on the results of the evaluation as well as additional geophysical surveys planned for the site. If further excavation does take place, the results of the 2021 archaeological evaluation will be integrated, where appropriate, into the results of the longer-term project. In the event that no further excavations happen, the results of the 2021 archaeological evaluation will be written up as a Research Archive Report and a short article describing the project's main findings will be submitted to the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society.

Short articles about the 2021 evaluation season have been published in *The Mosaic* (Hinton St Mary community newsletter), and *Epistula* (Roman Society eNewsletter). Other articles and summaries will be published in the *British Museum Magazine* and *Britannia*.

## 5. ARCHIVES AND DEPOSITION

The site code is **DHSM21**, for **Dorset Hinton St Mary 2021**. The excavation archive (physical and digital) have been transferred to The British Museum. The OASIS ID number for this archaeological evaluation is: **barbican1-503200**.

It is recommended that 18 of the coins and 8 copper alloy and iron Registered Artefacts would benefit from conservation (cleaning and stabilisation) prior to final identification. Another 10 very fragmentary Registered Artefacts are not considered sufficiently significant to be retained in perpetuity. Lists of Registered Artefacts that require cleaning or that are recommended for discarding have been received by The British Museum, as well as lists of bulk finds groups that should be retained or discarded.

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## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 TRENCH PLANS

Figure 29 Plan of Trench 1

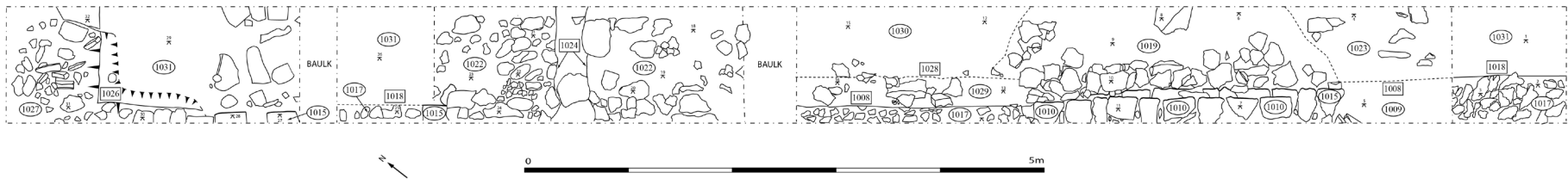


Figure 30 Plan of Trench 2

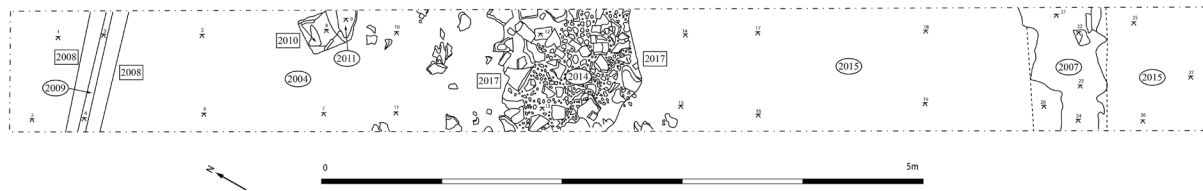


Figure 31 Plan of Trench 3

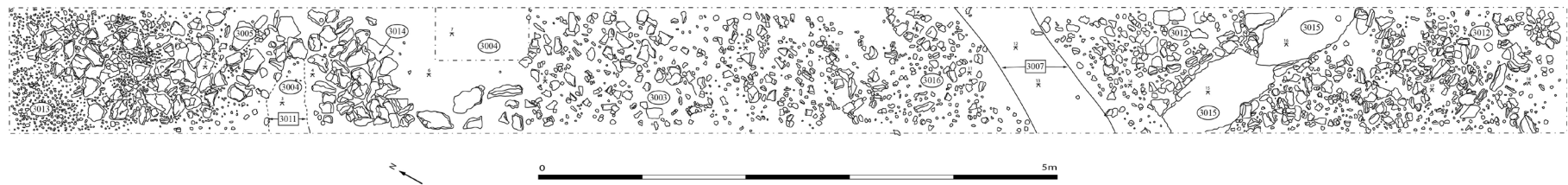


Figure 32 Plan of Trench 4

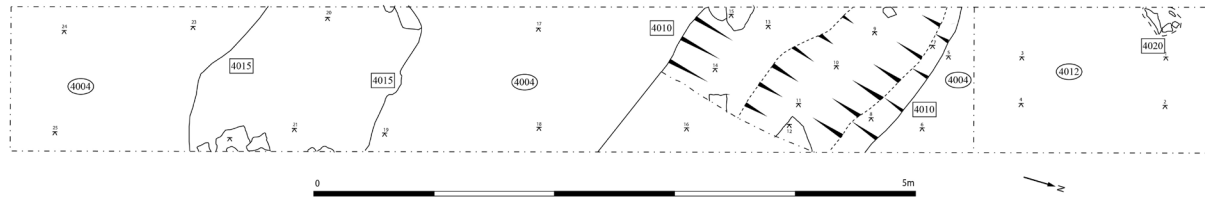


Figure 33 Plan of Trench 5

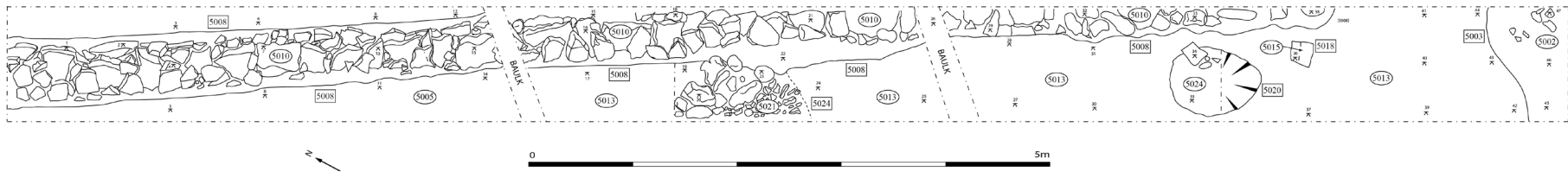
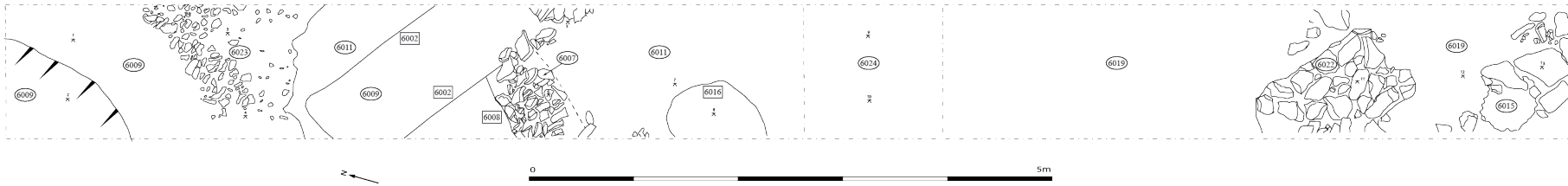


Figure 34 Plan of Trench 6





## 7.2 REGISTERED ARTEFACTS ASSESSMENT CATALOGUE

RA#	Context #	Material	Artefact type	Description	Conservation
101	1003	CuA	Button	Tinned button with loop on reverse - not Roman	
106	1001	Shale	Rod/pin	Shale rod/pin	clean
108	1007	Pb	Stopper?	Possible stopper/bung?	clean
109	1007	CuA	Handle?	Openwork handle from a bladed implement - Roman?	clean
110	1009	Fe	Disc	Pierced disc	clean
201	2003	Bone	Boar's tusk	Boar's tusk	
203	2002	Stone	Peg	Stone peg in 2 fragments	
204	2003	Fe	Ring	Fragment of finger-ring; shoulder and part of hoop only	clean
208	2006	Shale	Rod/pin	Shale rod/pin	clean
209	2003	CuA	Pin head?	Possible pin-head - uncertain	
304	3003	CuA/Ag	Object	Delicate metal strip - function uncertain	clean
305	3001	Pb	Object	Uncertain/undiagnostic	
306	3003	Fe	Box lid?	Possible seal box lid?	clean
307	3003	Shale	Object	Worked shale? - function unclear	clean
401	4002	CuA	Stud/mount	Domed stud or mount - not Roman	
402	4003	Stone	Object	Pierced stone; possibly for textile working	clean
404	4004	CuA	Finger ring	Fragment of Roman finger ring	clean
405	4005	Fe	Blade?	Possible fragments of a straight edged blade	clean
406	4005	Fe	Implement?	Leaf-shaped implement?	clean
407	4009	Fe	Object	Miscellaneous/undiagnostic	
408	4011	Fe	Tool?	Possible fragment of a straight edged blade	clean
409	4011	Fe	Blade?	Possible fragment of blade - doubtful	clean
410	4011	Fe	Object	Rectangular iron loop - probably not Roman	
411	4013	Fe	Tool?	Terminal of a chisel/awl?	clean
501	5001	CuA	Finger ring	Fragment of Roman finger ring	clean
503	5005	Fe	Ring	Not a finger ring - undiagnostic	
602	6005	CuA	Button	Circular button with loop on reverse - not Roman	
606	6001	Stone/Fe	Roof Tiles with nail in situ X 3	Roof tiles with nails in situ	

### 7.3 COIN ASSESSMENT CATALOGUE

SF	Context	Denomination	Emperor / Obverse	Reverse / Type	Notes	Date	Clean?
102	1005	AE3	House of Valentinian	GLORIA ROMANORVM		364-78	No
103	1005	AE4	uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	No
104	1002	AE4	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	No
105	1007	AE3	Uncertain	uncertain		4th c.	Yes
107	1007	AE3	GRATIAN	GLORIA NOVI SAECVLI		367-75	No
111	1007	AE1	Uncertain	uncertain		1st-2nd c.	Yes
112	1007	AE4	House of Theodosius	Victory walking left		388-402	Yes
113	1011	AE4	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	Yes
114	1011	AE4	House of Theodosius	Victory walking left		388-402	No
115	1001	AR frag	Uncertain	uncertain	cut penny?	Medieval?	No
116	1001	AE3	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	No
117	1014	Radiate	CLAUDIUS II	uncertain		268-70	No
118	1001	AE4	Uncertain	FEL TEMP - falling horseman?		353-60	No
202	2003	AE3	House of Valentinian?	SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE?		364-78?	Yes
205	2003	AE3	House of Constantine	GLORIA EXERCITVS - 1 std		335-40	No
206	2003	AE3	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	No
207	2006	AE3	CONSTANTINOPOLIS	Victory on prow		330-40	No
210	2001	AE2	House of Constantine	BEATA TRANQVILLITAS		318-24	No
301	3001	AE3 frag	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	No
302	3003	AE3	House of Constantine	GLORIA EXERCITVS - 1 std		335-40	No
303	3003	AE4	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	Yes
403	4001	AE3	House of Constantine	GLORIA EXERCITVS - 2 stds		330-35	No
412	4001	Radiate	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd c.	Yes
413	4001	Radiate	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd c.	No
502	5001	AE3	CONSTANTINOPOLIS	Victory on prow		330-40	No
601	6003	AE3	Uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	Yes
603	6001	AE3	House of Constantine	VICTORIAE DD AVGG QNN	Trier	347-8	No
604	6014	AE4	uncertain	uncertain		late 3rd-4th c.	No
605	6004	AE3	House of Constantine	GLORIA EXERCITVS - 2 stds		330-35	No

## 7.4 POTTERY ASSESSMENT - SPOT DATES

Abbreviations; b-s - bodysherd; FLB, developed beaded and flanged bowl; SRD - simple rimmed dish

Context	Quantity (sherd#)	Dating
1001	30	Post Med
1002	16	Post Med
1003	2	BB1 b-s, AD120+
1005	4	Post Med
1007	41	Med
1009	29	BB1 b-s w obtuse lattice, cAD200+
1011	128	BB1 FLBs & late jars AD270+; one BB1 b-s with oblique line 'lattice', perhaps cAD390+
1012	77	BB1 jar, cAD270+
1014	15	BB1 SRD x2, cAD200-400
1016	22	BB1 b-s, obtuse lattice, cAD200+
2001	22	Post Med
2002	27	Post Med
2003	24	Med
2004	1	BB1 SRD, AD200-400
2006	3	BB1 SRD, AD200-400
2014	2	Roman
2016	4	Storage jar, Fulford (1975) NF TY 40.3, cAD270-400
3002	74	Post Med
3003	87	Med
3004	1	BB1 b-s, Roman
3006	3	Ox cc, C75, AD325-400+
3015	1	BB1 b-s, Roman
4001	22	Post Med
4002	23	BB1 FLB cAD270-400
4004	69	NF mort, ty 106, cAD325-345
4005	88	BB1 2 x FLB cAD270+ & jars cAD270+
4006	17	Med
4007	35	BB1 FLBs cAD270+
4008	62	NF lid FULFORD 87? AD300+ & 2 x BB1 jars prob cAD300+
4011	16	BB1 SRD, cAD200+
4012	2	BB1 jar cAD240-270
4013	68	BB1 FLB x3 cAD270+
4014	26	BB1 FLB cAD270+
4016	7	BB1 b-s, obtuse lattice cAD200+
5001	27	Post Med
5002	6	BB1 b-s w groove and oblique burnish lines, poss AD390+?? & 2 x jar cAD250-400
5004	4	1 Med b-s
5005	20	3 Med b-s
5006	2	BB1 b-s, Ro
5007	3	1 Med b-s

5009	3	Ox CC b-s, AD240+
5014	1	BB1 b-s, Ro
5016	2	2 b-s, Ro?
5019	12	BB1 jar, cAD300-400
5022	2	Post Med
6001	18	Post Med
6003	12	Post Med
6004	25	Post Med
6005	17	Med
6006	2	BB1 b-s, Ro
6010	26	BB1jar, AD270+
6011	24	NF bowl, cAD270+
6012	2	BB1 jar, cAD200-300
6013	6	BB1 b-s w obtuse lattice, cAD200+
6022	1	BB1 b-s, Ro

## 7.5 HUMAN REMAINS ASSESSMENT

SNO	Context	Taxon	Element	Side	Proximal Fusion	Distal Fusion	Erosion/ Abrasion Score	Notes
1	2003	Human	M3				na	Unsure if maxillary or mandibular, left or right - dimensions unclear with break
2	6005	Human	Capitate	Right			2	
3	6005	Human	Lunate	Right			1	
4	6005	Human	Scaphoid	Right			1	
5	6005	Human	Prox Phalanx 1		Fused	Fused	1	Prob right
6	6005	Human	Prox Phalanx 2		Fused	Fused	1	Prob right
7	6005	Human	Prox Phalanx 3		Fused	Fused	1	Prob right
8	6005	Human	Prox Phalanx 4		Fused	Fused	1	Prob right
9	6005	Human	Prox Phalanx 5		Fused	Fused	1	Prob right
10	6005	Human	Int Phalanx 2		Fused	Fused	1	
11	6005	Human	Int Phalanx 3		Fused	Fused	1	
12	6005	Human	Int Phalanx 5			Fused	1	
13	6005	Human	MC1	Right	Fused	Fused	1	
14	6005	Human	MC3	Right	Fused		1	
15	6005	Human	MC4	Right		Fused	1	
16	6005	Human	MC5	Right	Fused		1	Articulates with SNO 17
17	6006	Human	MC5	Right		Fused	1	Articulates with SNO 16
18	6005	Human	MC2	Left	Fused		1	
19	6005	Human	MC3	Left	Fused		1	
20	6005	Human	MC4	Left	Fused		1	
21	6005	Human	Rib	Right			1	
22	6005	Human	Rib	Right			2	

23	6005	Human	Rib	Right			1	
24	6005	Human	Rib	Left			2	
25	6005	Human	Rib	Left			1	
26	6005	Human	Rib	Left			2	
27	6005	Human	Rib	Left			1	
28	6005	Human	Rib	Left			1	
29	6005	Human	Rib				1	
30	6005	Human	Rib				1	
31	6005	Human	Rib				2	
32	6005	Human	Rib				1	
33	6005	Human	Rib				1	
34	6005	Human	Rib				1	
35	6005	Human	Rib				1	
36	6005	Human	Rib				1	
37	6005	Human	Rib				2	
38	6005	Human	Rib				1	
39	6005	Human	Rib				1	
40	6005	Human	Rib				2	
41	6005	Human	Rib				1	
42	6005	Human	Rib				1	
43	6005	Human	Rib				1	
44	6005	Human	Rib				2	
45	6005	Human	Rib				1	
46	6005	Human	Rib				1	
47	6005	Human	Rib				2	
48	6005	Human	Rib				1	
49	6005	Human	Clavicle	Right	Fused		2	Articulates with SNO 50
50	6005	Human	Clavicle	Right			2	Articulates with SNO 49

51	6005	Human	Scapula	Right			2	
52	6005	Human	Scapula	Right			3	
53	6005	Human	Scapula	Right			2	
54	6005	Human	Radius	Right		Fused	1	
55	6005	Human	Radius	Left			2	Articulates with SNO 56
56	6005	Human	Radius	Left			1	Articulates with SNO 55
57	6005	Human	Ulna	Right		Fused	1	
58	6005	Human	Ulna	Left	Fused		1	
59	6005	Human	Ulna	Left			1	Articulates with SNO 60
60	6005	Human	Ulna	Left		Fused	2	Articulates with SNO 59
61	6005	Human	Humerus	Left	Fused		2	
62	6005	Human	Humerus	Left			1	Articulates SNOs 62-64
63	6005	Human	Humerus	Left			1	Articulates SNOs 62-64
64	6005	Human	Humerus	Left			1	Articulates SNOs 62-64
65	6005	Human	Humerus	Left			1	Articulates SNOs 65-69
66	6005	Human	Humerus	Left			1	Articulates SNOs 65-69
67	6005	Human	Humerus	Left			1	Articulates SNOs 65-69
68	6005	Human	Humerus	Left		Fused	1	Articulates SNOs 65-69
69	6005	Human	Humerus	Left		Fused	2	Articulates SNOs 65-69
70	6005	Human	UNID				3	Possible humerus? Articulates with SNO 71
71	6005	Human	UNID				3	Possible humerus? Articulates with SNO 70
72	6005	Human	UNID				2	Possible radius?
73	6005	Human	Femur	Left	Fused		3	
74	6005	Human	Femur	Right	Fused		2	
75	6005	Human	Vertebra				2	
76	6005	Human	Vertebra				3	Articulates with SNO 77
77	6005	Human	Vertebra				3	Articulates with SNO 76

78	6005	Human	Thoracic Vertebra				3	
79	6005	Human	Thoracic Vertebra				2	
80	6005		UNID				2	Probable sacrum, unsure if human
81	6005		UNID				2	Probable vertebra from (non-human) large mammal
82	6010	Human	Sacrum				3	Articulates with SNO 83
83	6010	Human	Sacrum				3	Articulates with SNO 82
84	6010	Human	MT3	Right	Fused		1	
85	6022	Human	MT1	Right	Fused		1	



## 7.6 ANIMAL BONE ASSESSMENT - SPECIES BY TRENCH

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Total	ABG	% Id	% Dom	% C:S:P	% S:P	%H:C	%Ch:S
Cattle	22	10	29	27	5	3	96		36.9	40.2	40.2			
Sheep/Goat	22	8	24	33	8	10	105		40.4	43.9	43.9	81.4		
Pig	10		4	2	1	7	24		9.2	10.0	10.0			
Horse		1	1	3		7	12		4.6	5.0			11.1	
Dog			1				1		0.4	0.4				
Cat				11			11	10	0.4	0.4				
Red Deer	2	1	3	1		2	9		3.5					
Wild Boar					1	2	3		1.2					
Hare	2						2		0.8					
Chicken	2			3			5		1.9					4.5
Duck sp.					1		1		0.4					
Thrush family				1			1		0.4					
Total Identified	60	20	62	81	16	31	270	10	260	239	225	129	108	110
Large Mammal	31	15	34	41	1	26	148							
Medium Mammal	33	6	23	40		22	124							
Unid. Mammal	19	1	11	17	3	3	54							
Unid. Bird				2			2							
Total Undentified	83	22	68	100	4	51	328							
Total	143	42	130	181	20	82	598							

NISP = numbers of individual specimens (NISP)

% Id. = % identified excluding bones in Associated Bone Groups (ABG)

% Dom = % of domestic mammal bones (excluding ABGs)

% C:S:P = percentage of cattle, sheep/goat and pig only

% S:P = percentage of sheep/goat of total sheep/goat and pig

% H:C = percentage of horse of total cattle and horse

%Ch:S = percentage of chicken of total sheep/goat and chicken

## 7.7 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES ASSESSMENT (see Table 1)

Sample#	Context	Flot vol (ml)	Charcoal (>,<2mm)	Chd grain	Chd Chaff	Chd seeds	Unchd seeds	bone	snails	insects	comments	Contents of residue
101	1014	15ml	4,5						2		NO CPR; good nos id'ble charcoal fragments including c 60 fragments >4mm; small/mod nos snails (including burrowers <i>Cecelioides acicula</i> ); good amount of roots	Coin, frags of fired clay,
201	2016	46ml	5,5	2	2	2		1	5		Mod CP assemblage - c 20 grains ( <i>Triticum dicoccum/spelta</i> , <i>T. aestivum</i> , <i>Triticum</i> , <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> ), c 15 chaff fragments ( <i>Triticum spelta</i> , <i>Triticum</i> glume bases, spikelet bases), c 10-15 seeds ( <i>Rumex</i> , Poaceae (large & small), cf <i>Bromus</i> , indet seeds); very good nos id'ble charcoal fragments (including c 40 >4mm); very good nos snails; trace small mammal bone; some roots	Nothing in residue
301	3018	3ml	1,3						2	1	NO CPR; occ id'ble charcoal fragments small nos snails; occ Cladoceran ephippia; occ insect (beetle) fragments; >roots	Tiny bone and pot
302	3010	3ml	2,3	1					2		Trace poorly preserved charred grain fragments (2); small nos (c 20) id'ble charcoal fragments; small nos snails; >roots	Tiny bone
401	4014	2ml	2,4						3		NO CPR; small nos id'ble charcoal fragments; mod nos snails (c 50) including burrowers <i>Cecelioides acicula</i> ; >roots	Pot sherd and bone frag
601	6017	12ml	4,5				1		2		NO CPR; good nos id'ble charcoal fragments including c 25 fragments >4mm; occ uncharred seeds ( <i>Ranunculus</i> , <i>Rumex</i> ); small nos snails (including burrowers <i>Cecelioides acicula</i> ); occ worm eggs; some roots	Tiny pot

## 7.8 FIELDWORK TEAM

Directors	Peter Guest	Barbican Research Associates
	Richard Hobbs	The British Museum
	Mike Luke	Albion Archaeology
Trench Supervisors	Berber van der Meulen van der Veen	Cardiff University
	Phineas Elmore	Pre-Develop Archaeology
Finds Supervisor	Christine Waite	Independent
Metal detectorist	Archie Gillespie	Independent
Fieldwork coordinator	Ian Dennis	Cardiff University
Cook	Emma Wellman	Independent
Excavators	Hannah Brennan	Cardiff University
	James Green	Cardiff University
	Emily Hedley Du Bois	Cardiff University
	Michael Guest	Volunteer
	Llywelyn Humphreys	Cardiff University
	Gabrielle Jackson	Cardiff University
	Dina Martin	Cardiff University
	Thea Plumstead	Cardiff University
	Andreas Puliasis	Cardiff University
	Leah Reynolds	Volunteer
	Eden Sedman	Cardiff University
	Maisy Swift	Cardiff University
	Evie Taylor	Cardiff University
	Tierney Tudor	Cardiff University
	Joseph William Vart	Cardiff University
	Molly Westall	Cardiff University
	Kieran Williamson-Coates	Cardiff University



Figure 35 The Hinton St Mary 2021 Excavation Team