

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**GLEND A SPOONER FARM,
BRINCIL HILL LANE, KINGSDON,
SOMERSET**

NGR ST 51051 2579 centred

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

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REPORT FOR World Horse Welfare
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological strip and record of a minor Roman road in advance of new development (Planning Ref: 12/00651/EIASS) at Glenda Spooner Farm, Brincil Hill Lane, Kingsdon, Somerset (NGR ST 51051 25791). The archaeological excavation followed a geophysical survey (Stratscan 2008), aerial photograph survey (JMHS 2008a) and archaeological evaluation (JMHS 2008b) which identified and sampled a truncated road surface, considered to be a minor Roman road, which split from the main road near Ilchester and crossed along the western slopes of Kingsdon Hill and into the grounds of Somerton Erleigh. The road continues along the Poldens as a ridgeway, adapting its course to follow the ridge. The closest known Roman settlement to the site was at Catsgore Farm, 700m to the west and the road probably once connected this site with the main Roman settlement at Ilchester.

The area was stripped to the top of the road surface and six 1.5m wide hand excavated sections were strategically positioned across the road and roadside ditches. A cumulative length of 35m of the road surface was hand cleaned. In most areas the road surface was badly truncated with only a thin deposit of lias stone surviving directly above natural. No trace of any 'agger' or surface conglomerates was present. Two kerbs perhaps used as shuttering were present towards the north-western part of the excavation. These kerbs were on both sides of the road and perhaps were used to define the width of the road during its construction.

Towards the south east corner of the main field the surface of the road was thicker with larger stones including some architectural fragments of Ham stone in possible post-medieval style. It would seem the road was resurfaced along this stretch during the post-medieval period with cart ruts apparent where the road curved. It is possible the wheel ruts were created during the post-medieval period, although this is uncertain as wheel ruts are a common feature on Roman roads. At the far south-eastern end of the excavation, the road surface was almost non-existent. A deposit of stones, which may have once been used as capping stones, were discovered adjacent to the road in this area. The road was also truncated at this end of the site by either a bomb crater or anthrax pit and suffered from post-medieval or modern terracing across this part of the field.

The south roadside ditch was the more apparent of the two roadside ditches and seemed to follow the natural topography of the site presumably for drainage reasons. It came away from the road and petered out where the hillside sloped to the south. The south roadside ditch reappeared where the ground was more level. The north roadside ditch was not as obvious as the southern ditch and was immediately adjacent to the road at north-western end of the excavations. This ditch would not have been as necessary as the southern ditch as water would have flowed to the south and south-west. The road lacked any Roman finds and was obviously used perhaps until the early part of the 20th century. It was covered over by topsoil by at least 1946, as shown on the aerial photograph of that time.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site of the proposed development is located on the west side of Brincil Hill Lane immediately south of the existing farm buildings (NGR ST 51051 25791).

The road lies between *c.* 17.68m AOD- 12.35m AOD. The site is currently agricultural land used as paddocks for former neglected horses.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission has been granted by South Somerset District Council for development at Glenda Spooner Farm. A condition of the permission states that archaeological work is required during the work. The Historic Environment Service (HES) of Somerset County Council produced a *Brief* (Membury 2012) for such work. This was followed by a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012a) which outlined the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve by record archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

A known Roman road runs through the proposed development site and there are extensive Roman remains in the landscape surrounding the site. These include a Roman villa and settlement at Catsgore Farm 700m to the west and another Roman settlement 600m to the north.

This road forks north-west from the Fosse Way (PRN 55101) just beyond Ilchester and is clearly traceable almost throughout. The first mile to Bondip Hill (ST511248) is still in use and where the modern road bends away traces of the metalling could be seen in a ploughed field. Green lanes then follow it and it can be seen as a terrace east of Catsgore Farm (ST505247). It continues along the western slopes of Kingsdon Hill and into the grounds of Somerton Erleigh (ST5002851). After Cary Bridge (ST485289) the modern road probably follows it to Littleton (ST490304) and then an overgrown lane marks it but below Dundon Hill the modern road through Compton (ST490330) again follows it. It appears to continue as a lane past Ivy Thorn (ST480344) rising gradually to the ridge one mile east of Ashcott crossroads. The road continues along the Poldens as a ridgeway, adapting its course to follow the ridge, but beyond Loxley Wood (ST4037) it is notably straight and in parts much raised. Near Stawell (ST3638) the ridge is narrow and entirely occupied by the road. At Bawdrip, (ST3439) after the railway it is lost for half a mile but reappears as a lane past the north side of Knowle Hall grounds (ST330404) and continues straight along the ridge to its very tip at Dunball (ST3141) near Puriton, no doubt, once connecting with a small harbour on the Parrett estuary. The metalling of the agger is visible in the final section. The above was obtained from the Somerset Historic Environment Record.

Modern roads and lanes mark the route for the majority of the way and no indisputable remains of the Roman road survive. From Ilchester to the Polden Hills the course of the road is generally straight but there are too many minor deviations for it to represent the precise

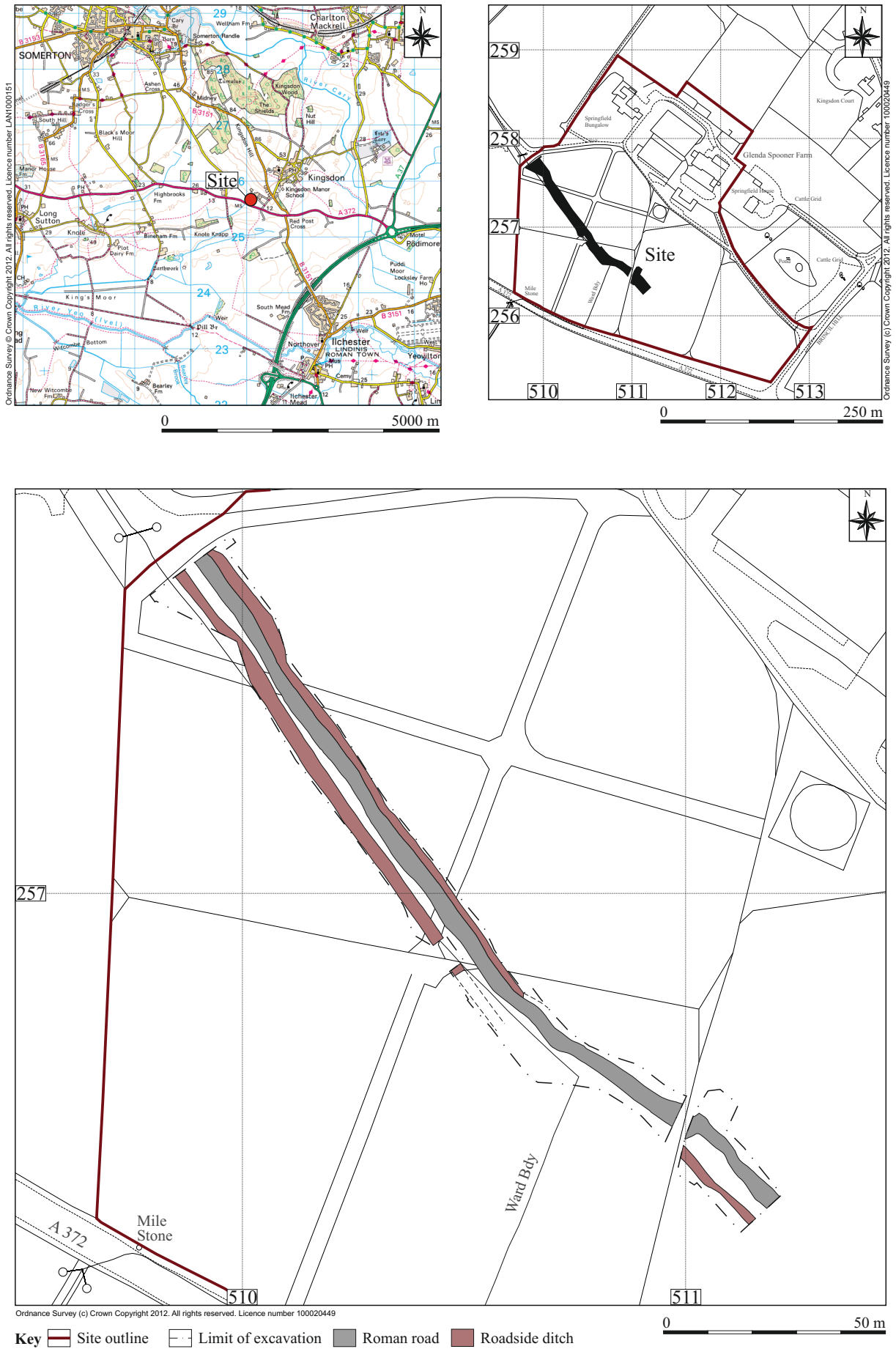


Figure 1. Site location

Roman line. Along the Poldens to Puriton many of the slight bends are to enable the road to remain on the top of the narrow ridge.

The Roman road at Glenda Spooner Farm is very distinct on the aerial photographs of the area. A geophysical survey was undertaken in 2008 (Stratascan 2008) and this located a potential roadside ditch to the south. Analysis of geophysical survey data and aerial photography was carried out to determine any correlation between the two (JMHS 2008a). The investigation revealed that although the aerial photographs showed significant detail along the road much of this was not reflected in the geophysical results.

No indication of the road surface was suggested by the geophysical results, it was thought possible that this has previously been robbed or that modern ploughing had destroyed it. The road surface was established during the later archaeological evaluation (JMHS 2008b), which proved it was heavily truncated and only the lowest courses of its rubble sub-base were left. In some places (Trench 3) even this had been heavily disturbed and dispersed with fragments of ceramic field drain mixed amongst the stones. Some fields displayed stone on the surface on the line of the road. Not all the features to the side of the road apparent in the 1946 aerial photograph were evident during the fieldwork.

The road was not equidistant from both roadside ditches. The reason for this remains uncertain, but may be due to drainage issues on the sloping ground as well as the apparent curve in direction of the road itself.

Interestingly no material of Roman date was recovered from the area. The pottery retrieved dates from the 13th century onwards and is likely to be associated with manuring of the fields over a considerable number of years, some sherds then finding their way into later contexts as residual pieces. No concentrations of pottery or other artefacts were noted.

An Appendix of the local HER sites are listed within Appendix 1.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The main aims of the investigation were outlined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012).

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record any evidence associated with the prehistoric landscape and/or Roman road.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

The recording was carried out in accordance with the *standards and guidance* specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008), the Somerset County Council *Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook* (2011) and John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012a).

3.2 Methodology

A team of archaeologists were present on site during all ground reduction connected with the archaeological investigation. All ground reduction was achieved using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A general photographic record of the work was kept using colour transparency, black and white and digital cameras and will form of the part site archive to be submitted to the Somerset County Museum.

The excavation and backfilling took place over four continuous weeks from 8th -31st October 2012.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In total 13 evaluation trenches and one excavation area have been excavated at the site, during the four stages of work.

Stage 1; Geophysical analysis

Stage 2: Aerial photograph analysis

Stage 3: Archaeological Evaluation

Stage 4: Archaeological Strip and Record Excavation

Of the 13 evaluation trenches, 3 trenches were recorded as containing the Roman road and the roadside ditches. The results of the evaluation trenches can be obtained from the evaluation report (JMHS 2008b). Full details of the results of the excavations are given below. All details are housed with the site archive.

A fairly restricted range of dates were obtained from specialist assessment during the post-excavation process. This places the majority of activity on the site within the late post-medieval or modern period. The pottery data, as it was so sparse, generally could not provide any more refined site phasing. The majority of the pottery and broken ceramic field drain fragments are considered intrusive. During the excavation and subsequent initial post-excavation analysis, coherent sets of features were grouped together. The groupings were established on the basis of the association of the features in plan and the stratigraphic relationships established on site.

The phasing and dating of the Roman road has proven problematic. There is a lack of precise dating and finds from within the road surface. Any finds that have been recovered were post-medieval in date which indicates the road was used until perhaps the beginning of the 20th century.

All original context numbers (assigned on site) have been kept as unique identifiers for sections excavated across layers. Every section had a unique cut and fill number assigned. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. cuts, while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of materials.

4.2 Quantification of Site Archive

Excavation phase

Across all the area a total of 50 further individual contexts were encountered during the Stage 4 excavations and each was recorded on a pro-forma context sheet. Eight sheets of plans and sections were drawn on plastic drawing film, providing plans at scales of 1:20 and Sections at 1:10 & 1:20. An overall site plan was maintained at a scale of 1:200. A total of 90 level readings were taken during the excavation phase using a dumpy level and these were recorded on level recording sheets. The photographic record was listed on pro-forma sheets and consists of approximately 28 black and white exposures, approximately 32 colour transparencies. A full digital photographic record was also maintained for section photographs and general working shots.

Number of Contexts	50
Plan and sections sheets	49 (1:50, 1:20 and 1:10)
Bulk Samples	0
Registered finds	0
Photographs	29 black and white exposures and 32 colour slide exposures
Bulk finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Summary quantification of site archive

4.3 Excavation Results

The excavation results revealed un-clarified periods of activity. The road is known to be Roman as it can be traced across a large area linking Roman farmsteads and settlements to the main Fosse Way. However, no actual direct dating evidence from the Roman period was discovered at the site, either across the cleaned areas of the road or within the hand excavated sections across the road. It is common for Roman roads to leave little trace of any Roman activity (see discussion).

General Overburden

The excavation area revealed a total of *c.*190m of cobbled road/trackway and two interrupted roadside ditches but see discussion. The stratigraphic sequence of overburden consisted of the following deposits (earliest to latest). The natural geology was light brown-orange compact clay silt (03). Lying directly above the natural was *c.* 0.10m thick mid brown silty clay subsoil (02), up to a maximum depth of 0.15m. The latest deposit was 0.20m thick topsoil (01) seen across the entire excavations.

4.3.1 The Roman Road (Figures 2 - 5)

The principal aim of the archaeological excavation was to investigate the known road, established just beneath the topsoil during the initial geophysical survey, aerial photograph analysis (JMHS 2008a) and archaeological evaluation (JMHS 2008b).

The road, section contexts (06)=(19)=(25)=(35)=(38)=(42), was constructed of lias stone blocks with a typical size of <50-250mm. The road surface had an average surviving depth of 0.10-0.25m. It had clearly been re-surfaced in the post-medieval period in patches, especially towards the south-eastern end of the main field. The road had possibly been cut into the natural clay at shown at section [39] (Fig. 5; Section 6), but was generally considered to have

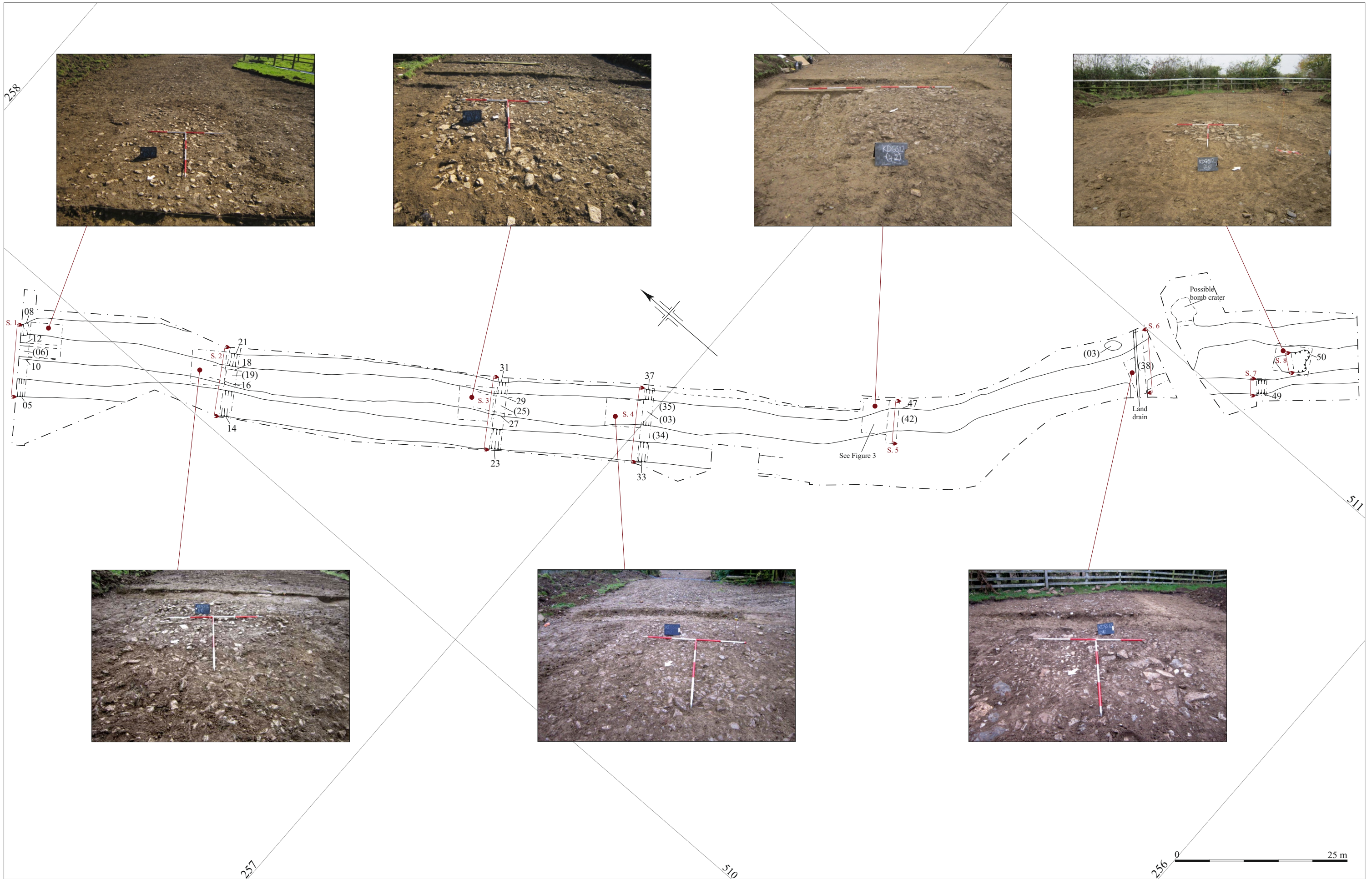


Figure 2. Site plan

been constructed using a large pestle to push the stones into the surface of the natural clay. Alternatively the weight of the road and passing traffic forced the stones into the top of the clay. At every section placed across the road surface, a 5m strip was hand cleaned; photographed and planned. This enabled any changes of the roads construction to be fully recorded. Hand cleaning towards the north-western end of the excavation revealed a thin fairly dense stone surface between definable kerbs and only post-medieval finds scattered randomly across its uppermost surface (Fig. 2).

At the south-eastern end of the excavation the road surface was barely surviving and as a result no section could be excavated across it.

The stone blocks used in the construction of the road were roughly laid presumably tipped onto the surface of the clay from carts and then spread randomly. The road was fairly consistently *c.* 3m wide. It survived thinnest and with fewest stones at the north-western end of the excavation and south-eastern end of the excavation. The road was thickest closest to the main hedge line (which was not removed during the excavation) (Fig. 2), where larger stones were cleaned and recorded (38). Within the road at this location were dressed Ham stones in probable post-medieval style (see section 5.2) indicating the road was resurfaced here during this period. The dressed stones looked to have come from a building of neo-classical style.



Plate 1; General view of the road looking north-west (2m scale)

The road was fairly straight but could be seen to curve towards the south-east, at which point a section was placed (42). As a result of this section the road surface was seen to be very

compact with cart rutting apparent on the eastern side [45] & [47] (Fig. 3; Fig. 5; Section 5). The road here was well preserved and an apparent cream coloured mortar was seen amongst the stones, used as a bonding agent. This may suggest a post-medieval addition across this area, although cream mortar was also recorded as a Roman bonding agent on the Fosse Way at Ilchester (Leach 1982).



Plate 2; detailed view of cart rutting looking east (2m scales)

4.3.2 The Kerbs

On either side of the road, seen only towards the north-western end of the excavations were the ephemeral presence of two roadside kerbs, which would have helped contain stone during the construction of the road.

The southern kerb and construction cut had three sections placed across it; [10], [16] & [27] (Fig. 4). The construction cut dimensions ranged from 0.20-0.40m wide and 0.10-0.20m deep. The kerb was distinguishable from the rest of the road surface as the stones were denser and more compact along the edges. This cut was filled by compacted lias stone (<50-250mm) placed in an irregular order (09)=(15)=(26).

The northern kerb construction cut also had three sections placed across it; [12], [18] & [29] (Fig. 4). Again, the kerb was distinguished from the rest of the road surface by denser and more compacted stones. The dimensions of the kerb ranged from 0.20-0.25m wide to 0.10-0.30m deep. This cut was filled by irregular shaped compact lias stone (<50-250mm) (11)=(17)=(28).

Where the road changed course with an obvious bend there was clear evidence of a possible gutter and cart rutting [45] & [47] (Fig. 5, Section 5, Plate 2). The possible gutter [45] was 0.30m wide and 0.10-0.15m deep with concave sides and a rounded base (Plate 2).

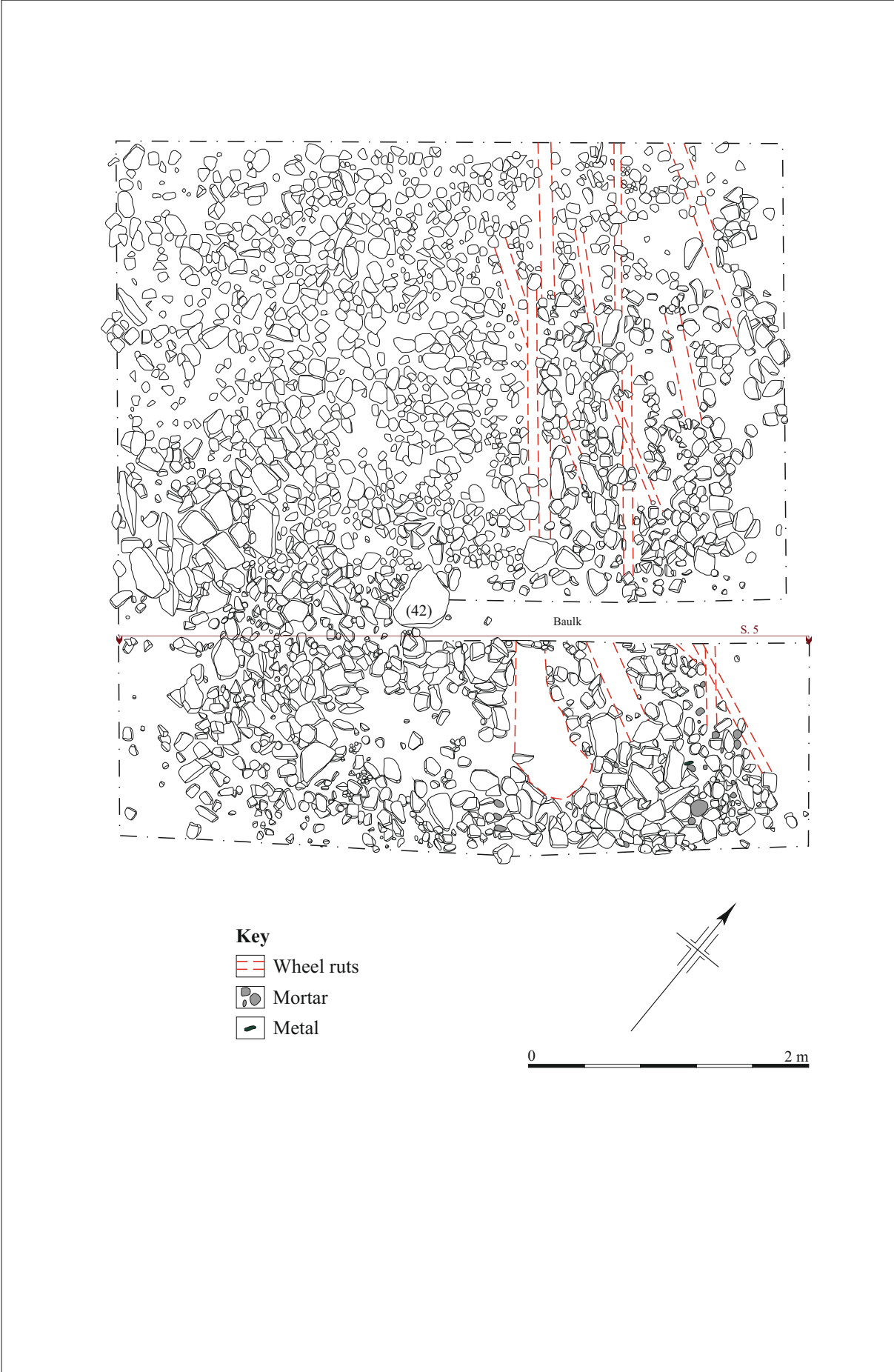


Figure 3. Detail plan of road showing wheel ruts



Figure 4. Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4

However, this may have been formed by successive wheel ruts. On the immediate north side of [45] was a narrow depression [47], which looked like a cart rut. It was 0.15-0.20m wide and had very sharp sides getting gradually less apparent further to the west away from the section. Other cart ruts were clearly visible in plan (Fig. 3). The cart ruts were filled by (44) & (46), both light yellow brown sticky clay silts with occasional ceramic building material present. Overlying these features was a thin clay layer (43) only seen on the eastern side of the road.

4.3.3 The Roadside ditches

The south roadside ditch was the more substantial of the two roadside ditches, but was still generally shallow. The ditch was sectioned across five locations [05], [14], [23], [33] & [49] (Figs. 4 & 5) and had a generally similar profile recorded, except in the far south eastern end of the site (see below). Section [06] was at the north-western end of the excavation (Fig. 4, Section 1; Plate 3), the ditch was 0.27m deep and 1.5m wide with gradually concave side and a gently rounded base. The profile remained similar until section [33] (Fig. 4, Section 4) where the ditch was 0.18m deep and 2.60m wide, it had gradual concave sides and an almost flat base. To the south of this section the ditch seemed to fade out with no obvious terminal end. It was seen again at the south-eastern end of the excavations [49] (Fig. 5, Section 7) and had a shallow depth of 0.05m and width of 1.5m. The ditch was filled by firm mid grey brown loamy clay (04)=(13)=(22)=(32)=(48). The geophysical survey showed the ditch curving away from the road surface on the southern side, but this was not visible during the excavation.



Plate 3; Southside ditch [14] looking north-west (2m scale)

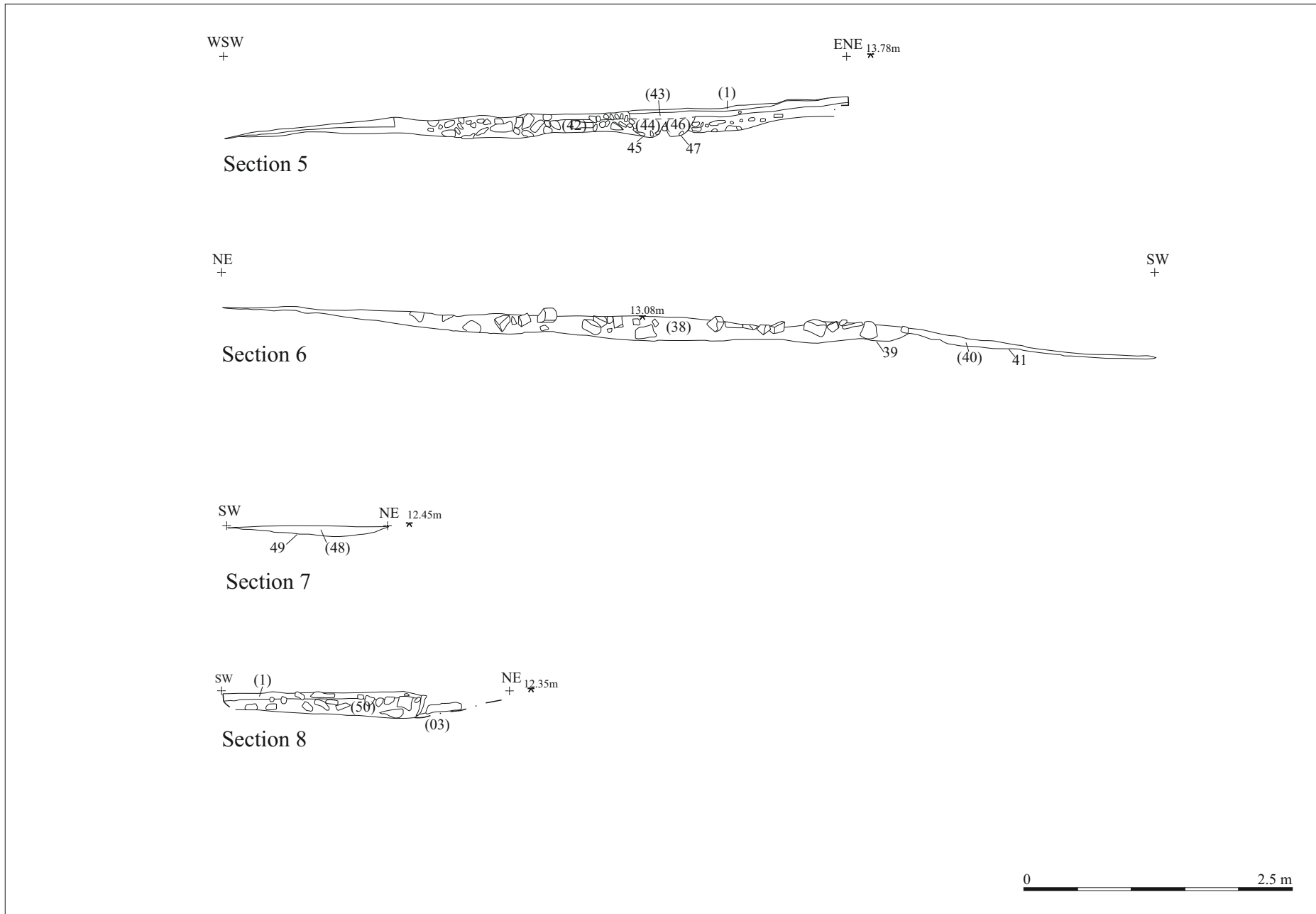


Figure 5. Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8

The possible north roadside ditch (Fig. 4, Sections 1, 2 & 3) was less obvious than the south side ditch and had a shallow profile in all sections across it; [08], [21], [31] & [37]. The width of the ditch was generally *c.* 1.5m wide and 0.20m deep. It had shallow concave sides and a generally flat base. The ditch was filled by dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent stone inclusions (07)=(20)=(30)=(36). The north side ditch was tentatively seen during the evaluation within Trench 11. The ditch fades away in a similar location to the south side ditch, but was not seen again.

The ditch was very close to the road and may have been excavated for materials to use in the road construction such as a sticky clay bonding agent for the metalling. The depth of the ditch and its location to the north of the road on a slope would suggest that it was not a drainage ditch. It could have been caused by water run-off from the slight slope to the north meeting the solid road and eroding a gully alongside it.

4.3.4 Other features

Towards the south-eastern end of the excavation an irregular area of stones (50) (Fig. 2; Fig. 5, Section 8) measuring 5m in length and 3m wide was investigated. This was considered to be a dump of material moved to this location perhaps from the surface of the road. Between the stones were fragments of post-medieval brick and pottery sherds.

The hand excavated section (38) recorded a field drain orientated along the length of the section (Fig. 2). The cut of the drain was wide and was initially interpreted as an adjoining road. This matched with the geophysical survey interpretation. It was established during excavation that this was the cut for a simple land drain.

Also at the south-eastern end of the road surface was a possible bomb crater which can be seen on the aerial photograph from 1946. There are two other circular parch marks seen visible within the field which also have a high metallic disturbance on the geophysical survey. These features would therefore seem to be a line of bomb craters. Bomb craters are rare from a rural location, but perhaps a returning bomber saw a light on the farm and off loaded some spare bombs. These may be considered to represent an interesting insight into the habits of the enemy bomber crews.

The bomb crater was not numbered but an exploratory trench was excavated across the crater, showing loose backfill, which had probably been bulldozed into the crater. A thin layer of stone pushed from the road surface to the north of the bomb crater was also visible.

Other layers

A layer of topsoil containing loose stones was recorded adjacent to the road on its south eastern side between the road surface and the south side roadside ditch; (24)=(34) (Figure 4; Section's 3 & 4). This deposit was probably created as a result of water erosion across the surface of the road, spreading some of the cobbled surface into this area between the road and the south roadside ditch.

4.3.5 Reliability of Results

The excavations took place in generally favourable weather conditions, typical of autumn weather. A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

5 THE FINDS

5.1 Pottery (By D. Gilbert)

The pottery assemblage comprised 27 sherds with a total weight of 231 g. It consisted of a range of post-medieval and a single earlier type, which suggests that there was low-level activity at the site from the 14th century onwards and is in keeping with the material recovered during the evaluation (Blinkhorn 2008).

The following fabrics were noted:

Donyatt fabric DPT4, 14th C. (Coleman-Smith and Pearson, 1988, 103). Wheel-thrown. Hard sandy fabric with ironstone and rare limestone inclusions. Glazed with applied slip decoration. 1 sherd, 18g.

Donyatt fabric DPT6, 16th C. (ibid., 104). Wheel-thrown. Hard smooth fabric with fine sand, ironstone and rare limestone inclusions. Glazed. 1 sherd, 15g.

Donyatt fabric DPT7, 17th C. (ibid.). Wheel-thrown. Hard smooth fabric with fine sand, ironstone and rare limestone inclusions. Glazed and slip-trailed. 11 sherds, 132g.

Misc. 19th/20th century wares. Mass-produced white earthenwares, horticultural pottery, stonewares etc. 14 sherds, 66g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 2. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The fabric types are all well known in the region. The assemblage is not considered to merit retention in archive.

Table 2: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	DPT4		DPT6		DPT7		19thC		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1					1	1	2	7	U/S
7			1	15					16th C
35	1	18					1	11	19th C
38					8	74	11	48	19th C
50					2	57			17th C
Total	1	18	1	15	11	132	14	66	

5.2 The Stonework (by Stephen Yeates)

Excavation work at Glenda Spooner recovered part of a worked piece of oolite limestone (Ham Stone) measuring 270mm x 230mm x 130mm, being recovered from context (38). The piece of stone is wedged shaped with a square cut which forms a square lip. Though it cannot be considered conclusive a possible interpretation can be given from what little survives. The stone does have the appearance of a piece of stone that could form part of the raking cornice around a decorative tympanum on a classical pediment. The stone has an ashlar finish. The piece is not likely to be a capping of the top of a gable wall (medieval or post-medieval barn or dwelling) as these were always formed by separately carved blocks and there would not be

a step. Though there is a possibility that this could be a carved stone of a medieval date it is not readily apparent how it would have fitted into a Romanesque or Gothic style with its angular form and wedged shape. Classical architectural pieces were carved in Britain initially from the 1st to the 4th century AD, and then later from the mid-18th century in the emergence of Neo-Classical traditions. Context (38) was interpreted as an area of road patching and therefore may fit into this period.

6 DISCUSSION

General

The archaeological investigations have proven a useful insight into the preservation of the road/trackway which traverses the site, considered to be Roman in origin. Every Roman settlement/large villa must have had a road of some sort, if only a cart track, connecting it directly or indirectly to the major road system (Tratman 1961). The road or trackway uncovered at Glenda Spooner Farm would have probably originally been a minor Roman road connecting Ilchester with Combwich, west of Puriton, a course which is approximately 27 miles in total (see background). The road branched off the Fosse Way heading north-west along the Polden Hills towards Crandon Bridge (Margary 1973; route 51). Ilchester was located immediately to the south of where the Fosse Way (Margary 1973; route 5) and the road north from Dorchester (Margary 1973; route 47) crossed the River Yeo. Romanised Britons undertook the cultivation of the fertile land of the valleys and, in the third and fourth centuries, developed groups of villas linked to the road system in Somerset, probably to meet the increasing demand for corn for the army and for the towns. Locally this road probably connected the known Roman villa at Catsgore Farm with Ilchester. This minor road was different in character to the main Roman road (Fosse Way) which established a boundary line running north-east from the Axe across Somerset to the Cotswolds, through the Midlands to Lincoln. A section of the Fosse Way, uncovered by excavations at Ilchester (Leach 1982), showed that it was constructed on a foundation, five inches thick, of local lias stone, which had been packed with flinty gravel and lime mortar and then surfaced with fine gravel to a width of over 14 feet. Where it crossed marshy ground the road was built on an embankment or *agger*, in some places several feet high. Both the Fosse Way and the road at Glenda Spooner farm were therefore constructed of *c.* 0.15m thick local lias stone, except the road at Glenda Spooner Farm had no finer conglomerate covering, which may have been truncated by medieval ploughing, washed down slope or simply never existed. The main road from Ilchester was *c.* 2m wider. The Glenda Spooner Farm road falls into the average width of minor Roman roads (between 12 and 15 *pedes*). The width of the road was less than 5m, but perhaps was just wide enough for the flow of two way traffic.

Paved surface

There was no surviving presence of any paved surfaces or use of capping stones on the road itself. Paving on all Roman roads was rare with only *c.* 4% being recorded as surfaced or with paving or slabs. Minor Roman roads which have paving such as Blackstone Edge near Greater Manchester and Dean Road in the Forest of Dean now have doubts over their Roman origin (Poulter J 2010 & Davies, H 2002). Where paving has been used there is often a strong military connection, such as the forts of South Shields, Caerleon and Ebchester. Other examples of Roman roads with roughly hewn capping stones have been recorded on Akeman Street (JMHS 2012c). William Stukeley claimed to have observed a good quality paved surface on the Fosse Way just south of Ilchester (Stukeley 1776, 155). Most roads would have had a hard and uneven surface, especially the minor roads, often described as a 'cobbled surface'. The road surface at Glenda Spooner Farm was a 'cobbled surface' but would have

probably been too uneven for wheeled traffic such as wagons as found. A layer of finer conglomerates such as gravel may have been spread across the road surface to make a smoother uppermost surface, but has since dispersed. An area adjacent to the road at the south-eastern end of the excavation may prove some roughly hewn capping stones were used on the road surface. These stones were then removed and stored, probably during the post-medieval period. Some of the unwanted stone (50) was simply left and then forgotten.

Kerbs

The road had the presence of two kerbs, seen only towards the north-western end of the excavation. The kerbs were defined better in section than in plan with denser and more compact stone along the road sides. It is assumed that these kerbs may have provided shuttering on each side of the road in order to prevent spillage and make the hand compaction of the road surface easier within a defined area during its construction. Kerbs also help to counter the effects of rain, frost and traffic. Only 7% of sites within England have been defined as being supplied with kerbs and these were mostly in Northern England, Wales and Scotland. A good example of Roman road from northern England with kerb stones was discovered at the Stockton Heath excavation where the kerb stones were clearly surviving in some places (Dodd 2006). Kerbing on Roman roads may have been more widespread than apparent from the databases. Kerbs are more likely to have been removed for reuse than the stones forming the foundation of roads, (Davies 2002) meaning the real number of roads with kerbs is likely greater than recorded in the archaeological record. A useful example would be the Roman road uncovered by John Moore Heritage Services in Beckley on the new Thames Water Pipeline (JMHS 2009), where a foundation trench for kerbing along with some remaining stones was present, the rest robbed out. As the road at Glenda Spooner Farm was on a steep terrace with soft ground, kerbs may also have been necessary in certain places to help contain the road material and stop it from washing down slope.

The foundation layer

The road had no evidence of a hard stone, sand or chalk base often seen on roads across other parts of the country, especially in Oxfordshire (JMHS 2012b & Morris *et al* 1968). Roman engineers in this part of Somerset seemed not to favour a compacted foundation layer, as seen with the similarity of the road construction uncovered from the Ilchester excavations (Leach 1982). Engineers would have calculated the anticipated use of the road and used local resources as they saw fit. As this road was minor it was probably felt the road surface would not need a hard stone base or any other type of foundation layer.

The roadside ditches

Minor Roman roads (and modern roads) often feature roadside ditches, used to contain or carry away rain water which has drained off the surface. Most ditches would have acted as soakaways as there is often no water proofing in the ditch or any provision for run off water to be discharged into nearby streams (Davies 2002). It was not necessary for all roads to have one, let alone two roadside ditches as the soil was often free draining enough to obliterate the need. At Glenda Spooner Farm the southern roadside ditch was the most substantial ditch, as would be expected, as this was the ditch into which water would have drained. The ditch was shown on the geophysical survey to come away from the road near the modern hedge following the natural topography of the slope. The excavation has proved the south roadside ditch was not completely contiguous along the length of the road, re-appearing again at the south-eastern end of the excavations where the ground surface begins to flatten out.

Wheel ruts

Most Roman roads do not actually show any evidence of wheel rutting which may indicate efficient (annual) re-compacting of the surfaces. The apparent resurfacing and changes along the road with kerbs at the north-western end of the excavation and with cart ruts towards the south-eastern end show common techniques used during the construction of Roman roads in Britain. Wheel ruts have been recorded on other Roman roads in Britain. The recent excavation at Sharpstone Hill (SLR Consulting 2011) has proven through the use of scientific dating that wheel rut surfaces were in use even before the Romanisation of Britain during the Iron Age. At Glenda Spooner Farm we only have wheel ruts on the northern side of the road meaning we cannot gauge the width of the wheeled wagons which used the road. The road surface is very compact where the wheel ruts are most apparent. It is therefore possible that they were caused more recently with heavier more damaging wagons than would have been in use during the Roman period. Perhaps the road was resurfaced during the operation of the quarry seen to the north-west of the site on aerial images. Heavily loaded wagons of stone may have caused the ruts during the lifespan of the quarry presumably in the post-medieval period. The ruts were apparent where the road seems to curve and may indicate a place where wagons allowed other vehicles to pass.

Dating

The road at Glenda Spooner farm was not straight and can be seen from the plan to have had some curves especially at the south-eastern end of the excavation area. It was not uncommon for the smaller roads in Somerset to follow natural topographical features of the landscape. The road had clearly been resurfaced in places during the post-medieval period, with Ham stone blocks used within the cobbled surface, some of which were dressed in neo classical style. Caution should be exercised when attributing roads with metalled or cobbled surfaces to the Romans. Metalled road surfaces are uncommon in the Iron Age, and for that matter the Anglo-Saxon period and medieval period. However, there may be confusion with post-medieval roads often built in a similar manner to Roman roads sometimes deliberately copying the Roman construction techniques. Direct Roman dating evidence on any Roman road is rare, with *c.* 5% of all Roman roads recorded in Britain actually having Roman dating associated with them (Davies 2002). The excavation at Glenda Spooner Farm was important as it was an opportunity to uncover a relatively long stretch of road (190m) under archaeological conditions. It has previously been discussed that the lack of dating evidence from Roman roads may be the result of limited excavations with often only narrow sections across the roads. It was hoped the difficulty of dating could have been overcome with a large open area excavation of a Roman road. This excavation did not find any Roman dating evidence on the road surface or within its makeup. This may therefore refute the idea of lack of dating due to limited excavation. Perhaps any waste materials discarded from the people using the roads washed away with the finer conglomerates which likely covered the cobbled surface.

The best clue as the origin of this road (as Roman) is using indirect evidence. The road if viewed in the wider landscape connects known Roman settlements and villas to the main Fosse Way. Without the existence of minor Roman roads these settlements and villas could not exist.

Conclusion

The excavation of this portion of Roman road was a rare opportunity to fully uncover a section of Roman road which was moderately undisturbed. Most Roman roads in the area are presently beneath the modern road network and there is limited information as to the survival and the methods used in their construction. Other sections of road are visible in the landscape

but are not threatened by development and as such are relatively unstudied. This examination has enabled detailed plans and sections of the road and will add to the future study of minor Roman roads in Britain.



Plate 4; View of Road looking south-east (2m scales x2)



Plate 5; View of bend in road looking north-west (2m scales x2)

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The drawn records	

The Finds

No finds are to be retained for the site archive

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be deposited with Somerset County Museum under accession number; 152/2008

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APPENDIX 1; Other HER on the Ilchester to Combwich Roman Road

Site Name	HER Number	Grid Ref	Description
Roman road remains, Puriton Hill, Puriton	10714	ST 322 411 (ST 34 SW) ST 323 410 (ST 34 SW)	The ridge road was sectioned in 1971, during work on the M5 motorway. Roughly laid metalling of small Lias stone up to 0.2m thick and 2 to 3m wide was observed, partly underlying the existing lane, and the southern hedge, both of which had disturbed it. No ditches or finds were uncovered.
Roman burials, Green Walk, Somerton Erleigh	54533	ST 50050 28280 (ST 52 NW)	'Ancient burials found about 1889 and Col William Pinney had head and foot stones placed in the positions the burials were found. On this large mound close against the Roman road. Said to have be 6 skeletons.'
Watching Brief (2001), A39, Chilton Polden	18033	ST 3834 3849 (ST 33 NE)	A watching brief during the construction of a new water supply main uncovered an earlier phase of the Ilchester to Combwich Roman road. Metalling, probably Roman (PRN11831) on the same alignment as the modern road.