TVAS Update - Summer 2000

Medieval Buildings at Quedgeley, Gloucester

Evaluation (trial) trenches indicated archaeology was confined to three areas within a large site at the former RAF Quedgeley in Gloucestershire. A strategy was devised which targeted these areas for detailed excavation prior to re-development. The work on these selected areas identified a medieval farming settlement with the remains of two buildings surrounded by a network of field boundaries which were reorganized on at least one occasion. The buildings were constructed with limestone rubble footings, which would have supported lighter walls made from wood or cob (a mix of clay, gravel and straw commonly used for rural buildings in the area).

for Entec UK Ltd

Heading

Text

for Entec UK Ltd
TVAS Update - Autumn 2001

Iron Age Horcott

At Totterdown Lane, Horcott, near Fairford in Gloucestershire, a large area excavation has revealed extensive Iron Age and Roman settlement and land-use.

The archaeological remains cover 5.5 hectares. Ditches (each perhaps accompanied by a bank or hedge) marked out fields which were devoted either to the living (round-houses, rubbish pits), to the dead (clusters of cremation burials and inhumations), or to farming (blank areas!).

Although the site does not appear to have been especially rich, it was probably occupied over a long period and so the excavation produced considerable quantities of finds, mostly animal bones and pottery, with only the very occasional fine piece, such as a single brooch or glass bead (left).

The sole of a leather shoe (left) was retrieved from a waterlogged pit with some wood and Roman pottery. It comprises several layers of leather with hobnails, most still in place. It would have had a separate leather upper and have been laced with thongs. The shoe was worn by someone with a foot as small as a modern child’s size 11 (19cm long). It has been conserved by The Leather Conservation Centre, University College, Northampton.
been conserved by The Leather Conservation Centre, University College, Northampton.

Commissioned by Hanson Aggregates

King's Arms, Amersham

The Kings Arms, in the High Street, was surveyed to record the history of this important Listed Building. The inn was first mentioned in 1756 when a licence was granted to the innkeeper, James Wilson, but the main part of the building dates to the 15th century, with extensive 16th-century modifications.

Old Amersham lay a day’s ride from London on one of only two old roads to Buckinghamshire. In 1637, this road carried the greatest volume of traffic into London, with 33 carriage services a week. The first stage coaches appeared in the early 17th century, bringing yet more custom for innkeepers. However, the heyday of the coaching inn came in the 18th century and it was later in that century that the Harness Room (on the right in the photograph above) was constructed, to provide facilities appropriate for stage coaches, including stabling and a hayloft.

Building survey commissioned by Mr John Jennison

National Archaeology Day

Saturday the 21st of July saw TVAS participate in National Archaeology Day, in conjunction with the Museum of Reading. The Council for British Archaeology devised this to encourage public interaction with all aspects of archaeological activity.

TVAS and Reading Museum designed a series of activities for both children and adults. A mini-excavation was prepared with real objects. Once this material was ‘excavated’ it had to be washed and marked, as it would be from true excavations. Most of this material was pottery, therefore the sequence culminated in the making of pots following prehistoric techniques.

The day was a great success, attracting over 250 people in five hours, with feedback from parents and children demonstrating a great deal of interest in archaeology.
Mystery find from Oxfordshire

This intriguing find was discovered whilst excavating a medieval pit at The Orchard, Brighthampton, in Oxfordshire. It is a strap distributor and would have been used to attach three straps, either on a horse harness or on a man's belt.

The date is more ambiguous. This type of fitting has been found in Saxon and Viking contexts but has been used since the Iron Age. Opinions have been sought from museum curators and specialists around the country and all have agreed it is a fascinating piece.

And does it show a man's face or a horse's head?

Commissioned by Bower Mapson

Medieval Reading

At Castle Street, in the heart of Reading, medieval tenements have been uncovered. Traces of buildings and rubbish pits have provided information illustrating the everyday lives of the 12th- to 13th-century occupants of the town.

One of the conclusions to emerge is the distinct difference in lifestyle between the townsfolk and the monks, by comparison with the evidence previously unearthed by excavations on the site of the Abbey. The Castle Street site has yielded a much narrower range of pottery types, for example, indicating less frequent trading contact with areas beyond Reading. Evidence also appears to suggest a different balance to their diets: the Abbey sites produced more pig and sheep bones (pork, bacon and mutton) compared to more cattle (beef) at Castle Street.

Most intriguingly, at the rear (south) of the site, a wide, deep channel represented the ancient course of a river flowing parallel to Castle Street. The first signs of silting in this channel can be dated to the late 11th or early 12th century. Later, perhaps in the middle of the 12th century, it was more deliberately filled in. This may have been the previous course of what became the Holy Brook, which is known to have been diverted and culverted by, at the latest, AD 1164 when the Abbey was consecrated.
Traces of a medieval building (mainly beaten-earth floor layers) lay on the land reclaimed after the infilling of this channel.

Commissioned by Leadbitter Construction

Medieval tanning pits found at Morland Brewery, Abingdon

Excavation at the site of the former Morland Brewery in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, discovered complex deposits representing medieval (11th–15th century) occupation on the south side of Ock Street. This adds to information from the north side of the street, at Enock’s Coal Yard (no. 75) and the Mr Warrick’s Arms Hotel and The Crown public house (nos 83–88). Together, these excavations have revealed that medieval occupation extended further along this main street of the town than was previously thought. This suggests a westward growth in the early medieval period (11th-13th centuries), by comparison with the preceding Saxon settlement. The first trench, near the roadside, revealed two substantial buildings represented by a series of earthen floors and massive limestone walls. One was constructed in the 13th century and the other was probably in use until the 17th or 18th centuries. Later phases included further walls, brick and flagstone floors, a well, a fireplace and a chimney-stack. A number of large, earlier medieval storage or rubbish pits were found beneath the lowest floors.

Other trenches, further back from the road, uncovered large numbers of pits that had been backfilled with rubbish. The majority of these were medieval and later, but one was filled with Roman material.

Quantities of horns and foot bones from cattle and sheep were found, suggesting that some of the pits had been used for the processing of animal products, possibly the tanning of leather.

A trench next to the river Ock included 14th-century pits with the remains of a delicate timber and mortar lining, and others contained offcuts of leather preserved in the waterlogged conditions.

The earliest discoveries on the site were flint tools from the late Mesolithic period, c. 5000 BC.
TVAS Update - Summer 2002

Life and Death in 1st century Kent

Open area excavation at Sittingbourne, Kent, uncovered an extensive Iron Age and Roman field system including two phases of droveway (a trackway used for moving livestock) with field boundary ditches running off either side. The basic Iron Age system was remodelled in the 1st century AD (around the time of the Roman conquest) with major modifications on one side of the droveway, but retaining the original layout on the other. Roman features include a corn-drying oven and what may have been a clay quarry pit. Roman ditches subdivide the existing land plots without changing the overall plan. This essential continuity shows how little impact the Roman conquest must have had on everyday life for ordinary farmers in the area, at least for the first few generations.

A small group of cremation burials along one of the boundaries also dates to the 1st century. The edges of fields were in practical terms 'marginal' land that could be used for non-productive purposes, but may also have been regarded as symbolic of the boundaries of life, and ideally suited for specifically religious and funerary uses in both the Iron Age and Roman periods.

for Bloor Homes

Aylesbury-Chalgrove pipeline

At first glance, mile after mile of pipe-trench might not seem the most promising place to
conduct research. But the fact that a pipeline describes a random line (in an archaeological sense) across the landscape means that it provides an opportunity to examine areas that archaeologists might otherwise ignore. By directing attention to new areas, pipe-line projects have significantly increased our estimates of the density of known archaeological sites, and are beginning to disprove some assumptions about where prehistoric occupation can be expected. Monitoring the laying of a gas pipe from Aylesbury (Oxon) to Chalgrove (Bucks) revealed several unsuspected sites, including prehistoric, Roman and Saxon settlements. Here, traces of a circular Iron Age building appear for the first time.

for Transco

**Catherine Wheel Hotel**

Building survey can reveal fascinating detail hidden in the fabric of historic buildings. The Catherine Wheel Hotel in Henley-on-Thames (Oxon) has an impressive Georgian façade, but is known to be considerably earlier. The property is recorded in documents from as early as 1499. A detailed survey revealed that parts of the original structure were constructed at right angles to the present frontage, and set well back from the street. What might appear today to be wings added to the rear of the main building have been revealed as among the earliest parts of the frame. Later additions include store-rooms, possibly for a now lost malthouse, and stables, with visitor accommodation above, added in the 18th century to cater to the rising trade from coach travel.

for JD Wetherspoon plc

**National Archaeology Day**

Following the success of last year’s National Archaeology Day, TVAS has continued with projects aimed at the promotion of archaeology within the community. For a second successive year, TVAS teamed up with the Museum of Reading and the Ure Museum of Greek Pottery at Reading University to develop activities encompassing the archaeological discipline. Through the use of real objects and enjoyment, National Archaeology Day is continuing to prove that people are still interested in getting dirty.

Not all archaeology deals with the distant past. In May, with the help of Bewley Homes,
an open day was held at excavations at Gas Works Road in Reading. This site housed part of the Huntley and Palmner biscuit factory, an extremely important part of Reading's more recent history. This Open Day represented an opportunity for the local community to explore the foundations of the factory, which naturally evoked vivid memories for many.

The Open Day also assisted the excavators, as additional information from the public allowed us to develop a fuller picture of the site. Attracting over 100 people, and interest from the local press and media, the open day delighted all who attended.

**From medieval village to industrial metropolis**

Complex urban stratigraphy at High Road, Whetstone (Barnet) preserved details of the history of this area from the 13th century to the present. Whetstone seems to have leapt straight from a humble village, little more than a wayside stop on the Great North Road, into part of London's urban sprawl, with no intermediate stages of development. This kind of site requires painstaking recording, but the value of this is seen when details of the medieval layout can be disentangled below 17th and 18th century buildings.

*for Boots Properties plc*

**Early Hunters in Hampshire**

In a gravel quarry at Somerley, Hampshire, evaluation revealed a dense scatter of over 400 struck flints, from the Upper Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) period. The finds included distinctive 'long blades', backed blades and other tools. Sites of this period are particularly rare in Britain.

In a second phase of work, 949 tiny test pits were dug at 1m intervals to test the extent of the flint scatter, which was confirmed to be no more than 100 sq m, allowing the follow-up detailed excavation to be precisely targetted. These final excavations, just before Christmas, recovered a further 500 flint artefacts.

By meticulously recording the precise position of all artefacts, the archaeologists learnt far more about the nature of the site and its age. The site was occupied long enough for local flint to be knapped into blades and used in tasks such as hide-skinning. From the
range of tools found, it is clear that their prehistoric owners had hunted animals and processed their carcasses here.

Microwear analysis of the tools (which can show what caused the wear marks) may yield further clues about what was going on at the site.

Scientific dating using Optically Stimulated Luminescence and the related technique of Thermoluminescence will provide a precise age for the site. It may turn out to be the same age as a site not far down-river, at Hengistbury Head, near the mouth of the Avon, which dated to 12,500 years ago. If so, this site may be the result of a short trip upstream to replenish flint supplies and hunt fresh game.

for Tarmac Southern Ltd

**Bronze Age barrow cemetery**

Aerial photographs showed a group of circular cropmarks in a quarry site at Ibsley in Hampshire. On excavation, these turned out to be substantial ring ditches, all that remained of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery. The original barrow mounds had long since been ploughed away, leaving only the ditches behind. In the centre of one of the rings a cremation burial had been placed in an urn, inside another urn, set upside down into the ground. A number of large, empty pits appear to represent holes from tree-clearance, suggesting that the site of the cemetery had to be cleared of forest before the burial monuments were built. Small groups of round barrows, each covering a single grave, were common features of the Bronze Age landscape. This contrasts with the practice of the preceding Neolithic period of multiple burials under a single isolated long barrow.

Archaeologists see this as an important step in social development, marking a move away from rituals celebrating 'the ancestors' as a homogenous group, towards a more personal commemoration of the deceased individual.

for Tarmac Southern Ltd
TVAS Update - Spring 2004

Thames Valley Archaeological Services is growing! We now have an office in Ireland, where we are currently involved in a large scale road scheme for Clare County Council on behalf of the National Roads Authority. TVAS Ireland Ltd can be contacted at Ahish, Ballinruan, Co. Clare, Republic of Ireland.

Tel: 00353 656 823 533. Fax 00353 656 890 980. Email: tvas@eircom.net

Recent Work

A selection of some of the more interesting sites we have worked on recently.

Middle Bronze Age in Dorset

An excavation carried out at Chard Junction Quarry, Thorncombe in Dorset revealed a roughly elliptical enclosure ditch dating to the Middle Bronze Age. A small quantity of pottery was retrieved from the ditch as well as over 120 pieces of struck chert.

Several features were associated with the enclosure including a pit which contained two urns, thought to be food storage vessels. Several other pits were noted within the enclosure, and what may have been a hearth.

Towards the eastern edge of the enclosure was a possible roundhouse composed of five postholes.
Death and Burial on the Isle of Dogs

At Yabsley Street, on the Isle of Dogs, immediately above the Blackwall tunnel, a skeleton was discovered while monitoring of the removal of a peat layer across the site during an evaluation exercise.

The skeleton was in very poor condition but was identifiable with its head to the top of the picture and its knees drawn up towards the chest. The body (possibly that of a woman) had been placed in a rectangular grave which was lined with wood.

Associated with the burial was a very fragmentary early Neolithic pot and a flint knife.

Other artefacts from the site included small sherds of pottery, a polished flint axe, an arrowhead and several pieces of flint waste, known as debitage, from flint working. A radiocarbon date from pieces of the wooden grave lining gave a date of approximately 4000BC, which makes this, as far as we are aware, the earliest human burial ever found in London.

Robert de Waudari's Castle?

A small excavation at the former Luton Bus Depot discovered a substantial ditch dating to the medieval period.

The V-shaped ditch was over 6m across and 3m deep, suggesting its main purpose was most likely defensive. A combination of factors -- the scale of the ditch, the dating of pottery from the excavation and documentary sources -- suggest that the feature is part of an Anglo-Norman castle.

Most early Norman defenses took a very similar form, known as ‘motte and bailey’. They would consist of a very steep, artificial mound (motte) surrounded by a ditch, with a larger flat adjoining area, the ‘bailey’, which was also usually ditched. The motte was in most cases a circular structure, with its very steep sides making it a defensive
strongpoint. The bailey was usually more rectangular and could house various structures such as stables, smithies and stores.

The majority of pottery retrieved from the ditch dates to the 12th-13th century. It seems no coincidence therefore that a castle is known from history here. Initially a wooden castle was constructed in AD 1139 by Robert de Waudari, a mercenary for King Stephen, for the war against Matilda, and pulled down a mere 15 years later in AD 1154 under the terms of a truce. The motte however had survived long enough to give Castle Street its name.

The evidence is by no means conclusive, and we cannot state for certain that the ditch relates to de Waudari’s castle. However if the ditch was part of some defensive complex it must surely have served its purpose well.

*Commissioned by Bride Hall Developments*

**A medieval Oxfordshire town**

An excavation carried out at St Mary’s Street in Wallingford revealed pits and deposits in a sequence stretching back as far as the 11th century. The site is located within the historic core of Wallingford, a town founded as a burh by King Alfred in the late Saxon period. The massive defensive earthworks that still surround the town were erected in the late 9th century as part of Alfred’s system of defence against the Danes. It is likely that the rectilinear street grid of the town was laid out at the same time, and St Mary's Street is thought to be part of this original layout.

During the 11th century the street system was realigned slightly, due to the establishment of the castle and St Martin's Street may have been established as part of this realigned main north-south routeway. The site lies between the town’s two main thoroughfares and therefore is clearly a site of some importance. The excavations revealed landscaping during the medieval period with levelling layers dating from the 11th and 12th centuries, containing a wealth of artefacts, mainly pottery, as well as 16th century structures with associated yards, and later post-medieval pits including a cess pit.

*for Pettitts*
Some interesting artefacts

Recent finds include this intact Bronze Age urn, used in a cremation burial from Ibsley in Hampshire and this distinctive chocolate-coloured flint arrowhead from Kempsford in Gloucestershire. (See top-right for photos.)
TVAS Update - Autumn 2005

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for Entec UK Ltd

Saxon Wallingford

TVAS has been particularly active over recent years in the Saxon and medieval borough of Wallingford, located on the banks of the Thames in Oxfordshire. Several projects in the last few years have examined different aspects of the town, from the central layout to the earliest defences which formed part of King Alfred’s programme of defence against the Danes.

In one recent project, a small excavation was carried out prior to construction of new classrooms at a primary school. The original construction of the school revealed 11 Saxon inhumation burials with further burials, both inhumations and cremations, coming to light in the 1920s and 1930s. Further burials were therefore anticipated in this project.
During the fieldwork human bones were discovered in a small grave cut into the base of a ditch. These were the remains of an infant, perhaps 2 to 6 months old, buried without any grave goods. A second deposit comprised a pottery urn but did not contain any burial remains.

*for Oxfordshire County Council*

**Ibsley Quarry, Ringwood**

Ongoing fieldwork at Ibsley Quarry in the Avon Valley just north of Ringwood, Hampshire has recorded further evidence of Bronze Age and Roman settlement and land use in the valley. Excavations taking place over several hectares of gravel terrace have revealed a number of Bronze Age post-built round houses, four-post storage structures, ring ditches representing levelled burial mounds and various other rubbish pits and postholes. An uncommon and exciting discovery was that of a small hoard of bronze metalwork comprising a decorated bracelet and two axes.

The focus of Roman occupation has not yet been identified but a range of boundary features, rubbish pits and a stone-lined well have been unearthed.

*for Tarmac Southern*

**TVAS Consultancy**

The excavations described above document the final stages of archaeological intervention in development projects where there was no realistic practical alternative to the excavation and recording of archaeological deposits. Yet a significant proportion of our work takes place where the alternatives to complex and time-consuming full excavation can be developed. For example, the archaeology within our historic towns and cities is rich and complex and excavation is often difficult to integrate with construction programmes. The two examples described here document projects where informed design was used to facilitate redevelopment, but with minimal effects of the necessary groundworks on buried archaeological deposits.

**Bathwick, Bath**
Bathwick is a suburb of the historic Roman and Georgian city of Bath and the importance of the city has been highlighted with its designation as a World Heritage Site. Archaeology and heritage are clearly significant issues in any redevelopment proposals within the city.

The site at Bathwick was beyond the Roman town walls, but as an initial desktop study indicated, within an area used both for extra-mural settlement and burial in Roman times. Field evaluation (trial trenching) provided two key pieces of information to inform the design plans. Firstly, it found no evidence of human burial and therefore the strictures of the Burial Act did not apply. Secondly it showed that the significant archaeological deposits were deeply buried by fairly modern dump deposits. A scheme was therefore drawn up whereby the main components of the foundation design were kept above archaeologically sensitive levels. The necessary deep foundations, which had to impact the archaeologically significant levels were kept to a bare minimum. This design, incorporating only a minimal requirement for archaeological monitoring of superficial deposits, allowed a planning consent to be obtained and provided protection for the heritage of one of the country’s most historic cities.

for Rectory Homes

Mistrals, Little Minster Street, Winchester

Unlike the Bathwick project, the site of the former Minstrals bar lies in the historic heart of the city of Winchester, which has a well documented history of more or less uninterrupted urban settlement from late Iron Age times to the present day. This history is represented by the formation of archaeological layers several metres thick with modern deposits overlying.

For this site, the archaeological potential was not in doubt as part of the site had been investigated when the basement for Minstrals had been built in the 1970s. In this instance, field evaluation was able to confirm the survival of archaeological deposits on other parts of the site and again provided information as to the depth at which significant deposits were first encountered. The evaluation also confirmed the survival of Roman deposits beneath the floor of the existing basement.

A similar design solution to Bathwick was employed with the main components of the
foundation design kept above the archaeologically significant levels and with deep foundations, which impacted these levels kept to a minimum. A small archaeological watching brief was maintained on superficial groundworks. The opportunity was also taken to excavate in the positions to be occupied by deep piles located within the old basement area, as unusually, on this occasion, these archaeological levels were accessible. This fieldwork revealed the presence of Roman floor surfaces with early prehistoric deposits beneath.

for Bach Homes
TVAS News: Hitches Lane, Fleet, Hampshire

Archaeologists working at what will become a new housing development north-west of Fleet have been sharing glimpses into prehistoric and Roman life with visitors from the North-east Hampshire Historical and Archaeological Society and Calthorpe Park School.

Some of the earliest evidence dates from the Bronze Age, 3–4000 years ago. A 30m-diameter circle of large timber posts stood on the high ground, surrounding a smaller circle of just five posts. Associated with this the archaeologists found Bronze Age pottery and a Neolithic axe, which must already have been centuries old when it was buried. This may represent a meeting place for the Bronze Age population from many miles around.

Near the timber circles are ditches that marked the boundaries of Bronze Age fields. In one of these, the Bronze Age farmer had laid a complete pot known as a Food Vessel. Inside the pot was a flint blade. This could have been an offering in thanks for the fruitful use of the field.

Moving forwards in time, there is evidence of Roman fields and a Roman timber building, probably a barn. Just outside it was a small furnace. When the building went out of use, a layer of dark earth accumulated over the top, packed with finds left behind when the site was abandoned.

The site was being investigated by Thames Valley Archaeological Services working on behalf of the developer, Berkeley Homes.
TVAS News: North Bersted, Bognor Regis

Excavations, led by Andy Taylor and Andrew Weale, have been taking place in advance of a new housing development in North Bersted (near Bognor Regis) on behalf of Berkeley Homes (Southern) Limited and Persimmon Homes (South Coast) Limited. The archaeological work is taking place as a requirement of the planning process with the archaeological officer of West Sussex County Council advising the District Council as to what is required.

These excavations have revealed Bronze Age boundary ditches and occupation, a small hoard of four Middle Bronze Age bronze axes (palstaves), an Iron Age roundhouse and a Roman building, set amongst fields.
TVAS News: Kendrew Quadrangle, St John's College, Oxford

An archaeological team led by Sean Wallis from TVAS is close to finishing its excavations in Kendrew Quadrangle, formerly Queen Elizabeth House, St John's College, between St Giles and Blackhall Road, Oxford.

Most of the archaeological deposits found date from medieval into early post-medieval times, but the chief interest of the site lay deeper buried, in the form of human remains. At least twenty individuals had been buried together in a mass grave. At the moment we think they might all be male, but detailed analysis will be needed to confirm this. This is clearly not an organized cemetery, nor is it a collection of disarticulated bone such as a charnel pit; complete or near-complete, articulated skeletons form the majority of the remains, but all bundled into the ground together: and therein lies the mystery.

The human burials are at present undated, except that they lie beneath the medieval levels on the site, so they are probably Saxon or conceivably Roman. They were buried with no grave goods or finds of any sort, so dating will have to rely on the bones themselves. Radiocarbon dating should establish their date definitively, but this process will take several weeks or months to complete, and in any case will not provide a precise date, only a range of possible dates.

For the moment, it is tempting to speculate that they may be related to a known slaughter of Danes resident in Oxford on St Brice’s Day (November 13) AD1002 or reprisals by the Danes when they attacked and burnt the city in 1009. Should the carbon dating show that these dates are within the possible range, further scientific analysis (eg., DNA testing) might be able to establish if the remains are those of natives or foreigners.
Above these are features dating from at least the 12th century in an area of the site which would once have been garden and yard areas for medieval buildings which fronted onto St Giles. Most of these features are pits backfilled with rubbish but other features such as hearths and ovens, a well, cess pits and boundary ditches are present. All of the features are providing a wealth of artefacts mostly of pottery and animal bone. Above these again, the foundations of a range of stone built post-medieval buildings and associated yard and floor surfaces have been uncovered, which seem to relate to structures shown on 17th century maps of Oxford.

Underlying these later deposits is a massive ditch containing Early Bronze Age pottery in its deeper fills, and Roman pottery on top: the graves lie on top of this ditch.

Planning permission has been granted by Oxford City Council to redevelop the site for new college accommodation. A planning condition attached to the consent required the excavation of the archaeological deposits present on the site prior to the new construction work. The fieldwork is being carried out by TVAS on behalf of the College.

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TVAS News: Faringdon, Oxfordshire

Excavations in advance of mineral extraction revealed a small causewayed ring ditch and two ditches of Iron Age and Roman date. The ring ditch was probably dug at the end of the Early Bronze Age with a radiocarbon determination of 1691–1530 cal BC on charcoal from the lower fill of the ditch. Middle Bronze Age re-use of the monument took place with a crouched inhumation burial providing a radiocarbon determination of 1413–1290 cal BC. Inhumation burials of Middle Bronze Age date are most unusual at a time when cremation burial in urns was the norm. Finds included Early and Middle Bronze Age pottery and a deliberately broken bronze rapier blade. A residual later Mesolithic microlith was recovered pointing to some earlier use of the landscape.
TVAS News: St. Mary's School, Wantage

The first phase of archaeological works carried out at St Mary’s School, Wantage on behalf of Berkeley Homes Ltd during spring 2008. The excavations revealed evidence for human activity ranging from the Mesolithic to the Medieval period. Most of the activity was focused around the late Saxon to Medieval period. The features included boundary ditches, rubbish pits, a medieval well and possibly a large timber built structure. The finds ranged from Mesolithic flint blades, Roman Samian ware pottery, Saxon and Medieval pottery. The highlights among the finds include a Saxon coin from the reign of King Burgred (AD 852-874) who was the last independent king of Mercia. It is a type D coin and was minted late in the reign of this unfortunate king, who abdicated and had to flee from the Vikings. At the bottom of the well a complete Medieval jug (Boarstall Ware) which appears to have been dropped in by an individual using the well during the 13th century. Intriguingly a single crouched female burial of unknown date at present was found. No grave goods were found with her and she appears to have been under 20 when she died. The date and the causes of death are at present unknown, but future analysis will hopefully reveal her interesting story. The second phase of work is due to begin in August 2008.
TVAS News: Kendrew Quadrangle: The henge beneath the bodies

Recently, a ditch discovered back in March has now been identified as being part of a very rare monument type called a "henge", which was created in the late Neolithic and Bronze Age (c. 2300 BC) round the same time as Stonehenge. The ditch excavated here is up to 8m across and at least 2.5m deep, curves only very slightly and based on the small part of the plan so far recovered, would have enclosed an area of at least 150m diameter, encompassing all of what is now Keble College and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

This discovery adds considerable interest to cropmark evidence (visible from the air) in The Parks, already well known since the 1970s, showing three large circular ditches, and other features. These are usually thought to represent levelled Bronze Age round barrows (tumuli) but may be too large (40–50m across) for that interpretation; further, smaller circles more likely to be barrows surround them, in The Parks, the University Science Area and Sackler Street. Several of these have been partially excavated in recent times. If the ditch in Blackhall Road is indeed a henge, this points to an even more significant ritual focus in this area.

About halfway up the fill in the ditch was a turfline, showing that the ditch had settled, partly filled, long enough for grass to grow. On this was set a hearth associated with Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age Beaker pottery. To this date three deer antlers have been found in the lower ditch. These had been used as picks during the digging of the ditch and discarded (or reverentially offered to the earth they had just transformed) once it was finished. Both the hearth and the antler will be able to be dated by radiocarbon analysis which should give an accurate date for construction and use of the monument.
This is the same site that produced medieval occupation and the mass grave, thought to date to around AD1000, but these are totally unrelated to the prehistoric ditch. Click here to see the news article about the mass grave.
TVAS News: North Berstead warrior burial, Bognor Regis

Archaeologists from TVAS have unearthed the grave of a warrior who died at around the time of Caesar's Gallic Wars, in the 50s BC.

The team, led by Andy Taylor, has been excavating in advance of a new housing development on behalf of Berkeley Homes (Southern) Limited and Persimmon Homes (South Coast) Limited.

These excavations have revealed Bronze age boundary ditches and occupation, a small hoard of four Middle Bronze Age bronze axes (palstaves), an Iron Age roundhouse and a Roman building, set amongst fields. But the chief interest lies in the finding of a rich, isolated burial, which is not part of a larger cemetery and is not otherwise distinguished from the rest of the site. The deceased, a mature male more than 30 years old, was laid out in a grave and was accompanied by grave goods. These included three large, complete, pottery jars placed at the end of the grave, presumably containing offerings to the gods or food for the journey into the afterlife, an iron knife and several items made of bronze. One appears to be a cavalry helmet and the other a shield boss. Also present are two bronze latticework sheets highly decorated, perhaps used to cover the shield; they seem to be too big to be elaborate cheek-pieces for the helmet, but that is another possibility. The burial and its grave goods seem to have been placed in a large coffin or casket bound by iron hoops with a further iron framed structure placed on top. The bronze objects are not well preserved and have been lifted in blocks of soil by a specialist for careful excavation and conservation in the laboratory prior to their study in detail. The provisional date of the burial from the associated pottery, which seems to have been made specially for the funeral, and may have its origins in Normandy,
indicates that it took place at the very beginning of what archaeologists term the Late Iron Age, perhaps around 50BC.

The burial does not appear to be so rich as some from the 1st century BC to 1st century AD in south-east England, but shares similarities with famous graves of Late Iron Age date from Welwyn and St Albans (Herts); Colchester (Essex); and Aylesford (Kent), and less close similarities with others from the continent. All of these are likely to have been graves of princes or chiefs (or, possibly, priests) but all are dated later than this site appears to be. It is also unclear if our warrior was himself from Gaul, or simply had acquired pottery from Normandy on his campaigns.

The Iron Age people of this area were in essence pro-Roman, and the Emperor Claudius, a century later, launched an invasion, initially, to restore the local king Verica to his throne. Our deceased does not seem rich enough to have been a king, but his weaponry, and likely date of death, suggest he may have been one of the mercenaries Caesar claims were accustomed to fight for the Gauls against him, which he used as one of his pretexts for his abortive invasions of England. Cross-channel links of this rather shadowy kind have long been known, but this grave is one of the most exciting pieces of evidence yet found confirming the personal nature of these connections.

The archaeological work is taking place as a requirement of the planning process on the advice of the archaeological officer of West Sussex County Council.
TVAS News: Wexham, Slough

The excavations, on the future site of residential care facilities in Wexham, Slough, have revealed several periods of activity on the site spanning both the prehistoric and historic periods. The most significant discoveries comprise the finding of an Middle Iron Age enclosure with single internal roundhouse, and two post-built hall houses of Early Saxon date. Roman activity was limited to a single ditch, possibly one or two pits and postholes, and residual pottery finds. One or two rolled struck flints derived from the underlying gravel are possibly of Palaeolithic date. The Middle Iron Age enclosure is an unusual discovery as similar monument types for this period are either absent for the region or known only for poorly documented sites. As a monument type, they are not common or typical for the period as a whole. The site may also take on added significance for providing evidence of an extension to the chronology of post-Deverel-Rimbury pottery in the region beyond its usual 5th century BC end-date. By way of contrast the Saxon structures, whilst typical of one form of Saxon site for this period, with doubtless many more similar sites to be found, are of interest here due to their rarity in this region.

Carbon-14 dates were obtained from environmental samples that were collected from excavated features. These enabled us to give approximate dates to the Middle Iron Age enclosure (Ditch 101, terminal 232), the Middle Iron Age roundhouse (Structure 104, posthole 220) and both Early Saxon post-built hall houses (Structure 102, posthole 301 and Structure 103, posthole 405). The results were as follows (see the plan to the left for the locations of the features):

Charcoal, Structure 104, posthole 400

Calibrated ages (Two Sigma Range): cal BC 602–413
Calibrated ages (Two Sigma Range): cal BC 602–413
Probability: 52.5%

Charcoal, Ditch 101, terminal 232

Calibrated ages (Two Sigma Range): cal BC 362–270
Probability: 56.3%

Charcoal, Structure 102, posthole 301

Calibrated ages (Two Sigma Range): cal AD 550–643
Probability: 95.4%

Charcoal, Structure 103, posthole 40

Calibrated ages (Two Sigma Range): cal AD 505–595
Probability: 59.1%
TVAS News: Report Archive Online

We are currently working on scanning, databasing and uploading all of our unpublished fieldwork reports from 1988 to the present. Phase I (1988-2003) has now been completed and is available in our Online Report Archive for browsing and downloading the pdf reports.

At this point the archive available consists of the majority of our unpublished evaluation, excavation, watching-brief and desk-based assessment reports from 1988 to 2003. They can be viewed by administrative area or year. Year is the date the project was commissioned, not necessarily when the actual work took place. Desk-based assessments are only presented when fieldwork subsequently takes place. Projects which are published are not reproduced here, see our publications list. Similarly, projects intended for publication but are either in draft report form, post-excavation report form or in preparation are listed in our publications list. These reports are available on request.
TVAS News: Itchen Farm Park and Ride, Winchester

Archaeological works carried out at Itchen Farm, Winchester on behalf of Hampshire County Council during autumn 2008 and winter 2009 have revealed evidence of activity from the middle Iron Age through to the Romano-British period. Most of this activity occurred during the late Iron Age and early Romano-British period. The Iron Age features took the form of a large enclosure defined by a V-shaped ditch which, in some places, was 2.5m deep. Parts of this enclosure was quarried and then later re-cut during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, the Romano-British period. A number of field boundary ditches dating to the Iron Age were also excavated and many of these were, again, re-cut during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

The Roman activity on the site was represented by a number of ditches and pits which yielded a considerable amount of pottery, tile and several quern stones, used for grinding grain. One of these querns had a phallus carved into it. A Roman trackway complete with wheel ruts was also discovered cutting across part of the Iron Age field system. In addition to this, two graves, possibly dating from the Saxon period, were excavated and more human remains were found in the Iron Age enclosure.
TVAS News: Itchen Farm Park and Ride, Winchester

A child’s burial was excavated in the site of the new Winchester Park and Ride at Itchen Farm. The child was placed in a crouched position lying on its right side facing north. It was aged between 5 and 10 years old when it died and its grave contained no grave goods. At present no radiocarbon dating has been attempted on the burial but it is thought to date to the period between 2200 and 100 BC.
TVAS News: Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries

The director of Thames Valley Archaeological Services has recently been elected as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.
TVAS News: Neolithic and Roman occupation at Arlington Way, Thetford

Detailed archaeological excavation in advance of development of the site for housing has just been completed.

These works uncovered the nucleus of a Roman settlement on the banks of the river Thet, dating from the 3rd/4th century AD, which included the remains of at least four timber structures together with a more substantial structure floored with crushed chalk. When this building went out of use, a layer of dark earth accumulated over the top, packed with finds left behind when the site was abandoned.

Close by was an extensive midden deposited in a natural hollow, which contained substantial quantities of occupation debris including fine and coarse ware pottery, animal bone, quern stones, coins, lead weights, copper alloy objects, iron agricultural and domestic implements and worked bone implements.

Small enclosures and land divisions were laid out around the settlement, possibly for livestock control, and other evidence for agriculture came in the form of plough marks below one of the Roman buildings. Previous work immediately adjacent to the site had suggested an early Roman phase of occupation of 1st/2nd century and some of these features may relate to this phase of Roman settlement.

An exciting discovery was that of a worked flint scatter in the northern part of the site on the edge of an ancient channel of the Thet, this being buried by drift and colluvial
deposits. This assemblage appears to have Neolithic traits and represents early use of this riparian area.
TVAS News: Online Report Archive Completed

20 years of TVAS history is now online!

We have just completed the scanning, databasing and uploading of our entire archive of previously unpublished fieldwork reports from 1988 to 2008. These are available in PDF format for browsing and downloading in our Online Report Archive.

They can be viewed by administrative area or year or searched using the text search box provided. Year is the date the project was commissioned, not necessarily when the actual work took place. The maps showing the sites in each administrative area may not show all those listed below the map due to technical limitations. Desk-based assessments are only presented when fieldwork subsequently takes place. Projects which are published are not reproduced here, see our publications list. Similarly, projects intended for publication but are either in draft report form, post-excavation report form or in preparation are listed in our publications list. These reports are available on request.

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TVAS News: TVAS South - Open for Business

A new branch of Thames Valley Archaeological Services has recently opened. TVAS South, based in Brighton, covers projects and clients based in Kent, East Sussex, Brighton, West Sussex and the Isle of Wight.

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TVAS News: Burnt mounds at Dryleaze Farm, Shorncote, Gloucestershire

Recent archaeological excavations at Dryleaze Farm in 2008 and 2009 in advance of gravel extraction revealed a range of archaeological deposits, mostly typical of Iron Age occupation found on the terraces of the Upper Thames. It is though, the discovery of a more unusual monument type, discovery that has prompted this note.

This particular part of the extraction area lies adjacent to an old river channel, now infilled with silt and peat. It probably last flowed as a channel in about 1500 BC before changes to drainage patterns (rivers move!) caused it to block off and infill. But this is geology. What makes the site of interest (to archaeologists) is the presence here of monuments called “burnt mounds”. There are five of them, created, perhaps successively over several generations. These monuments are typically simple heaps of fire-cracked flint, 5-10m across and often to be found with a crescentic plan. They are usually to be found close to water. In southern Britain, they are now only to be found 0.3-0.5m high - reduced by ploughing. These sites are not especially common in Southern Britain and are rare in Gloucestershire but their big brother examples, of which there are quite literally thousands, are to be found in Highland Britain. In Ireland where they are called Fulachta Fiadh and can be 2m high or more. link to Ireland

The reason for the distinctive crescent form is that the focus of attention was a water-containing trough with which hot stone is used to boil the water it contained. When the thermal shock has caused the stone to fracture into unusable pieces, it was simply dumped adjacent to the trough. At a time in later prehistory when sheet metalwork had not been invented, experiments have shown that the use of hot stones to boil a large volume of water in a trough was quite efficient.
It is thought that they are the remains of communal cooking places. There is very little archaeological evidence to support this but we are fortunate in that old Irish literature (which stretches back to early Christian times, and perhaps beyond) describes them thus.

The examples at Shorncliffe here are likely to be of Bronze Age date, c.1500 BC but radiocarbon dates are awaited.
TVAS News: Church Farm, Thame, Oxfordshire

Archaeologists from Thames Valley Archaeological Services have recently been engaged in the excavation of a Bronze Age ring ditch and other features of Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman date at Church Farm, just north of Thame, Oxfordshire. The work has been carried out on behalf of Thame Town Council in advance of the construction of a new community football club with a new club house and a series of pitches.

Several areas were opened up for excavation to target features identified in the results of previous aerial, geophysical and archaeological surveys. The main area of investigation was the ring ditch. This circular monument measured an unusually large 45m in diameter and excavation showed its ditch to be c.1.2m deep and 4m wide. There were no entrance gaps in the ditch circuit. Most other examples of ring ditches are usually considered to be levelled burial monuments, with the spoil from the ditch used to create a distinctive burial mound. However, no definite evidence of human burial deposits was found at Thame and the unusually large diameter of the ring ditch and its infill suggests an alternative construction, with the spoil used to create a circular bank around the outside of the ditch. Similarly, the presence of very large, deep pit near the centre of the circle which could have held a large post is at odds with the notion of a central mound. All of this lead to a suggestion that the site might be a ceremonial rather a burial monument.

Various objects were found at the very bottom of the ditch and help date it until radiocarbon dates are obtained. These finds include Early Bronze Age (2100-1700BC) pottery and the very rare find of a stone shaft-hole tool called an axe hammer. Such tools are not particularly common with most examples having been found in northern
England and Scotland. They are particularly rare for the south Midlands and southern England. The axe hammer head is made from an as yet unidentified hard rock that is not available locally.

The ditch was completely in-filled, possibly deliberately so, within the Bronze Age as two middle Bronze Age (c. 1200BC) bronze spearheads in very good condition had been inserted point down into the top fill of the ditch.

The earliest human activity on the site pre-dated the Bronze Age with the discovery of several late Neolithic (3300-2100BC) pits. These contained a large collection of struck flint tools and several sizeable fragments of a distinctive highly decorated type of pottery known as grooved ware. These pits are unlikely to be dug simply for the disposal of rubbish but are also likely to be of ceremonial significance.

Other features discovered in the area around the ring ditch included a probable Iron Age (750BC-AD43) pit alignment. This is a territorial boundary marker formed, in this instance by a single line of pits. Thirty two pits were uncovered. Unusually, the pit alignment made a sharp right-angled bend. A small number of Roman (AD43-410) agriculture-related features such as field boundaries were also recorded.
TVAS News: TVAS Ireland to work on the M11 motorway

Our sister company, TVAS Ireland Ltd., are pleased to announce that they have been awarded the archaeological contract for the M11 Gorey to Enniscorthy motorway.

The proposed scheme comprises approximately 30km of new motorway from the end of the Gorey Bypass to the townland of Scurlockbush, south of Enniscorthy. The scheme also includes an 8km N30 bypass to the west of Enniscorthy and a 4km N80 link road which will connect the N80 at Scarawalsh to the new M11. The scheme will bypass Ferns, Camolin and Enniscorthy and will incorporate a new bridge crossing of the River Slaney north of Enniscorthy.

The services encompassed by this contract are archaeological test excavations and surveys (Stage (i)); pre-exavocation services (Stage (ii)); archaeological excavation services (Stage (iii)); and post-exavication services, including analysis and reporting and publication (Stage (iv)).

The project is funded by Wexford County Council through the National Roads Authority.
TVAS News: Published Reports Online

Several journals which have published our reports have kindly given us permission to make these articles available in our Online Report Archive.

Publications which have extended their permission include:
- Britannia
- Lincolnshire History and Archaeology
- Northamptonshire Archaeology
- Oxoniensia
- Sussex Archaeological Collections
- Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS)
- Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine
TVAS News: Eysey Manor Quarry Aerial Photos

Following fruitful excavations at Eysey Manor Quarry Phase 5 a series of high-level photos were commissioned to provide an aerial perspective of the findings. The resulting images clearly show the enclosures, ditches and post-built Saxon hall and will assist in the interpretation of the landscape as it changed through time.

These high-level shots were taken using a camera elevated on the top of a long telescopic pole. The image (bottom right) showing the vehicle gives a view of the mechanism from above (note - this image was taken during a previous phase of excavations, Phase 5 is actually located in the field just visible in the lower left corner of the photo).
TVAS News: Monographs 12 and 13

Monograph 12, entitled "Archaeological Investigations along the line of Ermin Street in West Berkshire, 1992-2008", explores the recent work carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in Thatcham, West Berkshire. It presents the results of small excavations at Turnpike School, at several locations on Bath Road, and at Church Gate, and summarises results of smaller watching briefs and evaluation trenching exercises.

Monograph 13, "Archaeological Investigations to the south of Reading, 2002-2008", focuses on recent archaeological excavations which have added to our knowledge of Roman settlement and landscape exploitation in the area to the south of modern Reading, Berkshire. The five sites reported in the volume include: a Roman occupation site and landscape management at Three Mile Cross, a very similar late Iron Age/early Roman settlement and landscape in south Reading, and at two smaller sites in Shinfield; while a final short paper reports on a Bronze Age pit and Iron Age 'currency bar' hoard from south Reading.

To order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Iron Age iron production at Sadlers End, Sindlesham

During June, August and September 2010 Thames Valley Archaeological Services undertook an archaeological evaluation and excavation at Sadler’s End, Sindlesham near Wokingham in Berkshire in advance of the construction of the new Wokingham cricket ground on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, West London. The major find of the excavation was a large area of iron smelting including a number of small pit furnaces and a single large shaft furnace which were located next to a large mound of slag. This has been provisionally dated to the Iron Age and, if this date proves to be correct, will be a rare example of iron production from this period. An estimated 2 tonnes of slag were recorded and other finds included a number of decorated pottery sherds dating to the middle Iron Age. This dating will hopefully be refined further by the use of radiocarbon dating at Kiel University and archaeomagnetic dating carried out by Bradford University. In addition, a number of small pits, interpreted as charcoal clamps for the production of charcoal for the smelting process and ore roasting pits for the refining of the iron ore, were excavated close to the furnaces. Elsewhere on the site the remains of two Middle Bronze Age urns were also recovered.

A number of iron production sites and iron slagheaps are recorded for south east Berkshire (and beyond), exploiting the iron-rich sands of the Bagshot Beds. However, at Sindlesham, there is no ore locally available and it seems most likely that the ore was brought to the site presumably to exploit an abundance of fuel.
TVAS News: TVAS in the News

A new page has been added to the TVAS website detailing some of our most recent appearances in the press. Click here to see the TVAS press page.
TVAS News: Itchen Farm Park and Ride Revisited

Post-excavation studies of the finds from the Itchen Farm Park and Ride site in Winchester have revealed more about the people who once occupied this area. One of the finds of particular interest is Burial 3567, which was originally reported on the TVAS website on 15th May 2009: TVAS News - Itchen Farm Park and Ride, Winchester.

This single inhumation was a crouched burial, roughly orientated east-west, with the body resting in a simple shallow grave, on its right side. There was no evidence of a mound which may have covered the grave, or any other form of marker. Despite the preservation of the remains being poor due to the soil conditions, it was possible to estimate the age at death to be approximately 4-6 years by measuring the extent of dental development. Because the skeleton was that of a child, sex determination was not possible. Examination of the remains of the skull showed the presence of a porosity in the eye sockets known as cribra orbitalia. This is caused by vitamin B12 deficiency which could be a result of disease or, more likely, the mother’s poor nutritional health.

The most interesting discovery was that Burial 3567 produced a radiocarbon date of 4082–3971 cal BC (KIA42095) which is very early in the Early Neolithic period, not long after it is thought that the ‘neolithic package’ of ideas, plants, animals and probably people arrived in the British Isles. Most burials from this period were collective with the bodies being deposited together, typically in long barrows or chambered tombs. Yet the Itchen Farm burial is similar to another found at Blackwall on the Isle of Dogs, London which has an equally early radiocarbon date (Coles et al, Proc. Prehist. Soc. 74, 2008 215-233, TVAS news). Together, these burials hint at a burial practice distinct from and perhaps earlier than the collective burial practice which hitherto has characterised the period.
TVAS News: Civil War defences at Milesdown Children's Home, Winchester

In 2009, excavations on a site on St Giles’ Hill in Winchester discovered what is likely to have been part of the city’s Civil War defences. Field evaluation had revealed a single human burial and post-medieval deposits of uncertain significance within an area of a new housing development which include a large basement. Subsequent open area excavation identified additional archaeological deposits including a Late Neolithic grooved ware pit, an early post-medieval wall foundation and several undated disturbed human burials.

Of most significance however, was the finding of a large ditch of early post-medieval date along with later post-medieval levelling layers. It is thought that the ditch is a part of a redoubt, that is, a detached outwork forming a part of Winchester’s Civil War defences. The ditch was aligned roughly east-west with a right-angled turn at the western end and a 45° turn towards the east. A total length of 38m was exposed. Excavation of the ditch showed it was up to 5.2m wide and 1.8m deep and was infilled with a sequence of layers. The lowest layer was likely to be the result of weathering of the natural chalk causing the sides to fall in. This, however, was followed by a rapid, intentional backfilling of the ditch producing layers which reflect the composition of the topsoil, subsoil and natural chalk. The practice of rapidly backfilling defensive ditches was known as slighting and served to both prevent their further use and possibly take the focus off the area as a strong point. The shape of the ditch in plan suggests that the redoubt was square with an angled projection as a cannon platform pointing eastwards. It is likely that an earth rampart was built along the south and west side using spoil from the ditch, possibly reinforced with turf. No evidence for the rampart was seen during the excavations but it is probable that the same material was used for the infilling of the ditch.
Whilst there are contemporary documentary records of the presence of the city’s Civil War defences, these have mostly not been located on the ground, nor are any contemporary maps depicting them known. This excavation therefore has allowed the location and the nature of some of these fortifications to be determined.
TVAS News: TVAS News RSS Feed

We have implemented an RSS news feed which will enable you to receive TVAS news to your favourite RSS reader as it published.

Subscribe in a reader
TVAS News: Educational resources online

TVAS have mounted several displays and exhibitions designed to share our findings from the sites that we excavate. On a number of occasions these have contained informative posters which we can now freely make available in PDF format for download.

The first exhibition to be made available was originally produced for the Kendew Quadrangle opening ceremony to detail the archaeological findings that resulted from the new building's construction. The exhibition, which was described as "a triumph", initially went on display at St John's College, Oxford before moving to the science department at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College where it was used in the teaching of their Forensic Science course.

PDF versions of the original A1 posters can be found on our Educational Resources page. Posters from other events will be added as they become available.
TVAS News: Plumley Wood Quarry Aerial Photos

Excavations in advance of gravel extraction at Plumley Wood Quarry, Hampshire have uncovered an extensive Roman pottery industry. A large area has been exposed containing at least four pottery kilns along with associated postholes, gullies and enclosures. While the excavations themselves were still ongoing an open day was held for the Avon Valley Archaeological Society. A poster detailing the project's findings was produced for the occasion and can be downloaded here: Plumley Wood Quarry: Prehistoric Occupation, Burial and Roman Settlement and Kilns.

While the open day was in progress Jo Crane took a series of aerial photos from her plane which do a great job of showing the layout of the archaeology and the Society being given a guided tour! Thanks go to Jo and Sue (G-WSSX) for the photos.
TVAS News: Through the ages at Beeches Manor, Wokingham

Excavations at Beeches Manor, Wokingham, carried out in advance of the redevelopment of the site as a care home, have peeled back the ages to reveal the history of the manor house itself and its immediate surroundings. The manor house has been documented as being located on the site since 1624 though it may have been there longer as it was probably named after the 15th century landowner Robert de Beche. Various maps show the development of the site from a possible appearance on Rocque's 1761 map of Berkshire with a detailed layout depicted on the enclosure map of 1817. The Ordnance Survey map of 1877 shows a marked change in the building's size and layout. Later editions show further changes with the addition of various out buildings and a landscape garden including a sunken lawn. The last building remaining on the site was destroyed by fire in 1953 and since then the area had been abandoned with trees and shrubs covering any traces of what was there previously.

A six-trench evaluation was carried out by TVAS in December 2010 which uncovered evidence of buildings and early post-medieval activity. This confirmed the archaeological potential of the site and it was decided that a full excavation should be undertaken to record the extent of the manor house and any surrounding features.

The excavations uncovered the brick foundations of the manor house and other components of the complex as well as medieval features. By studying the different types of bricks and construction methods used, it was discovered that the house was built in at least two main phases. The first of these was the original 17th century house, which was built of flat wide bricks and made up the central core of the later house. The second major phase was built in the modern, primarily Victorian, period and consisted of...
extensions to both ends of the old house and a large wing projecting into the garden at the northern end. It was during this later period that the garden was landscaped and evidence of this was found in the form of in-situ paving stones and garden features. Prior to the house and garden was a ditched enclosure and other ditches containing medieval finds. This tentatively suggests that the brick-built house may have had a medieval antecedent.
TVAS News: Medieval Haddenham, Buckinghamshire

Recent excavations in Haddenham, Buckinghamshire have uncovered features typical of the 'backlands' of a medieval settlement. The work was carried out on behalf of Rectory Homes in advance of the construction of housing on the site.

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in April 2007 which uncovered archaeological features, such as pits, ditches and walls, across the site. The features showed that a complex pattern of activity mostly dating from the 11th to 13th centuries existed. Because of this, it was deemed necessary to undertake a full excavation of the site to piece together the features found in the evaluation. Once the whole area had been stripped off and the features excavated it was possible to see that the linear features were once the boundary between two plots which had been redefined on several occasions. It is assumed that the actual houses for the plots would be located closer to the street frontage whereas these zones are used for various activities including rubbish disposal and animal management. It is thought that the smaller linear features at the south of the site may have acted as small animal pens.

The majority of the deposits found here are dated to medieval times (11th-13th centuries) indicating that the settlement flourished and had expanded from its Saxon origins. Yet, as observed for many other similar sites, this activity then ceased with little further development for several centuries. Here, this may simply reflect a change in methods of rubbish disposal or a change of landuse but it may also reflect a wider decline at this time thought to be due to factors such as economic downturn, climatic deterioration and epidemic disease (eg the Black Death).
Pottery belonging to the Saxon and Roman periods was also found in some of the features as well as several animal burials, including a sheep and two dogs.

A public open day was held on the site to allow people to come and view our findings. As part of this, we created a series of information posters detailing the history of Haddenham, the background to the site and the findings themselves. These posters are now available to download in PDF format here: TVAS Educational Resources.
Excavations by archaeologists from TVAS (South) on the site of Ballamy's Showroom in Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex have revealed clues to the area's history. Despite the site having undergone several phases of occupation in the 19th and 20th centuries the archaeology beneath was relatively untouched and was found to include prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman and medieval features.

Apart from a few stray finds of prehistoric struck flints, the site and adjacent areas were lightly used in late Iron Age and early Roman times but with this use terminating before the end of the Roman period. No further use is documented until the late 12th century at a time broadly when the formation of New Shoreham is historically documented. The site is then well used during the 13th and 14th centuries for domestic occupation activities, perhaps as a part of a large landholding. Yet in common with many other medieval settlements across England, this use comes to an abrupt end in the late 14th century, an observation easier to make than explain, though epidemic disease, economic decline or, for a coastal town, naval warfare, may all have their part to play. Sustained reuse was not to take place again until 19th century terraced houses were built followed by a cinema, car show room, and shortly, residential accommodation which necessitated the excavations described above.
TVAS News: Roman activity at Woodsford Quarry, Dorchester, Dorset

Thames Valley Archaeological Services have been working on behalf of Hills Quarry Products at the site of Woodsford Quarry, near Dorchester, Dorset, since December 2008. The work so far has been carried out in four fields in advance of the construction of the quarry operational plant, and, more recently, extraction of the gravel.

The site of Woodsford Quarry lies within a general area rich in evidence of prehistoric and Roman occupation with for example the Neolithic causewayed enclosure at Flagstones, the Iron Age hillfort of Maiden Castle and the Roman town of Durnovaria all to the west in or around modern Dorchester. Later monuments in the vicinity of the site include the 14th century fortified house of Woodsford Castle to the northeast and, to the east of the castle, the earthworks of the deserted medieval village of Woodsford Strangeways.

The vast majority of the finds and features discovered on the site date to the Roman period, in particular the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. These consist of a complex of ditches, gullies and pits which form a series of fields and enclosures all of which contained pottery of 3rd and 4th century dates. By studying the way that all of the individual ditches and gullies relate to each other and their positions in the landscape it has been possible to identify three main phases of use with the newer overlying the old, putting them out of use. Despite the presence of rubbish pits, hearths, a small iron-smelting (bowl) furnace, pottery and animal bone, no traces of houses have so far been found. It is thought that this is because construction techniques involved the use of sill beams which rested on the ground rather than foundations set into the ground. Any traces of this sort of building are easily removed by subsequent ploughing.
In addition to the Roman finds evidence of occupation dating to the Bronze and Iron Ages was recovered. The primary feature belonging to this period was a small sub-circular ring ditch which measured 4.8m across. It is thought to have once surrounded a small Bronze Age burial mound now levelled by later cultivation although no burial was found and no conclusive dating evidence was recovered.

Work continues as and when the quarry requires access to new areas of gravel.
TVAS News: Monuments to the Dead at West Meon, Hampshire

The TVAS archaeology team, working on behalf of Drew Smith Ltd and Hyde Housing Association have been excavating an area on the outskirts of West Meon, Hampshire in advance of housing construction. Preliminary work in the form of trial (evaluation) trenches identified a Bronze Age ring ditch and a small number of Saxon graves. We have opened up the area around the ring ditch to identify its full extent and record and excavate it and any burials that may be at risk from the future development of the site.

Once excavated, the ring ditch proved to be 29m in diameter with the ditch itself being c.3.5m wide and 1.5m deep. In the centre, which would have originally been built up into a barrow mound but has now been ploughed away, was a single urn holding cremated human remains. An un-urned cremation deposit was found on the lip of the ditch and a further urn was excavated to the southwest of the ring ditch. The style of the pottery suggests that the barrow probably dates from the early Bronze Age, around 1700 BC. As the ring ditch was excavated the upper layers of fill were found to contain numerous struck flints. It appears that the flint nodules within the chalk from the ditch digging had been used as a convenient source of raw material for flint tools in the Bronze Age.

A total of 49 Saxon burials were found cut into the ground surrounding the ring ditch and even into the fill of the ditch itself. These are a mix of adults, teenagers and children who were buried in a variety of crouched and stretched out (extended) positions. Some of the graves are orientated east-west but the majority are north-south. Several of the individuals were buried with grave goods including weapons, jewellery and tools which, when combined with the orientation of the bodies, strongly suggests that the burials are
pre-Christian, probably from the 6th or 7th centuries AD.

A site open day held while excavations were in progress proved very popular with the local residents and archaeological groups. A series of posters were created detailing our findings and discussing two of the burials in particular detail. These can be downloaded using the links to the right or here: TVAS Educational Resources.
TVAS News: TVAS Goes West

TVAS have taken Indiana newspaper writer John Soule's 1851 advice: "Go West, young man" and are pleased to announce the opening of a new branch office in Taunton, Somerset. **TVAS (South West)** covers projects and client in Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Bristol and Wiltshire.

TVAS (South West) offer a full range of archaeological services, from pre-planning advice to full excavation, with each project tailored to meet the needs of all the various stakeholders.

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TVAS News: Monograph 9 Published

Monograph 9, entitled "Archaeological Investigations in the Silchester Hinterland", explores the landscape use around the Roman town.

Silchester is one of the best-known and best-preserved Roman towns in Britain. A series of archaeological investigations conducted as part of the planning process has added to our knowledge of how the landscape around the site of the Roman town was used and developed.

The investigations reported in this volume include two fieldwalking surveys of the Lodden valley and the area immediately around Silchester itself as well as sites in Arborfield, Mortimer, Silchester and Latchmere Green. None of the sites reported here is remarkable by itself but the steady accumulation of evidence from many such small sites can transform the way entire landscapes are perceived.

To order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Chilton Fields Roman Villa

While investigating a site near Chilton, Oxfordshire in advance of development TVAS have discovered a multi-phase Roman building and underlying ring gully. The work, on behalf of David Wilson Homes, required the top- and subsoil to be stripped off an area exposing the gravel geology underneath. Once the soil had been removed the archaeological features could be identified in the surface of the gravel and subsequently excavated and recorded.

The first area to be stripped revealed the chalk-built foundations of a building which consisted of a large rectangular room with smaller rooms around the edges. As the area was excavated and artefacts were discovered it became obvious that the structure dated to the Roman period and was possibly the remains of a villa. Finds such as pottery, coins, animal bone and even painted wall plaster were recovered from features within the structure and in its immediate surroundings. A surprising discovery was the skeleton of a baby buried in the building itself. Such discoveries are not uncommon on Roman villa sites and have been interpreted as many things, including dedications or evidence of unofficial births.

Click here to discover more about the finds from the Chilton villa

As work continued, the remains of a small two-roomed structure which comprised of an arched stokehole and a covered hypocaust were discovered to the east of the main building. Although it is not known what the structure was used for the fire from the stokehole would have heated the air in the hypocaust, warming the room above. After the structure went out of use it served as a rubbish dump and it was here that much of the painted wall plaster from the villa was found. Further to the north a series of ditches were discovered that also dated to the Roman period. These probably represent farming...
enclosures and show that the villa building was part of a wider estate complex.

A further discovery was made beneath the building which suggested that the site had been occupied before the villa had been built. The ring gully measuring approximately 12m in diameter was found under the Roman structure and is probably the remains of a roundhouse dating to the Iron Age or early Roman periods. It is tempting then to imagine the Iron Age farmer who made good when the Romans arrived and replaced his roundhouse with a stylish new villa!
TVAS News: Monograph 10 Published

Monograph 10, entitled "Archaeological Investigations in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, 1992-2010", brings together the findings of several archaeological investigations in the Saxon and medieval town of Wallingford.

Wallingford, on the River Thames in south Oxfordshire, is one of the country's best-preserved medieval towns, with origins as a late Saxon burh. It retains its medieval street plan to a remarkable degree, and substantial remains of the Saxon defences and Norman Castle survive.

This volume in the TVAS Monograph Series brings together the results from almost two decades of investigation at more than a dozen small sites, none of which by itself is especially remarkable, but which produce new insights when combined. They also demonstrate how the requirements of the town planning process can effectively direct research, and amount to a local success story.

To order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: TVAS Press Launched with the Publication of Monograph 11

We are proud to announce the launch of TVAS Press - our own in-house book printing and binding operation. TVAS Press will allow us to publish books which only require a small print-run, such as our popular monograph series and upcoming occasional papers. The first TVAS Press publication is Monograph 11.

Monograph 11, entitled "Archaeological Investigations in Surrey, 1997-2009", brings reports the results of archaeological investigations in advance of development at eight sites in Surrey; in Mestham, Burgh Heath and Staines, two in Egham and three in Guildford.

These sites, representing 12 years of investigations, together span a period beginning in the Bronze Age and extending through to the 17th century. Findings include a medieval pottery kiln in Egham, insights into the diet of 17th century Guildford and settlements of a range of periods.

For further details of Monograph 11 or to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and Click on the image thumbnails below for larger versions:
complete the order form.
Archaeologists from TVAS (South West) have recently finished investigating an area of land at Bowdens Quarry, Huish Episcopi, Somerset for Lovell Purbeck.

The excavations, carried out in advance of lias extraction, investigated approximately 1ha of land overlooking the Parrett valley. Top- and subsoil were removed across the area exposing the underlying geology with the archaeological features cut into it. The team were able to identify two circular structures, sections of ditch and gully and a typical range of pits and postholes. These features were all investigated further in order to obtain dating evidence and any clues as to their original use.

The earliest set of features discovered was a circular post-built structure, probably a roundhouse, which stylistically may belong to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age though dating evidence in this case was sparse. Middle Iron Age occupation was firmly attested with a sample of burnt residue that coated one of the pot sherds found in a storage pit giving a carbon date of 322-205 cal BC. Approximately 10m to the east of the first roundhouse was found a second circular structure; this time built using a penannular gully dated to the later Iron Age by several sherds of distinctive Durotrigian-style pottery which were found in a posthole within the structure. Other features of the same date include land divisions and additional storage pits. These two groups of features have been interpreted as Iron Age farmsteads, either two stages of the same complex or two different occupations of the same site a few hundred years apart.

Detailed study of soil samples and animal bone collected from features provided clues about what type of farming was practiced on the site. Little information is available for
the Middle Iron Age features as these contained little animal bone, and the only charred plant remains recovered were weed seeds from plants favouring waste and disturbed ground. No cereals were noted in the samples. For the later Iron Age, the finding of small amounts of horse, cattle and sheep/goat bones, in conjunction with the presence of ditched enclosures, and the recovery of spelt wheat grains from soil samples suggest that at this time the small farmstead was practicing a mixed economy.
TVAS News: Monographs 14 and 15

We are pleased to announce the publication of the next two installments in the TVAS Monograph Series:

Monograph 14, entitled "Settlement and Landscape Archaeology in the Middle Thames Valley: Slough and Environs", presents the results of archaeological excavations on five sites in and around Slough, all undertaken under the provisions of town planning legislation. It details excavations at Cippenham, Wexham, All Souls Farm quarry and Beaconsfield which between them uncovered evidence for land use spanning from the Neolithic to medieval periods.

Monograph 15, "Bronze Age and Roman Settlement, with Neolithic and Saxon Burials, at Itchen Farm, Winchester, Hampshire: The Archaeology of the South Winchester Park and Ride", focuses on archaeological excavations which were undertaken in advance of the construction of South Winchester Park and Ride at Itchen Farm to the south of the city. Here archaeologists found evidence for human habitation starting in the Neolithic period and continuing through the Bronze and Iron Ages and into the Roman period. The latest remains on the site were two human burials both of which dated to the Saxon period although both grave also contained Roman finds.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: TVAS geophysical survey service launched

We are proud to announce the launch of the TVAS geophysical survey service. This provides archaeological geophysical surveys for both research and developer-led purposes. These are carried out on sites of all sizes across the southern UK to the highest standard by our team of specialist surveyors working out of our Reading office.

We provide both evaluation and characterisation magnetometer surveys. These types of survey offer rapid ground coverage and respond to a wide range of anomalies caused by past human activity. These properties make them ideal for fast yet detailed survey of an area, offering a good balance between time and cost and the amount of detail provided.

As part of this new service, we have become corporate members of the International Society for Archaeological Prospection (ISAP). As such, we ensure that our work is to the highest standard and serves to accurately inform the planning process.

For further details please see our Geophysical Surveying page.
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For further details please see our Geophysical Surveying page.
TVAS News: Sonning Cursus geophysical survey

In November 2012 the TVAS geophysics team undertook a detailed survey of an important prehistoric cropmark complex at Sonning, near Reading in Berkshire. Aerial photographs had revealed the presence of a Neolithic cursus monument along with a ring ditch and several rectangular enclosures, one of which is a Neolithic mortuary enclosure. However, because of the nature of the cropmarks, the position and form of the western end of the cursus and therefore its complete length was unknown. The complex forms a Scheduled Monument and consent was granted by English Heritage to survey the site in an effort to locate the missing detail and reveal any new features. The results were a great success. Not only were we able to locate a western end to the cursus but the survey also identified another probable rectangular enclosure and several linear features.

With the discovery of its western end, the cursus can be measured at 200m long and 35m wide with an entrance opening at the western end only. The intercutting rectangular enclosures to the northeast, one of which was excavated in the 1960s and found to be Neolithic in date, suggest multiple phases of use. Other features of note include several linear anomalies, which in some places appear to form trackways, and a meandering palaeochannel at the base of the hill. The geophysics also served to date a prominent linear feature that was originally identified in the aerial photograph survey. The large amount of magnetic debris and iron spikes seen on the line of the cropmark suggests that it is relatively modern in date and most likely represents an old field boundary.

To find out more about the TVAS geophysical survey service see the Geophysical Survey page.
TVAS News: Baydon pipeline Bronze Age settlement

Recent work carried out by TVAS archaeologists on behalf of Optimise in advance of laying a pipeline between Baydon water tower and Bailey Hill reservoir has revealed evidence of prehistoric occupation and land use. The site, which consisted of a 2km-long narrow strip of ground stretching across the Berkshire Downs on the West Berkshire-Wiltshire border, was monitored as the ground was prepared for the water pipe. Three sets of archaeological features were identified in three separate locations along its length. The first of these consisted of a 2.8m-wide ditch containing a single sherd of Roman pottery and interpreted as being an extension of the near-by Near Down Ditch - a boundary marker with possible prehistoric origins.

Further to the south, the second area of archaeological interest contained a negative lynchet (land eroded by ploughing) of unknown date and two post-built roundhouses. The first roundhouse, only partially exposed, included what is thought to be a south-facing entrance and yielded four sherds of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery. A puzzling aspect however is the finding of wood charcoal that was radiocarbon dated to cal BC 1450-1370 and a fragment of animal bone that was dated to cal BC 1519-1422. Both of these dates sit firmly in the Middle Bronze Age and it starts to raise interesting questions about how these finds could have been within the same structure as the Late Bronze Age pottery. The second roundhouse, which had much smaller postholes than the first and overlapped it by as much as half its area, was dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age by the finding of pottery of that date in the internal postholes. This suggests the interpretation that the pottery in the first roundhouse is perhaps residual from the construction of the second in the later Bronze Age.
The southern-most find of the excavation was the south-western corner of a probable rectangular enclosure defined by a ditch. Four slots dug across the ditch showed it to be between 1.40m and 1.60m wide and 1.00m deep, originally with very steep sides and a rounded base. The only dating evidence recovered from the ditches was a single sherd of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery and a couple of struck flint flakes of Neolithic or Bronze Age date. This can only be interpreted as a probable broad prehistoric date rather than a specific period.
TVAS News: Excavations and Open Days at Dever Close, Micheldever

The TVAS archaeology team, working on behalf of Drew Smith Ltd and Winchester Housing Trust have been excavating an area on the outskirts of Micheldever, Hampshire in advance of the construction of affordable housing. Preliminary work in the form of an excavation in the 1970s and subsequent trial (evaluation) trenches identified a building which had been subject to several phases of rebuilding since the medieval period and a large number of medieval and post-medieval pits and ditches. We have opened up the area to the southeast of the building in order to record any further structural remains or landscape features that may be at risk from the future development of the site.

The previous excavations uncovered the remains of a wealthy medieval building which had been destroyed by fire and then rebuilt during the Tudor period. The Tudor house survived for about a century until it was mostly demolished and rebuilt on a similar alignment during the 18th century. The TVAS archaeologists have revealed several features which formed part of the gardens of the later houses including a slighted wall that had reused building materials from the original medieval house. This wall seems to have formed the southern edge of a terrace which had been built up using garden soil containing both medieval and post-medieval pot sherds. The area had then been landscaped with dumps of gravel and clay and then had a small garden wall and brick-built garden feature constructed on top.

The southern area of the TVAS excavations revealed a wide ditch that had been recut at least four times and contained some, possibly residual, sherds of Roman pottery.
addition to this the area was dotted with medieval pits, used either for depositing rubbish or quarrying out the local brickearth and chalk for making bricks and lime mortar.

A site open day held while excavations were in progress proved very popular with the local residents and archaeological groups. A series of posters were created detailing our findings in particular detail. These can be downloaded using the links to the right or here: TVAS Educational Resources.
TVAS News: Grey Literature Update

We have just completed a major update to our Online Report Archive. In addition to adding over 100 report PDFs from 2012 and 2013 projects you can now search the database by site type and we are currently working on being able to search by archaeological period.

This latest update means that you can now freely access PDF copies of the reports and journal articles for the vast majority of the sites on which TVAS have worked. The database now contains a total of 1752 sites spanning a period of 32 years which means an impressive 2141 individual reports and articles! These can all be browsed and downloaded at our Online Report Archive.
TVAS News: Monograph 16

We are pleased to announce the publication of the next exciting instalment in the TVAS Monograph Series:

Monograph 16, "Iron Age Iron Production Sites in Berkshire: Excavations 2003 - 2012", details recent excavations in Berkshire, which, backed by a programme of radiocarbon dating, have begun to shed light on a subject that has been surprisingly underrepresented in the archaeological record. Investigations at Sindlesham uncovered what seems to be the largest quantity of Iron Age iron slag so far recorded in the country, along with several furnaces, charcoal clamps and ore roasting pits. The publication also details smaller production sites at Three Mile Cross and Finchampstead and the results of the excavation of an Iron Age, Roman and Saxon site at Bisham and analysis of a 'currency bar' from Reading.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Occasional Papers Launched

We are pleased to announce the launch of the TVAS Occasional Paper series with the publication of the first three papers:

The three titles detail the results of archaeological investigations at three individual sites, two in Berkshire and one in Gloucestershire. Occasional Paper 1, entitled "Medieval Occupation at RAF Quedgeley, Gloucestershire", presents the results of excavations which uncovered a sequence of occupation, including a farmhouse, dating from the 11th century AD through to the 18th. The second paper, "Medieval Boundaries and an Early Post-Medieval Manor House at Beeches Manor, Reading Road, Wokingham, Berkshire", describes the investigations that brought to light evidence for the medieval, early post-medieval and 19th-20th century occupation of the substantial house that once dominated the site. "Middle Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age Occupation and Post-Medieval Limekilns at RAF Staff College, Broad Lane, Bracknell, Berkshire", Occasional Paper 3, details the varied archaeological finds made within the grounds of the former RAF Staff College site.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Occasional Paper series please visit the Occasional Papers information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Streatley-Moulsford pipeline ring ditch and Bronze Age pits

Recent work carried out by TVAS archaeologists on behalf of Optimise in advance of laying a pipeline between Streatley and Moulsford has revealed evidence of prehistoric occupation and land use. The site, which consisted of a 4.6km-long narrow strip of ground stretching across the Berkshire Downs on the West Berkshire-Oxfordshire border, was monitored as the ground was prepared for the water pipe.

All of the archaeological features identified during the project were found towards the northern, Oxfordshire end of the strip. These consisted of a ring ditch, two 0.7m-deep ditches, thirteen burnt pits, some of which were packed with Bronze Age pottery, and a shallow gully. The ring ditch, probably the remains of a levelled burial mound or round barrow, measured c.15m in diameter with a ditch 1.7m wide and 0.7m deep.

Round barrows are a distinctive feature of the Early Bronze Age and several have been identified in the Streatley and Moulsford areas. While commonly found on the river gravels and, such as this example, the chalk downlands, they have also been recorded on the sandy and clayey soils, indicating exploitation of these zones and presumably an expansion of settled areas. It is possible that the scatter of pits and pottery on the gravel geology on the hill to the north of the barrow indicate the presence of a settlement in the vicinity.

The two ditches that were found at the northern end of the pipeline strip contained Saxon or earlier pottery and a mystery metal object (see photos 5-6). This appears to be made of a copper alloy, possibly with a high lead content, and includes a paisley-like motif, brown enamelling and cut amber-like stones. It is double-sided and has the
remains of a loop on one edge, possibly for hanging the object, but it is, so far, of unknown use and date.
TVAS News: Iron Age Settlement and Burials at Highbury Avenue, Salisbury

In the summer of 2013 TVAS archaeologists undertook an open area excavation on the site of the former Highbury and Fisherton Manor Schools in Salisbury, Wiltshire. The goal was to record any buried archaeological features and expand on the observations made during previous evaluation trenching in advance of the construction of new housing units by Taylor Wimpey Southern Counties.

Despite the large amount of damage that the school foundations had done, the excavations uncovered a series of Iron Age and Roman ditches which together formed an enclosure complex. The majority of the excavated ditches were less than 0.5m deep but one in the western part of the site was found to go down to a depth of 3.6m. A series of 11 human burials were found in the central and eastern parts of the site amongst the enclosure ditches. The four best preserved skeletons were successfully radiocarbon dated to the Iron Age between 376-152 BC. Finds from the site included a variety of pottery ranging in date from the Middle Bronze Age through to the Roman period although the majority were Late Iron Age and Late Roman wares. Also recovered were several metal finds which consisted mostly of iron nails and hobnails although an iron ring was found in Grave 37 and an iron strap end in Grave 10. A small knife blade with loop attached to the handle and two fragments of twisted copper alloy bracelets were found in the fills of the enclosure ditches.

In addition to the main excavations on the Schools site it was identified that a substantial deposit of brickearth remained to the south of the area. Palaeolithic remains had been recorded previously during brickearth extraction and it was decided that the work provided an opportunity to assess the potential of the surviving deposits to contain...
Pleistocene palaeoenvironmental evidence and Palaeolithic material. A test pit was dug to enable the examination of a 4.4m deep sequence of brickearth deposits which overlay the gravel of River Terrace 4. No archaeological remains were recovered but analysis of the layers within the sequence showed evidence of biological activity and laid down in still or slow-flowing water but were also episodically exposed as land. This suggests that they were floodplain deposits, perhaps from a marshland environment, probably meaning that the area is unlikely to have been chosen for human habitation. Two samples were taken from sand lenses within the brickearth for dating using Optically Stimulated Luminescence. This returned dates of 47±8 ka BP (thousand years before present - AD 1950) and 56±9 ka BP placing the deposition of the material in an interstadial element of the Devensian period and the Middle Palaeolithic.
TVAS News: Streatley-Moulsford pipeline pits radiocarbon dated to the Bronze Age

Last November we reported on the work of TVAS archaeologists excavating a ring ditch and pits during the construction of a pipeline between Streatley and Moulsford on the Berkshire Downs (see Streatley-Moulsford pipeline ring ditch and Bronze Age pits). The ring ditch was dated to the Bronze Age by Early and Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery that was found in the ditch fill and the pit clusters were thought to date to a similar period, again due to the presence of Late Bronze Age pottery in the fills. Charcoal and bone samples from the pit fills were submitted for radiocarbon dating. These gave calibrated ages of 980-832 BC and 919-799 BC respectively suggesting that, due to the clustering of the pits and the finds of pottery, animal bone, quernstone and a few charred cereal seeds, the area was the site of a Late Bronze Age settlement.
TVAS News: Bronze Age burial at Hurn Court Farm Quarry, Dorset

This on-going project follows on from a desk-based assessment, fieldwalking and evaluation at Hurn Court Farm Quarry, near Bournemouth, Dorset. The latest phase of excavation revealed a ring ditch (levelled Bronze Age burial mound) next to an Early Bronze Age urn (c. 1700 BC). The pot was buried upside down and had been wrapped in an organic material when deposited. Unusually, it did not contain any remains of cremated bone meaning that it was probably a symbolic offering. The urn, which is one of the best preserved of an important group of similar vessels also found in the area, is currently being restored at our Taunton office. Study of the sherds has identified the presence of a potter's mark or signature, possibly making it one of the earliest examples in Britain.
TVAS News: Occasional Papers 4-7 Published

We are pleased to announce the publication of the next four volumes in the TVAS Occasional Paper series:

The four titles detail the results of archaeological investigations at a range of sites in Oxfordshire, West Sussex and Buckinghamshire. Occasional Paper 4, entitled "Medieval Occupation in Marston, Oxford", presents the results of two small excavations which uncovered a surprising density of medieval pits and ditches, giving the first indications of the medieval layout of the village, with origins apparently in the 12th century. The fifth paper, "Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age Occupation and Roman Fields at Lidsey Landfill, Woodgate, West Sussex", describes the two phases of investigation which were undertaken on the site. These brought to light evidence for predominantly prehistoric occupation, being represented by clusters of pits and postholes and small enclosures, which was overlain by a series of Roman field boundaries. "Medieval Haddenham, Buckinghamshire: Excavations at Townsend and Fort End, 2011 and 2013", Occasional Paper 6, details the findings of two excavations within the Saxon settlement of Haddenham while Occasional Paper 7, "Medieval Settlement at Oak Farm, Milcombe, Banbury, Oxfordshire: Excavation in 2012", explores a component of the medieval settlement at Milcombe.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Occasional Paper series please visit the Occasional Papers information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Monographs 17 and 18

We are pleased to announce the publication of the next two installments in the TVAS Monograph Series:

Monograph 17, entitled "The Oxford Henge and Late Saxon Massacre; with Medieval and Later Occupation at St John's College, Oxford", presents the results of archaeological excavations undertaken in at the College in 2008. These investigations in the heart of Oxford have dramatically altered our view of the prehistoric landscape, provided striking evidence of a massacre dating to around AD 1000, and shed light on the later occupation of the site: a suburb in the medieval period and later a farm. Click on the links to view the original news items detailing the discovery of the Saxon burials and the henge beneath the bodies.

Monograph 18, "Neolithic, Roman and Saxon Settlement at Arlington Way, Thetford, Norfolk", focuses on archaeological excavations which were undertaken in advance of housing development on the south-eastern edge of the town. Here archaeologists found a complex landscape, used and occupied over a considerable time during the Roman and Saxon periods. The findings provide an extension of the wider topography of the Roman and Saxon settlement, previously revealed to the south at Melford Meadows where they occupied a terrace ridge above the flood plain of the river Thet.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Monograph 19 Published

We are pleased to announce the publication of the next volume in the TVAS Monograph Series:

Monograph 19, entitled "Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman Landscapes of the Coastal Plain, and a Late Iron Age Warrior Burial at North Bersted, Bognor Regis, West Sussex; Excavations 2007-2010", details the open area excavation that took place across nine separate areas at North Bersted. The fieldwork revealed artefacts and features spanning the Upper Palaeolithic through to the Defence of Britain in the mid-1940s, although the principal periods represented were of later Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman date. A smaller volume of Neolithic and medieval deposits were encountered. Perhaps the most notable finding of the excavation was the grave of a late Iron Age warrior prince or priest who may have been raised in southern Europe, may have fought with the Roman army, and was buried with sword, scabbard, spear, shield, other grave goods including most remarkably, elaborate ceremonial headwear. Click on the links to view the original news items detailing the discovery of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman settlement features and the Iron Age warrior burial.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: 2500 Grey Literature Reports Online

We are pleased to announce that our Online Report Archive now contains over 2500 previously unpublished reports as well as several published journal articles. These are all freely available for download.

Among the recent additions are reports for a building survey for the old Worcester City FC ground and the results of the subsequent evaluation which uncovered evidence for medieval iron production. Three phases of work at Stratford-sub-Castle, next to Old Sarum, are detailed in a series of reports for the desk-based assessment, geophysical survey and evaluation, which identified Iron Age and post-medieval activity, and the report for an evaluation at New Worthing School details the important discovery of an Early Neolithic pit, a rare find for the Sussex coastal plain.

In addition to these, several archaeological journals have given us permission to make TVAS papers available to download from our archive. Recently added have been "Neolithic occupation, with an early date for Mortlake Ware, at Parsons Mead School, Ashtead" from the Surrey Archaeological Collections, "A late 15th-century manufactory of the Brill/Boarstall pottery industry at Ludgershall, Buckinghamshire" from Medieval Ceramics and "Excavation of Late-Neolithic Pits, an Early Bronze-Age Ring Ditch and an Early Iron-Age Pit Alignment at Church Farm, Thame" from Oxoniensia.
TVAS News: Monograph 20

We are pleased to announce the publication of the 20th volume in the TVAS Monograph Series:

Monograph 20, "Archaeological Excavations at Roundhouse Farm, Marston Meysey, Wiltshire", documents a large area excavation covering some 25ha of gravel terrace in the Upper Thames Valley of north Wiltshire. The excavations have revealed a wide range of evidence for human activity with occupation sites, funerary sites, ceremonial sites and organised landscapes dating from the later Neolithic through to mid Roman times and again from the medieval period to the present.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Roman coin hoard found at Ridgeway Primary School, Reading

Archaeologists from TVAS have been excavating in advance of the construction of new teaching and hall blocks at The Ridgeway Primary School in southern Reading. Evaluation trenching and three open area excavations have revealed a significant number of archaeological features, primarily dating to the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods. The find that has caused the greatest amount of interest, however, is a Roman jar which contained upwards of 200 coins.

The features uncovered on the western side of the current school buildings consisted of ditches, gullies and post holes. Pottery found within some of them suggested that they dated to the Bronze Age, Iron Age and the Roman periods. The types of pottery, which mainly consisted of local wares, and features are representative of rural farming settlements with the ditches and gullies forming land and field boundaries while the post holes could indicate the presence of wooden structures. One of the earliest features recorded was the remains of a burnt mound. These are piles of burnt stone which, it is thought, were heated in a fire and then placed in a trough or container of water in order to raise its temperature. Once cool, the stones were then discarded, forming large mounds like the one discovered here.

Perhaps the most surprising find so far has been the Roman coin hoard that was discovered in the edge of the second excavation area. The greyware jar which held the coins was found in an almost upturned position within the subsoil, some 20cm beneath the ground surface. The coins and jar were excavated and brought back to the office for cleaning and analysis. TVAS' in-house numismatist and Roman specialist is currently working her way through the 200-plus coins that have been carefully removed from the
vessel. Those that have been processed so far appear to date to the period of the Gallic Empire with coins depicting emperors from Gallienus to Claudius Gothicus representing a period of approximately 20 years, from c.AD 260-280.
TVAS News: Monograph 21

We are pleased to announce the publication of the 21st volume in the TVAS Monograph Series:

Monograph 21, "An Iron Age Round House and Roman Villa at Chilton Fields, Oxfordshire", documents an area excavation covering some 2ha which was undertaken on the lower chalk plain north of the Berkshire Downs, now in south Oxfordshire. The excavations have revealed the full ground plan of a modest Roman villa along with a significant proportion of surrounding landscape features. Use of the site for a villa complex was preceded by a small amount of Bronze Age pit digging followed by a Middle Iron Age round house, coincidentally located beneath the later villa.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Romano-British metalworking at Tanfield Lane, Wickham

Archaeologists from Thames Valley Archaeological Services carried out two phases of work in advance of development at Broad Ha'Penny, Tanfield Lane, Wickham for Southcott Homes. The initial phase of machine dug trenching revealed the presence of Late Iron Age and Roman ditches and pits along with an area associated with metalworking. Subsequent excavation of the site targeting the area of known archaeological deposits and the areas to be affected by the development revealed further evidence of Late Iron Age and Roman linear features and pits including a possible well.
TVAS News: Ring ditches and windmills at
Dukes Meadow Drive, Banbury

Archaeologists from Thames Valley Archaeological Services carried out three phases of work in advance of development at Dukes Meadow Drive, Banbury for Amber Developments Ltd. The first phase was comprised of a geophysical (magnetic) survey which revealed the presence of three possible ring ditches in the central area of the development. The second phase of machine dug trenches on the site confirm the presence of these features whilst producing a small amount of datable material from two of the ditches. A final phase, consisting of an excavation targeting the known archaeological features, revealed the full extent of one prehistoric ring ditch along with associated linear features and postholes, the partial remains of a much smaller ring ditch and the remains of a post-medieval windmill.
TVAS News: Iron Age and Roman settlement evidence found at Cheriton Road Sports Ground, Folkestone

Archaeologists from Thames Valley Archaeological Services carried out a recording action during the initial phase of development at Cheriton Road Sports Ground, Folkestone for SIS Pitches Ltd. The archaeological work revealed the presence of large numbers of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman linear features and pits relating to settlement activity as well as Bronze Age cremation and Iron Age inhumation burials.

The Iron Age inhumation consisted of the remains of a crouched burial which also contained the remains of several copper beads. The individual was buried on their right-hand side with their arms drawn up around their face. The bones were not very well preserved but analysis suggested that the person was 25-35 years old at the time of death, of unknown sex and had a possible developmental hip deformity which may have caused them to walk with a limp. The placement of a body face down in a grave is commonly viewed as resulting from the fact the deceased person was to be punished after death for a perceived fault, execution, or simply a rite considered appropriate for an individual who was somehow different from their neighbours. Pottery found in the grave dated the burial to the Early Iron Age.
TVAS News: Roman shoes and a giant’s grave at Top Road, Kempsford

Archaeologists from TVAS have been excavating land along Top Road in Kempsford, Gloucestershire ahead of a housing development. Guided by the findings of evaluation trenches, an open area excavation revealed a significant number of archaeological features and a long history of site use spanning the Iron Age to the post-Medieval period. These include post-Medieval ridge and furrow, Saxon sunken-featured buildings (SFBs), Late Roman burials and a series of large Iron Age boundary ditches (some approaching two metres in depth). The latter contained a range of artefacts including a worked antler pressure flaker, a bone comb and a number of loom weights.

A series of graves from the 4th century AD (Late Roman) were discovered in the southern half of the site. The graves were dated primarily from what grave goods were present, two 4th century coins being of particular relevance. The age of the individuals ranged from just 2 - 3 years old through to adults in relative old age. Although the burials contained relatively few grave goods, one notably contained two clusters of hobnails next to the individual’s legs, still retaining the shape of the shoes they once belonged to. Three separate graves contained mature to elderly women, all suffering from abnormal curvature to their lower spines, likely as a result of a long life of hard work.

Undoubtedly the most exciting of these graves contains a male skeleton displaying tell-tale signs of gigantism. The grave itself is nearly eight feet long, and in life the young man buried within would have stood just shy of six feet tall. Uniquely of the burials at Top Road, he was buried face down. Normally this burial position has negative connotations, but based on the position of in situ coffin nails it seems that the whole coffin was buried the wrong way up, possibly completely accidentally!
TVAS News: Remains of a Farmhouse at Eysey Manor, Gloucestershire

Archaeologists from Thames Valley Archaeological Services have excavated the remains of a farmhouse at Eysey Manor in Gloucestershire. Historic maps date the main farmhouse and associated outbuildings and yards date to at least the 1880s, with the site falling out of usage around the 1950s. The quantity of material recovered from the site was vast and ranged from coins (the earliest of which was a Dutch ‘Duit’ dating to 1709) to articulated animal skeletons, farm equipment, pottery and an array of condiment containers!
TVAS News: TVAS is offering occasional papers online for free.

TVAS are pleased to announce that from May 2016 our occasional papers will be available free of charge for download. Papers in the series will still be available as a perfect bound and covered report using good quality paper for £5 (+ p and p) for those who prefer a well presented hard copy.

Newest Occasional Papers

Download order form here
TVAS News: Hatch Farm, Winnersh Open Day

Archaeologists from TVAS have been conducting an archaeological excavation in advance of a residential and school development at Hatch Farm, Winnersh. The work was commissioned by Armour Heritage Ltd on behalf of Bovis Homes and Persimmon Homes. Two previous episodes of trial trenching on the site identified several areas of high archaeological potential highlighting the need for further investigation which has resulted in the excavations now underway. Sixteen separate areas, totalling c.4ha have been proposed for excavation.

The excavation commenced with the removal of the top and subsoil by mechanical excavator to reveal the archaeological features cut into the natural geology (sand, gravel and clay). To date the stripping of the separate areas has revealed a moderate density of archaeological features comprising ditches, gullies, pits and postholes. Early indications from pottery evidence and relative dating place the site within the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period.

During the open day TVAS archaeologists gave tours of the site and explained to the public the work that has been completed and what has been discovered at the site so far.
TVAS News: Press reports from Hatch Farm Open Day on April 24th 2016 at Winnersh

Local residents along with the local press attended the open day at Hatch Farm to view the remains of a late Iron Age or Early Roman farmstead.

Bracknell News

Wokingham News on April 27th 2016 pg.1

Wokingham Paper on April 29th 2016 pg.3 cont.17
TVAS News: Monographs 22, 23, 24 and 25

We are pleased to announce the publication of the next four installments in the TVAS Monograph Series:

Monograph 22, entitled "Roman Occupation at Chapel Farm, Blunsden, Swindon, Wiltshire (Lower Widhill Farm)", presents the archaeological excavations just north of Swindon in Wiltshire, which, over several years, uncovered an almost continuous landscape of around 7ha, occupied mainly in the 1st to 3rd centuries AD. The results of work by both Oxford Archaeology and Thames Valley Archaeological Services are presented in this volume.

Monograph 23, "Archaeological excavations at Latton Quarry, Wiltshire", documents the archaeological examination of a large (18ha) parcel of land which was formerly a Scheduled Monument, and lies adjacent to a large cropmark enclosure complex. The fieldwork investigated a wide range of deposits, with early Neolithic, middle Bronze Age, early and middle Iron Age and early Anglo-Saxon occupation being revealed, along with Iron Age, Roman and Medieval land division.

Monograph 24, "Bronze Age, Saxon and Medieval Evidence from Wantage, Oxfordshire: Excavations at St Mary’s and St Gabriel’s Schools", details archaeological excavations close to the modern town centre of Wantage which revealed a dense complex of mostly medieval features on two large parcels of land, thought to lie within the town as it was in late medieval times. The continuous occupation sequence, however, commenced in the late Saxon period with the construction of a circular or oval enclosure, various small enclosures, pens, buildings, workshops and other features and a substantial boundary ditch to the south. Finds include pottery suggesting a high status centre, supporting the view of Wantage as a Saxon royal estate. Medieval activity...
expanded in the 11th century with further redefinition and reorganisation which continued until the 13th or 14th century when all this activity ceased. Subsequent use of the sites was light, except for re-cutting of the boundary ditch well into the 16th century.

Monograph 25, entitled "Neolithic, Bronze Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Occupation and Bronze Age Burial at Ibsley Quarry, Ibsley, Ringwood, Hampshire", presents the results of excavations which were undertaken in advance of mineral extraction located on the eastern terrace of the river Avon at Ibsley, north of Ringwood. These revealed a wide range of sites and finds. Two episodes dominated the cut deposits examined namely those in the Bronze Age and Roman periods.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Monograph Series please visit the Monograph Series information page and complete the order form.
TVAS News: Occasional Papers 10-13

We are pleased to announce the publication of the next three volumes in the TVAS Occasional Paper series:

The four titles detail the results of archaeological investigations at a range of sites in Hampshire, Oxfordshire, West Sussex and Wiltshire. Occasional Paper 10, entitled "Excavation of Medieval Occupation at Ropetackle, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex", presents the modest but significant assemblages of pottery and animal bones (among other finds). The quantity of ship nails among the metal finds suggests ship-breaking was among the activities on the site or nearby. Paper 12, "A Middle Bronze Age Pit Circle and Field System, and Roman Settlement at Hitches Lane, Fleet, Hampshire", describes an excavation that covered five areas and were undertaken in advance of development. The largest of the areas contained a substantial 2nd-century Roman rectangular timber-framed building set within a system of fields and passocks, which was remodelled around the middle of the 3rd century. Occasional Paper 13, "The Archaeology of four Pipelines in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire" describes a recoding action which uncovered several features including a possible Late Bronze Age enclosure and two overlapping post-built roundhouses. According to radiocarbon dates place one of the roundhouses in the Middle Bronze Age while pottery suggests occupation also took place in the Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age.

For more information and to order a copy of any of the volumes in the TVAS Occasional Paper series please visit the Occasional Paper information page and complete the order form.
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Occasional Paper 14

Two Roman Occupation Site near Swindon: Wanborough and Purton

by James McNicoll-Norbury, Jo Pine and Andy Taylor

The two archaeological excavations presented in this volume, at Wanborough to the southeast of Swindon, and Purton to its west, primarily focus on Roman occupation and add to a growing picture of dense rural settlement in this area throughout the Roman period. At Stanley Close, Wanborough, the full extent of settlement was not exposed but the excavated area included enclosures defined by ditches and gullies, with pits and a possible drying oven. The deposits also include a decapitation burial, perhaps that of an old soldier. All seem to date to the middle to late part of the Roman period (later 2nd to 4th centuries AD). The economic evidence suggests a typical mixed agricultural settlement with the usual domesticated animals being raised and consumed on the site, but with an unexpectedly high incidence of horse. Charred plant remains were well represented, with wheat and some barley and oats, being grown and processed on the site. A few Neolithic or Bronze Age flint flakes along with a small amount of Iron Age pottery and pits suggest some earlier activity in the area. Similarly a few sherds of Saxon and medieval pottery probably reflect...
use of the site as arable farmland well after the Roman site has gone out of use. At Battlewell, Purton, Roman settlement seems to have been continuous between the 1st and 4th centuries. The early phase included a post-built round house (only partially revealed); the middle Roman phase consisted of pits and a kiln or furnace; but the majority of features belonged to the later Roman occupation, including a rectangular timber building, partial remains of a stone building, a drying oven (pottery- or corn-drier) and a well containing a human burial. Economic data here were less plentiful but probably point to the same mixed subsistence base.

A4 soft cover, 22pp, illustrated throughout including 21 colour plates.

ISBN 978-1-911228-09-7

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Two Iron Age Occupation Sites on Andover Road and Cromwell Road in Winchester

by Stephen Hammond, David Platt and Steve Preston

Excavation in advance of mineral extraction located on the eastern terrace of the river Avon at Ibsley, north of Ringwood, revealed a wide range of sites and finds. Two episodes dominated the cut deposits examined namely those in the Bronze Age and Roman periods. The site appears to have been in use for the whole of the Bronze Age, with the earlier Bronze Age represented by four ring ditches (the remains of levelled barrows) and a few pits. One of the ring ditches was revisited for use in the middle Bronze Age as an urnfield (cremation cemetery). A probable middle Bronze Age roundhouse and a few pits were superseded by much more intensive later Bronze Age occupation in the form of roundhouses, four-post structures (granaries?), pits and a fence. A notable feature of the middle Bronze Age was the finding of a small hoard of two bronze palstaves and an armlet.

Little is known of what might have happened on the site in the Iron Age, although it was perhaps then that the barrows were levelled (ploughed out). In the Roman period, the site
became a farmstead surrounded by an organized landscape of paddocks and fields, with a stone-lined well, although any buildings seem to have been outside the area excavated.

Other periods were represented by small numbers of cut features, with earlier Neolithic pits containing plain ware and Ebbsfleet ware pottery, a possible late Neolithic pit circle, and an early Anglo-Saxon sunken-floored building. The Mesolithic period was represented by flintwork and the later medieval period, surprisingly, only by a hammered silver coin and a belt buckle. The fieldwork here complements the findings of earlier phases of investigation at the quarry to the east which led to the excavation of three Early Bronze Age ring ditches in 2001.


Price: £10.00