From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

Roman Dymock: Archaeological Investigations 1995-2002, Excavations at land adjacent to the Rectory, Dymock, Gloucestershire, 2002

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2007, Vol. 125, 220-235

Excavations at land adjacent to the Rectory, Dymock, Gloucestershire, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

During October 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an excavation on land adjacent to the Rectory at Dymock, at OS Nat. Grid. SQ 7000931234 (Fig. 2). This work was commissioned by Bruton Knowles Property Assets Consultancy on behalf of the diocese of Gloucester in advance of construction of a new cottage. The excavation was secured by means of the attachment of a condition by Forest of Dean District Council to the planning permission for the development.

Geology and Topography

The site is located west of St Mary's church, to the rear of the rectory house (Fig. 3). It is approximately 50 m above OD and slopes gently westward toward the house, the area around which appears to have been artificially levelled, most likely during the house's construction in 1953 (Verey and Brooks 2002). The house does not occupy the site of the old parsonage, which stood between the churchyard and the village street on land that now forms part of the village green. The underlying geology is Devonian mudstone, sandstone and associated drift over Lower Old Red Sandstone.

Summary of the Evaluation Results

In September 2001 OA carried out an archaeological evaluation comprising four 10 m-long trenches (OAU 2001). This revealed a large ditch aligned north–south and containing Romano-British pottery. Also revealed was a gravel surface at the eastern end of the development area interpreted as part of one of the two Roman roads which pass through the village. There were also a gully and a small pit, neither of which produced datable artefacts.

Excavation Methodology

The main excavation area was a rectangle 17.0 × 9.5 m, forming the footprint of the proposed cottage (Fig. 3). Additionally, two small areas to be affected by the digging of a pair of soakaways were excavated. The larger soakaway, located to the east of the main area, was 3.5 m square, while the smaller one, to the west, was 2.5 m square. The overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator down to the first significant archaeological horizon.

All archaeological features were cleaned, excavated and recorded by hand in accordance with standard OA practices (Wilkinson 1992). A watching brief undertaken later during the excavation of drainage and service trenches for the proposed building revealed no further remains as the works in question did not extend deep enough to impact on archaeological horizons.

THE EXCAVATIONS (Fig. 20)

General

The modern overburden consisted of a layer of loamy topsoil (1) 0.4 m thick and a reddish brown silty clay subsoil (2) up to 0.35 m thick. This overlay a layer of brown silty clay (3) between 0.05 and 0.25 m thick which extended across the entire site. This layer contained animal bone, slag and mid–late 2nd-century Romano-British pottery. The relatively intact and unabraded condition of the pottery indicated that it had not experienced a significant amount of disturbance or redeposition and may thus be *in situ*. A similar deposit exposed in an excavation by Marches Archaeology at Rose Cottage and Winserdine a short distance to the north-west of the Rectory site was interpreted as a Roman ground surface (Tavener 2001); a similar interpretation would seem appropriate here. No features could be identified cutting into this layer, so it was removed by machine to expose features beneath it. The lower boundary of this layer was poorly defined and this resulted in some over-machining.

Phase 1

The earliest evidence for activity on the site comprised a probable fence-line extending across the area of the excavation from north-east to south-west. Five postholes survived from this alignment (28, 37, 47, 50 and 68: Fig. 20). The best preserved was posthole 47, an oval feature 0.64 m wide which survived to a depth of 0.24 m. Posthole 50 was also oval, measuring 0.47 × 0.33 m, with a depth of 0.15 m (Fig. 21). Its lower fill (52), a reddish brown silty clay, contained pieces of sandstone, possibly packing material and was overlain by a greyer, more charcoal-rich backfill (51). This layer also produced 2nd-century pottery. Posthole 28 was an elongated oval in shape, suggesting that it may have been subject to some disturbance, possibly during the removal of the post. It measured 1.0 m long by 0.5 m wide and had steeply sloping sides and an irregular base, with a depth of 0.28 m. A sterile primary fill (30) 80 mm thick was overlain by a main fill (29) which yielded 1st-century pottery, animal bone and some slag. The other surviving elements of the alignment, postholes 37 and 68, were less well preserved, having been truncated until only their bases remained (Fig. 20). This truncation suggests that other elements may have been lost completely, and that the alignment may originally have extended much further than the length of the surviving part. The pottery recovered from postholes 50 and 63 indicated a 2nd-century date for this structure, with some apparently residual pottery of 1st-century date being present in posthole 28.

A gully (63) ran at a right angle to the fence-line on its north-west side (Figs. 20 and 21). The gully was exposed for a length of 2 m, continuing to the north-west beyond the limits of the excavation. It was 0.24 m deep with a 'V'-shaped profile and had been back-filled with a deposit containing a large quantity of bone and some hand-made pottery, including from context 64 a dish with internal and external burnished lattice decoration in a Malvernian rock-tempered ware of pre or early Roman date. The location and alignment of the gully indicate that it marked a boundary associated with that represented by the fence-line.

Fig. 20. Rectory: all features.

Pit 76 was also interpreted as belonging to this phase of occupation as it was cut by a beam slot forming part of Phase 2 structure 88 (Fig. 20). The ceramic assemblage from pit 31 is slightly earlier than those from the majority of the features excavated, indicating that it too belongs in the earlier phase. The location of pit 41 within structure 88 suggests that the two are not contemporary, as it would present a hazard to the building's occupants. It is therefore likely that this pit should also be assigned to Phase 1. All three of these features were large circular pits with steeply sloping sides and flat bases (Fig. 21). They had very similar dimensions, with diameters in the range of 1.20–1.45 m and depths of around 0.5 m. All three pits contained domestic refuse – indicating that they were used as rubbish pits – in the form of pottery and animal bone, some of which exhibited signs of butchery. The later of the two fills in pit 41 (39) also yielded a piece of lead waste and 2nd-century pottery, while pit 76 contained a fragment of copper-alloy sheet and an iron nail. The fills of pit 31 produced pottery including a Malvernian tubby jar from context 33 and fragments of iron.

Also dating to this phase was pit 56, a small, flat-based feature 0.65 m across and 0.22 m deep located near the southern corner of the excavation. Its only fill (55) contained a dense concentration of iron-working debris (see Keys, below), most of a Severn Valley ware jar and a few sherds of grog-tempered pottery (see Brown and Timby, below).

Phase 2

At some time in the 2nd century the boundaries marked by the fence-line and gully fell out of use and were replaced by a rectilinear structure (88) on a slightly different alignment. The structure was formed by beam slots aligned at right angles, running from north-west to south-east (72) and from north-east to south-west (86: Fig. 20). These had been partially truncated, resulting in the loss of the southern corner of the building and some of its south-west end. Part of the structure lay beyond the limits of the trench, and consequently its full dimensions could not be established. Within the area exposed in the excavation it measured 9.5 m from north-east to south-west and it was at least 6.5 m wide from north-west to south-east, although it is possible that it was narrower and that the north-west side had been removed by truncation. The beam slots on which the building was founded were 0.3 m wide and up to 0.18 m deep, with vertical sides and a flat base (Fig. 22). A pair of postholes (26 and 35) flanking the beam slot on the south-east side of the structure may have held clamping posts which secured horizontal timbers forming the superstructure of the walls. Another possible structural element forming part of the building was represented by posthole 65. This vertical-sided posthole was 0.5 m in diameter and 0.1 m in depth, and was located adjacent to beam slot 86 on it west side.

A row of pits of varying sizes was dug along the gable end of the building. Pits 16 and 18 intersected but their fills (17 and 19) were indistinguishable, both consisting of reddish brown silty clay. It was not therefore possible to establish a stratigraphic relationship between them. Both were relatively shallow oval features with bowl-shaped profiles, pit 18 being slightly larger with dimensions of 1.3 m across and 0.3 m deep compared with a width of 1.0 m and a depth of 0.2 m for pit 16 (Fig. 22). Pit 16 contained an assemblage of animal bone and early 2nd-century pottery consistent with use as a rubbish pit, while pit 18 produced similar material, albeit in smaller quantities.

Pit 42 was irregular in shape, comprising a circular bowl 0.7 m in diameter and 0.2 m in depth with a 0.5 m-long projection on its north-east side (Figs. 20 and 22). Its basal fill was a layer of disturbed natural material (49) overlain by a dump of charcoal (43) 30 mm thick. This was sealed by a layer of backfill (44) containing flecks of charcoal and heat-discoloured soil and early 2nd-century pottery. The feature was cut slightly into the top of earlier pit 31.

Pits 20 and 84 were located at the south-eastern end of this row of pits, near the south corner of the building. Both features are shallow and concave in shape, and probably represent the

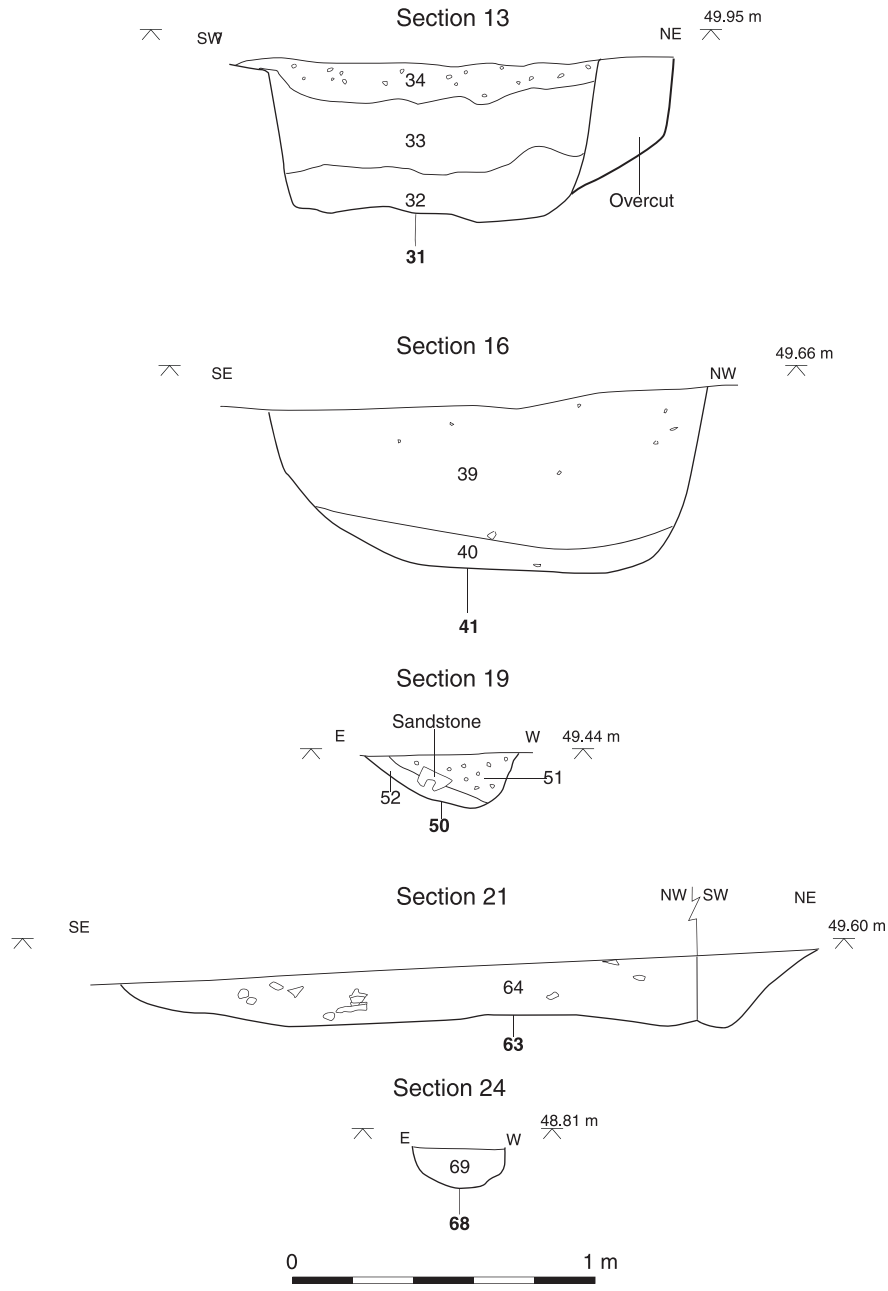

Fig. 21. Rectory: Phase 1 sections.

truncated bases of substantial pits. Pit 20 was 0.6 m in diameter and 0.13 m deep. Pit 84 measured 0.52 m across and was 0.1 m deep and it produced 1st- and 2nd-century pottery.

A small number of other pits in the southern part of the excavation were also attributable to this phase of activity on ceramic grounds. Pit 12 was located 3 m from the south-west end of structure 88. At 60 mm deep and 0.50 m wide it was unusually shallow in relation to its width, and it contained a charcoal-rich fill (13). The base of a stake hole or small posthole (14) located immediately adjacent to feature 12 may be associated with its use. The truncated base of a pit (6) was located toward the south corner of the excavation. It was 0.7 m in diameter but only 90 mm deep, and the pottery and animal bone retrieved from it may indicate a function as a domestic rubbish pit. Features 58, 60 and 62 were identified in section in the south-west face of the trench. Feature 58 was a small pit or posthole 0.47 m wide and 0.18 m deep which produced no finds. Although both considerably larger than that feature, pits 60 and 62 were almost identical. Both were 1.1 m wide with steep sides and a flat base and were 0.35–0.40 m deep. Pottery and animal bone were retrieved from the fills of both features (59, 61).

Pits 6, 56, 58, 60 and 62 were sealed by a spread of broken up slag 60 mm thick (54) which extended across the southern end of the excavation (Fig. 20). No dating evidence was recovered from this layer, but its location outside the end of building 88 suggests that it may be contemporary with the occupation of the building. The fragmentary nature of this material suggests that it does not represent primary deposition, and it may have been deliberately laid down as a surfacing material, although it is not thick enough or compacted enough to be a metalled road surface.

Unphased Features

A small number of features could not be allocated to a specific phase due to an absence of either stratigraphic relationships or datable artefacts. It is nevertheless probable that they are broadly contemporary with the Roman activity recorded on the site.

Posthole 10 did not form part of any identifiable structure. It had clearly been truncated, with only the lower 70 mm surviving. It was 0.3 m in diameter and contained a single fill (11) which yielded a sherd of Central Gaulish samian ware dating to the first half of the 2nd century.

Two pits (22 and 24) were located in the central part of the site, within the footprint of building 88. Both were oval, bowl-shaped pits, and had similar dimensions, pit 22 measuring 0.70 × 0.5 m with a depth of 0.35 m and pit 24 measuring 0.8 × 0.6 m and 0.22 m deep. Neither feature contained any finds to indicate a date or function, and so they cannot be attributed to a specific phase, although their form and the nature of the fills are consistent with the other Romano-British features found on the site.

Three small postholes (74, 80 and 82) were uncovered in the eastern part of the site. None of these features contained datable artefacts, and it was not possible to relate them to other structures or features on spatial grounds.

Excavation of the soakaway to the west of the main excavation area revealed part of a gully (context 8). It was 0.35 m wide and 0.20 m deep and aligned from north-west to south-east, at a right angle to the principal axis of the building uncovered in the main area of the excavation (Fig. 20). The similar soakaway pit dug to the east of the main area was excavated entirely within a large archaeological feature (context 46: Fig. 20). This is believed to be the large boundary ditch recorded during the evaluation (OA 2003).

The gravel surface interpreted in the evaluation as possibly the metalling of a Roman road extended into the eastern corner of the area of the excavation but was later revealed to be a modern garden path.

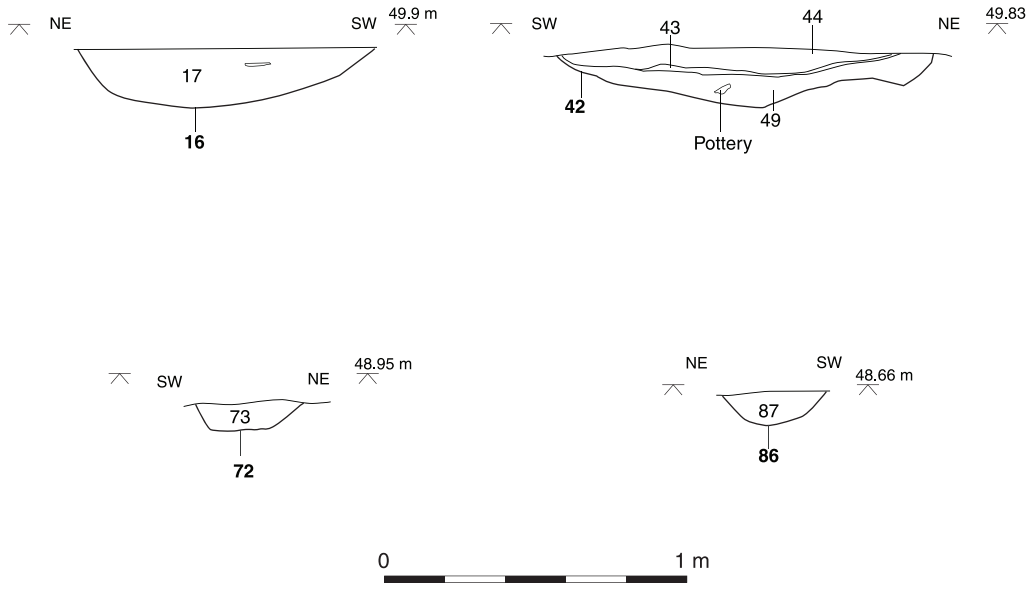

Fig. 22. Rectory: Phase 2 sections.

THE FINDS

Pottery by Kayt Brown and Jane Timby

A small assemblage of 339 sherds of pottery (3,607 g) was recovered from the excavations as detailed in Table 19. The assemblage appears to span the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The condition of the sherds is generally good, with a number of large and unworn sherds and good preservation of surfaces. Where relevant the fabrics are cross-referenced to the Gloucester City type fabric (TF) series. The assemblage was quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated (rim) vessel equivalents (EVE). The assemblage was recorded directly onto an access database, which, along with the fabric series, forms part of the site archive.

Fabrics and Forms

A small quantity of hand-made pre-Roman native ware was recovered comprising two fabrics; a grog-tempered ware (Glos TF 2C) and a Malvernian rock-tempered ware (Glos TF 18; Tomber and Dore 1998: MALREA). The only featured sherds are in the latter ware comprising a Malvernian tubby jar from context 33 and a dish with internal and external burnished lattice decoration from context 64. Such wares feature commonly until and sometimes beyond the 2nd century AD.

The dominant fabrics are Severn Valley wares (Glos TF 17, 11B and 23; Tomber and Dore 1998: SVW OX), which account for over half the assemblage by sherd count (66.4%). Forms represented include jars, bowls and dishes, among them a curving-sided dish and a dish with a footring scar. Decoration on these fabrics comprised burnished zones and lattice decoration.

Table 19. Rectory: quantification of pottery by sherd count, weight (in grams) and estimated vessel equivalents.

	Fabric	Description	No.	%	Wt .	%	EVE	%
Native ware	GL TF 2C	grog-tempered hm	2	0.6	18	0.5	0	0.0
	GL TF 18	Malvernian rock-tempered	15	4.4	203	5.6	28	7.4
Imports	samian	Central Gaulish samian	1	0.3	107	3.0	0	0.0
	samian	South Gaulish samian	1	0.3	8	0.2	0	0.0
	mortaria	source unknown	5	1.5	183	5.1	24	6.3
Regional	GL TF 4	Dorset black burnished ware	11	3.2	114	3.2	3	0.8
Local	GL TF 11B	Severn Valley ware	225	66.4	2,421	67.1	201	52.9
	GL TF 17	SVW charcoal variant	1	0.3	24	0.7	0	0.0
	GL TF 23	SVW hm storage jar	1	0.3	30	0.8	0	0.0
	GL TF 15	SW oxidised sandy ware	1	0.3	24	0.7	0	0.0
	GL TF 7	Gloucester white-slipped flagon	1	0.3	10	0.3	0	0.0
	GL TF 11A?	Gloucester oxidised ware	2	0.6	31	0.9	10	2.6
	GYF	fine micaceous grey ware	54	15.9	295	8.2	66	17.4
Unknown	GREY	misc grey sandy ware	6	1.8	46	1.3	22	5.8
	FE1	Forest of Dean ironstone-tempered	2	0.6	39	1.1	18	4.7
	BW	misc black wares	5	1.5	10	0.3	8	2.1
	WW	fine white ware	3	0.9	4	0.1	0	0.0
	OXWS	micaceous with cream slip	1	0.3	7	0.2	0	0.0
	OXID	misc. oxidised ware	2	0.6	33	0.9	0	0.0
Total			**339**	**100.0**	**3,607**	**100.0**	**380**	**100.0**

Unsourced, but presumably local reduced and oxidised coarse wares make up the bulk of the remaining assemblage. Of particular note is a fine grey, slightly micaceous ware which accounts for 15.9 per cent of the assemblage. This features as jars, including a bead rim jar, bowls and a single beaker rim sherd. Decoration on these coarse ware sherds included rouletting, rustication on the shoulder of a jar sherd, and the use of cordons at the base of neck. The typology would suggest an industry dating to the late 1st–early 2nd century. Other local wares include three possible sherds from the Gloucester kilns (TF 11A and 7), all from flagons, and two sherds with an ironstone temper probably from a local source within the Forest of Dean.

Continental imports are limited to two sherds of samian, one, possibly from Les Martres-de-Veyre, a dish (Dragendorff form 18/31R) and the other, South Gaulish, a decorated bowl (Dragendorff form 29). A possible import is a mortarium from context 3. The fabric is very fine, buff to pink in colour, with a sparse scatter of fine quartzite trituration grits. The vessel has a lead repair rivet still *in situ*.

Metalwork by Leigh Allen

The metalwork assemblage comprised a total of four objects. Two iron nails were recovered from fill 17 of pit 16 and fill 77 of pit 76. Context 77 also yielded a piece of copper-alloy sheet (SF 1). The object comprises three fragments of folded sheet metal at least one of which has rough perforation through it. There appears to be a rivet through one fragment and a neatly cut and finished edge on another. It is possible that these are fragments from a sheet metal vessel or vessel repair. A lump of melted lead (SF 2) weighing 91 g was recovered from fill 39 of pit 41.

Metal-Working Waste by Lynne Keys

A total of 46.1 kg of material identified as iron slag was recovered from the excavation, as detailed in Table 20.

Much of the slag is in a broken condition and so could only be characterised as undiagnostic. Of the material which could be securely identified, tap slag, the most diagnostic by-product of the smelting process, formed the bulk of the assemblage. It is likely that the bulk of the material described as run slag and much of the undiagnostic material is in fact also broken tap slag. Of the two largest individual assemblages, pit 56 was filled by a deposit (55) composed almost entirely of smelting debris while context 3 consisted of similar material, albeit in a more fragmentary state.

The presence of hammerscale and other micro-slags in a number of deposits indicates that the assemblage represents the debris from smithing activities as well as smelting. This debris is more likely to result from primary smithing to remove excess slag from the bloom than from the production of finished artefacts.

No evidence for furnace structures or smithing hearths was found in the excavation, but pieces of furnace lining were recovered from layer 3 and from deposit 55, the fill of pit 56. Fragments of iron were present in context 33, the second of the three fills of pit 31, and in layer 54.

Table 20. Rectory: quantification of slag by context (* hammerscale present).

Context	Tap slag (g)	Run slag (g)	Dense slag (g)	Micro-slags (g)	Hammer-scale	Undiag-nostic (g)	Total (g)
3	749		120			1,554	2,423
11			150			217	367
13	64	46					110
21	714	88				1,612	2,414
29	440					52	492
31						34	34
32	62				*	16	78
33	468	254				188	910
34	52				*		52
39						86	86
40					*		
43		76			*	8	84
44	90				*	12	102
54	62	8708	38	277	*	11,576	20,661
55	10,216	756	776	13		5,476	17,237
61					*	24	24
64	34	50				466	550
73					*		
77					*	24	24
87	58				*		58

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

Animal Bone by Emma-Jayne Evans

Results

A total of 375 (2,487 g) fragments of bone and teeth were recovered during the excavation. The refitting of broken elements reduced this fragment count to 289 pieces. The bones survived in good condition, with the majority scoring 1 according to Lyman's criteria (Lyman 1996).

Despite the generally good condition of the bones, there are many small broken fragments, many with fresh breaks, resulting in only 63 fragments (21.8%) being identifiable to species (Table 21). A single bone was certainly identified as sheep which has been incorporated into the sheep/goat category in Table 21.

Cattle appear to be present in slightly larger numbers than sheep/goat. Although this is based on very low numbers, it does follow a pattern commonly observed on Roman sites, in which cattle are often present in greater numbers than sheep/goat.

Fusion data gave some limited information regarding the age at death of some animals present at the site. The assemblage from Phase 1 included juvenile cattle, sheep/goat and pig, while juvenile cattle and pig were present in layer 3.

Carnivore gnawing was noted on three bones from pit 31, one bone from pit 6, and on two bones from the Roman soil layer (context 3). This may indicate that these bones were left exposed on the surface for some time before finally being covered over. Butchery marks were noted on several bones from each phase.

Discussion

The small size of the excavated assemblage does not allow any conclusions about animal husbandry regimes to be made, although the main domestic species of cattle, sheep/goat and pig are all present. The presence of several juveniles and the occurrence of butchery marks indicate that these animal remains are likely to represent household domestic waste.

Charred Plant Remains by Denise Druce

A total of fifteen bulk samples were collected from a range of features during the excavation. Following an initial assessment, three samples were selected for further analysis (Table 22).

Table 21. Rectory: total number of bones according to species and phase.

Phase	**cattle**	**sheep/goat**	**pig**	**horse**	**unidentified**	**Total**
1	16	14	5	1	142	178
2	6	6	1	–	36	49
Soil layer 3	8	5	1	–	48	62
Total	**30**	**25**	**7**	**1**	**226**	**289**

Results

All three samples contained cereal grains, although sample 4, from fill 43 of pit 42, only contained three identifiable grains. Sample 8, from beam slot 72, produced the largest cereal grain assemblage, and this was dominated by *Avena* sp. (oats) and *Triticum* sp. (wheat) grains. Many of the grains were of the short-grained variety, resembling free-threshing wheat such as *Triticum* cf. *aestivum* (bread wheat). *Triticum* sp., including *Triticum* cf. *spelta/dicoccum* (spelt/emmer wheat), grains were also present in all three samples. All of the samples contained *Triticum spelta* (spelt wheat) glume bases/spikelet forks, in addition to which samples 8 and 10 also contained *Avena* sp. awn fragments and limited numbers of culm nodes. Sample 8 also contained *Triticum aestivum* and *Secale cereale* (rye) rachis. The weed seed assemblages from all three samples contained taxa typical of grassland/cultivated land, dominated by Poaceae (grass) and Fabaceae (pea family), with some element of wet or damp ground. Additionally, *Corylus avellana* (hazel) shell and *Brassica* sp. (cabbage etc) seeds were recorded in small quantities, but even if these plants were collected or cultivated as food their low amounts suggest that neither was likely to have formed a major part of the diet.

Conclusions

The charred plant remains contained taxa typical of crop husbandry during the Roman period in Britain. Spelt wheat, considered to be the principle cereal crop during this period, was the dominant crop represented, along with free-threshing wheat such as bread wheat and rye. Free-threshing wheat is not so common in the Roman period, and its presence here and at other sites in Gloucestershire (e.g. Birdlip Quarry: Pelling 1999) and south-east Wales (e.g. Biglis: Hillman 1981 cited in Caseldine 1990) may reflect a regional pattern. The relatively high numbers of Fabaceae seeds has been attributed elsewhere to arable agriculture and decreasing soil fertility (Jones 1978). Weeds indicative of both damp and well-drained ground were present, indicating that a variety of land was being exploited. As Dymock is situated on the edge of the floodplain of the river Leadon

Table 22. Rectory: the charred plant remains.

	Sample	**4**	**8**	**10**
	Context.	43	73	32
	Feature	Pit 42	Beam slot 72	Pit 31
	Sample size (litres)	20	40	40
Cereal Grain				
Triticum sp.	Wheat	1	6	9
Triticum sp.	Short-grained/free-threshing wheat	1	20	–
Hordeum vulgare	Barley undiff.	1	–	1
Avena sp.	Oats	–	40	1
Secale cereale	Rye	–	4	–
Cerealia indet.	Indeterminate grains	3	17	11
	Total Grain	**6**	**87**	**22**
Cerealia indet. frag.		19	174	48
Cerealia indet.	Sprouted embryos	2	17	29
Cereal Chaff				
Triticum spelta	Spelt wheat glume base	8	38	586
Triticum spelta	Spelt wheat spikelet fork	1	–	4
Triticum sp.	Wheat spikelet fork base.	1	31	78
Triticum aestivum	Bread wheat rachis	–	6	–
Secale cereale	Rye rachis	–	8	–
Avena sp.	Oat awn frag.	–	28	12
cf. Cerealia indet.	Culm node	–	5	2
	Total Chaff	**10**	**116**	**682**
Triticum cf. *spelta* frag.	cf. Spelt wheat glume base frag.	–	60	420
Other Charred Edibles				
Corylus avellana frag.	Hazelnut shell frag.	5	1	–
Brassica sp.	Cabbages	–	1	–
Weed Seeds				
Ranunculus sp.	Buttercups	–	6	–
Ranunculas cf. *repens*	Creeping Buttercup	–	10	–
Papaver sp.	Poppies	3	–	–
Chenopodium/Atriplex	Goosefoots/Oraches	7	9	3
Stellaria media	Common Chickweed	1	1	1
Agrostemma githago	Corncockle	–	9	–
Cerastium sp.	Mouse-ears	–	14	–
Polygonum undiff.	Knotgrasses	1	–	1
Polygonum aviculare	Knotgrass	–	3	–
Polygonum lapathifolium	Pale Persicaria	1	–	–
Fallopia convolvulus	Black-bindweed	–	1	–
Rumex acetosa	Common Sorrel	–	10	1
Rumex acetosella	Sheep's Sorrel	2	12	–
Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved Dock	8	3	–

Viola sp.	Violets	–	1	–
cf. *Hypericum* sp.	St John's-worts	–	6	–
Anagallis arvensis	Scarlet Pimpernel	–	6	–
Rosaceae	Rose family	–	1	–
Fabaceae <4 mm	Pea family	18	45	7
Vicia/Lathyrus/Pisum	Vetches/Peas/Garden Pea	1	1	–
Trifolium/Medicago/Lotus	Clovers/Medicks/Trefoils	–	30	–
Conium maculatum	Hemlock	–	2	–
Plantago sp.	Plantains	2	18	–
Plantago major	Greater Plantain	–	2	–
Rhinanthus minor agg.	Yellow-rattle	–	8	–
Galium sp.	Bedstraws	1	–	2
Asteraceae	Daisy family	–	1	1
Lapsana communis	Nipplewort	–	2	–
Leontodon sp.	Hawkbits	–	2	1
Anthemis cotula	Stinking Chamomile	2	–	1
Chrysanthemum segetum	Corn Marigold	–	8	–
Tripleurospermum inodorum	Scentless Mayweed	–	2	–
Carex spp. trigynous	Sedges- three sided	11	14	1
Carex spp. lenticular	Sedges- two sided	–	4	3
Poaceae <2 mm	Grass family	17	327	44
Poaceae 2–4 mm	Grass family	5	30	72
Poaceae >4 mm	Grass family	–	–	1
Bromus sp.	Bromes	1	10	24
Indet.	Indeterminate seeds	11	10	–
Indet.	Unknown seeds	1	1	–
	Total Weed Seeds	**93**	**609**	**163**

it is possible that some low lying areas were being cultivated during the summer months when flooding was less likely to have taken place.

Wood Charcoal by Dana Challinor

Two samples were analysed for wood charcoal remains. Sample 1 was from fill 13 of pit 12, while sample 13 was from context 77, the fill of pit 76. A sample from a large irregular pit with a dump of charcoal, slag and burnt soil (feature 42; context 44) was briefly examined to confirm the provisional identifications made in the assessment by Elizabeth Huckerby. The results of the analysis by fragment count are given in Table 23.

Methodology

Fragments of charcoal >2 mm were extracted from the flots and identified. The charcoal was fractured and sorted into groups based on the anatomical features observed in transverse section at × 10 and × 20 magnification. Representative fragments from each group were then selected for further examination using a Meiji incident-light microscope at up to × 400 magnification. Identifications were made with reference to Schweingruber (1990), Hather (2000) and modern

Table 23. Rectory: results of the charcoal analysis.

		Phase	AD 2nd/3rd century	
		Cut number	12	76
		Context number	13	77
		Sample number	1	13
		Volume floated (litres)	10	40
		% flot identified	25	25
Ulmus sp.	elm		–	1
Quercus sp.	oak		–	91sh
Corylus avellana	hazel		12	7
Betula sp.	birch		–	8
Maloideae	hawthorn type		90r	13
Hedera helix	ivy		3	–
Indeterminate			12	4
Total	**117**		**124**	

Key: h = heartwood; r = roundwood; s = sapwood

reference material. Classification and nomenclature follow Stace (1997). The maturity of the wood was assessed where the condition of the wood permitted but the material was too fragmented to examine growth rings.

Results

Six taxa were positively identified (Table 23). The taxonomic level of identification varied according to the biogeography and anatomy of the taxa. The preservation of the charcoal was average; it was generally fragmented with most fragments less than 4 mm in size. The indeterminate fragments are likely to represent additional specimens of taxa positively identified. Both oak sapwood and heartwood were identified in sample 13, while sample 1 produced a large quantity of narrow roundwood fragments (<20 mm in diameter).

The brief examination of charcoal from context 44 (pit 42) confirmed that a range of taxa was indeed present, including *Quercus* (oak), Maloideae (hawthorn type), cf. *Rhamnus cathartica* (purging buckthorn) and *Prunus spinosa* (blackthorn), but the provisional identification of *Ilex aquifolium* (holly) was not verified.

Discussion

The analysis of the two charcoal samples shows a distinct contrast in the selection of taxa and type of wood for fuel. The assemblage from pit 12 (sample 1) was dominated by narrow roundwood of hawthorn type (Maloideae), whereas the assemblage from pit 76 (sample 13) was chiefly composed of oak, heartwood and sapwood. While this variation may relate to changes in woodland resources or management practices over time, it is more likely to relate to the function of the fire. The processes of iron smelting and smithing would both have required charcoal as fuel (Edlin 1949, 160; Cleere and Crossley 1985), although it is not possible to determine from archaeological charcoal whether it was used as charcoal or as wood fuel. Traditional methods for making charcoal utilise shallow pits with layers of straw/grass or clamps of roundwood to shut out

the air (Edlin 1949, 160). However, the hawthorn type stems from pit 12 were particularly narrow and it is unlikely that they would have provided the prolonged high temperatures required for smelting, although the intense, short-lived heat provided could have supported some smithing activity.

Nevertheless, the complete absence of oak from this sample is unusual. Traditionally, oak heartwood forms a significant component of the fuelwood used for smithing (Edlin 1949), and this is also supported by archaeological assemblages from features associated with both iron smelting and smithing. Evidence from other sites suggests a dominance of oak, with a range of other, variable, taxa (e.g. Campbell 1998, 37; Challinor forthcoming; Cleere and Crossley 1985, 37; Figueiral 1992, 189; Gale 1999, 378). Even where there is evidence of alternative fuels being used, indicating pressure on woodland resources, oak remains a component of the assemblage (Murphy 2000, 220). It is possible that the presence of small quantities of other non-oak taxa may be explained by their use as an aid to ignition or as an accidental inclusion. Certainly, the ivy in sample 1 is likely to have been attached to a host tree which was deliberately felled/gathered for use. It is interesting to note that sample 5 from pit 42 also produced a range of taxa, including some additional taxa not identified in the analysed samples. This suggests that, apart from the need for oak for smelting, there was little deliberate selection of wood for charcoal burning.

DISCUSSION

The ceramic evidence indicates that occupation at the Rectory site commenced during the late 1st or early 2nd century with the establishment of linear boundaries in the form of a fence-line extending NE–SW across the area of the excavation and a gully extending at right angles to it toward the north-west. These features were associated with rubbish pits, the fills of which contained pottery and animal bone, some of which exhibited signs of butchery. Although there was no evidence for structures associated with these features within the excavated area the domestic refuse deposited in the pits and in the gully was presumably generated by occupation close by. This phase of activity would be contemporary with occupation recently recorded in excavations *c.*150 m to the north-west of the current site at Rose Cottage and Winserdine (Tavener 2001) and *c.*250 m to the east at Dymock Sewage Treatment Works (Catchpole 2000 and above).

During the 2nd century the earlier features were superseded by the construction of a rectilinear building (88) associated with a number of pits, some of which were dug along the building's gable end. The building measured at least 9.5 × 6.5 m and was founded on ground-fast beams. The absence of other building materials from the excavation would indicate that it was constructed from timber or wattle and daub, with a thatched, shingle or turf roof. The large ditch recorded during the evaluation and encountered in the soakaway pit to the east of the main excavation area is aligned parallel to the building's south-east wall and may have been part of an enclosure ditch within which the building stood. A gully (8) excavated in the western soakaway may be a related boundary or the beam slot of a second building. This is similar to the results of the excavation at the sewage treatment work, where a series of rectangular buildings up to 22.5 m long, associated with pits and burials, was identified within a large ditched enclosure (Catchpole 2000 and above). The evidence from these two sites suggests that the settlement may have been divided into a number of rectilinear plots arrayed alongside the road, each containing an individual dwelling together with out-buildings, pits and other associated features.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are owed to Neil Percival of Bruton Knowles Property Assets Consultancy which commissioned the work on behalf of its clients, the diocese of Gloucester. The diocese paid for the fieldwork and the post-excavation work including this publication. The fieldwork was managed for OA by Dan Poore and the post-excavation programme by Alan Hardy. The fieldwork was monitored by Charles Parry of Gloucester County Council Archaeological Services who also provided helpful comments on the draft text. The editor is thanked for assistance during the publication of this report. Thanks are owed to all of the specialists for their reports and to Oxford Archaeology's finds, environmental and archive staff for their work at various stages of the project. Dana Challinor would like to thank Dr. Mark Robinson (Oxford University Museum) for reading a draft of her report. Philippa Bradley edited the report.

Archive

The archive will be deposited at Dean Heritage Centre, Soudley, under accession number SOYDH 2002.75.

Dymock: its origins and function

By TOBY CATCHPOLE, ANDREW SIMMONDS and TIM COPELAND

Recent excavations at the Rectory site, at Dymock Sewage Treatment Works and at Rose Cottage and Winserdine (Tavener 2001) have all failed to uncover evidence for either Iron-Age occupation or military activity at Dymock. This leads to the conclusion that the settlement founded in the Roman period, probably during the second half of the 1st century AD, was from the outset civilian in nature. Dymock certainly comes within the category of 'roadside settlements' described by Roger Finch Smith (1987) as there is evidence of buildings within 50 metres of the road. Its description as a large rural settlement (McWhirr 1981, 59) is probably based on the spread of finds reported by Gethyn-Jones. The function of this type of settlement is much more difficult to establish. On the evidence of the archaeological interventions that are the subject of these papers, we can now postulate a primarily agricultural settlement with a significant industrial component stretching along a metalled road from at least the Rose Cottage to the cricket pitch sites in the late 1st century. It may well be that official travellers were being housed in the settlement.

Black (1995) suggests that roadside settlements were deliberately founded by the Roman administration to provide a workforce and lodgings to aid the functioning of the transport system. Dymock was either deliberately founded or developed due to market availability but as the same evidence could be used to make a case for either scenario it is extremely difficult to determine if one or both applied here. The settlements at Kenchester, Stretton Grandison, Dymock and Worcester (and possibly Gloucester if the postulated southern road from Dymock did exist) are equidistant from each other and this may indicate that these settlements were planted as an act of deliberate policy, perhaps associated with the functioning of the imperial transport and postal system.