

**AVON EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

# **CAMERTON**

**DECEMBER 1999**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This report was prepared by Emily La Trobe-Bateman.

I would like to thank the following people for their help: Vince Russett, project manager (Avon County Archaeologist, subsequently North Somerset Archaeologist) and Dave Evans (Avon Sites and Monuments Officer, subsequently South Gloucestershire Archaeologist) for their comments on the draft report; Pete Rooney and Tim Twiggs for all their IT support, help with printing and advice setting up the GIS data base; Bob Sydes (Bath and North East Somerset Archaeologist), who managed the final stages of the project; Jane Lawes for her help identifying the articles in the *Camertonia* journal. Special thanks go to Roger Thomas, Graham Fairclough and John Scofield of English Heritage who have been very supportive throughout the life of the project. Final thanks go to English Heritage whose substantive financial contribution made the project possible.

## CONTENTS

1.0	<b>Introduction</b>	1
1.1	The aims of the report	1
1.2	Major sources of evidence	1
1.3	A brief history of Camerton	2
2.0	<b>Prehistoric archaeology (pre AD 47)</b>	4
2.1	Sources of evidence	4
2.2	Local settlement pattern in the Neolithic and Bronze Age	4
2.3	Local settlement pattern in the Iron Age	5
2.4	Regional context	6
3.0	<b>Romano-British archaeology (AD 47–c.450)</b>	7
3.1	Sources of evidence	7
3.2	The Fosse Way	7
3.3	1st century settlement	7
3.4	2nd century settlement	8
3.5	3rd century settlement	8
3.6	4th and 5th century settlement	9
3.7	Regional context	9
4.0	<b>Post-Roman and early medieval archaeology (c.450-1066)</b>	10
4.1	Sources of evidence	10
4.2	Sub-Roman and early medieval cemetery	10
4.3	Regional context	10
5.0	<b>Further research</b>	11
6.0	<b>References</b>	12
6.1	Bibliography	12

### Maps

Study area

Statutory designations

Map A: Neolithic and Bronze Age

Map B: Iron Age

Map C: Romano-British

Map D: Romano-British settlement areas in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th/5th centuries

Map E: Post-Roman / early medieval period

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The aims of the report

The Extensive Urban Areas Survey in Avon was commissioned by English Heritage in October 1995; the survey was completed three years later in September 1998. It is one survey in a national project designed to assess the archaeological resource in smaller and less-well understood urban areas. It is the sister project of the Intensive Urban Areas Survey which, as its name suggests, has been focused on the *intensive* study of large urban areas where complex stratigraphy is known to survive and archaeological interventions are comparatively high. The settlements chosen for inclusion in the *extensive* survey, though not necessarily small, have been subject to fewer archaeological interventions and limited historical enquiry.

The aim of the Avon survey has been twofold:

- To provide an assessment of the archaeological resource surviving in the following urban and former urban areas in Avon: Banwell, Bedminster, Camerton, Chew Magna, Clevedon, Chipping Sodbury, Hawkesbury Upton, Keynsham, Kingswood and Mangotsfield, Marshfield, Norton-Radstock, Pill, Portishead, Thornbury, Weston-super-Mare and Wickwar.
- To provide a strategy to improve the management of the archaeological resource and the historic environment in these urban and former urban areas.

Following local government reorganisation, Avon County Council ceased to exist on 31 March 1996 and four new unitary authorities were created: Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset. As a result four areas now fall within the jurisdiction of Bath and North East Somerset Unitary Council: Camerton, Chew Magna, Keynsham and Norton-Radstock.

The assessment report is a strictly desk-top study of below-ground archaeological remains, standing buildings and historic plan form of the urban area. The development of the town is considered within a standard chronological framework, drawing on information in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held by Bath and North East Somerset Unitary Council and historic maps held in the county record offices. The quality of many records in the Avon SMR is poor and where necessary clarification and/or corroboration was sought through research conducted in Bristol Central Library and local libraries. Original research and site visits were outside the remit of the project but it is hoped that the assessment reports will encourage others to take forward our understanding of these historic settlement centres: recommendations for further research are made at the end of each report. All sites and finds of archaeological interest identified in the text were mapped onto the modern map base using a geographical information system (MapInfo). A paper copy of these maps is included in the reports.

Copies of the assessment reports for all the urban and former urban areas in Bath and North East Somerset are held in the Sites and Monuments Record (Trimbridge House, Trim Street, Bath), Bath Library and Bristol Central Reference Library.

### 1.2 Major sources of evidence

Camerton has been included in this survey because excavation in the 19th and 20th centuries revealed evidence for a nucleated Romano-British settlement in fields to the south of the present village. It is one of the best-known 'minor settlements of Roman Britain' and its fame is a direct result of the efforts of William Wedlake, who maintained a close association with the site and its setting for the whole of his life (Jackson 1990: 8). In 1958 he published the results of excavation and fieldwork at the site, including a summary of work carried out by earlier antiquarians such as the Reverend Skinner and Reverend Horne, in '*Excavations at Camerton*'. The present report is largely dependent on this work, and is inevitably constrained by it.

Collinson first mentions the site in 1791. In his description of Camerton he states that:

'large foundations of buildings have been seen. Near the Fosse were heretofore found some large bones, and part of a tessellated pavement' (Collinson 1791: 329).

In the first half of the 19th century John Skinner worked intermittently on various archaeological features on the plateau (1800-1839). Although his methods were far from systematic, he did record a great deal of what he found in his voluminous diary. He bequeathed a total of 150 volumes to the British Museum, where they are still held. In 1816 he claimed to have located the foundations of 18 buildings along the Fosse Way, but unfortunately his plan was lost. Scarth published some of the details in 1861, and Haverfield collated all the remaining finds and published the results in the Victoria County History in 1906.

Further excavation began in 1926, when human skeletons were found to the north of Eighteen-Acre field during quarrying operations. Dom Horne directed summer excavations at the site between 1926 and 1932. Work on the plateau then switched to examining the Romano-British buildings at Camerton, and excavation continued until the beginning of the Second World War. Camerton Excavation Club was set up after the war, and the summer excavations were directed by Wedlake, and usually lasted several weeks.

The long period over which excavations took place and the short digging seasons, makes Wedlake's publications all the more remarkable. However, it also indicates the potential shortcomings of the work, and the discrepancies between, for example, the final site plans and those drawn up during excavations (Lawes personal communication). Interest in the site was also directed firmly towards 'the Romans', and consequently the relationship of the site to earlier Iron Age occupation was not explored, and the post-Roman phase did not receive adequate attention. Although some evidence for timber structures was recorded, it is likely that a great deal was missed.

The size of the settlement is certainly larger than the area Wedlake indicated on his site plans: in 1980 a large quantity of metal artefacts was discovered by metal-detector users in fields to the north of the settlement area. Although the context and exact place of the finds were not recorded, an analysis of the group by Jackson (1990) has shed new light on the site and his work has been included in this report.

### 1.3 A brief history of Camerton

The Camerton site occupies one of the highest points on a plateau of Cornbrash, which is part of the oolitic ridge to the east of the Mendips. This fertile strip of land is about one kilometre long and three kilometres wide, separating the river valleys of the Cam and the Wellow. A large number of flints have been found on the plateau, including finished tools from hunter-gatherer and early farming communities of the fifth to the second millennia BC. Bronze Age funerary remains also survive, along with evidence for extensive Iron Age settlement on the plateau, including several ditches, pottery, bronze and bone needles, animal bones, and human skeletal remains. Coins of the Dobunni tribe have also been found and there is little doubt that they occupied the site when the Roman invaders arrived around AD 43-47 (Wedlake 1958: 7; Jackson 1990: 12).

Wedlake characterised the first phase of the Romano-British site by the construction of the Fosse Way, which formed the backbone of the settlement; today the A367 Bath-Wells road follows the same route as it passes through the site. He suggested that a temporary work camp in what is now the east corner of the Longlands Field, was built to house the people who planned and built this famous road; soon after, wooden buildings began to appear mainly on the north side of the Fosse Way (Wedlake 1958: 7). He believed that further archaeological investigation was needed to establish the military status of the site at the time of the conquest. Sadly, this 'second phase' was never initiated, but the discovery of over 300 metal artefacts by metal-detector users in fields to the north of the site has led Jackson to argue that Camerton was the site of a Roman fort.

The first stone buildings were constructed in about AD 180 to the north of the Fosse Way and facing it. At this time there were also a number of outbuildings, made mostly of timber, in an area to the south of the Fosse Way. These buildings were burnt down in the early 3rd century. The cause or reason for their destruction is not known, although it was probably related to the growth of the iron-smelting industry and the introduction of pewter casting workshops on the site. A series of simple rectangular buildings were built in their place, and Wedlake thought it likely that they were built to house artisans connected with this industrial development (Wedlake 1958: 54). Further buildings were constructed in the first half of the 4th century, although they are described by Wedlake as 'buildings of inferior workmanship', with stones incorporated from earlier buildings and masonry 'degenerate in character' (Wedlake 1958: 8). By the 5th century he describes the desertion of the settlement, and occupation by 'squatters'.

Wedlake's emotive use of words to describe the changing fortunes of Roman Camerton can be identified with the interests of Imperial Rome rather than a serious attempt to explore the last phase in the town's life. It seems likely that later timber structures may well have been missed during excavations and that there was continual settlement of the site into the 6th century. The presence of a large early medieval cemetery only a few hundred metres to the north of Camerton suggests an overlap between its use and the occupation at Camerton during the 5th and 6th centuries.

## 2.0 PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY

### 2.1 Sources of evidence

- **Below ground intervention:** Sporadic excavation 1800-1839 by Reverend John Skinner (manuscripts held at the British Museum); excavation 1926-1956 (Wedlake 1958); metal detecting finds (Jackson 1990); excavation due to the Eckweek bypass (Young forthcoming).

### 2.2 Local settlement pattern in the Neolithic and Bronze Age

#### **Flint and stone axe finds** [Map A: 1]

Many prehistoric flints and a large volume of flint debitage were collected by Wedlake from the Camerton plateau; this high concentration of flint material is shown on his excavation plan (Wedlake 1958: 9) and indicates prehistoric exploitation of the area; this area has been shown on *Map A*. A total of eight stone axeheads have been recorded, including one example which was made from a greenish grey igneous rock from the Penwith district area of Cornwall (Wedlake 1958: 21); 78 arrowheads and 27 other flint implements were also found. The highest concentration of finds was in Thirty Acre Field and Eighteen Acre Field. Wedlake ascribes Neolithic and Early Bronze Age dates to most of the finds. He noted that for each implement or arrowhead represented, at least 100 fragments of flint were also picked up, but this material was almost certainly discarded. Any assessment of the flints today would examine this 'discarded' material and could have added much to our understanding of the collection.

#### **Pit** (SMR 1145) [Map A: 2]

During the excavation of the early medieval cemetery at Camerton (described below) a number of potsherds, a flint thumb-scraper, a saddle quern and two rounded stones were found in a small pit which was identified by Wedlake as earlier in date than the cemetery. Comparisons with pottery found at Ham Hill (Somerset) and Maiden Castle (Dorset) led Wedlake to suggest a Neolithic date for the finds (Wedlake 1958: 19). The depiction of the pit on *Map A* is based on the cemetery area, as identified by Wedlake on his general excavation plan (Wedlake 1958: 9).

#### **Bronze Age barrows** (SMR 1152, SMR 1151) [Map A: 3, 4]

Two barrows can be identified in Rowberrow Field and they were both partly excavated by Wedlake. Barrow I is still highly visible today and is commonly known as 'Roundhill' (SMR 1152). The second barrow, Barrow II, in the north east corner of Rowberrow Field has been almost ploughed out since Wedlake's excavations and was only a metre high when it was last surveyed in 1981 (SMR 1151). According to Skinner many more barrows were ploughed out when the plateau ceased to be common land and was enclosed in the latter half of the 18th century (Grinsell 1971: 109-10). The depiction of the barrows shown on *Map A* is based on the excavation plan produced by Wedlake, and mapped earthwork features surviving today (Wedlake 1958: 9).

Barrow I was excavated by Skinner in 1815. Although he found no evidence for a cist, he describes a hole dug into the natural soil in the center of the barrow and a large amount of charcoal. The only finds recorded are a broken whetstone and a human thigh bone. Wedlake did not excavate the main barrow, but dug sections at the north and south of its base. This work revealed that no surrounding ditch had been dug, but material had been removed from the south side to emphasise a natural rise. The original ground level emerged from underneath the barrow about one metre above the present surface (Wedlake 1958: 29). It was found to be burnt and contained charcoal as Skinner had indicated, possibly indicating a funerary pyre.

Barrow II lies to the north of Barrow I, only a few metres south of the Fosse Way. It has been ploughed over many times, and consequently it is spread out over a larger area and is less visible than its neighbour. Its height is also masked by Romano-British occupation material. Wedlake excavated a larger part of this barrow, including part of the central area, which showed clear evidence for extensive disturbance. As with Barrow I there was a thick layer of burning at the original ground level (turf-line). Finds were also found at this level, including pottery, a flint thumb-scraper, flint flakes, animal bone and a small fragment of human bone. Excavation of the barrow ditch did not

reveal any evidence of ceremonial deposits, such as those found in barrow ditches on the Wiltshire Downs.

#### **Late Bronze Age cremation (SMR 1150)[Map A: 5]**

During an exploratory cutting made by Wedlake in 1955, an inverted cordoned cinerary urn was found in a shallow pit. The urn measured 23cm (9 inches) high, with a diameter at the mouth 23cm (9 inches) and a base diameter of 15cm (6 inches) (Wedlake 1958: 28). Wedlake identified it as a late Bronze Age cremation, adding that further cremations may be found in this area (*ibid*: 41). The area shown on *Map A* is based on the excavation plan produced by him (*ibid*: 9).

#### **Environmental data**

Wedlake made a limited investigation of environmental data. Charcoal recovered from ash deposits at the center of Barrow II and its ditch were examined, and willow (or poplar), ash, holly and possibly birch species identified (Balfour Brown 1958: 30), indicating that these trees were well established before the Bronze Age. Animal bones recovered from the same layer were identified from ox, pig, horse, pig and sheep (Jackson 1958: 30).

### **2.3 Local settlement pattern in the Iron Age**

#### **Iron Age settlement [Map B: 1, 2, 3]**

Wedlake subdivides Iron Age occupation at Camerton into an early and late period on the basis of pottery types A and B. This division has since been discredited (Cunliffe 1974) and for the purposes of this report distinctions made by Wedlake on the basis of the pottery will not be considered. However, the Camerton plateau was clearly the site of an extensive Iron Age settlement for a considerable period of time. The largest area of settlement remains was found during excavations of a quarry in Seven Acre Field (Horne 1937; Wedlake 1958: 9). The area shown on *Map B* is based on Wedlake's excavation plan (*ibid*)[*Map B: 1*].

Skinner first mentioned the quarry in his diary. It is clear from his description that human remains, which he describes as graves, fragments of pottery, animal bones and charcoal were all found. He writes of a farmer in the area:

‘the quarry has been worked as long as he can remember, and that a great quantity of bones, and pieces of pottery have at different times been thrown out by the workmen, at one time he recollects seven skulls, and several thigh and arm bones, which were interred again on the side of the quarry’ (Wedlake 1950: 3).

Part of the area of excavated by Wedlake, and a system of Iron Age ditches [*Map B: 2*] was found close to The Fosse Way and continuing underneath it. They were part of a large defensive or enclosure system, which gradually filled up with occupation debris (Wedlake 1958: 38). The area shown on *Map B* is conjectural and covers the approximate area shown on the general excavation plan produced by Wedlake (1958: 21).

A second occupation phase clearly overlies these ditches. A circular structure with wattle-and-daub walls was constructed with its entrance across a small causeway facing eastward. The gateway had large posts on either side, strutted with smaller posts. There was a central hearth and a small drainage channel which led water into the nearby circular ditch. An inner circle of posts supported the roof (Wedlake 1958: 39). Iron Age pottery has also been recovered from the circular ditch around Barrow II, where excavation revealed a gradual infilling of Iron Age and Romano-British occupation debris. A loosely built stone, circular structure [*Map B: 3*] was built partially in the ditch and in the shelter of the barrow mound. The area shown on *Map B* is based on the general excavation plan produced by Wedlake (1958: 21).

Trenching operations in two other fields close to the Camerton site have produced further examples of Iron Age ditches and occupation material (Wedlake 1958: 39). In his diaries, Skinner writes that pre-Roman material was found in a quarry at Red Post. He also mentions that six skeletons were found ‘in a quarry by the lane side which leads



from the Red Post to Wellow' (Skinner Manuscripts 33648). Wedlake interpreted this to mean a refilled quarry at the junction of the Red Post, Braysdown and Wellow roads, but the location is not certain.

### **Pre-Roman settlement**

There is little doubt that Camerton was occupied when the Romans arrived around AD 43-47 (Wedlake 1958: 7; Jackson 1990: 12). Coins, pottery and metalwork found on the Camerton plateau suggest a strong Iron Age presence in the early years of the 1st century AD. The Dobunni tribe is known to have occupied the Cotswolds and Bath area at this time, and four of their coins were found during the excavations at Camerton, indicating that the plateau was almost certainly part of their territory.

### **Late La Tène Cemetery [Map B: 4]**

Of particular interest are three large grey coarse ware urns found in the north-east corner of the Romano-British settlement area. The neck of each jar was missing and they contained burnt ash, suggesting that they were probable cremation urns. A fourth suspected cremation was found in the same area under a large piece of amphora. Skinner mentioned sepulchral urns found beneath the floors of the Roman buildings; there are several large jars held in the Bristol City Museum which are the bequest of Skinner, and in each case the top part of the jar is missing. Wedlake concluded that these were probably the 'sepulchral urns' found by Skinner and that, like very similar examples from the pre-Roman site of Bagendon near Cirencester, they belonged to a period immediately preceding the Roman occupation of the site (Wedlake 1958: 41).

Radford (1955) has stated that the burial rite among the Dobunni was inhumation. However, the number of examples is very small and comparison with other late La Tène cremations in Britain indicates that elsewhere cremations have sometimes been placed in amphorae and urns. Wedlake suggested that the cremations may be part of a larger late La Tène cemetery. It is located on the south-western limit of the region occupied by the Dobunni, in what might be seen as a liminal or important border region. The area shown on *Map B* is conjectural and based areas identified on the general excavation plan produced by Wedlake (1958: 9).

## **2.4 Regional context**

The area around the Camerton site is comparatively rich in prehistoric remains. There are two Neolithic Long Barrows in close proximity; Stoney Littleton Long Barrow is about two kilometres to the east of the site, and Tunley Long Barrow is about two kilometres to the north. Other chambered long barrows have been found further afield at Beckington, Holcombe, Fromefield, Buckland Down, Felton Common and 'Fairy Toot' at Numpnett Thrubwell (Bulleid 1941). There are also several Bronze Age Round Barrows in the surrounding area. The closest example is Clandown Round Barrow several hundred meters to the west of Camerton site, which was opened by Skinner in 1824 (SMR 2223). A cluster of three barrows called the Wallmead barrows are known to have existed about three kilometres to the north of Camerton Romano-British town (SMR 1126, 1158, 4563). Today only Barrow I is clearly visible, but the other two barrows were excavated by Skinner, and located by Wedlake in the late 1960s. In addition to these mounds, Skinner found four Bronze Age cist burials to the east of Barrow II.

Iron Age occupation has been identified in the same area to the north of the Camerton plateau: a pit close to the Wallmead barrow yielded early Iron Age pottery (SMR 1128), and there is an Iron Age hillfort close to Tunley Long Barrow (SMR 1140). More recent excavation in an area to the north-east of Camerton has revealed Iron Age ditches that may be contemporary with those at Camerton (SMR 2296; Young forthcoming).

### 3.0 ROMANO-BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

#### 3.1 Sources of evidence

- **Below ground intervention:** Sporadic excavation 1800-1839 by Reverend John Skinner (manuscripts held at the British Museum); finds discovered by Skinner (Haverfield 1906); excavation 1926-1956 (Wedlake 1958); metal detecting finds (Jackson 1990).

#### 3.2 The Fosse Way [Map C: 1]

The Fosse Way ran through the centre of Camerton Romano-British settlement, and was evidently vital to its development as an urban center. This section is thought to have been built around AD 47 (Wedlake 1958: 7). The modern road overlies the ancient Roman route over most of the plateau, although occasionally it is exposed: Wedlake was only able to excavate a small part close to Building II. The ditches that ran on either side of the Fosse Way have been more fully excavated. They clearly cut through the filling of the Early Iron Age ditches to the north east of the site, demonstrating that they were abandoned well before the Fosse Way was constructed.

The Fosse Way ditches helped drain water from the surface of the road and may have also marked out the road's military zone at its earliest stage. They were partially infilled by the end of the 1st century AD, and had gone out of use by the end of the 2nd century. Their interrupted character in the settlement area led Wedlake to speculate that they may have formed part of a ditch system of a 1st century military camp alongside the Fosse Way (Wedlake 1958: 45). The area shown on *Map C* is based on the general excavation plan produced by him (Wedlake 1958: 9). Jackson has noted that they are similar to the *titulum* type of Roman defended entrance, but there are no corresponding north-south ditches, corners or contemporary structures in the excavated area (Jackson 1990: 12).

#### 3.3 1st century settlement

##### Possible temporary Roman camp [Map C: 2]

Wedlake also suggested a temporary camp close to the Fosse Way in the north-east corner of Longlands Field, where exploratory cuttings allowed a glimpse of a series of small ditches. Their yellow silt fill contained part of a Hod Hill brooch and a few sherds of pottery of the same date (Wedlake 1958: 42, 227). The site is marked on Wedlake's general excavation plan as 'Probable site of 1st century AD Roman Camp' (Wedlake 1958: 9) but its geographical extent is not shown; as a result, its depiction as a circular area on *Map C* is conjectural. Jackson has argued that this evidence does not adequately support Wedlake's claim and instead has advocated a larger military presence within a fort.

##### Probable fort at Camerton [Map C: 3]

Although Wedlake failed to confirm the presence of a fort at Camerton, more recently Jackson has suggested that Camerton was the site of an early Romano-British fort. His assertion is based on the discovery of over 300 metal artefacts by metal-detector users in 1980. The exact find-spots and context of these finds is not known, but one of the metal-detector users specified the north-east corner of Eighteen Acre Field and the north-west corner of Longlands Field as the main area of finds (Jackson 1990: 16). The area shown on *Map C* is a copy of the area highlighted by Jackson in his study (*ibid*). This area coincides with the highest part of the Camerton plateau, ringed by the 175m contour line, and is a position which commands a particularly good view of the surrounding countryside. Although a search of aerial photographs yielded negative results, its hilltop position makes it a likely spot for an early fort (Jackson 1990: 24).

According to Jackson, the analysis of the Camerton metalwork collection showed that both the date and character of the finds are very different from a normal Romano-British site assemblage, and strongly suggests a conquest-period military assemblage. The great majority of the finds belong to the end of the Iron Age and the beginning of the Romano-British period. The absence of 3rd and 4th century finds is particularly striking, given the flourishing settlement of that period revealed in Wedlake's excavation of the site. The metalwork includes military pieces associated with both infantry and cavalry

soldiers, but they could not be confidently associated with either legionary or auxiliary unit. Jackson concluded that there was probably a flexible use of troops, with 'auxiliaries and legionaries often brigaded together in various combinations and concentrations'. (Jackson 1990: 19)

Whatever the exact nature of the unit at Camerton, they would have probably been responsible for policing or fighting any indigenous populations in the area, and constructing the Fosse Way. Soon after this, they are likely to have had an important role supervising the distribution of lead and silver from the nearby mines at Charterhouse, which appears to have been exploited from at least AD 49. (Jackson 1990: 24)

#### **1st century settlement [Map C: 4, Map D]**

The transition from indigenous to Romano-British settlement is not understood. The excavations concentrated on the stone foundations and failed to carefully examine evidence for timber buildings, although it is clear that all buildings before the 2nd century were made using timber and wattle. As a result it is not known whether the site was a nucleated place before the Romans arrived, if any existing buildings were utilized or destroyed, or if the growth of the site only occurred after the construction of the Fosse Way. The evidence is limited to the presence of a circular structure, described by Wedlake as a 'hut' in the settlement area, and pottery and coins associated with the Dobunni tribe, which suggest pre-Roman activity. By the second half of the 1st century AD, additional buildings were constructed on the north side of the road, using timber and wattle: the assumption is that these were built by the Roman invaders. The area shown on *Map C* is based on Wedlake's general excavation plan (Wedlake 1958: 9).

#### **3.4 2nd century settlement [Map C: 4, Map D]**

By the end of the 2nd century the settlement area had grown up on both sides of the Fosse Way; the area shown on *Map D* is based on Wedlake's general excavation plan (Wedlake 1958: 9). The first stone buildings were constructed about AD 180 to the north of the Fosse Way and facing it. Four buildings have been located and they were all well made and of a corridor type; they are on a south-east alignment which maximizes sunshine and minimizes westerly winds and rain. The street layout underlies this organization, with two parallel roads stretching to the south-east and abutting the Fosse Way; they were probably laid out around AD 150 (Wedlake 1958: 68).

There is also evidence for two parallel streets to the south of the Fosse Way, probably built around AD 180. Intersecting with these are two further roads, forming a distinct chess-board pattern. Although there were no stone building foundations to the south of the Fosse Way during this period, Wedlake claimed to identify the remains of several timber buildings. He writes that there 'appear to have been a number of out-buildings, constructed mostly of timber, on the area south of the Fosse Way, where the later 3rd century buildings were erected' (Wedlake 1958: 7).

A slag pit dating to the early years of the second half of the 1st century AD indicates that iron smelting occurred on the site. Judging from the large amount of iron slag, it is likely to have been used in connection with a smelting furnace or bloomery. Slag occurred in most Romano-British levels on the site, including a layer in the Barrow II ditch contemporary with the Dobunni coins; however, it was greatest in mid 3rd century layers when industrial production in the town was at its height.

#### **3.5 3rd century settlement**

##### **Industrial development in the 3rd Century [Map C: 4, Map D]**

During the early years of the 3rd century the timber buildings south of the Fosse Way were burnt down and a series of simple stone rectangular buildings were built in their place. It is not clear if the destruction of the earlier buildings was due to deliberate clearance, but it may be linked to the growth of the iron-smelting industry and the introduction of a pewter casting industry on the site. The buildings may have been erected to house the artisans connected with this industrial development (Wedlake 1958: 54). The settlement area is depicted on *Map C*.

The new industrial part of the settlement was placed to the east of the residential buildings, in a position that allowed the prevailing south-west wind carried away smoke from the furnaces. Before the workshops were built the ground was leveled and metalled yards were constructed around the buildings. The area shown on *Map D* is based on Wedlake's general excavation plan (Wedlake 1958: 9).

Evidence for a pewter industry includes furnaces, moulds, pewter plates, a handle from a dish, and a spoon. The position of Camerton close to local outcrops of coal and lead deposits in the Mendips made it an attractive location for metal working industries. Lead mining was well established in the Mendips during Flavian times (Wedlake 1958: 95) and there are examples of lead nails and rivets throughout the settlement history.

### **3.6 4th and 5th century settlement [Map C: 4, Map D]**

Building resumed again in the first half of the 4th century, to the north of the Fosse Way. Three buildings were built incorporating stones from earlier buildings and poor quality masonry, and Wedlake concluded that these buildings of 'inferior workmanship' and 'degenerate character' indicated general decline. Although the Roman Empire was indeed crumbling and the wealth of Camerton seems to have hinged on the Fosse Way and industrial production for Roman markets, it is now acknowledged that many settlements continued to be occupied in the post-Roman period, despite the loss of Roman authority. Wedlake found the evidence he was looking for, and as a result we have only a very distorted picture of 5th century 'squatting' at Camerton. It is very likely that later timber buildings were missed during the excavations.

### **3.7 Regional context**

Within three years of the Roman landing in AD 43 the second Augustan Legion had reached the Severn; thus the inhabitants of the Camerton plateau are likely to have come under Roman domination during the period AD 43-AD 47. The Fosse Way was constructed at this time, and it crossed the plateau on its way to Bath. It formed a major axial component of the military communications network (Jackson 1990: 9), extending from Seaton in Devon, by Ilchester to Bath, and then by Cirencester and Lincoln to the Humber (McMurtrie 1903: 326).

Aside from a number of coins and pottery found on the plateau, the only site of particular importance is a large earthwork to the south of Camerton Church (SMR 5184). It pre-dates the church and in his description of the site Skinner mentions four small cists. Wedlake conducted a small excavation on the site and concluded that its original use was probably as a place of interment in Romano-British or even prehistoric times (Wedlake 1958: 99). Further work is required to determine the date of the site and any possible relationship with the settlement at Camerton.

## 4.0 POST-ROMAN AND EARLY MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

### 4.1 Sources of evidence

- **Below ground intervention:** Excavation by Horne 1926-1932 (Horne 1928, 1933a, 1934; Wedlake 1958: 96-97).

### 4.2 Sub-Roman / early medieval cemetery (SMR 1145)[*Map E*]

A number of human skeletons were found in 1926 when quarrying began a few hundred metres to the north-west of the Romano-British site of Camerton, at the Camerton and Clandown crossroads. Dom Horne interviewed the workmen and recovered some of the bones, a gilt bracteate, the glass bezel of a ring and several small silver rings; he concluded that the area was of archaeological importance and gained permission to excavate the area. Excavations commenced and continued each summer for a short season until 1932. (Wedlake 1958: 96)

A total of 109 shallow graves or parts of graves were opened during the excavation, within which 115 skeletons were found. All the skeletons were placed directly in the grave, with the exception of Grave 11 where a stone coffin was used (SMR 926). Grave goods included 28 iron knives, a bone comb, a small pair of shears, three spindle-whorls, a whetstone, iron pins and buckles, three bronze discs, six Roman coins, cowry shells and blue glass beads. The coinage was dated to the fifth century, and a late Roman pale glass bead was dated to the 5th or early 6th centuries. In addition to these finds a number of potsherds, possibly Neolithic or Iron Age in date and a flint scraper came from a small pit (SMR 1147). All the finds are held in Taunton Museum (Accession number A786-873, A2658). (Horne 1928, 1933a, 1934; Wedlake 1958: 96-97)

Judging from the east-west orientation of the burials and the gilt bracteate, the cemetery was probably early Christian in date (although it should be noted that many pre-Christian burials also follow this alignment). Horne has ascribed a 6th and 7th century date to the cemetery (Horne 1928: 63; 1933a: 42), however, the presence of the stone coffin, which is characteristic of Romano-British burial, suggests a longer period of use. It is possible that burials were made here by the 5th century or earlier. Re-examination of the finds may allow its period of use to be identified more accurately.

The cemetery area shown on *Map E* is the same as that identified by Wedlake on his general excavation plan (Wedlake 1958: 9). The quarry was subsequently infilled and the bones from the cemetery reburied close to the site (Lawes personal communication). Although their original context has been destroyed, they still have great value because modern studies of human skeletons can yield information about the age, sex and lifestyle of past populations. It is also highly probable that a number of skeletons at the fringes of the original quarry area were not discovered by Horne (Lawes personal communication); the excavation of these skeletons from their original context has the potential to yield the greatest amount of information.

## 5.0 FURTHER RESEARCH

The Camerton site is of great research interest because there are archaeological remains from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romano-British and post-Roman Period in a very concentrated area. Although a considerable part of the Romano-British settlement has been excavated, there is great potential for further work. A geophysical survey is urgently required to assess the extent of the site. Ideally, this would be followed by a full-scale research project. Short of this, a re-examination of the trenches dug by Wedlake would undoubtedly throw new light on the phasing of the site.

The prehistoric remains on the Camerton plateau are of particular interest and there is still scope for their reassessment through both new fieldwork and the examination of Skinner's work in the early 19th century. Unlike many other antiquarians of the period he recorded a great deal of what he found in his voluminous diary. An edited version of these journals has been published (Coombs & Coombs 1971), however it does not include many of the archaeological references. Wedlake read through many of them and he made occasional reference to some of them in his articles published in *Camertonia* (the journal of the Camerton Excavation Club). Robert Dunning is currently working on some of Wedlake's notes, and this may result in new information coming to light.

In addition to work focusing directly on the Romano-British town, further work is also required on settlement in the immediate pre-Roman period. A better understanding of the Iron Age settlement will help understand the reasons for the growth of a small town at this site. Similarly the demise of the settlement also needs to be addressed more fully; not all Romano-British towns disappeared when the Roman empire collapsed and the nature and timing of Camerton's demise needs to be better understood. In particular, the accurate dating of the skeletons from the early medieval cemetery might help establish the chronological relationship between the Romano-British town and the cemetery.

**6.0 REFERENCES****6.1 Bibliography**

- Branigan, K. & Fowler, P. (eds.) 1976 *The Roman West Country: Classical Culture and Celtic society*. David and Charles, Newton Abbot
- Bulleid, A. 1941 Notes on some chambered Long Barrows of North Somerset. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 87: 56-71
- Collinson, J. 1791 *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*. Reprint 1983. Alan Sutton, Gloucester
- Coombs, H. & Coombs, P. 1971 *Journal of a Somerset Rector 1803-1834, John Skinner*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Cunliffe, B. 1974 *Iron Age Communities in Britain: an account of England, Scotland and Wales from the seventh century BC until the Roman conquest*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London
- Cunliffe, B. & Fulford, M.G. 1982 *The British Academy Corpus of Sculpture of the Roman World: Great Britain. Volume 1, Fascicule 2, Bath and the rest of Wessex*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Grinsell, L.V. 1969 *Prehistoric Bristol: the prehistory of the Lower Avon*. Bristol
- Grinsell, L.V. 1971 Somerset barrows. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 115: 120
- Grinsell, L.V. 1980 Barrows in the County of Avon. *Avon Past* 3: 5-7
- Grinsell, L.V. 1985 A register of Bronze Age sites and finds in Avon. *Bristol Avon Archaeology* 4
- Grundy, G.B. 1935 *The Saxon Charters and Field Names of Somerset*. Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Taunton
- Haverfield, F.J. 1906 Romano-British Somerset. In Page (ed.) *The Victoria History of the County of Somerset Volume I*: 207-371. Archibald Constable and Company Ltd., London
- Horne, E. 1928 Saxon cemetery at Camerton, Somerset I. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 74: 61-70
- Horne, E. 1932 A Roman rubbish pit. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 78 (2): 129
- Horne, E. 1933a Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Camerton, Somerset II. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 79: 39-63
- Horne, E. 1933b Roman house, Camerton. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 79 (2): 114
- Horne, E. 1934 The Saxon cemetery and Roman house. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 80: 8-9
- Horne, E. 1935 Excavations at Seven Acre Field, Camerton, Somerset. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 81: 86-89
- Horne, E. 1937 The early Iron Age site at Camerton, Somerset. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 83:

- 155-165  
 Horne, E. 1939 Camerton excavations. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 85: 39-41
- Horne, E. 1940 Roman houses. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 86: 92-95
- Jackson, W. 1958 Report on animal bones. In W.J. Wedlake (ed.) *Excavations at Camerton, Somerset*: 13, 30, 73
- Jackson, R. 1990 *Camerton: the Late Iron Age and Early Roman Metalwork*.
- Margary, I.D. 1955 *Roman Roads in Britain*. Phoenix House, London
- McMurtrie, J. 1899 Notes on ancient British and Romano-British remains discovered in the Tynning and Kilmersdon road quarries. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 108-124
- McMurtrie, J. 1903 Notes on Roman road with an account of excavations on the Fosse Road at Radstock and on road near north Stoke, Bath. *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeology Society* 26: 326-338
- Radford, C.A.R. 1955 The tribes of Southern Britain. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 20 (1)
- Rahtz, P.A. 1968 Sub-Roman cemeteries in Somerset. In M.W. Barley & R.P.C. Hanson (eds.) *Christianity in Britain 300-700, Papers Presented to the Conference on Christianity in Roman and Sub-Roman Britain, held at the University of Nottingham 17-20 April 1967*: 193-195. Leicester University Press, Leicester
- Raleigh Radford, C.A. 1954 The tribes of southern Britain. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 20: 1-26
- Scarth, H.M. 1862 On Roman remains discovered at Camerton. *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 11: 174-186
- Wedlake, W.J. 1950 Camerton - its archaeological past, present and future. *Camerton I: The Journal of the Camerton Excavation Club*.
- Wedlake, W.J. 1952 Camerton Excavations Club interim report 1951-52. *Camerton II: The Journal of the Camerton Excavation Club*.
- Wedlake, W.J. 1958 *Excavations at Camerton, Somerset*. Camerton Excavation Club, Pitman Press, Bath
- Wedlake, W.J. 1973 Tithe disputes at Camerton, Somerset 1800-1839. *Second North Somerset Miscellany* 32-51. Bath and Camerton Archaeological Society
- Young, A. forthcoming *Eckweek Geophysical Survey and Excavation*. Unpublished evaluation report produced by Avon Archaeological Unit