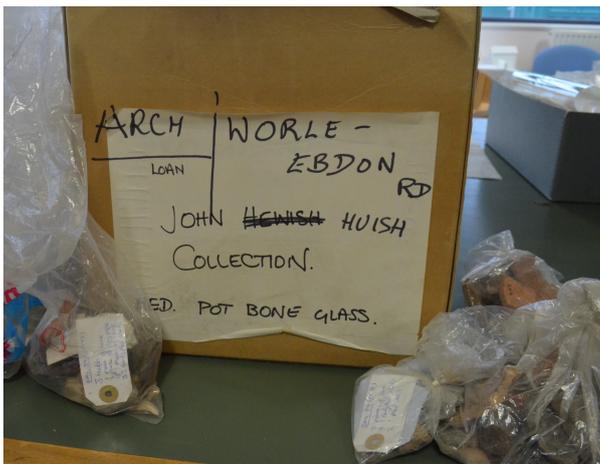


# Ebdon Road and Thyer's Market Garden, Worle

## Two Archaeological Collections: A Brief Re-examination



Peter Johnson and Bryan Moore

2015

# **Ebdon Road and Thyer's Market Garden, Worle.**

## **1 Introduction**

This report describes two archaeological events which might shed some light on the early origins of the village of Worle. One was a collection of items gathered in 1957 at Thyer's Market Garden in circumstances which are not exactly clear. The other was a better documented watching brief carried out when a development of bungalows in nearby Sherwood Close was built around 1970.

The finds from both events and their accompanying paper archives were deposited at the North Somerset Museum in Weston-super-Mare and have since been transferred to the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton.

In December 2014 Bryan Moore and Peter Johnson arranged a visit to SHC to view the archaeological archive of the two sites.

## **2 Context and location of sites:**

The village of Worle sits at the easternmost end of Worle Hill. In Domesday it ranks as one of the larger taxable settlements in Winterstoke and so was an established settlement in Saxon times.

The main area of settlement lies on the hill to the east of the Parish Church some 23 metres above sea level, well above the flood plain surrounding the hill. Roads lead around the hill to Kewstoke and Milton and down through the plain to Woodspring, Ebdon, Congresbury/Bristol and Locking.

Both sites lie close to one another in an area which occupies a position close to the centre of the present village. They are located on the north east slope and are in line of sight of Castle Batch, a feature considered to be a Norman Motte. Another motte lies to the south east at Locking Head, suggesting a potentially strategic role for the settlement.

The sites lie at the junction of the roads to Kewstoke and Castle Batch/Ebdon (Figure 1).

Chris Richards (formerly of Weston Museum) informally reported that a significant bank and ditch had been revealed about half way down Hollow Lane, very close to the sites in question.

The immediate locality has undergone dramatic change over the last few decades. Sherwood Crescent has been completed. Thyer's Market Garden has also been built over. A quarry directly to the north of Sherwood Crescent has been filled in and largely forgotten about.



Figure 1 Location of features and principal roads referred to in text

### 3 Description of Collections

#### 3.1 Thyer's Market garden WESTM: 1957.92-105 and 1957.204

In 1957 finds were made in Thyer's Market Garden and deposited by Mr D R Palmer with the Museum in Weston. Notes made at the time include a crude hand drawn map of the location. These notes were subsequently reviewed by Temporary Museum Assistant R. Iles in 1990 and he located the findspot at ST 35536307. This agrees with the map as long as the road names are revised. (The road labelled by Palmer as "the Scaurs" should in fact be identified as Hollow Lane.) Finds of pottery described in the report include Samian, 20 sherds coarse pottery and grey and black wares. Also listed are 3 glass fragments, horn (of ox), one piece smelted lead, animal bones, stone and soil samples.

The circumstances of the find are not known and there is no indication as to context.

#### 3.2 Ebdon Road. WESTM: 1977

This site is rather better recorded, thanks to the work of John Huish who carried out a watching brief while the area now known as Sherwood Crescent was being developed. His handwritten notes

are useful and succinct. His hand-drawn plans indicate the findspots and locate them accurately in relation to the building plots (Figure 4).

There only appears to have been one area that was systematically excavated. For the most part it was a matter of describing the finds as they were revealed by the digger and plotting the findspots. In these circumstances it was not possible to assign useful archaeological contexts to the finds.

Although Huish specifies that no foundations or post holes were observed he does refer to a small cobbled area near the site of a former farmhouse and barton known to exist in 1845. A property included on the Tithe Map for Worle 1840 numbered 685 meets this description.

The area that was excavated was described as a midden and it yielded a piece of pottery which was subsequently inspected by the noted archaeologist Philip Rahtz. In a letter to Huish he describes it as “closely comparable in fabric and form with a large group from Cheddar dated to 1200-1220 AD associated with King Johns Building”.

This item of pottery and a loomweight made of pottery “dating to the Anglo-Saxon period” ER 71 were on display at the Museum in Weston-super-Mare until its closure in 2015 (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2 Saxo-Norman pottery at Weston Museum

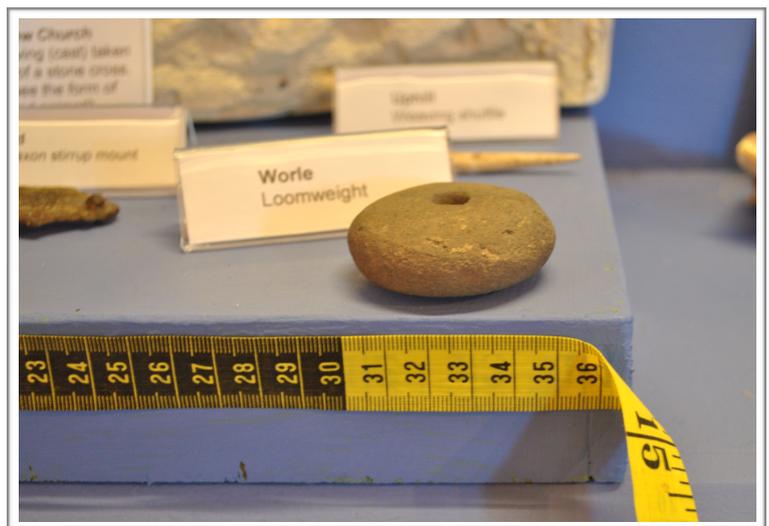


Figure 3 Loomweight

Rahtz also refers in his letter to a Saxon bowl which he looks forward to seeing in Bristol and Huish’s notes refer to this item ER 51 as being at Bristol Museum.

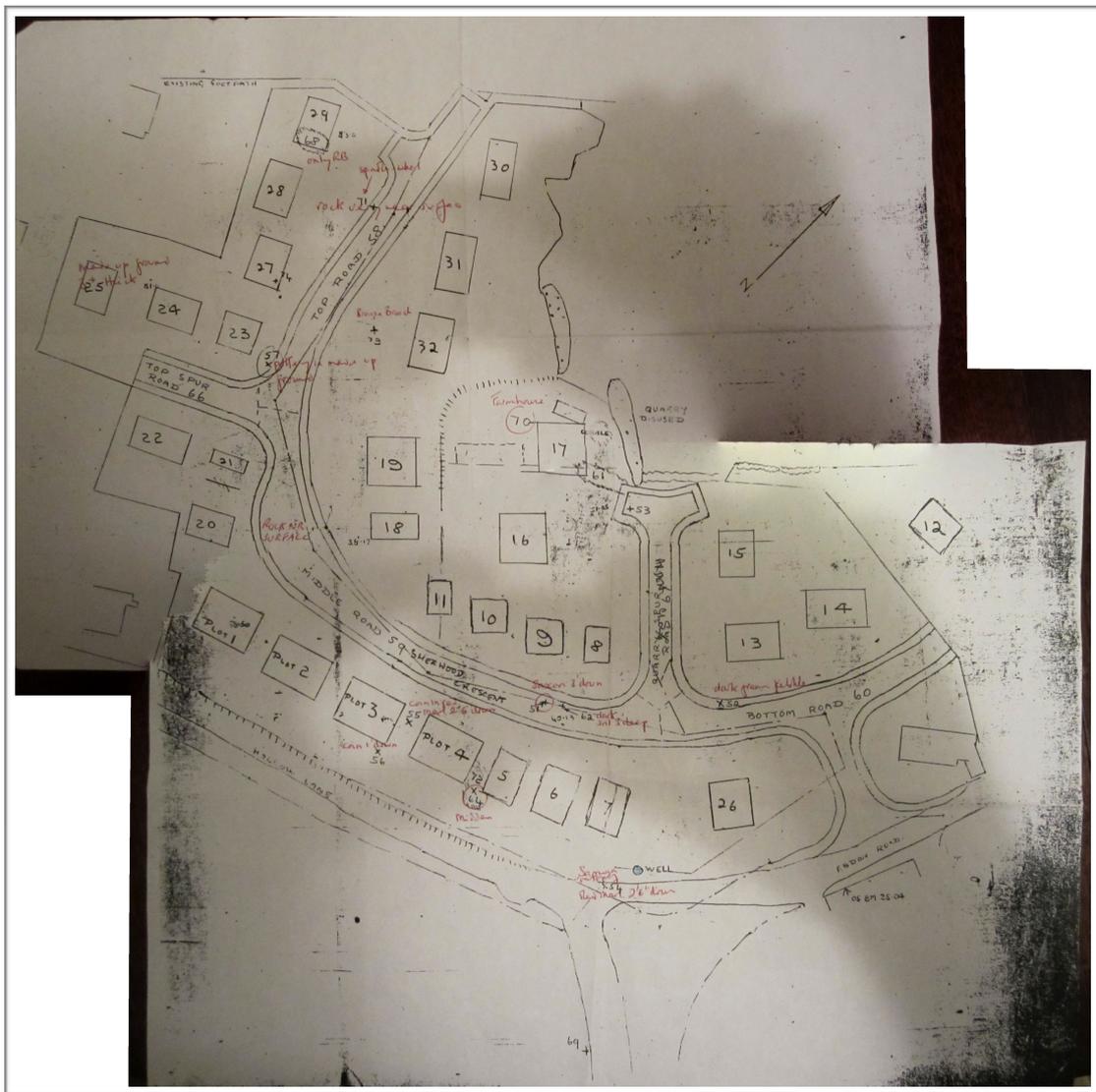


Figure 4 Composite of Huish’s plans of Sherwood Crescent findspots. (The rectangles represent the building plots for the individual properties. The findspots are not so easy to see but are written in. These numbers relate to the ER numbers in Hush’s inventory)

#### 4 Visit to Somerset Heritage Centre

In December 2014 Bryan Moore and Peter Johnson visited the SHC and were able to inspect the finds from the two sites. There was a surprisingly large amount of material and it was not possible to make a systematic appraisal of it in the time available. Nonetheless we were able to gain a good impression of the scope of the finds and to identify and photograph some of the items referred to by Huish. With the help of Amal Khreisheh and resident experts Finds Liaison Officers Laura Burnett and Ciorstaidh Hayward-Trevarthen we were able to add some detail to the identifications.

Ciorstaidh and Laura commented on the apparent lack of prehistoric material in the assemblage. Nonetheless an interesting picture was revealed with large amounts of pottery, ranging from Roman through to Saxo-Norman and later. There is plenty of coarse Romano-British pottery (Stretcholt was suggested as a source) and the occasional piece of finer Samian. There is also the later material referred to as Saxon or Saxo-Norman.

## **5 Conclusion**

This corner of Worle is clearly of interest. This should perhaps not come as a surprise, given its prominent location commanding the North Somerset levels. Nowadays it is largely built over and unlikely to become available for further investigation in the near future.

Nevertheless it has clearly seen human activity since Roman times at least. Worle is listed in Domesday and it is interesting to have material evidence of habitation from this general period.

It seems likely that this site was occupied in Roman times, despite the absence of evidence for buildings. Evidence of Saxon occupation is interesting but does not in itself establish continuity between the Roman and medieval periods. More detailed analysis of the pottery might help establish a timescale for occupation.

It is important however to recognise that little true archaeological excavation took place and the finds, though numerous, cannot be assigned to particular contexts.

## **6 Recommendations for future investigation**

### **6.1 Further investigation of ceramics.**

We were rather taken aback by the volume of finds from Ebdon Road. Neither of us is a specialist in ceramics. It would be very good to have a more thorough-going analysis of the finds, and in particular the pottery. The letter from Philip Rahtz places pottery from the midden as 1200-1220AD. The sample E64 formerly on display at Weston Museum is from this group. It should be possible to arrive at a clearer understanding of the implications of the medieval (Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman) material which would inform a greater understanding of Worle's origins.

### **6.2 Tracing the Anglo-Saxon bowl.**

Rahtz also refers to an Anglo-Saxon bowl ER 51. According to his letter and Huish's notes this is or was located at Bristol Museum. It was not identified during our viewing of the collection and it would be good to reach a conclusion about the ultimate fate of this item.

### **6.3 Test Pits**

It might be possible to consider a community project involving residents of the area in digging test pits to see if more material can be exposed.

### **6.4 Analysis of numbering.**

The original numbering of the Ebdon Road finds might be analysed further as the sequence begins with ER51. Huish assigns some early finds to the designation ER-R but there are a number of items with numbers that precede the sequence he describes.

## **7 Acknowledgements**

Grateful thanks are due to Amal Khreisheh of South West Heritage Trust for making the material available for our visit and for her subsequent helpful remarks. Finds Officers Ciorstaidh Hayward-Trevarthen and Laura Burnett were also very generous with their assistance.

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## Appendix 1

### Illustrations of Finds

Given the time constraints images of a selection of items only were made. They are not necessarily representative of the whole collection but illustrate some of the more striking items. Comments between quotation marks are based on notes made of comments by Ciorstaidh and Laura

#### Appendix 1.1 Thyer's Market Garden

Worked Bone Object

Undated



Pottery

Early Medieval?



Pottery

Early Medieval?



Oyster shell

Undated



Shell-tempered pottery

Romano-British?



## Appendix 1.2 Ebdon Road

Samian Pottery

“Mid-Gaul Second Century AD”

ER 54



Roman Brooch

“Part of Roman brooch. Most likely female jewellery item. Common design throughout period.”

ER 73



“Nummus of the House of Constantine. URBS ROMA with wolf and twins, stars above on reverse  
URBS ROMA with helmeted bust of Roma facing left on obverse. Mint of Trier. AD 333-334.”

ER 53



“Coin weight. Fleur-de-lis and crown. Weight 3.27 gm.

1/4 noble. 1421-1464. Used to check the weight of gold coinage.”

ER 74



Fired stone and slag.

Undated

ER 12 ER-R



Trailed Slipware

Early Modern

ER 12 ER-R



Glass Bottle Decoration

Modern

ER, no location



Musket Ball

Modern

ER Plot 2

