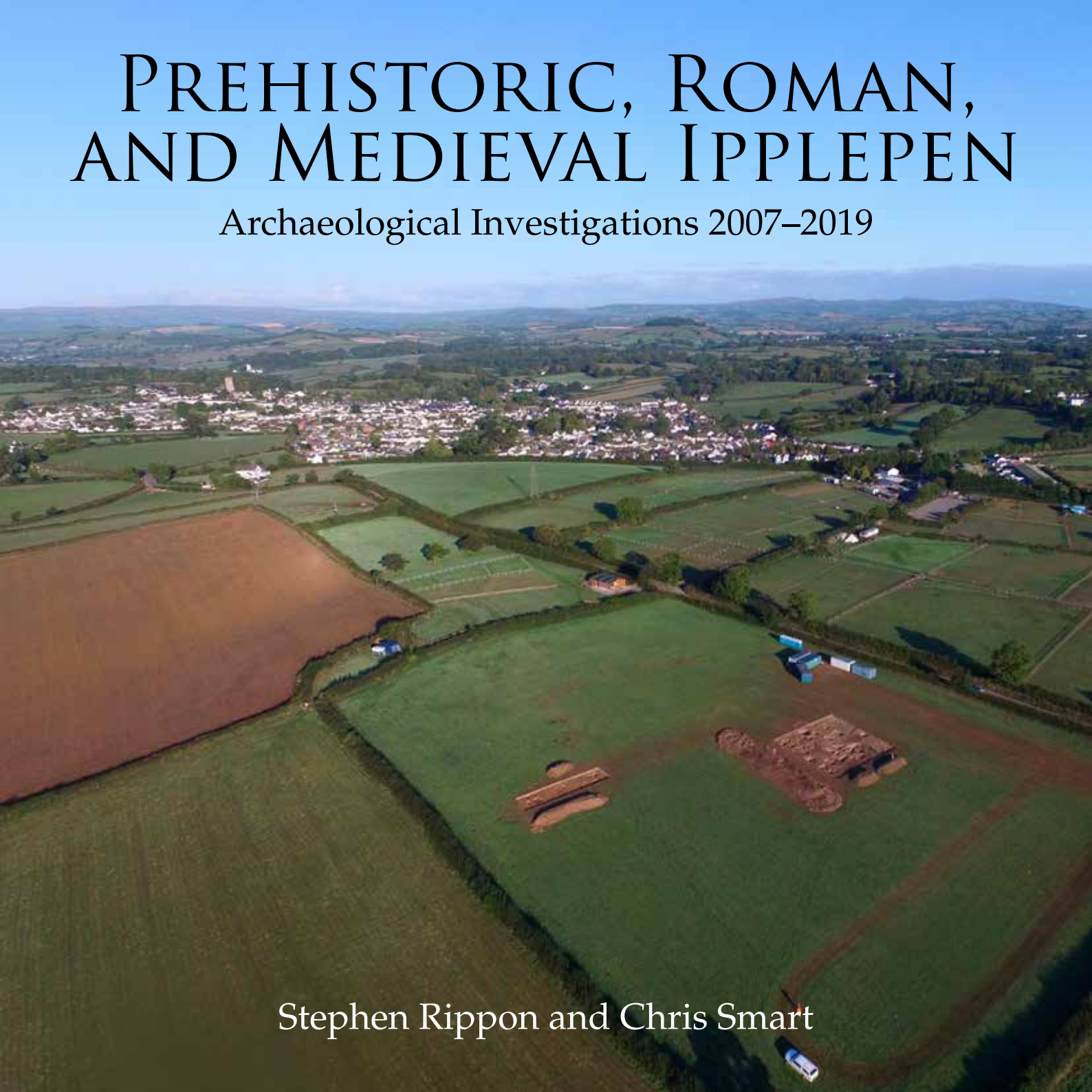
Prehistoric, Roman, and Medieval Ipplepen

Archaeological Investigations 2007–2019



Stephen Rippon and Chris Smart

Acknowledgements

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Front cover image: © Richard Agnew

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Between Sea and Moor

Aerial view of the 2018 excavations, looking north-west over the site, the modern village of Ipplepen, and Denbury towards Dartmoor.

The village of Ipplepen is located in the Teignbridge district of South Devon, about one third of the way between the coast of Torbay and the high ground of Dartmoor National Park, on a watershed between the rivers Teign and Dart. The archaeological site whose story is told here is often referred to as 'Ipplepen' but, more precisely, is located at Dainton Elms Cross, a kilometre from the village on the east side of the A361 Newton Abbot to Totnes road. The site occupies a saddle of flattish land between higher ground at Forchen and Pens. The John Murray Handbook for Devon and Cornwall, a traveller's guide first published in 1859, noted the good vantage and views afforded by the village's elevated situation. The underlying geology mainly comprises Devonian slates, but layers of limestone, sandstone, and mudstone also occur. These give rise to free-draining soils, though of limited fertility. Despite being positioned on a high watershed between two major rivers, springs and a near-surface water table will have provided the prehistoric, Roman, and medieval communities with a good supply of water.

Below: *Drone image looking over Ipplepen to Torbay.*

Detecting and discovery

The possibility of an archaeological site at Dainton Elms Cross was first raised when aerial photographs taken in 1996 by the then Devon County Council Archaeologist Frances Griffith showed cropmarks – traces of buried archaeology impacting on crop growth and ripening – in the field north-east of the cross roads. These marks complimented early reports of Roman objects found during metal detecting. With well-preserved archaeological remains at Dainton Elms Cross a real possibility, when a planning application was made for the construction of two barns nearby, contracting archaeologists were brought in to check for buried remains and that excavation, undertaken in 2007, confirmed Roman features in this location. The following year, and with permission, local metal detectorists Jim Wills and Dennis Hewings began systematically searching fields around Dainton. Over a five-year period friends Jim and Dennis recovered 115 Roman coins in five adjacent fields. The location of each of these finds was precisely recorded and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme's county-based Finds Liaison Officer. But what was the origin of the coins? Were they part of a buried hoard that had been dispersed by ploughing? This seemed unlikely – the date range of coin issues was wide, as was their findspots across the five fields – and it appeared that the collection was hinting at a long-lived Roman settlement, the remains of which were buried beneath the surface.

Dennis and Jim with two of the Roman coins that they discovered, prompting recognition of the site.

Below Left: *A copper alloy nummus of Constantine I, dating to AD 310-13, and minted in Trier (PAS ID DEV-B64B80)*

Below Right: *A copper alloy nummus of Constantius II, dating to AD 348-50, and minted in Trier (PAS ID DEV-838994)*

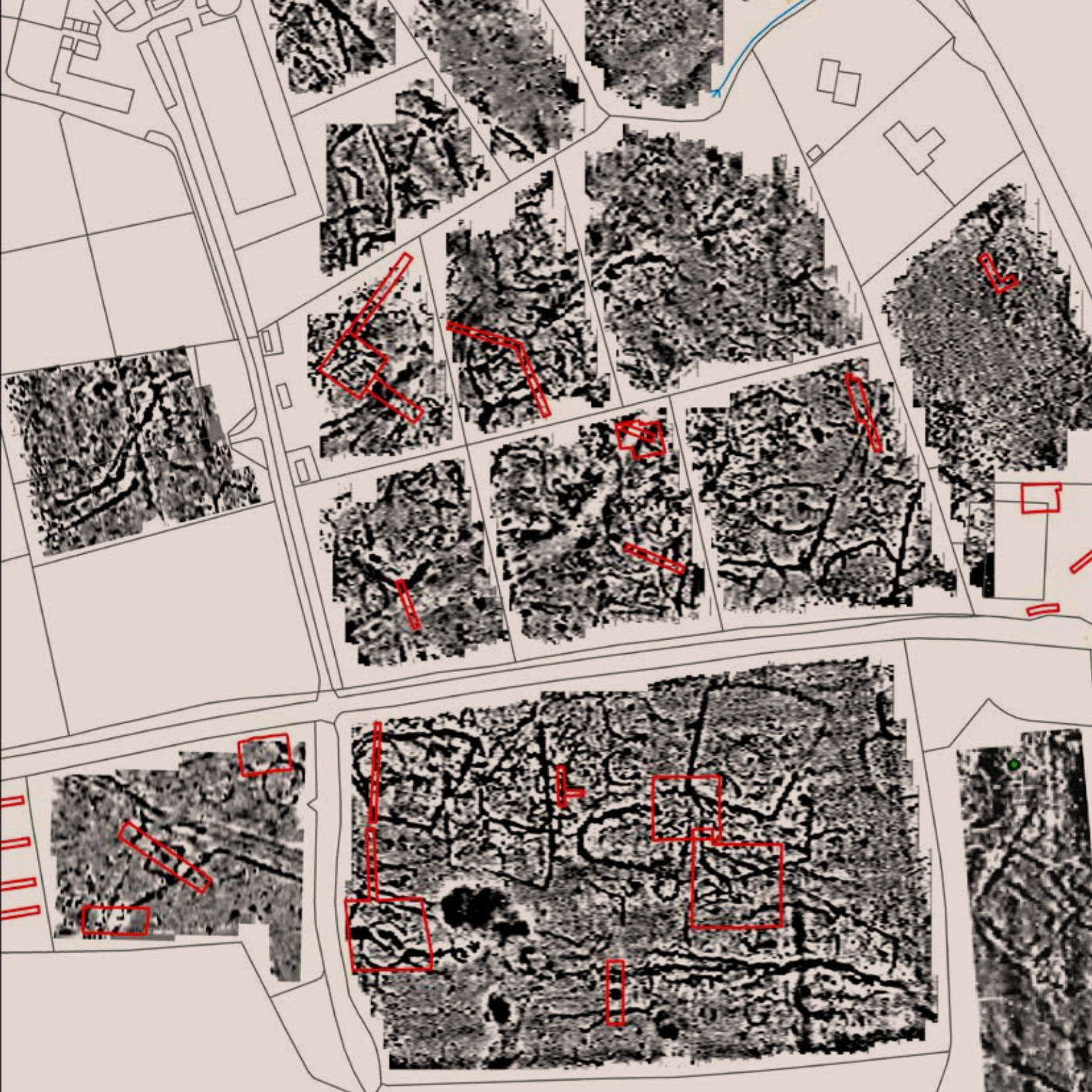
Remote sensing

Archaeological technician Sean Goddard undertaking geophysical survey at Dainton Elms Cross in the summer of 2015.

A crucial component of the archaeologist's arsenal of investigative tools is geophysical survey – an overall term for a suite of non-intrusive survey methods that can identify and characterise buried remains. The majority of Roman rural settlements known in Devon were not stone-built but instead were typified by timber roundhouses set within ditched enclosures. As such, the best way to map the buried archaeology of Dainton Elms Cross was to use magnetic survey. A magnetometer detects variations in the strength and direction of the Earth's magnetic field, which can be altered through human action – such as the digging of holes and ditches or the heating of materials – which is exactly what would be expected. In 2010, Devon County Council Historic Environment Service commissioned a geophysical survey of thirteen fields, including and surrounding those from which the Roman coins had been discovered. Between 2012 and 2019 additional surveys were undertaken by staff and students of the University of Exeter in surrounding fields to better understand the full extent of the archaeological site.

The results of these surveys show that beneath the surface of the area in which detectorists Jim and Denis found the Roman coins lay an extensive complex of ditched enclosures, trackways and roundhouses. Whilst the survey could not definitively date the buried archaeology, the form of this settlement and the coin evidence allowed the supposition that at least parts of it were Roman in date. An important function of this geophysical survey is that it quickly allowed archaeologists to map the overall extent of the site – to see its focus – and also to establish its limits. In some of the peripheral fields that were surveyed the only evidence for buried archaeology appears to relate to lost medieval field boundaries.

Opposite: *Plot of magnetometer data at Dainton Elms Cross showing archaeological trenches outlined in red. Trenches shown outside of the area of geophysical survey have been dug by commercial archaeologists ahead of changes in use of the land.*



Digging into the past

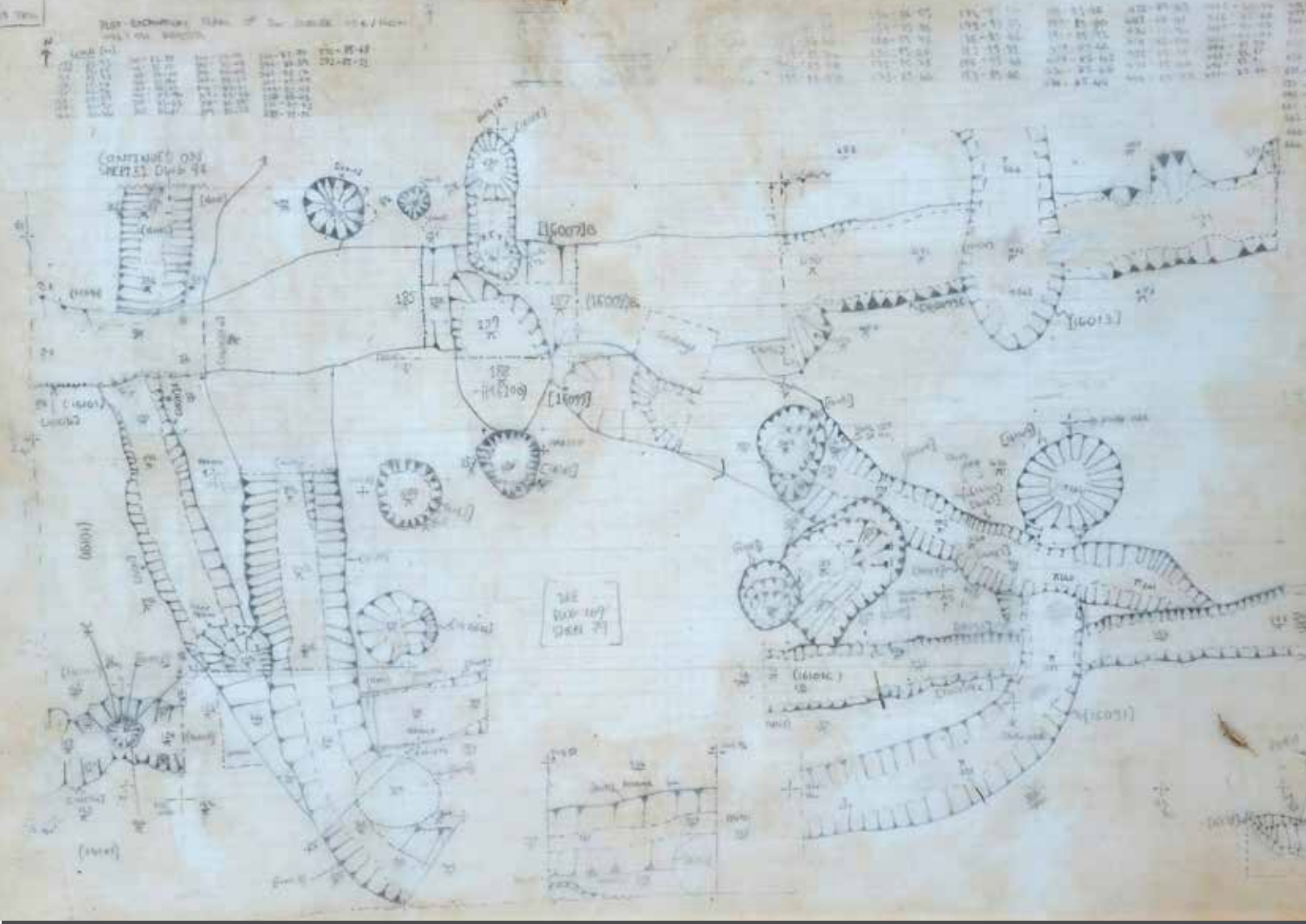
Community volunteers and University of Exeter students worked side by side to excavate and record archaeological remains.

Excavations at Ipplepen grew into an annual event that enabled public participation in archaeology, offering the chance to excavate and record, visit and learn about the site's history.

The geophysical surveys of the fields surrounding Dainton Elms Cross provided good evidence for the nature of the archaeology to be found there, but it was clear that there was significant complexity, with 'layers' of occupation on top of one another. Archaeology is a tiered process, often beginning with non-destructive and non-invasive methods (like magnetometry survey), but excavation is often the only way to fully understand the age and character of buried remains, in this case of a long-lived rural site. The detail provided by excavated evidence really puts 'flesh' on the 'bones' of the story.

There have been ten phases of archaeological excavation at Dainton Elms Cross that have focussed on the core of the site. The first, in 2007, comprised six trenches dug in advance of the construction of light industrial units. In 2011, six trenches were excavated in the first attempt to characterise the wide array of buried archaeological remains indicated by the 2010 geophysical survey. Between 2012 and 2019, the site became the focus of research excavations undertaken by the Department of Archaeology at the University of Exeter. Each was a month in duration and served as a training fieldschool for students and members of the local community. From the point of discovery the site became the subject of much local interest and the involvement of the community became a regular part of the 'Ipplepen project', culminating in National Lottery Heritage Fund support to increase the public participation in the 2017, 2018, and 2019 excavations.

Careful excavation by hand, recovering artefacts and recording the archaeological features and deposits – ditches, pits, structural remains, as well as layers of debris from occupation – allows the subtle nuances of activity to be discerned and a chronology of site use to be formed.

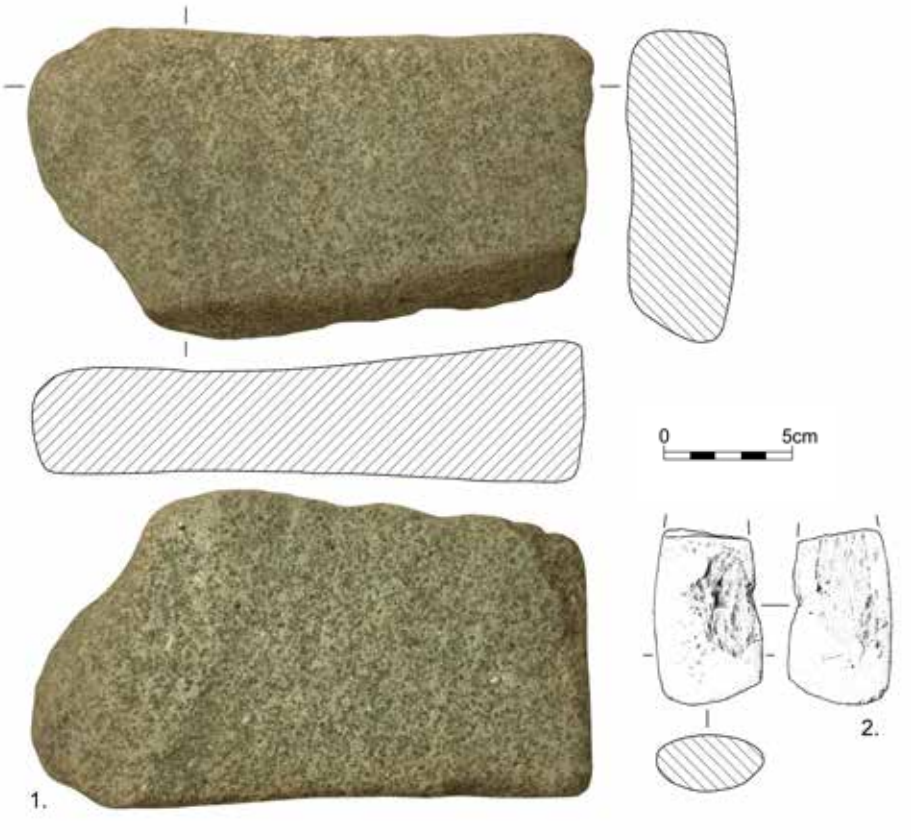


Despite the many months that have been spent excavating at Dainton Elms Cross since 2007, only a small percentage of the archaeological palimpsest has been investigated, and inferences about the overall site are drawn from this sample. The physical record of the various archaeological investigations, the paperwork, drawings, photographs, specialist reports, and finds, are all preserved for study by future generations, and these are held in archive at Torquay Museum.

Above: *Many hundreds of meticulous scale drawings have been made of the archaeological features excavated at Dainton Elms Cross, each showing the key attributes of size, shape, and relationship to one another.*

Early prehistory

The earliest inhabitants of Ipplepen for which there is evidence date to the period when people started farming in Britain, in the Neolithic period c. 4300 BC to 2000 BC. What remained archaeologically were several groups of pits into which domestic rubbish had been dumped, finds from which included pottery vessels (that will have been used for cooking, and storing foodstuffs), flint flakes (that will have been used for cutting), an arrowhead (used in hunting), a polished stone axehead, and a quern stone used for grinding corn. The food remains recovered showed that people were also gathering wild plants to eat, such as hazelnuts.



Right Top: *Part of a Neolithic quern stone from excavations at Dainton Elms Cross.*

Right Bottom: *One half of a Neolithic polished stone axehead from excavations at Dainton Elms Cross.*

Illustrations by George Scott.

Iron Age settlement

The site was re-occupied in the Iron Age (c. 400 BC - AD 43). A lot more is known about this settlement, and the community who lived there, as the excavated evidence was more extensive and better preserved. People lived in roundhouses in what was a small farming settlement. The houses, which were 10-12 metres in diameter, had walls made of timber and mud and will have been thatched using straw or reeds. The analysis of environmental remains has made it possible to build a picture of how the surrounding land was used. Animal bone rarely survives in South-West Britain as the acidic soils dissolve it, but at Dainton Elms Cross a few Iron Age bones survived showing that the farming community living there kept cattle, sheep, and pigs. Cattle will have been kept for meat and dairy products, while their skins will have been turned into leather. They were also the primary 'workhorse' of rural communities and will have been used to pull ploughs and draw carts. Sheep will have provided wool for clothing, as well as meat, while pigs were kept for just for their meat. The people living at Dainton Elms Cross in the Iron Age also had domestic dogs. We know the community grew wheat and barley (as we have cereal grains that were preserved when they were burnt and turned into charcoal). They turned the wheat into flour by grinding the grains between two stones, known as querns, and then made it into bread. Barley will have been brewed to make beer, while oats will have been eaten by humans and/or animals. A single burial was found that dates to this period: a collection of cremated bones placed in a shallow pit.

The perimeter of Iron Age roundhouses excavated in 2019 marked out using yellow buckets.

A rare quantity of animal bone was found at Dainton Elms Cross, providing a picture of livestock farming in the Iron Age and Roman periods.

Charred cereals recovered by wet sieving

The coming of Rome

After nearly 2000 years Roman once again walked the road – this time though they were re-enactors.

The earliest phase of road surface was finely made; later repairs used large rocks as a foundation beneath a gravel top dressing.

A farming community had become well established at Dainton Elms Cross by the end of the Iron Age but what was its experience with the coming of Rome? The Roman conquest of Britain began in AD 43 when twenty-thousand men landed on the South Coast, probably in Kent. Of the four legions that set off to conquer Britain, it was the Second Augustan Legion, commanded by the future Emperor Vespasian, that swept across the south. Contemporary Roman writer Suetonius tells us that the tribes of southern Britain, including the Iron Age Dumnonii peoples of Devon and Cornwall, were subdued by the end of the decade. A legionary fortress was established at Exeter by the mid 50s AD, and which from the 90s AD developed into the only major town in the region.

Local communities are likely to have come face-to-face with Roman soldiers, if not legionaries themselves then auxiliaries. The army is likely to have campaigned around the east and south of Dartmoor in its move west towards the River Tamar, and Cornwall beyond. Archaeological excavations near Chudleigh revealed part of a temporary Roman camp, supporting the idea of campaigns or troop movements south of Exeter.

A major development at this time was the construction of a well-made Roman road through the settlement at Dainton Elms Cross, undoubtedly implemented by the Roman administration. Instead of by-passing native communities, roads such as this sought to connect them. The road measured about 3m across and had a cambered surface or agger which would have shed water into drainage ditches on either side. It presumably came south from Exeter, probably crossing the river Teign near Newton Abbot, before heading south (perhaps along a similar line as the A381?) to cross the river Dart near Totnes.

There were four subsequent phases of repair and maintenance of the road, implying a long period of use.

Artefacts provide important evidence for the date at which events occurred. The discovery of the neck of a Roman storage vessel – an amphora – in the upper surface of the road provides information about when that surface was created.

The Roman settlement

One of several Roman wells that were the source of water for people living in the village.

The road remained in use for most of the Roman period, and the small Iron Age farming settlement grew into a substantial roadside village covering around 6 hectares – the area of about 10 football pitches. Most of the residents probably made their living out of farming, but there were some people with more specialist occupations providing services both to this community and people living further afield.

As the site lies on high ground – well away from any rivers – it was necessary to dig deep wells to get water. Archaeologically, these wells provide important time capsules as, after they went out of use, people tended to use them as rubbish dumps, and it is from these back-filled wells that some of the most informative assemblages of pottery, glass, coins, animal bones, and plant remains were recovered.

As discussed earlier, it is very unusual to find animal bone preserved on rural settlements in the South-West, but at Dainton Elms Cross significant assemblages of animal bone were found in some features: perhaps the large amount of bone being dumped helped to neutralise the acidity of the soils in these isolated contexts. During the Roman period the community at Ipplepen kept cattle, sheep, and pigs, along with chickens, dogs, and horses. They grew wheat, barley, and oats as they had in the Iron Age, but from the Roman period we also have evidence that they grew beans (similar to modern broad beans). Wild animals living around the settlement included badgers, red deer, and squirrels, allowing the suggestion that there were trees, thickets, and woods in the surrounding landscape.

In contrast to the self-sufficiency of the Iron Age community, people living in the Roman-period village had more connections with the outside world. People used coins for the first time, so they could make, sell, and buy things.

Large amounts of metalworking debris (slag) show that there was a blacksmiths forge in the south-western part of the settlement, while there also appears to have been small-scale copper-alloy (e.g. bronze) casting. Sawn offcuts show that deer antler was also worked, being used to make objects. In the south-eastern part of the site a ditched enclosure was used for slaughtering animals – notably cattle – and in addition to producing meat the hides may have been turned into leather. The products of these industries, and food production, may have been sold at Dainton Elms Cross, perhaps at an open market or in roadside shops, or they may have been taken to the town at Exeter. Either way, this market-based trade probably accounts for the large amounts of coinage found at Ipplepen.

Across large parts of eastern and central Roman Britain, most people gradually changed the style of the buildings from native circular structures to 'Roman' rectangular layouts. Across rural parts of South-West Britain, however, people generally shunned this aspect of Roman cultural influence and instead continued to live in traditional roundhouses. This was the case at Dainton Elms Cross, where the majority of Roman-period houses were circular, although traces of one more 'Romanised' rectangular timber-built structure was uncovered, dating to the 2nd century AD.

Despite generally shunning Roman architecture, the community at Ipplepen seemed to like other aspects of Roman life. People started eating and drinking in a Roman fashion, including using fine quality ceramic and glass tableware. Various items of jewellery were also found, suggesting that the people living at Dainton Elms Cross had also started to dress in a Roman way (e.g. wearing clothes pinned together using brooches).

No burials at Dainton Elms Cross were definitively dated as Roman, but part of a large cemetery was excavated on the southern edge of the settlement that probably dates to this period. A series of east-west oriented graves were neatly arranged in north-south oriented rows, although unfortunately upon excavation they did not produce any human bone (as it had all been dissolved away by the acidic soils). It is possible, however, to say something about the cemetery as graves were physically above (i.e. later than) some early Roman features, and physically below (i.e. earlier than) an early medieval grave that was on a different orientation. As cremation was the normal burial rite in Early Roman Britain, the Dainton Elms Cross cemetery probably dates to the Late Roman period.

Roman brooches found at Dainton Elms Cross (drawn by George Scott)

Pottery: regional, national, imported

A mid Roman jar under excavation from where it had been deposited in a gully.

The same Roman jar once cleaned and the fragments carefully joined back together.

The most common type of find from the excavations at Ipplepen is pottery. Iron Age and Roman pottery of all shapes and sizes, some produced in the South-West, some from elsewhere in Britain and, for the Roman period at least, some imported from the continent. In the Iron Age the people at Ipplepen were using pottery made in the region, most likely in and around the Ludwell Valley, on the east side of modern Exeter. Most of the Iron Age pots are jars, used for storage and the cooking of food, but the range of vessels increases to include bowls, cups, and platters as the community transitioned into the Early Roman period.

Regionally-produced pottery continued to be the most used in the Roman period, with over a third of the assemblage comprising jars, bowls, and dishes made in South Devon, possibly in the Dart or Erme valleys. Black-burnished pottery, dark in colour, sometimes with incised decoration, and a dull shiny surface, was brought to the site from potteries in East Devon and South-East Dorset. Whilst the majority of regional ceramics brought to Ipplepen came from Devon or counties to the east, a small amount of Cornish pottery shows trade and connections with communities further west. From further afield, fine tablewares, as well as mixing bowls – mortaria – were brought from Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, probably reaching the South-West via the Fosse Way. Similar vessel types were also reaching Ipplepen from the New Forest, in Hampshire, and whilst transport by road via Dorchester is a possibility, these wares may have reached Devon via coastal shipping. One of the more unusual pottery finds came from an Early Roman well: sherds of a drinking beaker with olive-green glazing – the first recorded instance of this type of vessel in South-West Britain. Such is its rarity that the archaeologists excavating the well were at first unsure if it was Roman at all!

The one distinguishing feature of the Romano-British community of Ipplepen was how it embraced the Roman lifestyle and, as well as using pottery made in Roman Britain, also used imported ceramic tablewares. The most easily recognised type of imported fine-quality pottery in Britain is red, glossy, samian ware, made in modern-day central and southern France, and this graced tables at Ipplepen in the second half of the 1st, and 2nd centuries AD. It must have held personal value too, for there are a number of broken samian vessels that were repaired with rivets.

One form of pottery vessel possibly tells archaeologists more about the Roman diet than any other – amphora. These iconic pots – often tall, pointed at the base, with large handles at the neck – were used to transport wet foodstuffs around the empire. Perhaps surprisingly for a rural community on the edge of the Roman world, food imports reaching the community at Ipplepen are no less exotic than might be found in a shopping basket today. There are three main sources of amphora. From the south of Spain, Baetica as it was known, amphora were used to bring olive oil and preserved fish-based products, including the famous Roman fish sauce garum. It is also clear that the residents of early Roman Ipplepen enjoyed a tipple, with wine being imported in amphora from the Rhone Valley in southern France, and from Italy too. This wine would have likely been decanted into and drunk from glass vessels, which were also found during the excavations at Dainton Elms Cross. These imported goods likely arrived in Exeter by sea, and were then transported overland, almost certainly along the well-made road described earlier.

Decorated samian pottery with the partly-surviving motifs of an archer and a griffin

Spending power: Roman coins

Project Director Stephen Rippon and Jim Wills, co-discoverer of the site, discussing the chronological range of the coins found at Dainton Elms Cross.

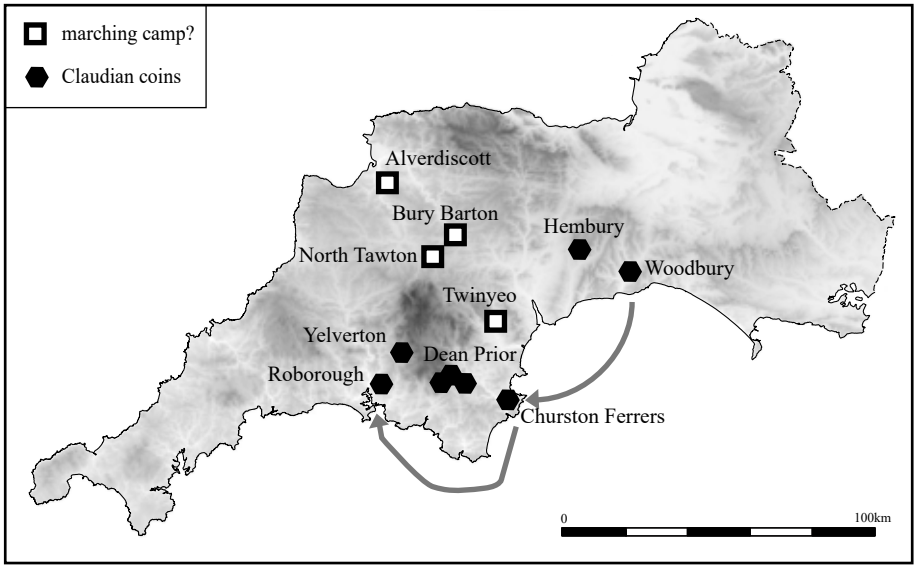
A Republican denarius of the moneyer Q. Minucius Thermus, minted in Rome and dated to c. 103 BC.'

A distinct change that occurred with the advent of the Roman conquest, and the subsequent development of the Roman province of Britannia, is that coinage became a feature of everyday life for many people. Whilst the community at Ipplepen was no different in this regard, the archaeological site is exceptional for the number of Roman coins recovered from a rural settlement in the South-West, with the collection being the largest west of Exeter. A total of 307 Roman coins have been recovered – initially through the dedicated work of detectorists Jim Wills and Denis Hewings, and subsequently through archaeological excavation that also incorporated a programme of associated metal detecting. Over two thirds of the coins were recovered from the topsoil, either by detecting or during the initial cleaning of the archaeological trenches, and this gives an indication of the damage wrought by centuries of ploughing on the remains of the Iron Age and Roman settlement. The coins cover a period of 500 years. The earliest is a Republican silver denarius dated to 117-16 BC, minted in Rome, and the latest are several copper alloy nummi of the House of Theodosius, dating to AD 388-402, one of which was certainly struck in Rome after AD 395.

The invasion and subsequent conquest of Britain began in AD 43 under the Emperor Claudius, and it is likely that the Roman coins found at Ipplepen that were minted before this date arrived in the region in military pay chests. These coins, and a number of Claudian issues – the first minted within the time-frame of the conquest – found in South Devon may have been lost during the initial campaigns of the Second Augustan Legion in the region.

The coins found at Ipplepen show that the community at Ipplepen were actively part of the monetised economy and were trading agricultural and industrial products throughout the entire Roman period. All dominant coin types have been found at Ipplepen. In the first two hundred years, up to around AD 250, four principal coins were in use – the as (the lowest denomination), dupondius

(2 asses), sestertius (4 asses), and denarius (16 asses). The denarius was a silver coin, the others being made of copper alloys. To give an idea of relative value in the community – it is known that under the reign of Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) a soldier's annual pay was raised to 300 denarii – or 4800 as. In the second half of the 3rd century, as a result of massive inflation, a denomination of twice the value of a denarius was put into circulation and these 'radiate' coins were so-named because the reigning emperor was depicted wearing a radiate crown. At the very end of the 3rd century, in an attempt to stabilise the continued inflation across the empire, the emperor Diocletian (AD 284-305) did away with most existing coin denominations and focussed the monetary economy on a copper alloy coin known as a nummus, which accounts for almost half of the Roman coins found at Ipplepen.



A map showing locations in the South West where Claudian issue coins have been found, suggesting that the Roman army had initial campaigns through East and South Devon.

Map drawn by Stephen Rippon.

Above Top: A Nummus of Constantine I, minted in Trier and dated to c. AD 324-325.

Above Bottom: A Nummus of Constantine I, minted in Trier and dated to c. AD 322-323.

After the Romans: early medieval Ipplepen

Intercutting graves, each with a surviving skeleton, in the early medieval cemetery, indicating that burials occurred over a long period of time.

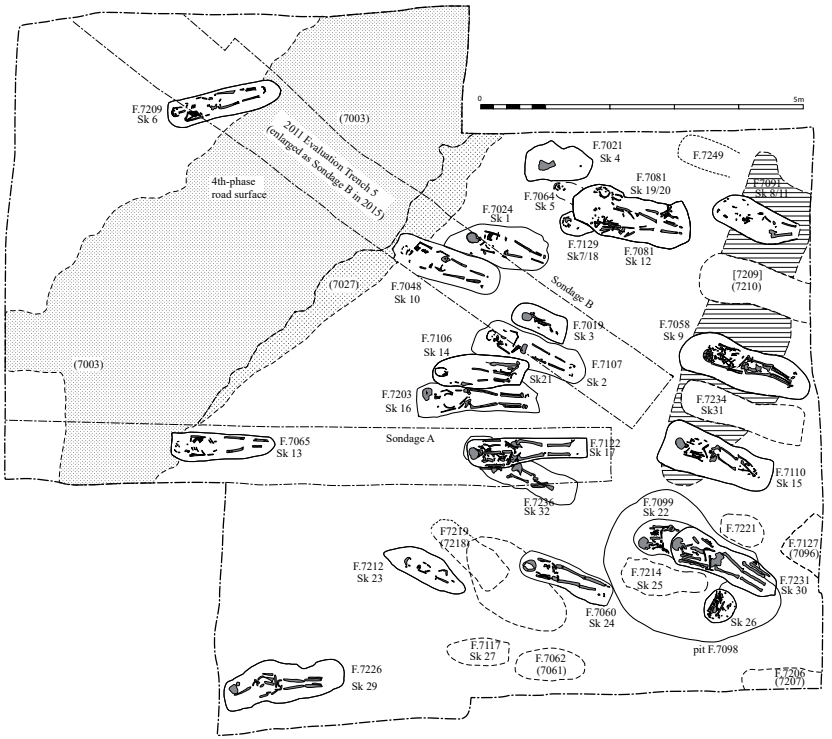
Opposite: *Graves were carefully hand excavated and the soils sieved to recover all artefacts and, where it survived, fragments of bone.*

The latest dateable finds from Dainton Elms Cross suggest that activity continued right up to the end of the 4th century, but what became of the community after that? By AD 410 Britain ceased to be formally part of the Roman Empire and was left to govern itself. A traditional view of the following centuries is one of catastrophe and turmoil – old history books will speak of the Dark Ages – a period for which it is difficult to evidence the lives of ordinary people in the countryside. Today, whilst it is preferred to speak of these centuries as 'early medieval', the issue of recognising living populations in the archaeological record in South-West Britain is no less problematic.

With the near total collapse of market-based pottery industries, and coins no longer being produced and used, archaeologists must turn to scientific means when trying to illuminate this period, in the form of a technique called 'radiocarbon dating'. All living things – people, animals, plants, trees – absorb 'carbon 14' from the air but once they die the 'carbon 14' gradually decays away too. By measuring the amount of carbon 14 left in something, it is possible to determine an approximate date when its absorption stopped – when a person or animal died, a crop was harvested, or a tree was cut down.

The first indications that life at Dainton Elms Cross continued after Britain ceased to be part of the Roman Empire came when a dump of domestic rubbish in the top of an in-filled well was radiocarbon-dated to around the 5th century AD. The buildings occupied during the early medieval period have been elusive – but given how much of the site has not been excavated this is perhaps not surprising. What is certain, however, is that a community lived here for several hundred years after the end of Roman Britain, as in 2014-15 a cemetery of inhumation burials was revealed in Trench 7, with 32 graves recorded.

Right: *A plan of trench 7, excavated in 2015, showing the density of burials within one part of the early medieval cemetery. The graves largely respect the course of the Roman road, suggesting that it perhaps remained visible as an earthwork in the landscape beyond its functional life.*



The graves were mostly arranged in ordered rows and were aligned east-west indicative of a Christian rite. Further graves were identified in Trench 8, 30m away, implying that the cemetery was extensive. A number of the graves cut through the surface of the Roman road showing that it had gone out of use by time the dead were buried. Radiocarbon dating of ten of these skeletons showed that they date to between the 5th and 8th centuries AD. Another, separate, cemetery was located in Trench 17, on the southern edge of the settlement in 2018. This is thought to be Late Roman (see above), but one grave – on a different orientation – dates to the early medieval period (the sixth or seventh centuries AD).

Overall, with the Iron Age settlement starting around the 3rd century BC, and the site being continuously occupied throughout the Roman period, and into the early medieval period (up until the 8th century AD), the site at Dainton Elms Cross appears to have been occupied for around 1,200 years.

Growth of a village: medieval Ipplepen and its countryside

The settlement at Dainton Elms Cross was abandoned in the 8th century AD. Ipplepen is first recorded in AD956 when Eadwig, the King of England, granted land at Ipplepen, Dainton, and Kerswell to a noble lady called Aethelhild. The place-name 'Ipplepen' combines the personal name Ipela with the Old English word 'pen' – that means enclosure – suggesting that Ipplepen was named after 'Ipela's enclosure'. The place-name Dainton means 'the settlement belonging to Dodda'. We next hear of Ipplepen in Domesday Book, which records that on the eve of the Battle of Hastings it was held by a Saxon called Goda. Domesday records that there was land for 15 ploughteams and a sizable population with 56 households. Dainton is not recorded in Domesday, suggesting that it was also owned by Goda (as Domesday does not purport to record every settlement that existed, just the manors/estates into which the landscape was divided).

Both Dainton and Ipplepen were associated with a distinctive way of farming known as 'open fields', in which arable land was arranged in bundles (known as furlongs) of strips (known locally as 'landscores'). The strips were divided up between all of the villagers, and instead of earthen hedgebanks between fields as we see today, the strips were separated simply by a thin strip of uncultivated land (hence the name 'open' fields – as opposed to fields enclosed by field boundaries). The abandoned settlement and cemetery at Dainton Elms Cross was covered by the open fields belonging to Dainton and Ipplepen for several hundred years before the communities took the decision to abandon open field farming in favour of the approach we see today, with the fields belonging to each farmer lying in a series of fields enclosed by hedgebanks – these being the field boundaries that are still in use today.

Opposite: *St Andrew's church, Ipplepen was dedicated in 1318 and the present-day church is mostly of 15th-century date.*

Photo: Stephen Rippon.

Researching the Historic Landscape: Accessible Resources

Records of known archaeology and heritage

Most English Counties and Unitary Authorities maintain a database of known heritage, including archaeological sites and findspots, listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments. Once widely called 'Sites and Monuments Records' these are now more commonly called 'Historic Environment Records' on the basis that the term reflects all physical evidence for past human activity. These contain records spanning tens of thousands of years, from the Palaeolithic to the Cold War.

This data can be accessed for research but is also fundamental to decisions made by planners and environmental agencies about development and land management. Both the Historic Environment Record for Devon, and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record, have online mapping portals where the data they hold can be viewed by anyone.

Both web-based map viewers also contain options for viewing different historic map backdrops, from the 1830/40s tithe surveys to Ordnance Survey maps of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Devon

www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/the-devon-historic-environment-record

https://map.devon.gov.uk/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=71fe583c7004410ca8cdc62e0e9b2577

Cornwall

www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/conservation-and-environment-protection/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-isles-of-scilly-historic-environment-record

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=1&xcoord=162690&ycoord=64380&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=

National registers

Historic England Archive: holding over 12 million photographs, drawings, reports and publications from the 1850s to the present day, covering the whole country. Use these collections to learn about your local area and to research individual buildings and archaeological sites, as well as discover England's changing urban and rural landscape

https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/

The National Heritage List for England: an up to date register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England – listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, registered parks and gardens, and battlefields.

https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list

Heritage at Risk Register: a register, updated annually, of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England whose condition and management is of concern, and that are in a state of deterioration or vulnerability.

https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register

Historic maps

Historic maps are an invaluable resource to anyone investigating the historic landscapes as they provide information about what changes have occurred with the past 150 years or so, what heritage has been lost (by comparing to modern mapping), and specifics such as place- or field-names. An excellent source of historic Ordnance Survey maps is provided by the National Library of Scotland, where in addition it is possible to view older geology maps, aerial photography, and LiDAR data side-by-side.

https://maps.nls.uk

Place-names

Britain has a historic landscape with a rich linguistic heritage. The names of places in which we live and work today often have origins that can tell us about what the landscapes was like in the past, and who might have lived there. Useful online resources are provided by the Institute for Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham.

http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk

https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk

Primary archives

Researching historic landscapes, especially when the focus is on the medieval and later periods, can be greatly assisted by the consulting of original documents, plans, charts, and maps, and even old photographs. Whilst it is not unknown for archive material relating to a specific place to be held in unlikely locations – often due to places once being part of large landed estates – most relevant material will either be held in a county or regional repository, or the National Archives, all of which are accessible to the public.

The National Archives are housed in Kew, London, and the public can visit and view much of the primary material curated there. The catalogues are searchable online, which means that it is possible to research what may be relevant before travelling.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

The home for Cornwall's archives is Kresen Kernow in Redruth.

https://kresenkernow.org

Archives for Devon and the City of Exeter are held in the Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter.

https://swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives/visit/devon-heritage-centre

Archives for the Archdeaconry of Barnstaple and of North Devon and Torridge District Councils are held in the North Devon Record Office, Barnstaple.

https://swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives/visit/visiting-barnstaple

The holdings both of these can be searched online via the South West Heritage Trust:

https://devon-cat.swheritage.org.uk

Archives relating to the City of Plymouth are held at The Box, Plymouth.

www.theboxplymouth.com/collections/archives-and-local-studies

The holdings of The Box can be searched online:

https://web.plymouth.gov.uk/archivescatalogue

A suggestion when searching for archives relating to a specific place in Devon or Cornwall – due the nature of historic landowning and record keeping, it is often worth searching multiple archives by place-name, even if outside of the county where it is located. For example, you will find documents relating to Ipplepen, Devon, in Kresen Kernow, and documents for Calstock, Cornwall, in the Devon Heritage Centre and The Box.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