

Colliton Park Roman Town House – A Preliminary Description of the Building, Archaeology, Setting and Reconstruction

**Prepared on behalf of Dorset County Council
by**

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COLLITON PARK, DORCHESTER

The Excavations 1937 – 1939 by Col. C. D. Drew and Mr K. C. Collingwood Selby.

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COLLITON PARK, DORCHESTER

The Excavations 1937 – 1938 by Col. C. D. Drew and Mr K. C. Collingwood Selby.

Background and context of the excavations (Figs 1-2)

The excavations at Colliton Park were located in the north-west corner of the Roman town of Durnovaria and investigated a large area of open ground 4 hectares (10 acres) in extent and representing approximately 12% of the area enclosed by the Roman town walls (Plate 1). Commenced in 1937, the work was undertaken in advance of the construction of the new Dorset County Council County Hall and, for this period, was one of the largest area excavations of a Romano-British town. Prior to the construction of County Hall, the area had been open park land belonging to Colliton House, a seventeenth century house fronting onto Glyde Path Road. Excavation of the site ceased in 1938. Post-war excavations have recorded further buildings and other activity, notably in advance of the construction of the new library site between 1961-1963 and during extensions to County Hall in the 1980's (Figure 1).

The 1937-1938 excavations, along with those by Sir Mortimer Wheeler at St Albans between 1930 and 1935 (Verulamium), were a milestone in Romano-British urban studies and it is deeply unfortunate that the outbreak of World War II prevented full publication of the results and, by default, the contemporary importance of the work. Until this point, all previous large scale investigations of Roman towns in Britain had been focused upon those sites in 'green field' locations with no later occupation, such as Silchester in Hampshire and Wroxeter in Shropshire. The methodology of these earlier excavations was not as rigid as that adopted at Colliton Park, involving little more than wall chasing in an attempt to recover building plans with scant regard for the associated stratigraphy.

The Colliton Park excavators adopted the grid or 'box' method of excavation, with trial trenches dug along one edge of each 20 feet square grid. Where features of archaeological interest, such as walls or hard surfaces, were encountered, the area was expanded. Each box was separated from its' neighbour by a baulk, 3 feet wide (Fig. 2). In the vicinity of the 'Town House', the baulks between each box were removed to expose the entire structure (Plate 2b).

This method of excavation was heavily influenced by that developed by Dr R. E. M. (later Sir Mortimer) Wheeler during his excavations at the Roman town of *Verulamium* (St Albans) and the hillfort of Maiden Castle (Plate 2a). Work at the latter site overlapped with the first season at Colliton Park and Sir Mortimer was a frequent visitor to the site, giving much encouragement and advice to the excavation directors, Col. C.D. Drew (then Curator of Dorset County Museum) and Mr K. C. Collingwood Selby. Two interim accounts were published (Drew and Collingwood Selby 1937, 1938) but full publication is still awaited. The only detailed summary account available is that prepared by RCHM (1970). An assessment of the publication potential prepared by Timby (1996) was commissioned by Professor M Fulford (University of Reading) and Mr P Woodward (Dorset County Museum) on behalf of Dorset County Council but failed to achieve the required funding. The site archive, comprising notebooks, drawings, photographs and artefacts are housed at The Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

Further excavations in the area were undertaken in 1961-3 (Aitken and Aitkin 1982) and 1984-1988 (Smith 1993).

Although Romano-British urban remains can be seen at other sites, notably Caerwent and St Albans, the Colliton Park town house remains the most complete and best-preserved example currently visible.



Plate 1. View to the north of the site prior to commencement the excavations. Photo dated February 1937.

The excavations located at least eight substantial stone buildings of Roman date; a Roman street, pits, ovens and a substantial, stone lined water conduit, the latter probably associated with the aqueduct serving Roman Dorchester. The structures revealed represent a variety of building types in varying degrees of preservation. These range from a large and richly adorned town house with many mosaics (Fig. 1; Building I; Figure 4); a simple three roomed dwelling with a porch (Building IV); two large courtyard structures associated with industrial activities (Buildings III, IIIA and VII). More fragmentary structures are represented by Buildings II, V and VI, the latter being another courtyard structure, probably domestic in character, with mosaic floors. Building V was probably a large hall or basilical plan building with substantial pier bases. Further traces of timber structures, represented by postholes or slots, were recorded in the vicinity of Building 1. Only three of the buildings, III, V and VII, appear to be aligned on the Roman street grid. Of the structures investigated, only Buildings I and IV were fully exposed allowing complete, or near complete plans of the structures and their immediate environs to be produced.

In addition to the buildings, the excavations located a substantial lime kiln, probably contemporary with the construction of the town wall, immediately to the west of Building 1 (Figure 5) and three sections were excavated across the western and northern line of the Roman defences at Colliton Walk and North Walk. These revealed a two phase sequence beginning with a simple earthen rampart which was subsequently faced with a substantial stone wall (Figure 3).



Plate 2a. The Wheeler box excavation method as employed at Maiden Castle. (From Wheeler 1943). Plate 2b. View across the south eastern area of the Town House following removal of the baulks. Note the collapsed window in the nearer room (From Putnam 1984).

Location and Topography (Figure 1, 4)

Set within the north west corner of the Roman town, the site is at approximately 65m OD close to a steep scarp at the end of a chalk spur overlooking the valley of the River Frome. Profiles across the site based on a review of the 1937-8 archive and detailed survey undertaken by AC Archaeology in 1996 clearly demonstrate that the Town House is set on an artificial platform cut into the chalk bedrock. The platform measures approximately 40m east – west and 30m north – south (Figure 4). The building is set some 5m lower than the industrial buildings III, IIIA and VII, located to the south of the complex and will have been in a very sheltered position with the adjacent western and northern town defences providing protection from the elements.

Building 1 (The ‘Town house’) (Figure 5, Plates 3 - 15)

Building 1, the ‘Town House’, forms an ‘L’ shaped block of 15 rooms within the north-west corner of the town defences. The alignment of the complex reflects the angle of the defences rather than the known street-grid of *Durnovaria*. All construction phases of the stone building and at least some of the adjacent post-hole structures lie within the fourth century AD. The preservation of the remains was exceptional by British standards and included evidence for windows and the external plaster rendering of the building, painted Pompeian red. All the stone walls were constructed from roughly dressed flint nodules with limestone being employed for quoins and bonding courses.

The extent and nature of occupation on the site prior to construction of the town house is uncertain. Immediately to the west of Room 18, a large oval-shaped stone lined pit is most probably a lime-kiln (Figure 5). This was backfilled prior to the construction of the town house and the backfill included a coin of Tetricus I minted cAD270-73. It is tempting to link this lime-kiln to the construction of the stone defences of *Durnovaria* towards the end of the third century.

Immediately to the north of the late 3rd century lime-kiln and Room 18 of the 4th century Town House, the 1937-8 excavators recorded a series of regular slots, up to 0.3m (1 foot) deep and 0.3m wide. These form a parallel pair of features 2.6m apart with a further slot set a 90° to the east-west components and curving slot that may represent an even earlier structure. In addition, there are a number of small post-holes, up to 0.3m deep on the same alignment as the slots. Interpreted by the excavators as drains and not published in the RCHM account, the slots make more sense as part of a succession of timber structures including both beam-slot and post construction. At least one of the slots is clearly truncated by the cut for the lime-kiln indicating that the timber structures pre-date construction of the kiln. The alignment of the timber structures is identical to that of the 4th century stone buildings suggesting that the alignments in this corner of the town were already established at an irregular angle in relation to the town street grid. As the alignment follows that of the northern defences, it is possible that these structures were built after the first, earthen phase of enclosure was constructed, probably in the early 3rd century.

Finds from the excavations include a significant quantity of 2nd century samian ware, 2nd to 3rd century Black Burnished Ware forms, copper alloy brooches and 2nd and 3rd century coins; all suggestive of activity and occupation in the vicinity prior to the construction of the dwelling. Pits A and C, beneath Room 17 of the stone building,

produced material of late 2nd to late 3rd century AD and may be associated with this earlier phase of occupation.

The coins are particularly informative in demonstrating activity before the main phase of activity in the fourth century (Table 1). They can be statistically compared with other assemblages from Dorchester, most notably Greyhound Yard, using the 'per mills' method developed by Reece (1991). The Colliton Park assemblage is from a peripheral location of Roman *Durnovaria* whilst Greyhound Yard is from one of the central insulae, close the probable forum-basilica site and the public baths at nearby Woolaston House. The assemblages are markedly different in the first hundred years of *Durnovaria*, with a high proportion of Flavian issues (69-96AD) from Greyhound Yard in comparison to Colliton Park. This might be expected with the late 1st century development of the *civitas* focusing upon the more central locations within the town. From the Antonine period (138-192AD) onwards Colliton Park is on a par with Greyhound Yard and this would suggest that the development of the north-west corner of the later walled area is underway by c140-160AD. Proportionally, the totals from Colliton Park for the period 161-180 are double those for Greyhound Yard and may well represent losses during the first half of the 3rd century. From the mid 3rd century onwards, the proportions are broadly comparable indicating similar levels of coin use and loss. Of especial note is the higher than average proportion of the very latest coinage dating to 388-402+ across the excavated area at Colliton Park. A number of these late coins came from the Town House. This may suggest activity extending into the 5th century AD – a topic that is discussed in greater depth below, p11-12.

COINS: Table 1. Colliton Park and Greyhound Yard. Comparative coin data between peripheral and central insulae.

Mint Period	Colliton Park No. of coins	Colliton Park Coins per mills	Greyhound Yard No. of coins	Greyhound Yard Coins per mills
To 41	2	1.57	5	21.46
41 to 54	3	2.35	5	21.46
54 to 69	0	0	3	12.88
69 to 96	2	1.57	12	51.5
96 to 117	5	3.92	3	12.88
117 to 138	6	4.7	5	21.46
138 to 161	11	8.62	2	8.58
161 to 180	11	8.62	1	4.29
180 to 192	3	2.35	0	0
193 to 222	7	5.49	1	4.29
222 to 238	2	2.35	1	4.29
238 to 260	4	3.13	0	0
260 to 275	238	186.52	44	188.84
275 to 296	318	249.22	38	163.09
296 to 317	16	12.54	3	12.88
317 to 330	27	21.16	9	38.63
330 to 348	393	307.99	65	278.97
348 to 364	97	76.02	17	72.96
364 to 378	72	56.43	12	51.5
378 to 388	6	4.7	0	0
388 to 402	53	41.54	7	30.04
TOTALS	1276	1000	233	1000

Figures from R. Reece 1991, Roman Coins from 140 Sites in Roman Britain.

Apart from the late 3rd century lime kiln and possible earlier 3rd century timber building mentioned above, structural evidence of the 1st to 2nd centuries is lacking although

artefacts of this date are present. This lack of evidence may, in part, be due to the extent of the 4th century complex. Mosaic floors were laid in every room of the main wing thus restricting examination of the underlying levels. Only in Room 16 was a single post-hole pre-dating the mosaic noted. Its position is not recorded on any of the contemporary plans. Beyond the main house, numerous posthole alignments were recorded. Based on orientation and their relationship to the stone building, the majority of these probably represent timber structures contemporary with the main house and they have been assigned provisional phases on Figure 4, although the possibility of an earlier date cannot be entirely dismissed without full examination and analysis of the archive.

All phases outlined in the following section must be regarded as *provisional* and subject to revision following detailed assessment of the archive. The sequence presented below is based on the original excavators' interim accounts, the RCHM (1970) account and unpublished research notes compiled by one of the authors of this document (MC) between 1983 and 1985 whilst employed on research of the archive held at Dorset County Museum.

Stone Building Phase 1 c300-320AD (Figure 6)

The first phase of stone structures is represented by 3 simple three-cell units, a well known form of Romano-British structure frequently encountered in rural and urban contexts. With exception of Phase 1 Room 15, all of the walls are laid directly onto the chalk bedrock with only very shallow foundations. There are two north-south aligned core structures marked by rooms 16, 17 and 18 (Unit 1); rooms 10, 14, and phase 1 room 15 (Unit 2). Room 15, later enlarged in Phase 2, was given foundations .9m (3 feet) deep, possibly indicating that this room was designed to stand at a greater height than the remainder of the range. An east-west aligned building is marked by rooms 2, 3 and 6 (Unit 3). Both of the main alignments reflect the plan of the town defences indicating that they post-date their construction. The westernmost unit (Unit 1) has projecting stub walls flanking the east facing entrance into room 16. This is suggestive of a porch, similar to that recorded on Building IV, located 110m to the south.

Each unit is of broadly similar dimensions: Unit 1, 11.5m x 6m; Unit 2 12.5m x 5.5m and Unit 3 11.5m x 5.8m. For comparison, Building IV measures 15m x 6m and is on the exact alignment as Unit 3. Room 17, the only heated room of this phase, was constructed over a large pit, (Pit A) containing a shale table leg and purple gloss New Forest Ware beaker sherds of Fulford type 27 dating to after cAD270. The pattern and spacing of the supporting piers and wall channels suggest the position of a window in the south wall. This room may have functioned as a winter *triclinium*. A coin of Licinius I (AD307-324) was found embedded in the east wall of Room 3 of Unit 3. The construction of the first stone building phase appears, on the available evidence, to date to the first two decades of the 4th century.

The dating evidence for Phase 2 (discussed in detail below) suggests that the Phase 1 structures remained separate units until the middle of the 4th century.

The nature of the original floors in Units 1 and 2 is uncertain as they were subsequently covered by mosaics during the Phase 2 expansion (see below). In Unit 3, rooms 2 and 6 were found to have solid mortar floors (although that in Room 6 was re-laid in Phase 3) but no traces of flooring were recorded in Room 3.

Stone Building Phase 2 c350AD (Figure 7)

This phase witnesses the expansion and aggrandisement of the complex into a well-appointed town house of two stone ranges on the west and south, with a possible timber range to the east. The principle range is that on the west side of the complex, containing the living quarters with mosaics on every floor.

The west range was constructed by linking phase 1 Units 1 and 2 with a corridor, room 13. The sequence is clear on the original excavation photographs and still partly visible consolidated fabric of the building as presented today. The walls of room 13 make butt joints with Units 1 and 2, and a new doorway is inserted into the west wall of room 10. The difference in levels between Units 1 and 2 is clearly demonstrated in room 13, with steps being required at either end.

Remarkable detail survives in the fabric of this phase. In the walls surrounding the small court between rooms 18, 13 and 14, a series of weep holes to facilitate drainage from the washing of the mosaic floors can still be seen. Made from re-used ceramic roofing tiles (mainly *imbreces*), these feed shallow channels running to a deep, stone lined soakaway. In Room 10, a window jamb, with part of the rebate for the wooden frame, was found *in situ* where it had collapsed onto the mosaic floor from the south wall (Plate 3). Painted plaster survived on the inner splays, with a red panel and traces of blue and grey decoration. In Room 8, a window sill survived in the east wall set approximately 0.75m above the mosaic floor.



Plate 3. Room 10 looking south showing collapsed window jamb. (From RCHME 1970)

It is during this phase that a new *praeurnium*, room 17a, is butted onto the east wall of room 17 (Plate 4). The *praeurnium* was constructed over a pit, (Pit C) containing mainly

mid to late 3rd century pottery, although the level at which it had been inserted produced a number coins to AD337.



Plate 4. Phase 2 channelled hypocaust in Room 17. (Author).

The most substantial modifications of this phase are made to Unit 2, with the demolition and robbing of the original north wall of room 15 (Pit E is clearly the trench marking the removal of the feature) and its enlargement into a near square room of at least two stories. The remains of the collapsed west and east walls being found. The surviving mass of rubble from the east wall indicates a minimum height of 4m. Immediately to the east of this wall, two masonry blocks may represent either the base of an external staircase or a pair of buttresses. The date of the expansion of room 15 is given by a coin of 341 from robber trench, Pit E, suggesting that this phase dates to the mid 4th century. The badly damaged mosaic in room 15 was undoubtedly the finest in the complex, featuring circular panels probably featuring depictions of the four seasons. Room 14, immediately south of 15, is divided from room 10 by a timber or plaster partition. Further modifications were made to the south east corner of Unit 2 with the addition of a further room, 8. The south wall of room 8 makes an awkward offset junction with the south east corner of room 10 making butt joints with the earlier fabric.

The South Range, Phase 1 Unit 3, is now linked to the West Range by the addition of a corridor along the north side (rooms 1 and 4); these again being simple butt joint additions to the existing fabric. The western end of room 4 appears to be of the same build as the corner of room 8, suggesting a single episode of construction. This addition to Unit 3 took the form of an open fronted verandah with the roof supported on Portland stone dwarf columns; fragments of which were recovered from the fill of the nearby well.

Against the south wall of room 2 there is a semi-circular niche. The excavators noted that it had been constructed against the plaster of Period 1 wall although this relationship is no longer visible in the consolidated remains. This has been interpreted as a fireplace, but the lack of any mention of burning by the excavators would appear to discount the latter suggestion. Boon (1983) however sees this as evidence for a domestic shrine to the *lars* or household gods and on balance this is the most probable interpretation.

Two parallel lines of postholes runs westwards from the west end of room 4, along the south side of rooms 8 and 10 and appears to be a timber corridor, numbered as Room 9 by the excavators, and giving sheltered access to the *praefurnium*, 17a. The pairs of postholes show evidence of replacement and one group is partly overlain by and therefore pre-dates the period 3 addition, room 7.

Although a direct stratigraphic link cannot be demonstrated, it is most likely that a large posthole complex, including a part sunken room, 19, and forming an East Range, also belongs to this phase. Material recorded from this complex points to a mid 4th century date. The posthole pattern suggests at least two rooms; room 19, aligned north-south with an oven at its south end with a further room, or rooms, of unknown extent along its north side. The oven may suggest use as a kitchen or industrial range (Plate 5). A timber fence, marked by a series of post-holes, may have linked this range to the east wall of Room 15 and formed the northern boundary of a courtyard.

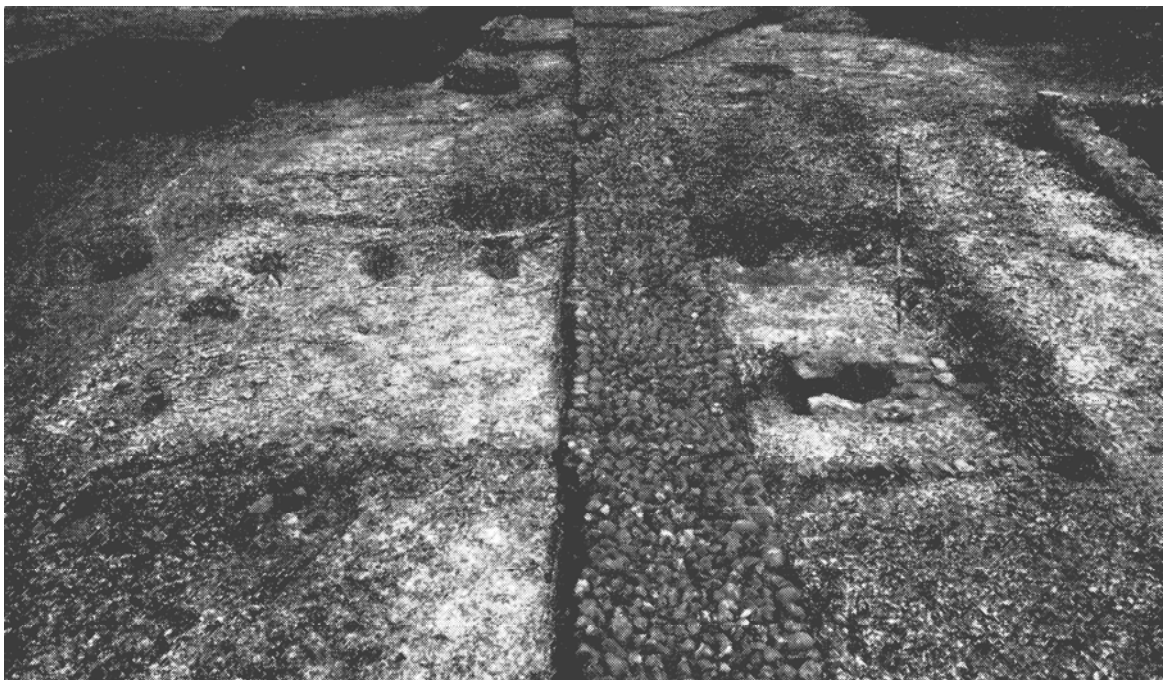


Plate 5. Timber structure 19 overlain by cobbled path. Note the oven to right of the path. (RCHME 1970)

Stone Building Phase 3 c350+ (Figure 8)

The final phase of major additions to the complex primarily affects the South Range with the addition to the east of a simple rectangular room (Room 5) housing two ovens and a hearth. A limestone flag floor within the room sealed a number of coins of 341-348. At

the western end of the range, a small square room with a channelled hypocaust (Room 7) is also added (Plate 6). This is floored in concrete laid onto large flagstones. The original *praefurnium* (7b) was inserted into Room 6. This was subsequently backfilled and a new *praefurnium* (Period 3b, Room 7a) added on the external, western end of room 7. Room 6 is then resurfaced with concrete following the abandonment of 7b; the new surface sealing a coin of 341-348.



Plate 6. Phase 3 channelled hypocaust in Room 7; note the vertical channels in the walls for box-flue tiles. (Author).

The Rooms 5 and 7 additions are butt jointed to the existing fabric (Plate 7) and the cumulative dating evidence points a date no earlier than the mid 4th century. It is quite possible that little time, if any, separates the building works of Phases 2 and 3. Further refinement would only be possible with a full and detailed analysis of the excavation archive, most notably the pottery.



Plate 7. Phase 3 butt joint between Room 5 (left) and Phase 2 Room 1 (right). (Author).

To the west of Room 7, a parallel pair of posthole alignments marks a boundary and timber outbuilding, possibly providing covered access and a fuel store for *praefurnium* 7a. The postholes range from 0.4m to 0.6m in depth and would suggest a substantial structure. A further line of postholes extending eastwards from the south east corner of Room 5 is also likely to be part of the Phase 3 remodelling and forms the southern boundary of the property.

The Phase 2 timber East Range may have passed out of use during Phase 3, its function as a possible kitchen or industrial range being replaced by Room 5 with its suite of ovens and hearths. A further stone range, shown on Figure 7 as Room 20, is certainly of 4th century date and may also belong to Phase 3. The dating evidence is not precise although it is set at 90° to South Range suggesting a planned relationship. Rooms 19 and 20 are overlain by a cobbled path and both produced coins running to AD364-378.

Human Remains from the Town House

The excavations discovered at least 5 infant burials, 4 of which were within the South Range. Two were recovered from the period 3 kitchen extension, Room 5; one was under the chalk floor of Room 3 and a further burial was placed in a hollow in the floor of Room 6. All of these burials were placed either against, or very close to the south wall of the range. A fifth infant was found immediately to the north of Room 15 in the west range. Infant burials are a common find in and around Romano-British domestic

buildings in both rural and urban contexts. The very young were excluded from the Roman law stipulating the burial of the dead beyond the limits of the urban area. The reasons for the burial of new born infants in close proximity to dwellings are probably complex. A widely accepted view is that the spirits of these babies were considered to be a powerful spiritual defence against evil and are often found buried adjacent to walls or in door thresholds. The cause of death in such cases is impossible to establish archaeologically. Many may merely be an indicator of a very high infant mortality rate although acts of infanticide cannot be ruled out. Even in the late Roman period Imperial edicts forbidding infanticide were still considered necessary. No adult burials were found on the site, this part of the population being interred in one of the many extra-mural cemeteries that ringed the town. A fragment of an adult human skull was also recovered from the overburden of Room 13. Neither the date nor context for this piece is known. The stone coffin and lid now displayed on the Town House site was found at the large extra-mural cemetery at Poundbury and brought to the site for public display.

The Status of the Building

The house and associated structures date from a period in Roman Britain when the wealth and confidence of the urban elite of western Britain was expressed through opulent living accommodation. The period c300 – c370AD marks the peak of both rural (villas) and urban private building in south western Britain. A complex such as Colliton Park may well have been owned by a family who were members of the *Ordo*, the governing council of *Durnovaria* and the *civitas* of the local tribe, the Durotriges. Clearly the owners had a substantial capital base to allow the laying of mosaic floors in every room of the West Range and the other substantial modifications made after c350. The basis of this wealth is most likely rooted in villa-based rural estates, although the evidence for intensive industrial activity in buildings III and VII may indicate an additional potential source of income. The evidence for an upper storey in room 15 is of some interest. The Roman author Pliny (writing in the early second century) describes a granary or store on the upper floor above the *triclinium* of his villa at *Laurentium* near Ostia (Radice, 1969). The close proximity of Durnovaria to a rich and highly ordered hinterland could suggest that such storage areas may also be expected within the town houses of the landed classes. A similar interpretation has been proposed for the aisled building belonging to the late Roman phase at Greyhound Yard, Dorchester (Woodward *et al* 1993) and by McWhirr for the mid to late 4th century complex at Beeches Road, Cirencester which, like Colliton Park, also occupies a peripheral position within that town (McWhirr, 1986).

The End of the Building Phase 4 (Figure 9).

The building ultimately fell into decay with at least part of the complex gradually collapsing, probably through prolonged lack of maintenance. The detailed sequence of the decline of the building can only come from detailed analysis of the archive. Some general points and observations can be made based on the currently available published sources. The well immediately to the north of the South Range was found to contain a large number of fragments of dwarf columns that probably derived from the verandah of room 4. Further dwarf column fragments were found in Room 7. This would suggest deliberate demolition of at least part of the range. The circumstances of the demolition cannot be known, although recent work on a number of deposits in wells or pits from late Romano-British towns has led to the suggestion that these may be deliberate ‘acts of closure’ marking a change in the urban landscape and may date to the 5th or even 6th

century AD (Clarke 1997; Fulford 2001). Certainly the evidence from the Poundbury cemetery, Alington Avenue and St George's Road would all suggest a sizeable population still existed in the Dorchester area during the early post-Roman period. Additionally, excavations by Wessex Archaeology in 1988 (Smith 1993), 50m south east of the town house, located a post built timber structure of probable early post-Roman date (Figure 1, W247). It is of interest that this timber structure is on the same alignment as the Town House which may suggest that the house was still in use and influencing local building planning.

Part, if not all, of the West Range appears to have suffered a somewhat different fate to the South Range and may have gradually decayed following the final phase of occupation. The character of the occupation changes in the late and early post-Roman periods. In room 18 the mosaic floor was partly covered with a new flagstone surface and a series of stakeholes, cutting the mosaic and parallel to the north wall mark a clear change in use. The original excavation plan shows only 2 stakeholes linked by a shallow slot. Re-excavation of this room in 1996 showed that the line of stakes actually ran the full width of the room, 0.4m south of the wall (Plate 8). This is too narrow to be interpreted as a partition and may mark the erection of shelving or storage units against the wall. A pit, cut into the north west corner of the room, produced a re-used block of limestone containing part of an inscription reading ...VAL... . Recent excavations of a villa at Dinnington in Somerset recorded numerous alignments of stake built sub-divisions, cut through mosaics, and associated with burnt grain that produced a series of later 5th century AD radio-carbon dates (Prof. A. King, *pers com.*). Further flagstones, laid onto a rammed chalk surface, are recorded over the eastern half of the mosaic in room 13 and a rough limestone floor was also placed over the worn mosaic floor of room 15, once the principle room of the house. An unpublished section drawing across Room 15 shows a worn patch in the mosaic which held the remains of a hearth. How this relates to the limestone flags above the mosaic is not recorded. The date of these episodes is difficult to establish but could belong to the early post-Roman period. In room 15 the limestone floor sealed a number of coins ending with an issue of Gratian dated 367-375 although this may have been deposited long after the date of issue. None of the walls show signs of serious robbing; indeed a remarkable feature of the excavations was the height to which many of the walls in this range still stood. The south wall of room 10 clearly fell inwards as evidenced by the substantial surviving portion of the window jamb found by the excavators (Plate 3). Substantial numbers of stone roof tiles were found on the floors of Rooms 8 and 10, marking the collapse of the roof. The upper parts of the east and west walls of room 15 eventually collapsed outwards and remained where they lay until rediscovered in 1937. This collapse sealed a bronze coin of 388-402 and the eastern wall rubble contained another issue of the same period suggesting that the collapse could not have occurred before the early 5th century and may be considerably later. The unpublished site notebooks record the discovery of a rough rubble floor or surface above the collapsed wall of Room 15 (Site Diary Volume I, p36). The date and full extent of this feature are unknown.

The finds from the excavations do contain significant quantities of later Roman material and the coin list contains a significantly high proportion, well in excess of the national average, of the latest bronze issues to reach Roman Britain in the late 4th and very early 5th century (Table 1). A further feature that may belong to this phase is a well, assumed to be post medieval by the excavators and not excavated, that was cut through the mosaic in room 14, close to the threshold leading into room 15 (Plate 9). This may be of late or post Roman date and replace the well in the court to the north of the south range.

A cobbled path (Plate 5) aligned on the main entrance into the West Range terminates at a shallow ditch on the same alignment as the range. The ditch contained later Roman pottery and a coin of 364-378. The path sealed coins of 364-378 and was interpreted by the excavators as a late Roman approach to the town house. Draper (1978, 120) has suggested that it may in fact be a post-Medieval construction associated with the grounds of Colliton House. The recorded stratigraphic account would still favour a late Roman or early post-Roman date and it is provisionally placed in phase 4. To the east of the south range a short length of drystone wall, stratigraphically late in the sequence, may also be of this phase.

The area of the town house is set within the extreme north west corner of the Roman town defences and is a considerable distance from the core of the later Anglo-Saxon town and Medieval Dorchester. This peripheral location must also have been an important factor for the survival and preservation of the Roman structures with little subsequent use of the site other than for horticultural activities.



Plate 8. Line of stakeholes (to left of ranging rods) cut through mosaic in Room 18 as re-excavated in 1996. (AC Archaeology)



Plate 9. Well cut through mosaic in Room 14 as re-excavated in 1996. (AC Archaeology)

Reconstructing the exterior of the Town House

Reconstructing the original appearance of Romano- British buildings is fraught with difficulties given that so few structures have survived beyond a few courses above the foundation levels. The condition and preservation of the remains at Colliton Park and the high standard, by contemporary standards, of the recording do allow an informed attempt to be made in reconstructing the appearance of the complex. In addition to the excavated remains at Colliton Park, more recent excavations in Britain have recognised substantial portions of collapsed Roman superstructures that clearly indicate the ability of Romano-British builders to achieve two or more storeys. Examples being known from Redlands Farm in Northamptonshire, Meonstoke in Hampshire, Carsington in Derbyshire and Cirencester. The collapsed walls of room 15 clearly demonstrate that this part of the phase 2 and 3 house had at least one upper storey. Although there is no evidence for a staircase at the Colliton Town House, a brief consideration of the character of Roman staircases is included.

To reconstruct the staircase, surviving examples have to be sought from the central regions of the Empire. Roman staircases survive at Pompeii and Herculaneum, and the impressions of wooden stairs are known from other parts of the Empire (Adam, 1984, 217-222). The angle of known wooden staircases varies considerably with examples at Pompeii, Herculaneum and Ostia ranging from 36° to 65° (Figure 10). Recorded and estimated heights for single flights of wooden stairs range between 2.6m to 3.8m (*ibid*).

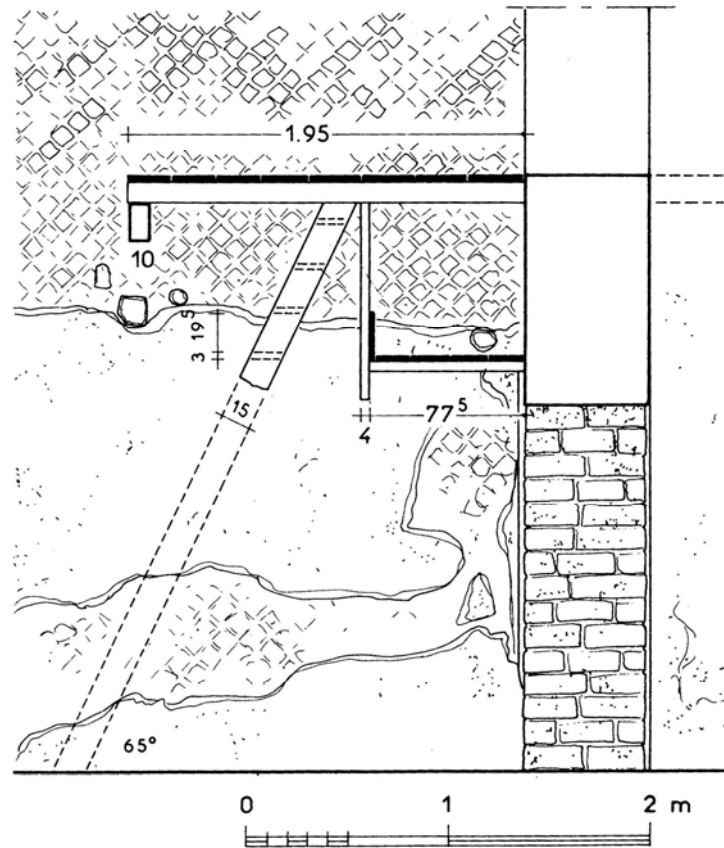


Figure 10. Wooden staircase at Herculaneum with angle of 65°. (From Adam 1984).

An alternative solution is to see the pair of blocks east of Room 15 as supports for a loading bay for hoisting produce for storage in the upper storey. This scheme has been adopted by Neal (1990) in his reconstruction of a free-standing, multi-storied granary at the villa of Gorhambury, Hertfordshire (Figure 11). Whilst this scheme offers an attractive reconstruction, it does leave the problem of access to the upper floors unresolved although access by means of a ladder is quite possible.

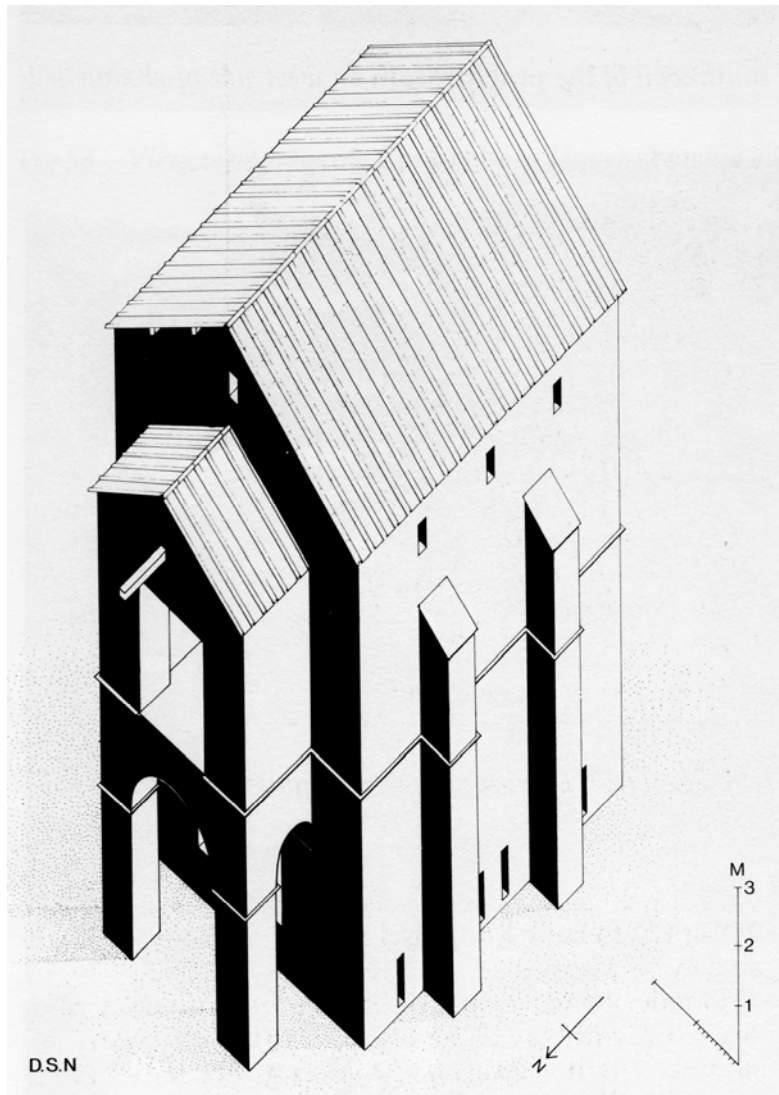


Figure 11. Reconstruction of free standing tower granary at Gorhambury villa, Hertfordshire. (From Neal, 1990).

Roofing.

The evidence from the excavation suggests that all of the buildings were roofed with hexagonal limestone (Portland stone) tiles fixed with iron nails (Plate 10a) apart from the *praefurnia*, 7a and 17a, where ceramic tiles were apparently employed. The evidence from Colliton Park, County Hall and Greyhound Yard clearly demonstrates that the use of stone roofing materials is exclusively later Roman in date, becoming increasingly common from the mid to late 3rd century. One of the ceramic tiles recovered from the Town House bore a stamp reading 'NVND'. Identical stamps have been recorded from other areas of the Roman Town, including Greyhound Yard, County Hall 1986 and the former Allington Dairy, Glyde Path Road (Plate 10b). The weight of stone clad roofing will have been considerable and implies substantial timber trussing and stone walls of some strength. In a detailed analysis of the Roman military granaries at the fort of

Birdoswald on Hadrian's Wall, also roofed in stone tiles of similar dimensions to those from Dorchester, Astill (1997) has calculated that the roof would have weighed approximately 49 tons. This figure excludes any calculation for the weight of the supporting timbers. The Birdoswald granaries are rectangular structures measuring 28.3m x 8.2m (232²m).



Plate 10a, top, reconstructed stone roofing tiles. Plate 10b, bottom, stamp reading 'NVND' on ceramic *imbrex*.

Reconstructing the character of Romano-British roofs has been a subject of intense debate, especially concerning the angle of the roof pitch. Estimates have varied from angles as low as 20° (as proposed by Putnam for the Dewlish villa, based on the angle displayed on a complete roof finial; Putnam *pers com.*) to pitches as steep as 40° to 47°. The 40° angle can be demonstrated from the collapsed façade found at Carsington, Derbyshire (Figure 12a), and the 47° angle for the upper roof line at Meonstoke, Hampshire (Figure 12b). The detailed study and reconstruction of the Birdoswald granaries by Astill (1997) makes the point that to provide an effective, stable water proof roof, stone tiles affixed with iron nails or pegs require a minimum pitch angle of 35°.

The collapsed building remains at Carsington, Meonstoke and Redlands Farm also allows an accurate reconstruction of the original height to the gable apex. Carsington stood at 11.5 metres high (Ling 1992), Meonstoke 11.8 metres (King 1996) and Redlands Farm 6.5m (Keevil 1996). At Meonstoke a series of round headed windows also survived. These are now displayed in the British Museum (Plate 11).



Figure 12 a. Collapsed building façade from Carsington, Derbyshire.

Meonstoke

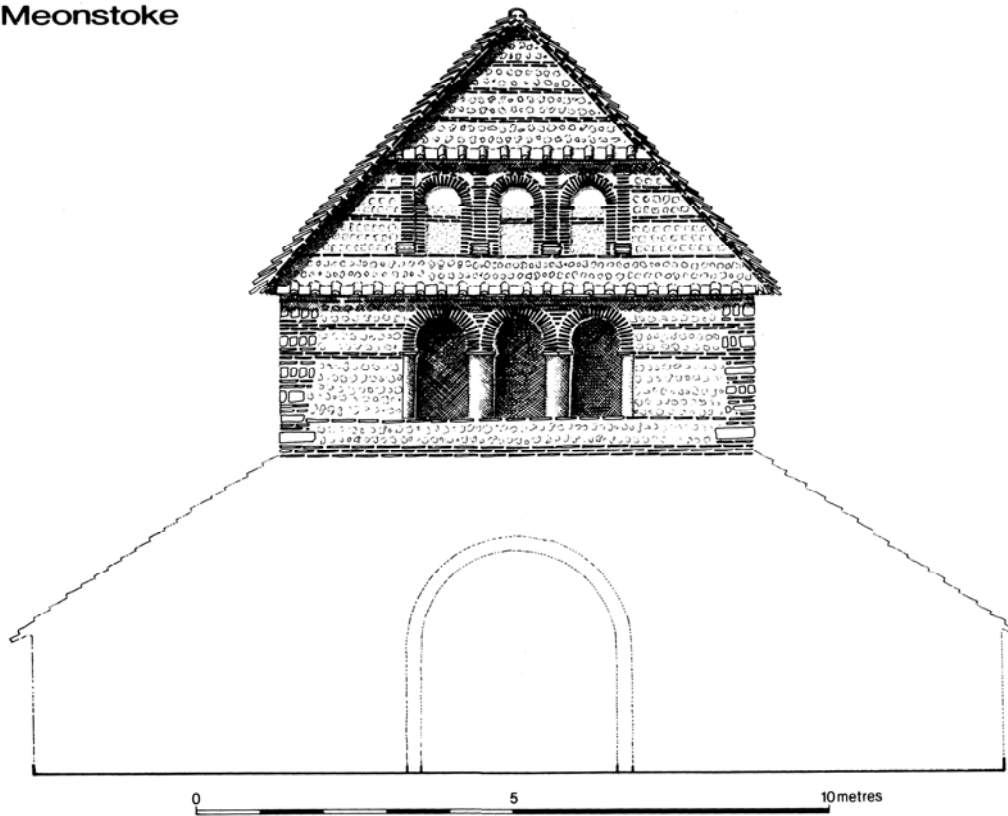


Figure 12b. Collapsed building façade from Meonstoke, Hampshire.



Plate 11. The upper part of the Meonstoke façade incorporating blocked windows as displayed in the British Museum.

Phase 1

The Phase 1 units represent one of the simplest forms of stone structure encountered in Romano-British architecture. The tripartite plan is suitable for a variety of functions ranging from residential use, with simple sub-divisions into living, working and sleeping quarters, through to industrial and storage units. Although built of stone for at least the lower part of their superstructure (at Colliton Park the mortared walls are 0.7m thick, stability would not be a problem) no building of this form has produced any convincing evidence for an upper storey. For this phase it is suggested that the three units were free standing single storey buildings with the westernmost unit possibly having an east facing porch, perhaps indicating its status as the principal building within the complex (Figure 13).

Phase 2

Phase 2 sees the expansion and aggrandisement of the complex with the linking of the Phase 1 units to form an 'L' shaped stone complex with an additional East Range constructed in timber. The linking of Units 1 and 2 presents no problems in architectural terms, the linking corridor, room 13, can be reconstructed as a simple hipped roof structure tied into the existing units. The enlargement of room 15 and the addition of room 8 do present problems in reconstruction. The collapsed masonry from room 15 clearly indicates that this remodelled room was of at least two storeys and use of the upper storey as a store has been suggested above (p9). In appearance and plan the room is very similar to the wings or pavilions found in Romano-British and other provincial architecture. Such structures are known to have been multi-storied in other parts of the Empire. Mosaic depictions of buildings from North Africa show these structures as towers with pyramidal roofs (Plate 12).



Plate 12. 4th century mosaic from Tunisia showing tower structures with steep pitch pyramidal roofs.



Plate 13. 4th century wall painting from Trier, Germany showing multi-storied wing of a building (note figure in doorway providing scale and pitch of roof).

Wall paintings from Trier in the Moselle Valley of western Germany also show such features as towers (Plate 13). On the basis of this evidence, room 15 is here reconstructed as having an appearance similar to that depicted on the Tunisian mosaic (Figure 14).

Room 8, the addition to the south east corner of Unit 2 makes an awkward junction with that corner, being offset to the south by the full width of the wall of room 10. This would make the integration of the roof line with the existing building difficult and it is suggested that this too took the form of a pyramidal roof similar to room 15. There is no evidence of room 8 having more than one storey but a pyramidal roof would provide a certain degree of visual symmetry when approaching the house, similar to that displayed by contemporary 'winged corridor villas' common in the 4th century Romano-British countryside.

Windows are known to have existed at ground level in rooms 8 and 10 with a further example implied by the spacing of the vertical flues in the south wall of room 17 (Figure 15). In rooms 8 and 10 the embrasures are splayed, plastered and painted. The external width of the windows is approximately 0.9m expanding internally to approximately 1.2m. The room 10 window still retained an impression of the rebate to take a timber frame for the glazing bars. Finds of window glass from the West Range confirm the evidence for glazing. The lack of any mention of voussoirs in the site notebooks might suggest that these openings were flat topped rather than arched (Plate 14) although the evidence from the Meonstoke building and other Romano-British sites suggests that round-headed windows were increasingly commonplace in the late 3rd and 4th centuries (King

1996). Based on the evidence from the Town House and other sites, the large ground floor windows are reconstructed as flat topped whilst other, smaller windows are reconstructed as round-headed.



Plate 14. Room 10 window re-erected and as displayed prior to 1996 (left); as restored 1999 (right). The iron grille is based on an example discovered at the Hinton St Mary villa in Dorset.

Phase 3

The main additions to this phase affect the south range with the addition of rooms 5, 7, 7a and a timber range west of 7a. This marks the full development of the complex (Figures 16 and 17).

Phase 4.

This phase sees a reduction in the size of the building complex with the probable demolition – or at least partial abandonment - of the South Range and infilling of the adjacent the well (Figure 18). In the West Range, some of the mosaics are covered with rough limestone paving and a series of stakeholes, indicating narrow divisions possibly for storage bins, are inserted through the mosaic floor in Room 18 (Plate 8). It is probably during this phase that a new well is constructed, cutting through the mosaic floor of Room 14 (Plate 9). The hypocaust, Room 17 may also have been abandoned in this period. The excavators thought the mosaic floor had been deliberately smashed but it is equally possible that it collapsed when two of the supporting piers subsided into the underlying Pit A.

Reconstructing the interior of the Town House

Reconstructing the interior of the house requires the examination of many aspects of the building; including ground plan, décor and a consideration of the internal superstructure. For the latter, an estimate of the height of the walls over the single storey ranges is important. The evidence for lofty Romano-British structures has already been discussed above (12-13). Elsewhere in the Empire, surviving structures suggest that the ceiling levels were relatively high with examples ranging from 2.5m to 3.8m known (Adam 1984). From Britain the evidence is sparse, but a number of collapsed internal walls found at Cirencester, comprising a timber frame infilled with limestone blocks and ceramic tile levelling courses stood to a height of 3.1m (Plate 15) and are dated to the 2nd century AD (Holbrook 1998, 231-6). At the Town House the structural evidence points to walls of solid masonry and an internal height of at least 3m or higher would have been easily achievable.



Plate 15. Collapsed internal wall from a 2nd century building at Cirencester. The wall was timber framed and infilled with masonry. The estimated height of the wall is 3.1m. (From Holbrook 1998).

The internal layout of the house provides a number of clues as to the possible functions of the rooms. The West Range was clearly the main residential part of the complex. The main east facing entrance gives onto a large double reception room represented by rooms 10 and 14, possibly sub-divided by a wooden partition. This could have been a folding door or open screen of the type preserved at Herculaneum (Plate 16) thus allowing it to be enlarged or reduced in size as required.



Plate 16. Casts of wooden folding doors from Herculaneum (1st century AD).

Room 8, with an east facing window and geometric mosaic could have functioned as a small day living room and office for the owner.

The principal room after the phase 2 remodelling would undoubtedly have been 15. This is the largest room in the range and had the most ornate of the mosaics, probably featuring the four seasons. This will have functioned as the summer *triclinium* – the formal dining area and main reception room. The upper floor of this room may have had a number of potential uses. The only obvious means of access would appear to be external, there being no evidence of an internal staircase and it has already been suggested that the most probable use would be as a store or granary (Figure 19).

Rooms 8, 10, 14 and 15 may be regarded as a whole, representing the ‘public’ space within the building and used for receptions, formal dinners and day to day business.

Corridor room 13 links the front of the range with the rear range of private rooms. 17, with its hypocaust is most likely the winter *triclinium* and could also have been used as living space and a bedroom. Across the central corridor, room 16, room 18 may be interpreted as the principal *cubiculum* or bedroom and would have been simply furnished with a bed, cupboard and chair (Plate 17). Scorch marks on the mosaic in this room may be the result of cinders falling from a charcoal brazier used to heat the room during winter.



Plate 17. Reconstruction of a Roman bedroom (*cubiculum*) at August, Germany.

The South Range appears to have had a mix of functions. The phase 3 addition to the eastern end, room 5, featuring two ovens and a hearth, must surely be the kitchen for the later 4th century complex (Plate 18). It is most likely that it replaced the Phase 2 timber complex, room 19, also with an oven, as the main kitchen range.



Plate 18. Reconstruction of a Romano-British kitchen. Museum of London.

The remainder of the South Range, with its own hypocaust in room 7, may have provided an additional accommodation suite in Phase 3, possibly for a cadet branch of the family or for servants and retainers. Clearly its conversion and enlargement in Phase 3 would suggest an expansion of the household and its fortunes. Further discussion of the South Range is given in Appendix 1 (P40, below).

A hint of the furniture current in the later Roman period is provided by the very fine shale table-leg found in Pit A, below room 17. This would have come from a tripod form of table frequently depicted on provincial manuscripts and sculpture. (Plate 19).



Plate 19. Shale table leg from Pit A (left). Early 5th century manuscript depicting diners with tripod table (centre). From the *Vergillius Romanus* in the Vatican Library. Right, tombstone of Curatia Dinsia from Chester showing tripod table.

The Floors

In the West Range every room of phases 2 and 3 was provided with a mosaic floor. Full records of these floors were made at the time of excavation and more recently David Neal and Stephen Cosh have produced detailed water colours of them for inclusion in Volume 2 of their corpus of 'Roman Mosaics in Britain' (Neal and Cosh, 2006). The most complete and best preserved floors were in rooms 8, 10 and 13. (Plates 20-23)

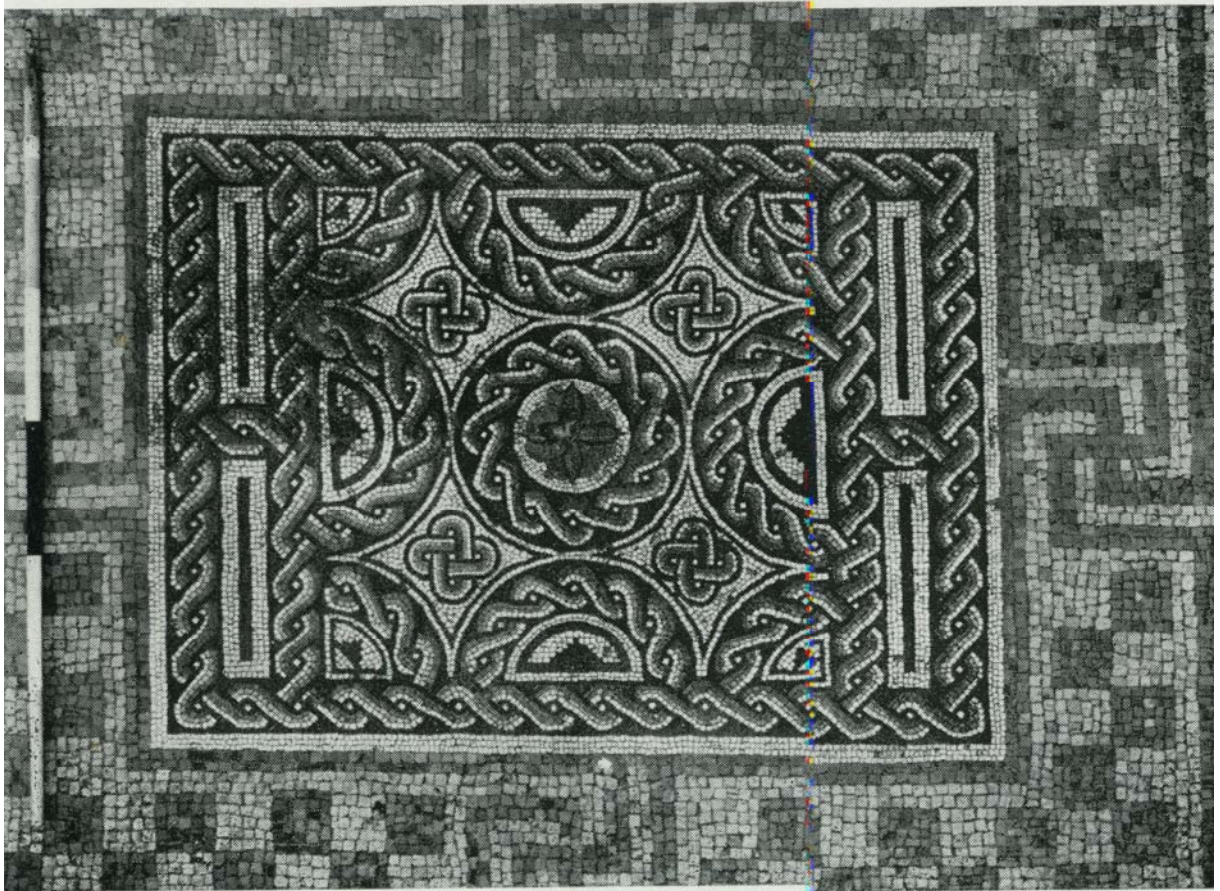


Plate 20. Mosaic floor in Room 8 as excavated. The border is in coarse red and white *tesserae*, the central panel employs *tesserae* of three shades of grey, red, white and yellow. (RCHME 1970).

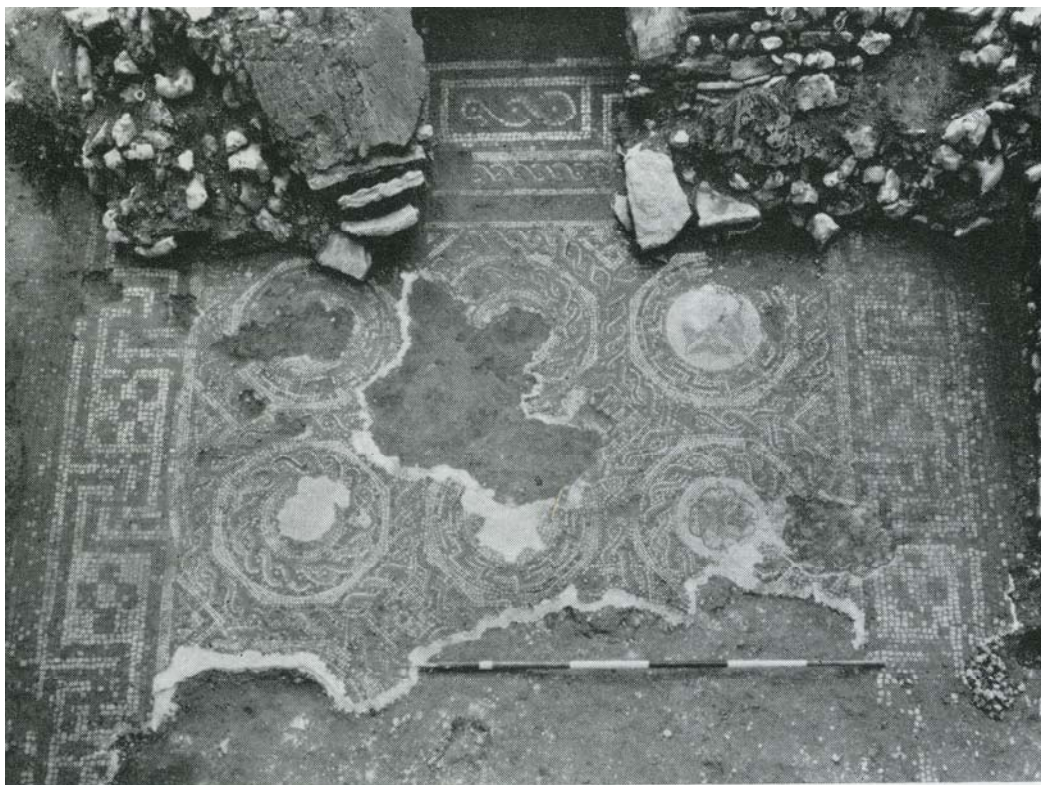


Plate 21. Mosaic floor in Room 10 as excavated. The border is executed in red and white *tesserae*; the octagonal panels (of which there were originally 12) used *tesserae* of dark grey, red, yellow and white. (RCHME 1970).



Plate 22. Mosaic floor in Room 13 as excavated. Mosaic executed in coarse red and white *tesserae*. (RCHME 1970).

The remaining mosaics were in a very fragmentary state although it is possible to reconstruct most of their original designs. Room 14 featured a simple design of alternating broad red and grey stripes; room 16 had a red and white diagonal lattice pattern; in room 18 only part of the border remained, this being a swastika pattern with chevrons and room 17, the hypocaust, had a floor featuring a border with red and white rectangular panels between swastikas and the centre included medallions bordered in blue-grey, red and white. The excavators were of the opinion that this floor had been deliberately smashed. The finest mosaic in the building was that in room 15. This had been badly damaged, but two heads, set within circular medallions, probably represent two of the four seasons, possibly spring or summer and winter. Colours used on this floor are: white, red, dark and medium grey, a pale reddish brown, yellow, blue and green. Some of the *tesserae* used on this floor are especially fine and indicate the quality of the work.

The floors of the South Range are very different. Rooms 2, 6 and the hypocaust, 7, all had concrete floors with quarter round mouldings at the junctions with the walls (Plate 23). Although floored in concrete, these floors would most probably have been made more comfortable by the addition of rugs or mats. Late Roman woven textile floor coverings survive in the arid conditions in the eastern Empire with examples known from Egypt, Syria and Iraq (Plate 24).



Plate 23. View of room 2 as excavated showing concrete floor, quarter round mouldings and niche in the south wall. The rough rammed chalk floor of room 1 is partly visible in the foreground. (RCHME 1970).



Plate 24. Wool and linen textile from Egypt. 4th – 5th century AD.

No trace of a floor surface survived in room 3. In room 5, the period 3 addition, part of rough flagstone floor was noted. The corridor, rooms 1 and 4 were floored with rough rammed chalk and no floor levels are recorded for rooms 19 and 20. Rammed chalk flooring was also recorded in the timber structures, probably stores, to the south of the West Range.

The Walls.

The excavators noted that the external wall faces were generally plastered and painted Pompeian red. Whether this colour was carried up the full height of the walls is unknown although in other parts of the Empire outside walls are known to have a lower panel in Pompeian red with white or cream above. The excavations also recovered quantities of plaster with impressions of laths and reeds which the RCHM account (1970, 555) believes to be evidence of timbered upper walls although these could equally have come from the ceilings.

Internal decorative schemes can be partly reconstructed from the plaster fragments recovered. In the West Range every room appears to have had decorated walls and a considerable quantity of plaster was discovered in room 17, both *in situ* and as fragments. On the south wall there was a dark red border, 0.4m high; above this was an area of white with horizontal lines. Further fragments from the room depict floral patterns in blue and green. Floral motifs, often employing swags coupled with panels and architectural motifs are common on Romano-British wall paintings (Plate 25).



Plate 25. Wall painting from Southwark (Museum of London Archaeology Service).

One fragment of plaster from this room carried two graffito saying in Latin *Paternus scripsit*, translated as 'Paternus wrote this' (Plate 26). We can only speculate as to whom Paternus was – and why he felt the need to write his name twice on the wall!



Plate 26. Plaster from Room 17 bearing the words *Paternus scripsit* – Paternus wrote this.

In room 10 the plaster had a design of rectangular panels with curvilinear components; the window splay bore a red panel with traces of blue and grey whilst other fragments from the room had shades of brown, yellow, blue, green, purple, predominantly on a red or white background. The schemes for the other rooms are fragmentary and must await full analysis of the archive.

In the South Range the hypocaust, room 7, had a panelled scheme with foliate components. The dominant colours included red, white, green and brown. In room 2 the design included green leaf patterns set on a red background extending over the niche and adjacent walls. There was no trace of a plaster rendering in room 5, the phase 3 addition.

There is no mention in the published accounts of any ceiling plaster, although full examination and analysis of the small assemblage held at DCM is still awaited.

Life in the Town House

The quantity, quality and range of artefacts recovered during the excavations, combined with the evidence from the fabric of the buildings, gives a good insight into the material culture and lifestyle of a high ranking late Romano-British urban family. The appointment of the house typifies and reflects the confidence in the peace and security within the four provinces of Britain in the 4th century AD. Very little is known of the furniture used in Roman Britain although the shale table leg found on the site provides a hint of the ornate character of some items (Plate 19). Tombstones and other carvings also give an idea of furniture ranging from wicker chairs to formal dining couches (Plates 27 and 28).



Plate 27. Tombstone of Regina from South Shields showing the deceased seated on a wicker chair with jewellery box and basket at her feet (left) and of Curatia Dinysia from York reclining on a couch (right).



Plate 28. Detail of wicker chair on funerary relief from Neumagen, Germany.

Although some 250 years earlier than the Colliton Park house, carbonised wooden furniture from Pompeii and Herculaneum may be used to illustrate an example of earlier Roman furniture (Plate 29).



Plate 29. Carbonised wooden cabinet from Herculaneum (From Boon, 1983).

The largest category of finds from the house is pottery. The entire excavation of the County Hall site resulted in 172 boxes of pottery being deposited in DCM. Approximately 25% of this total came from the Town House and its immediate environs. Much of this is coarse ware, everyday pottery used for storage, cooking and other utilitarian purposes; the majority coming from the Black Burnished industry centred on Poole Harbour (Plate 30).



Plate 30. Group of Black Burnished Ware from the Colliton Park excavations.

In addition to coarse wares, late Romano-British finer quality table wares are also represented, especially products from the New Forest and Oxford regions (Plate 31).



Plate 31. New Forest Ware beaker (left) and Oxford Wares (right).

More specialised ceramics are also present, most notably mortaria, vessels with a gritted interior used in food preparation (Plate 32).



Plate 32. Part of a mortarium (mixing bowl) made in the Oxford region.

The site produced a large number of metal objects with coins form a large proportion, the majority dating to after AD260 when a dramatic increase in production of low value bronze coin begins and continues until the end of the 4th century. Of the coins from the Town House, most belong to the 4th century and feature all of the most common issues found at that date (Plate 33).



Plate 33. 4th century AD bronze coins. From left, Constantine I 306-337; Constantius II 337-361; Valens 364-378.

Other metal items include brooches or *fibulae*. These are mainly 1st and 2nd century AD in date and must reflect activity on the site before the construction of the Town House. These objects come in a wide range of types and were universally used as clothes fastenings (Plate 34).



Plate 34. Selection of bronze brooches dating between cAD50-200.

Other metal items recovered include bronze spoons and pins, as well as iron objects ranging from nails to knives, cleavers and keys (Plate 35). Additionally, bone artefacts,

especially pins, were commonplace (Plate 37). This rich and varied assemblage attests to the life, work and tastes of the population of the Town House and its environs.



Plate 35. Iron knife, key and bronze key handle.



Plate 36. Bone pins.

The animal bones recovered during excavation that will provide an insight into diet still await detailed study but do include fish bones. Whether these are salt or fresh water species remains unknown, but large numbers of oyster shells show that seafood formed part of the diet.

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APPENDIX 1

ROOM RECONSTRUCTIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS (Figure 20).

The following hypothetical detailed reconstructions of room use are based on the plan of the Period 3 building when the complex had reached its maximum extent and level of opulence. Descriptions and possible functions for the rooms in the main West Range have been given above (p24-32)

General observations on Roman building styles.

Doors.

The evidence for doors from Roman Britain is sparse. Whilst actual doorways can often be identified within structures, the form of the door is rarely evident. The means of affixing doors is known, with numerous examples of strap and pivot hinges being recorded. At Colliton Park the door positions can be identified for every room thanks to the exceptional preservation of the building fabric with stone thresholds or steps being recorded for rooms 1, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15 and the corridor, room 13. The threshold between rooms 14 and 15 was formed from a single block of Purbeck stone, whilst the division between rooms 14 and 10 may have been a folding partition (above, p25 and Plate 16). The doors into rooms 17 and 18 were less well-preserved although the surviving fabric suggests they were of differing proportions with that into room 18 being wider. A narrow door into room 17 is not surprising as this was a heated room and a smaller opening will have assisted in retaining the heat within the room during the winter. Waterlogged conditions in London allowed the remarkable survival of a wooden door from a 2nd century shop excavated at No 1 Poultry and was of simple form comprising three planks secured by cross joists (Plate 37).



Plate 37. Wooden door from No 1 Poultry, London as excavated (left) and reconstructed (right). Museum of London.

The main entrance into the West Range, opening into Room 10, is likely to have been of a more ornate form although the evidence for this is entirely absent. Contemporary depictions of formal entrances on wall paintings, coins and reliefs show panelling, metal studs and other decorative fittings (Plate 38). The internal doors may have been similarly ornate except in the South Range between room 1 and 5, the kitchen.



Plate 38. Ornate door as depicted on a wall painting from Pompeii (left) and on a coin of Nero (right).

The South Range.

Rooms 1 and 4.

These rooms functioned as a corridor (Room 4), giving access to Rooms 2, 3, 6 and 7, and as an entrance lobby to the kitchen, Room 5. The excavated evidence from Room 4 leaves little doubt that it was fronted to the north by a dwarf wall, probably little more than 1.5m high, that supported a row of limestone dwarf columns 1.1m high. These will have supported a lean to stone tiled roof butting against the north wall of Rooms 2, 3 and 6. This room will have been open to the elements (see reconstruction drawing, Figure 16) and had a simple rough chalk floor. There is no record in the excavators' notes of any plaster on the inner faces of the walls in Rooms 1 and 4 although some did survive on the outer, north facing side. From the corridor, Room 4, a north-facing entrance gave access to the courtyard and, opposite this to the south, access to Room 6. Room 1 provided access to Rooms 5 and 3. There is no linking door between Rooms 2 and 3 or 3 and 5.

Room 5

Room 5 was of simple rectangular plan with no evidence of plaster rendering on the internal wall faces. The floor was of rammed chalk with an area of limestone flags to the south of the entrance from Room 1. The room contained a substantial, 'keyhole' shaped oven and two hearths. Four post holes around the oven suggest some form of timber cover. The oven and two hearths leave little doubt that Room 5 was the kitchen serving the house during Phase 3. The oven is of a well known type frequently encountered in Roman Britain. The oven was oval in plan, stone lined and with a clay dome rather similar to a modern Italian pizza oven (Figure 21). To the west was a long flue where the fire was laid. Fuel probably comprised of charcoal although P Cox (pers com) has suggested the use of waste shale offcuts, by-products of the Dorset shale industry. A

reconstruction of a Romano-British kitchen, based upon excavated evidence at numerous urban and rural sites is given above (Plate 18, p27).

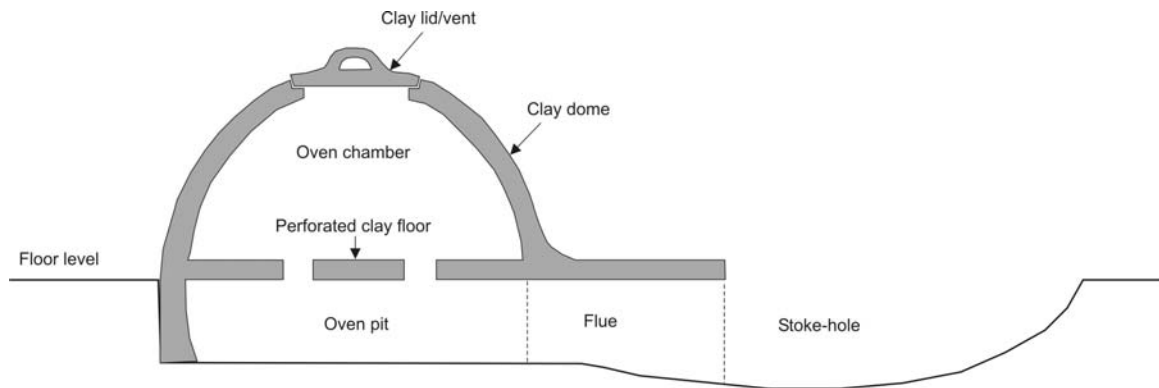


Figure 21. Section through typical Romano-British domestic oven.

Rooms 2, 3, 6 and 7.

In Phase 3, this suite of rooms is most probably a self-contained domestic range including a heated room, 7, with a hypocaust served by a *praefurnium* or stokehole, Room 7a. The décor of this range, which includes painted wall plaster, does not feature mosaic floors and suggests that the accommodation here was of a lower status to the West Range. Whilst room use is largely conjectural, the niche in Room 2, here interpreted as a private household shrine or *lararium* (above, p.9; Plate 39a), would indicate that this was a private room for use by the occupants. In addition to housing the shrine, it may have been used as a private living room. The colour scheme here included green foliage on a red background, possibly similar to a scheme reconstructed from excavated fragments discovered at Leicester (Plate 39b),



Plate 39a (left). Domestic shrine or *lararium* from Pompeii. 39b (right). Painted plaster from Leicester.

The appearance of these painted rooms is currently under discussion and computer generated reconstructions are being made by UCL, London to recreate the effects of lighting provided by oil lamps or tallow candles. The study, still underway, is based on rooms from buildings at Pompeii, but the results give an impression that will hold true for the Roman World (Plate 40).



Plate 40. Computer generated reconstruction of bedroom (cubiculum) interior lit by oil lamps. UCL.

Based on contemporary reliefs and other sources, such rooms appear to be modestly furnished with a simple couch, chairs and small tables (Plates 41 and 42). The glass and metal vessels depicted on the stone sarcophagus from Simpelveld, Holland (Plate 42) can be paralleled by examples from Romano-British sites and are typical of higher status provincial objects (Plate 43a, b).



Plate 41. Reconstruction of a Romano-British room interior. (Museum of London).



Plate 42. Sarcophagus from Simpelveld, Holland, showing room interior with tables, cupboards and glass vessels (left).



Plate 43a (left), bronze jug from Dorchester (DCM). Plate 43b (right), glass vessels from London (Museum of London).

Room 6, with its doorway onto the corridor and providing access to Rooms 2 and 7, will have been a 'public' space and may have also functioned as a day work and reception room. Room 7, the Period 3 hypocaust addition, may have been used as a winter dining cum living room. The preservation of this room provided many details into the operation of the hypocaust system with internal flues to carry hot air up the walls (Figure 22).

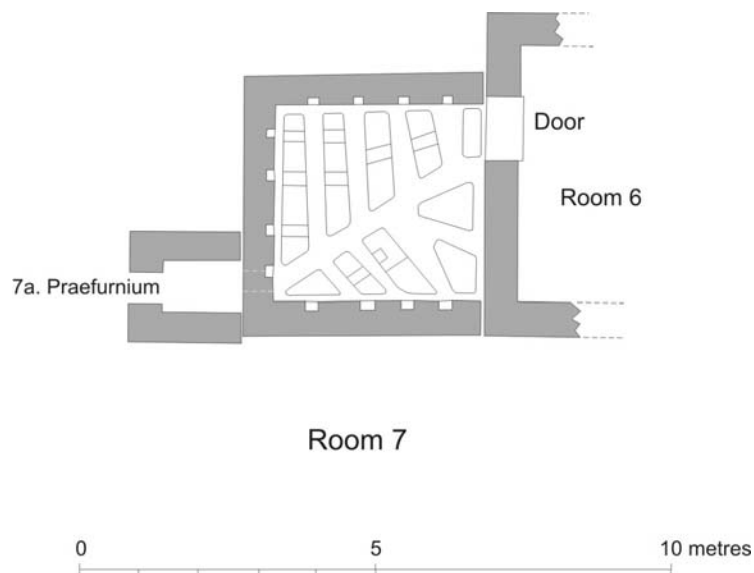


Figure 22. Detail plan of room 7 showing pier supports for floor, wall flues and the *praefurnium* (stoke hole).

The workings of such a system can be reconstructed in some detail and the painted wall plaster included a panelled scheme with foliate components. The dominant colours included red, white, green and brown (Figure 23).

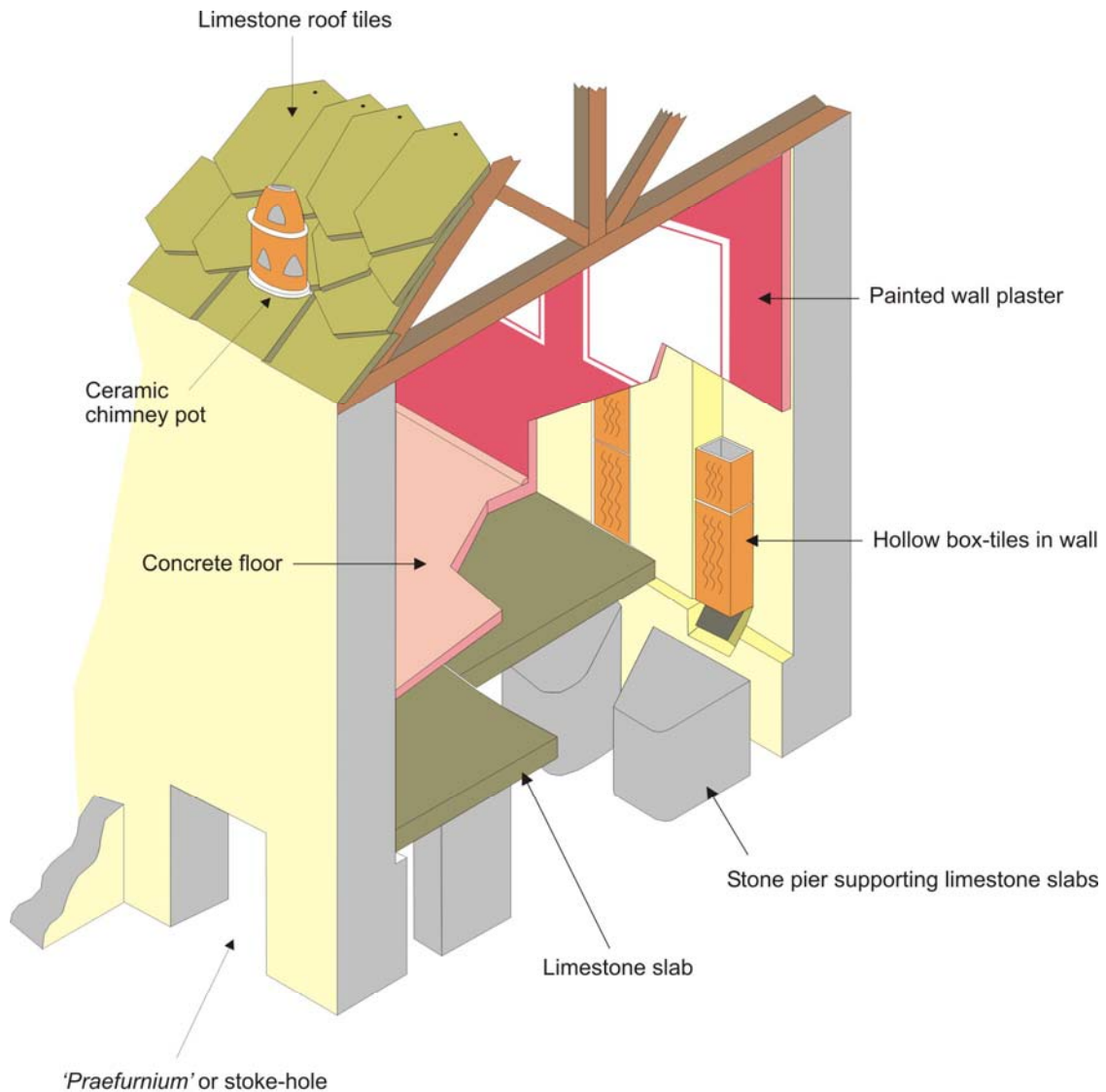


Figure 23. Cutaway reconstruction of Room 7.

The provision of smoke outlets varies considerably across the Roman world. These range from simple openings in the wall below the eaves to ornate ceramic chimney pots (Plate 44). The latter were relatively common in Roman Britain although no fragments of these have yet been identified from the Town House they can, when fragmented, be easily misidentified as sherds from coarse pottery vessels or brick fragments. Full analysis of the material in DCM may lead to the identification of such objects.



Plate 44. Ceramic chimney pot from Ashstead, Surrey.

In other rooms where no underfloor heating is provided, additional heating could be supplied by charcoal – or even coal fuelled braziers. In Dorset, the waste products from the oil-rich shale industry may also have been employed as fuel (Plate 45).



Plate 45. Iron and bronze braziers from Cologne. (Cologne Museum).

The Town House lacks evidence for two components necessary for comfortable life; a bath suite and provision of a lavatory. Public lavatories, well constructed in stone and generally linked to the public sewer system are known from a number of Romano-British public bath buildings, military sites and commercial premises. The evidence for private lavatories from Roman Britain is more mundane and generally takes the form of a cess-pit, sometimes with evidence for a stone or, more frequently, a timber superstructure. Such features are rarely encountered within main dwellings and are generally sited at a discrete distance from the house. The 1937-8 excavations did not record a convincing example of a cess-pit/lavatory and such a feature may lie beyond the limits of the excavation. Two *possible* candidates may be the stone-lined soakaway associated with Pit 'D', located in the small court between Rooms 15, 13 and 18, or Pit 'G' a short distance to the north of 'D'. No postholes were noted in the vicinity of either pit and further speculation can only come from a full and detailed analysis of the archive.

The appearance of Romano-British domestic lavatories may be reconstructed however based excavated examples from other parts of the country. The well-preserved plan of a timber lavatory and cess-pit from the villa at Gorhambury, near St Albans, may be cited. Here, a cess-pit only 1m deep had deep postholes at each corner and the excavator believes the pit may have been emptied regularly to provide manure for growing crops or vegetables. A reconstruction of this simple, two-seat privy by the excavator is produced here as Figure 24. In addition, part of a wooden lavatory seat – the only example from Roman Britain - was recovered from a cess-pit at Neatham in Hampshire. This was of standard Roman 'keyhole' shape with chamfered edges, Figure 25.

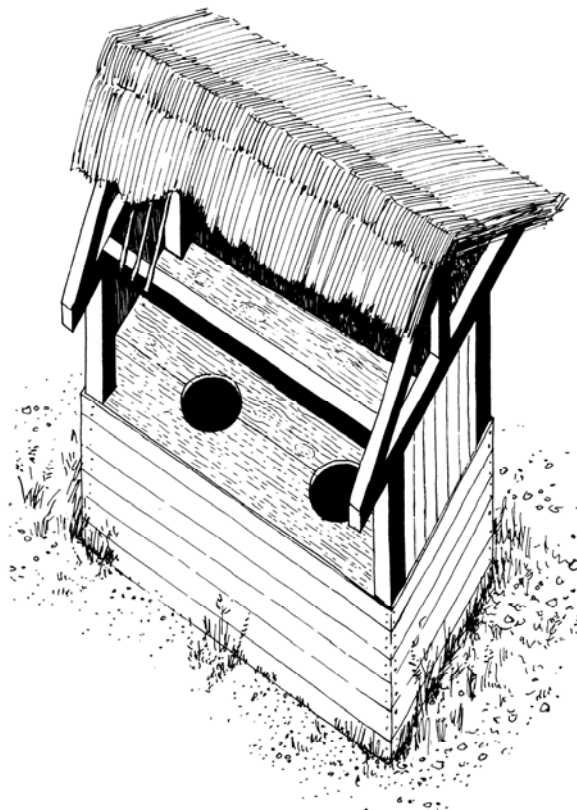


Figure 24. Reconstruction of a timber privy from Gorhambury villa, Hertfordshire. From Neal 1990.

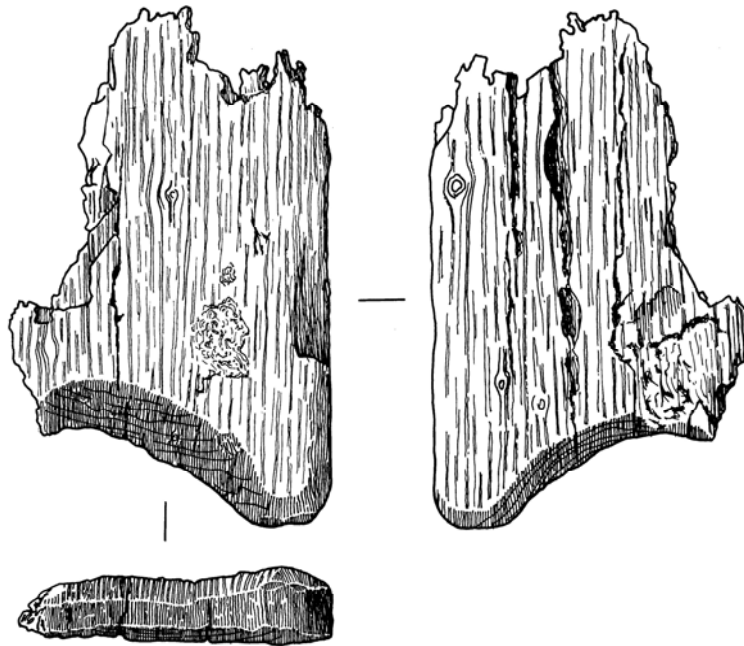


Figure 25. Fragment of late 3rd century wooden lavatory seat from Neatham, Hants. Scale ¼.

In the later Roman period some private town houses were provided with a modest bathing suite, usually comprising three rooms for cold, warm and hot bathing. Such a feature is lacking from the Town House and the occupants must have used a public bathing facility – or had access to a private suite in a nearby property. A large public bath building stood close to the centre of Durnovaria although this was some 500m from the Town House. It is possible that a smaller public bathing establishment could have existed in the upper part of the town although there is no evidence for this at present and use of an adjacent private suite would appear to be the more likely option.

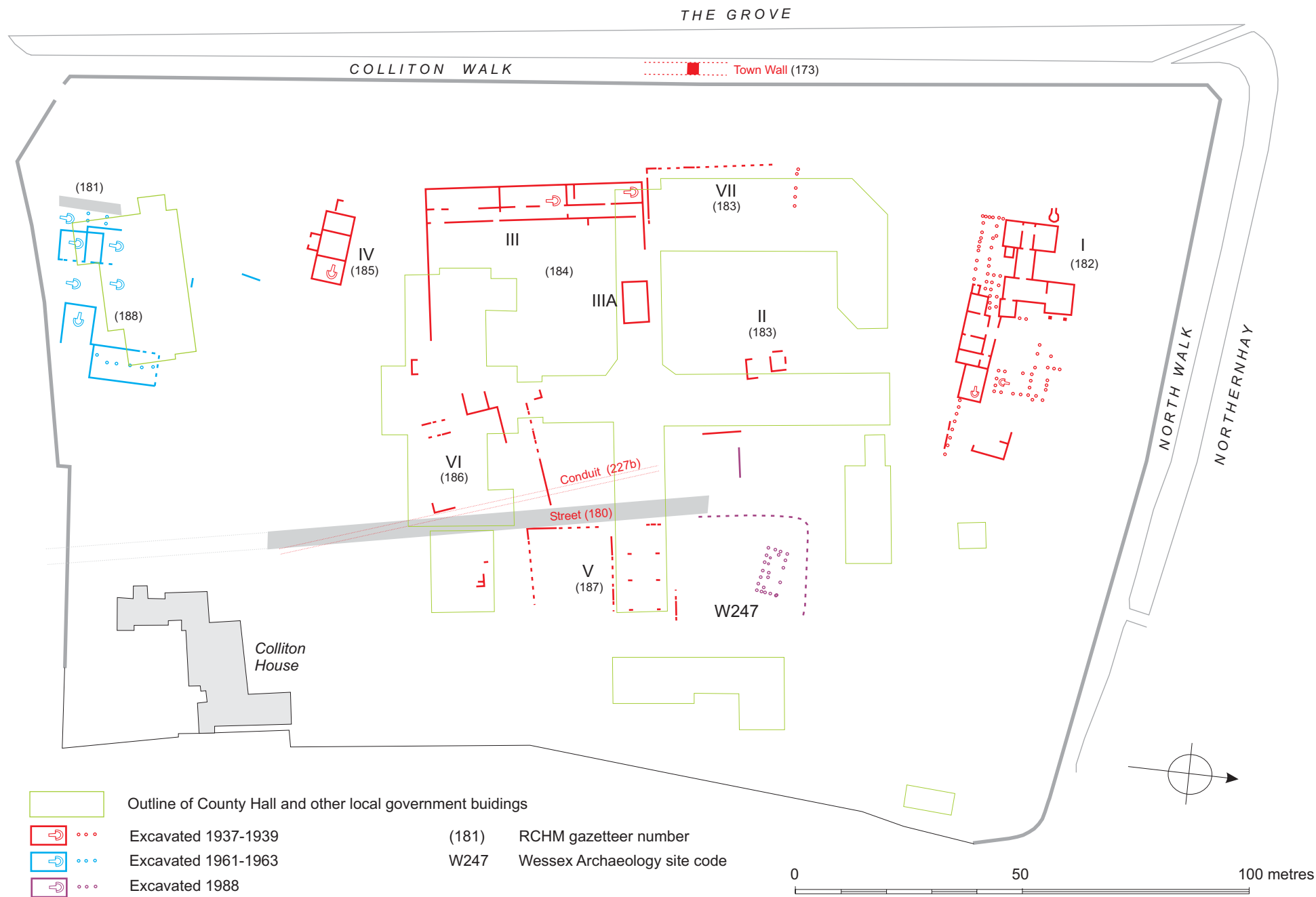


Fig. 1. The Colliton Park Excavations. (After RCHME 1970 with additions).



Figure 2. Extract from site plan showing grid orientation and excavated areas.

SECTIONS THROUGH THE ROMAN DEFENCES OF DORCHESTER

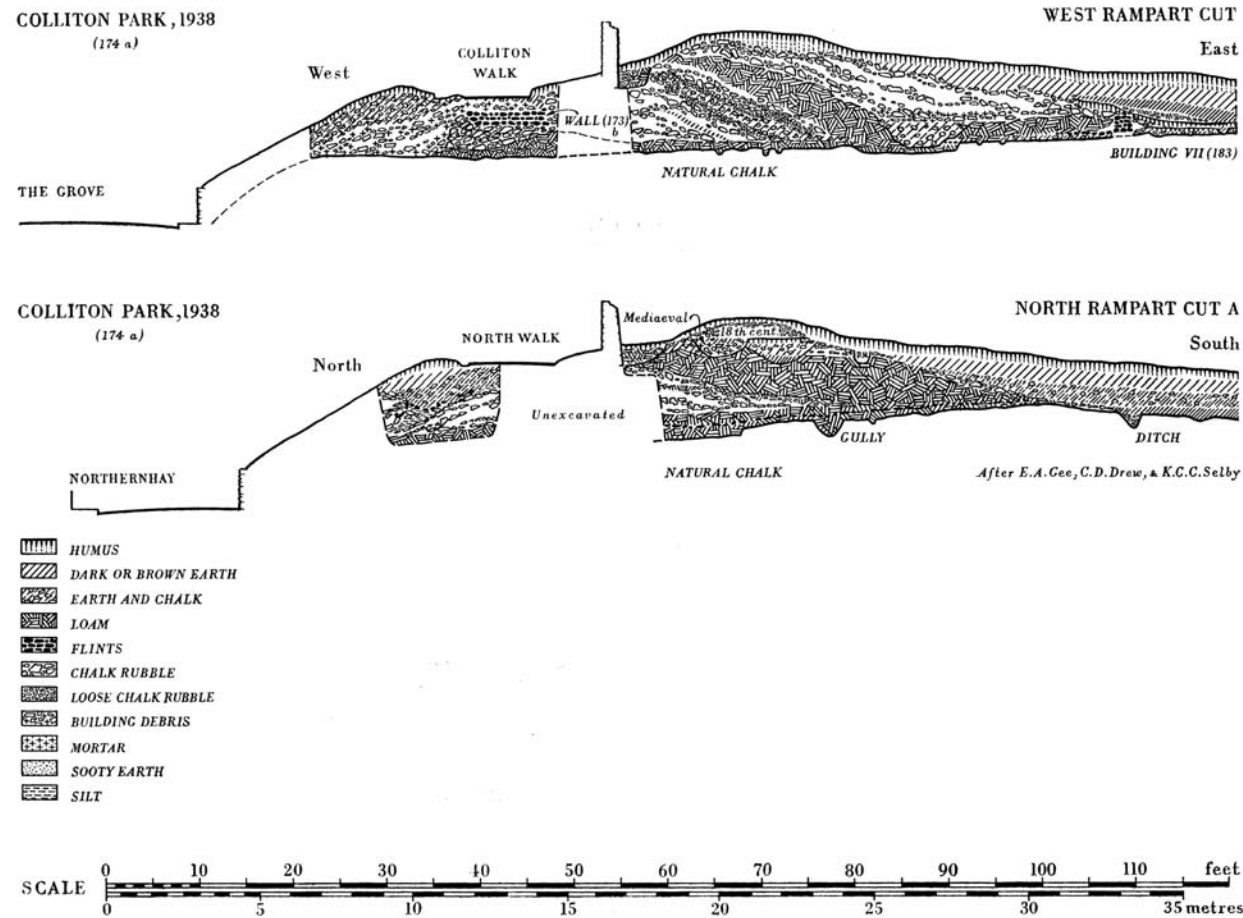
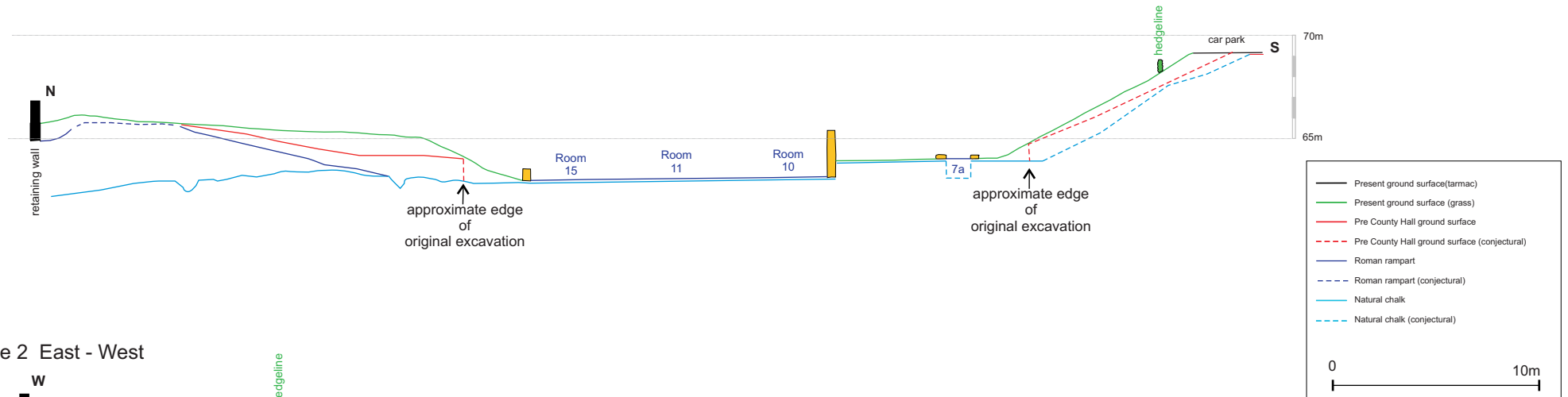


Figure 3. Sections across the western and northern defences of Roman Dorchester at Colliton Walk and North Walk. (From RCHME 1970).

Profile 1 North - South



Profile 2 East - West

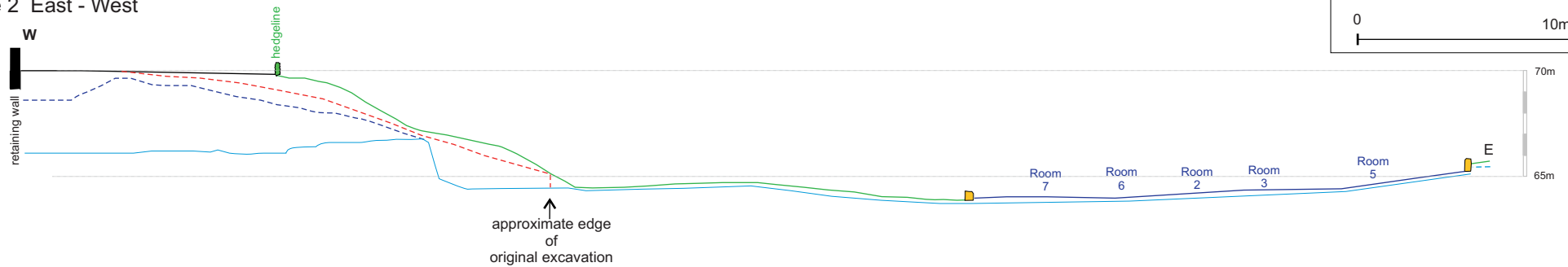


Figure 4. Profiles across Town House site. AC Archaeology



Figure 5. Overall plan of Colliton Park 4th century AD Town House with provisional phasing. Room numbers as given by Drew and Selby. (After RCHME 1970 with modifications).

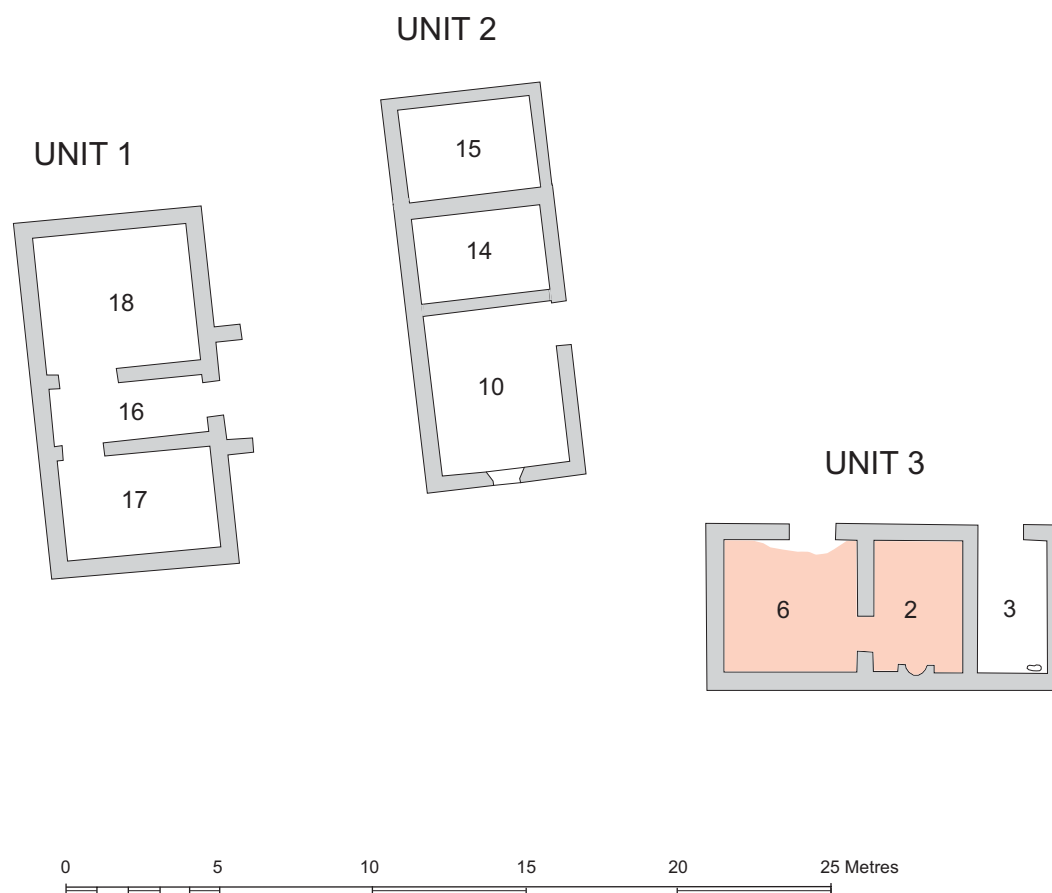
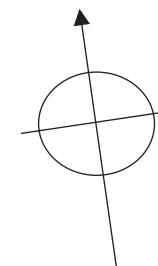
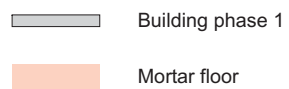


Figure 6. Provisional Phase 1 configuration

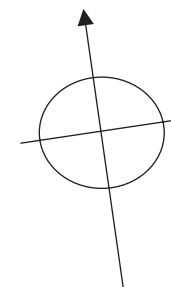
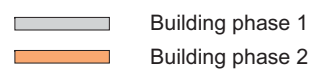
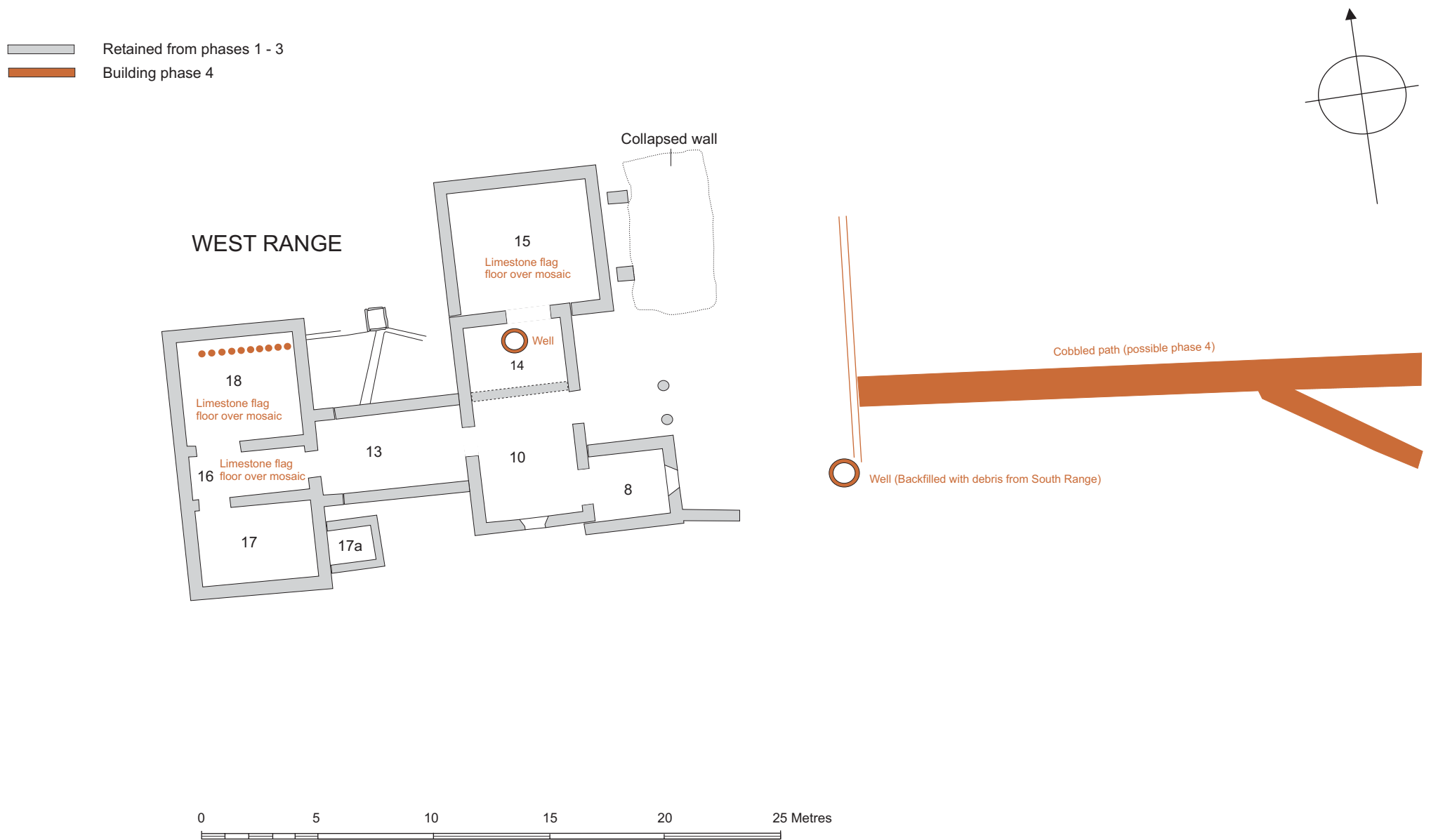


Figure 7. Provisional Phase 2 configuration.



Figure 8. Provisional Phase 3 configuration.



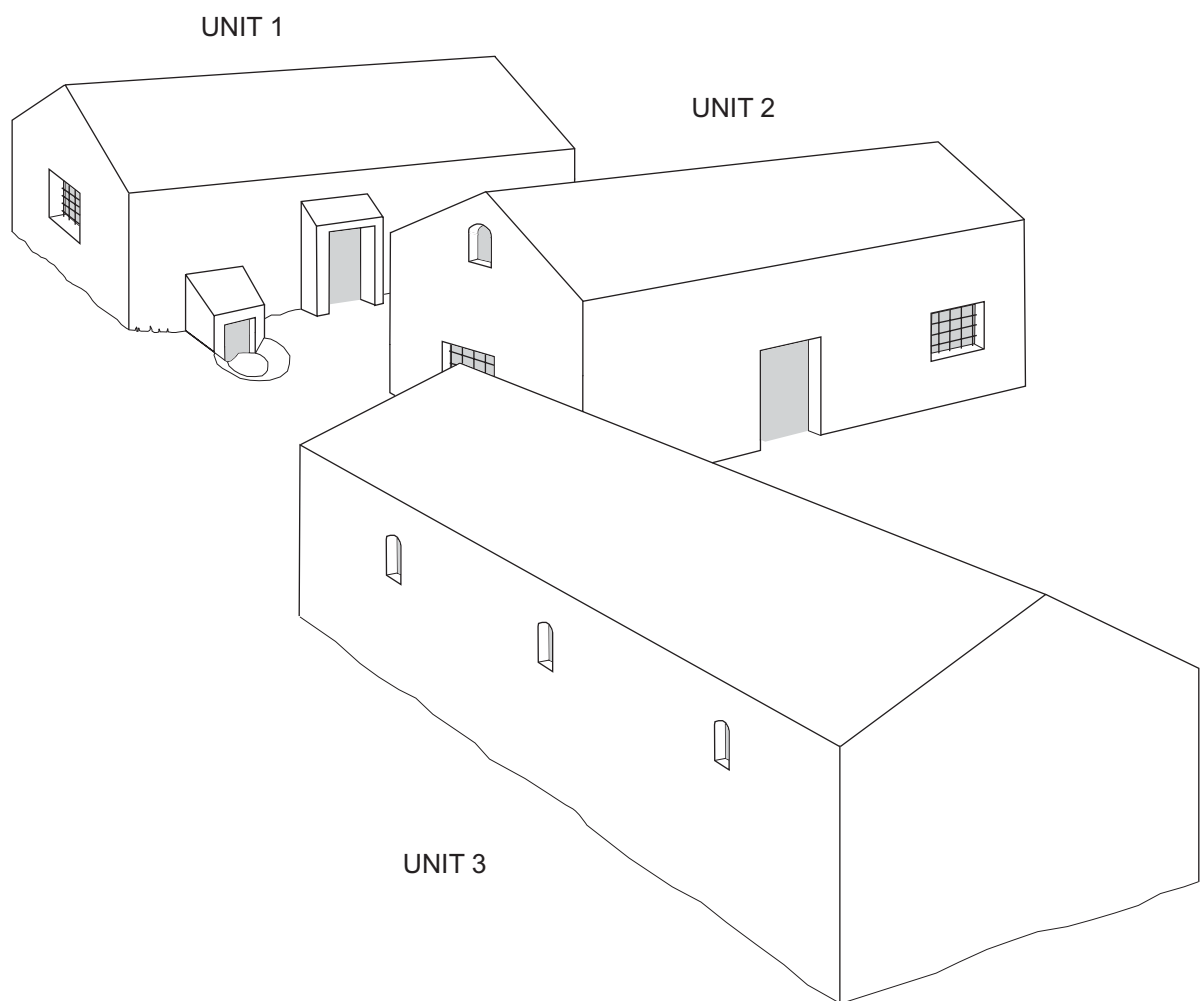


Figure 13. Suggested outline reconstruction of Phase 1 buildings viewed from the SE.



Figure 14. Suggested outline reconstruction of Phase 2 buildings viewed from the E with external loading bay.

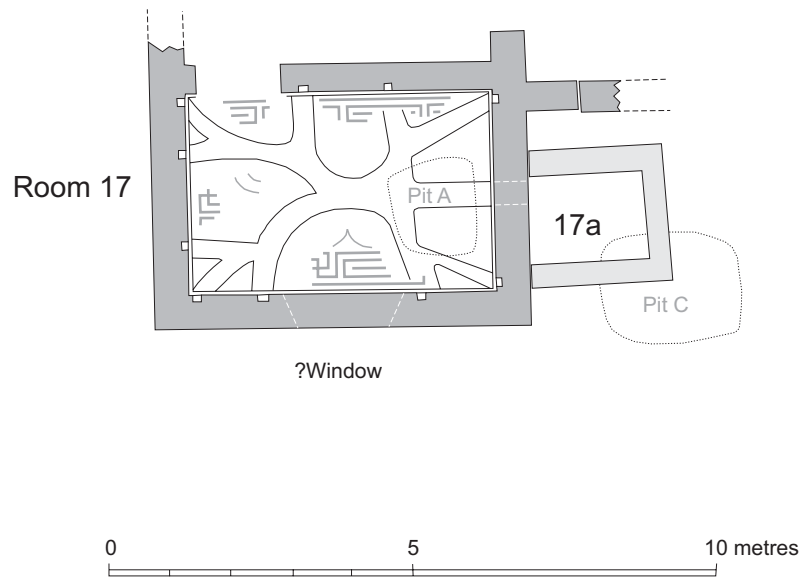


Figure 15. Detail plan of Room 17.



Figure 16. Suggested outline reconstruction of Phase 3 buildings viewed from the E with external loading staircase.

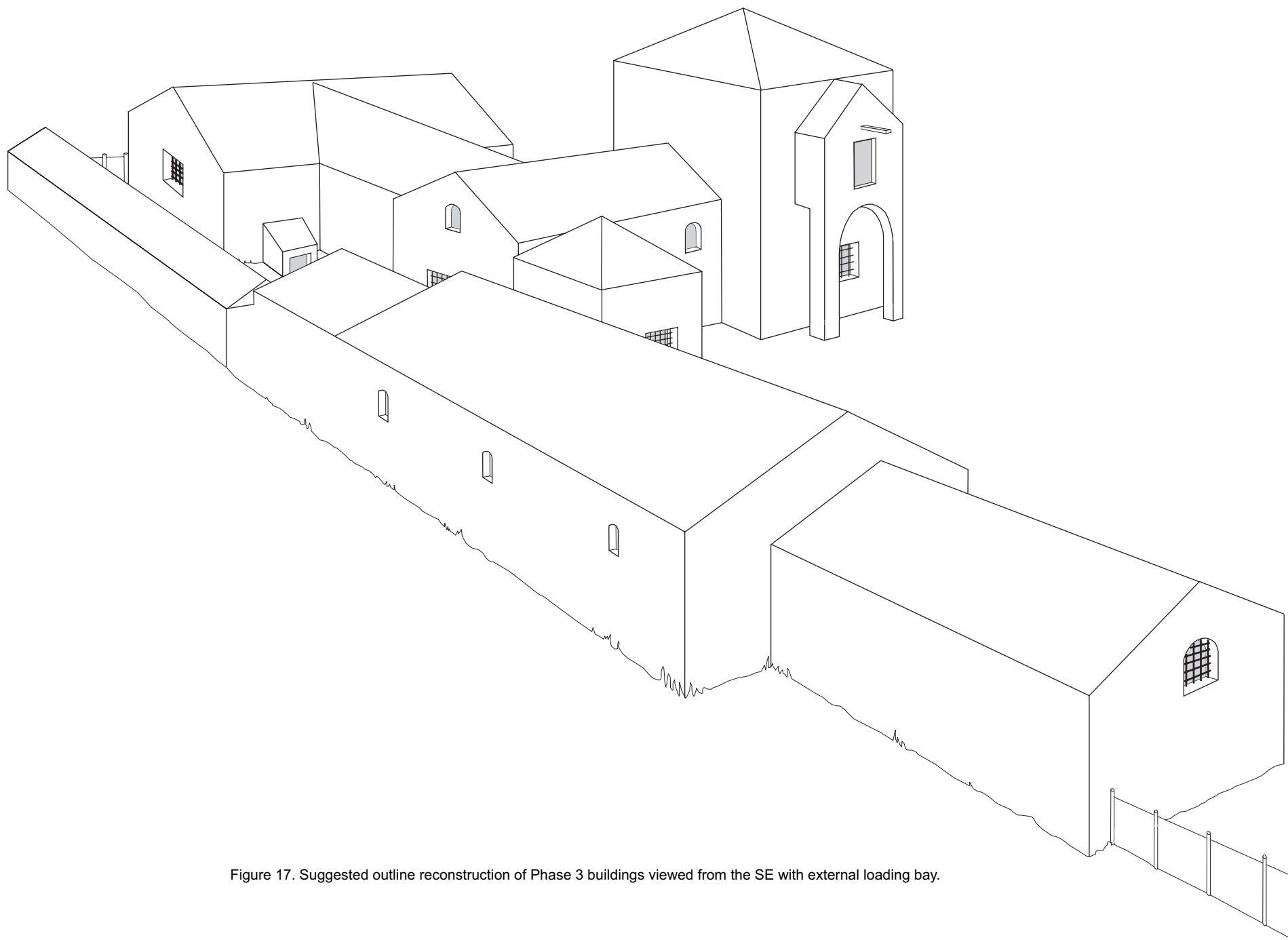


Figure 17. Suggested outline reconstruction of Phase 3 buildings viewed from the SE with external loading bay.

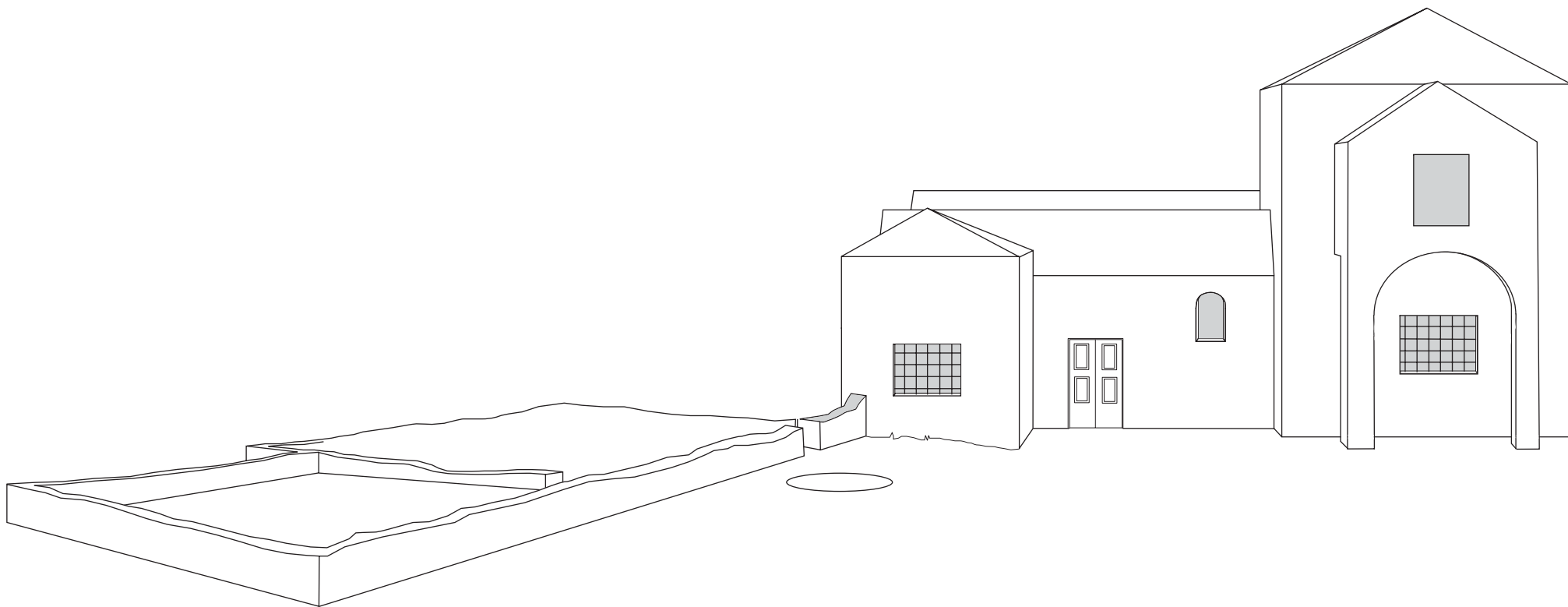


Figure 18. Suggested outline reconstruction of Phase 4 buildings viewed from the E.



Figure 19. Suggested reconstruction of Phase 3 interior, Rooms 10, 14 and 15.



Fig. 20. Simplified plan with room numbers