

EXCAVATIONS AT STRATTON-ON-THE-FOSSE 1995

1995 has been a good year for the Bath and Camerton Archaeological Society. We have held our first excavation for over twenty years and become actively involved in a practical archaeological project that may last another two to three years.

In April the committee decided to go ahead with a magnetometer survey of the "Linkmead" field at Stratton-on-the-Fosse. The Society agreed to pay for the survey cost of £3000 and the work was started in early April. The results were well worth the expense and the Society is now in possession of a very valuable report showing many interesting features on the 6 hectare site.

We decided to continue the excavation of the building discovered in the autumn of 1993 and run the three week dig as a training excavation, opening it up to any interested parties for a small charge.

We started work in earnest on Monday 3 July and finished with an open weekend on 23 July. About 30 people took part during the three weeks including two students from France. Quite a few members were able to spend a few days on site and everyone had a really good time. More importantly we excavated over half of the building and uncovered much of the internal details of the rooms.

The building is probably rectangular in plan and has at least 6 internal rooms. These rooms are almost certainly arranged around a central courtyard which contained the remains of a water cistern. The floors were probably made of beaten clay, however it was difficult to prove this as we only have the very bottom courses of the walls and therefore very little of the inner floor layers. The southern end of the building was in a better state of preservation and showed how the rooms had been laid out symmetrically with the central room of three being almost square and the two outside rooms narrower and of very similar dimension. The southern wall measured 13m, so it was easy to see this was quite a large building even by modern standards. However the quality of the work was not up to villa standard and so far there has been little evidence of underfloor heating normally associated with that class of building. It is probably safe to assume that this was a large and quite wealthy farmstead associated with similar settlements in the nearby vicinity.

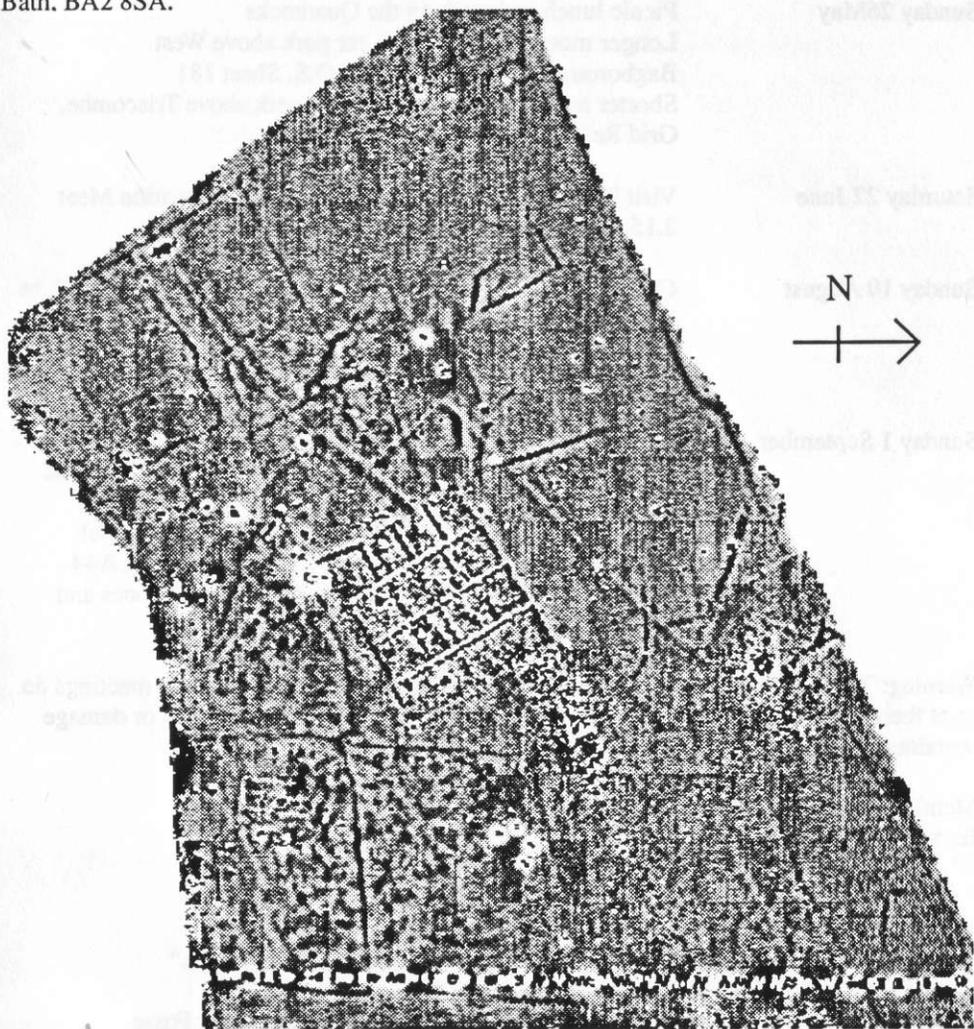
The date of the settlement is of interest because it is quite late in the Roman period. The coins that could be identified when excavated were closely grouped, having dates between c 275 and 320 AD. The pottery evidence also supports this late date although much more work has to be done to give a complete picture of what was going on here.

We are now putting together a program of excavation and investigation into the whole site covering a period of approximately three years. This year we will complete the excavation of the building. In the following years we intend to excavate the other areas shown on the

survey and undertake surveys and fieldwork around the surrounding fields. In a few years time we hope to have a better picture of the Romano-British settlement of Stratton-on-the-Fosse and may have filled in the illusive gap between the end of the Roman period and the beginning of the Middle Ages.

This year we are starting work for three weeks from 8 July and anyone interested in taking part can contact me:

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Greyscale of 6 hectare field at Stratton-on-the-Fosse showing Roman field system (ignore central feature - 19thc sewerage beds)