

WESTON ROAD SITE PROJECT PORTLAND

Leaflet two: progress

The site appears to become more and more complex as work progresses, but that is the fascination of archaeology: as one question is answered, another is raised. This keeps the volunteers working on the site alert and observant of the slight change in soil colour, feature or the minutest detail of a find. The workers are becoming quite “addicted” to scraping away in pleasant circumstances, hour after hour and holding in their hands pieces of pottery and other finds which were last used more or less two thousand years ago. It gives a wonderful sense of time but also timelessness.

Work so far has concentrated on the southern part of the site and it is becoming very clear that the site has numerous substantial structures on it and is of great significance in the story of Portland’s past. Vast quantities of archaeological material are being found, washed marked and recorded.

We do not yet have a clear date for the site but it is becoming obvious from the pottery types the main Romano-British occupation started late first century AD and continued well into the second century at least. The existing and visible remains of the round building, which appears to be central to the site, are now known not to be Iron Age in date, as first thought, but also of the Romano-British period but they may eventually be shown to overlie vestiges of earlier remains. The function of this round structure is also not yet clear, but it is now being considered possible that it could be a civic or community building rather than a dwelling.

Excavation work on the large and very substantial rectangular building which overlies earlier Romano-British structures has revealed an area of well-constructed dry-stone walling and a beautifully worked corner stone. On the southern side of the building very elegant stone steps have been revealed but their interpretation is not yet certain. A number of pieces of glazed ceramic tiles have been found. The associated finds are mostly of early medieval date but a great deal more work is required to confirm what the nature of the building is. One fact is evident: the building is one of importance. More archival research will be necessary to find out why there are no known contemporary records for the building.

There is at least one area where the presence of a lot of charcoal and burnt material suggests some or other industrial activity. There is an overall pronounced spread of charcoal and other burnt material on the site, perhaps suggesting that at some stage there had been a fire in the roofs and super-structures of at least some of the buildings.

A great deal of work remains to be done and more help with any aspect of the work will always be welcome. Visitors are also most welcome.

This is a Local Heritage community project.

