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The archaeology of Taylor's Wood, Congresbury

**YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM AND CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**



Egg-ended boiler or atomic bomb?

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Page	Contents
3	Abstract Acknowledgements Introduction Taylor's Wood
4	Site location
5	Land use and geology
6	Historical & archaeological context
8	The archaeology Taylors Wood enclosure The Roman presence The cave Industrial and military archaeology
21	References Archive Further work

Abstract

Taylor's Wood, a small wood on the southern slopes of Broadfield Down has numbers of archaeological sites from an undated, but possibly prehistoric enclosure, a burial cave, a Roman building and later military history. These unrelated sites and others are reported together for convenience.

Acknowledgements

YCCCART are most grateful to the then owners of Kings Wood, The Vincent Trust, through Dr Laurent duVerge for access to the wood; to Chris Richards, Peter English and Jane Evans, for access to information about sites in and adjacent to the wood.

Jane Evans (1983): This investigation was prompted by the late Mr Jim Pullan to whom the writer owes a debt of gratitude for inspiration in fieldwork. The fieldwork was subsequently carried out by Mr Chris Richards. Mr & Mrs O J Urch, owners of Woodlands and of Taylor's Wood, and Mr Palmer, former owner of Taylor's Wood, both kindly gave permission for their respective properties to be visited. Mr P L Baldwin of Rhodyate Lodge kindly lent his house deeds for examination. Mr Philip Bartholomew of the Ashmolean Library provided a photocopy of Long's letter to Haverfield.

Chris Richards (1983): Sheila Richards for help with the cave survey

Introduction

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) is one of a number of community archaeology teams across northern Somerset, originally supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team.

The objective of the teams is to carry out archaeological fieldwork, for the purpose of recording, and better understanding and management, of the heritage of northern Somerset.

The fieldwork for this report was largely carried out in 1983 and 2007.

Taylor's Wood

This seems to be a rather arbitrary name for woodland growing on Taylor's Hill. Part of it was initially removed for a quarry, and subsequently the construction of the adjacent Victorian villa 'Woodlands' post-Tithe Map. The clearest depiction of an area called 'Taylor's Wood' is on the 1903 OS 1:2500 plan, and we have chosen this area for the purposes of this report.

Site location



Fig 1: Location of Taylors Wood, Congresbury

Taylors Wood is a woodland area of approximately 2Ha, lying above and immediately adjacent to Woodlands, off the Wrington Road, in Congresbury, North Somerset. Its centre is at ST44866434.

Land use and Geology

Taylor's Wood lies on a south-west facing promontory, on the Carboniferous Limestone of Broadfield Down. This Limestone is highly mineralised, with large veins of iron, utilised from the Roman period, and supporting an active iron mining industry in the 19th century.

The limestone was also valued for its hardstone, and small quarries can be found around the edges of Kings Wood: they are responsible for some of the features, such as inclined planes, visible in the woods today.

This is private woodland. Some of the archaeology is, however, visible from public and permissive Rights of Way. Please remember this, and obey all warning signs: there are open mine workings in the woods, and the woods are used for shooting at irregular intervals. As Taylor's Wood is also part of the King's Wood and Urchin Wood SSSI, please be careful if visiting not to disturb or damage wildlife.

Historical and archaeological context

Previous work on the archaeology of Taylor's Wood has been poorly reported, and the 19th century accounts of excavation of a Roman 'villa' in particular, seem inadequate by modern standards.

Little is known of the prehistoric period at Taylor's Wood, other than that it is thought, largely on botanical grounds, to be ancient semi-natural woodland (<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/sitedetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1005522&SiteName=&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&unitId=>). Its recent history seems to be very mixed, and little of the original area that was woodland can have survived the changes since medieval times (or earlier) intact.

It is known from recent excavation at Cobthorn Way, Congresbury, and Arnolds Way, Yatton (North Somerset HER), that there was considerable Roman interest in the area for its iron ores, evidence for smelting of which was found at both sites.

The extensive evidence for 19th century iron mining in the woods has made identification of Roman evidence difficult, and no evidence for Roman mining has yet been positively identified.

An ill-defined Roman building was recorded at or near Taylor's Wood in the mid-19th century (details below, p 11), and burials, reputedly of Roman date, were found at a cave within the study site. Nothing else is known of Roman usage of the area, although presumably at the very least, the smelting of iron locally would have required quantities of charcoal for its production, and King's Wood would have been the obvious source.

Neither is medieval use of the area any clearer: King's wood was clearly exploited by the manor of Congresbury (there are notes regarding the size and nature of coppices in the wood on the 1567 survey of Congresbury, although none refers to Taylor's Wood by name). The area does not occur on the deWilstar maps of 1736-9: the earliest portrayal yet seen is the Tithe Map of 1840.

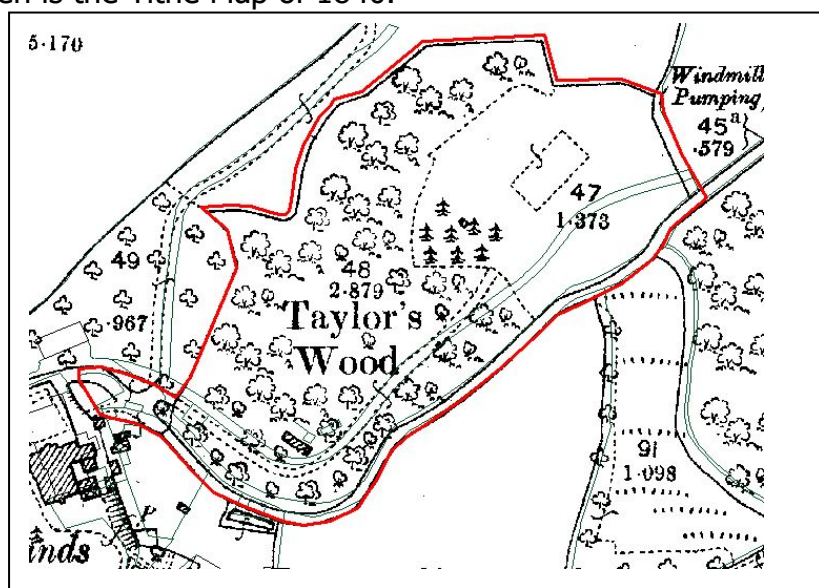


Fig 2: Taylor's Wood area of study (based on OS 1903 map)

The Tithe map portrayal shows a wood surrounded by open fields on all sides, except in its southern reaches where the construction of 'Woodlands' has subsequently removed

a large part of the wood.



Fig 3: Taylors Wood from Tithe Map, 1840. Study area in red

Tithe entries:

Number	Owner	Occupier	Name	Land use
1687	J H Smyth-Pigott	George Harvey	Quarry Piece	Pasture
1688	J H Smyth-Pigott	Moses Hill	Taylors Hill Ground	Arable
1691	J H Smyth-Pigott	J H Smyth-Pigott	Taylors Hill	Wood
1692	J H Smyth-Pigott	Moses Hill	Taylors Hill	Arable
1693	J H Smyth-Pigott	Moses Hill	Taylors Hill	Arable
1694	J H Smyth-Pigott	Moses Hill	Orchard	Orchard
1695	J H Smyth-Pigott	George Harvey	Orchard	Orchard

Unfortunately, the Smyth-Pigott archives for Congresbury are (apparently) thin on the ground, so no earlier references to Taylor's Wood or Hill have yet been found.

The Archaeology

Taylors Wood enclosure (ST44866432)

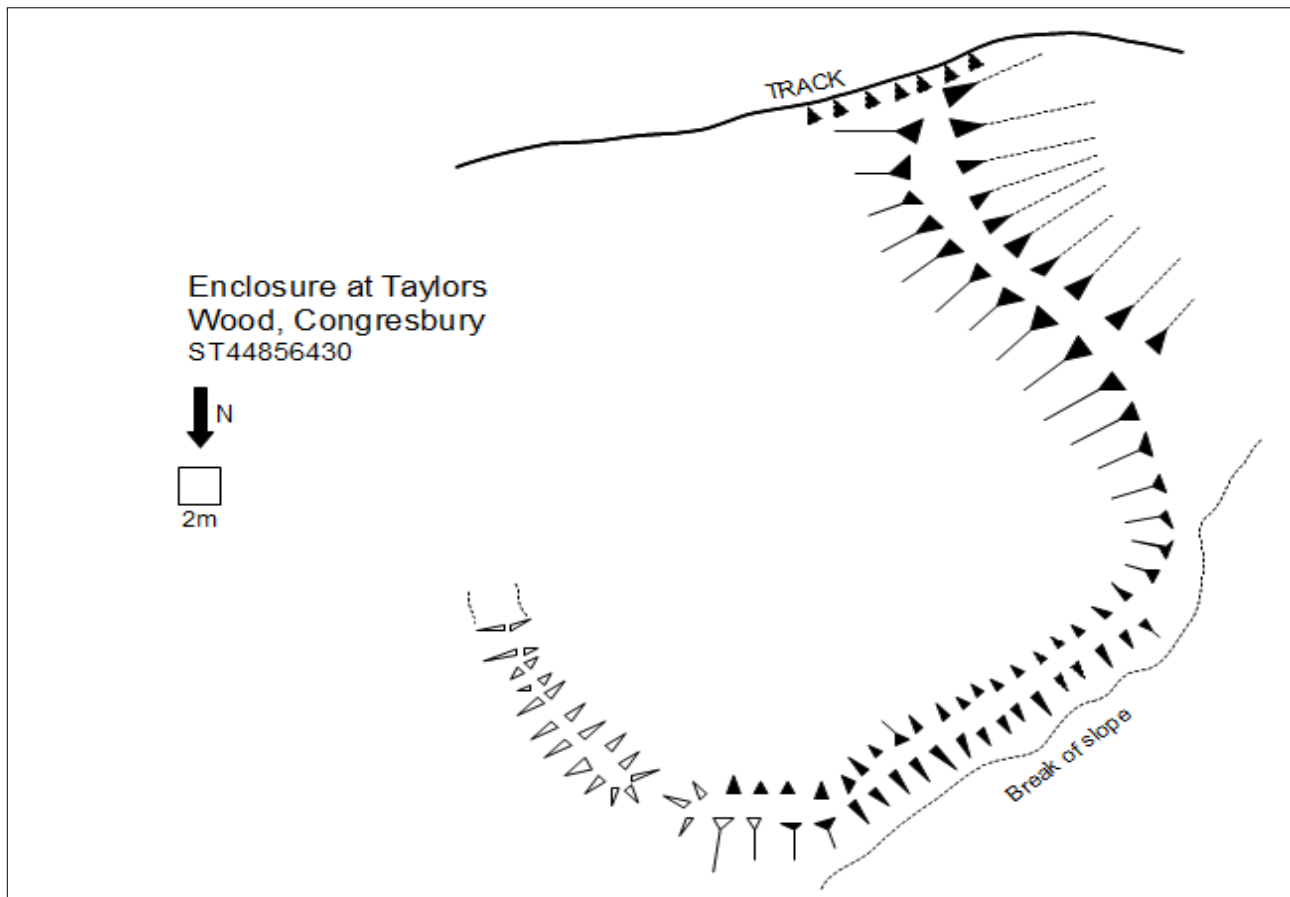


Fig 4: Taylors Wood enclosure

Part of the reason for examining Taylor's Wood in detail was the finding of this enclosure during an YCCCART walk in 2006. A number of penannular enclosures have been found in the woods at the western end of Broadfield Down. Their date is still not clear, despite several having been surveyed and published in detail (such as Everden 2010 http://www.ycccart.co.uk/index.htm_files/Chelvey%20Y21%202010.pdf). For a discussion of their nature, see, for example (Russett 2007 http://www.ycccart.co.uk/index.htm_files/Four%20enclosures%20full%20final.pdf).

Taylors Wood enclosure seems to be less well-preserved than most, and has clearly been damaged by military activity and probably by landscaping in the late 19th century for Woodlands, a villa who's garden included Taylor's Wood.

The remaining earthwork is c25m x 40m, although its south-eastern exterior blends into the natural slope down to the track leading to the area. The broad rubble bank at this end terminates abruptly in a 2m high cliff of quarried rock: it runs from there down to a slight break of slope, then turns to run NE, reducing to a small bank 2m wide, before turning again to run SE as a barely perceptible bank, finally becoming undetectable close to a point where the adjacent platform cuts into it.

No internal features were visible when surveyed. Assuming that this enclosure was once complete, it is not clear whether landscaping for gardens in the late 19th century or military activity in the mid-20th was responsible for its erosion (see below).

The earthwork sits above and faces a shallow combe, along which runs a significant hollow-way, forming a direct link between the north of Congresbury village and Woolmers in the centre of King's Wood. The age of this route (which is still a public footpath along its entire length) is also unknown. Since the earthworks tend to occur in pairs on either side of combes giving access to Broadfield Down, this may imply another enclosure to the east of the combe. This possibility has not yet been explored.

Some references to 'examination of the prehistoric earthworks' in the visits in the late 19th century (p13 below) may refer to this site.

The Roman presence

It has never been disputed that there has been Roman activity in this area, but the nature and date of that activity is not clear. Roman 'villas' (and the definition of a villa is problematic at best, especially in early references) do occur in semi-natural ancient woodland (e.g. Hooke 1989: 114), and help to fuel the argument about woodland regeneration in post-Roman times.

References to 'Woodlands Roman villa' are preceded by references to RB burials at Taylor's Wood. Some further reference to these is made in 'The Cave' below.

The skeletons are referred to in an undated letter from Col. Long (who lived at Woodlands) to Mr Haverfield where (with a sketch map – see Fig 5 below) he refers to

'... B is a cave about 150 yards off where Mr White [referred to elsewhere as in 1867] recovered some skeletons..'

This appears to be the original source of the evidence of the finds, and a supposition was made at the time that these were 'the original inhabitants of the Roman villa'. Thus the conflation in date of the two sites has no basis in factual evidence at all. It is highly unlikely that a gentleman excavator in 1867 would have realised that cave burial (or at least, disposition of human remains) has been happening in this part of the south-west since the late Upper Palaeolithic (e.g. Goughs Cave in Cheddar). The supposition is not accepted by the Mendip Cave Registry, which simply describes the finding as 'four human skeletons'. Despite Branigan & Dearne (1991) accepting the cave burials as Roman, these skeletons should remain undated unless new evidence emerges.

Woodlands Roman villa by Jane Evans (1983)

Woodlands Roman Villa was given credence and respectability by appearing in Haverfield's gazetteer of Roman Villas published in the Victoria County History for Somerset in 1906. Subsequently it achieved notoriety as a 'lost villa'. It is hoped this note will serve to show the site is no longer lost, but doubt may be cast on whether it was actually a villa.

The earliest published references appear to be passing comments by Prebendary Scarth. In 1877 he wrote: 'Above the present residence of Capt William Long, Roman remains have also been found, consisting of much pottery and bronze implements and the foundations of a dwelling; a boundary of loose stone has been traced in the wood, enclosing an area of several acres'.

Ten years later, in 1887, in an article on Wrington, he wrote 'Other Roman remains have been found on the property of Col Long at Woodlands'. A fuller account was given in 1891 when Col Bramble as Vice President of the Clifton Antiquarian Club, in a letter of apologies for not attending a meeting on 12 October, gave an account of some Roman antiquities found in 1868 near Col Long's house on what appears to have been the site of an unrecorded Roman Villa. Other Roman remains found at the same time are now in the possession of Col. Long. The remains exhibited were

1. a bronze spoon with rat-tail handle; 5 1/8 inches long.
2. a bronze fibula or brooch of ornamental design.
3. ten fragments of red-glazed 'Samian' pottery, one with the potter's mark, (read by the Secretary as RIIOGENI.M).
4. fragments of coarse grey pottery

Haverfield's entry (1906) states

'At Woodlands, on the slope of Rhodyate Hill, traces of a small house or rural building have been noted. In 1867 Mr White, then resident at Woodlands, uncovered two rooms, one with a hypocaust beneath it, and picked up abundant potsherds and other small objects, since lost. More recently, Capt Long, the present owner of Woodlands, has found pottery, including Samian, and bronze implements, and has traced in the wood a boundary of loose stones enclosing several acres. One bit of Samian found here bears the mark RIIOGENI.M; one coin, found in 1873, is a Third Brass of the middle of the third century. The mass of potsherds found by Mr White has suggested the idea of a potter's kiln, to which the subsoil is fairly suitable. In a footnote, Haverfield quotes the three references already given and adds 'information from Capt. Long, and personal knowledge.'

Since that date, many people, including the O.S, have tried to locate the find-spot but without success. The problem was a challenge to the late Mr Jim Pullan, to whose efforts the discovery of Henley Wood temple was due. In 1959, he wrote to Miss M.V. Taylor editor of the Journal of Roman Studies, to enquire whether in Haverfield's notebooks, there were any further details of the Woodlands site. Miss Taylor located a letter with a rough plan written by Capt Long to Haverfield on 8 November, of which she forwarded a typed copy. In it he says

'I am sorry you cannot manage to come now but I shall be glad to see you whenever you can come. 'Now to answer your letter. In 1867 a Mr White lived here. He uncovered two rooms of the villa and took away everything he found. I did not see them, but I heard it was an unusually good find. This oblong represents the spot he cleared:- the circle on the left represents what I believe to be a hypocaust with at the point A. what I believe to be a flue running under other rooms. B is a cave about 150 yards off whence Mr White recovered some skeletons. This is the villa alluded to by the late Prebendary Scarth, and I shall be delighted to show it to you if it will interest you.'

Unfortunately the year is not given, but Miss Taylor suggested 1902 or 1903 might be the date. She started work with Haverfield in 1904/5 and says

'he had certainly before 1903 completed his account of the villas'

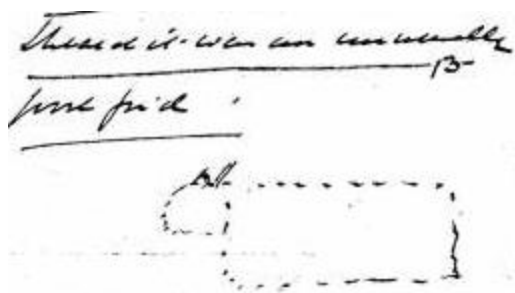


Fig 5: Colonel Long's sketch of the Roman 'villa'

The fact that Long says he 'did not see them' (? the rooms) is interesting, also the fact that he makes no mention of possessing any of the objects seems to

be at variance with what Haverfield wrote in his entry.

Armed with the letter and the known references, Jim Pullan persevered in his search, looking around waterholes, near stone walls, even in the valley where the subsoil might be suitable for pottery kilns. Over the years he dug numerous trial trenches, mostly some distance from the house. He particularly favoured the area of the old tennis court in the north-east of Taylor's Wood, but not a sherd was found. He scrutinised air photographs and proved that the significant-looking marks at the north end of the field called The Coombe belonged to an old boundary of the adjoining wood.

In January 1983 Mr Pullan passed his maps and information over to Woodspring Museum and discussed the problem with the writer of this note and Mr Chris Richards. A fresh application to the Ashmolean Library produced a photocopy of Long's original letter with the rough plan. His handwriting is difficult to read, but it now seems certain that in the fourth sentence quoted above the word 'poor' should replace the word 'good'

One clue in Long's letter which remained to be found and which would help to locate the 'villa' was the cave 'about 150 yards off' (no orientation given) Mr Richards, an experienced cave-finder, undertook the necessary fieldwork and after a few hours search managed to locate the cave towards the north end of Taylor's Wood (see note below for further description of the cave). In addition, Mr Richards consulted Ernest Baker's scrapbooks in the Central Library in Weston-super-Mare. Baker was the Hon Secretary of the Axbridge branch of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society and on 23rd May 1903 the branch made a field excursion to Yatton and Congresbury.

Descriptions of the excursion were printed in both the Weston Mercury and the Weston Gazette and included most of the names of the sixty participants who travelled by charabancs from Weston.

After visiting Yatton Church and Urchinwood, the party arrived at Woodlands for tea, where they were received by Col W Long, their President, and the Misses Long. The Mercury report states that after tea came a stroll through the beautiful woods on The Woodlands Estate. Not only was the stroll appreciated by virtue of the beauty and variety of the scenery, but also on account of its antiquarian and botanical interest. Under the former category came an inspection of portions of the remains of a Roman villa: uncovered by a Mr White, who resided at The Woodlands some 40 years since, but who apparently did not realise the nature of the discovery.

By the removal of the surrounding earth, Col Long pointed out, various rooms would in all probability be discovered. This would be highly interesting but, on the other hand, he should lose the whole of his privacy. Therefore it would probably not be until he had a severe attack of gout and was laid up altogether that he should consent to the uncovering of the earth (laughter).

At one stage in the walk a spot was pointed out by Col Long as that in which in the year 1867 four skeletons had been removed from a cave - being probably remains of residents in the villa. At the crest of the hill there came an inspection of the prehistoric earthworks,

in regard to which brief address were given by Col Long and Mr E E Baker, F.S.A. It appears that no definite period in the world history can be assigned as the date of construction of these earthworks. Whether prehistoric, English, Roman or medieval work nothing can be said, although, as Mr Baker remarked, it was conjectured by some, having regard to the existence of the camp on the opposite hill at Cadbury, that the present earthworks were the remains of a fort or station which the Romans might have used for the location of the British, for whom they made work.

The report in the Gazette differs very slightly, 'After tea a ramble was taken through the delightful woods above Col Long's residence. An old Roman Villa was inspected, and Col Long stated that two rooms were uncovered by Mr White, who lived at Congresbury some years ago. In all probability there were two or three other rooms, but if he uncovered them he would lose the whole of his privacy. However, when he had the gout very badly indeed, and was quite laid up, perhaps he would allow them to be uncovered (laughter). Higher up the Colonel directed attention to a cave from which four skeletons were taken in 1867, these being probably the remains of the people who lived in the Roman villa... The prehistoric earthworks were also viewed, Mr Baker explaining that they could not tell whether was Roman, Medieval or even nineteenth century work (laughter). As there was a camp at Cadbury, it was probably some outlying fort or station which the Romans might have used as a location for the British, for whom they found work. From the higher points of the woods magnificent views of the surrounding country are obtainable, and the party were charmed with the picture.'

A third newspaper cutting dated 26 March 1904, gives the annual report of the Society as written by Ernest Baker and, of the excursion in question he writes 'The remains of the Roman Villa at the back of the house were inspected and then the party strolled through the woods to some recently discovered prehistoric earthworks, conjectured to be the remains of a fort or an encampment, but they are covered with a cloak of uncertainty and doubt'

Furnished with these further details and with a radius of 140m from the cave drawn on the 1884 large scale O.S. map (25 inch to 1 mile) the area of search was narrowed down. The villa had to be within sight of the house, It could not be in the gently sloping field to the north-west as that was then (and still is) in the ownership of Rhodyate Lodge. The vegetable garden at the back of the house and the area of the oil storage tank were considered as possible locations, also the lower parts of the wood. Upon entering the wood, a series of hollows on the slope above the path looked similar to the outline sketch. After some consideration it was decided these are likely to be quarrying hollows from which stone was extracted for the wall close by. The wall strikes across the wood; it is not present on the tithe map of 1840 but is shown on the OS map of 1884; its precise function is unknown. On one of several visits, two very small sherds of Romano-British pottery were found just below the path. Here the ground is gently sloping and a small terrace is cut into it. This is the place suggested as the site of the Romano-British structure (ST 44786430).

As for the earthworks in the woods, these are still very visible and are no more than the well preserved banks of an extensive Celtic field system.

There is no doubt that the value of old newspaper reports cannot be overestimated and that many archaeological finds are reported there and nowhere else. Generally, the reports are extremely verbose but maybe there is still the odd occasion when something is left to the imagination. The writer was called out recently to a neighbouring house, Uplands, a little nearer to Wrington, to collect a Victorian Moule's earth closet for Woodspring Museum. This had once been a fine example complete with ivory handle, and was situated in a brick built privy at the furthestmost part of the back garden. If this were the fashion for the gentlemen of the area, surely it explains why Col Long was afraid that if more excavation: were done *'he would lose the whole of his privacy'*. Therefore it would probably not be until he had a severe attack of the gout and was laid up altogether. that he should be content to the uncovering of the earth (laughter) (author's italics). A close examination of the 1902 edition of the 25 inch map reveals a very small building at the junction of paths, a spot where now stands a shed. Was this the site of Col Long's privy? It would indeed be in sight of the excavation.

Although we now feel satisfied at the location of the so-called villa, several problems remain. The spot is an unlikely one for a villa, lying as it does on the limestone ridge, when a few yards away lay a more attractive situation on a gentle valley slope.

However, there is a comparable site found in 1957 at Roslyn Avenue, Weston-super-Mare (ST 34246238) situated on a spur of limestone between a valley and embayment where large quantities of pottery, mostly 3rd and 4th century AD, came to light during building development (unpublished notes in Woodspring Museum and Avon SMR).

'Villa' is perhaps not the correct term to use for the Woodlands site. Also the idea of a potter's kiln should be abandoned. There is no suitable clay available in the immediate area. No wasters have been recorded but reports of sherds from the Venus Street area of Congresbury could well have been conflated with this site. It is unfortunate that Woodlands has been included in Swan's recent gazetteer of Romano-British kiln sites.

Haverfield was normally very meticulous in his reportings but it does seem that on this occasion he had not visited the site. If he had Long would probably have reported it to the Society on the occasion of their visit. It is noteworthy also that the party were not shown any objects, so presumably none survived by that date. It seems that Long's interest in the site on his land was only stimulated as a result of Haverfield's enquiries. Maybe it is worth remarking that on the occasion of a visit of the Bath Field Club in 1893 to Woodlands no mention whatsoever was made to the 'villa', interest being directed solely towards the botany and geology of the area and a well.

To conclude it would appear that Haverfield compiled his entry from Bramble's published account and added the hypocaust from Long's (undated and almost illegible) letter, but omitting Long's cautionary wording: 'what I believe to be a Hypocaust'. Whether the bulk of the finds were rich or poor, a spoon, brooch and samian (only ten pieces) imply some richness. Was it a small house, or could it have been a small rural shrine? Conjecture must remain.

[*Editors note:* Nothing of this building could be seen in 2007] [It seems likely that the visitors were laughing at Col. Long's potential loss of 'privacy']

The Cave by Chris Richards (1983)

Between 1891 and 1903 the Axbridge Branch of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society met at Woodlands on a number of occasions to have tea with Col William Long, president of the branch, and explore his grounds.

On a visit there on the 23rd May 1903, the Colonel directed attention to a cave, from which four skeletons were taken in 1867, they being, it was suggested, probably the remains of the people who lived in the Roman villa.

In Long's letter to Professor Haverfield, believed to have been written about 1902/3, he mentions this cave as being about 150 yards away from the villa (qv) and that the skeletons were discovered by Mr White.

We would like to know much more about Mr White, his excavations at the villa and cave, and the ultimate fate of his finds. A close examination of literature, including Bristol, Clevedon and Weston newspapers of the 1860s has not given us any further information. The description and survey which follow were made with the assistance of my wife Sheila Richards.

Description of the Cave.

The cave lies on the west side of Taylor's Hill.

Taylor's Hill is a little spur of Carboniferous Limestone projecting from upland rising to 150m or more above Ordnance Datum. The limestone dips at about 10° to the south west. East and west of the spur are embayments floored with red mud-stones and conglomerates of Triassic age. These embayments slope down gently to the River Yeo.

The west side of Taylor's Hill rises steeply from the edge of the Trias and there are lines of low cliffs. It is at the crest of this steep, cliffy side of Taylor's Hill that the cave lies. The cave appears today as a short length of elongate, open-ended void, with one entrance (the lower) facing north-west beneath an overhanging 2m-high cliff and the other entrance (the upper) is a pit in the westward-sloping ground behind the edge of the cliff. The lower entrance is an arch 2m wide and 1m high and made irregular by recessing by solution and minor break-down.

Below the arch, the floor of earth and stones slopes into the cave from a step-down of 0.4m encircling the entrance and cut into the side of a low mound, 5m in diameter, lying immediately outside the entrance. The pit forming the upper entrance is roughly rectangular in plan, measuring about 2.5m long in a north-south direction and 1m wide east-west. There is a solid rock on the west side only, where the body of the cave opens. All other sides are of red-brown earth and stones. The steep slope of the east side (that opposite the cave mouth) extends half way along the cave where it meets the slope coming in through the lower entrance.

The slope from the upper entrance consists of the earth and stones seen in the sides of

the pit but near the bottom there is an accumulation of house-hold rubbish. Some of this might extend back to Victorian times and certainly most, if not all, not more recent than World War II. The body of the cave measures 3m long, 2m wide, 1m high and trends north west/ south east. The inside of the cave is recessed by solution hollows up to 1m across - The present appearance of the cave can be put down to White's excavations when he dug out four human skeletons from within the cave.

Before his excavations the lower entrance would have been 1m wide and 0.3m high and probably did not extend inwards for more than 2m, though it was probably a little higher inside. White cleared out infill from 1m outside the entrance (producing the 'step-down' mentioned above) and from the body of the cave. He also made the upper entrance by digging at the plane of contact between the solid rock and infill of red-brown earth and stones.

Drift since White's excavation prevents us from seeing if he cleared the cave down to solid rock. It is certain, however, that he did not excavate more extensively the earth and stones around the upper entrance. These must fill an un-roofed south-easterly extension of the cave and may contain something of archaeological value. It is also certain that he did not touch deposits outside a distance of 1m from the lower entrance and today concealed below White's spoil-heap.

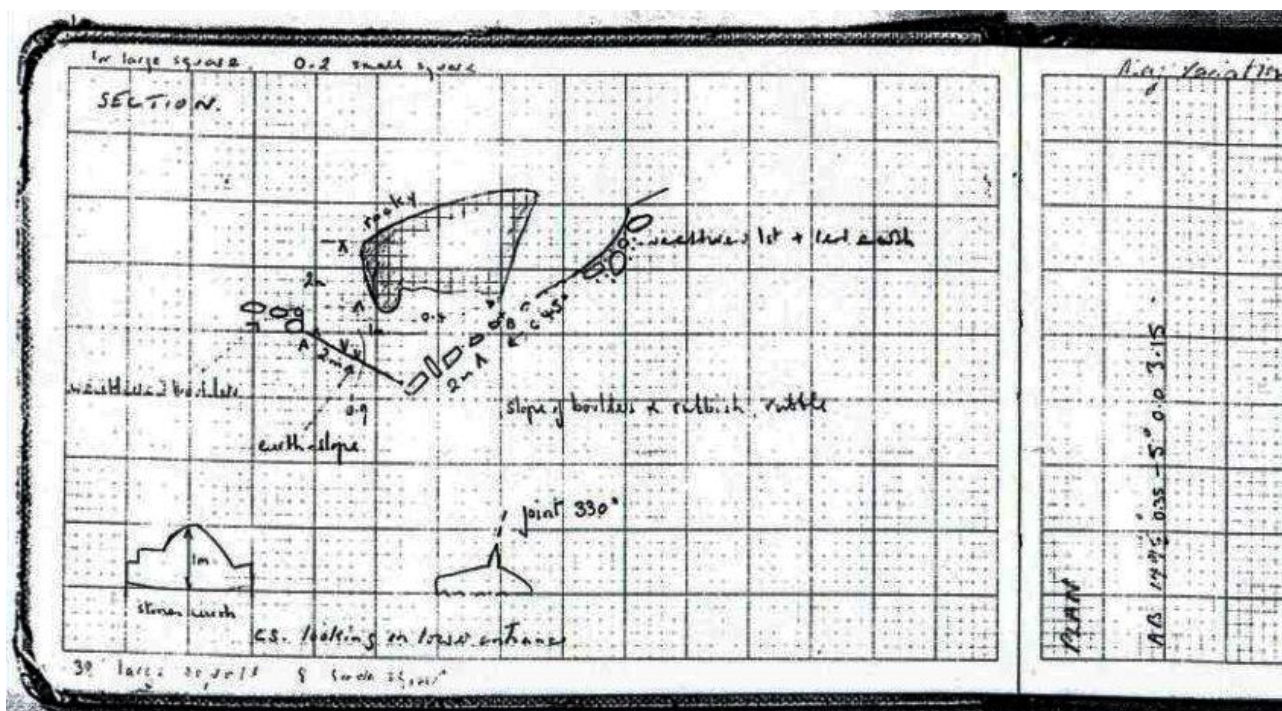


Fig 6: Chris Richards's original field survey

The erosional forms inside the cave testify to a solutional origin. This would have been under a water-table at 60m above Ordnance Datum when the Triassic rocks, which function as a hydraulic 'dam' to water circulating in the limestone, were at a higher-level than today. The extension of the cave to the north west has been destroyed by denudation and the same agencies have unroofed the south east extension, in which fill has accumulated. The segment explorable today has been formed at the intersection between a north-west/

south-east trending strike joint and a bedding plane, the intersection allowing mixing of phreatic waters and consequent cave-formation at this point.

Many caves in Avon and Somerset have been used for human burial from Late Upper Palaeolithic to Roman times.

At Compton Bishop there is a burial cave (ST39635495) which has close parallels with the Woodlands site. Boys from Sidcot School started a "dig" for a cave towards the end of 1930 and in the earth under the entrance arch almost immediately came across some human bones. A complete excavation of the cave and area immediately outside produced the remains of six individuals: a c40 year old man, a c35 year old woman; a baby; a child aged c6 years; another child of c12 years, and a man whose age was not determined.

Dr N C Cooper examined the bones. The cave is the site referred to in Dobson's Archaeology of Somerset under "Crooks Peak" in her gazetteer (pp 228 - 259) : "Bones representing parts of six individuals. Described by Dr N C Cooper as probably Keltic 1931." Dobson marks the approximate spot on her map of the 'Early Iron Age'. The cave is only 3m long and not 1m high. There was a mound of earth and stones outside the cave entrance and extending in to the cave (Sunday Dispatch 4 January 1931). The cave lies only a few metres away from Scragg's Hole - a cave used in late Roman times as a living site (W.I.Stanton personal communication.).

[Editors note: The (Taylor's Wood) cave was again explored in 2007 and some bottles from the late 19th century recovered. There was no surviving evidence of Roman activity within the cave]

Industrial and military archaeology

While quarrying, mining (and possibly charcoal burning) have been practised in the greater Kings Wood, with the exception of the terrace next to Taylor's Wood enclosure there was no obvious sign of them in the area examined.

Some removal of rock from the side of the track up to the enclosure was probably for the purpose of widening the track for vehicles during WW2.

One notable feature of the area was the presence of two large industrial boilers by the side of the track, probably re-used as header tanks for Woodlands water supply.



Fig 7: The egg-ended boiler

It is not really possible to date these boilers other than 'early', it seems - they 'appeared' around 1814 in the Lancashire Mills (Hills 1993: 132), but many seemed to continue in use until the late 19th century at least. Coal production in Nailsea had totally ceased by then, so this may well be the source.

Riveted Boiler and boiler section used as water storage tanks by Pete English

Both vessels are situated in woodland above the house(s) they used to supply. The first comprises a horizontal cylinder with domed ends. The cylindrical section is approximately 5ft (1.52m) in diameter and approximately 10ft 6ins (3.20m) long. It is made up from three rolled plates each about 42inches (106.5cm) long. They are of slightly different diameters giving the cylinder a stepped appearance. The domed ends are each made of seven pieces. All plates are joined by rivets. There is a closed inspection cover 22ins (55.9cm) (from one end and a 3inch (7.5cm) diameter hole approximately half way along the length of the cylinder.

The boiler section stands vertically with the upper end open. It is approximately 8ft in diameter and stands approximately 8ft (2.44m) above the ground. This again is of riveted construction and has a lozenge shaped inspection opening 8.5 ins by 12ins (21.5cm x 30.5cm) with two external screwed braces. The design of the manhole would suggest it was built much later.

We have contacted Birmingham University who think the horizontal 'egg ended' boiler will have started life in one of the local industries, possibly the Nailsea coalfield.

Water supply

Col. Long attempted to find a water supply in Kings Wood, and it may be that the 'Windmill, Pumping' recorded on the 1903 OS plan (Fig 1) was a result of this. It is no longer visible on the site. A capped well was uncovered at the site on a woodland footpath.



Fig 8: Capped well in footpath at Taylors Wood

Recreation

Taylor's Hill / Wood seems to have been regarded very much as an extension of the gardens of Woodlands, to the extent that a tennis court was laid out in the woods (shown as an rectangular enclosure with dashed lines in Fig 1).

Military

There is reputed to have be military activity on the site in Taylors Wood during WW2, and a possible generator base in the wood may date from this period.



Fig 9: Generator base in Taylor's Wood

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Archive

The archive for this project is entirely digital and will be found in the YCCART archive

Further work

Further fieldwork should be carried out to identify and survey the site of the Roman building, which could not be positively identified in 2007.

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