

Preston: Bowleaze Cove Romano-British building

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The winter of 2013-2014 demonstrated that the archaeology of the Dorset coastline is vulnerable to the twin threats of coastal erosion and landslip. These are processes that demand diligent observation and the recording of the coastal archaeological resource thus affected. Equally, it is crucial that the results of such fieldwork should be made widely available. The Bournemouth University archives contain the record of a short but important fieldwork project (1969) that was undertaken by WG (Bill) Putnam, then of Weymouth College. This archive includes the finds from the site (Bournemouth University BU101). The object of the project was a 'Roman' building that had been observed to be crumbling into the sea along the line of Furzy Cliff at Bowleaze Cove, Weymouth at SY 70158197 (Putnam 1970, 186).

In effect, the Putnam investigation examined two sites at Bowleaze (Figure 1). These were situated in the soft Nothe Grit above the Oxford Clays on the west bank of the Jordan River (sometimes spelled 'Jordon'; see Mills 1998, 92).

1. Site 1 was situated close to the mouth of the Jordan river (or Jordan stream) at SY 70258194. Here, Romano-British pottery was falling out of the cliff, along with ash, bone, brick, dressed stone and other evidence of occupation. It was noted that at this site, erosion was slow.
2. Site 2 was situated higher up the cliff towards the west at SY 70158197. Two stone wall foundations and the floor (pavement) of a building were visible

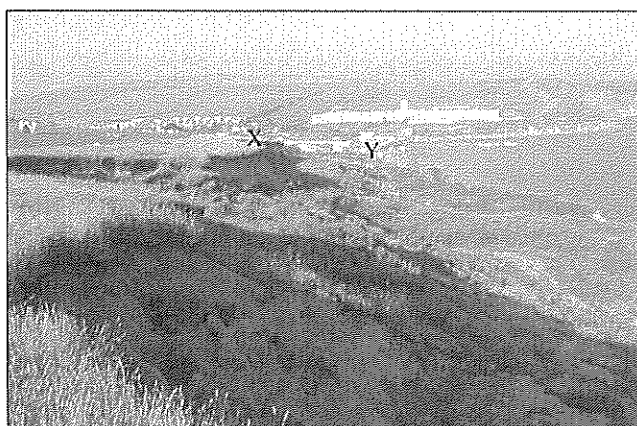


Figure 1: Location photograph: Bowleaze Cove looking east from Furzy Cliff towards the valley of the Jordan river. Site 1 (labelled Y) is in the middle distance on the west bank of the river. Site 2 (labelled X), on higher ground on Furzy Cliff, is at the centre of the composition. Bournemouth University Putnam Collection.

in section in the cliff face. At this location erosion was fast, estimated at 2-3m per year (Putnam 1970, 186).

The terms Site 1 and Site 2 will be used to differentiate between the two areas of fieldwork throughout this paper.

Previous observations at Bowleaze Cove

Observations at Bowleaze Cove had been in progress for some years before the Putnam excavation as the process of coastal attrition became an urgent matter. These observations could have started as early as the final decades of the nineteenth century when, according to Arkell, the main road in the vicinity of the Cove (now called Bowleaze Cove way) had to be set back by some 18.3 metres between 1860 and 1890, but further problems had set in by 1899. Subsequent damage was recorded in various sources thereafter (Arkell 1947, 344-5). It was during the course of these incidents that the presence of the 'Roman' building might first have come to light.

However, the first published account of the Bowleaze Cove Roman site can be attributed to P.A.M. Keef who reported that coarse Romano-British pottery had been visible in the cliff face over a period of many years. Roman coins had also been found, but whether these were cliff-face or surface finds is unclear (Keef 1949, 63-4). In 1962, F.A. Archibald found a silver coin of the Durotriges in the landslip at the edge of Furzy Cliff (Site 2). In a rough sketch section included in a letter to the Dorset County Museum (copy in BU 101 but not reproduced here), Archibald shows that this coin was found 'just below' the surface of a portion of the Roman pavement that had fallen onto the foreshore. The coin probably dates to the last quarter of the first century AD (Farrar 1963, 112). This suggests that the coins mentioned by Keef also came from this area of the cliff.

Keef observed the cliff throughout the summers and springs of 1945-1949 and collected pottery as the process of erosion continued. Apparently, these sherds betrayed 'a strong native cast' including a countersunk handle form. Also evident, were flat limestone slabs 'suitable for paving a courtyard'. Nails of various sizes, limpet, oyster and cockleshells plus a fragment of tegula were also present. Keef stated that

the main masses of pottery were concentrated in three 'V-shaped depressions' that were joined by a dark occupation layer. A sketch section was provided to illustrate these features which measured 3 feet wide (0.91m) by 1 foot 6 inches (0.46 m) to 2 feet (0.6 m) deep (Keef 1949, 63). Unfortunately there is no indication of the location of these 'depressions' in relation to the cliff-face, consequently, the value of the sketch section is limited. However, the section drawing does indicate the presence of the Roman occupation layer that was recorded by subsequent field workers. Keef was also imprecise regarding the details of two 'storage jars of flanged type' with 'dark grey bodies' and 'black-faced' that were found on the site (1949, 64). Their find spots, state of completion and whereabouts remain uncertain: a declared resolve to publish these vessels remained an unfulfilled promise.

In 1953, and perhaps in response to Keef's observations, an annotated sketch section was made by RAH Farrar of the remains of the Roman building visible in the line of Furzy Cliff at SY 70148196: Site 2 (copy in Bournemouth University archive BU101 reproduced here as Fig. 2 and Table 1). The section extends to ca 51 feet (15.5m). It shows the remains of wall foundations consisting of water-rolled ('canon ball') pebbles with sub-floors that included similar material. Farrar noted that the most easterly wall foundation included stones that were laid in herring bone fashion. The building thus represented was not constructed upon a prepared terrace but instead followed the contours of the ground rising from the east to the west along its visible length. Four monochrome photographs that were taken by Farrar at the same time as the section drawing (copyright

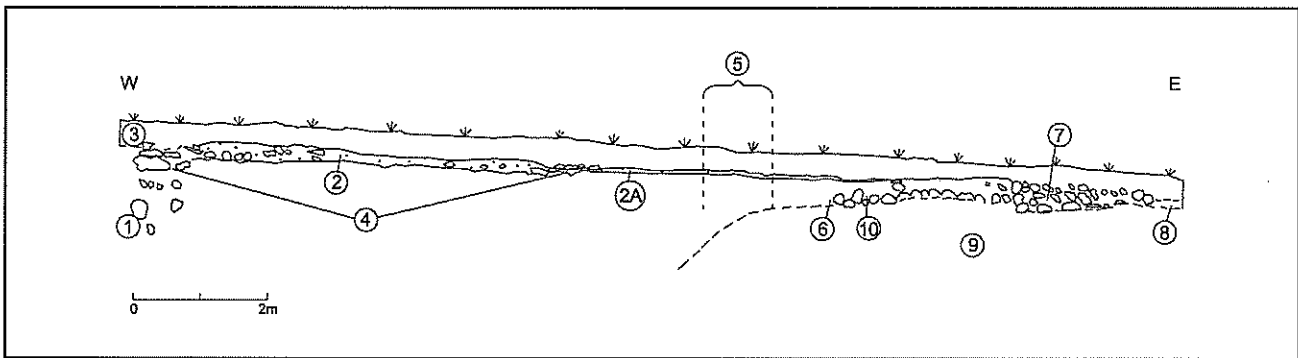


Figure 2 A computer aided version of Farrar's south-facing sketch section of Furzy Cliff (Site 2) in 1953. It equates closely with the features recorded during the Putnam excavation of 1969. See Table 1 for key to numbers. Emily Rhodes, Bournemouth University.

Table 1. Key to ray Farrar's 1953 section of the archaeology of Furzy Cliff, Bowleaze Cove (see Figure 2 above).

Number on section	Ray Farrar's annotation
1	Brown clayey soil about 1 foot (0.30m) or more deep.
2	Laid stones, <i>i.e.</i> quoins.
2A	Stony, <i>ca</i> 1foot 4 inches (0.41m) deep and 2 to 3 inches (0.08m) thick on top of clay.
3	Brown clay (top dirty with a few sherds and tile fragments).
4	These are evidently parallel walls. I was puzzled by the stones in what seems to be undisturbed Nothe Grit below and, as it were, continuing the left hand 'wall'. (I) am now inclined to assume that they were more naturally occurring 'canon-ball' concretions.
5	Falling face in front of (and below) this point shows large stones present in the floor itself.
6	'Pebbles' appear to stop short here. 'Pebbles' = cannon ball concretions. NB at the east end the cannon-ball concretions underlie 2A. Stony for some 6 feet (1.8m). They are derived from the Nothe Grit, but one of them seen later at the east end by M.R. House had a protruding fossil Gryphaea which was abraded and therefore unlikely to be naturally in situ – he did not comment upon the apparent herringbone arrangement.
7	Laid herring bone.
8	Plough line or occupation (layer)?
9	Face obscured by landslip.
10	'Pebbles' and brown clay.

National Monuments Record) demonstrate that partially coursed blocks of (presumably) limestone were also visible.

Carreck's Geological Survey

JN Carreck published a survey of the geology of Bowleaze Cove in 1955. Within the survey was a useful contribution to the archaeology of the Cove (1955, 85-9). Carreck described the Roman occupation layer as a black argillaceous loam including flint pebbles, pieces of sandy oolite, potsherds, shells of edible marine mollusca, and occasional bones and teeth of domesticated animals. The thickness of this layer was measured as 6-8 inches (0.15-0.2m). The layer is confined to the west side of the Cove where it appears in the low cliff overlying the Early Holocene loam. Carreck observed that this layer can be traced westwards for a distance of 68 yards (ca 62m) in the cliff just above beach level, from near to the west bank of the Jordan stream (Site 1) to a point where its upper surface reaches a height of 14'6" (4.5m) above beach level (Carreck 1955, 85).

Carreck collected potsherds from the area between 1952 and 1953, broadly at the same time that Farrar was carrying out his fieldwork there and it was to Farrar that Carreck turned for an interpretation of his finds. Farrar's general impression was that the recognisably later pot fragments were generally substantial whereas the earlier sherds were small, suggesting that they had been 'lying about for some time' prior to their inclusion in the deposit. Seven pieces were of a finer slip-coated ware, including four indented beaker vessels, probably representing AD fourth-century New Forest ware (NFW) types. In addition, there were three fragments of coarseware conical bowls with flanged rims and six everted rims from cooking pots, two of which could have been of fourth-century date. Amongst the smaller, earlier sherds there was three of Samian Ware, including Dragendorff form 37, probably of second-century date.

'Native' (*sic*) pot forms were also present including two countersunk-handled 'jars' and several bead rims (Carreck 1955, 86).

Animal bones and marine mollusc shells were interpreted as human food debris. A non-marine assemblage of snail shells was analysed by N.F. Davies who suggested that these indicated the former presence of scrubland with moss, dead leaves and grass. Davies added that the lower ground was damp, marshy and adjoined the bank of a slow,

muddy stream, presumably the Jordan stream or a local tributary (Carreck 1955, 88). This evidence needs to be re-assessed with reference to a new sample of non-marine mollusca from the Roman occupation layer.

The Royal Commission

Following the publication of Carreck's report, R.A.H. Farrar continued to pursue his interest in the Bowleaze Cove sites. Bournemouth University archive BU101 includes a copy of a letter written by geologist M.R. House to Farrar and dated 31 December 1958. Inferentially, House had been asked to examine the 'Roman pavement' at Bowleaze (Site 2). In his letter, House drew a sketch-plan of the site showing the pavement as visible in section in Furzy Cliff (not reproduced). He describes the pavement as located within 'Canon Ball' concretions typical of the Nothe Grits. The constituents of the pavement itself House lists as Osmington oolite (Upper Jurassic limestone), 'bits of chert', shingle and pebbles, limestone (possibly of Purbeck origin) with ~~Canon Ball~~ ^{Canon Cannon} concretions at the east end.

Farrar had been appointed Archaeological Investigator on the Staff of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (RCHME) in 1948 (Peers *et al* 1995, 167) and his 1953 fieldwork probably provides the core of the Royal Commission's account of the site (RCHME 1970, 617-18). However, this source is somewhat confusing because it is effectively a conflation of previously published information pertaining to Sites 1 and 2. In order to rationalise, Site 1 is described as being situated above the foreshore west of the Jordan stream (~~i.e. Site 2~~) extending for about 60 yards (49 m) from SY 7019 8195 to 7024 8194 and perhaps eastwards towards the (Jordan) stream (~~i.e. towards Site 1~~): In this lower lying area, Site 1 might have included the piles of a supposed Roman landing stage said to have been found by J. Medhurst in 1845 (RCHME 1970, 617; Powell 2005, 11).

Site 2 is described as a mortared 'floor' in the upper face of Furzy Cliff to the west-north-west of Site 1 and some 60 feet (18.3m) above sea level at SY 7014 8196. The 'pavement' is described as comprising a roughly mortared floor of some 9 inches (0.23 m) of oolite, chert and shingle extending in section for about 22 feet (6.7 m). However, there is no mention of the 1969 excavation of Site 2 because Putnam's interim report was not published until 1970, the same year as the relevant volume of the RCHME Dorset, South-East.

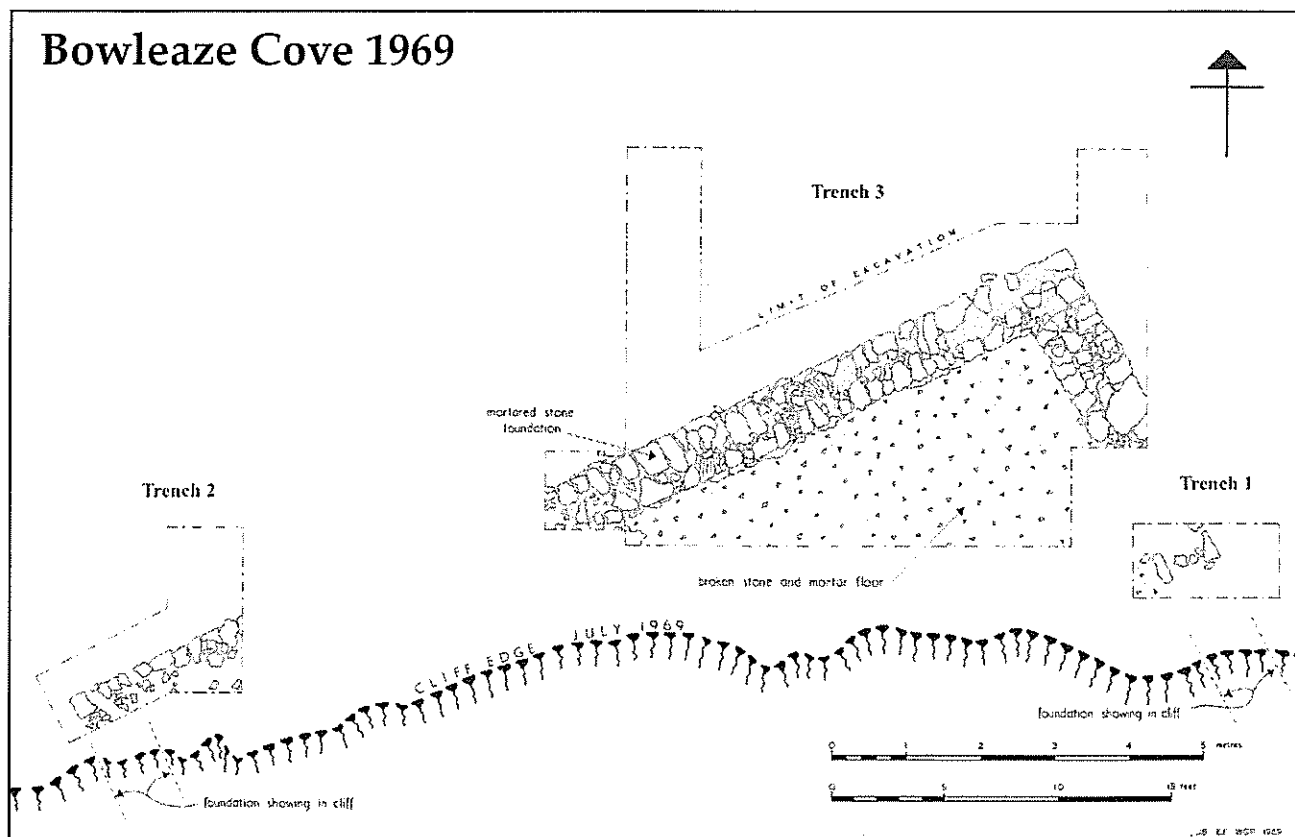


Figure 3 Plan of 1969 trenches produced by Bill Putnam for eventual publication. Bournemouth University Putnam Collection.

The 1969 excavation and its aftermath

Bill Putnam was appointed to the History Department of Weymouth College in 1967 bringing with him a background in archaeology. College students became involved in summer field schools within the County of Dorset (Beavis and Hunt 1995, 4-5). An investigation of the Roman sites at Bowleaze Cove was amongst the earliest of these field schools and it is tempting to suggest that contact with Ray Farrar through the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society provided the motivation for this project.

Work at Site 1 seems to have been of an observational nature only. Site 2 on Furzy Cliff was afforded greater attention. It involved the excavation of three trenches that exposed what remained of the foundation walls and floor of the building earlier hinted at by Keef (1949, 63-4) but otherwise only recorded in unpublished correspondence. The essence of the evidence from the 1969 Putnam excavation is recorded in what purported to be an 'interim report' but it contained the phrase 'events showed that the excavation had come too late', which indicated that no further investigation was planned beyond 1969 (Putnam 1970, 186). However, the Bournemouth University archive for Bowleaze contains the original

copies of a series of letters written by RAH Farrar, to Bill Putnam. These letters were written during the first five months of 1970 and from their content it is clear that a more detailed report on the Bowleaze building, under joint Putnam-Farrar authorship, had been agreed. For whatever reasons, this report did not materialise. Nonetheless, Bill Putnam did prepare an excavation plan for publication and the University's site archive includes a number of useful colour slides. The director's site notebook and the context records have been found very recently and although the entries are cursory, the contexts (or layers) are described therein. A digest of the context descriptions is shown in table form (Table 2). If a new section drawing had been carried out in 1969, then it has not survived.

Site 2 details

Three trenches were set out, the details of which were recorded on a plan (Fig. 3). Trenches 1 and 2 were placed so as to pick up upon the line of walls that were indicated by the foundations visible in the cliff edge, one of which is illustrated in Figure 4. Trench 1 revealed little more than the suggestion of the line of a wall, but Trench 2 uncovered more substantial evidence of a wall that consisted of a limestone outer

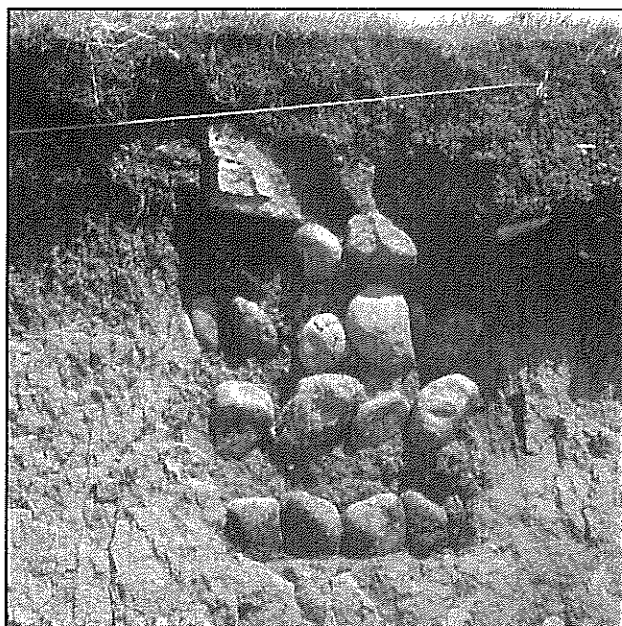


Figure 4: Shown here in the cliff edge of Site 2 are the east wall foundations of 'canon ball' concretions topped by partially coursed limestone. Bournemouth University Putnam Collection.

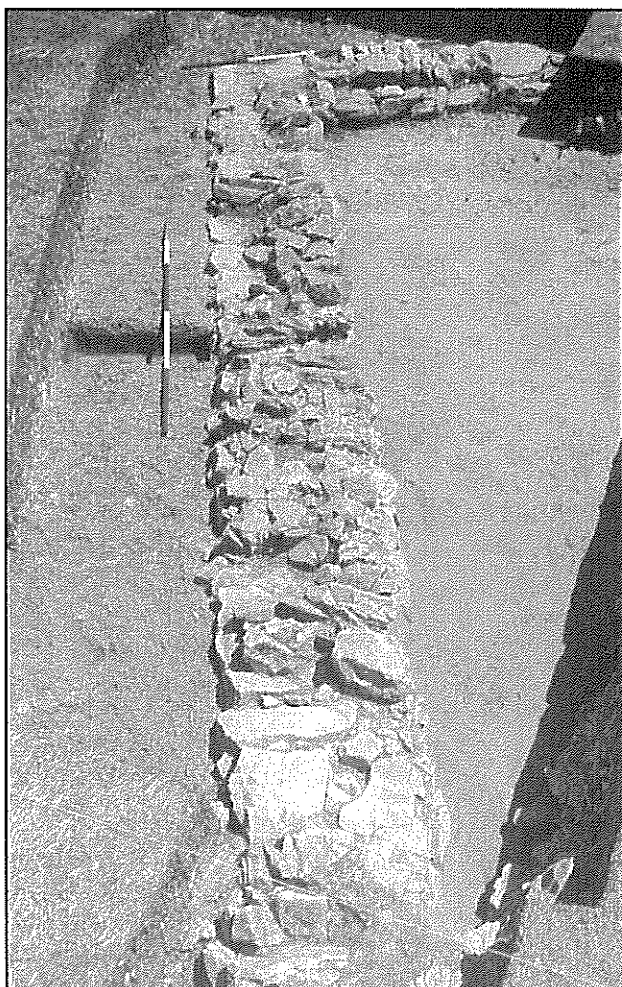


Figure 5 Trench 3: limestone wall facing north-west with a return towards the south-east and the cliff edge (see Figure 3). Bournemouth University Putnam Collection.

course and a rubble core. Importantly, in Trench 2 there was a hint of a return towards the northeast which prompted the need for Trench 3.

Trench 3 together with Trench 2 proved to contain the only surviving complete length of wall to be evident from the site (Fig. 5). Here it became apparent that the internal and external faces of the wall comprised selected flat limestone pieces at foundation level: tooling of the stone was limited and more obvious at the quoins. The core of the wall was of rubble and mortar throughout its entire visible length. The interim report states that the total length of the surviving wall was 17 m (Putnam 1970a, 186) but on the hitherto unpublished Putnam plan (Fig. 3) it measures a little less than 15m. This is roughly in accord with Farrar's 1953 sketch section which extends for *ca* 51 ft (14.75 m) with wall foundation features apparent at both ends (Fig. 2). However, the original Farrar section is basic and open to interpretation. Putnam records that the visible wall foundations were about 1m deep comprising 'large rounded stones' ('^{Common} canon ball' concretions) set in puddled clay. Wall width is given as 0.7 m.

Some of the limestone from the above-ground structure of the wall had collapsed into the inside of the building, and the excavators removed these in the search for a floor surface (referred to above as a 'pavement'). No *tesserae* were recovered and what might be described as the floor material comprised a 0.3m thick layer of 'broken stones and mortar with a levelled surface' (Putnam 1970, 186). Similar material was visible in section along the cliff edge. The floor (context 11) was found to seal pottery fragments of AD third-fourth-century date which may be regarded as a *terminus post quem* for the building. These sherds were described as 'well preserved and substantial in places'. Pottery from the surrounding soil (*i.e.* outside the building) was described as small and abraded. There was no occupational accumulation, nor any sign of scattered building material, except above the floor itself (*ibid.*, 186).

Curiously, the interim report did not mention all of the available evidence from the site. In a letter dated 13 August 1969 to E.J. Jones of the Weymouth Town Clerk's Office, the excavator states that there was no sign of doorways or other features. Above the buried foundations, the wall was made of 'crudely dressed local stone...set in a good lime mortar'. Of considerable interest, is the fact that the whole of the building 'sloped with the ground so much that its

Table 2. Quantification of pottery from the excavation
(by context, number/weight/average sherd weight in grammes)

Context	Context description	Number	Weight (g)	Ave. sherd weight (g)
1	Topsoil. Soft, worm-sorted and without stones	11	87	7.9
2	Trench 4 (not illustrated on plan by WGP). Stony soil. Small pieces of Portland limestone. Flints. Abraded potsherds.	2	20	10
3	Trench 3. Stony soil. Less pot; less rubbish generally.			
4	Trench 3 northwest extension. Stony Soil 10-20cm deep.	3	23	7.7
5	Trench (not illustrated by WGP). Sony soil. Damper, more yellow, more clayey. Black sherds under Context 2.	2	21	11
6	Trench 4 (not illustrated by WGP). Less stony than elsewhere. Beneath Context 1 by at least 30cm. Roman rim.	10	73	7.3
7	Trench 3. Floor of small broken stone. 25cm depth.			
8	Trench 3. Collapsed wall in southern part. Large fragments of Portland stone lying at angles showing frost shattering. Bedded in mortar at lower levels. Lime mortar mixed with fine grit from the beach.			
9	Trench 3, northwest extension. Stone tumble 10 cm down. Black sherd well-sealed. Sandstone and Portland.	8	26	3.3
10	Trench 3, south extension. Wall collapse. Mixed clay and mortar grit. Tile frags. Wall has its lowest course present. Appears to be herring bone of small irregular stone set in good mortar including imbrex frags.	2	20	10
11	Trench 3 mortar floor within walls. Near bottom, iron objects and black sherd. Most finds are at the bottom of the subsoil (original topsoil dug out to receive floor foundations including Samian, NF ware and BBW. Piece of melted lead and broken roof tiles.	34	179	5.3
12	Trench 3 Yellow sand beneath 11. Flecks of charcoal. Material labelled 11 may have come from this Level. Black base and sherds do. Antedates the building.	33	194	5.9
Total		105	643	6.1

western end was 4ft (1.2 m) higher than the eastern', this over a distance of *ca* 15 m (Bournemouth University, BU101).

FINDS (by Grace Jones)

Pottery

Excavation finds

The Bowleaze Cove pottery assemblage comprises 132 sherds, weighing 1356 g. Most were recovered from the excavation (105 sherds, 643 g, Table 2), but some (27 sherds, 713 g) were collected from the surrounding area and are unstratified. The material is in poor condition with abraded surfaces and an average sherd weight of 6.1 g from the excavation but 26.4 g from the surface finds.

The excavation pottery is dominated by local coarseware fabrics, including 53 sherds (336 g), of Black Burnished ware from the Wareham/Poole Harbour area of Dorset (Table 3). The most commonly occurring form was the plain rimmed dish, with eight examples recorded, two with a grooved rim (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 20). Four rim fragments came from everted rim jars (cooking pots). However these were broken at the neck. Other featured sherds included the rim from a bead-rimmed jar or bowl, part of the flange from a bowl or dish and a handle fragment of oval cross-section. The rim diameter of only one vessel could be measured, a plain-rimmed dish from the floor layer (context 11), 160 mm in diameter. An un-sourced, soft, silty fabric containing a very common to abundant amount of coarse-silt to very fine grained quartz with occasional fine-sized grains (Q104) accounted for 28 sherds (151 g) from the excavation. These were again abraded and included only one rim, from a small vessel with beaded rim, recovered from the topsoil; six sherds from context 12 were re-fitted to form the central area from the base of a vessel.

Other coarsewares were present in very small quantities. The only oxidised ware (Q101) comprised small and highly abraded body sherds. A single body sherd in a very coarse sandy ware (Q105) was recovered from the topsoil. A small, abraded body sherd in a soft, silty fabric containing moderate (15%) limestone, 0.25-2.5mm, sub-angular and rare (2%) iron oxides, <0.5mm, rounded, was recorded from a layer of brown clay (context 6). This layer also produced a small, abraded body sherd in a sandy fabric containing common (25%) fine-grained quartz with occasional

(2%) coarse and very coarse rounded grains and sparse (3%) ironstone, rounded, 0.25-3 mm. A possible mortaria is represented by a single, but very abraded sherd in an un-sourced micaceous whiteware fabric (Q107) from the layer associated with the wall collapse (context 10).

Late Romano-British finewares from the New Forest and Oxfordshire industries predominantly came from the floor (context 11). This layer included eight sherds (55 g) of New Forest colour-coated ware, comprising a slightly footed base and indented beaker body sherds (Fulford 1975, type 27), all abraded. Four body sherds (16 g) of very abraded and powdery Oxfordshire colour-coated ware were also recorded. A small indented beaker body sherd from the New Forest also came from context 4.

A rim fragment of a Tudor Green baluster jug, possibly dating to the fifteenth century, was recovered from the topsoil (Pearce and Vince 1988, 79), and a sherd of Victorian blue and white china came from context 4.

Pottery from the surrounding area

Surface collection of pottery was also made from the surrounding area, and bagged as 'NGR 703/819' or 'surface and cliff finds March 1975'. The finds from the former comprised five sherds (44 g) of Black Burnished ware body sherds and one sherd

(8 g) of the very fine sandy ware, all abraded. The collection from the March 1975 finds (21 sherds, 661 g) was dominated by Black Burnished ware. Forms included two late cooking pots with strongly everted rims, broken at the neck; a third cooking pot rim fragment; a plain rimmed dish (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 20) and a narrow-necked jar with flanged rim (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 11). At Greyhound Yard, this form was dated to the 3rd century onwards (*ibid.*, 231). This jar form may be the same as that referred to by Keef as the 'storage jars of flanged type' (1949, 64). Three plain bases were recorded, one with external wiping and one with fire-clouding on the exterior. Other coarsewares comprised single body sherds in greyware, oxidised ware and whiteware fabrics. A small bead-rimmed vessel with a rim diameter of 60 mm was recorded, in a very fine sandy fabric. Also of interest was a single highly abraded and powdery sherd (116 g) of amphora, possibly a Peacock (1991) class 27 (Pélichet 47/Gauloise 4), a wine amphora from southern France, dating to the later first-century AD to third-century (Peacock 1991, 142-3).

Table 3. Quantification of the Bowleaze Cove assemblage, by ware (number/weight in grammes)

Ware	Number	Weight (g)
<i>Roman</i>		
Black Burnished ware	74	897
Very fine sandy ware (Q104)	30	162
New Forest colour-coated ware	9	58
Oxidised ware (Q101)	6	43
Oxford colour-coated ware	4	16
Amphora	1	116
Fine, micaceous whiteware (Q107)	1	18
Very coarse sandy ware (Q105)	1	9
Whiteware (Q102)	1	8
Greyware (Q100)	1	7
Limestone-gritted fabric (C100)	1	5
Sandy ware with ironstone inclusions (Q103)	1	2
<i>Late medieval</i>		
Tudor Green	1	10
<i>Modern</i>		
Blue and white painted pottery	1	5
Total	132	1356

Other finds

Ceramic building material

Ten fragments of ceramic building material, weighing 525 g, were recovered from the excavation and surface finds collection. The wall collapse, layer 10, produced three pieces (92 g) from a plain tile, 15 mm thick, in a marly fabric and a tiny, surfaceless fragment. Roofing material came from floor layer 11, including a tegula fragment in an oxidised, silty fabric (67 g, 17 mm thick, with a flange height of 44 mm), and two imbrex pieces in a marly fabric, both 16 mm thick. A plain, flat tile fragment, 20 mm thick, was also recovered. A single, plain tile fragment with one surface was recorded from NGR 703/819 and an imbrex fragment, 15 mm thick, from the surface and cliff finds collection.

Opus signinum

Three pieces of *opus signinum*, weighing 110 g, were recovered from collapsed wall context 8. They consisted mainly of sub-angular to angular gravel of 2 mm set in a pinkish buff mortar, with occasional larger pieces up to 13 mm to rounded pebbles of 28 mm. One of the pieces incorporates a 40 mm x 10 mm piece of oolitic limestone. A small piece (6 g) was also recovered from wall collapse layer 10, but made from crushed ceramic building material in a mortar matrix.

Stone

Part of a stone mortar (336 g), made from the Portland limestone was recovered from floor context 11. Too little of the rim was present to ascertain its diameter, but would have been in the region of 300 mm. The interior is very smooth and well used, tool marks are visible on the exterior, the base is missing but wall to base junction is visible and indicates an inner depth of 67 mm at this point. The top of the rim and wall are 22 mm thick, the maximum thickness at 45° to vertical is 24 mm. A fragment of a limestone tile (48 g), 7 mm thick, was also recovered from this layer. Part of a nail fixing hole is still visible, surrounded by a rust.

Fired clay

An amorphous lump of fired clay, weighing 4 g, was recovered from floor layer 11.

Glass

A piece of green glass came from wall collapse layer 10.

Metal objects

Two metal objects were recorded from floor layer 11, an iron sheet fragment (5 g) and a lead object, 527 g. The latter comprised a 170 mm irregularly shaped bar

(3-28 mm wide, 4-6 mm thick), expanding into a plate of approximately 120 x 70 x 6 mm with a 10 mm sub-oval perforation towards the end. The object is now broken in two but appears to have been folded in half during antiquity and is probably a waste piece but may have been designed / used as a box fitting or similar.

Shell (identification by Sarah Wyles, Wessex Archaeology)

Five *Cornu aspersumi* were recovered from collapsed wall layer 8. These were a Roman introduction to Britain. An *Oxychilus cellarius* was removed from one; this is a shade-loving species but can also be found in leaf litter or long grass (Sarah Wyles *pers. comm.*).

Nomenclature is according to Anderson (2005) and habitat preferences according to Kerney (1999) and Davies (2008).

Summary

The small finds assemblage recovered from the excavation at Bowleaze Cove and the surface collection from the surrounding area indicates a date in the late Romano-British period for the site. The pottery is dominated by local coarsewares, however some fine drinking vessels were being brought in from the kilns in operation in the New Forest and Oxfordshire region during the later third to early fifth centuries AD. The single amphora sherd is earlier in date but not recovered from the excavation. The pottery was all abraded and the sherds recovered from the excavation, particularly the floor layer, were small and the vessels may have been out of use for some time prior to entering the archaeological record. The pottery forms and fabrics are all paralleled on other sites in the region, for example at Greyhound Yard, Dorchester (Seager Smith and Davies 1993). A stone mortar made from the Portland limestone was also present. Most of the other finds relate to building materials, including roofing material, flooring and glass.

Discussion and Conclusions

The 1969 excavation of the remains of the Romano-British building at Bowleaze Cove revealed some interesting details. Much of the structure had been lost to land slip but it is significant that sherds of third- and fourth-century Romano-British pottery were sealed by the floor of the building which suggests that it was of fourth-century date, conceivably a little

later. Elsewhere, the presence of smaller and worn sherds indicates that the building was constructed in an area that had been subject to earlier occupation.

It is also curious that the whole of the building followed the slope of the east-west lie of the land along the top of Furzy Cliff. One might have expected it to have been perched upon an artificial terrace. The apparent paucity of displaced building stone, might indicate that the walls of the building were always low, thus providing a base for a timber-framed structure. In spite of the incomplete state of the building and the absence of an occupational accumulation, Bill Putnam did speculate upon the purpose of the structure, noting in particular that it is situated little more than 300m (south-south-west) of the 'presumed' Romano-Celtic temple on Jordan (Jordan) Hill. In an earlier draft version of his interim report dated October 1969 (Bournemouth University, BU101) Putnam suggests that the Bowleaze building might be the site of 'a second, perhaps unfinished, temple'. In the letter to the Weymouth Town Clerk's Office it is clearly stated that the building was 'not domestic' but that 'religious, public, military or agricultural purposes should be considered' (Bournemouth University, BU101).

The time available for the excavation was restricted to ten days which imposed considerable limits upon what could be achieved. Trenches 2 and 3 were both extended northwards but these were restrained measures and they were unlikely to have cast much light upon the context of the site. The presence or otherwise of a doorway on the surviving north wall was not robustly tested: a gap of about 4m between Trenches 2 and 3 meant that the entire length was not exposed to view. The 1953 section drawn by Farrar (Figure 2) included an annotation that drew attention to stones that had possibly been laid in herring bone fashion at the east end of the building (Table 1). This feature was also noted by Putnam in 1969 (see Table 2, context 10).

Taking into account the strange characteristics of the Furzy Cliff building (the fourth-century pottery sealed by a functional rather than decorative floor, its conformity with a natural slope, the potential presence of courses of herringbone walling and the virtual absence of fallen building materials) it is just possible that it represents a structure of the early fifth century. Therefore, it is entirely feasible that the Bowleaze building may be an example of a sub-Roman rather than a late Roman structure.

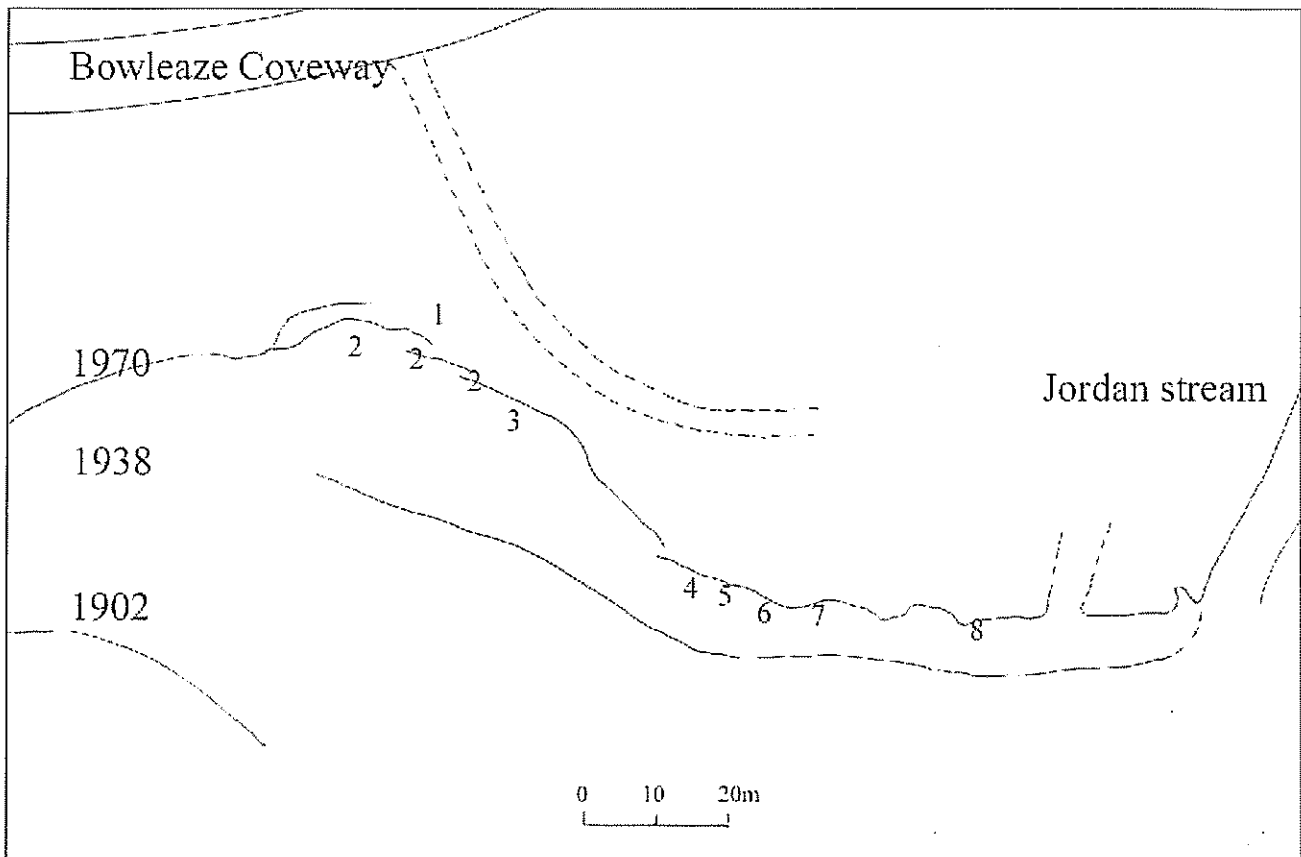


Figure 6 Map of coastal attrition at Bowleaze Cove 1902-1970 compiled by WG Putnam as a map regression exercise. Approximate position of the coastline is shown by year. Other observed features are denoted numerically:

1 = shingle filled pit or ditch; 2 = shingle spread; 3 & 4 = collapsed stone structures; 5 = scatter of broken stone; 6 = dark brown soil and occupation layer; 7 = collapsed stone structure (Site 2); 8 = collapsed stone structure.

Some of the materials used in the structure, such as the limestone quoins, and occasional fragments of imbrex and tegula recovered from the site, were not sufficiently abundant as to suggest that they were part of the building's structural fabric. These materials may have been sourced from the temple on Jordan Hill. Other potential 'quarries' are the Preston Roman villa (ca 830m to the northwest; SY 70298270) (RCHME 1970, 618), or undetected structures within Site 1 which lies 110 m east-north-east).

Finds bags dated 1975 and 1983 (and two colour slides of this date) demonstrate that Bill Putnam continued to monitor the Bowleaze Cove area subsequent to his 1969 excavation. However, these were added to the archive box without further comment. These finds are likely to be related to a map regression exercise that was carried out by Putnam, here shown as Figure 6. Intriguingly, this figure charts a total of four 'collapsed stone structures' that he observed in the cliff face at Bowleaze, presumably at various times up until 1983. On the strength of this evidence it seems likely that the remains of other built features were present on the cliff and possibly

further inland.

In pulling together the various strands of evidence, both published and archival, it has been possible to construct a better if substantially incomplete, picture of the Bowleaze Cove site than hitherto. Further clarification much depends upon continuing observation along Furzy Cliff and the west bank of the Jordan stream as the processes of erosion and land slip continue.

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