

1.13 The hollow way and road

List of features and layers

F719	E94–E95	Hollow way
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Associated stratigraphy layers 401, 411, 412, 415, 434–46

Description of the hollow way

F719	E84–E94–E95	Late Iron Age
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Width: 4.3 m (N), 4.5–5.5 m (S)	Depth: 0.25 m
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This linear feature appears to have been gently curving at the point exposed, running north-east to south-west. It had a shallow dished profile with gently shelving sides merging imperceptibly into the curved base. The hollow was a result of wear and trample, but no evidence of wheel ruts was present. Two cuttings were excavated through it, both 2 m wide, one alongside the south baulk and the second along the east baulk of the excavation trench.

Remnants of flint metalling compacted into the surface survived only along upper edges at the side of the hollow way.

The fill varied somewhat in both cuttings. In the southern section the lowest fill was equivalent to layer 445. Above this layer 1 (=443) was a dark brown compact clayey soil containing a low density of chalk grit and subangular fragments up to 25 mm, occasional mottles of yellow chalky clay and rare subangular flints *c.*30 mm.

In cutting 2 there was a thin lens of angular flint grit and small gravel 10–15 mm with scattered larger flint gravel up to 60 mm set in chalky clay and mortar fragments (3). This was overlain by a very clean dark brown, compact clay soil containing rare chalk grit and subrounded fragments 10–15 mm (4). This was sealed by a distinct layer of small angular–subangular flint gravel 10–25 mm and grit mixed with a lower density larger gravel and broken flint nodules up to 60 mm, small weathered chalk 15–25 mm and grit set in a matrix of pale brown clay soil with a high density of yellowish brown crumbly mortar fragments (2).

Description of the stratigraphy

The south-east corner of the excavation was covered by gravel surfaces, which sealed an earlier hollow way and which were in turn cut through by the fences PL1 and PL2.

The hollow way, F719, took the form of a shallow hollow worn into the chalk natural to a depth of about 0.25 m and 4.3–5.5 m wide. It had gently sloping sides forming a continuous surface with the dished base. The hollow way was roughly aligned north-east to south-west, but possibly curved at this point to skirt round parallel to the banjo enclosure ditch F710. It was dated to the 1st century AD. Two 2 m wide trenches were excavated across the hollow way. There was no indication of wheel ruts, but compacted onto the west side and lip of the

hollow way were the remains of small (20–50 mm) tightly packed angular flint gravel metalling (445, 415) with occasional larger weathered blocks and subangular chalk gravel 15–50 mm.

In the eastern cutting [2] this was overlain by a thin layer of clean dark brown compact clay soil (4) with rare chalk grit. Above this was a distinctive fill (444) of small (10–25 mm) subangular–angular flint gravel and grit mixed with weathered chalk and a few flint nodules c.60 mm set in a matrix of degraded yellowish brown mortar and mortar fragments. In the south cutting [1] the hollow way was filled with a dark brown compact clayey soil (443) containing a low density of small chalk and grit and rare flints. This could be equivalent to layer 4 in cutting 2. It appears soil or mud was allowed to accumulate in the hollow way before more deliberate tips were spread to form a hard surface.

Overlying this fill of the hollow way were a series of surfaces that appeared to spread beyond the line of the hollow way masking its basic shape. Apart from the two cuttings across the hollow way none of the layers were excavated and the relationships shown in the matrix are based on those visible in plan or in the sides of later post-holes. The layers took the form of a series of spreads of flint or chalk, which formed irregular areas of hard surface.

Along the west edge apparently following the side of the hollow way north of cutting 1 was a tip of chalk and flint gravel (446). It was formed of scattered angular–subangular flint gravel 20–70 mm plus occasional flint nodules and rare chalk blocks up to 150 mm set in a brown clayey soil containing small chalk and grit. At its western margin there was a much higher density of subrounded chalk 10–50 mm with some larger blocks 80–120 mm to the south.

Overlapping this and extending over most of this area were two layers (401, 411), which are probably roughly equivalent representing variations in a series of contemporary dumps. Layer 401 was dated to the late first to early second centuries AD and L411 to the first century AD. Layer 401 occurred in the southern area over cutting 1 and layer 443. It comprised angular–subangular flint gravel 15–70 mm in size plus larger flint nodules up to 140 mm mixed with small chalk, dispersed in a dark brown clayey soil mixed with occupation debris such as pottery, including samian, clay tile, burnt chalk and non-local stone.

To the north-east this merged into layer 401, a spread of subangular–subrounded weathered chalk up to 70 mm in size plus a few larger chalk blocks and flint nodules 80–120 mm set in brown clayey soil with a little occupation debris mainly pottery and clay tile. This either merged with or was overlapped by layer 411 on the east side. This was composed of angular and subangular flint gravel 40–80 mm, tightly packed with increasing quantities of chalk 10–80 mm eastwards. It was set in a matrix of dark brown clayey soil with a scatter of occupation debris, notably pottery, oyster shell, small fragments of bone and clay tile.

It is possible that the fence PL1 was constructed at this level, though it could postdate all the surfacings. The relationships of the post-holes to the gravel surfaces is obscure and contradictory suggesting the gravel has shifted around either as a result of trample on the surface or later agriculture.

To the north of layer 401 overlapping it or merging with it was a spread of tight packed chalk and flint gravel (442): this was composed of weathered subangular flints 30–80 mm, broken flint nodules 100–150 mm, small weathered chalk 5–40 mm and rare blocks 70–80 mm in brown clayey soil matrix. In the side of ph 1048 this layer was 50–100 mm thick.

To the north-east this merged imperceptibly into layer 412, which consisted of large angular flint gravel and nodules 80–150 mm dispersed in brown clayey soil unevenly distributed with small flint gravel. The stone density ranged from about 50%–70%. The layer contained occasional pottery, limestone slabs and burnt flints. It could only be dated generally to the Roman period.

These layers probably represent a single phase of surface composed of separate dumps of material with variations in the quantity of gravel present: in some areas there were distinct patches of metallated surface, whilst in others the gravel was more dispersed trampled into a muddy surface.

A series of discontinuous patches of large flints overlay these spreads. Delineating the north-west margin of the area was a linear deposit (437) 4 m by 1.5 m forming a flat metallated surface of broken flint nodules 80–150 mm more rarely 180 mm close set in brown clayey soil with small chalk. The flints became sparser towards the margins, but the chalk increased in density and size towards the north-west edge.

Running parallel to layer 437 a few metres to the south was another linear tip (434) measuring 3 m by 1 m. It consisted of large flint nodules, broken and angular, 100–259–0 mm close set in dark brown clayey soil with a little small chalk and flint gravel. In addition there was much occupation debris incorporated especially pottery and charcoal, some of which was recovered.

To the south of this was an irregular spread (435) about 3 m by 1.5 m in area, which formed a distinct metallated surface of flint nodules and subangular broken flints 100–150 mm tightly packed with small angular flint gravel and occasional chalk between in a matrix of brown clayey soil. Immediately south of this were several small patches of surface (436), which consisted of large angular flint nodules 80–200 mm close packed with small subangular flint gravel 10–60 mm between in dark brown clayey soil. Occasional occupation debris in the form of pottery, bone and burnt flints was observed, but none was recovered.

West of these stratified deposits were isolated but extensive areas of dispersed gravel spread (438, 439, 440), which generally took the form of angular and subangular flint gravel up to 60 mm sometimes with chalk gravel and larger flint nodules compacted into the natural brown clayey soil. Some, such as 440, appear to infill localized potholes or puddles.

This area of gravelled, metallated surfaces extended beyond the line of the earlier hollow way and clearly contained occupation material Roman in date. The later surfacings may be interpreted as maintenance of the earlier track or the formation of a hard surface over the area of the muddy hollow of the former trackway. The surfaces in apparently extending beyond the hollow way may indicate the presence of a yard surface rather than a track by the Roman period. The construction of the fence PL1 across the area would certainly have put any trackway out of use.