

# Understanding the Archaeological and Historical Landscape of Lufton, near Yeovil, Somerset.



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In 2014, I had the opportunity to participate in an excavation taking place in the Lufton area. Through this project, I was able to meet and work with local archaeologists and residents who expressed great enthusiasm regarding the history of the area. However there was a sense of frustration that they were unable to grasp a true understanding of the great historical and archaeological significance of the landscape.

**1. Lufton:** A small village with an extensive archaeological record. Most well-known sites include a Roman Villa, first excavated in 1946 by Mr Leonard Hayward. Excavations over the next few years revealed a fourth-century corridor house containing painted wall plaster and mosaics.



Figure 1: Roman mosaic excavated at the Lufton Roman Villa

**2. St Michaels Hill/ Montacute:** Is home to a Motte and Bailey castle that once stood at the site. The castle structure was built by Robert of Mortain (William the Conqueror's half-brother.) The site is thought to have held great significance in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Nearby is Montacute house; a 16<sup>th</sup> century building now owned by the National Trust.



Figure 2: The Motte and Bailey Castle at Montacute before tree over

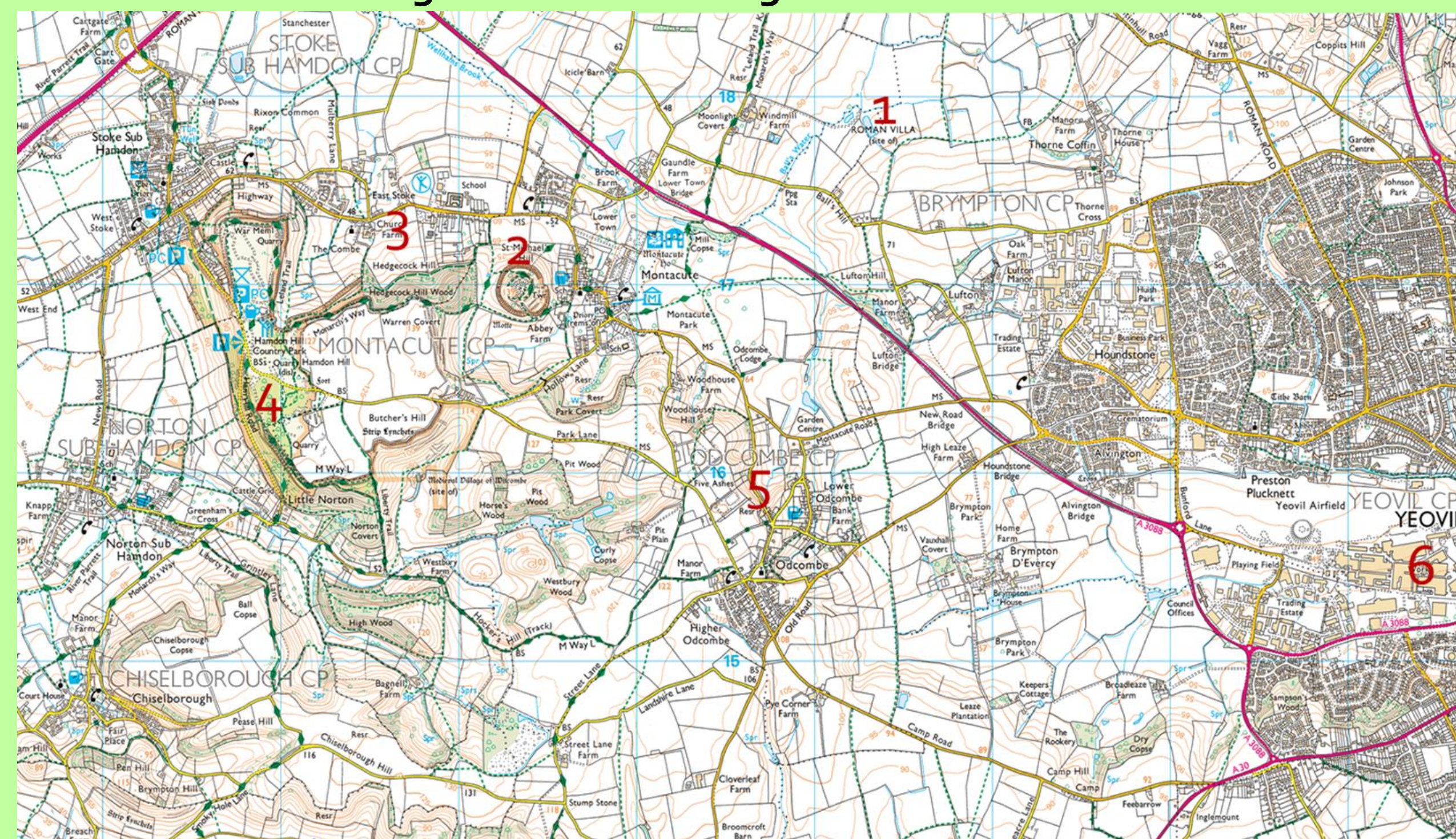
**3. East Stoke:** Parish church of St Mary the Virgin. The church today is still recognisably a Norman building. The church is most well-known for its intriguing tympanum above the north door. Only six others can be found in the county of Somerset.



Figure 3: St Mary Church at East Stoke

## Aims:

- To collect existing information regarding the historical and archaeological landscape of Lufton and surrounding areas from a number of sources.
- To create a user friendly, engaging heritage trail that can be utilised by locals and tourists- enabling them visit these historical sites in person.
- To complement the trail with an assemblage of detailed reports that discuss the archaeological and historic significance of the sites.



## Methods:

I collected information from a number of sources including:

- Domesday Book
- Tithe maps
- Historic Environments Record
- Historical and archaeological journals
- Excavation reports

## Conclusion:

- Succeeded in investigating a broad landscape history of a range of significant historical sites.
- As a result of the research I conducted, I was able to publish a collection of reports, on the Lufton Project Blog, that can now be accessed by members of the public.

**4. Ham Hill:** Hamdon Hill is a well-known historical landmark due to the significant number of antiquities, (spanning from the early prehistoric through to the late Roman period), excavated over the years. Evidence suggests the most intensive settlement period existed in the 1st century BC. Finds from the site include Iron Age pottery, some daub fragments, animal bone and quantities of carbonised plant remains.



Figure 4: Iron Age Hillfort: Hamdon Hill

**5. Odcombe:** Makes an entry into the Domesday Book in 1086. It is referenced under the ownership of Robert of Mortain (the same count responsible for the construction of the Motte and Bailey at Montacute. The village is built mainly from local Ham stone quarried at Ham Hill (see 4).

**6. Yeovil:** Many archaeological investigations have been undertaken over the years. Evidence suggests it had a rich history, spanning from prehistoric times. It is home to a fine fourteenth-century parish church of St John the Baptist.

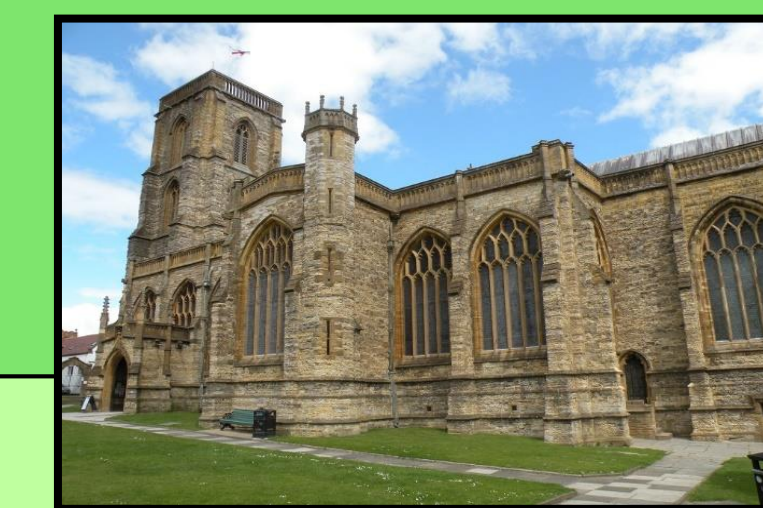


Figure 5: Church of St John the Baptist, Yeovil

- List of References:
- Historic Environments Record 2015
  - Lufton Blog: <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/luftonarchaeology/> [date accessed 07/07/15]
  - Mills, S. (2004) 'Castle, church and conquest: the Normans in south Somerset' in Gittos, B. and Gittos, M. (eds.) *Yeovil, The Hidden History*, Gloucestershire: Tempus.
  - Figure 2: <http://stmarysstoke.com/> [date accessed 07/07/15]
  - Figure 5: <http://www.westcountrychurches.co.uk/USERIMAGES/Yeovil%20St%20John%20.jpg> [date accessed 07/07/15]
  - Figure 4: <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/research-results/recent-research-results/south-west/ham-hill-geophysics/> [date accessed 07/07/15]