

CAP CULVER ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

Bridge Farm 2011-14

Nr. Barcombe Mills, Sussex

The excavation of a Romano-British riverside settlement

**The story so far: an interim report by
David Millum, CAP Deputy Director**

Website: www.culverproject.co.uk

Cover illustration © Andy Gammon

**Initial summary for the excavation and interpretation
of the Romano-British settlement at
Bridge Farm, Wellingham, Lewes, East Sussex
From 2011 – 2014**

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The Deputy Director of the Culver Archaeological Project

ABSTRACT

This interim report written at the end of the 2014 Summer Excavation Season is aimed more at the general reader rather than the archaeological specialist, as we await the imminent publication of Rob Wallace's full 2013 post-excavation report. This is more just a broad overview of the first two seasons of excavation and the survey work undertaken during the first 4 years of CAP's investigations of the incredible site at Bridge Farm.

It also includes a brief summary of the specialist reports from the 2013 season and some thoughts about the wider context of the settlement. Being compiled in sections as events unfolded it may be prone to some inconsistencies and repetitions, for which I can only apologise.

D.H. Millum. ©CAP 2014

CONTENTS

1. General background	2
2. 2011-2012: Initial survey and desk-bound assessments	6
3. 2013: a National Lottery funded year	12
4. 2014: an unfunded year of incredible rarities	30

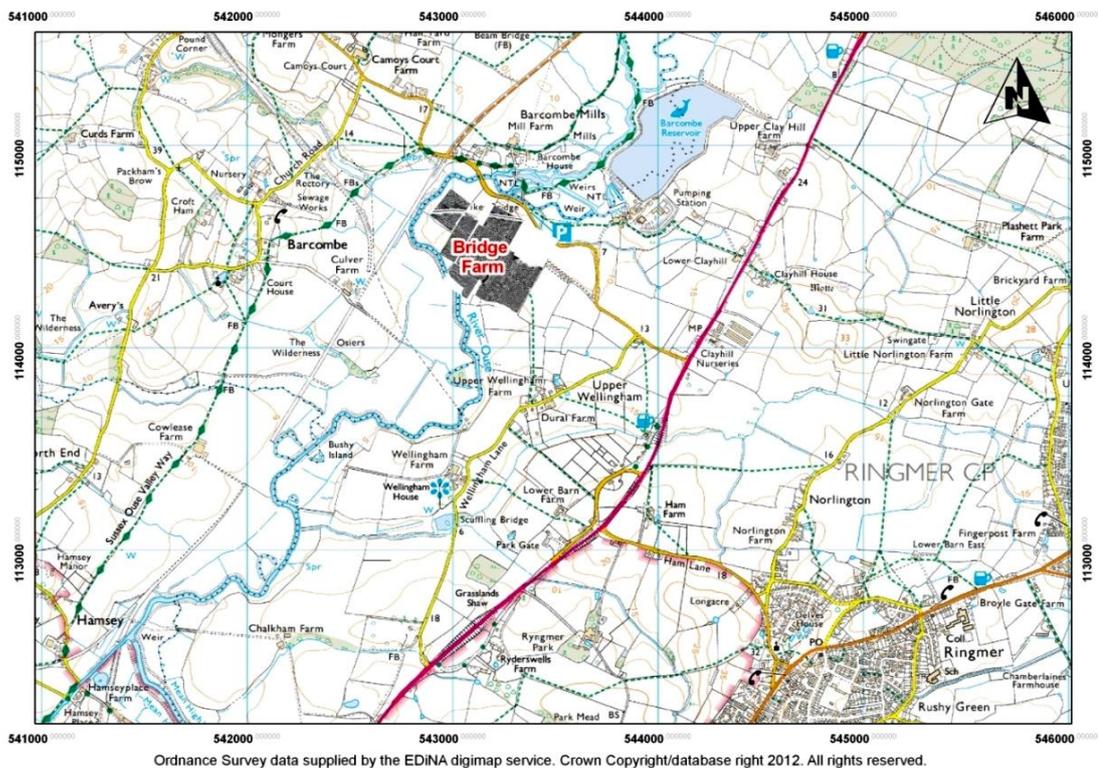
1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

THE PROJECT

The project involves the local community, students and volunteers in the investigation of the historic environment under the supervision of the directors of the Culver Archaeological Project, Rob Wallace and David Millum. In late 2012 CAP received a grant from the National Lottery via the Heritage Lottery Fund which enabled the appointment of a commercial contractor, AOC Archaeology, for the 2013 season to assist CAP in excavation, tuition and public relations. In 2014 it was back to the more usual 'CAP-in-hand' state of affairs with the excavation funded by a modest charge made to volunteers, students and campers plus donations from visiting groups and the winter talks circuit.

SITE LOCATION

The site comprises of agricultural land situated in the bend of the River Ouse in the fields forming Bridge Farm, Wellingham, Nr. Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5BX, centred on National Grid Reference 543200 114400, map reference TQ432144.



1.1: Location map of the Bridge Farm project site

PROJECT CONTEXT

The investigation of the Romano-British settlement at Bridge Farm forms part of the wider research project of the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP) founded by Robert Wallace in 2005 to investigate the historical environment of the alluvial plain of the Upper Ouse Valley in the parishes of Barcombe and Ringmer. CAP has always endeavoured to conform to a high standard of archaeological research whilst seeking to actively involve the local community in the discovery and interpretation of their landscape heritage and archaeological remains. As well as open area archaeological excavation of targeted areas, the project includes magnetometer and resistivity surveys of the wider area and supervised metal detecting,

The preparatory geophysical surveys indicated a substantial amount of below ground archaeology, with a magnetometer survey undertaken in 2011 showing a large double-ditched enclosure, seemingly overlaying a grid of road and boundary ditches. The initial interpretation as a potential Romano-British settlement site, surmounted by a later enclosure of possible official origin, was supported by the results from the 2013 excavations. The settlement site is situated on the projected junction of two major Roman roads, which met at a point on the River Ouse where it was still tidal and navigable; making it an attractive site for a trading, and/or administrative, centre. The evidence from the site and surrounding landscape suggests that the archaeology within this previously unknown settlement dates from the early period of Roman occupation in the late 1st century AD until the start of its collapse in the late 4th.

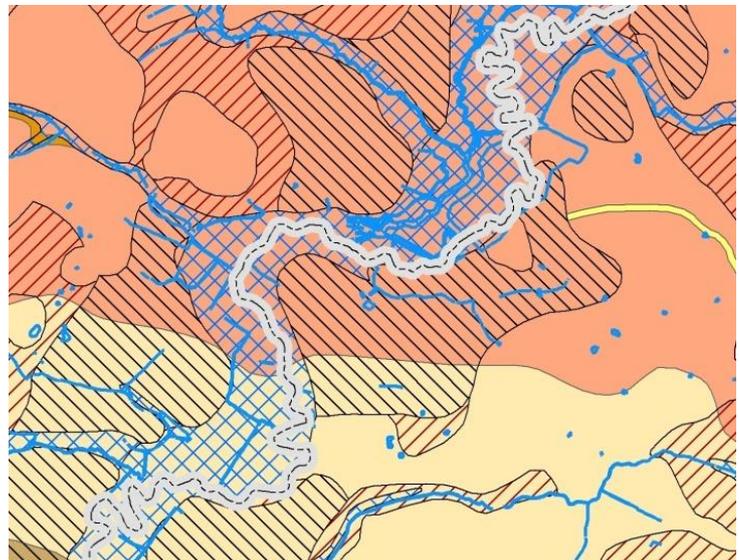
This settlement forms an important part of a wider Romano-British landscape including a villa complex, detached bathhouse, industrial sites and road system, which has yet to be fully interpreted. The evidence from Bridge Farm will aid the understanding of the development of Roman activity in this area as within this single site, there is the potential for uncovering both the beginning and the end of the domestic Roman era in rural East Sussex whilst also offering indications on how this activity affected the native British community.

Currently part of the site comprises intensively farmed arable land subject to regular ploughing using soil compaction avoidance techniques. The site lies across the 5m O.D. contour and is within the River Ouse flood plain. Regular flooding has the potential for damaging and/or altering the archaeology and this, combined with a real danger of 'night-hawking', puts the archaeology on this site at risk. The potential risk to the site and the regional, if not national,

importance of the archaeology, especially if evidencing how British people lived under Roman authority, supports the use of the intrusive techniques used in this investigation.

GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The underlying geological structure of the site is sedimentary with the Ouse valley cutting through east-west bands of Lower Greensand and Weald Clay which are heavily mantled with Head and River Terrace deposits. The site lies on the eastern bank of the Ouse floodplain, north of Lewes, which comprises deep alluvium flanked by margins of first and second terrace valley gravels. The area supports gleyic argillic brown earths of the Waterstock Association soils on the floodplain, with pelo-alluvial gley Fladbury 3 Association soils adjacent to the river. Dr Mike Allen reporting on the soil structure in 2013 highlighted the perpendency of the localised geology for rapid pedogenesis (soil generation) and also the effects that post depositional gleying and annual flooding are having on the archaeology. This has resulted in a loss of the upper levels of the archaeological record and a blurring of some of the more ephemeral deeper features. It was surprising to find that features clear in the geophysics were often hard to trace in the ground and the conditions hamper a COSMIC type analysis of historic agricultural practices.

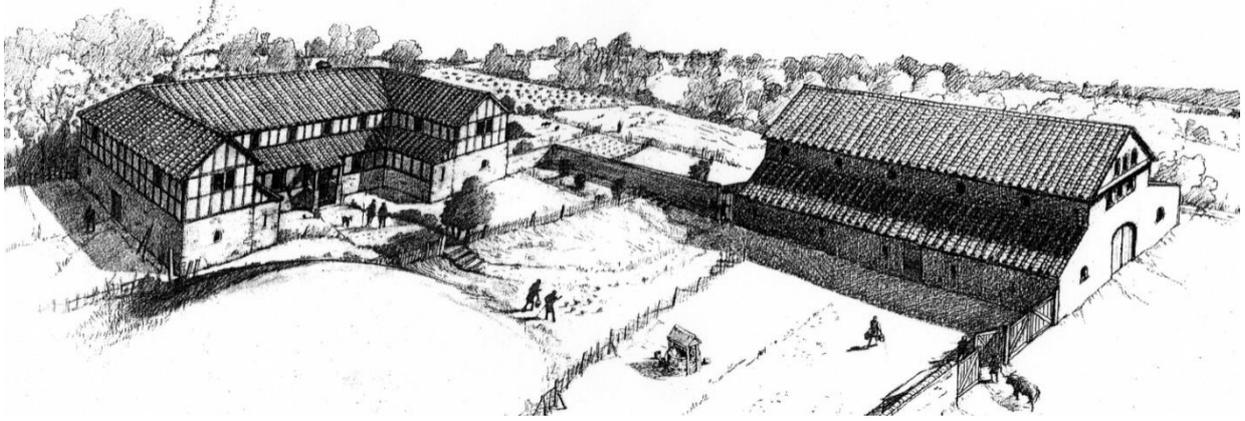


1.2: Solid and drift geology of the site area
(BGS 2010)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the late 1990s a 3rd century, wing corridor villa was discovered in Dunstalls Field on Culver Farm, Barcombe with other casual finds indicating much wider Roman period activity and possible settlement. This led to the discovery of an adjacent aisled building and a further T-shaped building forming a reasonably sized villa complex, and subsequently a detached bath

house in the adjacent field. Excavation of these buildings was undertaken by the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (UCL), the Mid Sussex Field Archaeology Team (MSFAT) and the Centre for Community Engagement Department of the University of Sussex, under the joint directorship of David Rudling, MIfA and Chris Butler, MIfA.



1.3: A conjectural reconstruction of the villa complex by Andy Gammon

Concurrently the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP), under director Robert Wallace, was investigating the wider historical landscape around the villa complex; discovering a substantial Roman road and instigating an extensive programme of geophysical surveys, systematic field walking, evaluation trenching and open area excavation along the road's corridor, to the west of the River Ouse in Culver and Cowlease Farms, Barcombe. This work has identified several previously unknown sites of roadside activity, including industrial sites and potential ritual sites. Research by CAP has also revealed activity from the Mesolithic period onwards within the surrounding area, including several instances of Middle Bronze Age activity, one of which is thought to be one of the earliest waterlogged sites discovered in Sussex.

2. 2011-2012: INITIAL SURVEY & DESK-BASED ASSESSMENTS

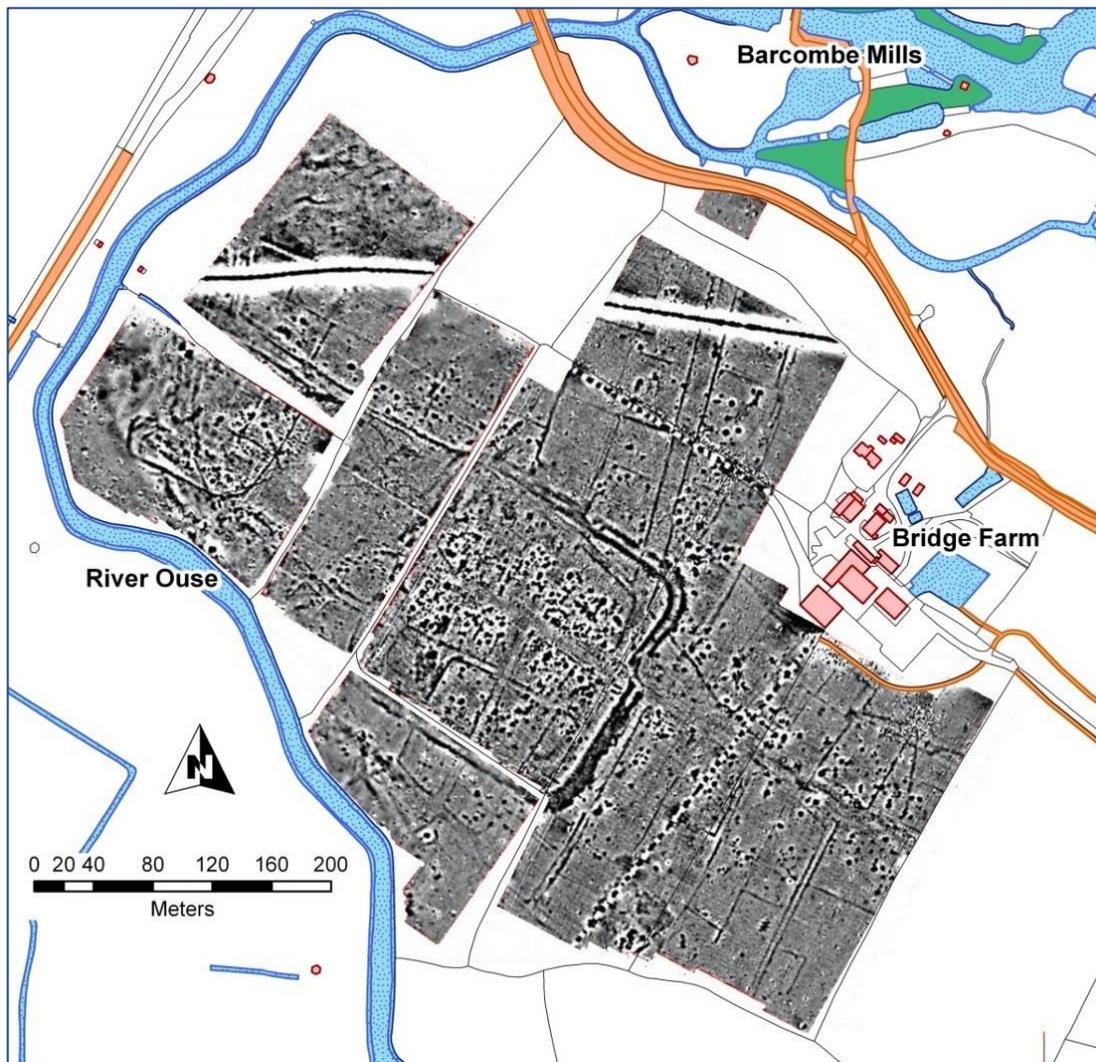
INVESTIGATION BEGINS

In early 2011 the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP) gained permission to investigate several fields at Bridge Farm at Upper Wellingham, Nr Lewes (TQ 433144). Bridge Farm was formerly known as Upper Wellingham Farm and one interpretation of the element *hamm* of the Saxon place-name Wellingham is 'the land in the river bend' (Dodgson, 1978, p. 84) which in this case is evidently borne out on the ground. Historical research has suggested that there was a settlement in this general area known as Walecote, which could derive from the Saxon word *wealh*, meaning Briton or serf, prefixing *cote*, a small settlement (Bleach, 1986). Although thought to be south of Wellingham, could this alternatively be a reference to a Romano-British settlement at Bridge Farm?

Documentary research also revealed that a north-south Roman road in this location had been suggested by William Stukeley as early as the 18th century (Horsfield, 1835, p. 38) and that Ivan Margary (1948, p. 125) had undertaken a small excavation (Section 14) in the large, somewhat characterless, field to the south of the farm buildings when investigating the location for the London to Lewes road. He records that he exposed a very compact flint surface 6.4m wide and approaching 400mm thick at a depth of 300mm and made '*from large lumps to small chips, mixed with gravel, and a very small amount of iron slag*' (Margary 1948, p. 162). Roman pottery described as 1st or very early 2nd century overlaid the edges of the road which led to a proposed construction date of around AD100 (Margary 1948, p. 150).

SOME UNEXPECTED RESULTS

CAP's investigations commenced with a magnetometer survey of this field by David Staveley, a well-known local geophysicist, to see if this modern technology could accurately trace the route and prominent features of the road. The initial results were so outstanding and unexpected that the survey area was extended and over the next two years a clear picture emerged not only of the road heading to the north but of the framework of a substantial settlement adjacent to the River Ouse (Fig.2.1).



2.1: Geophysical survey results (D. Staveley 2012)

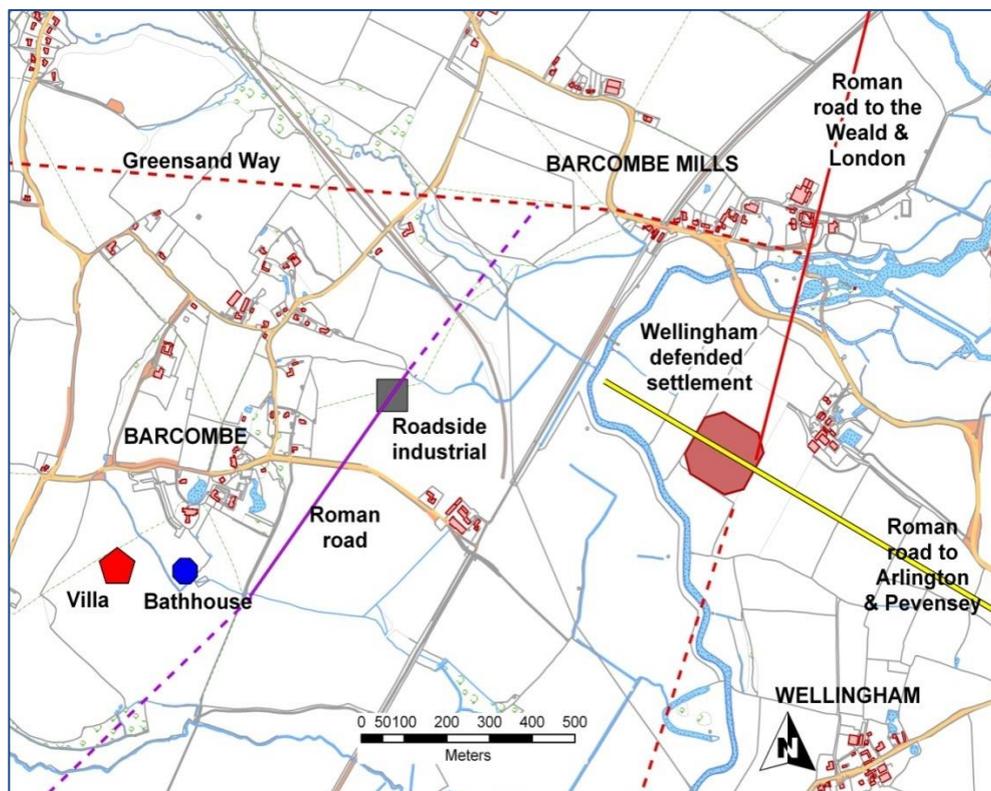
(Ordnance Survey data from EDINA digimap service. Crown copyright/database 2010. All rights reserved)

The settlement pattern is clearly interrupted by a double-ditched enclosure confirming that this was a site of more than one phase of activity. The enclosure appears to overlay and truncate the open settlement but the chronology could not be determined conclusively from the magnetometer images and the CAP Archaeological Director, Robert Wallace, felt that this was a crucially important question that could only be resolved by targeted excavation. Progressive surveys revealed roads heading to the east and possibly west, with smaller trackways and boundary ditches in the areas surrounding the main settlement.

Further work undertaken by David Staveley with the Ringmer Roman Studies Group during 2012 produced strong evidence, from just east of More Lane and south of Loughton Road at Ringmer (TQ 472123), for the eastern road continuing on an alignment heading for the Roman settlement at Arlington and thence to Pevensey (Chuter, 2008). With Barcombe Mills as the

accepted eastern end of the Greensand Way this puts the Wellingham settlement in a pivotal location at the junction of the road from London and the Wealden iron works, with roads to Pevensey and Chichester, and on a navigable stretch of the River Ouse giving access to the coast. The potential importance of the site is further enhanced by the proximity to the 2nd-3rd century, Barcombe villa complex and adjacent bathhouse, recently excavated by the University of Sussex and the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team, at just over a kilometre to the west (Fig.2.2). It is also situated midway between the known Roman settlements of Hassocks and Arlington, approximately 13k west and east respectively, making it an ideal staging post for trade and travel across the district as well as from the Weald to the coast.

The interpretation of the buried features as Roman was supported by the pottery and tile collected by systematic 40m transect field-walking in March 2011, when CAP volunteers were joined by members of the Brighton & Hove Archaeological Society and Lewes Archaeological Group. It was noticeable that a very small amount of CBM was collected given the indications from the geophysics of a substantial settlement. A summary of the fieldwalking finds is shown in table 2.1 below.



2.2 Relationship of the settlement to the villa, bathhouse and other Roman features

(Ordnance Survey data from EDINA digimap service. Crown copyright/database 2010. All rights reserved)

Material	No.	Weight	Remarks
Pottery	800	5,426g	Mainly small abraded sherds of local Romano-British coarse wares with some fine wares including black colour-coated beaker sherds possibly from Wickham Barn at Chiltington and amphora. Most date from AD180-350 although some East Sussex Ware body sherds could be earlier. There were a few later to modern sherds thought to be the result of marling.
CBM Tile/brick	612	13,282g	Mainly post-medieval with only 76 pieces recognised as Roman tile by fabric and/or shape, mainly tegula but some imbrex and box flue.
Burnt flint	589	13,994g	Distributed too evenly over the site to be diagnostic.
Prehistoric worked flakes	121	728g	More prevalent in the northern half of the field with the largest numbers of flakes generally found adjacent to cores. Assemblage appeared to be mainly of Mesolithic to Early Neolithic character.
Cores	11	511g	
Iron slag	128	4,903g	Mainly collected to north of the main settlement but there were concerns over the possible uneven collection of this material by the field walkers.
Glass	5	505g	Mainly post-medieval to modern.
Animal bone	3	7g	Too small a sample to be diagnostic but thought to be modern.
Clay pipe	5	12g	Post-medieval stem pieces.

Table 2.1. Summary of items collected from the 2011 field-walk (Millum, 2012)

AN EXTENSIVE COLLECTION OF COINS AND OTHER METAL ARTEFACTS

In November 2012 Robin Hodgkinson, of the Independent Historical Research Group (IHRG), introduced a local metal detectorist who had collected metal objects from the site over several years. The collection, which was intact, proved to be quite extensive and ratified the longevity of the settlement as it included a series of over 50 Roman coins with identifiable examples from the Republican era right through to the Emperor Gratian in the late 4th century AD (Fig.2.3). Whilst it is likely that these republican coins, being well worn, indicate use in the 1st or even 2nd century AD rather than when they were minted (David Rudling pers. comm.), the coin sequence still indicates a time span of around 300 years. The collection also extended the evidence of activity into the Saxon period with artefacts including circular and axe-shaped mounts and a Merovingian tremissis, a rare gold coin, possibly from Neustria (Northern France) and dating from the late 6th to 7th century AD (Dr John Naylor, National Finds Director for Medieval and Post-Medieval Coinage, pers. comm.)(Fig.2.4). The assemblage also included a number of biconical-shaped lead weights with the vestiges of the iron hooks by which they could have been suspended from a steelyard scales or *statera*, several bow brooch fragments, a bronze writing stylus and a Roman ring key (Fig.2.5).

In early December 2012 CAP organised a thorough and systematic metal detecting survey of the site by the Eastbourne, West Kent and Ringmer groups, where a further 18 Roman coins were found; the majority being over the main settlement area (Fig.2.6). This varied from the

finds detailed above which were far more dispersed with many coming from the area to the SE of the enclosure. The artefact assemblage, comprising 237 iron, 248 lead and 203 other metal objects, is awaiting full analysis but it also included two of the biconical lead weights as well as eleven others of various shapes (Fig.2.6).



2.3. A small selection of the detected coins (photographs by D. Millum 2013):

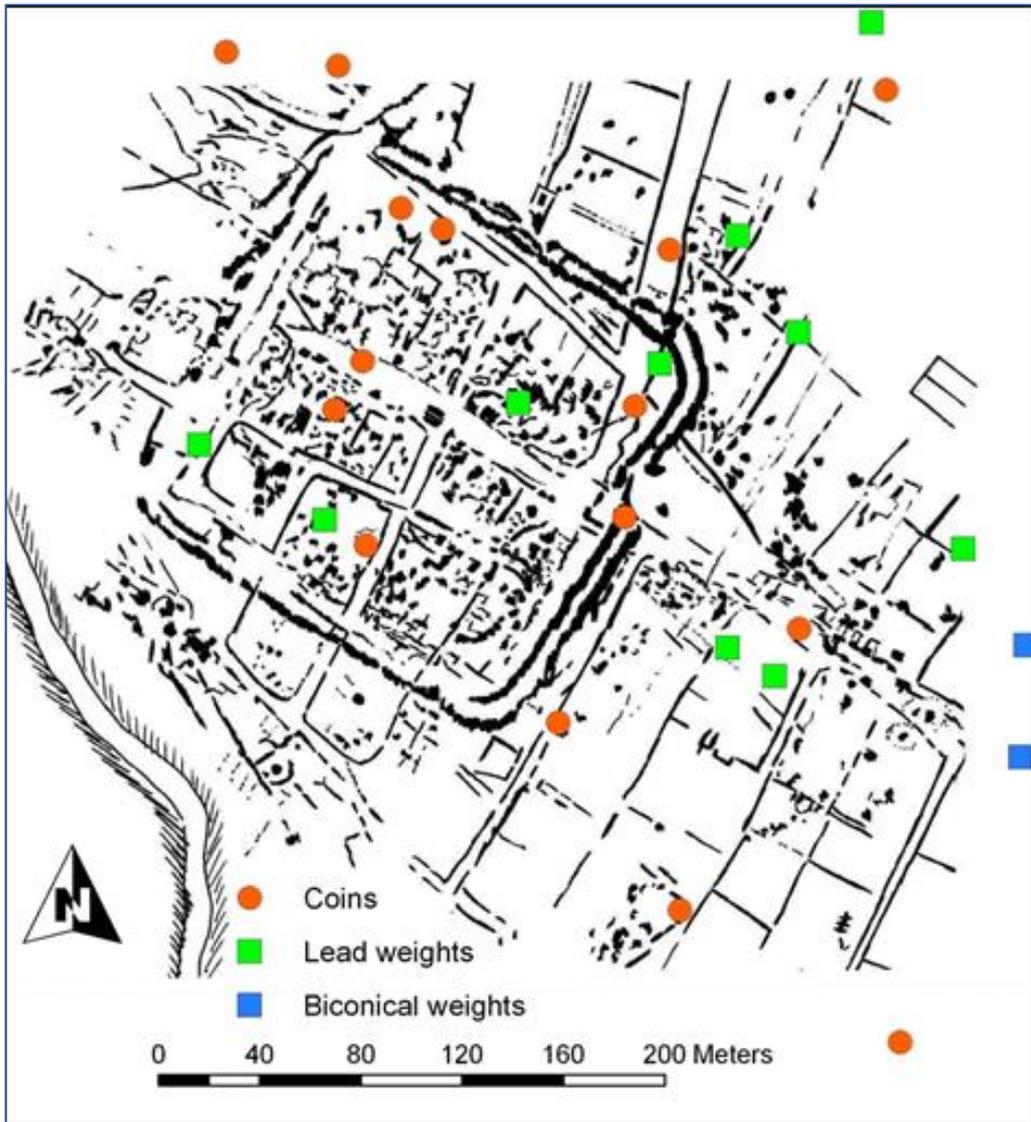
a) Titia 1 (Q. Titius) denarius, c.90 BC; *b)* Aemilia 8 (M. Aemilius Scaurus and Pub. Plautius Hypsaeus) denarius, c.58 BC; *c)* Galba denarius AD 68-9; *d)* Trajan denarius c.AD 114-7; *e)* Julia Maesa (died AD 225) denarius; *f)* Gratian siliqua AD 375-8 (mint of Thessalonica).



2.4. The Merovingian tremissis; 11.4mm diameter, 1.33mm thick, 1.23g weight.



2.5. A Roman ring key



2.6. Location of the Roman coins and lead weights collected in December 2012

3: 2013: A NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDED YEAR

THE SUMMER EXCAVATIONS

During 2012 the Culver Archaeological Project gained a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund which enabled a programme of surveys and excavations during July and August 2013. This assisted the project's aimed involvement of the local community and village primary and secondary schools. The excavations, with the approval of the County Archaeologist, targeted the intersection of the double ditch enclosure with features from the open settlement to aid understanding of the crucial question of archaeological sequence and add to the general chronological and archaeological evidence of the site. The four trenches, totalling approximately 1200sq.m, were located to minimise the effects on the busy working farm whilst showing any difference in preservation of the archaeology between the grassed meadows and those fields used for arable production from at least the mid-18th century (Fig.3.1)



3.1. Location of the trenches in the 2013 summer excavation



3.2: An aerial photograph of the site under excavation in July 2013 (S. McGregor)

This latter question, which at the request of the County Archaeologist's department was due to be the subject of a COSMIC (Conservation of Scheduled Monuments in Cultivation) style record, proved impractical to define due to the nature of the soil. The soil was analysed by Dr Mike Allen as having a soft sandy and silty nature allowing deep and rapid pedogenesis and bioturbation, essentially obliterating the upper profiles of the archaeology (Allen, 2013a). This led to some difficulty in defining feature edges in excavation despite their strong signal in the geophysical results particularly in Trench 1 in the arable area.

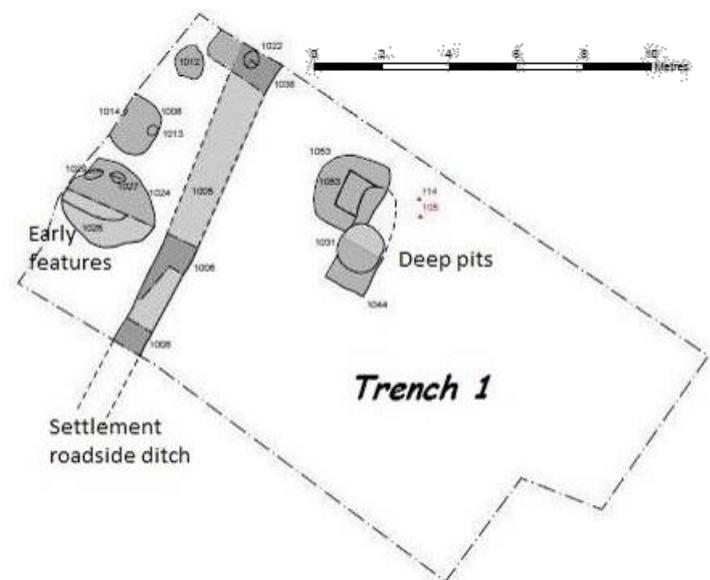
However the first year of excavations at Bridge Farm proved to be truly memorable not only for the archaeology revealed but also for the terrific response from the 180 volunteers of all ages and experience who signed up for a total of over a thousand days' work (Fig.3.3). During the 6 weeks of excavation an estimated 400 visitors had tours of the site and the five organised local school fieldtrips attracted 150 pupils. The wide range of workshops gave 120 people the opportunity to share the knowledge of 6 specialists in subjects as diverse as handling human bones to recording pillboxes.



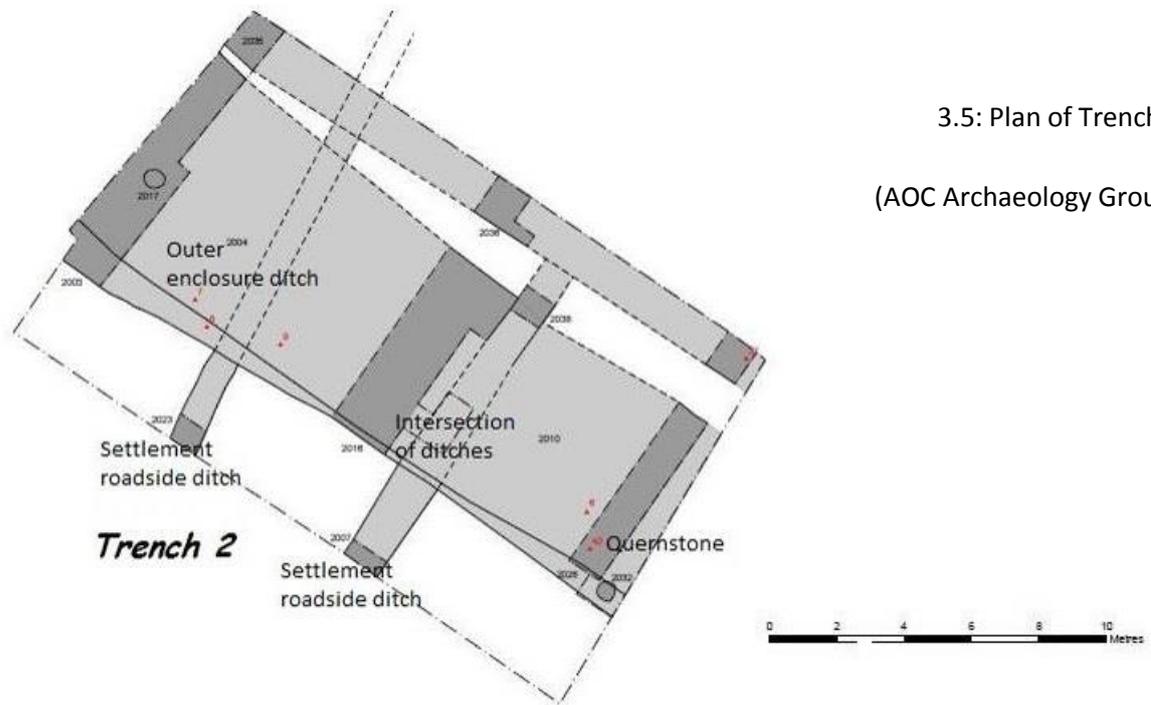
3.3: A typical turnout during the 6 weeks of excavations

The partnership between the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP) and their appointed contractor, AOC Archaeology, was an overriding success made possible by the generous grant that CAP received from the National Lottery via the Heritage Lottery Fund. This grant not only funded the dig, workshops and visits, all of which were free to participants, but also the crucial post-excavation work including conservation and specialist reporting. So it can be justifiably claimed that as a community project Bridge Farm 2013 was a resounding success; and so was the archaeology?

Trench 1, c.20 x 10m (Fig.3.4), was dug just into the edge of the sweet corn crop inside the double ditched enclosure over the central N/S roadway of the open settlement. This proved to be the most difficult trench to interpret with the roadside ditches proving very difficult to distinguish from the surrounding soil. The task was not helped by the series of deep pits that had been cut into the ditches although some distinctive sherds of pottery from the basal deposits proved crucial for dating some features in this trench to the 1st century, as detailed in the summary of artefacts below.



3.4: Plan of Trench 1 (AOC Archaeology Group)



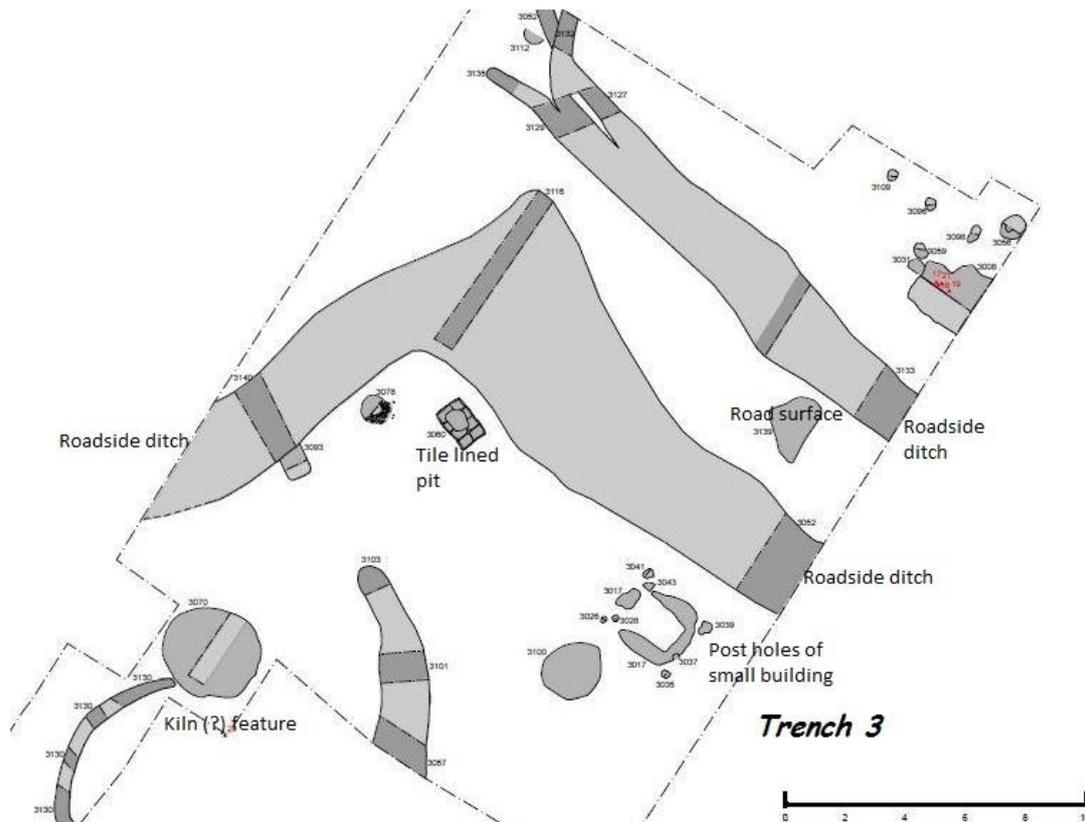
3.5: Plan of Trench 2

(AOC Archaeology Group)

Trench 2, c.20 x 12m (Fig.3.5), was positioned wholly in the meadow, *Little Park Brook*, and was placed over the intersection of the same road ditches as Trench 1 with the outer enclosure ditch so that the phasing of these 2 elements could be resolved. It became clear after both stratigraphic excavation and box sectioning at the intersection that the enclosure ditch did cut, and was therefore later than, the more ephemeral roadside ditches. This was supported by dates of pottery sherds which suggested a late 1st century origin for the roadside ditch and late 2nd for the enclosure ditch. Two finds of note from Trench 2 were a quern stone made from West Sussex greensand (Fig.3.6) and a Samian platter base Dr 18/31 (SF 46) found in Ditch 2013 (Context 2012) indistinctly stamped either Cinnamvs II, a maker from Lezoux in Central Gaul in the late 2nd century or CIII---RAIM being Martres de Veyre Samian of c.AD.90-130. This item is due to be laser scanned by the University of Brighton to see if a clearer image can be obtained.



3.6: The 330mm diameter quern stone from Trench 2



3.7: Plan of Trench 3 (AOC Archaeology Group)

Trench 3, c.20 x 25m plus SE extension (Fig.3.7), targeted a series of anomalies clustered around a crossroads to the southern edge of the settlement. This was arguably the most successful trench exposing the remains of a possible tile kiln (Fig.3.8), a rectangular pit lined with tegula roof tiles (Fig.3.9), postholes of a small rectangular structure, roadside ditches containing fragments of water-logged timbers, patches of flint road metalling, flint-packed pits/postholes, and charcoal and ash filled pits; all suggesting a busy working area close to the river. In the centre of the possible kiln was a strange greasy fill from which a sample was taken by the geoarchaeologist, Dr Mike Allen, for further analysis.

3.8: The half-sectioned possible tile kiln showing the intense burning

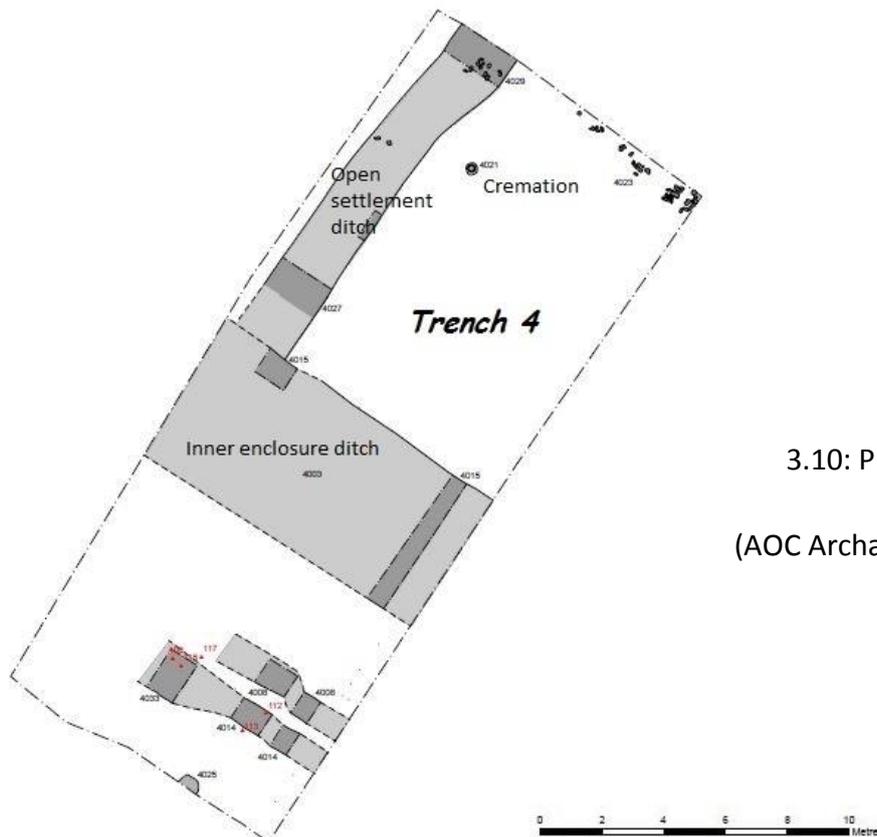




3.9: Tile-lined basin with mortar

Trench 4, c.25 x 10m (Fig.3.10), offered the only chance to examine both enclosure ditches as it was placed across the boundary between the meadow and the arable field and produced further valuable evidence for dating. But this trench also brought us our most intriguing find; a human cremation in a nearly complete urn (Fig.3.11). This was lifted whole and taken back to AOC's Twickenham headquarters where Dr Rachel Ives, an osteoarchaeologist, excavated the contents finding 652g of burnt human bone. With no duplications in the larger fragments, which included elbow, wrist, vertebrae and several teeth, this appears to be the remains of a single adult (Ives, 2013). No firm date has been attributed to the cremation although the urn appears to date from the 3rd century. Its location within an upper context inside the enclosure could imply a date nearer the end of the settlement or an earlier abandonment of the southeast corner.

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3.10: Plan of Trench 4

(AOC Archaeology Group)



3.11: Catherine Edwards (AOC) and Sarah Foster (CAP) wrap the cremation urn prior to lifting.

During the dig everyone was kept up to date with the results by the Excavation Diary on CAP's website, www.culverproject.co.uk, posted by Clara Gonzalez-Hernandez.

A SUMMARY OF THE ARTEFACT REPORTS

POTTERY (Lyne 2013)

As always one of the reports most anticipated, especially for dating purposes, was that on the pottery, particularly when undertaken by Dr Malcolm Lyne. The first thing apparent from his report is the wide range of the dating evidence from mid-1st century right through to late 4th, as well as the variety of wares which include Samian, Gallo-Belgic Terra Nigra, Moselkeramik, and Cologne Whiteware, with New Forest and Oxford wares, as well as more local sources. A significant find was 7 fresh pieces from a reeded-rim bowl of Fishbourne type 89 dating to c.AD.50-80 from fill (1020), feature [1025], in the SW corner of Trench 1, just north of the inner enclosure ditch. Together with other sherds this suggests a very early date for this feature and the 'Fishbourne-type' bowl raises the possibility of a connection between the early settlement and the client kingdom of Togidubnus. Virtually all of the pottery recovered from the features in Trench 1 carried a possible 1st to mid-2nd century dating and the absence of early East Sussex Ware jars with 'eyebrow' motifs and of Gallo-Belgic imports suggest a late 1st century date of between AD70-100 for most of the features in this area (Lyne, 2013, p.2). This crucially

includes the NS 'roadside' ditches of the open settlement. As discovered in excavations in Trench 2 these were cut by, and therefore earlier than, the much larger double enclosure ditches which, from Malcolm's analysis from Trench 4, would date from the late 2nd century at the earliest. This is somewhat earlier than the hypothetical mid-3rd century date put forward in the precursor of this paper published in the *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 151 (Millum 2013a) which was written prior to the excavation. Rubbish dumping over these ditches would appear to have taken place from the late 3rd and well into the 4th century which initially led to dating these features to a somewhat later period than now seems probable.

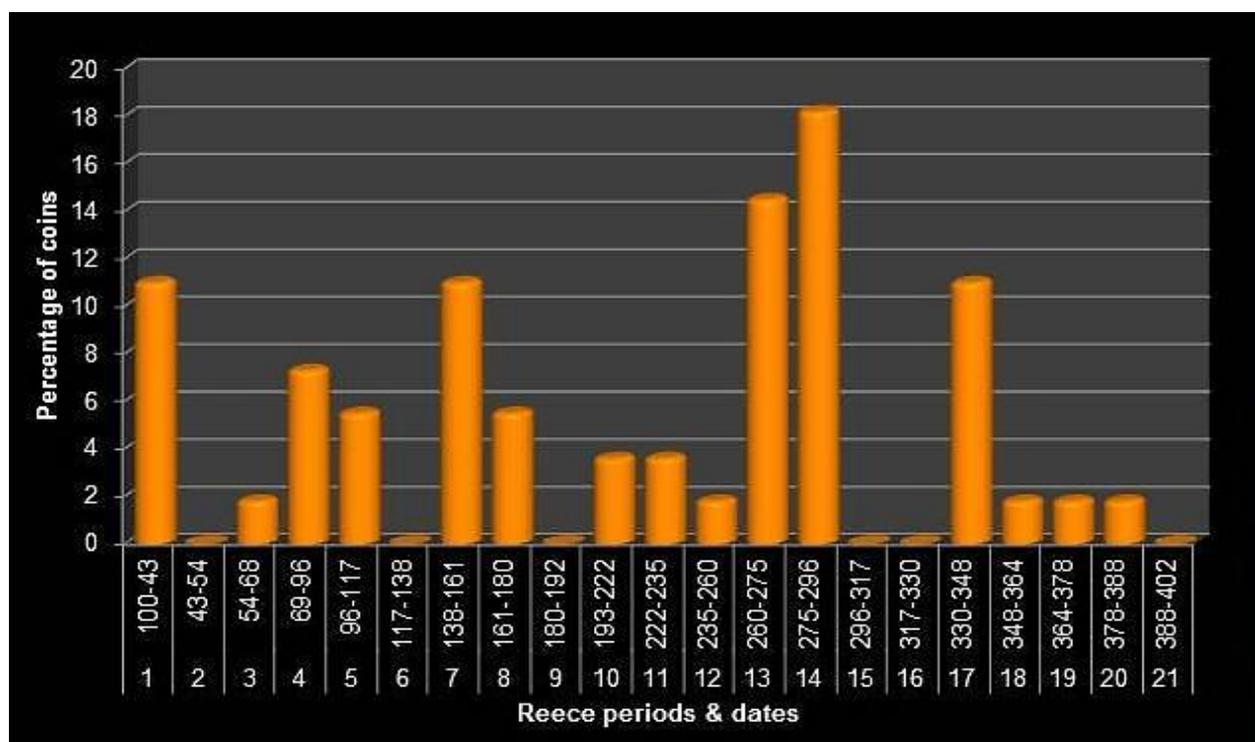
Some features from Trench 3 are proving hard to tie down to specific periods. However, the ditch in the NW corner that forms the southern end of the roadside ditch (3127 & 3129) from Trench 2 confirmed the 1st century origin of this feature as mentioned above. From the pottery from the SW-NE ditch [3140] that swings east across the trench [3116] and possibly runs round the 'kiln' feature [3057] Malcolm Lyne suggests a date around the beginning of the 3rd century. The upper fill of this ditch (3020) produced an assemblage of 193 sherds of 3rd-4th century date which included a fragment of a horizontally-ribbed jar of Overwey/Portchester fabric D which tends to be most common in post AD370 assemblages. The general occupation layer (3088) would appear to have started to accumulate from around AD200 and continued to build up until the mid-4th century. The tile-lined pit (3060) yielded only pottery of a post AD270 date, most of which was abraded indicating that the feature was in use well after this date (Lyne, 2013, p.3). Sadly the possible kiln feature itself did not have any datable pottery.

Evidence was found for only half a dozen mortaria. In the early pit [1024] in Trench 1 six cream sherds date to AD43-80; an Oxford red colour-coated sherd (AD240-400) was found in the upper fill (2013) of the outer enclosure ditch; a sherd of Wickham Barn courseware (AD300-370) came from the occupation layer (3088); and sherds of white Rhenish fabric and Oxfordshire whiteware, both of the 3rd century, came from fills of the inner enclosure ditch [4008].

Only 36 sherds of amphora were found, 27 of which were from Dressel 20 types with 3 sherds from Gauloise 4 designs. The former are associated with olive oil and olives whilst the latter are regarded as wine carriers. The scarcity of both amphora and mortarium sherds in the assemblage may reflect the mainly non-residential location of the 2013 excavations.

COINS (Rudling 2013a/b)

The coin analysis undertaken by David Rudling included the 77 coins, including 54 of Roman and Late Iron Age period, collected by David Cunningham and the 35, including 18 Roman, collected by the metal detecting groups in December 2012 plus the further 21 Roman coins collected from the excavations (Rudling, 2013a; 2013b). The total assemblage includes 3 possible Late Iron Age coins including a silver issue of Verica and 4 Republican coins from a Titia 1 type of 90BC to one issued in 42-40BC bearing the image of Pompey the Great (Pompey died in 48BC). Among the coins identified are a bronze *As* of Nero (AD 54-68), 2 *Denarii* of Galba (AD68-9), a coin of Vespasian (AD69-79) and one of Nerva (AD 96-8); all of which support the pottery evidence for settlement on this site in the second half of the first century. The remaining coins span the next 3 centuries with the last in series being a wreath type silver siliqua of Gratian (AD375-383) although there are some definite gaps in the coin series collected to date (Fig.3.12). In particular the lack of early 4th century coins, quite common on other sites, suggesting that either occupation and/or coin loss was not continuous either in parts of the site or in general. Alternatively a more prosaic answer could be that those areas associated with early 4th century occupation still await investigation.



3.12: Bar chart showing the variation of coin numbers per Reece period as a percentage of the 55 identifiable coins in the assemblage (Millum, 2013c).

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL (Barber, 2013a)

Luke Barber analysed the 6847 pieces of CBM from the excavations of which he assigned all but 7 to the Romano-British period. The CBM ranged generally across the site and through the 1st-4th century. This material included tegula, imbrex, box flue, brick and hearth/kiln lining; the latter forming the majority of the over-fired material. Whilst on site it had appeared that there was a lot of sub-standard building material in the SW corner of Trench 3, suggesting wasters from a tile kiln, this has not been confirmed by Luke's analysis although he does comment on the considerable variability of firing in the assemblage. So the final verdict on whether the burning pit was a tile kiln must remain in abeyance for the time being. In this regard the presence of box flue tiles in an area where no high status building is expected may be an indication of either tile production or at least transportation. A complete tegula was removed from the tile-lined pit [3060] measuring 467 x 330 x 22mm thick. A spindle whorl (Fig.3.13) also comes under this heading having been fashioned from reused tile.



3.13: CBM spindle whorl (37mm diameter)

GEOLOGICAL MATERIAL (Barber, 2013b)

Most of the stone collected came from the local Wealden district to the north and mainly comprised clay ironstone with some sandstone. Whilst little Downland material was in the assemblage, this was due to the collection policy rather than its absence on site with a good quantity of flint nodules being observed and recorded. This latter stone could only have reached the site by man's intervention as the site is upstream of the Downs. Whilst some of the Wealden stone could have arrived naturally via the river the amount, size, and in some cases evidence of working, suggest that it was also transported to the site intentionally.

Other items of note in this section were the 46 fragments of quernstone material both Wealden greensand and German lava-stone including a nearly whole quern stone in Lodsworth lower greensand (Fig.3.6), all of which are evidence of on-site cereal processing. There was also a fragment of a c.80mm diameter, Kimmeridge shale, bracelet (Fig.3.14). This item suggests a possible link via the coastal trade with Dorset (Barber, 2013b).



3.14: 80mm diameter shale bracelet

METALURGICAL MATTER (Barber, 2013c)

The recovered 264 pieces of slag included fuel ash slag, furnace lining, smelting slag and smithing slag, suggesting either small-scale industrial activity on site or material being brought down from the iron working sites in the Weald for such uses as road surfacing. Future excavation within the main settlement area may resolve which of these possible sources was dominant but some connection with the Wealden iron trade would not be unlikely given the settlement's location at the junction of the 'Iron Way' (Margary's London-Lewes road) with the tidal reach of the Ouse.

METAL (Barber, 2013d)

The metalwork collected is dominated by iron being mostly nails ranging from small hobs to large carpentry nails with one joiner's dog (a large staple for joining timbers). The finds came from all areas of the site and from throughout the Romano-British period with the majority being from the general occupation layers. Other iron objects included part of a key and a 115mm long stylus although other items may well be hidden in the collection of corroded miscellany. Twenty four items of lead were collected from the later Roman deposits including a



further biconical weight with the residual iron hooks suggesting statera or possibly plum-bob use (Fig.3.15). The amount of amorphous lead lumps on site suggests that lead was being re-melted on site and possibly indicates use as fishing weights. Four bow brooch fragments were found of which one was early Roman with the others being late Roman. There was also a 2nd century disk brooch.

3.15: Biconical lead weight (19.5 maximum diameter)

GLASS (Barber, 2013e)

The 73 pieces of glass collected were all judged to be of Roman date. Most were of uncertain form but there were 3 beads (Fig.3.16) 11 bottle shards, 4 bowl fragments, and 11 pieces of window glass. The range of forms and colours was varied which is not unusual for a Roman site. The beads possibly indicate the presence of women with the window glass either suggesting a higher class building nearby or possibly a collection/shipping point for cullet (waste glass) for recycling.



3.16: 16mm diameter Glass 'melon' bead

HUMAN CREMATION (Ives 2013)

A vessel containing flecks of charcoal and burnt bone was found in trench 4 during the excavation. A total of 652g of burnt bone was recovered and sufficient fragments were identified as human to suggest that this was the burial of a single adult. Six iron fragments suggest the remains of a buckle or other clothing fixture worn by the deceased on the funeral pyre.

ANIMAL BONE (Robertson, 2013a)

The animal bone analysis was undertaken by Jackaline Robertson of AOC Archaeology in Edinburgh. It was a fairly small assemblage and adjudged to be domestic rubbish derived from activities such as food preparation and cooking, even though none of the fragments showed any obvious signs of butchery.

WATERLOGGED & CHARRED WOOD (Robertson, 2013b)

The waterlogged and charred wood was analysed by Jackaline Robertson and comprised birch, hazel and alder round-wood with oak timber offcuts. A large quantity of charcoal from the kiln feature was found to be mostly fragments of oak with some small birch round-wood.

GEOARCHAEOLOGY (Allen, 2013a)

An on-site geoarchaeological and palaeo-environmental survey was undertaken by Dr Mike Allen in July 2013 and a detailed report written in August. Whilst this summary is primarily concerned with the artefacts discovered on site Dr Allen's conclusions with regard the propensity of the soil to deep and rapid soil formation may help explain why many of the archaeological features were so difficult to define given the clear results from the geophysics. His analysis suggests that some finds may be in their primary location even though the feature in which they lie is no longer detectable having been truncated or indeed obliterated by pedogenesis (Allen, 2013a, p. 11). An important and positive point in considering the pottery fills from the ditches is his conclusion that the primary ditch fills on the site could have taken place within the first 30 years of use (Allen, 2013a, p. 18).

CHARRED PLANT & CHARCOAL REMAINS (Allen, 2013b)

Dr Allen also carried out an analysis of the environmental samples taken from the excavation. He noted charred grain in only 2 samples from pits [3003] (fill 3007) and [3008] (fill 3006). These samples also contained charred weed seeds as did 3 other contexts (1025, 3010 and

4004). However they were all in low quantities and ‘some of them questionable’. Charcoal was noted in most samples but was significantly missing in the samples from the kiln suggesting that this feature was thoroughly cleaned out after use. Appreciable concentrations of charcoal were noted in the 2 samples containing charred grain. Dr Allen highlights the lack of cereal caryopses in the samples as a whole suggesting that if domestic and crop processing activities were present, they did not occur within, or adjacent to, the excavated areas which may indicate a non-domestic function to this area of the site (Allen, 2013b, pp.2&7). This should be borne in mind when assessing the quernstone fragments described above. Further analysis undertaken on the charcoal, pollen and water-logged plant remains, when funds allow, could provide valuable information about the local lived-in environment.

GREASY DEPOSIT FROM ‘KILN’ PIT

We still await a definitive answer on the ‘greasy’ deposit (3067) found in the ‘kiln’ feature which we took to be a residue from later reuse of the existing pit. Whilst we initially thought this might be an extract of animal fat, such as tallow, Dr Allen kindly arranged for Dr Oliver Criag, of the University of York, to analyse the substance for us. It was dissolved in DCM/Methanol with sonication and analysed by gas chromatography (GC). The analysis revealed no peaks on the GC other than the internal standard and he is therefore confident that the substance is not tallow or that it contained organic compounds that are verifiable by GC analysis. So we are still awaiting a definitive answer for this substance that Dr Allen considered out of the ordinary when excavated compared with the other deposits on the site.

PREHISTORIC FLINT (Butler, 2013)

An assemblage of 728 flints was examined by Chris Butler comprising mostly hard and soft hammer-struck flakes of Downland flint, plus some blades, scrapers and 2 arrowheads (Fig.

3.17). The majority was Mesolithic to Early Neolithic although the larger hard struck flakes were deemed Later Neolithic to Bronze Age. Implements were rare making up only 3% of the assemblage which is of a similar ‘derived/residual’ nature as that found by CAP at the nearby Culver Farm sites.



3.17: Late-Neolithic/Early Bronze Age tanged and barbed arrow head

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2013 EVIDENCE

The pottery and coin reports have further confirmed the longevity of this Romano-British settlement with the pottery report providing a basis for dating some features, including crucially the intersecting ditches of the open settlement and bivallate enclosure. It has also allowed some chronological grouping of other less determinable materials.

It would appear from the small area of the main site excavated in Trench 1 that the open settlement was founded in the second half of the 1st century and developed its formal infrastructure during the late 1st to early 2nd centuries. Late in the 2nd century the settlement was enclosed by a double ditch that appears to indicate a change in relationship with the wider environment, with less traffic arriving from the north and the Weald iron workings and an increase in communication to the east, to Arlington and/or Anderida (Pevensey). The industrial area uncovered in Trench 3 appears to date mainly from the early 3rd century and continue through to the mid-4th. No further resolution has been possible on the use of our large circular burning pit with some basic form of tile kiln still being the favoured interpretation. Whilst we have an indication that the tile-lined pit was in use after AD270, what that use was still remains a mystery. Many theories abound and one can imagine that such a structure could have been utilised in a variety of procedures.

Some of the materials analysed have indicated potential activities in the settlement as well as possible trading and even administrative connections. This includes possible links to the iron industry with some onsite smelting and smithing, albeit probably only on a local craft scale. Not unexpectedly processing of agricultural products has also been indicated by the fragments of quernstones although the absence of cereal remains in the environmental samples suggests that processing was not occurring in the areas investigated. The pivotal location of the site is strengthened by its possible connections with Fishbourne, the Weald and its access by coastal trade to areas like Dorset.

The open nucleated settlement is closely allied to the road heading to the north which is shown by the image of two ditches 16m apart; the same distance observed between the boundary ditches of the Roman Greensand Way excavated at Plumpton (Millum, 2011). The northern alignment may result from the requirements of the intense early period of iron production in the Weald. This would embrace a 1st to early 2nd century AD origin for this phase in line with Margary's dating for the road (Margary, 1948, p. 150).

The outer enclosure ditches are approximately 185m long enclosing an area of ground internally approaching 2.4ha; this compares to under 1ha for the *mansio* enclosures at Alfoldean and Iping and equates more closely to the double-ditched, enclosed area of 2.5ha of the settlement at Neatham, Hampshire (Millett & Graham, 1986, p. 157). It appears to have its main access midway along the eastern side with the entrance off set, rather than in line as is more usual in early military forts and *mansiones*. This entrance is adjacent to a triangular 'open area' immediately to the east of the defended area at the junction of the northern and eastern roads. This area suggests a possible early 'market place' subsequently excluded by the defences. If this could be proved by excavation it could indicate an economic shift in the settlement (Ernest Black, pers. comm.) The geophysical images do not show any clear access to the wide northern road implying that when the defences were erected the main focus was east-west. Whilst on economic grounds this could imply a date for the defensive structure after the decline in importance to the settlement of the Wealden iron industry and the rise in importance of the Saxon shore fort of *Anderita* (Pevensey), it appears from the pottery report that a late 2nd century date is likely, corresponding with the widespread provision of earthwork defences of both towns and settlements across the country at this time (Black, 1995, p. 61). David Rudling (forthcoming) in researching reasons for the degrading of Bignor Villa during the late 2nd century quotes Woodfield's (1995) suggestion of a '*contagion spreading from the south-east*' possibly linked to either '*an incursion by the Chauci as a preliminary to their attack on north-east Gaul in the early 170s*' or '*a purely internal revolt, perhaps by the peasantry, which threatened the security of the roads and the official traffic they carried*'. Rudling expands on this latter explanation by looking at a suggestion by Ernest Black that the Great Antonine Plague may have fuelled rural disruption, particularly to the area north of the Thames. He reasons that such plagues were often recurrent in nature and if affecting large enough numbers of the peasantry could have devastating effects on the rural economy and even lead to banditry and attacks on richer villas and market settlements, which in turn might look to protect themselves by defensive enclosures.

SOME COMPARISONS WITH WESTHAWK & ALFOLDEAN

The longevity of occupation suggested by the coin data encourages comparisons with settlements such as Westhawk Farm, near Ashford, established on an important road junction from the Weald to Canterbury and Lymppe just after the conquest and showing coin evidence

for activity to the mid-4th century (Booth, et al., 2008). This complex, nucleated settlement, stretching over 15ha, has been categorized as a small town or market village, despite the rural character of some marginal areas. It comprised timber buildings in both round and rectilinear forms located side by side throughout the period, but with the latter becoming slightly more prevalent from the 2nd century. A shrine set in a small rectangular enclosure in an open space was the only obvious public building discovered within the settlement with the cemetery being outside the north-west boundary. Evidence of iron working, in the form of both smelting and smithing, was found although seemingly indicating local craft production rather than a major industrial site. Another similarity between the sites is the presence of a quantity of lead, biconical, steelyard weights at both locations. The presence of such weights at Westhawk was taken as an urban characteristic (Booth, et al., 2008, p. 154 & 392) and together with the styli found at Bridge Farm indicates probable commercial and/or administrative activity. The economic emphasis of Westhawk was interpreted by Booth *et al* (2008, p. xix) as based on agriculture and local market services, with a possible administrative role in the iron trade, and given the parallels in location and artefacts it is tempting to predict a similar pattern for the Wellingham settlement. With some areas outside the enclosure still to be surveyed the open settlement at Bridge Farm may well stretch over an area approaching that found at Westhawk and a similar predominance of timber buildings might explain the modest amount of Roman tile collected in the field walking survey at Bridge Farm in 2011 (Table 2.1).

The coin assemblage noted by Winbolt at Alfoldean shows a period from Nero to Valentinian, AD54-375 (Luke & Wells, 2000, p. 94), also similar to that at Wellingham if we ignore the coins from the Republican era which may have still been in circulation in the late 1st century AD. The Westhawk excavation had only 10 coins post-dating AD235 out of the 237 collected, with only one Republican and a single 4th century coin, although a slightly wider range was collected by metal detecting over a larger area (Booth, et al., 2008, p. 135). The coin evidence so far gained from Wellingham would seem to indicate the settlement being in existence at least as early as Westhawk and Alfoldean with the possibility of a longer continuation of activity, either despite, or because of, the changes to its form and possibly its function with the building of the ditched defences.

Whilst Westhawk, being under imminent threat of a housing development, was the subject of a large, developer funded, open area excavation, the Wellingham site is in a rural location under mixed farmland, with the main settlement area being subjected to an arable rotation.

Investigation of the site will therefore be much more on a targeted basis, likely to last over a number of years, as and when the acquisition of funding allows and specific objectives demand. The possibility that the settlement may be constructed of mainly timber buildings, as was the case at Westhawk, may mean that larger open area excavation may, however, need to be considered in future project designs.

An interesting result from Westhawk was the survey into how the various non-ferrous artefacts were collected which showed that a significant majority of the heavier solid pieces were found by metal detecting in the plough soil, whereas the lighter finer and flatter pieces were discovered during excavation. This is particularly relevant with regard the steelyard weights where 8 of the 9 Westhawk examples were found from unstratified collection and suggests that the assemblage of lead weights at Bridge Farm should not be taken as an indication that there will be a lot more awaiting discovery during excavation. Encouragingly the scarcity of light jewellery and cosmetic items in the unstratified finds does not signify a potential dearth of such items on the site, as these were mainly found in excavation at Westhawk (Booth, et al., 2008, pp. 158-9).

VICUS, MUTATIO OR MANSIO?

Ernest Black (1995 pp. 12-15) in his researches into the infrastructure of government in Roman Britain compares the intervals of facilities provided for official travellers. He identifies varying levels with *mansiones* supplying a full range of overnight accommodation, bathing and stabling in a range of qualities dependant on the status of the officials. In examining *Stane Street*, in comparison to routes that appear in the *Antonine Itinerary*, he concludes that a *mansio* was built at Alfoldean, being the midway stop 52k (35.5 Roman miles) from London and 40k (27 Roman miles) from Chichester. The intermediate settlements at Dorking and Ewell, being 17k and then a further 14k to the north, and Hardham, being 17.5k to the south, he suggests were also *vici* but unlikely to have had purpose-built *mansio*-type accommodation. These intermediate staging posts would have been more regularly used as a *mutatio* for acquiring fresh transport.

It would seem likely that Upper Wellingham would have been such a *vicus* providing more basic *mutatio*-type assistance rather than being equipped with a full *mansio*. Even this lesser role would have required some provision of facilities and staffing raising the possibility of state

encouragement for the foundling settlement. Less formal accommodation was often made available either within the general settlement or at other nearby establishments and Black (1995, p. 89) mentions that detached bathhouses provided for the use of official travellers were often in peripheral locations. Although he warns that such a use should not be assumed without other supporting evidence it is tempting to see this as a possible explanation for the size and location of the large detached bathhouse adjacent to the Barcombe villa complex.

It should also be remembered that the *Cursus Publicus* not only required facilities for fast travelling officials but also for slower moving foot travellers and goods vehicles that would require more frequent overnight stops and a secure environment for their consignments. The need for such a facility at the junction of 2 major roads and a navigable river could well have encouraged the formation of the original settlement which at that time was possibly an undertaking in the remit of the client kingdom. An official function and the protection of animals, wagons and cargo against theft and pilfering could be sufficient cause for the subsequent provision of earthwork defences. Such ditched defences were widely provided in the late 2nd century to both *vici* and *mansiones* attesting to the importance given by the authorities to the security of these roadside settlements (Black, 1995, pp.61 & 89).

FURTHER 'MAGWORK'

During the autumn of 2013 CAP committee members and volunteers continued with geophysical investigations east of Bridge Farm (Fig.3.18) and also along 'Stroude Street', the Culver Farm Roman road, as it heads south towards the Downs at Offham.

3.18: Magnetometer results from the field to the east of the previous surveys at Bridge Farm showing continued activity beside the road heading towards Arlington (D. Staveley, September 2013)



4. 2014: AN UNFUNDED YEAR OF INCREDIBLE RARITIES

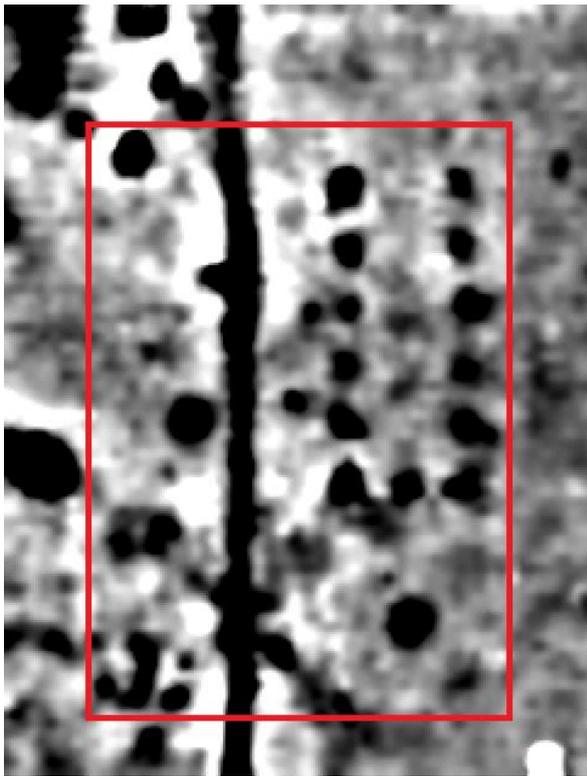
SUMMER EXCAVATION: TRENCH 5

The summer of 2014 saw the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP) excavating an area to the east of the enclosed Romano-British settlement at Bridge Farm in a field of permanent grassland known as Five Acre Brook (Fig.4.1). A recent magnetometer survey conducted by David Staveley showed 13 round anomalies forming an 18 by 6 metre rectangle (Fig.4.2) which the CAP directors believed represented a pattern of postholes for a substantial building and if so would be the first building to be excavated at the settlement.

The dig, which as usual was open to volunteers and students, ran through July and into early August with over 60 people turning out to help during the 6 week period despite a modest charge to defray excavation costs. The only other funding for this year was a small grant from the University of Sussex Archaeology Society (USAS) towards the excavation insurance premium. The success of this year's dig once more validates one of CAP's basic aims of encouraging community interest in the discovery and appreciation of the local historic environment.



4.1: Geophysical survey image with location of Trench 5 in relation to 2013 trenches and the enclosed settlement (geophysical survey image by D. Staveley)



4.2: Geophys plot of excavation area



4.3: Drone shot showing the completed excavation

The site duly revealed a variety of ditches, pits, hearths, and post holes, including the 13, one metre wide, holes that formed the rectangular feature in the geophys (Figs 4.2 & 4.3). In the first 3 weeks the team concentrated on the remainder of the site, tracing 3 major ditches and numerous small post and stake holes, as well as 2 hearths. Whilst the hearths still require further analysis initial interpretation favours Feature 002 being a smelting hearth and/or oven, whilst Feature 007, which contained several lumps of iron slag, may be a secondary forging hearth. Local small scale ironworking would not be unexpected adjacent to a large settlement, especially one so accessible to the Weald.

Two large pits, Features 009 & 010, were also excavated and have been initially interpreted as shallow wells for gathering surface water from the high water table; both needed constant bailing and/or pumping during excavation as seemingly clear water rushed in from the sides (Fig.4.4).



4.4: David Lea (volunteer), Rob Wallace (director) and John Kane (CAP committee) excavating pit F009

One of the pits (F009) was particularly interesting as towards its base was a layer of large stones, mainly foreign to the site, comprising chalk (42%), Paludina limestone (27%), various Wealden sandstones (14%) and Downland flint (12%). This layer had blackened animal bones beneath it (probably cattle) and waterlogged roundwood above, the latter possibly representing the remains of a wattle structure or pit lining. Just above this layer was found a single piece of waterlogged timber (Fig.4.4). The fills surrounding this layer were 100% sampled and flotted with some remarkable success. Not only was a Roman coin found (Emperor yet to be identified) but a plain, brass, wrap-around, finger ring and a fine turned disk/spindle whorl. Then a rather unpromising lump of earth turned out to be the back half of a leather shoe/sandal complete with hobnails (Fig.4.5). The unexpected wealth of artefacts in this pit together with the need for constant pumping of the fast inflowing water meant that this feature took all 6 weeks and a bit beyond to fully excavate and record.

All features brought forth a wealth of Roman pottery including some pieces of Samian and some fine beaker fragments, including some possibly from the Nene Valley (pottery report awaited)(Fig.4.6). Seventeen Roman coins were found both from excavation and metal detecting including 2 Diva Faustina from after her death in AD141, and 2 of Lucius Verus c. AD169, being from around the time that the adjacent settlement was most likely enclosed by defensive ditches. The most recent Roman coin found was of the House of Constantine issued between AD330 and 335. Previous surface detecting of this area had revealed coins from Galba

AD68 to Gratian c.AD380. During the excavation CAP's metal detecting team found a zoomorphic enamel brooch possibly in the shape of a hound (Fig.4.7a) and a small square of silver inscribed with (V)TER(E) (F)ELIX (utere felix i.e. use with good luck) which is thought to be the bezel attachment to a 4th century ring (Fig.4.7b). But unknown to the excavators the real archaeological treasures were yet to be discovered!



a)



b)



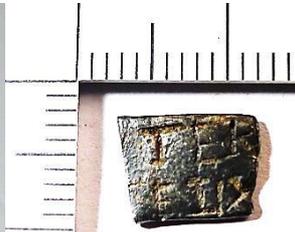
c)

4.5: Artefacts from the well:

a) the heel of the 'Roman shoe':

b) wrap-around ring:

c) the turned disk



a)



b)

4.7: Metal detecting finds

a) (V)TER(E) (F)ELIX inscribed ring fragment

b) Zoomorphic enamelled brooch

4.6: Globular Nene Valley beaker

The final 3 weeks were allocated to the excavation of the 13 large postholes (Fig.4.8) and a series of smaller adjacent postholes which had been interpreted to be from a building of a different phase. At first it was thought that the metre wide post holes were disappointingly shallow but then it was remembered that last year many features had a hard manganese layer well above their lowest fill and it was decided to test a couple of the holes to see if this also

applied here. With the manganese pan removed a series of 400-500mm diameter post-pipes were revealed.

These were half sectioned with some difficulty as they were discovered to average over a metre in depth and penetrating the surface water level. Then at the bottom of one was discovered the *in situ* remains of a waterlogged post. A busy period ensued during the last few days of the dig as all 13 post holes revealed *in situ* post-bases (Fig.4.9).



4.8: Locating the 13 larger postholes with ranging poles

4.9: One of the waterlogged post bases →



4.10: Excavating the posts by hand; the head first technique!



These, whilst exciting in themselves, being the rotted remains of the bases of probably every main post of this large timber frame building, turned out to be just the entrée as when trying to feel under one of the post

to record its depth another timber was felt to be lying flat beneath it and this one felt as if it

was carved! A decision was made to remove the fragmented post base to inspect the timber below which was thus verified as being a sawn timber with some form of carving and appeared quite robust. Careful excavation of the surrounding soils and river gravels was undertaken, mainly by bare hands at full arm stretch (Fig.4.10), until the timber could be lifted out safely without risk to its integrity.

The revealed artefact was indeed a carved beam end showing an ogival-shaped end with a possible lap joint for another timber and had been in a conclusively sealed Roman context (Fig4.11). Later another ogival-carved piece and a block from a heavy beam were also found whilst carrying out a total excavation of this posthole (PH9).



4.11: The very rare carved Roman timbers used as pads for the post in posthole number 9

Whilst the team knew that any site with waterlogged timbers is of great importance and that carved timbers from Roman sites are rare, particularly in Sussex, they were not fully aware of how rare these items were until being put in touch with Damian



Goodburn, an archaeological woodwork specialist, by the Museum of London. He confirmed that architectural moulded timbers of the Roman period are very rare. From a photograph he observed that one face has an odd sloping housing joint cut in it and that the overall form and apparent scale of the timber suggested it came from a relatively high status structure; but he

was unable to define what type of element it was. What we do know is that it became a pad for a post at some time during the 300 years of Roman activity in a bend of the River Ouse just south of Barcombe Mills. Was it just spolia, the reuse of recycled building material, or was there some more significant meaning in its use in providing closure for a previous structure and/or continuity with the new build? We shall never know but we can research its previous use providing we can find some relevant *comparanda*.

But that doesn't mean we can't start to speculate on what the 13 post holes might represent, for instance by firstly imagining them with posts rather than thin red and white ranging poles (Fig.4.12).

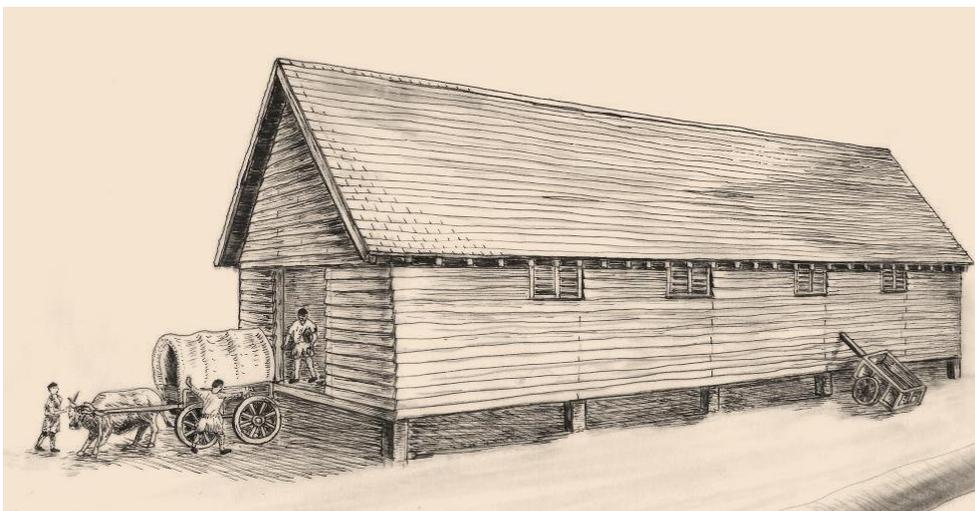


4.12: Photograph of site with 13 computer generated 'posts' added

But we can go a little further without totally losing credibility. The footprint of the 13 postholes at around 15 by 6 metres and the size of the posts at c.450mm diameter suggest that we are looking at a substantial building. The building would have been the same size and of a similar configuration (missing one end post only) as the early timber-phase building at Springhead, Kent, which although burnt down showed traces of burnt daub suggesting wattle and daub infilling for the walls (Andrews, 2008, p. 52)(*see end note). The Springfield site has been interpreted as religious but it seems much more likely that, with its location on the outskirts of the settlement close to river, the Bridge Farm building was either a barn or warehouse. Whilst evidence seems scarce in East Sussex, Kent can supply several closely comparable 14 post

buildings e.g. Westhawk, (building D) 14 x 7m, Thurnham, 15 x 7m, and Keston, 14.6 x 6.8m (Booth, 2008, p. 377), apart from Springhead, 15 x 6m; all of which have been dated loosely to mid/late 2nd century, with the exception of Keston which is more likely mid-1st to 2nd. These *comparanda* may give us an indication of the age of the Bridge Farm building although such buildings may be ubiquitous for the entirety of the Romano-British period.

We know the building was timber framed and apparently without a central post in the north east elevation, suggesting that this was possibly the main access point although a barn would more commonly be accessed mid-way up the long side elevations. The site yielded virtually no Roman tile, suggesting that any structure probably had a thatch or shingle roof; unless of course we postulate that a tiled roof was carefully removed for reuse elsewhere when the building was decommissioned. The predisposition of this ground to flood may suggest that any storage building would have been likely to have had a raised floor although such construction usually involved a mass of closely packed posts which is clearly not indicated in the archaeology here. Putting all this speculation together you arrive at a building that looked something like the sketch in figure 4.13, or alternatively many other equally viable reconstructions.



4.13: A sketch of how the 13-post building *might* have appeared if made of plank walls and shingle roof (after Alan Sorrell)

Six smaller post holes, all devoid of timbers, seem to form a smaller rectangle crossing the northern end of the thirteen-posts and possibly continuing beyond the SE trench edge. These were interpreted as representing a building of a different phase and the absence of any timbers suggested that this building predated the erecting of the 13 large posts; the construction of which necessitated the complete removal of any earlier timbers on the site. One intriguing question is whether this possible earlier building is the source of the ogival-

carved beams or did they come from a more nautical source as advocated by another CAP luminary?

CAP are now looking at a winter of post excavation analysis of the artefacts and features, as well as having a mountain of flotation residues awaiting the attention of tweezers and magnifying glasses. This will hopefully aid the initial interpretation and phasing of the possible activities on this part of the settlement before setting down to write the annual practical report. The directors are also embarking on their now regular round of presentations to local societies whilst developing plans for next year's excavation on this large and potentially nationally important site.

For more information on our current and future projects or information about CAP's activities over the last decade visit our website www.culverproject.co.uk.

**Subsequent reinterpretation of the temple building at Springfield has suggested that the 0.80m deep holes were for flint and mortar postpads contemporary with the stone walled phase (Andrews et al, 2011, p.61).*

Acknowledgements

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