

A RESCUE EXCAVATION

AT BRADING ROMAN VILLA COACH PARK,

ISLE OF WIGHT.

by KEVIN TROTT B.A.

with contributions from :

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## SUMMARY

A late Iron Age and Early Roman ditch with a possible circular sunken potters' clamp, was briefly uncovered during construction work for a new coach and car park on an area known locally as the "Middle Paddock". Other features included three possible late Iron Age round houses, and a Pre-Flavian oven.

During construction work on a small path connecting the villa with the new car park, a small portion of the villa's courtyard wall was uncovered, in association with a fourth masonry building dated to around A.D. 300-370.

The final major feature to be uncovered on the coach park site was an alignment of chalk-packed post-holes dated to the last quarter of the 4th-Century or post-Roman period.

## LOCATION

Brading Roman villa is situated at (SZ 60000 86300) the south east end of a central chalk downland ridge that crosses the Isle of Wight (fig 1) .

The villa complex is situated on light sandy soil's derived from the ferruginous sands of the Lower Greensand series. This villa complex overlooks the junction of the river Yar and Brading Haven. This Haven above Brading was still navigable up until the middle of the 13th-Century when a causeway was constructed to reclaim the land for agricultural use.

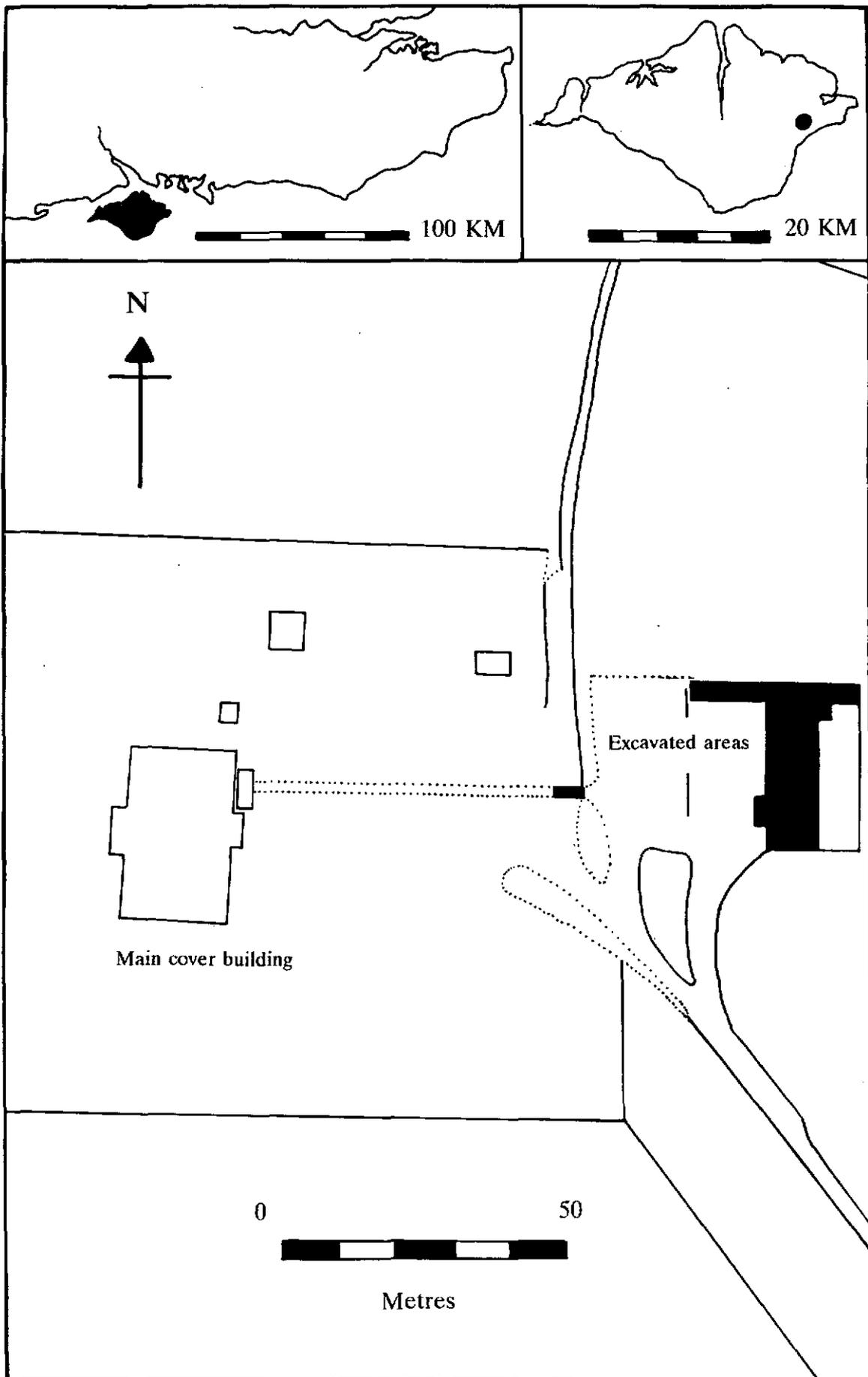


FIG 1. Brading Roman Villa location & plan of the investigated area's

## THE EXCAVATION

During the early part of March 1997 construction work began on an area known as the "Middle Paddock". Within this area Scheduled Monument consent had been obtained for the construction of a large planned coach and car park.

The planned brief stated that a layer of soil should protect any archaeology that survived within this area. A site visit made by English Heritage Inspector Dr. Steven Trow and County Archaeologist Dr. David Tomalin noted that a series of archaeological features were exposed during scraping activities from a mechanical excavator (fig 2).

At this site meeting it was decided that the exposed area should be hand trowelled where the protective topsoil had been removed. Any clipped archaeological features should be cleaned and recorded but not excavated to any depth.

This report deals with the excavated features and the material found during excavation from the coach park. As work continued two further features were exposed during the mechanical removal of topsoil for a pathway leading from the main villa towards the carpark, this again was hand trowelled and sample sections were examined to collect dateable material.

## METHOD OF EXCAVATION

An area 18 x 2 square metres was hand trowelled with in the northern part of the coach park. The area produced a an array of Roman ceramics and five features. The major feature encountered was the top fill of a ditch (8301) and part of an alignment of chalk packed posts (8309).

The next section to be trowelled and recorded ran southwards (15 x 5.5 square metres) across an area where more chalk packed post holes were observed. This area again produced a number of early features and archaeological objects.

When the recording of each feature was completed using a 1 x 1 metre planning frame, each feature and individual find was measured in using an Total Station Theodolite. The next stage involved covering individual features with soil and then a patch of Terram, over this went another layer of soil and the whole coach park area was sealed with a single layer of Terram, above this fine crushed chalk was laid before a rubble hard-core was used for the coach park foundation layer.

The pathway leading from the villa was also protected with soil and a double layer of Terram.

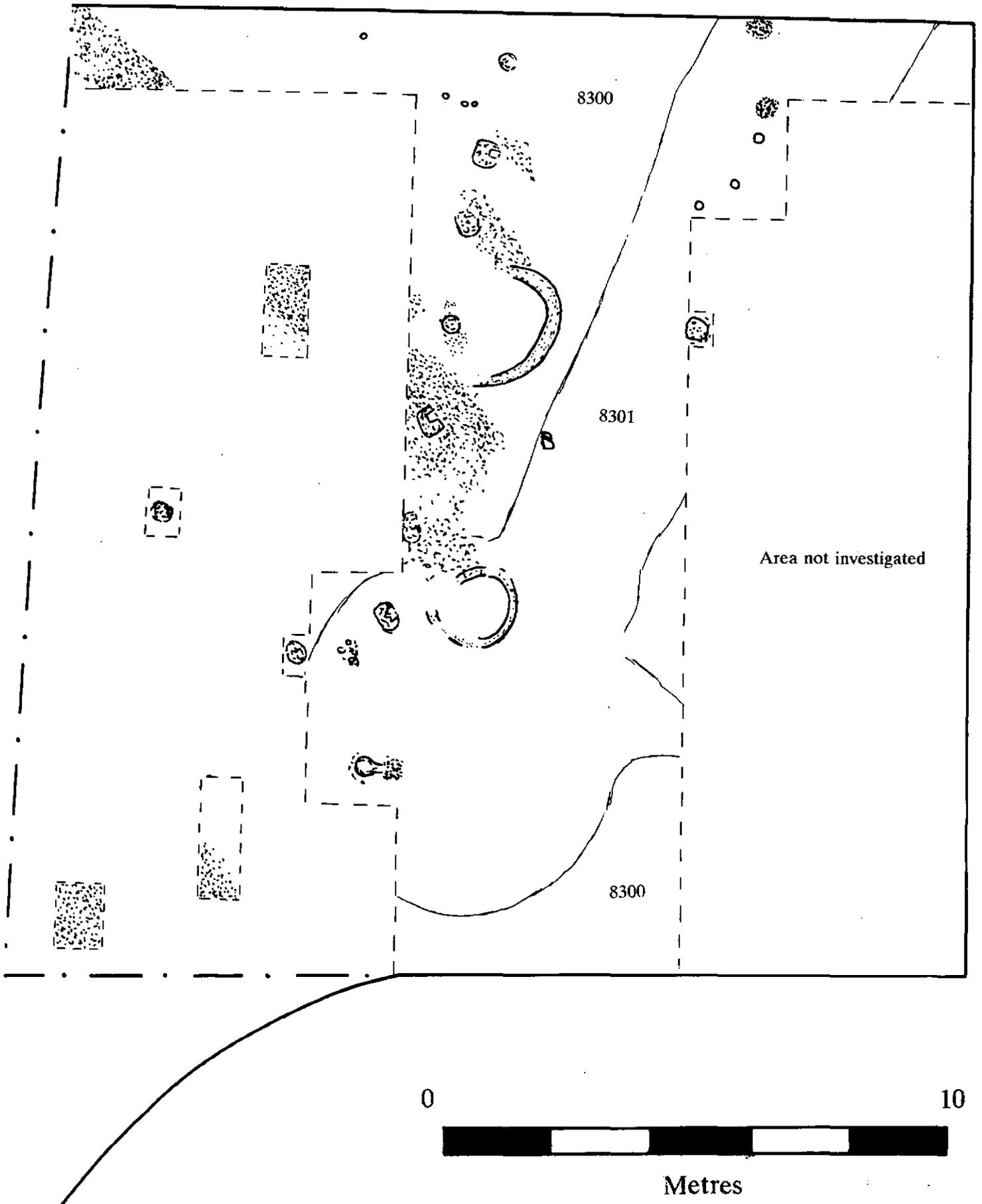


FIG 2. Plan of the overall features found on the coach / car park area

## THE PHASING OF THE FEATURES BENEATH THE CAR PARK AREA

### Phase 1

The earliest activity on the site of the coach park was a disturbed scatter of Late Neolithic - Early Bronze Age flint work comprising of waste flakes and retouched flakes and a single end scraper. All these flints were found within Iron Age and Roman layers and must be residual (fig 12).

### Phase 2

The second period of occupation at Brading (fig 3) was represented with a ditch and a circular terminal (8301). The top fill of the ditch contained fragments of late Iron Age pottery and prehistoric lithics.

The circular terminal produced a scatter of partially complete pots (8322). Augering around this feature revealed at 25cm a burnt sandy hard clay with a charcoal layer. This feature may have been a local Vectensian potters clamp, producing the local pottery vessels known as Vectis ware. The pottery from this feature could have been the remains of a waster heap.

Above the fill of 8301 a short arc of post-holes was recorded (8306, 8307, 8308). This arc was extended by two circular burnt ?post-holes (8302, 8305) providing a conjectured circle 6.5 metres in diameter. This feature with two circular gullies 8303 & 8312 presents the possibility of a Late Iron Age round house and two ancillary structures some 3 and 2 metres in diameter. These might be compared with those found at Danebury Hillfort and Houghton Down in Hampshire (Cunliffe. B. 1994 & 1995). The final feature was a small oven (8318) built into the circular terminal of the ditch (8301), The pottery from the fill and fragments of building material suggest a Pre-Flavian date for this structure.

### Phase 3

A trench running from the villa towards the carpark (fig 5) exposed the lower foundations for the courtyard wall and the rear wall and floor of an associated building. This is attributed to the formal development of the villa in the 3rd-4th century AD.

The courtyard wall (8327) measured 62cm wide separated by an eavesdrip gully (8328) for the rear roof of an internal courtyard building (8330).

A single feature on the Coach park site (fig 6) was represented by a tesserae and combed flue tile packed post-hole (8310).

#### Phase 4

A single alignment of chalk-packed post-holes was recorded running north to south across the coach park area (fig's 7 & 8). Each post-hole was capable of holding a timber up to 30cm in diameter and each post was spaced around 2 metre intervals. Only seven post-holes were observed in the excavated area. There is a good chance a few more may survive under the grass field to the north.

#### Phase 5

Two spreads of gravel were located in the south west corner of the site (8323) and running from the north west towards the centre of the site (8324). Spread 8323 produced Medieval pottery. Spread 8324 remains undated.

#### Phase 6

A generous scatter of post-medieval pottery was scattered over the site. This possibly derives from manuring from the nearby manor of Morton.

## THE MATERIAL EVIDENCE

### Exterior of the ditch and stripped surface : 8300

This context comprised the exposed surface across the western part of the site west of the perceived ditch. This surface had been damaged by stripping from the excavator, and some sherds were apparently disturbed. Some sherds from this context might be attributed to cultivation during the later period of the villa's occupation.

### The top fill of a broad ditch and its circular terminal : 8301

This was the principal feature in the stripped area. The fill was not investigated but augering revealed a ditch approximately 2 metres deep and some 3.5 metres wide. Its circular terminal seemed to broaden into an area some 6.2 metres in diameter. This was augered to a depth of 25 cm.

In 1994 a magnetometer survey was carried out over this ditch by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory. The results produced a very high reading in the vicinity of the terminal. It seems possible that this reading may have been influenced by the conjecture potters clamp-kiln and oven.

### Burnt circular hollows : 8302 & 8305 Post-holes : 8306, 8307, 8308

It is possible that these features are all contemporary with each other and that they form a small portion of the disturbed circular structure dug into the fill of 8301. The three post-holes were all packed with flint and Greensand rubble and Late Iron Age pottery fragments.

The two burnt circular hollows or scoops filled with charcoal did not produce any artefacts but they might represent two burnt door posts leading into a possible round house of late Iron Age character.

### Two circular drainage gullies : 8303 & 8312

Structure 8303 was situated towards the west of 8301. This was a badly eroded feature which was just visible. It possibly enclosed an area of 3-4 metres. The drainage gully produced Late Iron Age pottery and twelve fragments of daub.

Structure 8312 survived better than 8303, It was built over the fill of the circular terminal of the broad ditch. The gully enclosed an area of 2 metres, and the pottery from the near complete drainage gully produced Late Iron Age and Early Roman pottery.

Both structures 8303 & 8312 are good candidates for Late Iron Age round buildings, it is a pity that the site has suffered from ploughing and that this has resulted in the destruction of all traces of the timber slots within the area surrounded by the drainage gullies.

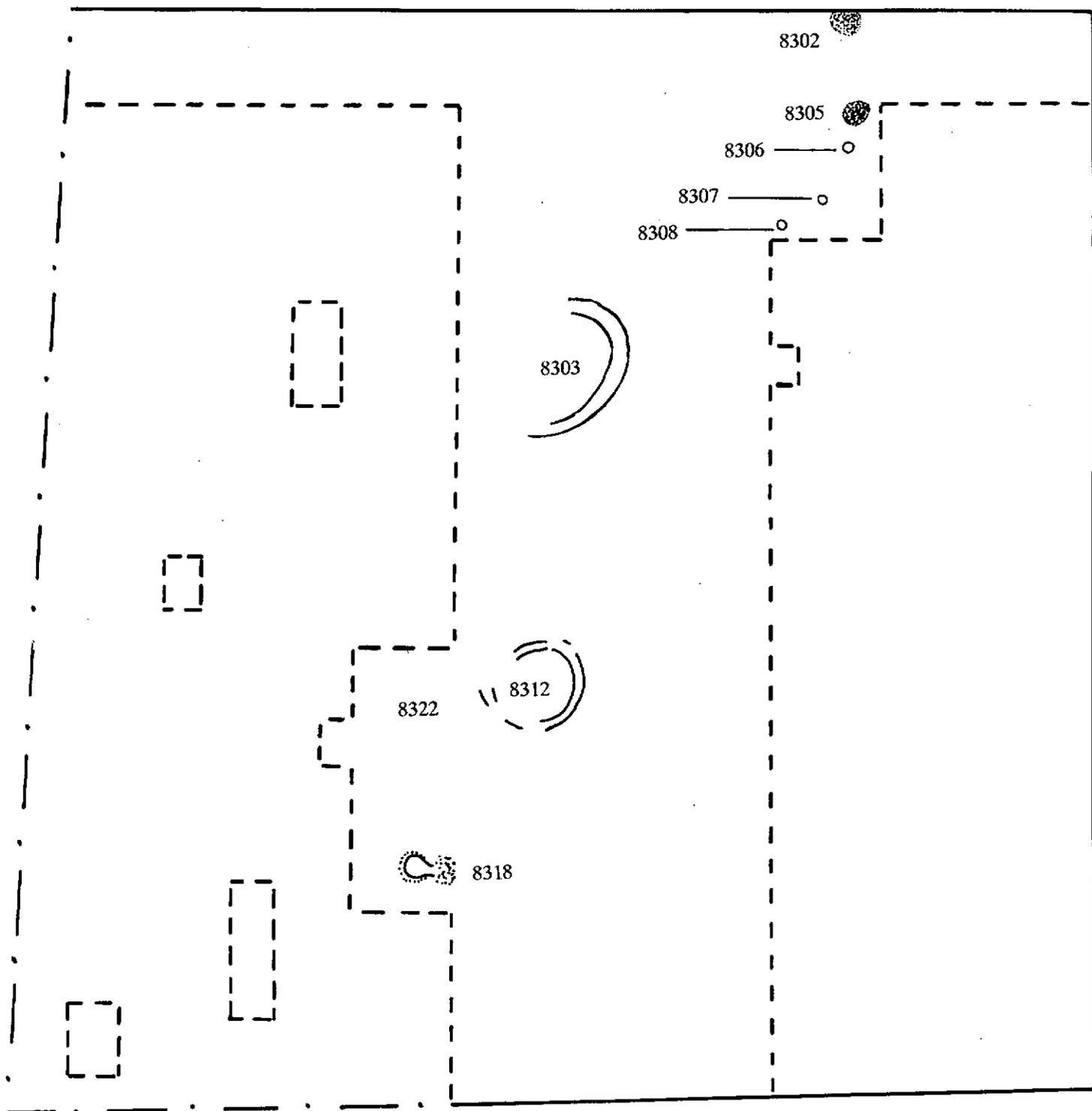
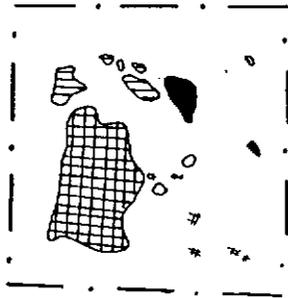


FIG 3. The Late Iron Age and pre-Flavian features



8306



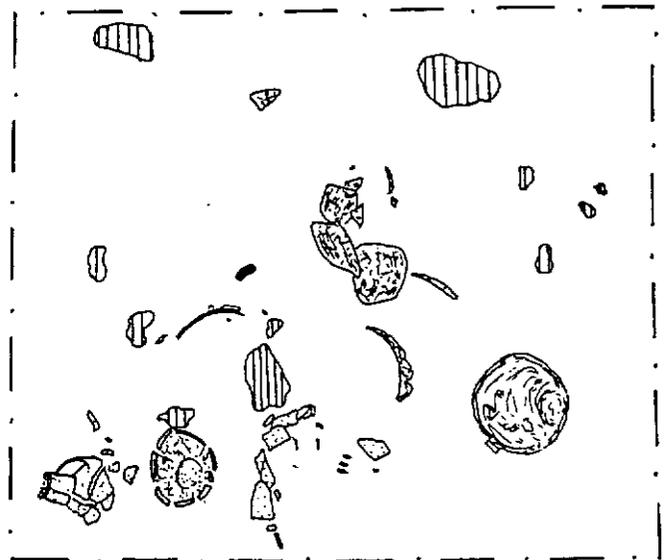
8307



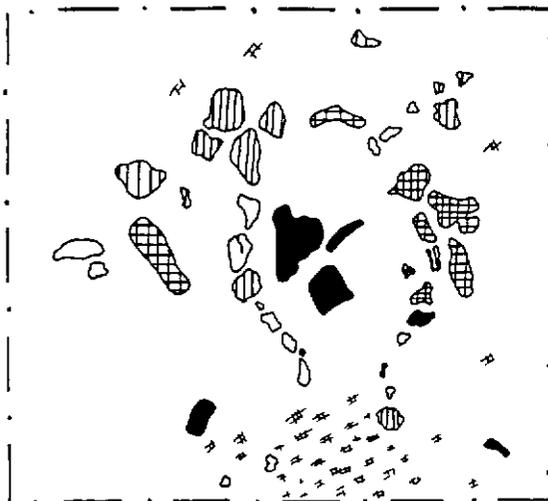
8308



8302



8322



8318

FIG 4. Surface sections of the Late Iron Age and pre-Flavian features

#### Stake-holes : 8311

Four small stake-holes were recorded to the northern end of the site. It is unclear of their date but the proximity to feature 8309 may be contemporary.

#### Small oven 8318

A small circular oven built from flint nodules and Greensand was set into the upper fill of the circular terminal of the broad ditch. The oven was served by a substantial stoking pit filled with large quantities of charcoal. The fill of the oven contained early Roman pottery and ceramic building material.

#### Post-hole : 8310

A compact area in the top fill of the broad ditch (8301) produced a small assemblage of combed flue tile and tesserae. These materials were contained within the top filling of a square filled post-hole housing a timber some 30 cm in diameter. The dating of this feature was indicated by a single body sherd of New Forest Greyware contained within the fill. This suggests a date ranging from the late 3rd century to the mid 4th century.

#### Chalk block : 8321

A single broken chalk block was found between the post alignment and ditch fill. Its function is unclear and the only finds from above this were small sherds of Roman Vectis ware.

#### Chalk packed post-hole alignment : 8309, 8313, 8314, 8315, 8316, 8317 & 8332

A prominent feature within the stripped area was an alignment of seven post-holes running on a north to south axis. Post-hole 8309 had traces of a timber void 0.103m in diameter. Likewise post-hole 8313 had a rectangular void of 0.40 x 0.25m. Post-hole 8315 had a squared timber void of 0.30 x 0.305m and finally post-hole 8316 was again rectangular 0.201 x 0.30m square. In the remainder it was not possible to identify any further timber voids within the chalk packing.

#### Post-holes : 8319, 8320

Two flint filled post-holes were found running at a north west angle from the end of the chalk packed post alignment. No dateable material was recovered except a well eroded piece of combed flue tile in the top fill of post-hole 8319.

#### Two gravel spread paths : 8323 & 8324

Two compacted gravel spreads were observed on the stripped area. 8323 was situated within the south west corner and contained 13th-century pottery fragments. Gravel spread 8324 was traced at a south

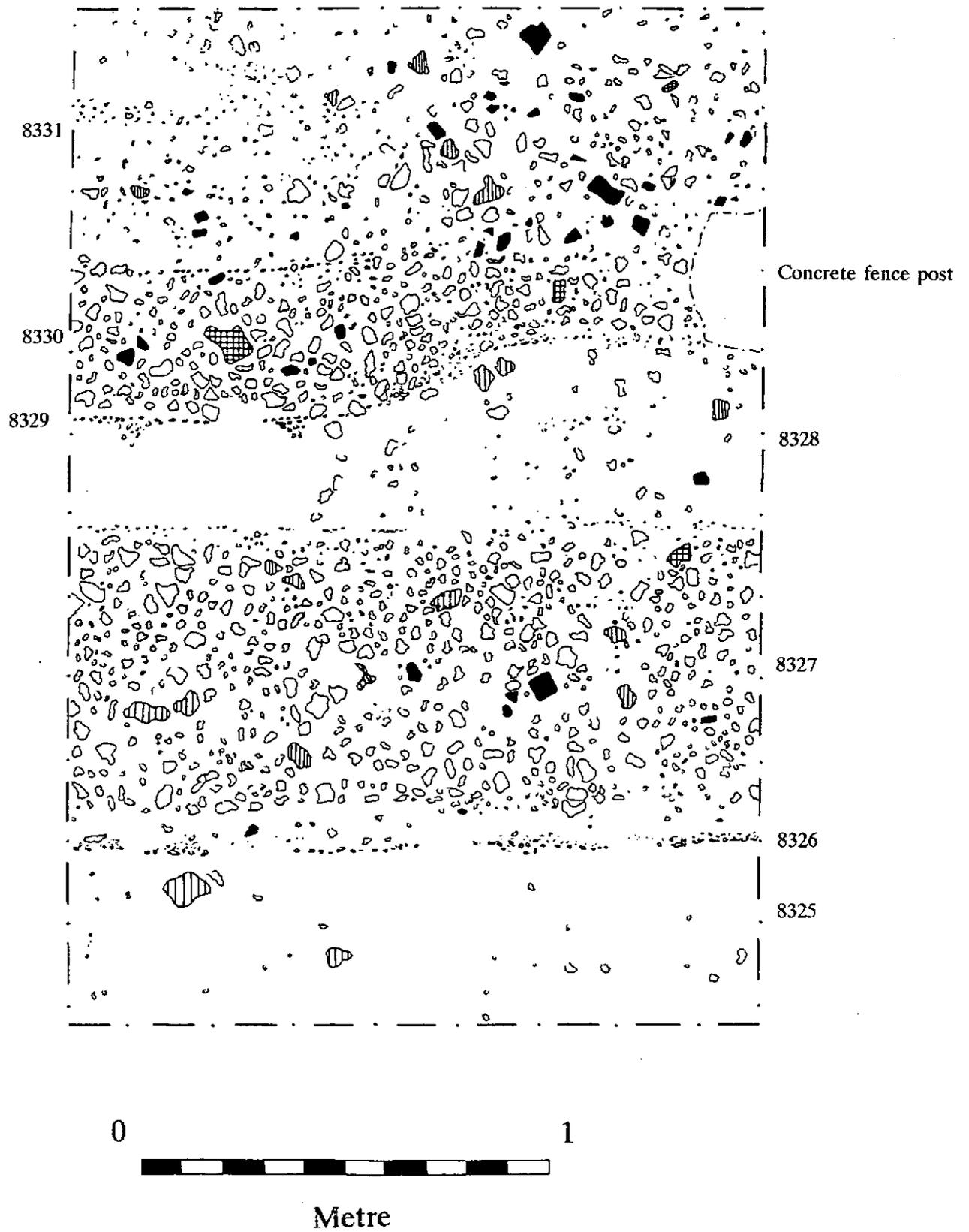


FIG 5. The late Fourth-century courtyard wall and internal building

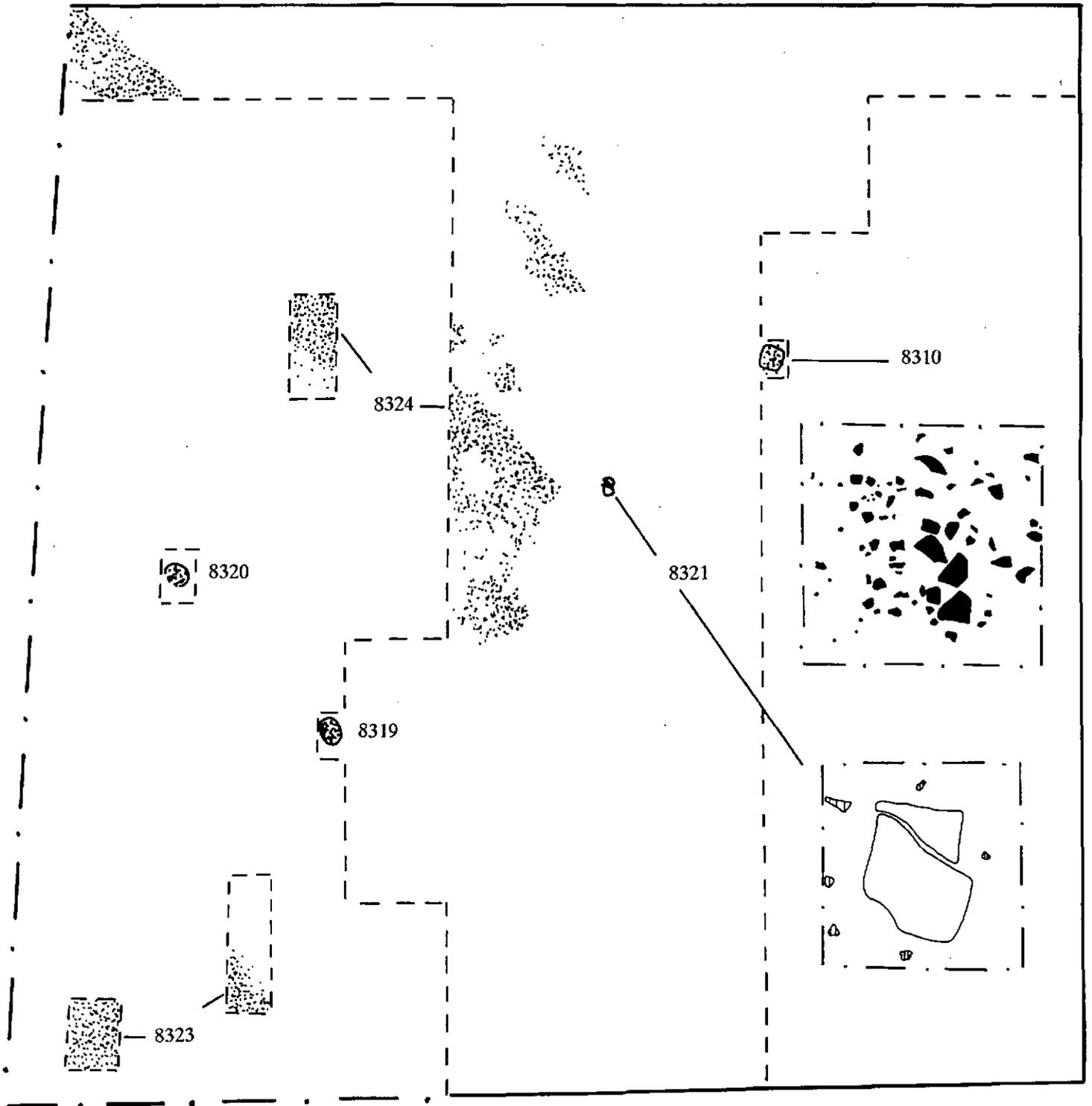


FIG 6. Surface sections of miscellaneous features on the stripped area

east angle towards the chalk packed alignment. No dateable material was found but it could be contemporary with gravel spread 8323.

The courtyard wall : 8327 The Foundation trench : 8326

Two footings of a substantial wall 60.5 cm thick were recorded running across the pathway trench. This comprised of tightly rammed chalk laid within a foundation trench 0.67m wide. The upper courses of this courtyard wall are uncertain but moderate quantities of mortared flints within the spoil from this area may betray its nature. Roman pottery built into the wall and from the foundation trench suggest a phase 3 date for this feature.

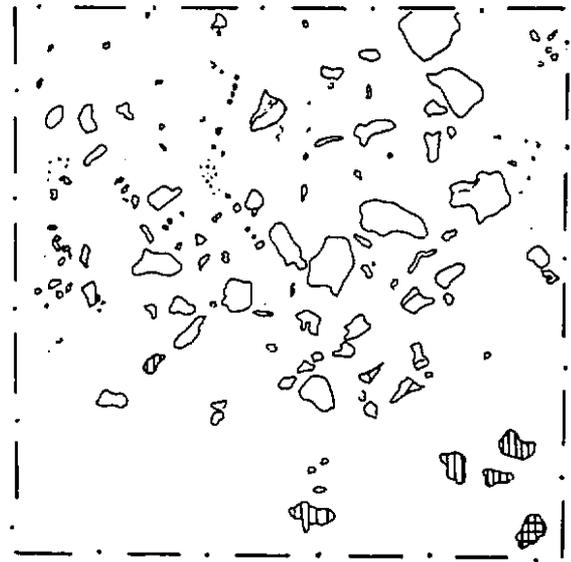
Foundation trench : 8329 Internal wall of courtyard building : 8330

A second wall 0.30m thick was seen running parallel with the courtyard wall. It was separated by an evesdrip gully (8328). Like the courtyard wall, only a trench-built footing had survived. This was composed of flint and Greensand rubble interspersed with layers of tightly rammed chalk. Within the building a demolition layer was encountered, This was composed of mortared flints and ceramic building tile. The nature of this rear wall is uncertain but it is attributed to an internal facing building. The fallen mortared flints within this structure suggests that the wall was composed, at least in part, of masonry.





8309



8313



8314



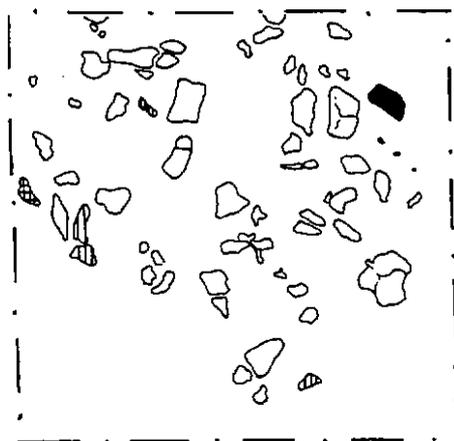
8315



8316



8317



8332

FIG 8. Surface sections of the chalk-packed post-hole alignment

# THE POTTERY

By Malcolm Lyne

## Introduction

Amounts of pottery recovered are small (2417 gm.) because of the necessarily superficial nature of the excavation. Nevertheless, there are a few small stratified assemblages which supply key dating evidence for some of the various structures of Iron Age to Fourth-century date which were encountered.

## Methodology

Fabrics were identified macroscopically using a x8 lens with built in scale to determine the size of the various inclusions. Quantification by numbers and weight of sherds per fabric was carried out for all assemblages, but in practice the various assemblages are so small as to make any quantification system unreliable.

## The Late Iron Age / Early Roman fabrics

The excavation is particularly important in that it supplies us with the first stratified pottery assemblages with fabrics of Late Iron Age type from Brading, although the majority of these assemblages date to the earliest years of the Roman occupation of the site.

Because of the potential importance of these early assemblages in understanding the origins of the indigenous Vectis ware, the early fabric variants are dealt with in considerable detail here. The following local fabrics were distinguished:

1. Handmade fabric with profuse up-to 2.00mm. grey and white calcined flint and fired black.
2. Handmade fabric with profuse up-to 2.00mm. grey and white calcined flint and profuse up-to 0.20mm. multi-coloured quartz. Fired black.
3. Handmade fabric with profuse subangular up-to 0.30mm. multi-coloured subangular quartz and sparse up to 2.00mm. calcined flint. Fired black.
4. Handmade fabric with profuse subangular up-to 0.50mm. multi-coloured quartz, sparse angular up-to 0.50mm. White-patinated flint grit and very sparse shell flecks. Fired black.
5. Handmade fabric with profuse subangular up-to 0.30mm. multi-coloured subangular quartz. fired black.
6. ?Wheel turned fabric with profuse up-to 0.20mm. subangular colourless quartz. Fired black.
7. Handmade fabric with profuse subangular up-to 0.50mm. colourless quartz and sparse up-to 1.50mm.

soft, red, ferrous inclusions. Fired grey-brown to black.

8. Handmade fabric with profuse up-to 0.10mm. quartz, sparse up-to 0.75mm. subangular white quartz and sparse rounded, black ferrous inclusions. Fired buff-brown.

9. Soapy grey-black fabric with moderate up-to 0.75mm. rounded soft buff grog inclusions. Fired buff-brown.

Fabrics 1 and 2 are in the Early Iron to Middle Iron Age potting tradition and fabric 3 seems to be transitional between that tradition and Vectis ware variants and in most cases continue in use until the fourth century. Fabric 4 makes use of beach sand filler and probably originated on a coastal production site.

#### The Iron Age / Early Roman assemblages

The earliest feature identified on the site appears to be the broad ditch and its circular terminal feature (8301). The fill of this feature was not penetrated to any significant degree and as a result only 10 sherds of pottery were recovered. This pottery consists entirely of Vectis ware fragments and includes two intrusive everted rim fragments of second-to-third century character, probably pushed in during machine scraping.

Some of the features dug into the upper surface of the ditch fill produced small pottery assemblages of late Iron Age-to-Early Roman character.

Gully (8312) produced 16 sherds of pottery in a wide variety of fabrics. There is 1 sherd each in Fabrics 1, 3, 6, 8 and 9 and 5 each in Fabrics 5 and 7. A burnt whiteware sherd is also present and probably comes from a pre-Flavian flagon imported from North-eastern Gaul. All but one of the pieces are featureless body sherds from closed forms.

No. 1. Bead or stubby everted rim in black Fabric 5, probably from a jar of Tomalin Form 10 (1987, Fig. A15) dated to the late first and early second centuries. *8312.6*

Small oven (8318) produced 20 sherds of pottery (156gm.), comprising 2 sherds in Fabric 4, 13 sherds in Fabric 5, 1 sherd each in Fabrics 6, 7 and 8, 1 sherd in miscellaneous grey ware and flagon body sherd in very-fine cream fabric. All but one of the sherds in Fabric 5 are black-surfaced and include the following pieces:

No. 2. Lid rim in buff-brown Vectis ware Fabric 5 fired rough black (Tomalin Form 28 (1987) dated to the first and second centuries). Ext. rim diameter 160mm. *8318.3*.

No. 3. Fragment from another lid in buff-brown Fabric 7 fired rough black but with two rim edge grooves. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. 8318.4.

No. 4. Rim from bowl or dish in rough black Fabric 5 with lid-seating groove. Ext. rim diameter 200mm. This type is not in Tomalin's corpus and differs from late-3rd-early-4th century Vectis ware incipient-beaded-and-flanged bowls in having a squared-off rim edge and well-defined lid-seating groove. 8318.15.

The scatter of partially complete pots (8322).

These vessels were exposed by machine scraping but could not unfortunately be lifted. Fabric samples were, however, taken and the pots drawn in situ.

No. 5. Lower part of pear-shaped jar or flagon in grey Fabric 5 fired brown-black with buff-to-reddish-brown margins. 8322.1.

No. 6. Lower part of another flagon of more squat proportions, in rough, grey-black Fabric 5 with buff-to-reddish-brown margins. 8322.2.

No. 7. Strainer in reddish-brown Vectis ware Fabric 5 fired flecky brown-black. Ext. rim diameter 140mm. 8322.3.

No. 8. Flagon in dirty-grey Vectis ware Fabric 7 and of Tomalin Form 29 (1987). The type is rare and known from Redcliff and Combley in the east of the Island. A further example has recently been recovered from Grange Chine in the south-west of the Island. The Redcliff examples are dated to the Late-first-early-second centuries. Redcliff is a coastal salt manufacturing site not far from Brading and it may be that the flagon was manufactured there. The flagon handle is tenoned into the body of the vessel in a similar manner to BB1 examples. Ext. rim diameter 75mm. 8322.5.

There was also part of another Vectis ware jar or flagon base. 8322.4.

The pot scatter lay just under the surface of the fill of the circular feature at the southern end of the broad ditch. Auguring of this sandy fill to a depth of 25cm. met with a layer of burnt sandy clay overlain by a thin seam of charcoal and sand. It is possible that the circular feature is a sunken potters' clamp base and that the exposed pots were just the top of a scatter of wasters on its surface. Set against the latter notion is the fact that the flagon is in a different fabric to the others and photographs taken of the pots in situ show no sign of discolouration and spalling normally associated with wasters.

Post-holes (8306, 8307 & 8308) in the fill of the broad ditch produced further small amounts of pottery

of first century character. Post-hole 8306 produced just one sherd of Vectis ware Fabric 5 and Post-hole 8307 had one sherd each of Fabrics 5 and 7. Post-hole 8308 had four sherds including a fragment from a *Gauloise* type amphorae in soft cream fabric fired pink and a small chip of Fabric 7. There were also two rim fragments of first-century character:

No. 9. Bead-rim jar in dirty-grey Vectis ware Fabric 5 fired rough flecky-brown-black with orange margins (Tomalin Form 9, dated to the late-first century). Ext. rim diameter 220mm. *8308.4*.

No. 10. Bead-rim from a small jar in Durotrigian Black burnished ware. ?Ext. rim diameter. *8308.3*.

Gully (8303) to the west of the broad ditch produced a mere 8 sherds of pottery (160gm.) made up of one body sherd in Fabric 4 and the following:

No. 11. Six joining sherds from a high pedestal base in grey Fabric 6 fired black with brown margins (Tomalin Form 3, dated to the immediately pre-Roman Iron Age and pre-Flavian period). *8303.4*.

No. 12. Fragment from the basal foot-ring of a ?globular jar in similar fabric and of similar date. *8303.5*.

#### The late Roman assemblages

The section through the villa courtyard wall and building immediately inside it, made when the path from the car park was laid, produced useful ceramic dating evidence for these structures.

#### The courtyard wall (8327) and its foundation trench (8326).

The wall foundation trench produced two sherds from a Hampshire Grog-tempered ware cooking-pot, five sherds from two New Forest greyware everted rim cooking-pots and the rim from a BB1 beaded-and-flanged bowl.

No. 13. Rim from a developed beaded-and-flanged bowl in black BB1 with weak bead and stubby flange and external wipe marks. Ext. rim diameter 220mm. *8326.1*.

No. 14. Everted rim from a cooking-pot in coarse New Forest grey ware with up-to 0.50mm. quartz and ferrous inclusions. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. *8326.2*.

The presence of the grog-tempered and New Forest greyware sherds indicates that this section of wall at least was constructed after c.AD. 260. The BB1 bowl rim, with its lack of burnished decoration and stubby flange would further indicate a date sometime after 300 and possibly as late as the middle of the fourth century. An identical BB1 rim came from the 330-370 dated occupation debris dumped in the phase A ditch of Bokerly Dyke (Rahtz 1963, Fig. 10-41) and other examples from the Worgret

kilns were dated to the later fourth-century onwards (Hearne 1992, Fig. 14-53, p.79).

The wall itself produced a further 10 sherds (258gm), of which five are from New Forest greyware jars and four from Hampshire grog-tempered ware closed forms. The tenth fragment is from a cooking-pot in Vectis ware Fabric 7 and is probably residual in its context. The grog-tempered ware sherds include the following piece:

No. 15. Everted rim from a handmade cooking-pot in grey-black fabric with profuse up-to 3.00mm. subangular white siltstone grog. Ext. rim diameter 100mm. 8327.7.

This material supports the post-300 dating for the wall given by the sherds from its foundation trench.

The floor of the building (8331) and the fill of its external evesdrip gully (8328).

The floor produced 66 sherds (456gm) of pottery, most of which is very broken up. The sherds also have a very wide date range, extending from the Late Iron Age to the fourth century, and are probably a mixture of pre-building occupation debris and pottery associated with the use of the building. The pieces include a sherd of the early Fabric 3, another from an early third century Moselkeramik beaker, seven sherds of Hampshire Grog-tempered ware, three sherds of East Gaulish Samian and four sherds of New Forest greyware. The bulk of the rest of the pottery consists of first-to-third-century sherds of Vectis ware. None of this material is particularly useful for dating the building.

The pottery from the evesdrip gully (8328) is more useful for such dating. Forty mainly large and fresh-looking sherds (386gm) came from the feature and include the following pieces:

No. 16. New Forest greyware everted-rim cooking-pot with black slip on the shoulder and top of rim. Ext. rim diameter 200mm. 8328.3.

No. 17. Deep straight-sided bowl/dish rim in black Hampshire Grog-tempered ware. Ext. rim diameter 160mm. 8328.7.

White and black-slipped New Forest cooking-pot sherds are indicative of the fact that some at least of the occupation of the building dates to before AD. 350, as the Portchester evidence suggests that use of white/black firing slip on New Forest greyware cooking-pots phased out after that date (Fulford 1975, 100). The Hampshire grog-tempered ware dish is of a type more current before 370 than after that date, when deep convex-sided forms made their appearance. A Vectis ware sherd may be residual, but if not it would also have to be earlier than the end of the industry during the mid-fourth century. On this basis a date range of c.AD. 300-370 might be suggested for the life of the building with the

proviso that the absence of later pottery does not necessarily mean that occupation did not continue after that date.

#### Miscellaneous feature assemblages

##### The chalk-packed post-hole alignment (8309, 8313, 8314, 8315, 8316, 8317 and 8332)

Only post-holes 8309 and 8315 produced any pottery. The chalk packing of post-hole 8309 produced three sherds including a chip of BB1 and a fragment of Late grog-tempered ware with white siltstone grog. The packing of post-hole 8315 also produced three sherds including two abraded sherds of Vectis ware. These sherds indicate that the post alignment is <sup>no</sup> earlier in date than the last quarter of the fourth century and could well be post-Roman.

##### The gravel spread paths (8323 and 8324)

The three sherds of pottery from the gravel spread 8323 include a medieval flagon sherd with splashed green glaze and indicate a 13th-century or later date for the feature. Gravel spread 8324 had no pottery associated with it at all.

##### Occupation inside the ditched enclosure (8300)

This unstratified context produced 53 comminuted sherds of pottery, ranging in date from the Iron Age to the 18th century. None of the sherds are drawable, but show occupation throughout the Roman period. Of particular interest are two sherds of grey-black 'chaff-tempered' pottery fragments of fifth-to-seventh-century date, these sherds were found in a small hollow contemporary with the chalk-packed post alignment, this indicates Early / Middle Saxon occupation on this site. The 14 medieval and post-medieval sherds are probably the result of field-marling.

There were also 21 fragments of fired clay, which may be derived from the pot-firing area beneath context 8301.

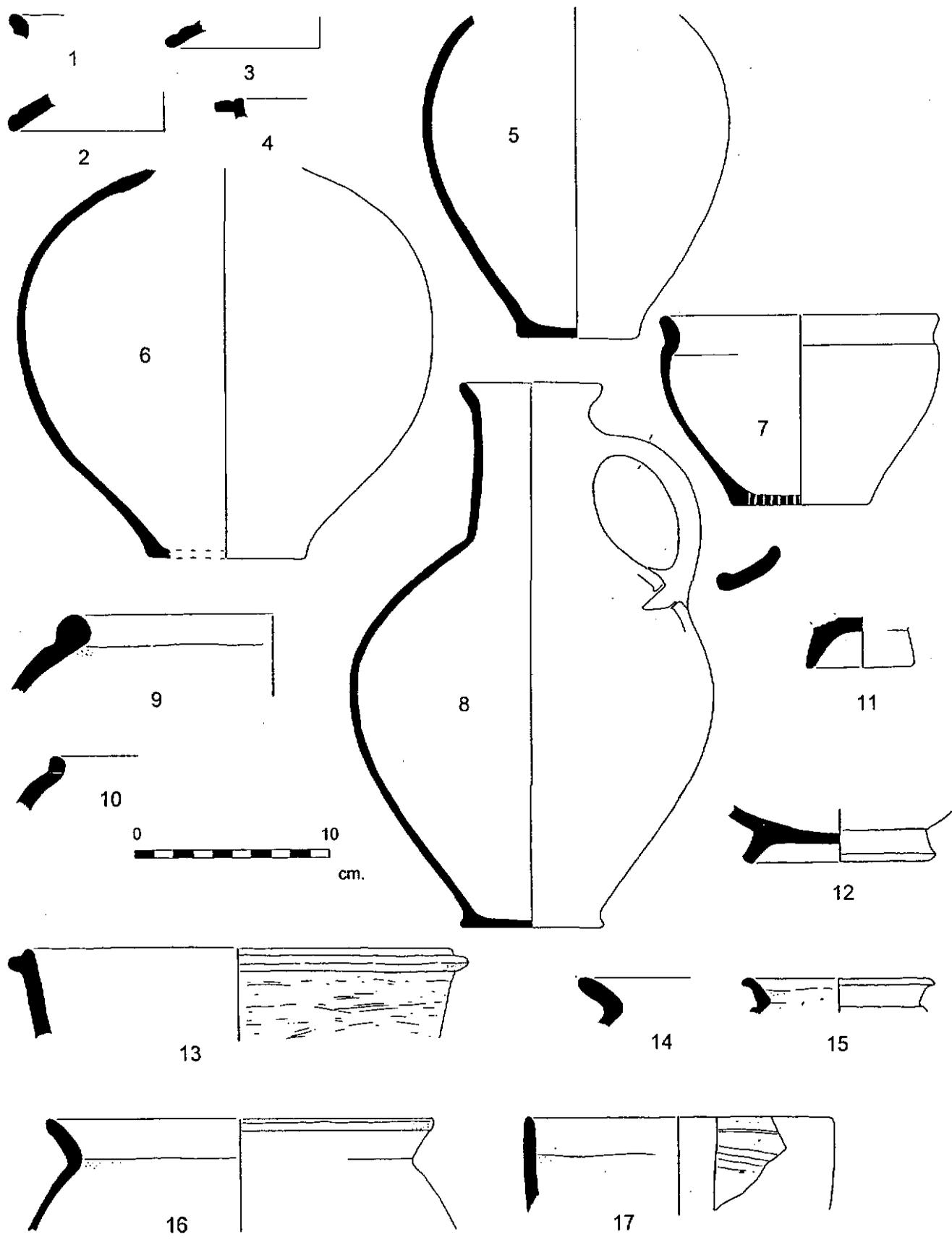


FIG 9. The Roman Pottery

## THE ROMAN TILE

During the excavation at Brading a relatively small quantity of tile (4.674kg) was found. This consisted of ceramic roof tile (*tegulae* and *imbrices*), flue tile (*tubulus* and *voussoir*) floor tile and *tessarae* cubes.

The study of this tile collection using a x-2 magnification has indicated that there are six classified types of tile represented at Brading.

### Roof Tile

Both *tegulae* and *imbrices* could each be classified into four types. The fabrics all look similar to other tiles found on the island and without further analysis we can only speculate whether the tiles were made locally.

Unfortunately only the fragmented face panels survived from the *tegulae* on this site, but the fabrics and firing techniques indicate ten tiles were present.

A similar pattern to the *tegulae* could be seen with the *imbrices*. The only identifiable gable end from a mortared *imbrex* was located within 8331.

### Flue Tile

Sixteen combed fragments of box-flue tile was obtained from the site, and with this collection a single combed face panel from a *voussoir* was found in the fill of 8318.

Careful examination of the flue-tiles has indicated that the small collection was made from five fabrics.

The combed designs on the flue-tiles were so fragmented that only a few width measurements of the combs could be taken, of the limited combed designs, comb widths ranged from 32mm to 0.8mm.

### Floor Tile

Four small fragments of hypocaust tile or bricks were recovered from the area. All three fragments were made from fabric type 2 and the remainder from fabric type 4.

The sizes and thickness (22cm) of these tiles conforms to Vectensian sizes of either *lydion*, *pedalis* or *bessalis* described in detail by Tomalin (1987, 100).

### Unclassified Tile

Twenty-one small fragments of unclassified tile was found scattered across the site during excavation.

### Tessarae

Twenty cubed pieces of tile was obtained from a single feature associated with combed flue-tile (8310).

The feature was not penetrated to any degree and only twenty fragments were obtained as a sample. Two small cubed Greensand tesserae was found within feature 8331, the size of these two pieces suggests they come from a mosaic than a tessalated floor.

### Conclusion

The tile from Brading was too small to make a reliable case-study although the quantity of tile from around the internal courtyard building suggests this was roofed in *tegulae* and *imbrices*. The small tile filled post-hole (8310) situated under the coach park is probably contemporary with the floors within the main west building.

Three small abraded post-medieval peg-tile fragments were found within the topsoil of the coach park and are probably modern.

### Type 1

Sandy course fabric Colour : Munsell 4/3 5YR reddish brown & 5/6 2.5 YR red

Abundant quartz sand. Sub-angular / Sub-rounded grains mainly less than 0.1-0.3mm with moderate scatter of larger grains up to 0.6mm.

Flint : Small angular inclusions of white flint mostly 0.1-0.2mm across.

Iron-Oxides : abundant scatter of angular pellets of dark brown ferruginous ironstone, mostly 0.3-0.7mm diameter.

This fabric is limited to a three *imbrex* fragments from 8325, 8328. and 8331.

### Type 2

Sandy fabric Colour : Munsell 6/6 2.5YR light red.

Abundant quartz sand with sub-angular grains mainly 0.1-0.4mm.

Iron Oxides : Moderate scatter of elongated dark brown pellets of ferruginous ironstone mostly 0.2-0.4mm in diameter although a sparse collection can range up to 0.8mm in this fabric.

Clay Tabular argillaceous inclusions : These tabular inclusions dominate this fabric and some rounded argillaceous pellets can measure up to 1.2mm diameter.

This fabric dominates the Brading site and can be found in features : 8302, 8305, 8310, 8318, 8325, 8328 and 8331.

### Type 3

Very sandy fabric Colour : Munsell 5/8 2.5YR red.

Very fine well sorted sand (0.1-0.2mm)

Inclusions : Fine streaks of whitish cream clay with 5% small rounded tabular argillaceous clay pellets (0.1-0.3mm across).

This fabric is found in five features : 8300, 8318, 8319,8325 and 8331.

#### Type 4

Sandy course fabric Colour : Munsell 6/6 5YR redish yellow.

This fabric has a small assemblage of rounded clay tabular pellets and streaks of whitish clay.

Iron Oxides : Abundant grains of ferruginous inclusions up to 0.1mm across.

This fabric is limited to three fragments from features 8318 and 8325.

#### Type 5

Smooth clayey fabric Colour : Munsell 6/4 5YR light reddish brown.

This fabric has a sparse collection of sub-angular sandy quartz grains (0.2-0.6mm across) and has a transparent colour to the grains.

There are traces of small flecks of ferruginous inclusions on the surface but no trace can be seen in the freshly broken sections.

This fabric was found in features 8300 and 8302.

#### Type 6

Hard sandy fabric Colour : Munsell 6/3 5YR light redish brown.

This fabric has similarities to type 2 and type 3 and may be a variant of these types, like type 2 there is the clay tabular argillaceous pellets ranging from 0.3-0.5mm diameter but there is traces of a whitish streak of creamy clay. The core of this fabric is heavily reduced and small ferruginous inclusions can be traced around 0.1mm across.

This fabric is limited to features 8300, 8310 and 8328.

## TILE FABRICS

Type 1 = imbrèx

Type 2 = imbrex, tegulae, floor tile, tile, box-flue, tesserae

Type 3 = tegulae, tile, box-flue

Type 4 = tegulae, floor tile, box-flue

Type 5 = tile, box-flue

Type 6 = tegulae, box-flue

imbrex = type 2 = 1.290kg

tegulae = type 2 = 312g type 3 = 392g type 4 = 44g type 6 = 512g

floor tile = type 2 = 48g type 4 = 232g type 6 = 462g

tile = type 1 = 72g type 2 = 126g type 3 = 8g

box-flue = type 2 = 106g type 3 = 46g type 4 = 440g type 5 = 18g type 6 = 190g

tesserae = type 2 = 228g (Greensand = 6g)

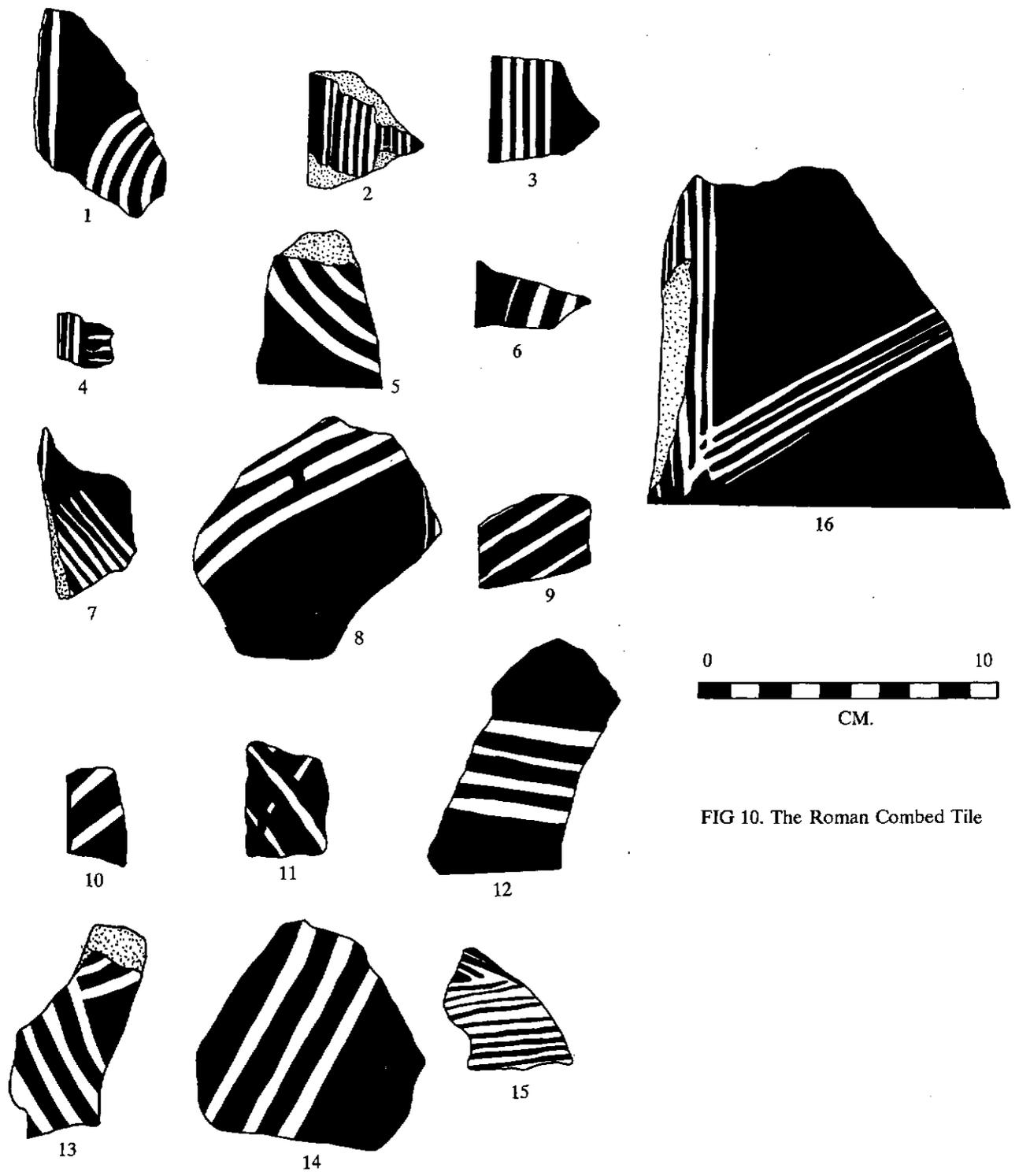


FIG 10. The Roman Combed Tile

## THE IRONWORK

Eight items of ironwork were recovered from the site during investigation.

Five Roman nails were recovered from the external eavesdrip gully (8328). The nail types were identified using Cleere's 1958 report on the ironwork from the 1880 excavation's.

A single example of Cleere type 1 was recovered, length 6cm with a square shank. The size of this type is a lot smaller than other examples described by Cleere. The function of type 1 would still indicate it was used for heavy duty purposes.

A single Cleere type 2 was identified with the small collection (length 6.5cm). The shank and head was rectangular in section and like type 1 it was possibly used for heavy duty work.

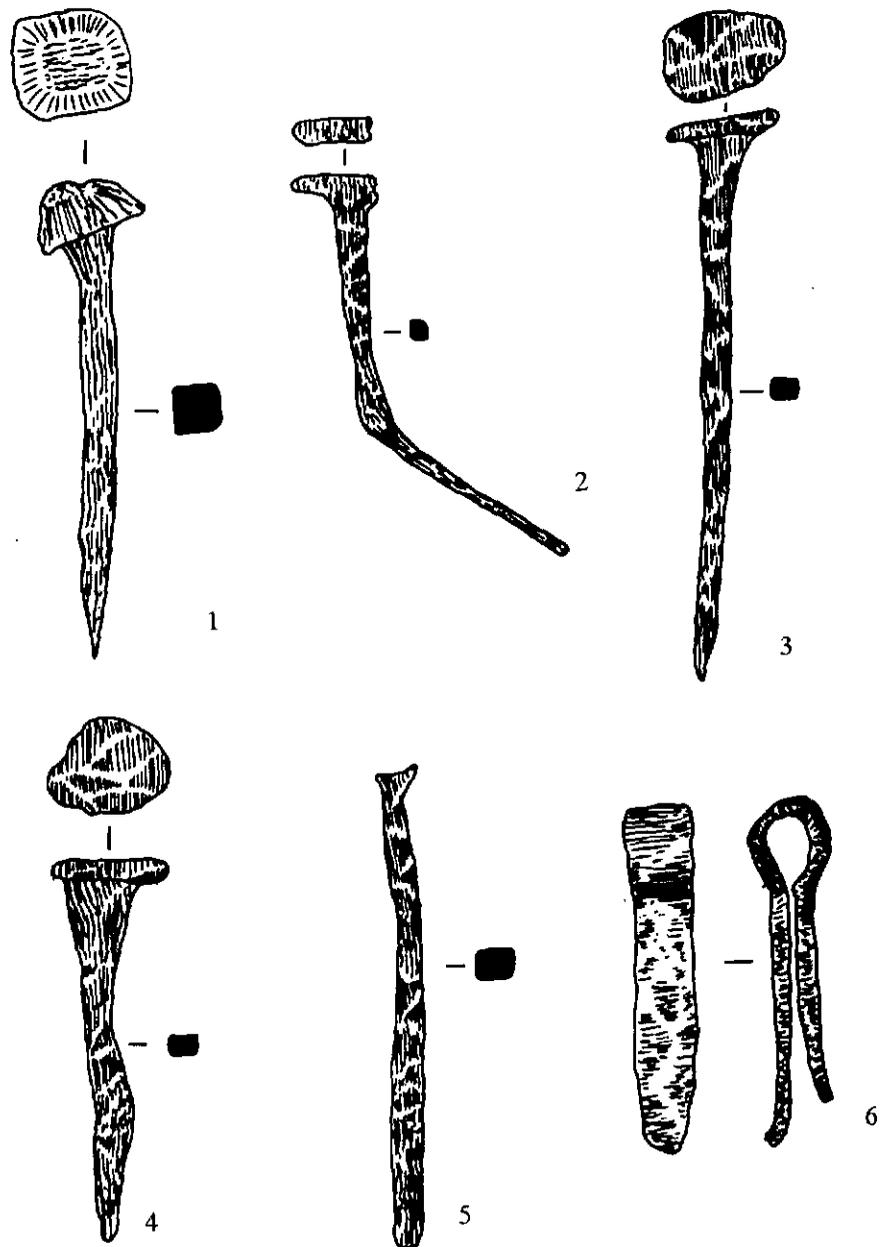
Two examples of Cleere type 3 were found with the shank of a third example (length 7.1cm, 6.4cm and 4.6cm) all exhibiting square shanks. These types of nails were associated with general purpose usage.

Cleere type 3 was recorded in late Roman levels at Newport and Rock villa (Tomalin 1987. 75).

Finally type 3 nail heads with a diameter of 15mm have been recorded rusted into Bembridge limestone roof slabs at both Brading and Combley villa.

The three remaining items of ironwork all come from the disturbed layer within the coach park (8300).

Two of the items come from Victorian or modern barbed wire fencing, the third example is more interesting. This resembles a Late Roman iron fastening loop with splayed arms. Length 41mm. A parallel to this was found in the 1880 excavation at Brading. The example found in the Victorian excavation was found looped over a L-shaped bracket which has been tentatively attributed to window shutters (Tomalin 1987.74).



Scale 1/1.

FIG 11. The Ironwork

## IRON SMELTING

Nine fragments of Roman industrial slag was found indicating iron smelting was practised within the vicinity. Eight fragments of tap slag were found on the late general stripped area of the coach park (8300). The ninth example of tap slag was located from within the courtyard building (8331). This type of slag is commonly associated with smelting (Morgan. 1985. 78).

Iron smelting has long been associated with Brading as during the 1880 excavation large quantities of tap slag and a single crucible were found during excavations. Unfortunately their Provenance was not recorded.

## GLASS

Three small fragments were recovered from the site. A possible Roman pale green vessel was obtained from within the internal courtyard building (8331).

Two other fragments of glass came from 8300. These are post-medieval and modern in date.

## PAINTED WALL PLASTER

Two small fragments of painted wall plaster was found during excavation. A single pinkish-white (8/2 7.5 YR) fragment was found close to the tesserae filled post-hole (8310). The second example a pale red (6/4 5R) was found within the wall-fall of the internal courtyard building (8331).

## MARINE BIVALVE'S

Five complete oyster shells were recovered from the site around the investigated courtyard complex.

Two single lower valves came from within the courtyard building (8331) and outside the courtyard wall (8325). The remaining three upper valves came from within the external evesdrip gully (8328), the three upper valves had traces of a small marine worm called *Polydora Ciliata*. This type of worm is common in sandy clay sediment's and thrives in warm shallow waters, the nearest location could have been within the flooded Haven of Brading or its environs.

## FAUNAL REMAINS

A meagre total of six fragmented animal bones were recovered during excavation. This is too small to draw a meaningful conclusion.

A single fragment of a cattle molar was recovered from 8300.

Eight fragments from two cattle molars were recovered from amongst the discarded pots in feature 8322.

A small snapped shaft from a cattle metacarpal was found within a late Roman layer outside the courtyard wall (8325).

Two pig bones were recovered from the external eavesdrip gully (8328). These comprised of a single rib and a fragmented lower right mandible with pre molars 1 & 2 present.

A small butchered fragment of a cattle long-bone was obtained from within the internal courtyard building.

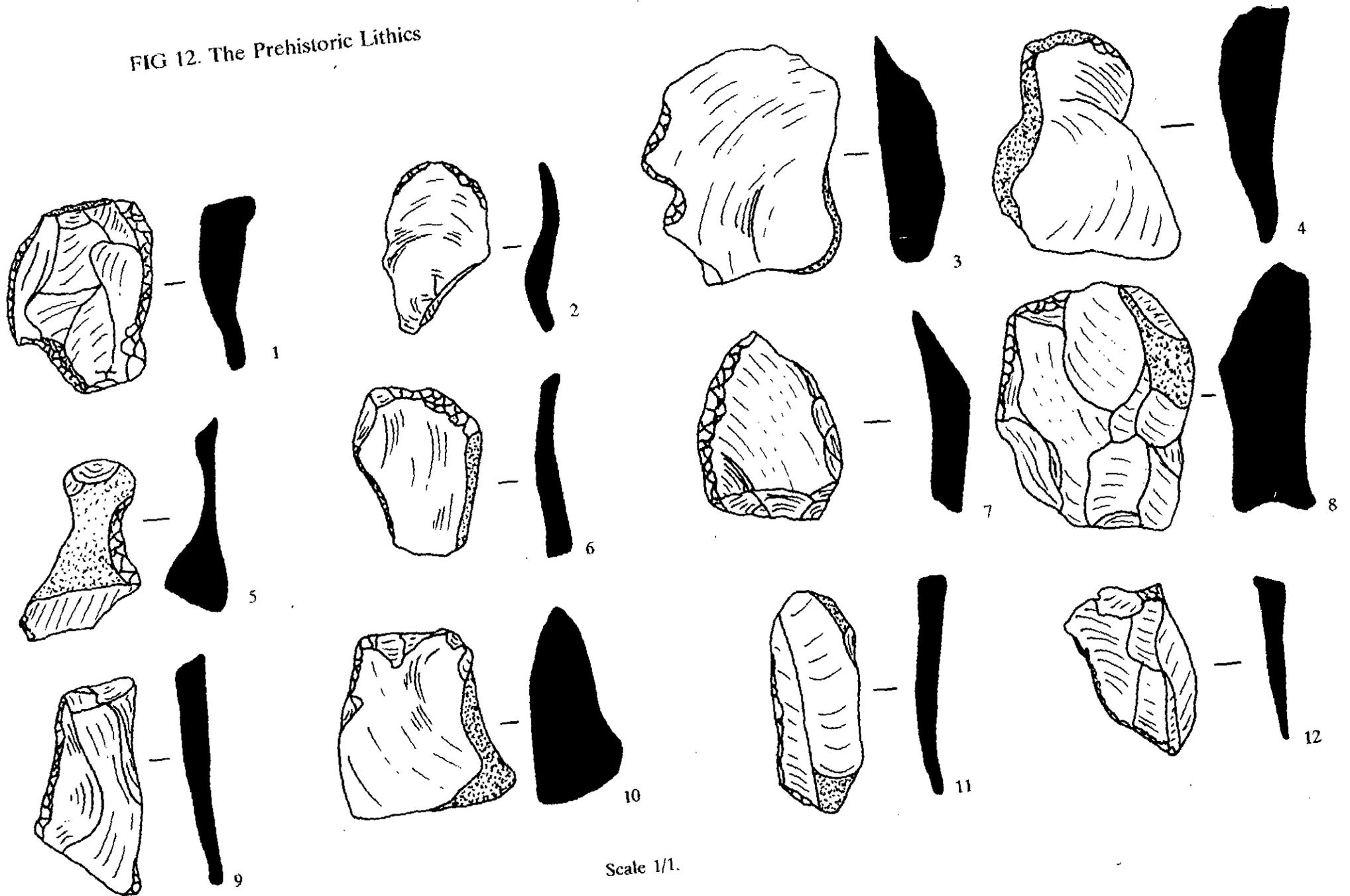
## PREHISTORIC LITHICS

A total of 23 lithics was found during the excavation. A single end scraper was found within a late Roman surface outside the courtyard wall (8325).

Eleven retouched waste flakes were found scattered across the site in a variety of features. This was accompanied by nine remaining waste flakes.

This small collection of lithics denotes Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age activity within the villa environs. All the flint work found was intrusive within Iron Age and Roman levels.

FIG 12. The Prehistoric Lithics



## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first occupational evidence at Brading occurs during the Late Neolithic / Early Bronze Age period when prehistoric flint working was practised within the environs of the villa. Continued field-walking by the Isle of Wight Archaeological Unit and English Heritage has recorded generous scatters of lithics within the surrounding fields of the villa but unfortunately, no evidence of pottery has yet been found. A second phase of occupation at Brading occurs during the later part of the Middle Iron Age. This is represented by the possible construction of a square enclosure ditch in the north-west corner of the field known as the "Middle Paddock". This ditch was silted up around the 1st-century B.C. when a group of timber structures and gullies were recorded in the Coach park area.

Late Iron Age occupation at Brading was encountered during excavations lead by Rebecca Loader in 1995. Within trench 5 of the 1995 excavation a shallow gully was found containing Late Iron Age pottery and large quantities of daub (Loader 1995. 30).

The current investigations on the coach park site found the possible Middle Iron Age ditch (8301) the top fill was not penetrated to any degree but the few ceramics found were all Late Iron Age in date. Above the top fill of this ditch two circular structures were found. Structure 8312 was the possible remains of a small drainage ditch associated with a possible small Late Iron Age round building. The second structure was represented by three post-holes (8306, 8307 & 8308) and two burnt terminal (8302 & 8305). The post-holes produced late Iron Age pottery. The burnt hollow features were undated but were possibly contemporary with the post-holes. It is possible that the burnt terminals may represent door posts associated with the entrance to a Iron Age round house some 6.5mm in diameter. The third structure (8303), like 8312, survived as a shallow gully filled with Late Iron Age pottery and daub. Unlike the two previous structures this was situated to the west of the filled ditch and had suffered considerable damage by modern ploughing.

The three circular structures might be the remains of Late Iron Age buildings. If we also draw upon the gully found during the 1995 excavation found around 25 metres to the west of the coach park we may well be seeing a small Late Iron Age farmstead pre-dating the construction of the villa. The small circular oven (8318) and clamp kiln (8322) were found dug into the fill of the ditch's circular terminal might be late features of this early settlement.

If we are correct in this interpretation of pottery production within the Late Iron Age farmstead, It

could be suggested that we are seeing the emergence of a small industrial centre serving a local or wider community. Similar questions have been raised about salt production within the neighbouring site at Redcliff (Tomalin 1990, 102-3). These present a possible scenario in which small settlements established themselves as rural industrial centres serving a localised community which could continue through the Roman period.

The third phase of occupation found within the 1997 excavations was identified beneath the path that connected the villa with the car and coach park. Here evidence was found of the courtyard wall and an internal facing building. The survival of a foundation trench and Roman pottery mortared within the chalk footing supported a post AD 300-330 date for the construction. Taking into account a second rear wall of an internal building and its associated exterior eavesdrip, this could place important construction work at Brading in the mid-late 4th-century.

With this new evidence and the final Victorian plans of the 1900, I would argue that we are seeing the villa's final constructed plan surrounding all sides of its courtyard. The main double storey corridor house would face a range of buildings and entrance on the opposite side of the courtyard. Towards the north and south of the courtyard were situated two substantial buildings completing the courtyard plan. The late construction at Brading villa with its mosaics and buildings stands out from the other known villa sites of the Island. The villas at Newport and Rock were notably in decline by the mid 4th century. This is intimated by the pottery and coinage evidence (Malcom Lyne, pers. comm.). Around this period of renewed construction at Brading, the villa at Combley was possibly already abandoned (Tosdevin 1992. 12-13).

Decline at both Newport and Rock seems to have involved possible squatter occupation but more believable would be a functional change in the use of the standing structures (Lyne. unpub. 18).

A late upsurge in building activities at Brading cannot be explained to a full extent based on the limited new evidence encountered in relation to current data from the villa. Tomalin has suggested that the owner or tenant at Brading gained success through a number of specialised activities. This would have involved not only arable and pastoral farming but, perhaps, vine cultivation. This is conjectured on large grinding stones found in the 1880 excavation, also the proximity of modern vineyards surrounding the villa today.

Another possible specialisation was maritime trade. This is inferred by the number of imports to the

villa and also boat hooks and the maritime themes in the mosaics. This is further backed up with the proximity with Brading Haven (David Tomalin, pers. comms.).

Another argument to explain the upsurge of late investment at Brading could fit into Martin Millett's suggestion that the 4th-century was a period of prosperity, when there was increasing social and economic differentiation accompanied with the separation of the richer aristocracy from the remainder of the Romano-British society (Millett 1990. 227).

This evidence put forward from Tomalin and Millett may help us to understand the investment in new building at Brading during such a late stage of the Roman period.

During the late 4th-century or post-Roman period, dramatic changes had transformed the lifestyle which had been followed at the start of the century. It was perhaps during this late stage that the construction of possible post-built structure was commenced on the coach park site. Excavation found an alignment of seven chalk packed post-holes running at around 2 metre intervals across this site. Post-holes 8309, 8313, 8315 and 8316 produced timber voids measuring up to 30cm square. The pottery from the top fills of these post-holes were all very eroded late 4th-Century ceramics. Nearby, on the same level, two badly crushed 5th-7th-Century "chaff tempered" pottery sherds were found.

Taking into account the eroded nature of the late Roman sherds we could be seeing evidence of a post-Roman structure of Late-Roman or Early Saxon date.

When the site was excavated on the coach park no traces of a second alignment was found to suggest the construction of an aisled hall of Romano-British type (Morris 1979, 129-146). The stout nature of the timber alignment and packing would certainly suggest a substantial structure rather than a simple fence or boundary. No traces of side walls or associated post-holes were found to support the idea for a possible structure. As yet if this structure was of Saxon date it could resemble the centre posts of a large hall house in which minor side wall posts had been regrettably ploughed away.

With the possible traces of Saxon activity at Brading it is difficult to understand why the prosperous villa at Brading constructed during the early 4th-Century declined so rapidly within the later 4th-century. Taking into account Dr. Millett's ideas of the wealthy aristocrats continuing to dominate society into the Post-Roman period (Millett 1990, 227), we could be detecting a shift from an elite dominated society, towards a early form of the Medieval feudal system within the Romano-Saxon period.

This theoretical approach to activities at Brading during the Late Roman period must be seen in the context of the current archaeological database for the site. This includes the new evidence for a possible hall house and other possible structural changes in the main west wing. This building was subject to change when the entrance wall was demolished and partition walls were erected between rooms 7 and 9, 6 and 3. Rooms 4 and 8 were also demolished at a time when functional requirement and new secondary uses had taken precedence.

Around this period, a malt drying oven was inserted into the tessellated floor of the corridor. Possibly, another was installed at the east end of the north wing. Similar late 4th-century malt drying kilns have been recorded at Packway near Newchurch (Tomalin 1989. 43-55) and Rock Roman villa near Brighstone (Lyne unpub, 23).

David Tomalin has suggested that the preservation of the mosaics in rooms 9 and 12 may have survived with the storage of cereal crops heaped up upon these once prestigious floors. The late finds of iron pointed ard socks and other late ploughing implements like the single asymmetric share found within the ground floor of the west wing (Dark & Dark 1997. 103), could help suggest that this building was turned over to agricultural storage in the late 4th-century.

Any later occupation within the courtyard villa is only speculative but we could suggest that the gravel spread in the south-west corner of the courtyard may have surrounded a timber building that abutted the south east wing of room 3. The broken down wall of room 3 was possibly the entrance into the villa from this timber structure.

Other late features at Brading could include the finds of human skeletal remains in rooms 5 and 6 of the west wing. These might be compared with the late post-Roman burials dug into the palace at Fishbourne in Sussex (Cunliffe 1971.193-194). A somewhat similar example was found within room 12 at Newport villa (Tomalin 1987. 18).

The practice of burial within derelict villas is not uncommon. John Percival observes that burials are commonly found scattered, apparently at random, within abandoned villas and that building debris can be used to line graves. The practice of inhumation burial in these circumstances is commonly carried out without grave goods (Percival 1976 185).

Recent investigations at Brading have produced the first securely stratified assemblages of finds from the villa. These help us to understand the bulk of unstratified pottery and structural remains found in

the late 19th-Century.

The Coach park excavation has indicated the presence of a possible pre-villa settlement downslope from the masonry villa. This settlement possibly continued up until the late 1st-Century or early 2nd-Century, when the construction of a masonry building (Tomalin 1987. 25) was established up-slope from the earlier settlement.

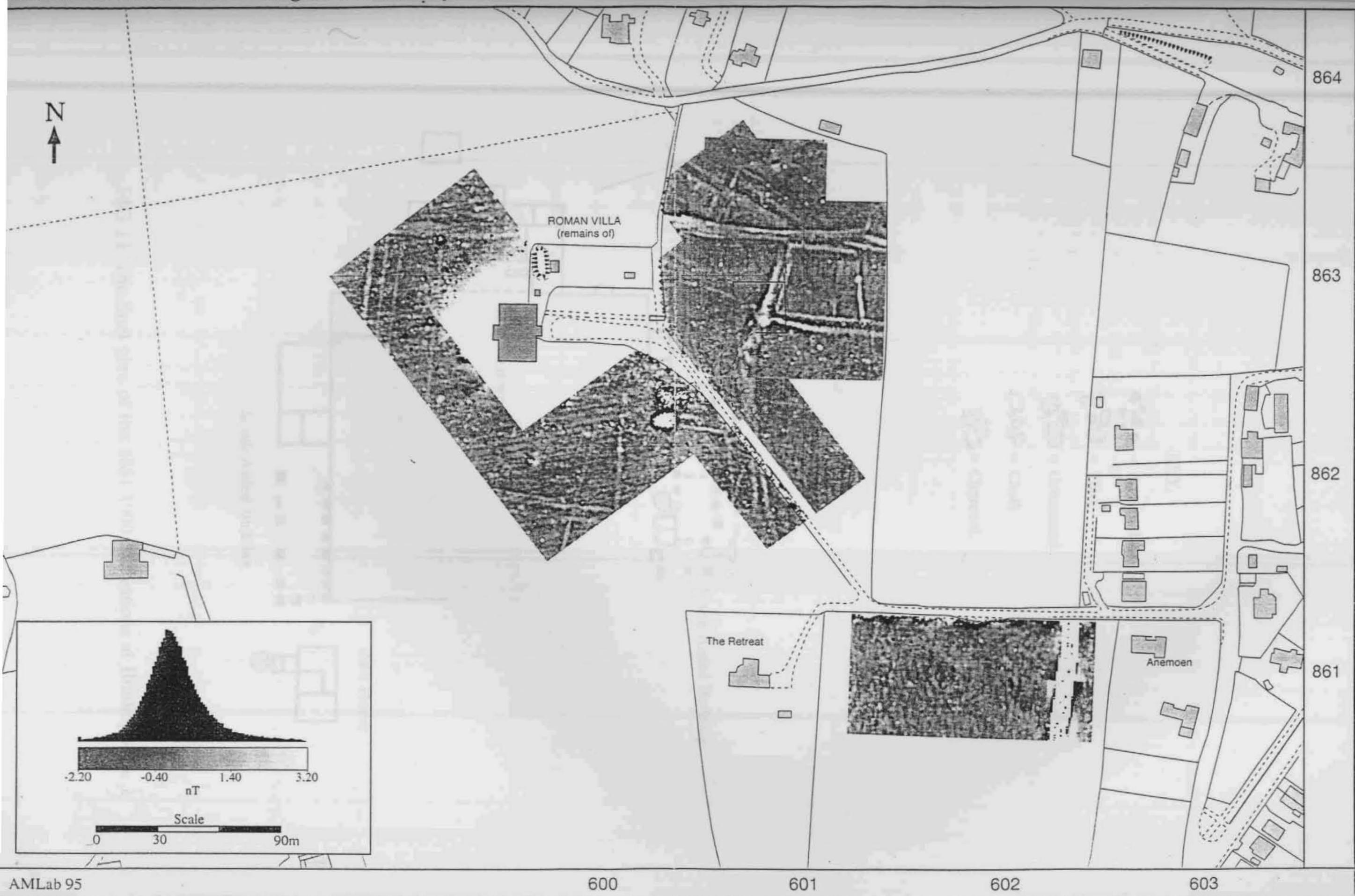
During the 2nd and 3rd-century the villa began to establish itself with fields turned over to agricultural use based on the field plans of the Magnetometer results (fig 13), and the chalk downland field systems (Dark & Dark 1997, 74). The villa at Brading continued to grow and develop until the early 4th-Century when it reached its final form as a single courtyard villa with internal facing buildings. During the late 4th-Century the prosperity of the villa seems to have entered into the general economic decline of late Roman Britain.

Brading was subject to an agricultural economy with malt drying and processing of cereal crops from its surrounding fields (Dark & Dark 1997. 145). It is unclear whether the main west wing still had an inhabitable upper storey during the late phase or whether occupation was within one of the surrounding buildings.

Mark Stedman has suggested that Brading could fit into a late occupation pattern similar to the villas at Meonstoke and Sharvards Farm in Hampshire. At both these sites industrial and agriculture activities persisted with occupation within sunken featured buildings and hall houses (Mark Stedman, pers. comms.).

Saxon activity is known in the Morton area in AD 683 (downslope from the villa) when the first documented source mentions the "Kings Town" or Whitefield Manor (Winter 1991, 183). Was this Middle Saxon manor within the environs of the Medieval manor of Morton ?

The overall archaeological evidence suggests continued occupation from the Late-Neolithic to the present day within and around the Roman Villa at Brading.

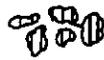


AMLab 95

FIG 13. The Brading Roman Villa Magnetometer survey with the striped area imposed on the survey (English Heritage 1994)

KEY.

 = Roman Tile.

 = Flint.

 = Greensand.

 = Chalk.

 = Charcoal.

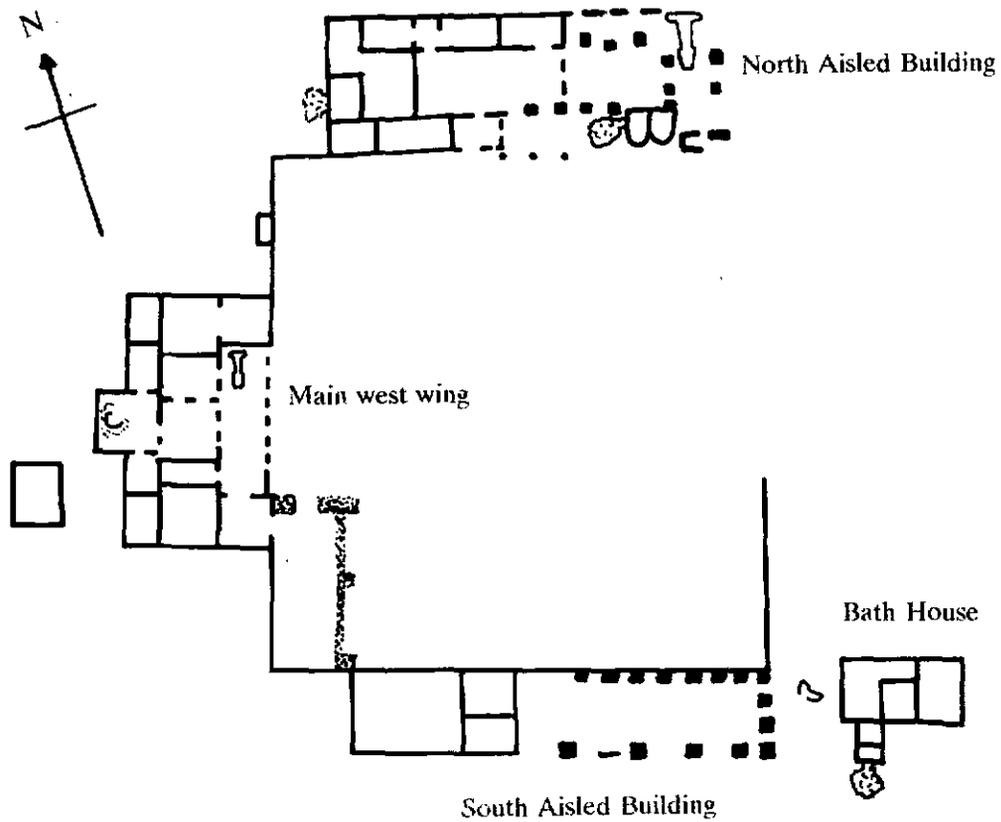


FIG 14. The final plan of the 1881-1900 excavations at Brading villa

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