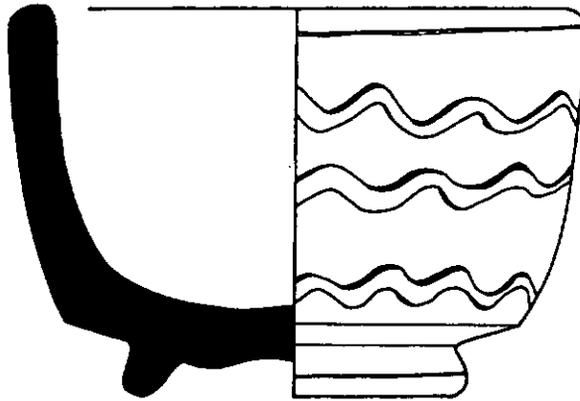


1996

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An Archaeological Investigation of
**Land at Fishbourne Harbour,
West Sussex**

P-96-046

The Archaeological Monitoring of Groundworks at Fishbourne Harbour, West Sussex, 1996

Introduction

Chichester Harbour Conservancy Board have commenced a programme of works designed primarily to strengthen the sea defences on the west side of Fishbourne Channel. These have included the renovation of the existing earthwork sea wall at the head of the channel using material derived from the creation of a small lagoon at its rear. Because of the proximity of an important complex of Roman buildings, excavated in 1982-3 (Rudkin, 1986), CHCB commissioned Southern Archaeology to monitor all groundworks, recording any archaeological deposits, and to carry out a surface artefact collection survey (field-walk) of the surrounding area. The monitoring and field-walk were carried out between December 4th and 9th 1996.

Method 1 (monitoring)

All groundworks were closely inspected and all suspected in-situ archaeological features were cleaned manually and recorded on plan, in section and photographically. Where possible the features were sampled for artefacts.

Method 2 (surface artefact collection survey)

An area up to 135m by 25m was chosen for the field walk. This covers the known Roman site and an area immediately adjacent to features revealed in the west side of the lagoon. A collection grid was laid out, aligned with Ordnance Survey grid north, with grid squares of 5m² (see Fig. 1). Each of the 108 grid squares was examined for surface artefacts which were placed in numbered bags. In order to produce statistically valid results, a set period of 10 minutes was allowed for each square.

Results 1 (monitoring)

Quantities of Roman brick, tile and pottery are visible in the new bank created from spoil produced by the excavation of the lagoon and recutting of drainage ditches leading to and from the lagoon. This material derives either from hitherto unknown features destroyed during construction of the lagoon or from known features associated with the Roman buildings (which were discovered when the ditch was first dug, in 1982, and was seen to cut Roman masonry features). The largest of the brick and tile fragments and any potsherds were collected and assigned to Context u/s (unstratified). Examination of the newly-scraped sides of the drainage ditches revealed no new features, several features (see Fig. 1) were however observed in the sides of the lagoon:

Context Description

- | Context | Description |
|---------|---|
| 1 | Ditch or gully 0.63m wide, apparently running SW-NE, cut into the brickearth subsoil. |
| 2 | Fill of 1: dark greyish brown clayey loam with medium angular and subangular flints. |
| 3 | Pit 1.1m wide, cut into the brickearth subsoil. |
| 4 | Fill of 3: very dark grey loamy clay with medium-large angular and subangular flints. |
| 5 | Ditch or gully 2.6m wide and 1.3m deep, cut into the brickearth subsoil. |
| 6 | Fill of 5: dark grey silty clay with burnt material. |
| 7 | Subrectangular pit 1m by 0.5m, cut into the brickearth subsoil. |
| 8 | Fill of 7: very dark grey loamy clay with medium angular and subangular flints. |
| 9 | Layer c.32m long cut into the brickearth subsoil. Possibly a ditch. |
| 10 | Fill of 9: dark grey silty clay with flecks of burnt material. |
| 11 | Ditch 2m wide and 1m deep, cut into the brickearth subsoil. |

Of the above, contexts 1, 3 and 9 are of uncertain depth (due to water levels). Time and water levels did not allow recovery of finds from contexts 7(8) and 11, though small fragments of Roman tile were noted in the latter. Although sampled, no finds were recovered from context 5(6).

The finds

Context	Description
u/s	Quantities of Roman brick, tile and coarse sandy greywares and a single sherd of pale pinkish-buff fineware. 3 sherds buff to dark grey, very coarse with large angular flint inclusions - prehistoric, one an upright-rimmed jar of Iron Age type.
2	3 fragments of Roman brick/tile, c.100g. 11 sherds Roman coarse sandy greyware, including a Rowlands Castle internally finger impressed jar (AD 2 nd - 3 rd century), c.150g. 2 sherds samian ware. 1 sherd fine, sandy, pale buff fineware.
4	1 fragment Roman tegula, c.400g. 3 fragments Roman brick, c.350g. 3 fragments Roman brick/tegula, c.400g. 2 Fe. nails (one definitely Roman). 1 fragment animal bone. 1 fragments hard, light grey sandstone with one surface worn/smoothed. 6 sherds Rowlands Castle internally finger impressed jar (AD 2 nd - 3 rd century), c.400g. 36 sherds Roman coarse sandy greyware, including a Rowlands Castle everted-rimmed jar (AD 2 nd - 3 rd century), c.600g. 6 sherds Roman (black-burnished ware?), including a lid rim and a bead-rimmed bowl (1 st half AD 3 rd century), c.100g. 1 sherd pale pinkish-buff to dark grey, sandy Roman fineware.
10	2 fragments Roman brick, c.1050g. 8 fragments Roman brick/tegula, c.950g. 1 fragment Roman combed flue tile, c.200g. 2 fragments Roman imbrex (burned), c.100g. 5 fragments animal bone, c.150g. 2 fragments burnt flint, c.25g. 1 sherd translucent, pale-green glass strap handle from very large Roman vessel, c.50g. 7 sherds Rowlands Castle internally finger impressed jar (AD 2 nd - 3 rd century), c.450g. 26 sherds Roman coarse sandy greyware, including a Rowlands Castle everted-rimmed jar (AD 2 nd - 3 rd century), c.250g. 3 sherds samian ware. 1 sherd fine, pale dark buff with traces of red colour coat, footring base (New Forest? late AD 3 rd - 4 th century). 1 sherd Roman pinkish-cream sandy fineware. COMPLETE POT: a New Forest, Fulford type 53 cup, with three lines of incised wavy decoration, unevenly fired from light grey to purpleish-dark grey and with a distorted base (a kiln-waster or 'second'). Fulford dates the decorated examples of his Type 53 c.AD 300-350 (see title page for life-size drawing).

In addition to the above a number of metallic artefacts were recovered through metal detecting, they are:

Smallfind no.	Context	Description	NGR
1	Ploughsoil	CuA object.	SU 83615.213 04361.854
2	u/s	CuA coin, 'minimissima', c.354 - 364.	SU 83622.255 04241.504
3	u/s	CuA coin, Antoninianus, c. AD late 3 rd .	SU 83622.370 04239.349
4	u/s	CuA stud.	SU 83623.436 04238.615
5	3/4	CuA object.	
6	3/4	Pb object.	

Results 2 (surface artefact collection survey)

Large quantities of burnt and worked flint (including two waste-flakes, at SU 83605 04272 and SU 83605 04252, and a Mesolithic waste-blade, at SU 83610 04235), Roman pottery and brick/tile were recovered during the field-walk. These have been generally identified and the results incorporated in a series of distribution maps (see Fig. 2: post-Medieval finds have not been plotted). The results of the monitoring are mirrored in those of the field-walk: Roman occupation clearly extends north from the masonry buildings for at least another 50m.

Discussion

Given the presence of the complex of Roman buildings the results of the lower half of the field-walk are not surprising. The discovery that concentrations of Roman finds exist in the northern half, together with the fact that a variety of Roman features were observed in section in the banks of the lagoon, indicates that the buildings are only the focus of a much wider area of landscape use. The dating of the Roman artefacts adds little to the results of the 1982-3 excavations, though the complete New Forest pot is an interesting example of the value of a 'second', given the remoteness of Fishbourne from the original production site.

The few sherds of Iron Age pottery (and possibly also the fired flint - though this can be of any period) indicate the presence of pre-Roman settlement, while the few flint flakes are probably the result of infrequent visits to the site in more remote prehistoric periods (note that Iron Age pottery and worked flints were recovered from disturbed upper levels in 1982-3).

Suggested further work

Further information regarding the wider landscape surrounding the buildings can be acquired most cost effectively through the analysis of aerial photographs and production of a resistance survey. A combination of the two techniques could potentially produce an accurate plan of the field systems and other ancillary Roman structures while causing little damage to below-ground features.

Reference

Rudkin, D. J. (1986) The Excavation of a Romano-British Site by Chichester Harbour, Fishbourne, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 124, 51-77.

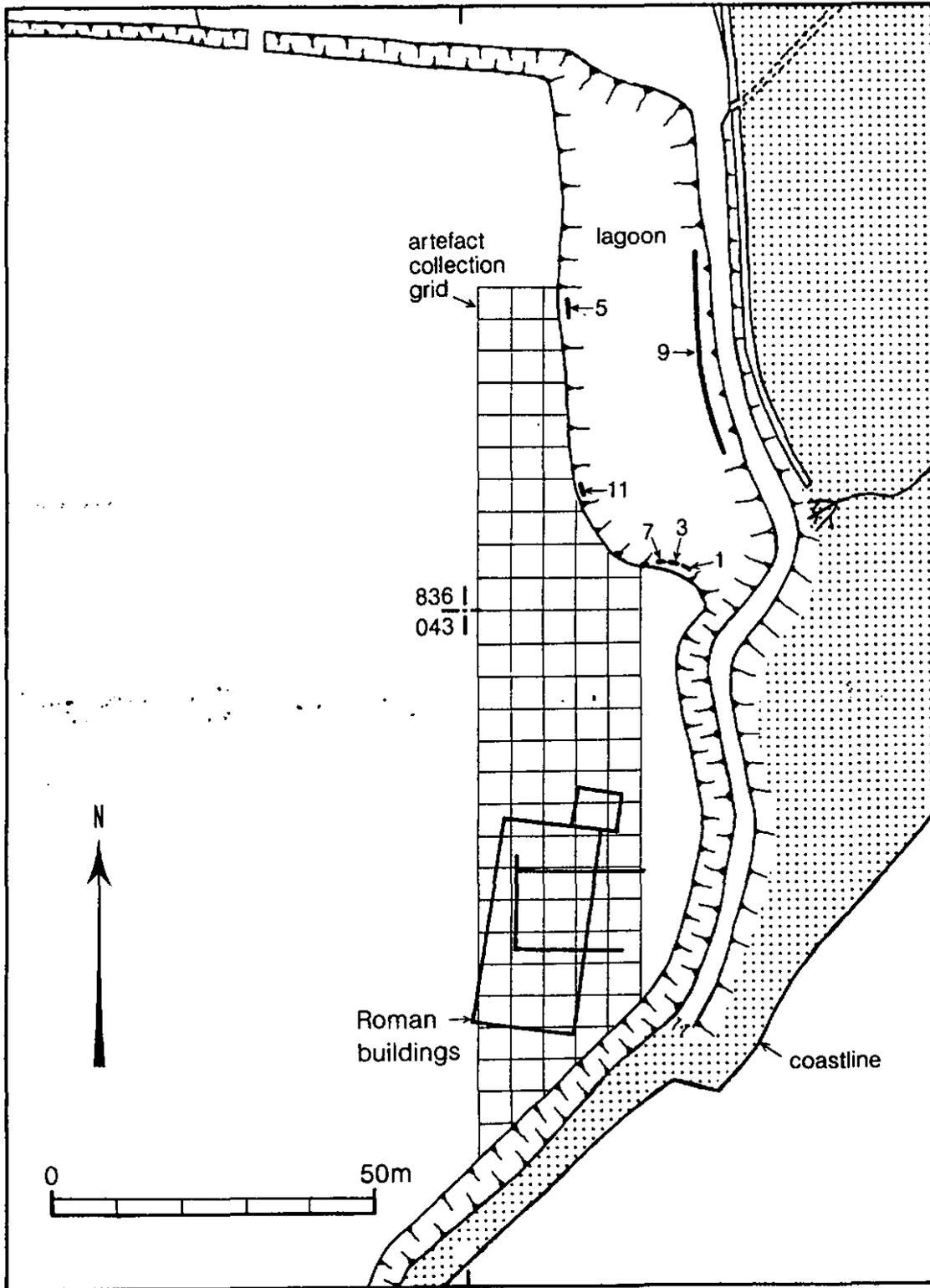


Fig. 1: location plan.

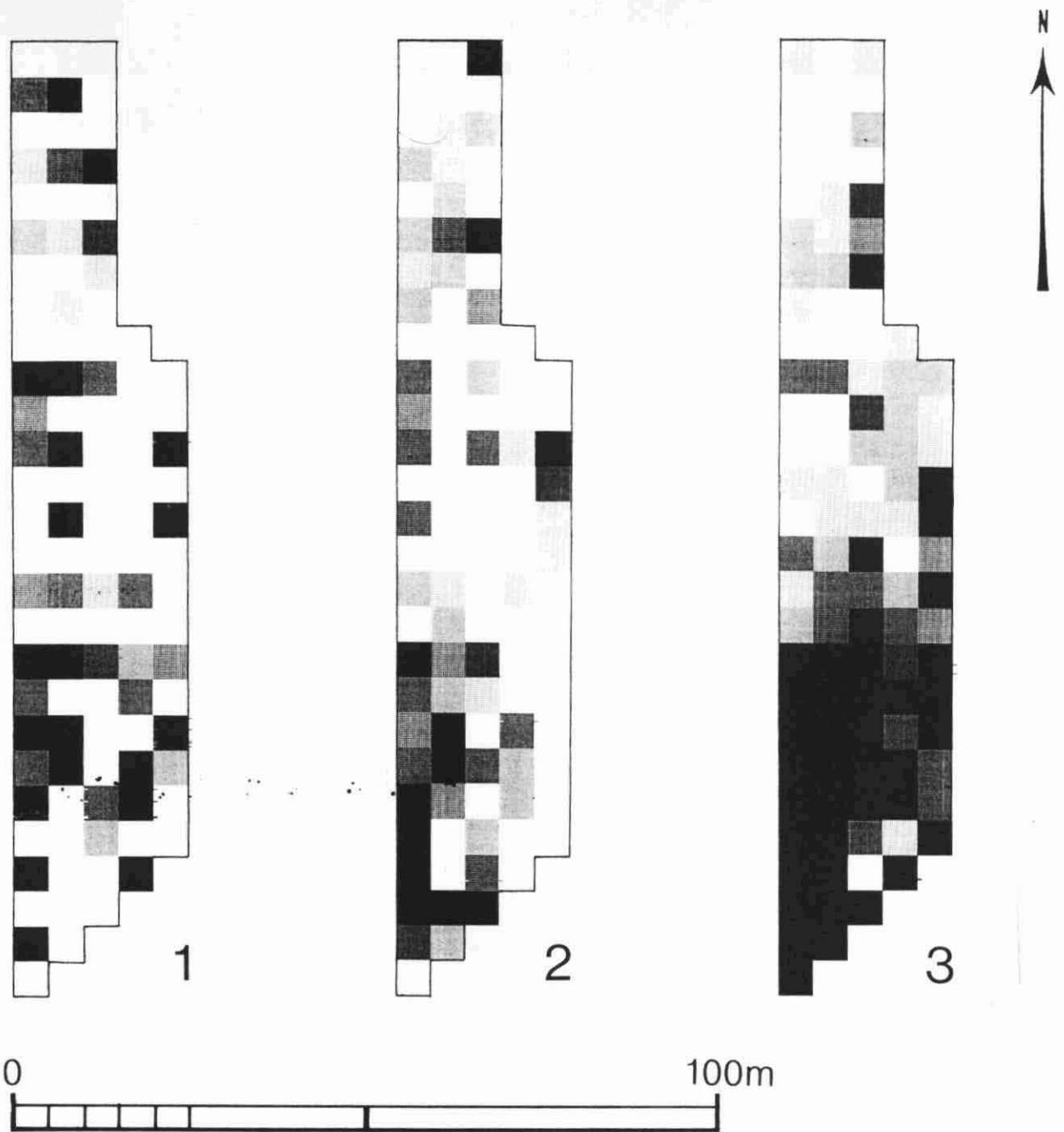


Fig. 2: distribution plans illustrating the results of the artefact collection survey.

1. Fired flints and worked flints (white <8.3g, black \geq 100g).
2. Roman pottery (white <8.3g, black \geq 100g).
3. Roman tile (white <83.3g, black \geq 1000g).