

The excavation of a Romano-British site at Burgess Hill, West Sussex

by Jennifer Sawyer

A watching brief and subsequent excavation by the Field Archaeology Unit, University College London, in advance of development of land to the west of Burgess Hill revealed a number of Romano-British features. Evidence of Mesolithic and Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age activity was established through the surface collection of a small assemblage of worked flint. A single blade/burin of Upper Palaeolithic date was also located. Romano-British features, which were predominantly of late 4th-century date included a ditch with a large pottery assemblage and a probable corn-drying oven.

INTRODUCTION

The site (Fig. 1) was situated on arable land to the west of Burgess Hill, between Eastlands Farm and Locks Manor (NGR TQ296188). Topographically the site lies on an undulating hill averaging 32.95 m O.D., and covers an area of approximately 145 m × 125 m. The underlying geology is Weald Clay with thin bands of Marker Clay and outcrops of Tunbridge Wells Sand. The London to Brighton Roman Road, which passes through Burgess Hill, runs to the east of the site.

An archaeological condition was imposed as part of the planning consent by the District Council. The Field Archaeology Unit, University College London, was subsequently commissioned by Laing Management to undertake an archaeological watching brief in July 1996, during the removal of topsoil. During the watching brief evidence of prehistoric and Roman activity on the site was revealed and consequently a small-scale excavation was undertaken. All observed features were investigated and recorded, soil samples were taken, and the exposed subsoil surface was subjected to a surface collection to examine the nature of the lithic scatter across the site.

RESULTS

PREHISTORIC

No prehistoric features were located at the site, but 152 pieces of worked flint were recovered from the surface of the Weald Clay. These are discussed in more detail below.

ROMANO-BRITISH

Excavation of the features identified produced evidence of Romano-British activity from the 1st to 4th century AD, although most dated to the 4th century. The most substantial

feature was a possible corn-drying oven (Cut 70: Figs 1d & 2a) which was located on the north-eastern edge of the site. It consisted of a broadly rectangular structure of clay-bedded flints (Context 54: Figs 2a & 3:S1–S2) with a central flue (Contexts 58 & 59). It was cut by a pit on its south-eastern side (Context 67: Fig. 2a) and was disturbed on its north-western side by modern activity. Similarly, the area around the flue terminal was truncated on its north-eastern side by a pit (Context 61). The north-eastward extension of the flue was covered by flat sandstone slabs (Context 66) but no stoke-hole was apparent. Pottery from beneath the slabs covering the flue dates from the later 4th century.

Two ditches were identified on site. Both were only clearly visible when quantities of charcoal were present in their fills. Otherwise they proved difficult to trace and their full extent and morphology remain unascertained. The first (Context 15: Fig. 1d only) was shallow and produced 1st- to 3rd-century pottery. The second was more substantial (Context 5: Figs 1d, 2b & 3:S3). Its fills (Contexts 7 & 11) produced substantial amounts of pottery dating from the late 4th to early 5th century AD. Other material from the ditch included several fragments of rotary querns. Ditch 5 was originally seen for a distance of 12 m. Subsequent machining showed it continued for at least a further 20 m (approximately) eastwards. Ditch 15 was only visible over a length of 1.8 m and was not well-defined in the rough machine section cut across it.

Six hearths (Contexts 1, 3, 19, 25, 28 & 44: Fig. 1d), were identified on the site. These were spread across the whole area and showed no signs of grouping. Despite full investigation, only one produced pottery (Cut 25, Fill 26: Fig. 3:S5). This showed the feature to be of early Roman

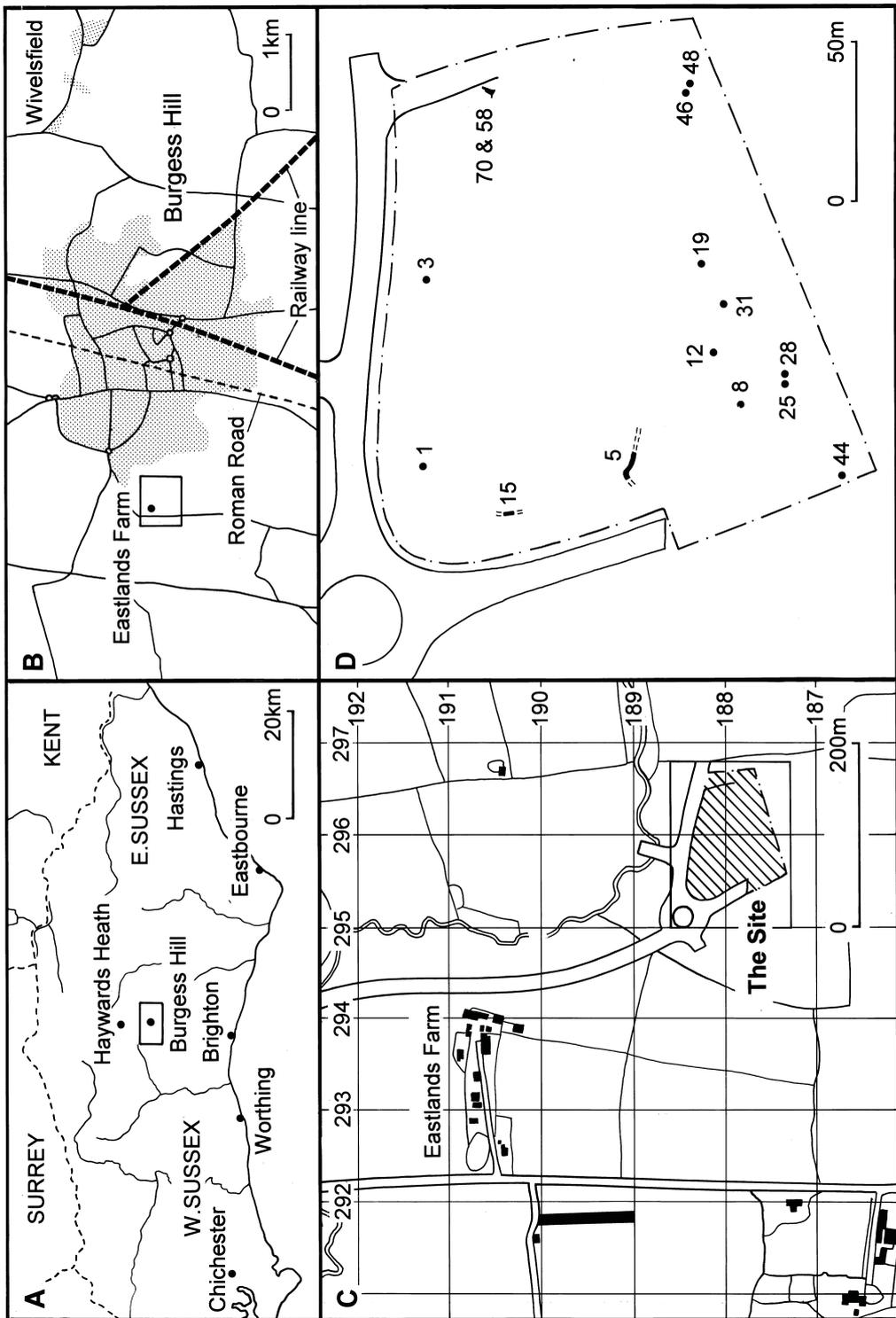


Fig. 1. Site location and overall plan showing distribution of features.

date. Most of the hearths were similar in appearance (Context 44 is a typical example: Fig. 3:S4) and consisted of shallow circular cuts filled with charcoal and fire-cracked flint. Owing to their similarity, it can tentatively be suggested that all are contemporary and therefore of Romano-British date. Hearth 19 (section not illustrated) contained a number of pieces of iron forging slag as well as a single fragment of forge lining and it is possible this feature was associated with secondary iron-working. The absence of slag from the other hearths makes their precise function difficult to ascertain as they could have been used for a number of general activities.

Other Roman features on the site included two adjacent pits (Contexts 46 & 48: Fig. 1d; sections not illustrated) which contained 26 sherds of Romano-British pottery. Two elongated features which produced no dating material (Fig. 1d: 12 & 31) may also have been of this period as they lay in an area of Romano-British activity.

SAXON

Two sherds of Saxon pottery were identified, one Early Saxon rounded basal sherd in Ditch 5 (Fill 7), and the other in a post-hole (Context 8: Figs 1d & 3:S6) which was of Middle Saxon date. The lack of further evidence for Saxon occupation may relate more to site conditions and identification than to actual absence.

THE FINDS

WORKED FLINT

By Chris Butler

and utilized here.

One large, fresh-looking blade/burin (Fig. 4:3) is possibly of a very early date. It has been snapped towards its proximal end, removing the bulb and platform. At the distal end of the blade a point has been created by the removal of a burin spall. It is likely that this piece may have been intended as a projectile point, although there is no evidence

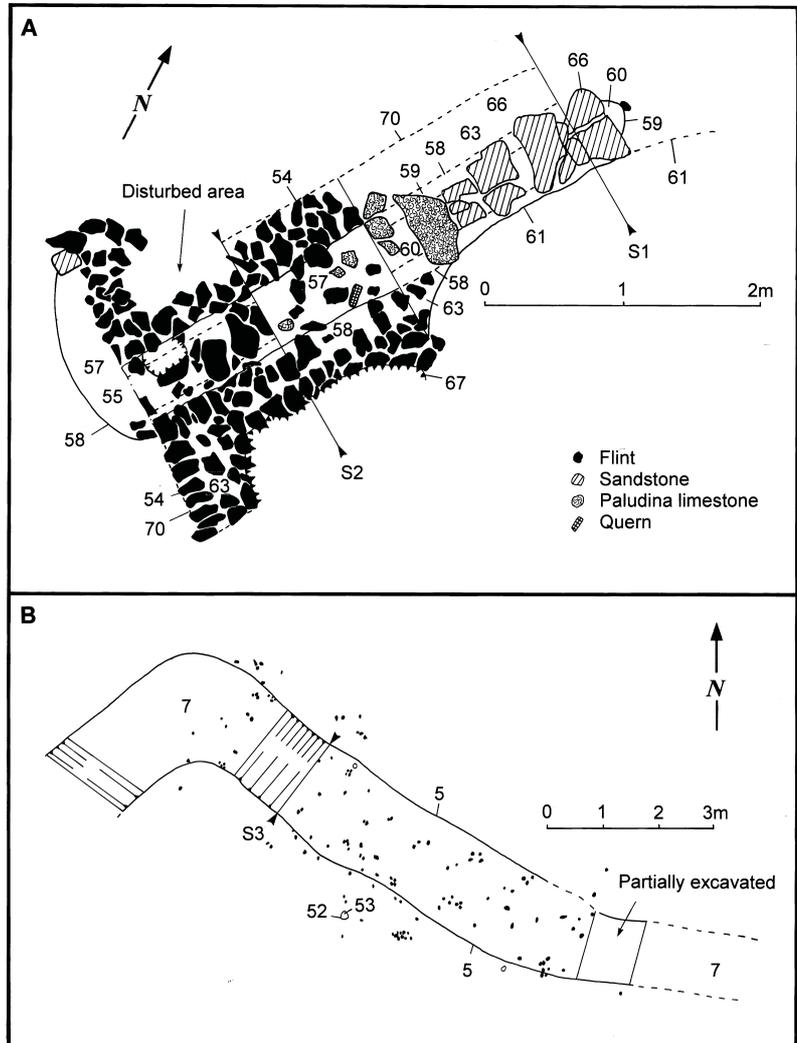


Fig. 2. Plans of the principal features.

The 152 pieces of worked flint are a mixture of types, but generally consist of unpatinated black flint, and pieces of well-patinated blue-grey flint. Most pieces of worked flint are from small nodules, which are commonly found locally on the Wealden clays.

Most of the assemblage is hard hammer-struck debitage (Table 1, fiche), with flakes predominating. The small number of cores, and the numerous chips, fragments and shattered pieces, indicate that flaking was taking place here. Almost 20 per cent of the flakes are 'initial flakes' with cortex covering the dorsal side. The few implements, with scrapers (e.g. Fig. 4:1 & 2) and miscellaneous retouched pieces predominating, would suggest that the finished implements were being both produced for its having been hafted. If this was its intended purpose, the missing proximal end may have been hafted. The blade could also have been intended as a cutting implement as its still sharp edge would have been ideal for this use, and the blade fits comfortably into the hand. There is no retouch on the piece, the few chips along the sharp edge are the result

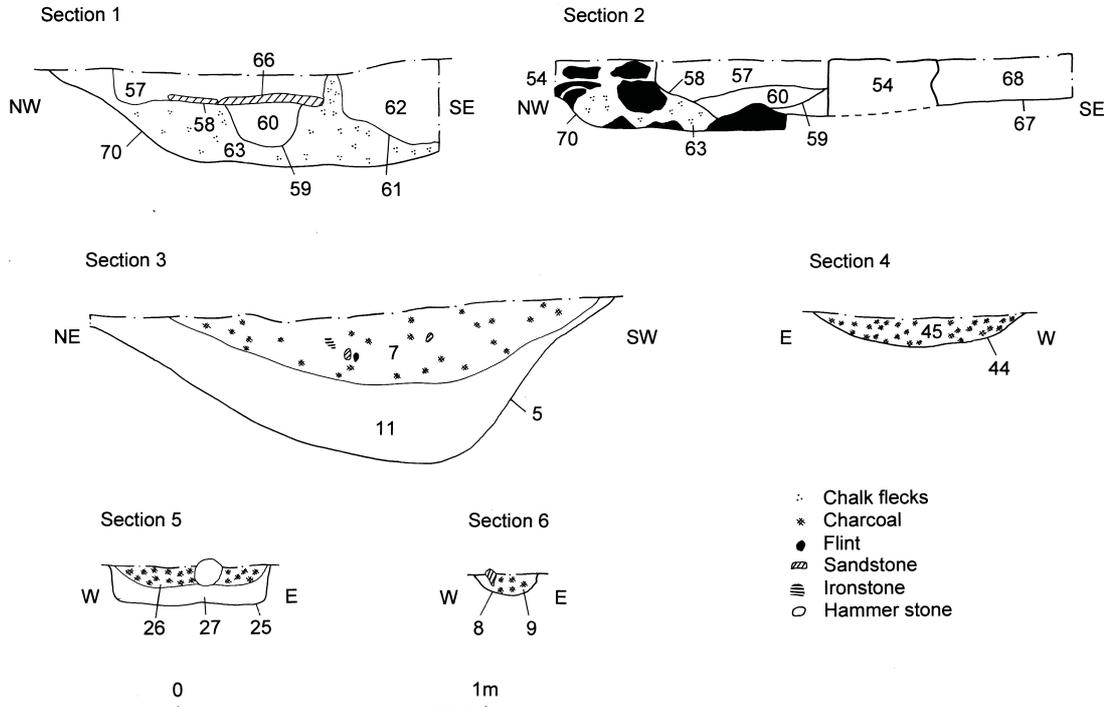


Fig. 3. Sections.

of later damage.

Similar large blades were found at 'Beedings', near Pulborough, West Sussex, at the turn of the last century. Some of the blades had similar dimensions, and it has been suggested that they were thrown weapon-heads, possibly doubling up as knives (Jacobi 1986, 63). The 'Beedings' material was assigned an Upper Palaeolithic date. It is therefore likely that the piece found at Burgess Hill is of similar Upper Palaeolithic date, and is the first such find recorded from this area.

There are no distinctive Mesolithic implements present but the soft hammer-struck blades and bladelets and a small number of other pieces are of Mesolithic date. They form 6.5 per cent of the assemblage; the remainder could fit within a Later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age context.

The assemblage is similar to that recently recovered from an adjacent site at Maltings Farm, Burgess Hill (Butler 1999), which also had a mix of Mesolithic and Later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pieces. Although quantities of prehistoric flintwork are commonly found in this area, the main centre for activity in the Mesolithic appears to have been on the Lower Greensand ridge some 2 km south of Burgess Hill (Butler 1989) while the scatters of flintwork further north resulted from hunting expeditions. Later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age activity was also centred on the Lower Greensand ridge, as evidenced by the recently discovered site at Friars Oak, Hassocks (Butler forthcoming).

THE POTTERY

By Malcolm Lyne

Introduction

The majority of Roman sites in the Weald are of 1st- to 3rd-century date; however, the bulk of the pottery from the current site is of late 4th- to early

5th-century date and includes at least one early Saxon sherd. Most of this late pottery came from a ditch (Context 5) and gives important clues as to the nature of pottery supply within East Sussex at the end of the Roman occupation.

Fabrics

Roman coarse wares

C.1. Handmade, friable brown fabric with profuse (up to 2.00 mm) subangular buff-brown and white grog and sparse black ferrous inclusions. Usually fired darker grey to black externally.

C.2. Handmade black fabric with profuse irregular buff and off-white grog (up to 3.00 mm) and also occasional grass impressions. This fabric can be subdivided into a soft-fired black version (A) and a high-temperature fired version with hackly blue-grey fabric and hard, protruding grog (B), but the two grade into each other. The use of very coarse siltstone grog and high-temperature firing is characteristic of some late 4th-century East Sussex wares. High-temperature firing is particularly common in the Beddingham/Ranscombe group of East Sussex wares (Lyne 1994, 350), but these differ from Fabric C.2 wares at Burgess Hill in containing large quantities of crushed black ironstone as well as siltstone grog. The Burgess Hill East Sussex Ware variant may have been made locally on an iron-working site, where there would have been plenty of crushed furnace clay for filler and considerable expertise in high-temperature firing technology.

C.3. Handmade black fabric with moderate 0.50 to 4.00 mm crushed red ironstone and sparse buff grog (up to 2.00 mm). This is a very rare fabric at Burgess Hill, but could have been made by the potters who produced

the vessels in Fabric C.2, using iron ore instead of furnace clay for filler.

C.4. Handmade reddish-brown fabric with profuse crushed black ironstone (0.50 to 4.00 mm). This fabric was also rare at Burgess Hill and largely restricted to one everted-rim storage jar from the ditch.

C.5A. Alice Holt grey ware (Lyne & Jefferies 1979). Some fragments have bands of white or black slip, but in most cases the acidity of the soil has removed them.

C.5B. Coarse Alice Holt grey ware.

C.6. Overwey (Portchester D) fabric (Lyne & Jefferies 1979; Fulford 1975) and post-330 AD in date.

C.7. Very fine off-white to pale grey fabric with no visible inclusions other than sparse black ferrous grits and lime flecks (up to 1.00 mm).

C.8. Orange fabric with moderate rounded colourless quartz (up to 0.10 mm) and rounded, soft, reddish-brown ferrous inclusions (up to 0.50 mm), fired pale blue-grey. A necked bowl came from the ditch and is probably a product of the Wickham Barns industry recently discovered by the Greensand Way (Margary 1955, road 140).

C.9. Very fine reddish-brown fabric with rounded quartz (up to 0.10 mm), fired black. The source of vessels in this fabric is uncertain, but the ware is similar to Fabric C.5A except in its colour and may be an Alice Holt variant from an outlying group of kilns.

C.10. Dark blue-grey fabric with profuse quartz (up to 0.20 mm) and sparse subangular colourless quartz (up to 0.50 mm) and ill-defined black carbonaceous smudges. Possibly a late Hardham product. One sherd came from Ditch 5.

C.11. Oxidized orange fabric with sparse subangular red ironstone (up to 1.00 mm) and sparse irregular white grog up to 5.00 mm.

C.12. Handmade sandy black fabric with profuse rounded and subangular colourless quartz. An early Roman fabric, not present in Ditch 5.

C.13. Hard gritty-brown fabric with colourless quartz (0.10 to 0.50 mm) and red ironstone and calcite (up to 0.50 mm). An early Roman fabric.

Roman finewares

F.1A. Oxfordshire Red Colour-coated wares (Young 1977, 123). Sherds were present in both the corn-drier (?) and the ditch. Forms include C51 (AD 240–400+), FC16/18 (AD 270–400+), FC84 (AD 325–400+), FC75 (AD 325–400+) and C82 (AD 325–400+).

F.1B. Oxfordshire Whitewares (Young 1977, 56). One 4th-century mortarium came from Ditch 5.

F.2. Pevensey ware (Fulford 1973). The forms include jars, otherwise unknown in this industry's typology.

Saxon fabrics

S.1. Handmade black fabric with profuse subangular colourless quartz (up to 0.10 mm) and sparse irregular lime inclusions (up to 0.50 mm). Early Saxon.

S.2. Very coarse black fabric with profuse crushed angular grey and white non-calcined flint filler (up to 3.00 mm) and occasional red ironstone,

fired patchy reddish-brown with very rough surfaces. Middle Saxon. One closed form body sherd came from Context 9.

The assemblages

GROUP 1. The early Roman features

The earlier Roman pottery assemblages are very small and characterized by a predominance of Fabric C.1. Full details of these assemblages are housed with the archive.

GROUP 2. The corn-drier

A small pottery assemblage came from beneath the slabs of the corn-drier (Context 60, 16 sherds, 246 g). It comprised two pieces from an Oxfordshire colour coat Dr.38 copy, three sherds of Fabric C.2 and 11 sherds of Fabric C.9. The following pieces, both in Fabric C.9, are illustrated: developed beaded-and-flanged bowl (Fig. 5:20); rim from jar fired black (Fig. 5:21). The assemblage is of 4th-century character and the presence of the Fabric C.2 sherds suggests that it is probably later than AD 350 in date.

GROUP 3. The ditch (Cut 5, Fill 7)

The bulk of the pottery from the site came from this feature and was sufficient for quantification by numbers of sherds, weight and EVES (Table 2, fiche). The most significant single fabric in this assemblage is Overwey/Portchester D ware (C.6). The only excavated kilns where such wares have been shown to be made are those at Overwey in West Surrey (Clark 1950). Fragments have also been found on late 4th-century waster dumps in Alice Holt, however, indicating that such wares were also made there alongside the standard grey wares (Lyne & Jefferies 1979). A number of late 4th-century sites in East Sussex such as Truleigh Hill, Wolstonbury and Burgess Hill have high percentages of Overwey products, whereas quantities on West Sussex sites tend to be somewhat smaller.

The kilns in East Sussex which produced Overwey-type products, like the others, were also late 4th-century in date, continuing into the early 5th century. The Burgess Hill ditch has the highest percentage

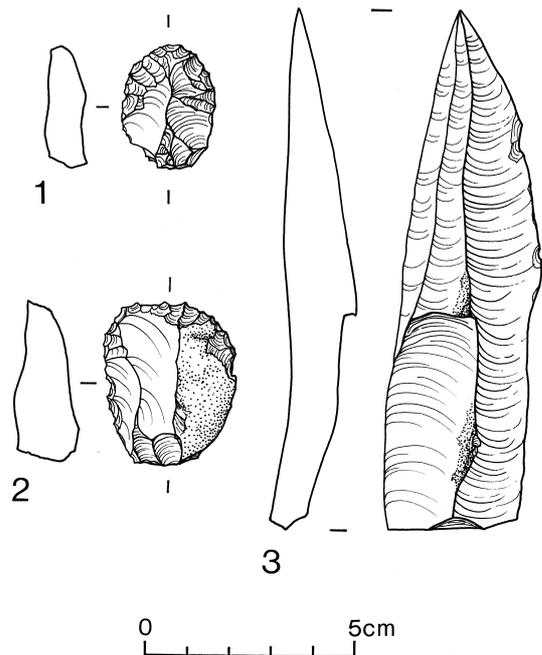


Fig. 4. Flintwork.

from a Sussex site east of the Adur. The Wolstonbury site (Holleyman 1935) on the escarpment of the Downs south of Burgess Hill has the next highest percentage (25 per cent) and Truleigh Hill (21 per cent) had a clipped siliqua of Gratian in association. This would imply that the ditch assemblage is post-370 in date, although the necked bowl in Fabric C.8 is unlikely to be later than the middle of the century. It may, however, have been an old vessel still in use after 370. The rest of the pottery looks later than 370 and the presence of rounded cooking-pot base in an early Saxon fabric suggests that some at least of this assemblage was deposited during the early to mid 5th century.

Catalogue (Fig. 5) All Context 7

1. Jar (Fabric C.2A).
2. Similar jar in very rough blue-grey Fabric C.2B.
3. Similar, but smaller, vessel in blue-grey Fabric C.2B with patchy external reddening.
4. Small jar in black Fabric C.2A fired patchy-grey-black orange-brown externally and brown internally.
5. Beaded-and-flanged bowl in black Fabric C.2A.
6. Another example, in extremely coarse patchy grey-black Fabric C.2b.
7. Another example, in patchy black/grey/buff Fabric C.2B.
8. Store jar rim in very rough brown Fabric C.4.
9. Beaded-and-flanged bowl in brown Fabric C.9 fired black externally.
10. Deep convex-sided dish in grey Fabric C.5A with external blackening. One of two.
11. Strainer rim in grey-brown Fabric C.5B fired grey-black (Lyne & Jefferies 1979, Type SC.2).
12. Jar with moulded hook-rim, in cream-grey Fabric C.6.
13. Similar, but plainer, hooked rim from horizontally-rilled cooking-pot in grey Fabric C.6 fired pink-buff.
14. Beaded-and-flanged bowl in similar fabric.
15. Necked bowl rim in orange Fabric C.8 fired pale grey.
16. Dr.38 copy in soft orange Fabric F.IA.
17. Mortarium of Type M.22 in Fabric F.1B (Young 1977).
18. Jar rim in Fabric F.3.
19. Another jar rim in similar fabric.

METALWORK AND SLAG

By Luke Barber

The excavations produced six pieces of iron and one copper-alloy object. This virtual absence of metalwork should be seen as the result of the acidic ground conditions rather than as a true reflection of the actual usage on site. All the metalwork came from Context 7 and consisted of five heavily corroded iron nails of indeterminate form plus the pointed tip of a possible tool. The only piece of copper alloy was from a heavily corroded and broken plain penannular brooch.

Twenty-six pieces of slag and one fragment of forge lining were recovered from the site. All the material consisted of iron forging slag; no smelting waste was present in the assemblage. Only two contexts produced slag. The bulk of the material, including the fragment of lining (23 pieces), came from the fill of Ditch 5 (Fill 7). Four further pieces of forge slag were located in Hearth 19 (Fill 20). The relatively low density of slag on the site demonstrates that neither primary or secondary iron-working was taking place on any scale. The material present is therefore likely to be the result of intermittent secondary working to produce items such as nails when required.

GEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

By Luke Barber

The excavation produced 47 pieces of geological material (other than flint) from five different contexts. Thirty-three pieces were of iron-rich Wealden sandstones which could have been collected from the immediate vicinity of the site. Three water-rounded quartzite pebbles were also present (Context 7). These may have been obtainable from Wealden streams or brought from further afield, perhaps for use as smoothing or polishing stones. Only eight fragments of worked stone were present, all from Context 7. Three of these were fragments of fine-grained sandstone with one face on each piece showing smoothing through wear. It is likely these were all parts of a large stationary sharpening stone. The remainder were all pieces of buff granular quartz sandstone from rotary querns. There were at least two stones present but all the pieces were too small to establish whether upper or lower stones are represented.

THE CHARCOAL

By Sophie Seel

Introduction

Nine soil samples containing charcoal were recovered from the site. Owing to the quantity of charcoal present a sub-sampling strategy was employed, details of which are housed with the archive. This published report presents the results of a relatively brief analysis of some of these samples in terms of species identification. Botanical nomenclature follows that of Stace (1991). A full charcoal report is housed with the archive.

Results

Two hundred and twenty-eight fragments were analyzed from six samples. Of these, 218 fragments were identified. The results of the analysis are provided in Table 3 (fiche). Analysis of the charcoal assemblage indicates a relatively limited arboreal flora. Taking the five taxa identified as a whole, a surrounding vegetation of open, mixed deciduous woodland may be tentatively suggested.

The assemblage was recovered from several context types which should be considered prior to interpretation of the charcoal. The majority of contexts are clearly a result of human activity, i.e. hearths, and as such should be treated with caution when attempting environmental reconstructions. Indeed, the limited species diversity from these features indicates cultural biasing of the assemblage. Perhaps the most useful context for vegetational reconstruction is that of Context 7 (ditch fill). This context contains the most diverse species assemblage and, as a ditch feature, the taxa present are possibly less likely to be the sole product of deliberate human selection.

The most abundant taxon identified from the assemblage as a whole is *Quercus* sp. Given the preference of *Quercus robur* (pedunculate oak) for the heavier clay soils of southern Britain (Godwin 1975), it is suggested that this species, rather than *Q. petraea* (sessile oak) is represented in the assemblage. Given the Late Roman date for the present site, it seems unlikely that the local vegetation could have remained in a primary state amongst episodic and permanent clearance in the area from the Mesolithic to Roman periods. It is therefore suggested that the

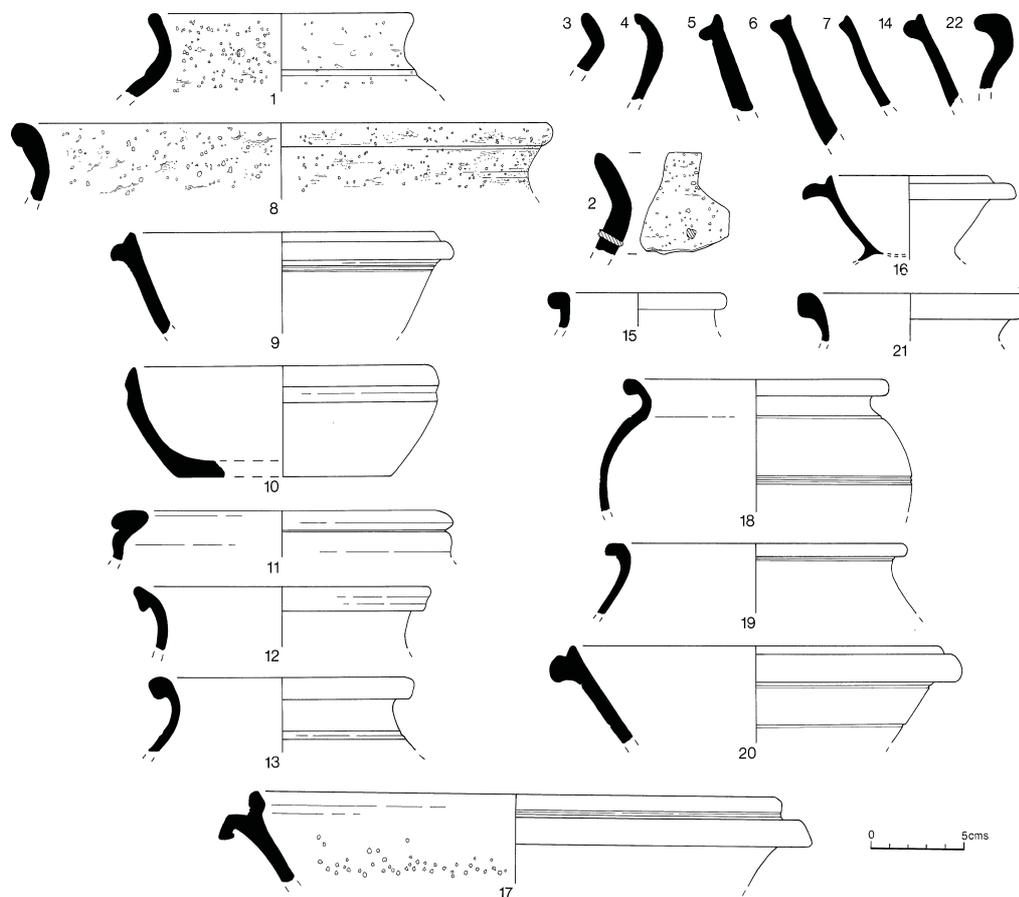


Fig. 5. Pottery.

arboreal vegetation around the site was secondary woodland/scrub in which *Quercus* was abundant.

The majority of the other species represented in the assemblage are light-demanding and further indicate open woodland conditions. In particular, *Prunus* sp. (blackthorn and/ or wild cherry) and *Acer campestre* (field maple) require light for establishment and growth and will only flourish given such conditions. *Corylus avellana* (hazel) does not specifically require open conditions for growth but will fail to produce nuts if shaded.

Also abundant in the assemblage are members of the Pomoideae family. Of the possible taxa represented by the charcoal, *Crataegus monogyna* (hawthorn) is the most common component of oakwoods on clay soils (Tansley 1911) and probably comprised the majority of Pomoideae in the palaeoenvironment. This species is well suited to the possible open woodland structure suggested for the palaeoenvironment.

The demands on woodland resources made by bridge and ship building, and particularly in the Weald, by iron-working, were great during the Roman period (Rackham 1993). As a result, the Romans managed their woodlands extensively, especially in the form of coppicing. Tansley (1911) states that until the beginning of this century the most common coppice-withstandards in the Weald consisted of *Q. robur* as the standard, and *Corylus* as the main shrub species. Also present in well-managed coppice were *Fraxinus* (ash), *Betula* (birch) and *Acer*. It is possible that the vegetation, from which the Context 7 charcoal originated, represents recently neglected

coppiced woodland. This would account for the dominance of *Q. robur* and fits well with the species composition of the charcoal assemblage as a whole.

Aside from the ditch-fill charcoal assemblage, the other contexts from Burgess Hill produced a limited species composition with a clear weighting towards *Quercus* fragments. This is particularly the case for Contexts 44 (hearth), 60 (corn-drier) and 1/2 (hearth). Such a dominance of one species suggests deliberate selection of taxa for specific purposes.

CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

By Pat Hinton

Four of the nine studied samples (Hearth 1, fill 2; Hearth 19, fills 20 and 21; and Cut 67, fill 24) included no plant remains other than charcoal. Four others (Ditch fill 7; Hearth 25, fill 26; Hearth 28, fill 29; and Hearth 44, fill 45) contained only very few charred seeds, but the sample from the corn-drier flue (Context 60) yielded evidence of cereals and probable crop weeds. Results are listed in Table 4 (fiche) where the nomenclature and order, except for cereals, follows Stace (1991).

Cultivated plants

Wheat grains cannot safely be assigned to species without diagnostic items of chaff but some sufficiently well-preserved grains from the corn-drier flue have characteristics of the glumed wheats *Triticum dicoccum* (emmer) or *Triticum spelta* (spelt), and fortunately there are sufficient

of the glume bases essential for identification to confirm the presence of both species. Spelt appears to be the more numerous, and is in fact the major wheat of the later Roman period when emmer occurs much less frequently.

The *Hordeum vulgare* (hulled barley) grains are in slightly better condition and it is possible to discern a natural asymmetry in one grain, which identifies it as a lateral grain of 6-row barley.

The presence of *Avena* sp. (oats) is indicated by two very small fragments of awns and a very damaged grain. Although listed with the cereals, it may not represent a cultivated oat and it is more than likely a weed of the other cereal crops.

Wild plants

All the other plants in the corn-drier sample might occur in cultivated fields, although the water peppers (*Polygonum hydropiper* or *P. laxiflora*) characteristically grow in muddy places such as ditch or stream sides. *Anthemis cotula* (stinking mayweed) was once a very common weed and both of these plants would be appropriate to fields on the heavy clay of this area.

The wheat and barley grains, chaff fragments and field weeds probably represent by-products of crop preparation procedures which subsequently formed part of the fuel for the kiln.

The few remains in the other four samples are likely to be part of the usual background scatter of charred fragments which is found on most sites, and although the two fragments of nut shell in Context 45 might be remnants of gathered hazel nuts, they seem more likely to relate to the large amount (c. 400 ml) of charred wood in this sample.

DISCUSSION

Owing to the restricted nature of the excavations, only limited interpretation can be made about the occupation at the site and much of this relies heavily on the artefacts and ecofacts recovered. In particular, evidence of building structures is lacking and this may be due in part to site ground conditions

be said regarding the settlement morphology. However, the cumulative evidence of excavated artefacts and features enable some general observations to be made regarding the occupation. The two late Roman features are substantial: a ditch (Cut 5) and a flint and sandstone-built structure, thought to be a corn-drying oven. The latter lacks the usual burnt deposit associated with an oven/furnace. It is therefore possible it was never used or, if it was, that use was infrequent. A number of corn-drying ovens have been found in Sussex, for example at Ranscombe Hill, Fishbourne and Bullock Down (Bedwin 1976; Rudkin 1986; Rudling 1982). They are common on agricultural settlements, although they have not frequently been found on the high-status villa sites. Although they all vary to a certain extent, the basic morphology of the ovens is similar to that of the Burgess Hill example. The presence of emmer and spelt wheat, barley and cultivation weeds from this feature suggests arable cultivation in the area. This theory is strengthened by the

rather than to actual absence. The nature of the subsoil and feature fills was also problematic at times. Features with dark fills or fills containing charcoal were easily located; those with a fill similar to the clay subsoil, however, proved extremely difficult to trace.

Prehistoric activity on the site is indicated by the scatter of worked flint, some of which is Mesolithic but the majority appears to be of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date. The assemblage is similar to that recently recovered from an adjacent site at Maltings Farm, Burgess Hill (Butler 1999). It is assumed that the implements are the result of hunting expeditions into the Wealden forest from the base-camps on the Lower Greensand ridge, two kilometres south of Burgess Hill.

The Upper Palaeolithic blade/burin is important as it is the first evidence of activity of this period found in the area. It was discovered approximately half a metre from the surface, in the machine section originally excavated for the placement of a new road. Unfortunately, until more material of this date is found in the area, little can be said regarding this early presence.

The most extensive archaeological evidence from the site comes from the 1st to 4th century AD and points to semi-permanent or permanent occupation of this apparently open wooded area. The Weald was heavily exploited during Roman times for iron-working, but evidence of occupation and land-use in Burgess Hill has so far been limited, despite the presence of the Roman road. The Romano-British assemblage is of particular importance because it includes evidence of late Roman occupation of the Weald as opposed to the more common earlier occupation usually found.

Owing to the low quantities and dispersed nature of the Romano-British features on the site, little can conclusively be said regarding the presence of quernstone fragments. Their presence indicates that if arable crops were not being grown on the surrounding Weald clay, they were at least processed in the area. The exact whereabouts of the cultivated fields, whether on the Weald Clay, Greensand or Chalk, cannot therefore be established at present with any certainty. Animal bone was absent from the site, but this is undoubtedly the result of the acidic soil conditions, as a mixed agricultural economy is likely considering the closeness of the Weald for foraging animals. Until deposits containing animal bone are found in this area, little can therefore be said about animal husbandry at this time.

The small quantities of iron-forging slag found in Ditch 5 and Hearth 19 suggests small-scale secondary iron-working for the needs of the site. Certainly iron-working was common in the Weald during Roman times and blooms from iron-smelting sites could easily have been brought to Burgess Hill for secondary working into required objects. Only one hearth

(Cut 25, fill 26), with early Roman pottery, showed potential evidence of the high firing-temperatures needed for the secondary working of iron.

Saxon activity on the site is suggested, but only in the form of two sherds of pottery. The fact that one of these sherds was in a post-hole suggests other structural features of this period may have been present but were not located owing to the adverse ground conditions. The lack of Saxon material culture would, however, suggest occupation was never intense. More evidence of Saxon activity is being found in the area (Butler forthcoming) and future work at Burgess Hill will hopefully shed more light on this elusive period.

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