

Excavation of a Mesolithic occupation site and a Saxon building to the rear of Upper Bognor Road, Bognor Regis, West Sussex

by Greg Priestley-Bell

with contributions from

Luke Barber

Rowena Gale

Pat Hinton &

Lucy Sibun

A small-scale excavation was undertaken in November 2001, following evaluation of the site in July of the same year. Mesolithic features and flintwork were identified, including evidence for a possible structure. Neolithic/Bronze Age and Roman activity was also represented within the finds assemblages and a single Roman feature identified. A Saxon building associated with late sixth- to early/mid seventh-century pottery provides important evidence for the Early–Mid Saxon period.

INTRODUCTION

In 2001, Archaeology South-East (a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit) was commissioned by Crayfern Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological field evaluation of land (hereafter ‘the site’), to the rear of Nos 43–47 Upper Bognor Road, Bognor Regis, West Sussex (Fig. 1) (NGR SZ 9400 9978).

The site is located on the eastern outskirts of Bognor Regis town, bordered to the south by Northcliffe House on Upper Bognor Road and to the north, east and west by properties on Mead Lane. Back gardens to Northcliffe House (formerly Spencer Terrace) had formerly occupied the site; the gardens had been divided by existing flint walls and had contained a number of sheds (now demolished). The site lies at c. 5 m AOD on the edge of a slight terrace which comprises highly variable geology.

The initial work at the site consisted of an evaluation to establish the presence of any archaeological remains which might be affected by the proposed development. This evaluation, consisting of five trial trenches and a geoarchaeological test-pit (Fig. 2), was carried out by Archaeology South-East in July 2001 (Griffin 2001) and identified concentrations of worked flint (including a microlith), possibly associated with two features. A pit of probable Roman date was also identified, together with a number of features relating to post-

medieval and modern activity on the site. Based on the results of the evaluation West Sussex County Council recommended that additional archaeological investigation and recording should take place prior to development. This comprised a topsoil strip under archaeological supervision which was followed by the excavation of any visible features. This stage of the work was carried out by Archaeology South-East in November 2001 and revealed significant prehistoric and Saxon remains.

This report deals primarily with the excavation, but the results of the evaluation are summarised and referred to where relevant. Full details of both elements of work are housed with the archive in Chichester Museum.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

PREHISTORIC

Mesolithic

The evaluation did not identify any definite Mesolithic features. Despite this, a significant quantity of worked flint was recovered, including Mesolithic material from three later and/or unsealed contexts: 5, 9 and 11. While this material must be regarded as residual, its reasonably fresh condition suggested that it had not moved far.

In contrast to the evaluation, the excavation identified a group of predominantly elongate features that contained well-sealed silty fills producing flintwork, including diagnostic Earlier Mesolithic

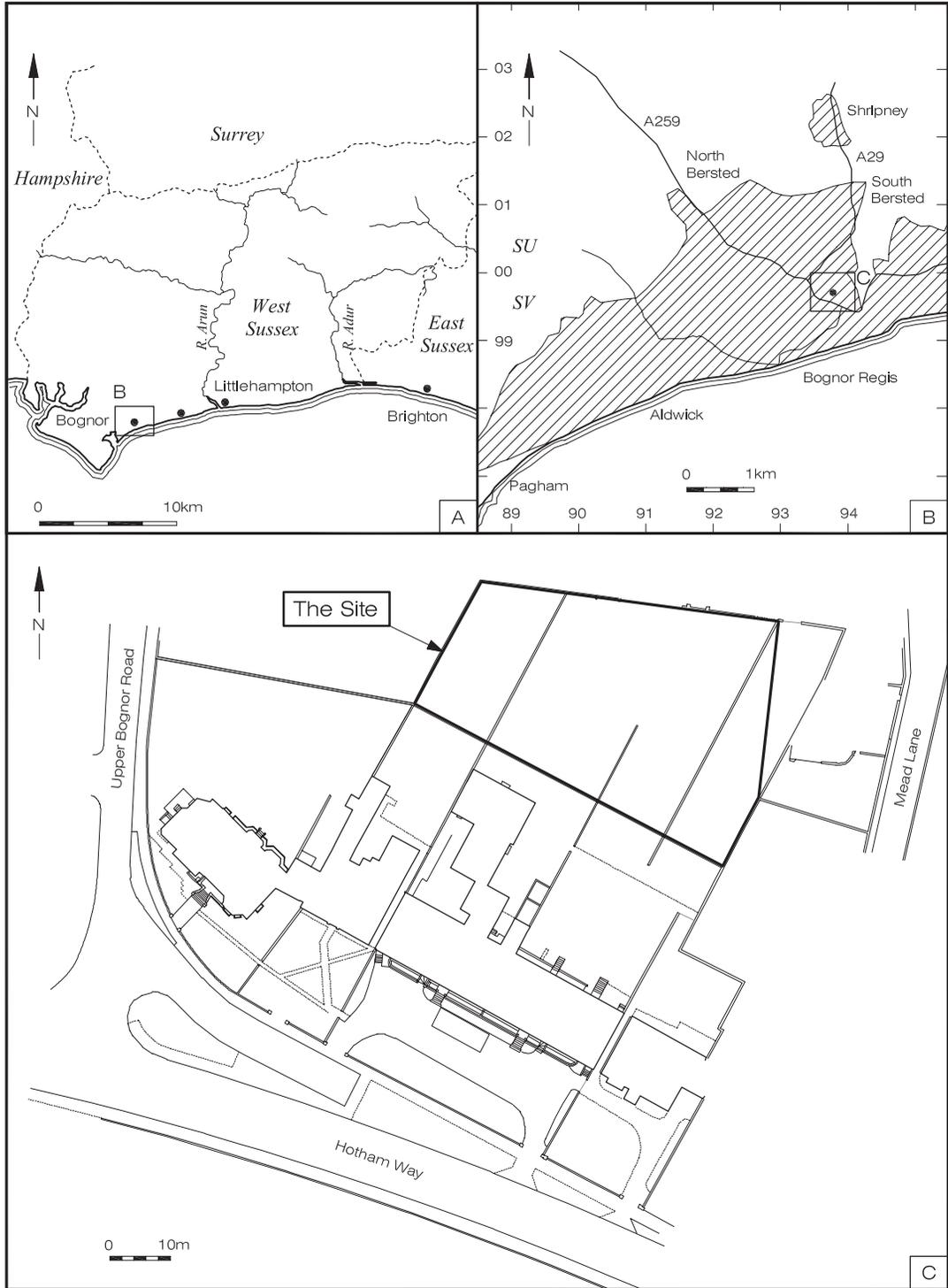


Fig. 1. Site location.

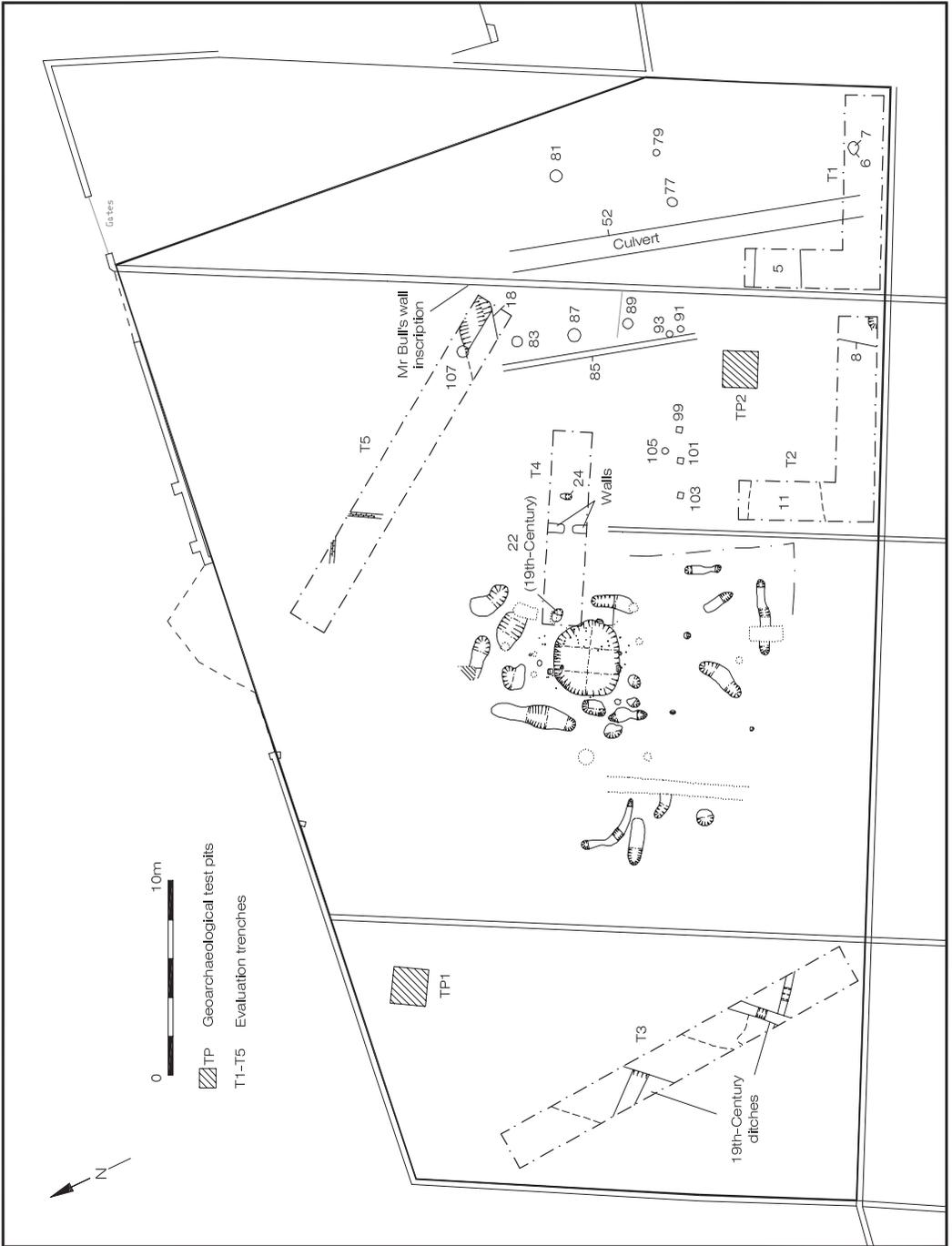


Fig. 2. Site plan.

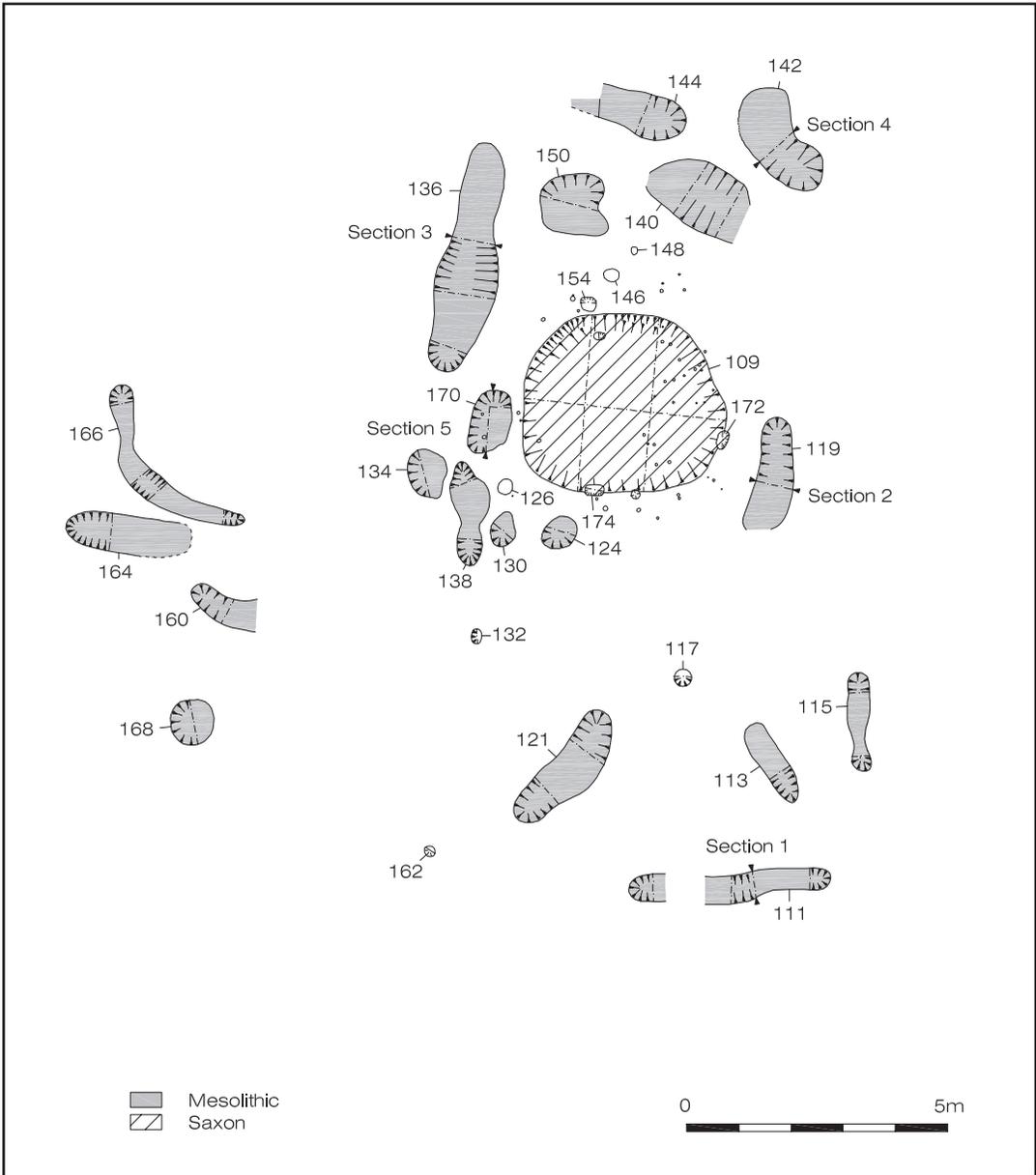


Fig. 3. Phased plans: Mesolithic and Saxon.

material. These features included: a short section of gully (Fig. 3:111 & Fig. 4:S1) whose fill (112) contained a small flint assemblage of Mesolithic character, including a tranchet flake; a short curving gully (Fig. 3:119 & Fig. 4:S2) with a fill (120) that produced over 250 pieces of worked flint, including micro-debitage and a tranchet flake;

another short curving gully (Fig. 3:121), produced some possibly Mesolithic flintwork and a short section of ditch or gully (Fig. 3:136 & Fig. 4:S3) with a fill (137) that yielded over 60 pieces of worked flint of Mesolithic character, including two end-scrapers. Three shallow pits (Fig. 3:140, 142, 150 & Fig. 4:S4) located at the northern end of the group of

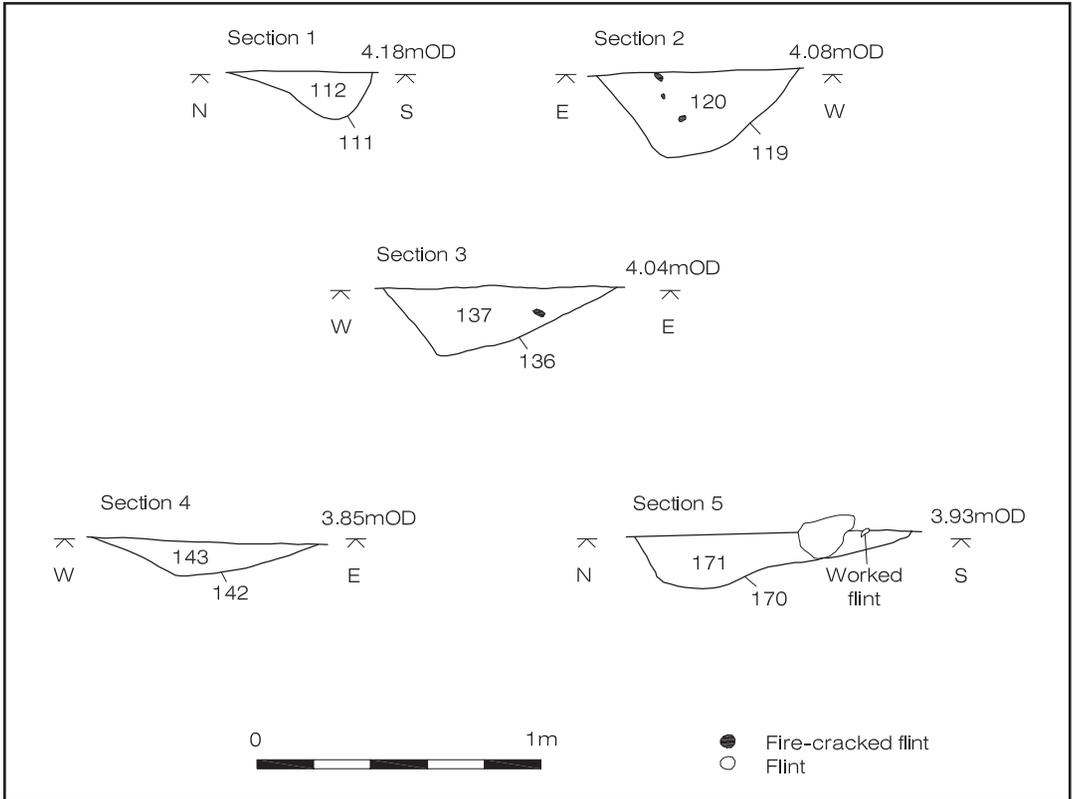


Fig. 4. Sections 1–5.

features, also produced flint assemblages, including micro-debitage and a small tranchet adze, of Mesolithic character.

Other features can also be considered as Mesolithic in date. A shallow pit or short gully (144) lay immediately to the north of pit 140 and produced a small quantity of undiagnostic flintwork. Two pits/post-holes (Fig. 3:134 & 170, Fig. 4:55), with silty fills (135 & 171), produced further quantities of worked flint of Mesolithic character, including a microlith from fill 135. An undated short irregular gully (Fig. 3:138) was apparently respected by pit 134 and was therefore likely to have been broadly contemporary. The fills of two further probable post-holes (Fig. 3:124/fill 125 & 130/fill 131) and two short gullies (Fig. 3:113/fill 114 & 115/fill 116) to the south-east also produced small quantities of undiagnostic flintwork.

Eleven of the features (119, 124, 130, 134, 136, 138, 140, 142, 144, 150 & 170) formed a broadly rectangular arrangement measuring c. 7 m by 8 m. This could represent the site of a light structure or

shelter. The extent of the apparent focus of activity compares very closely with that identified at the early Post-Glacial site at Iping Common (Keef *et al.* 1965) on the Greensand ridge. At Iping Common, although no potential structural features were identified, a roughly circular area of stained sand measuring c. 8 m in diameter produced a very large Mesolithic worked flint assemblage. While the much greater quantity of artefacts from Iping suggested a longer and/or more intense period of occupation, the interpretation of the Iping site as the temporary camp of a small hunting group could well be applied to the current site, particularly considering that flintwork on the original land surface is likely to have been lost by subsequent cultivation/truncation.

Five other features (Fig. 3:111, 113, 115, 121 and perhaps 117) may represent the site of another light structure immediately to the south of the structure defined above. This second putative structure would have measured c. 5 m in diameter. There is no reason to suppose that these were

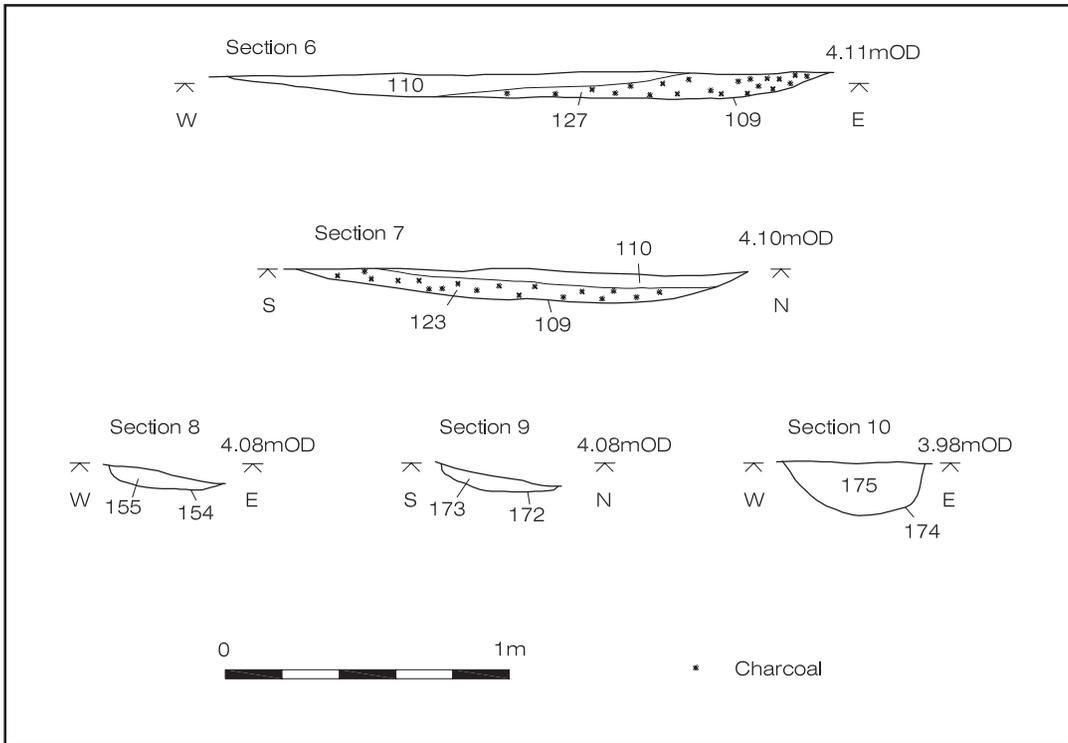


Fig. 5. Sections 6–10.

contemporary structures and they may represent separate phases of activity.

A group of four features (Fig. 3:160, 164, 166 & 168) lay c. 3 m west of the first structure. A short curving gully (160) contained a silty fill (161) that produced a significant quantity of worked flint of broadly Mesolithic character. Another short gully (164) produced a quantity of undiagnostic flint waste flakes, while an undated curving gully (166) lay immediately to the north of gully 164; the morphology of the feature and the character of the fill (167) suggested an association with nearby Mesolithic features. A circular pit/post-hole (168) produced a small quantity of undiagnostic flintwork; again the character of the fill (169) suggested an association with the main group of features.

Finally, a single isolated feature, possibly a post-hole (Fig. 2:79) produced a single flint waste flake and a small quantity of fire-cracked flint. This feature may have been associated with the Mesolithic flintwork from evaluation trench 1 to the south or with the later prehistoric remains described below.

Neolithic/Bronze Age

No features of Neolithic and Bronze Age date were identified. However, perhaps 10% to 15% of the waste flint flakes were of a Neolithic/Bronze Age character (*see* The Worked Flint). These may have been the result of opportunistic knapping events and a residual Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead from context 70 is further evidence that the Coastal Plain, particularly in the vicinity of watercourses, attracted prehistoric hunters over a long period.

ROMANO-BRITISH

Only a single feature of probable Romano-British date was identified. This was a disturbed amorphous cut (Fig. 2:107), probably the northern extension of cut 18 excavated in evaluation trench T5, which contained a small assemblage of abraded Romano-British pottery. While no independent dating evidence was recovered from cut 107 during the excavation, a small quantity of abraded Romano-British pottery was recovered from cut 18 during the evaluation. Although cut 18 was provisionally identified as a ditch during

the evaluation, it was later clear that it represented an amorphous pit partly disturbed by a modern unexcavated service trench (Fig. 2:85). A small pit/post-hole (Fig. 2:83) close to cut 107 produced a single very abraded sherd of Romano-British pottery. The abraded nature of the pottery from both features suggests the possibility that it might be residual and intrusive.

SAXON

A sub-rectangular shallow cut (Fig. 3:109 & Fig. 5: S6 & S7) contained a lower fill (123) of very dark blackish-brown clayey silt with 1% charcoal and occasional fire-cracked flint and burnt clay. Context 123 was partly overlain by an upper fill (110) of medium/dark yellowish-brown clayey silt with occasional flints. Fill 110 produced 62 sherds of late sixth- to early/mid-seventh-century Saxon pottery, together with a small quantity of burnt clay/daub and part of a residual Roman floor tile. Fill 123 produced 120 sherds of Saxon pottery, a few fragments of burnt clay/daub and two pieces of undiagnostic iron slag.

Cut 109 probably represented a Sunken Featured Building (SFB) or *Grubenhäuser*: a small hut with a sunken floor. There is significant evidence that these structures were perhaps used for craft work, in particular for weaving, rather than as domestic dwellings. Clay loom weights are frequently found in SFBs, sometimes discovered in rows, as at Old Erringham (Holden 1976), where they had apparently fallen from the loom.

Three small post-holes (Fig. 3:154, 172 & 174; Fig. 5:S8, S9, S10), lay on the northern, eastern and southern edge respectively of cut 109. Although no independent dating evidence was recovered, the character of the dark silty fills with occasional charcoal (155, 173 & 175 respectively) indicated that post-holes 154, 172 and 174 were almost certainly contemporary with cut 109. Two possibly associated undated post-holes (Fig. 3:146 & 148) lay just to the north-east of post-hole 154. At least 22 stake-holes were identified within cut 109, predominantly in the eastern half; an additional 20 stake-holes lay just outside, but within one metre of cut 109.

Post-holes 154, 172 and 174 were set in a tripod formation indicating timbers that perhaps supported the roof. The stake-holes close to the edge of cut 109 probably represented the position of wattle uprights that supported the walls of the SFB, while the internal stake-holes perhaps represented an

internal division or some light structure associated with a specialised activity. Although the excavated SFB did not exhibit the classic plan of this category of structure: a major post-hole set at either end of the hollow (e.g. Itford Farm: James 2002), other examples of SFBs from Sussex are known without such post-holes (Site A at Friars Oak, Hassocks, Butler 2000). It is possible these represent lighter structures or a different type of construction used on wetter soils.

POST-MEDIEVAL/MODERN

A number of post-holes, sometimes forming alignments, were located across the site (e.g. Fig. 2:91, 99, 103, 77, 81, 83 etc.). Owing to the very humic nature of the fills and the presence of modern materials, including concrete and iron, the features were usually left unexcavated. These features probably relate to modern fenced boundaries and/or to one of a number of wooden sheds that occupied the site until recently.

A substantial brick-built culvert (Fig. 2:52) ran for at least 18m across the site; the feature continued northwards and southwards into unexcavated areas. The culvert was probably contemporary with late-eighteenth- to early-nineteenth-century residences that fronted Upper Bognor Road to the south of the site, and would have carried waste water away to the north. A large quantity of glass bottles, china and tins within one section of the culvert suggested that it had gone out of use by the early twentieth century. A significant amount of late-nineteenth-century pottery recorded from nearby evaluation trench 1 was further evidence that the area had latterly been used for the disposal of domestic rubbish.

One of the existing boundary walls incorporated a large stone block which was the width of the wall and was inscribed both sides 'Mr Bull's Wall 1851'. The wall was built of dressed flint blocks and it was likely that a significant quantity of unstratified larger flint flakes from this area of the site derived from *in situ* knapping during its construction. Small areas of iron staining noted on some of the flakes may have been the result of the use of iron hammers.

UNPHASED FEATURES

An undated post-hole (Fig. 3:126) lay within 500 mm of the south-western edge of the SFB and was perhaps associated with it. Three further undated

post-holes (Fig. 3:117, 132 & 162) lay between 3 m to 8 m to the south of the SFB. A single sherd of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery from

post-hole 117 was likely to have been residual. Post-holes 126, 132 and 162 formed an alignment and were possibly contemporary.

THE FINDS

THE POTTERY by Luke Barber

The evaluation and subsequent excavation at the site produced a combined total of 369 sherds weighing 6415 g. The 167 sherds (4264 g) from the evaluation are predominantly composed of a single mid- to late-nineteenth-century group, which accounted for 148 of the sherds (4077 g: Trench 1, Context 7). The remainder of the evaluation assemblage consists of six abraded Roman sand-tempered sherds from pit 18 (Fill 19, Trench 5) and an assortment of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century earthenwares. A full listing of this material is housed with the archive.

The assemblage from the subsequent excavations (202 sherds) is also of a number of different periods. The earliest pottery consists of a small scrap (1 g) of probable Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age flint-tempered ware from Context 118. Small and abraded Romano-British material, probably intrusive, is again present (Contexts 84 and 112) and may be the result of manuring. A number of small groups of eighteenth- to nineteenth-century material were also identified. However, by far the majority of the assemblage from the excavation belongs to the Anglo-Saxon period. Although the 182 Saxon sherds, from only two contexts (cut 109: fills 110 & 123), is a small assemblage, it is considered to be of particular interest owing to the paucity of pottery of such a date from the Coastal Plain, and indeed from Sussex as a whole. This being so, this report has concentrated on this material alone. Details of the earlier and later pottery are housed with the archive.

The Saxon material from fills 110 and 123 was divided into one of five fabric groups based on a visual examination of the tempering and inclusions of each sherd using a $\times 20$ hand lens where necessary. Codes in brackets refer to the currently developing West Sussex fabric reference collection.

The fabrics

Five interrelated fabrics were identified.

F1 – Flint-tempered with some coarse quartz (WS/F/AS1)

A low- to medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate to abundant semiangular to semi-rounded flint (white, grey, black, red, brown) and sparse quartz (clear and milky) grits to 1.5 mm. No or very rare fine sand. Variable in colour but usually black throughout, though some sherds have dull brown orange patches. Cat. No. 3.

F2 – Coarse quartz and flint (WS/Q+F/AS1)

A low- to medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate to

abundant rounded quartz (clear and milky) and sparse to moderate semiangular to semi-rounded flint (white, grey, black, red, brown) grits to 1.5 mm. Sparse fine to medium quartz sand. Variable in colour but usually black throughout, though some sherds have dull brown orange patches. This fabric is obviously closely related to F1 (WS/F/AS1), but has notably more quartz grits.

Cat. Nos 1 and 2.

F3 – Coarse to fine quartz-tempered with flint inclusions (WS/Q+F/AS2)

A low- to medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate to abundant semi-rounded quartz (clear and milky) grits to 1.5 mm. Abundant fine to medium quartz sand. Sparse semiangular flint (white, grey, black, red, brown). Variable in colour but usually black throughout, though some sherds have dull brown orange patches. Although related, this fabric is distinct from F2 (WS/Q+F/AS1) in having abundant fine sand giving a very sandy texture between the coarser inclusions.

F4 – Abundant fine sand with sparse coarse flint and quartz inclusions (WS/Q+F/AS3)

A low- to medium-fired fabric tempered with abundant fine sand with sparse semi-rounded quartz (clear and milky) grits and semiangular flint (white, grey, black, red, brown) to 1.5 mm. All sherds were black throughout. Some light burnishing is present on some sherds. This fabric is a hybrid between F3 (WS/Q+F/AS2) and F5 (WS/Q/AS1) though obviously using the same tempering sources.

F5 – Abundant fine to medium sand (WS/Q/AS1)

A medium-fired fabric tempered with abundant fine to medium clear quartz. All sherds were black throughout. Some light burnishing is present on some sherds. This fabric is rare at the site and may be of earlier (fifth to sixth century) Saxon date.

The pottery groups

Contexts 110 and 123 were fills in the same cut and both groups appear to have a similar fabric composition and therefore date. Sherds from some vessels appear in both contexts, though this may be due to slight mixing during excavation. The assemblages are summarised below in Table 1.

Only a few feature sherds are present in these small context groups. These consist of 11 rim and three base angle sherds from a minimum of four vessels (Fabrics 1, 2 & 3). It is quite probable that more vessels in these fabrics are represented, but the patchy nature of their firing makes the positive identification of individual vessels difficult. In addition, the presence of two further fabrics (F4 & F5) shows that at least six vessels are represented. The comparative rarity of the latter fabrics may indicate they were the remains of pots in earlier-type fabrics. The vessels consist of simple jars/cooking-pots with out-turned rims and rounded bases, although one possible verti-

Table 1. Quantification of fabrics in Contexts 110 and 123 (No./weight).

Context	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	Totals
110	9/68 g	15/300 g	36/164 g	-	2/20 g	62/552 g
123	45/676 g	13/330 g	57/228 g	5/40 g	-	120/1274 g
Totals	54/744 g	28/630 g	93/392 g	5/40 g	2/20 g	182/1826 g

cal-sided bowl is present with a simple rim (F1, Context 123). Such vessels, though in an earlier sandy fabric, are paralleled at Bishopstone (Bell 1977, fig. 102, nos 9–10).

Catalogue (Fig. 6)

- 1) Jar/cooking-pot with simple out-turned rim. Fabric 2. Context 110. At least 15 sherds are present from this vessel and although one rounded base sherd is present, it is not possible to reconstruct a full profile with certainty.
- 2) Jar/cooking-pot with simple out-turned bead rim. Fabric 2. Context 123. This small vessel also appears to have had a rounded base.
- 3) Jar/cooking-pot with simple out-turned, slightly thickened rim. Fabric 1. Context 123.

Discussion

It is difficult to be precise about the date of the assemblage. However, the closest parallels suggest that the material most probably dates to a period when flint-tempering was replacing the better-made earlier sandy wares of the Early Saxon period. The current assemblage does not have the developed rim forms of the Middle Saxon assemblages at Friars Oak, Hassocks and Medmerry (Lyne 2000; White 1934) and has more in common with the assemblage at Bishopstone (Bell 1977). The material is very close in date to, though probably slightly earlier than, that excavated close by at Bersted Street, Bognor (Barber 2006/*this volume*). This being so, a late sixth- to early/mid-seventh-century date seems likely.

THE WORKED FLINT

A total of 804 pieces of worked flint were recovered from 42 Contexts (Table 2). Analysis of the flintwork includes 135 pieces recovered during the evaluation (Contexts 2–25). Three principal sources of raw material were identified: approximately 90% of the assemblage apparently derived from downland flint typically consisting of light/medium grey, medium-/coarse-grained material with many inclusions and a thin yellowish-grey cortex; 5% of the assemblage derived from a dark grey fine-grained material with few inclusions and 5% from medium yellowish-grey, coarse-grained material with occasional inclusions. Only *c.* 2% of the assemblage was fire-cracked and less than 1% was patinated. The material was generally in fresh condition with little or no evidence of rolling. The absence of thermal fracture surfaces on the artefacts suggests that the raw material had

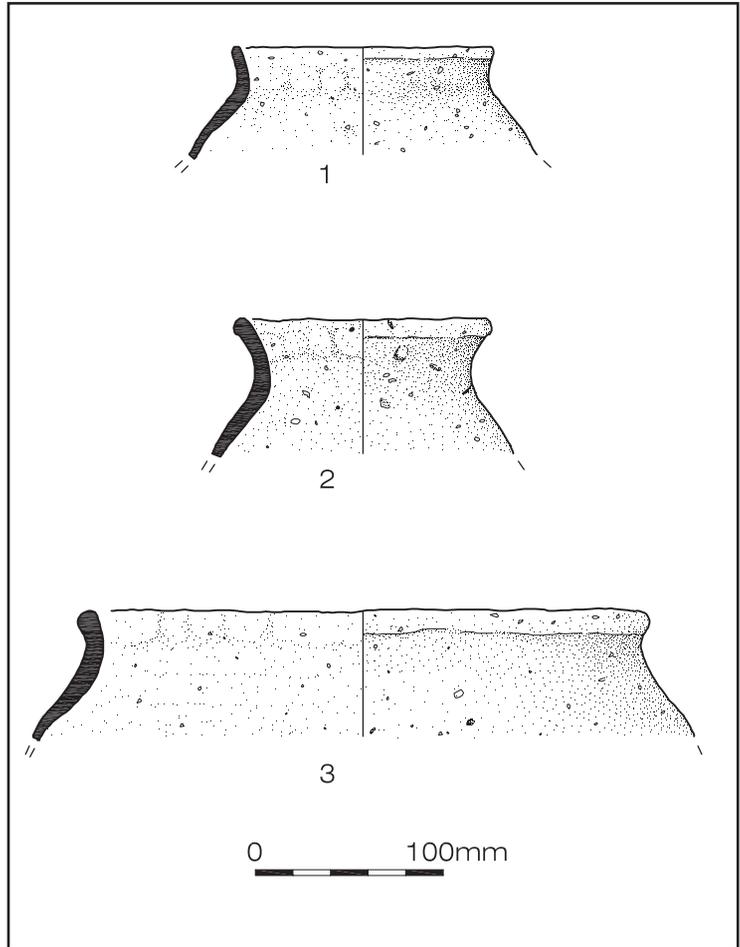


Fig. 6. Pottery.

probably been collected from fresh exposures in the chalk or chalk-stream beds.

Waste flakes

A total of 763 waste flakes were identified, of which *c.* 15% were of soft-hammer manufacture, the remainder being either hard-hammer or undiagnostic. Most of the soft-hammer material consisted of thinning, trimming and finishing flakes associated with biface or axe production. The butts of the waste flakes were predominantly flat with occasional cortical examples together with a few dihedral and winged examples. Linear, winged and punctiform platforms were present on 12 bladelets from various contexts. Approximately 29% of the waste flakes were cortical.

A significant proportion of the largest hard-hammer waste flakes from non-sealed contexts is likely to have resulted from the *in situ* dressing of flint blocks during the construction of nineteenth-century walls and other masonry structures since removed. Most of the large material from evaluation trench T5 is likely to fall into this category. Although iron staining on

Table 2. Frequencies for flint artefact categories and selected variables (by context).

Cxt/T	WF (inc.md)	SH	Core	Crx	Retouch/Diagnostic	Total	Dating
2/T3	1	-	-	-	1 uf	2	
5/T1	37	5	1	11	1 m, 1mp	39	Residual (Meso)
9/T2	2	-	-	2	1 tf	3	Residual (Meso)
11/T2	19	2	-	4	1 nf, 1 ss, 1 uf, 1 cb	24	Residual (Meso)
13/T3	4	1	1	2	-	5	Residual
17/T3	2	-	-	-	-	2	Residual
19/T5	47	2	4	14	3 uf, 1 nf	54	Residual (Neo/BA/PM)
21/T3	1	1	-	-	-	1	Residual
23/T4	2	-	-	1	-	2	Residual
25/T4	3	-	-	-	-	3	Residual
55	1	-	-	-	-	1	
70	19	6	5	15	1 lp, 3 uf, 1 nf, 1 d	30	Residual (Meso, Neo)
72	2	-	-	-	-	2	Residual
73	61	10	9	30	1 tf, 2 nf, 4 es, 1 sc, 1 uf, 1 gr/cb, 1 cb	58	Residual (Neo/BA/Meso)
76	12	2	1	3	1 uf	19	Meso?
80	1	-	-	1	-	1	
84	3	-	-	3	-	3	
85	6	-	-	-	-	6	
88	3	3	-	-	-	3	
90	1	-	-	-	-	1	
110	18	1	1	4	1 m?	20	Residual (Meso)
112	8	1	-	-	1 trf	9	Meso
114	4	-	-	2	-	4	
116	5	1	-	2	-	5	
120	255(135+)	60+	5	21	1 tf, 1 uf, 1 nf, 1 br, 2 mp, 1 trf, 1 pf	266	Meso
122	20	6	-	1	-	20	Meso?
123	25	1	1	3	1 br	27	Residual (Meso, Neo/BA)
125	6	-	-	1	-	6	
127	1	-	-	-	-	1	
131	1	-	-	-	-	1	
135	10	2	-	-	1 m	12	Meso
137	69	7	-	23	2 es, 1 uf, 1 hs	72	Meso
139	1?	-	-	-	-	1	
141	51	-	1	12	1 cb, 1 ub, 1 ta	55	Meso
143	1	-	-	-	1 tf	2	Meso
145	5	-	-	2	-	5	Neo?
151	21	2	1	7	-	22	Meso?
159	1	-	1	-	-	1	Meso
161	16	3	-	5	-	16	Meso?
165	8	2	-	4	1 tf?	9	Meso?
169	3	-	-	-	-	3	
171	6	-	1	-	-	7	Meso?
Totals	763	85	32	163	46	804	

Key for Table 2

Cxt=context, T=Evaluation Trench, WF=waste flake (inc. md=including micro-debitage), SH=soft hammer*, Crx=cortex**, br=borer, cb=crested blade, d=denticulated, es=end-scraper, gr=graver, hs=hammer-stone, lp=leaf-shaped arrowhead, m=microlith, mp=microlithic point, nf=notched flake, pf=plunging thinning flake, ss=side-scraper, ta=tranchet adze, tf=tranchet flake, trf=tranchet adze resharpening flake, ub=utilized blade, uf=utilized flake.

Dating: Meso=Mesolithic, Neo=Neolithic, BA=Bronze Age, PM=post-medieval, ()brackets denote residual or intrusive

* The term 'soft-hammer' is used here to describe a percussor of a material softer than flint. The analysis of soft/hard hammer flakes (all unclassified flakes are hard-hammer or undiagnostic) is based upon criteria described by F.F.Wenban-Smith (1989).

** Dorsal surface consists of 20%+ cortex

some of the pieces may have been caused by plough strikes, it is more likely to have been the result of the use of iron hammers during nineteenth-century flint knapping. A flint wall incorporating a stone bearing the inscription 'Mr. Bull's Wall 1851' still survives on the site.

Cores

A total of 32 cores were recovered from 13 contexts. These fell into two broad types: probably Neolithic or Bronze Age double or usually multi-platform globular cores that would have produced flakes of varying thickness and outline; and small pyramidal or bullet cores (example from context 159: Fig. 7:1) of probable Mesolithic origin that would have produced fairly regular flakes or bladelets.

Retouch/Diagnostic

A total of 13 utilized flakes were recovered (including a large utilized blade from 141) showing apparently unintentional retouch/use wear usually along one edge. Six end-scrapers and two side-scrapers of varying form were recovered; three of the end-scrapers (example from context 73: Fig. 7:2) were of typical Mesolithic character. A Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead was recovered from context 70. Additional retouched tools identified within the assemblage comprised one borer from fill 123 (Fig. 7:3), one graver, one denticulated piece and four notched flakes.

A single small tranchet adze (Fig. 7:4), probably made on a flake, was recovered from context 141. Although the characteristic tranchet flake has been removed from the proximal end, the piece appears to have been unfinished or spoiled during manufacture. The piece has then been modified to make a knife: blunting half way along the left lateral edge allows the piece to be gripped by the proximal end, while moderately heavy use-wear is apparent on the same edge near the distal end. The site also produced four, perhaps five, tranchet adze-sharpening flakes (examples from fills 9 and 120 (Fig. 7:5 & 6) and two tranchet re-sharpening flakes (example from context 112: Fig. 7:7): these pieces are diagnostic debitage from the manufacture and modification of Mesolithic tranchet adzes. Six Earlier Mesolithic microliths were also present within the assemblage: a typical 'broad-blade industry' obliquely blunted point from context 120 (Fig. 7:8), two elongated points (example from context 5: Fig. 7:9), two shouldered points (example from context 5: Fig. 7:10) and a utilized bladelet with a blunted end. In addition, four crested blades were recovered: these pieces are characteristic waste flakes produced during Mesolithic (or Upper Palaeolithic) blade manufacture; an example from context 141 may have been produced during the manufacture of a large tranchet adze.

The total number of intentionally retouched pieces and tranchet flakes (32 — not including cores or a Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead) represented 4.1% of the total assemblage (ignoring the small quantity of later flintwork present). This proportion compares very closely with the c. 3.1% breakdown from Iping Common (Keef *et al.* 1965), a site that produced the largest stratified Earlier Mesolithic assemblage from Sussex. Indeed, the range of artefact classes and their relative proportions are very similar between the two sites.

Conclusions

The Earlier Mesolithic period is usually defined as lying between c. 10,300–8500 bp, while Earlier Mesolithic assem-

blages can be divided into three typological groups named after type sites at Star Carr, Deepcar and Horsham (Jacobi 1975; Reynier 1997, 529). Chronologically the Star Carr assemblages are the earliest, with Deepcar being slightly later, followed by Horsham. The earliest Sussex Mesolithic assemblages are of the Deepcar-type, as is the assemblage from the current site. Deepcar-type assemblages have been recorded both in the Weald and on the Coastal Plain in locations almost invariably overlooking watercourses. Two nearby examples of such sites were identified in 1992 during work on the Westhampnett Bypass near Chichester (Fitzpatrick *et al.* forthcoming) where two significant assemblages of Earlier Mesolithic flintwork were recorded. The two Westhampnett sites were located on the edge of a 'knoll' overlooking a stream course. This description is identical to that of the current site and it is possible that, although a greater quantity of flintwork was recovered at Westhampnett, both sites functioned as long-stay camps.

The worked flint assemblage indicates that a range of activities took place on the site. The microliths were almost certainly elements of the composite armature of hunting weapons such as spears and arrows. Scrapers were likely to be associated with the processing of raw materials, perhaps de-fleshing hides or bone-working. The presence of a borer, a graver and notched or denticulated flakes suggests wood- or bone-working, while lightly retouched or unretouched flakes would have served as general-purpose knives for processing and butchery. Large quantities of waste flakes, worked-out cores and a hammer-stone indicate that a significant level of flint-working took place on the site, not only the production of flake tools, but also tranchet adze production and re-sharpening. Tranchet adzes probably served a range of purposes including wood-working.

MISCELLANEOUS FINDS AND THE ANIMAL BONE

by Luke Barber & Lucy Sibun

A small assemblage of other finds and ecofacts were recovered during the evaluation and excavation. These include ceramic building material, burnt clay, fire-cracked flint, slag, glass and shell, the latter two only coming from late-post-medieval contexts. The only items of interest in these categories were a little abraded Roman tile, including part of a floor tile from fill 110; a few pieces of burnt clay/daub from fills 110 and 123 and two pieces (167 g) of undiagnostic iron slag from fill 123. Thirty-four fragments of bone were also recovered, including 29 charred and calcined fragments from fill 123. Only cattle and sheep/goat were represented. A full list of this material is housed with the archive.

THE CHARCOAL by Rowena Gale

Introduction

A large volume of charcoal was recovered from the shallow cut 109. In the absence of contemporaneous sites on the Coastal Plain in this region, environmental and economic evidence from the charcoal deposit is of particular interest. Charcoal analysis was undertaken to obtain data on the character of local woodland and the exploitation of associated resources.

Methodology

A sample was obtained from context 123, the lower fill of cut 109. The sample weighed 785 g but consisted mainly of very small fragments. The larger pieces measured up to 10 mm in the longest axis and were generally well-preserved

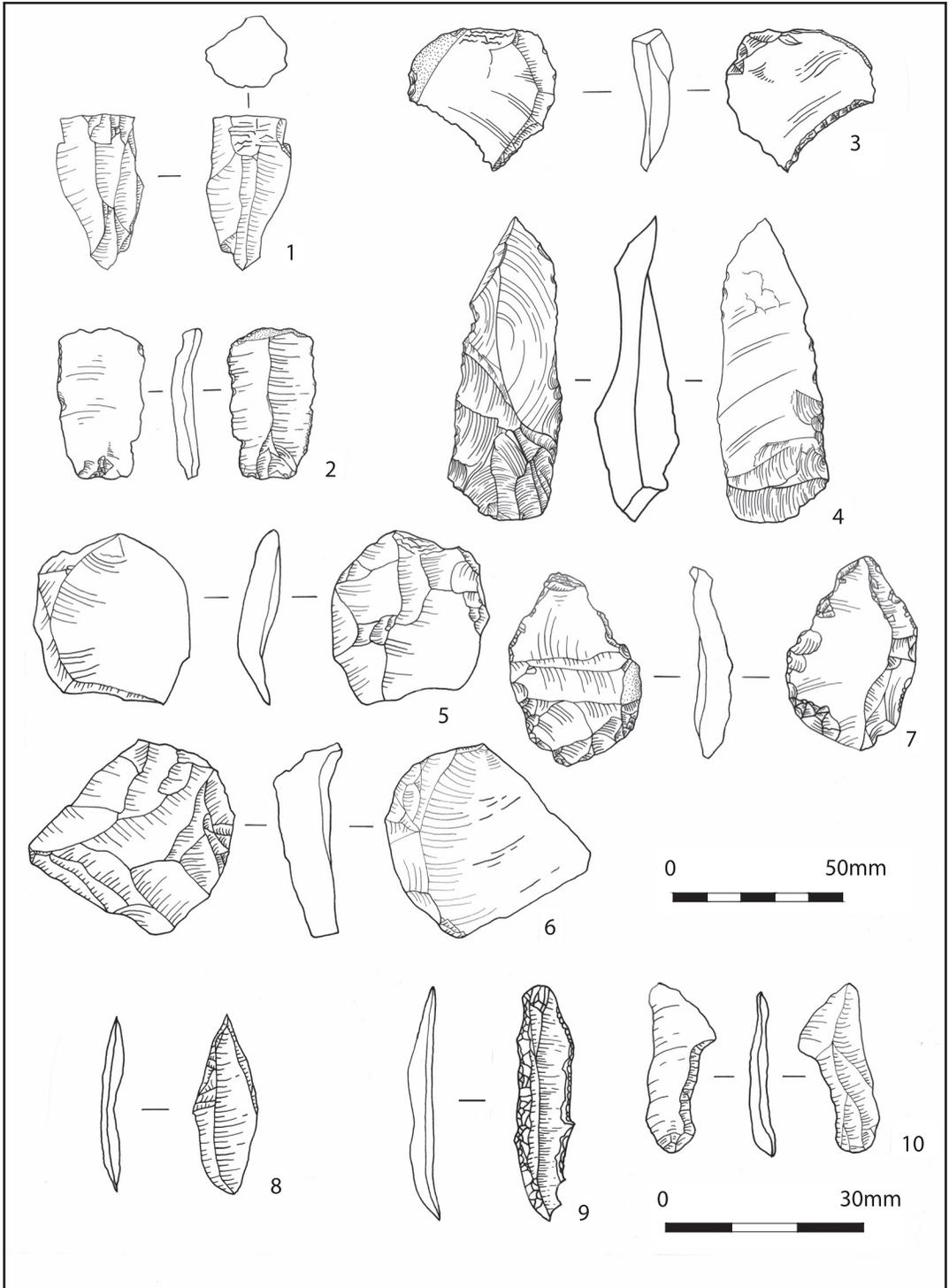


Fig. 7. Worked flint.

and firm. A 25% subsample was examined and fragments measuring >2 mm in radial cross-section were considered for species identification.

Standard methods were used to prepare the samples for examination (Gale & Cutler 2000). The anatomical structures were examined using incident light on a Nikon Labophot-2 microscope at magnifications up to $\times 400$. The taxa identified were matched to prepared reference slides of modern wood. When possible, the maturity of the wood was assessed (*i.e.* heartwood/ sapwood).

Results

The taxa identified are presented in Table 3. Classification follows that of *Flora Europaea* (Tutin *et al.* 1964–80). When a genus is represented by a single species in the British flora, this is named as the most likely origin of the wood given the provenance and period, but it should be noted that it is rarely possible to name individual species from wood features, and exotic species of trees and shrubs were introduced to Britain from an early period (Godwin 1956; Mitchell 1974). The anatomical structure of the charcoal was consistent with the following taxa or groups of taxa:

Aceraceae. *Acer campestre* L., field maple
 Corylaceae. *Corylus avellana* L., hazel
 Fagaceae. *Quercus* sp., oak
 Oleaceae. *Fraxinus excelsior* L., ash
 Salicaceae. *Salix* sp., willow, and *Populus* sp., poplar.

In most respects these taxa are anatomically similar.

Discussion

The site is located on the Coastal Plain in a region from which, to date, there has been scant evidence of Saxon occupation. Cut 109 contained pottery, charred seeds and large quantities of charcoal. By association, the charcoal deposit from fill 123 is likely to represent domestic fuel debris and its analysis indicates that firewood consisted mainly of oak (*Quercus* sp.) but also of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), maple (*Acer campestre*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and willow (*Salix* sp.) or poplar (*Populus* sp.). The inclusion of both oak heartwood and sapwood suggests an origin from largewood or roundwood in excess of 30 mm diameter; it was not possible, however, to assess stem diameters for the remaining taxa.

Evidence from elsewhere in the region, for example, at Westhampnett, Chichester, suggests that by the Iron Age and Romano-British periods the Coastal Plain was fairly densely populated (Fitzpatrick 1997), with settlements provisioned from managed woodland (Gale 1997), but little is known of the woodland environment during the Early to Middle Saxon occupation. The frequency of oak in the deposit at Bognor Road suggests that oak woodland probably formed the climax vegetation, possibly interspersed with ash, maple and hazel. Although it was not possible to assess whether the oak fuel was gathered from managed woodland, it could be argued that, if from coppiced stock, it was probably grown on a relatively long rotational cycle, *e.g.* >20 years. Although comparatively slight, the data obtained from Bognor Road provide a baseline for future analyses of Saxon occupation.

Table 3. Charcoal from cut 109.

Context	<i>Acer</i>	<i>Corylus</i>	<i>Fraxinus</i>	<i>Quercus</i>	<i>Salicaceae</i>
123	3	2	16	72h, 61s	4

Key: h = heartwood; s = sapwood

The number of fragments identified is indicated

CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by Pat Hinton

Method

Floated charred remains from 11 contexts were examined by stereo microscope at 7–40 \times magnification. The smaller flots from nine probably Mesolithic samples were searched in entirety, but the larger volume of charred material from two Anglo-Saxon samples was sub-sampled and totals estimated. When dry, these ‘flots’ (*c.* 1000 and 900 ml respectively) were passed through a stack of sieves (2– 0.25 mm), the largest fraction completely searched, half the 1mm fraction and a quarter of the 0.5 mm and 0.25 mm fractions. The remainder was briefly scanned for any other significant items.

Results

Mesolithic

Identifiable charred plant remains were found in three of the samples (fills 125, 135 and 171). Fills 125 (posthole 124) and 135 (pit/posthole 134) produced traces of cereals, which are probably intrusive, and two fragments of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana*) were recovered from fill 171 (pit/posthole 170). Hazelnut shells are common finds in Mesolithic contexts. In addition to the charcoal all samples included small amounts of unidentified charred material, presumably the result of burning organic material. Full details of this material are housed in the archive.

Anglo-Saxon (Table 4)

The flots from two Anglo-Saxon samples (Context 123 A and B) consist almost entirely of charcoal (*see* The Charcoal). As described above, after sieving, the larger fractions were comprehensively searched but revealed only occasional plant remains, mainly cereal. The smaller fractions included only very few small seeds and fragments. Possibly more were present originally, but the condition of the grains and other fragments indicates burning at high temperature and some may have been destroyed.

Although meagre, the results are sufficient to illustrate the presence of wheat and barley but preservation is too poor for detailed identification. A few grains indicate free-threshing wheat (*Triticum cf. aestivum*) and two barley grains were probably naturally asymmetric, rather than distorted, indicating 6-row hulled barley.

There is little to distinguish the results from samples 123 A and B. Sample 123B produced slightly more wheat and barley but both had very few weed seeds. These included fat hen and another smaller goosefoot (*Chenopodium* spp.), small vetches or tares (*Vicia* spp.) and sheep’s sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). Sheep’s sorrel is usually associated with dry stony or sandy places, but a sedge seed (*Carex* sp.) suggests damper conditions. Proximity to woodland or hedgerow is indicated by hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) shell fragments and a sloe (*Prunus spinosa*) stone.

These samples also included small pieces of charred material very similar to those from the prehistoric contexts.

Table 4. Charred plant remains: from Anglo-Saxon contexts.

Context 123		A	B
Sample size (litres)		50	50
Cultivated plants			
<i>Triticum cf. aestivum</i>	bread wheat	4	12
<i>Hordeum cf. vulgare</i>	hulled barley	3	9
<i>Avena</i> sp.	oats		?1
Cerealia indet. - grains - fragments	unidentified cereals	2 <0.5 ml	3 0.5 ml
Arable/grassland			
<i>Chenopodium album</i> L.	fat hen		1
<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.	goosefoot		1
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	sheep's sorrel	1	
<i>Vicia hirsuta/tetrasperma</i>	hairy or smooth tare		1
<i>Vicia</i> sp.	vetch	1	
<i>Carex</i> sp.	sedge	1	
Hedgerow/Wood			
<i>Corylus avellana</i> L. - nut shell fragment	hazel		1
<i>Prunus spinosa</i> L.	sloe	1	
cf charred organic material inc. ?cereal fragments (ml)		c. 0.5	c. 1.5
coal-like fragments		<0.5	c. 1.0

CONCLUSIONS

The earliest activity on the site appears to have occurred in the Earlier Mesolithic period, between 10,300–8500 bp. Typologically the flintwork belongs to the 'Deepcar' type which immediately precedes the 'Horsham' assemblages that have been attributed to the ninth millennium bp (Jacobi 1981).

The focus of activity was quite small, perhaps occupying a slightly raised area, or small knoll on the edge of a low terrace, with the ground immediately to the east and north falling gently away towards the Aldingbourne Rife stream course. At the time of excavation the difference in elevation between the area containing the Mesolithic features and the surrounding terrace surface was only just discernible, measuring less than 200 mm at its greatest. However, given the apparently truncated nature of the site (evidence from the Saxon SFB suggests that the amount of truncation might be as much as 400 mm), the knoll may originally have been much more prominent. In a low-lying area (less than 5 m AOD) close to a watercourse,

any slightly raised area would act as a focus for human activity. More specifically, such an area would provide an ideal base from which Mesolithic hunter-gatherers might operate. Although environmental analysis only identified very limited remains in the form of hazelnut fragments, evidence from the valleys of the Arun (Waton 1982) and Ouse (Waller & Hamilton 1998), amongst others, suggests that the local vegetation probably consisted of mixed woodland.

Analysis of the worked flint assemblage indicates that a range of activities took place on the site. The microliths were almost certainly elements of the composite armature of hunting weapons such as spears and arrows. Scrapers, a borer, a graver and notched or denticulated flakes would have served a variety of purposes

associated with the processing of raw materials, including de-fleshing hides, wood- and bone-working. Unretouched flakes would have been used as general-purpose knives. Large quantities of waste flakes indicate that a significant level of flint-working took place on the site, not only the production of flake tools, but also tranchet adze production and re-sharpening. 'Deepcar'-type assemblages (which include the material from the current site) are typically associated with a broad range of activities carried out in a valley location and/or at the forest edge close to a water source.

Given the range of activities, it is possible the site was occupied as a long-stay camp by a small hunter-gatherer group. The broadly rectangular arrangement of 11 gullies and pits perhaps represents the site of a light structure measuring c. 7 m by 8 m that would have served as a temporary shelter. The group of four gullies, immediately to the south, perhaps represented a second structure. Thus, it appears that this camp site was probably used once, or perhaps twice and then abandoned.

There was some evidence within the worked flint assemblage that a low level of prehistoric

activity continued on the site in the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. A very small amount of Romano-British remains, comprising a possible pit and a few sherds of abraded pottery, indicated that the site was probably peripheral to settlement but cultivated during that period.

The Anglo-Saxon period brings the first firm evidence for permanent occupation on the site. Ceramic evidence indicates that in the late sixth century a Sunken Featured Building (SFB) measuring 3.9 m by 3.4 m was constructed, occupying most of the small knoll around which many of the prehistoric features had been centred. Analysis of the plant remains suggests that the SFB would originally have been located in a transitional zone between a relatively dry forested area and much damper conditions close to a watercourse. The wide range of natural resources available in such areas has attracted settlement throughout the archaeological record.

Evidence from Rookery Hill, Bishopstone (Bell 1977) suggests that SFBs are probably over-represented in the archaeological record, perhaps through selective preservation. Of the 22 buildings excavated at Rookery Hill, only 3 were SFBs while 17 were rectangular buildings founded on individual post-holes. This proportion strongly suggests that SFBs were not simply dwellings but had a specialised function. On the current site, however, no traces of any associated buildings or remains were found though this could in part be due to later truncation.

Many SFBs were almost certainly weaving-sheds, in these cases a sunken/suspended floor can be recognised as affording some distinct advantages. A tall warp-weighted loom could be accommodated in a relatively low building, thus reducing the amount of time and materials required for its construction (the taller the loom, the longer the swath of cloth produced and the more efficient the operation). A floor partly suspended over a pit would allow the loom-weights to hang below floor level; once the weights were attached, the weaver would not need access to that part of the warp closest to the loom-weights. Standing on the raised part of the floor the weaver could more easily access the upper section of the warp, or could sit on the edge of the floor with feet in the pit to work on the lower section.

The particular form of SFB that features a gable post-hole at either end, is recorded at several sites

in Sussex including Rookery Hill, Bishopstone (Bell 1977), Botolphs (Gardiner 1990), Old Erringham (Holden 1976) and Itford Farm (James 2002). This layout would seem to be especially suited for use as a weaving shed. The two main post-holes would not only have supported the roof of the building but also the horizontal beam from which the warp threads were attached. Thus, a structure *c.* 3 m long might have allowed two sets of warp threads to be worked on simultaneously: evidence from Erringham suggests that the maximum width of the weft probably did not exceed *c.* 1.2 m. Given the combined weight of even one set of loom-weights, a substantial frame would be required. It therefore seems unlikely that the numerous stake-holes often identified within SFBs could have supported such a frame. As simple planking may not have been able to bridge the sunken feature in a single span, particularly without support, the internal stake-holes may represent propping of the floor in areas.

An alternative arrangement has been postulated by Holden (1976), who suggests that a portable, free-standing loom might have been leant against the rafters of the hut. In such a set-up, the sunken feature would not have been spanned by a suspended floor, but would simply have provided increased headroom. The particular advantage of this arrangement would be the facility for moving the loom outside during favourable weather; the limited availability of light within an SFB would surely suggest that outdoor working would be carried out whenever practicable.

However, the layout of the Upper Bognor Road SFB lacks the two gable posts in favour of what appears to be a tripod arrangement set on the surrounding ground level. This arrangement was perhaps one of many alternative modes of SFB construction. Another layout was identified at Friars Oak (Butler 2000) where 43 stake-holes lay inside the SFB, mostly around the edge, perhaps defining the position of the walls, while five post-holes outside the central sunken feature formed a broadly rectangular arrangement that perhaps supported the roof. Given the distinct advantages of the two-gable post design when constructing a weaving-shed, it is possible that the SFB on the current site served a different purpose. Indeed, there was no evidence whatsoever for weaving on the site.

The presence of iron slag is interesting but is not present in quantities large enough to suggest that metal-working was a major concern at the

site; iron-working evidence was also found at Friars Oak (Butler 2000). The charcoal assemblage was much more likely to have been associated with a domestic cooking hearth. This supposition is supported by the presence of a significant quantity of predominantly calcined animal bone, including cattle and sheep/goat, from fill 123; in addition, analysis of the charred plant remains identified wheat, emmer and oats from the same context. Although the possibility exists that the charcoal, cereal grains and animal bone might represent domestic refuse associated with the disuse of the building, the weight of evidence suggests that the SFB on the current site was a small domestic dwelling or perhaps a detached kitchen. The ceramic evidence indicates that by the mid-seventh century the SFB had been abandoned.

No further activity could be identified on the site until the late eighteenth to early nineteenth

century. During this period residences were built fronting Upper Bognor Road and the area of the site was turned over to back gardens. A brick-built culvert, probably contemporary with the residences, was constructed to carry waste water away to the north. At least one garden wall was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. The culvert seems to have gone out of use by the early twentieth century, when the eastern part of the site was used for the disposal of domestic rubbish.

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Author: Greg Priestley-Bell, University College London Field Archaeology Unit, 1 West Street, Ditchling, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 8TS.

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