

Excavations at the former site of Tribe's Yard, Bersted Street, Bognor Regis, West Sussex

by Simon Stevens

with contributions by
 Luke Barber
 Chris Butler
 Lucy Sibun &
 Lisa Gray

A small-scale excavation was undertaken at the site during March and early April 2002, following an evaluation in December of the previous year. Despite heavy modern truncation, a group of features ranging in date from the Middle Saxon (AD 650–750) to later medieval periods were excavated and recorded. The finds assemblages from all represented periods were small and the recovered environmental evidence was limited. However, the discovery of rare Middle Saxon remains was of particular significance.

INTRODUCTION

In 2001 Arun District Council granted planning permission to Crayfern Homes for the redevelopment of the former Tribe's Yard, Bersted Street, Bognor Regis, West Sussex (NGR SU 9373 0026) (Fig. 1). This area was considered to be archaeologically sensitive (*see below*) and a condition was attached to the planning consent specifying that archaeological work should be carried out prior to redevelopment. Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Crayfern Homes to undertake this work. The initial archaeological investigation (October 2001) involved analysis of the standing buildings coupled with an examination of all relevant maps and records. This was followed by the mechanical excavation of trial trenches to assess the archaeological potential of the site (December 2001). The buildings appraisal identified no structures of any significant age or interest, but a number of medieval features were encountered in the trial trenches (James & Butler 2002).

The results of the evaluation suggested that a larger-scale excavation would be appropriate in order to identify and record all archaeological features to be destroyed during groundworks. Consequently, an area measuring c. 26 m by c. 15 m in the northern part of the site was mechanically stripped and observed features excavated. An archaeological watching brief was also undertaken during the removal of contaminated ground south of the excavation area (Fig. 1c). These operations were undertaken during March and early April 2002.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The name Bersted is Old English in origin, referring to the place or *stede* of *Beorga*, and the presence of two settlements with this name is of great antiquity. A documentary reference of AD 680 refers to a north *Beorgan stede* and South Bersted is mentioned in AD 1272 as *Suthbergested* (Glover 1997). The site lies in the historic core of South Bersted, on the north side of Bersted Street and there are a number of archaeological sites and findspots in the vicinity listed in the West Sussex Sites and Monuments Record. Recent archaeological work at Shripney Road to the north-east of the site has produced medieval features and possible plot boundaries fronting onto the historic alignment of Bersted Street (John Mills pers. comm.), while to the south of the site, an archaeological investigation demonstrated the presence of Mesolithic material and associated features, as well as an Early to Middle Saxon *grubenhau* (Priestley-Bell 2004).

THE SITE

The evaluation (Fig. 1c)

Five evaluation trenches were excavated at the site and these revealed extensive modern truncation and a number of surviving archaeological features. These included: a shallow pit in Trench 1, which contained part of a Saxo-Norman cooking-pot; an east–west aligned ditch containing twelfth- to thirteenth-century pottery located in the central part of Trench 2 and a ditch aligned north–south

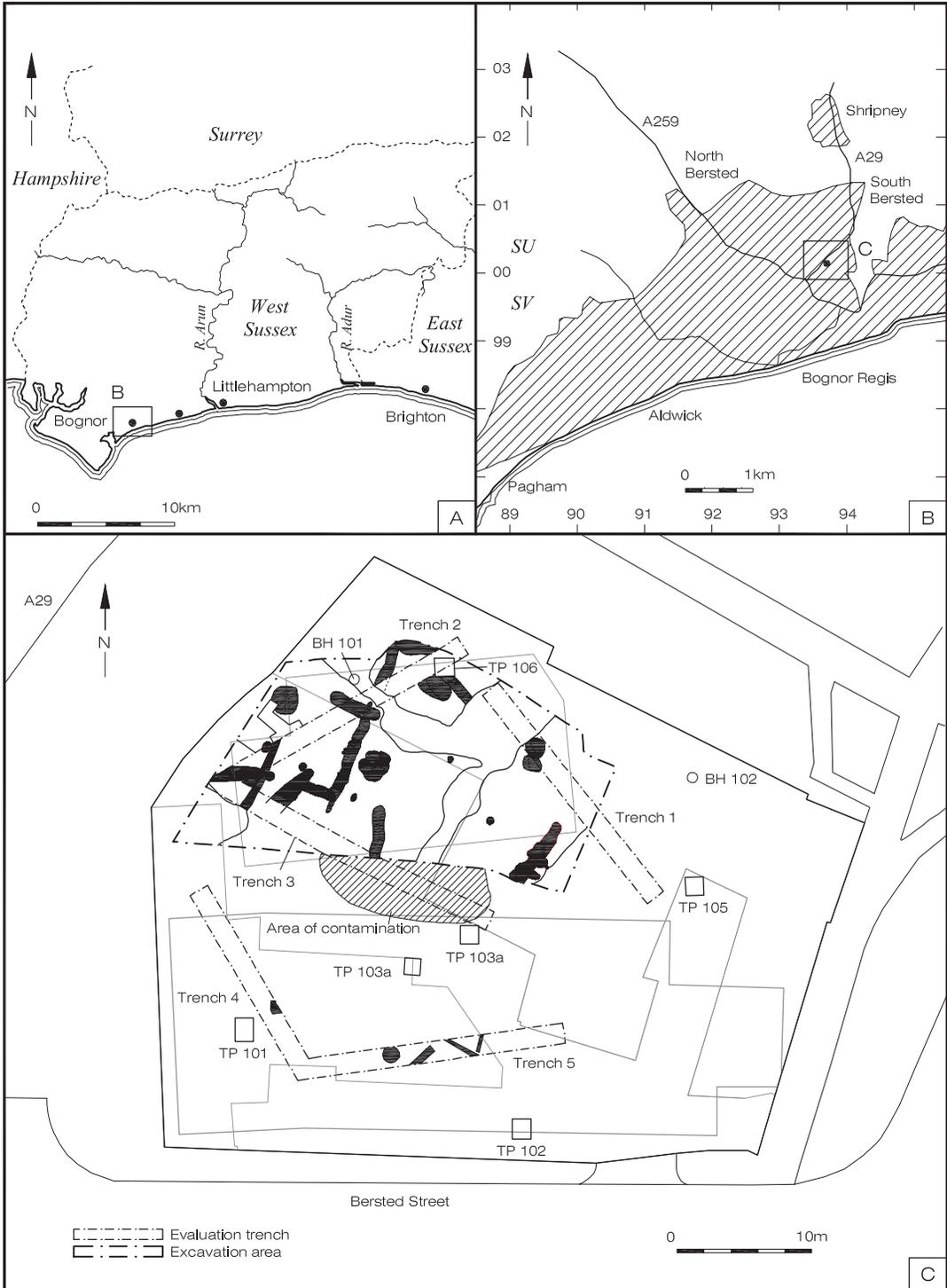


Fig. 1. Site location plan.

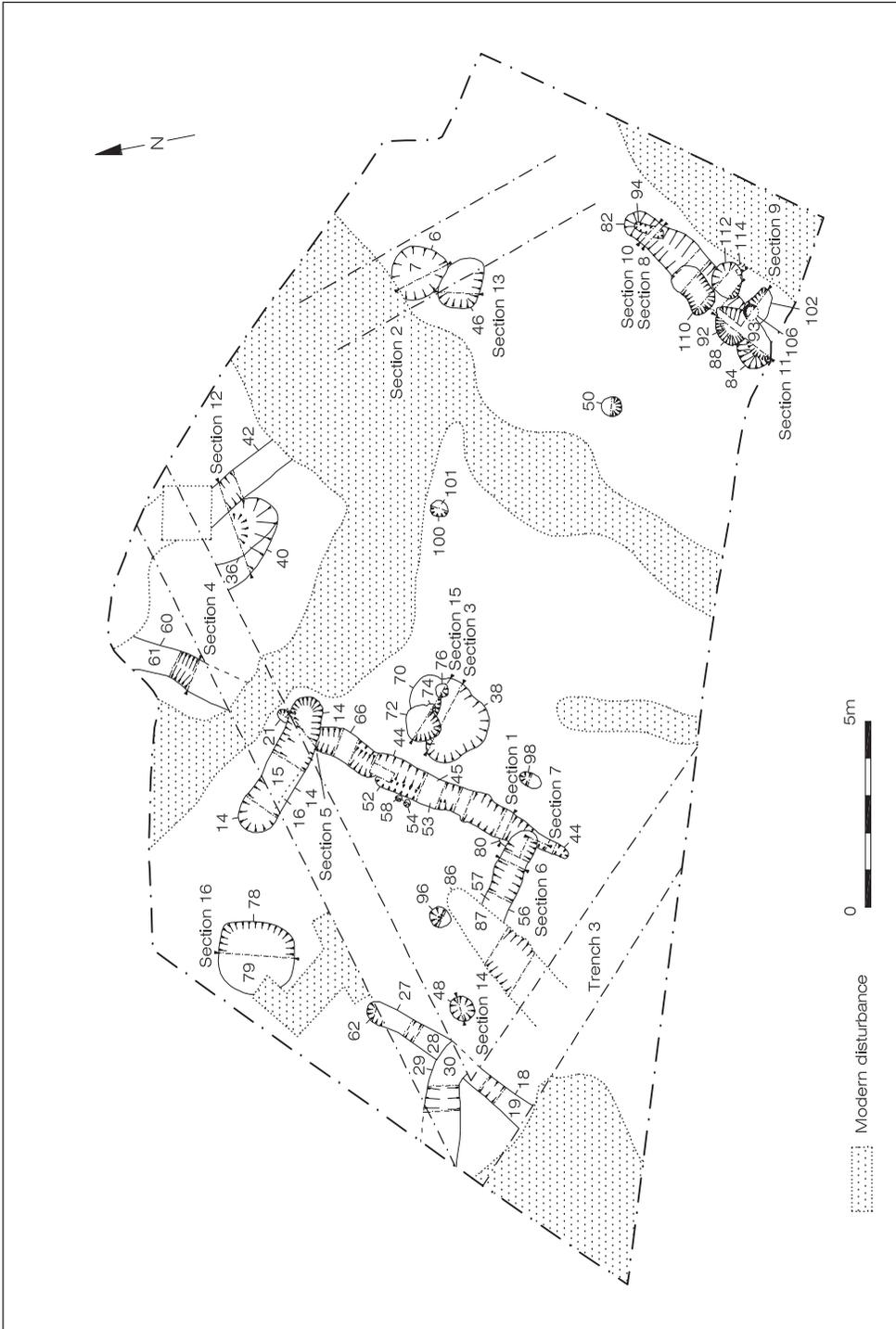


Fig. 2. Site plan.

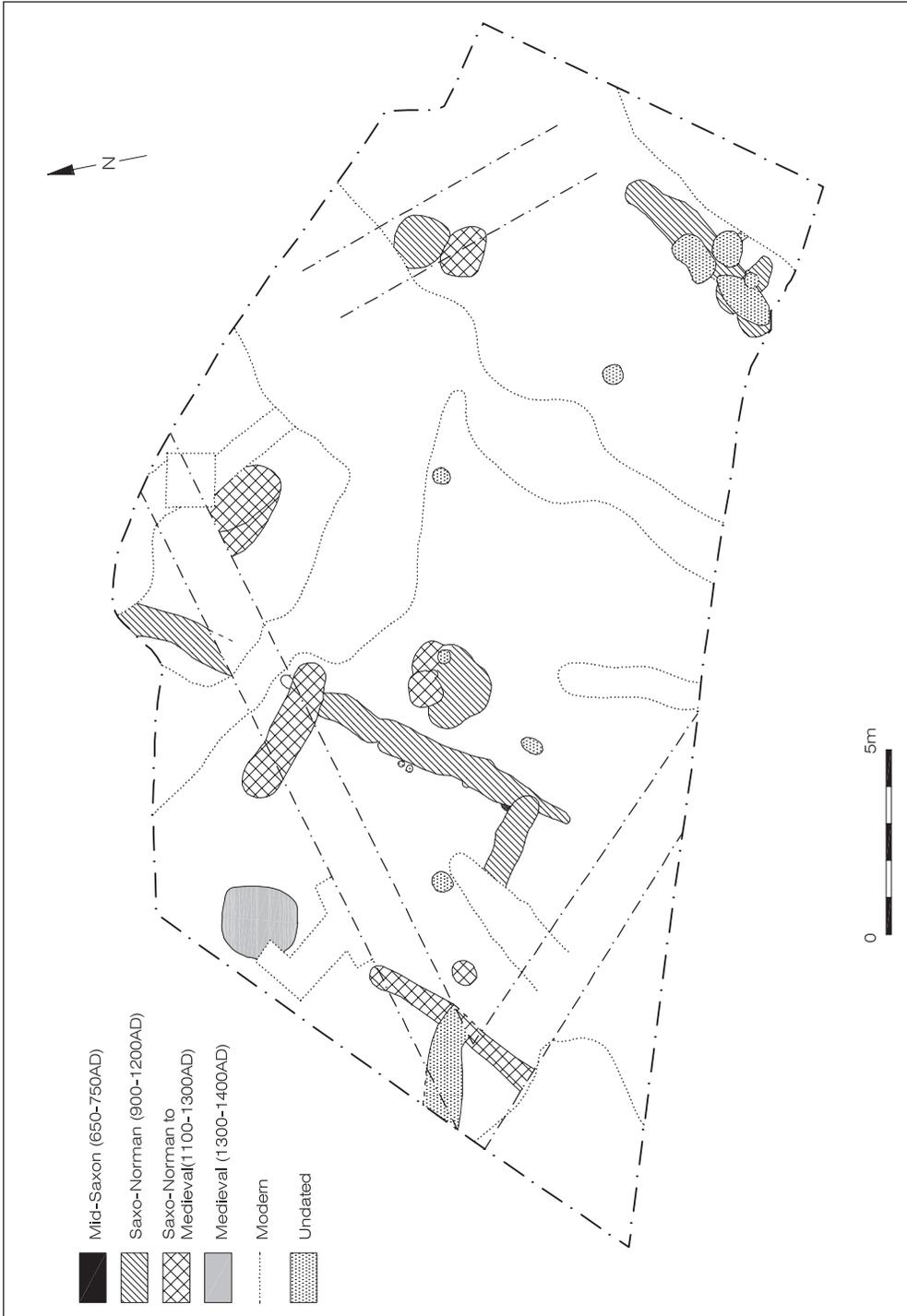


Fig. 3. Phased plan.

was encountered at the south-west end of the same trench. This feature extended into Trench 3 where it was truncated by a curvilinear ditch. Both ditches contained twelfth- to thirteenth-century pottery. Trench 4 contained a clay-lined, rectangular pit from which a single sherd of twelfth- to thirteenth-century pottery was recovered and Trench 5 contained only modern features, including a brick-lined well (James & Butler 2002). Full descriptions of the trenches and features are held with the site archive.

The watching brief (Fig. 1c)

Prior to the stripping of the excavation area a watching brief monitored the mechanical removal of chemically contaminated overburden and 'natural' Brickearth. No features or finds were recorded, although it should be stressed that the deposits were discoloured by the petrochemical contamination.

The area excavation (Figs 2 & 3)

Following the mechanical removal of *c.* 750 mm of recent overburden from the excavation area, the following features were identified, nearly all containing residual struck flint and fire-cracked flint (*see below*).

Phase 1: Middle Saxon (AD 650–750)

The only feature positively dated to this phase was a post-hole/small pit (80), which had been heavily truncated by later ditches (Fig. 4:S1). The clayey silt fill (81) contained an assemblage of Middle Saxon domestic pottery dating from the mid-seventh to the mid-eighth century, the majority from one vessel (Fig. 5:1). A sample taken for environmental analysis showed evidence of the cultivation of cereals.

Phase 2: Saxo-Norman (AD 900–1200)

A number of features were dated to this phase on the basis of recovered pottery assemblages. Cut 6 was a pit truncated by a modern feature (9/10) which had been identified and sectioned during the evaluation phase (Fig. 4:S2). The remainder of the fill (7) was excavated and was found to contain mid-eleventh- to twelfth-century material

A large pit (38) was located in the centre of the site (Fig. 4:S3). It was truncated on its northern side by a number of later features, but a sherd of pottery dating from the tenth to twelfth century was recovered from its silty clay fill (39).

At the northern edge of the site part of a flat-bottomed ditch (60) was identified running north to south across the site (Fig. 4:S4). It had not been identified during the evaluation owing to the extensive modern truncation, which had also destroyed the ditch's stratigraphic relationships with other features. The clayey silt fill (61) contained pottery dating from the eleventh to twelfth century. A sample taken for environmental analysis contained little of archaeological significance.

The ditch continued to the south of the modern disturbance as cut 66, where it was truncated by a later medieval feature, cut 14 (Fig. 4:S5). At this point the ditch contained two fills, an intermittent upper fill of clayey silt (67) from which a large sherd of eleventh- to twelfth-century pottery was recovered (*see below*), and a charcoal-rich, siltier fill which contained no datable finds (68). At its southern end, ditch 66 clearly truncated another flat-bottomed ditch (44) which ran on a similar north-south alignment (Fig. 4:S1) and contained (45) a small sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery and two small sherds probably dating from the twelfth century.

Ditch 44 was truncated by another ditch (Cut 56) which ran for short distance east to west across the site (Fig. 4:S6 & S7). Its silty fill (Context 57) contained pottery dating from the late eleventh to twelfth century. Cut 44 also truncated the Middle Saxon pit (80). The ditch was itself truncated by a modern feature (86/87). Thus it is suggested on stratigraphic grounds that ditch 44 and associated episodes of backfilling are broadly contemporary.

At the eastern end of the site a ditch (82) ran north-south (Fig. 4:S8). Its alignment was barely discernible to the north owing to the fact that the colour of its upper silty fill (Context 83) matched that of the 'natural' Brickearth, and the ditch had been truncated by a later feature to the south (Fig. 4:S9). The fill contained pottery dating from the eleventh to early twelfth century. This ditch also truncated an earlier feature, which appeared to be a post-hole (94) in the northern terminal (Fig. 4:S10). A single sherd of pottery, dating from the mid-twelfth to the early thirteenth century, was recovered from its silty fill (69) (*see The Pottery*). This fill also contained a discrete lens of redeposited 'natural' clean Brickearth (91). The post-hole was dated to this phase on stratigraphic grounds.

To the south another heavily truncated feature was located: a pit (84) with two identifiable fills. The upper fill (Context 85) was a clayey silt from which eleventh- to early-twelfth-century pottery was recovered. The lower fill (90) was similar in texture, but contained only residual fire-cracked flint. Pit 84 was truncated by Cuts 88 and 92 (Fig. 4:S11).

Cut 102 was a pit encountered among the same cluster of features. It had been truncated by later features (Fig. 4:S9), but a sherd of pottery dating from the eleventh to twelfth century was recovered from the upper clayey silt fill (103) (*see* The Pottery). No artefacts were recovered from the lower clayey silt fill (104). It was truncated by another pit (88). Its upper fill (95) contained a single sherd of pottery dating to the ninth to eleventh century (although this dating is far from certain). Residual fire-cracked flint was recovered from the lower silty fill (89). The pit was dated to this phase on stratigraphic grounds.

Phase 3: Saxo-Norman to medieval (AD 1100–1300)

A number of positively dated features belonged to this phase. Cut 14, an elongated pit (Fig. 4:S5), was encountered during the excavation, but further investigation of its silty clay fill (15) produced mid-twelfth- to early-thirteenth-century pottery. A sample taken for environmental analysis contained limited evidence of cereal cultivation. This feature was in a similar stratigraphic position to that of ditch 56 to the south-west as well as being of comparable dimensions; both may be contemporary.

Two intercutting pits from this phase were identified in the northern half of the site (Fig. 4:S12). Cut 40 was a pit with a single fill (41) of silty clay which contained a single sherd of pottery dating from the thirteenth century. It had been truncated by a pit of similar depth (36). Its clayey silt fill (35) contained material dating from the twelfth to thirteenth century including animal bone. Cut 36 was truncated by a gully (42). Its silty clay fill (43) contained a single sherd of eighteenth-century pottery.

Cut 46 was a pit located partially within evaluation Trench 1 (Fig. 4:S13). Unfortunately, its stratigraphic relationship with Cut 7 had been lost, but its silty clay fill (47) contained late-twelfth- to early-thirteenth-century pottery. A sample taken for environmental analysis produced some evidence for the cultivation of peas or beans.

In the south-west corner of the site a post-hole

(48) was identified (Fig. 4:S14). Its silty clay fill (49) contained finds dating from the thirteenth century. A ditch (62) ran across the corner of the evaluation Trenches 2 and 3 (previously numbered 18/19 and 27/28). It terminated to the north and ran into an area of modern disturbance to the south. Although no datable evidence was recovered from its silty clay fill (63) during the excavation, twelfth- to early-thirteenth-century pottery was recovered from the feature during the evaluation. The alignment of a broadly contemporary ditch (29/30) recorded in Trench 2 during the evaluation could not be re-established during the excavation.

A cluster of features was located in the centre of the site, truncating the northern edge of cut 38 (Fig. 4:S15). Two of the features belonged to this phase. Cut 70 was a pit with a silty clay fill (71) containing twelfth- to early-thirteenth-century pottery. It was cut by two post-holes (74/75 and 76/77) and a pit (72). The silty clay fill (73) contained a sherd of pottery dating from the 13th century.

Phase 4: medieval

The only feature positively dated to this phase was a large pit at the western edge of the site (78). It contained two distinct fills (Fig. 4:S16). The main fill was a remarkably homogenous silty clay (79) from which pottery dating to the mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century was recovered, as well as a relatively large assemblage of residual prehistoric struck flint. Residual twelfth- to early-thirteenth-century pottery was also recovered. The lower silty fill (105) appeared to be the result of primary silting and produced no datable artefacts.

Unphased

A number of features could not be closely dated owing to the absence of datable artefacts or to ambiguity between datable pottery and stratigraphic relationships.

Six post-holes with no stratigraphic relationships could not be closely dated by artefacts (50/51, 54/55, 58/59, 96/97, 98/99 and 100/101). Two other post-holes (74/75 and 76/77) cut into the Saxo-Norman/medieval pit (70), but produced no firm evidence for when they went out of use. Similarly, a short length of gully (52/53) truncated the Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman ditch (44) but provided no further evidence of date.

There were a number of such relationships in the cluster of features encountered in the south-eastern corner of the site. A post-hole (106/107)

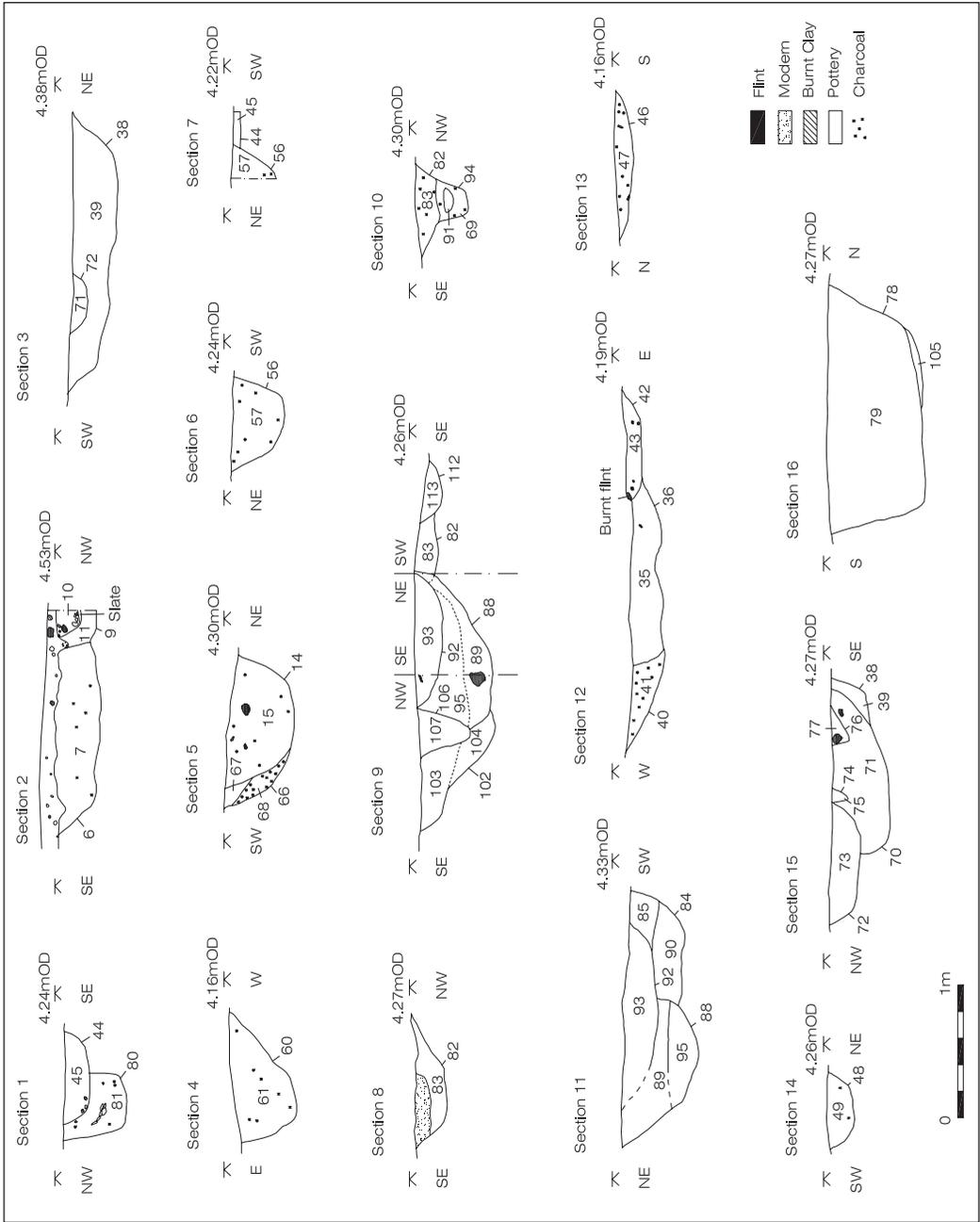


Fig. 4. Selected sections.

truncated the Saxo-Norman pits 88 and 102. Pit (92/93) also truncated pit 88 and a Saxo-Norman ditch (82). Hence the exact date of these two features remains uncertain.

There were other relationships with the Saxo-Norman ditch. It was truncated by a pit (112). Its silty fill (113) contained a single sherd of ninth- to eleventh-century pottery and fire-cracked flint, both clearly residual. In turn, this feature truncated

a gully (114/115) which ran into the complex of features from the south-east but did not emerge at the north-west. It produced no dating evidence. The Saxo-Norman ditch was also truncated by a pit (110). Its single clayey silt fill (111) contained a sherd of pottery dating from the ninth to the eleventh century and fire-cracked flint, again both clearly residual. None of these features could be dated with accuracy.

THE FINDS

THE POTTERY by Luke Barber

Introduction

The evaluation and subsequent excavation at the site produced a combined total of 197 sherds weighing 4082 g, from 35 individually numbered contexts. The 42 sherds (1432 g) from the evaluation include 23 sherds (1082 g) of late-nineteenth- to early-twentieth-century date, though the subsequent excavation only located one post-medieval sherd: a piece of eighteenth-century white salt-glazed stoneware from Context 43. The remainder of the assemblage is of Middle Saxon, Saxo-Norman and later medieval date. The majority of contexts produced only one or two sherds and owing to the small, and frequently abraded, nature of the pottery assemblages, dating of features has proved problematic. This problem has been accentuated by the lack of diagnostic rims and the frequent presence of residual/intrusive sherds.

The largest context group from the site is that from context 81 (43 sherds weighing 938 g), though by far the majority of these sherds (40) are from a single Middle Saxon cooking-pot. The next largest context group consists of a mere 16 sherds. Despite the poor nature of the assemblage, the lack of excavated material of this date from the area increases its importance and it was deemed appropriate to characterize the pottery at least at a basic level. As a result, the aim of this report is to outline the nature of the assemblage, the fabrics present and the date of the activity on site. A full listing of the whole assemblage, together with dating notes, is housed with the archive.

The Fabrics

The pottery from the site was divided into one of several fabric groups based on a visual examination of the tempering and inclusions of each sherd using a $\times 20$ hand lens where necessary. Unfortunately, most fabrics were only represented by undiagnostic bodysherds, which hindered their dating. This problem was worsened by the small number of sherds from any one context, this situation not allowing dating by association, and by the unknown extent of intrusive or residual material. This being so, although the site has provided a good range of Saxo-Norman fabrics, it has not provided enough data to date them closely with certainty. Codes in brackets refer to the West Sussex fabric reference collection currently curated by the author. Fabrics which do not have this reference are new to the reference collection, but are not well enough represented by diagnostic sherds in the current assemblage to be accessioned into the collection. It is interesting to note that some of the Middle Saxon fabrics were noted at the Upper Bognor Road site (Barber 2006/this volume).

F1a - Coarse sparse multicoloured flint (WS: F/AS2)

A low-fired fabric tempered with sparse to moderate sub-rounded multicoloured flint grits to 3 mm with no or very sparse fine sand. Black cores and inner surfaces with light grey to dull orange external surfaces. A crude handmade fabric, bonfire-fired and generally friable. Forms consist of undecorated bag-shaped cooking-pots. A seventh- to eighth-century date is likely. This fabric was not present at Upper Bognor Road.

Catalogue (Fig. 5)

No. 1: Crude handmade cooking-pot with simple, slightly thickened, out-turned rim and rounded basal angle. Black core with dull brown to orange patchy exterior surfaces. Forty sherds (890 g) of this vessel were recovered from Context 81. A 20 g sherd of F1c was found in the same context. The form is not closely matched at either Medmerry or Pagham (White 1934; Gregory 1976) suggesting that the Bersted vessel is earlier than the ninth-century date now ascribed to both these sites (Gardiner 1990, 251). A slightly closer form parallel, albeit cruder, is present at the sixth- to seventh-century Hassocks cemetery (Lyne 1994). As such, a mid-seventh- to mid-eighth-century for the Bersted pot is probable, with the closest form parallels from the similarly dated site at Friars Oak (Lyne 2000).

F1b - Medium abundant flint (WS: F/AS3)

A medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate subangular to angular white and grey flint to 2 mm with very sparse/sparse fine sand. Grey cores with patchy surfaces ranging from light grey to red brown. A handmade fabric, bonfire-fired but quite hard. Forms consist of undecorated cooking-pots. Although diagnostic sherds would be needed to clarify this, a ninth- to eleventh-century time span is possible.

F1c - Coarse moderate flint with very rare ?shell (WS: F/AS1)

A low-fired fabric tempered with moderate subangular multicoloured flint grits with no or very sparse fine sand and occasional voids left by burnt out shell. Black cores and dull brown to black surfaces. A crude handmade fabric, bonfire-fired and generally friable. Forms consist of undecorated bag-shaped cooking-pots. A seventh- to eighth-century date is likely. This fabric was present at Upper Bognor Road, though there it contained virtually no shell.

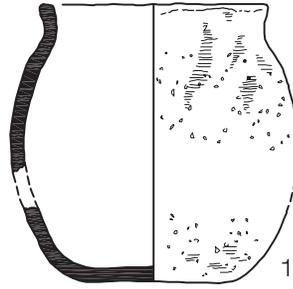
F1d - Medium abundant flint (WS: F+q/M1)

A medium- to hard-fired fabric tempered with moderate subangular to angular white and grey flint to 2.5 mm with very sparse/sparse fine sand. Similar to F1b and possibly related. Grey cores with patchy surfaces ranging from light grey to

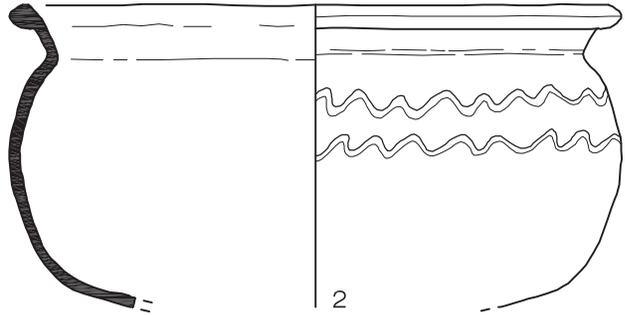
red brown. A slow wheel-finished fabric fired quite hard. Forms consist of cooking-pots. An eleventh- to early thirteenth-century date is likely.

Catalogue (Fig. 5)

No. 2: Shallow wide-mouthed cooking-pot. Light grey core with dull orange surfaces. Sooting on base and up exterior surfaces of body. Spots of unintentional glaze on exterior/interior surfaces. Decorated with two horizontal wavy lines on shoulder. Probably of twelfth- to early-thirteenth-century date. Context 47.

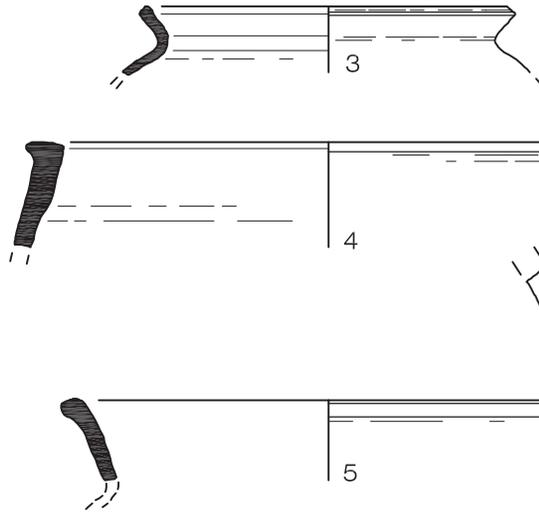


No. 3: Cooking-pot with flaring rim. Dull pinkish orange throughout. Late eleventh- to twelfth-century date. Context 57, slot 2.



No. 4: Storage jar with externally thickened rim. Light grey core with dull pinkish orange surfaces. The surface of this vessel has been smoothed. No parallel for this vessel has been found but an eleventh- to twelfth-century date is suggested by the fabric. Context 67.

No. 5: Cooking-pot with large flaring rim. Slightly less flinty than Nos 3 and 4. Light grey core with light grey to pink orange surfaces. Splashes of dull green glaze on interior and a thumb applied strip of clay on the top of the rim. Probably twelfth-century date. Context 79.



F2a - Moderate chalk with rare flint (WS: C + f/M1)

A medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate sub-rounded chalk to 1.5 mm, rare subangular multicoloured flint grits to 1 mm and sparse fine sand. Black cores with grey to black surfaces, occasionally with brick-red margins. A well-made fabric possibly turned on a slow wheel and kiln-fired. Forms consist of undecorated cooking-pots. A mid/late tenth- to early-twelfth-century date is likely.

F2b - Chalk (WS: C/M1)

A low- to medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate to abundant sub-rounded chalk which has burnt/dissolved out creating a distinctive lightweight 'corky' feel to the fabric. A little fine sand is also present. Some sherds have an occasional piece of subangular flint to 2 mm and multicoloured flint grits with no or very sparse fine sand. Light grey to brown cores with patchy grey to dull orange surfaces. A well-made fabric possibly turned on a slow wheel and possibly kiln-fired. Forms consist of undecorated cooking-pots. Similar to Adur Valley fabric DA (Gardiner 1990). A mid/late tenth- to eleventh-century date is likely.

F2c - Moderate quartz sand with rare chalk (WS: Q + c/M1)

A medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate medium/coarse sand and sparse sub-rounded chalk to 1.5 mm (burnt/dissolved out leaving voids) and occasional iron oxides to



Fig. 5. Pottery.

1.5 mm. Grey cores with dark grey to dull orange surfaces. A well-made fabric possibly thrown on a wheel, or at least finished on a slow wheel. Probably kiln-fired. Forms consist of undecorated cooking-pots. A twelfth- to mid-thirteenth-century date is likely.

F3a - Medium sand (well fired) (WS: Q/M2)

A medium hard-fired fabric tempered with moderate medium sand. Rare subangular dull red flint inclusions to 2.5 mm. Dull orange throughout. A well-made fabric probably turned on a wheel and kiln-fired. Forms consist of jugs decorated with a thin patchy external glaze. A mid-twelfth- to early/mid-thirteenth-century date is likely.

F3b - Moderate to abundant glauconite and quartz sand (WS: -)

A medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate to abundant black sub-rounded/glauconite grains and clear rounded quartz to 1 mm. Grey cores with grey to dull orange surfaces. A well-made fabric though the complete absence of diagnostic pieces precludes dating. It is possible this may be a Late Iron Age fabric, residual in Context 15.

F3c - Moderate fine sand (WS: Q(f)/M1b)

A medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate fine and sparse medium quartz sand giving a distinct glittering surface. Grey cores with buff to dull brown surfaces. A well-made fabric finished on a wheel. Forms consist of undecorated cooking-pots, some with external sooting. A late-twelfth- to thirteenth-century date is likely.

F3d - Moderate fine sand (WS: Q(f)/M3)

A medium- to well-fired fabric tempered with moderate to abundant fine quartz sand with occasional inclusions of dull red iron oxides to 0.5 mm. Light grey to buff cores with pinkish buff surfaces. A well-made fabric finished on a wheel. Forms consist of thin-walled undecorated cooking-pots/bowls? A thirteenth- to early-fourteenth- century date is likely.

Discussion

The site has produced evidence for activity spanning the Middle Saxon to thirteenth-century periods. However, precise dating has proved difficult owing to the nature of the current assemblage. Nevertheless, a number of fabrics have been recovered from a period all too rarely represented in the archaeological record. The Middle Saxon material is very close in date to, though probably slightly later than, that excavated close-by at Upper Bognor Road (Barber 2004: late-sixth- to early/mid seventh-century date). As such, the limited Middle Saxon activity at the current site would appear to fall somewhere between the mid-seventh and mid-eighth centuries.

More sustained activity, though not involving the discard of large amounts of domestic refuse, appears to have occurred in the Saxo-Norman period. The ceramics at this time are notoriously difficult to date, particularly in the absence of larger groups with feature sherds. The majority of the material from the present site could easily be placed in an eleventh- to twelfth-century bracket, though it would be equally possible to push the date of some of the sherds back into the tenth century. Whatever the case, the presence of some glazed pieces indicates that activity continued to the end of the twelfth century and probably lingered on into the early part of the following century. None of the pottery need postdate the

middle of the thirteenth century. The total absence of imports is in keeping with a 'rural' site of this early date.

THE WORKED FLINT by Chris Butler

A small assemblage of 74 pieces of residual worked flint (weighing 1.13 kg) was recovered during the fieldwork at Bersted Street (see Table 1). The raw material comprised a range of locally available flint types.

Two bladelet fragments, one of which is burnt, two soft hammer-struck flakes, and a flake fragment represent Mesolithic activity at the site. The remainder of the assemblage comprises 42 hard hammer-struck flakes, 13 fragments, a single-platform core and nine other pieces of debitage, the majority of which are likely to be of a later prehistoric date. However, a small number of flakes and fragments (from contexts 15, 41, 43 and 45) may be the result of medieval or later flint-knapping for the construction of walls or their subsequent demolition.

The three end-scrapers comprise two made on hard hammer-struck flakes, and together with the side-scraper are likely to be of later prehistoric date. The third end-scraper is made on a longer, possibly soft hammer-struck flake, and has utilization damage at its scraper end. This scraper is likely to be earlier than the others.

THE GEOLOGICAL MATERIAL by Luke Barber

The excavations at the site recovered a small quantity of stone: 16 pieces, weighing 7116 g, from five different contexts. The material is fully listed for the archive. The majority comes from contexts dated to the eleventh to twelfth centuries. Bognor Rock, quartzite, downland flint and Tertiary sandstones are present and could all have been collected relatively locally, directly from source or from the beach. A single piece of dolerite (context 57: 34 g) may also have come from the beach or via westward trade contacts. With the exception of two faced pieces of stone: one of flint and one of Bognor Rock, no worked pieces are present. Bognor Rock, as well as Lower Greensand (one piece weighing 82 g) was also present in a thirteenth-century context (79).

THE ANIMAL BONE by Lucy Sibun

Five contexts (37, 45, 49, 61, 79) produced 45 animal bone fragments weighing 218 g. The assemblage was in an extremely poor state of preservation and highly fragmentary.

Table 1. Quantification of worked flint.

Hard hammer-struck flakes	42
Soft hammer-struck flakes	2
Bladelet fragments	2
Flake fragments	14
Chip	1
Shattered pieces	4
Chunks	4
Single platform flake core	1
End-scrapers	3
Side-scraper	1
Total	74

Table 2. Flot samples quantified by context.

Context	Context type	Litres processed	Date	Flot size (ml)
15	ditch	25	c. 11th–c. 12th	15
47	pit	35	c. 12th	28
61	ditch	35	c. 11th–12th	10
68	ditch	35	c. 11th–c. early 12th	700
81	Post-hole/small pit	28	mid c. 7th–c. mid-8th	20

Table 3. Charred and uncharred plant remains.

Species	Common name	Plant part	Habitat/ use codes	[15] ditch 14	[81] small pit 80	[61] ditch 60	[47] pit 46	[68] ditch 66
Charred remains								
indeterminate	-	wood	-	++++	++++	++++	++++	++++
<i>Triticum aestivum</i> L.	Bread wheat	grain	FI	1	-	-	-	-
cf. <i>Vicia faba/Pisum sativum</i> L.	Horse bean/Pea	seeds and fragments	FI	-	-	-	2	-
<i>Hordeum sativum</i> L.	Barley (naked)	grain	FI	-	1	-	-	-
<i>Rumex crispus</i> L.	Curled dock	seed	BC	-	1	-	-	-
Uncharred remains								
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L.	Elder	seeds, fragments and whole	BCFGH	+	+	+	-	-
<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.	Goosefoot	seed, fragments and whole	ABCD FH	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Chenopodium album</i> L.	Fat hen	whole seeds	ABFH	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Lamium</i> spp.	Dead-nettle	seed	ABC	-	-	+	-	-
<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.	Stinging nettle	seed	BCDEF GH	-	-	+	-	-

Habitats/use codes

- A Weeds of cultivated land
- B Ruderals, weeds of waste places and disturbed ground
- C Plants of woods, scrub and hedgerow
- D Open grassland/heath
- E Plants of damp/wet environment and aquatics
- F Edible plants
- G Medicinal and poisonous plants
- H Commercial/industrial use
- I Cultivated plants

Estimated levels of abundance

- + 'occasional' 1'10
- ++ 'low' 11'50
- +++ 'moderate' 51–150
- ++++ 'abundant' many 100s

It was not possible to identify the fragment recovered from context 45, but contexts 49, 61 and 79 contained single fragments of identifiable bone; contexts 49 and 61 fragments of cattle mandibular molar and premolar, and context 79 a fragment of pig mandible.

Context 37 contained approximately 24 fragments identified as cattle or cattle-size long-bone fragments. The 10 fragments identified as sheep/goat were either from long-bones or a scapula. Two mandibular molar fragments were identified as pig. No further information was obtainable.

THE PLANT REMAINS by Lisa Gray**Introduction**

This report is an analysis of five flots from Bersted Street. Table 2 summarizes the stratigraphic details. These flots were selected after an assessment of all the flots from the excavation.

Methodology

Soil samples were taken from ditch and pit contexts and processed by bucket flotation. A 250-micron mesh was used to collect the flot and a 1 mm mesh was used to collect the residue. The flots were dried prior to dispatch to the author for analysis.

Each selected flot was scanned under a stereomicroscope with magnification of $\times 10$ to $\times 40$. Charred remains, apart from wood fragments, were counted and uncharred remains were given estimated quantities (Table 3). Where identifications have been made, modern reference material was used. Cereal identifications were made using Charles (Charles 1984) and Hillman *et al.* (1996). Nomenclature for plant taxa has been taken from Stace (1997).

Results

Preservation was by charring and the inhibition of decay by anaerobic conditions. Where plant remains were present they are generally fragmentary. Some identifications to species were possible. Charring occurs when plant material has been exposed to fire in a reducing atmosphere (Green 1982, 40).

Discussion

The cereal grains and legumes identified here are common botanical finds from medieval sites in England and Wales (Astill and Grant 1988). They would have been used as food or animal fodder. One charred curled dock seed (*Rumex crispus* L.) was found in the seventh- to eighth-century post-hole/small pit (80). This is commonly found in both waste and cultivated ground (Stace 1997, 194) and is not an unusual seed to find among cereal remains.

The uncharred seeds come from plants that frequent disturbed, nutrient-rich ground, but as they are present in such low quantities and mostly in fragments they should not be viewed as evidence of the past environment at the site and are probably intrusive.

DISCUSSION

Although the site was small in area and heavily truncated, and the number of excavated features was limited, the discoveries at Bersted Street are nevertheless significant. The site contained a range of features dating from the Middle Saxon period to the thirteenth century from which assemblages of pottery, stone, animal bone and environmental remains were recovered. Residual flint provided evidence of Mesolithic and later prehistoric activity at the site or in the immediate vicinity.

The discovery and excavation of Early Saxon domestic sites in Sussex has become more common in the last 30 years (e.g. Holden 1976; James 2002), as the focus has moved away from the investigation of burials to settlements (Welch 1992, 14) and important Late Saxon sites have also been published (e.g. Gardiner 1993). However, the recovery of Middle Saxon material on a site in Sussex, or in the country as a whole, is rare, especially in a rural context. Most excavations of Middle Saxon sites have been located in so-called *emporium* or trading centres such as Southampton (Middle Saxon *Hamwic*) and York (*Eoforwic*) (Arnold 1997, 229). A number of recent regional studies of the Middle Saxon period have been based largely on metal-detector finds (Ulmschneider 1999; 2000) and excavated sites of Middle Saxon date remain scarce, although some of the recently excavated remains at Friar's Oak are of this date (Butler 2000). Thus it is unfortunate that only one truncated

Middle Saxon feature was encountered at Bersted Street, although this has provided a limited, but all-too-rare assemblage of mid-seventh- to mid-eighth-century pottery, supported by environmental evidence of utilization of cereals.

The Saxo-Norman and later medieval ditches and pits are a more common discovery on sites in Sussex and further afield. The ditches mark the boundaries of plots often containing a structure and an area to the rear for the disposal of domestic refuse, a well-documented medieval arrangement known at excavated rural sites such as Wharram Percy (Hurst 1979). Ditches forming such enclosures containing rubbish pits, spanning the Saxo-Norman and later medieval periods, have come to light on a number of sites in Sussex such as Little High Street, Worthing (Lovell 2001). There appears to have been periodic re-digging/realignment, a phenomenon more clearly represented elsewhere (e.g. in Crawley, Stevens forthcoming). As at Worthing and other rural, and indeed urban sites, no firm evidence of structures was encountered. It is probable that the buildings associated with the excavated 'backland' deposits fronted onto Bersted Street (as at Shripney Road, *see above*) and therefore lay outside of the limits of the excavated area. The level of truncation at the site would certainly have removed evidence of ephemeral structures had any ever been present within the excavated area.

The nature of the pottery, and to some extent the environmental and faunal evidence, suggests

that the site formed part of a rural, agrarian settlement of unknown extent in the period spanning the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, and perhaps even as early as the seventh century. The almost total absence of later medieval and early post-medieval material suggests abandonment, or radical contraction, as elsewhere in the county (e.g. Hartfield; Tebbutt 1981), before reoccupation of the site in the more recent past.

Author: Simon Stevens, University College London Field Archaeology Unit, 1 West Street, Ditchling, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 8TS.

REFERENCES

- Arnold, C.** 1997. *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*. London: Routledge.
- Astill, G. & Grant, A.** 1988. *The Countryside of Medieval England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Barber, L.** 2006/this volume. The pottery, in G. Priestley-Bell, Excavation of a Mesolithic occupation site, a Saxon building and to the rear of Upper Bognor Road, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, *SAC* **144**, 58–9.
- Butler, C.** 2000. *Saxon Settlement and Earlier Remains at Friars Oak, Hassocks, West Sussex*, B.A.R. (British Series) **295**.
- Charles, M.** 1984. Introductory Remarks on Cereals, *Bulletin on Sumerian Agriculture*, **1**, 17–31.
- Gardiner, M.** 1990. An Anglo-Saxon and medieval Settlement at Botolphs, Bramber, West Sussex, *Archaeological Journal* **147**, 216–75.
- — 1993. The excavation of a late Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Market Field, Steyning 1988–89, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter *SAC*) **131**, 21–67.
- Glover, J.** 1997. *Sussex Place-Names*. Newbury: Countryside Books.
- Gregory, V.** 1976. Excavations at Becket's Barn, Pagham, West Sussex, 1974, *SAC* **111**, 207–17.
- Green, F.** 1982. Problems of interpreting differentially preserved plant remains from excavations of medieval urban sites, in A. Hall & H. Kenward (eds), *Environmental Archaeology in the Urban Context*, C.B.A. Research Report No. **43**, 40–45.
- Hillman, G., Mason S., de Moulins D. & Nesbitt M.** 1996. Identification of archaeological remains of wheat: the 1992 London workshop, *Circaea: The Journal for Environmental Archaeology* **12**(2), 195–209.
- Holden, E.** 1976. Excavations at Old Erringham, Shoreham, West Sussex, *SAC* **114**, 306–21.
- Hurst, J. G.** 1979. *Wharram, a Study of Settlements on the Yorkshire Wold*. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph No. **8**.
- James, R.** 2002. The excavation of a Saxon *grubenhäus* at Itford Farm, Beddingham, East Sussex, *SAC* **140**, 41–7.
- James, R. & Butler, C.** 2002. An Archaeological Evaluation (Stage 1) at Tribe's Yard, Bersted Street, Bognor Regis, West Sussex. Unpub. Archaeology South-East Report No. 1436.
- Lovell, J.** 2001. Excavations on a medieval site at Little High Street, Worthing, West Sussex, 1997, *SAC* **139**, 133–45.
- Lyne, M.** 1994. The Hassocks Cemetery, *SAC* **132**, 53–85. — — 2000. The pottery, in C. Butler (ed.), *Saxon Settlement and Earlier Remains at Friars Oak, Hassocks, West Sussex*. B.A.R.(British Series) **295**, 23–6.
- Priestley-Bell, G.** 2004. The excavation of a Mesolithic occupation site, a Saxon Sunken Featured Building and other remains at land to the rear of 43–47 Upper Bognor Road, Bognor Regis, West Sussex. Unpub. Archaeology South-East Client Report 1459.
- Stace, C.** 1997. *New Flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stevens, S.** forthcoming, Excavations at the Asda Site, Crawley, West Sussex.
- Tebbutt, C.** 1981. A deserted medieval farm settlement at Faulkner's Farm, Hartfield, *SAC* **119**, 107–16.
- Ulmschneider, K.** 1999. Archaeology, History, and the Isle of Wight in the Middle Saxon Period, *Medieval Archaeology* **43**, 19–44.
- — 2000. Settlement, economy and the 'productive' site: Middle Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire AD 650–780, *Medieval Archaeology* **44**, 53–79.
- Welch, M.** 1992. *Anglo-Saxon England*. London: English Heritage/Batsford.
- White, G.** 1934. A settlement of the South Saxons. *Antiquaries Journal* **14**, 393–400.

