



Report on a Programme of Archaeological Work at Camices Farm, Binsted, Hants.

January 2011

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This document sets out the results from a programme of archaeological works carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. on behalf of Mr. & Mrs. Hooper at Camices Farm, Binsted, Hampshire. The archaeological work was carried out in October & November 2010. The recovery of wasters from late medieval pottery kilns suggests that such structures lie in the vicinity, but none were found in the excavated area.

BACKGROUND

Topographical Background



Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. Camices Farm is in River Hill, a hamlet on the outskirts of Binsted village in Hampshire, c. 6km north-east of Alton (see Fig.1). The site lies at c. 138m aOD and is centred at OS grid reference SU7857 4114. The underlying geology of the site is Upper Greensand.
2. The owners of Camices Farm, Mr. & Mrs. M. Hooper, obtained planning permission (27105/025) from East Hampshire District Council for a replacement sand school. Condition 2 of this planning permission stated that: “No work shall start on site until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation and recording which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.”
3. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. (WSA) was appointed by Mr. & Mrs. Hooper to carry out the archaeological work in order to meet this condition. A Method Statement drawn up by WSA set out the methodology used in order to fulfil the terms of this condition (WSA 2010).
4. This report details the results of that archaeological work, which was carried out on the 18th – 21st October and the 1st & 2nd November 2010 by George Anelay of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd.

Historical Background

1. Camices Farmhouse is Grade II listed and dates from the 16th century with later additions. To the east of the farmhouse lie the remains of a timber barn, with attached late 19th century stable block. The barn is undated, but the brickwork suggests a 17th century date. It would appear from historic mapping that the barn was originally larger,

possibly with aisles to the east and west and several more bays to the north. In the last quarter of the 19th century it was reduced to approximately its current size, with an extension added to the south which is no longer extant. A further building, now demolished, lay to the south-west.

2. The site of the replacement sand school lies c.100m to the east of the Farmhouse, in an area containing no known archaeological artefacts or features. However Saxon pottery sherds were discovered in 1982 by Malcolm Lyne in the north-west corner of the field adjacent to Camices Farm (AHBR 39715), and it is possible that these relate to archaeological occupation which may extend into the site of the replacement sand school.

RESULTS

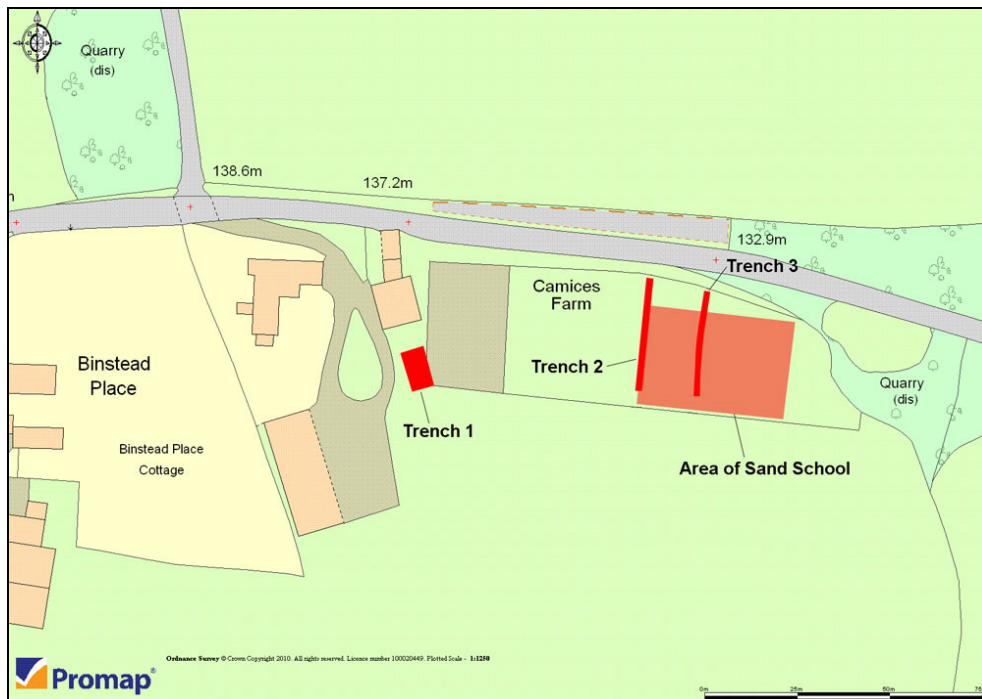


Figure 2 Plan showing the trench locations. The area of the sand school is shown in paler red. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068.

1. Three trenches were originally planned at Camices Farm. Trench 1 was on the site of a proposed swimming pool to the south of the existing barn. Trenches 2 & 3 were within the western area of the proposed sand school.
2. Trench 1 contained only one archaeological feature, which was the eastern part of the demolished south wall of the late 19th century barn extension. The wall was built of roughly faced upper greensand rubble set in a yellow mortar, with brick quoins. The south east corner of the foundation was in line with the same corner of the extant 17th century barn.



Figure 3 The south wall in Trench 1, looking north. The scale is 1m.

3. Due to the presence of archaeological features in Trenches 2 & 3, the area to be monitored during the creation of the sand school was extended to include all of the western half of its proposed dimensions (a & b in Fig. 4). The eastern half was not monitored since any landscaping remained within the depth of the topsoil (c in Fig.4). Subsequently the decision was taken not to monitor the remaining parts of the southern third of the western area due to the absence of archaeological features in this area (b in Fig. 4).

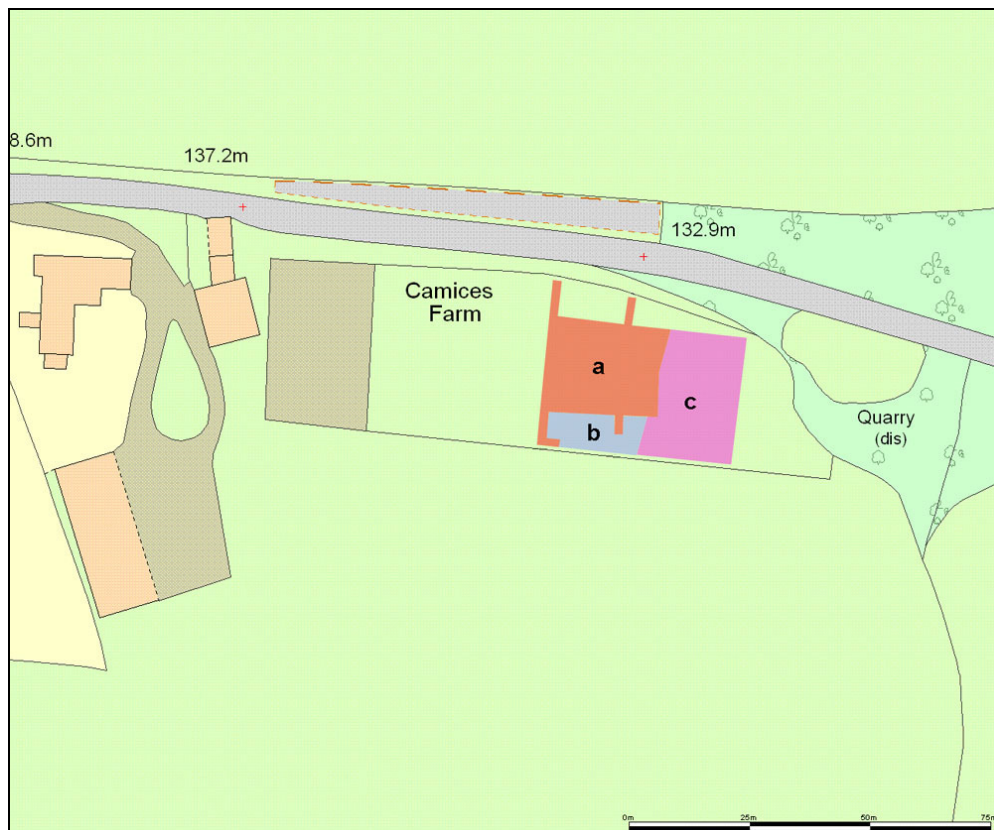


Figure 4 The sand school trench. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068.

4. The northern boundary of the site is formed by the Binstead Road, which is now deeply sunken below the surrounding fields. The edge of this cutting [12] was located within the north-west corner of the trench. To the south of the road the land slopes smoothly down to the east and south, although below the modern topsoil the remains of lynchet were located which would originally have formed a step in the topography. This lynchet had been historically ploughed flat, creating a deeper layer of soil immediately below it's originally line. It is probable that the lynchet pre-dates the medieval landscape, composed of the current field boundaries and buried archaeological features, since they do not respect it. It is likely instead that it is of prehistoric or Roman origin and forms part of field systems which would have followed the contours of the hill upon which Binsted now sits. A single fragment of a tegula found in ditch [8] may hint at a Romano-British settlement in the vicinity.

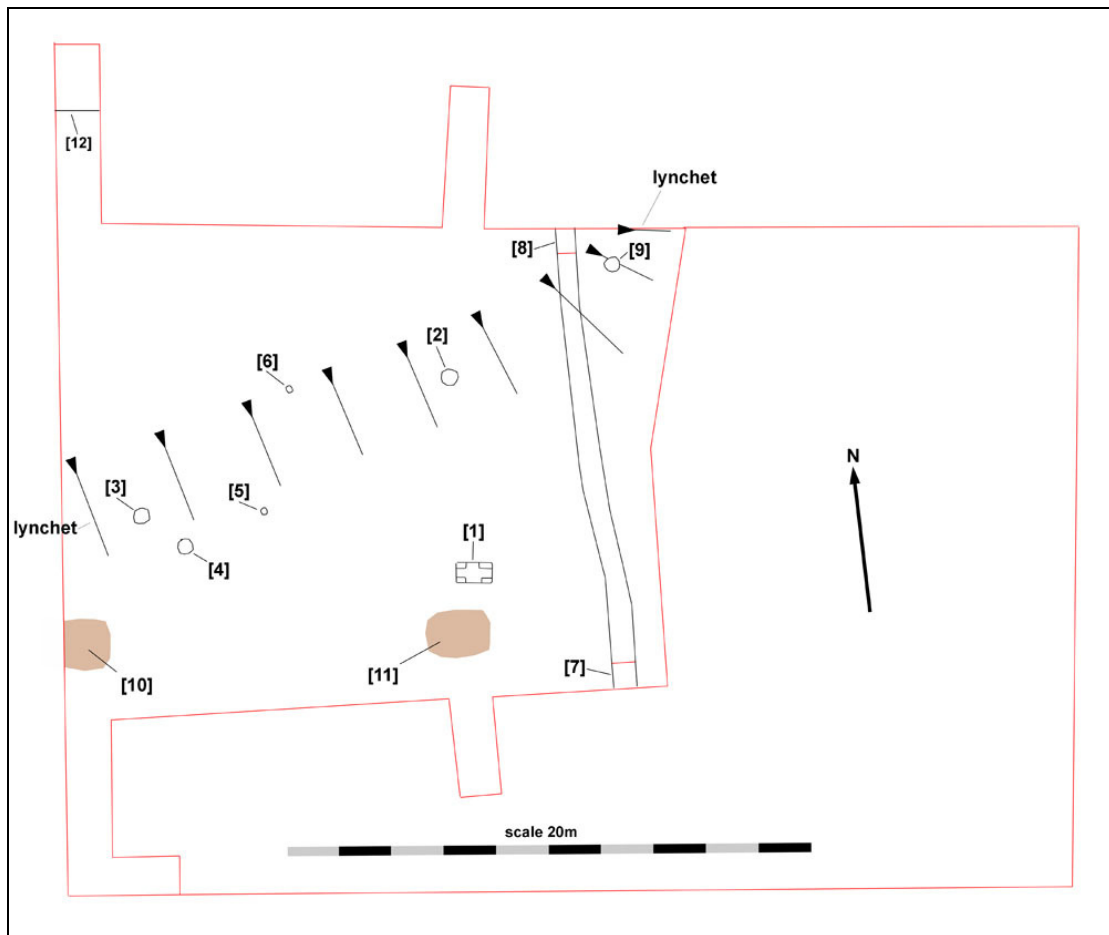


Figure 5 The sand school trench showing all archaeological features.

5. Partly protected from subsequent ploughing by the deeper soil below the lynchet, two spreads (10 & 11) of late medieval pottery were found, both approximately 2m in diameter. The nature of these two pottery assemblages suggests that they may represent dumps of wasters from kilns lying nearby (see Appendix). No evidence for such kilns was

found with the area investigated as part of this project, but they may lie to the west, where the “Saxon” pottery was recorded by Malcolm Lyne.

6. At the eastern edge of the excavated area a gully [7 & 8] was revealed, running north-south from the Binstead road, towards the south. It was c. 0.75m wide, 0.55m deep at its northern end and 0.3m deep at its southern. It had been filled by a mid-grey/brown clay silt containing frequent upper greensand rubble and seven sherds of late medieval pottery. It is possible that this marks the eastern boundary of the late medieval occupation of the site, with the northern boundary formed by the current road. The southern boundary is harder to determine since the gully continued to the south beyond the limits of the areas monitored. The location of the two pottery spreads (10 & 11) at points equidistant from the road may suggest that they respect a lost southern boundary, but this is impossible to prove on the evidence so far recovered.

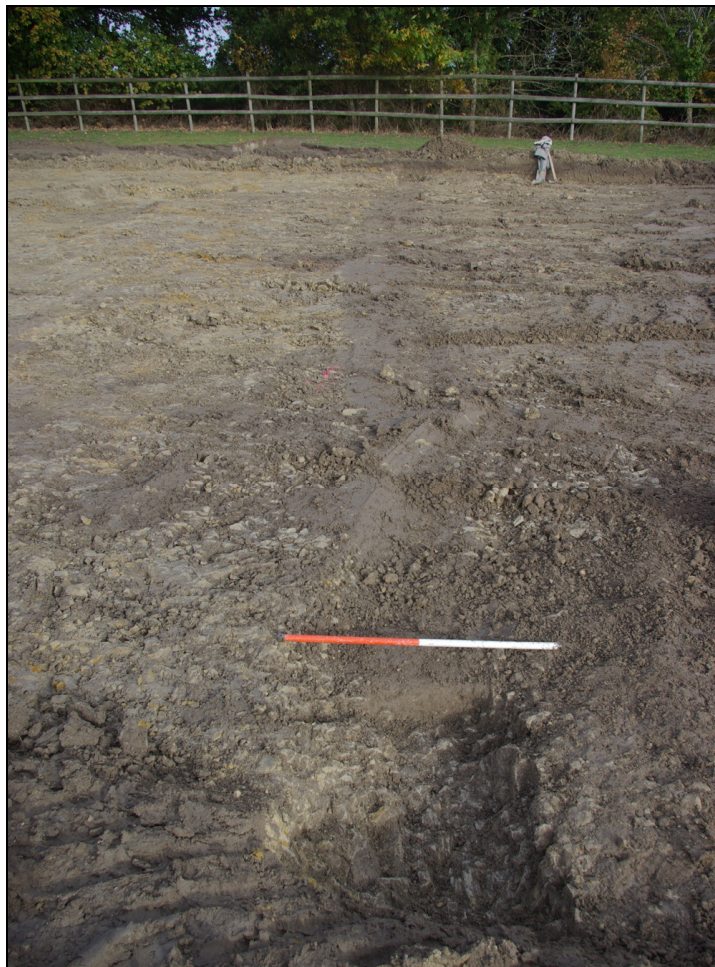


Figure 6 Gully [7], looking north. The scale is 1m.

7. Within the limits of this tentative occupation plot were found six pits of varying size. The most substantial [1] lay immediately to the north of the eastern pottery spread. It was 0.75-0.8m wide, 1.3m long and 0.6m deep. At its base, in each corner, a small rectangular slot had been

made into the upper greensand, 0.2-0.25m wide, 0.35-0.4m long and 0.2m deep. The pit had been back-filled with a light grey/brown clay silt containing frequent upper greensand rubble but no artefacts. While it is impossible to be certain of this pit's date and function, the homogenous nature of the total finds assemblage from the site would suggest a late medieval date. To the north of this pit lay a second smaller one [2], 0.55m in diameter and 0.4m deep. This was filled with the same type of material as [1], but in this case contained a single sherd of late medieval pottery.



Figure 7 Pit [1] looking south. The scale is 1m.

8. To the west of these were two pairs of further pits. The eastern of these [5 & 6] were of identical diameter (0.25m) and appearance. The northern [6] being the deeper (0.2m rather than 0.13m). Neither contained any artefacts, although the usual clay silt fill was darkened by frequent flecks of charcoal. The western pair of pits [3 & 4] were again of identical diameter (0.55m) and appearance to each other. Both had flat bases, the northern being 0.17m deep and the southern 0.1m deep. Their fill was similar to that of [5] & [6], although with a greater quantity of charcoal, and both contained late medieval pottery. The purpose of these four pits is hard to determine, although the flat bases and diameter of the latter two [3 & 4] suggest they may have been post-holes.



Figure 8 Pit [3], looking north. The scale is 1m.

9. The only remaining archaeological feature on the site was a single pit [9] just beyond the eastern gully at its northern end. This had a diameter of 0.35m and a depth of 0.45m. Its fill was the usual clay silt, containing two sherds of late medieval pottery. Its function is unknown.

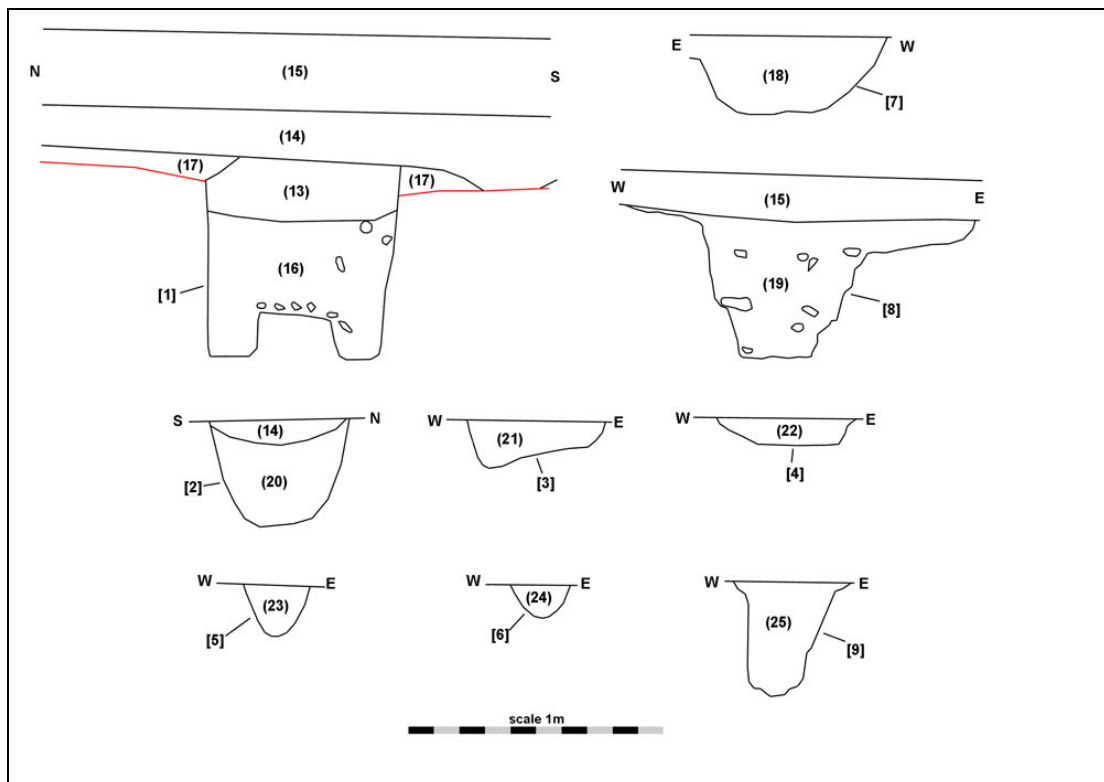


Figure 9 Sections across all the archaeological features within the sand school trench.

CONCLUSION

1. The earliest archaeological feature on the site is the remains of the prehistoric or Roman lynchet following the contours of the hill upon which Camices Farm sits. Nothing is now visible of this above ground, presumably as a result of subsequent ploughing, but it demonstrates that agricultural activity was taking place in the area before the current field systems were laid out in the medieval period.
2. The most significant result of this project has been to correct what is probably a mistake in pottery identification by Malcolm Lyne and point to the possible nature of past activity at Camices Farm. The uniform nature of the pottery assemblage recovered from this excavation indicates that it is late medieval occupation which has occurred on this site in the past, not Saxon. Furthermore the presence of wasters amongst this assemblage suggests that pottery kilns may well lie nearby. A probable location for these would be between the sand school and Camices farmhouse, and close to Binstead road. One interesting possibility is that the farmhouse, or a predecessor, may have originally been the dwelling of either the owner or the operator of these kilns. The present building has been dated to the 16th century, a date close to that of the kiln products.
3. The surviving late medieval pits, post-holes and ditch found in the excavated area provide few clues as to the nature of the activity undertaken in this area. However the rectangular pit [1], with holes in each corner, is unusual and must have been for a specific purpose; it is possible that it was a “pit loom”, with the holes supporting the frame of the loom. The user sits upon the edge of the pit, with legs resting on its base and the loom suspended above.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

West Sussex Archaeology. 2010. ***Method Statement for a Programme of Archaeological Work at Camices Farm, Binsted, Hants.***
Unpublished.

APPENDIX

Pottery from Camices Farm

Duncan H. Brown

An assemblage of 261 sherds, weighing 4,017 grams, was recovered from nine contexts. The material was sorted by ware type, sherd type, vessel type, glaze distribution and decorative style, and quantified by sherd count and weight. Recording and reporting was carried out in December 2010. The pottery from each context is described below.

Fifteen sherds, weighing 351 grams, came from the ploughsoil and were not weighed or recorded in any detail, although it should be noted that they are all in the same late medieval sandy fabric as the majority of the assemblage overall. Two rims probably came from large bowls, or pancheons, with an internal glaze around the base.

A 'pottery spread' in Trench 2 produced 92 sherds of the same fabric, with a total weight of 1,856 grams. This is a very sandy ware, rough to feel, with abundant quartz and some iron inclusions. The complete profile of a bowl present in this context is indicative of one of the most common vessel forms that occur in this ware. Among the sherds from this context, 23 were from bowls and seventeen from jars or cooking pots. The bowls are characterised by glazing around the base, although there is no glaze in the most complete example. The jars or cooking pots have complex, slightly everted rims and rounded shoulders. There are also two sherds with an external glaze that are likely to be from jugs. One is decorated with an incised horizontal line, the other with a combed, horizontal, wavy line. This sandy ware is typical of the pottery of northern Hampshire and southern Berkshire. The closest known production site is at Bentley but there are suggestions that this group may represent kiln waste. In many cases the glaze is badly decayed or over-fired, while at least one sherd shows evidence of spalling. The homogenous nature of the fabric range may infer the same thing. A single sixteen-gram sherd of a late medieval whiteware, perhaps from the production centres of the Surrey/Hampshire border, is also present in this context.

The 'pottery spread' in Trench 3 produced 130 sherds, weighing 1,601 grams. These are all in the same late medieval sandy ware and include the same range of bowl, jar/cooking pots and jugs. Among the jar sherds are two fragments with thumbled applied strip decoration, while the single jug sherd is decorated with a combed horizontal line.

Context 2 produced a single twelve-gram body sherd of late medieval sandy ware.

Context 3 has more variety. There is one eleven-gram sherd of late medieval sandy ware but also two body sherds, weighing 36 grams, of an earlier coarseware with a denser, quartz-rich fabric. Five scratch-marked sherds, weighing 70 grams and characterised by scored lines over the exterior surface, may date from the early 13th century date, although they may well be residual.

Context 4 contained three scratch-marked sherds, all from the same vessel, with a combined weight of sixteen grams.

Context 7 produced six small sherds of late medieval sandy ware with a total weight of 25 grams.

Context 8 contained a single ten-gram sherd of late medieval sandy ware.

Context 9 produced two sherds, weighing five grams between them, of late medieval sandy ware and two sherds of scratch-marked ware with a combined weight of eight grams.

This is a small assemblage but the possibility that some of it might represent kiln waste gives a hint at the potential for further work in this area.