



**Report on a Programme of Archaeological Works at
64 Fishbourne Road West, Fishbourne, West Sussex**

September 2018

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 the owner at 64 Fishbourne Road West, Fishbourne, West Sussex. The works were carried out in August 2018 in advance of the construction of a new boundary wall. The results failed to find any remains associated with the south wing of the Fishbourne Roman Palace, thought to exist within the immediate vicinity of the site. As a consequence, it is thought that the wing lies further to the south.

BACKGROUND

Topographical Background



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

1. No. 64 lies on the north side of Fishbourne Road West (A259) within the village of Fishbourne, c. 1km to the west of Chichester, in West Sussex (see Fig.1). The property lies wholly within the footprint of Fishbourne Roman Palace, a scheduled ancient monument (SAM No. WS233). It lies at 6m aOD and is centred at OS grid reference SU8397 0469. The underlying geology is the clay of the Lambeth Group.

Project Background

1. The owner of 64 Fishbourne Road has received Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) (Ref. S00194183) from Historic England (HE) for the erection of a boundary wall to the front of the property. Condition (e) of the SMC stated that: “No ground works shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by Historic England, and the works shall subsequently be undertaken in accordance with the approved details..”
1. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. was appointed by owner to write and submit such a specification (WSA 2108) and to carry out the ensuing archaeological works. This report details the results of that archaeological work, which was carried out on the 7th August 2018 by George Anelay of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd.

Historical Background

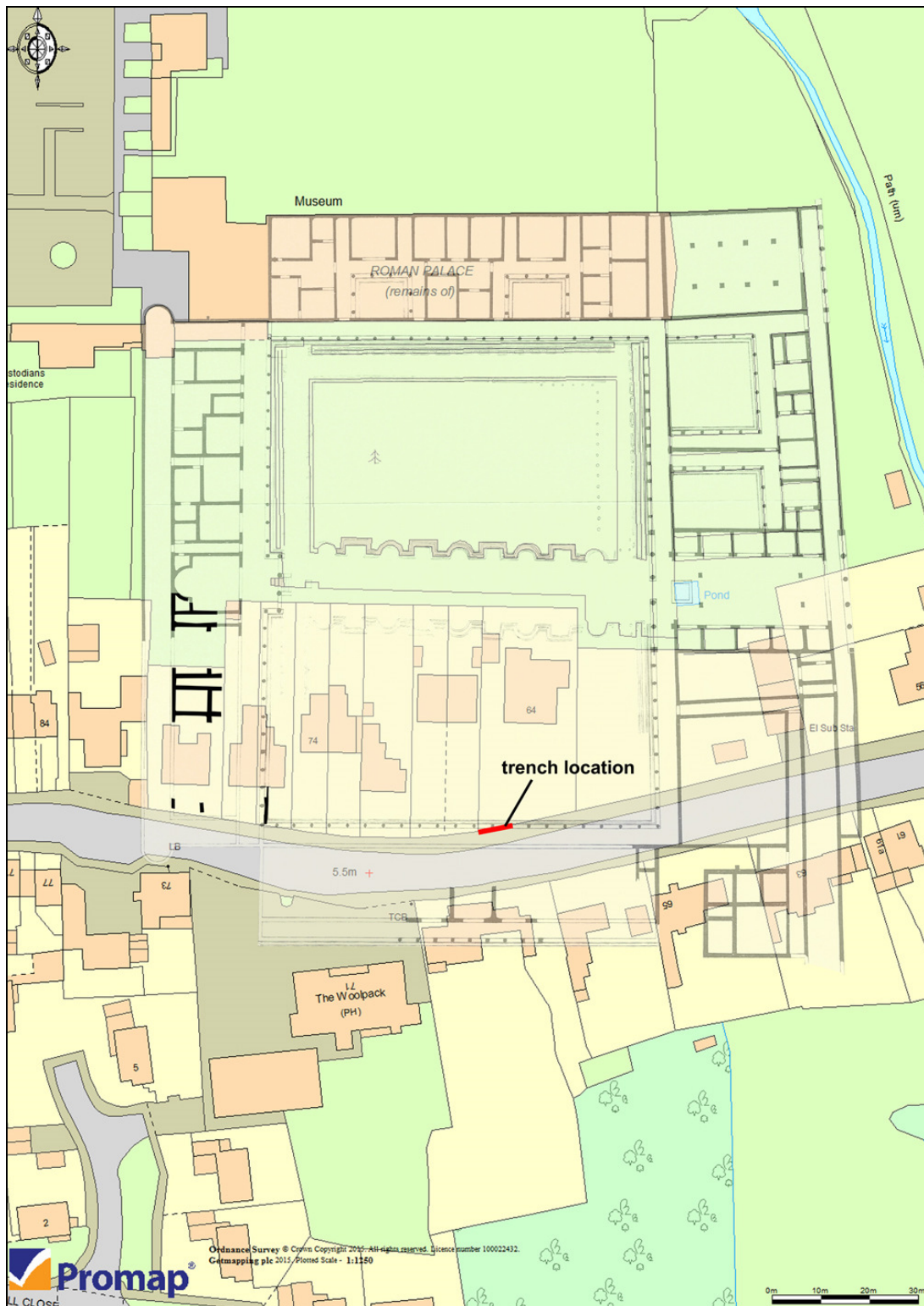


Figure 2 Plan showing the location of the proposed excavation trench (in red) in relation to the Flavian Palace as a whole according to Cunliffe's proposed plan, with the addition of subsequent excavation results (in black) © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

1. Roman occupation at the Palace site began with timber buildings which were superseded by the Neronian 'proto-palace,' This Roman-style building is thought to date to the early AD 60s. The construction of the great Flavian palace is dated to between AD 75 and AD 80.
2. The Palace faced south to the harbour across an artificially created terrace containing a landscaped private garden, which ran c.90m south from the palace building. A quay wall built of stone blocks and timber retained the south edge of the terrace.
3. 64 Fishbourne Road lies largely within the central courtyard of the Flavian Palace in an area little explored by previous excavations. If the projected overall plans of the Palace layout are correct for this area, which given the paucity of evidence is very uncertain, then the area to be impacted by the erection of the new boundary wall was thought to overlie the line of the stylobate of the colonnade fronting the south wing, with the latter's north wall lying c.3m further south under the modern pavement and road (see Figure 2).

RESULTS

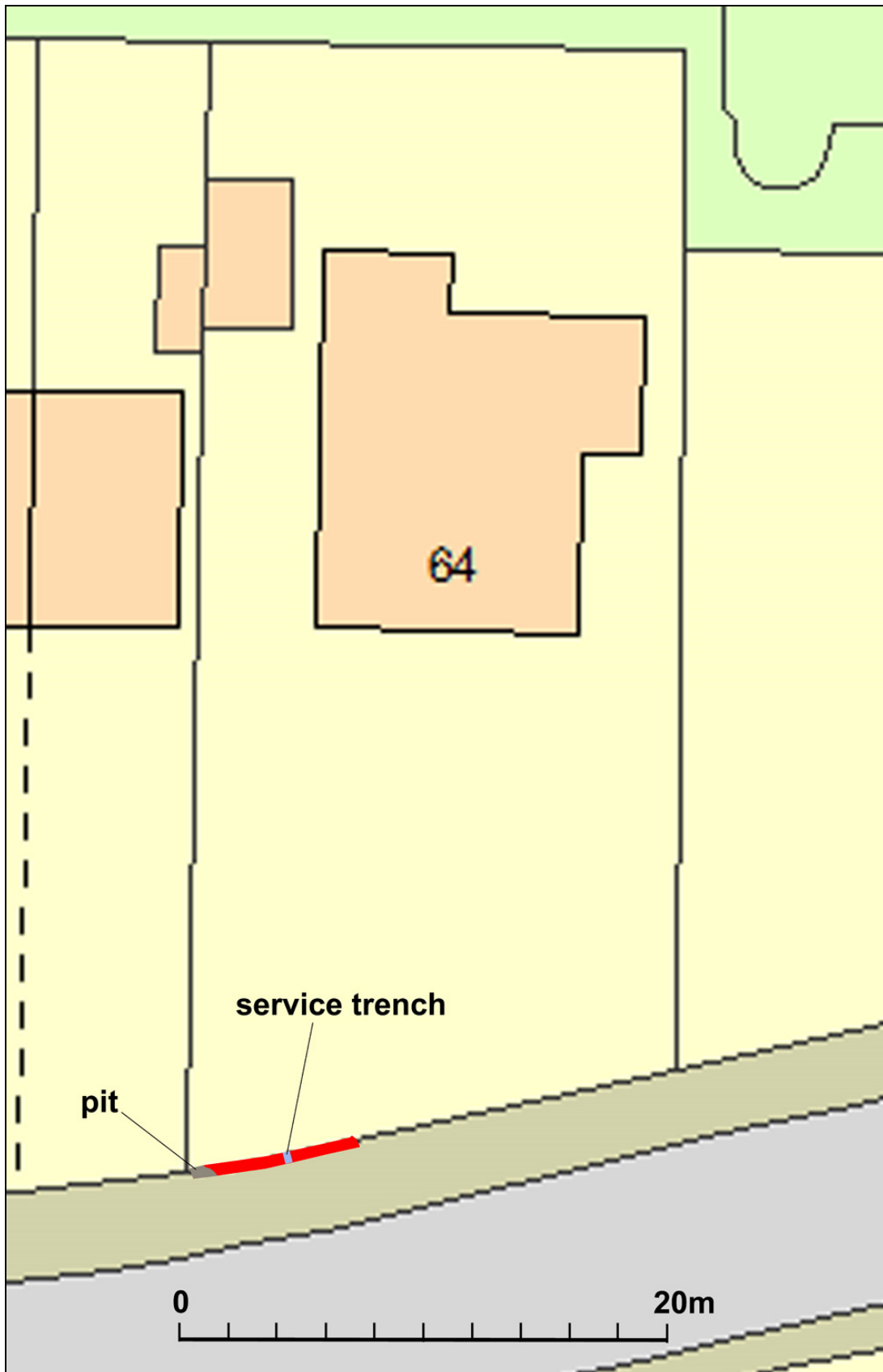


Figure 3 Plan showing the location of the excavation trench (in red), and its features. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

1. A trench, 7m long, 0.45m wide and 0.7m deep, was excavated in advance of the construction of a new boundary wall along the western front of No.64 Fishbourne Road West. The same sequence of layers was noted throughout, with a dark grey/brown topsoil (1 in Figure 5), c.0.3m thick and containing occasional flints, overlying a pale yellowish grey/brown subsoil (2 in Figure 5), c.0.2m thick and containing more frequent flints. Below these layers was a yellow clay (shaded yellow in Figure 5), which may be the undisturbed clay of the Lambeth Group. A modern service trench for water was noted cutting the clay towards the centre of the trench, running north-south.



Figure 4 The excavated trench, looking west

2. At the western end of the trench, an irregular depression, or pit, into the clay was revealed, partially filled by the subsoil (2) overlying a further layer composed of flint gravel in yellow/brown silt (3 in Figure 5). Only a part of this pit lay within the excavated trench, with its side sloping to the south-west, and reaching a maximum depth, where excavated, of c.0.3m. No artefacts were recovered from its fill, save for a single oyster shell.

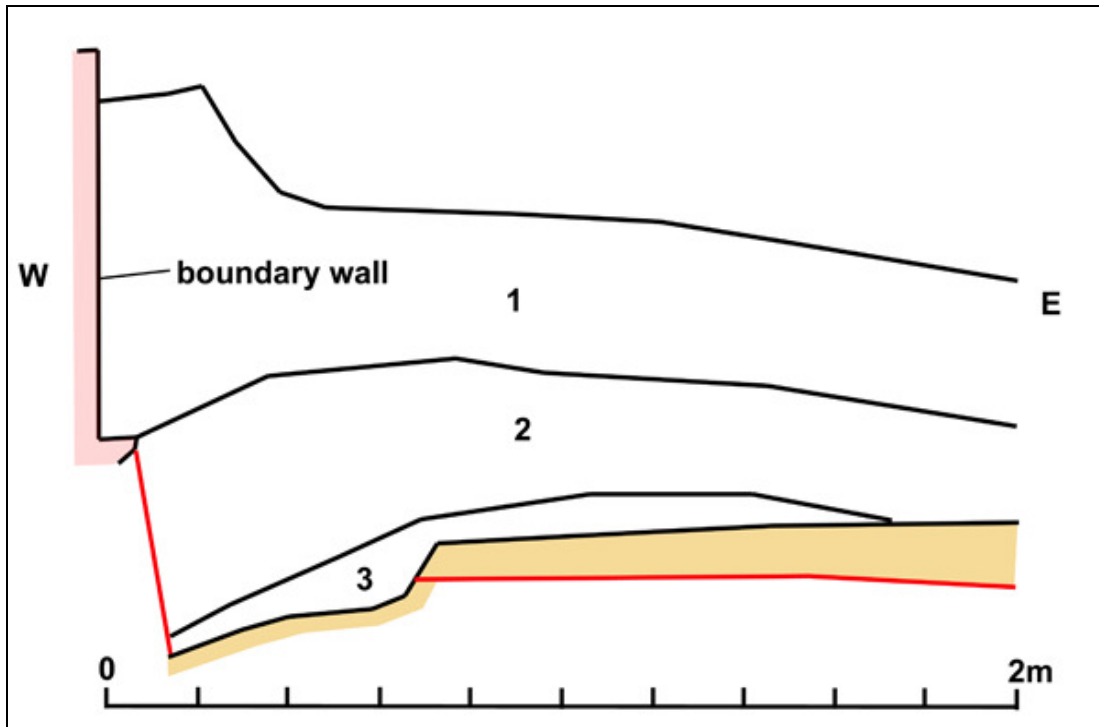


Figure 5 Section showing the pit at the west end of the trench



Figure 6 The pit at the west end of the trench

CONCLUSION

1. No trace was found of the base to the stylobate thought to have existed in the vicinity of this trench. Elsewhere this base was found to be composed of a rubble filled trench 0.6m wide and 0.76m deep (Cunliffe, p.121), so it would seem unlikely that it has been entirely destroyed by post-Roman truncation. Rather the results suggest that the remains of the south wing of the Flavian Palace lie further to the south than previously supposed, although perhaps at no great distance. The depth of both the stylobate foundations, and those of the wing walls, make it likely that at least some trace of them will survive under the modern pavement or road, as was demonstrated during excavations at No.76 Fishbourne Road West (Anelay, p.16).
2. The date and function of the depression or pit noted at the west end of the trench is unclear, although it may be associated with bedding trenches for the gardens lying within the courtyard of the Flavian Palace. It is also possible that the clay lying at the base of trench is not the undisturbed Lambeth clays, but rather re-deposited material used to create a level platform for these gardens (Cunliffe, p.123).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anelay, G. 2016 ***Report on a Programme of Archaeological Works at 76 Fishbourne Road West, Fishbourne, West Sussex***. Unpublished.
- Cunliffe, B. W. 1971 ***Excavations at Fishbourne, 1961-1969. Vol.I. The Site***. London: Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London. No. XXVI.
- West Sussex Archaeology 2018 ***Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Works at 64 Fishbourne Road West, Fishbourne, West Sussex***. Unpublished.