



**Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Pitlands Farm, Up Marden, West Sussex**

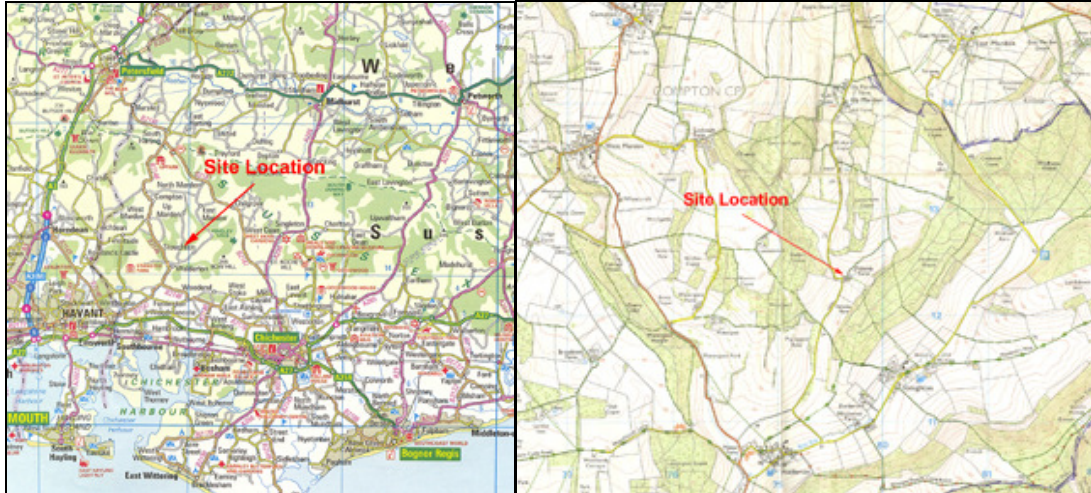
June 2017

## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

*This document sets out the results from an archaeological watching brief carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd on behalf of the owner, at Pitlands Farm, Up Marden, West Sussex, in March 2017. The work was associated with the construction of an extension to the north-east of the Farmhouse. It had been thought that the demolition of an existing flint wall, and the subsequent digging of the foundation trench for the extension's north wall, might expose part of the remains of a Roman bathhouse, however the results indicate that such remains must lie further to the north.*

## BACKGROUND

### Topographical Background



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

1. Pitlands Farm lies 10km to the north-west of Chichester in the parish of Compton, West Sussex, at 60m aOD, OS grid reference SU 7967 1235. Geologically the site lies on the Newhaven chalk formation.

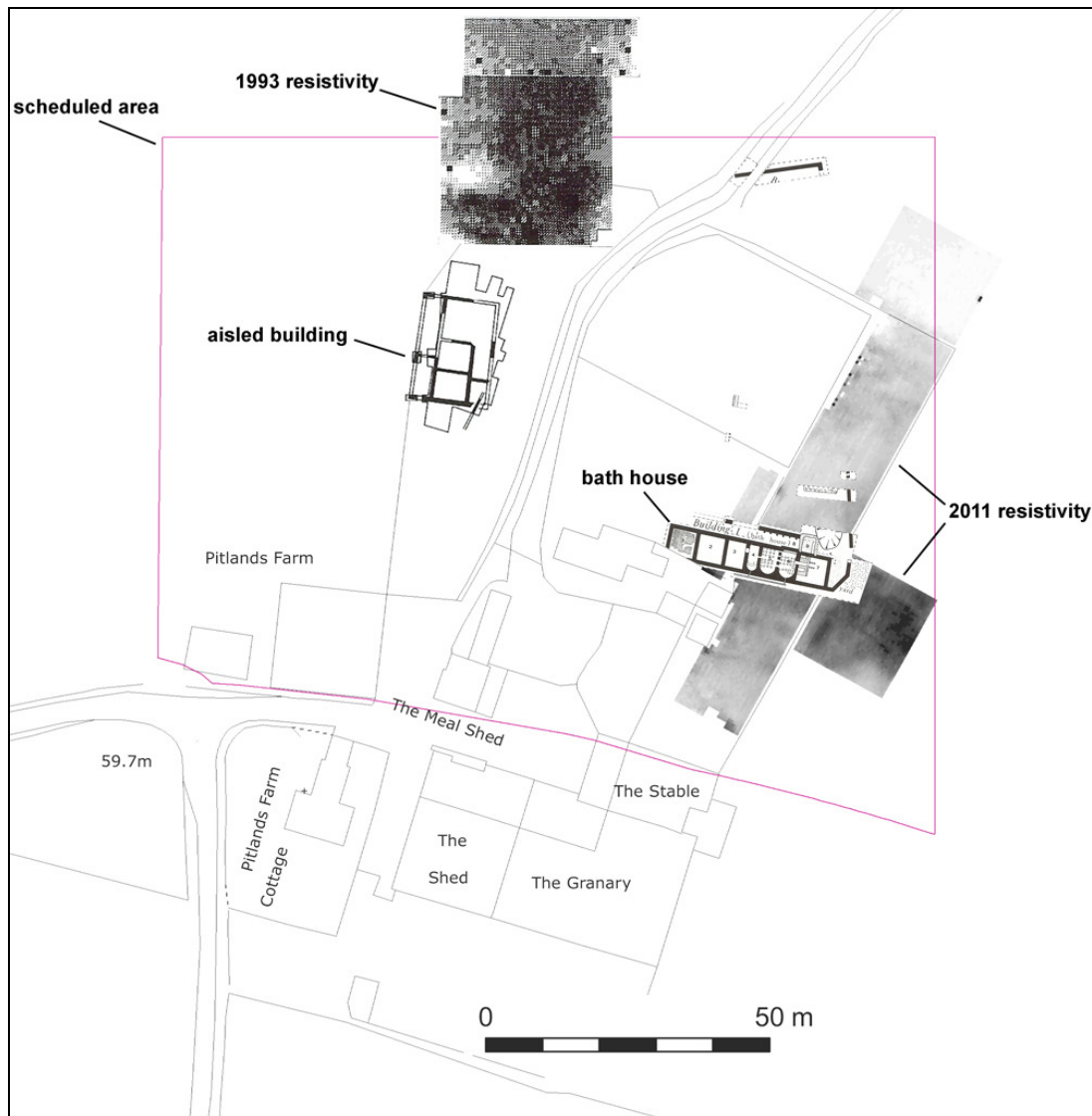
### Project Background

1. Excavations at Pitlands Farm, undertaken in the 1960's and 1990's, uncovered the remains of a substantial second century Roman bathhouse and associated aisled building. The site, including the area of the current Farmhouse, was subsequently designated a Scheduled Monument (No.1015235).
2. Mr. A. Huxham has received planning permission (SDNP/16/05100/HOUS) and Scheduled Monument consent (S00150512) for an extension off the north-east corner of the existing Farmhouse at Pitlands Farm, in an area immediately to the south of the known Roman bathhouse (see Figs.3 & 6). Condition 6 of the planning permission stated that: "The developer shall arrange for an archaeological organisation or appropriately qualified archaeologists to observe and record archaeological evidence that may be uncovered as a result of the development and shall make suitable provision for publication of the results."
1. This report details the results of that archaeological observation, which was carried out on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017 by George Anelay of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd.

## Historical Background

1. The presence of Roman remains at Pitlands Farm was first noted by the wife of the then landowner in the garden to the rear of the current farmhouse. This led to a series of archaeological excavations carried out between 1965 and 1969 under the supervision of Roy & Sheila Morgan and overall direction of Alec Down (Down 1979). The main trench was positioned over what proved to be a substantial bath building running east-west, to the immediate north-east of the farmhouse, together with traces of an adjoining wall, yard surface and well. Further small-scale trenching was located to the north which revealed two more stretches of wall foundation, which were interpreted as the remains of further buildings, and an undated gully with an associated line of post-holes. The excavated pottery suggested a date range for the villa as a whole from Flavian to the fourth century AD. An alteration to the bathhouse was dated to sometime after the late third century AD. The superior size and construction of the excavated bathhouse suggested to the excavators that the villa was of greater size and importance than others in the area. Late Saxon and medieval pottery was also found within the trenches, suggesting later occupation on the site. The current farmhouse is 17<sup>th</sup> century in origin.
2. Further excavations were undertaken in 1992 and 1993 by the Chichester District Archaeological Unit, again under the direction of Alec Down. The purpose of this project was to re-excavate parts of the bathhouse in order to refine its dating and to investigate a possible building seen as a parch marks in a field to the west. The bath building was dated to the early second century AD on the basis of the *in situ* relief patterned flue tiles. It was suggested that this villa is another example of the early development of masonry villas along the south coast of Sussex (Down 1992). The structure revealed by the parch marks proved to be an aisled building, aligned north-south, divided into at least six rooms and dating to the same period as bath building to the east. Further late Saxon and medieval pottery was recovered from pits cutting the Roman remains. A resistivity survey to the north, while recording some anomalies, failed to reveal anything consistent with any further buildings (Down 1993).
3. An archaeological watching brief was carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd at Pitlands Farm in two phases from 30<sup>th</sup> January – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010 – 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011. The watching brief was in response to a condition of a planning permission for the re-development of some of the farm buildings which lie to the south of the present farm house. The principal result of this archaeological work was to demonstrate that no remains associated with the villa lie under the southern part of the modern farm courtyard. Only two significant archaeological features were found, both pits of uncertain date. In addition a number of unstratified Roman artefacts were recovered; of particular note were two fragments of a Bembridge

Limestone slab, possibly originally from a monumental Roman building, but re-used as a rainwater drain (Anelay 2011).



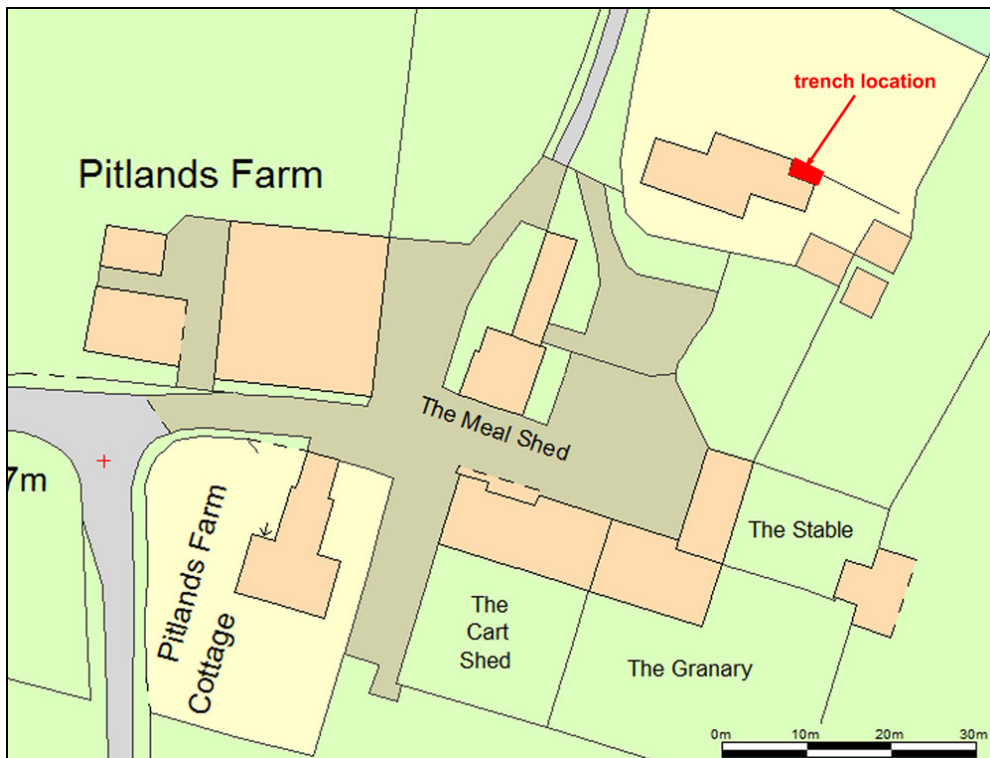
**Figure 2** Plan of known archaeological features and the geophysical surveys. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

4. In July 2011 a geophysical survey was carried out by volunteers under the direction of Neville Haskins. While the magnetometer survey proved ineffective, probably due to the geological conditions on the site, a resistivity survey not only confirmed the position of the bathhouse found by the earlier excavations, but also demonstrated that other structures exist beyond the 1960's excavations to the east. Fainter anomalies also suggest further structures may exist to the south and north of the bathhouse (Haskins 2011).
5. In spite of all the archaeological excavations that have taken place at Pitlands Farm over the course of the last fifty years, the overall layout of the Roman villa, which undoubtedly exists there, is still uncertain. The geophysical survey undertaken in 2011 suggested that substantial

remains exist to the east of the known bathhouse, potentially extending beyond the limits of the current Scheduled area.

6. Associated with the current project, in August & September 2016 an archaeological evaluation of the area to the immediate east of the current farmhouse was undertaken. This revealed that any Roman remains associated with the bathhouse had been truncated below the surface of the geology within the excavated trench, possibly in the 18th or 19th century (Anelay 2016). It was thought, however, that the excavation for the northern foundation trench for the new extension might expose in its north face parts of the bathhouse, and so a watching brief was maintained, the results of which are given below.

## RESULTS



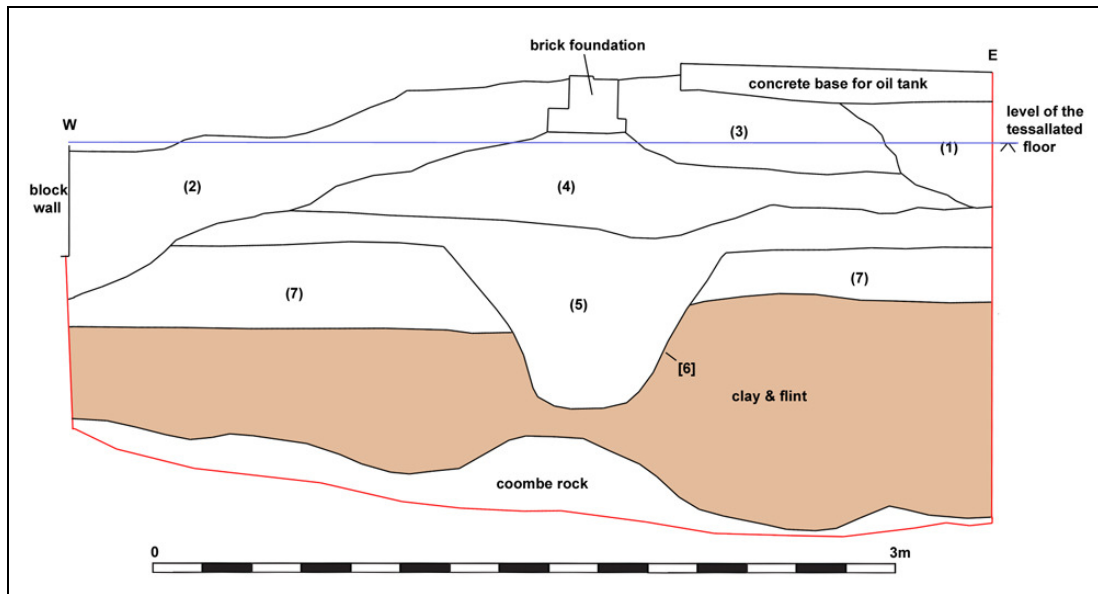
**Figure 3** Plan showing the area of the extension trench in relation to the Farmhouse. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. It had been hoped that the demolition of the existing flint wall, in order to make way for the north wall of the extension, would have exposed behind it the remains of the Roman bathhouse. However this proved not to be the case, and instead a series of later soil layers (1-7 in Fig.4) were revealed sitting upon the undisturbed clay-with-flints geology.
2. The lowest of these soil layers was a mid-dark brown clay silt, up to c.0.35m thick, containing frequent flints and chalk fragments (7). This had been cut into by a c.1.1m wide and c.0.6m deep pit or gully [6], filled by a mid-grey/brown clay silt (5) containing frequent mortar and



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chalk fragments and flints. This fill material continued as a layer to the east and west, up to c.0.2m thick. Above this was a layer of mid-dark brown clay silt (4), up to c0.35m thick, containing frequent large flints. This layer would appear to have been truncated to the east and west, where it was overlain by a dark brown topsoil (2) and a mid-brown clay silt (3) containing frequent mortar flecks. The remains of a brick wall foundation sat on top of layer (4). At the extreme east end of the exposed section an area of black/brown clay silt (1) is all that was left in the trench of the soil deposited behind the demolished flint wall.



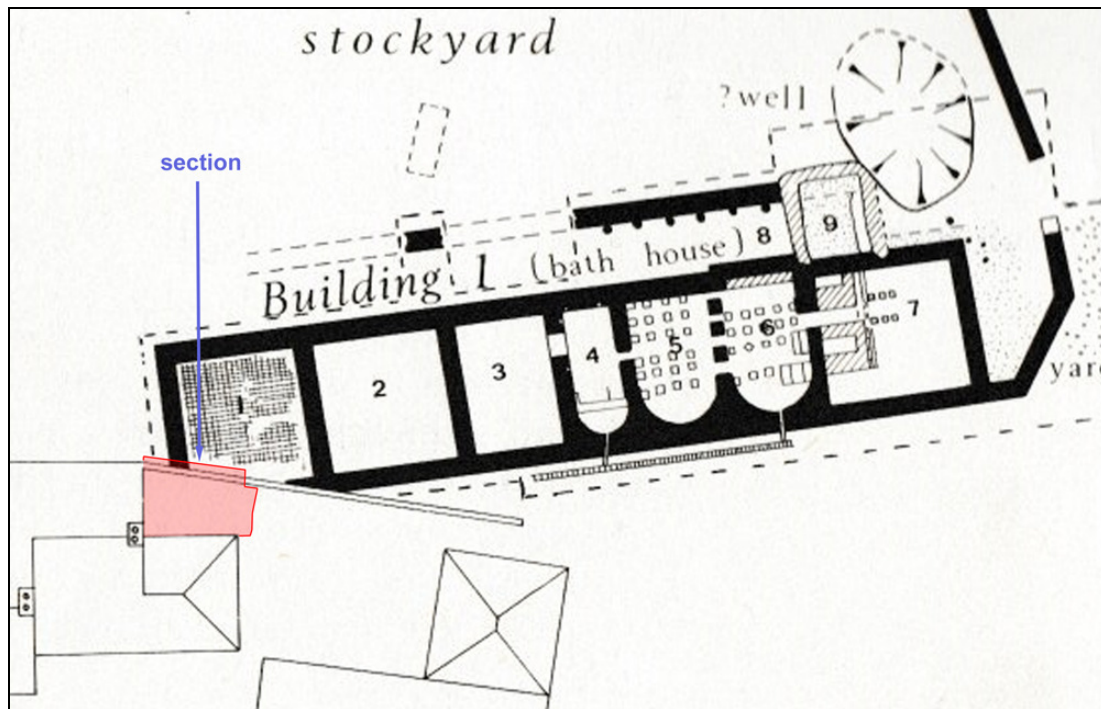
**Figure 4** North section behind the demolished flint wall.



**Figure 5** North section, looking north-west

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3. A level taken from an *in-situ* preserved part of the tessellated floor of Room 1 of the bathhouse (see Fig.6) indicated that the surface of the undisturbed geology, together with soil layers (4), (5) & (7), as seen in the recorded section, all lay below it. No trace of the tessellated floor, or the walls of the bathhouse, survived within the trench, despite it being positioned over the baths south-west corner. It is evident that these have been destroyed at some point subsequent to the abandonment of the villa, the only evidence for the date of this destruction being a single sherd of post-medieval pottery recovered from the fill of the pit/gully [6].
4. It is probable that this truncation of the bathhouse was associated with the building or expansion of the current farmhouse, with an area terraced into the ground behind to create a platform with battered sides. Some later modifications appear to have taken place, for example with the cutting of the gully/pit [6]. This appears to slope downwards to the south-west, towards a brick structure found in the 2016 evaluation (WSA 2016). Later works include the brick foundation over layer (4), the demolished flint wall and the construction of the modern block wall to the west.



**Figure 6** The location of the extension trench in relation to the Roman bathhouse.

## CONCLUSION

1. It has become evident from the results of this archaeological work that the remains of the Roman bathhouse lie further to the north than was initially expected. This expectation was based upon the published plan of Down's 1960's excavations, but it is now clear that the extent of the walls marked on this plan are in part conjectural and project beyond



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what was actually found. It seems more likely that the drawn southern edge of the tessellated floor in Room 1 in fact indicate the limits of the surviving Roman archaeology, lying as it does just outside the 2017 trench.

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