



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

January 2016

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 76 Fishbourne Road West, Fishbourne, West Sussex. The works were carried out in August 2015 in advance of an extension to the existing drive. The results included the uncovering of the inner wall of the west wing of the Flavian Palace, together with a parallel wall and associated chalk flooring probably associated with the pre-Palace masonry building to the north-west.

BACKGROUND

Topographical Background

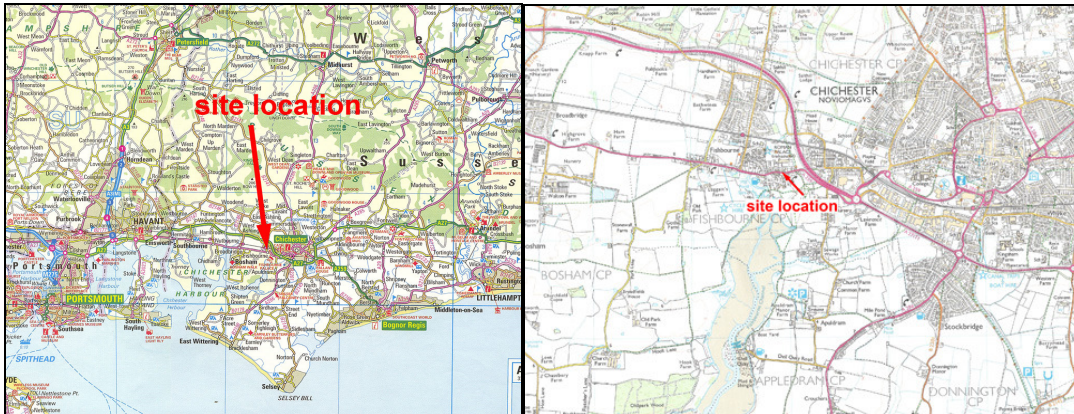


Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. No. 76 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 SU8391 0468. The underlying geology is the clay of the Lambeth Group overlain by brickearth.

Project Background

1. Mr. A. Jackson has obtained both Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) (Ref.S00112410) from Historic England (HE) and planning permission (FB/14/02804/DOM) from Chichester District Council (CDC) to extend the existing drive to 76 Fishbourne Road West, Fishbourne, West Sussex. Both the SMC and planning permission included conditions for archaeological works to be carried out in accordance with a specification to be agreed in advance with both HE and CDC.
2. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. was appointed by Mr Jackson to write and submit such a specification (WSA 2105) and to carry out the ensuing archaeological works. This report details the results of that archaeological work, which was carried out on the 5th, 6th, 14th & 17th August 2015 by George Anelay of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd.

Historical Background

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 Roman occupation at the Palace site began with timber buildings which were superseded by the Neronian 'proto-palace,' This Roman-style building is thought to date to the early AD 60s.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 Flavian 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. 76 Fishbourne Road lies over the south-west corner 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 extension of the drive would encompass the junction of the south and west walls of the portico. A previous extension to the drive undertaken in 1999 was thought to have revealed an east-west running Roman wall.

RESULTS

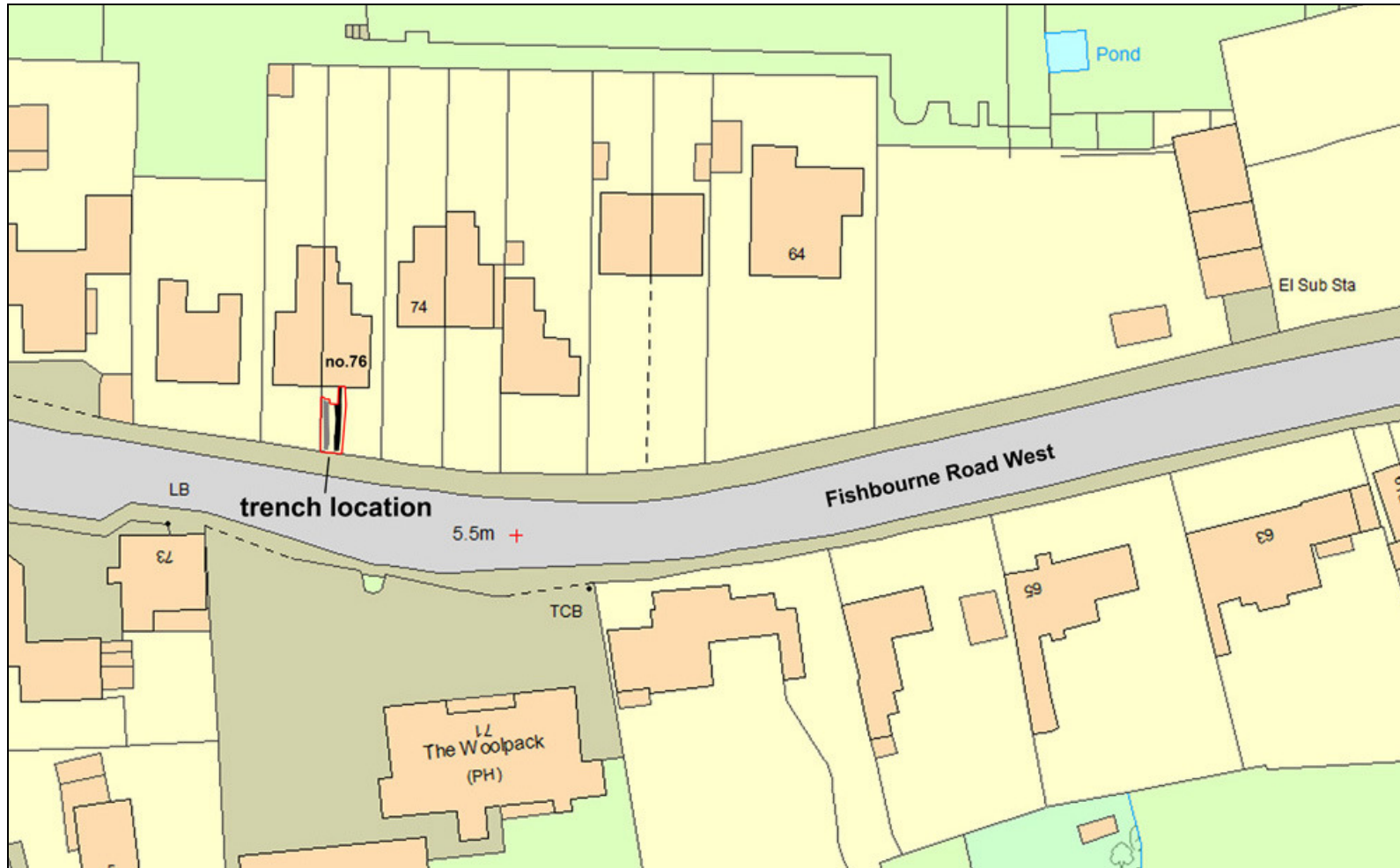


Figure 2 Trench location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

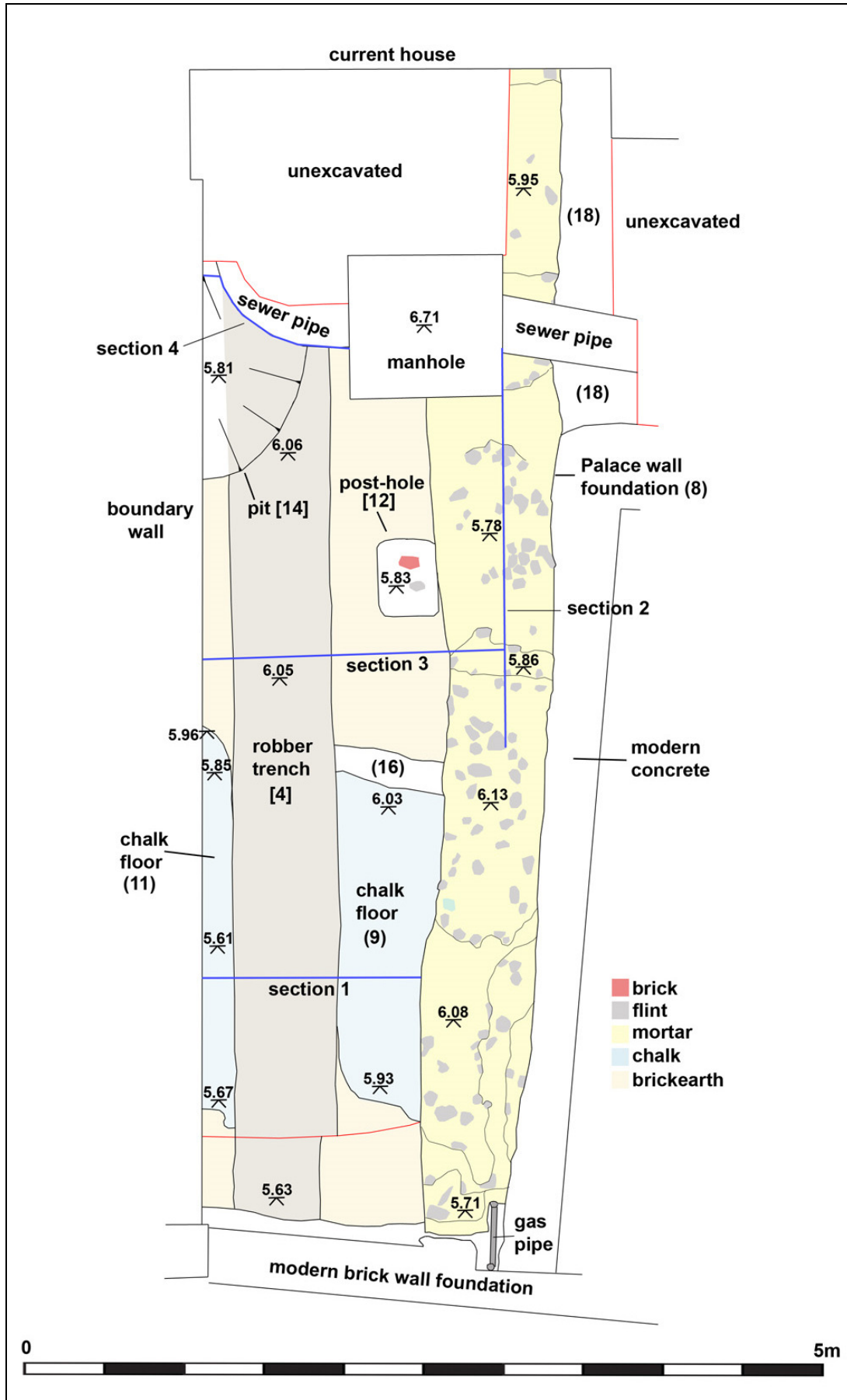


Figure 3 Plan of the excavated features

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

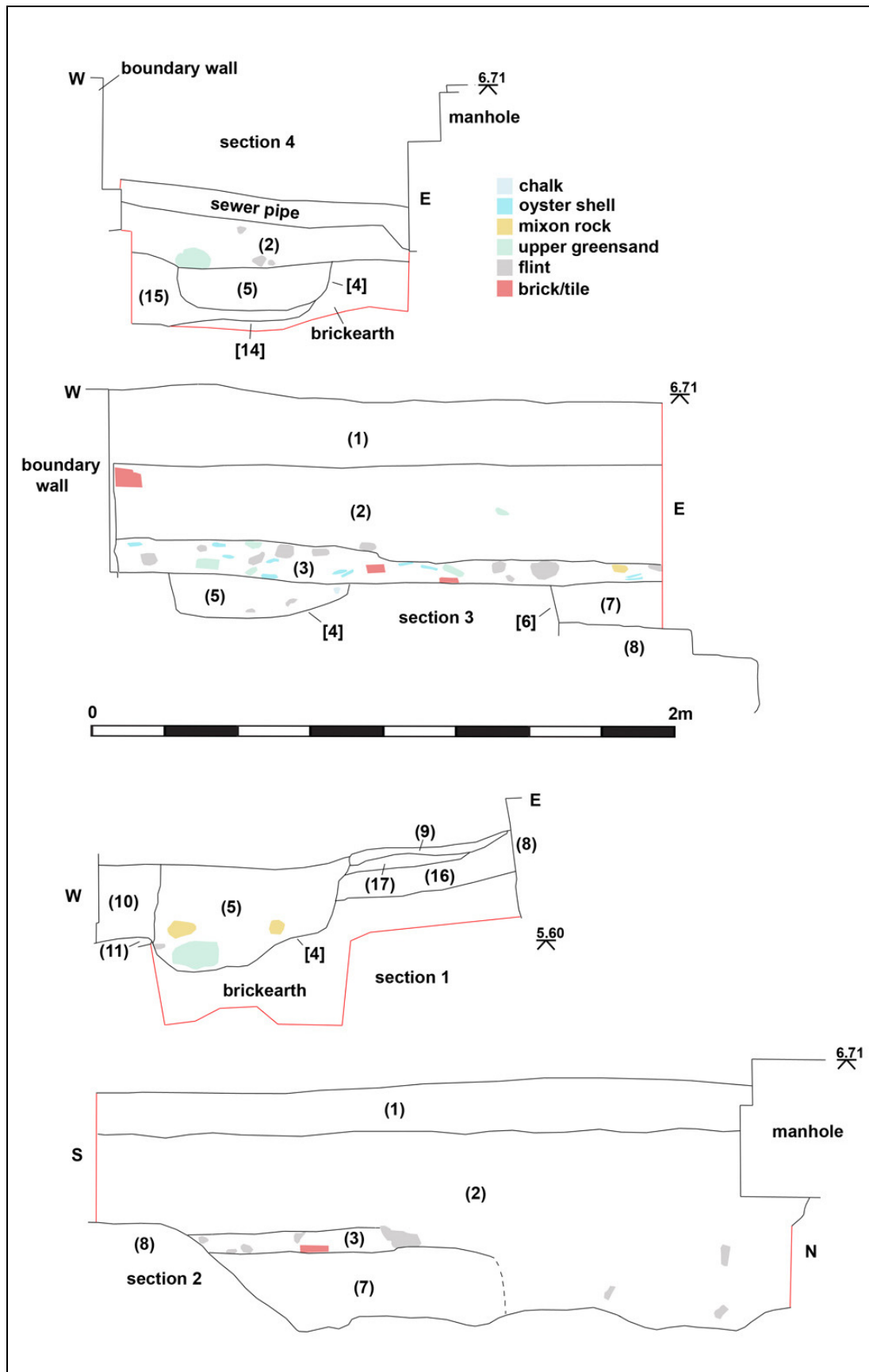


Figure 4 Sections within the excavated trench (see Fig.3 for locations, marked in blue)

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

1. A single trench was excavated on the site, in advance of the works to widen the existing front drive, the latter having already removed all overlying deposits, to below the surface of the natural geology, over an area of approximately two thirds of the total front garden (see Fig.2). The surviving portion, comprising the excavated trench, measured c.1.9m wide at its southern end, increasing to c.2.3m immediately to the south of the existing sewer manhole (see Fig.3).
2. The earliest feature on the site lay at the extreme north-west corner of the trench, and only partially within it, and was a shallow pit, or possibly the angle of a ditch [14], cut into the undisturbed brickearth geology (see Figs.3 & 5 and section 4 in Fig.4). It extended to a maximum depth of c.0.25m below the brickearth and was filled with a clay/silt mix (15) containing oyster shell, tile, animal bone and pottery (dating to the pre-Roman or early Roman period). While it clearly pre-dates the robber trench [4], which cuts through its fill, it is not possible, from the limited area exposed, to determine its exact date or nature.
3. Running north-south towards the western side of the trench was the robber trench [4] of a demolished wall (see Figs. 3 & 6). This trench varied from c.0.55-c.0.65m wide, and survived to a depth of c.0.35m, at its southern end, shallowing to c.0.15m, where it met the northern baulk of the trench (see sections 1, 3 & 4 in Fig.4). This change in depth is a result of later truncation, which has cut into the original slope of the ground as it runs upwards to the north. The robber trench was filled with a mixed clay/silt (5) and contained frequent chalk flecks and occasional blocks of Upper Greensand, Mixon rock, flint and chalk. Two sherds of pre-Flavian fineware and three of early Roman coarsewares were recovered from its fill. It is not clear from the profile or fill of the robber trench whether it once supported a stone foundation or a wooden cill beam.
4. Immediately to the east and west of this robber trench [4] were two chalk surfaces, both c.0.03m thick, that to the east (9) sitting c.0.3m higher than that to the west (11) (see Figs. 3, 6 & 7 and section 1 in Fig.4). Both sloped up to the north, with the western (11) doing so more markedly and rising again to the south (see Fig.7). It was not possible to determine their original extent, since both had been truncated to the north and south, with the eastern surface (9) additionally being cut by the later wall foundation (8) and the western (11) by the modern brick wall. Beneath the eastern surface (9) was a layer of flint gravel (16), c.0.1m thick, with patches of brickearth (17). It is clear from the change in their heights that both surfaces relate to the wall that once sat in the robber trench [4]. They were probably laid down as crushed chalk floors or floor bases, that to the east, with its gravel base, being the more substantial.



Figure 5 The northern part of the excavated trench, looking north-west and showing the pit [14] and post-hole [12]



Figure 6 The robber trench [4] flanked by the two chalk surfaces (11) & (9), looking north (see section 1 in Fig.4)



Figure 7 The western chalk surface (11) looking west

5. Similar chalk surfaces were found in the 1987-8 excavations at 80 Fishbourne Road, to the west of the current site. There they were interpreted as immediately pre-dating the buildings of the pre-Palace masonry building, and as possibly being used as a “clean white surface into which was scribed the ground plan” (Cunliffe et al., p. 76). The most southerly of the trenches from these earlier excavations, which lay c.15m to the west, contained one of these chalk spreads, the remains of which sloped to the south in a similar manner to the western of those found in these excavations. It is clear from the relationship of the surfaces (9) & (11) to the robber trench [4] that they cannot have performed the function ascribed to the chalk layers in the 1987-8 trenches, but were instead part of the building itself. In the light of this evidence it may be that a re-interpretation of the 1987-8 chalk layers is required.
6. To the north of the eastern chalk floor (9) a small rectangular pit [12] was revealed, c.0.2m east-east, c.0.25m north-south, and c.0.25m deep below the surface of the brickearth (see Figs. 3 & 5). It is cut by, and pre-dates, the adjacent later foundation (8), and may have been associated with the chalk floors (9) & (11) and robber trench [4], although no direct relationship has survived, due to the truncation of the overlying layers. The pit was filled with a layer of re-deposited brickearth, similar to (10) (see below), and then, at its base, a dark clay silt (13), c.0.03m thick, which contained tile, animal bone, two iron nail fragments and pottery, dating to the early Roman period. It is possible that this is the remains of a post-hole linked to the building within which lay the chalk floor (9). As with the rest of this structure, it appears that the post was removed, and the resulting hole infilled, in advance of the construction of the later foundation to the east (8).
7. Overlying chalk floors (9) & (11), the robber trench [4] and the post-hole [12], was a layer of re-deposited brickearth (10) surviving up to the height of the remains of the eastern wall foundation (8) (see Fig.8). It is probable that this was imported and laid down to level the ground in advance of the construction of this foundation (8), and is to be identified with similar layers revealed by the 1961-9 excavations (Cunliffe, p.78). This layer (10) had been truncated to the north, just to the south of section 3, and to the south.
8. The eastern boundary of the trench was formed by the edge of a north-south running wall foundation (8) c.0.85m wide at its greatest surviving width, at the point where it ran under a manhole (see Figs. 3 & 9). To the south of this manhole it narrowed to c.0.55m, probably as a result of historic robbing, rather than the 1999 works, since its eastern face was only partially visible in the baulk left by those works, leading to its misidentification as the terminus of an east-west running foundation. This foundation (8) was composed of flints set in a yellow mortar, and ran the length of the trench until cut by a modern brick wall, at its southern end, and the existing house at its northern end, a distance of c.7.3m.



Figure 8 The excavated trench after the removal of the modern layers (1) & (2), looking north. The re-deposited brickearth (10) can be seen over the front edge of the eastern chalk floor (9)



Figure 9 The wall foundation (8) of the Flavian Palace's west wing, looking north-west

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

9. The form and alignment of this wall foundation makes it almost certain that it is that for the retaining wall of the west wing of the Flavian Palace (Cunliffe, p.89). Cunliffe's suggested reconstruction of the Palace mark the junction of this wall with the stylobate of the south wing, as being somewhere either under, or immediately to the north of, the pavement which runs past the southern end of the trench. No evidence for such a junction was seen within the trench, however the loss of the eastern face of the surviving foundation at this point would have removed any evidence for it. The south-east corner of the west wing would lie, should Cunliffe's reconstruction be correct, further to the south still, under Fishbourne Road West.
10. It was clear that subsequent truncation had removed all traces of the Palace's floor levels and walls, above their foundations, with the depth of this truncation following the top of the surviving foundation (8). Preceding this more recent destruction the Palace walls and foundations had evidently been already at least partially robbed out, since the remains of a backfilled robber trench (7) was visible below the later truncation level (see sections 2 & 3 in Fig.4).
11. Overlying all of these Roman features and deposits was a layer of soil (3) containing significant quantities of flints, Upper Greensand rubble, Mixon rock, oyster shell, brick, tile and pottery (see sections 2 & 3 in Fig.4). Where dateable these were found to be from the earlier Roman and medieval periods. It is probable that this soil layer (3) is an historic ploughsoil dating from after the abandonment of the Palace. It is evident that the formation of this ploughsoil had been responsible for, or at least post-dated, the truncation of the Roman features and layers below it. However it in turn had been truncated to the south and north (just to the south of the manhole) probably as a result of works associated with the construction of the present house in the late 19th century. The layer above (2), which extended throughout the trench, contained considerably less rubble, and is presumably the soil spread across the site after the construction of the house. Above this lay the modern topsoil (1).
12. To the east of the Palace foundation (8), the ground had been reduced as part of the 1999 works, to below the level of the brickearth, with the exception of a 1.8m wide strip running east-west immediately south of the existing house's south wall. However this was found to have been heavily disturbed, again to below the level of the brickearth, probably as result of the construction of the house's cellar. A deposit of soil containing abundant rubble (18) was found in this location extending to below the level to be reached by the current works (see Fig.3).

CONCLUSION

1. While this excavation has been of only limited extent, encompassing an area of just over 15m², the results have been significant. First it has demonstrated that nationally important remains associated with

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

Fishbourne Roman Palace do have the potential to survive in the front gardens of the houses along Fishbourne Road West, and it is to be regretted that similar archaeological investigations have not taken place in the adjoining properties during previous landscaping works, a number of which have taken place since the site was Scheduled. The extent to which such remains survive beneath the road itself is currently unknown. There has clearly been at least some truncation of deposits as a result of earlier re-surfacing and service trenching (Wessex Archaeology, p.4), but it would seem probable that, away from the latter, the lower parts of the foundations of the walls of the Flavian Palace will survive, as was suggested by Cunliffe (Cunliffe, p.103). The 1961-9 excavations clearly demonstrated that such walls survive to the south of the road (ibid., p.104).

2. Secondly it is probable that the robber trench [4], chalk surfaces (9) & (11) and post-hole [12] are further remains of the masonry buildings that existed on the site before the construction of the Flavian Palace. To the east of these excavations, at a distance of c.90m, lies what Cunliffe termed the "Proto-Palace", which was later incorporated into the Flavian Palace (ibid., pps.61-9). While to the north-west a second masonry building existed, which also pre-dated the Flavian Palace (ibid., pps.69-72), further parts of which were revealed during the 1987-8 excavations (Cunliffe et al., p.76). It is this second masonry building to which the features found in these excavations are most likely to relate, based upon its closer proximity and the presence there of similar chalk surfaces. It had been suggested, on the evidence of the 1961-9 excavations, that this building was never in fact completed, with its foundations being the only element constructed (Cunliffe, p.72). This would seem unlikely in the case of the robbed out wall [4] found within these excavations, since it is improbable that floor surfaces would have been laid down before the walls and roof were completed. Should the chalk surfaces found during the 1987-8 excavations similarly have been associated with the masonry building, then it is probable that this too was fully built. If this were the case then the evidence is mounting for there to have been a considerable complex of buildings on the site pre-dating the later Flavian Palace.
3. Thirdly these excavations have also recovered further evidence for early Roman literacy at Fishbourne, in the form of graffiti on pottery sherds, at last one of which, from the fill of the robber trench [4], must have been executed before the construction of the Flavian Palace.
4. In the light of the results of these excavations, it is strongly recommended that all future works to the properties fronting Fishbourne Road West, which lie within the footprint of the Flavian Palace, or within its vicinity or that of any of its predecessors, should be the subject of archaeological investigation, preferably in advance of any decision being made regarding the granting of Scheduled Monument Consent or planning permission.

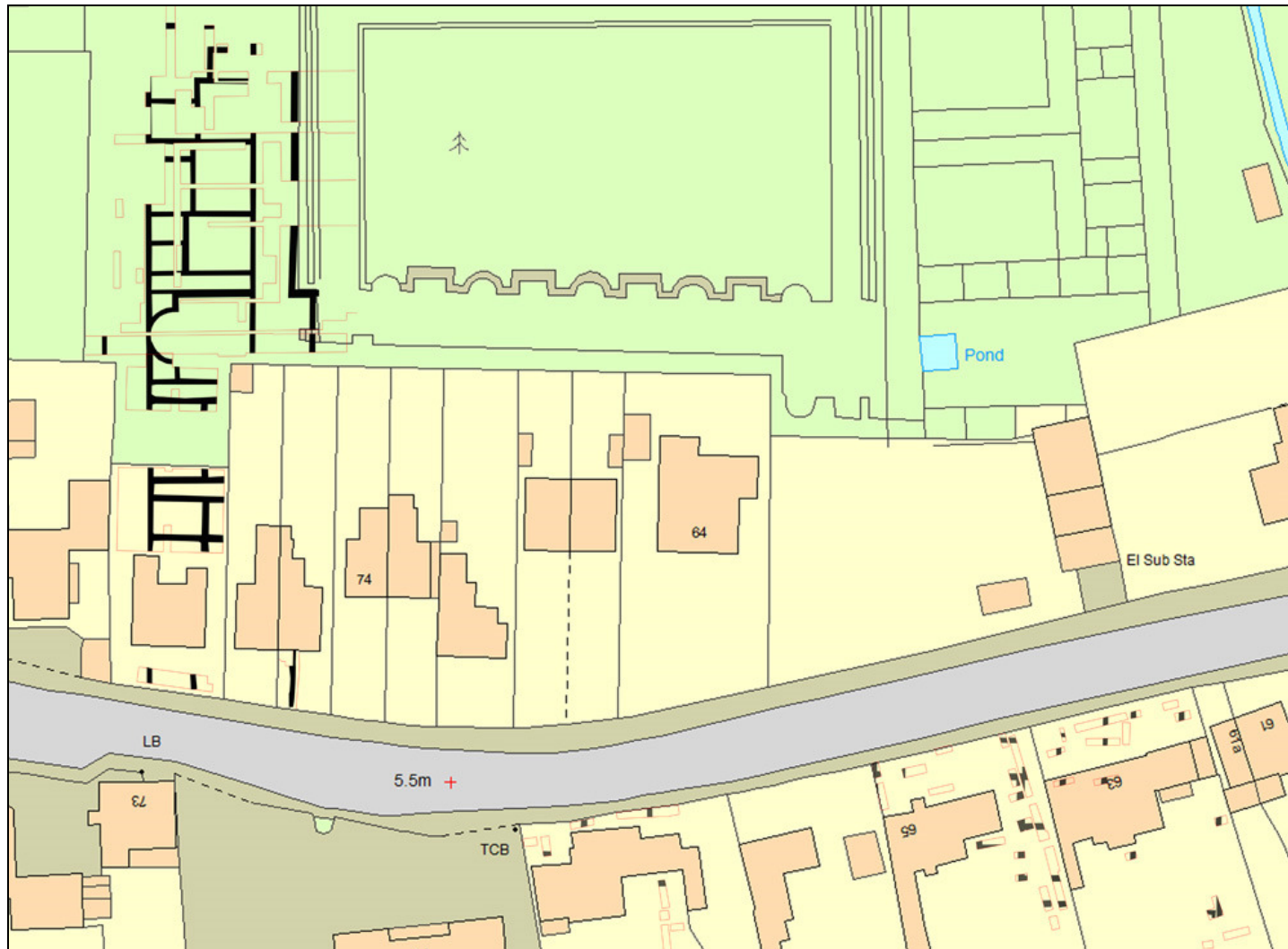


Figure 10 Plan of the excavated wall foundations of the west and south wings of the Flavian Palace. The excavated trenches are in red.

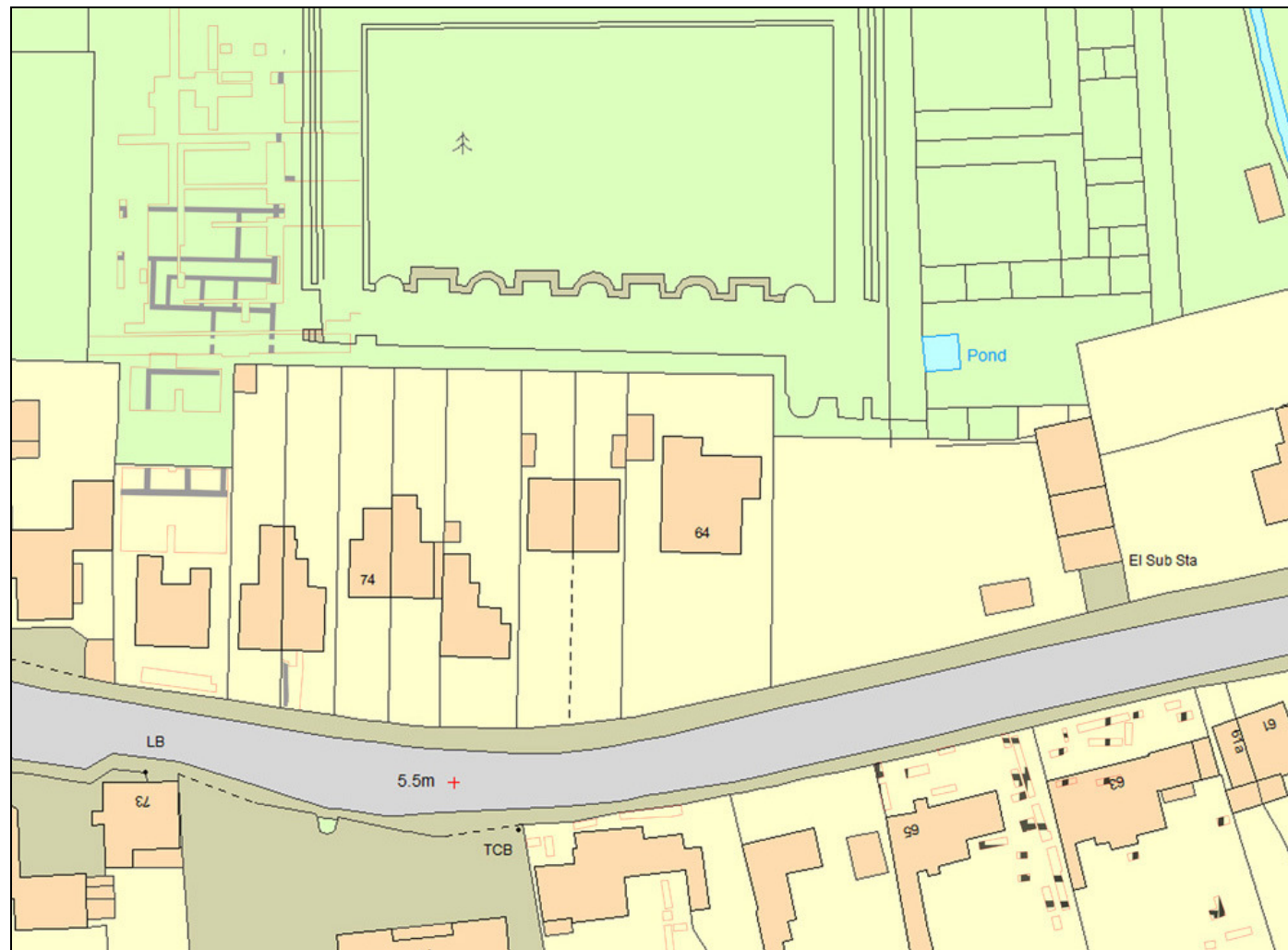


Figure 11 Plan of the excavated wall foundations of the pre-Flavian Palace masonry building (in grey to the left of the image) and Proto-Palace (in black to the lower right of the image). The excavated trenches are in red.

APPENDIX 1

THE POTTERY

By Jane Timby

1 Introduction

1.1 The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 134 sherds, weighing 1793g dating to the Roman and medieval periods.

1.2 Pottery was recovered from five separate contexts investigated within the west wing of the Palace near its junction with the south wing.

1.3 Although the overall assemblage is quite small the condition of the material was good with several large sherds and some pieces from the same vessels. Surfaces were well preserved and sherd breaks were fresh. The overall average sherd size is 13.4g.

1.4 For the purposes of the assessment the pottery assemblage was briefly scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. Freshly broken sherds were counted as single pieces. Recognisable named, traded, wares are coded following the National Roman fabric series (Tomber and Dore 1998). The resulting data is summarised in Table 1.

1.5 In the following report the pottery is discussed chronologically. No research has been carried out at this stage to seek local or regional parallels for the material.

2 Roman

2.1 Just over half the assemblage, some 58 sherds, is of early Roman or possibly earlier, date.

2.2 The group mainly comprises wares of local manufacture, in particular a black surfaced, sandy ware with a red-brown core generally termed South Atrebatian sandy ware. This accounts for 54% of the Roman assemblage and includes examples of everted rim jars and a straight-sided dish. Of particular note is a sherd with a post-firing graffiti from the ploughsoil (3) (see Plate 1).

2.3 Accompanying these wares are three imported wares: two Gallo-Belgic pieces and one sherd of South Gaulish samian.

2.4 The Gallo-Belgic wares include a basesherd from a large platter with a functional foot-ring in *terra rubra* (GAB TR1C) (Tomber and Dore 1998, 20) from the pit fill (15). The sherd has part of a broken potter's stamp probably originally with the name Julios (IV....) (Timby and Rigby 2007, vessel no.509). The stamp is radially impressed and the die is well cut set within a rectangular

border. The fabric and the platter, undoubtedly a moulded form, along with the die suggests this is potentially a pre-conquest import. The second Gallo-Belgic piece is from a *terra nigra* platter (two joining sherds showing a fresh break) (GAB TN1) (Tomber and Dore 1998, 15) from the robber trench fill (5). The sherd is of particular interest in that it has a series of concentric circles on the upper face and a post-firing graffiti on the underside (see Plate 2). This is broken but appears to be a literate name beginning with the letter 'A'. The platter may be from the Camulodunum 12-14 series (Hawkes and Hull 1947), suggesting a pre or early post-conquest date.

2.5 The South Gaulish samian sherd (LGF SA) (Tomber and Dore 1998, 28), also from the robber trench fill (5), is probably from a small carinated cup Ritterling type 9 likely to be of pre-Flavian date. The type is rare after AD 60.

2.6 Other sherds are probably local wares and include two sherds from an everted jar in Rowlands Castle type grey ware; odd oxidised, brown and grey sandy wares, including a beaded rim jar from the post-hole (13); eight body sherds from a thin-walled, oxidised sandy ware possibly slipped and a sherd from a fine oxidised white-slipped flagon.



Plates 1 & 2: Details of graffiti on sherd of Southern Atrebatic sandy ware from cxt (3) and on base of a *terra nigra* platter from cxt (5)

3 Medieval

3.1 Medieval wares account for 43% of the total assemblage. All the sherds were recovered from context (3), thought to be an early ploughsoil.

3.2 The pottery includes thumbled bases from jugs and plain bodysherds from jars/ cooking pots. The jug sherds are decorated with irregular lines of white slip over which there is a patchy glaze. Some of the cooking pot sherds are sooted from use.

3.3 In broad terms the sherds appear to conform to the description of pottery from the Graffham area of West Sussex (Aldsworth and Down 1990).

Notwithstanding they are likely to be products from kilns on the West Sussex plain.

4 Chronology

4.1 The upper ploughsoil deposit, context (3), produced all the medieval pottery along with 39 sherds of Roman date. The Roman sherds, all redeposited, are local coarsewares and appear to be earlier, rather than later, Roman in date.

4.2 The fill of the robber trench (5) produced five sherds two of which are pre-Flavian imports and three early Roman coarsewares.

4.3 The clay layer (10) produced just three sherds of black sandy ware which can only be broadly dated as early Roman and the pit fill (15) just two sherds one of which is a pre-conquest import; the other an early Roman grey sandy ware jar.

5 Summary and further work

5.1 The assemblage recovered documents activity dating to the early Roman and medieval periods. Despite being a moderately small group the assemblage includes three prestigious imported fine-wares, one pre-conquest and two of pre- or early conquest date. There are two examples of graffiti attesting to a level of literacy only expected at a high status site such as Fishbourne at this early date.

5.2 The composition of the assemblage is entirely within that to be expected from Fishbourne.

5.3 The assemblage is too small and enigmatic to warrant further analytical work as it stands unless more precision is required for the identification of the medieval wares. The Gallo-Belgic stamp from (15) has been added to the National Gallo-Belgic stamp corpus (Timby and Rigby 2007). The graffiti could be submitted for a note in *Britannia*.

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

Table 1: Pottery Data

Cxt	Type	Fabric	Description	Form	Wt	No	Rims	Date
3	rubble/ploughsoil	MEDOX	medieval oxidised sandy	jars and jugs	927	45	8	13-15th
3	rubble/ploughsoil	MEDGY	medieval grey sandy		290	13	0	13-15th
3	rubble/ploughsoil	WSOXIDF	fine white-slipped oxidised		4	1	0	early Roman
3	rubble/ploughsoil	OXID	oxidised sandy ?white slipped		15	8	0	early Roman
3	rubble/ploughsoil	BW	Southern Atrebatic black sandy ware	jars, dish	315	28	6	LIA-C2
3	rubble/ploughsoil	BWNSY	smooth surfaced brown sandy ware		16	2	0	LIA-C2
5	robber tr	GAB TN	Gallo-Belgic terra nigra	platter	39	1	0	Tib-Claud
5	robber tr	GY	grey sandy ware		26	2	0	early Roman
5	robber tr	OXID	oxidised sandy ware		6	1	0	early Roman
5	robber tr	LGF SA	South Gaulish samian (La Graufesenque)	Ritterling 9	3	1	0	pre-Flavian
10	clay layer	BW	Southern Atrebatic black sandy ware		17	3	0	LIA-C2
13	posthole	BW	Southern Atrebatic black sandy ware		46	4	0	C1
13	posthole	OXID	oxidised sandy ware	beaded rim jar	63	8	1	C1
15	pit	GAB TR1C	Gallo-Belgic terra rubra fabric TR1C	large platter	12	1	0	Aug-Tib

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