

EXCAVATIONS IN FLETCHER'S CROFT, STEYNING, 1967-8

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Steyning was a burh by 1024–30 according to the evidence of the Saxon coin mint. Archaeologically, no evidence of the 11th-century town had been found by 1967 when an opportunity occurred to mount a rescue excavation in a shallow valley running south from the imposing Norman church. The excavations, although yielding some 10th-century material including a coin of Edgar, were predominantly of 12th-century material lying on the upper slope of the valley. The lack of conclusive evidence of early house plans suggested the site was on the fringe of the town, in the backyards of plots whose ditched boundaries may have dated back to an earlier field system. In the discussion of the site, ideas are put forward about the location of the early town and of the port.

INTRODUCTION

In 1967 proposals were put forward to level Fletcher's Croft and create a new town car park for Steyning. Worthing Museum applied to Chanctonbury Rural District Council for permission to excavate in advance of the work, since a pipeline dug through the field some years previously had produced early medieval sherds. Permission was readily given, preliminary weekend work gave positive results and in August 1967 the then Ministry of Public Building and Works asked Worthing Museum to conduct a rescue excavation on its behalf.

The site (Fig. 3) lay some 90 metres south of the 1962 excavations by K. J. Barton in Cuthman's Field opposite the church (Barton 1986). Since most of the field was destined for public open space with minimal surface disturbance, no further excavation took place there except for a machine-cut trench through the field boundary separating Cuthman's Field from Fletcher's Croft (at Y on Fig. 3).

The aim of the dig was to find evidence of the 9th-, 10th- and 11th-century settlement to qualify the supposition that there was a town at Steyning at that date. In the event, most of the archaeological evidence found was of 12th-

century date, difficult to interpret and overlain by later medieval material.

Steyning (Fig. 1) is situated at about 15 metres O.D. at the foot of the north scarp face of the South Downs close to a gap where the river Adur, draining from the once forested Weald, breaks through the downs on its way to the sea nearly five miles beyond. It is at a point where routes converge to cross the wide valley which, at some time in the past, used to be filled with water, at least at high tide. A prehistoric route along the top of the downs descends in two places, by terrace-ways north of Pepperscoombe Farm and also south of Pepperscoombe from Steyning Round Hill; both tracks meet a route along the foot of the downs which runs eastwards from Washington through Wiston, Charlton Court, Steyning, and on to King's Barn at the very edge of the valley. A Roman road, usually known as the Greensand Way, lay just over a mile to the north, crossing the valley near Wyckham Manor. Romano-British material has been found near King's Barn and at Highfield Barn just east of Steyning Round Hill (see West Sussex County Council archaeological sites and monuments record). It was in a quarry at the latter place that a single, probably Saxon, burial was found. Place

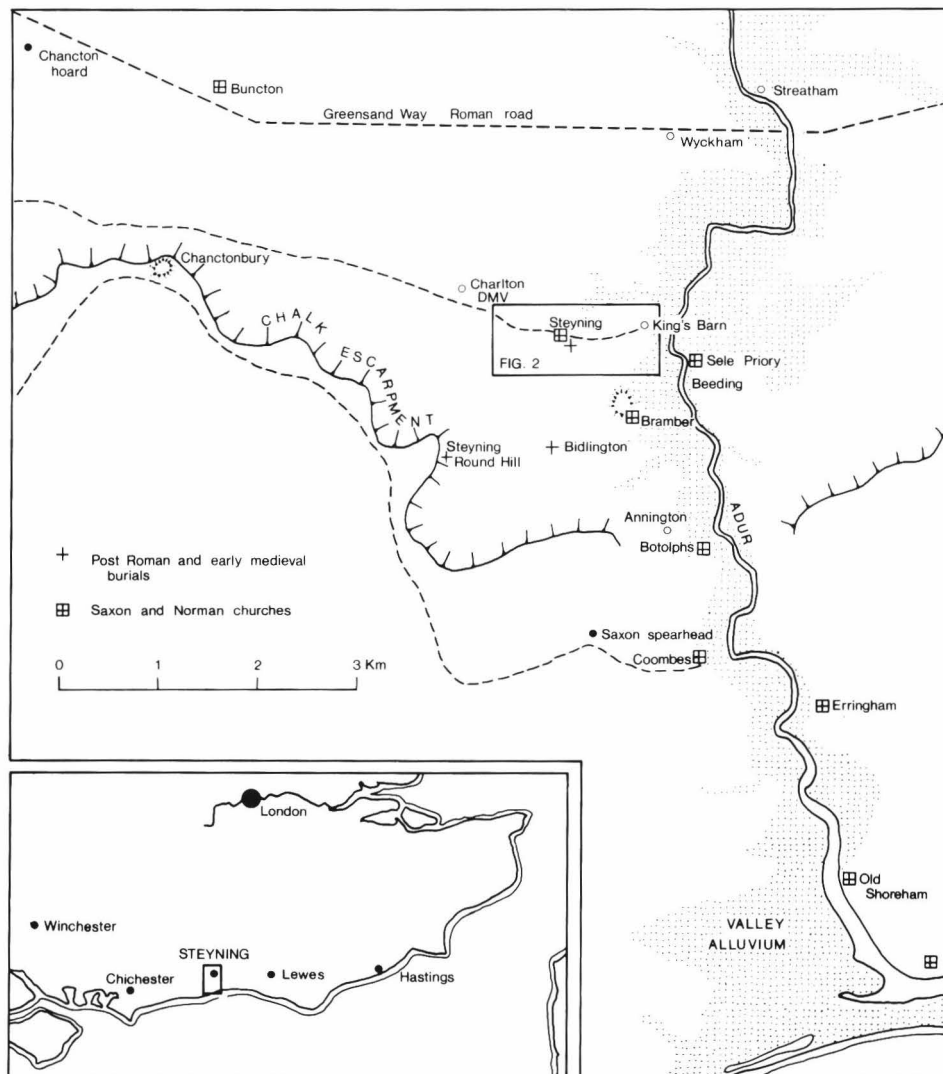


Fig. 1. Location map of Steyning, West Sussex. The early west-east routes are marked.

names with the *-ingas* ending are found on the edge of the downs throughout Sussex and represent districts settled when the first expansions took place following the initial colonization whose primary settlements are indicated by *hām* names (Dodgson 1978).

GEOLOGY (by Con Ainsworth)

The site lies in a shallow valley cut into the

chalk marl of the zone of *Schloenbachia varians* which is the zone at the base of the Lower Chalk and rests on the Upper Greensand, the first of the Selbornian Beds. A medieval well excavated in the course of the Cuthman's Field excavation passed through the Lower Chalk marls into the Upper Greensand at the base of the well. The excavations in both Cuthman's Field and Fletcher's Croft exhibited the same features of the *variens* marls in which soft laminated marl

and marlstone alternate. It was noted that the surface of the marlstone where exposed exhibited typical spheroidal exfoliations. Most of the archaeological features are cut into the marl which rapidly weathers to a uniform yellow or fawn colour, which tends to obscure archaeological features which would normally be visible as colour differences. Along the foot of the chalk escarpment the marls are extensively cultivated, and in former times were often quarries for agricultural purposes, the abandoned quarries now being overgrown with timber.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (see Fig. 2)

According to tradition, it was at Steyning that St. Cuthman finished his journeying with his elderly mother and founded a church of wood or stone in the late 8th or early 9th century. What is known of St. Cuthman was published by Cox (1932-3), who put forward the theory that Cuthman's journey 'from the west' was from Chidham near Bosham, a reasonable journey of 25 miles from a spot with known early Christian associations. Steyning was sufficiently important for King Ethelwulf (King Alfred's father) to have been buried there in A.D. 858, although the body was later moved to Winchester. Ethelwulf, and others of the royal house of Wessex, held estates in the area which may account for the occurrence of the name King's Barn. The King's Barn estate was held by the king in 1066. Archaeological evidence from these centuries is virtually non-existent in Steyning itself, with the exception of a pre-Conquest grave slab now in the church porch. Several churches nearby, for example, Botolphs and Buncton, exhibit pre-Conquest stonework and at Chancton Farm less than four miles from Steyning a hoard of about 3,000 coins was found, hidden in the unstable days of 1066 (Head 1867).

Steyning was not listed in the Burghal Hidage, a defence system drawn up by Edward the Elder between A.D. 911 and 919, incorporating any towns situated in strategic positions, for example, in river valleys. Either by 1018 or, more

probably, some time between 1024 and 1030 (Stewart 1978) a Saxon mint was set up in Steyning, apparently taking over from one in the old earthwork at Cissbury. The form of the name which appears on coins is Staen- or Stenige. The names of eight moneyers are known who worked there at various intervals throughout the rest of the 12th century, the busiest period being *c.* 1040-60 (Dudley 1978). Steyning was therefore a place of some importance at the time the King granted it to the Abbot of Fécamp in *c.* 1047. Shortly before the Conquest it was revoked from Fécamp, although it was restored by William I soon after 1066 (Hudson 1980b).

In 1066 the borough of Steyning had 118 houses of substance and was one of the largest places in Sussex (Hudson 1980a). By 1086 the figure had risen to 123 and the population was probably about 600 (Hill 1978). The increase is surprising because an event had occurred which was to change the whole outlook of Steyning, namely the building of Bramber Castle by William de Braose, in course of construction, or completed, by 1073 (Barton & Holden 1977). De Braose attempted to assert his superiority over Fécamp Abbey until Fécamp's rights were ratified by a charter of 1086. Steyning's continuing growth and prosperity must be put down to the influence of Fécamp which, in 1086, was wealthier in its English possessions than any other foreign religious house and made thereby a big contribution to the building up of an Anglo-Norman culture after the Conquest. Even so the precise location of the early 11th-century town was unknown at the time of the excavations. There are documentary references from 1086 to 1103 to St Cuthman's parish and St Cuthman's port but the significance of the use of these names is not clear (Hudson 1980b).

Hudson (1980a), quoting earlier writers, states that the port was 'sited apparently on an inlet which then stretched up to the church'. The present writer considers this was not the case and would place the site of the port near King's Barn where an old meander bed indicates the river channel ran at one time. Beach pebbles noticed



Fig. 2. Steyning: suggested development of town plan. A. c. A.D. 900. The establishment of St. Cuthman's church at a junction of two early routes. B. c. A.D. 1025-86. The burh and Domesday Steyning, with port at King's Barn. C. c. A.D. 1100-1350. The new town, with site of port shifted a short distance down river.

here by Mitchell (1947) may have been brought as ballast to provide hard standing for ships. Such a site would be far more convenient for shipping than attempting to traverse a twisting course up the side valley during the limited periods of high water. From King's Barn, traffic could travel directly up or down river, or across it. This idea of the port's location, a possible layout for the 11th-century town and the town's subsequent shift in focus has been developed in some detail, drawing on field evidence, such as house platforms and other earthworks, sunken lanes, field names, old parish boundaries and random finds (unpublished MS. in author's possession). A summary is included below (see

Interpretation of Site) which might suffice to indicate possible lines for future research into early Steyning.

THE EXCAVATIONS

The area to be investigated measured some 61 metres by 61 metres, a field on the side of a shallow east-facing valley sloping from 12.8 metres to 8.5 metres O.D. Most of the upper slope was stripped, also much of the area alongside the School Lane twitten (a pathway running 'betwixt and between') which marked the south boundary of the field. As there was some 0.6 metre of overburden to natural, a

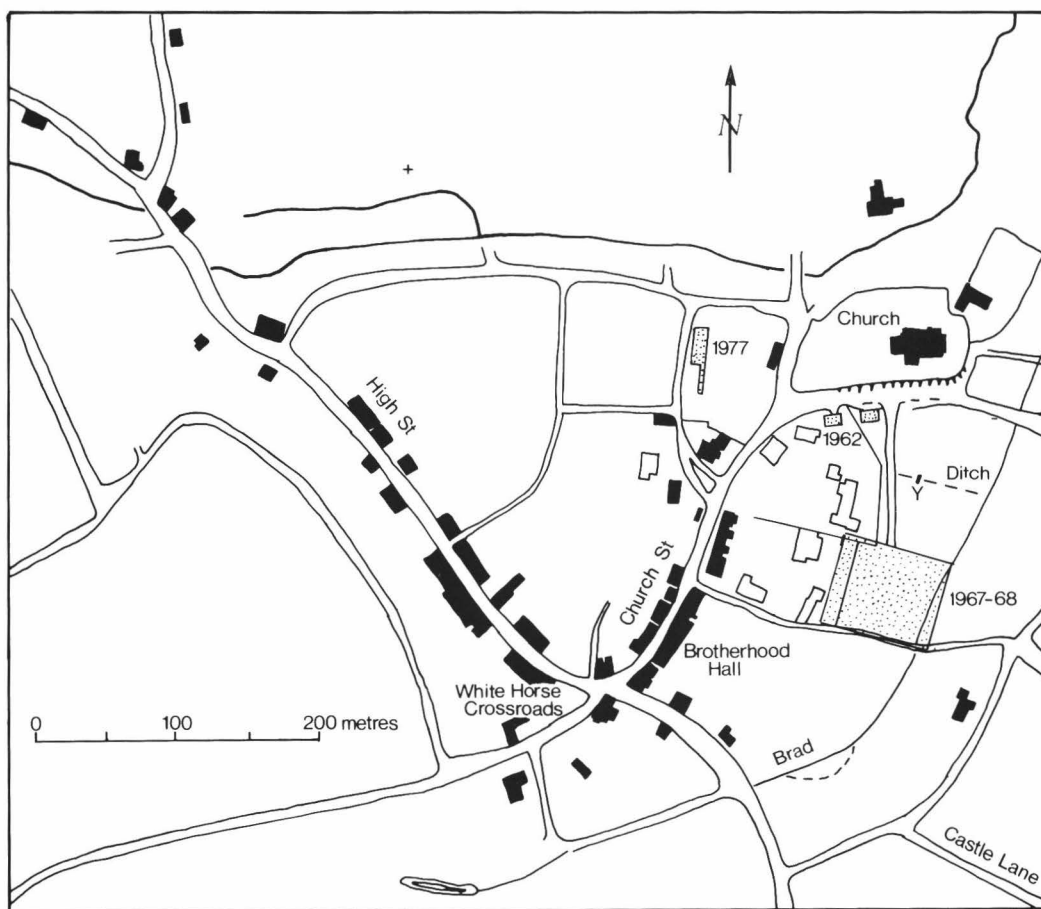


Fig. 3. Steyning: locations of excavations in 1962, 1967-8 and 1977. Solid black shading indicates surviving medieval buildings.

machine was used in the later stages of the dig to open up new areas in the middle and south parts of the field and to shift dumps. The layout of the excavations is shown on Fig. 4.

Several factors soon became apparent. One of the original intentions was to strip the bottom (east) of the field where the wide valley floor of today's tiny river Brad looked, at first view, attractive for settlement and for the siting of public buildings. Excavation soon proved it consisted of a metre or more of water-laid deposits and silt containing rubbish from the 12th to the 19th centuries. The valley may have held a permanent marsh or at least suffered heavy periodic flooding. A watermill of unknown date was situated some 70 metres upstream, the pond but not the buildings being marked on a map of the town of 1791. It might be expected that a mill would control the flow of water down river, so this valley bottom may have been the site of a pond for yet another mill nearer the church. Evidence for this is suggested by the 'dog-leg' in the course of the stream on the tithe map where it crosses the road near the vicarage. The gentle slope of the side of the valley had no recognizable house platforms. Excavation produced a preponderance of 12th-century ceramics. The dominant feature revealed was an early medieval ditch running almost due north-south across the slope at about 11.9 metres O.D. On the uphill or west side of this ditch in the northern half of the site lay most of the area of early medieval activity which consisted of areas of cobbles, pits, a gully and two east-west ditches.

The late medieval (14th/15th-century) areas of occupation, mainly comprising cobbled yards, lay more to the south, orientated to the twitten and extending further down the slope towards the valley floor. These cobbles contained the occasional fragment of Roman tile and Romano-British pottery, including Samian. Similar fragments were also found in Chantry Croft in 1977 (Freke 1979). Although such finds only constitute 'field scatter' it seems likely there is an as yet undiscovered Roman site near Church Street in the centre of Steyning. At

present the nearest Roman finds recorded come from Newham Lane and the King's Barn area.

Post-medieval finds were rare, limited to one pit and some heavy cobbling. Although there were several coins and tokens of 17th-century date, the numbers were insufficient to suggest the ground was ever used for fairs. In modern times the field has been criss-crossed by at least six pipelines of various public services. Locals related that nine horses were buried there by a local vet and the excavations seemed to locate most of these.

The Early Medieval Area (Fig. 5)

The considerable amount of pottery and food debris together with a complex of features indicated the presence of some sort of occupation in the 10th and certainly in the 11th and 12th centuries, although probably not continuous. The most important small finds were of 10th-century date and included a coin of Edgar (deposited A.D. 965-75) and two pieces of Pingsdorf-type pottery; a pair of decorated tweezers and an arrowhead were probably of this date. Unfortunately, the lack of hearths and of possible post-holes made the detection of houses difficult, although daub occurred in places and the scatter of nails could indicate thatched roofs. The prevailing features are shown on Fig. 5 and are described as follows.

a. *The North-South Ditch*

This is likely to have had a long life and in one section showed evidence of several recuts. It was V- to U-shaped and averaged a metre across and 0.36 metre deep into natural. As it ran across the slope it had no function for drainage purposes. It presumably was a boundary and at its north end is in line with a chain-link fence, beech hedge and lynchet-like break of slope which extends north for another 50 metres. This line is shown as a hedge on the 1791 map. At a point 30.5 metres south from the north limit of the site, it ran into and made a right angle with the East-West Ditch. It did not immediately continue to the south, perhaps indicating an entrance here to the lower field, yet the same alignment is

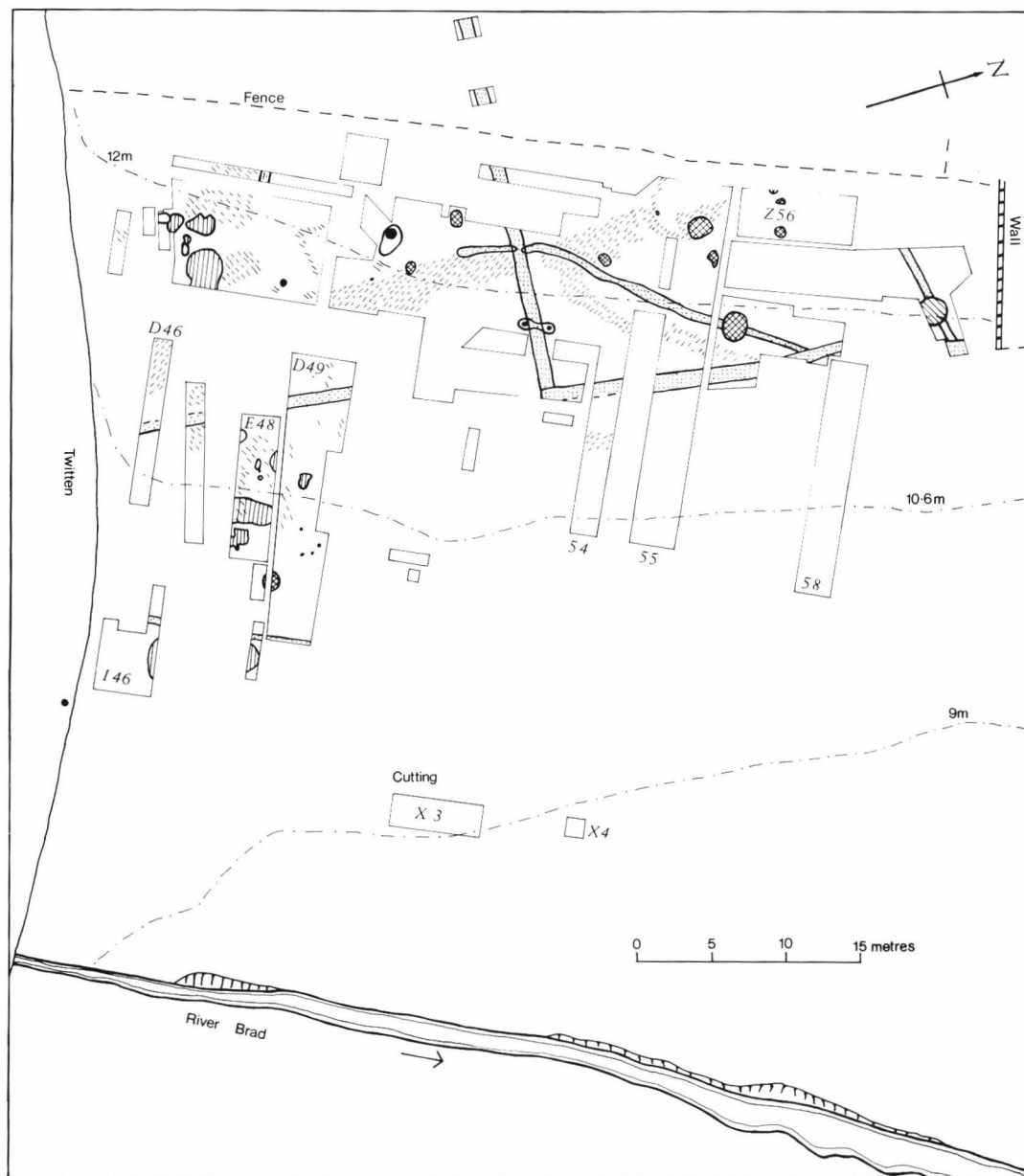


Fig. 4. Extent of excavations.

resumed further south and continues towards the twitten. Overall the line persists for at least 112 metres.

The fill comprised dark silt along the bottom of the ditch with virtually no finds, the

exceptions being a horseshoe nail and an 11th/12th-century pottery handle (SF160). Most of the fill was a brown soil containing a small quantity of pottery fragments dated 1080-1180 (and one tiny sherd of Samian), shell debris

(snails, winkles, oysters) and animal bones and teeth. A bronze belt-end (SF101) and a small lump of iron occurred in the fill and an iron strap-end (SF106) was on the lip of the ditch. A 13th-century spout (SF145) overlay the ditch.

b. *The main East-West Ditch*

This ditch formed a right angle with the North-South Ditch, which cuts across it, and ran in a very straight line in a westerly direction. It was excavated for 11 metres and sampled in the adjacent garden at a point 25.3 metres from the junction. Although it ran down the slope it did not serve any purpose for drainage as it did not extend east of the North-South Ditch. Its dimensions were similar to those of the North-South Ditch though it tended to be more U-shaped. The contents were also broadly similar and 12th-century in date, including a fragment of French painted ware.

c. *Gully*

A flat-bottomed gully took an irregular

course south-south-west to north-north-east for 12.5 metres, forming with the two main ditches the third side of a right-angled triangle. It averaged a depth of 0.32 metre from the cobbles and a width at the top of 0.56 metre and at the bottom of 0.35 metre. The fill was very black and contained considerable amounts of charcoal, pottery, daub, bone and shells. This feature was the richest on the site and the material was concentrated in the top 10 cm. Below, the texture of the fill was much more of a clayey consistency with lumps of natural chalk, some charcoal and tiny fragments of daub. The pottery was of developed Saxo-Norman type and included a saucer lamp and spouted sgraffito ware (Fig. 7, Nos. 2-3; microfiche, p. 70) and also a rim fragment of 10th-century Rhenish ware. A more or less complete pot had been dropped full of mussel shells. Small finds included several pieces of iron, also a bodkin and half a spindle whorl (Fig. 9, Nos. 11, 14; microfiche, p. 74). The bones

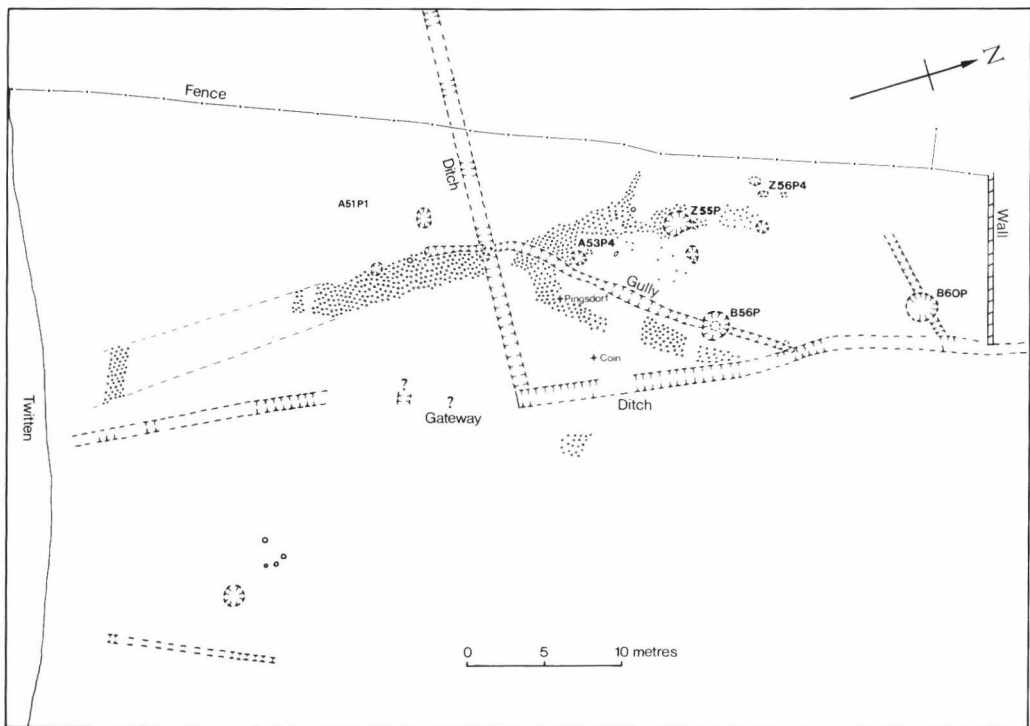


Fig. 5. Plan of early medieval features.

included a sheep's skull and there were also some dog coprolites. At both of its ends the character of the gully changed and became a shallower feature.

d. *Minor east-west ditch at north of site*

This feature was discovered near the end of excavation. It was a small ditch only about 0.6 metre wide. The North-South Ditch cut across it and it was not quite parallel to the main East-West Ditch. The datable contents were few and appeared to be early medieval. They included two very small fragments of Samian.

e. *Main pits*

Five pits contained pieces of side-lug pots of 11th/12th-century date (Fig. 7, No. 1: microfiche, p. 70). Some of these may have been from the same vessels. The pits were:

Z55P: diameter 1.5 metres, depth 0.43 metre. The cobbles ran over the top and had sunk into it. Other pottery included a piece of imported red painted ware and a curious object, perhaps part of the pedestal of a pillar-type lamp, or an article of industrial use (Fig. 9, No. 18: microfiche, p. 74).

B60P: similar dimensions.

B56P: similar diameter, depth 0.76 metre. This pit seemed to be of two periods and chalk blocks at the bottom may have been packing of an earlier post-hole. There was a large amount of charcoal at the bottom and on one side.

A/ZP2 and Z56P4: shallow pits, depth c. 0.24 metre.

The remaining small pits in the area of Z56 contained small amounts of early medieval pottery, as well as bones, as also did A51P1. The only other pit of note was the **D**-shaped pit (A53P4) which had vertical sides and a depth of 0.76 metre. It contained very little pottery but some charcoal, daub, bone and snail shells. It also contained two pieces of a similar object to that found in Z55P. It seemed to be of the same period as the Gully and was cut through the cobbles.

f. *Areas of cobbles*

These were a characteristic feature of the whole of the site, appearing variously as heavy,

fine or all types in between, densely or sparsely laid. Flint constituted the dominant component, with some lumps of chalk, and the occasional piece of ironstone and greensand. No Roman tile was included (by contrast with the late medieval cobbles further south). Layers of cobbles ran into each other, some overlay pits, and in some cases pits were cut through the cobbles. Despite drawing them in detail, no distinctive patterns emerged. The lowest layer of cobbles seemed to be a trackway c. 2.4 metres wide running across the slope from the south to the East-West Ditch. North of this it separated into two lines. In this area, either side of the East-West Ditch, there were extraordinary amounts of animal bones (including pig jaws and sheep's horns) and shells (mainly cockles and winkles) lying on the cobbles. No housewife would have allowed so much food debris to accumulate on the floor of a house; it is reasonable to assume that these cobbles were the floors of animal yards which acted also as middens. Layers of manure would have served to protect the bones and prevent marks of attrition.

g. *Early medieval features to the east of the North-South Ditch*

An area of sparse but well-graded flint cobbles was found just to the east of the ditch in the centre of the site. Further down the slope to the south-east there were two small pits or post-holes, and a small ditch running north-east/south-west. This is not parallel with the main North-South Ditch but could still be part of the same field or boundary system.

Late Medieval Areas (Fig. 6)

After the 12th century occupation died out and the area was deserted for a time, any ceramic evidence being missing from the record. Thereafter there were some late 13th-century and a predominance of 14th-century West Sussex ware types with some early 15th-century material.

The late medieval areas were confined to the southern half of the site, running in an **L**-shape along the top of the slope and then down the slope parallel to the School Lane twitten. The

northern limit more or less coincided with the line of the East-West Ditch. Although a good deal of evidence of occupation was found, the features were not sealed stratigraphically and it was difficult to distinguish individual buildings or the sequence of events. A further difficulty was the degree of disturbance encountered from numerous pipe trenches and modern pits. Each cutting made seemed to land on a pipe trench with the exception of Cutting 48 measuring 10.7×2.6 metres. In the upper south-west corner an area 19.4×6.7 metres was stripped and this was merely beset by bad weather problems.

In summary, the occupation revealed indicated the existence of dwellings, probably of the artisan class, including a smithy. The structural evidence related only to clay or beaten chalk floors and a few ovens and hearths. Apart from one short section of chalk walling, stray fragments of daub suggested the walls were of wattle and daub resting directly on the floor. There were several random post-holes which could not be directly linked with any building plans. No slate, tile or Horsham stone was found, so roofing must have been of thatch. However, a number of fragments of chimney pot (over 30 pieces, from about ten or more different pots) implied the domestic nature of most of the buildings as did some fragments of quern. Before excavation no house platforms were detectable (by contrast with the 1962 site). The fact that two pieces of joining chimney pot were found 10 metres apart may mean that the buildings fell empty and were left to decay, with tumble creeping down the slope, rather than that they were purposely demolished in the 15th/16th century.

Some of the salient features will now be described in more detail, starting from the top or north end of the L-shape (see Fig. 6). Part of the East-West Ditch was re-used in the 14th century, its scalloped north edge suggesting the existence of a palisade fence at this date. At its west end, a large sarsen stone set in its side marked a post-hole with a beam slot running 5.5 metres away south, alongside cobbles which were laid on top of the early medieval cobbles. The dating

of this beam slot was a vexed problem; it was thought at first to belong to the early medieval period as it contained an amount of early medieval pottery. However, it also produced two small sherds of green-glazed pottery amongst the food debris and 12th-century sherds. Unfortunately, there appeared to be no pair to this beam slot. Eastwards, at 4.9 metres a massive double post-hole lay astride the East-West Ditch cutting through the side of a smaller post-hole (which may have been the pair to the sarsen post-hole). It spanned nearly 3 metres and each hole was 1.32 metres in depth from present ground level. The post was in the south hole, where some chalk and flint packing remained, and the support occupied the north hole. The fill contained a few fragments of West Sussex ware, part of a Purbeck marble mortar, a schist hone and two large rivets (see Fig. 9, Nos. 16-17 and Fig. 8, No. 12: microfiche, pp. 72, 74), bone and shell. The posts to be supported were either very tall or short heavy ones, perhaps to take a footbridge strong enough to support the weight of horses. Late medieval occupation north of the East-West Ditch was confined to a confused patch, disturbed by manure heaps abutting on the palisade of the ditch. Just to the south-east the ground had been dug to provide clay for the ovens.

Moving south from the beam slot at 4.2 metres lay a large clay oven. This had been repaired several times and was still in use in the 15th century. A handful of carbonized peas trapped in a pocket of clay attested to its domestic nature. Amongst the debris was a fragment of slip-decorated floor tile from the church or priory.

A section of recognizable chalk walling to the east of the oven maybe was continued further south in Cutting AB46-8 where there was a scatter of chalk blocks. Most of the area of AB46-8 was taken up with heavy cobbling, consisting of flint, chalk, greensand, some ironstone and re-used Roman tile with large amounts of animal bone and oyster shells, probably the backyards of houses which fronted onto

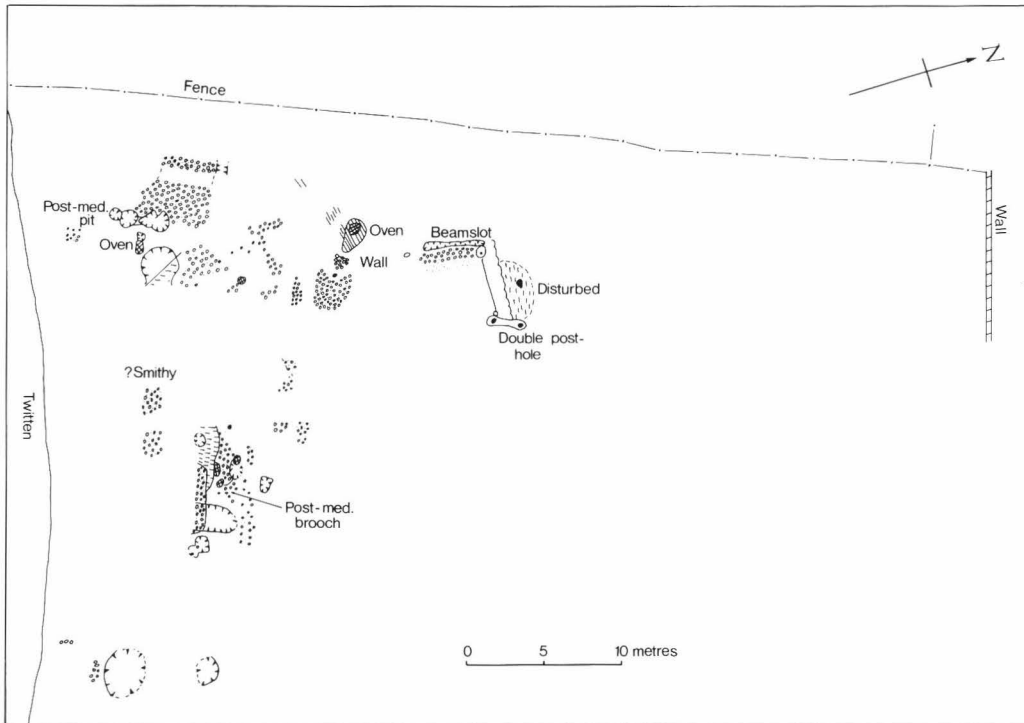


Fig. 6. Plan of late medieval features and post-medieval pit.

the twitten.

Near the south of the cutting was a small 14th-century oven and associated pits. A pathway of graded cobbles led to the twitten. The cobbles overlay a large stone-lined pit containing late West Sussex ware. Just to the east a large ashy depression disappeared into the baulk. This may have been associated with a smithy since some ironwork, including nails and a horseshoe, was found at the west end of Cutting 47 where the line of the North-South Ditch had been obliterated by later activities.

Further east down the slope a trodden chalk floor and small stake holes suggest the presence of byres. The chalk floor overlay a pond-like area in which were found the best examples of West Sussex ware and chimney pot fragments.

Post-Medieval *16th/17th centuries*

Ceramic evidence for this period was sparse with a notable exception of the contents of a pit

in the upper south-west corner, dated by an imported Raren vase to c. 1500. Presumably the house to which this pit belonged lay further west up the twitten.

There are series of very heavy cobbles here, and the mass of oyster shell debris might lead one to suppose it was the site of a fish market. Coins on the cobbles included a Nuremburg token and a Charles II farthing. A rubble yard also lay down the slope to the east, where the bronze bauble was found (Fig. 9, No. 7: microfiche, p. 74).

Recent

At the bottom of the slope, close to the twitten, Cutting I46 revealed a 19th-century ditch or pit containing rubbish.

INTERPRETATION OF SITE (Fig. 2)

The two main ditches, the North-South Ditch and East-West Ditch, make a right angle at

their junction and must be related to each other. Presumably they represent an early form of land allotment, demarcating areas of different ownership. From the size of the areas so demarcated, it seems likely that they are field boundaries, perhaps laid out beyond the area of primary settlement around the early church. If the East-West Ditch were continued to Church Street its distance would be 125 metres, and it would not make a right angle with the street. However, existing plots on Church Street are aligned at right angles to the street, as is School Lane. The twitten or path bounding the south side of the dig is parallel to the East-West Ditch and could well mark the line of another ditched boundary. Where the twitten runs into School Lane, it makes a distinct bend to account for the change of alignment. It seems, therefore, that the early ditched boundaries are overlain by later plots along Church Street which may have been established in the 12th century.

It is just possible that the ditches are remnants of a field system laid out in late Romano-British times comparable with that discovered at Ringmer Road, West Tarring (Lewis 1960). There, two rectangular fields 73.2 metres by 18.3 metres were found at 10.7 metres O.D. on clay subsoil. There is no real evidence as to the date the Steyning ditches were dug. Presumably they remained fairly clean whilst farming was under way with only natural silting taking place. The finding of a coin of Edgar, deposited *c.* A.D. 965-75, may be a clue as, from its position, it could have remained concealed in the tail of the bank formed by the original upcast of the ditch. In addition, the occurrence of several fragments of Pingsdorf, a small amount of 10th-century coarse ware, the tweezers and arrowhead, suggest that there was a 10th-century dwelling hereabouts. In any event, it seems the ditches must be early as it would have been difficult to lay out boundaries once the area was occupied.

To account for the apparent lack of early 11th-century material, the writer has developed the following argument concerning the location of the early town. This is based on the suppo-

sition that a river crossing or landing place, which later became St. Cuthman's port and the port of Steyning, was sited at King's Barn, where a deep-water channel in the tidal estuary swung close to the side of the main valley. From here, an east-west road ran towards the present church, passing to the north of it, then along Tanyard Lane and Mouse Lane.

The original 9th-century wooden or stone church may have lain a little to the east of the chancel of the present day church. When the early town was established, in the late 10th or early 11th century, a grid pattern of streets was laid out from this main east-west axis, their antiquity first recognized by Cox and Duke (1954). Westmost is Elm Grove Lane (formerly Newman's Lane and Back Lane), next is Chantry Lane, then Church Lane. East of the church is Vicarage Lane, which cut through a possible late Saxon burial ground (five skeletons reported in 1938). Another road, it is now suggested, lay just to the west of South Down House, and the eastern limit may have coincided with the slight change of alignment near the old railway station, the evidence being all destroyed at the time the railway was constructed. Finds of early medieval pottery have been reported from the churchyard, Church Lane cottages, Chantry Croft (Freke 1979) Highland Croft (Cox & Duke 1954) and Alfred Close.

With regard to the northern and southern limits of the town, it is reasonable to suppose that marshy land furnished a natural boundary on the northern side, although the moat ditch at the Old Priory may be the remnant of an artificial boundary; the presence of Gatewick may be significant but is an unknown factor. On the southern side there can still be seen a slight ditch running through what is now a public open space between the church and the car park. At the time of the 1967 excavations this old hedge boundary was sectioned by mechanical excavator at a point 24.7 metres east of the school fence. The trench revealed a U-shaped ditch 1.5 metres wide and 1.2 metres deep from ground level. The fill consisted of a deep layer of natural silting, then

dark soil with fragments of daub, bone and charcoal. In the upper part was a shallow V-shaped recut. Unfortunately no dating material was found, nor was the remnant of any wall or bank detected. At the time the possible implications of the ditch were not appreciated, otherwise the trench could have been extended to check whether there was any sign of an intramural street making a circuit of the town inside the boundary (Hill 1978). This ditch has not been noticed elsewhere, but perhaps the old footway from Chantry Green to Elm Grove Lane could represent part of such a street. The extent of the town as outlined above, covering about 18 a. (570 × 130 metres) would be a reasonable size to accommodate all the functions of the borough—the market, mint, properties of the rich burgesses and the abbot's men.

When, after the Conquest and probably whilst Bramber Castle was being built, a new road was laid out to link Bramber to Steyning, it aimed for a short cut both to the Portway (the road over the downs running into Church Street) and to the old east-west road (Tanyard Lane) which ran at the foot of the downs. De Braose's intention, Hudson (1980b) says, in respect of the timber-built Bramber causeway, was 'to direct east-west traffic away from Steyning'. He was also pushing the limits of Bramber borough as far as he could towards Steyning. In the event, he caused a general shift in the location of the town of Steyning. The new road, now called Castle Lane, when extended along its original line, became what is today the High Street of Steyning.

During the late 11th and early 12th centuries the Church Street/High Street crossroads became sufficiently important to provide a focus for a new market place and to draw occupation along Church Street away from the early town around the church itself. This move released space for the rebuilding of the Norman church, which took place from 1080 to 1160.

Some settlement apparently moved into the fields (the site of the 1967 excavations), and a cobbled trackway took a diagonal course across

the fields in the direction of what was perhaps already a mill on the river Brad. Occupation in the form of rubbish pits and cobbled yards spread across the area, the backs of plots where animals and middens were to be found, rather than dwellings, as there were no wells and no hearths. The ditches, perhaps protected by hedges, remained open but gradually filled, the fill including pottery of the period 1080-1180. The northern half of the site was then deserted and the land was not again ploughed, or the cobbles would have been destroyed.

About this time in the 12th century, the field evidence suggests that a road linking Church Street to the main river valley was laid out alongside the edge of one of the old field boundaries (now School Lane twitten). There was the odd pocket of occupation alongside it in the 13th century and the North-South Ditch was filled and levelled so that the field was henceforth treated as one unit. Indeed, it was probably all one unit with land to the south before the road was laid out, as will be shown below in the discussion on the name of the field. The obliteration of the North-South Ditch must have been a deliberate action by a new landowner (perhaps one of the Gervays family) as, beyond the site to the north, the line of the North-South Ditch still remains in use as a boundary today, at least 900 years later.

As the plots along Church Street (also called Middle Lane) filled up, occupation then spread along what is known today as High Street. Sheep Pen Lane became the sheep market and the name *Le Schepenstrete* is recorded in 1271.

At what date The Stone House was built, a place of obvious importance, being the only medieval building of stone apart from the church which survives in the town, is not known. Its position firmly at the crossroads of Church Street and High Street suggests it was maybe the bailiff's house and its outline on the map supports the probability that the High Street originally ran in a straight line to the Jarvis Lane/Castle Lane junction.

Meanwhile there were changes taking place

in the river valley. It is postulated that the meander called the Great des Deniers loop had become the main tidal channel, a channel which swung against the west side of the valley further south than King's Barn itself. Wharfs were constructed and a more direct road link was laid out in a straight line towards the new medieval town centre. This is the line followed by Castle Way, Holland Road, School Lane and so into Church Street. But perhaps these wharfs only had a life of a hundred years. The great bridge at Bramber (Holden 1975) was aggravating the silting up of the valley and storms and submergence in the 14th and 15th centuries led ultimately to the embanking of the river. It is generally believed that the port had gone out of use by the mid 14th century.

It was at this time that a line of medieval houses with West Sussex ware chimneys first appeared fronting onto the road at Fletcher's Croft and it is just possible that the people here had moved from the deserted port settlement up the road to the edge of the town of Steyning. In due course these houses fell into ruin and there was some irregular occupation on the site in the 15th century and again in the 16th century when it was limited to the westernmost corner.

It is in the 17th century that there is the first definite link, in written terms, with the site. In 1674 one 'John Fletcher, gent.', held a messuage at 42 High Street. This, according to Cox and Duke (1954), is the Fletcher associated with the current name of the field Fletcher's Croft. (Was he any relation to George Fletcher of Tarring, two tokens of whose dated 1659 and 1667 were found on the site of the 1962 excavations?). On the title map of 1840 Fletcher's Mead spans the river Brad and includes the large field north of the twitten between the Brad and Jarvis Lane. Since Fletcher's Croft, or Mead, was a new name in the 17th century, the question arises as to what was the name of the field before that date. Bearing in mind the size of Georges Croft (successfully identified by Cox as the Barrack Field, on the east side of Jarvis Lane, and sometimes in the plural form due to the track

passing through the middle of it), it seems likely that Gervays or Garveys or Jarvis Croft, a name which occurs not infrequently through the centuries, was of a similar size and close to the farm called Jarvis.

By 1840 the field name of Jarvis is limited to two small fields south of the twitten, on either side of the Brad, both owned by Richard Gates who, it should be noted, also owned Fletcher's Mead. Cox quotes from the churchwardens' account book which in 1544 refers to Garveys Croft as lying between Jarvis and the church. It seems quite possible that the original Gervays Croft included all of Fletcher's Croft. If this is so, it is easier to trace the documentary history for the land on the site of the excavation, especially as Gervays Croft always seems to have been associated with the farm house of Jarvis. In 1255 a Robert Gervays is mentioned and in 1329 another Robert Gervays was paying tax. One Hugh Quecche, at his death in 1404, owned Gervises and La Nash as well as part of Wyckham manor.

It was in the early 15th century that a Steyning guild, known as the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity, came into existence. Its 'lodge' was built in 1417, the building now well known as the Grammar School in Church Street. Many notable local persons gave or bequeathed property to it, one being John Gore in a will of 1424 (probably the same man whose name appears in Gore's Croft close to the river at King's Barn). The Jarvis lands, including 'Garveys fiede' and 'Georgys Croft,' were amongst those which came into the Brotherhood's possession at some time and they are listed in the inventory of the Brotherhood's possessions drawn up in 1548 at the Dissolution. At this time the widow Lewkenor is listed in the chantry records as a tenant of Jervis Crofts. Richard Farnfold of Gatewick held Georges Croft as a tenant in 1544 and it is presumed that he acquired Jarvis at the Dissolution when the lands were leased and subsequently sold and the Guild's buildings converted to a school. It might be expected that the Dissolution would be reflec-

ted in the archaeological record when there was, no doubt, a change of use of ancillary buildings associated with the 'lodge'. In fact, occupation on the site of the excavation had virtually ceased by the mid 16th century.

The house Jarvis is itemized in Richard Farnfold's will of 1609 and thereafter descended in his family, being occupied in 1639 by Lawrence Davenport, rector of Bramber, who was suffering from the damp situation of the rectory at Botolphs. Thomas Farnfold disposed of all his property in 1647, which may coincide with the time at which Gervays or Jarvis Croft was divided and the name Fletcher first attached to a part of it.

To conclude, in the light of the hypothesis outlined above suggesting a location for the 11th-century town, followed by a movement of the town centre in about 1100, the nature of the findings from the 1967-8 excavations begins to make some sense. The site lay well outside the 11th-century borough of Steyning, being more than 150 metres from the church. It was at its busiest in the 12th century with occupation related to the shift towards the Church Street/High Street crossroads. Later occupation was sporadic and even the fact that it was on the road to the new port *c.* 1200 did little to encourage settlement, until the port ceased to function *c.* 1350, when people moved up here to the edge of the town. Thereafter, occupation was sporadic until the dissolution of the Brotherhood in 1548, after which date the land soon reverted to pasture.

THE FINDS

Full finds reports are on microfiche (pp. 68-92) with summaries of the principal contents given below.

The Local Pottery (by K. J. Barton)

This comprises material which falls into four components that constitute the standard forms of medieval wares in this part of Sussex. The earliest is of A.D. 1000-1200 whilst the latest belongs to the late medieval period. Two chimney pot fragments are illustrated from the 30 found.

The Imported Pottery

A number of pieces of imported pottery were found throughout the site. Amongst them in the early medieval cobble layer there were two small decorated fragments of 10th-century Pingsdorf ware. A plain fragment of rim of Rhenish ware, 10th-century, came from the Gully. Two small pieces of French painted ware of 12th-century date were identified, one from Pit Z55P and the other from below the cobbles. In the late medieval layers in the south-west corner of the site there was a fragment of South-Western French green-glazed jug, associated with late 14th- and 15th-century fabrics such as painted ware and devolved West Sussex ware. In the early 16th-century pit there was a base of a Raren stoneware jar.

Iron Objects

Some 90 items were recovered, not counting ordinary nails (*c.* 35). Many of these were indeterminate pieces of bar or fragmentary plates with a concentration in the area of H49L2 and D47L3, where slag was also found, indicative of a smithy.

Bronze Objects

Some 13 items were recovered, including a pair of tweezers with unusual decoration from an early medieval context.

Coins and Tokens

Of the 15 items recovered only one was early and this was a Saxon penny of Edgar (959-75) struck at Winchester.

Edgar penny (by Marion Archibald)

Edgar (959-75)

Penny of BMC type III (CC)

Mint: Winchester. Moneyer: Wulfsgie

Obv.: +EADGARRE+ANGLORV: around small central cross

Rev.: +VVLFSIGE Mō PINTONIA around small central cross (P denotes 'wen')

Weight: 1.29 g. (19.9 gr.) Die axis: 0°

Until the discovery of this coin, Wulfsgie was not known as a moneyer for the reign. He is not recorded in the last, Reform, type of Edgar, nor for his successors Edward the Martyr and Aethelred II at Winchester. He is also absent from the issues of Edgar's predecessor, Eadwig, but the name occurs on coins without mint signature for Edred (946-55), although the moneyer responsible may have been a different person. The mint signature is an unusually full one. The obverse die has not been found among the rare coins of this sub-group of class III at the mint which has small neat lettering and consequently has room for a long form of the king's title. These coins are however possibly only fortuitously scarce in modern cabinets because most of the large hoards of the period have been found in the north and west of the country where local coins of a different type predominate. The issue of this coin cannot be dated precisely within the reign but it was probably struck around the middle period and certainly before the Reform of the coinage which is usually placed in the year 973. All previous issues were then reissued and so, abnormal survivals apart, this coin is most

likely to have been deposited some time within the decade c. 965-75.

The discovery of a coin struck at Winchester at Steyning conforms to the pattern that outside the main commercial centres isolated coin finds tend to have been struck at a mint in the same part of the country. This is not necessarily the immediately local mint. In the case of Steyning, there was no mint there as far as we know in Edgar's reign (the earliest recorded coins are of Cnut), and the nearest mint at the time was at Chichester where output was on a smaller scale than at Winchester which was one of the most important mints in the kingdom. (No mint-signed coins of Lewes of Edgar's pre-Reform types are known although it produced mint-signed coins earlier for Athelstan and later in the Reform type of Edgar. Lewes is, however, at least a potential mint in type III).

Glass Objects

A total of 21 items were recovered but none were of particular significance.

Bone Objects

Only two items of worked bone were recovered: a bodkin and a flat piece which may have been the handle of a comb.

Stone Objects

These include two hones, two spindle whorls, part of a Purbeck marble mortar, and fragments of sandstone and Mayen lava quernstones.

Clay Objects

Only two items were recovered: a crucible fragment and a cylindrical object which may be part of a pillar lamp.

Building Materials

No dressed stone, slate or roof tile was recovered but finds included daub and part of a 14th-century slip-decorated floor tile.

Miscellaneous Finds

These included several pieces of iron slag and charcoal.

Mollusca (by June E. Chatfield, Ph.D.)

Nearly all the molluscs available for study were comparatively large ones that had been collected by the excavators, although a few additional examples of small land snails were obtained extracted from mud in some unwashed material. The molluscs fall into two categories, the marine species that were brought to the site by man, presumably for food, and the land snails that were living on the site.

Animal Bones (by J. Ridout Sharpe, B.Sc., A.R.C.S., Dip. Archaeol.)

A total of 1,862 animal bones and teeth were recovered.

The bones were generally well preserved, although fragmentary. The context of this material shows that most of it was midden material. Its study throws light on the animal economy of the period and indicates that slaughtering and butchery took place locally, probably in Steyning itself.

Contents of Microfiche

The local pottery (by K. J. Barton) (pp. 69-70)

Iron objects (pp. 69, 71-3)

Bronze objects (pp. 73-5)

Coins and tokens (pp. 75-6)

Glass objects (pp. 76-7)

Bone objects (p. 77)

Stone objects (pp. 77-8)

Clay objects (p. 78)

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Mollusca (pp. 79-81)

The animal bones (by J. Ridout Sharpe)

(pp. 81-91)

References (pp. 91-2)

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