

THE RESULTS OF A FIELDWALKING SURVEY AT NOVINGTON MANOR, PLUMPTON, EAST SUSSEX

by Chris Butler

INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1987, it was noted that a large number of medieval pottery sherds were lying on the surface of a field near Novington Manor, Plumpton (TQ372135; Fig. 1). It was decided to take advantage of the fallow condition of the field and conduct a systematic survey to see if there was a pattern to the distribution of pottery and other artefacts.

The field was walked in transects spaced at 20 metre intervals and orientated on grid north. All material likely to be of archaeological interest found along each transect was collected and bagged in 20 metre collection units. Most of the fieldwalking was undertaken by Mr L. Gaston during one week in July.

A wide range of material was recovered from across the whole field, including flintwork, pottery and building material. These, together with a number of items found at an earlier date, are discussed below.

THE FINDS

The finds and survey records have been deposited at Barbican House Museum, Lewes. Numbers in the text refer to the illustrations in Fig. 2.

The Flintwork

A total of 265 prehistoric flints was recovered during the survey, and the finds are summarised in Table 1. The flint is of three types:

A. Blue/black in colour with, where present, a white cortex. The majority (88.3 per cent) of the flint found in the survey is of this type, and is typical of the flint most commonly found in the Weald.

- B. Olive green, orange, grey or dark grey-brown in colour. This type of flint (representing 11 per cent of the total) is found in the Lower Greensand as nodules (Holgate *et al.* 1986, 1).
- C. White in colour with some trace of patination. Only two flakes (0.7 per cent) of this type were present, probably originating from the chalk Downs.

TABLE 1
The Flint Assemblage

<i>Debitage</i>	Number of Pieces
Flakes	222
Blades	4
Bladelets	1
Blade/bladelet fragments	1
Axe-thinning flakes	1
Single platform, flake core	2
Shattered pieces	17
<i>Implements</i>	
Leaf shaped arrowhead	1
Scrapers	10
Notched pieces	2
Cutting flake	1
Piercers	3
Fire-fractured flint	207
Total	472

Most of the pieces recovered are hard hammer-struck. In addition to the worked pieces shown in Table 1, 19 of the flakes and one blade show signs of retouch; others have abrasion consistent with plough damage. A post-3rd-millennium B.C. date is likely for most of the assemblage, although a few pieces may be earlier in date.

Example Pieces:

- End scraper, flint type A. Late Neolithic/early Bronze Age (No. 1).
- Piercer, flint type A. Late Neolithic/early Bronze Age (No. 2).
- Cutting flake, flint type A (No. 3).
- Retouched flake, flint type A (No. 4).
- Broken end scraper, flint type A (No. 5).
- Leaf-shaped arrowhead fragment. Reflaked with abrupt

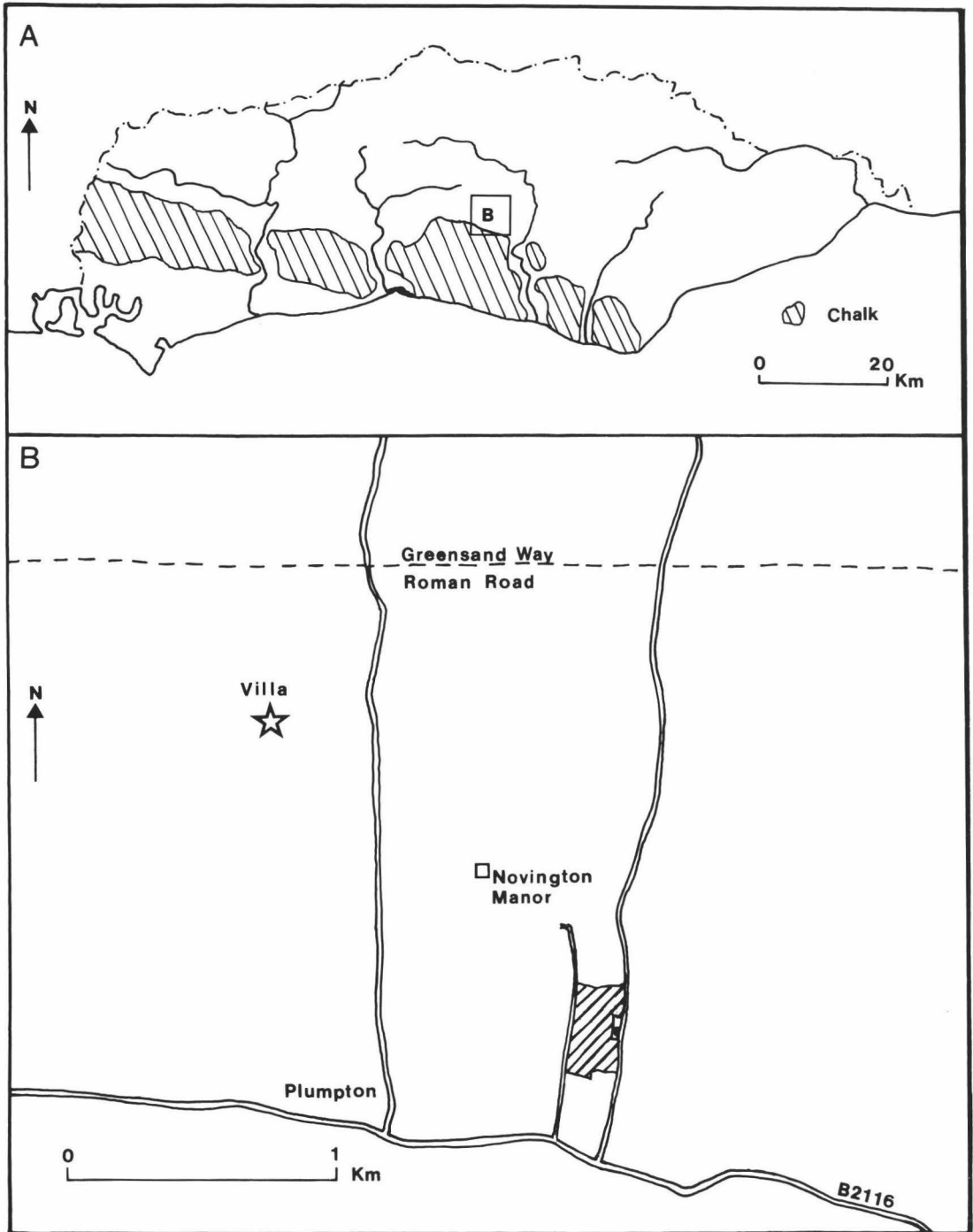


Fig. 1 Location of field at Novington Manor.

retouch at one end to create a point or notch; the other end has been snapped in antiquity. Flint type B. Early Neolithic (No. 6).

The Pottery

Introduction

The survey yielded a total of 874 pieces of pottery, together with 110 fragments of burnt clay and four of clay pipe. The pottery includes examples ranging from the prehistoric period through to post-medieval and the finds are summarised by fabric below.

1. *Prehistoric*. Five sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered, all of the same fabric. They probably date to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age.

Fabric A. Coarse calcinated flint-gritted ware, red-brown to black fabric.

2. *Roman*. Of the 80 Roman sherds, the majority (94 per cent) were of East Sussex Ware, which is consistent with sites of the Roman period in East Sussex (Green 1980, 79).

Fabric B. Handmade grog-tempered wares ('East Sussex Ware'). Various fabric colours ranging from pink to black.

Fabric C. Sandy 'grey' wares (2 sherds).

Fabric D. Orange-red fabric with grey core (3 sherds).

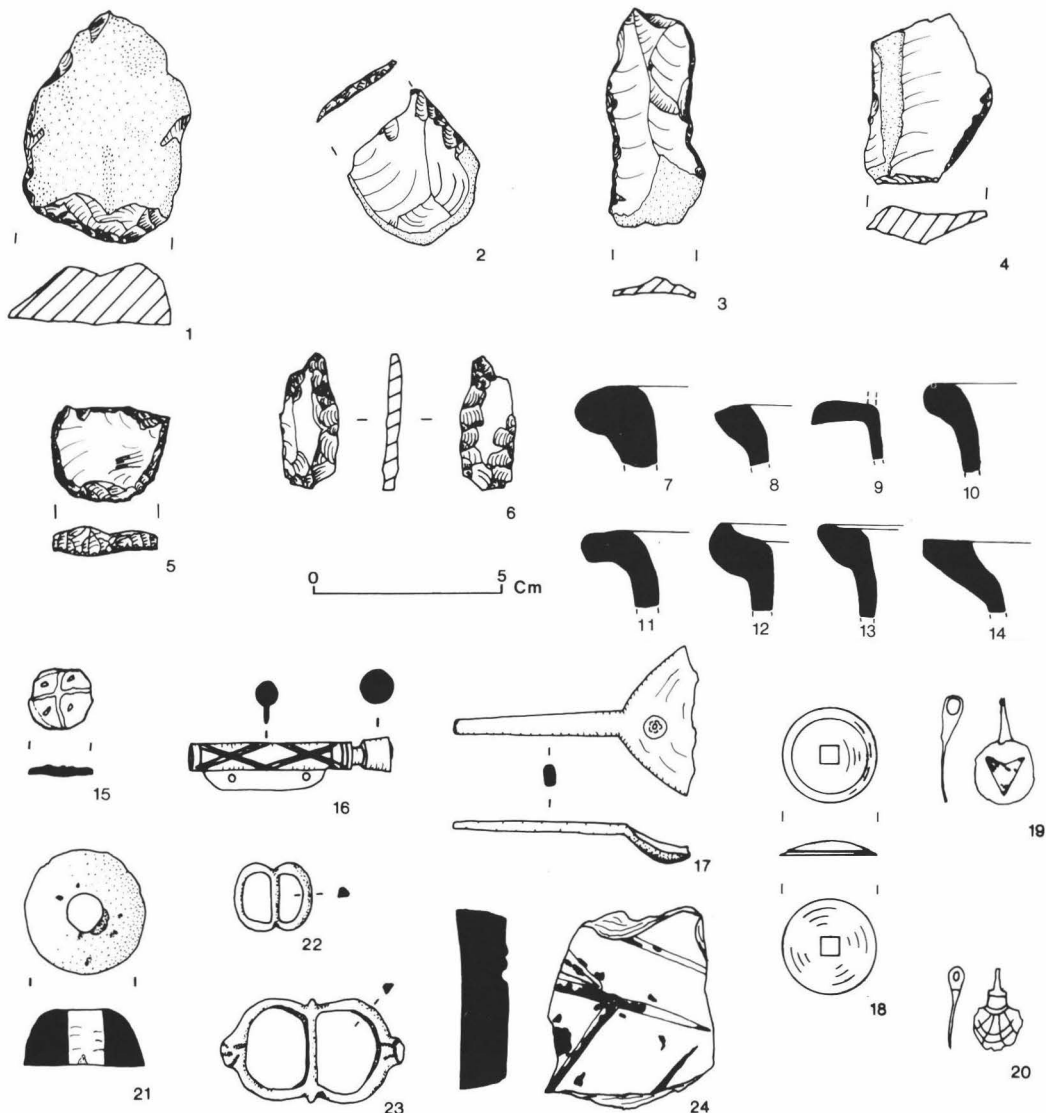


Fig. 2 Worked flint, pottery and other artefacts.

3. *Medieval*. The largest quantity of pottery recovered in the survey was medieval, totalling some 694 sherds. It has been analysed into fabric types using the size of filler as the index. This is to enable comparison to be made with other assemblages in Sussex, and because of the chronological implications of the filler grain size in Sussex medieval pottery (Barton 1979, 9). Forty-four sherds (6.3 per cent) showed signs of a glaze, 35 (5 per cent) were rim sherds and two were handle fragments.

Fabric E. No inclusions visible to the naked eye. 11 sherds (1.5 per cent).

Fabric F. Sandy filler, grains no larger than 0.25 mm. 54 sherds (7.8 per cent).

Fabric G. Fine flint filler, grains no larger than 0.5 mm. 175 sherds (25.3 per cent).

Fabric H. Medium flint filler, grains no larger than 1 mm. 323 sherds (46.5 per cent).

Fabric I. Coarse flint filler, grains larger than 1 mm. 131 sherds (18.9 per cent).

4. *Post Medieval*. A total of 95 sherds of post-medieval pottery, together with four fragments of clay pipe, were collected.

Fabric J. Various types/wares.

Fabric K. Clay pipes.

5. *Other*. Fabric L. Burnt clay. Colour ranges from light buff through to black, with irregular flint and chalk inclusions. This probably represents daub of an indeterminate date.

Example Pieces:

- Rim. Fabric B. Red brown (No. 7).
- Rim. Fabric B. Pink to brown (No. 8).
- Flange from flanged bowl. Fabric D. Orange red with reduced grey core (No. 9).
- Rim. Fabric I. Light brown body with dark brown core (No. 10).
- Rim. Fabric H. Red brown/brown body with darker core (No. 11).
- Rim. Fabric H. Red brown body with grey core (No. 12).
- Rim. Fabric F. Red/pink body with grey core, speckled green glaze on inside (No. 13).
- Rim. Fabric H. Red/grey body (No. 14).

Coins and Tokens (by David Rudling)

- JOHN, 1199–1216. Short Cross Penny. Class 5b-c. Reverse: ADAM.ON.LVND (i.e. the moneyer Adam of the London mint). Worn, but no signs of clipping.
- EDWARD II, 1307–27. Halfpenny of London. Unclipped.
- HENRY VI, First Reign: 1422–61. Halfpenny of London. Leaf-Trefoil issue (1435–8). Leaf on breast. Unclipped.
- HENRY VIII, 1509–47. Halfgroat of Canterbury. Third Coinage (1544–47) or Posthumous Coinage (1547–51). Very worn.
- ELIZABETH I, 1558–1603. Penny of London. Uncertain issue; mintmark illegible. Worn.
- GEORGE IV or VICTORIA pre-1860. Copper halfpenny. Extremely worn.
- LEAD TOKEN, late medieval. Uniface type: Large cross with pellet in each angle. Diameter: 15 mm. (No. 15).

Iron Objects

- Half oxen shoe.
- Half oxen shoe.
- Buckle.
- Nail.
- Belt ring.
- Post-medieval fork handle.

Non-Ferrous Metal Objects (Copper alloy unless otherwise stated)

- Purse bar. Late 15th/early 16th century (London Museum Catalogue 1975). (No. 16).
 - Spoon. Faint traces of tinning and silvering. Below the junction of the bowl and handle is a Tudor Rose; makers mark? (No. 17).
 - Button? Circular with square hole in centre. Diameter: 25 mm. (No. 18).
 - Pendant. From horse-furniture. Traces of red and possibly blue enamel. Medieval. (No. 19).
 - Pendant. From horse-furniture. Raised gold wire decoration. Medieval. (No. 20).
 - f-h. Three fragments from buckets or cauldrons.
 - i. Spindle whorl. 85g. (No. 21). (Lead).
 - j. Buckle. Figure of eight type. Medieval (No. 22).
 - k. Buckle. Figure of eight type. Medieval (No. 23).
- Items j. and k. were found by Mr R. Burgess and remain in his possession.

Building Material

Forty fragments of brick and tile were recovered in the survey. Some of the tiles could be identified as being late medieval in date. One fragment of late medieval tile/roof furniture is illustrated (No. 24); it has a buff fabric with a grey core, and medium flint filler. Decoration is incised with traces of a lead green patchy glaze.

Geological Material (by Tim Gosden)

A total of eleven pieces of foreign stone, together with two fossils, were recovered and are summarised in Table 2. This material derives mainly from the sedimentary deposits in the Wealden District, although the fossils and beach pebbles originate from the Upper Chalk. Four of the sandstone fragments (Items 2, 7, 8 and 9 in Table 2) may have been used as whetstones.

TABLE 2
Geological Material

Item	Transect	Description
1	B2	Red-brown medium-coarse grained sandstone, contains poorly sorted mixture of medium and coarse grains showing little sign of erosion.
2	K2	Medium grained, well sorted sandstone.
3	K5	Fine sandstone-siltstone exhibiting fine lamination, micaceous with specks of muscovite.



Fig. 3 Distribution of worked flint, fire fractured flint and prehistoric pottery.



Fig. 4 Distribution of Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery and burnt clay.

4	N6	Argillaceous mudstone, dark grey, hard and brittle with one face exhibiting scrape marks developed during fault movement.
5	N9	Beach pebble of flint or chert.
6	R11	Golden to medium-brown fine sandstone, highly oxidised and full of iron or limonite.
7	-	Medium grained, well sorted sandstone.
8	-	Medium grained, well sorted sandstone.
9	-	Medium grained, well sorted sandstone.
10	-	Fossiliferous rock composed almost entirely of the shells of bivalves and gasteropods in a sandy matrix.
11	-	Fossiliferous rock composed almost entirely of the shells of bivalves and gasteropods in a sandy matrix.
12	P6	Fossil-Micraaster coranguinum-in chert.
13	P6	Fossil-Micraaster coranguinum-in chert. Also fire-fractured.

Animal Bones and Molluscs

Fifteen fragments of bone and tooth, together with three fragments of oyster shell and one cockle, were collected from the surface of the field during the survey.

DISCUSSION

The finds recovered in this survey indicate that there has been human activity in the area from the Mesolithic period up to the present day.

The majority of the flintwork is typical of the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, with a few pieces dating to the Mesolithic and early Neolithic periods. The worked flint and especially the flint tools seem to be concentrated at the north and south ends of the field, a pattern closely mirrored by the fire fractured flint (Fig. 3). This probably indicates some activity nearby, or perhaps the edge of a settlement area. However, settlement sites on the Downs have a much higher concentration of flintwork than that discovered here, e.g. Pyecombe (Butler, forthcoming). There has not been sufficient fieldwork carried out off the Downs to indicate whether a similar pattern applies in the Weald and Greensand (c.f. Holgate *et al.* 1986, 6).

The Roman period is represented by a scatter of pottery in the centre and north of the field (Fig. 4). The close proximity of Plumpton

Roman villa (1½ km to the north west) may indicate that this area was under cultivation as part of the villa estate (Percival 1976), with pottery arriving on the field during manuring. The type of pottery, however, does not correspond with that found during the field survey of the villa when it was noted that little of the pottery was East Sussex ware (Allen 1984). There may, alternatively, have been an earlier, or simultaneous, native settlement nearby from which the East Sussex ware originated. With the Roman Greensand Way only 2 km to the north (Margary 1948), it is likely that there were a number of villas and settlements in the area; only further fieldwork will clarify the picture.

Medieval activity is concentrated in the centre of the field, where the majority of the medieval pottery, along with the building material, coins and other medieval finds, was found (Fig. 4). This probably indicates that a medieval building or buildings once stood on this spot; alternatively, a building of this date might have existed where the modern house stands on the east side of the field. The pottery and coins show that occupation may have lasted continuously from the 12th to 16th centuries.

In the post-medieval period, activity is represented by a scatter of pottery across the whole field, but concentrated in the central area (Fig. 4) which corresponds to the central of three fields, the boundaries of which have been removed. This could show that this field was more heavily cultivated than the other two.

It is hoped that the surrounding fields will be fieldwalked as they become available, so that a more complete picture of past agricultural activity in this area can be compiled.

Acknowledgements

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