

FURTHER FIELDWALKING AT NOVINGTON MANOR, PLUMPTON, EAST SUSSEX

by Chris Butler and John Funnell

INTRODUCTION

During the autumn of 1989 two fields (Fig. 1, Fields 2 and 3) were walked at Novington Manor, Plumpton; this was arranged and supervised by John Funnell as part of an 'A' level archaeology project. A further field (Fig. 1, Field 1), walked by Mr L. Gaston during the preceding year, was also brought into this survey. These three fields were adjacent to the field previously surveyed in 1987 (Butler, 1989), and together comprised a rectangular block of land just off the north scarp slope of the South Downs (Fig. 1).

The fields were walked in transects spaced at 20 metre intervals and orientated on grid north. All material likely to be of archaeological interest was collected and bagged in 20 metre collection units. The two fields surveyed in 1989 had been sown, the crop having just emerged; the field walked the preceding year was fallow.

As with an earlier survey, a wide range of finds were recovered and are discussed below, together with further items that were found with the aid of a metal detector.

THE FINDS

The Flint

Over 1000 pieces of flintwork were recovered during the survey, and are summarised in Table 1. The flint is of the same types as were found in the previous survey of the adjacent field (Butler 1989, 31).

A small proportion of the flakes and blades are soft hammer struck which, together with a number of blade tools and other implements, probably date from the Mesolithic. They indicate limited activity here, possibly from hunting groups, in the Mesolithic.

The remainder of the debitage is hard hammer struck and, along with most of the implements, is typical of the flintwork found in the later Neolithic and early Bronze Age, although a few pieces may be later in date. The large quantity of implements and debitage suggests an activity site or sites of some size, and from the range of implements found; scrapers, piercers, knives, and other tools (Fig. 2), indicates that a range of activities was being carried out here (Holden, 1975).

Pottery

Over 1000 sherds of pottery, together with pieces of clay pipe and burnt clay were found during the survey (Table 2).

Prehistoric

The prehistoric pottery comprised five fabrics,

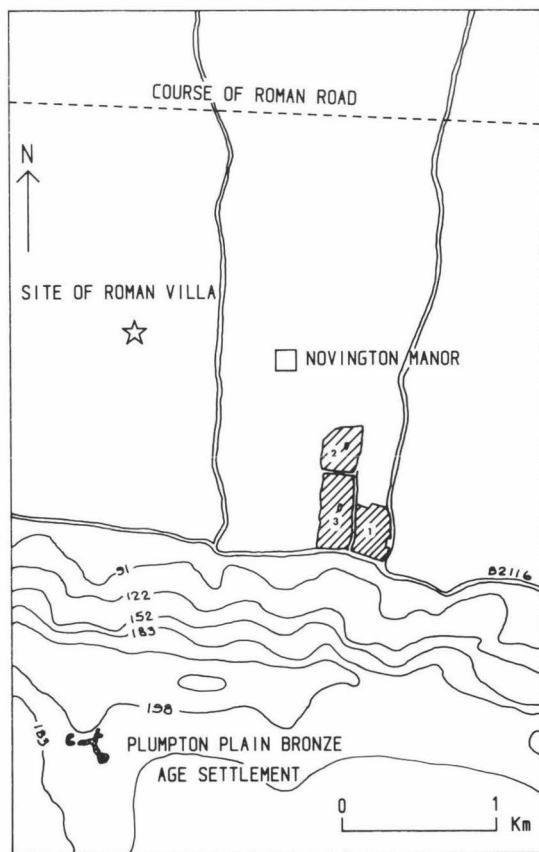


Fig. 1. Location of the Fields at Novington Manor.

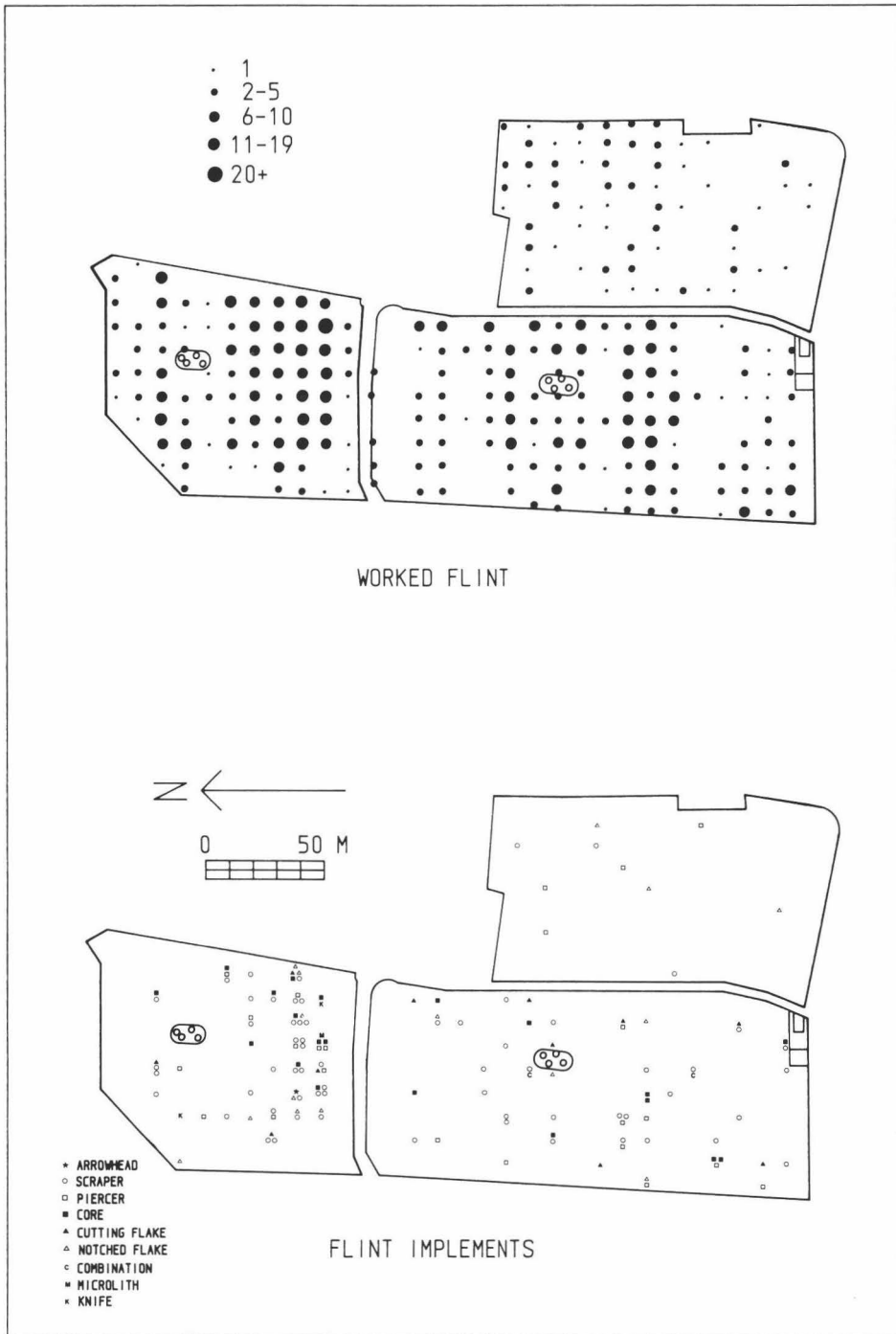


Fig. 2. Distribution of Worked flint and Flint Implements.

TABLE 1
The Flint Assemblage

| | Field 1 | Field 2 | Field 3 | Total |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| <i>Debitage</i> | | | | |
| Flakes | 85 | 296 | 339 | 720 |
| Blades | 7 | 16 | 13 | 36 |
| Crested blades | — | 2 | — | 2 |
| Miscellaneous retouched pieces | 1 | 43 | 16 | 60 |
| Shattered pieces | 4 | 60 | 62 | 126 |
| Burin spall | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| Single platform, flake core | — | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Two platform, flake core | — | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Three platform, flake core | — | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Single platform, blade core | — | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Core tablets | — | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Core rejuvenation flake | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| <i>Implements</i> | | | | |
| Leaf shaped arrowhead | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| Scrapers | 3 | 33 | 26 | 62 |
| Piercers | 4 | 10 | 9 | 23 |
| Notched pieces | 3 | 8 | 4 | 15 |
| Knives | — | 2 | — | 2 |
| Cutting flake/blades | 1 | 4 | 7 | 12 |
| Combination tool | — | — | 2 | 2 |
| Microolith | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| Hammerstone | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 108 | 494 | 489 | 1091 |
| Fire-fractured flint | 284 | 312 | 841 | 1437 |
| Total | 392 | 806 | 1330 | 2528 |

TABLE 2
Pottery (Sherds)

| | Field 1 | Field 2 | Field 3 | Total |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Prehistoric | 3 | 11 | 13 | 27 |
| Roman | 13 | 14 | 24 | 51 |
| Medieval | 359 | 17 | 313 | 689 |
| Post-medieval | 154 | 12 | 87 | 253 |
| Clay pipe | 6 | — | — | 6 |
| Burnt clay | 41 | 79 | 275 | 395 |
| Total | 576 | 133 | 712 | 1421 |

dating from the early Bronze Age through to the early Iron Age; however the majority of the prehistoric pottery found appeared to be typical of fabrics found in the Bronze Age.

1. Buff to red or black sandy fabric with frequent medium sized calcinated flint inclusions. Holes left from burnt-out organic material. Probably Bronze Age.

2. Black sandy fabric with small to medium sized flint inclusions. Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age.

3. Grog-tempered dark grey or red brown/brown fabric with occasional medium sized calcined flint inclusions. Early Bronze Age.

4. Grey/black and brown fabric. Small to medium sized calcined flint inclusions. Holes left from burnt-out organic material. Probably Bronze Age (similar to Fabric 1).

5. Orange red to brown grog tempered fabric with medium sized calcined flint and quartz inclusions. Probably Bronze Age.

Roman

Four different fabrics of Roman pottery were found, however the majority (70 per cent) of the sherds were of East Sussex Ware, with the remainder being finer sandy wares.

6. Fine sandy buff ware.

7. Sandy orange-red ware, sometimes with reduced core.

8. Sandy grey ware.

9. Grog-tempered ware with soapy feel. Rare flint inclusion. Various colours from buff to black. East Sussex Ware.

Medieval

Medieval pottery made up the largest proportion of all the sherds found. They were all of a sandy fabric, most had flint inclusions of variable size and frequency, and some were glazed.

10. Sandy ware with variable sized flint inclusions of variable frequencies. Colours range from buff, red to brown. Some sherds have a green or yellow-green glaze. Mostly 12th–13th century in date, some may be earlier Saxo-Norman type ware.

Post-medieval

Over 250 post-medieval sherds and 6 fragments of clay pipe were found, mainly in Field 1. These ranged in date from the 17th Century up to the present day.

11. Various fabrics and types of ware.

12. Clay pipe, no makers marks present on pieces found, but some stems are thick, indicating an earlier rather than later date.

Burnt Clay

The survey revealed almost 400 fragments of burnt clay, the majority of which came from Field 3. This material, most of which was of the same composition and texture, probably represents daub of an indeterminate date.

The Purse Bar

One of the side bars from this purse bar was found during the earlier project at Novington (Butler 1989, Fig. 2, No. 16). The remainder of it was found more recently, near to the findspot of the first sidebar, by Mr L. Gaston with the aid of a metal detector. The reconstructed purse bar is shown in Fig. 6.

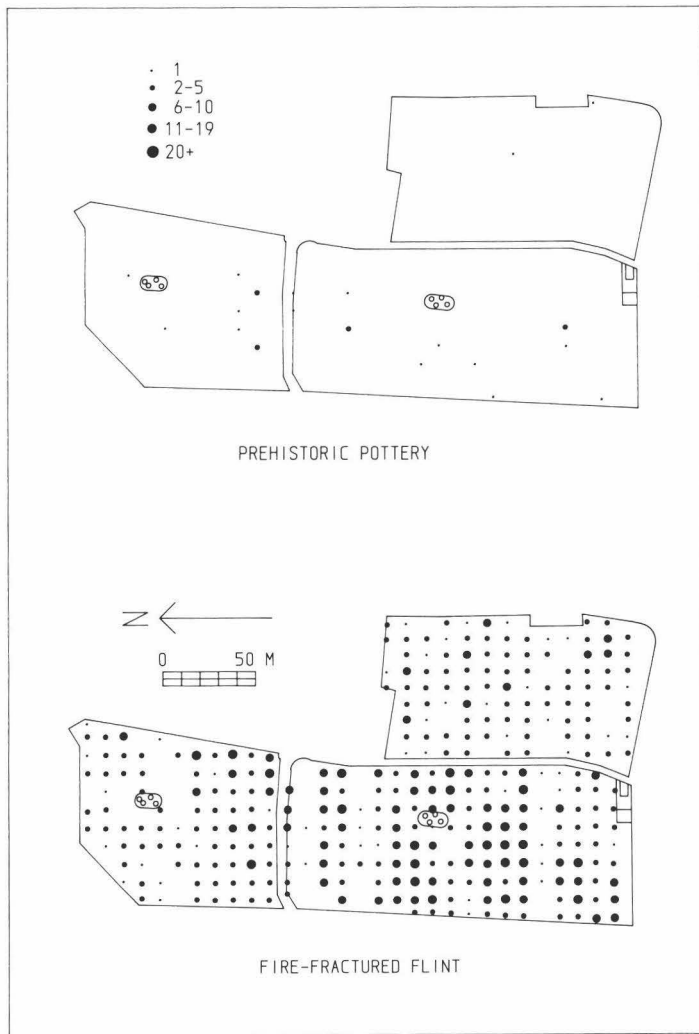


Fig. 3. Distribution of Prehistoric Pottery and Fire-fractured Flint.

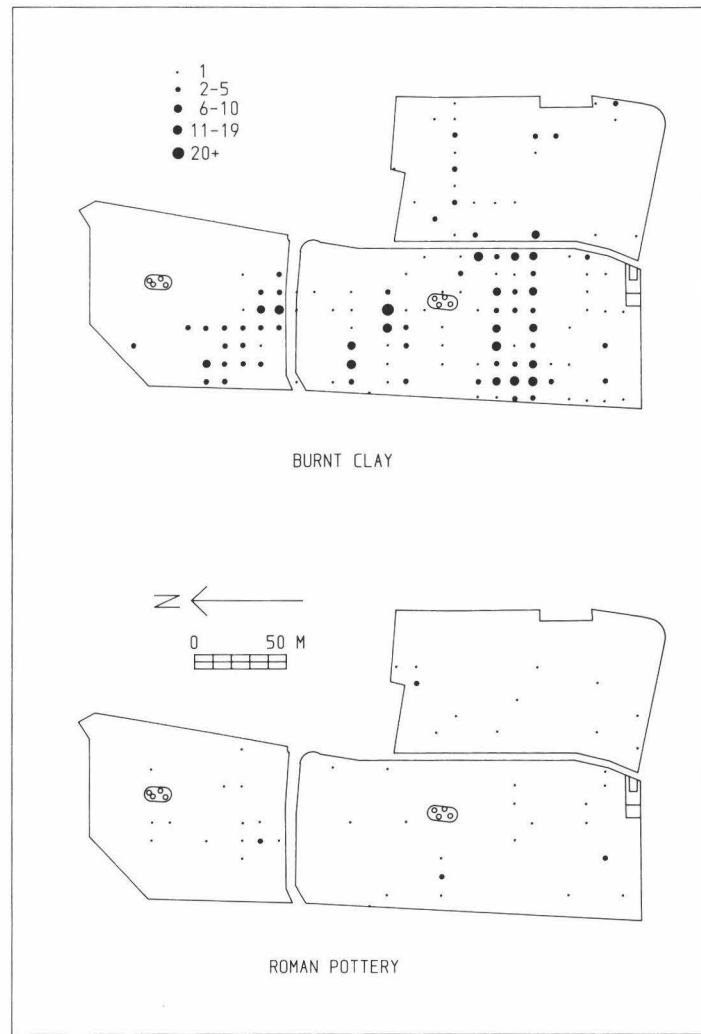


Fig. 4. Distribution of Burnt Clay and Roman Pottery.

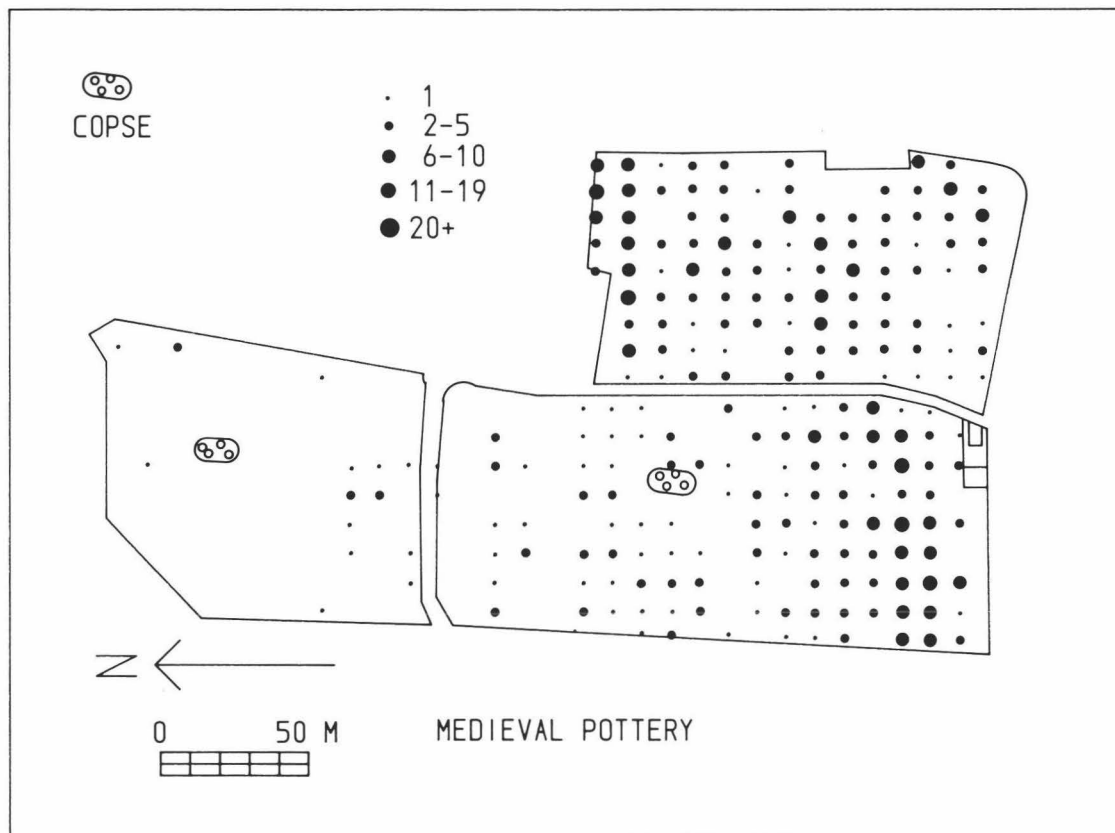


Fig. 5. Distribution of Medieval Pottery.

The purse bar is made of bronze or copper-alloy. The side bars are circular in section and take the form of animal's heads at their junction with the central boss. The side bars are decorated with a diagonal lattice-pattern on both the back and front. On one side of the central boss is a simple star, and on the other, what appears to be three almost vertical lines, but which may be a simple 'W', an initial which was quite common on this type of purse bar. The central loop, used for suspending the purse bar from a belt, is undecorated.

This particular form of purse bar is typical of a Type A1 (London Museum Catalogue, 1940, 164), which is amongst the earliest and most elaborate known in the country, and dates from the 15th Century.

Other Non-ferrous Metal objects

1. The Disc Brooch:

A 'Ring and Dot' ornamented disc brooch (Fig. 7) was found (at the south end) of Field 1, by Mr R. Burgess.

Made in copper alloy, the disc brooch contains a 'ring and dot' design comprising: a central large 'dot' enclosed within an incised ring, Around this are eight smaller dots each within its own incised ring. The whole design is then enclosed within a larger (double?) ring. On the reverse of the brooch are the broken remains of two lugs which would originally have held the fastening pin.

Ring and dot ornamented disc brooches are commonly found in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and settlements in southern England (Welch, 1983),

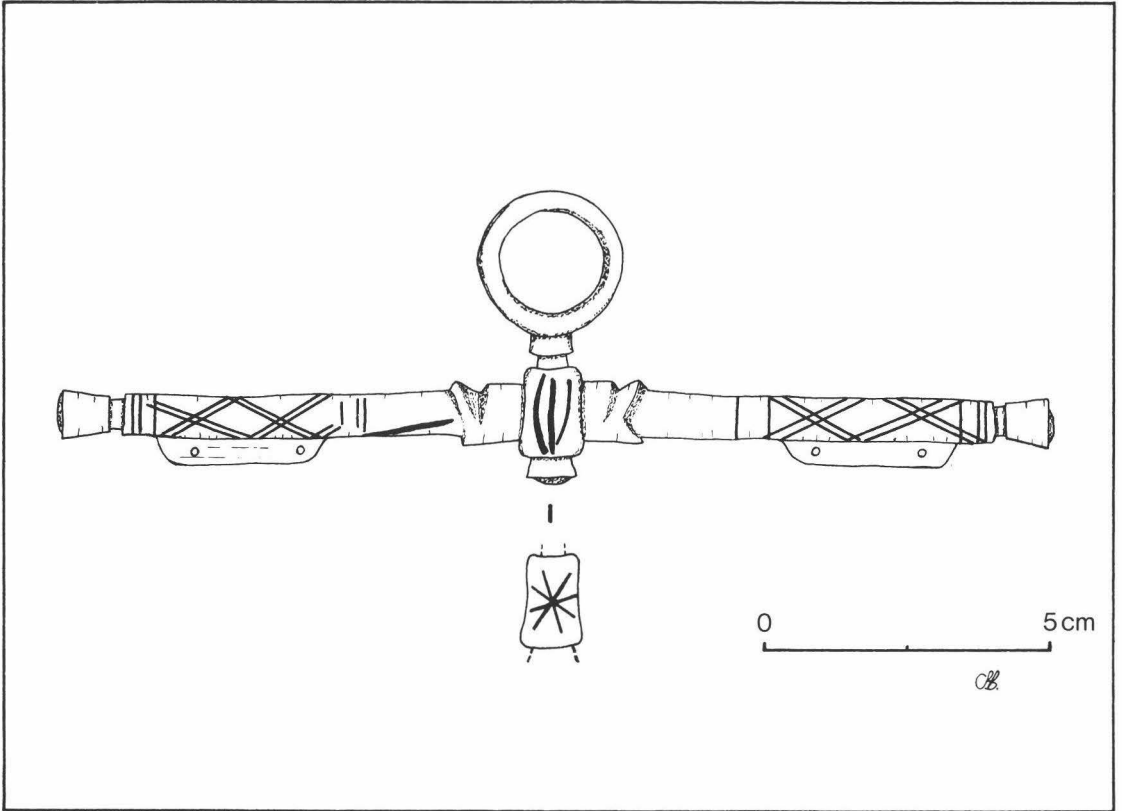


Fig. 6. 15th Century Purse Bar.

with examples in Sussex coming from Alfriston, Beddingham and Highdown. They date from the second half of the 5th Century and into the later 6th Century.

2. *The Strap-end:*

A 9th-Century Anglo-Saxon strap-end of copper-alloy (Fig. 8) was also found by Mr R. Burgess in Field 1. It is broken at the split-end, with the upper part of the front missing, and the back is broken at the rivet holes. As with other strap-ends recently found in Sussex (Graham-Campbell 1988 and 1989), this latest one has 'Trehwiddle style' decoration. The terminal is in the form of an animal's head viewed from above, with oval ears containing lunate incisions and a fan shaped field on its forehead, containing a stylised plant-motif. There is a beaded border along either side of the main body of the strap-end, with a plain inner border framing a field which contains a stylised animal with nicked

contours; however, part of this field is missing. The reverse of the strap-end is plain. Length: 39 mm.

This find takes the number of 9th Century Anglo-Saxon strap-ends found in Sussex to six in total, one of which was found in 1984 at Westmeston, only some 3 km from this latest one. We would like to thank Mr Graham-Campbell for his comments on the strap-end.

3. *The Buckles:*

Six copper-alloy buckles were found in the topsoil of Fields 1 and 3. They include both single and double types. Two of the buckles are decorated, and one has an iron pin. Most of them may date from the medieval period, but some are probably later in date. Three of the buckles have been illustrated previously (Funnell 1990).

4. *Miscellaneous Copper-alloy items*

Three small pieces, possibly belt or horse furniture fittings, were found in Field 1, together with a small strip of copper-alloy.

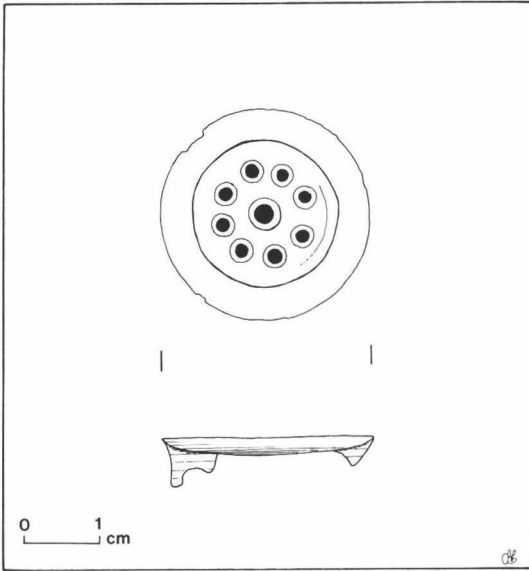


Fig. 7. Anglo-Saxon Disc Brooch.

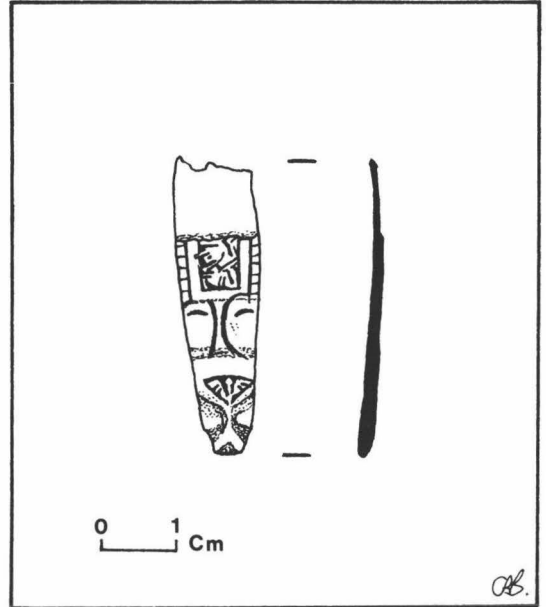


Fig. 8. 9th Century Anglo-Saxon Strap-end.

5. *Musket Balls:*

Three lead musket balls were found, two of which are 5.6 mm. in diameter, the other being 15.5 mm. in diameter.

6. *Lead Weight:*

A lead weight was found in Field 1. It is domed in shape with a hole through the centre. Weight 31 gm.

Iron Object (by David Rudling)

Part of a handled knife blade was found in Field 3. The handle is of rectangular section. Date uncertain.

Glass

A single annular glass bead was found in Field 1. It is light blue in colour, is undecorated, and has been broken either in antiquity or more recently. Such beads are commonly found in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, and date from the late 5th to mid-6th Century (Welch 1983, 83).

Coins (By David Rudling)

a. *Celtic*

1. Verica, King of the Atrebates. c. AD10–40. Silver unit. 12 mm. 1.22 gm. Die axis: 90. Obverse: COMF in tablet; solid crescent

with pellet and two rings above and below tablet; large circle around entire image; pellet border outside circle.

Reverse: Eagle faces with wings spread and head turned left; pellet border; VI RI above eagle.

Reference: Van Arsdell (1989, 157) no. 471–1.

Classification: Atrebatian I, AD10–20. Van Arsdell notes that many examples of this type of coin were found at Wanborough, Surrey.

b. *Roman*

2. Commemorative issue of the period AD330–335. Ae 17 mm.

Obverse: CONSTANTINOPOLIS, Helmeted bust left.

Reverse: No legend. Victory standing left; right foot on prow. In exergue: PLG (i.e. the Lugdunum mint).

Ref. *RIC* 185.

c. *English*

3. Henry III. Short Cross Coinage, Class 6c (1210–17). Silver cut halfpenny.

Reverse:]RES.ON.E[, i.e. the moneyer Peres of the York mint.

Reference: North (1980) No. 976.

4. Henry III. Short Cross Coinage, Class 7(b?) (1217/8–42). Silver cut halfpenny.
Reverse: +WIL[]NTE, i.e. the moneyer Willem Ta of the Canterbury mint.
Reference: North (1980) No. 979.
5. Edward III. Fourth Coinage, Pre-Treaty Period (1351–61). Series D or E (1352–55). Silver penny of the Durham mint.
Reference (North (1975) No. 1159 or 1170.
6. Elizabeth I, 1558–1603. Threepence. Second Issue. Dated 1573. Initial mark: Eglantine.
Reference: North (1975) 2000.
- d. *Jeton*
7. Anonymous issue of Nuremberg, 'Rose/orb' type brass jeton, c. 1500–1550. 23 mm.
Obverse: Three crowns, alternating with three Fleurs de Lis, arranged centrifugally around a five-petalled rose: fictitious marginal inscription.
Reverse: Imperial orb surmounted by a cross: within an ornamental tressure that has three main arches: three pairs of pellets around tressure: fictitious marginal inscription.
Pierced for suspension.
Reference: Type as Mitchiner (1988) page 377.

Foreign Stone

A possible Whetstone was found in Field 2. This was identified by Tim Gosden as a blue-grey non calcareous metamorphosed? siltstone, possibly originating from the Palaeozoic rocks of South West England or Wales.

DISCUSSION

In analysing the information gained from this fieldwalking, reference was also made to the previous fieldwalking carried out in the adjacent field (Butler 1989).

A small scattering, across all of the fields, of Mesolithic flintwork indicates that there was some activity here during this period. This probably amounts to little more than isolated activity connected with the hunting and gathering of food rather than a specific hunting camp, as there is no concentration of Mesolithic material in the fields surveyed.

Evidence increases from the Neolithic and continues into the Bronze Age with two major

concentrations of flintwork (Fig. 2), fire fractured flint and prehistoric pottery (Fig. 3) in Fields 2 and 3. Although leaf-shaped arrowheads have been found in this (Table 1) and the previous survey (Butler 1989, Fig. 2, No. 6), and some of the other flintwork is undoubtedly earlier Neolithic, the majority of the diagnostic flintwork is later Neolithic/early Bronze Age. There appears to be little difference in the flintwork from the two concentrations, however the earlier material seems to be concentrated in Field 2. As the flint and pottery concentrations also match that of the daub (Fig. 4), it would seem likely that these two concentrations of material represent a settlement rather than just activity areas as at Rackham (Holden 1975). It would also seem sensible to assume that this is a single settlement rather than two separate ones. The lack of material between the two concentrations could be due to poor artefact collection, whether because of inclement weather or otherwise. However, it is more likely that the flint material found represents waste material carefully disposed of around the edge of a settlement area; as has been suggested elsewhere (Holgate 1988, 32). In any event, the site appears to have been abandoned later in the Bronze Age.

The site discovered here supports the theory that in the later Neolithic/early Bronze Age, settlements were established on the Greensand in conjunction with woodland clearance, but then during the later Bronze Age as the soils became exhausted the settlements moved up onto the Downs (Needham 1987). There is substantial evidence for widespread activity on the Downs nearby in the later Bronze Age, with the Plumpton Plain settlements only some 1.5 km away (Holleyman 1935). There have also been more recent isolated finds of a palstave (Butler 1990) and awl (Butler 1988), less than 1 km from this site.

There is little evidence for occupation or activity during the Iron Age, with just a few sherds of possible early Iron Age pottery being found. In the Roman period there is a fairly general scattering of pottery across all of the fields (Fig. 4), probably as a result of agricultural activities. The results from walking these additional three fields do however highlight the concentration of Roman pottery at the north end

of the field walked in 1987 (Butler 1989). This suggests that there could be a Roman site to the north of that field, and that it is probably worthy of further investigation. This location would be suitable for a villa site, being adjacent to a possible road or track running south off the Greensand Way, and approximately 1.5 km from the villa at Plumpton (Allen 1984).

As with the results from the previous fieldwalking, there is a hiatus in activity during the Saxon period in terms of evidence recovered. However, the disc brooch and glass bead from the southern end of Field 1 could indicate the presence of a Saxon cemetery, dating from the late 5th to mid-6th century. This sort of position, at the foot of a spur running off the north scarp slope of the Downs, appears to have been favoured by the Saxons for their cemeteries, as at Beddingham and Keymer. However these finds may alternatively be simply accidental losses. The 9th century Saxon strap-end is also likely to have been an isolated loss, rather than continued use of any cemetery.

There is a general spread of medieval pottery across all of the fields, especially Fields 1 and 3 (Fig. 5), probably as a result of agricultural

activities. There are one or two concentrations of medieval material, which may relate to some activity or settlement on, or adjacent to, those concentrations. The lack of pottery at the northern end of Field 2 could indicate that the adjacent wood once extended into the northern part of the field thereby limiting any agricultural activities, with clearance taking place in the post-medieval period.

This additional fieldwalking has helped to complete a little more of the picture on past activity in the Novington area, and has highlighted areas that would benefit from further investigation in the future.

Acknowledgements

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