

Short articles

A polished flint axe from Seaford Head, East Sussex

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Following a cliff fall in July 1993, a polished flint axe (Fig. 1) was found by Mr P. Hudson of Seaford on the beach under Seaford Head at TQ494978. It was found amongst sandy clay soil which may have been the remains of the matrix in which it was situated before the cliff fall.

The axe is 181 mm long, 41 mm broad, 68 mm wide at the cutting edge and weighs 862 g. It has a cream to grey-brown patination which is typical of that on flint mined from the chalk of the South Downs. The whole surface of the axe has been polished except for some areas where there are deeper flaking

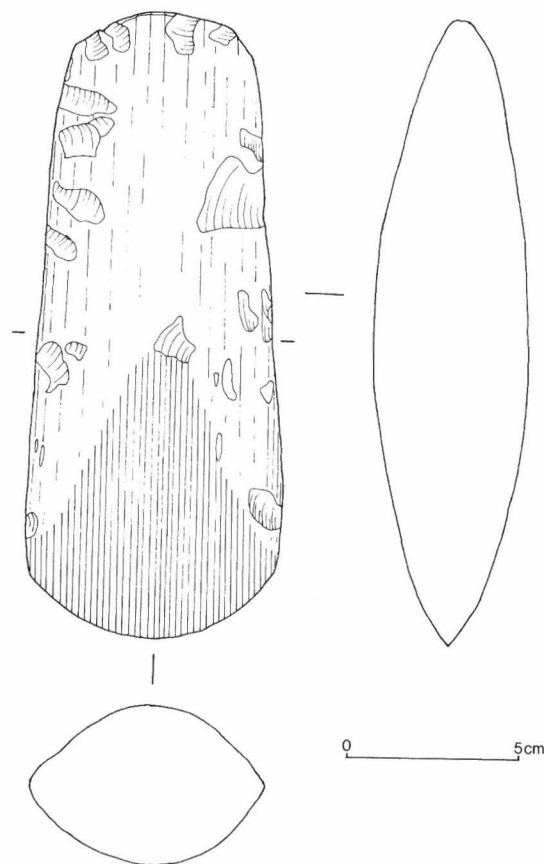


Fig. 1. Polished Neolithic axe from Seaford Head.

scars, into which the polishing has not reached. The axe is of the thick-butted type I variety (Adkins *et al.* 1978), and as such could date to any part of the Neolithic (Holgate 1988). It is in excellent condition with a finely sharpened cutting edge and is completely undamaged except for one or two minor chips which may have been caused during the cliff fall. There is no indication that it has been hafted although there is some abrasion on the butt end. Although it was probably intended as a wood-cutting or tree-felling tool, its condition suggests that it has almost certainly never been utilized, and may, therefore, have been a votive deposit.

There have been many finds of Neolithic flintwork nearby, especially immediately to the east of Seaford Head. Flintwork was collected here by W. J. Mortimore and E. D. Arundell in the late 1940s and 1950s (SN&Q 13), and generally around Seaford by Messrs Hurrell and Price Jones (Holden 1979). Amongst the many flint implements found are polished axes, leaf-shaped arrowheads and petit-tranchet arrowheads, which are all distinctive types of Neolithic flintwork. A further 'reflaked polished flint axe' from Seaford is known from the Hewlett collection in Canada (Drewett 1983) and other axes have been found in the sea, off Seaford Head, where they had probably been deposited by earlier cliff falls.

Seaford Head itself is the site of an Iron Age hillfort, and there is a barrow inside the hillfort which, when opened in 1876, produced Early Bronze Age material. More recent excavations have not located any Neolithic activity there (Bedwin 1986).

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A Neolithic polished flint axe from Hand Cross

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The axe illustrated was handed to the writer recently, found at High Beeches Nursery, Hand Cross (TQ 279 308). Of Neolithic date it is of polished flint, heavily patinated, with some

iron staining. Obviously well-used, the end shows damage sustained in antiquity.

The axe is now in the possession of the finder at the Nursery.

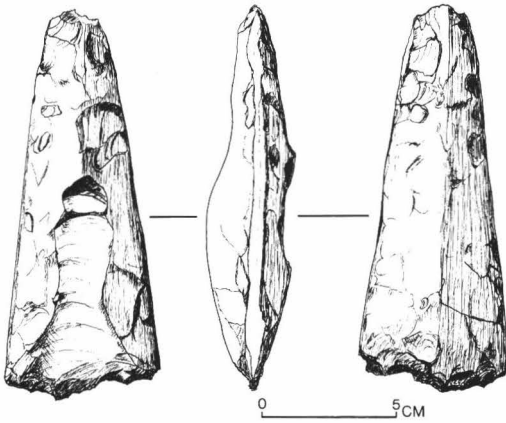


Fig. 1. A polished flint axe from Hand Cross.

A collection of Late Anglo-Saxon pottery from St Mary's Church, Walberton

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Limited excavation was undertaken by the Field Archaeology Unit, University College, London, in the churchyard of St Mary's church, Walberton, in advance of the installation of a septic tank. The excavation had been requested by the County Archaeologist's office and was conducted under a faculty issued by the Chancellor of the diocese.

St Mary's is of medieval origin and possible pre-Conquest elements have been noted. For example, the re-use of Roman brick and tile in the nave walls work may represent earlier work. Such evidence suggests that within the graveyard there may exist, *inter alia*, unmarked medieval graves and Romano-British deposits not directly associated with the church.

No medieval graves were found during the excavation, but two medieval features were recorded at a depth of about 1.5 m, above which level any 'archaeological' deposits had been truncated by a complex series of later, probably 18th- or 19th-century burials. Of greater interest, however, was the recovery of a collection of medieval pottery, predominantly late Saxon in date.

A total of 65 medieval sherds was recovered from the excavation and although almost all were from residual contexts, the sherds are largely of one date. With the exception of four sherds which are probably Binsted ware (late-13th–early-15th century), and of one sherd which is possibly early Anglo-Saxon, the remainder are late Anglo-Saxon.

The Anglo-Saxon pottery closely parallels the excavated

collection from Botolphs (Gardiner 1990) in the Adur valley, where ten Saxo-Norman fabrics were recognized, of which five are present at Walberton. Similar wares are also known from the Chapel Street kilns at Chichester. The greater part of the pottery, therefore, belongs to the period AD 900–1100. The most common fabric was Adur Valley DA, and its sandy variant DB. The few rim forms that are present are also characteristic of this period.

The single sherd of possible early Anglo-Saxon date is too badly abraded to allow certain identification, but the inclusion of organic temper and its soft, fine, sandy fabric make it similar to some of the pottery from Highdown Hill.

The majority of sherds were not badly abraded, which suggests that they had not been moved far from their original place of deposition. It would not be unreasonable to posit that the graves had been dug into archaeological deposits and the artefacts incorporated along with the disturbed contexts into the grave fills.

This small collection of pottery confirms the archaeological potential of the site suggested by the County Archaeologist and underlines the desirability of undertaking such archaeological recording whenever areas of such high potential are to be disturbed.

The archive is stored at Littlehampton museum: accession number A1807.

REFERENCE

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Seal matrix from Tarring, West Sussex

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In 1992 Mr J. Hersey of Tarring found a medieval seal matrix in his garden (TQ 135043). The matrix has been retained by the finder.

The seal matrix (Fig. 1) is made of lead and is 29 mm in diameter. It is carved in intaglio with the inscription +S:AVICIE:UXORIS:FRANC (The seal of Avice, wife of Francis). The inscription is bordered by incised bands. The centre is decorated with a crudely incised crescent which partly encloses an 8-pointed star. At the top of the reverse, there is a cast suspension loop.

Seal matrices of this type were common in the medieval period and are difficult to date unless they can be associated with a known individual; in this case there is no such association. To have a seal in her own name, Avice must have been a woman of some standing. Women seldom held land in their own right unless they had inherited it before their marriage. Lead seals are less common than those made of silver or latten, and this one is at the smaller end of the size range. Small lead personal seals most commonly date to the late 13th or early 14th centuries and there is no reason to think that this one falls outside this date range.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Jane Russell for drawing the seal matrix.

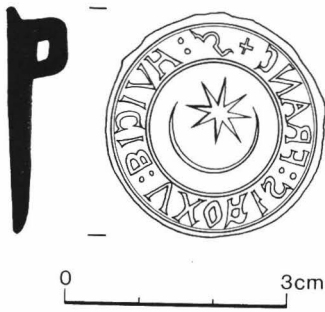


Fig. 1. Seal matrix from Tarring.

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A 7th-century gilt-bronze mount from East Preston, West Sussex

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In late 1992 Mr F. Salvia uncovered a gilt-bronze mount in his garden at Saxon Close, East Preston (TQ076031). He took the mount to Worthing Museum for identification. It was later bought by the Museum and given the Accession number 1993/32.

The mount (Fig. 1) is circular, 37 mm in diameter and 3 mm thick. It is made of bronze and the surface has been gilded. Some of the gilding has been damaged. The body of the mount



Fig. 1. 7th-century mount from East Preston.

is covered with Style II ornament. There is a white paste setting in the centre of the disc. This would originally have enclosed a garnet or piece of glass which is, unfortunately, missing. The main body of the mount is decorated with Style II interlaced animal ornament enclosed by two outer rings. The disc is pierced by two asymmetric pairs of holes. One pair is slightly larger than the other. They appear to be secondary, since they pierce the decoration. The back of the disc is plain, apart from a shallow, raised circle in the centre, which may be the remains of an attachment stud.

The mount was probably used to decorate a box or shield and the closest parallel to the decoration is on a gilt-bronze mount from Caenby, Lincs. (Speake 1980, fig. 10g & pl. 15j). This similarity reinforces the dating of the East Preston mount, on purely stylistic grounds, to the early 7th century. Saxon Close is only 2.5 km from the important Saxon cemetery site of Highdown, which went out of use in the late 6th century. The mount is especially interesting, since it is the first piece of early 7th-century metalwork to have been found in this part of West Sussex.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Linda Stiles for drawing the mount and Leslie Webster of the British Museum for help in dating it.

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A Mensa stone found at Rustington Parish Church

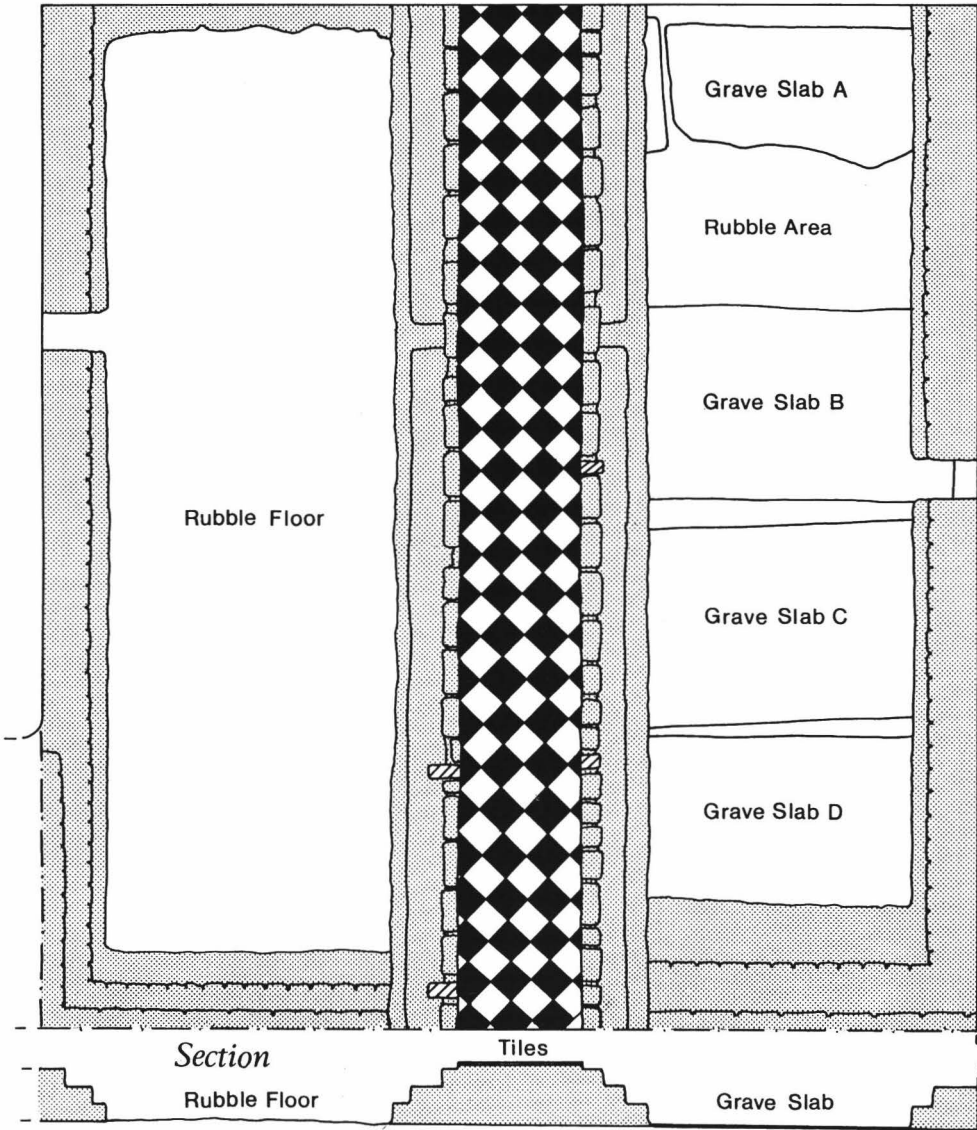
Jane Russell
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In January 1993 the Field Archaeology Unit (University College London) was commissioned by Rustington Parochial Church Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief. Masonry was removed for the purpose of investigating wet rot in the Lady Chapel and north transept of Rustington Parish Church. The parish church of Ss Peter and Paul is situated at the junction of Sea Lane and The Street in Rustington (TQ 051023).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Traces of a small stone-built church, thought to have been built soon after the Norman Conquest have been found, but are not now visible (Heynes 1983). The church was considerably enlarged in c. 1170, by the addition of a south aisle and a tower, and possibly the north aisle. In c. 1220 the side chapel was added to the north transept and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, now known as the Lady Chapel (cf. Peckham 1948). In 1861 the church was 'considerably restored' and it was at this time that the church floor was tiled throughout, including the centre of the chapel.

Lady Chapel Plan



-  Red and Black Victorian Floor Tiles
-  Dwarf Brick and Mortar Walls
-  Wood Blocks



Fig. 1. Plan of Lady Chapel, Rustington Parish Church.

Position of Grave Slabs & Mensa Stones

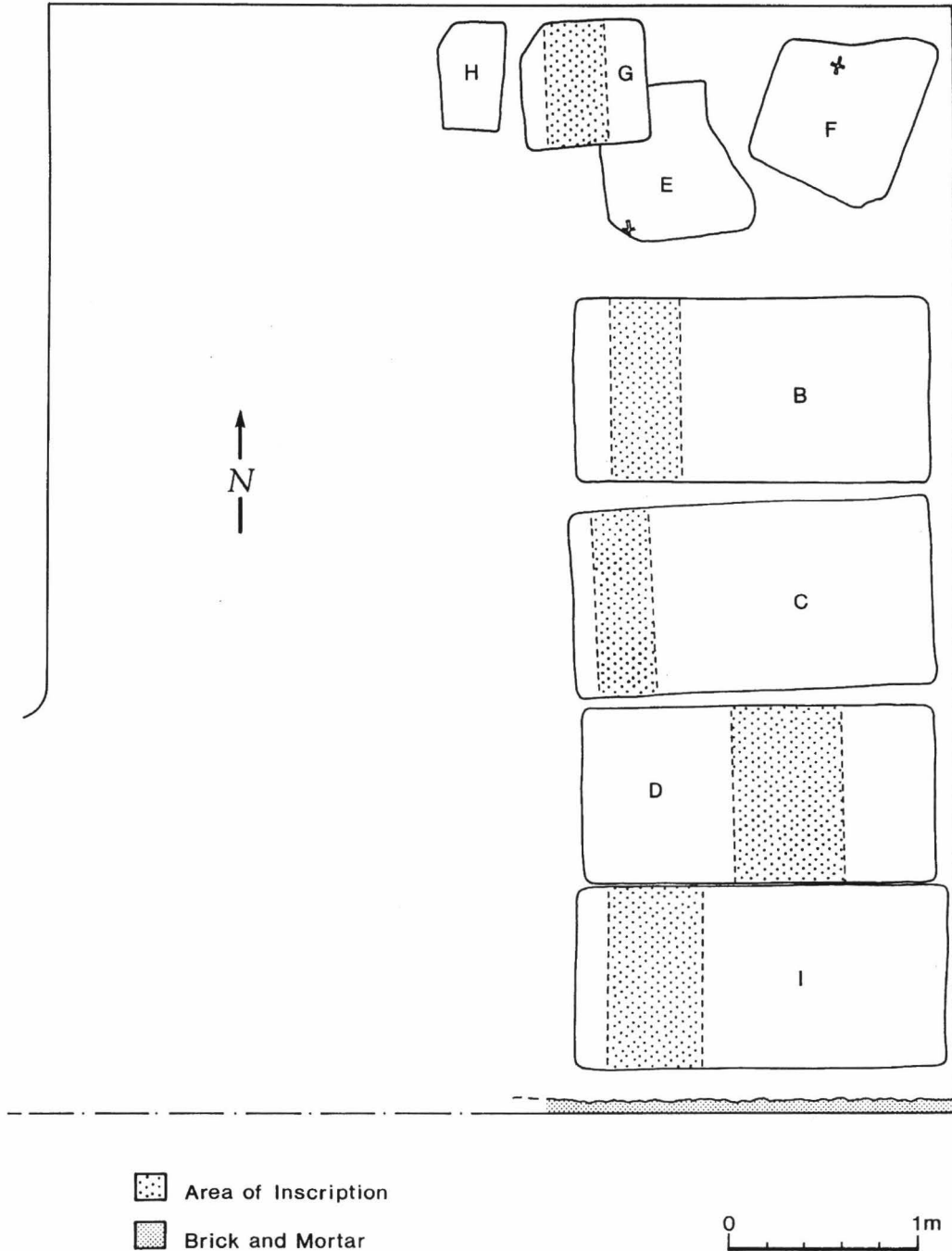


Fig. 2. Plan of location of grave slabs and *mensa* stone.

Slab J

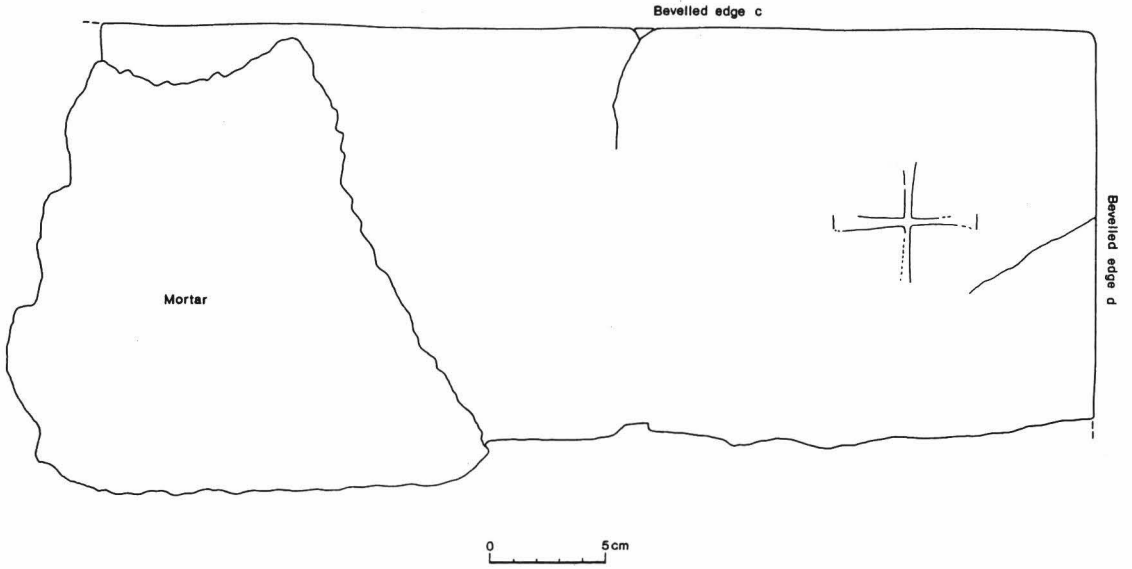
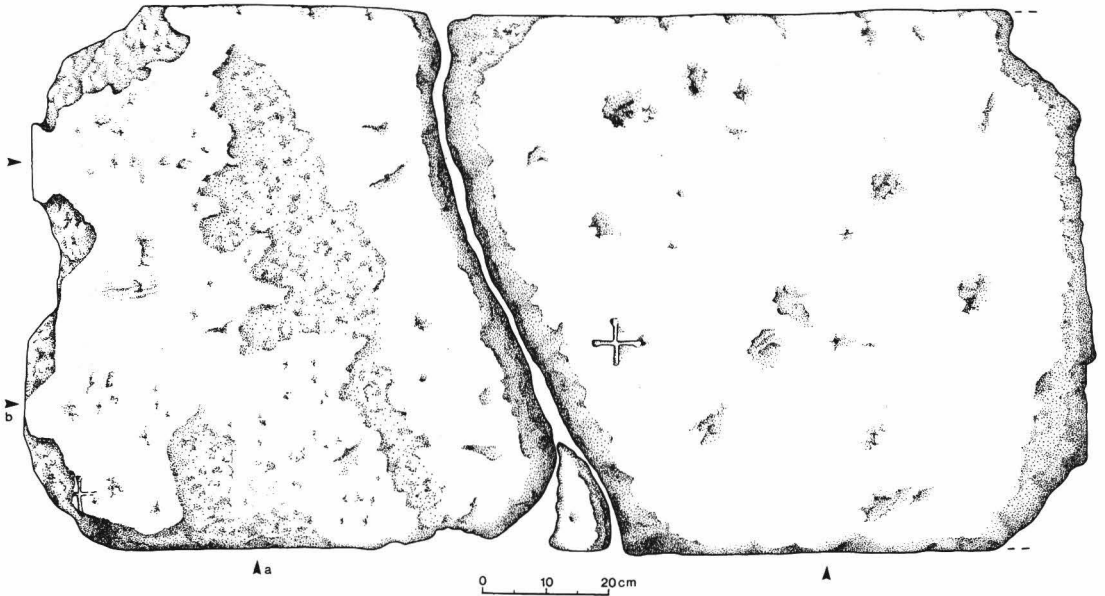


Fig. 3. Slabs E and F: the *mensa* stone.

The Mensa



▲ Bevelled edges

Fig. 4. Slab J.

Bevelled Edges

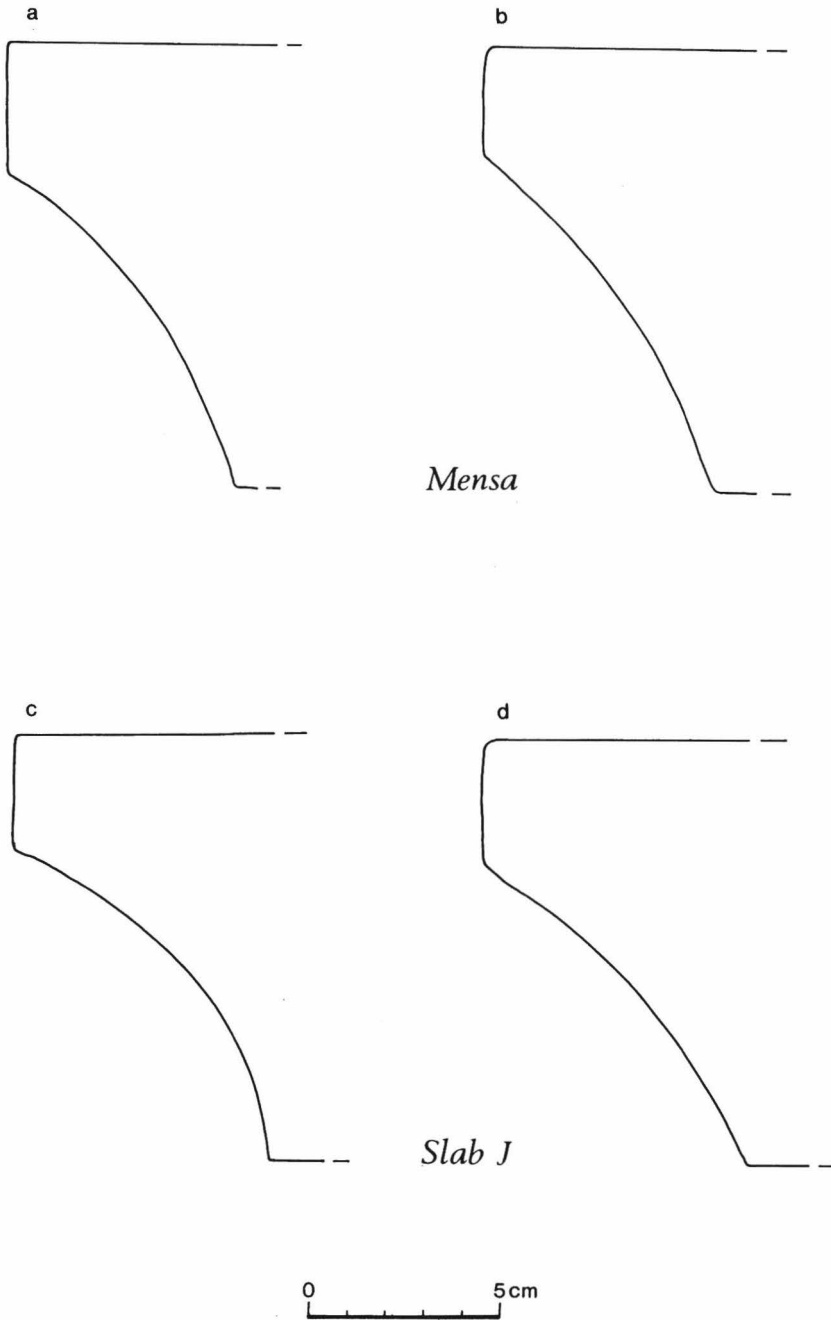


Fig. 5. Profiles of stones.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

The wooden floors which had been suspended between the dwarf walls at the sides of the Lady Chapel and the centre tiled aisle were removed, along with much of the rubble below the floor level. Nothing was revealed on the west side of the aisle, but five grave slabs were found on the east side. These were positioned in an east-west direction with the inscriptions on the western end, except for one which was inverted. (Fig. 1; slabs A, B, C, D & I). Two other broken fragments of grave slabs were also recovered (Fig. 2; slabs G & H).

A small area of redeposited building rubble in the north-east corner was sectioned to investigate whether the slabs had been laid as a foundation for the Victorian floor or were actually covering the tops of vaults. At a depth of 130 mm below the level of the top surface of the grave slabs another stone slab was found, lying at an angle, with the lower northern end beneath the grave slab positioned in the corner of the chapel. Further investigation of this area revealed a second similar slab, neither having a written inscription.

Careful probing beneath the corner grave slab indicated that a void existed, so it was decided to lift this slab. This revealed the full extent of the two similar slabs and it was noticed that both had bevelled edges and each one had a small inscribed cross on the top surface (Fig. 2; Slabs E & F).

When all the slabs had been removed, the top edges of two brick built vaults were found, one in the north-east and the other in the south-east corner.

THE GRAVE SLABS

From each grave slab it was possible to read the name of the person or persons buried, and in most cases the dates and years could be seen. There are a few discrepancies concerning the date recorded on some slabs and the dates recorded in the Parish Registers, but this is probably because Parish Registers tended to record baptisms and burials rather than births and deaths.

Slab A: This was broken down its length with about a third of the slab missing. The inscription refers to two sisters who died within 17 days of one another. Ann Wilson died 8th January 1792, aged 60 years, and Mary Jupp died 25th January 1792, aged 58 years. The Parish Register records the burials as the 15th and 29th respectively.

Slab B: Recorded the death of Edward Greene, Gent, senior, who died 25th July 1707, the Parish Register recorded the burial as 29th July.

Slab C: Edward Greene, gent, junior, (son of Greene senior) died 10th June 1704, the date in the Parish Register is recorded as 16th June.

Slab D: Anne, wife of Greene senior, died December. Unfortunately the inscription was badly eroded and other dates could not be read. The Parish Register records the death as 24th September 1713.

Slab G: This records the death of John and William Ashton, who were nephews of Ann Wilson and Mary Jupp (Slab A). Only one date is recorded in the Parish Register, that of 16th July 1751.

Slab I: John Greene, also son of Edward Greene, senior. He died 10th March, 1731, aged 68 years.

These families were all tenants of Manor Farm, leasing it from the Lord of the Manor for periods of 21 years. Their burial in the chapel of the church is indicative of their status.

THE MENSA STONE (Fig. 3)

It is thought that the two slabs (E & F), when placed together, represent the *mensa* or altar table used either in the church or the chapel up to the Reformation. It was recorded by Dr Carruthers Corfield (Church Warden 1940–61) that during the Reformation the original stone altar top was broken and buried somewhere within the church. These slabs do fit together despite being badly degraded by the damp conditions under the floor. Two sides have bevelled edges (Fig. 5) with the back edge being flat. The fourth edge is missing. On the surface in one corner is a small engraved cross, and approximately in the centre is another. This does indeed suggest that this could be the original *mensa* of the church. Generally, *mensa* had engraved crosses at each of the four corners and one in the centre. When placed together the two stones measure approximately 1.64 × 0.81 m.

A sample of the stone was taken to the Geological Department of Booth Museum, Brighton, where John Cooper identified it as Sussex Marble or small Paludina Limestone from the Weald Clay. The only presently known bed is at Burgess Hill, but there could have been others that have been worked out and lost to us today.

A third fragment (Slab J) was found and thought to be of a stone similar to that of the other two (Fig. 4). It had been positioned near to them, but was partially buried under the west wall of the chapel. The conditions here were drier than in the chapel itself so this piece had not been so degraded as the other two. The two bevelled edges meet at a corner with a cross engraved on the upper flat surface. This piece is obviously part of a larger slab and could possibly be the missing fourth side of the *mensa* stone.

Acknowledgements

The Field Archaeology Unit would like to thank the Rev. K. L. Masters, Mr Gordon Evans of Tunmore Builders, Mr Purser, Chartered Architect, and Mr John Mills, Assistant County Archaeologist for West Sussex, for their help throughout the archaeological investigations. Also thanks are due to John Cooper, Keeper of Geology, Booth Museum, Brighton, and to Bev and Mary Taylor for their historical information concerning the church and the families recorded on the grave slabs. The *Mensa* stone may be viewed with permission from the vicar, the Rev. K. L. Masters.

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