

Short articles

A stone head at Kingston-near-Lewes

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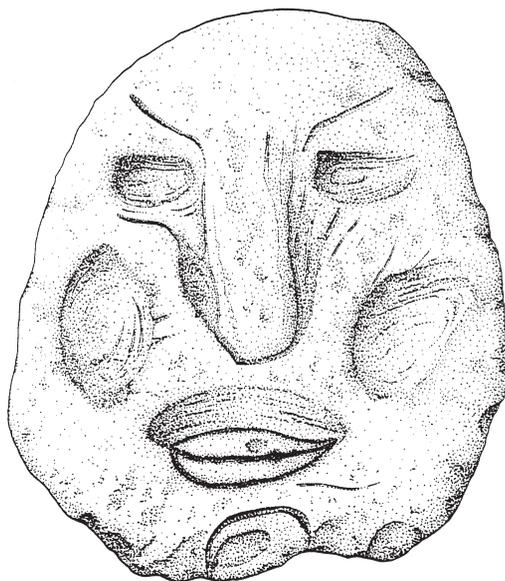
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For many years a stone head lay in a courtyard garden at Kingston-near-Lewes (TQ 392082). When examined by the authors on 25 June 2000, it was found to be fashioned from greensand, 205 mm wide, 242 mm long and 165 mm deep. The front face of the stone is weathered and there is a small, flattened area on top, as if it might have been part of a corbel table. There is a roughish patch towards the top of the head at the rear, perhaps indicating keying for mortar. The long nose descends from deeply angled eyebrow cuts. The eyes and cheeks are indicated by sunken hollows, and there are possibly vestiges of ears on either side. The mouth is pronounced, with a slight 'lift' of the left side of the upper lip.¹ The lips appear to be closed, but in a certain light also open and sneering.



0 5cm

Fig. 1. Stone head facial detail.

The origins of the head are not known, but the property was formerly the principal farmhouse, situated opposite the church of St. Pancras at Kingston-near-Lewes. During the 19th century, the farm was tenanted by Mr Hodson, who was also the churchwarden at the time when the church was badly damaged by a lightning strike. Restoration was completed by 1874, mostly funded by the Revd John Goring of Wiston, landowner of Kingston Farm. Various artefacts were removed from the damaged church at that time. If the crudely carved head was found there, it is possible that it was deemed no longer sufficiently refined for the restored church, and became a garden ornament. Whether the head is much older than the medieval church is a matter of conjecture. Dr. Anne Ross (pers. comm.) feels that the head '...would certainly seem to indicate a Celtic origin or, at least, to have been fashioned with the Celtic head-cult in mind...'

Acknowledgements

Line drawing by Jane Russell.

NOTE

- ¹ The left-sided lip lift is similar to that on a wooden head carved on the truss of a former open hall of a c. 1400 timber-framed house in Kingsclere, Hampshire. This was seen in September 2000 by members of the Wealden Buildings Study Group.

The excavation of a later Saxon privy at Norton in East Sussex

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INTRODUCTION

During the first season of the Society's Bishopstone Valley Project, six trial trenches were excavated to the rear of Norton Farm, Norton. These trenches were located in an area of standing earthworks long thought to be related to the medieval occupation of the hamlet. Of these only one, test pit E, which was located to investigate one of two cut terraces, yielded clearly stratified and datable material. All of this was Iron Age. The following season the author conducted a small area excavation around test pit E in order to ascertain more fully the nature of the newly discovered prehistoric site. As expected most of the features identified were Iron Age; two however were of Saxon date. The latter, along with a feature of possible Saxon date excavated with test pit E, are considered here.

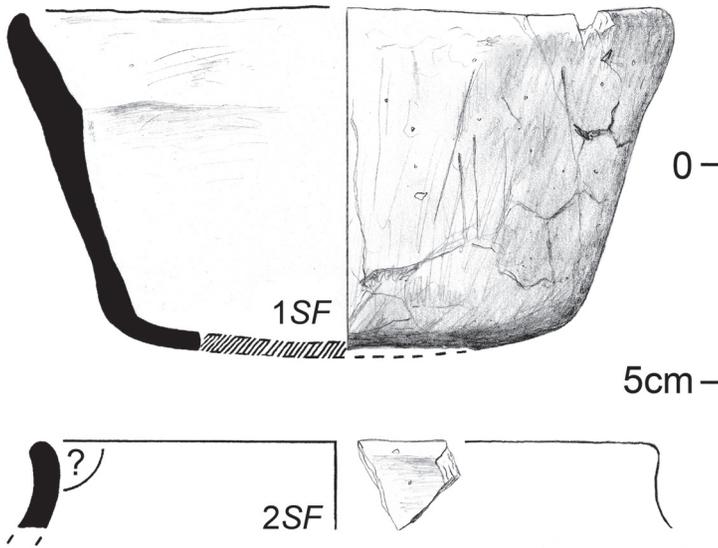


Fig. 1. Norton Farm. Saxon pottery from pit 15.

The relationships and the form of the last, pit 16, are less certain. It probably interfaced with Iron Age pits 1 and 13, it was believed to underlie a flinty layer which has since been confidently identified as Iron Age metallurgy, and all of the pottery from it is of Iron Age date (Table 1). However, it was close to, and of similar size as, pit 14; the level at which the relationship was identified was similar to that between pits 11/PP4 and 14; and it yielded oyster shell, which was absent from Iron Age features on site, and which bore traces of a viral condition associated with later periods (E. Somerville pers. comm.). Accordingly, it has been assigned to the Saxon period. Pit 16 had two fills, one comprising a flinty, yellow-brown clayey loam, the other a dark yellow-brown clayey silt mottled with dark brown. Saxon pottery was also recovered from the topsoil up-slope of the excavated features.

EXCAVATION

Among the seventeen pits investigated at Norton were two of Saxon date and one of possible Saxon date. All three were located on the Iron Age terrace, two in the area of the main excavation, and one within test pit E. The first, pit 14, cut the upper fill of Iron Age pit 11/PP4 (Seager Thomas 2004, fig. 7). Owing to soil development at the interface between these two features, their stratigraphic relationship was not recognized on excavation but is demonstrated by the finds from them, wholly Iron Age from pit 11/PP4 and Saxon from pit 14. Pit 14 was filled with green-grey silt. The second, pit 15, cut one of the upper fills of Iron Age pit 1, and was cut by a hollow way which demarcated the southwestern edge of the site (Seager Thomas 2004, fig. 6). It yielded a small Saxon bowl (Fig. 1). The sherds comprising this, most of which came from the upper half of the fill, were randomly orientated but concentrated horizontally. It also yielded a very corroded lump of poor quality (i.e. iron-rich) tap-slag. Pit 15's fill was indistinguishable from that of pit 14.

INTERPRETATION

Key to the interpretation of pits 14 and 15 are the colour of their fills, the similarity of these, and the distribution of the sherds comprising the Saxon bowl. The concentration of the latter horizontally, as opposed to vertically or on a slope, requires that they were dropped into a deposit with consistency of slurry, their passage through which perhaps determined their random orientation. Given that the deposit was green, the obvious mechanism for this is the cesspit. The close proximity of the two pits and the similarity between their fills indicates that they had a common function. The site was either a privy, or, less likely but supported by a lack of evidence for an associated structure, received excrement bucketed-out from a nearby settlement. The fills of pit 16 are quite different. Both were inhomogeneous and both contained earlier pottery. The best explanation for this is that it was dug through the features referred to above and back-filled with material from them. It is not possible to suggest a functional interpretation for it.

Table 1. Saxon pottery from Norton Farm.

Feature	Fill/layer	Pottery fabric			
		SF	F2	SFQ	Iron Age
		Number of sherds/weight in grams			
Topsoil (lower worm sorted horizon)	2/3	17/87	1/2	3/9	Not quantified
Pit 14	59	None	1/1	None	None
Pit 15	6	30/208	None	None	None
Topsoil/pit 15	2/6	None	1/2	None	None
Pit 16	E11	None	None	None	4/38
	E12	None	None	None	None

SAXON POTTERY

The site yielded 42 Saxon sherds weighing 307 grams (Table 1). These are distinguished from the Iron Age assemblage by their tempering and from a small, later medieval assemblage by their firing. Most belong to a small bowl (Figure 1:1). It is in a dark grey 'soot soaked' fabric, SF, which comprises around 10% coarse sand-size shell, flint and coloured quartz. Two other fabric types, F2 and SFQ, are



essentially variants of this. Fabric F2 contains no shell and fabric SFQ contains a small, unquantifiable proportion of quartz sand. A second vessel in fabric SF, a small everted-rim jar (Figure 1.2), is represented by a single rim sherd found immediately above the bowl.

The bowl, of which about 50% survived, is very crudely hand-made. From its undulating surface, it looks as if it was coil-built. Its interior was finger smeared and – prior to firing – its exterior was roughly scored. It is slightly worn and when found its interior surfaces were caked with charred organic material.

Owing to the poor quality of the archaeological record for this period, the dating of Saxon pottery locally is as much a process of elimination as anything else. Except for its internally bevelled rim, the form of which occurs in the earlier Saxon assemblage from Rookery Hill (Bell 1977, fig 101), the bowl has no obvious parallels, but the shelly, flint-tempered fabrics of the assemblage overall draws it towards the early medieval period. Because the form of the bowl and the ‘soot soaking’ the fabric comprising it are not characteristically Late Saxon, a Middle or later Saxon date is suggested for them. The same arguments apply to the everted-rim jar.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SITE

It is of course interesting to see how the pre-existing Iron Age landscape was used during the Saxon period; it is interesting to see a privy, ironworking and an unusual pottery vessel – all of which are very human and which bring us physically close to the people who lived and worked in Norton during the period. But they add nothing to our understanding of settlement in the valley. Interpretatively, what is important is the isolation of the excavated features. Although this might reflect their role, two things suggest a different interpretation. The first is the lack of evidence for an associated structure. While supporting the view that slops were bucketed out of the settlement, it raises the possibility that any structure associated with it left no trace, and if one structure left no trace, it is possible that others left no trace. The second is the many finds of Saxon pottery from the topsoil. These suggest activity in the immediate area. The implications of this for the visibility of Saxon settlement in the valley and the chronological attribution of Norton earthworks are considerable.

REFERENCES

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A moated site at Warren Farm, Hadlow Down, East Sussex (TQ:518225)

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INTRODUCTION

The moated site at Warren Farm comprises a substantial earthwork in a good state of preservation (Fig. 1). However, it is very poorly understood and documented. At the request of English Heritage and the landowner, the Archaeological Section at East Sussex County Council carried out a resistivity survey in March 2004 of the interior of the moat in an attempt to further our understanding of this site.

The site is situated upon a west-facing hill slope at 70 m O.D. The British Geological Survey (Sheet 303) records the underlying geology at the site as Ashdown Beds with patches of overlying Wadhurst Clay. However, a large outcrop of sandstone was noted during the survey to the south of the site. This unusual choice of location is probably influenced by the use of natural springs, evident on the south side, to feed the moat. This redirected stream probably drained from the south-western area of the moat, where there is evidence of a sluice.

The moated area comprises a slightly irregular sub-rectangular enclosure, approximately 52 m² in area (Fig. 2). The moat, now dry, is cut deepest on the south and east sides, to maintain a level with the lower north and west sides. The moat ranges in depth from 4 m on the south side to 1 m on the north side, and is generally 3 m wide around all of its circuit.

The interior of the site is relatively level, but rises slightly towards the central area. Initial inspection revealed no evidence of internal buildings or the original entrance area. A gap across the northern moat appears to be a modern entrance, an area that has suffered from erosion by cattle.

The resistivity survey was carried out using a RM 15 with data logger, by the author and Paul Clements on the 30 March 2004 during damp but sunny weather conditions. The survey was delimited by the moat, which was not surveyed. The results were processed using Geoplot 3.0.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Warren Farm lies within the parish of Hadlow Down, which was probably originally part of the parish of Mayfield. However, the closeness of the site to the parish of Buxted may make this parish another contender for ownership. The Mayfield entry in the Domesday Book reads:

The Count of Mortain holds Mesewelle himself. Godwin held it. Then and now for 4 hides. Land for 2 ploughs. They are there, with 4 villagers and 5 smallholders. In lordship 1 plough. From woodland 30 pigs. Value before 1066 £4; now 40s. Of this land, William de Warenne holds 3 virgates of land and 1 mill. (Morris 1976)

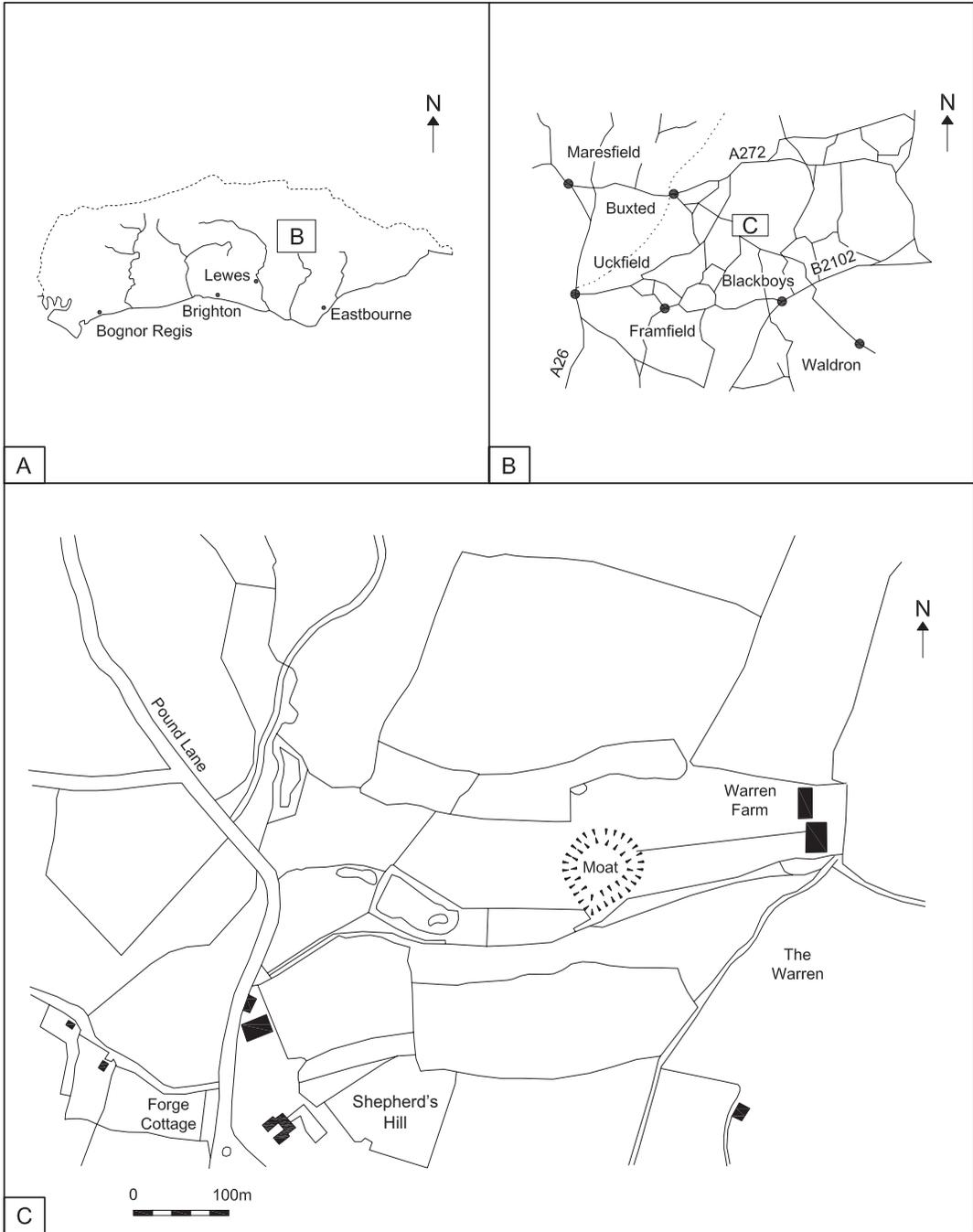


Fig. 1. Location.

Buxted is not mentioned by name, but may be the lost place-name of *Alchin* listed under the estate of the Archbishop of Canterbury and described as 'William of Keynes holds 1 virgate of this manor. It is at 'Alfihorne' (Morris 1976).

The place-name Hadlow Down derives from *Headda leah* (Headda's clearing) and is first recorded in 1254 as *Hadleg* and again in 1279 as *Haddelegh*. By 1333 'Down' had been added to describe the hill sloping to the Rother valley and the name



Fig. 2. Results.

continued as 'Hadley Down' as late as 1771, with the modern spelling being a recent corruption (Glover 1997).

The author was unable to locate any historical reference to the moated site at Warren Farm or any published record of archaeological investigation at the site, however, the landowner had in his possession a pamphlet on Hadlow Down (Barrett 1977) which makes reference to a trench having been dug across the site in 1930. This trench did not locate any stone structures, but did recover sherds of pottery,

identified at the time as of 13th-century date. One sherd is described as being green-glazed with a zigzag decoration. Unfortunately, there is no reference to the source of this information. There is also no evidence of a trench apparent on the resistivity results.

The only reference to the site, other than the East Sussex Historical Environment Record, is a general description in the *Victoria County History* (Salzman 1905), where the site name is given as Shepherd's Hill.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The resistivity survey proved successful in identifying a number of anomalies within the earthwork:

HIGH RESISTANCE ANOMALIES

(indicative of masonry and compacted surfaces)

1. Large anomaly orientated NE-SW, measuring c. 15 m by 5 m. This may represent the main hall of the complex.
 2. Area of medium to high resistance with no obvious form. This is in the area of the modern entrance to the site that has been eroded to form a hollow.
 3. Area of high resistance orientated E-W, measuring c. 10 m by 4 m. This is strongly indicative of a masonry building, possibly a chapel.
 4. Area of medium to high resistance orientated N-S and parallel with the eastern moat. Masonry was noted protruding from the turf in this area. This anomaly may represent an ancillary building such as a stable block.
 5. Very solid band of high resistance orientated NE-SW, measuring c. 10 m by 2 m. The anomaly starts at the edge of the eastern moat and probably represents a metalled surface connected to the original entrance into the site. Access across the moat may have been via a wooden bridge as there is no evidence of masonry piers in this very deep section of the moat.
 6. Small area of medium to high resistance with no obvious form. A scatter of roofing tile was noted in this area.
- There are also areas of very high resistance around the inner edge of the moat, possibly representing material dumped during its construction or modern tree roots.

It is also possible that anomalies 1, 3 and 6 represent one large structure such as a hall.

LOW RESISTANCE ANOMALIES

(indicative of pits and ditches)

- A. Small area of very low resistance in the centre of the site. This area is the location of a modern campfire area, which appears to have affected the readings.

CONCLUSION

The resistivity survey appears to have revealed at least three possible structures and the original entrance to the site; this, however, could only definitely be confirmed through excavation. Warren Farm moat is similar in size and shape to several other moated sites in East Sussex; very few of these have been archaeologically investigated.

What evidence we have suggests that the earlier (11th to 12th-century) moated sites contained a selection of buildings, including long halls, kitchens and stable blocks. These were usually located within the central area of the moated site. Depending upon the status of the site, buildings were constructed wholly of masonry, timber-framed resting on masonry walls or timber sleepers. However, by the 14th century, the internal layout of buildings was usually of a courtyard style, with masonry building ranges set against the curtain walls. The apparent layout of Warren Farm, with central locations of separate buildings, rather than a courtyard layout, suggests that it is of the earlier date and had been abandoned by the 14th century. This substantial moated site is clearly worthy of further investigation to establish conclusively its chronology and relationship within the landscape and medieval settlement pattern.

Acknowledgements

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