

# ◆ Fieldwalking at Duttle's Brow near Jevington, East Sussex

## PREHISTORIC TO ROMANO-BRITISH DOWNLAND OCCUPATION AND AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY

By Greg Chuter

*A fieldwalking project on the Downs at Duttle's Brow confirmed the location of finds made in the 1960s and produced evidence of settlement in the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods as well as evidence of Neolithic and Early Saxon activity.*

### INTRODUCTION

**D**uttle's Brow is a southwesterly-facing spur of Willingdon Hill, which is located on the highest point of the Eastbourne block of the South Downs ridgeway (Fig. 1). The brow is an elongated ridge, bordered on its northwest by a large and wide dry valley called Oxendean and on its southeastern side by a shallow dry valley called Duttle's Bottom, which runs into Oxendean and separates the brow from the main ridgeway. The brow joins the main southerly spur of Willingdon Hill at 150 m OD, and the valley floor of Oxendean at 60 m OD.

The British Geological Survey (Sheet 334) records the solid geology of the area as flint-bearing Middle and Upper Chalk, with Lower Chalk outcropping on the northern scarp face of the Downs. Patches of Quaternary deposits, comprising Clay-with-Flints and Coombe Rock, overlie the higher elevations. The major valley floors are shown as 'valley gravels', a term that includes both Pleistocene and Postglacial sediments.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site was first recorded and fieldwalked, between 1963 and 1969, by Mrs E. Gibbs and her colleagues, who recorded two separate pottery concentrations named Site 1 and Site 2, as well as other associated features, which have been given names here for ease of reference.

### SUMMARY OF MRS GIBBS'S OBSERVATIONS

The site had lain fallow for many years and had only been ploughed for about five years. The two

pottery concentrations were discernible as patches of dark earth and large flints which the farmer had had difficulty in ploughing. These concentrations were linked by a trackway running up the spur and visible as a dark linear soil mark.

#### Site 1

This area lay just below the 120 m OD contour, It spread slightly down the west side of the brow and stopped at the trackway. Midden-like scatters of marine shells were recorded amongst the pottery. On the southern edge of the concentration a ditch running northeastward from the track and ending at a steep lynchet was recorded.

#### Site 1b

Further up the spur on flat ground to the northeast of site 1 were four or five slight depressions overlain by shallow soil which contained concentrations of large flints mixed with 'crumbly white flinted sherds' and large fire-fractured-flints. Two triangular clay loom-weights (now housed at the Barbican House Museum, Lewes) and quern stones were also recovered from one of these areas. These depressions may have been the last vestiges of hut platforms.

#### Site 2

This area spread slightly down the east side of the spur into Duttle's Bottom and was located just above the 90 m OD contour. Two possible hut platforms consisting of slight depressions with flat bases were visible within the concentration area, as was a patch of slag mixed with charcoal and a midden concentration of marine shells c. 0.8 m in diameter. A ditch running from the trackway to the bottom corner of the scatter was recorded.

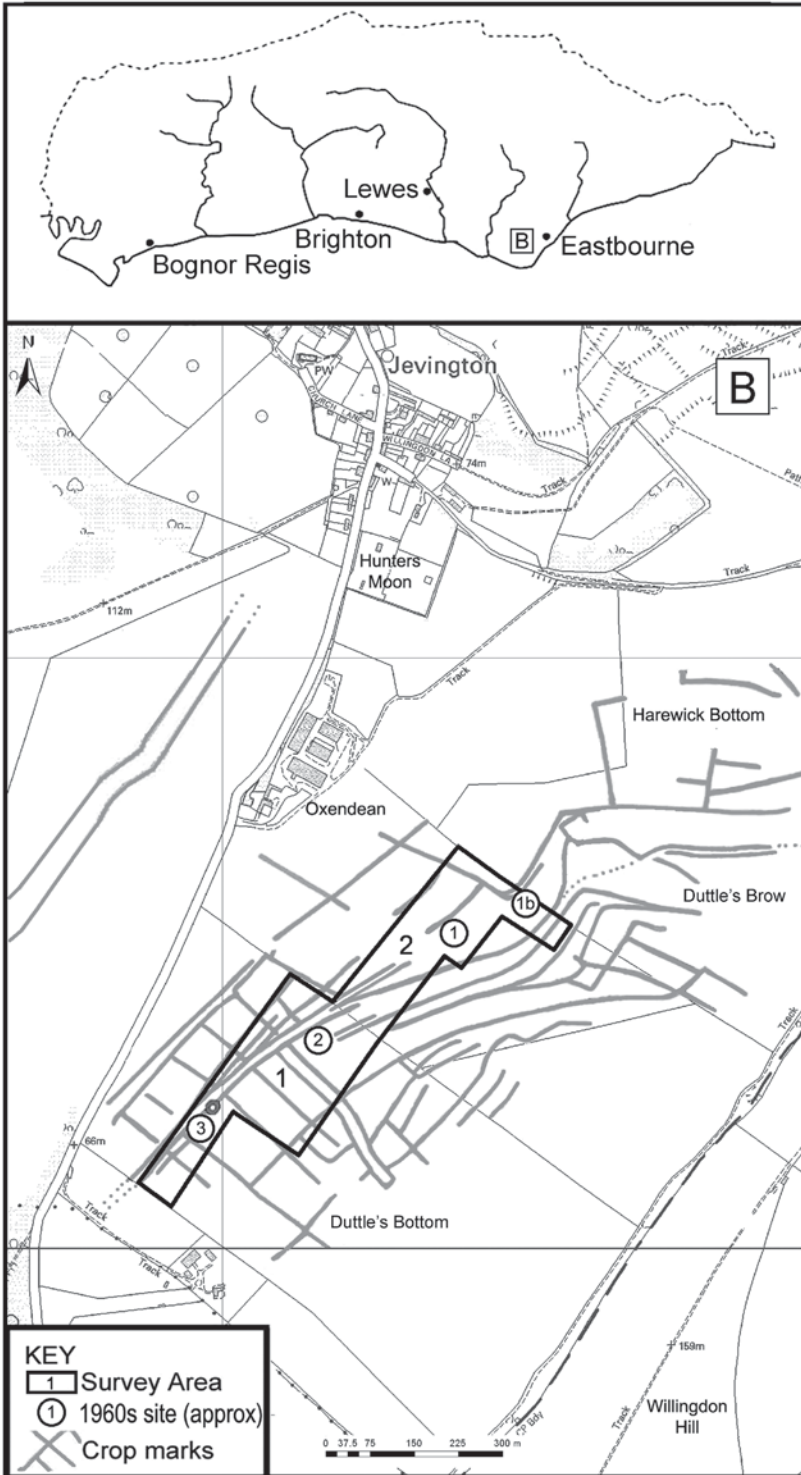


Fig. 1. Site location and crop marks.

### Site 3

Further down the hill to the east of the trackway, just below the 90 m OD contour, the partial skeleton of a young female was found in the most southerly of three low triangular-shaped mounds. The area is described as being covered with 'huge quantities of large flints', possibly from the core of three barrows which were rapidly being levelled by ploughing in the 1960s. Air photographs (held by ESCC) show a possible round barrow at this position, but the angular description of the mounds suggests that they may be the corners of lynchet plots terminating alongside the trackway. A small quantity of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery sherds including Samian ware was also recovered from this area of the field.

Gibbs recovered small quantities of pottery sherds from outside the main concentrations, as well as a fragment of a flaked flint axe.

Finds of a similar date in the Lewes and Eastbourne museums labelled 'Willingdon Hill' and 'Jevington' such as a copper-alloy twisted wire bracelet (Barbican House acquisition number 44.19), and an Iron Age silver unit with opposing heads from 'Jevington' recorded in a London sale catalogue, may well have come from Duttle's Brow.

The 1960s finds were never published and were eventually archived in the East Sussex County Council stores, along with some very brief field notes. The site appears to have been forgotten until 1990, when the writer recorded pottery scatters on the hill during a rapid walkover survey of the area. Enquires were made with local metal-detectorists, Jim Parks and Dave Wootten, which revealed that

a large number of finds had been recovered from the site over the previous ten years. Much of this material has now been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme and is summarized in this report. Both metal-detectorists were subsequently involved in later phases of this survey project. There is also evidence that the site had been heavily detected prior to Jim Parks' and Dave Wootten's research, but unfortunately none of this material has been made available for recording and is assumed lost.

A study of aerial data held by the East Sussex Historical Environment Record confirmed that the site lies at the top of a double lynchet trackway, which leads down the brow. This trackway appears to continue south through Butcher's Hole Bottom, possibly on to West Dean and to access to the River Cuckmere. A well-defined field-system, possibly extending to the probable Romano-British farmstead on Bourne Hill is also visible on Duttle's Brow (Fig. 1).

Since Duttle's Brow, after 40 years of plough damage, was to revert once again to pasture, it was decided to carry out an artefact collection survey, in order to try and understand the nature, layout and date of the site. The first stage of this project took place in October 2003, with fieldwalking, metal-detecting and earthwork surveys on Field 1 at the southern end of the brow (TQ 560004). Stage 2 took place in March 2004 with a survey of the next field to the north (TQ 560002). Both fields were divided into 20 m grids targeting the top of the brow. Each grid was subject to a total collection strategy carried out by four fieldwalkers per grid.

## THE FINDS

Although a large assemblage of finds survive from the 1960s fieldwork, most are unprovenanced and thus provide only an overall picture of the site. This report will concentrate on the 2003–2004 survey finds. However, reference to some of the more important finds from the 1960s archive as well as to the metal-detectorist collections will be made where deemed beneficial.

### THE FLINTWORK (Figs 2 & 3)

A total of 303 humanly-struck flints and 2858 fire-fractured flints were recovered during the 2003–2004 surveys. All are patinated white and are typical of the chalk Downs.

The majority of the struck flint was knapping debitage, typically hard hammer-struck flakes representing the dressing of or the cortex removal from flint blocks in preparation for tool production.

This flintwork assemblage is typically late Bronze Age, with the exception of one Neolithic polished flint axe blade

Table 1. Flintwork summary.

	Field 1	Field 2	Total
<b>Debitage</b>			
Cortex waste	74	39	<b>113</b>
Flakes	51	103	<b>154</b>
Cores	3	2	<b>5</b>
<b>Implements</b>			
Blades	6	1	<b>7</b>
Retouched flake	1	2	<b>3</b>
Scrapers	11	8	<b>19</b>
Fabricator		1	<b>1</b>
Polished axe		1	<b>1</b>
Fire-fractured flints	41	2817	<b>2858</b>

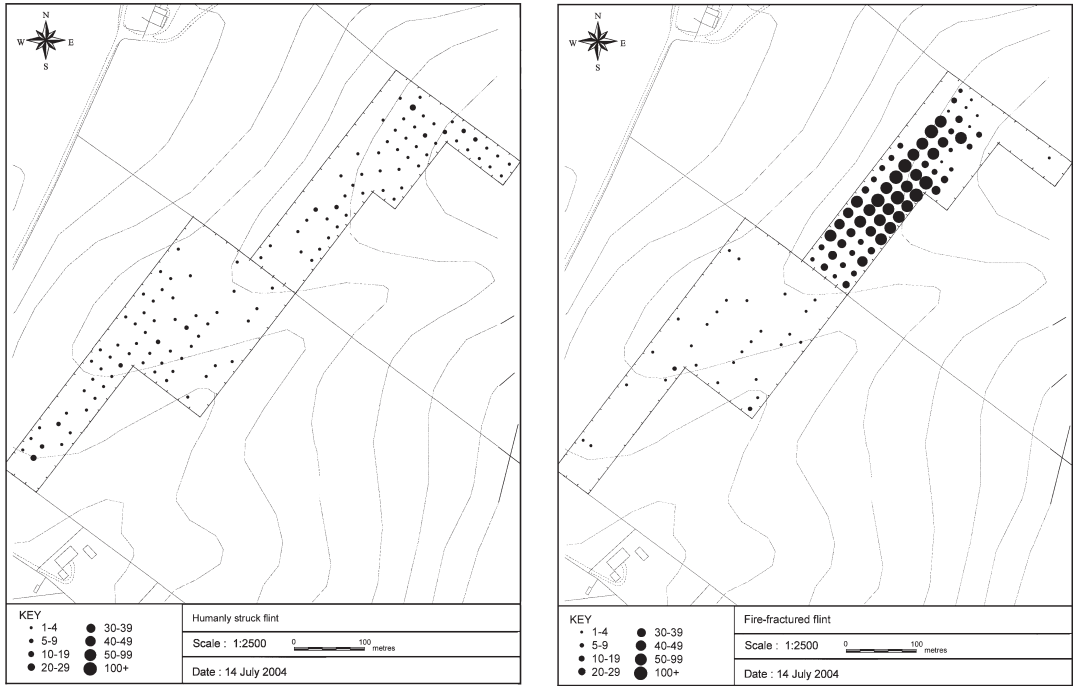


Fig. 2. Distribution of humanly-struck and fire-fractured flint.

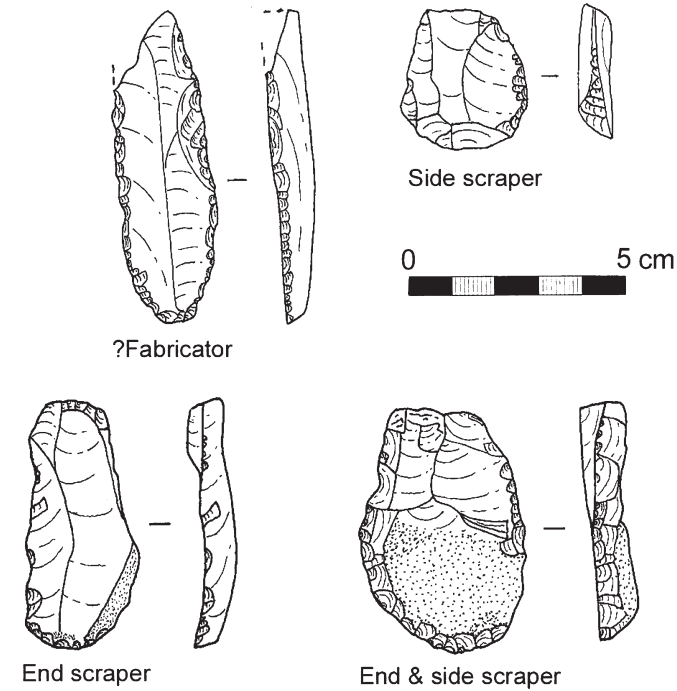


Figure 3. Flint finds.

found in 2004 and the flaked flint axe found in the 1960s. These axes would appear to be stray finds perhaps lost during initial vegetation clearance of this area. The late Bronze Age tool assemblage is dominated by scrapers; possibly suggesting that hide preparation was being carried out on site although this type of tool may have been used for many other activities.

The large quantity of fire-fractured flint, especially from Field 2, suggests occupation in this area and its association with concentrations of prehistoric pottery suggest that it is of Bronze Age rather than Romano-British date. A relatively small number of tools were recovered, but a large quantity of debitage was spread over both fields, with slightly more at the north end of Field 2.

### THE POTTERY (Fig. 4)

The survey recovered 4313 sherds of pottery and the 1960s archive contains a similar quantity. The majority of the sherds are abraded; this damage is likely to have been caused by modern ploughing, as those from the 1960s are notably fresher. The pottery can be divided into 13 main fabrics and a selection of the more diagnostic sherds is shown in Figure 4.

#### Fabrics

**P1:** A handmade, well-fired fabric with corky fractures. It contains a moderate amount (15–20% density) of angular calcined flint (1–2 mm) temper including occasional chalk and polished quartz (max. 1 mm) inclusions. The matrix has a cream/buff to red/brown exterior and an unoxidized grey/black core. Average sherd thickness is 4–6 mm. This fabric is similar to Bishopstone Bronze Age/Iron Age fabric 1a (Bell 1977, 88–9).

**P2:** A handmade, well-fired fabric containing a moderate amount of angular flint (0.5–2 mm) and occasional polished quartz (< 0.5 mm). The matrix has red oxidized outer surfaces and a reduced grey/black core and interior surface. The average sherd thickness is 7 mm. This fabric is similar to Bishopstone Bronze Age/Iron Age fabric 1b (Bell 1977, 88–9).

**P3:** A handmade, well-fired fabric, containing a moderate amount of angular flint (0.5 mm max.) and polished quartz (0.5 mm max.). The matrix is oxidized orange/red throughout. Average sherd thickness is 8 mm.

**RB1:** East Sussex Ware. The largest ceramic category at Duttle's Brow consists of this grog-tempered fabric. It is notoriously common in East Sussex in artefact collections dating to the Late Iron Age and the end of the Roman period (Green 1980).

**RB2:** (East Sussex Ware variant) A handmade, well-fired fabric with mainly grog inclusions but also including angular flint (1 mm max.) and fine polished quartz and ironstone (0.5 mm max.).

**RB3:** A well-fired, wheel-turned grey ware. The fabric contains occasional polished quartz (0.5 mm max.) and polished ironstone inclusions (0.5 mm max.). The matrix is grey throughout and the average sherd thickness is 5 mm. This 'Grey Ware' was most likely produced at Arlington (Holden 1979) or possibly further afield at the Wickham Barn kilns (Butler & Lyne 2001).

**RB4:** A ware tempered with fine sand with few ironstone inclusions (0.5 mm max.). The fabric is well-fired with jagged breaks. The matrix varies from red to buff/brown to grey/black throughout, sometimes with blackened exterior surface.

**RB5:** Porchester D-type fabric (Tyres 1994). A well-fired fabric tempered with common quartz sand and occasional polished ironstone inclusions (< 1 mm).

**RB6:** A fine, red micaceous ware. A well-fired fabric with sparse polished quartz inclusions (0.5 mm max.). The matrix has a red/orange oxidized exterior with an unoxidized grey core. This fabric is known as Hardham/Pulborough micaceous ware (Bell 1977, 154), and was produced in the late first to early second centuries.

**RB7:** Thundersbarrow ware. A handmade, thick, grog-tempered fabric resembling a ceramic concrete and known only in very large storage jar forms. The matrix is orange-brown containing common grog, calcined flint, ironstone and chalk particles, all ranging in size from 1–5 mm. This ware is generally accepted as being later Roman in date and owing to the size of the pots is likely to have been made at Duttle's Brow either by the inhabitants or by itinerant potters.

**RB8:** Oxfordshire colour-coated ware (Tyres 1994). A widely distributed fineware common on late Roman sites.

**RB9:** Colchester colour-coated ware (Tyres 1994). A fineware frequently found as flagons and beakers in production from the early second to later third century.

**RB10:** Gaulish Samian Ware: the typical Roman tableware (Tyres 1994).

The distribution of the different pottery fabrics reveals two distinct concentrations, one in each of the two fields surveyed.

The prehistoric pottery, although not as common as the Roman wares, is concentrated in Field 2 (Fig. 5a), corresponding to the fire-fractured flint concentration. This suggests occupation in this area, which may relate to the hut platforms and triangular loom-weight finds recorded in the 1960s.

The largest part of the assemblage comprised Romano-British East Sussex Ware which was concentrated heavily in Field 2, moderately in Field 1, and occurred as a low scatter over the rest of the surveyed area (Fig. 5b). The concentration in Field 2 may relate to the hut platforms and finds recorded in this area in the 1960s.

The terra sigillata corresponded with the East Sussex Ware concentrations (Fig. 5c). The grey ware and later Roman wares, however, were concentrated in Field 1, with very few sherds from the Field 2 concentration or from the remainder of the survey area (Fig. 5d).

### THE CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

The survey recovered 444 fragments of Roman ceramic building material, roughly two thirds of which was recovered from Field 2. The 1960s archive contains approximately 1000 fragments. As with the pottery distribution this material forms two distinct concentrations (Fig. 6a), with the concentration in Field 2 containing two sub-concentrations.

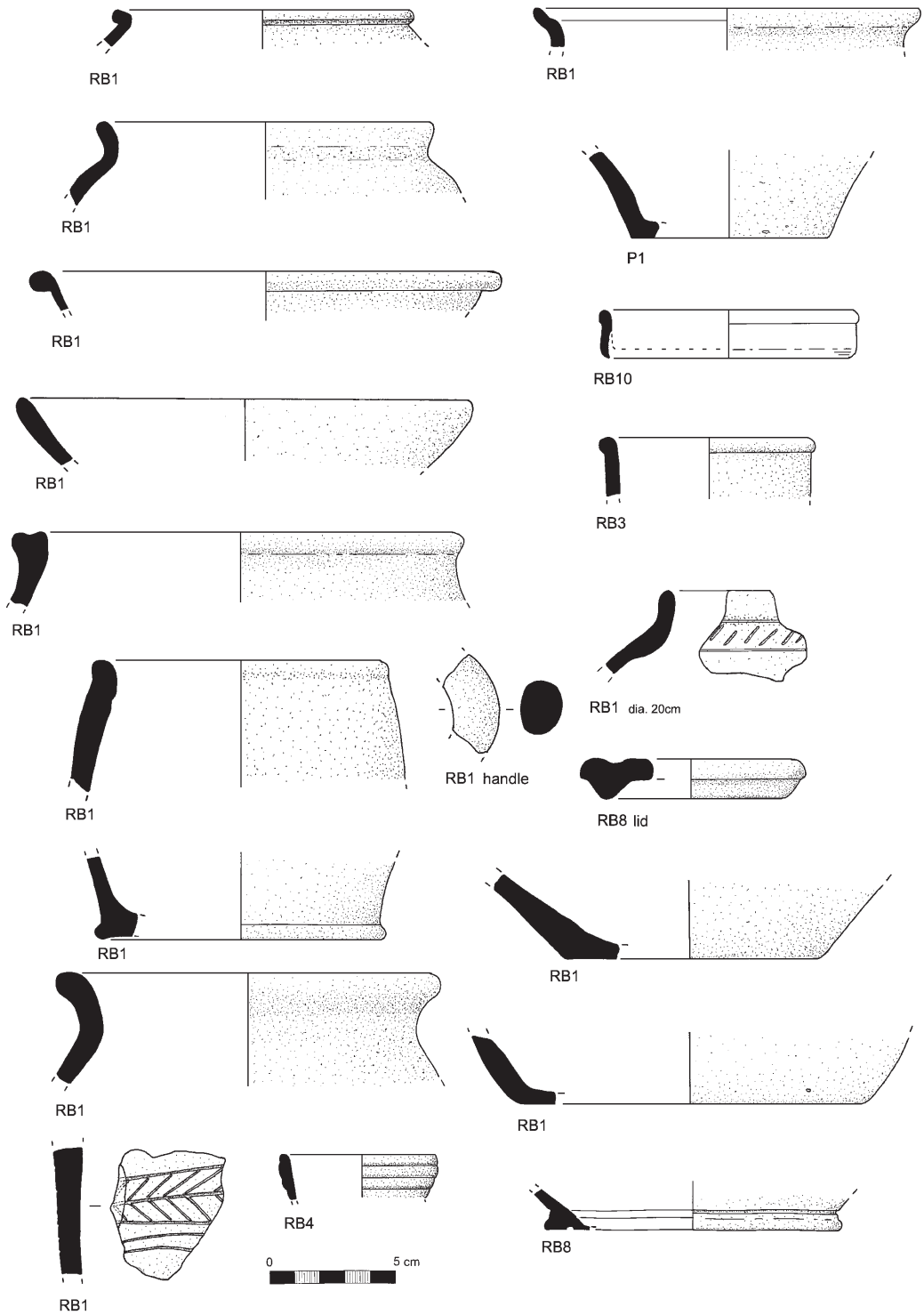


Fig. 4. Pottery (unstratified feature sherds by fabric).



Fig. 5. Pottery fabric distribution (late Bronze Age and Romano-British).



Fig. 6. a) Ceramic building material; b) non-ferrous metal artefacts (approximate locations).

The majority of the material comprised tegulae roof tile with an oxidized orange-red matrix with grey core. The assemblage also contained two fragments of tile with lozenge comb decoration, one produced by die 21 (Betts *et al.* 1997) and are both of a late first- to early second-century date. This quantity of roof tile strongly suggests that a building of some substance existed on the site.

#### FOREIGN STONE

Several fragments of non-local stone were recovered. At least one, a coarse hard sandstone, may be a quern fragment. Another large dressed sandstone block has been identified as a Neolithic axe sharpening stone or *polissoir*.

#### GLASS

Several fragments of glass were recovered, the majority of which are likely to be of nineteenth- to twentieth-century date. Only one piece is definitely identifiable as Roman in date and is a square bottle base with squared corners in a light blue colour, recovered from Field 1. The 1960s archive contains a number of fragments of potential Roman glass.

#### ANIMAL BONE

The survey recovered a very small quantity of animal bone. As the site shows no/little evidence of post-Roman activity, it is likely these remains are contemporary with the datable artefacts recovered. The 1960s archive contains a larger quantity of animal bone. Cattle, sheep, dog and horse are all represented.

#### METAL ARTEFACTS

As part of the fieldwalking survey, local metal-detectorists carried out a gridded survey, as well as a rapid sweep outside the survey area (Fig. 6b). This recovered a number of metal artefacts, the majority of which were Roman in date, the remainder being of the nineteenth to twentieth century. The latter are not recorded in this report. As discussed, metal-detectorists Dave Wootten and Jim Parks had recovered a vast quantity of material from this site over many years and had responsibly made this material available to the Portable Antiquities Scheme for recording.

The coin assemblage, especially those recovered by the metal-detectorists, provides a good indication of late Iron Age as well as Romano-British activity on the site (Fig. 7). Large assemblages are rarely recovered from 'native' farmsteads and the Duttle's Brow Iron Age coin assemblage, which is large compared to any from other East Sussex sites, e.g. Bullock Down (Drewett 1982), possibly indicates that this was an important or high-status site prior to the Roman invasion. A number of Roman Republican coins suggest contact with Europe prior to the invasion, although these may have been in circulation and dropped after AD 43. The native coins are predominantly associated with the Atrebates and Canti tribes, only a single Trinovante coin is present. Two coins are fairly rare: they bear two opposing human faces on the obverse and a horse on the reverse. To date only 15 of these coins have been recorded in England (Portable Antiquities and Celtic Coin Index data bases), and their distribution so far is on Downland sites between the River Ouse and Eastbourne in East Sussex



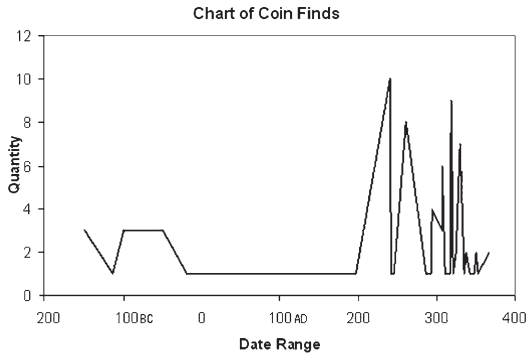


Fig. 7. Coin assemblage date range.

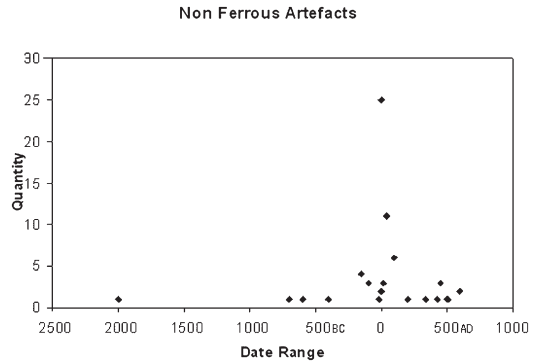


Fig. 8. The date range of the non-ferrous metalwork assemblage.

and coastal sites such as Dover and Gravesend in eastern Kent. It is possible that this type of coin was minted by a minor tribe based in East Sussex and traded along the Kent coast. The recovery of at least two, but possibly three of these coins from Duttle's Brow again indicates the importance of this site and its occupants in the local Iron Age community.

The Roman assemblage is low and constant for the first and second centuries AD, but rapidly increases for the third and early fourth centuries, culminating in a coin of the Emperor Gratian (AD 367–383). The lack of early fifth-century coins either indicates the abandonment of the site or the decline of a monetary economy.

The metalwork assemblage recovered by the metal-detectorists (Figs 8 & 9), of which 70 pieces have so far been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, ranges in date from the early Bronze Age to the post-medieval period. The bulk of the assemblage does, however, date to the late Iron Age, Romano-British and Early Saxon periods.

The Early Bronze Age axe-chisel (Fig. 9), along with the Neolithic axes, is likely to be associated with the initial clearance of the landscape in advance of farming. The Iron Age assemblage includes a sixth- to seventh-century BC Halstatt-style brooch (Fig. 9), which so far is the only evidence of mid-

Iron Age activity on the brow. By the Late Iron Age, a number of brooches, as well as bridle fittings were being deposited; these artefacts, alongside the Iron Age coins and the East Sussex Ware pottery (arguably appearing in the first century BC) strongly suggest a definite settlement of the brow.

Unlike the Roman coin date-range distribution, the Roman-period brooches are most concentrated in quantity at the beginning of the Roman interlude, with only a single fourth-century crossbow brooch representing the later Roman period. This distribution may suggest a fairly affluent community living here after the Roman invasion which had, by the end of the Roman period, become fairly impoverished.

A number of interesting artefacts from the Early Saxon period, including a great square-headed brooch, two face-mask button brooches and a number of other clothing accessories, all recovered from a confined area of the brow, strongly suggests that a small inhumation cemetery was focused on the site of the abandoned Romano-British settlement. These burials may have been made by a community living at the location of the present village of Jevington and perhaps the choice of location was made out of respect to their ancestors who lived on Duttle's Brow.

## DISCUSSION

The survey proved successful in identifying the locations of the two concentrations recorded in the 1960s and a detailed examination of this archive will definitely add to the story of this site. Examination of the fieldwalking finds has shown activity on the site in the Neolithic and Early Saxon periods, with probable occupation from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age through to the end of the Roman period and evidence of shifting settlement (Fig. 10).

This occupation is located within a large field-system, accessed by a double lynchet trackway which runs the breadth of the brow. The field-

system radiates from this track-way and therefore is likely to be contemporary. The Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age occupation lies adjacent to this trackway (in Field 2), so it is therefore likely that the trackway and field-system were constructed at this date and expanded in later periods. The artefact concentrations from the Late Bronze Age are likely to represent the last vestiges of a small, single-unit farmstead, typical of Downland farmsteads from this period such as Itford Hill (Burstow & Holleyman 1957).

The Late Iron Age and Early Romano-British occupation overlay the area of the earlier occupation, but there appears to have been an apparent break in occupation, as Mid-Iron Age

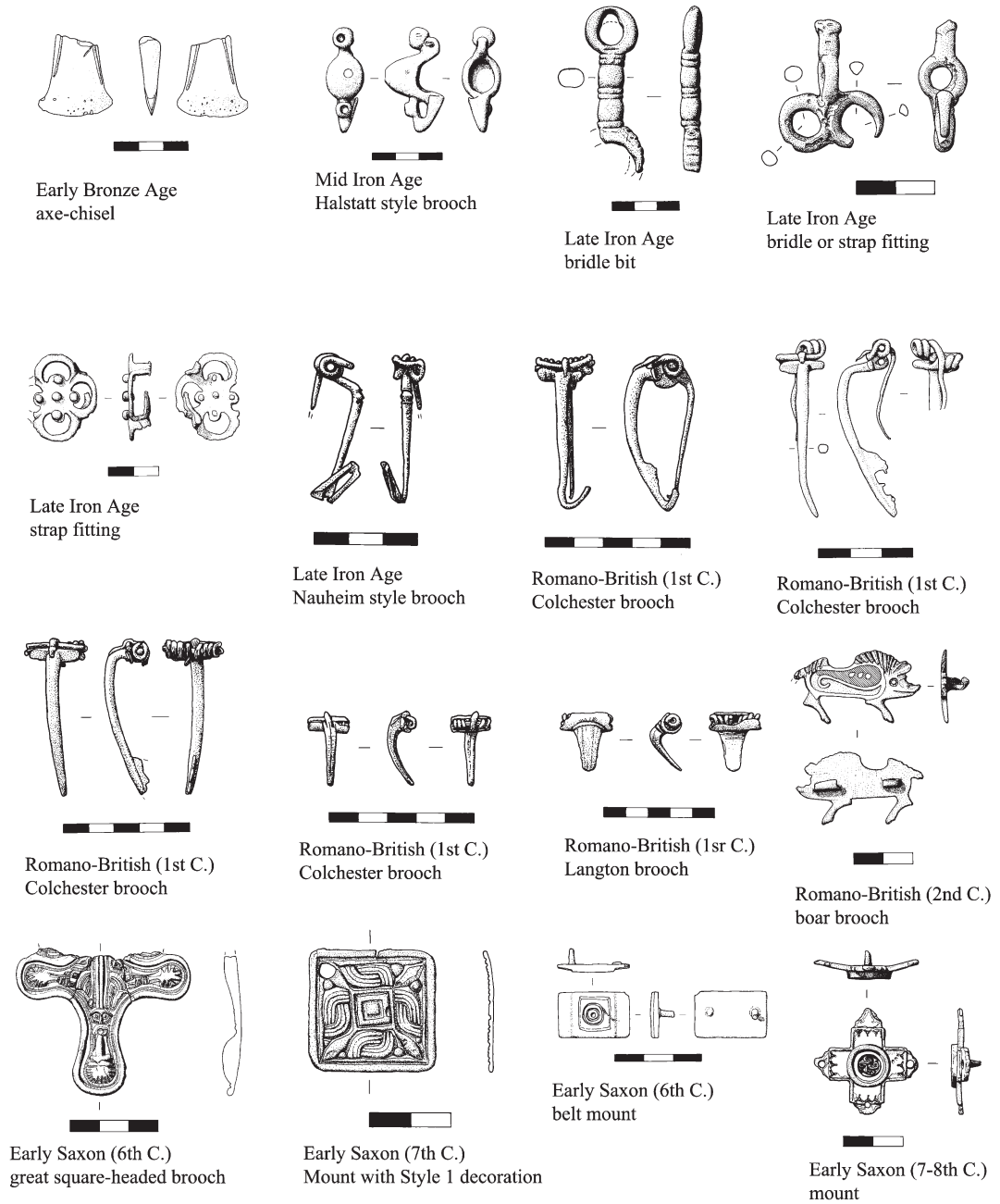


Fig. 9. Selected examples from non-ferrous metalwork assemblage. (Illustrations courtesy of the P.A.S., illustrated by Dominic Andrews)

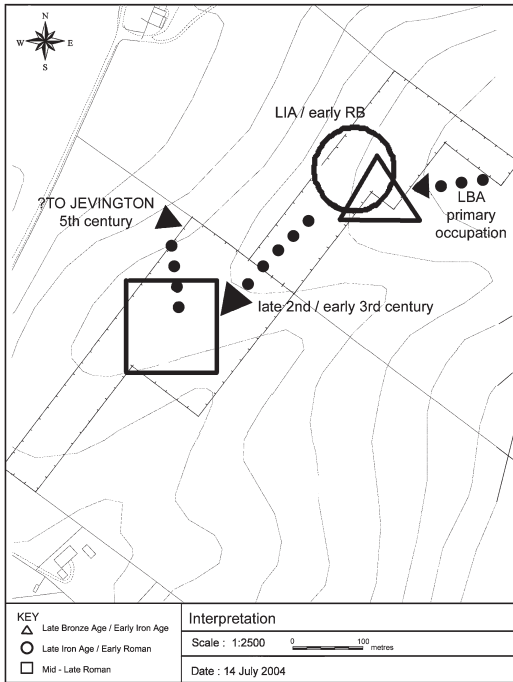


Fig. 10 Interpretation.

material is lacking from the assemblage. Again, this occupation is likely to have been in the form of a single-unit farmstead, which on the evidence of the roof tile and imported Samian pottery became Romanized by at least the first century. The farmstead appears to have had a mixed economy, both arable and pastoral. The large field-system and the finding of quern stones show that cereal crops were being grown. Animal bones recovered, along with the loom-weights found in the 1960s, show that sheep and cattle were being reared, dogs and horses were kept and textiles made. Another source of food is indicated by the limpet shells in the 1960s archive.

In the late second- to early third-century occupation appears to have migrated southwards along the brow (to Field 1), with the primary site possibly abandoned.

The pottery and coins indicate that this new site continued to be occupied into the fourth century, but was presumably abandoned by the fifth century. Focus for settlement is likely to have shifted to the area of the village of Jevington, which certainly has evidence of occupation in the Mid-Saxon period (East Sussex Historical Environment

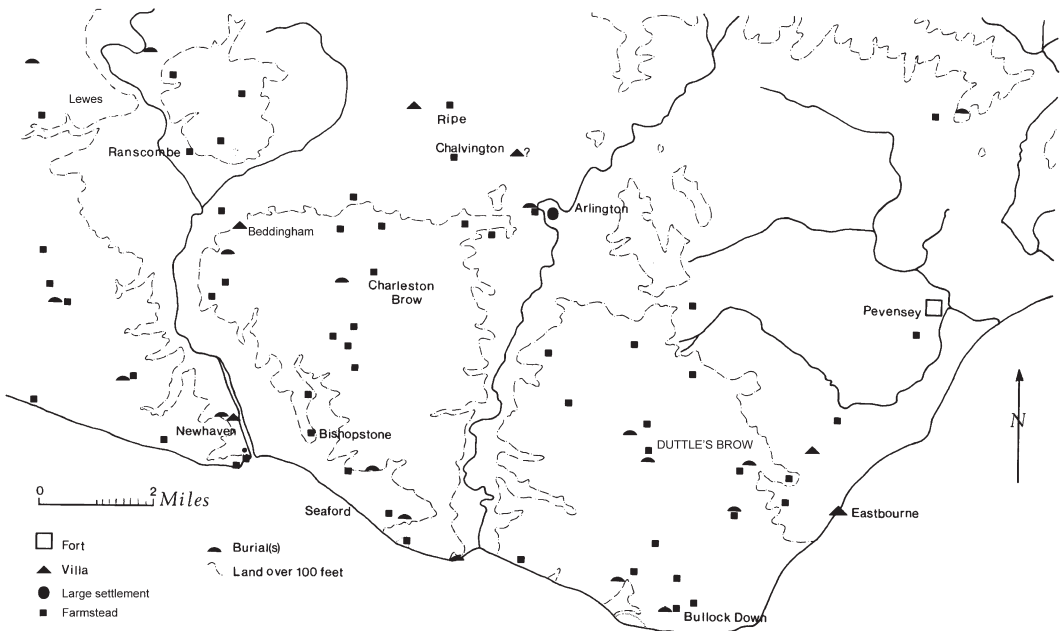


Fig. 11. Romano-British sites between Lewes and Pevensey (updated from Drewett 1982).

Record) and the former occupation of Duttle's Brow was perhaps acknowledged by its use as a cemetery in the sixth century.

The total lack of medieval pottery indicates that the site was not ploughed during this period and its use as grazing land probably continued at least until the 1830s, when the Tithe Award records it as a single pasture field. By the 1960s, however, it had again been turned over to arable cultivation.

The evidence of a Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age farmstead at Duttle's Brow adds to a growing number of such sites known on the Downs in East Sussex. In the Jevington area, these farmsteads appear to be set fairly widely apart, with the nearest known sites being at Birling Manor near East Dean (Chuter 2005) and Fore Down near Litlington (Chuter 1987), suggesting a sparse occupation and usage of this section of the chalk Downs during this period. It is possible, however, that other occupation sites existed within the dry valley bottoms are now masked by deep colluvial deposits and have therefore not been discovered.

The Late Iron Age and Romano-British farmstead on Duttle's Brow, by contrast, appears

to have been part of a more densely occupied and cultivated landscape, with virtually every south-facing spur on the Downs showing evidence of field-systems and occupation (Fig. 11). The site has strong similarities with the contemporary Romano-British farmstead(s) recorded by the Bullock Down Project (Drewett 1982), also located adjacent to a double lynchet trackway and set within a large field-system. Unlike Duttle's Brow, the Bullock Down settlements did not occupy earlier sites, the only recorded earlier occupation within the Bullock Down Project area was an Early Iron Age site some distance to the east, again suggesting possible abandonment of the Downs during the Middle Iron Age.

#### Acknowledgements

The writer would like to thank Steven Carr, the landowner, for allowing access to Duttle's Brow, members of the Eastbourne Natural History and Archaeological Society and Jim Parks and Dave Wootten of the Eastbourne Metal Detector Club, who participated in this survey. The writer would also like to thank David Rudling for identifying the comb-decorated tile, Liz Wilson for identifying the metal artefacts and Dom Andrews for some of the illustrations.

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