

Archaeological investigations at Preston Roman Villa, Springfield Road, Brighton, 2002 and 2004

by Richard James

with contributions by

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Archaeology South-East was commissioned to carry out an archaeological excavation situated at the junction of Preston Road and Springfield Road, Brighton. The site has been known since the 1870s to contain one of Brighton's most well-known archaeological monuments, the Springfield Road or Preston Roman villa. Excavations in the early 20th century uncovered a number of walls relating to at least five rooms, some of which contained tessellated floors. The excavations reported here located a small surviving area of Roman stratigraphy including walls, a chalk-lined well, rubbish pits and a burial. Two stone wall foundations were identified, although one had been severely truncated by 19th-century pitting, and the other survived mainly as a robber trench. Several possible floor deposits of mortar were recognised, together with a very small surviving patch of coarse tessellated floor. An important assemblage of artefacts and pottery sheds some light on the activities of the inhabitants. The new findings are considered in relation to the previous work undertaken at the site and an updated overview of the villa plan is presented.

INTRODUCTION

In 2000, developers commissioned Archaeology South-East (UCL Institute of Archaeology) to carry out a programme of archaeological works in advance of the redevelopment of a former garage site on the western side of the junction between Springfield Road and Preston Road, Brighton (NGR 530929, 105724; Fig. 1).

An initial desk-based assessment identified the site as having high potential for containing archaeological deposits relating to Preston Roman Villa, a site known since the 19th century and previously investigated on several occasions, albeit in difficult conditions (Johnson 2000). Although the assessment identified the likelihood of significant truncation from previous residential and industrial developments across up to 50 percent of the site, it was anticipated that significant archaeological deposits would survive in the remainder.

Following discussion with the planning department of Brighton and Hove City Council and their archaeological advisers, East Sussex County Council, it was agreed that the site be stripped mechanically to the top of any surviving

archaeological deposits, under archaeological supervision. These deposits were then to be manually excavated. During this operation, a small island of surviving archaeological stratigraphy was encountered.

In practice, this approach was modified, with the agreement of the relevant authorities, to permit the residential development to take place in two stages. Consequently, the northern half of the site was excavated in October and November 2002 and the remainder in October and November 2004.

The villa is variously referred to in archaeological literature as the Preston, Preston Park or Springfield Road villa. During the 2002–4 fieldwork, Springfield Road was used as the identifier due to the practice of naming archaeological excavation sites with reference to the street or property on which they are located, and this name is used on all of the site archive records. However, for this article it is felt more appropriate to call it the Preston villa, as this is a more meaningful geographical identifier and also has historical authenticity through its use by Herbert Toms, the respected Brighton archaeologist, in his 1926 paper on the villa (Toms and Herbert 1926).



Fig. 1. Site location.

TOPOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

The site is located at an altitude of approximately 20m AOD on the lower, south-west facing slopes of the broad Wellesbourne valley (now followed by the A23 Preston/London Road), a dry valley carved through the dip slope of the South Downs (Fig. 2). This valley, together with the adjacent dry valley now followed by the Lewes Road, defines a wedge-shaped ridge extending south from the main Hollingbury downland block, which reaches a height of 170m AOD at the Hollingbury Iron Age hillfort. The villa site is situated at the point where the slope begins to flatten out within the valley floor, although much of this profile is derived from post-Roman deposits and is unlikely to reflect the contemporary topography of the site.

The British Geological Survey records the geology as Newhaven Chalk Formation, overlain by soliflucted head deposits (BGS 2016). A site investigation report described the head as ‘dense flint gravel with some putty chalk matrix in places... present to between 3m and at least 5m depth’ (Crossfield Consulting Ltd 2000).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

PREHISTORIC PERIOD

The Brighton area has produced evidence for all periods of prehistoric settlement, reflecting its position on the warm, southern slopes of the chalk uplands, close to areas of fertile soil, with sheltered dry valleys and proximity to the resource-rich coastline and sea. Key sites include the palaeolithic raised beach deposits at Black Rock, the neolithic causewayed enclosure at Whitehawk, the Bronze Age barrows at Hove, settlement sites such as Varley Halls and the Iron Age hillfort at Hollingbury. Much material was destroyed without record during the expansion of Brighton in the nineteenth century, so the known distribution of sites tends to be patchy. Prehistoric evidence in the environs of the site includes a pit with mesolithic or neolithic flint from 7–9 Springfield Road (Martin 1999) and a destroyed neolithic long barrow at the junction of Preston Drove and Havelock Road.

ROMANO-BRITISH PERIOD

A significant Romano-British site has been recognised at Preston since the late nineteenth century. Various observations and investigations

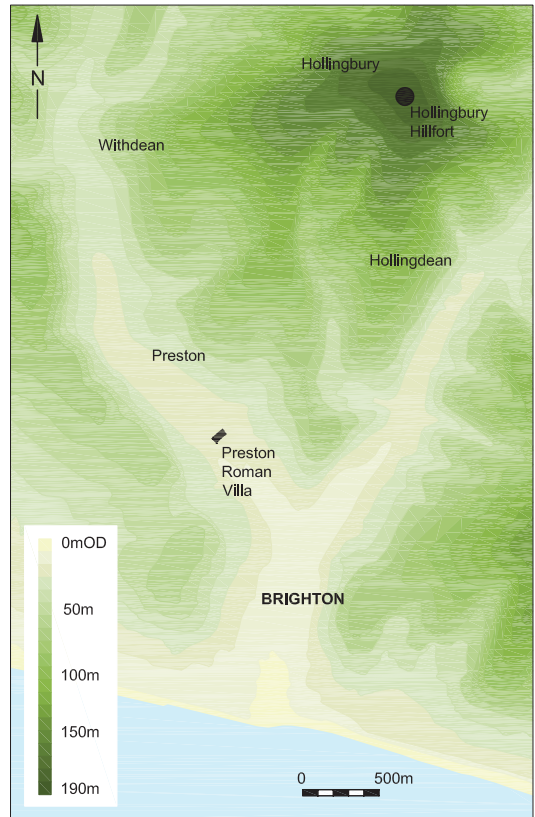


Fig. 2. Topography of the site and its environs.

over the years have revealed a number of different elements, both within the site boundary and beneath nearby properties (see below).

POST-ROMAN DEVELOPMENT

Little is known about the later history of the site. It lay within the manor of Preston, centred on a small settlement around St. Peter's Church at the point where a drove road (now Preston Drove) crossed the Wellesbourne valley (or perhaps within the smaller manor of Radynden, the boundaries of which are unclear; Thomas-Stanford 1921).

The site lay to the south-east of the village and, according to a survey of 1608, probably lay within an open field called the Middle Laine (Farrant and Farrant 1975). Thomas Yeakell and William Gardner's survey of 1778 shows it as lying within a belt of enclosed fields and it is likely that this represents piecemeal enclosure of the former open fields. It is probable, therefore, that the site was

ploughed for much of the medieval and early post-medieval periods.

Development of the site commenced from 1876 onwards, when two groups of semi-detached houses were built along the Preston Road frontage and one semi-detached block and a large detached villa were built along the north-eastern frontage of Springfield Road (Fig. 3). The bulk of the site lay behind the house plots but was discovered during initial flint digging; this work uncovered the walls of the villa and is likely to have damaged much of the upper surviving archaeological deposits.

The recent excavation work revealed evidence for significant amounts of wall robbing, in places down to the base of the footings. The various phases of development of the garage premises had the most destructive impact, with large areas of the overburden on the site (including archaeological deposits) removed down to the level of the Coombe Rock and the installation of significant underground facilities including fuel tanks, oil storage tanks and concrete service ducts.

Apart from a small intervention by Herbert Toms and George Herbert in 1926 (Toms and Herbert 1926), most of the information relating to the villa before the 2002–4 work was recorded by construction workers rather than by archaeologists. It is fortunate that, during both main periods of building work, key individuals were present on site who took a personal interest in the Roman deposits and took it upon their own initiative to preserve and record: Edwin Gates and his son of the same name in the 1870s, and Jack Whitehead in the 1960s.

PREVIOUS FIELDWORK

1876–80

The first indication of Roman settlement was the discovery in 1876 of a number of flint-filled pits, interpreted at the time as possible graves containing inhumations, cut into the underlying head (Coombe Rock). The pits were found during construction work in Springfield Road, east of the site boundary (Stevens 1877, 518, Fig. 3); the published note states that ‘of these supposed graves, seven were opened...’ suggesting more may have been present.

A small portion of a flint-and-mortar wall was also observed, and Stevens speculated that some of the ‘graves’ may have been further lengths of walling. A further grave was found in September 1877, during the construction of 5 Springfield Road,

lined with stones and containing several pottery vessels, including a cinerary urn, and other artefacts. Stevens reported that the site owner, Mr Gates, a speculative builder, supervised the recording of the remains and brief results published, with a simple plan, in the *Brighton Herald* (1 September 1877). The newspaper account only refers to a Mr Gates and his son E. A. Gates, who can probably be identified as Edwin Gates.

An incomplete plan was produced of a building 50 feet (15m) square (although it was acknowledged that the remains continued into the adjacent property to the north-east), with walls of mortared flint, two feet (0.6m) wide, set upon footings of ‘limy cement’, although only the outer walls of the building appeared to have had this treatment (*Brighton Herald*, 18 August 1877; Fig. 3).

Most of the outer walls on the north-western, south-western and south-eastern sides were traced (Toms and Herbert 1926, 11). Traces of tessellated floors were found, including ‘small and finely-wrought mosaics in red, white, grey and black’, with a coarser floor to the north-east. Coloured wall plaster was also noted. Eight coins were recovered, of which only one was legible and dated to the reign of Claudius II (AD 268–70). Traces of burning were interpreted as evidence that the building had been destroyed by fire.

In 1878 a further area of clay floor, with associated tiles, was found at a depth of three feet (0.9m) in the garden of 10 Springfield Road and in 1880 a cremation urn was found during building work in the front garden of 115 Preston Road (Fig. 3).

1915

In January 1915 a continuation of the south-eastern wall, comprising mortared flints, was unearthed in the garden of 1 Springfield Road (Toms and Herbert 1926, 11; Fig. 3).

Herbert Toms and George Herbert, 1926

In 1926 Toms and Herbert produced a paper summarising the 19th-century discoveries, culled from articles in the *Brighton Herald* and from discussion with the original building contractors (Messrs. Gates), and including the results of their own limited excavations (Toms and Herbert 1926).

They excavated three small trenches in the garden of 1 Springfield Road, locating the south-east corner of the building and 14 feet (4m) of its north-east wall. They identified the construction method

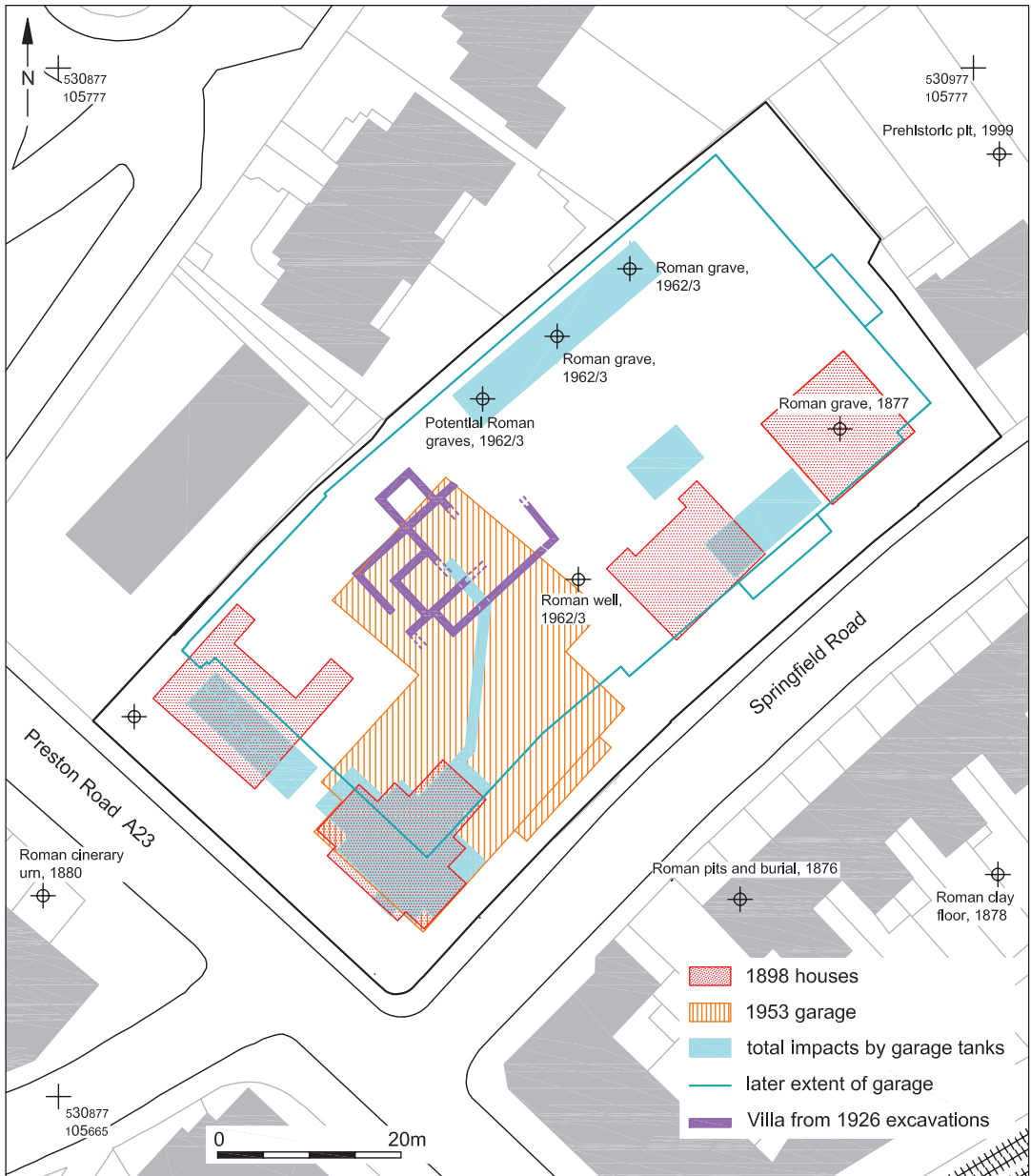


Fig. 3. Plan showing earlier phases of fieldwork and location and impact of later development.

as foundation trenches two feet (0.6m) wide, filled with a foundation course of large flints, capped by a layer of ‘cement’ five inches (127mm) thick, upon which was built a mortared flint wall.

Using the plan created by the builders (redrawn by Robert Gurd), they deduced that the site

comprised a small corridor-plan villa of 2nd to 3rd century date, situated mainly beneath 94 and 96 Preston Road, but extending into the (unexcavated) garden of 1 Springfield Road.

The plan indicated five rooms, although Toms suggested that more existed, ‘possibly 10 or 12 in all’

(*ibid.*, 13). One room (Room 1; Fig. 11) was of some importance, with a geometrical mosaic floor and painted wall-plaster. An additional room was added to the north-western wall at a later date (Room 5). No evidence had been found for a hypocaust or a bath-house. Ancillary structures represented by the portions of walling found in 1876–7 were interpreted as outbuildings.

The ‘graves’ examined in 1876 were reinterpreted as rubbish pits, with an assortment of artefacts from the lower fills, including coins of Hadrian (AD 117–38) and Lucilla (AD 151–180, daughter of Marcus Aurelius). The upper fills contained building material and human remains, which Toms interpreted as secondary burials inserted into earlier rubbish pits (citing parallels from the work of Augustus Pitt-Rivers and excavations at Caerwent); the original newspaper accounts described human and animal bones ‘deposited, in most instances, without order’ (*Brighton Herald*, 3 June 1876).

1934

The plot containing 90–96 Preston Road and 1–7 Springfield Road was acquired by Hartley and Midgeley Ltd in 1934. The houses were converted into car showrooms and offices and a workshop built in the gardens. No archaeological remains were reported (Dudley 1981, 73).

1945–55

Sometime during this period, further workshops were built at 94–96 Preston Road and the site was levelled with thick deposits of hardcore. A company employee, Jack Whitehead, had a personal interest in archaeology and accordingly maintained an informal ‘watching brief’ during the works, but only noted the line of some of the Roman walls and a few tiny scraps of pottery.

November 1953

Roman pottery sherds (from a grey, sandy beaker) were found during construction work at the corner of Stanford Avenue and Preston Road (Dudley 1981, 73).

December 1962–January 1963

In 1955 the company changed hands and was rebranded as the Endeavour Motor Company Ltd. Major redevelopment works were planned and Jack Whitehead, by then a director of the company, maintained his interest in the site. The houses were demolished and the site levelled.

Excavation work in the north-western corner of the site for oil storage tanks produced a number of artefacts, including some evidence for richly-furnished cremation burials, including pottery, bronze fittings indicating the presence of a wooden funerary box, two female, pipeclay, bust figurines, glass bottles and a well-preserved iron hanging lamp (Philpott 1991, 250; Dudley 1981; Wilson 1965, 220). Deep excavations for petrol tanks at the southern end of the site produced no archaeological evidence. Finally, in January 1963, a chalk-lined well was uncovered (Dudley 1981, 76).

RESULTS OF THE 2002–4 FIELDWORK

The latest phase of excavation work was carried out over two seasons: October–November 2002 and October–November 2004 (Fig. 1). The results of both seasons are reported here.

The demolition of the former garage buildings was carried out down to slab level without any need for archaeological supervision. The concrete slab that covered most of the site was then broken up and removed, together with modern hardcore and overburden, by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. The machining was halted once archaeological deposits or natural geology was reached, whichever was uppermost.

Due to the extensive truncation of the site in the 1870s (from basements) and the 1960s, which involved deep excavations for petrol tanks, oil storage tanks and vehicle inspection pits across the site, plus a dense network of substantial concrete stanchions and foundations, stratified archaeological deposits only survived in the centre of the site. These were limited to a rectangular block approximately 50m² in the north-eastern corner of the villa (although this included further truncation from post-medieval pit digging).

The stratigraphy here was complex and often difficult to interpret, due to the small areas surviving and a lack of closely datable artefacts. Elsewhere on site, the archaeological evidence was limited to cut features surviving at a greater depth, primarily pits but including a chalk-lined well and a single inhumation grave.

The natural geology comprised head deposits, a coarse, flinty, gravel known as Coombe Rock, several metres in depth and overlying chalk, which was itself overlain by up to two metres of made ground

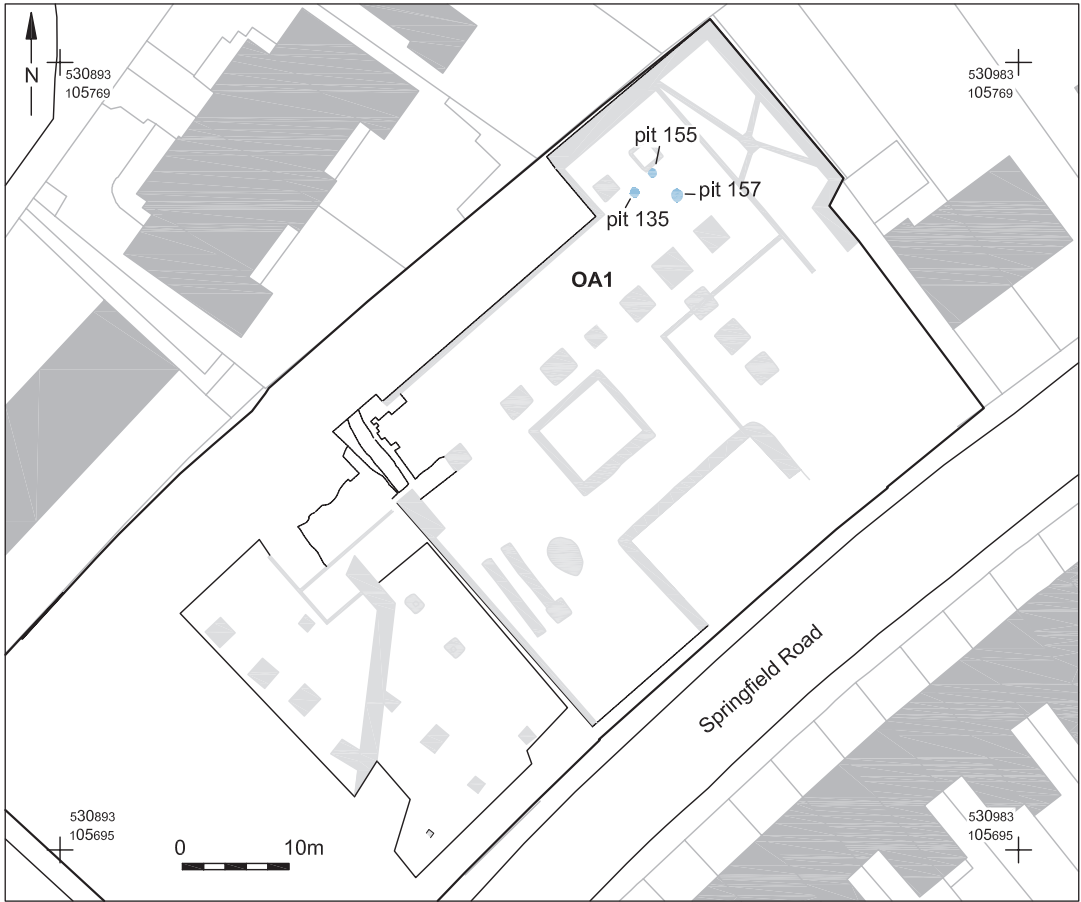


Fig. 4. Plan of mid – late Iron Age features (Period 1) in Open Area 1 (OA1). (See Fig. 1 for key).

of modern origin. All the archaeological features were cut into the head.

PERIOD 1: MID-LATE IRON AGE (300 BC – AD 43)

Open Area 1: Pits

The earliest features were three circular pits located within the north-western corner of the site (pits [135], [155], [157]) (Fig. 4). These were dated by a small quantity of pottery in several different fabrics, but consistent with a mid-late Iron Age date. A small assemblage of animal bone was also recovered, including part of a sheep mandible, two small undiagnostic pieces of flint and a small fragment of daub. The pits provide limited evidence for some degree of prehistoric occupation in or around the site. A background scatter of mesolithic

to early Bronze Age flintwork from unstratified contexts hints at earlier, probably transient, use of the locality.

PERIOD 2: ROMANO-BRITISH

Phase 2.1: AD 43–100

Open Area 2 (OA2): pre-villa occupation/activity

Evidence for activity prior to the construction of the villa is very limited. A single sherd of 1st-century-AD pottery was recovered from a flinty deposit underlying the villa; late-1st-century pottery was also recovered in 1926 and 1962–3 (Dudley 1981, 76) and a worn coin of Claudius, issued in AD 41 but probably still in circulation in the second half of the century, was found in 1877.

Phase 2.2: AD 100–400*Open Areas 2 and 3: preparation of the site*

The villa buildings overlay, and were cut into, a series of flint gravel deposits which appear to be redeposited natural gravels or colluvium reworked to provide a level construction platform on the sloping site. This remains speculative, however, due to the localised survival of these deposits. Dating evidence was poor, being limited mainly to pottery sherds that could not be closely dated and a roof tile of mid-2nd-century date, although five small sherds from one buried soil layer post-dated the early 2nd century. Evidence from within the construction deposits of the villa structure suggest a construction date around the end of the 2nd century.

A number of large pits were located in the northern half of the site, including one that lay immediately adjacent to the northern external wall of the villa (pit [47], Fig. 5). These contained deposits of Roman date consistent with use as rubbish pits, although it is likely that at least some of them were dug into the Coombe Rock to access flint for building purposes. Pit [47] was a large cut, over a metre deep, filled by a complex sequence of tip lines containing limited amounts of Roman pottery and some intrusive post-medieval material from the upper interface with the modern demolition rubble (Fig. 6, Section 1). The association of this feature with Wall 1 of the villa was unclear due to the partial slumping of the wall foundations into the pit fills.

The resulting void in the other side of the wall had been packed with a flinty soil, partly overlain by the thick cement mortar layer of the upper flint wall footings, suggesting an attempt at underpinning the walls. Pit [47], which cut an earlier Roman pit only partly visible in section (Fig. 6, Section 1, pit [44]) was itself subsequently cut by a later feature, pit [67] (Fig. 6, Section 2), which contained 17 sherds of pottery dated broadly to the later 2nd century (AD 180+) and an unusual fragment of flanged ironwork resembling part of a shield boss (*see* Finds from Open Area 3, below). This was too fragmentary for a secure identification, but military equipment is not uncommon on villa sites, and could be explained as equipment retained from former military service, or from villa owners being associated with militia forces in their area (Black 1994, 107).

Pit [23], the largest and most complex (up to 1.5m deep), had been recut at least seven times, with the bulk of the fills comprising alternate layers of soil and chalk rubble, sometimes truncated by later

cuts. This suggests a systematic process of digging to extract the flint while disposing of the chalky spoil behind, then extending the excavation to access more flint and repeating the process.

Most of the fills contained only Romano-British, grog-tempered wares and a few residual Iron Age sherds, although the rubbish pits cutting the upper quarry backfills were more closely datable to the 3rd century, generally from AD 240–70 (including a small assemblage of decorated bone pins from fill [24] of recut [304]), but with the earliest rubbish pit containing material from as early as the late 2nd century. The remaining quarry pits (pits [35], [91], [94], [133]) were generally much shallower, with mainly single fills.

Finds from Open Area 3 by Trista Clifford

A total of 35 objects came from Open Area 3, primarily from the fills of refuse pit [304], fill [24], and pit [120], fill [33], both recuts into the top of quarry pit [23]. Very few of the objects are complete; many were broken before deposition or consist of small fragments from larger objects, supporting the interpretation of the feature as a refuse pit and indicating deliberate discard rather than casual loss. Where objects are datable, for example the small group of hairpins (Fig. 10, RF <2> to <4>), a 2nd-century or later date is proposed (*see* ADS for further details of finds).

A wide range of activity consistent with villa life is represented; the largest groups are tools, including a saw, RF <76>, which may have had a secondary military function, a knife RF <80> and two whetstones RF <45> and RF <47>, and fasteners/fittings which include fittings relating to the structure of the villa and a variety of smaller strip fittings which might derive from furniture or caskets. Also of significance are two weapon fragments, shield boss RF <37> (pit [67]) and knife/dagger hilt RF <74> which hint at a military connection.

Structure 1: Roman Villa

The evidence for the villa was packed into a tiny area of surviving stratigraphy within the centre of the site, where a historic property boundary had probably afforded it some protection from disturbance. The deposits comprised the external and internal walls forming the north-eastern corner of the building (with further wall lines indicated by a T-shaped robber trench) and partial floor deposits

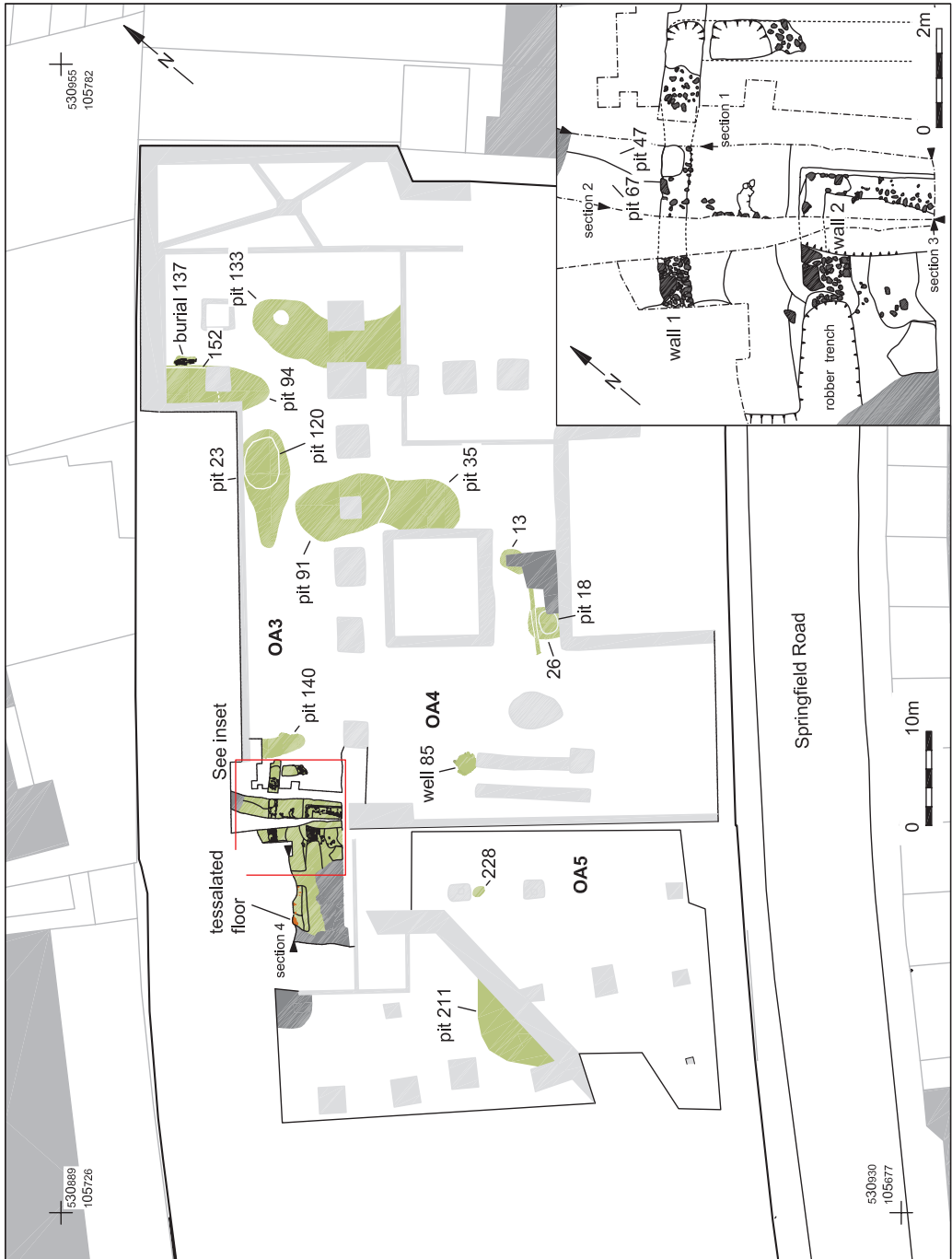


Fig. 5. Plan of Roman features (Period 2). (See Fig. 1 for key).

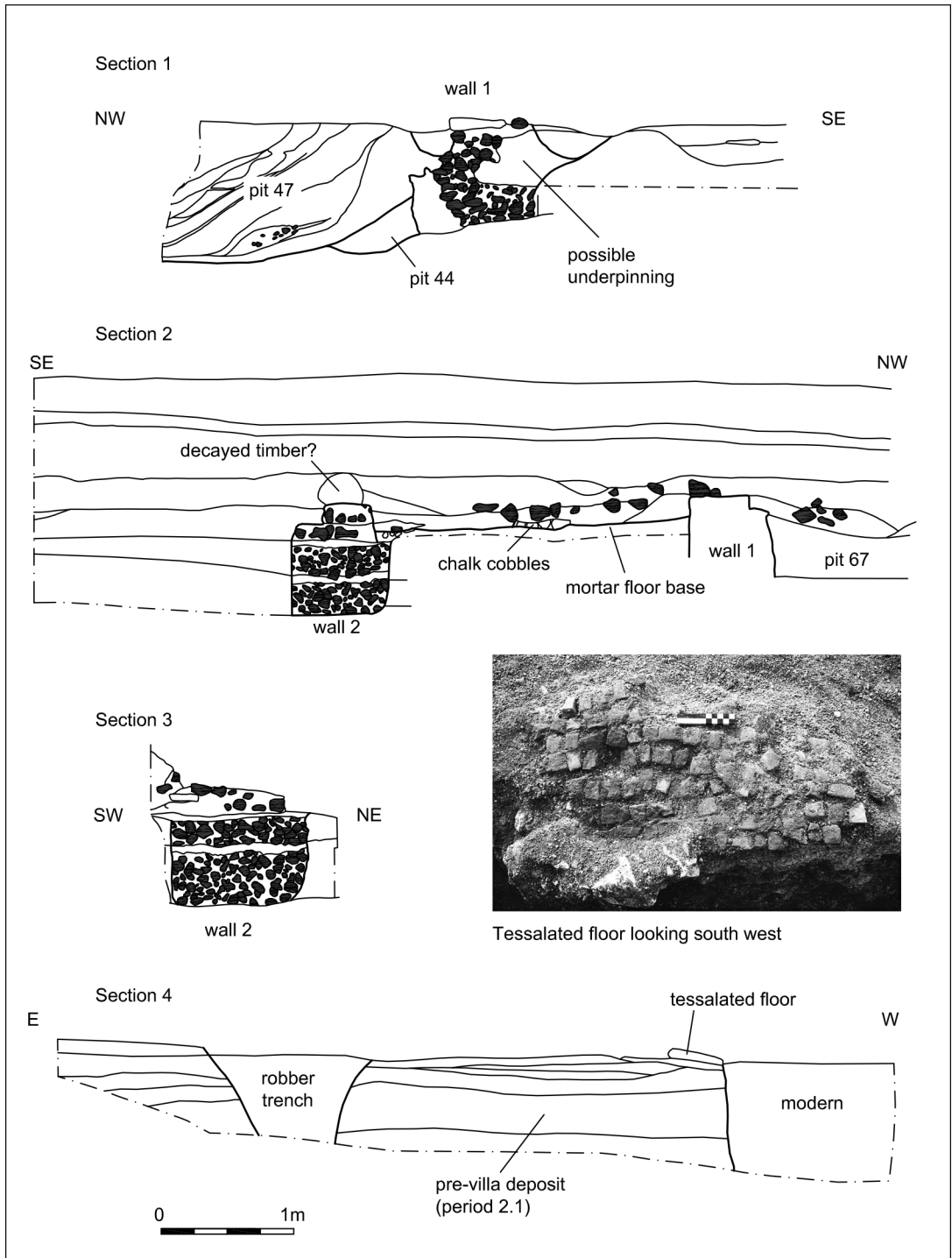


Fig. 6. Selected sections of Roman features.

relating to three rooms, indicating a very small patch of *in situ*, tessellated floor. The excavations completed much of the plan drawn in 1877 and 1926 and formed a mirror-image of the known south-western corner. Traces of Toms' 1926 excavation trenches were also observed.

Wall 1

This wall formed the external wall of the building and survived for a distance of five metres to the level of the lower superstructure (maximum of 0.8m), with a further four metres at the northern end surviving as a truncated and partly-robbed L-shaped foundation. The wall was 0.6m wide and comprised a vertically-sided, flat-bottomed cut, sunk to the level of the Coombe Rock, containing a lower foundation of unbonded flint nodules 0.5–0.6m in depth.

Above this was the upper foundation of coarse flint nodules, set in a crude lime mortar and 0.2m deep, but with no obvious separate cement layer as reported by earlier excavators. Above this was a narrower wall superstructure, set back 0.13m on the external side from the top of the footings, comprising mortared flint (including a large slab) and chalky clunch faced with smaller, roughly-squared flints. The offset was overlain by a mortar deposit associated with the construction of the wall. All deposits above this level had been truncated by modern activity. Two small sherds of pottery dated to AD 120–400 were recovered from within the make-up of the wall.

Wall 2

This wall formed an internal L-shaped wall, an extension of the wall examined by Herbert Toms in 1926. The structure appeared to have a more complex character than Wall 1 (although much of the latter had suffered significant disturbance from slumping and collapse).

It was constructed within a foundation cut sunk into the Coombe Rock and measuring up to 0.9m in width. The foundations comprised two distinct layers of unmortared flint rubble, separated by a thin layer of trampled soil interpreted as working surfaces and capped by a further similar deposit. On top of this was the mortared wall itself, inset internally by 0.15m and comprising mortared flint nodules faced with roughly-knapped flints. This only survived to a height of 0.2m, with everything above truncated by modern activity.

The mortared flintwork produced two pottery sherds dated to AD 180–300. A localised 0.3m wide and 0.2m deep deposit of firm, reddish clay was observed in section to overlie (but not extend beyond) the wall footings, prompting some speculation as to whether this represented the decayed 'ghost' of a timber sole plate, although no similar deposits were observed elsewhere. Neither the deposit nor any of the deposits physically stratified around it contained any dating evidence, so this interpretation remains tantalising but firmly unproven, although the presence of daub in many of the contexts on the site may suggest a half-timbered construction.

Two sherds of pottery dated to AD 180–300 were recovered within the wall itself, while a localised deposit of silty clay in the southern half of the site, containing pottery dated to AD 120–300, overlay it.

The upper level of the east–west aligned parts of the wall were cut by a series of small rectangular features and interpreted as excavation trenches cut by Herbert Toms and George Herbert in 1926. Unfortunately, no detailed records survive of their work, although the brief published account (Toms and Herbert 1926, 13) broadly conforms to the excavated evidence found in the 2002–2004 excavation.

The southern extent of the wall was traced by a seven-metre-long feature of similar width, containing a small spur to the west (truncated by a modern pit). The fill of this feature contained 19th century pottery and was interpreted as a robber trench, probably excavated by building labourers in 1876–7 before Edwin Gates realised the significance of the site.

This trench, together with the excavated lengths of walling, neatly fills in a gap in Toms' and Herbert's published plan and suggests that their Room 2 was actually two separate rooms (renumbered Rooms 2 and 6 see Fig. 11).

Room 2

This room was heavily truncated by a modern pit to the west and was defined to the north and east by robber trenches, with post-medieval pits to the south. The surviving stratigraphy within the room was 3.2m by 1.2m in area but, remarkably, retained a small patch of tessellated floor *in situ*, measuring 0.6m by 0.32m. Approximately 80 *tesserae* survived, all cut from greensand (each *tessera* was approximately 40mm square); this

compares with Toms' description of 'larger and coarser *tesserae*' of 'grey sandy cement' found in this room (*ibid.*, 14).

A small area of the floor appeared to have been patched with flint and tile. The *tesserae* were bonded into a cream mortar (which contained three small sherds of undiagnostic Roman pottery). Below this were a succession of soil layers, containing some loose *tesserae*, pieces of painted wall plaster, a single box flue tile and significant amounts of pottery dated to AD 120–270.

This may suggest that the tessellated floor was a later addition to the room, perhaps replacing an earlier floor. Below these layers was a thick, flint, levelling deposit. The tessellated floor was overlain by a soil layer containing more Roman pottery (AD 120–400) and interpreted as relating to the period following the disuse of the room.

Room 7

This corridor was L-shaped in plan and located between the two excavated walls. It mirrors room 4 as described by Toms in 1926 and, like that room, contained no evidence for a dividing wall or partition. The room contained a small area of irregular chalk blocks, apparently forming a cobbled surface. These were laid directly on to a layer of mortar which extended across the room to butt up against both walls.

This mortar deposit [56] contained a small pottery assemblage dated to AD 120–270 and was overlain by another layer of mortar associated with the decay of Wall 1 which contained a number of pottery sherds dated to the 3rd or 4th centuries and a small piece of late Roman rotary quern.

This layer of mortar was in turn sealed beneath soil layers dated to the 3rd century by pottery and two mid-3rd-century coins, but also containing residual glassware of 1st-to-2nd-century date. The soil layer [57] immediately sealing the remains of the chalk floor, and interpreted as a post-abandonment deposit, contained a bone hinge of a type usually associated with decorative boxes (Fig. 10, RF <6>).

Room 8

A small portion of the north-western corner of Room 8 was examined. A flinty deposit containing 1st century pottery (Period 2, Phase 1) was overlain by an undated mortar deposit, which thickened in depth towards Wall 2 and therefore probably

represents a layer of construction trample, although it could be a disturbed floor base.

This was partly overlain by a demolition deposit [299] containing flints and mortar dated to the late 3rd or 4th century and which contained partial remains of a newborn infant, a further bone hinge and a copper-alloy brooch (Fig. 10, RF <7> and <20>). Both of these deposits were overlain by a small area of burning containing pottery dated to AD 270+, which was sealed by a silty soil of similar date.

Building materials and painted wall plaster

with a contribution by Susan Pringle

Given that so little survived of the villa itself, evidence from ceramic building materials and painted wall plaster provide some evidence for its construction and how it would have looked.

The tile fabrics indicate two different geological sources. The most abundant are tiles with a highly calcareous matrix and coarse calcareous inclusions, usually light brown with a pale pink, pale orange or grey matrix containing coarse, whitish, rounded inclusions. They are part of a distinctive group of calcareous tile fabrics which has a wide distribution along the south coast of England, from Exeter to London (Betts and Foot 1994, 27, fig.4).

The origin of these fabrics is unknown but is presumed from their distribution to be somewhere on the south coast of England or possibly northern France. Their date range is around AD 140/180 to 300. They are probably the tiles 'of ochrous colour' recorded from the 1926 excavation (Toms and Herbert 1926, 1617). The predominance of these tiles on the site suggests that they were the main tile source for the villa. The second group, of orange silty fabrics with red iron-rich inclusions (the T1 fabric group), is likely to have been made at kilns local to Brighton and the Sussex coast.

Most of the plain wall plaster is from painted, red and white decorative schemes, with a smaller quantity of yellow ochre and a small fragment of green, painted plaster. There was evidence from Rooms 2, 7 and 8, as well as from demolition and residual deposits, that schemes were based on white-ground panels divided by red intervals. There was also evidence from Room 8 for overpainting on a red ground, either a panel or panel interval.

The red on white ground scheme may also contain elements of diagonal banding in red on white from Rooms 2 and 8. These may be from

a dado, from a band of decoration marking the horizontal division between zones, or from a ceiling, although a more typical dado scheme of pale pink ground, with red spatters, was noted from Room 8.

Also from Room 8 and post-villa deposits were fragments of other decorative motifs, including straight red bands on white with bobbles(?) and curved red lines, and one with a floral or foliate motif. The straight lines could be part of an internal border to a white-ground panel; the curved lines are perhaps more likely to have formed part of a frieze, possibly a vine scroll, in the upper zone of the wall.

In backfill [275], which comprised material from the 1920s excavation trenches, was a fragment of white painted plaster with a greyish-black band and, parallel to it, a thin red line. This is likely to represent an internal panel border.

In the same context there was a suggestion of more elaborate decoration from a fragment with what appears to be a realistically modelled architectural motif, possibly a cornice, against two shades of yellow.

From fill [24] of quarry pit [304] (upper recut of pit [23] on plan), there were three very small pieces with a geometric design in pink and red which may represent an architectural feature such as a modillion cornice. Although almost certainly part of the villa decoration, these cannot be attributed to a specific room.

Finds from the villa by Trista Clifford

Twenty-five objects were recovered from contexts associated with the villa itself. The largest category, not surprisingly, is household items. Glass vessel fragments account for the majority but also present are furniture studs and quern fragments which attest to the processing of crops nearby. Dress accessories are also fairly numerous.

No firm conclusions regarding activity patterns can be drawn but it may be noted that there are fewer tools from within the villa structure, and fewer activities are represented by the finds from the villa building compared to that of Open Area 3. Modern disturbance and robbing out of the walls of the villa in antiquity may account for the scarcity of finds generally from this area.

Burial [137]

with a contribution by Lucy Sibun

An inhumation grave [137] was recorded in the northern corner of the site (Figs 5 and 7). The



Fig. 7. Photograph of inhumation burial, 200mm and 300mm scales.

skeleton was of an adult male of average size, with a healed fracture to his lower right leg. The grave cut was anthropoid in shape, cut closely around his head, and orientated broadly north-south. Large flints lined the foot of the grave which compare with the cremation burial found in 1877 which was ‘...paved with large flat stones, some of which were flints’ (Stevens 1877, 33). No grave goods or dating evidence were recovered, other than a series of hobnails around the feet.

Although other inhumation burials are reported from the vicinity of the site (Stevens 1877), the quality of the records are poor and details about the location, layout and orientation are absent. The dating of these burials is also uncertain and as these are described as ‘secondary’ it is unclear how formal these graves were.

The richly-furnished ‘box’ cremation burial and other probably cremation burials from the site are largely mid-late 2nd century in date (Dudley 1981, 76) but the chronological and spatial relationship

between all of the burials, including inhumation burial [137] is unclear. Given that inhumation gradually replaced cremation from the mid-2nd century AD onwards, it seems most likely that burial [137] dates to the later 2nd –3rd century (Philpott 1991, 53–8)

Open Area 4: well [85]

A chalk-lined well [85] was located just outside the north-east corner of the villa (Fig. 11), presumably the one partially examined in the 1960s (Dudley 1981, 76). Excavation was limited by safety concerns to the removal of the upper 1.4m of fill, with hand auguring of a further 1.25m (Fig. 8).

The well had a diameter of 1.5m (externally) and 1m (internally) and was constructed of coursed chalk blocks (0.2m high, up to 0.35m long and 0.25–0.35m deep), unworked on their outer faces but with evidence for toothed chiselling on the inner faces.

Three fills were sampled: the upper fill was modern but contained some residual pottery of 2nd to 4th century date. Below this was a soil deposit containing pottery of late 3rd to 4th century date, building material and a coin of Constantius II (issued around AD 353–355). Below this was a similar deposit containing more flint and chalk. The auger was deployed from this level to attempt to determine the depth of the well but was abandoned after 1.25m due to the rubble fill of the well.

Open Areas 4 & 5: pits

A scatter of pits across the site appears to have been used for rubbish disposal. Many of these were cut into the top of earlier quarry pits, while others survived as heavily truncated discrete pits cut into the Coombe Rock.

One unusual feature, pit [26] comprised a large sub-oval pit filled with thick green clay. A smaller pit ([18]) was cut into the top, lined with similar clay and filled with marine mollusc shells, mostly oysters and mussels. One oyster shell had been pierced.

The clay was found nowhere else on site, suggesting it had been imported, but defies easy interpretation. The thickness of the clay (0.3–0.5m in a pit only 2m across) makes it excessive for a



Fig. 8. Photograph of chalk-lined well [85], 2m scale.

shellfish tank. The clay may have been useful for construction purposes, although why it needed to be stored in a pit is less obvious.

PERIOD 3: POST-ROMAN

No medieval or early post-medieval features or artefacts were encountered on the site, apart from a stray 17th-century pipe stem from a later context. A number of 19th and 20th century pits were observed, often truncating Roman features, and extensive evidence for 19th and 20th century buildings, the latter comprising large quantities of reinforced concrete. Several of the modern features in and around the Roman walls are probably trenches from the 1920s and 1960s.

THE FINDS

Information from the finds has been integrated into the narrative where relevant to the interpretation of the villa. The pottery report has been included here in full due to the presence of key groups relevant to the study of 3rd century assemblages from East Sussex. Full versions of all specialist reports can be found on the ADS.

THE PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN POTTERY

by Anna Doherty

Introduction

A relatively large pottery assemblage was recovered (see Table 1). The earliest sherds consist of a small assemblage of Middle-to-Late Iron Age material,

Table 1. Quantification of prehistoric and Roman pottery by Period/Phase.

Period/Phase	Sherds	Weight (g)	EVE	ENV
1.1 (300BC-AD43)	39	314	0.13	33
2.1 (AD43-100)	12	88		11
2.2 (AD100-400)	2339	24739	23.37	1981
Unstratified or from post-Roman contexts	117	924	0.58	95
Total	2510	26105	24.08	2120

recovered from several pits. A relatively small proportion of the Roman pottery was directly associated with construction or occupation layers within the villa. The largest and most diagnostic groups come from pits outside the footprint of the building, including one exceptionally large and well-dated mid-3rd-century group from quarry pit [304] (upper recut of pit [23]).

Methodology

An initial post-excavation assessment of the pottery was carried out by Malcolm Lyne (Archaeology South-East 2005). The pottery was quantified for analysis by Owain Mason under the supervision of the author as part of a Heritage Lottery Fund workplace learning placement in Roman ceramics. In the absence of a regional type series for Sussex, fabrics, forms and decoration were recorded using an adapted form of the Southwark/London typology (Marsh and Tyers 1979; Davies *et al.* 1994). Where pre-Roman or local fabrics were encountered, these were given site specific fabric codes detailed below.

In the context of a training program, a 'splitting' approach was taken to defining grog-tempered and unsourced Roman sandy wares. Consequently, there are a number of sub-divisions within these categories. As no further information as to the source of these wares and no strong correlations with distinctive forms or decoration were noted, these sub-divisions have not been further commented on here, although fabric descriptions are provided below.

For regionally-traded wares such as Rowland's Castle and Alice Holt wares, forms were recorded using Southwark/London codes for broad form class (1 for flagon, 2 for jar etc) but with additional cross-references to other published type-series (Dicks 2009; Lyne and Jefferies 1979). The pottery was recorded on pro forma sheets which are

retained for the archive; data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. It was quantified by sherds count, weight, Estimated Number of Vessels (ENV) and Estimated Vessel Equivalent (EVE).

Site specific fabric definitions

FLIN1 sparse to moderate flint of 0.5–1mm (occasionally up to 2mm) in a fine sandy matrix with sparse/moderate quartz of 0.1–0.2mm.

GLAUC1 Common glauconite of 0.2–0.4mm, sometimes with rare quartz or flint in a similar size range.

GROG1 Moderate angular grog of 1–2mm, in a generally quartz-free slightly micaceous matrix, frequently burnished; some partially oxidised.

GROG1a As GROG1 but with rare to sparse fine grained calcareous inclusions.

GROG2 Comparable to GROG1 but with larger angular grog inclusions of 2–3mm and calcareous inclusions of >1mm.

GROG2a As GROG2 but no calcareous inclusions.

LIME1 Fabric with sparse/moderate quartz grains 0.2–0.3mm with rare to sparse hard white calcareous inclusions (?limestone/fossil shell) 0.3–1mm.

SAND1 High-fired silty, moderately micaceous matrix with moderate larger grains of quartz of 0.2–0.3mm.

SAND2 High-fired silty matrix with moderate larger grains of quartz (0.5–1mm). Some examples contain infrequent black/red iron rich inclusions.

SAND3 Softer fired with fairly sparse quartz, 0.3–0.4mm in a silty matrix with infrequent mica and black iron-rich inclusions.

SAND4 Possibly similar to Wickham Barn ware (Butler and Lyne 2001, fabric C.1A). It comprises a fine silty matrix with sparse to frequent quartz grains of 0.2–0.3mm and occasional black iron rich inclusions. The core is often white/pale grey and surfaces darker (sometime burnished).

QUARTZ1 Hand-made, coarse fabric, containing moderate to common quartz of 0.4–0.6mm and rare iron rich inclusions.

Period 1.1

Only three features containing pottery were assigned to period 1: pits [135], [155] and [157]. As shown in Table 2, this is a very small quantity of pottery, dominated by glauconitic fabrics with a few sherds in a range of other types, including flint-tempered, grog-tempered and quartz rich wares, as well as fabrics containing fossil shell and possible

limestone inclusions. The only feature sherds in the assemblage are a few fragmentary rims or shoulders from S-profile jars all in glauconitic fabrics (e.g. Fig. 9, 1). These are consistent with a Middle/Late Iron Age date.

The appearance of grog-tempered wares in pit [157] only is perhaps of chronological significance. In Kent and East Sussex, this ware type is sometimes associated with assemblages which are still stylistically Middle Iron Age. However, this seems to be a development occurring near the end of this period and continuing into the Late Iron Age.

The dominance of glauconitic fabrics is also worth remarking on. The nearest greensand deposits outcrop around 10km to the north of Brighton and as such fall outside the likely procurement zone of local non-specialised potters (Morris 2006, 73–75; Arnold 1985, 35–60). Although the pottery assemblage is very limited in size, it suggests some degree of contact and exchange with more distant communities in the Middle/Late Iron Age.

Catalogue (Fig. 9.)

Period 1.1

1. Shoulder/neck of S-profile jar. Fabric GLAUC1; Pit [155], Fill [156].

Period 2.1

2. Necked globular beaker/ jar, probably of Arun Valley origin. Fabric FMIC; Layer [268].

3. Reeded-rim bowl. Fabric SAND1; Layer [268].

Period 2.2

4. Rowlands Castle jar/bowl with reeded-rim (cf. Dicks 2009, form B2). Fabric RWCG; Layer [249].

5. Rowland's Castle plain lid. Fabric RWCG; Layer [249].

6. Necked jar with slightly lid-seated/chamfered rim. Fabric GROG1A; Layer [249].

7. Everted rim jar. Fabric GROG1; Pit [304], Fill [24].

8. Necked/everted rim jar. Fabric GROG1A; Pit [304], Fill [24].

9. Everted rim jar. Fabric GROG1A; Pit [304], Fill [24].

10. Necked/everted rim jar with post-firing graffiti along the rim interior and on the shoulder. Fabric GROG1; Pit [304], Fill [24].

11. Necked jar with shoulder cordon. Fabric SAND2; Pit [304], Fill [24].

12. Beaded rim jar with carinated shoulder. Fabric SAND2; Pit [304], Fill [24].

13. Rowland's Castle everted rim jar (cf. Dicks 2009, form D2). Fabric RWCG; Pit [304], Fill [24].

14. Rowland's Castle everted rim jar (cf. Dicks 2009, form D2). Fabric RWCG; Pit [304], Fill [24].

15. Everted rim jar, with slight lid-seated groove along rim. Fabric BB1; Pit [304], Fill [24].

16. Everted rim jar. Fabric BB1; Pit [304], Fill [24].

17. Cornice rim bag-shaped beaker with roughcast decoration. Fabric COLCC; Pit [304], Fill [24].

18. Cornice rim bag-shaped beaker with barbotine decoration. Fabric KOLN; Pit [304], Fill [24].

19. Fine barbotine scroll decoration. Fabric CGBL; Pit [304], Fill [24].

20. Funnel rim beaker. Fabric NVCC; Pit [304], Fill [24].

21. Plain rim dish. Fabric GROG1A; Pit [304], Fill [24].

22. Plain rim dish. Fabric GROG1A; Pit [304], Fill [24].

23. Plain rim dish with grooved/lid-seated rim, featuring post-firing graffiti across the rim. Fabric Grog 1A; Pit [304], Fill [24].

24. Plain rim dish with burnished arc decoration and burnished loops on base. Fabric BB1; Pit [304], Fill [24].

25. Bowl with incipient bead and flange and acute lattice decoration. Post-firing graffiti is slashed across the rim; Fabric BB1; Pit [304], Fill [24].

26. Bowl with incipient bead and flange and burnished arc decoration. Almost identical to number 25 and featuring similar graffiti, although with a different diameter and a slightly varying pattern of decoration; Fabric BB1; Pit [304], Fill [24].

27. Base and lower wall of Dragendorff 37 bowl. Fabric SAMEG; Pit [304], Fill [24].

28. Base and lower wall of mould-decorated bowl, probably of Dragendorff 37 type. Fabric CGBL; Pit [304], Fill [24].

29. Dragendorff 31 bowl. Fabric SAMLZ; Pit [304], Fill [24].

30. Body sherd with illiterate graffito. Fabric GROG1A; Pit [35], Fill [36].

Table 2. Quantification of fabrics in Period 1.1.

Fabric	Sherds	Wt (g)
FLIN1	4	32
GLAUC1	25	188
GROG2A	2	30
LIME1	6	44
QUARTZ1	2	20
Total	39	314

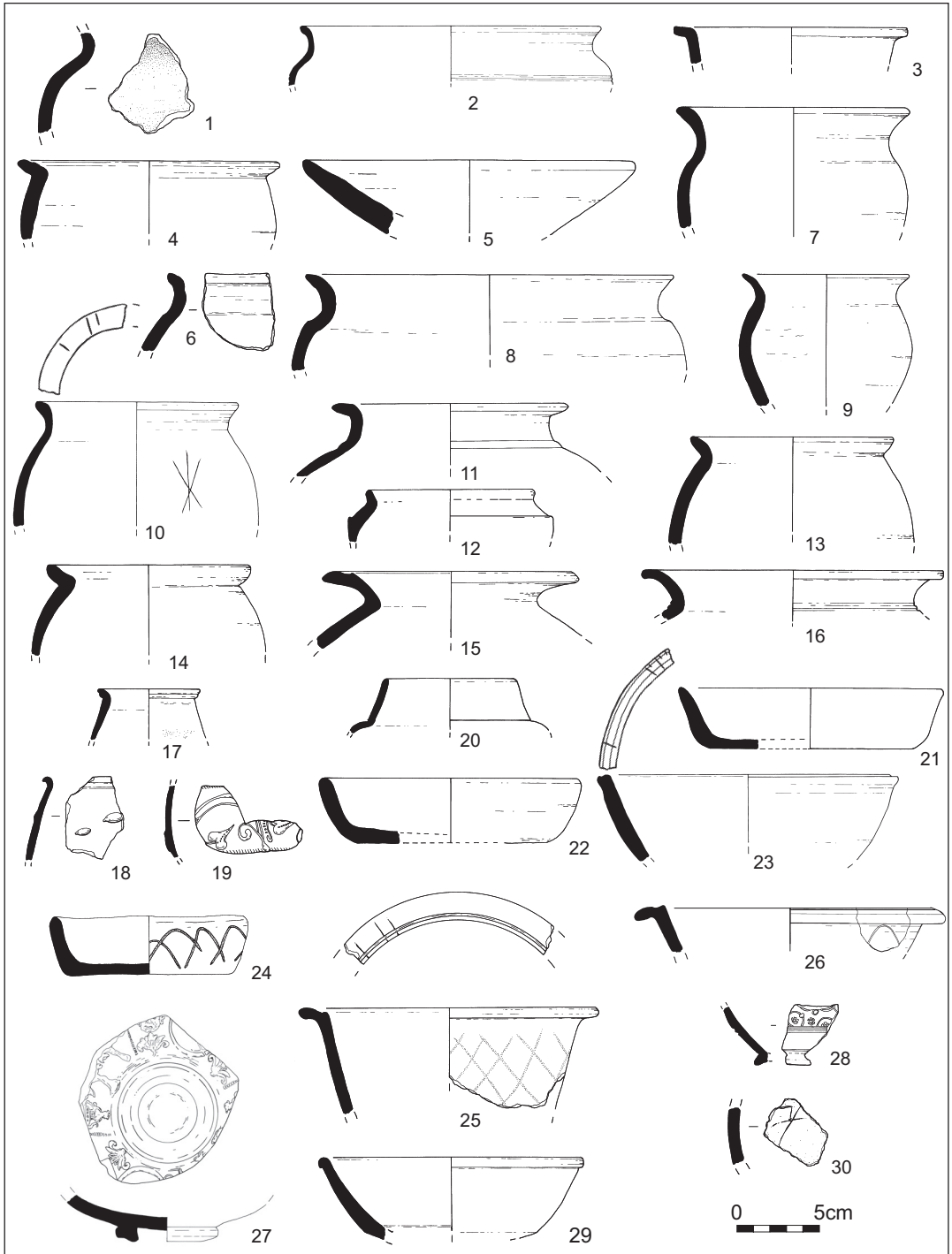


Fig. 9. Pottery illustrations 1-30.

Period 2.1

A small amount of pottery was found in the make-up/levelling deposits predating the villa construction (layers [247] and [283]). These contained just 12 sherds, most of which are grog-tempered, although four are in undiagnostic, but recognisably Roman, fabric types. As shown in subsequent phases, grog-tempered wares remained one of the most common fabric groupings throughout the lifespan of the site, so these sherds provide little insight as to the date of period 2.1.

There are, however, a few possible residual examples of Late Iron Age/early Roman forms in later deposits, and it could be speculated that these are contemporary with this phase. They include two fragmentary rims from grog-tempered platters. Although fairly similar forms imitating BB1 dishes are common in the later assemblage, these examples look closer to 1st-century Gallo-Belgic forms.

A rouletted shoulder, probably from a butt-beaker, in a fine micaceous fabric, similar to products from the Arun Valley, was recovered from a later deposit.

Period 2.2. Groups related to villa construction

It has previously been argued that the villa may have been an early construction, based on the coin of Claudius and an unpublished pottery assemblage containing an element which 'seems to be' of late 1st-century date (Dudley 1981, 76). Despite the possible examples of mid/late 1st-century pottery noted above, it is worth pointing out that the current assemblage lacks closely-dated residual sherds from around AD 70–120, a period which is generally highly visible in the ceramic record.

This raises some questions as to whether the very early Roman activity on site could be discrete from the construction of the villa. Unfortunately, this question cannot presently be resolved without fuller publication of existing pottery archives from previous excavations.

The excavation produced a moderate assemblage of pottery from layers interpreted as being associated with the construction of Rooms 2 and 7 (contexts [246], [268], [269], [270], [271] and [294]; contexts [263], [264] and [265]). These are relatively undiagnostic sherds, although as a whole assemblage they provide some useful comparative data on fabrics (*see* Table 3).

Grog-tempered wares make up 60% of the group and the majority of the other sherds are made up

by unsourced sandy wares. At Beddingham Villa, the proportion of grog-tempered wares declined to about 30–40% during the period AD 100–150 (Lyne forthcoming). This might suggest that the material in the Springfield Road construction layers derives from relatively early activity. However, Lezoux samian or BB1 were present in very small quantities in most of the contexts, suggesting that they were deposited after about AD 120.

Most of the feature sherds are small rims from simple, necked jars in grog-tempered fabrics, which are difficult to place chronologically. A fine micaceous beaker/jar, from the Room 2 layers (Fig. 9, 2) and a reeded-rim bowl, from deposits in Room 7 (Fig. 9, 3), are both seemingly consistent with a date in the first half of the 2nd century. A small rim sherd from a typical Rowland's Castle everted rim jar (not illustrated; Dicks 2009, D2), is probably intrusive in layer [263].

Despite indications that some construction layers might be of slightly earlier date, several individual well-stratified sherds provide good evidence that the two walls encountered in the current excavations were constructed in or after the late 2nd century. A sherd of Rowland's Castle ware was mortared into the matrix of wall [123]. Whilst this ware was first produced in the 1st century, it is now quite well established that, in the earlier Roman period, it had a relatively local distribution, not extending much beyond Chichester.

For example, at Bignor Roman villa, it seemed to first appear in groups dated to the late 2nd century and had become an important supplier by the 3rd century (Lyne 1995, 163–4). A mortar layer, [250], on wall [277] also produced a sherd of Moselkeramik, a type not produced before the 3rd century. It should also be noted that layer [249], interpreted as relating to the use of Room 7, produced an assemblage of over 200 sherds which can be closely dated to the first half of the 3rd century (Fig. 9, 4–6), including diagnostic sherds of Rowland's Castle ware.

Pottery group from pit [304] (upper recut of pit [23])

More generally, period 2.2 is notable for some very large groups of pottery discarded in the fills of quarry pits dating to the late 2nd to 3rd century; these include assemblages of over a hundred sherds from pits [120] and [35]. An exceptionally large group recovered from [24], the upper fill of pit [304], has been selected for more detailed quantification

Table 3. Quantification of fabrics from villa construction layers (Groups 6 and 7).

Fabric	Sh	%Sh	Wt	%Wt
Grog-tempered wares	162	58.1%	1014	62.0%
GROG1	3	1.1%	14	0.9%
GROG1A	154	55.2%	946	57.8%
GROG2	5	1.8%	54	3.3%
Romano-British reduced wares	82	29.4%	500	30.6%
SAND (Un sourced grey wares)	2	0.7%	12	0.7%
SAND1	45	16.1%	292	17.8%
SAND2	5	1.8%	52	3.2%
SAND3	19	6.8%	114	7.0%
SAND4	11	3.9%	30	1.8%
Black burnished wares	2	0.7%	<2g	<0.1%
BB1 (Black burnished ware 1)	2	0.7%	<2	<0.1%
Romano-British fine wares	9	3.2%	30	1.8%
FMIC (Fine micaceous wares)	1	0.4%	10	0.6%
OXIDF (Fine oxidised wares)	8	2.9%	20	1.2%
Romano-British oxidised wares	8	2.9%	30	1.8%
OXID (Un sourced coarse oxidised wares)	8	2.9%	30	1.8%
Samian	7	2.5%	26	1.6%
SAMLZ (Lezoux samian)	7	2.5%	26	1.6%
Imported fine wares	2	0.7%	2	0.1%
CGBL (Central Gaulish black-slipped ware)	1	0.4%	0	0.0%
KOLN (Cologne colour-coated ware)	1	0.4%	2	0.1%
Other tempered wares (probably residual)	7	2.5%	34	2.1%
FLIN1	1	0.4%	2	0.1%
GLAUC1	2	0.7%	16	1.0%
LIME1	4	1.5%	16	1.0%
Total	279	100.0%	1636	100.0%

as it is fairly representative of the greater part of the assemblage (see Tables 4 and 5).

Although this group contains a small amount of residual Iron Age pottery, it is mostly composed of material from a relatively short span of activity in the early/mid-3rd century and therefore provides good evidence of patterns of consumption and supply which is generally lacking from sites in East Sussex.

Grog-tempered wares appear to have slightly reduced in frequency compared with the 2nd-century assemblages from villa construction layers, but they remained the single most common fabric type, accounting for just over 40% of the pit group. Un sourced greywares of probable local origin remained the second largest ware group, but a distinct change from the earlier groups is an increase in the proportion of regionally-traded coarse wares

Table 4. Quantification of fabrics from early/mid-3rd-century pit fill [24].

Fabric	Sh	%Sh	Wt	%Wt
Grog-tempered wares	356	40.4%	5250	44.1
GROG1	144	16.3%	1236	10.5%
GROG1A	92	10.4%	1864	15.8%
GROG2	97	11.0%	1946	16.5%
GROG2A	23	2.6%	204	1.7%
Romano-British reduced wares	265	30.1%	3488	29.6
RWCG (Rowland's Castle grey ware)	58	6.6%	1202	10.2%
SAND (Unsourced grey wares)	13	1.5%	178	1.5%
SAND1	44	5.0%	744	6.3%
SAND2	88	10.0%	796	6.8%
SAND3	40	4.5%	392	3.3%
SAND4	22	2.5%	176	1.5%
Black burnished wares	100	11.4	1124	9.5
BBS (Black burnished style ware)	5	0.6%	42	0.4%
BB1 (Black burnished ware 1)	92	10.4%	1052	8.9%
BB2 (Black burnished ware 2)	3	0.3%	30	0.3%
Romano-British oxidised wares	59	6.7	376	3.2
OXID (Unsourced coarse oxidised wares)	46	5.2%	266	2.3%
OXWS (Oxfordshire white slipped ware)	10	1.1%	74	0.6%
RWS (Unsourced white slipped wares)	1	0.1%	8	0.1%
WIGWW (Wiggonholt white ware)	2	0.2%	28	0.2%
Romano-British fine wares	33	3.7	120	1.0
COLCC (Colchester colour-coated ware)	2	0.2%	8	0.1%
FINE (Unsourced fine reduced wares)	16	1.8%	50	0.4%
FMIC (Unsourced fine micaceous wares)	1	0.1%	2	0.0%
OXIDF (Unsourced fine oxidised wares)	13	1.5%	42	0.4%
NVCC (Nene Valley colour-coated ware)	1	0.1	18	0.2
Amphorae	20	2.3	858	7.3
BAETL (Late Baetican Dressel 20 fabric)	2	0.2%	14	0.1%
GAUL1 (Gaulish Pélichet 47 fabric)	18	2.0%	844	7.2%
Samian	19	2.2	392	3.3
SAMEG (East Gaulish samian)	2	0.2%	132	1.1%
SAMLZ (Lezoux samian)	17	1.9%	260	2.2%
Imported fine wares	15	1.7	64	0.5
CGBL (Central Gaulish black-slipped ware)	7	0.8%	26	0.2%
KOLN (Cologne colour-coated ware)	8	0.9%	38	0.3%
Other tempered wares (probably residual)	14	1.6	104	0.9
COAR (Unsourced coarse wares)	2	0.2%	6	0.1%
FLIN1	2	0.2%	16	0.1%
GLAUC1	5	0.6%	20	0.2%
LIME1	5	0.5%	62	0.6%
Total	881	100.0%	11776	100.0%

Table 5. Quantification of forms from pit fill [24].

	EVE	%EVE	ENV	%ENV
Jar	7.31	58.0%	67	55.4%
Jar/beaker	0.08	0.6%	1	0.8%
Beaker	1.42	11.3%	9	7.4%
Bowl	1.75	13.9%	20	16.5%
Dish	1.89	15.0%	17	14.0%
Mortarium	0	0.0%	3	2.5%
Amphora	0	0.0%	2	1.7%
Lid	0.15	1.2%	2	1.7%
Total	12.6	100.0%	120	100.0%

such as Rowland's Castle ware and BB1, reflecting expansion in both these industries during the 3rd century.

Imported and Romano-British fine wares are present in similar quantities to those from the construction layers, although some varying types are present, including East Gaulish samian and Colchester colour-coated ware. Amphorae are also represented in this group but absent from the construction layers. However, some of these small variations could reflect the much larger size of the group from fill [24], rather than any wider chronological or functional differences.

Coarse ware forms dominate the group from fill [24] (see Table 5). These include a large proportion of necked, or everted rim jars both in grog-tempered and greyware fabrics (Fig. 9, 6–11). There is a single example of beaded rim jar with carinated shoulder (Fig. 9, 12) and a number of typical Rowland's Castle jars (Dicks 2009, D2) and BB1 everted rim jars (Fig. 9, 13–16).

Fine-ware beakers from various sources are represented, including cornice rim forms with both roughcast and barbotine decoration (Fig. 9, 17–18). These probably slightly pre-date the deposition of the group. More contemporary fine-ware forms include a very finely executed example of barbotine decoration on the body of a Central Gaulish black-slipped vessel (Fig. 8, 19) and a funnel rim beaker in Nene Valley colour-coated ware (Fig. 9, 20).

Plain rim dishes are particularly common with examples in both grog-tempered fabrics and in BB1 (Fig. 9, 21–24). Although bead-and-flange bowls are present (Fig. 9, 25–26) these all have relatively low/incipient beads, and one example features acute

lattice decoration, suggesting that they are early versions of this form, probably of early/mid-3rd-century date.

Fine-ware bowls include mould-decorated Dragendorff 37 forms in both East Gaulish samian and Central Gaulish black-slipped ware, as well as plain samian forms including Dragendorff 31 (Fig. 9, 27–29).

The ratio of jars to bowls/dishes is seen as an indicator of status and settlement hierarchy (Evans 2001). In this group jars make up just over 55% of the assemblage and dishes/bowls account for slightly fewer than 30%. This assemblage is therefore marginally more jar dominated than the examples cited by Evans from other villas in southern Britain (*ibid.*, fig. 5, 27), although less so than typical lower-status rural sites.

However, the composition of this group is quite similar to a late 2nd/early 3rd-century group from Beddingham Villa (Lyne forthcoming, group 11) and to the mid Roman assemblage from the roadside settlement at Hassocks (Biddulph 2010, fig. 9, 32).

The group from fill [24] includes five examples of post-firing graffiti, all on coarse wares. These include three vessels with incised lines, perhaps representing numerals, slashed across rim sherds, one of which also includes a further illiterate mark on the shoulder (Fig. 9, 10 and 25–26).

Another example was recorded on a ceramic counter made from a modified pottery sherd (RF<68>). Evans (1987) has shown that the occurrence of graffiti varies according to site type, with far more examples being found in forts and *civitas* capitals than on rural sites (including villas). He suggests that this might be linked to varying degrees of basic literacy.

In general, the incidence of graffiti from villas in the south-east is particularly low, perhaps because their populations were not so directly involved in large-scale procurement or supply of goods (*ibid.*, 194–196). The occurrence of so many examples in one pit fill, as well as another illiterate graffito from a similar feature [35] (Fig. 9, 30), is therefore of some note and may imply something about the function of the villa and the degree to which its residents were connected to the Roman administrative system.

However, the ceramic assemblage does not appear unusually high-status. As already stated, fine and imported wares come from a relatively narrow range of sources. It is also worth noting that the assemblage as a whole produced no examples

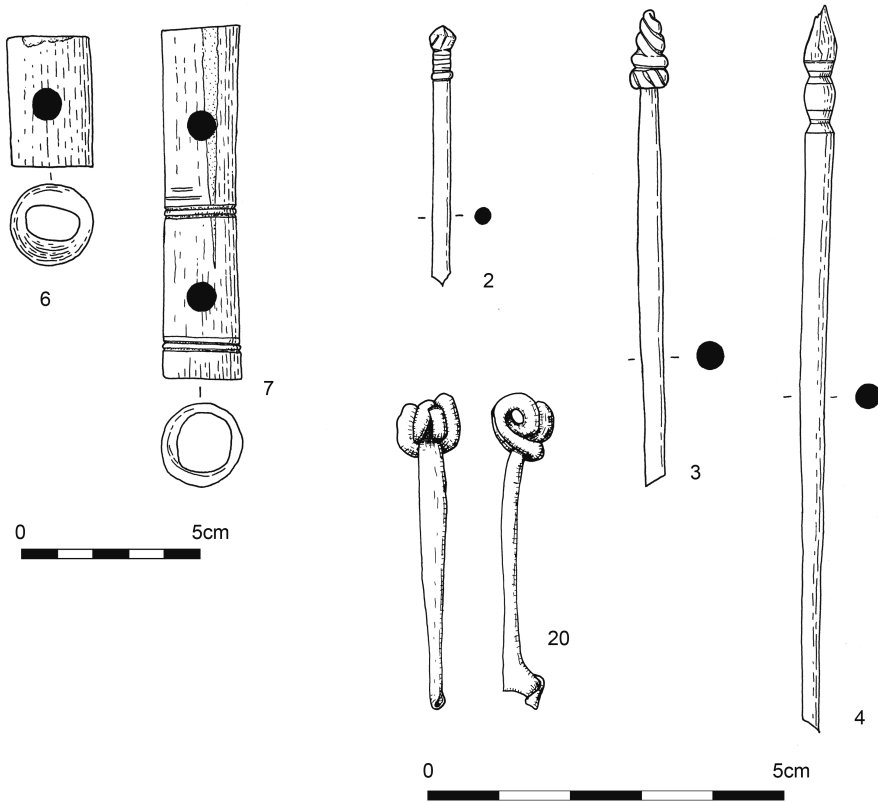


Fig. 10. Illustrated Registered Finds (RF). RF <2> to <4>: bone pins; RF <6> to <7>: bone hinges; RF <20>: copper alloy brooch.

of unusual amphorae or imported fine wares. This might be a result of the relatively small size of the current assemblage, but it contrasts with the (admittedly much larger) assemblage from Beddingham Villa (Lyne forthcoming).

Late Roman pottery

Fabric types indicative of late Roman activity, such as slipped Alice Holt Farnham, New Forest and Oxfordshire red-slipped wares are very few and concentrated within a small number of stratified contexts. These include demolition deposits [243] and [285] and fill [87], of well [85]. The latter also contained a coin of Constantius II (around AD 353–55). None of these are particularly large or diagnostic groups and cannot be dated very closely within the late 3rd to 4th centuries. Fragmentary feature sherds include a necked jar in New Forest parchment ware, bead-and-flange bowls in local grog-tempered wares and a pentice beaker in New Forest colour-coated ware. It is perhaps worth noting that Portchester

D ware, a fairly common element in mid/late-4th-century assemblages, was not observed at Springfield Road, perhaps suggesting that the coin from the well is one of the very latest artefacts from the site.

DISCUSSION

The excavation was hampered by the sheer amount of modern truncation. The surviving stratified deposits were restricted to a relatively small 'island' in the centre of the site, truncated on all sides down to the level of the Coombe Rock, with further extensive disturbance within the 'island' from 19th and 20th century pitting, episodes of robbing of Roman wall footings and various other interventions, including earlier archaeological trenching. Nevertheless, the plan of the north-eastern corner of the villa, including some internal walls, was recovered, allowing the overall ground plan prepared by Herbert Toms in 1926 to be refined.

CHRONOLOGY

In terms of dating the building construction and development, most of the recovered artefacts defied close-dating, but the pottery assemblage supports Toms' suggestion that the villa was built in the second half of the 2nd century and had been abandoned by the late 3rd century (Toms and Herbert 1926, 7), although the mid-4th-century coin found in the well suggests some degree of occupation for at least a few more decades.

Toms suggested a possible earlier building, based on finds from within pits, but there was no structural evidence to support this. The recent excavations also failed to find any significant 1st-century deposits predating the villa and certainly no evidence for earlier building phases.

Limited dating evidence associated with the construction of the two main walls was firmly mid- to late 2nd-century in date. Many writers on Roman villas in Sussex have loosely attached the Preston villa to a list of early sites, often very well-appointed and of some size, imposed on new sites within the existing Iron Age settlement pattern and occupied by local aristocrats (Drewett *et al.* 1988, 193; Rudling 2003, 118; Russell 2006, 138). However, the Preston villa does not seem to fit this pattern, either in terms of date or size. Other villas in the region grew out of earlier native farmsteads, often seeing a progression from timber to stone (Rudling 2003, 118) and this may be a better fit for Preston, particularly as there is some evidence for Iron Age activity on the site, albeit just three pits and a few scraps of residual pottery in later features.

No evidence for continuity of settlement, such as has been found at the Beddingham and Barcombe villas (Rudling 2016, 79–83 and 84–87), was found either in 2002–2004 or by Toms in 1926; comments in his report indicate that he was aware of the possibility of earlier phases and was actively looking for them.

Other datable features around the villa, including rubbish pits and a solitary inhumation burial, with the head to the north, also support the broad chronology for the villa. Earlier work produced evidence for at least one box burial on site, a type of funerary practice with a known cluster on the Sussex Coastal Plain and which was popular by the late 1st century but continued to be found into the early 3rd century (Philpott 1991, 17).

Traditionally, the villa is considered to have been destroyed by fire in the late 3rd century. Toms

and Herbert found numerous traces of burning and further limited evidence for fire was found in the recent excavations (for example, the late destruction deposit in Room 8).

The context for this destruction is unknown and could well have been accidental in cause, although a link has been suggested with the unrest associated with the rebel regimes of Carausius and Allectus, either from piratical attacks of the sort that inspired Carausius to set himself up as emperor in AD 288, or in the chaos and retribution that ensued when imperial forces regained control in AD 296 (Russell 2006, 265; Toms and Herbert 1926, 8).

Other coastal villas are known to have been abandoned at roughly the same time (for example, Fishbourne) and many iron-working sites in the eastern Weald also ceased production (Rudling 1998, 46).

Most of the few surviving upper deposits that appeared to be derived from demolition or abandonment could not be closely dated: a degraded mortar layer overlying the remains of the chalk floor in Room 7 was dateable only to AD 120–400, as was a demolition deposit associated with Wall 2 and the overburden sealing the tessellated floor in Room 2. However, a mixed soil layer containing pottery dated to AD 120–300 overlay a finds-rich deposit within Room 7 of early 3rd-century date (AD 200–250) and also the truncated Wall 2.

PLAN OF THE VILLA (Fig. 11)

The excavated plan of the villa is broadly symmetrical, comprising a small corridor villa (around 20m x 12m, or 16m including Room 5), of at least eight rooms (although some of these are capable of sub-division), constructed of flint, probably with half-timbered superstructures: numerous small pieces of daub were found across the site, some of which had wattle marks.

At least one chalk block forming a quoin was found at the south-east corner in 1926, similar to those found at the villa in West Blatchington (Norris and Burstow 1950, 39). Roof tiles were very scarce, probably due to later site clearance, but examples of *tegulae*, *imbrices* and ridge tiles were found, indicating a standard roof form, although with limited evidence for some use of Horsham Stone slabs.

A central core of three rooms (Rooms 1, 6 and 8) was enclosed to the south, west and north by two ostensibly L-shaped spaces (Rooms 4 and 7),

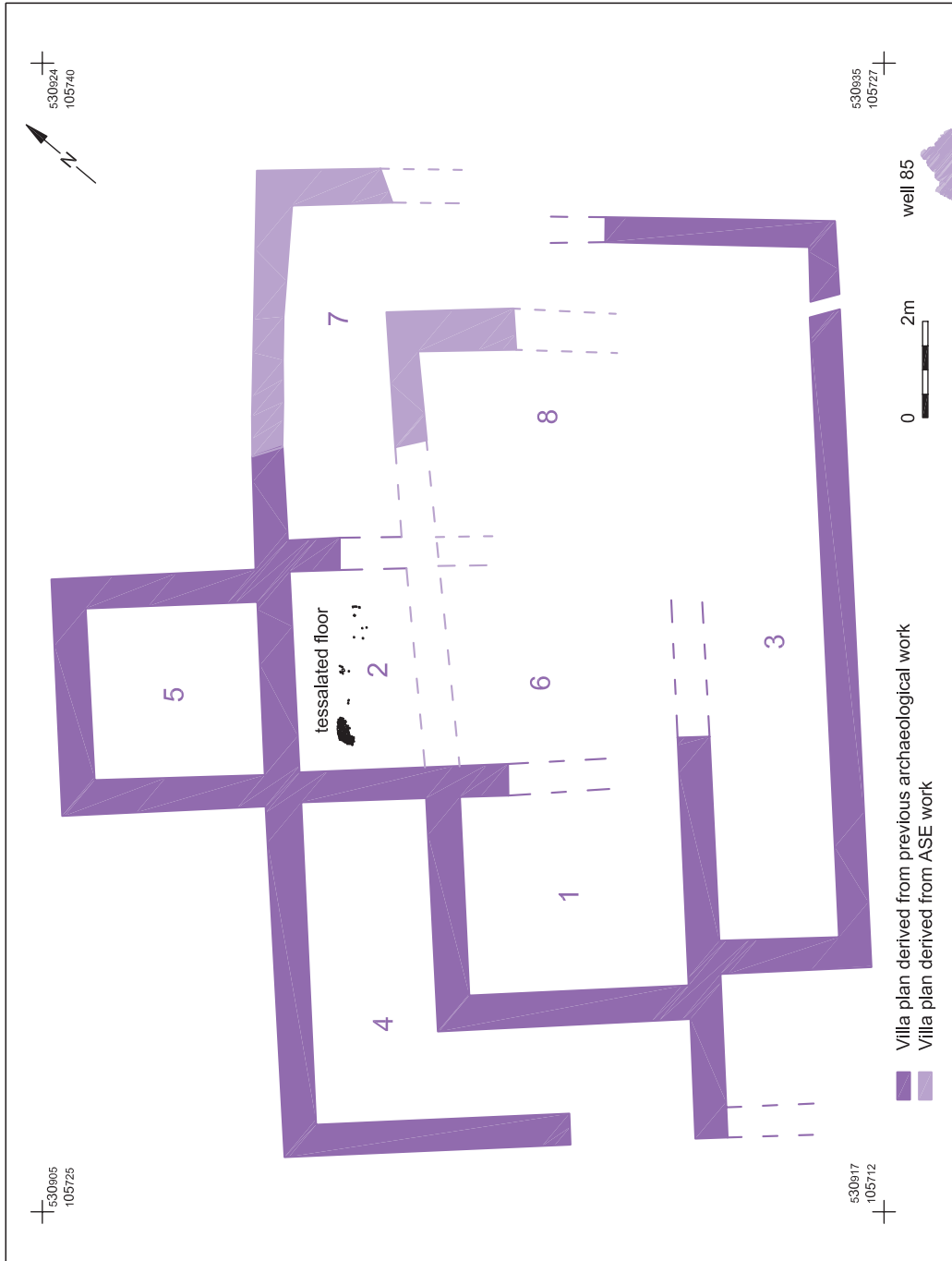


Fig. 11. Plan of villa layout from the 1926 and 2002–4 excavations.

separated by a smaller rectangular room (Room 2). A long narrow space (Room 3), probably a corridor, was located along the eastern side, with traces of a wing room at its western end, while a square room (Room 5) jutted out from the main western wall; Toms interpreted this as an addition due to the misalignment of its northern wall with that of Room 2 (Toms and Herbert 1926, 14), although this remains speculative as this part of the villa (and indeed almost all of the area planned by Toms) had been completely destroyed by the 1960s.

Many of the rooms had tessellated floors, some quite intricate in design, although the small patch surviving *in situ* in Room 2 was probably relatively plain. Painted wall plaster (none *in situ*) from Rooms 2, 7 and 8 (and scattered through various later deposits) suggests a simple decorative scheme of red and white, with occasional green elements, with possible dado schemes of red and white diagonal banding and pink with red spatters (Room 8).

Two small fragments of window glass indicate some glazing within the villa. No direct evidence for a hypocaust was found, although small quantities of box flue tiles suggest the possibility of some sort of underfloor heating system.

No evidence was found in the 2002–2004 excavations for any ancillary buildings, although some were found outside the site boundary in the 19th century. The villa is likely to have had a bathhouse and, if so, this may have been a separate building located some way from the main house to reduce the risk of fire (particularly necessary if the domestic structure was half-timbered). The villa at Goring, which was of similar size and layout to that at Preston, had a separate bathhouse more than 40m away (Rudling 1998, 50).

ECONOMY AND LANDSCAPE

The 2002–4 excavations concentrated on the settlement core of the villa site, and it is probable that the whole area of excavation was encompassed within an enclosure of some kind, as at the Beddingham and Barcombe villas (Rudling 2016). The artefactual assemblage from the site, while lacking anything spectacular or unusual, throws some light on the wider context of the villa.

The pottery was a mix of local and imported wares, including some Gaulish samian; other finds, such as glass vessels, also indicate links with areas outside the province, such as the Rhineland or even

further afield. These artefacts may have come to Preston by sea or by road.

The location and status of the access track to the villa has caused much argument over the years, with alternative routes for the main London to Brighton road (Margary Road 150) south of Hassocks extending either over the downs towards Portslade or down the Wellesbourne, past the Preston villa (Margary 1965, 96; Shields 1999). Unfortunately, the various phases of work at Preston villa have failed to throw any light on this issue. Margary's London to Brighton Road may not have continued southwards beyond Hassocks (other than by trackways), forming a 'T-junction' rather than a crossroads with the east–west 'Greensand Way' (Rudling 2016, 75).

The faunal assemblage from the site is typical of a small rural settlement. Cattle and sheep were the main animals represented, with lesser numbers of pig and horse, but also red deer, which are likely to have been hunted on the more wooded parts of the downs and possibly in the Weald. In total, it was a farming landscape that remained broadly consistent until at least the late medieval period.

Remains of three dogs were also found, including a small specimen probably representing a miniature toy dog, perhaps evidence for a family pet. Unsurprisingly for a coastal site, large amounts of shellfish were being consumed, including many oysters. Perforated oyster shells have been found elsewhere in Sussex, notably on the medieval settlement site at Hangleton, but their function remains a mystery (Holden 1963, 177).

Supplementary reports can be found on the ADS website at <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/sac/>. Follow the link to Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol 156.

Geological material by Luke Barber

Ceramic building material by Susan Pringle

Glass by Elke Raemen

Registered Finds by Trista Clifford

Coins by David Rudling

Nails by Trista Clifford

Animal bone by Lucy Sibun and Gemma Ayton

Human bone by Lucy Sibun

Worked flint by Karine Le Hégarat

Briquetage by Trista Clifford

Marine molluscs by David Dunkin

Acknowledgments

Archaeology South-East would like to thank Richard Hill, of Southern Primary Housing, for commissioning and funding the project and for kindly agreeing to some community involvement in 2002 in the form of weekend access by local volunteers from the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society,

under the direction of the author, with valuable support from John Funnell. The project was managed in the field by Ian Greig and in post-excavation by Luke Barber and Louise Rayner. The figures were prepared by Justin Russell, Fiona Griffin and Owain Mason (pottery). The site archive is currently held at the ASE Sussex office until deposition with Brighton Museum can be arranged.

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