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Landscape investigation on the Surrey greensand: fieldwork at Abinger and Holmbury, 1985–9

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A programme of fieldwalking and woodland inspection carried out between 1985 and 1989 shed light on the changing pattern of early settlement and land-use within the Tillingbourne valley. A 1km wide transect across the greensand lithologies provided a sample that can be cross-checked and used for comparison elsewhere. The Tillingbourne valley is shown to have been an important focal point for settlement throughout the past and while prehistoric activity is seen to be wide ranging across the landscape, that of the Roman and later periods is more nucleated.

In memory of Pat Nicolaysen 1923–2010

Introduction

This report is an abbreviated description of a programme of landscape investigation that took place at Abinger and Holmbury in Surrey between 1985 and 1989; the complete version being available digitally online (see *Endnote*). The focus was partly defined by the topography itself, a 6 x 1km transect bounded by the dramatic chalk escarpment in the north and the equally striking Lower Greensand escarpment that overlooks the Weald Clay in the south. The area encompassed known archaeological sites: Holmbury hillfort, the then little-known Roman villa at Abinger, while north of centre, and just beyond the eastern boundary of the transect lay the Abinger Manor Mesolithic (reputed) pit dwelling. In each case little was known of their hinterland or landscape context and the intention was to remedy this and provide some idea of landscape use, change and development. The investigation thus not only provides an assessment of the local archaeology but also a benchmark for comparison elsewhere on the greensand.

Topography and geology

The area is situated centrally within the block of greensand hills that lie between Guildford and Dorking (fig 1) and which is bounded by the Wey drainage in the west and the Mole valley in the east (fig 2). The river Tillingbourne, a tributary of the Wey, and here barely more than a stream, runs east to west acting as a focus for modern settlement, while a series of feeder streams drain into it from the Lower Greensand hills around Abinger Common, Leith Hill, Holmbury, Peaslake and Winterfold Heath, leaving a number of obsequent combes around Wotton and Abinger Commons where former minor streams have eroded the topography. Of relevance here is an unnamed stream (known locally as the Sutton stream), which rises from springs at Holmbury St Mary, flows north through the hamlet of Sutton and joins the Tillingbourne at Abinger Hammer. These often deeply incised rivers and streams leave bluffs overlooking them, particularly on the south side of the Tillingbourne. In the south of the area alongside the greensand escarpment, springs issue from the junction of the Hythe Beds and Atherfield Clay (fig 3) and drain to the south, in one case sapping back northwards leaving a watershed around Holmbury St Mary.

The respective escarpments of the chalk and Lower Greensand provide striking landscape features, both acting as natural barriers, particularly when approached from the south. The

escarpments afford commanding views to the south, and frame the views when looking north from southerly locations. The dip slope of the greensand faces north, gently sloping towards the Tillingbourne. The soft sands with patches of resistant seams have resulted in a picturesque landscape of hills, some undulating, others steep and dramatic. The higher ground of the greensand escarpment in the south around Holmbury Hill, for example, is the result of harder layers of chert that have resisted weathering. Within the study area the Folkestone Beds ridge, less than 0.5km south of the chalk escarpment, stands out, leaving a narrow east–west valley between them. To the south of the Tillingbourne, the Tolt, a conical hill reaching 148m OD is locally prominent providing extensive views and from which the land slopes rapidly northwards towards the river.

The geology of the area comprises ribbons of sand and clay, each with their own topographical and vegetal characteristics, arranged east to west and situated between the chalk escarpment in the north and the Weald Clay in the south (fig 3). At the foot of the chalk escarpment is a narrow deposit of Upper Greensand little more than 100m wide. Abutting this is an equally narrow deposit of Gault clay, a sticky impervious material, blue/grey on exposure but weathering to a brown colour and interrupted on the ground by an east–west railway line. Moving south again a rather wider deposit of Folkestone Beds occurs, comprising quartzose sands sometimes stained various colours but often clean and white. Seams of ferruginous sandstone or carstone as well as ironstone occur within this and such

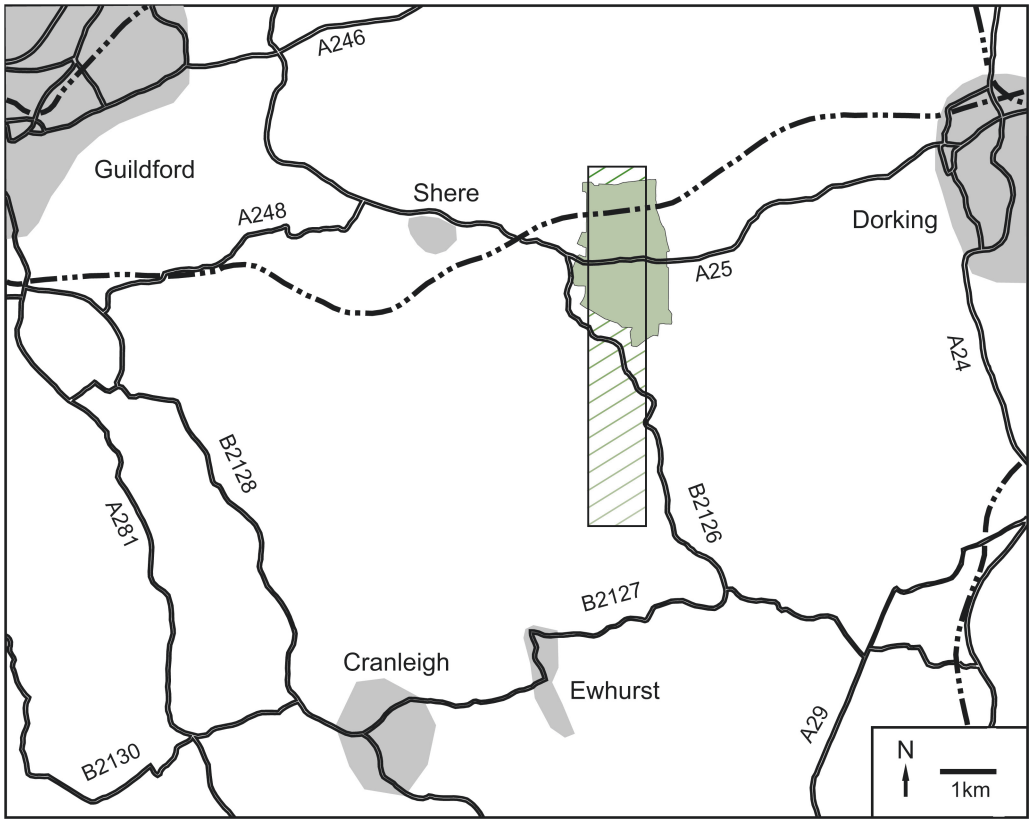

Fig 1 Abinger/Holmbury. Map of the local area showing the survey transect (black outline rectangle). The location of the areas shown in figures 4–7 are in green; most of this land was fieldwalked. The area shown hatched is mainly heathland and woodland and the subject of a topographical survey. The dotted and dashed line shows the course of the railway.

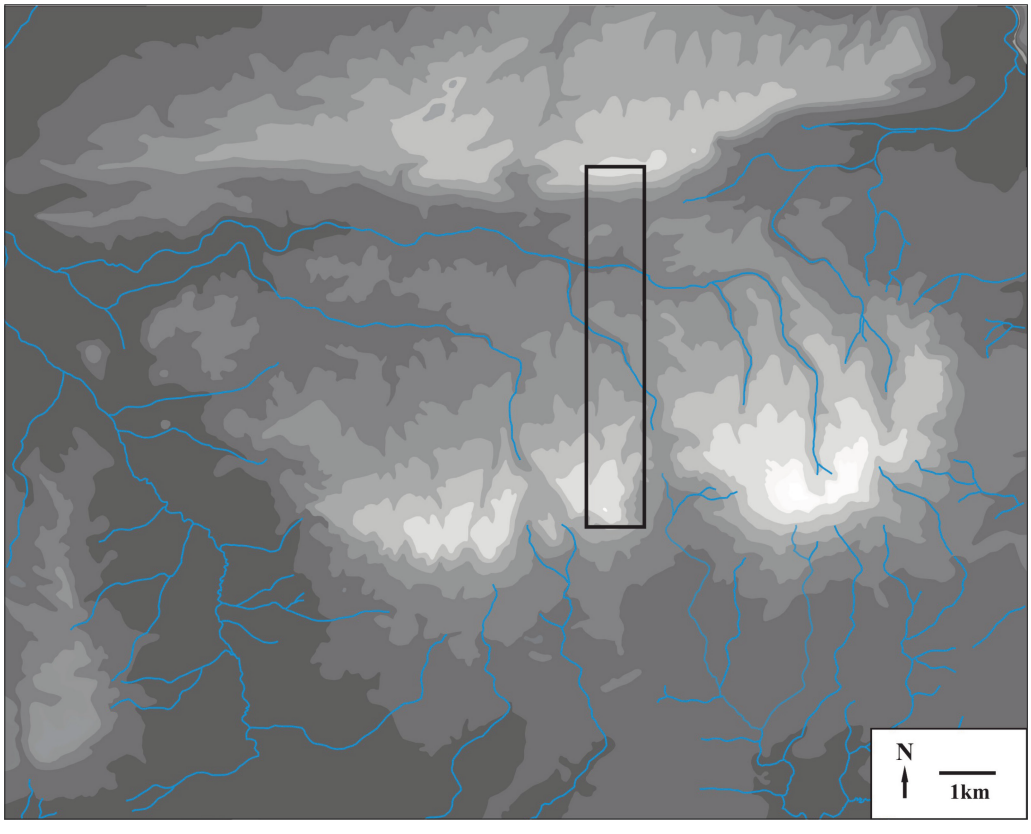

Fig 2 Abinger/Holmbury. Topography of the greensand between the rivers Wey and Mole, showing the position of the survey transect. Contours are depicted at 10m intervals with land below 45m OD darkest grey.

material is often spread around on the surface by cultivation. The major deposit of Hythe Beds, coarse brown sand interspersed with layers of tabular sandstone and seams of chert, extends for over 4km southwards as far as the escarpment at Holmbury Hill. However, spreads of Sandgate Beds, here mostly the lower deposit known as the Bargate Beds, overlie it on either side of the Tillingbourne (Gallois 1965, 34). Terrace gravel and alluvium also fringe the river in places.

Today, cultivation is mostly confined to the areas of Sandgate Beds and the gravel terraces. Early cartography, for example Roque's map of 1768, indicates that for the most part fields in cultivation today are those that were cultivated during the 18th century and presumably much earlier. Any earthworks on the Sandgate Beds were destroyed long ago in contrast to the Hythe Beds where traces can survive among the woodland. The latter, located in the south of the transect, incorporates part of the Hurtwood, an extensive area of manorial common land, partly planted with trees, but formerly quite open, that was depicted as heath on Roque's map.

Method

The area lies at the heart of Surrey's central block of greensand and the chosen transect can be considered to represent a sample across the various lithologies and thus generally representative of the whole. It was considered that an area 1km wide, a little less than the width of a parish, should provide enough information without the project becoming

unmanageable. The area of study thus formed a transect across geological formations defined by Ordnance Survey eastings TQ 10–11 and northings 43–49, an area of 6 km from north to south and 1km in width (figs 1 and 2). Reports on some of the more interesting sites encountered during the project – a particularly intense flint scatter at Paddington Farm (Field *et al* 1987), a gunpowder processing site at Abinger (English & Field 1992), and a Late Iron Age enclosure (Field 1989) at Felday – were published as work developed.

Cultivated fields were generally fairly small, and consequently each was taken as a collection unit (fig 4) (fieldwalking methodology can be found in the full version online). In contrast, extensive areas of woodland and heath posed problems for investigation, particularly on the Folkestone Beds and Hythe Beds. The most problematical areas were close-planted plantations where visibility was restricted to a few metres, while elsewhere bracken and extensive tracts of bilberry (known locally as hurt) also rendered much of the surface unobservable. Notes of the position and description of earthworks were made as they were encountered and they are probably correct to *c* 10m, but given the potential for error in positional accuracy, observations are presented within 100m grid squares (in online version: see *Endnote*). An enclosure discovered in woodland above Felday was surveyed and given further attention (Field 1989).

The survey

Results are presented in two parts: a) where surfaces have been levelled and artefacts have been collected from the surface of cultivated fields and b) where there are surviving earthworks.

CULTIVATED FIELDS

Material recovered from the surface of cultivated fields is mostly flint. Only a few sherds of prehistoric pottery were found and Romano-British or later material was similarly relatively sparse.

The results of the recovery of material are presented here as a series of plots each showing the distribution of selected artefact types (figs 5–7) and a commentary on these can be found in the online version (see *Endnote*). Material can be seen to cluster more strongly in some areas than others and this provides an indication that some parts of the landscape were favoured for certain activities over others.

WOODLAND

The major feature recorded in the southern woodland was an enclosure subsequently named the Felday Enclosure after the hamlet of Felday immediately to the south (Holmbury St Mary is a 20th century catch-all name for the hamlets of Felday and Pitland Street). Two trenches across its rampart excavated in 1984–5, established a 1st century date (Field 1989), although recent re-analysis of the pottery has identified a Middle Iron Age component (Seager Thomas 2010). Within the enclosure are the remnants of a First World War prisoner of war camp and both enclosure and prisoner of war camp have since received further investigative work (Newell *et al* 2016), but by which time beam slots of huts formerly visible in the leaf litter had been lost to forestry operations. Aside from the enclosure and the previously known Holmbury hillfort, the greatest number of observations was of quarries and occasional ditches or tramways (in online version, see *Endnote*; Bannister 2004).

PASTURE

Apart from those alongside the Tillingbourne few fields were under pasture and only Hammer Meadow, south of the forge at Abinger Hammer (TQ 0975 4720), contained earthworks. These were surveyed and analysed in 1989, then reported separately (English & Field 1992).

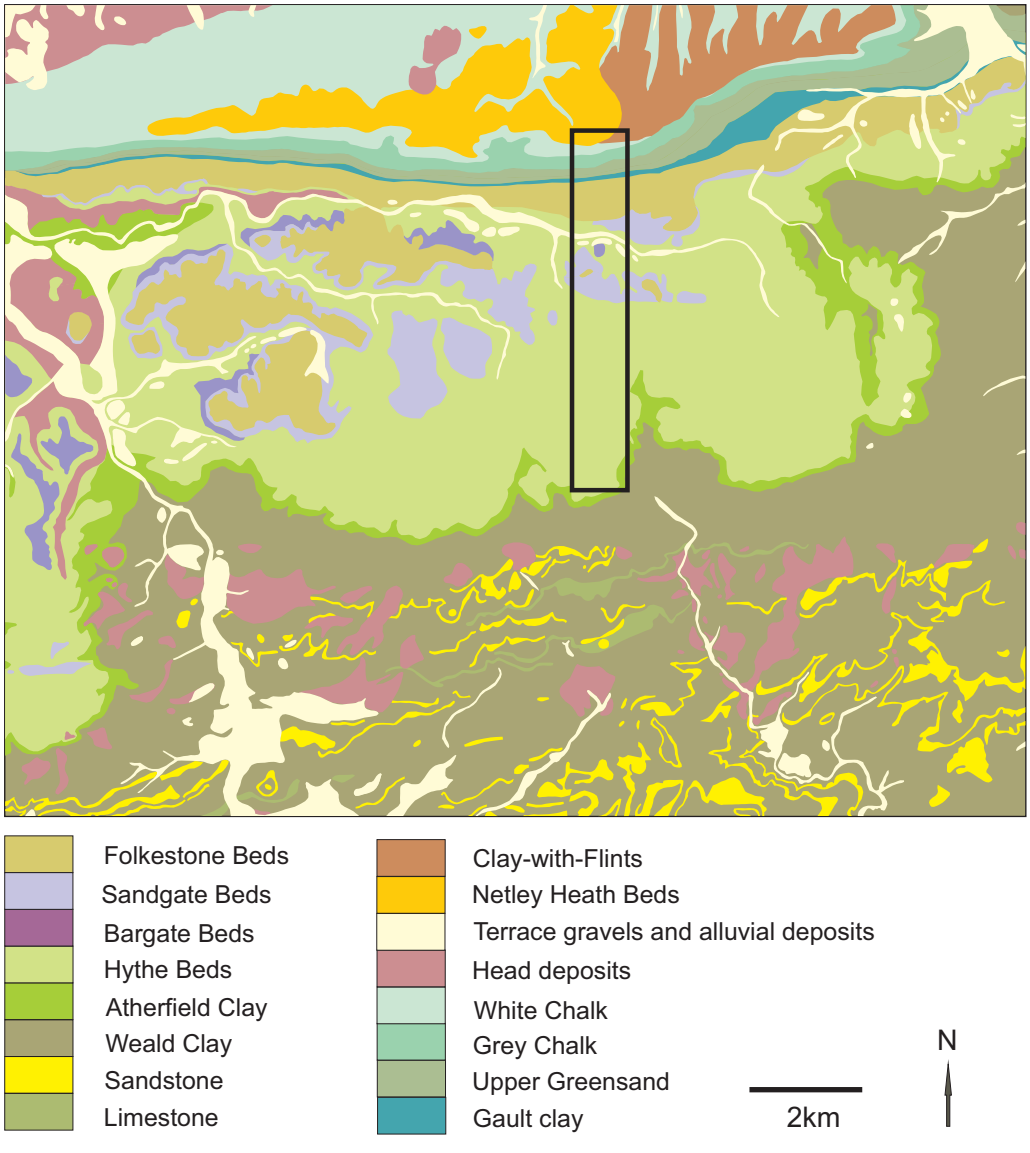

Fig 3 Abinger/Holmbury. Geology of the area between the rivers Wey and Mole showing the location of the survey transect.

The unusual nature of a series of platforms, mounds and depressions linked by ditches and apparent hollow ways cast doubt over initial considerations that they represented deserted medieval settlement. Instead, the presence of water-related channels led to the view that they were of an industrial nature and a plan of *c* 1789 (SHC: G53/107) showing the position of a corning house and charge house suggests that the site was prepared for gunpowder manufacture, the water channels presumably being constructed to move materials around the site by barge.

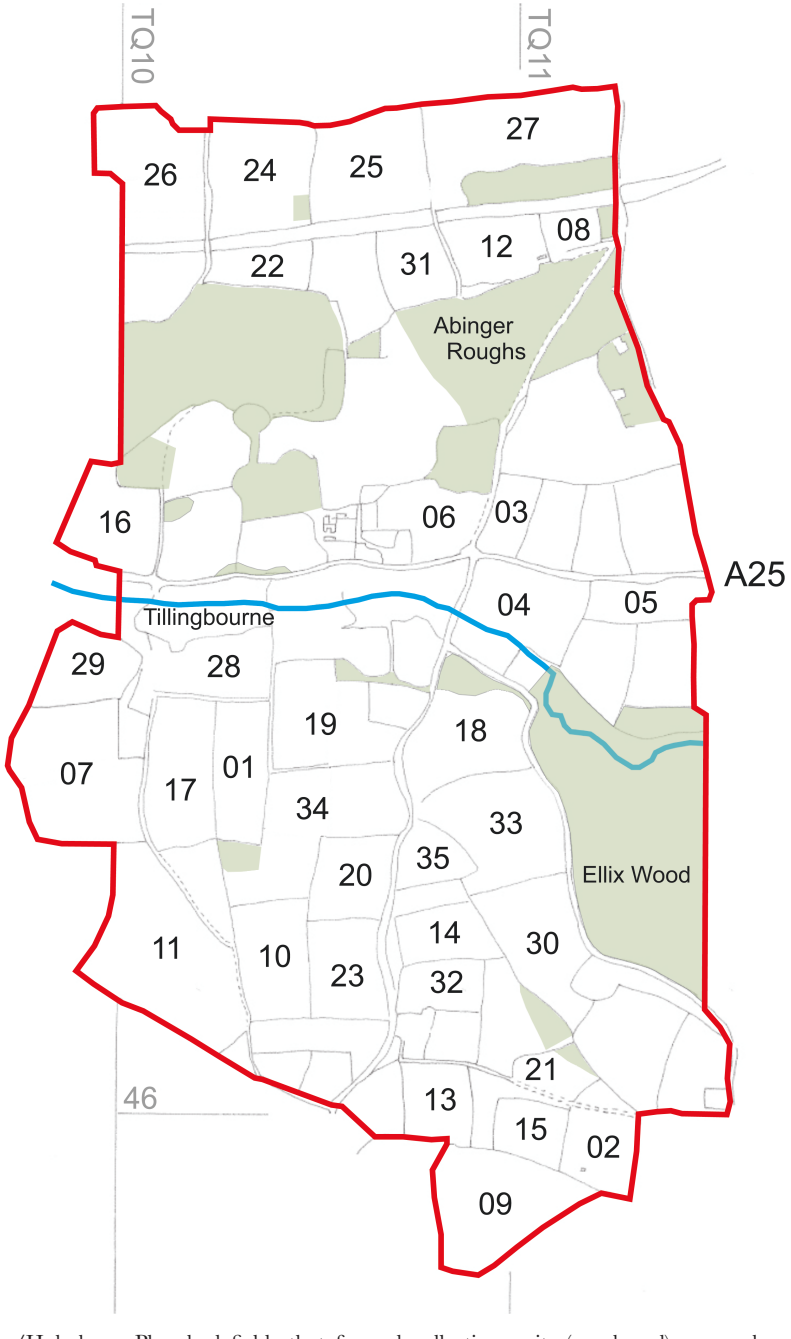

Fig 4 Abinger/Holmbury. Ploughed fields that formed collection units (numbered); unnumbered fields (not walked); woodland (green tone).

Discussion

MESOLITHIC

No collection unit was entirely devoid of material but at a glance it is clear that some sites were favoured over others. The sandy Folkestone Beds produced a very large number of finds of both tools and waste material (figs 5–7). Sites in Field 08, immediately below the chalk escarpment might be seen as a continuation of those sites recorded in Sandy Meadow immediately to the east (Hooper 1927, 223; Carpenter 1961, 110–11; Corcoran 1963, 18; Winser 1987), which cluster around the spring of an unnamed stream that feeds into the Pipp Brook and which, in turn, drains into the river Mole near Dorking. More recent work here encountered additional evidence of Mesolithic activity that included finds of an obliquely-backed point and a Horsham point (Hooker *et al* 2014) and, considered in conjunction with the earlier finds, indicate that activity occurred during all phases of the Mesolithic period. The location was clearly attractive, the escarpment providing shelter from northerly winds, the sands well-drained but with the Gault clay nearby providing a variety of ecological possibilities and it undoubtedly became a favoured locale, evidently being persistently visited in the manner outlined by Barton *et al* (1995) at the former lake basin at Waun Fignen Felen in the Black Mountains of Wales, or within Surrey, at North Park Farm, Bletchingley (Jones 2013). Whether it was the spring in particular that attracted attention might be tested by investigating the landscape to the east in order to ascertain whether Mesolithic presence was commonplace further along the stream. A small scatter of struck flint apparently of Mesolithic affinities found between Park Farm and Coombe Cottages (*c* TQ 123 458) may indicate that it does (Winser Records); certainly, springs elsewhere appear to have attracted Mesolithic interest. One need only refer to the sites at Farnham (Clark & Rankine 1939) and Carshalton (Orton 1979) in Surrey, or further afield at Ulwell (Rankine 1962) and Blashenwell (Calkin 1953) in Purbeck, or Culver Well on the Isle of Portland (Palmer 1999) or, more recently that at Blick Mead, Amesbury, Wiltshire (Jacques 2014) to make the point.

It is perhaps of little surprise that Field 29 and those fields on the bluff around Crossways Farm overlooking the Tillingbourne contain Mesolithic material. Field 29 may be particularly important being positioned at a confluence of a feeder stream from the south, but is also adjacent to Field 28 from which very large quantities of material were recovered (Field *et al* 1987, 91–102). The fields are separated by a shallow gully and both occur on iron-rich Bargate Beds with a remnant gravel terrace closer to the river, although whether this and the potential of the Bargates as a source of ochre had a bearing on choice of location is unclear. Nodules and primary flakes indicate that knapping of raw material was taking place in both fields although some of this might of course be attributable to later periods, but the presence of tranchet adze-heads and a sharpening flake do suggest some heavy activity. Blades, blade cores and snapped blades are all numerous and the spread of burnt flint might be taken to represent at least some domestic activity. Study of the microliths from Field 28 suggests that the site was visited during the Horsham as well as Later Mesolithic periods and assessment of material from Field 29 is similar; one and probably two obliquely-backed points, together with three Horsham points, one isosceles triangle and one four-sided piece, collectively indicate a considerable timespan (online version Appendix 4: see *Endnote*).

Other sites of slightly less intensive activity occur along the river banks. Blade cores occurred in high proportions in Field 16 as well as Field 06 and to a lesser extent Field 03 along the northern bank, while above average numbers of blades occurred in Fields 16 and 06, as well as lesser quantities in Field 04. Whether there is near continuous activity along the northern bank is unclear because of the interruption in cultivated spaces by the buildings of Abinger Hall and Cocks Farm/Eversheds. However, a tranchet adze was formerly recovered from Abinger Hammer by A E P Collins (Rankine 1938), while a few Mesolithic flints from Crossways Farm, which would otherwise interrupt the sequence, also exist among his collection (Wymer 1977, 267). A little further west another site was identified at Southbrook Farm (*ibid*, 285). Again, just west of the transect, a prolific site which extends southwards

Fig 5 Abinger/Holmbury. Distribution of a) secondary flakes b) flake cores c) blades d) blade cores. Finds density: light grey = 1 x standard deviation (SD); mid-grey = 2 x SD; dark grey = 3 x SD above average for the area fieldwalked.

to Fulvens Farm (Winser Archive). occurs on the bluff overlooking the Abinger Hammer cricket pitch. Burnt flint that may be related to this period occurred in Field 19 as well as Fields 04 and 06 along the northern bank of the river. Whether this distribution on both banks of the river is confined to the Abinger Hammer stretch of the Tillingbourne is unclear and needs testing; however, a scatter of flakes and blades from 'Chalketts', Horsley Copse, Wotton (TQ 128 473) and others from the fields between Crossways Farm and Brickyard Cottages, Wotton (Winser Archive) hint that it may well be the case.

Further south scatters are less intense although no less important; those in Fields 11, 09 and 15 stand out. Field 15 lies close to the reputed pit-dwelling site at Abinger Manor, but it is curious that the field containing the pit-dwelling itself was not prominent in terms of material collected from the surface, except perhaps for snapped blades and utilised pieces. Major Beddington Behrens' surface collection of Mesolithic material from the field which led to Dr Louis Leakey's excavation was, however, confined to a relatively small area (Leakey 1951, 7) and it may be that this is now all but covered by the protective hut.

The nature of the pit-dwelling site itself has been the focus of debate (Ellaby 1987); the asymmetry in profile and roughly V-shaped cross-section have led to a suggestion that the pit is in fact a tree-throw hole. Whether this is so, the presence of two postholes at one end together with a group of charred stones and two hearths beyond the confines of the pit indicate that a structure of some kind was erected and activity extended beyond the life of a single fire. Similar controversy concerns a structure excavated in Weston Wood, Albury further to the west (Anon 1967; 1968; Harding 1968) where a shallow pit 4m in diameter x *c* 0.3m deep was surrounded by stakeholes in a similar manner to an undoubted Mesolithic house at Broom Hill, Hampshire (O'Malley & Jacobi 1978). However, a Neolithic date is just as likely for the Weston Wood site as Neolithic pottery was found close to the feature, while petit-tranchet arrowheads were present among the flint assemblage (Ellaby 1987, 67; Field & Cotton 1987, 77 and see also Russell 1989).

In the case of the Abinger pit, an even smaller scatter of Mesolithic flints closer to the Manor House included Horsham points and geometrics that did not occur in the pit-dwelling, the patina on them being quite different from those in the pit. If the amount of flint recovered is any guide, these appear to be small sites: just over 200 pieces were recovered from the topsoil around the pit-dwelling during excavation and while a nearby spring provided fresh water, it does not seem to have attracted the same degree of interest as the spring in Sandy Meadow. Conventionally, the Abinger pit site is envisaged as a hunting camp and the small, well-defined area of activity, when compared with for example, Field 28, indicates that it was only rarely visited.

The degree and nature of Mesolithic use of the Hythe Beds remains uncertain owing to the lack of opportunity for flint recovery. Little was noted on fire breaks or forest rides, but Barfoot & Cotton (1989) recorded the presence of microliths, microburins, blades, blade cores and adzes in the area, while a tranchet adze was found on the south-west escarpment of Holmbury Hill in 1931 (Guildford Museum acc no 7690) all suggesting that the vegetation masks other sites.

If the evidence from the present survey holds good for the rest of the greensand, and support can be found in the work of Rankine and other collectors that it does, the implication is of relatively intense activity across the length of the greensand throughout the Mesolithic. The greensand, particularly in west Surrey, has often been noted for the large number of flint implements collected from local fields. The Rev W H F Edge, S Allden, Canon F O'Farrell, H A Mangles, the Rev C Kerry, and others all amassed large collections of material. Much of this was summarised by W F Rankine in his contribution to *A Survey of the Prehistory of the Farnham District* (Oakley *et al* 1939), but equally large concentrations of material were found elsewhere on the greensand. East of the Mole gap the task fell to John Shelley and W Hooper (1933), while material from recent excavations at Franks' Sandpit, Betchworth (Williams 2017) and North Park Farm, Bletchingley (Jones 2013) testify to repeated interest in those areas. Between the Wey and the Mole rivers, a number of other collectors were at

Fig 6 Abinger/Holmbury. Distribution of a) snapped blades b) burnt flint c) scrapers d) utilised pieces. Finds density: see caption for figure 5.

work. C H Grinling and A E P Collins assembled material from Shere, Abinger and Peaslake, Lt-Col H H Godwin-Austen from around Blackheath, Albury, and Dr W Watson and A V Keeble from Shere and Holmbury. Little of this was collected on a formal basis and it cannot be assessed in relation to its landscape, or to other sites. It is not even clear how representative some of the collections are, but the material does provide some background and a rough framework.

While the greensand lends itself to a natural home range, it is not clear whether such a range might be restricted to that formation alone or whether it might incorporate a wider area as part of a domain. The increasing amount of Mesolithic material found in the Low Weald (eg Ellaby 2004; English 1990) certainly needs to be taken into account. Mellars and Rheinhardt (1978, 281–2) point out that locations were often favoured where two or more ecological zones could be exploited and on the greensand a variety of different geological beds and soil types can be utilised within a short distance of 6km or so and it might rarely be necessary to travel greater distances. To subsist here, it is not necessary to ascend to the chalk or descend to the Low Weald, in each case strenuous tasks, for life on the greensand can be self-contained. It may even be that such a rich variety of resources encouraged an increasingly settled way of life. If anything, this tends to support Rankine's view of the topography here having significant influence over settlement locations.

Rankine (1949, 6) believed that the Mesolithic concentrations on the greensand in west Surrey were the result of the topography, being 'a fortunate mingling of favourable geological and topographical factors [...] unlimited stores of flint, and well drained soils which favourably influenced ecological conditions'. He thought that the altitude of the chalk scarp and degree of slope of the chalk were factors in affecting accessibility of flint and identified four types of site: a) flint-gathering sites on the fringe of the chalk, b) fishing camps along the rivers, c) a series of hilltop sites that were not easily explained, and d) hunting camps, the dominant site type but which usually lay remote from the chalk outcrop. Seen like this Field 08 could be interpreted as a flint procurement site, Field 29 and the Crossways Farm sites as fishing camps, and Fields 11 and 09 as hunting camps, although this would undoubtedly be a gross oversimplification were we to accept it. Certainly Field 08 represents more than procurement, while location along the Tillingbourne might be for a number of factors other than fishing.

In terms of hunting, while game might move freely along the east to west corridors, at the foot of the chalk or along the Tillingbourne, or northwards along the Holmbury valley, certain bluff sites would be ideal for observing progress, although social conventions may impede movement for humans. In any case the human relationship with animals is likely to have been more intimate (Ingold 2000). Humans too will have had bases and a home range.

NEOLITHIC

Leaf-shaped arrowheads are distributed widely across the topography (fig 7b). Fields 29, 04 and 18 are all situated close to the Tillingbourne, others in fields to the south including Field 11 and the higher ground approaching the Abinger pit-dwelling field. It is worth noting that Major Behrens was surprised at the number of leaf-shaped arrowheads encountered during his search of the pit-dwelling field, two of which were illustrated and were found together with two ground flint axe-head fragments (Leakey 1951, 42 and fig 12). Also illustrated was a petit-tranchet derivative arrowhead, a type generally assigned to the 3rd millennium BC, examples of which were found during the present survey in the riverside fields around Crossways Farm. A further ground axe-head fragment was found in Field 02 – the Abinger pit-dwelling field, during the present survey and others were recovered from Fields 09 and 11 adding to the interest in the higher ground but in particular around Field 02.

If we take the flake cores and secondary flakes as indicative of Neolithic activity (fig 5) Field 08 below the chalk escarpment stands out as do the riverside sites at Fields 29 and 04. These would appear to be the more intensely occupied areas. All of these saw earlier activity

during the Mesolithic and it might be considered that the reason for initial occupation of these spots persisted, but also that over time these places became embedded in tradition to the extent that tenurial rights may have attached, with the presence of ancestral artefacts on the surface adding to the symbolic significance of the 'place'. Fields 16 and 06 along the northern bank of the Tillingbourne produced good numbers of flake cores, but whether distribution continued further west is uncertain as cultivated fields are interrupted by the buildings and grounds of Abinger Hall and Cocks Farm/Eversheds. It is perhaps noteworthy that the blade of a Neolithic ground flint axe-head was found to the north of Eversheds in 1965 (Surrey HER 65).

In the north, many flakes and cores and all types of arrowheads have been recorded from Sandy Meadow, just east of the transect (Hooper 1927, 223; Carpenter 1961, 110–11) and more recent work here has helped define the separate areas of Neolithic and Mesolithic activity (Winser 1987). To the south, leaf-shaped arrowheads and a ground axe-head together with other Neolithic flintwork have been found across the paths and rides of the Hythe Beds, in particular around Holmbury Hill where at least twenty scrapers have been recovered (Barfoot & Cotton 1989; Hooker & Williams 2016; *VCH* 1902; Winser Archive) and a basalt-like stone spearhead from the lower eastern slopes (Elmore 1983). A ground flint axe-head was also found on the eastern slopes (at TQ 1077 4388) when an area was being levelled for Holmbury St Mary cricket pitch (Anon 1902, x). It is noteworthy that the survey observed that the area levelled for the pitch cut into a long bank or mound *c* 15m wide, reaching no more than 1m in height and about 60m in length (see also Bannister 2004, 72). Of shallow profile, this is oriented north to south with a ditch or hollow on the west. It is by no means clear whether it is a natural feature or of human construction. Other finds have been made in the area of the cricket pitch particularly from the tracks to its east and around the car park (Winser Archive). Nearby, disturbance resulting from the 1987 storm revealed a concentration of struck flints at Bluebell Walk (TQ 1095 4365). Two further axe-heads, one of them ground, were found on the lip of the scarp overlooking Felday hamlet (TQ 1065 4430) according to annotations on a map prepared by A E P Collins. How representative of the Hythe Beds these finds may be is unclear, but similar finds come from Heathy Brow in Pasture Wood to the east of the transect and in the southern part of Pasture Wood (Winser Collection: see *Endnote*). Clear felling of Heathy Brow following a fire in 1976 allowed recovery of Neolithic material that incorporated leaf-shaped arrowheads, ground axe-heads and scrapers, together with Mesolithic microliths and blades (Winser Records: see *Endnote*). A ground axe-head from here was found by A V Keebles (Keebles Collection – now dispersed), another by A Newman, another (from TQ 112 453) is among the H Potter Collection, while part of an axe-head along with a flake from an axe were found by one of the authors (Winser Collection). A bank and ditch roughly aligned east-north-east at TQ 116 450 remains uninvestigated.

A single rim fragment of what may an Ebbsfleet bowl was recovered from the southern valley slopes close to Ellix Wood (online Appendix 5: see *Endnote*), but other than this, evidence of the Neolithic period is provided only by the flintwork. Like its Mesolithic counterpart knapped flint is generally of a higher quality on the greensand than on the chalk downs, that is to say, it is finely and more keenly knapped, a point appreciated long ago by Frank Lasham (1893a and b). There are none of the crude artefacts or flakes associated with Neolithic sites on the chalk (eg Care 1979; Field *et al* 1990). Intensity of distribution also appears to be greater on the greensand; compared with the chalk at Norbury Park, where fieldwalking of an area of 51.3ha produced 1395 pieces of flint (English in prep), an average of 27.2 per ha, compared to 12,510 from 156ha at Abinger, an average of 80.1 per ha. As the present survey has demonstrated, flint artefacts are ubiquitous across the area, but a number of accumulations can also be identified from adjacent locales. From Postford Farm, Albury, come arrowheads, a ground axe-head flake, a 'slug knife', and a good number of flakes, although the extent of the recovery area is unknown (Grinling-Collins Collection, Guildford

Museum; Hooper Collection, Guildford Museum and Holmesdale Natural History Club Museum).

Just to the west of the transect, Far Corner (now Drovers), a house off Wonham Way, Peaslake, which lies on the edge of a north-facing spur 1km to the south of the Tillingbourne and close to the southern edge of the Hammer Field and Fulvenden Farm, formerly produced a remarkable concentration of struck flints. A number of diagnostic pieces including leaf-shaped arrowheads were recovered from this location (Winser Records), but particularly notable is the material in the Grinling-Collins Collection (Guildford Museum), which includes parts of five ground axe-heads (listed in Appendix 9 online: see *Endnote*). Less than 1km to the west lies Burrows Wood, site of a cache of three Neolithic axe-heads (Bruce-Mitford 1938). In addition to the pieces recovered by the present project some 33 complete or fragmentary ground axe-heads have been found in the area either within the transect zone or nearby (Field & Woolley 1984, microfiche). Many of these are of good quality and well formed, at least seven having faceted sides. The broken and fragmentary pieces indicate that these were used tools and the flakes show that the material was being reused. In addition, the three unground axes found at Burrows Wood are often taken to represent products from the Sussex flint mines (Barber *et al* 1999). All of these can be compared with the 49 complete and broken ground axe-heads from the greensand around Limpsfield (Field & Woolley 1984, microfiche).

The extensive Grinling-Collins Collection (Guildford Museum) contains much of Neolithic interest from the Shere, Peaslake and Abinger areas. Large numbers of leaf-shaped, tranchet derivative, and barbed and tanged arrowheads are present, as are scrapers. Twenty-five mixed period scrapers are present from Tower Hill Farm, Shere, 27 from Lane End Farm, Shere, and 33 from Kingslands, Abinger, all very clearly a product of selective recovery techniques. Between Raikes and Paddington Farms in Abinger a scatter was noted as containing flakes and various scraper forms (Wood 1952, 23–4). There is some indication that higher ground, or knolls, set back from the Tillingbourne river provided a focus for settlement. Thus, in addition to the flintwork recorded here, Neolithic material has been recovered from Weston Wood (Russell 1989), from the higher ground around Far Corner, Peaslake, and Bury Hill, Westcott. Further east, material including a Peterborough bowl from Box Hill Sand Pit (online Appendix 10: see *Endnote*) and flintwork from Franks' Sandpit, Betchworth (Williams 2017), come from a similar position overlooking the river Mole at Brockham.

To the east of the Mole gap the greensand is less well explored. However, in those places where collectors have operated activity matching that in the west is revealed. Box Hill Sand Pit at Betchworth lies on the northern slopes of a knoll on the Folkestone Beds with the terraces of the river Mole looping around less than 1 km to the west and south. Finds attributed to a number of archaeological periods have been recovered here since 1928 as quarrying has progressed (eg Hooper 1933, 69–70; Williams 2017). The Neolithic finds make up a neat group similar to those from Far Corner even though there is no evidence of direct association or indeed how close together they were found. The Hooper Collection (Guildford and Holmesdale Natural History Club Museums) contains much flint material of Neolithic date from the greensand, especially from the Reigate Heath and Redhill Common areas. In a field on the east side of Ladbroke Road, close to Redhill Station, two circular patches of black greasy earth marked by luxuriant vegetation and containing calcined flints and fragments of burnt bone were observed by John Shelley and were presumed to have been the sites of tumuli (Evans 1860, 71). Apparently from the same field, a large collection of flintwork was made by Shelley, but the description and the presence of a number of large obliquely-backed points now in the Pitt Rivers and Ashmolean Museums, Oxford, suggests an Early Mesolithic date (*ibid*, 72–3; Ellaby 1987, 61).

Whether these sites are genuine discrete home bases or otherwise favoured areas is unclear. To a degree, of course, each reflects the search area of a local collector, but the present survey indicates that scatters are indeed ubiquitous across the topography and

Fig 7 Abinger/Holmbury. Distribution of a) microliths and tranchet adzes b) arrowheads and ground axe-heads c) Romano-British pottery d) medieval pottery.

if investigated the rest of the greensand in the Weald might provide similar evidence. It would seem that settlement on the greensand during the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods was quite intense.

BRONZE AGE

Evidence of Early Bronze Age activity is less visible. A plano-convex 'slug knife' was found in Field 09 and a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead was found in the same field during the present survey. At least five other barbed-and-tanged arrowheads were formerly noted at The Chalks by Major Behrens (Leakey 1951, fig 12) and a further example from Field 08 was illustrated in an article by John Pull (1935, 637), while two others were found at Holmbury Hill (Barfoot & Cotton 1989; Thompson 1979, 269). These are located in areas of former Neolithic activity and may be casual losses, but such locations on the upper slopes of valleys are frequently adopted for barrow construction. Some of the other material found on rides and excavations on Holmbury Hill may also be Bronze Age in date although it is difficult to determine how the area might have been occupied or utilised. Whether some of the shallow quarries on the Hythe Beds represent activity of this period is unknown, but it becomes an intriguing possibility given the cargo of Bromsgrove Sandstone found in the bottom of a Middle Bronze Age log boat from Shardlow near Derby (Derby Museum) and the number of perforated implements made of sandstone (Field & Woolley 1984).

A number of sherds of Bronze Age pottery were recovered from Field 08, together with a more diagnostic Late Bronze Age sherd found in Field 24 a little further west. More recent work at Field 08 has added significantly to this numerically, by identifying further Late Bronze Age material and by providing greater precision regarding location in the south-east portion of the field (Hooker *et al* 2014). In addition, some 300 sherds mostly of post-Deverel-Rimbury type from here are in the Winser Collection (Winser Records). To the south of this, at Cocks Farm, overlooking the Tillingbourne, a Deverel-Rimbury pot containing a cremation was recently discovered (Corke 2017) and it may be that the palimpsest of successive episodes of Iron Age and Romano British activity may have masked others.

Of relevance here is an obscure reference to a 'Stone Age Village' reported by John Pull at Abinger Rough that was made in the *Sussex County Magazine* in 1935, where the location plan depicts the site as being in survey Field 08 (fig 8). The site is described as being discovered by Frank and Stanley Carnzue of Abinger. The field had been almost levelled by cultivation but:

> traces of a line of circular huts [...] in the north west corner of the field [his plan depicts them in a line extending from close to Bishops Cross (Wilberforce Monument) north-eastwards to the junction of Effingham Lane (White Down Lane) with the railway line]. [...] most plainly seen in the north-east corner of the field near the railway. A well-marked zone, where burnt and fire cracked flints are extremely numerous and charcoal is admixed with the sandy sub-soil, is also fairly well preserved. In the vicinity of these vestiges of dwellings and a great communal fire, flint implements, flakes and the flint cores from which they were struck, are very numerous indeed [...] The original outline of the ancient village seems to have been confined to a straggling street of circular dwellings, the bases of which had been well dished out in the sand (Pull 1935, 636–8).

The activity described by Pull largely corresponds with the evidence recovered by Hooker *et al* (2014), but together it would appear that settlement activity of one form or another extended right across the field. Already cultivated in Pull's day, a further 80 years of ploughing has eradicated any surface indication of the 'huts', if indeed that is what they were.

John Pull surveyed and excavated Neolithic flint mine sites at Blackpatch, Church Hill and Cissbury in Sussex and his field recognition was first class, although in 1935 he was just beginning his archaeological investigations. On an unfamiliar geology he may have

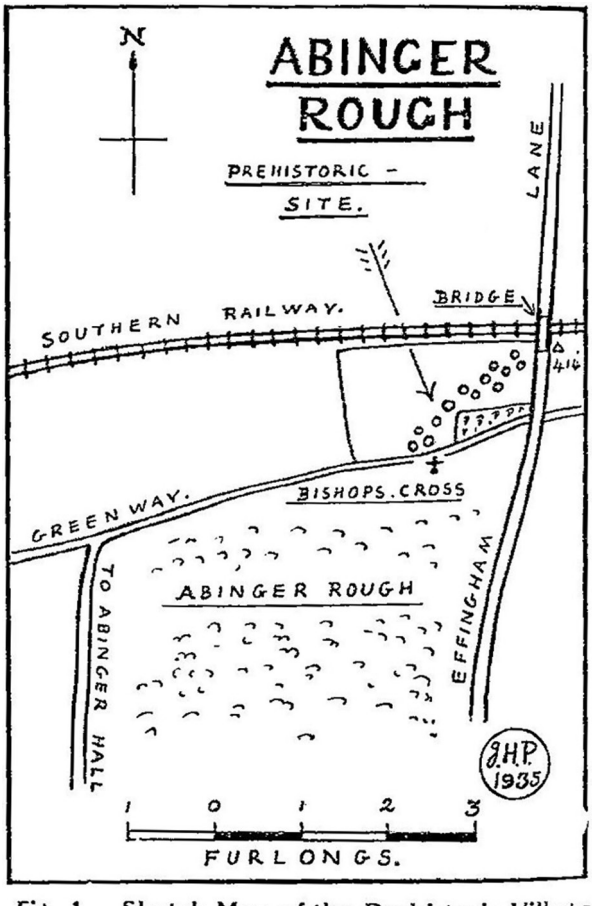

Fig. 1. Sketch Map of the Prehistoric Village Site at Abinger Rough

Fig 8 Abinger/Holmbury. John Pull's plan of settlement in Field 08 (from the *Sussex County Magazine* 1935).

been misled by the sheer quantities of material on the ground. The features noted might be explained as pits, but although he gives no dimensions, the impression is, nevertheless, of rather large features. The blade-like nature of some of the flints that Pull (1935, 637) illustrated might point to a Mesolithic rather than Neolithic date, and it is interesting to observe the approach of a stranger to the greensand (Pull's work was all but confined to the chalk of the South Downs) in identifying undiagnostic flintwork.

No barrows were recorded during the survey, although an undoubted example was noted subsequently overlooking Field 08 and another close by (Hooker & English in prep) while several mounds occur elsewhere along the Folkestone Beds ridge. One of these in Deerleap Wood, overlooking Sandy Meadow is thought to be a natural sand knoll; another, undoubtedly a bell barrow was, like others on the sands of Sussex, found to cover no burial. To the west a mound, in Weston Wood, Albury, had modified a natural knoll but the deposits were dated to the 18th century (Hanworth & Hastings 1961) and may have been part of a landscaping scheme. It is by no means clear whether a Food Vessel recovered from Fulvenden Farm immediately west of the transect (Wood & Thompson 1966) was formerly covered by a mound, but it nevertheless provides a clue that settlement was comfortable here during

the Early Bronze Age. Food Vessels are rare within south-east England, indeed southern England as a whole, so its presence is not without significance. Elsewhere, the presence of place-names Frolbury (Field 09) and Foxbury (Field 17) could provide an indication of former earthworks, while on the Hythe Beds to the south of the Holmbury St Mary cricket pitch, disturbance following the 1987 storm revealed six Bronze Age sherds potentially from different vessels (Waters Collection: see *Endnote*; Winser Records).

The lack of Bronze Age fields is of some concern. Absence on the Hythe Beds appears to be genuine as almost certainly earthworks would have survived at least between areas of quarrying. Bronze Age field boundary earthworks are present on sandy subsoil at Whitmoor Common, Worpleson, for example (English 2016), so ought to be visible here if they existed. Spade dug plots were evident at Weston Wood, Albury, although there is little but proximity to tie them to the two Late Bronze Age huts situated alongside the Tillngbourne there (Russell 1989) and in any case the excavator, Joan Harding, had her own doubts about them (Hanworth 1978). Otherwise, the Surrey greensand is devoid of known prehistoric fields, the nearest recorded being those on the chalk downs around the Mole gap near Leatherhead (Hanworth 1978; English 2013, 33–6) and possibly Puttenham Common (Briggs 2017). This might be considered surprising given the former suitability of the area south of the chalk escarpment for early cultivation (Wooldridge & Linton 1933). It may be that a critical population size was necessary before formal fields were laid out. Recent geophysical investigations and excavation at the Cocks Farm villa have located a Middle Bronze Age cremation burial (Corke 2017), Late Iron Age activity including a number of pits within an enclosure ditch (Bird 2015; 2017) and a ditched field system of Romano-British date (Bird 2010) that was also undetected on the surface. It can only be surmised that subsequent episodes of cultivation, perhaps coupled with extensive turf cutting for fuel (Brandon 1984, 96–9), may have removed surface evidence of the Bronze Age as well.

IRON AGE

The hillfort on the lip of the greensand escarpment at Holmbury has long been known to antiquaries, being noted by John Aubrey for example, although he appears to have confused it with Anstiebury (Aubrey 1718, 171). It saw initial excavation in 1930 when S Winbolt cut sections through the defences and again when F H Thompson carried out further excavations in 1974 (Winbolt 1930; Thompson 1979). The location of the hillfort suggests that it has more to do with the Low Weald from where it would have a prominent siting rather than the greensand and even today the Ockley parish boundary makes a tortuous curve around its ditches in order to incorporate it. The origin of that boundary is uncertain, but it presents a tenurial link of some antiquity. Recent survey of the earthworks (Hooker & English 2016) has shown just how odd its siting is, set astride a prominent seam of chert that ensured that one half of the enclosure was *c* 6m below the other and which restricted use of the interior. The weather-resistant chert had resulted in a 'nose' projecting south at the escarpment and the earthwork construction incorporated a circuitous diversion around it. Dense vegetation, steepness of slope and more recent interventions resulted in difficulty establishing the extent to which there might be earlier construction here but, as indicated by the flints recovered during excavation by Winbolt and Thompson respectively, not to mention the presence of Late Bronze Age sherds (Seager Thomas 2010, 2), the place had evidence of some considerable ancestry.

In contrast, the enclosure at Felday lay on the dip slope. Its location on a spur overlooking Felday associates it with activity along the adjacent valley and the watershed between the unnamed streams that drain to north and south. As with Holmbury hillfort its purpose remains unknown; use as a stock enclosure seems unlikely as its siting makes access difficult for animals. A large shallow scoop within the interior may be contemporary and could easily accommodate one or more huts. Recent reanalysis of the pottery has identified a Middle Iron Age sherd (Seager Thomas 2010 and pers comm) though it is not clear whether this was a

late survival or a curated piece; it could indicate that the site was, in part, contemporary with Holmbury hillfort. The construction of enclosures at Felday and Holmbury Hill indicate the presence of a significant workforce, yet there is little from the survey to indicate areas of occupation or activity. The place-names of Frolbury (Field 09) and Foxbury (Field 17) mentioned above may equally indicate the presence of enclosure earthworks as companions to Felday, while Frogbury, so named in a survey of Paddington and Mills farms in 1772 (SHC: 329/13/10) is situated north of the Tillingbourne west of the Abinger villa site. Paired enclosures, for example, on Longbridge Cow Down and Swallowcliffe Down are well known in Wessex (Field & McOmish 2017) and would not be out of place here. It may well be that historic cultivation has truncated much of the surface evidence and it is worth noting that the base of a probable Iron Age ditch that David Bird suggests may have enclosed the hilltop north of the Cocks Farm villa was only revealed during recent excavations. Pits within the enclosure are thought to have been dug for grain storage (Coombe *et al* 2016, 223). A second enclosure together with a number of pits was recorded in subsequent excavations (Corke 2017). Further east, at Westcott, a sub-rectangular enclosure known in part from aerial photographs has recently been shown by excavation to comprise substantial ditches (Rapson 2017), but pottery there indicates predominant use in the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period.

ROMAN

Small spreads of pottery and tile from Fields 03 and 06 (fig 7c) suggest that buildings associated with the Cocks Farm villa may exist to the east of the main complex. Little is known of the villa itself although ongoing excavations by David Bird (Bird 2010; 2015; 2017; Corke 2017, 2–7; Coombe *et al* 2016, 223) will undoubtedly improve knowledge of the site. Buildings are thought to have been arranged on the north, south and west of a courtyard, while the recent excavations have shown that there is phased building construction with an associated field system to the north and east. To the south, features may have been damaged by the A25 road and perhaps by movement of the river Tillingbourne. One might expect garden features around the villa perhaps extending to the south of the river, but none are obvious and it is not clear whether the present field boundaries bear any relationship to the villa.

Tile was recovered from Field 27 and may indicate the presence of a building and, given its position on the clay at the base of the chalk, potentially a tilery, while to the south of the Tillingbourne, the pottery and flue tile from Field 33 point to the possible presence of a building. Just to the east of the transect further cremations in urns, one dated to the 1st century AD, were found when a sand pit was dug in Sandy Meadow during the 1920s (Hooper 1927).

South of the river the main focus was in Field 33 close to the western edge of Ellix Wood where pottery covered a wide date range and while a fragment of possibly Roman tile may indicate a building, the spread is very localised. Similarly, the datable pottery from Field 11 covered a wide range. Both of these sites are worthy of further investigative work.

SAXON

Little evidence was found for post-Roman activity. A single Saxon sherd was recovered from Field 08, but perhaps significantly a sherd was formerly recovered from the sandpit mentioned above at Sandy Meadow (Hooper 1927). Discussion of the Saxon and historic period landscape can be found in the online version of this report (see *Endnote*).

Conclusion

Fieldwork on a 1km wide transect through the greensand topography provided evidence of a settlement pattern largely dependent on the river Tillingbourne and possibly on the

springline at the base of the chalk escarpment. It would appear that following later prehistory when occupation activities took place widely, although perhaps intermittently, across the valley slopes, the pattern of settlement nucleated and re-focused alongside the Tillingbourne during the historic periods.

Endnote

The complete report has been deposited with the Surrey Archaeological Society's Library, Abinger and on the website (http://surreyarchaeology.org.uk) under Research with the filename Abinger-Holmbury_1985-9.pdf

Waters Collection: Private Collection held by Ken Waters
Winser Collection: Private Collection held by Keith Winser

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329/13/10 Wotton Estate papers. Map of Paddington and the Mill Farms, Abinger, part of the estate of Sir Frederick Evelyn.

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Excavations at Orchard Hill, Carshalton, 1964–5

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with contributions by
†PHIL JONES and MIKE SEAGER THOMAS

Excavation by the late Dennis Turner prior to a development close to the parish church in Carshalton recovered worked flint, including an important collection of microliths from the Mesolithic period, and pottery dating from Early Neolithic through to the medieval period. Owing to extensive disturbance few features were located and this paper primarily comprises a report of the finds assemblage.

Background

In 1964 the intention of Carshalton Urban District Council to redevelop land on Orchard Hill as elderly persons' residences came to the attention of the late Dennis Turner. The site involved the back gardens of a terrace of cottages that had already been demolished and permission to excavate was given by the Council (fig 1).

Excavations took place, under his directorship, with sponsorship from the Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington Archaeological Society, and financial support from the London Natural History Society and the Surrey Archaeological Society (SyAS), starting in the October 1964 and continuing, at weekends, for 9 months ending in August 1965. Two brief notes were published at the time (Anon 1965; 1966), but only an interim report of the full findings has since appeared (Turner 1966). The site archive was donated by the director with the wish that the full results should be placed in the public domain.

Geology, topography and present land use

The site lies at *c* 40m OD on the north-facing slope of Orchard Hill (TQ 279 644), overlooking Carshalton Ponds and the spring-line at the foot of the dip slope of the North Downs (fig 2). It is situated between two shallow dry valleys that are presumably former courses of headwaters of the river Wandle (Orton 1989). The surface geology of the site was found to comprise vestigial Thanet Sand overlying Upper Chalk (fig 3), while previous excavations at Queen's Well, a little to the north (Turner 1970), exposed the Bullhead Bed which usually occurs at the junction of the aforementioned strata (Dines & Edmunds 1933, 131).

Historical background

A considerable amount of historical research was undertaken around the time of the excavation by the late Sidney Totman. A précis of his work, together with further research and figure 4, can be found in the full report (see *Endnote*).

The excavation

Sixteen trenches, together giving an area of some 733 sq ft (68 sq m), sampled a total plot area of *c* 11,250 sq ft (134 x 84ft) (1000 sq m (38 x 26m)) in what had been the cottage gardens (fig 1). All appear to have been excavated to 'natural', but disappointingly the investigations revealed that the site had been heavily disturbed by gardening and, possibly, earlier ploughing. The only features found were two truncated gullies of possible medieval date and three pits