



Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 52

March 2004

Editorial

It's that time of year again, and subscriptions are due on 1st April. Please send your cheque for £8 payable to MSFAT as soon as possible, using the form at the end of this newsletter. You can also register your interest in digging at Barcombe using the same form.

We have been quite busy since the last newsletter, with excavations at Keymer, Cooksbridge and Arlington, watching briefs at Barcombe Church and Hassocks, whilst other members have helped by processing finds from Barcombe and other sites. The Christmas party was very successful, with around 40 members and some invited guests attending.

Barcombe starts again in mid-May, with our first planned weekend on site being the 15/16th May, although we may start earlier, on the May Bank Holiday weekend. Before then we will be machining off a new area and will need one or two members to assist with this exercise. Further excavations will also take place at Keymer, and there is a watching brief coming up in Hurstpierpoint. Keep an eye on our website for the latest information.

There are finds that need to be washed and marked from a number of sites, so if you would like to help with this, please contact me. When we start at Barcombe we will have some soil samples from a number of sites that we have recently worked on to process. If anyone would like to help with these please contact me as soon as possible.

I would like to thank you all for your help with our projects over the last year, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Barcombe or on our other projects this coming year.

Finally there are four publications that you can now purchase, details of which are later in this newsletter.

Chris Butler

Barcombe Roman Villa 2004

This year we will be continuing to excavate to the east and south-east of the main villa, and will be investigating the aisled building with the in-situ tessellated floor, and the enigmatic features between the two buildings.

The main excavation will start in mid-May when the Field Archaeology Unit will be organising training courses for Institute of Archaeology students, and then from late June they will be running public training courses in Excavation Techniques, Surveying, Conservation and Drawing (Contact details for these courses: Tel: 01273 845497; email: fau@ucl.ac.uk). Students on these courses, or participants of courses in previous years, may also volunteer to dig during the week. Those doing so will be asked to contribute £50 per week towards costs.

MSFAT will be organising the weekend work throughout the whole excavation period, and as the number of weekend volunteers may be limited, to excavate at the weekend you must be a member of MSFAT.

As in previous years, a booking system will be in place. To volunteer for a particular day or weekend, you will need to contact me by telephone on 01323 871021 or by email on chris@reltub.fsbusiness.co.uk to book a place during the week leading up to that weekend. You can also book a place for the following weekend when you attend the excavation.

We again have a problem with parking, and I would ask that where possible you share cars when travelling to the site. Toilets and portacabins will be available at the site, but you should bring your own food, drink and appropriate clothing. You will need your own 4" pointing trowel and a kneeling mat, but other equipment is available on site. Please make sure that your tetanus is up to date.

If you are not working on the site, but wish to visit (at weekends only), please contact me to make the necessary arrangements, as parking is limited.

Barcombe Church

Jo Miller will be re-starting the churchyard survey at Barcombe Church again in April, weather permitting. Anyone who is interested in helping this summer should contact Jo, either by e-mail or by telephone (01273 812840), so that she can include you on her contact list.

The church has also recently extended their car park. An inspection of the surface whilst the machining took place, and a later inspection of the spoil which was spread over the adjacent field recovered prehistoric flintwork, fire-fractured flint, Roman tile and some Post Medieval pottery and glass. No features were observed.

Barcombe Villa 2003.

In 2003 the excavation at Barcombe concentrated on the area immediately to the east of the main villa building (Building 2), and the area stretching to the south-east where last year we found the tessellated floor in a new building (Building 3). A number of exciting new features were located during the excavation (See Plan).

To the east of Building 2 a number of large pits, of uncertain function, were found. Some of their infills are thought to comprise cess, which may have come from the small room 12 in Building 2, which might have been a toilet. Other discoveries from the pits include a complete pot in the bottom of one pit, suggestive of ritual practices, and two dog burials. The pit that contained the two dog burials was sealed by mortared flints, perhaps a rite of termination, although the dogs themselves seem to have been simply thrown into the pit with little dignity. Demolition material to the east of these pits is dated to the late third century, with one sherd of possible fourth century date.

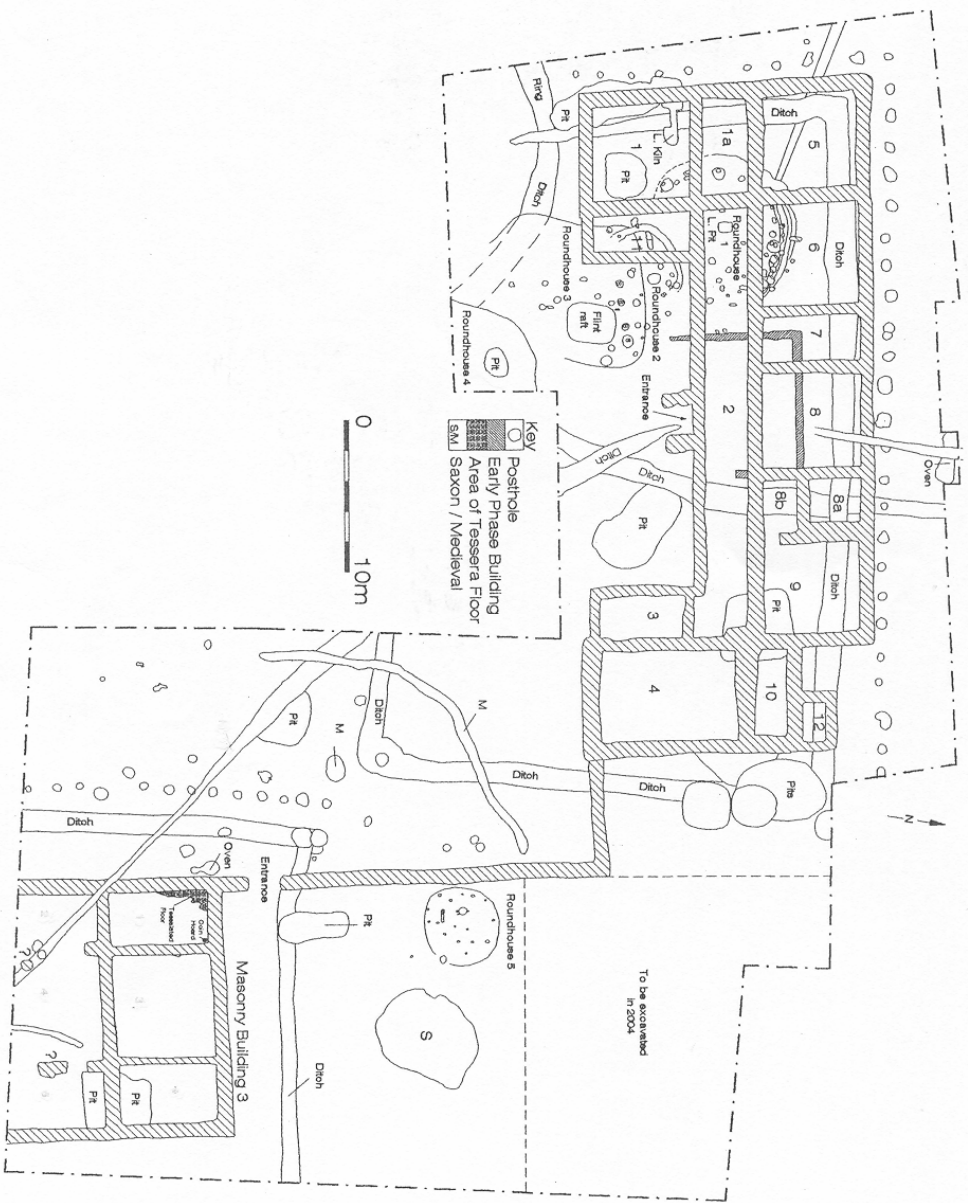
Building 3

Building 3 was initially revealed in 2002 when the chalk foundations for a courtyard wall and the north-west corner of the building were located. In the north-west corner of room 1 of Building 3 was a reasonably well-preserved area of *in-situ* red tesserae flooring. In 2003 a small patch of such flooring was also found along the western edge of room 3, and the recovery of large numbers of loose tesserae indicate that such flooring may once have been present in other parts of this building. A further discovery in 2002 was a small, dispersed, hoard of approximately 120 late third century antoniniani coins centred on the north-east corner of room 1. It is unfortunate that the hoard had been disturbed by ploughing and/or stone robbing since it may have been a foundation deposit or a money hoard buried beneath a floor. Other dating material from the area of masonry building 3 includes pottery sherds which have been dated to the late third or early fourth centuries. The rectangular building, which is some 17 m wide, has one large and two small rooms at its northern end. To the south, and continuing into the area to be investigated in 2004, is a large room with possible side aisles (rooms 2 and 6). An unusual constructional feature for Barcombe of Building 3 was the use of ironstone blocks at some locations in the otherwise chalk filled foundations. The use of such material is also recorded at Beddington where it was used in the lining of the well and as quoin stones for the main villa building. As in the case of masonry building 2, the foundations of building 3 were also excavated by the builders down to the bottom of any earlier disturbances (pits etc) of the construction site.

The precise function and dating of the aisled Building 3 will we hope become clearer after the excavations in 2004. It would appear however to be a relatively high status building, with at least some tessellated floors and well constructed foundations. It would appear to be contemporary with the main Building (2) to which it is joined by the courtyard wall (note: there is an entrance in this wall just to the north of the aisled building). Possibly this is a second high status residential building (perhaps for a son or an unrelated farm manager), or it may have an administrative function. Adjacent to the north-west corner of the building is an earlier clay oven, and the whole site of the building may be located within a former ditched enclosure of uncertain date.

BARCOMBE ROMAN VILLA 2003

Interim plan of main area



A new roundhouse (Roundhouse 5) was revealed in 2003 to the east of the masonry wall, which defined the eastern side of the courtyard in front of the winged corridor villa. This fifth roundhouse, which is as yet undated, may also be post-Conquest. If it proves to be late in the site's Roman history, it may have been deliberately located in order to be screened by the adjacent masonry wall. If so, and if domestic and not for animals or some other purpose, was this structure occupied by servants or slaves?

Post-Roman activity

After the abandonment of the Romano-British villa complex, which is thought to have occurred *c.* AD 300 (perhaps due to the real or perceived threat of Saxon and pirate raiding along the south coast), the site appears to have been abandoned until the late Saxon period when possible squatter occupation is suggested by a large cesspit and some post-holes to the south-west of the entrance to the winged villa. A large depression/?building to the east of Roundhouse 5 may also date to this period, and the total excavation of this interesting feature will occur in 2004. Subsequently, starting in the eleventh/twelfth centuries, the walls of the villa buildings were robbed to provide materials for the construction of local buildings, including (probably) the nearby parish church of St. Mary.

David Rudling & Chris Butler

Keymer Burial Ground

On the 26th and 27th February MSFAT carried out an assessment excavation at Keymer, on the site of a proposed new burial ground. This is located opposite the church, and may have originally been on the Medieval road frontage.

Three machine-cut trenches were excavated, and revealed a number of features. Close to the road frontage a feature produced Medieval pottery, animal bone and a Medieval copper-alloy strap end. There were also a number of small un-dated features. However, the most interesting feature was a large prehistoric ditch orientated north-south, which was located in all of the trenches, although at the south end it had been largely truncated.

The ditch was 5m wide and almost 1m deep in the central trench, and produced prehistoric flintwork, fire-fractured flint, a few sherds of pottery and a single animal tooth. The pottery has provisionally dated the ditch to the first half of the first millennium BC (i.e. Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age).

We shall probably return to the site in the near future to excavate in advance of the construction of an entranceway into the field. A full report will appear in a forthcoming newsletter. I would like to thank all those members who helped over the two days. Photos of the excavation are on our website.

Chris Butler

Danny Tile Kiln.

We have been trying to find the remains of the Roman tile kiln at Danny for a number of years. The kiln was last recorded in Couchman's 1925 article in Sussex Archaeological Collections as being in a ditch. The wood in which it was supposedly located has been searched, most recently by Peter Bidmead and Michael Fairbrother.

A scatter of Roman tile and some pottery was found in an adjacent field, which resulted in some fieldwalking and a rather inconclusive resistivity survey. However, a few weeks ago Michael relocated the kiln, in a ditch, but some distance from where Couchman's map placed it. The pictures (which can be seen on the MSFAT website courtesy of Michael Fairbrother) show part of the structure in the ditch, and the dimensions match up with the measurements given by Couchman. Nearby in the same ditch is a flint-metalled surface with pieces of Roman tile on top of it.

We are not revealing the exact location of the site as it is on private property and cannot be visited. The remains have been covered over and are no longer visible. The area was swept with a metal detector, which showed that there were no metallic finds present. We plan to return to the site in the future to excavate and properly record this site.

Chris Butler

Cooksbridge Fieldwork

In November 2003 members of MSFAT and students from a CCE class carried out a tape survey of a possible house platform in a field south of Cooksbridge. Bruce Milton also supervised a geophysical survey of the site, which produced some interesting results. In March 2004 a series of test trenches were excavated across the platform to investigate the geophysical anomalies.

Unfortunately, the results were very disappointing, as the anomalies could not be traced in the excavation. The topsoil produced Post Medieval pottery and tile, but below this was a clay layer and then below that clay subsoil with natural flints. No trace of a building or any other features were found in the trenches, except for one test pit in the south-east corner of the platform. This produced numerous pieces of brick and tile with Post Medieval pottery and glass, and below this was a possible floor layer of chalk pieces with some flints.

Amongst the finds were a piece of worked bone, and a copper-alloy handle, but all of the finds appear to fit an 18th-19th century date. Sue Rowland has carried some initial historical research, which has produced records from the 17th and 18th century, although the 18th and 19th century maps do not show any buildings.

Arlington

Following on from our work at the end of last year (see Newsletter 51), Greg Chuter has carried out further resistivity work to the east of the site, and found that our possible road continues on the same alignment. A small team re-excavated and extended our trench to see if the whole width of the road could be determined. This was achieved, and as a bonus, a Roman posthole was also found and excavated. Two further trenches were excavated on the road alignment, but the road had been completely ploughed out at these points.

Frog Firle

The promised report will be in our next newsletter.

New Publications

Please order from Chris Butler. Do not send any money with your order as postage and packing at cost are in addition. Payment on delivery with invoice.

Some Medieval and later activity at Cuckfield, West Sussex (Excavations at Marshalls Manor)

A review of some excavations at Marshalls Manor in Cuckfield High Street where Medieval and Post Medieval remains were recovered. MSFAT Monograph No. 1 £5.00

An Archaeological Survey at Tilgate Forest Lodge

A survey of some enigmatic earthworks in Tilgate Forest. MSFAT Monograph No. 2 £5.00

An Interim Report on the Archaeological Excavations at Clayton Manor

Excavations have recently located the Roman building originally uncovered in the early 19th century. MSFAT Report £5.00

The Excavation of a late 19th Century Pit at the Magazine, Castle Street, Winchelsea, East Sussex

The final report on an excavation of a late 19th century pit that contained a remarkable assemblage of finds including pottery, glass, worked bone, and metal objects. CBAS Report £10.00

***Please complete and return this form to Chris Butler
at Rosedale, Berwick, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6TB***

Name:

Address:

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Tel. No.: Email:

- I enclose a cheque for my subscription renewal of £8 for 2004/5 made payable to MSFAT.
- I am available for finds washing/marking
- I would like to be added to the volunteer list for excavation/survey projects, and I am available at weekends/weekdays (please delete as relevant)

(details).....

- I would like to volunteer for the Barcombe Villa excavations. I agree that I have no personal interest in any finds that I recover during my work at the site, and acknowledge that they belong to the owner of the site.

I confirm that I have a current tetanus vaccination.

I would like to volunteer for:

❖ Excavation work

❖ Finds Processing

❖ Tour Guide

Current First Aid certificate *Yes/No*

Signature Date