

# Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team

## NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 55

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### Editorial

Your 2005/6 subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> April, and once again we have held the rate at £8. 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.

Things have been quiet since the last newsletter, with just a few small projects underway. The Christmas party was again very successful, with around 40 members attending.

Barcombe starts again in early May, with our first planned weekend on site being the 7/8th May, although we may start earlier. The week before this, we will be machining off a new area adjacent to Building 3 and will need one or two members to assist with this exercise. Keep an eye on our website for the latest information on this and other fieldwork.

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.

Chris Butler

## **Barcombe Roman Villa 2004**

This year we will be extending the excavation area to investigate the new building that has appeared adjacent to Building 3. This will also give us the opportunity to look at the approach to the main villa and the supposed courtyard.

The main excavation will start in early 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](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)). Students on these courses, or participants of courses in previous years, may also volunteer to dig during the last two weeks of July. 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, no further contribution is required.

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](mailto: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.

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.

This year will be the final year of the project in its current format, and the excavation season will be finishing early, at the end of July. However, there may still be things to finish off, so we may continue working at weekends into August if necessary.

What happens in 2006 to a very great extent depends upon what we find this year. However, do not worry we have not forgotten about the barrow and the bathhouse. Even if we do not return for a full season in 2006, we may return then or in a future year to investigate these sites. It is also possible that we may excavate a trial trench over the bathhouse this season: Watch this space.

We also need to have a maximum effort on finishing the finds processing this year, as it is our intention to then pass on the finds at the end of the season to the relevant specialists and then commence the writing up. Therefore we will need to keep on top of the finds during the season, and I am therefore looking for some volunteers who are able to come along regularly on weekdays throughout the season, or just for part of it, and help to manage and process the finds. Please contact me directly if you are interested in this.

Chris Butler

# Barcombe Villa 2004 Season

At the end of the 2003 season we had excavated the north end of a new masonry structure (Building 3), provisionally identified as an aisled building, and investigated the area between this and the winged-corridor villa (Building 2) excavated in 2001-2. The excavations in 2004 were intended to complete the excavation of Building 3 and the north-east part of the site.

## **Saxons at Barcombe**

Over the previous three seasons we had found hints of Saxon activity at Barcombe, including a possible temporary structure attached to the front of the decaying villa building. In 2003 a large depression in the north-east part of the site was partly investigated and produced numerous sherds of later Saxon pottery. A small pit at this location also yielded an almost complete Saxon pot. The total excavation of this area in 2004 revealed numerous small pits, many of them inter-cutting (see plan), some small gullies and post holes, together with the 'banana-shaped' feature initially investigated the previous season. Many of these features produced sherds of un-abraded later Saxon pottery, some produced quantities of animal bone, whilst a Saxon knife and fragments of a bun-shaped loom weight were also found. Most of the pits contained large quantities of flint nodules in them, and in a few cases appeared to have been packed with the flint nodules. Also of interest was the large amount of iron slag, suggesting that this might have been an industrial area. Although no evidence of buildings has been found, it seems that after a possible gap of a few hundred years the villa had become a focus of activity again.

## **Masonry Building 3**

The excavation area had been enlarged southwards to establish the full extent and nature of Building 3. The east and west walls of the building only existed as chalk or flint foundations, normally just a single course of which remained. However, although heavily robbed, the south wall foundations were still substantial. Here, for the first time at Barcombe, we were able to see not only the robber trench, but also the original wall-footing trench. This had been excavated slightly wider than the proposed foundations, which comprised a bottom damp-proof course of chalk held in place with clay, and then above this the flint wall construction. The gap between the flint wall foundation and the edge of the trench had then been backfilled with soil. Where the flints had only been partly robbed-out, it was possible to see the complete sequence of events in the wall section.

Although there appeared to be a gap in the wall at its south-east corner, this is most likely due to the effects of ploughing, and not the location of an original entrance, the location of which cannot be determined with any certainty (but see below for one possibility). Two parallel lines of post pads were discovered within the main, southern part of Building 3, and may mark the position of roof supporting posts. These post-pads had also been robbed-out and were badly truncated by recent ploughing, but in one there was a remnant of mortared flint, which originally formed the base for the post. The presence of these post-pads confirms the idea that this building was an

aisled building - a common structure found at many villa sites. Such buildings were probably used for various purposes, including domestic accommodation. At Barcombe, as at Chilgrove 2 in West Sussex, at least two of a group of three rooms at one end of the building had tessellated floors and thus indicate a relatively high status of usage.

The interior of the aisled structure had few other features. In the south-west corner there was a rectangular, slightly lower, area that may have marked a sunken floor of a building or room within the side aisle of Building 3. Two almost parallel linear features were located just inside the east and west walls (see plan). The western linear feature, which was V-shaped, appeared to have partly silted up before being filled with building demolition material. In contrast, the eastern linear feature was much shallower and had a flat bottom. It had been filled with rubbish including pottery, animal bone, some tile and the occasional metal object.

Outside Building 3 in the south-east corner of the site were a number of pits. One was possibly a later Saxon cesspit, whilst a second was filled with discarded building material including tegula, imbrex and tesserae.

The most interesting feature was located on the west side of Building 3. Three narrow flint wall footings, which appear to butt the outside wall of the aisled building, run off westwards extending outside the current trench. On the inside of Building 3 at this location, and under a large spread of building demolition rubble was a rectangular area of mortared flints measuring 5m x 6m and perhaps forming the floor of an entrance, room or a building of a different date. This was only partly excavated in 2004, and it is our intention that in 2005 we will complete its excavation and also extend the trench to the west in order to trace the full extent of the flint walls abutting the outside face of Building 3.

### **Other activity**

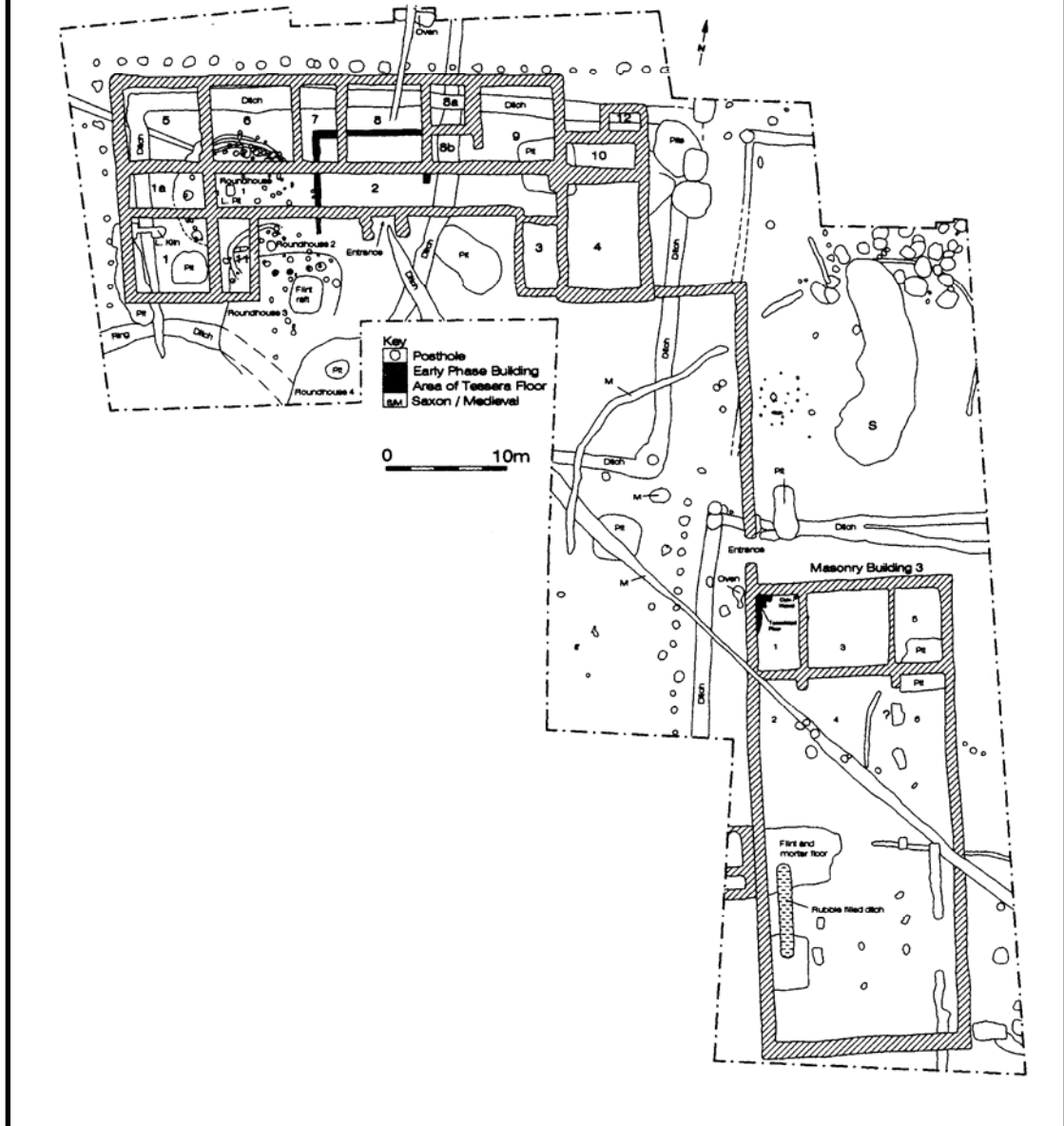
Trial trenches had been excavated earlier in the season to try and establish the full extent of the villa complex. These had targeted anomalies, thought to be ditches, detected by the original resistivity survey. On the south side one trench encountered the flint footings of a wall, which appeared to be a continuation of the south wall of Building 3. However, an adjacent trench failed to locate any further continuation of this wall, which may therefore be part of a building rather than a wall marking the southern boundary of the villa courtyard. On the west side, two trial trenches revealed a Roman ditch, which probably does form the west boundary of the villa complex. No corresponding ditch (or wall) was encountered on the east side of the site.

Further work was carried out in the area between the two main masonry buildings, and revealed a re-cut ditch, which may have originally enclosed Building 3. There were also a number of postholes, and a later prehistoric ditch, perhaps part of a field system that pre-dated the villa.

Chris Butler & David Rudling

# BARCOMBE ROMAN VILLA 2001 - 2004

Interim plan of main area



Interim plan of the Barcombe Villa excavations at the end of the 2004 season

## **Talbot Field, Hassocks**

During early December 2004, Hassocks Parish Council started planting trees at Talbot Field in Hassocks. Many of you will be aware that this is the site of the important Roman roadside settlement, on which we worked in the late 1990's. After negotiations, some of the trees were located away from the settlement area, but a significant number have been planted where they may in the longer term through root action seriously damage the site.

Dave Cudmore and Keith Butler carried out a watching brief during the tree planting, but the initial root holes that were dug did not go deep enough to reach the archaeological deposits (Watching Brief Report). We have got permission from the Parish Council to do some more work on Talbot Field, and this will take the form of excavation trenches around and between the recently planted trees to see what archaeology might be in danger from future root growth. We will then excavate and record any features that we discover. This will ensure that the archaeology is investigated and recorded before it is destroyed.

## **Pevensey Castle**

We have been asked to undertake a geophysics survey on the interior of Pevensey Castle for English Heritage to investigate the post-Roman use of the castle. We will be doing this over the Sunday and Monday of Easter and then the two following weekends. At present we have sufficient volunteers, but if you do want to help then please contact either Chris or Bruce as soon as possible.

## **North Chailey**

More features have been found at the Roman site at North Chailey, on which we reported in the July 2004 Newsletter. Two more post holes or pits were encountered during the excavation of a pipe trench, together with more of the east-west gully originally encountered last year. More pottery and two copper-alloy artefacts were found in the gully feature.

We hope to return to this site later this year and carry out some geophysics in the adjacent field. This may provide more information about the size and extent of this site.

***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 2005/6 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 .....