



Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 57

November 2005

Post-Christmas Party

In a departure from tradition we will be having a *post*-Christmas Party on Saturday 14th January 2006, in the upstairs room at the Royal Oak pub, Station Street, Lewes, from 7.30pm.

- * *There will be buffet-style refreshments provided and you can buy your own drinks at the bar*
- * *There will be an update on our work this year*
- * *There will be a bookstall, raffle and a display of recent finds*
- * *Barcombe T-shirts and other goods for sale*

Entrance fee £6.00 per person payable on the door

The Royal Oak is up the hill from Lewes railway station, just before the crossroads on the right. The nearest parking is on-street in Southover Road or in the West Street car park the other side of the High St. We hope that you will be able to attend, and make the evening a success. So that we can give the pub the right numbers for catering, please let Anne or Tim Locke know (ideally by Christmas) if you intend to come. Phone 01273 475381, email anne@timlocke.co.uk

THE BARCOMBE AND HAMSEY BIG DIG, August 2005

The Hamsey Big Dig was conducted as part of “Discovering Barcombe and Hamsey: contrasting communities”, a Sussex Archaeological Society community research project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. One of the aims of the project is to identify lost medieval house sites in both parishes. Early medieval documentation is sparse so archaeological evidence is very important. Few medieval sites have been identified so it can be assumed that some may have been replaced on the same site by later houses. A public meeting was held in Barcombe where residents were asked to come forward if they wished to dig a metre square test pit in their garden under the guidance of Chris Greatorex, archaeological consultant for the project. The aim was to find evidence for earlier settlement, particularly medieval.

In Hamsey parish certain houses were targeted where it was thought there might be an earlier settlement. These included houses which have been dated by Annabelle Hughes, Historic Buildings Consultant, as part of the project. They range from the earliest house, Highwell 1400 to Tulleys Well 1735. Also included were some 19th century houses where we know from the Hamsey Manor Map of 1752 (ESRO MOB 1699) that earlier houses existed. Resistivity, organised by Bruce Milton, was carried out where we suspected the former house site may have been in a different position from the present day house. Because of the large amount of medieval pottery recovered when a pond was dug at Great North Barn in 2003 we also conducted resistivity behind Hamsey Place Farmhouse on the roadside up to Hamsey Church.



Figure 1: Pottery from Woodcock Cottage, Offham

Twelve sites were visited over two weekends with a variety of finds coming to light. These are at present with Luke Barber, Research Officer at SAS, and we await the dating results. The most exciting area was around Woodcock Cottage (c.1550-1600) in Offham where four pits were dug. One of these contained medieval pottery and a substantial amount was also found in an adjacent newly planted hedgerow. We know from documentary evidence that a chapel of ease stood in this area in the 14th/15th centuries. The finds have not yet been fully analysed. Once that has been done we may follow up some of the sites. Thanks to all the MSFAT members who helped over the two weekends.

Sue Rowland

A foreign stone hammer?

This hammer (Fig. 1) was found during building work near Cophthorne some years ago, and was recently shown to me by Allan, a resident of Barcombe.

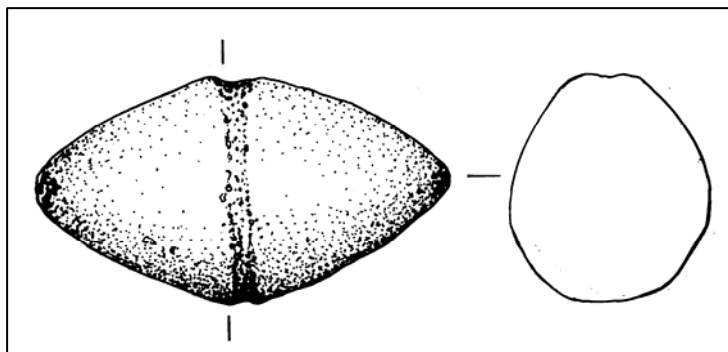


Fig. 2: Stone Hammer from Cophthorne
Drawn by Claire Goodey

The hammer is made from a quartzite stone, and is 112mm long, 57mm wide at its centre, and weighs 448gms. Both ends of the hammer narrow almost to a point, and have been heavily abraded through use. The central part of the hammer has a shallow groove around its circumference which must have been to assist its hafting into a handle.

It is heavily patinated a dark brown colour over most of its surface, but at its widest point, where it has a shallow groove, it is a much lighter buff colour. This corresponds with the position of a wooden handle, and would suggest that the patination over the rest of the surface was attained during the life of the hammer's use, and therefore as the presence of a handle appears to have stopped the central part of the hammer patinating it must have still had a handle until recently, and must therefore be a relatively recent artefact.

Although stone hammers are well known from the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in Britain, often being found as grave goods, their form is normally more rounded or square. This form is more typical of continental forms of hammers, or those from North America. Given the probable recent date, it is likely that this is a battle-hammer of 18th-19th century date brought home from North America, which has then been discarded or lost.

Chris Butler

BRIGHTON AND HOVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

DAYSCHOOLS WINTER 2006

This year we have arranged three dayschools.

January 21st Illustration of Artefacts

Barbara McNee (University of Southampton)

This day will be an introduction to the illustration of pottery and flint tools.

February 25th Introduction to Flints

Chris Butler (University of Sussex, and MSFAT)

This day will provide both an introduction and a refresher course for those who want to learn more about flints.

Both these dayschools will be held in the Biology Department of the University of Sussex from 10 am. until 4pm. Please meet in the Biology Carpark at 9.45 am. You will need to bring a packed lunch and something to drink.

April 1st Introduction to the County Record Office

Christopher Whittick (Senior Archivist, Sussex County Record Office)

A day for those who wish to learn how to find and use documents in order to help in their research.

This dayschool will be held at the County Record Office, Lewes, from 10am until 4pm. Details of the meeting point will be available closer to the time.

There will be a charge of £15 per day. However, there will be a discount of £5 if all three days are booked together.

Please pay in advance. Cheques should be made payable to Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society and sent to: Maria Gardiner, 41, Rothbury Road, HOVE, East Sussex, BN3 5LG. Tel: 01273-415725

WEST SUSSEX LIAISON GROUP MEETING

On 1st November this year, I attended the latest West Sussex Liaison Group meeting at the Marlipins Museum, Shoreham-on-Sea. The meeting, chaired by Liz Wilson the Finds Liaison Officer for Sussex was attended by the County Archaeologists and Museum curators together with several archaeological and metal detecting groups within West Sussex.

The meeting began with a very interesting and at times moving presentation on Archaeology on the Western Front by The Sussex Archaeological Society's Research Officer, Luke Barber. He described a recent excavation, which discovered three soldiers who died in 1916 during the early days of the Battle of the Somme.

The agenda included an update from Liz regarding the Portable Antiquities Scheme. She stated that over 500 non-treasure finds had been recorded on the database and that ten treasure cases have been reported since August this year.

'The Portable Antiquities Scheme in Sussex' touring exhibition was also discussed. Each exhibition includes finds made by local metal detectorists and recorded within the Scheme; it will be on display at the following places on the following dates:

Littlehampton Museum: 19th November to 28th January 2006

Chichester District Museum: between Feb – March 2006

Horsham Museum: Whole of April 2006

Crawley Museum: 9th June – 1st week in August 2006.

The Finds Agreement was also discussed and the document has now been approved by a legal adviser in East Sussex County Council. The agreement is for archaeological societies and professional units to use, if they want to use detectorists or amateur diggers on site.

This is the first time I have attended any of these meetings, so I did not know what to expect, however I found it very interesting and useful hearing the various activities the groups and societies have got up to in the year. It was also very interesting to hear about the activities carried out by the metal detecting groups and of their (in the main) interest in using their skills in assisting archaeological groups.

Bruce Milton

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT FOR MID-SUSSEX

I also attended a Stakeholder workshop in Burgess Hill last September. This was one of a series of workshops as part of an initiative set up by West Sussex County Council for their 'Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme' This programme aims to "identify the diverse character of West Sussex so helping to promote, protect and enhance this character and diversity".

Several stakeholders and groups (including MSFAT) were invited to attend and discuss the different landscape characters that make up the Mid Sussex areas, which include the High Weald, the South Downs and the Ouse Valley. We then had to discuss what impact building development and land management has on the countryside and how we think they can be improved and enhanced.

On an archaeological point of view I explained that any type of development including planting of trees can have a devastating effect on any archaeological site and that more assessments and site surveys be carried out to ascertain whether a development site could contain archaeology.

This is proposed to be a dynamic assessment, to be constantly updated and a full report should be available shortly from Mid Sussex District Council.

If anyone would like further details of these two meetings please let me know.

Bruce Milton

Recent work at Barcombe

Over the last few weeks a small team of members have been working on a project run by University of Sussex MA student Rob Wallace, on looking at aspects of the wider Roman landscape around the villa.

This has included the fieldwalking of a large field near Culver Farm by University of Sussex CCE students and MSFAT members, which produced a wide range of artefacts including Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flintwork, prehistoric pottery, and Roman pottery and tile.

Two machine-cut trenches were excavated across the line of the proposed Roman road running north-south in the same field, on the west side of the River Ouse. The first of these encountered the Roman road; which had been largely ploughed-out, but survived as an 8m wide layer of compacted flints, while the second trench found a prehistoric ditch which appears to be on the same alignment as the Roman road – is this further evidence for continuity in this landscape?

Chris Butler