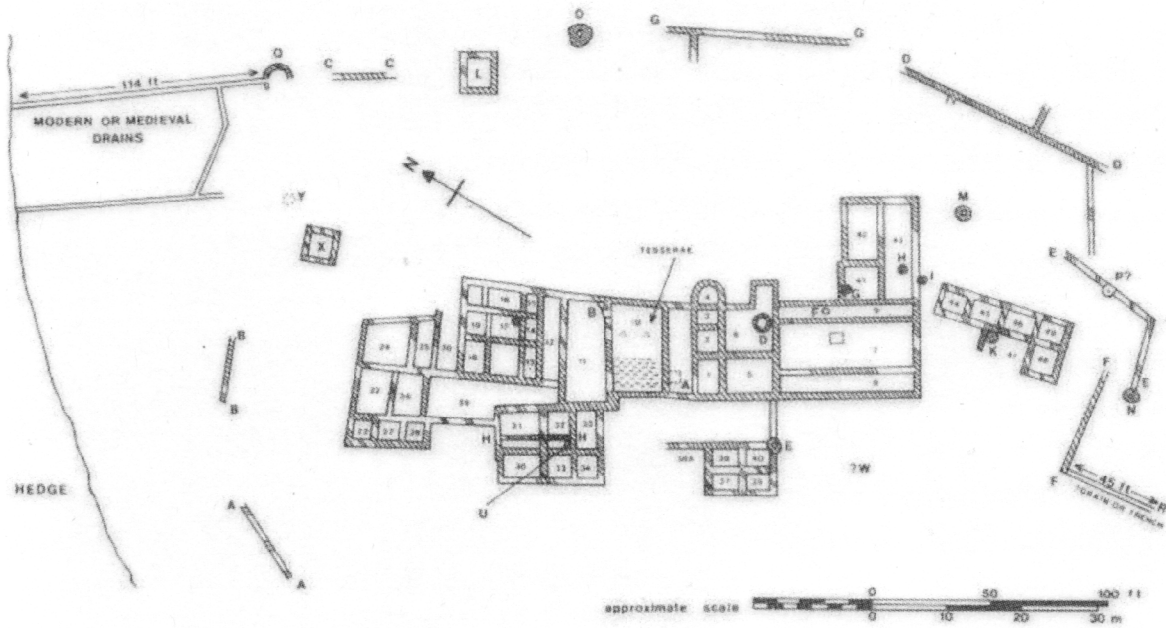


WHITEBEECH ROMAN SITE, CHIDDINGFOLD, SURREY.

NGR SU 9784 3610



ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWALKING

November 2002

On behalf of: Surrey Archaeological Society
Surrey County Council

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Dates of fieldwork: 13th -17th September 2002

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1. SUMMARY:

An archaeological fieldwalking exercise was undertaken on the site of the large complex of Roman buildings at Chiddingfold, southwest Surrey. A large amount of material was catalogued, by volunteers from the Surrey Archaeological Society, with the resultant plots being used to identify more precisely the presumed location of the structures. No Roman finds were removed from the site, although a small number of worked flints were retained for further study. The results suggest that a Prehistoric site might be located slightly towards the western side of the field examined, with the Roman complex more centrally positioned. A contour survey suggested that this area, whilst not the highest point of the field, was the position of a shallow terrace.

2. INTRODUCTION:

2.1 Chiddingfold:

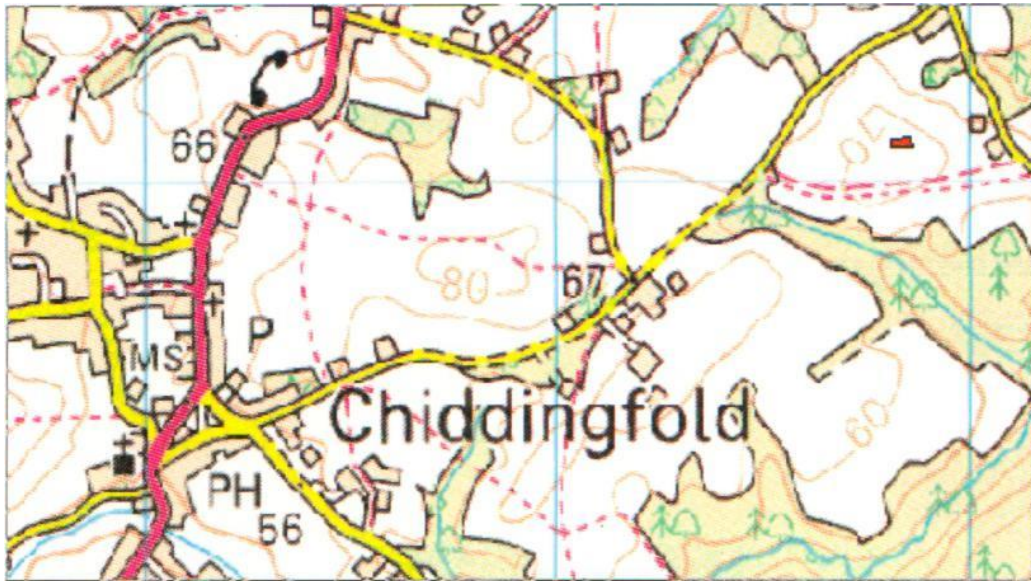


Fig. 1. Chiddingfold village

Chiddingfold is the largest of the "Fold" villages, and is centred around a triangular green at NGR SU 9613 3550. It is situated deep into the Weald, although pockets of gravel and sandy soils punctuate the landscape in the area. The name is first recorded in 1130 as Chedelingfelt, (*EPNS XI*, 186) although the root of the name (enclosure in the hollow) is suggestive of a Saxon origin to the settlement. During the medieval period, the area was famous for its glass-making, with examples of local work being used at St. Stephen's Chapel Westminster and St. Georges Chapel, Windsor (Collyer 1984). The industry died out however, apparently suppressed during the reign of Elizabeth I due to the unpopularity with the locals of the foreigners who owned the furnaces, and later collapsing in 1615 after a Royal proclamation prohibited the burning of wood for industrial purposes. The later history of the village is in itself undistinguished, although many of the more prominent buildings date from the 18th century, attesting to the wealth and influence of the local landowning families. In more recent times, the village has become locally well known for its bonfire night celebrations.

2.2 The Roman Site:

The site is located in High Riddings field, just outside Chiddingfold at Whitebeech. Local tradition suggests that a town (Cowntown) previously existed on the site, and the field in which the site is located was once known as Riddington. It has been known that a Roman site is to be found here since 1883, when clearance of relatively recent foundations revealed tile and pottery. Under the direction of Ralph Neville later that year, and more comprehensively by T. S. Cooper in 1888-9, the site was uncovered and its plan revealed. The findings were not reported formally however until a 1984

article in the *Surrey Archaeological Collections*. The site lies approximately 1.7 kilometres from the village, at NGR SU 9784 3610, in an irregularly shaped field bordered by further fields to the north and west, a green lane to the south, and the grounds belonging to White Beech Cottage to the west. The location is indicated on fig. 1, near the 70m contour line at the north-west corner of the map.

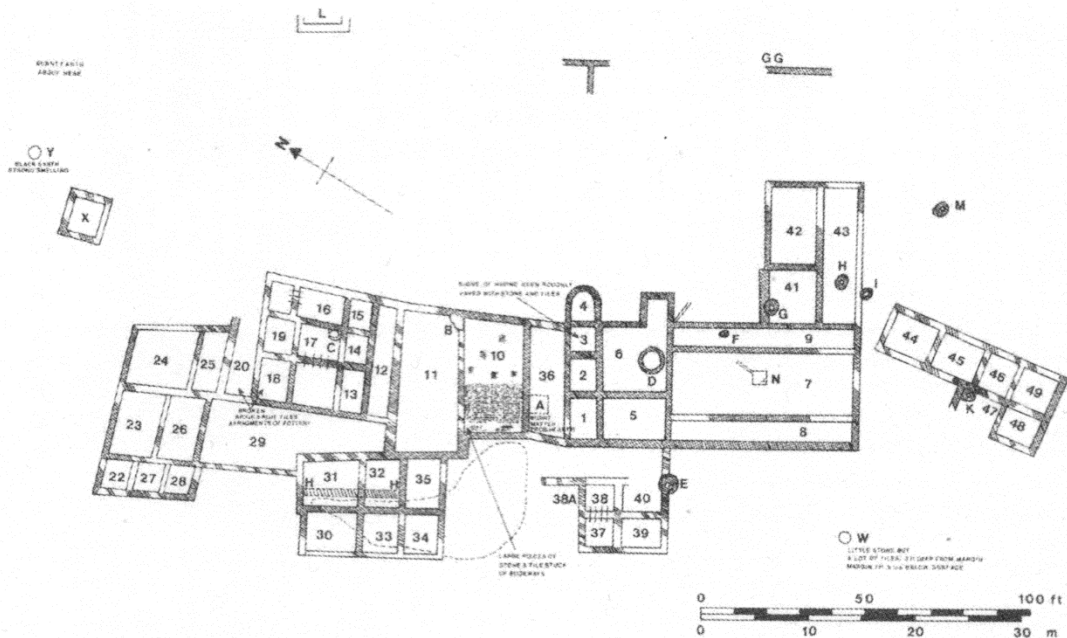


Fig. 2. Plan of the Roman site.

Two plans of the site exist from the 1888-9 Observations, the first of which is reproduced here (the second, more extensive plan can be seen on the front cover of this report). Casual observation indicates that the site exhibits some unusual characteristics. Its size is unprecedented in Surrey (for comparative plans see Bird 1987, figs 7.2, 7.3), whilst the seemingly haphazard layout is not typical of Roman formal planning, even if one accepts that later additions to an original structure were not recorded as such during the 19th century excavations. Other facts such as the isolated location of the site in the Weald, and the apparent low-status nature of the finds from the site have also given rise to some debate. Reappraisal of the site has suggested that some of the structures may have acted as shrines (Bird 1987, 175), an idea that more recent consideration has expanded into the possibility that the whole complex could be a religious centre (Bird, forthcoming). Whatever the function of the complex, it is clear that the site is unusual and of some importance to Roman studies nationally. For this reason, it has been designated as a Scheduled Monument by English Heritage, and is protected from unwarranted or illegal damage by the provisions of the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. A wider surrounding area has been suggested as an Area of High Archaeological Potential by Surrey County Council, a status which has been adopted by Waverley Borough Council.

3. STRATEGY

3.1 Aims of the Investigation:

High Riddings field itself measures roughly 295m x 143m. Within this area, the precise location of the site has been poorly plotted, as the 19th century records contain insufficient topographic details. The aims of the investigation were therefore as follows:

- To identify from the concentrations of finds, the likely location within the field of the Roman buildings;
- To examine and catalogue any other archaeological material within the field;
- To examine the evidence recovered for indications of recent damage to the site by ploughing;
- To provide training for a number of volunteers from the Surrey Archaeological Society, into the conduct of formal fieldwalking projects and finds recognition.

3.2 Methodology:

A 100m² Ordnance Survey site grid was established using an EDM, with a working grid of 10m squares based within this being marked out on the ground using a combination of ranging poles and canes. The squares were numbered on a master plan of the site (fig. 3), with the numbers being physically marked in the corresponding square on the ground. Each square was then allocated to a "walker", who collected the archaeological material of all periods from within the area, and removed it for processing. In total, 343 whole or partial 10m squares were examined.

Finds processing was designed to be rapid, with the material simply identified, and then catalogued on a pro-forma sheet specially designed for the exercise (See appendix 1). No attempt was made to differentiate the Roman material within each collection category (by date for example), although the pottery sherds were separated into coarse and fine wares, and the presence of tesserae was noted as distinct from the rest of the Ceramic Building Material (CBM). In a similar way, worked flints were roughly categorised, although again, no attempt was made to differentiate the material by likely production date. Initial finds processing was conducted by the site directors, although training was given and by the end of the exercise, all processing was being conducted by the volunteers, with the directors providing advice on unusual or confusing items.

Following processing, the material was returned to the square from where it had originally been collected, and the square was deleted from the site master

4. RESULTS

4.1 Prehistoric Material:

Collected prehistoric material was processed in three main categories: Worked Flint, Burnt Flint and Pottery. The plots for each are presented below. In all cases, the results are given by weight in grams, rather than number of objects recovered, and the orientation of the plots are the same as the site master plan given in figure 3.

The small blue circle shown at the north east of the field on all maps pinpoints the location of a spring. With a possible interpretation of the Roman site as a religious complex being borne in mind, this feature was believed to be a potential focus for activity before the exercise began and was marked accordingly on all of the processed plots. It will be noted from the results however, that whilst a distribution of prehistoric material was encountered across the field, the main concentration lies to the western side of the area, with little evidence for any activity in the area of the spring. It is also clear that the frequency of pottery is markedly less than that of flints — a pattern that is as likely to show a bias in the data caused by the fragile and degradable nature of prehistoric pottery (resulting in only partial survival), as it is to represent an accurate distribution map. As previously mentioned, no attempt on site was made to categorise the pottery or flints according to the differing prehistoric periods, although the retained material was sub-divided, and demonstrates prehistoric activity on the site across a greater range of dates than was previously known (see appendix 2).

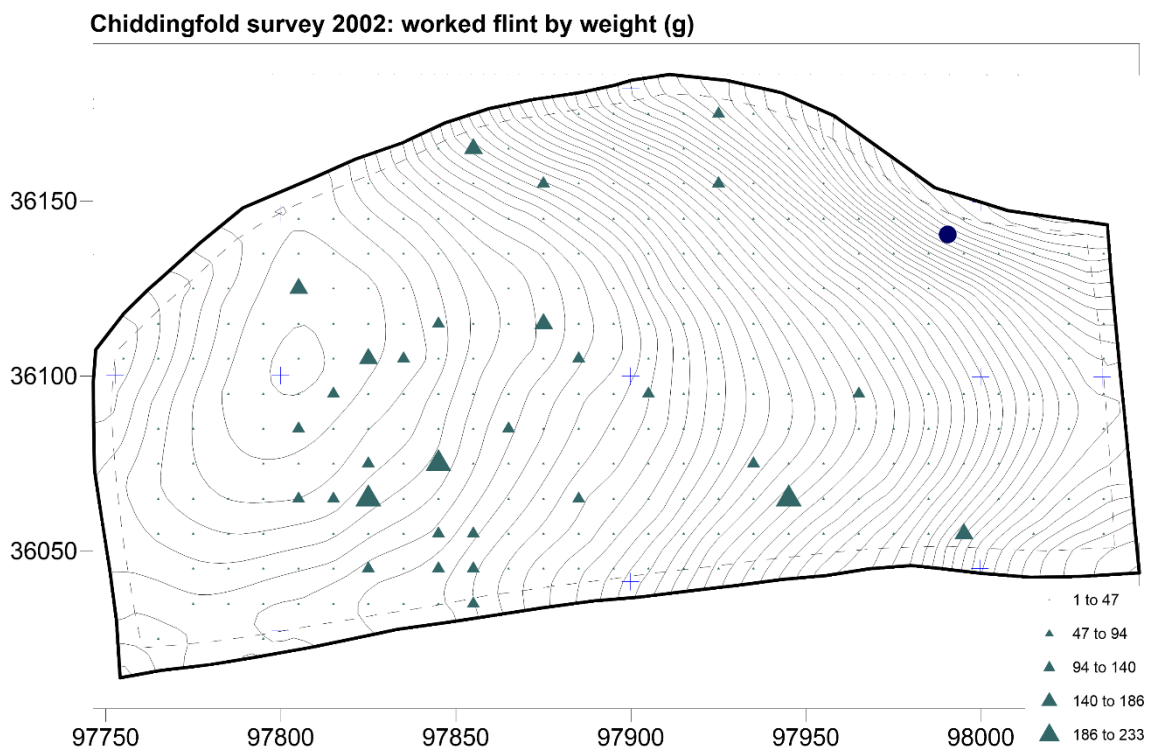


Fig. 4. Worked flint.

Chiddingfold survey 2002: burnt flint by weight (g)

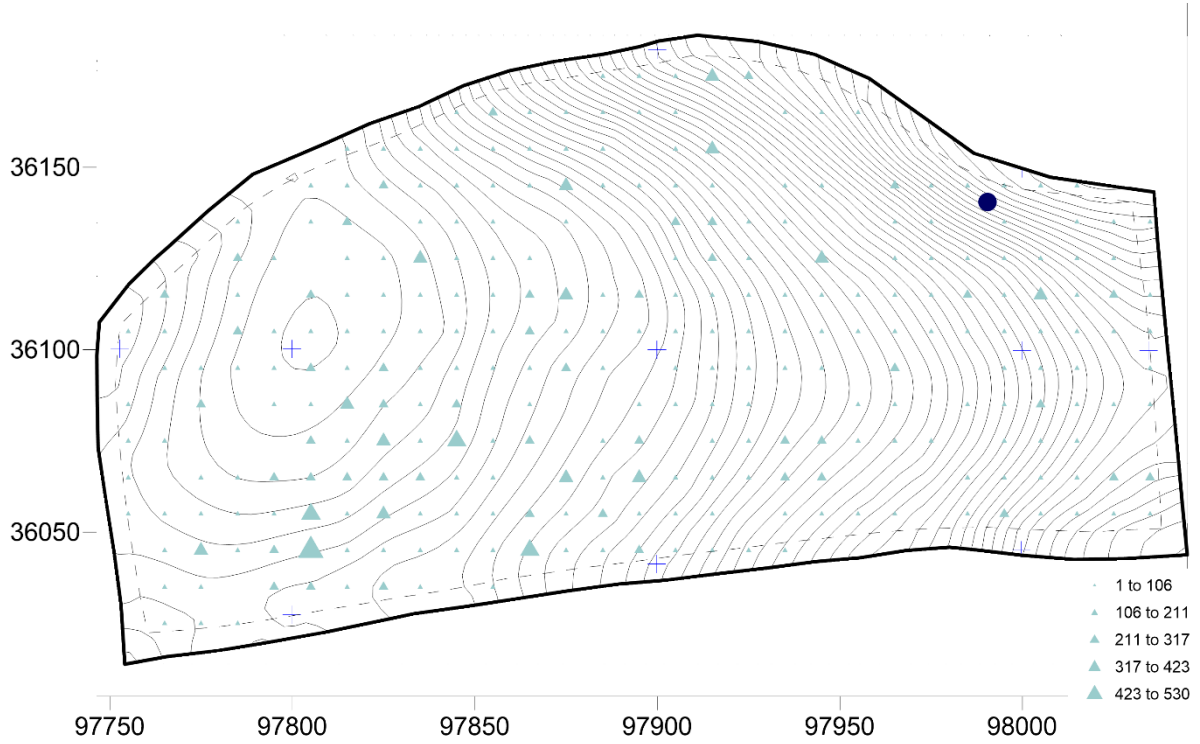


Fig 5. Burnt flint

Chiddingfold survey 2002: prehistoric pottery by weight (g)

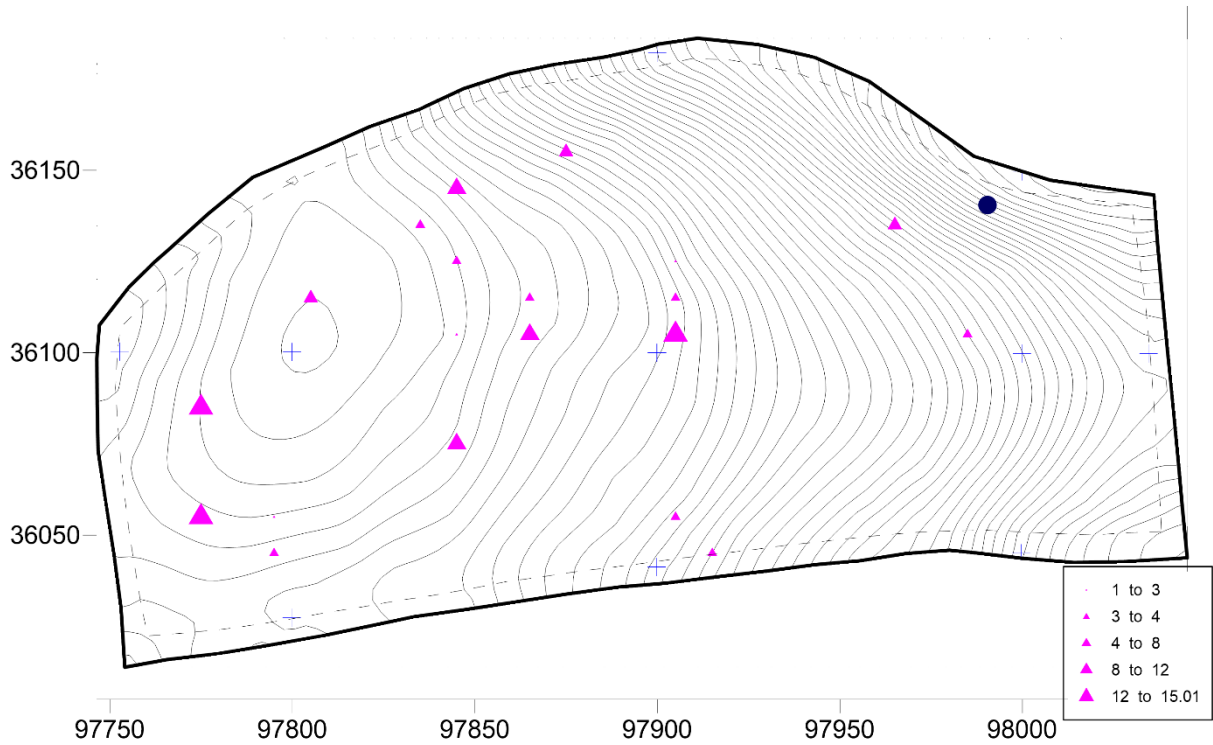


Fig. 6. Prehistoric pottery

4.2 Roman Material:

Roman material has been processed in a number of separate plots — ceramic Building material (CBM), tesserae, pottery, stone and plaster, as well as a combined building materials plot. All plots are calculated by weight, except that for tesserae, where concentrations were more apparent if the distribution was processed by number. The weight of this material was recorded however, and is readily available in the archive. The data for coarse wares and fine wares were combined within the pottery assessment, due to the low amount of the latter that was recovered. The concentrations of plaster and tesserae suggest that this material is being derived from specific sources within the building, rather than representing a general spread indicative of the Roman structure's location. These concentrations also suggest that damage caused by ploughing is occurring on the site — the plaster fragments in particular showed marked signs of degradation caused by rain which occurred two days prior to the start of the exercise, indicating that this material at least must have been brought to the surface by the most recent ploughing episode. The difficulty in assigning a definite period to broken building stone should be noted here (and also that no attempt was made to identify specific stone types), although the central location of the concentrations of stone found suggest that it is related to the Roman activity, and the results are presented as such.

No Roman metalwork was recovered, whilst the occurrence of identified Roman glass was so small, the data was not plotted. As with the data relating to the Prehistoric material, the area around the spring was notably devoid of activity.

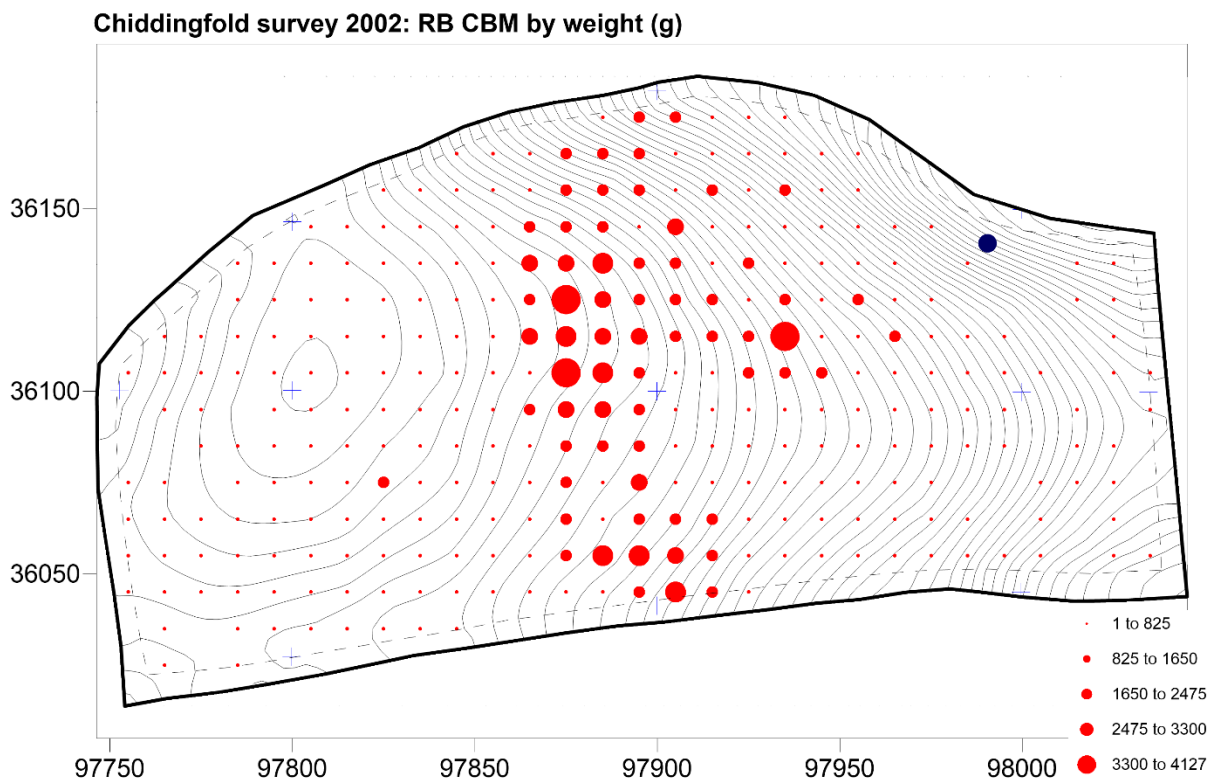


Fig. 7. Roman CBM

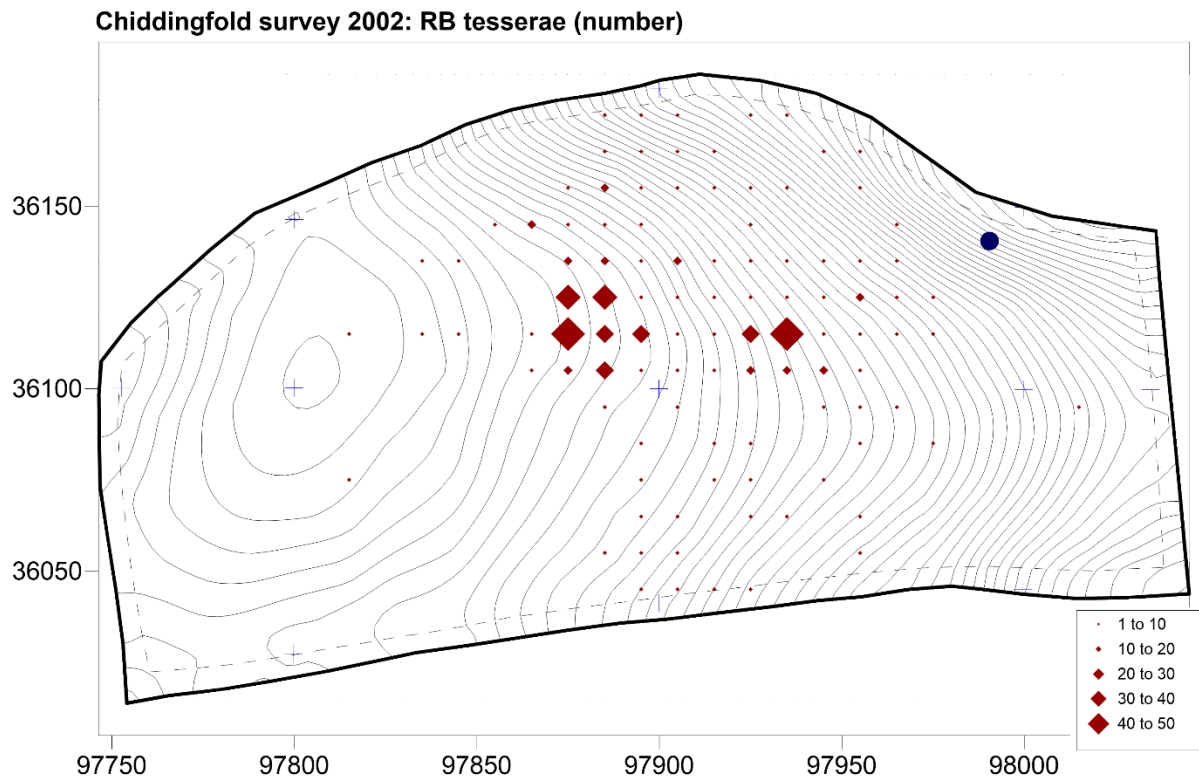


Fig. 8. Tesserae

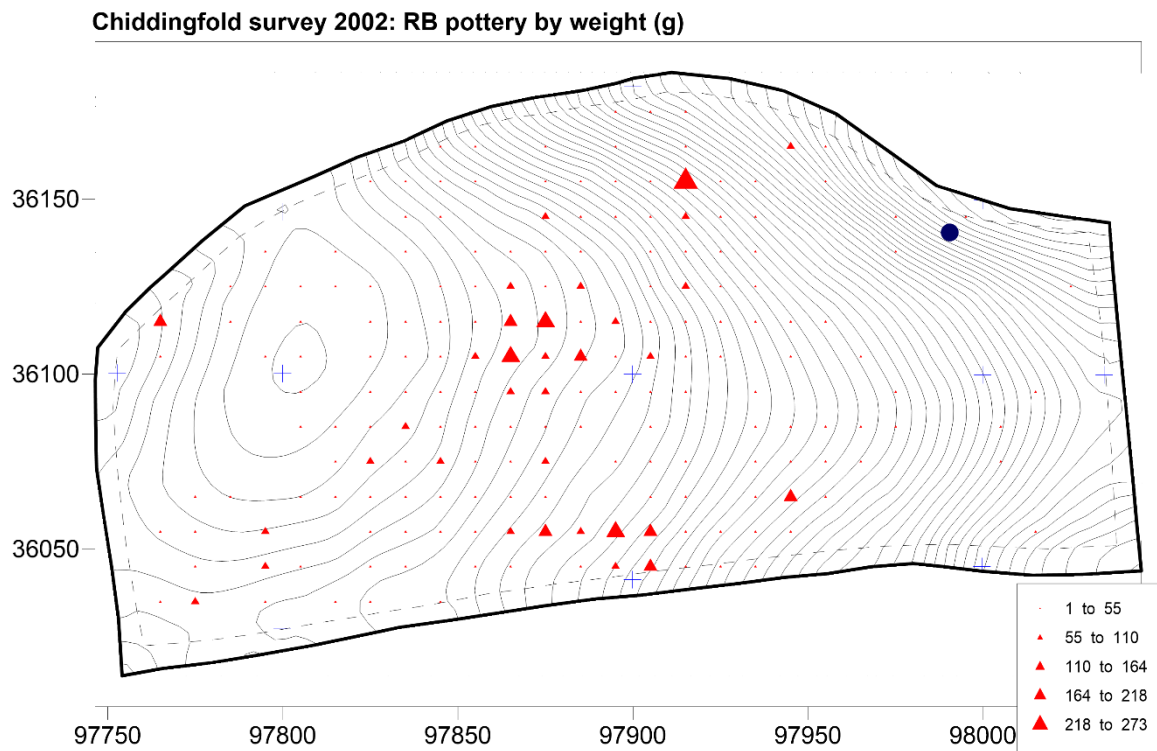


Fig. 9. Roman pottery – coarse and fine wares combined

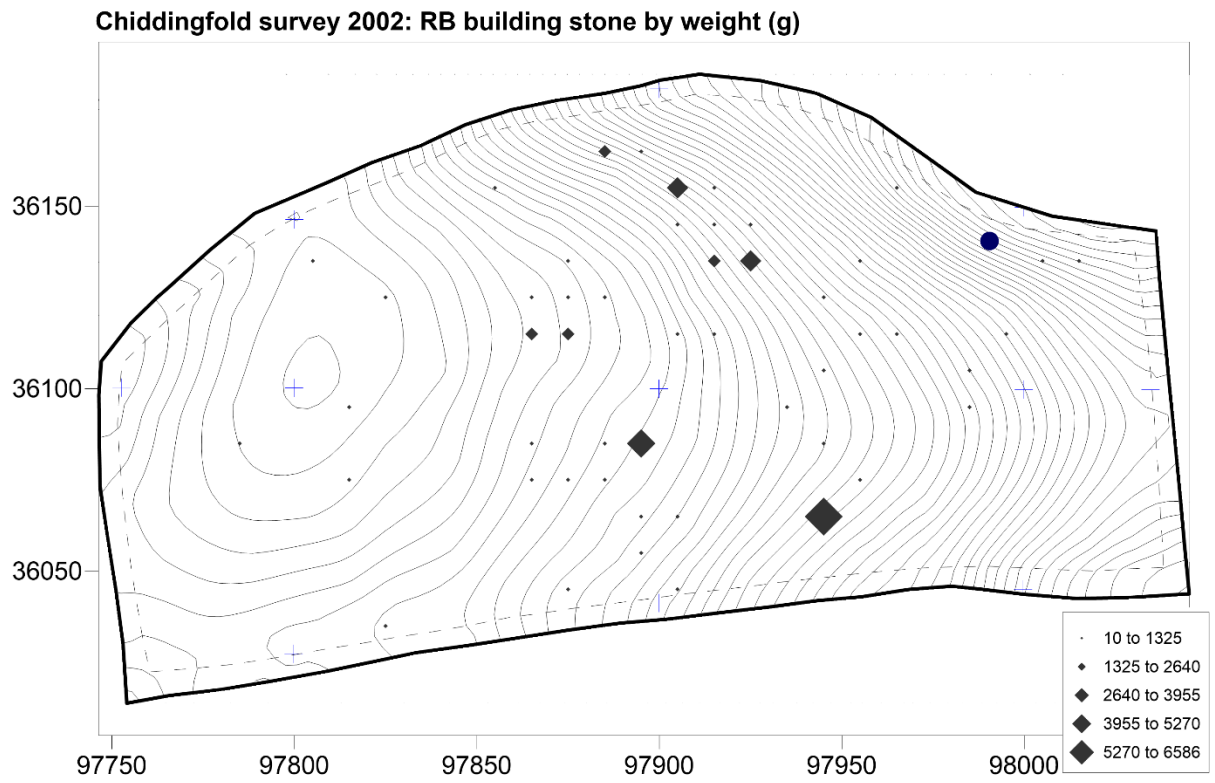


Fig. 10. Building stone

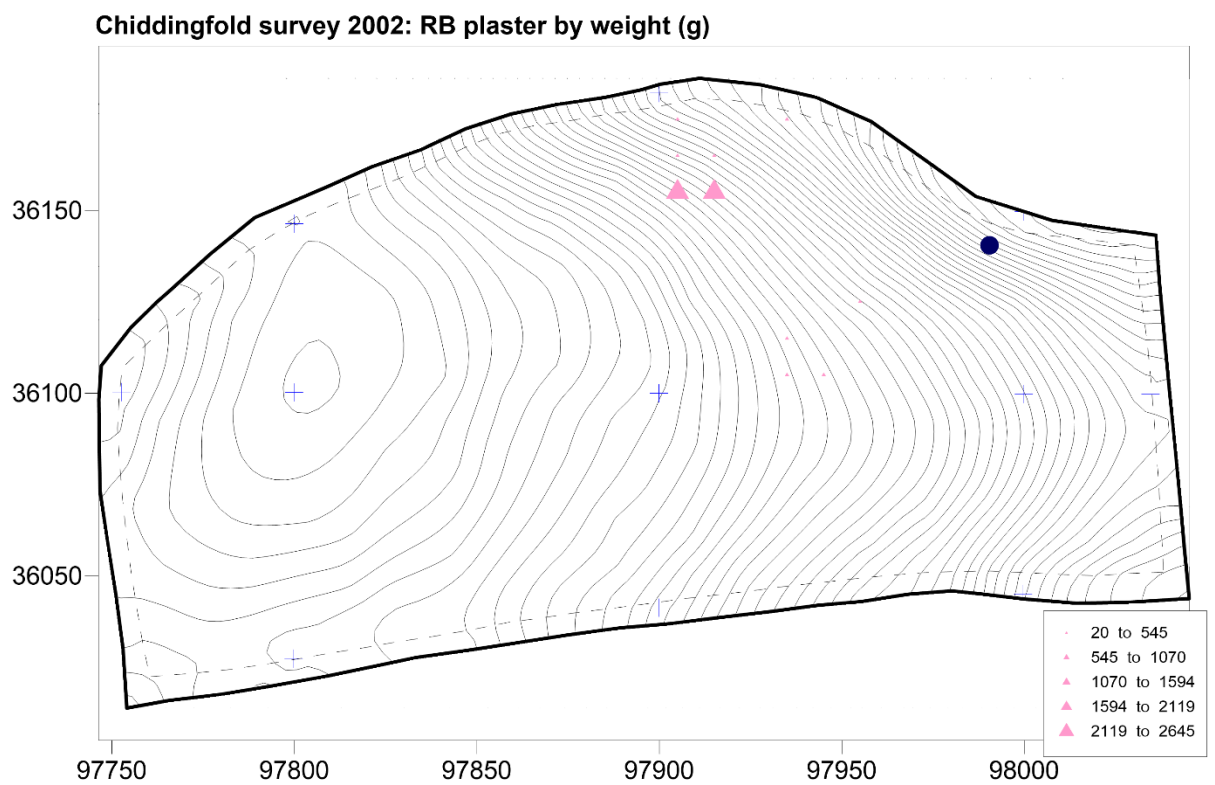


Fig. 11 Plaster

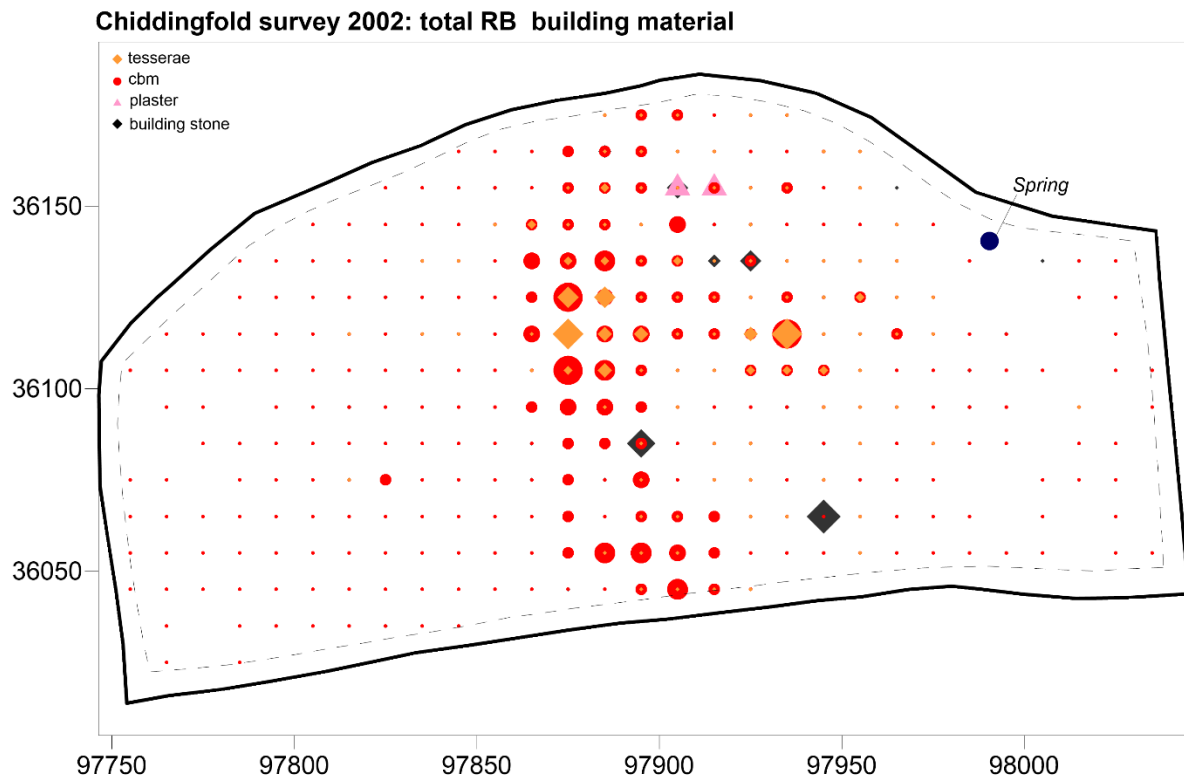


Fig. 12. Combined Roman building materials

4.3 Material of Other Periods:

It was apparent during the fieldwalking that material dating to many other periods was to be found on the site, although no concentrations were immediately obvious. A good example of this can be seen in the processed data for post-Medieval pottery, which shows a fairly random spread across the site with little to indicate that any isolated occupation or activity sites may exist. Additional information collected, for example the incidence of clay tobacco pipe fragments, supports this conclusion. This data has not been plotted in order to produce this report, although the information exists within the archive to do so should it become necessary.

A small amount of post-Medieval metalwork was recovered, although nothing of any real antiquity or interest was included in this assemblage, and none was retained. Glass slag was noted fairly evenly across the site. Given that the Roman material was found to be concentrated in certain parts of the site, it seems more likely that this material relates to later Medieval and Post-Medieval agricultural activity.

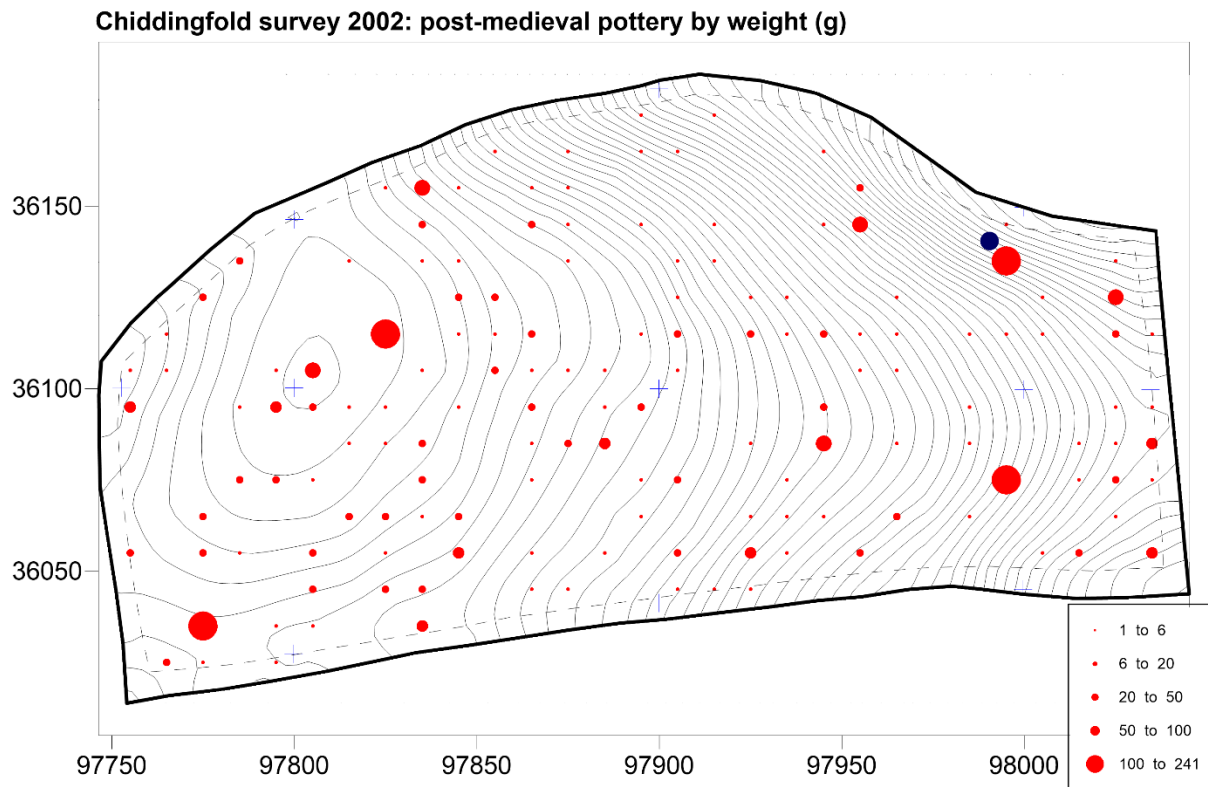


Fig. 13. Post-medieval pottery distribution

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the data recovered during the exercise. A possible Mesolithic site has previously been recorded in this field (see Halahan 1927 & Hooper, 1933), although it seems likely that the area was a focus for prehistoric activity for a more general period. Potentially, this could be related to the presence of the spring, although the apparent lack of activity surrounding this feature is puzzling. Certainly there was more prehistoric material found than would be normally expected as the "background noise" which might normally be found on a site where alien material may periodically be introduced as part of agricultural fertilisation or drainage improvements. A contour survey of the field, conducted just prior to the fieldwalking, suggests that the highest point of the site lies approximately on the 97800 grid line, which appears to tally roughly with the highest concentrations of burnt and worked flints to have been recorded. Whilst the concentrations are probably not sufficient to indicate a major settlement here, more short-term intermittent occupation possibly occurred over a longer period, with the high point in the field perhaps being the logical place to make camp. This particular area would certainly be worthy of further archaeological investigation, although the general nature of the results suggests the possibility that anywhere within the central part of the field may reasonably be expected to produce additional finds or possibly features, related to prehistoric activity from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age periods.

Chiddingfold survey 2002. east-west profile (SU 97747 36100 – 98040 36100)

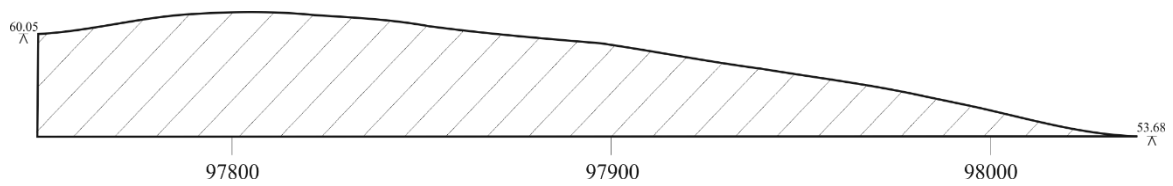


Fig. 14. Contour survey, east–west profile.

The Roman material clearly suggests that the structural complex is to be found on a north-south axis in the centre of the field, apparently coinciding with a shallow plateau just to the west of the 97900 OS grid line. This places the site somewhat to the east of the area where it was previously assumed to be, and largely beyond the area currently protected by the Scheduling. This indicates immediately that at least one of the future aims of any work should be to verify these results, in order to revise and extend the Scheduled zone so that the site may be properly protected.

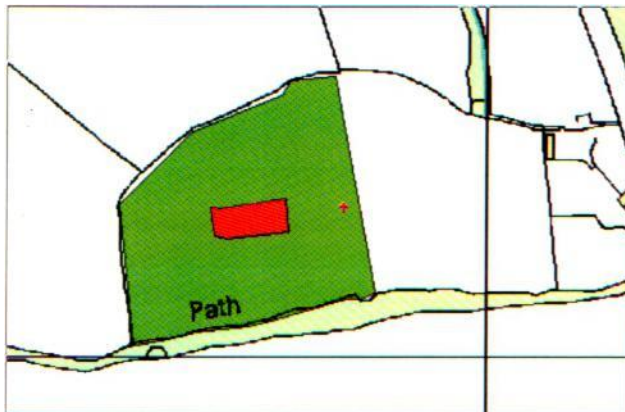


Fig. 15. Designated areas. The Scheduled Area is indicated by the red rectangle. The County Area of High Archaeological Potential is shown in green



Fig. 16. Cooper's plan superimposed. For comparison with the above, this shows the likely position of the Roman site, as demonstrated by the results of this fieldwalking project.

Compare also with figs. 7-12.

With the site having been excavated previously, one perceived danger prior to the exercise was that the location of the Victorian spoil heaps would be pinpointed easily, but the villa site might remain harder to identify. The results

would suggest that this has not been the case — if for no other reason, the discrete patches of plaster and tesserae indicate that specific sources of these materials occur on site and are being damaged by ploughing. The occurrence of Roman pottery on the site, whilst notably more diverse than the building materials, also concentrates around the centre of the field, suggesting that perhaps some contextual material remains *in-situ*, and that not all nonstructural deposits were fully removed by the antiquarian investigations.

The relatively small amount of building stone recorded is of note. A large site such as this may be expected to have contained significant quantities of this material — it is not uncommon for extensive remains to influence the place-name in the medieval period when ploughing is noted to have been difficult, or the field is agriculturally unproductive. However, whilst the local tradition suggested the presence of a "town", nothing definite was recorded until the first investigations in 1883. It is possible that large-scale Saxon and Medieval robbing of the site for building materials took place, but the lack of finds recorded in this exercise for these periods would not currently support this theory, and the historic accounts of the area are not indicative of the intense activity required on the site should robbing of such a presumably large complex have taken place. Local structures in the village such as the church are not noted for containing potentially re-used Roman building materials either.

Alternatively, the buildings may have been largely constructed from timber, resting on rubble foundations, with less obvious traces remaining in the archaeological record of such constructions. This hypothesis would perhaps suggest that the site might not have been a high status complex, which seems more reasonable when the apparent utilitarian nature of the finds recorded during the excavations is taken into account. However, a third possibility which seems reasonable, is that the site was not a single large complex of buildings at all, but rather a farmstead where less durable structures were added and removed over a period of time — possibly with only a few parts of the site remaining constantly in use. Certainly this idea would be supported by the strange haphazard nature of the layout, which defies most conventions of Roman planning, but with no suggestion of phasing having been recorded in the excavations, this theory must at present remain hypothetical. It should be noted also that at the start of the exercise, chalk fragments were collected and processed, as being potentially indicative of decayed building material. However, as the walking progressed, the chalk spreads were found to be fairly constant, and the collection was largely discontinued as too time consuming, the assumption being made that this material was imported onto the site as part of agricultural fertilization.

The dearth of metalwork of all periods on the site may be viewed as a cause for concern. On a major Roman complex such as this, even where excavations have previously taken place, a certain amount of metalwork would normally be recovered, and certainly one would reasonably expect objects such as coins, buttons and broken fragments of agricultural equipment from the post-medieval period to be fairly numerous. However, only 14 metal objects were recorded, six of which were iron nails. Only one coin (1955 sixpence) was recovered, and

no Roman items were found whatsoever. The worrying conclusion from this is that the site may continue to be a focus for metal detectorists, despite the designation of part of the field as a Scheduled Monument that renders such activity illegal. As noted previously (Section 4.2), it appears that plough damage is occurring on the site. The extent of this is not clear, and further work will be needed for clarification of this. It is however, a situation that should be closely monitored.

The results of the fieldwalking have clearly demonstrated the worth of such relatively low-intensity exercises. In this case, enthusiastic volunteers proved to be at least as expert at artefact spotting and collection as their more seasoned colleagues (if not more so), whilst the structured approach to the work ensured that each participant was aware of their role and could see the pattern of data being accumulated even before the work was completed. It is therefore suggested that this has proven to be a highly successful pilot, and that similar work could be undertaken on other sites within the County.

In terms of the Chiddingfold site itself, further work (most productively in the form of limited trenching), could be conducted to identify sections of the complex illustrated on the 19th century plans, in an attempt to pin the location of the complex down precisely and reappraise the Scheduling. More comprehensive investigative archaeological work will be required to answer the questions of the site's possible function and phasing previously outlined, but the prospect of this should not be ruled out as the examination of the site continues. In the shorter term, monitoring visitors will need to ensure that possible evidence of plough damage in the areas shown here is checked for and noted if seen, whilst local residents who may pass the site whilst using the adjacent path, could usefully pause and examine the site for evidence of metal detecting.

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7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Everyone who freely gave their time to the project, and took part in the fieldwalking, should be congratulated for their efforts. Particular thanks go to David and Audrey Graham, for their preliminary survey work on the site, participation during the walking itself, and production of the processed data plots included in this report. Judith Roebuck, the English Heritage Inspector of Historic Monuments for Surrey is also to be thanked for her assistance, as is Peter Harp, who examined the retained selection of flints. Final thanks go to Mr. Neville Cherriman, the owner of the site, for his co-operation in allowing us access to the field.

8. APPENDICES

8.1 - Fieldwalking Record Form

SQUARE:	DATE:	CHIDDINGFOLD FIELDWALKING PROJECT, 2002:		
POTTERY		SHERD COUNT	WEIGHT	COMMENTS
	PREHISTORIC			
	ROMAN - FINEWARES			
	- COARSEWARES			
	SAXON			
	MEDIEVAL			
	POST-MEDIEVAL			
	UNIDENTIFIED (DESCRIBE)			

BUILDING MATERIALS		CERAMIC		STONE		DAUB		PLASTER		TESSERAE		OTHER	
		Ct	Wt	ct	Wt	Ct	Wt	Ct	Wt	Ct	wt	Ct	Wt
	PREHISTORIC												
	ROMAN												
	SAXON												
	MEDIEVAL												
	POST-MED												
	UNIDENTIFIED (SPECIFY)												
COMMENTS													

GLASS		BOTTLE		VESSEL		WINDOW		COMMENTS
		ct	Wt	ct	Wt	Ct	Wt	
	ROMAN							
	MED							
	POST- MED							
	UNIDENTIFIED							

FLINT		ct	Wt	COMMENTS
	FLAKE			
	BLADE			
	CORE			
	LUMP			

IRON	NAILS		SLAG		OTHER		COMMENTS
	ct	Wt	ct	Wt		wt	

BONE	HUMAN		ANIMAL		UNIDENTIFIED		COMMENTS
	Ct	Wt	ct	Wt	ct	wt	

SHELL	OYSTER		MUSSEL		COCKLE		WHELK	SNAIL		COMMENTS
	Ct	Wt	ct	Wt	ct	Wt		Wt	ct	

SMALL FINDS	NUMBER		MATERIAL		OBJECT

8.2 - Report on struck flint recovered during fieldwalking, by Peter Harp A

total of 17 pieces of struck flint were submitted for specialist report:

1. Grid A69. Projectile point, chisel type. 124, b 23, t 4. Neolithic or Early Bronze Age.
2. Grid A77. Bladelet. 113, b 8, t 2; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
3. Grid A83. Microlith fragment, distal end. 118, b 11, t 2; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
4. Grid B62. Blade or microlith fragment, distal end. 113, b 9, t 1; flint colour brown, unpatinated, burnt (but not calcined). Mesolithic.
5. Grid C59. Concave scraper on broken blade, proximal end. 131, b 1-8, t 5; flint colour grey, slight milky patination. Mesolithic.
6. Grid C65. Pointed blade. 142, b 19, t 5; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
7. Grid C75. Blade fragment, mesial part, retouched. 1 19, b 10, t2; flint colour brown, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
8. Grid C75. Blade fragment, proximal end, retouched. 19, b 6, t1; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
9. Grid C99. End scraper fragment, distal end. 119, b 26, t 5; flint colour brown, heavy milky/blue patination, burnt (but not calcined). Mesolithic.
10. Grid D11. Retouched flake, 124, b 16, t 3; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic
11. Grid D11. Retouched blade fragment, distal end; 117, b 9, t 2; flint colour grey, moderate milky/blue patination, glossy. Mesolithic.
12. Grid D84. Retouched blade, 162, b 28, t 8; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
13. Grid D84. Retouched blade fragment, proximal end, 121, b 12, t 3; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
14. Grid E37. Projectile point, barbed & tanged, Sutton type b (Green), 1 30, b 22, t 4; flint colour brown with cherty inclusions, moderate milky/blue patination, glossy. Early Bronze Age.
15. Grid F8. Flake, unretouched (but with considerable edge damage), 133, b 27, t 8; flint colour grey, heavy milky patination, calcined. Probably Mesolithic.
16. Grid F21. Blade fragment, distal end, 114, b 5, t 2; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.
17. Grid F42. Retouched blade, 141, b 13, t 5; flint colour grey, unpatinated, glossy. Mesolithic.

[All measurements in mm. l (length) is along axis of striking, b (breadth) and t (thickness) are at maxima].

Conclusion: A collection of probable Middle to Late Mesolithic struck flint with two arrowheads of Neolithic /Bronze Age date.