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News

College dig unearths exciting new evidence of Sussex life in 2000BC

by Paul Deacon

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EXCITING new evidence about life in West Sussex 4,000 years ago has been unearthed in a field in the grounds of Brinsbury College, near Pulborough.

Volunteer archaeologists and students investigated the site during a week-long dig and ended up calling in national experts to take a closer look at what they had discovered.

Ian Robertson, one of the project managers from Worthing Archaeological Society, reported there had been a 'huge number' of finds - 71 early Bronze Age flint arrowheads plus a piece of decorated Bronze Age pot and three possible fire sites from 2000BC.

He told the County Times: "It's an extremely exciting site. The arrowheads are some of the finest examples of what you can do with a piece of stone. They've all survived remarkably intact."

"It's very unusual to be able to find evidence of Bronze Age occupation, particularly where we are on the South Coast. This area was thought to have been heavily wooded and not occupied. This could be a very important site in understanding how they used the landscape in the Bronze Age period."

He explained that it had been previously thought that Bronze Age people only lived up on the Downs but recent discoveries, including a dig near Sainsbury's at Pulborough, were making archaeologists think again in this respect.

"It seems there's far much more going on in this area during the Bronze Age period than we have previously known about."

In a nice connection between the past and the future, one of the arrowheads was dis-



A fragment of Bronze Age pottery found on the dig.

covered by four year old Horsham girl Beth, daughter of Brinsbury tutor Paul Foksett - she had been brought along to take a look at the site with her older sister Holly.

Recalled Ian: "They got here and immediately his daughter bent down and picked up an arrowhead, straight from the ground!"

Despite all its history, nothing of archaeological interest had ever been discovered on the field until 2008, when students on a Brinsbury landscape conservation course discovered some arrowheads while walking across the field and reported it to their tutor, Mr Foksett.

They used GPS to record the exact locations where they found the arrowheads so further investigations could be carried out.

Mr Foksett decided to introduce an element of archaeology into the course and got in touch with the Worthing Archaeological Society (WAS).

Initially, nothing more was found on the site but in 2010 a field walk was organised, with 40 vol-

Farmers who hunted wild cattle

THE FOLK who made the Pulborough arrowheads in around 2000BC would have principally been farmers, growing food and keeping livestock, while living in roundhouses with wattle and daub walls and tall conical thatched roofs.

They are thought to have lived

unters covering the whole field and picking up everything they found in the soil.

This proved a great success, with 48 arrowheads from the Bronze Age period being found. This was "a very large number", said Ian, and it was decided to carry out a proper dig.

The spots where arrowheads had been found in 2010 were plotted on a map and a trench was dug along the biggest cluster.

The team were all volunteers, including Ian, aged 39, who lives in Chichester and works in company pension schemes.

Some are retired and others made use of their annual leave and the extra bank holiday to take part. Ian said there were 25 to 30 WAS members on site for most of the time, backed up by 25 college students.

He added: "Students have been coming in on their days off, which is fantastic, and turning up for early morning starts as well."

Steve William of Chichester College confirmed that they were delighted that Brinsbury campus students had been able to get involved. He said: "The college has made significant efforts to make itself

part of the local community and is pleased to work with groups such as Worthing Archaeological Society."

In family groups, occasionally congregating in larger gatherings at hill forts and other sites. Their cleverly constructed arrows would have been used for hunting the likes of wild cattle, deer and wild boar.

Flint tools were used by human beings for at least half a million years.

Although the dig revealed three burnt areas thought to have been sites of fires from 4,000 years ago, no trace was found of any houses or other materials like leather or bone.

Ian explained that this did not necessarily mean there was no permanent settlement there - just that they had not yet discovered it, with only one per cent of the field so far excavated.

The flint would have been mined from the South Downs, possibly the Findon area. The Brinsbury people may have carried out some initial work on the flint, preparing 'blanks' on the Downs, before bringing their supplies back to their base to 'knap' them into shape, flake by flake.

Said Ian: "It is possible they were making arrowheads at the site. It's a really developed skill they've used to produce these tools."

Examination of the flint heads shows they were not fitted to arrows that had been fired.



Left: Ian Robertson of Worthing Archaeological Society with a Bronze Age arrowhead found on Brinsbury land. Above: Volunteers hard at work at the dig.

DEREK MARTIN DMI1195116a

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Horsham's Beth Foskett, aged four (left), with the arrowhead she found - and her older sister Beth.

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