

PROJECT DESIGN FOR EXCAVATION AT ROMANO-BRITISH SITE LOCATED AT BLACKSMITHS CORNER, WALBERTON

1 Introduction

This project design details the planned excavation at Romano-British villa site at SU0597 and c. 10m OD. The excavation is scheduled to take two weeks commencing on 21st August 2010.

2 Site Location & Geology

The settlement site lies c10m above Ordnance Datum to the south east of the village of Walberton, east of the B3132 on the favoured south-facing slope of the Coastal plain. The underlying geology consists of aeolian 'Brickearth' deposits. The site is in the northwestern corner of the field, which is currently under arable farming. The Chichester-Brighton roman road runs approximately 1.5km to the north of the site.

3 Archaeological Background – Excavations in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009

A request by Luke Wishart provided the opportunity to perform a number of excavations to investigate the Roman Villa found there by Worthing Archaeological Society (WAS) in 2006. Further excavations continued in 2007, 2008. These excavations firmly established the floor plan of a five-room corridor villa, the long axis of which runs approximately north south. Wall foundations to a depth of 83cm were recorded; unfortunately there appear to be no surviving floor levels. In 2009, two more rooms were found built into the northeast corner of the villa, and the position of the furnace for the bathhouse located.

There are few others sites of Romano-British age recorded in the immediate vicinity. The society is currently undertaking a search of documentary sources in order to build up a more complete record of the known archaeology of the area..

4 Field Methodology for BCW 2010 Excavation

4.1 Objectives

Based on the findings from the previous excavation and the Resistivity survey there are four main objectives for what will probably be the last year of excavation on this site.

1. Was Room I of the villa heated?

Excavations in 2009 established the location of the bathhouse furnace. There appears to have been a flue knocked through the foundations at this point which could have allowed Room I of the villa to be heated. .

2. What is the extent, purpose and age of the ditch to the north of the villa?

Excavations in 2009 proved that the ditch north of the villa was filled in two distinct phases. Phase I consisted of a thick layer of flint which appears to have been deposited in one event. Phase 2 was the use of the ditch as a rubbish pit. We need to try to establish how this relates to the villa and how far the ditch extends.

3. What else survives of the villa complex?

Excavations in 2006,2007, 2008 and 2009 have firmly established a floor plan of the Walberton villa and begun to identify various phases of construction and demolition. We now wish to place the villa more firmly in its immediate environment. The wealth that generated the villa was almost certainly based on agriculture, which should mean that there are ancillary buildings. There would also have been access to the villa, probably linking to east west running road (along the bottom of the dip slope of the Downs) north of the villa. Previous resistivity surveys indicate the presence of other possible features, which need to be evaluated.

4. Is it possible to relatively date the various phases of construction?

Rooms VI and VII have very different foundations to the rest of the villa complex, suggesting a different phase of construction. The present evidence does not allow for relative dating of these phases.

4.2 Excavation Approach

Five trenches will be opened in order to investigate the objectives listed above. Initially the trenches would be excavated by machine and the spoil piled on ground immediately adjacent to trench. The trenches would only be left open for the minimum amount of time possible, and after recording will be backfilled by machine and the site tidied.

4.2.1 Trenches P, Q and R

Trench P will be 10 x 2 metres and will be located 5m to the west of the northern end of the villa. Trench Q is 3.5 x 3m over the ditch terminus established in 2009. Trench R will be 3 x 2m and 5m east of the terminus. These trenches are designed to investigate ditch 1 and to test the hypothesis that there is a ditch that runs below the northern part of the villa.

Trench U

An area 5 x 4.5m will be opened over the furnace area, extending into room I to look at the possible relationships in this area.

Trenches S and T

These two trenches are located to try to establish a relative dating sequence for the northern end of the villa. Trench S will be 2.5 x 1.5m over the north wall, trench T 4 x 1.5m and be look at the relationship between room VI & VII and the eastern veranda wall. .

Trench V

Will be a 6 x 5m trench located to further investigate the archaeology seen in trench K in 2009

Trench W

Will be a 25 x 2m evaluation trench to investigate the crop mark to the east of the villa.

The positions of these trenches is shown in figure1.

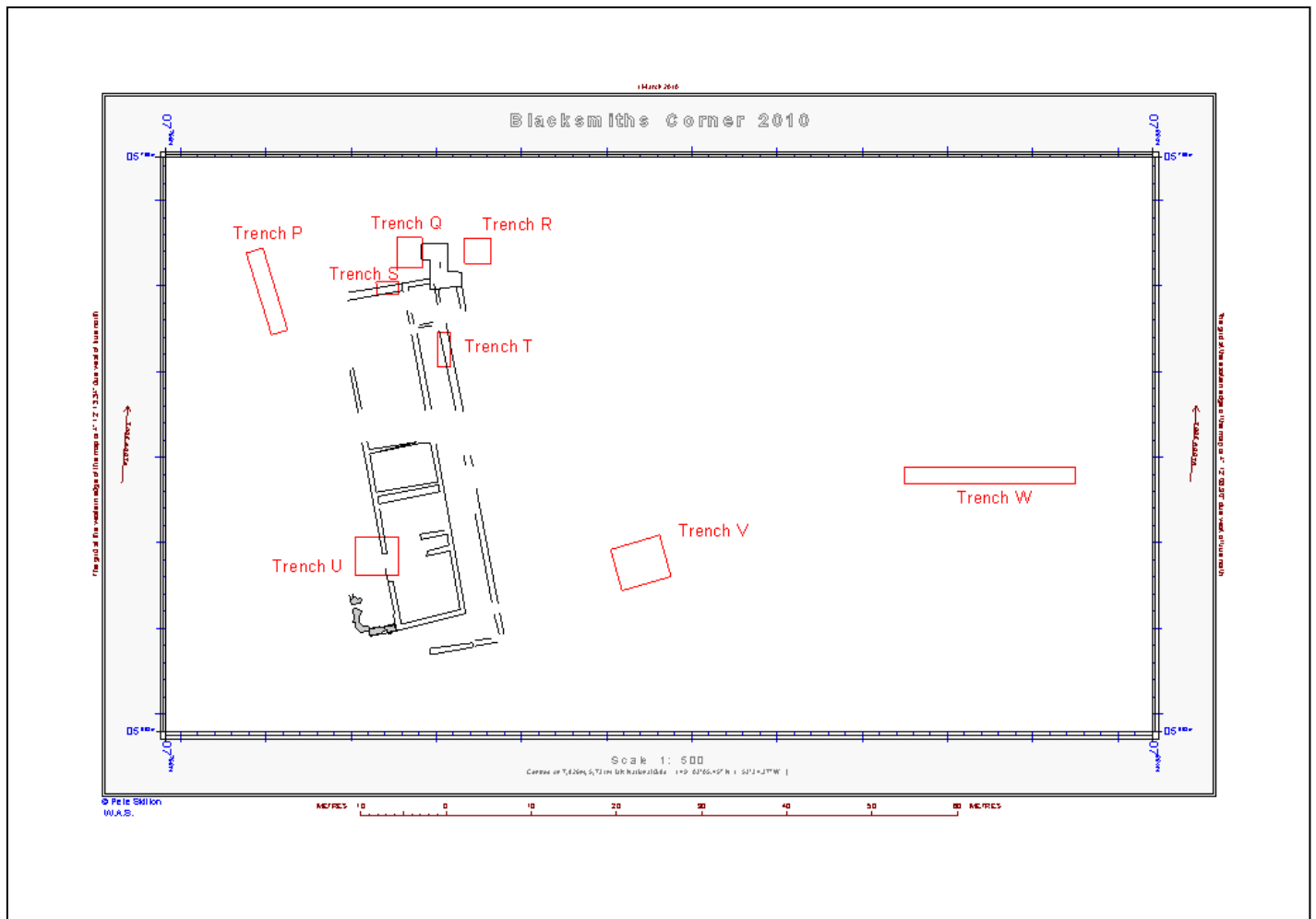


Figure 1 Location of 2010 trenches relative to the known archaeology

4.2.2 Site Records

- Details of the nature, extent and date (where it is possible to determine) of archaeological contexts will be recorded upon the standard pro forma sheets that would be provided by WAS (as drawn up in conjunction with the County Archaeologist).

- Measured drawings (plans at 1:20, sections at 1:10) will be made as appropriate, with particular emphasis on sections. All drawings to be accurately related to the OS National Grid.
- Levels will be taken where appropriate; ensuring that each context recorded can be related to Ordnance Datum. A TBM will be established on site and linked into the nearest OS BM at the church at Walberton.
- Photographs will be taken using both a film camera and a digital camera as appropriate, using a suitable scale.
- Artefacts will be retained where considered appropriate in the light of their context and/or importance.
- All artefacts recovered during the excavation will be processed according to guidelines as set out in First Aid for Finds, 1998, and to the standards of Worthing Museum.
- All artefacts will be quantified by number and where appropriate weight.
- All artefacts, except those excluded on the grounds of size/material, will be washed and marked with the site code.
- All artefacts will be bagged and boxed in containers approved by the museum and sympathetic to their condition. Specialist help will be sought via the Sussex Archaeological Society where more detailed analysis and/or conservation is required.

4.2.3 Environmental Material

Environmental sampling will occur where appropriate in trenches P, Q and R. Samples will be taken only from deposits that are well dated, or dateable from sealed contexts.

Sieving

As a general rule, and conditions allowing, every third wheelbarrow of spoil will be sieved. However all spoil from the ditch fill will be sieved.

4.2.4 Metal Detecting

Metal detectors will be used to scan the various spoil heaps to locate finds missed by the diggers. This has proved to be very successful in the past, increasing our recovery rate of coins by 100%. If possible, metal detectors will be used over the area of the trenches after machine digging but prior to hand excavation. Any 'hits' will be marked and left for recovery in the course of excavation.

5 Timetable

The excavation is planned for two weeks commencing on 21st August 2009. The plough soil will be removed by machine on Friday 20th August. Backfilling will occur on Monday 5th September.

6 Post-Excavation Analysis

It is envisaged that where possible all artefacts will be identified and reported on by local specialists.

7 Written Report

1. An interim reports will be produced within three months of completion of the excavation. This report will be distributed to those mentioned below, and will posted on the WAS website. It will also be published in the WAS newsletter/journal.
2. A final report (detailing the excavations in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010) will be prepared, which will include details of the excavation method, a description of the archaeological features, details of artefacts and an assessment of environmental evidence. The report will also include site location, trench details and feature plans tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and sections showing levels above Ordnance Datum.
3. Copies of the final report will be submitted to the following:
 - West Sussex County Council;
 - Arundel District Museum;
 - Sussex Archaeological Society.

8 Deposition of Archive and Finds

1. Artefacts remain in the ownership of the landowner, Mr L Wishart and will be stored, initially at the Slindon office. Where relevant some material will be kept off-site if conservation standards require it.
2. A copy of the site archive will be offered to the following:
 - National Trust
 - West Sussex County Council;
 - Arundel District Museum
 - Collection Discovery centre at Fishbourne Roman Palace

9 Other

1. The trench(es), when unattended, will be secured and clearly marked in a manner commensurate with Health & Safety regulations. 'Deep Excavation notices will be used if appropriate.
2. A Risk Assessment will be carried out prior to the archaeological excavation and all relevant Health and Safety regulations will be complied with during the excavation. All members of the excavation team will be briefed on its contents before commencing work at the site. A first aid kit will be available on site at all times.
3. WAS are fully insured (as arranged through the Council for British Archaeology) to undertake all aspects of archaeological fieldwork
4. The Worthing Archaeological Society will fund the initial excavation. If dating or other scientific analysis is required, Sussex Archaeological

Society will be approached for a Margary Grant. Alternatively the CBA South East regional society will be approached for a grant.