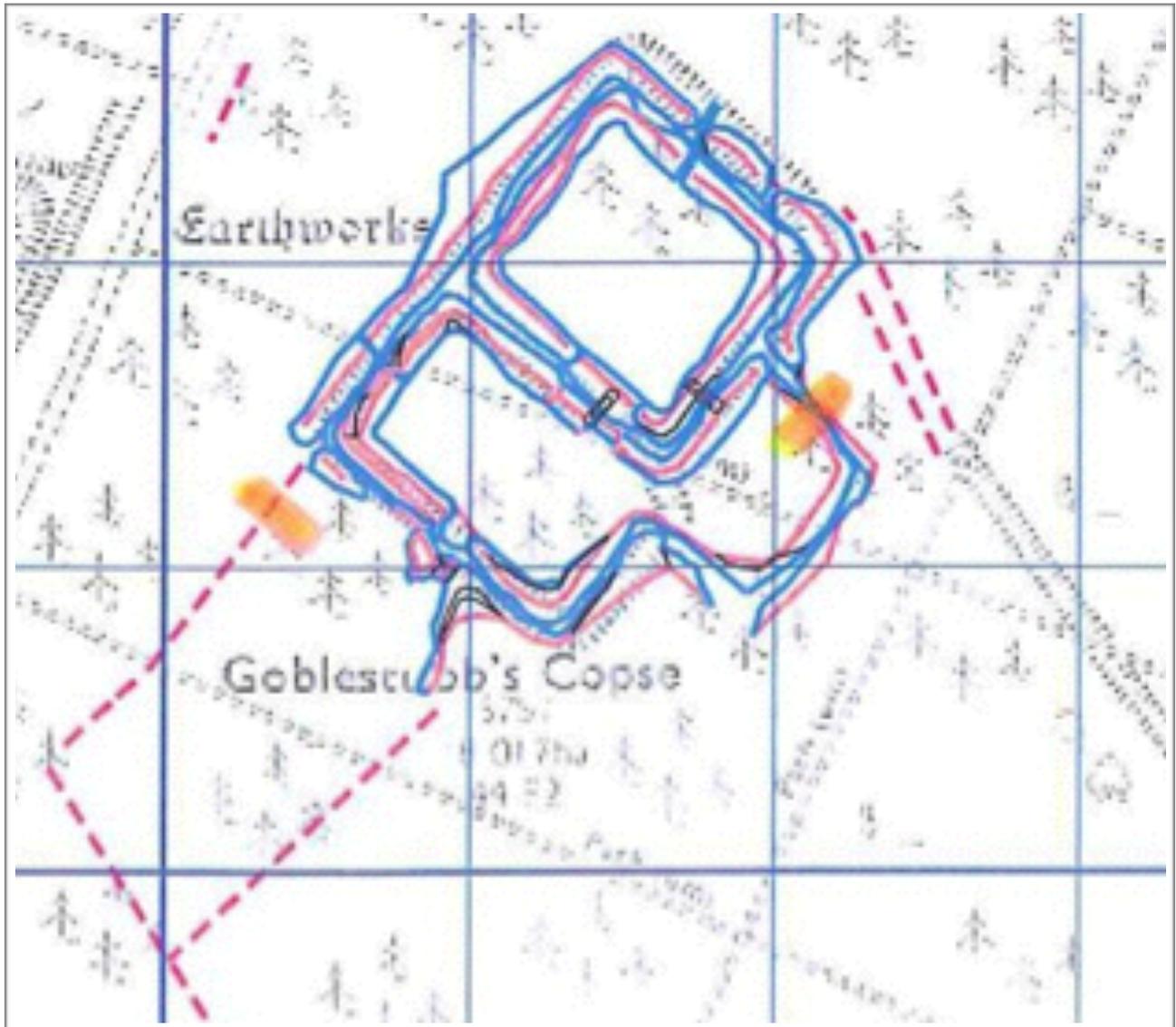

Project Design

GCWB16 - Goblestubbs Copse, Madehurst, West Sussex

By G. Hayden and A. Friend



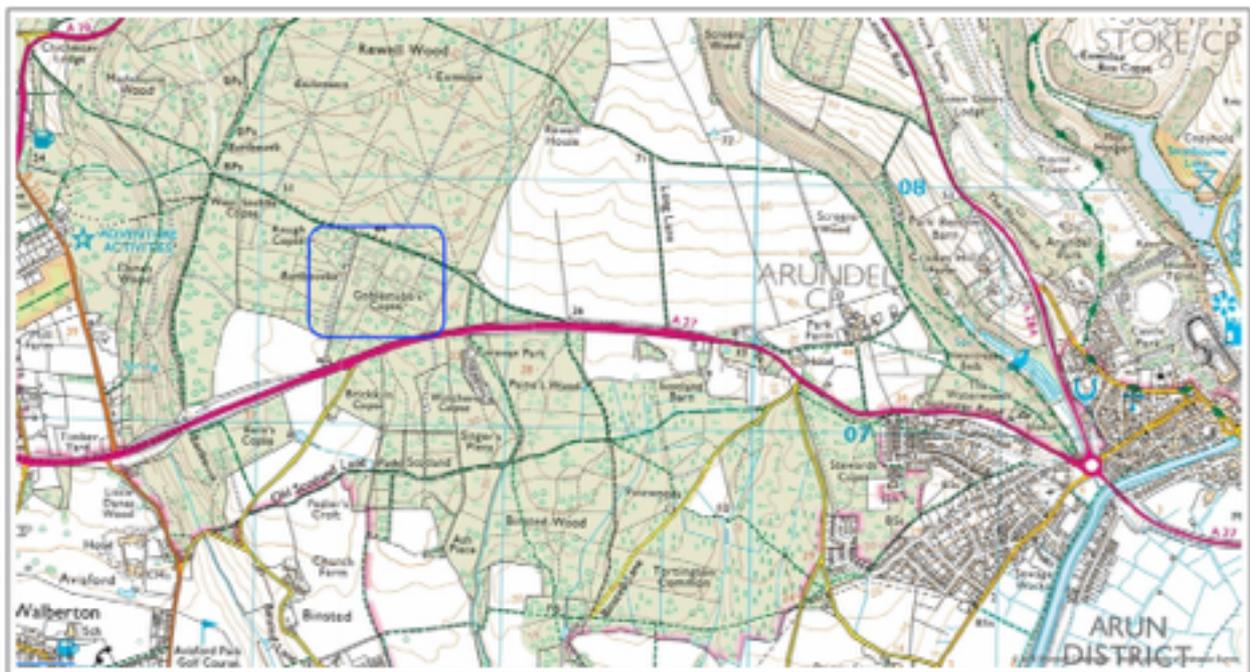
August Excavation of Eastern Enclosure 2016

1. Project Summery

Currently English Heritage is working with other conservation agencies, local archaeological societies and community groups to better understand the development and significance of the South Downs historic environment. In doing so, we would hope to encourage residents and visitors alike to understand what makes the South Downs landscape so special, and to support those who use, enjoy and care for the historical environment. It is important that local residents feel a sense of 'ownership' in this work, and to facilitate this English Heritage, through David McOmish, have created a series of initiatives that are both exemplary and illustrative. These initiatives consist primarily of targeted programs of field survey and research, which, it is hoped, will engage a wide constituency of people, both professional and non-professional. Dissemination of the project results is crucial, and a range wide range of media is currently being employed to facilitate this. Site reports and broadsheets have been produced, alongside generalised accounts of the research work alongside other outreach activities, such as public lectures and guided tours. It is envisaged that the field research at Goblestubbs Copse will form part of this general program of research, communication and connection with local communities. Much of the recording work will be carried out by Worthing Archaeological Society (WAS), and, it is hoped, that other local groups will participate.

2. Background

The site of Goblestubbs Copse lies within dense woodland approximately 2km to the west of the town of Arundle, West Sussex. The town has been the subject of recent investigation by English Heritage as part of the preparation of a broadsheet aimed at telling the story of the towns development, including its former port. During the course of this work a number of significant and



The district surrounding the town of Arundle and Slindon. Goblestubbs Copse is shown within the blue square. © Ordnance Survey

early historical elements were identified, elements which had previously been overlooked, ignored, or simply not recognised. Paramount among these discoveries was the recognition that the entire peninsula of downland which hosts the medieval and later town, had been isolated by a massive bank and ditch cutting across the promontory to the north of Castle Park, and that this earthwork had its origin in the middle of the 1st millennium BC. Other early elements had previously been identified, including a presumed Roman Villa, dated to the 1st to 3rd century AD, at the western end of Tarrant Street, on the north bank of the river Arun.

There is also a known concentration of Late Iron Age and Romano British occupation sites within the Arundle area. These sites, including Shepard's Garden, consist of both enclosed and open elements, set within a complex landscape of fields and tracks. Excavations at Shepard's Garden indicated that metal working may also have been taking place and the materials recovered included a wide range of distinctive ceramic forms, some of which are dateable to the late 1st century BC - early 1st century AD. In total, within this small area of enclosed medieval parkland, there are a dozen or so known find spots of Late Iron Age and Romano British material, ranging from isolated finds of pottery and metal work through to, at least, one probable temple site.

The drive to find the context for such an intense late prehistoric and Roman use of the landscape led to investigation of the area of woodland to the west of Arundle. Here there are six known earthwork enclosure complexes set alongside other occasional finds of Prehistoric and Romano-British pottery. These complexes are bounded on the north and west by a massive, and in places multiple, linear boundary, called the War Dyke. There has been much speculation about the nature and origin of this linear earthwork but it is almost certain that it is pre-medieval and not constructed as part of a deer park boundary - although there is justification for presuming that the War Dyke was reused as just such a feature. This linear boundary extends south-westwards along the escarpment edge above Fairmile Bottom, in the direction of Slindon, and then detours to the south, crossing the A27 to the north of Binstead. Its course is less certain beyond this, but aerial photographs show that it continues to the south for at least 2km, towards Marsh Farm, 1km to the west of Tortington. Here it likely terminates in the boggy ground of the area. This boundary, therefore, encloses an area close to 22 sq. km, flanked on the east by the river Arun.

Within this enclave there are at least six major complexes of compact earthwork enclosures. Each consists of multiple square and rectilinear enclosures, closely located, and often inter-connected, by lengths of linear ditch. The linear boundary at Goblestubbs Copse, for example, is triple, consisting of three parallel ditches with intervening banks and is of a form that is entirely comparable to other multi-linear boundaries dated to the Late Iron Age - Early Roman period. The earthwork enclosure complexes in this area of woodland have been presumed to be constructed for the husbandry of stock or deer at a medieval or later date. This is based, largely, on inference from a late-17th century estate map that describes the area as 'sheepwalk'. The form of the enclosures, their fresh and well-preserved condition, also gives them a superficial 'appearance' of having been constructed in a relatively recent era. However, archaeological work undertaken, including recent fieldwork by Worthing Archaeological Society and English Heritage, indicated that an earlier date of

construction is likely, and that the enclosure clusters may well date to the Late Iron Age – Romano-British period. If so, they are likely to be contemporary with the War Dyke thus suggesting that this was a landscape of some importance during this period. The nearest analogy for this close co-location of a number of earthwork complexes set within a large and extensive enclosing boundary dating to the Late Iron Age – Roman period, are sites known as *oppida*. Although ill-defined and displaying a great deal of variation, these frequently comprise dispersed nuclei of settlement that have an origin in the Late Iron Age and are often demarcated by large enclosed boundaries within which there is evidence for a variety of activities ranging from domestic, political, industrial through to religious. Planned fieldwork, outlined in this Project Design, is aimed at further testing the hypothesis that the earthwork complexes in this study area form part of a previously unrecognised Late Iron Age – Romano-British oppidum.

2.1 The study area

The current focus of the project centres around the eastern section of the Goblestubbs enclosures. The western component of the complex lies at SU 9843 0760, SAM No. West Sussex 59; NMR No. SU 90 NE 16, and has been subject to several archaeological investigations. However the second of the enclosures is situated approximately 50m to the east, and is beyond the defined scheduled area.

It is this enclosure, here named ‘Goblestubbs Copse East’ that will form the focus of the current project investigation. The enclosure is square in plan with a narrow annexe on the south. In addition another length of linear ditch extends eastwards from the mid-point of the enclosure on its eastern flank. The enclosure lies to the south of a substantial linear ditch that extends for at least 500m to the west, skirting the main enclosure complex at Goblestubbs Copse.

The enclosures stands on a sand and gravel terrace at a height of 39m above Ordnance Datum, and has been built at an angle to the terrain contour, on gently south-facing slopes that lead to a dry valley some 300m to the south. The chalk is overlain here by a substantial tertiary capping of clay-with-flints and the surface of the enclosure interior is strewn with flint detritus, some of it struck whilst other fragments are fire-cracked.

Today the enclosures sits within a dense section of conifer and birch woodland, which has been under woodland for a considerable period of time, certainly since the middle part of the 20th century. Indeed, apart from an episode of clearance during World War II, it may have been wooded since the medieval period (Forestry Commission pers. comm.)

This wooded area is located 200m to the north of the A27, and continues through the ancient hunting landscape to the west of Arundel. The parkland certainly extended to the south of the road into Binsted Wood and beyond, and there are many features associated with emparkment and woodland management in the surrounding vicinity.

2.2 Previous research

War Dyke, as well as a number of the earthwork complexes in the area, have received a little attention. Perhaps the first to undertake any sort of concerted investigation in the area were the Curwens (1918; 1920; 1928). E. C. Curwen had noted the damage being wrought on downland

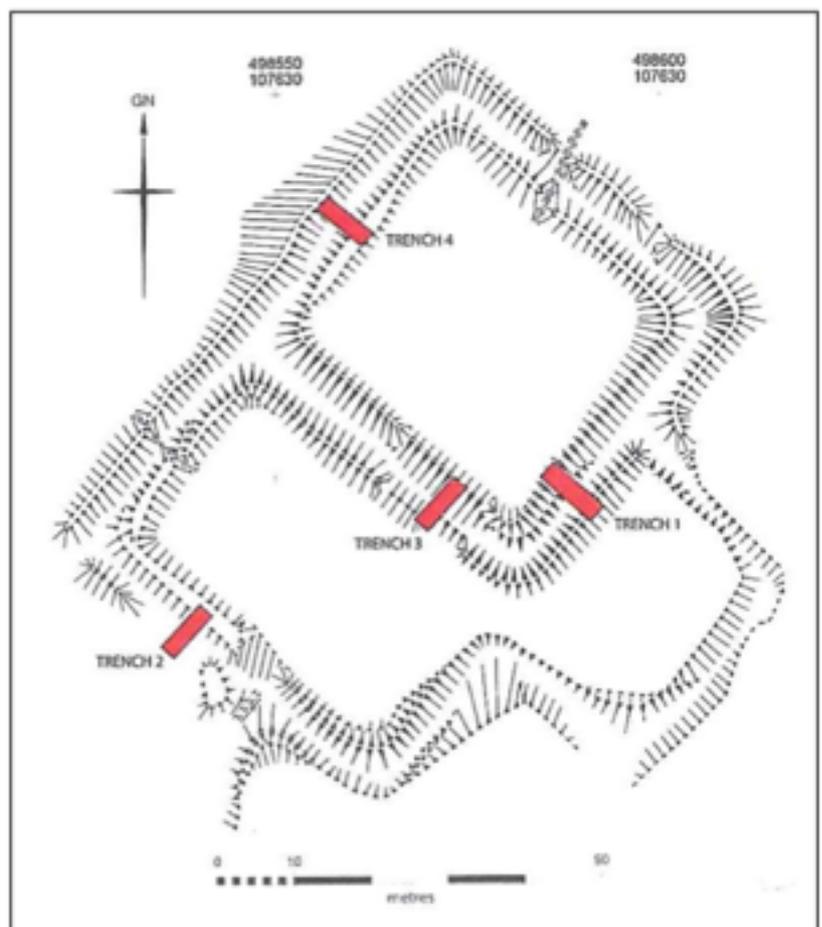
landscapes by cultivation in the early part of the 20th century and had sought to identify areas for research that were outwith the arable zone. The heavily wooded landscape to the west of Arundel fulfilled his criteria, and so he began a series of investigations aimed at three of the earthwork complexes, Rewell Wood, Dalesdown Wood, and Goblestubbs, as well as the War Dyke near Whiteways Lodge.

At Dalesdown Wood only three sherds of Early Iron Age pottery and a fragment of early Roman amphora were found, with a conclusion that there was insufficient evidence to suggest a date or purpose to the enclosure complex (Hadrian Allcroft 1920). The Curwens' survey at Rewell Wood, however, led them to suggest that the form of the earthworks was so similar that it must have been contemporary with Dalesdown. After further investigation, on this occasion at Goblestubbs Copse, they reached a similar conclusion but despite their enthusiasm to continue work there, no corresponding willingness was forthcoming from other members of the Sussex Archaeological Society. As a result the project foundered leaving the Curwens to bemoan their colleague's obsession with open chalkland landscapes.

Following this no further fieldwork was undertaken in the area until the sites were re-visited by field surveyors, from the Ordnance Survey, in the 1970s. Again, noting the similarity in the form of the enclosure complexes, they concluded that as the area was described as sheepwalk before emparkment in 1786, the likeliest interpretation is that they are stock enclosures of medieval date.

Magilton (2003) speculated that the War Dyke may well have been constructed in the Late Iron Age and was ultimately associated with a series of linear boundaries in the vicinity of Chichester. This had been echoed in an earlier publication by Manley (1999), but these authors make reference to neither the associated archaeological complexes nor their socio-cultural context and significance.

More recently fieldwork, carried out in 2005/6 by English Heritage and the Worthing Archaeological Society, suggests that the earthwork complexes are potentially much earlier, possibly of late prehistoric and Romano-British date. Indeed, a search of the Worthing Museum archive by members of the Worthing Archaeological Society has brought to light a hitherto unknown excavation of the main (scheduled) Goblestubbs enclosure complex. Details of this work, undertaken in 1973 and co-directed by Con Ainsworth and H. B. Ratcliffe-Densham, remain elusive



Goblestubbs East Enclosure showing 2006 trenches. © Worthing Archaeological Society

with only a brief series of hand-written notes by A.J. Pudwell surviving. The excavation came to an abrupt end due to the sudden death of Ratcliffe-Densham, but several small trenches were certainly opened, and substantial quantities of Roman ceramics were recovered, including a complete Samian cup. Much of the material seems to be of Early Roman date, and Pudwell's notes speculate that Goblestubbs Copse was a military site. Members of the Worthing Archaeological Society are actively pursuing research into this archive at Worthing Museum.

As a result of this research Worthing Archaeological Society gained permission in 2016 to carry out investigative excavation within the unscheduled, eastern enclosure at Goblestubbs. This excavation demonstrated that the square planned northern element of the enclosure was most likely to have been broadly contemporaneous with the annexe arm leading away from it, and dating evidence suggests a construction phase early in the 1st century AD. The project also investigated a possible linear feature to the immediately south of the enclosure, indicated by newly available lidar data. The feature appeared to be leading away from the enclosure corner suggesting the possibility of a larger enclosure system, or perhaps a pre-existing feature. However, once opened the trench revealed what was most likely a natural flint lense.

3.1 Project aims

The aim of this second phase of the Goblestubbs 2016 project, will be to undertake targeted fieldwork based on the results of the previous GCWA16 excavation, carried out earlier this year. During the planned excavation a maximum of three trenches will be opened to further understand the construction phases of the eastern Goblestubbs enclosure, consolidate and finish earlier excavation work and to define the cause of lidar indications to the south of the enclosure.

The work will seek to:

- ✿ Provide sufficient material to allow secure dating of the southern enclosure boundary and possibly the enclosure entry way.
- ✿ To develop an understanding of the over all construction of the enclosure, inclusive of elements such as the entry way.
- ✿ Complete and back fill earlier excavation work, returning the site to a safe state.
- ✿ Develop a detailed assessment of the chronological span of occupation.
- ✿ Facilitate comparisons with the known archaeological results of earlier excavations at Goblestubbs Copse.
- ✿ To continue providing comparable data on the current nature and condition of the enclosure boundaries.
- ✿ To collect appropriate samples for paleo-environmental research.

3.2 Justification for the project

This proposed work accords well with a number of research themes identified by English Heritage and outlined in the Research Agenda (2005). Two main themes are of particular relevance to this work. Firstly, *Discovering, studying and defining historic assets and their significance*, and secondly, *Engaging and developing diverse audiences*. The former, in this instance, seeks to define the character of the enclosure complex at Goblestubbs Copse Madehurst and to provide a detailed contextual understanding of the site as well as its local and regional context. The proposed work will certainly help to enhance our understanding of what has, to date, been an under-researched component in a very complex landscape and help resolve other issues surrounding the chronological development of the enclosures and linear earthwork, their relationship to other nearby enclosure foci, and, potentially, site history and function.

All of this work will seek to engage with non-professional groups and communities. The fieldwork will be undertaken by members of the Worthing Archaeological Society Field Unit (WASFU), with all on-site responsibility for contextual recording and artefactual analysis undertaken by WASFU, and, where appropriate, suitable training. In all cases EH staff will provide a supportive, mentoring, role, and it is anticipated that the production of a site archive and ultimately, a detailed analytical report, will be undertaken by WASFU in joint authorship with English Heritage.

3.3 Contribution of the project to archaeological knowledge

The fieldwork already completed has identified the area surrounding Goblestubbs as an area of excellent archaeological survival. Indeed, woodland, particularly older stands of timber, have been identified as priority zones for future fieldwork. Statistical analysis shows that on the open downland of the South Downs there is an average of one monument every 1 sq km. In wooded areas, this drops to less than 0.5 monuments per kilometre, a low figure that reflects lack of investigation rather than lack of archaeology. This work seeks to redress the balance.

In addition the identification of a potentially '*oppida-like*' grouping of earthwork complexes and a massive enclosure could be supported by the results of the fieldwork. If so, Arundel joins a small inventory of already identified oppida and would become of international significance because of its rarity and value within the research and education spheres.

The retrieval and analysis of palaeo-environmental samples would also build upon and enhance previously undertaken research in other parts of the chalk downland environment (Allen 2005; 2006). The lack of recent cultivation and the relatively undisturbed contexts at Goblestubbs ensures that deep soils survive and it is likely that substantial colluvial deposits will be present within the enclosure and in the area immediately surrounding it. No recent palaeo-environmental research has been carried out in this area but there is great potential for retrieving deeply stratified evidence for earlier land use and vegetational histories.

3.4 Publication & presentation

To be negotiated with English Heritage, Worthing Archaeological Society, and the Forestry Commission. Currently Publication will consist of an excavation report produced by Worthing Archaeological Society.

3.5 Public outreach & education

To be negotiated with the site owners.

4. Methodology

Site Code - GCWB16

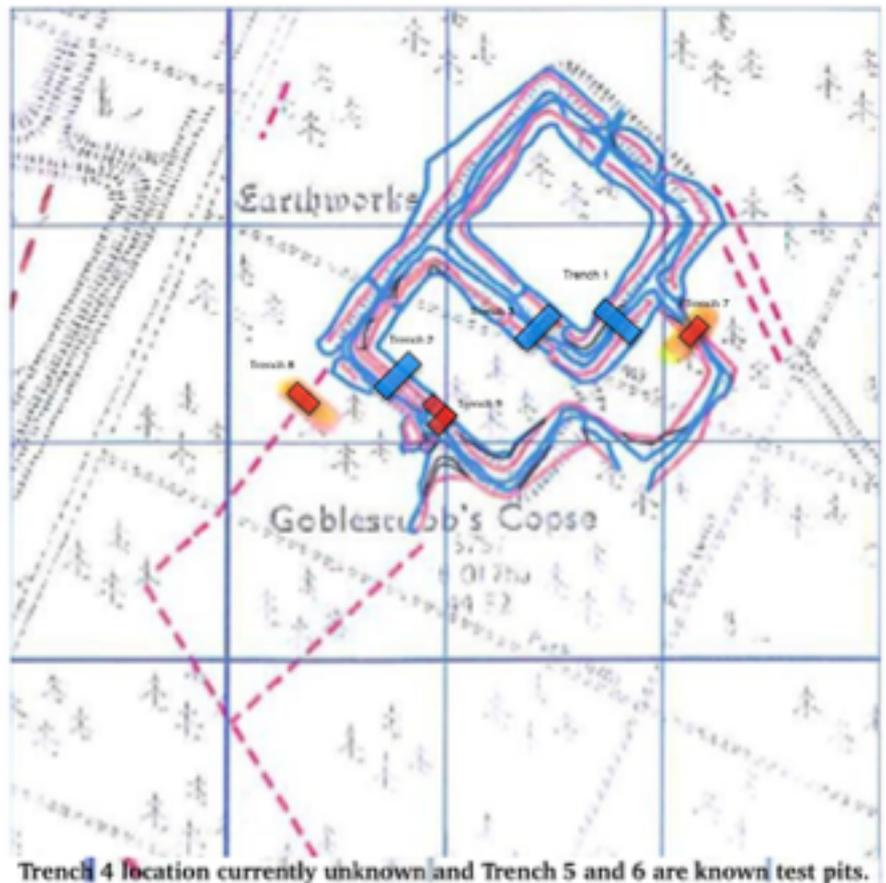
4.1 Excavation

This project will open a maximum of three trenches aimed at completing the excavation of an earlier trench (Trench 2, 2006), which cuts the southern boundary of the enclosure, resolving the position, dating and construction of the enclosure entry way, and investigating the lidar anomalies to the south of the enclosure.

The trenches will measure no more than 8x2m and will be laid in accordance to the archaeology described above, and with reference to the surrounding tree coverage and health and safety factors. Each trench will be dug no more than the requisite 2.2m and steps will be dug at directors discretion to ensure safe working conditions.

The trenches will be a continuance from the previous 2016 dig (GCWA16) and the earlier 2006 excavation, and as such the Trench labelling will be as follows.

- * Trench 2 will be a re-examination of a previously defined trench from 2006, with the aim of fully excavating this section of the bank and ditch. This trench will therefore be referred to as Trench 2.



*Over view of Goblestubb's Eastern Enclosure with 2006 and 2016 trenches
© Worthing Archaeological Society.*

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- ✿ Trench 9 will be placed in order to determine the location, construction and date of the possible entry way to the enclosure complex.
 - ✿ Trench 10 will seek to determine the existence and route taken by the possible track way indicated by the Lidar survey.
 - ✿ Trench 11 will seek to determine the cause of a right angled anomaly featured in the lidar data to the south of the enclosure complex. This trench will only be started if the available resources and time are judged to be sufficient by the site directors. If not this trench will be saved for possible future works on the site.

Once processed all finds will be deposited at a local museum (the site falls within the catchment area of Littlehampton Museum, but material is also held at Arundel and Worthing Museums)

4.2 Recording

All archaeological deposits and features will be planned relative to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum and the area of investigation plotted onto an accurate base map of not smaller than 1:1250.

All contexts, finds and other site record data will be recorded on pro-forma context sheet. All sections will be recorded at a scale of 1:10 and all plans will be produced for each trench at a scale of 1:20.

Each trench will be assigned its own series of context numbers. These will be separated into spit numbers and context features within these spits. This has been done due to the homogenous nature of the soil.

Small finds numbers will be sequential; with the existing Small Finds policy being used.

4.2.2 Other

If deemed necessary 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. Entrances to and from site will also be cleared as best as possible, of detritus and marked, using safety tape.

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. Any and all accidents or medical issues will be recorded and kept with the archaeological context and register files.

WASFU are fully insured (as arranged through the Council for British Archaeology) to undertake all aspects of archaeological fieldwork.

5. Bibliography

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