

# Worthing Archaeological Society Journal

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*Walking down Field 20 to the site at Slindon, 2018*

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Dear Members

The Society has had a successful return to fieldwork this summer uncovering the past landscape at Sompting directed by Connie Shirley, and a continuation of the clearing and recording of the Stable Block at Slindon. In the stable block, the year finished with the surprise discovery of a foundation wall with several rows of brick and 2 arches. This excavation was directed by Keith Bolton and a small team from the Field Unit. I hope to publish articles on both these pieces of work in a future journal.

While running over the articles, something stands out and that is the increased use of mapping as a tool which greatly enhances them. Our thanks are due to Connie Shirley who has led a class through the intricacies of QGIS this autumn, and I expect to see the results of improved mapping in future articles. I took part in the class and can assure you that the results were achieved with a lot of sweat and tears on our part, and patience on Connie's.

The emphasis this year is on Roman archaeology. Brian Drury has written an article about the temple on Lancing Down which has unfortunately been lost from the landscape, so we are grateful to him for reintroducing it through aerial photos and maps.

Alex Vincent considers Highdown's position in the Roman landscape.

And Keith Bolton completes our Roman offering by giving us an interpretation of the puzzling Romano-British site on the Slindon Estate which the Society excavated in 2017 and 2018. He paints a picture of a busy landscape dotted with farmsteads which is very different from today's quiet and empty vistas, and is entirely borne out by the spread of small Iron Age/Romano-British fields across the Downs.

Amie Friend revisits the Society's dig at St Nicholas' Church, Angmering in 2016, when we completed the plan of Owen Bedwin's excavation of 1974. Angmering in Bloom, who care for the garden, have put the final touch to this work by installing a board brim-full of information in the garden covering the site. As most people regarded the garden just as a place to sit or to walk the dog, it was the missing piece and is certainly worth a visit.

I wish you all good reading and hopefully a better New Year. And, once again, I must thank all the contributors to this year's Journal for their energy and time in pursuing their research.

Cheryl Hutchins  
Editor

# The Romano Celtic Temple on Lancing Down

By Brian Drury

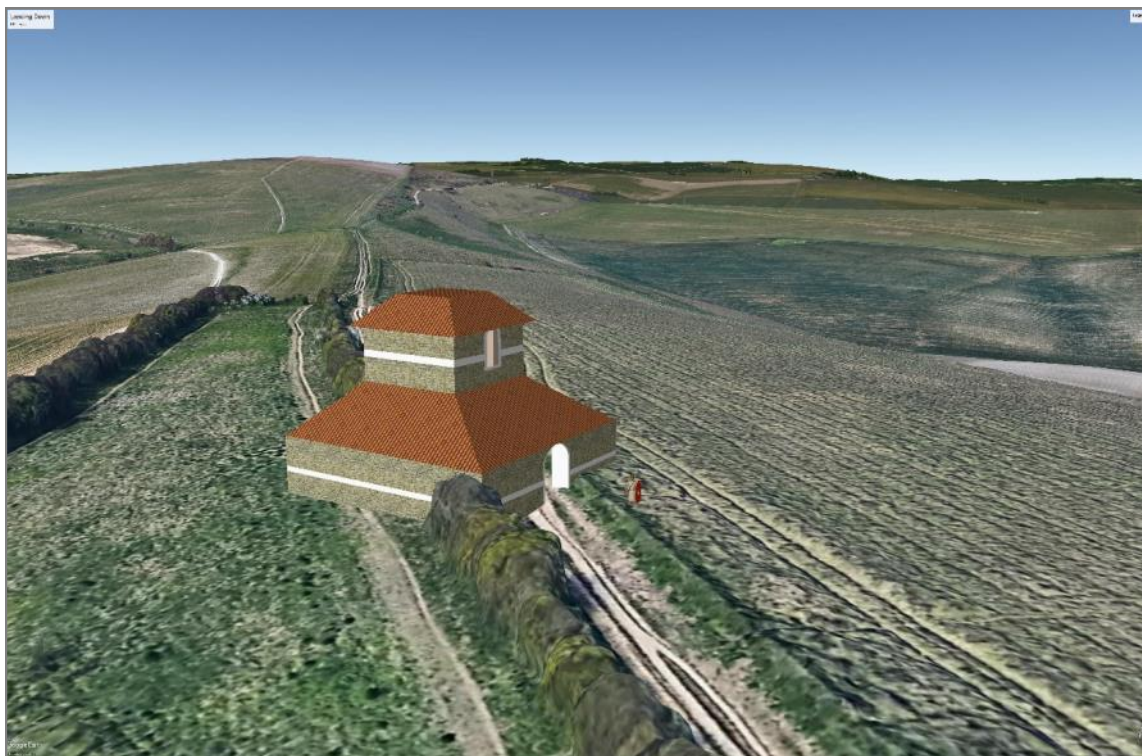


Figure 1

## Introduction

Very few travellers using the busy path running along the saddle of land between Lancing Ring and Steep Down realise they are walking through the centre of a once sacred site constructed shortly after the Roman Conquest.

Nothing remains above ground to indicate what once stood here on Lancing Down, however, below ground the footings for this ancient building can still be seen today and evidence is just visible in the middle of the path. Figure 1 is a 3D reconstruction of what the temple may have looked like sat on Lancing Down.

## Location

The foundation remains are located at TQ1785 0670. Curiously, the temple is not at the highest point on Lancing Down. The top of Lancing Ring some 170m to the South East is 6m higher at 110m above sea level. It appears the temple was located here because a small Iron Age shrine already occupied the site. The obvious question is why was the shrine built here in the first place?

## Background

The temple remains were discovered on Good Friday in April 1828 by James Medhurst, a Brighton Turner and local Antiquarian. The site was occupied by a large mound which Medhurst supposed might contain a burial and possible grave goods.

On removing the earth, he discovered a gallery about 40 feet square with a tessellated pavement about 16 feet square in its centre<sup>(1)</sup>. Scattered around were a variety of Roman coins, ornaments, vases and rings as well as many human bones.

## Modern Excavation

Exactly where the temple was located became lost until an aerial photo showed the faint trace of the temenos surrounding the site and this provided the evidence for a three-week excavation in Sept 1980 by the Sussex Archaeological Field Unit under the direction of Owen Bedwin.

<sup>(1)</sup> Gentleman's Magazine 1828

The results are recorded in Sussex Archaeological Collections 119 (1981), 37-56

## EXCAVATIONS AT LANCING DOWN, WEST SUSSEX 1980

Figure 2 is copied from SAC 119, it shows the extent of the excavation trench which has uncovered only a small portion of the NE corner of the building.

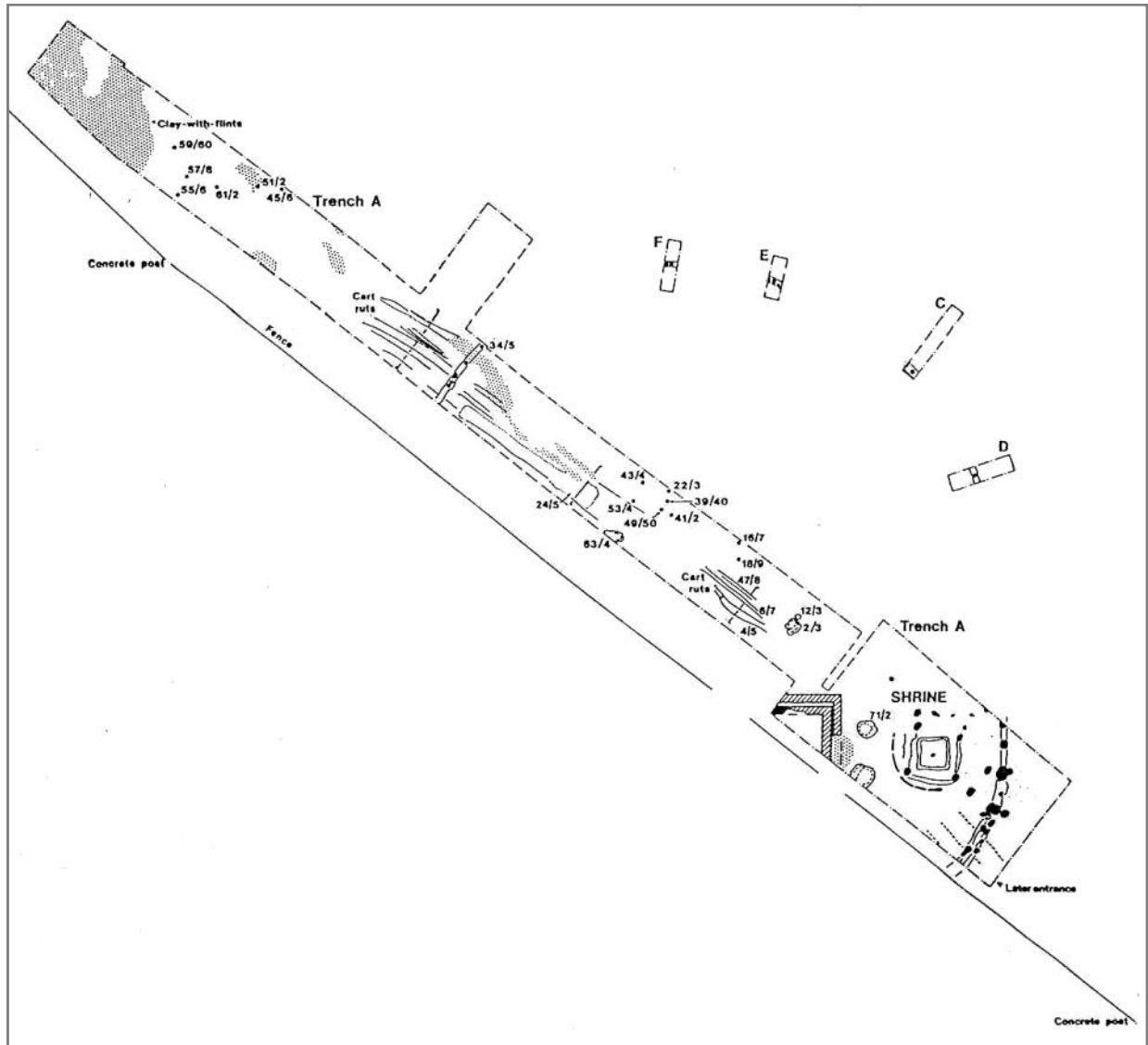


Figure 2

### 2014 Investigation

During the winter of 2014 the author made several bicycle trips along the Lancing Down path and noticed that very heavy rain had washed away much of the soil leaving some large flints exposed, could this be part of the temple footings? To find out it was necessary to establish exactly where the temple had been located during the 1980 dig. Fortunately, the concrete posts shown on the dig plan are still extant and better still they are visible on Google Earth. A scale is also provided with the plan and this

means everything required to accurately locate the temple on the ground is available.

The technique employed by the author was to extract an image of the plan from SAC 119 and convert this to a transparent GIF which could then be overlaid in Google Earth using the concrete posts as a guide. The scale was then checked using GE's linear measurement tool and was found to be very accurate.



The coordinates of the foundations were then loaded into a hand-held GPS and choosing a fair-weather day in summer 2014 the site was visited to conduct a simple survey to look for any remaining foundation material.

The result was quite stunning. Normally obtaining an accurate fix from a hand-held GPS is difficult but using a long sample averaging technique the GPS identified the outer walls shown on Google Earth to be exactly coincident with the line of flints on the ground. This allows the full extent of the building to be added to Figure 2.

Figure 5 shows the plan of excavation from the 1980 dig with annotated dimensions in metres using post 2 as the datum. The 'Predicted' measurements are taken from the plan where the 1830 drawing has been scaled and overlaid. The 'Measured' are derived from the foundation material located in the ground. It demonstrates how accurately the 1830 drawing compares to the measurements from 2014. Clearly the artist was meticulous in his work because the accuracy is excellent. An inspection of the NE corner shows that in 1830 buttress-like features were recorded. Owen Bedwin wrote 'There was no sign of the two buttresses then observed (Frere 1940, Fig. 16).' The explanation may simply be that the buttresses were fully removed when the remains were destroyed.

## 2018

Another site visit in July 2018 revealed a circular patch of vegetation that is noticeably greener than its surroundings. This patch is located just South of the 1980 trench and is believed to be North of the area excavated by Medhurst. The location and size are indicated by a red circle in Figure 6 below.



*Figure 3 North outer wall*



*Figure 4 North outer close up*

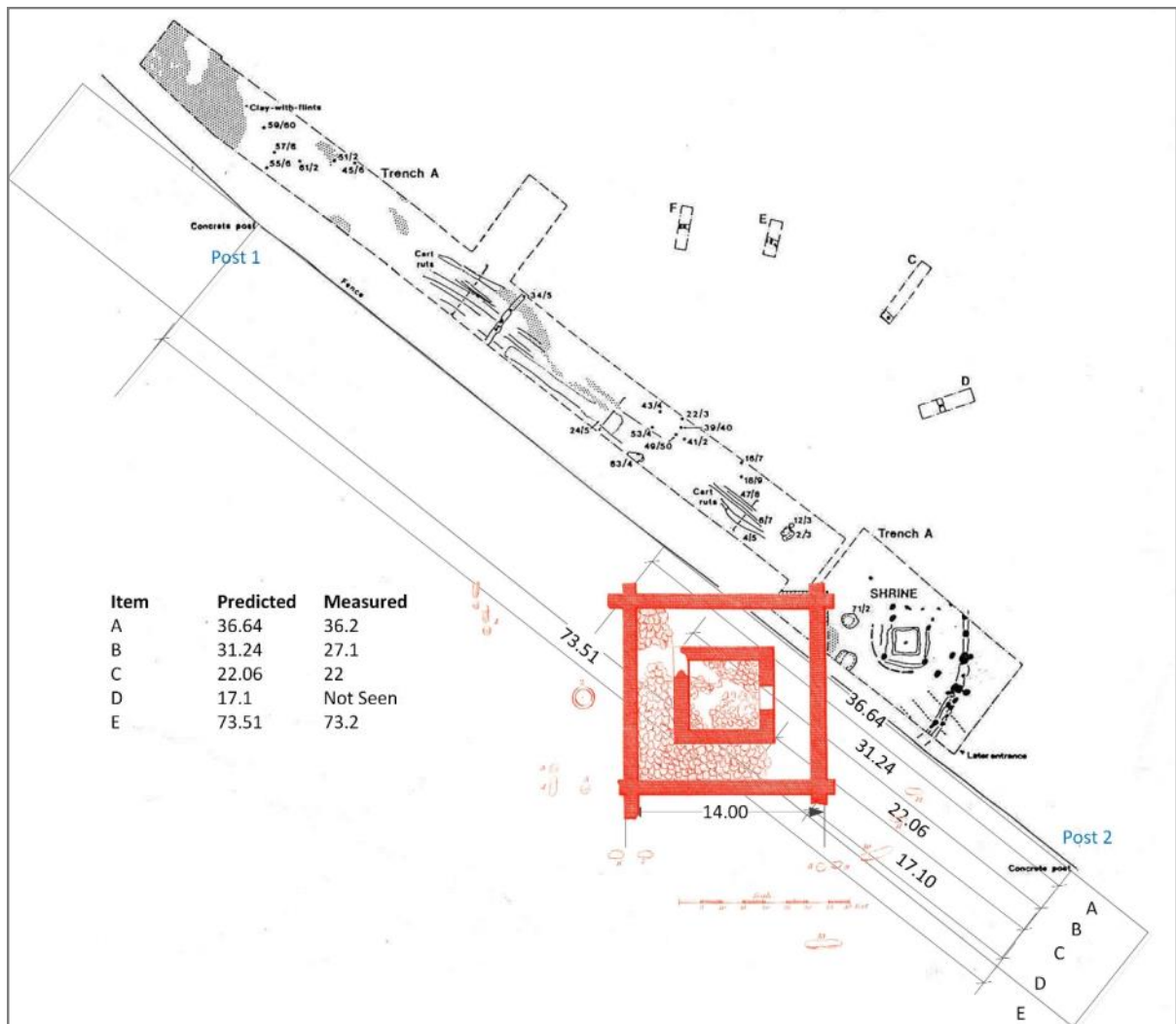


Figure 5



Figure 6



A photo of the green patch which is about 4m in diameter is included below as Figure 7. This feature was not identified on the 1830 drawing but a circular 'bath' was referred to outside the West facing outer wall: *'A bath lined with hewn chalk, two feet deep, and four feet and a half in diameter.'*



Figure 7

### Why build a temple here?

The presence of an earlier Iron Age shrine with a similar shape and same orientation located just 4m from the temple East outer wall undoubtedly influenced the temple builders. However, the expectation is for the temple to be associated with a high-status residential site such as a villa and none has yet been identified locally.

Two possible explanations for the choice of locating the shrine have been put forward and these will be discussed next. The archivist at Lancing College kindly allowed the author to inspect a collection of documents relating to the temple and amongst these are some letters from David Frere, brother of archaeologist Prof Sheppard Frere. One letter provides the result of a survey by David Frere to accurately locate the position of some Iron Age barrows on Lancing Down.

These survey notes were used by the author to mark the barrow locations on Google Earth and the result is shown below in Figure 8.

An observer standing near the possible barrow at the top of Steep Down can observe the next two barrows and the Iron Age shrine by looking along the saddle of Steep Down at an angle of 132°. This bearing, is by accident or design, aligned with the direction required to observe the sunrise on mid-winter's day.

Another possible explanation is that for some reason a water source or spring emanated from the ground somewhere near the shrine. This sounds an unlikely theory because springs are usually located much lower down and there is a good example about 1.5km at the head of the Ladywell Stream.

The supporting evidence for a water feature includes a bath-like structure found by Medhurst on the West side of the temple. A supply of fresh water would be required especially as its chalk lining is porous.

Additional evidence is the water mark visible in aerial photos for many years that extends down the slope away from the shrine towards a damp area to the South West.

Lancing temple is not alone in this landscape. Just 6.6km to the NW is Chanctonbury where two possible Romano-British temples were located and yet another Romano-British shrine existed 7.5km to the WNW at Muntham.

Chanctonbury had two buildings but neither is a replica of Lancing<sup>(2)</sup>. However, the temple at Ratham Mill has a near identical footprint to Lancing as does the very similar Temple at Maiden Castle (Google Earth).

One of Medhurst's finds in 1828 is shown in Figure 9. It is a brooch showing a horse with a fish-like tail that may be a representation of the legendary Greek and Roman water creature the Hippocampus<sup>(3)</sup>.

### Further archaeological work

The area immediately surrounding the temple has been thoroughly trashed over the past 190 years therefore nothing would be achieved by further work here. A possible remaining area of interest is where the green circle has been identified. If this was once part of a natural water feature it may contain artefacts that could provide more information about the site.

When Medhurst excavated the large mound that once covered the remains he found many artefacts and some of these may have been discarded within the spoil heap which is likely to have been constructed South East of the temple





Figure 8

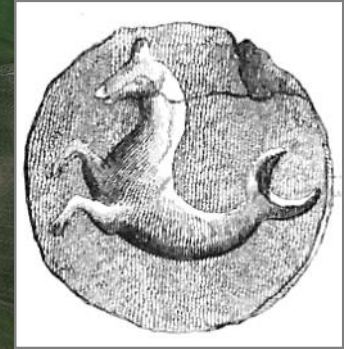


Figure 9

as this would be easier than moving material uphill. The resulting heap would have been scattered by the farmer over many years and probably explains why so much Roman pottery turns up in mole hills today. A systematic field walk may yield yet more pottery sherds etc.

### Acknowledgements

Worthing Museum  
Lancing College  
Robert Brown  
Hilary Greenwood  
Richard Kelly

### Further Reading

Lancing College have kindly provided access and copies of some documents relating to Lancing Temple, some of these plus others from various sources are collected together as hyperlinks in a common spreadsheet file which can be accessed by clicking [Here](#)

For those with a paper copy who would like to access the spreadsheet, please contact Brian Drury on [brian@drury-home.co.uk](mailto:brian@drury-home.co.uk)

<sup>(2)</sup> Rudling, D. R. (2001). Chanctonbury Ring revisited. The Excavations of 1988-91; Supplementary report. Sussex Archaeological Collections 139. Vol 139.

<sup>(3)</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocampus\\_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocampus_(mythology))

# Highdown: a central Roman Stronghold?

By Alex Vincent

In the late Roman period, a chain of forts called “Saxon Shore Forts” was built along the coast between Norfolk and Hampshire to defend the coast from Saxon raiders. There were ten of them with a few more possible sites. Pevensey was the last to be built to fill in the large gap between Lympne in Kent and Portchester in Hampshire. Were there other Shore Forts between Pevensey and Portchester to defend this part of the Sussex coast?

It is thought that other Saxon Shore Forts existed along the coast, but are now lost to the sea by coastal erosion, which defended Portchester, Chichester and Pevensey. Alternatively it could have been the hillforts along the South Downs at Highdown, Cissbury and Mount Caburn which were the strongholds, Highdown being the most likely candidate as it is nearer the coast than the others.

A number of the Bronze Age and Iron Age hillforts were re-fortified in the late Roman period as defences as well. In the case of Highdown, this was probably done to defend the Roman towns

of Clausentum (Bitterne near Southampton) and Noviomagus at Chichester as well as the Saxon Shore Forts at Portchester (Portus Adurni) and Pevensey (Anderida).

It is possible that Highdown was a stronghold between the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD to defend this part of the coast rather than the Saxon Shore Forts at Portchester and Pevensey. Highdown is 267 feet above sea level and lies about halfway between the two, some 50 km or so east and west of them. There seems to be an almost straight line between all three sites. The northing grid reference for all three is 04 to 05. Chichester is also on this line as its southern wall is 04 to 05 and may have been used for defence.

The southern part of the hillfort at Highdown was re-fortified and a Roman signal station or watchtower may have been situated on the hill just to the south to defend the coast in this part of Sussex. A slight circular feature here may mark it. Figure 1 shows lidar mapping of the hilltop.

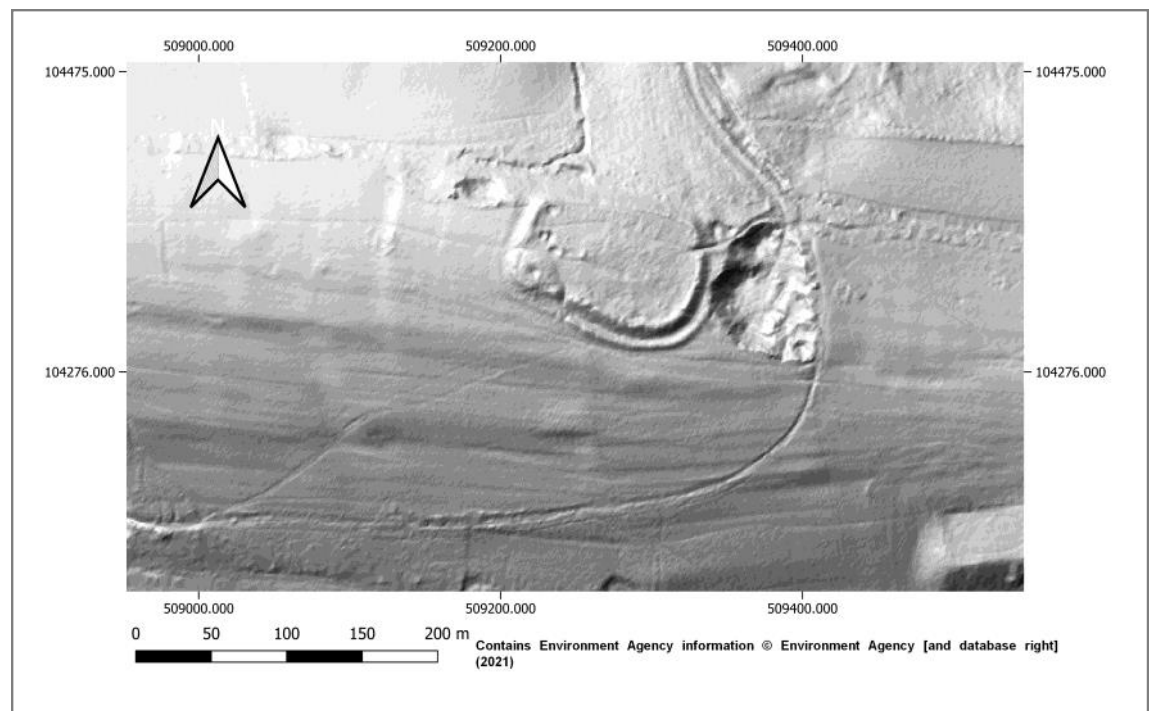


Figure 1 Lidar view of Highdown Hill



Figure 2 Highdown Hill: OS Sussex XLIX Surveyed 1875/6 pub. 1880  
National Library of Scotland viewed 8/11/21



Figure 3 Possible site of  
Roman watchtower or signal  
station at the southern end  
of Highdown Iron Age hillfort.  
Photo: Alex Vincent



Figure 4 Possible site of Roman watchtower  
or signal station at the western end of the  
hillfort, Highdown.  
Photo: Alex Vincent.



Figure 5 Brick and tile from the sites, which could be Roman.  
1 West of the hillfort and 2 South of the hillfort.  
Photo: Alex Vincent

Just west of the hillfort is a square earthwork, which may have been re-used as a signal station or watchtower instead. The author has found brick and tile on both sites, which has been confirmed as probably Roman and/or medieval in date. Field walking and excavations hopefully will be carried out at these sites in the future.

Highdown is a very good strategic point which looks over the south coast to the Isle of Wight in the west and Beachy Head in the east. Other fortlets, signal stations or watchtowers may have existed on the South Downs going towards Pevensey and possibly towards Portchester. There may have been signal stations at Cissbury, Chanctonbury, Bignor Hill, Bow Hill, Steep Down, Foredown Hill, Whitehawk, and Firls Beacon. It is said that a great beacon tower was built at Beachy Head in the Roman period. These watchtowers or signal stations would have had a height of about 25 metres.

There could have been only two other signal stations which defended Portchester and Pevensey as well as Highdown. One of these could be on Ports Down north-east of Portchester and another on the South Downs in the Beachy Head area south-west of Pevensey. These distant hills are visible from Highdown and any signal stations would have been lit to warn of any impending attack.

### Acknowledgements

With thanks to Connie Shirley and Chris Lane for assistance with the Lidar map.

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# — Slindon Estate: Field 20 Romano-British site Interpretation

By Keith Bolton

## Introduction

### Background

Since its inception in the late 1990's the Worthing Archaeological Society (WAS) Field Unit has been interested in an area of the National Trust's Slindon estate known colloquially as the 'War Ag' fields. The name refers to the fact that these fields were not cleared and ploughed until the Second World War, therefore, up to the 1940's any archaeological features were protected by the trees.

Of special interest has been a field referred to as 'War Ag 2' as not only does it contain ten Bronze Age barrows (Aldsworth 1976) sadly now all ploughed out, but the field also contains the largest concentration of Roman surface finds on the Slindon estate (c3700 pottery sherds, together with quern stone fragments and CBM) gathered over three decades by Mr Robin Upton.

In terms of archaeological investigations, there have been at least three surface collection

surveys undertaken on this field, four excavations and three geophysical surveys (either focussed on specific areas of the field or over the whole field). To date none of these have been able to explain the quantity of material that indicates either a small villa or prosperous farmstead (Southern Archaeology 1997, 6).

The purpose of this article is to concentrate on the most recent excavations undertaken in 2017-18 and whilst the focus is on providing an interpretation of the site, there is some discussion on the features found during the excavations.

### Location

The site (see B in figure 1 below) is centred on NGR SU 496000 111075 and slopes from 110m OD in the North East to 95m OD in the South West corner of the field. The field is located to the South-West of Warren Barn. The solid geology is a mix of Newhaven and Seaford chalk.



*Figure 1 Slindon Estate Map showing key Romano-British sites*

Contains Ordnance Survey Open Source Data OS Data © Crown copyright [and database right] (2020)  
Maps are generated using ArcGIS (GIS Software) Version 10.8.1 Redlands CA USA Environmental Systems Research institute 1992 – 2021  
Contains data from Whitfield, 1997



## Archaeological Background

### Pre-Roman

Ten barrows were recorded in War Ag 2 in 1976 (Aldsworth, 1976). Unfortunately, only one survives to any extent. This barrow has been the subject of two excavations in 2001 and 2016.

There are a number of field systems in the vicinity of the War Ag 2 site, which are probably Iron Age or Roman. Figure 2 below shows the field systems identified through the lidar data as part of the Secrets of the High Woods project. The War Ag 2 site is shown by the red diamond.



Figure 2 IA and Roman Field Systems from NT record 121031

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Contains data from Whitfield, 1997

### Romano-British sites at Slindon

The main Roman feature on the Slindon estate is Stane Street, which runs SW to NE through the Gumber area of the estate. Whilst not on the estate, the lands belonging to and supporting the Romano-British villa at Bignor (see A in figure 3 below) probably extended over the Downs into the Gumber area. The third Romano-British site located on the Slindon estate, is an aisled-barn located in the grounds of the medieval deer park (see C in figure 3 below). The evidence from the barn suggests a fixed use of human habitation together with a working area suggested by burning and possible foundations of a grain dryer.



Figure 3 Slindon estate map showing key Romano-British sites

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Maps are generated using ArcGIS (GIS Software) Version 10.8.1 Redlands CA USA Environmental Systems Research institute 1992 – 2021  
Contains data from Whitfield, 1997

### Recent Archaeological Investigations

As part of a programme of work to reinstate the wooded pasture on the area of the Slindon estate known as the War Ag fields, an archaeological investigation of known sites of interest was required.

For War Ag 2, this involved a geophysical survey undertaken by Wessex Archaeology in 2014 (see figure 4 below for summary of results and trench locations for 2016 excavation).

The findings from this survey (Wessex, 2014) indicate that there appears to be a series of enclosures and trackways in this field. Given the extent and nature of the surface artefacts from the field and the 'Native' field systems in the surrounding area it has been assumed that these features relate to Iron-Age and Romano-British occupation (Southern Archaeology, 1997). This assumption is supported by the fact that Stane Street lies less than 500m to the north of the site.

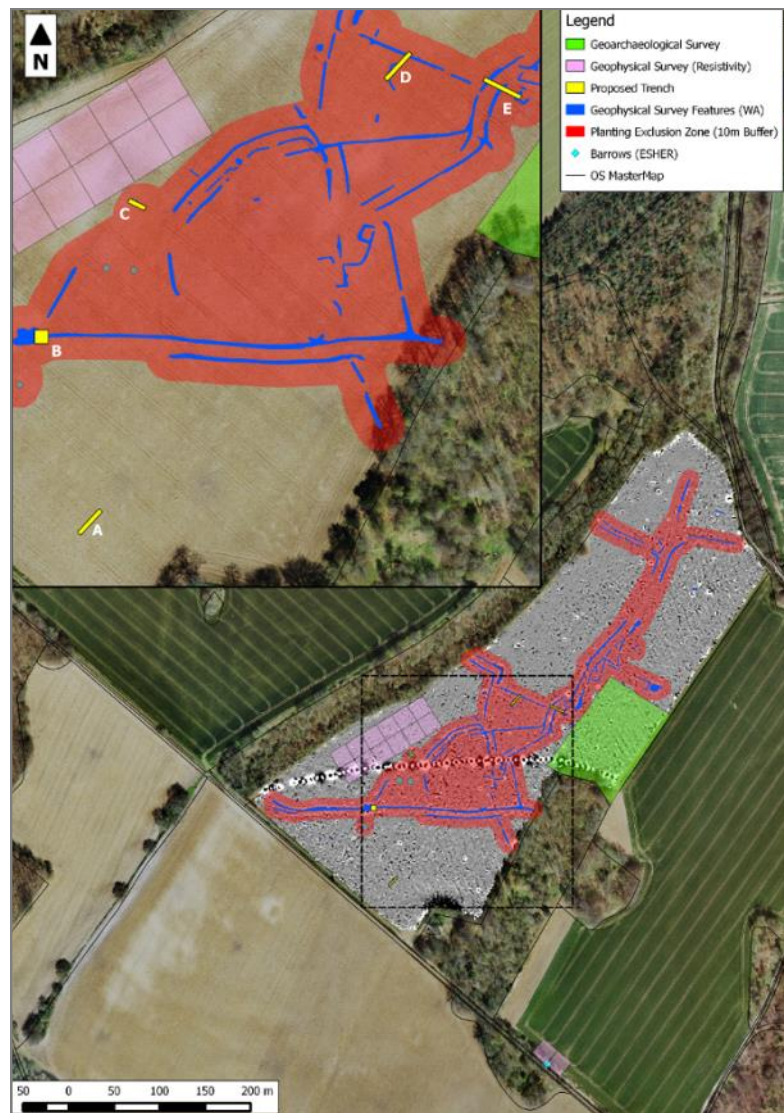


Figure 4 Field 20 Geophysical Results

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OS Data © Crown copyright [and database  
right] (2020)  
Maps are generated using ArcGIS (GIS Soft-  
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ronmental Systems Research institute 1992 –  
2021  
Contains data from Whitfield, 1997





*Figure 5 2016 Excavation 'Long' Trench*

Following on from this geophysical survey, a series of evaluation trenches were excavated in February 2016 by West Sussex Archaeology (WSA). Of particular interest were two features uncovered during this excavation; an area of burning and a series of linear features consisting of large pieces of flint (WSA, 2016). See figure 5 below for the linear features consisting of chalk and flint.

Subsequently, Worthing Archaeological Society Field Unit (WASFU) undertook two sets of excavation (2017 and 2018) to examine the above two features. In addition to excavating these features, the 2017-18 excavations located a series of ditches and a clay lined hollow. The 2018 excavation revealed that the clay lined 'lozenge' was in fact triangular, with a ditch to the south of it noticeable by its reddish-brown fill (see figure 6 below).



*Figure 6 Trench 2 from 2018 Excavation showing ditch to the top left and clay lined feature in centre of picture*

## Dating of Site

The primary evidence for the dating of this site comes from the pottery assemblages excavated in 2017 and 2018. This shows activity on the site from c. AD70 through to AD 410, with most of the assemblage coming from the period AD 250-410.

The majority of the assemblage is dominated by coarsewares, with a comparatively small amount of finewares. As with most contemporary local Roman-period sites, the coarseware assemblage is dominated by products from the Rowlands Castle industry, with a number of early Arun Valley coarseware sherds. The finewares are more variable in terms of sources, containing Samian, local finewares and later Oxfordshire and New Forest products. Fabrics used in the production of mortaria and flagons appear to be exclusively made by the Wiggonholt industry.

The nature of the assemblage (percentages of fineware, cooking and storage vessels) indicates that the area of the site excavated may have been used for the storage of agricultural produce and not for habitation (Hayden 2019).

## Discussion

### Continuity

A number of small Iron Age agricultural settlements or farmsteads are found on the South Downs e.g., Muntham Court, Findon Park, Charleston Brow. As at the War Ag 2 site, many of these Iron Age settlements are located on south-facing spurs, though not on the highest point and are often located within contemporary field systems (Bedwin 1978, 41). The presence of extensive field systems and trackways near the War Ag 2 site, would suggest a continuation of use and settlement from the Iron Age into the Roman period (Cunliffe, 1973, 96).

Whether the Romano-British site is located directly over any Iron Age settlement has yet to be determined and currently there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case. The presence of a possible Iron Age enclosure in the field immediately to the north of War Ag 2, could indicate the position of the Iron Age settlement (Cunliffe, 1973 96).

## Function

Based on the evidence found to date, the actual function of the site is undetermined. There is a significant amount of burnt soil across the site, the absence of layering in the sections appears to suggest that this was deposited in a one-time event. Further analysis may confirm if the soil contains evidence of grain or not. A loom weight found suggests sheep grazing and/or the processing of wool taking place on the site.

The thick clay lining of the key feature (No. 10) indicates that this was able to retain water – whether as part of an industrial process such as preparing grain for malting or for use with animals is impossible to tell. It is worth noting that there is a 60mm layer of burnt soil on top of the clay. This layer is associated with the feature's function or was deposited after the feature went out of use. Of the two options, the second is more feasible.

The most interesting aspect of the seven features located in the 2016 excavation is the fact that they are all aligned in a SE to NW direction and are parallel to each other. Their truncation (presumably by modern ploughing) and their lack of depth (in terms of courses of flint) make it difficult to determine whether these were intended to support a significant structure or not.

It is conceivable that they supported a flimsy or temporary structure. The amount of burnt material could suggest a series of grain dryers, but apart from the northern end of features (No. 1 and 2) there are no cross-walls/foundations and no obvious evidence of stoke-holes. See figure 7 below for end of feature No 1. So, whilst these structures may not be the remains of grain dryers, the ten quern stone fragments found suggests that cereal was processed in the vicinity.

Regardless of its specific function it is highly unlikely that the features excavated to date were isolated. The amount of pottery found (over 1100 sherds in 2017 and 319 in 2018) together with the material from the Upton Collection suggests that some form of dwelling is located in the near vicinity. However, there is insufficient evidence to determine the extent of the dwelling and its level of sophistication.

The nature of the pottery assemblage and other finds (loom weight and mortaria) and the limited quantity of CBM would indicate a long-lived farmstead, but not necessarily a sophisticated villa. If so, this would fit the pattern of non-villa settlements on the Sussex chalk downlands (Rivet 1964, 117 and Hingley 1989, 136).



Based on the archaeological evidence from the excavations, it appears that the ditches and chalk/flint features were in use at the same time as there is no evidence of building over ditches or of the chalk/flint structures being truncated by the ditches.

In terms of the features identified by the geophysical survey, it is possible that they are contemporary with the site, or they may pre-date the site and the Roman period agricultural site is occupying the same plot or is close to its prehistoric predecessor.



Figure 7 Curved End of Feature No 1

#### Part of larger Estate

The pottery recovered during the 2017-2018 excavations bears a number of similarities to that found at the aisled building in Slindon Park. It illustrates a highpoint in activity during a period dating from the early-2nd to mid-4th century AD, with the South Gaulish Samian and early Arun Valley vessels suggesting there is clearly earlier activity of an undefined nature taking place; possibly pre-dating the features so far excavated.

The question which will remain unanswered is whether this farmstead was an independent small-holding or managed as a dependent tenancy associated with a larger landowner or estate. If the latter, could this site be linked to the villa at Bignor or to an unidentified villa to the south (Arnold 1875, 267-8)?

The association with Bignor is based on the suggestion that flocks from the Bignor estate would have been grazed on Burton Down and on land south of Stane Street (Applebaum 1975, 125)

and on the theory that Bignor's expansion at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century was due to the absorption of nearby rural farms (Rudling 2003, 121). However, it is equally possible that the villa estates used Stane Street as a boundary and therefore, any associated villa site lies elsewhere (Gordon Hayden pers. comm).

Whilst the location of this site half-way up the Downs suggests that this is a low status establishment (Rudling 2003, 115), the presence of three pieces of combed tile (see figure 8 below) from the Upton Collection, which was collected in the same field, could imply that a more impressive residence is nearby and is awaiting discovery.



Figure 8 Combed tile found in field 20

#### Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks to Connie Shirley for help with the graphics, and to Gordon Hayden for his knowledge of pottery.

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# St Nicholas' Church Angmering - Six Years On

By Amie Friend

## A Brief History

The village of Angmering is referred to as early as the Domesday Book, where it is listed as 'Angemare' or 'Langemare'. Originally, the local area was divided into three separate parishes, those of East Angmering, West Angmering and Bargham, each with their own church. Of these three churches only St Margaret's (West Angmering) is still in operation and little remains of St Nicholas' (East Angmering).

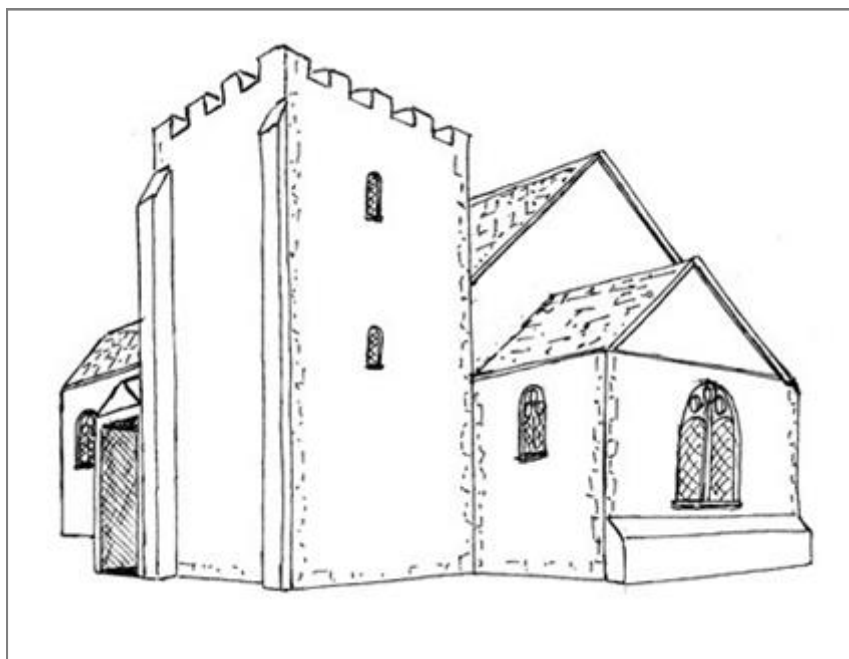
The church of St Nicholas' had its foundation some time during the Saxon period. Little is known of its early beginnings, but by the 12th century the early phase of the church had been transformed into a typical Norman style of construction. In its design St Nicholas' would have been similar to that of churches still standing in local villages, such as Sompting and Rustington.

The church underwent several phases of adaptation through its active life, and would have formed an integral part of the community. However, by the late 16th century the church was closed and eventually demolished, with the stone likely being recycled into local building projects.

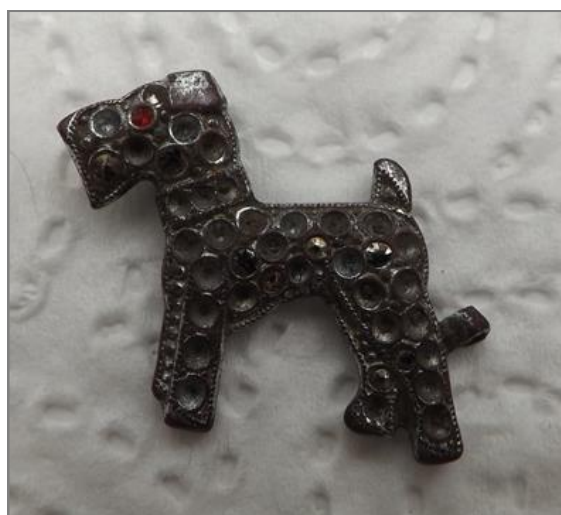
Internment records allow us to trace the active use of St Nicholas' until 1559; but from this point the East Angmering church is lost from visible history, and in 1573 the three parishes were merged. As part of this merger the West Angmering church of St Margaret's was chosen to be the principal church of the village, spelling the end for St Nicholas'. Anything of value would have been transferred to St Margaret's and the ground on which St Nicholas' once stood was transformed into a rector's garden.

Following the church's demolition, the site of St Nicholas' served various uses. In 1838 the site was recorded as a garden and by the end of the 19th century it was being used as a playing field for the village school. Most recently the land has been bought by Arun District Council (ADC) and designated by Angmering Parish Council (APC) as a site of recreation for the village.

But the story of St Nicholas' did not end in the 16th century. Archaeologically, remains of the church lay just under the surface of the community garden. Interest in this shadowy memory remained and in the 1970s work commenced to rediscover this important relic of Angmering's past.



*Sketch of St Nicholas' Church, based on Owen Bedwin's excavation plans  
© Bob Turner.*



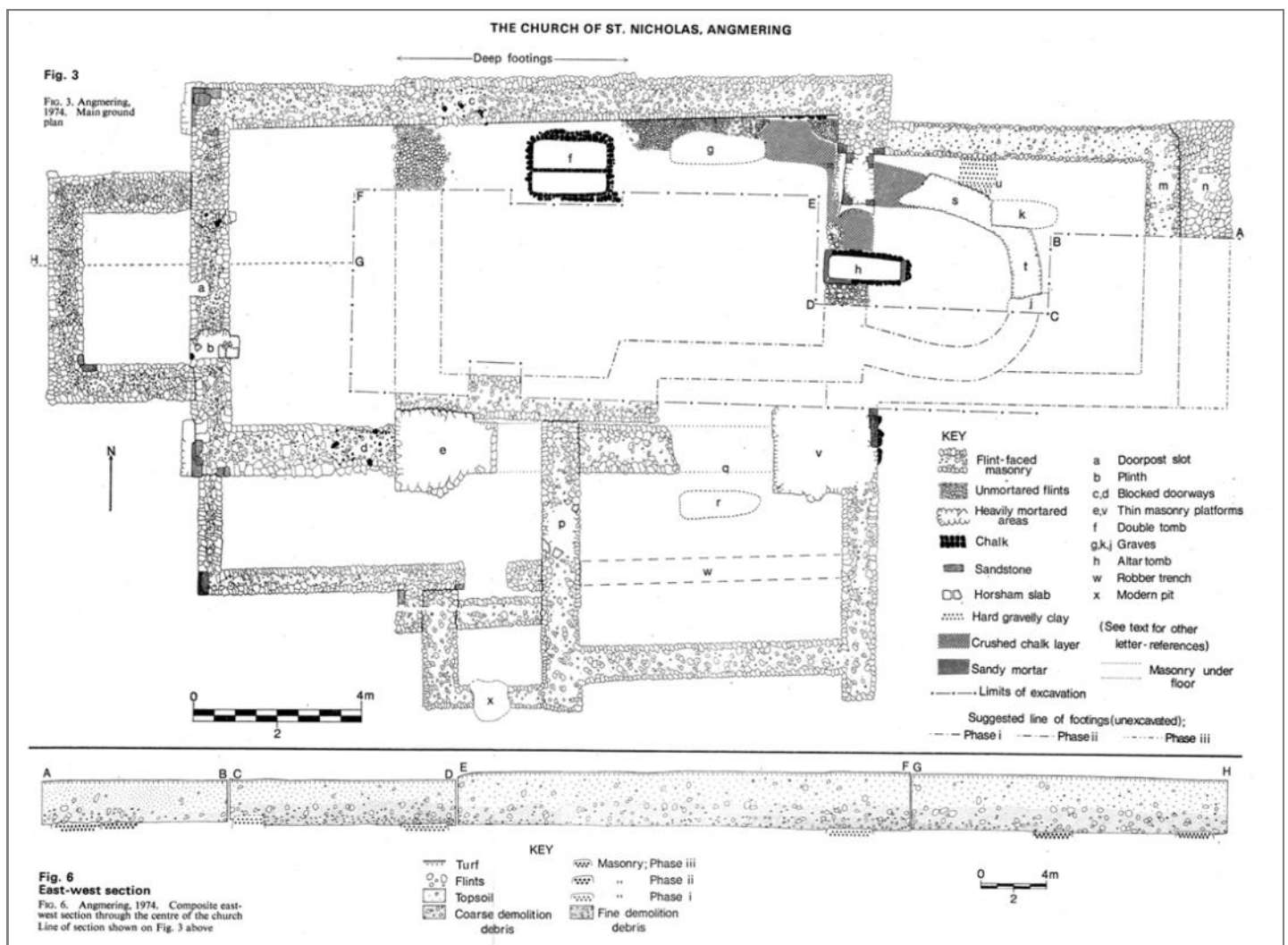
*A 20th century children's dog brooch, likely lost  
when the field was used by the local school*

In 1974, proposed building work threatened to destroy what was left of the site. In response, archaeologist Owen Bedwin undertook an examination of the church's remains. During this project, Bedwin focused on establishing an overall floorplan for the church, along with piecing together a timeframe for its phases of construction.

However, Bedwin's excavation was carried out using the archaeological methods available in the 70s, with the trenches being placed through a combination of onsite observations, old maps and records, intermixed with a little bit of luck (Bedwin, 1974). Today, thanks to developments in technology, archaeology can map the church to a much finer degree of accuracy. There are also several areas of the site where questions still needed to be resolved, such as the relationship between the Norman and Saxon chancel walls, on the south side of the church.

Therefore, in 2012 Worthing Archaeological Society (WAS) was approached by the APC to discuss the possibility of a renewed archaeological investigation. The project would initially undertake a geophysical survey to map the area, outlining the possible structure of the church.

Following this, WAS, in combination with the APC, would carry out a community research excavation, with the express aims of defining the layout of the church and extending the information gathered in 1974. In so doing, they would provide an up-to-date understanding of the church. The culmination of this work would then be presented to the community, and a marker would be designed for the site to explain its history.

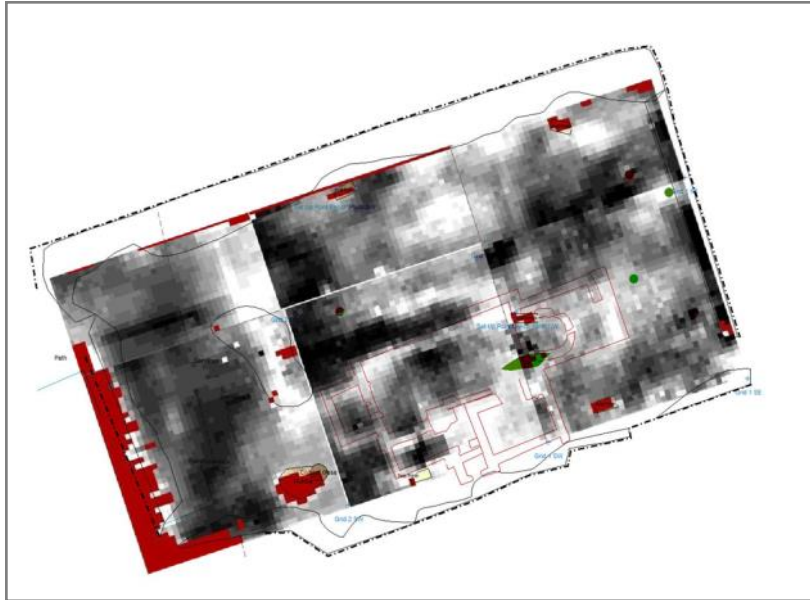


Owen Bedwin's 1974 excavation plan © Owen Bedwin



### The Geophysical Survey and Planning the Project

The first part of the project was always to carry out a geophysical survey on the site. This would help to establish the outline of the church and the best placement for trenches during a future excavation. The survey showed the outline of the church buildings, but also anomalies to the north of the foundations.

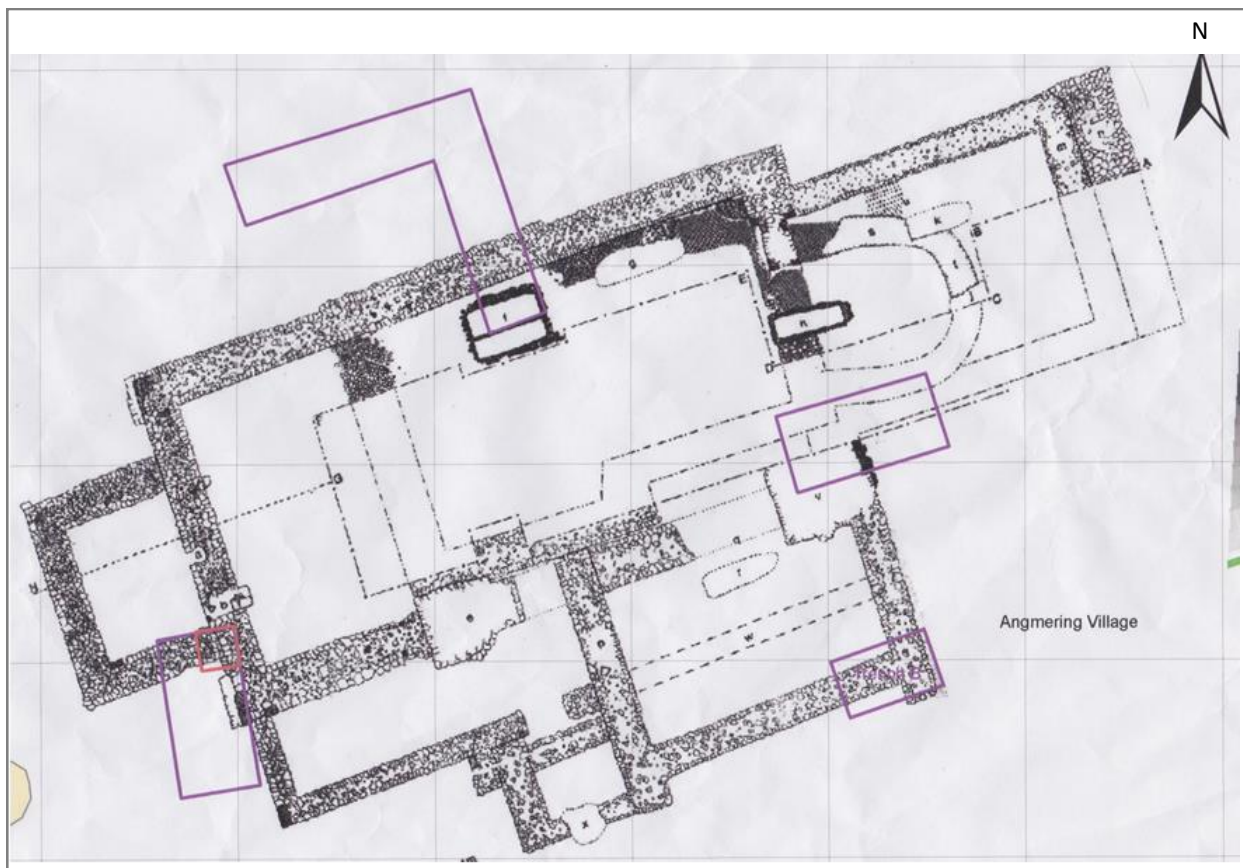


*Results of the geophysical survey carried out on St Nicholas' Garden  
© Connie Shirley*

It was due to these anomalies that the following excavation aims were established.

- 1) To provide a community-based archaeological project, where the local community would have the opportunity to gain hands-on practical experience of archaeology.
- 2) To establish, using modern archaeological methods, the layout and construction phases of the church for publication and local presentation.
- 3) To build on Bedwin's previous excavation and address questions still unresolved, concerning the Saxon and Norman chancel walls.
- 4) To investigate the geophysical anomalies observed to the north of the church's foundations.

Following the geophysical survey and much planning, the excavation phase of the project was scheduled for the summer of 2015.



*Map of the 2015 planned trenches overlaying Owen Bedwin's 1974 excavation plan*

## The Excavation Plan

Guided by the geophysical survey, the excavating team always planned to open four trenches at St Nicholas'. These would be classified as trenches A, B, C and D.

However, prior to the opening of the trenches a site walk was organised. From the moment that the team arrived on site it became clear that the position of the planned trenches would have to be re-thought. While their placement would give the team the best chance of sampling the archaeology, a flower bed obscured part of the planned Trench A, a hedge would have to be navigated to access Trench B, a large tree was growing almost directly over the spot of a double grave in Trench C and a bench would be very close to the edge of Trench D. In all the best laid plans ...

In the end, and after much measuring and debate, the trenches were slightly re-arranged to where the team hoped we could still sample the archaeology, but avoid all the obstacles.

Trench A was placed to establish the SW corner of the feature labelled, by Bedwin, as the church porch. Trench B was set to look at the SE corner of Bedwin's tower feature. Trench C would establish the Northern wall and examine the anomaly seen on the geophysical survey. Together, these three trenches would also be used to rediscover the 'footprint' of St Nicholas' Church, and correlate it to the maps drawn during Bedwin's 1974 excavation. Lastly, Trench D would be placed to examine the area around the south side of the chancel in order to define the relationship between the Norman and Saxon walls.

All in all everything was looking very positive for the planned excavation. The local library gave us the use of one of their rooms for the storage of equipment and The Lamb pub very kindly allowed a muddy troop of archaeologists to use their toilets. In this respect, St Nicholas' has possibly been one of the most comfortable excavations I have ever been involved with.

## The Excavation

The two weeks of the excavation were great fun. The weather other than the odd day was beautiful and from the very start the finds team was kept very busy with a wealth of material from all periods of the gardens' use.

The main church archaeology was also very close to the surface. In Trenches A and B it was only 50-60cm below the surface, and the finer trowelling work soon replaced spades and shovels.

In Trench A, three intersecting structural walls were found, all constructed of flints placed within mortar. These wall lines are seen on Bedwin's original excavation map and are listed by him as being the south wall of the porch and part of the Norman nave. Each of these sections of masonry wall was integrated into each other, which would suggest that they were all part of one phase of the church's development.

A small hole was also uncovered within one of the walls. This was not mentioned in Bedwin's excavation report. The hole was built into the wall, rather than having been made due to some form of destruction, and was likely the foundation for a structural post included within the wall itself. Internal wall posts can be used as part of structures built on slopes, to give the wall extra support, particularly if the wall is a crucial load bearer. Small fragments of white plaster were also recovered from this trench, indicating that the church would have once been decorated.

A masonry wall, also constructed from flints set into mortar, was uncovered in Trench B. A trench extension also revealed the return of the wall that ran towards the nave and chancel. This part of the church was listed by Bedwin as being the church tower and it was roughly square in shape.



*The finds team at work*



A possible buttress was observed in the plans of the 1974 excavation and this was likely the basis for the tower interpretation. However its location, to the south of the church, is unusual and the walls found by the 2015 team were arguably very small to have supported a substantial structure such as the tower.

In Trench C the northern wall of the church was quickly found, with fine white plaster on the face of the wall. In 1974, a double grave was discovered in this area, however no sign of this feature could be found, at the expected depth, in 2015. As the plaster on the wall seemed to be continuing it was decided to excavate a little further down, to see how far it extended. This turned out to be a very good decision as it was in this small sondage that the double grave first appeared. As the area was excavated the grave was fully uncovered along with the remains of a

third grave, which had been built into the side of the double grave. The line of Bedwin's 1974 trench edge was also seen in the ground during excavation, which showed that his team had missed seeing the third grave by a matter of centimetres. Archaeology can be very cruel at times.

The second objective of this trench was however less successful. The L-shaped trench was designed to investigate the anomalies identified from the geophysical survey. These anomalies were quickly identified. But they were in no way medieval. As the first curves of the trench were lifted, the top of the anomaly, a large drainage system with an accompanying water chamber, could clearly be seen. For the rest of the excavation it amused the children to hear we had found part of an old toilet system.

The final trench of the excavation was Trench D. Archaeologically this was possibly the most interesting of the four trenches. The trench revealed the southern wall of the Norman nave and the outline of the Norman chancel wall. Within these walls the excavation uncovered a very well-preserved masonry floor, which included a clear imprint of a large flagstone-shaped tile. To the south of this level a dressed-stone lined hole was uncovered, which was thought to be the remains of the piscina. To the west of the masonry floor, was a small partition wall leading to a coarser rubble layer, which appeared to have been a level for another floor. Beneath this level the smaller masonry blocks of the Saxon chancel wall were found, curving away from the straight Norman wall. This categorically explained the relationship between the two phases of church construction.



*Opening Trench A*



*The walls discovered in Trench A*



*Stone post hole found in Trench A wall*



But there was one more surprise for the archaeologists in this trench. In between the two chancel walls the skeletal remains of an infant were found. The individual was tiny and the bones incredibly fragile. From the arc of the skull the baby would appear to have been full term or very close to, possibly a still born. The child had been placed with great care within the rubble layer. This would suggest that the child had been laid to rest sometime during the building work, which redeveloped the chancel of the church during the Norman period, something which may not have been officially sanctioned.

### A Re-interpretation

Overall, the 2015 excavation at St Nicholas' Garden was very successful. The team began the dig in early June with clear objectives, all of which were achieved, and are now written up in a full archaeological report.

The report confirmed in many ways the findings from 1974, but the new evidence gathered, during this most recent project, has led to a reinterpretation of the church's tower. The excavation of Trenches A and B now indicate that the tower would have been located on the west side of the church, as is more usual for this type of building. The walls in Trench A were much more substantial and included extra supports, which would be needed in an elevated structure, positioned on a sloping gradient. In contrast, it



*Working in Trench B*



*Finding a modern drainage system*



*The first sign of the double grave in Trench C*

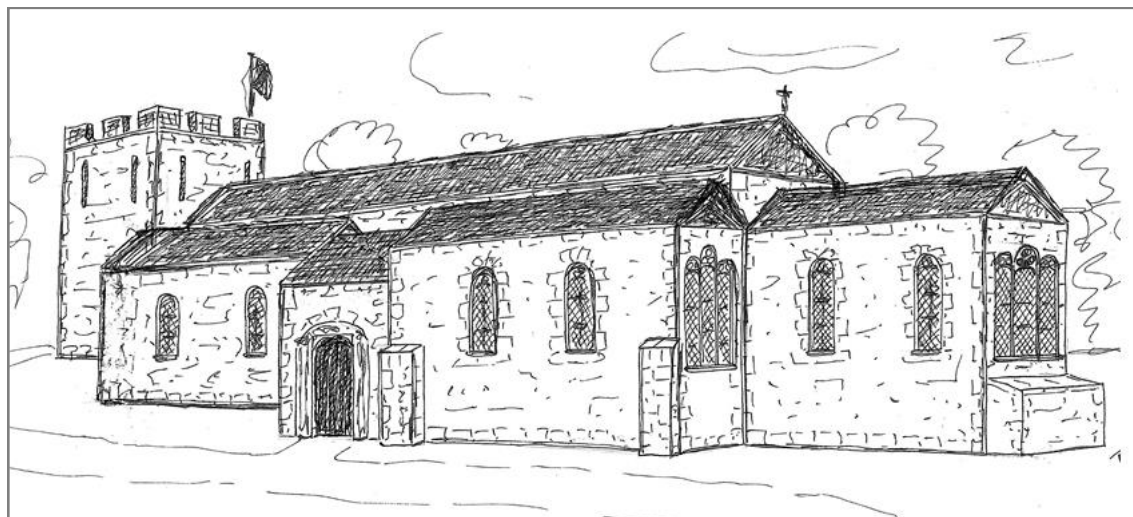


*Trench D - Both Saxon and Norman chancel walls*



was agreed that the walls found in Trench B were not what would have been needed to support a tower structure, and its position on the southern side of the church, at the lowest point of the site gradient, made it an unlikely position to choose when constructing a key element such as a tower.

### **The Angmering Community**



*2015 interpretation of St Nicholas' Church © Bob Turner*

Throughout the 2015 project, the excavation team received a fantastic level of support and interest from the local Angmering community. This was a huge asset to the excavation as many, including children from both St Wilfrid's and St Margaret's Primary schools, came to volunteer their time and enthusiasm. Working mainly in Trenches A and B, these new archaeologists helped to uncover both the previously excavated and unexcavated archaeology, and they did a tremendous job!

### **St Nicholas' 2021**

It seems unbelievable that six years have passed since the Angmering excavation. It truly feels like yesterday, but then time seems to have a way of slipping by. This revisited article has been written now due to the completion of the last of the original project aims, set out in 2012.

The second of our aims stated that the excavation would be carried out to '*establish the layout and construction phases of the church, for publication and local presentation*'. Almost immediately after the completion of the excavation WAS was invited to a community open day, where some of the artefacts recovered, along with the preliminary results, were shared with the local community. In addition, both a formal archaeological report and a more informal community report were produced and published for all to



*Visitors to the site having a site tour*



*Children on site having a look at artefacts in the tent*

read. But the final part of this objective, to mark the church in some way within the garden, has taken a little longer to come to fruition. It was never clear how the marking of the site would be done, and both finance and then Covid-19 played their part in delaying a permanent marker for the site.

Then in late 2019, Angmering in Bloom got in touch with WAS. They had secured some funding to design and produce an information board for the site. This would be positioned within the garden so that everyone could discover and appreciate the history that was beneath their feet. Through the trial that has been the Covid years, they continued to push for the project to be completed. With a little help on content from me and access to pictures from the excavation, they have designed a board that tells both the story of the church and of the excavations carried out to rediscover it.

On the 11th August 2021, Angmering in Bloom finally unveiled their information board for the church of St Nicholas, in the garden where it once stood. From a personal and WAS perspective, it is a proud moment to have the archaeological project on which we all worked so hard recognised. From a village perspective, it is fantastic to see local history remembered and appreciated in such a way, for everyone to enjoy.

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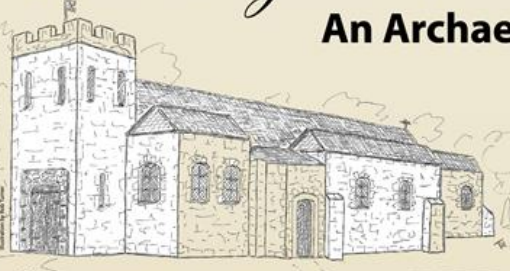
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# Uncovering St Nicholas' Church

## An Archaeological Dig 2015



### History of St Nicholas' Church, Angmering

The village of Angmering is mentioned in the Domesday Book, where it is referred to as 'Angemare' or 'Langemare'. Originally the local area was divided into three parishes each with its own church, representing East Angmering, West Angmering and Bargham. Of these three churches only St Margaret's (West Angmering) is still in operation and little remains of the village's second church, that of St Nicholas (East Angmering), only small amounts of foundation stone buried beneath the grassy area known as St Nicholas' Gardens.

St Nicholas' was almost certainly founded during the Saxon period, some time prior to 1066. Little is known of its early beginnings but by the 12th century it would seem that the first church had been replaced by a typical Norman-style construction.

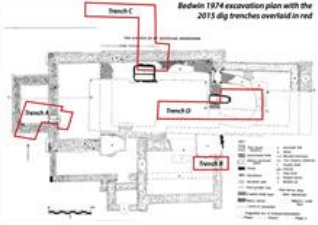
The church was in use for some 400 years, during which the building underwent several phases of adaptation and addition. However, by the late 16th century the church was closed and eventually demolished, with the stone likely being recycled into local building projects. Records show that St Nicholas' was in active use until 1559, but from this point the East Angmering church fell into disuse as the three local parishes merged and St Margaret's was adopted as the sole church.

The ground on which St Nicholas' once stood was transformed into a Rector's garden. By the end of the 19th century it was being used as a playing field for the village school. Most recently the land has been bought by Arun District Council and designated by Angmering Parish Council as a site of recreation for the village.

### Excavation by Owen Bedwin in 1974



The site lay undisturbed from the 16th through to the 20th century. In 1974, when proposed building work threatened to destroy the remains of the church, archaeologist Owen Bedwin undertook an examination of the site, focussing on establishing an overall floor plan and developing a timeframe of the various phases of its construction. Excavations were carried out using archaeological methods of the time, with trenches being placed based on a combination of onsite observation, old maps and records and a bit of guesswork.

Today, thanks to developments in technology, archaeologists can map the church to a much finer degree of accuracy, and in 2012 Worthing Archaeological Society was approached by the Angmering Parish Council to discuss the possibility of a renewed examination of the site.



### A Community Project

The project provided a strong community objective. Both St Wilfred's and St Margaret's schools spent time on site, as well as members of the local Home Schools Association. Each school group had the opportunity to work alongside archaeologists on site and take part in a range of activities to experience the process of archaeology. In addition, places on site, along with training, were offered to members of the local community.




### Trench Objectives

**Trench A** – Placed in order to establish the SW corner of a feature labelled by Bedwin as the church porch.

**Trench B** – To establish the SE corner of Bedwin's tower feature. In combination with trenches A and C this trench was used to rediscover the 'footprint' of St Nicholas' Church.


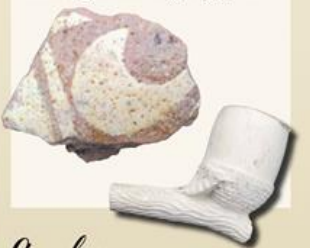
**Trench C** – To establish the northern wall of the Norman church nave.

**Trench D** – To examine the area around the south side of the chancel, to define the relationship between the Norman and Saxon chancel walls.

### Finds

The finds team was kept busy throughout the dig with a constant stream of artefacts arriving at the tent. The team identified pottery shards from the 12/13th century through to modern times, pieces of metal work, such as a small cross and a lovely horseshoe-shaped button, coins from many periods, including one from the reign of Edward I, painted wall plaster, stained glass and many clay pipes.







### Conclusion

The Angmering excavation of 2015 was a true success: all the objectives were met and community involvement was excellent. Archaeologically, the WAS team was able to identify the layout of St Nicholas' Church in relation to Bedwin's 1974 excavation and to further define areas such as the southern nave. Lastly, the excavation demonstrated that the tower of the Norman Church once stood to the west of the site instead of the south, a feature observed in similar churches such as St Margaret's.

From day one the site had the support of the wider community and received a constant stream of visitors who showed their interest in the project.

This information board was facilitated by Angmering in Bloom with support and funding from Angmering Heritage Trust and Angmering Parish Council, with many thanks for all the help received from Worthing Archaeological Society. A full report on the 2015 dig can be found in Angmering Library or at [worthingarchaeological.org](http://worthingarchaeological.org)

Worthing Archaeological Society

The St Nicholas' information board, now displayed in St Nicholas' Garden Angmering





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