

A SUMMARY REPORT OF EXCAVATION ON LAND WEST OF HORNDEAN ROAD, EMSWORTH, 2017

By STEVEN BUSH and RICHARD MASSEY

ABSTRACT

Excavation revealed four distinct phases of Roman enclosure ditches, of which the earliest were of mid-late 1st-century date. These were subsequently recut and augmented during the later 1st and 2nd centuries, to create a series of contiguous rectilinear enclosures, not all of which may have been in contemporary use. A notable density of finds within the north-central part of the excavated area, together with evidence of a small post-ring structure, suggested a focus of domestic activity. A later phase of post-medieval activity was represented by a probable field boundary ditch and a post-built structure of irregular rectilinear plan.

INTRODUCTION

In September and October, 2017, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) undertook an archaeological excavation at the request of Bellway Homes (Wessex) Ltd, on land west of Horndean Road, Emsworth, Hampshire (centred at NGR: 474341 107083; Fig. 1).

The site, previously farmland, is 7.75ha in extent, and bounded to the east by properties along Horndean Road, to the north by Southleigh Road and by farmland to the south and west (Fig. 1, inset). Elevations range from c. 12m above Ordnance datum (aOD) in the north-west, to 8.5m aOD in the south-east. Underlying geology comprises clay, silt and sand of London Clay Formation, with localised superficial Quaternary Head deposits of gravel and clay (BGS 2017).

Geophysical survey and investigation of a Roman villa at Warblington, 1.2km to the south-west, has identified building ranges on an extensive rectilinear plan, and a surrounding enclosure ditch (Linford 2015;

Taylor & Collingwood 1927; Chichester & District Archaeological Society 2010–2018). The Chichester to Bitterne Roman road, Margary's 421 (1973, 92), ran c. 880m to the south, with surrounding Roman-dated findspots. Further villa sites are recorded at Havant, c. 5km to the west (Scott 1993, 84), and at Rowlands Castle, c. 3km to the north-west (*ibid.*, 87).

SUMMARY RESULTS OF EXCAVATION

Archaeological features were recorded in 24 (of 78) evaluation trenches (CA 2017), but mostly comprised undated land drains. Excavation was targeted on a group of truncated ditches in Trenches 35 and 41, which produced 2nd-century greyware and amphora sherds and dispersed hearth material (CA 2018).

Period 1: early prehistoric

A redeposited Palaeolithic hand-axe was recovered from gravel deposit 1151 (Fig. 1). Later prehistoric evidence comprised nine residual worked flints, of broad Mesolithic and Neolithic date.

Period 2: Roman

Four Roman sub-phases (2.1–2.4) were distinguished stratigraphically and broadly dated by 1st–2nd century AD pottery. These indicated that, within a relatively short-lived site, ditched boundaries had undergone intensive episodes of reorganisation. Ditches contained a range of clay sand and silty clay fills, variously grey/brown, orange/grey and blue/grey in colour, within which iron-stained charcoal indicated occasionally waterlogged

deposits. Although truncated, recorded ditch profiles were generally gently-sloping and concave, but intermittently steeply-sloping and uneven (Fig. 2, sections AA and BB).

Period 2.1

Period 2.1 was represented by Ditches 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11 and 16, Gullies 2 and 3, and Structure 1 (Fig. 1). Ditch 1 ran for 5.6m from the western edge of the excavation area on a north-east/south-west alignment, before terminating (Fig. 1). A 2.8m gap lay between this terminal and the edge of Period 2.4 Ditch 6. The south-western edge of Ditch 6 was aligned north-west/south-east, and may represent a recut of an earlier feature. Ditch 2 ran for 11.6m, on a north-east/south-west alignment, and was cut by Ditch 3 at its north-eastern terminal.

Ditches 3, 4 and 8 collectively formed a sub-rectangular enclosure of *c.* 26.5m in width and 22m in length. Ditch 3 entered the excavation area on a north-west/south-east alignment, and ran 17.8m, before turning 90° to the north-east. It was then cut by Period 2.4 Ditch 6. Ditch 3 was 0.8m wide and 0.6m deep, and contained a single secondary fill, of red/grey silty clay. Ditch 4 ran for 16.4m on a south-west/north-east alignment, with a terminal to the south-west, and was cut by Ditches 12 and 5 at its north-eastern end. Ditch 4 displayed a width of 0.89m and a depth of 0.69m. Ditch 8 was located approximately 1.5 metres from the northern terminal of Ditch 6 and measured of 0.91m in width and 0.23m in depth. North/south-aligned Ditch 11 was located directly to the west of Structure 1 and measured 0.86m wide and 0.29m deep at the northern end, and 1.44m wide and 0.38m deep at the southern.

In the north, Ditches 9 and 16, together with Gullies 2 and 3, appeared to form an enclosure surrounding Structure 1. Ditch 9 may represent a northward extension of Ditch 2, which had been largely recut by Period 2.4 Ditch 6. Along with Ditch 8, just to the east, Ditch 9 may have formed an offset enclosure entrance. Ditch 9 displayed an untypically steep, uneven "V"-shaped profile, with a width of 0.56m and depth of 0.38m.

Ditch 16 ran for 2.7m from the north, on a north-west/south-east alignment, before

terminating, and was of comparable profile and fill to Ditches 8 and 9. This may represent the south-eastern extremity of an isolated length of curvilinear gully, represented *c.* 15m to the north-east by Gully 2, which extended for 4m into the excavation area, on a west-north-west/east-south-east alignment.

Immediately to the east of Ditch 11, a group of five postholes described a sub-circular plan of 6.8m diameter (Structure 1, Fig. 1), with an internal pit and possible hearth. Roman pottery was recovered from one posthole and millstone fragments from the pit. Structure 1 could represent an agricultural building (Harding 2009, 70) or windbreak, although evidence for an external stake-built wall or ring-gully may not have survived (c.f. Sharples 2010, 220). The fill of Ditch 11, immediately to the west, contained the highest concentration of pottery on the site, suggesting domestic occupation.

Period 2.2

Period 2.2 was represented by Ditches 12, 13, and 14, located in the south-east of the excavation area (Fig. 1). Ditch 12 entered from the south-east, on a south-east/north-west alignment, for 22.3m; it cut Period 2.1 Ditch 4 and was cut by Ditch 5 at its north-western extent. Ditch 12 measured 0.72m in width and 0.25m in depth, with a single secondary fill. Ditch 13 ran, for 4.3m, on a north-east/south-west alignment, and was cut by Ditch 12 at its western extent, and by Period 2.3 Ditch 15, close to its eastern terminal. A gap of 1.3m between Ditches 13 and 14 may represent a small entranceway. Ditch 14 continued for 2.4m on the same alignment as Ditch 13, before extending beyond the excavation area. Ditches 13 and 14 displayed a width of 0.55m and depth of 0.36m, with two silty clay fills.

Period 2.3

Period 2.3 was represented by Ditches 5 and 15, on the north-east edge of the site. Ditch 5 ran for 30.8m, on a north-west/south-east alignment, and was cut by Period 2.4 Ditch 7 at its north-western extent. Ditch 5 varied from 1.2m wide and 0.36m deep in the north-west, to 0.8m wide and 0.32m deep in the south-east.

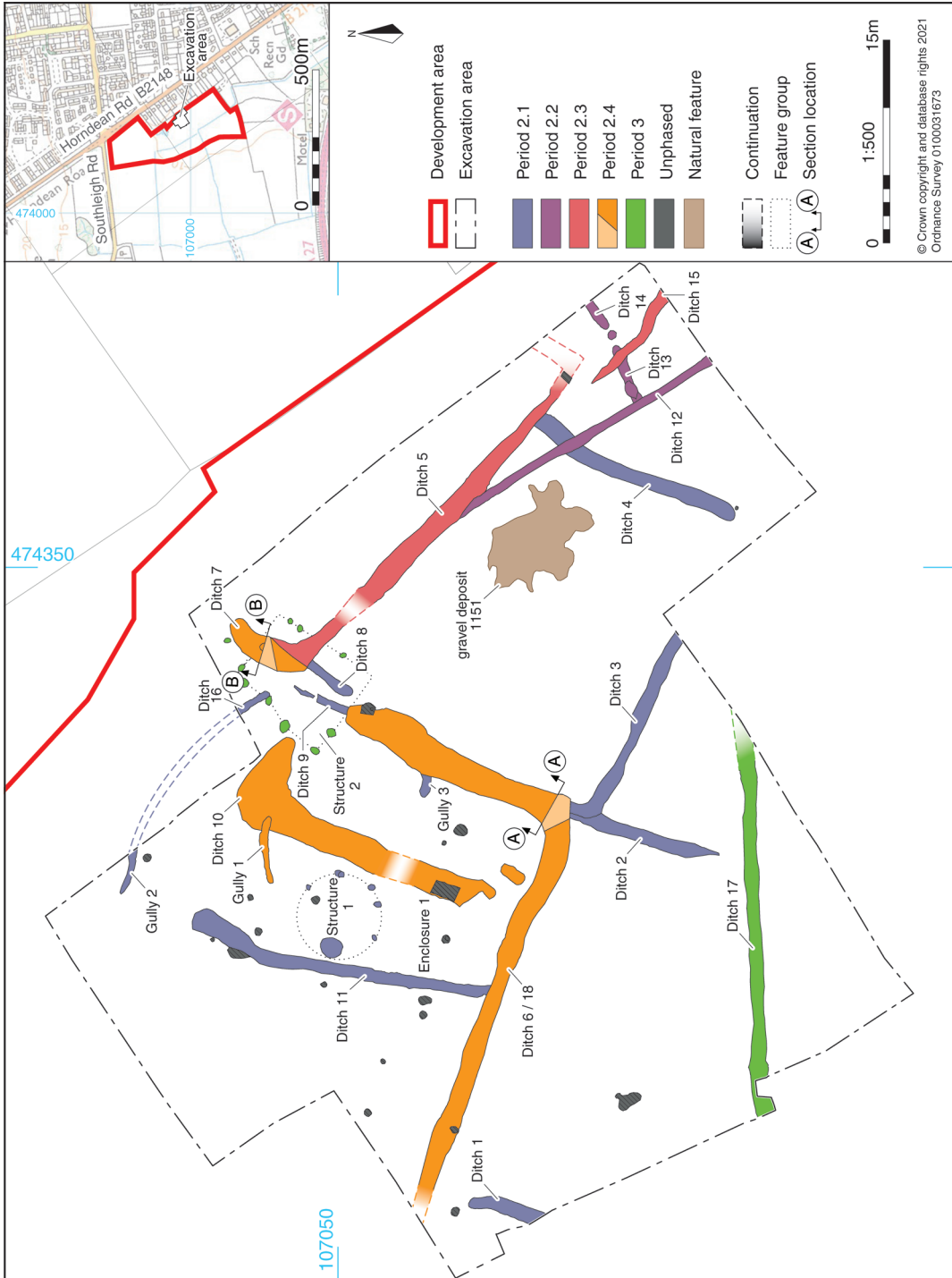


Fig. 1 Plan of excavated features (1:500)

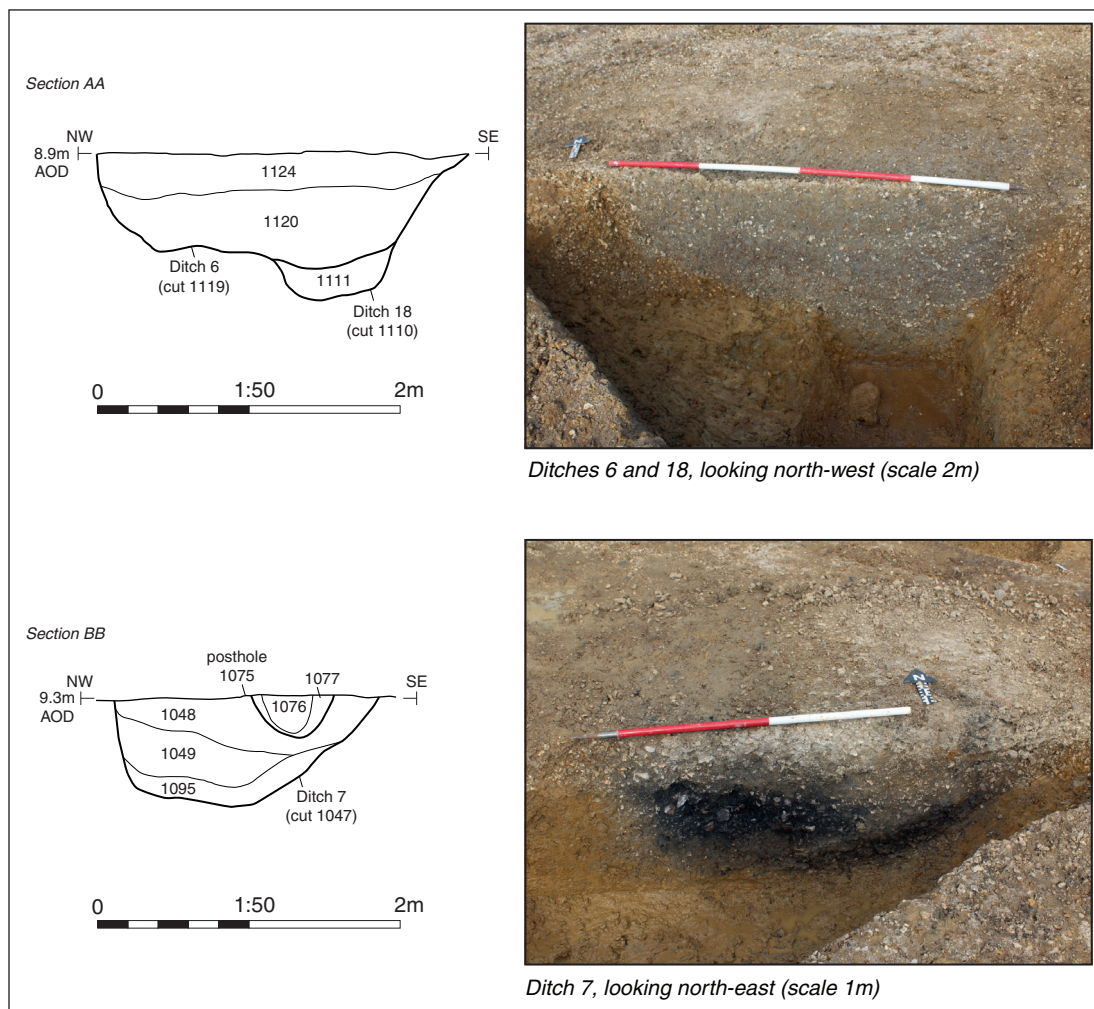


Fig. 2 Ditches 6 and 8, and Ditch 7: sections and photographs

Ditch 15, to the south-east, was aligned north-west/south-east, and cut Period 2.3 Ditch 13. It may represent a southerly continuation of Ditch 5.

Period 2.4

Period 2.4 features included Ditches 6, 7, 10 and 18, and Gully 1. Ditches, 6, 7 and 10 were in the northern part of the excavation area, and partly enclosed putative Enclosure 1 (Fig. 1), which appeared to extend beyond the excavation area, to the north. Ditch 6

entered the excavation area on a north-west/south-east alignment; it turned 90° to the north-east and continuing for a further 18.1m before terminating. It appeared to represent a substantial redefinition of earlier Period 2.4 Ditch 18, which was only visible in section (Fig. 2, section AA). A series of postholes along the base of Ditch 18 may represent a stockproof fence.

Ditch 7, 8m north-west of Ditch 6, ran for 6.5m on a similar alignment, and may represent a partial recut of Period 2.3 Ditch 5 (Fig. 2, section BB). Shallow Gully 1 was 4.9m in

length and 0.11m in depth and cut Ditch 10. Its curvilinear plan suggested a surviving segment of ring-gully.

Period 3: post-medieval

Ditch 17, a field boundary, ran on an east-west alignment across the south of the excavation area. A group of 11 postholes, located to the north-east, represented a simple post-built structure of irregular rectilinear plan (Structure 2, Fig. 1), measuring 8.5m in length and 6.3m in width. Individual postholes of Structure 2 cut Period 2 features, and pottery from posthole 1052 was of post-medieval date. Structure 2 may represent a small, post-built barn.

Undated features

Four undated postholes were recorded, as were 26 tree-throw pits, some of which post-dated archaeological features.

THE FINDS

A re-deposited flint hand-axe, of Palaeolithic date, was recovered from deposit 1151. Ten items of worked flint may represent transient activity in Neolithic and Mesolithic periods.

A total of 1607 sherds (40,577g) were almost all of Roman date. The bulk was recovered from ditches, with smaller quantities from pits, layers and other features. The largest group came from Ditch 11 (816 sherds, 25,916g), adjacent to Structure 1. Finewares comprised only 3.1% of this assemblage and included South Gaulish samian from Ditches 5, 6 and 11 and Structure 1. Ditch 11 contained 11 sherds of a form Dr 37 decorated bowl. Amphora sherds of Dressel 20 type were recovered from Ditch 3.

Locally produced reduced coarsewares were largely represented by jar forms, comprising 76% of the total coarseware assemblage. Most were in Rowlands Castle greyware fabrics, of mid-1st to late 2nd-century date (Dicks 2009). Large, cabled-rimmed, jars were well-represented, mostly in Rowlands Castle and Alice Holt fabrics, and potentially of 1st to 3rd-century date (Lyne & Jeffries 1979).

A fragmentary copper alloy brooch (Ra.

113) was recovered from Ditch 10. Other metalwork finds included a contemporary copy of a denarius of Trajan (AD 98–117) and a few forged iron nails.

Forty-one fragments of Roman ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered from various ditch fills included imbrex and box-flue tile. Without evidence of a neighbouring Roman building, it is possible that imported building rubble was used to consolidate marshy ground.

Fragmentary remains of ten querns, five of Lodsworth greensand (Peacock 1987), and one millstone, were recovered from pit and ditch fills.

BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL

Only 25 fragments of poorly-preserved animal bone could be identified to species, predominantly of sheep/goat, although cattle, pig and equids were also represented.

Small charcoal assemblages from 23 environment samples identified oak as a dominant fuel-source, supplemented by alder/hazel, poplar/willow, heather, blackthorn/cherry, broom/gorse and field maple.

Limited, poorly-preserved, charred plant remains included indeterminate grain fragments from posthole and pit fills.

DISCUSSION

An expanding record of Roman-period settlement within the Hampshire Basin (e.g. Clelland 2012; TVAS 2013), while still imperfectly understood (Fulford 2014, 181), suggests precocious post-Conquest activity approaching that attested on adjoining downland and the Sussex Plain (c.f. Allen 2016, 86–87, figs 4.12, 4.13; Manley 2008, 47, 53).

In this case, 1st-century establishment may reflect the proximity of a (probably early) road (Margary 1973, 92) and a rapidly-developing economic landscape around the coastal environs of Chichester (Manley 2008, 47–8). A short-lived site chronology reflects regional patterns of 2nd-century abandonment (Allen 2016, 84). While flooding may have contributed to this,

economic factors may also have supervened (Taylor 2007, 101–2).

Ditch sequences represent an evolving set of enclosures, although unclear distinctions between newly-dug and recut/modified ditches suggest that not all of these were contemporary. Overall, the evidence suggests a series of stock-proof paddocks surrounding a modest settlement. While the paucity of charred plant evidence might infer dependence on stock rearing, environmental samples were generally uninformative.

The small post-ring Structure 1 is regionally atypical of Early Roman roundhouses, in terms of both size and mode of construction (Harding 2009, 147–8). While this could represent a simple shelter or ‘working area’ (c.f. Lambrick & Robinson 2009, 133–4, fig. 5.1; Harding 2009, 244), pottery and quern fragments from adjacent fills strongly suggest a domestic focus.

The dearth of imported wares reflects distance from markets, and corresponding dependence on local sources (c.f. Rigby & Freestone 1997). These, and a typically ‘native’ preponderance

of jar forms, place this site on the lowest rung of the rural settlement hierarchy (Evans 2001, 27–29; Willis 1998).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation, post-excavation analysis and reporting were funded by Bellway Homes Ltd (Wessex), whose support is gratefully acknowledged. The fieldwork and post-excavation projects were managed respectively by Oliver Good and Karen Walker. The specialist reports were written by the following: pottery and ceramic building materials by Grace Jones, metal finds by Katie Marsden, worked flint by Jacky Sommerville, worked stone by Ruth Shaffrey, faunal remains by Matilda Holmes, plant microfossils and charcoal by Sarah Wyles and the charcoal by Dana Challinor. The illustrations were prepared by Charlotte Patman. The full report (CA report No. 18156) is available online, at <http://reports.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/>.

REFERENCES

- Allen, M J 2016 The South, in Smith, A *et al.* 2016, 75–140.
- BGS (British Geological Survey), 2014 *Geology of Britain Viewer*: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> [Accessed 2 January 2018].
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology), 2017 *Horndean Road, Emsworth, Hampshire: archaeological evaluation*, unpubl CA report No.17172.
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology), 2018 *Land West of Horndean Road, Emsworth: archaeological excavation*, unpubl CA report No. 18156.
- Chichester & District Archaeology Society, 2010–2018 *Warblington Roman Villa Excavations*, www.cdas.info/WarblingtonHome/html.
- Clelland, S E 2012 Prehistoric to post-medieval occupation at Dowd’s Farm, Hedge End, Hampshire, *Proc Hampshire Fld Club Archaeol Soc* **67.1** 142–173.
- Evans, J 2001 Material approaches to the identification of different Romano-British site types, in James, S & Millett, M (eds) *Britons and Romans: advancing an archaeological agenda* (CBA Res Rep 125), York, 26–35.
- Fulford, M 2014 The Roman period research agenda, in Hey, G & Hind, J (eds) 2014, 179–184.
- Harding, D W 2009 *The Iron Age Round-house: later prehistoric building in Britain and beyond*, Oxford.
- Hey, G & Hind, J (eds) 2014 *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment: resource assessments and research agendas*, Oxford Wessex Monograph, Oxford, 6.
- Lambrick, G H & Robinson, M A 2009 *The Thames through Time: the archaeology of the gravel terraces of the upper Thames Valley in later prehistory 1500 BC 50 AD*, Oxford Archaeology Press, Oxford.
- Linford, N 2015 *Warblington Roman Villa, Havant, Hampshire. Report on Geophysical Surveys, February, 2015*, Historic England Research Report Series No. 82–2015, Portsmouth.

- Lyne, M A B & Jefferies, R S 1979 *The Alice Holt/ Farnham Pottery Industry* (CBA Res Rep 30), London.
- Manley, J (ed.) 2008 *The Archaeology of Fishbourne and Chichester: a framework for its future*, Sussex Archaeological Society, Lewes.
- Margary, I D 1973 *Roman Roads in Britain* (3rd ed.), London.
- Peacock, D P S 1987 Iron Age and Roman quern production at Lodsworth, West Sussex, *Antiq J* **67**(i) 61–87.
- Rigby, V & Freestone, I 1997 Ceramic changes in Late Iron Age Britain, in Freestone, I & Gaimster, D (eds) *Pottery in the Making*, British Museum Publications, London, 56–61.
- Scott, E 1993 *A Gazetteer of Roman Villas in Britain*, Leicester Archaeology Monographs 1, Leicester.
- Taylor, J 2007 *An Atlas of Roman Settlement in England* (CBA Res Rep 151), York.
- Taylor, M V & Collingwood, R G 1927 Roman Britain in 1927: sites explored, *J Roman Stud* **17** 208.
- Sharples, N 2010 *Social Relations in Later Prehistory: Wessex in the first millennium BC*, Oxford.
- Smith, A, Allen M, Brindle, T & Fulford, M 2016 *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain*, Britannia Monograph 29, London.
- TVAS (Thames Valley Archaeological Services), 2013 22 *Havant Road, Horndean, Waterlooville, Hampshire*, unpubl TVAS Report 13/205.
- Willis, S 1998 Samian pottery in Britain: exploring its distribution and archaeological potential, *Archaeol J* **155** 82–133.

Authors: Steven Bush and Richard Massey (formerly of CA), Cotswold Archaeology, Stanley House, Walworth Road, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 5LH

© Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society