An interim report on excavations at land at Gallant's Farm, East Farleigh, Kent

By Stephen Clifton

Abstract

This is an interim report on excavations that I have directed at a site in East Farleigh, Kent in 2013 and 2018. The site consists of features identified as late Iron Age and late Romano-British, and it is close to a cluster of Roman buildings that lie approximately 100m to the north, which were also excavated by the same archaeological team over the last 12 years. The aim is to write a report that accurately draws together the material that we have gathered, as well as extending our data-set with geophysical survey data, and comparison with other similar sites. I will be aiming to emulate identified best practice, and it should crystallise the thinking on this area of the site before more work is carried out in subsequent years.

Introduction

The Maidstone Area Archaeological Group, MAAG, have been excavating a site in East Farleigh since 2005, when the then landowners, Mr and Mrs Boughan invited the group to investigate a known Roman building on the site (Fig.2). Roman walls and foundations had been observed on the site from about 1800, and a plan of one range of buildings was recorded in 1839 (Smith, J, 1839, 57), along with intimations of other buildings having been removed nearby.

The Maidstone Area Archaeological Group, (MAAG), was formed on the 16 April 1969, and is a charitable group affiliated to the Kent Archaeological Society (KAS) and Maidstone Museum. The first MAAG chairman was the then director of the museum Allen Grove, (www.maag.btck.co.uk/GroupHistory). The group undertake archaeological excavations, local research and community engagement in the form of regular talks, meetings and exhibitions. The group currently comprises approximately 75 members, led by a chairman and archaeological director. There are a small number of active members who participate in archaeological activities such as excavation, finds processing, and research. The group usually convene for active archaeological work on a Sunday, and sometimes one day during the week. The excavation season usually starts around Easter and runs through until the end of October, depending on the weather. Information on the group can be found on the website (www.maag.btck.co.uk) and a daily blog is run during excavation work. An active Facebook page is also updated regularly and shared with other groups. The group is funded by charitable donations and a small yearly subscription. The groups' funds are therefore limited. Careful consideration has to be given before any money is allocated in support of excavation, or post-excavation work.

Fig.1 Aerial photo showing East Farleigh and the River Medway

Notwithstanding this, the provision of mechanical excavators at the start of the digging season is often essential for achieving the goals set for that year.

Attracting younger volunteers is a continual problem for MAAG, and many other local groups. The average age of the active members is 60+ and this must be factored into excavation schedules and it often dictates the methodology on site. For instance, careful consideration must be given to the way the trenches are accessed, leading to steps being cut into the baulk of particularly deep trenches. The archaeological knowledge and experience of active members varies, as do the ability of members to undertake physical work. With any voluntary activity the number of participants can vary greatly on any given day. This makes planning a digging schedule difficult, and some decisions can only be taken when members actually turn up on site. Typically the active members of the group number about seven or eight and on any given occasion we can expect four or five of those to be present. This limited number of excavators means that progress is often very slow. All of the site recording is done by the site supervisors. However, training in excavation techniques is given to anyone new to archaeology and anyone wishing to learn how to draw and record is encouraged and supported.

The subject of this interim report is an adjacent area of land that lies a little to the south that became the focus of attention due to the groups' investigations on Mr and Mrs Boughan's land leading to supposition that the site extended in this direction, supported by a reference on the 1961 ordnance survey map to a Roman building, (site of), on this almost three acre piece of land. Permission was sought from the landowner to undertake some exploratory work, and a number of test pits were dug in 2013 with a mechanical digger across the area that was free of trees. These trenches did not reveal the presence of a Roman building, but did reveal some archaeological features in two of the trial trenches. These features were explored at the time, but no further excavations were undertaken until 2018, when MAAG returned to this area and extended the excavation trenches to reveal two previously unknown late Iron Age ditches and what appeared to be a fifth century 'corn-drier'.

The archaeological work at East Farleigh in 2018, (and since 2005), is a research excavation. There is no imminent threat to the site from development or environmental change. The aim of the project is to reveal as much information as possible about the site and to communicate that information as lucidly as possible to the local people of East Farleigh and to the wider archaeological community. Our objectives are to explain as much of the story of this area of ground as possible, through geophysical surveys and excavation, whilst encouraging and training anyone who wishes to become involved. We are seeking to resolve the unanswered questions raised in the 19th-century concerning the Roman buildings found nearer to the river, and their relationship to other known Roman sites in the area. This interim report brings together the information that MAAG have gathered in advance of further work in 2019 and the production of a full report on the whole Roman site to the north.

Site Assessment

The site is situated on the southern bank of the Medway, and is centred on TQ72850, 53550, and consists of a 2.5 acre (10,242 m²) parcel of land to the north of a small industrial unit on the B2010, (Lower Road), on the western side of East Farleigh near Maidstone in Kent. This rectilinear area of land consists of a wooded perimeter on three sides to the east, north and west and an open area of scrubland with various self-seeded grasses, nettles, brambles, giant hogweed and a few small saplings. The viable area not affected by trees being 1.4 acres, (5708 m²). It is a roughly level platform at approximately 35m AOD, but with a slope away to the north of 1m over 30m, and forms part of the Medway river valley. A slope of 100m in 2.5km to the south is responsible for the varying depth of hillwash. The river is 273m to the north.

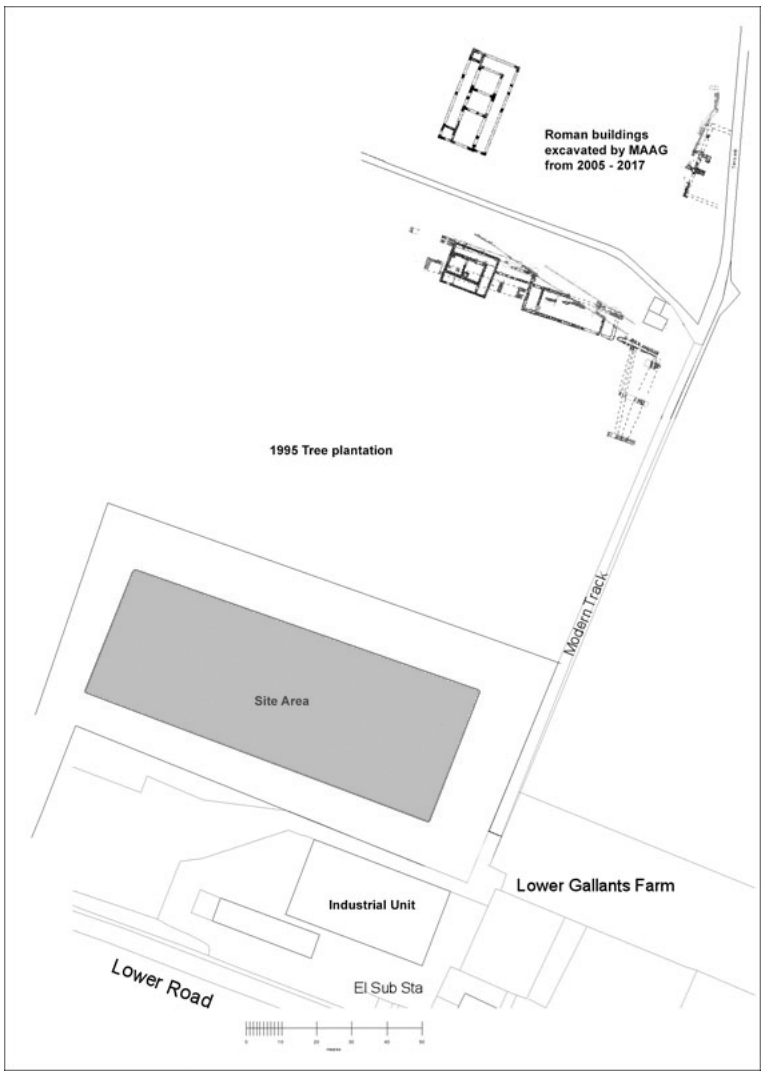


Fig 2. Whole site at East Farleigh showing Roman buildings and extent of 2018 area of investigation.

This area falls within the Kentish Wealden basin and geologically it is part of the lower Cretaceous Hythe beds overlain by lower greensand and gault clay. The stone here being generally referred to as 'Kentish ragstone', but in reality comprises a wide spectrum, from layers of hard, well cemented, sandy and glauconitic limestone, (ragstone) through to poorly cemented layers of calcerous sandstone, known as 'Hassock', (Blagg, 1990). The ragstone varies very widely in colour and consistency, and it is typically very difficult to dress into smart course stone, hence the name, and is often used as a rubble stone, (Blows, 2017). However, many of the Roman buildings immediately to the north of the site have been constructed to a very high standard using dressed ragstone, with rougher rubble core, and quoining of tufa.

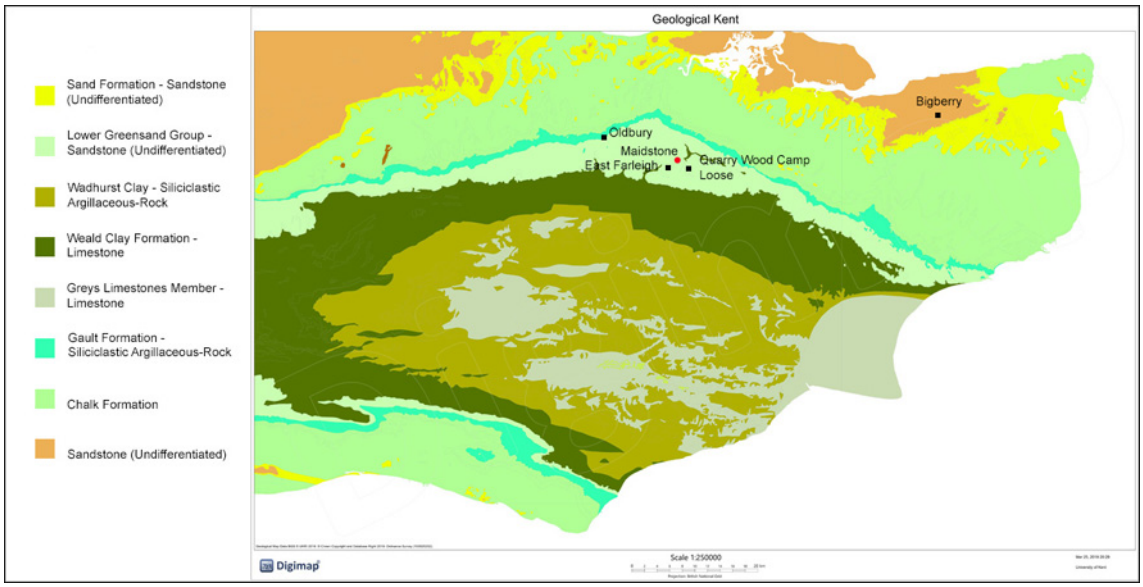


Fig.3 Geology of Kent

The ragstone is known to have been exported out of the county to other parts of the country, and in particular to Roman Londinium via the river system, (Worssam and Tatton-Brown, 1993). Within the lower greensand the sediments contain the green iron silicate, glauconite which imparts a greenish hue to the stone, and weathering can produce an orangey brown stain to the stone, reflecting the iron content, (Middlemiss, 1975). Long term exposure to sunlight and other weathering bleaches the stone to a grey white colour, as can be seen in the ragstone walls and buildings all around Maidstone.

Tufa is another stone that can be seen in evidence as part of the building materials associated with the Roman stone buildings nearby, it is found at the edges of the Hythe beds and associated with natural springs, (Blagg, 1990). Due to its soft and easily worked nature it is often used for fine quoining or carving.

The Hythe formation varies in thickness from 30m in the Maidstone area to 10m in East Kent, with the ragstone beds usually between 0.15m and 1m thick and comprising between 50% and 20% of the rock in the Hythe formation, (Middlemiss, 1975).

The high clay composition of the subsoil means that in wet weather the ground is very slippery and puddles easily, and in hot dry weather it bakes hard, making it very difficult to work. When using mechanical diggers the group have had problems once the ground dries out. The smaller machines struggle to penetrate the ground, and toothed buckets need to be employed, which is not ideal for preserving the features and creating a neat trench.

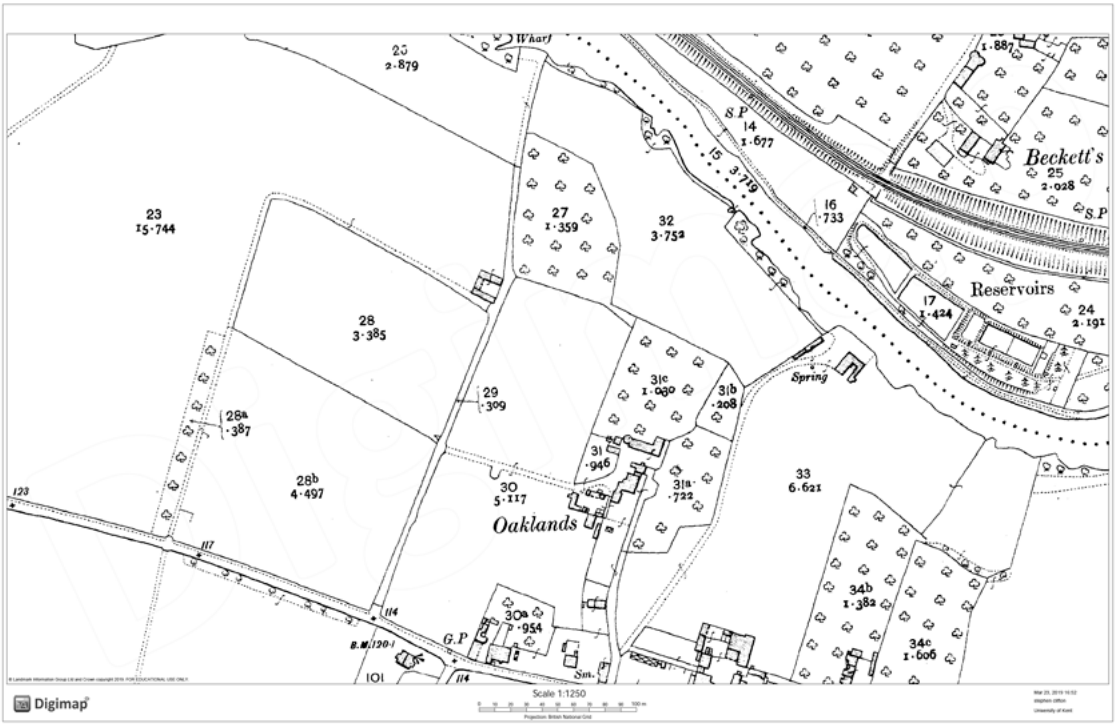


Fig.4 1890 Map of the site showing tracks and hop picker's accomodation

This area of land has been agricultural, in some form or another, since the end of the Roman period. There does not appear to have been any habitation or other constructional use of the land until the beginning of the 19th century, when the hop-pickers 'huts' were built at the confluence of a number of farm tracks, (Fig.4), and probably were the cause of the discovery and removal of the Roman buildings. In 1995 the landowner received an EU grant to replace the hops with a plantation of deciduous trees (Daniels, 2018). At this time an area thought to represent the location of the archaeological site was left free of trees.

Fig.5 Aerial photo of the site from 1940 *Fig.6 Aerial photo of the site from 2018*

The hop gardens have left a legacy below ground. In order to grow, the hops were trained along wires over a framework of timber poles. These poles were tensioned with wires attached into the ground with timber and concrete anchors, as well as conical coiled wire anchors. These systems have been found all across the site and represent more than one generation of hop garden activity, with the timber system being replaced by the concrete version. These anchors were dug into the ground, typically to a depth of about a metre, often through the archaeology beneath. There is no available plan of the hop garden arrangement, but it is clear that the rows ran east/west, with the anchors set close to the track-ways, the group have discovered many of these. The coiled wire anchors are much more frequent, and interfere with geophysical readings. Similarly the beaten earth of the tracks between rows of hops can sometimes be identified in the resistivity survey data.

Methodology

In 2013 MAAG had the opportunity to do some work on this land after the owner gave his permission. This was to evaluate the area in light of a 1961 Ordnance Survey map reference to a Roman building (site of). To this end 26 trial trenches were dug using a JCB Star McCann mechanical digger with a 1.9 meter toothless ditching bucket, (Fig.7).

Once the topsoil layers were removed by machine, the rest of the excavation was completed by hand. Initially the trench edges were cleaned up i.e. protruding roots removed, and sections straightened as far as possible. Any remaining material from upper layers was removed so that the area of study was consistently the same context

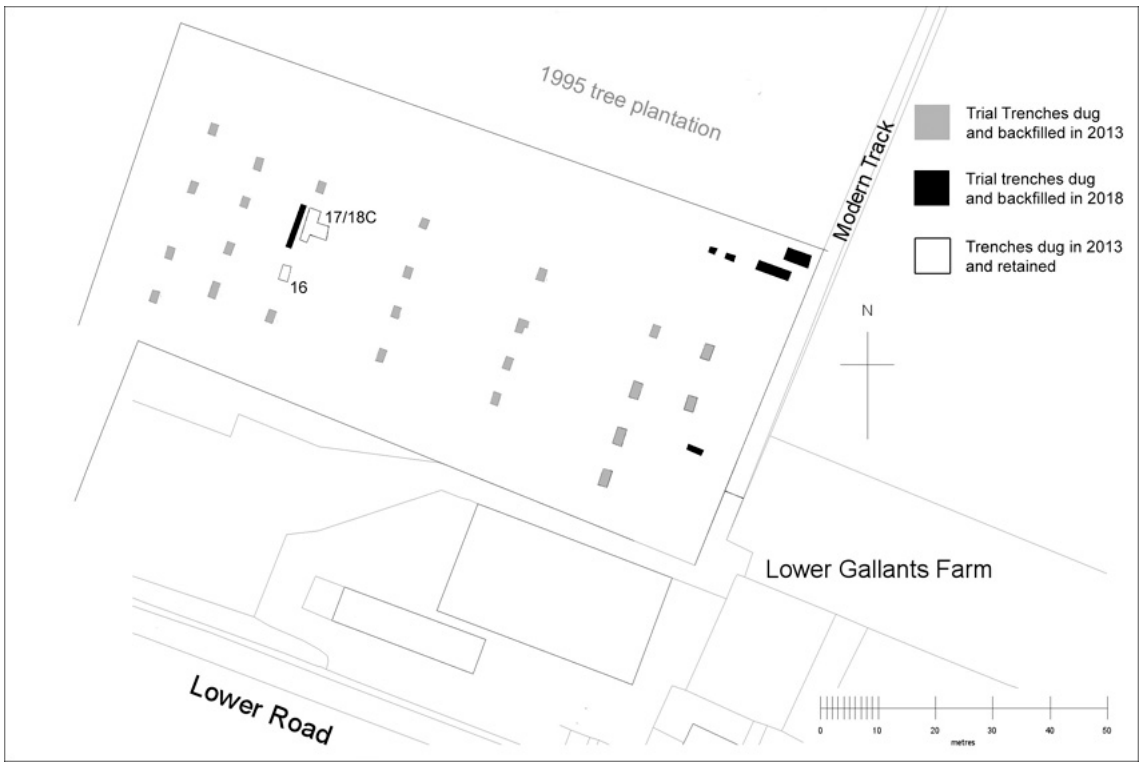


Fig.7 Trench plan showing trial trenches from 2013 and 2018

layer across the trench. Due to the high clay content of the soil in many places, extensive use was made of plastic sheeting to cover the trenches when not being excavated. This has the benefit of helping to keep features dry in wet weather and moist in dry weather. Excavation was carried out using mattocks, shovels, spades, hand shovels, archaeological trowels, plastic buckets and wheelbarrows. Spoil heaps are kept close to the trench but leaving a clear walkway between the edge of the trench and the spoil heap.

Although the group recognises the potential value of taking bulk soil samples from contexts, the practical and financial resources of the group is very limited, so soil samples are only taken where we believe that they will be useful and provide significant paleoenvironmental information, such as from charcoal rich deposits. All finds are kept with a record of the site code, context number and trench number. Small finds are individually bagged and numbered and recorded. The finds are washed by group members and then returned at the earliest opportunity. Pottery will be individually marked with the site code and context number before being bagged. This material is then stored by members in advance of evaluation by specialists. The long-term storage of material after specialist reports have been written is a problem as yet to be resolved. In the past, Maidstone Museum took material from MAAG excavations, but the museum no longer has the capacity to store large collections over a long period, so some tough decisions will have to be taken on this.

Site recording is carried out by one of the supervisors and follows the MOLA principles as set out in the 1995 handbook (MOLA, 1995). A context sheet is used to record the cut

and fill of features, and a context register sheet keeps track of the numbering and general information. Small finds are individually numbered and details are recorded on their own small finds sheet. Where appropriate the position of small finds are recorded on the site drawings. Features are photographed using a digital camera and scale. Plans of trenches are drawn at 1 to 20 scale onto Permatrace and sections are drawn at 1 to 10 scale. Site levels are taken of the features using a Leica optical levelling instrument. A record of relative context numbers using the Harris matrix method, (Harris, 1979), is kept on the context sheet and later transferred to a site-wide sheet.

The Archaeological Remains

In April 2013, 26 test pits were dug, using a JCB type mechanical digger fitted with a 1.9 meter toothless ditching bucket. Each trial trench was dug to an average length of 3m, and trench depths varied from .65m to 1.4m. All of the test pits where no features or artefacts were observed, were dug through the topsoil to the natural deposits beneath. In two trenches however, features were observed, and these were left open for later investigation.

These two trenches, (Nos. 16 and 17, Fig.10) were subsequently excavated in 2013. The first trench (number 16) was found to contain a single truncated pot in a dark grey fabric containing cremated bones in an orangey grey brown clay soil matrix. This pot was found upright in a shallow gully, [411], running roughly east/west, (Figs. 8 and 9). No other finds were recovered from this trench. The other trench, 17, later enlarged and renumbered 18C (hereinafter referred to as such, Fig.11), contained a burnt feature, in a rough oblong shape, 1.23m x .78m, with a 'flue' extending beyond the extent of the trench. This feature consisted of reddened and blackened scorched clay, and a single piece of pottery was recovered, which has been tentatively dated to the fifth century A.D. (Lyne, 2018). A small extension to the trench was dug of .75m x .65m to explore this feature further.

Fig.8 Cremation vessel in situ in the gulley

Fig.9 The cremation deposit

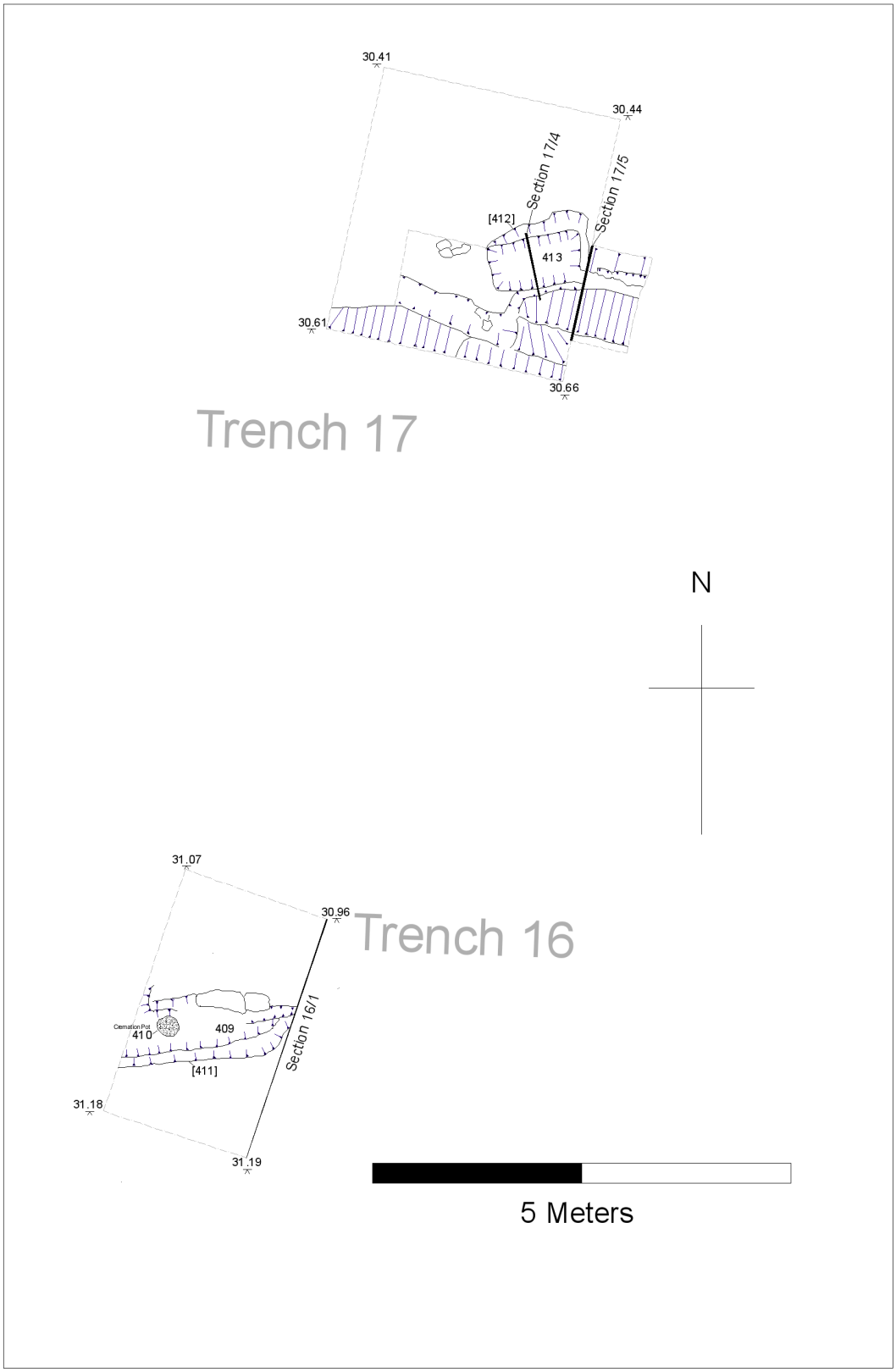


Fig.10 Test trenches 16 and 17 as excavated in 2013

Fig.11 Test trench 17 enlarged in 2018 to form 18C, showing hearth and flue [412] and [835]

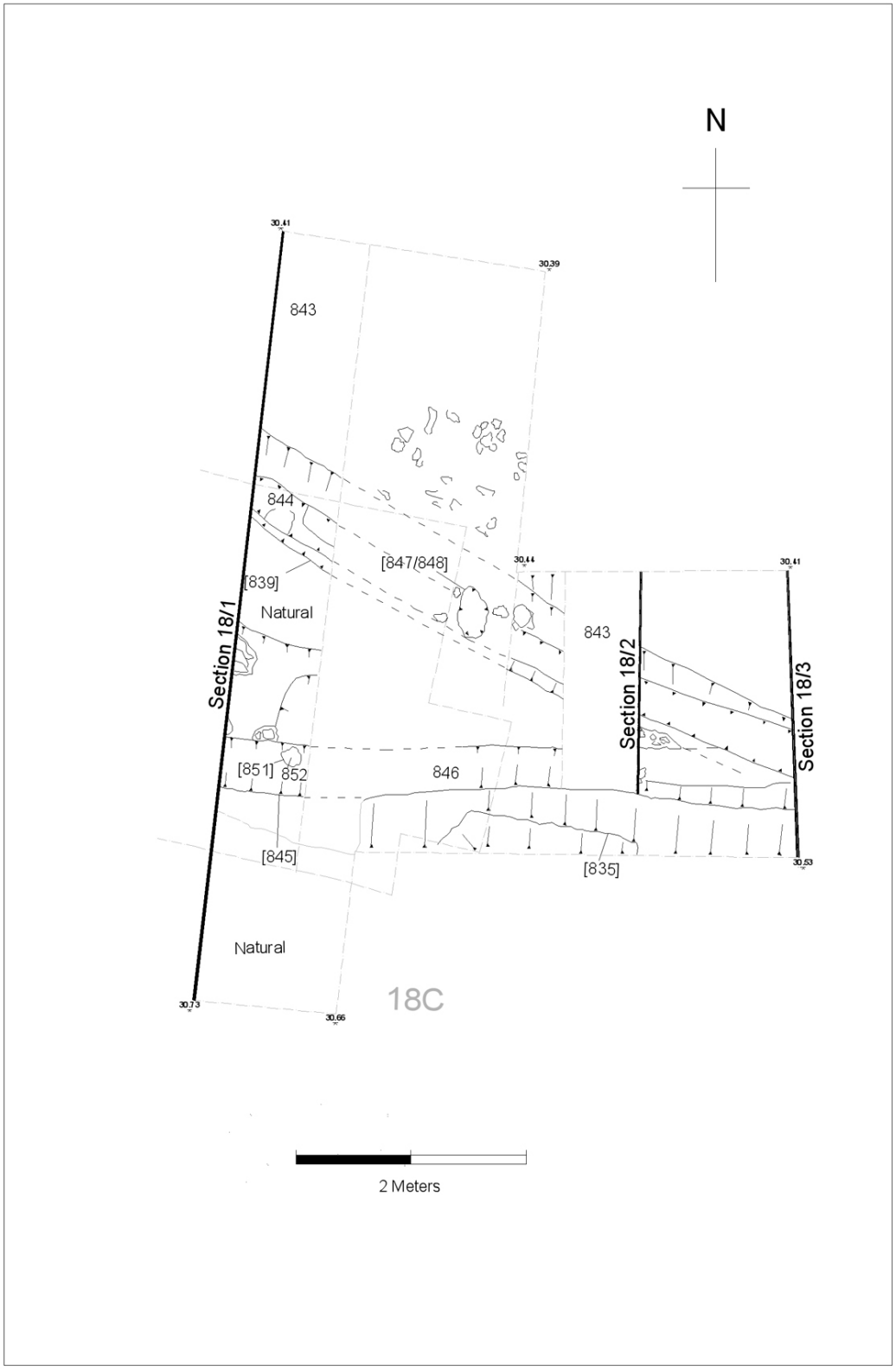


Fig.12 Trench 18C showing the intersecting ditches [845] and [839]

In 2018 the group returned to this part of the site to further explore the features seen in 2013 and to see if any of the Roman drainage ditch features extended as far as this parcel of land. To this end a further five trenches were dug, the first two were hand excavated, the other three were excavated using a 3 tonne 360^{o} mechanical digger with a 1.2m toothless ditching bucket. These trenches were situated on the north-east corner of the site and only revealed features associated with the 19th-century hop garden, and no features or deposits of earlier archaeological interest. These trenches were recorded, closed down and backfilled. The trench with the hearth feature, (18C), was then the focus of attention and it was extended to the north, south and east. Additionally another speculative trench was dug close to 18C, at 1.2 m x 9 m, in which no features were observed and it was backfilled.

A team of no more that six volunteer group members, led by myself, excavated this trench by hand using standard MOLA techniques, (MOLA, 1995). The nature of the clay soil made excavation slow and arduous, and the variations in the colour of the soil produced by differentials in moisture retention meant identification of potential features was very difficult. When re-opening the trench with the mechanical digger, much of the hearth feature [412] was lost, however as the trench had been enlarged an additional area of charcoal deposit [837] was encountered, which appeared to be associated with [412]. This deposit was no more than 8 – 10mm in depth, and had well defined edges as though originally retained by timber barriers or similar, there was no spread beyond this discrete feature.

Beneath the charcoal spread was an occupation layer (843) containing a few sherds of Iron Age and early Roman pottery, and cut into this layer was a small pit or possible posthole [847/848]. There was no dating evidence for these features. Beneath (843) were two features which appeared to be ditches, (Fig.12). Subsequent pottery analysis has shown these features to be late Iron Age or possibly early Roman. The first of these ditches, [845], runs roughly east/west and is cut into the gault clay chert natural layer, and was traced for a distance of 5m. It was filled with an orangey brown clay very similar to the surrounding natural layer. What remained was quite shallow at an average depth of 32cm. This feature appears to run parallel to the gully feature observed in 2013 in trench 16. The few sherds of pottery are dated from 50 BC to 60 A.D.

The second ditch, [839], runs approximately NW/SE at a depth of 320mm, and has a distinct slot cut into the base about 320mm wide. The fill is a similar orangey brown clay and chert mix. The base is flattened and dug to the natural ragstone. A ditch profile that could be associated with a beam-laid wall. A parallel can be seen on many late Iron Age sites, and a good example is enclosure 11, [858], at Pegswood Moor, Northumberland, (Proctor, 2009), which exhibited the same flat bottomed characteristic and has been interpreted as the construction trench for a timber fence, (Figs. 13 and 14).

Fig.13 View of 18C looking east showing ditch [845] marked in red, and ditch [839] marked in white

Fig.14 Trench 18C looking west showing the two ditches in section

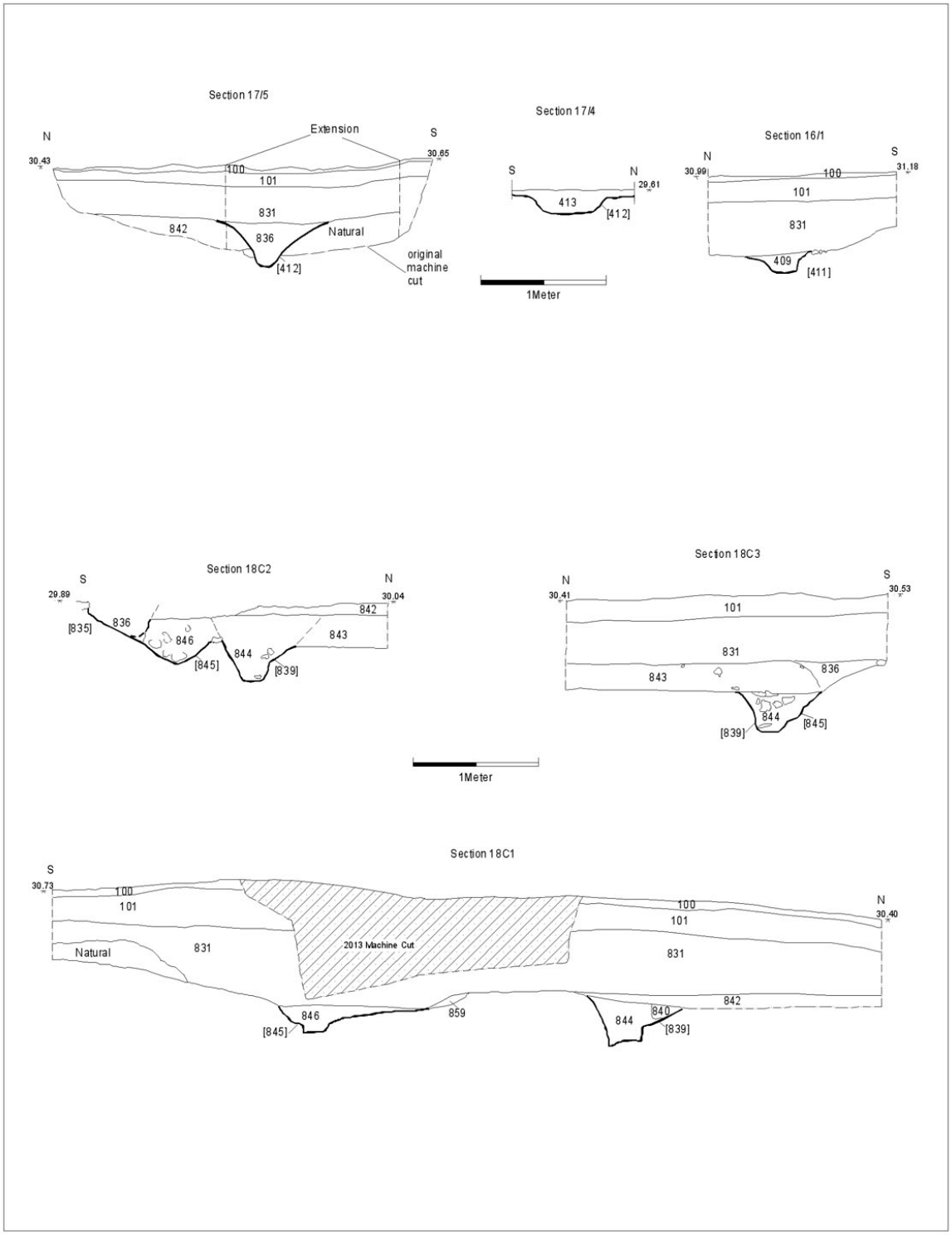


Fig.15 Section drawings from test trenches 16 and 17 and 18C

The two ditches intersect at the eastern baulk, allowing for a section drawing to illustrate the relationship. The excavation of the ditches seemed to suggest at the time that [845] predated and was cut by [839], but the pottery hints at the possibility that it was in fact the other way around. However there are a number of variables and the dates are very close between the two, and it is entirely possible that residual pot sherds were deposited in one or the other ditch when one was replacing the other. Only further excavation of these features in other parts of the site is likely to shed further light on this aspect. Also observed were a number of small circular discolourations in the soil in the vicinity of [845] close to the western baulk. These were treated as features and excavated accordingly. However, they yielded no finds of any kind, and it is likely that they are a natural phenomenon, such as tree roots or solution hollows.

The excavation ceased at the end of October 2018 when the weather started to make continued activity on the site very difficult due to the muddy nature of the clay soil. The features were covered with nylon tarpaulins over the winter, and then subsequently backfilled.

The Pottery Evidence

The pottery recovered from the contexts associated with 18C represents a small assemblage weighing just 115g in total. Many of the sherds appear abraded and much of it could well be residual. The fieldwork associated with 18C yielded a total of 26 sherds, as well as two sherds of fifth century pottery from [412] which was excavated in 2013. Most of these pieces were small and hard to identify. The pieces of fifth century coarseware come from the fill of [412] which is the first feature encountered beneath the hillwash layer (831). And beneath this is a layer of very abraded early Roman or Iron Age material in layers (842) and (843) together with a very worn piece of Roman roof tile, (tegula). The pottery from these deposits look as though they may be residual, but they are some distance from the known Roman buildings to the north. There was only one piece of recognisably Roman material from a flagon in North Kent fineware, dated 43 to 250 A.D. (Lyne, 2018)

The two ditches below yielded only a few very small pottery sherds, (Fig.16). Ditch [839] produced four sherds weighing 27g, one piece of a fine ‘Belgic’ grog tempered ware jar, dated 25 BC to 70 A.D. (1); one piece of coarseware in glauconitic fabric dated 50 BC to 60 A.D.(14); and two pieces of a necked jar in North Kent shell tempered ware dated to 25 BC to 80 A.D. (2 and 4). The other ditch, [845], yielded two sherds of coarse glauconitic ware (5) dated to 50 BC to 60 A.D. (Lyne, 2018).

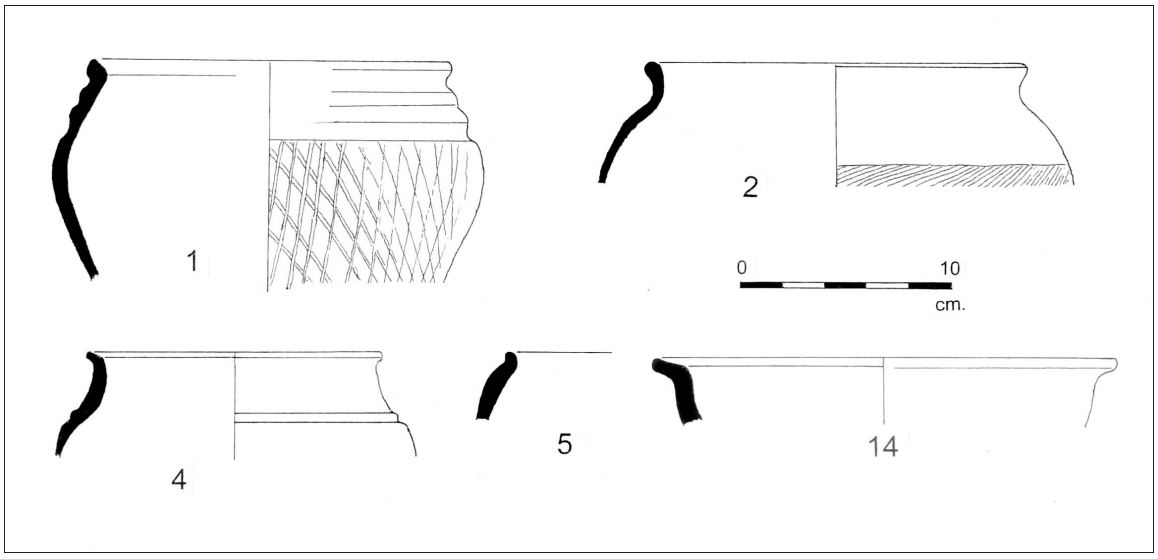


Fig.16 A selection of pottery from 18C, illustrated by Malcolm Lyne

The pottery recovered from this trench nicely sequences the use of this area of land and puts the hearth feature, [412], at the very end of the Roman period, and the underlying ditches at the beginning of the Roman period or the late Iron Age, and there is an occupation layer between, probably associated with the cessation of use of the ditches.

Geophysical survey

Over three unseasonally warm days in February, 2019 a resistivity survey and a magnetometry survey were carried out on the site, using equipment provided by the University of Kent under the guidance and tutelage of Lloyd Bosworth from the technical department. The heavily wooded areas and those not accessible due to undergrowth or modern builders rubble were avoided. The same 3,600m^2 were surveyed using both methods. A 30m x 30m grid system was used allowing for four grids to be set out, encompassing the trenched area dug in 2018. The results are tantalising, but both methods produced extremely noisy data. This is probably due to the previous use of the ground for growing hops, which involves metal retaining devices screwed into the ground to support the hop poles and wires. These iron fixtures have turned up all over the site and generate spikes in the readings.

Magnetometry works by picking up tiny differences in the earth's magnetic field and the meter produced an even result, albeit very contrasty, across the area. A section of the ground around the trenches from 2018 was not surveyed due to the disturbance caused by excavation. Several anomalies can clearly be seen, most notably a squarish feature, of approximately 20m x 20m, almost in the centre of the site to the east of trench 18C. Besides this feature there are two other curving anomalies that could be ditches, one to the southwest and the other running off the square feature to the east, (Fig.17 and 19).

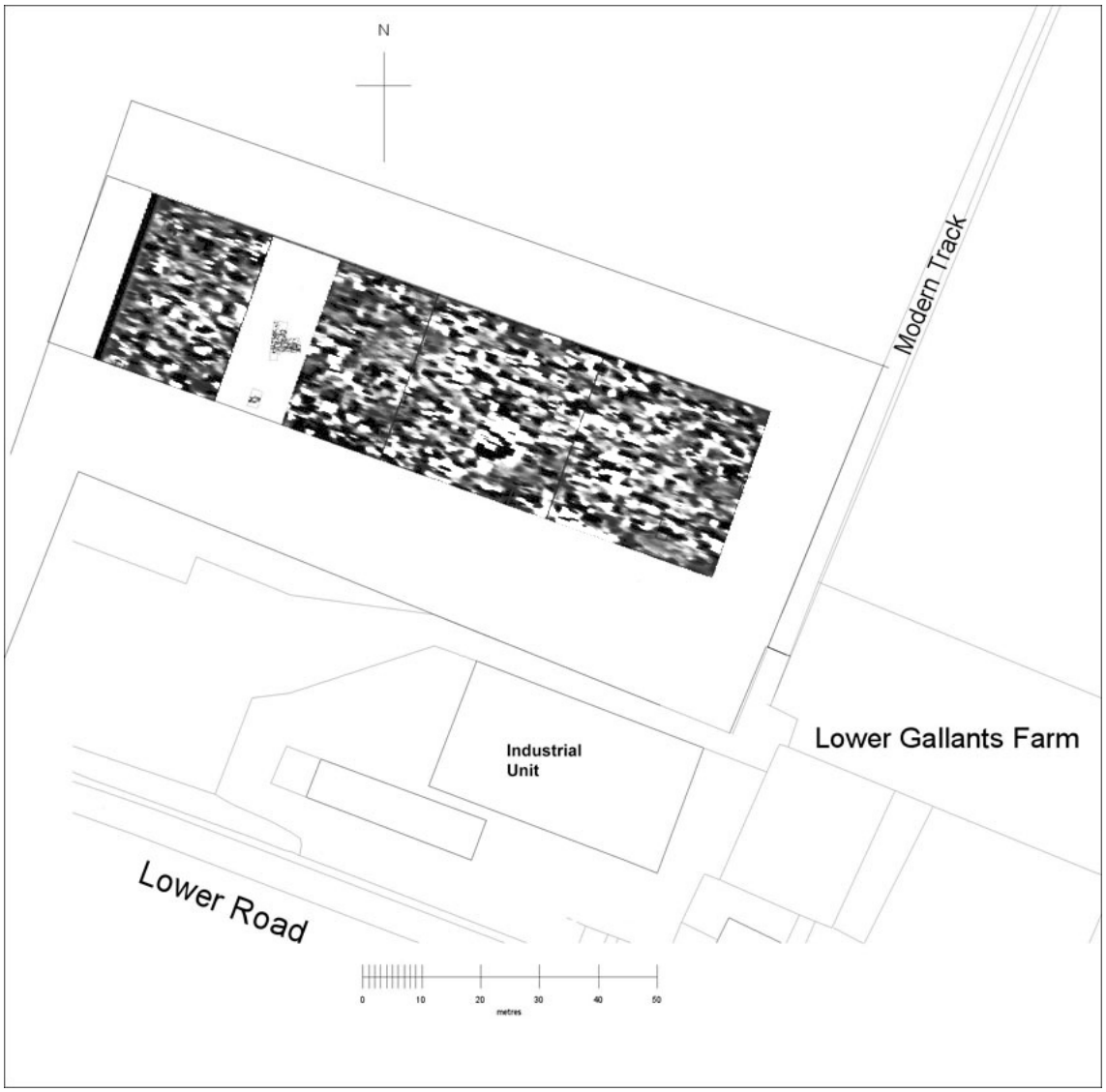


Fig.17 Magnetometry survey of the site showing anomalies

The resistivity survey was if anything even more confused, (Fig.18 and 19). We were not expecting much from this, because the trial trenches had not thrown up anything to suggest buildings on the land, and resistivity works by highlighting differences in electrical resistance caused by features such as walls. However, there are numerous swirls of high and low readings that must be geological, but two areas of interest were revealed. On the northern edge of the survey area on the edge of the first, (eastern), 30m grid, is a right-angled anomaly of high signal that looks as if it is worthy of further examination. And there is also an area of low signal at the far edge of the second square that looks like a squarish feature, coincidentally occupying a similar position to the large feature in the magnetometry survey. The two ditches identified in 2018 were not discernable in the survey data.

Fig.18 Resistivity survey of the site showing two possible anomalies

Site history

The site sits on the south bank of the river Medway, with the river some distance down the slope of the valley. The Roman buildings uncovered by MAAG between 2005 and 2017 are situated on a relatively flat, horseshoe shaped promontory that overlooks the river to the north. Roman buildings were first mentioned on the site in 1839 and refer to foundations removed '9 years since'. There is another reference to foundations removed thirty years previously (Smith, J., 1839). It is likely that these remains were removed when the farm track-ways were put in place and then later when the hop-pickers 'huts' were built sometime around 1830 – 1840. However the buildings found and excavated by MAAG do not appear to be those uncovered in the 19th century. The

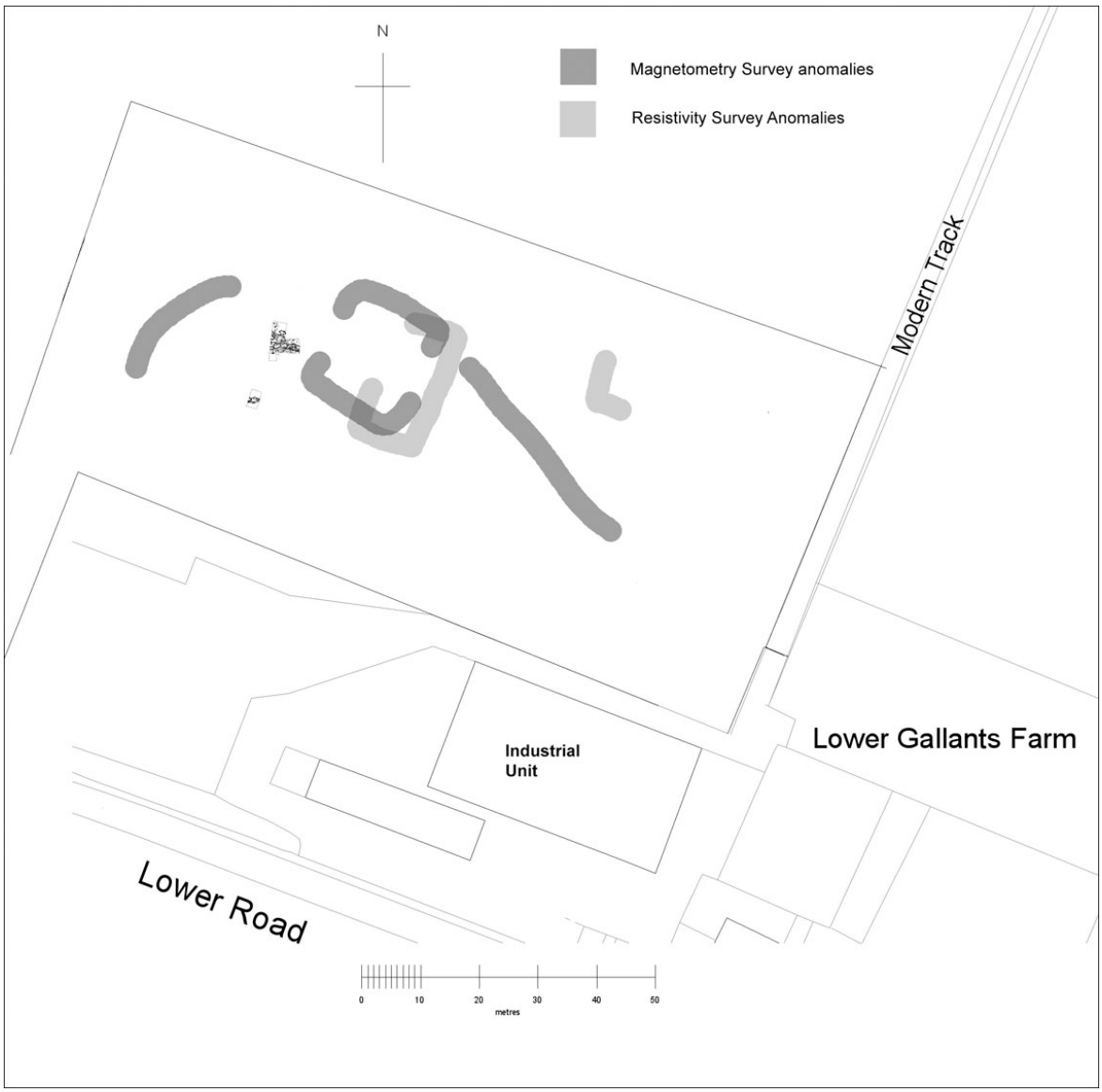


Fig.19 Anomalies identified by the survey techniques

ground plan in Smith's book does not match that of the first building excavated by the group. It is similar, roughly the same proportions as far as they go, but not the same. This is probably because the Roman building found earlier was completely removed in order to build the modern hop-picker's accommodation building, and their concrete floors still remain as part of the vehicle access to this part of the land. The modern buildings themselves were gradually dismantled, until they disappeared completely, sometime in the 1990's.

The modern agricultural track-ways run to the north down to the river, and across to the west and east, and uphill to the south. On the western side there is a revetment, which is

partially constructed of un-mortared stone, and was later found to have truncated at least three Roman period buildings, and the stone removed from these buildings appears to have been re-used in the revetment. It is likely that this was part of the activity referred to by Smith in 1839.

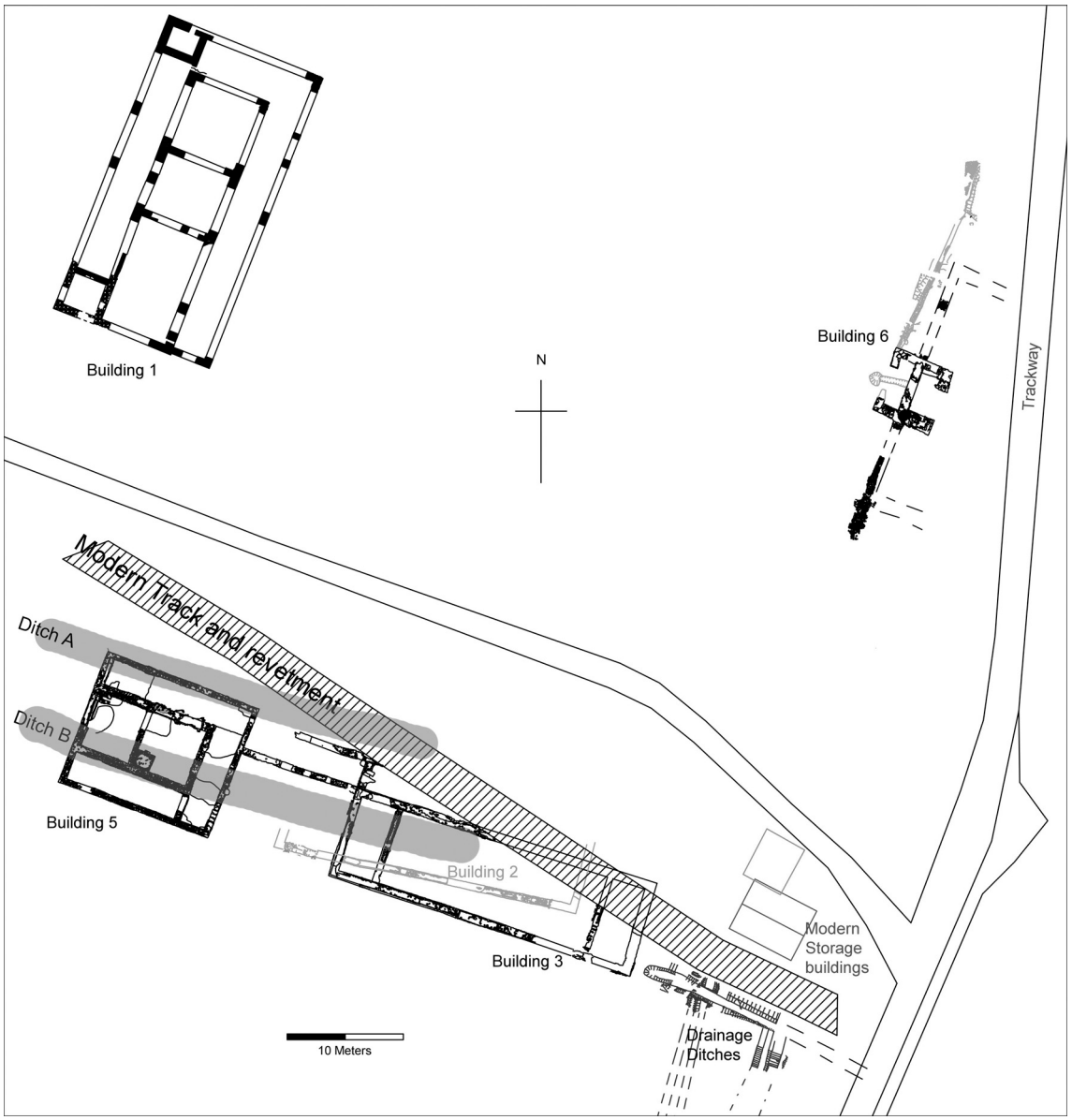


Fig.20 The Roman site at East Farleigh

The Roman buildings consist of a number of phases but the earliest buildings are believed to date to the mid-second century A.D. and the last buildings standing were finally abandoned and demolished at the end of the fourth century, (Fig.20). These buildings do not appear to constitute a domestic villa type establishment, and indeed there is a suspected villa on the north bank of the Medway at Barming, which would be a more conventional location, looking south across the river valley, (Payne, G., 1880). The

exact nature of the site at East Farleigh is not clear, but we can say that there was at least one Romano Celtic style temple as part of the complex and possibly at least two others. It is also likely that some form of a river crossing allowed communication between the Barming site and those on the southern side of the river. It is possible that the Roman third century phase is a religious complex with associated accommodation, (Smith et al, 2018, 167), potentially part of the estate on the opposite bank at Barming.

Fig.21 The two early ditches underlying the Roman buildings at East Farleigh

Underlying the Roman site is a pair of substantial ditches dated to the late Iron Age or conquest period Roman by pottery found in the primary fills, 50BC – 60AD (Lyne, 2018). The depth of the outer ditch to the south is approximately 1.6m deep, with a slot cut into the base in places. The inner ditch was approximately 1.35m deep, and was a classic 'V' shape. It is hard not to see these as defensive in nature, particularly if originally there was a corresponding earthen bank associated with them, although no sign of any such bank was observed. The ditches were traced for approximately 70m where they ran parallel to one another, at about 5.5m apart, running east/west. It then appears that they turned sharply to the north, towards the river. The positioning is also significant as this is located close to the River Medway on a slight promontory, rather than further up the hill where it would presumably have been more defendable. That said, the oppidum at Quarry Wood is in a similar position at the base of the slope close to a watercourse, (Kelly, 1972). But until more information is available we will have to keep an open mind as to whether these features are late Iron Age or early Roman, but they mirror the date range of the ditches to the south.

During the excavation of the primary Roman site, there were two residual Iron Age coins found in later features. One dated to the very end of the first century BC and the other to early in the first century A.D. The first century BC coin is an extremely rare silver minim, and believed to be one of only three known and the first of its type to be securely provenanced, (Holman, 2019). It is attributed to 'SEG0', (meaning 'powerful' in Celtic), possibly a minor Kentish chieftain. Or it may be a regional issue of Tasciovanus, a King from the Hertfordshire region who appears to have sought influence in Kent after the demise of Dumnobellaunus. Coins bearing the legend SEGO are more usually found in the east of the county, (Holman, 2019). The other Iron Age coin is of more common bronze,

and attributed to Cunobelin, a ruler based in Camulodumon (Colchester), who had gained control of Kent by the early first century A.D. This is a common type with almost 100 examples found in Kent including an example found in nearby Tovil, approximately a mile to the east of the site, (Holman, 2019).

Fig.22 Rare Iron Age silver 'minim'

All this suggests Iron Age activity on the site, without really giving us any precise information. Clearly the position of the site overlooking the River Medway would have been strategic militarily, as well as advantageous commercially. The nature of the ditch system can only be guessed at without further investigation but it is possible that it was some sort of protected enclosure in pre-Roman Kent or equally it could have been a defended staging post in the Roman conquest after A.D. 43.

The wider site has produced a number of apparently ritualised elements from the Iron Age through into the Roman period. As at many other sites of this period there is a seeming continuity between the pre-Roman and Roman world, (Willis, 2013, 440). Depositions seem to be a very common form of ritualised activity during the late Iron Age, evenly distributed throughout the UK, and are most often found in pits and ditches (Smith et al, 2018, 130). On the site at East Farleigh there are several deposits which appear to be ritual, but they are very hard to prove definitively. The example closest to 18C was the cremation deposit found in trench 16, (410), from 2013. This was found during the trial trenching process using the mechanical excavator, and was found to be sitting upright in a shallow gully. The vessel was truncated, but the contents do not appear to be compromised. The vessel is a dark grey combed jar in glauconitic fabric, dated 50 BC - 50 A.D. and measures 210 mm in diameter at its widest, (Lyne, 2018). The

contents are a deposit of orangey grey brown clay soil with very little charcoal, and a layer of calcified bone beneath. It was not possible to identify the nature of the bone. It was clear from the quantity in the vessel that we are probably not looking at the remains of a whole animal, (human or otherwise), and due to the marked absence of charcoal, it is likely that the bones were selected for this reuse as an offering within this ditch, rather than being scooped up randomly with the ashes from the fire, (Cunliffe, 1982).

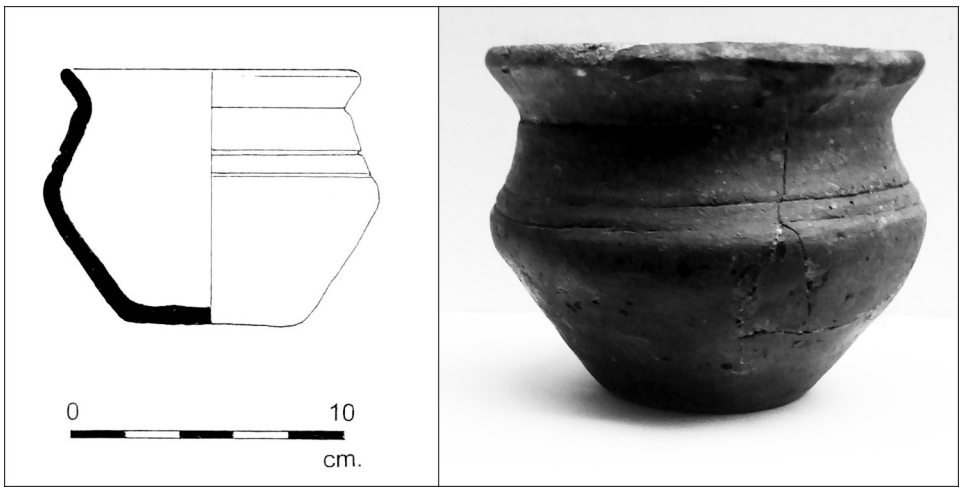


Fig.23 Ritual deposit 'Belgic' jar (illustration by Malcolm Lyne)

Elsewhere, in one of the large ditches to the north, (ditch B), an almost intact jar in black 'Belgic' grog tempered ware fabric with flush shoulder cordon, and an exterior rim diameter of 110 mm, dated to 50 BC - 60 A.D., (Lyne, 2018), was found in one of the lower fills, (Fig.23). It is hard to conceive that this was not a deposition, and the slow draining nature of the clay soil would have meant a watery environment so often associated with ritual deposits from this period, (Prior, 2003; Hutton, 2013). The age of this ditch and its neighbour, ditch A, have always been difficult to ascertain precisely. For instance there are two sherds of fineware from the same context, dated 43 to 60 A.D., putting them just into the Roman period. And it is this crossover period that is so difficult to pin down. The ditches appear to have been left open for sometime into the Roman period, ditch B possibly for as long as 150 years. The pottery assemblages for the two ditches show a slightly different date profile between them, with ditch A being slightly earlier and filled in sooner after the Roman conquest and ditch B being dug at the time of the conquest and filled in slightly later, (Lyne, 2018). This means that it is quite possible that they were dug at the same time, or in quite quick succession.

The first Roman structure on the site, building two, appears to have been built sometime in the second century, probably in the latter part, judging by the material used to backfill the ditches over which it was built. Unfortunately building two was almost completely demolished when a later building was built to replace it on the same location, again sometime towards the end of the second century. Building two does not appear to have any other contemporary structures associated with it, and perhaps was a stand-alone building connected to agricultural practices. It is hard to be certain due to the truncation

of the site in the 19th century. All that remains of building two is its southern wall and south-eastern corner. The walls having been reduced to the floor level of the subsequent building. Also revealed is a large doorway in the southern wall 3210 mm wide, which is reminiscent of the large openings seen in modern agricultural structures. To facilitate the construction of building two, ditch B was backfilled, and a substantial amount of ragstone was used to level off the floor within the confines of the building, presumably to avoid 'slump'. Although the ditch system has been traced over a 70m length and then glimpsed turning to the north, where it is again overlain by a later Roman period building, this is almost certainly only a small section of a much larger system. The Roman buildings constructed over the earlier ditches appear to have been positioned there deliberately, it would have been possible to have constructed the buildings to avoid them. In modern construction terms we would have seen them as a foundation hazard to be avoided, and taken steps to build on solid ground if possible. As Smith says, "Why the buildings were constructed over deep ditches has yet to be explained: the problems of subsidence must have been obvious, yet buildings were rebuilt, or re-floored on the same site"(Smith, 1997).

A clue may lie in the nature of the later buildings. At least one of the buildings, building five, was a Romano Celtic style temple, and although some of the site has been lost to 19th century agricultural development, and it has not been fully excavated yet, it is clear that we have a clear ritual element to the site. Building one, although with a complete floor plan, was robbed down to the last course of the foundations and had very little in the way of stratigraphic information to give us. However, this style of building, essentially an elongated version of the temple, building five, appears to be peculiar to Kent and there are other examples such as at Hollingbourne, (Feakes, 2007) and Minster (Parfitt, 2006). It is clear from the orientation of the building that it is not a domestic structure. If it were, it would be orientated to enjoy the view of the river and more likely be on the north bank looking south rather than on the south bank looking east. It is also clear that the buildings were conceived as a grouping, and dating estimates have placed buildings one, five and six into the third century and likely going out of use by the end of the third century or early in the fourth. The orientation at a slight angle to the river is curious and raises the question of whether this site is in fact part of a larger estate, centred on the potential villa glimpsed at Barming on the other side of the river in 1879 by George Payne, (Payne, 1880).

Building six is another curiosity. It appears to be a pair of shrines back-to-back separated by a substantial wall heading off to the north and south on the same alignment as building one. Unfortunately it was not possible to explore the wall further than a few metres either side of the building but we were able to tentatively establish that it could not have extended further than about 7m in either direction and is therefore likely to have turned to the east to form an enclosure, and possibly a 'temenos' around an as yet unknown temple. The ground plan to building six itself is complete but was significantly robbed down to only a course or two of stone. And, like building five, there was some evidence of reuse for another purpose prior to its final demolition. A feature had been

dug through the middle of the structure, apparently terminating in a large pit in the centre of the building, which was partially filled with a large piece of ragstone. This feature did not appear to be associated with heat or burning, and there was evidence for a channel produced by water erosion running away to the east, as though it was some sort of water sluice. There were no finds which could be attributed to religious or ritual practice specifically, found in the building.

Fig.24 Building six seen from the west

Building five is the building that has survived the best of all the buildings on the site, and this is no doubt because of its reuse after its life as a temple had ceased. Like building one and six it has been established that the building was built sometime around the middle of the third century, but by the end of the third century or possibly early in the fourth, it was being used for other activities. When the building was excavated a large entrance in the north wall had been blocked up with stone, before the whole wall was subsequently removed down to a few courses. The blocking of the doorway would suggest that once the temple had ceased to be used as a temple it was deliberately put out of use. Another remarkable feature of this building was the survival of painted wall plaster on the outside of the building on the western wall. A 500mm section survives along the length of this wall revealing a pink lower panel separated by a black band and a pale blue or white upper section. There was no trace of wall plaster on or near the outside of any of the other exterior walls. It may be that the building was never completed for some reason, or that it was removed from the other walls, but it is perhaps indicative of the short period of time that the building was in use for its primary

purpose. The outer walls had been removed, (sometime around 300AD), presumably to facilitate access to the inner cella where a number of ovens had been introduced, and numerous mortaria and quern stones were recovered.

Fig. 25 Building five, looking east

Pottery and coin evidence points to this later re-use of the building continuing throughout the 4th century and a number of coins of the House of Theodosius, dated 388 - 402 A.D., were found in the demolition layer (Holman, 2019). It is clear from the remodelling of the structure and the later use that it was put to, that its users were not fazed by the building's former life as a temple, or perhaps they were unaware. Given the short time span involved and the pervading nature of ritual and religion in the Roman period just a few decades previously this is surely significant. But perhaps there is a parallel with modern churches that are deconsecrated and find new secular uses.

The other features of note on the site are the drainage ditches that run away from building three to the east, with a tributary joining it from the south. A magnetometry survey of the adjacent plot of land to the east revealed that the ditch continued in a more or less straight line for approximately 70m to the east, and appears to stop abruptly. With the river to the north it would seem sensible to allow water to drain there rather than being diverted into a channel running parallel to the river. This suggests that

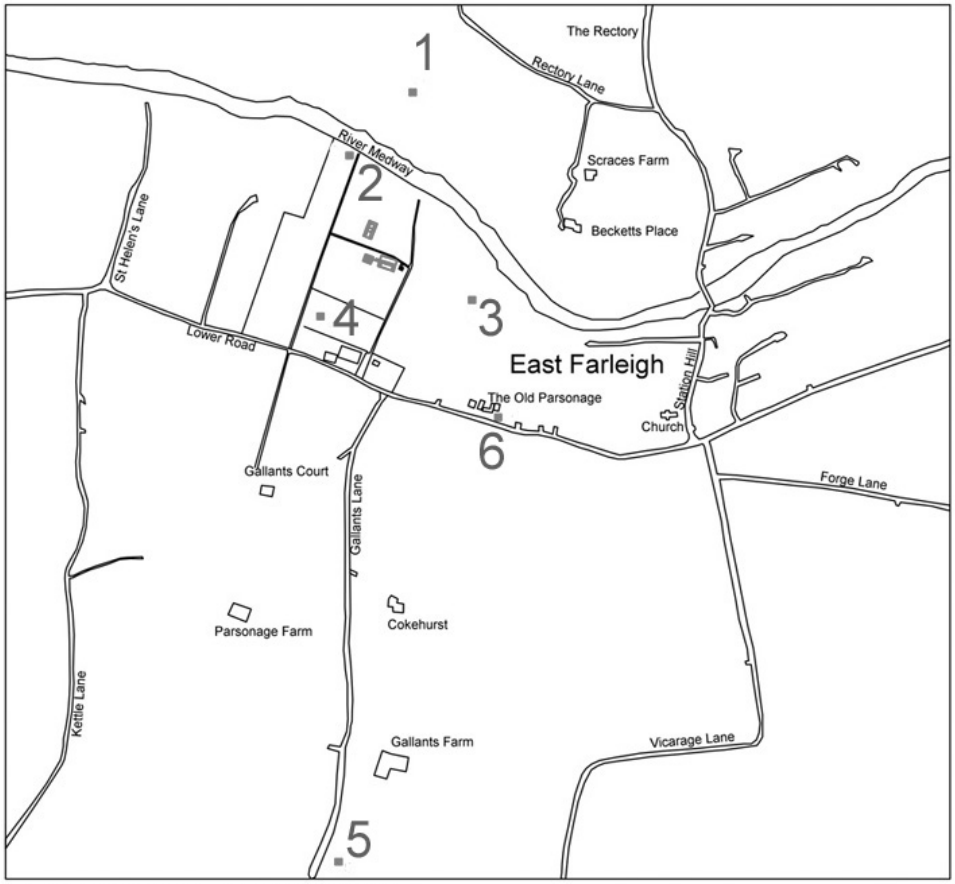
the watercourse was diverting water around something, such as the temple within the temenos and perhaps the missing building from 1838. It is also conceivable that a

Fig.26 Painted wall plaster on building five

Fig.27 Drainage ditch looking west

channel filled with water might have had ritual significance as well. The tributary running off to the south was traced for 30m, but where we placed a trench in the adjacent plot of land in 2018, 65m away to the south, there was no sign of it, suggesting that somewhere between it had either stopped or changed direction.

In the vicinity of the East Farleigh site there are numerous other Roman sites with a Roman cemetery and building further to the northwest in Barming, (Smythe, 1883), (possibly associated with a villa to the east, (1)), and another very substantial Roman villa at Teston, (3km to the west), that has yet to be fully excavated, (Grover, 1873). Two cremation burials were found in east Farleigh in December 1845, (Fig.28) one of which was apparently in a stone-lined cist just off Gallants Lane (5). There were several small pots found including a Samian patera, with the Potters stamp 'HABICNSM', along with two Roman coins, one identified as Faustina, wife of Antoninus Pius, (2). In 1841 a cremation burial was found further along the river at 'Bydews' on Tovil Hill, and in 1843 an ‘urn’ with handles was discovered in the front garden of the Parsonage on Lower Road,(6), (Post, 1848). On the other side of the river at Barming three cremation ‘urns’ were found by workmen in 1979, dated to the mid second century AD, (Detsicas, 1980).



1. Possible villa site at Barming
2. Roman coin of Allectus found in 1830
3. Roman coin found 1830
4. Late Iron Age cremation deposit found by MAAG in 2013
5. Stone-lined cremation burial found 1845
6. Roman 'urn' with handles found 1843

Fig.28 Map showing discoveries around East Farleigh

Discussion

The work done at East Farleigh in 2018 has broadened our perspective on the overall site. From 2005 to 2017 we concentrated on the Roman buildings as they revealed themselves and puzzled over their style and placement, but there were clues to the broader picture, with evidence of pre-Roman activity and post-Roman activity, which were difficult to separate from the glare of the Roman period materiality. The double ditches of late Iron Age/Roman conquest date point to the earlier use of the site, and the late reuse of the buildings for very different purposes giving us an end date sometime in

the fifth century. But in 2018 the focus shifted to the two ends of the Roman period in Britain. The two Iron Age ditches found in 18C confirming pre-Roman activity in this area to the south and obviously chimed with the double ditch system nearer to the river. The hearth and the flue system, dated to the fifth century, alerts us to the continued activity after the legions have left Britain, but perhaps before it is realised that they are not coming back. This feature could well be a 'corn-drier', which would echo similar features found in buildings three and five.

A valuable lesson was learned about the nature of the local geology and topography. When we put trial trenches across the area in 2013 with a mechanical digger, we only saw two areas of archaeological interest. Subsequent hand excavation has shown that there are many more features that are hard to identify in the soil conditions. We have also done geophysical surveys, which have shown up several large anomalies, but which missed the ditches that we knew were present. And the depth of the features has also given us a contrast with the features to the north, there is little in the way of topsoil or hillwash from earlier periods, juxtaposing 19th century layers with archaeological features. This suggests that the topsoil has been continually washed down the slope towards the Roman buildings where it has been building up. This perhaps explains some of the residual Iron Age material found in Roman contexts.

The ritual deposit found in an Iron Age ditch in Trench 16 in 2013 may be a cremation burial and would fit well with similar practices at other sites such as at Aylesford, (Evans, 1890), Westhampnett, (Fitzpatrick, 1997) and at the Furfield Quarry site close to the Quarry Wood Oppidum at Loose, (Howell, 2014, 50). Indeed in the greensand region of Kent, cremation accounts for 85% of excavated burials, and 60% of all known cremations are 'urned', (Smith et al 2018, 216 and 259). At East Farleigh we only have the one cremation so far, so it is not possible to discern a pattern, however, the other features identified on the survey may point to settlement activity nearby associated with the interment. Recent work in the vicinity of Maidstone Hospital in Barming on the north side of the river has revealed a landscape rich in activity from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age to the late Iron Age and Roman (Stevens, 2014). The nearby Oppidum at Quarry Wood, Loose is a few miles to the southeast, where much of the glauconitic pottery found at East Farleigh is thought to originate (Kelly, 1972; Lyne, 2018). The bloomery at Quarry Wood is evidence of iron working in this area, together with another site further to the south-east, with a further bloomery and six cremations, (Howell, 2014), which supports the impression of an integrated network of established pre-Roman settlements which continued into the Roman period. Indeed the transition from Late Iron Age to Roman is barely perceptible in the archaeological record in Kent, suggesting that certainly for the rural economy, life was continuing as it had before and perhaps the Romanisation process had been in train for several decades, potentially since Caesar's campaigns in the region, (Salway, 1997; Rogers, 2013). However, as yet it is difficult to join the dots of the pre-conquest late Iron Age in the area, and perhaps there is no surprise that we are seeing activity so close to the river, which must have been an important commercial artery.

The fifth century features are more elusive. We clearly have activity on the site after the fine third century buildings have gone out of use and in some cases demolished. Many site reports mention 'squatter' activity where mosaics are cut through by later more 'humble' activity, such as at Butleigh Villa, in Somerset, (Gerrard, 2013, 158). At East Farleigh this activity has been considerable, and apparently sustained over a period of time, with pottery associated with displays giving us a period from the end of the third century through to the fifth. A parallel would be the Roman building at Stone Road, Broadstairs, where later ovens had cut through numerous infant burials in an earlier Roman building, (Moody, 2008). The hearth feature at East Farleigh unearthed in 2013 and later explored in 2018, appears to sit alone without any associated buildings, but that may just be because they were timber and we have not identified them yet, or it may be that the positioning was related to agricultural activity and a domestic structure lies elsewhere.

Corn-driers and other features found within the third century buildings appear to date to the fourth century with only a small question mark over their final cessation, sometime around the end of the fourth century, beginning of the fifth. There is little pottery evidence of occupation later than 409, (Lyne, 2018). However the last remnants of the buildings appear to have been demolished around this time, perhaps displacing the occupants to the site to the south identified in 2018. Could this in fact point to a clearance by the landowner or perhaps by some other executive of the Roman state? Why were they not used in favour of the structure uphill to the south, further from the river? Certainly we are seeing the end of a process that started in the early fourth century. The Roman buildings were demolished, walled up or abandoned, only to be partially re-used during the fourth century, but then occupation around the Roman buildings was ended and the last of the buildings demolished, sometime early in the fifth century, leaving very little in the way of material clues as to what happened next, (Esmonde Cleary, 1989, 173). Clearly there is a lot of information missing which could help to answer these questions.

Conclusion

The intention of this interim report is to encapsulate the work done by the Maidstone Area Archaeological Group close to a Roman site that the group has been working on since 2005 but no longer has access to. The results show significant activity during the Iron Age which were previously unsuspected and help us to better understand the Iron Age to Roman and Roman to Anglo-Saxon transition phases in this part of the country. Another aspect to the work is the suspected religious nature of the Roman site and the potential for this to be a continuation of earlier pre-Roman traditions. The survey work done in advance of any future excavation has given us some tantalising targets that potentially build on the work done in 2018. The next season of excavation promises to be revealing.

Appendix

Pottery by context

2013

Context	Fabric	Form	Date-range	No of sherds	Weight in gm	Comments
410	C7A	Combed jar	c.50BC-AD60	1	848G	Trunc crem pot
413	C29		?5th c	2	11G	

2018

Context	Fabric	Form	Date-range	No of sherds	Wt in gm	Comments
836 18C	C2E	Bead-rim jar	c.25BC-AD70	1	8G	Abraded
842	C16A C28	Closed form	c.50-200	1 2	6 16	sl.abraded abraded
			?Residual	3	22g	
843	C7A C8 C9 C28 F6A *Fired clay*	Flagon	c.50BC-AD60 c.43-60 c.25BC-AD.80 c.50-150 c.43-250	3 5 5 2 1 ***1***	12 16 7 14 1 *1*	Abraded sl abraded abraded sl abraded abraded
			c.43-60 or poss all residual	16	50G	
844	C2A C7A C9	Ev.rim jar necked jar	c.25BC-AD.70 c.50BC-AD60 c.25BC-AD80	1 1 2	9 6 12	Abraded fresh abraded
			c.25BC-AD.80	4	27G	
846	C7A		c.50BC-AD60 but residual	2	8G	abraded

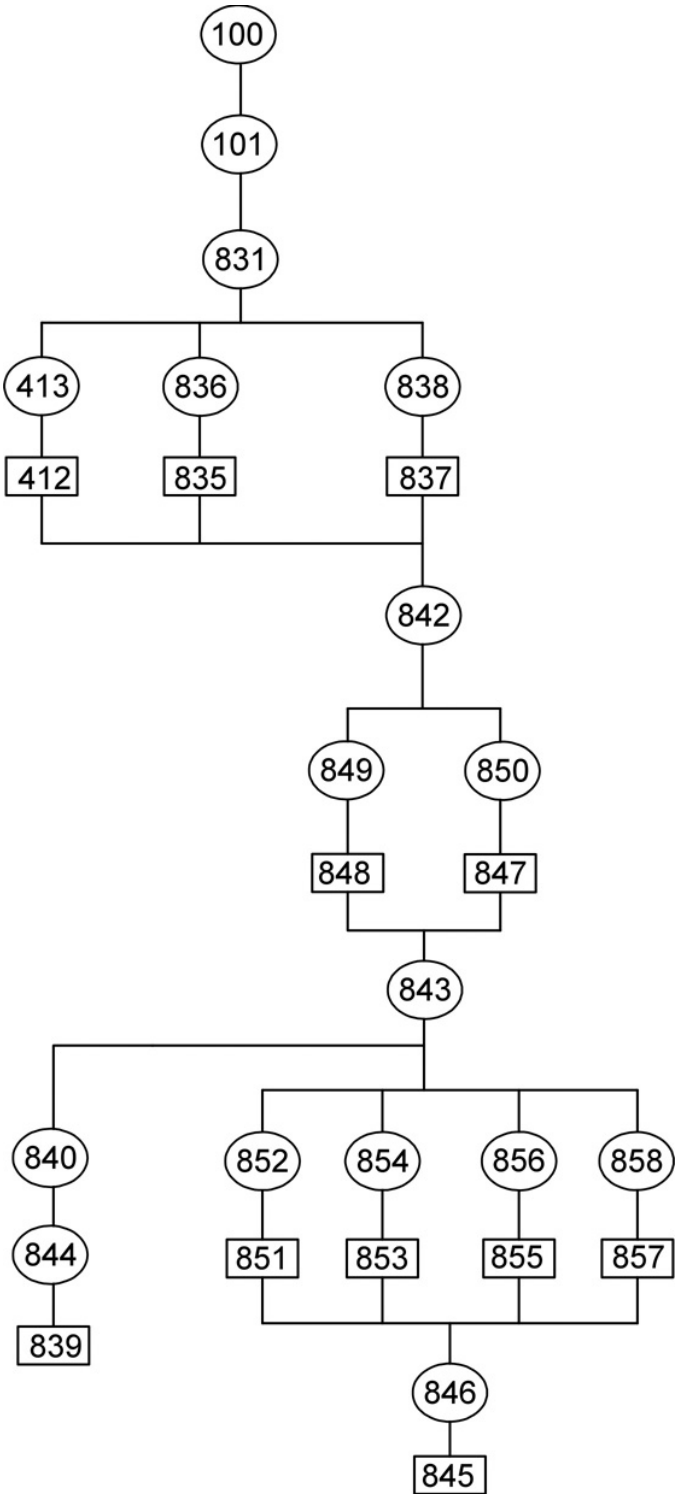
East Farleigh Pottery Fabrics

National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codings (Tomber and Dore 1998) are put in brackets after relevent East Farleigh ones.

C2A. Fine 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware (SOB GT var)
C2E. Handmade grog-tempered ware with siltstone grog filler
C7A. Glauconitic ware
C8. Handmade black fabric with profuse <0.10 mm quartz-sand filler
C9. North Kent Shell-tempered ware
C16A. Fine grey Thameside fabric with <0.30 quartz-sand filler
C28. Miscellaneous oxidised wares
C29. Handmade soft underfired black fabric with sparse chaff and<0.30mm.quartz-sand and occasional rounded vesicles

F6A. North Kent Fineware (UPC FR)

Harris Matrix for Trench 18C



			2018		
No	Type	Trench	Context Description	Date	Init
831	fill	18C	Layer beneath (101) 'hillwash'	16/04/22	SC
835	Cut	18C	Cut of 'flue' in [412]	09/07/22	SC
836	fill	18C	Fill of [835] clay soil with stones	09/07/22	SC
837	Cut	18C	Cut of charcoal feature	09/07/22	SC
838	fill	18C	Fill of [837] sample taken	09/07/22	SC
839	Cut	18C	Cut of circular charcoal feature (later reinterpreted	09/07/22	SC
840	fill	18C	Fill of [839] clay soil with charcoal	09/07/22	SC
842	fill	18C	Layer below hillwash (831)	23/08/22	SC
843	fill	18C	Possible fill of 'kiln' feature	23/08/22	SC
844	fill	18C	Fill of [839] ditch feature	17/09/22	SC
845	Cut	18C	Cut of linear ditch	15/10/22	SC
846	fill	18C	Fill of ditch [845]	15/10/22	SC
847	Cut	18C	Cut of small circular post hole	15/10/22	SC
848	fill	18C	Fill of [847]	22/10/22	SC
849	Cut	18C	Cut of small post hole	22/10/22	SC
850	fill	18C	fill of [849]	22/10/22	SC
851	Cut	18C	Cut of stake hole through ditch [845]	05/11/22	SC
852	fill	18C	fill of [851]	05/11/22	SC
853	Cut	18C	Cut of possible post hole	05/11/22	SC
854	fill	18C	Fill of [853]	05/11/22	SC
855	Cut	18C	Cut of small feature	05/11/22	SC
856	fill	18C	Fill of [855]	05/11/22	SC
857	Cut	18C	Cut of small feature	05/11/22	SC
858	fill	18C	Fill of [857]	05/11/22	SC
859	fill	18C	Layer beneath (831)	05/11/22	SC

Context register sheet from 18C for 2018

Context Detail

(831) - Orangey brown clay soil fill, believed to be 'hillwash', of variable depth from 400mm – 600mm, beneath modern topsoil layer (101), extends across excavated area.

[835] - Linear cut of the 'flue' structure associated with [413] oven-like feature cutting through the natural to the south as well as through the hillwash layer (831), as well as potentially (842) and (843). Feature observed and partially excavated in 2013. Filled by (836). Extends to the east and appears to continue past the extent of the edge of the trench, observed for 3.27m.

(836) - Fill of [835]. Dark orangey brown clay soil with frequent stone inclusions (no finds). Overlain by (831).

[837] - Cut of a discrete area of charcoal rich orangey brown soil, in roughly square shape of approximately 1m^2, cuts (842). Appears to be associated with [412], no datable evidence recovered.

(838) - Fill of [837]. Charcoal rich orangey brown grey soil, to an average depth of 10mm.

[839] - Cut of ditch, running south east, observed for 5.42m, filled by (840) and (844). Profile has defined linear 'slot' at the base of approximately 320mm x 320mm. Cuts [845].

(840) - One of the fills of [839], orangey brown clay soil fill with charcoal flecks. Appears to be a tip of fill into the ditch.

(842) - General deposit beneath hillwash layer (831). Contained some early Roman material and a piece of very abraded roof tile (tegula). Orangey brown clay layer with frequent stones.

(843) - General deposit beneath (842), and maybe indistinguishable. Mid orangey brown with occasional charcoal flecks and frequent stones.

(844) - Fill of [839]. Orangey mid/light brown clay soil. Overlain by (842)/(843).

[845] - Cut of linear ditch running east, cut by ditch [839]. Observed for 5m. shallow at western end, 150mm - 200mm, with a flat base. Deeper at the eastern extent, 320mm in depth, with concave base.

(846) - Fill of linear ditch [845]. Mid brown orange clay soil, fairly loose.

[847] - Cut of small ovoid feature, (later reassessed to be part of a slightly larger feature incorporating [848]), possibly a post hole. Roughly 100mm in diameter, filled with grey charcoal soil. Approximately 100mm deep with two large stones.

[848] - Cut of small feature, later reassessed to be part of [847]. Possible post hole.

(849)/(850) - Fill of [847]/[848]. Orangey grey brown loose fill with charcoal inclusions, and two large stones.

[851], [853], [855] and [857] are all features that were treated as possible steak holes, but on investigation appear to be natural phenomenon, possibly tree root, or solution hollows.

(859) - Dark red orange brown clay soil, very firm and sticky. Residual make up layer beneath hillwash (831). Cut by [845].

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