

A RESCUE EXCAVATION AT THE BRADING ROMAN VILLA COACH PARK, ISLE OF WIGHT

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ABSTRACT

A late Iron Age and Early Roman ditch with a possible circular sunken potter's clamp was uncovered during construction work for a new car park on an area known locally as the 'Middle Paddock', adjacent to Brading Roman villa. Other features included three possible Late Iron Age buildings, and a pre-Flavian oven. During construction work on a small path connecting the modern facilities of the villa with the new car park, a small portion of the Roman courtyard wall was uncovered. The feature was found in association with a masonry structure dating to c.AD 300–370. The other major feature to be uncovered was an alignment of chalk-packed post-holes which dated from the last quarter of the 4th century or the post-Roman period.

LOCATION

Brading Roman villa (PRN: 1017; NGR SZ 60000 86300) is situated at the south-east end of the central chalk downland ridge which crosses the Isle of Wight (Fig. 1). The villa lies on the light sandy soils derived from the ferruginous sands of the Lower Greensand series, and overlooks the junction of the river Yar and Brading Haven. This waterway (close to the later and modern village of Brading) was still navigable up until the middle of the 13th century when a causeway was constructed to reclaim the land for agricultural use.

THE EXCAVATION

During the early part of March 1997 construction work began on an area known as the 'Middle Paddock'. Within the area under development Scheduled Monument Consent had been obtained for the construction of a large coach and car park

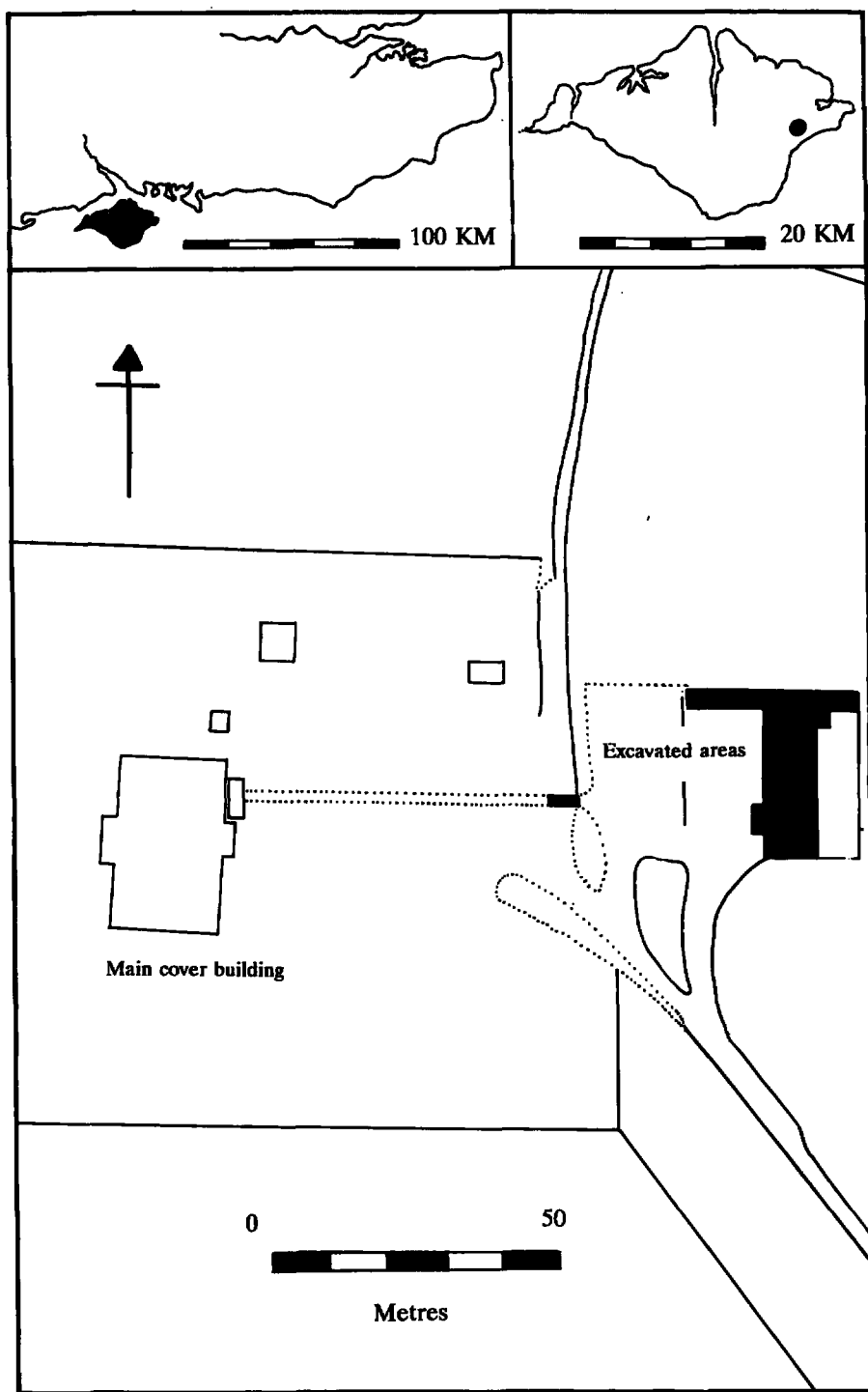
for visitors to the Roman villa. The planning brief stated that a layer of soil should protect any archaeology that survived within this area. A site visit with English Heritage resulted in a recording programme being agreed, after a series of archaeological features had been inadvertently exposed by a mechanical excavator (Fig. 2). It was decided that any exposed area should be trowelled where the protective mantle of topsoil had been broken. Any clipped archaeological features should be cleaned and recorded but not excavated to any depth.

This report considers the exposed features located on the site of the car park, together with two further features exposed during the mechanical removal of the topsoil for a pathway leading from the car park to the main villa building. Following the brief these were also hand trowelled and sample sections examined to collect datable material.

Method of Excavation

Initially, an area 18 × 2 m was hand troweled within the eastern part of the car park site. This produced an array of Roman ceramics and five features. The major feature was the top fill of a ditch (8301) and part of an alignment of chalk packed post holes (8309). The next section to be troweled and subsequently recorded ran southwards (15 × 5.5 m) across an area where more chalk packed post holes were observed. This again produced a number of early features and archaeological artefacts.

When the recording of each feature was completed using a 1 × 1 m planning frame, its plan and any individual finds were measured by means of a Total Station Theodolite. The next stage involved the protective covering of individual features with soil and then patches of Terram. Further layers of soil and Terram were used to cover the whole of



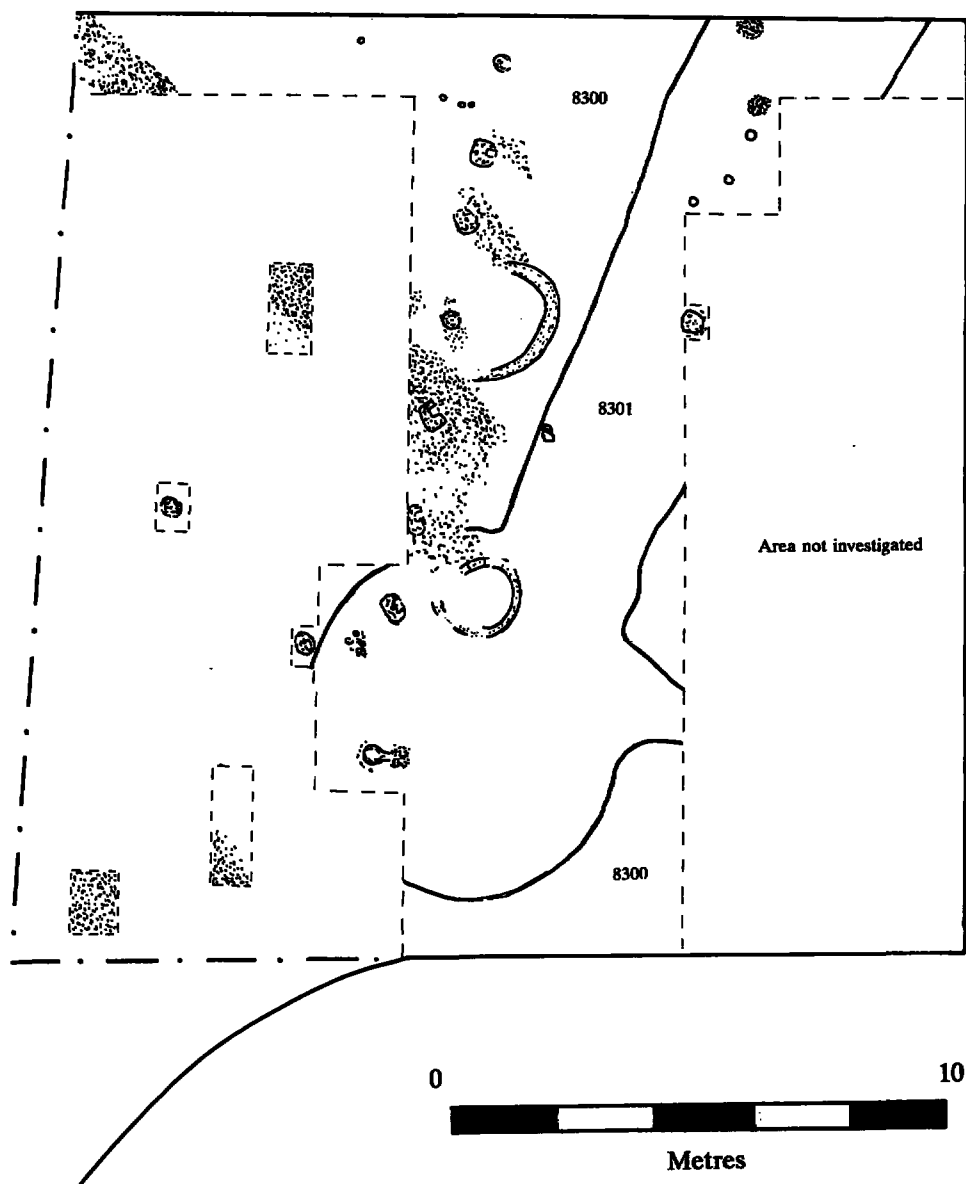


Fig. 2 General plan of features in the coach/car park area

Fig. 1 (left) Brading Roman Villa: location plan of the excavated areas

the car park to protect it from further construction damage. A final layer of crushed chalk was then laid over the site before a rubble based hard-core was used for the car and coach park's foundation layer. The pathway leading from the villa site was also protected with soil and a double layer of Terram.

layer had been damaged by stripping from the excavator, and some sherds of pottery were found apparently disturbed. Some pottery fragments from this context might be attributed to cultivation during the later period of the villa's occupation.

Contexts and Features (Figs 2-8)

Exterior of the ditch and stripped surface (8300)

This context comprised the exposed surface which was found to be to the west of the ditch. The surface

The top fill of a broad ditch and its circular terminal (8301)

This was the principal feature within the stripped area. The fill of the ditch was not investigated, but auguring revealed that the ditch was *c.* 2 m deep and *c.* 3 m wide. Its circular terminal seemed to

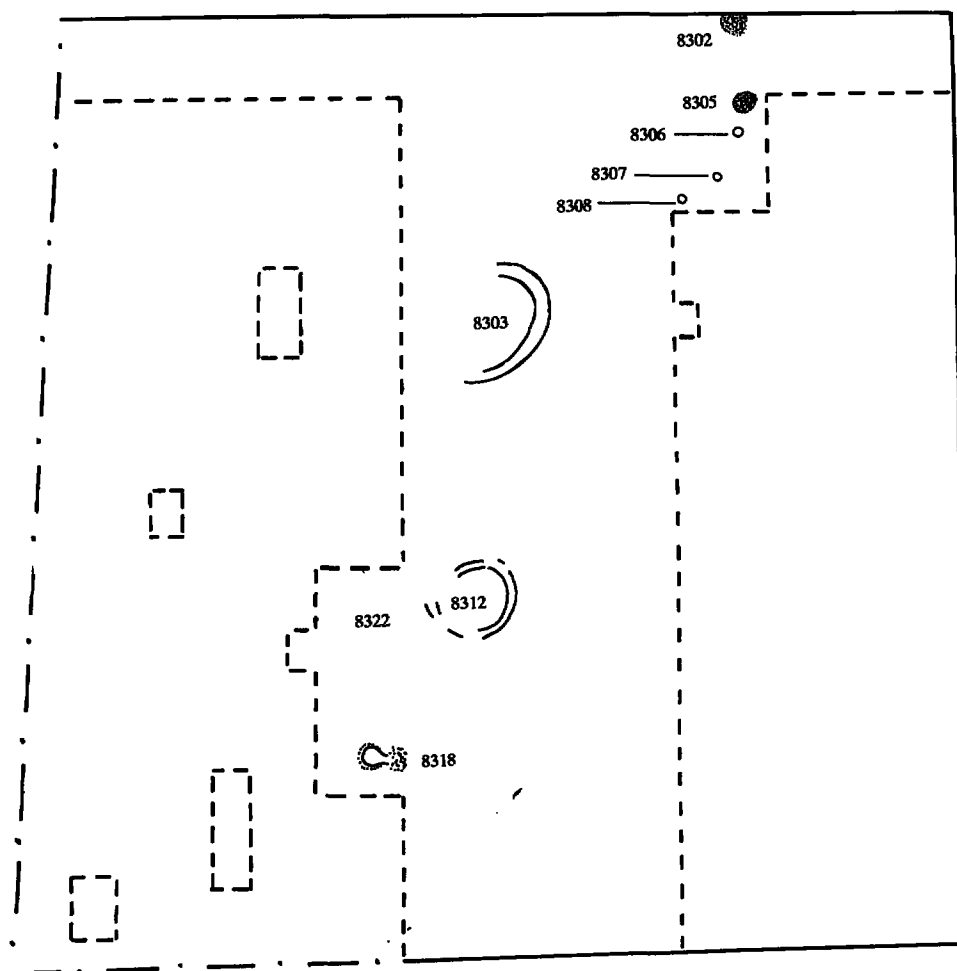


Fig. 3 Plan of the Late Iron Age and pre-Flavian features. Scale as Fig. 2

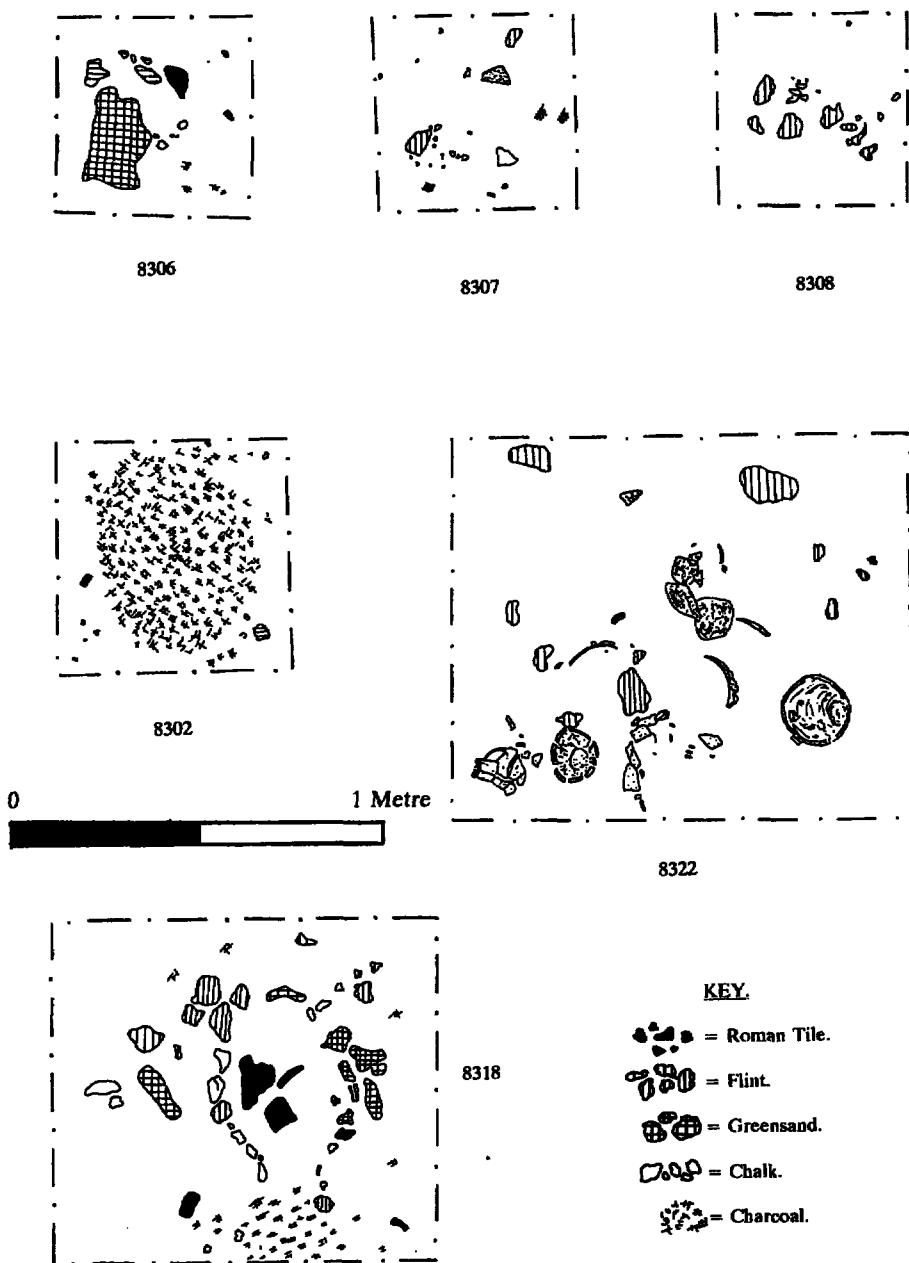


Fig. 4 Surface sections of the Late Iron Age and pre-Flavian features

broaden into an area *c.* 6 m in diameter (this was augured to a depth of 25 cm).

In 1994 a magnetometer survey was carried out over this ditch (Fig. 14) by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory. The results produced a very high reading in the vicinity of its terminal. It seems possible that this reading may have been influenced by the conjectured potters' clamp-kiln and oven.

Burnt circular hollows (8302 & 8305), post holes (8306, 8307, 8308)

It is possible that these features are all contemporary with each other and that they form a small portion of a disturbed circular structure dug into the fill of (8301). The three post holes were all packed with flint, Greensand rubble and Late Iron Age pottery fragments.

The two burnt circular hollows or scoops filled with charcoal did not produce any artefacts but they could possibly represent two burnt door posts leading into a possible round house of Late Iron Age character.

Two circular drainage gullies (8303 & 8312)

Structure (8303) was situated towards the west of (8301). The badly eroded feature could just be discerned. It could be estimated that the feature possibly enclosed an area of 4 m. The pottery from the near complete drainage gully produced Late Iron Age and early Roman pottery.

Both structures (8303 and 8312) are good candidates for the Late Iron Age round house building type. It is a pity that the site has suffered from ploughing resulting in the destruction of all traces of the timber post holes and slots within the area surrounded by the drainage gullies.

Stake holes (8311)

Four small stake holes were recorded to the northern end of the site. It is unclear of their date but the proximity to feature (8309) may suggest that these are contemporary in date.

Small oven (8318)

A small circular oven constructed from flint nodules and Greensand was set into the upper fill of the circular terminal of the broad ditch. The oven was served by a substantial stoking pit filled with large

quantities of charcoal. The fill of the oven contained early Roman pottery and ceramic building material.

Post hole (8310)

A compact area in the top fill of the broad ditch (8301) produced a small assemblage of combed flue tile and tesserae. These materials were contained within the top filling of a square filled post hole which housed a timber *c.* 30 cm in diameter. The dating of this feature was indicated by a single body sherd of New Forest grey ware and a small shard of southern Spanish amphora, contained within the fill. This suggests a late-3rd to mid-4th century date.

Chalk block (8321)

A broken chalk block was found between the post alignment and ditch fill. Its function is unclear and the only finds from above this were small sherds of Roman Vectis ware.

Chalk packed post hole alignment (8309, 8314, 8315, 8316, 8317 & 8332)

A prominent feature within the stripped area was an alignment of seven post holes running on a north to south axis. Post hole (8309) had the traces of a timber void measuring 0.103 m in diameter. Likewise post hole (8313) had a rectangular void of 0.40 × 0.25 m. Post hole (8315) had a square timber void of 0.30 × 0.305 m and finally post hole (8316) was again 0.201 × 0.30 m rectangular to square. In the remainder it was not possible to identify any further timber voids within the chalk packing.

Post holes (8319 & 8320)

Two flint filled post holes were found to run from a north west angle from the end of the chalk packed post alignment. No dateable material was recovered except a well eroded piece of combed flue tile in the top fill of post hole (8319).

Two gravel spread paths (8323 & 8324)

Two compacted gravel spreads were observed in the stripped area. Spread (8323) was situated within the south west corner and contained 13th-century pottery fragments. Gravel spread (8324) was traced at a south east angle towards the chalk packed alignment. No other dateable material was found but it could be contemporary with (8323).

The courtyard wall (8327) and the foundation trench (8326)

Two footings of a substantial wall measuring 0.605 m thick were recorded running across the modern path way trench. This comprised of tightly rammed chalk laid within a foundation trench 0.67 m wide. The nature of the upper courses of this courtyard wall are uncertain but moderate quantities of mortared flints within the spoil from the excavated area are suggestive of its nature. The Roman pottery found to be built into the wall and from its foundation trench suggest a phase 3 date for this feature.

Foundation trench (8329) and the internal wall of courtyard building (8330)

A second wall 0.30 m thick was seen running parallel with the courtyard wall. It was separated by an eaves-drip gully (8328). Like the courtyard wall, only a trench-built footing had survived. This was composed of flint and Greensand rubble interspersed with layers of tightly rammed chalk. Within the building a demolition layer was encountered, this composed of mortared flints and ceramic building tile. The nature of this rear wall is uncertain but is attributed to an internal facing building. The fallen mortared flints within this structure suggests that the wall was composed, at least in part of a masonry component.

Phasing

Phase 1

The earliest human activity on the site of the car park was a disturbed scatter of late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age flint work. The assemblage included waste flakes, retouched flint flakes, end scrapers and a single unfinished barbed and tanged arrow head. All these flint implements were found within Iron Age and Roman layers and proved to be residual.

Phase 2

The second period of occupation at Brading (Fig. 3) was represented by the ditch and its circular terminal (8301). The top fill of the ditch contained fragments of Late Iron Age pottery and prehistoric lithics. The circular terminal produced a scatter of

partially complete pots (8322). Auguring around this feature revealed, at a depth of 25 cm a burnt sandy hard clay with a component charcoal layer under the surface. This feature may have been a potters' clamp, producing the local ceramics known as Vectis ware. The pottery from this feature could have been the broken vessels from the last firing of the kiln.

Above the fill of (8301) a short arc of post holes was recorded (8306, 8307, 8308). Their distribution was further extended by two circular burnt post holes (8302, 8305) which provided a conjectured circle 6.5 metres in diameter. This feature with two circular gullies (8303 & 8312) could present the possibility of a late Iron Age round house and two ancillary structures which measured respectively some 3 and 2 m in diameter. These could be compared to the structures found at Danebury Hillfort and Houghton Down in Hampshire (Cunliffe 1994; 1995).

The final feature was a small oven (8318) which was built into the circular terminal of the ditch (8301). The pottery from its fill and fragments of ceramic building material suggest a pre-Flavian date for this structure.

Phase 3

A trench running from the villa towards the car park (Fig. 5) exposed the lower foundations of the building's courtyard wall, its rear wall and the floor of an associated building. These can be attributed to the formal development of the villa in the 3rd and 4th Centuries AD.

The courtyard wall (8327) measured 62 cm wide, and it was separated by an eavesdrip gully (8328) which was associated with the rear roof of an internal courtyard building (8330). A single feature on the car park site (Fig. 6) was represented by a tesserae and broken combed flue tile packed post hole.

Phase 4

A single alignment of chalk packed post holes were recorded running north to south across the car park area (Figs 7 & 8). Each post hole was capable of holding a timber post of up to 30 cm in diameter and each post was spaced around 2 m intervals. Only seven post holes were observed within the excavated area, yet due to their number and align-

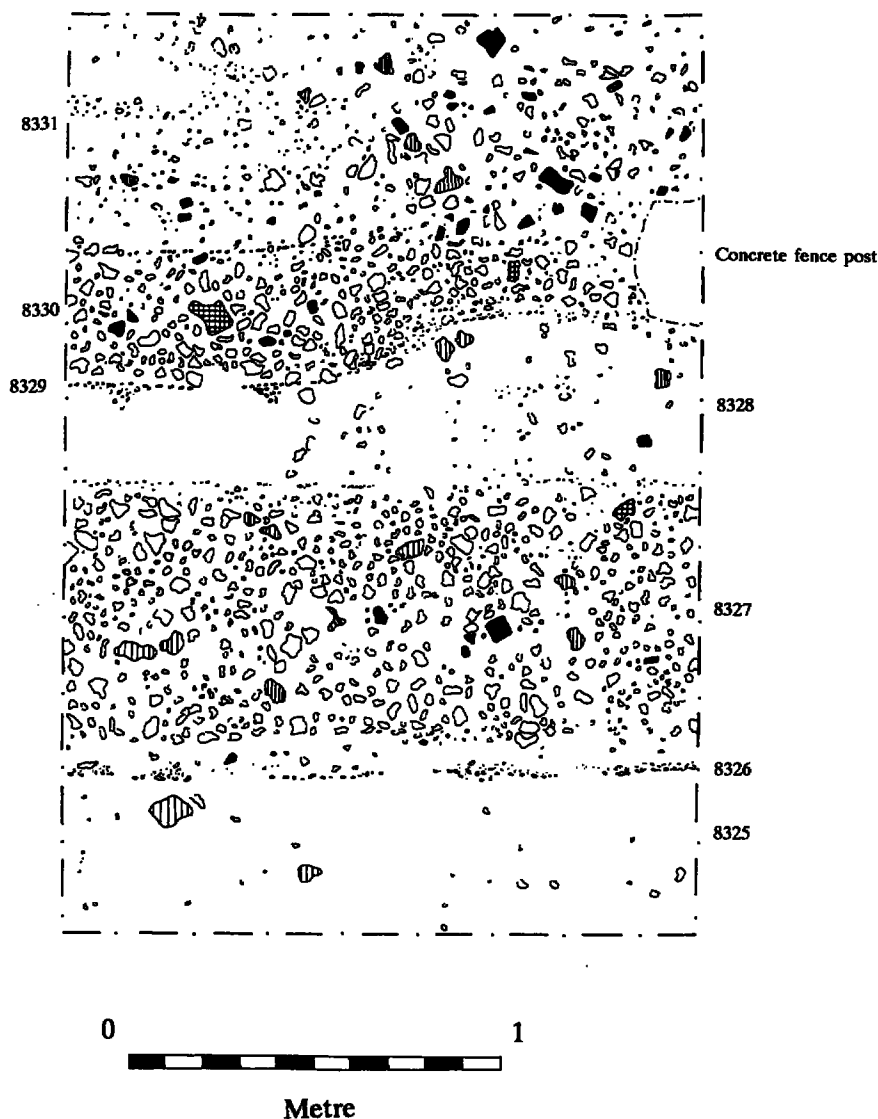


Fig. 5 Plan of the late 4th-century courtyard wall and internal building

ment other features could be present extending under the grass field to the north.

Phase 5

Two spreads of gravel (Fig. 6) were located in the south-west corner of the site (8323) which ran from the north-west towards the centre of the site

(8324). Spread (8323) produced medieval pottery, but spread (8324) remains undated.

Phase 6

A generous scatter of post-medieval pottery was found over the site. This possibly derives from manuring activities from the nearby manor of Morton.

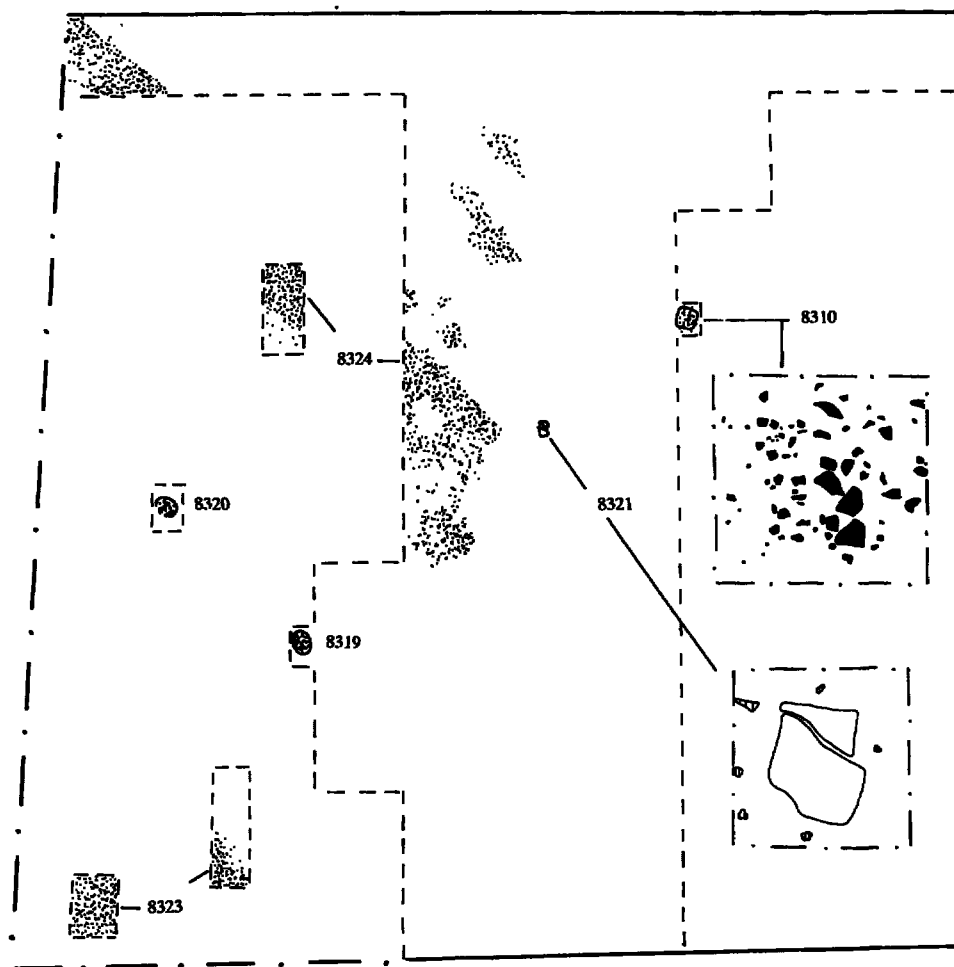


Fig. 6 Plan and surface sections of miscellaneous features within the stripped area. Scale as Fig. 2

THE FINDS

Roman Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

Introduction

The amounts of pottery recovered are small (2417 g) because of the necessarily superficial nature of the excavation. Nevertheless, there are a few small stratified assemblages which supply key dating evidence for some of the various structures of Iron Age to 4th-century date which were encountered.

Methodology

The fabrics were identified microscopically using a $\times 8$ lens with built in scale to determine the size of the various inclusions. The quantification by numbers and weight of sherds per fabric was carried out for all assemblages, but in practice the various assemblages are so small as to make any quantification system unreliable.

The Late Iron Age/Early Roman fabrics

The excavation is particularly important in that it supplies us with the first stratified pottery assem-

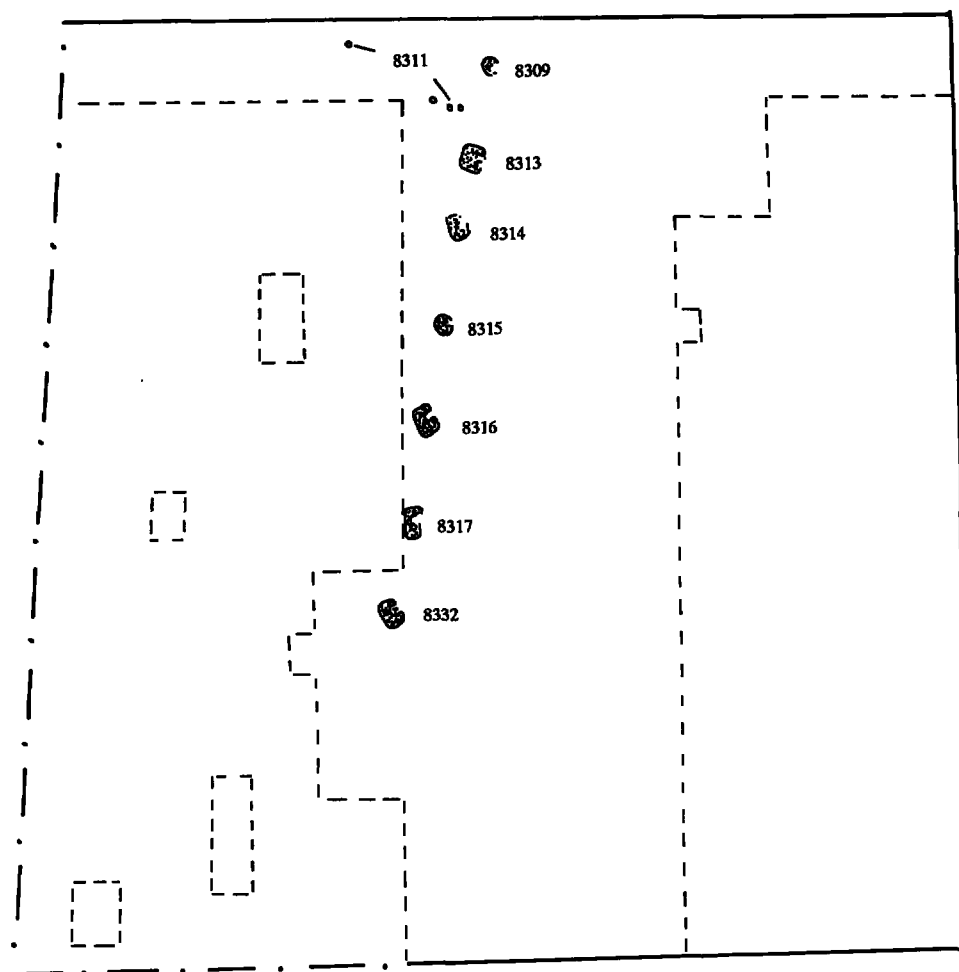


Fig. 7 Plan of the Early Anglo-Saxon post-hole alignment. Scale as Fig 2

blages with fabrics of Late Iron Age type from Brading, although the majority of these assemblages date to the earliest years of the Roman occupation of the site. Because of the potential importance of these early assemblages in understanding the origins of the indigenous Vectis ware, the early fabric variants are dealt with in considerable detail here. The following local fabrics were distinguished:

1. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 2.00 mm grey and white calcined flint and fired black.
2. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 2.00 mm grey and white calcined flint and profuse up-to 0.20 m. multi-coloured quartz. Fired black.
3. Handmade fabric with sub-angular up to 0.30 mm multi-coloured sub-angular quartz and sparse up to 2.00 mm calcined flint. Fired black.
4. Handmade fabric with profuse sub-angular up to 0.50 mm multi-coloured quartz, sparse angular up-to 0.50 mm. White-patinated flint grit and very sparse shell flecks. Fired black.
5. Handmade fabric with profuse sub-angular up to 0.30 mm multi-coloured sub-angular quartz. Fired black.

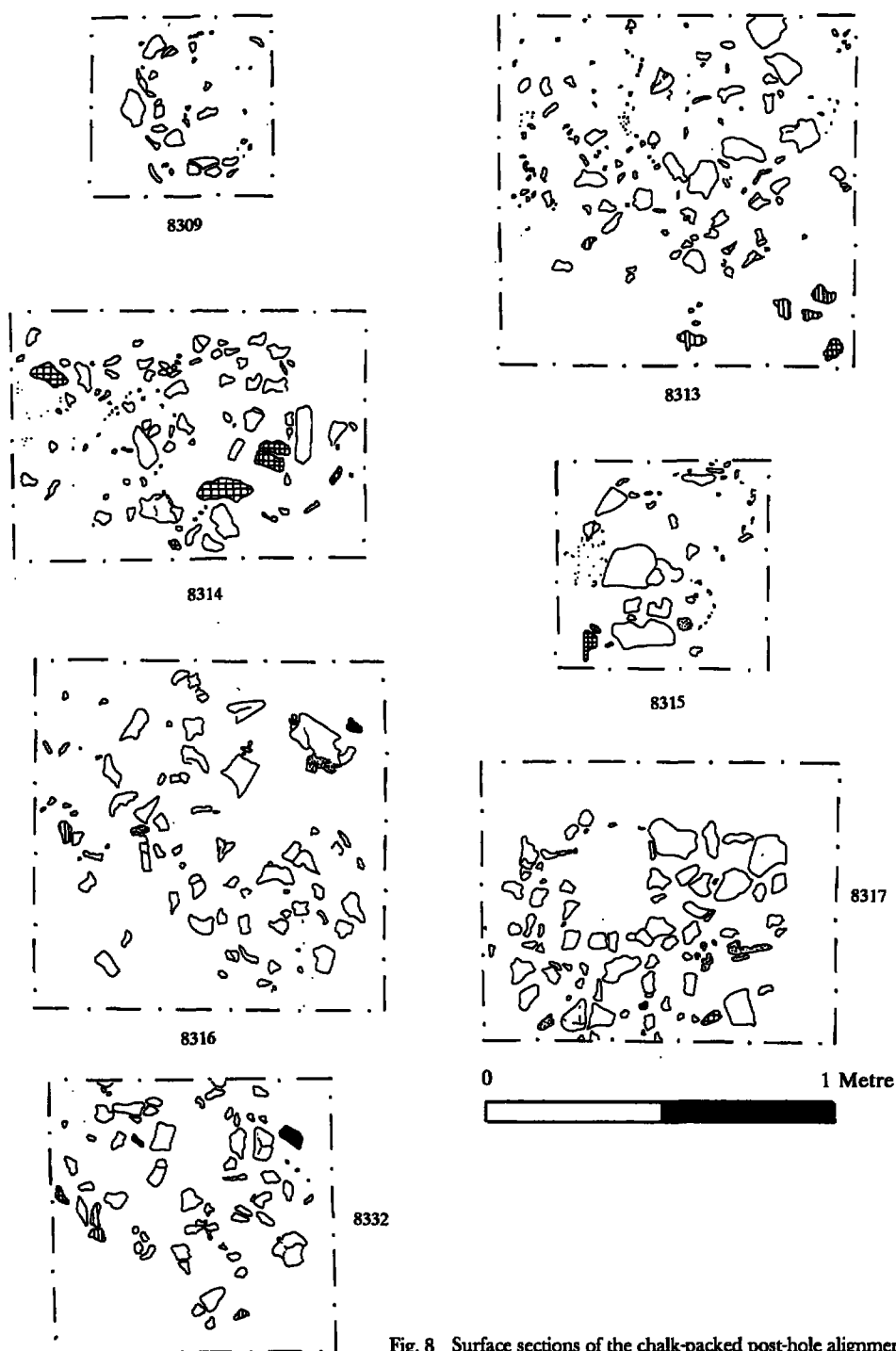


Fig. 8 Surface sections of the chalk-packed post-hole alignment

6. Wheel turned fabric with profuse up to 0.20 mm sub-angular colourless quartz. Fired black.
7. Handmade fabric with profuse sub-angular up to 0.50 mm colourless quartz and sparse up to 1.50 mm soft, red, ferrous inclusions. Fired grey-brown to black.
8. Handmade fabric with profuse up to 0.10 mm quartz, sparse up to 0.75 mm sub-angular white quartz and sparse rounded, black ferrous inclusions. Fired buff-brown.
9. Soapy grey-black fabric with moderate up to 0.75 mm rounded soft buff grog inclusions. Fired buff-brown.

Fabrics 1 and 2 are in the Early Iron Age to Middle Iron Age tradition and fabric 3 seems to be transitional between that tradition and Vectis ware variants and in most cases continues in use until the 4th century. Fabric 4 makes use of beach sand filler and probably originated on a coastal production site.

The Iron Age/Early Roman assemblages (Fig. 9)

The earliest feature identified on the site appears to be the broad ditch and its circular terminal feature (8301). The fill of this feature was not penetrated to any significant degree and as a result only 10 sherds of pottery were recovered. This pottery consists entirely of Vectis ware fragments and includes two intrusive everted rim fragments of 2nd to 3rd century character probably inserted during machine scraping. Some of the features dug into the upper surface of the ditch fill produced small pottery assemblages of late Iron Age to Early Roman character.

Gully (8312) produced 16 sherds of pottery in a wide variety of fabrics: one sherd each of fabrics 1, 3, 6, 8 and 9, and five each of fabrics 5 and 7. A burnt white ware sherd was also present and probably comes from a pre-Flavian flagon imported from north-eastern Gaul. All but one of the pieces are featureless body sherds from closed forms.

Fig. 9 no.1. Bead or stubby everted rim in black fabric 5, probably from a jar of Tomalin Form 28 (1987, Fig. A15) dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries. 8312.6

Small Oven (8318) produced 20 sherds of pottery (156 g), comprising 2 sherds in fabric 4, 13 sherds in fabric 5, 1 sherd each in fabrics 6, 7 and

8, 1 sherd in miscellaneous grey ware and a flagon body sherd in a very-fine cream fabric. All but one of the sherds in fabric 5 are black-surfaced and include the following pieces:

Fig. 9 no.2. Lid rim in buff-brown Vectis ware (fabric 5) fired rough black (Tomalin Form 28 dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries). Ext. rim diameter 160 mm. 8318.3

Fig. 9 no.3. Fragment from another lid in buff-brown fabric 7 fired rough black but with two rim edge grooves. Ext. Rim diameter 160 mm. 8318.4

Fig. 9 no.4. Rim from bowl or dish in rough black fabric 5 with lid-seating groove. Ext. rim diameter 200 mm. This type is not in Tomalin's corpus and differs from late-3rd/early-4th century Vectis ware incipient-beaded-and-flanged bowls in having a squared-off rim edge and well-defined lid-seating groove. Since this report was compiled two identical rim types have been recovered from a sealed Flavian ditch fill at Mersley Farm, Newchurch (Trott 1999 forthcoming). 8318.15

The scatter of partially complete pots (8322). These vessels were exposed by machine scraping but could not unfortunately be lifted. Fabric samples were, however, taken and the pots drawn in situ.

Fig. 9 no. 5. Lower part of pear-shaped jar or flagon in grey fabric 5 fired brown-black with buff-to-reddish-brown margins. 8322.1

Fig. 9 no. 6. Lower part of another flagon of more squat proportions, in rough, grey-black fabric 5 with buff-to-reddish-brown margins. 8322.2

Fig. 9 no. 7. Strainer in reddish-brown Vectis ware (fabric 5) fired flecky brown-black. Ext. rim diameter 140 mm. A similar strainer form in a Late Iron Age flint tempered fabric, found in the Portsdown area, can be viewed in Portsmouth City Museum. 8322.3

Fig. 9 no. 8. Flagon in dirty-grey Vectis ware (fabric 7) and of Tomalin Form 29. The type is rare and is known from sites at Redcliff, Knighton and Combley, in the east of the Island. Two further examples have been recently been recovered from St. Catherines Point in southern part of the Island, and from a Romano-British salt kiln at Grange Chine in the south-west of the Island. The Redcliff, Knighton, Grange Chine and Combley examples are dated to late-1st/early-2nd centuries. The flagon handle is tenoned into the body of the vessel in a similar manner to BB1 examples. Ext. rim diameter 75 mm. 8322.5

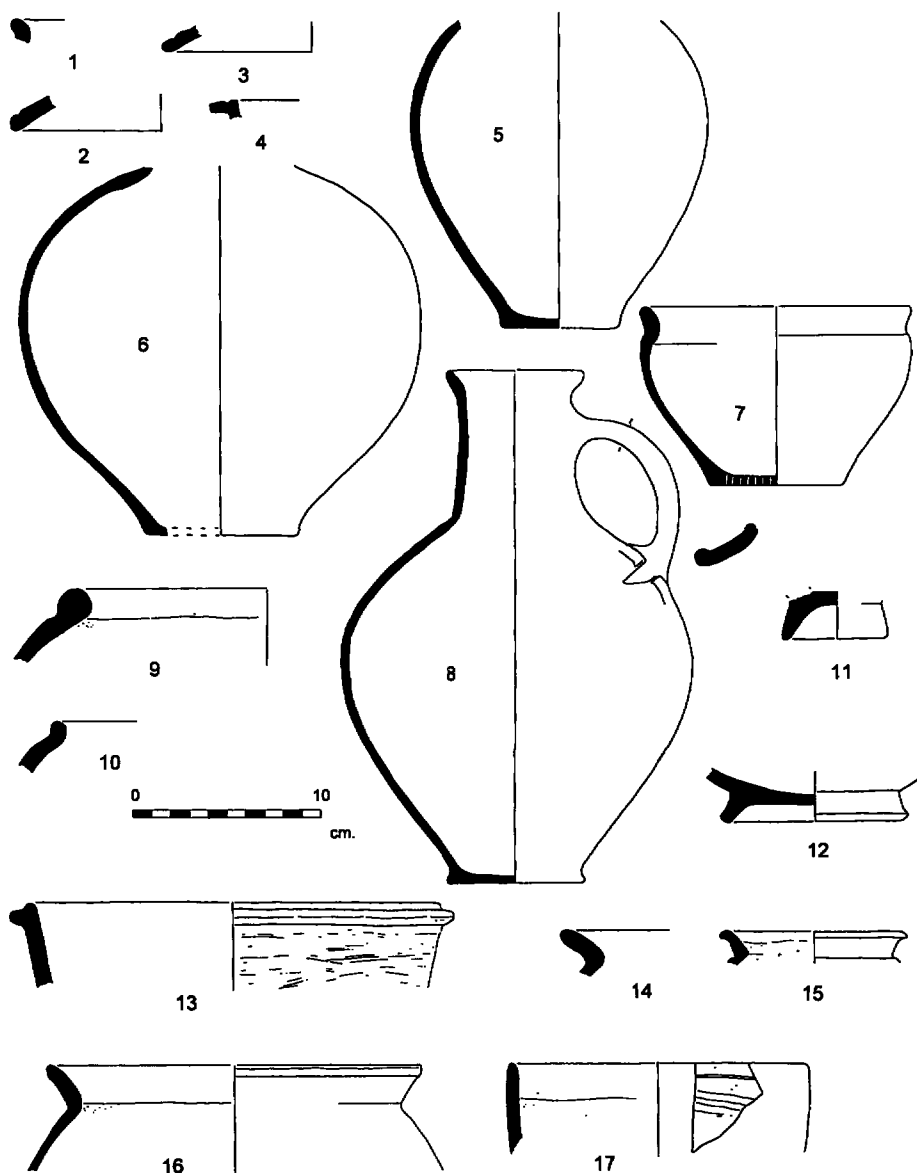


Fig. 9 Roman pottery

There was also part of another Vectis ware jar or flagon base. 8322.4

The pot scatter lay just under the surface of the fill of the circular feature at the southern end of the

broad ditch. Auguring of this sandy fill to a depth of 25 cm met with a layer of burnt sandy clay overlain by a thin seam of charcoal and sand. It is possible that the circular feature is a sunken potter's clamp base and that the exposed pots were

just the top of a scatter of wasters on its surface. Set against this latter notion is the fact that the flagon is in a different fabric to the others. In addition, the photographs taken of the pots in situ show no discoloration or spalling normally associated with wasters.

Post holes (8306, 8307 & 8308) in the fill of the broad ditch produced further small amounts of pottery of 1st-century character. Post hole (8306) produced just one sherd of Vectis ware fabric 5 and post hole (8307) had one sherd each of fabrics 5 and 7. Post hole 8308 had four sherds including a fragment from a Gauloise type amphorae (see report below) and a small chip of fabric 7. There were also two rim fragments of 1st-century character :

Fig. 9 no. 9. Bead-rim jar in dirty-grey Vectis ware (fabric 5) fired rough flecky-brown-black with orange margins (Tomalin Form 9, dated to the late-1st century). Ext. rim diameter 220 mm. 8308.4

Fig. 9 no. 10. Bead-rim from a small jar in Durotrigian Black Burnished ware. Ext. rim diameter not ascertained. 8308.3

Gully (8303) to the west of the broad ditch produced a mere 8 sherds of pottery (160 g) made up of one body shard in fabric 4 and the following:

Fig. 9, no.11. Six joining sherds from a high pedestal base in grey fabric 6 fired black with brown margins (Tomalin Form 3, dated to the immediately pre-Roman Iron Age and pre-Flavian period). 8303.4

Fig. 9 no.12. Fragment from the basal foot-ring of a globular jar in similar fabric and of similar date. 8303.5

The Late Roman assemblages

The section through the villa courtyard wall and building immediately inside it, made when the path from the car park was laid, produced useful ceramic dating evidence for these structures.

The courtyard wall (8327) and its foundation trench (8326). The wall foundation trench produced two sherds from a Hampshire grog-tempered ware cooking pot, five sherds from two New Forest

grey ware everted rim cooking pots and the rim from a BB1 beaded-and-flanged bowl.

Fig. 9 no.13. Rim from a developed beaded-and-flanged bowl in black BB1 with weak bead and stubby flange and external wipe marks. Ext. rim diameter 220 mm. 8326.1

Fig. 9 no.14. Everted rim from a cooking-pot in coarse New Forest grey ware with up to 0.50 mm quartz and ferrous inclusions. Ext. rim diameter 160 mm. 8326.2

The presence of the grog-tempered and New Forest grey ware sherds indicate that this section of wall at least was constructed after c AD 260. The BB1 bowl rim, with its lack of burnished decoration and stubby flange would further indicate a date sometime after 300 and possibly as late as the middle of the 4th century. An identical BB1 rim came from the occupation debris dumped in the phase A ditch of Bokerly Dyke, dated 330–370 (Rahtz 1963, fig. 10–41) and other examples from the Worgret kilns were dated to the later 4th century onwards (Hearne 1992, fig. 14–53, p.79).

The wall itself produced another 10 sherds (258 g), of which five are from New Forest grey ware jars and four from Hampshire grog-tempered ware closed forms. The tenth fragment is from a cooking-pot in Vectis ware fabric 7 and is probably residual within its context. This material supports the post-300 dating for the wall given by the sherds from its foundation trench. The grog-tempered ware sherds include the following piece:

Fig. 9 no.15. Everted rim from a handmade cooking-pot in grey-black fabric with profuse up to 3.00 mm sub-angular white siltstone grog. Ext. rim diameter 100 mm. 8327.7

The floor of the building (8331) and the fill of its external eaves-drip gully (8328). The floor produced 66 sherds (456 g) of pottery, most of which is very broken up. The sherds also have a very wide date range extending from the Late Iron Age to the 4th century, and are probably a mixture of pre-building occupation debris and pottery associated with the use of the building. The pieces include a sherd of the early fabric 3, another from an early 3rd-century Moselkeramik beaker, seven sherds of Hampshire grog-tempered ware, three sherds of

Central Gaulish samian ware and four sherds of New Forest grey ware. The bulk of the rest of the pottery consists of 1st/3rd-century sherds of Vectis ware. None of this material is particularly useful for dating the building.

The pottery from the eaves-drip gully (8328) is more useful for such dating. Forty mainly large and fresh looking sherds (386 g) came from the feature and include the following pieces:

Fig. 9 no.16. New Forest grey ware everted-rim cooking-pot with black slip on the shoulder and top of rim. Ext. rim diameter 200 mm. 8328.3

Fig. 9 no.17. Deep straight-sided bowl/dish rim in black Hampshire grog-tempered ware. Ext. rim diameter 160 mm. 8328.7

White- and black-slipped New Forest cooking-pot sherds are indicative of the fact that some at least of the occupation of the building dates to before AD 350, as the Portchester evidence suggests that use of white/black firing slip on New Forest grey ware cooking-pots phased out after that date (Fulford 1975, 100). The Hampshire grog-tempered ware dish is of a type more current before AD 370 than after that date, when deep convex-sided forms made their appearance. A Vectis ware sherd may be residual, but if not it would also have to be earlier than the end of the industry during the mid-4th century.

On this basis a date range of c AD 300–370 might be suggested for the life of the building with the proviso that the absence of later pottery does not necessarily mean that occupation did not continue after that date.

Miscellaneous assemblages

The chalk-packed post hole alignment (8309, 8313, 8314, 8315, 8316, 8317 and 8332). Only post holes (8309 and 8315) produced any pottery. The chalk packing of post hole 8309 produced three sherds including a chip of BB1 and a fragment of late grog tempered ware with white siltstone grog. The packing of post hole (8315) also produced three sherds including two abraded sherds of Vectis ware. These sherds indicate that the post hole alignment is no earlier in date than the last quarter of the 4th century and could be post-Roman.

The gravel spread paths (8323 & 8324). The three

sherds of pottery from the gravel spread (8323) include a medieval flagon sherd with splashed green glaze and indicate a 13th-century or later date for this feature. Gravel spread (8324) had no pottery associated with it at all.

Occupation inside the ditched enclosure (8300). This unstratified context produced 53 comminuted sherds of pottery, ranging in date from the Iron Age to the 18th century. None of the sherds are drawable, but show occupation throughout the Roman period. Of particular interest are two sherds of grey-black 'chaff-tempered' pottery fragments of 5th/7th-century date. These were found in a small hollow contemporary with the chalk-packed post alignment, indicating Early/Middle Saxon occupation on the site. The 14 medieval and post-medieval sherds are probably the result of field marling. There were also 21 fragments of fired clay, which may be derived from the pot-firing kiln beneath context (8301).

Other Roman pottery by Kevin Trott

A pre-Flavian stamped vessel (Fig. 10)

A single stamped sherd (1812.13) from a thick-walled, closed vessel was found in the gully of a circular structure (8312). The sherd was heavily abraded but still retained its embossed decoration. The fabric is a soft, micaceous, finely grog-tempered grey ware with a creamy external surface. There is no trace of any slip on the sherd or the decoration.

The stamped decoration on the exterior shows no signs of being applied, although the nature of the sherd's abrasion within the soil may indicate that it was once applied. The decoration resembles the hind legs and tail of a horse in full gallop. The treatment of the horse resembles the Iron Age representations found on Armorican and Duro-



Fig. 10 Pre-Flavian stamped vessel. Scale 1:2

trigian coins. Comparative parallels to this sherd are found in a similar stamped vessel of a contemporary date, excavated in the settlement at Kelvedon, Essex (Rodwell 1988, 107, Fig. 82). The Brading vessel was probably a bowl with a black burnished micaceous surface, and a proto-type copy of a Terra Nigra vessel.

Allowing for the scarcity of these pre-Flavian stamped vessels in Britain, the Brading example may indicate a prestigious gift or good trading networks with neighbouring Gaul.

Amphorae

A single body sherd from the flat-bottomed southern Gaulish amphorae form Gauloise type 4 (Laubenheimer 1985). Later 1st–3rd century. 8308.2

Three body sherds from the squat, globular-shaped Dressel 20 olive oil container from Baetica region in southern Spain (Peacock & Williams 1986, Class 25). Two sherds (8300.1 & 8310.3) are probably from the same vessel, a further example was found in the courtyard building (8331.5).

The post-Roman pottery (8300.54) by Mark Stedman

Two badly abraded hand-made thin-walled body sherds of uncertain form were submitted for examination. These were examined with a $\times 8$ lens with a built in scale. The sherds were found to be of the same fabric, probably originating from the same vessel.

A light brownish grey (2.5 Y 5/6) thin walled body sherd with a smooth soft fabric (mainly of a clay paste) and an irregular to laminated fracture. Sub rounded to sub angular milky and translucent quartz inclusions < 0.1 mm to 0.4 mm common to illsorted. Finely chopped and striated vegetable temper 0.1 mm to 0.2 mm abundant and illsorted. Sub rounded to striated organic seed void 1.0 mm sparse and illsorted. Rhomboidal to sub angular micaceous white sands < 0.1 mm abundant, illsorted. Rhomboidal to sub angular translucent white quartz sandstone inclusions 0.1 mm sparse and illsorted. Sub rounded dark brown iron stone pellets 0.1 mm sparse and illsorted.

The fabric seems to fit the known hand-made chaff-tempered ware tradition of the 5th/7th century. Other local sites peripheral to Brading Villa

in the East Wight district have produced similar fabrics both south and north of the median chalk downland, at Mersley Farm and Eaglehead Combe, Ashey.

Tile by Kevin Trott

During the excavation at Brading a relatively small quantity of tile (4.674 kg) was found. This consisted of ceramic roof tile (tegulae and imbrices), flue tile (tubulus and voussoir), floor tile and tessera cubes. The study of this tile collection using a $\times 2$ lens has indicated that there are six fabric types represented at Brading.

Type 1 This fabric is limited to three imbrex fragments from (8325, 8328 and 8331).

Sandy coarse fabric. Colour Munsell 4/3 5YR reddish brown & 5/6 2.5 YR red. Abundant quartz sand: sub-angular/sub-rounded grains mainly less than 0.1–0.3 mm with moderate scatter of larger grains up to 0.6 mm. Flint: small angular inclusions of white flint mostly 0.1–0.2 mm across. Iron oxides: abundant scatter of angular pellets of dark brown ferruginous ironstone, mostly 0.3–0.7 mm diameter.

Type 2 This fabric dominates the Brading assemblage, and can be found in features : (8302, 8305, 8310, 8318, 8325, 8328 and 8331).

Sandy fabric. Colour Munsell 6/6 2.5 YR light red. Abundant quartz sand with sub-angular grains mainly 0.1–0.4 mm. Iron oxides: moderate scatter of elongated dark brown pellets of ferruginous ironstone mostly 0.2–0.4 mm in diameter although a sparse collection can range up to 0.8 mm in this fabric. Clay tabular argillaceous inclusions: these dominate the fabric and some rounded argillaceous pellets can measure up to 1.2 mm diameter.

Type 3 This fabric is found in five features : (8300, 8318, 8319, 8325 and 8331).

Very sandy fabric. Colour Munsell 5/8 2.5 YR red. Very fine well-sorted sand (0.1–0.2 mm). Inclusions: fine streaks of whitish creamy clay with 5% small rounded tabular argillaceous clay pellets (0.1–0.3 mm across).

Type 4 This fabric is limited to three fragments from features (8318 and 8325).

Sandy coarse fabric. Colour Munsell 6/6 5YR reddish yellow. This fabric has a small assemblage of rounded clay tabular pellets and streaks of whitish clay. Iron oxides: abundant grains of ferruginous inclusions up to 0.1 mm across.

Type 5 This fabric was found in features (8300 and 8302).

Smooth clayey fabric. Colour Munsell 6/4 5YR light reddish brown. This fabric has a sparse collection of sub-angular sandy quartz grains (0.2–0.6 mm across) and has a transparent colour to the grains. There are traces of small flecks of ferruginous inclusions on the surface but no trace can be seen in the freshly broken sections.

Type 6 This fabric is limited to features (8300, 8310 and 8328).

Hard sandy fabric. Colour Munsell 6/3 5YR light reddish brown. This fabric has similarities to types 2 and 3 and may be a variant. Like type 2, there are the clay tabular argillaceous pellets ranging from 0.3–0.5 mm diameter, but there are also traces of a whitish streak of creamy clay. The core of this fabric is heavily reduced and small ferruginous inclusions can be traced around 0.1 mm across.

Roof Tile Both tegulae and imbrices could each be classified into four types. The fabrics all look similar to other tiles found on the island and without further analysis we can only speculate whether the tiles were made locally. Unfortunately only the fragmented face panels survived from the tegulae on this site, but the fabrics and firing techniques indicate ten tiles were present. A similar pattern to the tegulae could be identified with the imbrices. The only identifiable gable end from a mortared imbrex was located within 8331.

Flue Tile Sixteen combed fragments of box-flue tile were obtained from the site, and with this collection a single combed face panel from a voussoir was found in the fill of (8318). Careful examination of the flue tiles has indicated that the small collection was made from five fabrics. The combed designs on the flue tiles (Fig. 11) were so fragmented that only a few width measurements of the combs could be taken, of the limited combed designs, comb widths ranged from 32 to 45 mm.

Floor Tile Four small fragments of hypocaust tile or bricks were recovered from the area. All

three fragments were from fabric type 2 and the remainder from fabric type 4. The sizes and thickness (22 cm) of these forms conform to Vectensian sizes of either *lydion*, *pedalis* or *bessalis* described in detail by Tomalin (1987, 100).

Unclassified Tile Twenty one small fragments of unclassified tile was found scattered across the site during excavation.

Tesserae Twenty cubed pieces of tile were obtained from a single feature associated with combed flue tile (8310). The feature was not penetrated to any degree and only twenty examples were obtainable as a sample. Two small cubed greensand tesserae were found within feature (8331), the size of these two pieces suggesting that they come from a mosaic rather than a tessellated floor.

The tile assemblage from Brading was too small to make a reliable case-study, although the quantity of tile around the internal courtyard building suggests this was roofed in tegulae and imbrices. The small tile filled post hole (8310) situated under the car park is probably contemporary with the floors within the main west building.

Three small abraded post-medieval peg tile fragments were found within the topsoil of the car park and are probably modern.

Ironwork by Kevin Trott (Fig. 12)

Five Roman nails were recovered from the external eavesdrip gully (8328). The nail types were identified using Cleere's 1958 report on the ironwork from the 1880 excavations.

A single example of Cleere type 1 was recovered, length 6 cm with a square shank. The size of this type is a lot smaller than other examples described by Cleere. The function of type 1 would still indicate it was used for heavy-duty purposes.

A Cleere type 2 was identified (length 6.5 cm). The shank and head were rectangular in section and like type 1 it was possibly used for heavy-duty work.

Two examples of Cleere type 3 were found, together with the shank of a third example (length 7.1 cm, 6.4 cm and 4.6 cm) all exhibiting square shanks. These types of nails were associated with general-purpose usage.

Cleere type 3 nails were recorded in late Roman levels at Newport and Rock villas (Tomalin 1987, 75). Type 3 nail heads with a diameter of 15 mm

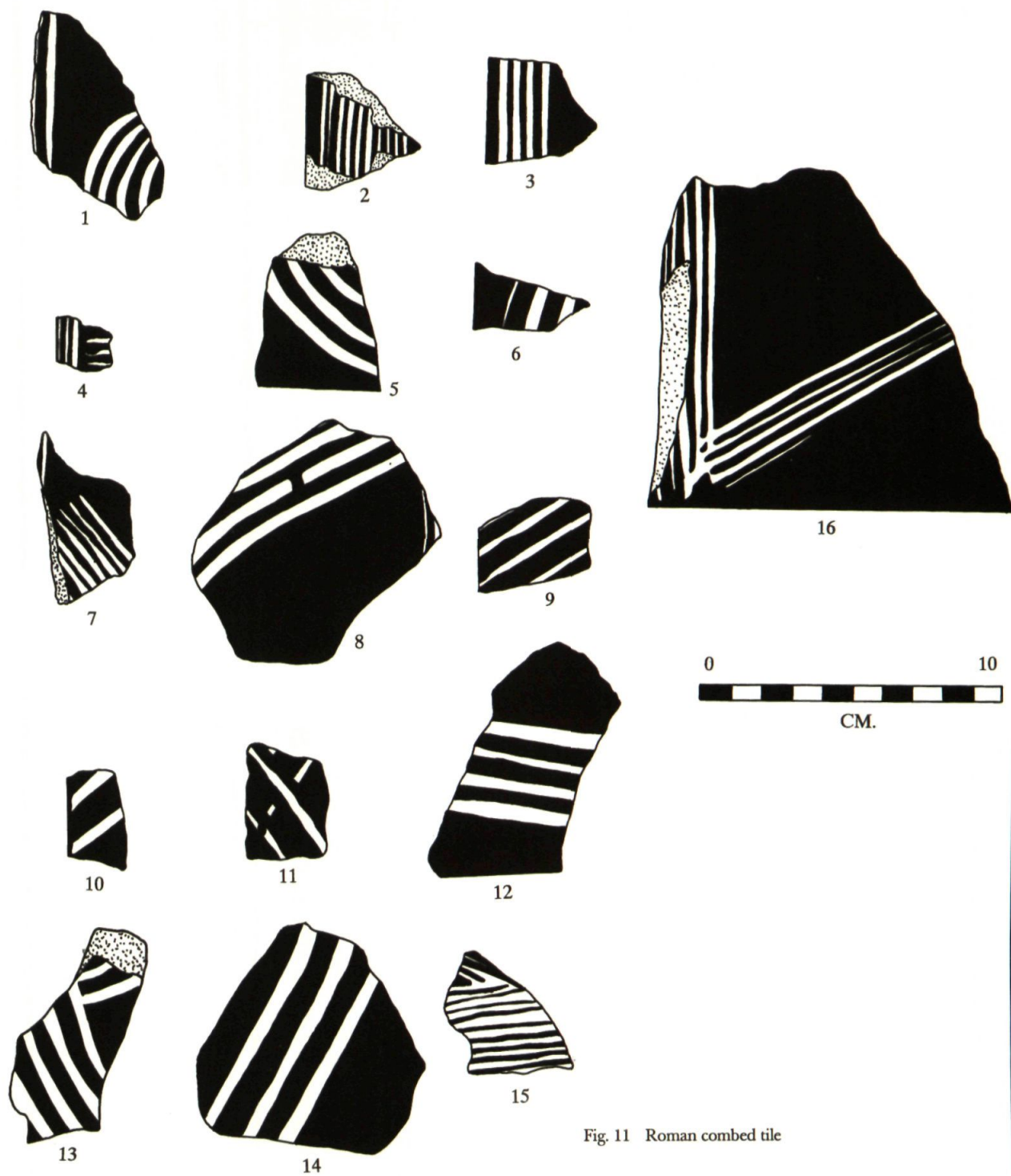


Fig. 11 Roman combed tile



Fig. 12 Ironwork. Scale 1:1

have been recorded rusted into Bembridge limestone roof slabs at both Brading and Combley villas.

The three remaining items of ironwork all come from the disturbed layer within the car park (8300). Two of the items are of Victorian or modern barbed wire fencing, but the third example is more interesting. This resembles a Late Roman iron fastening loop with splayed arms (length 41 mm). A parallel to this was found in the 1880 excavation at Brading. The example found in the Victorian excavation was found looped over a L-shaped bracket which has been tentatively attributed to a window shutter (Tomalin 1987, 74).

Iron Smelting

Nine fragments of Roman industrial slag were found, indicating iron smelting within the vicinity. Eight fragments of tap slag were found on the late general stripped area of the car park (8300). The ninth example of tap slag was located from within the courtyard building (8331). This type of slag is commonly associated with smelting (Morgan 1985, 78; Cleere 1970).

Glass by Kevin Trott

Three small fragments were recovered from the site. A possible chip from a Roman pale green vessel was obtained from within the internal courtyard building (8331). Two other fragments of glass came from (8300). These are post-medieval and modern in date.

Painted wall plaster by Kevin Trott

Two small fragments of painted wall plaster were found during the excavation. A single pinkish-white (8/2 7.5YR) fragment was found close to the tessera-filled post hole (8310). The second example in a pale red (6/4 5R) was found within the wall-fall of the internal courtyard building (8331).

Faunal remains by Kevin Trott

Marine bivalves

Five complete oyster shells were recovered from the site around the investigated courtyard com-

plex. Two single upper valves came from within the courtyard building (8331) and outside the courtyard wall (8325). The remaining three lower valves came from within the external eavesdrip gully (8328), the three lower valves had traces of a small marine worm called *Polydora ciliata*. This type of worm is common in sandy clay sediments and thrives in warm shallow waters. The nearest location could have been within the flooded Haven of Brading or its watery environs.

Mammal bones

A meagre total of six fragmented animal bones was recovered – too small to draw a meaningful conclusion.

A single fragment of a cattle molar from (8300).

Eight fragments from two cattle molars were recovered from amongst the discarded pots in feature (8322).

A small snapped shaft from a cattle metacarpal was found within a late Roman layer outside the courtyard wall (8325).

Two pig bones were recovered from the external eavesdrip gully (8328). These comprised of a single rib and a fragmented lower right mandible with premolars 1 and 2 present.

A small butchered fragment of a cattle long bone was obtained from within the internal courtyard building.

Prehistoric lithics by Kevin Trott

A total of 23 lithics was found, including a single end scraper from within a Late Roman surface outside the courtyard wall (8325). Nine retouched waste flakes were found scattered across the site in a variety of features. This was accompanied by nine remaining waste flakes, again within residual layers. A Late Neolithic flint core was found in ditch (8301), and an unfinished Bronze Age flint barbed-and-tanged arrow head was collected from the Early Roman oven (8318). This small collection of lithics denotes Late Neolithic and Bronze Age activity within the environs. All the flint work was found intrusive within Iron Age and Roman levels.

DISCUSSION

The first occupation at Brading occurs during the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age, when early

farmers were working flint in this area. Field-walking by the Isle of Wight Archaeological Unit and English Heritage has recorded generous scatters of lithics within the fields surrounding the villa (Busby 1994), but unfortunately there has been no prehistoric pottery to characterise this early phase of activity.

A second phase of occupation at Brading occurs during or before the Late Iron Age. This is represented by the possible construction of a square enclosure ditch in the north-east corner of the field known as the 'Middle Paddock'. This ditch was silted up around the 1st century BC when a group of timber structures and gullies was recorded in the car park area.

Late Iron Age occupation at Brading was encountered during excavations conducted in 1995, and took the form of a shallow gully containing Late Iron Age pottery and large quantities of daub (Loader 1995, 30; Trott 1995). The current investigations on the car park site confirm an Iron Age date for the ditch (8301). The top fill was not penetrated to any degree, but a few ceramics were found, all Late Iron Age in date. Above the top fill of this ditch two circular structures were found. Structure 8312 appeared to be the remains of a small drainage ditch associated with a possible small Late Iron Age round structure. The second structure was represented by five post-holes (8306, 8307, 8308) two of which may indicate the threshold of a doorway (8302, 8305). The post-holes produced Late Iron Age pottery, together with undated charcoal from within the threshold features. It is possible that these burnt terminals may represent door posts associated with the entrance to a Iron Age round house some 6.5 m in diameter. The third structure (8303), like feature (8312), survived as a shallow gully filled with Late Iron Age pottery and daub. Unlike the two previous structures this was situated to the west of the filled ditch and had suffered considerable damage by modern ploughing.

The three circular structures are probably the remains of Late Iron Age buildings. Another gully was found during the 1995 excavation and situated around 25 m to the west of the car park site. It might be conjectured that the complex is a small Late Iron Age farmstead pre-dating the construction of the villa. The small circular oven (8318)

and clamp kiln (8322) were dug into the fill of the ditch's circular terminal and might be later features of this settlement.

If pottery production was practised within the late Iron Age farmstead it could be suggested that we are seeing the emergence of a small industrial centre serving a local or wider community. Similar questions have been raised about salt production within the neighbouring site of Redcliff (Tomalin 1990, 102–3) and the Romano British site at Yaverland (Trott & Connell forthcoming; cf also Trott in prep. a). Such sites present a possible scenario in which small settlements established themselves as rural industrial centres serving a localised community which might continue throughout the Roman period.

The third phase of occupation found within the 1997 excavations was identified beneath the path connecting the villa with the car park. Here evidence was found of the courtyard wall and rear wall of an internal facing building. The survival of a foundation trench and Roman pottery mortared within the chalk footings, support a post-AD 300–330 date for the construction. Taking into account the rear wall of the internal building and its associated exterior eaves-drip, this could place important construction work at Brading in the mid-late 4th century.

From the new work and the final Victorian ground plans of the 1900 report (Fig. 13; Price & Price 1900), it may be argued that here we are seeing some evidence of the villa's final plan. This includes information supporting the suggestion that buildings surrounded all sides of its courtyard. The main two-storey corridor house would face a range of buildings and an entrance on the opposite side of the courtyard. Towards the north and south of the courtyard were situated two subsidiary buildings completing the courtyard plan.

The late flowering of construction at Brading Villa with its mosaics and buildings stands out from other known villa sites on the Island (Tomalin & Hanworth 1998; Trow 1996). The villas at Newport, Rock, Combley and Carisbrooke appear to have been in decline by the mid 4th century. This is intimated by the pottery and coinage evidence (Malcolm Lyne, pers. comm.; Lyne unpub.; Tosdevin 1992, 12–13; Tomalin 1977).

Decline at both Newport and Rock seems to have involved demeaned occupation and a functional change in the use of the standing structures. A late upsurge in building activities at Brading cannot be explained by the limited new evidence encountered in relation to the current data from the villa. Tomalin has suggested that the owner or tenant at Brading gained success through a number of specialised activities (Tomalin & Hanworth 1998; cf also Branigan 1988). This would have involved not only arable and pastoral farming but, perhaps, vine cultivation. This is conjectured by the presence of large grinding stones found in the 1880 excavation (Price & Price 1881), and also the proximity of modern vineyards surrounding the villa today.

Another possible specialisation was maritime trade. This is inferred by the number of imports to the villa and the presence of boat hooks and maritime themes within the mosaics. The villa is also close to Brading Haven (Tomalin, *pers comm*; cf also Trott 1996).

The upsurge of late investment at Brading could fit into Professor Martin Millett's suggestion that the 4th century was a period of prosperity, 'when there was increasing social and economic differentiation accompanied by the separation of the richer aristocracy from the remainder of the Romano-British society' (Millett 1990, 227). The evidence put forward by Tomalin and Millett may help us to understand the investment in new buildings at Brading during such a late stage of the Roman period.

During the late 4th century or the emerging post-Roman period, dramatic changes had transformed the lifestyles of the villa owners. It was perhaps during this late stage that the construction of a possible post-built structure was commenced on the excavated coach park site. An alignment of seven chalk-packed post-holes ran across the site at *c.* 2 m intervals. Post-holes (8309, 8313, 8315, 8316) produced timber voids measuring up to 30 cm square. The pottery from the top fills of these post-holes consisted of very eroded late 4th-century sherds. Nearby on the same level, two pieces of badly abraded 5th/7th-century chaff-tempered pottery were found.

Taking into account the eroded nature of the late-Roman sherds we could be seeing evidence of

a post-villa structure of late-Roman, sub Roman or Early Anglo-Saxon date. The spatial relationship between the excavated structure and the villa building at Brading is similar to that of a late-4th century building found in the vicinity of the villa site at Sparsholt, Hampshire (Stedman, *pers comm*; Johnston in prep.).

When the site was excavated at the coach park no trace could be found of a second alignment which might accord with the construction of an aisled hall of Romano-British type (Morris 1979, 129–146). The stout nature of the timber alignment and packing would certainly suggest a substantial structure rather than a simple fence or property boundary. There was no indication of side walls or associated post holes to support the idea for a possible building. As yet, if this was a structure of Anglo Saxon date, it could resemble the centre posts of a large hall house in which minor side wall posts had been regrettably ploughed away. With the possible continuance or close proximity of activity at Brading during the Early Anglo-Saxon period it is difficult to understand why the site's prosperity seems to have declined so rapidly within the later 4th century.

Taking into account Professor Millett's ideas of the wealthy aristocracy continuing to dominate societies into the post-Roman period (Millett 1990, 227), we could be detecting a shift from an elite dominated society, towards a system which is more akin to that of a rural feudal nature. This approach to activities at Brading during the late Roman period must be seen in the context of the new archaeological evidence from the site. These include the possibility of a hall house, as mentioned above, and structural changes within the main west wing of the villa itself (Fig. 13). The building was subject to change when the entrance wall was demolished and the partition walls were erected between rooms 7 and 9, 6 and 3. Rooms 4 and 8 were also demolished at a time when the functional requirement of the building had changed and its new secondary uses had taken precedence. Around this period, a malt drying oven was inserted into the tessellated floor of the corridor. Another possible oven was installed at the east end of the north wing. Similar late 4th-century malt drying kilns have been recorded at the Roman site of Packway near Newchurch

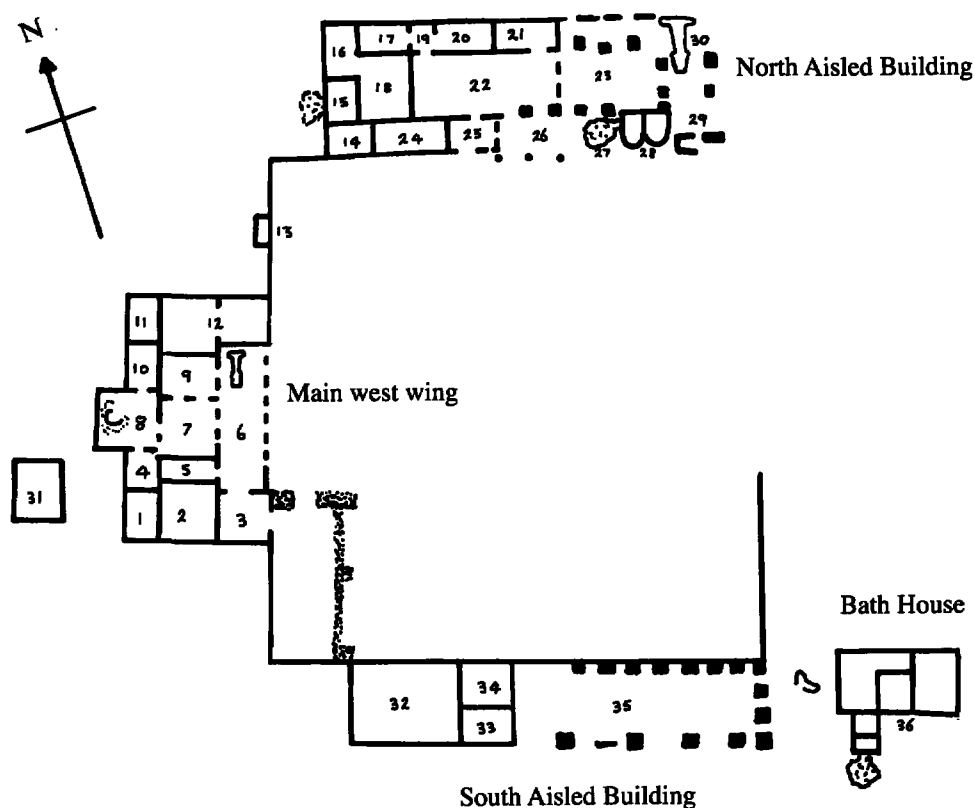


Fig. 13 Plan of the 1881-1900 excavations (after Price & Price 1900)

(Tomalin 1989, 43-55; Trott in prep. b) and at the Rock Roman villa site at Brighstone (Lyne unpub, 23 in Tomalin in prep.).

David Tomalin has suggested that the good preservation of the mosaics in rooms 9 and 12 may have been due to the storage of cereal crops which were heaped up upon these once prestigious floors. The late Roman finds of iron pointed ard socks and other ploughing implements like the single asymmetric share found within the ground floor of the west wing (Dark & Dark 1997, 103), could help suggest that this building was turned over for agricultural storage purposes in the late 4th century.

Any later occupation within the courtyard villa is only speculative but we could suggest that the

gravel spread in the south-west corner of the of the courtyard (Tomalin 1987, 22, fig 9) may have surrounded a timber building which was abutted to the south east wing of room 3. The broken down wall of room 3 was possibly the entrance into the villa from this structure.

Other late features at Brading could include the finds of human skeletal remains in rooms 5 and 6 of the west wing. These might be compared to the late post-Roman burials dug into the Palace site at Fishbourne in West Sussex (Cunliffe 1971, 193-194; 1998, 147). A similar Island example was found within the corner of room 12 at Newport Roman Villa (Tomalin 1987, 18; 1977). The practice of burial within derelict villas is not uncommon. John Percival observes that burials are



Fig. 14 Magnetometer survey of the environs of the Roman Villa (from Busby 1994, with permission). The SW sector of the survey corresponds with the excavated area (see Fig. 2)

commonly found scattered, apparently at random, within abandoned villas and that building debris were used to line the graves. The practice of inhumation burial in these circumstances is commonly carried out without grave goods (Percival 1976, 185).

CONCLUSION

Recent investigations at Brading have produced the first securely stratified assemblages of finds from the villa. These help us to understand the bulk of unstratified pottery and structural remains which were found in the late 19th century. The car park excavation has indicated the presence of a possible pre-villa settlement downslope from the later masonry villa. This settlement possibly continued up until the late 1st or early 2nd century, when a masonry building was established up-slope from the earlier settlement (Tomalin 1987, 25).

During the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD the villa began to establish itself with fields turned over to agricultural use. This assertion can be based on the magnetometer survey results (Fig. 14; Busby 1994), and the known chalk downland field systems (Dark & Dark 1997, 74). The villa at Brading continued to grow and develop until the early 4th century when it reached its final form as a single courtyard villa with internal facing buildings. During the late 4th century the site seems to have entered into the general economic decline of late Roman Britain.

Brading at this time was still an agricultural establishment with malt drying and the processing of cereal crops more than likely derived from its surrounding fields (Dark & Dark 1997, 145). It is unclear whether the main west wing still had an inhabitable upper storey during the late phase, or whether the occupation of the site centred purely upon the surrounding buildings.

The site of the villa at Brading could fit into a long lasting occupation pattern similar to that seen

at the site of the Roman building at Meonstoke in Hampshire (King in prep.; Stedman in prep.). At this site, agricultural activities persisted into the Mid Anglo-Saxon period with a shifting settlement pattern of site occupation (Hamerow 1993; Johnston 1998, 106), suggested by the presence nearby of sunken featured buildings and post-built structures (Hughes 1986) and the siting of two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries.

Other finds of a general occupation nature are hinted at by the discovery of various Mid Anglo-Saxon coins and metalwork found in close proximity to Brading Haven. The earliest documentary evidence pertaining to Brading mentions the site of the nearby manor of *Whitefield* in AD 683 (Winter 1991, 183). The *Whitefield* manor maybe the northern neighbour of a possible predecessor to the medieval manor at Morton. The modern settlement of Morton can be found directly to the east of the Brading Villa site. The place name of *Morton* (Mills 1996, 32–72) raises the question of whether the settlement shifted to the east from the abandoned site of the villa in the early medieval period. Certainly the overall archaeological evidence suggests that there has been activity at and around this site from the Late-Neolithic to the late medieval period.

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