

AN0389 Land South of Lower Road, Havant, Hampshire:

Archaeological Excavation

INTERIM SUMMARY

This interim summary presents the preliminary fieldwork results, based upon an initial consideration of the site stratigraphy, recorded features and interim dating of artefacts. The information and interpretations should be considered as provisional at this time.

The site stratigraphy

The natural geological substrate was largely uniform across the site, comprising mid yellowish-brown silty clay with occasional patches of gravel and chalk. Several large spreads of alluvium were noted in hollows of the natural substrate, typical of a former marshland environment of the South Hampshire coastal plain. These deposits generally comprised mid to dark grey clayey silt, with inclusions of flint, charcoal flecks and archaeological artefacts, suggesting that they accumulated partly during phases of nearby past activity. Both the natural and the alluvial deposits were overlain by mid reddish-brown subsoil and subsequently by mid greyish-brown sandy silt topsoil.

The identified archaeological features cut through the natural substrate, or through the alluvial deposits, where present.

The archaeology

The excavation area can be divided in two parts in consideration of the density of archaeological remains encountered: one within the north-east and the other in the south-west.

The north-east area included several archaeological features, most significantly:

- A multiple animal burial within the large, sub-rectangular pit **1007**, with a minimum number of individuals (MNI) of twenty-seven;
- Squared **Enclosure A** (comprising ditches **1024**, **1074** and **1090**), enclosing pit **1108** and the possible former structure **1083** (comprising four postholes); and
- East-north-east/west-south-west oriented ditch **1319**.

The south-west part of the site demonstrated a greater concentration and frequency of archaeological features, of which the most significant were:

- Squared **Enclosure B** (comprising ditches **1103**, **1235** and **1281**), which was possibly completed by the (natural?) feature **1272**;
- Heavily truncated ditch **1321**, running parallel to ditch **1281**;
- Sub-oval pits **1212** and **1218**, demonstrating five phases of oven use;
- Possible Romano-British sunken feature building **1102**;
- Deposit **1186**, containing a significant number of artefacts and cut by ditch **1247** and pit **1180**;
- Ditch **1322**, cutting refuse pit **1134**;
- Five rows of postholes, including, from east to west, groups **1323**, **1169**, **1200**, **1230** and **1211**, which were oriented on the same alignment as **Enclosure B** (north/south); and
- A further group of apparently randomly aligned pits and postholes **1273**, some of which contained a small quantity of calcined bones.

The recovered pottery assemblage, including a complete, medium-sized storage jar and several sherds of fine fabrics, weighed a total of 23.1kg (863 sherds). Initial examination has suggested a Late Iron Age/Roman date for all datable ceramic evidence. Furthermore, 7.4kg of animal bone was recovered and c. 80kg of burnt flint, from stratified contexts. Preliminary measurements of the animal bone recovered from pit **1007** suggest a late medieval/post-medieval date.

Initial discussion

Despite the limited surface exposed (c. 0.5ha) and the expectation of limited archaeological remains (as suggested by the preliminary evaluation trenching results), the quantity of artefacts and quantity and variety of features encountered is intriguing.

The initial evidence clearly demonstrates a concentration of activity during the Late Iron Age and Roman periods, likely including elements of industry, agriculture and possibly settlement. The surrounding environment, geological strata and features (e.g. the oven/kiln **1212/1218**) suggest that salt production may have been taking place, alongside animal husbandry. The high quantity of ceramic remains may also be associated with transportation of saltwater and salt.

Further assessment of the layout of features, artefactual assemblage and environmental samples is underway to refine the provisional theories outlined above.

