

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Institute of Archaeology Field Course 2014: The Search for the Lost Hunting Lodge of the Earls of Arundel at Downley, Singleton, West Sussex, UK

Mark Roberts*

This paper discusses research into the area of the medieval and post-medieval deer park, at Downley in West Sussex, which is the focus of the Institute's current training excavations. The excavations constitute part of a wider project attempting to learn more about the development and function of the park through time. A range of information, which indicated the presence of a substantial lodge building within the park was considered and the 2014 excavations have revealed evidence almost certainly corroborating its presence. The project will continue both on and off site in 2015.

The Institute's Field Course

Fieldwork is an essential and highly valued component of the undergraduate degree at UCL Institute of Archaeology. Students undertake seventy days of funded fieldwork, predominantly on excavations but also in museum, laboratory and archive placements. The practical work is intimately linked to the teaching of first year courses: 'Field Methods', which introduces the foundations for fieldwork, archiving and publication; and 'Field Archaeology', in which students build up a portfolio of their fieldwork and placements, culminating in two reports which are submitted in their final year of study. The combination of taught and practical elements is part of a drive towards research-led teaching in

field archaeology at UCL. Another key aspect of the undergraduate field course is the training of second and third year students as excavation and finds supervisors. Those selected are trained on-site with their first year peers, and each is responsible for their own area, finds and recording. The Masters' students' field course is a recent innovation, intended for students who have transferred from other disciplines, or those with archaeological degrees who wish to develop or expand their practical portfolio.

In 2014 the Institute of Archaeology's Undergraduate and Masters' students' field courses commenced excavations in an attempt to discover the remains of a hunting lodge within the perimeter (pale) of the Downley deer park, near Singleton in West Sussex (**Fig. 1**). The fieldwork took place between May and August 2014. An introduction to the study and preliminary results are presented here.

* UCL Institute of Archaeology, London WC1H 0PY, United Kingdom
mark.roberts@ucl.ac.uk

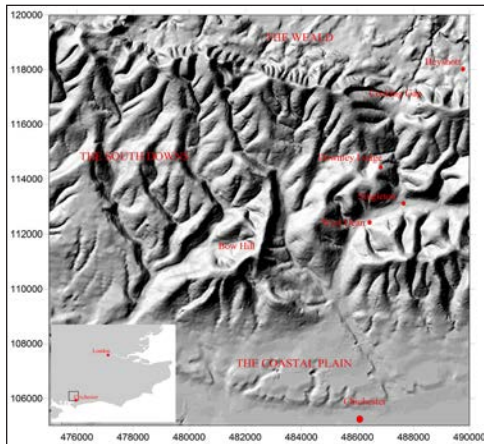


Fig. 1: Digital Terrain Model (DTM) and location map, showing the relationship of the site to the surrounding geological provinces and topography (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right [2014]).

Downley Deer Park

The deer park at Downley is one of a large number of medieval parks known from the County of Sussex (Cantor and Hatherly 1979; Dallaway 1815; Ellis 1885; Harris and Dawbis 1570). The park was constructed for and belonged to the earls of Arundel and their heirs, the Dukes of Norfolk, throughout its period of use. It then passed into other hands as part of a parcel of agricultural land in the 17th century. No licence to impark has yet been discovered but documentary evidence suggests that this must have happened sometime between 1272 and 1331. Downley was one of several downland parks within the Honor of Arundel (land, manors, tithes and rights associated with the earldom), and with the exception of Stansted, the most westerly in the county. Correspondence between the 10th and 11th earls of Arundel and prominent figures such as King Henry VIII, Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell maps and documentary evidence describing the lodge and its eventual ruins; together with chance archaeological discoveries and evidence from field walking over the past fifty years; all attested to the presence of a substantial

lodge building. This operated as a capital dwelling rather than simply a house for occasional entertaining, or quarters for the park servants.

The potential presence of a number of phased features, substantial and varied finds, the ability to combine archaeological and historical research, and clearly defined objectives, all contributed to making the site an ideal one to host a training excavation.

Location of the Park

The deer park at Downley is located in the county of West Sussex (Central Grid Reference SU 486745 114750), 8km north of the county town of Chichester and 18km north of the present day English Channel coast at Pagham (**Fig. 1**). The park is situated on the chalk hills of South Downs, the geographical and geological province, which in this area of southern England, is encompassed between the Coastal Plain to the south and the Weald to the north. The eastern two thirds of the park fall within Singleton Parish and the western third within West Dean (**Fig. 2**). The park perimeter measures 6.622km, covering an area of 261.7 hectares or 646.5 acres. The excavations were carried out in an area of grassland, designated as archaeological set-aside, where no invasive agricultural works may be undertaken. Some further trenches were located in a strip of game cover to the south of the set-aside in an attempt to assess the parameters of the lodge site.

Present day land use within the park pale is agricultural, with a mixture of arable and pasture fields, and strategically planted game crops for driven pheasant shooting. The northern part of the park is under commercial beech and softwood forestry. No trace has yet been found of medieval woodland management methods such as wood pasture or coppice with standards, although the wood at Honeycomb Copse, mentioned in correspondence from Downley during the 16th century, is still present on the north-eastern slopes of Hat Hill. The park is owned by the

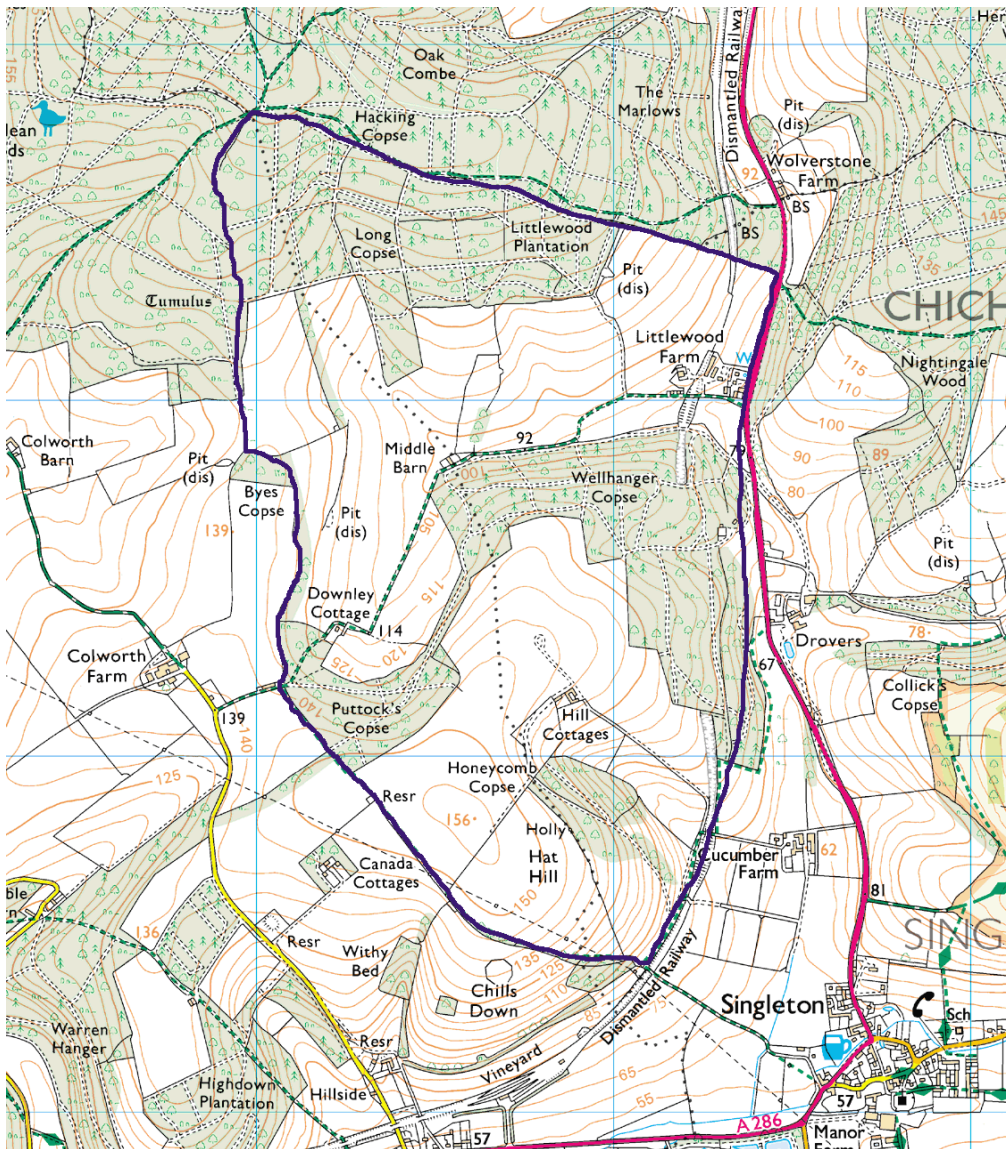


Fig. 2: Map showing the location, boundary and topography of the Downley deer park, to the NW of the village of Singleton. Blue squares = 1km². (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right [2014]).

National Trust, following a bequest made during the Second World War, and forms part of their Drovers' Estate.

Geology of the Area

The solid geology within the area of Downley Park is predominantly the Seaford Chalk (**Fig. 3**); with the Lewes Nodular and older Chalks

exposed around the south-eastern and eastern perimeter, by the Cocking-Singleton dry valley and, further south, the valley of the River Lavant (Aldiss 2002; BGS 1996). Superficial sediments comprising head gravels are present as tongues of basal dry valley sediments in the Wellhanger Valley and the Hill Cottages' Valley. The disposition of the



Fig. 3: Geology and location map for the Downley area. The lodge site is located on the Downs between Hat Hill and the Wellhanger Valley. (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right [2014]).

geology at Downley is of particular importance when considering the availability of building materials and access to fresh water.

Topography and Drainage

The highest ground in the park is in the NW corner, known as Blind Stile, where the land attains 175m OD. The ground falls away southwards eventually rising again to meet a north-eastward trending spur that is conjugate with Hat Hill. It is on this spur in the vicinity of the 140m contour that the lodge site is believed to be located.

The drainage pattern of the deer park is predominantly towards the south and eastern boundaries into the main valley systems, although most of the surface water goes directly into and through the Chalk (**Fig. 3**). To the north of Cucumber Farm at SU 875 142, a spring rises, under certain conditions, which floods the valley southwards down to

the farm. Within the park pale, the geological and topographical evidence and surviving archaeological evidence suggests that water was available only via wells dug through the chalk; one such well is recorded in the environs of the lodge (Harris and Dawbis 1570) and is further mentioned by later writers such as Elwes and Robinson (1876) and Dallaway (1815). However, inspection of the map drawn up on the order of Lord Lumley around 1630 (**Fig. 4**), indicates that two ponds might have existed within the park, one at Middle Barn and one further to the NW, both designated by green circles.

Past Archaeological Work in the Area

Very little previous archaeological work has been carried out at the site. From 1965 there is a record of a well-built drain found during ploughing, and reference to other structures

Arundel Castle Archives (ACA), MD 535. Survey of the Honor of Arundel (1570). A survey taken by Robert Harris and John Dawbis [Dobbs] servants to the Duke of Norfolk of certain of the Earl of Arundel's lands, the names whereof are hereunder written viz: Downley Park. FO39R c. 1570.

Downley Park lies in the parish of Singleton & contains by estimation 3 miles circuit there is estimated in it at this present 400 deer & the keeper now there called William Batson who has £3 10d yearly for keeping thereof at will the feed thereof is short & the ground 'brukis' meetest for deer & sheep the chief part thereof is grown with beech of 100 or 200 years growth there is situated in it an old lodge much in decay & specially the tower thereof & the same is watered with a well only in the which lodge the Earl of Arundel his father that now is did often lie there & died therein

Md that a great part of the pale thereof is newly repaired & there lies provision of riven wood for the paling the residue in which park it is to be noted that the farmer of Singleton has the feed of 20 beasts which is delivered in value at £5 per annum which is charged in the gross sum for the demesnes of Singleton in the occupation of John Perior aforesaid.

In addition to the written evidence there exists a small corpus of cartographic evidence for the park and its lodge, one such is the Lumley map shown in **Fig. 4**. The park is also clearly figured in relation to surrounding parks, villages and highways, in the map accompanying Harris and Dawbis's 1570 survey of the Honor of Arundel (**Fig. 5**). It is also clearly shown on Speed's Sussex map of 1610 and interestingly is still shown on Morden's map of 1695, although the lodge is thought to have been completely taken down by this time. By the time of Yeakell and Gardner's

Sussex mapping between 1778 and 1783, all recorded traces of the lodge and park have gone, although Cucumber Farm is present on the map and Littlewood Farm goes under its original name of Downley Farm (**Fig. 2**).

Research Objectives

The aims of the fieldwork and associated research over the next year to 2015, focus on further excavation at the lodge and within the park, continuing the documentary research and, with the National Trust, preparing an education and outreach programme.

Research into the lodge will involve both land survey and geophysical survey, and excavation to discover the footprint of the building, including features such as internal walls and drains, evidence of construction and use, as well as indication of earlier structures on the site. Survey and excavation will be used to discover more about how the park was used, to look for other structures, and for indications of woodland management and other aspects of the past parkscape.

Wider research objectives

In order to bring the Downley Project to a point where excavation was both justified and feasible it was necessary to consult and research widely during the formulation of the original research design. Analytical and comparative work on the physical configuration of the park has been drawn from the works of Cantor and Hatherly (1979), Fletcher (2011), Mileson (2009), and Taylor (2004), Shirley (1867), whilst information on the ownership of the estate and the Honor of Arundel is largely based on Dallaway (1815) and Tierney (1834). Some of these works also consider the social implications of imparkment, the social curtailment of parkmaking through sumptuary laws (Liddiard 2007), the effect of the reformation and counter-reformation, which was especially relevant for the Earls of Arundel, and the effect of the Civil War on the ownership and destruction of some Sussex parks (Thomas-Stanford 1910).

Two of the earls of Arundel, Thomas and William, died at Downley (in 1524 and 1544

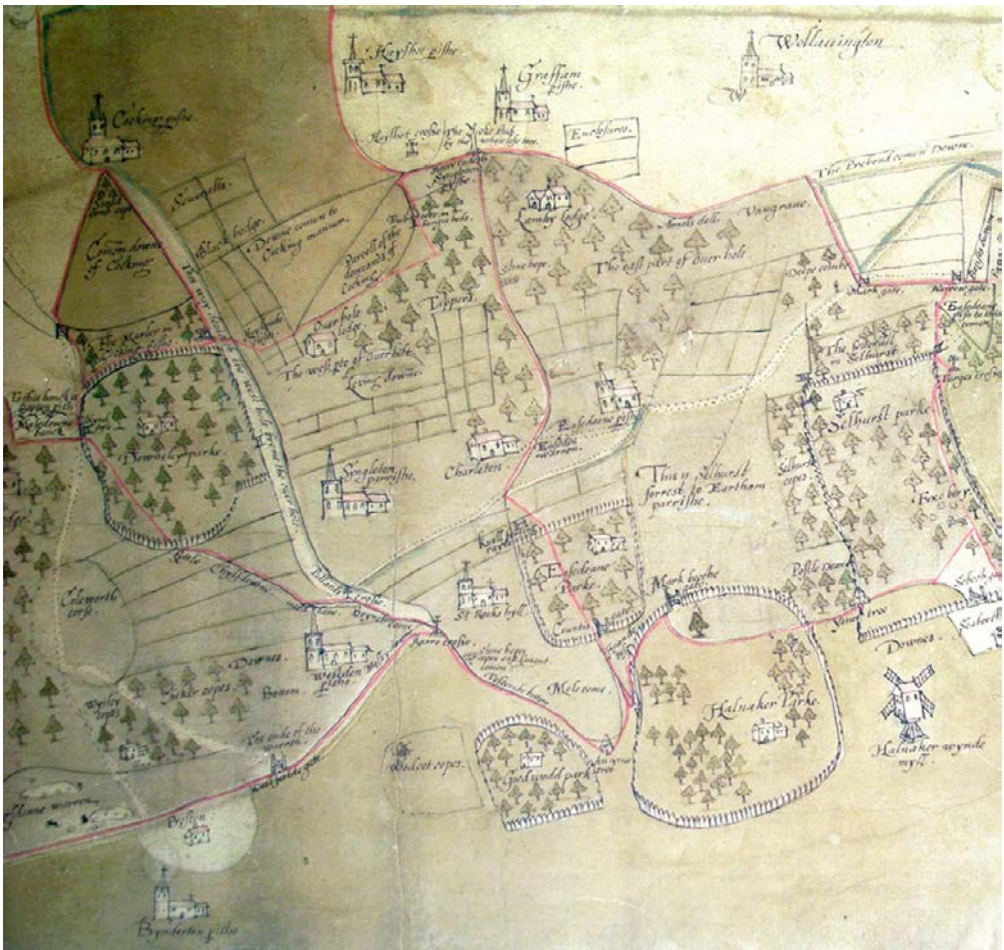


Fig. 5: Arundel Archive Map (PM 193). The park at Downley can be seen on the left of the image adjacent to the Chichester to Midhurst road. (From the Arundel Castle Archives, reproduced by kind permission of His Grace the Duke of Norfolk).

respectively) and were possibly temporarily interred in Singleton Church, where two memorials to them are preserved on either side of the altar. As mentioned above, there is a considerable volume of correspondence between the earls and Thomas Cromwell, Wolsey, and the King himself. An important question to consider is how the political and religious circumstances of the day might have led to the adoption of Downley over Arundel as the principal dwelling during the first half of the C16th. On a more prosaic level, it is hoped that the internal investigations within the park will shed more light on its function over time and allow comparison

with recent research into other parks, such as those in the Forest of Bowland (Lancashire), Dinefwe (Camarthenshire), and at Ravensdale (Derbyshire) (Neil and Thurnhill 2013; Schlee 2008; Taylor 2004).

The actual use of parks and the surrounding forest in the practice of hunting and the supply of venison and other game, such as boar, has drawn largely on the works of Fletcher (2011) and Sykes (2007); many of the technicalities of the medieval hunt are explained by Burrell (1850), and the application of forest law by Nelson (1717). Future work on the site will also require that the archaeological data is considered alongside

an assessment of the environmental and ecological development of the park landscape through time (Rackham 2006; Rotherham 2007). This study will become particularly important when considering the intra and inter economic viability of the park.

The work at Downley provides the opportunity to draw together the management aims of the National Trust, the Goodwood, West Dean and Arundel Estates, with the Institute's academic research objectives. This powerful grouping has the potential to provide the driver for a concentrated landscape scale investigation at Downley and thence into the surrounding area, one of the most chronologically and archaeologically diverse pieces of landscape in southern England. Although not in receipt of external funding, the Downley Project is run and managed following the MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment) and SHAPE (Strategic framework for Historic environment Activities and Programmes in English heritage) guidelines designed by English Heritage (2006, 2008b) which provides relevant experience for the students.

Results of the 2014 Survey and Excavations

Landscape survey

Students and staff examined the landscape around the lodge site to look for other features such as the pale, salters (Cooper 2013), lynchets and cross dykes, and piles of flint (Brown 2008) which are normally indicative of field boundaries (English Heritage 2007), and thus particularly relevant in the case of deer parks and rabbit warrens (Tittensor and Tittensor 1985). The project was able to assess the full perimeter of the pale, prove the old pond at Middle Barn (Fig. 4) and identify the landscaped area around the northern spring at Cucumber Farm, which might contain evidence for duck and stew ponds.

The excavation and associated work

Fifteen trenches were excavated, twelve within the area of the set-aside field and three within a strip of game crop to the

south of the set-aside (Fig. 6). The trenches measured 10m x 1.5m, except in the game crop where they were smaller 3m x 2m investigative test pits.

The main site base-line was laid out along the longest dimension of the set-aside field, from SW – NE (Fig. 6). No surface features were visible across the excavation area, with the exception of a recent field boundary that ran through Trench 2. A uniform plough soil of c. 0.2m was present at every trench regardless of whether the bedrock is the Chalk or Clay-with-flints, and at each location it contained a substantial quantity of roof tile and to a lesser extent brick fragments, floor tile fragments, pottery, imported stone, and other artefacts. All the trenches were opened and excavated by hand and were recorded following the standard MoLA (Museum of London Archaeology) single context system and drawing conventions (Westman 1994).

A magnetometry survey was carried out by John Cook (of Archaeology South East), in tandem with excavation, at the beginning of the project (English Heritage 2008a). The survey covered the entire area of the set-aside field but was obviously not available to inform the siting of the excavation trenches. A complete topographic survey was undertaken of the set-aside field and significant field boundaries and structures in the surrounding area. The Total Station was also used to record the position of all the trenches and the features in them.

Although all the trenches contained material in the plough soil, none of the trenches to the east or south of the main site base-line contained any evidence of structures. Trench 2 revealed a wall foundation containing dressed stone with medieval and Roman pottery but this feature was not excavated further during this season of work. Trenches 3 and 4, like those to the east simply revealed ploughsoil resting on the solid. Trench 5, when cleaned, revealed a large elliptically shaped pit, the terminal part of which was excavated. The pit appears to have been for storage, perhaps as a type of butter hole where perishable goods were stored, and

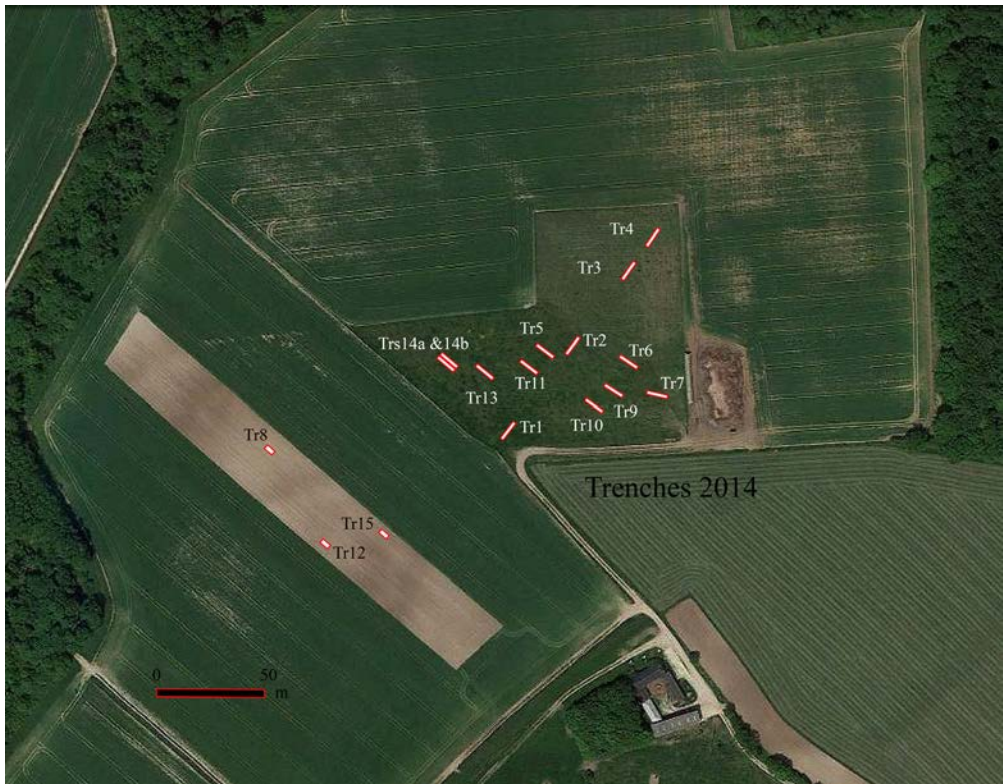


Fig. 6: Aerial image of the archaeological set-aside area and surrounding arable fields at Downley, showing the position of the 2014 trenches.

would most likely to have had a wooden plank roof during the time it was in use. The pit seems to have been deliberately backfilled over a short period of time when the site was levelled sometime in the 17th century.

Trench 11 contained two linear features that ran approximately N-S, perpendicular to the long axis of the trench (**Fig. 7**). The one running through the centre of this trench is clearly a foundation trench for a major wall, possibly the south eastern wall of the lodge itself. The stone that comprised the main wall was robbed upon abandonment or destruction of the site; its presence attested to by small flaked shards of stone, some of which exhibit dressed faces, and a large piece of building stone, probably some type of Wealden sandstone that was found at the surface of the trench.

Next to the main wall a narrow retaining or supporting wall, largely comprising chalk

blocks in a lime mortar cement, still survives. **Fig. 7** shows how these blocks have collapsed into the void left by the robbing of the main wall. The robber trench, in addition to the stone flakes, contained a large amount of bone, pottery, charcoal and other domestic rubbish, along with the same type of demolition debris found across the site and in the pit in Trench 5. There was a noticeable amount of brick from this feature but as elsewhere on the site, no complete bricks were found; complete bricks were almost certainly cleaned of their mortar and removed from the site along with the dressed stone.

Immediately to the south of Trench 11 (**Fig. 6**), a largely empty Trench 13 revealed, in addition to some Tudor postholes, a pre-historic ditch that contained a few sherds of late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age pottery and a number of pieces of knapped flint, including two end scrapers.



Fig. 7: The wall footings in Trench 11. The main wall cut on the right has been robbed of its stones and the carved chalk blocks of the retaining wall (centre) have collapsed into the resulting void. Note the difference in the disposition of the demolition rubble either side of the wall.



Fig. 8: Trenches 14a and b looking SE, showing internal footing trenches, postholes and pits.

Trench 14 to the west revealed a series of shallow linear structures and was doubled in size to include Trench 14b, which in addition to linear structures also contained a number of post holes and pits (**Fig. 8**). Initial interpretation of this partially excavated area suggests that these are internal building structures and that the main western wall of the lodge must lie to the west of them towards the edge of the set-aside field. In a similar manner to elsewhere on site, the primary sedimentation in the features was overlain by demolition debris, which was presumably used to level the site off. The linear trenches might well have been for the siting of oak sill beams upon

which the internal walls of the lodge were constructed.

The finds

Finds were recovered either directly from the excavation (**Fig. 9**), with the exception of the die which was recovered by flotation, or from the flotation of the sediment from cut features.

The bulk of the finds are roof tiles and mortar, much of which is assumed to have been cleaned from the bricks as the lodge was taken down, but other finds such as glassware and some of the pottery attest to the high status of the site in the 16th century. The most common evidence of food-stuff consists of oyster shells and the bones of deer, bovids and other domesticates. Finds from flotation samples were sent off to relevant specialists and full analysis is awaited. Preliminary analysis of the fish remains indicates that some at least are marine in origin and include clear identifiers such as ray spines and wrasse teeth.

The students attending the field courses process the finds as part of specialist teaching but also as part of their general excavation activities (**Fig. 10**). They also participate in flotation and the sorting of residues and thus see all the major components of the excavation process.

The field course aims to equip the students and supervisors with the experience and skills required not just to attend other projects but to devise and run their own fieldwork. The combination of living in camp and working with their peers outside the normal academic milieu, adds a new element to the course and together with the experience of excavation provides what is generally agreed to be an enjoyable introduction to the practical side of the discipline.

Conclusions

The excavation during 2014 has revealed evidence for a high status Tudor building, which is almost certainly the capital messuage or hunting lodge of the earls of Arundel at Downley. The building sits within



Fig. 9: Various finds from the site, from top left; Venetian glassware, a musket ball, an ivory die, lead came (window lead), a sherd of Sieberg ware, copper alloy pins, the rim of a lacquer drinking cup, and a boar tusk.



Fig. 10: Processing finds at the West Dean excavation headquarters.

a well-defined park pale, although there is a suspicion that the south eastern part of the pale may have contracted at the end of the 16th or early 17th centuries, allowing the land around Cucumber Farm to be let out for grazing to the villagers of Singleton. The park, in terms of its game probably had a dual role, as a place where controlled hunting took place, especially when the Earls of Arundel were entertaining:-

...and whilst at Arundel in August 1526, Lord De La Warr declared that

he was determined to make the king “right greater cheer”. The king stayed with him at Halnaker, near Chichester, where De La Warr had imparked 300 acres in 1517. The court moved on to **Downley**, another residence of the earl of Arundel, and subsequently to Warblington, home of the countess of Salisbury (Samman 1995).

but also as a place that, along with the other Fitzalan parks to the east, could supply game to the great Forest of Arundel, where the ultimate form of hunting or free chase was practised (White 2012).

The period of the abandonment and destruction of the lodge is unknown, the ruins were still extant in 1739, when the ‘Grand Chase’ of the Charlton Hunt passed by the site (Rees 1998), further 18th century evidence of the ruins being still visible, is found in the West Dean Parish perambulation records (Ede 1997a). By 1896 (Anon) the site had passed into mystery and was sometimes known as ‘Troy Town’, and the connection with the earls of Arundel almost forgotten.

From the initial excavations it may be stated that the building was probably largely brick built on stone sills. From the surviving brick fragments it is clear that some black glazed bricks were used and that these were probably laid in patterns in the external walls. The roof comprised clay peg tiles, most of which were apparently broken when the roof collapsed. The presence of a brick built tower is as yet unsubstantiated by excavation but is described in the survey of the Honor of Arundel (Harris and Dawbis 1570). Very few pieces of wall plaster have been recovered but some of these exhibit a faint trace of pigment. There are at least three types of flooring recovered from the site: glazed floor tiles, plain floor tiles and stone flags; the floor tiles all have the characteristic nail impressions on their underside to stop explosions in the kiln from destroying a whole batch of tiles.

The excavations at Downley in 2014 have proved a substantial success from both

teaching and research perspectives and have gone a long way to achieving the research objectives set out earlier in this paper. The Institute's field courses are set to return to the site in the summer of 2015, when the objectives will be to trace and delineate the outer walls and map the internal structures of the house.

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