



# The Bridge Farm site is just south of Barcombe Mills

3.5k north of Lewes, in open farmland in an arcing bend of the River Ouse





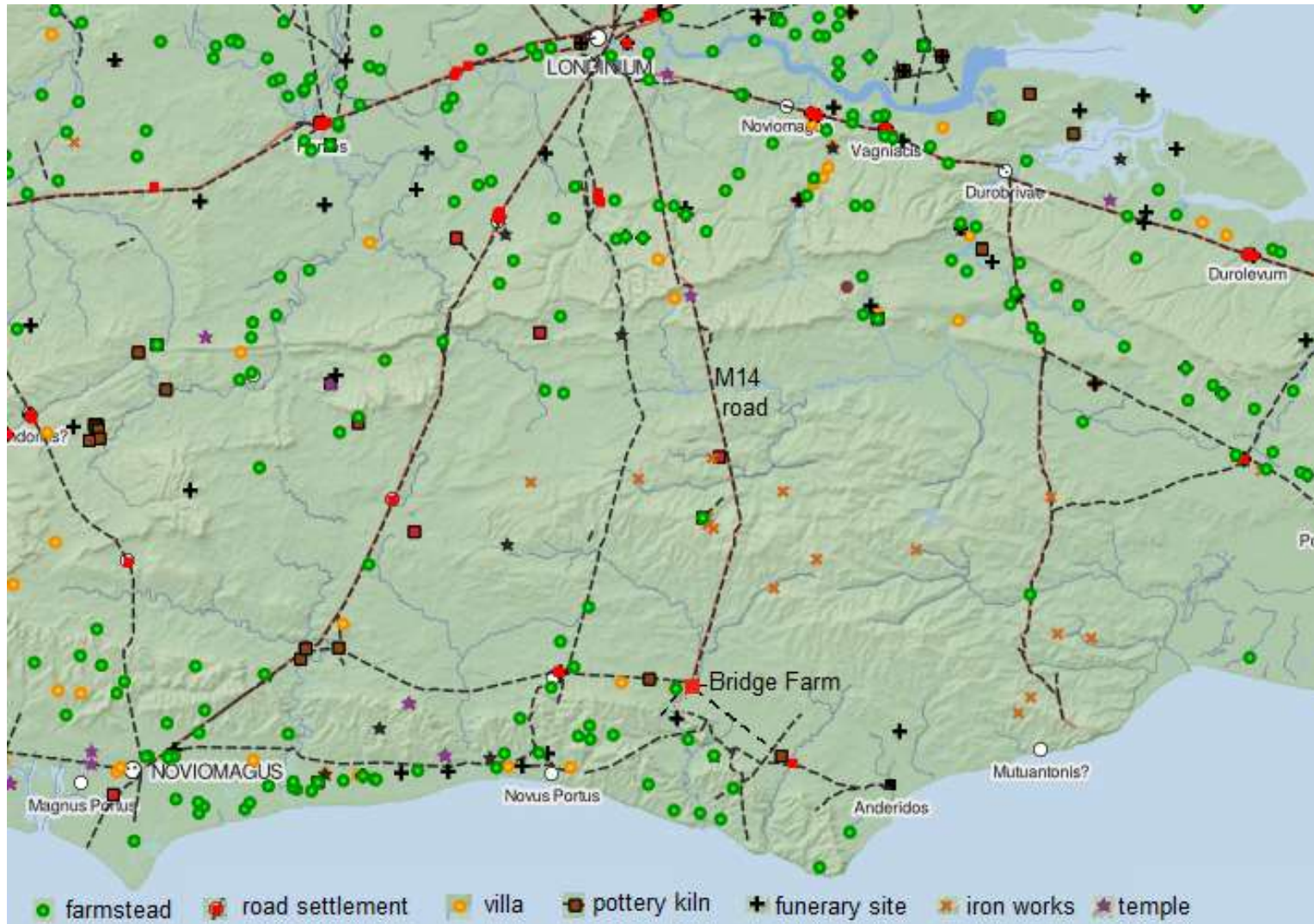
# The Bridge Farm has been extensively geophysically (MAG)

This image supplied by David Staveley shows the extent of the main enclosure, field boundaries and the northern and eastern roads and roadside activity





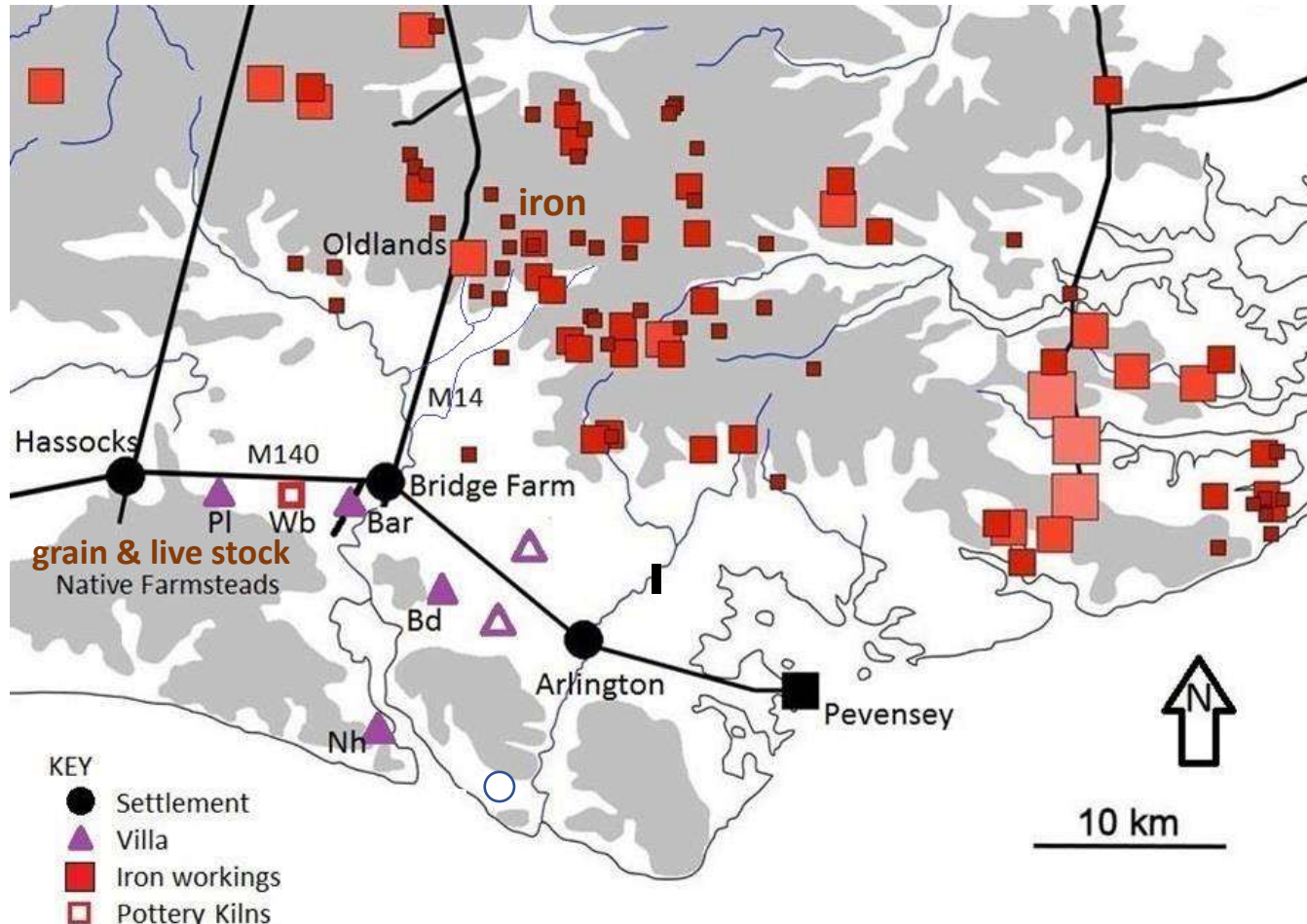
# How does Bridge Farm fit into the Roman period context?



**The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain: an online resource**

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/romangl/map.html>

# A Romano-British site in an agricultural area but linked to Wealden iron and the Channel



- KEY
- Settlement
  - ▲ Villa
  - Iron workings
  - Pottery Kilns

Margary road numbers: M14 London-Lewes (Bridge Farm), M140 The Greensand Way  
 Abbreviations: PI Plumpton, Wb Wickham Barn, Bar Barcombe, Bd Beddingham, Nh Newhaven

Roman roads and iron workings in the Weald (J. Hodgkinson 1999)

Estimated iron output from slag heap volume

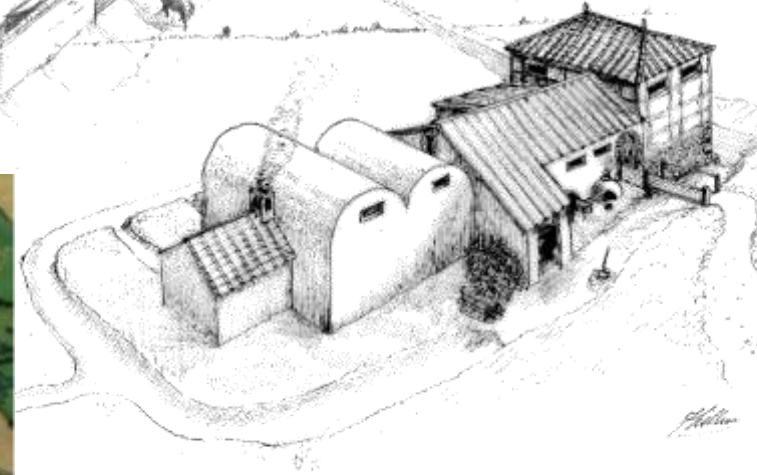
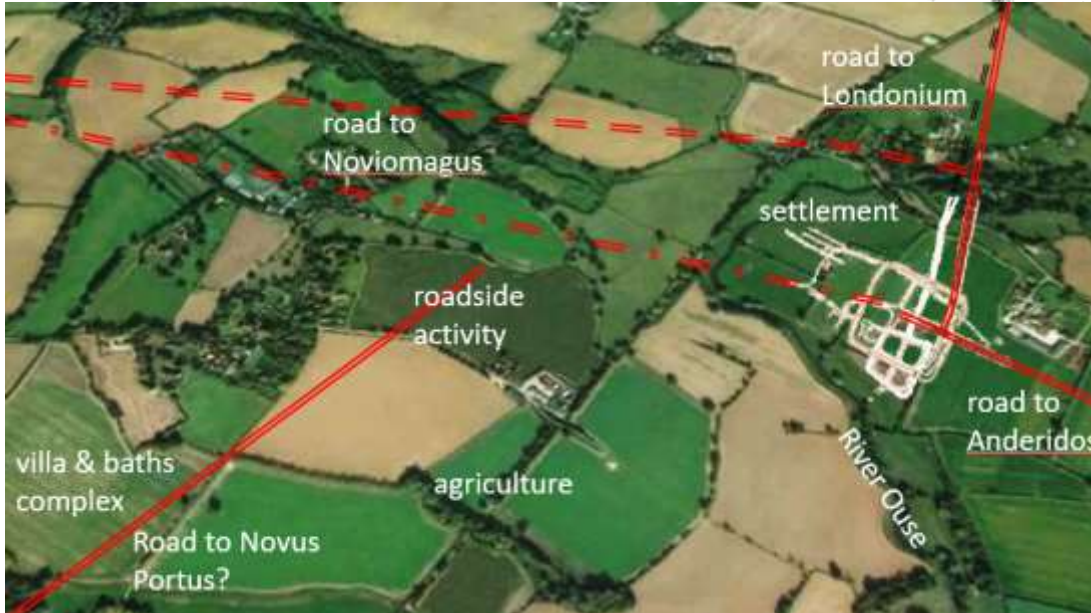
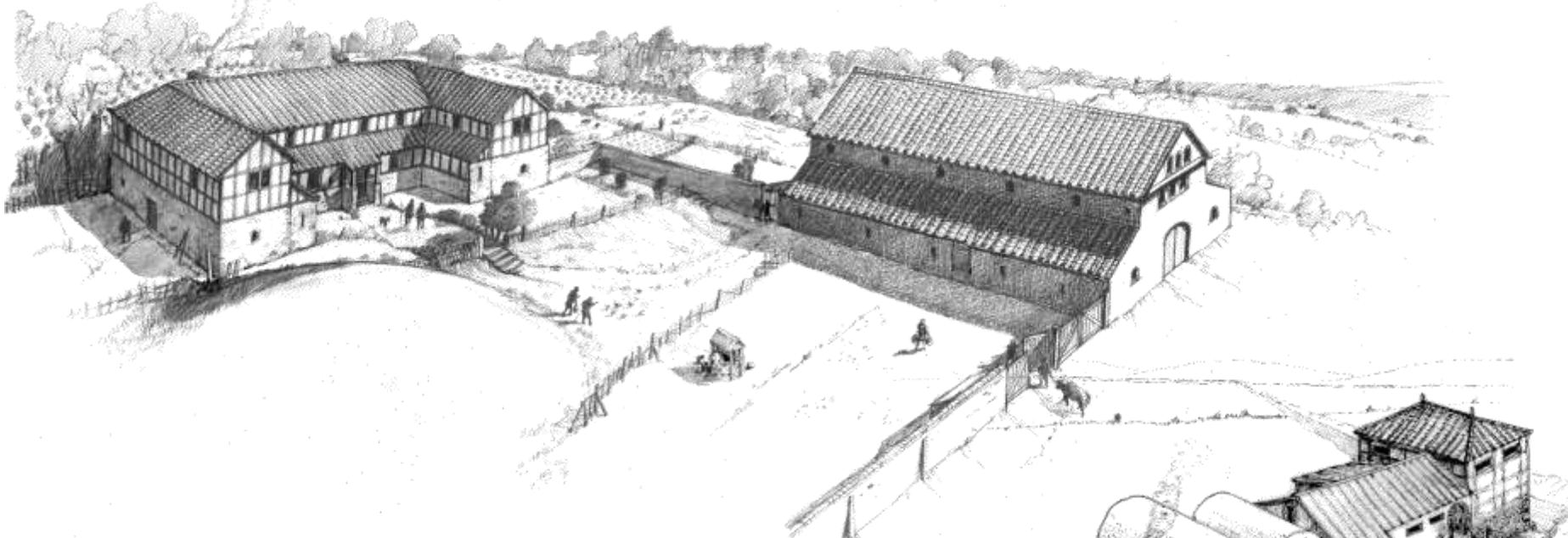
- <100m<sup>3</sup>
- >100m<sup>3</sup>
- >1,000m<sup>3</sup>
- >10,000m<sup>3</sup>

## But don't forget Agriculture

Whilst grain was exported from Britain to the Continent in the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> it became crucially important at times in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries



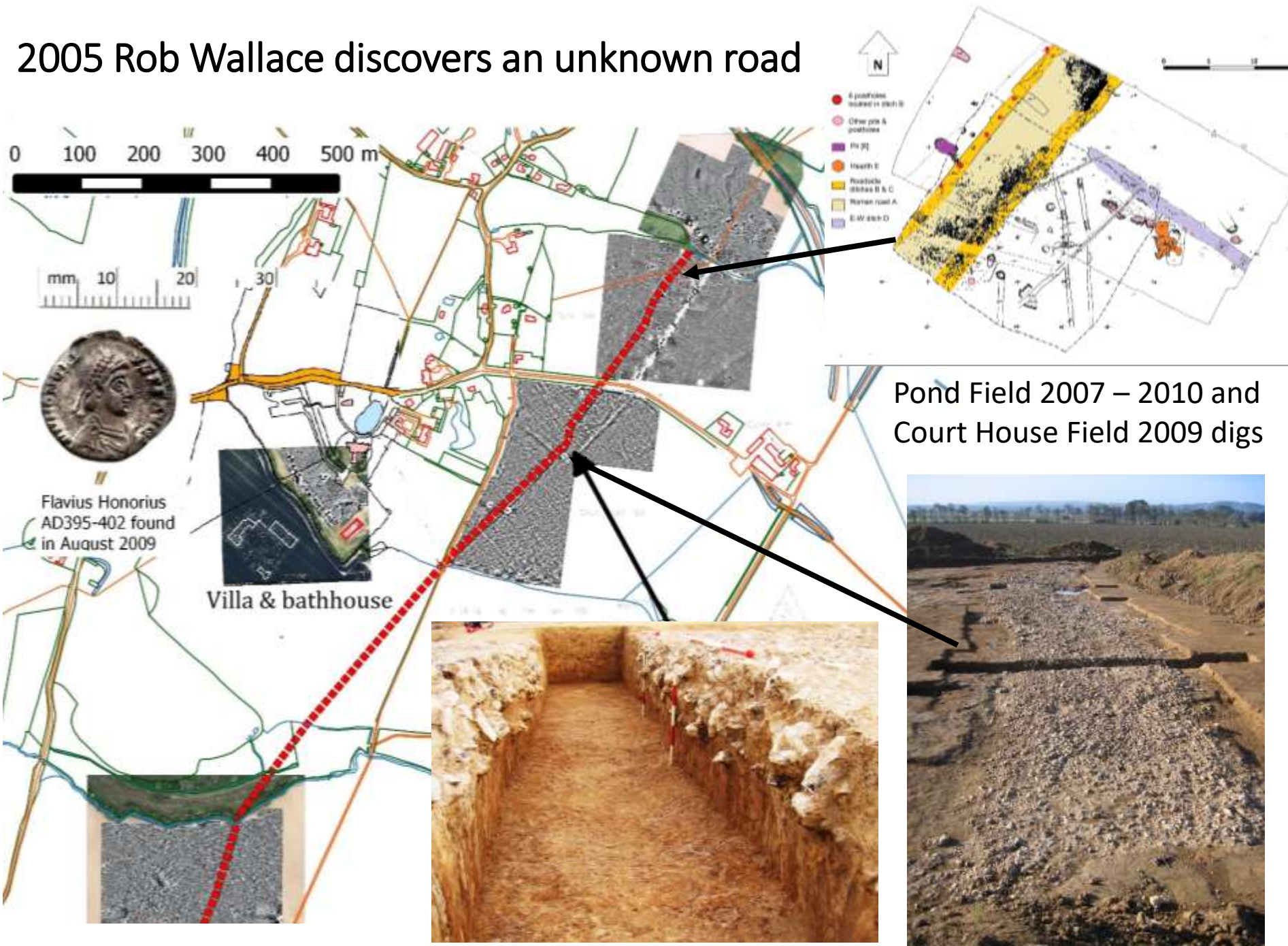
# A villa complex with detached bathhouse on the west bank



Plus a substantial flint built road heading past the villa towards the Downs and possibly even on to coast ?

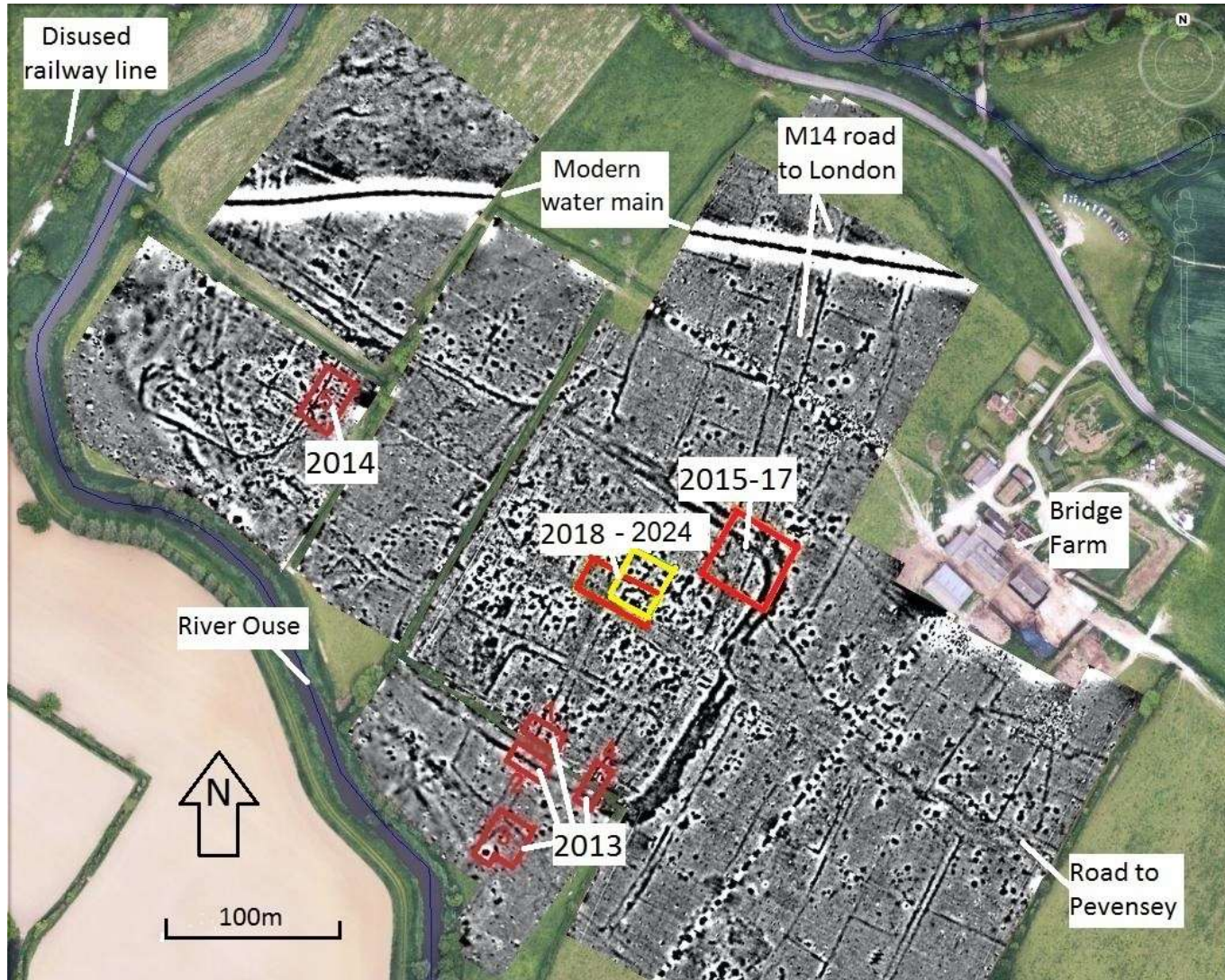


# 2005 Rob Wallace discovers an unknown road



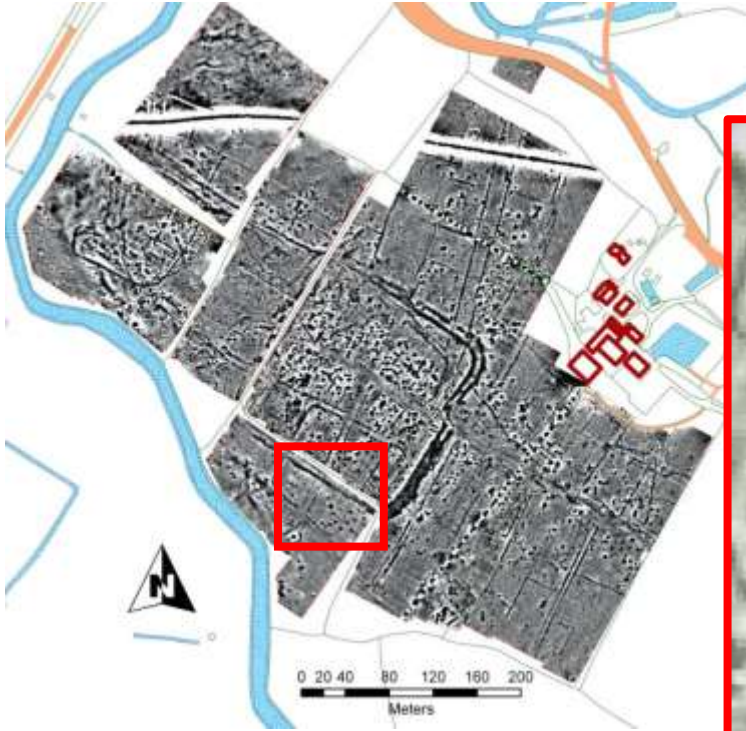


Bridge Farm settlement discovered in 2011 by geophysical survey  
An HLF grant was secured in 2012: Excavation started from 2013  
To 2024 CAP have completed 7 open area excavations of the site

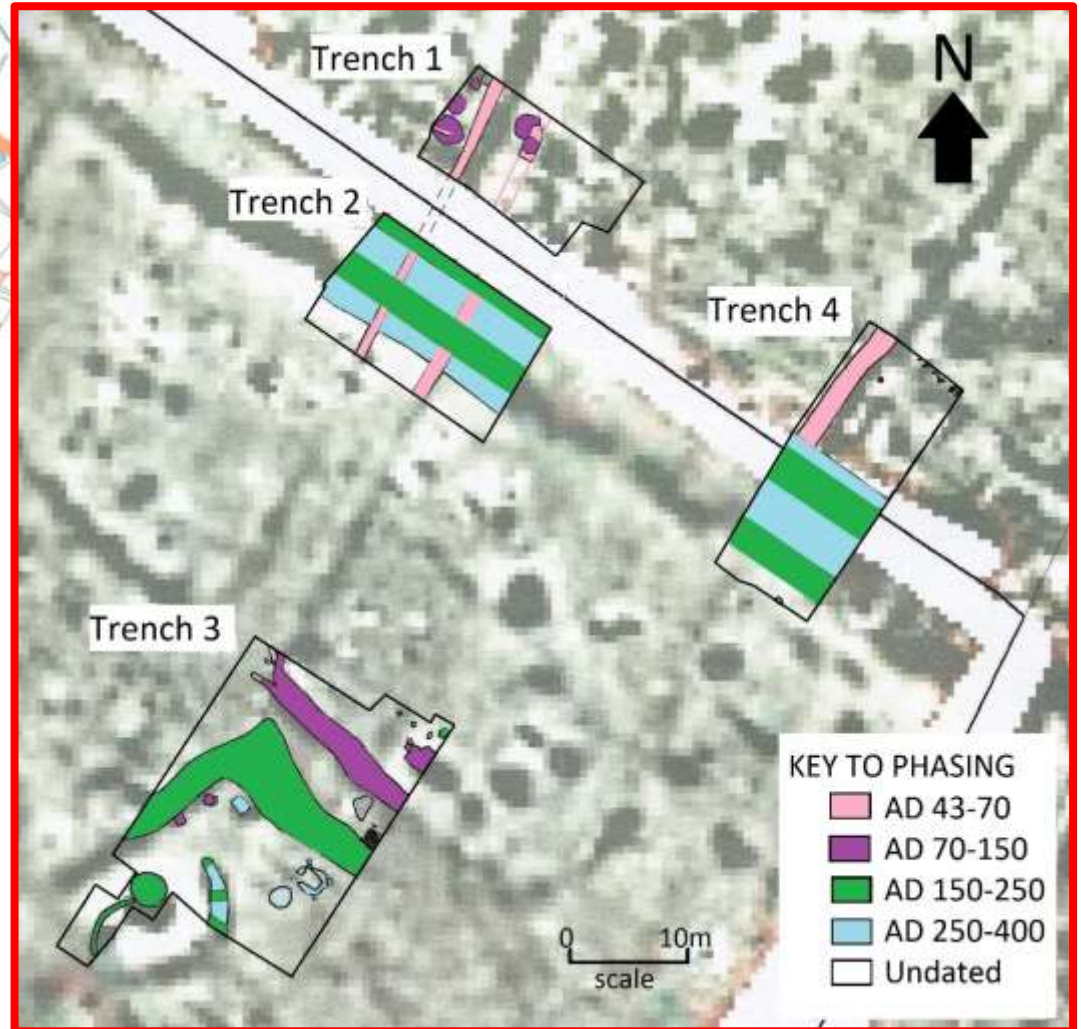




# The 2013 community project funded by the HLF to investigate an area to the southeast of the main settlement



A large grant enabled us to open 4 trenches and encourage large numbers of local volunteers to take part

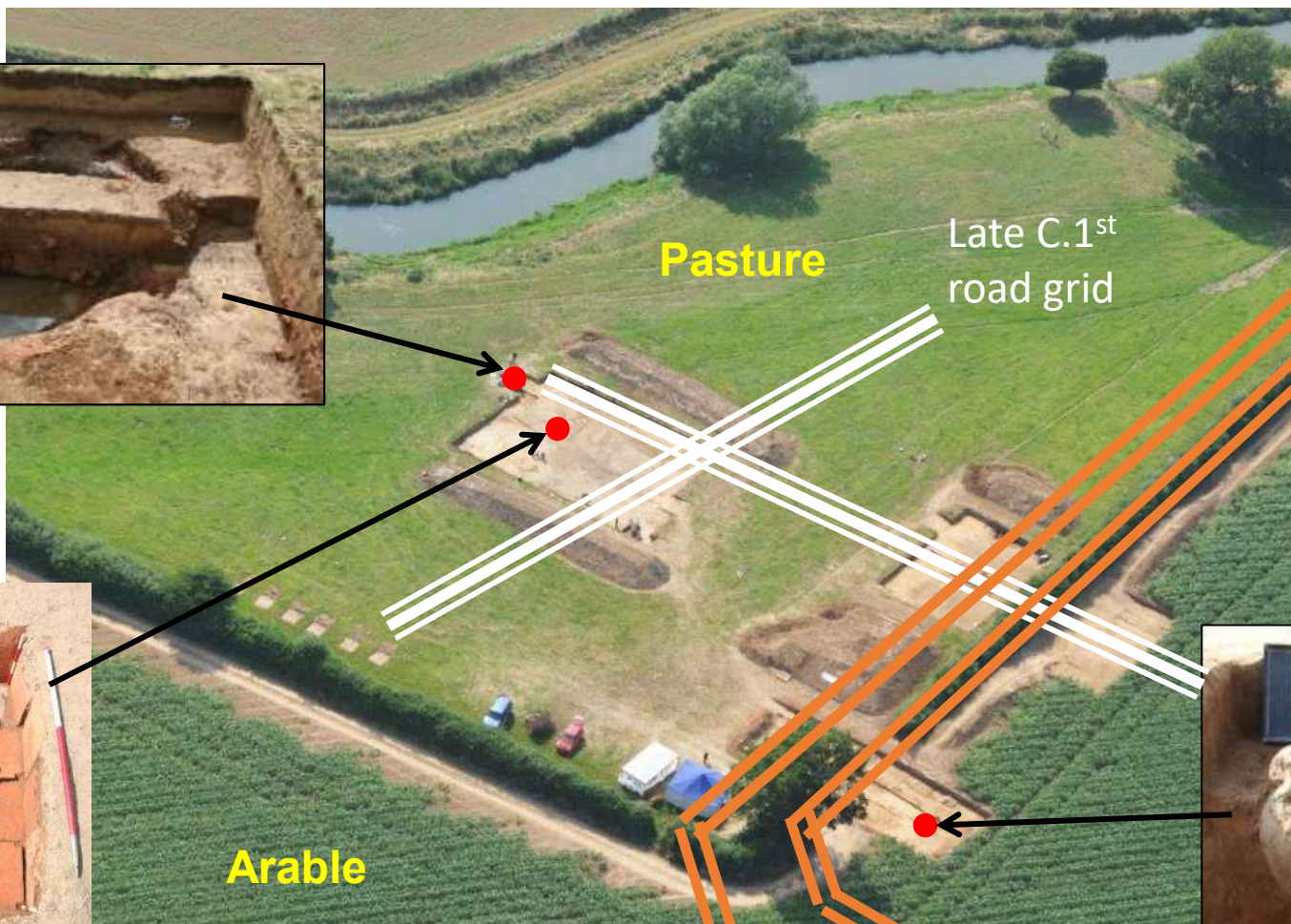


2013 EXCAVATIONS investigated the different phases of the features under the varying land uses of pasture and arable.  
This established a late 1<sup>st</sup> c. foundation and late 2<sup>nd</sup> early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. enclosure

Burnt pit/  
kiln?



C. 4<sup>th</sup> tiled  
pit



Pasture

Late C.1<sup>st</sup>  
road grid

Late C.2<sup>nd</sup>  
enclosure  
ditches

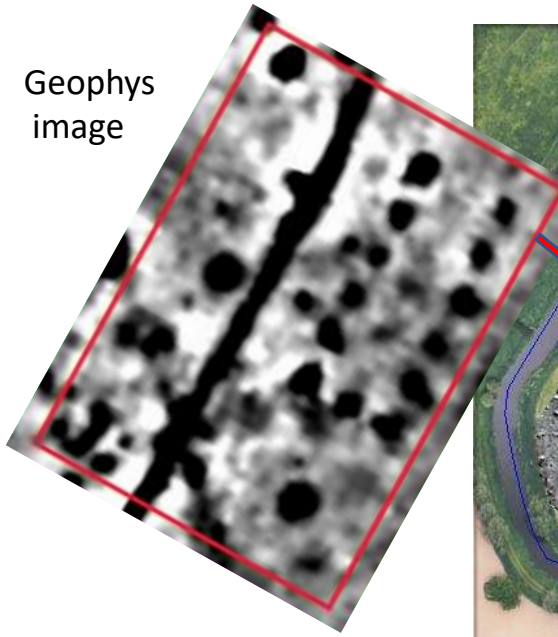
C.3<sup>rd</sup>  
cremation

Arable





Geophys image



2014

Trench 5  
(unfunded)  
to west of main  
settlement to  
look at a possible  
building;





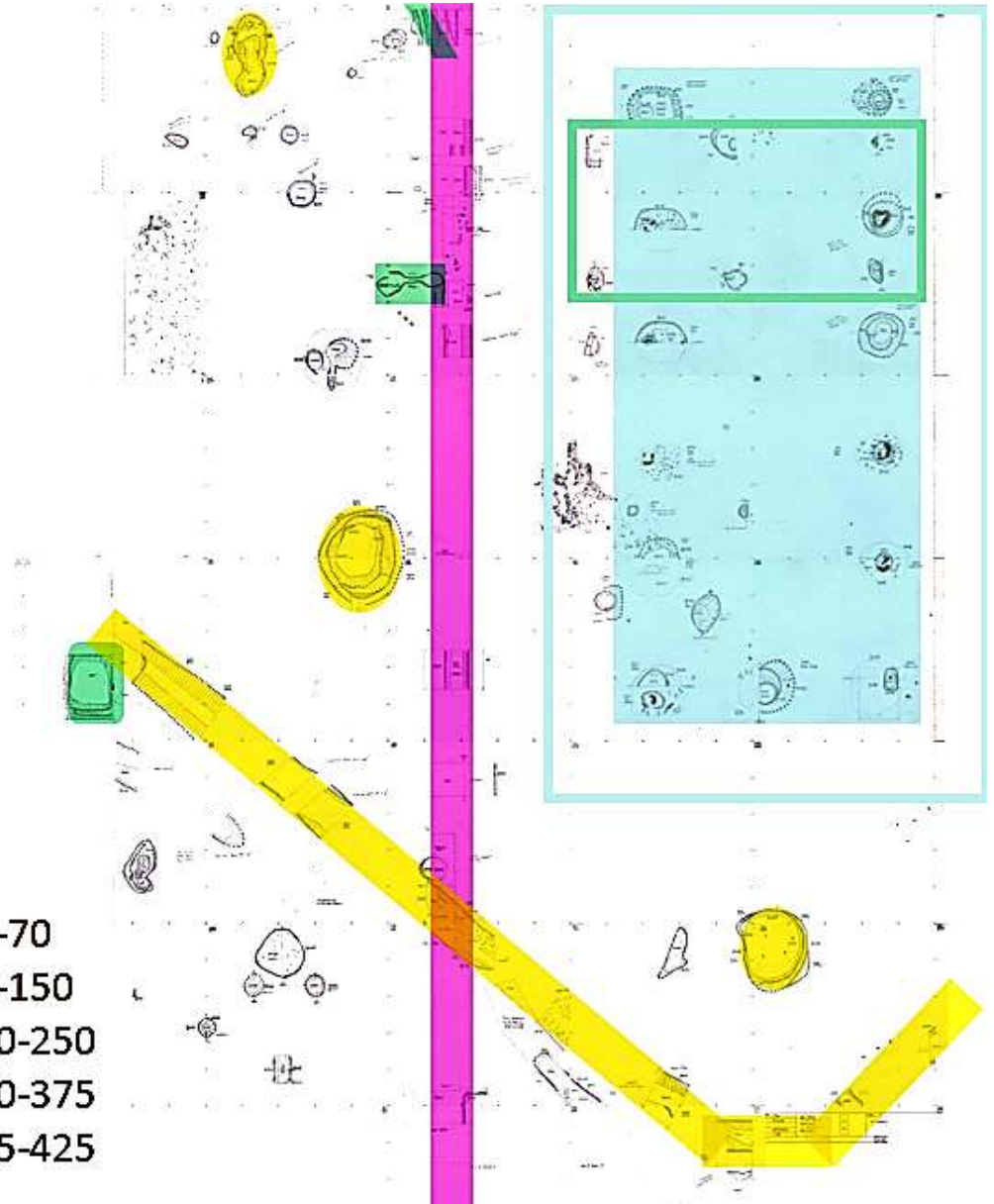
# 13 large postholes plus ditches and pits



A drone shot at the end of the excavation

Site plan showing the main phases suggested from the pottery assessment

- AD 43-70
- AD 70-150
- AD 150-250
- AD 250-375
- AD 375-425



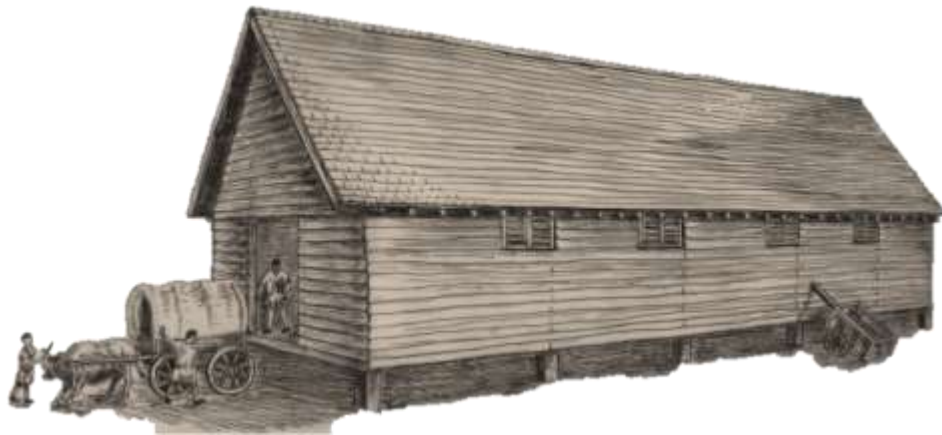
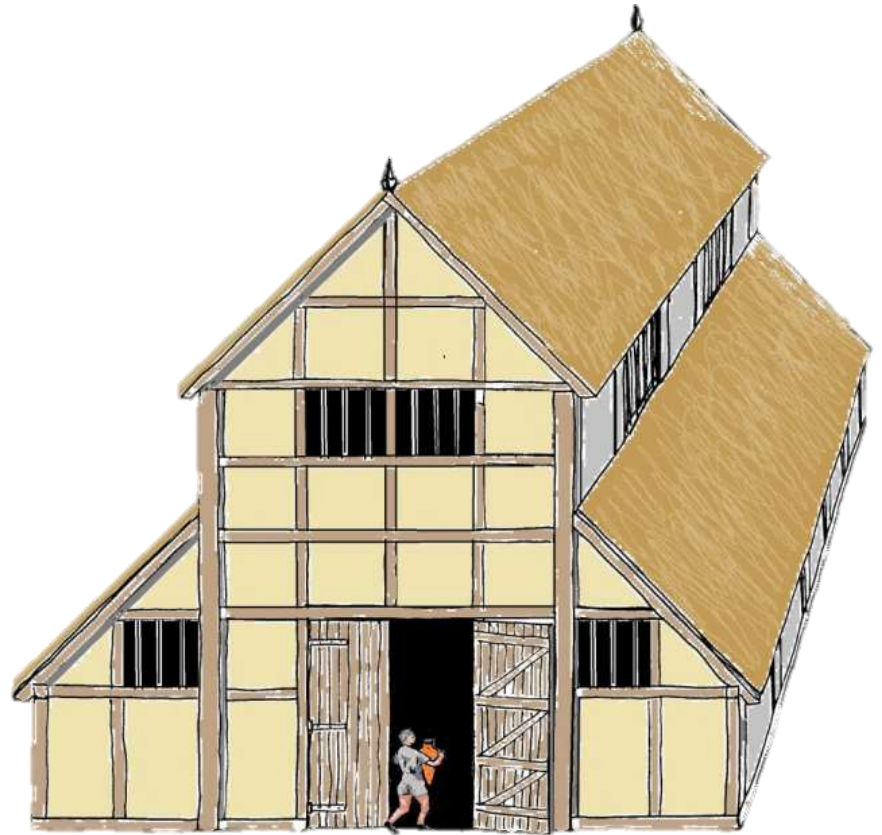


# A Timber frame rectangular building

Pottery analysis suggests  
late 3<sup>rd</sup> century

Was it a thatched, wattle &  
daub, 'aisled' barn?

(Millum 2017 based on the footprint of the  
13 posts & the Meonstoke reconstruction by  
King 1996)



or  
a plank walled, shingle  
roofed warehouse?

(Millum 2014: after Lunt Granary by  
Alan Sorrell)

Remains of posts were found at the bottom of all 13 of the water-filled post-pipes

Even more exciting were the timbers used as post packing below the remains of the post base in PH9

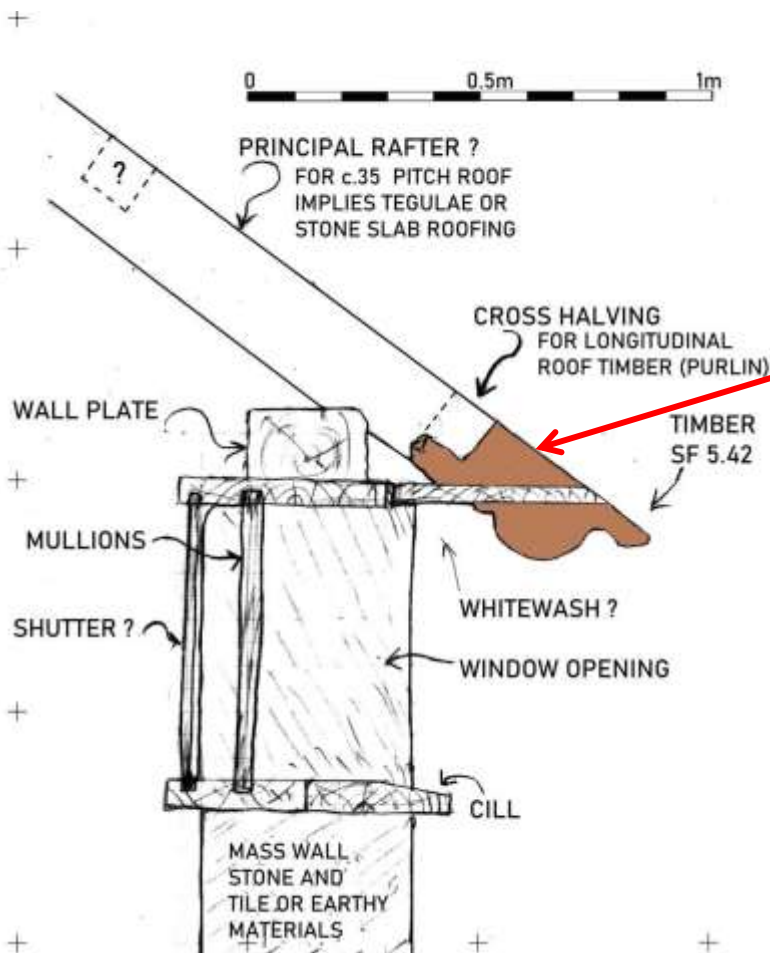
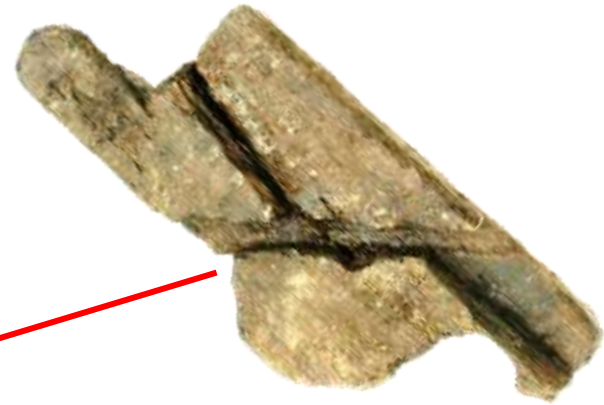
Two of these are believed to be unique in Britain being potentially the carved eave ends of roof rafters



One of the two possible rafter ends after conservation



The rarest object so far found at Bridge Farm is this mid-Roman ogival carved beam which was possibly the eaves end of a principal rafter



It is so rare that we can only trace one other example in Briton and that came from post hole 9 of Feature 4 at Bridge Farm as well!



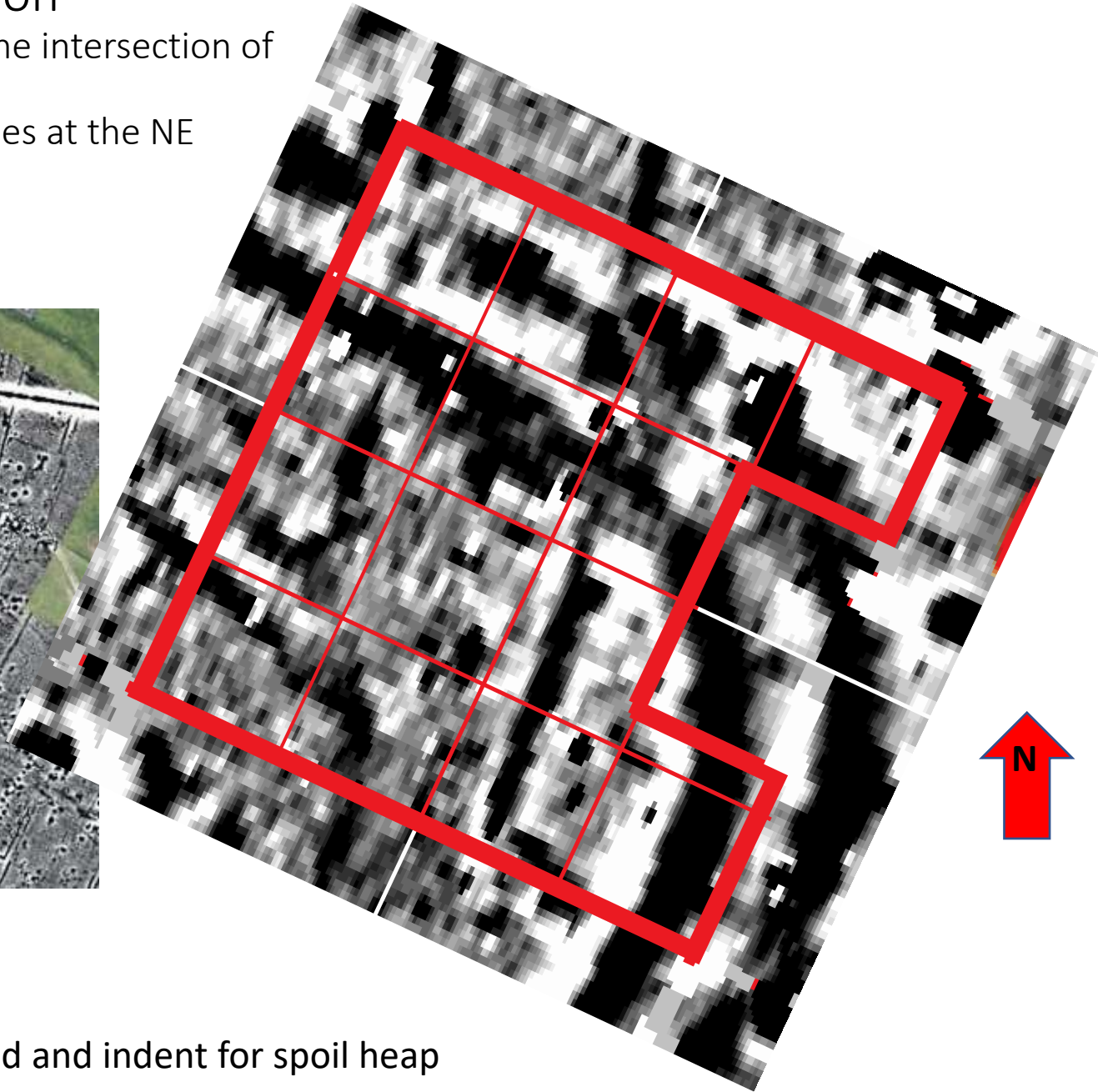
Being smaller this was possibly the end of a one of the common rafters

Reconstruction by Dr Damian Goodburn

over to Rob

# 2015-17 Excavation

40m sq trench 6 over the intersection of the London road and the defensive ditches at the NE corner of the site



Trench 6 with 10m site grid and indent for spoil heap



# The late 2<sup>nd</sup> C. enclosure ditches and the London road

The aim was to confirm the phasing of the enclosure and the road



Both late 2<sup>nd</sup> century enclosure ditches were overlaid by remains of the road. The road was under a dark layer which contained late 3<sup>rd</sup> C coins e.g. Gallienus radiate AD 265-7.

Conclusion:  
**this road is 3<sup>rd</sup> century**



Although the roadside ditches appear to be earlier suggesting an earlier road cut by the enclosure



A slot dug across both enclosure ditches revealed a slumped road layer of flint, gravel and sand overlying the main ditch fill

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> century road just north of Margary's excavated Section 14



E-W slot across the road shows the remaining structure to be very similar to Margary's description from his section:

*'Road buried under 12 inches of top soil. Metallurgy of flint, from large lumps to small chips... a very small amount of iron slag, 15 inches thick in the centre, width 21 ft...'*





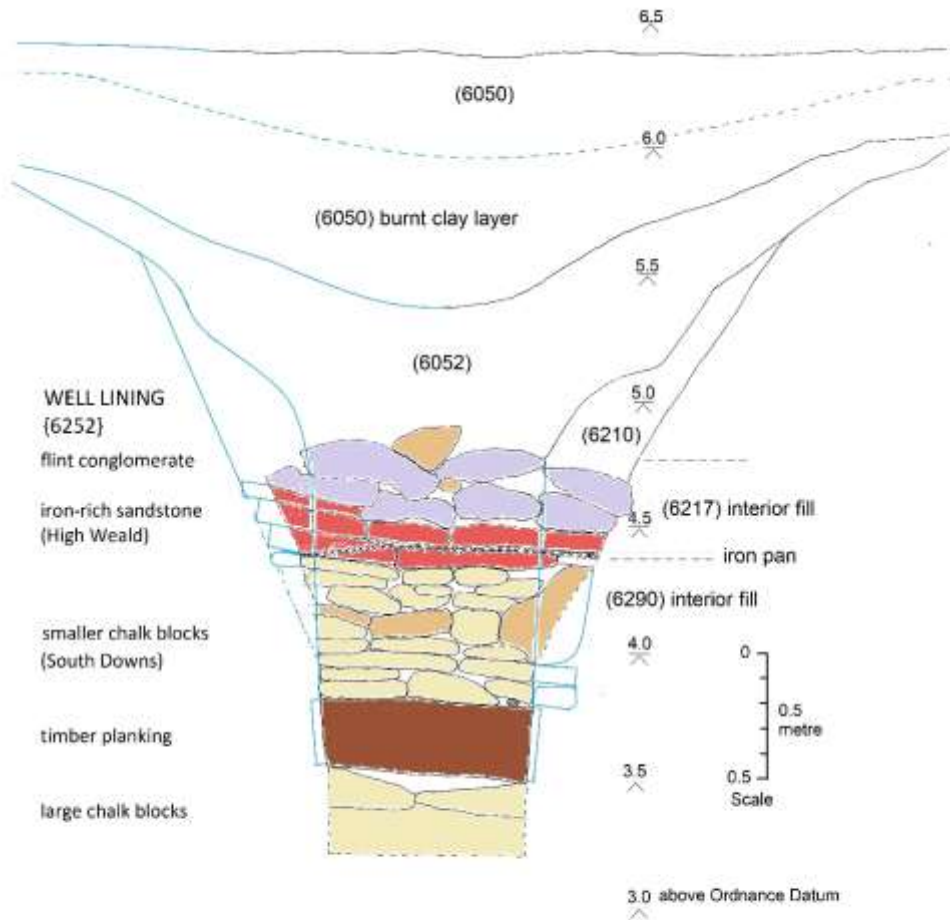


Trench 6  
from above

Aerial drone shot  
with main  
features added as  
CG shapes:  
i.e.  
roads,  
roadside ditches,  
other flint areas,  
enclosure ditches,  
large single pit,  
series of deep pits  
& the lined well



The well was excavated down to a depth of 3m being 3.2m AOD and then fully recorded.



DRAWING OF WELL (BF16/17 - F26) COMBINING SECTIONS 56 & 75  
Drawn by David Millum Date: 10/09/2017 Scale: from 1:10 originals



# A few other 'Special Finds' from trench 6



Red jasper intaglio  
Mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century

Gilded bronze  
disk brooch



109mm bronze pin



Honorius  
siliqua  
AD 395-423



Hadrian (?) denarius  
early 2<sup>nd</sup> century

Items not to scale



Terret Ring: part of  
a draught harness

Bronze pin or  
brooch?

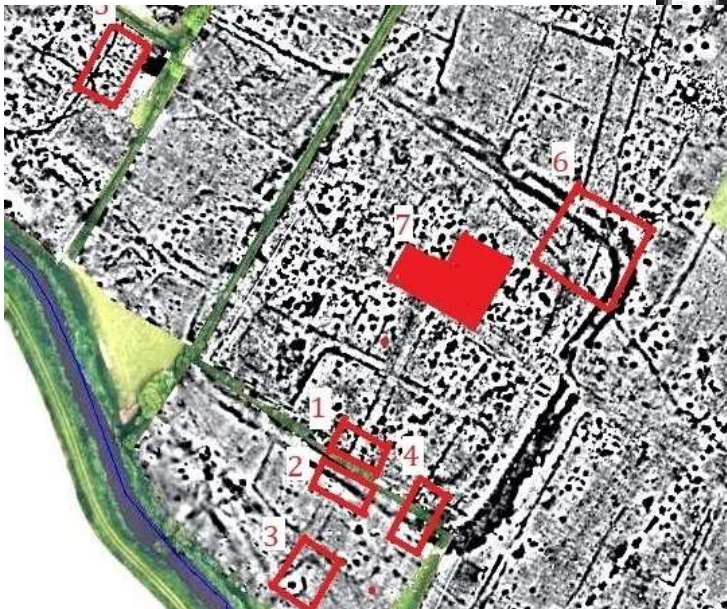
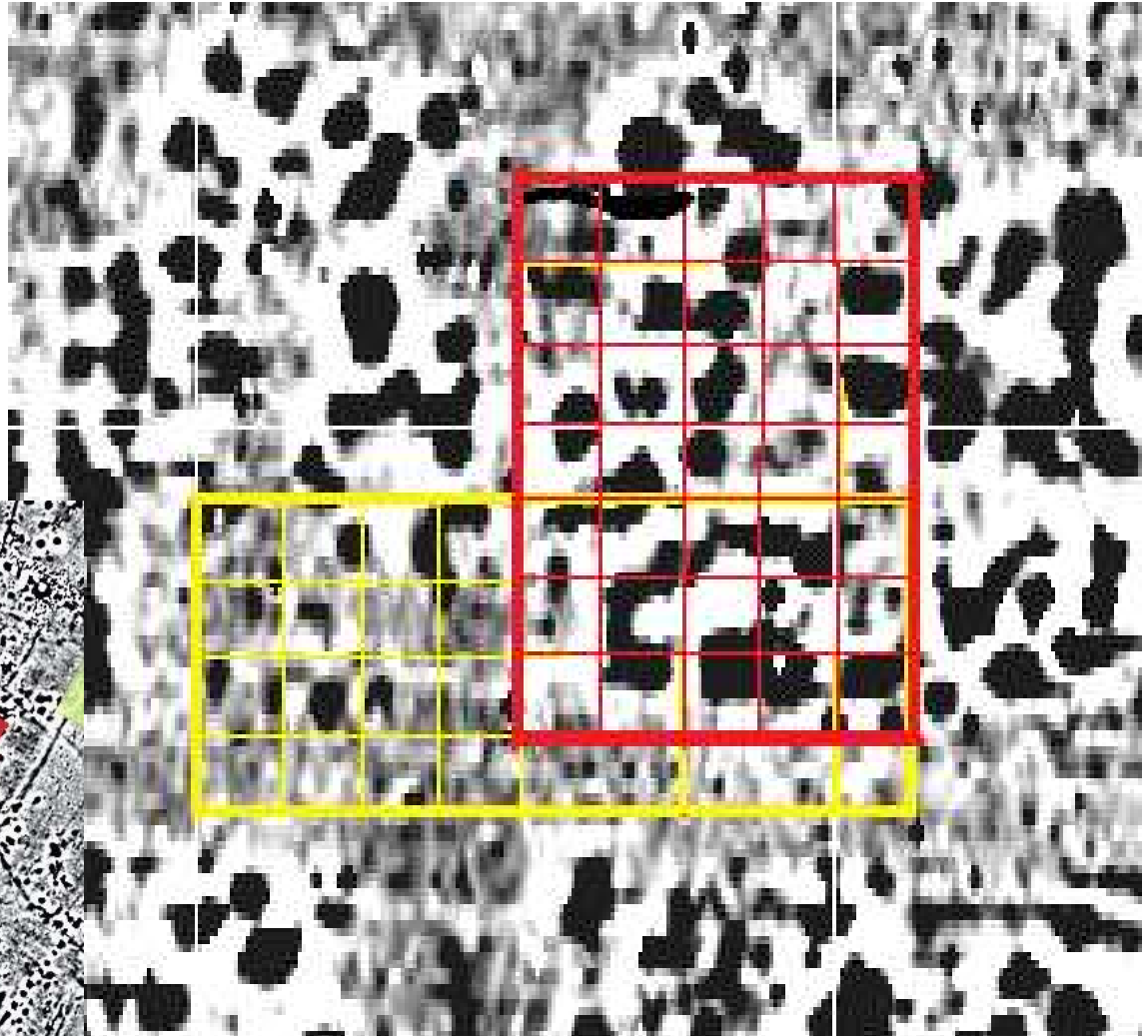


Complete small  
fibula brooch



# Opening Trench 7 in 2018, extended in 2022, closed 2024

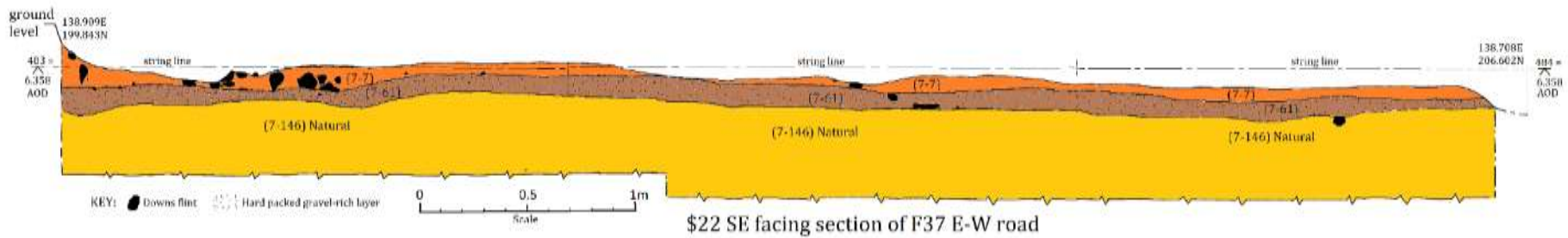
The west 20m & south 5m of the original trench were backfilled





# F37 E-W road: 2018-19

Extremely shallow so lucky to find anything at all!  
Field used for arable crops from at least the medieval  
Slot excavated 2018 then cut back and section drawn in 2019



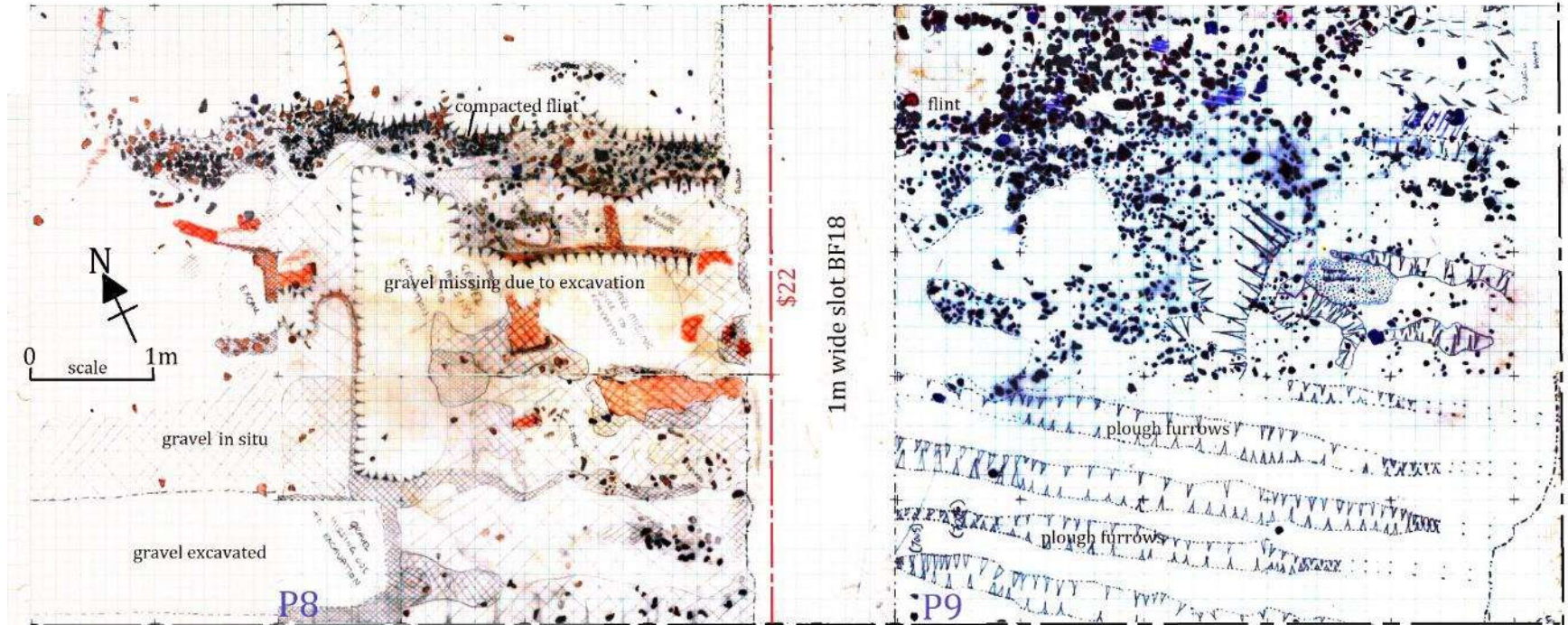
Disturbed flint layer on a consolidated base found just 200mm (8") below field surface at the southern corner of the trench only – no road remains found further west



## F37 E-W road: 2021

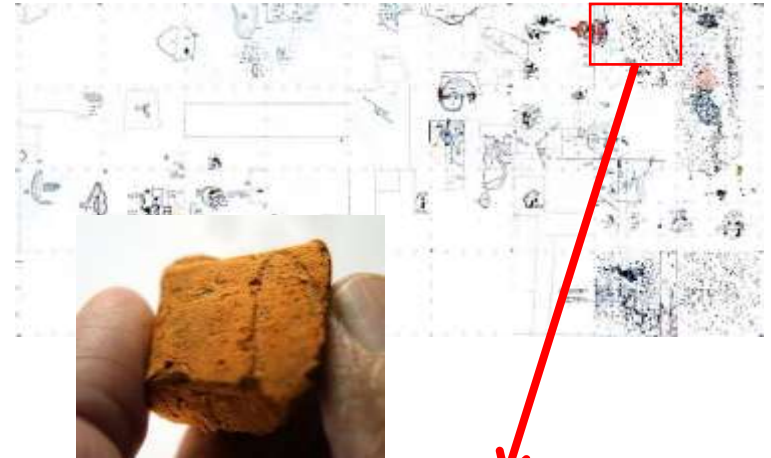
Further careful surface cleaning exposes signs of ploughing in an SE-NW direction but also a good indication of the northern edge of the cambered agger were observed and recorded.

Road structure of flint cobbles on very compacted 100mm sand/grit layer.  
Finer red sand to the north possibly redeposited top surface of the road?





# 2018-23 : A deposit of 5854 coarse tesserae



At c.20mm cubes: 2,500 needed for 1 sq.metre.  
A few black and white tesserae were also found  
Most are made from tile but some from amphora



Groups of roughly cut 'tile'  
tesserae lay in the trench  
surface; but are they a floor  
or manufacturing debris?



# 2018 : SF7.52 a deposit of 493 fineware sherds



The 'dump' of 493 fine white-ware and samian sherds; just some of the 73,000 sherds (524k) from 2018-2023. All washed, marked and recorded, ready for reconstruction and specialist analysis once the trench is closed: now 'due to be' at the end of the 2024 season.



Sherds laid out for sorting possible reconstructions: a jigsaw with missing pieces and no picture

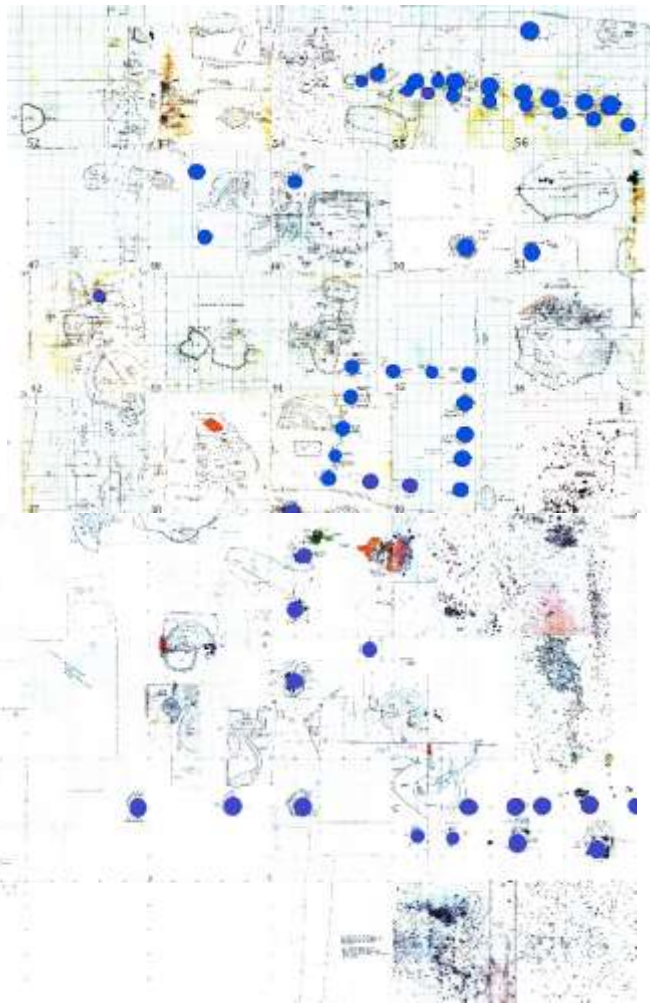


Nene Valley or Rhenish?

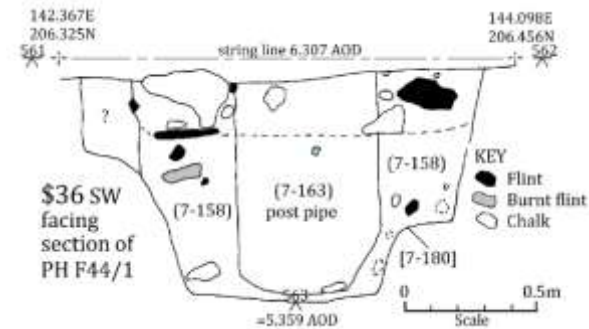
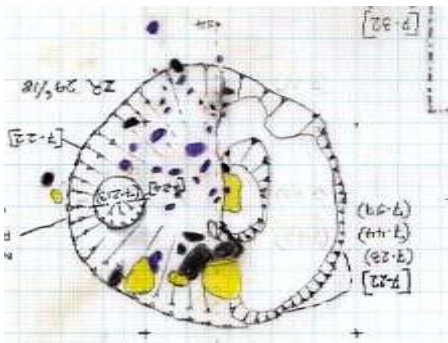
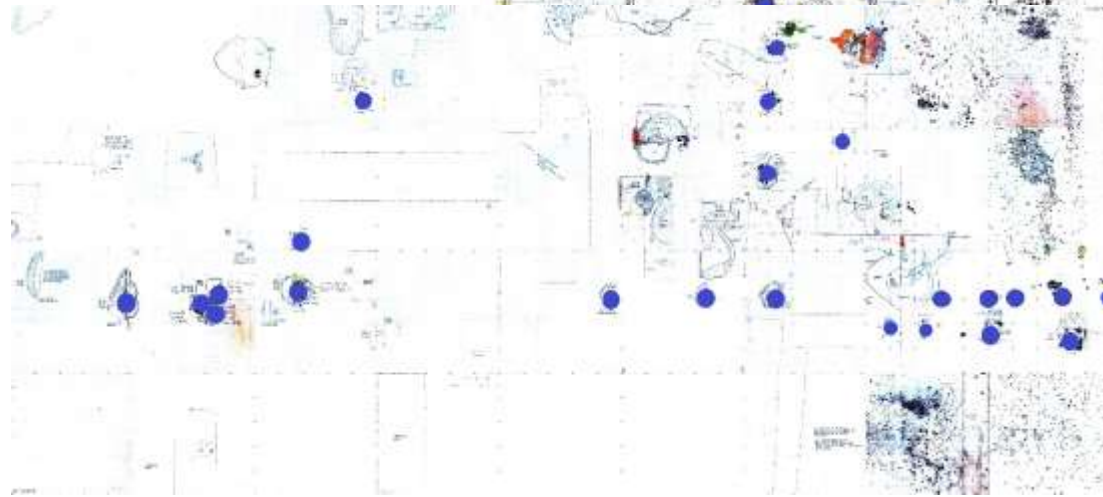


# Lines of postholes

The postholes contain large packing of flint, chalk and ironstone. Some seem to form lines, some along the road edge, and even right angles, and we seem to have **one complete rectangle**



A pair of 1m dia postholes with very large chalk packing







# F54: a very large pit – and a deposit of cattle mandibles

**Feature 54** was discovered in 2020 under a deposit of iron slag although no evidence of iron processing was found in the pit which contained a deposit of decayed cattle mandibles at its base. The pit 4.5m wide and x 1.5m deep. It abuts another large pit that extends well beyond Trench 7.



Each fragile mandible was carefully recovered having been individually numbered and 3D located



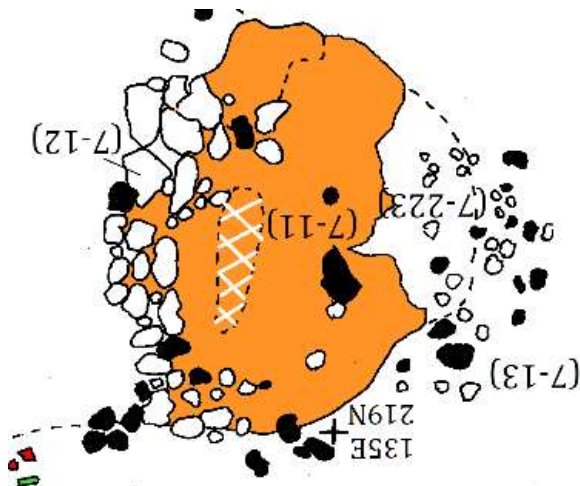
# 2018 F48: how ephemeral signs can turn into major features



Not too dramatic on the trench surface at 135E 219N but could it be an interesting feature?



Burnt clay surrounded by chalk!  
Lime burning or tesserae kiln???  
Process or structure?



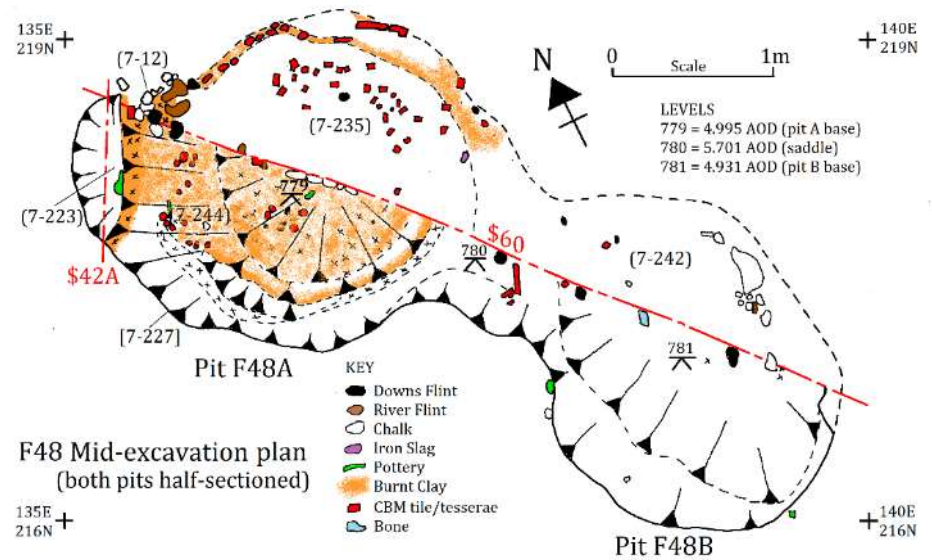
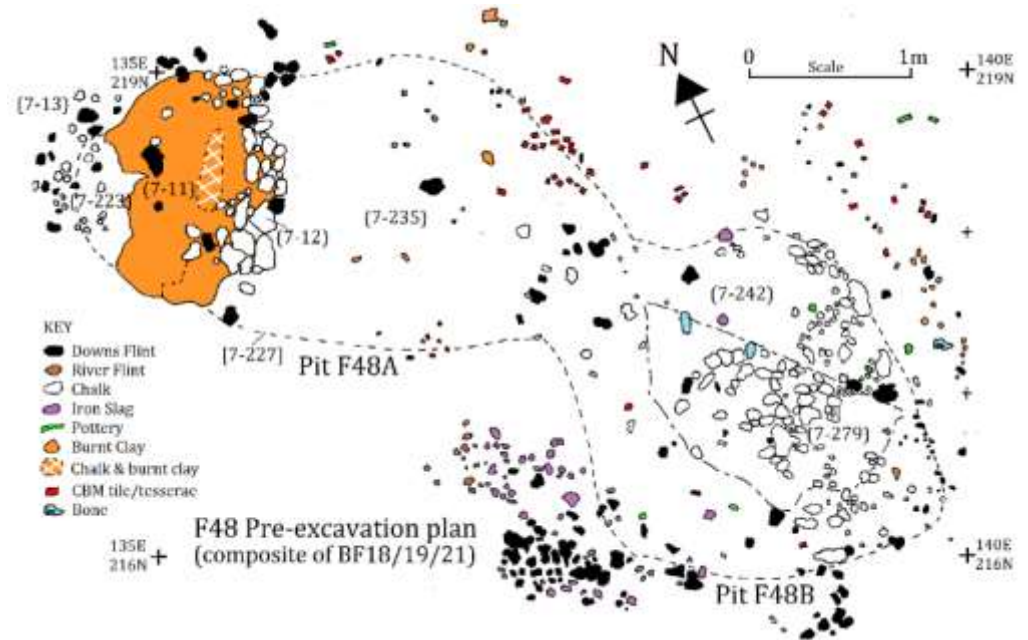
*To be continued!*



2021: F48 has grown  
and become 48A & B  
Covering 5m x 3m:  
At 135-140E / 216-219N

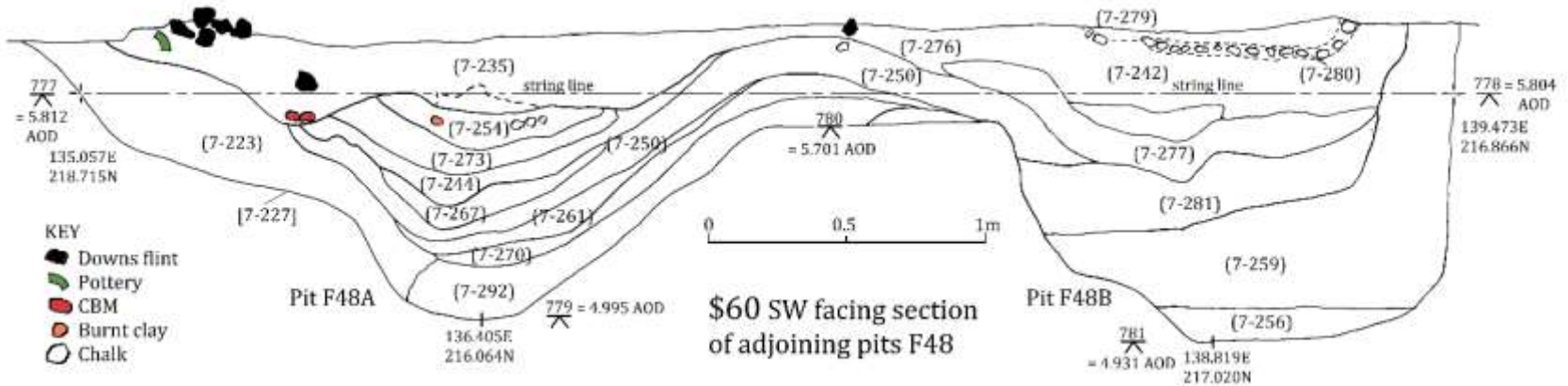
All change as first a darker 'figure 8' area appears on surface which excavation reveals as two deep interconnecting pits!

*To be continued!*



# 2021/2 F48: the double pit/kiln?

A 1:10 scale Section draw at this stage in case of damage during winter



\$60 SW facing section of adjoining pits F48

The NW pit (F48A) has multiple fills, the upper being full of tesserae, lower fills showing burning : just deposits or is this part of a manufacturing process?

The SE pit (F48B) possibly 2 features: a dark shallow pit (stokehole to kiln 48A?) cut into an earlier backfilled much and larger deeper pit; but how deep?





# 2023 F48B : reveals a deep waterlogged timber frame



Pit F48B keeps going deeper and amid the mud and water are timbers, leather fragments and the top of a timber frame as per the well found in Trench 6

Andy needed full wading gear and a submersible pump to investigate the base of pit F48B



Serious earth removal for 2024?

*Worth continuing if safe?*



Rob on the edge on Open Day





**The 0.5m terracing needed to excavate the well & the dozens of samples extracted for floating**

27/06/2024 16:1



The baulk secured: supervisor George in charge of excavation



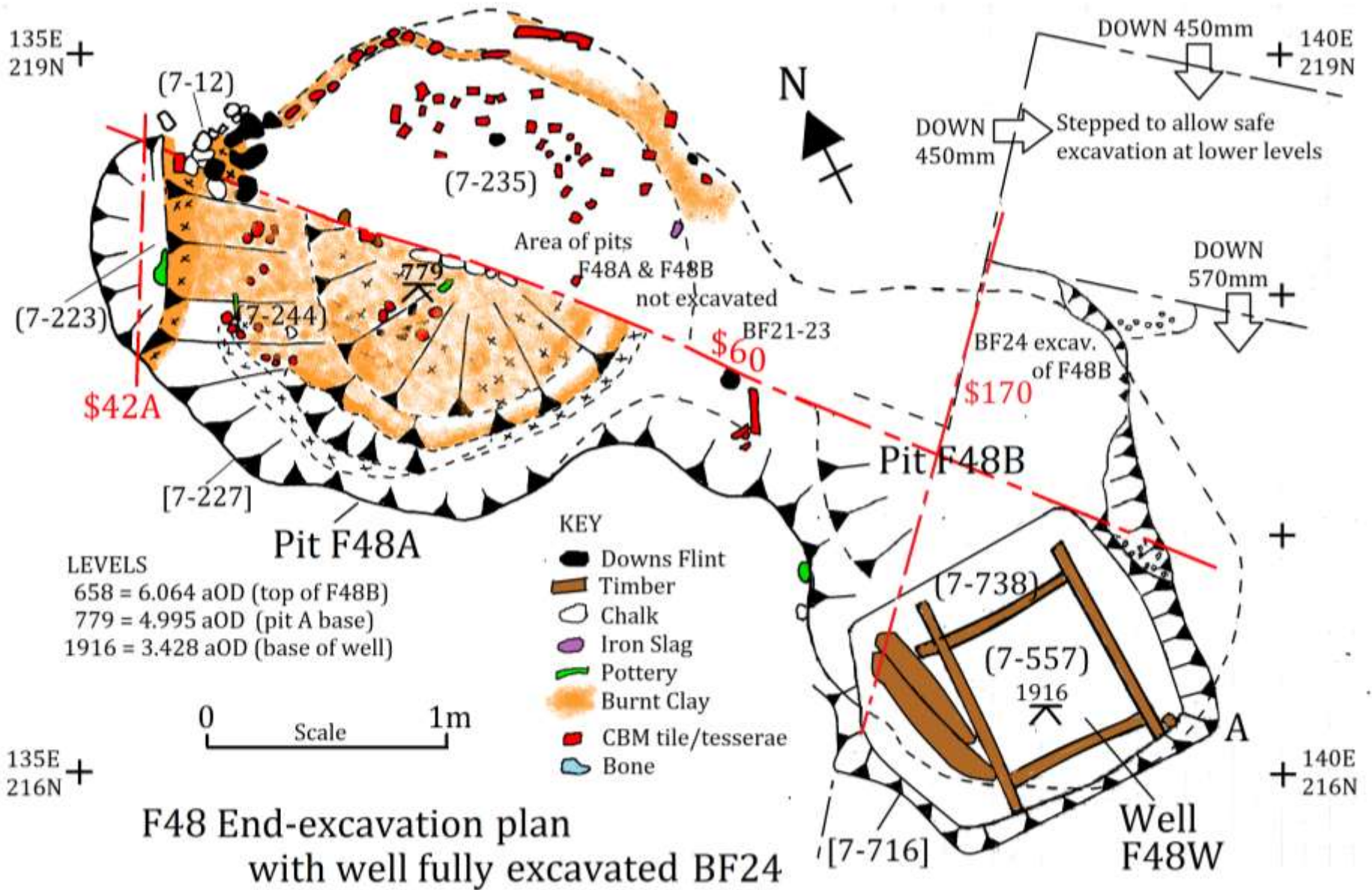
July 2024: the Well pit & timber lining revealed







A shot from the 3D image taken at the end of the dig





George, Wiki, Andy & Blake  
remove one of the timbers







Supervisors: Andy and Blake, carefully moving the timber into its storage box



back to David



# Bridge Farm 2018-2024: The Finds

Fineware pottery, coins, glass & bronze articles



Jane Clarke (Sussex FLO) in discussion with Andy Symonds, Mike Naylor and Dr Lindsay Banfield



Head finds coordinator: Nancy Wiginton with some of the 600+ Roman coins.

Finds coordinator: Julia Montgomery is also our in-house bones expert.

**Our finds team will welcome new recruits**

**Contact: [information@culverproject.co.uk](mailto:information@culverproject.co.uk)**

# Our finds unit have been kept pretty busy in 2018-24

with 81,366 sherds of pottery, 9,985 pieces of bone, 6,410 iron objects, 198 non-ferrous metal items incl 82 coins, 5854 tesserae, 387 shards of glass, 655 'Special Finds' including glass, bronze jewellery, leather and timbers.



All items are cleaned, recorded and packaged, ready to be sent for specialist analysis

Bridge Farm has produced over 120,000 sherds of pottery from the 7 trenches dug so far!



Finds Unit is used for lectures, finds processing and storage and open day displays



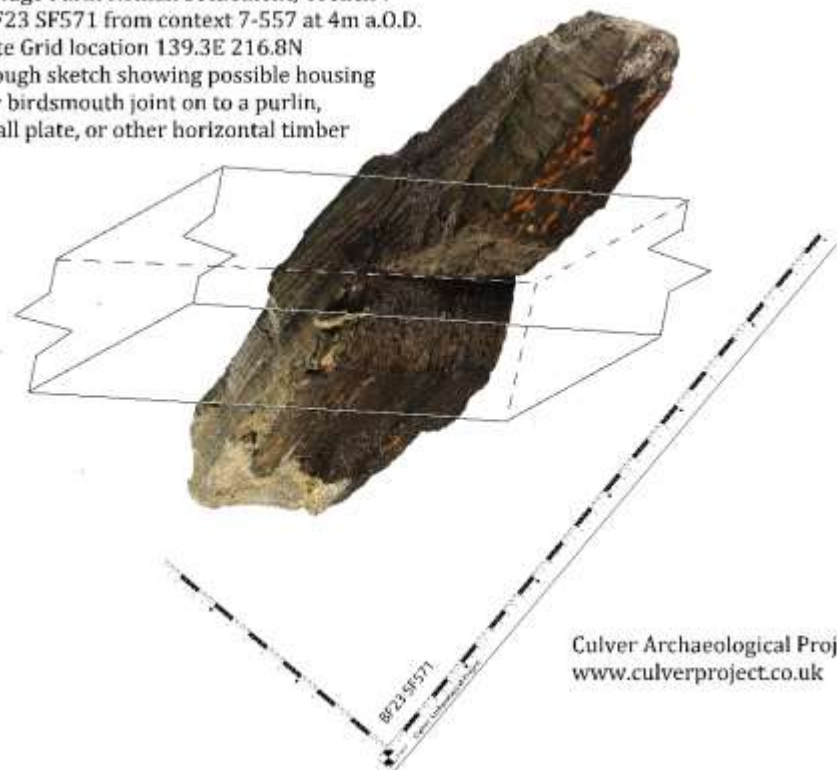
# From the well: waterlogged timbers and strips of leather



BF23 SF568  
Culver Archaeological Project



Bridge Farm Roman Settlement; Trench 7  
BF23 SF571 from context 7-557 at 4m a.O.D.  
Site Grid location 139.3E 216.8N  
Rough sketch showing possible housing  
by birdsmouth joint on to a purlin,  
wall plate, or other horizontal timber

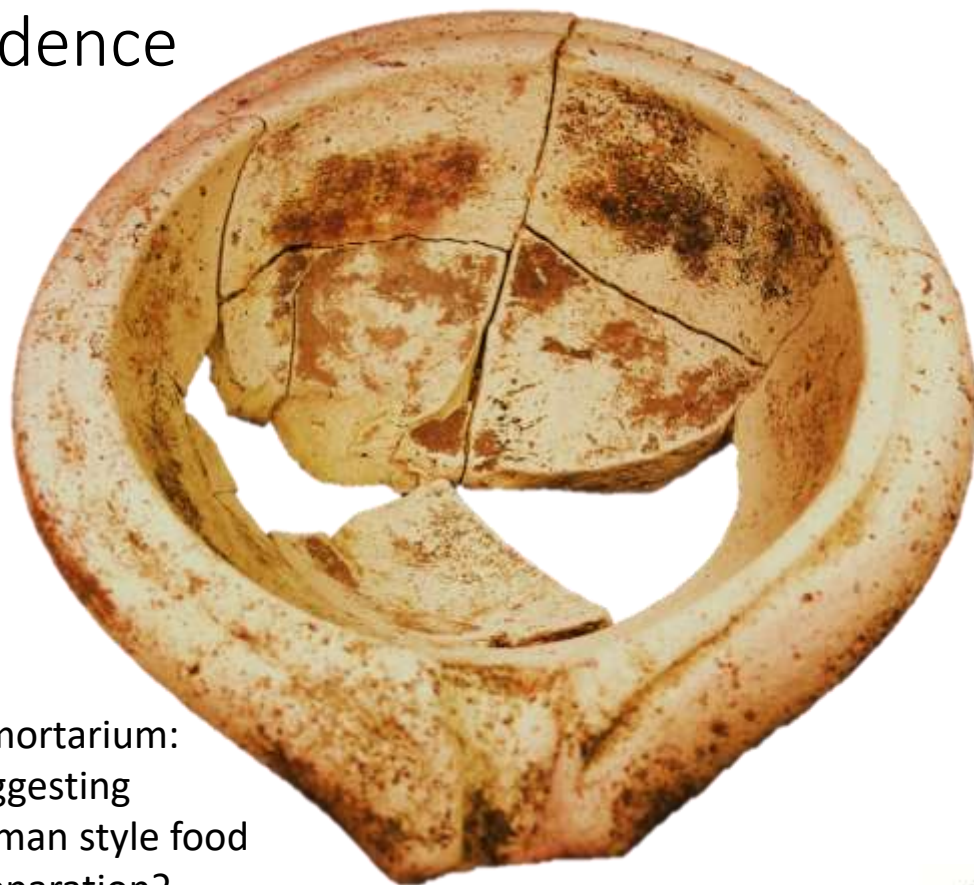


mm Culver Archaeological Project

# Bridge Farm Pottery gives evidence of eating and drinking habits



Colour-coated beakers including 'hunt cups'



A mortarium: suggesting Roman style food preparation?



A selection of flask rims





2023 gave us several fairly complete vessels



East Sussex  
Ware cooking  
pots and  
storage jars



A bulbous jar/  
large beaker with  
pinched surface



A buff coloured flask



A black-  
burnished  
ware dish



# Trench 7 has more Samian than previous trenches

Most of the makers stamps are from Lezoux or Les Martres-de-Veyre in Central Gaul being imported in 2<sup>nd</sup> century



Plain beakers & cups



Graffiti



Dr.37 bowl made by Cettus AD130-160. Bacchus & Minerva



Dr 37 form bowls with animal and human decoration



Base with makers mark of [D]AGOMARUS. The D is missing and the M/A and R/V are ligatured



Samian sherd with flanged rim





# And more Samian found in 2023

Just a few of the many recognisable sherds/vessels

Human figures  
can include  
the erotic



Dr.37 bowl sherds showing a complex design with large cat leaping a boar with a man lying beneath



Dr 54 globular beaker with incised 'cut-glass' decoration



BF24 SF61

Dr 33 plain cups attractive for their simplicity

More makers marks



Almost complete Dr36 shallow dish with trailed leaves around rim

# Trench 7 is also rich in jewellery

45 brooches, 54 pins & 15 rings  
in bronze bone, jet/shale and even gold  
plus **other special finds**



Green glass intaglio with trophy of arms design



Jet gaming piece



Flat-section gold ring

Rings of various materials



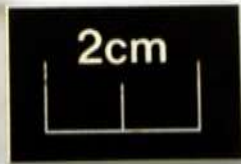
Jet and bone pins



Bronze pins

Harness strap slide

Bronze brooches





# Only 82 coins from Trench 7

show a bias towards the 1<sup>st</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries with few later 3<sup>rd</sup> indicating greater activity at the time just prior to the enclosed settlement in T7 area, rising in the early/mid 4<sup>th</sup>.

Flavian late 1<sup>st</sup> Century



Vespasian AD71



Domitian AD84



Trajan early 2<sup>nd</sup> century



Antoninus Pius  
dated 138AD



Antonine  
2<sup>nd</sup> century



Severan  
AD200+



Caracalla  
AD198-217



Lucilla AD164-9



Commodus  
AD186-7

Septimius Severus  
198-200 AD

Magnentius  
AD350



Constantine  
AD335-41



Constans  
AD347-8



Constantinian  
4<sup>th</sup> century

A very different set of coins from Trench 6 where of 168 coins many more were later 3<sup>rd</sup> century radiates\* where in Trench 7 very few have been found.

\*Radiates often dominate coin assemblages

Metal detecting and excavation at Bridge Farm up to 2023 has produced over **600 Roman coins** dating over five centuries



88 BC  
Q. Titius



c. AD 68  
Galba



c. AD 137  
Hadrian



AD 138-161  
Antoninus Pius



AD 161-9  
Lucius Verus



AD 146-173  
Faustina Junior



c. AD 200  
Septimius Severus



Pre AD 223  
Julia Maesa



AD 238-244  
Gordian II



AD 265-267  
Gallienus



AD 268-270  
Claudius II Gothicus



AD 270-273  
Tetricus



AD 317  
Crispus



AD 330-335  
Constantinopolis



AD 335-341  
Constantine II



c. AD 350  
Magnentius



c. AD 375  
Gratian



c. AD 395-402  
Honorius



# Late.1<sup>st</sup> Century



## Small official staging post

Late 1<sup>st</sup> century small planned grid-formation settlement. An official foundation at the junction of the road from Londonium adjacent to the river to the coast.

But was this established by the Regnenses Civitas or by the Flavian administration?

**Fishbourne AD50-80 reed-rim bowl sherds found in a ditch of the grid system**



**Strabo: early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD exports to continent included grain, cattle, hides and iron.**

**British iron and grain were important to the Roman army.**

Getting these bulky supplies to the coast by river would seem a practical solution.

**Wealden Iron an important resource**

**An official site where such cargos were transferred onto the river would be a logical installation**

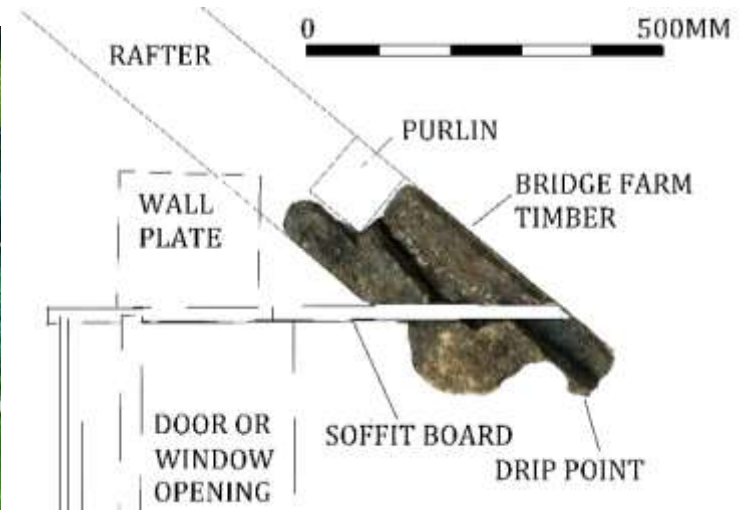
## 2<sup>nd</sup> Century



## Enlarged defended settlement/vicus

Settlement has expanded north in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and is enclosed by late 2<sup>nd</sup> /early 3<sup>rd</sup> century earthwork defences highlighting its official importance.

**Unique carved timbers found as post-padding possibly from a building of this phase**



**Appian: mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD – exports from Britain include grain, woollen goods and metals.**

The official staging post expands and is protected by the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century double ditch enclosure with internal bank.

These defences demolished in the 3<sup>rd</sup>C.



# 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Century

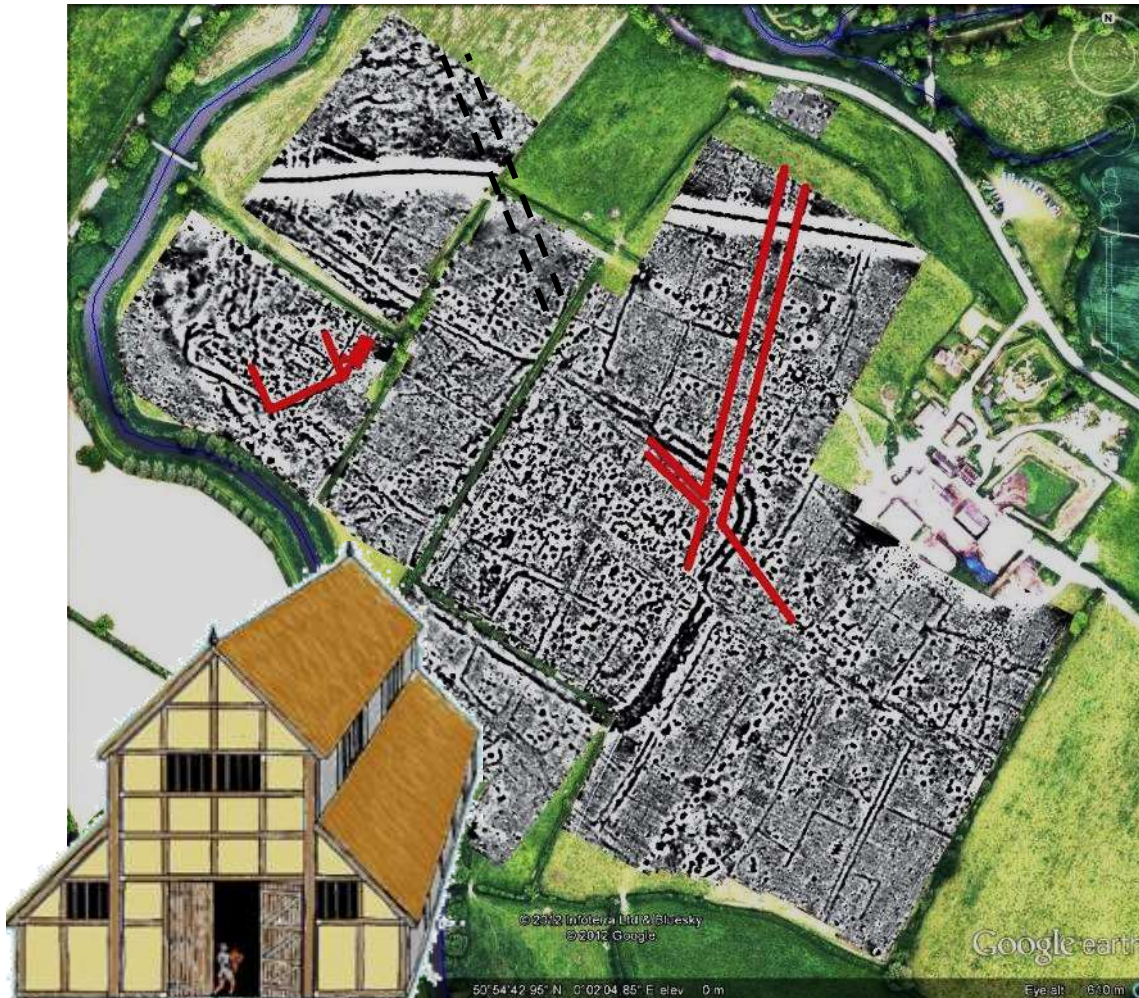


# Sprawling commercial centre?

A 3<sup>rd</sup> century road overlays the backfilled defensive ditches with a dark layer above rich with late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> century finds indicating continued activity.

A seemingly less formal and controlled period with a late aisled storage building near the river.

***Growth of rural production: larger storage buildings, improved ploughs (Mattingly 2006)***



**Iron:** Apparent abandonment of the Weald iron production sites during mid- to later 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Allen, Fulford *et al* 2017)

**Agriculture:** Grain from Britain became crucial in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and mid 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Probus:** AD 270s had a crisis of supplies for his Rhine garrison.

**Eumenius:** AD 297 Britain ... so rich are its harvest, so countless the pasturelands, so many harbours (Pan.Lat ix 4 11.1)

**Julian c.AD359: 400 ships built.** (Letters 279D). **Laden with grain from Britain to the Rhine**



Bridge Farm: A pivotal site accessible by roads with pack mules/horses, pedestrians, wagons, and ox carts; but also by river in boats to the coast & barges to the Weald!

Pottery and other smaller loads would go by pack mule but iron and grain needed wagons or barges and then by boat to the coast and beyond



Oxen were the main draught animals averaging 15 kilometres per day

Duncan-Jones (1982) used the Edict of Diocletian (AD 301) to calculate that transport by river was 6 to 11 times cheaper than road





CULVER ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

# **Archaeological Volunteering & Field School at Bridge Farm 2025**

**Barcombe Mills, Nr. Lewes, Sussex**



**May 26<sup>th</sup> - July 4<sup>th</sup>  
Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30  
Excavation and/or  
Finds Processing  
Participate in revealing  
the archaeology of this  
important Romano-British  
settlement site**



For further information on **CAP** and Bridge Farm visit our website

**[www.culverproject.co.uk](http://www.culverproject.co.uk)**

Where you will find much more information about our project including, volunteering, field school, reports, articles, pdf presentations, and diary dates.

There is also the contact emails for both information and joining in or donating:

**[information@culverproject.co.uk](mailto:information@culverproject.co.uk) & [join@culverproject.co.uk](mailto:join@culverproject.co.uk)**