



CDAS Circular – January 2021

Hello Everybody.

Well that is another month of lockdown passed and I hope you have all been keeping well. A good number of us should now have had our first jab. My wife is due hers this week but I am still too young! This all augurs well for a future release from the intensity of current restrictions though goodness (nor even Boris) knows when that will be. We can but hope for earlier rather than later as that would mean we can start doing things together again.

Fieldwork

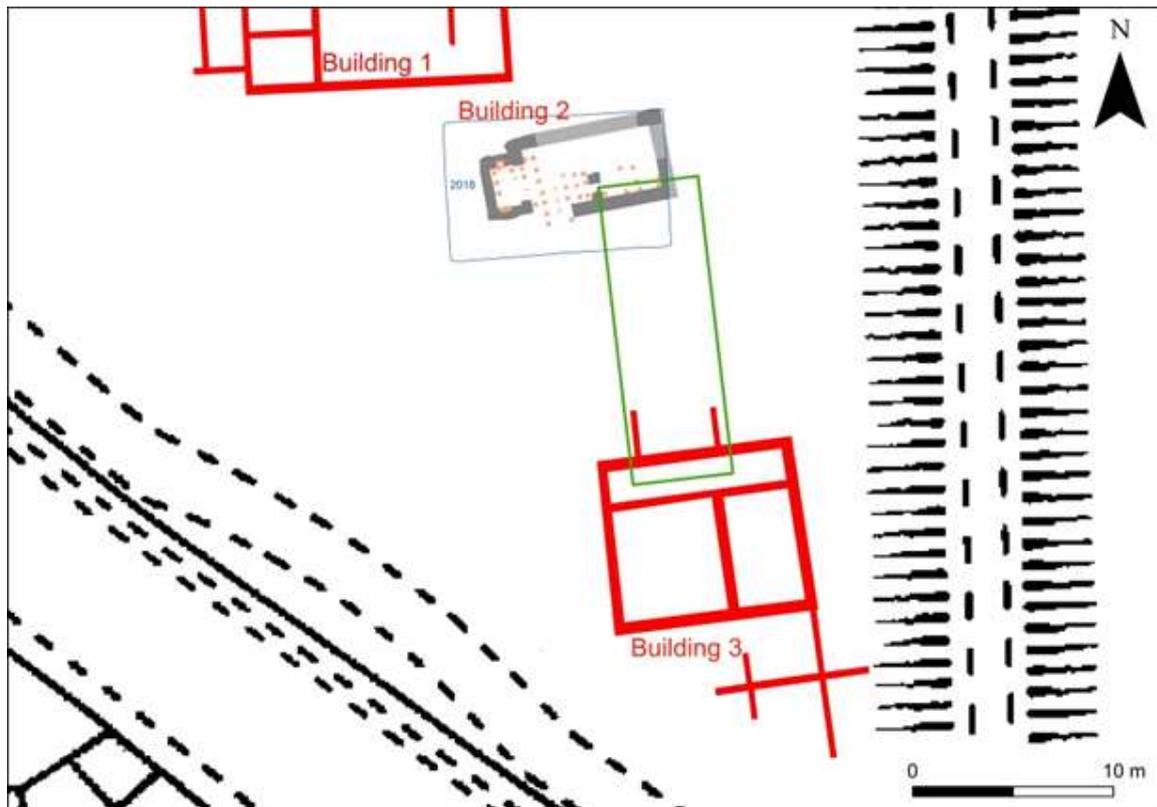
We never do much fieldwork at this time of year so the pandemic hasn't particularly impinged upon our activity. Our Fieldwork Committee, now chaired by Mike Kallaway, is still planning for the future and keeping a close eye on possible dates when we might restart. Much depends upon the farming calendar but without concrete dates to propose it is difficult to get firm plans in place. However the Committee is keeping in contact with various landowners so that we will be able to get access permission quickly when we can restart work. Particular opportunities that we are keen on are Hoyle Farm – where we are looking for a pottery kiln and would like to extend our previous area of geophysics survey, and Langford Farm – where we are itching to excavate a roman villa site. We would of course like to get back to Priory Park but have decided that will have to wait until early summer 2022 as, although we could probably arrange for us to do a socially distanced excavation, it would not be right for us to provide a spectacle that the public would flock to and not be able to socially distance.

In the meantime I am indebted to James Kenny who has provided this interim write up on our previous work there.

Priory Park Archaeology project

2019 excavation

In 2019 we investigated the area between and including the southern wall of the hot rooms of the Roman bath-house (Building 2) and the northern walls of the house (Building 3) seen in geophysics and ground-penetrating radar to its south. The intention was to identify further elements of the bath-suite, whose hypocaust had been seen to continue in that direction in 2018, and to establish whether or not it was connected to that house.



The 2018 investigation (blue outline) concentrated on the hot and warm rooms of the bath-house (Building 2). In 2019 (green outline) we investigated the area between it and the house (Building 3) to the south. Walls shown in red were plotted from the results of geophysics and GPR

Our annual two week excavation ran from Monday 20th May to Tuesday 4th June 2019. A trench 15m by 5m was excavated, initially by machine and then by hand, to reveal parts of the south wall of the hot rooms of the bath-house and their hypocausts and an area to the south.

2019 results: Roman

Unfortunately it took most of two weeks and some hard trowelling to discover that all the remains of masonry structures to the south of those revealed in 2018 had been extensively robbed, so the only evidence for the southern part of the bath-house was a large, rectangular, deep disturbance, filled with a jumble of decayed mortar and discarded rubble. This either represented the remains of a hypocaust or a large bath, but details of its form and function remain elusive. It was most probably either the cold room (*frigidarium*), with its cold plunge-bath, or the changing room (*apodyterium*), which may have been heated.

A key discovery was that a masonry wall had extended south from the south-east corner of the bath-house towards the house, forming the east wall of the robbed hypocaust/bath. Although it too had been extensively robbed, there was evidence it extended to within at least six metres of the house, where it was truncated by a large pit [31] containing 12th century pottery.

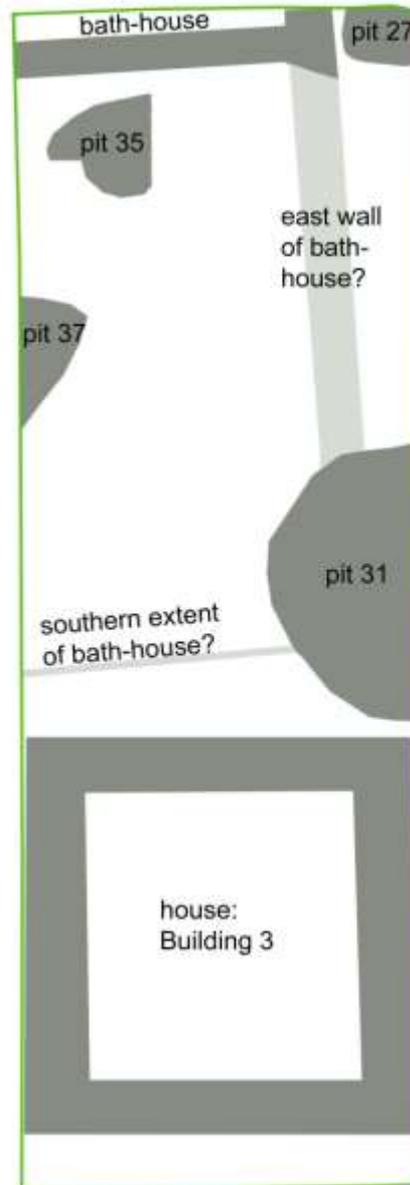


The 'walls' of Building 3 starting to emerge

To the south of the remains of the bath-house, the walls of Building 3 were found to be represented by shallow flint and earth footings with occasional traces of a mortared surface. These would certainly not have been robust enough to support a significant masonry structure, so it seems likely that the house was constructed from relatively lightweight timber-framing. Finds from within the area of the house indicated that it had been a relatively opulent establishment, with tessellated and mosaic floors, and that occupation is likely to have continued from the late 2nd to the late 4th century AD. Although no physical relationship was identified between the two buildings, the distance between them is so small that it seems likely that they were connected.

2019 results: medieval

As well as having been comprehensively robbed of masonry, presumably for reuse in other buildings, a series of large pits were found which had been dug across the southern part of the bath-house in the middle ages. Most were probably originally dug as cess-pits, ending up as the repositories for general refuse including large quantities of broken pottery. One of the pits [35] was sealed beneath the disturbed masonry remains of the Roman building, another [37] was cut through this material whilst a third [27] was just east of, and probably outside it. The results of the preliminary dating of the pottery from these three pits can be tied in to what we know of the medieval history of Priory Park and can indicate when the main period of robbing took place.



An ortho-rectified photograph of the 2019 trench, with a diagrammatic interpretation.

The pit [35] sealed by the robbing debris contained large, fresh, sherds of pottery dating from the later 9th to mid 10th centuries AD, i.e. in the late Saxon period when Chichester was being re-established as an urban centre. It presumably relates to general occupation of this part of the town. The pit [27] just to the east of the bath-house also contained large, fresh, sherds of pottery, but this time dating from the 11th century, i.e. late Saxon or early Norman. It could be from a later generation of general Saxon domestic activity, or might relate to Norman occupation of the site with their establishment of a motte and bailey castle after 1066. The pit [37] that cuts through the robbing debris contained smaller, more abraded sherds of pottery dating from the early 12th to early 13th centuries. This material may have been redeposited from elsewhere, perhaps in the disposal of an old refuse heap, or midden, relating to occupation of the Norman castle. It is quite possible, therefore, that most of the general robbing of the Roman masonry happened either during the establishment of stone buildings for the castle or in the construction of the Friary church and other

associated buildings. Larger pit [31] was mainly filled with well-sorted angular flint nodules and gravel, together with a few 12th century pottery sherds. Whatever the original purpose, it was filled with what looks like the remains of a metalled surface, perhaps excavated and disposed of during a building project somewhere in the park in the later middle ages.



A talk on the results during Public Day

The future

Hopefully we can return to Priory Park in 2022 to continue the investigations. If so, we would excavate a trench the same size as in 2019 and immediately to its west, the intention being to investigate the rest of the area to the south of the bath-house, where the 2018 results indicated that there should be the remains of the hypocaust heating furnace (*praefurnium*).

James Kenny, January 2021

Talks

I hope you all enjoyed Josh Pollard's talk about the Avebury district. It certainly surprised me that they had been looking so carefully at the topsoil! My thanks to Josh and also to David Blagden who arranged the youtube technology for the talk. I trust this is an acceptable approach for you all. Personally I think the ability to watch as often as I like and also at a time to suit me is an advantage over the many Zoom webinars I watch. We propose to continue with this format for the rest of the year and we have the following delights lined up for you:

Wednesday 24th February

The Iron Age Hoards from Snettisham - Julia Farley

Wednesday 24th March

Place-names in the archaeological and historical landscape - Judie English

Wednesday 28th April

Tba - Andy Duncan

Wednesday 26th May

Provisional title: Using archaeology creatively to interpret the past with 3D prints and virtual reality 3D models. - Sam Fieldhouse

Sussex Archaeology Society

SAS are running a series of fortnightly talks via Zoom. You have to be a member to register to receive the link but the talks are very interesting and well worthwhile. I would urge you to consider signing up to be a member - £40.00 each or £58.00 for two people at the same address. Membership includes free access to all their sites, which includes Fishbourne Roman Palace. www.sussexpast.co.uk

Forthcoming talks are:

We are really looking forward to welcoming you to the first talk but also do keep the following dates in diary as we have the following talks planned for the rest of the Spring, each at 7pm every second Thursday.

4th Feb. Dr Janet Pennington Chanctonbury Ring: The Story of a Sussex Landmark.

18th Feb Dr Andy Margetts. The Wandering Herd.

4th March Elly Griffiths. Becoming Ruth Galloway: How Elly Griffiths turned to crime – and archaeology

18th March Jane Clark. The Portable Antiquities Scheme in Sussex.

1st April Dr Miles Russell Wolstonbury Revisited - Excavations and Survey of an Enigmatic Prehistoric Enclosure

AGM

I attach as a separate file the minutes of last December's AGM, including the endorsed accounts. Don't worry, you will get these again before the next AGM but I thought members should have them now.

CDAS policies

May I draw your attention to our Health & Safety Policy which applies to all our activities – visits, fieldwork, etc? It is on our website ([CDAS Health and Safety Policy July 2020.pdf](#)) and includes an obligation on each of us which we should be aware of. The other important policy you should be aware of is our privacy policy ([CDAS Privacy Policy 20180702.pdf](#)) which relates to what data we capture about you and how we look after it (basically that we take 'next-of-kin' details before each event and destroy them immediately the event is over).

Stay safe, stay warm and above all -stay healthy

Malcolm Pheasey

Chairman CDAS