

Bronze Age Brighton



Excavating two of the Bronze Age hut platforms at Varley Halls.

The students of the University of Brighton will be following in the footsteps of their Bronze Age ancestors when they move into new accommodation at the Varley Halls of Residence. When the next phase of the development is complete, the site, at Coldean Lane on the northern outskirts of Brighton, will have its first inhabitants for thousands of years.

South Eastern Archaeological Services conducted a preliminary archaeological evaluation, which revealed traces of prehistoric occupation. Liaison between SEAS, the university (formerly Brighton Polytechnic), their contractors Liewellyn Homes Ltd., Brighton Borough Council Planning Department and the county archaeologist then enabled the topsoil to be stripped from the site well in advance of the projected start of construction, allowing the full extent of the archaeology to be assessed. With funding generously provided by the university, archaeological excavation took place in July and August without disruption to the construction programme.

This work revealed a later Bronze Age settlement of at least four circular huts. They were terraced into the steeply sloping site in exactly the same way as the new halls are to be built, though on a rather different scale! There are strong similarities with the sites excavated along the new Brighton bypass at Downsview and Mile Oak (News 1) indeed, the new road runs just behind Varley Halls, and Downsview is only about 500m away. It is possible that rather than being isolated farms, these houses may be part of an extensively inhabited area covering a large part of the Downland slopes. A soil resistivity survey project to try and assess the extent of this settlement is under way around the Varley Halls site, and is being conducted jointly with the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society.

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