

The Later Bronze Age Settlement at Downs View, Coldean Lane

In January sample excavations were undertaken on a pasture field to the south of Coldean Lane. Most of the trenches were located at the north western part of the field where it borders the junction of Coldean Lane and Ditchling Road. On the basis of previous discoveries it had been expected that this north western area ('Old Boat Corner') would yield archaeological remains. Unfortunately this area, which is on clay-with-flints, yielded few archaeological finds or features: a small ditch and several postholes. Further to the east, on the junction with the chalk, a well worn track or road running between Hollingbury and Stanmer Woods was sectioned and recorded. This trackway is thought to have been used in medieval times, but may well be of much greater antiquity.

At the eastern end of the pasture field, opposite Downs View School, trial trenches located part of a previously unrecorded prehistoric settlement site. This area, which is now referred to as the Downs View site, has subsequently been further investigated and the principal discoveries include seven terraced hut platforms, two ponds, a pit containing a 'store' of ironstone, and the remains of a possible boundary ditch (see illustration). The evidence for most of the huts, which are circular or oval in shape, consists of postholes and large numbers of stakeholes. The stakeholes are of particular interest and indicate both the walls of the huts (in one case the wall is represented by two concentric lines of paired stakeholes 40 cm. apart) and also internal divisions/arrangements within the huts. Two of the huts have circular 'fire pits' Not all of the huts are contemporary, and there is at least one example of a hut having gone out of use before the construction of an adjacent building. The huts range in size from approximately 3 m. in diameter to in excess of 10 m. in diameter.

Of the other features on the site, a ditch which survives to a maximum size of 1.4 m. wide and 1 m. deep may represent the settlement's boundary on both its northern and eastern sides. The fill of this ditch has yielded large quantities of animal bone, struck flints and a quern fragment.

Finds from this important settlement site include pottery dating to the Later Bronze Age. It is thus interesting to note that the huts at Downs View are of a different constructional type to the broadly contemporary huts which are recorded from Itford Hill and Black Patch.

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