A Report on the excavations carried out at Rocky Clump, Stanmer. by the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society during 1998

Introduction

The excavations at Rocky Clump, Stanmer began in April and finished at the end of October. All features were excavated, drawn and photographed with slide film, print colour film and black and white, a video diary was also kept. Again this year the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society Field Unit were absent from the site for a number of weekends. During late June and early July a request was received from Archaeology South East for assistance with their rescue excavation of a Middle Bronze Age barrow at Crowlink, near Friston. The barrow or burial mound is about to erode over the edge of the cliff along the Seven sisters footpath.

New personnel joined the group this year and some of our team moved on to University. Some the new members are studying the Certificate of Archaeology at the University of Sussex. Training was given in excavation techniques, section drawing, planning and other archaeological sciences. Dayschools were organised in bone, shell and pottery identification. The site was visited once again by illegal metal detectorists who removed all the location tags and metal pins.

The excavations this year have been particularly important as the top layers have been removed and the features revealed underneath. A number of features had already been recognised by artefacts protruding from them, including 2 rubbing stones. A thin layer of top soil had been deliberately left during the winter of 1998 to protect the archaeology beneath. The soil was carefully removed down to a flint layer below. The flint layer is the residue of the cobbled floor found originally. A number of features preserved the cobbling in-situ including circular solution pit context 296. Once the soil had been removed the site was planned prior to removal of the disturbed flint layer. There was one small extension to the existing open area, a 6 metre by 2 metre strip in the south east corner. This small addition was cut to determine whether the line of post holes on the east continued south. One solitary post hole was found close to existing contexts 248 and 249. This group of 3 post holes mark the south east corner of an enclosure. A new geophysical survey was conducted in the north field to the west and north of the existing site boundaries, using the newly purchased RM15 resisitivity meter.

The Excavations

The removal of the thin layer of top plough soil produced numerous features below. A line of post holes contexts 298, 343, 295, 313. 317, 332, 318 and 346 along with post hole context 259 known from the 1997 excavation provided a north boundary to a building, enclosure or stockade. It is possible that another post hole lay in the north/south ditch feature and was cut by it, but this was not observed. Post hole feature context 327 added another post hole location for the boundary on the west side of the enclosure. Other post holes contexts, 359 and 295, indicate that the building or possible fence line continues north past the enclosure. A further post hole is assumed within the east/west ditch feature but again no indication was noted of its presence. A solitary post hole lay within the enclosure on the north side context 285. Other post holes outside of the defined parameters of the enclosure were located. Within the enclosure on the east side, contexts

354, 362 and 258 were found. Context 362 lay near an excavated section of a possible prehistoric tree hollow. Features out side of the enclosure include 2 post holes contexts 286 and 380, north of the enclosure.

Three ditches were found, one of significant dimensions, ran from a south terminus lying within the enclosure and disappears under the baulk out into the field at the north. A second ditch of similar dimensions and section ran from the west baulk of the site through an area of clay with flint solution material. This ditch cut a pit at the west baulk. The second ditch running east to west, cut through a third ditch that linked the first and second ditches. The third ditch was smaller in depth and width. It was vee-shaped and had a larger flat base. The fill of the third ditch was also different to the larger ones containing a light chalky loam. There were few finds in this third ditch suggesting a rapid filling in of the feature. Both of the large sectioned ditches disappear under the baulk, but appear well defined in the geophysical results.

The ditches cut through a number of earlier pits. The east/west ditch having been constructed through solution material proved difficult to define. A section cut at the west side of the excavation confirmed the shape and dimensions of the ditch but also showed that the ditch cut through an earlier pit. The north/south ditch also cut through a large pit containing a possible sheep skull (to be confirmed), lying directly on top of a pair of oysters shells. The south terminus of the north/south ditch cut through a very large 'boat shaped' pit, similar in shape to a large pit found in 1996, context 185.

The ditches were each divided into alternative 2 metre sections for excavation. This method allowed sections to be removed alternately allowing a significant number of cross sections and a complete section of the lengths of each ditch, with the exception of the original cross sections removed to determine the shape of the ditches. Particular care was taken where the north/south ditch linked to the middle east/west ditch and where the east/west ditches met. This method allowed a well defined chronology to be interpreted. Close to the north end of the north/south ditch were three pits, one cut by the ditch itself~, see above, one to the west of the ditch and another disappearing under the baulk.

The Features

Contexts 327, 298, 359 and 295

The new excavations produced 4 post holes on the west side of the site. The post holes were less substantial than the main enclosure posts with little flint packing. They were also less deep than the enclosure posts. These new features show a continuation of the line of posts on the west side of the site. One of the post holes cut through solution material, context 298. This post hole was excavated during wet weather and produced flint packing and a well defined post pipe.

Post Hole	Diameter	Depth
Context 295	50cms	23cms
Context 298	40cms	35cms
Context 327	38cms	20cms
Context 359	60cms	36cms

This line of post holes were very regular in their spacing of I .3M apart. Contexts343, 295, 313, 317.332, 318, 346, 290 and 379

This was a line of post holes that defined the north wall or perimeter of the enclosure. The post holes were flint packed and substantial in size although not as large as those excavated in the 'shrine' building. This line of post holes links with the north/south 'fence line' of post on a corner post at context 298 and with the line of posts on the east side of the enclosure at post hole 259. A possible post hole between context 318 and context 346 may have been cut by the north/south ditch, however no traces were found during sectioning. Three of these post holes were cut by adjacent ones and these possibly suggest later supporting posts. These double cuts or pairs of post holes were contexts 3 13/290, 332/3 18 and 343/379.

Post Hole	Diameter	Depth
Context 290	56cms	38cms
Context 295	50cms	23cms
Context 313	56cms	23cms
Context 317	40cms	28cms
Context 318	50cms	52cms
Context 332	55cms	30cms
Context 343	43cms	33cms
Context 346	90cms	40cms
Context 379	43cms	30cms

The east'west line of post holes were more irregularly spaced than the 'fence line' post, but were still on a well defined linear configuration of 1.3M

Contex 285 Posthole

A particularly large posthole was found within the confines of the enclosure on the north west side. The post hole was flint packed and a well defined post pipe was observed in the lower layers. The post hole dimensions of 80cms diameter and S9cms depth was far larger than any of the other post holes found.

Context 301 Pit

This pit lay at the west end of the east/west ditch section and was found during a cutting of a section at that end. The pit post hole relationship was clearly seen in the section at the baulk side. The ditch clearly cut into the pit. More of this context remains in the unexcavated area to the west. The fill was of a dark chalky loam.

Context 299 and 322 Pit

This pit was considerably larger than any other found so far in trench J. The shape of the pit was 'boat shaped' as though a small sailing boat had been inserted into the ground. It was similar in appearance to one found in 1996 but of greater dimensions. The pit was cut by the north/south ditch. The terminus of the ditch completely removed the south section of the pit. On the east side of the ditch only a small section remained, but a significant section was still retained on the west side of the ditch. The various sections cut through in this area, contexts 322, 333, 335, 299, 245, 363 and 334 showed a clear distinction between pit and ditch. The pit comprised of a very light chalky loam fill. Finds from this section included pottery of prehistoric date. The pottery was distinguished by a fabric of coarse flint fill, similar to that found in the pit feature context 014.

Context 356 Pit

This pit was located at the north end of the ditch, lying predominantly on the east side of the northi south ditch. The pit was cut by the ditch and a small section topographically placed on the other side of the ditch can be considered of the same context. The pit produced numerous finds of bone, shell and pottery. As mentioned earlier this pit contained an unusual alignment of a sheep skull, head up and facing north, overlying a pair of oyster shells, as though deliberately placed? The fill of this pit was of a dark to medium brown soil fill. The north section at the baulk of ditch and pit dearly shows the chronology. During fill removal it was noted that there appeared to be some anomaly in this area, the ditch cut the pit, but another lower layer also cut the pit in a vertical orientation. On further examination it was shown that the section was made more complex by being cut into a solution hollow, the pit having removed all trace down to the level of the ditch base.

Context 302 Pit

This pit also lay to the north of the site and to the west of the north/south ditch. This pit was shallower than those mentioned previously and round based. The fill was of a light chalky loam and there were only a few finds.

Context 380 Pit/Post Hole

This pit or post hole lay close to the junction of the 2 ditches. It was a fill of chalky loam and cut into the west side of the ditch. The pit was the earlier feature being cut by the ditch running north/south.

Context 296 Cobbled Flooring

A small sunken area, overlying a solution pit, and as a result not damaged by the plough, provided an area of 1.2 metres in diameter of preserved cobbled floor. This floor consisted of quantities of flint nodules compressed into the chalk and clay. Overlaying the floor were finds of Romano-British pottery, bone and shell.

North/ South Ditch

This ditch was the major feature on the site this season. The ditch was almost a metre wide and approximately 75cms deep. The variation in depth of the ditch varied by only 2 or 3 centimetres along the length excavated. The ditch was vee shaped with a very narrow fiat section at its bottom. The length excavated was 13 metres. The fill produced 2 distinct layers. The upper layer consisted of heavy flint nodules and the second deeper layer was of a dark brown to black coloured loam. Pottery was observed in section at both layers, and no other stratification was present. The layers of flint and loam were consistent along the whole length of the ditch. The section at the junction of the east/west ditch showed that the north/south ditch cut the latter. The ditch was divided into a number of sections to allow several cross sections to be drawn and the complete length section drawn in detail. These contexts number 245, 360, 333, 363, 355, 334. 335, 364, 354, 336, 337, 366, 367, 338, 339. 340, 368, 369, 341, 370, 342 and 342A. The intersecting sections were contexts 339, 340, 368 and 369. The ditch cut through a solution hollow in contexts 336, 337, 365 and 366. This area was further complicated by post holes, context 345 and 346, also cut into the clay with flint geological deposit.

East/West Ditch (West Section)

The east/west ditch runs from beneath the baulk in an easterly direction until it is terminated after joining the east section of the east/west ditch. The ditch cut through an earlier pit context 301, as previously mentioned. The east terminus was quite distinct and lower than the east section of this pair of ditches. The fills of this section were similar in construction to the north/south ditch, both in depth, width and fills, There were 2 fills in this ditch similar in content of materials. The upper layer was of large flint nodules, while the lower consisted of medium brown to dark loam. This section of the east west ditch cut through a solution area of clay with flint and only precision trowelling managed to maintain an accurate profile in some sections of the length. Accurate sections were obtained at the west end and where the 2 ditches met. An original hypotheses of a possible pit below the terminus end was found not to be the case. The ditch was vee shaped with a narrow flat base. This ditch section produced considerable finds of pottery and bone as well as a large dump of oyster shells. Below the oyster shells were found a number of pieces of Samian wares. The ditch was again divided into sections allowing several section drawings to be recorded along the ditch and also as with the north/south ditch a complete section going from west to east. The contexts were numbered 348, 350, 358, 351, 35IA, 352, 362, 376. 377, 292, 375, 339 and 369. The latter 2 contexts were the linking sections of the ditch to the north/south ditch. The large oyster shell dump was found in contexts 352362. A pair of small finds were also recovered from this section of the ditch, a bronze broach and a 12mm wide strip of bronze approx. 30mm in length. This ditch has produced the main concentration of finds from the site. For reference a previously cut assessment trench was allocated context number 194.

This section of the eastwest ditch was the first to be observed. The east end could clearly be seen joining the north/south ditch. The junction with the west section was far more complex further complicated by the clay with flint solution material it cut through. This ditch was both narrower and less deep than the west section, it also had a wider base, but was still vee shaped. The fill of this ditch was distinctly different to both of the other ditches. In this feature the fill consisted of a chalky loam with medium chalk nodules, There were only a few finds from this centre section. When it was noted that there were 2 ditches and not I a central baulk was maintained and sectioned back carefully to determine the sequence and chronology of these sections. The resulting examination proved that the west end ditch cut the earlier central shallower ditch. For reference it should be noted that initial contexts numbers were granted to the ditch segments prior to the detailed sectional contexts compiled later, these numbers contexts 292, 293 and 294 are given to avoid confusion on the planning drawings.

Contexts 258, 362, 354, 345, and 381 Post holes

These post holes do not relate immediately to the enclosure or building parameters. Some were chalk loam fills while other, contexts 354 and 346 were flint packed.

Contexts 319, 320 and 321 Stake Holes

These 3 stake holes were observed in a distinct location under plough soil context 234. The configuration of the stake holes does not immediately suggest the reason for their presence at this time.

Small Finds

- 1) Bronze perforated Plate context 349 ref. from C6 location 14.99M from C 10 location 14.4M depth from top of the ditch l6cms
- 2) Bronze broach context 351 -ref from C6 location 12.20M from ClO location II.35M
- 3) Numbers of Samian Ware pottery context 35 IB
- 4) Possible pebble spindle whorl context 360.
- 5) Possible pebble bead context 263.
- 6) Very small fragment of bronze-context 263.

Discussion

The excavations at Rocky Clump during 1998 have been exceptionally producti~e in both features and finds. Significant quantities of pottery, bone and shell have given some indication of the type of settlement that was constructed on this small spur of the South Downs. The most important evidence from the excavations is the confirmation of a previously suspected building or enclosure. The features rectangular in shape suggest a stockade. The dimensions of the enclosure are 10 metres east to west and 9 metres north to south. The north line of post holes include context numbers 298, 379, 343, 295, 313, 317, 332, 318. 346, and 259. The posts are not spaced in a regular pattern, but as some are obviously supporting existing posts, further examination of the plans may produce evidence for some form of regularity. The post holes on the east side of the enclosure, contexts 248, 250, 208, 252, and 259 are of a more regular spacing. A smaller post hole context 315 has been found between context 208 and 252. On the west side of the enclosure 2 lines of post have already been noted running north to south. The line furthest to the east consists of post hole contexts 59, III, 148, 176, 164 and 285. The line of posts is again almost equally spaced, but post hole context 285 is exceptionally larger than the others in the line. The most westerly line of post holes indicating a possible 'fence line' consists of contexts 84, 58, 74, 71, 160, 175, 188, 327, 298, 359, 355, and 300. These post holes are the most consistently pitched features.

All these 3 sides are well defined, however a problem lies at the south end of the enclosure. It is in this vicinity that no concise pattern emerges. There are a number of irregularly spaced post holes including contexts *59*, 91, 100, 90, 244 and 247 but these are far from being a linear arrangement. Further examination of the of the post holes on the plans can produce circular arrangements around the large pits, contexts 54 and 83, including post holes 100, 91, 59 and 84. Another compilation of possible industrial use could be the configuration of post holes contexts 84, 83, 82 and 100. This pattern of post holes would tend to suggest that the south section of any enclosure or building had either minimal support or was completely open.

The evidence for the cobbled floor continued with well recorded sections of in-situ segments, undisturbed by the plough, although close lying to the ploughed surface. It is obvious from the excavations that the floor is a later addition. The surface may have originated in earlier building, suggested by the inner line of post holes on the west side, but the covering of post hole context ill by the floor shows that construction was extended at a

later period to the outer line of posts. The western line of posts are of less substantial stature than the inner line of the building. There has been no evidence for further cobbling outside of the building.

The new plan clearly shows that some rubbish pits, of industrial and domestic use lay outside of the central complex. These pits include contexts *57*, 185. 147, 163 and 182. Other rubbish pits lie to the north in contexts 301, 302 and 356. A number of these rubbish pits are of prehistoric date and support the theory for an earlier phase at Rocky Clump, originally suggested by the very large pit at context 14 from the earlier excavations located within the clump. The pottery from these pits, as already recorded, shows very heavily flint tempered wares.

It is in the excavation of the ditches that further phases in the development of R.ock\
Clump can be discerned. The substantial north to south ditch begins within the confines of the building structure and runs out to the north under the baulk. The flint nodules lying within the upper layers of the ditch inside the building precincts could be construed as being part of the floor in this area. However, the heavy flint noduled layer continues all the way along the ditch and past the enclosure boundary. This may prove to be a possible pathway? Equally the east to west ditch and its 2 sections requires further assessment and evaluation. The west segment has a similar upper layer to the north/south ditch, consisting of heavy flint nodules overlying extensive domestic rubbish deposits. The centre section is of an earlier date, cut by both the west section of the east/west ditch and the north/south ditch. This ditch was significantly shallower than the others and the dearth of archaeological deposits suggest it was very quickly filled in. The geophysical survey conducted suggest the ditches may form part of another enclosure.

The results of the excavations at Rocky Clump now provide evidence for 2 enclosures or structures in close proximity and on the same alignment, with possible extensions further north. The north building was of significant dimensions, enclosed by post supports. The floor consisted of compressed flint packing. A large post hole at context 285 may suggest a tethering post for large animals. The considerable size of the structure would be difficult to call a building and the size does suggest more of a stockade. The inner line of post holes on the west side could be interpreted as a possible 'lean- to', but the location of post hole context 111 under the cobbled floor confirms an extension to the construction at a later period(see above).

The examination of the excavations in a panoramic landscape, now give an even greater picture and understanding of the complexities of the site. The recently uncovered large construction and other features allow a chronology of the site to be pieced together. Rocky Clump can now be seen to have possibly originated in the Late Bronze Age period or early Iron Age. The post holes of the structures, however, can only be connected typographically. The essential chronology is produced by the excavations on the new enclosure, in this location are several pits dating to the prehistoric period. A later phase sees the beginning of a ditch construction, at present awaiting dating from artefact analysis. This ditch was quickly filled in again. Other ditches were created at a later date going north to south and east to west, cutting the earlier smaller ditch, probably forming a causeway between the others. The later ditch cut through earlier pits. The next phase is the construction of an enclosure or stockade with a fence line to the west. This building was constructed over the ditch running north to south. The final phase is the extension of the enclosure to a 'fence' line on the west and the laying of the flint cobbled floor. Coins dating to the reign of Claudius II (268A.D.-270A.D.) lying above the floor layer date this latest phase to the late third century. Rocky Clump now has an occupation date covering

1000 years. The limited amount of domestic debris would suggest an interrupted occupation with activities during the prehistoric period and re-occupation during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. confirmed by coin dating. This is a similar set of events that occurred at Chanctonbury Ring in West Sussex (D.Rudling pers. Comm.).

Is Rocky Clump a farm or a 'shrine'? The question still remains unanswered. That some form of farming occupation took place is now obvious, however the dimensions of the first building excavated still suggest something different to known Romano-British buildings The name 'Patchway' still hints at religion and ritual. It is possible that the stockade was the ritual slaughtering place of animals, but the lack of bone finds of particular cult animals suggests otherwise. It is not unusual for farms or villas to be both, as for example Chedworth Roman villa in Gloucester (Goodburn 1989). The excavations at Rocky Clump have produced conclusive evidence for farming activities but still leave many questions unanswered. The site lacks any real evidence for domestic settlement buildings, the ones excavated are too large for such purposes. The lack of supportive features such as corndrying ovens, 'round houses' and storage pits causes some concern. The research programme conducted in 1993 highlighted the intensity of archaeological material in the south field. Mrs Edna Gorton, widow of the director of the original excavations, has stated that small trenches they had cut in the south field, produced finds of pits and 'hut floors'. The south field may provide the evidence required for the settlement missing from the material collected to date.

The evidence gathered is beginning to answer some of the questions originally raised. While some form of agricultural activity within these precincts can be appreciated, we are still far from completing the panoramic picture. The evidence although suggesting occupation during the prehistoric period, lacks confirmation by absence of indigenous 'round house' buildings(see above). At a later period there is a 'Romanisation' in this settlement reflected in the rectangular configuration of the buildings, but intimating a lack of substantial material wealth to encompass the costs of building a traditional villa. Rocky Clump may prove to be a transitional or early phase of Romano-British villa building (O.Gilkes Pers Comm.). The transition from the 'round house' can be observed in other settlement sites (Brandon 1998). One important aspect of the excavation is the locality of the site, a hill-top some distance from the sea and away from below the scarp north of the South Downs. It is known that another Romano-British settlement lies to the south in Coldean valley (Funnell forthcoming), so a greater intensity of Roman occupation is evident in this region. The pottery comes from diverse sources, but a large proportion, 30%, originated from the pottery kilns recently excavated by Mr Chris Butler and the Mid-Sussex field Team at East Chiltington (Butler forthcoming).

A dayschool at Sussex University organised by the BI-IAS Field Unit invited Dr Malcom Lyne to give a presentation on the locations of kilns sites, the style and types of pottery and their distribution. Dr Lvne examined considerable quantities for pottery from Rocky Clump and produced an initial dating some of the features. A number of the pits were confirmed of being prehistoric in date and probably Late Iron Age, this confirmed earlier hypotheses. The north/south and east! west ditches produced pottery from the 1 st and 2nd centuries. The contexts above the cobbled floor, and this was supported by coin evidence(see above), produced activity during the late third and early fourth century. Rocky Clump is providing important information about Romano-British settlements on the slopes of the Downs and hitherto unknown or recorded peasant farming sites.

It is the intention of the BHAS Field Unit to continue excavating during 1999. The emphasis this year will be extensive geophysical surveys of both the north and south fields with the

new resisitivity meter. A number of new investigations will be undertaken. The area between the 2 buildings will be examined to seek some form of typology between the 2 sites found, and reveal the ditch surrounding Rocky Clump in this area. This new area may provide confirmation of the dating of this ditch if it cuts earlier pits or post holes. Within the trees a small area close to the cemetery has not been excavated, having been covered by an old tree since rotted and fallen. This section may reveal further burials. Any skeletal evidence found may be utilised as material for radio-carbon dating, thereby providing new evidence for the 'Saxon' content at Rocky Clump that so far has alluded the research. Small extensions to the north and west would allow detailed examination and conclusive dating for the ditch features and pits remaining under the baulk. Sections are planned to examine the geophysical survey results to determine the extent of the ditches and to discover if indeed there is an earlier enclosure lying north of the trees at Rocky Clump.

The excavation will again give, both students and the people of Brighton and Hove. access to archaeological investigation with training and guidance where requested. Dayschools will continue to examine and collate post excavation details of the artefacts found. The excavations in 1999 may prove to be the final year in this section of the field. The north field has produced a significant archaeological record, the post excavation examination requires the completion of a written report for publication in the Sussex Archaeological Collections. Further excavations are being planned for the new millennium in the field south of Rocky Clump where fieldwalking produced the most evidence for occupation. This new research programme is, of course, determined by the continuing consent of Brighton Borough council and Mr West the farmer. This objective is anticipated unless new discoveries are found in the north field that justify further investigation.

Bone

A dayschool in the identification and methods of recording archaeological bone deposits was organised during November of 1998. A further day is planned for February 1999 where bone will be sorted into diagnostic and non-diagnostic material. The non-diagnostic will be counted and weighed. The diagnostic will be the subject of a further investigation at the Booth Museum during March of 1999. Initial examination of material from Rocky Clump shows a preponderance of cattle, sheep and pig. A part of the jaw bone of a shrew has been found during sieving and the head of the dog found in context 14 is still at Sussex University with Dr Elizabeth Somerville awaiting inspection and recording.

Mollusc

The marine material from Rocky Clump was also examined at the November dayschool and the correct method of recording marine crustaceans was the subject of another educational programme. Initial examination of the shells showed a large proportion of oyster shell with some mussel, whelk and periwinkle. The marine mollusc will be studied during the early part of 1999 and the data collated.

The Pottery

An extensive collection of pottery has been found. Most of the material is from the plough soil and very abraded. The pottery dayschool allowed Dr Malcom Lyne to examine sherds collected from the sealed contexts of the ditches and pits. The list of probable location sources for the pottery includes:

- Central Gaul (Samian Ware)
- East Sussex Ware (The majority of the pottery found)
- HardhamlPulborough Grey Wares
- HardhamlPulborough Cream Wares
- Oxfordshire Ware (Including segments of mortaria)
- Rowlands Castle (Hampshire)
- Wickham Barn (East Chiltington)approx 30% of sherds(local source Plumpton)

Amphorae was part of the pottery debitage but only 2 pieces have been found. A significant item was a solitary piece of Terra Rubra, but this is to be confirmed. Unfortunately the piece came from the 1950 excavation and is unprovenanced. Dr Lyne has proposed the grey ware as being from Hardham and Pulborough, but has suggested that this may change if, as he suspects, other kilns are found in the Hassocks region.

Slag and Geology

A dayschool in the subject of archaeological slag identification and the geology of the South Downs in this area has been organised for March/April at Brighton University. The date is to be confirmed. The day will include examination of material found at Rocky Clump.

Acknowledgements

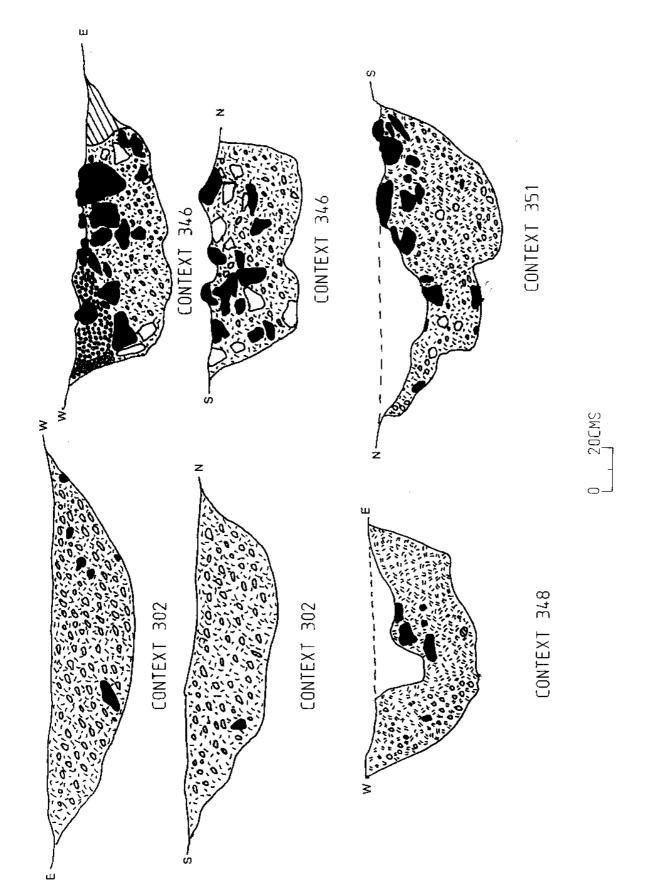
The Secretary for Archaeology of the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society would like to thank Brighton and Hove Council, Mr G.Bennett and Mr David West for their support in allowing access to the lands, and to Dr M.Lyñe, Dr E.Somerville, Dr S.Ullyot, Mr David Rudling and Dr A.Woodcock for their assistance and support through their expertise in archaeological matters and artefacts. Finally grateful thanks are expressed to the whole of the Brighton and Hove Society Field Unit for their endeavours during the past Season. Particular mention should be made of Mr G.Bishop who organised and directed during my absence and who also undertook the planning and a considerable amount of the section drawing of the site. Finally to Mr W.Santer and Mr David Coombs for their work with the Resistivity meter.

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John Funnell 21/1/99



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