

East Horton Farm Fair Oak & Horton Heath, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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**EAST HORTON FARM, HAMPSHIRE,
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Reference 31614

Prepared on behalf of: S. GRUNDON (EWELME) LTD

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**Wessex Archaeology
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1. SUMMARY

In July 1994, Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by S. Grundon Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at East Horton Farm, Hampshire (SU 505183). This involved the topsoil stripping of an area prior to sand extraction. The remains of ten features were revealed containing burnt flint and charcoal and a ditch of uncertain date was also identified. A substantial amount of worked flint was collected during the course of the watching brief and is of probable Mesolithic date.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wessex Archaeology would like to acknowledge the further help and co-operation of the Grundon Group, Den Nelson and the staff of East Horton Farm.

The watching brief fieldwork was undertaken by W. Boismier who also wrote the flint report. The project was managed by Kit Watson for Wessex Archaeology and the report was compiled by Melanie Gauden.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 *Project Background*

Following a telephone call from Den Nelson of Grundon Ltd during July 1994, Wessex Archaeology was requested to undertake an archaeological watching brief at East Horton Farm, Fair Oak, Hampshire (SU 505183). Topsoil stripping was taking place prior to further sand extraction.

Wessex Archaeology has a history of work at East Horton Farm including an evaluation in 1987 and a watching brief in 1989 (commissioned by S. Grundon Ltd), both revealing substantial archaeology.

3.2 *Topography and Geology*

East Horton Farm is situated approximately 1.5 km east of Fair Oak. The countryside is undulating, with the predominant land use being mixed arable/pastoral farming. A small tributary of the River Hamble flows south-west through the farm. The underlying geology is tertiary sand, hence the requirements for previous and current archaeological work in the vicinity in advance of sand extraction.

3.3 *Archaeological Background*

In 1963, two local schoolboys discovered a group of Neronian or early Flavian pottery in a newly opened sand pit at East Horton Farm (Collis 1974). Two years later, sixth-formers from the Richard Taunton School in Southampton conducted some small excavations at the site and revealed a series of ditches running into the field to the south. Finds from these ditches were largely Roman and included sherds of samian and of *terra nigra* platter (Collis 1974).

In 1987, planning permission for large scale sand extraction was requested by D.K Symes Associates on behalf of S. Bastion, the owner of East Horton Farm. In view of the previously recorded Roman activity, the County Archaeologist, M.F Hughes, requested that an archaeological evaluation be carried out before planning permission was granted. Wessex Archaeology undertook this work, the results of which revealed a ditch containing 1st century AD pottery, a post-hole, and a cobbled area. The results established that an early Roman site of small size had once existed at East Horton Farm (Jenkins, 1990).

In 1989, an archaeological presence was maintained by Wessex Archaeology during extensive overburden stripping at the farm. A considerable number of archaeological features were excavated and recorded, including probable Bronze Age pits and a Romano-British rectangular enclosure with an associated field system. The conclusions of this work suggested that the Bronze Age features did not represent a settlement site, but that perhaps it was a temporary base. The evidence for Roman occupation was more substantial and it would appear that a small farm was established at the site soon after the Roman invasion (Jenkins 1990).

4. METHODOLOGY

The 1994 watching brief took place just to the south-west of Field 1, the area of observation in 1989. The area was stripped using a box scraper. None of the features were excavated as the pressures of the topsoil stripping was conducive only to observation before they disappeared under the box scraper.

5. RESULTS

Ten oval/crescent shaped patches of grey/brownish grey sand containing burnt flint and charcoal were revealed by the stripping. These features were generally clustered together and occurred in two groups: one group occurred more or less in the area being stripped, the other group occurred in the north-north-eastern area within a 20-25 m² radius from which 50 worked flint artefacts were recovered from the top of the subsoil (sand). All ten features appear to be the remains of hearths.

A grey/brownish grey linear feature with irregular, indistinct edges was observed in the north-north-western corner and ran south-west to north-east. This contained worked and burnt flint, and charcoal. A single fragment of bone and a sherd of post-medieval pottery were also collected from its surface. This was the probable remains of a ditch of uncertain date, as both worked flint and the single post-medieval sherd were recovered from it.

6. THE FINDS

The Flint Assemblage

A total of 66 pieces of worked flint were collected during topsoil stripping. These comprise 28 flakes, 4 flake fragments, 14 blades, 11 blade fragments, 2 blade cores, 32 blade core fragments, 2 pieces of core shatter, and 2 burnt flakes. The majority of pieces were recovered from an area 20-25 m² in the north-north-eastern corner of the site.

The technological characteristics of the recovered assemblage (blades, blade cores, soft hammer/indirect percussion mode) indicate that most of it is of probable Mesolithic date.

7. DISCUSSION

The probable Mesolithic date of the flint assemblage from the watching brief adds another chapter to the archaeological record at East Horton Farm. Evidence for human activity in the Farm's vicinity in prehistoric times was established in the 1989 excavations when nine sherds of prehistoric pottery were identified. These sherds were given an Early Bronze Age date (Mephram 1990). The results of the 1994 watching brief has established a definite human presence in the Mesolithic period. It is unfortunate that the pressures of the stripping did not allow for an investigation of the probable hearth features to reveal possible dating evidence and to identify them as being Mesolithic in date or otherwise. Likewise with the linear feature which had mixed finds on its surface.

9. THE ARCHIVE

The archive, containing the flint assemblage and general observations, is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury under the archive code 31614.

10. REFERENCES

Collis, J.R., 1974, 'Pottery from Fair Oak, Hants', in *Rescue Archaeology in Hampshire*, 1974, 97-8

Jenkins, A.V.C., 1990, *East Horton Farm, Hampshire*, unpublished Client Report, Wessex Archaeology.

Mephram, L., 1990, in *East Horton Farm, Hampshire*.



Wessex Archaeology Ltd. registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire, UK SP4 6EB
Tel.: 01722 326867 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

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