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Corhampton
Saxon Church



A Metal Detecting Survey at Storey's Meadow West Meon, Hampshire

February 28th – March 1st 2014

Carried out by Project Metal-Detectorists
(The Saxons in the Meon Valley Project)

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With special thanks to the following for their support



SUMMARY

A metal-detecting survey was undertaken at Storey's Meadow, West Meon, Hampshire to compliment the geophysical survey that took place in the field to the north of the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery excavated in 2011 by Thames Valley Archaeological Services. The survey was conducted by metal detectorists from the Saxons in the Meon Valley Project with the aim of recovering any metal artefacts that might have been disturbed from early Anglo-Saxon graves. A small assemblage of artefacts were found, but none could be definitely identified as early Anglo-Saxon in date.

LOCATION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND



Fig. 1 Site location (backdrop map contains Ordnance Survey data crown copyright 2014).

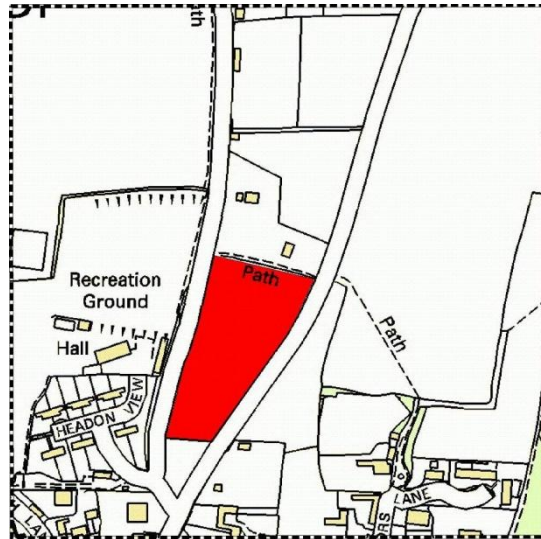


Fig. 2 Detailed location of the Survey site.

The site (SU 6425 2425) was the focus of a joint geophysical (Raven 2014) and metal detecting survey (this report) and was allocated the code: STM14. The survey site forms part of a field located at the head of the Meon Valley, just north of West Meon (Figs 1 & 2). It is defined on its eastern edge by the A32, Gosport to Alton road; on its west by a local lane, which formed part of the original thoroughfare through the village. Its northern extremity is marked by a private property and to the south is Storey's Meadow, a housing development by Drew Smith Ltd. An excavation in advance of this housing by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) in 2011 produced an early Bronze Age ring ditch, measuring 29 metres in diameter, plus an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery of 49 burials which focussed on the earlier monument. Since the completion of the housing the field has been protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 1409204).

The field had been arable since 2012 but at the time of the survey was laid to grass. A section 42 licence was granted to allow the survey work to take place from the 28th Feb - 1st March 2014. The weather over the two day was fair with mostly sunny intervals interspersed with light hail showers. Although a large amount of rain had fallen over the preceding weeks, the ground conditions were favourable due to good soil drainage.

The objectives of the survey were:

- 1) to recover metal artefacts (ferrous and non-ferrous) that had been disturbed from early Anglo-Saxon burials;
- 2) to introduce local community volunteers to the technique of metal detecting through the Saxons in the Meon Valley Project.

GEOLOGY

The local bedrock is 'Newhaven Chalk Formation' (NCK) and is composed of soft to medium hard, smooth white chalks with numerous marl seams and flint bands, including abundant zoophycos flints (notably at levels near the base). The formation is known to contain distinct phosphatic chalks of limited lateral extent.

The superficial or drift is 'Head' polymict deposit comprising of gravel, sand and clay depending on upslope source. These are poorly sorted and poorly stratified deposits formed mostly by solifluction and/or hill wash and soil creep and essentially comprises sand and gravel locally with lenses of silt, clay or peat and organic material (NERC 2014). The geology within the survey area should have little to no effect on the results of either the magnetometry or the resistivity results.

METHODS

Metal detecting took place over the grid established for the geophysics (see Raven 2014) (Fig. 3) and was conducted by Project detectorists (Mike Gaines, John Whittaker and Richard Burdett).

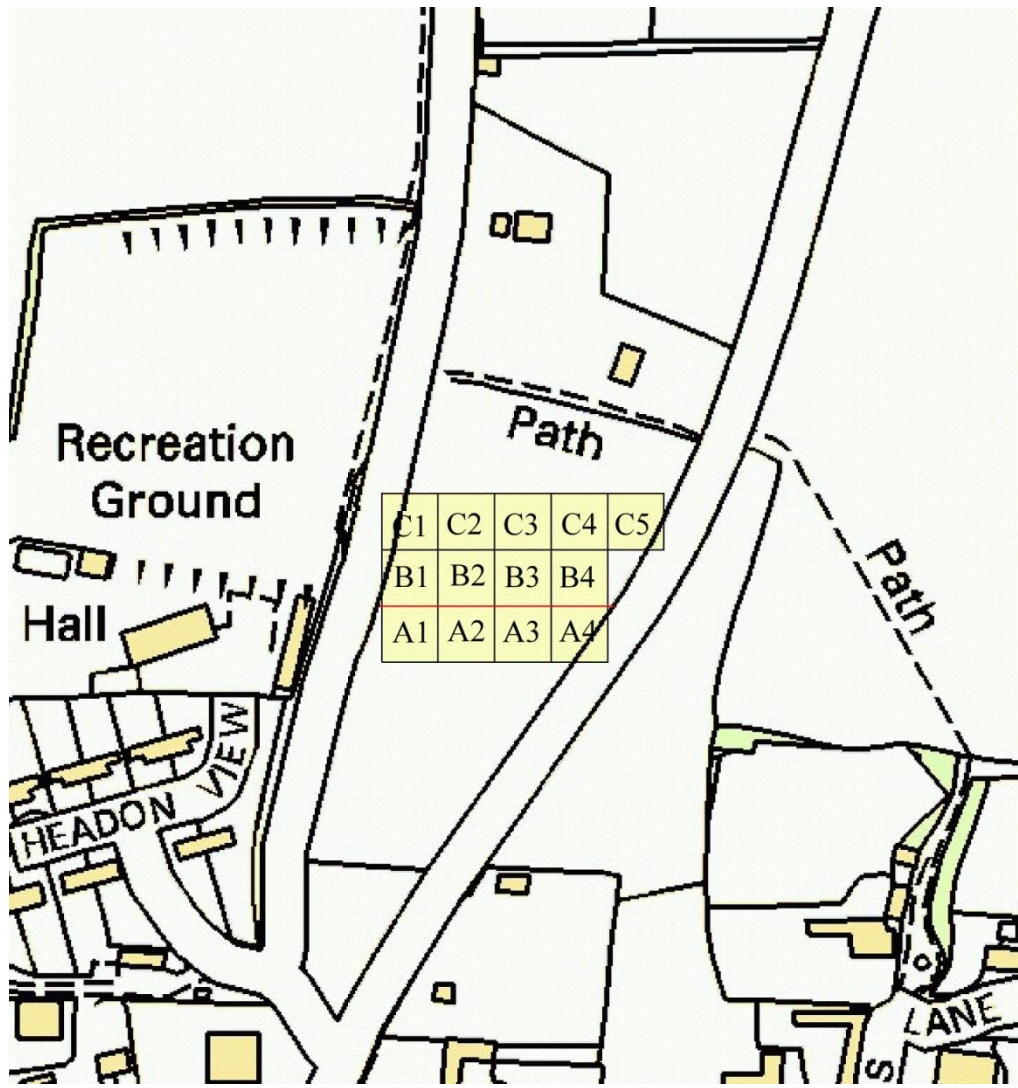


Fig. 3 Grid layout and position in relation to survey field.

The equipment consisted of:

A C.Scope model 1220XDP non - motion machine with a 10 inch diameter "HiQ" search coil;
Garrett AT PRO with a 8.5x11inch coil;
Minelab Explorer SE

The aim was to recover both ferrous and non-ferrous objects from the plough zone. Ground conditions affect the accuracy of the equipment so initial testing and adjusting was performed at the start of each session. On chalk moderate sensitivity and discrimination settings are used to get an optimum performance. The settings remained consistent to allow unbiased comparison of results. The depth performance averages between 0.15to 0.23m for small targets, but increases for larger the targets.

Each detectorist systematically searched a grid and finds were removed from the ground using a trowel. Artefacts were only removed from a depth no greater than the contemporary plough zone and not from undisturbed contexts. The location of the finds were recorded using a Garmin etrex Vista hand held GPS receiver accurate to 3m. Because the finds would be unstratified no greater accuracy was required.

RESULTS

Very few metal artefacts were recovered from the plough soil (Appendix). None can be securely identified as early Anglo-Saxon in date. Of note are finds 8 (a small cast copper alloy ring), 11 (a fragment of a post-medieval crotal bell showing part of the maker's mark within a decorative area), 12 (a medieval groat of Edward ???, minted in London) and 13 (a lead weight) (Fig. 4).

CONCLUSION

The geophysics survey has demonstrated that the cemetery probably continued into the survey area (Raven 2014). Metal-detecting was undertaken to recover metal artefacts that had been disturbed from graves, but the lack of artefacts of early Anglo-Saxon date indicates that very little damage had occurred to the interments, or they are at a depth sufficient to avoid damage from agricultural activity. Alternatively, the burials may not have been accompanied by metal grave goods. The majority of the excavated burials at Storey's Meadow were unaccompanied (information from lecture by Steve Ford), which can be explained by the fact that the cemetery appears to be of the later sixth to seventh century, i.e. a time when the grave good rite was in decline. Another consideration is the possibility that the survey targeted the northern edge of the cemetery: the geophysics produced evidence of only three probable graves. If this evidence can be taken as an accurate reflection of the density of graves in this area then quantities of metal artefacts would not be expected, especially if the graves were dug towards the end of the early Anglo-Saxon period. Moreover, the general lack of artefacts from other periods suggests that this area did not experience much activity in the past.



Fig. 4 Selected finds from metal detecting

REFERENCES

TVAT, 2014a *Monuments to the Dead: excavations at West Meon. The Background to the excavations and the details of the ring ditch*, http://www.tvas.co.uk/downloads/WestMeon_poster1.pdf

TVAT, 2014b *Monuments to the Dead: excavations at West Meon. The Saxon Cemetery*, http://www.tvas.co.uk/downloads/WestMeon_poster1.pdf

Raven, C 2014 *A Geophysical Survey at Storey's Meadow West Meon, Hampshire*, archive report for The Saxons in the Meon Valley Project.

APPENDIX

<i>Finds number</i>	<i>description</i>	<i>NGR</i>
001	Cu/Fe: linkage	64229/24331
002	Cu object	64243/24367
003	Cu sheet fragment	64293/24353
004	Pb waste (molten?)	64239/24330
005	Pb fragment	64214/24290
006	Cu lump	64242/24283
007	Cu disc (coin/token)	64216/24315
008	Cu ring	64213/24303
009	Cu sheet fragment	64267/24361
010	Cu sheet fragment	64220/24361
011	Cu fragment bell	64264/24297
012	Ae coin	64205/24332
013	Pb weight	64245/24290
014	Pb waste (molten)	64229/24301