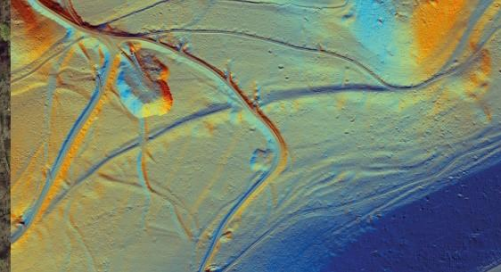




SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS

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Pottery report, Markwells Woods, Hampshire/ West Sussex For the 'Secrets of the High Woods' project

June 2016

Alice Thorne and Anna Doherty



Introduction:

The Secrets of the High Woods (SHW) project is an HLF funded project, hosted by the South Downs National Park Authority. The project seeks to identify, map and explore the archaeological heritage of a large swathe of the wooded western downs, using airborne laser scanning (LiDAR) technology.

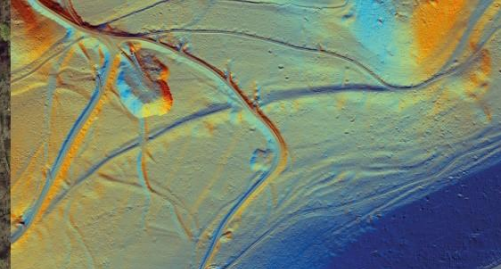
A series of fieldwork programmes have been devised to investigate, explore and record the archaeological resource. The aims of the fieldwork have been as follows:

- To introduce project volunteers to a range of upstanding archaeological features which characterise the historic environment of the South Downs National Park.
- To explore the representation of these features using a range of different visualisation techniques.
- To make a rapid record of these features to enhance our understanding of the LiDAR visualisations



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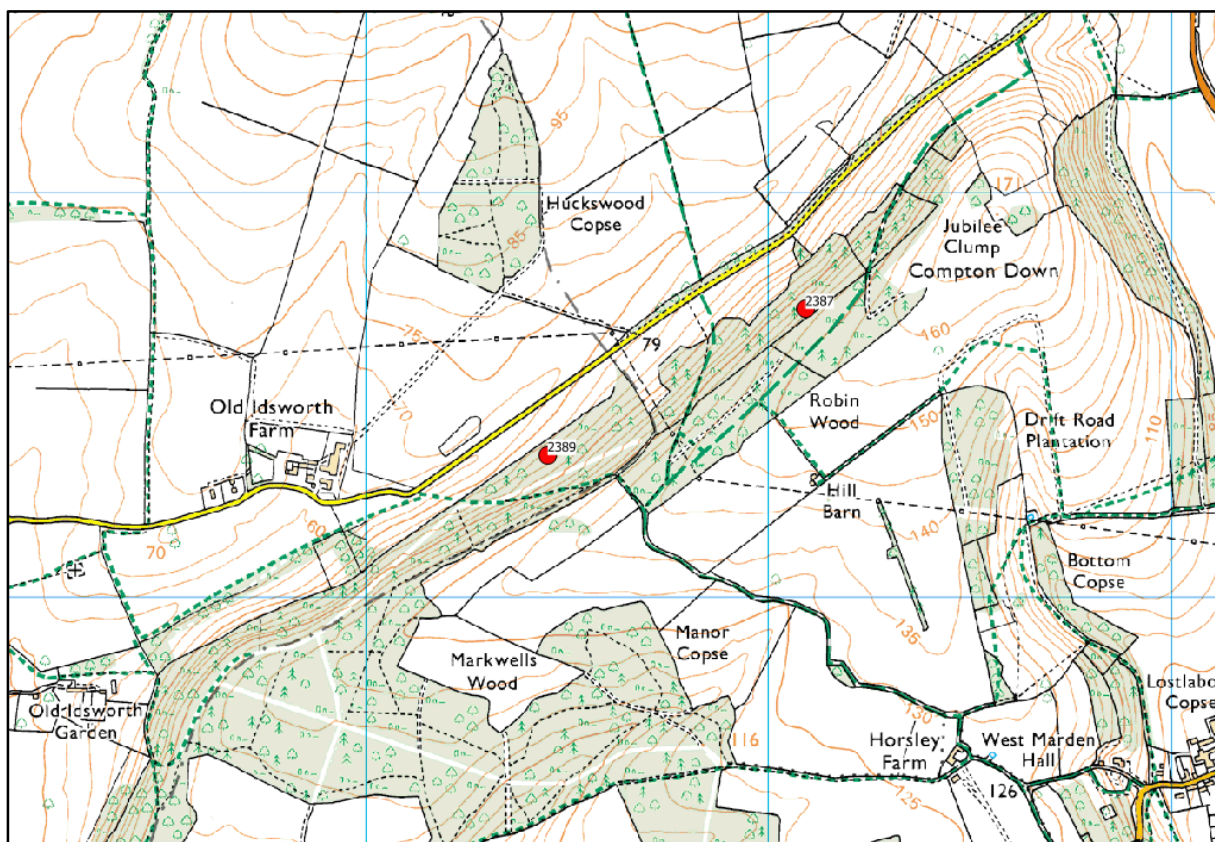
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Markwells Woods

Fieldwork at Markwells Wood was undertaken by the SHW volunteers, with kind agreement from the landowner Mr Steve Mason during March 2016.

This report is a short interim report on a pottery assemblage recovered by project volunteers at two sites visited during the field survey programme.



Markwells wood, Volunteer sites 2389 and 2387.

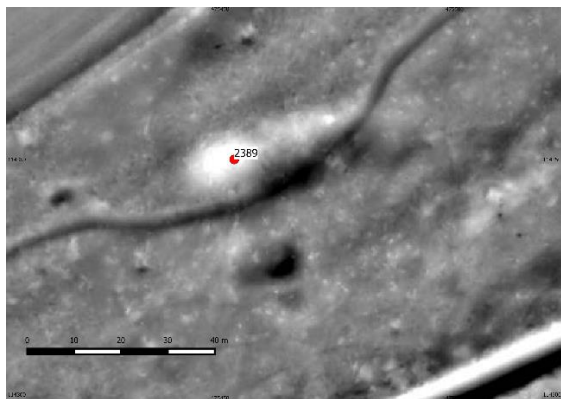
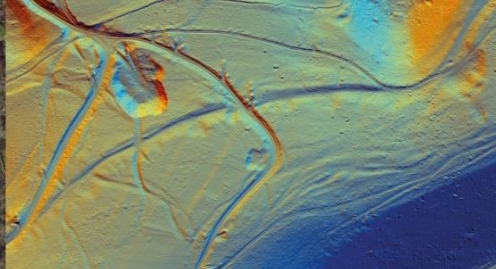
Site 2389: (Hampshire)

During the course of the field survey, a sub-rectangular terrace was visited by project volunteers, located on the north facing slope of Markwells wood (NGR 475452 114349). This was found to measure approximately 30m length by approximately 8m in width. Located close by, on the hillslope to the south, was located a second, sub-circular terraced area.



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Site 2389

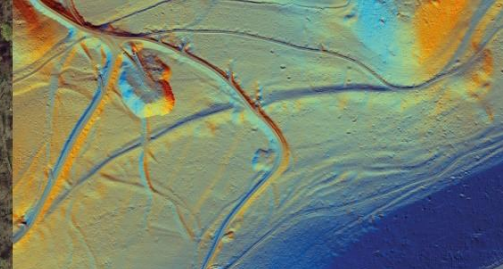
A large number of pottery sherds were recovered from the surface of terrace 2389, which were collected, and sent for analysis.





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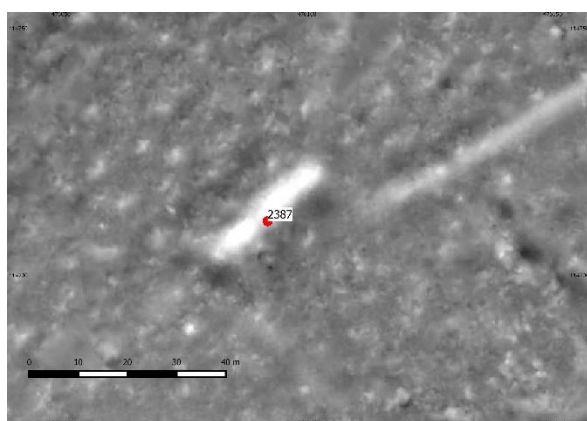
The Pottery by Anna Doherty

Surface collection of pottery from site 2389 at NGR 475452 114349 near Old Idsworth, Hampshire produced a small assemblage of 20 sherds, weighing 298g, all probably of c.1st century AD date. The pottery comprises a related group of coarse sandy fabrics representing the early products of the Rowlands Castle Roman pottery industry. Recent work on pottery from the later Iron Age/early Roman settlement at Horndean (ASE 2014) suggests that the more well developed Roman grey wares produced by this industry may have developed from pre-existing hand-made Iron Age sandy wares; however, although seven of the 20 sherds are dark-surfaced, all appear well-fired and probably wheel-thrown, suggesting that they are more likely to be of early post-conquest date. One of these dark surfaced fabrics was associated with a wheel-thrown short-necked/everted rim jar: a very typical early Rowlands Castle form.

Six of the sherds also feature flint inclusions, sometimes in fairly coarse size grades. Flint-tempering is quite a common feature in earlier Rowlands Castle vessels (Dicks 2009, 55) and all of the flint-tempered wares in the current collection appear well-fired and greyish in firing colour. Seven of the sherds are more well-developed non-flint-tempered Rowlands Castle grey wares including a rim from a large necked jar.

Site 2387: (West Sussex)

A second terrace was observed some way to the North east at NGR 476092 114711 also located against the steep north- west facing hillslope. This measured approximately 30m by 7m wide. A single sherd of pottery was recovered from the surface of this feature.



Site 2387

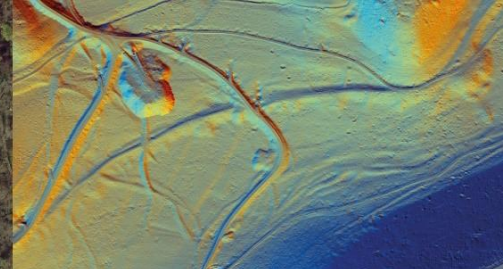
The Pottery by Anna Doherty

Surface collection from site 2387 NGR 476092 114711 also produced a well-fired coarsely flint-tempered Rowlands Castle grey ware sherd, weighing 13g. This is of similar type and also likely of early Roman date.



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Discussion:

The program of volunteer fieldwork has revealed a complex, multi period landscape within Markswells Wood, with field systems, quarries, terraces, pits and mounds identified. The sites described above are just two examples of a much wider range of features present. Normally, in a non – intrusive program of fieldwork, identification of features is undertaken on the basis of surface morphology, by and by looking for examples and parallels with similar sites identified elsewhere. Dating features is fraught with difficulty, and but chronological periods can sometimes be proposed, on the basis of similarities to excavated and dated examples of comparable sites.

In this case however, one of these sites (2389) had considerable quantities of pottery visible on the surface. Although occasional artefacts sherds are identified during fieldwork, usually the woodland vegetation prohibits identification of much material culture. Any identified artifacts are photographed and left in situ by project volunteers. However in this case, due to the quantity of pottery and the range of fabric sherds present, a decision was made to take some samples, in order to confirm a date for these sherds. The assemblage of sherds was sent for analysis to Anna Doherty, Roman Pottery Specialist at Archaeology South East, UCL. The pottery has since been returned to the landowner, Steven Mason.

The analysis has indicated a Roman, and probable first century date for the sherds recovered - giving an intriguing suggestion of Roman period settlement or occupation, on these terraced platforms on the hillslopes above Idsworth valley. It must be borne in mind of course, that all these sherds have been collected from the surface only – and not from any securely stratified context.

It is probable that these sites could contain further buried features, deposits and material culture relating Roman period activity on the north-west facing hillsides of Markswells wood. Roman pottery and tile has also been recovered during field walking in the 1970's to the east of St Hubert's church at Old Idsworth, and important work by Barry Cunliffe has been undertaken on the development of the wider archaeological landscape of Chalton. These sites are considered to represent exiting new additions to the archaeological record, deserving of much further research.

Bibliography:

ASE 2014, *Archaeological post-excavation assessment and updated project design report: land west of 34 Havant Road, Horndean, Hampshire*. Archaeology South-East unpublished report 2014021

Barry Cunliffe (1973). Chalton, Hants: The Evolution of a Landscape. *The Antiquaries Journal*, Vol **53**, pp 173-190.

Cunliffe, B. 1976. The Romano-British Village at Chalton, Hants. In *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*. Vol **33**, pp 45-69.

Dicks, J, 2009, The Rowland's Castle Romano-British pottery industry, *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, **14**, pp 51-66