

THE SELHURST PARK PROJECT

The Selhurst Park Project is focused upon five sites within one valley in the South Downs, near Chichester in West Sussex. Excavations on the first of these sites took place in 2005, 2006 & 2008 and were directed by George Anelay (Chichester District Council) using teams of volunteers and funded through donations from the public and local business. A series of enclosures were found dating from the Middle Iron Age to the 2nd century AD. It is intended that the Selhurst Park Project will in total involve the excavation of all five archaeological sites, which will then be published as a series of monographs. The first of these monographs, on the 2005-8 excavations, is planned for publication in 2015.

The project has now reached the final stage of the post-excavation phase, after the completion of all the reports on the artefact assemblages. The funding received in 2013 allowed for the completion of the final of these reports, which was on the pottery assemblage. Below is a list of the completed reports:

The Pottery from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex by Dr. Jane Timby
The Animal Bones from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex, by Dr Martyn G. Allen
The Charred Plant Remains from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex by Mariangela Vitolo
The Fired Clay from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex by Cynthia Poole
The Human Skeletal Remains from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex by Dr. Mary E. Lewis
The Boxgrove Helmet Cheekpiece by Dr. M.C. Bishop
The Stone from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex by David Bone
The Copper and Silver Small Finds from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex by James Kenny
The Flint Finds from Selhurst Park Farm, West Sussex by James Kenny

The pottery report described how the assemblage from Selhurst Park can be divided into four ceramic traditions; the first dates to the middle Iron Age and is characterised by saucepan pots and the predominant use of calcined flint in the pottery fabrics; the second dates to the later Iron Age and sees the appearance of the black sandy and black flint-tempered wares commonly referred to as the South Atrebatian tradition and at some point in the latest pre-Roman Iron Age the introduction of Rowland's Castle-style wares; the third dates to the early Roman period (pre-Flavian) with the continuation of the previous traditions alongside other local industries such as those based in the Arun Valley and Chichester. The last stage probably dates to the early 2nd century and represents the abandonment of this part of the site and sees the development of the local industries with increasing numbers of wheel-made vessels.

It concluded by stating that the pottery assemblage from Selhurst Park is an extremely important one both locally and regionally from a number of perspectives. The quality and quantity of material is exceptionally good and is one of the largest assemblages of this date to be excavated in the area in modern times. The composition of the assemblage raises a number of issues with regard the chronological development of pottery vessels and decorative styles in Sussex from the middle Iron Age into the early Roman period and the potential persistence of certain middle Iron Age traits well into the 1st century BC. It also highlights the issues surrounding the development of the local pottery industries and how these relate to one another. These issues cannot be completely addressed by a single site but hopefully the sequences suggested will be confirmed or refuted by the excavation and publication of future sites and further research.