

# Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team

## NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 67

December 2009

### Editorial

Welcome to the final Newsletter for 2009. The usual suspects are reported this year including the Culver Project, the Chapel site at Exceat and a summary of work at Arlington during 2004 to 2009. Many thanks to Rob Wallace, Greg Chuter and Bruce Milton for these reports.

Although the winter is usually a season of talks, in "Calling all members" Susan Birks announces our first event of 2010, a Finds Processing day on 6<sup>th</sup> February. Please note the date and hope to see you there.

We expect work at Barcombe Bath House, Church Field to be reported in the next Newsletter.

I am always looking for ways to improve the Newsletter, so if you have suggestions or articles please forward to me at [david.worsell@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:david.worsell@tiscali.co.uk).

I would wish you and your families all the best for the festive season,

David Worsell



### Culver Archaeological Project 2009 season

This year's excavation started on August the 8<sup>th</sup>. We hired in a 13 Tonne tracked excavator to open up our two sites. It was the generosity of the Margary fund grant of £1,400 that allowed us to hire this plant, and the project is truly grateful for this grant.

Our first site was opened in Court House Field. Our geophysical survey of 2008 had plotted a Roman road across the width of the field, running NE-SW. Furthermore, the road appeared to have an S-bend, and there was a geophysical anomaly which could indicate why the road S-bended.

The second site was opened up in Pond Field where we opened up part of our 2007 excavation and extended these to include features that disappeared under the bulks.

We had student volunteers and from Newcastle, UCL, Bradford, Leicester, Sheffield and Edinburgh universities. Furthermore we had volunteers from The West Kent Archaeological Society (WKAS formerly WKAT), MSFAT we also had a metal detecting group The Landscape Explores Group in South East : National Council for Metal Detecting Southern Region LEGISE:NCMD (SR), which were recommended by WKAS, and did a fabulous job, they recovered 14 coins the majority being Roman.

In Court House field, we came down on the road at approximately 400/500mm depth, where there was a very large quantity of flint. The flints were left partly covered until we cleaned back by hand. On initial cleaning of the road we started to realise how good the state of preservation was. This part of the field was a separate field at least up until 1966 where aerial photos show a hedgerow as a boundary. It is presumed that the farming practice in this part of the field was different to the rest of Court House Field, as we only had one or two layers of flint surviving outside this area. Cleaning back of the road took around two weeks, although we split personnel between the road and the industrial site.

When we finally had cleaned back the road it was photographed by Lisa Fisher. The edges of the road were drawn, and at ten metre intervals, drew two metres of the road (we had forty metres of the road exposed and could not draw the road entirely because of the amount of flint. I must give my sincere thanks to Sarah Foster for the hours she spent drawing the road in such detail). Once the road was fully recorded, we put a one-metre slot through it to get a good section and see the depth of the foundations. We also had a vast amount of small flint, which we consider to be part of the metalled surface, which has slipped down to the edges.

Early in the excavations we discovered another metalled surface coming off the eastern side of the road, approximately one to two metres in width. There was a large amount of slumping adjacent to it which was present across the width of the road. We opened a three-box section along the line of the slumping (one on part of the road) and discovered a paelo channel along this line. It was decided that the paelo channel running under the road had caused the slumping, and the second metalled surface was not constructed but due to the slumping and deposited by wash down from the road.

Two linear features were found one running NW-SE and the other E-W. The first was sterile of any finds and the second had several sherds of East Sussex Ware. There were also several small pits; these might have been the result of the wash down. Unfortunately, we could find no evidence of the geophysical anomaly that was thought to be the reason for the road S-bending. It is a possibility that we have miscalculated where the anomaly is. Therefore, in November we shall be carrying out a GPR survey to see if we can locate the anomaly again for future excavations.

In Pond Field we have cleaned back several areas, and uncovered both roadside ditches, put four one-metre slots through them and recovered some Roman pottery. On the eastern ditch, we recovered two large pieces of slag. From our 2007 excavations, we started re-excavating a large pit, which disappeared under the bulk. This feature actually turned out to be a large linear feature that runs E-W for approximately ten metres before disappearing under the eastern bulk. We fully excavated the 2007 puddling pit, and are still excavating a possible clamp kiln feature along with other features. Although the season finished on 19<sup>th</sup> September, we are still excavating at weekends hopefully until the end of November before backfilling the site.

This has been a very interesting and successful season, which has answered some of our research questions, and raised more. Hopefully with the GPR survey, we will answer the big question we failed to answer so far.

Rob Wallace  
CAP Director.



### **Excavations at Arlington 2004 – 2009: A major Roman roadside settlement**

Between 2004 and 2009 archaeological investigation of the fields south of Arlington village, by local volunteers under the direction of Greg Chuter identified a hitherto unknown Roman roadside settlement, an associated cemetery and the true course of the major Roman road between Pevensey and the Ouse Valley.

Roman activity was first noted in the area as early as 1915 when a local farmer collected quantities of Roman pottery from two of his fields; further finds were recorded in the 1960s leading to the excavation of a Roman building, thought at the time to be a villa, but unfortunately never written up. Rescue excavation during the construction of the Arlington reservoir in 1969, recorded further evidence of Roman occupation including a pottery kiln.

In 2004, following reports from metal detectorists of large quantities of Roman coins being found in a field to the east of the reservoir, investigation comprising geophysical survey, fieldwalking and evaluation excavation was initiated by the Mid Sussex Field Archaeology Team. Initial conclusions from these results suggested a Roman villa. However continued excavation over the following years by Greg's team identified a wide flint built Roman road with evidence of occupation and industrial activity alongside.



### **Roman road surface under excavation**

The excavation phase of the project has now finished and initial analysis of the finds and results is beginning to reveal the story of what appears to be a very large Roman settlement.

No evidence has been found of Iron Age occupation on this site and activity appears to commence with the construction of the Roman road in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

The road was 10 metres wide, flanked by 2 metre wide, 1.5metre deep ditches and crossed the River Ouse near Chilver Bridge, either by fording or more likely a bridge. A settlement very quickly grew up at this river crossing, expanding rapidly both sides of the river.

The excavations have found that the roadside ditches had been filled in deliberately in several places and a series of plots defined by ditches laid out alongside the road. One of these plots contained a wooden building and another contained an iron smelting area. The filling of the ditches appears to have caused a problem with water management and one area appears to have become very waterlogged, exasperated by an unusual dip in the road surface. Attempts were made during the Roman period to drain this area with a series of ditches.



### **Series of pits and ditches cut into the filled in road ditch**

Artefacts show that the settlement was linked into the vast trade network of the Roman Empire, with pottery, mortars and amphora coming in from the major production centres of Britain, as well as Europe. Presumably a vast amount of resources such as wood, food and iron were also being exported out. This transportation would certainly have been by road, but the accessibility of the site by small boats is also likely to have played a major role.

By the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century the site appears to have gone into decline and certainly the area of excavation was abandoned. This may reflect a general decline of sites in Southern England due to the instability of the Roman Empire or was possibly a result of commerce shifting to the newly established fortress at Pevensey to the east. So far there is a gap in occupation of the Arlington area of at least 500 years until the establishment of a new settlement at Arlington village in the mid Saxon period.

Excavation in a field to the east of the settlement and alongside the Roman road has identified a cremation cemetery containing an unusual flint structure. Measuring 7 metres square it comprised a well constructed flint built pad nearly 1 metre thick.

Unfortunately the above ground structure has totally vanished, probably as a result of the stone being robbed after the Roman period. Fragments of masonry suggest it was partly constructed of greensand and may have had a tile roof. The current assumption is that it was a shrine or mausoleum and thus unique so far in East Sussex.



### **Possible Mausoleum**

The information from Arlington fits neatly into the emerging story of the wider landscape which is revealing that the Low Weald was a focus for intensive 'colonisation' and utilisation during the late Iron Age and Roman periods. In the past archaeologists have focused their attention on the chalk downs, but it now appears that the Weald clay is just as rich in Roman sites !

Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist, East Sussex County Council.



### **Calling all members**

A year of productive digging at Barcombe, Peacehaven and Exceat has produced a wealth of artefacts ranging from jet toggles to hand axe rough-outs and medieval pottery to boar's tusks.

We can all feel proud of our efforts over the spring and summer. But before sitting back and resting those blisters, give a thought to the fact that the real work has yet to begin. For the finds to be of useful value, they must be washed, sorted and marked with a context number ready for identification and analysis by the boffins. That applies to the several thousand bits of flint from Peacehaven barrow, the pottery, glass and tile from Barcombe Roman bathhouse and the pottery and bones from the medieval chapel/barn buildings at Exceat.

If you thought you would never have the chance to look closely at that decorative bit

of Samian you found during the summer, or whether that lob-sided triangular bit of flint really was a slightly- less-than-perfect broken Bronze Age arrow head, or the mottled bit of ceramic building material (cbm) really was part of a masterpiece painted on plaster - come and join the volunteer finds processors!

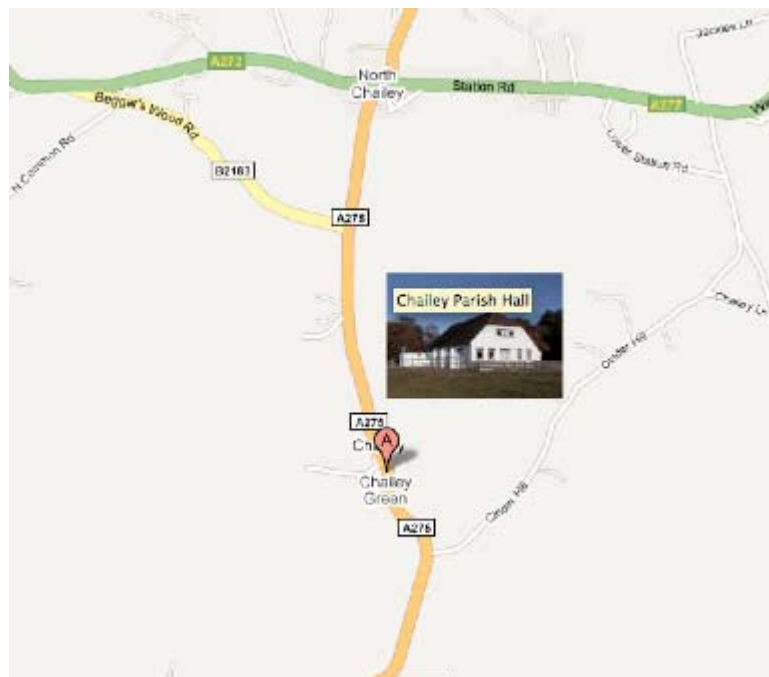
It is free, and no experience is necessary, just grab your old toothbrush, packed-lunch and flasks of hot beverages and join us at Chailey Parish Hall on February 6<sup>th</sup> between 10.00am and 3.00pm for a chance to see the finds washed and close up.

Please e-mail [susanb@hpcimedia.com](mailto:susanb@hpcimedia.com) or call T 01403 241550 to let us know you are planning on coming.

MSFAT and BHAS members are welcome and places will be allocated on a first come first serve basis.

More days are also planned so if you prefer mid-week or can't make that date but would be interested in a future date please also let us know.

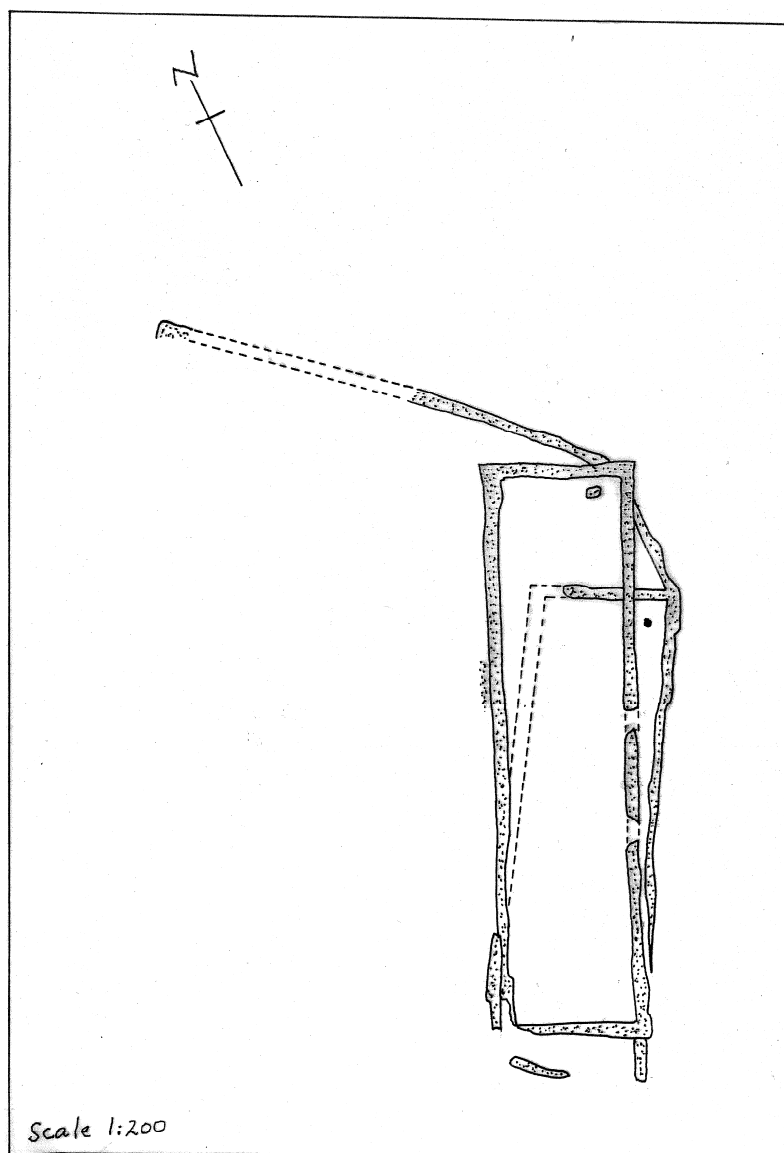
Chailey Parish Hall is situated on the A275 adjacent to The Five Bells public house near Chailey Green BN8 4DA (see map below).



### **Update on the Chapel site at Exceat**

We went back to the site this autumn with the hope of finishing the excavations ready for backfilling. All the foundation walls have now been uncovered and the area inside the walls was quadranted with four of these areas excavated.

These quadrant areas were excavated to try and find evidence of any floor surface, none was found, however a linear feature found through trowelling was sectioned and appears evidence of a robbed-out wall. This appears to run diagonally to the south west corner of the main building, to link up with the foundation wall which lies on the south-west corner on the outside of the main building. This links in and runs parallel with the outer eastern wall to form another rectangular building with boundary wall attached (see plan below).



It is now obvious that there were two buildings on this site and that the original building, with the boundary wall attached was partly robbed out to allow another longer building to be built albeit at a different angle.

To confirm the theory that the linear 'scorch' marks found in the grass to the west of the site, further up the hill a test pit was dug. It was placed to determine if these marks had walls underneath and also to see if a corner could be found to link up with the boundary wall running off diagonally from the north end of the main building. This corner was duly found and the foundations consisted of chalk blocks, consistent with much of the other foundations.

Although no floor was found in the interior of either building a large amount of animal bone, probably sheep was found deposited in numerous areas. This could mean either one of both buildings could have had an agricultural use at one time, probably at the latter stages of their lives.

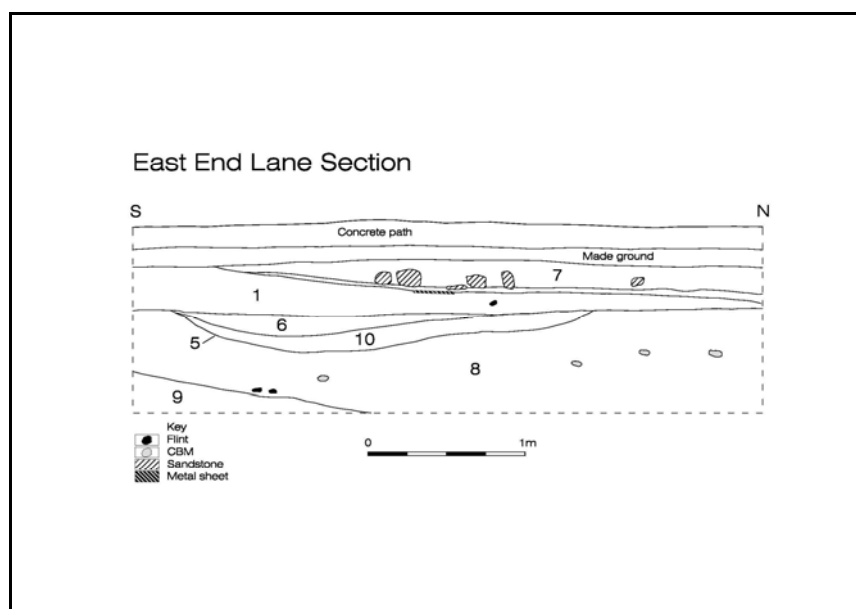
I was hoping to have returned with my loyal crew in November with the hope of digging more test pits and try and find the direction of the western boundary wall, but the weather has been so awful. Maybe we can early December if there is a break in the weather. If we can finish off then the site can at last be backfilled ready for some further geophysics work on the western side of the buildings, so see if there are other buildings close by.

Bruce Milton

### **3 East End Lane, Ditchling by Chris Butler**

Chris Butler Archaeological Services was commissioned to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks associated with the construction of a porch and driveway at 3 East End Lane, Ditchling, East Sussex (TQ 32621 15328).

The watching brief resulted in the discovery of a shallow pit which produced pottery and other artefacts dating to the early to mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, together with an assemblage of bone and other environmental material. Prehistoric flintwork and Medieval Pottery was also recovered, together with 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century pottery, and a piece of decorated glazed floor tile of late 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date.



Of particular note is the assemblage of 15<sup>th</sup> to mid 16<sup>th</sup> century pottery as this is the first of this period from the village. The assemblage demonstrates the range of local fabrics in use as well as indicating the range of market contacts available to a presumably wealthy household in Ditchling.



### **Decorated glazed tile**

The decorated glazed floor tile is of late 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date and has a fine buff sandy fabric with sparse iron oxides to 2mm and rare patches of unmixed off-white clay. The tile (Fig. 0), which is 25mm thick and has a 27mm diameter circular conical profiled fixing depression on its underside, has stamped decoration under a white slip which is itself covered by a clear (yellow) glaze. The design, depicting a human head in one corner of the tile (presumably there were heads in each corner), is almost certainly of Continental origin, quite possibly from the Low Countries but no parallel has yet been found.

I would like to thank Mr George Baxter of George Baxter Associates who made the arrangements for the watching brief on behalf of Mrs H Barker (the owner). The watching brief was carried out by the author, and Keith Butler. The project was monitored by Mr Greg Chuter for ESCC.

### **Excavations at 24/26, Lucastes Avenue, Haywards Heath, West Sussex.**

Chris Butler Archaeological Services (CBAS) was commissioned to carry out an excavation at 24/26, Lucastes Avenue, Haywards Heath, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2009. The site is located on the north-west side of Haywards Heath, and is in an area of the town that is predominantly residential in nature, with the majority of buildings dating from the 1950s and 1960s.

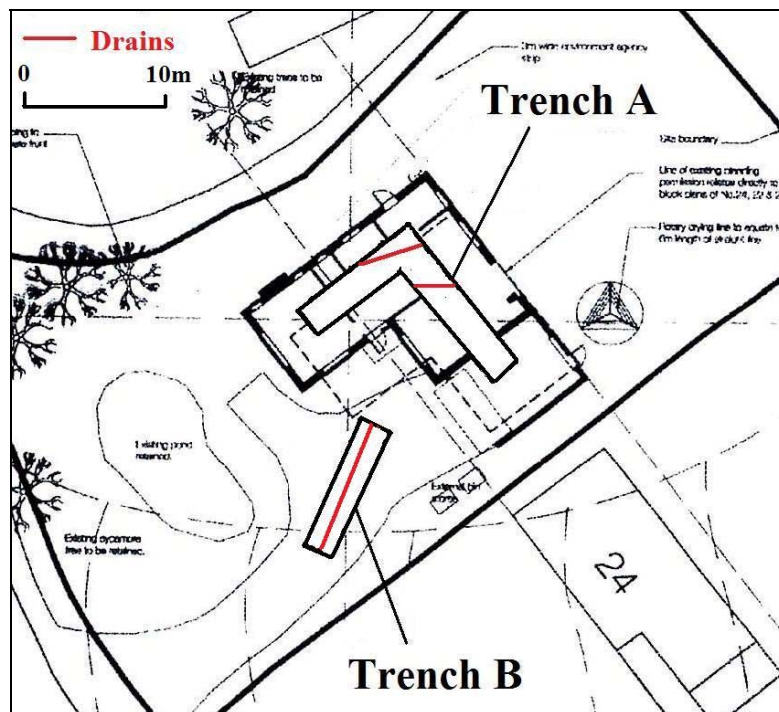
There are several Victorian dwellings in the vicinity. The site is within the Lucastes Conservation Area. No. 24 Lucastes Avenue is a Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century dwelling that has subsequently been extended. The trenches were positioned between No. 24 and a small stream that runs to the west of the site.

The site was of special archaeological interest because it had been projected by Margary that the London to Brighton Roman Road crossed through or was immediately adjacent to the site. However, English Heritage predict that the Roman road is situated further to the west of this. The actual route of the road through Haywards Heath is not known, although its course is known at Bolnore to the south, and to the north of Haywards Heath. The crossing point over the stream, which has been in use for some time, hints that the Roman road also crossed at this point. Other evidence for Roman activity in close proximity to the site, is the Roman pottery found in 1922 in Lucastes Avenue where the Roman road was conjectured to cross it.

Trench A was located over the site of the proposed new dwelling, and was 'L' shaped with a length of 10m to the north with a further 8m running in a westerly direction. This trench had a width of 1.8m. Trench B was situated to the west of Trench A and had the dimensions of 8m in length and 1.8m in width. The trenches were excavated by machine to a depth of up to 1m, at which the natural (silty clay) was reached. This was confirmed by the geologist working for the developer who augered a bore hole in the bottom of each of the trenches. Trench A was augered to a depth of 2.4m where the only change was that the silt was getting denser. In Trench B to a depth of 1.75 were a layer of sandstone was reached.

During these excavations very few artefacts were recovered. The few that were retrieved came from the upper layers, and comprised ceramic building material and pottery sherds, all dating to the late Post-medieval period. The only features revealed were of a modern date, a red ceramic land drain running down the centre of Trench B and two corrugated white plastic pipes running across Trench A at its western end. These were most likely land drains that had been laid in recent times, as they were within the upper layers.

It was disappointing that no evidence of the London to Brighton Roman road, predicted to pass through the site by Margary, was discovered during the course of the excavation of the two trenches. This, combined with the fact that no traces of the road were found during the earlier watching brief maintained on the excavation of a trench for the laying of new sewer upsizing at No. 27 Lucastes Avenue, could imply that the English Heritage route of the road is possibly the correct one. It is also a possibility that during the laying of the land drains that any evidence of the Roman Road could have been destroyed, especially in Trench B.



## **A Watching Brief at Baldwins, Keymer, West Sussex by Keith Butler**

Chris Butler Archaeological Services were commissioned to maintain an archaeological watching brief at Baldwins, Keymer, West Sussex, on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

At the time of the fieldwork, the original outbuildings had all been demolished with the exception of the building at the south of the site, of which the two side walls remained, as this building was going to be rebuilt using the side walls as a garage. These buildings all dated to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

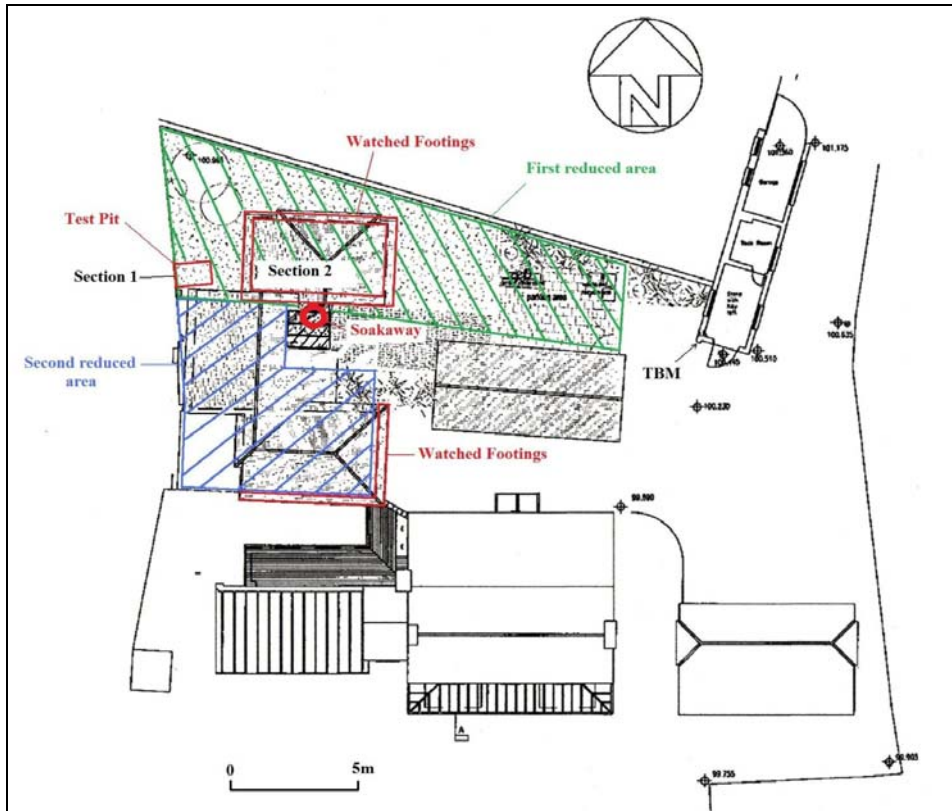
The site was located on the south side of the Keymer Road in Keymer village, and is set back from the road, behind the Greyhound Inn and a row of 19th century cottages, with an access drive opposite the Church of SS Cosmas and Damian. Situated to the east of the site is the Keymer Burial Ground which in an assessment excavation by MSFAT, revealed Medieval activity dating to the 12th to 14th centuries along the frontage with Keymer Road, and which may have been associated with properties now buried under the current road. Activity appears to have continued here into the 15th century.

The groundworks being monitored by the watching brief were, firstly a ground reduction of up to 300mm. This was over the footprint of the new building and the garden to the east. A later second reduction of 1.1m, associated with the building and the excavation of the footings to a depth of 1.2m, were also watched.

A large assemblage of artefacts was recovered during the work, this was largely made up of pottery and glass, with smaller quantities of ceramic building material, bone and clay pipe stems. Three pieces of worked flint were recovered from the excavations. One was a hard hammer-struck flake, and two were soft hammer-struck flakes, these pieces are largely undiagnostic, although the presence of soft hammer-struck pieces would suggest a Mesolithic or early Neolithic date. The earliest sherds of pottery date from the 7th to the early 18th century, but the majority dates from the late 19th to early 20th century. This makes them broadly contemporary with the demolished outbuildings. Perhaps the most interesting piece is the top of a small vase with a green and red transfer-print of the White Star Companies logo. Among the glass artefacts recovered were a number of complete containers, among these were 'MARMITE' and 'BOVRIL' jars and 'JEYES' disinfectant and 'CAMP' coffee bottles.

The only archaeological feature discovered during this watching brief was a circular brick built soak-away. This had been constructed with 20th century frogged bricks, and the modern date of construction was confirmed with the discovery of a large black plastic sack containing modern building material within it.

Considering the close proximity of the site to known Medieval activity, it is surprising that no archaeological features or artefacts of this period were noted or recovered during this watching brief. The most likely reason for this is that the foundations of the demolished outbuildings would have destroyed any archaeological evidence when they were constructed.



### Mid Sussex Development Projects

A number of local commercial archaeological projects are currently underway or have recently been completed (includes information taken from Sussex Archaeological Forum Minutes):

Items marked with an \* indicate projects reported separately in this Newsletter.

None are included this time as up to date information is not available.



### **DIARY DATES 2010**

#### **Project**

Finds Processing  
 Chapel Site, Ewe Down  
 Barcombe – Church Field  
 Culver Archaeological Project

#### **Dates**

6<sup>th</sup> February  
 TBA  
 TBA  
 TBA

#### **Contact**

Susan Birks  
 Bruce Milton  
 Chris Butler  
 Rob Wallace

David Worsell