



# **Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at Priory Lands Farm Appledore Kent**

TQ 9518 2852

Project Number 2007/09/01

By  
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### ***Summary***

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the removal of an old electricity pole, which was located within the boundary of the Royal Military Canal Scheduled Ancient Monument at Priory Lands Farm, Appledore, and its replacement by a new post which was inserted into the same hole. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered during the work.*

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Fig. 1 Site Location Plan

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services was commissioned by Freedom Group on behalf of their client EDF Energy, to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the replacement of a high voltage electricity pole at the Royal Military Canal site at Priory Lands Farm (TQ 9518 2852).
- 1.2** The site is located on the bank of the Royal Military Canal adjacent to Priory Lands Farm (Fig. 1), in the parish of Appledore, Kent. The site is bounded by the Royal Military Canal on the east side, and by the Military Road on its west side, and comprises a low grassed embankment, with a number of trees. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Kent SAM 396), and also a SSSI.
- 1.3** The site is located on the north-west edge of Romney Marsh. The geology, according to the British Geological Survey is alluvium<sup>1</sup>, although the situation is much more complex than this<sup>2</sup>, with a thin layer of topsoil overlying silty clays, which in turn generally overly a thick peat deposit. Although the ground close to the site is flat, it rises to the north-west of the site at Appledore.
- 1.4** An application had been submitted to English Heritage by Freedom Group for the removal of the existing electricity post in the Scheduled area, and its replacement with a new post in the same hole. Consent for the work has been granted by English Heritage under Section 2 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended). However, given the archaeological sensitivity of the site, a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief was attached to the consent.
- 1.5** The existing electricity pole had been erected on the site in 1960 (the pole carried a reference number and year of erection). The original method of erection was that a linear stepped trench was excavated by hand. This trench was larger than the pole, which was then lowered into the deepest part of the trench and the spoil packed back into the trench around the pole.
- 1.6** The watching brief itself was carried out on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007 by the author.

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<sup>1</sup> Gallois, R.W. (1992) *The Wealden District*, 4th Ed., British Geological Survey, London HMSO.

<sup>2</sup> Eddison, J. (2000) *Romney Marsh: Survival on a Frontier*, Stroud, Tempus Publishing Ltd.

## **2. Archaeological & Historical Background**

- 2.1** Romney Marsh has a long and complex history of formation and change, and has been exploited and adapted by man over the last 8,000 years. There is limited evidence for prehistoric activity, with some Roman activity. It is in the later Saxon period and then in the Medieval period that large scale settlement of Romney Marsh took place<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.2** The Royal Military Canal was cut between 1805-7, and runs along the landward edge of Romney Marsh for 42km between Hythe and Winchelsea. It comprised a waterway with a low rampart and Military Road on its landward side, and was part of the defences constructed along the south-east coast to counter the threat of an invasion by Napoleon<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.3** The spoil from the canal was thrown up as a rampart on the landward (north) side of the canal. "The main "ditch" was to be 62 feet wide and 9 feet deep. A road was to be built all the way along the northern bank, around 50 feet away from the water's edge. The road would be raised 3 feet above land (or marsh) level and would be 30 feet wide. A parapet would be built along the road, built from the soil dug from the canal cut"<sup>5</sup>
- 2.4** After the military threat had receded, the Royal Military Canal was used for the transportation of goods, and the tolls collected were intended to offset the huge cost of its construction. This use declined during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the last toll was collected at Iden Lock in 1909. It was once again used as defensive barrier during the Second World War, with pillboxes erected along its banks. The canal is now used for recreational activities and is managed by the Environment Agency.
- 2.5** There has been no previous recorded archaeological work carried out on this site, although other sites along the Royal Military Canal have been the subject of watching briefs in the past. At Dymchurch at the eastern end of the Canal, a revetment wall was encountered on the north side of the rampart, however it is not clear whether this was constructed at the same time as the rampart or slightly later<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Eddison, J. (2000) *Romney Marsh: Survival on a Frontier*, Stroud, Tempus Publishing Ltd.

<sup>4</sup> Hutchinson, G. (1995) *The Royal Military Canal*, Hastings, M & W Morgan.

<sup>5</sup> Hardcastle, P. *Canals & Waterways: Roots & Routes 1994-2003*

<sup>6</sup> Butler, C. (2003) *An Archaeological Watching Brief at 3 Dymchurch Road, Hythe, Kent*, Unpublished report, Ditchling Archaeology South-East

### **3. Archaeological Methodology**

- 3.1** The methodology for the work had been agreed between English Heritage and Freedom Group in advance of the work.
- 3.2** The first stage after the electricity supply had been isolated was for engineers to remove the wires from the existing electricity pole.
- 3.3** The upper part of the pole was cut off with a chain saw. The remaining part of the pole was then loosened by careful use of the bucket of the JCB. Once loosened, a chain was attached to the pole which was then lifted out of its hole using the bucket of the JCB and placed on the ground alongside the hole, before being removed offsite.
- 3.4** There was then an opportunity to inspect the hole for any archaeological features and artefacts. A small section was quickly cleaned using a trowel, as removal of the pole had left the internal surface smeared. However, due to the depth of the hole and the small space in which to work this could only be achieved near to the top of the hole.
- 3.5** The new pole was then lifted into position using the chain by a lorry with a small crane, and lowered into the hole. Using the weight of the pole and with the crane pulling down on the chain, the pole then dropped into the hole. This may have resulted in further downward displacement due to the soft ground, and the requirement to achieve the required depth. The results of this could obviously not be investigated.
- 3.6** The pole was then twisted by hand to ensure its correct alignment to the other poles in the line, and then its vertical alignment was achieved using the bucket of the JCB, with some packing of the soil around the base of the pole. After this, the wires were re-attached to the new pole.
- 3.7** A careful watch was also made for any disturbance of the site due to the movement of the tracked machine and other vehicles across the site, using the agreed access routes.
- 3.8** All archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded according to accepted professional standards. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.9** A full photographic record of the work was kept as appropriate and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held by Chris Butler Archaeological Services. A site reference of PLF07 has been allocated.

## **4. Results**

- 4.1** Once the pole had been removed it left a hole 1.9m deep and 500mm in diameter. Although the diameter of the pole was much smaller, it had a slightly splayed lower part, which resulted in a much larger hole once it had been fully removed.
- 4.2** The soil exposed in the hole comprised an upper layer 1.3m deep of dark brown silty loam (Context 1) with numerous roots in its upper 300mm, below a turf ground surface. Numerous small rounded fragments of gravel were noted in the upper layer and turf. Below this was a 0.6m deep layer of yellow brown silty clay loam (Context 2).
- 4.3** No archaeological features or deposits were noted in the hole, and the only artefacts noted were a number of unidentified fragments of iron, which were in the upper 100mm of the upper fill.
- 4.4** A watch was also kept on possible damage to the buried archaeological deposits and earthworks due to the movement of vehicles over the site. Although there was some surface disturbance due to the tracks of the tracked digger, there was no damage caused to the site during the period of the watching brief.

## **5. Finds**

- 5.1** There were no artefacts collected during the watching brief.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1** There were no archaeological deposits or features noted in the hole, and no archaeological finds were recovered.
- 6.2** Given the method used to erect the original pole, it would appear that the area around the pole would have been disturbed, making it unlikely that any archaeological features or deposits would have survived this disturbance to be seen after the removal of the pole.
- 6.3** The depth of the hole and its small diameter, together with the 'smearing' effect as a result of the pole's removal would compound this, by making any archaeological deposit difficult to identify. Furthermore any potential artefacts would almost certainly be residual.

- 6.4** In conclusion, it is clear that the removal of the post and its replacement has not disturbed any buried archaeology on the site, however the work in connection with the erection of the original poles may well have damaged and disturbed archaeological deposits.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Sam Polley of Freedom Group, together with his on-site team, for their co-operation throughout the watching brief. Judith Roebuck of English Heritage made the original arrangements for the watching brief.



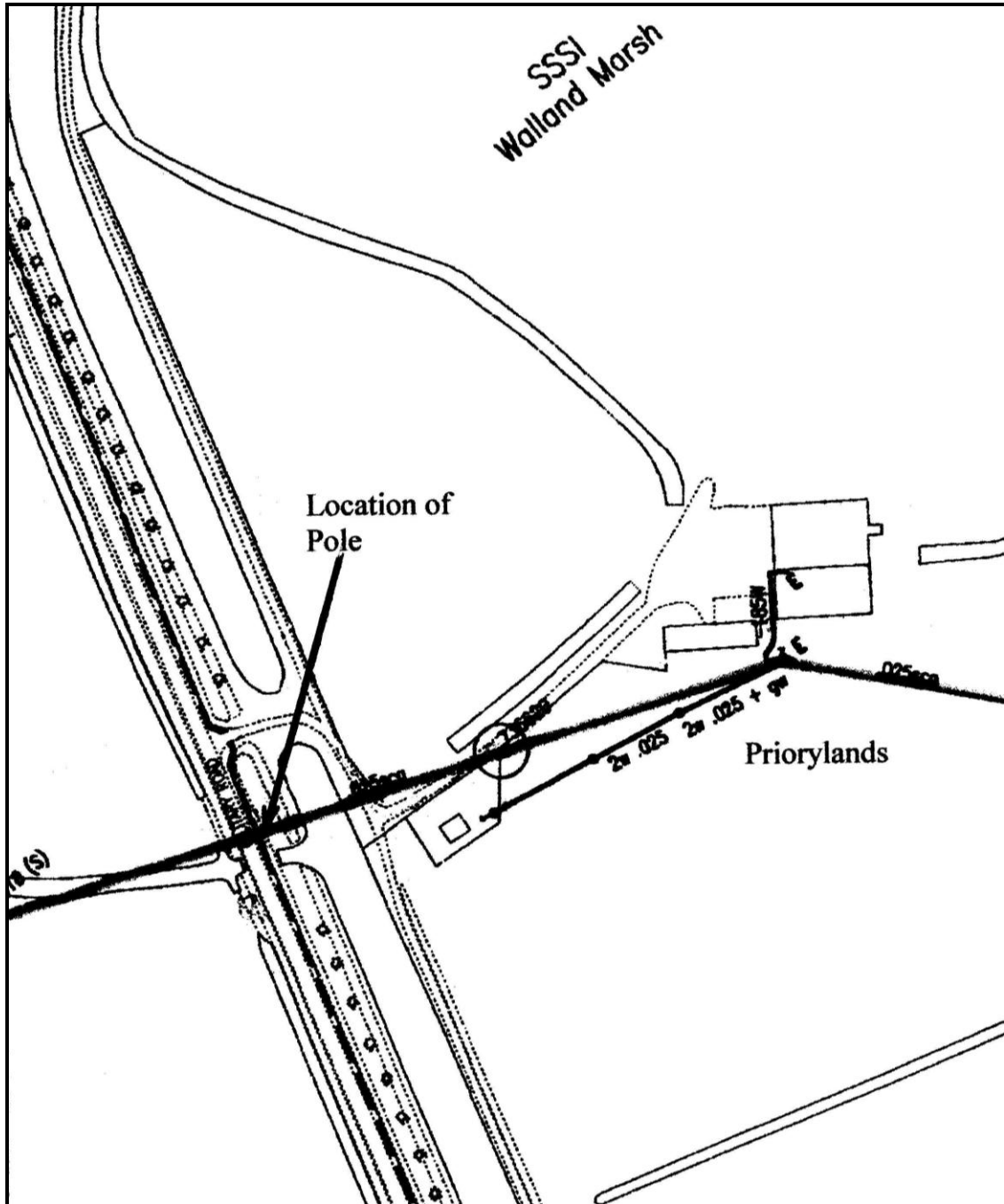


Fig. 1: Location of the electricity pole at Priory Lands Farm. (TQ 9518 2852).

## **Chris Butler Archaeological Services**

Chris Butler has been an archaeologist since 1985, and formed the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in 1987, since when it has carried out numerous fieldwork projects, and was runner up in the Pitt-Rivers Award at the British Archaeological Awards in 1996. Having previously worked as a Pensions Technical Manager and Administration Director in the financial services industry, Chris formed **Chris Butler Archaeological Services** at the beginning of 2002.

Chris is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, a committee member of the Lithic Studies Society, and is a part time lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sussex. He continues to run the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in his spare time.

Chris specialises in prehistoric flintwork analysis, but has directed excavations, landscape surveys and watching briefs, including the excavation of a Beaker Bowl Barrow, a Saxon cemetery and settlement, Roman pottery kilns, and a Mesolithic hunting camp.

**Chris Butler Archaeological Services** is available for Flintwork Analysis, Project Management, Military Archaeology, Desktop Assessments, Field Evaluations, Excavation work, Watching Briefs, Field Surveys & Fieldwalking, Post Excavation Services and Report Writing.

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