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A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

OF THE PROPOSED A27 POLEGATE BYPASS

EAST SUSSEX

17th July 1991

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Areas on or in the vicinity of the road line considered archaeologically sensitive. Scale 1:10,000.

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS
OF THE PROPOSED A27 POLEGATE BYPASS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report was undertaken by the Field Archaeology Unit, Institute of Archaeology and was commissioned by WS Atkins Consultants Ltd on behalf of the the Department of Transport.
- 1.2 The survey and report were prepared during the period 2nd - 17th July 1991.
- 1.3 Help in preparing this report was kindly provided by the Record Office and the Environmental Section of East Sussex County Council.

2. Site and Monuments Record, East Sussex County Council

- 2.1 The Sites and Monuments Record (S.M.R.) held by East Sussex County Council was consulted to determine if any previously known archaeological sites lay on the road line or adjacent to the area of the road.
- 2.2 The archaeological record for 1:10 000 sheets TQ 50 NE, TQ 60 NW and TQ 60 SW is largely that compiled by the Ordnance Survey before about 1975. No subsequent enhancement of the record appears to have taken place in this area.
- 2.3 Only a single site is noted on the S.M.R. in the vicinity of the proposed road. This is Otham Court, the site of the former Abbey and later grange of Otham. The site is known principally from historical records and the only archaeological remains recorded is a chapel with some fourteenth-century features. The building is presently used as a music room and is Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (county number 332) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979.
- 2.4 The proposed road line passes about 50 metres to the south of Otham Court.

3. Aerial Photographic Survey

3.1 East Sussex County Council holds as part of the Sites and Monuments Record map plots of archaeological features shown on aerial photographs. These were consulted. Only a single site is marked on 1:10,000 sheet numbers TQ 50 NE, TQ 60 NW and TQ 60 SW. A photograph (National Monument Record reference TQ 6004/1) taken in 1975 shows an irregular ditch system centred on TQ 608047 and lying to the south of Sharnfold. This is interpreted as an area of war-time trenches.

3.2 The air photographic coverage currently in use by the County Council was consulted. This was flown in May 1987 by G.C.A. Run 7 which covers the area of the proposed bypass shows no archaeological features.

3.3 Archive aerial photographs held by the East Sussex Record Office were also consulted. The following photographs which covered the area of the intended road were examined:

<u>E.S.R.O. Ref.</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Photo nos.</u>
C/P63 8	RAF taken 1-8-1957 from 33,333 feet 58/RAF/2235 F21	0095, 0096
C/P63 9	RAF taken 1-8-1957 from 33,333 feet 58/RAF/2235 F22	0095- 0098
C/P63 16	Meridian Airmaps Ltd. flown 1959, no scale, but <u>c.</u> 1:10,000	75034-5 75061-2 74788

The only archaeological feature apparent on these maps is the ditch system mentioned in 3.1 above which also appears on 58/RAF/2235 F22, nos. 0097 and 0098.

3.4 The composite aerial photographical maps produced by the Ordnance Survey from RAF coverage at the scale of 1:10,000 were examined as follows:

<u>E.S.R.O. Ref.</u>	<u>Ordnance Survey sheet</u>
AMS 5868 no. 28	TQ 50 NE
AMS 5868 no. 42	TQ 60 NW
AMS 5868 no. 44	TQ 60 SW, SE

No archaeological features were evident on the line of the road on these photographs.

3.5 The road line lies on Weald Clay. This produces heavy soils which are, for the most part, unproductive of features, which can be identified from aerial photographs.

4. Historical Survey

- 4.1 Sources in the East Sussex Record Office (E.S.R.O.) were consulted to identify possible archaeological sites. A microfilm of documents in the Kent Archives Office (K.A.O.), a catalogue of sources in the Bodleian Library, Oxford and notes on relevant material in the British Library (B.L.) were also studied. Sources in the Public Record Office (London) have not been examined, although these are likely to have material concerning this area.
- 4.2 The line of the road passes through the manors of Otham, Priesthaves and Sharnfold. Medieval documents survive only for the first of these manors, but later sources may be used to infer earlier patterns of settlement and land use.
- 4.3 The Abbey of Otham was founded c.1180 at the site of an existing chapel on the demesne (land occupied by the lord of the manor) of Ralph de Dene. In 1207 the abbey, which was poorly endowed with lands was combined with one from Brockley in Kent and re-established on a new site at Bayham on the Sussex-Kent border. The site at Otham became a grange (monastic farm) and a chapel was retained. In 1526 Bayham Abbey was dissolved and funds from it granted to Cardinal Wolsey to establish the college which became Christ Church, Oxford. The manor and farm of Otham then passed into lay hands.
- 4.4 The full extent of the abbey is not apparent from the surviving buildings. It is improbable that the abbey would have had the revenue to undertake a large building programme in the twenty or so years between its foundation and removal. The range of monastic buildings are unlikely to have extended much beyond the area of the present farm buildings. The road line will probably not affect any archaeological remains of the abbey.
- 4.5 To the east of the abbey are two parcels of land called in the nineteenth century Great and Little Castle Field. (E.S.R.O. TD/E 140, nos. 1274, 1295; Ordnance Survey parcel nos. 9184, 1100). These could take their name from their proximity to Pevensey Castle. However, a charter of 1219 refers to land lying between Eppehale and the 'Castelry of Otham' (Salzmann 1901, 183 citing B.L. Add. MS. 6037, no. 48). The inference is that there was a castle at or near the abbey. It is hardly possible that the monks would have built it, but they took over a site on the demesne of Ralph de Dene where there was already a chapel. It is more likely that he had constructed a

castle here, which was granted with the land to the monks. The site of the castle is not certain, but presumably lay at or near the top of the ridge close to Otham Court. The road should not affect the area of the castle.

4.6 In the thirteenth-century the abbey of Bayham had a fair at Otham which was held on the vigil and feast of St Lawrence (9th, 10th August) (B.L. Add. MS. 6037, f. lv.). It is not known when the fair lapsed. To west of the abbey site is a field called Fair Place (E.S.R.O. TD/E 140, no. 1304; Ordnance Survey parcel no. 6668). The corner of this field lies on the line of the road.

4.7 The extent of the demesne (lord's land) of Otham can be plotted using the Tithe Award maps (E.S.R.O. TD/E 84, TD/E 140), court books (E.S.R.O. ADA 215) and other manorial records (E.S.R.O. AMS 5897, nos. 28-41). To the east, immediately beyond the demesne are three fields, Little, Middle and Upper Hipholes (E.S.R.O. TD/E 84, nos. 154-6; Ordnance Survey parcel nos. 4540, 6558). These are described in 1669 as certain lands called Hephale in Westham of 20 acres (E.S.R.O. AMS 5897, no. 30). As already noted (Section 4.5 above), a charter of 1219 refers to land lying between Eppehale and the 'Castelry of Otham'. A rental of c. 1200 mentions two tenants of Otham manor, Adam de Heppehale and Eilwin de Heppehale (Salzmann 1901, 177). The locative names of these tenants suggest that they lived in the area now called Hipholes.

The second element in this place-name is probably halh, which means 'a corner or nook of land' (Smith 1956 sub verba). This accurately describes the location of Hipholes in the corner of Westham parish.

The fields called Hipholes are crossed by the proposed road.

4.8 The only early estate map of the area crossed by the road is dated 1794 and shows the farms called Swines and Swine Hill (E.S.R.O. D481/6). It gives perspective drawings of four buildings, one of which is clearly a barn. A second building lies on the site of Bramley Farm and is not affected by the proposals. The two other buildings lie on the east side of Bay Tree Lane and are on the intended road line.

Both buildings lie within the probable demesne of Otham and it has not been possible to trace their history before the late eighteenth century.

4.9 The lands of the manor of Sharnfold lay either side of the Lewes-Pevensay road to the east of the manor of Otham. To the north lay the manor of Priesthaves. Close to the boundary of the two lordships lay a piece of pasture of eight acres called Bolte Acre. A survey of Sharnfold manor in 1555 describes it as follows:

'in which piece of ground is mention of a moat compassing a plat where it should seem that the manor house stood in time past',

and

'within a great moat enclosing a parcel of ground where the manor house sometime was set in the past' (K.A.O. U269/E341, consulted from E.S.R.O. XA4/1; spelling modernised).

The field name does not survive, but its position is indicated in a 1620 survey of Priesthaves, which mentions one piece of marsh which lay with Bolte Acre on one side and Sharnfold Gut on the other (E.S.R.O. A4811 (pt)). The most likely identification of 'Sharnfold Gut' is the watercourse now called Drockmill Hill Gut. The only other evidence for its position in the 1555 survey is that it lay beside a narrow lane from 'Mr Thatcher's warren to the highway from Lewes to Pevensay'. Mr Thatcher occupied Priesthaves and his rabbit warren adjoined the Westham to Hailsham highway, the present Hailsham Road. Warren Field is shown near to Sharnfold Cottages (E.S.R.O. TD/E 84, no. 179). The lane adjoining Bolte Acre is therefore probably the track which runs passed the buildings now called Sharnfold.

5. Ground Survey

- 5.1 A survey of the ground was carried out after the documentary research had been completed and aerial photographs searched. The whole of the road line was walked and particular attention was paid to areas identified as archaeologically sensitive.
- 5.2 At the time of the ground survey the eastern part of the road line was largely under crop and the opportunities for observing earthworks or recovering artefacts from the surface of the soil were limited. The western area was mostly under pasture and any earthworks would have been clearly visible.
- 5.3 The area to the south of the Hailsham Road was very carefully examined to attempt to locate the moated site near Sharnfold (Section 4.9). All the parcels of woodland to the south of road and east of Shepham Lane were examined and an area to the west of Sharnfold Farm was field-walked to identify artefacts which might indicate the position of buildings. No evidence was found to locate the moated site.
- 5.4 The housekeeper at Otham Court, Mrs J. Field reported that ploughing in the field to the west of the farm buildings (Ordnance Survey parcel no. 6668) in 1987 brought to the surface quantities of flints. Since flint does not occur naturally in this area, it suggests that this may be an area of former buildings. No surface indications were apparent when the field was visited. The proposed road crosses the south-west corner of the field.
- 5.5 On the west of the disused railway where the ground had been disturbed by vehicles an area with burnt clay and charcoal was noted (Grid reference TQ58420568). A scatter of brick here may suggest that this is the site of a brick kiln.

The bricks were hand made and measured approximately 235 by 100 by 60 mm. This thickness implies an eighteenth-century or earlier date.

No site here is recorded in the gazetteer of early Sussex brick-making sites which is being compiled by Mrs M. Beswick of Heathfield. There were a particular large number of early brick-making sites in the Polegate and Hailsham areas and this site may have escaped note.

5.6 The site of the two buildings shown on the 1794 estate map on the east of Bay Tree Lane were visited (Section 4.8). One lies under an existing building, or under the scrapyard adjoining it. The second lies in a pasture field, though there was no trace of the site on the ground surface.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 The line of the proposed road runs along a ridge of land between the Pevensy and Willingdon Levels. This area, because of its access to contrasting environments is likely to have been exploited from the prehistoric period onwards. The Weald Clay forms a poor soil and when Otham was settled by the monks, it was probably a remote place. The Premonstratensian Order, to which Otham Abbey adhered, chose distant, sparsely occupied locations.

6.2 Three levels of response may be considered for the sites identified in the survey:

- i) no further action necessary
- ii) some further fieldwork should be undertaken, but prior excavation is unlikely to be necessary
- iii) further fieldwork is necessary to assess the significance of the site and determine whether excavation is appropriate.

The recommendations are divided according to the appropriate level of response.

Response (i)

6.3 The probable site of the castle to the east of Otham Court (Section 4.5) is not threatened by the proposed road. No further action is necessary.

6.4 The trench system to the south of Sharnfold (Section 3.1), is likely to be of recent date. Military remains from the twentieth century are not, perhaps, generally considered to have historic significance. They do, however, provide evidence of wartime strategic planning. These trenches have largely been destroyed during the construction of the Westham and Pevensy bypass and it is doubtful if any useful information can now be recovered. No further work is proposed.

6.5 The location of the moated site near Sharnfold (Sections 4.9, 5.3) was not discovered, but the documentary evidence suggests it is in low-lying land to the north of the road line and is unlikely to be affected. No additional work to locate the site is necessary.

Response (ii)

- 6.5 The intended road line does not appear likely to damage remains connected with Otham Abbey (Sections 2.3, 2.4, 4.3, 4.4, 5.4). No construction work, however, should be undertaken which encroaches further north of the current intended line of the road and watercourse improvement. It is suggested that an archaeological watching brief should be kept while cutting the new watercourse on the north side of the road and while stripping topsoil in the field to the west of Otham Court.
- 6.6 It is uncertain whether the medieval fair at Otham will have left significant traces in the subsoil (Section 4.6). Fairs are, however, often the site of casual losses of artefacts and coins. The location and date of artefacts may provide evidence for the type of goods sold and the period of operation of the fair. It is suggested that the area to be affected by road construction should be examined with a metal detector used under archaeological supervision and the location of all finds accurately plotted using a theodolite. If significant concentrations of finds are discovered, then the area should be sampled by trenching.

Response (iii)

- 6.7 The area of the medieval settlement at Hipholes (Section 4.7) should be examined by field-walking to determine the exact location of any remains. If the site is likely to be damaged by the road construction or by the Shepham Lane diversion, it should be assessed and considered for full excavation.
- 6.8 The possible brick-making site to the east of Otham Court (Section 5.5) should be assessed by trial excavation. Little is known about the structure of eighteenth-century and earlier brick kilns and if this was shown to be a reasonably preserved example, it should be considered for complete excavation.
- 6.9 The site of the building shown on the 1794 map to the east of Bay Tree Lane which at present lies in a pasture field (Sections 4.8, 5.6) should be assessed by excavation to determine the date and quality of survival of any remains. If appropriate, the site should be considered for further excavation.

The site of the other house shown on the same map, now covered by a scrap-yard is unlikely to be well preserved and need not be further investigated.

References

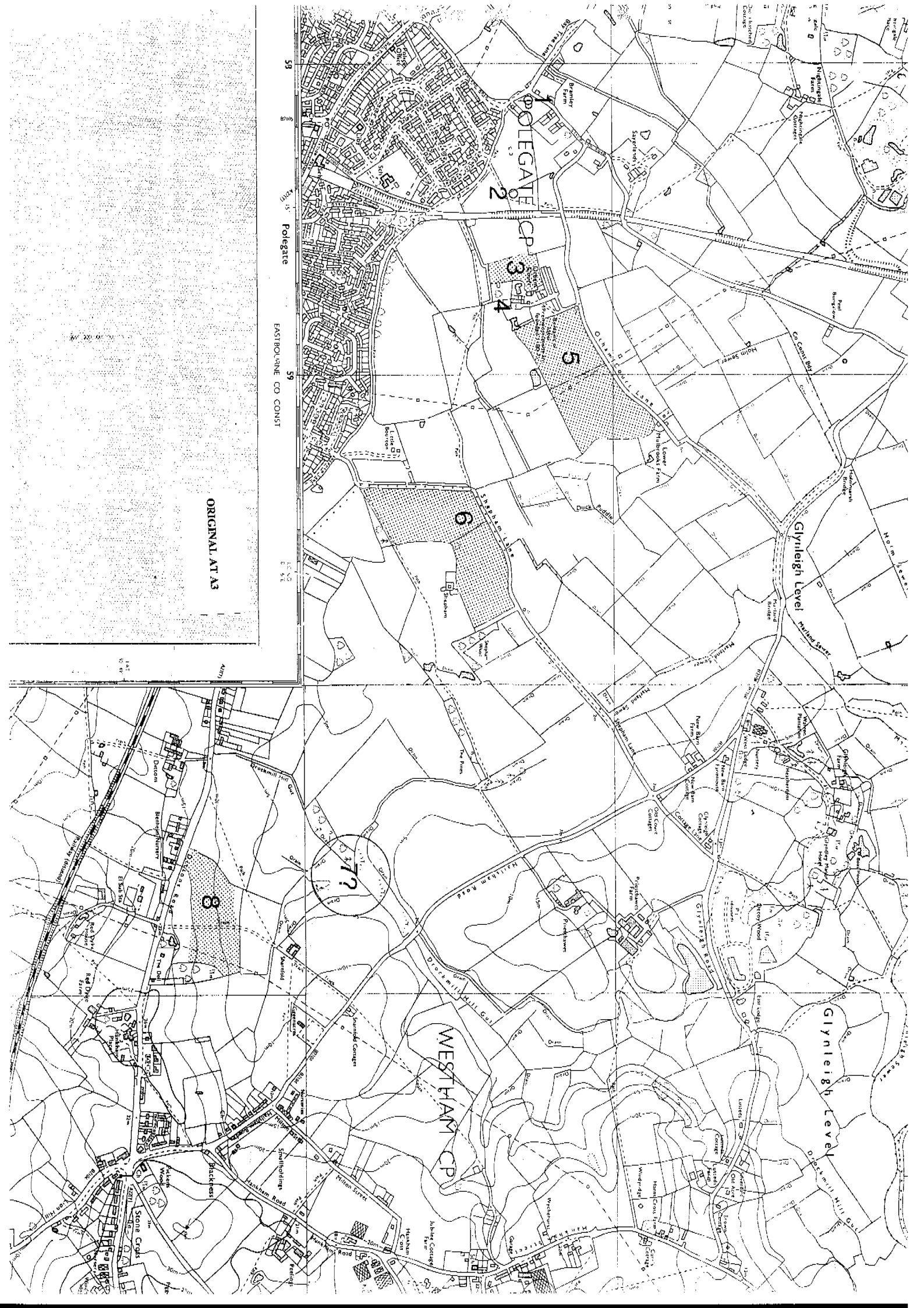
- Salzmann, L.F. (1901) The History of the Parish of Hailsham, the Abbey of Otham and the Priory of Michelham.
- Smith, A.H. (1956) English Place-Name Elements (English Place-Name Society 25, 26).

Abbreviations Used

B.L.	British Library
E.S.R.O.	East Sussex Record Office
K.A.O.	Kent Archives Office
S.M.R.	Sites and Monuments Record

Key to Figure

1. House site shown on 1794 estate map (Sections 4.8, 5.6, 6.9).
2. Possible brick kiln (Sections 5.5, 6.8).
3. Fair Place Field, site of medieval fair and possible structural remains (Sections 4.6, 5.4, 6.5, 6.6).
4. Otham Court, site of abbey and grange (Sections 2.2, 2.4, 4.3, 4.4, 5.4, 6.5).
5. Great and Little Castle Fields, possible area of castle (Sections 4.5, 6.3).
6. Hipholes, area of medieval settlement (Sections 4.7, 6.7).
- ✓ 7. Possible area of Sharnfold moated site (Sections 4.9, 5.3, 6.5).
- ✓ 8. Area of trench system (Sections 3.1, 6.4).



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400
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600
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800
900
1000

59
EASTBOURNE CO CONST

ORIGINAL AT A3

WESTHAM CP

Glynleigh Level

POLEGATE

3
4

6

7?

Glynleigh Level

Glynleigh Level

Glynleigh Level

Hickham Hill Gate

Hickham Hill Gate

Hickham Hill Gate

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