

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on Geotechnical Test Pits at the  
University of Sussex, Falmer Campus, Village Way, Brighton, East Sussex**

**Site Code: XUSB 05**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3488 0858**

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# 1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken on geotechnical test pits at the University of Brighton, Falmer Campus, Village Way, Brighton, East Sussex. The watching brief was commissioned by Concept Site Investigations on behalf of the University of Brighton, and took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2005. The site was located on the southern campus of the University, immediately south of Falmer station, with the geotechnical test pits being located around the former Friston House.
- 1.2 Five trenches were arranged around the Friston House building, with one pit being located to the south, three to the west and one to the north.
- 1.3 All trenches revealed topsoil immediately overlying natural chalk.
- 1.4 No archaeological remains or evidence for human activity prior to the landscaping of the University between 1963 and 1968, was found during the archaeological watching brief.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on geotechnical test pits at the University of Brighton, Falmer Campus, Village Way, Brighton, East Sussex. The watching brief took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2005.
- 2.2 The five geotechnical test pits were all located around Friston House, which was undergoing demolition at the time of the watching brief. This building was bounded to the north by university football pitches, to the west by the Falmer Library, to the south by Westlain House and to the east by a further university building.
- 2.3 A Method Statement for an Archaeological Watching Brief was prepared by Tim Bradley (2005) prior to the fieldwork.
- 2.4 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 3488 0858.
- 2.5 The site was given the code XUSB 05.
- 2.6 The project was commissioned by Concept Site Investigations on behalf of the University of Brighton and monitored for the local planning authority by Andrew Woodcock, the County Archaeologist for East Sussex County Council. The site was project managed by Tim Bradley and supervised by the author, Alexis Haslam.



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey 1:25,000. Crown Copyright 1996.

Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000

### **3 PLANNING BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The proposed development of the site consists of the replacement of Friston House with a four-storey main block building with four associated three storey wings. These wings will be cut into the existing slope, and the building will be used for academic purposes. A detailed archaeological study had not been carried out on the site and, for this reason, it was recommended in mitigation that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during the ground investigation.
- 3.2 The East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991 - 2011 mirrors advice contained in a Department of the Environment document, "Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16)". This document identifies the need for early consultation in the planning process to determine the impact of construction schemes upon buried archaeological deposits. The Structure Plan runs as follows:
- 3.3 The archaeological heritage of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove is rich, diverse and full of interest. However, the increase in the scale and pace of development over recent years threatens much of the remaining physical evidence of the past. Archaeological remains are a finite, non-renewable resource particularly vulnerable to damage and destruction, which contain irreplaceable information about the past. Structure Plan policy seeks to ensure the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological importance and their settings (policies EN22 - EN25).

#### **"POLICY EN22**

**Provision should be made for the identification, recording, safeguarding, investigation and preservation, preferably "in situ" or, where not feasible, by record, of all archaeological sites (including those of maritime interest) and monuments and historic and listed buildings."**

#### **"POLICY EN23**

**Sites and features of demonstrable historical or archaeological importance and their settings, including ancient monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, battlefields and other historic features will be protected from inappropriate change and development."**

#### **POLICY EN24**

**Development proposals affecting known archaeological sites or areas of**

**potential archaeological interest should be accompanied by an assessment, based on a field evaluation, of their archaeological implications before decisions on applications for planning permission can be made.**

**"POLICY EN25**

**Programmes for the maintenance and enhancement of archaeological and historic features, whether sites, areas, buildings or building groups, historic parks or historic towns and their settings, will be developed and implemented."**

- 3.4 The first priority is to safeguard the archaeological resource on land or sea either in situ or by record, and to protect the plan area's stock of historic buildings, parks and gardens, from development or change, which would damage them. Where sites are particularly sensitive, proper evaluation of the sites' importance is required and for the local planning authority to be satisfied no damage will be caused to the objectives of designation before planning permission can be contemplated.
- 3.5 Protection of the setting of historic sites, conservation areas and historic towns is also important. There is a need to encourage the development of programmes of action to secure the maintenance and enhancement of archaeological and historic features.

## 4 GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The University of Brighton site is located at Falmer on the South Chalk Downs. It is shown on the British Geological Survey maps (sheets 318 / 333 1:50,000 series, 1988) to be directly underlain by Upper and Middle Chalk of the Cretaceous period. The geological memoir for the region shows the chalk in the Falmer area to be part of the Newhaven Member of the Upper Chalk division (the boundaries between members are taken at lithological marker horizons, generally marl seams). The site is also shown to be located between drift filled dry valleys located to the east and west, which run in a north north-west direction.
- 4.2 The South Downs form a significant line of hills extending along the west coast from Eastbourne. They produce a unique, open, rolling landscape dissected by major river valleys cut by the Ouse and Cuckmere. Virtually the entire undeveloped downland is part of the Sussex Downs Area of National Beauty. Limited quarrying of chalk for agricultural purposes is long established and has had a noticeable impact on the landscape, especially along the scarp slope and around Lewes.
- 4.3 The South Downs consist of a chalk dip slope inclined to the south with a dramatic north-facing escarpment. Earth movements and subsequent erosion towards the end of the Cretaceous period resulted in the uplift and folding of the chalk to influence the present day complex. The chalk dip-slope has been eroded by numerous small dry valleys and the entire mass of chalk has been carved into separate blocks by the principal chalk valleys, four of which contain the rivers flowing from the Weald to the sea.
- 4.4 The ground level at the site falls from 84m OD in the south-east to 76m OD in the north-west. To the north-west the topography has been modified to create level playing fields and the ground rises to the south-east generally in keeping with the natural hill slopes. There is a depression in the playing fields, which is probably a dissolution feature (swallow hole) caused by the erosion of chalk.



## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 The approximate timescales used in this report are:

### **Prehistoric**

Palaeolithic	450,000 - 12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 - 4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 - 1,800 BC
Bronze Age	1,800 - 600 BC
Iron Age	600 BC - AD 43

### **Historic**

Roman	AD 43 - 410
Saxon / Early Medieval	AD 410 - 1066
Medieval	AD 1066 - 1485
Post-Medieval	AD 1485 - Present

### **PREHISTORIC**

5.2 Until recently, the site existed within a traditional rural setting, with the fields being mostly of a pastoral character, but also with some grain farming rotation. The rolling chalk hills of the South Downs were a favoured landscape for farming going as far back as the Neolithic period. Many field monuments of Bronze Age and Iron Age date are also present along the Downs and a Fort with earlier tumuli is seen across from the site on Hollingbury Park Hill. Further tumuli are well attested to the south and east of the Falmer Campus.

5.3 Unfortunately, the archaeological potential for the Prehistoric period on the site is particularly low. This is due to the fact that the groundworks for the existing buildings will have had a significant impact upon the original topsoil, the sub soils and even possibly the natural chalk.

### **HISTORIC**

#### **Roman - Medieval**

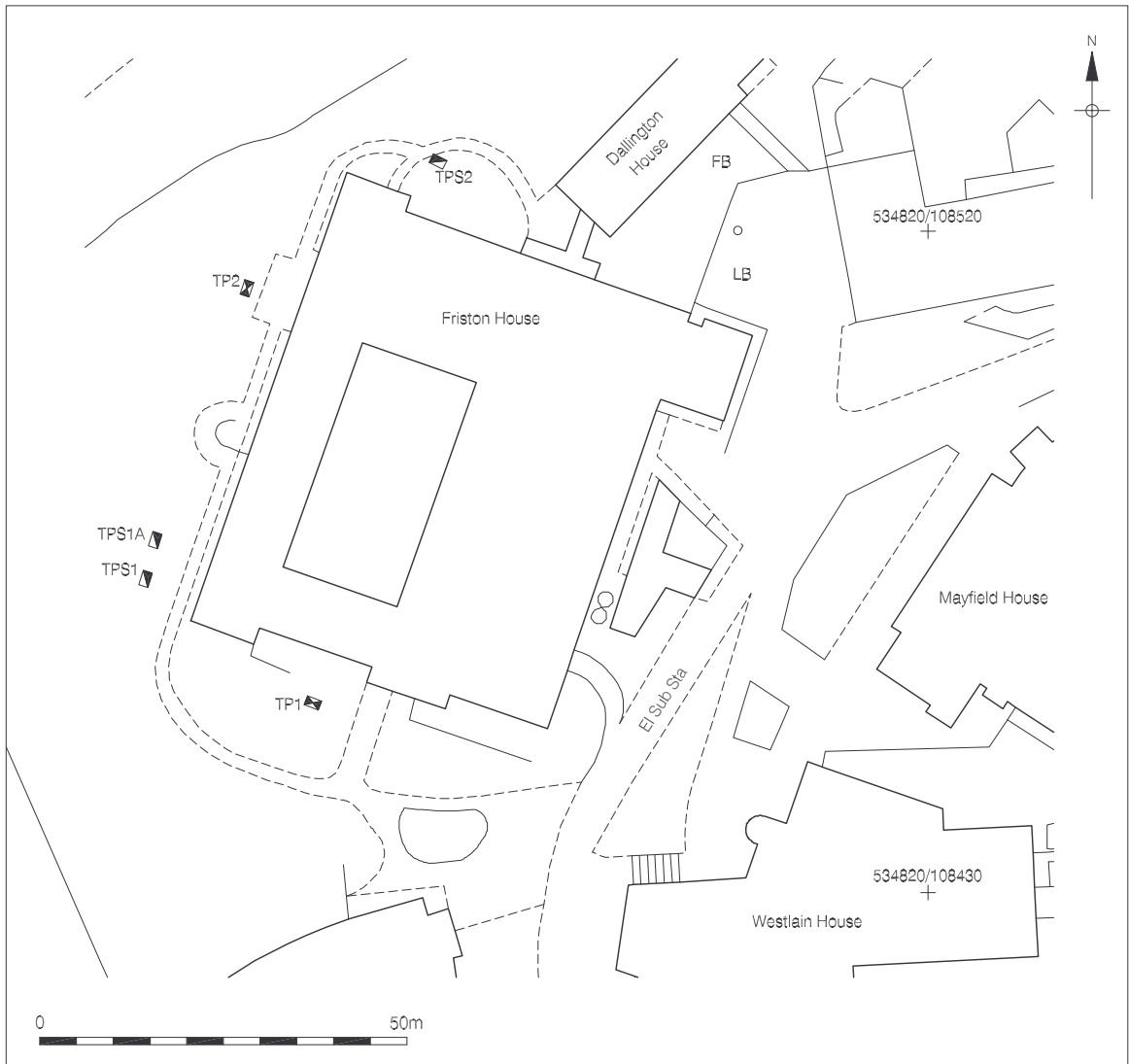
5.4 Roman remains are believed to be present within the local vicinity of the site. There is no information on specific finds or features however. No information has been received on either Saxon or Medieval finds or sites within the immediate vicinity either.

## **Post-Medieval**

- 5.5 Until fairly recently, the site existed as farmland, with the field pattern being suggestive of a relatively recent enclosure dividing up the characteristically rolling chalk hills. The first real change on the site arrived with Falmer station to the north, which opened on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1851 as part of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. The site was in existence as a field right up until 1968, where the Ordnance Survey map shows the site and vicinity to be occupied by the buildings of the Brighton College of Education. By 1982 this College was known as Brighton Polytechnic, with the name being changed again to the University of Brighton by 1995.

## **6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 6.1 In accordance with the specification, five geotechnical test pits were excavated by the contractors in order to determine the geology of the site and to test the natural deposits for drainage.
- 6.2 The trenches were opened up with the use of a 180° JCB type mechanical excavator using a narrow toothed bucket. This machining was monitored by the archaeologist, checking for archaeological deposits and features through the topsoil and into the natural chalk. All machining was preceded by scanning for live services using a CAT scanner.
- 6.3 The trenches could not be hand cleaned due to their depth, but they were examined and recorded in both plan and section.
- 6.4 The single context system was used for recording, developed out of the Department of Urban Archaeology Site Manual, now published by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MOLAS 1994). Both plans and sections were recorded at a scale of 1:20.
- 6.5 The trenches were both surveyed and levelled by the geotechnical contractor on the site.
- 6.6 No unusual health and safety issues were encountered during the watching brief.



KEY	
	TP - Trial Pit
	TPS - Soakaway Pit

Figure 2  
 Location of Geotechnical Trial and Soakaway Pits  
 1:1000

## 7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION

- 7.1 In all, five geotechnical test pits were excavated in order to evaluate both the geology and the drainage capacity of the land at the University of Sussex. The monitoring of the test pits for archaeology had been stipulated as a requirement regarding the planning permission for the construction of a new university building. This building is due to replace Friston House, which was being demolished at the time of the watching brief. The relevance of the drainage capacity of the land regarded the proposed use of soak-aways on the site.
- 7.2 All of the five geotechnical test pits were excavated around the Friston House building. The numbers regarding the test pits indicate whether they were merely test pits (eg. TP1, TP2) or whether they were test pits for soakaway testing (eg. TPS1, TPS1A, TPS2). TPS1A was previously not included in the original methodology, but was excavated after TPS1 was deemed too deep to fill with water and test for drainage. TP1 was located to the south of Friston House and was aligned east-west. TPS1 was located to the west of Friston House and was aligned north-south. TPS1A was located immediately north of TPS1. TP2 was also located west of Friston House and north of TPS1B. It was aligned north-south. TPS2 was located north of Friston House and was aligned east-west.

### TP1

#### Natural Chalk

- 7.3 TP1 measured 2m in length from east to west and 0.60m in width from north to south. The earliest deposit encountered at the base of this test pit was the natural chalk [2], recorded as a well compacted deposit of white chalk, containing occasional small to medium sized flint gravels at a highest level of 80.30m OD. The natural chalk was excavated down to a depth of 77.60m OD before machining ceased.

#### Topsoil

- 7.4 Sealing natural chalk deposit [2] was topsoil [1], a soft deposit of loamy sand, light yellowish brown in colour and found to be containing occasional small to medium sized flint nodules, modern plastic and evidence of tree root disturbance. This deposit was up to 0.30m thick at 80.60m OD.

## **TPS1**

### **Natural Chalk**

- 7.5 The earliest deposit discovered in TPS1 was the natural chalk [2]. This was recorded at a highest level of 77.05m OD and was excavated down to a depth of 74.30m OD.

### **Topsoil**

- 7.6 Sealing natural chalk [2] was topsoil [1], which was up to 0.40m thick at 77.45m OD.

## **TPS1B**

### **Natural Chalk**

- 7.7 The earliest deposit encountered in TPS1B was the natural chalk [2], recorded at a highest level of 77.10m OD and excavated down to a depth of 75.45m OD.

### **Topsoil**

- 7.8 Overlying natural chalk [2] was topsoil [1], which was up to 0.35m thick at 77.45m OD.

## **TP2**

### **Natural Chalk**

- 7.9 The earliest deposit encountered at the base of TP2 was the natural chalk [2], recorded at a highest level of 77.39m OD and excavated down to a depth of 74.59m OD.

### **Topsoil**

- 7.10 Sealing the natural chalk [2] was topsoil deposit [1], which was up to 0.30m thick at a highest level of 77.69m OD

## **TPS2**

### **Natural Chalk**

- 7.11 The earliest deposit encountered at the base of TPS2 was the natural chalk [2], recorded at a highest level of 78.81m OD and excavated down to a depth of 77.71 m OD.

### **Topsoil**

- 7.12 Sealing the natural chalk [2] was topsoil deposit [1], which was up to 0.20m thick at a highest level of 79.01m OD.

## **8 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 One of the principal objectives of the archaeological watching brief was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological activity of any period. No archaeological deposits predating mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century activity were found on the site.
- 8.2 The earliest evidence of human activity at the site dates to the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 8.3 The watching brief suggests that there is limited potential for archaeological deposits and features predating the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century to survive on the site.
- 8.4 The natural on the site was chalk, with the site being located in an area of the South Downs. The thin nature of the topsoil and a lack of any form of subsoil on the site would appear to suggest that the site was heavily landscaped during the construction of the University, with the pre-existing ground levels presumably being stripped right down to the natural chalk.



## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Concept Site Investigations for commissioning the work. Thanks also to Andrew Woodcock, County Archaeologist for East Sussex County Council.
- 9.2 The author would also like to thank Evan Bucherer of Concept Site Investigations for all of his assistance on site; Josephine Brown for the illustrations, Tim Bradley for his project management and Joanna Taylor for her editing.

## APPENDIX 1 – CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Test Pit</b>	<b>Sec. No</b>	<b>Plans</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Layer	All Test Pits	1 - 5	N/A	Topsoil
2	Layer	All Test Pits	1 - 5	5	Natural Chalk

## APPENDIX 2 - OASIS Form

# OASIS ID: preconst1-11207

Project details	
Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief on Geotechnical Test Pits at the University of Sussex, Falmer Campus, Village Way, Brig
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on geotechnical test pits at the University of Brighton, Falmer Campus, Village Way, Brighton, East Sussex. Five geotechnical test pits were located around Friston House, which was undergoing demolition at the time of the watching brief. One of the principal objectives of the archaeological watching brief was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological activity of any period. No archaeological deposits predating mid to late 20th century activity were found on the site.
Project dates	Start: 20-09-2005 End: 20-09-2005
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	XUSB05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Investigation type	'Test-Pit Survey','Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX BRIGHTON AND HOVE BRIGHTON University of Sussex, Falmer Campus, Village Way, Brighton, East Sussex
Study area	9464.90 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 3488 0858 Point
Height OD	Min: 77.05m Max: 80.30m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Pre-Construct Archaeology

Project design originator Tim Bradley

Project director/manager Tim Bradley

Project supervisor Alexis Haslam

Sponsor or funding body Concept Site Investigations

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