

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Sandling Place, Sandling Lane,
Maidstone, Kent**

Site Code: KSLM 04

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 7570 5790

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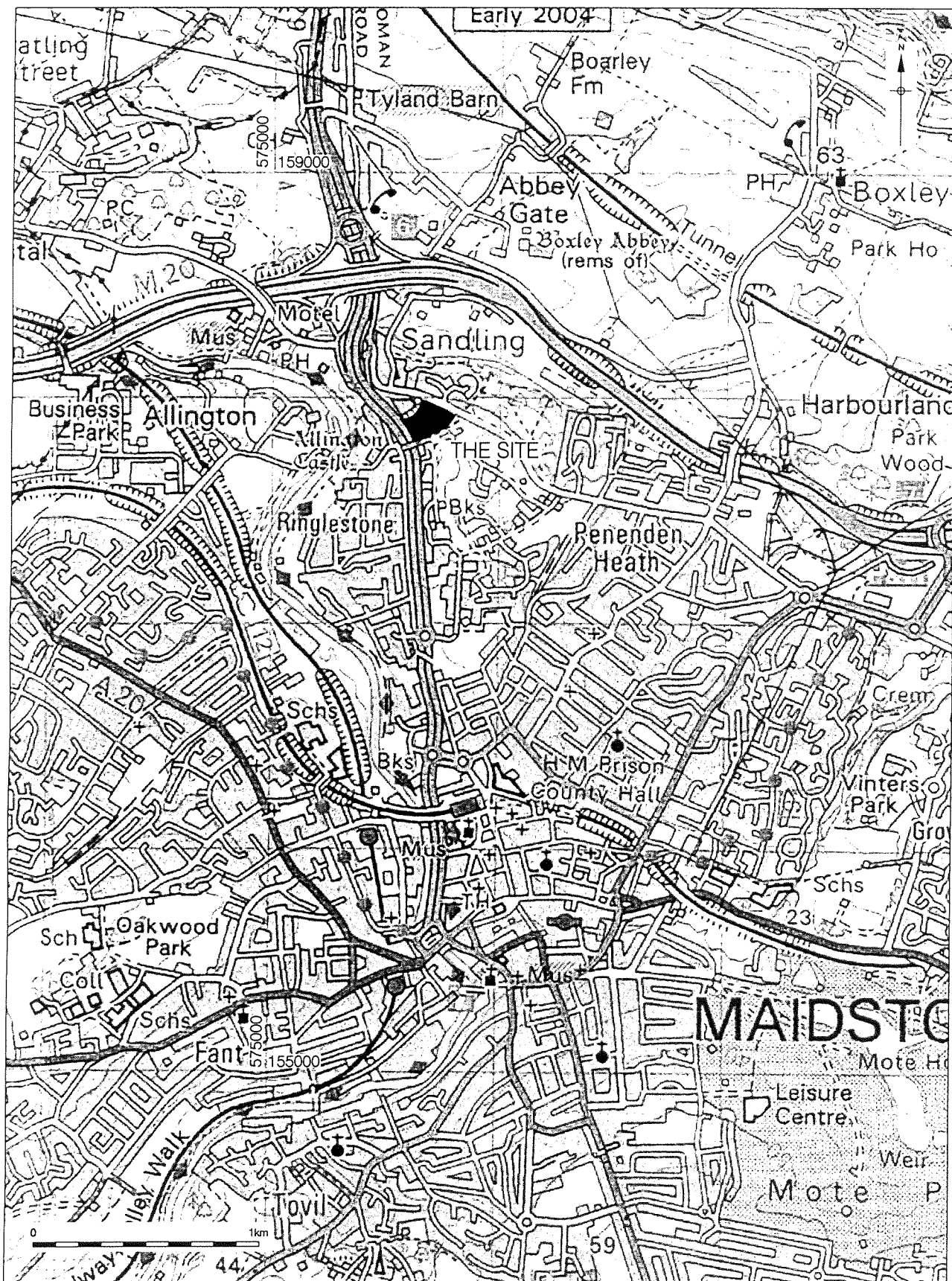
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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone, Kent.
- 1.2 This phase of archaeological work was undertaken during the redevelopment of the site by Ward Homes and follows an evaluation previously completed by PCA (Holden 2004). This evaluation revealed a small assemblage of lithics.
- 1.3 No archaeological features were observed during the watching brief. . In total 46 struck flints were recovered during the watching brief. However, these were only dateable with any degree of certainty from Early Post-Glacial to the Early Neolithic. There is a narrow possibility the assemblage is more characteristic of Mesolithic industries and represents the position of a short term stop for a small transient group.

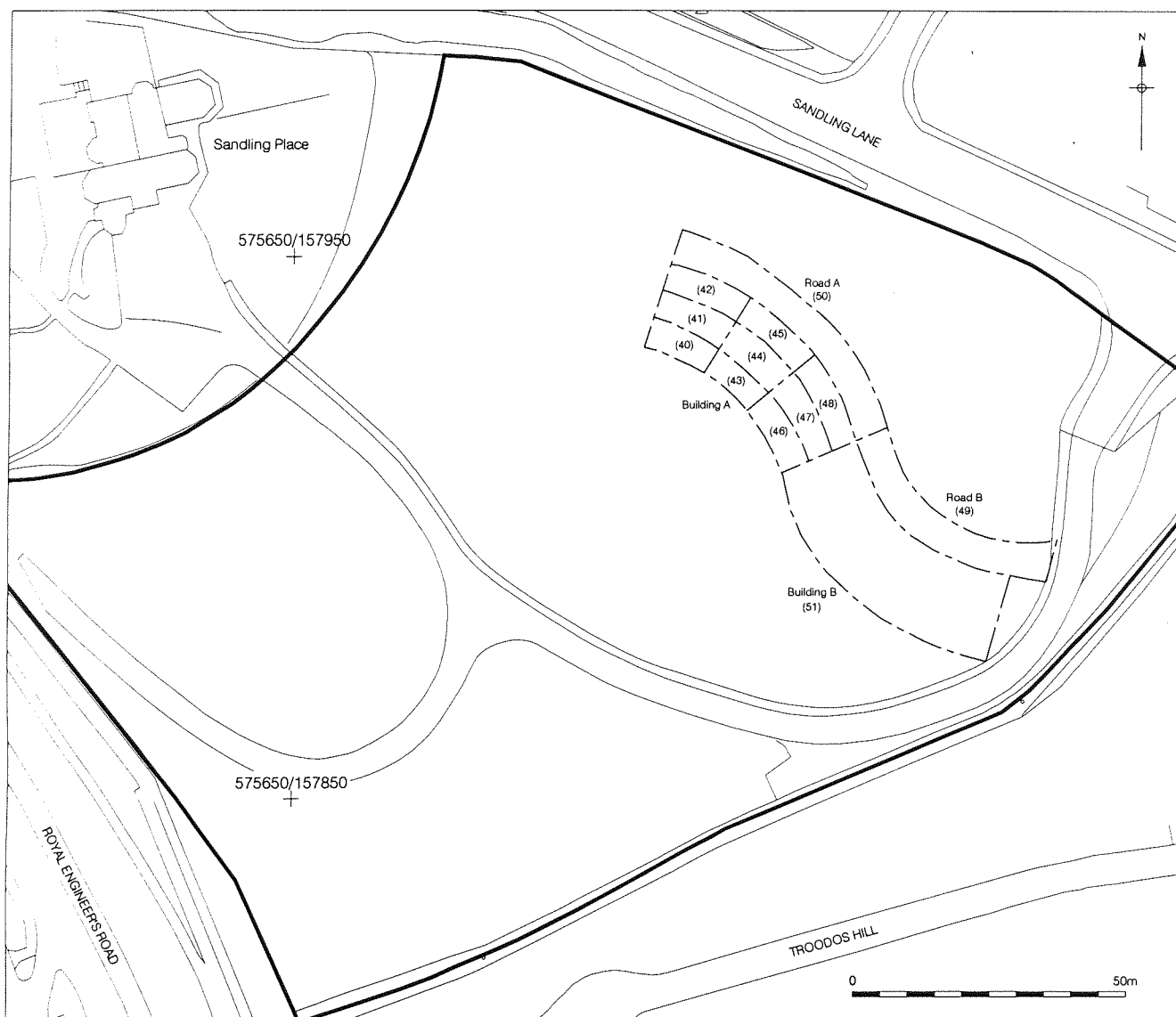
2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at Sandling Place, Sandling Lane (Figure 1) during redevelopment work.
- 2.2 The work was conducted between the 22nd and 29th November 2004 and was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Ward Homes.
- 2.3 The watching brief was undertaken on the soil stripping of Buildings A and B, and the associated roads, positioned towards the north the site (Figure 2).
- 2.4 The National Grid Reference of the centre of the site is TQ 7570 5790
- 2.5 The unique code KSLM 04, assigned for the evaluation was continued.
- 2.6 The work was undertaken by Stuart Holden and the project managed by Jon Butler for Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited.



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Figure 1
Site Location
1:25,000



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Figure 2
Watching Brief Areas
1:1250

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 Planning background

3.1.1 The study aims to satisfy the objectives of Maidstone Borough Council, which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which they are the custodians. The Council's deposited draft 'Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan', adopted in 2000, contains policy statements in respect of protecting the buried archaeological resource.

3.1.2 The proposed development is subject to the Environment Policy:

POLICY ENV17

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON REMAINS OF LOCAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE IF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OUTWEIGHTS THE LOCAL VALUE OF THE REMAINS. IF PLANNING PERMISSION IS GIVEN FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD AFFECT REMAINS OF LOCAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE, CONDITIONS WILL BE IMPOSED TO ENSURE THAT THE REMAINS ARE PROPERLY RECORDED AND EVALUATED AND, WHERE PRACTICABLE, PRESERVED.

POLICY ENV18

IF PLANNING PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO DEVELOP ANY SITE WHERE THERE ARE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OR THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SUCH REMAINS EXIST, CONDITIONS WILL BE IMPOSED TO SECURE THE EXCAVATION AND RECORDING OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS AND THEIR REMOVAL OR PRESERVATION IN WHOLE OR IN PART, IF JUSTIFIED, BEFORE DEVELOPMENT BEGINS.

3.1.3 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings on site.

3.2 Research Objectives

3.2.1 The work aimed to gather evidence for previously unknown prehistoric activity following the discovery of struck flint during the evaluation. Further evidence for all other periods was also sought.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 An archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (Hawkins, 2004) was prepared prior to the commencement of the evaluation. Below is a summary of the findings of this exercise.
- 4.2 A search was made of the Kent County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) with the intention of locating known archaeological sites and to predict and extrapolate the likely archaeological conditions within the development area from finds made nearby. This latter analysis is important, as many entries onto the SMR result from chance discoveries and are, at best, a small and unrepresentative sample of the total buried heritage. Further study of published and unpublished material and land-use through cartographic sources was also incorporated.
- 4.3 No evidence for prehistoric activity was found within the study area. The position of the site in relation to nearby watercourses and the underlying geology suggests that it may not have been favourable for settlement or arable farming and is likely to have been in an area of woodland or pasture.
- 4.4 It is thought that 'Old Chatham Road' is situated upon the line of a Roman road connecting Maidstone and Chatham. This would pass by c.100m to the west of the site centre. A Romano-British burial has been recorded on the west side of the road approximately 350m to the south of the site. A coin of the Emperor Tetricus I was recorded some 400m to the southwest of the site, at a position more suitable for a farming settlement.
- 4.5 An Anglo-Saxon Ansate Brooch of the 9th century was found at Cuckoo Wood to the northeast of the site. This is likely to have been a casual loss rather than signifying settlement or similar such human activity.
- 4.6 The early cartographic evidence of the 18th century shows the site as agricultural land on the slopes of a small hill. Sandling Place was built in 1823 and is depicted in detail on the Ordnance Survey map of 1867 with the land surrounding the house being woodland and pasture. By 1897, the house was enlarged and a number of paths had been laid out across the site. A few small buildings adjacent to the main house were constructed prior to its requisition by the Army in 1941. It remained in their possession until the early 21st century.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The fieldwork was designed to recover further evidence for primarily prehistoric activity and was agreed with the Kent County Council Archaeological Officer. This consisted of monitoring the initial stripping of the topsoil and subsoil from across the proposed building footprints, roadways and associated works at the northern part of the site.
- 5.2 All works were undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out by English Heritage and the Institute of Field Archaeology.
- 5.3 Under archaeological supervision, a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat ditching bucket was used to remove the soils down to the top of the natural. This excavated material was mounded for subsequent use in landscaping or for removal off site.
- 5.4 In order to provide more detailed information on the positioning of the finds and their concentrations, the area stripped was roughly divided into smaller units and assigned individual context numbers (Figure 2).

6 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 6.1 The site is located upon the Folkestone Beds of the Lower Greensand Group according to the Geological Survey. No geotechnical investigation data was made available prior to the commencement of the evaluation or the watching brief
- 6.2 The site is situated on the southern and western flanks of a small hill and varies in height quite dramatically from 50.5mOD at the northeast to 35mOD at the southwest and 39m at the southeast with a hummock in the central northern part of the site rising to 54.5mOD.
- 6.3 The site lies 400m to the east of the River Medway where its meandering course changes direction towards the northwest. A tributary to the Medway flows westwards, passing the site approximately 100m to the north.
- 6.4 The excavations exposed deposits of sand, which varied in silt content, between 40.72m and 53.52mOD varying across the site commensurate with the natural topography.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Summary

- 7.1.1 The area of stripping observed consisted of a stratigraphical sequence of natural sand becoming more silty towards the east, overlain by subsoil towards the northwest of the site (Building A) and topsoil across all of the monitored area.

- 7.1.2 Forty-six struck flint and a small quantity of burnt flint were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil across the building footprints and roadways. These lithics were mixed with finds of later date such as post-medieval roof tile and pottery suggesting that they had been disturbed probably during landscaping of the gardens.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The archaeological evaluation and watching brief have provided previously uncharted evidence of prehistoric activity in the area. This is likely to consist of short-term use by small nomadic groups. It is unfortunate that the assemblage of flints recovered cannot be narrowed down to a specific date range, although it is tentatively suggested that the Mesolithic period is more likely. Should further archaeological interventions be undertaken in the vicinity of the site, further evidence gathered may enable the data set to be reassessed and a more succinct date range to be proposed.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work on behalf of Ward Homes. The author would like to thank Barry Bishop for his lithic analysis and the CAD staff at PCA for providing the illustrations.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hawkins, D. 2004 *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, Land at Sandling Lane, Maidstone, Kent.*
CgMs unpublished report

Hawkins, D. 2004 *Specification for an Archaeological Field Evaluation, Land at Sandling Lane, Maidstone, Kent.* CgMs unpublished report

Holden, S. 2004 *An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone.*
Pre-Construct Archaeology unpublished report

Maidstone Borough Council 2000 *Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan* Deposited Draft

APPENDIX 1: LITHIC ASSESSMENT

Barry John Bishop December 2004

INTRODUCTION

An Archaeological Watching Brief at the above site recovered 46 struck flints and 21g of burnt flint. This report quantifies the material by context according to a basic technological/typological scheme (see Table 1), assesses its ability to contribute to further understanding of the nature and chronology of the activities identified during the project, and recommends any further work required. No statistically based technological, typological or metrical analyses were attempted and a more detailed examination may alter or amend any of the interpretations offered here.

QUANTIFICATION

Context	Prep. Flake	Rejuvenation Flake	Chip	Flake	Flake Fragment	Narrow Flake	Cortical Blade/Narrow Flake Fragment	Blade	Blade/Narrow Flake Fragment	Core	Chunk	Burnt Flint (No.)	Burnt Flint (Wt. in g)
40			3	1	2	2			2		1		
41							2						
42	3	1		1	1				3	1			
43					1	1						1	4
44				1	2	1						1	5
47										1			
49		1		1									
50		2	2		2								
51						1		1	4	1	1	1	12

Table 1: Quantification of Lithic Material by Context

BURNT FLINT

Only very small quantities of burnt flint were recovered. These probably derive from hearth-use although the quantities were insufficient to suggest any potential hearth location, and it most probably represents incidental 'background' waste.

STRUCK FLINT

Raw Material

The raw materials used to manufacture the struck assemblage predominantly consisted of fine-grained translucent black flint, with a more-coarsely grained, semi-opaque speckled grey/black flint also common. A few pieces consisted of fine-grained yellow brown (honey coloured) flint were also present. Original cortex, where present, consisted of a weathered light yellow chalky type of variable thickness. The majority, if not all, of the raw material was

likely obtained from superficial deposits on or close to the North Downs. A few of the more-cherty pieces may have originated from the Lower Greensand Group.

Condition

The condition of the assemblage as a whole was variable although most pieces exhibited only minor chipping and/or rounding to their thinner edges. This would be consistent with their recovery from reworked soil horizons. Although some colluvial displacement may have occurred, there is little indication that at least most the material was not recovered from close to where it were originally discarded. Recortication was rare but the assemblage did contain some pieces with either incipient or full recortication.

Typology, Technology and Dating

The blades, narrow flakes and rejuvenation flakes all indicate that the assemblage was the product of a considered systematic reduction strategy. The core from context [42] appeared to be a blade/narrow flake core of Clark *et al*'s (1960) type A2 with heavy platform-edge trimming although had been burnt. The rejuvenation from the same context is a good example of a transversely struck striking platform/core face removal flake, probably struck to remove a crushed striking platform. The core from context [47] had two platforms and was of type B2. It was heavily platform-edge trimmed and, although most surviving scars were from flakes, there was some evidence it had previously produced blades. It was probably discarded due to thermal flaws. The rejuvenation flake from context [49] was a 'classic' core-tablet, whilst that from context [51] consisted of a longitudinally struck plunged flake removed from a narrow blade (bladelet) core. This was missing its bulbar end and it was uncertain why it was struck. The rejuvenation flakes from [50] included a core-tablet removing a heavily crushed striking platform, and a plunged flake, which was missing its bulbar end.

DISCUSSION

The Archaeological Evaluation that preceded the Watching Brief phase of archaeological investigation identified lithic material that was potentially of Late Glacial date. Unfortunately the latter phase of investigation did not produce any further evidence that could confirm this. The struck material from the Watching Brief was technologically homogenous, although differences in recortication suggest it may have been discarded over a significant period of time. The assemblage as a whole reflected a considered, systematic approach to lithic reduction and was characteristic of industries dating from the Early Post-Glacial to the Early Neolithic. Unfortunately, the lack of chronologically diagnostic implements means that this date range cannot be further refined with confidence, although as a whole the assemblage maybe most characteristic of Mesolithic industries. The cores and rejuvenation flakes suggest that lithic reduction had occurred at the site, although the small size of the assemblage means that further inferences concerning the range of activities conducted, or possible different

episodes of occupation, is impossible. By itself the assemblage would indicate that the site was probably used by small, probably transient, groups as a short-term stop.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to its size and paucity of chronologically diagnostic artefacts, this report is all that is required of the material for the purposes of the archive and no further analytical work is proposed. Nevertheless, the material does contribute to the body of evidence for prehistoric activity in the area and a description of the assemblage alongside suitable illustrations should be included in the published account of the fieldwork. The publication should also include some consideration of local geology, raw material sources and previous finds and research in the local area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Clark, J.G.D., Higgs, E.S. and Longworth, I.H. 1960 Excavations at the Neolithic site at Hurst Fen, Mildenhall, Suffolk (1954, 1957 and 1958). *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 26, 202 - 245.

APPENDIX 2: KENT SMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

Site name: Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone (KSLM 04)		
Site address: Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone, Kent		
<p>Summary: An archaeological watching brief was undertaken to monitor the topsoil and subsoil stripping. The work was designed to expand upon the results of an evaluation undertaken on the site that produced an assemblage of flintwork. In total 46 struck flints were recovered during the watching brief. However, these were only dateable with any degree of certainty from Early Post-Glacial to the Early Neolithic. There is a narrow possibility the assemblage is more characteristic of Mesolithic industries and represents the position of a short term stop for a small transient group.</p>		
District/Unitary: Maidstone		Parish:
<p>NGR (centre of site: 8 figures): TQ 7570 5790 (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs)</p>		
Type of archaeological work (delete)		
Evaluation	Watching Brief	Field Walking
Documentary Study	Building Recording	Earthwork Survey
Excavation	Geophysical Survey	Field Survey
Geoarchaeological Investigation		
Date of recording: 22 nd and 29 th November 2004		
Unit undertaking recording: Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd		
Geology: Mixed deposits of the Folkestone Beds formation		
Title and author of accompanying report: Land at Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone, Kent: Archaeological Evaluation. Stuart Holden		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate):</p> <p><u>Upper Palaeolithic to Late Neolithic</u></p> <p>Forty-six pieces of struck flint were recovered in an un-abraded condition and may signify activity occurring on or near to the site in prehistoric times.</p>		
Location of archive/finds: PCA Ltd		
Contact at Unit: Jon Butler		Date: December 2004

APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-5608

Project details

Project name	Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone
Short description of the project	Watching brief during soil stripping following an evaluation. Primarily to recover further evidence of prehistoric activity
Project dates	Start: 22-11-2004 End: 29-11-2004
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	preconst1-4780 (1) - OASIS form ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	OCCUPATION SITE Uncertain
Significant Finds	STRUCK FLINT Uncertain

Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT MAIDSTONE BOUGHTON MALHERBE Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone
National grid reference	TQ 757 579 Point
Height OD	Min: 40.72m Max: 53.52m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	CgMs Consultants Ltd
Project design originator	CgMs Consultants Ltd
Project director/manager	Jon Butler
Project supervisor	Stuart Holden
Sponsor or funding body	Ward Homes

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Local museum
Physical Contents	'Ceramics', 'Worked stone/lithics'
Physical Archive Exists?	Yes
Digital Archive recipient	Local museum
Digital Media available	'Text'
Digital Archive Exists?	Yes
Paper Archive Exists?	Yes

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An archaeological watching brief at Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Maidstone, Kent
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Holden, S
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