



**DOCUMENT VERIFICATION**

**NAPENTHE, CLIFF END, PETT LEVEL  
EAST SUSSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited			K2022
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	Amelia Fairman		April 2009
Graphics Prepared by:	Mark Roughly		April 2009
Graphics Checked by:	Josephine Brown		April 2009
Project Manager Sign-off:	Tim Bradley		April 2009

Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd  
Unit 54  
Brockley Cross Business Centre  
96 Endwell Road  
London  
SE4 2PD

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Napenthe Cliff End, Pett Level, East  
Sussex, TN35 4EE**

**Site Code: XNPL 09**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 8875 1320**

**Written and Researched by Amelia Fairman  
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, April 2009**

**Project Manager: Tim Bradley**

**Commissioning Client: Form Design Architecture on behalf of Mr W  
Wong**

**Unit 54  
Brockley Cross Business Centre  
96 Endwell Road  
Brockley  
London  
SE4 2PD  
Tel: 020 7732 3925  
Fax: 020 7732 7896  
E-mail: tbradley@pre-construct.com  
Website: www.pre-construct.com**

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April 2009**

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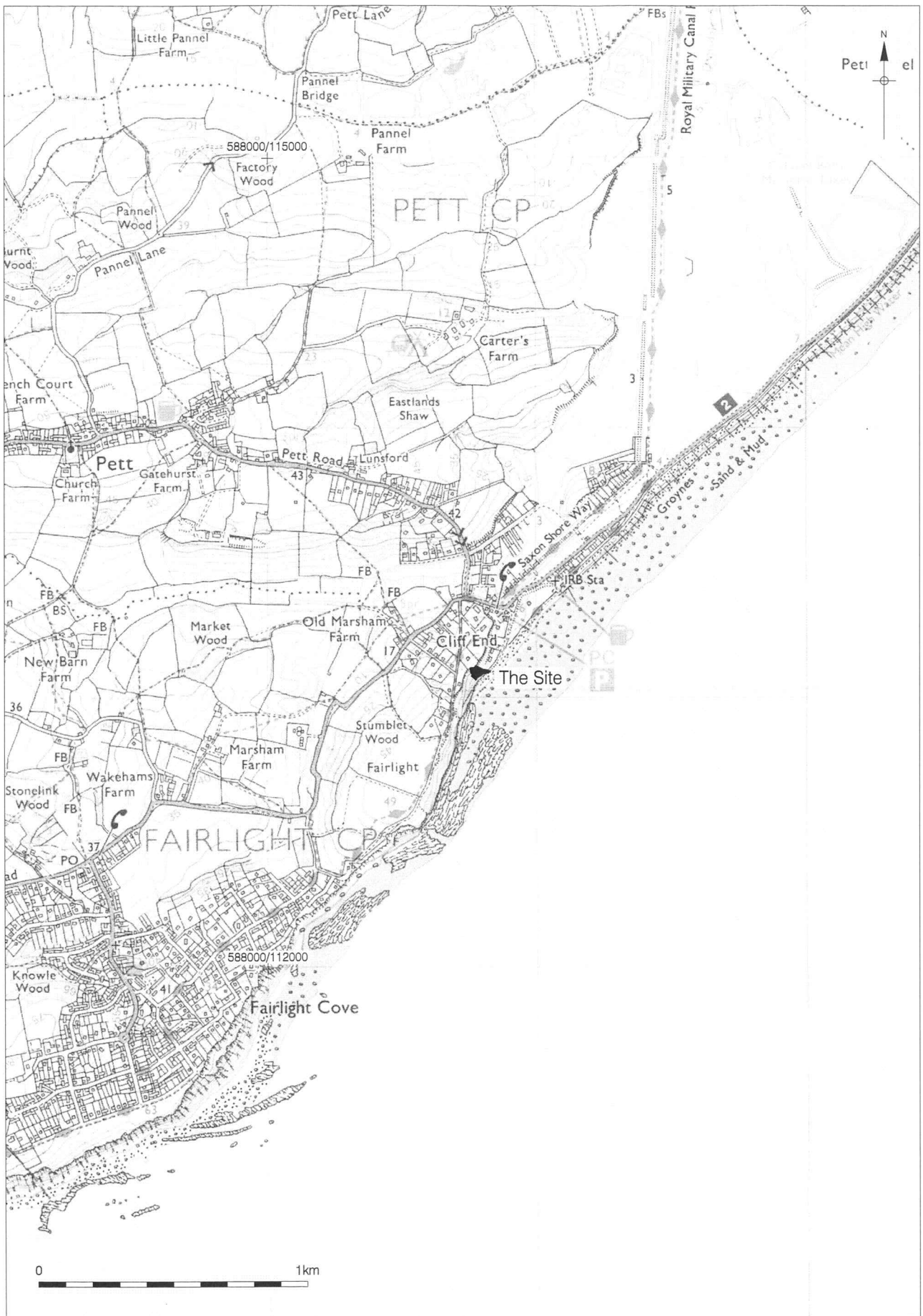
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## **1 ABSTRACT**

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief conducted at 'Napenthe', Cliff End, Pett Level, East Sussex, TN35 4EE. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 8875 1320 (Figure 1).
  
- 1.2 The watching brief found evidence of cut garden features associated with the former 'Napenthe' property and natural horizons of Wadhurst Clay, including bands of red clay ironstone, at around 0.45m below current ground level at heights of between 55.78m OD within the area of the retaining wall, sloping down to 54.60m OD to the east. No other archaeological features were identified, which is likely a result of extensive terracing carried out during the construction of 'Napenthe'.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 'Napenthe', Cliff End, Pett Level, East Sussex, between 31<sup>st</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009 (Figure 1). The watching brief monitored the ground reduction works on landscaping to the rear of the property in preparation for the retaining wall, and during the excavations for a composting toilet to a maximum depth of 1.50m below current ground level.
- 2.2 The commissioning client was Form Design Architecture on behalf of Mr W Wong and the watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. The watching brief was supervised by the author and project managed by Tim Bradley.
- 2.3 The site of the proposed development lies within an irregularly shaped plot of land, on a steep slope above a near vertical cliff. Several relatively level terraces are present on the site, with trees, bushes and grass bounding the north, east, west and southern limits. Beyond this, the gardens of 'Stone Walls' and 'The Thatch' bound the northern and western limits of the site respectively. The cliff face lies approximately 35m to the immediate southeast of the property (Figure 2).
- 2.4 The completed archive comprising written and drawn records will be deposited at a appropriate local museum within East Sussex under the site code XNPL 09.



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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000 at A4

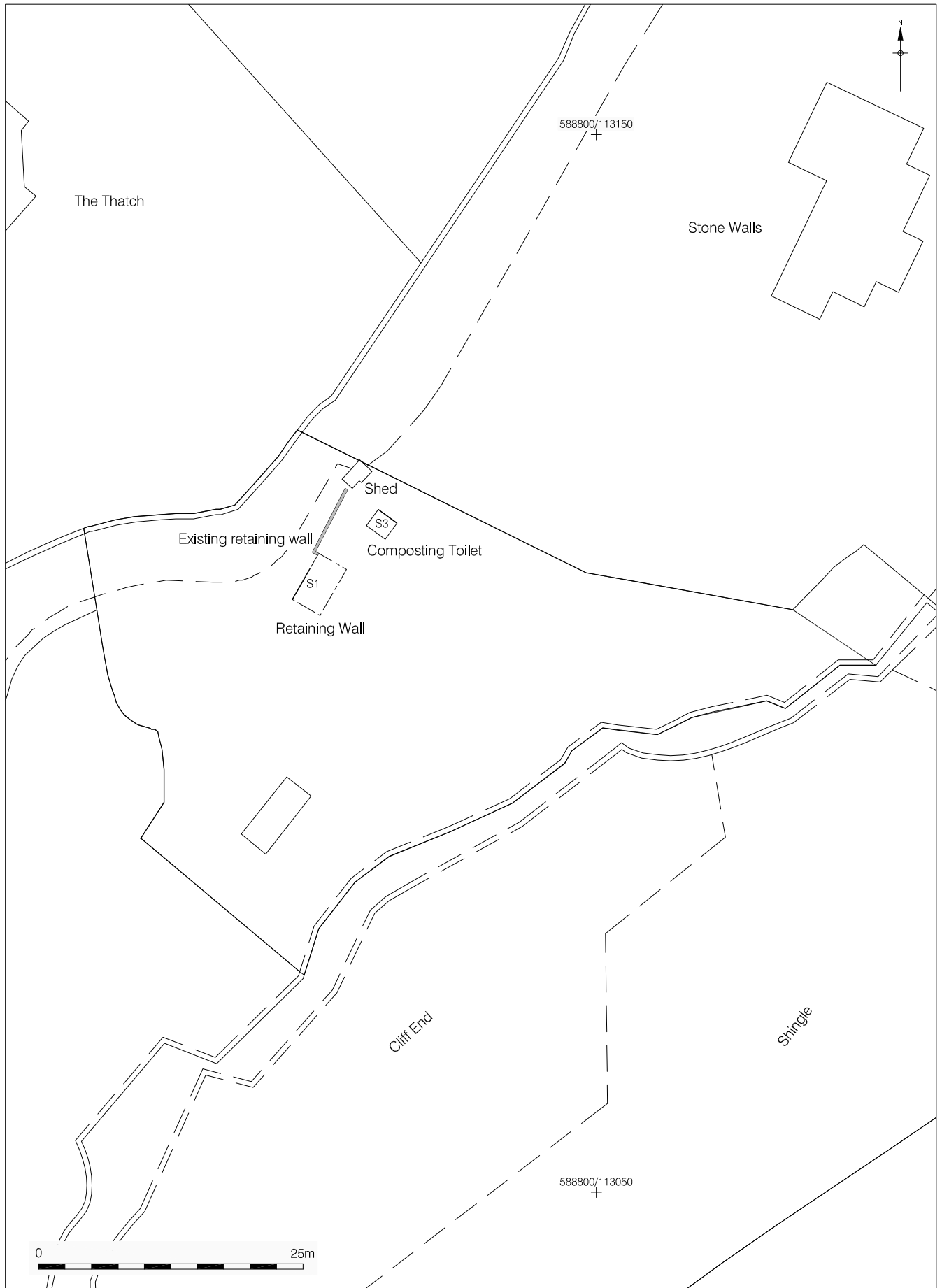


Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:500 at A4



### **3 PLANNING BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Archaeology in East Sussex**

- 3.1.1 The study aims to satisfy the objectives of the District of Rother, which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which they are the custodians. The relevant Strategic Development Plan framework is provided by the Rother District Local Plan, adopted July 2006. It includes the following policy of relevance to archaeology within Rother:

#### **Archaeological and Historical Features**

##### **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.

##### **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.

##### **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.

- 3.2 An archaeological desk based assessment was carried out for the site by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. in March 2009<sup>1</sup>. The assessment suggested that the area of the site has a moderate to high potential for prehistoric remains, and a low potential for Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains.
- 3.3 Given the archaeological potential of the site, and the proposed ground works on the site, Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist for East Sussex County Council,

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<sup>1</sup> Fairman, 2009

recommended that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken on the ground reduction works on the landscaping to the rear of the property and on the excavations for the composting toilet, with a contingency for further detailed excavation and recording should this be required.

- 3.4 The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief<sup>2</sup>, approved by Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist for East Sussex County Council, in advance of the commencement of the groundworks.
- 3.5 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings within the area of the development site.

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<sup>2</sup> Bradley, 2009

## **4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **4.1 Geology**

4.1.1 The British Geological Survey (BGS) of England and Wales (Hastings - Rye), indicates that the site geological sequence consists of a basal geology of the cretaceous Hastings Beds, comprising sand and Wadhurst clay. These are predicted to extend up to 57m in depth, and include shelly limestone bands indicating former channel fills. Wadhurst clay overlies a solid geology of Cliff End Sandstone, which is likely to represent a similar barrier-bar deposit. The Cliff End Sandstone is approximately 10m in thickness, and directly overlain by the 'Cliff End Bone Bed', a sand-rich layer containing frequent fossil and fish remains. The survey indicates that the Cliff End fault line lies directly to the south of the subject site, which may therefore effect elevations of the buried topography.

4.1.2 Additional information regarding the underlying geology derives from a series of boreholes carried out by Ashdown Site Investigation<sup>3</sup> across the study site. These documented a 100mm-200mm layer of topsoil sealing Wadhurst Clay from elevations of between 48.30m OD and 56.05m OD, from north-east to south-west of the subject site respectively.

### **4.2 Topography**

4.2.1 The site is located on land that slopes considerably downwards from 58.08m OD in the northwest to 48.67m OD towards the cliff edge in the southeast. Several relatively level terraces are present however, with the current building lying at around 53.30m OD.

4.2.2 The study site lies c.35m north-west of the cliff edge overlooking the English Channel. This rises some 10m in height, comprised of sandstone, and stands above a shingle beach.

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<sup>3</sup> Jones, 2007

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Introduction

To date there have been a limited number of archaeological investigations within the immediate vicinity of the study site. The majority of the evidence for activity within the area derives from the Prehistoric periods, albeit with poorly provenanced findspots of flint scatters or coins. Other evidence types relate to Roman industry, or post-medieval military defences, with no entries on the HER for the Saxon or early medieval periods. The area of Cliff End seems to have undergone only limited development, with housing only appearing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It appears that the focus for activity and settlement lay within the villages of Pett to the northwest and Fairlight to the southwest. The following archaeological and historical background cited below therefore represents a summary of the desktop assessment of the site, carried out by Pre-construct Archaeology Ltd in March 2009<sup>4</sup>.

### 5.1 Prehistoric

- 5.1.1 Palaeolithic remains are likely to be limited to find spots and tools, rarely *in situ*. The disturbance of deposits likely to yield such remains, and a general lack of large-scale gravel extraction may explain the limited evidence within the region pertaining to this period. Sources such as raised beaches, river gravel deposits and surface sites have however been identified.
- 5.1.2 The raised beach at Boxgrove is perhaps the best example of a Palaeolithic raised beach within West Sussex. The site of Boxgrove has yielded exceptionally well preserved flint scatters and faunal remains, with which to infer Palaeolithic environment and exploitation strategies. Many examples of raised beaches so far identified lay predominantly to the west of the subject site. The identification of a Palaeolithic cave dwelling [Ref: MES3911] may infer the presence of a raised beach in the localised vicinity, and lies less than 100m to the south of the subject site. The cave appeared to be seawater cut, the floor of which comprised Pleistocene pebbles, inferring formation when sea levels were around 50ft higher than at present. Flint blades and a 'pick-like artefact' were discovered within the cave, in addition to indications that it had been artificially enlarged, possibly during World War II when it was utilised as a look-out post.
- 5.1.3 Numerous findspots of prehistoric flints, predominantly dating to between the Lower Palaeolithic and Late Bronze Age, have been identified within 1km of the subject site, and are held by the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group. The Mesolithic is better represented with the identification of sites at Hassocks, Heath Common at

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<sup>4</sup> Fairman, 2009

Storrington and Iping Common, all found on lower Greensand. The latter is likely to represent a temporary camp of a small hunting group. Among the tools recovered from such sites are sharpening flakes, scrapers and microliths. No such sites are documented within the vicinity of the subject site however, and may therefore have been lost due to erosion. A similar lack of evidence within the subject site is apparent for the later Mesolithic. The predominant finds for this period derive from poorly provenanced tools and waste materials identified within disturbed plough soils.

- 5.1.4 Activity during the Late Iron Age appears to have increased within Sussex. Greater numbers of settlement locations have been identified, in addition to ritual centres, and evidence for centralised ceramic production. Indications of contact with the Roman world also occur at this time, with discoveries of imported wares such as Samian Ware from Italy and *terra nigra* and *terra rubra* from Roman Gaul. Coinage and trade is also likely to have increased. This is perhaps attested archaeologically by the discovery of three Iron Age coins at Cliff End, around 250m to the south of the site, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century [Ref: MES3910].

## 5.2 Roman

- 5.2.1 Following the Roman invasion, Sussex became part of a client kingdom ruled by Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus. Many of the major roads however, which indicate a Roman and/or military presence pass some distance to the west of the subject site.
- 5.2.2 The 2<sup>nd</sup> century saw a major expansion of the Wealden ironmaking industry. It is possible that the industry was formed of two distinct groups, a western 'private' zone and an eastern area linked to *Classis Britannica*, inferring that the weald may have formed part of an 'Imperial Estate'. This may explain an apparent lack of Roman farms in this region, perhaps prohibited due to state controls over the valuable iron reserves. Other important industries would have included farming, pottery and tile manufacture, forestry and the quarrying of stone

## 5.3 Saxon/Early Medieval

- 5.3.1 One of the earliest documentary references to Sussex occurs in the 9<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon chronicle. This records the arrival of Aelle and his sons in 477 AD, a battle near the banks of a river in 485 AD and Aelle's attack on *Anderitum*, modern day Pevensey, in 491 AD. Archaeological evidence pertaining to this period however is minimal.
- 5.3.2 The paucity of historical documentation for the vicinity of the subject site within this period and lack of archaeological evidence would suggest that occupation or exploitation of the area was minimal.

## 5.4 Medieval

- 5.4.1 Pett, as in previous centuries, is likely to have remained relatively unchanged for much of the medieval period, as little more than a hamlet. Woodland clearance, sheep and cattle grazing, and the intensification of crop farming however increased towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The area may also have benefited from the increased prosperity of Winchelsea, aided by the wine trade, fishing industry and other imported goods. It is estimated that Winchelsea made use of 15 ships, each of between 83 and 190 tons, for the wine trade alone during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Edward I's imposition of the customs system at this time also led to an increase in smuggling, with the inhabitants of the Cinque Ports retaining reputations for being 'the most infamous of all European Pirates'.
- 5.4.2 It may be inferred that occupation within the Pett Levels at this time was minimal. Only two records were highlighted on the HER within a 1km radius of the subject site, a Bloomery and a moated feature. The area of the subject site was likely to have remained open land or marshes at this time and therefore either uninhabited or utilised for pasture.

## 5.5 Post-Medieval

- 5.1.1 Documentary sources, in the form of Parish records or those associated with the church form the basis for much of the information regarding Pett and the Pett levels during the post-medieval period. The earliest evidence for a dedication of a church in Pett derives from the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, with parish records not beginning for another century in 1675. An Elizabethan return on the state of the Diocese of Chichester records that 'the parish of Pett having neither parson or curat', a situation rectified with the induction of Richard Gowge in 1569 or 1570. Some ten years later, Thomas Mawdesley became the rector of Pett in addition to Iden, eventually being buried at Pett in 1615. The state of East Sussex churches while he was in residency was considered fairly poor, with Pett church being described as such:

"There are no sentences of holie scripture written upon the walles of the church. Item, there lacketh the table of the ten commandments"

- 5.1.2 It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the population of the area began to significantly rise. By 1801 the population of Pett parish had risen to 185, occupying 36 houses from a previous count of 49 adult members of the community in 1676. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Napoleonic Wars also saw the construction of a number of major military defences in the region. The Martello Towers comprised 73, 30 foot high towers with 13 foot and 6-8 foot thick walls along the seaward and landward sides

respectively. Each tower was designed to carry a 2.5 tonne gun on the top, which could fire a 24 pound shot a mile out to sea. Construction of the towers begun in 1804, with the stretch of coastline between Winchelsea Beach and Cliff End housing tower numbers 31 to 38. The last of these was destroyed during the 1890s.

- 5.1.3 The second major military defence was the construction of the Royal Military Canal, which currently lies around 300m to the north of the subject site, but originally passed less than 100m to the immediate east of the property [Ref: MES4112]. This was intended to act as a moat defence against a Napoleonic invasion, stretching from Shorncliffe, Kent, to Rother at Rye, and later extended to Cliff End at Pett Level. The canal was the brainchild of Col. John Brown and began construction in 1804. This feature was not completed until 1809 at the cost of £200, 000, becoming little more than a folly and later a commercial canal.
- 5.1.4 Following the Napoleonic Wars and the imposition of the Corn Laws, the smuggling trade was again rife along the East Sussex coast. Several cases during the 1830s are documented as examples. In one instance men drowned in the Military Canal while trying to escape from customs officials, and another example states that 20 or so men were involved in running cargo at Cliff End. When surprised by coastguards, a fight ensued, whereupon the smugglers 'wrested muskets from the coastguards', beating them with the butt of the weapons and bayoneting one of them, leaving him dead before escaping. Local place names such as the 'Smuggler' pub may testify to this flourishing trade.
- 5.1.5 The main concentration of post-medieval development therefore appeared to be around Cliff End to the south of the Royal Military Canal and within the open fields to the west of the subject site. Other developments in the wider area were focussed upon military defences, dating to either the Napoleonic Wars or World War II, and as such were sited along the coast. An early cartographic source, Saxon's map of 1575, shows little development within the localised area. This remains unchanged until 1936, whereupon a number of residential properties appear. The boundaries of the subject site were also formalised at this time. Development does not begin on the site itself until the construction of 'Buena Vista' sometime prior to 1961. No further developments occurred on the subject site, and the property of 'Napenthe', presumably a name change from 'Buena Vista', and its boundaries remain the same to the present.

## 6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation<sup>5</sup>, the ground reduction for a composting toilet and landscaping to the rear of the property were monitored. These excavations lay within the grounds of the former 'Napenthe' property, East Sussex (Figure 2).
- 6.2 Both areas were machine excavated to a maximum depth of 1.50m below current ground surface using a 360 machine with a flat bladed ditching bucket, and under the supervision of the attendant archaeologist. The area of the composting toilet measured 1.90m x 2.20m x 1.50m, and the area of the retaining wall was cut back approximately 1m in width x 5m length north-south.
- 6.3 The recording systems adopted during the investigations were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in East Sussex, and as detailed in the East Sussex Standards for Archaeological Fieldwork.
- 6.4 The site archive is so organised as to be compatible with its eventual deposition with the relevant local museum. Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated and exposed were entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets which include the same fields of entry as are found on the recording sheets of the Museum of London. Sample recording sheets, sample registers, finds recording sheets, accession catalogues, and the photography record cards will follow the Museum of London equivalents. This requirement for archival compatibility extends to the use of computerised databases.
- 6.5 A record of the full extent in plan and/or section of all archaeological deposits as revealed in the investigation was made on polyester based drawing film at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20.
- 6.6 The OD height of all principal strata and features was calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans and sections.
- 6.7 A 'Harris Matrix' stratification diagram was used to record stratigraphic relationships. This record was compiled and fully checked during the course of the excavations.

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<sup>5</sup> Bradley, 2009



- 6.8 A 'site location plan' indicating the site north and based on the current Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) was also prepared.
- 6.9 The site was given the code XNPL 09.

## **7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

### **7.1 Natural**

7.1.1 Natural Wadhurst clay was observed in both areas of excavation. This comprised a firm, light blue-grey to red-orange clay. The deposit was well sorted and identified as context [4], from an uppermost elevation of 55.78m OD within the area of the retaining wall, sloping down to 54.60m OD to the east. This drop in elevation is consistent with the extensive landscaping of the area prior to the construction of 'Napenthe'.

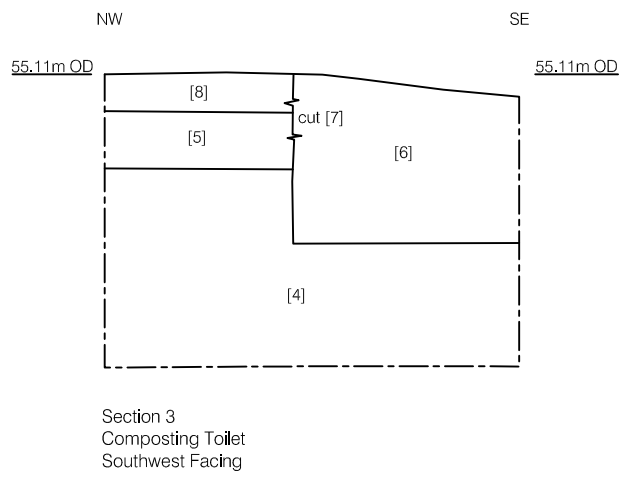
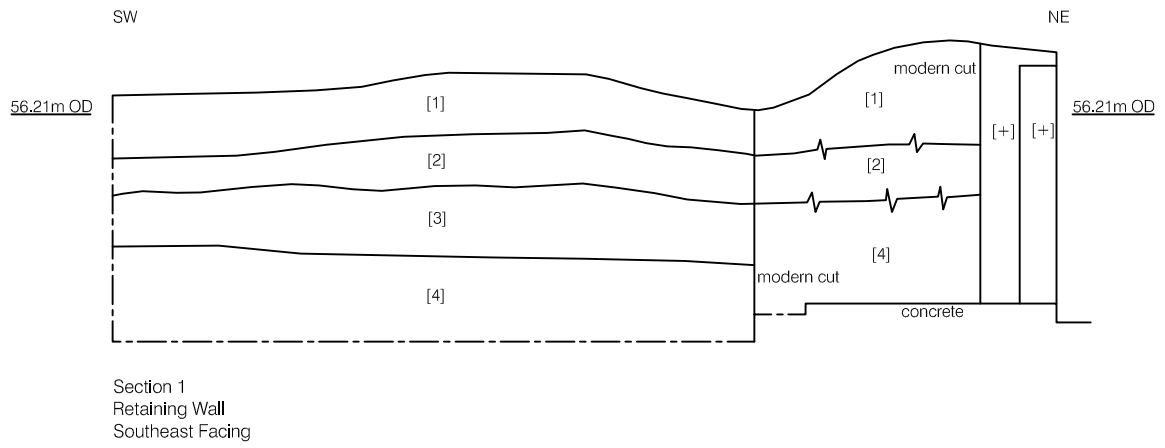
7.1.2 Deposit [3] sealed [4] from an uppermost elevation of 55.83m OD. This comprised a naturally banded layer of silty clays and seams of red clay ironstone nodules. The deposit maintained a maximum thickness of 0.40m, and sloped down to 55.74m OD to the north. This layer was only observed within the area of the retaining wall towards the west of the subject site and was considered part of the Wadhurst Clay formation.

### **7.2 Post-Medieval Landscaping/Garden Features**

7.2.1 Sealing natural clays were layers of sub-soil and topsoil. Within the area of the retaining wall these were identified as contexts [2] and [1] respectively. Layer [2] comprised soft, yellowish-grey clay-sand, identified from 56.11m OD with a maximum thickness of 0.29m. This was sealed by a 0.30m thick layer of dark grey-brown clay-silt topsoil, from around 56.60m OD.

7.2.2 Towards the east of the site, within the footprint of the composting toilet, mixed sub-soil [5] sealed natural clay from a maximum elevation of 55m OD, 0.30m thick. This comprised mid brown sandy silt with clay lenses, frequent rooting and occasional gravel inclusions. This, in turn, was sealed by dark grey-brown sandy silt with small rounded gravel inclusions. Identified as context [8], the layer extended 0.20m in thickness from around 55.11m OD. The layer was interpreted as a mix of topsoil and bedding material for a pathway/paved steps associated with the previous property.

7.2.3 Deposit [8] was truncated to the north-east by cut [7]. This feature extended around 1.20m north-south x 0.90m in depth with vertical sides and flattish base. The cut was filled in its entirety by deposit [6], a mid grey-brown sandy silt, with frequent rooting and moderate inclusions of post-medieval material including brick fragments and plastic sheeting. This was therefore interpreted to be the cut for a garden feature or shrub bole, similarly associated with the former 'Napenthe' property.



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Figure 3  
Sections 1 & 3  
1:40 at A4

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 The principal objectives of the archaeological watching brief were to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits, establish the nature of these, and to ascertain whether any evidence of prehistoric remains existed in the area of development. Furthermore, the nature and topography of the natural strata was also to be recorded. These objectives were achieved and the results are summarised below.
- 8.2 Natural Wadhurst Clay was found at the base of both areas of excavation, and is therefore assumed to underlie the entire site, supporting the findings from the initial site investigation. This was sealed by bands of natural clays and red clay ironstone nodules to the west of the site only. The remainder of the site revealed sub-soil and topsoil deposits directly overlying the natural ground, with garden features truncating these upper soil horizons towards the west of the site. This truncation was considered to be of 20<sup>th</sup> century date and therefore associated with the 'Napenthe' property.
- 8.2 No archaeological features predating the 20<sup>th</sup> century were observed. The lack of the distinctive natural banding of red clay ironstone within the lower, eastern areas of excavation suggests that extensive truncation of natural horizons occurred during landscaping works for the 'Napenthe' property.

## **9 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Bradley, T, 2009, A Written Scheme of Investigation for An Archaeological Watching Brief at Napenthe, Cliff End, Pett Level, East Sussex, TN35 4EE

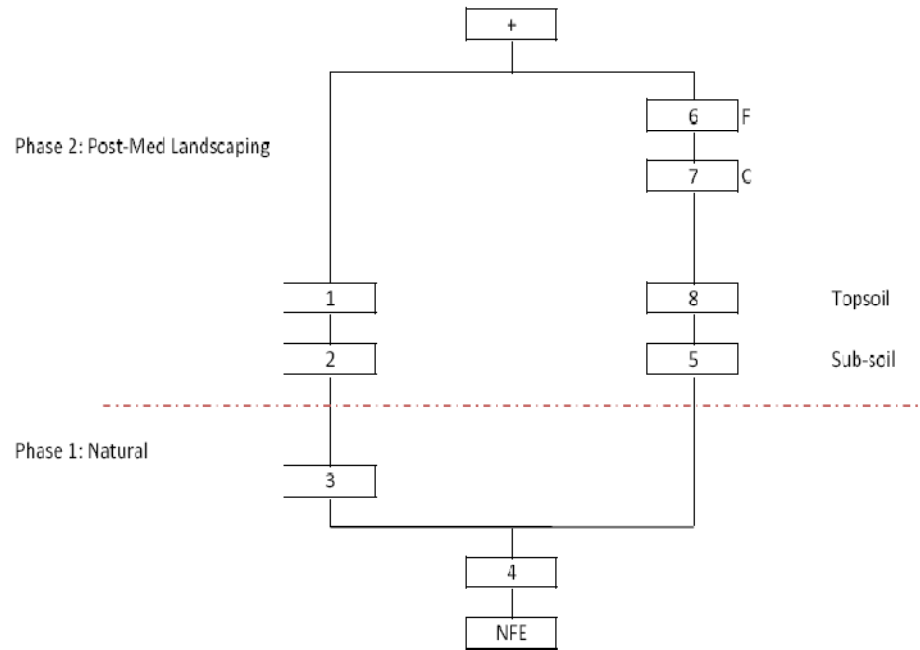
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## **10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Form Design Architecture for commissioning the work on behalf of Mr W Wong, and Greg Chuter, County Archaeologist for East Sussex County Council, for his assistance in setting up the project and for monitoring the work.
- 2.5 The author would like to thank Luke McElhinny for his on-site assistance, Mark Roughley for the illustrations and Tim Bradley for his project management and editing.

## APPENDIX 1: SITE MATRIX



## APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context Number	Trench	Plan Number	Section Number	Phase	Type	Description	Highest	Lowest
1	RW	RW	1	2	Layer	Clay-silt topsoil	56.6	56.23
2	RW	-	1	2	Layer	Soft, clayey sand sub-soil	56.11	55.97
3	RW	-	1	1	Layer	Banded natural clay and ironstone	55.83	55.74
4	RW/CT	RW/CT	1, 2, 3	1	Layer	Natural Wadhurst Clay	55.78	54.6
5	CT	-	2, 3	2	Layer	Mixed sandy-silt sub-soil	55	54.9
6	CT	-	3	2	Fill	Sandy silt fill of [7]	55.11	54.99
7	CT	-	3	2	Cut	Tree throw	55.11	54.21
8	CT	-	3	2	Layer	Sandy silt with clay lenses: mixed topsoil	55.11	



## Appendix 1: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-57819

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 'Napenthe', Cliff End, Pett Level, East Sussex, TN35 4EE
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out within the grounds of the former 'Napenthe' property at Pett Level, East Sussex. The ground reduction for a composting toilet and landscaping works to the rear of the property in advance of a new retaining wall were monitored. Natural Wadhurst clay was observed, including bands of natural red clay ironstone. This was sealed by subsoil and topsoil, which were truncated by modern garden features. No other archaeological significant deposits or features were identified.
Project dates	Start: 31-03-2009 End: 02-04-2009
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Current Land use	Coastland 5 - Cliff and related features
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX ROTHER PETT 'Napenthe', Cliff End, Pett Level, East Sussex, TN35 4EE
Postcode	TN35 4EE
Study area	69.70 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 8875 1320 50.8867913831 0.683848568284 50 53 12 N 000 41 01 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 54.60m Max: 55.78m

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### Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Form Design Architecture

Project design originator Tim Bradley

Project director/manager Tim Bradley

Project supervisor Amelia Fairman

Type of sponsor/funding body Form Design Architecture

Name of sponsor/funding body Mr W Wong

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### Project archives

Digital Archive recipient Local museum

Digital Media available 'Text'

Paper Archive recipient Local Museum

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Matrices', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section'

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### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief at 'Napenthe', Cliff End, Pett Level, East Sussex, TN35 4EE

Author(s)/Editor(s) Fairman, A

Date 2009

Issuer or publisher Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Place of issue or publication London

Description A4 folio

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Entered by Tim Bradley (tbradley@pre-construct.com)

Entered on 17 April 2009

# P C A

PRE - CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED

UNIT 54

BROCKLEY CROSS BUSINESS CENTRE

96 ENDWELL ROAD

BROCKLEY

LONDON SE4 2PD

TEL: 0207 732 3925 0207 639 9091

FAX: 0207 639 9588

EMAIL: [info@pre-construct.com](mailto:info@pre-construct.com)

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED (NORTHERN OFFICE)

UNIT 19A

TURSDALE BUSINESS PARK

DURHAM DH6 5PG

TEL: 0191 377 1111

FAX: 0191 377 0101

EMAIL: [info.north@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.north@pre-construct.com)

