

**Gilton Mill,  
Poulton Lane,  
Ash-next-Sandwich,  
Kent**

**Archaeological watching brief**

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 Planning Ref: DOV/13/00961  
 Client: Carla and Michael Lorne  
 NGR: 628157 158182 centred

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# A watching brief at Guilton Mill, Ash-next-Sandwich, May 2021

## 1. Summary

**1.1** A watching brief was maintained during trenching work for the construction of a new garage immediately to the west of Guilton Mill, Poulton Lane, Ash-next-Sandwich, Kent. The development area (NGR 628157 158182 centred) stands on Lambeth Group sands at an elevation of about 23m above OD.

**1.2** The site falls within the area of a known Anglo-Saxon cemetery, which is a Scheduled Monument (Guilton Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Monument No. 1005141; Kent HER ref. TR25 NE6). Careful observation of all the excavated trenches revealed no finds or features of archaeological interest.

**1.3** No further analysis of the information recorded in 2021 is warranted but this negative evidence could usefully feed into any future study concerned with charting the extent of Anglo-Saxon graves in the Guilton area.

## 2. Introduction

**2.1** In 2021 Canterbury Archaeological Trust was commissioned to maintain a watching brief during trenching work required for the construction of a new garage immediately to the west of Guilton Mill, Poulton Lane, Ash-next-Sandwich, Kent. The development site falls within the area of a Scheduled Monument (Guilton Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Monument No. 1005141; Kent HER ref. TR25 NE6).

**2.2** The site, NGR 628157 158182 centred, is located within the parish of Ash, at the top of a south-east facing slope, overlooking the valley of the Durlock Stream. It stands at an elevation of about 23 metres above OD (Figs 1 & 2). The natural geology here consists of sands belonging to the Palaeocene Lambeth Group (British Geological Survey 2019). The sands in this area have been dug for building material since at least the eighteenth century (Figs 3 & 4).

**2.3** The fieldwork was conducted 17 May 2021, mostly during dry but overcast weather. No Anglo-Saxon graves or other features of archaeological interest were identified and no artefacts were recovered. A previous drainage trench had damaged part of the site and there had been significant spoil dumping across the area.

**2.4** The fieldwork generated a small archive, comprising six recorded contexts, a general site plan, a block section and thirteen digital photographs. No artefacts were recovered. All the field records have been checked and indexed. They will shortly be placed in an appropriate local repository.

## 3. Planning background and nature of development

**3.1** The site has planning permission for the 'Erection of first floor and single storey side extension incorporating a garage, rear conservatory extension, raising of roof including the installation of clerestory window and rear balcony (existing garage to be demolished)'. The Local Planning Authority's planning reference number for the proposal is DOV/13/00961.

**3.2** The Local Planning Authority placed the following general condition (4) on the planning consent:

*No works shall take place until the applicant(s), or their agents or successors in title,*

*has or have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

**Reason:** *To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.*

**3.3** The new construction project has been undertaken in stages. Archaeological investigations in 2003 established that the area to the south (rear) of the old mill had previously been truncated, removing the need for any further archaeological works in this area (confirmed in a letter from Paul Roberts of Historic England to DDC Planning Dept, July 2015). Excavation along the western side of the mill at the same time revealed a single Anglo-Saxon grave (Gr. 109; Parfitt 2003; 2006; Figs 5 & 6, see below).

**3.4** The final piece of work to be carried out in the present building programme is the erection of the single storey side extension incorporating a garage. Falling outside the previously truncated area, this new construction accordingly required an archaeological input during the groundworks. The area affected lies across presently open ground immediately to the west of the current dwelling formed around the old mill tower (Fig. 5).

**3.5** It was previously agreed with Historic England that in this instance the archaeological work would consist of a watching brief, where the builders' trenching would be careful monitoring by an archaeologist, allowing any features revealed, especially Anglo-Saxon graves, to be recorded. This response was partially based on the assumption that the area was quite likely to have been previously terraced, quarried or otherwise disturbed (see below).

## **4. Archaeological and historical background**

**4.1** The site is occupied by the brick base of a nineteenth century smock mill. This appears on the Ordnance Survey map for 1873, whilst earlier records indicate that there had once been three windmills in this area (Figs 3 & 4). The extant mill was partially demolished in 1933 and its base converted into a house in 1961 (Downes 2000). Various extensions and additions have now been made to the original structure.

**4.2** To the west of the mill, the new development site is situated in a region of considerable archaeological interest and potential, falling within the general area of a known Anglo-Saxon cemetery. The ground is accordingly Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (Gilton Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Monument No. 1005141). Much of the area of this cemetery would seem to have been previously quarried away for building-sand (Figs 3 & 4).

**4.3** Between 1760 and 1763, Bryan Faussett excavated part of a large and important Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Gilton (modern spelling, Guilton) Mill, near Ash (Faussett 1856; Richardson 2005, Site 5; Ash I). More than one hundred graves were examined but it is clear that these did not represent the full extent of the cemetery and a few further graves have been recorded subsequently, most recently in 2003 (Parfitt 2003; 2006). The finds from this site date from at least the early sixth century, until at least the end of the seventh century.

**4.4** Andrew Richardson has carefully documented the various investigations that have taken place at the site. The most recent work was conducted by the Dover Archaeological Group in 2003. The main interventions and discoveries are listed below, largely based on Richardson's research (2005, 2–3):

**Before 1759** Bryan Faussett noted that "...for a great many years past..." antiquities had been recovered whenever sand was dug from a large sandpit at 'Gilton Town', Ash.

**1759** Faussett visited Ash and oversaw the hurried excavation of a skeleton and spearhead by two workers from the adjacent mills. The grave had been visible in section in the side of the sandpit. Faussett also purchased from the millers and the mill owner, Mr. Kingsford, a collection of finds. These included a number of iron objects (a sword, 7 spearheads, 2 shield-bosses and a buckle), and 18 beads. However, only the latter survived the 10-mile journey home.

**1760–3** Faussett supervised the excavation and recording of 106 graves during eleven days of fieldwork over this period. Grave 41 produced a gold coin of Justinian.

**1771** James Douglas and William Boys both recorded that labourers had found more grave goods. Douglas illustrated a shield-boss, probably from the same grave as two spearheads found at the same time (Douglas' Tumulus VII). He also illustrated a number of objects which had been scattered in various collections, but which he believed to have all come from one grave (his Tumulus XV).

**1773** Douglas noted that children would go looking for beads near the miller's house.

**1774** Two further graves (Tumulus XIII and an unnumbered burial) were discovered.

**1842** W.H. Rolfe, a collector of antiquities from neighbouring Sandwich, acquired a group of finds from the site, discovered when ground around the miller's house was being levelled to make a garden. The finds consisted of 2 copper alloy bowls, spear and axe-heads, swords, shield-bosses, brooches, buckles, beads, crystal balls, and a glass vessel. The larger of the metal bowls had been repaired with three riveted patches, which bore stamped human and animal figures on them.

**1854** Akerman visited Gilton and observed that the site of Faussett's excavation was planted with fruit trees. Akerman had a trench dug, but encountered no remains, though he had heard that discoveries had recently been made at the site.

**1859** A spearhead, '...18" long...', from the site was exhibited to the British Archaeological Association. The grave from which it came was also said to have contained parts of a pottery vessel.

**1923** R.A. Smith illustrated a gold bracteate in the British Museum that was from Gilton.

**1957** A grave (Gr. 107) was found in a private garden at Gilton. It contained a sword, and two glass pouch bottles.

**June 1973** When the owner of Gilton Mill, Mr. John Giles, had a sun porch constructed on the south side of the mill, a further grave (designated Gr. 108) was discovered. It was of a woman and contained a brooch that was a hybrid between the plated disc and composite brooch, as well as some beads and a pendant (Avent 1975, 52; plate 78).

**1975** D. Brown and M. Welch excavated for the Ashmolean museum and relocated Grave 108.

**February 1987** The Canterbury Archaeological Trust carried out a watching brief during the laying of a drainage pipe at Guilton Mill. The trench was cut through the scheduled area, to a depth of up to 1.52m, but no Anglo-Saxon features were located (Hone 1987).

**July and August 2003** Dover Archaeological Group examined an L-shaped area immediately to the south and west of the extant mill building. The maximum dimensions of the area were 13.80m (N–S) by 7.20m (E–W). Of this area, a portion on the west side, measuring 9.30m (N–S) by 4.00m (E–W) was excavated under controlled archaeological conditions (Figs 5 & 6), the remainder being inspected during a subsequent watching-brief of the building work.

Examination indicated that there had previously been extensive terracing of the area to be built across, when the surface of the natural sub-soil had been lowered by between 0.10 and 0.15m. This was probably connected with the construction of a rear extension to the mill in the 1970s (see above).

The excavation revealed a single new grave (designated Grave 109), several modern pits and service trenches, all cut into the natural sand (Parfitt 2003; 2006). Grave 109 was aligned north-east by south-west and lay around 4 metres to the west of the site of Grave 108. It was roughly sub-rectangular in shape, although its north-eastern end had been cut away by a modern pipe-trench and the top was truncated by the earlier terracing. As surviving, the grave was a minimum of 2.25m long, 0.74m wide and up to 0.25m deep.

Traces of highly decayed bone occurred on the base in the south-western half of the grave. There was perhaps just sufficient remaining to identify two arm bones and suggest that the head was at the western end - but this cannot be certain. Nor were the decayed bones preserved as soil stains, such as occurred with the 'sand men' of Sutton Hoo. An area of iron staining in the natural sand near the north-east end of the grave could represent the position of an iron grave-object but it was impossible to determine what, if anything, this might have been. No other finds were recovered from the filling of the grave. A thorough metal-detector search of the entire area failed to locate anything of interest and nothing more was revealed during the subsequent watching-brief, despite a careful search.

**May 2021** Canterbury Archaeological Trust conducted a watching brief during the groundworks being undertaken for a new garage on the western side of the mill (reported in detail below; Fig. 5).

## 5. Aims and objectives

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief in 2021 was to:

- Identify any traces of Anglo-Saxon graves and arrange for either their full excavation or preservation *in situ*.
- Identify any other features of archaeological interest and arrange for either their excavation or preservation *in situ*.
- Record the location of all archaeological features in relation to the current buildings.
- Alert Historic England if unexpectedly extensive remains were revealed such as could not be dealt with to a proper and satisfactory standard through the resources allocated to a watching brief, and which may require additional mitigation measures to be implemented.
- Ensure that no unauthorised damage occurred to the Scheduled Monument outside the permitted area.

## **6. Description of excavated trenches** (Figs 7–12)

**6.1** The new development area lay immediately west of the area examined in 2003 (Fig. 5). The watching brief was maintained throughout the programme of ground excavation on the site, with all spoil generated being carefully inspected.

**6.2** Four separate trenches were observed during the course of the watching brief (Fig 7, Trenches 1–4). No Anglo-Saxon graves or other features of archaeological interest were identified and the area was found to have seen significant previous disturbance. The recorded information is detailed below.

### **6.3 Trench 1** (Figs 7–8)

**6.3.1** This represented the south foundation trench for the new garage. It was aligned roughly east–west and was 4.65m in length and 0.66m wide (Fig. 7). The trench was between 1.00 and 1.10m deep and revealed a continuous sequence of deposits (Fig. 8). The top of the natural Lambeth Sand lay at about 0.70m below present ground level. In detail, the natural here consisted of a compact yellow-green sand with some orange mottling (Fig. 8, Context 4). No archaeological features were noted cutting into the top of this, but a deep modern pipe trench was revealed at the western end, dug in from a higher level (Fig. 7).

**6.3.2** The natural sand was overlain by a deposit of similar sandy material about 0.30m thick (Fig. 8, Context 3). At first sight, this appeared to represent an upper zone to the natural sand layer, but further inspection suggested that it was actually a recent dump of redeposited natural material. It was slightly less compact than the underlying Context 4 and it was also slightly darker in colour. Traces of this same layer were noted in parts of Trench 2 to the west (see below) but no datable finds were recovered at any point.

**6.3.3** The redeposited sand (3) was sealed by a recent topsoil deposit about 0.25m thick (Fig. 8, Context 2). This consisted of a uniform dark grey-brown sandy loam. No finds were recovered from this layer.

**6.3.4** Sealing the topsoil (3) was a layer of blue plastic sheeting sealed by a 0.15m thick layer of modern dumped soil (Fig. 8, Context 1).

### **6.4 Trench 2** (Figs 7 & 11)

**6.4.1** This joined Trench 1 at a right angle and represented the west foundation trench for the new garage. It was aligned roughly north–south and was 6.60m in length and about 0.70m wide (Fig. 7). The trench was approximately 1.00 deep.

**6.4.2** Cutting in from the top of Context 2 (topsoil) was a modern drainage trench, complete with soil pipe and associated inspection chamber. This had removed all the earlier deposits in the southern half of the trench. Both the drainpipe and the inspection chamber were of plastic, indicating a relatively recent date for the cutting of the trench (Figs 11 & 12). Fairly certainly, this trench formed part of that examined during a watching brief undertaken by Canterbury Archaeological Trust in February 1987, when no significant archaeology was found (Hone 1987).

**6.4.3** North of the inspection chamber an undisturbed sequence of deposits, very similar to that revealed in Trench 1, was observed (Fig. 11). The top of the natural sand here lay at about 0.60m below present ground level. No finds or features of archaeological interest were discovered.



### **6.5 Trench 3** (Figs 7 & 12)

6.5.1 This was a short spur trench, 1.50m in length, joining the north end of Trench 2 at a right angle (Fig. 7). It represents the western part of the north wall foundation trench, which is not to be continuous but formed of two short end sections only. The corresponding eastern spur trench is to be dug by hand due to the presence of numerous live services in this area, but its site had been previously covered by the watching brief of 2003 when it was found to be clear of any archaeology (Fig. 6).

6.5.2 The undisturbed sequence of deposits exposed in Trench 3 was the same as that revealed in the adjacent Trench 2. No finds or features of particular archaeological interest were noted but a quantity of broken post-medieval (?) pan-tile noted in the topsoil layer (Context 2), may have actually been contained within a poorly defined shallow pit.

### **6.6 Trench 4** (Figs 7 & 12)

6.6.1 Within the area enclosed by Trenches 1–3, a small fourth trench was cut to further investigate the line of the modern drain previously located in Trench 2 (see above). This trench (Fig. 7; Trench 4) measured about 1.00m (NE–SW) by 0.80m (NW–SE).

6.6.2 The excavation of Trench 4 confirmed that there was an angle-change in the line of the drainpipe at the inspection chamber. It also established that in the area of Trench 4 the drainpipe was of glazed ceramic type, indicating that there are two phases of development to this drainage system. No undisturbed soil deposits were revealed in the trench and there were no archaeological finds.

## **7. Finds**

Despite a very careful search, no finds of archaeological interest were revealed during the course of the trenching.

## **8. Conclusions**

**8.1** A very careful watch maintained on all the excavated trenches failed to identify any Anglo-Saxon graves or other features of archaeological interest, and no artefacts were recovered. The previous drain trench cut across the area (as revealed in Trenches 2 & 4) had damaged part of the investigated site but the original excavation of this trench was apparently inspected by CAT in 1987 (see above), when nothing was discovered.

**8.2** More extensive excavation of the area immediately to the east of the present site in 2003 reveal just one, poorly preserved grave (Grave 109), which appeared to be a relatively isolated feature (Fig. 6).

**8.3** The general conclusion would seem to be that the overall density of Anglo-Saxon graves in the immediate area of Guilton Mill is not that great, with individual burials being quite widely spaced.

**8.4** No further analysis of the information recorded in 2021 is warranted at present but this negative evidence could usefully feed into any future study concerned with charting the extent of Anglo-Saxon graves in the Guilton area.

**8.5** Copies of the present report have been provided to the client, Historic England, KCC Heritage Conservation Group, Dover Archaeological Group and CAT's on-line library. A copy will also be placed on the OASIS database.

## 9. Bibliography

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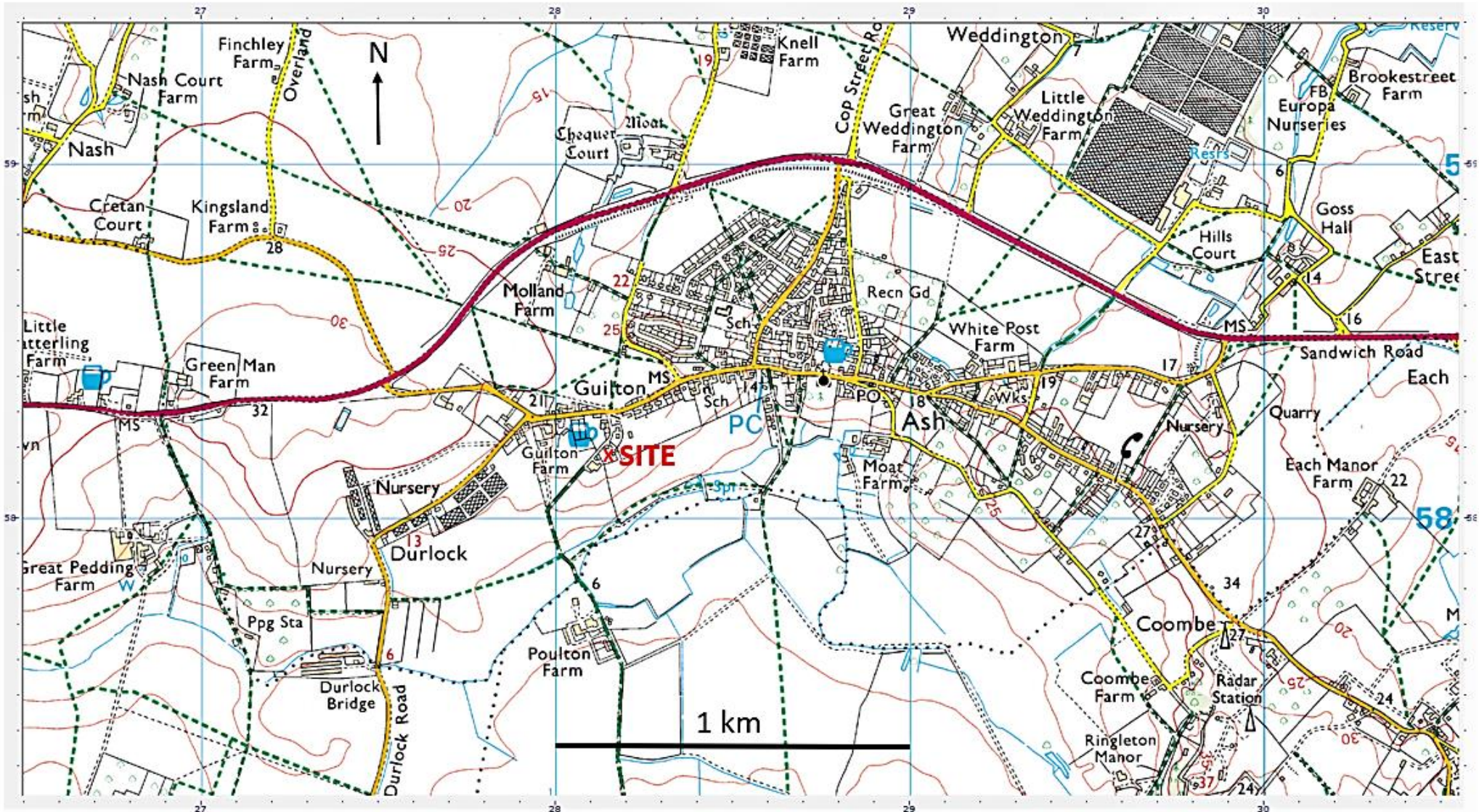
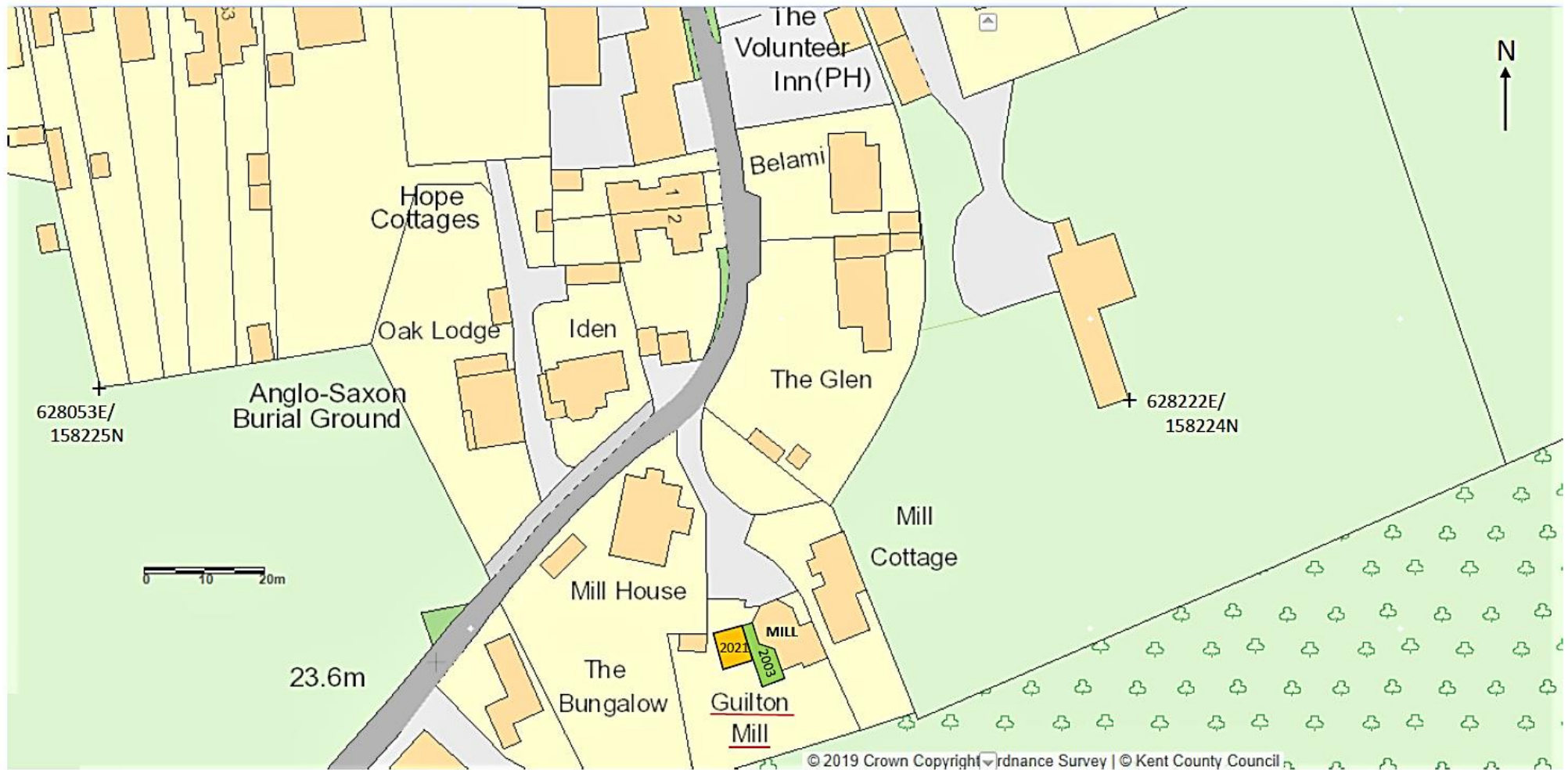


Fig. 1 General location map showing position of the site

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**Fig. 2** General location plan of Gilton Mill showing areas investigated in 2003 and 2021

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Fig. 3 View of the sandpit in 1797 by James Douglas (1793, 25). A, Level ground now a ploughed field; B, Depth at which interments are usually discovered; C, Lower mill; D, Upper Mill; E, Sand pit excavated



Fig. 4 View of sandpit in 1854 (source, *Inventorium Sepulcrale* 1856)

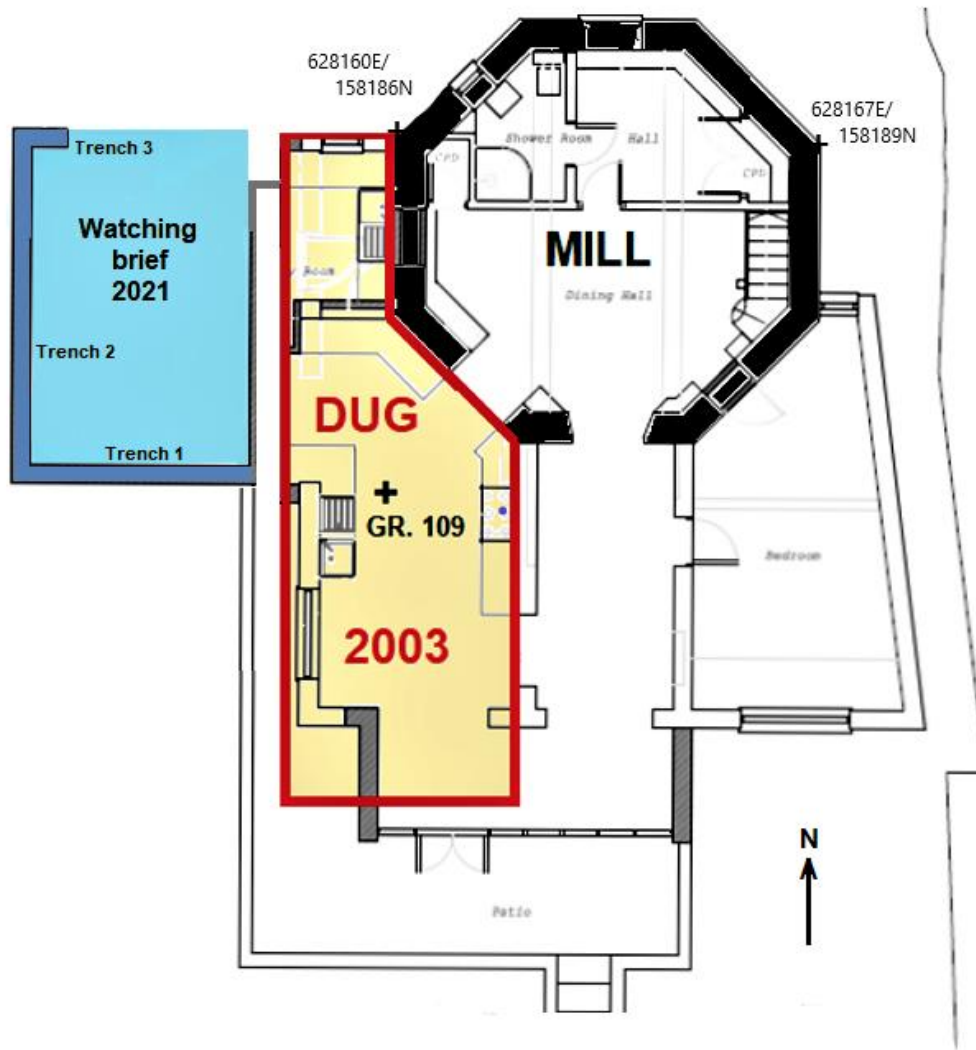


Fig. 5 Outline plan showing location of investigations undertaken 2003 and 2021 in relation to the original mill tower

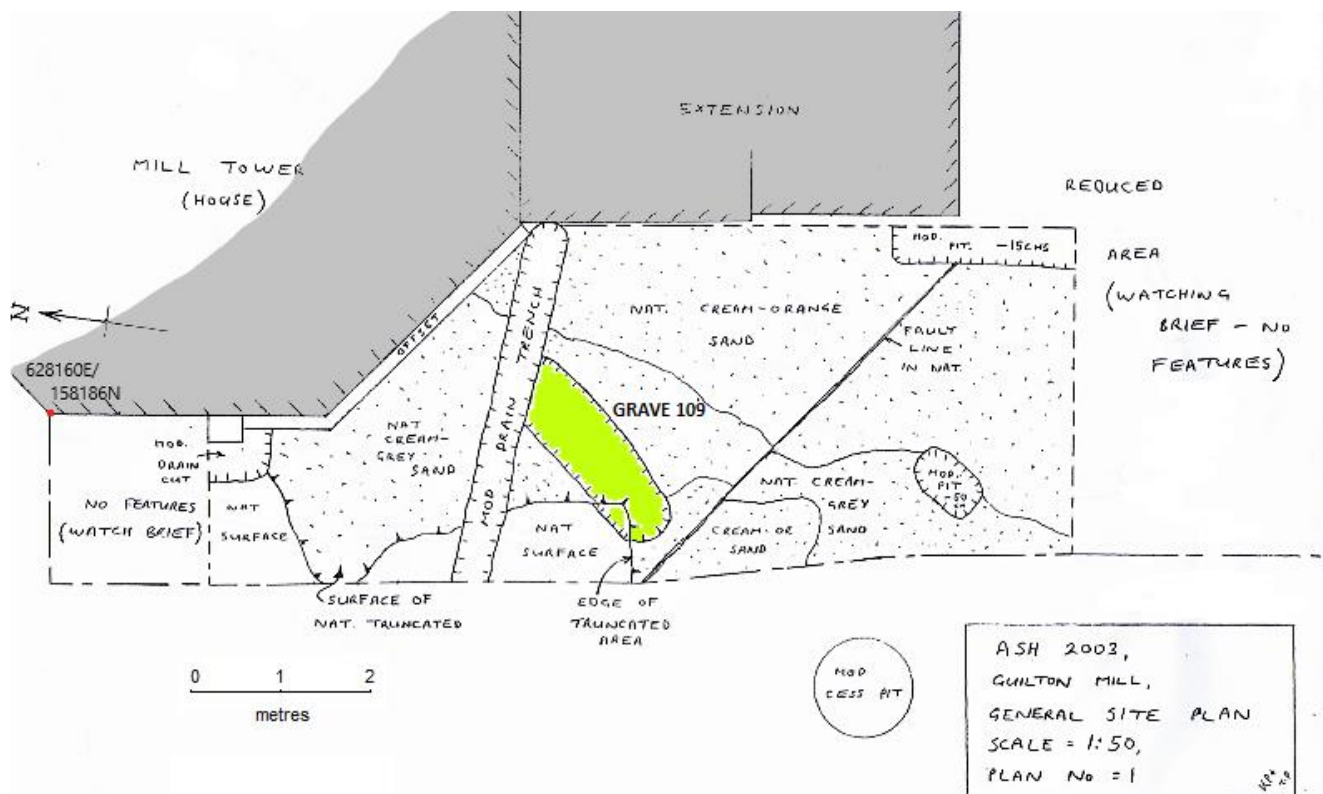
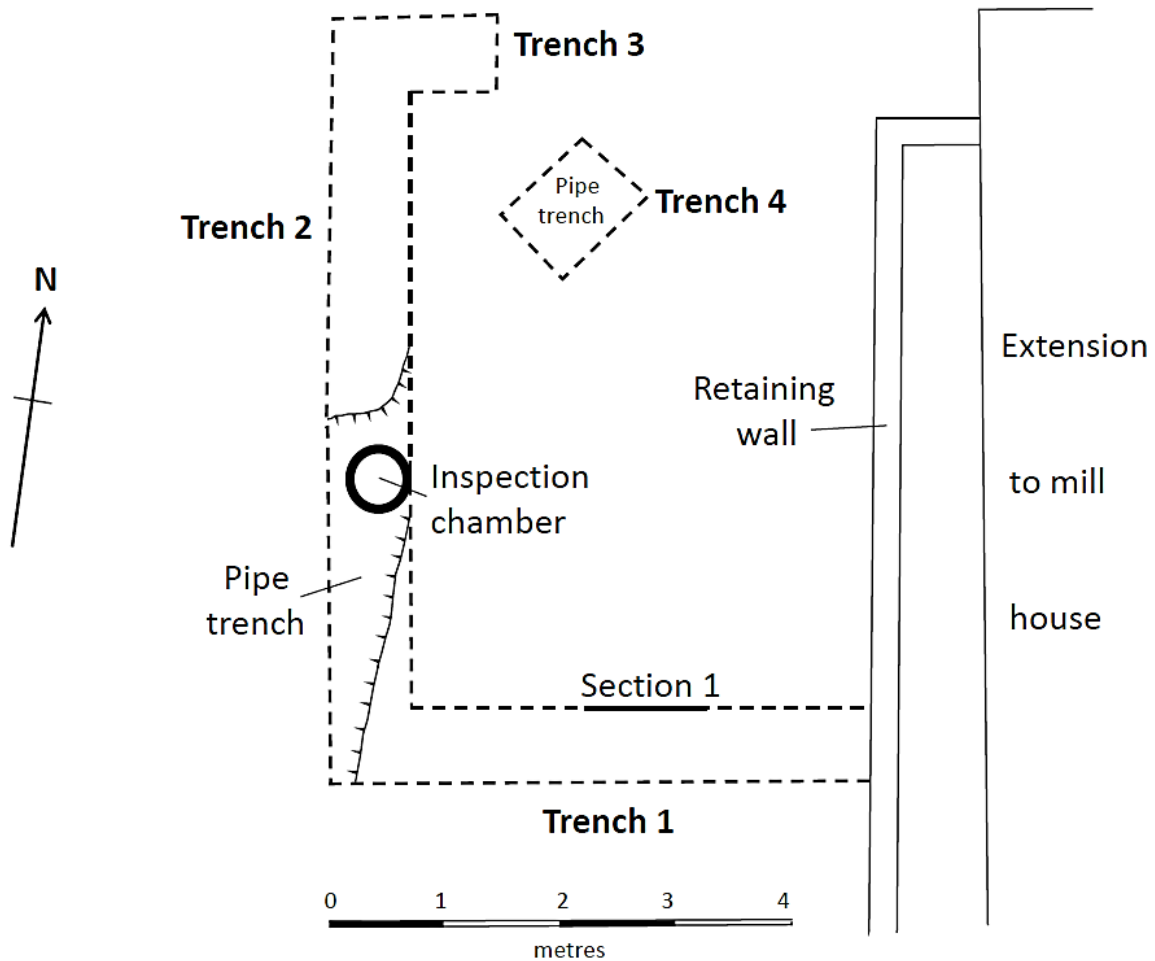
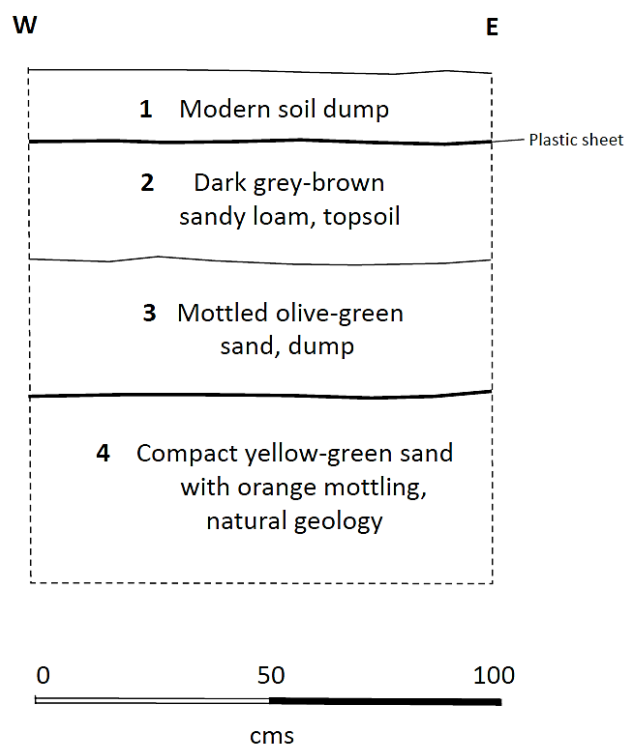


Fig. 6 Field plan of 2003 showing location of Grave 109 in relation to the mill tower (from Parfitt 2003)





**Fig. 7** General site plan showing trenches excavated 2021 in relation to mill house extension



**Fig. 8** Block section of deposits exposed in Trench 1 (Section 1)





**Fig. 9** General view of the site, looking south



**Fig. 10** General view of the site, looking north





**Fig. 11** General view of Trenches 2 and 3 under excavation, looking north



**Fig. 12** General view of completed trenches, looking south

TABLE 1

## Kent County Council HER summary form

<b>Site Name:</b> Gilton Mill, Ash		
<b>Site Address:</b> Gilton Mill, Poulton Lane, Ash-next-Sandwich, Kent		
<b>Summary:</b> A watching brief was maintained during trenching work for the construction of a new garage. The development area falls within the area of a known Anglo-Saxon cemetery, which is a Scheduled Monument (Gilton Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Monument No. 1005141; Kent HER ref. TR25 NE6). Careful observation of all the excavated trenches revealed no finds or features of archaeological interest.		
<b>District/Unitary:</b> Dover	<b>Parish:</b> Ash-next-sandwich	
<b>Period(s):</b> Modern drain trench		
<b>Type of Archaeological work (delete):</b>		
<del>Evaluation</del>	<del>Watching Brief</del>	<del>Field Walking</del>
<del>Documentary study</del>	<del>Building recording</del>	<del>Earthwork survey</del>
<del>Excavation</del>	<del>Geophysical survey</del>	<del>Field survey</del>
<del>Geoarchaeological investigation</del>		
<b>Date of recording:</b> May 2021		
<b>Unit undertaking recording:</b> Canterbury Archaeological Trust		
<b>Geology:</b> Lambeth Sands		
<b>Title and Author of accompanying report:</b> <i>Gilton Mill, Poulton Lane, Ash-next-Sandwich, Archaeological Watching brief</i> by Keith Parfitt		
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> No finds or features of archaeological interest were discovered. A modern pipe trench had cut across the site previously.		
<b>Location of archive/finds:</b> Canterbury Archaeological Trust		
<b>Contact at Unit:</b> Keith Parfitt	<b>Date:</b> 20.5.21	