

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
MIDDLE BARN FARM, BARNHORN ROAD,  
BEXHILL, EAST SUSSEX.**

**NGR TQ 69400 07740**

**Project Number 06 / 08**

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***ABSTRACT.***

*An archaeological watching brief was maintained on groundworks associated with the conversion of a barn and other outbuildings into two new dwellings at Middle Barn Farm, Barnhorn Road, Bexhill, East Sussex.*

*The investigated site lies within a designated 'archaeologically sensitive area' encompassing the presumed location of Barnhorn deserted medieval village. However, no negative features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance were discovered during the fieldwork.*

## **1.0. INTRODUCTION.**

- 1.1. This document presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken at Middle Barn Farm, Barnhorn Road, Bexhill, East Sussex (N.G.R. TQ 69400 07740) (Figure 1).
- 1.2. Rother District Council has granted planning permission for the conversion of an existing barn and associated outbuildings at the site into two new dwellings (Rother District Council Reference No: RR/2006/149/P). However, as the proposed redevelopment lies within an area of defined archaeological sensitivity (see Section 3.0.) it was believed that groundworks associated with the scheme could disturb or even destroy archaeologically significant features and deposits. Dr Andrew Woodcock, the then East Sussex County Archaeologist, therefore requested that a condition was attached to the planning approval requiring the implementation of the archaeological investigation considered within this report.
- 1.3. The archaeological methodology employed during the project (see Section 5.0.) was based upon a targeted Method Statement prepared by C. G. Archaeology and agreed with Dr. Woodcock. It should be noted that C. G. Archaeology was not instructed to produce an interpretive architectural survey of the extant farm buildings.
- 1.4. The archaeological fieldwork was carried – out by Christopher Greatorex of C. G. Archaeology between the 5<sup>th</sup> June and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2006.
- 1.5. All aspects of the project described below were commissioned by C. K. A. Architectural Consultants Limited on behalf of Mr. Roger Harris (Lushmeadow Properties Limited).

## **2.0. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.**

- 2.1. The redevelopment under consideration occupies an area of flattish land located on a high ridge / knoll overlooking Hooe Level to the south. It lies at c.23m. above sea level.
- 2.2. The 1: 50,000 British Geological Survey (Sheet 320 / 321: Hastings and Dungeness) records the underlying geology at the site as Tunbridge Wells Sand.

### **3.0. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.**

- 3.1. Middle Barn Farm is situated within a designated ‘archaeologically sensitive area’ (ASA) encompassing the presumed site of Barnhorn deserted medieval village. This settlement was apparently founded in the 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century, but by the 14<sup>th</sup> century appears to have fragmented into a small number of discrete farms. Some of these (including Middle Barn Farm?) survived into the Post-medieval period (Andrew Woodcock pers. comm.).
- 3.2. It is beyond the basic requirements of this particular report to present a detailed reappraisal of the somewhat confused / confusing archival evidence for Barnhorn medieval village or its perceived successor established (by the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century?) on marshland at nearby Northeye (N.G.R. c.TQ 683 072). However, readers should certainly note that the 25” Ordnance Survey maps of 1930 and 1939 record a series of earthworks across ‘Upper Pound Field’ located to the immediate west and south-west of Middle Barn Farm (see Section 6.1.2.) (figures 6 and 7). The two relevant entries held by the East Sussex County Historical Environment Record are summarised in Section 6.2.

#### **4.0. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.**

4.1. The primary aims of the archaeological watching brief are summarised below.

- Ensure that all archaeological layers, cut features and structures exposed during the monitored groundworks are investigated, sampled, recorded and interpreted to an acceptable standard.
- Ensure that all significant discoveries of an artefactual and / or ecofactual nature are recorded and analysed in accordance with accepted standards.



## **5.0. INVESTIGATIVE METHODOLOGY.**

- 5.1. An inspection was first made of the East Sussex County Historical Environment Record. This study was supplemented by an examination of historic cartographic sources stored at the East Sussex Record Office, Lewes. Relevant documents were also consulted for additional details concerning Barnhorn deserted medieval village.
- 5.2. Following the above background research, the excavation of those intrusive groundworks shown on figures 8 - 11 and described in Section 7.0. was subject to the archaeological watching brief required by the East Sussex County Archaeologist.
- 5.3. All such excavation was undertaken with a mechanical digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. In this way, removal of the overburden in successive spits continued under the supervision of Christopher Greateorex (C. G. Archaeology) until the uppermost surface of natural geology had been exposed.
- 5.4. Each archaeological context identified during the project was documented on an individual pro-forma. Detailed field notes were also made on the main site plan.
- 5.5. A full black and white and colour transparency photographic record of the fieldwork was maintained as appropriate.

## **6.0. RESULTS OF BACKGROUND RESEARCH.**

### **6.1. The cartographic evidence.**

6.1.1. The following historic maps were examined at the East Sussex Record Office, Lewes by David Dunkin.

- Tithe map and Apportionment for the parish of Bexhill (1843) (ref: TD/E 141) (Figure 2)
- 25" Ordnance Survey (Sheet 70/5) 1873 (Figure 3)
- 25" Ordnance Survey (Sheet 70/5) 1899 (Figure 4)
- 25" Ordnance Survey (Sheet 70/5) 1909 (Figure 5)
- 6" Ordnance Survey (Sheet 79 NW) 1910
- 25" Ordnance Survey (Sheet 70/5) 1930 (Figure 6)
- 25" Ordnance Survey (Sheet 70/5) 1939 (Figure 7)

6.1.2. Changes made to the layout of buildings, walls / fences and probable animal pens at Middle Barn Farm between the years 1843 and 1939 can be tracked on figures 2 - 7. What is here interpreted as a large pond was clearly once located over the current property entrance (figures 3 - 7). However, of far greater importance are the earthworks documented to the immediate west and south-west of the farm by the surveys of 1930 and 1939 (figures 6 and 7). These features denote the presumed site of Barnhorn deserted medieval village, but as shown do not extend significantly beyond the confines of 'Upper Pound Field' (see sections 3.1., 3.2. and 6.2.2.). Indeed, none of the maps listed in section 6.1.1. record any earthworks, structures or cuts of obvious archaeological significance across the precise area of present redevelopment. Details of the relevant tithe Apportionment entries are held within the Site Archive (see Section 9.0).

## 6.2. The Historical Environment Record.

6.2.1. An inspection of the East Sussex County Historical Environment Record produced only two entries of archaeological significance within a c.1.2km. radius of Middle Barn Farm (see summary below). Full details of the search are held within the Project Archive (see Section 9.0).

6.2.2. SMR No: TQ 60 NE8 – MES94  
Grid Ref: TQ 6932 0763 and TQ 6921 0788

Upper Pound Field (TQ 6932 0763) contains the earthworks of a small but typical deserted medieval village recorded on the 25" Ordnance Survey maps of 1930 and 1939 (see sections 3.1., 3.2. and 6.1.2.) (figures 6 and 7). Slight historical evidence only, period of desertion uncertain, poor archaeological evidence in both cases. No dateable material has been found. May have been abandoned or destroyed after the draining of nearby marshland and establishment of the later Northeye settlement (c.TQ 683 072). Although subject to ploughing after 1940 and now under grass, the majority of the earthworks documented by the aforementioned Ordnance Surveys (including a probable sunken trackway running down the western side of the field) can still apparently be seen on the ground as smooth amorphous undulations.

A mound located at TQ 6921 0788 occupies the highest point of the ridge / knoll which intrudes into the main body of the Hooe Level. This c.25m. diameter and c.3.5m. high, sub-circular - shaped earthwork is disturbed, somewhat hollow and tilts slightly towards the south. Various suggestions regarding the function of the undated mound have been offered, most of which can be disregarded on grounds of practicality. However, its general appearance and situation are consistent with that of a Bronze Age round barrow, perhaps utilized at a later date for some other, as yet unknown purpose.

6.2.3. SMR No: TQ 60 NE31 – MES135  
Grid Ref: TQ 698 081

Formerly an R.A.F. radar station, HMP Northeye opened as a Category C training centre in January 1969. Most of the prison buildings were the original R.A.F. single – storey huts. The prison was closed in 1992.

## 7.0. RESULTS OF FIELDWORK.

7.1. For ease of description, the fieldwork has here been divided into the five separate elements discussed below (stages A – E). The location of the monitored groundworks is shown on figures 8 - 11.

### 7.2. Stage A.

7.2.1. A c.0.40m. – 0.50m. thick deposit of fairly compact, mid orange - brown silty clay containing c.15% flint and 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century brick / tile inclusions (c.10mm. – 0.20m.) (**Layer 1**) was excavated from the internal ‘floor area’ of the farm outbuilding (animal stall?) highlighted on Figure 8.

7.2.2. This procedure revealed a patchy / heavily disturbed uppermost surface of natural Tunbridge Wells Sand (**Layer 2**) but no features or artefacts of any archaeological note.

### 7.3. Stage B.

7.3.1. Initially, a contiguous concrete, brick and hardcore floor with an approximate thickness of 0.30m. (**Layer 3**) was lifted from the two attached outbuildings (animal stalls / stores?) indicated on Figure 8. It would appear that these structures, first recorded by the 1899 Ordnance Survey (Figure 4) replaced a smaller building documented on the earlier maps of 1843 (Figure 2) and 1873 (Figure 3).

7.3.2. Layer 3 concealed a c.0.30m. thick deposit of compact, mid orange – brown silty clay, similar in character to Layer 1 but encompassing a somewhat higher proportion (c.20%) of flint and 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century brick / tile pieces (c.10mm. – 0.20m.) (**Layer 4**). The subsequent removal of Layer 4 revealed a relatively ‘clean’ surface of natural Tunbridge Wells Sand (**Layer 2**).

However, no archaeologically significant features or artefacts were discovered during this phase of the fieldwork.

#### 7.4. **Stage C.**

7.4.1. Following the demolition of a small 20<sup>th</sup> century structure / outbuilding (not observed / function unclear) a layer of friable, mid grey – brown silty clay containing c.5% flint and 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century brick / tile inclusions (c.10mm. – 0.20m.) (**Layer 5**) was stripped from that area of the site hatched on Figure 9.

7.4.2. Layer 5 possessed a maximum thickness of c.0.30m. and lay immediately above an archaeologically sterile deposit of natural Tunbridge Wells Sand (**Layer 2**). No artefacts of significance were unearthed as a result of the excavation.

#### 7.5. **Stage D.**

7.5.1. A c.0.25m. thick layer of compact, mid to dark orange - brown silty clay with c.20% flint and 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century brick / tile fragments (c.10mm. – 0.30m.) (**Layer 6**) was removed from the interior of the large barn highlighted on Figure 10. The barn in question is clearly shown on the Bexhill Parish tithe map (Figure 2) and must therefore predate the year 1843.

7.5.2. Layer 6 covered a ‘clean’ deposit of natural Tunbridge Wells Sand (**Layer 2**) which was itself excavated to an overall depth below original ‘ground’ level of between 0.75m. and 1.0m. No discrete cut features or artefacts of archaeological importance were discovered during these particular groundworks. However, partial / intermittent exposure of the barn’s internal footings did confirm that the standing flint walls had been built upon at least two courses of seemingly unmortared sandstone blocks (dimensions impossible to ascertain).

## 7.6. **Stage E.**

### 7.6.1. **Trench 1.**

7.6.1.1. Trench 1 (12m. long and c.0.75m. wide) was first cleared of a c.0.50m. thick silty clay deposit (**Layer 7**) indistinguishable from Layer 1 (see Section 7.2.1.) (Figure 11). This procedure revealed the immediately underlying Tunbridge Wells Sand (**Layer 2**) which was in turn excavated to a maximum depth below the original ground surface of c.1.30m. The barn footings exposed at the south-westernmost end of the trench again comprised two courses of apparently unmortared sandstone blocks. As with the Stage D fieldwork (see Section 7.5.2.) no evidence for any features associated with possible barn wall construction was discerned. Indeed, the excavation under discussion failed to unearth a single cut or artefact of real archaeological significance.

### 7.6.2. **Trenches 2 and 3.**

7.6.2.1. A layer of fairly compact, mid grey - brown silty clay containing c.5% flint and 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century brick / tile inclusions (c.10mm. – 0.20m.) (**Layer 8**) was stripped from both Trench 2 (c.6.70m. ‘long’ and c.0.90m. wide) and Trench 3 (5.80m. long and c.0.80m. wide) (Figure 11). Layer 8 possessed a maximum thickness of 0.30m. and lay directly above natural Tunbridge Wells Sand (**Layer 2**).

7.6.2.2. The 1843 tithe map (Figure 2) and 1873, 1930 and 1939 Ordnance Survey sheets (figures 3, 6 and 7) record the presence of at least two and probably three different structures (long since demolished / function uncertain) adjacent the southernmost end of the barn subject to current redevelopment. However, not one feature or artefact of archaeological importance was discovered within either Trench 2 or Trench 3.

## **8.0. CONCLUSIONS.**

- 8.1. No negative features or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the watching brief undertaken at Middle Barn Farm, Barnhorn Road, Bexhill.
- 8.2. No fresh information concerning the origin, development and abandonment of Barnhorn deserted medieval village (see sections 3.1., 3.2., 6.1.2. and 6.2.2.) was therefore provided by the project.
- 8.3. It is of course possible that post-medieval and / or 'modern' activities associated with the establishment and day to day running of the Middle Barn Farm complex have simply destroyed any *in-situ* remains of the earlier Barnhorn settlement once located across the area of current investigation. However, the failure of the fieldwork to yield a single archaeologically significant artefact of medieval, or indeed any other date, is striking.
- 8.4. No deposits of palaeoenvironmental significance were exposed during the watching brief.
- 8.5. The investigative methodology employed by C. G. Archaeology doubtlessly satisfied the project objectives set out in Section 4.0. of this report.



## **9.0.     ARCHIVE.**

- 9.1.     It is intended that the full paper, digital and photographic records arising from this project will be collated in accordance with '*Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage*' (UKICI 1990) and deposited with Bexhill Museum.

## **10.0. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

- 10.1. C. G. Archaeology would like to acknowledge Dr. Andrew Woodcock and Greg Chuter at East Sussex County Council, C. K. A. Architectural Consultants Limited and Mr. Roger Harris of Lushmeadow Properties Limited for their assistance during the project. Figures 8, 9, 10 and 11 are based upon a plan drawn – up and supplied to C. G. Archaeology by C. K. A. Architectural Consultants Limited.

### CONTEXT REGISTER.

CONTEXT NUMBER.	DESCRIPTION.	LOCATION.
1.	Mid orange – brown silty clay	Above 2 (Stage A)
2.	Tunbridge Wells Sand Natural geology	Below 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (stages A, B, C, D, E)
3.	Concrete, brick and hardcore floor	Above 4 (Stage B)
4.	Mid orange – brown silty clay	Above 2 Below 3 (Stage B)
5.	Mid grey – brown silty clay	Above 2 (Stage C)
6.	Mid to dark orange – brown silty clay	Above 2 (Stage D)
7.	Mid orange – brown silty clay	Above 2 (Stage E: Trench 1)
8.	Mid grey brown silty clay	Above 2 (Stage E: trenches 1 and 2)

## SUMMARY SHEET.

<b>Site Code.</b>	MBF 06					
<b>Site identification and address.</b>	Middle Barn Farm, Barnhorn Road, Bexhill					
<b>County, district and / or borough.</b>	East Sussex					
<b>O.S. grid ref.</b>	TQ 69400 07740					
<b>Geology.</b>	Tunbridge Wells Sand					
<b>Project number.</b>	06 / 08					
<b>Fieldwork type.</b>	<b>Eval.</b>	<b>Excav.</b>	<b>W.Brief.</b>	<b>Survey.</b>	<b>Other.</b>	
			<b>X</b>			
<b>Site type.</b>	<b>Rural.</b>	<b>Urban.</b>	<b>Other.</b>			
	<b>X</b>					
<b>Date of fieldwork.</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June – 9 <sup>th</sup> November 2006					
<b>Client.</b>	C. K. A. Architectural Consultants Limited on behalf of Mr. Roger Harris (Lushmeadow Properties Limited).					
<b>Project manager.</b>	Christopher Greatorex					
<b>Project supervisor</b>	Christopher Greatorex					
<b>Period summary.</b>	<b>Palaeo.</b>	<b>Meso.</b>	<b>Neo.</b>	<b>B. Age.</b>	<b>I. Age.</b>	<b>R – B.</b>
	<b>A. S.</b>	<b>Med.</b>	<b>P. Med</b>	<b>Other.</b>		
				No features, deposits or artefacts of significance discovered		
<b>Project Summary.</b>						
<p>An archaeological watching brief was maintained on groundworks associated with the conversion of a barn and other outbuildings into two new dwellings at Middle Barn Farm, Barnhorn Road, Bexhill. The investigated site lies within a designated ‘archaeologically sensitive area’ encompassing the presumed location of Barnhorn deserted medieval village. However, no features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance were discovered during the fieldwork.</p>						