

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
57 SOUTH COAST ROAD, PEACEHAVEN, EAST SUSSEX.**

N. G. R. TQ 42125 00675

Project Number 08 / 16

February 2009

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ABSTRACT.

An archaeological watching brief was maintained on groundworks associated with the construction of four new flats at 57 South Coast Road, Peacehaven, East Sussex.

No deposits, cut features, structures or artefacts of archaeological significance were discovered during the investigation.

No fresh information regarding the Bronze Age bowl barrow once located to the south of the site, or the known Mesolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age and Romano-British exploitation of the wider Peacehaven area was therefore gleaned as a result of the project.

1.0. INTRODUCTION.

- 1.1. C. G. Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief at 57 South Coast Road, Peacehaven, East Sussex (N. G. R. TQ 42125 00675) (Figure 1).
- 1.2. Lewes District Council has granted planning permission for the demolition of a former dwelling and the construction of three one - bedroom and one two - bedroom flats on the site (Lewes District Council Planning Application Number: LW/07/1598). However, recent archaeological excavations undertaken in the vicinity of South Coast Road have demonstrated the extensive prehistoric exploitation of the region. Indeed, the redevelopment under current consideration lies within a defined Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA) centred on the location of a probable Bronze Age bowl barrow (Figure 1) flattened during the construction of Friars Avenue in the 1920s (no remains now visible) (see sections 3.2. and 6.2.4.). It was thus believed that groundworks associated with the proposed scheme could impact upon archaeologically significant features and deposits. Greg Chuter, the East Sussex County Council Assistant 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 Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by C. G. Archaeology and approved by Greg Chuter.
- 1.4. The archaeological fieldwork was carried – out by Christopher Greatorex and Annalie Wood of C. G. Archaeology between the 12th and 24th November 2008. The examination of historic cartographic sources was undertaken by David Dunkin.

- 1.5. All aspects of the project described below were commissioned by Mr. Nick Liddiard to whom thanks are extended.

2.0. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.

- 2.1. Peacehaven is located on the top of a cliff “where the southern (dip) slope of the South Downs is eroded by the English Channel. There is a gentle seaward slope across the town from c.60m. OSBM at the east end of Telscombe Road, to 25.9m. OSBM at the southern end of Steyning Avenue....Settlement has been established north and south of the pre-existing and slightly sinuous South Coast Road from Newhaven to Brighton” (Harris 2004, 10). Number 57 South Coast Road encompasses a narrow strip of relatively flat, presumably landscaped land located approximately 250m. from the cliff edge.
- 2.2. The 1: 50,000 British Geological Survey (Sheet 334: Eastbourne) records the basal geology at the site as Upper and Middle Chalk, undivided. However, it should be noted that the ‘natural’ geology exposed by the monitored groundworks comprised the younger Woolwich Beds (Lambeth Group) formation of vertically and laterally varying sands and clays (see Section 7.4.).

3.0. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.

3.1. The detailed history of Peacehaven is described within the Historic Character Assessment Report prepared on the town as part of the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (Harris 2004) and as such does not merit re-examination here. Suffice to say, Peacehaven originated as an early 20th century planned town set – out on a gridded street pattern. Construction of the first houses on what was then open downland (see Section 6.1.) began in 1920. “Thereafter, expansion was rapid, with a population of around 3,000 by 1926 and the building workforce as large as 1,000” (Harris 2004, 14). Today Peacehaven “is of interest as an example of an inter – war speculative coastal development, and for the notoriety it has achieved on account of its downland location” (Harris 2004, 17). The town’s only listed building (Grade II) comprises a small 19th century flint shepherd’s hut now situated within a private garden at 7 The Compts.

3.2. Despite modern development, the Peacehaven area is rich in known archaeological remains and find-spots of prehistoric and Romano-British date. Indeed, as early as 1924 a paper published in the annual journal of the Sussex Archaeological Society described an extremely large collection of ‘pygmy’ (i.e. Mesolithic) flints and two Romano-British pots recovered from the local Woolwich Beds (Bernard Calkin 1924). It has already been stated that 57 South Coast Road is located within an Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA) centred on a long – since flattened Bronze Age bowl barrow (see sections 1.2. and 6.2.4.). Furthermore, the site under current discussion lies just c.200m. to the south of a second Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA) encompassing a dense spread of significant prehistoric features subject to recent survey, evaluation and excavation (Historical Environment Record numbers MES7168 and MES7366) (see sections 6.2.5. and 6.2.6.). In November 2008, a limited archaeological investigation undertaken at 46 Dorothy Avenue, Peacehaven also gleaned a small assemblage of humanly – worked flints assigned to the Mesolithic period (Greatorex forthcoming).

4.0. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.

4.1. The following aims of the archaeological watching brief were defined within the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (see Section 1.3.).

- Ensure that all archaeological deposits, cut features and structures exposed during the groundworks carried – out at the site are excavated, sampled, recorded and interpreted to an acceptable standard.
- Ensure that all significant discoveries of artefactual and / or ecofactual evidence are recorded and analysed to an acceptable standard.

5.0. INVESTIGATIVE METHODOLOGY.

- 5.1. An inspection was first made of the East Sussex County Historical Environment Record (HER) (see Section 6.2.). This study was supplemented by an examination of historic cartographic sources stored at the East Sussex Record Office, Lewes (see Section 6.1.). Relevant publications were also consulted for additional details concerning those sites and find-spots of archaeological significance identified within a c.1km radius of the site.
- 5.2. Before the commencement of the archaeological fieldwork, the dwelling then located at 57 South Coast Road was demolished by the client's chosen contractor.
- 5.3. The stripping of topsoil from that area of the former back garden impacted upon by the proposed new structure (Figure 9) and the subsequent excavation of the c.0.60m. to 0.70m. – wide footings shown on Figure 10 was then subject to the archaeological watching brief requested by East Sussex County Council (see Section 1.2.). All intrusive excavation work was carried – out by the client's main groundworks contractor using a tracked mechanical digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. In this way the careful removal of the topsoil / overburden and underlying natural geology continued under the constant supervision of C. G. Archaeology until the depth of footing (c.1m. below original ground level) required by the groundworks contractor had been reached.
- 5.4. Each context identified during the project was investigated manually in order to assess its archaeological / palaeoenvironmental potential and then documented on an individual pro-forma.
- 5.5. A 35mm. black and white film and digital 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.

- Estate Map by William Figg (E. S. R. O. ref. Acc 3714/3) 1806
- Tithe map and apportionment for the parish of Piddinghoe (E. S. R. O. ref: TD/E 59/1) 1843 (Figure 2)
- 25” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78/6) 1874 (Figure 3)
- 6” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78 NW) 1899 (Figure 4)
- 25” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78/6) 1910 (Figure 5)
- 6” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78 NW) 1911
- 25” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78/6) 1928 (Figure 6)
- 6” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78 NW) 1928
- 25” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78/6) 1937 (Figure 7)
- 6” Ordnance Survey (Sheet 78 NW) 1950 (Figure 8)

6.1.2. The estate plan of 1806 (not reproduced here) 1843 tithe map and 1874, 1899, 1910 and 1911 Ordnance Survey sheets confirm that prior to the foundation of Peacehaven (see Section 3.1.) the site under consideration lay within an expanse of ‘open’ downland (called Cliff Down in the first half of the 19th century). All six of these maps also show the stretch of the main Newhaven to Brighton highway that would one day become known as South Coast Road. Full details of the tithe apportionment form an integral part of the Project Archive (see Section 9.0.).

6.1.3. By the time of the 1928 Ordnance Survey, the central gridded street pattern of Peacehaven had been laid – out and the first property (presumably that demolished in November 2008) constructed at 57 South Coast Road.

- 6.1.4. The 1937 Ordnance Survey sheet documents the significant widening of that section of South Coast Road located in front of number 57. This procedure clearly absorbed the 'buffer' of land (garden?) once sandwiched between the north side of the house and the street frontage.
- 6.1.5. Finally, at some point in time between the years 1950 and 2008 a small extension appears to have been added to the rear of the now demolished property and a shed / garage erected at the southern end of the plot's back garden.
- 6.1.6. None of the examined historic maps document the Bronze Age bowl barrow discovered during the construction of Friars Avenue (see sections 1.2., 3.2. and 6.2.4.). It should also be reiterated that no archaeological or topographical features are shown across the precise area of proposed redevelopment.

6.2. **The Historical Environment Record.**

- 6.2.1. An inspection of the East Sussex County Historical Environment Record produced five entries of archaeological significance within a c.1km. radius of the development site. These are listed in numerical order and described briefly below. The full details of the search form part of the Project Archive (see Section 9.0.).

- 6.2.2. SMR No: MES1828
Grid Ref: TQ 412 015

A Lower Palaeolithic, Acheulian handaxe discovered within an area of chalk geology on the east side of Steyning Avenue.

6.2.3. SMR No: MES1833
Grid Ref: TQ 425 007

A Romano-British occupation site noted during road re-surfacing works at Peacehaven Heights.

6.2.4. SMR No: MES1849
Grid Ref: TQ 4211 0063

A probable Bronze Age bowl barrow, approximately 27.0m. in diameter and 1.3m. in height, found during the construction of Friars Avenue. A section through the mound revealed it to be composed of a light sandy soil, although no evidence for a ring-ditch was observed. No extant remains (see sections 1.2. and 3.2.).

6.2.5. SMR No: MES7168
Grid Ref: TQ 4196 0133

A sub-rectangular enclosure and associated pits discovered during a 2004 resistivity survey and subsequent archaeological evaluation. The enclosure ditch yielded early - mid Iron Age pottery. A second, similar enclosure was also detected c.60m. to the west (see Section 3.2.).

6.2.6. SMR No: MES7366
Grid Ref: TQ 4172 0121

In 2006 - 2007, extensive archaeological investigations were undertaken by Archaeology South East on land to the north of Keymer Avenue and at Seaview Avenue (see Section 3.2.). The following information on this project has been extracted from www.archaeologyse.co.uk. (full report by Archaeology South East pending). "At Keymer Avenue the below ground remains of a Mid Iron Age farmstead or community left the most visible trace of human occupation....Seven enclosures and two trackways were

identified.... A series of inter-cutting ditches were orientated towards this location. The dense concentrations of fire-cracked flint recovered and the complexity of the re-cut ditches suggest continued use for some time. Near the centre of this enclosure was a possible burial which was backfilled with over a thousand large nodules of flint. A second smaller area revealed a series of pits. One feature from this area contained large quantities of Mesolithic / Early Neolithic flintwork. Two other pits contained Late Iron Age pottery. After the Mid Iron Age the site appears to have been abandoned (*sic.*). At Seaview Avenue three features were found to contain Neolithic pottery and flintwork. One pit also contained burnt sandstone and charcoal indicating that it may have once been used as a cooking pit. Two other deep features were thought to be early prehistoric / Neolithic flint mine shafts or wells”.

- 6.2.7. None of the archaeologically significant find-spots or sites described above were impacted upon directly by the redevelopment under discussion.

7.0. RESULTS OF FIELDWORK.

- 7.1. Only four archaeological contexts were exposed by the monitored groundworks. These layers are described in numerical order below.
- 7.2. The topsoil **(1)** removed from the former back garden of the property (see Section 5.3.) (Figure 9) comprised a loose, dark grey – brown sandy loam with a maximum thickness of c.0.25m. Context 1 contained rare, sub-angular flint inclusions (c.10mm. – 30mm.) and 20th century brick / tile fragments (c.20mm. – 40mm.).
- 7.3. No *in-situ* topsoil **(1)** was found across the area of the previous (i.e. recently demolished) house located at 57 South Coast Road (Figure 9). Instead, here a deposit of loose, grey – brown sandy clay ‘overburden’ **(2)** incorporating c.2% sub-angular flint and sandstone inclusions (c.1mm. – 50mm.) small pieces of 20th century brick / tile (c.20mm. – 40mm.) and apparent breezeblock fragments was recorded. Context 2 possessed a maximum recorded thickness of c.0.45m. at the northern end of the site. However, it became thinner towards the south, until finally petering – out at the southern end of the former building footprint (c.14m. from South Coast Road.) (Figure 9).
- 7.4. The excavation of both contexts 1 and 2 revealed an immediately underlying horizon of compact but friable, orange – brown sandy clay **(3)**. Context 3 was between c.0.20m. and 0.40m. – thick and in turn overlay a final observed layer of loose, brown – yellow sand, encompassing compact, red sand patches **(4)**. Contexts 3 and 4 clearly represent discrete strata of the ‘natural’ Woolwich Beds (Lambeth Group) formation (see Section 2.2.).
- 7.5. No cut features, structures or artefacts of archaeological significance were discovered during the fieldwork.

Table 1: Context Register.

CONTEXT NUMBER.	DESCRIPTION.	PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIPS.
1.	Sandy loam topsoil	Above 3 (irregular boundary)
2.	Sandy clay overburden	Above 3 (irregular boundary)
3.	Woolwich Beds	Above 4 (diffuse boundary) Below 1, 2
4.	Woolwich Beds	Below 3

8.0. SUMMARY.

- 8.1. No deposits, cut features, structures or artefacts of archaeological importance were exposed during the watching brief carried - out at 57 South Coast Road, Peacehaven. The fieldwork did not uncover a single context of palaeoenvironmental potential.
- 8.2. No fresh information regarding the Bronze Age bowl barrow once located to the south of the site, or the known Mesolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age and Romano-British exploitation of the wider Peacehaven area was therefore gleaned as a result of the fieldwork.
- 8.3. It is possible that the construction of the first house at the site in the 1920s resulted in the unrecorded destruction of shallow deposits / features of archaeological note. Even so, the failure of the recent watching brief to recover a single artefact of archaeological significance (even from the former, presumably relatively undisturbed, back garden of the property) is striking.
- 8.4. Despite the negative results of the project under consideration, the future discovery of extant archaeological remains in the immediate vicinity of 57 South Coast Road should certainly not be discounted.
- 8.5. The investigative methodology employed by C. G. Archaeology is judged to have satisfied the Project Objectives set out in Section 4.0.

9.0. ARCHIVE.

- 9.1. It is intended that the full paper and digital 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 in a suitable local museum.

10.0. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

- 10.1. C. G. Archaeology would like to thank Greg Chuter of East Sussex County Council and Mr. Nick Liddiard for their assistance during the project. Figures 9 and 10 are based upon a plan drawn – up by Ralph Hitchens Associate and supplied to C. G. Archaeology by the client.

11.0. REFERENCES.

Bernard Calkin, J. 1924. 'Pigmy and other flint implements found at Peacehaven' *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **65**, 224 – 241.

Harris, R. B. 2004. 'Peacehaven historic character assessment report' *Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)*.

Greatorrex, C. forthcoming 'Archaeological recording undertaken at 46 Dorothy Avenue, Peacehaven, East Sussex' *Unpub. C. G. Archaeology Report 08 / 17*.

HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET.

Site Code.	SRP 08					
Site identification and address.	57 South Coast Road, Peacehaven					
County, district and / or borough.	East Sussex					
O.S. grid ref.	TQ 42125 00675					
Geology.	Woolwich Beds (Lambeth Group)					
Project number.	08 /16					
Fieldwork type.	Eval.	Excav.	W.Brief.	Survey.	Other.	
			X			
Site type.	Rural.	Urban.	Other. Brown Field			
Date of fieldwork.	12 th – 24 th November 2008					
Client.	Mr. Nick Liddiard					
Project manager.	Christopher Greatorex					
Project supervisor	Annalie Wood					
Period summary.	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	B. Age.	I. Age.	R – B.
	A. S.	Med.	P. Med	Other. No significant discoveries		
Project Summary.						
<p>An archaeological watching brief was maintained on groundworks associated with the construction of four new flats at 57 South Coast Road, Peacehaven, East Sussex. No deposits, cut features, structures or artefacts of archaeological significance were discovered during the investigation. No fresh information regarding the Bronze Age bowl barrow once located to the south of the site, or the known Mesolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age and Romano-British exploitation of the wider Peacehaven area was therefore gleaned as a result of the project.</p>						