



making sense of heritage

RNLI Station, Selsey West Sussex

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Accession Code: CHCDM2014.21
Ref: 103211.01
August 2014



**RNLi Station, Selsey
West Sussex**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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August 2014

**Accession Code: CHCDM 2014.21
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Quality Assurance

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* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

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RNLI Station, Selsey West Sussex

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Contents

Summary	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
1 INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1 Project background	5
1.2 The site, location and geology	5
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Designated Heritage Assets	6
2.3 Non-designated Heritage Assets	6
3 METHODOLOGY.....	6
3.1 Aims and objectives	6
3.2 Fieldwork methodology	7
3.3 Recording.....	7
4 GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATIONS.....	7
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS.....	8
5.1 Introduction	8
5.2 Natural deposits and soil sequences	8
5.3 Trench 1.....	8
5.4 Trench 2.....	8
5.5 Trench 3.....	8
5.6 Trench 4.....	8
6 FINDS	9
7 CONCLUSIONS.....	9
8 RECOMMENDATIONS AND PUBLICATION	9
9 STORAGE AND CURATION	9
9.1 Museum	9
9.2 Archive	9
9.3 Discard policy.....	10
9.4 Copyright.....	10
9.5 Security Copy.....	10



10	REFERENCES.....	10
	APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH SUMMARIES	12
	APPENDIX 2 – OASIS FORM	14

Figures

Figure 1: Site and trench location

Plates

Front Cover: Excavation of geotechnical pit in Trench 1 from the north

Plate 1: West facing section of Trench 1 (scale 1m)

Plate 2: North facing section of Trench 2 (scale 1m)

Plate 3: Plan of Trench 3 from the north (scale 2m)

Plate 4: East facing section of Trench 3 (scale 1m)

Plate 5: General shot of Trench 4 from the east (scale 1m)



RNLI Station, Selsey West Sussex

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Ramboll UK on behalf of the Royal Navy Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at the RNLI Station, Selsey, West Sussex, PO20 0DJ, centred on NGR 486184 92781. The site is proposed as the location of a new on-shore boathouse. The evaluation was undertaken from 11th to 12th August 2014.

The evaluation followed the compilation of a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) summarising the known archaeology in the vicinity of the site and a programme of geophysical survey which revealed a roughly east–west aligned anomaly with a north–south aligned return interpreted as a building associated with possible floor surfaces.

As a result of the DBA and the geophysics, the Archaeology Officer of Chichester District Council called for a trial trench evaluation to assess the presence or absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains that may exist within the site which may be impacted by development.

Four trenches were excavated across the site and no archaeological remains of significance were identified. The possible structure identified by the geophysics was revealed as a modern concrete footing, perhaps of a barn which a local resident recalls as having stood within the site.



RNLi Station, Selsey West Sussex

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Ramboll UK on behalf of the Royal Navy Lifeboat Institution (RNLi) and would like to thank Caroline Russell, Melissa Conway and Chris Refoy in this regard. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful to James Kenny (Chichester District Council Archaeology Officer) who monitored the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. Thanks are also extended to Clive Cockayne (Lifeboat Operations Manager – RNLi Selsey) for his assistance in facilitating access.

The evaluation was undertaken by Steve Thompson and Dave Murdie. This report was written and prepared by Steve Thompson. The finds were assessed by Rachel Seagar-Smith. The report illustrations were prepared by Nancy Dixon. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Gareth Chaffey.

RNLI Station, Selsey West Sussex

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Ramboll UK, on behalf of the Royal Navy Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) (hereafter “the Client), to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at the RNLI Station, Selsey, West Sussex, PO20 0DJ (**Figure 1**), hereafter “the Site” (centred on NGR 486184 92781).
- 1.1.2 The development site extends across the east coastline and foreshore of the town and into the Site. The proposed works include the removal of the old offshore boathouse, and the construction of a replacement onshore boathouse.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the evaluation (WA 2014b) was prepared by Wessex Archaeology and submitted to, and approved by the Client and James Kenny (Chichester District Council Archaeology Officer) prior to the start of fieldwork. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the guidelines and standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (IfA 2008).
- 1.1.4 This document sets out the results of the evaluation which took place from 11th to 12th August 2014.

1.2 The site, location and geology

- 1.2.1 The Site lies on the coastline of Selsey some 770m to the east of the centre of Selsey and 5.1km south-west of Pagham (**Figure 1**). It comprises two areas; a tarmac driveway and an adjacent compound which is being used to store boats, a total of c. 0.14ha. The ground surface is of a hard-standing now overgrown with grass.
- 1.2.2 The Site occupies a triangular area of relatively flat land with a very shallow slope increasing to the north-west away from the coastline. The land lies at a height of approximately 3m above the Ordnance Datum (aOD). It is bounded to the north by Kingway Road, to the east by open grassland, to the south-east by the sea, and to the south-west by fishermen’s huts.
- 1.2.3 The soils underlying the Site are unsurveyed, as this area is mostly urbanised (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983). The bedrock geology is predominantly the Selsey Sand Formation consisting of sand, silt and clay with superficial deposits of undifferentiated river terrace deposits (BGS, 2014).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 An archaeological desk based assessment (Ramboll 2014) was prepared for the Site and the results are summarised below.

2.1.2 Previous archaeological work undertaken on the Site comprised a detailed geophysical survey (WA 2014a) which identified the foundations of a probable structure and an amorphous anomaly approximately 0.4m below the ground surface (**Figure 1**).

2.2 Designated Heritage Assets

2.2.1 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Site or its environs.

2.3 Non-designated Heritage Assets

2.3.1 Prehistoric activity in the surrounding area around the Site has been found through find spots both on land and on the eroding coastline. The majority of prehistoric artefacts date to the Bronze Age and Iron Age while there is a small scattering of Mesolithic and Neolithic artefacts. Excavations in 2000-2001, 1.4km to the north of the Site, revealed features associated with potential Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age settlement.

2.3.2 There is considerable evidence of Romano-British activity within and around the Site, most coming from findspots in the surrounding area. Significantly, a pot of Romano-British coins (AD 220 to 270) were discovered in 1932 and located immediately to the south of the Site. In addition, the owner of the house where the coins were found also mentioned that there were fragments of flint walls that were buried 0.5m below the surface. These wall fragments could be related to the probable structure identified during the geophysical survey (WA 2014a). Shallow ditch features containing Romano-British pottery were recorded during an archaeological evaluation at Pontins Broadreeds Holiday Camp, located 0.5km south-west of the Site, and may represent part of a field system.

2.3.3 The place name of Selsey has its origins in the Saxon period, with the name Selsey containing the Old English element of "seadh", which means "a seal". No sites of Saxon or medieval date have been recorded near the Site and only limited evidence of Saxon settlement has been encountered through coastal erosion.

2.3.4 Selsey as it is known today is first seen on Yeakell and Gardner's 1778-1783 map and the town developed from a fishing village. A lifeboat station was established in 1861 but was rebuilt in 1925 and in 1960 due to coastal erosion. The modern lifeboat station and its associated buildings were constructed in 1987.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 Prior to the commencement of works, a WSI (WA 2014b) was prepared which set out the agreed aims of the archaeological watching brief and the methods by which these aims would be achieved.

3.1.2 The general aims and objectives of the archaeological works were to:

- *Clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be impacted by development;*
- *Identify, within the constraints of the investigation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site;*
- *Clarify the nature of the probable structural evidence identified by the geophysical survey;*
- *Assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits;*

- *Produce a report which will present the results of the evaluation in sufficient detail to allow an informed decision to be made concerning the Site's archaeological potential.*

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.2.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out within the WSI (WA 2014b) and in compliance with the standards outlined in the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (IfA 2008), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.
- 3.2.2 A total of four machine-excavated trial trenches, two measuring 2.40m by 2.40m, one measuring 2.60m by 2.20m and one measuring 8.50m by 2m were positioned within the proposed areas of development as shown on **Figure 1**.
- 3.2.3 The trenches were laid out using GPS, on general accordance with the layout as proposed in the WSI. The trench locations were tied in to the Ordnance Survey. Each trench was scanned prior to excavation for buried services using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) by a qualified operator from WA.
- 3.2.4 The trial trenches were excavated using a 360° excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Machine excavation proceeded in spits, c. 50-200mm and ceased upon reaching the archaeological horizon or the natural which ever was encountered first. Where appropriate, hand cleaning was undertaken to establish the nature of the deposits.
- 3.2.5 Trenches completed to the satisfaction of the Client and the Chichester District Council Archaeology Officer were backfilled using the excavated material in the approximate order in which they were excavated and left level on completion. Any top layer of stone chippings (now grassed over in places) was reinstated for use as a hardstanding. No other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken. Three of the trenches were used for further geotechnical investigations to assess the condition and nature of the underlying geology for construction purposes.

3.3 Recording

- 3.3.1 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using WA's *pro forma* recording system.
- 3.3.2 A complete drawn record of excavated archaeological features and deposits was compiled. The trenches were surveyed using the GPS and tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels will be calculated and plans/sections will be annotated with OD heights.
- 3.3.3 A photographic record was maintained during the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes which will embed appropriate metadata within the image and ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4 GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATIONS

- 4.1.1 Following the completion of the archaeological works, ground investigations took place, which involved the excavation of deeper pits within Trenches 1, 2 and 4 (**Figure 1**). The results of the geotechnical investigations are incorporated into the **Archaeological Results** section below.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The following section provides a summary of the information held within the Site archive. Details of individually excavated contexts are retained in the Site archive and a tabulated version of these can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 5.1.2 The following results section is presented by trench with reference to the results of the geophysical survey and should be read in conjunction with **Appendix 1**.

5.2 Natural deposits and soil sequences

- 5.2.1 The site-wide stratigraphy was relatively uniform. The Site was covered by a 0.20m thick layer of limestone hogging used as the current ground surface, which in parts was covered by turf formation. This surface was recorded as 101, 201, 301 and 401. Below the surface was a layer of made ground; levelling for the surface recorded as 102, 202, 302 and 402 (**Plates 1, 2 and 4**).
- 5.2.2 The natural geological deposits were exposed at approximately 0.40m below the current ground surface at approximately 4.10m aOD and consisted of compact brickearth. The upper levels of the geology were very dry, compact, pale and leached out; an indication that the Site had been stripped and the geology exposed to the air. This upper level was recorded as 103, 206, 304 and 404. With depth the geology became less leached and dry and more gravel rich, this change occurred at approximately 0.60m below the current ground surface at c. 3.90m aOD and was recorded as 104, 207, 305 and 405.
- 5.2.3 At between 1.40m and 1.60m below the current ground surface the geology changed to fine sand with small rounded pebbles; possible river terrace gravels or perhaps raised beach deposit. Excavation ceased at 2.40m below the current ground surface at c. 2.1m aOD.

5.3 Trench 1

- 5.3.1 Trench 1 was located in the northern corner of the Site and measured 2.4m by 2.4m square. It was excavated to a depth of 1.20m below the current ground surface and the geotechnical pit was excavated to a depth of 2.40m. No archaeology was revealed.

5.4 Trench 2

- 5.4.1 Trench 2 was located in the south-west corner of the Site and measured 2.6m long by 2.2m wide and 0.93m deep. A single modern pit (204 filled with concrete rubble 205) was revealed in the southern facing section of the trench cutting the top of geology 206. This was capped by a layer of modern concrete rubble 203. The geotechnical pit was excavated to 2.40m in depth. No archaeology was revealed.

5.5 Trench 3

- 5.5.1 Trench 3 was located within the centre of the Site and was 8.50m long by 2m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.80m (**Plate 3**). Cutting the top of the natural geology 304 was northwest-southeast aligned concrete wall footing 306; recorded as 0.40m wide. It was clear that this was the linear anomaly identified within the geophysical survey, although the evaluation noted a slight change in the location. The wall footing was actually located 1.53m to the south of the projected anomaly. No archaeology was revealed.

5.6 Trench 4

- 5.6.1 Trench 4 was located in the south-east corner of the Site and was 2.4m by 2.4m square and excavated to a depth of 1.2m. A spread of modern rubble 403 was revealed at 0.40m

below the current ground surface and accounted for the anomaly within the geophysics (WA 2014a). The geotechnical pit was excavated to 2.00m in depth. No archaeology was revealed however a sherds of Late Roman pottery were revealed with the natural deposit 404.

6 FINDS

- 6.1.1 Three very abraded sherds of Late Roman pottery were recovered from natural deposit 404, Trench 4. The sherds represent a drop flange bowl and are made of a local sandy fabric.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 The evaluation was successful in its stated aims of identifying an absence of archaeological remains within the four trenches excavated and was able to confirm that the anomalies identified within the geophysics were the result of modern activity – a modern concrete footing and a spread of modern demolition material. Though not shown on the historical maps (Ramboll 2014) a local resident recalled that a barn was situated within the confines of the Site, providing an origin for the concrete footings identified.
- 7.1.2 The identification of sherds of Roman pottery within the natural geology within Trench 4 is not unsurprising considering that known archaeology of that period has been recorded in the vicinity. It is possible the finds were deposited elsewhere within a fairly mobile geology and arrived at the site as a result of natural processes.
- 7.1.3 From the results of the evaluation it would appear no archaeological remains will be impacted upon by the proposed development.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS AND PUBLICATION

- 8.1.1 No further work is proposed as no archaeological features were identified and there was a paucity of finds.

9 STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Museum

- 9.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Chichester Museum. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

9.2 Archive

- 9.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts and ecofacts, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (Walker 1990; SMA 1995; Richards and Robinson 2000; Brown 2011). An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators Forms. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the West Sussex HER. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive). A copy of the OASIS entry has been included in this report (**Appendix 2**).
- 9.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with both site (**103211**) and accession codes (**CHCDM 2014.21**), and a full index will be prepared. The archive comprises the following:

- 1 cardboard box or airtight plastic box of artefacts and ecofacts, ordered by material type
- 1 files/document cases of paper records A3/A4 graphics
- digital data: databases, spreadsheets, word-processed files, photographs.

9.3 Discard policy

9.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. All discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.

9.4 Copyright

The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms with the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.

9.5 Security Copy

9.5.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

10 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench 1	Dimensions :	2.4m x 2.4m x 1.2m (geotechnical pit excavated to 2.4m)	Ground surface level:	4.52m aOD
	Centre point Coordinates (NGR):	486177.05, 92786.44		
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)	
101	Layer	Limestone hogging, modern ground surface	0-0.20m	
102	Layer	Yellowish brown clay with occasional flint gravels, modern levelling layer.	0.20-0.40m	
103	Natural	Pale greyish brown fine silty clay with very occasional flint pebbles >0.03m. Very compact and leached, indication that the ground had been previously stripped, exposed. Same layer as 104. (Equal to 206, 304 and 404 in Trenches 1, 2 and 4).	0.40-0.60	
104	Natural	Orange brown clay with fine sand particles, with occasional flint pebbles and gravel. Becomes increasingly gravel rich to depth.	0.60-1.67m	
105	Natural	Fine white and light yellow sand with rounded flint pebbles <0.05m, river terrace gravels or possible raised beach deposits.	1.67-2.40m	
106	Natural	Fine white and light yellow sand.	2.40m +	

Trench 2	Dimensions :	2.6m x 2.2m by 0.93m (geotechnical pit excavated to 2.4m)	Ground surface level:	4.45m aOD
	Centre line Coordinates (NGR):	486190.76, 92792.38 486187.69, 92784.56		
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)	
201	Layer	Limestone hogging, modern ground surface, with turf formed above it.	0-0.22m	
202	Layer	Deliberate modern dump of redeposited natural mid yellow brown (orange) silty clay.	0.22-0.45m	
203	Layer	Deliberate modern dump of waste concrete, timber and plastic.	0.45-0.68	
204	Cut	Modern pit excavated for dumping of waste concrete blocks and other waste. Only revealed in the south facing section of Trench 2.	0.64m deep	
205	Fill	Modern backfill of pit 204 – filled with modern waste.	0.64m thick	
206	Natural	Pale greyish brown fine silty clay with very occasional flint pebbles >0.03m. Very compact and leached, indication that the ground had been previously stripped, exposed, same as 207(equal to 103, 304 and 404 in Trenches 1, 3 and 4).	0.68-0.83m	
207	Natural	Mid yellow brown silty clay becoming increasingly gravel rich to depth.	0.83-1.40m	
208	Natural	Very fine white/light yellow sand with small gravels; river terrace gravels or possible raised beach deposits.	1.40-2.40m	



Trench 3	Dimensions :	8.5m by 2m by 0.80m	Ground surface level:	4.49m aOD
	Centre point Coordinates (NGR):	486187.62, 92784.43 486190.57, 486190.57		
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)	
301	Layer	Limestone hogging, modern ground surface, with turf formed above it.	0-0.15m	
302	Layer	Yellowish brown clay with flint gravels and occasional pebbles. Made ground – levelling for surface	0.15-0.30m	
303	Layer	Very dark grey-black mix of cinders and ash and concrete rubble. Demolition deposit	0.30-0.40m	
304	Natural	Pale greyish brown compact layer of fine particle silt clay with very occasional pebbles >0.04m. Same as 103, 206 and 404 in Trenches 1, 2 and 4)	0.40-0.60m	
305	Natural	Orange brown clay with fine sand grains and occasional flint gravels and rare pebbles >0.03m	0.60m+	
306	Wall footing	Northwest-southeast aligned concrete footing for wall. Recorded as 0.40m wide and 1.80m long and 0.40m below the current ground surface. Cut into the top of 304.	0.40-0.60m	

Trench 4	Dimensions :	2.4m by 2.4m by 1.2m (geotechnical pit excavated to 2m)	Ground surface level:	4.48m aOD
	Centre point Coordinates (NGR):	486201.05, 92780.44		
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)	
401	Layer	Limestone hogging, modern ground surface, with turf formed above it.	0-0.20m	
402	Layer	Yellowish brown clay with flint gravels and occasional pebbles. Made ground – levelling for surface.	0.20-0.40m	
403	Layer	Dark grey silty sandy clay layer with modern timber and metal. Modern demolition layer.	0.40-0.46m	
404	Layer	Pale greyish brown fine silty clay with rare flint pebbles, common orange iron staining, very compact and leached deposit. Indicative of having been stripped and exposed to the air. Contained Late Roman pot sherds.	0.46-0.60m	
405	Natural	Orange brown clay with fine sand particles, occasional rounded pebbles and flint gravel. Becomes increasingly gravel rich with depth.	0.60-1.40m	
406	Natural	Very light yellow sand; river terrace gravels or possible raised beach deposit.	1.40-2.00m	
407	Natural	Fine sand with common to abundant flint pebbles <0.04m.	2.00m+	



APPENDIX 2 – OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: wessexar1-187627

Project details

Project name	RNLI Station, Selsey
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Ramboll UK on behalf of the Royal Navy Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at the RNLI Station, Selsey, West Sussex, PO20 0DJ, centred on NGR 486184 92781. The site is proposed as the location of a new on-shore boathouse. The evaluation was undertaken from 11th to 12th August 2014. The evaluation followed the compilation of a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) summarising the known archaeology in the vicinity of the site and a programme of geophysical survey which revealed a roughly east-west aligned anomaly with a north-south aligned return interpreted as a building associated with possible floor surfaces. As a result of the DBA and the geophysics, the Archaeology Officer of Chichester District Council called for a trial trench evaluation to assess the presence or absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains that may exist within the site which may be impacted by development. Four trenches were excavated across the site and no archaeological remains of significance were identified. The possible structure revealed in the geophysics was revealed as a modern concrete footing associated with a barn which local tradition recalled as being on the site (though not shown on historical mapping).
Project dates	Start: 11-08-2014 End: 12-08-2014
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	103211 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	CHCDM2014.21 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 4 - Storage and warehousing
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location



Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX CHICHESTER SELSEY RNLI Station, Selsey
Postcode	PO200DL
Study area	0.14 Hectares
Site coordinates	SZ 486193 092787 49.9810467349 -1.321793952 49 58 51 N 001 19 18 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 4.45m Max: 4.52m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Ramboll UK
Project design originator	Wessex Archaeology
Project director/manager	Gareth Chaffey
Project supervisor	S Thompson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	RNLI

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Chichester Museum
Physical Archive ID	103211
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Chichester Museum
Digital Archive ID	103211
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Chichester Museum
Paper Archive ID	103211
Paper Contents	"none"



Paper Media available "Diary","Drawing","Map","Plan","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

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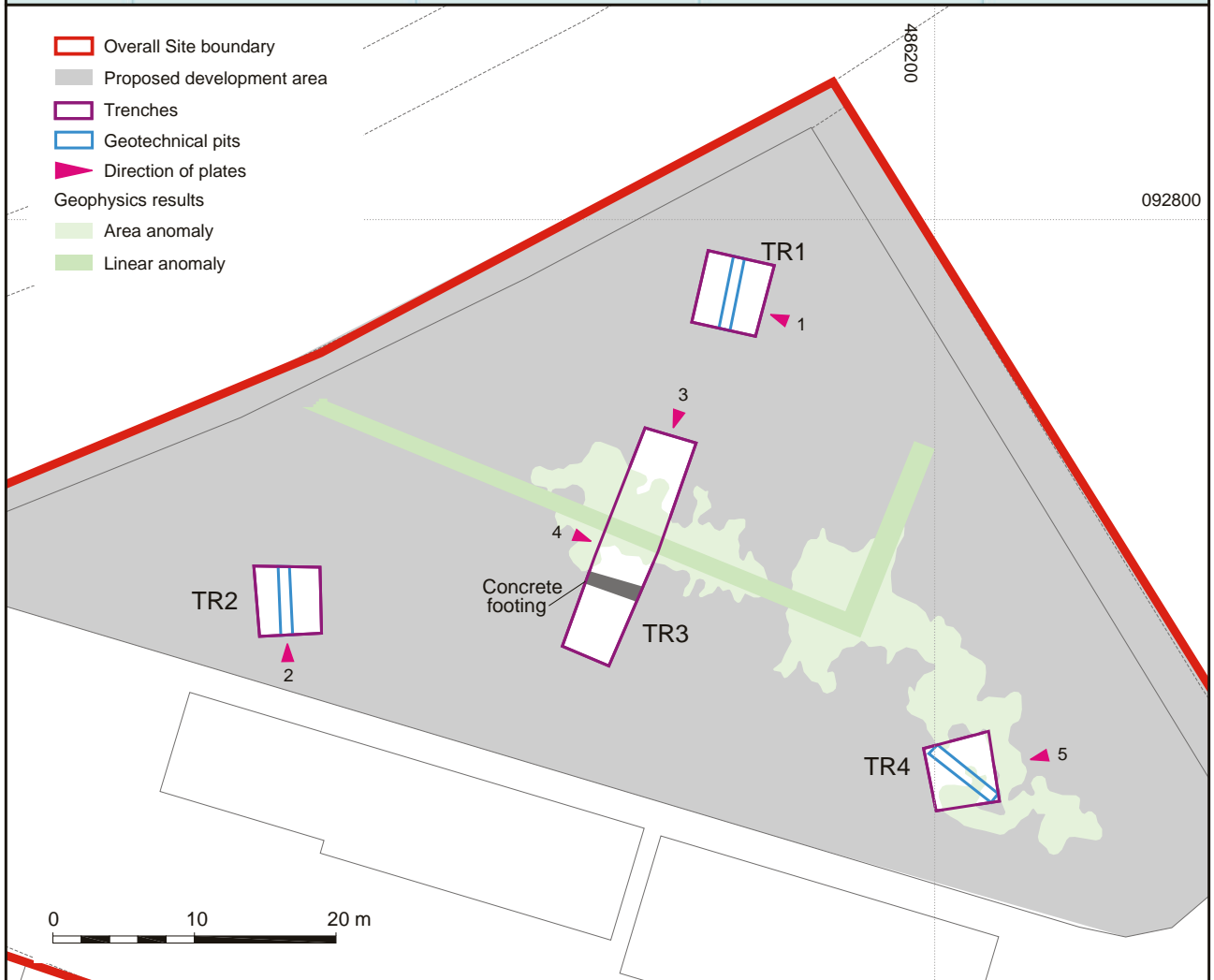
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Site and trench location

Figure 1

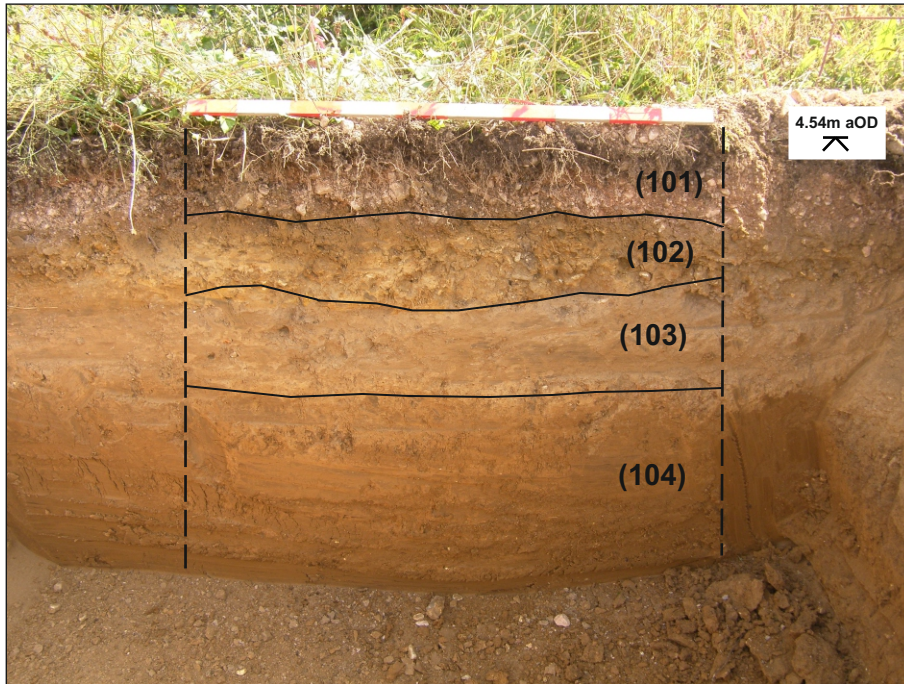


Plate 1: West facing section of Trench 1 (scale 1m)

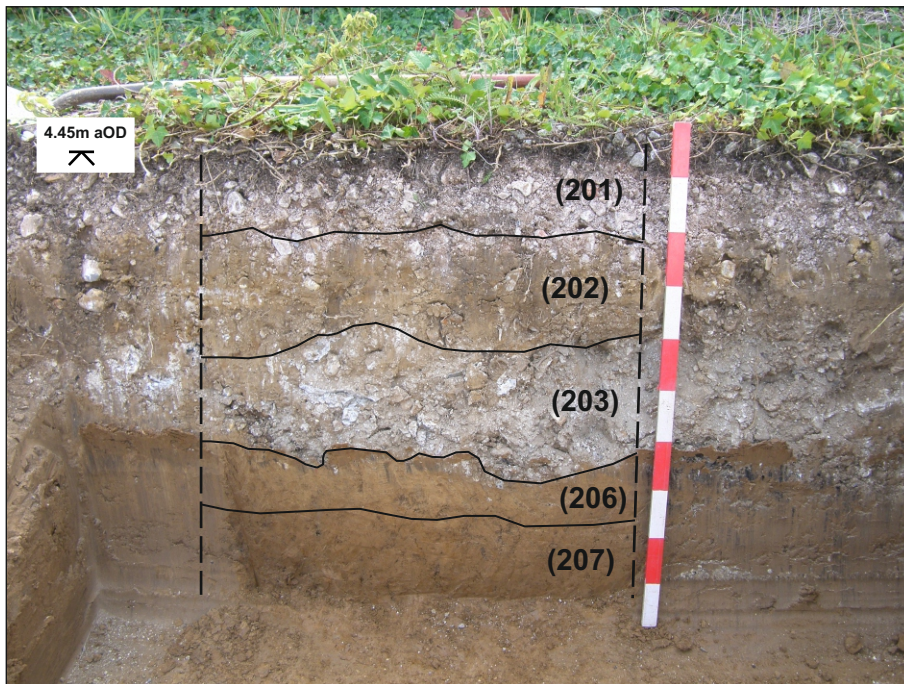


Plate 2: North facing section of Trench 2 (scale 1m)


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Plate 3: Trench 3 from the north (scale 2m)

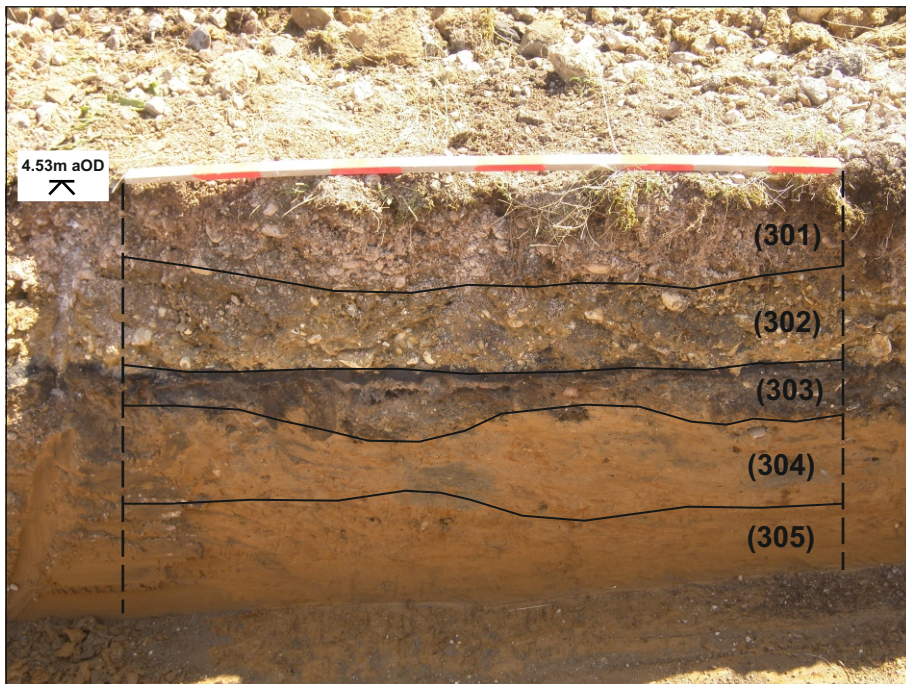


Plate 4: East facing section of Trench 3 (scale 1m)



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Plate 5: General shot of Trench 4 from the east (scale 1m)

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