

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden, near Cranbrook, Kent**

Planning Ref: TW/08/03515

NGR 579343 139434

Project No: 3751

Site Code: Roc 09

**ASE Report No. 2011177
OASIS id: archaeol6-105711**

Greg Priestley-Bell

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned to carry out a watching brief during groundworks associated with the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and the construction of a new detached dwelling with garage at Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden, near Cranbrook Kent. The work revealed a possibly 16th- to 18th-century dump deposit that perhaps represented backfill or tailings associated with stone quarrying. Alternatively, the deposit was perhaps the result of landscaping associated with the existing dwelling on the site, formerly called Rock Cottage.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology (UCLCAA), was commissioned by Mrs Sarah Vas to undertake an archaeological watching brief. This watching brief took place during groundworks associated with the demolition of the existing property and the construction of a new detached dwelling with garage at Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden, near Cranbrook Kent (NGR 579343, 139434) (Figs. 1 & 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is located approximately 2km north of Sissinghurst and 2.6km south-west of Frittenden on the A229. The site lies on the eastern edge of a clearing in Home Wood and occupies apparent terraces on a west facing slope. The underlying geology, according to the British Geological Survey map, is Tunbridge Wells Sand.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Planning permission was granted by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for the construction of a detached 5-bed dwelling with triple garage (planning ref. TW/08/03515). Tunbridge Wells Borough Council attached a condition to the final planning appeal decision requiring that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the proposed development.

'No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a written programme and specification 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.

1.3.2 A Specification for the watching brief was produced by the Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council (KCC) (2009). Details of the techniques to be used were set out in the Specification, a copy of which is contained within the archive. The Specification also stated that if significant remains were revealed during the watching brief, further archaeological measures might be required to secure mitigation on the site. The Specification provided background information which has been re-used in this report with due acknowledgement.

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report details the finding of an watching brief carried out over two days, 30th and 31st March 2009, by Greg Priestley-Bell (Senior Archaeologist)

2.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The application site lies along the route of the former Roman road between Maidstone and Hastings and which served the iron making industry of the Weald. Evidence of the road or contemporary roadside features may be revealed during groundworks for the proposed development. The Scheduled Castle Bank earthworks are 1.5km north and Sissinghurst Castle is 1.7km south east.
- 2.2** A nineteenth century find of Roman urns in a ritual shaft is recorded 1.3km north east at Legg's Wood and a possible Romano British iron working site is 2km to the north. The area has not been subject to significant archaeological investigation and similar remains may be encountered. Rockdene appears on the First Edition OS map as Rock Cottage.
- 2.3** The Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by KCC, and held at County Hall, Maidstone, was consulted and the results are summarised below. Details were taken of all archaeological sites and listed buildings within a 500 metre radius of the centre of the site. The identified sites (numbered 1 – 7) are tabulated below, and plotted on Figure 1.

Table 1: Gazetteer of Sites, Finds and Listed Buildings within a 500 m Radius of Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden:

Site no.	NGR	HER Number	Period	Details/Description
1.	TQ 79187 39063	TQ 73 NE 114	Post-medieval	Listed Building, two cottages: North Cottage & Summerhill
2.	TQ 7979 3944	TQ 73 NE 262	Post-medieval	Listed Building, Foxearth Cottage
3.	TQ 7898 3923	TQ 73 NE 113	Post-medieval	Listed Building, Saunders Farmhouse
4.	TQ 7918 3904	TQ 73 NE 322	Post-medieval	Pit ctng. Brick and tile
5.	TQ 78950 39330	MKE74585	Unknown	Findspot: copper alloy mould
6.	TQ 79080 39220	MKE74586	Unknown	Findspot: copper alloy pin
7.	TQ 78900 39400	MKE75620	Roman to Post-medieval	Findspot: copper alloy possible toggle

3.0 METHODOLOGY and AIMS

3.1 Methodology

- 3.1.1 The proposed groundworks comprised: grubbing out of foundations of the existing dwelling and garage, ground reduction and footing trenches for a new dwelling and footing trenches for a new garage.
- 3.1.2 A continuous watching brief was maintained during ground reduction and the machine excavation of strip footings for the new dwelling (Figs 2 and 3). The footings trenches were 600mm wide and to a depth of up to 1.5m below the existing ground level of the site. No archaeological monitoring was carried out on groundworks associated with the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and the construction of the new garage
- 3.1.3 Archaeological monitoring was conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in the specification document (KCC, 2009). Archaeological monitoring included an inspection of excavated material in order to identify and retrieve artefacts and ecofacts, and an examination of exposed surfaces for archaeological remains.
- 3.1.4 Provision was made for all identified significant archaeological remains to be recorded to accepted professional standards and in accordance with *Standards and Guidance: watching brief* of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2007). Full details of the techniques used are contained within the archive.

Number of Contexts	4 contexts
No. of files/paper record	1 file
Plan and sections sheets	1 trench location plan
Photographs	3 B+W, 3 colour transparency, 32 digital

Table 2: Quantification of site archive

3.2 Aims

- 3.2.1 The general aim of the archaeological watching brief was to contribute to the understanding of the history of Frittenden through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks.
- 3.2.2 Particular attention is paid to the character, depth below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1** Topsoil, context [01], at c. 58.2m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) was 150mm deep and consisted of dark yellowish brown clayey silt with occasional tree rooting, and produced pottery dating to between 17th – early 19th century.
- 4.2** Topsoil [01] overlay deposit [02] consisting of 100mm-150mm of mid/dark yellowish brown very silty clay with occasional charcoal.
- 4.2** Deposit [02] overlay a c. 600mm deposit [03] a light/mid yellowish brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal that produced a small quantity of post-medieval pottery dating to between 1575-1700 AD. Deposit [03] overlay natural [04] consisting of mottled mid yellowish brown/light brownish yellow very silty clay.
- 4.3** No cut archaeological features were revealed.

5.0 FINDS

5.1 A small collection of finds was recovered during the watching brief at Rockdene, quantified in Table 3, below:

Cxt	Pot	Wt (g)	CBM	Wt (g)	Bone	Wt (g)	Stone	Wt (g)	Fe	Wt (g)	Glass	Wt (g)	Slag	Wt (g)
01	10	180	6	136	1	8	4	478	2	26	4	16	1	4
02\03			3	242					1	80				
03	3	16	6	520			2	74	2	14				
Total	13	196	15	898	1	8	6	552	5	120	4	16	1	4

Table 3: Quantification of finds by context/ type

5.2 The post-Roman pottery by Luke Barber

5.2.1 Pottery was recovered from contexts [01] and [03] only. The largest group was recovered from [01], amounting to 10 sherds in relatively fresh condition suggesting they have not been subjected to repeated reworking. The earliest sherd in this deposit consists of a very sandy earthenware jug handle with all over clear glaze that is probably of 17th- to mid 18th- century date.

5.2.2 The remaining sherds are all from the very end of the 18th or 19th centuries. These include sherds from an unglazed earthenware flower pot (1/7g), glazed red earthenware vessel (1/12g), transfer-printed pearlware plate and bowl with Chinese/European landscapes (3/20g), brown transfer-printed ware plate with floral/foilage border (1/18g), industrial-slipped refined white earthenware vessels and a Wedgwood Jasper-type ware stoneware with moulded white classical figures on a matt dull green slipped body. The latest material from [01] suggests a mid 19th- century date.

5.2.3 Context [03] produced three sherds suggesting a deposition date of between c. 1575 and 1700. One bodysherd (2g) in medium-fired silty earthenware with deliberately reduced grey surfaces is present along with two further bodysherds (13g) in a harder fired sandier earthenware with sparse chalk inclusions to 1mm. These sherds have dark grey cores, maroon margins and dark grey surfaces.

5.3 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus

5.3.1 All the ceramic building material (CBM) recovered from the site was in a fine orange fabric with coarse red and cream silt inclusions and sparse coarse black iron rich inclusions. Context [01] contained peg tile and brick, both abraded though well formed and of broad 17th to 19th century date. A brick was recovered from context [01/02] of complete 56mm thickness, unfrogged with rounded arises the brick is likely to be of 16th to 18th century date.

5.3.2 Brick and peg tile recovered from context [03] was under-fired and soft though almost identical to the brick recovered from [02/03]. a 16th to 18th century date is also likely for these fragments.

5.4 The Slag by Luke Barber

5.4.1 Context [01] produced a single (3g) piece of 19th- century aerated black

clinker waste from coal-burning.

5.5 The Geological Material by Luke Barber

5.5.1 Context [01] contained four pieces of 19th- century Welsh roofing slate while context [03] contained two conjoining pieces of Tunbridge Wells pale yellow medium-grained sandstone. The latter would be available locally to the site.

5.6 The Bone by Lucy Sibun

5.6.1 A single fragment of sheep-sized scapula was recovered from [01]. Butchery was evidenced by three transverse chop marks.

5.7 The Ironwork by Trista Clifford

5.7.1 Three general purpose nails were recovered from contexts [01] and [03]. They are not inherently dateable. A highly corroded rectangular strip fragment of uncertain date was recovered from [02/03].

5.8 The Glass by Trista Clifford

5.8.1 Three fragments of green vessel glass and a single fragment of opaque white vessel glass came from context [01]. These are most likely modern in date.

5.9 Environmental remains

5.9.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

5.10 Potential

5.10.1 The assemblage is too small to have any potential for further analysis. No further work is required.

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1** Although deposit [02] resembled subsoil, it was not a true subsoil as it did not overlay natural [04]. Deposit [02] perhaps represented a zone of bioturbation below the topsoil [01] or may have been an upper unit of the underlying dump deposit [03].
- 6.2** Deposit [03] was a dump deposit that perhaps represented backfill or tailings associated with stone quarrying. A steep sandstone face is exposed on the eastern side of the site; such features are not uncommon on the Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand and would present a readily available source of sandstone (British Geological Survey, 1992, 27). A small quantity of post-medieval pottery dating to between 1575 - 1700 AD was recovered from deposit [03], perhaps indicating that the suggested quarrying activity took place during that period. Alternatively, deposit [03] was perhaps the result of landscaping associated with the existing dwelling on the site, formerly called Rock Cottage.
- 6.3** No remains associated with the nearby line of the Roman road between Maidstone and Hastings were found.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1** The lack of significant archaeological remains identified on the subject site may be due to possible truncation by quarrying. However, had a high level of activity occurred on the site during any later prehistoric or early historic period, residual material might be expected. No such material was identified. In view of this, it is likely that there was only a low level of activity on the site in antiquity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey 1992 *British Regional Geology: the Wealden District*, 4th edition, 27.

Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council 2009 *Specification for an archaeological watching brief at Rockdene, Rocks Hill in Frittenden, near Cranbrook in Kent*

Institute for Archaeologists, 2007 *Standards and Guidance: Archaeological Watching Briefs*

SMR Summary Form

Site Name: Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden	
Site Address: Rockdene Rocks Hill Frittenden Near Cranbrook Kent	
Summary: Archaeology South-East was commissioned to carry out a watching brief during groundworks associated with the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and the construction of a new detached dwelling with garage at Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden, near Cranbrook Kent. The work revealed a possibly 16 th - to 18 th -century dump deposit that perhaps represented backfill or tailings associated with stone quarrying. Alternatively, the deposit was perhaps the result of landscaping associated with the existing dwelling on the site, formerly called Rock Cottage.	
District/Unitary: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Parish: Frittenden
Nature of Development: Demolition of an existing dwelling and garage; construction of new dwelling and garage	
Period(s): Post-Medieval	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): NGR 579343, 139434	
Type of archaeological work Watching Brief	
Date of Recording: 30 th and 31 st March 2009	
Unit undertaking recording: Archaeology South-East	
Geology: Tunbridge Wells Sand	
Title and author of accompanying report: An Archaeological Watching Brief at Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden, Kent	
Summary of fieldwork results Post-Medieval: Dump deposit perhaps associated with stone quarrying	
Likelihood of surviving archaeological remains on-site: Low	
Location of archive/finds: Currently held at the offices of ASE	
Contact at Unit: Neil Griffin	Date: 22 nd July 2011

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: archaeol6-105711

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Rockdene, Frittenden, Kent
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned to carry out a watching brief during groundworks associated with the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and the construction of a new detached dwelling with garage at Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden, near Cranbrook Kent. The work revealed a possibly 16th- to 18th-century dump deposit that perhaps represented backfill or tailings associated with stone quarrying. Alternatively, the deposit was perhaps the result of landscaping associated with the existing dwelling on the site, formerly called Rock Cottage.
Project dates	Start: 30-03-2009 End: 31-03-2009
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	DUMP DEPOSIT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POT Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT TUNBRIDGE WELLS FRITTENDEN Rockdene, Rocks Hill, Frittenden, Kent
Postcode	TN17
Study area	5400.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 79343 39434 51.1254929463 0.563200681925 51 07 31 N 000 33 47 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 57.50m Max: 60.00m

Project creators

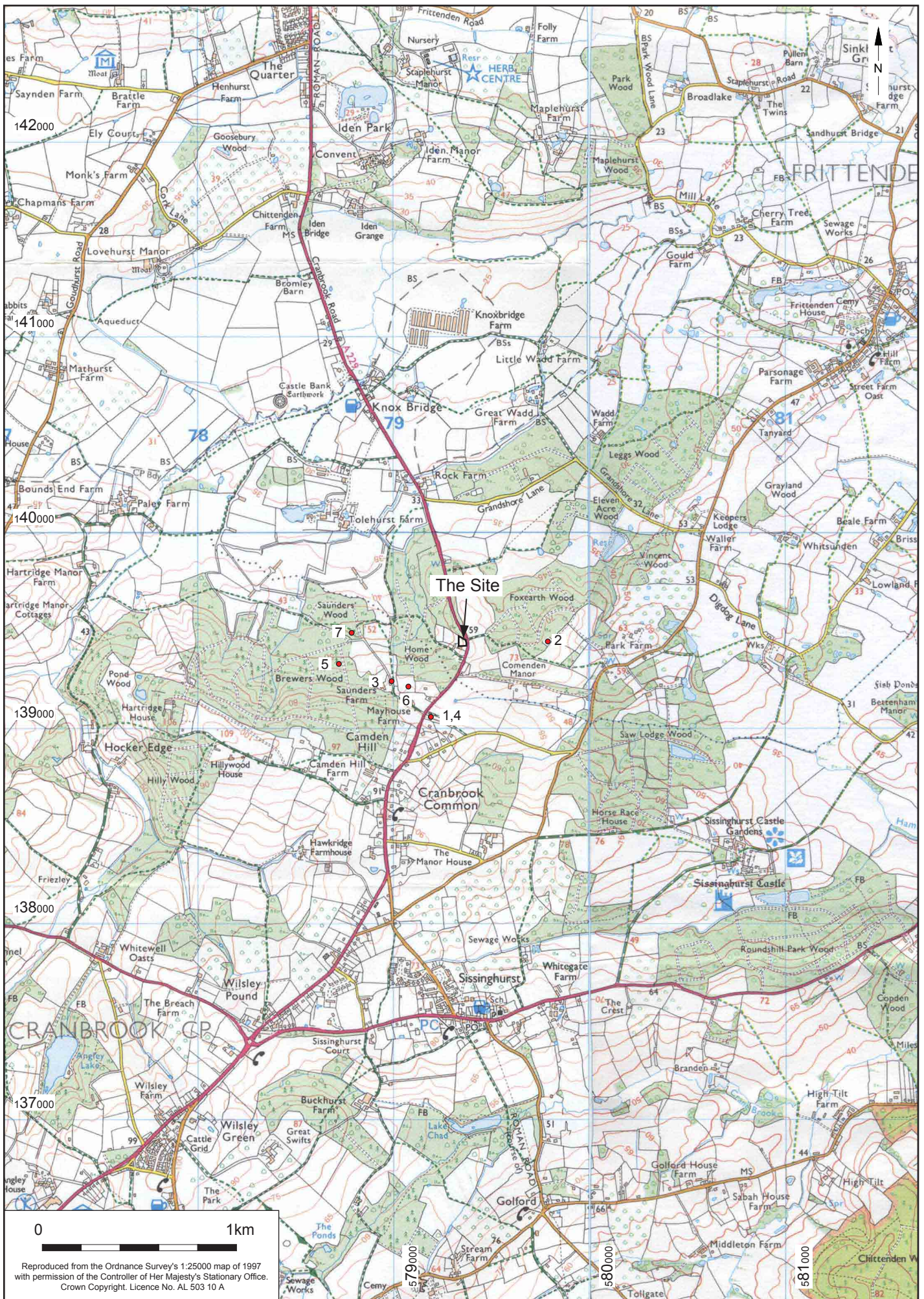
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
----------------------	------------------------

Project brief originator	Heritage Conservation Kent County Council
Project design originator	Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin/Jim Stevenson
Project supervisor	Greg Priestley-Bell
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client

Project archives

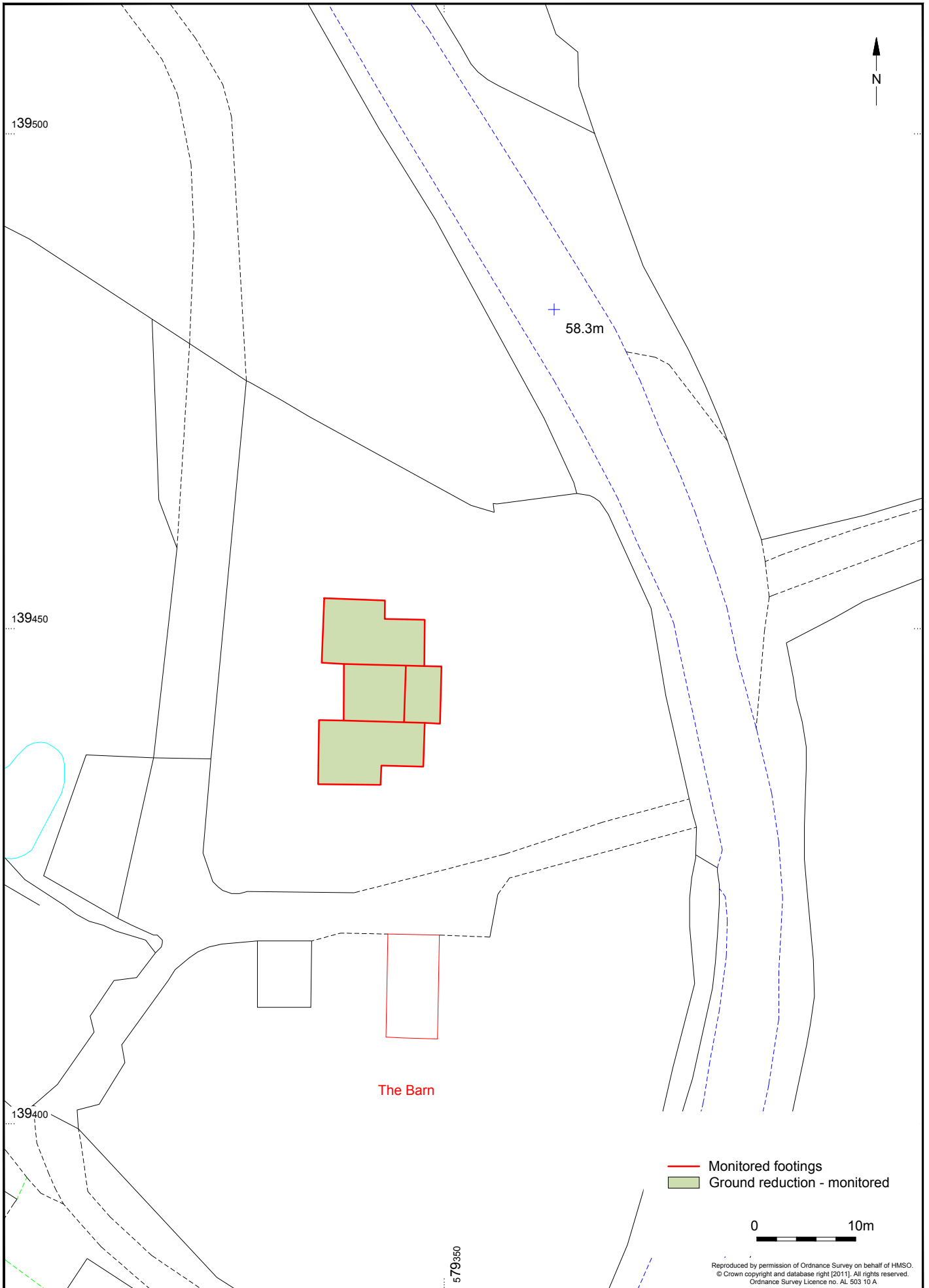
Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Contents	'none'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Photograph','Plan','Report'

Entered by	Greg Priestley-Bell (gregpbell@btinternet.com)
Entered on	24 July 2011



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Project Ref: 3751	July 2011	Site location and HER points	
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Fig. 1



© Archaeology South-East		Rockdene, Cranbrook	Fig. 2
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Fig. 3.1: Ground reduction for new build, looking east



Fig. 3.2: Footing for new dwelling, looking west

© Archaeology South-East		Rockdene, Cranbrook	Fig. 3
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