

**An Archaeological Watching Brief during  
Gas Main Replacement Work at Midhurst, West Sussex**

**Centred at NGR 488670 121460**

**Project No. 4840  
Site Code: MID11**

**ASE Report No. 2011259  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-112863**

**by  
Simon Stevens BA MIFA**

**With a contribution by Sarah Porteus**

**October 2011**

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**Abstract**

*An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the replacement of a gas main in the centre of Midhurst, West Sussex. No archaeological features or deposits were observed. The only artefacts recovered was a small assemblage of late medieval or early post-medieval construction material recovered from a deposit of made ground.*

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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 Southern Gas Networks to undertake an archaeological watching brief during gas main replacement work in the centre of the town of Midhurst, West Sussex (centred at NGR 488670 121460) (Fig. 1).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 Midhurst lies in the Weald of Sussex, in the valley of the River Rother, at heights varying between c.25mAOD close to the river to c.37mAOD at St. Ann's Hill. It is the only local town in an area of West Sussex which is sparsely populated compared to much of the rest of the county. The streets impacted by the works were South Street, Duck Lane and Sheep Lane, all in the south-eastern part of the town, close to the current course of the Rother.

1.2.2 According to current data from the British Geological Survey the underlying bedrock is Pulborough Sandrock/Sandstone. There are no recorded superficial geological deposits (BGS 2011).

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 The works involved the decommissioning of existing mains and the installation of new mains at a number of locations in Midhurst. Some of the new mains were installed within the existing trenches while others required the mechanical excavation of entirely new trenches. Although the work is not subject to standard planning regulations, Southern Gas Network were advised by Chichester District Council Archaeological Officer, James Kenny that monitoring of the intrusive works by a suitably qualified archaeologist was considered appropriate, given the location of the works within the core of the historic town.

1.3.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* for the archaeological work was produced by ASE. This document outlined the methodologies to be used during monitoring at the site, and in the subsequent reporting and archiving of the results (ASE 2011). It was approved by the Chichester District Council Archaeological Officer before the commencement of work at the site.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The objectives and aims given in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2011, 3) were to

*'record, to monitor intrusive works associated with the installation of the new gas pipes (i.e. trenching).*

*In general, the aim of the watching brief is to record, interpret and report on any archaeological remains exposed during the groundworks (including artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest) to appropriate archaeological standards.*

*The watching brief will also assess the past impacts on the site and pay particular attention to the character, height/depth below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.*

*Specific aims include:*

- *Is there any evidence for pre-medieval remains on the site?*
- *Is there any evidence for the medieval and post-medieval settlement within the trenches? If so what is the nature of this (domestic, commercial etc.)?*

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 The current report provides results of the archaeological monitoring of groundworks at the site carried out in September and October 2011. The fieldwork was undertaken by Nick Garland and Dylan Hopkinson (Archaeologists). The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-excavation Manager).

## **2.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 The Town**

- 2.1.1 The following information is drawn from the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (Harris 2010) for Midhurst, with due acknowledgement.
- 2.1.2 The name Midhurst is thought to relate to the general area and probably predates any nucleated settlement. Although pre-Conquest in origin the name is first recorded in 1185.
- 2.1.3 Midhurst's parish church originated as a medieval chapel dedicated to St Mary Magdalene. A charter of inspeximus dating to 1234-41, citing the foundation charter of c. 1216, lists Midhurst as one of its dependant chapels. On the east side of the town lies the remainder of a minor castle dating to the early medieval period. The exact date is still vague; the castle was abandoned in favour of Cowdray Castle in c. 1280, leading some to conclude it is Norman. However, it has also been suggested that it dates to as late as the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.1.4 There is little early documentary evidence for Midhurst. A weekly market was established some time before 1223 and in 1278 an ash tree in Midhurst was the location of the court of the hundred of Easebourne. The first reference to the borough status of Midhurst dates from 1219-20 and is found in a charter dated 1234-41. In 1278 Midhurst is described as a 'free borough'.
- 2.1.5 By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Midhurst was still of modest size with a postulated population numbering around 180. Occupational by-names in the rentals suggest that cloth-related industry was prevalent in Midhurst with names such as tailors, dubbars, puffers, weavers, dyers and tanners. The importance of the town is reflected in 1301 by sending two representatives to Parliament, from when it was intermittently represented throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.1.6 Midhurst grew in prosperity and was the eighth wealthiest town in Sussex by 1524, although its population still only stood at approximately 500. However, over the next 150 years the population nearly doubled to 960 in 1670. Following this peak Midhurst saw little growth and by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century had a population numbering less than 1,500.
- 2.1.7 Throughout the post-medieval period the market continued in operation, with a market hall being built in 1552. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century an increase in coach travel naturally led to the increase in inn accommodation and improvements to the access roads to Midhurst.
- 2.1.8 Midhurst's railway station was constructed in 1864 to the southwest of the town centre and formed the terminus of the London and South Western railway until 1866 when the London Brighton and South Coast Railway from Petworth was linked in. However, the introduction of the railway to Midhurst had little impact on its population although it is considered that it did at least prevent the rural depopulation apparent in other parts of Sussex.

### **2.2 Previous Archaeological Work**

- 2.2.1 Much of the archaeological work carried out in the area in recent years has been summarised elsewhere (Magilton and Spencer 2001). In essence nearly all of the work within Midhurst has been focussed on investigations at the Norman castle at St. Ann's Hill, or on a length of the town's defences at the Spread Eagle Hotel.
- 2.2.2 No other large scale work has been undertaken in the town to date and archaeological work has been limited to projects such as two small-scale evaluations and a watching brief on North Street (ASE 2000, Magilton, 2001).



**3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 Fieldwork methodology**

3.1.1 Mechanical and manual groundworks were monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist from ASE. All sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features, and all spoil was scanned for the presence of archaeological artefacts, both visually and with a metal detector.

3.2.2 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East context record forms.

**3.2 The archive**

3.2.1 A full photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive which will be deposited at Chichester District Museum (Accession number CHCDM: 2011.20) in due course. The archive consists of the following:

Number of Contexts	3
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	-
Bulk Samples	-
Photograph	26 digital images
Bulk finds	-
Registered finds	-
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 2: Quantification of Site Archive

## **4.0 RESULTS (Fig. 2)**

### **4.1 Site visits**

4.1.1 Three visits were made to the trenching works at Midhurst during September and October 2011

### **4.2 Area 1**

4.2.1 During the first visit (on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011) it was possible to record the section of a trench in Duck Lane (Area 1).

4.2.2 The trench was 300mm in width and varied between 500mm and 800mm in depth. The road surface and associated underlying concrete, context [001] were a maximum of 550mm in thickness. The concrete overlay a 360mm thick layer of made ground, context [002]. This overlay the local 'natural' sand, context [003], which was encountered at a minimum depth of 950mm below the current carriageway surface. A small assemblage of late-medieval or early post-medieval ceramic building material was recovered from made ground, [002].

4.2.3 The second visit to the site (on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011) allowed the recording of part of the trench in Duck Lane. The stratigraphy was similar to that observed on the previous visit to Duck Lane. Tile was recovered from the made ground. A dressed sandstone block measuring c.200mm by c.300mm by c.100mm was observed in the trench but not retained.

### **4.3 Area 2**

4.3.1 The trench in South Street (Area 2) had been excavated and backfilled prior to the first monitoring visit to the site.

### **4.4 Area 3**

4.4.1 The third and final visit to the groundworks (on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2011) allowed recording of the results of excavations in Sheep Lane (Area 3). Here it was noted that the road surfacing, context [001] lay directly on top of the surviving surface of the 'natural' sand, context [003], suggesting truncation of the 'natural' during road construction.

4.4.2 Given this evidence of truncation (and removal of archaeological deposits), it was agreed with all parties that no further monitoring work was required in this area, and therefore on the project as a whole.

**5.0 THE FINDS**

**5.1 The Ceramic Building Material** by Sarah Porteus

- 5.1.1 Three fragments of peg tile were recovered from context [002]. The peg tile is in a pale orange sandy fabric with moderate medium sized quartz, one fragment has a retained core and the tile is of 15mm thickness. The tile is of probable later medieval or early post-medieval date, broadly 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. The tile has been retained.

**6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

- 6.1** Archaeological monitoring of the trenches excavated for the installation of replacement gas mains in Midhurst did not lead to the discovery of any archaeological features or deposits. Finds were limited to late medieval or early post-medieval construction materials.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Southern Gas Networks for commissioning the work, and to James Kenny, Chichester District Council Archaeology Officer for his input at all stages of the project.

**SMR Summary Form**

Site Code	MID11					
Identification Name and Address	Midhurst Gas Main Replacement					
County, District &/or Borough	Chichester District, West Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	588670 121460					
Geology	Pulborough Sandstone					
ASE Project No.	4840					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 23.09.11 – 27.10.11	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Southern Gas Networks					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the replacement of a gas main in the centre of Midhurst, West Sussex. No archaeological features or deposits were observed. The only artefacts recovered was a small assemblage of late medieval or early post-medieval construction material recovered from a deposit of made ground.</i></p>						

## OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeo16-112863**

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief during Gas Main Replacement Work at Midhurst, West Sussex
Project dates	Start: 23-09-2011 End: 27-10-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	4840 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	MID11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 1 - Highways and road transport
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	General structure plan/local plan/minerals plan guidance

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX CHICHESTER MIDHURST Midhurst Town Centre Gas Main Replacement
Postcode	GU29 9PD
Study area	100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 8867 2146 50.98516095 -0.736607722833 50 59 06 N 000 44 11 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 25.00m Max: 28.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Chichester District Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson
Project supervisor	Dylan Hopkinson

Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Southern Gas Networks

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### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	Yes
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet',' Report',' Unpublished Text'

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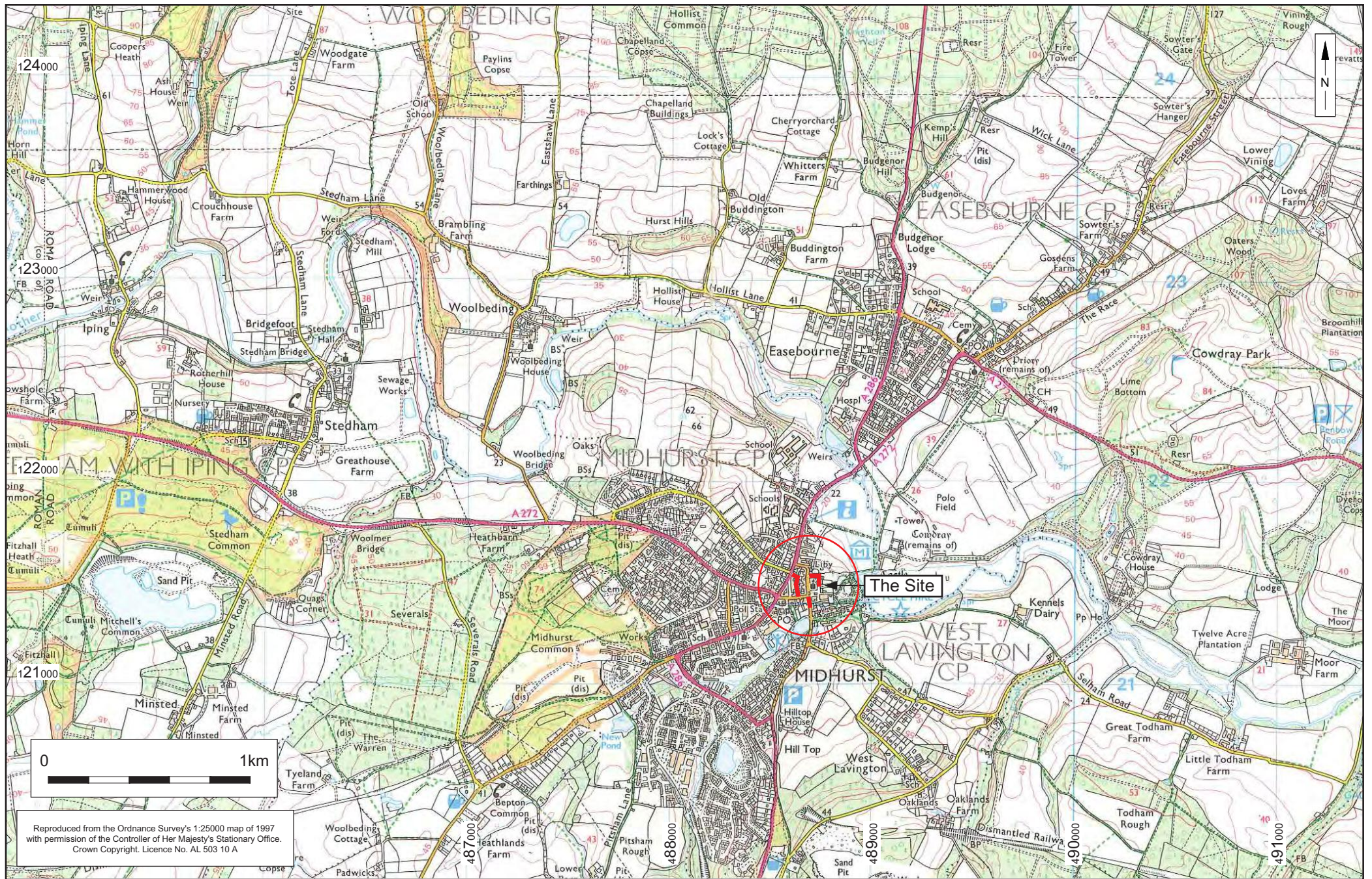
### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Description	ASE client report. A4-sized with cover logos.

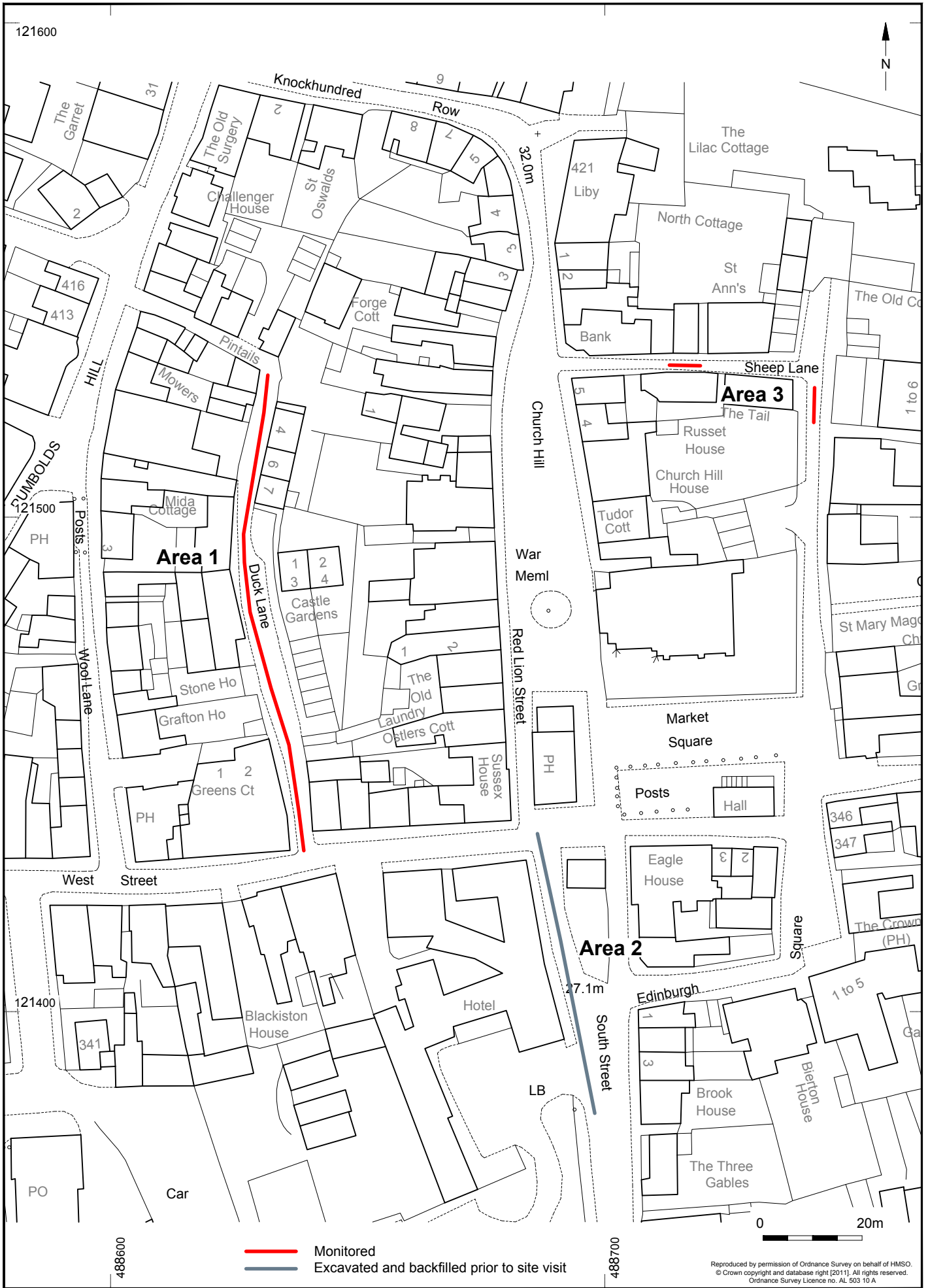
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Entered by	Simon Stevens (simon.stevens@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	31 October 2011





© Archaeology South-East		Midhurst Town Centre Gas Works	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 4840	Nov 2011	Site location	
Report Ref: 2011259	Drawn by: DJH		



© Archaeology South-East		Midhurst Town Centre Gas Works		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4840	Nov 2011	Plan of monitored works		
Report Ref: 2011259	Drawn by: JLR			

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