

**An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Kiln Drive, Rye,
East Sussex**

(TQ 9185 2160)

by Greg Priestley-Bell AIFA

Project no. 2189

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Archaeology South-East

Archaeology South-East is a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit. The Institute of Archaeology at UCL is one of the largest groupings of academic archaeologists in the country. Consequently, Archaeology South-East has access to the conservation, computing and environmental backup of the college, as well as a range of other archaeological services.

UCL Field Archaeology Unit and South Eastern Archaeological Services (which became Archaeology South-East in 1996) were established in 1974 and 1991 respectively. Although field projects have been conducted world-wide, Archaeology South-East retains a special interest in south-east England with the majority of our contract and consultancy work concentrated in Sussex, Kent, Greater London and Essex.

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Archaeology South-East, as part of UCL Field Archaeology Unit, is a registered organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists and, as such, is required to meet IFA standards.

Summary

Archaeology South-East were commissioned by Weston Architects to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land at Kiln Drive, Rye Foreign, Rye, East Sussex. Three trial trenches were mechanically excavated. The work revealed a late 18th to early 19th-century occupation layer and three associated possible post-holes that probably represented the location of a Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars period (1783-1815) military encampment or barracks that was likely to have extended over much of the site.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** In January 2006, Archaeology South-East (a division of the University College London Field Archaeology Unit) was commissioned by Weston Architects, on behalf of their client, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to Kiln Drive (henceforth ‘the site’), Rye Foreign, Rye, East Sussex (Fig. 1), (NGR TQ 9185 2160).
- 1.2** The site lies in Playden village *c.* one kilometre north of Rye town centre, and is bounded to the north by the Rye Memorial Care Centre, to the east by Kiln Drive and the Ambulance Station, to the south by Highfields and Hilltop Drive and to the west by farmland. The application site is currently used as pasture for sheep. The underlying geology, according to the British Geological Survey, consists of Tunbridge Wells Sand and Wadhurst Clay.
- 1.3** A planning application (Planning Ref. RR/2005/1975/P) has been submitted to Rother District Council for the erection of a Primary Health Care Facility on the site, with associated car parking provision and alteration to existing vehicular access. This phase of work falls in advance of planning and hence is a pre-determination archaeological evaluation in line with best practice as set out in PPG16, *Archaeology and Planning*.
- 1.4** Due to the archaeological potential of the site (see below), Dr. Andrew Woodcock, the Archaeological Officer for East Sussex County Council (ESCC) as the representative of the Local Planning Authority, has recommended that the applicant undertake a programme of archaeological fieldwork to determine the impact of the proposed development. Following consultation with ESCC, Archaeology South-East produced a Method Statement outlining Stage 1 of such a programme consisting of a field evaluation by trial trenching at the site. The Method Statement described the techniques to be used during the evaluation (full details are contained within the archive).
- 1.5** The Method Statement also indicated the possibility of the need for further archaeological investigation on the site (Stage 2). In the event that the Stage 1 evaluation identifies significant archaeological remains that might be unavoidably disturbed or destroyed by the proposed development, a mitigation strategy would be required. This might entail more detailed archaeological excavation and recording, together with additional post-excavation work including further reporting and possible publication.
- 1.6** The general aims of the evaluation were as follows:-
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
 - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
 - To establish the ecofactual/environmental potential of archaeological features.

And if archaeological remains are discovered:-

- To appraise the likely impact of the development proposals on any archaeology located.
 - To prepare a mitigation strategy which states how the archaeology of the site is to be accommodated within the proposed development, either by preservation *in situ* or by record (i.e. through excavation, recording and publication) if this is considered necessary or appropriate.
- 1.7** The field evaluation was carried by Greg Priestley-Bell (Senior Archaeologist) and Dion Whittaker (Archaeologist) between the 10th and 12th January 2006.

2.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1 Selected data held on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for East Sussex relating to archaeological remains recorded within a one kilometre radius of the current site is summarised in Table 1, and the locations indicated on Fig 1.

Site No. on Fig. 1	SMR	NGR TQ	Description
1	ME2183	920 210	Site of probable Roman villa complex
2	MES2292	9244 2149	Roman artefacts - unstratified
3	MES2188	9218 2109	Medieval pottery kilns c.AD1250-1350
4	EES9629	921 212	Archaeological evaluation – activity relating to 14 th -century pottery production and R-B activity relating to iron working?
5	EES14125	9192 2155	Archaeological watching brief – medieval pottery waster dump also unstratified late 18 th - to early 19 th -century military finds
6	MES2165	9202 2167	Medieval St Michaels Church c.AD1190
7	MES2290	9220 2153	Site of medieval chapel
8	MES2187	920 213	Site of medieval hospital
9	MES2292	9244 2149	Medieval artefacts - unstratified
10	MES2289	9233 2152	Site of medieval/post-medieval house
11	MES2189	920 210	?Battle site – traditional, of unknown date
12	EES13956	9186 2134	Archaeological watching brief – unstratified prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval artefacts
13	MES2181	9214 2139	Windmill of unknown date

Table 1: SMR Data (Fig. 1)

2.2 Site No. 5 is the most significant in regards to the current site. In 1994, as part of a rescue watching brief, c. 80% of the area of a proposed car park was excavated. The work uncovered a very large waster dump dated to between AD1200-1275, associated with a nearby kiln. It is thought that the site of the kiln may lie under the adjacent ambulance station. This postulated kiln, together with pottery kilns dating to between AD1250-1350 recorded c. 500m to the south of the current site, would have formed part of the regionally important Rye pottery industry.

2.3 In addition to the medieval finds, the 1994 excavation recovered a number of late 18th- to early 19th-century military finds, including pistol and musket balls, gun flints and brass pricklers (for cleaning fouling from muskets).

2.4 An infantry barracks from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars period (1793-1815) is recorded at the corner of Leasham Lane on the north side, only c. 150m to the north of the current site (Holloway 1847). The corresponding cavalry barracks is recorded as occupying a nearby field later occupied by 'Union House'. War Office (WO) records (40/7) of 1794 and 1798 mention temporary barracks for 110th Infantry and barracks for 280th Infantry respectively at Rye and Playden. However, WO records of 1803 (30/57) state that no barracks accommodation existed at Rye or Playden at that time but also

note that good sites for barracks existed at Rye and 'Playden Heights'. This might indicate that before 1803 only a tented camp, or very basic form of temporary barracks existed at Playden. Alternatively, barracks erected in response to the threat of invasion during the Revolutionary War may have been dismantled during the short peace of 1802-3, only to be re-established after the rise to power of Napoleon (Hudson 1986a).

- 2.5** Two or more of the 'good sites' mentioned in 1803 were obviously taken up, because WO records of 1806 mention temporary barracks at Rye and Playden for 168th Cavalry and 934th Infantry (Hudson 1986b). These barracks, although still referred to as temporary, probably consisted of light buildings rather than tents. Some elements of the barracks complex were more substantial however, the hospital of Playden barracks is recorded as surviving as a cottage (Horsfield 1835). Soon after 1815, most of the barracks of the period were dismantled.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1** The original trench layout comprised four 1.8m wide trial trenches (T1 – T4, Fig. 2), three 20m and one 10m long. Due to the proximity of overhead powerlines however, trench T4 was not excavated.
- 3.2** The trenches were excavated using a JCB excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket under the supervision of staff from Archaeology South-East. The locations of the trenches were checked with a CAT scanner for the presence of buried services prior to their excavation. Where practicable, mechanical excavation was taken down to the top of the ‘natural’ or the top of any significant archaeological deposit, whichever was the higher. Care was taken not to damage archaeological deposits through excessive use of mechanical excavation.
- 3.3** All revealed archaeological features were cleaned by hand prior to appropriate sampling, and recorded to accepted professional standards. Spoil was scanned both visually and with a metal detector (where practicable) for the presence of artefacts. Provision was made for environmental sampling. Full details of the excavation and sampling methodology are given in the Method Statement, a copy of which is contained within the archive.
- 3.4** After consultation with the Archaeological Officer for ESCC, permission was given for the trenches to be backfilled on completion of work.

4.0 Results

- 4.1** The site was covered by between 80mm – 200mm of topsoil and turf (Context **1**) consisting of mid reddish brown sandy silt.

Trench T1

- 4.2** The maximum excavated depth was 1.5m below ground level. Context **1** was c. 80mm thick and overlay a deposit (**2**) of mixed materials. The upper 200mm – 300mm of Context **2** consisted of mid yellow-grey silty clay with occasional brick, concrete, rounded flint pebbles, building sand and plastic. The remainder of the deposit contained up to 50% mixed modern building materials, including concrete kerb stones, bricks, sand, gravel, iron, cable, plastic and wood. A small quantity of residual late 18th- to early 19th-century pot and tile was recovered from Context **2**.

- 4.3** The trench was generally taken down to a depth of c. 1.2m below ground level, with a c. 1.5m deep sondage at each end. The base of the excavation was within Context **2** and no undisturbed ‘natural’ was encountered. Further excavation would have required the enlargement and stepping of the trench. Given the minimal quantity of topsoil available for capping the back-filled trench and the nature of the buried materials, it was felt that for the safety of grazing stock no further excavation should be carried out.

Trench T2 (Fig. 3)

- 4.4** The maximum excavated depth was 650mm below ground level. Topsoil (**1**) was c. 200mm thick and overlay a deposit (**3**, Fig.3, S4) of mid-dark reddish brown sandy silt with occasional rounded flint pebbles. A small quantity of late 18th-century material including pot, brick and clay pipe was recovered from Contexts **1** and **3**.

- 4.5** Two small circular depressions (Cuts **5** and **7**, Fig.3, S1,2), both measuring 450mm in diameter and 100mm and 150mm deep respectively, contained very similar fills (**6** and **8** respectively) of mid greyish brown slightly sandy silt. An oblong depression (Cut **9**, Fig.3, S3), measuring 350mm x 500mm contained a very similar fill (**10**). Late 18th-century pot and brick were recovered from fill **7** and a small quantity of tile from fill **10**.

- 4.6** Context **3** overlay light orangey brown/grey silty clay natural with occasional dark reddish brown veins (**4**).

Trench T3 (Fig. 3)

- 4.7** The maximum excavated depth was 900mm. Topsoil (**1**) was c. 200mm thick and overlay c. 300mm of mid yellow-grey silty clay with occasional brick, concrete, rounded flint pebbles, building sand and plastic (**2**). Context **2** overlay a 180mm – 200mm thick layer (**12**, Fig.3, S5) of dark reddish brown sandy silt with occasional rounded flint pebbles.

- 4.8** Context **12** overlay a continuous 100mm – 150mm thick layer (**11**, Fig.3, S5) of dark orangey brown sandy silt that contained significant quantities of late 18th-century material including pot, tile and brick, together with fired clay, glass, two non-ferrous buttons, iron and lead scrap. Context **11** overlay natural (**4**) as described above. Broad, shallow, sloping-sided linear depressions in the surface of the natural contained compressed material derived from layer **11**. The author has encountered such features elsewhere and is confident that they represent the wheel ruts made by large dumper trucks.

5.0 Finds

5.1 The evaluation produced a small assemblage of finds. These are quantified in Table 2.

Trench	Context No.	Pot	CBM	Stone	Glass	Clay Pipe	Bone	Other
T2	1	7/61	2/87					FCF 1/10
T2	2	3/10	7/356					
T2	3	13/192	13/636			1/4		Fe 1/56
T2	7	5/48	1/80					Fe 2/66
T2	10		1/8					
T3	11	15/191	14/333	2/6	6/4	8/8	1/4	Fe 5/198 Lead 4/16 Burnt clay 3/28 Cu Buttons 2/4

Key: CBM=ceramic building material, FCF=fire-cracked flint, Fe=iron, Cu= copper alloy

Table 2: Finds Quantification: ct/weight in grams

5.2 The Pottery

The pottery from the site is of several periods. The earliest material consists of a number of abraded residual sherds of oxidised sand tempered Rye ware from cooking pots and jugs (three and two sherds in Contexts **3** and **11** respectively). These are likely to be of 14th- century date. In addition a harder fired (possibly over-fired) reduced sherd of 14th- to early 15th- century date was recovered from Trench 2, Context **1**. A sparse scatter of early post-medieval pottery is also present. This material also shows signs of abrasion and all is residual. The material consists of fine local earthenwares (glazed/unglazed) and some Wealden ‘buff’ whitewares (four and two sherds in Contexts **03** and **011** respectively). A 16th- to 17th- century date would fit this material.

5.21 The majority of the pottery assemblage can be placed firmly within the 18th century, with most of the wares post-dating c. 1725, though most would appear to have been deposited in the late 18th century (the earlier 18th- century wares probably being old vessels). The material of this period shows limited, or no, abrasion. Local glazed red earthenware bowls and jars (red/brown glazed ‘Sussex’ Ware) are by far the most common and were located in all contexts. The fine nature of the fabrics and glazes suggests a later 18th- century date for these vessels. A single trailed slipware plate sherd was also recovered from Context **11**. Other material of this period includes a London stoneware tankard (Context **11**), part of a late tin-glazed earthenware plate (Context **7**), white salt-glazed stoneware (Contexts Tr. **2**, **1** and **2**), creamware (Context **11**), a basalt teapot and a Chinese porcelain saucer (both Context **11**). The latest sherds consist of pearlware, including a blue shell-edged plate (Context **7**). Although the latest sherds could be as late as the mid 19th- century there is no reason why they need be later than the very beginning of the 19th century.

5.3 Clay Tobacco Pipe

The few pieces of clay pipe recovered (Contexts **3** and **11**) consist of plain stem fragments of 18th- century date. Although one early 18th- century piece is present, most would best fit in a mid to late 18th- century date range.

5.4 Ceramic Building Material

The earliest piece of tile from the site consists of a 16mm thick fragment in a moderate fine/medium sand tempered oxidised fabric. Unfortunately it is not diagnostic of form but it possibly could be from a Roman box flue tile or, more likely, a thick 13th/14th- century peg tile (Tr. 2, **3**). A single definite fragment of medium sand tempered 13th/14th- century peg tile was recovered from the same context. The majority of the tile consists of fairly abraded pieces of peg tile in a number of sparse fine sand tempered fabrics. These are predominantly of 15th- to early 18th- century types, though some harder fired examples may be of later 18th- century date.

5.41 Hand-made red brick fragments were recovered from virtually every context. These consist of fine sand tempered fabrics with other coarse inclusions (eg of flint or iron oxides). All would be consistent with an 18th- to early 19th- century date.

5.5 Metalwork

Eight pieces of iron were recovered. Although of post-medieval date, most defy close dating. The metal is in good condition with only sparse adhering corrosion products. The items include several nails (Context **11**), a late hinge pivot (Context **3**), a post-medieval clench bolt (Context **7**) and a possible splinter from a shell (Context **11** – though this could be intrusive from WW2). Two copper alloy items were recovered (Context **11**) – an 18th- to early 19th- century button and the head from an 18th/19th- century decorative stud. Context **11** also produced four pieces of lead sheet off-cuts.

5.6 Other Finds

A few other categories of artefact were recovered. These include several fragments of bottle and window glass from Context **11**. These are likely to be of mid 18th- to mid 19th- century date judging by their form and condition. Three amorphous pieces of burnt clay and a badly degraded bone fragment were also recovered from Context **11**. One piece of ?shale and one of coal were also recovered from the same context.

5.7 Summary of Finds

The current assemblage of finds is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis.

5.8 Environmental Samples

Lucy Allott

5.8.1 Introduction

One sample was taken for processing with the aim of recovering finds rather than environmental information. It was extracted from a continuous layer, which may represent an occupation horizon.

5.8.2 Methodology

The single sample was sub-sampled (Table 3) and 50% was processed using bucket flotation. The residue (heavy fraction) and flot (light fraction) were retained on 250µm meshes. The flot from this sample was passed through graded sieves and further sorted into the categories documented in Table 4. The residue was air dried and passed through 4mm and 2mm sieves to aid the sorting process. Archaeological and environmental materials from this residue have been classified and quantified (Table 3) and these materials are discussed below.

Sample No.	Context No.	Sample Size (litres)	Sub-Sample Size (litres)
1	T.3/11	40L	20L

Table 3: Environmental sample details

5.8.3 Results

Flot

The flot from this sample contained both archaeological and environmental material. Charred and uncharred wild seeds were recovered while only one charcoal fragment >4mm was present. Small quantities of industrial debris and one hammerscale flake were also recovered from the flot.

Sample No.	Context No.	Total Flot (grams)	Uncharred content (grams)	Charcoal >4mm	Industrial Debris >4mm	Hammerscale flake	Charcoal and industrial debris <4mm	Seeds
1	(11)	12	10	1/<2g	13/<2g	1/<2g	4g	*

Table 4: Flot analysis results (Quantification key: * = 0-25, ** = 26-50)

Residue

Residue from this sample (quantified in Table 5) contained glass, bone, metal including three pieces of iron (nails), industrial debris, clay pipe stems and pottery. All of these finds are also represented within the hand collected material discussed above.

Sample No.	Context No.	Glass	Bone	Metal	Iron Nails	Coal	Industrial Debris	Clay Pipe	Pottery
1	(11)	1/<2g	2/2g	1/<2g	3/6g	14/14g	10/66g	2/<2g	1/4g

Table 5: Residue analysis results

5.8.4 Further potential

The environmental remains provide no potential for further work.

6.0 Discussion

Trench T1

- 6.1** Context **2** was modern made ground associated with the construction of the present Rye Memorial Care Centre, which was begun in 1994. The large rubble at the base of this deposit had been capped by heavy clay that had obviously derived from the local underlying natural. The shallowness of the overlying topsoil in this area was probably due to a limited supply being available for landscaping. No buried turf line was identified, indicating that the area had been stripped of topsoil prior to development. Observation of the surrounding contours suggested that the ground level in the vicinity of Trench T1 had been raised by perhaps two metres.

Trench T2

- 6.2** Layer **3** probably represented an occupation level, perhaps originally deep, muddy trample probably dating to the late 18th- to early 19th-century. A significant quantity of military finds of this period were recovered during work on the present car park immediately to the east, suggesting that layer **3** was associated with late 18th- to early 19th-century military activity, and perhaps represented the site of a military tented camp or temporary barracks.
- 6.3** Features **5**, **7** and **9** perhaps represented truncated post-holes. The marked similarity of the fills suggested that the features were broadly contemporary. Late 18th- to early 19th-century material from the fill (**10**) of cut **9** suggested that the postulated post-holes were probably associated with the Napoleonic period activity proposed above.

Trench T3

- 6.4** Layer **12** probably represented disturbed material from layer **11**. This disturbance had probably occurred during topsoil stripping prior to the 1990's development immediately to the north.
- 6.5** Layer **11** was almost certainly the same late 18th- to early 19th-century probably military occupation level recorded in Trench T2 as layer **3**.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1** With the exception of a few pieces of residual medieval pottery and tile within post-medieval contexts, no medieval remains were identified and no trace of the suspected medieval kiln was uncovered. Given the large quantities of finds usually associated with kilns, it is likely that the present site lies beyond the area of activity that would have accompanied such a feature.
- 7.2** Photographic evidence from 1968 (Rye Memorial Care Centre archive) shows three rows of 2nd-World War anti-tank obstacles ('dragons' teeth') running E-W through the site, just to the south of Trench T2. Approximately 30 of these objects can still be seen in the grounds of the adjacent ambulance station. The present work did not reveal any trace of these obstacles or of any associated 2nd-World War remains.
- 7.3** The only significant archaeological remains recorded on the site were associated with a late 18th- to early 19th-century occupation layer that probably represented the location of a Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars era military tented camp or temporary barracks. Even semi-permanent barracks, which were not a conversion of an existing building, would probably have only consisted of predominantly timber buildings that could be quickly erected and dismantled. This type of structure would have left little trace.
- 7.4** It is well documented that a barracks of this period existed only c. 150m to the north of the site. At Lewes, the 1803 infantry barracks consisted of 52 buildings each housing 24 men (Hudson *ibid.*), add to this a hospital, kitchens, messes and various other outbuildings, the entire facility would have covered many acres. If Playden barracks were only half the size of Lewes barracks it could easily have extended southwards over the current site. (Although the 18th- to 19th-century occupation layer was not revealed in Trench T1, it may still lie beneath the modern build-up.)
- 7.5** The footprint of the proposed new building is likely to be almost entirely within the area of significant (1.5m+) modern build-up. Although evidence from Trench T3 suggests that the former topsoil was stripped prior to the build-up and that heavy machinery subsequently rutted the exposed surface, archaeological levels may still survive. Consequently, in this particular area, the impact of the proposed development on the archaeology will depend upon the extent of landscaping and the precise build method employed.
- 7.6** Most of the proposed car park area in the south of the site could not be accessed by machine due to the presence of overhead power lines. Consequently, the proposed trial trench (T4) in that area was not excavated and no conclusions as to the presence or otherwise of archaeological remains in that area can be drawn.

8.0 Consideration of Methodology and Confidence Rating

8.1 Trial trenching by machine provides the quickest, most economic means of evaluating large areas, and is best suited to the identification of extensive areas of archaeological activity. Isolated features however, may remain unidentified between trenches. In view of this, and given that modern build-up masks some of the site, a confidence rating of 70% is given for the identification of remains within the northern part of the area of investigation.

9.0 Recommendations for Further Work

- 9.1** The abandonment of Trench 4 was discussed with East Sussex County Council and it was agreed that a watching brief should be maintained in the vicinity of Trench 4 during groundworks to ascertain whether or not archaeological remains survive in that part of site. Given the locally significant discovery of remains relating to Napoleonic occupation of the site, it has also been suggested that a watching brief should be maintained during groundworks in the eastern part of the site in the vicinity of Trenches 2 and 3. It should not be necessary to extend the watching brief across the whole site given that Trench 1 revealed that any such Napoleonic deposits had been truncated. The extent of the watching brief will be influenced by the depth and extent of the proposed development, and in consultation with the East Sussex County Council County Archaeologist.

References

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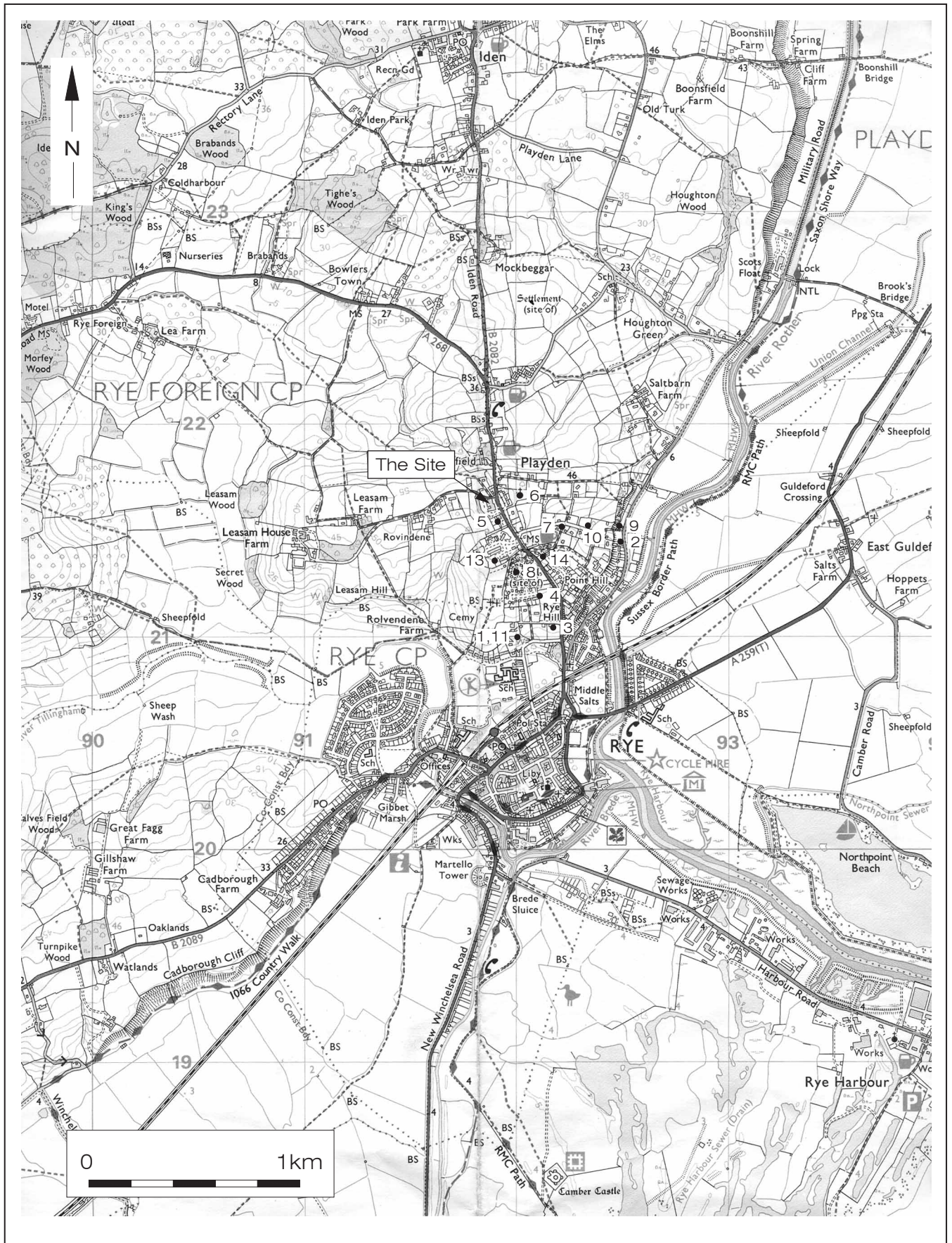
Acknowledgements

The author would like to give particular thanks to Eddie Potter of the Rye Memorial Care Centre for providing invaluable background material on the site.

APPENDIX 1

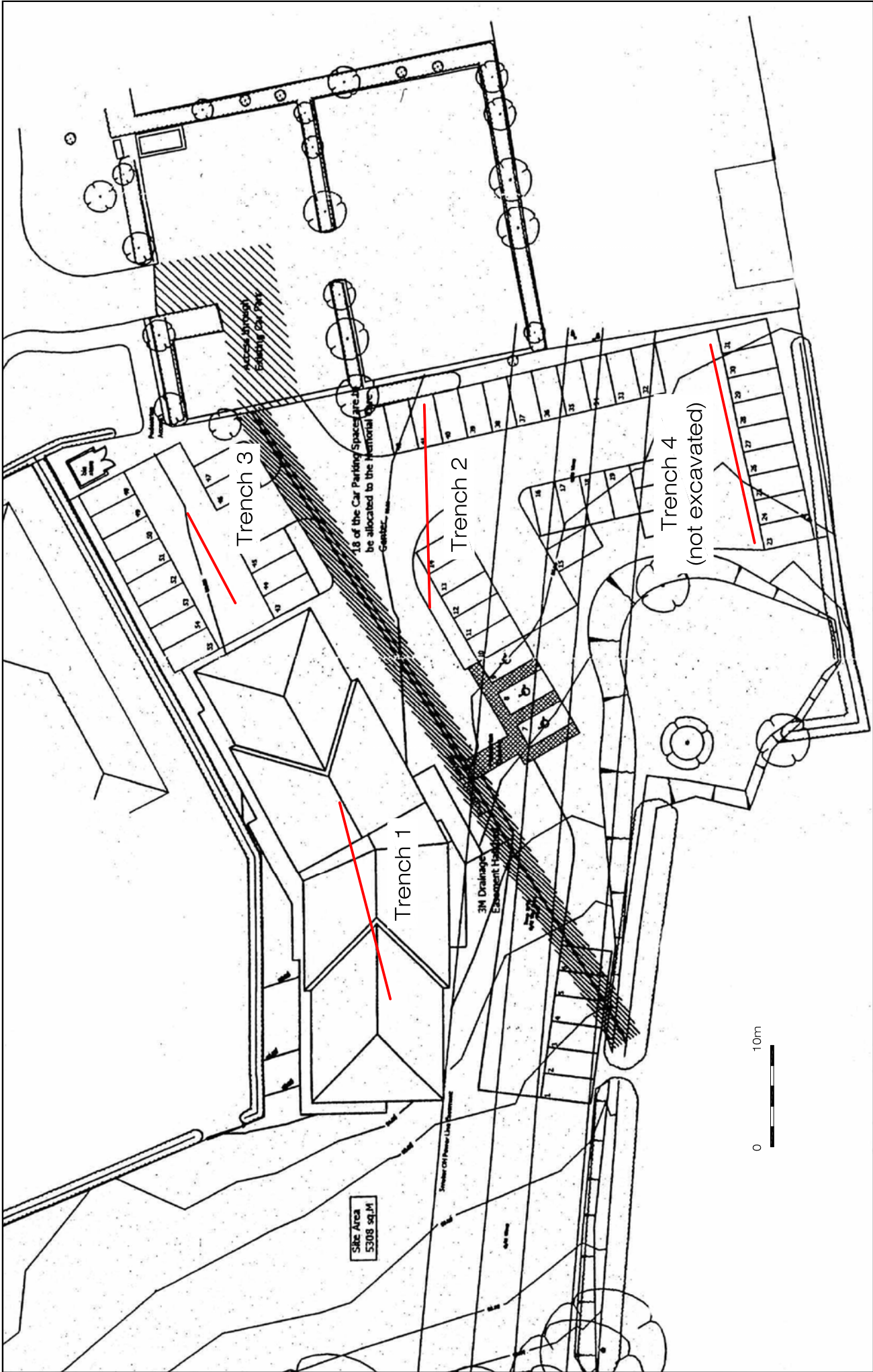
SMR Summary Form

Site Code	RMC 06					
Identification Name and Address	Land off Kiln Drive, Rye Foreign, Rye, East Sussex TN31					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 9185 2160					
Geology	Tunbridge Wells Sand and Wadhurst Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2189					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. X	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field X	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. 9 th -11 th Jan 06	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Weston Architects					
Project Manager	Darryl Palmer					
Project Supervisor	Greg Priestley-Bell					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East were commissioned by Weston Architects to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land at Kiln Drive, Rye Foreign, Rye, East Sussex. Three trial trenches were mechanically excavated. The work revealed a late 18th- to early 19th-century occupation layer and three associated possible post-holes that probably represented the location of a Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars period (1783-1815) military encampment or barracks that was likely to have extended over much of the site.</i></p>						



© ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH EAST			Rye Memorial Care Home	Fig. 1
Ref: 2189	Jan 2006	Drawn by: JLR	Site Location Plan	

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© ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH EAST	Rye Memorial Care Home	Fig. 2
Ref: 2189	Jan 2006	Trench location plan
Drawn by: JLR		

