

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
at Capron House, North Street  
Midhurst, West Sussex**

**NGR: 488650 121866  
(SU 88650 21866)**

**ASE Project No: 5651  
Site Code: CAP12**

**ASE Report No: 2012185  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-133247**

**By John Cook BSc AlfA**



**September 2012**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
at Capron House, North Street  
Midhurst, West Sussex**

**NGR: 488650 121866  
(SU 88650 21866)**

**ASE Project No: 5651  
Site Code: CAP12**

**ASE Report No: 2012185  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-133247**

**By John Cook BSc AlfA**

**September 2012**

**Archaeology South-East  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex  
BN41 1DR**

**Tel: 01273 426830  
Fax: 01273 420866  
Email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)**

**Abstract**

*Archaeology South East were commissioned by Mackeller Schwerdt Architects on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex.*

*The archaeological watching brief uncovered no archaeological activity at the site and no artefacts were recovered. The depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the presence of small fragments of very modern CBM (stock brick etc) may suggest the improvement of soil for agricultural use. Nevertheless, the identification of possible remnant topsoil within TP1 and the depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the apparently untruncated natural horizon identifiable in both test pits suggest that other areas of the site may have potential for archaeological remains.*

## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

**Bibliography**  
**Acknowledgements**

**HER Summary Sheet**  
**OASIS Form**

### **TABLES**

Table 1: Quantification of site archive  
Table 2: TP1 list of recorded contexts  
Table 3: TP2 list of recorded contexts

### **FIGURES**

Figure 1: Site location  
Figure 2: Test pit location plan  
Figure 3: Photographs

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Mackeller Schwerdt Architects on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority to undertake an archaeological watching brief during excavation of geotechnical test pits at Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex (NGR 488650 121866; Figure 1).

### 1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The site is located on the western side of North Street at Capron House, at a height of c. 25m AOD. The site consisted of an area of car park to the front of Capron House and a grassed area to the rear.

1.2.2 According to current data from the British Geological Survey the site lies over Selham Ironshot Sandstone with superficial Sussex Rother Terrace deposits (BGS 2012).

### 1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 In consultation with James Kenny in his capacity as Chichester District Council Archaeology Officer it was agreed that an archaeological watching brief would be maintained on two test pits at Capron House. As the work is pre-planning determination no formal written scheme of investigation was required. However, the work would be carried out to standard watching brief requirements and an illustrated summary report completed.

### 1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 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.

1.4.2 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.

1.4.3 The Midhurst Extensive Urban Survey (Harris 2010) suggests that archaeological investigations in Midhurst should address a wide range of research questions. The relevant research questions are set out below:

#### ***Pre-urban activity***

***RQ1: What was the nature of the palaeo-environment (ancient environment), and the prehistoric, Roman, and early to mid-Anglo-Saxon human activity in the area?***

## **Origins**

**RQ2:** *What evidence is there for Anglo-Saxon settlement or activity, which may have provided a focus for the siting of the later Norman castle and town?*

**RQ3:** *What was the road layout, how did this evolve, and how did it relate to major routes, river crossings, and a transhumant Downland-Wealden economy?*

## **Norman town**

**RQ4:** *What was the extent of the town in the 11th and 12th centuries, and to what degree did it change over this period?*

**RQ5:** *What different zones (e.g. the market place) were there during this period, and how did they change?*

**RQ6:** *What evidence is there for the development of burgage plots?*

**RQ9:** *What evidence is there for the economy of the town, especially with regard to its Wealden hinterland?*

## **Later medieval town**

**RQ14:** *How have tenements/burgage plots developed from the first built-up street frontages to the plots that survive today?*

**RQ15:** *What different zones (e.g. social differentiation, or types of activity: especially consider industry, the putative multiplication of markets, and the role of the Knights Hospitallers) were there during this period, and how did they change?*

## **Post-medieval town**

**RQ18:** *What different zones (e.g. social differentiation, or types of activity: especially consider industries), were there during this period, and how did they change?*

**RQ19:** *How were the medieval and early post-medieval buildings adapted for new functions and changing status (e.g. creation of carriageways, or subdivision of hall houses)?*

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

- 1.5.1 The current report provides results of the archaeological monitoring of two test pits at the site in August 2012. The on-site work was undertaken by John Cook (Archaeological Surveyor). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 A summarised account of the archaeological background of Midhurst is given below from various references (Magilton and Spencer 2001, Harris 2010, ASE 2012). In essence, there appears to have been little traceable human activity in the area until the foundation of the town in the Middle Ages. However, this conclusion must be tempered by the recognition that little recorded fieldwork has been undertaken in the town.
- 2.2 The fortification at St. Anne's Hill may be a Norman foundation, but dating remains somewhat vague (Magilton 2001a). However, documentary sources suggest that some form of settlement existed at Midhurst by the reign of Henry I in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Cooper 1868), and it is generally accepted that Midhurst originated as a Norman planned town (Magilton 2001b).
- 2.3 The new town possessed substantial defences, partly investigated at the Spread Eagle Hotel located at the junction of South Street and West Street, (SEAS 1996, Magilton 2001c). Magilton (*ibid.*) suggests part of the town's defensive ditch was dug shortly after the Conquest. A weekly market had been established in the town by 1223, and Midhurst had gained borough status by 1248, suggesting an expanding economic base (Bleach and Gardiner, 43).
- 2.4 No large scale archaeological work has been undertaken in the core of the medieval town to date. Archaeological work in North Street has been limited to two recording projects. An evaluation at Capron House in 1996 to the north of the current site produced a small assemblage of medieval pottery (Magilton 2001d). No deposits of archaeological significance were located at the former bus station adjacent to Capron House during an evaluation and watching brief undertaken in early 2000 (ASE 2000). A watching brief during replacement of gas mains in Duck Lane and Sheep Lane was equally unproductive (ASE 2011). A watching brief at 14 North Street (ASE 2012b) identified no significant archaeological features. However, a large assemblage of material was recovered from the overburden, including a single struck flint and pottery spanning the late 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Other material included tile, clay tobacco pipes, glassware and animal bone.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The watching brief of two machine excavated geotechnical test pits (Figure 2) was conducted. All monitoring was conducted in accordance with WSCC standards (WSCC 2007) and IfA guidelines (IfA 2001).
- 3.2 All sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features, and all spoil was scanned for the presence of archaeological artefacts.
- 3.3 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East record forms. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.4 A photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive.
- 3.5 The site archive is currently held by Archaeology South-East at the offices in Portslade. The archive will be deposited at Chichester District Museum. It consists of the following material:

Number of Contexts	6
No. of files/paper record	1
Photograph	28 digital images

Table 1: Quantification of site archive



## 4.0 RESULTS

(Figure 3)

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Two test pits were monitored on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2012. Conditions were warm and dry with bright sunshine.

#### 4.1 Geotechnical test pit TP1

4.1.1 TP1 consisted of a 1.5m by 0.7m test pit excavated to 2m in depth and was orientated in a north east to south west alignment. Due to the depth of the test pit it was not entered and all recording was completed from the surface. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

4.1.2 The natural [1/004], a mid yellowish brown coarse grained clay sand, was observed at 23.69 m OD. A layer of possible remnant topsoil [1/003], a mid greyish brown clay sand, lay over the natural and below a layer of made ground [1/002] underlying a made ground and asphalt layer [1/001].

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
1/001	Layer	Asphalt	Test Pit	Test Pit	0.40
1/002	Layer	Made ground	Test Pit	Test Pit	0.20
1/003	Layer	Remnant Topsoil	Test Pit	Test Pit	0.20
1/004	Layer	Natural geology	Test Pit	Test Pit	-

Table 2: TP1 list of recorded contexts

#### 4.1 Geotechnical test pit TP2

4.1.1 TP2 consisted of a 1m square test pit excavated to 1m in depth. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

4.1.2 The natural [2/002], a mid yellowish brown clay sand, was observed at 24.50 m OD. A topsoil [2/001], consisting of a dark greyish brown sandy silt with occasional CBM inclusions, lay over the natural.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
2/001	Layer	Topsoil	Test Pit	Test Pit	0.55
2/002	Layer	Natural geology	Test Pit	Test Pit	-

Table 3: TP2 list of recorded contexts

## **5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The archaeological watching brief uncovered no archaeological activity at the site and no artefacts were recovered.
- 5.2 The depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the presence of small fragments of very modern CBM (stock brick etc) may suggest the improvement of soil for agricultural use.
- 5.3 Nevertheless, the identification of possible remnant topsoil within TP1 and the depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the apparently untruncated natural horizon identifiable in both test pits suggest that other areas of the site may have potential for archaeological remains.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

ASE, 2000. *An Archaeological Watching Brief and Evaluation of The Former Bus Garage Between Lamberts Land e and Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex*. Unpub. ASE Report No. 1194

ASE. 2011. *An Archaeological Watching Brief during Gas Main Replacement Work at Midhurst, West Sussex*. ASE Report 2011259-4840.

ASE 2012a. *14 North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9DJ Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation* Unpub. ASE document

ASE 2012b. *Archaeological Watching Brief Report No. 14 North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex*. ASE Report 2012116

Bleach, J. and Gardiner, M. 1999. Medieval Markets and Ports, in K. Leslie and B. Short, *An Historic Atlas of Sussex*, 42-3

BGS 2012. British Geological Survey, Geology of Britain Viewer, accessed 03.09.2012 [http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer\\_google/googleviewer.html](http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html)

Cooper, W. 1868. Midhurst: its Lords and its inhabitants, SAC **XX**, 1-5

Harris, R. 2010. *Midhurst: Historic Character Assessment Report*. English Heritage

IFA 2001. Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance* documents.

Magilton J. 2001a. Excavations at St. Ann's Hill, 1994, in J. Magilton and T. Spencer, 26-48

Magilton, J. 2001b. The development of Midhurst, in J. Magilton and T. Spencer, 13-18

Magilton, J. 2001c. The borough ditch. Investigations at the Spread Eagle Hotel, in J. Magilton and T. Spencer, 49-66

Magilton, J. 2001d. Excavations south of Capron House, North Street, in J. Magilton and T. Spencer, 67-73

Magilton, J. & Spencer, T. 2001. Midhurst. *Chichester District Archaeology 1*

SEAS 1996. *An Archaeological Evaluation of land at The Spread Eagle Hotel, Midhurst, West Sussex*. Unpub. South Eastern Archaeological Services Report No. 507

WSCC, 2007, *Recommended Standard Archaeological Conditions*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank Mackeller Schwerdt Architects and the South Downs National Park Authority for commissioning the work, and Mr James Kenny, Chichester District Archaeology Officer for his input at all stages of the project. The co-operation and hospitality of the Morgan Sindall on-site team is also gratefully acknowledged.

HER Summary Form

Site Code	CAP12					
Identification Name and Address	Capron House, North Street, Midhurst					
County, District &/or Borough	West Sussex, Chichester District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	488650 121866					
Geology	Selham Ironshot Sandstone with superficial Sussex Rother Terrace deposits					
Arch. South-East Project Number	5651					
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. 23.08.2012	Other		
Sponsor/Client	<i>Mackeller Schwerdt Architects</i>					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin/Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	John Cook					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern		
<p>Summary</p> <p><i>Archaeology South East were commissioned by Mackeller Schwerdt Architects on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex.</i></p> <p><i>The archaeological watching brief uncovered no archaeological activity at the site and no artefacts were recovered. The depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the presence of small fragments of very modern CBM (stock brick etc) may suggest the improvement of soil for agricultural use. Nevertheless, the identification of possible remnant topsoil within TP1 and the depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the apparently untruncated natural horizon identifiable in both test pits suggest that other areas of the site may have potential for archaeological remains.</i></p>						

## OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-133247**

---

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex
Short description of the project	Archaeology South East were commissioned by Mackeller Schwerdt Architects on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex. The archaeological watching brief uncovered no archaeological activity at the site and no artefacts were recovered. The depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the presence of small fragments of very modern CBM (stock brick etc) may suggest the improvement of soil for agricultural use. Nevertheless, the identification of possible remnant topsoil within TP1 and the depth of topsoil in TP2 along with the apparently untruncated natural horizon identifiable in both test pits suggest that other areas of the site may have potential for archaeological remains.
Project dates	Start: 23-08-2012
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	5651 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	CAP12 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None

---

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX CHICHESTER MIDHURST Capron House
Postcode	GU29 9DJ
Study area	100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 88650 21866 50 0 50 59 19 N 000 44 12 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 22.49m Max: 25.19m

---

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Chichester District Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin/Dan Swift
Project supervisor	John Cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mackeller Schwerdt Architects

---

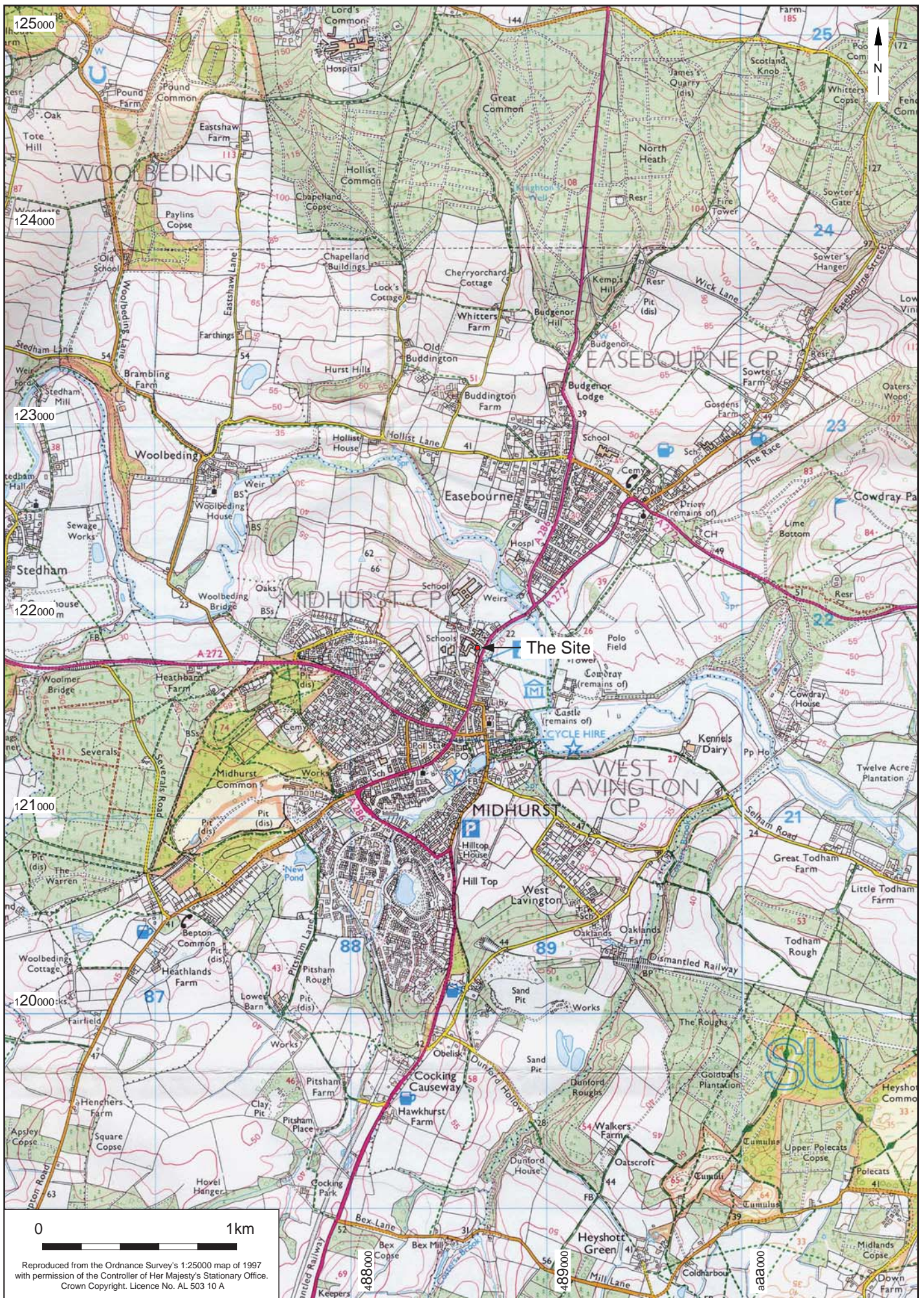
**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, J.
Other bibliographic details	ASE Report No. 2012185
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	ASE
Place of issue or publication	Portslade
Description	ASE Client Report. A4-sized with cover logos

---

Entered by	Dan Swift (d.swift@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	4 September 2012



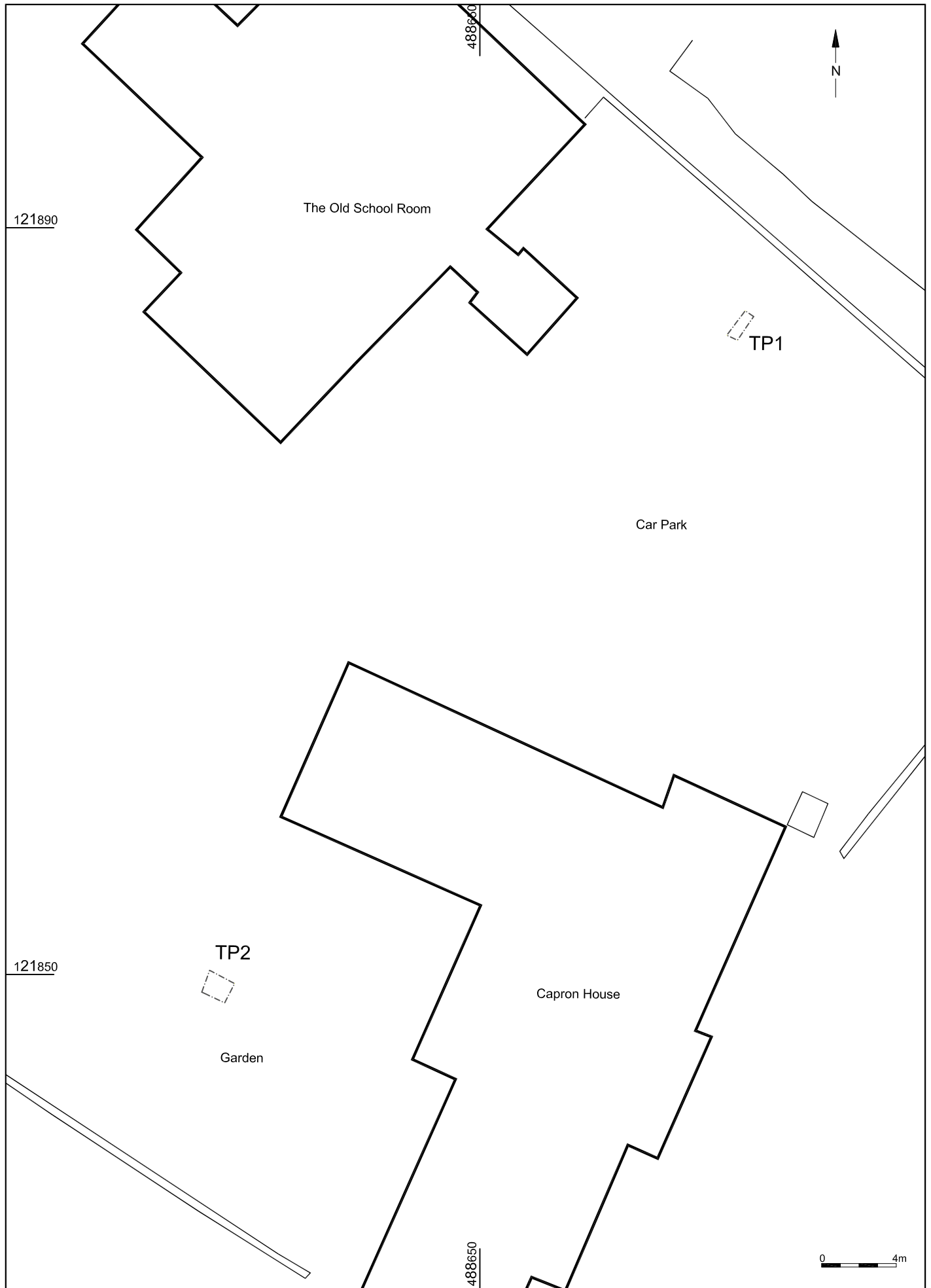


Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's 1:25000 map of 1997 with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. Crown Copyright. Licence No. AL 503 10 A

© Archaeology South-East		Capron House, North Street, Midhurst	
Project Ref: 5651	August 2012	Site location	
Report Ref: 2012185	Drawn by: JC		

Fig. 1





© Archaeology South-East		Capron House, North Street, Midhurst	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 5651	Sept 2012	Test pit location plan	
Report Ref: 2012185	Drawn by: JC		



Test pit 1, facing north west



Test pit 2, facing south east

© Archaeology South-East		Capron House, North Street, Midhurst	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 5651	Sept 2012	Photographs	
Report Ref: 2012185	Drawn by: JC		

Head Office  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex BN41 1DR  
Tel: +44(0)1273 426830 Fax: +44(0)1273 420866  
email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.archaeologyse.co.uk](http://www.archaeologyse.co.uk)



London Office  
Centre for Applied Archaeology  
Institute of Archaeology  
University College London  
31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1 0PY  
Tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778  
Fax: +44(0)20 7383 2572  
Web: [www.ucl.ac.uk/caa](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/caa)

The contracts division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University College London 

©Archaeology South-East