

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Courtsale Farm, Cliffe, Kent**

**NGR 573564 176706**

**Medway Borough Council  
Planning Reference No: P/12/01658/F**

**ASE Project No: 6444  
Site Code: CFC 13**

**ASE Report No: 2013294  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-164305**



**By Simon Stevens BA MIFA**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Courtsale Farm, Cliffe, Kent**

**NGR 573564 176706**

**Medway Borough Council  
Planning Reference No: P/12/01658/F**

**ASE Project No: 6444  
Site Code: CFC 13**

**ASE Report No: 2013294  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-164305**

**By Simon Stevens BA MIFA**

**With contributions by  
Luke Barber and Elke Raemen**

**December 2013**

**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**

*Following on from archaeological evaluation of the site, an archaeological watching brief was maintained during mechanical and manual groundworks for redevelopment work at Courtssole Farm, Cliffe, Kent. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting.*

*No archaeological features or finds were recorded in the watching brief and only modern deposits were encountered as the groundworks were not deep enough to impact any of the archaeological deposits exposed in the earlier evaluation.*

## **CONTENTS**

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

**Bibliography**  
**Acknowledgements**

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

## **TABLES**

- Table 1: Quantification of the site archive
- Table 2: Recorded contexts
- Table 3: Quantification of the finds assemblage

## **FIGURES**

- Figure 1: Site location
- Figure 2: Site plan showing monitored areas

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Following on from archaeological evaluation of the site, Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for redevelopment work at Courtsole Farm, Cliffe, Kent (Figure 1; NGR 573564 176706).

### **1.2 Topography and Geology**

1.2.1 The site is a roughly rectangular parcel of land bounded by Pond Hill to the east, St Helen's Church to the south, Pickles Way to the north and open fields to the west. It lies on a considerable north facing slope overlooking the Thames Estuary (and the new Thames Gateway complex on the opposite side of the river) and has been subject to significant terracing towards the southern site boundary.

1.2.2 According to current data available from the British Geological Survey, the underlying bedrock is Lewes Nodular Chalk. There is no recorded superficial geology (BGS 2013).

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 Planning permission has been granted by Medway Council for the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of thirteen new residential units and associated accesses and parking at the site (planning reference MC/13/0604). Following consultation between Medway Council and the Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council (HCGKCC) (Medway Council's advisers on archaeological issues) a condition (no. 22) was attached to the permission requiring that:

*'No development shall take place until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and time table which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved specification.'*

*Reason: To safeguard the archaeological interest in the site in accordance with Policy BNE21 of the Midway Local Plan 2003.'*

1.3.2 The first element of the programme of archaeological work was an evaluation including trial trenches and test-pits (Figure 2). This work was undertaken by ASE in September 2013 and resulted in the identification of buried archaeological features (ASE 2013).

1.3.3 Following consultation between CgMs and HCGKCC it was decided that a 'strip, map and sample' excavation and associated watching brief would be undertaken at the site in order to meet the terms of the planning condition. A

*specification* for this work was duly produced by HCGKCC, outlining the techniques to be used in the field, and in the production of a report and an archive (HCGKCC 2013).

## **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

### 1.4.1 The aims stated in the *specification* (*ibid.*) were to:

*‘to clarify the character and extent of the archaeological remains identified during the earlier evaluation;*

*to understand the character, form, function and date of any archaeological activities present on the site;*

*to include analysis of the spatial organisation of such activities on the site through examination of the distribution of artefactual and environmental assemblages;*

*to identify if there is any further evidence for Romano-British activity on the site and relate this to previous findings;*

*to clarify the nature of Middle to Late Bronze Age activity on the site;*

*to place any findings into the wider prehistoric, Romano-British and early-medieval landscape and relate this to existing archaeological understanding of the area; and*

*to contribute to an understanding of the environmental history of Cliffe.’*

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

### 1.5.1 The current report provides the results of the archaeological work at the site carried out by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist) in September and October 2013. The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and by Dan Swift (Post-Excavation Manager).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

2.1 The following information is drawn from the ASE evaluation report (ASE 2013) which in turn utilised information gathered during a desk-based assessment (DBA) for the Cliffe Pools RSPB Reserve, c. 500m to the west of the current site (ASE 2007).

### **2.2 Prehistoric**

2.2.1 Evidence for the early prehistoric period is sparse in the area. Three Mesolithic sites are known to the west of the site, two comprising antler mattocks and the third comprising an assemblage of worked flint.

2.2.2 The Bronze Age and Iron Age periods are better represented although the sites listed are predominantly finds-spots; a hoard of eight Bronze Age metal objects including a sword; a palstave found at West Court Farm and an axehead found on the clifftop overlooking the RSPB reserve. One possible settlement of possible Bronze Age or Iron Age date also exists at East Tilbury.

### **2.3 Romano-British**

2.3.1 Cliffe is known to have been the location of a Roman pottery industry due to a number of favourable factors such as the availability of workable clay, tempering material (shell, sand and flint) and an unlimited supply of water. The industry produced a range of products, including Cliffe Peninsula Grey Wares, Hoo Flagons, Rochester Mortaria and Medway Estuary Grey and Fine Wares. The industry is known to have been in operation from the mid-1st century until the late 4th century AD.

2.3.2 Over the years large quantities of Roman pottery have been recovered from the surrounding marshes, particularly from the foreshore between Cliffe Creek and Lower Hope Point. Evidence for industrial structures has been located during excavations in the early 1960's. The location is vague but the remains comprised spreads of burnt clay, post-holes and a circular unfired clay structure, thought to be associated with salt extraction.

2.3.3 As well as industrial activity, there is also evidence for Roman settlement activity at four sites; one is represented by a rammed chalk floor while the remainder relate to burial sites including a 1st/2nd century infant cremation burial and two small inhumation burials.

### **2.4 Anglo-Saxon**

2.4.1 There is some archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity in the area, but this is scattered and sparse. A possible settlement site exists at West Court Farm, c. 1km to the south-west of the site.

## **2.5 Medieval**

2.5.1 From the 12th century onwards sea levels rose making the area less viable as an area for settlement. Throughout the period that followed efforts at land reclamation were made represented by embankments, sea walls and revetments.

## **2.6 Post-Medieval**

2.6.1 By the 17th century the area had more or less been reclaimed, with drainage channels across the area clearly delineated on the Russell map of 1697. The reclaimed marshes were predominantly used for pasture. This farming activity continued throughout the post-medieval activity.

## **2.7 Previous archaeological work on the site**

2.7.1 An L-shaped ditch of uncertain date was identified in Trench 1. Middle to Late Bronze Age pottery was recovered alongside a fragment of brick, almost certainly a later find and some animal bone within an apparently disturbed upper fill of the ditch.

2.7.2 Trench 2 was abandoned and immediately backfilled due to significant quantities of buried asbestos.

2.7.3 Trench 3 revealed a sequence of cut features, including pits and a hearth or fire pit, a possible posthole, a large cut, possibly a chalk quarry and a gully. The features are difficult to date with any certainty and may range from Romano-British to medieval or post-medieval.

2.7.4 Three test pits were also monitored; all three were devoid of archaeology.

2.7.5 Significant modern truncation was evident within the site area; most notably along the southern site boundary where the hill on which St Helen's Church sits has been heavily terraced to provide a level platform for farm buildings and storage areas within Courtsale Farmyard. Relatively intact topsoil and subsoil horizons survived towards the northern site boundary.



### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 A watching brief was maintained during initial intrusive groundworks associated with the redevelopment work, namely the mechanical ground reduction for the access road in the north end of the site (Figure 2). A watching brief also maintained during limited ground reduction in the south-eastern part of the site.
- 3.2 During the course of the fieldwork it became apparent that the area designated for 'strip, map and sample' , would not to be subject to significant ground disturbance and that therefore any archaeological deposits would be left safely *in situ*. It was therefore agreed that this area would not be stripped and that the archaeological work would be limited to a watching brief across areas of the site that would be subject to excavation.
- 3.3 All work was conducted in line with the specification (HCGKCC 2013) and in line with accepted professional standards (IfA 2008).
- 3.4 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded on standard ASE recording 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 forms part of the site archive which is currently held by Archaeology South-East at the offices in Portslade, and will be offered to a suitable local museum in due course. The archive consists of the following material:

Number of Contexts	8
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	1
Photographs	22
Bulk finds	1 small box

Table 1: Quantification of the site archive

## 4.0 RESULTS (Figure 2)

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Monitoring of the groundworks revealed a straightforward sequence of deposits.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
100	Layer	Topsoil	450mm
101	Layer	Former Access Road	210mm
102	Layer	Made Ground	250mm
103	Layer	'Natural' Chalk	-
104	Layer	Topsoil	Unknown
105	Layer	Topsoil	270mm
106	Layer	Subsoil	360mm
107	Layer	'Natural' Chalk	-

Table 2: Recorded contexts

### 4.2 The Access Road

4.2.1 Four contexts were encountered during this phase of the watching brief, the monitoring of a c.5m wide strip for the construction of a haul road. The latest was a layer of mid-brown silty clay humic topsoil, context [100], which partly overlay the existing access track, context [101]. This comprised a mixture of topsoil, brick rubble, crushed concrete and stone, builder's sand and laid slabs of concrete. The levelling material underlying the access road, context [103], was also encountered and partially removed. It consisted of the same material as the road itself, but with a higher percentage of topsoil.

4.2.2 This deposit directly overlay the 'natural' chalk, which was revealed only intermittently during the construction of the new access road. No archaeological features were observed in the revealed surfaces of the chalk. On either side of the existing road, which was c.3.5m in width, the topsoil, context [100] directly overlay the chalk, context [101]. There was no evidence of a subsoil layer, strongly suggesting that the area had been stripped of overburden sometime in the past.

4.2.3 A small assemblage of material of late post-medieval material, including a milk bottle from the former farm itself, was recovered from the topsoil.

### 4.3 The Southern Area

4.3.1 A further four contexts were encountered and recorded during ground reduction in the southern part of the site. Much of this area was subjected to only superficial ground reduction.

4.3.2 In the northern part of this area, a maximum of 70mm of a dark brown humic topsoil, context [104] was removed. No finds were recovered from this material.

- 4.3.3 Another area of the site, to the rear of Thames Terrace was also reduced by only a small depth, in this case c. 50mm. The only context encountered in this area was a similar humic topsoil, recorded as context [105]. However, as the strip was continued southwards beyond the extent of Trench 3 the depth increased revealing a straightforward sequence of the topsoil, context [105], which directly overlay an intermittent layer of yellowish brown silty clay subsoil, context [106], which in turn directly overlay the 'natural' chalk, context [107].
- 4.3.4 There was some recent truncation of the surface of the chalk but no obvious features of antiquity were recognised. A small assemblage of post-medieval material was recovered from the topsoil.

## 5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered from topsoil [100] and [105]. Finds were all washed and dried or air dried as appropriate and subsequently quantified by count and weight. They were bagged by material and context and packaged and stored following IFA guidelines (2008). Animal bone from the environmental residues is included in the following report as well.

Context	Pottery	wt (g)	CB M	wt (g)	FCF	wt(g)	Iro n	wt (g)	Glass	wt (g)	CTP	wt (g)
100	4	378							1	304		
105	56	546	14	652	4	364	2	80	4	30	20	44
<b>Total</b>	60	924	14	652	4	364	2	80	5	334	20	44

Table 3: Quantification of the finds

### 5.2 The Pottery by Luke Barber

5.2.1 The archaeological monitoring recovered a medium-sized assemblage of pottery from the site. All was recovered from just two individually numbered contexts.

5.2.2 Context [100] produced an assemblage that can all be placed between c. 1875 and 1925. Sherds consist of a plate and a bowl in refined whiteware (2/50g), a fragment from an English porcelain saucer (2g) and the rim from an internally white-slipped yellow ware water closet (324g).

5.2.3 Context [105] produced a much larger and slightly more chronologically diverse assemblage of pottery. Although most can be placed between c. 1850 and 1925 there is a scatter of earlier sherds. The earliest material can be placed into a late 16<sup>th</sup>- to 17<sup>th</sup>- century date range. The four sherds involved consist of parts of a Frechen stoneware bottle (7g), local hard-fired earthenware vessel (15g) and bodysherds from yellow-glazed Border ware (7g) and buff green-glazed Wealden earthenware (5g).

5.2.4 In addition there are one or two glazed red sandy earthenware sherds that may be of the late 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. The remaining assemblage from [105] represents a domestic group of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Coarsewares include five sherds (45g) from at least four different unglazed earthenware flower pots and two, including one from a bowl from glazed red earthenware vessels.

5.2.5 There are four (65g) yellow ware sherds, including one from a late mixing bowl with internal white slip, two in English stoneware (18g) and one (5g) in black-glazed Jackfield-type ware. The industrialised finewares are dominated by transfer-printed wares with blue (8/50g), black (3/11g), brown (1/8g) and purple (2/9g) colour transfers all being present (typically of floral designs). A range of plate, dishes and bowls are represented. Refined whitewares are also common (18/97g) and derive from a number of cups, jars and plates sometimes with blue or green sponged decoration or plain moulding. There are also three sherds (24g) from English porcelain saucers.

5.2.6 Taken as a whole the pottery would suggest low-level refuse disposal between the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a subsequent notable lull in the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, before significant discard began between c. 1850/75 and 1900/25.

### 5.3 The Animal Bone by Gemma Ayton

5.3.1 A total of 126g of animal bone was retrieved from four samples (<1>, <2>, <3> and <5>). The majority of the fragments are small and poorly preserved though it has been possible to identify a limited range of taxa. Sample <1> contains two small, round vertebrae that may derive from a shark or ray. Sample <2> contains a cattle phalanx as well as evidence of anuran and small mammal. Very few of the bones from sample <3> are identifiable though a small vertebra recovered from the 2-4mm fraction probably derives from a mouse (*Mus/Apodemus sp.*). Sample <5> contains the proximal articulation from a cattle femur.

5.3.2 Due to the size of this assemblage, it holds no potential for further analysis and no further work is required.

### 5.4 Other Finds by Elke Raemen

5.4.1 Other than pottery, topsoil [100] also contained a complete clear glass 20<sup>th</sup>-century milk bottle (H160mm, base di 60mm). "FILMER&SON COURTSOLE FARM CLIFFE" is stencilled in red paint across the body.

5.4.2 Thirteen roof tile fragments and a small brick fragment, dated to the 18<sup>th</sup>- to 19<sup>th</sup>-century, were recovered from topsoil [105].

5.4.3 In addition, the context contained a green glass wine bottle base, a colourless glass cylindrical bottle fragment, a colourless jar rim fragment and a body sherd from a green cylindrical vase. Pieces are all of mid 19<sup>th</sup>- to early 20<sup>th</sup>-century date.

5.4.4 Twenty clay tobacco pipe (CTP) fragments were recovered as well, including a straight cut mouthpiece and 16 plain stem fragments, all dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. A fragment with the start of a fluted bowl, dated 1850-1910, was found, as well as a bowl fragment dated 1840-80 with oak leaf decorated seams. Finally, a complete bowl of similar date and with maker's marks AR moulded in relief on the spur sides was recovered. The piece has a moulded shield with cross under a horse with rider on either side of the bowl. Further research would be required to establish the maker; however, the pipe bears close resemblance to pipes from Rochester (pers. collection).

5.4.5 Topsoil [105] also contained a general purpose iron nail fragment, an iron bolt with screw thread and fragments of both Welsh and West County roofing slate.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 No archaeological features or finds of note were recorded in the watching brief and only modern deposits were encountered.
- 6.2 The monitored groundworks concerned the removal of only a thin skim of modern surface material which was 0.66m thick along the route of the Access Road and between 0.50m and 0.70m thick in the Southern Watching Brief Area.
- 6.3 Therefore, the groundwork impacts were not deep enough to reach the archaeological deposits exposed in Evaluation Trench 3 or to address any of the research aims listed in section 1.4 of this report.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

ASE 2007. *Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment of Cliffe Pools RSPB Reserve, Kent*. ASE Report No. 2007094 (Project No. 3126)

ASE 2013. *Archaeological Evaluation Report - Courtssole Farm, Cliffe, Kent, ME3 7QT*. Unpub. ASE Report No. 2013233 (Project No. 6318)

BGS 2013. British Geological Survey, Geology of Britain Viewer, accessed 14.11.13  
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Heritage Conservation Group Kent County Council 2013. *Specification for archaeological strip, map and sample excavations and an archaeological watching brief of Land at Courtssole Farm, Pond Hill, Cliffe, Rochester, Kent ME3 7QS*

Institute of Archaeologists 2008. *IFA Standards and Guidance Documents*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank CgMs for commissioning the archaeological work at the site and the Heritage Conservation Group at Kent County Council for their input at all stages of the project. The understanding and hospitality of the on-site contractors is also gratefully acknowledged.

## HER Summary Sheet

Site Code	CFC 13				
Identification Name and Address	Courtsale Farm, Cliffe				
County, District &/or Borough	Medway, Kent				
OS Grid Refs.	573564 176706				
Geology	Chalk				
ASE Project Number	6444				
Type of Fieldwork			Watching Brief		
Type of Site	Brown field				
Dates of Fieldwork			WB. 04.11.2013 – 08.11.2013		
Sponsor/Client	CgMs Consulting				
Project Manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson				
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens				
Period Summary					
			PM		
<b>Summary</b>					
<p>Following on from archaeological evaluation of the site, an archaeological watching brief was maintained during mechanical and manual groundworks for redevelopment work at Courtsale Farm, Cliffe, Kent. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting.</p> <p>No archaeological features or finds were recorded in the watching brief and only modern deposits were encountered as the groundworks were not deep enough to impact any of the archaeological deposits exposed in the earlier evaluation.</p>					



## OASIS Form

### OASIS ID: archaeol6-164305

---

#### Project details

Project name	Courtsale Farm, Cliffe, Kent
Short description of the project	Following on from archaeological evaluation of the site, an archaeological watching brief was maintained during mechanical and manual groundworks for redevelopment work at Courtsale Farm, Cliffe, Kent. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting. No archaeological features or finds were recorded in the watching brief and only modern deposits were encountered as the groundworks were not deep enough to impact any of the archaeological deposits exposed in the earlier evaluation.
Project dates	Start: 04-11-2013 End: 08-11-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	6444 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	CFC 13 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	P/12/01658/F - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CLAY PIPE Post Medieval
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

---

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT MEDWAY CLIFFE AND CLIFF WOODS Courtsale Farm, Cliffe
Postcode	ME3 7QT

Study area                    3.00 Hectares

Site coordinates            TQ 7356 7670 51 0 51 27 43 N 000 29 55 E Point

---

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation            Archaeology South-East

Project brief originator            Heritage Conservation Group at Kent County Council

Project design originator            Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager            Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson

Project supervisor            Simon Stevens

Type of sponsor/funding body            Client

Name of sponsor/funding body            CgMs Consulting

---

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type            Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title            Archaeological Watching Brief Report - Courtsale Farm, Cliffe, Kent

Author(s)/Editor(s)            Stevens, S.

Other bibliographic details            ASE Report No. 2013294

Date            2013

Issuer or publisher            Archaeology South-East

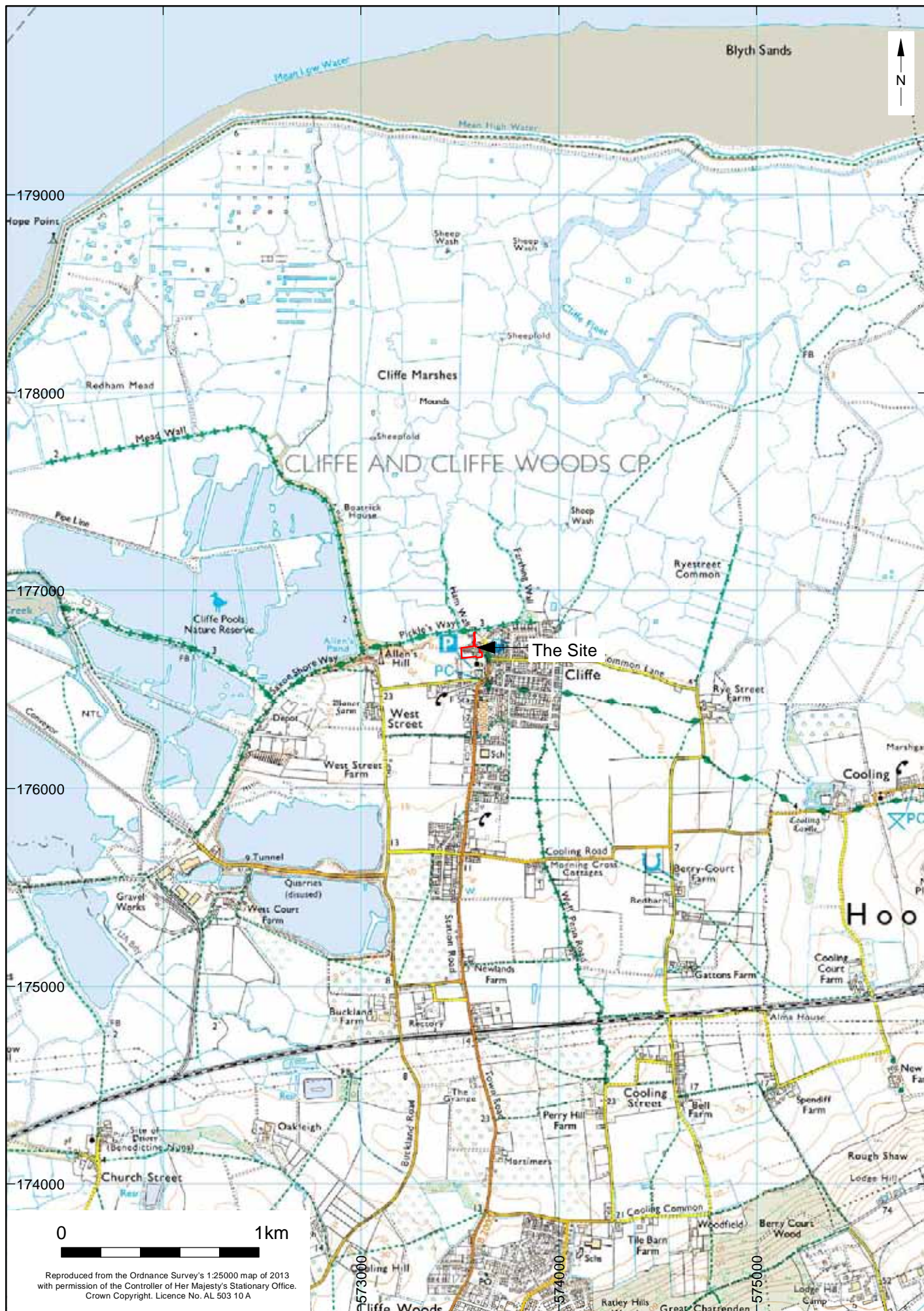
Place of issue or publication            Portslade, East Sussex

Description            ASE client report. A4-sized with cover logos

---

Entered by            Dan Swift (d.swift@ucl.ac.uk)

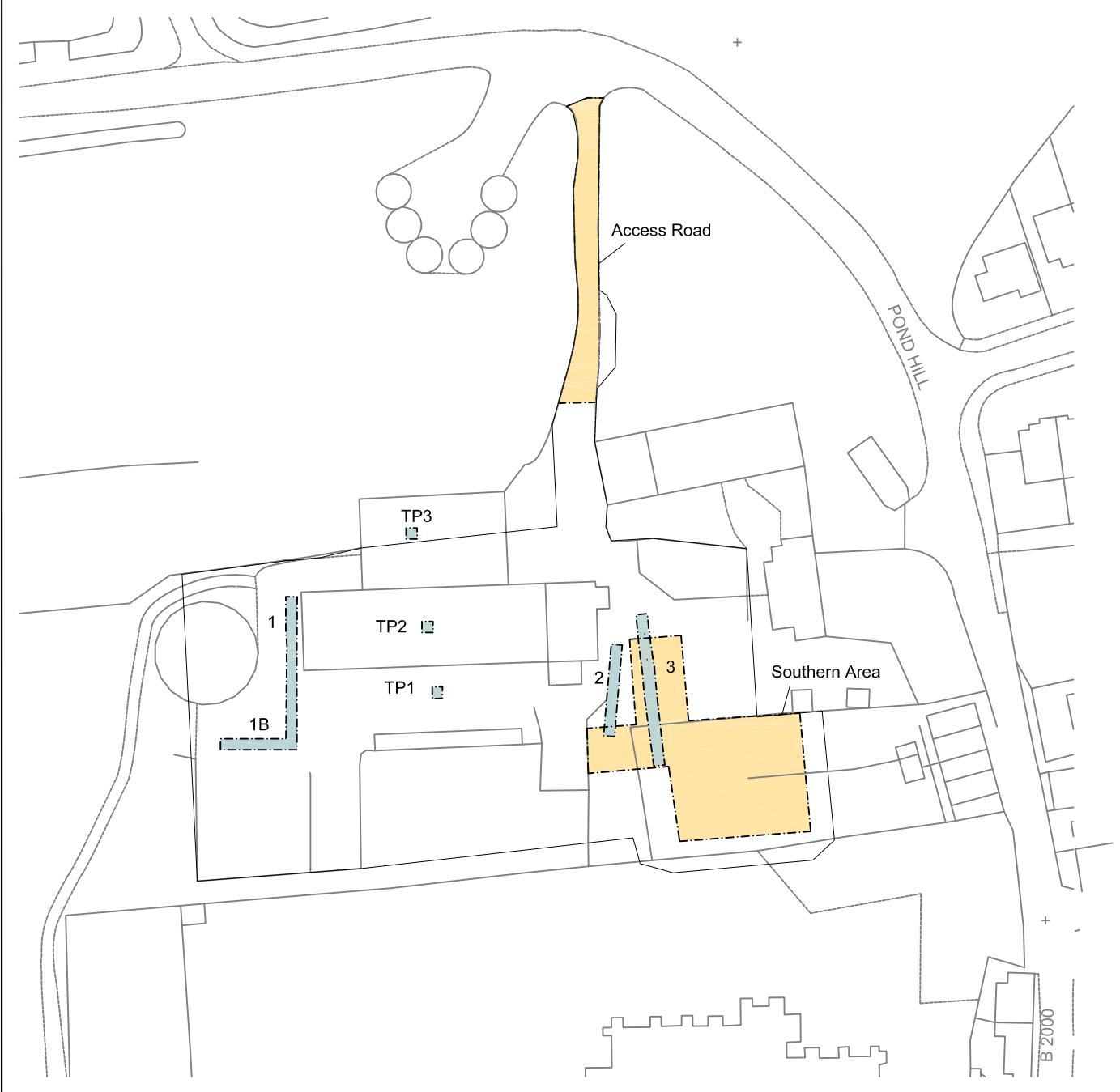
Entered on            12 December 2013



© Archaeology South-East		Coursele Farm, Cliffe	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 6444	November 2013	Site location	
Report Ref: 2013294	Drawn by: JLR		

+ 573500, 176820

+ 573620, 176820



- 2013 Evaluation
- 2013 Watching brief

0 20m

© Archaeology South-East		Cliffe, Courtssole Farm	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 6444	Dec 2013	Site plan	
Report Ref: 2013294	Drawn by: RHC		

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