

**Southerham Grey Pit Bank Repair,
Southerham, Lewes, East Sussex**

NGR 542484 109294

Marine License L/2015/00001

**Project No: 7287
Site Code: SGP 15**

**ASE Report No. 2015040
OASIS ID: archaeo16-202589**

Simon Stevens BA MCIfA

February 2015

**Archaeology South-East
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**Archaeological and Geoarchaeological
Watching Brief Report**

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Abstract

An archaeological and geoarchaeological watching brief was maintained during riverbank stabilisation works on the River Ouse near Southerham Grey Pit, Southerham, Lewes, East Sussex (NGR 542484 109294). Excavations were undertaken near the site of a borehole carried out in 1975 which revealed a deposit of peat some 4.90m below ground level, which had accumulated during the Late Mesolithic-Neolithic period.

The groundworks involved the removal of c.3.0m of material to a maximum depth of c.3.9m below ground level to form a vertical face on an 18.0m long stretch of the riverbank. The encountered deposits consisted of topsoil, made ground and alluvium, with the excavation not deep enough to disturb any possible underlying peat.

No archaeological features were noted in any of the layers and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

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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 Royal Haskoning DHV Limited (RHDHV) to undertake an archaeological and geoarchaeological watching brief during repairs to the bank of the River Ouse near Southerham Grey Pit, Southerham, Lewes, East Sussex (NGR 542484 109294) (Figure 1).

1.2 Topography and Geology

1.2.1 The site is located on the eastern bank of the River Ouse, immediately to the west of the A26, close to the Cliffe Industrial Estate, and immediately upstream of the Southern Railway Bridge. The River Ouse is tidal at this point.

1.2.2 According to current data from the British Geological Survey the underlying bedrock at the site consists of Zig Zag Chalk formation overlain by superficial deposits of alluvial clays, silts, sands and peat associated with the River Ouse (BGS 2015).

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 As the River Ouse is tidal at this point and the repair of the bank would require groundworks at a level below the Mean High Water Springs tide mark, the project required the grant of a Marine License under the terms of Part 4 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

1.3.2 An application for a Marine License (ref. MLA/2014/00486) was submitted to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) – an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by DEFRA and responsible for the grant of Marine Licenses - in October 2014. English Heritage (in their capacity as archaeological advisers to the Environment Agency) commented upon the application. Their initial response given to the MMO in November 2014 was that:

‘No development shall take place until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, to include a desk based assessment and modelling exercise, and following this if deemed appropriate by English Heritage and the East Sussex County Council Archaeologists, a programme of work which may include evaluation, recording, or sampling, through to mitigation by record or mitigation by design’

1.3.3 Following consultation between RHDHV, the MMO and the County Archaeologists from East Sussex County Council, it was agreed that the scope of the works did not justify this approach. Instead it was agreed with all of the parties that a condition should be attached to Marine License (granted in January 2015, ref. L/2015/00001/1) stating that:

'The License Holder must ensure that no development shall take place until the License Holder has secured the implementation of a programme of fieldwork in the form of a geoarchaeological watching brief on the embankment trimming works aspect of the scheme, to be undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the MMO.'

- 1.3.4 Subsequently a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by RHDHV. It outlined the methodology to be used in the field, and in the reporting and archiving of the results (RHDHV, 2015).

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The aims of the archaeological/geoarchaeological work given in the WSI (*ibid.*) were to:

'record the stratigraphy of the bank deposits, or any related artefacts that may be revealed, and to collect samples for further geoarchaeological analysis, if required.'

1.5 Scope of Report

- 1.5.1 The current report provides results of the monitoring of groundworks at the site in late January and early February 2015. The on-site work was undertaken by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist), with geoarchaeological support from Kristina Krawiec (Geoarchaeological Specialist). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 All entries on the East Sussex County Council Historic Environment Record within a 500m radius of the site were examined. Given the situation of the site directly on the bank of the river, some distance to the south-east of the centre of the historic town of Lewes, most were not directly relevant, but a summary is given below.

2.2 Prehistoric

2.2.1 Palaeolithic flintwork has been recovered from deposits associated with the River Ouse, including a handaxe found on the opposite side of the river at Mountfield Road. Other Palaeolithic material has been located at Piltdown, Isfield, Rodmell, Southease, Piddinghoe and Newhaven (listed in entry for HER No. MES 1656).

2.2.2 Stray finds of later prehistoric flintwork and occasional pottery are known from the general area, as well as the location of barrows on the higher ground. A limited quantity of prehistoric flintwork was recovered during archaeological works on the Southerham to Beddingham and Glynde road junction improvements. The material came from near Ranscombe Hill, and no prehistoric material was recovered during works for the roundabout closer to the current site (Brossler, Pope & Preston, 2009).

2.2.3 In addition, a borehole sunk close to the site in 1975 (Figure 2), revealed the presence of a peat deposit at a depth of 4.9m below the ground level which was sealed by layers of made ground and alluvium. Radiocarbon dating of samples from this layer produced a date range of 5000BP to 4305BP, which dated the onset of peat accumulation to have occurred in Late Mesolithic into the Neolithic period (Appendix 1 - KCC Highways Lab; Borehole Log). This deposit was c.1.0m thick and a change in depositional environment is indicated by the presence of overlying alluvial blue grey silt clays. No palaeoenvironmental analysis was carried out on the deposits at the site beyond radiocarbon dating and, therefore, the type of environment that these deposits represent is unknown.

2.3 Romano-British

2.3.1 Although excavations in the town of Lewes have produced little in the way of Romano-British material. Stray finds of Roman coins and other artefacts have been made in the area, including a '*small bronze Roman statuette*' found at Southerham but since lost (HER No, MES 1648). There is also a report of a Roman urn and coins found in Southerham, again now lost (HER No. MES 1649). These reports arguably suggest the presence of Romano-British settlement in the area.

2.3.2 However more tangible remains of a farmstead with associated pottery dating from the 1st century through to the 4th century were found during works on the A27, again at Ranscombe Hill (Bedwin, 1978).

2.4 Anglo-Saxon

- 2.4.1 There have been numerous finds of Anglo-Saxon material in the Ouse valley, including cemeteries and settlements (Stevens *in prep.*). For instance, a *grubenhaus* and later Anglo-Saxon material have been excavated at Itford Farm at Beddingham (James, 2002; Butler, 2009).

2.5 Medieval

- 2.5.1 The town of Lewes was a major medieval administrative, religious and military centre, and numerous excavations in the town have revealed extensive remains from this period.

2.6 Post-Medieval

- 2.6.1 Similarly, Lewes continued as an important centre in the post-medieval period, reflected in the survival of numerous historic and listed buildings in the town, and in its continued role as the county town of East Sussex.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The mechanical removal of part of the riverbank was observed by a suitably qualified archaeologist, supported by an office-based geoarchaeologist. All sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features, and all available spoil was scanned for archaeological artefacts.
- 3.2 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East context record forms. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.3 A full photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive. The site archive is currently held by Archaeology South-East at the offices in Portslade, and has been offered to Barbican House Museum in Lewes in due course. The archive consists of the following material:

Number of Contexts	3
No. Of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	-
Bulk Samples	-
Digital Photographs	63
Bulk finds	-

Table 1: Quantification of Site Archive

4.0 RESULTS (Figure 2)

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 An archaeological and geoarchaeological watching brief was maintained during mechanical reduction of the bank to allow the construction of a gabion basket wall to prevent future undermining of the riverbank. The monitoring was hampered by two main issues, the first the over-riding need to ensure the Health & Safety of all involved, and secondly the need to work during the hours of darkness owing to the times of low tide.

4.2 The Stratigraphic Sequence

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
001	Layer	Made Ground	c.1.5m
002	Layer	Made Ground	c.1.7m
003	Layer	Alluvium	>0.7m

Table 2: Recorded Contexts

4.2.1 Excavation involved the removal of c.3.0m of material to a maximum depth of c.3.9m to form a vertical face on a 18.0m stretch of riverbank. This was achieved by excavating the material mechanically with the machine located on top of the riverbank, with all work undertaken during periods of low tide.

4.2.2 No manual cleaning of the deposits was possible and observation was undertaken from a distance, often under artificial light. However, the encountered stratigraphic sequence was able to be recorded. The uppermost layer consisted of the humic topsoil forming the surface of the current bank, context [001]. It was heavily disturbed by substantial tree roots and by recent collapses.

4.2.3 It overlay a series of dumped deposits of chalk rubble and clay made ground [002]. The individual episodes of dumping could not be recorded separately, but never appeared to be more than 0.45m in thickness.

4.2.4 The oldest deposit encountered was a brownish grey/mid-bluish grey alluvial clayey silt, context [003]. There were no obvious organic remains in this layer, which was only partially exposed at the base of the excavation.

4.2.5 No archaeological features were noted in any of the layers and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The mechanical excavation of the riverbank did not lead to the disturbance of any significant archaeological or geoarchaeological deposits. The results were similar to those seen in the borehole of 1975, with topsoil and made ground overlying alluvial deposits. The current project did not involve excavation of a depth that would disturb any possible underlying peat (encountered in the vicinity at a depth of 4.8m bgl in 1975). No finds or features were observed truncating the surface of the alluvium.
- 5.2 As no significant geoarchaeological deposits were encountered, no samples were taken for analysis, and hence no further work is required to meet the research aims given in the WSI (RHDHV, 2015).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Stevens, S. in prep. The Anglo-Saxon period, in *The Archaeology of the Ouse Valley* BAR volume

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank RHDHV for commissioning the work, and for the input of English Heritage and East Sussex County Council's Archaeologists at all stages. Thanks are also due to the groundworks contractors from J. T. Mackey for their co-operation and hospitality.

HER Summary Form

Site Code	SGP 15					
Identification Name and Address	Southerham Grey Pit, Southerham,					
County, District &/or Borough	Lewes District, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	542484 109294					
Geology	Alluvium over Chalk					
Arch. South-East Project Number	7287					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other <i>Riverbank</i>		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 20.01.2015 – 02.02.2015	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Royal Haskoning DHV Limited					
Project Managers	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisors	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other <i>NONE</i>		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological and geoarchaeological watching brief was maintained during riverbank stabilisation works on the River Ouse near Southerham Grey Pit, Southerham, Lewes, East Sussex (NGR 542484 109294). Excavations were undertaken near the site of a borehole undertaken in 1975 which revealed a peat deposit dated by C14 analysis to the Neolithic period.</i></p> <p><i>The groundworks involved the removal of c.3m of material to a maximum depth of c.3.9m to form a vertical face on an 18m long stretch of riverbank. The encountered deposits consisted of topsoil, made ground and alluvium, with the excavation not deep enough to disturb the underlying, dated peat.</i></p> <p><i>No archaeological features were noted in any of the layers and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.</i></p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-202589

Project details

Project name	Southerham Grey Pit, Southerham, Lewes, East Sussex
Short description of the project	An archaeological and geoarchaeological watching brief was maintained during riverbank stabilisation works on the River Ouse near Southerham Grey Pit, Southerham, Lewes, East Sussex (NGR 542484 109294). Excavations were undertaken near the site of a borehole sunk in 1975 which revealed a layer of peat dated by C14 analysis to the Neolithic period. The groundworks involved the removal of c.3m of material to a maximum depth of c.3.9m to form a vertical face on an 18m long stretch of the riverbank. The encountered deposits consisted of topsoil, made ground and alluvium, with the excavation not deep enough to disturb the underlying, dated peat. No archaeological features were noted in any of the layers and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.
Project dates	Start: 20-01-2015 End: 02-02-2015
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	7287 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	SGP 15 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Environmental (unspecified schedule)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX LEWES LEWES Southerham Grey Pit
Study area	100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 42484 09294 50.8649947235 0.0249769230797 50 51 53 N 000 01 29 E Point

Project creators

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

Project brief originator	Royal HaskoningDHV Ltd.
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Simon Stevens
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Royal HaskoningDHV Ltd.

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Barbican House Museum, Lewes
Physical Contents	"other"
Digital Archive recipient	Barbican House Museum, Lewes
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Barbican House Museum, Lewes
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Report", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Watching Brief Report - Southerham Grey Pit, Southerham, Lewes, East Sussex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Stevens, S.
Other bibliographic details	ASE Report No. 2015040
Date	2015
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East

Place of issue or publication	Portslade, East Sussex
Description	Standard ASE client report. A4-sized with cover logos.
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Entered on	6 February 2015

TQ40NW/82

Form No. 453

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL 4253.0927

HIGHWAYS LABORATORY

Sheet 1 of 2

BOREHOLE LOG

ln. 319.

[TQ426/093]

Date started 21.1.75. Date completed 28.1.75.

Scheme Lewes By-pass. South Street Bridge.

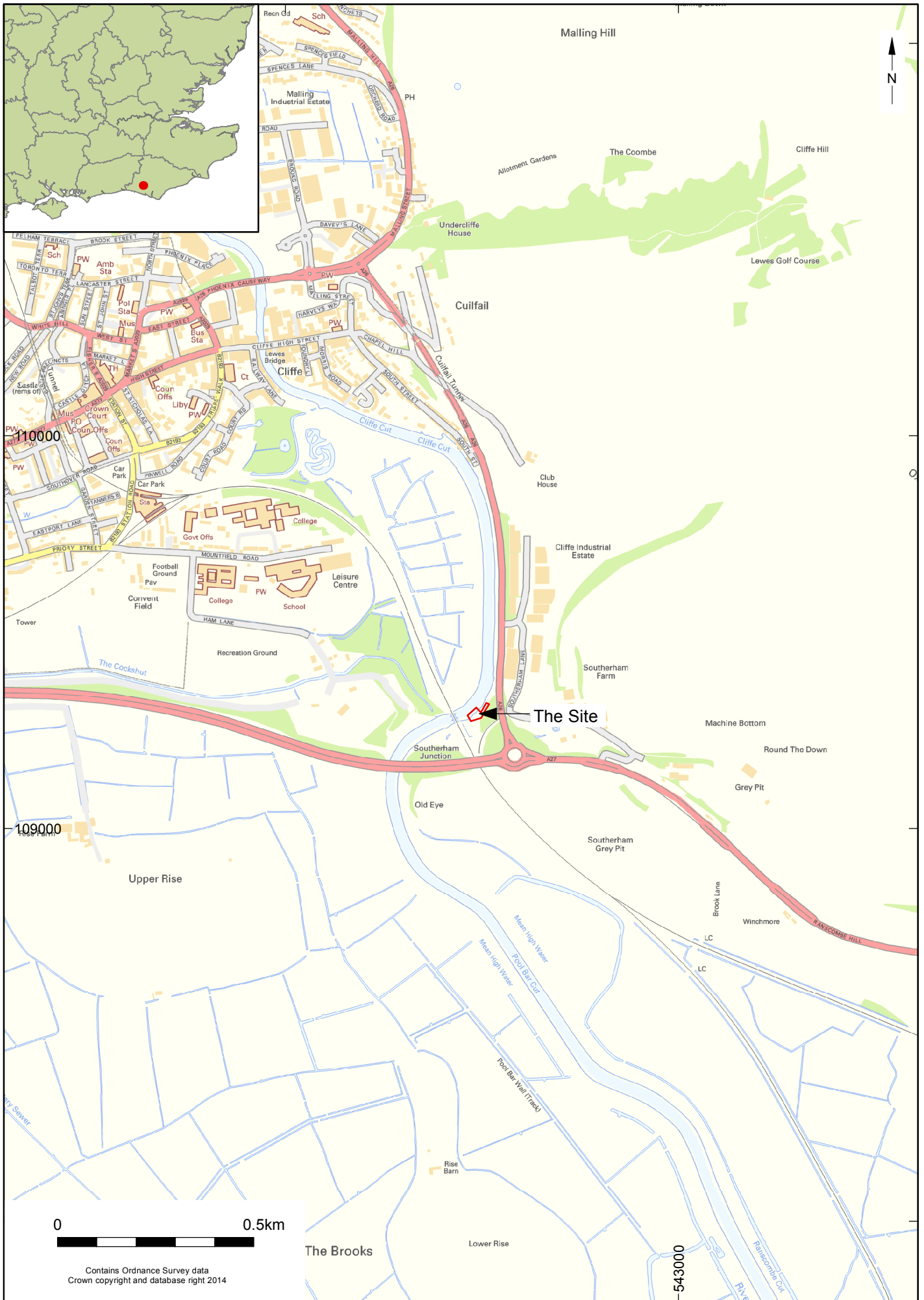
Location End of piled foundation below S. wing wall.

Borehole No. SS No. 1(a). Ground Level 3.13 m. A.O.D.

- KEY**
- Disturbed Sample
 - ↑ Bulk Disturbed Sample
 - █ 105 mm Undisturbed Sample
 - | Standard Penetration Test
 - * CONE " "
 - △ Water Sample

Sample			Section	Depth about O.D. below Ground Level	Thickness of Stratum m.	Description of Soil	Penetration Test	
No.	Type	Depth m.					Pen't'n mm.	No. of Blows
1	█			0.30	0.30	TOPSOIL.		
2	█	0.50			1.20	Chalk fill. (MADE GROUND)	305	4
3	█							
4	█	1.00						
5	█							
6	█	1.45		1.50			305	4
7	█	1.90				Soft to medium soft, light brownish grey, finely fissured clayey SILT. Much ironstain on fissures & many root traces. (ALLUVIUM)		
8	█							
9	█	2.45						
10	█				3.30			
11	█	3.40				Very soft & wet, blue grey, clayey fine SILT. Some slight ironstain with scattered organic traces. (ALLUVIUM)		
12	█	4.00						
13	█	4.90		4.80				
14	█	5.40		5.45	0.65	Rich red brown, dark brown & black, silty PEAT. (ALLUVIUM)		
15	█							
16	█	5.90			0.65	Soft, dark grey, blue grey & black, clayey SILT. Containing much organic matter & few scattered chalk fragments. (ALLUVIUM)		
17	█				6.10			
18	█	6.40						
19	█							
20	█	6.90						
21	█				3.50	Finely shattered hard CHALK (5mm) + few scattered larger chalk fragments (20-50mm) in very soft & wet grey CHALK MARL. Some ironstain below 7.3m. & few flint fragments (20-75mm) below 7.8 m. (COOMBE DEPOSITS)	305	4
22	█	7.35					305	4
23	█	7.80					305	4
24	█	8.25					305	7
25	█	8.70					305	17
26	█	9.15					305	17
27	█	9.60		9.60			305	13

* Samples submitted for Radiocarbon dating



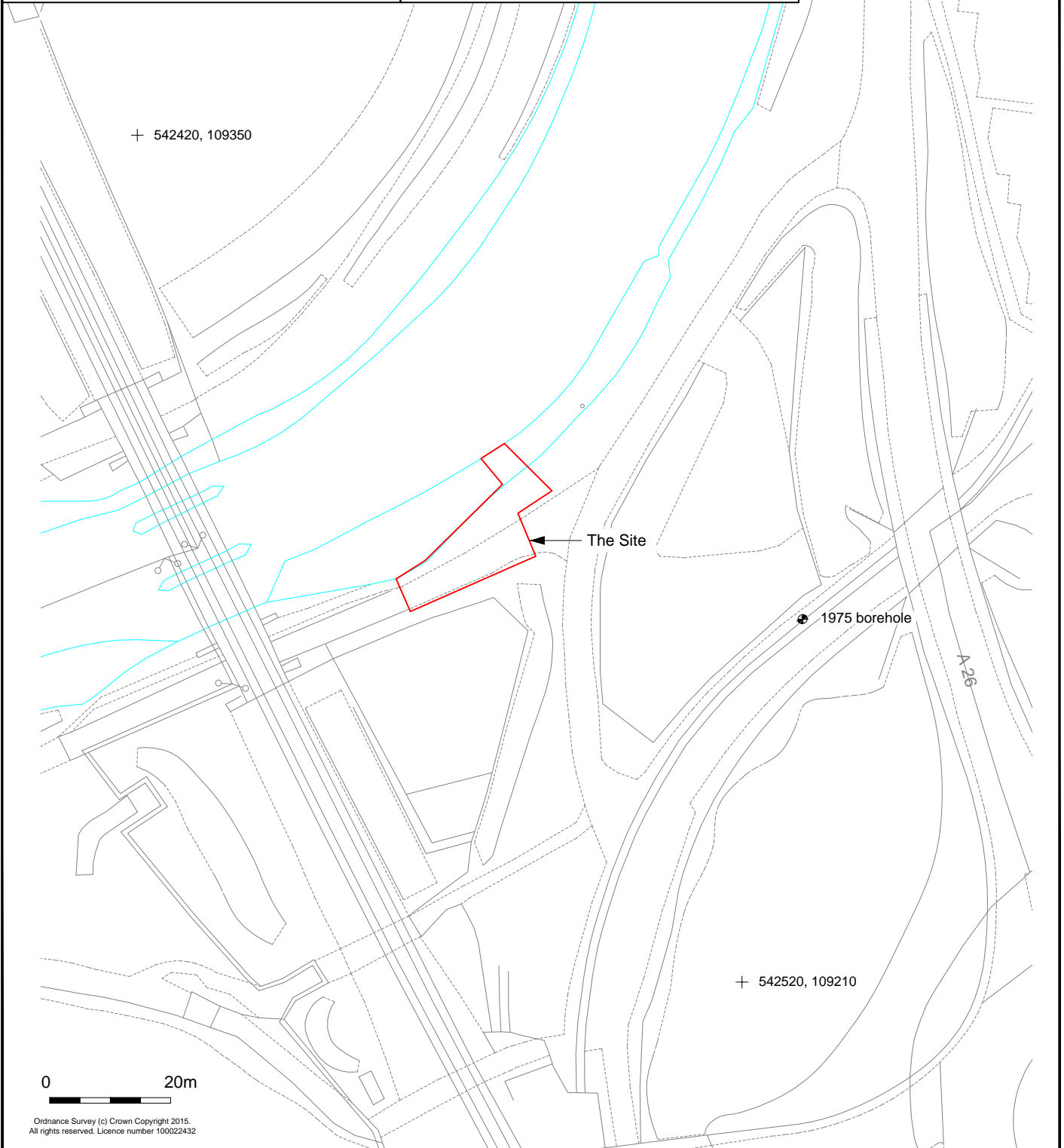
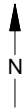
© Archaeology South-East		Southernham Grey Pits, Lewes		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 7287	February 2015	Site location		
Report Ref: 2015040	Drawn by: RHC			



Machine excavation along riverbank



Completed stabilised riverbank



© Archaeology South-East		Southerham Grey Pits, Lewes		Fig.2
Project Ref: 7287	February 2015	Site Plan		
Report Ref: 2015040	Drawn by: NG			

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