

**An Archaeological Watching Brief during the  
Barcombe to Horsted Keynes Mains Renewal, East Sussex**

**NGR 541255 123780**

**Project No. 2165**

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## **Abstract**

*An archaeological watching brief was maintained on land south west and adjacent to Sheffield Park, A 275, East Sussex (NGR 541255 123780) The watching brief was maintained during the excavation of approximately 1150m of mains water pipe trench with associated easements and compounds. Presumed Roman industrial evidence was found consisting of iron bloom deposits in pits and possible postholes. Based on finds from previous works, this is probably associated with a Roman bloomery. Additional evidence of Neolithic and / or Bronze Age activity was recorded in a concentration of 11 worked flint artefacts, again reinforcing earlier evidence from previous work on the extant water pipeline. No other archaeology was found.*

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### SMR Summary Sheet

**Fig. 1:** Site Location

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**Fig. 3:** 009, 011, 013 Plans and Sections

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeology South East (ASE), a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit (UCLFAU), were commissioned by South East Water to undertake a watching brief during the Barcombe to Horsted Keynes Mains Renewal (site centred NGR 541255 123780), hereafter referred to as 'the site' (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The development site is situated on an area of arable land adjacent to the National Trust property of Sheffield Park (TN22 3QX). Planning consent was granted by East Sussex County Council (ESCC). The County Archaeological Officer (Dr Andrew Woodcock) advised that the site is considered to have archaeological potential, and a condition requiring a programme of archaeological work has been attached to the consent. ESCC have recommended that an enhanced archaeological watching would be the appropriate response.
- 1.3 The general objective of the archaeological work was to monitor the groundwork in order to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the excavations were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards. This was to include artefacts of archaeological interest (e.g. worked flint, burnt flint, pottery, ceramic building material) that may be recovered from within the soil during its removal.
- 1.4 The works examined included:
  - Excavation of a new mains water trench
  - Stripping an area 30 x 30m in order to create a site compound
  - A topsoil strip 25m in width tracing the course of the existing and new pipeline
- 1.5 A Brief outlining the requirements was prepared by ESCC. It suggested intermittent periods of attendance by a suitably qualified archaeologist. The fieldwork was undertaken initially by Alice Thorne on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August and subsequently by Andrew Margetts, Jim Webster and Deon Whittaker following piecemeal stripping of the site. The project was managed by Darryl Palmer (Project Manager) and Louise Rayner (Post-excavation Manager).
- 1.6 The British and Geological Survey Sheet 303 shows that the site lies on Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand with areas of Upper Grinstead Clay. Towards the River Ouse are found River Gravels and Alluvium.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Several archaeological findspots exist in the vicinity of the site relating to finds recovered during the excavation of the original main c. 5m away from the proposed pipeline route.
- 2.2 In the east of the site 14 pieces of worked flint dating from the Neolithic period were recovered (findspot ES3141) including flakes, a core and a retouched blade.
- 2.3 In the west of the site a possible Roman Bloomery (metal working site) was recorded, including finds of iron working slag and Samian pottery (findspot ES3151). Further iron working slag was observed farther to the west (findspot ES3127) but no dating evidence was present.
- 2.4 Close to the possible Roman Bloomery, earthworks and a footing of Tudor bricks were recorded (findspot ES3151) in association with pottery dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has been postulated that this is the site of the deserted medieval/post-medieval village of Coleham.

## **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 Groundworks mentioned in Section 1.4 were monitored at all times by an archaeologist until/unless it became clear beyond reasonable doubt that no archaeological remains were present (e.g. once excavation reached undisturbed natural subsoils, below which there were no archaeological remains present - after the recording of any significant remains if present at higher levels). All machines used for removal of material above undisturbed natural subsoil were fitted with a toothless bucket of appropriate width wherever practicable, dependent on ground conditions.
- 3.2 Where new excavations revealed archaeological features, machine or excavation by contractor's staff ceased and hand excavation and recording to archaeological standards by the archaeologist began. Exposures were hand cleaned by archaeologists as necessary to clarify the presence/absence and nature of any features. Adequate time was made available for appropriate archaeological excavation by hand to identify and record the archaeology.
- 3.3 This enabled any archaeological deposits and features, disturbed during the proposed works, to be adequately recorded in line with the advice given in PPG16 (the Government's advice on *Archaeology and Planning*).
- 3.4 The spoil from the excavations was also to be inspected by archaeologists to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest.

- 3.5 ESCC's archaeologists were kept informed of progress so that they could monitor the archaeological work as necessary.
- 3.6 All archaeological features were recorded according to standard UCLFAU practice. Where practicable, all features were planned at 1:20 and section drawings were at 1:10. Drawings were on plastic draughting film. Features and deposits were described on standard pro-forma recording sheets used by UCLFAU. A digital photographic record was maintained.
- 3.7 If the results had merited it, a post-excavation assessment report would be prepared, and a programme of post-excavation analysis and reporting along the lines recommended in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) will agreed with the client and the relevant authorities.
- 3.8 The written and drawn archive will be offered to Barbican museum, Lewes. Artefacts recovered during excavation form an important part of an archaeological site archive. The archive has been prepared according the principles of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991) and the requirements of the recipient museum.

## 4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 The site was divided into four areas (see fig.2):

- Area 1 – approximately 300 metres in length, running north west to south east. Containing a 30 x 30 metre compound at the north westerly point adjacent to the A275 and **test pit 2** at the south easterly end.
- Area 2 - approximately 300 metres in length, running north west to south east. Containing a modern fence posthole (**Context 07**) in line with current field boundary.
- Area 3 - approximately 250 metres in length, running north west to south east
- Area 4 - approximately 300 metres in length, running north west to south east bounded at the south easterly point by a stream. Containing three pits (**Contexts 09, 11 & 13**) and a concentration of 11 worked flint artefacts.

4.2 In Area 1, test pits 1 (not illustrated) and 2 (see fig. 2) revealed the extant water pipeline:

- Topsoil 200 - 300mm.
- Backfill - approximately 1 metre - Backfill of mixed natural and subsoils – mixed, firm sandy clays, orange with grey mottling and occasional flecks of manganese.

4.3 In Area 2 was an ovoid pit (**Context 07**) - 0.95 x 0.6 metres across and 300mm deep with gently curving concave sides and base. The top was sharply defined with an abrupt break due to truncation by the machine. It contained firm, yellow / grey sandy clay (**08**), with crushed, burnt / degraded brick, stone and sandstone. The alignment with a current field boundary suggests this may have been the base of a modern fence post-hole.

4.4 Area 3 produced no remains of archaeological interest.

4.5 In Area 4, three pits were discovered (**Contexts 09, 11 & 13**) and a concentration of 11 worked flint artefacts was uncovered (see figs. 2 & 3).

- Context [**09**] - a sub-circular, bowl-shaped concavity, 570 mm x 620 mm across by 200mm deep. The top was exposed by machine, the section displaying steep 45 degree sloped sides, very slightly concave merging gradually into a rounded base. Filled by (**10**), a firm, mid brownish / grey silty clay, containing charcoal flecks and occasional burnt clay fragments. Possibly a

post hole as the charcoal appears constrained to the upper portion of the fill in a concentrated area.

- Context **[11]** - a sub-circular, bowl-shaped concavity, 400 mm x 460 mm across by 60 mm deep. The top was exposed by machine, the section displaying gentle 30 degree sloped, concave sides merging imperceptibly into a rounded base. Filled by **(12)**, a firm, dark grey / black silty clay, containing charcoal flecks and burnt clay fragments. Possibly a post hole as the inclusions appears constrained to the southern portion of the fill, filled perhaps, with material from the nearby Roman bloomery.
- Context **[13]** - a sub-circular, bowl-shaped concavity, 520 mm x 800 mm across by 140 mm deep. The top was exposed by machine, the section displaying steep 70 degree sloped sides, slightly concave, merging gradually into a slightly rounded base. Filled by **(14)**, a friable, yellowish / black silty clay, containing iron slag, charcoal flecks and burnt clay fragments. Probably a waste pit associated with the Roman bloomery. Surrounded by small stake holes (not illustrated).



## 5.0 FINDS

By Lucy Allott, Luke Barber & Charlotte Thompson

### 5.1 Table 1. Quantification of Finds

Context	Pottery	Wt (g)	Flint	Wt (g)	Stone	Wt (g)	Slag	Wht (g)	Burnt clay	Wt (g)
[1] Area 3	19	64	9	100	1	4	2	46		
[2]			2	4						
[14]							8	866	1	48

5.2 A group of 19 sherds weighing 64g from the topsoil [2] was the only pottery that was recovered from the watching brief at the Barcombe to Horsted Keynes mains renewal. They are mostly small and heavily abraded.

5.3 This assemblage contains body sherds from at least seven different vessels. One is tempered with glauconite and sparse coarse quartz, another contains dense sand temper, further vessels are tempered with moderate grog, and others are tempered with sparse flint inclusions. The variety of temper alone suggests that they are not a coherent group and conceivably represent later prehistoric activity in the area: the poor condition of the sherds indicates that they have been redeposited.

5.4 Eleven worked flints were collected from contexts [1] and [2] (the subsoil) in Area 3 (see fig 2). These consist of four semi-cortical end struck flakes and one broken blade (proximal end missing) all without retouch. Use damage was observed on the proximal end of a small side struck flake and along the right lateral of a small end struck flake. Flints with secondary working include one blade with retouch at the distal end, and a flake (58 x 33mm) with retouched (squared) 'notch' at the distal end and some use damage along the opposing distal side and at the tip. The platform of this piece has some preparation scars and there is retouch along the left lateral at the proximal end. A possible core rejuvenation flake and a core (predominantly used for blade production) were also collected from this context. The worked flint assemblage is small and varied. Coming from unstratified and subsoil contexts they may date to a range of occupations, therefore considered undiagnostic. Some of the forms point to Neolithic and Bronze Age flint production techniques.

5.5 One large piece of burnt clay was recovered from [14], the fill of a pit. It is pale buff/orange mottled in colour and is powdery to the touch and no diagnostic features such as piercings or wattle marks remain, although a small piece of flat surface remains on one face. The fabric is vesicular as it has been tempered with organic inclusions. The piece gives no indication of function or date but the pit also contained eight

pieces of slag weighing 866g. The majority of this consists of dense, though aerated, undiagnostic iron slag, probably from smelting, though smithing cannot be ruled out. A couple of pieces of furnace lining are also present within this group. Context [2] produced a piece of fuel ash and a probable piece of iron smelting slag.

## **6.0 Discussion**

- 6.1 The concentration of worked flints suggests late prehistoric occupation of the Neolithic and / or Bronze Age. Evidence of sedentism and mobility and duration of activity is not apparent due to the unstratified nature of the flint artefacts and inconclusive dating from the typology. There is no reason to doubt that further late prehistoric remains could be present in the immediate area, outside the bounds of the excavations, given the Neolithic finds already reported circa 5 metres from the earlier pipeline works.
- 6.2 The presence of slag and other waste that may be associated with iron working, suggests a probable connection with the Roman bloomery site alluded to by finds from previous work on an earlier pipeline. Further archaeological remains are likely to exist in the immediate area, outside the bounds of the current excavations. The presence of stake holes around the pit suggests a deliberate approach to waste disposal, and convenient proximity to a main activity area not as yet located.

### SMR Summary Form

Site Code	BHK06					
Identification Name and Address	Sheffield Park A257					
County, District &/or Borough	East Sussex, Fletching Parish					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 541255 123780					
Geology	Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand with areas of Upper Grinstead Clay.					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2165					
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. Sept – Nov 2006	Other		
Sponsor/Client	South East Water					
Project Manager	Darryl Palmer					
Project Supervisor	Darryl Palmer					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo. ✓	BA✓	IA	RB✓
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern ✓		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was maintained on land south west and adjacent to Sheffield Park, A 275, East Sussex (NGR 541255 123780) The watching brief was maintained during the excavation of approximately 1150m of mains water pipe trench with associated easements and compounds. Presumed Roman industrial evidence was found consisting of iron bloom deposits in pits and possible postholes. Based on finds from previous works, this is probably associated with a Roman bloomery. Additional evidence of Neolithic and / or Bronze Age activity was recorded in a concentration of 11 worked flint artefacts, again reinforcing earlier evidence from previous work on the extant water pipeline. No other archaeology was found.</i></p>						



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© Archaeology South-East			Barcombe to Horsted Keynes Mains Pipeline		Fig. 1
Ref: 2165	March 2007	Drawn by: FEG	Site Location Plan		

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