

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane , Furners Green, East Sussex.**

**NGR 541552 125743**

**Wealden District  
Planning Ref. WD/2006/0524/F**

**Project No. 2496**

**By  
Andrew Margetts BA PGCE**



**September 2007**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane , Furners Green, East Sussex.**

**NGR 541552 125743**

**Wealden District  
Planning Ref. WD/2006/0524/F**

**Project No. 2496**

**By  
Andrew Margetts BA PGCE**

**September 2007**

**Archaeology South-East  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex.  
BN41 8DR  
Tel: 01273 426830  
Fax: 01273 420866**

## **Abstract**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with an extension to Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Furners Green. Groundworks included ground reduction of an area approximately 13.5 x 5 metres to a maximum depth of 1.74 metres below ground level. A Temporary Benchmark (TBM) with a value of 0m was established as there was no benchmark in the immediate vicinity and levels were obtained for recorded sections in relation to this. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2007. All further groundworks were to take place within this footprint for the new extension. Excavations revealed the presence of a large pit that contained backfilled material relating to the medieval Sheffield Mill Iron Furnace.*

## CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Historical and Archaeological Background
- 3 Archaeological Methodology
- 4 Archaeological Results
- 5 The Finds
- 6 The Environmental Samples
- 7 Discussion
- 8 Bibliography

### SMR Summary Sheet

#### List of Tables

Table 1: Quantification of the finds from Sheffield Mill Farm by count and weight (g)

Table 2: Flot and residue quantification

**Fig. 1:** Site Location

**Fig. 2:** Site Plan

**Fig. 3:** Sections

**Plate 1:** General Shot of Cut **05**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Archaeology South East (ASE), a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit (UCLFAU), was commissioned by Mrs Cornelia Dyball to undertake a watching brief over groundworks associated with an extension to Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Furners Green, East Sussex (site centred NGR 541552 125743).
- 1.2 Planning consent was granted by Wealden District Council (reference WD/2006/0524/F). East Sussex County Council (ESCC) as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority have 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 Brief* would be the appropriate response.
- 1.3 The extent and purpose of the archaeological work was to monitor the excavation of new groundworks to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the groundworks were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.
- 1.4 The works examined included ground reduction of an area approximately 13.5 x 5 metres to a maximum depth of 1.74 metres below ground level. This comprised the footprint of the new extension.
- 1.5 The British Geological Survey sheet 303 shows that the site is situated on Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand.
- 1.6 A Temporary Benchmark (TBM) with a value of 0m was established as there was no benchmark in the immediate vicinity. This was located at ground level by the house wall to the south of the lobby as shown on Figure 2 and levels were obtained for recorded sections in relation to this.
- 1.7 A Written Scheme (WSI) of Investigation for these works was approved by Casper Johnson, County Archaeologist, East Sussex County Council (ESCC). The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Margetts on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2007. The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and Louise Rayner (Post-excavation Manager).

## **2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The information in this section has been taken from the WSI (Griffin, 2006) with due acknowledgement. Sheffield Mill Farm is situated in an area of undulating woodland and pasture close (approximately a quarter of a mile) to the hamlet of Furner's Green. The site is located in gardens adjacent to the Sheffield Mill farmhouse and to the pond bay

associated with the Sheffield Iron Furnace known to have been in use by 1546, but not mentioned in 1574. A corn mill had been built on the site by 1597-8 (Cleere and Crossley 1995, 356).

2.2 A documentary source dated 25<sup>th</sup> April 1580 states:

“[Charles Howard](#) of Sheffeld holdeth [[Sheffield Mill](#)] by indenture of demise from Sir Thomas Sackvill, Knight, to Richard Leech, Esquire the corn mill, the wheat mill and the malt mill newly built by the same Richard at Sheffeld upon the decaied Ironworke at Sheffeld aforesaide. sometime called the furnes for the casting of raw iron there, a messuage for the miller, and all those banks, baies, ponds, waters, watercourses, waterlaies, fludgates and waterworcks to the said corne mill belonging. And all the parcels aswell rough as plain called Northall, with a barn, 80 acres, and The Hooke, 30 acres, And all that the Ironworck or yron mill called the Hammer mill or forge of Sheffeld aforesaid and all wheeles, belowes, howses, edifices, buildings, colehowses and coleplaces belonginge to the said yron worck or hammer Mill. And all that the great pond, Bankes, baies, pools, waters, water courses, fludgates, poolebaies, sluices, groundgates and. other the waterworcks whatsoever to the said forge or hammer mill belonginge or appertyninge. And all those implements. and utensills to the said Iron work or hammer mill belonginge or apperteyning mentoned or contained in a Schedule to the same Indenture of lease annexed (Straker 1933, 72)”.

2.3 The present Sheffield Mill Farm is constructed on a large heap of glassy slag (Mrs Dyball, *pers. comm.*), which is likely to be associated with early post-medieval iron working at the Sheffield Furnace.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

3.1 The extent and purpose of the archaeological work was to monitor the excavation of new groundworks to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the groundworks were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.

3.2 Groundworks mentioned in Section 1.4 above 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 would be no archaeological remains present - after the recording of any significant remains if present at higher levels). All excavations were carried out with a 3 tonne tracked machine (equipped with a toothless bucket).

3.3 Where new excavations revealed significant archaeological features, machine or hand excavation by contractor's staff ceased, and these

were hand excavated and recorded to archaeological standards by the archaeologist in attendance. Exposures were hand cleaned by the archaeologist 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 remains as far as possible within the limits of the works in order to extract archaeological and environmental information, as this proved necessary.

- 3.4 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*).
- 3.5 All archaeological features and deposits encountered were recorded according to accepted professional standards. A full photographic record was kept of the work as appropriate.
- 3.6 The spoil from the excavations was inspected to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest.
- 3.7 ESCC's archaeologists were kept informed of progress so that they could monitor the archaeological work as necessary.
- 3.8 The site archive is presently held at the Archaeology South East offices in Portslade and will be offered to Barbican House Museum, Lewes in due course (site code SMF07).

#### **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

- 4.1 The groundworks excavated for the footprint of the new extension comprised an area c.13.5 x 5m dug to a depth of c.1.74m (Fig. 2). The deposits revealed during the contractors excavations consisted firstly of a firm mid grey brown sandy silt (Context 01). This topsoil deposit was c.300mm thick and contained moderate inclusions of building materials (<60mm), occasional sandstone fragments (<150mm) and occasional charcoal flecks. Directly beneath Context 01 was encountered a firm mid yellow brown silty clay (Context 02). This deposit contained frequent quantities of charcoal (<30mm), moderate amounts of ceramic building materials (<50mm) and occasional pieces of blast furnace slag (<400mm). Context 02 was c.300mm thick and was interpreted as a layer of made ground composed of re-deposited natural clay. Below Context 02 was encountered the compact mid yellow natural Tunbridge Wells Sand (Context 03, Fig. 3, Section 1). Cut into Context 03 was a large sub-circular pit (Context 05, Figs 2, 3; Section 2 & Plate 1). Measuring approximately 2.5m in diameter it had gently sloping concave sides and a flat base (See Fig. 3). Context 05 was filled by Context 04 a firm mid brown grey silty clay. This fill was of a thickness of 320mm and contained moderate inclusions of

ceramic building material (CBM) (<70mm), moderate amounts of charcoal flecks and blast furnace slag (<300mm) as well as occasional ironstone/ore (<40mm).

A Temporary Benchmark (TBM) with a value of 0.0m was established as there was no benchmark in the vicinity of the site. This was located at ground level by the house wall to the south of the lobby as shown on Figure 2. A level was obtained for the ground surface in relation to this. The backsite and instrument height were 3.53m and reduced levels were calculated in relation to this. The level of the ground surface as recorded in Figure 3, Section 1 was 1.92m. Natural was recorded at a depth of 0.98m on the unexcavated surface of cut **05** and the value for the base of pit **05** was 0.69m.

#### *Other Intrusive Groundworks*

- 4.2 It was confirmed with the contractors that all further intrusive groundworks would be undertaken in the footprint of the extension dealt with in section 4.1 above. Therefore no further archaeological supervision was required as undisturbed natural subsoils had already been reached.

### **5 The Finds by Luke Barber**

- 5.1 The archaeological work recovered a small assemblage of finds from two different contexts. These are quantified in Table 1.

<b>Context</b>	<b>CBM</b>	<b>weight (g)</b>	<b>Industrial debris</b>	<b>weight (g)</b>	<b>Iron ore</b>	<b>weight (g)</b>
02	3	352	4	254		
04	3	1630	10	5616	1	1408

Table 1: Quantification of the finds from Sheffield Mill Farm by count and weight (g)

#### *Ceramic Building Material*

- 5.2 Unfortunately no pottery was recovered from the site and as a result all dating has had to rely on CBM. The subsoil (**02**) produced a piece of brick and two pieces of roof tile, all in a well-fired sparse sand tempered fabric with moderate iron oxide and white clay pellet inclusions to 4mm. The brick/tile is well formed and probably can be placed between the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Context (**04**) the fill of pit [**05**] produced three fragments of frogless brick. One is quite crudely made, but well-fired. It is tempered with fine sand with abundant slag and white clay inclusions to 4mm. Full dimensions survive for its width (110mm) and height (65mm) and an 18<sup>th</sup>- century date is probable. The other two brick fragments from (**04**) measure 53 and 56mm high, are quite crudely made and medium fired. Both have patches of self-glaze.



Tempering consists of moderate fine sand with either clay pellet or iron oxide inclusions to 2mm. A later 17<sup>th</sup>- to 18<sup>th</sup>- century date is probable.

*Slag*

- 5.3 A number of pieces of slag were recovered, some of which were quite large. Context (02) produced a piece of clinker, a piece of blast furnace slag and two pieces of well aerated undiagnostic iron slag. Context (04) produced significantly more material, including one piece of blast furnace slag and seven quite large pieces of dark grey/black undiagnostic iron slag. These tend to be of a very mixed and aerated nature, often incorporating sandstone fragments, many of which have been vitrified. One large piece clearly has part of the hearth lining, an exterior layer of burnt (red) sandstone with slag adhering. It is not clear exactly what process is represented in the assemblage. Some blast furnace slag appears to be present though this material does travel quite far from source and was used extensively for road/track metalling. The undiagnostic pieces of iron slag are from the inside/edge of a furnace/hearth and have probably not travelled too far. More material would be needed to be certain if they were from a smelting furnace or smithing hearth.

*Ironstone*

- 5.4 The only other find consists of a fragment of fossiliferous Wealden clay ironstone. Although of ore quality it is possibly natural to the area.
- 5.5 The assemblage is not considered to hold any potential for further detailed analysis though it is recommended that at least a sample of the CBM and slag from (04) is retained for long-term curation.

**6 Environmental Samples** by Lucy Allott

- 6.1 Two bulk samples were taken to establish the nature and composition of the environmental remains present in context [2] (subsoil) and context [4], the fill of pit [5]. These samples were processed using tank flotation and the flots and residues retained and quantified (Table 2). Both the light and heavy fractions of these samples were dominated by charcoal fragments.
- 6.2 Context [2] was particularly rich with >90% of the flot composed of charcoal and a similarly large proportion present in the residue. Interestingly context [4], which contained possible evidence for smithing or furnace activities (see finds report), produced smaller quantities of charcoal than the subsoil. It is possible that the subsoil charcoal is associated with the activities recorded for context [4] however this deposit may have been reworked. The CBM in context [4] was consistent with that documented in the finds report.

Sample No.	1001	1003
Context No.	2	4

	Flot	Residue	Flot	Residue
<b>Volume</b>	470		10	
<b>Total Weight</b>	200		6	
<b>Uncharred %</b>	5%		50%	
<b>Sediment %</b>	<5%		<5%	
<b>Charcoal &gt;4mm frags</b>	***	****/230g	*	**/4g
<b>Charcoal &lt;4mm</b>	****	****/130g	***	**/4g
<b>Shells</b>	1 land snail			
<b>CBM</b>		*/6g		**/338g

Table 2: Flot and residue quantification (\*=0-10, \*\* = 11-50, \*\*\* = 51-250, \*\*\*\* = >250)

## 7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The underlying geology encountered during the course of the groundworks comprised Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand.
- 7.2 The results of the watching brief did produce evidence for the well documented iron working on the site during the 1500's however this evidence was not of a structural nature and indeed seems to have been disturbed through much later activity. Context **02** seems to be formed of a landscaping deposit of 'made ground', this deposit contains material possibly associated with ironworking on the site however it has been re-worked probably during later alterations to the garden in order to heighten the bank between the river and the house. Beneath this deposit was encountered Pit **05**. Although this contained material derived from the demolition of a furnace it also contained later material and as such can presumably be seen as relating to deposition of material during construction related to either the mill or the house.

## 8 Bibliography

- Cleere, H. and Crossley, D. 1995. *The Iron Industry of the Weald*. Merton Priory Press Ltd: Cardiff.
- Griffin, N. 2006 *Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Furners Green, EAST SUSSEX Archaeological Watching Brief; Written Scheme of Investigation*. ASE unpublished document
- Straker, E. 1933. *The Buckhurst Terrier 1597-1598*. [Sussex Record Society](#)

**SMR Summary Form**

Site Code	SMFO6					
Identification Name and Address	Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane , Furners Green, East Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	Wealden District, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 541552 125743					
Geology	Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2496					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other ✓ Rural Garden		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 19 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2007	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Mrs Cornelia Dyball					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin and Louise Rayner					
Project Supervisor	Andrew Margetts					
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 undertaken during groundworks associated with an extension to Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Furners Green. Groundworks included ground reduction of an area approximately 13.5 x 5 metres to a maximum depth of 1.74 metres below ground level. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2007. All further groundworks were to take place within this footprint for the new extension. Excavations revealed the presence of a large pit that contained backfilled material relating to the medieval Sheffield Mill Iron Furnace.</i></p>						

## Printable version

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-30817**

### Project details

Project name	Sheffield Mill Farm WB
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with an extension to Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Furners Green. Groundworks included ground reduction of an area approximately 13.5 x 5 metres to a maximum depth of 1.74 metres below ground level.. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks on the 19th and 20th April 2007. All further groundworks were to take place within this footprint for the new extension. Excavations revealed the presence of a large pit that contained backfilled material relating to the Medieval Sheffield Mill Iron Furnace.
Project dates	Start: 19-04-2007 End: 20-04-2007
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SMF07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	IRON WORKINGS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	IRON SLAG Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

**Archaeology South East**  
Sheffield Mill Farm, Furners Green, East Sussex.

---

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX WEALDEN UCKFIELD Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Furners Green, East Sussex
Postcode	TN22 3XX
Study area	13.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 415 257 51.0126906612 0.017374561821 51 00 45 N 000 01 02 E Point
Height OD	Min: 43.00m Max: 45.00m

#### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Andrew Margetts
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mrs C Dyball

#### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No

Paper Archive Exists? No

---

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief at Sheffield Mill Farm, Mill Lane , Furners Green, East Sussex

Author(s)/Editor(s) Margetts, A

Other bibliographic details 2496

Date 2007

Issuer or publisher Archaeology South East

Place of issue or publication Portslade

Description Watching Brief Report

---

Entered by Andrew Margetts (andrew\_margetts@tiscali.co.uk)

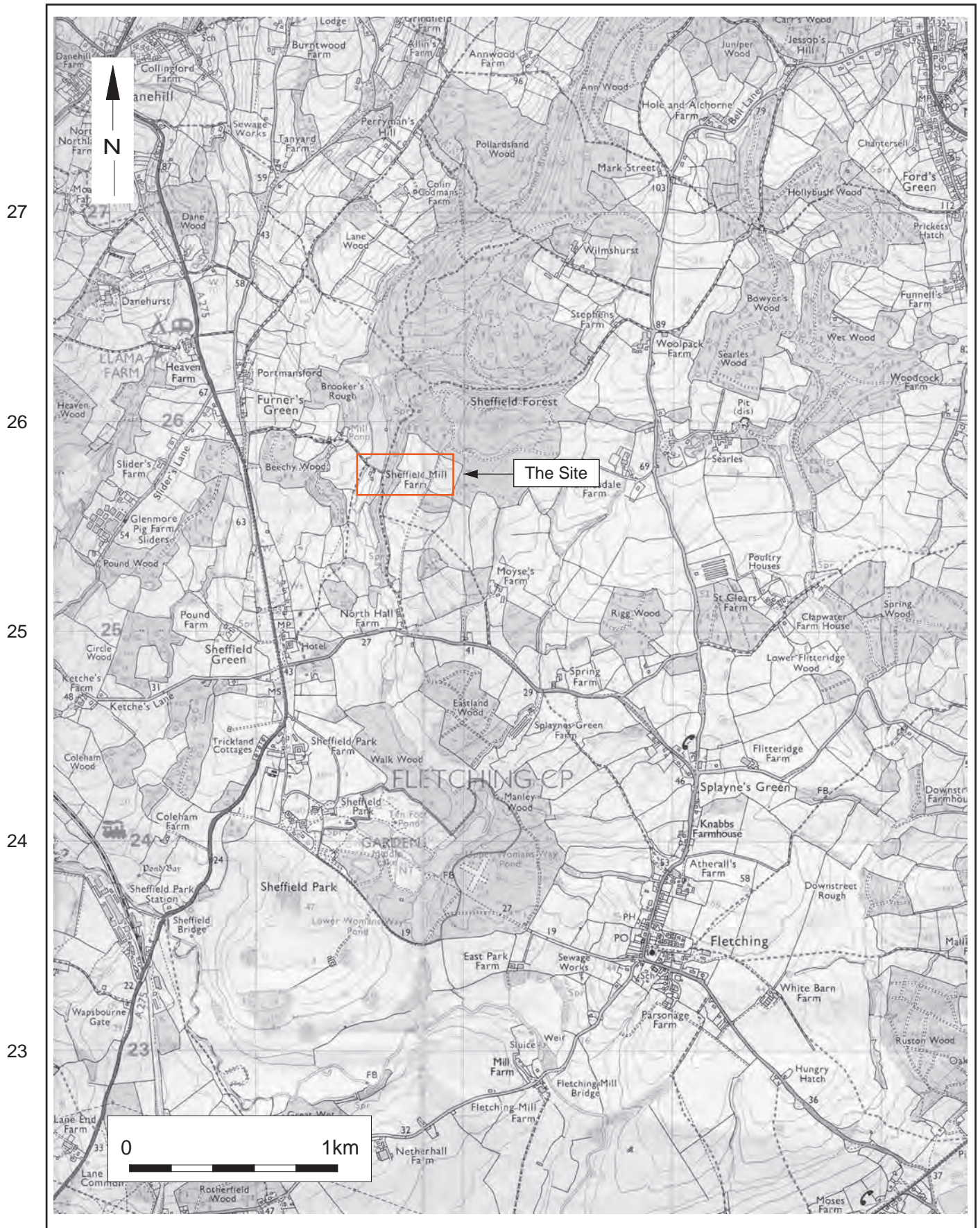
Entered on 28 August 2007

---

**OASIS:**

Please e-mail [English Heritage](#) for OASIS help and advice  
© ADS 1996-2006 Created by [Jo Gilham and Jen Mitcham, email](#) Last modified Friday 3 February 2006  
Cite only: <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/print.cfm> for this page





41

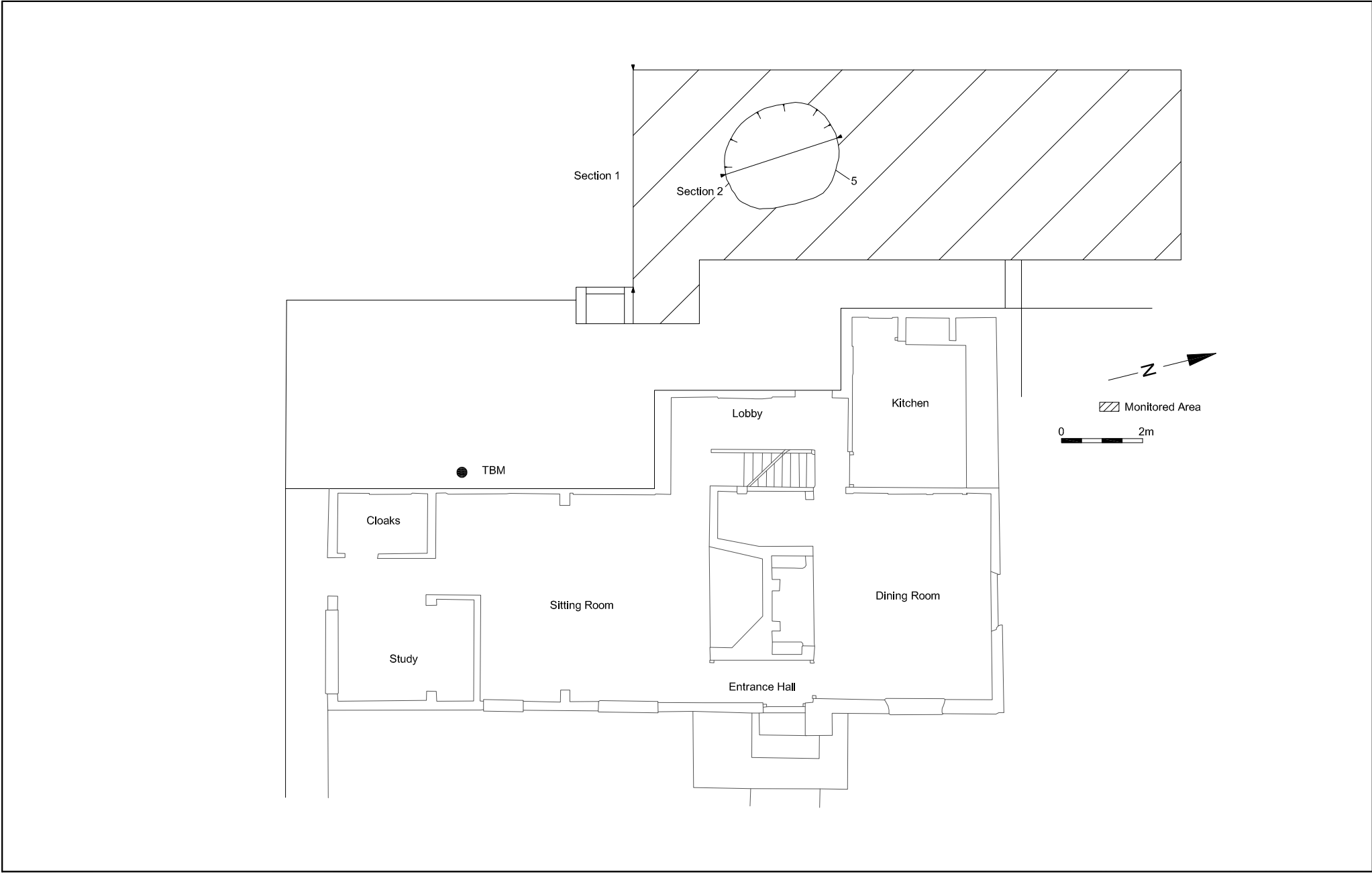
42

43

44

© Archaeology South-East			Sheffield Mill Farm, Furners Green		Fig. 1
Ref: 2496	Sept 2007	Drawn by: JNC	Site Location Plan		

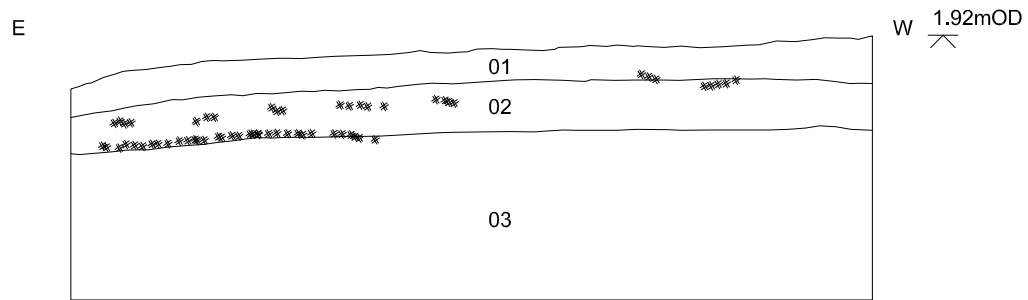
Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's 1:25000 map of 1997 with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. Crown Copyright. Licence No. AL 503 10 A



© Archaeology South-East			Sheffield Mill Farm, Furners Green		Fig. 2
Ref: 2496	Sept 2007	Drawn by: JNC	Site Plan		



Section 1



Section 2



- \* Charcoal
- Sandstone
- ▨ Ceramic Building Material
- Slag





Plate 1: General Shot of Cut 05

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