

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Land West of A29, Water Treatment Works  
Billingshurst, West Sussex**

**NGR: 507770 124848**

**ASE Project No: 170753**

**Site Code: ABT17**

**ASE Report No: 2018064**

**OASIS id: archaeol6-309535**



**By Jake Wilson**

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<b>Prepared by:</b>	<b>Jake R. Wilson</b>	<b>Archaeologist</b>	
<b>Reviewed and approved by:</b>	<b>Dan Swift</b>	<b>Project Manager</b>	
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**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 was commissioned by MGJV on behalf of Southern Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief at land west of A29, water treatment works, Billingshurst.*

*The watching brief consisted of a topsoil strip along the proposed route of the new sewer in addition with four trenches measuring 20m in length. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed in the watching brief and subsequent trenches. A small assemblage of late post-medieval finds was recovered from the topsoil.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by MGJV to undertake an archaeological watching brief for works on behalf of Southern Water on a new sewer at waste water treatment works (WTW) west of the A29 at Billingshurst, West Sussex, (Figure 1; centred on NGR 507770 124848).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

- 1.2.1 The site is bounded to the north-east by the A29 Billingshurst bypass and lies within a hedged field. According to the British Geological Survey the site is underlain by Weald Clay formation mudstone overlain with no superficial deposits recorded, (BGS 2017).

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 This scheme falls within the necessary parameters of the General Permitted Development Order benefitting from Southern Water's Permitted Development rights as a Statutory Undertaker. It is understood that no element of the scheme is subject to planning consent. A Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief (ASE 2017) was nevertheless submitted.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.4.1 The general objective of the archaeological work is to ensure that any deposits, features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the excavations are recorded, interpreted and reported on to appropriate standards.
- 1.4.2 The site may have the potential to address the following research questions from the South-East Research Framework (SERF 2008):
- Was the Weald occupied or a barrier during prehistory and the Roman period? How good is the evidence for occupation or exploitation?
- 1.4.3 A number of further aims have been developed for the site from a proposed updated research agenda for The Wealden region (Margetts in prep). The number of Middle Iron Age sites remains limited from the region, particularly the interior. Can we add to this corpus?
- As knowledge of Roman Wealden settlement expands does it continue to be that later 1st and early 2nd century AD sites represent a continuation of earlier settlements, so-called 'native farmsteads'?
  - Does a hiatus of settlement from the mid-2nd century continue to be a feature of the Roman period within the Weald? Can this hiatus be related to the rise of villa estates and/or the draw of urban centres and burgeoning roadside settlements?

- Can the site contribute to an understanding of the origins and phases of development of the loosely co-axial system that occupies much of the Sussex Low Weald?

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

- 1.5.1 This report details the findings of the archaeological watching brief carried out between the 11/01/2018 and the 24/01/2018.

## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Summary

2.1.1 This following background summarises information previously collated (ASE 2017) and information provided in earlier ASE client documentation produced for this project. There are no statutorily designated heritage assets within the works area. A number of Grade II Listed Buildings are located within c. 700m of the works area, although will not be directly impacted by the proposed work. An area of ancient woodland is located adjacent to the WTW boundary, which according to provisional development plans, will not be affected by the proposed development.

2.1.2 The works area is not within a Conservation Area or Archaeological Notification Area (ANA), however, the works area is located c. 300m from an ANA for Stane Street (Roman Road), listed as category *amber* and c. 300m from an ANA for a multi-period site to the East of Billingshurst, also listed as category *amber*. Publically available HER data is sparse for the area and the following discussion consequently draws on information available for the wider locality as appropriate.

### 2.2 Prehistoric

2.2.1 Prehistoric material within the Weald tends to be sparse. The region was covered in dense forest throughout this period, and much of the known settlement pattern concentrates around the rim of the Weald, where the Chalk and Greensand produce better soils. The small amount of prehistoric material that is known from the area tends to be of Mesolithic date and reflects activities associated with resource exploitation, often on a seasonal basis, and mainly comprises evidence for hunter gathering activity. Some small-scale agricultural exploitation of the more tractable soils is suggested by pollen evidence from the Neolithic onwards, and the presence of Bronze Age barrows (burial mounds) within the High Weald points to some level of settlement at this period. The Iron Age saw the exploitation of iron ore deposits, and the presence of fortified hilltop enclosures suggesting some level of control of this industry.

2.2.2 A possible Mesolithic flint scatter was found in the rear garden of a house at Clevelands within Billingshurst c1km to the north-east of the site. Five Mesolithic flints have been recovered from Little Lordings Wood c. 500m to the south-west. Four Neolithic polished flint 'celts' (axeheads) were found while digging a ditch 'near Billingshurst' in 1852, the exact location of which is unknown, although may lie to the north-east on the other side of Billingshurst. Five Bronze Age palstaves have been found in the Billingshurst area. Recent 2015 - 2016 archaeological investigations carried out by ASE to the south of the A272 east of Billingshurst revealed evidence of a low level prehistoric presence within the landscape including small quantities of residual flint artefacts and three pits of Middle Bronze Age date, one of which contained a partially intact vessel (ASE 2015 and 2016).

## 2.3 Iron Age and Roman

- 2.3.1 Archaeological investigations carried out in 2004, just over 1km north of the site revealed a linear feature with associated worked and fire-cracked flint possibly relating to the Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age. A structure identified as a smithy was also found. Archaeology recorded within the ANA covering the land east and south-east of Billingshurst includes Romano-British settlement and Roman coins and evidence for Middle and Late Iron Age/Early Roman settlement was found at the recent ASE site east of Billingshurst (ibid).
- 2.3.2 As one of the nearest parts of Britain to the Continent, Sussex experienced contact with Rome from an early date, forming part of the client kingdom of the Regni. Following the Roman invasion of AD43, the region became heavily settled, particularly along the Downs and the fertile Coastal Plain, where settlements were mostly associated with farming and are characterised by evidence of continuity with the previous Iron Age (Rudling 1999, 24). Settlements also occur along principal routes such as Stane Street, which linked the major urban centre of Chichester with London. However, evidence for Roman activity in the Weald is generally sparse, and is confined mainly to roads and ironworking sites.
- 2.3.3 An excavation by the Billingshurst Local History Society in 1984 across Stane Street located a flint and ironstone agger, plus a small ditch containing medieval pottery, c. 300m east of the WTW site. Roman coins dating from Vespasian to Constantine, pottery and *tesserae* were found c. 1819 by the Unitarian Chapel in Billingshurst, which is interpreted as a possible site of a villa lying c. 1km from the WTW site.

## 2.4 Saxon/ Early medieval

- 2.4.1 Billingshurst is first recorded in 1202 but has an Anglo-Saxon name meaning the 'wooded hill of Billing/the people of Billa' suggesting some degree of earlier pre-Conquest settlement. The predominantly north - south alignment of many of the roads within the Weald fossilise the line of many of the early droveways (Brandon 2003, 47), which in turn have acted as templates for distinctive linear co-axial field systems, forming ladder-like patterns in several areas of the Weald. Little early-medieval activity is recorded in the locality and the site may have comprised woodland and agricultural land.

## 2.5 Medieval

- 2.5.1 The settlement of Billingshurst is not recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086. The Grade I listed church of St Mary originally constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century would have formed the focus of the medieval settlement. A former late medieval hall house is located c 1km to the north-east of the site. Whilst much of the land to the north and east of the town is largely a fossilised late medieval landscape comprising small irregular fields carved (assarted) from the surrounding woodland, with heavily wooded 'shaws', aerial imagery (Google Earth) suggests the fieldscape within which the site lies to be less distinctive. As such it may reflect similar or later enclosure patterns.
- 2.5.2 The agricultural regime initiated in the Saxon period in the Weald that of scattered pastoral activity, continued on into the medieval period. The typical



heavy clay soils of the area rendered much of the land unsuitable for arable farming at this time as the primitive ploughing technology was unable to cope with these heavier soils. Archaeology recorded within the ANA covering the land east and south-east of Billingshurst includes medieval farmsteads and post-medieval settlement. The 2015 - 2016 ASE investigations to the south of the A272 revealed field systems, trackways and pits of medieval date, which were identified across the site on similar alignments to those of early Roman date.

## **2.6 Post-medieval and Modern**

- 2.6.1 A relatively large number of Listed Buildings are located within Billingshurst centred on the longstanding church. Many of these date to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and form the core of the Billingshurst Conservation Area. The surrounding parish is characterised by dispersed post medieval farmsteads within a landscape of intrinsically agricultural character.
- 2.6.2 The site remained undeveloped until between 1950 and 1960 when a small WTW works was constructed. The site had expanded by c. 1970 and further development has occurred at the WTW since then, although there are still areas of the WTW site that are likely unaffected by construction impacts. The field area in which the pipe is proposed has remained free of development, although has likely been used for agricultural purposes over the years.

## **2.7 Previous Work**

- 2.7.1 Geotechnical works monitored on the site at an earlier stage of the project produced no results of archaeological significance.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Fieldwork Methodology**

- 3.1.1 An area of topsoil centred on the pipeline route c. 30m wide was initially stripped (Figure 2). This was scanned prior to excavation using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) operated by accredited MGJV personnel.
- 3.1.2 The topsoil was removed with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision, grading in spits of no more than 100mm at a time until the first archaeological horizon or next geological horizon was reached.
- 3.1.3 All deposits were recorded using standard ASE context sheets with colours recorded by visual inspection only. A digital photographic record was made of the trenches.
- 3.1.4 Following on from the topsoil strip; 4 x 20m x 2.1m trenches were excavated (Figure 2) with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision adjacent to the proposed sewage pipeline.
- 3.1.5 The trenches were located and levelled using a GPS and tied into the Ordnance Survey.
- 3.1.6 Spoil heaps and the trench bases were scanned by eye, for unstratified artefacts.
- 3.1.7 All recording and planning was conducted according to the methodology in the WSI (ASE 2017).

### 3.2 The Site Archive

3.2.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at a local museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Context sheets	4
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	43
Context register	0
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	8
Trench Record forms	4

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box )	1 bag
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

## 4.0 RESULTS

4.0.1 During the topsoil strip between 11/01/2018 and the 24/01/2018 and the subsequent four trial trenches excavated on the 24/01/2018 no archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief. A small quantity of late post-medieval pottery and CBM was recovered from the topsoil.

4.0.2 The topsoil was a light to mid-brown silty clay [001] of slight variable depth across the stripped area, a various assortment of finds were recovered during the excavation. The subsoil [002] consisted of a mid-brown orange silt clay sealing the Weald clay formation mudstone [003].

### 4.1 Topsoil Strip monitored between 11/01/2018 to the 24/01/2018

(Figure 3)

Context	Type	Interpretation	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
001	Layer	Topsoil	220m+	30m+	0.1-0.3m
002	Layer	Subsoil	220m+	30m+	-
003	Layer	Weald Clay formation Mudstone	220m+	30m+	-

Table 3: List of recorded contexts

### 4.2 Trial trenches excavated on the 24/01/2018

(Figure 4)

Context	Type	Interpretation	Deposit Thickness m	Height AOD
01/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.3m	15.00-15.12m
01/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.25-0.26m	-
01/003	Layer	Weald Clay	0.01m+	14.86-14.9m
02/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.26-0.28m	14.74-14.83m
02/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.2-0.22m	-
02/003	Layer	Weald Clay	0.02m+	14.54-14.59m
03/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.18m	14.32-14.43m
03/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.23-0.24m	-
03/003	Layer	Weald Clay	0.01m+	14.17m
04/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.1-0.12m	14.00-14.04m
04/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.2m	-
04/003	Layer	Weald Clay	0.01m+	13.85-13.91

Table 4: List of recorded trenches

## 5.0 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered and were washed, and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were subsequently quantified by count and weight and were bagged by material and context (Table 5). All finds have been packed and stored following ClfA guidelines (2014).

Context	Pottery	Weight (g)	CBM	Weight (g)
001	3	98	5	165
Total	3	98	5	165

Table 5: Finds quantification

### 5.2 The Pottery by Luke Barber

- 5.2.1 The archaeological monitoring recovered three pieces of pottery weighing 98g. All were recovered from topsoil [001] and exhibit only slight signs of having been reworked. The largest sherd (68g) is from the base of a late English stoneware vessel with exterior iron wash under a salt glaze, but plain grey internal Bristol glaze. There is also a 26g sherd from a Yellow ware mixing bowl with moulded exterior decoration and internal white slip and a 4g sherd from a plate in plain refined whiteware. All three sherds can happily be placed between c. 1890 and 1940. The post-Roman pottery has no potential for further analysis beyond that undertaken for this report and has duly been discarded.

### 5.3 The Ceramic Building Material by Isa Benedetti-Whitton and Luke Barber

- 5.3.1 Only five pieces of ceramic building material (CBM), comprising two broken pieces of peg tile, two of wall tile and one of land drain, weighing a total of 165g, were collected from a single context, [001]. All the material was quantified by form, weight and fabric and recorded on standard recording forms. Fabric descriptions were developed with the aid of a x20 binocular microscope.
- 5.3.2 The flat roof tile fragments were made from a cream silt rippled medium orange fabric, which was fired to a solid consistency. Although peg tile is difficult to date in isolation as it changes very little in form between the 1400s and 1900s, the level of firing can be an indicator of date and in this instance a later post-medieval date is suggested. Two refined whiteware wall tile fragments were also noted. One measures 10mm thick and has a moulded base and clear (white) glaze (28g); the other measures 9mm thick, has a pale yellow glaze and moulded base, including the wording 'ENGLAND'. Both pieces can be placed between c. 1890 and 1940+.
- 5.3.3 A piece of ceramic land drain in a less marbled version of the roof tile fabric was also recovered. This cannot be dated at all. All CBM has been discarded.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence**

6.1.1 The trenches exhibited the same sequence throughout with Weald Clay mudstone formation natural directly overlain by subsoil and topsoil.

6.1.4 The methodology, as set out in the WSI (ASE 2017) was successfully employed during the evaluation. The conditions on site were conducive to confident and efficient identification and recording of the topsoil and the trenches and as such it is considered that this archaeological watching brief and report has successfully achieved its objective.

### **6.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts**

6.2.1 During the topsoil removal a large metal water/sewage pipe was observed running on a northwest-southeast alignment from the WTW through the excavation area. The pipe truncated the topsoil, subsoil and roughly 0.5m into the natural geology.

### **6.3 Discussion of archaeological remains by period**

#### **6.4. Post Medieval**

6.4.1 The site produced a small assemblage of late post medieval finds dating roughly from between 1890-1940. Three pieces of pottery and five pieces of CBM were recovered during the topsoil excavation. No piece was related to an archaeological feature or deposit and it is likely that these were small amounts of refuse associated with the post-medieval agricultural landscape.

### **6.5 Consideration of research aims**

6.5.1 Whilst the general objectives of the evaluation have been achieved, none of the specific research aims can be addressed with any certainty due to the total lack of archaeological features and deposits and the paucity of archaeological findings.

### **6.6 Updated Research Agenda**

6.6.1 Any further work could be directed towards further identification of the post-medieval landscape though this is not considered to represent an important research aim.

### **6.7 Conclusions**

6.7.1 No archaeological features or deposits were revealed in the watching brief and subsequent trenches. A small assemblage of late post-medieval finds was recovered from the topsoil.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## HER Summary

<b>HER enquiry no.</b>											
<b>Site code</b>	ABT17										
<b>Project code</b>	170753										
<b>Planning reference</b>	-										
<b>Site address</b>	Land adjacent to the A29, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9PQ										
<b>District/Borough</b>	Billingshurst										
<b>NGR (12 figures)</b>	507770 124848										
<b>Geology</b>	Weald Clay Mudstone Formation										
<b>Fieldwork type</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td>WB</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>			WB							
		WB									
<b>Date of fieldwork</b>	11/01/2018-24/01/2018										
<b>Sponsor/client</b>	MGJV										
<b>Project manager</b>	Paul Mason										
<b>Project supervisor</b>	Jake Wilson										
<b>Period summary</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Post-Medieval</td><td></td></tr></table>									Post-Medieval	
			Post-Medieval								
<b>Project summary</b>	<p>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by MGJV on behalf of Southern Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief at land west of A29, water treatment works, Billingshurst.</p> <p>The watching brief consisted of a topsoil strip along the proposed route of the new sewer in addition with four trenches measuring 20m in length. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed in the watching brief and subsequent trenches. A small assemblage of late post-medieval finds was recovered from the topsoil.</p>										
<b>Museum/Accession No.</b>											



**OASIS ID: archaeol6-309535****Project details**

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Land West of A29, Water Treatment Works, Billingshurst, West Sussex.
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by MGJV on behalf of Southern Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief at land west of A29, water treatment works, Billingshurst. The watching brief consisted of a topsoil strip along the proposed route of the new sewer in addition with four trenches measuring 20m in length. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed in the watching brief and subsequent trenches. A small assemblage of late post-medieval finds was recovered from the topsoil.
Project dates	Start: 11-01-2018 End: 24-01-2018
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ABT17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 2 - Undisturbed Grassland
Monument type	- None
Significant Finds	- None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Service infrastructure (e.g. sewage works, reservoir, pumping station, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX HORSHAM BILLINGSHURST Land West of A29, Water Treatment Works, Billingshurst, West Sussex
Study area	3749.13 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 772 2491 51.012886 -0.464308 51 00 46 N 000 27 51 W Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 0m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	ASE
Project design originator	ASE
Project director/manager	Paul Mason
Project supervisor	Jake Wilson
Type of sponsor/funding body	MGJV
Name of sponsor/funding body	MGJV

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**Project archives**

Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Media available	"Database","GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Report"

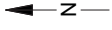
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Entered by	Jake Wilson (Tcrnjrw@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	19 February 2018



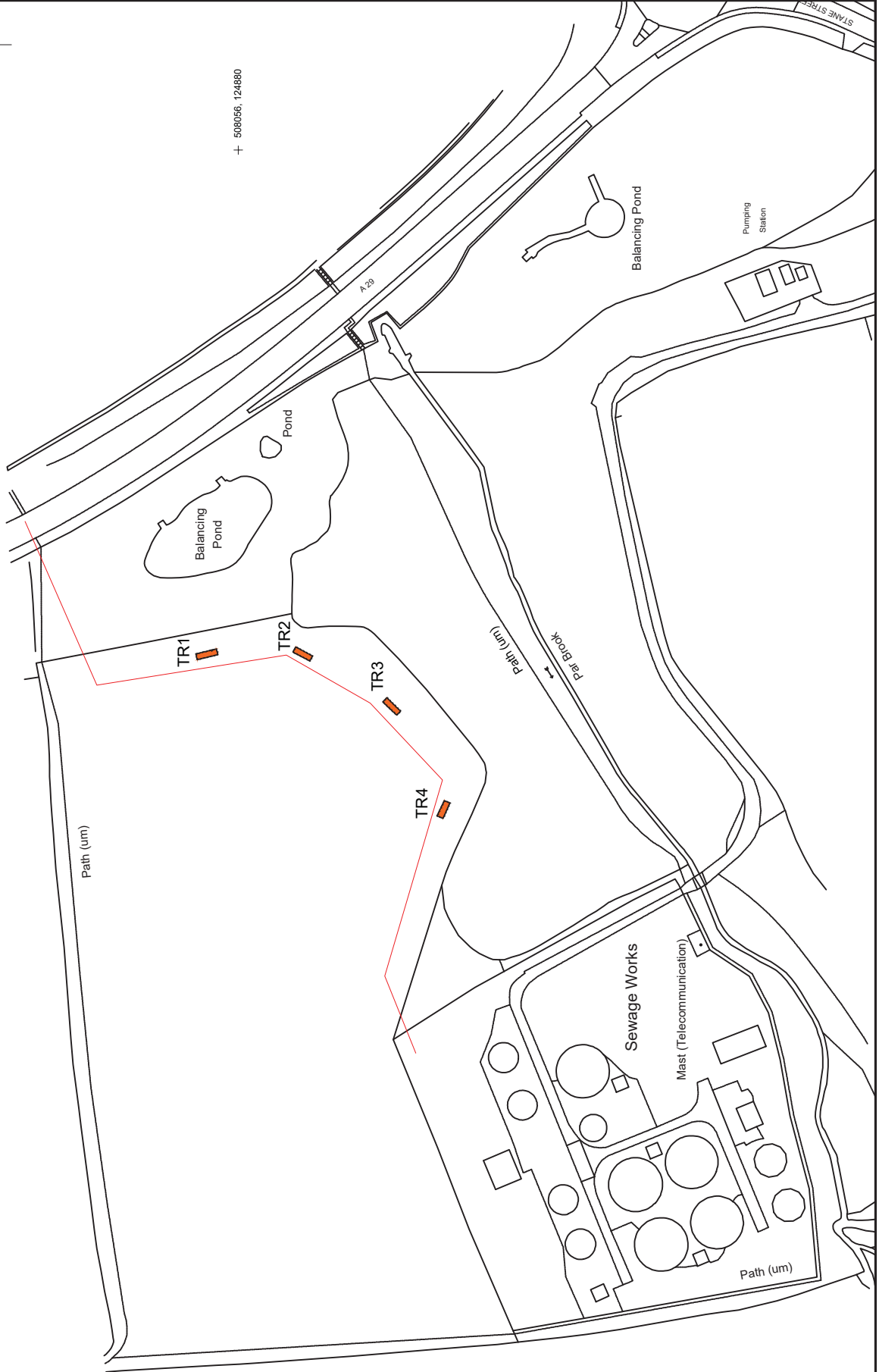
Contains Ordnance Survey data  
Crown copyright and database right 2017

© Archaeology South-East		Billingshurst A29	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 170753	Feb 2017	Site location	
Report Ref: 2018064	Drawn by: AR		



+ 507598, 124968

+ 508056, 124880



— Pipe route

▬ Trench

0 50m

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Billingshurst A29

Trench plan

Fig. 2



Top soil strip, looking east



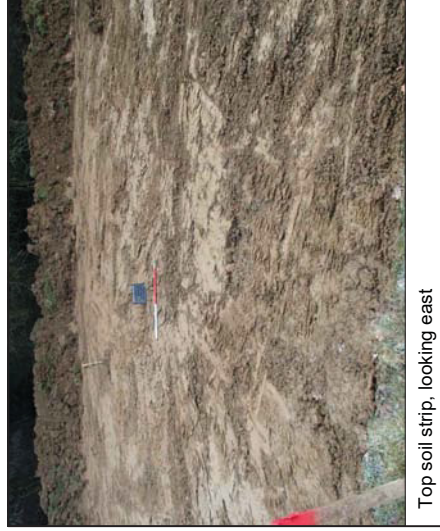
Top soil strip, looking east



Top soil strip, looking north



Top soil strip, looking east



Top soil strip, looking east



Top soil strip, looking east

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Top soil strip photographs



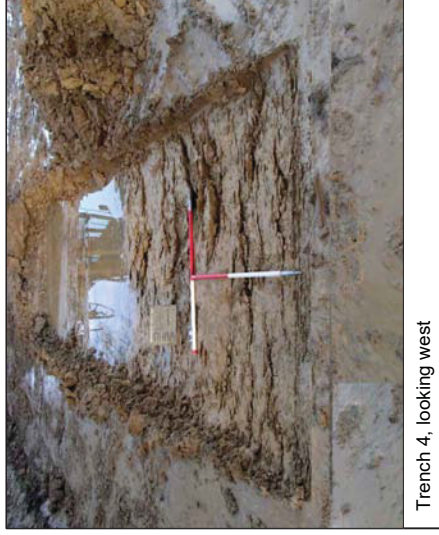
Trench 1, looking south west



Trench 2, looking south west



Trench 3, looking south west



Trench 4, looking west

• **Archaeology South-East**

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Project Ref: 170753

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Drawn by: AR

Trench 1, 2, 3 and 4 photographs

**Sussex Office**

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

**Essex Office**

27 Eastways  
Witham  
Essex  
CM8 3YQ  
tel: +44(0)1376 331470  
email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)  
[www.archaeologyse.co.uk](http://www.archaeologyse.co.uk)

**London Office**

Centre for Applied Archaeology  
UCL Institute of Archaeology  
31-34 Gordon Square  
London WC1H 0PY  
tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778  
email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)  
[www.ucl.ac.uk/caa](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/caa)

