

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Lealands Farm, Groombridge,  
East Sussex**

**NGR 512335 103290**

**Project No. 3097  
Site Code: LFG 08**

**ASE Report No. 2008061  
OASIS id: archaeol6-43009**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by EDF Energy to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of groundworks associated with a new energy supply at Lealands Farm, Groombridge. No archaeological deposits or finds were discovered during the excavations. The work was undertaken between the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008 and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by EDF Energy to undertake a archaeological watching brief during intrusive groundworks associated with a new electricity supply at Lealands Farm, Station Road, Groombridge (NGR 553505, 136880).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

- 1.2.1 At present the site is used partly for animal pasture and partly for arable crops. A forested area is located immediately to the north of the site and further pasture fields are located to the east. To the west and north, the site is bounded by Station Road.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the site consisted of Ashdown Beds (British Geological survey sheet 303).

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 The new electricity supply works are permitted developments (under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, 1995), and as such do not require planning permission. However, EDF Energy adheres to a code of best practice in respect of archaeological remains. As such, the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer, (Greg Chuter), in his capacity as advisor to Wealden District Council on archaeological matters, recommended that an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of new groundworks until it become clear beyond reasonable doubt that no archaeological remains were present. A Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeological monitoring was produced by ASE (Sygrave 2008), outlining the methods to be used during the watching brief. The methodology was agreed with the ESSC Archaeological Officer prior to the commencement of work at the site

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.4.1 The aims and objectives of the archaeological investigation (watching brief) were outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Sygrave 2008). These were:

#### **Research Aims**

- To understand the use and development of the historic landscape.
- To investigate the origins of Groombridge.
- To investigate the industrial/ economic landscape of Sussex during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

#### **Specific Research Objectives (to fulfil the Research Aims)**

- To establish whether the predicted low potential for the prehistoric periods is valid
- To investigate the extent of industrial activity in the area associated with iron workings.
- To investigate evidence relating to the early development of Groombridge.
- To investigate evidence relating to the post-medieval development of the area, in particular evidence associated with industrial practices.

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

This report details the findings of watching brief undertaken by Nick Garland and Simon Stevens between the 27<sup>th</sup> February and the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The project was managed by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** This section of the report incorporates information from the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 2.2** The Grom Valley has been a focus of human activity since at least the Mesolithic period when it was visited by seasonal hunter gather groups. Excavations at Edrige in 1999, approximately 5 km east of Groombridge, found evidence for Mesolithic rock shelters of a temporary nature (Greatest & Seager Thomas 2000)
- 2.3** There is currently little evidence for later prehistoric or Roman activity in the area, although this may be due to lack of archaeological fieldwork as such sites have been recorded throughout the Weald.
- 2.4** It is believed that the origins of Groombridge village lay in the Saxon period. A castle may have been established by Gromen, a Saxon nobleman, known as *Gromenebrigge*, at the site of Groombridge Place. This defensive settlement may have originated due to its location as a river crossing between the Saxon Kingdoms of Kent and Sussex.
- 2.5** In the medieval period the Weald was an important focus for iron extraction and processing. In the Groombridge area Iron ore was taken from local sandstone and wood (for production) was sourced from nearby Ashdown forest.
- 2.6** A moated manor house was constructed at Groombridge in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was first mentioned in records in 1286. The site of the manor lies 350 metres to the north of the site. A settlement known as 'Old Groombridge' grew around the manor house.
- 2.7** The moated manor house was later replaced by a 17<sup>th</sup> century country house, known as 'Groombridge Place' which is designated as a *Scheduled Ancient Monument* (KE12728).
- 2.8** Later medieval and post-medieval activity in the area is mainly associated with the increase in size of settlements and the industrialisation of farming such as the construction of windmills.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1** The general objective of the archaeological work was to monitor the excavation of groundworks associated with the placement of an electricity cable, stretching for 190 metres (revised during fieldwork, see 3.2), until it became clear beyond reasonable doubt that no archaeological remains were present (e.g. once excavation reaches undisturbed natural subsoils). This was in order to ensure that any archaeological deposits, artefacts or structural elements exposed by work associated with the earth-moving were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.
- 3.2** On site constraints required the revision of the initial, 190m cable route. The new route was longer than initially proposed and encompassed 320m of trenching (Fig. 2). An archaeologist was present to monitor all groundworks associated with the new electricity supply.
- 3.3** All excavation was monitored, all sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features or deposits and all spoil was scanned for the presence of artefacts. All archaeological deposits and stratigraphy encountered were recorded according to accepted professional standards using context record sheets based upon the Central Excavation Unit recording system, as modified for use by Archaeology South-East.
- 3.4** A full photographic record of the trenches and associated deposits and features was kept (including monochrome prints, colour slides and digital), and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade, East Sussex, and will in due course be offered to a suitable local museum.
- 3.5** The ESCC Archaeological Officer was notified in the event that any significant archaeological remains were encountered during the stripping. Any decision regarding the best way to proceed in this instance remained with the Archaeological Officer.

## 4.0 RESULTS

**4.1** A single cable trench was excavated from an existing electricity supply pylon north of the farm to another existing pylon to the south of the farm, in order to remove overhead power lines across this area. This trench measured 0.35m in width, 320m in length and approximately 1.2m in depth. The route of the trench ran along the edge of the fields to avoid disturbance of the existing crops.

### 4.1.1 Cable Trench

List of recorded contexts

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Depth	Depth below surface level
001	Deposit	Topsoil	320m (cable trench)	0.35m (cable trench)	0.10m	0m
002	Deposit	Subsoil	320m (cable trench)	0.35m (cable trench)	0.20-0.40m	0.10m
003	Deposit	Natural	320m (cable trench)	0.35m (cable trench)	-	0.30-0.50m

#### Summary

The stratigraphy exposed within the trench included a layer of mid-dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, [001], approximately 0.10m depth. This overlay a light greyish yellow silty clay subsoil, [002], varying from 0.20m to 0.40m in depth. The subsoil layer directly overlay the light yellow clay natural substrate, [003], which included some sandstone inclusions. No archaeological features or deposits were present and no ancient artefacts recovered.

## **5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1** The excavation at Lealands Farm, Groombridge, revealed no archaeological deposits, features or artefacts.
- 5.2** While the lack of archaeology uncovered on the site means that the aims of the project, as stated above, could not be fully addressed, some information can be gathered from these negative results.
- 5.3** Although archaeological negative, some useful observations can still be made. The cable trench (320m) provides a long north-south and c. east w-west transect across the fields to the east of Groombridge. Though only narrow, and so providing a somewhat limited 'keyhole' investigation, the complete lack of artefactual evidence recovered suggests that there is unlikely to be a major focus of archaeological activity in the immediate vicinity.
- 5.4** Given the nature of the cable trench, it is unlikely that ephemeral features would have been detectable. However, it is worth noting that the natural substrate lay relatively close to the surface (c. 0.30-0.50m) and it is probable that ploughing has impacted upon the archaeological horizon and only deeper features (potentially) remain in the vicinity.
- 5.5** However, despite the lack of the archaeological remains within the scope of these works the proximity of Groombridge place, a scheduled ancient monument and the early medieval origins of the village itself indicate that there is still potential for archaeology to have survived in this area.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Greathouse, C and Seager Thomas, M. 2000. Rock Shelter Stratigraphy. Sussex Archaeological Collections, 138: 49-56

Sygrave, J. 2008. Lealands Farm, Groombridge, East Sussex: Archaeological Watching Brief: Written Scheme of Investigation. ASE unpublished report Project No: 3097

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The information provided by Greg Chuter, both prior to and during works is gratefully acknowledged, as is the co-operation of EDF Energy.

**SMR Summary Form**

Site Code	LFG 08					
Identification Name and Address	Lealands Farm, Groombridge, East Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	Wealden, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 553505 136880					
Geology	TO ADD					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3097					
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. 27/2 to 14/4	Other		
Sponsor/Client	EDF Energy Ltd					
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave					
Project Supervisor	Nick Garland					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern ✓		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by EDF Energy to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of groundworks associated with a new energy supply at Lealands Farm, Groombridge. No archaeological deposits or finds were discovered during the excavations. The work was undertaken between the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008 and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008.</i></p>						

OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-43009**

**Project details**

Project name	Lealands Farm, Groombridge
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by EDF Energy to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of groundworks associated with a new energy supply at Lealands Farm, Groombridge. No archaeological deposits were discovered during the excavations. The work was undertaken between the 27th February 2008 and 14th April 2008.
Project dates	Start: 27-02-2008 End: 14-04-2008
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 2 - Operations to a depth less than 0.25m
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 1 - Minimal cultivation
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	'Visual Inspection'
Development type	Pipelines/cables (e.g. gas, electric, telephone, TV cable, water, sewage, drainage etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX WEALDEN CROWBOROUGH Lealands Farm, Groombridge
Postcode	TN3 9
Study area	6055.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 553505 136880 50.9011598290 0.209563958170 50 54 04 N 000 12 34 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	EDF Energy Ltd
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Jon Sygrave
Project supervisor	Nick Garland
Type of sponsor/funding body	EDf Energy Ltd

### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Physical Contents	'other'
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum

Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Report'

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**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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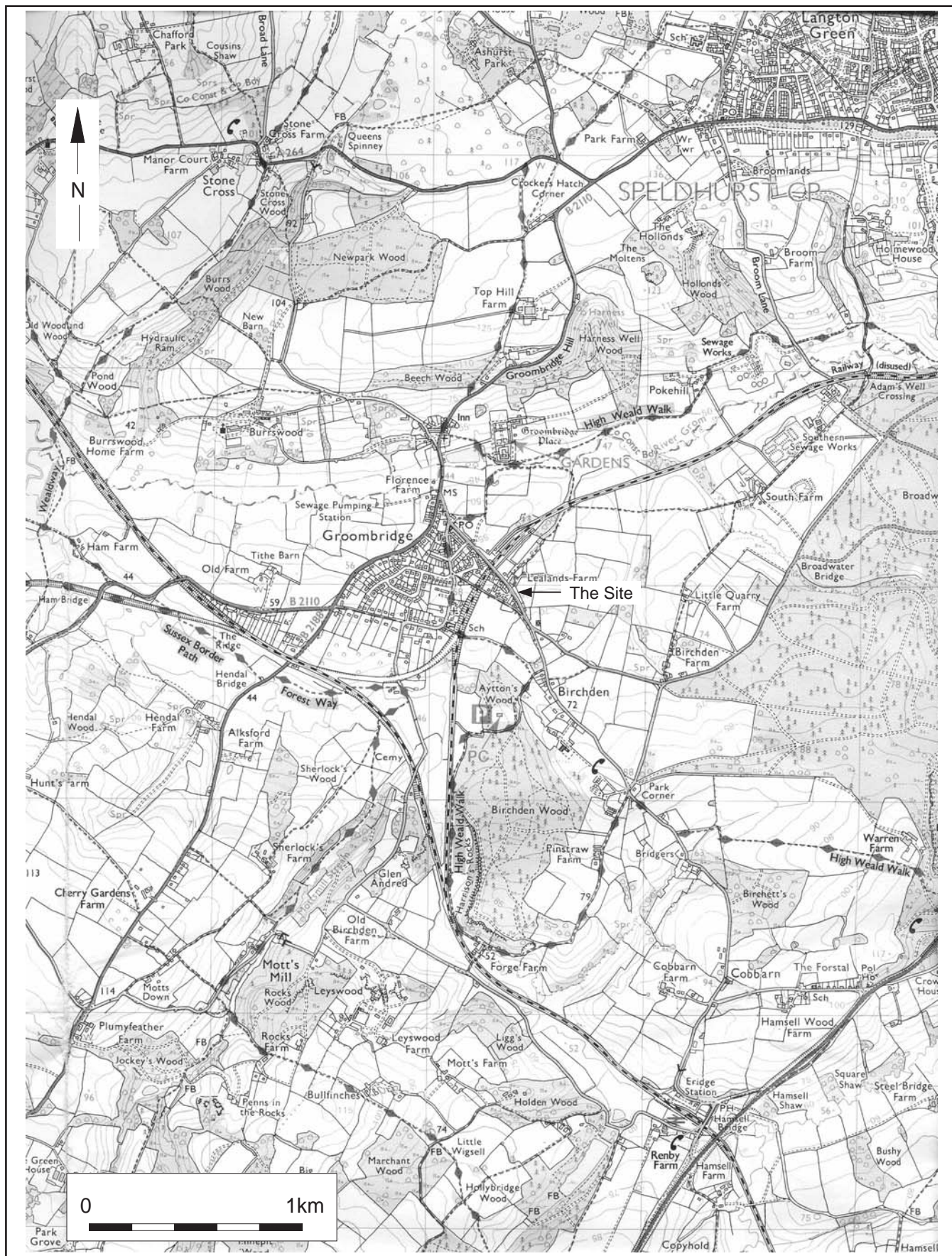
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© Archaeology South-East		Lealands Farm, Groombridge	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 3097	Feb 2008	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref:-	Drawn by: SM		

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