

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Bramber Castle,
Steyning, West Sussex**

Scheduled Monument Consent: SMC 12859

**NGR: 51853 11067
(TQ 1853 1067)**

**Project No: 4848
Site Code: BCS11
ASE Report No. 2011074**

OASIS ID: archaeol6-99484

Andrew Margetts

**With contributions by
Luke Barber, Elke Raemen and Lucy Sibun**

April 2011

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, were commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of four double posted lectern signs at Bramber Castle, Steyning, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 1853 1067). No significant archaeological remains were encountered during the groundworks although archaeological finds were collected from Panel [3/001].

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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, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, were commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of four double posted lectern signs at Bramber Castle, Steyning, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 1853 1067, Fig 1).

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The British Geographical Survey Map (Sheet 318/333) for the area indicates the underlying geology to comprise Zig Zag Chalk of the Lower Chalk Formation with overlying drift geology of alluvial clay nearby. Bramber village is situated in the floodplain of the River Adur, the castle itself being constructed on a natural knoll.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the work was undertaken in accordance with Scheduled Monument Consent (Reference: SMC 12859). The work involved the installation of four double-posted information panels. The postholes measured 500-600mm deep and 300mm in diameter.

1.3.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) was produced by ASE for the proposed archaeological works (ASE 2011). All excavations were monitored by an archaeologist and took place on a single day, the 31st March, 2011. Richard Massey (English Heritage) and John Mills (West Sussex County Council) were kept informed of the work.

1.3.3 All work was carried out in accordance with the WSI and the relevant *Standard and Guidance* of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008), and with reference to West Sussex County Council's, *Recommended Standard Archaeological Conditions* (WSCC 2007).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The general objective of the archaeological work was to monitor all excavations in order to record any archaeological remains to be impacted by the installation of the new signposts.

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report details the results of the archaeological watching brief undertaken during signpost installation at the site. The work was undertaken on the 31st March 2011 by Andrew Margetts (Senior Archaeologist). The project was managed by Andy Leonard (fieldwork) and Jim Stevenson (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following information is drawn from the Historic Character Assessment Report for Bramber, prepared by Roland Harris (Sussex EUS 2004).

2.2 Prehistoric

2.2.1 Archaeological investigations in the Bramber area have been limited and, to date, have generated only a small finds assemblage dating to the prehistoric period. This was in the form of 15 residual struck flints dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, found within the Adur valley alluvium.

2.2.2 Other find-spots in the area include a Bronze Age socketed spearhead, found near to Bramber Castle and an Iron Age coin found within Bramber Castle itself; further afield, a Late Bronze Age hoard was found in Clays Field and a Palaeolithic handaxe was recovered in the field to the west of Bramber railway station.

2.3 Roman

2.3.1 To date no archaeological excavations have produced evidence of Roman activity in the area, although residual Romano-British tile was found in medieval levels during work at Bramber Castle.

2.3.2 The east-west 'Greensand Way' Roman road passes c. 3km to the north of Bramber, connecting Stane Street, the London-Hassocks road and the London-Lewes road.

2.4 Saxon

2.4.1 Only very limited evidence of activity has been found dating to the Saxon period, comprising a few sherds of Saxon pottery at Bramber Castle.

2.5 Medieval

2.5.1 The name Bramber derives from the old English *Bremer* meaning 'broom-thicket' or 'bramble thicket', and was used as name for the river by 956 (the name Adur, only having been adopted in the 17th century). Bramber Castle was built by 1073 and is referenced in the Domesday Book of 1086. There is no documented use of the site prior to the castle's construction and the limited record of the construction itself only refers to the creation of a ditch to bring water to the site from the river.

2.5.2 Today Bramber Castle is in a ruinous state with only occasional upstanding structural remains. The site has been given the Historic Environment Value (HEV) 5, the highest available. Several parts of the curtain wall do survive but none of these date to the 11th century. The west wall of the gatehouse is the most complete masonry that survives, at 17m above modern ground level.

The lower parts of the east wall also survive, indicating that the floor plan of the gatehouse measured 12.5m x 11.5m externally.

- 2.5.3 Excavations in 1966-7 revealed 12th century blocking of the northern gateway. This was originally thought to indicate a change of use, to a keep or tower. However, it is considered more plausible that the gatehouse was heightened in the late 12th century and that the blocking was part of a later, and entirely separate, event.
- 2.5.4 Although the castle mound is natural, the motte, its associated ditch and the outer ditch are artificial modifications. The motte is part of the earliest works (pre-1073) and the infilling event of the inner ditch suggests that the motte's existence was short-lived, possibly being replaced by the gatehouse in its modified form. The proximity of the outer ditch evidently caused considerable problems for the curtain wall, with evidence that early phases of it had collapsed into the ditch and that subsequent walls were built upon the existing foundations.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 Each of the four signage panels required the hand excavation of two postholes measuring c.0.50m in depth and c.0.30m in diameter with the exception of Panel 4, which measured 0.60m in depth. The work was monitored throughout for evidence of archaeological structures, features or deposits.
- 3.1.2 All deposits encountered were recorded using the standard context record sheets used by ASE.
- 3.1.3 A full digital photographic record was maintained throughout the duration of the watching brief.
- 3.1.4 The areas surrounding the panels and the excavated spoil were scanned with a metal detector. Archaeological finds from surfaces and excavated spoil were bagged according to their context and retained for inspection by ASE specialists.

3.2 Archive

- 3.2.1 The site generated a small archive which is quantified in Table 1

Number of Contexts	6
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	0
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	7 (digital)
Bulk finds	1 bag
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The installation of four double posted signs were subject to archaeological monitoring (Fig 2).

4.1.2 The postholes excavated for the installation of the signage were located in-order to be sited away from clearly raised areas of in-situ (grass covered) masonry. The deposits encountered mainly comprised of topsoil; natural Chalk was only reached in one area (Panel 4) (Table 2).

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Thickness
Panel 1/001	Deposit	Topsoil	-	-	0.50m
Panel 2/001	Deposit	Topsoil	-	-	0.50m
Panel 2/002	Deposit	Destruction Debris	-	-	-
Panel 3/001	Deposit	Topsoil/Abandonment	-	-	0.50m
Panel 4/001	Deposit	Topsoil	-	-	0.25m
Panel 4/002	Deposit	Natural	-	-	-

Table 2: List of Recorded Contexts

4.2 Summary of deposits

4.2.1 All of the excavated postholes measured c.0.50m in depth and c.0.30m in diameter with the exception of Panel 4 which measured 0.60m in depth.

4.2.2 The topsoil deposits encountered at the Panel locations remained fairly consistent across the site (with the exception of Panel [3/001] see below) comprising light-mid grey brown sandy silt. These deposits contained moderate inclusions of chalk fragments as well as occasional inclusions of flint cobbles and charcoal flecks. Deposit [3/001] comprised dark black/grey sandy silt with occasional inclusions of faced flint cobbles and mortar as well as finds of pottery, bone, stone and an iron nail. The posts associated with Panel 4 were the only excavations to reach the natural horizon. At the base of the postholes for Panel 2, deposit [2/002] was encountered. This comprised clear 'tumble' from adjacent upstanding masonry remains and the decision was taken to cease excavation at this level.

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered from context [3/001]. A summary is given in table 3. Finds were all washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were counted, weighed and bagged by context and by material. No further conservation is required.

Context	Pot	Wt (g)	Bone	Wt (g)	Shell	Wt (g)	Stone	Wt (g)	Fe	Wt (g)
Panel 3/001	1	2	4	40	1	20	2	230	1	<2

Table 3: Quantification of the finds

5.2 The Pottery by Luke Barber

5.2.1 A single sherd was recovered from deposit [3/001]. This consists of part of the handle from a Tudor Green cup of mid 15th- to mid 16th- century date.

5.3 The Ironwork by Elke Raemen

5.3.1 An iron general purpose nail fragment was recovered from [3/001]. The piece is not intrinsically dateable.

5.4 The Animal Bone by Lucy Sibun

5.4.1 The watching brief produced four fragments of cattle-sized long bone. These included a fragment of humeral head displaying two shallow cut marks. No further information was available.

5.5 The Marine Shell by Elke Raemen

5.5.1 A single oyster shell fragment was recovered from [3/001]. The fragment consists of a mature right valve fragment displaying no infestation.

5.6 The Stone by Luke Barber

5.6.1 Deposit [3/001] produced two pieces of stone weighing 230g. Both consist of fragments from Horsham stone roofing slabs measuring 10 and 17mm thick with traces of adhering off-white lime mortar. Horsham stone roofing is still in evidence today on some historic buildings but evidence from Lewes and elsewhere suggests the main period of use was between the later 14th and 16th centuries.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 6.1** No archaeological features were encountered during the course of the groundworks and it was not necessary to re-site any of the signposts due to the presence of *in situ* archaeological deposits.
- 6.2** Clear 'tumble' from nearby upstanding masonry was encountered at the base of the postholes associated with Panel 2; however it was not necessary to impact upon these remains.
- 6.3** In the postholes associated with Panel 3, topsoil deposit [3/001] was revealed in an area known to have been in the vicinity of domestic buildings within the castle interior as well as the western gatehouse. Finds collected from this topsoil are consistent with what would be expected in this area of the bailey; construction materials possibly associated with these buildings were also encountered. It is probable that this deposit is made up by gradually accumulated destruction material, related to the castle's abandonment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank English Heritage for commissioning the work as well as Susan Holmes (EH) for her help and guidance throughout the project.

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	BCS 11					
Identification Name and Address	Bramber Castle, Bramber, West Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	West Sussex, Horsham					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 1853 1067					
Geology	Lower Chalk					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4848					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief X	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Castle (Scheduled Mon)		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 31 st March 2011	Other		
Sponsor/Client	English Heritage					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard and Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Andy Margetts					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED X	PM	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, were commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of four double posted lectern signs at Bramber Castle, Steyning, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 1853 1067). No significant archaeological remains were encountered during the groundworks although archaeological finds were collected from Panel (3/001).</i></p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-99484

Project details

Project name An Archaeological Watching Brief at Bramber Castle, Steyning, West Sussex

Short description of the project Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, were commissioned by English Heritage to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of four double posted lectern signs at Bramber Castle, Steyning, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 1853 1067). No significant archaeological remains were encountered during the groundworks although archaeological finds were collected from Panel (3/001).

Project dates Start: 31-03-2011 End: 31-03-2011

Previous/future work Yes / Not known

Any associated project reference codes BCS11 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Other 8 - Land dedicated to the display of a monument

Monument type CASTLE Medieval

Significant Finds FINDS Medieval

Significant Finds FINDS Post Medieval

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location

Country England

Site location WEST SUSSEX HORSHAM BRAMBER Bramber Castle

Postcode BN44 3AA

Study area 1.00 Hectares

Site coordinates TQ 1853 1067 50.8827835409 -0.314837249447 50 52 58 N 000 18 53 W Point

Lat/Long Datum Unknown

Height OD / Depth Min: 35.00m Max: 36.00m

Project creators

Name of Archaeology South East

Organisation

Project brief originator Archaeology South East

Project design originator Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager Andy Leonard

Project supervisor Andrew Margetts

Type of sponsor/funding body English Heritage

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 Bramber Castle, Steyning, West Sussex

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Other bibliographic details ASE Report No. 2011074

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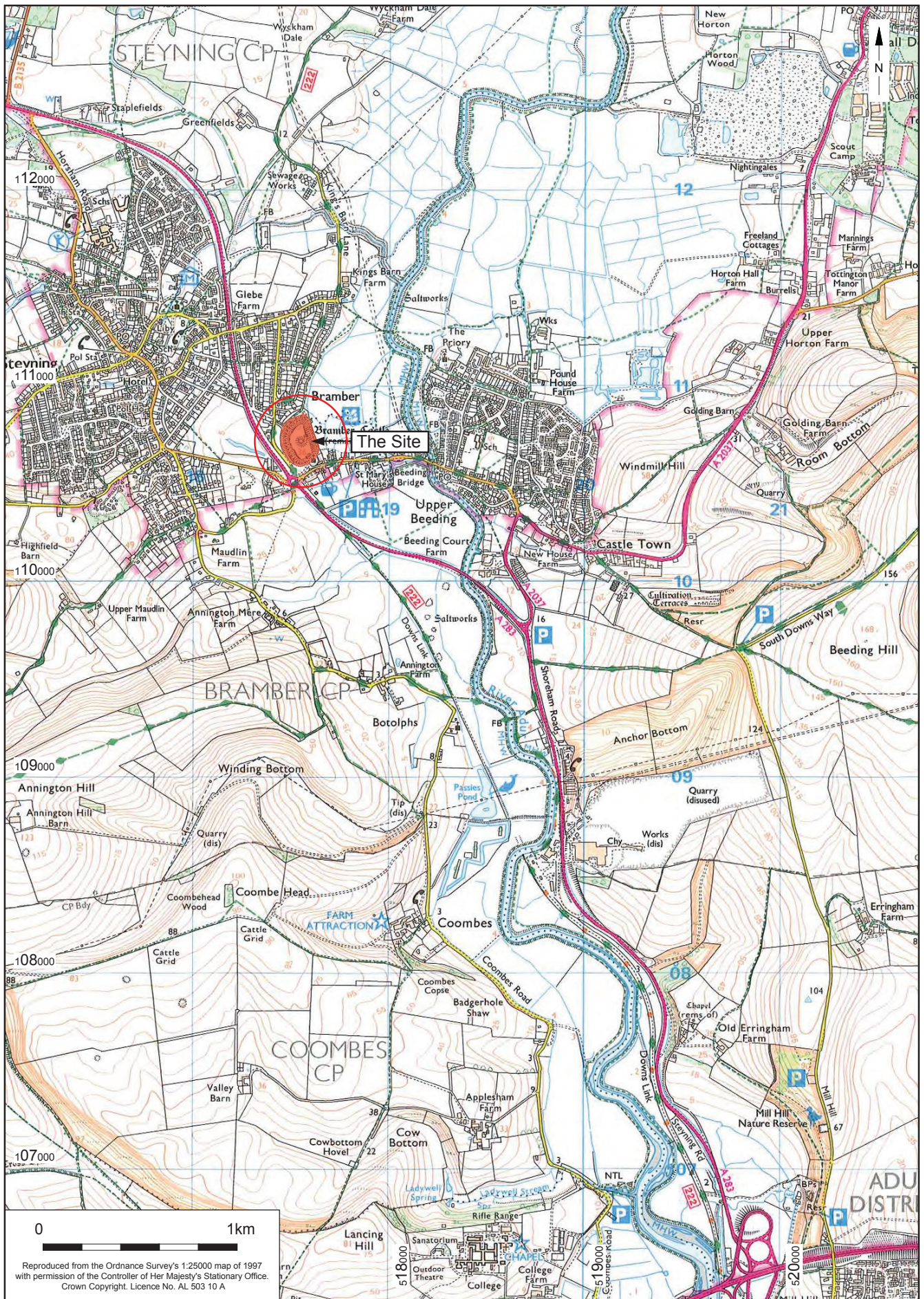
Issuer or publisher Archaeology South East

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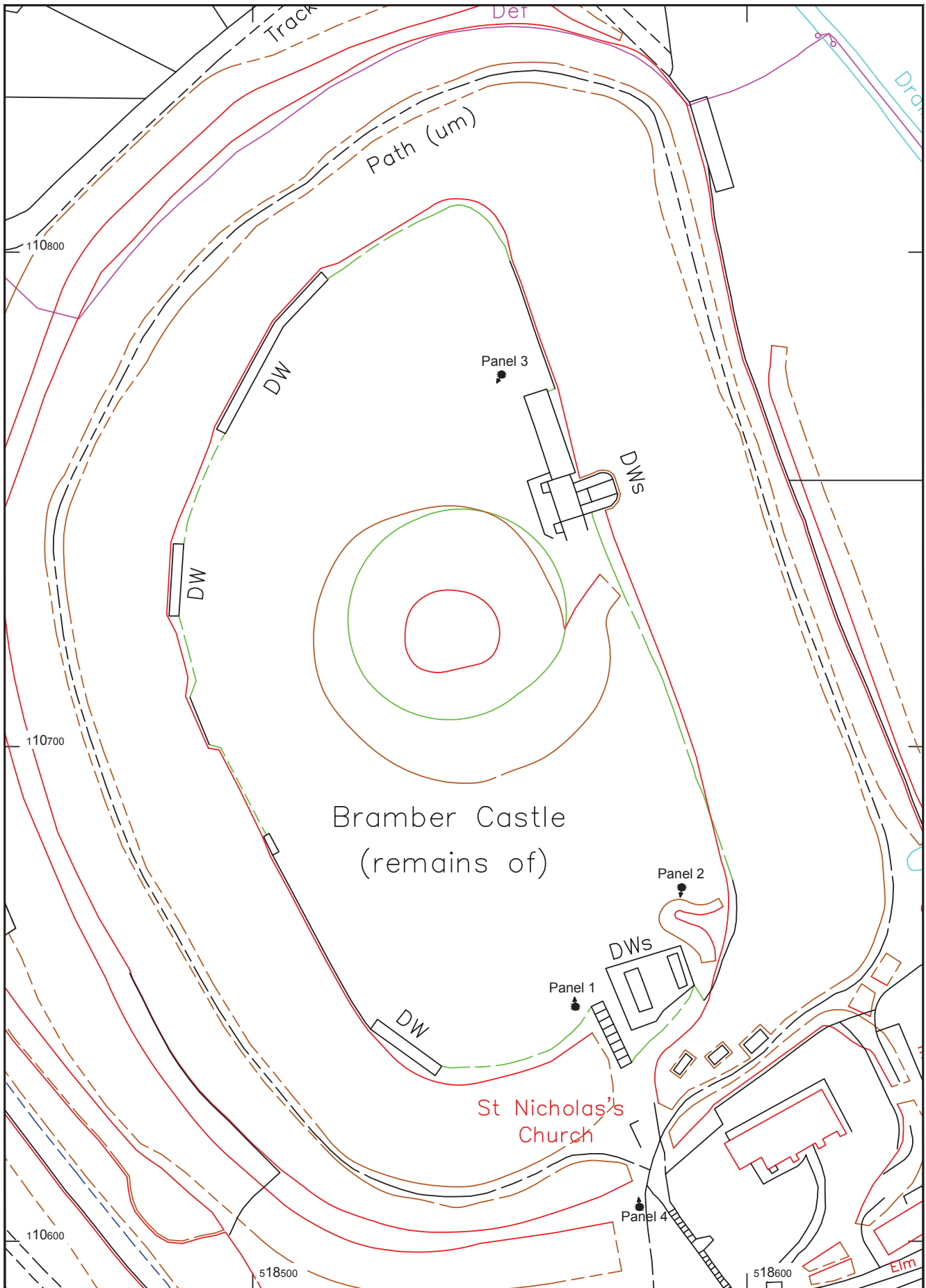
Description WB report

Entered by andy margetts (andrew_margetts@tiscali.co.uk)

Entered on 18 April 2011



© Archaeology South-East		Bramber Castle	Fig. 1
Project Ref. 4848	March 2011	Site location	
Report Ref. WSI	Drawn by: DJH		



Archaeology South-East		Bramber Castle	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4848	March 2011	Location of signage panels	
Report Ref: WSI	Drawn by: DJH		

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