

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

S O U T H

**68-70 High Street, Rottingdean,  
East Sussex**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Sean Wallis**

**Site Code: HSR11/119**

**(TQ 4220 1104)**

**68-70 High Street, Rottingdean,  
East Sussex**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For KerDan Ltd**

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCodeHSR11/119

**April 2012**

## Summary

**Site name:** 68-70 High Street, Rottingdean, East Sussex

**Grid reference:** TQ 4220 1104

**Planning reference:** BH2011/01773

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 19th March to 4th April 2012

**Project manager:** Sean Wallis

**Site supervisor:** Felicity Howell

**Site code:** HSR 11/119

**Area of site:** c.0.1 ha

**Summary of results:** It was clear from an initial site visit that the eastern part of the site had been terraced in the past, probably when the former garage was built. No archaeological features had survived this truncation. The western part of the site had been less disturbed by previous activity, but the only feature recorded of possible archaeological interest was a probable pit or ditch, dating from the late 19th or early 20th century.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Rottingdean Preservation Society, c/o The Grange Museum and Art Gallery, The Green, Rottingdean.

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# 68-70 High Street, Rottindean, East Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Sean Wallis

Report 11/119

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 68-70 High Street, Rottingdean, East Sussex (TQ 4220 1104) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Helen Smith of KerDan Ltd, 20 Southey Street, Penge, London, SE20 7JD.

Planning permission (BH2011/01773) had been gained from Brighton and Hove City Council to construct 8 new houses on the site. The permission was subject to a condition (18) relating to archaeology, which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work prior to the commencement of building work. Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist with East Sussex County Council, who act as archaeological advisors to the City Council, advised that this should take the form of a watching brief, to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5, 2010), and the City Council's policy (HE12) on archaeology. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by Mr Chuter. The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Bray and Felicity Howell between 19th March and 4th April 2012. The site code is HSR 11/119. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Rottingdean Preservation Society, c/o The Grange Museum and Art Gallery, The Green, Rottingdean, in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site lies to the east of Rottingdean High Street, within the historic core of the village (Fig 1.). The site was previously occupied by a garage, although all of the buildings had been demolished shortly before the watching brief commenced (Fig. 2). The site is relatively flat, and lies at a height of approximately 14m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology largely consists of deposits from the Newhaven Chalk Formation, although there was the possibility of Head deposits being present in the western part of the site, associated with a former river valley (BGS 2006). The natural geology encountered during the watching brief consisted solely of chalk.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the historic core of Rottingdean, and also from its position on the South Downs, which is regarded as being archaeologically rich (Rudling 2003). A search of the East Sussex HER revealed numerous entries in the vicinity of the site, including several possible round barrows dating from the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods on the chalk downland to the north-west of the village. Another barrow was recorded during building work at the Grand Crescent, to the east of the present site. Roman finds from the beach, to the west of the site, have led to the suggestion that there may have been a glass working site in the area, which may now be submerged. An undated ditch was recorded to the west of the site. Although *Rottingdene* is mentioned in Domesday Book (Mills 1993), and presumably has Saxon origins, the HER contains no entries relating to Saxon or medieval finds within the village. Despite the paucity of archaeological evidence, it is possible that medieval property boundaries may have extended back from the High Street into the proposed site, and sub-surface archaeological features may therefore have survived.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the watching brief were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to include the monitoring of footing trenches for the new houses, along with any areas of ground reduction. Sufficient time was to be allowed within the developer's and groundworker's schedules to record any archaeological features revealed.

## **Results**

An initial site visit was carried out just after the garage buildings had been demolished. It was clear that the eastern part of the site had been terraced to some extent, probably when the garage was built. A mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, was used to strip this part of the site down to the natural chalk. No archaeological features were recorded in the stripped area, and it was obvious that the ground had originally sloped down towards the west, prior to being terraced.

The western part of the site had not been significantly disturbed in the past, and garden soil and subsoil deposits had survived beneath the garage buildings. The foundation trenches for new houses were therefore monitored in this part of the site (Fig. 3). The footing trenches were mostly 0.8m wide and varied between 0.85m and 1.7m in depth (Pl. 1). The stratigraphy generally consisted about 0.2m of demolition and made ground,

which lay above the buried topsoil (50) and subsoil (51) horizons (Fig. 4). The depth of the soil deposits varied quite dramatically across the site, due to the fact that the ground had originally sloped down towards the west prior to being partially terraced. The original gradient of the underlying chalk was clearly visible in some of the footings. In the western part of the site the soil deposits were up to 0.6m deep. Apart from some areas of modern disturbance relating to the garage and recent geo-technical test pits, the only feature recorded in the footings was a probable pit or ditch (1) which was observed close to the north-west corner of the southern block (A) (Pl. 2) of houses. This feature was 1.2m wide at ground level, with steep sides, and was at least 1m deep (the depth of the footing trench). Its upper fill (52) was mostly re-deposited chalk, whilst its lower fill (53) consisted of mid greyish brown clayey silt. Sherds of transfer printed pottery, dating from the late 19th or early 20th century, were retrieved from the lower fill, along with fragments of clinker and brick.

## **Finds**

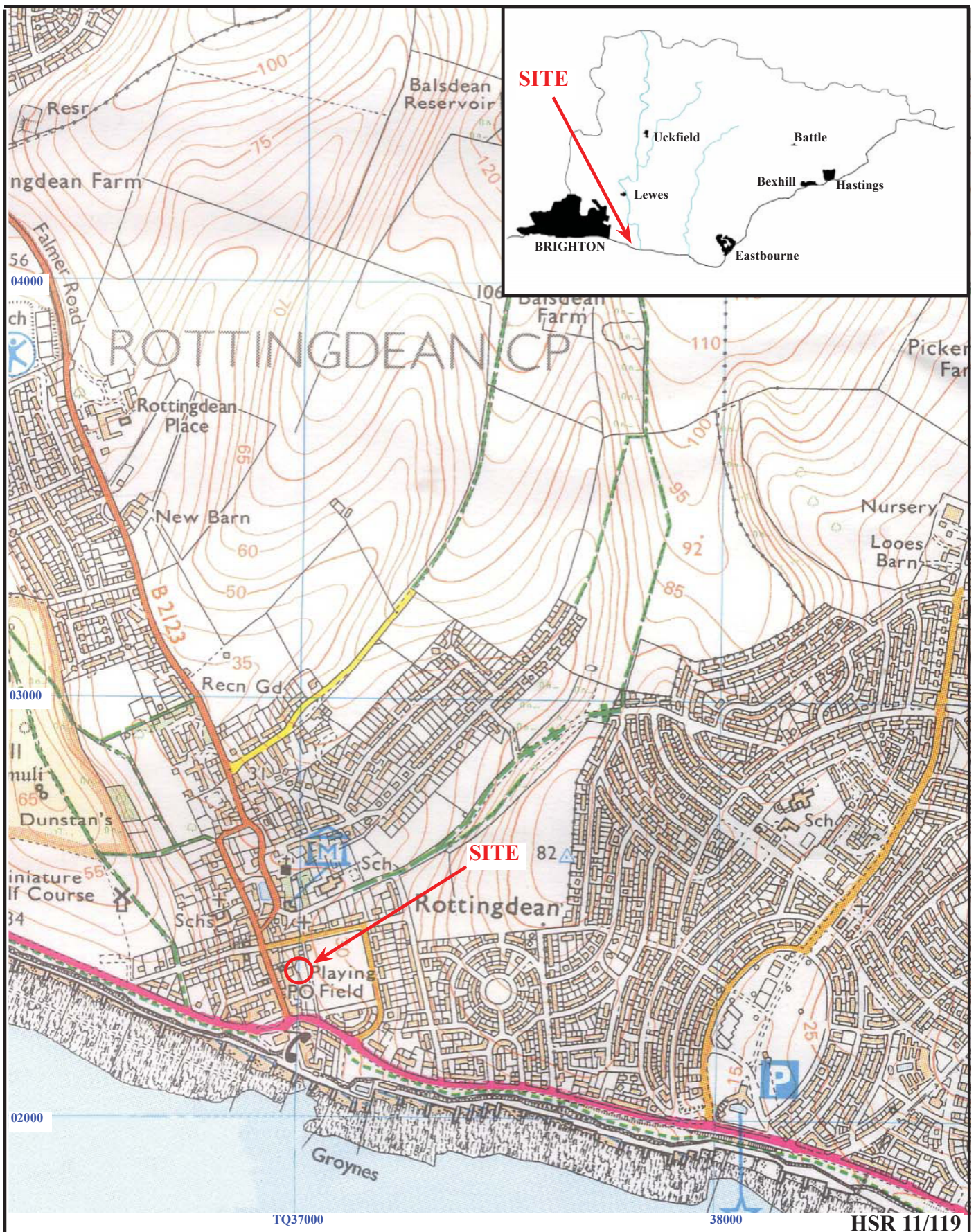
The only archaeological finds observed during the watching brief were sherds of transfer printed pottery, and fragments of clinker and brick, which were seen within the lower fill of a probable pit or ditch. These date from the late 19th or early 20th century, and were not retained.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief at this site successfully examined those areas of the site which were to be most affected by the planned building work. Apart from a probable pit or ditch, dating from the late 19th or early 20th century, no archaeological features were recorded. The watching brief established that the eastern part of the site had been severely truncated in the past, probably before the former garage was built.

## **References**

- BGS, 2006, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 318/333, Bedrock and Superficial Deposits Edition, Keyworth.
- Mills, A D, 1993, *A Dictionary of English Place Names*, Oxford
- PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, Department of Communities and Local Government Planning Policy Statement 5, London (TSO)
- Rudling, D, (ed) 2003, *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000*, King's Lynn



**68-70 High Street, Rottingdean, East Sussex, 2012  
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Figure 1. Location of site within Rottingdean and East Sussex.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off the High Street.

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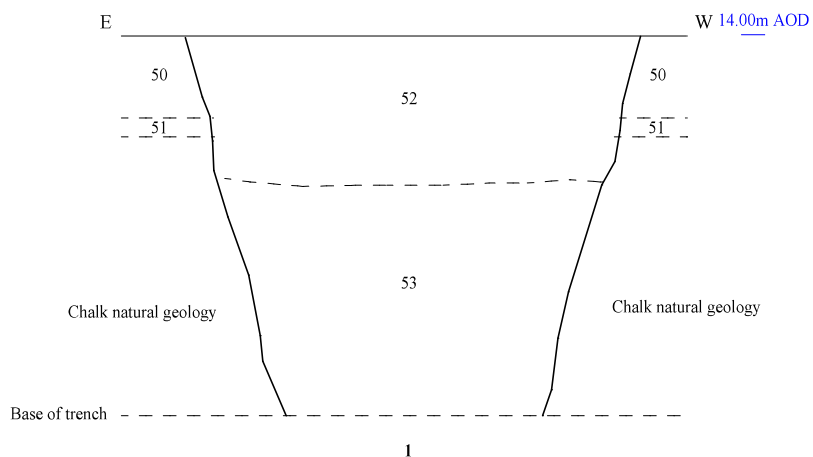
HSR 11/119

**68-70 High Street, Rottingdean, East Sussex, 2012  
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 3. Areas observed during watching brief.



**Block A**



HSR 11/119

**68-70 High Street, Rottingdean, East Sussex, 2012  
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 4. Section of Block A showing Feature 1.





Plate 1. Block A under excavation, looking south, Scale:s 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Feature 1, looking south. Scales: 2m and 1m

HSR 11/119

**68-70 High Street, Rottingdean, East Sussex, 2012**  
**Archaeological watching brief**

Plates 1 and 2.

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## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC





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