

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

**The Old School House, South Street
Falmer, East Sussex**

An archaeological watching brief

by Felicity Howell

Site Code SFF11/62

(TQ 3535 0878)

The Old School House, South Street, Falmer, East Sussex

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr John Burt

by FelicityHowell

ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices

Ltd

SiteCodeSFF 11/62

July 2012

Summary

Site name: The Old School House, South Street, Falmer, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 3535 0878

Planning reference: LW/11/0264

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 4th–5th July 2012

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Felicity Howell

Site code: SFF 11/62

Summary of results: Footings were excavated to the rear of the existing house, in advance of a new garden room extension. Despite the fact that the area had been disturbed by 20th-century concrete foundations and services, a probable medieval pit was recorded immediately adjacent to the existing house. Post-medieval pottery and a prehistoric struck flint were also recovered from the site.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Barbican House Museum, Lewes, in due course.

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 17.07.12
	Steve Preston ✓ 16.07.12

The Old School House, South Street, Falmer, East Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Felicity Howell

Report 11/62

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Old School House, South Street, Falmer, East Sussex (TQ 3535 0878) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the property owner, Mr John Burt.

Planning permission (LW/11/0264) had been gained from Lewes District Council to construct a new garden room extension on the site. The permission was subject to a condition (5) relating to archaeology, which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. Mr Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist with East Sussex County Council, archaeological adviser to the District 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 District Council's policy on archaeology. It is acknowledged that PPS5 has now been superseded by the recent *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012). The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the East Sussex County Archaeological Officer. The fieldwork was undertaken by Felicity Howell between 4th and 5th July 2012, and the site code is SFF 11/62. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Sussex Archaeological Society, Barbican House Museum, Lewes, in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located close to the junction of Park Street and South Street, within the historic core of Falmer village (Fig. 2). The site is currently occupied by a residential building (part of the former schoolhouse), and associated garden areas. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Woolwich and Reading formations of the Lambeth Group (BGS 2006), and this was confirmed as light orange-brown sand in the footing trenches. The site is relatively flat, and lies at a height of approximately 92m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the historic core of Falmer, and from its position on the South Downs, which are regarded as being archaeologically rich. A search of the East Sussex HER revealed numerous entries in the vicinity of the site. In summary, a recent large-scale excavation to the south-east of the site found evidence of occupation dating from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. Pits dating from these periods were recorded, along with a possible Neolithic flint mine, and several Bronze Age ring ditches. Occasional features from later periods were also observed, and are thought to be indicative of agricultural use. Roman activity has been recorded to the north of the site, with two corn-drying ovens investigated in the 1950s, in an area currently occupied by the University of Sussex. Within the wider landscape, there is cropmark evidence of Roman settlement on Falmer Hill, to the south-east of the site, whilst further cropmarks on the nearby Downs are thought to represent field systems dating from the prehistoric and Roman periods.

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 extension, along with any areas of ground reduction and any associated service runs. Sufficient time was to be allowed within the developer's and groundworker's schedules to record any archaeological features revealed.

Results

The footings for the proposed extension were hand dug to a depth of up to 1.18m (Fig. 3 and Pl. 1). In general the footing trenches were 0.60m wide and the stratigraphy consisted of 0.60m topsoil (50), above 0.30m of mid orange-brown, sandy clay, subsoil (51) which lay directly above natural sand (Fig. 4). Modern truncations including drain pipes and concrete footings were observed in the north-west, south-west and north-east footing strips. A modern pit, containing demolition rubble, was also apparent in the north-west footing trench.

Pit 1 was uncovered in the south-eastern corner of the extension footings, close to the construction cut [2] for the existing building (Fig. 4 and Pl. 2). The pit had a single fill of mid green-brown sandy silt (52), which produced one sherd of 14th-century pottery and two small fragments of oyster shell. The feature was seen to have a steep side, and clearly continued below the base of the footing trench.

Due to the depth of the topsoil, it was established that further planned ground reduction within the extension footprint and relocation of service runs would not impact upon any sub-surface archaeological deposits.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised four sherds with a total weight of 75g. All the material dated to the medieval period or later. The assemblage is generally in good condition and the pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 1.

Two sherds weighing a total of 26g were recovered from the topsoil (50). The fabric type was noted as Manganese Glazed Ware (MGW), with a distinctive, streaky, purplish-brown glaze and can be dated to late 17th – 18th century. One sherd of Glazed Red Earthenware (GRE) weighing 13g was found in the subsoil (51) the fabric type was noted as fine sandy earthenware and generally this type occurs with a brown or green glaze, in a range of utilitarian forms. Such 'country pottery' was first made in the 16th century, and in some areas continued in use until the 19th century (Brears 1969).

The one sherd recovered from pit 1 weighed 36g and has been identified as Binstead/Horsham type Ware (BIN) dated to 14th century (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 322). The sherd is a grey sandy fabric with orange-brown surfaces and a glossy olive green glaze. It is from the shoulder and neck of a long-necked jug typical of the tradition (eg. McCarthy and Brooks 1988, fig. 194), and has fragments of incised wavy line decoration on the body. It is in very good condition, and appears reliably stratified.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

Two struck flints were recovered from the site, from topsoil and subsoil contexts. An iron stained broken flake from the subsoil (51) is certainly of prehistoric (Neolithic or Bronze Age) date. A second broken flake was recovered from the topsoil (50) but its freshness suggests that it is not of great antiquity and is an accidental by-product of recent groundwork.

Oyster Shell by Felicity Howell

Two small fragments of oyster shell, weighing 29g, were recovered from the fill of pit 1 (52).

Conclusion

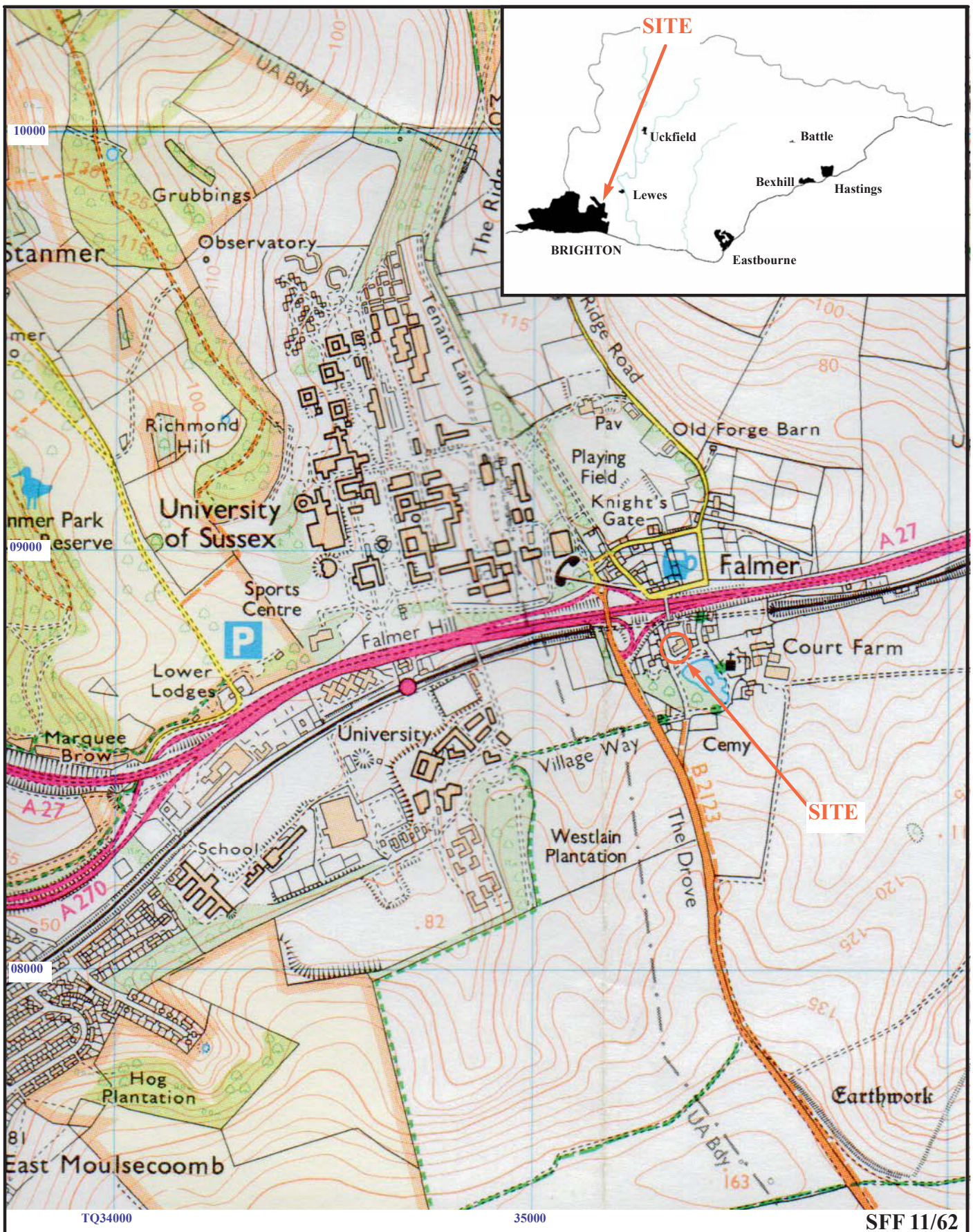
The watching brief at this site successfully examined those parts of the site which were to be most affected by the new extension. Despite previous disturbance in the 20th century, the underlying natural geology had not been significantly truncated, and a probable 14th century pit was recorded next to the existing house.

References

- BGS, 2006, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 318/333, Bedrock and Superficial Deposits Edition, Keyworth.
- Brears, P C D, 1969, *The English country pottery: its history and techniques*, Newton Abbot
- McCarthy, M R and Brooks, C M, 1988, *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD900-1600*, Leicester
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)
- 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

APPENDIX 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) per context by fabric type

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>BIN</i>		<i>GRE</i>		<i>MGW</i>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>
	50					2	26
	51			1	13		
1	52	1	36				
	Total	1	36	1	13	2	26

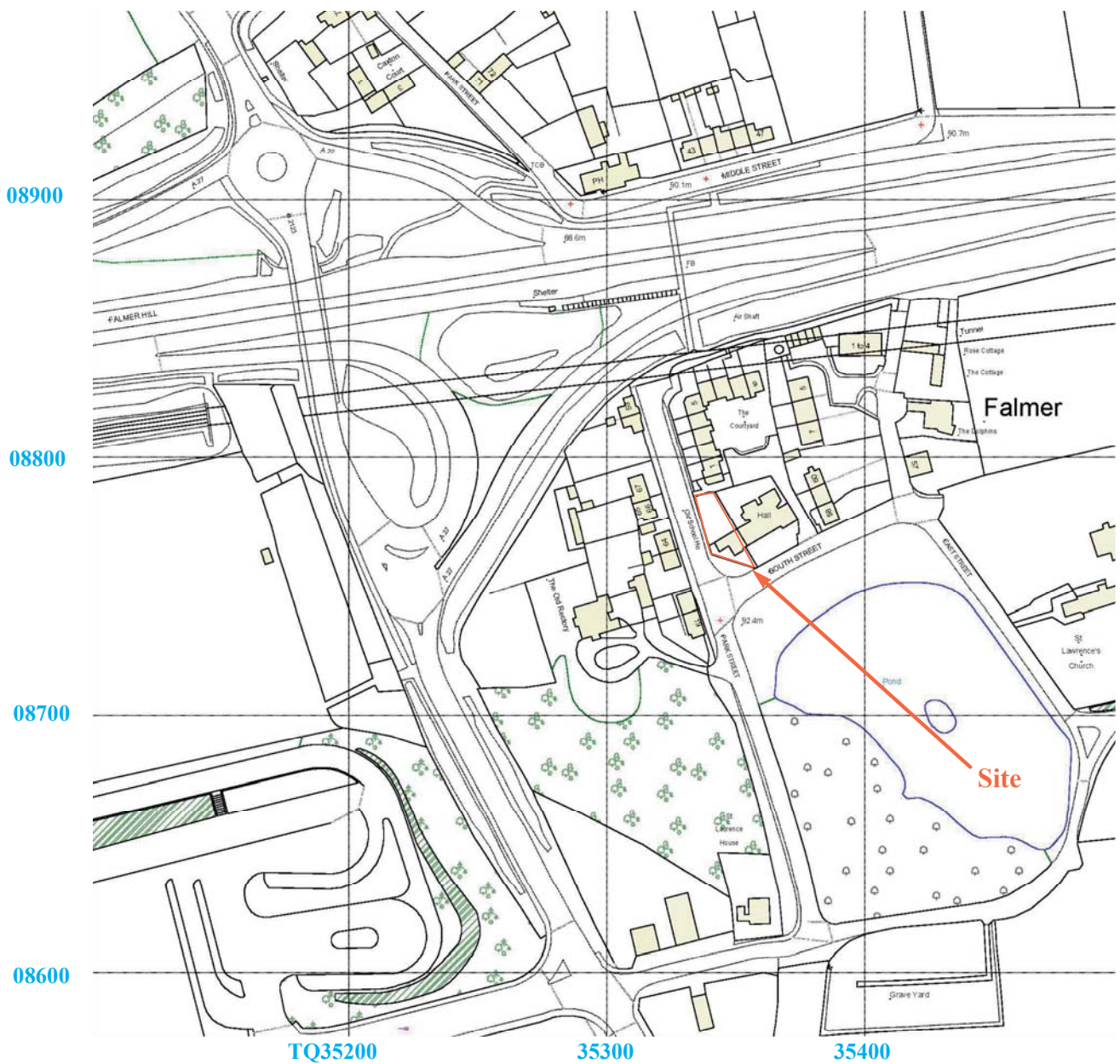


**The Old School House, South Street, Falmer, East Sussex, 2012
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Falmer and East Sussex.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer 122 at 1:12500
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
SOUTH

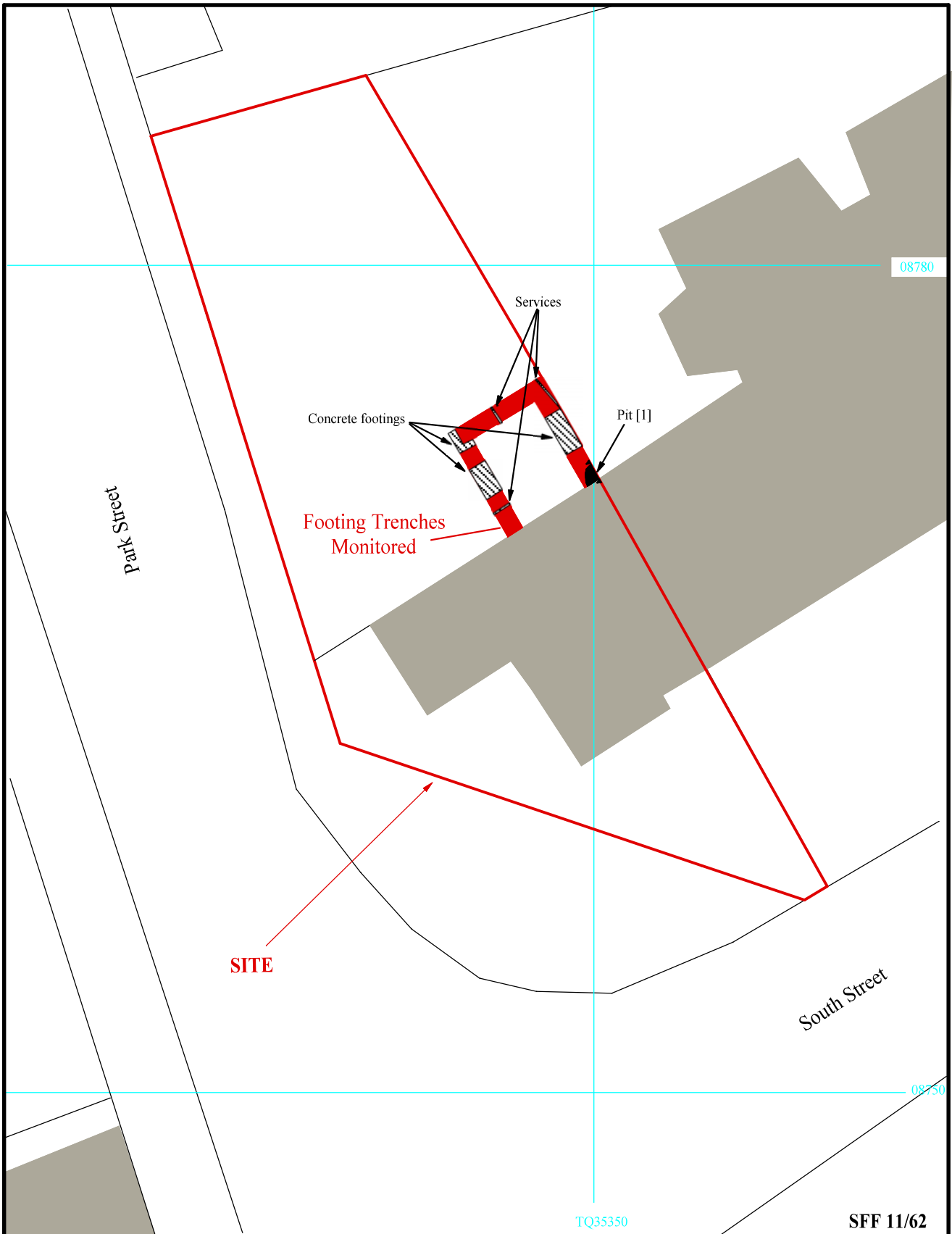


SFF 11/62

**The Old School House, South Street, Falmer, East Sussex, 2012
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping under licence.
Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:2500.



SITE

Footing Trenches Monitored

Concrete footings

Services

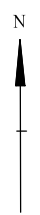
Pit [1]

08780

08750

TQ35350

SFF 11/62

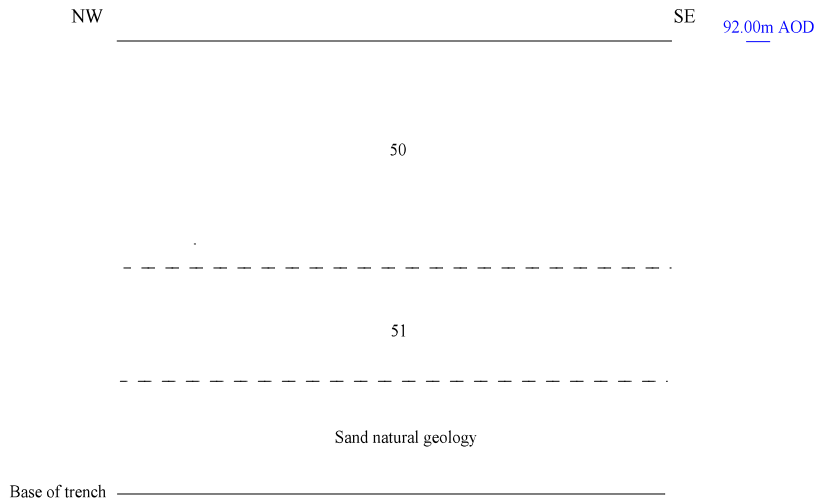


**The Old School House, South Street,
Falmer, East Sussex, 2012
Archaeological Watching Brief**

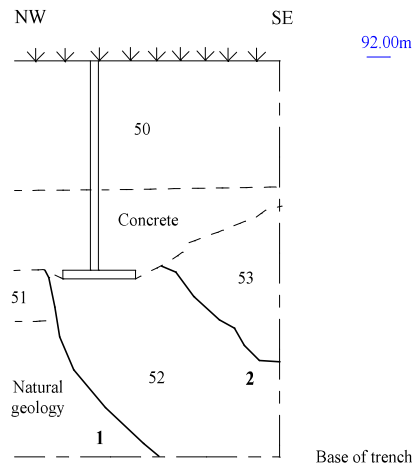
Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



General stratigraphy in south-west footing trench



Section showing pit [1] and construction cut [2]



SFF 11/62

**The Old School House, South Street, Falmer,
East Sussex, 2012
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Representative section and pit 1.





Plate 1. General view of footings, looking south-east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Pit 1, looking east, Scales: 1m (horizontal) and 2m (vertical).

SFF 11/62

**The Old School House, South Street, Falmer,
East Sussex, 2012
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Plates 1 and 2.

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
SOUTH

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
↓	↓



TVAS (South)
77a Hollingdean Terrace, Brighton
Sussex, BN1 7HB

Tel: 01273 554198
Fax: 01273 564043
Email: south@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk