

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

**Land at Sunnymede, Norlington Lane,
Ringmer, East Sussex**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Site Code: SNL15/204

(TQ4465 1298)

Land at Sunnymede, Norlington Lane, Ringmer, East Sussex

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr Trevor Denny

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SNL15/204

September 2015

Summary

Site name: Land at Sunnymede, Norlington Lane, Ringmer, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 4465 1298

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 26th August 2015

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: SNL 15/204

Area of site: *c.* 0.44 ha

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed the presence of medieval features, including four post-holes, a pit and a ditch.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and it is intended that it will be deposited at Lewes Museum in due course. Some of the finds will not require museum deposition.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston✓ 18.09.15

Land at Sunnymede, Norlington Lane, Ringmer, East Sussex An Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Report 15/204

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Sunnymede, Norlington Lane, Ringmer, East Sussex (TQ 4465 1298) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Trevor Denny of MHD Architects.

Planning permission is to be sought from Lewes District Council to develop the site for housing. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development of the site for housing, it was proposed to carry out a field evaluation on the site in order to inform the planning process with regard to potential archaeological implications, accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by the East Sussex County Council Archaeologist, Mr Greg Chuter. The fieldwork was undertaken by Teresa Vieira, Clara Schonfeld and Sean Wallis on 26th August 2015, and the site code is SNL15/204. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading. The preferred depository for the archive is Lewes Museum. Unfortunately the museum is not accepting new material at the present time, so the archive will be held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services until a suitable depository can be found.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the northern part of the village of Ringmer, approximately 4 km north-east of Lewes, East Sussex, and is centred on TQ 4465 1298 (Fig. 1). The area under investigation is currently occupied by a residential property called Sunnymede, and its associated ancillary buildings, garden and access drive (Fig. 2). The site is relatively flat and lies at a height of approximately 20m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology consists of Gault Clay (BGS 2006) and this was recorded in most of the trenches as mid orange brown silty clay. In two of the trenches situated within the former tennis court the natural geology had become discoloured due to the area being covered in Tarmac.

Archaeological background

The site lies within an area of moderate archaeological potential due to its location close to the historic core of Ringmer, which is well known for its pottery industry in the medieval period. Recent fieldwork immediately east of the present site uncovered the remains of an old kiln which had initially been recorded in the late 19th century, along with a series of undated ditches (CgMs 2013). Around 200m to the north of the site, a 13th-to 14th-century pottery production site was excavated in 1994 (Gregory 2014). An archaeological watching brief at the adjacent site to the north-west (Norlington Villas) did not reveal any features, although some sherds of medieval pottery were recovered (Margetts 2011). Ringmer itself has late Saxon origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book (1086).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of proposed development.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine whether any evidence of medieval activity is present; and
- to determine whether any evidence of post-medieval ceramic production is present.

Seven trenches were to be dug, each measuring 15m in length and 1.60m in width. The trenches were positioned to target those parts of the site which would be most affected by the proposed development. These were to be dug using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would then be excavated or sampled by hand to an agreed fraction to satisfy the aims of the brief, without compromising the integrity of any deposits that might warrant preservation in-situ.

Results

The seven trenches were dug close to their original planned positions, although some were shortened or moved slightly due to site logistics (Fig. 3). All the trenches were 1.60m wide, and measured between 11.80m and

15.40m in length, and between 0.46m and 0.60m in depth. Stratigraphy generally was topsoil (0.15–0.20m deep) above subsoil (0.15–0.30m deep) directly above natural geology, except that Tarmac replaced the topsoil in Trenches 5 and 6. The trenches which contained archaeological features are detailed below, and a complete list of the trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 1 was orientated approximately WSW–ENE, and was 14.80m long. The trench was generally up to 0.46m deep, although a test pit was dug at the western end to a depth of 0.88m. The natural geology was revealed beneath 0.15m of turf and topsoil (50) and 0.20m of subsoil (51). Five archaeological features (1, 2, 5, 6 and 7) were recorded within the trench, and two were sampled by hand just before the trench became flooded with rainwater. A probable sub-rectangular pit (5) was recorded between 2.50m and 3.80m from the western end of the trench. It had been truncated by a modern post-hole. Pit 5 was not excavated, but two small sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the surface of its upper fill of mid greyish brown clayey silt (56).

Post-hole 1 was observed between 5.40m and 5.80m, and was half-sectioned (Pl. 3). The feature measured 0.36m in diameter and was 0.10m deep. It had a single fill of light grey clay (52) which contained 4 small sherds of medieval pottery. Another probable post-hole (6) was recorded close by, but was not excavated.

A shallow sub-rectangular pit (2) was investigated between 10.20m and 10.80m. It measured 0.60m by 0.50m, but was only 0.08m deep. Five small sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from its fill of light grey clay (53). Another possible pit or post-hole (7) was observed nearby, running under the northern edge of the trench, but was not sampled by hand.

Trench 3 (Figs 4 and 5)

This trench was 12.30m long and up to 0.55m deep, and was orientated approximately SW-NE. The natural geology was observed beneath 0.15m of turf and topsoil (50) and 0.18m of subsoil (51). A shallow gully (3) was observed in the central part of the trench, between 4.50m and 7.60m, aligned more or less due west–east. A slot was hand dug through the feature which revealed that it was 0.52m wide and 0.06m deep. One very small sherd of abraded medieval pottery was found within its fill of mid greyish brown clay (54), along with several iron fragments, most of which were nails.

Trench 5 (Figs 4 and 5; Pl. 2)

Trench 5 was orientated approximately WNW-ESE, and was 11.80m long and up to 0.60m deep. The trench was dug within a former tennis court, and the upper part of the natural geology had become stained a greenish grey colour due to a lack of oxygen in the area beneath the Tarmac. Up to 0.20m of Tarmac and its associated bedding layer was removed to reveal a buried subsoil horizon (51). The subsoil was up to 0.20m thick, and lay directly

above the natural geology. Gully 4 was observed between 4.70m and 9.50m, aligned roughly east–west, and terminated to the west, just within the trench. The terminus was excavated by hand, and this revealed that the feature was about 0.50m wide and 0.11m deep (Pl. 4). A fragment of post-medieval brick was recovered from its fill of mid grey silty clay (55), along with fragments of ash slag, roofing slate, all suggesting a late post-medieval date, and a small sherd of residual medieval pottery.

Finds

Pottery by Luke Barber

The evaluation recovered a small quantity of pottery from the site. The assemblage is fully listed in Appendix 3. All fabrics have been correlated with the Lewes fabric series (Barber forthcoming).

The entire assemblage is of local origin, deriving from either Ringmer itself or the immediate environs. The earliest sherds consist of the oxidized Lewes Flinty Wares which probably belong to the second half of the 12th century. Unfortunately no feature sherds are present. The Clay Hill type ware probably develops from the Lewes Flinty Ware tradition from the mid 12th century, gradually replacing it until the beginning of the 13th century, when it is likewise replaced by the Early Ringmer Ware. All of the coarsewares consist of featureless bodysherds and although they probably originate from cooking pots this cannot be proven. The single Ringmer jug sherd is perhaps a little later, more likely to be of the first half of the 13th century. It is a close match for the products of the kiln in Norlington Lane (Gregory 2014). Overall the pottery consists of small and somewhat abraded sherds suggesting not only an acidic burial environment but a fair degree of reworking prior to their becoming incorporated into their associated features.

The assemblage consists of small abraded sherds of types well known of in Ringmer and Lewes. Far larger assemblages containing feature sherds from sealed deposits have been excavated at both locations and the current assemblage holds no potential for further analysis.

Metalwork by Luke Barber

Context 54 produced 10 heavily corroded pieces of iron weighing 20g. Virtually all consist of nail fragments. The only exception is a small fragment from a knife or tool blade but too little is present to discern form.

Ceramic Building Material by Luke Barber

Context 55 produced a 28g brick fragment. The brick is well formed, tempered with abundant 'sugary' fine sand, moderate iron oxides to 3mm and a few marl swirls and is low/medium fired. A 17th- to 18th-century date is suspected.

Stone by Luke Barber

Context 55 produced a 28g fragment from a Welsh roofing slate, almost certainly of 19th-century date.

Slag by Luke Barber

Context 55 contained two lightweight pieces (4g) of slightly vitrified fuel ash slag, probably derived from burning coal. An 18th- to 19th-century date is suspected.

Animal bone by Lizzi Lewins

Just two pieces of animal bone, weighing a total of 40.5g, were recovered from two features. The condition of the bones was fair although some erosion was noted.

Feature 3 (54) contained one piece of bone which could only be identified as possibly from an ulna of a medium to large mammal.

Feature 4 (55) contained one piece of bone which was identified as a rib from a large mammal (cow/horse). The body of the rib had been cleanly sawn through with the saw marks clearly visible on the section of the bone.

Apart from the saw marks no other taphonomic processes were observed.

Conclusion

The evaluation at Sunnymede, Ringmer successfully investigated those parts of the site which would be most affected by the proposed re-development of the site. It was clear from all the trenches that the area had not been significantly disturbed or truncated in the past. A small number of pits and post-holes, probably dating from the medieval period, were recorded in the trench closest to Norlington Lane. Although most of the pottery recovered from these features was quite abraded, it does suggest medieval activity in this part of the site. It is significant that these features were found close to Norlington Lane as they may represent roadside settlement, and it suggests that the lane may have medieval (or earlier) origins.

References

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- ESCC, 2015, *Sussex Archaeological Standards*, East Sussex County Council, Lewes.
- Gregory, D, 2014, 'A medieval pottery production centre at Norlington Lane, Ringmer, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeol Collect* **152**, 9–37
- Margetts, A, 2011, '1 Norlington Villas, Norlington Lane, Ringmer, East Sussex – an archaeological watching brief', Archaeology South-east unpubl rep, Portslade
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

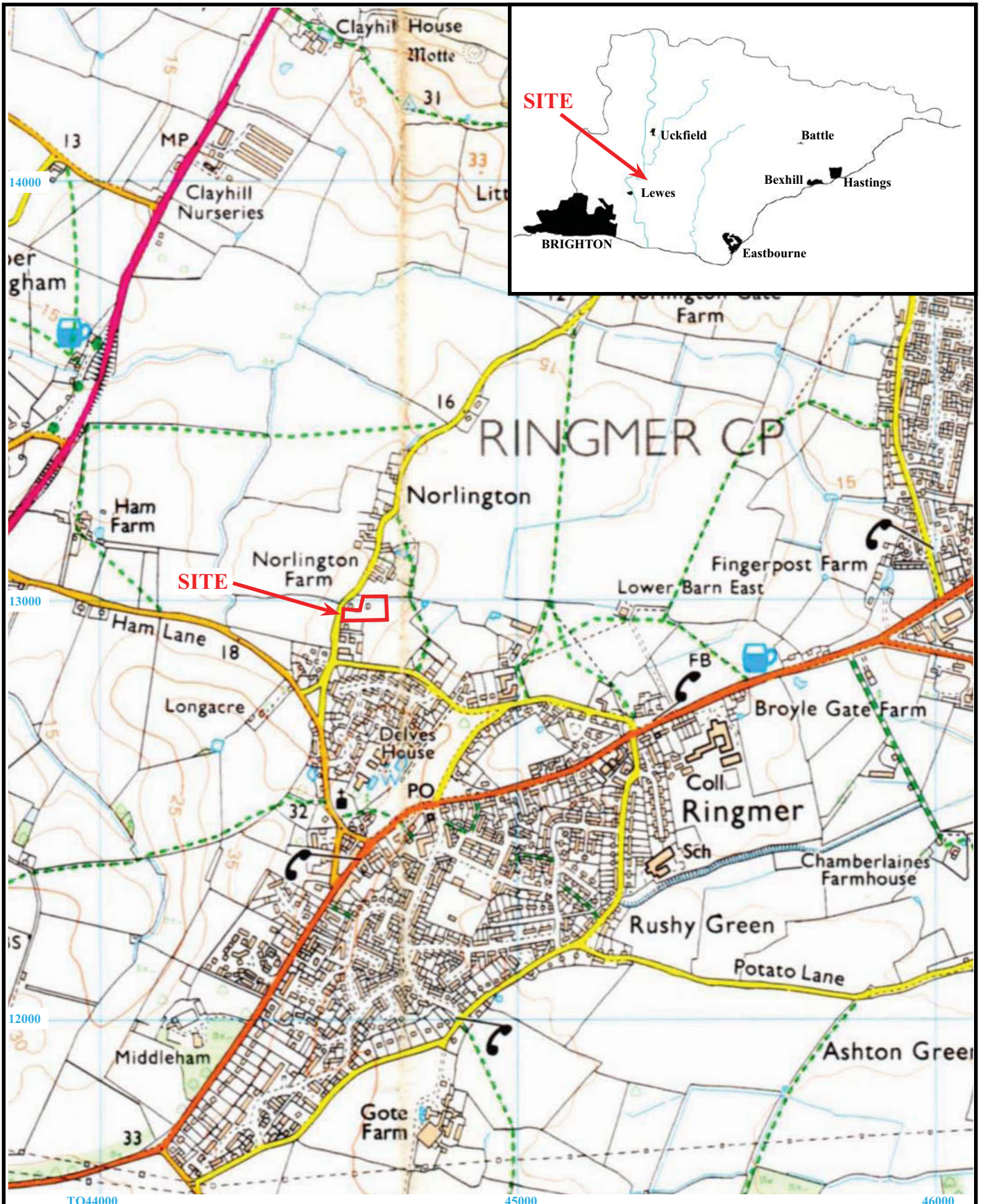
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	14.80	1.60	0.46	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.35m subsoil (51); 0.35-0.46m+ natural geology (clay). Test Pit 1 at south-west end (0.88m). Pits 2 and 5, post holes 1, 6 and 7. Base of trench (NE end) at 19.40m AOD. [Pl. 3]
2	15.40	1.60	0.43	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.31m subsoil (51); 0.31-0.43m+ natural geology (clay). Base of trench (W end) at 19.46m AOD.
3	12.30	1.60	0.55	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.33m subsoil (51); 0.33-0.55m+ natural geology (clay). Gully 3. Base of trench (NE end) at 19.61m AOD.
4	15.40	1.60	0.51	0-0.20m topsoil (50); 0.20-0.35m subsoil (51); 0.35-0.51m+ natural geology (clay). Base of trench (S end) at 19.32m AOD. [Pl. 1]
5	11.80	1.60	0.60	0-0.20m Tarmac; 0.20-0.40m buried subsoil (51); 0.40-0.60m+ natural geology (clay). Gully 4. Base of trench (W end) at 18.99m AOD. [Pls 2 and 4]
6	15.10	1.60	0.60	0-0.10m Tarmac, 0.10-0.40m buried subsoil (51); 0.40-0.60m+ natural geology (clay). Base of trench (N end) at 18.92m AOD.
7	14.50	1.60	0.47	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.30m subsoil (51); 0.30-0.47m+ natural geology (clay). Base of trench (S end) 19.03m AOD.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Post hole	Medieval	Pottery
1	2	53	Pit	Medieval	Pottery
3	3	54	Gully	Medieval	Pottery
5	4	55	Gully terminus	Post-medieval	Brick, slate, coal ash slag
1	5	56	Pit	Medieval	Pottery
1	6	57	Post hole	Undated	
1	7	58	Post hole	Undated	

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of pottery

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Spot date</i>
1	52	Lewes Flinty Ware (SNL3a)	1	6	Worn oxidized bodysherd	c. 1150–1200
1	52	Clay Hill Type (SNL5)	2	8	Worn oxidized bodysherds	c. 1150–1200
1	52	Ringmer Fine Sandy (HML9b)	1	4	Worn thickened rim from an oxidized green glazed jug	1200–1275
2	53	Lewes Flinty Ware (SNL3a)	2	12	Oxidized bodysherds	c.1175–1225
2	53	Clay Hill Type (SNL5)	2	16	Oxidized & reduced bodysherds	c.1175–1225
2	53	Early Ringmer Ware (HML1a)	1	2	Oxidized bodysherd	c.1175–1225
3	54	Clay Hill Type (SNL5)	1	1	Very worn oxidized bodysherd	c. 1150–1225
4	55	Early Ringmer Ware (HML1a)	1	1	Very worn oxidized bodysherd	13th century
5	56	Clay Hill Type (SNL5)	2	6	Worn oxidized bodysherds	c. 1150–1225



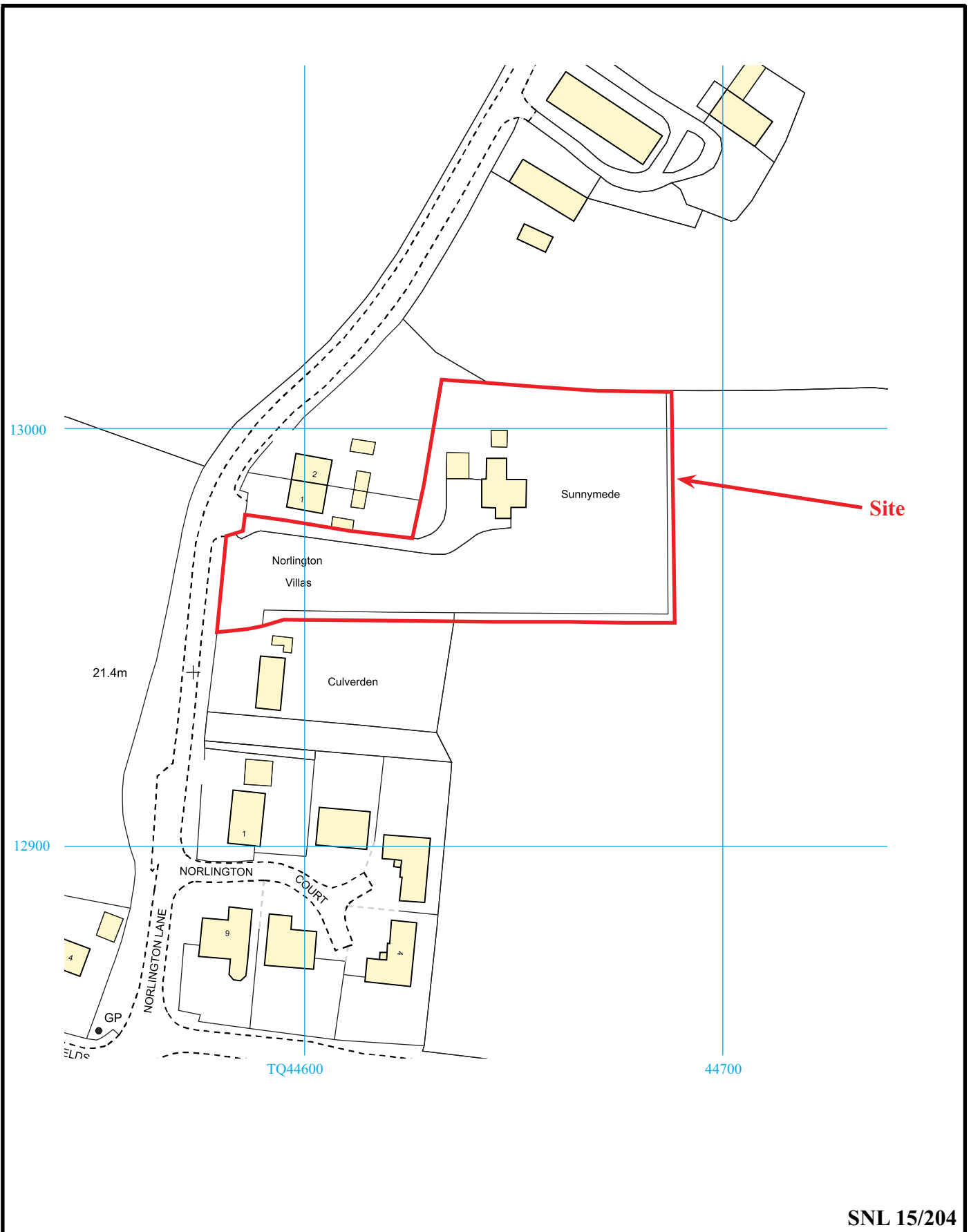
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**Land at Sunnymede, Norlington Lane,
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Figure 1. Location of site within Ringmer and East Sussex.

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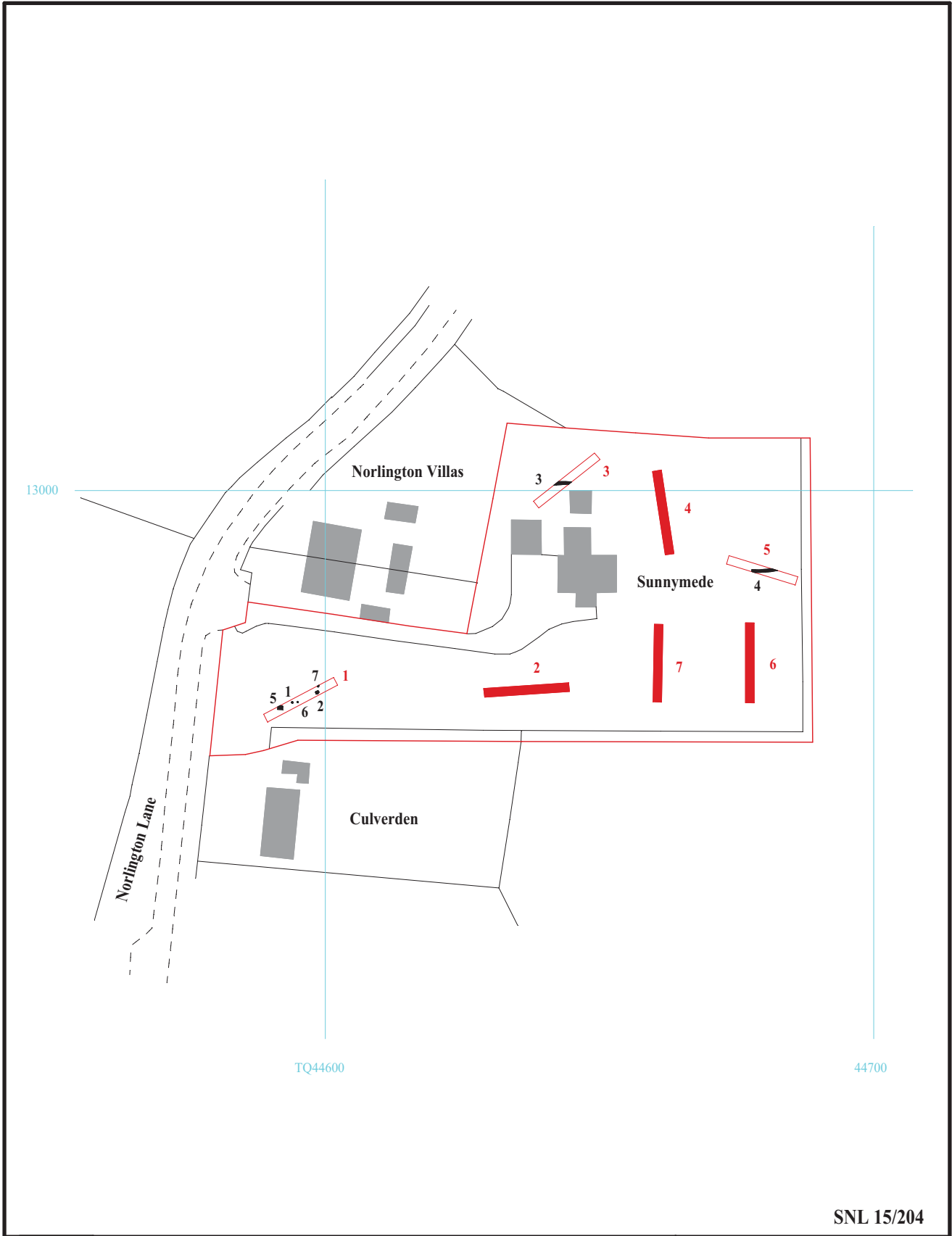
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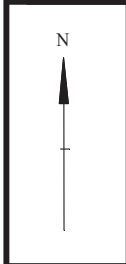
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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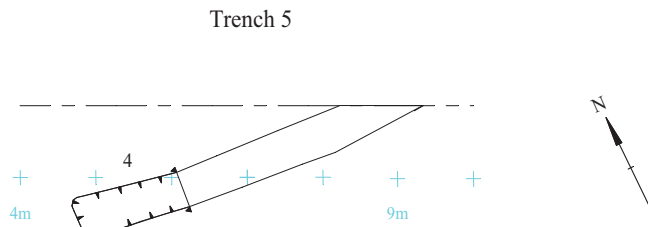
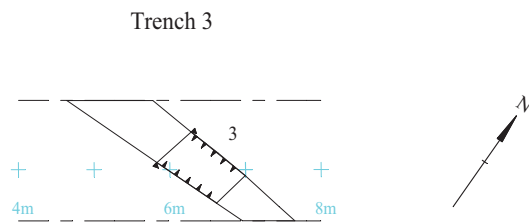
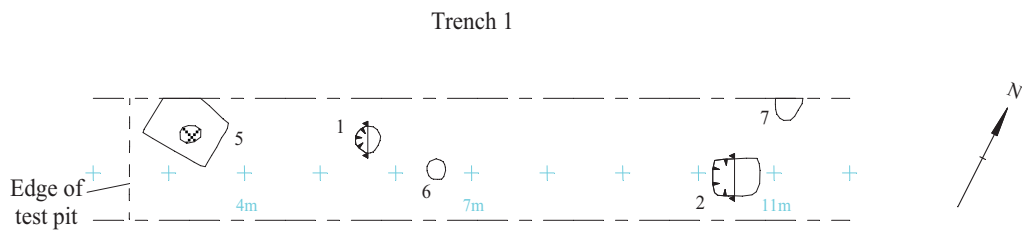
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.





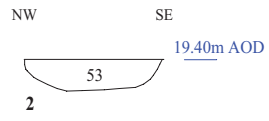
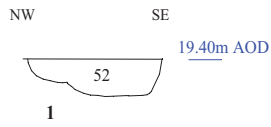
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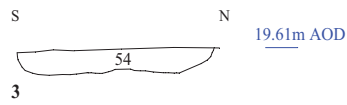
Figure 4. Plan of trenches 1, 3 and 5.



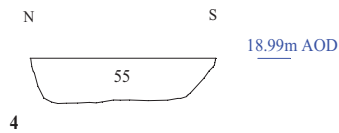
Trench 1



Trench 3



Trench 5



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Figure 5. Sections



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Plate 1. Trench 4, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m



Plate 2. Trench 5, looking south-east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 3. Post hole 1, looking west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Gully terminus 4, looking east, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m

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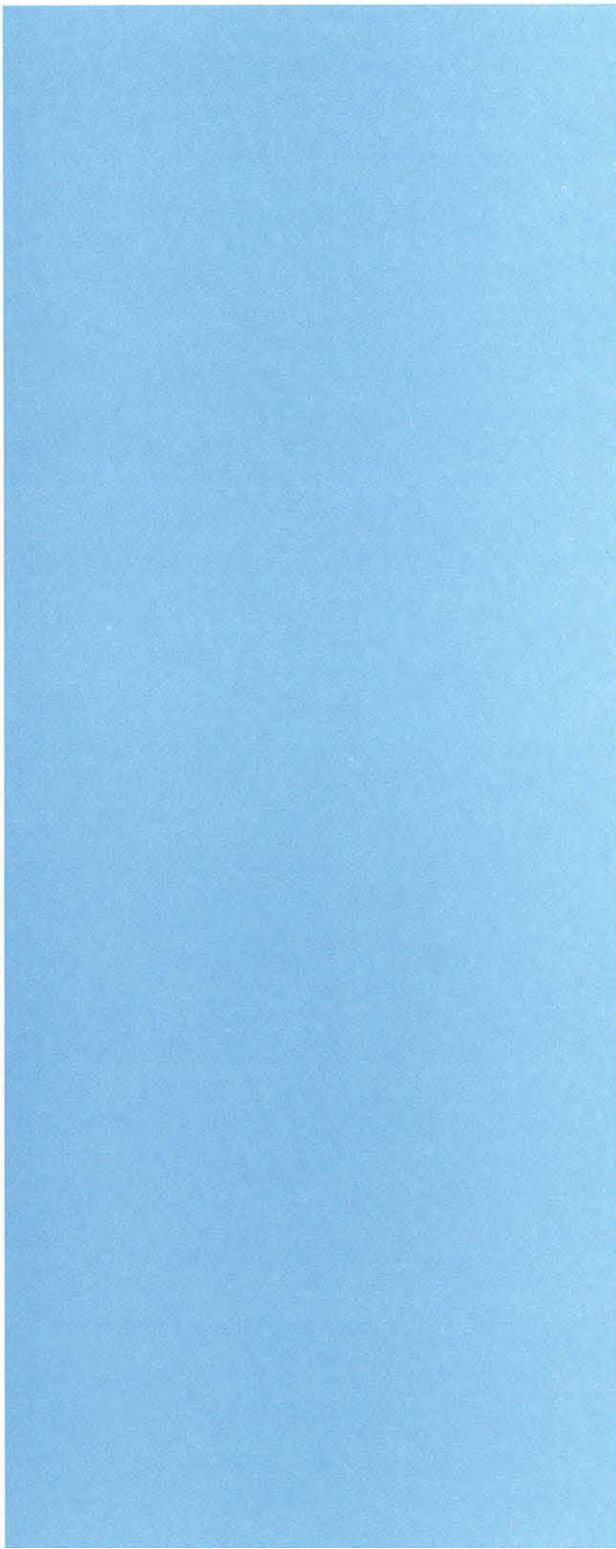
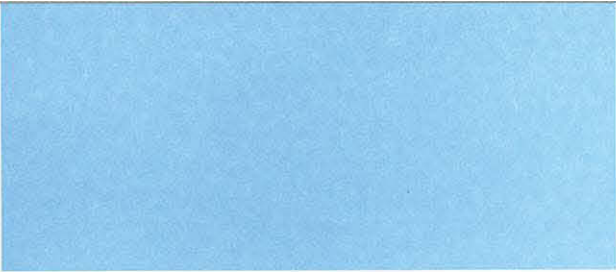
Land at Sunnymede, Norlington Lane,
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Plates 1 - 4.

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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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