

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

**47 Middle Street, Falmer,
East Sussex**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Sean Wallis

Site Code: MSF16/93

(TQ 3536 0892)

**47 Middle Street, Falmer,
East Sussex**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Ms Donna Lewis

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MFS16/93

July 2016

Summary

Site name: 47 Middle Street, Falmer, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 3536 0892

Planning reference: SDNP/14/0615/HOUS

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 6th-7th June 2016

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Teresa Vieira

Site code: MSF 16/93

Area of site: 26.6 sq m

Summary of results: Despite the archaeological potential of the site, no finds or features of archaeological interest were revealed during the course of the watching brief. The investigation determined that the site had been truncated in the recent past, with made ground deposits being recorded directly above the natural geology.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the Lewes Museum, Lewes or a viable alternative, in due course.

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47 Middle Street, Falmer, East Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Sean Wallis

Report 16/93

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 47 Middle Street, Falmer, East Sussex (TQ 3536 0892) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the property's owner, Ms Donna Lewis.

Planning permission (SDNP/14/06154/HOUS) had been gained from South Downs National Park Authority to construct new extensions to the side and rear of the property. The permission was subject to standard conditions (3 and 4) relating to archaeology and the historic environment, which required a programme of archaeological work. The East Sussex County Council Archaeologist who acts as archaeological adviser to South Downs National Park, Mr Greg Chuter, had indicated that this work should comprise an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during groundworks, and a building recording on the house itself. The building recording will form the subject of a separate report: this report details the watching brief only

This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF, 2012) and the National Park Authority's policies on archaeology and the historic environment. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer (Mr Greg Chuter). Where appropriate and relevant, the recommendations in *Sussex Archaeological Standards* (ESCC 2015) were followed. The fieldwork was undertaken by Teresa Vieira and Sean Wallis on 6th and 7th June 2016, and the site code is MSF 16/93.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading. The preferred depository for the archive is Lewes Museum, which is not accepting new material at the present time. The archive will therefore be held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services until a suitable depository can be found.

Location, topography and geology

The village of Falmer is located on the South Downs about 5.6km north-east of the historic centre of Brighton, East Sussex. The site lies on the north side of Middle Street, within the historical core of Falmer and consists of a residence and associated gardens (Fig. 2). According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology consists of Woolwich and Reading Formations (BGS 2006). This formation is characterised by clay and silt with thin lignite or shell beds in places and basal glauconitic pebbly sand. This geology was observed in the ground

reduction during the course of the watching brief. The site is on a gentle south facing slope and lies at a height of approximately 90m 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 for most periods (Rudling 2003). The archaeological background of the site has been gleaned from a recent search of the East Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER ref. 344/15). In summary, the site lies within an Archaeological Notification Area and Conservation Area associated with the medieval and post-medieval village of Falmer. The village is first documented as *Falemere* in Domesday Book (1086), and is likely to have Saxon origins (Mills 1993). Despite this, very little dating from the medieval period has been found within the village, and the numerous Listed Buildings in the area (including the parish church) all date from either the post-medieval or modern periods. However, a probable medieval pit was found recently during a recent archaeological watching brief in the High Street, to the south of the present site (Howell 2012). There is the potential for pre-Saxon archaeological features to be present on the site as the chalk downlands were utilised for settlement from the earliest times. 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. Roman activity has been recorded to the north of the site, with two corn-drying ovens being investigated in the 1950s in an area now 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 proposed groundworks. This was to involve the monitoring of any form of ground reduction for the new extensions and porch. Where archaeological deposits which warranted preservation *in-situ* were encountered, their treatment was to be discussed following consultation with the client and the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer. Where it was not possible or practicable to preserve archaeological remains *in-situ* the features were to be excavated by hand and fully recorded, to ensure their preservation by record.

Results

The area within the new extensions was to be reduced to natural geology before the foundation trenches were excavated. As a result, only the initial ground reduction was monitored during the watching brief. The area of the new extensions measured approximately 27 sq m in size (Fig. 3), and the overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. A toothed bucket was used to remove localized concrete and compact made ground deposits. The area closest to the house had been significantly disturbed by service trenches, and was covered with concrete. Some ornamental brickwork was also removed along the northern edge of the area. Elsewhere the stratigraphy generally consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.30m of made ground, above the natural geology (Fig. 4). The natural geology was largely composed of mid orange brown clay with flint gravel inclusions. However, some patches of the underlying chalk were exposed beneath the clay.

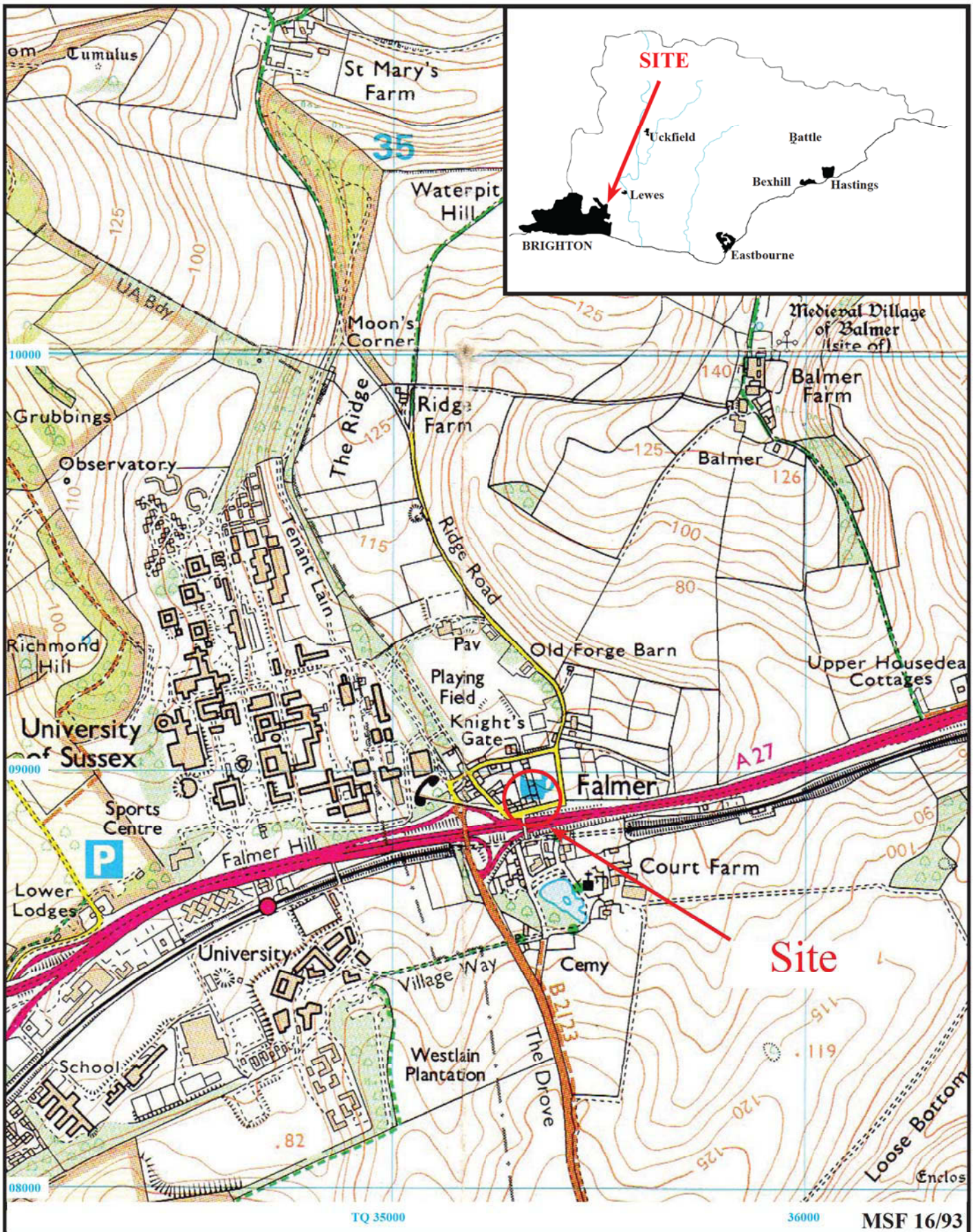
No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the area of the new extensions. The presence of made ground deposits directly above the natural geology indicates that the area had probably been truncated in the past. This theory is supported by the fact that the ground level of the adjacent field, to the east, was approximately 0.65m higher than the ground level around the house.

Conclusion

The watching brief at this site successfully examined the areas which was to be most affected by the planned building work on the site. No archaeological finds or features were recorded, and it appears that the area had been truncated in the past, presumably when the current house was built.

References

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- ESCC, 2015, *Sussex Archaeological Standards*, East Sussex County Council, Lewes.
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- Mills, A D 1993, *English Place-names*, Oxford.
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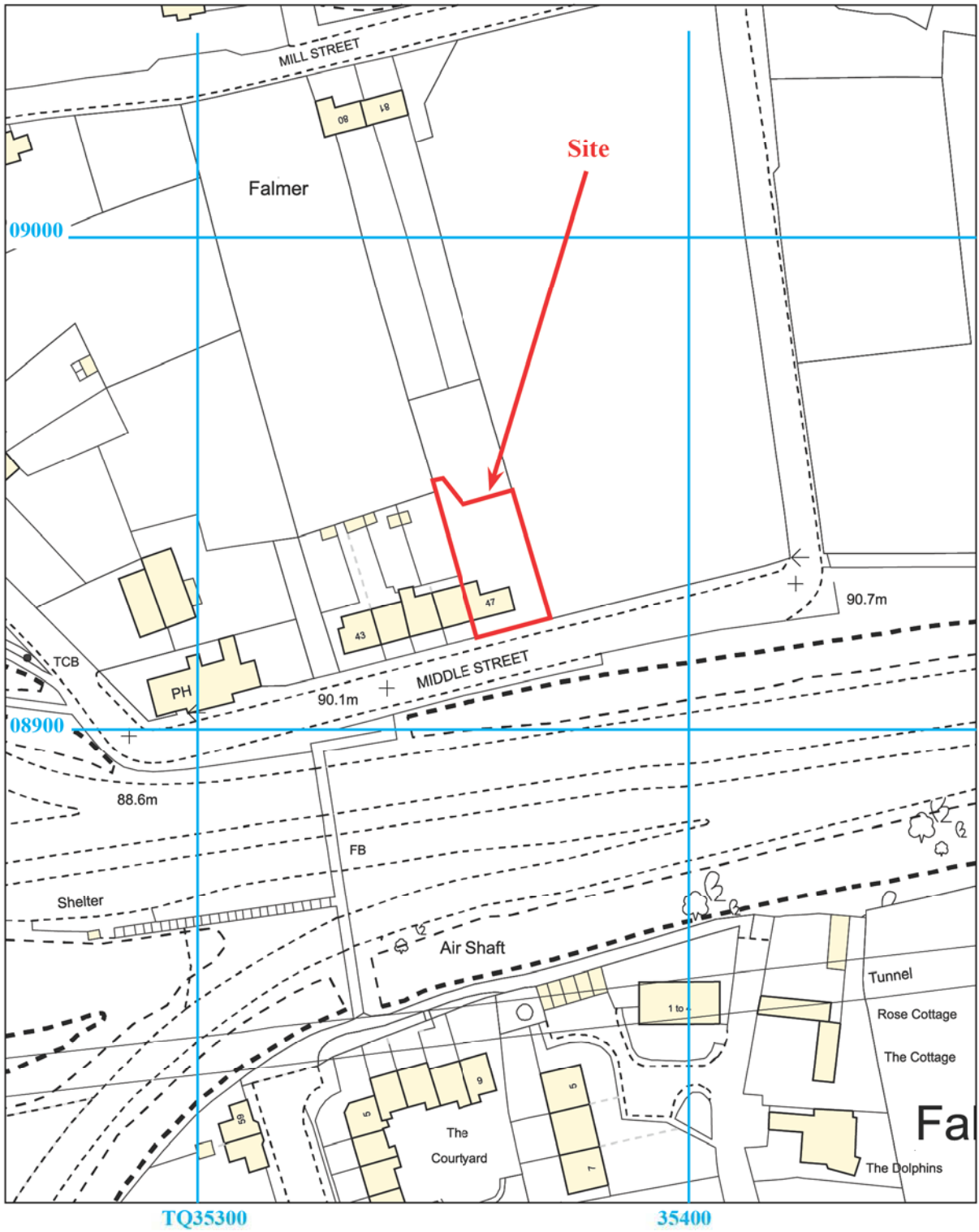


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Figure 1. Location of site within Falmer and East Sussex.

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 Figure 2. Detailed location of site

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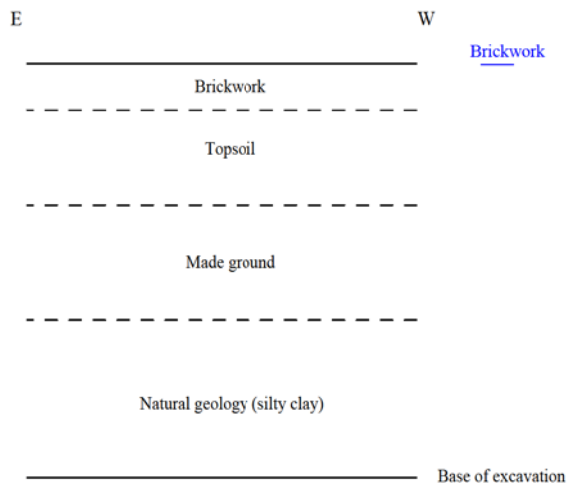


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Figure 3. Plan showing areas monitored.



General stratigraphy



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Figure 4. Section



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Plate 1. General view of site looking south.



Plate 2. Stratigraphy at northern boundary of site, facing north. Scale: 1m.

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Plates 1 - 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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