

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

**Irrigation Reservoir, Comptons Field, Home Farm,  
Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by David Sanchez**

**Site Code: HFS15/190**

**(SZ 8558 9520)**

**Irrigation Reservoir, Comptons Field, Home Farm,  
Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex**

**An Archaeological Recording Action  
For Landlink Estates**

by David Sanchez

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HFS 15/190

**August 2016**

## Summary

**Site name:** Irrigation Reservoir, Comptons Field, Home Farm, Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex

**Grid reference:** SZ 8558 9520

**Site activity:** Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 27th June - 1st July 2016

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** David Sanchez

**Site code:** HFS 15/190

**Area of site:** 1.60ha

**Summary of results:** The recording action revealed the presence of a modest range of archaeological features plus two modern ditches. The other features comprised two small fire pits likely to both be of later Iron Age or Roman date, a burnt flint deposit, undated but probably of prehistoric date and the lower part of an in situ Middle Bronze Age urn placed in a small pit.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 30.08.16 Steve Preston ✓ 25.08.16
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**Report 15/19**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at Comptons Field, Home Farm, Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex (SZ 8558 9520) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Mason of Landlink Estates Ltd, Ham Farm, Main Road, Bosham, West Sussex PO18 8EH.

Planning permission (SY/15/00897/FUL) has been gained from Chichester District Council to construct a 10 million gallon farm irrigation reservoir. The consent is subject to a condition (8) relating to archaeology requiring an archaeological investigation to take place. As a result of the possibility of damage or destruction of archaeological deposits during development of the site it was proposed to carry out a field recording action on the site. This is in accordance with the *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 Mr James Kenny, Archaeology Officer of Chichester District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Sanchez, Cosmo Bacon and Luis Esteves from 27th June to 1st July 2016 and the site code is HFS 15/190.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Chichester Museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located to the north of the town of Selsey, which is about 10km to the south of Chichester, West Sussex. The site itself is to the south-west of Home Farm in the western side of Chichester Road and lies to the west of Selsey Golf Club, with farmland to the north and east and an existing reservoir to the south (Fig. 2). It occupies a flat plot of arable farmland slopping down lightly to the south-east and occupies an area of *c.* 1.60ha. It is at a height of *c.* 3m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as on the boundary between Raised Beach Deposits of sand and gravel (BGS 1995), and Aeolian deposits ('brickearth'): the geology observed on site was brickearth in the full area investigated.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential for the site stems from its location close to known archaeological deposits. Recent investigations have shown clear evidence for Late Bronze Age occupation (Thomas 1998; Kenny 1989) as well as a high concentration of late Iron Age coins, almost certainly from one or two hoards from around the coast. Selsey had been posited as the Iron Age tribal centre of the Atrebates, possibly comprising the type of settlement known as a "territorial *oppidum*" (e.g., Collis, 1984, 224). Excavations to the south on Chichester Road (Hammond and Preston 2005) showed deposits of Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval date.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction of the irrigation reservoir. This involved examination of areas of topsoil stripping and ground reduction. The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on this site; and
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present.

The Sussex Archaeological Standards (ESCC 2014) were to be followed where relevant.

The area affected by the construction of the irrigation reservoir was stripped under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to fully expose any archaeological deposits. Following machine clearance all possible archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and investigated. All archaeological features were excavated according to requirements of the project specification, planned and sectioned, and environmental samples were recovered where sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits were located. A possible cremation burial was also sampled for flotation.

## **Results**

The area affected by the construction of the irrigation reservoir was stripped to the top of the natural geology as intended, to a maximum depth of 0.52m (Fig. 3; Pl. 1). The stratigraphy observed consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.27m of subsoil overlying brickearth natural geology. In the south half of the area stripped the recorded depth was only 0.35m and the stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of topsoil overlying natural geology.

Natural geology was truncated by a large number of land drains, most of them aligned NE - SW or E - W. In some areas these land drains were observed as frequent as one every 1.5m. Apart from the land drains, two modern ditches were observed (Fig. 3).

### *Ditches (modern)*

Ditch 1 was aligned W - E from the west limit of the stripped area, and then turning South through a right angle to continue beyond the southern limit of the site. Ditch 2 was aligned ENE -WSW from the east limit of the stripped area and it terminated at 2m from the edge of ditch 1. Both ditches were investigated for dating evidence, with modern bricks and tile as well as plastic fragments recovered.

### *Pits*

Four archaeological features were observed during the recording action consisting of two small fire pits, one burnt flint deposit and a small pit, all of them in the north half of the site (Figs 3 and 4).

Fire pit 1 (Pl. 2) was oval in plan, measuring 0.82m long, 0.42m wide and 0.06m deep. It was truncated in its west side and central area by two different land drains aligned E - W and NE - SW. Its fill (52) consisted of dark brown silty clay with burnt sediment edges and frequent charcoal. No finds were recovered from this fill but is tentatively dated to the Late Iron Age or Roman period by its association with pit 2.

Fire pit 2 (Pl. 2) was 0.50m to the south of fire pit 1, with circular shape and measuring 0.36m diameter and 0.05m deep. Its fill (53) consisted of dark brown silty clay with burnt sediment edges and frequent charcoal. One sherd of Late Iron Age/Roman pottery was recovered, tentatively dating this feature to the Late Iron Age or Roman period.

Pit 3 (Pl. 3) was a very shallow, sub-rectangular pit measuring 1.14m long, 0.68m wide and 0.12m deep, filled with burnt flint fragments and light yellowish brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks (54). It was half-sectioned and 845g of burnt flint were recovered but no dating evidence.

Pit 4 (Pl. 4) was circular in shape with a flat base and vertical sides measuring 0.24m diameter and 0.11m deep. Its fill (55) consisted of mid grey brown silty clay and contained the base and part of the body of a Middle Bronze Age vessel partially destroyed by a root but still in its original position. The fill of this pot (56) was fully excavated and recovered for flotation as it was originally thought to be a cremation deposit, but no human bones or ashes were recovered.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Richard Tabor*

A total of 71 sherds of pottery weighing 302g were recovered (Appendix 2), all from a single vessel from pit 4, apart from a single sherd from pit 2.

### Fabric

**F1** Moderately hard grey fabric with buff grey exterior and buff orange or grey interior surfaces and pink interior margin. Includes abundant medium fine (<1mm) to sparse to moderate coarse (<6mm) crushed calcined angular flint. Smoothed exterior.

The sherds from the single vessel were all from the lower wall and base and were mainly in fresh condition. The base exterior was slightly moulded in places, giving slight outward expansion, but elsewhere the line from base to wall was continuous. The slight inward curve towards the base suggests that the vessel had a slack profile. Base diameter: 180mm.

Flint is the overwhelmingly dominant inclusion. The inclusion of abundant predominantly fine/medium with some coarse flint is typical of medium to coarse fabrics of Deverel-Rimbury assemblages in Sussex (Seager Thomas 2008, 29). The earlier Post-Deverel-Rimbury or Plain Ware pottery fabrics are often very similar, but over time the density of the inclusions was reduced so that the vessel is probably of a Middle Bronze Age date within the range of 1500–1150BC (Seager Thomas 2008, 29).

One sherd was recovered from pit 2 (Appendix 2). This wall sherd (2g) was too abraded to determine whether it was hand-made or wheel-thrown. The presence of shale is consistent with South East Dorset Black Burnished Ware which was in circulation from the 1st century BC until at least the late 4th century AD.

### *Burnt flint* by David Sanchez

Burnt flint fragments with a total weight of 854g were recovered from pit 3 (fill 54). None had been worked and the pit showed no sign that the material had been burnt *in situ*.

### **Conclusion**

The recording action revealed the presence of a modest range of archaeological features, all of them in the north area of the site. Two small fire pits likely dated to the Late Iron Age or Roman period though their isolated location renders their significance difficult to interpret. The isolated presence of a Bronze Age vessel deposited in pit 4 is thought likely to be a cremation-related deposit despite the fact that no human bone was recovered from its fill. Similar isolated urn burials are found elsewhere on the Sussex coastal plain (Taylor et al 2014) and elsewhere though burial mounds and ring ditches are notably rare. It is possible that these isolated burial deposits were originally beneath a ditchless turf stack barrow (cf Ashbee 1960, 44) with the mound ploughed away long ago.

Finally one burnt flint deposit filling a shallow pit was also recorded and no dating evidence was recovered though it is considered to be of prehistoric date.

## References

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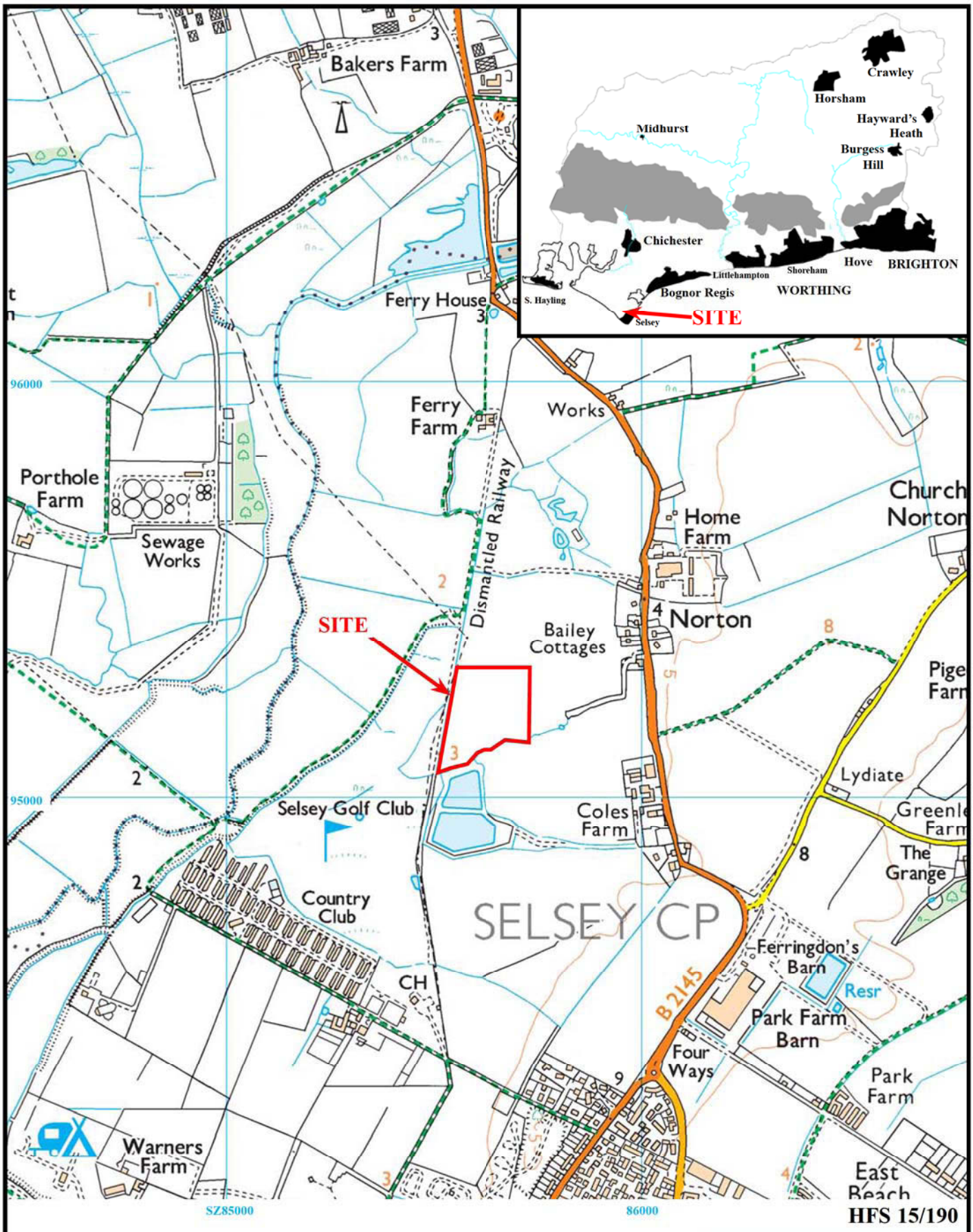


**APPENDIX 1: Feature details**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	52	Fire pit		
2	53	Fire pit	1st century BC - 4th century AD	Pottery
3	54	Pit		
4	55, 56	Pit	Middle Bronze Age	Pottery

**APPENDIX 2:** Catalogue of pottery

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
2	53	Fire pit	Q1	1	2
4	55	Pit	F1	70	300

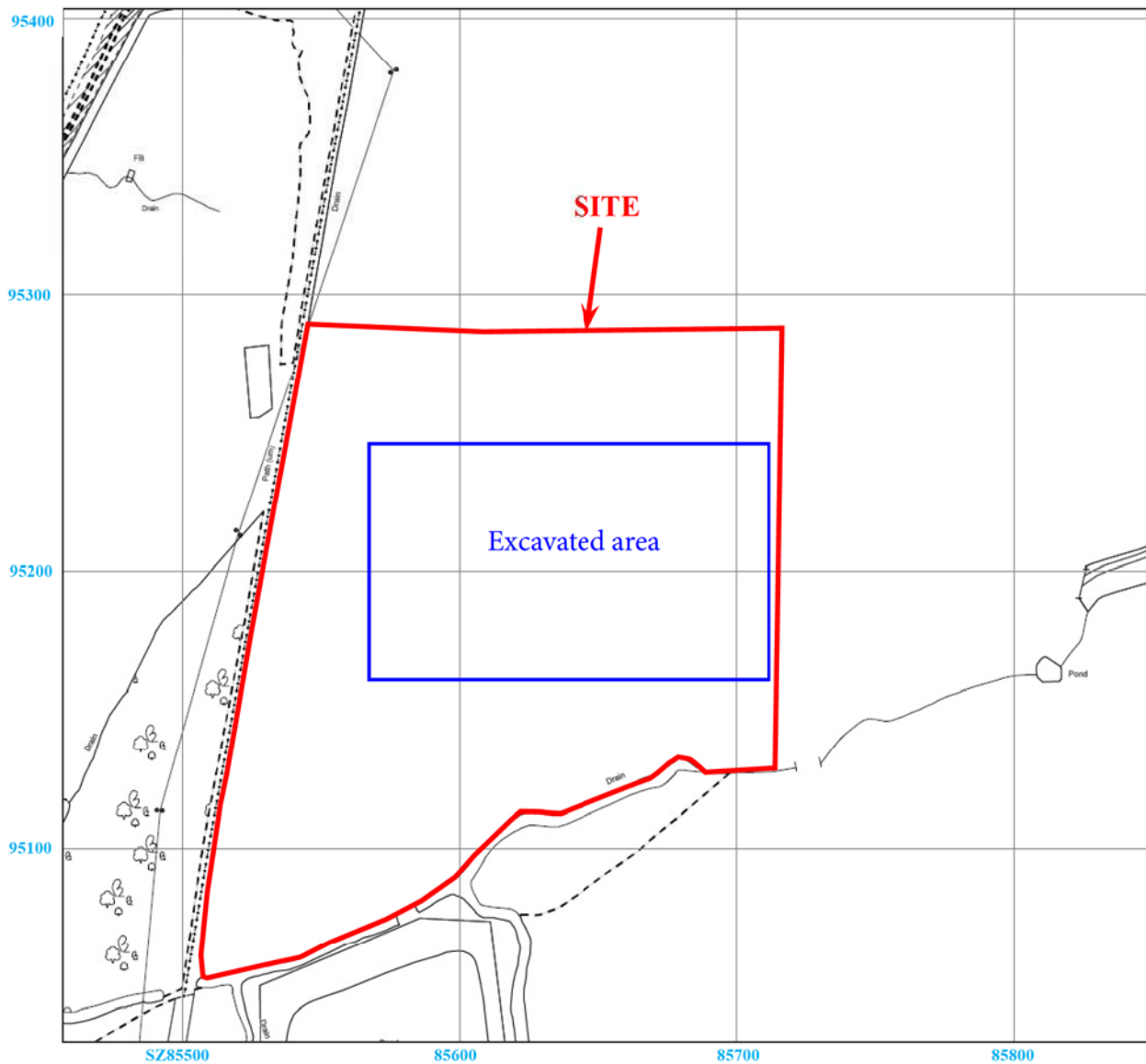


**Irrigation Reservoir, Compton Fields, Home Farm,  
Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex, 2016  
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Selsey and within West Sussex.

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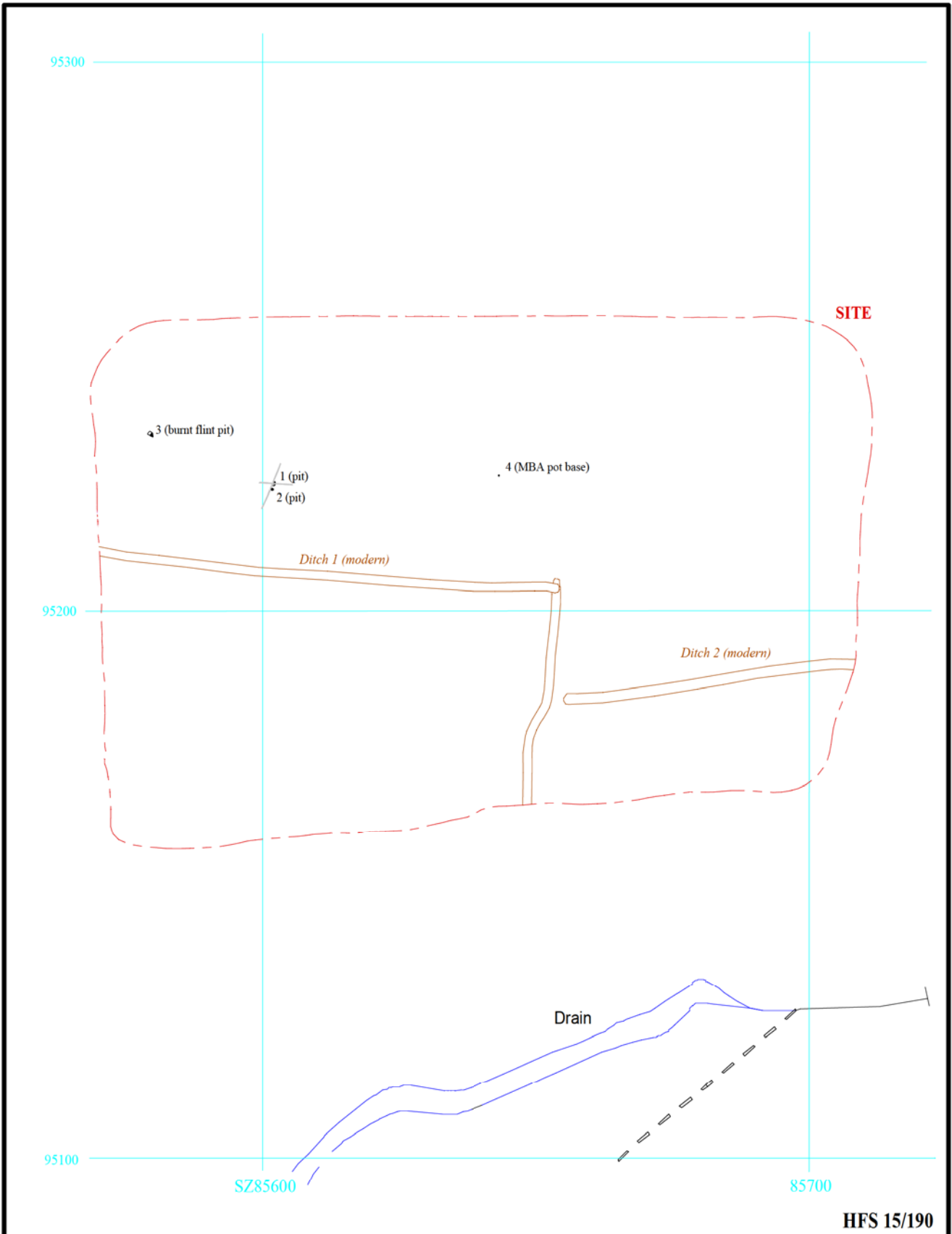
HFS 15/190



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Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex, 2016  
Archaeological Recording Action  
Figure 2. Detailed location of site.**

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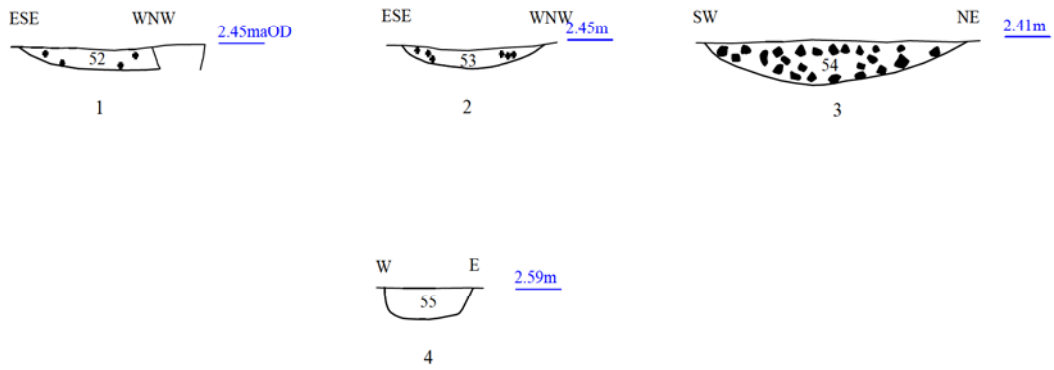
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Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex, 2016  
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 3. Location of features in observed area.



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HFS 15/190

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Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex, 2016  
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 4. Sections.



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Plate 1. Extent of strip, looking south south west.



Plate 2. Pits 1 and 2, looking south south west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

HFS 15/190

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Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex, 2016  
Archaeological Recording Action**

Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Burnt flint pit 3, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 1m and 0.5m, vertical 0.1m.



Plate 4. Pottery base in pit 4, looking north west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

HFS 15/190

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Chichester Road, Selsey, West Sussex, 2016  
Archaeological Recording Action

Plates 3 - 4.

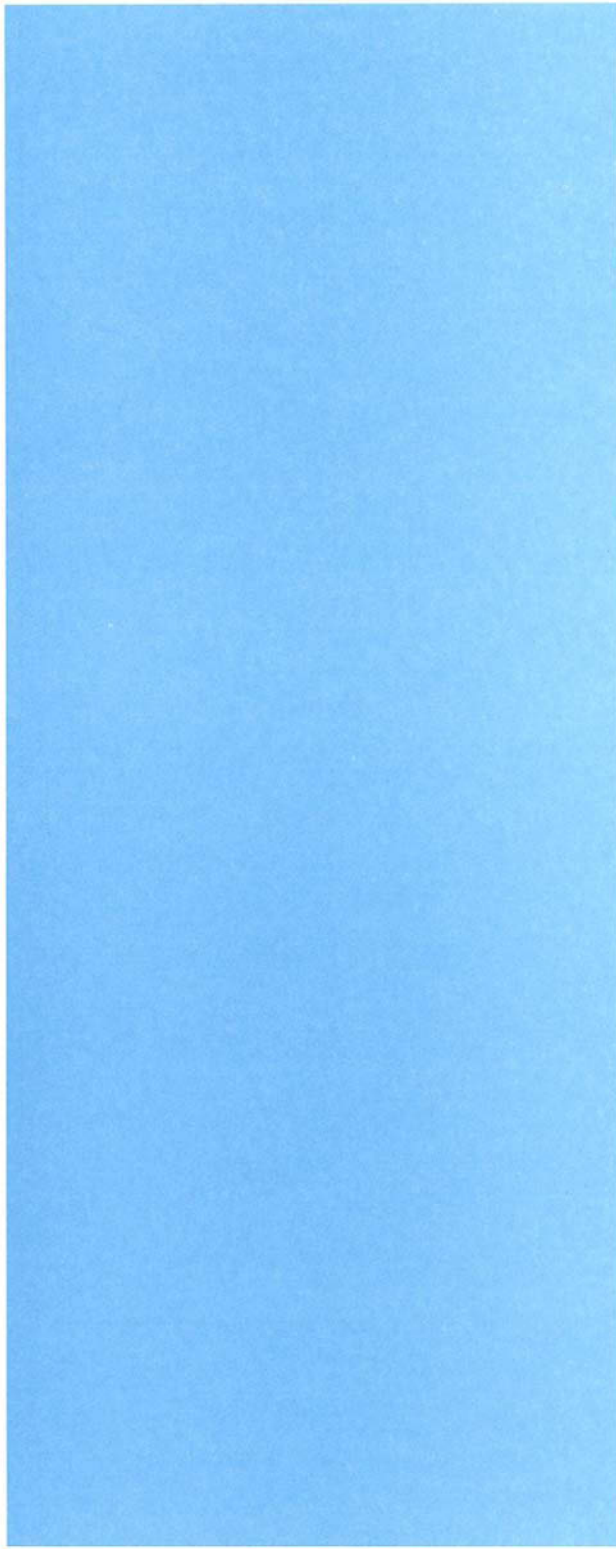
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## TIME CHART

	<b>Calendar Years</b>
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](mailto:south@tvas.co.uk)**  
**Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**