

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 The Orchards, Uckfield Road,  
Ringmer, East Sussex**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Sean Wallis**

**Site Code: OUR14/173**

**(TQ 4414 1383)**

**Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road,  
Ringmer, East Sussex**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**for Blue Sonic Ltd**

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OUR 14/173

**January 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road, Ringmer, East Sussex

**Grid reference:** TQ 4414 1383

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 14th-15th December 2016

**Project manager:** Sean Wallis

**Site supervisor:** Sean Wallis

**Site code:** OUR 14/173

**Area of site:** c. 1.6 ha

**Summary of results:** The archaeological evaluation has recorded the presence of several linear features in the south-west corner of the site which may represent the remains of a small medieval settlement or farmstead. It is also possible that the Roman road from Arlington to Barcombe is represented by flint nodules recorded in two trenches, which were positioned along a band of natural geology with frequent iron pan and manganese inclusions. Although the line of the road appears to be visible as a slightly raised area which runs to the south of a modern ditch, it is clear that the feature has been severely affected by ploughing and/or flint robbing.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local museum in due course.

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston ✓ 12.01.17 Steve Ford ✓ 12.01.17
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# Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road, Ringmer, East Sussex An Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Report 14/173b

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on an irregular plot of land situated immediately east of Uckfield Road, Ringmer, East Sussex (NGR: TQ 4414 1383) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Rob Winnifrith of Accel Consulting Ltd, 20 Southwick Street, Southwick, West Sussex, BN42 4TB, on behalf of Blue Sonic Ltd.

Planning permission (LW/14/0830) has been gained from Lewes District Council to redevelop 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 housing development it is proposed to carry out a field evaluation as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012, para 128), and the District Council's policies on archaeology, to determine the archaeological potential of the site and to help to formulate a mitigation strategy as necessary.

A single component of work is therefore proposed at this stage, namely field investigation by means of trial trenching. Dependent on the findings of this evaluation, further archaeological work may be requested, as will be determined through consultation with the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which had been approved by the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer (Mr Greg Chuter), who advises the District Council on archaeological matters.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Virginia Fuentes-Mateos, Teresa Vieira, Sean Wallis and Jim Webster between 14th and 15th December 2016, and the site code is OUR 14/173. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading, and will be deposited with an approved local museum in due course. The site nominally falls within the collecting area for Lewes Museum which is not currently accepting new archives.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located immediately east of Uckfield Road (A26), approximately 1.2km north of the historic core of Ringmer, East Sussex (Fig. 1). At the time of the evaluation the site was largely covered with grass, although there were several buildings close to the road, along with an associated hardstanding and access (Fig. 2). The site

is relatively flat, and lies at a height of approximately 13m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Lower Greensand (BGS 2006). However, the geology recorded in the evaluation trenches largely consisted of light yellow brown clay, with varying amounts of manganese and iron pan inclusions.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been considered in a desk-based assessment (Wallis 2014). In summary, the site was thought to lie just to the south of the Roman road from Arlington to Barcombe, which may be a continuation of the Greensand Way (Margary 1955, route 140). However, recent geophysical surveys in the surrounding area indicated that the actual route may run through the present site. This road is believed to join the London to Lewes Road (Margary route 14) close to Bridge Farm, to the north-west of the present site. Recent archaeological work at Bridge Farm has revealed evidence of a large Roman settlement associated with the road junction. A large Roman lead coffin was discovered in a field close to Wellingham Farm, to the west of the present site, in 1871. The earthworks on Clay Hill, to the north-east of the present site, are thought to represent the motte of a medieval castle, hence the name Castle Mound. This is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Fragments of worked flint, struck flint and Roman tile have been found close to Clay Hill, along with pottery dating from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. Ringmer is well known for its pottery industry, which flourished in the medieval and early post-medieval periods. Several kiln sites have been investigated at Bishops Lane, to the south-east of the present site.

## **Objectives and methodology**

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

This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation *in situ*. The work was to be carried out to comply with the East Sussex Archaeological Standards requirements for archaeological fieldwork (ESCC 2015).

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 prehistoric activity is present;
- to determine whether any evidence of activity associated with the Roman road is present;

to determine whether any evidence of medieval activity is present; and  
to determine whether any evidence of post-medieval activity is present.

Fourteen trenches were proposed to be dug, each measuring 20m long and 1.80m-2.00m wide. Twelve of the trenches were to represent a 5% random sample of the development area, whilst two additional trenches were positioned to target the planned drainage works to the east of the main site. The trenches 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, and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the project.

## **Results**

The fourteen trenches were dug close to their intended positions, although several had to be moved slightly or shortened for various logistical reasons (Fig. 3). All the trenches were 2.00m wide and measured between 8.50m and 22.10m in length, and between 0.39m and 0.65m in depth. The trenches which contained archaeological features are described below, with a complete list of the trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

### Trench 4 (Fig. 4; Pl. 4)

This trench was orientated approximately SW-NE, and was 19.20m long and up to 0.60m deep. The natural clay geology contained frequent manganese and iron pan inclusions, and was generally observed beneath 0.26m of topsoil (50) and 0.22m of subsoil (51). The trench was positioned in the area where the Roman road from Arlington to Barcombe was believed to cross the site, and this feature appears to have survived as a single layer of flint nodules (57) which were recorded immediately below the topsoil between 8.10m and 14.50m from the south-west end of the trench (Pl. 7). The flint nodules were not as tightly packed as one would expect from a road surface, and it is therefore likely that the feature had been damaged in the past by ploughing and/or the robbing of flint nodules for use elsewhere. The flint nodules were observed within a clayey soil matrix, but no archaeological finds were visible and the feature was not excavated further.

### Trench 9 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 9 was orientated approximately W-E, and was 20.00m long and up to 0.50m deep. The natural geology was observed beneath 0.22m of topsoil (50) and 0.21m of subsoil (51). Gully 5 was recorded between 3.50m and 7.80m from the west end of the trench, and a 1m wide slot was excavated through it by hand (Pl. 5). The gully was 0.60m wide and 0.13m deep, with a single fill of light orange brown silty clay (56) which contained one

small sherd of medieval pottery. Ditch 4 was investigated between 10.50m and 13m, and was seen to be up to 1.43m wide and 0.28m deep, with a single fill of light greyish brown silty clay (55) (Pl. 6). A 1m wide slot was excavated through the feature by hand, and this yielded one small sherd of medieval pottery. It is possible that this ditch is the same feature as that (2) recorded in Trench 10.

#### Trench 10 (Figs 4 and 5; Pl. 3)

Trench 10 was 21.90m long and up to 0.56m deep, and was orientated approximately SW-NE. The natural geology was observed beneath 0.26m of topsoil (50) and 0.19m of subsoil (51). Although it was not entirely clear, it is likely that two ditches (2 and 3) cross each other at right angles within the trench. A slot was excavated by hand through ditch 2, which was seen to be at least 1.08m wide and 0.12m (Pl. 8). It had a single fill of light greyish brown silty clay (53), which contained 31 sherds of medieval pottery along with a residual struck flint. It is possible that this feature is the same as that (4) recorded in Trench 9. Ditch 3 was not excavated, but 10 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the surface of its upper fill of light greyish brown silty clay (54).

#### Trench 11 (Figs 4 and 5)

This trench was orientated approximately SSE-NNW, and was 22.10m long and up to 0.52m deep. The natural geology was observed beneath 0.21m of topsoil (50) and 0.21m of subsoil (51). Gully 1 was recorded at the southern end of the trench between 2.60m and 3.60m, and a 1m wide slot was excavated through it by hand. The feature was 0.55m wide and 0.09m deep, with a single fill of light grey silty clay (52) which contained no archaeological finds.

#### Trench 14

Trench 14 was orientated approximately SSW-NNE, and was 21.00m long and up to 0.57m deep. The natural geology was revealed beneath 0.30m of topsoil (50) and 0.18m of subsoil (51), and varied significantly at either end. At the southern end it consisted of light yellow brown clay, whilst in the northern half of the trench a mid orange brown clay with frequent iron pan and manganese inclusions was recorded. Some flint nodules were observed in the northern end of the trench, seemingly embedded into the natural clay. It is possible that these flints could represent robbed out remains of the Roman road. No archaeological finds were recorded.

## **Finds**

### *Struck Flint* by Steve Ford

A single struck flint was recovered from ditch 2 (53). It was a small core (27g) made on a piece of frost fractured nodule. It can only be broadly dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods.

## *Pottery* by Luke Barber

The archaeological monitoring recovered 43 sherds of pottery, weighing 1179g, from four contexts. The material is listed in Appendix 3. Medieval fabrics have been allocated the Lewes fabric code as well as a common name and rim types also refer to the Lewes form series (Barber forthcoming).

Although the small sherds from contexts 4 (55) and 5 (56) are notably abraded, those from ditches 2 (53) and 3 (54) are both large and quite fresh (though all have suffered some surface degrading due to the acidic subsoil). The sherds from the storage jar join and it is clear the material in contexts 53 and 54 has not been reworked. The assemblage is remarkably uniform in fabric. All are essentially of the type classified as Clay Hill, though it is acknowledged that the early Ringmer industry may be the source of the material (Barber forthcoming). Although clearly from the same source the assemblage shows some variation in coarseness. The typical Clay Hill fabric SNL5, with notable quartz amongst the fine flint, is well represented and includes some classic rim forms of the type. There are also a number of slightly coarser sherds, with slightly more flint grits and less/no quartz. These have been isolated here as SNL3/5 but they have more in common with the SNL5 material than the SNL3 Lewes Flinty Wares. In Lewes these two variants were grouped under SNL5 and the current assemblage suggests this to have been appropriate. The combination of the fabrics and forms suggest the whole assemblage can be placed in a *c.* 1150–1200 date range.

## **Conclusion**

The archaeological evaluation to the east of Uckfield Road, Ringmer, East Sussex, successfully investigated those parts of the site which will be most affected by the housing development. Several linear features were recorded in the south-west corner of the site, four of which contained medieval pottery. It is therefore possible that these features represent the remains of a small settlement or farmstead, and their location close to the Uckfield Road may be significant. It seems likely that the flint nodules recorded in Trenches 4 and 14 may represent the badly truncated remains of the Roman road from Arlington to Barcombe. Not only were the flints recorded in the location predicted by recent geophysical work in the surrounding area, but they were also found along a slightly higher strip of land which runs across the site, to the south of a modern ditch. Interestingly, the road appears to have been constructed on an area where the natural geology has frequent iron pan and manganese inclusions, which would have presumably provided a more solid foundation to any road surface. Rather puzzling was the fact that no roadside ditches were recorded in Trench 4, although it may be that the



natural geology in this area meant that they were not needed for drainage purposes. The feature appears to have been destroyed to the west of Trench 4, and it was certainly not visible in Trench 5.

## References

- Barber, L, forthcoming, 'The Pottery', in D Swift, Excavations at the Baxters and Lewes House sites, Lewes, Archaeology South-East monogr, Portslade
- BGS, 2006, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet **319/334**, Bedrock and Superficial Deposits Edition, Keyworth
- ESCC, 2015, *Sussex Archaeological Standards*, East Sussex County Council, Lewes.
- Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain*, London
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London
- Wallis, S, 2014, 'Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road, Ringmer, East Sussex - an archaeological desk-based assessment', Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd unpubl rep **14/173**, Brighton

## APPENDIX 1: Trench details

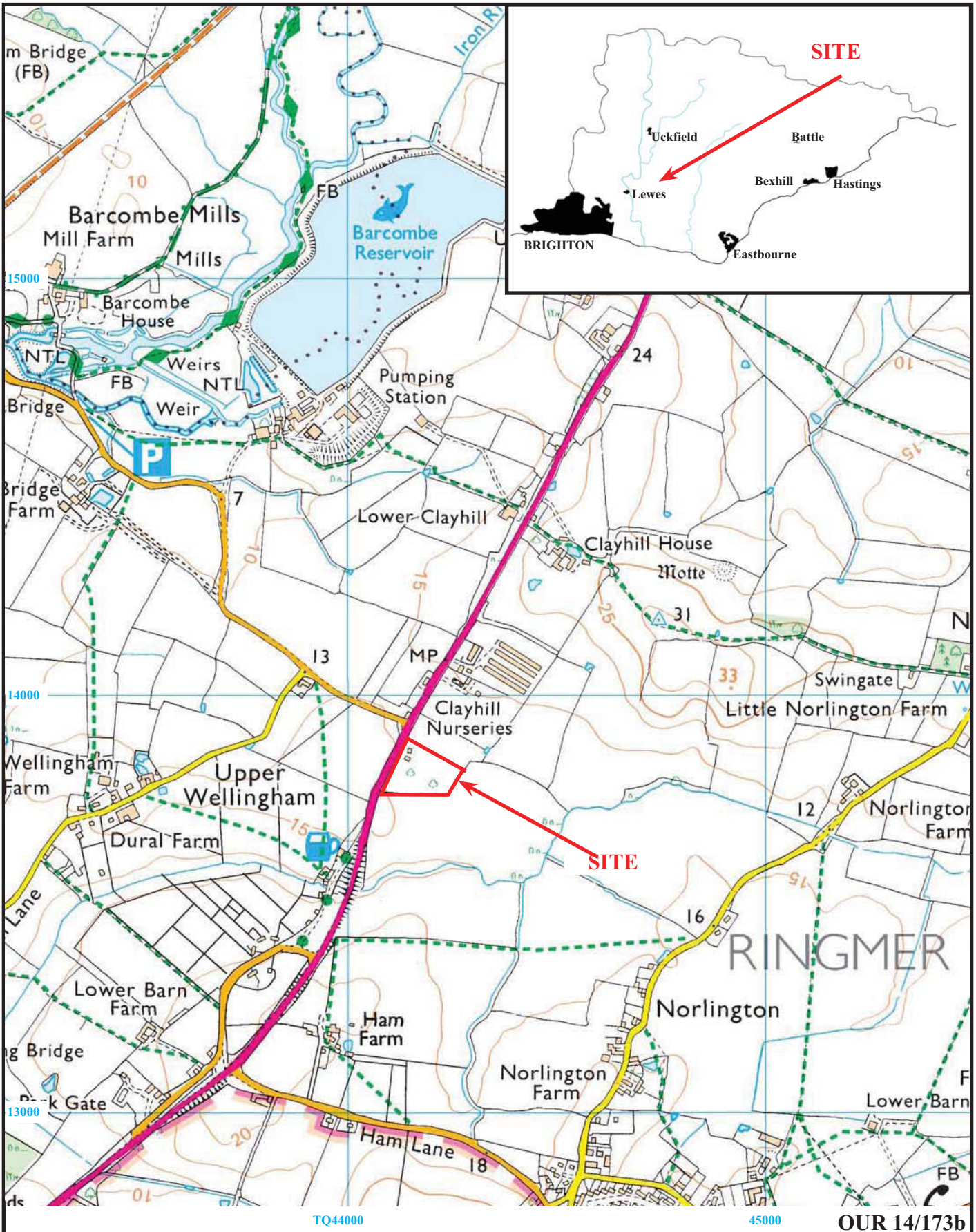
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	14.10	2.00	0.60	0-0.25m topsoil (50); 0.25-0.52m subsoil (51); 0.52-0.60m+ natural geology (mid yellow brown clay) <b>[Pl. 1]</b>
2	18.50	2.00	0.57	0-0.28m topsoil (50); 0.28-0.49m subsoil (51); 0.49-0.57m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
3	19.60	2.00	0.65	0-0.24m topsoil (50); 0.24-0.42m subsoil (51); 0.42-0.65m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
4	19.20	2.00	0.60	0-0.26m topsoil (50); 0.26-0.48m subsoil (51); 0.48-0.60m+ natural geology (mid orange brown clay with frequent manganese and iron pan inclusions). Road 57. <b>[Pls 4, 7]</b>
5	19.10	2.00	0.39	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.27m subsoil (51); 0.27-0.39m+ natural geology (mid orange brown clay with frequent manganese and iron pan inclusions).
6	8.50	2.00	0.75	0-0.09m Tarmac; 0.09-0.55m made ground; 0.55-0.75m+ natural geology (mid orange brown clay, stained in places). <b>[Pl. 2]</b>
7	20.10	2.00	0.51	0-0.22m topsoil (50); 0.22-0.37m subsoil (51); 0.37-0.51m+ natural geology (light yellow clay).
8	20.00	2.00	0.53	0-0.21m topsoil (50); 0.21-0.42m subsoil (51); 0.42-0.53m+ natural geology (light yellow clay).
9	20.00	2.00	0.50	0-0.22m topsoil (50); 0.22-0.43m subsoil (51); 0.43-0.50m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). Ditch 4, gully 5. <b>[Pls 5, 6]</b>
10	21.90	2.00	0.56	0-0.26m topsoil (50); 0.26-0.45m subsoil (51); 0.45-0.56m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). Ditches 2 and 3. <b>[Pls 3, 8]</b>
11	22.10	2.00	0.52	0-0.21m topsoil (50); 0.21-0.40m subsoil (51); 0.40-0.52m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). Gully 1.
12	20.70	2.00	0.58	0-0.23m topsoil (50); 0.23-0.43m subsoil (51); 0.43-0.58m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
13	21.40	2.00	0.60	0-0.24m topsoil (50); 0.24-0.44m subsoil (51); 0.44-0.60m+ natural geology (mid orange brown clay with frequent manganese and iron pan inclusions).
14	21.00	2.00	0.57	0-0.30m topsoil (50); 0.30-0.48m subsoil (51); 0.48-0.57m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay at south end; mid orange brown clay with frequent manganese and iron pan inclusions at north end).

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence / comments</i>
11	1	52	Gully	Undated	
10	2	53	Ditch	Medieval	Pottery. Possibly same feature as ditch 4.
10	3	54	Ditch	Medieval	Pottery.
9	4	55	Ditch	Medieval	Pottery. Possibly same feature as ditch 2.
9	5	56	Gully	Medieval	Pottery.
4		57	Road	Roman ?	

### APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of pottery

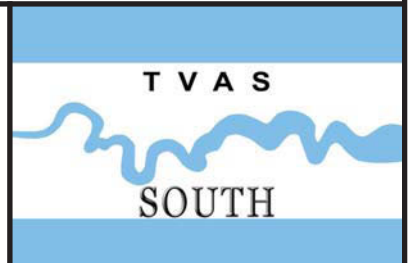
<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
53	Clay Hill type (coarse) SNL3/5	9	130	Uncertain form x3 (x1 with oblique incised line decoration). All oxidised
53	Clay Hill ware (fine) SNL5	22	220	Cooking pots x3 (hollow-topped rims Cp5h and 5g). All oxidised
54	Clay Hill type (coarse) SNL3/5	9	824	Storage jar x1 (squared club rim Cp5p) with 360mm diameter, pitcher x1 (thumbed handle). All oxidised
54	Clay Hill ware (fine) SNL5	1	2	Uncertain form x1. Oxidised
55	Clay Hill ware (fine) SNL5	1	1	Uncertain form x1. Oxidised. V worn
56	Clay Hill ware (fine) SNL5	1	2	Uncertain form x1. Oxidised

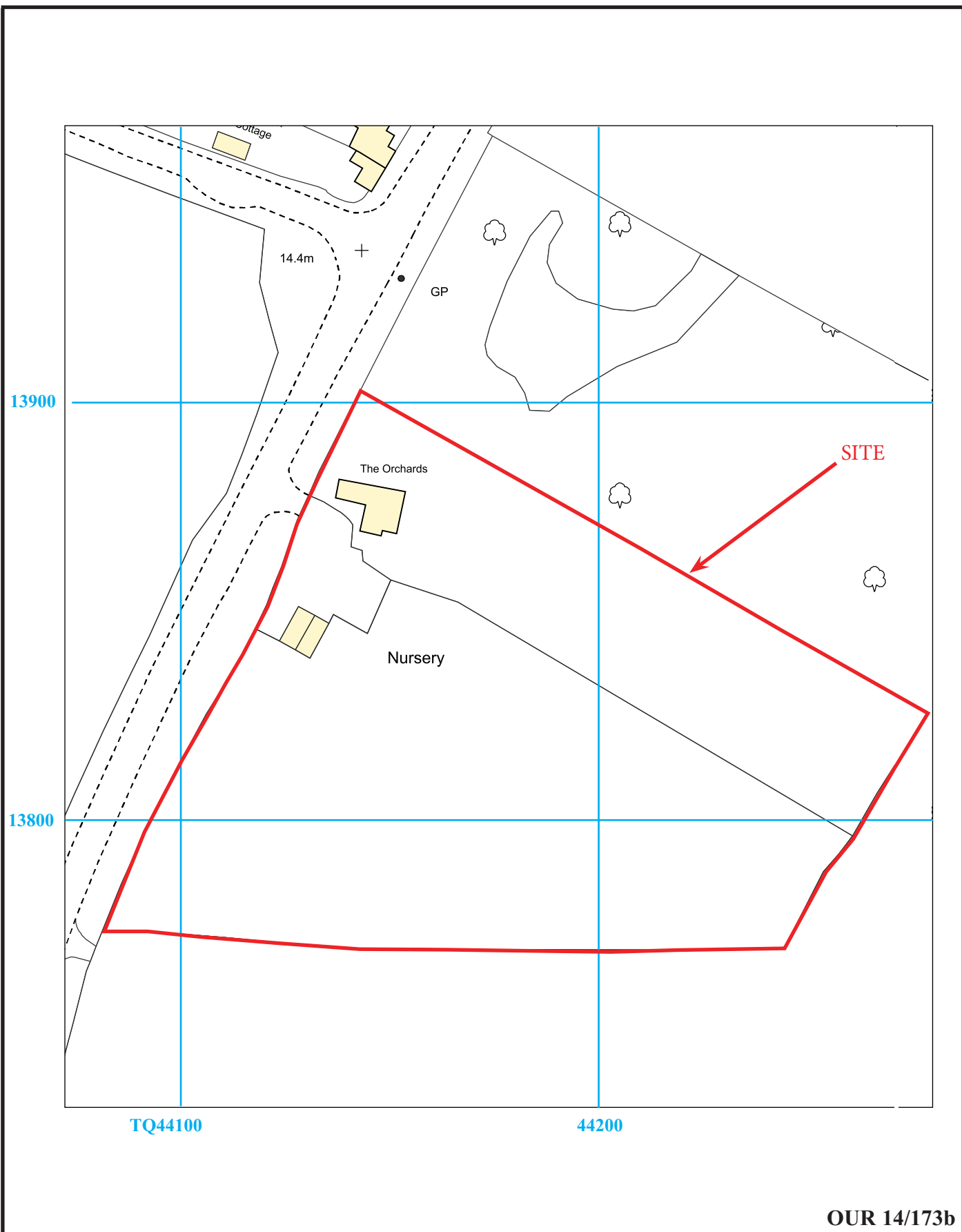


**Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road,  
Ringmer, East Sussex, 2016  
Archaeological Evaluation**

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

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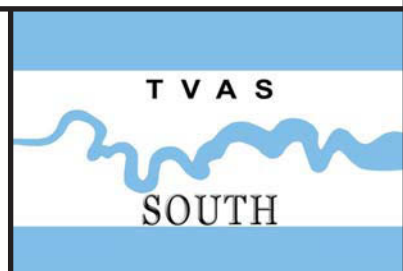
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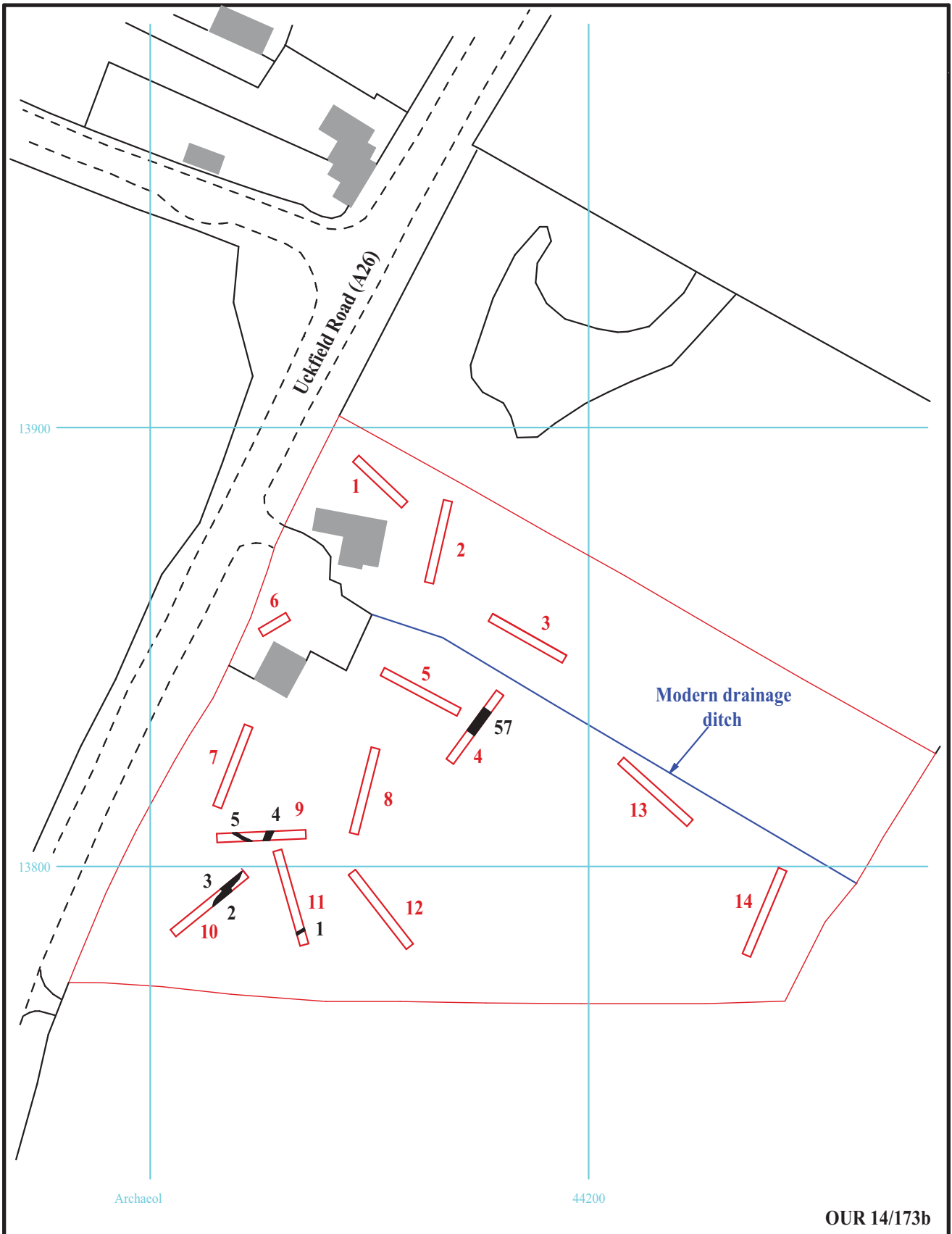


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site

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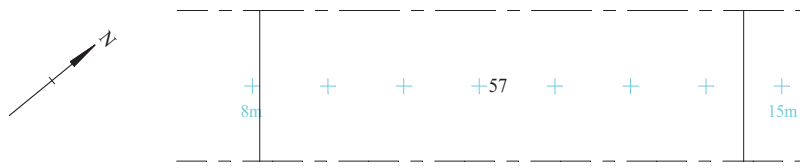
**Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road,  
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

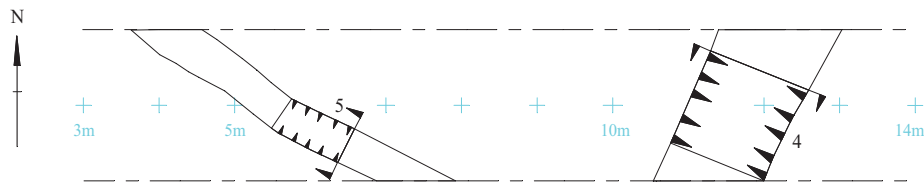


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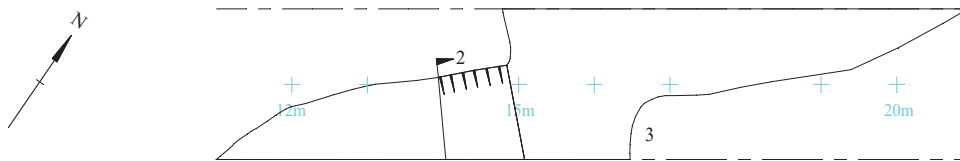
Trench 4



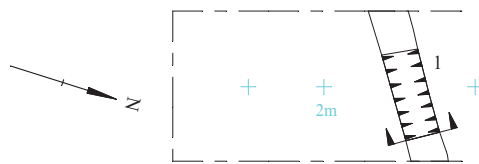
Trench 9



Trench 10



Trench 11



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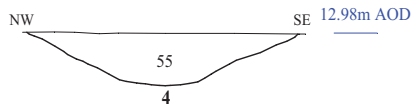
**Land at the Orchards, Uckfield Road,  
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Figure 4. Plan of trenches 4, 9, 10 and 11.

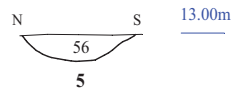




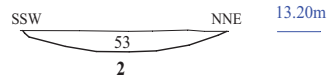
Trench 9



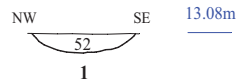
Trench 9



Trench 10



Trench 11



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Figure 5. Sections



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking NW.  
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 2. Trench 6, looking NE.  
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 3. Trench 10, looking NE.  
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 4. Trench 4, looking NW.  
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.

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**Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road,  
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Plates 1 - 4.**





Plate 5. Trench 9, gully 5, looking SE.  
Scales: 0.50m and 0.30m.



Plate 6. Trench 9, ditch 4, looking NNE.  
Scales: 1m and 0.30m.

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Plates 5-6.**

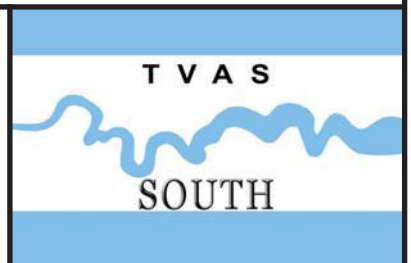




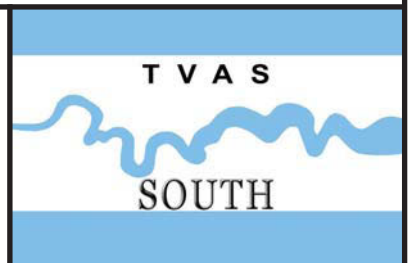
Plate 7. Trench 4, possible road surface 57, looking NE.  
Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 8. Trench 10, ditch 2, looking NE, Scales: 1m and 0.10m.

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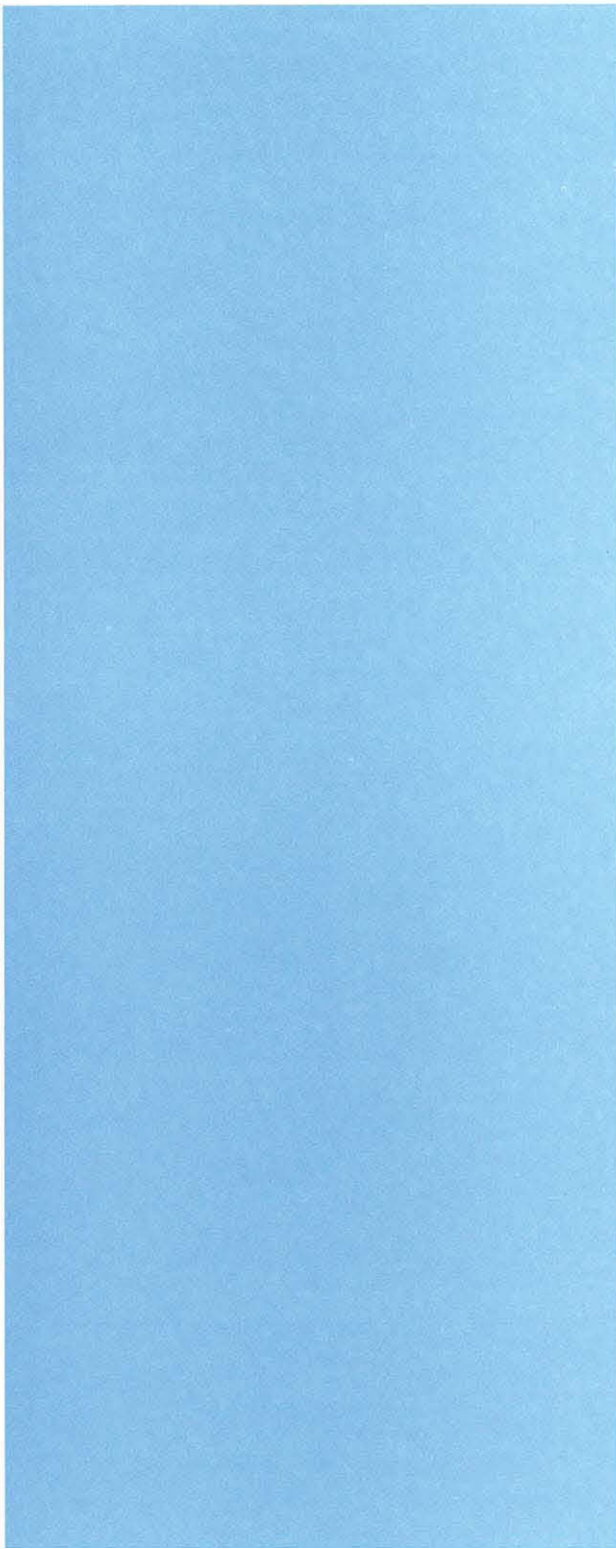
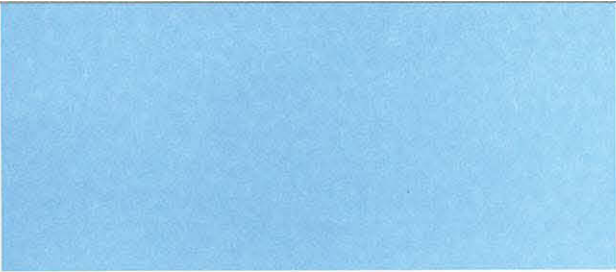
**Land at The Orchards, Uckfield Road,  
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Plates 7-8.**



## 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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