THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

SOUTH

Constables Farm, Old Marsh Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex

Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Site Code: CFB16/234

(TQ 6898 0752)

Constables Farm, Old Marsh Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr Alan Verity

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CFB 16/234

January 2017

Summary

Site name: Constables Farm, Old Marsh Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 6898 0752

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 4th-6th January 2017

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: CFB 16/234

Area of site: *c.* 1.6 ha

Summary of results: The archaeological evaluation at Constables Farm successfully investigated those parts of the site which will be most affected by the creation of an equestrian centre. Despite the close proximity of the deserted medieval village of Barnhorn, the only possible feature of archaeological interest was an undated gully in the south-east part of the site. It is considered that the site has very low or no archaeological potential.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 18.01.17
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Constables Farm, Old Marsh Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex
An Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Report 16/234

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on an irregular plot of land situated to the south of Constables Farm, Old Marsh Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex (NGR: TQ 6898 0752) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the property's owner, Mr Alan Verity.

Planning permission (RR/2016/558/P) has been gained from Rother District Council to redevelop the site as an equestrian centre. This will involve the construction of several new buildings, along with associated access and car parking. Much of the site will be built up to minimize the chance of flooding, prior to any construction work taking place. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development it is proposed to carry out a field evaluation as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), 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 was proposed at this stage, namely field investigation by means of machine trenching. Dependent on the findings of this evaluation, further archaeological work may be requested, as 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 and Sean Wallis between 4th and 6th January 2017, and the site code is CFB 16/234. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading, and will be deposited with Bexhill Museum or the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south of Barnhorn Road (A259), approximately 5km west of the historic core of Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex (Fig. 1). At the time of the evaluation most of the area was used for grazing horses,

and there were several separate paddocks (Fig. 2). However, there was a temporary shed to the north, and a large spoilheap in the north-eastern part of the site. The site generally slopes down towards the south from approximately 15m above Ordnance Datum at the northern end of the site to approximately 7m AOD at the south. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Tunbridge Wells Sand (BGS 1980). However, the geology recorded in the evaluation trenches largely consisted of light yellow brown clay, sometimes with bluish grey mottling.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site largely stems from its location on a south facing slope close to the coast and the Pevensey Levels. These areas have long been identified as favoured places for settlement and occupation in the prehistoric and Roman periods, and the understanding of past landscapes has been enhanced by recent archaeological fieldwork projects, particularly the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road. A recent East Sussex Historic Environment Record Consultation Report noted that whilst no archaeological finds or features have been recorded on the site itself, it is situated close to an Archaeological Notification Area associated with the deserted medieval village of Barnhorn. Another medieval settlement, known as Northeye, once occupied the higher ground across the marshland to the south-west. Archaeological investigations in the vicinity have demonstrated the potential for significant deposits to have survived on wetland sites and, although such deposits were not expected on the present site, associated features may be present on the slightly higher ground.

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 warranted 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 Roman activity is present;

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

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

The potential and significance of any such deposits located were to be assessed according to research priorities such those as set out in English Heritage Research Agenda (English Heritage 2005), or any more local research priorities as necessary (eg Rudling 2003 and the forthcoming SE regional research frameworks).

Twenty-two trenches were to be dug, each measuring 25m long and 1.80–2.00m wide, depending on the size of the machine. This was to represent a 5% sample of the development 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. Any potential archaeological deposits were to be cleaned, excavated and recorded using the appropriate hand tools.

Results

Several trenches had to be moved or shortened for logistical reasons including the presence of fences and buried services. It also became apparent that one of the proposed trenches had been positioned in any area which was covered by an earlier planning application, so this trench was not dug. There was a large spoilheap in the north-east part of the site and, as a result, no trenches were excavated in that location. These changes to the agreed scheme were agreed with the East Sussex Archaeological Officer. Eventually twenty trenches were excavated across the site (Fig. 3), and these are described below. The trenches were all 1.80m wide, and varied between 5.20m and 29.00m in length, and between 0.44m and 1.40m in depth. A complete list of the trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The one excavated feature is summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1

This trench was orientated approximately WNW-ESE, and was 24.50m long and up to 0.55m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.20m of topsoil (50) and 0.25m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 2 (Pl. 1)

Trench 2 was orientated approximately SSW-NNE, and was 25.10m long and up to 1.10m deep. It was dug in an area which was known to have been built up in the recent past and, as a result, made ground was recorded immediately below the present ground surface. The depth of made ground varied between 0.84m at the southern end of the trench to 0.30m at the northern end. A buried subsoil horizon, 0.20m thick, was observed below the

made ground, and this deposit lay directly above the natural geology. No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 3

This trench was orientated approximately SSE-NNW, and was 25.80m long and up to 0.52m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.22m of topsoil (50) and 0.25m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 4

This trench was orientated approximately S-N, and was 25.70m long and up to 0.50m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.08m of topsoil (50) and 0.19m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 5 (Pl. 2)

Trench 5 was orientated approximately W-E, and was 23.70m long and up to 0.45m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.12m of topsoil (50) and 0.10m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 6

This trench was orientated approximately SSW-NNE, and was 22.90m long and up to 0.49m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.10m of topsoil (50) and 0.15m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 7

This trench was orientated approximately WNW-ESE, and was 22.80m long and up to 0.44m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.09m of topsoil (50) and 0.21m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 8 (Pl. 3)

Trench 8 was orientated approximately SW-NE, and was 23.10m long and up to 0.47m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.10m of topsoil (50) and 0.18m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 9

This trench was orientated approximately SSE-NNW, and was 22.60m long and up to 0.49m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.08m of topsoil (50) and 0.19m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 10

This trench was orientated approximately WNW-ESE, and was 19.70m long and up to 0.51m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.30m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 11 (Pl. 4)

Trench 11 was orientated approximately WNW-ESE, and was 18.00m long and up to 0.60m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.27m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 12 (Pl. 5)

This trench was excavated in an area which was known to be built up. It was orientated approximately S-N, and was 5.20m long and up to 1.20m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.70m of made ground, 0.11m of buried topsoil (50) and 0.23m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 13

This trench was orientated approximately S-N, and was 10.10m long and up to 1.40m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.20m of topsoil (50) and 0.40m of subsoil (51). A test pit was dug at the northern end of the trench, to a depth of 1.40m, as the natural geology was different to that encountered elsewhere. It consisted of mid yellow brown clay, but there was none of the bluish grey mottling seen in most of the other trenches. The natural had been stained in places, suggesting that the area had been built up at some point in the past. No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 14 (Pl. 6)

The natural geology in this trench was the same as that recorded in Trench 13 nearby. The trench was orientated approximately NW-SE, and was 6.40m long and up to 1.10m deep. The natural clay geology consisted of mid yellow brown clay, and was observed beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.40m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 15

This trench was orientated approximately W-E, and was 29.00m long and up to 0.46m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.08m of topsoil (50) and 0.19m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 16 (Figs 4 and 5; Pl. 8)

Trench 16 was orientated approximately WNW-ESE, and was 22.00m long and up to 0.54m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.24m of subsoil (51). A possible gully terminus (1) was investigated between 7.40m and 8.90m from the WNW end of the trench. This feature was 0.70m wide

and 0.09m deep, with a single fill of mid yellow grey silty clay (52). No archaeological finds were recovered from this feature.

Trench 17 (Pl. 7)
This trench was orientated approximately W-E, and was 25.80m long and up to 0.49m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.13m of topsoil (50) and 0.24m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 18
Trench 18 was orientated approximately SSW-NNE, and was 26.40m long and up to 0.52m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.22m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 19
This trench was orientated approximately NW-SE, and was 25.40m long and up to 0.54m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.23m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Trench 20
Trench 20 was orientated approximately SSW-NNE, and was 22.20m long and up to 0.47m deep. The natural clay geology was observed beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.19m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

Finds

No archaeological finds were recovered during the evaluation.

Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation at Constables Farm successfully investigated those parts of the site which will be most affected by the creation of an equestrian centre. Despite the close proximity of the deserted medieval village of Barnhorn, the only archaeological feature recorded was an undated gully in the south-east part of the site. The site is considered to have very low or no archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 320/321, Solid and Drift Deposits Edition, Keyworth
English Heritage, 2005, *Research Agenda*, London
ESCC, 2015, *Sussex Archaeological Standards*, East Sussex County Council, Lewes
NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London

Rudling, D (ed), 2003, *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000*, Brighton

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	24.50	1.80	0.55	0-0.20m topsoil;(50); 0.20-0.45m subsoil (51); 0.45-0.55m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
2	25.10	1.80	1.10 (S) 0.85 (N)	South end: 0-0.20m topsoil (50); 0.20-0.52m clay made ground; 0.52-0.74m chalk made ground; 0.74-0.84m clay made ground; 0.84-1.04m buried subsoil (51); 1.04m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). North end: 0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.45m clay made ground; 0.45-0.65m buried subsoil (51); 0.65-0.85m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). **[Pl. 1]**
3	25.80	1.80	0.52	0-0.22m topsoil (50); 0.22-0.47m subsoil (51); 0.47-0.52m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
4	25.70	1.80	0.50	0-0.08m topsoil (50); 0.08-0.27m subsoil (51); 0.27-0.50m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
5	23.70	1.80	0.45	0-0.12m topsoil (50); 0.12-0.22m subsoil (51); 0.22-0.45m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). **[Pl. 2]**
6	22.90	1.80	0.49	0-0.10m topsoil (50); 0.10-0.25m subsoil (51); 0.25-0.49m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
7	22.80	1.80	0.44	0-0.09m topsoil (50); 0.09-0.30m subsoil (51); 0.30-0.44m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
8	23.10	1.80	0.47	0-0.10m topsoil (50); 0.10-0.28m subsoil (51); 0.28-0.47m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). **[Pl. 3]**
9	22.60	1.80	0.49	0-0.08m topsoil (50); 0.08-0.27m subsoil (51); 0.27-0.50m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
10	19.70	1.80	0.51	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.45m subsoil (51); 0.45-0.51m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
11	18.00	1.80	0.60	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.42m subsoil (51); 0.42-0.60m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). **[Pl. 4]**
12	5.20	1.80	1.20	0-0.70m clay made ground; 0.70-0.81m buried topsoil (50); 0.81-1.04m subsoil (51); 1.04-1.20m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). **[Pl. 5]**
13	10.10	1.80	1.40	0-0.20m topsoil (50); 0.20-0.60m subsoil (51); 0.60-1.40m+ natural geology (mid yellow brown clay).
14	6.40	1.80	1.10	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.55m subsoil (51); 0.55-1.10m+ natural geology (mid yellow brown clay). **[Pl. 6]**
15	29.00	1.80	0.46	0-0.08m topsoil (50); 0.08-0.27m subsoil (51); 0.27-0.50m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
16	22.00	1.80	0.54	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.39m subsoil (51); 0.39-0.54m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). Gully 1. **[Pl. 8]**
17	25.80	1.80	0.49	0-0.13m topsoil (50); 0.13-0.37m subsoil (51); 0.37-0.49m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay). **[Pl. 7]**
18	26.40	1.80	0.52	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.37m subsoil (51); 0.37-0.52m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
19	25.40	1.80	0.54	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.38m subsoil (51); 0.38-0.54m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).
20	22.20	1.80	0.47	0-0.15m topsoil (50); 0.15-0.34m subsoil (51); 0.34-0.47m+ natural geology (light yellow brown clay).

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence / comments*
16	1	52	Gully	Undated	-

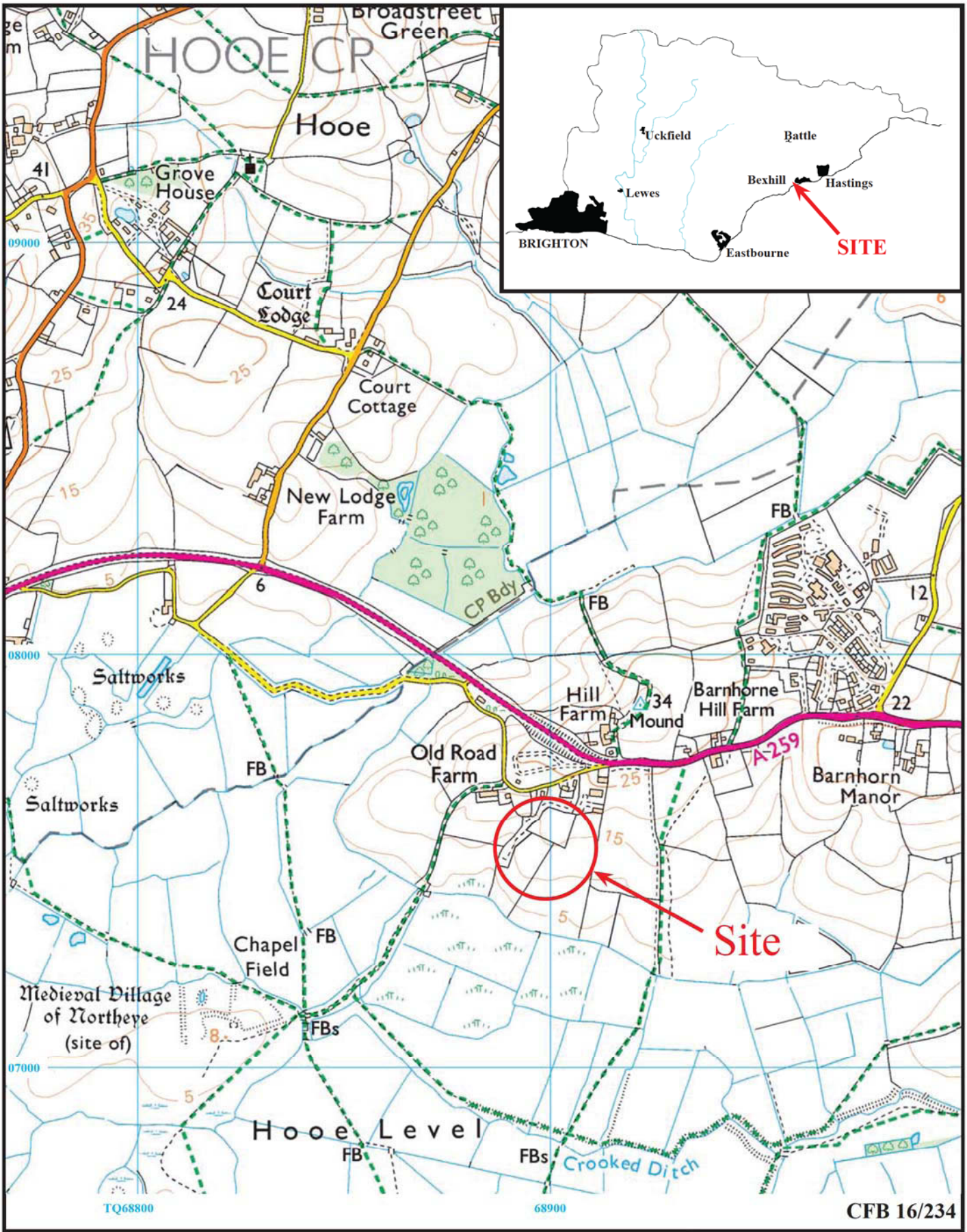

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Figure 1. Location of site within Bexhill-on-Sea and East Sussex.

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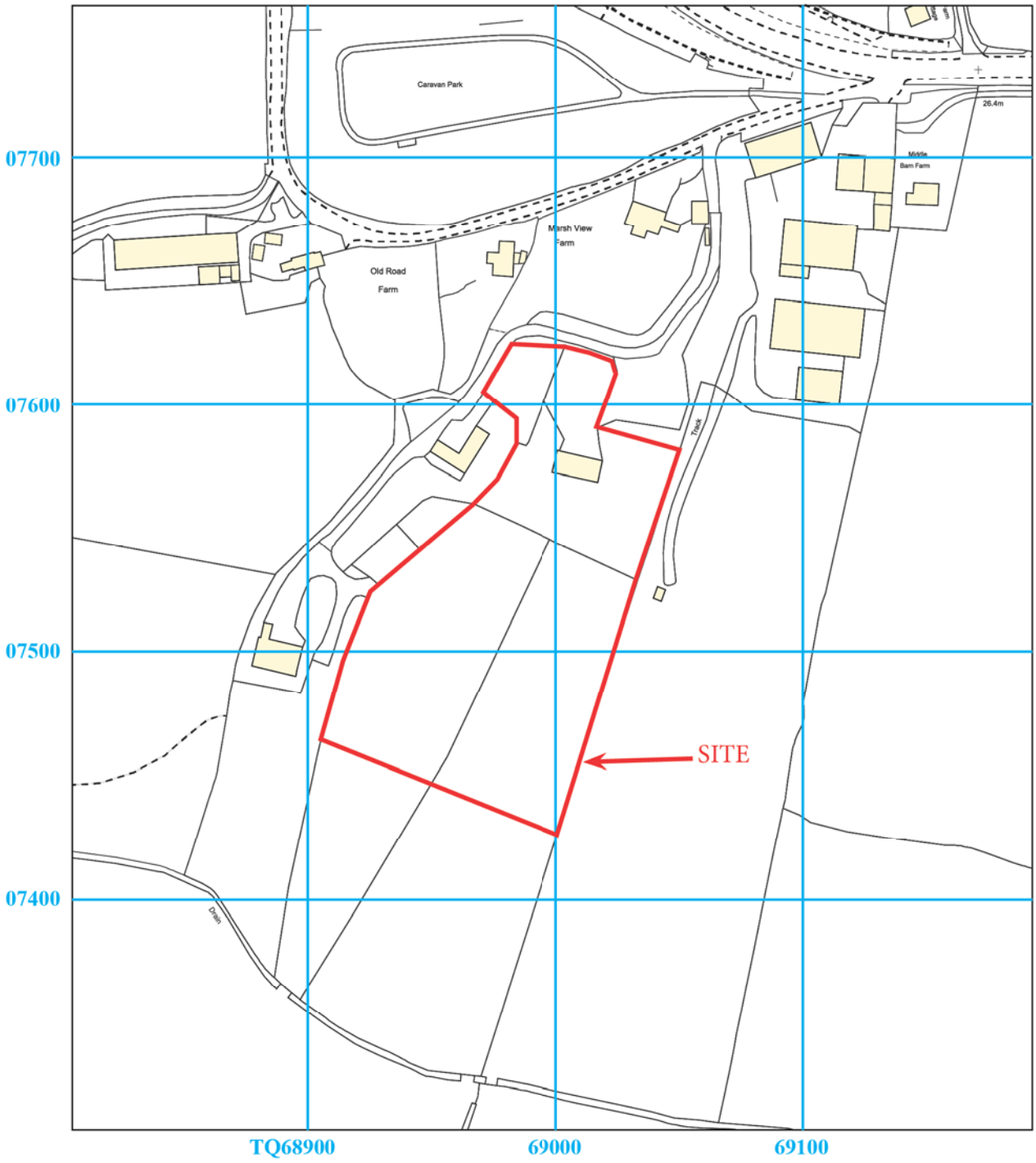

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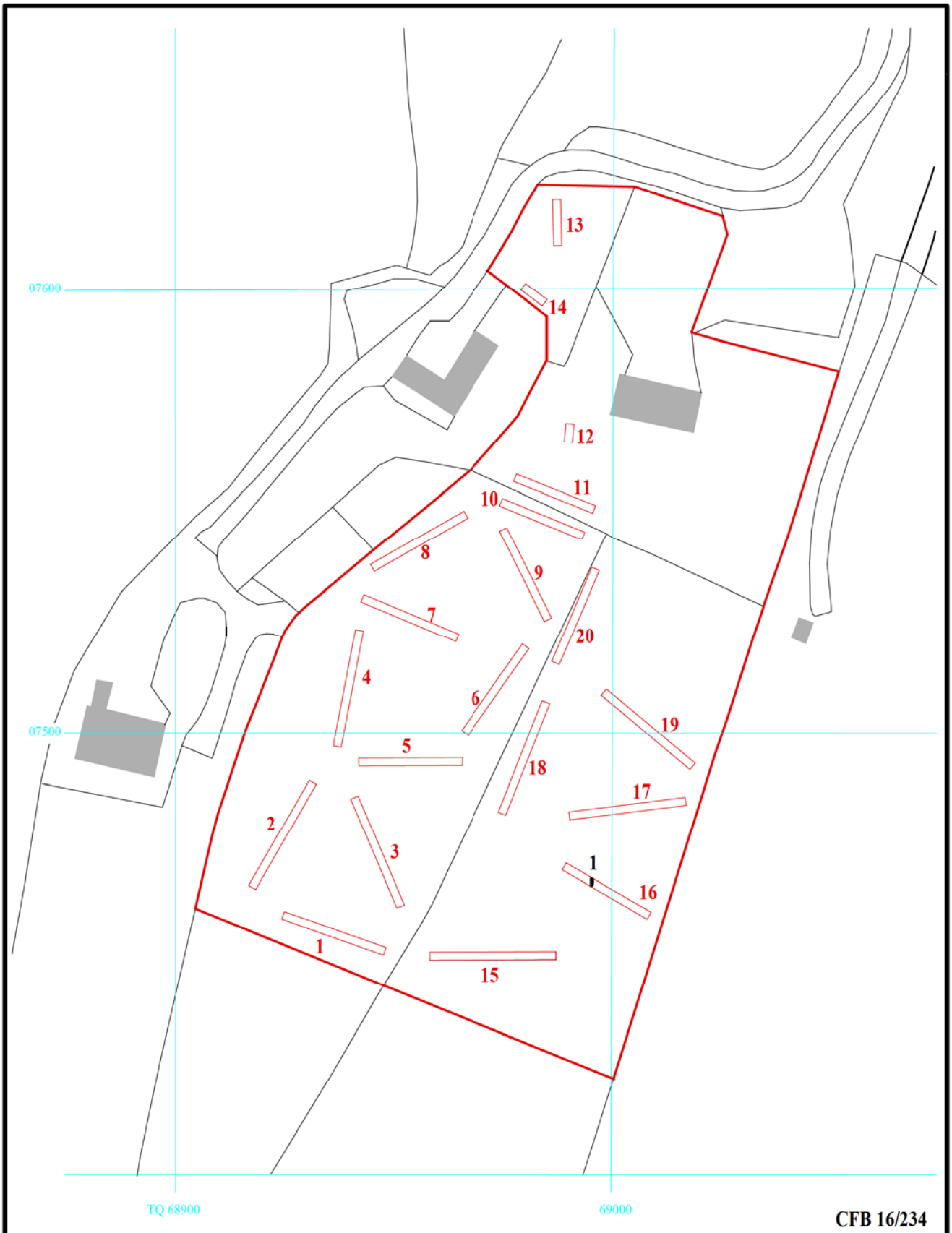
Figure 2. Detailed location of site

TVAS SOUTH



N

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 50m

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Trench 16

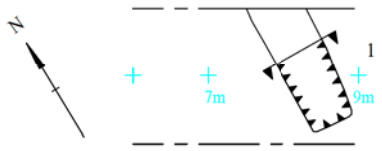

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Figure 4. Plan of trench 16.

0 5m

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Trench 16

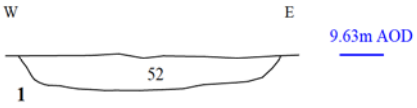

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Figure 5. Section

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 2, looking SSW.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.50m.

Plate 2. Trench 5, looking NE.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.50m.

Plate 3. Trench 8, looking NE.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.50m.

Plate 4. Trench 11, looking WNW.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.50m.

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Plates 1 - 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 12, looking N.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.50m.

Plate 6. Trench 14, looking SE.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.50m.

Plate 7. Trench 17, looking E.
Scales: 2m and 1m.

Plate 8. Trench 16, gully 1, looking N.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.10m.

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Plates 5 - 8.

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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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