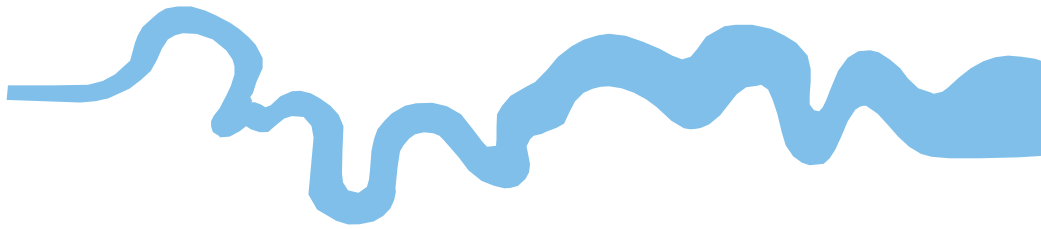


T V A S



SOUTH

**Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway,
Alfriston, East Sussex**

Archaeological Recording Action

by Sean Wallis and Teresa Vieira

Site Code: REA17/90

(TQ 5045 0199)

Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway, Alfriston, East Sussex

An Archaeological Recording Action

For Rathfinny Wine Estate

by Sean Wallis and Teresa Vieira
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code REA 17/90

May 2017

Summary

Site name: Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway, Alfriston, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 5045 0199

Planning reference: SDNP/15/05656/FUL

Site activity: Archaeological Recording Action

Date and duration of project: 8th - 10th May 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Teresa Vieira

Site code: REA 17/90

Summary of results: The recording action at the Rathfinny Estate successfully investigated those parts of the site which were to be most affected by the construction of two new buildings. A single archaeological feature was recorded which appears to be a ditch of prehistoric date, though the dating evidence is provided only by durable struck flint.

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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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 26.05.17

Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway, Alfriston, East Sussex An Archaeological Recording Action

by Sean Wallis and Teresa Vieira

Report 17/90

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at the Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway, Alfriston, East Sussex (TQ 5045 0199) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jamie Everett, on behalf of the Rathfinny Wine Estate.

Planning permission (SDNP/15/05656/FUL) had been gained from the South Downs National Park Authority for the construction of two new buildings, as part of the winery. The permission was subject to two standard planning conditions (8 and 9) relating to archaeology and historic environment. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on site which may be damaged or destroyed by the planned building work, it was proposed to carry out an archaeological recording action as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF, 2012) and the National Park Authority's policies on archaeology and the historic environment. The project was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer (Mr Greg Chuter), who advises the Authority on archaeological matters for sites in East Sussex. Where appropriate and relevant, the recommendations in *Sussex Archaeological Standards* (ESCC 2015) were to be followed.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Teresa Vieira and Jim Webster between the 8th and the 10th April 2017, and the site code is REA 17/90. The preferred depository for the site archive is Lewes Museum, but unfortunately the museum is not accepting new material at the present time. As a result, the archive will be held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services until a suitable depository is found.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the South Downs, approximately 2km south-west of the historic core of Alfriston, East Sussex. It is accessed via a farm track which runs westwards from the Whiteway into the Rathfinny Estate, which is largely devoted to the growing of vines. The two areas where the archaeological work took place are situated to the west of the existing vinery buildings (Fig. 2), and separated by the farm track. Prior to the project commencing, both the northern and southern areas had largely consisted of arable farmland, although part of the southern area was occupied by an agricultural building and various other features relating to the farm complex.

Due to the fact that the ground generally slopes down to the south, and to a lesser extent the east, the height above Ordnance Datum varied from approximately 72m in the north-west corner of the Northern Area, to 60m in the south-east corner of the Southern Area. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of the Seaford Chalk Formation, and this was confirmed during the archaeological recording action.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site had been considered in a recent desk-based assessment (James 2015). In summary, the site lies in an archaeologically rich part of the South Downs, with extensive areas of ancient (Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman) fields in the immediately adjacent areas, and numerous round barrows of Bronze Age date recorded nearby. Other entries from the East Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER) note the presence of probable settlement sites of Bronze Age date in the vicinity, along with stray finds of Mesolithic and Neolithic flintwork.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the recording action were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the proposed groundworks. This was to involve the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, particularly the proposed ground reduction within the footprints of the new buildings. Where archaeological deposits were encountered which did not warrant preservation *in situ*, the features were to be excavated by hand and fully recorded, to ensure their 'preservation by record'.

Results

It became apparent early on in the project that, due to the slope of the hill, the Northern Area was to be significantly reduced, whilst the Southern Area would generally be built up. The exception was a small part of the Southern Area, adjacent to the existing building, which was to be stripped of topsoil prior to being built up. The stripping was carried out using a 360° type mechanical excavator, fitted with a wide toothless bucket, under constant archaeological supervision (Fig. 2).

The Northern Area was roughly rectangular in plan, and measured approximately 3275 sq m in size (Pls. 2, 3 and 4). The natural chalk geology was generally encountered beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.10m of light

orange brown subsoil (51). No archaeological features were recorded in this area, although plough scaring was observed across the area, which was clearly visible from the air (Pl. 1).

The stratigraphy recorded in the Southern Area was very similar to that recorded to the north. The Southern Area measured approximately 360 sq m in size, and a ditch was recorded close to the northern edge of the area (Pls. 5, 6, 7 and 8). Two slots (1 and 2) were excavated through the feature by hand, which showed that the ditch was up to 1.50m wide and 0.42m deep. It was generally filled with a deposit of mid brown clayey silt, with frequent flint and chalk inclusions (52 and 54), although a primary fill of chalk, within a light brown clayey silt matrix, was recorded in slot 2. The only finds recovered from the ditch consisted of struck flint.

Struck flint by Steve Ford

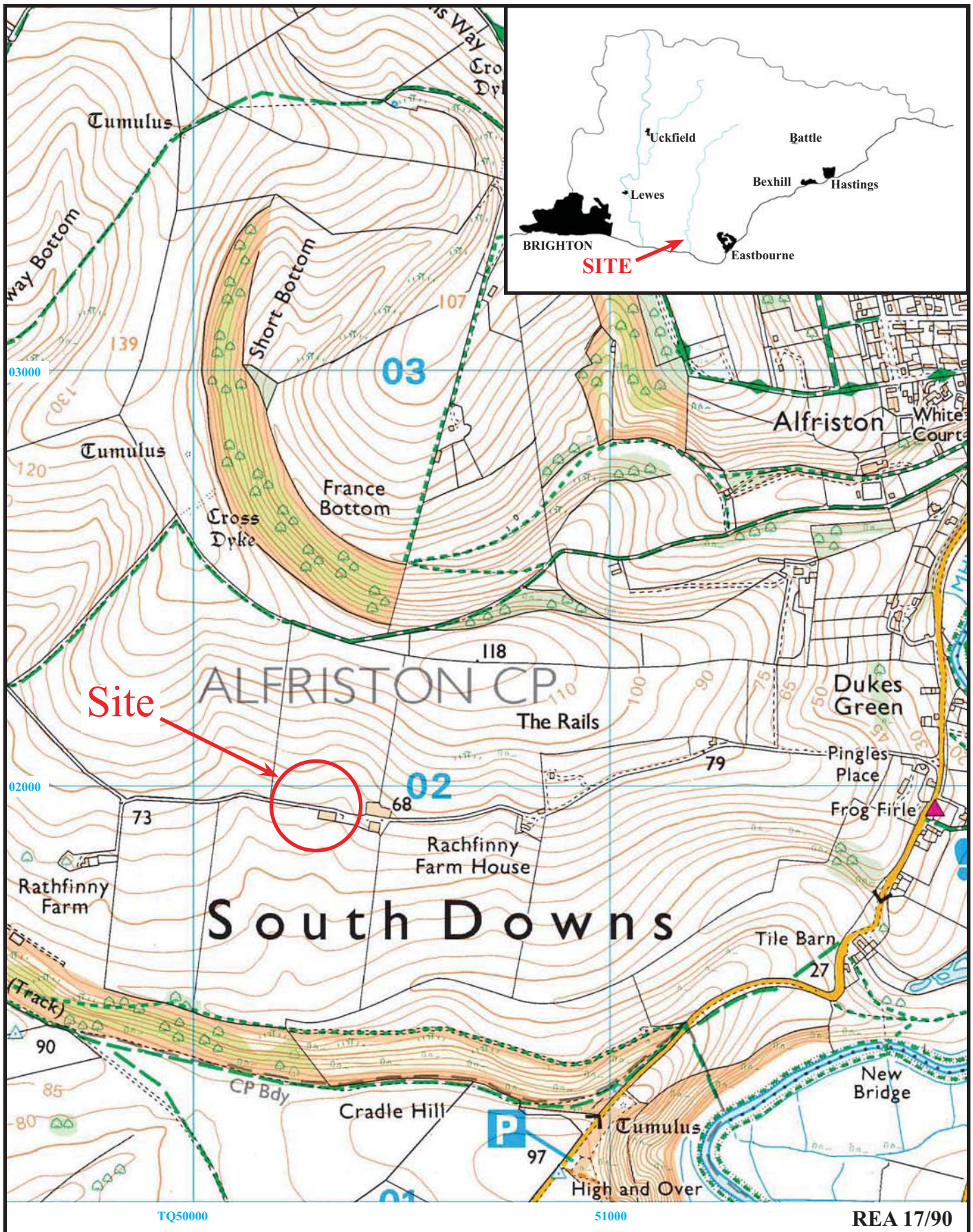
A small collection of 18 struck flints were recovered from the two slots excavated across the ditch on the site. Ten flakes came from slot 1 (52) and 7 flakes and a spall (piece less than 20x20mm) from slot 2(54). All of the pieces were patinated white or bluish/white. None of the pieces are closely datable and only a broad later neolithic- Bronze Age date can be suggested.

Conclusion

The recording action at the Rathfinny Estate successfully investigated those parts of the site which were to be most affected by the construction of two new buildings. Despite the fact that the stripped areas had not been significantly disturbed in the past, the only archaeological feature recorded was a ditch. Durable struck flint is frequently encountered as residual finds in deposits of later date and can sometimes be present in quantity if a later feature cuts across a lithic cluster. Nevertheless, in the absence of other dating evidence to the contrary the ditch here is considered to be of prehistoric date.

References

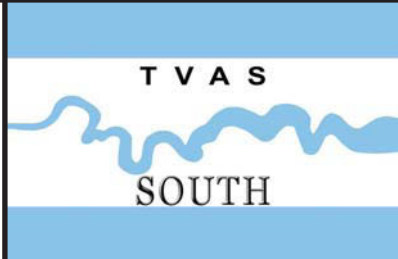
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- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO).

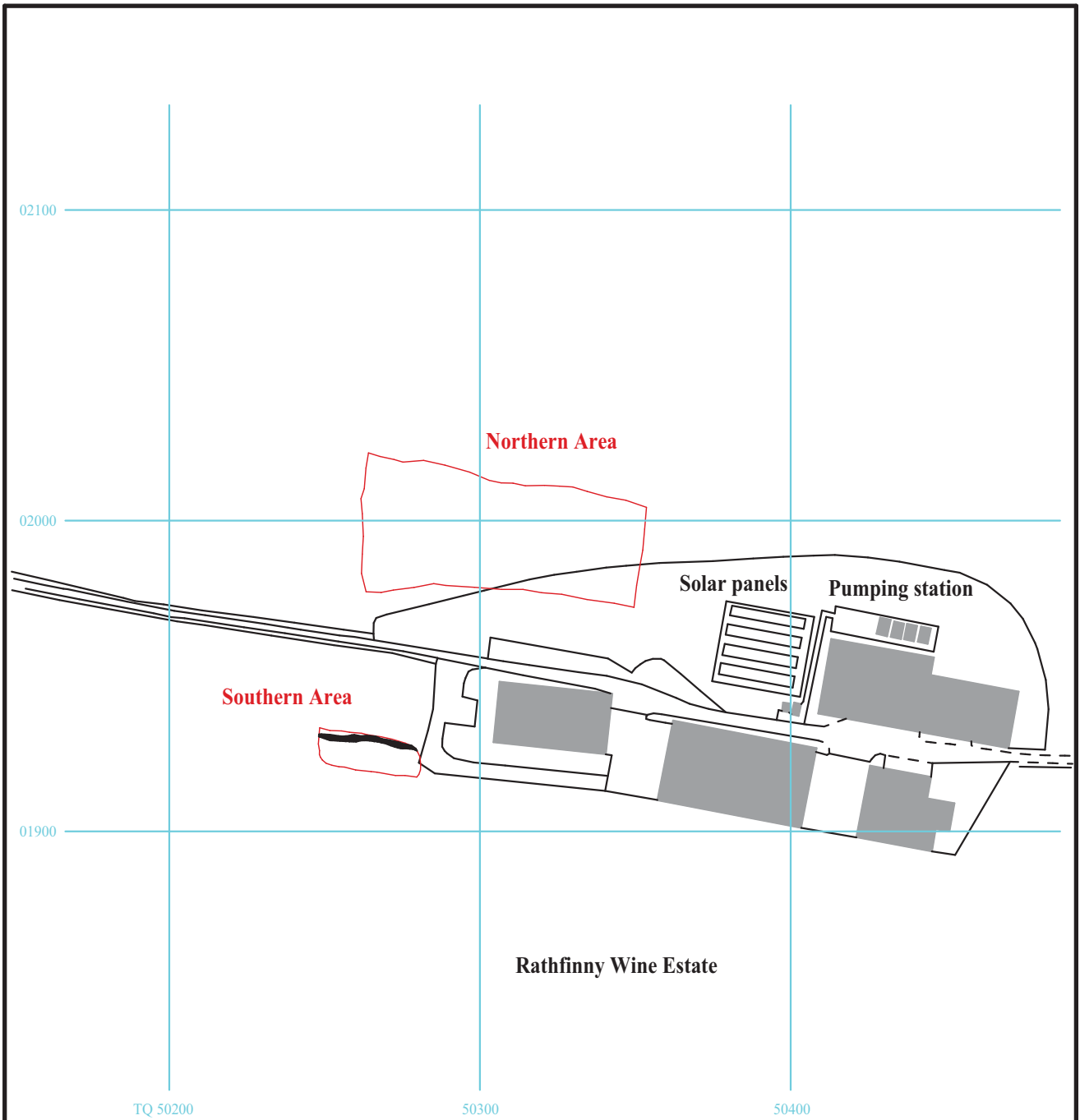


**Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway,
Alfriston, East Sussex, 2017
Archaeological Recording Action**

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

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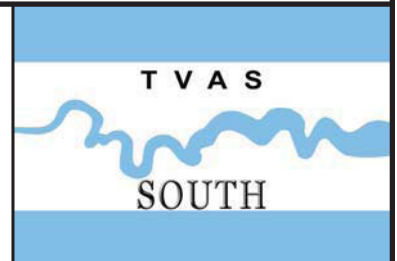


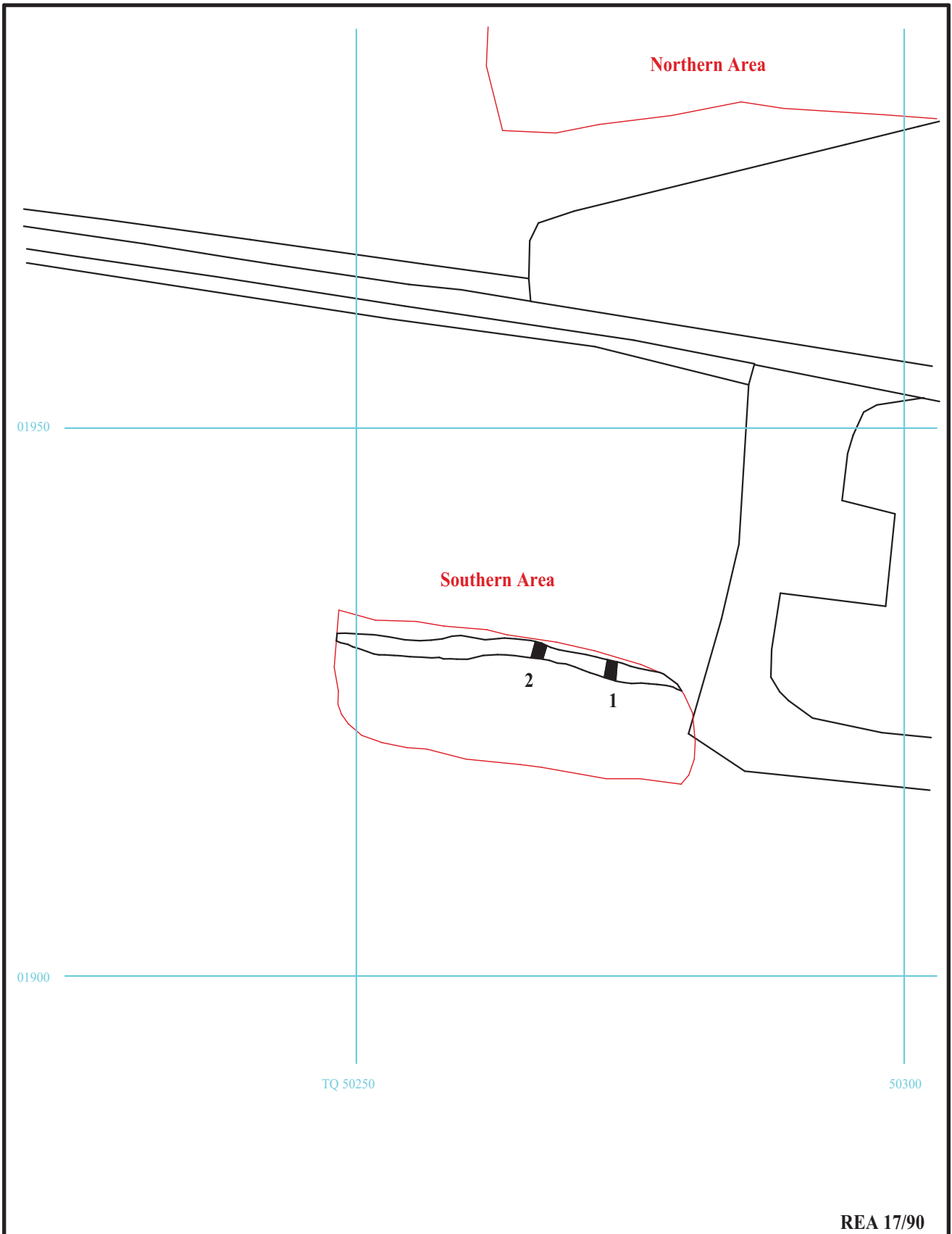
REA 17/90



**Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway,
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Figure 2. Detailed site plan showing areas stripped during the project.



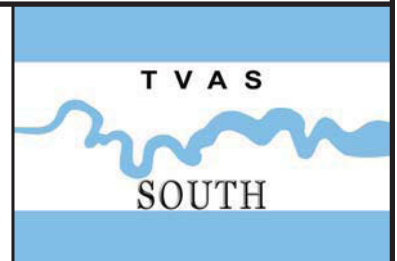


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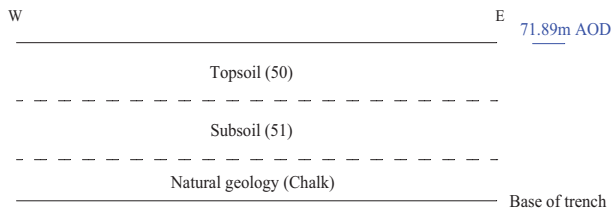


**Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway,
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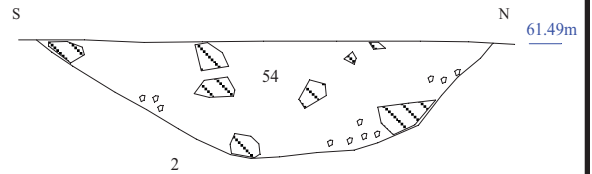
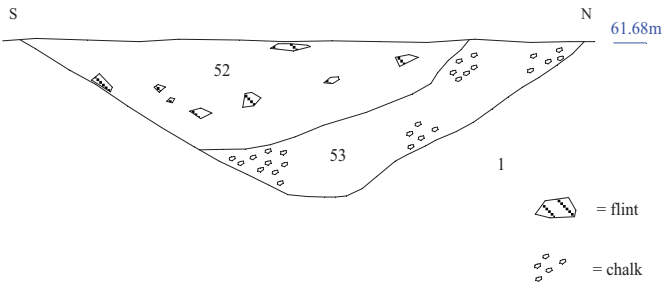
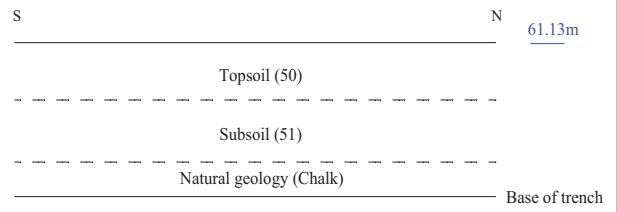
Figure 3. Close-up of Southern Area showing ditch.



Northern Area (general stratigraphy)



Southern Area (general stratigraphy)



REA 17/90

**Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway,
Alfriston, East Sussex 2017
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 4. Sections.

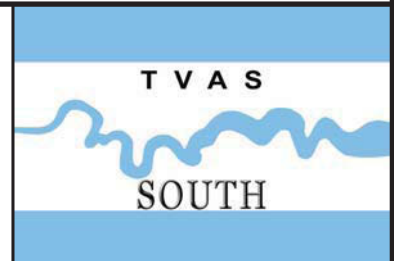




Plate 1. Aerial view of site taken during groundworks.



Plate 2. General view of Northern Area, looking North-west.



Plate 3. General view of Northern Area, looking South-west.



Plate 4. General view of Northern Area, looking South-east.

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**Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway,
Alfriston, East Sussex, 2017
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Plates 1 - 4.**

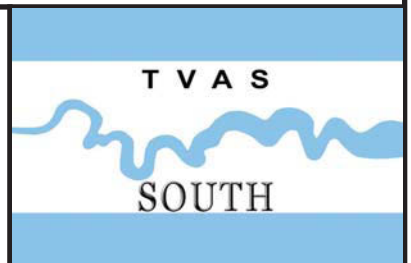




Plate 5. General view of Southern Area, looking West.
Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. General view of Southern Area, looking East.
Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 7. Slot 1 through ditch, looking West.
Scale: 1m.



Plate 8. Slot 2 through ditch, looking West.
Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

REA 17/90

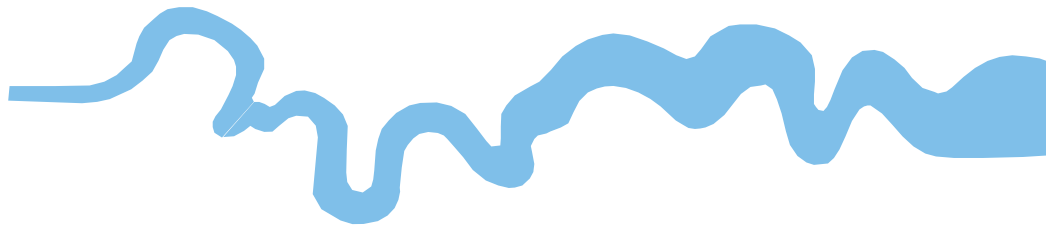
**Land at Rathfinny Estate, Whiteway,
Alfriston, East Sussex, 2017
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Plates 5 - 8.**



TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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