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**SOUTH**

**Chapel Royal, North Street,  
Brighton, East Sussex**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Sean Wallis**

**Site Code: CRB13/08**

**(TQ 3110 0422)**

**Chapel Royal, North Street,  
Brighton, East Sussex**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Ms Jo Thompson**

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CRB 13/08

**June 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** Chapel Royal, North Street, Brighton, East Sussex

**Grid reference:** TQ 3110 0422

**Planning reference:** BH2015/00226

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 22nd July - 11th September 2015

**Project manager:** Sean Wallis

**Site supervisor:** Teresa Vieira

**Site code:** CRB 13/08

**Summary of results:** The watching brief at the Chapel Royal successfully investigated those parts of the site which were to be most affected by the construction work necessary to convert the vaults into a new restaurant. An area immediately to the east of the building for a new entrance had clearly been heavily disturbed in the past, with modern made ground deposits being recorded. Although ground reduction of the interior of the vaults was expected to reveal little of archaeological interest two wells were uncovered. It is likely that both date from the 19th century, and were constructed when the vaults were largely used for storage.

**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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# Chapel Royal, North Street, Brighton, East Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Sean Wallis

Report 13/08b

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the Chapel Royal, North Street, Brighton, East Sussex (TQ 3110 0422) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the property's owner, Ms Jo Thompson.

Planning permission (BH2015/00226) had been gained from Brighton and Hove City Council for a number of alterations to the vaults underneath the Chapel Royal, associated with its change of use to a restaurant. These alterations were to include lowering the internal floor level, and the creation of a new entrance. The permission was subject to a standard planning condition (12) relating to archaeology and the historic environment. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on site which may be damaged or destroyed by the building work, the condition required a watching brief. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the City Council's policies. 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, who advises the City Council on archaeological matters.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Naomi Humphries, Teresa Vieira and Sean Wallis between 22nd July and 11th September 2015, and the site code is CRB 13/08. The preferred depository for the site archive is Brighton Museum, but unfortunately the museum is not accepting new material at the present time.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the historic core of Brighton, on the corner of North Street and Prince's Place (Fig. 2). The Chapel Royal is a Grade II\* Listed Building, originally constructed between 1793 and 1795, and extensively rebuilt in the late 19th century. Although North Street rises from east to west, the area around the Chapel Royal is relatively flat, and lies at a height of approximately 12m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology consists of Head Deposits (BGS 2006), and this was confirmed during the watching brief, with a mid yellow brown silty sand (with varying amounts of flint inclusions) being recorded during ground reduction throughout the building.

## **Archaeological background**

The Chapel Royal was the subject of a building recording (Wallis 2013), which also considered the implications of the development on any archaeological remains which might be present. It is a Grade II\* Listed Building, originally constructed between 1793 and 1795, and extensively rebuilt in the late 19th century. Whilst the ground floor of the building still functions as a place of worship, the vaults beneath have been in separate ownership for many years and, until recently, were used for storage. The creation of the vaults would almost certainly have destroyed any archaeological deposits pre-dating the very late 18th century, but the situation in the area of the new entrance is not so clear. Unlike other churches, the Chapel Royal was never used for burials, which were in fact specifically prohibited by an Act of Parliament. It is likely that any earlier floor surfaces within the vaults would have been removed when the current concrete floor was laid down.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the watching brief were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, including the ground reduction within the vaults and immediately outside. Where archaeological deposits were present, the features were to be excavated by hand and fully recorded, to ensure their ‘preservation by record’. Where appropriate and relevant, the recommendations in *Sussex Archaeological Standards* (ESCC 2015) were to be followed.

## **Results**

Prior to the commencement of the building work, the scope of the watching brief was discussed with the East Sussex County Council Archaeologist. It was clear that the ground reduction within the vaults would take several weeks, and it was therefore suggested that the watching brief primarily concentrate on the area immediately outside the existing entrance, as it was considered that this had not obviously been significantly truncated in the past. The reasoning behind this decision was that any archaeological remains within the footprint of the building would have been destroyed when the vaults were constructed in the 1790s, and that watching the entire ground reduction exercise would have serious cost implications for the client. However, it was decided that a small number of short monitoring visits during the internal ground reduction would be appropriate.

In the event, the groundworkers contacted us twice to report the discovery of wells within the vaults. These were unexpected, and it was proposed to leave them *in situ*, and perhaps incorporate them within the new restaurant. Both wells were therefore recorded as well as possible given the circumstances (Fig. 3).

### *Ground reduction*

The stratigraphy recorded during the ground reduction inside the building was fairly uniform, with a thin (0.03m) layer of concrete being removed to reveal the truncated natural geology (Pls 1–3). This generally consisted of mid yellow brown silty sand, with varying amounts of flint inclusions, and confirmed the British Geological Survey's depiction of Head Deposits in this area. The ground reduction varied from about 0.30m to 0.70m within the vaults. In places, a thin bedding layer (50) was recorded between the concrete and the underlying natural. Very few finds were recovered from beneath the concrete floor, although a small assemblage of broken wine bottles, dating from the 19th century, were found close to the south-western corner of the building, along with two fragments of peg tile. There is documentary evidence for the vaults being used for storing wine (Wallis 2013).

### *New entrance*

As part of the conversion of the building it was necessary to construct a new sunken entrance immediately to the east of the building, 1.50m lower than the existing pavement level. The ground reduction was monitored and it appeared that the entire area to be reduced for the new entrance had been heavily disturbed in the past, probably for the insertion of deep drains. As a result, the ground reduction in this area merely exposed various layers of made ground (Pl. 4).

### *Wells*

Well 51 was uncovered in the western part of the building, when the top of its upper brick dome was exposed during ground reduction (Pls 5–7). A disconnected lead pipe extended down into the well from a hole in the side of the dome. The brick dome was approximately 0.60m high, and constructed from red bricks with an off white mortar. A sample of the bricks and mortar was taken, and these appear to date from the mid 19th century. Below the brick dome the well was lined with specially carved chalk blocks, with bands of dark flint in between many of the courses. Due to health and safety considerations it was not possible to examine the lower parts of the well in much detail. However, it was established that the internal diameter of the chalk lining was about 1m, and the well was at least 6.50m deep, as measured from the original floor level of the vaults. The well was still active, and the top of the water was recorded 5.60m down. There appeared to be an opening in the chalk lining close to

the level of the water, but this could not be examined in any more detail. The construction cut for this well (1) was not uncovered during the building work.

Well 52 was discovered close to the south-east corner of the building, and initially it appeared similar to well 51, having a brick built dome (Pls 8–10). The top of dome was encountered 0.08m below the existing ground surface, and was 0.42m high. It was constructed from red bricks with an off-white mortar, similar to the dome of well 51. The dome was uncovered intact and, as a result, a brick sample was not taken. The diameter of the top of the dome was 0.45m. Below the dome the well was lined with red bricks with a dark grey mortar. Again due to health and safety considerations the feature could not be examined in detail at depth, but was seen to have an internal diameter of about 0.85m. The well was still active, and the top of the water was recorded 5.60m below the existing ground level. The bottom of the well appeared to be 7.20m down. The construction cut for this well (2) was not uncovered during the building work.

## **Finds**

### *Glass* by Luke Barber

Bedding layer 50 produced a small assemblage of 6 fresh uncorroded dark green shards from cylindrical wine bottles (weighing a total of 688g). At least three vessels are represented: two with neat inverted V-profile kicked bases (measuring 66 and 80mm diameter) and one with wide kick and pronounced 'imitation pontil dome' (uncertain diameter). Only two rims are present, quite possibly from the same vessels as the bases. One has a squared collar set below the lip (flattened string rim), the other a flat bead with a small tapering collar below. The latter has a distinctly convex-profiled neck. All the wine bottles can only be generally dated to the 19th century. The final piece of glass from layer 50 consists of an uncorroded fragment from a colourless hexagonal-profiled bottle (8g).

The glass assemblage is small, fragmented and of late post-medieval types. It is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis beyond that undertaken for this report and has been discarded.

### *Ceramic Building Material* by Luke Barber

A relatively small assemblage of brick and tile was recovered during the archaeological work.

Two 12mm-thick pieces of peg tile were recovered from context 50 (weighing 78g). Both are tempered with sparse fine/medium quartz, quite poorly mixed, but quite well formed and fired. A general 18th to 19th century date is suggested.

The brick and mortar sample from well 51 consists of part (478g) of a poorly mixed brick tempered with moderate fine quartz (with many voids) with moderate calcareous and iron oxide inclusions to 2mm. The brick is quite well formed, medium fired and has a shallow but well formed splayed 'U'-profiled frog and a thickness of 65mm. A mid to later 19th century date is likely. The 134g mortar sample from the same context would be in keeping with the date of the brick – it consists of an off-white mortar with abundant fine quartz, sparse black iron oxide pellets and very occasional chalk and flint grits to 2mm.

The ceramic building material assemblage is small and late in date. It is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis beyond that undertaken for this report. This material has been discarded.

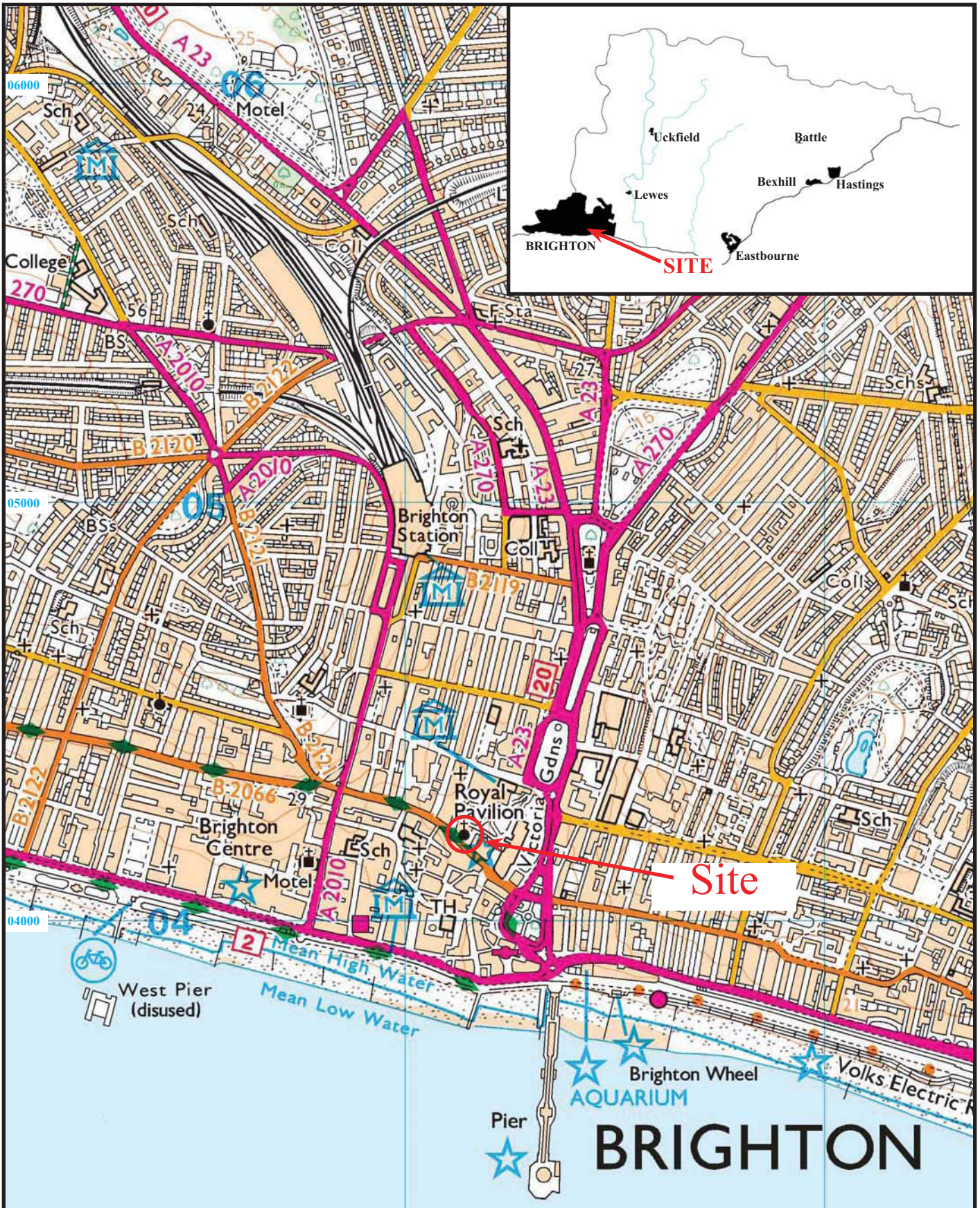
## **Conclusion**

The watching brief investigated those parts of the site which were most affected by the construction work necessary to convert the vaults into a new restaurant. The area immediately to the east of the building, where the new entrance was to be created, had clearly been heavily disturbed in the past, with modern made ground deposits being recorded. Although the interior of the vaults was thought to have little archaeological potential, two wells were uncovered during the ground reduction. It is likely that both date from the 19th century, and were constructed when the vaults were largely used for storage.

## **References**

- BGS, 2006, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 318//333, Bedrock and Superficial Deposits Edition, Keyworth
- ESCC, 2016, *Sussex Archaeological Standards*, East Sussex County Council, Lewes
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept of Communities and Local Government, London
- Wallis, S, 2013, 'Chapel Royal, North Street, Brighton, East Sussex - historic building recording', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **13/08**, Brighton





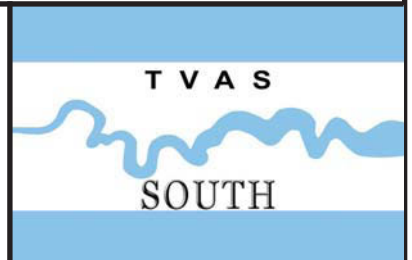
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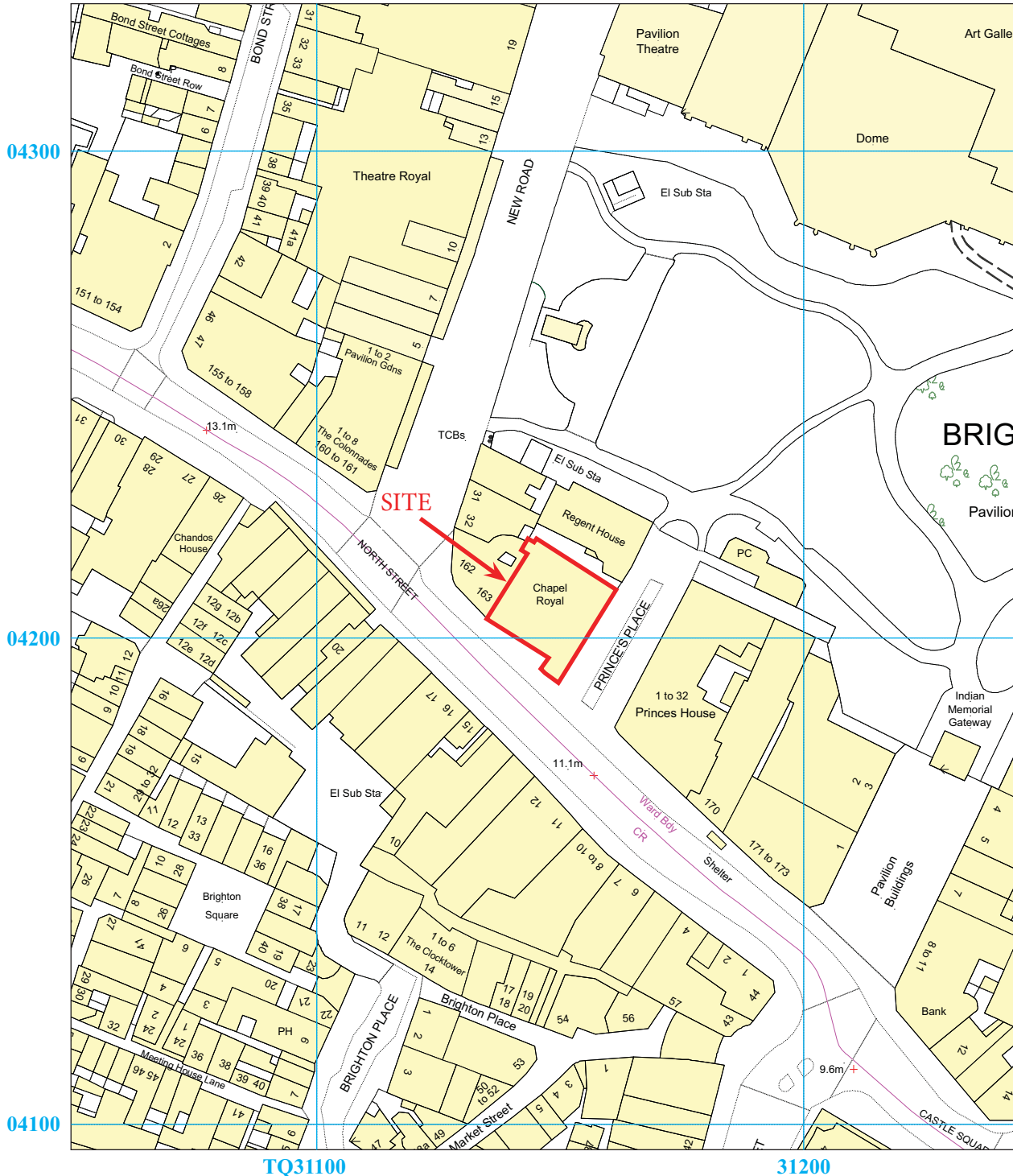
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Figure 1. Location of site within Brighton and East Sussex.

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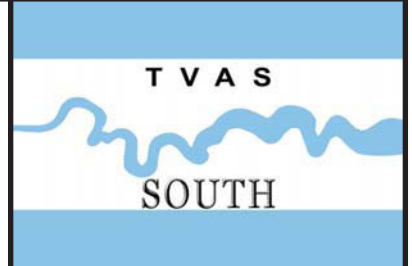


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site**

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Figure 3. Site plan showing features recorded (in red) and proposed development (in grey)





Plate 1. General view of interior, looking North-east.



Plate 2. General view of south-west corner of interior, looking North-west.



Plate 3. General view of western wall, looking North.



Plate 4. North-west facing section of new entrance area, showing made ground deposits.

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Plates 1 - 4.**





Plate 5. General view of well 51, looking South.



Plate 6. Well 51, showing brick dome and chalk block lining.



Plate 7. Well 51, looking down shaft.

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Plate 8. General view of well 52 after being uncovered looking North-east. Scale : 1m.



Plate 9. Well 52, showing brick dome and brick lining.



Plate 10. Well 52, looking down shaft.

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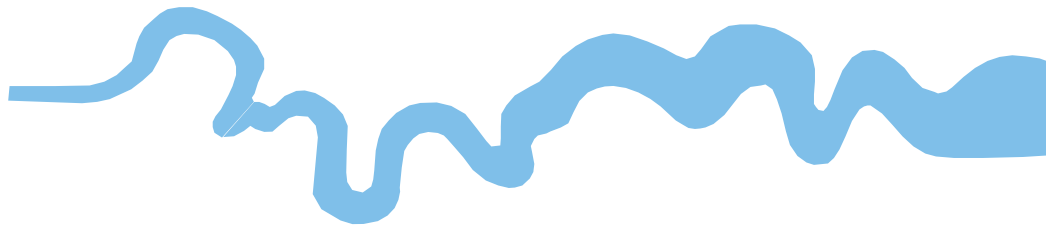
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Plates 8 - 10.



## 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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