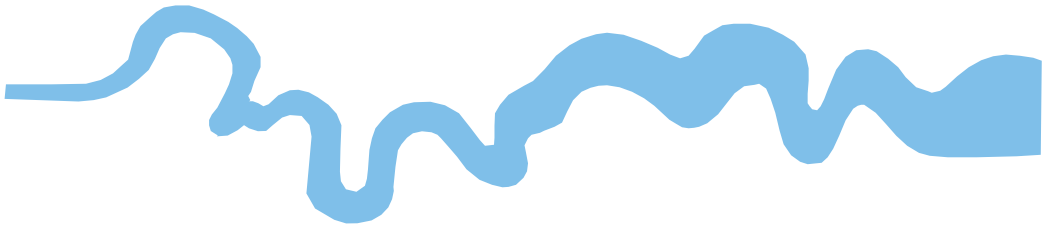
T V A S



SOUTH

Comet Corner (A259) road improvments, Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Sean Wallis

Site Code: CCM17/02

(SU 9748 0123)

Comet Corner (A259) road improvements, Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex

An Archaeological Recording Action

For Hobart Paving Company Ltd

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CCM 17/02

July 2017

Summary

Site name: Comet Corner (A259) road improvements, Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex

Grid reference: SU 9748 0123

Site activity: Recording Action

Date and duration of project: 8th March - 12th May 2017

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Teresa Vieira

Site code: CCM17/02

Summary of results: The watching brief at Comet Corner successfully investigated those parts of the site which were to be affected by highway improvements. Although some archaeological finds were recovered from the subsoil in one of the mitigation areas (A), no features were identified. The other mitigation area (B) had been heavily disturbed in the past by previous roadworks and the excavation of service trenches.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 30.06.17 Steve Preston✓ 30.06.17

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 77a Hollingdean Terrace, Brighton, BN1 7HB
Tel. (01273) 554198; Fax (01273) 564043; email **south@tvas.co.uk;** *website : www.tvas.co.uk*

Comet Corner (A259) road improvements, Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex
An Archaeological Recording Action

by Sean Wallis

Report 17/02

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out during road improvement works at Comet Corner (A259), Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex (SU 9748 0123) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Trevor Challen of Hobart Paving Company Ltd, Wellingham House, Holmbush Potteries, Crawley Road, Faygate, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 4SE. West Sussex County Council, as the county Highways Authority, had decided to carry out highway improvements on the junction between Worms Lane (A259) and Yapton Road (B2132), known locally as 'Comet Corner'.

As a result of the possibility of damage or destruction of archaeological deposits during the road improvement works, it was proposed to carry out a recording action on the site in accordance with West Sussex County Council's policies on archaeology. The West Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer (Mr John Mills) had identified two specific areas (A and B) which should be targeted by the recording action. The works were to include the widening of the eastern splay of the B2132 on the south side of the A259 (Mitigation Area B), and the excavation of a new section of roadside drainage ditch on the west side of the B2132, to the south of the A259 (Mitigation Area A) (Fig. 2).

The project was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the West Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer. 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 8th March and 12th May 2017, and the site code is CCM 17/02. The site archive and finds are presently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services and will be deposited in Littlehampton Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the junction of Worms Lane (A259) and Yapton Road (B2132), approximately 1km north of the historic core of Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex (Figs 1 and 2). The site is relatively flat, and lies at a height of approximately 4m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying

geology consists of Aeolian deposits ('Brickearth') (BGS 1996), and this was confirmed during the watching brief, where a mid orange brown silty clay was recorded in both mitigation areas.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site largely stems from the fact that a probable Roman settlement was identified in the area during road construction in the early 1960s. In addition to flint walls and a well, possibly dating from the Roman period, several ditches have been identified close to the site along with a pit containing a concentration of burnt flint. It is likely that these features date from the late prehistoric or Roman period.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the recording action were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks in the two mitigation areas, including topsoil stripping, landscaping and ground reduction.

The specific research aims of this project are:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site; and

to determine if relevant archaeological deposits associated with the previously identified Roman settlement have survived.

Results

The groundworks in both areas (Fig. 2) were carried out using a 360° type mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision.

Area A

The works in Mitigation Area A comprised the excavation of a roadside drainage ditch, measuring just over 51m in length. The excavated area was 3.40m wide and up to 0.70m deep (Pls 1 and 2), and the stratigraphy recorded above the natural Brickearth geology generally consisted of 0.30m of topsoil (50) and 0.30m of subsoil (51) (Fig. 3). Two small sondages were excavated by hand across the machine-dug trench to target possible archaeological features (Pls 3 and 4). However, no such features were recorded, and it appears that the small amount of archaeological material (pottery and flint) recovered from the sondages had merely worked its way down into the subsoil layer (51), which had clearly been disturbed by rooting.

Area B

In Mitigation Area B, ground reduction in respect of the road widening at the junction was monitored (Pls 5–7). Prior to the commencement of the project it was suspected that this area had been disturbed during previous

roadworks, and this was confirmed during the recording action. The stripped area measured approximately 156m in length, and was up to 4.85m wide. The stratigraphy above the natural Brickearth geology generally consisted of 0.10m of topsoil (50) and 0.40m of modern made ground (Fig. 3). The area had clearly been heavily truncated in the past and several service trenches were observed.

Finds

A small amount of archaeological material was recovered during the recording action from Mitigation Area A. Subsequent investigation by hand established that these finds came from patches of the subsoil layer (51) which had been disturbed by rooting.

Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

The five sherds recovered from this site comprise an abraded fragment from an Early or Middle Iron Age vessel with calcined-flint filler, four in early Roman Arun Valley greyware (*c*. AD50–250), and a fragment from a very-fine-sanded closed form fired red with black surfaces (*c*. 50BC–AD200). They were retrieved from the subsoil (51), and suggest cultivation of the area during the period *c*. 300BC–AD250, or the proximity of a similarly dated occupation site.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

Two struck flints were recovered from the subsoil (51). One was a flake and the other a spall (a piece less than 20mm x 20mm). Both are of prehistoric origin but are not otherwise closely datable.

Burnt Flint by Sean Wallis

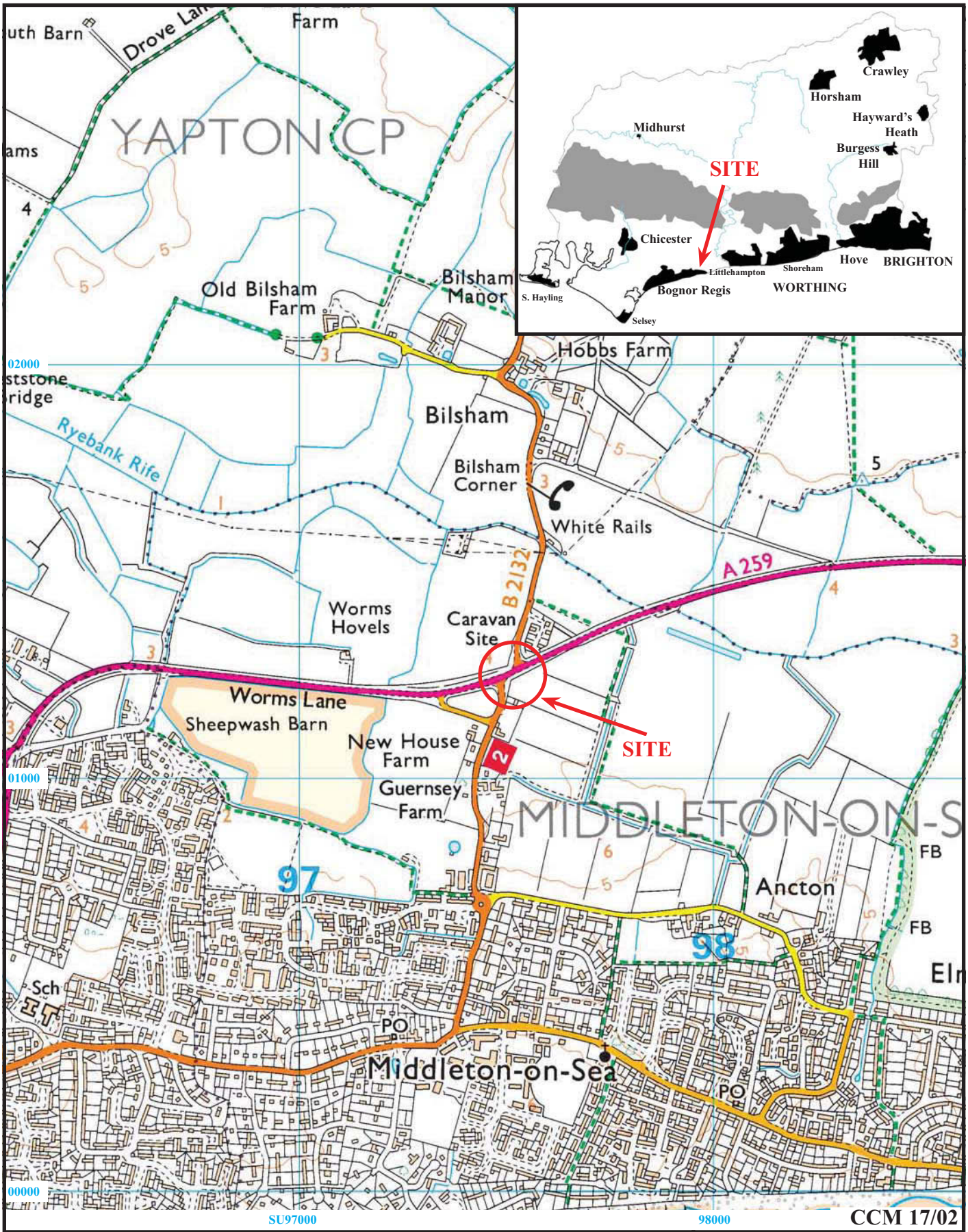
Six small fragments of burnt flint, weighing 235g, were recovered from the subsoil (51). None of the pieces had been worked.

Conclusion

The watching brief at Comet Corner successfully investigated those parts of the site which were to be affected by highway improvements. Although some archaeological finds were recovered from the subsoil in one of the mitigation areas (A), no features were identified. The other mitigation area (B) had been heavily disturbed in the past by previous roadworks and the excavation of service trenches.

References

BGS, 1996, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet **317/332**, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
ESCC, 2015, *Sussex Archaeological Standards*, East Sussex County Council, Lewes

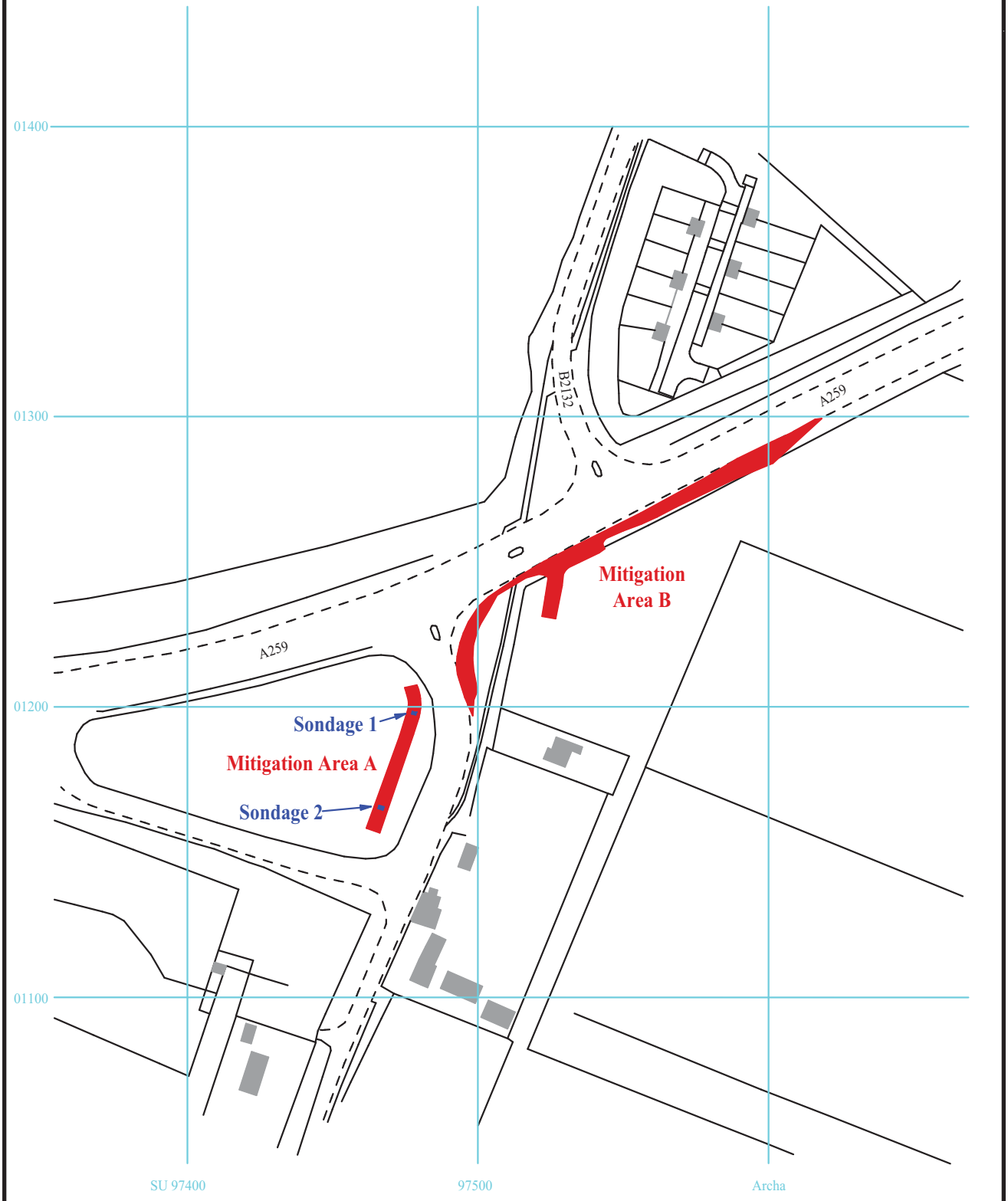


CCM 17/02

Comet Corner (A259), Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex, 2017
Archaeological Recording Action

Figure 1. Location of site within Middleton-on-Sea and West Sussex

TVAS SOUTH



CCM 17/02

N

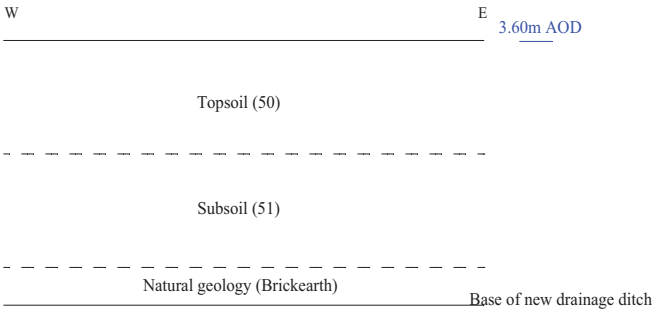
Comet Corner (A259), Middleton-on-Sea
West Sussex 2017
Archaeological Recording Action

Figure 2. Detailed location of site and areas monitored during the watching brief.

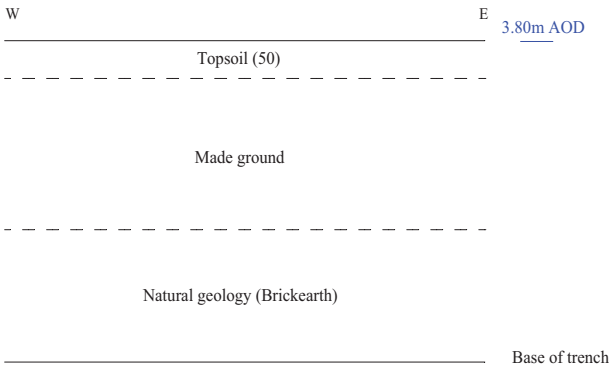
0 100m

TVAS SOUTH

Mitigation Area A



Mitigation Area B



CCM 17/02

Comet Corner (A259)
Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex, 2017
Archaeological Recording Action

Figure 3. Representative sections.

0 1m

TVAS SOUTH

Plate 1. General view of Mitigation Area A, looking North. Scales: 1m and 0.30m.

Plate 2. General view of Mitigation Area A, looking North. Scale: 1m.

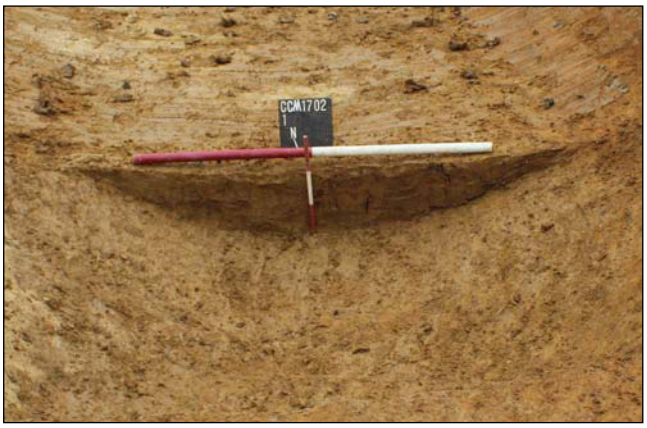


Plate 3. Mitigation Area A, sondage 1, looking North. Scales: 1m and 0.30m.

Plate 4. Mitigation Area A, sondage 2, looking North. Scale: 1m.

CCM 17/02

Comet Corner (A259), Middleton-on-Sea, West Sussex, 2017
Archaeological Recording Action
Plates 1 - 4.

TVAS SOUTH

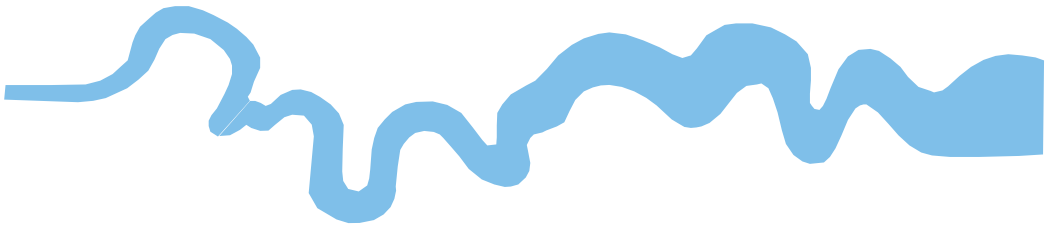
Plate 5. General view of Mitigation Area B, looking East.

Plate 6. General view of Mitigation Area B, looking North-east. Scales: 1m and 0.50m.

Plate 7. General view of Mitigation Area B, looking South. Scales: 2m and 1m.

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



TVAS (South),
77a Hollingdean Terrace
Brighton, BN1 7HB

Tel: 01273 554198
Email: south@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk/south

Offices in:
Reading, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent and Ennis (Ireland)