Orchard Way, Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex

An Archaeological Recording Action

For Persimmon Homes Limited

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OWH 04/75

September 2007

Summary

Site name: Orchard Way, Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 2750 1680

Site activity: Archaeological recording action

Date and duration of project: 3rd–9th July 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: OWH 04/75

Area of site: *c*. 2.7 hectares

Summary of results: A short length of gully with a rounded terminal was observed and sampled. A few finds of pottery of Late Iron Age and Roman date were recovered from the topsoil and spoil heap.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 31.08.07
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Report 04/75b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at Orchard Way, Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex (TQ 2750 1680) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jim Smith, of Persimmon Homes South East, Brooklands Business Park, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 0YP.

Planning permission (09/01364/FULM80) has been granted by Mid Sussex District Council, to develop the site for housing together with access roads, landscaping, balancing pond, local play areas and footpath. The planning permission was subject to a series of conditions. One of these (25) was a requirement for the implementation of a programme of archaeological excavation and recording.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and Policy CH11 of the adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016. The archaeological recording action was carried out to a specification approved by Mr John Mills, Archaeological Officer with West Sussex County Council, advising the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and the site code is OWH04/75. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Brighton Museum in due course.

A previous archaeological evaluation on the site had shown the presence of a very small number of Iron Age, Saxon and medieval pottery on the site, and prehistoric flints for the site as a whole, although no features of these dates were revealed (Ford 2004).

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on an irregular parcel of land on the north side of Albourne Road, to the west of properties on Orchard Way (Fig. 1). Commercial property and pasture used for horse grazing lies to the west with farmland to the north. The site has been cleared of the previous land use of abandoned allotments to the south, orchard in the middle and grazed horse pasture in the north, and is currently being developed for housing.

According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology for the southern portion of the site is Lower Greensand with Wealden Clay to the north (BGS 1984). No Greensand was encountered and the underlying geology consisted of sandy clay which contained grey silty sand patches mottled with what appeared

to be iron panning. The site slopes down from a height of 44.5m above Ordnance Datum on Albourne Road to 33m AOD at the north.

Archaeological background

A number of archaeological sites and finds have been recorded within the area (Rudling 2003) with a number of Bronze Age round barrows and Roman finds present. There is however a greater density of archaeology recorded on the chalk of the South Downs to the south of the site. One of the topics which raised the archaeological potential of the site was its apparent location on a geological outcrop (Greensand) which has long been noted for its preferential use in Mesolithic times within the Weald (Rankine 1954). The site also lies on the periphery of the historic core of Hurstpierpoint and adjacent to a historic lane (Albourne Road).

The archaeological evaluation was carried out on the site in September 2004 (Ford 2004) did not reveal any pre-modern archaeological features; however in the spoil heap for Trench 19, six fresh sherds of a crushed-flint tempered Middle Saxon cooking-pot and one sherd of abraded Early Iron Age calcined-flint tempered pottery were recovered. The spoil heaps from the other trenches produced pottery from the Medieval period and struck flints from a broad Mesolithic to Later Bronze Age, age range.

The nature of Saxon settlement within both Sussex and the rest of southern Britain is poorly known. It has been noted that there was a transition from dispersed, upland settlement to nucleated lowland settlement but the timetable for this remains unclear. It is not known how far medieval villages such as Hurstpierpoint had Saxon villages at their root, rather than, say enlarged farmsteads.

Objectives and methodology

The general objectives of the archaeological recording action were, to:

excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the development;

produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for the deposits and features recorded on the site;

establish the character of these deposits in the attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc;

produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the town and elsewhere.

The specific research objectives for the project were to address the following questions:

to establish if there is any evidence for the presence of Saxon occupation on the site and if so what is its nature and extent?

What use was made of floral and faunal resources and can these be identified and assessed from a programme of environmental sampling?

What is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the site during, before and after use?

The area investigated is indicated on Fig. 2. It was proposed that an area of *c*. 0.2ha centred on trench 19, from the evaluation where the finds of Saxon pottery were recovered, be investigated. A contingency for up to another 0.2ha was included if deposits were found to extend beyond the core area. The area, although designated as open space in the development scheme, will be extensively landscaped. As the access roadway for the development scheme was already in place, the area investigated was continued to the south and east of its proposed location. The topsoil was stripped by a 360º tracked machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. Following the machine clearance, all archaeological levels were examined, sampled, and recorded in plan and section. The exposed area was investigated with a metal detector to increase the recovery of metal objects.

Results

The topsoil (150) across the area was a friable mid brownish grey loam with occasional fragments of flint together with moderate roots. Topsoil 150 was found to contain 2 sherds of pottery. The underlying geology was reddish brown sandy clay with patches of brownish grey sand together with occasional iron pan.

A 3.85m long length of gully (101) with a rounded terminal was observed extending under the eastern limited of excavation (Fig. 2). A 1.2m length including the terminal was excavated, it was 0.28m wide and up to 0.12m deep (Fig. 3). Gully 101 was filled with a firm, mid reddish brown clayey silt (151) with less than 10% sand, which contained very occasional fragments of flint but no artefacts.

At the northern edge of the of excavation was a large patch of modern debris consisting of crushed concrete, brick fragments, Tarmac together with mixed reddish brown and greyish brown silty clays. This appeared to relate to the building of the roadway and associated surface water drainage. An area of concrete was also observed in the eastern part of the site, and related to the disposal of excess concrete from the construction of the roadway base. A line of fence posts with barbed wire ran east west across the site continuing the line of the existing site boundary towards the site of the former Langton Stables.

Finds

Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

The recording action yielded a further two sherds (57g) from the topsoil (Appendix 1), comprising a Late Iron Age East Sussex ware fragment and a piece from a Late Roman Oxfordshire Red Colour-coat bowl of uncertain type (c.AD.240-400).

Fabrics

1. Grog-tempered East Sussex Ware with additional sparse flint. Late Iron Age

2. Oxfordshire Red Colour-coat fabric. *c*. AD.240-400

Conclusion

No datable archaeological features were observed within the excavation area. The only feature excavated remains undated. The archaeological potential for the remainder of the site was deemed to be low and in consultation with Mr John Mills no further work was undertaken. A search of the spoil heaps located two sherds of pottery of late prehistoric and Roman dates. Together with those found in the evaluation, these suggest some activity within the Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods in the case of the pottery, and a broad range from Mesolithic to later Bronze Age, represented by flint finds, in the general area of the site. However, they are more likely to reflect either casual loss (in the case of the prehistoric struck flints) or the manuring of farmland in the case of the pottery. It is impossible, in any case, to be certain whether the artefacts originally derive from the site itself, as any or all of the artefacts could have been imported during more recent cultivation.

References

BGS, 1984, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 318/333, Drift Edition, Keyworth

PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

Ford, S, 2004, '*Orchard Way, Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex, An Archaeological Evaluation'*, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 04/75, Reading

Rankine, W F, 1954, 'Mesolithic research in east Hampshire', *Proc Hampshire Fld Club Archaeol Soc* **15,** 157-72

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

APPENDIX 1: Pottery Catalogue

Context	*Fabric*	*Form*	*Date-range*	*No of sherds*	*Weight in gm*	*Comments*
150 Topsoil	1	?Store-jar	Late Iron Age	1	37	Abraded
150 Topsoil	2	bowl	240-400	1	20	Abraded. Lumps of iron slag on the interior surface of this vessel give the impression of being trituration grits but microscopic examination suggests that they have fused to the surface during burial. Iron slag trits are uncharacteristic of Oxfordshire products

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Figure 1. Location of site within Hurstpierpoint and West Sussex.

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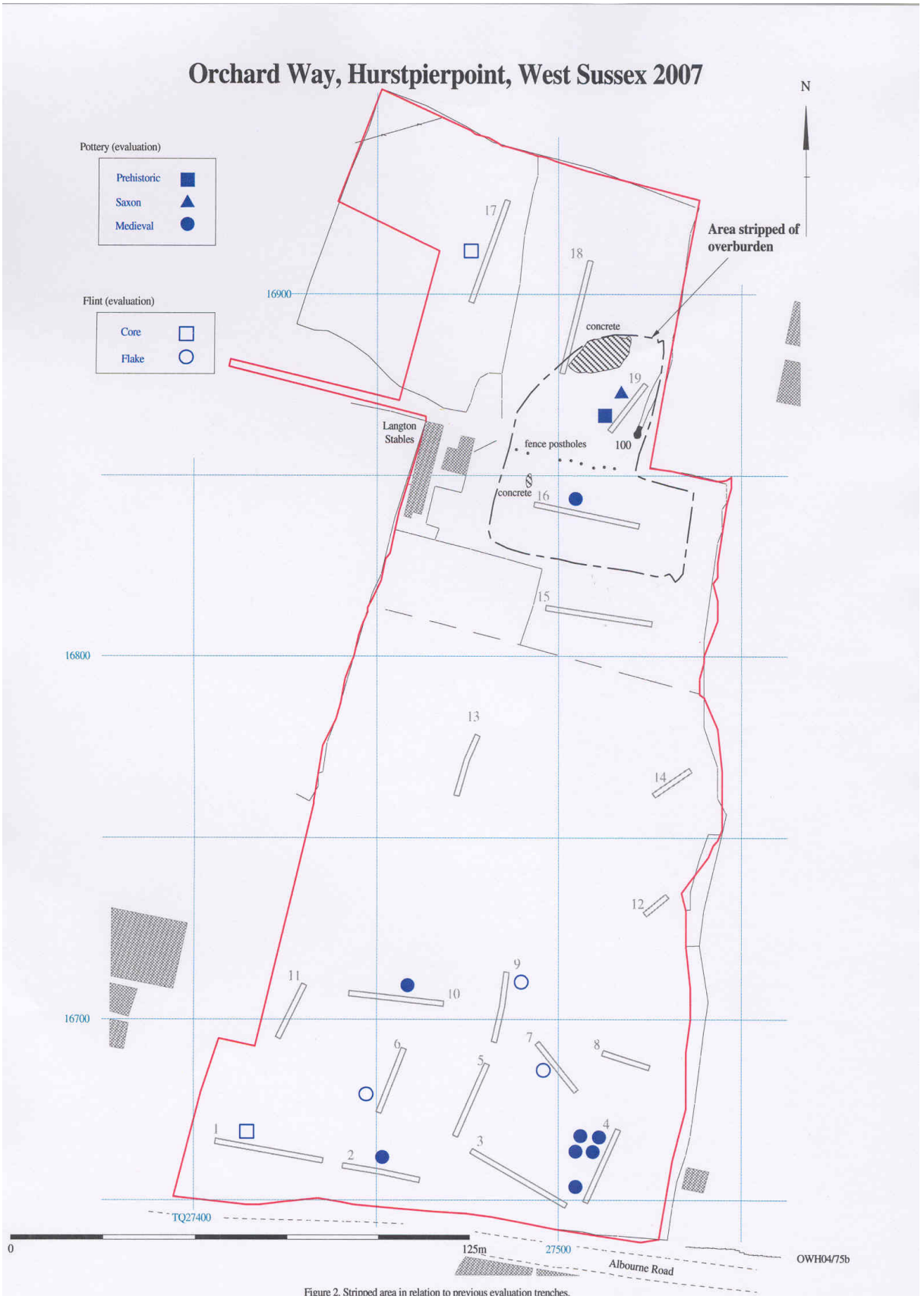

Figure 2. Stripped area in relation to previous evaluation trenches.

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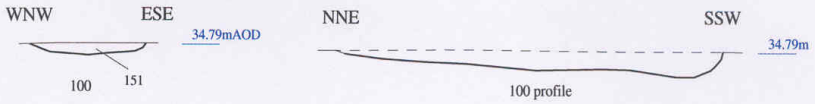

Figure 3. Sections

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