T V A S

SOUTH

The Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex

An Archaeological Excavation

by Odile Rouard

Site Code: VRBH17/272

(TQ 3260 2088)

The Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex

An Archaeological Excavation

for Thakeham Homes Ltd

by Odile Rouard

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code VRBH 17/272

June 2018

Summary

Site name: The Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 3260 2088

Planning reference: LW/17/0826

Site activity: Excavation

Date and duration of project: 18th January - 8th February 2018

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Odile Rouard

Site code: VRBH 17/272

Area of site: *c*. 840 sq m

Summary of results: The archaeological fieldwork at the Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, revealed a modest number of archaeological features, consisting of gullies, pits and postholes. Some have been dated to the prehistoric and Roman periods although most of them remain undated. The features were generally very shallow and were only tentatively interpreted.

Location of archive: The most suitable repository for the site archive should be Lewes Museum, which is not currently accepting archives.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 29.06.18 Steve Preston✓28.06.18

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The Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex
An Archaeological Excavation

by Odile Rouard

with contributions by Steve Ford, Lizzi Lewins, Malcolm Lyne, Jo Pine and Richard Tabor

Report 17/272

Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out by TVAS South at the Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex (TQ 3260 2088) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ben Stephenson of ACD Environmental Ltd, Rodbourne Rail Business Centre, Grange Lane, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 0ES, on behalf of Thakeham Homes Ltd.

Planning permission (LW/17/0826) had been gained from Lewes District Council for the re-development of a parcel of land to the east of Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, for housing. Conditions 20 and 21 required the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation.

This was in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District Council's policies on archaeology and the historic environment. As part of the initial phase of the programme of archaeological works, an evaluation had shown that one part of the development area had some archaeological potential (FA 2018). As a consequence of the presence of archaeological deposits on the site which would be damaged or destroyed by the building work, an excavation was called for to satisfy the condition.

The excavation took place according to a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by Mr Greg Chuter, the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer, advising the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Virginia Fuentes-Mateos, Odile Rouard, Sean Wallis and Jim Webster between 18th January and 8th February 2018, and the site code is VRBH 17/272. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Brighton, and will be deposited with a suitable repository in due course. Lewes Museum, the preferred repository, is not currently accepting archives.

Topography and Geology

Although the majority of Burgess Hill lies within West Sussex, most of the wider present site is located across the county border in East Sussex (Fig. 1). The excavation area consists of an irregular parcel of land, approximately 0.08ha in size, to the east of The Homestead (Fig. 2). The wider site is bounded to the west and east by residential properties, to the north by the new development and to the south by a buffer zone of trees. The site lies at the top of

a small rise but is otherwise relatively flat and lies at a height of approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology consists of Weald Clay Formation - Siltstone, Mudstone, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS 1999). The natural geology revealed during the excavation comprised yellow grey mottled clay, with mudstone inclusions.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been considered in a desk-based assessment (ACD Environmental 2016) and confirmed during a recent trial trench evaluation. A Roman pit and second, indeterminate, feature were revealed in one of the trenches (Trench 8) (FA 2018). Contingency trenching was also positioned north and south of trench 8 (trenches 6a and 6b). However, neither trench contained any significant features or archaeological material. No other significant features were recorded across the wider site during the same or an earlier phase of trial trenching

Although a Roman road through the Weald lies to the west of the site, there have been relatively few archaeological finds in the area around Burgess Hill. However, it is possible that this merely reflects the lack of archaeological fieldwork projects carried out in this part of the Weald, and it is interesting to note that features dating from the prehistoric and Roman periods have been recorded during recent residential developments to the south-west (Wallis 2016; ACD Environmental 2016).

Objectives and methodology

The aim of the project was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits and features which would be affected by the construction of the new housing. The excavation area targeted the archaeological features recorded during the evaluation. The work was carried out to comply with the East Sussex requirements for archaeological fieldwork (ESCC 2015).

The general objectives were to:

a) excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the excavation area;

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

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

d) produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

The project hoped to address the following research questions:

What is the nature and extent of prehistoric activity on the site?

What is the nature and extent of Roman activity on the site?

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

Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed by a 360° type machine, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Following machine clearance, all investigation of archaeological levels was to be by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording both in plan and in section. Features were to be hand excavated or sampled to an agreed sampling fraction dependent on feature type and significance. A programme of environmental sampling was to take place should sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits be located. Metal detectors were used to enhance the recovery of metal finds.

The Excavation

The excavation area was stripped down to the top of the underlying natural geology, which necessitated the removal of between 0.25m and 0.30m of topsoil (50) and subsoil (51) deposits. The area was stripped by a 360º mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. The excavation area measured a total of 840 sq m in size.

Two linear features, as well as pits and postholes were identified within the excavation area; however, these features were very shallow and their interpretation remains tentative.

Bronze Age

Discrete features (Figs. 4 and 5; Pls 1, 9, 11, 12, 15 and 16)

Four pits were dated to this period. They were concentrated in the centre of the southern area of the site. Pits 1, 13 and 17 had similar diameters of between 0.60 to 0.75m, with depths of about 0.13m. They contained pottery sherds dated to the Bronze Age and suggest prehistoric activity although the superficial character of these features rendered their interpretation difficult. Pit 20 appeared to be a more substantial feature, with an excavated length of 1.80m and a width of 1.45m (it was however only partly excavated as this feature lay partly beyond the area affected by the proposals). It was 0.33m deep and its primary fill (72) contained Bronze Age pottery as well as several fragments of worked flint, mostly dated to the Mesolithic period (see Appendix 3). The worked flint must be residual but suggests nonetheless early prehistoric activity at the site.

Three other pits may be associated with this phase, given more tenuous dating evidence: pits 4, 16 and 21. Pit 4 had a diameter of 0.32m and a very shallow depth of 0.07m. It however contained a flint spall dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age. Pits 16 and 21 may have been treeholes: they had a rough diameter of between 1.20m to 1.50m and a

depth varying between 0.11 and 0.33m. They also yielded several pieces of struck flint dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age.

Roman

Discrete feature (Fig. 4; Pl 7)

One possible large pit or spread was dated to this period. It was identified during the evaluation (in Trench 8) and was located in the north-western part of the site. Pit 10 had a single fill (62) of mid-grey brown silty clay that yielded a small amount of Roman pottery during the evaluation and one single sherd during the excavation. This feature was only about 0.15m deep and its function remains unknown.

Undated

Allowing that even the features assigned to phases above are dated on very minimal evidence, the remainder of the features produced even less dating evidence, or none at all.

Linear features (Fig. 4; Pl. 2, 5, 8 and 14)

Gully 1001 was aligned south-east to north-west and petered out towards the northern end of the site. It had a total length of about 20m, its width varied in the three slots excavated (7, 12, 19) between 0.50m and 0.60m, and it had a depth of between 0.06m and 0.20m. Its fills (58, 64 and 71) of light grey brown silty clay yielded one single flint spall dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age, but this is clearly insufficient to attribute the gully even tentatively to the Bronze Age phase (although that dating is possible).

Gully 1000 was aligned south-west to north-east and had a length of about 8m. It had a width of 0.40m and a depth varying between 0.05m and 0.12m. Its fills (53 and 63) of light grey brown silty clay did not yield any finds. This gully was very shallow and could only be seen in places, disappearing at both ends. As it was perpendicular to gully 1001, the two are probably contemporary, but even this tentative conclusion is uncertain, as it possibly continued on as Gully 8. Although both gullies petered out, it is possible that both would have been truncated by pit 9 (itself, however, undated).

Discrete features (Figs. 4 and 5; Pls. 3, 4, 6, 10 and 13)

Pits 3, 5, 6, 14, 15 and 18 were similar in shapes and sizes, having diameters of between 0.38m and 0.90m and depths varying between 0.09m and 0.16m. Pit 5 contained a small piece of iron slag, but otherwise remains undated. It however suggests industrial activity, possibly linked to the Roman period. Pit 14 contained some fragments of pottery that were too small to be dated but may be of Bronze Age date.

Pit 8 may have been a treehole: it measured 0.85m by 0.54m, with a depth of 0.12m, but did not contain any dating material.

Pit 9 had a diameter of roughly 1.50m and a depth of 0.45m. It was first identified during the evaluation, although it did not yield any finds. Its primary fill (60) of dark brown silty clay also contained a small amount of charcoal and was sampled (see below), with the possibility of identifying species.

Pit 23 had a diameter of at least 1.40m but was not fully excavated as it partly lay beyond the limit of excavation. It had a depth of 0.28m and a very sterile fill (76) that did not yield any finds.

Finds

Prehistoric pottery by Richard Tabor

The prehistoric pottery assemblage comprised 14 sherds and four crumbs weighing 95.5g, giving a low mean sherd weight of 5.3g. The sherds were distributed across the subsoil and five stratified deposits (Appendix 2). The condition of the material varied from moderately to badly abraded with one exception in fresh condition. The latter sherd was from a necked shouldered jar but no other sherds had formally diagnostic traits. Several sherds lacked one or both surfaces so that a full description of colour and surface treatment was not possible.

Fabrics

Early to Middle Bronze Age: grog

G1 (medium) Friable, slightly soapy to touch, reddish brown to grey fabric with buff red to grey surfaces including moderate grey to pink fine (<1mm) to medium coarse (<3mm) sub-rounded grog.

Early to Middle Bronze Age: grog and flint

GF1 (medium) Friable, grey fabric including rare to sparse medium (<2mm) to medium coarse (<3mm) burnt angular flint, moderate grey to pink fine (<1mm) to medium coarse (<3mm) sub-rounded and sub-angular grog.

Middle to Late Bronze Age: grog and flint

GF2 (medium) Moderately hard, pink to grey silty fabric with buff pink surfaces including sparse poorly-sorted fine to medium (<2mm) and rare medium coarse (<3mm) burnt angular flint, sparse grey to pink fine (<1mm) to medium coarse (<3mm) sub-rounded grog and sparse fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) reddish brown iron oxides.

GF3 (coarse) Moderately hard, pink to grey silty fabric with buff pink surfaces including moderate poorly-sorted fine to medium (<2mm) and sparse medium coarse (<4mm) and rare very coarse (<10mm) burnt angular flint, sparse grey to pink fine (<1mm) to medium coarse (<3mm) sub-rounded grog and sparse fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) reddish brown iron oxides. Surfaces may be smoothed.

Middle to Late Bronze Age: flint

F1 (medium) Moderately hard, pink micaceous fabric including moderate poorly-sorted fine to medium (<2mm) and sparse medium coarse (<4mm) and rare coarse (<6mm) burnt angular flint and sparse fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) reddish brown iron oxides.

The fabric inclusions ranged from grog, through grog with flint to flint. In Sussex grog is typical in Early Bronze Age pottery, but has been noted mixed with flint in Collared and Biconical urns of the period (Seager Thomas 2008, 25). Wall thickness tends to be 8mm or less as is the case for sherds in GF2, although such a thickness would also be acceptable for a Late Bronze Age vessel. However, a thickness of 11mm for a well-fired neck and shoulder sherd

from a jar in GF3 would better suit a Middle or Middle to Late Bronze Age vessel. In both cases the frequency of the flint and its association with grog would be unusual in Deverel- Rimbury pottery, but the same is true of Post-Deverel-Rimbury material although there are rare examples of the mixture in Developed Plain ware assemblages (Seager Thomas 2008, 31; fig. 9, 41, 18). On balance the friability of fabrics G1 and GF1 is consistent with an Early Bronze Age date whilst the better firing of the remaining material is suggestive of a later Bronze Age date.

Roman Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

A single small, fresh bodysherd weighing 6g, comes from a spread (10, context 62) and appears to be from a closed form in Arun Valley Greyware. It is too lacking in diagnostic features to be dated precisely, but is Early Roman (*c.* AD50–250).

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A small collection of 24 struck flints was recovered from the fieldwork on the site as detailed in Appendix 3. It is made on a wide range of flint colours and types: Some is on a light grey flint with chert patches and a thick cortex; some on a dark grey flint with our without cherty inclusions with a thin cortex; some on a brown flint with thin cortex and finally- some on a uniform black flint also with thin cortex.

Two of the three pieces from the subsoil were edge damaged, but the remainder were in good condition.

Most of the flintwork appears to represent casual flint knapping using a hard hammer. It is not closely datable and could be of later Neolithic or Bronze Age date. The exception, however, is from pit 20 (72) which contained two, possibly three broken narrow flakes showing blade scars on the dorsal surface, an end scraper and a retouched piece that is probably a shouldered point. These latter five pieces are likely to be of Mesolithic date.

The scraper has a distinctive form typical of the Mesolithic being on a flake with approximately parallel sides and with a scraping edge at the non-bulbar end having a gentle convex curve in plan. The shouldered point was 37mm long, 19mm wide and 3mm thick and formed on a flake that was less than 40m long. The right hand side was abruptly retouched for the whole length with similar retouch on the right hand side to form a point. The retouch was all on the dorsal surface. The left hand side of the piece nearest the bulb was damaged and it is not clear if this damage was accidental or was intended to form a shoulder.

Slag by Lizzi Lewins

A single piece of iron slag weighing 4g was recovered from feature 5 (56), it is likely the by-product of smithing but by itself cannot indicate the nature of the process by which it was formed..

Burnt Flint

A tiny quantity of burnt flint (totalling 116g) was recovered from four pits, a gully and the subsoil (Appendix 4).

Macrobotanical plant material and charcoal by Jo Pine

Three samples were processed from deposits encountered during the excavation. The samples were wet sieved to 0.25mm and the flots air dried. The flots were examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnification of x10. A small amount of charcoal was present in sample 2 (Feature 9, 60), with the fragment size of up to 10mm. A further very small fragment was recovered from Sample 3 (Feature 16, 68), which is of insufficient size to determine species. No charred plant macrofossils were present in any of the samples.

Conclusion

The excavation has revealed a small number of archaeological features: 17 possible pits and postholes, and 2 gullies were identified, although only 5 of these features produced any dating evidence.

The small assemblage of pottery and struck flint, with no bone or plant remains other than charcoal survival, offers very limited scope for interpretation of this cluster of shallow features. Prehistoric sites in the Weald have become more numerous in the past few years, reflecting the growing number of archaeological investigations taking place in the area, but remain few and on a small scale. The exploitation of the Weald probably started during the Mesolithic, but 'settlements' may have been nothing more than temporary camps exploited seasonally by hunter-gatherers. The very ephemeral nature of this occupation makes it difficult to identify such sites. Evidence of some Mesolithic presence was identified at Valebridge Road, as a dozen pieces of worked and struck flint were recovered from a large pit in the southern end of the site. The pit itself, however, is not a Mesolithic feature, as it also contained Bronze Age pottery.

Most of the activity seems to have taken place during the Bronze Age, as suggested by the few pottery sherds recovered from four different pits, also located in the southern part of the site. Woodland clearance started around the Middle and Late Bronze Age and it is also possible that the site reflects this kind of activity. The presence of a small amount of burnt flint in the features also suggests the use of camp fires close by. Most of the features recorded were so shallow that their interpretation remains tentative at best. It is tempting, but even more tentative, to suppose that the majority of the undated features belong to this phase. The activity appears concentrated towards the south-eastern corner of the site, and possibly beyond the excavation/development area. It is possible that the features identified at Valebridge Road represent a hunting camp: the small pits may, instead, have been post-holes and may have been structural although no clear pattern was visible, while two perpendicular gullies were recorded, forming

some kind of enclosure or boundary perhaps. Although undated here, 'L-shaped' enclosures are emerging as a Middle Bronze Age phenomenon: cf Pitt Rivers 1898; but with others now documented as at Latton Lands, Eysham, Shorncote, Tetbury and Cirencester in the Upper Thames Valley (Powell *et al.* 2009; Powell *et al.* 2010; Lambrick and Robinson 2009, fig. 3.11; Young and Erskine 2012; Socha-Paszkiewicz, 2018). Although the evidence here is too tentative to press this comparison closely (all the examples cited are considerably larger features), it adds to the small amount of evidence for exploitation of the Burgess Hill area in the Middle/Later Bronze Age (Wallis 2016).

A limited Roman presence was also identified at Valebridge Road, represented by a single pit or spread that had been previously recorded during the evaluation. This feature yielded several pottery sherds but its function remains unclear. The Weald was exploited for iron from the Iron Age onwards, and all through to the medieval period. It is possible that this pit or spread represents Roman industrial activity, although the only industrial waste recovered from any of the features was a small piece of undiagnostic slag in one of the otherwise undated pits.

Acknowledgements

The excavation was funded by Thakeham Homes Ltd, with the fieldwork being monitored by Greg Chuter, the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer. The excavation team consisted of Virginia Fuentes-Mateos, Sean Wallis, Jim Webster and the author. Illustrations were produced by Virginia Fuentes-Mateos and the author.

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APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Features

Cut	*Fill*	*Group*	*Type*	*Phase*	*Comments / Dating Evidence*
1	52		Pit	Bronze Age	Pottery. **Pl. 1**
2	53	1000	Gully	Undated	**Pl. 2**
3	54		Post-hole	Undated	**Pl. 3**
4	55		Post-hole	Undated	
5	56		Pit	Undated	**Pl. 4**
6	57		Post-hole	Undated	
7	58	1001	Gully	Undated	**Pl. 5**
8	59	?1000?	Gully	Undated	
9	60, 61		Pit	Undated	**Pl. 6**
10	62		Spread	Roman	Pottery. **Pl. 7**
11	63	1000	Gully	Undated	
12	64	1001	Gully	Undated	**Pl. 8**
13	65		Pit	Bronze Age	Pottery. **Pl. 9**
14	66		Pit	Undated	**Pl. 10**
15	67		Pit	Undated	
16	68		Pit	Undated	**Pl. 11**
17	69		Pit	Bronze Age	Pottery. **Pl. 12**
18	70		Pit	Undated	**Pl. 13**
19	71	1001	Gully	Undated	**Pl. 14**
20	72, 73		Pit	Bronze Age	Pottery, flint. **Pl. 15**
21	74		Pit	Undated	**Pl. 16**
22	75		Pit	Undated	
23	76		Pit	Undated	

APPENDIX 2: Distribution of fabrics by cut and deposit (weight in grams)

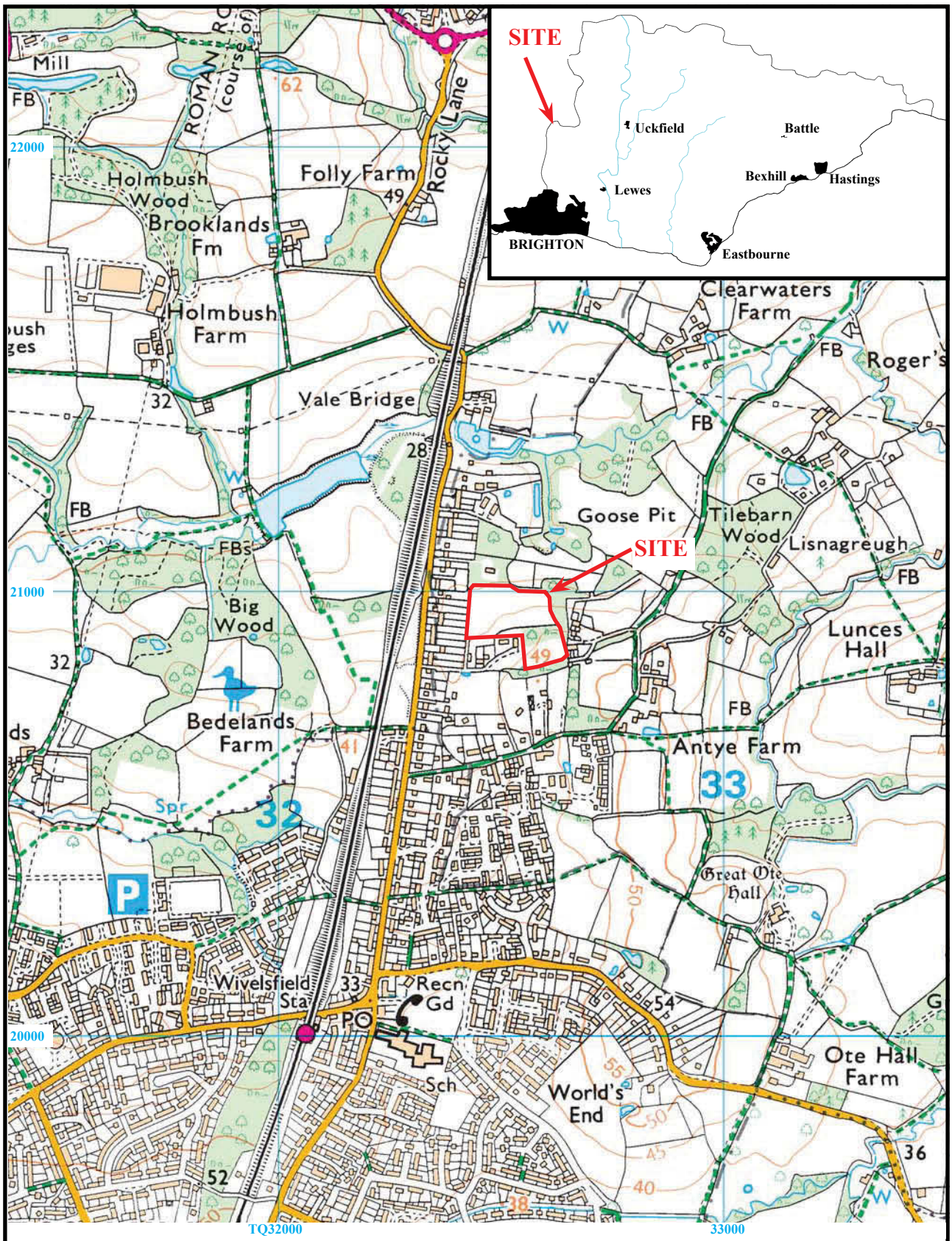
		Early to Middle Bronze Age				**Middle to Late Bronze Age**							
		G1		**GF1**		**GF2**		**GF3**		**F1**		**crumbs**	
cut	*deposit*	*no*	*wt*	*no*	*wt*	*no*	*wt*	*no*	*wt*	*no*	*wt*		
	51							1	55				
1	52	1	1							1	10		
13	65					4	13						
14	44											4	0.5
17	69									5	14		
20	72			2	2								
Total		1	1	2	24	4	13	1	55	6	24	4	0.5

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of Struck Flint

Cut	*Fill*	*Type*
4	55	Spall
	51	2 Broken flakes: Core?
21	74	Intact flake
7	58	Spall
16	68	Intact flake; 3 Broken flakes
20	72	3 Broken flakes; 2 Spalls; Scraper 2 possible broken blades Backed point
20	73	3 Intact flakes; Broken flake; Spall

APPENDIX 4: Catalogue of Burnt Flint

Cut	*Deposit*	*Group No*	*Type*	*No*	*Wt (g)*
	51		Subsoil	4	3
7	58	1001	Gully	1	7
13	65		Pit	2	11
14	66		Pit	3	7
20	72		Pit	2	50
20	73		Pit	1	38



The Homestead, Valebridge Road,
Burgess Hill, East Sussex, 2017
Archaeological Excavation

Figure 1. Location of site within Burgess Hill and East Sussex.

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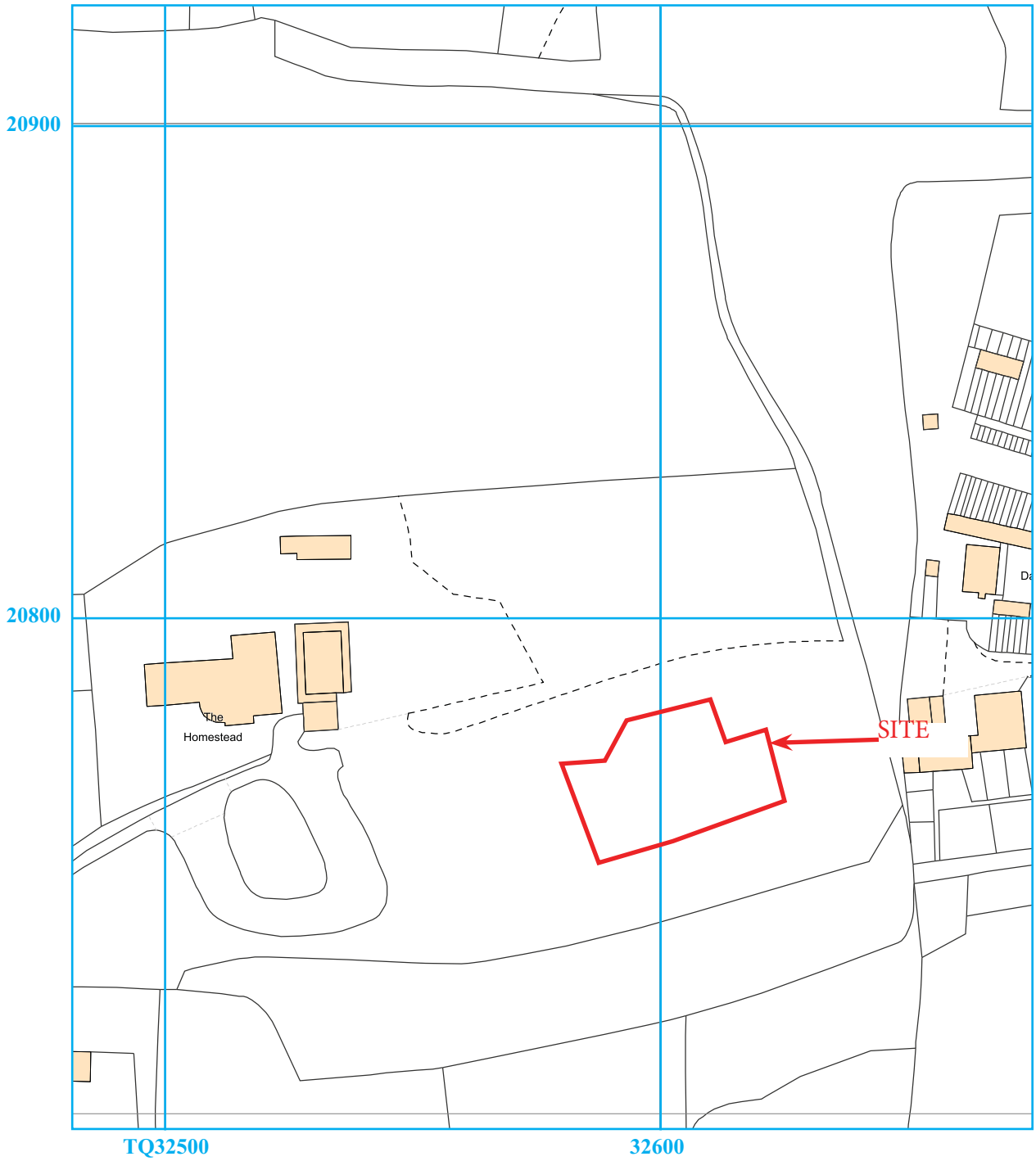
SOUTH



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The Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex, 2018 Archaeological Excavation

Figure 2. Detailed location of site

TVAS SOUTH

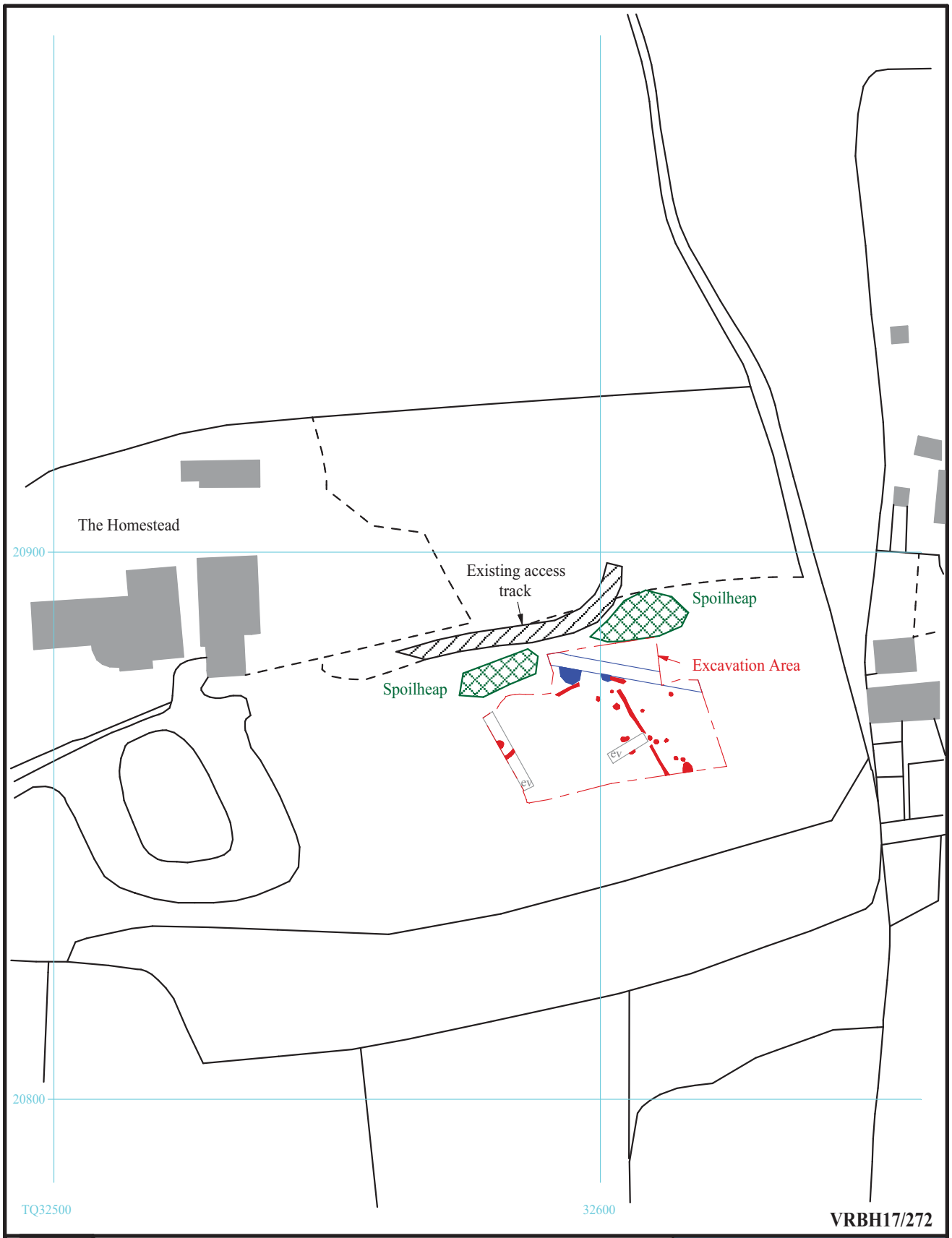

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Figure 3. Location of excavation area within overal site, along with evaluation trenches and features previously sampled (in blue).

0 50m

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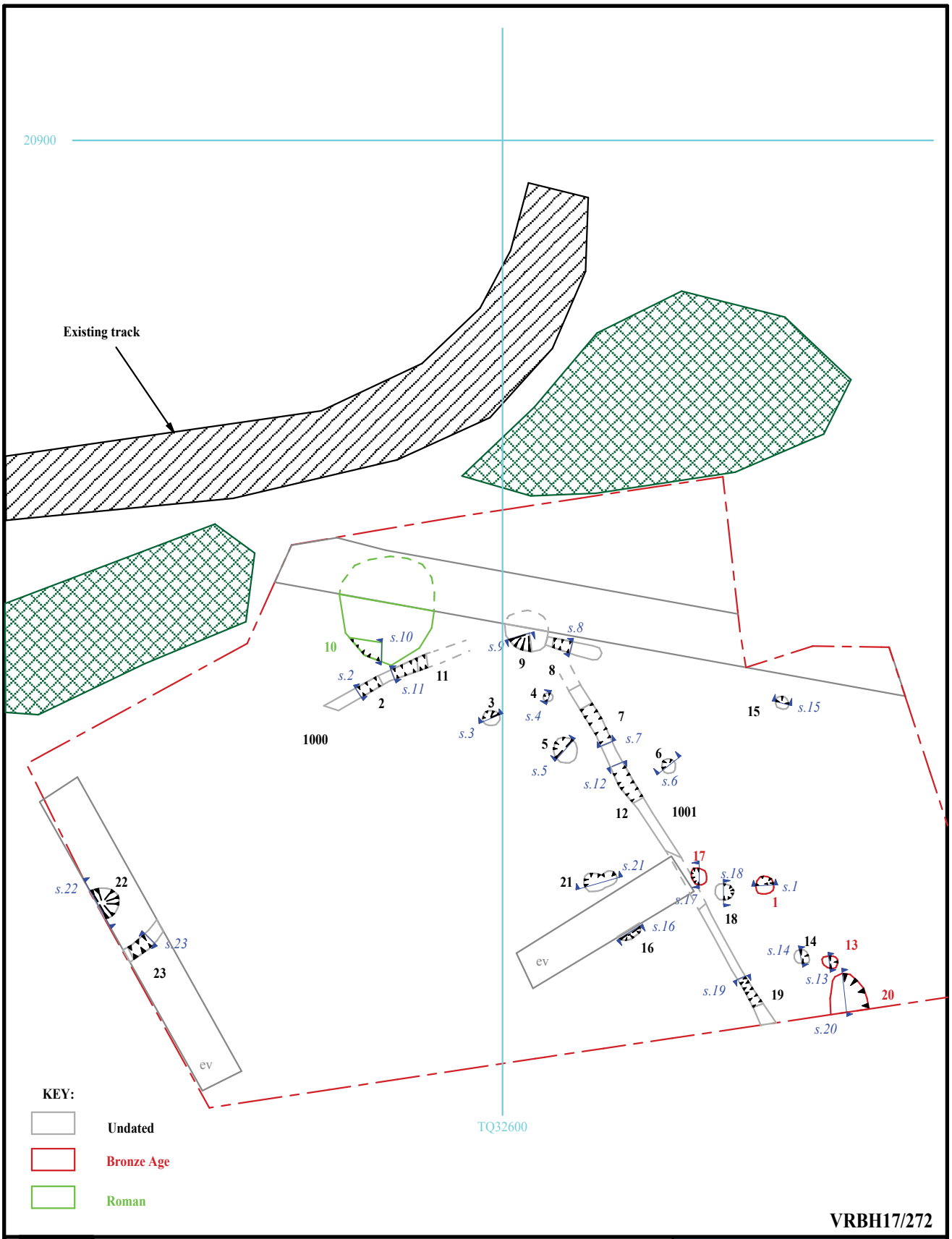

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The Homestead, Valebridge Road, East Sussex, 2018 Archaeological Excavation

Figure 4. Detailed plan showing all exavated features.

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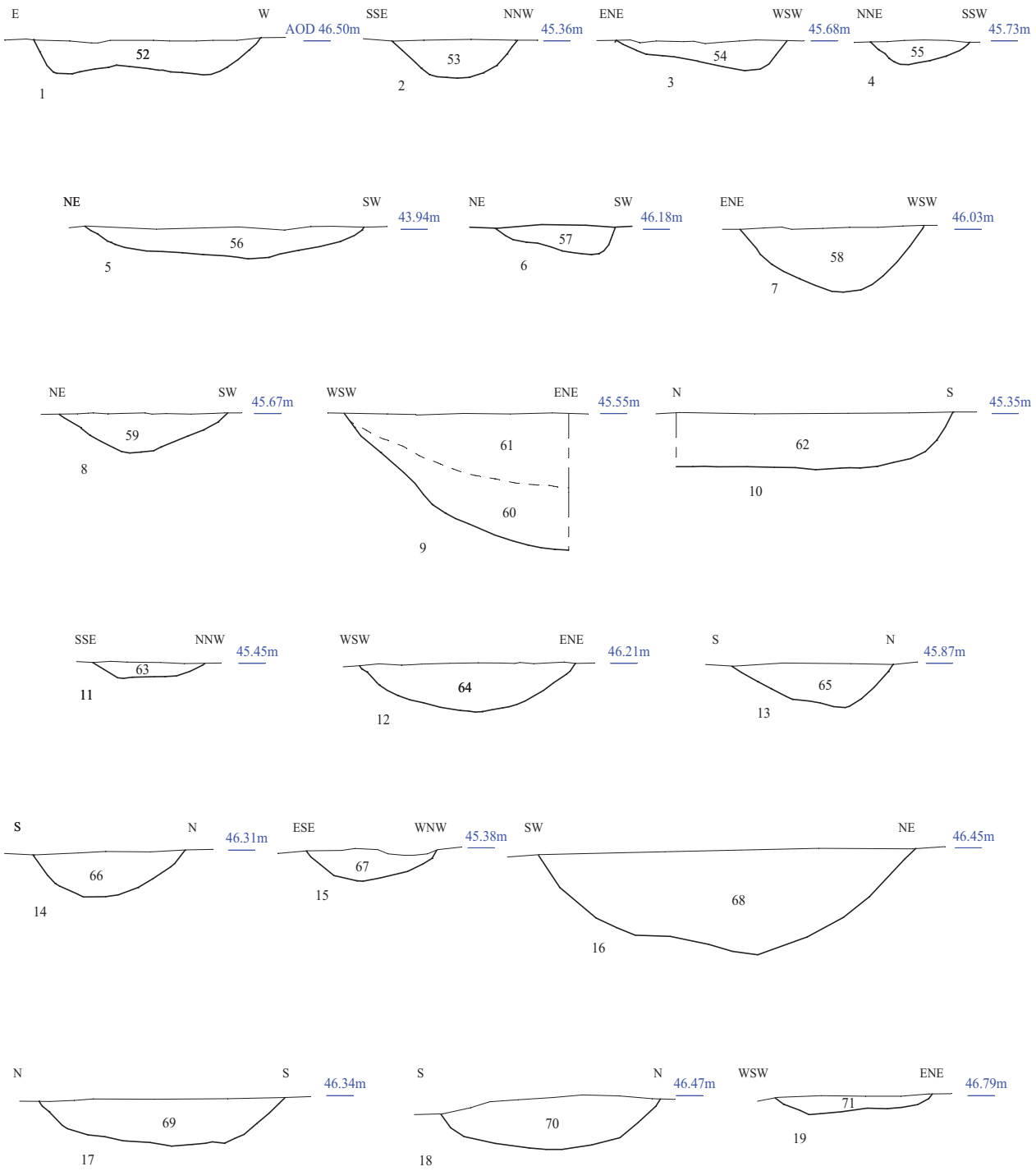
T V A S SOUTH



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The Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex, 2017 Archaeological Excavation

Figure 5. Sections.

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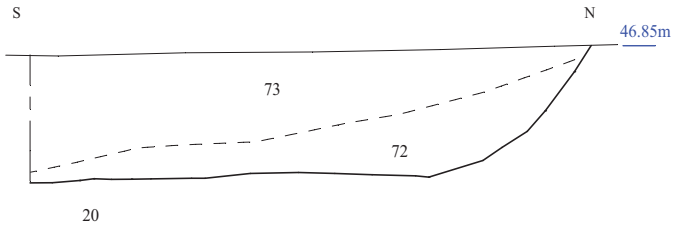

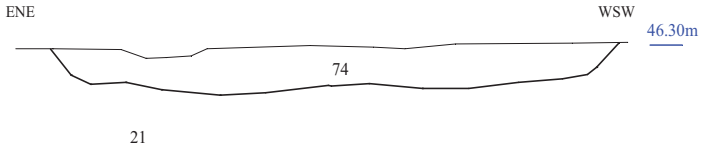

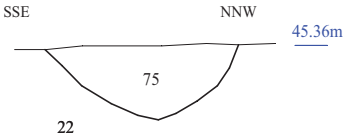

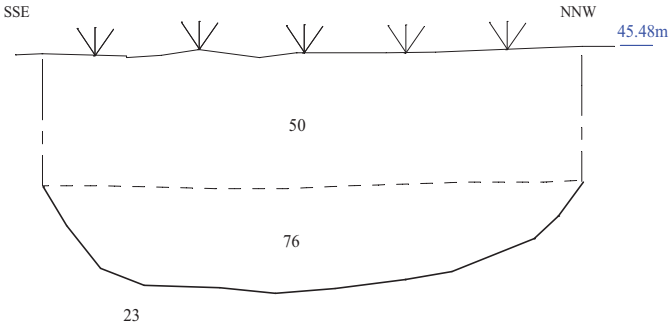

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The Homestead, Valebridge Road, Burgess Hill, East Sussex, 2017 Archaeological Excavation

Figure 6. Sections.

0 1m

TVAS SOUTH

Plate 1. Feature 1, looking South.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 2. Feature 2, looking South-west.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 3. Feature 3, looking South-east.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 4. Feature 5, looking South-east.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 5. Feature 7, looking South-east.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.20m.

Plate 6. Feature 9, looking North.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.30m.

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Plates 1 - 6.

TVAS SOUTH

Plate 7. Feature 10, looking East.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.20m.

Plate 8. Feature 12, looking North.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 9. Feature 13, looking West.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 10. Feature 14, looking West.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 11. Feature 16, looking North-west.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.20m.

Plate 12. Feature 17, looking East.
Scale: 0.50m.

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Plates 7 - 12.

TVAS SOUTH

Plate 13. Feature 18, looking West.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 14. Feature 19, looking North-west.
Scale: 0.50m.

Plate 15. Feature 20, looking West.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.30m.

Plate 16. Feature 21, looking South.
Scale: 1m.

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The Homestead, Valebridge Road,
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Plates 13 - 16.

TVAS SOUTH

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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