

T V A S



SOUTH

**Ashplats House, Holtye Road,
East Grinstead, West Sussex**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Site Code: AHH20/17

(TQ 4082 3926)

Ashplats House, Holtye Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Sigma Homes Ltd

By Sean Wallis

TVAS South

Site Code AHH 20/17

April 2021

Summary

Site name: Ashplats House, Holtye Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 4082 3926

Site activity: Evaluation

Planning reference: DM/19/1613

Date and duration of project: 19th - 21st April 2021

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: AHH 20/17

Area of site: c. 1.12 ha

Summary of results: The evaluation successfully investigated those parts of the site which will be most affected by the development of the site for housing. A probable Late Iron Age or Early Roman ditch was found in the north-east part of the site, along with a similarly dated pit in the south-west corner, which also produced a small amount of iron slag. Parts of the site are considered to have some archaeological potential which may relate to Late Iron Age or Early Roman iron production somewhere in the vicinity.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at TVAS South, Brighton and will be deposited with a suitable repository in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 27.04.21
	Steve Preston ✓ 27.04.21

Ashplats House, Holtje Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex An Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Report 20/17

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Ashplats House, Holtje Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex (TQ 4082 3926) (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Mr Adam Light of Sigma Homes Ltd, 44-46 Springfield Road, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 2PD.

Planning permission (DM/19/1613) has been granted by Mid Sussex District Council to re-develop the site for residential use, following the demolition of the existing buildings. The consent is subject to a condition (7) relating to archaeology and the historic environment, which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work prior to the commencement of groundworks. This was to take the form initially of field evaluation by trial trenching, the results of which would inform any mitigation work that may be required.

This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by the Local Planning Authority following consultation with the Surrey County Council Archaeological Officer (Ms Alexandra Egginton) who advises the Mid Sussex District Council on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Amelia Hopkins and Sean Wallis between the 19th and 21st April 2021, and the site code is AHH 20/17. The archive is presently held at TVAS South, Brighton, and will be deposited with a suitable repository in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south of Holtje Road, and to the east of the historic core of East Grinstead, West Sussex (TQ 4082 3926) (Fig. 1). The site is occupied by the main house (Ashplats House), a smaller residential dwelling, and several ancillary buildings, surrounded by a large garden. The area is relatively flat, although there is a slight downwards slope in the far south-western corner of the site. Most of the site lies at a height of approximately 139m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand (BGS 1971), and this was confirmed during the evaluation where a light yellow brown sand was recorded in all the trenches, apart from those in the north-eastern part of the site, where the natural geology was a clayey sand.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been considered in a recent desk-based assessment (MacQuarrie 2019). In summary, the site is situated in the Weald which is thought to have been heavily wooded until the post-medieval period. Until recently, very little prehistoric activity had been recorded in the Weald, although finds of flintwork suggested that the area had been utilized by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. However, this paucity of evidence may be due to the fact that relatively little archaeological fieldwork had been carried out. Indeed, settlement evidence from the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods has been recorded during recent excavations in Burgess Hill and Broadbridge Heath, respectively (Wallis 2012; Taylor 2017). The Weald was utilized for iron production during the late Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval periods, and numerous features survive from this industry, some of the most obvious being mill ponds which were used to power the foundries. Recent archaeological fieldwork immediately to the south and south-east of the present site revealed a number of linear features, which appear to date from the Iron Age (Palmer 2012). It was possible that some of these features, or related remains, may extend into the present site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of the proposed development.

Specific aims of the project were;

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if archaeological deposits from the prehistoric period are present; and
- to determine if any of the linear features previously recorded to the south continue into the present site.

Thirteen trenches were to be dug, each measuring 25m in length and 1.8m wide. The trenches were positioned to target those parts of the site which would be most affected by the new development. The trenches were to be dug using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

The trenches were dug close to their original planned positions, although several had to be moved slightly to avoid protected trees and known services (Fig. 3). These restrictions meant that some of the trenches were

shorter than originally planned, and one of the trenches (9) was abandoned after a live electricity cable was hit by the excavator. These changes to the agreed scheme were explained to the Surrey County Council Archaeological Officer during a telephone call on 20th April. The excavated trenches were all 1.80m wide, and measured between 6.00m and 25.80m in length, and between 0.49m and 0.98m in depth. A complete list of the trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Fig. 5)

This trench was orientated approximately NNE-SSW, and was 25.20m long and up to 0.49m deep. It was dug in the part of the site where there had formerly been a tennis court. The natural clayey sand geology was encountered beneath 0.15m of Tarmac and 0.23m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the trench.

Trench 2 (Figs 4 and 5; Pl. 6)

This trench was orientated approximately N-S, and was 23.10m long and up to 0.73m deep. The natural sand geology was encountered beneath 0.29m of topsoil (50) and 0.33m of subsoil (51). Ditch 2 was aligned roughly west-east, in the central part of the trench, where it was seen to have been truncated by a modern soakaway and land drain. A hand-dug slot through the feature revealed that it was at least 0.85m wide and 0.28m deep, with a single fill of mid-yellow brown sandy silt (56). Two sherds of Late Iron Age or Early Roman pottery were recovered from this deposit. The ditch was not observed in the nearby trenches to the east (1) or west (12).

Trench 3 (Pl. 1)

This trench was orientated approximately SW-NE, and was 15.10m long and up to 0.78m deep. It was dug in the part of the site where there had formerly been a tennis court, and was shorter than originally planned due to the presence of a live service. The natural clayey sand geology was encountered beneath 0.15m of Tarmac and 0.39m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the trench.

Trench 4 (Fig. 5)

This trench was orientated approximately NW-SE, and was 25.80m long and up to 0.59m deep. The natural sand geology was encountered beneath 0.23m of topsoil (50) and 0.18m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded, although a modern dog burial was noted in the central part of the trench.

Trench 5

This trench was orientated approximately WSW-ENE, and was 22.10m long and up to 0.86m deep. The natural sand geology was encountered beneath 0.26m of topsoil (50) and 0.40m of subsoil (51). A modern pit, containing glass bottles and broken pottery, was observed in the central part of the trench but was not recorded in detail.

Trench 6 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 2 and 5)

This trench was orientated approximately N-S, and was 21.80m long and up to 0.88m deep. The natural geology was recorded beneath 0.24m of topsoil (50) and 0.32m of subsoil (51). Pit 1 was investigated at the southern end of the trench. It was originally thought to be a modern feature as it was encountered quite high up compared to the stratigraphy seen in adjacent Trench 7, which had been excavated prior to Trench 6. As a result, the upper fills of the pit were removed by machine, and the rest of the exposed pit was excavated by hand. The pit was at least 2.1m long and 0.85m wide, and four separate fills (52, 53, 54 and 55) were identified. The primary fill of light brownish grey silty sand (52) was up to 0.15m thick, and contained no finds. Three small sherds of pottery dating from the Late Iron Age or Early Roman period were recovered from the secondary fill of light greyish brown silty sand (53), which was up to 0.28m thick. This deposit also contained two fragments of iron slag, indicating the possible presence of a bloomery furnace in the vicinity. A third fill of mid-greyish brown sandy silt (54) was largely removed by the machine, but no finds were observed during its excavation. The upper fill was largely comprised of dark greyish brown sandy silt (55), although some patches of yellow sand were present within the deposit, suggesting deliberate backfilling of the feature.

Trench 7

This trench was orientated approximately N-S, and was 21.20m long and up to 0.84m deep. The natural sand geology was encountered beneath 0.31m of topsoil (50) and 0.32m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the trench.

Trench 8 (Fig. 5; Pl. 3)

This trench was orientated approximately WSW-ENE, and was up to 24.50m long and 0.76m deep. The natural sand geology was revealed beneath 0.25m of topsoil (50) and 0.38m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded, although a modern soakaway was observed in the central part of the trench.

Trench 9

This trench was orientated approximately WSW-ENE, and was situated in an area which had formerly been a lawn, although the grass had recently been removed. The trench was abandoned at the 6m mark when a live electricity cable was hit. It was decided not to continue the trench as further services had been identified further east. The trench was up to 0.53m deep, and the natural sand geology was encountered beneath 0.15m of topsoil (50) and 0.26m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the trench.

Trench 10

This trench was orientated N-S, and was 17.80m long and up to 0.79m deep. The natural sand geology was revealed beneath 0.28m of topsoil (50) and 0.28m of subsoil (51). No archaeological features were recorded,

although a modern service trench was observed in the central part of the trench. A small sherd of Late Iron Age or Early Roman pottery was recovered from the subsoil layer (51).

Trench 11

This trench was orientated SW-NE, and was 18.80m long and up to 0.75m deep. The natural sand geology was revealed beneath 0.23m of topsoil (50) and 0.51m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the trench, although a couple of land drains were observed within the soil horizons as they were removed.

Trench 12

This trench was orientated N-S, and was 17.50m long and up to 0.98m deep. The natural sand geology was revealed beneath 0.30m of topsoil (50), 0.27m of mid yellow brown sandy silt (57) and 0.21m of subsoil (51). No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the trench.

Trench 13 (Fig. 5; Pl. 4)

This trench was orientated approximately W-E, and was 25.20m long and up to 0.80m deep. The natural sand geology was revealed beneath 0.29m of topsoil (50), 0.19m of mid yellow brown sandy silt (57) and 0.21m of subsoil (51). No archaeological features were recorded in the trench, although a couple of land drains were observed within the soil horizons as they were removed. A struck flint was recovered from the subsoil layer (51).

Finds

Pottery by Luke Barber

The archaeological work recovered six sherds of pottery, weighing 40g, from three contexts (Appendix 3). Overall the pottery consists of small to medium-sized sherds with moderate/heavy abrasion, though those from context 53 are notably fresh despite their small size. As such much of the material appears to have been subjected to notable reworking.

All of the pottery can be placed in a Late Iron Age date range but further, more diagnostic, sherds would be needed to refine the dating. It is suspected the assemblage sits in the 2nd half of the date range given in Appendix 3. The presence of fresh and abraded sherds shows *in situ* material on the site, not all of which are adversely affected by the acidic subsoil.

Slag by Luke Barber

The evaluation recovered two pieces of slag, both from pit 1, context 53 (46g). These both consist of fresh pieces of iron smelting (tap) slag using the bloomery process. Both pieces are fresh which correlates with the associated

pottery demonstrating the finds from pit 1 have not been reworked. The material appears to relate to a Late Iron Age bloomery furnace in the near vicinity.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A single struck flint was recovered from the subsoil layer (51) of Trench 13. It is a single large flake patinated blue grey with a rough cortex suggesting a direct chalk source. It is not closely datable but likely to be of later Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

Conclusion

The evaluation successfully investigated those parts of the site which will be most affected by the development of the site for housing. The site had clearly been affected by its use as a garden during the last hundred years, and it is likely that the ground levels have been built up in places with imported soil. This was most obvious in the north-west corner of the site, where an additional layer of soil was noted between the topsoil and subsoil horizons. A number of land drains were recorded in the northern part of the site, which are probably associated with its use as a garden. However, further land drains were recorded lower down in a couple of the trenches, which probably reflect the fact that it was part of an agricultural field before the house was built in the early 20th century.

A probable Late Iron Age or Early Roman ditch was found in the north-east part of the site, although it was only seen in one trench (2). A similarly dated pit also containing some iron slag in the south-west corner of the site may be related to iron production in the vicinity.

References

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- NPPF, 2019, *National Planning Policy Framework* (revised), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London
- Palmer, D, 2012, 'Archaeological investigations on land to the rear of 240-258 Holtye Road and adjacent to Ashplats House, East Grinstead, West Sussex', *Archaeology South-east* unpubl rep **2012.193**, Portslade
- Taylor, A, 2017, 'Early to Middle Iron Age occupation north of Old Guildford Road, Broadbridge Heath, Horsham, West Sussex', in J McNicoll-Norbury, D Sanchez, A Taylor, F Thompson and S Wallis, *Archaeological Investigations in Sussex: Prehistoric and Roman features in Selsey, Worthing, Angmering and Horsham, and Medieval occupation in Hailsham, Horsham and Crawley*, TVAS Occas Pap **17**, Reading, 41–7
- Wallis, S, 2016, *Middle/Later Bronze Age Occupation at Manor Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex*, TVAS Occasional Paper **9**, Reading

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

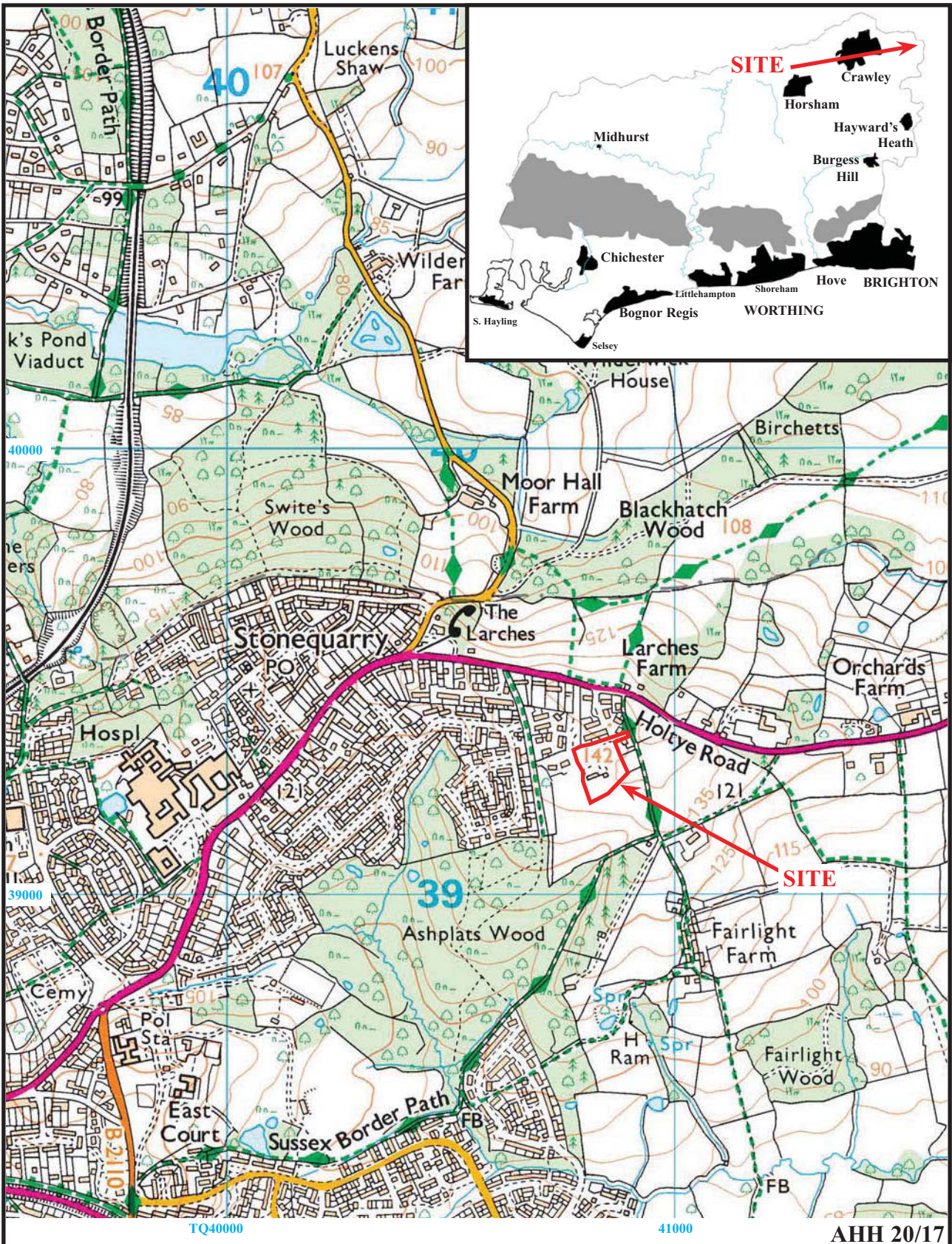
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	25.20	1.80	0.49	0-0.15m Tarmac; 0.15-0.38m subsoil (51); 0.38-0.49m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
2	23.10	1.80	0.73	0-0.29m Topsoil (50); 0.29-0.62m subsoil (51); 0.62-0.73m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand). Ditch 2. [Pl. 6]
3	15.10	1.80	0.78	0-0.15m Tarmac; 0.15-0.54m subsoil (51); 0.54-0.78m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand). [Pl. 1]
4	25.80	1.80	0.59	0-0.23m Topsoil (50); 0.23-0.41m subsoil (51); 0.41-0.59m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
5	22.10	1.80	0.86	0-0.26m Topsoil (50); 0.26-0.66m subsoil (51); 0.66-0.86m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
6	21.80	1.80	0.88	0-0.24m Topsoil (50); 0.24-0.56m subsoil (51); 0.56-0.88m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand). Pit 1. [Pls 2 and 5]
7	21.20	1.80	0.84	0-0.31m Topsoil (50); 0.31-0.63m subsoil (51); 0.63-0.84m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
8	24.50	1.80	0.76	0-0.25m Topsoil (50); 0.25-0.63m subsoil (51); 0.63-0.76m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand). [Pl. 3]
9	6.00	1.80	0.53	0-0.15m Topsoil (50); 0.15-0.41m subsoil (51); 0.41-0.53m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
10	17.80	1.80	0.79	0-0.28m Topsoil (50); 0.28-0.56m subsoil (51); 0.56-0.79m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
11	18.80	1.80	0.75	0-0.23m Topsoil (50); 0.23-0.54m subsoil (51); 0.54-0.59m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
12	17.50	1.80	0.98	0-0.30m Topsoil (50); 0.30-0.57m mid yellow brown sandy silt (57); 0.57-0.78m subsoil (51); 0.78-0.98m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand).
13	25.20	1.80	0.80	0-0.29m Topsoil (50); 0.29-0.48m mid yellow brown sandy silt (57); 0.48-0.69m subsoil (51); 0.69-0.80m+ natural geology (Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand). [Pl. 4]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence / comments</i>
6	1	52-5	Pit	Late Iron Age / Early Roman	Pottery
2	2	56	Ditch	Late Iron Age / Early Roman	Pottery; iron slag

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of pottery

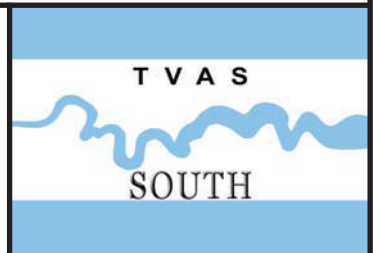
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Likely date</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
10	-	51	Moderate quartz, sparse flint and iron oxides to 1mm	100BC-AD50	1	6	Bitone, low fired, very abraded body sherd
6	1	53	Grog tempered with moderate fossil (voids) shell	100BC-AD50	3	12	Jar x1 Reduced with simple crude everted squared rim
2	2	56	Grog tempered	100BC-AD50	2	22	Bitone, worn

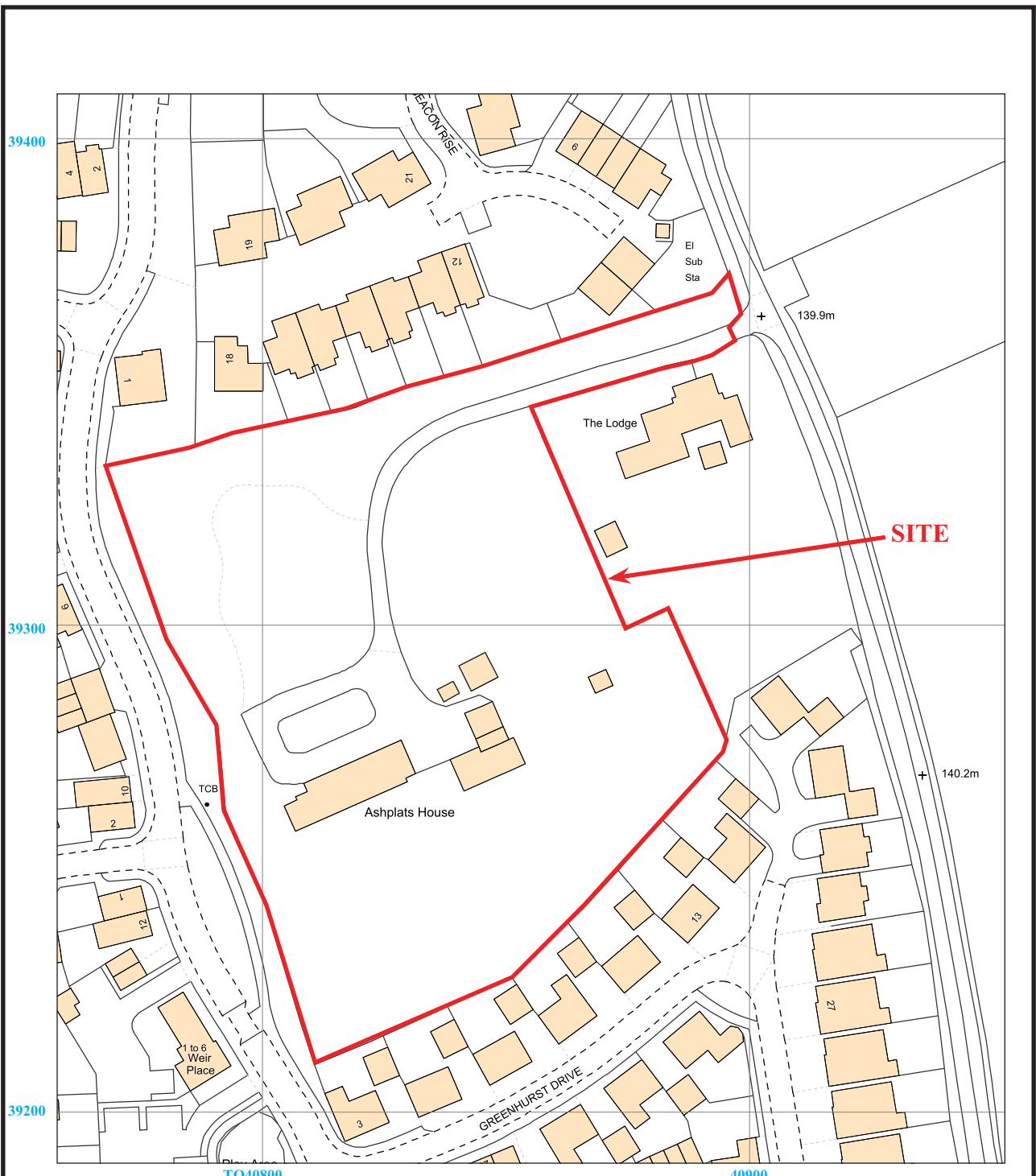


**Ashplats House, Holtye Road, East Grinstead,
West Sussex, 2021
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within East Grinstead and West Sussex.

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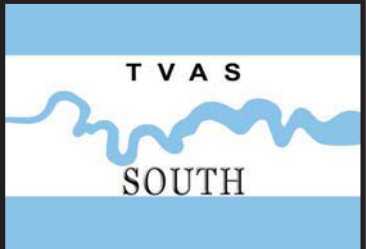
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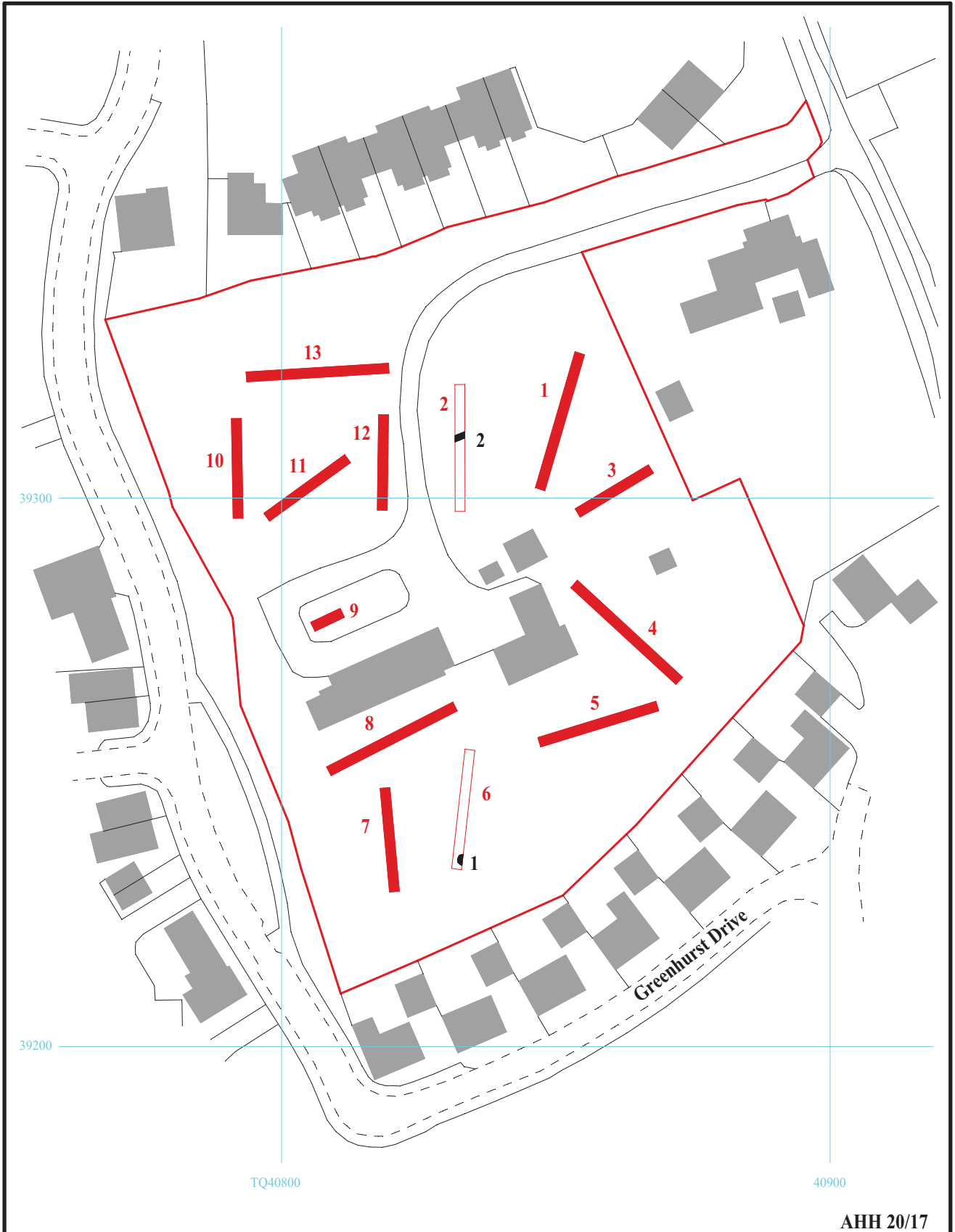


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Figure 2. Detailed site location.

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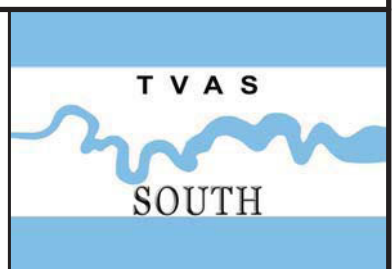


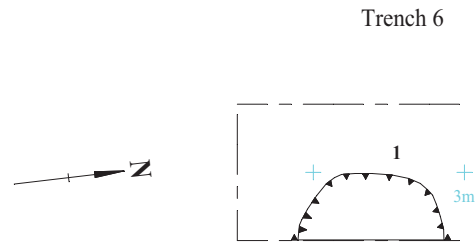
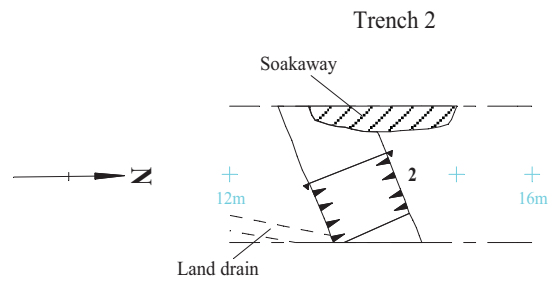


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Figure 3. Plan showing the trench layout and archaeological features.





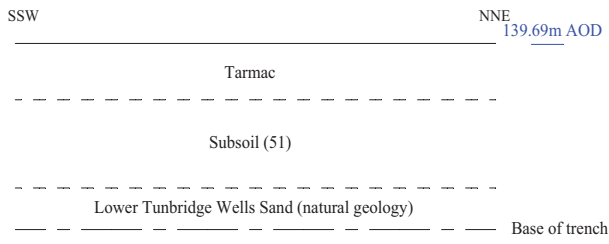
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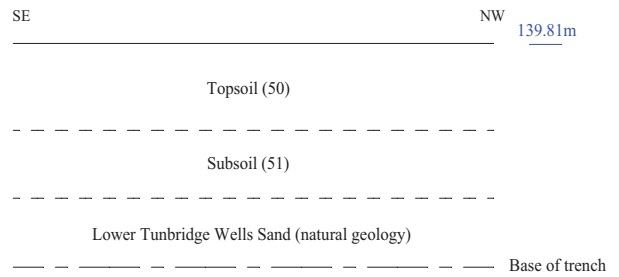
Figure 4. Plan of trenches 2 and 6.



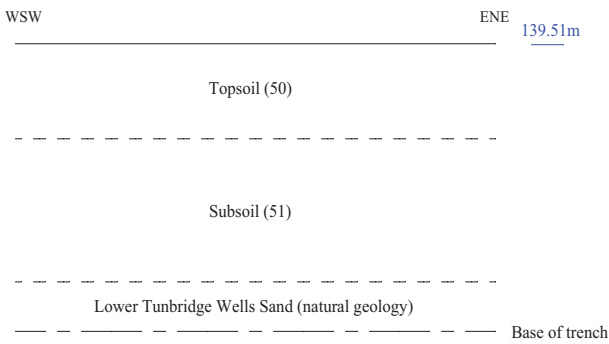
Trench 1



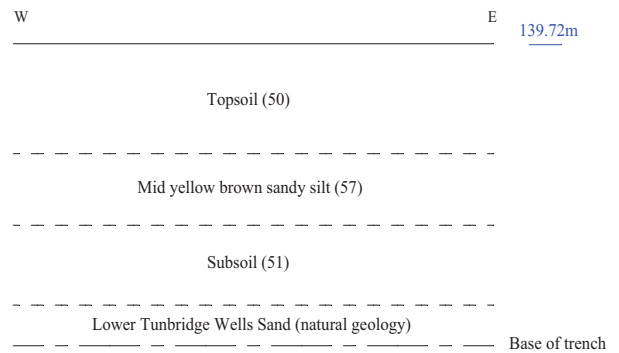
Trench 4



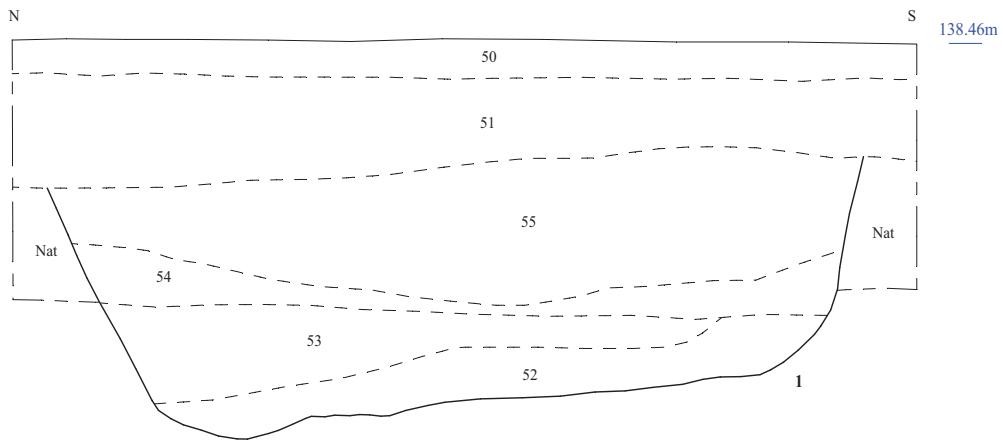
Trench 8



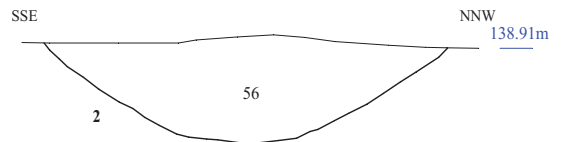
Trench 13



Trench 6



Trench 2



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Figure 5. Sections.

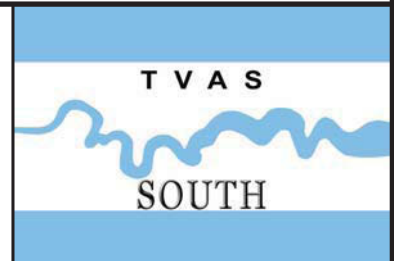




Plate 1. Trench 3, looking South-west.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 2. Trench 6, looking North.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 3. Trench 8, looking South-west.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 4. Trench 13, looking East.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.30m.



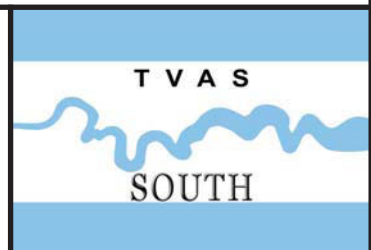
Plate 5. Trench 6, pit 1, looking East.
Scales: 1m and 0.30m.



Plate 6. Trench 2, ditch 2, looking East.
Scales: 0.30m x 2.

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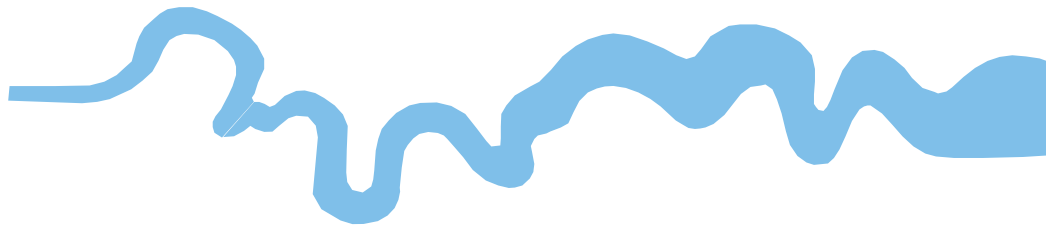
Ashplats House, Holtje Road, East Grinstead,
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Plates 1 to 6.



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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