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**Land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane,
East Hoathly, East Sussex**

Archaeological Watching Brief

**by Benjamin Matus, Odile Rouard
and Felicity Thompson**

Site Code: CFEH22/247

(TQ 5307 1805)

Land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane, East Hoathly, East Sussex

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For J D Courtney

Planning Reference : WD/2021/2672/MAJ

by Benjamin Matus, Odile Rouard

& Felicity Thompson

TVAS South

Site Code: CFEH22/247

June 2023

Summary

Site name: Land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane, East Hoathly, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 5307 1805

Planning reference: WD/2021/2672/MAJ

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 5th to 9th June 2023

Project manager: Odile Rouard

Site supervisor: Benjamin Matus

Site code: CFEH 22/247

Summary of results: The watching brief at Crouch's Farm, East Hoathly, monitored the construction of three new silage clamps, and an access road. No finds or features of archaeological interest were revealed in the access road area. The work in the area of ground reduction for the new silage clamps revealed several archaeological features, dating to the late Iron Age or early Roman period, but finds were too few to allow much interpretation of the nature of the activity these represented.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at TVAS South, Brighton, and will be deposited with an appropriate museum and the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

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	Steve Preston ✓ 07/07/23

Land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane, East Hoathly, East Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Benjamin Matus, Odile Rouard and Felicity Thompson

Report 22/247

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane, East Hoathly, East Sussex (TQ 5307 1805) (Figs. 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by J D Courtney of Crouch's Farm, East Hoathly, Lewes, East Sussex, BN6 6QX.

Planning permission (WD/2021/2672/MAJ) has been granted by Wealden District Council to construct three new silage clamps and a new access road at the site, along with refurbishment of an existing slurry lagoon. The consent is subject to two standard planning conditions (8 and 9) relating to archaeology and historic environment, which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, determined in this instance to be implemented as a watching brief during the groundworks.

This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021), and the District Council's policies on the historic environment. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the local planning authority, following consultation with the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Odile Rouard, Benjamin Matus and Sam Rishman between 5th and 9th June 2023, and the site code is CFEH 22/247. The archive is currently held at TVAS South, Brighton, and will be deposited with the appropriate museum and the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

Crouch's Farm is situated 2km north-north-east of the historic core of East Hoathly, East Sussex (Fig. 1). The site is located immediately to the north and north-east of Crouch's Farm (Fig. 2), which is located on Hollow Lane. The site slopes away steadily west to east from Hollow Lane, from a height of roughly 75m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to 65m aOD. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology consists of Wadhurst Clay (BGS 2006) and this was the natural geology encountered throughout the watching brief.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been considered in a recent desk-based assessment (ASL 2022). In summary, the site is situated in the Weald which is thought by some 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 utilised by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. However, this paucity of evidence may be due to the fact that relatively little archaeological fieldwork has been carried out in the Weald. Indeed, settlement evidence from the Iron Age has been recorded during recent excavations, such as one at Plumpton Green, to the west of the present site (Wallis and Ford 2022). The Weald was utilised for iron production during the 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.

A large concentration of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint work was found close to Hawkhurst Hill, about 450m north-east of the site, suggesting some level of occupation during these periods. A possible iron bloomery, dating from the Iron Age or Roman periods has been identified to the south-east near Scallow Bridge (ASL 2022).

Objectives and methodology

The primary aim of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved monitoring any areas of significant ground reduction in respect of the new silage clamps and access road (Figs. 2, 3 and 4). The work on the slurry lagoon was to be confined within the old slurry lagoon, and this did not require monitoring. Where archaeological deposits which may warrant preservation *in-situ* were encountered, their treatment was to be discussed in consultation with the client and the East Sussex County Council Archaeological Officer. Where it was not possible or practicable to preserve archaeological remains *in-situ* the features were to be excavated by hand and fully recorded, to ensure their preservation by record.

All significant ground reduction was to be carried out by hand, or by using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision.

Results

All ground reduction was carried out using a 360° type mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision. The groundwork for the new access road, to the north-west of the farm buildings (Fig. 3; Pl. 1) involved stripping of overburden up to 0.40m deep. In general, the stratigraphy in this area consisted of 0.25m of dark grey brown, silty clay topsoil (50), on top of 0.10m mid grey brown, silty clay subsoil (51) (Fig. 7). A yellow, grey clay natural geology was recorded throughout but no archaeological finds or features were observed.

An area of ground reduction in respect to the new silage clamps was monitored to the north-east of the farm (Fig. 4; Pl. 2). The stratigraphy within the footprint consisted of 0.30m of topsoil (50), above 0.10m of subsoil (51) (Fig.7), which in turn rested upon the same yellow, grey clay that was observed in the access road area.

Several pits, gullies, a ditch, and a tree throw, were identified in this area. Those which provided dating evidence suggest Late Iron Age to Roman activity, but ditch 20 was late post-medieval. Some key features are described below, with the full list of features summarised in Appendix 1.

Gullies 101, 102 and 103 (Figs 4, 5 and 6; Pls 3 and 9)

Gully 101 was a kidney-shaped feature, 3m long, initially continuing under the north-east edge of the site but the excavation limit was later extended so that its full extent could be recorded. Three slots excavated (1, 2, 18) showed that this feature very irregular, varying from 0.58m to 1.3m wide, and up to 0.27m deep, and contained a fill (52, 53, 71) which consisted of a dark greyish brown silty clay with gravel inclusions. A substantially complete triangular grog-tempered loom-weight from slot 1 is a typically late Iron Age form, while a struck flint from the same fill is not chronologically diagnostic.

Immediately to its south-west side, similarly curving gully 102 (examined in slots 3, 14 and 17) was very closely similar. Again the fill was a greyish brown silty clay (54, 67, 70) and the western side had been much disturbed by tree roots. The only find from this features was a flint core fragment, broadly likely to be prehistoric but not specific to any one period.

Some 18m further south, feature 103, which originally exhibited the shape of a small ring gully, upon excavation proved to be another very similar kidney-shaped feature. It also had three slots excavated through it (10, 11, 12) (Fig. 5, Pl. 6) which revealed undulating irregular sides and base recorded at a maximum width of 0.79m and a depth up to 0.39m. All slots contained fairly sterile mid grey brown silty clay with inclusions of manganese and gravel concentrated towards the base of the fill. One shard of glass from this fill (64) was possibly Roman in date.

Similar kidney-shaped features are occasionally recognised elsewhere although they are difficult to interpret and easily dismissed as natural. Although described here as curving gullies, it is tempting to associate them with deliberate tree removal (as opposed to natural tree throws) or even animal burrows but in areas where enough material culture is being disposed of for some to find its way into the fill they, at the very least, serve to indicate human action of some sort (for example at Iwade in Kent (Rouard 2021) at least in their filling.

Pits 4 and 5 (Fig. 5, Pl. 4)

Pit 4 measured approximately 1.20m by 0.65m and was 0.24m deep, and was cut into an earlier pit 5. Pit 5 had a diameter of 1.53m and was roughly circular in plan, and had a depth of 0.73m. Pit 4 was filled with a mid greyish brown silty clay (56) with some infrequent charcoal fragments. Pit 5 contained two fills; the upper fill (57) was a mid greyish brown silty clay, and had a maximum thickness of around 0.39m, and the lower fill (58) consisted of a light grey silty clay layered with burnt material, poorly preserved charcoal, and ash, and had a maximum thickness of 0.40m. Whilst larger than other pits on site, and despite the presence of burnt material, no archaeological finds were recovered from either pit.

Pits 6, 7 and 8 (Fig. 5; Pl. 5)

Three pits formed a tight cluster in the north-west corner of the site. Pit 6 was 0.70m in diameter and was quite shallow at 0.05m in maximum depth. It contained a fill (59) of mid orange brown silty clay which produced two sherds of Late Iron Age / Early Roman pottery. Approximately 1m away, a pit 7 measured 1.30m by 1.05m and had a mid greyish brown silty clay fill (60), and had a depth of 0.09m, also produced pottery of the same date and type. A much smaller pit or posthole, 8, just to the south, contained no finds.

Pits 15 and 16 (Fig. 6, Pl. 8)

Pits 15 and 16 were a pair of similar pits located at the south-east portion of the site. Pit 15 measured 0.75m in diameter and had a depth of 0.15m. It contained a fill (68) of mid yellow and reddish clay with evidence of burning. No finds were recovered from either pit.

Pit 19 (Fig. 6)

Pit 19 was located immediately to the east of Gully 101 and could potentially be associated with both curvilinear features (101 and 102). The pit was 1.30m in diameter and up to 0.18m deep and contained a single fill (72) of light grey brown clay which produced no finds.

Pits 21 and 22

Less closely related than the other pit clusters on the site, in the south-west corner were two pits. The only finds from either pit were some ferruginous siltstone nodules from pit 21.

Pits 23, 24 and 25 (Fig. 6, Pl. 10)

Another tight cluster of three pits. Pit 25 had a diameter of approximately 0.44m and a depth of 0.17m, and was filled with a dark grey brown silty clay (78) which contained fragments of charcoal and fired clay, and produced another similar late Iron Age sherd.

Ditch 100 (Fig. 5, Pl. 7)

This feature extended the length of the excavated area on a north-east to south-west orientation, around 50m long, and was excavated in three slots (9, 13 and 20) which showed it had a width of 0.70–0.93m and a depth not exceeding 0.17m. It had gentle slopes and was often ephemerally shallow in places, though consistent enough to see its full length, and show that it does continue beyond the limits of excavation. It contained a fill (62, 66, 73) of dark grey silty clay and (in slot 13) a field drain. Slot 20 yielded 18-19th century pottery and tile.

Finds

Pottery by Luke Barber

The archaeological work recovered 29 sherds of pottery, weighing 79g, from five contexts (Appendix 1). Overall the pottery consists of small to medium-sized sherds with moderate signs of abrasion. The sherds have also been adversely affected by having been buried in an acidic subsoil which has resulted in the degradation of most of the original surfaces.

With a single exception the whole assemblage appears to date to Late Iron Age or Roman Conquest period. The majority of the assemblage is composed of grog-tempered wares that became common around 50BC in the area but which continued throughout the Roman period. Only one featured sherd is present and that is of a simple everted rim jar, a form type that is long-lived. The finewares all consist of samian, albeit in a very badly degraded form but the presence of definite South Gaulish material suggests a 1st century date.

The other sherd is a locally produced glazed red earthenware of the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries.

Struck flint by Steve Ford

Two struck flints were recovered during the fieldwork. That from gully 1 (52) was a small tested nodule made on a frost-shattered nodule retaining more than 1/3 of its cortex. Just two removals were present. The second piece from gully 17 (70) is best described as a core fragment; there is evidence for numerous removals (but lacking evidence for corresponding striking platforms) but the core may have disintegrated from a frost fracture and subsequent removals were no more than chips or spalls ending in hinge fractures before the piece was abandoned.

Neither piece appears to be the by-product of an experienced flint knapper and may represent *ad hoc* use by someone who needed a sharp piece of flint quickly. Neither piece is closely datable. It might be assumed they are Neolithic or Bronze Age in date but *ad hoc* production of this sort has taken place in all periods.

Ceramic Building Material and Fired Clay by Luke Barber

A small assemblage of ceramic building material and fired clay is summarised in Appendix 2. The dominant element of the assemblage consists of a nearly complete triangular loom weight of classic Late Iron Age triangular form. The weight is broken at one tip along the line of one of the three oblique perforations and although a smaller fragment is present it does not conjoin. The weight measures 140mm along each edge and is 45mm thick and is neatly made in a grog-tempered fabric. The presence of the loom weight suggests some of the pottery at least is of this early date.

The other pieces consists of three well-made but worn fragments from peg tiles of late post-medieval date.

Other finds by Luke Barber

A single 1g shard of blue-green glass in fresh condition was recovered from gully 11 (64). This is probably from a square-sectioned bottle of Roman date. Four pieces (12g) of ferruginous siltstone that is local to the area came from pit 23 (76).

Environmental remains

Bulk soil samples were taken from four features (1, 7, 23, 25) to be sieved for palaeoenvironmental remains and to enhance small finds recovery. No charred plant remains were present in any of the sample and charcoal (present in three samples) was too comminuted or fragile for species identification.

Conclusion

The watching brief at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane, East Hoathly, successfully monitored those parts of the site affected by the construction of a new access road and the installation of the new silage clamps. Nothing of archaeological significance was identified during the monitoring of the groundworks on the new access road. However, several archaeological features including pits and a ditch were investigated during the groundworks for the new silage clamps. Gullies 101 and 103, pits 6, 7, and 25, all produced finds of pottery, glass, and a loomweight most likely dating to the 1st centuries BC and AD Late Iron Age/Roman). The other features are

undated but it is not unreasonable to suppose that at least some of them are from the same period. Finds, however, were too few to shed much light on the nature of the activity these represent, but fairly consistent signs of burning and charcoal might at least nod in the direction of some part of the processes of the iron production for which The Weald is noted in this era. In that light, four pieces of ferruginous siltstone (naturally local to the area) might not necessarily have been accidental inclusions in pit 21.

Post-medieval activity is also exhibited by the finds of 18-19th century pottery and ceramic peg tiles, recovered from a ditch oriented south-west to north-east which stretches the length of the site and continues beyond where it is on very much the same line as existing boundaries on either side.

Whilst the finds and deposits recorded here are modest, their discovery is nevertheless noteworthy as Iron Age and Roman activity within the Weald is rarely encountered.

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APPENDIX 1: Feature details

<i>Group</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence / comments</i>
101	1	52	Gully	1st C. BC - 1st C. AD	Loom weight, flint tested nodule
101	2	53	Gully		
102	3	54	Gully		
	4	56	Pit		
	5	57, 58	Pit		
	6	59	Pit	1st C. BC - 1st C. AD	Pottery
	7	60	Pit	1st C. BC - 1st C. AD	Pottery
	8	61	Pit		
100	9	62	Ditch		
103	10	63	Gully		
103	11	64	Gully	? 1st century AD	(Possible) Roman glass
103	12	65	Gully		
100	13	66	Ditch		
102	14	67	Gully		
	15	68	Pit		
	16	69	Pit		
102	17	70	Gully		Flint core fragment
101	18	71	Gully		
	19	72	Pit		
100	20	73	Ditch	Mid 18th C. - Mid 19th C.	Pottery, peg tile
	21	74	Pit		
	22	75	Pit		
	23	76	Pit		
	24	77	Pit		
	25	78	Pit	1st C. BC - 1st C. AD	Pottery

APPENDIX 2: Catalogue of Pottery

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>W (g)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
	51	Grog-tempered East Sussex Ware	LIA/RB	1	10	reduced
	51	South Gaulish Samian	LIA/RB	4	4	very worn, no slip left
6	59	Grog-tempered East Sussex Ware	LIA/RB	2	8	oxidised
7	60	Grog-tempered East Sussex Ware	LIA/RB	6	25	Jar (reduced, simple everted rim
7	60	Grog-tempered East Sussex Ware	LIA/RB	2	4	oxidised & reduced
7	60	South/Central Gaulish Samian	RB	12	20	very worn, no slip left
20	73	Glazed red earthenware (late)	LPM	1	7	clear glaze internally, worn
25	78	Grog-tempered East Sussex Ware	LIA/RB	1	1	oxidised

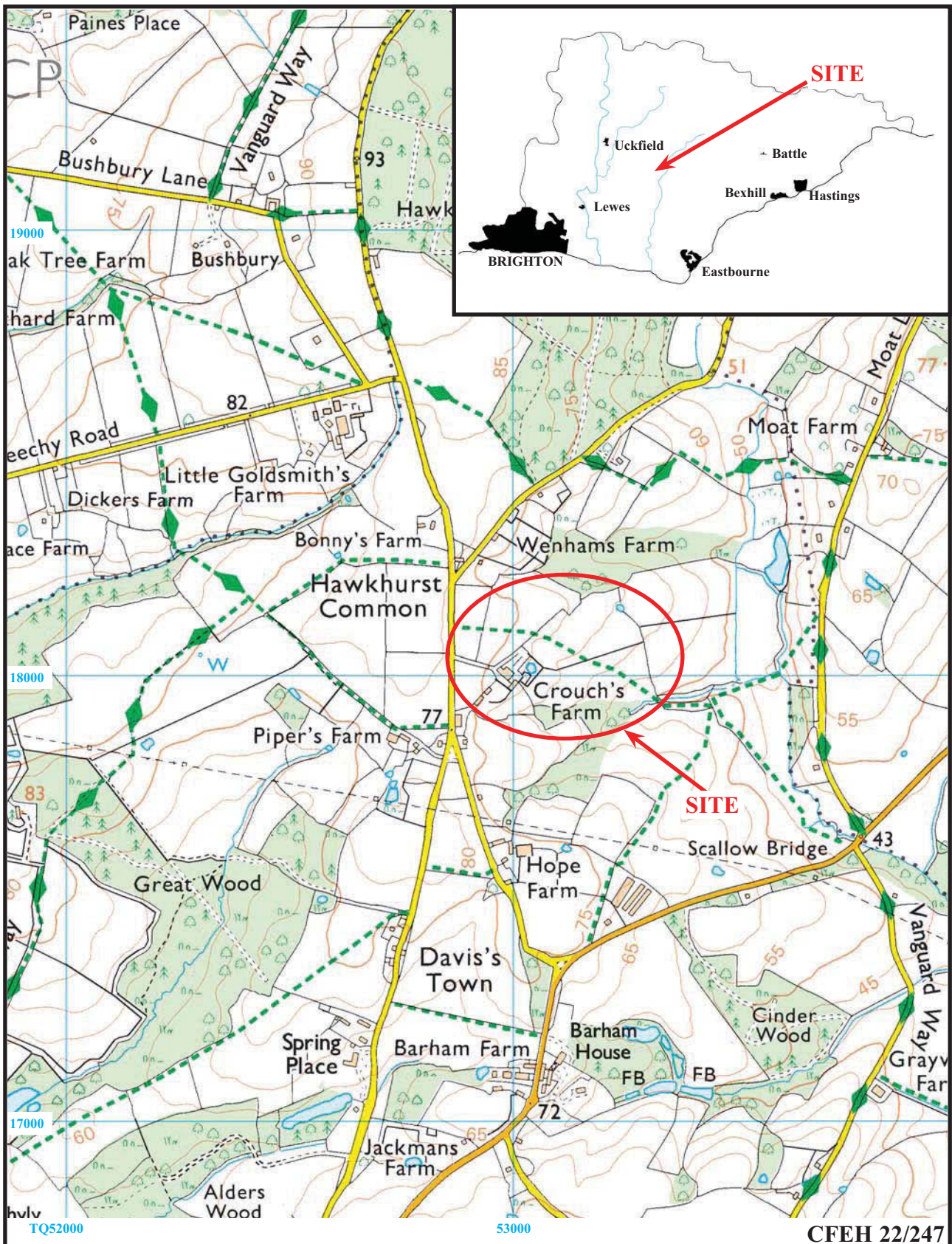
Late Iron Age 50BC-AD43;

RB – Roman AD43-410);

LPM - Late Post-Medieval c. 1750-1900.

APPENDIX 3: Ceramic Building Material assemblage summary

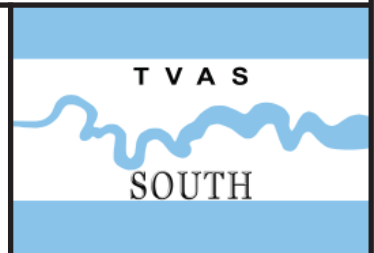
<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	52	c. 50BC-AD50	2	776	140mm each side, 45mm thick	Triangular loom weight. Grog tempered.
20	73	18th-19th century	3	12		Peg tile. Sparse iron oxide temper

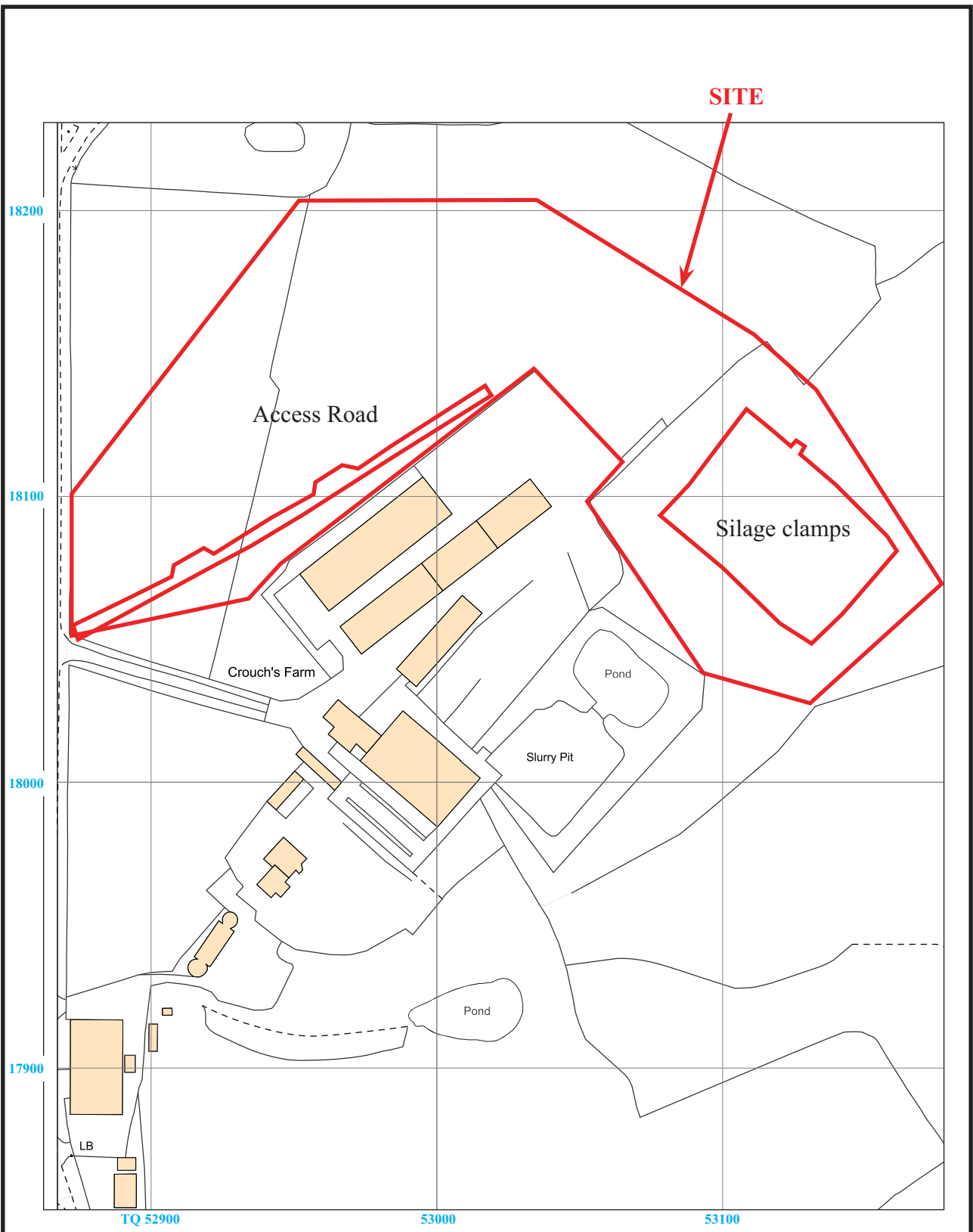


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Figure 1. Location of site within East Hoathly and East Sussex.

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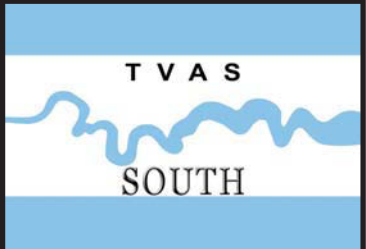


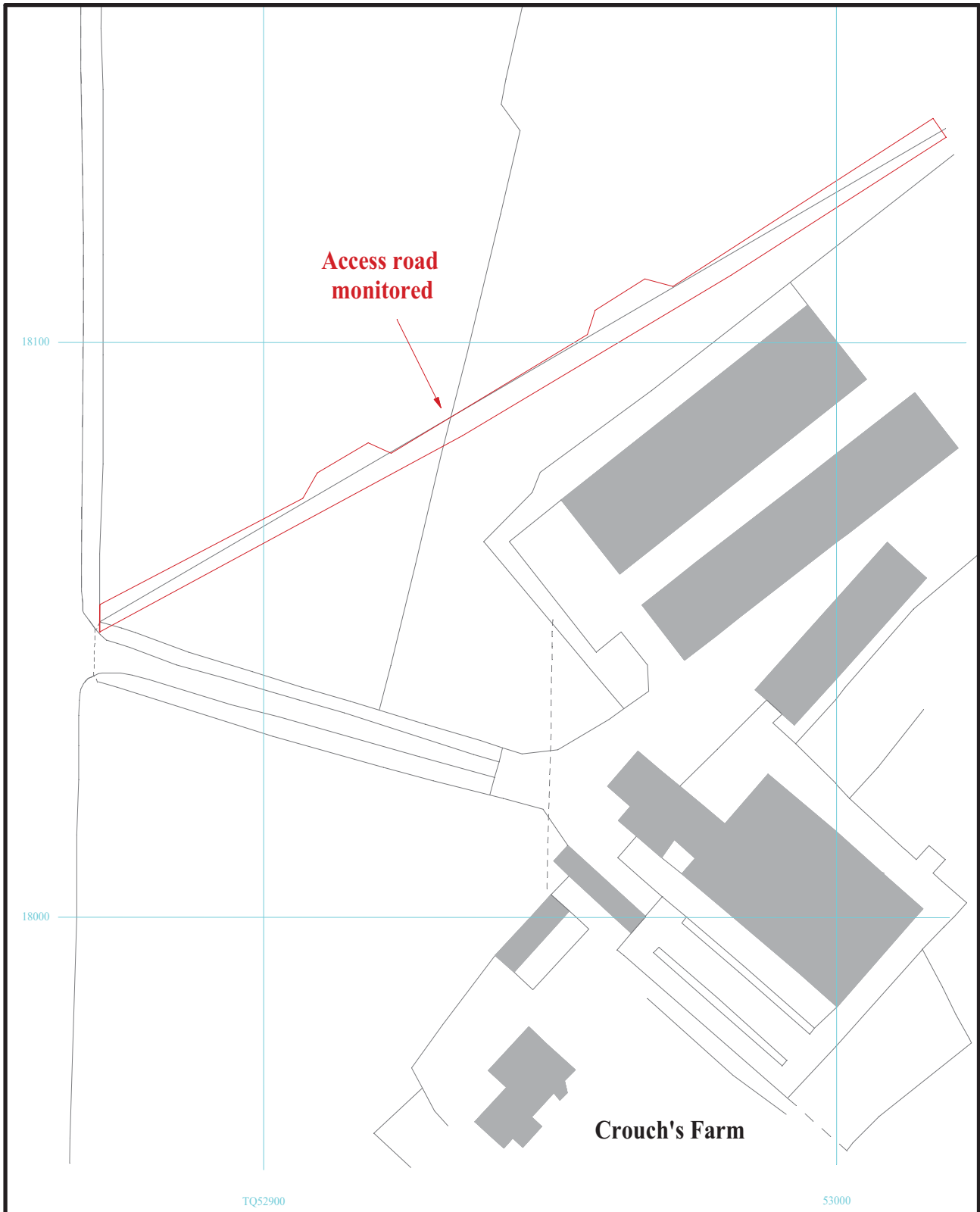
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Figure 2. Detailed site location.

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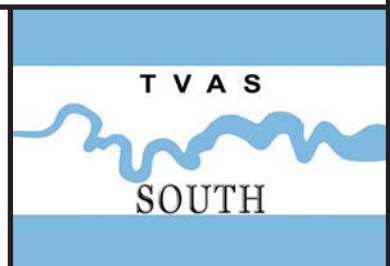


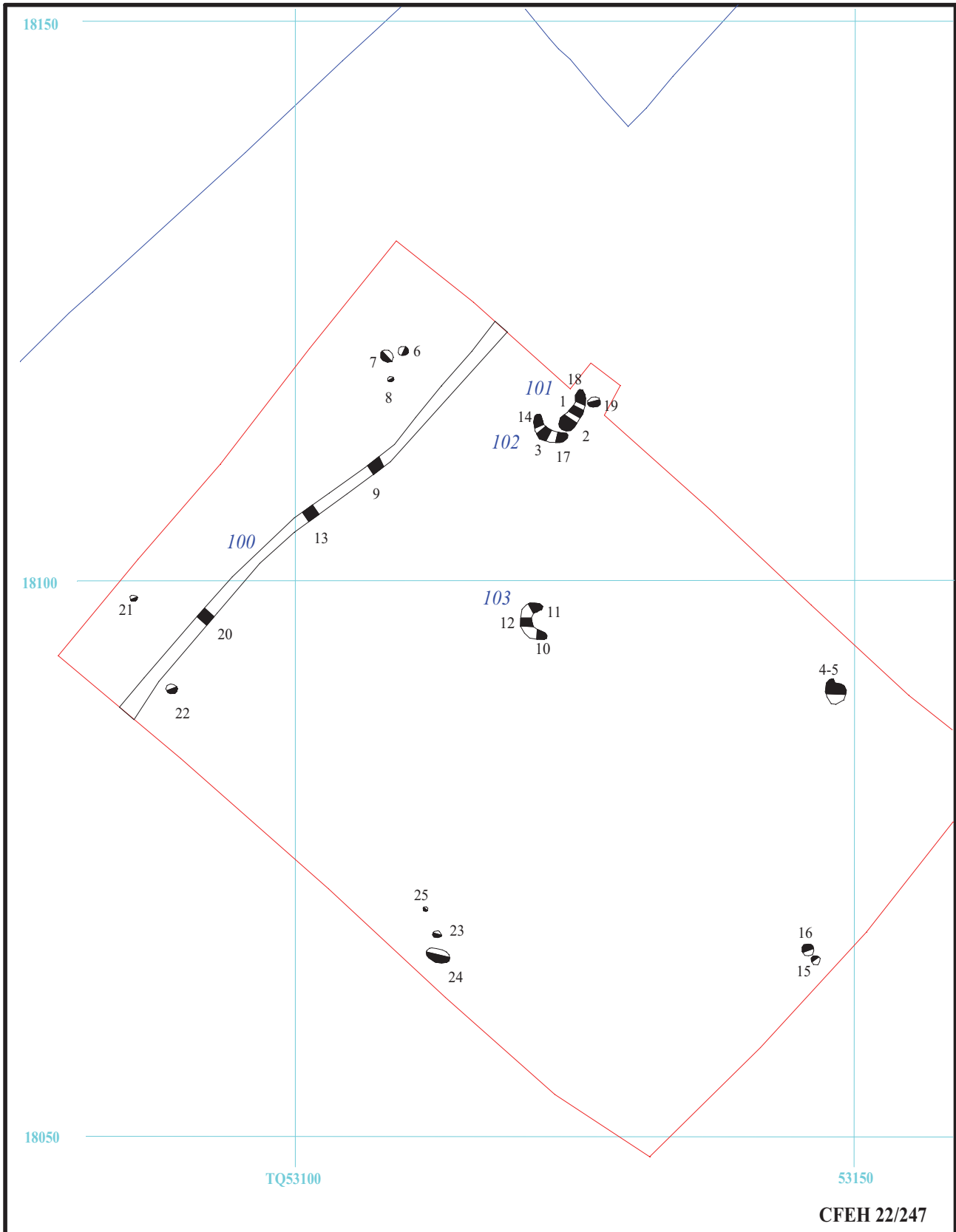
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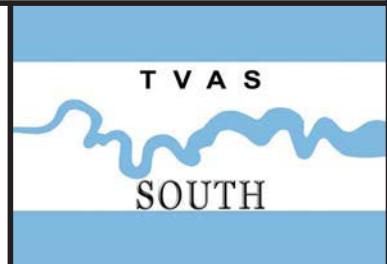
Figure 3. Plan of site showing monitored access road

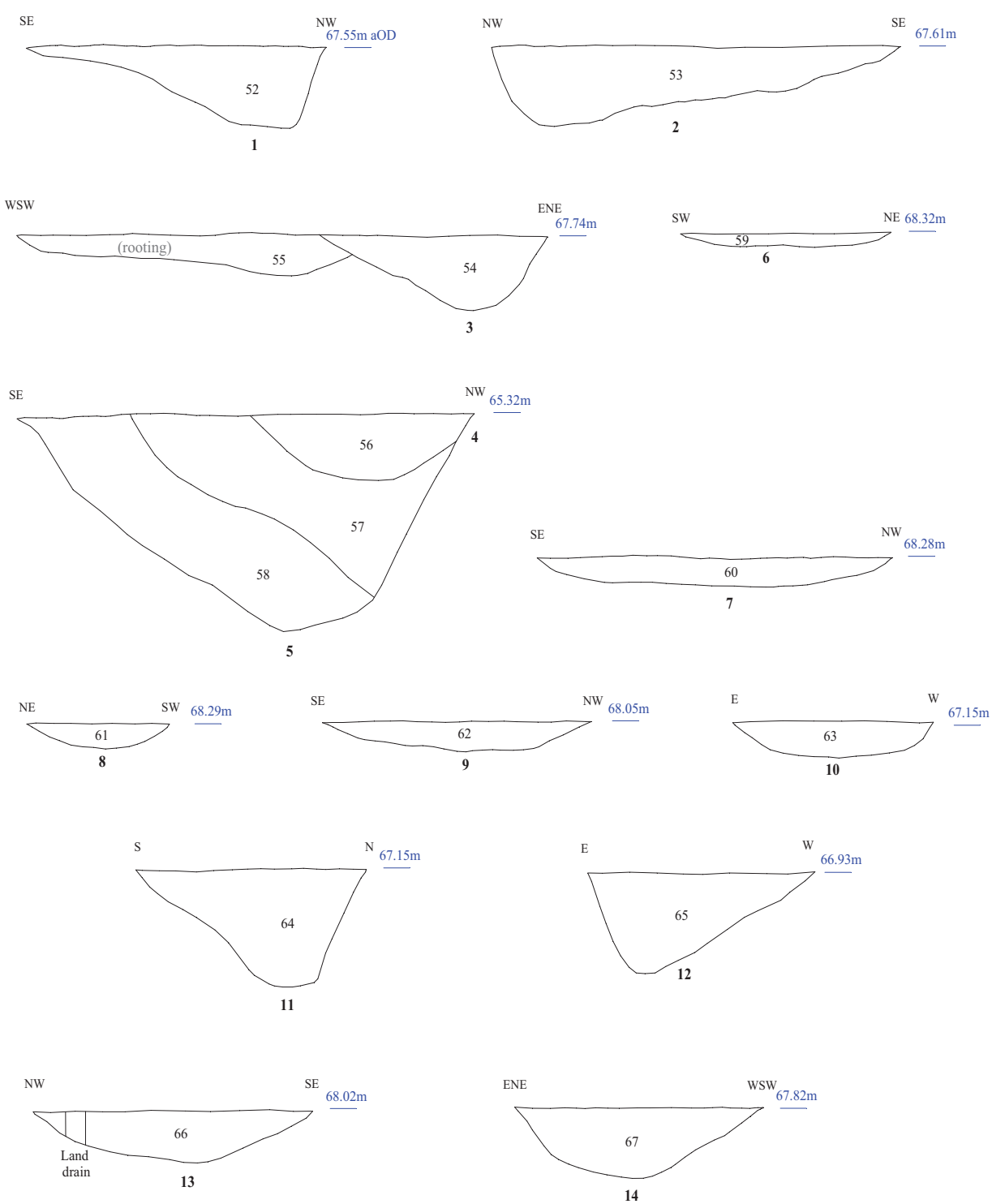




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Figure 4. Plan of silage clamp area and all excavated features.



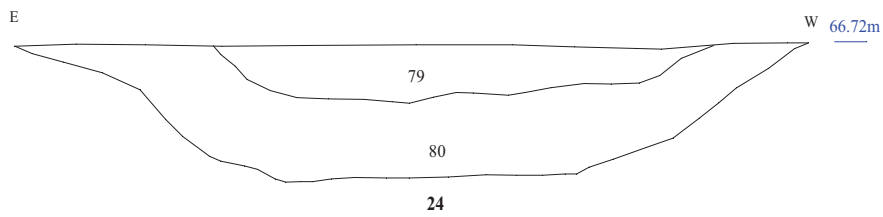
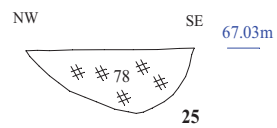
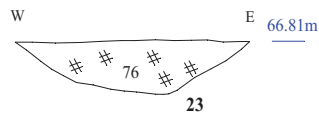
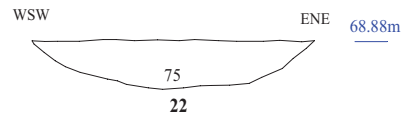
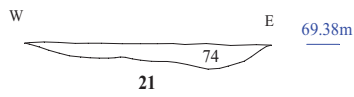
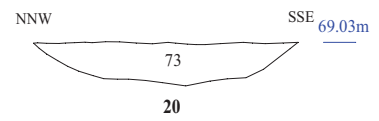
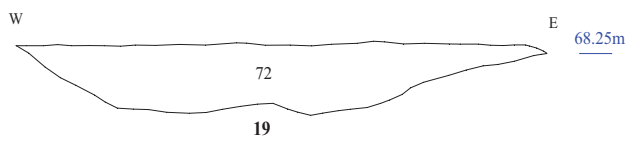
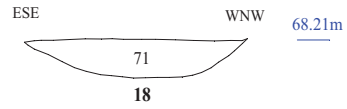
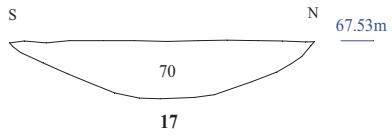
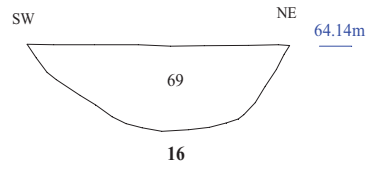
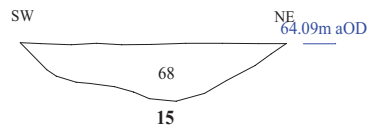


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**Land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane,
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Figure 5. Sections.





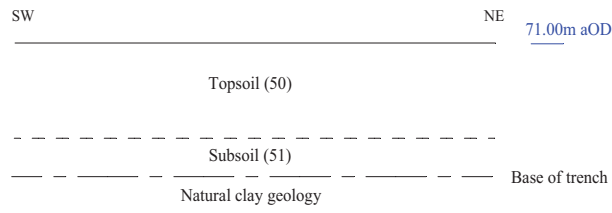
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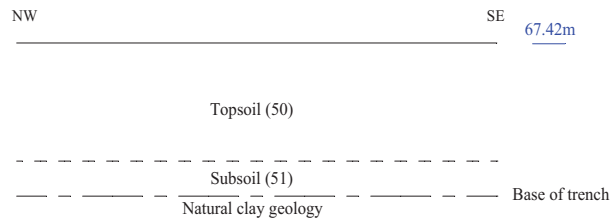
Figure 6. Sections.



Access road area monitored



Silage clamp area monitored



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Figure 7. Representative sections.

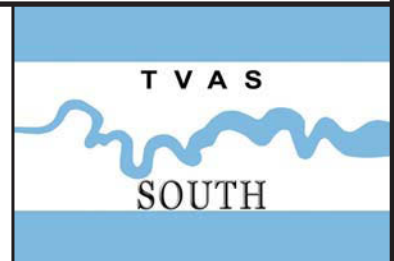




Plate 1. New Road Access. looking North East,
Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Silage Clamps Area.
General shot.



Plate 3. Gully 1, looking West.
Scales: 1m and 0.20m.



Plate 4. Pits 4 and 5, looking South.
Scales: 1m and 0.50m.



Plate 5. Pit 6, looking West.
Scale: 0.50m.



Plate 6. Tree throw 11, looking West.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.30m.

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**Land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane, East Hoathly,
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Plates 1 to 6.**

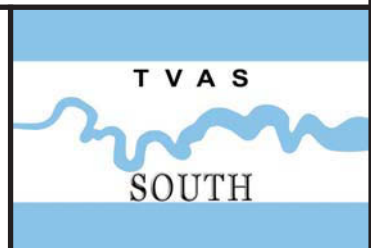




Plate 7. Ditch 13, looking North-east.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.10m.



Plate 8. Pit 15, looking North-west.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.10m.



Plate 9. Gully terminus 18, looking South.
Scales: 0.50m and 0.10m.



Plate 10. Pit 25, looking North-east.
Scales: 0.30m and 0.10m.



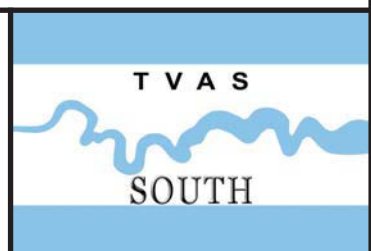
Plate 11. Iron Age loomweight from Pit 1.
Scale: 0.10m.



Plate 12. Iron Age loomweight from Pit 1.
Scale: 0.10m.

CFEH22/247

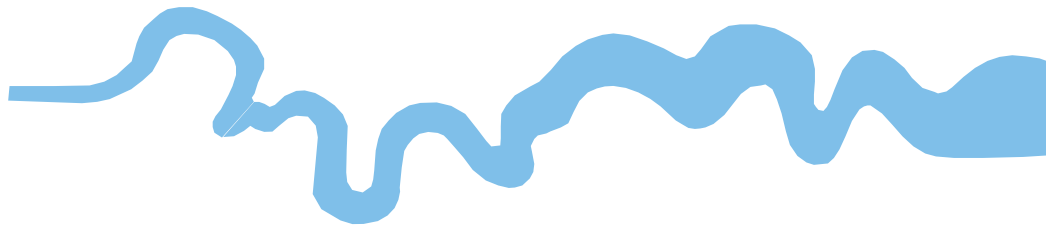
**Land at Crouch's Farm, Hollow Lane, East Hoathly,
East Sussex, 2023
Archaeological Watching Brief
Plates 7 to 12.**



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**

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