



## Archaeological Observation

Concerning:  
05-1091/76099 Forstal Road Offsite Developer Main  
Forstal Road  
Aylesford  
Kent

On behalf of:

**south east water**  
April 2020

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*Cover: View north of pre-excavation site*

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## 1 Non-Technical Summary

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*Border Archaeology undertook Archaeological Observation on behalf of South East Water in connection with the 05-1091/ 76099 Forstal Road Offsite Developer Main - Forstal Road Aylesford Kent. The work was carried out between April 9<sup>th</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019.*

*The main route (Trench 004) ran along the carriageway within a designated Conservation Area for a distance of 86m (between NGR TQ 73088 58980 and TQ 73179 58945). Three trial trenches (Trench 001, Trench 002 & Trench 003) were also excavated together with two additional trenches (Trench 005 & Trench 006) at either end of Trench 004 to facilitate connections; six trenches were thus excavated in total. The works were undertaken to a depth of up to 1.2m below existing ground level.*

*The remains of a square concrete structure (004005) in Trench 004 have been interpreted as a possible WWII 'mine-pit', although there is no recorded evidence for such a feature in this location and the remains could equally represent an item of modern street furniture, such as a traffic bollard.*

*A small amount of post-medieval and modern pottery, together with a fragment of medieval ceramic building material, was recovered from modern road subbase material (006004). However, this material will have been imported from elsewhere and the finds incorporated within it are therefore of little interpretative value.*

*Although Forstal Road is a fairly long-established routeway, the deposits encountered during the groundworks were largely associated with modern road construction activity and service installation, with no evidence found of earlier road surfaces.*

## 2 Introduction

Border Archaeology (BA) was commissioned by South East Water (SEW) to undertake Archaeological Observation (AO) of the 05-1091/ 76099 Forstal Road Offsite Developer Main - Forstal Road Aylesford Kent (*fig. 1*). The work was carried out between April 9<sup>th</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019.

Sections of open-cut trenching (see *fig. 2*) were excavated, as follows:

Trench	Dimensions (L × W × D) max
Trench 001	2.17m (l) × 0.72m (w) × 1.12m (d)
Trench 002	2.08m (l) × 0.63m (w) × 1.20m (d)
Trench 003	2.11m (l) × 0.64 m (w) × 1.20-1.35m (d)
Trench 004	86m (l) × 0.36m (w) × 1.20m (d)
Trench 005	1.83m (l) × 1.3m (w) × 1.20m (d)
Trench 006	3.05m (l) × 1.13m (w) × 1.20m (d)

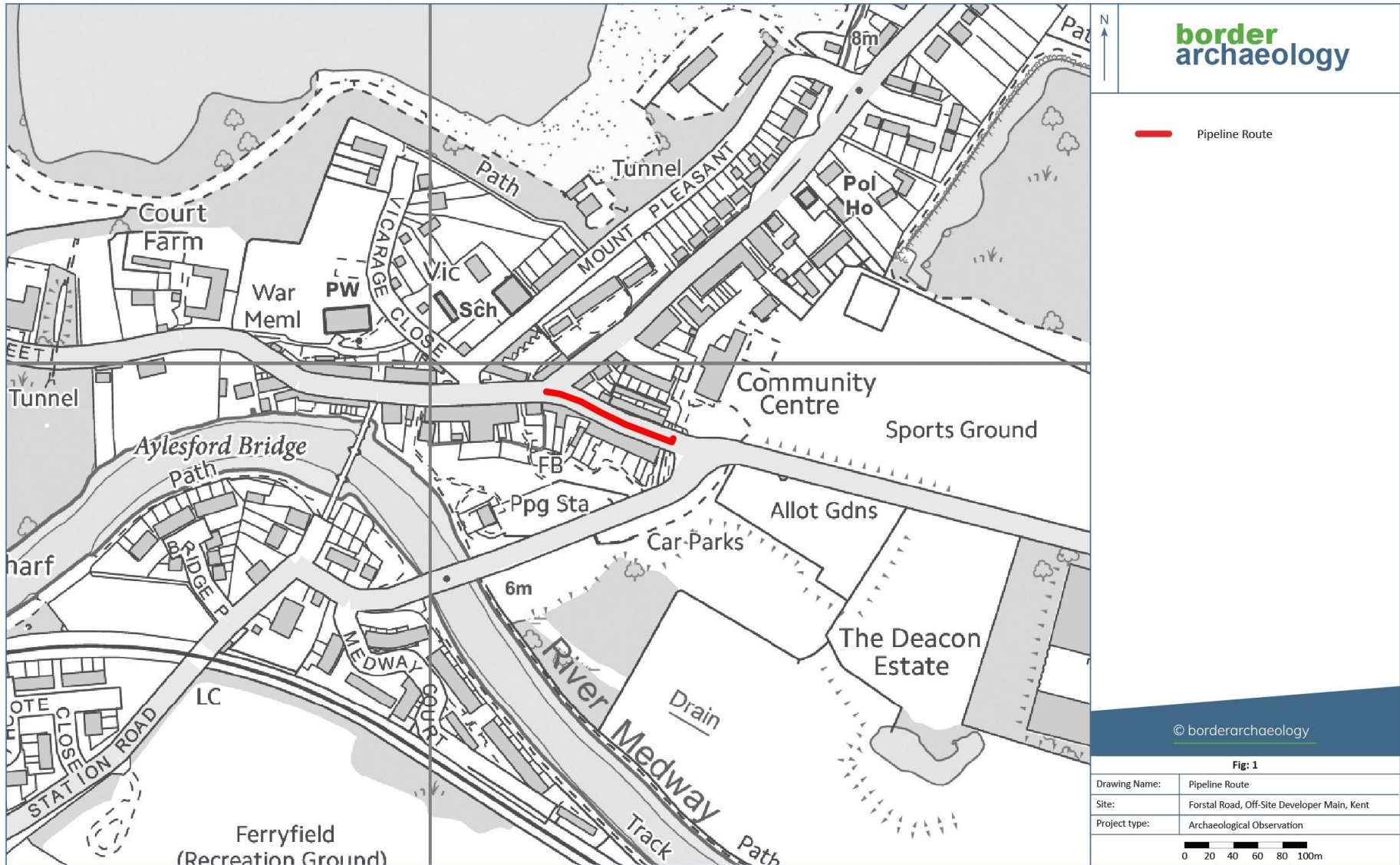
## 3 Topography & Geology

The pipeline runs at c.5m AOD for a distance of 86m WNW-ESE along Forstal Road on the E outskirts of Aylesford between NGR TQ 73088 58980 and NGR TQ 73179 58945. The WNW extent of the pipeline route lies roughly 165m ENE of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century bridge over the River Medway, a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

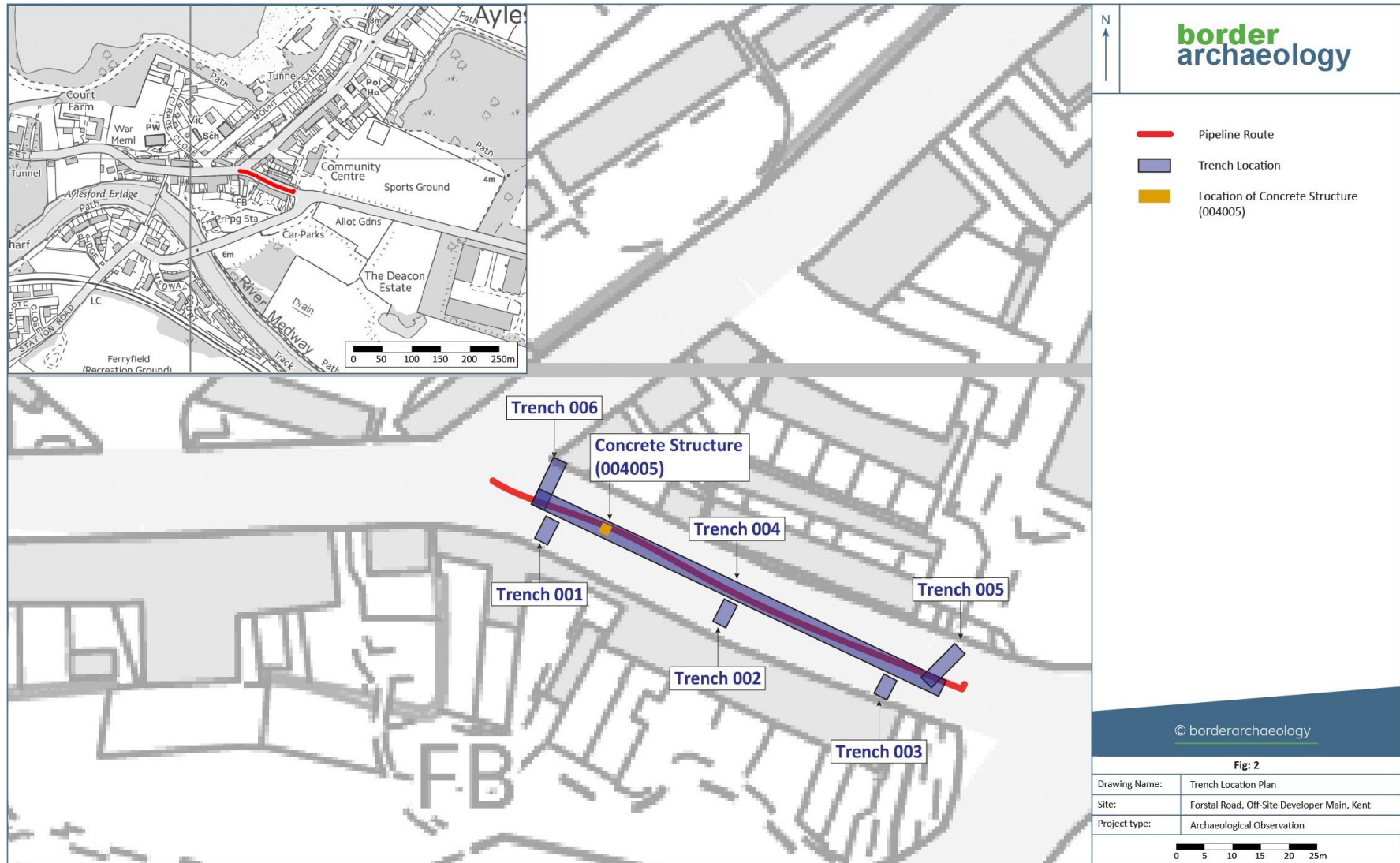
The soils of the area consist mainly of typical argillic brown earths of the FYFIELD 2 Series (571e), composed of well-drained coarse loamy and sandy soils over sands and sandstones (Soil Survey of England & Wales 1983).

The area overlies bedrock of the Folkestone formation overlain by Quaternary sand and gravel. Borehole data recovered from Aylesford Sandpits roughly 350m NW of the route (NGR TQ 72750 59090) show topsoil to a depth of 0.3m overlying dark and light brown subsoils to an approximate depth of 2.1m above a thin layer of ragstone. A deep sequence of sand and gravel deposits was encountered beneath the ragstone (British Geological Survey 2019).

However, the only deposits encountered were those relating to road construction and service installation activity; the natural substratum was not revealed at any point along the route.







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## 4 Historical and Archaeological Background

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A Rapid Appraisal (BA 2018) has been previously submitted in connection with this programme of work, of which the following is a summary.

### 4.1 Prehistoric

The 'Medway Valley Palaeolithic Project' (MVPP) identified the Aylesford area as one of extensive mapped fluvial terrace deposits and aggregate extraction with substantial recovered archaeological evidence.

Eight prehistoric findspots are recorded on the Kent HER in Aylesford at NGR TQ 7300 5900, which produced a number of Palaeolithic hand axes and related artefacts, including a Levallois core and eight Levallois flakes, a chipped and a polished prehistoric axe, a pair of Mesolithic tranchet axes and a Mesolithic blade or flake.

Whilst the precise location of these findspots is unclear, it is likely that many were located in the vicinity of the Aylesford sandpit roughly 340m NW of the route at its closest point, while other finds may also have been recovered from the Aylesford gravel quarry formerly located to the SE of Forstal Road.

Significant evidence of Bronze Age and Iron Age activity has also been identified in the vicinity of the Aylesford sandpit, including a group of Bronze Age burials found on the E side and three cists containing Bronze Age crouched burials on the W side. A Late Iron Age cremation cemetery and two stone cists containing human remains were found in 1886 within the same area.

### 4.2 Romano-British

No evidence for Romano-British activity has been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the pipeline scheme, although evidence of occupation from this period has been identified in the wider surrounding area.

### 4.3 Medieval

The pipeline route extends along Forstal Road to the E of the historic core of Aylesford village, the origins of which appear to date back to the Anglo-Saxon period. The course of Forstal Road, heading E from Aylesford towards the outlying hamlet of Forstal, appears to be long-established, dating back at least to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. No archaeological investigations have been undertaken along this stretch of Forstal Road, so it remains uncertain whether the medieval settlement did indeed extend further to the E. Aylesford Bridge (NGR TQ 72942 58930), a Scheduled Ancient Monument (List Entry No. 1005182) and Grade I Listed Building (List Entry No. 1363113), is located c.165m ESE of the WNW extent of the pipeline route. The structure comprises a multi-span bridge over the River Medway constructed of Kentish ragstone with seven arches in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the two central arches being replaced in 1824 by a single arch to allow for the passage of larger vessels.

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## 4.4 Post-medieval

Historic mapping dating back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century indicates that the present course of Forstal Road, extending E of Aylesford High Street, had already been established by that date, although the land lying to the N and S of the road appears to be only sparsely occupied prior to c.1800.

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## 5 Aims & Objectives

The main aim of the programme of archaeological work was to locate and record any archaeological finds, features or deposits within the groundworks area and to confirm that no impact on the archaeological resource occurred during the course of the groundworks without the implementation of this programme of archaeological work.

Additionally, potential was identified in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (BA 2019)(hereafter referred to as *WSI*) to address research themes and priorities detailed in the emergent South East Research Framework (SERF) relating to Palaeolithic activity (Wenban-Smith *et al.* 2017) and to later prehistoric funerary practices, technology and material culture (Champion 2019). SERF also aims to achieve a better understanding of the varied chronology (development and maintenance) of the region's medieval roads (Weekes 2013, 40) and the possibility was also noted that evidence of previous metalled road surfaces may be encountered along Forstal Road, the course of which evidently relates to a long-established routeway.

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## 6 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* issued by the (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b). BA is cognisant of Kent County Councils *Specification for an archaeological watching brief for linear utility scheme* (Heritage Conservation Group, 2016) and also adheres to the *ClfA Code of conduct* (2019).

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA) states (2014a, 4) that the purpose of a watching brief (Archaeological Observation) is:

- To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
- To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

## 6.1 Open-cut trenching

Some 86m of trenching (Trench 004) was opened within the carriageway along Forstal Road for the installation of a 180mm High Performance Poly Ethylene reinforcement main. Additionally, three investigatory trial-trenches (Trenches 001, 002 & 003) and two connection trenches (Trenches 005 & 006) were excavated (*fig. 2*).

In accordance with the *WSI* (BA 2019), the trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a straight-edged (toothless) bucket under the supervision of the attending archaeologist. Any features with archaeological potential were investigated by hand and fully recorded where appropriate.

## 6.2 Recording

This programme of works was recorded under the site code **FRA19**.

An OASIS online record has been initiated and the OASIS number assigned is: borderar1-348805.

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with BA's Archaeological Field Recording Manual (BA 2017). A pro-forma context recording sheet was compiled for each stratigraphic unit encountered. In the absence of archaeological deposits and/or features, the written record comprised a pro-forma trench recording sheet and an illustrated representative section for each excavated trench.

The drawn record was produced on gridded, archive-stable polyester film at an appropriate scale. Representative measured sections were prepared, as appropriate, showing the sequence and depths of deposits, where practicable and strictly within established safety parameters. All drawings were numbered and listed in a drawing register; these drawing numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

A photographic record was made using a high-resolution digital camera, comprising photographs of archaeological features and appropriate groups of features and structures. Appropriate scales were included and all records have been indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

## 7 Results

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Context descriptions are tabulated in full at the end of this Report (see *Appendix 1*). All vertical measurements are recorded in terms of depth below existing ground level (bgl).

### 7.1 Trench 001

Trench 001 (*Plate 1; fig 2*) ran NNE–SSW and was the first of three trial-trenches opened within the carriageway. The trench measured 2.17m (l) × 0.72m (w) × 1.12m (d).

The modern tarmac road surface (001001), 0.25m thick, was broken with a hydraulic breaker and removed using a toothless bucket. The underlying hardcore (001002) was 0.04m thick and overlaid a 0.32m thick hardcore aggregate (001003) containing frequent limestone and flint. A basal subbase of silty sand and gravel (001004) was excavated to the engineering depth of 1.12m.

No archaeology was encountered and the natural substratum was not reached.



*Plate 1: WNW-facing section of Trench 001 with 1m scale*

## 7.2 Trench 002

The second trial-trench was orientated NNE–SSW and measured 2.08m (l) × 0.63m (w) × 1m-1.2m (d) (*Plates 2 & 3; fig. 2*).

A 0.22m thick tarmac layer (002001) was again removed using a hydraulic breaker and toothless bucket down to the underlying hardcore (002002), which was 0.07m thick. Beneath this was a 0.22m thick sand and gravel aggregate (002003) overlying subbase (002004), which comprised silty sand and gravel down to the trench base.

No archaeology was encountered and the natural substratum was not reached.



*Plate 2: WNW-facing section of Trench 002 with 1m scale.*



*Plate 3: Overview of Trench 002, looking SSW with 1m scale*

### 7.3 Trench 003

The third trial-trench (*Plate 4; fig. 2*) was orientated NNE–SSW and measured 2.11m (l) × 0.64m (w) × 1.2m–1.35m (d) (*Plate 4*).

The sequence of deposits encountered reflected those in the previous two trial trenches, consisting of 0.19m thick tarmac (003001) overlying 0.28m thick hardcore (003002). The underlying aggregate (003003) was 0.53m thick, with subbase (003004) excavated to an engineering depth of 1.2m–1.35m.

No archaeology was encountered and the natural substratum was not reached.



*Plate 4: WNW-facing section of Trench 003, looking ESE with 1m scale*

### 7.4 Trench 004

The main pipeline installation trench measured 86m(l) × 0.36m (w) × 1.12m–1.2m (d) and ran WNW-ESE along the carriageway (*Plates 5-8; fig. 2*).

The 0.39m thick tarmac road surface (004001) was broken and removed to reveal hardcore (004002) overlying a 0.31m thick sand and gravel aggregate (004003), beneath which was the silty sand and gravel subbase (004004) visible to an engineering depth of 1.12m–1.2m.

A concrete structure (004005) was revealed 0.06m below the tarmac approximately 14.5m from the WNW extent of the trench (*Plates 6 & 7; fig. 2*). The structure was square in plan, measuring 0.9m (l) × 0.9m (w) × >1m (d), with

a wood-lined central hollow (004007) measuring 0.3m (l) × 0.3m (w). Its function remains unclear and neither the historic mapping nor the available photographic evidence indicates a structure in this location. There is a possibility that it relates in some way to drainage and may possibly comprise an infilled inspection chamber or similar; alternatively, it could be the base of a bollard or other traffic control measure, although this would not necessarily account for the wood-lined void at its base, unless this formed a below-ground compartment housing components associated with the structure.

It is also worth considering a wartime origin. Although the structure is not identifiable with the location of any recorded WWII defensive structures, Aylesford lay on or close to a GHQ anti-tank stop-line and the remains incorporate features that suggest (004005) could be a decommissioned mine-pit. These structures comprised a shallow concrete-lined pit set into the road of sufficient size to hold an anti-tank mine, into which a wooden plug could be inserted when the pit was not in use, thus allowing traffic to pass normally. Whilst the evidence is not incompatible with such an interpretation, the actual date and function of this structure remain unconfirmed.



*Plate 5: WSW-facing section of Trench 004 with 1m scale*





*Plate 6: Mid-ex plan of possible mine-pit (004005) with 0.5m scale*



*Plate 7: ENE-facing section of possible mine-pit (004005) consisting of (004006), (004007), with 1m scale*



*Plate 8: View WNW of Trench 004 fully excavated, with 1m scale*

## 7.5 Trench 005

This was a connection trench at the ESE extent of Trench 004; it was aligned NNE–SSW and measured 1.83m (l) × 1.3m (w) × 1m–1.2m (d) (*Plate 9; fig. 2*).

The tarmac (005001) extended to a thickness of 0.31m above a 0.06m thick hardcore (005002). Underlying this was a 0.21m thick sand and gravel aggregate (005003) above the silty sand and gravel subbase (005004), which was excavated to an engineering depth of 1.07m–1.2m.

This trench was crossed WSW–ESE by services including a mains water pipe required for the connection found approximately 0.6m bgl and a gas main [005006]/(005005) parallel to the water main located 0.84m bgl.

No archaeology was encountered and the natural substratum was not reached.



*Plate 9: ENE-facing section of Trench 005, with 1m scale*

## 7.6 Trench 006

Trench 006 (*Plates 10 & 11; fig. 2*) was orientated NNE–SSW and measured 3.05m (l) × 1.13m (w) × 1m–1.2m (d).

The tarmac (006001) extended to a thickness of 0.22m above a 0.1m thick hardcore (006002). Underlying (006002) was the aggregate material (006003) with a thickness of 0.4m; underlying this was a layer of ragstone (006005) 0.11m thick above subbase (006004) to the base of the trench at 1.2m–1.25m bgl.

Six fragments of redeposited post-medieval pottery and one of medieval CBM were recovered from this basal subbase deposit. No archaeological features were encountered and the natural substratum was not reached.



*Plate 10: View NNE of Trench 006 with 1m scale*



*Plate 11: WNW-facing section of Trench 006, looking ESE with 1m scale*

## 8 Significance of the Results

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The engineering groundworks extending along the carriageway of Forstal Road revealed the remains of a square concrete structure (004005) with a wood-lined void (004007) at its base, the date and function of which remains unclear. However, among several possibilities, it has been suggested that (004005)/(004007) may comprise the remains of a decommissioned WWII mine-pit, a type of defensive feature placed in the road that was designed to hold an anti-tank mine and which, when not in use, could be sealed with a wooden plug allowing traffic to pass. However, whilst the remains do share certain features in common with mine-pits, no record of such a feature has been identified in this location and this interpretation therefore remains speculative and unconfirmed.

A small ceramic assemblage was recovered from a single context, (006004), all of which consisted of pottery of later post-medieval date, apart from a single fragment of medieval CBM. However, its recovery from an insecure context, likely incorporating imported material, means the assemblage is of little interpretative value.

## 9 Conclusion

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The engineering groundworks largely encountered deposits associated with modern road construction and service installation activity. Whilst Forstal Road is evidently a routeway of some antiquity, no earlier road surfaces survived.

The finds assemblage was limited to six sherds of pottery and a single fragment of CBM, all of which was recovered from (006004). The assemblage contained material of medieval as well as later post-medieval date but is likely to have been redeposited from elsewhere in imported subbase material. No earlier finds were made.

It is suggested that the remains of a square concrete structure (004005) encountered beneath the modern road surface in Trench 004 may be those of a WWII mine-pit. However, the evidence is inconclusive and it is equally possible that the structure is a later feature associated with drainage or the base of a modern traffic control structure, such as a bollard.

Overall, these results are of little value in terms of regional research themes and priorities; however, it should be noted that the natural substratum was not reached at any point during the groundworks and it is therefore possible that earlier deposits survive below engineering depth.

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## 12 Appendix 1: Context Tables

### 12.1 Trench 001

Context	Slot	Type	F/B	F/O	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Sample No	Provisional Date
(001001)	-	Deposit	-	-	Black tarmac; 0.25m thick. Overlies (001002).	Modern road surface.	-	-	Modern
(001002)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted hardcore; moderate pebble inclusions, occasional cobbles; 0.04m thick. Underlies (001001). Overlies (001003).	Hardcore aggregate.	-	-	Modern
(001003)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted sandy gravel aggregate; frequent cobbles (limestone & flint), occasional pebbles; 0.32m thick. Underlies (001002). Overlies (001004).	Subgrade.	-	-	Modern
(001004)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted silty sand & gravel; occasional pebbles, cobble (flint & limestone) & brick; 0.51m thick. Underlies (001003).	Subbase.	-	-	Modern

### 12.2 Trench 002

Context	Slot	Type	F/B	F/O	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Sample No	Provisional Date
(002001)	-	Deposit	-	-	Black tarmac; 0.22m thick. Overlies (002002).	Modern road surface.	-	-	Modern



(002002)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted hardcore; moderate pebble inclusions, occasional cobbles; 0.07m thick. Underlies (00201). Overlies (002003).	Hardcore aggregate.	-	-	Modern
(002003)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted sandy gravel aggregate; frequent cobbles (limestone & flint), occasional pebbles; 0.22m thick. Underlies (002002). Overlies (002004).	Subgrade.	-	-	Modern
(002004)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted silty sand & gravel; occasional pebbles, cobble (flint & limestone) & brick; 0.61m thick. Underlies (002003).	Subbase.	-	-	Modern

### 12.3 Trench 003

Context	Slot	Type	F/B	F/O	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Sample No	Provisional Date
(003001)	-	Deposit	-	-	Black tarmac; 0.19m thick. Overlies (003002).	Modern road surface.	-	-	Modern
(003002)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted hardcore; moderate pebble inclusions, occasional cobbles; 0.09-0.14m thick. Underlies (003001). Overlies (003003).	Hardcore aggregate.	-	-	Modern
(003003)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted sandy gravel aggregate; frequent cobbles (limestone & flint), occasional pebbles; 0.53m thick. Underlies (003002). Overlies (003004).	Subgrade.	-	-	Modern
(003004)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted silty sand & gravel; occasional pebbles, cobble (flint & limestone) & brick; 0.49m thick. Underlies (003003).	Subbase.	-	-	Modern

12.4 Trench 004

Context	Slot	Type	F/B	F/O	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Sample No	Provisional Date
(004001)	-	Deposit	-	-	Black tarmac; 0.3m thick. Overlies (004002), (004005).	Modern road surface.	-	-	Modern
(004002)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted hardcore; moderate pebble inclusions, occasional cobbles; 0.09m thick. Underlies (004001). Overlies (004003).	Hardcore aggregate.	-	-	Modern
(004003)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted sandy gravel aggregate; frequent cobbles (limestone & flint), occasional pebbles; 0.31m thick. Underlies (004002). Overlies (004004).	Subgrade.	-	-	Modern
(004004)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted silty sand & gravel; occasional pebbles, cobble (flint & limestone) & brick; 0.42m thick. Underlies (004003). Underlies (004003).	Subbase.	-	-	Modern
(004005)	-	Structure	-	-	Concrete; square in plan; measures 0.9m × 0.9m, with 0.3m × 0.3m centrally placed wood-lined hollow at base. Underlies (004001).	Possible WWII mine-pit.	-	-	Modern
(004006)	-	-	-	-	VOID.	-	-	-	-
(004007)	-	Deposit	-	-	Wood; measures 0.3m (l) × 0.02m (th.).	Wood lining at base of (004005).	-	-	Modern

12.5 Trench 005

Context	Slot	Type	F/B	F/O	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Sample No	Provisional Date
(005001)	-	Deposit	-	-	Black tarmac; 0.31m thick. Overlies (005002).	Modern road surface.	-	-	Modern
(005002)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted hardcore; moderate pebble inclusions, occasional cobbles; 0.06m thick. Underlies (005001). Overlies (005003).	Hardcore aggregate.	-	-	Modern
(005003)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted sandy gravel aggregate; frequent cobbles (limestone & flint), occasional pebbles; 0.21m thick. Underlies (005002). Overlies (005004).	Subgrade.	-	-	Modern
(005004)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted silty sand & gravel; occasional pebbles, cobble (flint & limestone) & brick; 0.49m thick. Underlies (005003).	Subbase.	-	-	Modern
(005005)	-	Fill	-	[005006]	Loose gravel; not fully excavated.	Fill of service trench.	-	-	Modern
[005006]	-	Cut	(005005)	-	Cut; linear in plan; aligned WSW–ENE; break of slope top sharp, sides vertical; >1m (L) × 0.30m (W) × depth unknown (as not fully excavated). Filled by (005005).	Cut of gas main trench.	-	-	Modern

12.6 Trench 006

Context	Slot	Type	F/B	F/O	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Sample No	Provisional Date
(006001)	-	Deposit	-	-	Black tarmac; 0.22m thick. Overlies (006002).	Modern road surface	-	-	Modern
(006002)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted hardcore; moderate pebble inclusions, occasional cobbles; 0.1m thick. Overlies (006003).	Hardcore aggregate.	-	-	Modern
(006003)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted sandy gravel aggregate; frequent cobbles (limestone & flint), occasional pebbles; 0.4m thick. Overlies (006005).	Subgrade.	-	-	Modern
(006004)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firmly compacted silty sand & gravel; occasional pebbles, cobbles (flint & limestone) & brick; 0.41m thick. Underlies (006005).	Subbase.	Post-med & modern pottery; 1 × CBM fragment.	-	Modern
(006005)	-	Deposit	-	-	Loose sand; frequent limestone (ragstone) inclusions; 0.11m thick.	Ragstone base for road surface.	-	-	Modern

## 13 Appendix 2: Pottery & Ceramic Building Material (CBM)

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### 13.1 Introduction

Six sherds (29.6g) of pottery and a single fragment of CBM were recovered from (006004).

### 13.2 Results summary

All of the pottery was of later post-medieval date and consisted of four sherds of creamware, including the rim of a plate and a single small sherd of pearlware of similar or slightly later date. The remaining sherd was of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century stoneware.

Creamware was produced from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The sherd of stoneware is likely to be from a flagon or similar large vessel. Similar items were being produced at a number of centres well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The single fragment of CBM is almost certainly of medieval date. While it may indicate medieval occupation in the vicinity, such material could have been moved over some distance, for example, in imported levelling material.

### 13.3 Recommendations

In view of the late date of the pottery from (006004) and the insecure nature of the context, retention of the material as part of the site archive is not considered necessary.

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