



Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services



An Archaeological Evaluation Excavation at The Old Rectory, South Heighton, East Sussex

Project Number CBAS 0106

TQ 4523 0267

by
Keith Butler PIFA

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Summary

Two archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated in the grounds of The Old Rectory, South Heighton, East Sussex. No archaeological features were noted in either trench. The artefacts recovered from Trench A, located on the lower lawn, consisted of building rubble and metal piping all of which dated to the 20th century. Trench B was excavated on the north-west lawn where the ground had been reduced during the construction of the house, with the ceramic building material from here having a 17th or 18th century date.

The gardens of The Old Rectory appear to have been terraced, with the upper (north) part levelled for the construction of the house in the late 19th/early 20th century, and the lower (south) part having been cut away and then in-filled during the 20th century.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services (CBAS) was commissioned by Kember Loudon Williams Ltd for Vastreach Ltd (The Client) to carry out an archaeological evaluation excavation in advance of the redevelopment of the site at The Old Rectory, Heighton Road, South Heighton, East Sussex (TQ 4523 0267).
- 1.2** The current application (for 12 flats in two blocks (LW/08/0996)) follows the refusal of two previous planning applications. The first application (LW/06/1140) was for 10 flats and a pair of semi-detached houses, whilst the second (LW/07/0578) was for 12 two bedroom flats; both of these were refused.
- 1.3** As a result of the sites location, and the archaeological potential of the area, the local planning authority have put a condition on the planning consent for the development requiring an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.4** The site lies within a designated Archaeological Sensitive Area at South Heighton, and is within the area of known Prehistoric and Medieval settlement activity (Fig. 1).
- 1.5** The site for the proposed development (Fig. 5) is in the grounds of The Old Rectory which at present is laid out as lawn and flower beds. The lawns are on two levels, with that to the west of the current building being at a higher level. There are also a number of fairly mature trees on the western side of the site. The south boundary of the garden has a hedge with a steep drop beyond to the gardens to the properties to the south.
- 1.6** The geology, according to the British Geological Survey Sheet 319/334 is on the boundary between an outcrop of Newhaven Chalk and Seaford Chalk, with Head deposits in the dry valleys to the west and east of the site.
- 1.7** The archaeological evaluation excavation took place on the 1st March 2010. The fieldwork was carried out by the author assisted by Jim Ball, with the project being managed by Chris Butler MIFA.

2.0 Historical and Archaeological Background (Fig. 2)

- 2.1 The earliest activity in the area comes from isolated finds of Mesolithic flintwork which have been found on the Downs, especially in areas where Clay-with-flints outcrops occur. None have yet been found in the vicinity of the site, although Clay-with-flints outcrops occur to the north and east of the site.
- 2.2 Evidence for Early Neolithic activity has been found at Rookery Hill, Bishopstone¹, where there may have been a settlement, and near Alfriston², where flintwork was recovered around the Early Neolithic *Long Burgh* long barrow. Later Neolithic flintwork was also found at Valley Dip³, and near Seaford Head⁴.
- 2.3 The area of Itford Hill, some 2km to the north of the site, is well known for its Prehistoric and later archaeology, including Bronze Age burial mounds and settlement site⁵. In his re-evaluation of the Itford Hill site, Russell proposed a sequence of events commencing in the Neolithic period and concluding in the later Bronze Age⁶. Recent excavations at Itford Farm have produced further evidence for Bronze Age ritual activity⁷.
- 2.4 A possible Bronze Age burial mound (barrow) has been identified from aerial photographs showing multiple ring ditches at Mount Pleasant (MES1797) to the east of the site, whilst another barrow was destroyed during quarrying activity further north (MES1952). An Early Bronze Age pebble mace head (MES1844) was found just to the north of the site.
- 2.5 There is no evidence for Roman activity in the immediate area of the site, although a possible Roman road (MES4816) from Newhaven heads northwards across the Downs, just to the south of the site, towards Selmeston.
- 2.6 Evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement is difficult to find, with the discovery and excavation of larger settlements, such as Bishopstone⁸, being comparatively rare, as is the occasional discovery of isolated Saxon buildings, such as the Sunken Featured Building at Itford Farm to the north of the site⁹. Saxon pottery has however been found just to the north of the site (MES1975).

¹ Bell, M. 1977 'Excavations at Bishopstone', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **115**.

² Butler, C. 2001 'Horned scraper and other prehistoric flintwork from Alfriston, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **139**, 215-223.

³ Butler, C. 1996 'Later Prehistoric flintwork from Valley Dip, Seaford, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **134**, 219-224.

⁴ *Sussex Notes & Queries* 1950-3 Vol. **13**, 193-7

⁵ Russell, M. 1996 *A reassessment of the Bronze Age cemetery-barrow on Itford Hill, East Sussex*, School of Conservation Sciences. Bournemouth University, Research Report 2.

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Butler, C. 2009 *An Archaeological Excavation at Itford Farm, Beddingham, East Sussex*, CBAS Report.

⁸ Bell, M. 1977 'Excavations at Bishopstone'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **115**.

⁹ James, R. 2002 'The excavation of a Saxon *grubenhaus* at Itford Farm, Beddingham, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **140**, 41-7.

- 2.7** There are two Medieval settlements close to the site, the first is centred around St. Martin's Church (which was destroyed *c.* 1764) at South Heighton, just to the north of the site, (MES1954). An evaluation excavation (EES14309) in 2000 located the west end wall of the church.
- 2.8** The second (MES1809/10) is the shrunken Medieval village of Denton, centred on the 11th century St. Leonard's Church (MES1812), is situated a short distance to the south-east of the site. Medieval pottery and a quern stone were discovered in Heighton Road (MES1813), and in 1976 a Medieval pit containing pottery and animal bones was discovered during the building of the Church Hall at Denton (EES9053) adjacent to the ruins of the 13th century Priest House.
- 2.9** The 1841 Tithe map shows the site to be located in open Downland to the south of the settlement of South Heighton, and adjacent to the South Heighton to Denton Road. The 1st Edition OS map (1879) also shows the site to be open ground, with the parish boundary (now running along the south perimeter of the property) marked by a bank. The remains of St. Martin's Church are shown to the north of the site, and St. Lawrence's Church and its associated rectory are shown to the south-east of the site.
- 2.10** There is little change by the time of the 2nd Edition OS map of 1899 (Fig. 3), but by the 3rd Edition OS map (1911) the Rectory has been built, and a number of new roads have been laid out to its south with a few new houses appearing (Fig. 4). The 4th Edition OS Map (1928) shows little change although there are a few more houses appearing to the south of the Rectory.
- 2.11** In 1938 the Guinness Trust Holiday Home was built to the west of the Rectory to provide accommodation for tenants of the London Guinness Trust Estates. It was requisitioned in 1940, and became an administrative Naval HQ. In 1942 a tunnel complex, known as HMS Forward, was excavated 60ft below ground to the west of the Guinness Trust Holiday Home, from which there was an entrance which descended three flights of stairs into the tunnels complex¹⁰.
- 2.12** Numerous local houses were also requisitioned, including the Rectory, which was used to accommodate WRNS personnel. A large Nissen hut was built in the garden of the Rectory (site now in the front garden of the adjacent property to the east) and was used as the mess¹¹. A map dating to the Second World War period, but based on an earlier OS map, shows rows of Nissen huts and other accommodation on the Downs to the south of Denton, although the Nissen hut at the Rectory is not marked.

¹⁰ Ellis, G. 1996 *The Secret Tunnels of South Heighton*, S.B. Publications

¹¹ *Ibid* – photograph pg50.

2.13 A 1951 map shows a situation largely unchanged from the pre-war maps, but by 1972 the garden of the Rectory to the east of the house has been sold off and contains a number of new properties, and the roads to the south are now full of houses. The Rectory at this time appears to be called 'Martle', and it is only since then that it has become known as 'The Old Rectory'.

3.0 Archaeological Methodology

- 3.1** On the 1st March 2010 two evaluation trenches were excavated at The Old Rectory (Fig. 6). Trench A was positioned in the middle of the south lawn. Trench B was situated on the north-west lawn. The positions of the trenches were first marked out and then CAT scanned, and then also scanned with a Precision Gold metal detector.
- 3.2** Both Trenches A and B measured 10m in length with a width of 1.5m. All the excavations were carried out using a 3-ton Hitachi 360° tracked digger, with a 1.2m wide toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated in spits until either archaeology was encountered or the natural geology was reached.
- 3.3** The spoil from the excavations was piled up on the side of the trenches. This was visually inspected and also scanned with the Precision Gold metal detector, as were the machined surfaces. After both trenches had been excavated and recorded, they were backfilled.
- 3.4** A bench mark (22.21m OD) was located on the side of the electrical substation on the north side of Heighton Road and transferred to the site, where a temporary bench mark (21.535m OD) was established at ground level on the east side of the bottom step in front of The Old Rectory. Levels were established for both trench sections (Fig. 7).
- 3.5** It had been intended that an archaeological watching brief would be undertaken during some geotechnical test pitting. However, after the evaluation had been completed it was decided that these would be excavated on the sites of the archaeological evaluation trenches. As these had already been excavated to the depth of the natural, it was decided that a watching brief on these would not be necessary.
- 3.6** All archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded according to accepted professional standards. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart
- 3.7** A full photographic record of the work was kept as appropriate and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held by Chris Butler Archaeological Services. A site reference of TOR10 has been allocated.

4.0 Results

- 4.1** Trench A was situated on the south lawn and was the first to be excavated (Fig. 6). Context **1** was a layer of turf and topsoil which was a dark brown silty clay loam, with a loose consistence and having heavy rooting (5%). This layer was 150mm deep at the south end of the trench, and increased to 200mm in depth at the northern end. No artefacts were recovered from this layer.
- 4.2** Below Context **1** was Context **2** (Fig. 7), which was only apparent in the southern end of the trench, and was a layer of loose silty clay with a depth of up to 350mm. The inclusions in this layer were of chalk pieces up to 40mm (10%) and rooting (1%), and also contained building rubble and metal piping.
- 4.3** Below Context **1** in the northern end of the trench and below Context **2** in the southern end was Context **3**. This was a layer of mid brown silty clay with inclusions of natural flint pieces up to 50mm (1%) and chalk pieces up to 30mm (<1%). This layer was up to 600mm deep and from it was recovered ceramic building material, flint and metal (this included a metal water tank with associated piping).
- 4.4** Within Context **3** was Context **5**, which was a deposit of firm mid brown chalk-rich silty clay, with a thickness of up to 300mm. The inclusions were of chalk pieces up to 50mm (10%) and natural flint nodules up to 70mm (1%). No artefacts were recovered from this deposit.
- 4.5** Below Context **3** was Context **4** which was the natural. The natural was a very firm layer of chalk with parallel bands of a light brownish-orange silty clay running through it. The silty clay bands contained natural flint nodules up to 80mm (1%), but were otherwise sterile, and are probably the result of periglacial erosion¹².
- 4.6** Trench B was excavated on the north-west lawn (Fig. 6). There were two layers apparent (Fig. 7); Context **6** was a layer of deep topsoil under the turf with a depth of up to 600mm. This was a mid brown silty clay loam with loose consistence, and having inclusions of chalk pieces up to 50mm (1%), together with some larger pieces of chalk. Artefacts recovered from this layer comprised ceramic building material.
- 4.7** Below Context **6** was the natural (Context **7**), and was the same as Context **4** in Trench A, comprising firm chalk with bands of light brownish-orange silty clay running through it. The inclusions in the silty clay bands were of natural flint nodules up to 70mm (1%). At the northern end of the trench a sondage to a depth of 1m was excavated to confirm that this was the natural. No archaeological features were noted during the course of the evaluation excavations.

¹² Gallois, R.W. 1965 *The Wealden District*, British Geological Survey, London, HMSO

5.0 The Finds.

5.0.1 The archaeological work recovered a small assemblage of finds from the site from two individually numbered contexts. Most of this residual assemblage is relatively modern in date, and does not warrant retention in a museum and is recommended for disposal.

5.1 *Ceramic Building Material* by Luke Barber

5.1.1 The majority of the assemblage was recovered from Context **3**. This deposit produced three brick fragments (366g), three peg tile fragments (239g) and a single ridge tile fragment (84g). The brick is all of the same type – machine-made fine-grained granular frogged bricks from the Warnham brickyard. These have traces of a buff sandy mortar adhering to them and are almost certainly of 20th century date.

5.1.2 The peg tiles from Context **3** are also all of the same type – very hard-fired purple-red examples tempered with sparse fine sand with occasional inclusions of flint to 1mm. They are both thin (10mm) and neatly finished with smooth faces and are likely to be of the same date as the bricks. The ridge tile, measuring 16mm thick, is tempered with sparse fine sand, is well formed and fired and can best be placed in the 19th to 20th centuries.

5.1.3 Context **6** also produced a range of ceramic building materials: single pieces of brick (24g), floor tile (80g) and peg tile (46g). The brick consists of a friable red low/medium fired fragment, tempered with abundant fine sand though no original surfaces remain. The piece could be placed anywhere between the mid 16th and mid 18th centuries.

5.1.4 The floor tile from Context **6** is quite well formed with the remains of one sharp slightly bevelled edge. It is tempered with moderate fine sand with sparse inclusions of iron oxide to 2mm. It is 23mm thick and has a spot of black glaze on its edge. A 17th to 18th century date range is considered likely. The peg tile from Context **6** consists of a well formed and fired fragment, 14mm thick, tempered with sparse fine sand with white clay pellets/streaks to 3mm. A 17th to 18th century date is again probable.

5.2 Prehistoric Flintwork by Chris Butler

5.2.1 A single prehistoric flint flake (20g) was recovered from Context **3**. This flake has a light blue-grey patination with cortex on the dorsal side, and appears to be hard hammer-struck although there is no evidence of platform preparation. A Neolithic date is probable.

5.2.2 From Context **6** a possible core fragment (76g) was found. This was a dark grey coloured flint with some cortex remaining, and had a number of removals which appeared to have been removed from a single platform. This is likely to be later prehistoric in date.

5.3 Other finds by Chris Butler

5.3.1 The remaining artefacts were recovered from Context **3**, and comprised a small fragment of clear bottle glass (4g), and the lower shell of an oyster (61g)

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1** Considering the close proximity of the site to areas of Medieval activity it is a surprise that no features were noted or artefacts dating to this period were recovered during the evaluation excavation. The two pieces of prehistoric flintwork fit the general background pattern of prehistoric activity in the area.
- 6.2** Both Contexts **2** and **3** in Trench A were made-ground into which quantities of building rubble, metal piping and a metal water tank had been dumped. All of the artefacts recovered from these deposits were of a recent date. It was noted that the natural chalk in this trench had a fairly steep slope towards the southern end of the site implying that these two deposits had been used to in-fill and level the ground for the lawn probably at some stage during the 20th century.
- 6.3** The area of Trench B on the lawn to the north-west of the house would appear to have been reduced in depth to provide level ground for the construction of the house. This is also suggested by the height of the adjacent ground on the western and northern boundaries of the property which is at a higher level.
- 6.4** Although a few pieces of ceramic building material dating from the mid 16th to 18th centuries were found in Context **6**, it would seem likely that later landscaping of the grounds would have destroyed any archaeological remains of this or any earlier date that were once present here.
- 6.5** The evaluation excavation has demonstrated that due to the past landscaping of the site, it is unlikely that any archaeological remains will have survived within the footprint of the proposed development. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is undertaken in relation to this planning application.

7.0 Acknowledgements

7.1 I would like to thank Jon Williams of Kember Loudon Williams Ltd and Vastreach Ltd for commissioning this archaeological evaluation excavation, and the on-site staff for their assistance and co-operation during this fieldwork. I would also like to thank Jim Ball for his assistance during the excavations.

7.2 I would like to thank Luke Barber for his specialist reports. The project was managed by Chris Butler for CBAS, and was monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter.

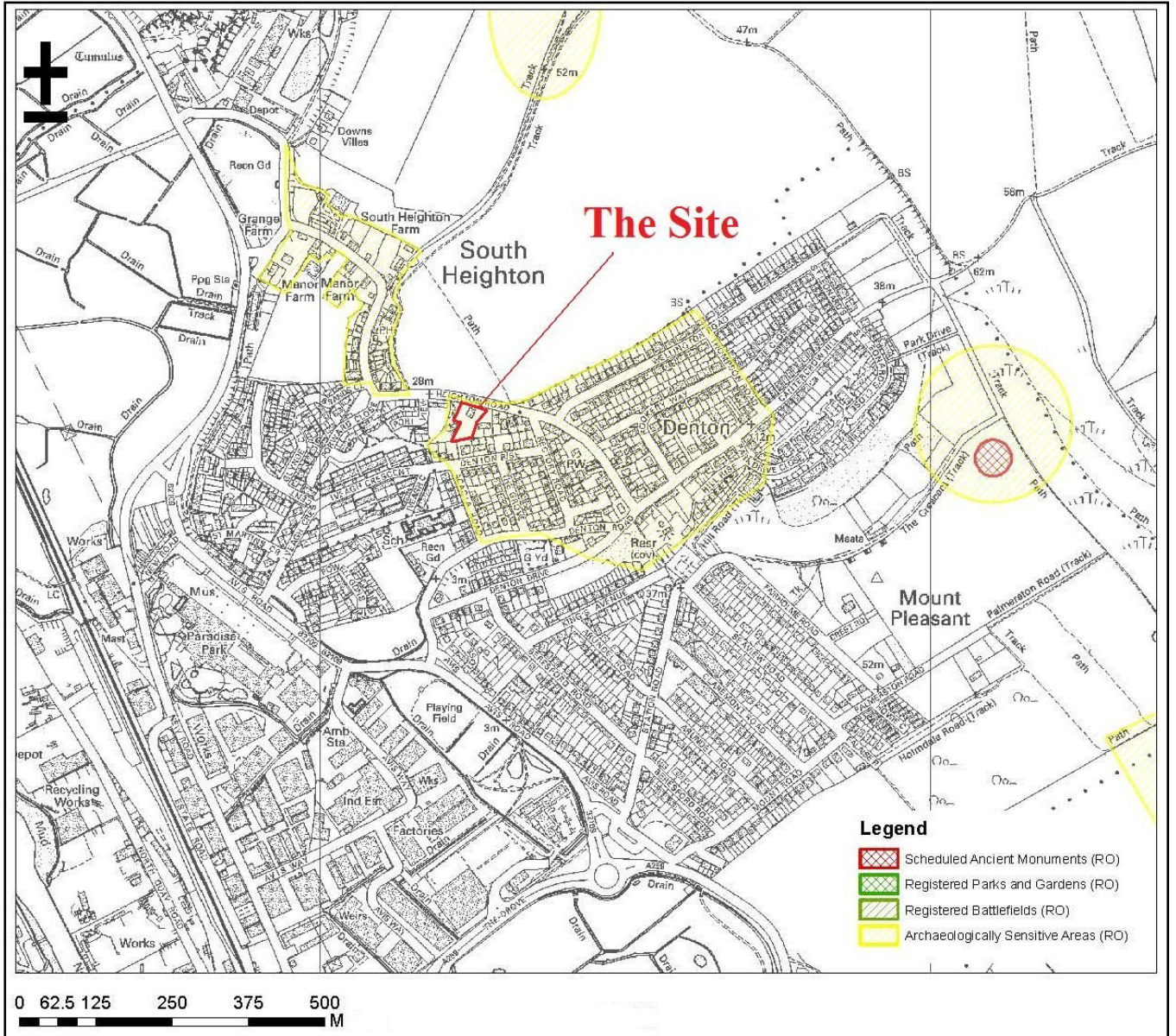


Fig. 1: The Old Rectory, South Heighton: Location of the site & Archaeologically Sensitive Areas
(Based on map provided by ESCC)
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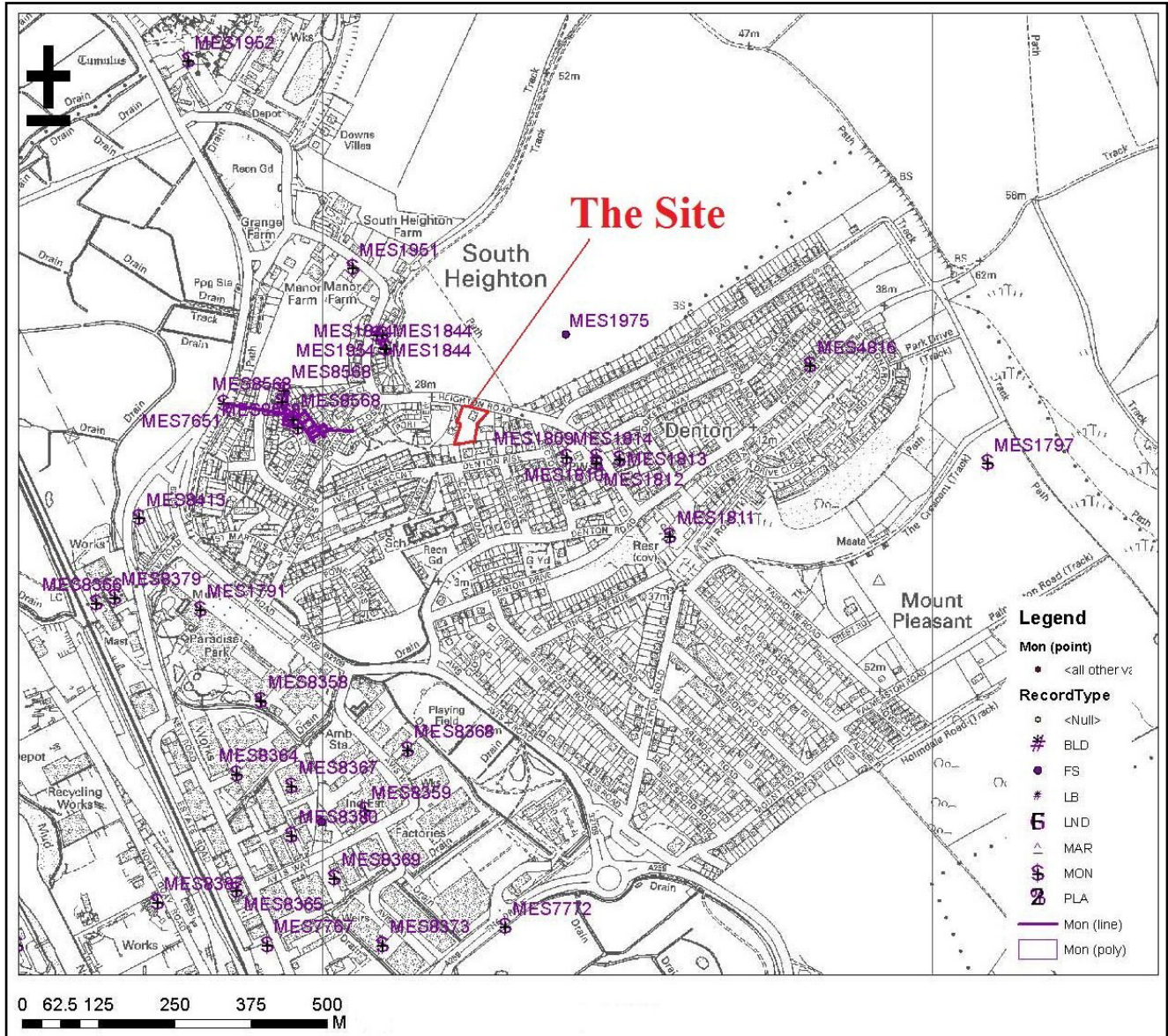


Fig. 2: The Old Rectory, South Heighton: Map showing the site, and monuments from the HER
(Based on map provided by ESCC)
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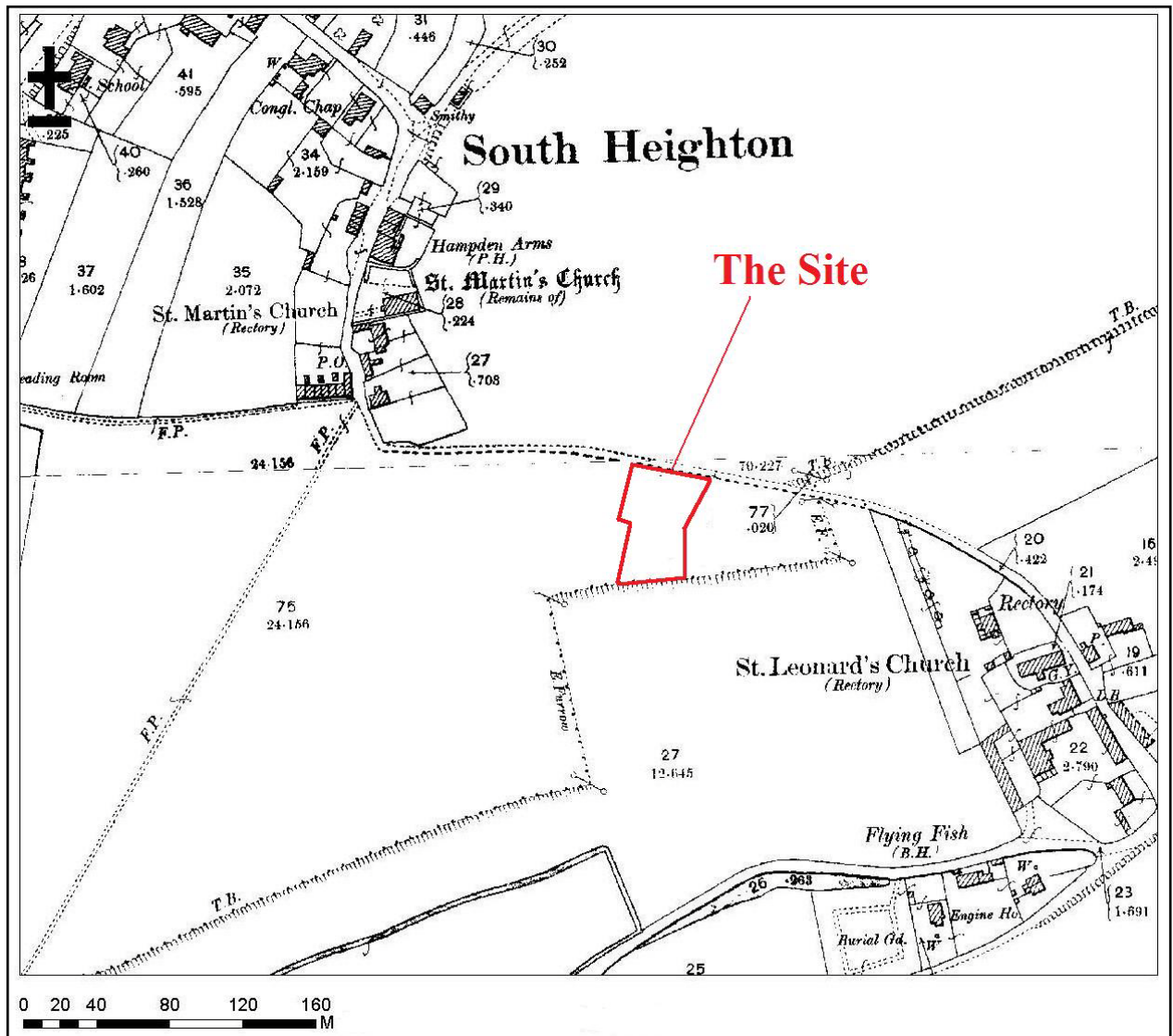


Fig. 3: The Old Rectory, South Heighton: 2nd Edition OS Map
(Based on map provided by ESCC)

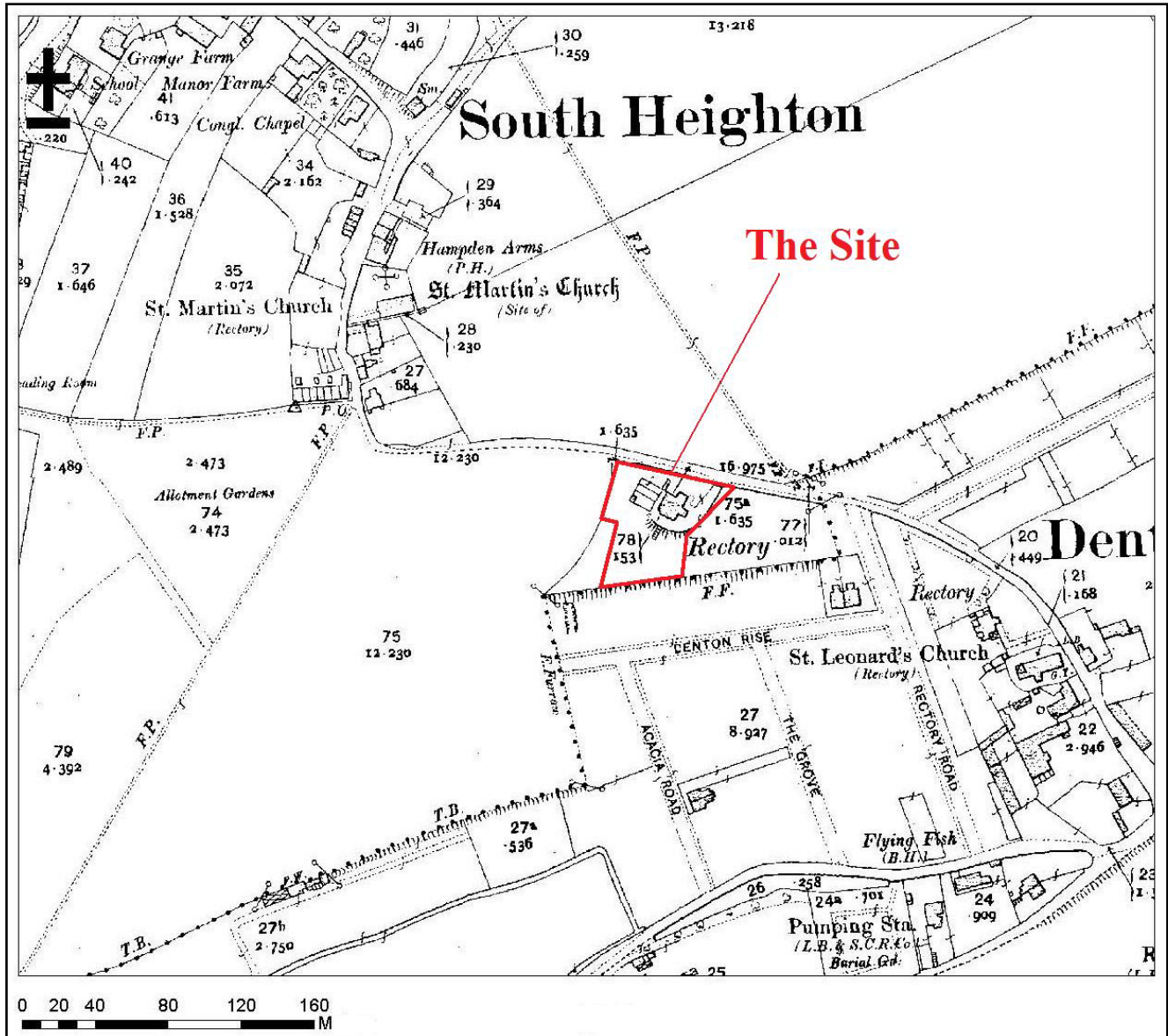


Fig. 4: The Old Rectory, South Heighton: 3rd Edition OS Map
(Based on map provided by ESCC)

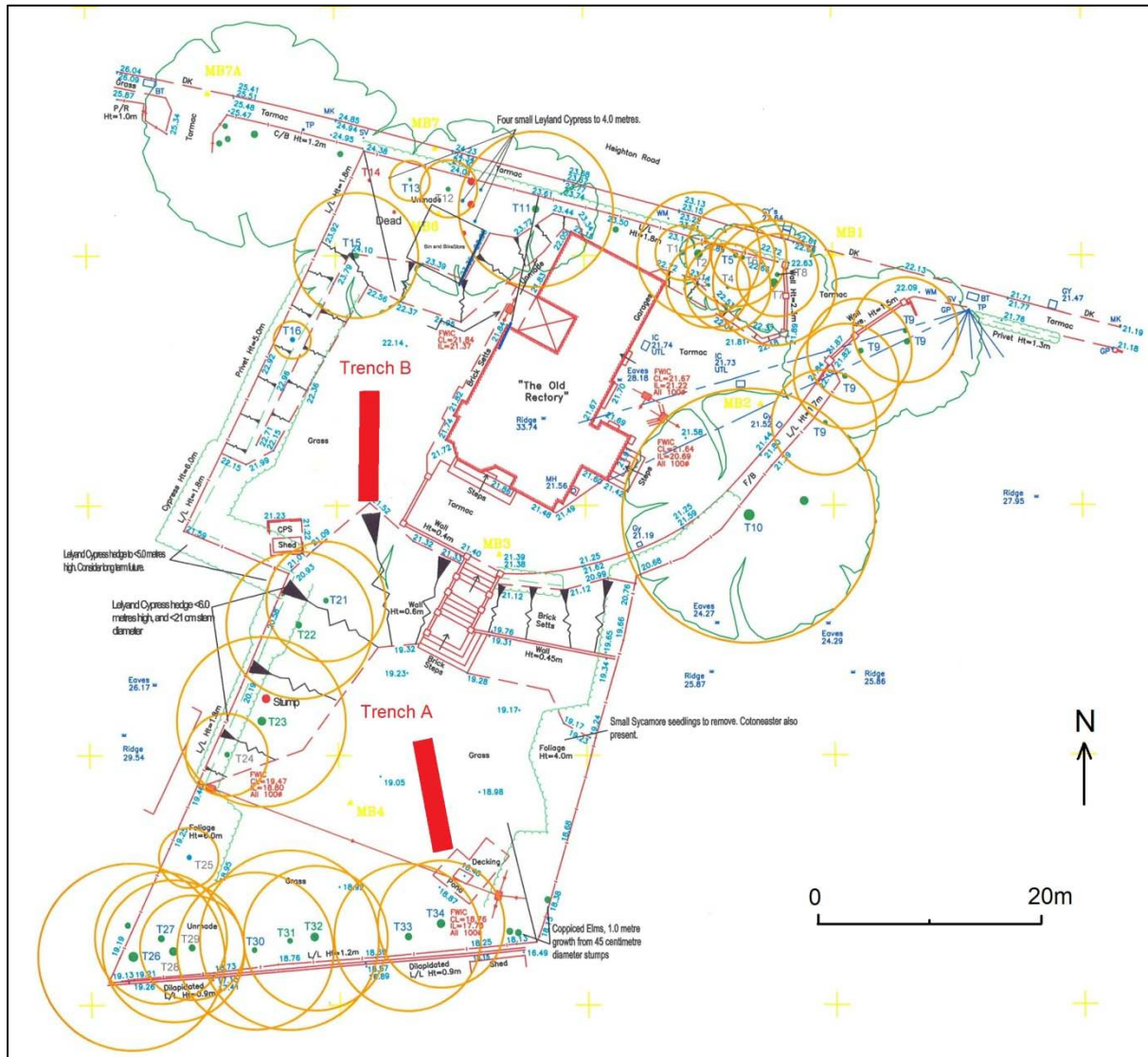


Fig. 6: The Old Rectory, South Heighton: Plan of the site showing location of the evaluation trenches
(Adapted from architects drawing)

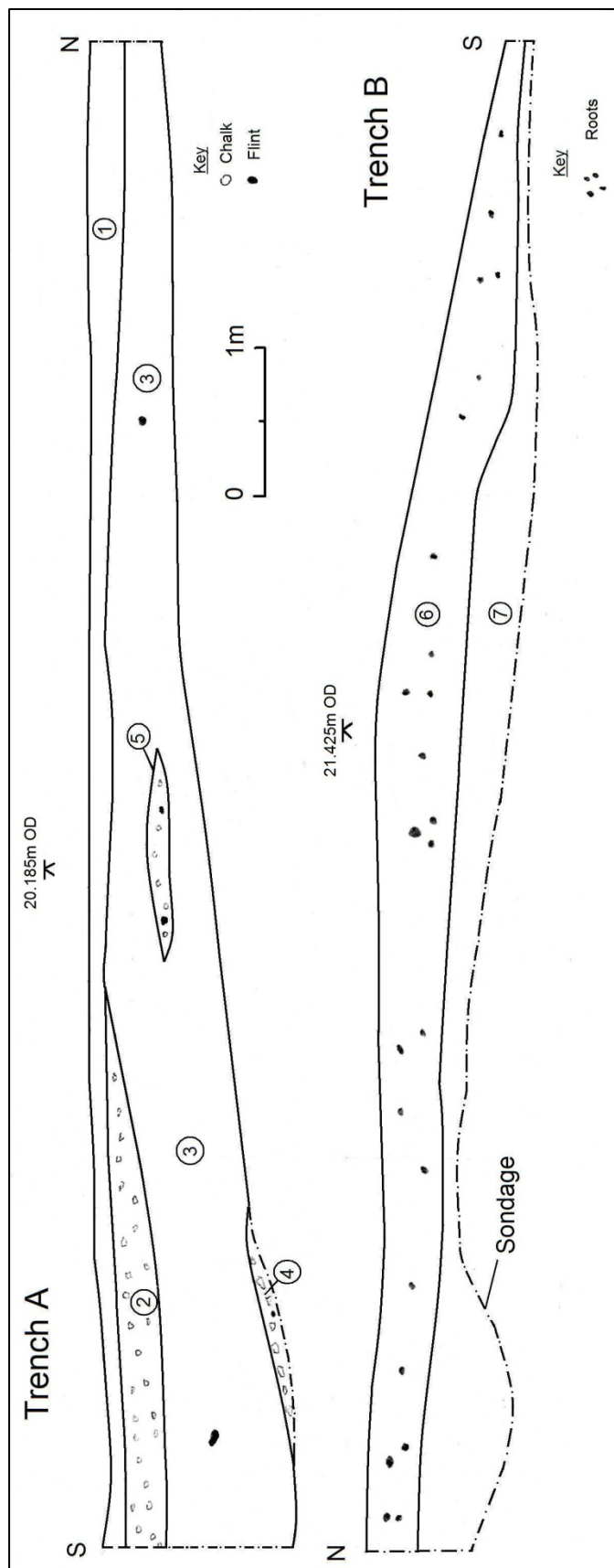


Fig. 7: The Old Rectory, South Heighton: Evaluation trench sections



Fig. 8: The Old Rectory, South Heighton:
Evaluation Trench A



Fig. 9: The Old Rectory, South Heighton:
Evaluation Trench B

Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

Site Code	TOR 09					
Identification Name and Address	The Old Rectory, South Heighton, Heighton Road, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Lewes District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 4523 0267					
Geology	On the boundary between an outcrop of Newhaven Chalk and Seaford Chalk with Head deposits to the west and east					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. X	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban X	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. 01-03-10	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Kember Loudon Williams Ltd for Vastreach Ltd					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MIFA					
Project Supervisor	Keith Butler PIFA					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Two archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated in the grounds of The Old Rectory, South Heighton, East Sussex. No archaeological features were noted in either trench. The artefacts recovered from Trench A, located on the lower lawn, consisted of building rubble and metal piping all of which dated to the 20th century. Trench B was excavated on the north-west lawn where the ground had been reduced during the construction of the house, with the ceramic building material from here having a 17th or 18th century date.</i></p> <p><i>The gardens of The Old Rectory appear to have been terraced, with the upper (north) part levelled for the construction of the house in the late 19th/early 20th century, and the lower (south) part having been cut away and then in-filled during the 20th century.</i></p>						

Chris Butler Archaeological Services

Chris Butler has been an archaeologist since 1985, and formed the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in 1987, since when it has carried out numerous fieldwork projects, and was runner up in the Pitt-Rivers Award at the British Archaeological Awards in 1996. Having previously worked as a Pensions Technical Manager and Administration Director in the financial services industry, Chris formed **Chris Butler Archaeological Services** at the beginning of 2002.

Chris is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, a committee member of the Lithic Studies Society, and is a part time lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sussex. He continues to run the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in his spare time.

Chris specialises in prehistoric flintwork analysis, but has directed excavations, landscape surveys and watching briefs, including the excavation of a Beaker Bowl Barrow, a Saxon cemetery and settlement, Roman pottery kilns, and a Mesolithic hunting camp.

Chris Butler Archaeological Services is available for Flintwork Analysis, Project Management, Military Archaeology, Desktop Assessments, Field Evaluations, Excavation work, Watching Briefs, Field Surveys & Fieldwalking, Post Excavation Services and Report Writing.

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