



# **Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services**



## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at Barling House, Winchelsea, East Sussex. RR/2010/78**

**Project No. CBAS0105**

by  
Keith Butler PIFA

September 2010

### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the excavation of the footings for a conservatory at Barling House, Winchelsea, East Sussex, on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010. No archaeological features were noted, and only a small number of finds were recovered from the footing trenches. The earliest artefacts were three pieces of peg tile dating to somewhere between the mid to late 13<sup>th</sup> up to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a fragment of brick dating to between the 14<sup>th</sup> and mid 16<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Previous research suggested that the site was used for gardens from the Medieval period through to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Barling House was constructed. This watching brief appears to confirm that there was no earlier occupation on this site.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services was commissioned by Mr & Mrs D. N. Hopkins (The Client) to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks associated with the construction of a conservatory at Barling House, Ham Green, Winchelsea, East Sussex (Fig. 1).
- 1.2** As a result of the site's location, and the archaeological potential of the area, the local planning authority have put a condition on the planning consent for the development (RR/2010/78), requiring an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.3** The site lies within the historic core of the Medieval and Post-Medieval town of Winchelsea. Winchelsea is located on a hilltop some 1.5 km inland, with the River Brede on its north side. The ground falls rapidly on all sides into the Pett Levels to its south, and Rye Bay to the east. On the west side a ridge takes the A259 through Icklesham and on to Hastings.
- 1.4** The site is within a designated Archaeological Notification Area, and is also located within a Conservation Area. Barling House is situated in Quarter 8, to the north of St Thomas's Church, and was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The conservatory was situated in the north-west corner of the garden, butting against the house to the north and the garage to the west (Fig. 2).
- 1.5** The geology, according to the British Geological Survey (Sheet 320/321), is Wadhurst Clay overlying Ashdown Beds sandstone, mainly Cliff End Sandstone. The upper seams contain horizons of Tilgate Stone, a calcareous sandstone frequently used in the past as a building stone in Winchelsea.
- 1.6** The appropriate programme of archaeological work comprised an archaeological watching brief in accordance with a written scheme of investigation<sup>1</sup> which has been approved by the local planning authority.
- 1.7** A watching brief was maintained during the groundworks associated with the construction of a conservatory on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010. The fieldwork was carried out by the author. The project was managed by Chris Butler MIFA for CBAS.

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<sup>1</sup> Butler, C. 2010 Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Barling House, Winchelsea, East Sussex. CBAS.

## 2.0 Archaeological & Historical background

- 2.1 The new town of Winchelsea was laid out in 39 'quarters' between 1283 and 1292, by the order of King Edward I. Initially the new town seemed to prosper, but in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries it suffered some seven major attacks by the French, who pillaged the town on almost every occasion.
- 2.2 The changing coastline hastened the decline of the town as a port, as a shingle bar spread across the river outlet. By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the town had declined and the last merchant had left, and for the next 300 years Winchelsea was in decay. In the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century textile manufactory was undertaken with cambric and crepe being produced.
- 2.3 The site is located in Quarter 8 of the town, situated to the north of St Thomas's Church. A map of the town was reconstructed from the 1292 Rent Roll by Homan<sup>2</sup>. He showed that the rental was arranged in a certain order round each quarter, and that the measurement was a *virga*, apparently of 16 feet (4.88 metres). He selected Quarter 8 as a worked example, proving that the south (High Street) and north frontages were developed, and that the intervening strips running east-west were un developed but occupied by adjoining householders, no doubt as gardens.
- 2.4 The principal buildings in Quarter 8 are the Court House, probably built *c.* 1300, and modified in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and again in 1890, and the Old Castle Inn which has Medieval origins but a 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century fabric. The origins of the houses opposite the Armoury in Castle Street are also Medieval, and 7-8 High Street may have incorporated open halls, but were too altered in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries to be certain.
- 2.5 Up until 2001 a total of 14 sites within Winchelsea have either been excavated, or had watching briefs undertaken on them. All revealed finds relating to the period immediately following the foundation of the town. The excavation of a stone-lined pit in the garden of Richmond House, Cooks Green in 1988-9, suggested it had been constructed in the late Medieval period and then been filled in around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>. In 1999, HAARG partly cleared and recorded a Medieval cellar at Hiham Green on the north-west corner of Quarter 8<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Homan, W.M. 1949 'The Founding of New Winchelsea', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **88**,22-41.

<sup>3</sup> Child, D. 1990 *The Excavation of a Stone Lined Pit in the Garden of Richmond House, Cooks Green, Winchelsea, 1988-8*, HAARG, Hastings.

<sup>4</sup> Padgham, D. 1999 'A vaulted Undercroft at Hiham Green, Winchelsea', *HAARG Journal*, New Series, No. 7, 1-12.

- 2.6** The 1763 map<sup>5</sup> of Winchlesea shows there to be no property present on the site, while the 1767 survey<sup>6</sup> shows a large area of formal gardens occupying the site of Barling House. Between 1872 and 1898 a pair of houses were constructed fronting the High Street, and by 1909 Barling House had been built in Higham Street on the west side of Quarter 8.
- 2.7** The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map of 1874 shows the site to be an area of open ground with trees, perhaps still gardens (Fig. 3). Two cottages (Elm Cottages) are situated on its north side, and the Methodist Chapel is on the south side. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS map of 1899 shows little change, but by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition OS map of 1909 Barling House is shown on the site (Fig. 4), and this again is unchanged on the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS map of 1929.
- 2.8** In 1974 excavations were undertaken in the south-western corner of Quarter 19 in German Street, and revealed the foundations of a Medieval stone built house. The house was subject to reconstruction in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, and was abandoned in the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup>.
- 2.9** Other archaeological excavations have been carried out on a number of sites in Winchelsea<sup>8</sup>. In 2005 a watching brief was undertaken at Plat Cottage in Quarter 19, where a possible Medieval wall footing was encountered on the east side of the building, and an assemblage of pottery dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century was recovered<sup>9</sup>.
- 2.10** Excavations in 2002 at The Magazine, Castle Street, on the south-east corner of Quarter 8, revealed a stone lined pit, which had been filled in during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> ESRO AMS 5806/3

<sup>6</sup> ESRO AMS 5788/1

<sup>7</sup> King, A. 1975 'A Medieval Town House in German Street, Winchelsea', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **113**, 124-145.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, D. & Rudling D. 2004 *Excavations in Winchelsea, Sussex 1974-2000*, Heritage Marketing & Publications Ltd.

<sup>9</sup> Butler, C. 2005 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Plat Cottage, Winchelsea, East Sussex*, CBAS Report.

<sup>10</sup> Butler, C. 2003 *The Excavation of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century pit at The Magazine, Castle Street, Winchelsea, East Sussex*, CBAS Report.

### **3.0 Archaeological Methodology**

- 3.1** On arrival at the site on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010, it was noted that an area around the footings of 6m by 5.5m had already been reduced by 700mm. A watching brief was maintained on the excavation of an 'L' shaped trench for the footings of the conservatory (Fig. 5). The footings measured 3.8m in an east to west direction, and 3m north to south.
- 3.2** The footings were 700mm wide and had a depth of 600mm. The trench was excavated using a 850kg tracked mini digger with a 600mm wide toothless bucket, and also by hand.
- 3.3** The spoil from this process was moved from the site to the front of the building using buckets. The spoil was visually inspected for artefacts, and also scanned with a Precision Gold metal detector. The metal detector was also used to scan the machined surfaces.
- 3.4** A 1m wide section of the footing trench was cleaned back and drawn. A temporary bench mark was established at ground level on the south eastern corner of the garage (Site OD: 35m).
- 3.5** 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
- 3.6** 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 Ltd and will be deposited at Winchelsea Museum in due course. A site reference of BHW10 has been allocated.

## 4.0 Results

- 4.1** At the southern side of the site the stratigraphy was revealed in the section of the 700mm reduction. In this area two layers were revealed. Context **1** was a layer of up to 400mm in thickness, and was a dark brown silty clay loam with a loose consistence. The inclusions were of small pebbles (<1%) and rooting (<1%).
- 4.2** Below Context **1** was Context **2**, and was a layer mid brown silty clay with a firm consistence. The inclusions were of sandstone pieces up to 50mm (<1%) and ceramic building material (<1%). This layer was not excavated to its full depth in the revealed section of the earlier reduction. No artefacts were recovered from Contexts **1** or **2**, having been excavated before the watching brief commenced.
- 4.3** During the excavation of the footings three layers were apparent (Fig. 6). Context **3** was a thin layer with a thickness of up to 30mm of pinkish grey MOT that had been layered after the original reduction and before the footings for the conservatory were excavated.
- 4.4** Context **4** was below Context **3** and the same as Context **2** in the reduction. This was up to 200mm thick layer in the footings trench, and was a mid brown silty clay with a firm consistence. The inclusions in this layer were of sandstone pieces up to 50mm (1%) and ceramic building material (1%). It was from this layer that all the artefacts were recovered, comprising mainly pottery and ceramic building material of Post Medieval date.
- 4.5** Context **5** was below Context **4**, and was a layer of the natural silty clay. This was buff in colour with a few grey patches, and had inclusions of sandstone pieces up to 50mm (1%). This layer was not fully excavated as it extended below the depth of the footing trench.
- 4.6** Context **6** was located at the western end of the footing trench, and was the cut of the footings for the garage. This was linear in plan with a width of 40mm from the eastern wall of the garage. The break of slope at the top of the cut was sharp with vertical sides.
- 4.7** Context **7** was the fill of Context **6**, and was a dark brown silty clay with a firm consistence. The fill appeared to have no inclusions but was not fully excavated. No artefacts were recovered from this fill.
- 4.8** No other deposits or features were noted during the watching brief.



## 5.0 The Finds.

**5.0.1** The archaeological work recovered a small assemblage of finds from the site. All were recovered from Context 4 and are quantified in Table 1.

**5.0.2** The assemblage is too small and mixed, with little early material, to warrant retention for long-term curation in a museum. As such the finds are recommended for discard.

**Table 1:** The Finds

Context	Pottery (by date group)	Ceramic Building Material	Other	Deposit Date
4	1750-1900 – 2/14g	Brick 10/1,032g Peg tile 8/433g Wall tile 9/69g	Clay pipe 3/5g Stone 5/45g Render 4/124g Bone 2/14g Oyster 8/64g	C20th Residual medieval and C19th

Quantification of finds (no./weight in grams)

### 5.1 The Pottery & Clay Tobacco Pipe by Luke Barber

**5.1.1** The two sherds of pottery consist of a glazed red earthenware jar rim of 18<sup>th</sup> to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century date and part of a late pearlware plate with blue willow pattern transfer-print (3g). Both sherds are unabraded.

**5.1.2** Only three fragments of clay pipe were recovered from the site. These all comprise fresh plain stem fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

### 5.2 Ceramic Building Material by Luke Barber

**5.2.1** The majority of the ceramic building material consists of brick fragments. The earliest consists of a single piece (253g) from a 42mm high dull yellow crudely made Flemish-type brick tempered with moderate to abundant fine/medium sand. The surfaces are notably sandy but the brick is medium fired. A 14<sup>th</sup> to mid 16<sup>th</sup> century date is possible though the latter half of this range is probably more likely.

- 5.2.2** The majority of the brick fragments consist of well formed red examples tempered with sparse fine sand and iron oxides to 3mm (6/210g). These are probably of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The final three pieces of brick (568g) are well formed machine-made examples with a sparse fine sandy granular fabric with abundant clay pellets to 5mm. One piece is 65mm high and all are likely to be of 20<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 5.2.3** The peg tiles are also of more than one period. Three pieces (113g) are quite crudely formed and tempered with moderate medium sand with some iron oxide inclusions to 1mm. One piece has a patch of green glaze and all probably date somewhere between the mid/late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The remaining peg tile fragments are all from well formed tiles tempered with sparse fine sand with sparse iron oxide inclusions. An 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date is likely.
- 5.2.4** The work also produced an assemblage of press-moulded glazed wall tiles of 20<sup>th</sup> century date. All are white with the exception of a single black example with marbling effect.
- 5.3 Bone and shell** by Chris Butler
- 5.3.1** Two pieces of bone were found. The first is the un-fused end of a sheep tibia, with a fresh beak, whilst the second is a femur from a small mammal, possibly a rat.
- 5.3.2** There were eight small degraded fragments of oyster shell, possibly originating from just one or two shells originally.
- 5.4 Geological Material** by Luke Barber
- 5.4.1** All of the stone from the site consists of medieval West Country roofing slate, some of which shows signs of having been burnt. This type of roof covering is common in the medieval town.
- 5.5 Other Finds** by Luke Barber
- 5.5.1** A few pieces of buff to grey sandy renders were recovered. Some of these have chalk and flint grit inclusions to 3mm and one has the remains of paint on one face. A 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date is probable.

## 6.0 Discussion

- 6.1 It is unusual that no archaeological features were discovered during the course of the watching brief considering the site proximity to known Medieval and Post Medieval activity noted in earlier watching briefs in Quarter 8 of the town. This in all probability was due to the small size of the area excavated, and the disturbance caused by the building of the existing house and garage.
- 6.2 The small number of artefacts recovered during the watching brief is probably due to the reduction of the ground surface by up to 700mm over the area of the footings trench before the archaeological watching brief took place. However, as most of the artefacts recovered during the watching brief from the lower part of this stratigraphy date to the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it seems unlikely that much in the way of earlier material was lost as a result of this earlier reduction.
- 6.3 Four fragments of ceramic building material of an earlier date were recovered. These consist of three fragments of peg tiles dating to between mid to late 13<sup>th</sup> and the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, and one Flemish style fragment of brick dating to between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 6.3 Previous work<sup>11</sup> has suggested that during the Medieval period the High Street and north frontage (Mill Road) of Quarter 8 were developed, and that the intervening strips running east-west (including that occupied by Barling House) were undeveloped, but were occupied by adjoining householders, no doubt as gardens. This may explain the low density of early artefacts from the site, and complete lack of features.
- 6.5 It is clear from the early map evidence that the site remained as gardens up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Barling House and the adjacent property to the north were built. It therefore seems unlikely that the construction of this conservatory and Barling House itself has damaged or destroyed any earlier archaeological remains.

## 7.0 Acknowledgements

- 7.1 I would like to thank Mr D. Hopkins for commissioning this archaeological watching brief, and his on-site contractors for their co-operation and assistance. Luke Barber reported on the pottery and CBM. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler and monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter.

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<sup>11</sup> Homan, W.M. 1949 'The Founding of New Winchelsea', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **88**,22-41.

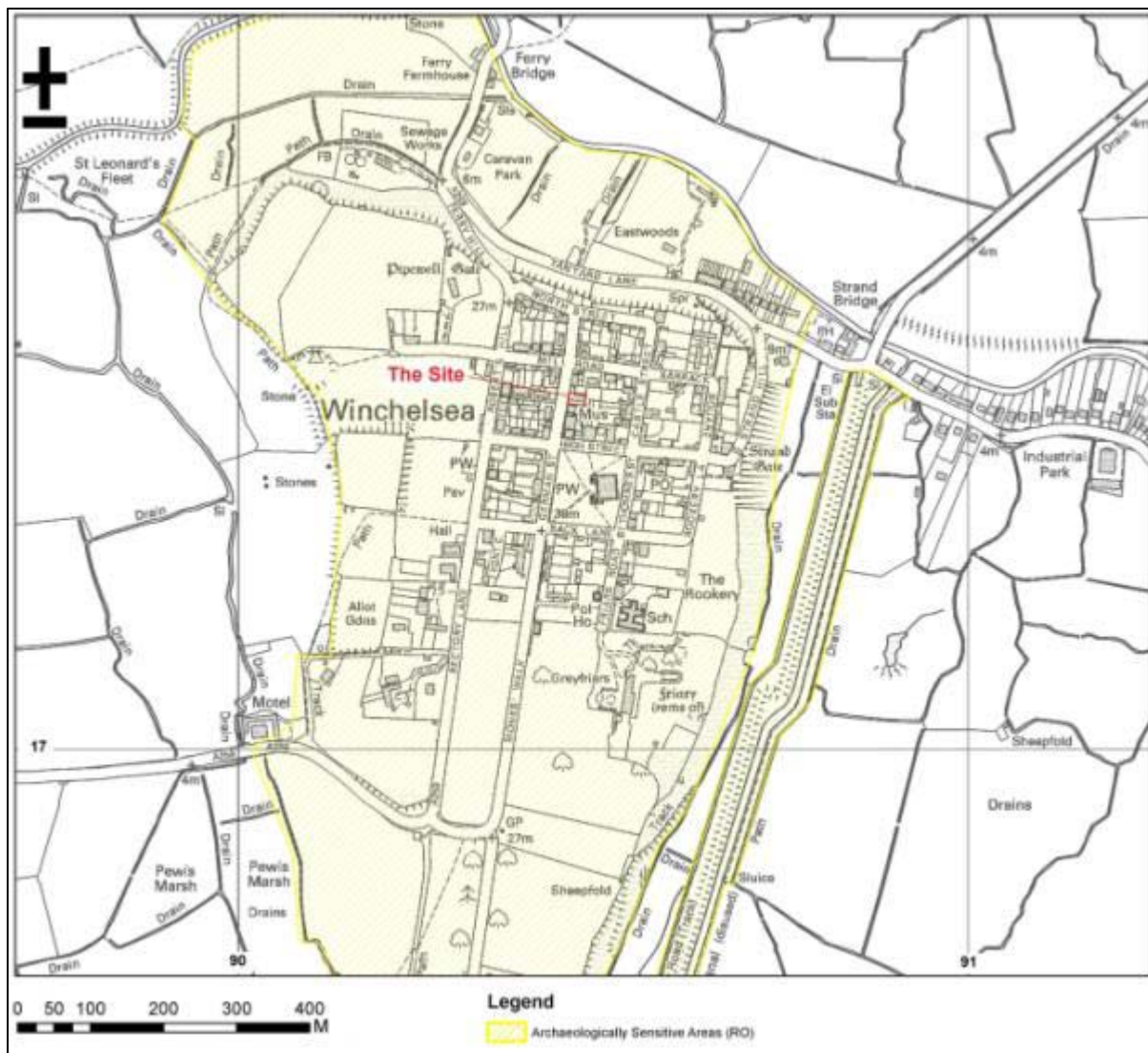


Fig. 1: Barling House, Winchelsea: Site location & Archaeologically Sensitive Area  
(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)  
Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100037471

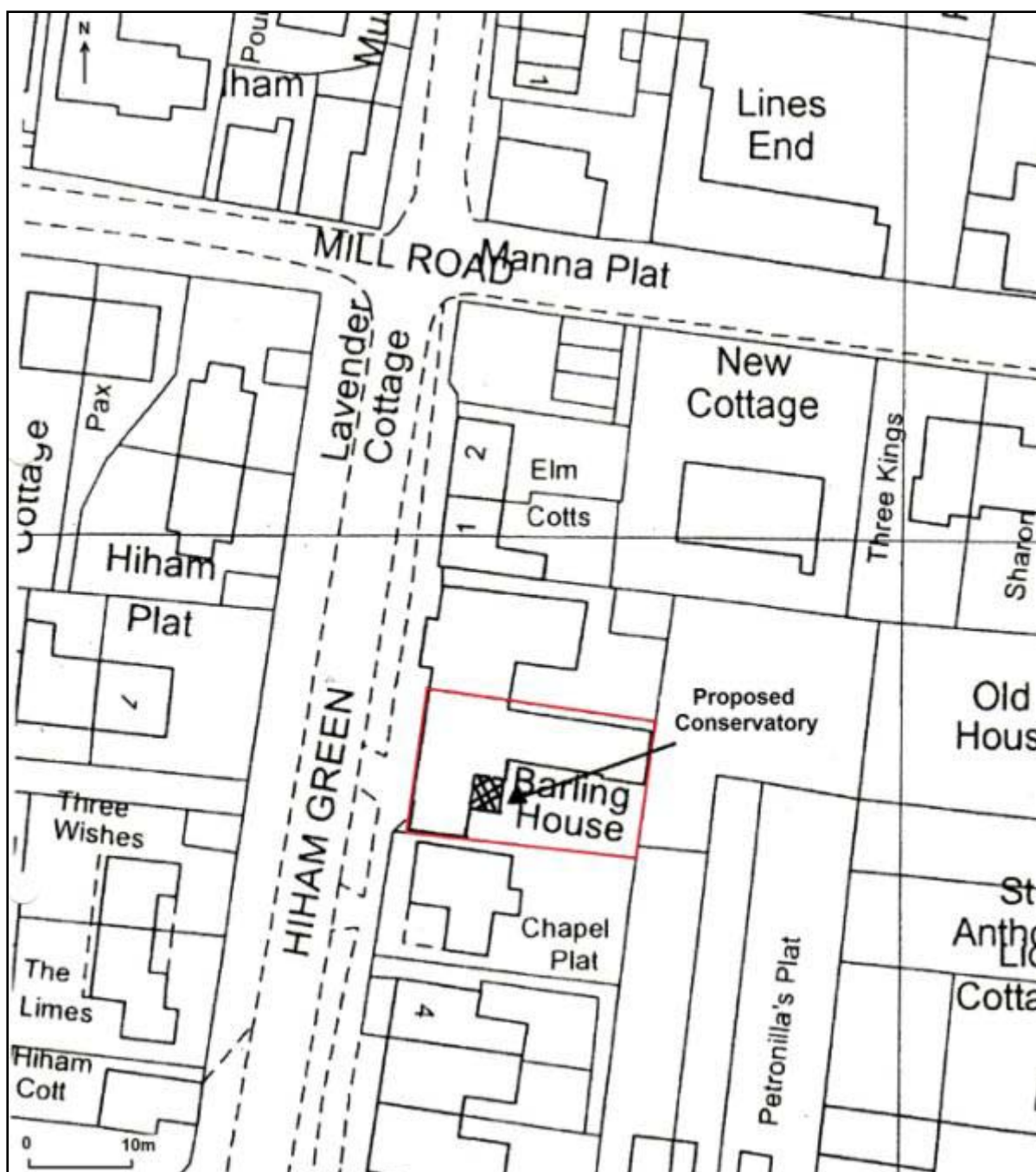


Fig. 2: Barling House, Winchelsea: Location of the site  
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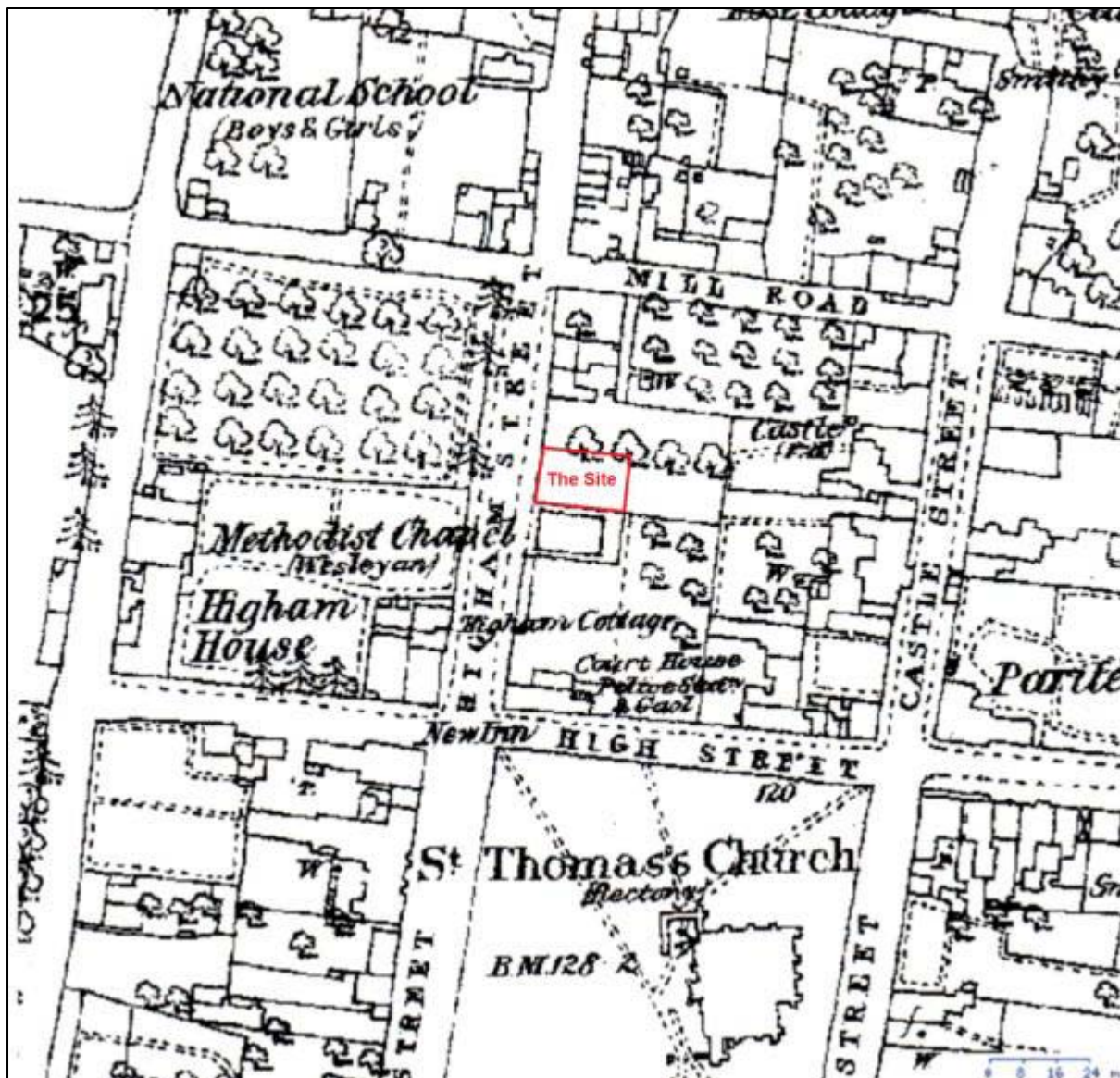


Fig. 3: Barling House, Winchelsea: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map 1874

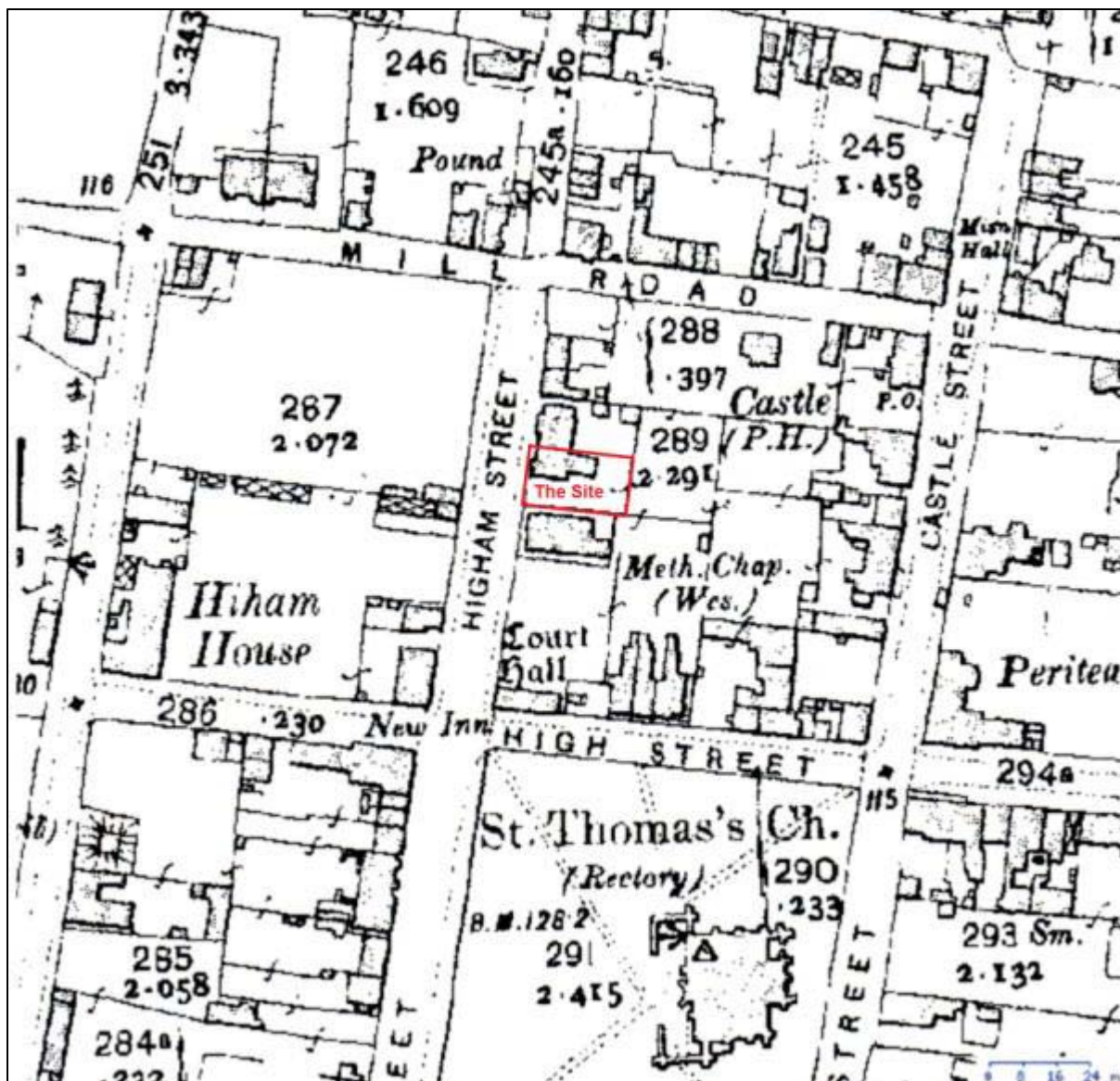


Fig. 4: Barling House, Winchelsea: 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition OS Map 1909

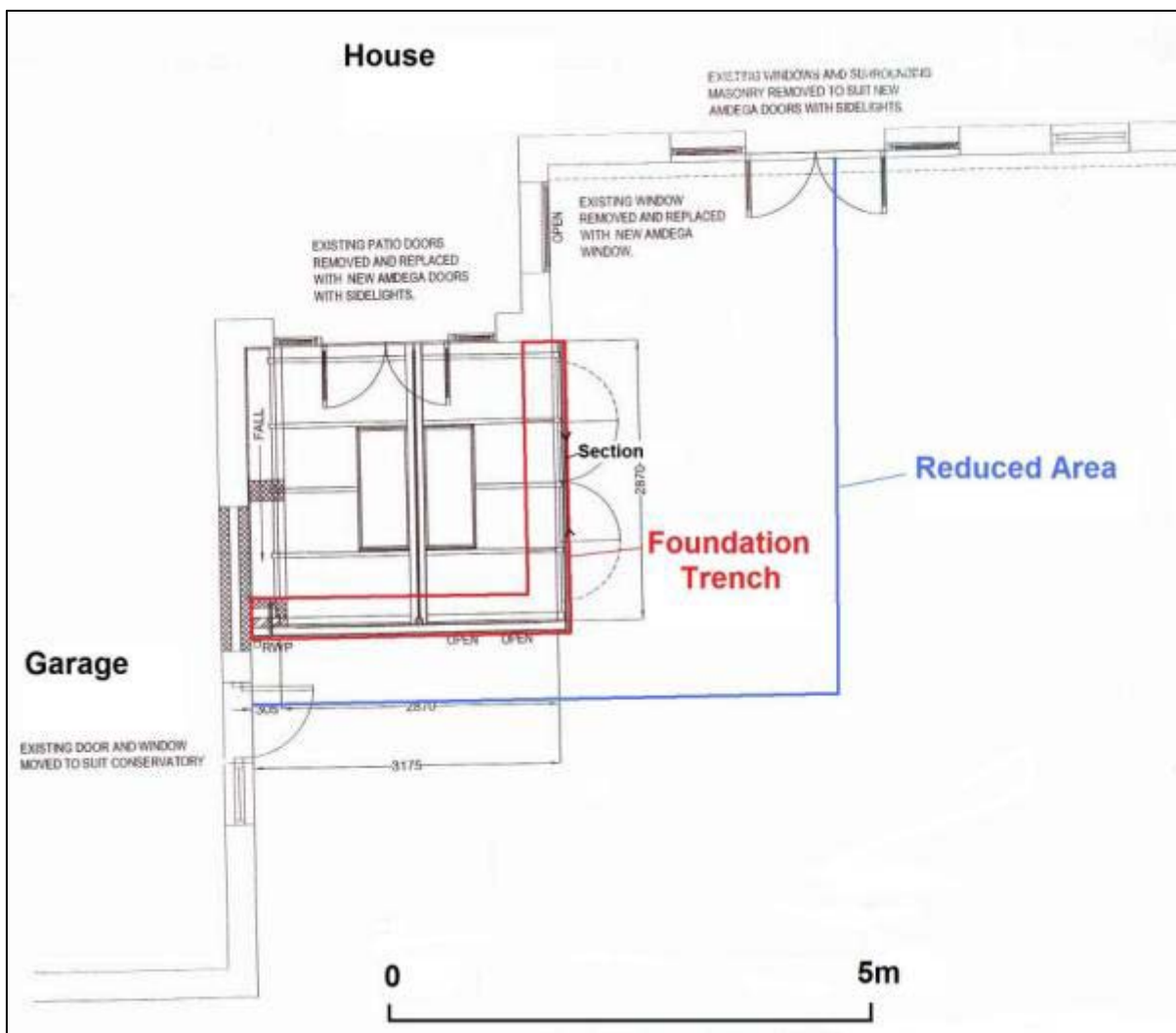


Fig. 5: Barling House, Winchelsea: Plan of Site



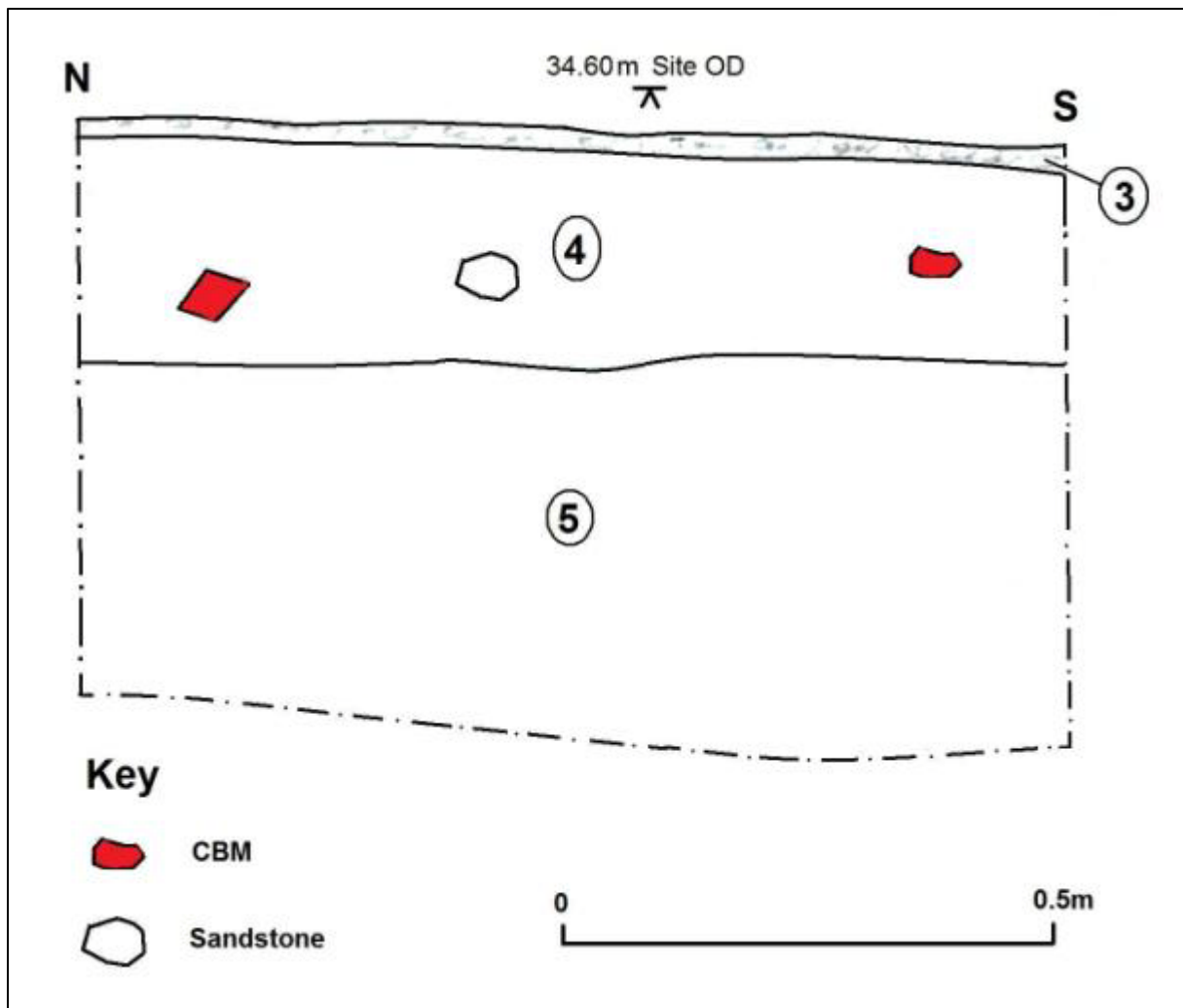


Fig. 6: Barling House, Winchelsea: Section



Fig. 7: Barling House, Winchelsea: Area of groundworks



Fig. 8: Barling House, Winchelsea: Excavated footing trench

### Appendix I HER Summary Form

Site Code	BHW 10					
Identification Name and Address	Barling House, Winchelsea, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 9045 1748					
Geology	Wadhurst Clay overlying Ashdown Beds sandstone, mainly Cliff End Sandstone.					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief <b>X</b>	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban <b>X</b>	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 29/3/10	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Mr David Hopkins					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MIFA					
Project Supervisor	Keith Butler PIFA					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED <b>X</b>	PM <b>X</b>	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the excavation of the footings for a conservatory at Barling House, Winchelsea, East Sussex, on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010. No archaeological features were noted, and only a small number of finds were recovered from the footing trenches. The earliest artefacts were three pieces of peg tile dating to somewhere between the mid to late 13<sup>th</sup> up to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a fragment of brick dating to between the 14<sup>th</sup> and mid 16<sup>th</sup> century.</i></p> <p><i>Previous research suggested that the site was used for gardens from the Medieval period through to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Barling House was constructed. This watching brief appears to confirm that there was no earlier occupation on this site.</i></p>						

## **Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd**

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 Ltd** 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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