



**Chris Butler MIFA**  
**Archaeological Services**



**An Archaeological Watching Brief,  
at  
The Presbytery, Sedlescombe,  
East Sussex.**

**Project No. CBAS0148**

(RR/2010/895 & 980)

by

David Atkin

December 2010

***Summary***

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out at The Presbytery, Sedlescombe, during the groundworks associated with the construction of a single story extension to enlarge the kitchen. During the excavation a modern drain was the only feature noted. No features of an earlier date were present.*

*No artefacts were recovered from this watching brief, although some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century artefacts were noted in the topsoil.*

**Chris Butler MIFA  
Archaeological Services**

***Prehistoric Flintwork Specialist***

**Rosedale**

**Berwick**

**Polegate**

**East Sussex**

**BN26 6TB**

**Tel & fax: 01323 871021**

**e mail: [chris@reltub.fsbusiness.co.uk](mailto:chris@reltub.fsbusiness.co.uk)**

## ***Contents***

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Historical & Archaeological Background
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology
- 4.0 Results
- 5.0 Finds
- 6.0 Discussion
- 7.0 Acknowledgements

### **Figures:**

- Fig. 1 Location map
- Fig. 2 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map
- Fig. 3 Site location plan
- Fig. 4 Site Plan

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix I: HER Summary Form

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Lonebay Ltd (The Client) to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks associated with the construction of a single storey extension to the kitchen at The Presbytery, Sedlescombe, East Sussex (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The Presbytery is a Grade II Listed Building of 18<sup>th</sup> century date. It has two storeys with a tiled roof and white painted brick walls, the doorway has a moulded architrave surround with a flat hood supported by brackets, and a six-panelled door<sup>1</sup>. It adjoins Chestnut Tree Cottage which is situated on its south side, and is a restored 17<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier timber-framed house, and also a Grade II Listed Building.
- 1.3 The Presbytery is situated within an Archaeologically Sensitive Area, and is also within the Sedlescombe Conservation Area. Policy GD1 (viii) of the Rother District Local Plan and PPS5 indicate that development should not prejudice the character and appearance of a Listed Building.
- 1.4 A planning application (RR/2009/895 & 980/L) for a single storey rear extension to enlarge the kitchen has been approved (Fig. 3). However, 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, requiring an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.5 The geology, according to the British Geological Survey Sheet 320/321 is predominantly Ashdown Beds, but there are thin bands of Clay in Ashdown Beds, whilst in the River Brede valley there is Head and Alluvium.
- 1.6 The watching brief was required to monitor any groundworks connected with the construction of a single storey extension to the kitchen at the rear of the building in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation<sup>2</sup> approved by the Archaeology Team at ESCC.
- 1.7 The fieldwork was carried out on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2010 by the author.

---

<sup>1</sup> English Heritage Listing details Ref. 414158

<sup>2</sup> Butler, C. 2010 *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Watching Brief at The Presbytery, Sedlescombe, East Sussex*. CBAS0148.

## 2.0 Archaeological & Historical background

- 2.1 There is some evidence for Prehistoric activity in the area; a Neolithic flint hollow-based arrowhead and Mesolithic flintwork, including microliths, were found at Combe Wood (TQ77511928). Two Neolithic stone axe heads were dug up at Oak Cottage (TQ78491712) in 1945, whilst a Neolithic axe was found at Jacobs Farm (TQ796189) in 1825. A scatter of flintwork was encountered to the south-west of Sedlescombe on the route of the Mountfield to Hastings pipeline<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.2 A Roman bloomery site is known at Oaklands Park to the south of Sedlescombe, (TQ78501750)<sup>4</sup>, whilst other ironworking sites are known from the immediate area, including the site at Footlands where iron ore pits have been found in association with Roman pottery<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.3 A hoard of between two and three thousand Saxon coins dating to Edward the Confessor was found at Sedlescombe in 1876 immediately to the north of The Presbytery, and it has been postulated that this was part of the bullion reserve of Hastings mint, that was dispersed at the time of the Norman invasion<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.4 At the time of the Domesday Book, Sedlescombe was held by Walter son of Lambert; it had 6 villagers with 2 smallholders have 5 ploughs; 7 acres of meadow, woodland for 6 pigs and a small church. One villager was held by the Count of Eu, whilst Canon Geoffrey held ½ hide<sup>7</sup>.
- 2.5 There must have been a significant Medieval settlement at Sedlescombe, as there are numerous Listed Buildings with 15<sup>th</sup> century origins within the village and its immediate surroundings, whilst further buildings survive from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A tannery associated with the monks of Battle Abbey was situated to the south of the village, and was in use in the 1380's<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Jones, G. 1985 'Archaeological observation of the Mountfield to Hastings Water Pumping Main Pipeline, East Sussex.' *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **123**, 243-246.

<sup>4</sup> Cleere, H. & Crossley, D. 1995 *The Iron Industry of the Weald*, Cardiff, Merton Priory Press.

<sup>5</sup> Hodgkinson, J. S. 1987 'Footlands Ironworking site, Sedlescombe', *Bulletin of the Wealden Iron Research Group. 2nd series*, **7**, 25-32

<sup>6</sup> Dolley, R.H.M. 1960 *Brit Num Journal* **30-31**, 76-81

<sup>7</sup> Morris, J. 1976 *Domesday Book*, Chichester, Phillimore.

<sup>8</sup> Searle, E. 1974 *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu* 301

- 2.6** Further expansion of the village took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, with further Listed Buildings of these dates. The Presbytery was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but given its location it may have replaced an earlier house on the same site. A Gunpowder works (TQ781176) is recorded at Sedlescombe on the site of a former furnace site<sup>9</sup> from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.7** The Presbytery is shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map of 1873/5 (Fig. 2) and appears little changed through the later edition OS maps, although the garden has been extended westwards a little after 1930. There has been little change in the immediate surrounding area until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when some infill and development has taken place.
- 2.8** Two brickworks were operating at Sedlescombe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first near Footland Wood (TQ763198) and the second on Castlemans Farm (TQ783194), both of which are marked on the 1843 Tithe Map<sup>10</sup>.
- 2.9** During the Second World War Sedlescombe (and Cripps Corner to the north of Sedlescombe) became a Nodal Point, although there are no surviving remains of the former. A Cold War Royal Observer Corps monitoring post is extant in a wooded compound to the north of Sedlescombe village at TQ7814918572.
- 2.10** Recent archaeological watching briefs have been carried out at Holmes House<sup>11</sup>, and at Asselton House<sup>12</sup>, both a short distance to the south-east of The Presbytery. Holmes House had probably originated as a timber-framed industrial building on land that was originally part of the 1569 Asselton House tenement, and was converted to a dwelling by c.1600.
- 2.11** During this work a full record was made of the standing remains of the north wall of Holmes House which confirmed that it had originally been jettied before having a flush gable end created in the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century. A trench excavated along the outside of the north wall provided an insight to the construction and changes that had taken place during the life of this house. Both watching briefs recovered artefacts that dated from the 15<sup>th</sup> century through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

---

<sup>9</sup> Straker, E. 1931 *Wealden Iron*, 341-4.

<sup>10</sup> Beswick, M. 2001 *Brickmaking in Sussex*, Midhurst, Middleton Press.

<sup>11</sup> Butler, C. 2009 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Holmes House, Sedlescombe, East Sussex*, CBAS Project No. 0090.

<sup>12</sup> Butler, K 2010 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Asselton House, Sedlescombe, East Sussex* CBAS Project No. 130 (forthcoming)

### **3 Archaeological Methodology**

- 3.1** On arrival at the site on the 13<sup>th</sup> September the first job, prior to any excavation, was the removal of a brick patio (built using un-frogged bricks and laid directly onto Context 2) by pick-axe. Some ground reduction of the lawn had already taken place as this sat some 300-400mm higher than the floor of the current kitchen.
- 3.2** Excavation of the footings, an area measuring 4.8m x 3.6m, over the footprint of the extension (Fig. 4) then began using a 360° mechanical mini-digger with a 440mm wide toothless bucket. The footings were 440mm wide and *c* 1.3m deep.
- 3.3** The first footing to be cut was along the south-west of the footprint, running north-west to the south-east. This uncovered the modern drain run for the existing house.
- 3.4** The remaining footings were then excavated well into the natural (by some 600mm) and all ground reduction was completed. No archaeological features were noted.
- 3.5** There were no archaeological features or finds to be recorded, however all deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards, using context record sheets. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.6** The archive is presently held by Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd and will be offered to a suitable local Museum in due course. A site reference of TPS10 has been allocated.

## **4 Results**

- 4.1** The topsoil/lawn (Context 1) comprised a firm, dark brown silty-clay loam some 420mm deep. There were no inclusions and very occasional pieces of 19<sup>th</sup> century material at less than 1%. The lawn had already been cut back from the excavation area prior to arrival on-site but may have extended up to the brick patio, which appears to have been laid directly onto Context (2).
- 4.2** Beneath the topsoil was a mid yellowish-brown sub-soil deposit (Context 2) which was present across the entire site. This deposit had no natural inclusions, however there was evidence of some root disturbance at 1% and some late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century material present at less than 1% and had a depth of 320mm.
- 4.3** Underlying Contexts 1 & 2 was the natural geology of the Ashdown beds (Context 3). Context 3 was comprised of a mid yellow-grey sandy-silt material with the very occasional small patch of yellow clay.
- 4.4** As Context 1 had already been removed prior to the excavation of the footings, the depth of the footings trench from the top of Context 2 to the limit of excavation within Context 3 was approximately 920mm. An overall depth from the top of Context 1 to the limit of excavation within Context 3 of 1.32m was recorded.



## **5 Finds**

- 5.1** The watching brief failed to recover any finds from the excavation area. A visual inspection of the immediate surrounding area and garden showed some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century brick and tile to be present in the top soil (Context **1**).
- 5.2** The only other artefacts noted were in the base of the section of Context **1** and comprised of a 20mm length of clay pipe stem along with a single sherd of transfer printed willow-pattern china, and one sherd of a 19<sup>th</sup> century china plate.
- 5.3** There appeared to a lump of iron or iron slag buried within the footings for the present kitchen wall. However, given its location it was not practical to examine or extract the artefact.

## 6 Discussion

- 6.1** No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief apart from the modern drainage run. No artefacts were recovered from the excavation, and the surface finds noted in the other areas of the garden all dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6.2** Given the depth of Context **1** it is possible that some landscaping had taken place in the past and topsoil has been brought in. It is also entirely feasible that the current house was terraced in and had truncated any evidence for an earlier building on the site and thus removed all traces of previous occupation.
- 6.3** Recent archaeological works to the north of The Presbytery also failed to recover any features or finds of significance<sup>13</sup>. However, recent archaeological watching briefs to the south-east of the site at Holmes House<sup>14</sup> and Asselton House<sup>15</sup>, recovered medieval and early post-medieval material. Given this evidence and numerous listed buildings with 15<sup>th</sup> century origins within the village it is entirely feasible to suggest that the main focus of medieval settlement in Sedlescombe was centred around the Green with the village not extending to the north as far as The Presbytery until the 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6.4** Whilst it is disappointing not to have found any archaeological features or finds from the Presbytery, given the sites and finds from the surrounding area and the two recent watching briefs at other properties in the village, it should not be forgotten that the excavation area was relatively small given its context within the wider landscape. It did however, also provide an opportunity, albeit a small one, to examine the spatial distribution of finds, or lack of, within the village and possible development to the north of the Green.
- 6.5** The methodology adopted for this watching brief proved to be satisfactory, and the confidence rating should be considered to be very reliable.

---

<sup>13</sup> Butler, K. 2010 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at the R.N. French Building, The Street, Sedlescombe, East Sussex*, CBAS0099.

<sup>14</sup> Butler, C. 2009 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Holmes House, Sedlescombe, East Sussex*, CBAS0090.

<sup>15</sup> Butler, K 2010 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Asselton House, Sedlescombe, East Sussex*, CBAS0130.

## **7 Acknowledgements**

- 7.1** I would like to thank Mr & Mrs. Parker for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, and the on-site contractors for their cooperation. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler, and monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter.

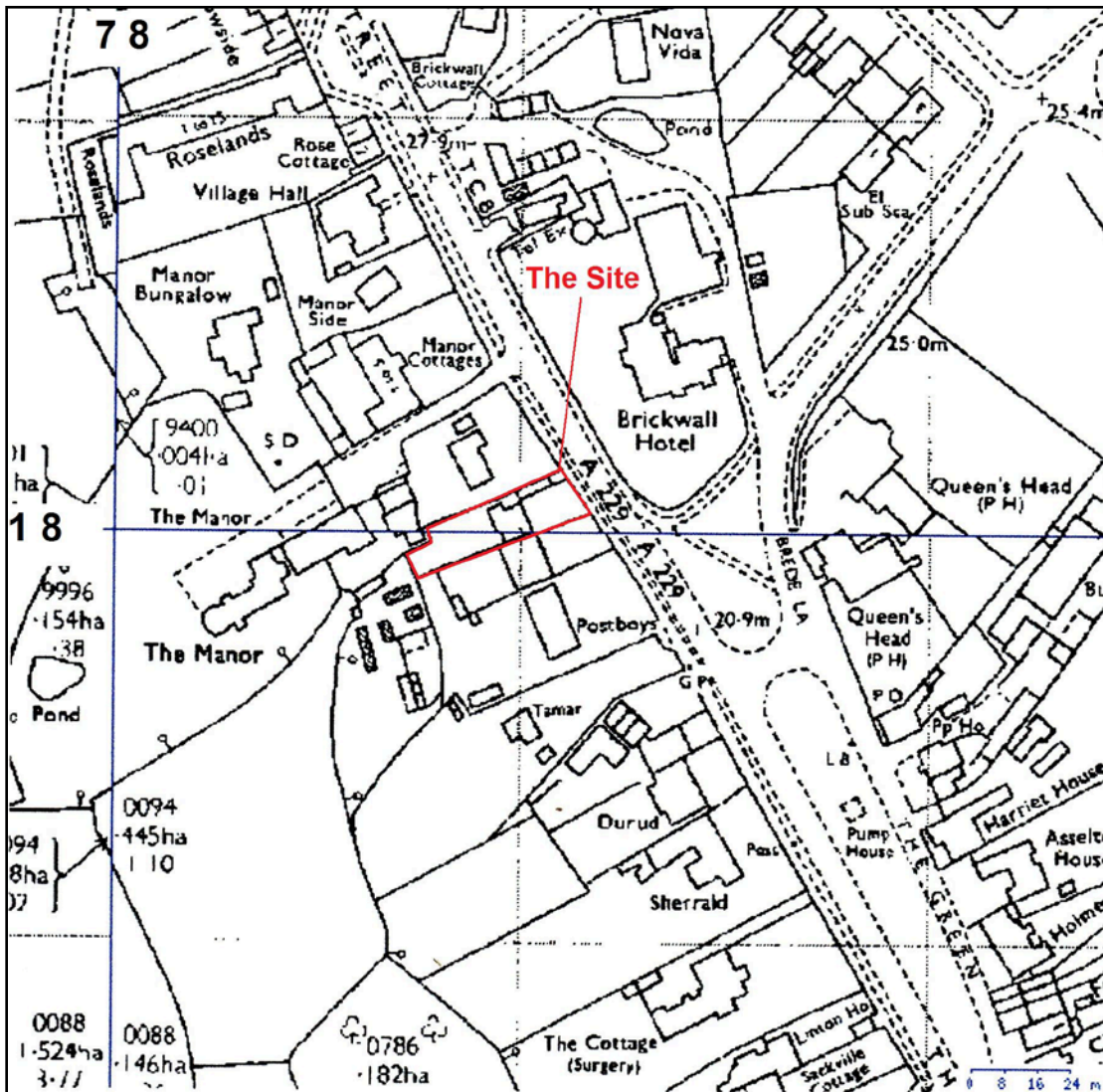


Fig. 1: The Presbytery, Sedlescombe: Location of the Site

Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100037471

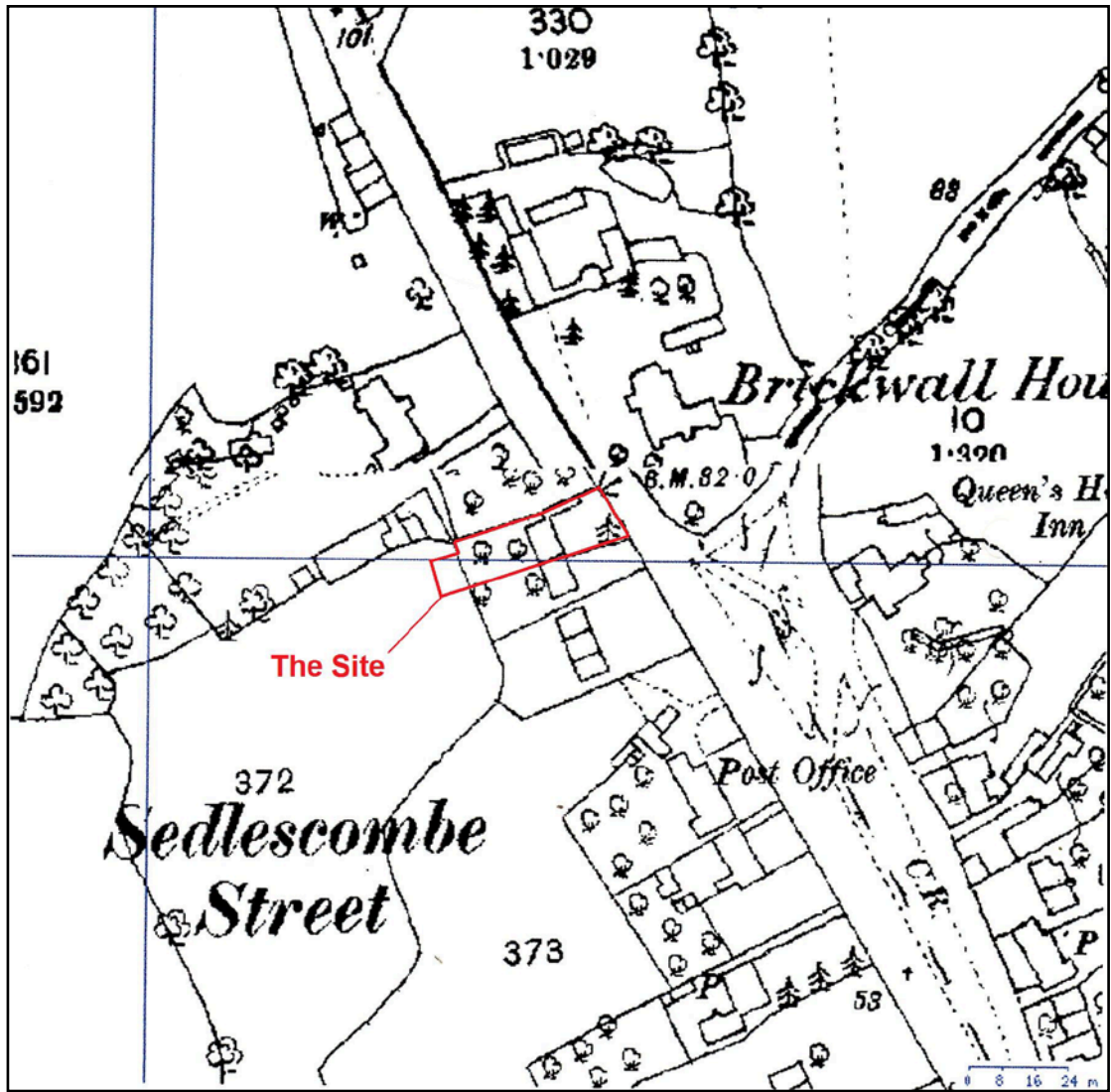


Fig. 2: The Presbytery, Sedlescombe: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map 1873-5

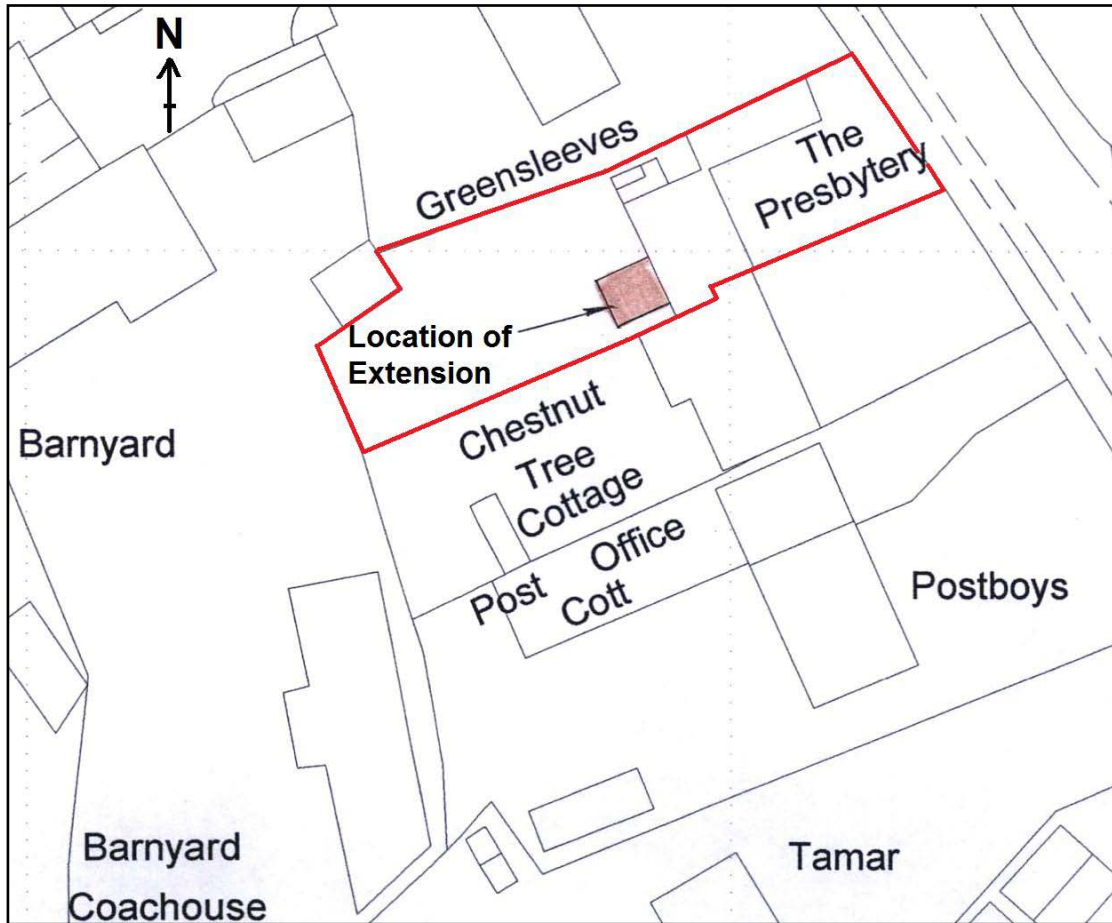


Fig. 3: The Presbytery, Sedlescombe: Location of the extension

Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100037471

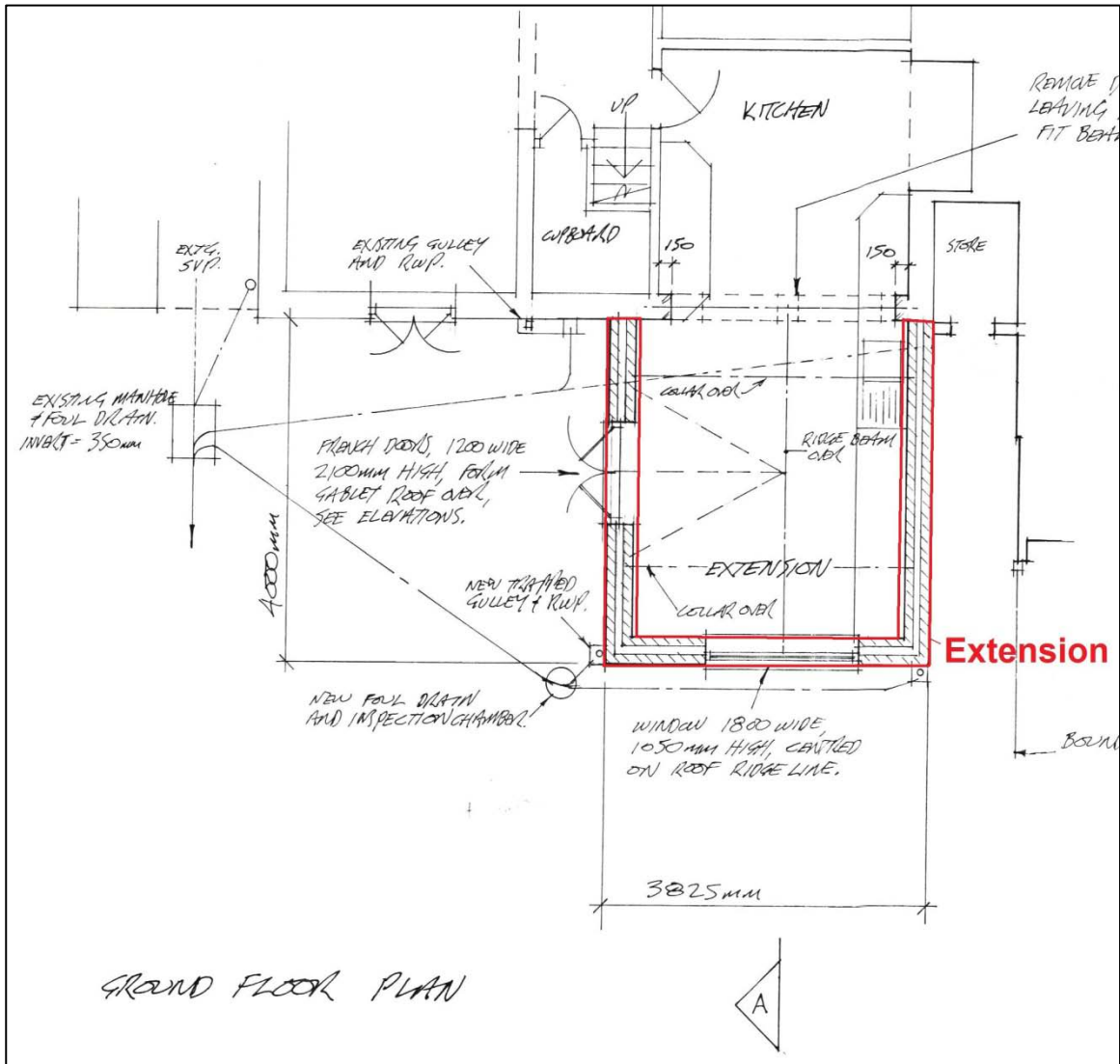


Fig. 4: The Presbytery, Sedlescombe: Site plan  
(Adapted from architects drawing)

## HER Summary Form

|  |  |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
|--|--|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
| Site Code  | HHS09                                    |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| Identification Name and Address  | The Presbytery, Sedlescombe, East Sussex |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| County, District &/or Borough  | Rother District Council                  |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| OS Grid Refs.  | TQ 78212 17915                           |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| Geology  | Ashdown Beds                             |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| 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. 13-09-10            | Other              |        |       |
| Sponsor/Client   | Mr C Parker                              |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| Project Manager  | Chris Butler                             |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| Project Supervisor   | David Atkin                              |                        |                         |                    |        |       |
| Period Summary   | Palaeo.                                  | Meso.                  | Neo.                    | BA                 | IA     | RB    |
|  | AS                                       | MED                    | PM <b>X</b>             | Other              |        |       |
| <p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was carried out at The Presbytery, Sedlescombe, during the groundworks associated with the construction of a single story extension to enlarge the kitchen. During the excavation a modern drain was the only feature noted. No features of an earlier date were present.</i></p> <p><i>No artefacts were recovered from this watching brief, although some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century artefacts were noted in the topsoil.</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. He has also recently undertaken an archaeological survey of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren.

**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.

# **Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services**

***Prehistoric Flintwork Specialist***

Rosedale  
Berwick  
Polegate  
East Sussex  
BN26 6TB

**Tel & fax: 01323 871021**

e mail: [chris@reltub.fsbusiness.co.uk](mailto:chris@reltub.fsbusiness.co.uk)