



# **Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services**



## **An Archaeological Survey of Land at Wilmington, East Sussex**

Project No. CBAS0182

by  
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### ***Summary***

*An archaeological walkover survey of land at Wilmington, East Sussex was undertaken in January 2011 in advance of tree planting. The survey did not reveal any above ground evidence for archaeological remains in the survey area, although significant lynchet was noted on the southern boundary of the site, and prehistoric flintwork and fire-fractured flint was noted in an adjacent ploughed field.*

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Stephen Judd of Independent Woodland Management, to carry out an archaeological walkover survey of land to the west of Wilmington, East Sussex centred on TQ 5425 0463 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2** The area surveyed comprised two complete fields, and part of a third field situated to the west of Wilmington village, on which it is proposed to plant new woodland. Field 1 is approximately 1.9ha in size, Field 2 is approximately 2ha, and Field 3 is approximately 1.5ha. To the south and north are fields, to the west are existing areas of recent tree plantation, and to the east are a number of houses which form the main part of Wilmington Village.
- 1.3** The South Downs are located approximately 0.6km to the south of the site, and the ground is sloping gently down from south to north across the site, and varies from c.36m OD at the south edge of the site to c.28m OD at the north end of the site. Fields 1 & 2 have been set aside, and were last cultivated c.15 years ago. Field 3 has been cultivated until recently.
- 1.4** The geology of the site, according to the Geological Survey map 319/334, is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation which is present across the majority of the southern part of the site. The northern part of the site comprises Gault Formation. There are patches of Head Deposit to the east and further to the south overlying the Chalk.
- 1.5** This report describes the methodology used in the archaeological walkover survey, and then looks at the results of the desk-based and field surveys, and draws conclusions about the potential for damaging or destroying any potential archaeology that may exist at the site.

## 2. Historical and Archaeological Background

- 2.1 The parish of Wilmington was part of the hundred of Longbridge, in the rape of Pevensey. The parish is on the road from Lewes to Eastbourne and comprises some 1744 acres<sup>1</sup>. The village is situated on the north-east declivity of the South Downs, on an elevated site commanding extensive views.
- 2.2 A Benedictine priory, a cell to the abbey of Grestain, in Normandy, was founded at Wilmington before 1243 and dissolved 1414, on the site of, or incorporating an earlier Alien or Priory Cell founded before 1086 and dissolved before 1243. The priory together with the manor of Wilmington was valued at 240 marks per annum, and was sold by Henry IV to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester in 1413, to whom it was confirmed by Henry V in the following year<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3 The church of St. Mary and St. Peter in Wilmington was located to the north of the priory, and has a 12<sup>th</sup> century chancel, whilst other parts date from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the south aisle being added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.4 The HER records were consulted and produced a large number of sites within Wilmington village and the surrounding landscape. A number of prehistoric sites occur on the top of the north scarp slope of the South Downs overlooking the village, and elsewhere around the parish, and include:

MES4532	TQ54980365	Neolithic	Hunters' Burgh Long Barrow
MES7200	TQ54880346	Neolithic	Polished axe
MES4526	TQ53970353	Bronze Age	Bowl barrow
MES4531	TQ54850344	Bronze Age	Bowl barrow
MES4540	TQ549052	Bronze Age	Hoard of bronze artifacts
MES7298	TQ54460531	Bronze Age	Possible barrow mound
MES4521	TQ542035	Iron Age	Bronze terret

- 2.5 Roman and Anglo Saxon activity is limited to just two sites:

MES7027	TQ555041	Roman	Pottery
MES2766	TQ534041	Anglo-Saxon	Coin Hoard

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<sup>1</sup> 'Willoughby - Wilstrop', A Topographical Dictionary of England (1848), pp. 581-584. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=51410>. Date accessed: 24 March 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Budgen, W. 1928 'Wilmington Priory: Historical Notes', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **LXIX**, 29-52.

<sup>3</sup> Whiteman, K. & J. 1994 *Ancient Churches of Sussex*, Seaford, S.B. Publications.

**2.6** As well as the Medieval Priory and church, there are a large number of Post-Medieval buildings and structures at Wilmington, all of which are listed or scheduled:

MES4522	TQ54410428	Medieval	St Mary & St Peter's Church
MES4525	TQ54250420	Medieval	Benedictine Priory
MES4527	TQ54250344	16 <sup>th</sup> Century	The Long Man
MES4550	TQ54490447	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Twytten House, The Street
MES7038	TQ54390425	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	22 The Street
MES7039	TQ54490449	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Brightside, The Street (previously an Inn)
MES7040	TQ54480441	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Carnoy, The Street
MES7043	TQ54530452	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Etherstone, The Street
MES7044	TQ54390425	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Garden wall east of The Cottage
MES7054	TQ54550462	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Pond Cottage, The Street
MES7055	TQ54610466	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Pond House, The Street
MES7064	TQ54390425	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	The Cottage, The Street
MES7046	TQ54390425	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Garden wall south-west of Hunter's Dene
MES7048	TQ54510448	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Holly Tree Cottage, The Street
MES7050	TQ54630474	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Lilac Cottage, The Street
MES7053	TQ54620473	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Orchard Cottage, The Street
MES7057	TQ54480441	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Priory Place, The Street
MES7062	TQ54480445	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	The Barnhouse, (previously a Barn)
MES7063	TQ54470444	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	The Chantry, The Street
MES7065	TQ54490432	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	The Glebe, (Old Vicarage)
MES7041	TQ54490444	19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Chantry View, The Street
MES7059	TQ54540462	19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Sunnyside, The Street
MES7067	TQ54390425	19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Pound, The Street
MES7060	TQ54520456	20 <sup>th</sup> Century	Telephone box
MES7049	TQ545044	Undated	Lantern Cottage, The Street
MES7056	TQ545045	Undated	Post Cottage, The Street

**2.7** A number of archaeological fieldwork projects have been undertaken in Wilmington, including three watching briefs:

EES14247	TQ54360427	2005/6	Priory Barn	Medieval and Post Medieval Structures were found
EES14260	TQ54460425	2006	Priory Farmhouse	Nothing found

Archaeological watching briefs have been carried out during demolition of an existing house, and the construction of a new house and garage at The Glebe, Wilmington<sup>4</sup>, and at the Old Vicarage<sup>5</sup>. The watching briefs resulted in the recovery of Post Medieval artefacts dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many of which came from a rubbish midden and demolition deposits from Post Medieval farm buildings. A small number of fire-fractured flint pieces, of probable prehistoric date, were also found. There were no other archaeological features or deposits seen during the watching briefs.

<sup>4</sup> Butler, C. 2008 *An Archaeological watching brief at The Glebe, Wilmington, East Sussex*, CBAS

<sup>5</sup> Butler, C. 2010 *An Archaeological watching brief at the Old Vicarage, Wilmington, East Sussex*, CBAS

- 2.8** Two recent excavation projects have been carried out on the Long Man hill figure in an effort to date it<sup>6</sup>, and to determine its original shape and purpose<sup>7</sup>. These have established that it was never a chalk cut hill figure, and had always been outlined in bricks, whilst its most likely date of construction was in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century AD. It was not possible to determine its original shape or purpose.
- 2.9** In association with the above fieldwork, the two fields between the Long Man and Wilmington village were fieldwalked. Prehistoric artefacts included a small quantity of worked flint of Neolithic and Bronze Age date, together with a large number of fire-fractured flint pieces. One sherd of Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pottery was also found. A small quantity of Roman pottery was found spread across both fields. Large quantities of Medieval and Post Medieval pottery were recovered, together with building material (including a fragment of inlaid Medieval floor tile) and other artefacts. Whereas the material from most periods was spread across both of the fields, and probably resulted from manuring, the Medieval pottery appears to be concentrated towards the north-west end of the eastern field<sup>8</sup>.
- 2.10** The existing historical and archaeological evidence suggests that the area around Wilmington has been exploited since at least Neolithic times. The presence of Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds on Windover Hill together with the flintwork and burnt flint found during the fieldwalking indicates that there may be settlement activity from these periods nearby.
- 2.11** Roman activity is also suggested by the pottery found, although this is likely to result from agricultural activities rather than settlement. The presence of a substantial Romano-British settlement at Arlington, to the north of Wilmington, would suggest that this area was being utilised as farmland.
- 2.12** The Medieval period is dominated by the presence of the Priory. Although there are some documentary sources and an archaeological survey of the surviving Priory structures<sup>9</sup>, there has been little investigation of any settlement that may have grown up around it. The recovery of large quantities of Medieval pottery from the fieldwalking suggests that such settlement may have been located to the south of the Priory.
- 2.13** During the Post Medieval period the village of Wilmington has grown up along The Street, and given the distribution of houses of different dates, and the village as shown on the early OS maps, the extent of the settlement has altered little until the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, and even then this has only been due to in-fill rather than expansion.

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<sup>6</sup> Bell, M. & Butler, C. 2003 'An Ancient Intrigue', *Sussex Past and Present* no. **101**, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Butler, C. 2004 *An interim report on recent excavations at the Long Man, Wilmington, East Sussex*.

<sup>8</sup> Wood, A. 2007 *Fieldwalking results from the Long Man of Wilmington, East Sussex*.

<sup>9</sup> Godfrey, W.H. 1928 'Wilmington Priory: An Architectural Description', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **LXIX**, 1-28.

- 2.14** Yeakell & Gardiner's map of Sussex 1778-83<sup>10</sup> shows the survey area to be open fields following a similar pattern to those of today. The fields to the south (including the remainder of Field 3) are significantly larger than those further north (Fields 1 & 2).
- 2.15** The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (1874) shows Field 1 to be exactly the same size and shape as it is today (Fig. 2). A small cottage sits within a property boundary in the south-east corner of Field 1. Field 2 is almost the same as it is today, except that the pond at its east end is mostly within the field, whereas today it is within the garden of the house 'Sundown'. Field 3 is part of a very large field that extends to the south.
- 2.16** There has been no change by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition OS map (1909) and 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS map (1928). The 1977 OS map appears to show no boundary between Field 1 and Field 2, which may have been merged into one at this time, and the housing development has reached the eastern end of Field 2, although the pond is still within Field 2. The same situation is shown on the 1981 OS map.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.envf.port.ac.uk/geo/research/historical/webmap/sussexmap>



### **3. Archaeological Methodology**

#### **3.1 *The Desk-top survey***

The desk-top study comprised the investigation of the East Sussex Historic Environment Records (ESHER), and other available resources. A brief study of the available historic mapping for the area was also undertaken, and one available aerial photograph was inspected.. A full search of historical records and documentary sources was not undertaken as part of this survey, although some sources were consulted in the course of researching this report.

#### **3.2 *The Field Survey***

The walk-over survey was undertaken on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011, after an initial site visit with Mr Judd on the 5<sup>th</sup> January. The weather was fine, although there had been a reasonable amount of rain over the preceding few days.

The survey comprised a systematic walkover of the area to be surveyed. A written record was made for each field, and any features were annotated on a map of the survey area. Digital photographs were taken, and form part of the site archive.

During the survey, any areas of exposed ground surface and the occasional molehills were inspected for archaeological artefacts, although none were recovered. In Field 3 the adjacent part of the field which was not part of the survey area had been ploughed and planted with a cereal crop. The exposed surface immediately adjacent to the survey area was briefly inspected for archaeological artefacts, and a note made of those present. None were retained.

This survey has only considered the above-ground archaeology, and no attempt has been made to investigate the below-ground archaeology. It is possible that there could be sites, especially those of prehistoric date, that are currently below-ground, and therefore any future groundworks should be closely monitored to ensure that they are fully recorded.

## **4. Results of the Survey**

### **4.1 Field 1**

Field 1 is currently down to rough grass, and slopes gently down from south to north. Along the south edge of the field there is a significant lynchet, which drops down 1m into Field 1 from the cultivated field immediately to the south. There are occasional bushes along this lynchet which hint at an earlier grubbed-out hedge.

Along the east and north-east sides of the field there are houses and gardens. The remainder of the northern side of the field, and forming the boundary with Field 2, is marked by a ditch c2m wide and 1m deep, along which grow a number of trees and a scrub hedge. On the south side of the ditch there is a very slight lynchet, and on the north side there is a drop of c300mm into Field 2.

At the west end of the field there is a small plantation of trees (post 1928) in the adjacent north-west plot, with one or two older trees on the boundary along with a small ditch and scrub hedge. Further to the south, the hedge continues, but there is no ditch.

No potential archaeological features were noted within the field. There were some areas of standing water noted, which appeared to be lying in shallow east-west orientated linear hollows. These can also be seen on the aerial photograph, and are likely to be the result of modern agricultural activity, and not remnant ridge and furrow. There were also faint traces of some north-east to south-west orientated drainage features of modern origin.

### **4.2 Field 2**

Field 2 is currently down to rough grass, and slopes down from south to north. Along the east side of the field there are houses and gardens. The pond noted on the early OS maps is now fully within the garden of the adjoining property 'Sundown'. The boundary with Field 1 has been described under Field 1 above.

The north edge of the field is bounded by a hedge with a water-filled ditch, and a drop into the adjacent field to the north of c300mm. Along the west side of the field there is an adjacent recent fenced plantation (post 1981).

No potential archaeological features were noted within the field. There were some areas of standing water noted, which appeared to be lying in shallow east-west orientated linear hollows. These can also be seen on the aerial photograph, and are likely to be the result of modern agricultural activity, and not remnant ridge and furrow. Some modern wheel rutting was also noted.

### 4.3 Field 3

This is the northern part of a much larger field, the remainder of which is currently cultivated with a cereal crop. The part of the field that forms the survey area is currently grassed, and has a very gentle slope down from south to north. There is no physical boundary along the south side.

At the west end of the field there is an adjacent recent plantation (post 1981). The east end of the field forms a boundary with Field 1 and has been described above. Along the north side of the field there is a hedge with a slight ditch. The hedge sits on top of a slight lynchet, with a small drop (c200mm) into the adjacent field to the north.

Only one potential archaeological feature was noted within the field. This comprised a short length (c.15m long) of drainage gully, situated in the north-east part of the field, running into the plantation. It was orientated north-east to south-west, and was 0.5m wide and 200mm deep, and is probably fairly recent in date.

There were some areas of standing water noted, which appeared to be lying in shallow east-west orientated linear hollows. These can also be seen on the aerial photograph, and are likely to be the result of modern agricultural activity, and not remnant ridge and furrow.

The opportunity was taken to walk along the edge of the cultivated part of the field to the south of the survey area, to see what artefacts were lying on the ground surface. There were frequent pieces of fire-cracked flint, occasional pieces of un-diagnostic worked flint, and occasional pieces of post medieval pottery and ceramic building material. No artefacts were retained.

## **5 Conclusion and Recommendation**

- 5.1** The walkover survey did not discover any obvious archaeological features or earthworks in any of the three fields. The only features noted were the lynchets forming the field boundaries along the north and south sides of each field. The most significant of these was along the south edge of Field 1, where the adjacent field to the south is c.1m higher. This lynchet has almost certainly accumulated over a long period of time as a result of ploughing in the two fields, with soil forming against a bank or hedge along this field edge. This lynchet will not be affected by the proposed tree planting scheme.
- 5.2** Other possible features noted were all either as a result of modern agricultural practices or through drainage. The standing water noted in all three fields, especially towards the northern part of the area, hints at possible drainage problems in the past, possibly due to the change in underlying geology from Chalk to Gault clay.
- 5.3** The artefacts noted in the cultivated part of Field 3 provide an indication of past activity which may well extend into the part of this field covered by the survey, and perhaps also into the other fields. The post medieval pottery and ceramic building material has almost certainly been deposited in the field as a result of manuring. However, the frequent fire-fractured flint pieces and occasional pieces of worked flint may indicate some later prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site. This mirrors closely the artefact assemblage found during the fieldwalking at the Long Man, just 0.5km to the south of the site (see above).
- 5.4** In conclusion, the survey has found no direct evidence for past settlement or other activity at the site, and the evidence of manuring, the lynchets and from the maps suggests that these fields have been used for agricultural activity for a long time. It has not been possible to determine below ground evidence due to the non-intrusive nature of the survey, however the artefacts recovered do hint at possible prehistoric activity in the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 5.5** The method of tree planting to be employed will involve no excavation, and therefore it is only the long-term effect of tree roots, and any other associated groundworks, such as drainage, which may affect potential buried archaeology. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is required in advance of the tree planting. However any associated or future groundworks that may involve excavation should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

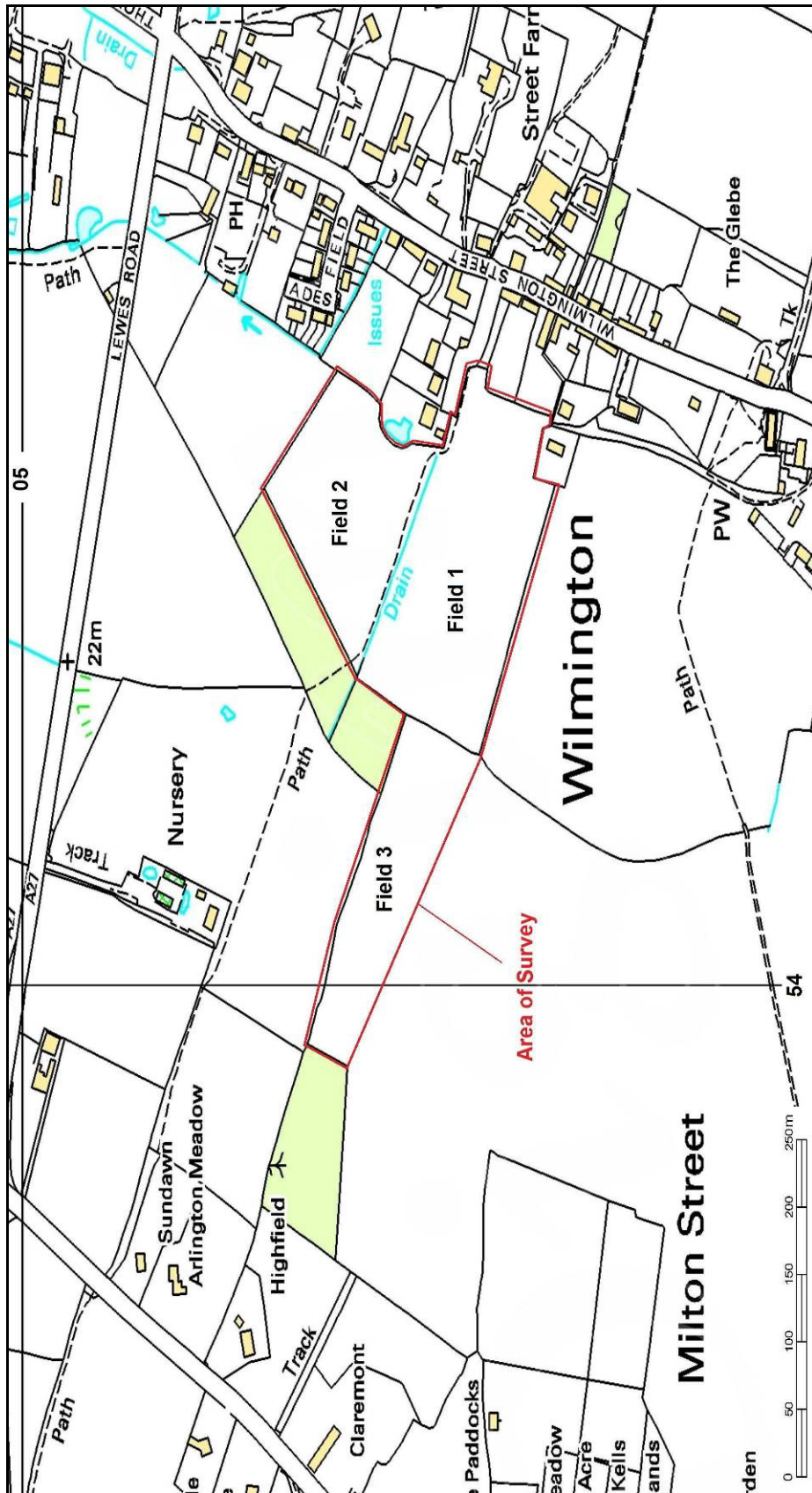


Fig. 1: Land at Wilmington: Location of the area surveyed  
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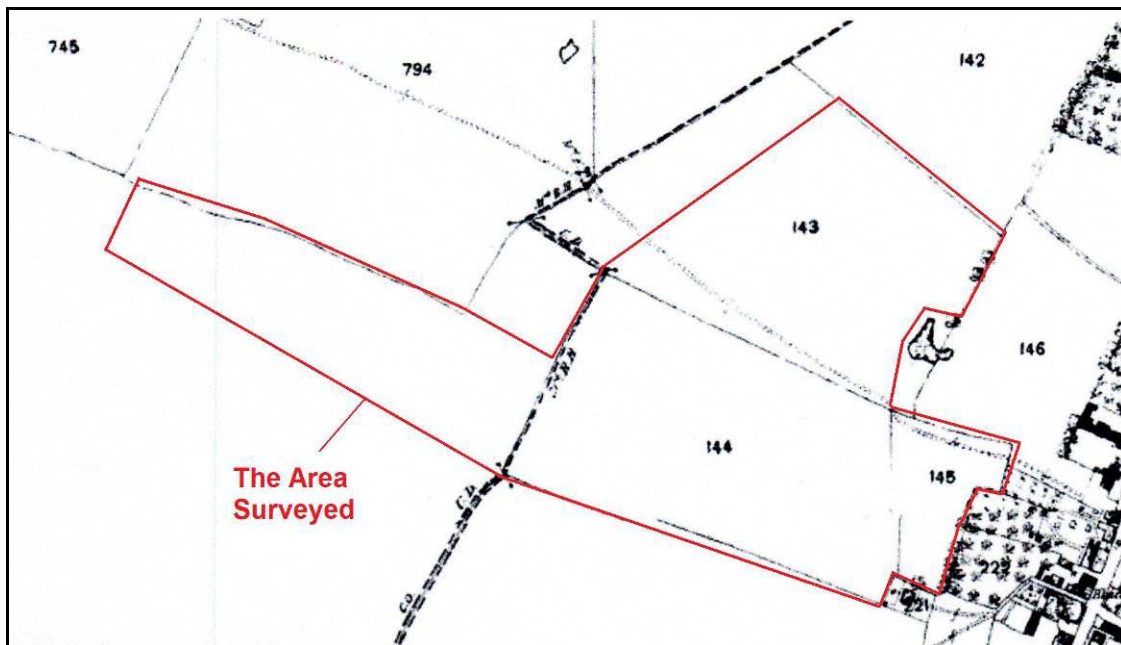


Fig. 2: Land at Wilmington: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (1874)

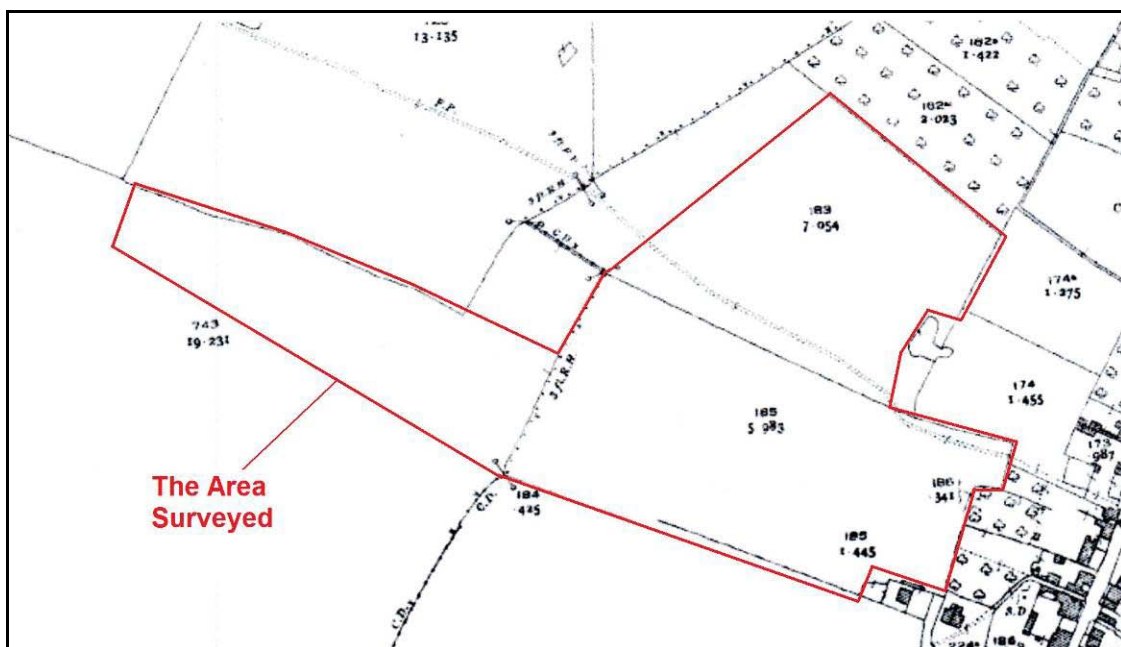


Fig. 3: Land at Wilmington: 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS Map (1928)



Fig. 4: Land at Wilmington: Field 1 looking east towards Wilmington



Fig. 5: Land at Wilmington: Lynchet on south edge of Field 1



Fig. 6: Land at Wilmington: Field 2 looking south-east



Fig. 7: Land at Wilmington: Field 3 looking east



## **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, and recent surveys 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, Woodland Archaeological Surveys, Field Surveys & Fieldwalking, Post Excavation Services and Report Writing.

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