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An Archaeological Evaluation Excavation at Dovecote Barn, Chyngton Lane, Seaford, East Sussex. LW/08/0120

TV 5036 9874

by Keith Butler

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Summary

An Archaeological Evaluation trench was excavated at Dovecote Barn, Chyngton Lane, Seaford in advance of the construction of a new house at the site. A previous desk-based assessment had identified the site to be situated in the area of a large pond, which had probably been in-filled between 1910 and 1927.

The excavation located the pond which had a clay lining. All of the artefacts recovered dated from the late 19^{th} to early 20^{th} century which corresponded with its later use and final infilling.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services was commissioned by Mr Henry Thomas to carry out an Archaeological Assessment Excavation at Dovecote Barn, Chynford Lane, Seaford, in order to establish the likely presence and importance of any archaeological remains that may be affected by the proposed construction of a new house (LW/08/0120).
- 1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation¹ was prepared for an archaeological evaluation excavation by CBAS, and approved by the Archaeology Team at East Sussex County Council. The assessment excavation was required to establish whether there are any archaeological remains surviving on the site. This will enable further decisions to be made regards the mitigation strategy for either in-situ preservation of the archaeology, or its preservation by record.
- 1.3 Dovecote Barn is located at TV 5036 9874, on the west side of Chyngton Lane, adjacent to Chyngton Farm which is situated to the east of Seaford town, and is north-east of Seaford Head (Fig. 1). The site is not a Scheduled Ancient Monument but is within an Archaeological Sensitive Area (ASA) and has been designated as a Conservation Area².
- 1.4 Within the Conservation Area there are eight Listed Buildings, these include Chyngton House (DES1968), a Grade II Listed Building of 18th century appearance, but having Medieval origins, which, together with its gardens, is enclosed by walls. There are also a number of barns and cowsheds of 18th/19th century date around the house which have been converted to dwellings, and are also Grade II listed.
- 1.5 The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 319/334), comprises Newhaven Chalk, with a thin horizon of Culver Chalk immediately to the south of the site, and outcrops of Woolwich and Reading Beds to the south-west and south-east.
- An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment³ was produced as the first stage of this work. This established that there was evidence for activity in the immediate area from the Mesolithic period through to the Roman period. However, this evidence was likely to have been removed by the construction of the large pond on the site. It was not clear whether the pond was constructed in the Medieval period or Post Medieval period.

¹ Butler, C. 2008 Specification for an Archaeological Assessment Excavation at Dovecote Barn, Chyngton Lane, Seaford. CBAS.

² Frost, L. 2003 *Chyngton Lane, Seaford; Conservation Area Appraisal*, Lewes District Council.

³ Butler, C. 2008 A Desk-based Assessment at Dovecote Barn, Chyngton Lane, Seaford, East Sussex. CBAS

- 1.7 Map and photographic evidence shows the pond to be present throughout the 19th century, but to have disappeared by 1927, although a photograph dated 1918 shows it still to be there at that time. The desk-based assessment highlighted the potential for artefacts and other remains that may have been dumped or lost into the pond together with the probable anaerobic conditions of this environment which may result in the rare survival of organic remains.
- 1.8 The evaluation excavation took place on the 6th November 2008. The fieldwork was carried out by the author under the direction of Chris Butler.

2.0 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 2.1 There has been very little archaeological work in the immediate vicinity of Chyngton Farm, apart from a programme of fieldwalking undertaken in 1982-3⁴, and a nearby watching brief (EES 14102).
- 2.2 The Archaeological Desk Based Assessment⁵ listed a small number of recorded HER finds spots of artefacts and Listed Buildings. The earliest being at least seven Palaeolithic handaxes found at Exceat although their exact provenance is unknown.
- 2.3 Numerous scatters of later Neolithic/Bronze Age flintwork were identified during 1982-3 fieldwalking project⁶, including at Chyngton Farm, South Hill and Walls Brow. These were mostly localised discrete concentrations, and could represent activity areas or small settlement sites. A Neolithic polished flint axe was found after a cliff fall below Seaford Head in1993⁷, whilst another was found at Lullington Close and a third example in the Hewlett Collection in Canada is known to have come from Seaford⁸.

⁴ Garwood, P. 1985. 'The Cuckmere Valley Project Fieldwalking Programme 1982-3, *Institute of Archaeology Bulletin* 22, 49-68.

⁵ Butler, C. 2008 A Desk-based Assessment at Dovecote Barn, Chyngton Lane, Seaford, East Sussex. CBAS.

Garwood, P. 1985. The Cuckmere Valley Project Fieldwalking Programme 1982-3, Institute of Archaeology Bulletin 22, 49-68.

⁷ Butler, C. 1994. A polished flint axe from Seaford Head, East Sussex. *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **132** 193-200.

Brewett, p. 1983. Sussex lithics in the Hewlett and Ami collections in Canada. Sussex Archaeological Collections 121 193-5.

- 2.4 Bronze Age flintwork, pottery and pieces of bronze have been found to the west of Chyngton Farm, although the exact find spot is uncertain. The presence of these finds would suggest that a Bronze Age settlement may be located in the immediate vicinity of the site.
- A discrete scatter of possible Late Iron Age or Roman pottery was recovered at Walls 2.5 Brow (TV507985) during the 1982-3 fieldwalking survey⁹, whilst two inhumations associated with Roman pottery were found after a cliff fall at Hope Gap ¹⁰.
- 2.6 Chyngton (Chinting) has Medieval origins, possibly being a village or hamlet in its own right. Chinting was granted to Richard de Luci in 1153/4, and subsequently passed to the De Aguila family. Part of Chiting was given to the Priory of Michelham in the reign of Henry III by Gilbert De Aquila and became a grange when a small chapel was built. It may have been an established settlement with a port at Cuckmere Haven¹¹.
- Dovecote Barn comprises of a 17th/18th century square flint-built dovecote with stone 2.7 quoins, with an $18^{th}/19^{th}$ century stable and coach house of similar material to the dovecot, and now converted to a residence, to its rear. Both are Grade II Listed Buildings.
- 2.8 The early map evidence starts with an estate map 'a survey of Chingting Farm in the parish of Seaford in the county of Sussex belonging to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle, by Abr'm Baley' of 1764¹². The map shows the manor houses, together with a number of smaller buildings (including the dovecote) to the south, with no enclosing wall. A large pond is situated immediately south of these buildings, in the area of the evaluation trench.
- 2.9 The Seaford Tithe map shows Chinton House and Farm surrounded by farmland. The large pond located immediately to the south of the barn and dovecote is still present and fills the area between these buildings and the farm buildings to the south-east. The apportionment tells us that Chinton House, Farm and surrounding land was all owned by the Earl of Chichester and was occupied by a Thomas William Chambers.
- The pond is shown on the 1st to 3rd Edition OS maps (1875-1910) however, by the 4th 2.10 Edition OS map (1927) the pond has disappeared and the site is shown as an open area.

⁹ Garwood, P.1985. 'The Cuckmere Valley Project Fieldwalking Programme 1982-3. Institute of Archaeology Bulletin 22. 62.

¹⁰ Bannister, N, 1999 Historic Landscape Survey of Chyngton Farm. National Trust.

¹² ESRO – Acc 6077/22/29.

3.0 Archaeological Methodology

- 3.1 A trench measuring 12m in length and 1.8m wide was marked out over the footprint of the new house (Fig. 2). This was excavated, under archaeological supervision, by a 5-ton 360° digger using a toothless bucket. The spoil from the excavation was placed on wooden boards on the western side of the trench until the trench was backfilled.
- 3.2 Initially a section 3m wide at the northern end of the trench was excavated to the natural to establish the depth of any archaeological deposits. It was then agreed with Greg Chuter, Assistant County Archaeologist at ESCC, that a similar 3m wide section would be excavated at the southern end of the trench, and if there was no difference in the archaeological deposits then the remainder of the trench between these two sections did not need to be excavated.
- 3.3 As the excavation proceeded it was decided to leave a step on the western side of the trench at both the north and south sections. This was for health and safety reasons due to the depth of the trench, and to aid access to enable the sections to be recorded.
- 3.4 A temporary bench mark was established on the eastern corner of the building (Cahoots) located on opposite side of Chyngton Lane to Dovecote Barn.
- 3.5 A metal detector was used throughout the evaluation excavation to monitor the spoil heap for metallic objects.
- 3.6 All archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded according to accepted professional standards, using context record sheets. A representative section, 1m wide, at each end of the trench was drawn. 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 and, after any further analysis, will be offered to Seaford Museum. A site reference of DBS08 has been allocated.

4.0 Results

- 4.1 In the northern end of the evaluation trench seven layers were revealed during the excavation (Fig. 3). Context 1 was the layer of topsoil immediately below the lawn. This was a mid brown, silty clay loam of a loose to firm consistence, with a depth of 300mm. The coarse components comprised small pieces of rounded gravel to 20mm (1%) and ceramic building material (CBM) (2%).
- 4.2 Below Context 1 was Context 2; a firm orange-brown layer of silty clay. This layer, with a depth of 400mm, appeared to be an infill of the pond and contained CBM (2%), irregular flint pieces to 75mm (<1%) and charcoal flecks (1%). Below Context 2 was a distinct layer of fill becoming deeper on the southern side of the section with a maximum depth of 500mm (Context 3). This was a dark grey-brown silty clay loam with a loose consistence, containing CBM (1%), window glass (1-2%), charcoal pieces and flecks (2%) and chalk pieces to 50mm (<1%).
- 4.3 Context 4 was only apparent in the northern edge of the section below Context 3. It comprised a layer of a dark grey-brown silty clay loam, with a loose consistence. This layer extended approximately half a metre from the northern end of trench, with a greatest depth of 230mm. It contained metal pieces (3%), CBM (2%), chalk pieces and flecks (3%) and charcoal pieces and flecks (2%), and appeared to be a dump of material deposited during the in-filling of the pond.
- 4.4 Context 5 was below Context 4, and comprised a layer of soft to firm, silty clay loam of a mid grey-brown colour, the depth of this layer varied between 300mm and 500mm. The artefacts recovered from this layer tended to be unabraded, and sometimes complete, suggesting that the ground was soft when they were deposited. This layer could possibly be interpreted as pond silt. The course components in this layer were of a much lower density and were made up of CBM (<1%) and charcoal flecks (1%).
- 4.5 Context 6 was below Context 5, and comprised a thin layer 130mm thick of compact orange-brown silty clay with irregular flint pieces to 100mm (30%), and would appear to be a clay lining to the pond. Below this layer (Context 7) at a depth of almost 2m was the natural, a chalky colluvium of a buff colour with pockets of orange-brown silty clay loam of a firm to compact consistence. The coarse components were chalk pieces and fragments to 75mm (15%) and flint pieces to 75mm (<1%).

- 4.6 At the southern end of the evaluation trench six layers were recorded (Fig. 3). Below Context 1 which was slightly deeper at 360mm depth at this end of the trench, was Context 8 which was a layer of a mid brown silty clay loam with large areas of a very dark brown charcoal-rich soil which appeared to be areas of burning. The layer had a loose consistence and contained irregular flint pieces to 50mm (<5%), CBM (2%) and charcoal pieces and flecks (5%).
- 4.7 Context 9 was below Context 8, and comprised an in-fill layer of light brown silty clay loam of a firm consistence, with chalk pieces and flecks up to 60mm (40%). This Context was 400mm in depth and produced no finds, and appears to be a layer of in-fill, probably from a local source. It was noted that the southern end of the trench produced fewer artefacts than at the northern end of trench.
- 4.8 Context 10 was below Context 9, and was very similar to Context 5, having a depth of between 450mm and 500mm, and comprising a mid grey-brown silty clay loam with a loose to firm consistence, but having numerous irregular and rounded flint pieces to 130mm (20%) and ceramic building material (2%).
- 4.9 Context 11 was the same compact orange-brown silty clay lining to the pond as Context 6, having a thickness of 140mm and containing pieces of irregular flint up to 100mm (20%). This layer was above Context 7; the natural.
- 4.10 The deposits found were interpreted as follows: The clay and flint lining of the pond (Contexts 6 and 11) with a layer of silting, possibly representing the immediate disuse of the pond (Contexts 5 and 10) above. The pond was then infilled and levelled off (Contexts 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9) with a final layer of garden topsoil laid over the top (Context 1).
- **4.11** No other archaeological features were discovered during the evaluation excavations at either the south or north ends of the trench. Both sections of the trench were backfilled after recording had been completed.

5.0 Finds

The evaluation excavation recovered a small assemblage of finds from the site. These are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

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Context	Pottery	CBM *	Stone	Other	
1	9/156g	-	-	Glass 2/17g Oyster 1/40g	
2	2/42g	3/180g (peg)	1/234g	Glass 5/144g	
3	22/442g	1/54g (peg)	-	Glass 7/363g	
5	3/408g	2/122g (wall) 1/3,150g (complete) 1/2,275g (coping) Ceramic drain 2/570g	1/194g	Glass 4/618g	
8	-	1/3,050g (complete) 1/3,325g (complete) 2/430g (frags)	-	-	
10	1/8g	2/86g (peg) 2/1,194g (ridge) 1/148g chimney1/50g (frag)	2/220g	-	

^{*}Ceramic Building Material

5.1 The Pottery by Luke Barber.

5.1.1 The earliest piece of pottery consists of a single sherd of early/mid 18th century tin-glazed earthenware from Context **3**. The sherd, from a hollow-ware with blue painted floral decoration, is quite abraded suggesting this is a residual piece rather than being from a long-term curated vessel. A single sherd from a stoneware jar with brown iron wash from the same context may be of late 18th century date.

Table 2

Context	Pottery (No. Weight)	Deposit Date
1	9 156g	Late $19^{th} - 20^{th}$ century
2	2 42g	Late $19^{th} - 20^{th}$ century
3	22 442g	Late $19^{th} - 20^{th}$ century
5	3 408g	Early 20 th century

10	1 8g	Early 20 th century

- **5.1.2** The remainder of the pottery from the site can all be placed within a later 19th century to early 20th century date range (Table 2). Context 1 produced a sherd of white stoneware preserve jar, a base from a buff earthenware mixing bowl, a small rim sherd from a blue transfer-printed 'china' (refined whiteware) plate and a number of sherds of plain white 'china'
- **5.1.3** Context **2** produced only two sherds, both of which are from unglazed earthenware flower pots. Context **3** produced the largest assemblage of pottery. As well as the 18th century sherds noted above this deposit produced 10 plain white stone china sherds including plates, bowls and a Newcastle preserve jar. In addition this context also produced a little late slipware (a bowl), plain English porcelain, white 'china' and a possible stone china plate decorated in blue.
- **5.1.4** Context **5** produced a complete white stoneware preserve jar (identical to the type found in Context **1**) as well as fragments from a plain white stone china bowl and plate. The only sherd recovered from Context **10** consisted of a blue transfer-printed 'china' saucer fragment with maker's print on its exterior (HANCOCK & SONS STOKE on TRENT ENGLAND) dated between 1906 and 1912¹³
- **5.2 The Ceramic Building Material** by Luke Barber.
- 5.2.1 The roof tile fragments from the site are all well fired and tempered with sparse fine sand and sparse iron oxides and/or white clay pellets/streaks to 2mm. The earliest piece consists of one 14mm thick quite crudely made peg tile fragment from Context 2, which may be of 18th century date. The remaining peg tile fragments are all of 19th or early 20th century date and are typically 10-12mm thick.
- 5.2.2 Two ridge tile fragments were recovered from Context 10. The earlier fragment, probably of late 18th to 19th century date, is medium fired and tempered with sparse sand and iron oxides to 1mm with an exterior black glaze. The other piece is unglazed and better made/fired and is probably of later 19th to early 20th century date. Context 10 also produced a fragment from an earthenware chimney pot of similar date. The only other tile recovered consists of two pieces of late 19th to 20th century white glazed wall tile from Context 5.

¹³ Godden, G. 1991. Encyclopaedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks, Barrie & Jenkins Ltd. London.

- 5.2.3 A number of complete and fragmentary bricks were recovered from the site. Context 5 produced two complete frogless examples of later 19th to mid 20th date. One of these, tempered with sparse sand and moderate iron oxide and white clay streak inclusions to 2mm, measures 220 x 107 x 62mm and is notably well formed and fired. The other example, tempered with abundant white clay, iron oxide and crushed brick pellets to 6mm, is also well formed/fired but has been shaped (post-firing) to form a coping brick. This measures 233mm long and 65mm high with a maximum width at its shaped curved apex of 80mm.
- 5.2.4 Context 8 also produced two complete bricks. The first is an extruded frogless example (225 x 107 x 64mm) tempered with sparse fine sand and sparse/moderate iron oxides to 3mm. It is well formed and fired and likely to be of early 20th century date. The other example measures 227 x 107 x 64mm and has a granular sandy fabric. It is well formed/fired with a neatly formed flat-based frog stamped 'SUSSEX BRICK & ESTATES Co LTD' 14. This company, based at Warnham, was formed in 1903 (Beswick 1993). Context 8 also produced a couple of brick fragments the most interesting of which consists of a 37mm tall 19th century flooring brick tempered with sparse fine sand and iron oxides to 2mm. The only other fragment of brick was from Context 10 which produced a piece of late 19th to 20th century perforated brick in a well fired sandy fabric.
- **5.2.5** Two fragments of later 19th to early/mid 20th salt-glazed drain from Context **5**. These include pieces which are still mortared together demonstrating they had been used prior to being deposited in this context.
- **5.3 Foreign Stone** by Luke Barber
- **5.3.1** Three quite large fragments of Welsh roofing slate were recovered from Contexts **2** (234g), Context **5** (194g) and Context **10** (220g).
- **5.4 Glass** by Chris Butler
- **5.4.1** A small assemblage of glass was recovered during the excavation (Table 1). A few of the pieces were fragments of clear window glass; Context **1** (2 fragments) and Context **3** (3 fragments). A large quantity of window glass was present in Context **3**, but only three pieces were retained as a sample.

¹⁴ Beswick, M. 1993. Brickmaking in Sussex. Middleton Press. Midhurst.

- **5.4.2** A piece of white glass, possibly from a gas/oil lamp funnel, and a base fragment from a thick clear glass tumbler were recovered from Context **2**.
- **5.4.3** Most of the glass came from bottles, and included fragments from green-glass mineral water bottles, brown-glass bottles and a neck fragment from a Codd bottle; all of which are likely to date from the latter part of the 19th century¹⁵.
- **5.4.4** A complete machine-made green-glass wine bottle (440g) was recovered from Context **5**, together with three other fragments from the base and neck of similar green-glass bottles. None had any markings that would aid identification. These are all likely to date from the 20th century.
- **5.5 Other Finds** by Chris Butler
- **5.5.1** A large number of metallic finds (mostly iron) were recovered from Context **4**, including two buckets (found one inside the other), fittings from agricultural machinery (including parts of oxen harness and yoke fittings), tools, and many unidentifiable fragments. Pieces of corrugated iron were also found. None of these were retained.
- **5.5.2** A single fragment from an oyster shell (40g) was found in Context 1.

¹⁵ Hedges, A.A.C. 2000 Bottlers and Bottle Collecting, Shire Publications Ltd

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1 Prior to the excavation it had not been clear whether the pond had originated during the Medieval period or at a later date. The excavation did not reveal any evidence for Medieval activity, or indeed any earlier Roman or prehistoric activity.
- 6.2 The excavation showed that the pond had been constructed by lining a shallow cut approximately 1m deep with a layer of clay mixed with flints some 130-140mm thick. No artefacts were recovered to date this event, although the early map evidence shows the pond to have been present by at least 1764. It is likely that the pond was constructed to provide a place to water the oxen teams which were used to pull ploughs and other agricultural equipment during the Post Medieval period (Fig. 4).
- 6.3 The last team of oxen at Chyngton Farm were probably 'retired' in the first decade of the 20^{th} century, and the last team in Sussex was working at Exceat Farm until 1924¹⁶. The pond has gone by the time the 4th Edition OS map was produced in 1927, although it appears in a photograph taken c1918.
- 6.4 Contexts 5 and 10 may represent a silting up of the pond in the early 20th century, as many of the artefacts in these layers were unabraded or complete. It was also noted that these artefacts were concentrated at the north end of the trench which would have been closer to the edge of the pond, and therefore more likely to have artefacts deposited.
- The pond has then been infilled with many different deposits containing later 19th and 20th century artefacts, including farm rubbish, building material etc, mostly probably sourced locally.
- 6.6 The excavation has established the presence of the pond and has broadly dated its construction and infilling. The construction of the new house is unlikely to have an impact on significant archaeological remains, and it is recommended that no further archaeological intervention is necessary.

¹⁶ Gordon, K. 2006 From a Seaford Album (Seaford Museum MFN13232)

7.0 Acknowledgements

7.1 I would like to thank Mr Henry Thomas of Dovecote Barn for commissioning this archaeological assessment excavation and his hospitality on site. The project was managed by Chris Butler for CBAS, and monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter. I would also like to thank Luke Barber for reporting on the pottery, ceramic building material and stone.

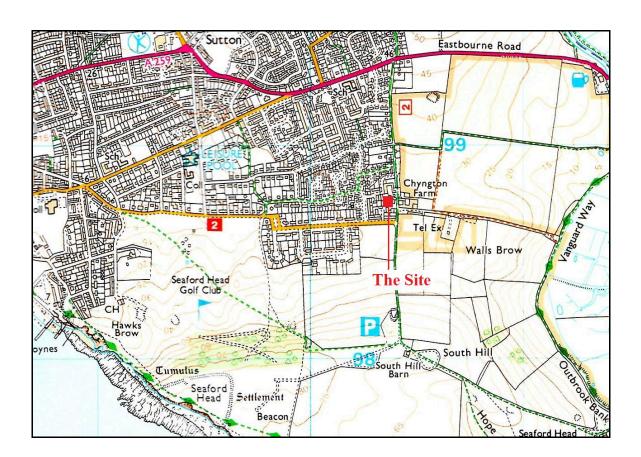


Fig. 1: Dovecote Barn, Seaford: Location Map Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100037471

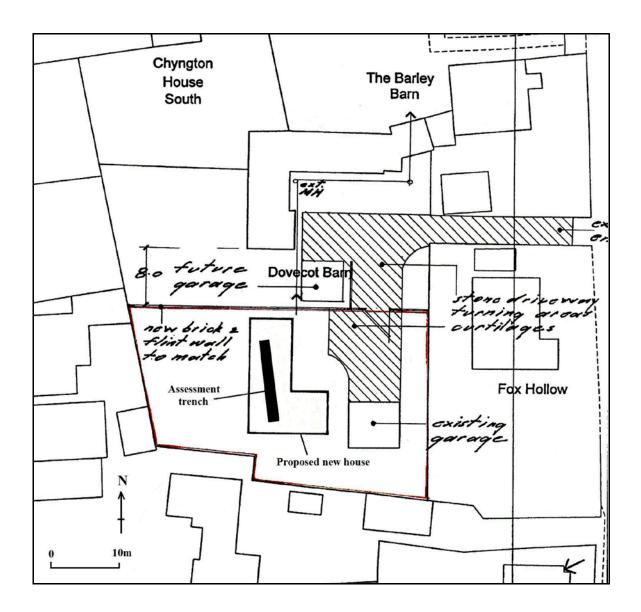


Fig. 2: Dovecote Barn, Seaford: Plan showing location of proposed house and assessment trench

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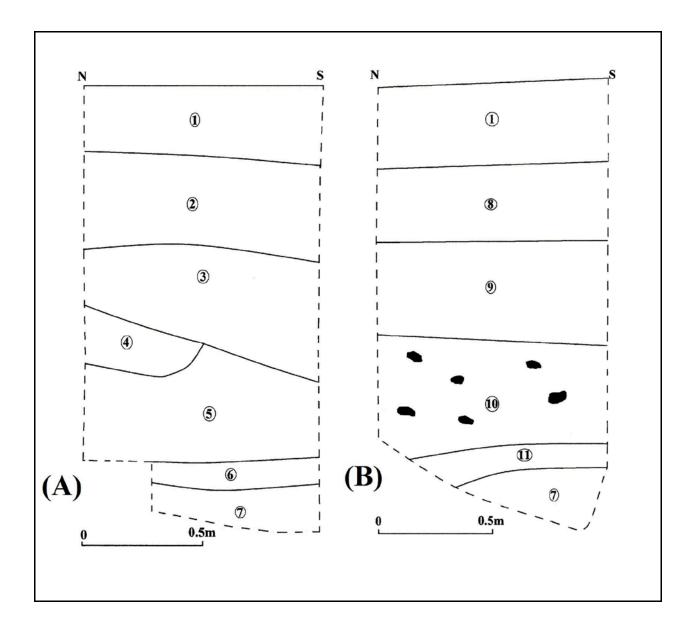


Fig. 3: Dovecote Barn, Seaford: Evaluation trench sections: (A) Section 1 at north end; (B) Section 2 at south end.



Fig. 4: Dovecote Barn, Seaford: Photograph of oxen team at Chyngton Farm c.1900 Copyright: Seaford Museum (MFN261)

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. He has also recently undertaken an archaeological survey of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren.

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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