



Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services



An Archaeological Watching Brief at Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex

Project No. CBAS0193

(EB/2010/0436)

TV 58890 97545

by
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex during the construction of a new bridleway crossing on the South Downs Way. The excavation of the crossing point and waiting areas was monitored, and although a small assemblage of prehistoric flintwork and 20th century artefacts was recovered, no archaeological features were noted, apart from a modern water main.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the South Downs Joint Committee (The Client) to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Beach Head Road, Eastbourne, 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 required a programme of archaeological work to be undertaken during the works to create a new bridleway crossing point and waiting areas on either side of Beach Head Road (EB/2010/0306).
- 1.3** The site is located near the junction of the Beachy Head Road (B2103) with Warren Hill on the west side of Eastbourne and approximately 1.5km north of Beachy Head at approximately 35m OD (TV 58890 97545 (centred)). The site is on the edge of an Archaeological Notification Area defining an area of prehistoric activity including Bronze Age barrows (Fig. 2).
- 1.4** The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey sheet 319/334, is Seaford Chalk, with Lewes Nodular Chalk immediately to the east and north, and a large outcrop of Clay-with-flints a short distance to the south.
- 1.5** The appropriate programme of archaeological work comprises an archaeological watching brief. A written scheme of investigation was prepared covering the watching brief, and was approved by the Archaeology Team at ESCC, and submitted to the local planning authority for approval.
- 1.6** The watching brief was required to monitor any groundworks associated with the construction of the crossing, waiting areas and bridleways, and was carried out by the author on the 8th March 2011, and David Millum on the 9th March 2011.

2.0 Archaeological & Historical background (Fig. 3)

- 2.1 Although Mesolithic flintwork has been found in the wider landscape, there have been few discoveries in the immediate vicinity of the site¹. Mesolithic flintwork on the South Downs tends to be concentrated on the Clay-with-flints, an outcrop of which is situated just to the south of the site.
- 2.2 Neolithic activity on the South Downs is widespread, but apart from a small number of polished flint axes and other flintwork, very little has been found in the vicinity of the site². The only monument of Neolithic date in the landscape is the Combe Hill causewayed enclosure, situated some 5km to the north of the site.
- 2.3 The Bronze Age saw the final clearance of the last woodland on the South Downs, and environmental evidence suggests that the Downland was given over to an open grazed landscape with limited arable agriculture until the end of the period when arable land appears to increase. The evidence suggests that the surrounding downland landscape may have been quite densely populated by small farming settlements, surrounded by fields during the Middle and Later Bronze Age³.
- 2.4 Scatters of later Neolithic/Bronze Age flintwork have been identified in the area (e.g. MES15562 and during the work at Bullock Down⁴) These are mostly localised discrete concentrations, and could represent activity areas or small settlement sites, perhaps farms.
- 2.5 Another feature of the Bronze Age landscape are the burial mounds (Barrows), which are present in large numbers on the South Downs⁵, especially on the top of slopes or false-crested. A number of barrows are situated in the immediate vicinity of the site (MES570, MES711), whilst others are located in the surrounding landscape (MES573, MES580, MES691, MES707, MES709).
- 2.6 During the Iron Age and Roman periods, farming activity continued in the surrounding landscape. A farm and field systems of this date are known at Bullock Down⁶, and the nearby undated lynchet (MES749) may also be part of a similar field system.

¹ Wymer, J.J. 1977 *Gazetteer of Mesolithic sites in England and Wales*, CBA Research Report 22.

² Drewett, P. 1982 *The Archaeology of Bullock Down, Eastbourne, East Sussex: The Development of a Landscape*, Sussex Archaeological Society Monograph 1.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Grinsell, L.V. 1934 'Sussex Barrows', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 75, 214-75.

⁶ Drewett, P. 1982 *The Archaeology of Bullock Down, Eastbourne, East Sussex: The Development of a Landscape*, Sussex Archaeological Society Monograph 1.

- 2.7** There is no evidence for Saxon activity in the area, and it is likely that the Downs were used for sheep grazing. Two Medieval farms were excavated at Kiln Combe, a short distance to the west of the site⁷. One dated to the 13th – 14th century, whilst the other dated to the 14th – 16th century. Evidence for Medieval and early Post Medieval fields can be found in the surrounding landscape (e.g. MES692).
- 2.8** The 1st Edition OS map (1874) shows the Beachy Head road as a track with an old chalk pit shown just to the west of the junction (Fig. 4). The surrounding landscape appears to be typical Downland scrub. There has been little change on the 2nd Edition OS map (1899), but by the time of the 3rd Edition OS map (1909) the track/road appears to be wider and the junction is much larger.
- 2.9** The 4th Edition OS map (1928) also shows little further change, and a 1947 aerial photograph shows the surrounding area to be scrub. During the post war period the Beachy Head Road has been widened and improved.
- 2.10** Monuments on the HER (See Fig. 3)

HER Ref.	Name	NGR	Period
MES570	barrow	TV 5885 9740	Bronze Age
MES573	bowl barrow	TV 5919 9725	Bronze Age
MES580	barrow	TV 5872 9777	Bronze Age
MES691	barrow	TV 5917 9727	Bronze Age
MES692	?med earthwork	TV 5898 9844	Medieval
MES707	barrow	TV 5876 9769	Bronze Age
MES709	barrow	TV 5865 9750	Bronze Age
MES711	?barrow	TV 5894 9745	Bronze Age
MES749	lynchet	TV 590 976	Undated
MES778	earthwork	TV 5949 9692	Undated
MES15562	flint	TV 5917 9726	Bronze Age

⁷ Drewett, P. 1982 *The Archaeology of Bullock Down, Eastbourne, East Sussex: The Development of a Landscape*, Sussex Archaeological Society Monograph 1.

3.0 Archaeological Methodology

- 3.1** The general objective of the archaeological work was to ascertain the presence or absence of any archaeologically significant features, artefacts or ecofacts and to record and interpret any relevant deposits to appropriate professional standards, and in accordance with ESCC's *Standards for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording and Post-Excavation in East Sussex* dated April 2008 (Recommended Standards) .
- 3.2** The initial removal of the turf on the south side of Beachy Head Road had been completed prior to our arrival on site. The turves and the revealed ground surface were inspected for artefacts. The removal of the turf on the north side of the road was monitored, and the turves and the revealed ground surface were inspected for artefacts. No further excavation was to be carried out on the north side of the road as the spoil from the south side was being moved to here to build up the ground level, which was then to be re-turfed (Fig. 5).
- 3.3** A strip approximately 1.5m wide for the new path on the south side of the road was then excavated by machine through the subsoil to the level of the underlying chalk natural. Further monitoring was undertaken during the cutting back of the pathway sides to landscape the area on either side of the path and waiting area.
- 3.4** All excavation was carried out using a Caterpillar 3 tonne 360° tracked excavator under archaeological supervision. Other movement of spoil was carried out using a second tracked excavator and small dumper.
- 3.5** All exposed sections and surfaces were inspected for archaeological features, structures or finds. Removed spoil and turves were also scanned for the presence of unstratified finds, and a Garrett ACE250 metal detector was used during the course of the work.
- 3.6** All archaeologically significant deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded according to accepted professional standards and to the ESCC Recommended Standards. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.7** A full photographic record of the work was kept as appropriate and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held by Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd. A site reference of BHR11 was issued.

4.0 Results

- 4.1** Below the turf on the south side of Beach Head Road, the topsoil was a firm mid grey-brown silty clay loam between 100mm to 200mm thick (Context **1**). It contained chalk pieces and flecks to 30mm (10%), irregular natural flint pieces to 100mm (2%) and roots (3%). It was noted that this layer became progressively more chalky in its lower part. Artefacts recovered from this layer included prehistoric flintwork and post-medieval glass and metal.
- 4.2** On the north side of the road the topsoil below the turf was a firm dark brown silty loam (Context **2**), 100mm to 200mm thick, containing chalk pieces and flecks to 20mm (1%), irregular natural flint pieces to 100mm (1%) and roots (2%). Artefacts recovered from this layer included prehistoric flintwork, together with post-medieval pottery and glass.
- 4.3** Below Context **1** on the south side of the road there was a subsoil up to 200mm thick comprising a firm mid to light brown silty clay loam (Context **3**). This contained frequent chalk pieces and flecks of varying sizes (30%) and irregular natural flint pieces to 150mm (3%). No artefacts were recovered from this layer.
- 4.4** Below Context **3** was the compact white Seaford Chalk (Context **6**), which contained rare irregular natural flint pieces to 350mm (<1%).
- 4.5** At the east end of the strip for the new path, a linear feature (Cut **4**) was noted crossing the trench diagonally in a north-east to south-west direction (Fig. 6). In section it could clearly be seen that it started below Context **1** and cut through Context **3** and into the underlying chalk natural (Context **6**).
- 4.6** Cut **4** was 750mm wide and had straight sides with a sharp upper break of slope, and was greater than 0.5m deep at which point exploratory excavation ceased. The fill (Fill **5**) comprised a loose off-white silty clay with frequent chalk pieces to 10mm (80%), chalk pieces to 100mm (10%), irregular natural flint pieces to 50mm (1%) and roots (<1%).
- 4.7** During the excavation on the south side of the road, a thin irregular horizon of loose orange fine sand (Context **7**) covering an area approximately 1m x 2m was noted below Context **3** and above the chalk natural (Context **6**). This appeared to be modern builder sand, and given its position close to the road, may have been related to road/verge works at some point in the recent past.
- 4.8** No other features or deposits were noted during the watching brief.

5.0 Finds

5.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief and are summarised in Table 1. The flintwork has been retained and will be deposited in Eastbourne Museum, whilst the post-medieval artefacts have been discarded.

Table 1 The Finds: Quantification (number & weight)

Context	Flintwork	Pottery	Glass	Metal
1	8/240g	1/1g	1/16g	1/10g
2	16/372g	-	2/44g	17/1,917g
5	-	-	1/19g	3/19g

5.2 Prehistoric Flintwork

5.2.1 A small assemblage of 24 pieces of prehistoric worked flint weighing 612 grams was recovered during the watching brief, all of which derived from topsoil contexts. Apart from two pieces, the entire assemblage was in a white patinated flint, with a rough buff coloured cortex. The remaining two pieces comprised a single grey coloured, and fire-fractured, piece, and a single piece of black coloured flint.

5.2.2 The assemblage was entirely debitage, with fifteen pieces being hard hammer-struck flakes, most of which have cortex present, and none have any evidence for platform preparation. Five were soft hammer-struck flakes, only one of which has any cortex remaining, and three have evidence for platform preparation. The remaining pieces comprised three flake fragments and a possible small single platform flake core (grey coloured and fire-fractured).

5.2.3 The assemblage is almost certainly later prehistoric in date, the presence of predominantly hard hammer-struck flakes with cortex, and the variations in shape and size hinting at a Bronze Age date. However the presence of a small number of non-cortical soft hammer-struck pieces, some of which exhibit platform preparation, would either suggest an earlier date in the Neolithic for the assemblage, or perhaps intermixing of earlier Neolithic and Bronze Age flintwork in the topsoil.

5.3 Pottery

5.3.1 A single sherd of light blue glazed china was found in Context **1**. This almost certainly dates to the earlier part of the 20th century.

5.4 Glass

5.4.1 Four pieces of glass were recovered during the watching brief (Table 1). Numerous complete bottles of obvious later 20th century date were noted in the turf/topsoil, but were not collected or recorded.

5.4.2 A clear bottle fragment (Context **1**) and brown bottle fragment (Context **2**) are both of later 20th century date. Dark green bottle fragments recovered from Context **2** and Fill **5** are probably from mineral water bottles, and date from the later 19th or earlier 20th century.

5.5 Metal

5.5.1 Most of the metal pieces recovered came from Context **2**, and were iron or alloys which appear to have derived from roadside signage or vehicles. A copper-alloy fragment, comprising a thick wire, possibly from a large buckle or belt fitting was also found in Context **2**, and may be agricultural. Three fragments of lead were found in Fill **5**.

5.5.2 A single 0.303 spent case was recovered from Context **1**, and a complete 0.303 round and case were found in Context **2**. The case had a headstamp R[^]L 1943 VIIZ, whilst the headstamp on the complete round was R[^]L 29 VII. Both of these are Mk 7 rounds which were produced at the Royal Laboratory from 1910 onwards and were the standard ball ammunition used in both the First and Second World Wars⁸; the 29 and 1943 being the years of production. The Z following VII denotes a round filled with nitro-cellulose propellant.

⁸ <http://enfieldking.tripod.com/enfieldking/id13.html>

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1** The watching brief was successful in that it confirmed that there were no archaeological features that were damaged or destroyed by the works. The only feature noted being the modern water main situated at the east end of the site.
- 6.2** A range of artefacts were recovered during the watching brief, which divide into two groups, firstly the post medieval artefacts which comprise pieces of metal, glass and a single sherd of pottery, all of which appear to be items discarded alongside the road. The 0.303 round and case are likely to have been lost/used during the Second World War, either during training, or perhaps during one of the attacks on the nearby Beach Head radar station⁹.
- 6.3** The small assemblage of prehistoric flintwork recovered is not unsurprising given the amount of prehistoric activity in the area, and the presence of the Bronze Age burial mounds a short distance to the south of the site. The possible mix of both earlier Neolithic and later Neolithic/Bronze Age flintwork

7.0 Acknowledgements

- 7.1** We would like to thank Andrew Gattiker the South Downs Way National Trail Officer on behalf of the South Downs Joint Committee for appointing CBAS Ltd to undertake the watching brief. We would also like to thank the on-site team from C.J. Thorne Ltd for their co-operation throughout the watching brief.
- 7.2** David Millum assisted with the watching brief, and Annalie Seaman processed the artefacts. Greg Chuter monitored the project for ESCC.

⁹ Butler, C. 2007 *East Sussex under Attack*, Tempus Publishing Ltd



Fig. 1: Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne: Site Location Map
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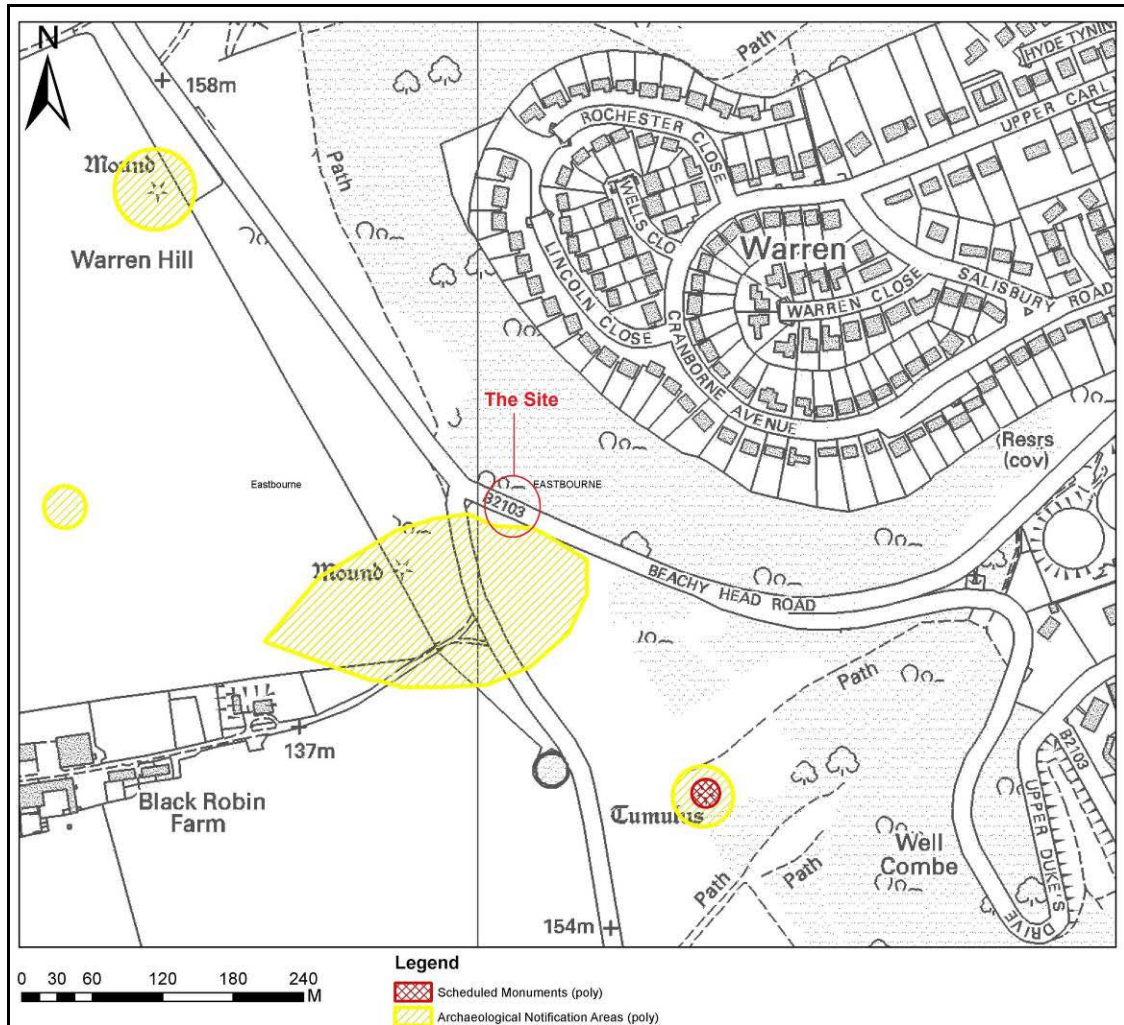


Fig. 2: Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne: Site Location & Archaeological Notification Area

(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)

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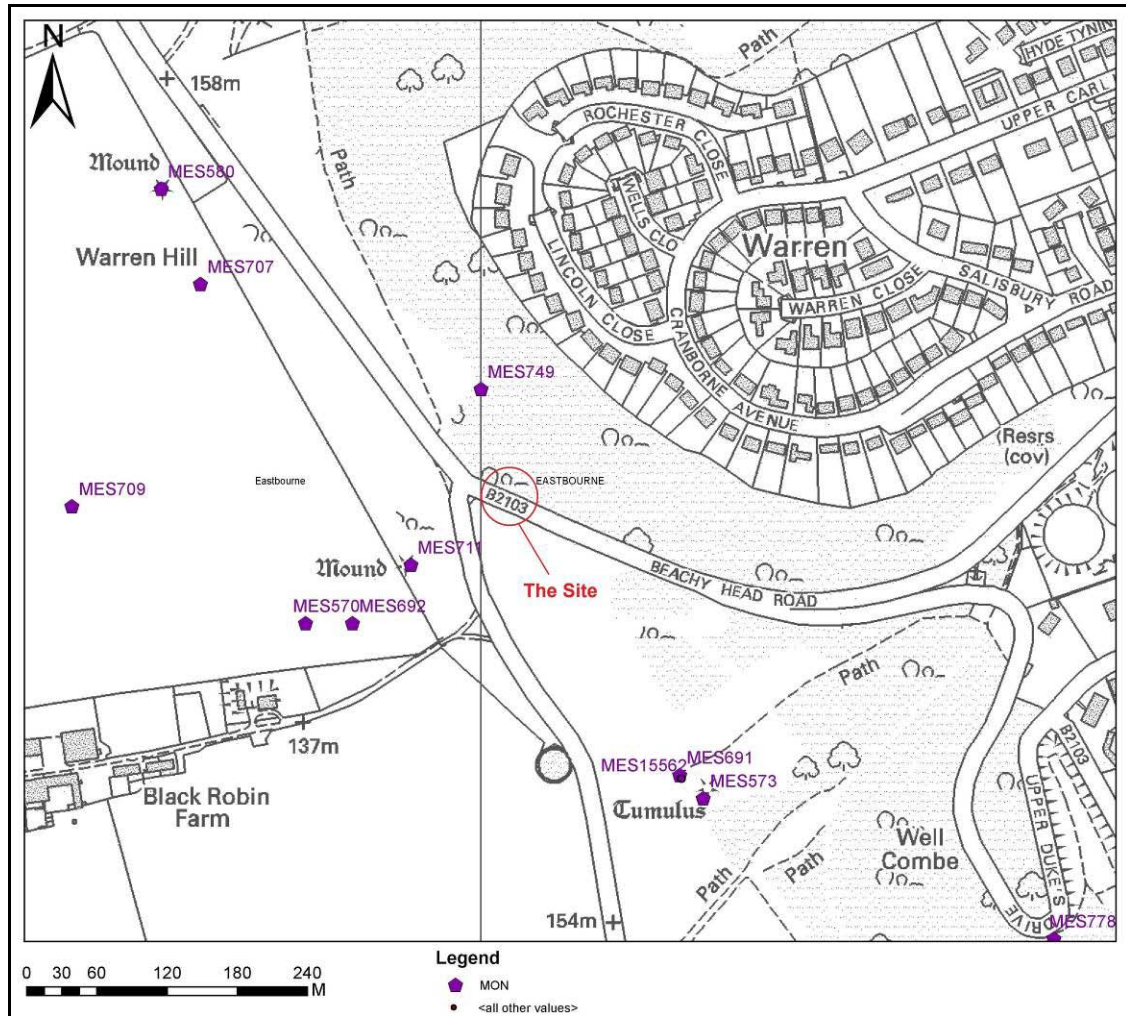


Fig. 3: Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne: Site Location & Monuments on the HER
(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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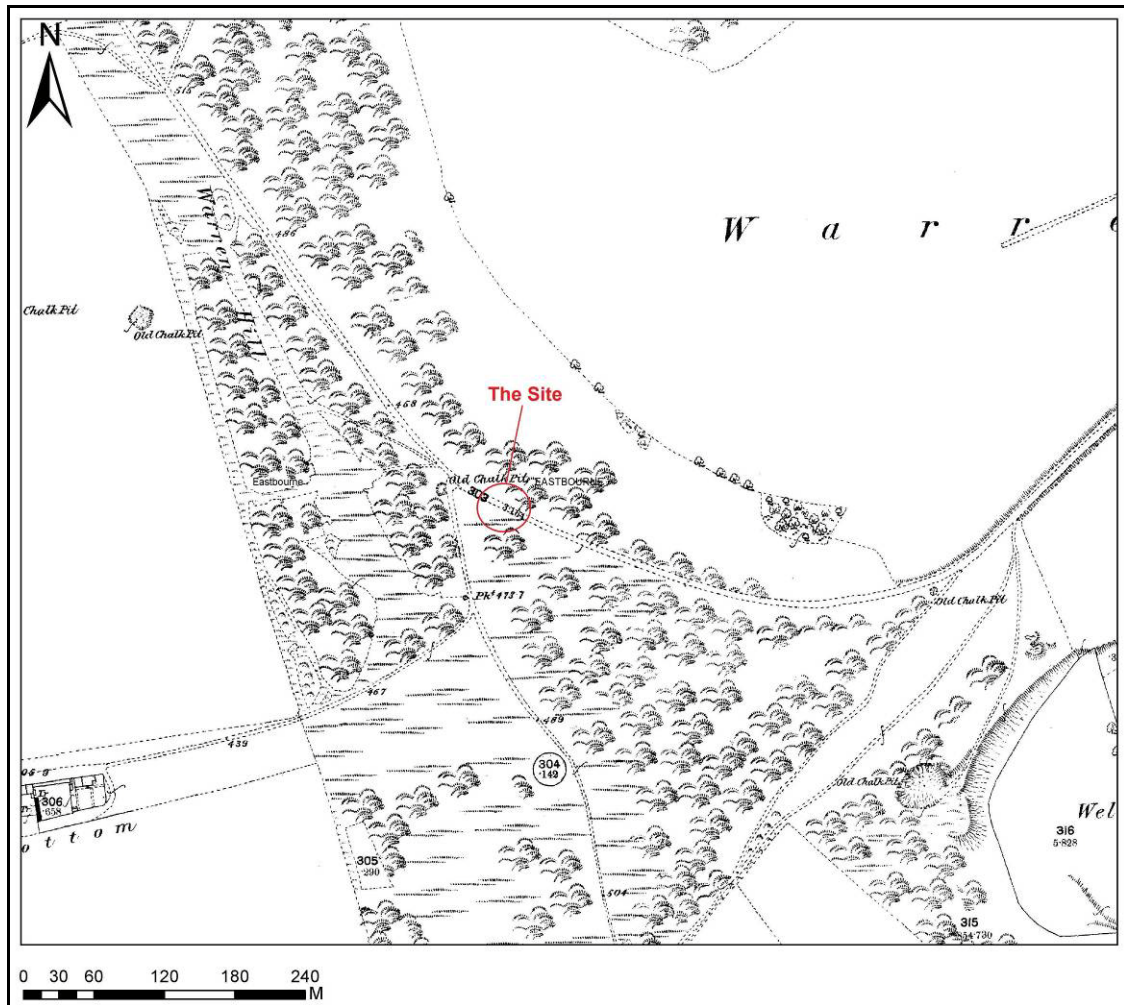


Fig. 4: Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne: 1st Edition OS Map (1874)
(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)

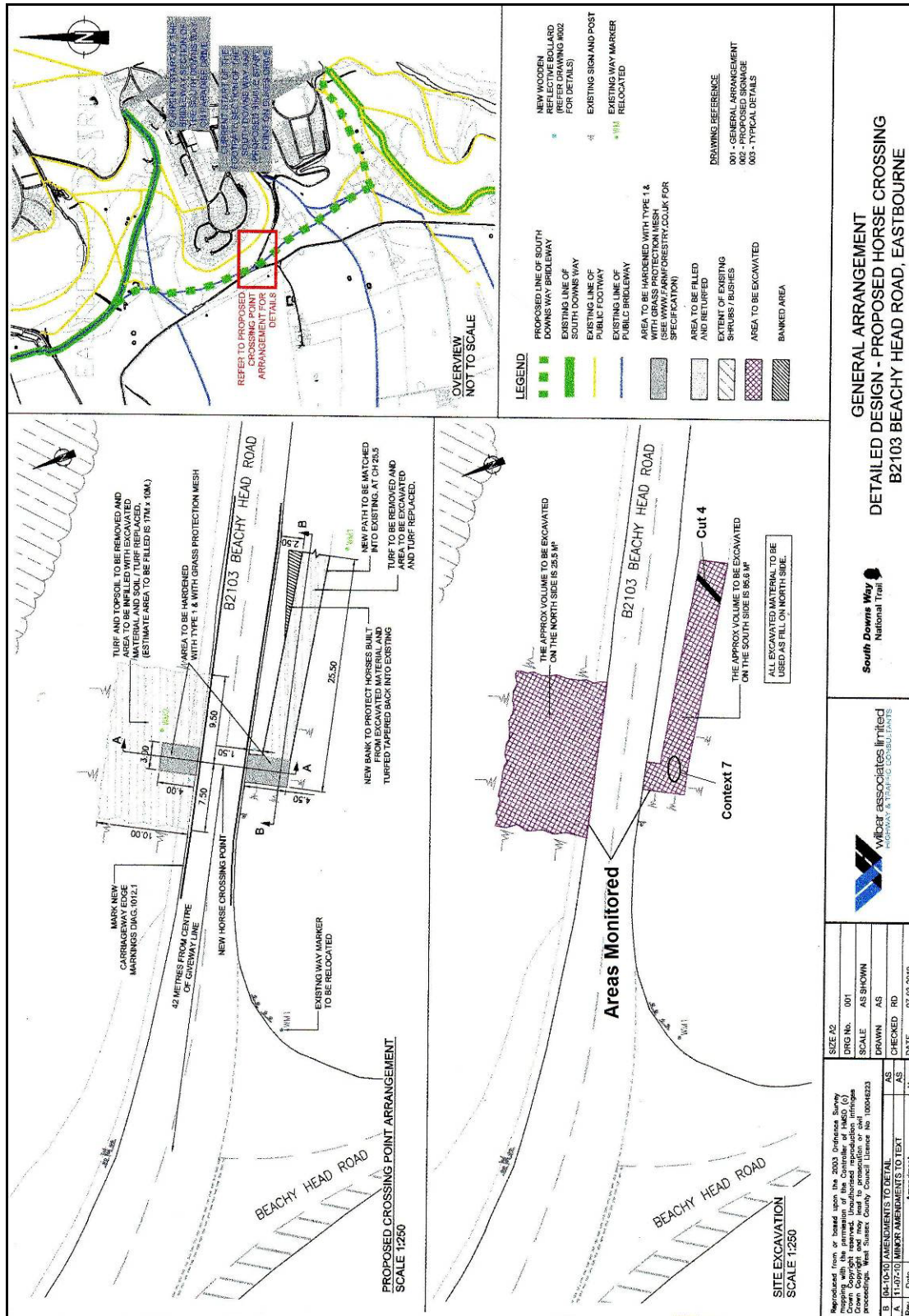


Fig. 5: Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne: Site plan showing areas monitored
(Adapted architects drawing)



Fig. 6 (top): Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne: Path excavation on south side of road, with water main feature closest to camera.

Fig. 7 (bottom): Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne: Excavation of waiting area on south side of road.



Appendix I: HER Summary Form

Site Code	BHR11					
Identification Name and Address	Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Eastbourne Borough Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TV 58890 97545 (centred)					
Geology	Seaford Chalk					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief X	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field X	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 8 th -9 th March 2011	Other		
Sponsor/Client	South Downs Joint Committee					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MIFA					
Project Supervisor	-					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo. X	BA X	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other: None identified		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex during the construction of a new bridleway crossing on the South Downs Way. The excavation of the crossing point and waiting areas was monitored, and although a small assemblage of prehistoric flintwork and 20th century artefacts was recovered, no archaeological features were noted, apart from a modern water main.</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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