



Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services



An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Glebe Wilmington East Sussex

TQ 5449 0431

by
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during demolition of an existing house, and the construction of a new house and garage at The Glebe, Wilmington.

The watching brief resulted in the recovery of Post Medieval artefacts dating to the 19th and 20th centuries, many of which came from a rubbish midden. A small number of fire-fractured flint pieces, of probable prehistoric date, were also found. There were no archaeological features or deposits seen during the watching brief.

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Cover picture: Some of the artefacts recovered from the midden deposit

1. Introduction

Chris Butler Archaeological Services was commissioned by Clive Stillman of Delavals Limited to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the demolition of an existing house and the construction of a new house and garage at The Glebe, Wilmington, East Sussex (TQ 5449 0431).

The Glebe is situated on the east side of The Street in Wilmington, and comprises an 18th century house, which is a Grade II Listed Building (Fig. 1), and its associated grounds. In the grounds of The Glebe is a small cottage, believed to have been converted from stables and later extended, which was to be demolished, and replaced with a new house and associated garage and garden store.

The site is situated on slightly higher ground, bounded by a lawn and gardens on the east side, and then open fields. On the north side there is a field, whilst on the north-west side of the site the ground falls away sharply to the gardens of cottages that front The Street. On the south side, the site is bounded by Gillett's Lane, which heads east from The Street to meet the Old Coach Road.

The geology, according to the British Geological Survey sheet 319, is Lower Chalk, with the Gault Clay situated a short way to the north of the site, and outcrops of Head deposits to the east and south.

An application had been submitted for planning permission for the demolition of an existing house, and its replacement with a new house on a similar footprint, together with a new garage. The planning consent had been granted by Wealden District Council (being the local planning authority). However, given the archaeological sensitivity of the development site, an archaeological planning condition requiring an archaeological watching brief was attached to the consent.

The fieldwork was undertaken between 28th September 2007 and 10th October 2007 by the author, with the final fieldwork being undertaken by Rachel Butler on the 24th January 2008.

2. Historical & Archaeological Background

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 acres¹. The village is situated on the north-east declivity of the South Downs, on an elevated site commanding extensive views.

¹ '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.

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 year².

The church of St. Mary and St. Peter in Wilmington was located to the north of the priory, and has a 12th century chancel, whilst other parts date from the 13th to 15th centuries, with the south aisle being added in the 19th century³.

A New Endowment of the vicarage of Wilmington in 1541 granted the Vicar 'the meadow called *Prestwysh* containing 1 acre, and a croft called *Monkyn pynd*, containing 1 acre, and another croft called *Pyngwellis haw* with a barn there lately built'. These properties presumably comprise the glebe, which apparently amounted to a total of four acres. A further document of 1635 states that 'a house, either specially erected or already existing on a piece of vicarage glebe land became the vicarage house'⁴

A new house was built by Edward Lord, the vicar, in 1744. 'It was not unnecessarily large, the ground plot being 35 feet by 27 feet, four rooms upon a floor, and the contract price with the old material was £200'⁵. This house is presumably The Glebe (or is it the Old Vicarage?).

Ordnance Survey maps for 1874, 1878, 1899, 1910, 1928 and 1950 were consulted. These show little change to the site. A school, which is later referred to as a 'sunday school', is shown on most of these maps at the southern edge of the glebe, adjacent to Gillett's Lane.

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 Budgen, W. 1928 'Wilmington Priory: Historical Notes', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **LXIX**, 29-52.

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

⁴ Budgen, W. 1928 'Wilmington Priory: Historical Notes', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **LXIX**, 29-52.

⁵ Ibid

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

MES7027	TQ555041	Roman	Pottery
MES2766	TQ534041	Anglo-Saxon	Coin Hoard

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

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

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

Two recent excavation projects have been carried out on the Long Man hill figure in an effort to date it⁶, and to determine its original shape and purpose⁷. 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 16th century AD. It was not possible to determine its original shape or purpose.

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 field⁸.

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.

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.

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 structures⁹, 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.

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 1st Edition OS map, the extent of the settlement has altered little until the later 20th century, and even then this has only been due to in-fill rather than expansion.

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

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

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

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

The glebe land appears to have been established in the middle of the 16th century, interestingly at about the same time as the Long Man appears to have been constructed, although there is no suggestion that the two events were connected.

3. Archaeological Methodology

On arrival at the site on the 28th September 2007, the garage site had already been levelled, and the footing trenches had been excavated to a depth of 1m and had been in-filled with concrete. The building contractors excavated a small trench adjacent to the foundations to enable me to see the stratigraphy, which was recorded on the 30th September 2007.

The soil from the excavation of the footing trenches had been placed into a large pile in the adjacent field, prior to its removal from the site. A walkover of the spoil was undertaken to recover any artefacts, and a metal detector was also used.

The topsoil strip over the main house area had already taken place prior to the next site visit on the 10th October 2007. However, the foundation trenches were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision, although no archaeological features were seen.

The final site visit was made on the 24th January 2008, after the demolition of the existing building, and during the reduction of the ground level in this area by machine.

There were no archaeological deposits or features to be excavated, although the revealed sections 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.

A 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 the appropriate Museum. A site reference of TGW07 has been allocated.

4. Results

Initially the only archaeological deposits that could be recorded were those revealed in the section of the small trench excavated to a depth of 1.05m adjacent to the garage footings in the north-west corner of the site.

Context **1** was a dark brown sandy loam topsoil, which contained chalk flecks (3%), roots (2%) and charcoal flecks (1%). This topsoil was 250mm deep and was visible as a surface deposit in parts of the site where it had not been removed.

Below Context **1** was a loose mid grey-brown silty loam (Context **2**) 300mm deep with chalk pieces and flecks (5%) and roots (1%). This lay directly above the chalk subsoil (Context **3**), which was a friable weathered chalk, giving way to more solid chalk below. The trench had been excavated 500mm into the subsoil.

In the north-west corner of the site and adjacent to the boundary, a large rubbish midden had been encountered by the footing trench (Context **4**). This comprised a dark grey-brown sandy loam with charcoal and ash, and contained numerous fragments, and some complete specimens, of pottery, glass, metal artefacts and animal bone. The owner stated that this had been a bonfire site used by the previous owners, and many of the artefacts had indications of having been burnt. A sample of artefacts from this midden were taken for identification and dating purposes.

The spoil from the garage footings was inspected, although little was found apart from some 19/20th century artefacts. A metal detector was also used, but there were so many responses from small iron objects such as nails, this did not prove to be helpful.

A revealed section during the second topsoil strip on the east side of the central part of the site showed a similar stratigraphy to that noted above. The topsoil (Context **1**) was 250mm deep, and was above a thin layer of loose mid grey-brown silty loam (Context **2**), although this was only 100mm thick. This was above the chalk subsoil (Context **3**), which again was very weathered in its upper part.

On the west and south parts of the site there was no surviving topsoil, and the stratigraphy here appeared to be entirely made-up ground. It comprised a dark brown sandy loam with frequent fragments (@70%) of brick, roof and floor tile, window glass and other building materials (Context **5**). Below this was the natural weathered chalk subsoil (Context **3**).

Apart from one small area of in-situ floor tiles (19/20th century) that were from the recently demolished building, there were no archaeological deposits or features seen in this part of the site.

The developer confirmed that there would be no further ground works undertaken on the site.

5. Finds

The excavation produced a small assemblage of finds, which are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1 The Finds

Context Number	Pottery No./gms.	Animal bone No./gms.	Glass No./gms.	Other No./gms.
Surface				2 flint flakes 1 flint flake fragment (17g)
Topsoil strip	11 Post Medieval (296g) 1 clay pipe (4g)	2 bone (14g) 1 oyster (3g)	1 small bottle (11g)	17 fire-fractured flint (286g) 1 Post Medieval tile fragment (35g)
Interface of 1 & 2	1 clay pipe (2g)	2 bone (36g)		1 flint fragment (12g) 6 fire-fractured flint (12g)
4	5 complete Post Medieval pots (1.209kg) 76 Post Medieval sherds (3.356kg) 1 clay pipe (1g)	10 bone (173g) 1 worked bone handle (6g)	8 complete bottles and jars (1.680kg) 10 frags (648g)	2 metal containers (67g)
5	1 Post Medieval (1g)			1 brick fragment (118g) 1 painted plaster frag. (8g)

Three pieces of worked flint were recovered from the revealed ground surface after topsoil stripping. It is possible that the fragment may be accidental and not prehistoric, but the two flakes are probably later prehistoric in date. Another fragment recovered from the interface of Contexts 1 & 2 may also not be prehistoric.

A total of 23 pieces of fire-fractured flint was recovered from the topsoil and from the interface of Contexts 1 & 2. These and the numerous similar pieces recovered from the recent fieldwalking carried out to the south of the site are almost certainly evidence for prehistoric activity.

The Post Medieval pottery from the initial topsoil strip comprised five sherds of china, three of which had transfer printed decoration, one having an untraceable motif in black inscribed 'J.M & []'¹⁰ There was also a single sherd of probable 18th century hard-fired light brown-glazed earthenware, one sherd of 19th century hard-fired brown-glazed earthenware, one sherd of yellow-glazed 19th century earthenware, one 19th century stoneware sherd and two sherds of un-glazed hard-fired earthenware, one of which is half of a small shallow dish.

¹⁰ Godden G.A. 1964 *Encyclopaedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks*, London, Barrie & Jenkins.

Fragments of brick and tile were also noted, and a sample recovered. The bricks found in Context 5 were hand made and un-frogged, typical of 18th or early 19th century manufacture. The piece of tile found in the topsoil was also handmade, as it retained a number of finger impressions.

The largest collection of artefacts was recovered from the midden (Context 4). The pottery comprised 49 sherds of china (including a small number of Pearlware and white-glazed sherds), of which 14 were blue transfer printed (including some 'willow pattern') and another seven had transfer printed decoration in other colours. The vessels represented included plates, bowls/dishes, pots/jars, lids and a mug. There were also two complete small white-glazed pots or jars. Although there are no distinguishing makers marks on these pieces, they are typical of pieces that were in use in the latter part of the 19th century.

There were three complete stoneware jars, together with 12 stoneware fragments, one of which was a large fragment of base and body. Two of these had manufacturers/trading marks. The first had an inscription on the base "Not Genuine unless bearing Wm P Hartleys Label". This company was making and distributing preserves and jams in these 'ribbed' stoneware jars from the 1880's into the early 20th century. The second had partial imprint on the lower side "[...]T LOVATT, [...]GLEYS MILL, NOTTS". Lovatt & Lovatt, Langley Mill, Notts was established in 1895, and made stoneware vessels until 1930, when it was renamed¹¹.

The remaining pottery comprised five sherds of un-glazed hard-fired earthenwares, three brown-glazed earthenware sherds, two yellow-glazed earthenware sherds and five other glazed earthenwares. All of these pieces would not be out of context in the later 19th century.

The midden also produced a large number of glass vessels and fragments. The complete glass bottles included a moulded light blue bottle, and a moulded clear glass bottle with 'D & M' on its base. A broken brown medicine bottle has 'B W & Co, Snowhill, London' inscribed on the base. This company was manufacturing medicines in the later 19th century.

A green glass jar was inscribed 'C S & Co' on the base, which can be traced to Cannington Shaw & Co Ltd of St. Helens, which was making bottles between 1875 and 1913. The final glass vessel that can be traced is a fragment of a green bottle with the name 'Goodall [...]' on it. This relates to Goodall Backhouse & Co. who were established in 1837 in Leeds, and manufactured 'Yorkshire Relish'.

The remaining glass pieces include fragments from green glass bottles, a blue medicine bottle, a dish and drinking glass. There were also three clear glass paste bottles, and two small perfume or ointment bottles. A number of the bottles appear to have hand-applied lips, and in one or two cases, possibly applied necks as well. These methods of production were used prior to the introduction of machine-made bottles; the first automated machine having been

¹¹ www.langleypottersociety.co.uk/pottery_history.htm

patented in 1887. However the range of bottles present suggests a date range from the latter 19th into the early 20th century.

Two metal items were also recovered from the midden. They comprise a small pot, and a shallow container, that may have had a roll-back lid such as may be found on a sardine tin. Neither item has any surviving manufacturers or traders names visible.

The animal bone recovered during the watching brief was identified by Pat Stevens. From the interface of Contexts 1 & 2 were a fragment of sheep femur and a molar from a cow. Two sheep tibia fragments were recovered from the topsoil strip spoil, together with an oyster shell. From the midden there were fragments from three sheep scapula (one of which had been chewed by a dog), and two sheep rib fragments, together with single examples of cow vertebra and rib. A sawn section of cattle femur shaft had probably been prepared for cooking to extract the marrow.

The only item of worked bone was probably a handle, but it has not been possible to establish exactly what it was a handle for. It was probably manufactured from the rib of a cow.

6. Discussion

The fact that much of the topsoil across the site had been removed when there was no archaeological presence at the site has meant that some evidence for past activities may have been removed without record. However during the watching brief visits no archaeological features, apart from the midden deposit were seen.

The small number of pieces of worked flint and the fire-fractured flint found hint at possible prehistoric activity in the immediate area. Given the burial mounds on the top of the north scarp slope of the Downs, and the evidence for prehistoric activity found during the fieldwalking, it is likely that there is a Bronze Age settlement nearby.

There was no evidence for any Roman or Medieval at the site. The absence of Medieval artefacts is surprising, although it may suggest that this area was not being utilised during the Medieval period, in contrast to the area to the south of the Priory, where numerous Medieval pottery sherds were recovered during the recent fieldwalking.

The single sherd of possible 18th century pottery found ties in with the first recorded activity at the site, but there is little further activity until the accumulation of rubbish in the midden deposit at the north end of the property.

The material recovered from the midden deposit provides a consistent and firm date for its use. The pottery and glass vessels range in date from the last 25 years of the 19th century through to the first decade or so of the 20th century.

The area immediately around the demolished cottage was very disturbed, and much of the ground had been made-up at some stage in the past, so little could be established about the past history of the building during the watching brief.

7. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Clive Stillman of Delavals and the building contractors for their co-operation during the watching brief. Greg Chuter, Assistant Archaeologist at East Sussex County Council provided the HER data. Pat Stevens identified, and commented on, the animal bones.



Fig. 1: The Glebe, Wilmington: Location Map
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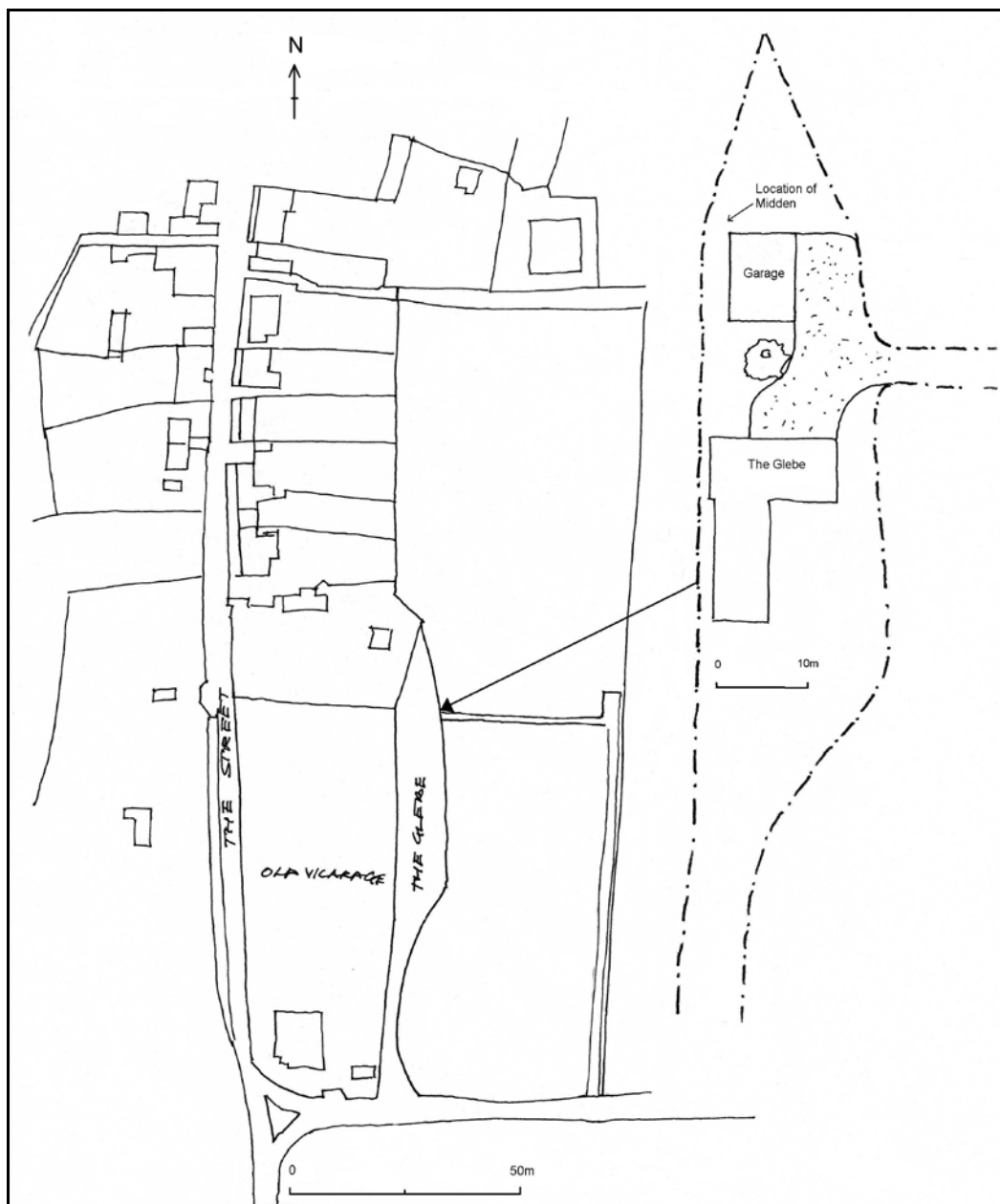


Fig. 2: The Glebe, Wilmington: Plan showing the location of the house and garage.
(Adapted from plan provided by Delavals.)

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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