



**Chris Butler MfA
Archaeological Services Ltd**



**An Archaeological Watching Brief
at
Ore Place Farmhouse, The Ridge,
Hastings, East Sussex.**

HS/FA/10/00371

Project Number CBAS 0191

by
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November 2011

Summary

On the 19th and 20th April 2011 a watching brief was maintained on the groundworks associated with the construction of a replacement extension on the northern elevation of Ore Place Farmhouse, Ore, East Sussex. All of the trenches were sterile of archaeological features with a small quantity of 19th-20th century artefacts recovered. This is most likely as a result of the construction of the earlier extensions and the associated drain runs having destroyed any archaeological evidence that may have been present. However, the excavations did allow the examination of the Farmhouse foundations, and the removal of the existing extensions revealed evidence for the Farmhouse having previously been a coach house for Ore Place Manor.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd (CBAS) was commissioned by Julia Hilton (The Client) to carry out an archaeological watching brief on the groundworks associated with the construction a new extension at Ore Place Farmhouse, The Ridge, Hastings, East Sussex, TQ 8199 1217 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 Ore Place Farmhouse lies within an Archaeological Notification Area (Fig. 2), and is accessed via a narrow road to the north from The Ridge. The ruins of the 12th century Old St Helen's church and Ore Place Manor are located to the south of the site. The original function of the Farmhouse was that of a Coach House, the scars of the entrance can be seen on the northern elevation.
- 1.3 This replacement extension (HS/FA/10/00371) was to house a boiler room, bathroom and a kitchen/ dining area, on the northern elevation of the Farmhouse. This was to replace an earlier range of lean-to extensions which had been demolished before the first visit to the site (Figs. 4, 5 & 6).
- 1.4 A specification¹ for the archaeological watching brief was produced by the ESCC Archaeology Section for Julia Hilton, and this was supplied to CBAS when commissioned to carry out the archaeological work. The specification also required the preparation of a Level 2 photographic and basic written record to be made of the existing extension before demolition; this had already been carried out, and was not part of the brief for CBAS Ltd.
- 1.5 The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 320/321), is complex here, with bands of Sand in Wadhurst Clay, Wadhurst Clay and Ashdown Beds sandstone.
- 1.6 The watching brief was maintained on the groundworks by the author, on the 19th and 20th April 2011. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler MifA.

¹ ESCC Archaeology Team 2011 *Specification For An Archaeological Watching Brief During The Groundworks Associated With Development At Ore Place Farmhouse, The Ridge, Hastings TN34 2RA*

2.0 Historical and Archaeological Background

- 2.1 There have been no discoveries of Palaeolithic artefacts in the immediate area of Hastings, and there are only a handful of artefacts known to have a provenance in the Weald². Such discoveries are normally linked to specific geological conditions, such as Head Deposits, some of which can be found in this area.
- 2.2 There is no evidence for Mesolithic activity at the site, however the cliffs below Hastings Castle have produced numerous pieces of Mesolithic flintwork (MES872 & MES7389) from fissures in the rock. Other sites are known in open sandy ridgetop locations across the Sussex High Weald; such sites, comprising scatters of flint debitage and tools, are sometimes extensive, suggesting either longer-stay camps or short-stay camps which were being visited repeatedly over a period of time³.
- 2.3 Amongst the Bronze Age flintwork recovered from Hastings was a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead from East Hill (MES881), whilst flintwork and pottery were recovered from the fissures below the castle. A single Bronze Age burial mound (Barrow) was recorded as existing at the south-west corner of East Hill (MES661), but has subsequently slipped over the cliff edge.
- 2.4 An Iron Age promontory hillfort (MES856) is located on East Hill, although both this and the enclosure on Castle Hill are currently undated⁴. Both of these hillforts/enclosures would have originally been located a little way inland from the coast, but from their hill top locations would have dominated both the coastal area, and some way inland. Iron Age pottery was found amongst the material coming from the fissures on Castle Hill, and a gold stater coin was also found nearby in 1946 (MES866).
- 2.5 The Ridge is an important ridgeway route that may have originated in prehistory, and was likely to have been in use during the Iron Age. The site is situated at a junction with a number of other tracks, which may have been a focus for settlement or activity.

² Pope, M. 2003 'The Earliest Occupation of Sussex: Recent Research and Future Objectives', in Rudling, D. (Ed) *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000*, Kings Lynn, Heritage Marketing & Publications Ltd, 17-28, Fig. 2.8.

³ Holgate, R. 2003 'Late Glacial and Post-glacial Hunter-gatherers in Sussex', in Rudling, D. (Ed) *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000*, Kings Lynn, Heritage Marketing & Publications Ltd, 29-38.

⁴ Hamilton, S. & Manley, J. 1997 Points of View: Prominent Enclosures in 1st Millennium BC Sussex' *Sussex Archaeological Collection* **135**, 93-112.

- 2.6** Roman pottery and the numerous discoveries of Roman coins (e.g. MES839) at Hastings would seem to confirm that there may have been a settlement, trading centre, and perhaps a port located nearby. A possible Roman road (Rochester to Hastings Roman Road MES2461) follows the ancient ridgeway route along The Ridge.
- 2.7** The extensive iron working site and baths at Beauport Park situated a few kilometres to the west of the site was operating between the late 1st century and mid 3rd century AD, and appears to have had connections with the *Classis Britannica* due to the presence of numerous tiles stamped CL BR⁵. It has been suggested that due to the connections with the British Fleet, the iron from Beauport Park and other production centres was being shipped out through Hastings⁶.
- 2.8** There is virtually no archaeological evidence for Saxon activity at Hastings, although King Offa conquered the Hæstingas in 771, and Hastingecentre appears in the Burghal Hidage in the 10th century, assessed at 500 hides⁷. There is no mention of Ore in the Domesday Book.
- 2.9** After 1066 Hastings was granted to the Count of Eu who was considered to be a safe pair of hands to control this important port of passage to Normandy⁸. The town was granted a charter as one of the Cinque Ports in 1154 by Henry II. The Rape of Hastings remained in the Eu family until the mid 13th century, and later passed to the Earl of Richmond, before being granted to Sir John Pelham in 1412, although the castle, lordship and barony were granted to Sir Thomas Hoo. Finally in 1591 these too were conveyed to the Pelham family⁹.
- 2.10** The Medieval Manor of Ore is first mentioned about 1220. The manor in 1361 consisted of a capital messuage, a dovecote in bad repair, rents of assize of free tenants, one villain, one windmill, and profits of the court¹⁰. The manor house (MES840) was situated on the west side of the church, situated some 600m to the west of the site. The remains of a Tudor manor house (MES991) now stand at the probable site of the earlier Medieval manor house. The Church of St. Helen's has early 12th century origins, with a tower added in the later 12th century and a chancel in the 13th century (MES846). A new church was built in 1869 just to the south of the site, and the original church is now a ruin.

⁵ Brodrigg, G. & Cleere, H. 1988 'The Classis Britannica Bath-house at Beauport Park', *Britannia*, **XIX**, 217-274.

⁶ Hodgkinson, J. 2008 *The Wealden Iron Industry*, Stroud, Tempus Publishing.

⁷ Salzman, L.F. 1973 *Victoria County History: Sussex* Vol. 9. Folkstone, Dawsons.

⁸ Morris, J. (Ed) 1976 *Domesday Book: Sussex*, Chichester, Phillimore.

⁹ Salzman, L.F. 1973 *Victoria County History: Sussex* Vol. 9. Folkstone, Dawsons.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

- 2.11** Other early Post Medieval activity in the area is evidenced by the presence of Great Ridge Farm (MES969) a short distance to the west of the site, which is a 17th century farmhouse (Grade II Listed Building DES910). A number of 16th century pottery kilns were discovered 1km to the north of the site (MES2568, MES2569 & MES7353).
- 2.12** The site is situated to the north of the 12th century Old St. Helen's Church and the remains of Ore Place Manor, and by the 19th century was defined as the farmstead associated with the manor house. The development site lies in the north western area of that farm complex, and the Tithe Map of 1840¹¹ shows the site before the construction of the present Ore Place Farmhouse. At this time the majority of the farm buildings lay to the south, between the present building and the church.
- 2.13** The 1st Edition OS map (1874) shows Ore Place Farmhouse (Fig. 3), with farm buildings along the western and southern edges of the courtyard, and this situation remains largely unchanged through to the 4th Edition OS map of 1929. It is possible that the original function of the Farmhouse was that of a Coach House, the scars of the entrance can be seen on the northern elevation.

¹¹ ESRO TD/E43

3.0 Archaeological Methodology

- 3.1** On arrival at the site on the 19th April, the original lean-to buildings had already been demolished; also a man hole located in the centre of the area of the footing had been removed together with its associated drains. The demolition rubble had been cleared from the site, and the ground surface had been also slightly reduced. The foundation trenches were first marked out in spray paint by the contractor. This area was then scanned with a Precision Gold metal detector and visually inspected for artefacts.
- 3.2** The eastern foundation trench was 450mm wide with the others having a width of 600mm; all of the trenches were 1m in depth. The excavations were carried out using a 3 tonne 360° tracked digger with a 450mm and 600mm toothed bucket.
- 3.3** The spoil from the excavations was taken to the western side of the site, where it was piled up temporarily; to be used later for the embankment for a pond. The spoil was scanned with a metal detector and visually inspected for artefacts.
- 3.4** All archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded according to accepted professional standards. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.5** 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. A site reference of OPF 11 has been allocated.

4.0 Results

- 4.1 During the excavation of the foundation trenches (Fig. 7) four deposits were apparent; Context 1 was a thin layer of topsoil up to 100mm thick. This was dark brown in colour, and comprised a silty clay loam with a loose consistence. The inclusions in this deposit were of mortar (<1%), ceramic building material (CBM) (1%) and pieces of slate, all of these were associated with the demolition of the lean-to buildings. This deposit produced the only artefacts recovered from the site, which were two pieces of late 19th to early 20th century pottery.
- 4.2 Below Context 1 was Context 2, which was a deposit of mid brown silty clay with a loose consistence, and had a thickness of up to 400mm. The only inclusions in this layer were of pieces of sandstone up to 40mm in size (<1%). Both this deposit and Context 1 were very disturbed due to the previous demolition and removal of a manhole and associated drains.
- 4.3 Context 3 was below Context 2, and was an orangey-buff silty clay deposit with a firm consistence. The deposit was up to 400mm thick, with inclusions of sandstone pieces up to 60mm in size (40%). The inclusions of sandstone were found in pockets within the clay. No artefacts were recovered from this deposit.
- 4.4 Context 4 was below Context 3, and was the natural. This deposit was of grey sandstone (Ashdown Beds) with no inclusions, and a firm to compact consistence.
- 4.5 The foundations of the north wall of Ore Place Farmhouse were seen where they were exposed by the new foundation trenches (Fig. 8). The foundations (Context 5) were constructed of the same type of faced sandstone blocks as the upstanding above-ground northern wall of the farmhouse. The dimensions of the sandstone blocks in the foundation were approximately 400mm by 200mm. The foundations were 600mm deep and consisted of three evenly laid courses. The bonding material was a mid grey coloured lime mortar.
- 4.6 Whilst on site a brief visual survey of the exterior of the Farmhouse was undertaken. The roof of the Farmhouse was covered with slate tiles, and was hipped at both ends (Fig. 5). The ridge and the hips had a row of black ceramic tiles with a triangular profile. There are two chimney stacks, with the largest being located at the western end of the building at the junction of the hips and the ridge of the roof. The second chimney stack is located slightly in from eastern end of the ridge. Both of the chimney stacks have courses of oversailed bricks. The north, east and western walls were constructed of evenly coursed faced sandstone blocks with a bonding material of mid grey mortar. The southern elevation was coated in a cement render.

- 4.7** The removal of the existing extensions against the northern elevation of the farmhouse shows evidence of the original use of the building as a coach house. There is a change of the stone work located in the centre of this elevation between the two current doors. This appears to be an in-filled large entrance to a coach house (Fig. 9). The two current doorways are at ground level, with the eastern opening being both higher and wider, having been built into the earlier larger entrance. There are no windows in the northern elevation.
- 4.8** The southern elevation of the farmhouse is finished in a brownish grey cement render. The front entrance to the building is located to the west of centre. There are two pairs of wooden framed sash windows located on the ground floor to the east of the main entrance. A single wooden framed sashed window is located on the first floor of this elevation, positioned directly above the door. The western elevation had four wooden framed casement windows; two each on the ground and first floors. The windows on the first floor are unusual in having four panes of glass below the opening part of the casement window.

5.0 The Finds.

5.1 The excavations produced very few artefacts, all of which derived from Context 1. The assemblage is not considered to hold any potential for further study and is recommended for discard

5.2 *The Pottery* by Luke Barber

The archaeological work recovered just four pieces of pottery from the site. All of the assemblage was from Context 1 and is in keeping with a mid 19th to early 20th century date. Pieces consist of a glazed red earthenware bodysherd with rilled decoration (12g), two unglazed earthenware bodysherds from a flowerpots (9g) and a fragment (47g) from a probable refined white earthenware wash basin.

5.3 *Other Material* by Luke Barber and Chris Butler

Three pieces (46g) of 19th- century Welsh roofing slate were recovered from Context 1 along with two fragments from a collared salt-glazed drain (98g) and a fragment (2g) from a 20th- century light fitting. There were also two pieces of clear glass (16g), one from a bottle, the other being a piece of window glass. The final artefact was a fragment from the leg bone of a sheep (24g).

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1** During the excavation all of the trenches were sterile of archaeological features; this in a large part could be due to the construction of the earlier lean-to buildings on the northern side of the house, and their subsequent demolition. The demolition process had involved the removal of a manhole and associated drains which had also caused a large amount of disturbance to the upper deposits of the site. .
- 6.2** Only a small quantity of artefacts was recovered from the excavations, all of these dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the excavations did allow an insight into the construction of the Farmhouse foundations, whilst evidence was noted that suggested the building's former use as a coach house, presumably to Ore Place Manor.
- 6.3** The methodology adopted for this watching brief proved to be satisfactory, and the confidence rating should be considered to be very reliable.

7.0 Acknowledgements

- 7.1** We would like to thank Julia Hilton for commissioning this archaeological watching brief and her on-site contractors for their assistance and co-operation during the excavations.
- 7.2** Luke Barber and Chris Butler reported on the artefacts. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler MifA and was monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter.

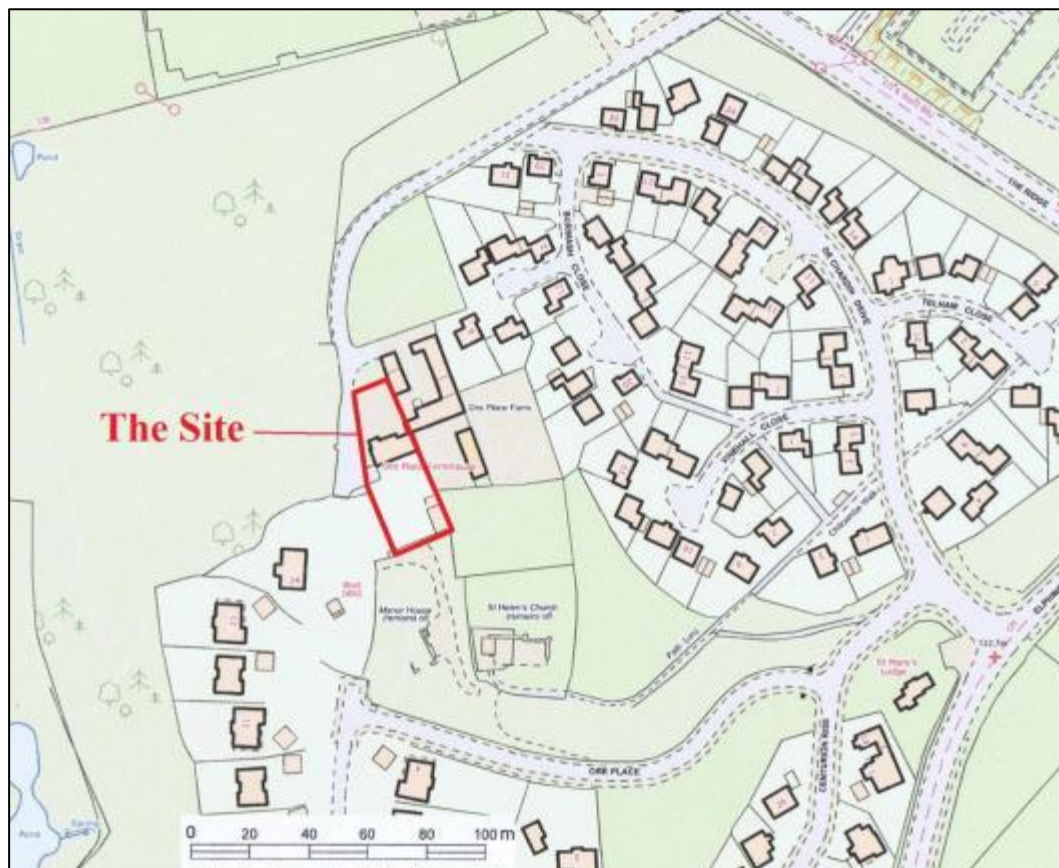


Fig. 1: Ore Place Farmhouse: Site location map
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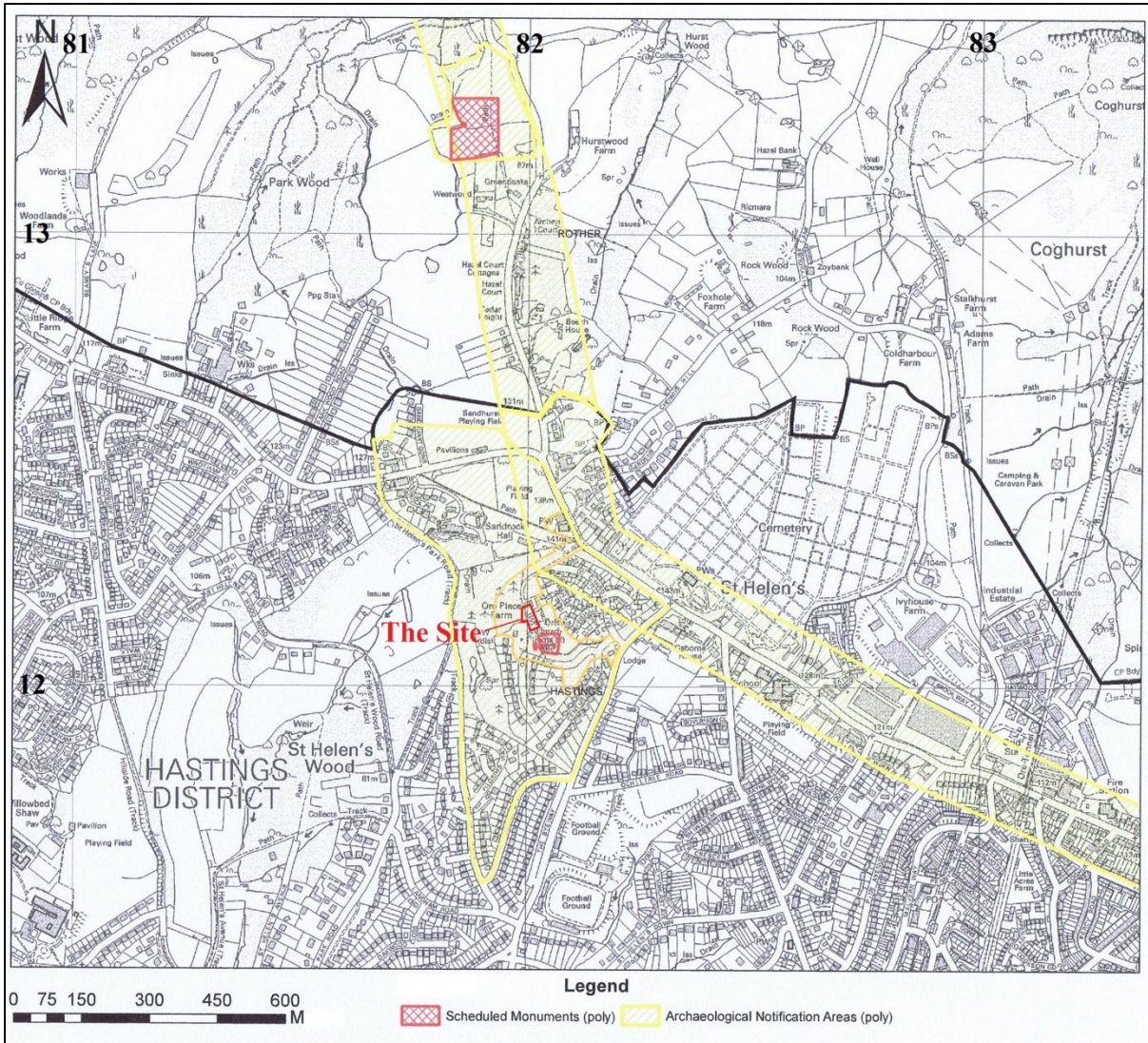


Fig. 2: Ore Place Farmhouse: Archaeological Constraints Map
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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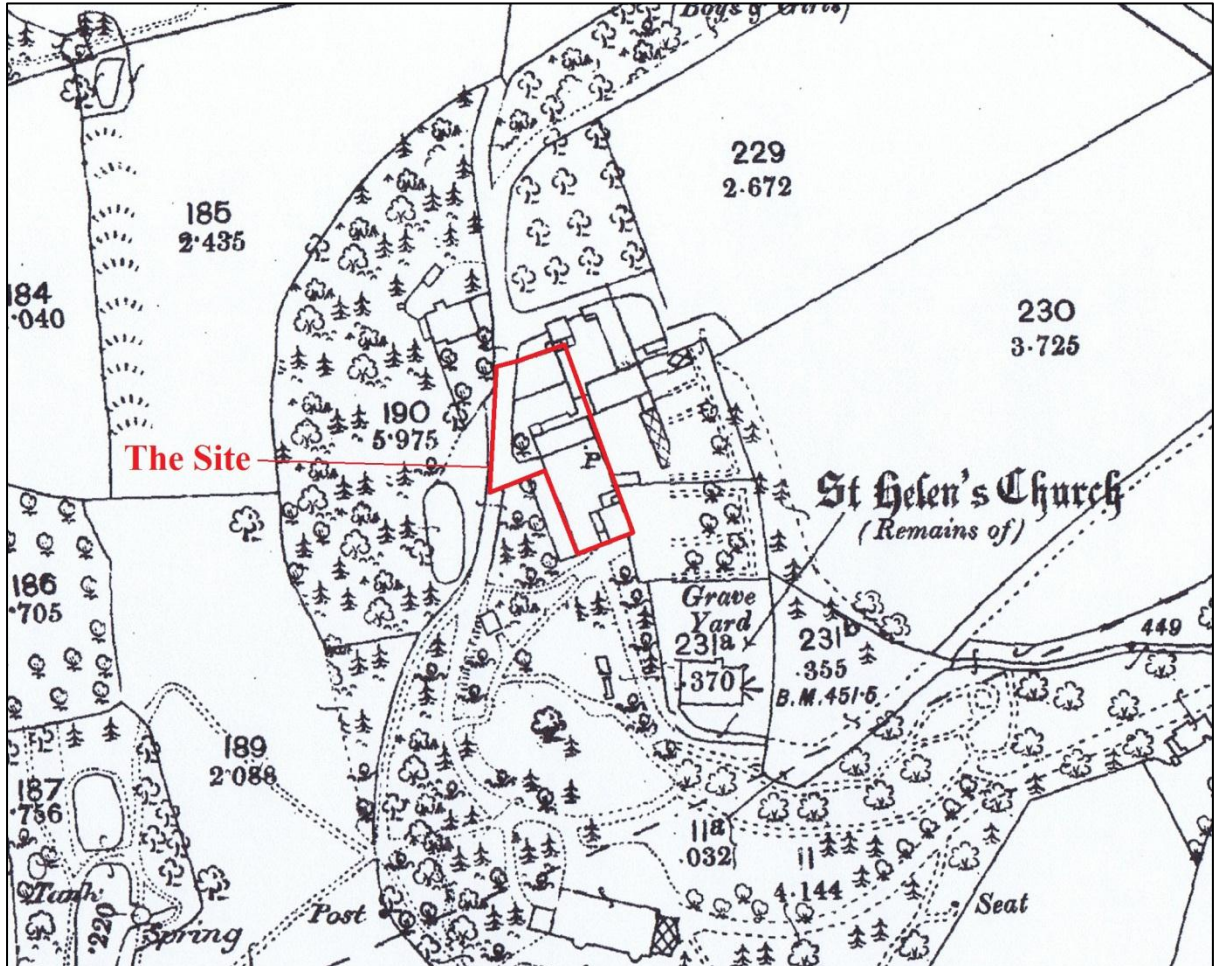


Fig. 3: Ore Place Farmhouse: 1st Edition OS Map (1874)

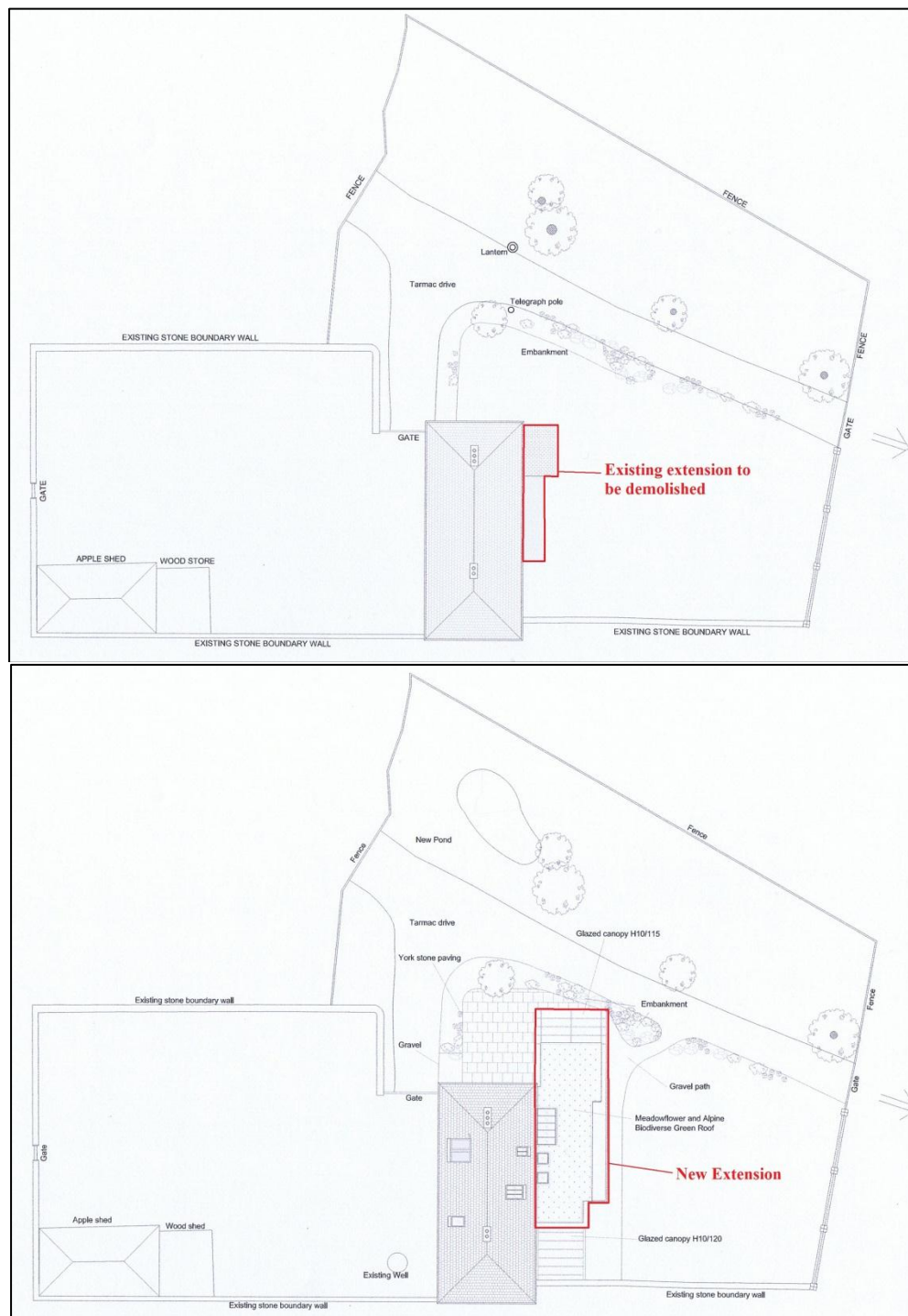


Fig. 4: Ore Place Farmhouse: Site plans showing location of existing extension (above) and new extension (below) (adapted from architects plans)



Fig. 5: Ore Place Farmhouse: Original extensions, now demolished
(Source: Julia Hilton)



Fig. 6: Ore Place Farmhouse: Original extensions, now demolished
(Source: Julia Hilton)



Fig. 7: Ore Place Farmhouse:
Excavated foundations for new



Fig. 8: Ore Place Farmhouse:
Foundations of Farmhouse



Fig. 8: Ore Place Farmhouse: North wall of Farmhouse showing
original entrance noted by the change in the stonework to the right of
the large doorway to the far side of the small doorway

Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

Site Code	OPF 11					
Identification Name and Address	Ore Place Farmhouse					
County, District &/or Borough	Hastings Borough Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 8199 1217					
Geology	Bands of Sand in Wadhurst Clay, Wadhurst Clay and Ashdown Beds sandstone.					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief X	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban X	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 19 & 20th April 2011	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Julia Hilton					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MifA					
Project Supervisor	Keith Butler PifA					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>On the 19th and 20th April 2011 a watching brief was maintained on the groundworks associated with the construction of a replacement extension on the northern elevation of Ore Place Farmhouse, Ore, East Sussex. All of the trenches were sterile of archaeological features with a small quantity of 19th-20th century artefacts recovered. This is most likely as a result of the construction of the earlier extensions and the associated drain runs having destroyed any archaeological evidence that may have been present. However, the excavations did allow the examination of the Farmhouse foundations, and the removal of the existing extensions revealed evidence for the Farmhouse having previously been a coach house for Ore Place Manor.</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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