



**Chris Butler MfA  
Archaeological Services Ltd**



**An Archaeological  
Evaluation Excavation  
at  
1 Whitefriars, Conduit Hill,  
Rye, East Sussex**

**Project No. CBAS0339**

**By  
Dr Caroline Russell**

**November 2012**

### ***Summary***

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out at 1 Whitefriars, Conduit Hill, Rye, East Sussex to provide archaeological information in support of a planning application to develop the cellar into an inhabitable room. The concrete floor of the cellar was found to overlie a layer of laid brick. Varied layers of made ground were recorded below this, all of which could have been deposited in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the house was apparently built.*

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Front cover: 1 Whitefriars ([http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results\\_Single.aspx?uid=291941&resourceID=3](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=291941&resourceID=3))

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Manning Duffie Architects Ltd, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Kay (The Clients), to carry out an archaeological evaluation in the basement of 1 Whitefriars, Conduit Hill, Rye, East Sussex in order to establish whether any archaeological remains are present at the site that may be affected by a proposed development to convert the cellar into an inhabitable room. Provision of this information will be used to support a planning application.
- 1.2** 1 Whitefriars is a Grade II Listed building, of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, that stands in the north half of Rye, south of the A268 and half way up the west side of Conduit Hill (Fig. 1). The house is sited within an Archaeological Notification Area that defines the historic core of the medieval and Post Medieval walled town of Rye. It is also located within Rye Conservation Area.
- 1.3** The cellar is of uncertain date. It lies under the east wing of Whitefriars (Fig. 3) and comprises a lower stone structure with vaulted brick walls and ceiling. The development proposes to remove an old boiler to one corner of the cellar, where an entrance will be opened up in the cellar wall leading to a new staircase. The renovation works will also include lowering the cellar floor by 500mm.
- 1.4** The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 320/321), is mudstone of the Wadhurst Clay Formation. Slightly further down Conduit Hill is an outcrop of Wadhurst sandstone.
- 1.5** In accordance with a brief prepared by ESCC, the archaeological evaluation comprised the hand excavation of three test pits in the cellar<sup>1</sup>. Dr Caroline Russell and Andrew Bradshaw carried out the evaluation on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> ESCC 2012. *Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (Test Pits) in the Cellar at White Friars, Conduit Street, Rye East Sussex.*

## 2.0 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 2.1 Very few prehistoric finds are known from Rye and its immediate surroundings; a flint sickle (MES2185) is thought to have come from the town. The Roman period is also poorly represented in the archaeological record, with few sites or finds having been discovered in the local area. A group of Roman coins (MES2186) was reputedly found at Rye. It is only in the Late Saxon period that there is evidence for any occupation, when Rye formed part of the manor of Rameslie.
- 2.2 Rye was an important port during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and became a Cinque Port in 1197. After being sacked by the French in 1377, a town wall was built, with a gun battery being added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A single gateway of this wall (the Land Gate) survives a short distance to the north of the site, at the northeast end of Tower Street, whilst remains of the wall stand at the base of Conduit Hill, in line with Cinque Ports Street.
- 2.3 An Augustinian Friary was located on Conduit Hill between 1380 and its dissolution in 1538. A former chapel constructed around 1380 survives on the eastern side of Conduit Hill<sup>2</sup>, just to the south of the site.
- 2.4 In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Rye was an important port, having prospered after the decline of nearby Winchelsea. The town had a population of some 5000 people between 1550 and 1570, but the silting up of the harbour led to its decline and the population fell to some 1500 people by 1600<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.5 Early maps of Rye are not really detailed enough to show individual houses. However Prowze's map of 1572<sup>4</sup> and the maps of Jeake 1666/7 (copied 1728)<sup>5</sup> both suggest that the streets of Rye within the town walls had houses along their sides. 1 Whitefriars is a Grade II Listed building of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 2.6 Whitefriars is shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map of 1872 (Fig. 2). The outline of the building is similar to that surviving today, although there is a projection from the north centre of the building which lines up with the hall, and presumably indicates that there was a large porch entrance to the house at this location. The Town Wall is shown running along the north side of the site, and there are formal gardens at the front and back of the house.

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<sup>2</sup> Hall, N. 2008. *Land at the rear of Tower House, Hilders Cliff, Rye, East Sussex: An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*. Development Archaeology Services Ltd, Fig. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Mayhew, G. 1987 *Tudor Rye*, Falmer, CCE, University of Sussex.

<sup>4</sup> PRO MPF 212

<sup>5</sup> Rye 132/15

- 2.7** The Listed Building entry for 1 Whitefriars describes the house as consisting of two wings and a slight projection to the north (Front cover). The west wing has a plastered front on the south side which probably dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and may conceal an earlier timber-framed building beneath it. On the north side this wing has an 18<sup>th</sup> century front of brick on the ground floor, hung with tiles above and a bay window. This wing has two storeys and attic and three windows. To the west of this is an 18<sup>th</sup> century wing built in two sections with two gables towards Conduit Hill and a mansard roof on the north and south sides. This has three storeys with one window on the south side and two windows on the north side. The ground floor has an arcade on the north side, above, it is hung with tiles. Tiled roof. Wooden eaves cornice. On the south side there is a small two storey addition joining the two wings. The doorway is at the side in Conduit Hill and has a flat hood over it supported on brackets. Massive chimney on west side.
- 2.8** A few archaeological interventions have taken place in the immediate vicinity of the site<sup>6</sup>. Human burials and pottery of 13<sup>th</sup> century date were discovered during the construction of an air raid shelter and during later excavations in the grounds of the Friary. A watching brief undertaken in 1999 in the grounds of Rye Lodge Hotel, to the east of the site, recorded 19<sup>th</sup> century deposits and residual medieval pottery. An evaluation excavation at Tower House, just to the east of the site, revealed a deep stratigraphy of Post Medieval layers dating from late 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Below this were deposits dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century, and a possible ditch that been finally filled-in in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century. A small trench in the garden also revealed a similar stratigraphy but at a shallower level, whilst a fourth trench encountered a large later 19<sup>th</sup> century kitchen midden<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Hall, N. 2008 *Land at the rear of Tower House, Hilders Cliff, Rye, East Sussex: An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*, Development Archaeology Services Ltd, Fig. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Butler, C. 2009 *An Assessment Excavation at Tower House, Rye, East Sussex*. CBAS

### **3.0 Archaeological Methodology**

- 3.1** The specification requested that three 1m square test pits be hand excavated within the cellar. On arrival at the site, it was observed that one of the test pits (Test Pit 1) had already been partly opened beside the old boiler, to a size of 530mm x 460mm. Over the week or two that the test pit had remained open, groundwater had soaked in and filled it with water. As there had been heavy rain the day before, and further rain was forecast for the day of the archaeological evaluation, it was clear that a high water table was going to be an issue during excavation. For this reason, and as it had not been foreseen that the cellar would have a concrete floor, thereby increasing excavation time, Test Pit 1 was not enlarged and Test Pits 2 and 3 were both reduced in size. Test Pit 2 measured 770mm x 500mm in plan, whilst Test Pit 3 was slightly larger at 850mm x 550mm. Each test pit was placed in the location proposed in the specification (Fig. 2).
- 3.2** Test Pit 1 was deepened slightly so that it bottomed onto the natural deposit at a depth of 390mm below the cellar surface; it was the only test pit in which the natural was encountered. The test pit was dug to a maximum depth of 430mm.
- 3.3** A pneumatic drill was used to break the concrete, and the underlying layer of laid brick, in Test Pits 2 and 3. The two test pits were then excavated by mattock and shovel. The high water table made it extremely difficult to excavate to any great depth in either test pit, and so excavation was abandoned at a maximum depth of 330mm below the cellar surface in Test Pit 2 and 280mm below the cellar surface in Test Pit 3.
- 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 with reference to a Munsell Colour chart; the cellar was not, however, well lit (even with extra lighting) and so colour identification was difficult. No levels were recorded.
- 3.5** A digital 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 and will be deposited in Rye Museum. An accession number is being obtained. A site reference of WFR12 has been allocated.

## 4.0 Results

- 4.1** In Test Pit 1 (Plate 1), the concrete surface of the cellar (Context **1/001**) was 30mm - 40mm thick, and overlay a single layer of red bricks (Context **1/002**). The bricks each measured 210mm x 110mm x 70mm deep, and were largely laid side by side.
- 4.2** Four layers of made ground, with an overall depth of 280mm, were recorded below the laid brick (Context **1/002**). The first was a light beige clay deposit (Context **1/003**), 40mm - 70mm thick, that contained occasional red brick fragments or Ceramic Building Material (CBM) up to 60mm long. Beneath it was a 100mm thick silty clay deposit (Context **1/004**), predominantly dark greyish brown in colour but also mottled pale yellowy brown. The mid grey sandy clay of Context **1/005** was recorded below Context **1/004**, and had a depth of 60mm. The underlying layer of made ground (Context **1/006**) was a dark greyish-brown clay, 80mm thick, that included occasional fragments of CBM.
- 4.3** The natural deposit beneath Context **1/006** was a mid grey sandy clay (Context **1/007**). It was encountered at a depth of 390mm below the cellar surface.



Plate 1: Test Pit 1

- 4.4** In Test Pit 2 (Plate 2), the concrete surface (Context **2/001**) and underlying layer of red brick (Context **2/002**) were of the same thickness as in Test Pit 1. Context **2/003** lay below Context **2/002**, and was a mid beige coloured deposit of sand and grit, 80mm thick, which may have comprised crushed mortar. Context **2/003** could have served as a bed for the brick layer above although it was not observed in the other two test pits.



- 4.5** The rate at which the test pit was filling with water, made excavation conditions poor below Context **2/003**. The underlying layer appeared to be a silty clay, either dark grey or brown in colour (Context **2/004**). On its excavation, a plank of wood (Context **2/005**), measuring 490mm x 300mm x 18mm thick, was found face down at a depth of 240mm below the cellar floor. Pressure had bent a curve in the plank. Another smaller piece of wood, measuring 220mm x 15mm x 13mm thick, was also discovered at about this depth. It had a hole cut into it, with a diameter of 10mm. Neither piece of wood was retained.



Plate 2: Test Pit 2

- 4.6** The deposit of Context **2/004** appears to have continued down around the plank (Context **2/005**), and also below it. When the plank was lifted, it exposed what looked to have been a double row of laid bricks (Context **2/006**), comprising two or three bricks laid end to end, with a sixth brick laid beside the end of one row (see Plate 2, with one brick removed). The bricks, which each measured 225mm x 100mm x 50mm deep, may have been laid to support a plank floor.
- 4.7** Context **2/004** was recorded between the bricks, and had a depth of at least 90mm. It comprised the basal deposit of the test pit, which was excavated to a maximum depth of 330mm below the cellar floor.
- 4.8** In Test Pit 3, the concrete surface (Concrete **3/001**) was 35mm thick, and had an open drain that ran alongside the cellar wall. The underlying layer of brick (Context **3/002**), 100mm thick, ran up to but not below the drain. Beneath the brick was a mid brown silty clay deposit (Context **3/003**), 120mm thick, that contained small pieces of crushed mortar (up to 15mm long), tile fragments and small flint pebbles. A dark grey or brown clay or silty clay (Context **3/004**) was recorded below Context **3/003**, and was only excavated into by around 20mm.

- 4.9** Beneath the concrete of the open drain, a shallow depth of pea grain was removed to uncover a ledge (Context **3/005**), 285mm wide. The surface of the exposed ledge comprised two stone flags, 35mm thick, which had been laid over a bed of clay. The clay covered one course of red brick, underlain by red tile.
- 4.10** On removal of the ledge, the bottom of the wall footing to the cellar (Context **3/006**) was found at a depth of 220mm below the cellar floor.

## **5.0 The Finds**

**5.0.1** The evaluation produced a small number of finds from Test Pits 1-3. The assemblage is not considered to hold any potential for further detailed analysis beyond that already undertaken here. It is recommended for discard.

### **5.1 Ceramic Building Material by Luke Barber**

**5.1.1** Context **1/006** produced a single fragment (398g) from a red frogless brick tempered with common fine to medium sand and rare iron oxides. The brick, which measures 58mm tall, is quite crudely made and low / medium fired. A 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century date is probable.

**5.1.2** Context **2/006** produced a complete red frogless brick (2310g), tempered with moderate fine to medium sand and sparse to common iron oxide pellets to 1mm. The brick, which measures 227 x 103 - 105 x 50mm, is quite crudely formed but medium fired and has traces of a buff sandy mortar with iron oxide pellets. An early / mid 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century date range is probable.

**5.1.3** Context **3/003** contained a fragment of peg tile (494g), measuring 142mm wide by 10mm thick. The tile, which has round peg-holes, is quite crudely made, tempered with sparse fine sand with common iron oxides to 1mm and marl streaks, but is notably well fired. All in all, a 17<sup>th</sup> to mid 18<sup>th</sup> century date range is perhaps most likely for this piece.

**5.1.4** Context **3/005** produced a well formed and medium fired complete red frogless brick (3075g) measuring 226 x 113 x 61mm. Tempering appears to be of common fine to medium sand with sparse iron oxides to 1mm. An 18<sup>th</sup> century date is probable for this specimen.

### **5.2 Clay Pipe by Luke Barber**

**5.2.1** Context **2/003** yielded a single unabraded clay tobacco pipe stem fragment (5g). The piece is finely burnished, and likely to be of early to mid 18<sup>th</sup> century date.

**5.2.2** Context **3/003** contained a fragment of fresh mid / late 17<sup>th</sup> century clay tobacco pipe stem / mouthpiece (3g).

### **5.3 Animal Bone** by Chris Butler

**5.3.1** A fragment of cattle rib (53g) was found in Context **1/006**. It appeared to have been snapped at both ends, and had a few small cut marks.

**5.3.2** A cattle rib bone (27g) and a sheep femur fragment (24g) were recovered from Context **2/004**. The former bone has been snapped, whilst the latter has been chopped. Both bones exhibit evidence of gnawing.

**5.3.3** A mesial fragment of sheep long bone (21g) was found in Context **3/003**. It had been broken at both ends and had no evidence of butchery.

### **5.4 Other Finds** by Chris Butler

**5.4.1** An iron nail 65mm in length, with a rectangular head and shaft, weighing 16g, was found in Context **3/003**. This was not diagnostically dateable.

**5.4.2** Two pieces of wood were recovered. The first came from Context **1/006**, and comprised a small peg/stake 187mm long, and 15mm x 24mm in section, weighing 46g. It tapers to a sharpened point at one end. The second piece was from Context **3/003** and measured 220mm long, and 18mm x 10mm in section, weighing 26g. This had no evidence of any working.

## **6.0 Discussion**

- 6.1** The evaluation excavation revealed the concrete floor of the cellar to rest above a layer of laid brick. Several horizons of made ground were recorded beneath the brick layer, with the sequence appearing to vary in each test pit. The natural deposit was only reached in Test Pit 1, where it was encountered at a depth of just 390mm.
- 6.2** The earliest dating evidence was produced in Test Pit 2, with one of the bricks from its base having probably dated to the early / mid 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. These bricks look to have been deliberately laid, perhaps to support a wooden floor as a plank was found in situ overlying them. All the made ground in Test Pit 1 had probably been laid from the 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In Test Pit 3, the stone flag ledge was built using brick of probable 18<sup>th</sup> century date, whilst material from a layer of made ground beside it may all have dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is therefore possible that all made ground in the cellar was laid in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which accords with the earliest known date of the house.
- 6.3** The finds assemblage has a distinct absence of 19<sup>th</sup> century artefacts. Bricks from the layer directly beneath the concrete were not sampled for dating, as they were thought at the time to have been laid down for the concrete floor. If this was the case, the floor of the cellar could have been reduced before the bricks were laid, thereby removing any 19<sup>th</sup> century material.
- 6.4** Ground reduction in the cellar may involve the removal of all made ground and excavation into the natural deposit, beyond the depth of the cellar wall footings. It is therefore recommended that all groundworks in the cellar be archaeologically monitored to ensure that any archaeological features cut into the natural, and any remains preserved below the layers of made ground are excavated and recorded before they are disturbed or destroyed.

## **7.0 Acknowledgements**

- 7.1** I would like to thank Tim Manning of Manning Duffie Architects Ltd, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Kay, for commissioning CBAS Ltd to undertake the archaeological evaluation. Luke Barber and Chris Butler reported on the finds.
- 7.2** Chris Butler managed the project for CBAS Ltd, and Casper Johnson, County Archaeologist monitored the project for East Sussex County Council.

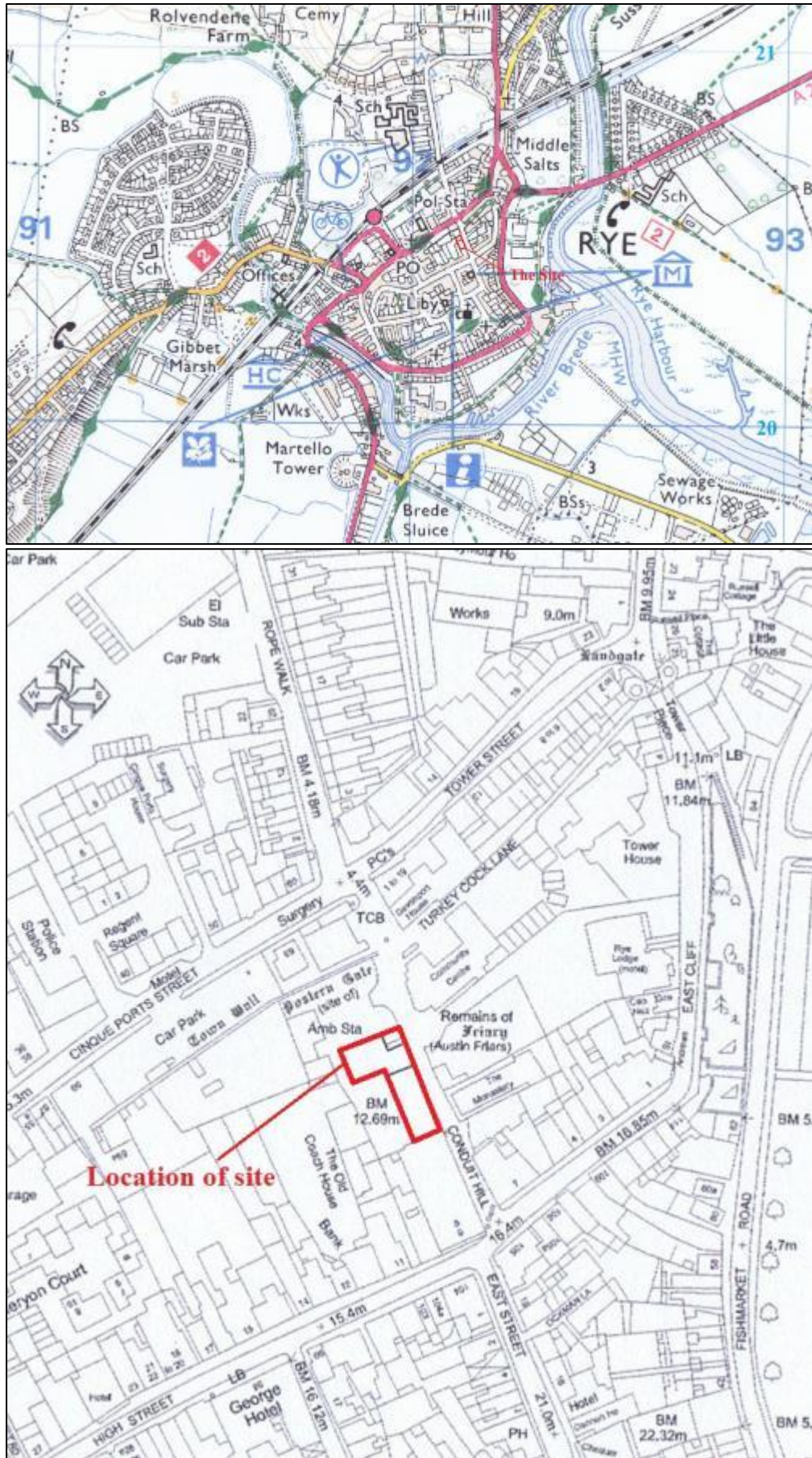


Fig. 1: 1 Whitefriars, Rye: Location Map  
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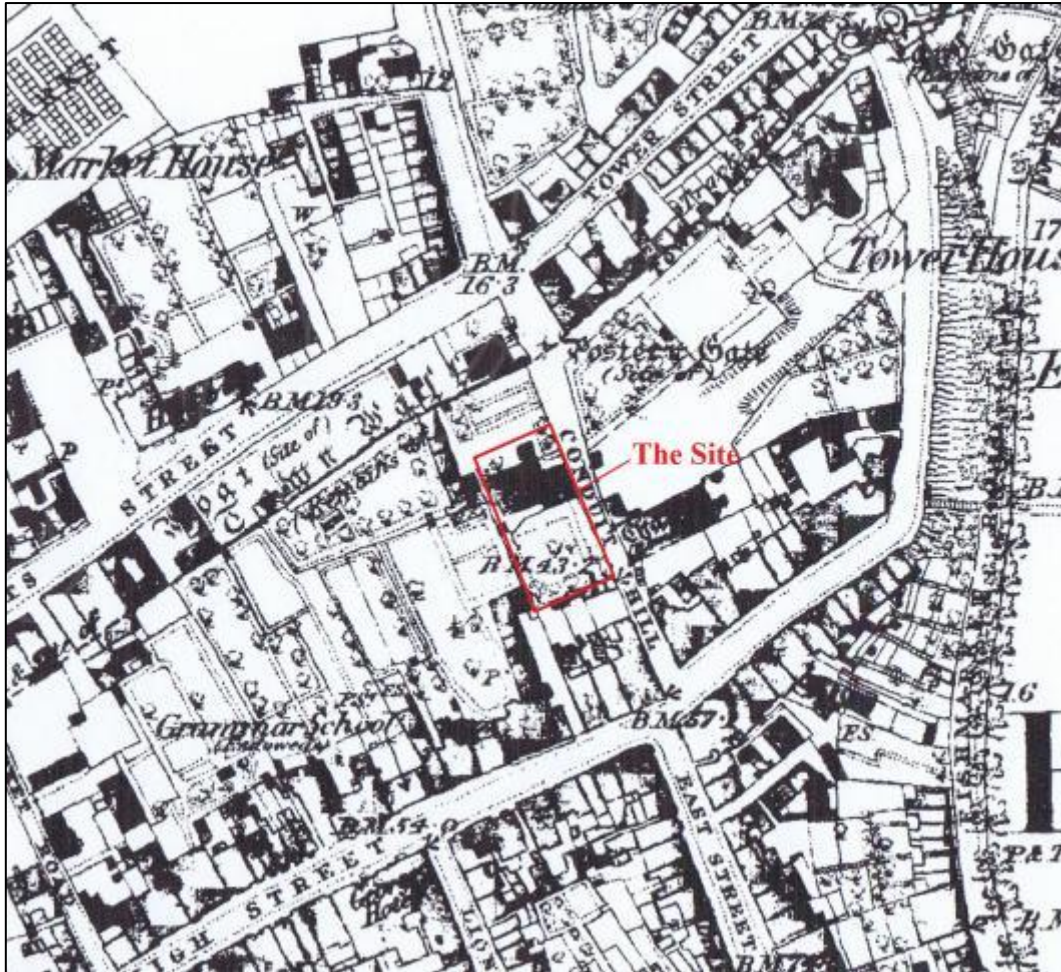


Fig. 2: 1 Whitefriars, Rye: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map 1872



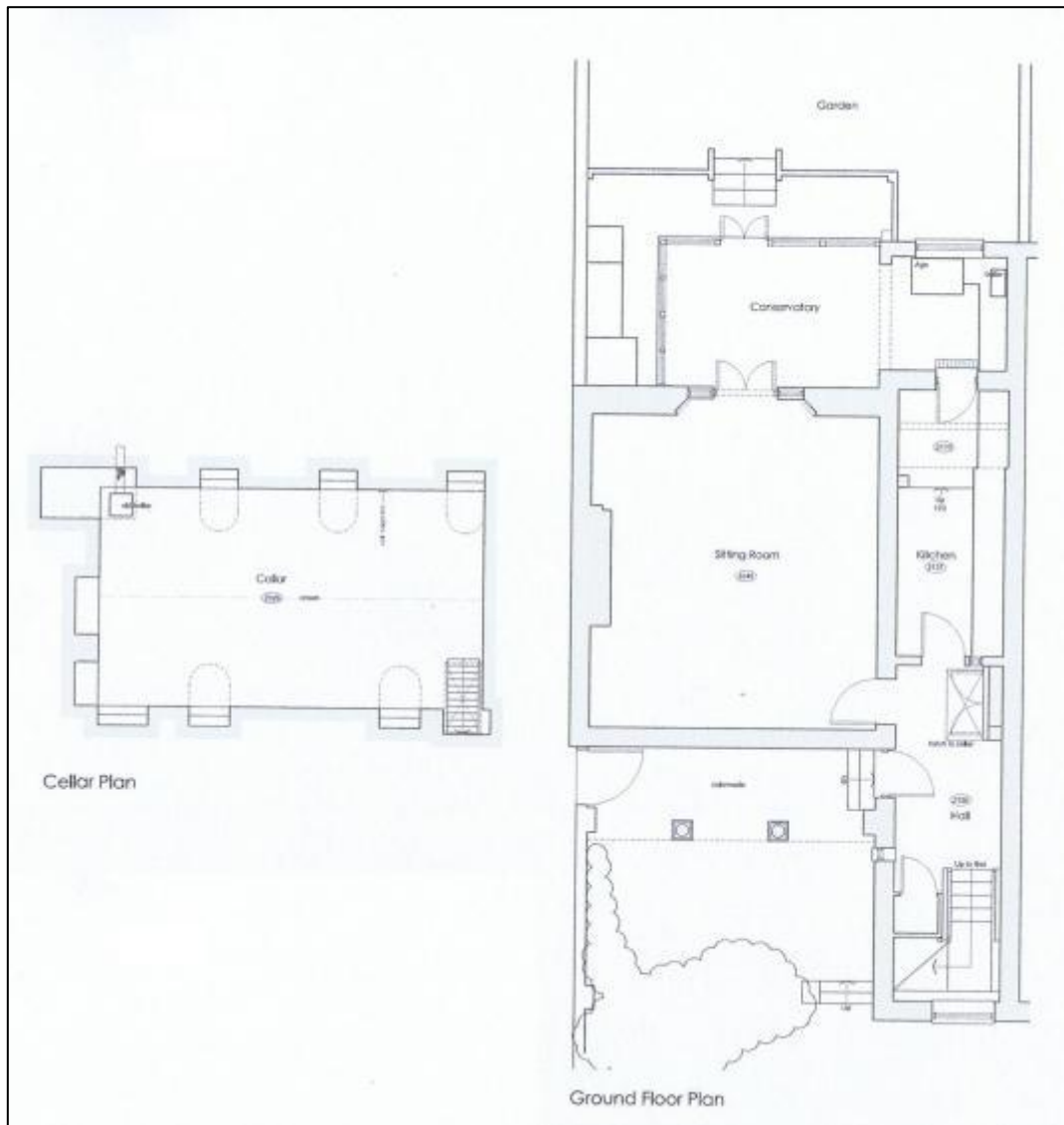


Fig. 3: 1 Whitefriars, Rye: Plan of ground floor and cellar  
(Adapted from plan provided by Manning Duffie Architects Ltd)

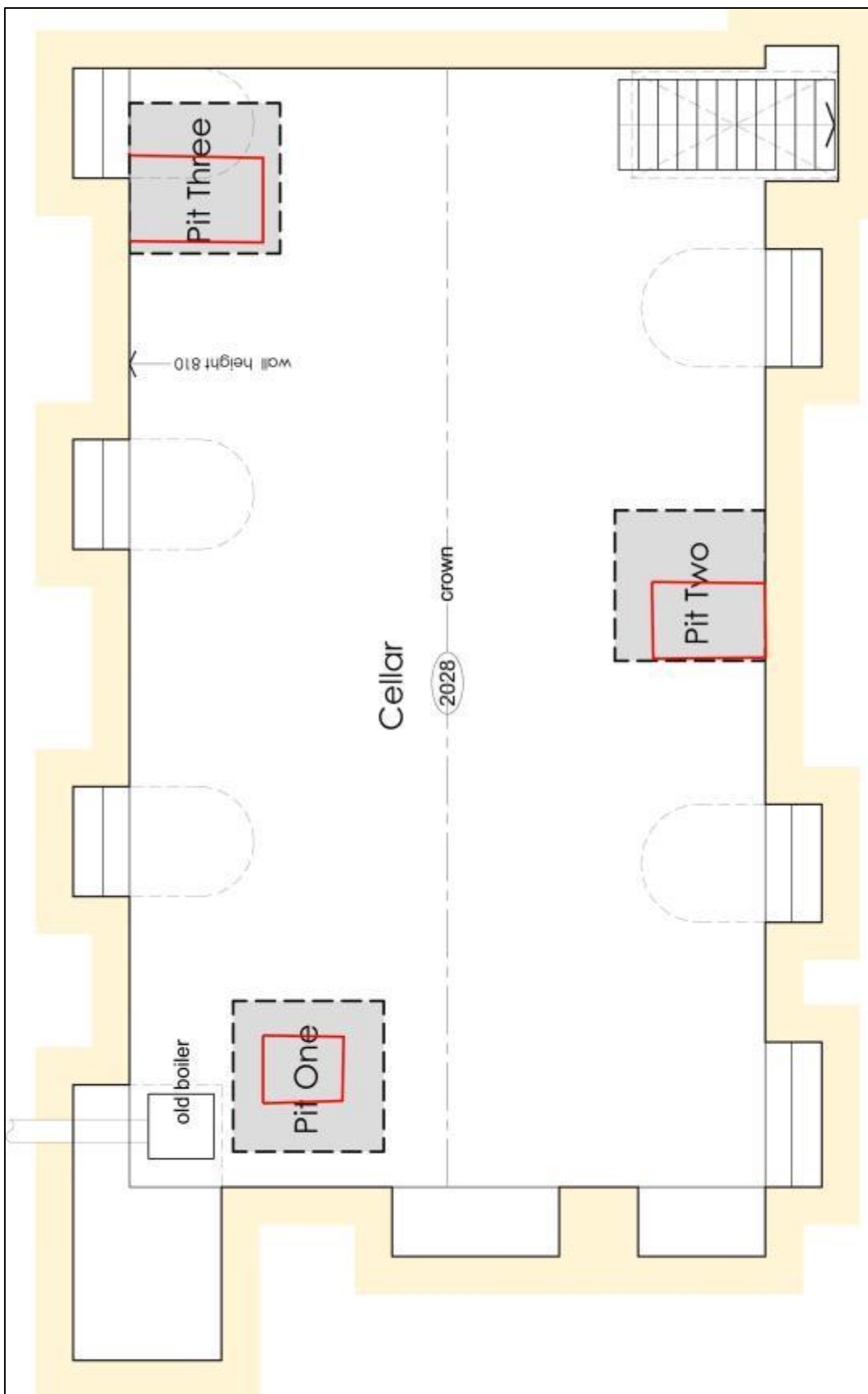


Fig. 4: 1 Whitefriars, Rye: Test Pit Location Plan  
Actual Test Pit locations shown in red  
(Adapted from plan provided by Manning Duffie Architects Ltd)

## Appendix 1 HER Summary Form

Site Code						
Identification Name and Address	1 Whitefriars, Conduit Hill, Rye, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 92127 20497					
Geology	Mudstone of the Wadhurst Clay Formation					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. <b>X</b>	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban <b>X</b>	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 01/11/12	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Mr and Mrs Kay					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MfA					
Project Supervisor	Caroline Russell					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM <b>X</b>	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological evaluation was carried out at 1 Whitefriars, Conduit Hill, Rye, East Sussex to provide archaeological information in support of a planning application to develop the cellar into an inhabitable room. The concrete floor of the cellar was found to overlie a layer of laid brick. Varied layers of made ground were recorded below this, all of which could have been deposited in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the house was apparently built.</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. He has also recently undertaken an archaeological survey of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren.

**Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd** is available for Flintwork Analysis, Project Management, Military Archaeology, Desktop Assessments, Field Evaluations, Excavation work, Watching Briefs, Field Surveys & Fieldwalking, Post Excavation Services and Report Writing.

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