



Chris Butler MIFA Archaeological Services



An Archaeological Watching Brief at New Cottage, Winchelsea, East Sussex

(RR/2011/1099)

By

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at New Cottage, Winchelsea, East Sussex following a previous evaluation excavation prior to ground work for the construction of a single storey rear extension.

Excavation of footing trenches revealed a rough-hewn mortared stone feature and a layer of mortar was similar to one found in the original evaluation excavation. These features extended beyond the excavated trenches, but both features were recorded prior to pouring of concrete footings.

Trenches close to the existing house showed signs of back fill from the house construction with building debris. Further away less disturbance and debris was evident.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Mr J Fisherden (The Client) to carry out an archaeological evaluation prior to making a decision on a planning application associated with the construction of a single storey rear extension at New Cottage, Winchelsea, East Sussex.
- 1.2** As a result of the site's location, and the archaeological potential of the area, the local planning authority requested that before making a decision on the planning consent for the development (RR/2011/1099), they required an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.3** The site lies within the historic core of the medieval and Post-Medieval town of Winchelsea. The site is within a designated Archaeological Notification Area, and is also located within a Conservation Area (Fig. 1). New Cottage was built in the late 1970's, and is situated in Quarter 8 of the historic town. It is set back from the street frontage due to the presence of an early 14th century vaulted cellar (MES17337 - Grade II Listed) in the front grounds of the site (Fig. 2).
- 1.4** Winchelsea is located on a hilltop some 1.5 km inland, with the River Brede on its north side. The ground falls rapidly on all sides into the Pett Levels to its south and Rye Bay to the east. On the west side a ridge takes the A259 through Icklesham and on to Hastings.
- 1.5** The geology, according to the British Geological Survey (Sheet 320/321), is Wadhurst Clay overlying Ashdown Beds sandstone, mainly Cliff End Sandstone. The upper seams contain horizons of Tilgate Stone, a calcareous sandstone frequently used in the past as a building stone in Winchelsea.
- 1.6** The appropriate programme of archaeological work comprised an archaeological evaluation excavation involving the excavation of two test pits. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)¹ for the evaluation excavation was prepared and agreed with the Archaeology Team at ESCC, and approved by East Sussex County Council.

¹ Butler, C. 2011 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation at New Cottage, Winchelsea*,

2.0 Archaeological & Historical background

- 2.1 The new town of Winchelsea was laid out in 39 ‘quarters’ between 1283 and 1292, by the order of King Edward I. Initially the new town seemed to prosper, but in the 14th and 15th centuries it suffered some seven major attacks by the French, who pillaged the town on almost every occasion.
- 2.2 The changing coastline hastened the decline of the town as a port, as a shingle bar spread across the river outlet. By the end of the 15th century, the town had declined and the last merchant had left, and for the next 300 years Winchelsea was in decay. In the last half of the 18th century textile manufactory was undertaken with cambric and crepe being produced.
- 2.3 The site is located in Quarter 8 of the town, situated to the north of St Thomas’s Church. A map of the town was reconstructed from the 1292 Rent Roll by Homan². He showed that the rental was arranged in a certain order round each quarter, and that the measurement was a virga, apparently of 16 feet (4.88 metres). He selected Quarter 8 as a worked example, proving that the south (High Street) and north frontages were developed, and that the intervening strips running east-west were undeveloped but occupied by adjoining householders, no doubt as gardens.
- 2.4 The principal buildings in Quarter 8 are the Court House, probably built c. 1300, and modified in the 15th century and again in 1890, and the Old Castle Inn which has Medieval origins but a 15th-16th century fabric. The origins of the houses opposite the Armoury in Castle Street are also Medieval, and 7-8 High Street may have incorporated open halls, but were too altered in the 15th-16th centuries to be certain. An early 14th century vaulted cellar (MES17337 - Grade II Listed) is situated in the front grounds of the site, and is entered by stairs from Mill Road. It measures 8.8m x 5.5m in size, and has a barrel vaulted roof³, whilst the back wall appears to be later blocking⁴.
- 2.5 Up until 2001 a total of 14 sites within Winchelsea have either been excavated, or had watching briefs undertaken on them. All revealed finds relating to the period immediately following the foundation of the town. The excavation of a stone-lined pit in the garden of Richmond House, Cooks Green in 1988-9, suggested it had been constructed in the late Medieval period and then been filled in around the middle of the 17th century⁵. In 1999, HAARG partly cleared and recorded a Medieval cellar at Hiham Green on the north-west corner of Quarter 8⁶.

² Homan, W.M. 1949 ‘The Founding of New Winchelsea’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **88**, 22-41.

³ Martin, D. & Martin, B 2004 *New Winchelsea Sussex*, Heritage Marketing & Publications Ltd.

⁴ Chuter, G. *pers. Com.*

⁵ Child, D. 1990 *The Excavation of a Stone Lined Pit in the Garden of Richmond House, Cooks Green, Winchelsea, 1988-8*, HAARG, Hastings.

⁶ Padgham, D. 1999 ‘A vaulted Undercroft at Hiham Green, Winchelsea’, *HAARG Journal*, New Series, No. 7, 1-12.

2.6 The 1763 map⁷ of Winchlesea shows no buildings situated on the site of New Cottage, as does the 1767 survey⁸. Both show this part of Quarter 8 to be open ground.

2.7 The 1st Edition OS map of 1874 shows the site to be an orchard with a well situated in the south-west corner of the site (Fig. 3). The 2nd Edition OS map of 1899 shows the same situation. The 3rd Edition OS map of 1909 shows the site to be open ground, and the well has now gone, whilst the 4th Edition OS map of 1929 shows a small building located in the south-east part of the site.

1.

2.8 A number of archaeological evaluations and watching briefs have been carried out in the immediate vicinity of the site since 2001. In 2003 building foundations dating to the 13th-14th century were found at Salutation Cottages (EES13969), whilst in 2006 an evaluation excavation (EES14274) found evidence for Medieval buildings at Three Kings immediately east of the site. The work revealed evidence of the destruction of a substantial, probably medieval, building including a pit (possibly a filled-in cellar⁹) containing stone rubble, roofing slate and mortar. The lower courses of a stone wall were also uncovered, perhaps representing a medieval building tenement boundary wall.

2.9 An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Barling House (EES14780), also in Quarter 8, in 2010. No archaeological features were noted, and only a small number of artefacts were recovered, including three pieces of peg tile dating to somewhere between the mid to late 13th up to the 15th centuries, and a fragment of brick dating to between the 14th and mid 16th century¹⁰. Excavations in 2002 at The Magazine, Castle Street, on the south-east corner of Quarter 8, revealed a stone lined pit, which had been filled in during the late 19th century¹¹.

2.10 A watching brief at Little Mariteau House, Winchelsea discovered a wall comprising Tilgate Stone in a lime mortar was recorded running east-west across the trench, and although it was undated, its relationship with the underlying layer suggested it was of 13th to 14th century date. An associated demolition layer with 13th-14th century CBM and 16th century pottery may provide a date for the demolition of this structure¹².

⁷ ESRO AMS 5806/3

⁸ ESRO AMS 5788/1

⁹ Chuter, G. *pers com*

¹⁰ Butler, K. 2010 An Archaeological Watching Brief at Barling House, Winchelsea, East Sussex. CBAS Report

¹¹ Butler, C. 2003 *The Excavation of a late 19th century pit at The Magazine, Castle Street, Winchelsea, East Sussex*, CBAS Report.

¹² Butler, C. 2009 An Archaeological Watching Brief at Little Mariteau House, Winchelsea, East Sussex. CBAS Report

4. Archaeology Methodology.

- 3.1 On arrival at the site, on the 26th September 2011, the paving slabs covering the area to be excavated had been removed by the client and string lines denoting the trench lines had been laid out. Beneath the paving slabs was a layer of typical builder's sand, used as a levelling layer for the patio.
- 3.2 Initially the eastern most trench, running south from the existing house wall was excavated Fig.4. This, as all trenches were, was excavated in spits of around 100mm depth and quickly cut through the top layer of sand and soil and arrived at a layer of friable dark grey soil, similar to the surrounding garden soil with inclusions of modern building debris left over from the construction of the house in the 1970's (**3003**).
- 3.3 Beneath this layer of soil and building debris was a layer of 'natural' clay; depth of this clay layer was 0.45m (**3004**). Once this layer of natural clay had been reached a further 6" (0.15m) was dug into it to establish the footings.
- 3.4 At the south-east end of this trench a horizontal layer of rough-hewn, random coursed stone work with mortar was discovered (**3005**). This layer at first appeared to drop away on the eastern side, at this point it was considered that it may be a cobbled surface or the roof of a vaulted cellar as is existent at the front of the property. This was the first significant feature or artefact found.
- 3.5 At this point the machine work was stopped and the feature was hand excavated to uncover its surface and discover its extents. This hand excavation revealed the edges of the feature and its depth, approximately 0.25m. Underneath the feature was a layer of solid clay which had been discovered as the 'Natural' layer in test pits.¹³
- 3.6 Cleaning of the top surface revealed possible edging stones along the west side of the feature, giving a possible original edge to the feature. To the east the feature continued into the section of the trench, so it was not possible to determine its final extent in this direction. Fig. 4.
- 3.7 During cleaning around the stone feature (**3005**) a layer of mortar (**3006**) was discovered at the corner of the eastern and south trenches, which butted up to and was cut by the stone feature (**3005**). This feature was similar to that discovered in Test Pit 2 during the evaluation excavation and was then designated (**2003**). This feature was a narrow layer at a depth of 150mm, it did not continue into the trenches, but was only evident where the two trenches met and earth had been removed to expose the edge of the stone feature (**3005**). It was not possible to determine the full extent of this feature as it disappeared into the west and north sections of the south and east trenches, i.e. into the baulk left in the centre of the footing trenches. Fig. 4.

¹³ See evaluation report by Dr Caroline Russell, contexts 1004 & 2004, dated August 2011. CBAS

- 3.8** Once both of these features (**3005 & 3006**) had been cleaned and recorded the machine excavation continued along the south and eastern trenches by the same technique detailed in 3.2.
- 3.9** The excavation of the south and western trenches revealed no other features and the stratigraphy was similar to that found earlier; a topsoil, under a layer of building sand lying on a natural clay layer.
- 3.10** Two sets of samples were taken during the watching brief one of the mortar layer (**3006**) and one of the stone and mortar (**3005**). Six contexts were raised a Sand levelling layer for used for the patio (**3001**), the Topsoil of the garden (**3002**), a Building Debris layer left from the construction of the current house in the 1970's (**3003**), the Natural clay layer (**3004**) the Stone feature (**3005**) and the Mortar layer found butting up to it (**3006**).

4.0 Results (Figures 5 and 6)

- 4.1** The Eastern Trench, running south from the line of the house wall revealed a loose layer of builders sand, immediately underneath the 25mm thick paving slabs which formed the patio (**3001**). This layer was 140mm deep and contained some particles of soil similar to that found across the garden and undoubtedly constitutes a levelling/foundation layer for the patio.
- 4.2** Beneath this was Context **3003**, a layer of friable soil with some clay inclusions (15-20%), to a depth of 350mm. It was generally dark grey in colour and contained modern CBM inclusions typical of the materials used on the house. This deposit appears to have been formed when the foundations for the house were dug out and then later backfilled.
- 4.3** Beneath this was a layer of natural sandy clay found across all the trenches, here appearing at a depth of 700mm.
- 4.4** The above stratigraphy continued around the footing trenches at similar depths, but less CBM was found in the southern trench away from the house.
- 4.5** In the south-east corner, at the junction of the eastern and southern trenches a layer of rough-hewn mortared stone was discovered, 600mm x 400mm made of pieces of up to 500mm x 250mm x 70mm (**3005**). It lay directly on a layer of clay and

appeared to have no other footings. Although the western and north edges could be traced, both the eastern and southern edges lay beyond the excavation.

- 4.6** An additional feature (**3006**) was revealed immediately to the west of the stones feature and this was a layer of mortar which appeared to be cut by the stones. This feature was at a depth of 150mm and was 50mm – 100mm thick, being similar to that found in Test Pit 2 during the evaluation excavation.¹⁴
- 4.8** Immediately above the stone feature (**3005**) was a layer of Topsoil (**3002**) similar to that found during the evaluation excavation and that which is common across the garden. This layer was between 250mm – 300mm in depth with inclusions of Pea Beach at <1%. This layer lay beyond the edge of the patio forming a flower bed that rose in a bank to the walled and raised garden to the south.
- 4.10** There were no other archaeological features or deposits noted during the evaluation excavation.

¹⁴ See evaluation report by Dr Caroline Russell, context 3006, dated August 2011. CBAS

5.0 The Finds.

Winchelsea New Cottage NCW 11 WB C. Butler

| Context | Pottery (by chronological period) | Ceramic Building Material | Other | Comment |
|---------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 3002 | 1750-1900: 2/10g | Peg tile 1/34g | Stone 5/684g | C19th pot but C16th tile |
| 3003 | 1550-1750: 1/8g 1750-1900: 1/4g | Peg tile 1/26g | Stone 1/38g | C17th pot x1, late C18th pot x1 |
| 3005 | - | Nib tile 1/58g | Stone 7/8840g | C18-19 th tile |
| 3006 | - | - | Mortar 3/72g | Sample. Probably C15th – 17th |

Table 1: Quantification of finds assemblage (Number/weight in grams)

5.1 *The Pottery by Luke Barber*

The 2nd stage of archaeological work recovered a very small assemblage of pottery from the site. All of the sherds are of small to medium size (to 40mm across) with only slight signs of abrasion. However, the types of pottery represented are all well fired and thus naturally resistant to abrasion.

5.2 The earliest pottery consists of a single sherd of probable Frechen stoneware jug rim/neck from [3003]. The same context produced an early transfer-printed pearlware sherd of late 18th- century date. The only other pottery recovered came from [3002]. This deposit produced a further transfer-printed pearlware sherd of late 18th- to early 19th- century date and a later 19th- century plain refined white earthenware sherd.

5.3 *The Ceramic Building Material by Luke Barber*

The site produced just three fragments of roofing tile during the Stage 2 works. Only Fabric 1 was noted during the Stage 1 works:

Fabric 1: Sparse fine sand with rare calcareous inclusions to 1mm. Quite crudely formed but well-fired with a whitish surface. Early C15th to 16th century. The peg tile fragments from [3002] and [3003] are of this type.

Fabric 5: Well formed and tempered with sparse fine sand and common iron oxide and marl inclusions to 1mm. A single 15mm thick nib/peg combination tile was recovered from [3005]. The well formed nib (29 x 14mm) sits immediately adjacent the perfectly formed 6mm diameter peg hole. C18th – 19th.

5.4 *Stone by Luke Barber*

The majority of stone from the site consists of the local Tilgate stone. The four pieces (474g) from [3002] measure between 14 and 16mm thick and may well be from roofing slabs. Context [3005] produced a further three (1612g) fragments of Tilgate stone. Most of the other stone is also of local Wealden origin. Context [3002] also produced a fine/medium grained calcareous sandstone of Wealden origin (possibly a variation of Tilgate stone) (216g) while [3005] produced a roughly shaped building

block in a buff fine-grained Wealden sandstone (110mm tall and weighing 2960g). The same context produced a 75mm tall fragment of fine shelly Wealden sandstone (3750g) and two pieces of off-white Hastings Beds sandstone. The only other stone type consists of a small fragment of Sussex marble from [3003]. This piece has part of a polished/worn surface surviving so may have come from a monument or was incorporated into a floor.

5.5 *Mortar* by Luke Barber

A sample of mortar was recovered from [3006]. The pieces are composed of a fine sandy off-white lime mortar with some Wealden sandstone inclusions to 5mm. Although it is impossible to be certain a late medieval/early post-medieval date is considered most likely.

5.6 The assemblage does not hold any potential for further analysis and is recommended for discard.

6.0 Discussion.

- 6.1 This watching brief was the result of an earlier evaluation excavation which established that there was some archaeology on the site, but to what extent it would be disturbed by the proposed development was uncertain.
- 6.2 The natural layer of clay appeared at relatively shallow depths because the ground had been reduced, probably, during construction of the house and landscaping of the garden, or at some point prior to this. Ground level beyond the adjacent wall was at least 1.5m higher.
- 6.3 Evidence of modern CBM was discovered in a deposit (3003) near to the house, combined sand, showing that the area had been disturbed when the modern house was built in the 1970's. This deposit, with its CBM was not in evidence further away from the building. One piece of Frechen Stoneware Jug, this being the earliest ceramic fragment found, also some 15th – 16th Century tile was recovered from this context. See 5.1.
- 6.4 A mortared rough-hewn stone layer (3005), found in the south-east corner was initially considered to be possible vaulted ceiling, similar to the vaulted cellar at the front of the house. However, the drop initially noticed on the stonework did not continue. It could possibly be the remains of a cobbled surface, but there was insufficient exposed in the trench to determine this. Beneath this layer there existed only natural clay, so it had been laid, if it was a cobbled surface, directly onto natural clay. Along the western edge there appeared to be some evidence of edging stones, so it could be part of a fallen wall feature. This feature, lying on top of natural clay, could indicate that the level of this area may well have been reduced prior to the building of the current house.
- 6.5 The majority of stone from the site was local Tilgate Stone, although (3005) did produce pieces of Wealden Sandstone and two pieces of Hastings Bed Sandstone. See 5.4.
- 6.6 Adjacent to the stone feature and cut by it was layer of mortar (3006) which may be the remnants of a hard standing associated with a late medieval / early post-medieval wall and is similar to that found in Test Pit 2 during the evaluation excavation.¹⁵
- 6.7 It was not possible to determine the full extent of either of these features due to the limited area of the footing excavations. What can be stated is that the stone feature (3005) does not continue further west or north than that show in Fig.4. Similarly the mortar layer (3006) does not continue further east than shown in Fig.4.

¹⁵ See evaluation report by Dr Caroline Russell dated August 2011. CBAS

7.0 Acknowledgements

7.1 I would like to thank Mr Fisherden for commissioning this archaeological evaluation and for his assistance in raising the paving and marking out the lines of the footing trenches and also for the generous tea and cake. The project was monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter, the Assistant County Archaeologist.

7.2 The project was managed for CBAS Ltd by Chris Butler. Chris Butler reported on the glass, bone and shell and Luke Barber reported on the pottery and other finds. I would also like to thank Dr Caroline Russell for her help and access to her report on the earlier evaluation excavation.

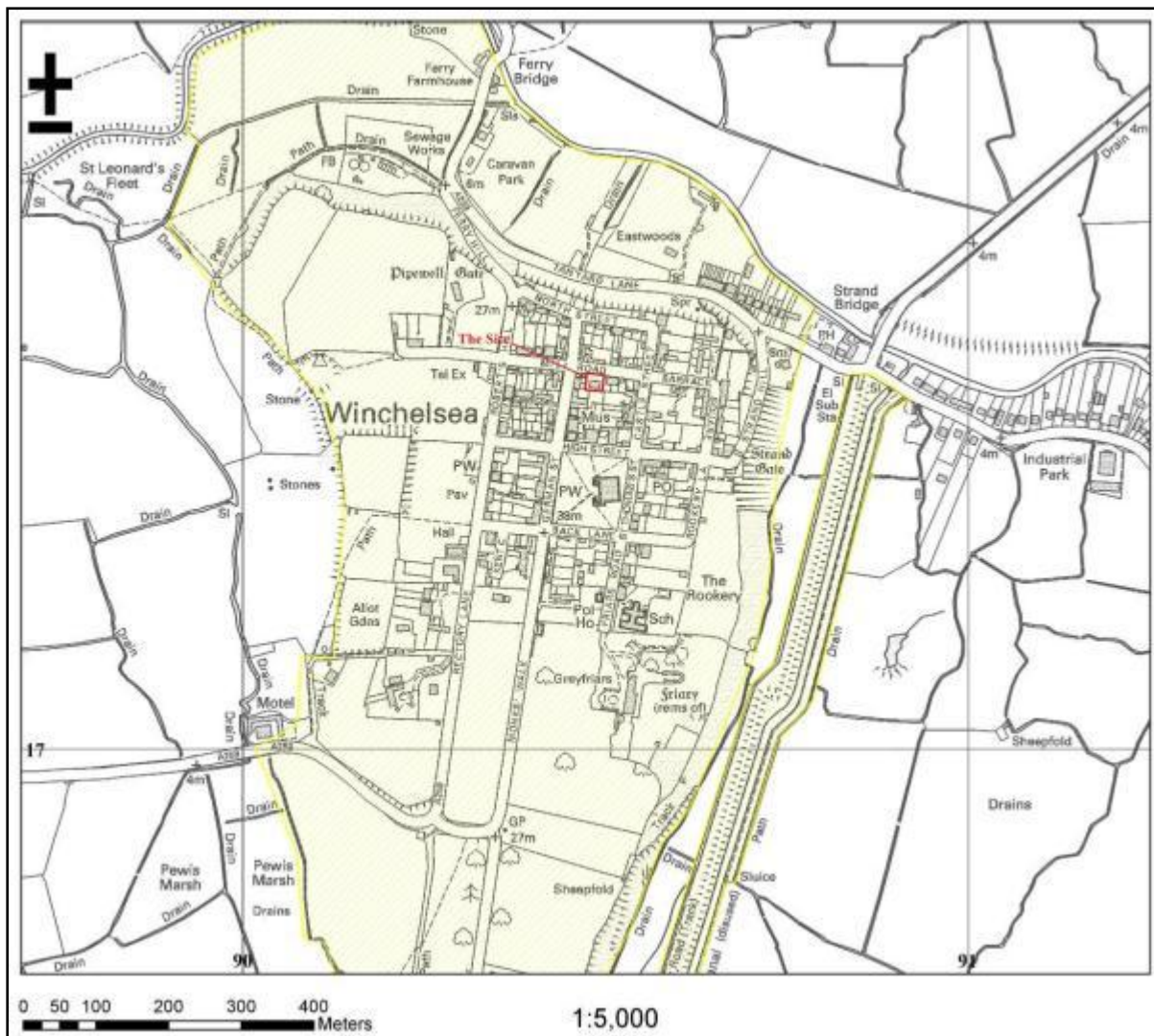


Fig. 1: New Cottage, Winchelsea: Archaeological Notification Areas
 (Adapted from map provided by ESCC)

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Fig. 2: New Cottage, Winchelsea: Sites on the HER
 (Adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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1st Edition OS Map (1874)



3rd Edition OS Map (1909)

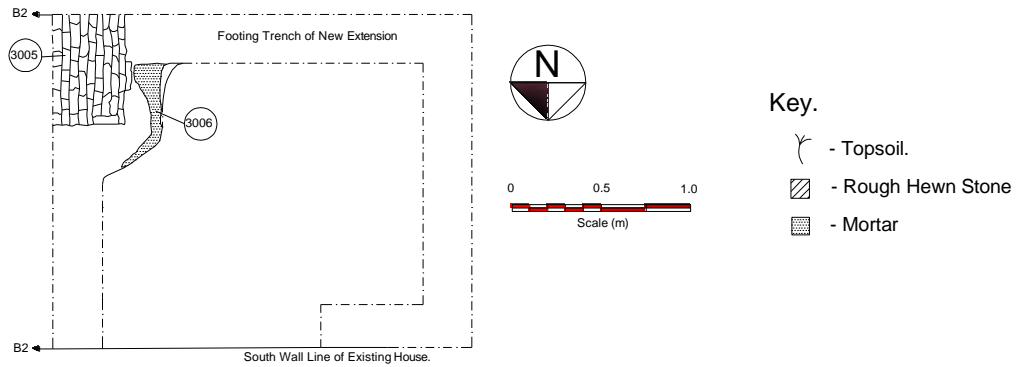


4th Edition OS Map (1929)

Fig. 3: New Cottage, Winchelsea: Early OS Maps

New Cottage Winchelsea. NCW.11 - Plan and Section of Footing Trenches.

Dwg. B1 - Plan.



Dwg. B2 - West Facing Section.

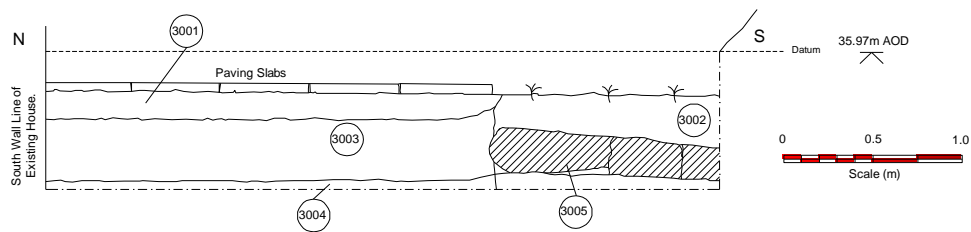


Fig. 4: New Cottage Winchelsea, West facing Section of eastern trench and plan of excavated trenches.



Fig.5: The Rough Hewn stone Feature in the south east corner, with the abutting mortar layer shown at bottom right.



Fig. 6: Rough Hewn Stone feature north facing section, viewed along the eastern trench, note the layer of clay immediately beneath the stones.



Fig. 7: Rough Hewn Stone feature west facing section viewed along the southern trench, again, note the layer of clay immediately beneath the stones.



Fig. 7: West facing section of eastern trench, showing sandy layer levelling the patio and the topsoil/building debris layer immediately above the natural clay.

Appendix 1 HER Summary Form

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
| Site Code | NCW11 | | | | | |
| Identification Name and Address | New Cottage, Winchelsea, East Sussex | | | | | |
| County, District &/or Borough | East Sussex County Council/Rother District | | | | | |
| OS Grid Refs. | TQ 90487 17504 | | | | | |
| Geology | Wadhurst Clay overlying 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. 26.09.11 | Other | | |
| Sponsor/Client | Mr J. Fisherden | | | | | |
| Project Manager | Chris Butler MIFA | | | | | |
| Project Supervisor | Andy Bradshaw | | | | | |
| Period Summary | Palaeo. | Meso. | Neo. | BA | IA | RB |
| | | | | Other | | |
| <p>100 Word Summary</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was carried out at New Cottage, Winchelsea, East Sussex following a previous evaluation excavation prior to ground work for the construction of a single storey rear extension.</i></p> <p><i>Excavation of footing trenches revealed a rough-hewn mortared stone feature and a layer of mortar was similar to one found in the original evaluation excavation. These features extended beyond the excavated trenches, but both features were recorded prior to pouring of concrete footings.</i></p> <p><i>Trenches close to the existing house showed signs of back fill from the house construction with building debris. Further away less disturbance and debris was evident.</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, and a committee member of the Lithic Studies Society. He is a part time lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sussex, and until recently taught A-Level Archaeology at Bexhill 6th Form College having qualified (Cert. Ed.) as a teacher in 2006. 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 recently undertaken large landscape surveys of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren and is Co-Director of the Barcombe Roman Villa excavation project.

His publications include *Prehistoric Flintwork*, *East Sussex Under Attack* and *West Sussex Under Attack*, all of which are published by Tempus Publishing Ltd.

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

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