



Chris Butler MfA
Archaeological Services Ltd

**Watching Brief
at land adjacent to
Fairlight/Staddlestones,
School Lane,
Pyecombe,
West Sussex.**

By
David Atkin

12/01084

Project No. CBAS0323

February 2013

Summary

A watching brief was maintained during the ground-works associated with the construction of a new dwelling on land adjacent to Fairlight, School Lane, Pyecombe, West Sussex. Ground reduction over the footprint of the new house, and the excavation of foundation trenches was monitored with chalk natural being reached on the west side of the site. The colluvium overlying the chalk produced a sherd of Iron Age pottery and prehistoric flintwork, but also pieces of Post Medieval CBM. No archaeological features were seen.

**Rosedale
Berwick, Polegate,
East Sussex
BN26 6TB**

Tel & fax: 01323 811785

e mail: chris@cbasltd.co.uk

Contents

1.0	Introduction	4
2.0	Historical & Archaeological Background	5
3.0	Archaeological Methodology	8
4.0	Results	8
5.0	Finds	9
6.0	Discussion	9
7.0	Acknowledgements	10

Figures:

Fig. 1	Location map
Fig. 2	Location of site and Scheduled Monuments, Conservations Areas etc.
Fig. 3	HER Map
Fig. 4	1 st Edition OS Map 1875
Fig 5	1951 OS Map
Fig 6	Site Plan.

Appendix

HER Summary Form

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd had been commissioned by SDP Developers to carry out an archaeological watching brief at land adjacent to Fairlight/Staddlestones, School Lane, Pyecombe, West Sussex (Fig. 1) during the groundworks associated with the erection of a detached two-storey 4-bed house with integral two car garage.
- 1.2** A planning application had been submitted (12/01084/FUL) for the development, and as a result of the site's location, and the archaeological potential of the area, the local planning authority put a condition on the planning consent for the development, requiring an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.3** Pyecombe is located to the north of Brighton, and is situated within a dry valley (or coombe) formed by the river Wellesbourne running through the South Downs, and adjacent to the modern London-Brighton road (A23). The river is now a winterbourne and runs underground for most of its length. The site is situated just outside the Pyecombe Conservation Area, but is within the former medieval village centre of Pyecombe, that was centred around the church and the former main street along Church Lane and School Lane (Fig. 2). There are a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the vicinity of the site, and it is situated within the South Downs National Park.
- 1.4** The geology, according to the British Geological Survey Sheet 318/333 is Upper and Middle Chalk, with Head Deposit in the spur of the dry valley on the east side of the site. An outcrop of Lower Chalk exists to the west of the site, and there are Clay-with-Flint deposits on the top of the Downs to the north-east and west of the site.
- 1.5** The appropriate programme of archaeological work comprised of an archaeological watching brief in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2012. A written scheme of investigation¹ covering the watching brief was prepared in accordance with a brief provided by the West Sussex County Archaeologist, and was duly submitted and approved by the local planning authority.
- 1.6** The watching brief was required to monitor all of the construction works (Fig. 6), including the excavation of foundation trenches, service trenches and any associated landscaping, to ensure the appropriate investigation and recording of archaeological Heritage Assets on the site.
- 1.7** The field work was undertaken on the 9th, 10th and 17th of October 2012 by the author.

¹ Butler, C. 2012 A Written Scheme of Investigation for a Watching Brief at land adjacent to Fairlight/Staddlestones, School Lane, Pyecombe, West Sussex. CBAS0323

2.0 Archaeological & Historical background (Fig. 3)

- 2.1 There is no evidence for either Palaeolithic or Mesolithic activity at the site; however there is a significant amount of evidence for Mesolithic hunter-gatherer groups exploiting the resources of the South Downs nearby, either for hunting and gathering or to obtain flint with which to make their tools, especially during the Later Mesolithic.
- 2.2 The majority of the evidence for Mesolithic activity on the South Downs is found on outcrops of Clay-with-Flints, which tend to be found capping some of the highest point of the South Downs to the north of Brighton and Hove. Sites on the East and West Hills (MWS3998) produced large quantities of Mesolithic flintwork including microliths and tranchet adzes hinting at extensive use of the Clay-with-Flint outcrops during this period².
- 2.3 A number of changes occur during the Neolithic, some of which may have had an impact on the local area. Some of the woodland was being cleared and small scale agricultural activities are likely to have started. Large quantities of Neolithic flintwork have been recovered on East and West Hills at Pyecombe (MWS3998), including evidence for axe production³. Neolithic axes have been found in some numbers in the surrounding landscape including eight found on Clayton Hill (MWS836), a polished axe and another fragment at Pangdean (MWS4639), and one on Pyecombe Hill (MWS609), and may provide evidence for the clearance of the woodland from the local Downland at this time. Neolithic flintwork was found on Wolstonbury Hill (MWS831).
- 2.4 Later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flintwork has also been found in a number of locations nearby, including on East and West Hills (MWS4170 & MWS3998), at Mill Lane (MWS5493), and to the east of Pyecombe Golf course (MWS4025). This may coincide with the start of more intensive agriculture on the South Downs during the Early Bronze Age, although there is little evidence for settlements of this period, which may have been located in valley bottoms⁴. Cross Dykes on Woldstonbury Hill (MWS5183) and Newtimber Hill (MWS6476) may have been a form of territorial boundary marker.
- 2.5 There is a substantial increase in activity during the Bronze Age with a number of bowl barrows (burial mounds) found on the higher ground. A Beaker bowl barrow on West Hill was excavated in 1988, and produced a male inhumation with accompanying beaker pot, wristguard and copper knife⁵. Other barrows are situated on Wolstonbury Hill (MWS 909, MWS911, MWS5182, MWS5779 & MWS6474) and on Clayton Hill (MWS759).

² Butler, C. 2001 'A Mesolithic and Later Prehistoric flintworking site at East and West Hills, Pecombe, West Sussex'. *Sussex Arch Colls.* **139**

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Butler, C. 1991 'The excavation of a Beaker Bowl barrow at Pyecombe, West Sussex', *Sussex Arch Colls.* **129**

- 2.6** During the Middle to Late Bronze Age settlement sites become more common on The South Downs, and although none are known from the immediate area, there are numerous examples known from the Downs to the north of Brighton, including Coldean Lane (MES7153) and Varley Halls (MES467). The enclosure on Wolstonbury Hill may have originated in the Neolithic period, but its main period of use appears to have been in the Bronze Age (MWS4517), however its function remains conjectural.
- 2.7** Bronze Age finds from the more immediate area include a Middle Bronze Age palstave from Wolstonbury Hill (MWS597) and another from Clayton Hill (MWS600), stone maceheads on East Hill (MWS623) and Wolstonbury Hill (MWS1248), and a spearhead (MWS5451) at Pyecombe, whilst metalworking debris was found near Clayton (MWS40209). Late Bronze Age ‘Sussex Loops’ were found at Pyecombe in 1849 (MWS607).
- 2.8** During the Early Iron Age it seems likely that the pattern of settlement and agriculture seen in the Later Bronze Age continues, although house structures dating to this period are rare. The field systems continued in use throughout the Iron Age, and there are a number of field systems noted in the vicinity of the site; e.g. at Pangdean Farm (MWS610) and on Pyecombe Golf Course (MWS748). Iron Age finds include brooches from West Hill (MWS608) and New Barn Farm (MWS5492), and pottery from East Hill (MWS3630).
- 2.9** One of the major features of the Iron Age is the hillforts. Many of these also appear to have originated in the Later Bronze Age, but become important centres of control and redistribution in the Middle and Later Iron Age. Devils Dyke hillfort is located to the west of Pyecombe, Ditchling Beacon to the east, and Hollingbury hillfort is situated to the south-east of the site. These sites were almost certainly central places and would have dominated the local area from their prominent hilltop locations⁶.
- 2.10** The earlier field systems at Pangdean Farm and Pyecombe Golf Course, together with another on the east side of Wolstonbury Hill (MWS834) continued in use throughout the Roman period, the latter associated with a small settlement site (MWS5781). Discoveries of Roman pottery at Haresdean (MWS602) and on East Hill (MWS3631) may also indicate the presence of small farmsteads.
- 2.11** At Clayton a Roman building was discovered in the 19th century, and then covered over again (MWS5792). Subsequent fieldwork relocated the building, and confirmed that it was possibly a bathhouse (MWS7332)⁷. A watching brief found further evidence of Roman activity (MWS7291), and other Roman finds in the area including coins (MWS933), coin and ligula (MWS4022) and pottery (MWS4051), together with the presence of re-used Roman tiles in Clayton Church (MWS5450) all confirm the presence of a Roman settlement here.

⁶ Hamilton, S. et al. 1997 ‘Prominent Enclosures in 1st millennium BC Sussex’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **135**, 93-112.

⁷ Butler, C. 2002. *An Archaeological Excavation at Clayton Manor, West Sussex*. MSFAT.

- 2.12** The Roman road the London-Brighton Way (MWS4200) runs south from the Roman settlement at Hassocks over the Downs (MWS3986), and then follows a prominent terrace earthwork (MWS4201) into Pyecombe where it crosses School Lane and follows Church Lane south. Its further course may be south to Brighton, or turning west to head over the Downs to Portslade.
- 2.13** There is some evidence for Saxon activity in the vicinity of the Pyecombe, including coins from Pyecombe (MWS616) and Clayton (MWS4021), and Saxon burials found on Wolstonbury Hill (MWS917) and on Clayton Hill (MWS972). Pyecombe itself does not appear in the Domesday book, and may have been part of the Manor of Pangdean⁸.
- 2.14** The Medieval settlement is thought to have been originally situated around the 12th-13th century Parish Church of the Transfiguration (MWS5783). The church of 'Pingedon' (Pangdean) was granted to the Priory of St. Pancras at Lewes by Adam de Poynings and his wife Beatrice, and this grant was confirmed by successive Earls Warenne in about 1095 and 1140. Another Adam de Poynings in 1180 renounced to the same priory all his rights in the church of Pyecombe, and in 1272–3 Luke de Poynings made a similar renunciation. It would appear that all these grants refer to the same church, which continued in the hands of the priory until, as the church of Pyecombe, it was surrendered to the king in 1537⁹.
- 2.15** At some stage in the 15th century the settlement was deserted (MWS593), and may have moved a little distance further north-west to Pyecombe Street. A few isolated medieval finds have been made in the area (e.g. MWS 5457). The site of a late / post medieval farm was located by fieldwalking at Rockrose, which revealed pottery, and an area of flint, brick and tile concentrated in one spot at the end of the trackway now only visible as a soil mark, with some flint walling nearby within a small copse of trees (MWS4002).
- 2.16** There seems to have been little further growth in the settlement at Pyecombe until the mid 20th century. The 1st Edition OS map of 1875 shows the church, school, a congregational chapel and a few houses to the north of the church, and the Plough Inn a little further south (Fig. 4). The 2nd Edition OS map (1899) and 3rd Edition OS map (1910) show little change. It is only by the 1951 OS map that further development along Church Lane and School Lane has taken place (Fig. 5). The area of the site is shown on all of the OS maps as being open ground, although on the 3rd Edition OS map the plot is shown as allotment gardens.

⁸ *A History of the County of Sussex: Volume 7: The rape of Lewes* (1940), pp. 212-214. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=56951&strquery=pyecombe>

⁹ *Ibid.*

3.0 Method Statement

- 3.1** The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with WSCC's *Recommended Standard Conditions for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording and Post-Excavation* dated February 2007 (the Recommended Conditions).
- 3.2** Initial ground reduction began with reduction of the slope along the western edge of the footprint of the house (Fig. 6) using an 8 tonne tracked machine with a 1.2m flat-bladed ditching bucket, and covered the area of the new build. Excavation was down into the underlying chalk deposit to a maximum depth of 1.6m.
- 3.3** The ground reduction then continued towards the east where, due to the slope of the hill, the underlying chalk natural disappeared below the colluvium. The footings were then cut into the colluvium to an overall depth of 900mm from the top of the topsoil.
- 3.4** The spoil from the excavation was deposited towards the southern boundary of the site and was inspected at regular intervals to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest. A Garrett ACE150 metal detector was also used to scan the spoil derived from the excavations, and the revealed ground surface during excavation.
- 3.5** All deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.6** The archive is presently held by Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd. A site reference of FLP12 has been allocated, and the archive will be offered to Lewes Museum.

4.0 Results

- 4.1** Context **1** was a soft, mid grey-brown, loamy silty clay topsoil deposit, up to 220mm deep at its maximum depth. It was a fairly sterile deposit with its inclusions amounted to chalk flecks at 3% and fire-cracked flint, ceramic building material (CBM) and 20th century pot all at <1%. The 20th century material was not retained.
- 4.2** Context **2** was a stiff, but friable, colluvium deposit that sat below Context **1** and above Context **3**. It was mid-brown in colour and was of a clayey silt composition with a strong clay component. This layer contained chalk pieces <20mm (5%), and angular flints <20mm in size at (<1%). This layer contained a sherd of prehistoric pottery and a small amount of worked flint, but also Post Medieval CBM and nails.
- 4.3** Context **3** was the natural chalk deposit, and was below Context **2**. It was a very loose and weathered white chalk deposit, possibly as a result of glacial action. It was 800mm in depth to the limit of excavation where it was exposed on the west side of the excavation, however on the east part of the site the chalk was not reached.
- 4.4** There were no other archaeological deposits, and no features were encountered during the watching brief.

5.0 Finds

5.0.1 A small assemblage of artefacts was found during the watching brief, and are summarised in Table 1 below. The assemblage is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis and is recommended for discard.

Table 1: The Finds (quantification)

Context	Pottery	Flint	CBM*	Other finds	Date
1	2/19g	Worked flint 7/115g FF flint 1/85g	1/18g	-	Modern
2	1/6g	Worked flint 5/28g FF flint 4/35g	1/12g	Iron 2/11g	18 th -19 th century

*Ceramic Building Material

5.1. Pottery by Luke Barber

5.1.1 By far the earliest sherd of pottery from the site was recovered from Context **2**. This consists of a slightly abraded 6g bodysherd from a reduced black vessel tempered with abundant shell. Although 10th to 12th century shelly wares are known for the area they are not common and, given the slightly soapy texture of the current piece suggests the presence of some grog, a later Iron Age date is considered more likely. The sherd is clearly residual in Context **2** considering the ceramic building material in the same deposit.

5.1.2 Context **1** produced a 16g base sherd from a vessel in glazed red earthenware and a 3g fragment from a creamware mug. Both could be placed within a 1760 to 1830 chronological range. Both are relatively fresh, suggesting they have not been subjected to extensive reworking.

5.2 Prehistoric Flintwork by Chris Butler

5.2.1 A small group of worked flint was found in Contexts **1** and **2**. The flint was a variety of types, ranging from white patinated, blue grey patinated, grey and black, all of which are typical of flintwork that derives from the chalk South Downs. All of the flintwork was debitage, no implements were found.

5.2.2 Context **1** produced a hard hammer-struck flake, a soft hammer-struck flake and three flake fragments, together with two core fragments. The latter are both in a black flint and appear quite fresh so may actually have resulted from post medieval wall construction, but could otherwise be quite crude later prehistoric core fragments. Context **2** produced two soft hammer-struck flakes and three flake fragments.

5.2.3 Two of the three soft hammer-struck flakes have some evidence for platform preparation, and therefore may date to the Early Neolithic period, but the remaining pieces are largely undiagnostic and could be from the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods.

5.2.4 A single piece of fire-fractured flint was recovered from Context **1**, and four pieces came from Context **2**. One of the latter pieces may have been a fragment of worked flint.

5.3 Ceramic Building Material by Luke Barber

5.3.1 Context **1** produced a fine grained red ceramic cube measuring 31 x 25 x 19mm (18g). The piece, which has curious lamination, may be a late post-medieval flooring cube. Context **2** produced a 12g abraded piece from a well formed and fired 12mm thick peg tile tempered with sparse fine sand. An 18th to 19th century date is certain for this piece.

5.4 Metal by Chris Butler

5.4.1 Two fragments of post medieval iron nails were recovered from Context **2**.

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1** The stratigraphy of the site was straightforward and while no features or artefacts of note were recovered from the watching brief, the amount of colluvium recorded during the watching brief is excellent evidence for early arable farming. The topography of the site is such that due to its south facing aspect it would be ideal for the early cultivation of crops.
- 6.2** The dating evidence from the excavation was scant with both prehistoric and Post Medieval artefacts being recovered from the colluvium. However, it is generally accepted that widespread clearance for farming began in the Early Bronze Age and gained momentum throughout the pre-historic period into the Romano-British period. The depth of the colluvium on-site would certainly suggest that there was intensive arable agriculture further up slope, spreading down towards the valley bottom, developing over a considerable period of time.
- 6.3** Evidence for this early farming was recently discovered further north along School Lane at High Banks¹⁰. The same colluvium deposit was present as well as a negative lynchet suggesting the same intensive cultivation was spread out over the surrounding landscape.
- 6.4** The methodology adopted for this watching brief proved to be satisfactory, and the confidence rating should be considered to be very reliable.

¹⁰ Atkin, D. forthcoming, *Watching Brief at High Bank, Pyecombe*, CBAS Report

7.0 Acknowledgements

- 7.1** We would like to thank SDP Developers for appointing us to undertake this project and their contractors for their co-operation throughout.
- 7.2** The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler, who also produced the WSI. The project was monitored for WSCC by John Mills.

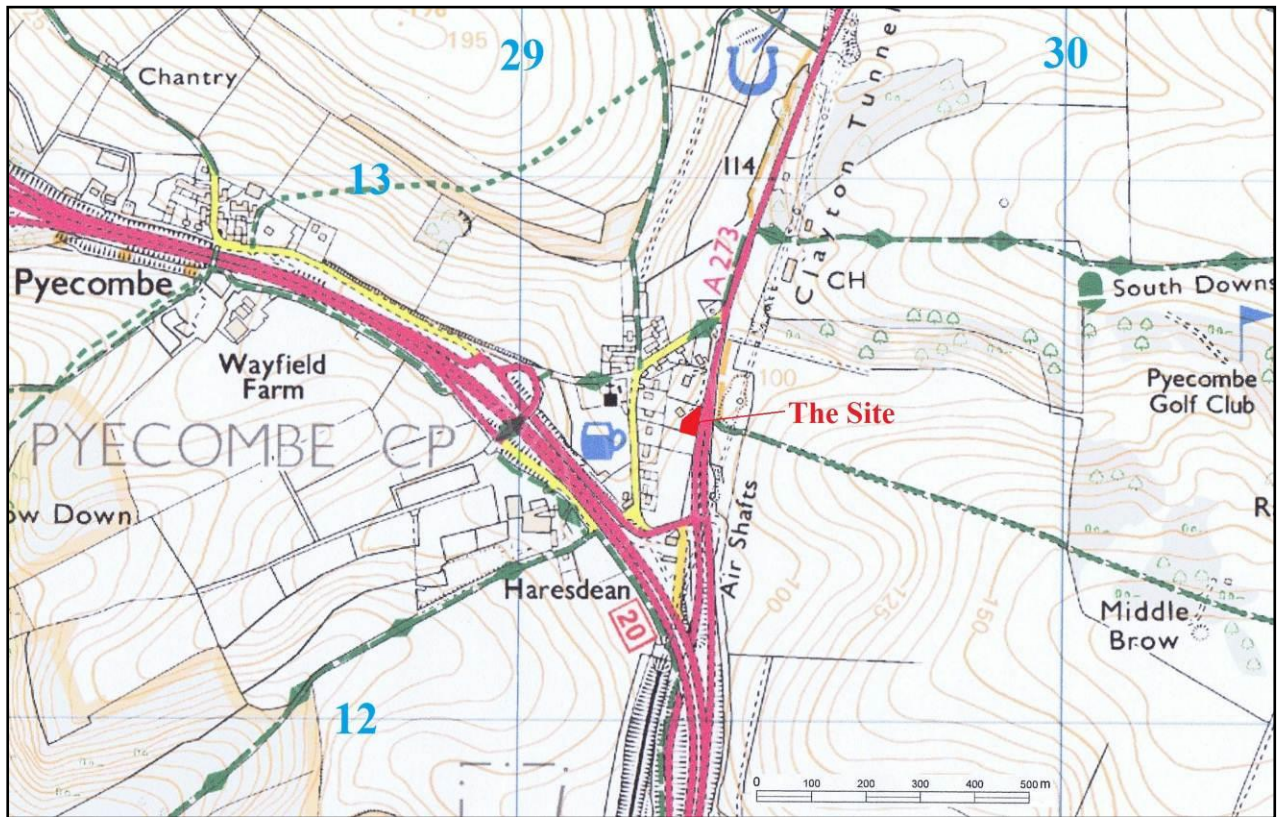


Fig. 1: Land adj Fairlight, Pyecombe: Site location map

Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100037471

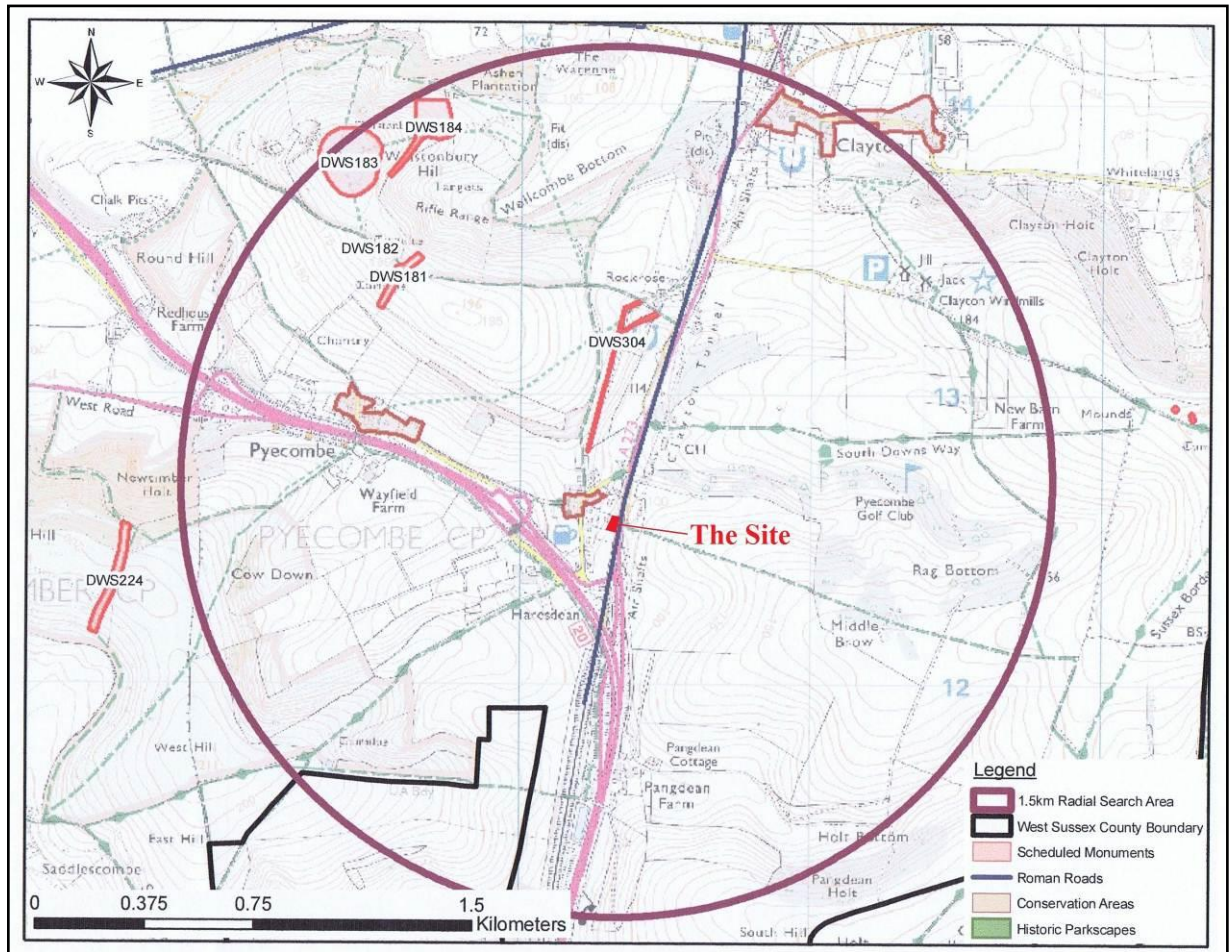


Fig. 2: Land adj Fairlight, Pyecombe: Map of Scheduled Monuments,
Conservation areas etc

Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100037471

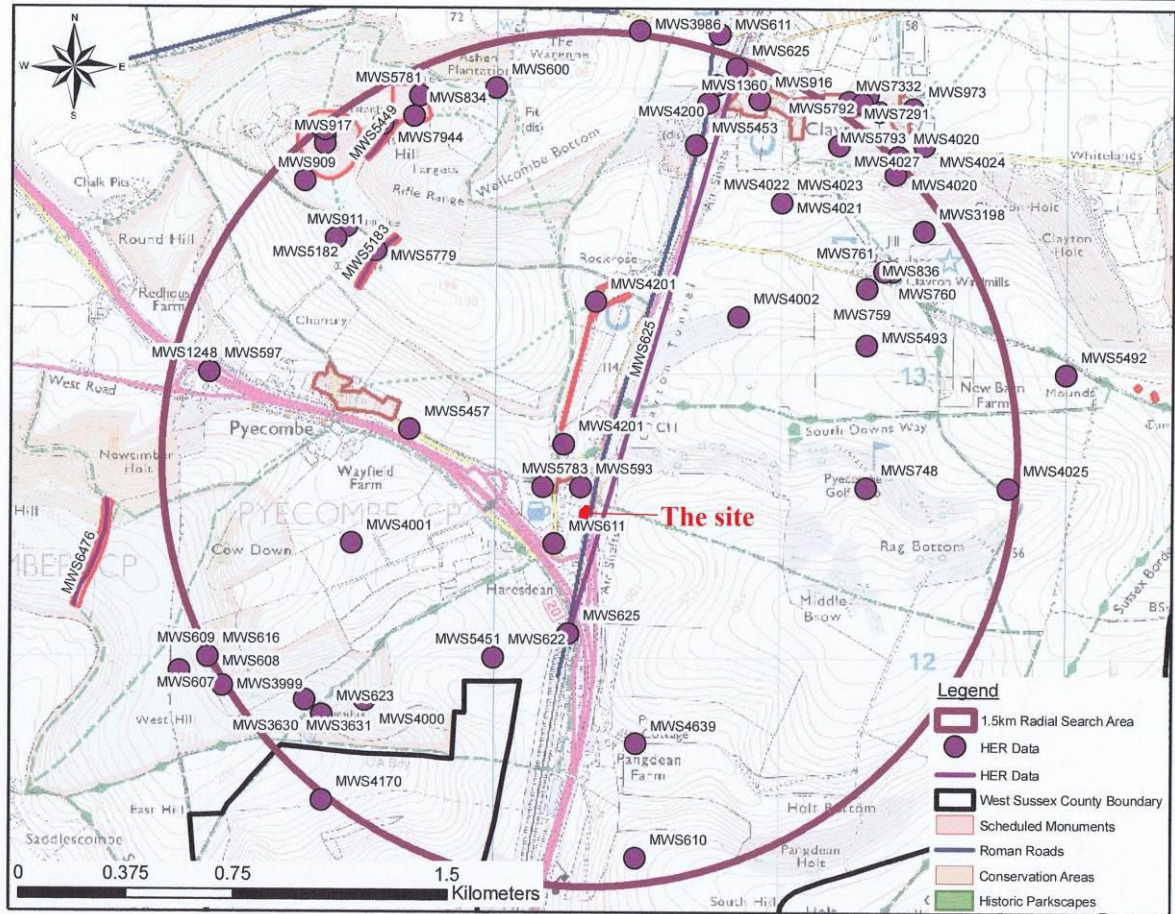


Fig. 3: Land adj Fairlight, Pyecombe: HER map
Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100037471

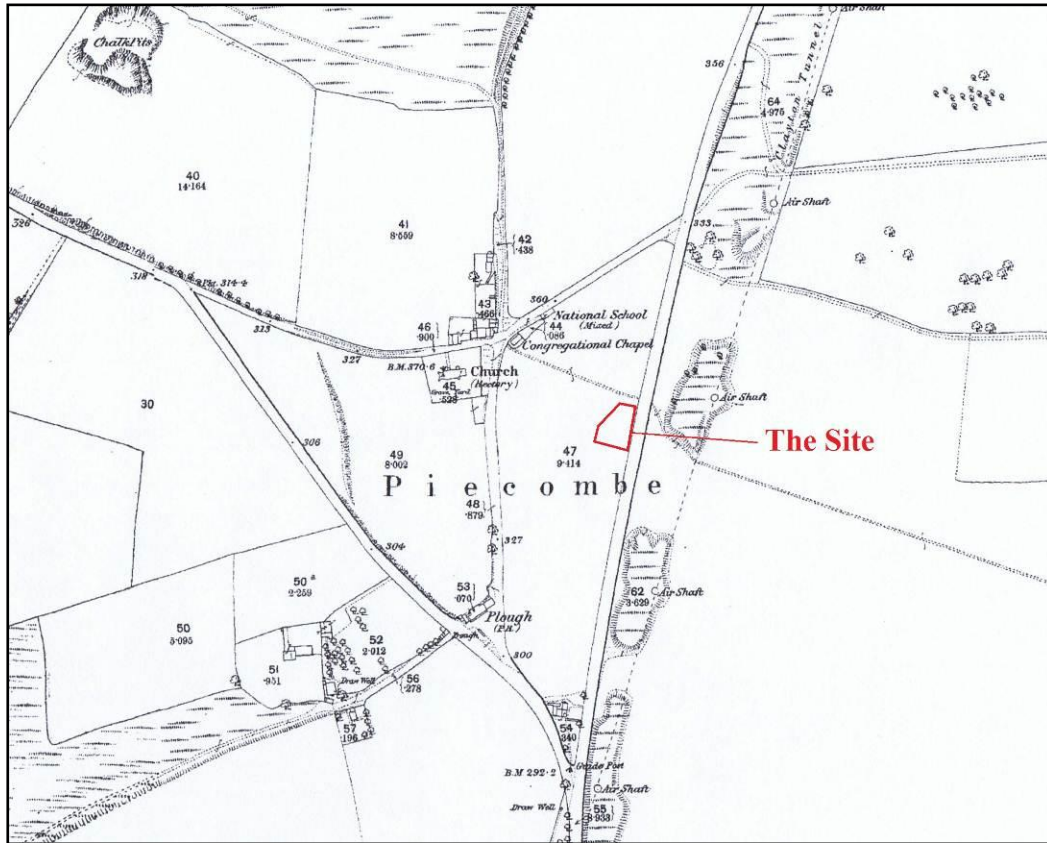


Fig. 4: Land adj Fairlight, Pyecombe : 1st Edition OS map 1875

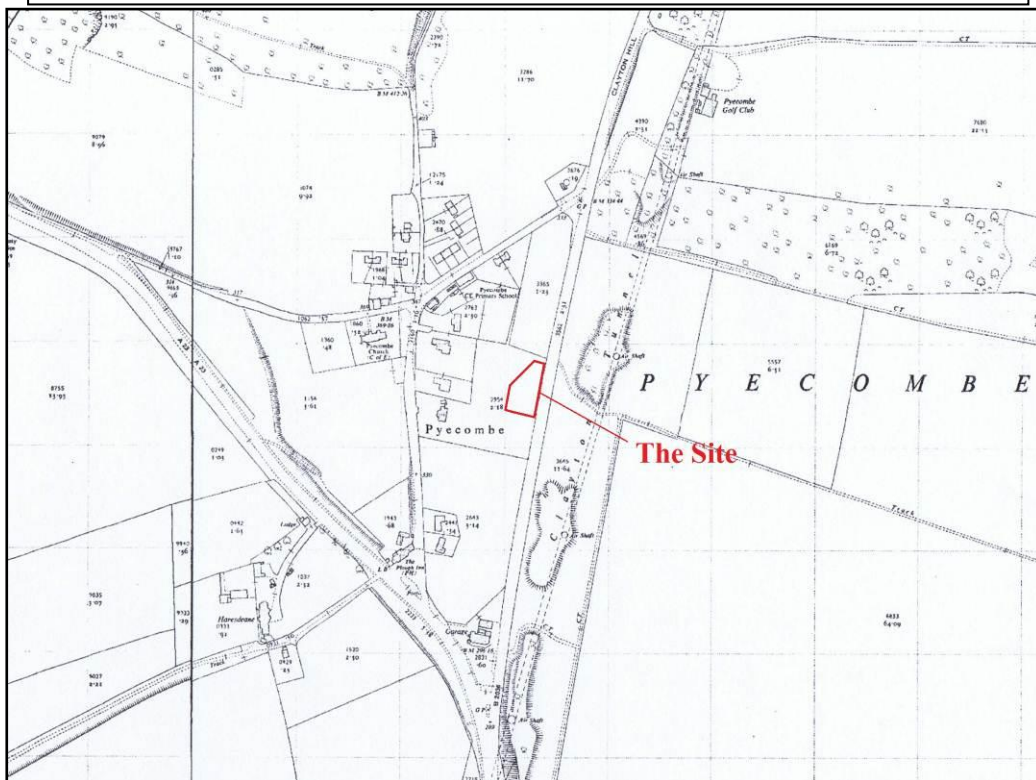


Fig. 5: Land adj Fairlight, Pyecombe: 1951 OS map
Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 1951. All rights reserved. Licence number
100037471



Fig. 6: Land adj Fairlight, Pyecombe : Site Plan
(Adapted from architects drawing)

Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

Site Code	FLP12					
Identification Name and Address	Land adj. to Fairlight/Staddlestones, School Lane, West Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Mid Sussex District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 2931 1254					
Geology	Upper and Middle Chalk.					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief X	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field X	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 09, 10 & 17/10/12	Other		
Sponsor/Client	SDP Developers Ltd					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MifA					
Project Supervisor	David Atkin					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo. X	BA X	IA X	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>A watching brief was maintained during the ground-works associated with the construction of a new dwelling on land adjacent to Fairlight, School Lane, Pyecombe, West Sussex. Ground reduction over the footprint of the new house, and the excavation of foundation trenches was monitored with chalk natural being reached on the west side of the site. The colluvium overlying the chalk produced a sherd of Iron Age pottery and prehistoric flintwork, but also pieces of Post Medieval CBM. No archaeological features were seen.</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 for 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.

Chris Butler MfA Archaeological Services Ltd

Rosedale
Berwick
Polegate
East Sussex
BN26 6TB

Tel & fax: 01323 811785

e mail: chris@cbasltd.co.uk