



Chris Butler MfA Archaeological Services Ltd



Archaeological Watching Brief at 25 Roedean Crescent, Roedean, East Sussex

BH2012/01117

CBAS0344

by
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June 2013

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in advance of the construction of a new two storey detached dwelling at 25 Roedean Crescent, Roedean, Brighton, East Sussex. Ground reduction was carried out over the footprint of the new build using a 13 tonne tracked excavator using a 1.8m toothless ditching bucket. No archaeological features, and apart from two flint flakes and a single sherd of 19th century pottery, no notable finds were encountered during the watching brief. The topography of the landscape, and deposits encountered, suggest that the site had been truncated, landscaped and subsequently levelled possibly during the construction of the original house at 25 Roedean Crescent.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by SDP Developers Ltd (The Client) to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the demolition of an existing dwelling and its replacement with a new contemporary house at 25 Roedean Crescent, Roedean, Brighton, East Sussex.
- 1.2 As a result of the site's location and the archaeological potential of the area, Brighton & Hove City Council (B&HCC) put a condition on the planning consent (BH2012/01117) for the development requiring an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.3 The site is located on the north side of Roedean Crescent, just to the west of its junction with Roedean Path, and is centred on TQ 3449 0354 (Fig. 1).
- 1.4 The site is within a designated Archaeological Notification Area covering an area of Prehistoric and Romano-British activity (Fig. 1), and is covered by Section HE12 (Scheduled Ancient Monuments & other important Archaeological Sites) of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005¹.
- 1.5 The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 318/333), comprises Upper and Middle Chalk, with an outcrops of Head Deposit to the east, and Clay-with-Flints to the north. The soil at the site is described as a shallow lime-rich freely-draining soil over chalk².
- 1.6 An appropriate programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a specification prepared by the Archaeology Team at ESCC, comprised of an Archaeological Watching Brief to monitor the groundworks during the development (Fig. 6). A Written Scheme of Investigation³ was prepared for the watching brief, including HER data provided by ESCC (HER Ref: 004/12), and was submitted to and subsequently approved by the local planning authority.
- 1.7 The fieldwork was undertaken by the author on the 17th and 25th of January 2013.

¹ <http://www.brightonandhovelocalplan.org.uk>

² <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>

³ Butler, C. 2012 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief at 25 Roedean Crescent, Roedean, East Sussex*, CBAS

2.0 Archaeological & Historical background (Fig. 3)

- 2.1 A single Palaeolithic handaxe was found in the raised beach at Black Rock (MES186)⁴. This important deposit is part of the Brighton-Norton Raised Beach which can be traced some 50km from Black Rock to Chichester, and has been dated to OIS-7 based on mammalian and molluscan fauna⁵. Grinsell also records 'drift implements and ovates' found at TQ351032, but gives no further details⁶ (MES255). There is no evidence for Mesolithic activity at or near the site. However, most of the evidence for Mesolithic activity on the South Downs is found on outcrops of Clay-with-Flints.
- 2.2 Little evidence for Neolithic activity has also been found close to the site although some of the flintwork found on watching briefs, and during recent fieldwalking further east at Rottingdean, is almost certainly of Neolithic date (e.g. MES7319). The causewayed enclosure at Whitehawk is situated to the north-west of the site, its high position and the scale of its construction would suggest that this area would be within its site catchment⁷.
- 2.3 A crouched burial found on the south side of Roedean Crescent in 1937 (MES202), another near Roedean Road found in 1924 (MES203), and another crouched burial in Roedean Way found in 1931 (MES204) may be Neolithic or Early Bronze Age in date. An Early Bronze Age crouched burial was found during a watching brief in 2003 at a development just to the west of the site (MES7314). An undated inhumation burial was discovered at the rear of 6 Roedean Crescent (MES16395), and prehistoric flintwork was found at 51 Roedean Road during a watching brief (MES21049).
- 2.4 The evidence suggests that the surrounding landscape was quite densely populated by small farming settlements, surrounded by fields during the Middle and Later Bronze Age. Examples have been found at Mile Oak⁸, Coldean Lane⁹, Varley Halls¹⁰ and Patcham Fawcett¹¹. In each case, evidence was found for round houses and other features set within an enclosure on a south facing slope. A hoard of Bronze Age metal

⁴ Woodcock, A 1981 *The Lower and Middle Palaeolithic Periods in Sussex*, Oxford, BAR **94**, p285.

⁵ Wymer, J. 1999 *The Lower Palaeolithic Occupation of Britain*, Vol. **1**, Wessex Archaeology & English Heritage.

⁶ Grinsell, L.V. 1929 *The Lower & Middle Palaeolithic Periods in Sussex* *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **70**, 172-82.

⁷ Oswald et al. 2001 *The Creation of Monuments*, Swindon, English Heritage.

⁸ Russell, M. 2002, 'Excavations at Mile Oak Farm', in Rudling, D. (ed) *Downland Settlement and Land-Use*, London, Archetype Publications Ltd.

⁹ Rudling, D. 2002 'Excavations adjacent to Coldean Lane', in Rudling, D. (ed) *Downland Settlement and Land-Use*, London, Archetype Publications Ltd.

¹⁰ Greig, I. 1997 'Excavation of a Bronze Age settlement at Varley Halls, Coldean lane, Brighton, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **135**, 7-58.

¹¹ Greatorex, C. 2002 'Excavations at Patcham Fawcett: A Summary', in Rudling, D. (ed) *Downland Settlement and Land-Use*, London, Archetype Publications Ltd.

work¹² was found during building work a short distance inland from Black Rock (MES187) also hints at the possibility of significant activity in this area during the Bronze Age.

- 2.5** One of the major features of the Iron Age Downland landscape is the hillfort. Many of these appear to have originated in the Later Bronze Age, but become important centres of control and redistribution in the Middle and Later Iron Age. Hollingbury hillfort, located 4km to the north-west of the site contained round houses and evidence for specialist craft activities. This site is almost certainly a central place and would have dominated the local area from its prominent hilltop location¹³. There have been a number of Iron Age finds (MES196, MES206) and coins (MES10569, MES17686 and MES17695) and a cremation burial (MES215) from the immediate vicinity of the site, and the presence of field systems which may originate in the Iron Age (e.g. MES247) hint at scattered farmsteads in the surrounding landscape. A Middle Iron Age ditch was found during a watching brief in 2003 at a development just to the west of the site (MES7314).
- 2.6** Local examples of Romano-British villas include Southwick, Brighton (Preston) and West Blatchington, although none are known from the east of Brighton. The presence of Romano-British pottery and other material at a number of locations in the surrounding Downland landscape, for example near to East Brighton Golf Course (MES194) and to the south of Roedean School (MES200), and to the east of the site (MES238 and MES7319), together with evidence for field systems (MES247) all suggest scattered farmsteads. There have also been a number of isolated discoveries of Roman coins (MES185, 201, 206, 209 & 212) nearby, together with pottery and other artefacts found, including Roman pottery sherds at 4 Roedean Crescent (MES17151), and at 51 Roedean Road (MES21049). A Roman burial in a coffin, together with a pit containing Roman pottery, was found in 1931 in Roedean Crescent (MES205). These finds hint at Roman activity in the area of the site.
- 2.7** Evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement is difficult to find, with the discovery and excavation of larger settlements, such as Bishopstone¹⁴, being comparatively rare, as is the occasional discovery of isolated Saxon buildings, such as the Sunken Featured Building at Itford in the Ouse Valley. Saxon cemeteries and individual graves are often found, with a burial recovered from a barrow in Kemp Town in 1837 (MES207), and cemeteries at Stafford Road, Brighton¹⁵, and at Rocky Clump, Stanmer¹⁶.

¹² 'Bronze Age Hoard', 1915-16 *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* **28**, 153-9.

¹³ Hamilton, S. et al. 1997 'Prominent Enclosures in 1st millennium BC Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **135**, 93-112.

¹⁴ Bell, M. 1977 'Excavations at Bishopstone', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **115**.

¹⁵ Smith, P.S. 1988 'Early Anglo-Saxon burials from Stafford Road, Brighton, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **126**, 31-51.

¹⁶ Gilkes, O.J. 1997 'Excavations at Rocky Clump, Stanmer Park, Brighton, 1951-1981', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **135**, 113-25.

- 2.8** Rottingdean was located in Whalesborne Hundred at the time of the Domesday Book, and was held by Hugh from William de Warenne, having previously been held by Haminc from Earl Godwin. It was assessed at two hides, and was part of the estate of Frog Firl¹⁷. Rottingdean later became part of Younsmere Hundred.
- 2.9** The parish suffered from coastal erosion, with the inhabitants in 1340 stating that since 1292, 50 acres of arable land had been lost to the sea; with a further 240 acres of land lying uncultivated due to its poor quality¹⁸. In 1377 the village and church was burnt during a French raid¹⁹. There is no evidence for Medieval activity at the site, although Medieval pottery and other material has been found to the east of the site (MES200). A medieval manor complex has been discovered at Ovingdean, adjacent to the parish church (MES7318).
- 2.10** The area of the site was probably open farm land throughout the Post Medieval period, with most of the land in Rottingdean held by copyhold, and comprised strips of land called laines in several large fields²⁰. Apart from a small number of metal detected artefacts little has been found from this period in the surrounding landscape.
- 2.11** The Rottingdean Tithe map shows the site to be located in open Downland. The 1st Edition OS map (1880) shows a similar situation with the site being to the north of Garden House (Fig. 4), and this remains the same until the 4th Edition OS map (1938), which shows encroaching development from the west. Roedean Crescent is shown on this later map, with the first few houses (including No. 25) having been built by this time (Fig. 5).
- 2.12** During the Second World War an anti-aircraft battery was situated on Roedean miniature golf course, and Roedean School was requisitioned to become part of HMS Vernon²¹. During a watching brief in 2001 a large below ground bunker, presumed to date from the Second World War, was found at 9 Roedean Crescent (MES20148).

¹⁷ Salzman, L. F. (Ed) 1973 *Victoria County History of Sussex VII*, London, Dawsons.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ D'Harcourt, L. 2001 *Rottingdean: The Village*, DD Publishing.

²⁰ Heater, D. 1993 *The Remarkable History of Rottingdean*, Brighton, Dyke Publications.

²¹ Butler, C. 2007 *East Sussex under Attack*, Tempus Publishing Ltd

3.0 Method Statement

- 3.1 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with ESCC's *Standards for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording and Post-Excavation in East Sussex* dated April 2008 (Recommended Standards), and in accordance with a specification issued by the Archaeology Team at ESCC.
- 3.2 The site is situated on the south-west facing slope of the South Downs. The existing dwelling had been demolished, and garden consisted of a straight-forward topsoil, subsoil stratigraphy. The lawn area to the north-east of site had been landscaped with steps leading up to a raised area of lawn that was subsequently found to all made-ground above the natural.
- 3.3 Excavation began by the marking out of approximately 1.2m of the lawn from the southern edge and the reduction down to the underlying natural chalk. The excavation was continued for the full 20.5m width of the lawn down to a depth of 1.7m. Ground reduction then continued with the removal of the remains of the garden and overlying overburden to the south of the lawn. This was excavated by a 13 tonne machine using a 1.8 toothless ditching bucket in accordance with the Recommended Standards. The entire footprint of the house was excavated down into to the natural chalk (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Excavation of house footprint

- 3.3 All exposed sections and surfaces were inspected for archaeological features, structures or finds. The spoil from the excavations was inspected on a regular basis to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest. A Garrett Ace 150 metal detector was initially used to scan the area of excavation, however, apart from a few signals from modern detritus, no material of note was recovered. The metal detector was also used to scan the spoil heap watching brief.

- 3.3** All deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards and to the ESCC Recommended Conditions. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.4** 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 Ltd. A site reference of RCR12 has been allocated and after any further analysis, the archive will be deposited at Brighton Museum.

4.0 Results

4.1 The topsoil (Context 1) was a dark brown, silty loam with a small clay component and some very occasional chalk pieces at 1% but it was generally free of inclusions and was 220mm at its maximum depth and sat above Context 2. No finds were recovered from this context.

4.2 Context 2 was a firm, light brown deposit with a slightly orange hue. It was a clayey-silt deposit with a strong clay component and angular flint inclusions that amounted to 5% at <100mm in size. It was 700mm at its maximum depth and was interpreted as modern made-ground. No finds were recovered from this context.

4.3 Below Context 2 sat the slightly off-white, modern, compact re-deposited chalk (Context 3) with silty patches and tarmac inclusions and was a modern made ground deposit. It was 430mm in section to the limit of excavation.

4.4 Context 4 was a thin tarmac deposit that sat below Context 3 and above Context 5 and was 110mm in depth and approximately 15m wide in section. It was edged with brick pavers (single course) on the east and west sides and was interpreted as the remains of a modern tennis court (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Stratigraphy showing Contexts 1 to 5.

4.5 Context 5 was the white, chalk natural and was 230mm in depth to the limit of excavation.

- 4.6** Context **6** was a soft/friable, off-white/light grey chalky silt modern made-ground deposit present in the north-east corner of the main south facing section. It was 200mm in depth and contained no finds or inclusions and sat above and within Context **2** and below Context **1**. No finds were recovered from this context.
- 4.7** Context **7** was a mid to light brown subsoil deposit which sat immediately above the natural chalk and was typical of the downland subsoils. It consisted of a chalky-silt containing chalk pieces at 25% <50mm in size. It was 130mm in depth by 1.1m in length and sat between Contexts **1** and **5**. No finds were recovered from this context.
- 4.8** Further downslope to the south, a well-developed subsoil (Context **8**) started to appear between Contexts **1** and **7**. It was a soft, mid brown deposit (Plate 3). It was a clayey-silt with inclusions that amounted to very occasional chalk pieces/flecks <10mm at 1%. No finds were recovered from this context.



Plate 3: Deposits in north-east corner of the main south facing section

5.0 Finds by Chris Butler

- 5.1** Only three artefacts were recovered during the watching brief, all of which were unstratified finds. The artefacts are recommended for discard.
- 5.2** Two flint flakes (13g), both in a light blue-grey mottled Downland flint were found. The first has a broad platform, but a diffuse bulb of percussion with two percussion impact points, and a slight lip, suggesting it had been removed with either a soft hammer or soft stone hammer. The second piece was a small chip-like flake with a minimal platform and diffuse bulb. Both are likely to date to the Later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age.
- 5.3** A single sherd of pottery (16g) was also found. This was a sherd of 19th century blue and white transfer printed willow pattern white earthenware, probably from the lower side wall of a bowl or dish.

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1** The chalk ridges and dry valleys of the South Downs are rich in archaeological heritage, but unfortunately on this occasion no archaeological features or finds were noted with the site being virtually sterile.
- 6.2** The watching brief confirmed that the natural (Context **3**) and the remnants of a subsoil (Context **8**) survived in-situ to the south. It was clear that 20th century works had had a substantial impact on the landscape, first with the construction of the tennis court which had been built directly onto the natural chalk and then with the subsequent landscaping and levelling episode that sealed the tennis court once it had fallen out of use. Aside from two flint flakes, no evidence was found that would be indicative of earlier human activity on site.
- 6.3** No firm conclusions can be drawn from the negative results obtained from this watching brief other than to say that the immediate area of the top-soil strip appeared to be devoid of human activity. Given the close proximity of the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age Burials and the Roman field system and finds, further work in the area and within the base of the dry valley may help to elucidate past Downland use and settlement within the immediate area of the site.
- 6.4** The methodology adopted for this watching brief proved to be satisfactory, and the confidence rating should be considered to be reliable.

7.0 Acknowledgements

- 7.1** I would like to thank the client, SDP Developers Ltd, for commissioning the archaeological watching brief. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler who also reported on the finds and was monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter.



Fig. 1: 25 Roedean Crescent: Location of Site
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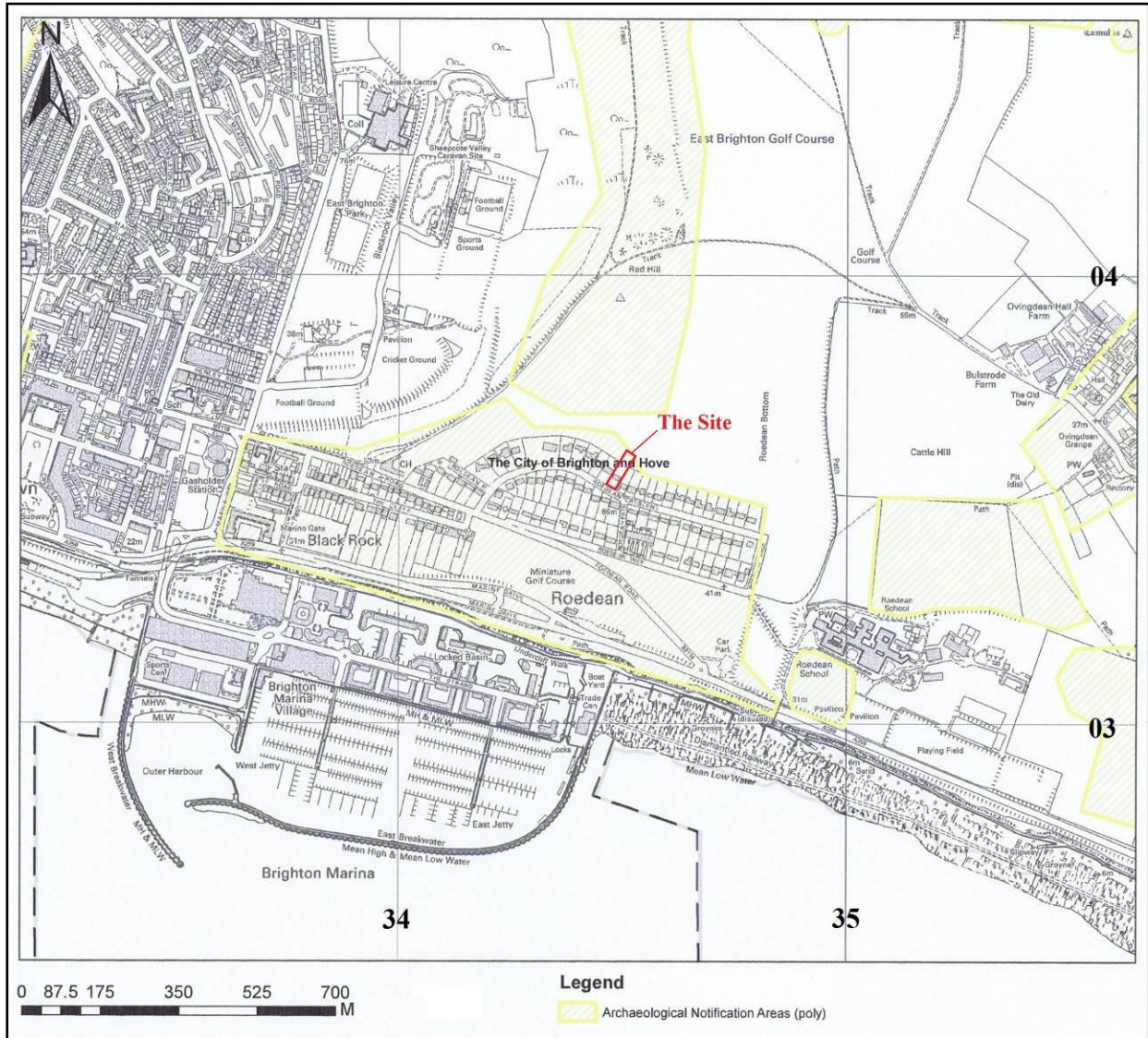


Fig. 2: 25 Roedean Crescent: Archaeological Notification Areas
(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)

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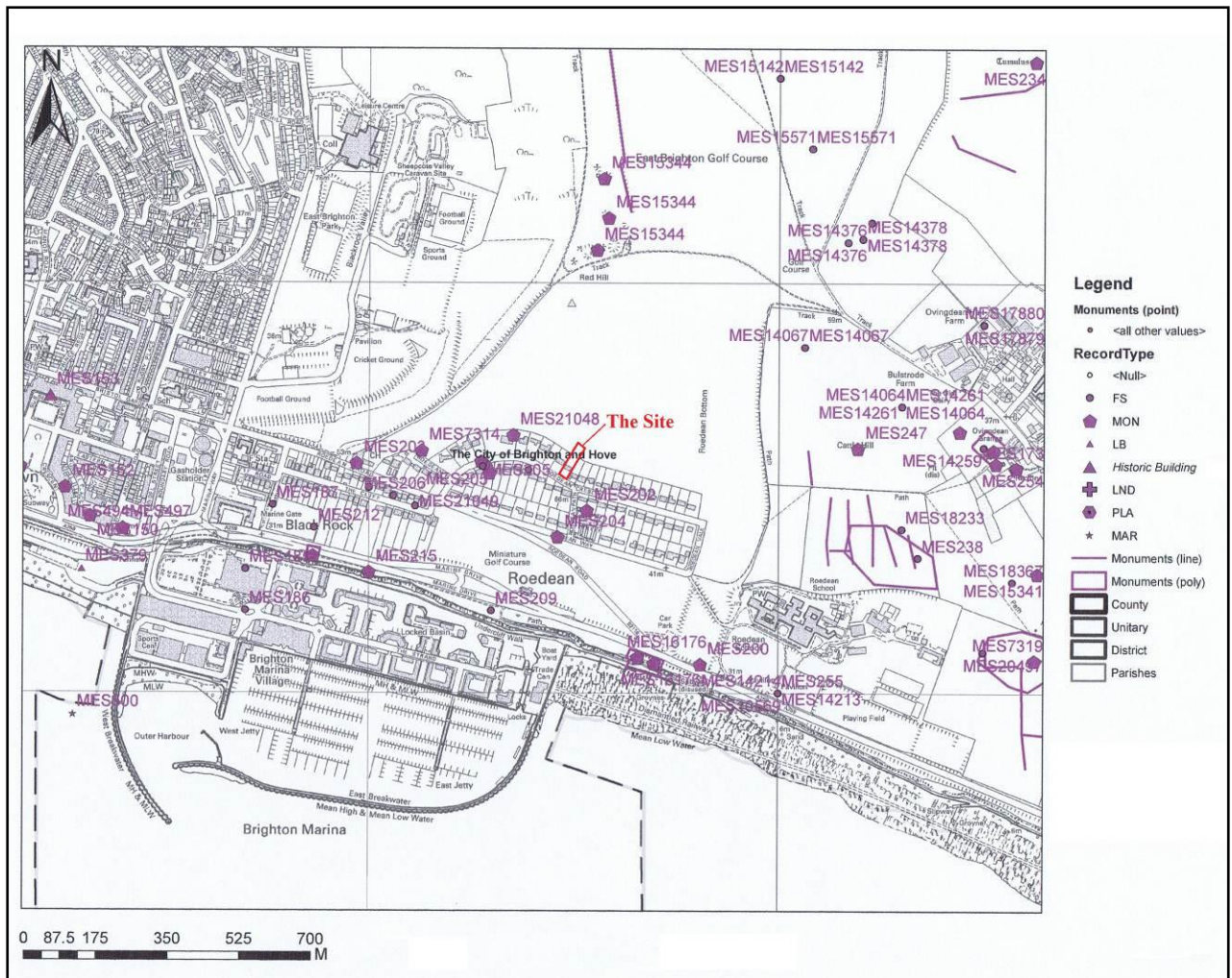


Fig. 3: 25 Roedean Crescent: Location of Site and Monuments on the HER
(Adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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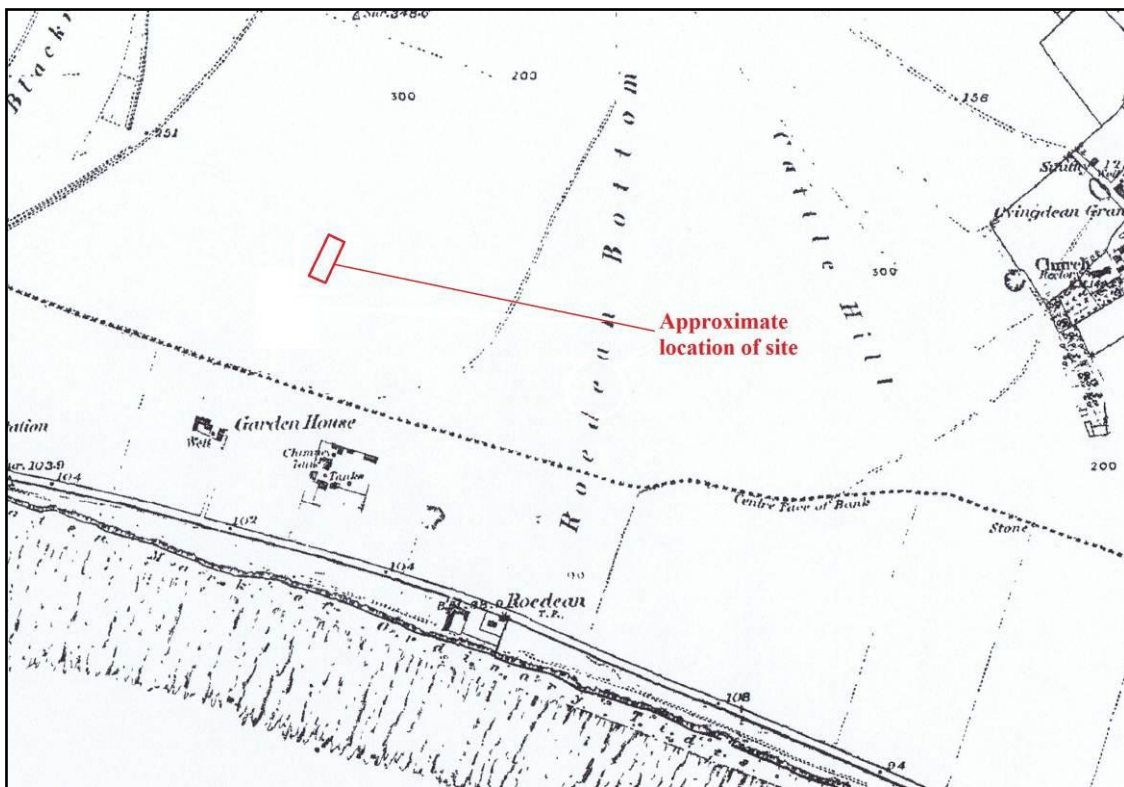


Fig. 4: 25 Roedean Crescent: 1st Edition OS Map 1880

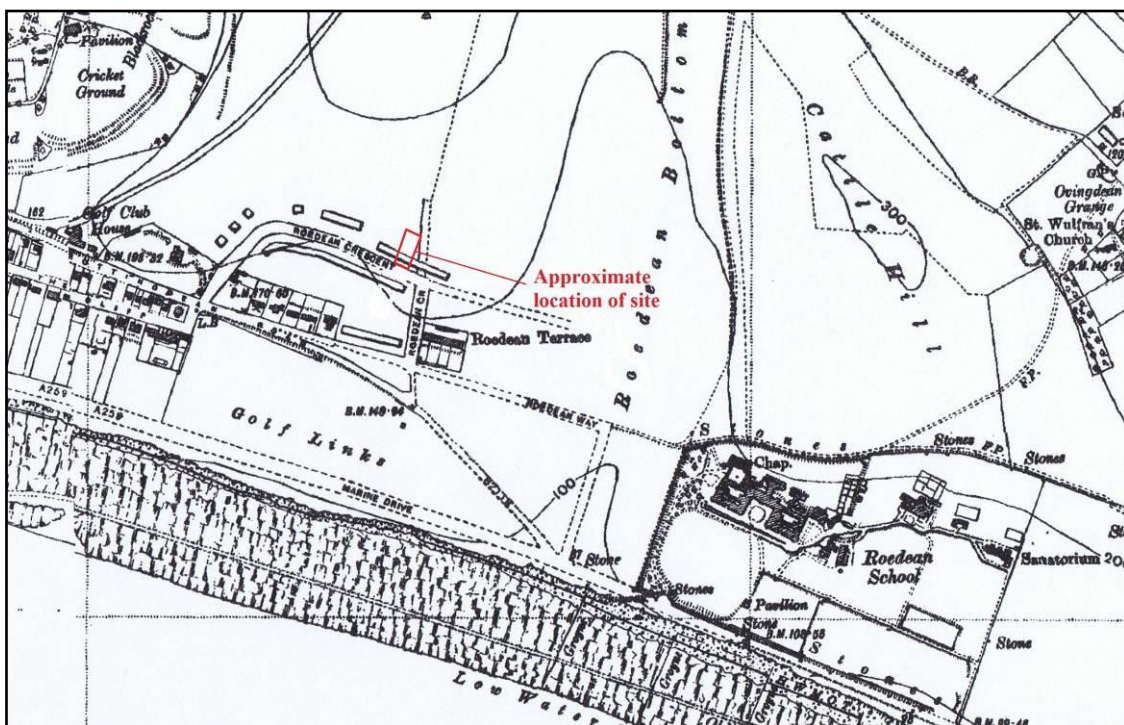


Fig. 5: 25 Roedean Crescent: 4th Edition OS Map 1938

Appendix 1: Summary Form

Site Code	RCR12					
Identification Name and Address	25 Roedean Crescent, Roedean, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Brighton and Hove City Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 3449 0354					
Geology	Upper and Middle Chalk.					
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. 17/02/13- 25/02/13	Other		
Sponsor/Client	SDP Developers Ltd					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MifA					
Project Supervisor	David Atkin					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was carried out in advance of the construction of a new two storey detached dwelling at 25 Roedean Crescent, Roedean, Brighton, East Sussex. Ground reduction was carried out over the footprint of the new build using a 13 tonne tracked excavator using a 1.8m toothless ditching bucket. No archaeological features and aside from two flint flakes and a single sherd of 19th century pottery, no finds were encountered during the watching brief. The topology of the landscape and deposits encountered suggested that the site had been truncated, landscaped and subsequently levelled during the lifetime of the original house at 25 Roedean Crescent.</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 was 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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