



**Chris Butler MfA
Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Watching Brief at
Land south of Stone Court
Gillmans Hill,
St. Leonards,
East Sussex.**

By
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Project No. CBAS0384

July 2014

Summary

A watching brief was maintained during the ground-works associated with the construction of four three-bedroom houses on land South Court, Gillsman Hill, St. Leonards-on-Sea, east Sussex. Ground reduction and the excavation of foundation trenches was monitored, but aside from some late post-medieval/modern material, no finds or features of note were recorded during the watching brief, with no trace being found of the 19th century lodge that previously stood on the site. It is likely that past landscaping and the construction of the tennis court had removed any evidence for past archaeological activity.

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HER Summary Form

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd had been commissioned by Neil Newstead of Oakfield Property on behalf of Breathe Developments to carry out an Archaeological Watching Brief during the construction of four x three-bedroom houses on land south of Stone Court, Gillsmans Hill, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, HS/FA/13/00114 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The site is located on the north side of Gillsmans Hill, and to the south of Stone Court (Fig. 1). The site was originally part of the grounds of Stone Court (previously Holly Bank), and the site was originally occupied by a lodge house and tennis court. The 0.124ha site is located at around 70m OD.
- 1.3 The site is not within a designated Conservation Area or an Archaeological Notification Area (Fig. 1), however the presence of the 19th century lodge house is of archaeological interest, as the below ground remains may be disturbed by the development.
- 1.4 As a result of the site's location, and the archaeological potential of the area, the local planning authority have required a programme of archaeological work to be undertaken during the construction of four x three-bedroom houses (HS/FA/13/00114).
- 1.5 The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 320/321), comprises Tunbridge Wells Sand. The soil at the site is described as a freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soil¹.
- 1.6 The appropriate programme of archaeological work, as specified by the ESCC archaeology section as advisors to Hastings Borough Council, comprised of an archaeological watching brief. A written scheme of investigation² covering the watching brief was prepared and duly submitted and approved by the local planning authority and included HER data provided by ESCC (HER Ref: 065/13).
- 1.7 The field work was undertaken on the 20th May 2013 by the author and the 29th May 2013 by Andrew Bradshaw.

¹ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>

² Butler, C. 2013 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at land south of Stone Court, Gillsmans Hill, St Leonards, East Sussex*. CBAS

2.0 Archaeological & Historical background (Fig. 2)

- 2.1 There have been no discoveries of Palaeolithic artefacts in the immediate area of Hastings, and there are only a handful of artefacts known to have a provenance in the Weald³. Such discoveries are normally linked to specific geological conditions, such as tertiary deposits and gravels, isolated deposits of which can be found in this area.
- 2.2 There is no evidence for Mesolithic activity at or near the site, however the cliffs below Hastings Castle have produced numerous pieces of Mesolithic flintwork from fissures in the rock, and further Mesolithic flintwork has subsequently been found eroding from the same cliff face.
- 2.3 Neolithic activity in the area is evidenced by the discovery of a polished flint axe (MES894), and a polished basalt axe (MES899), whilst an Early Bronze Age copper axe was also found (MES838). A flint hammerstone (MES900) is also likely to date to either the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods.
- 2.4 An Iron Age promontory hillfort is located on East Hill at Hastings, although both this and the enclosure on Castle Hill, Hastings are currently undated⁴. Both of these hillforts/enclosures would have originally been located a little way inland from the coast, but from their hill top locations would have dominated both the coastal area, and some way inland, and probably controlled the area in which the site is situated.
- 2.5 The extensive iron working site and baths at Beauport Park are situated a few km to the north-west of the site, and it has been suggested that due to the connections with the British Fleet, the iron from Beauport Park and other production centres was being shipped out through Hastings⁵. There have been a number of discoveries of Roman coins in the vicinity of the site (MES842, MES843 and MES901) and a Roman pottery lamp (MES8473), which would seem to confirm that there may have been a settlement, trading centre, and perhaps a port located nearby.
- 2.6 There is virtually no archaeological evidence for Saxon activity at Hastings, although King Offa conquered the Hæstingas in 771, and Hastingecentre appears in the Burghal Hidage in the 10th century, assessed at 500 hides⁶. According to the Domesday Book⁷, Hollington was held by Godwin and Alstan who ‘could go where they would with the land’. It answered for 4½ hides.

³ Pope, M. 2003 ‘The Earliest Occupation of Sussex: Recent Research and Future Objectives’, in Rudling, D. (Ed) *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000*, Kings Lynn, Heritage Marketing & Publications Ltd, 17-28, Fig. 2.8.

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

⁵ Hodgkinson, J. 2008 *The Wealden Iron Industry*, Stroud, Tempus Publishing.

⁶ Salzman, L.F. 1973 *Victoria County History: Sussex* Vol. **9**. Folkstone, Dawsons.

⁷ Morris, J. (Ed) 1976 *Domesday Book: Sussex*, Chichester, Phillimore.

- 2.7** After 1066 the Manor of Hollington, which appears to have included St Leonards, was granted to the Count of Eu⁸. By 1271 the Manor of Hollington was held by Matthew de Hastings, who was granted free warren in Hollington that year⁹. In the late 14th century the manor passed to Sir Edward Dalyngridge, and then in 1470 it passed to Thomas Pounce.
- 2.8** Although there is little evidence for a medieval settlement at St Leonards, there is a hospital and pottery industries close to the site. The first record of the existence of the Hospital of St Mary Magdalen (MES876) is in a grant of 1294¹⁰, and it is possible that the hospital remained in existence until the 16th century. Its remains were standing as ruins in 1820.
- 2.9** A large quantity of broken medieval pottery was found in a field at Bohemia in the 19th century, and led to the discovery of seven pottery kilns (MES830). There are no details of the kilns, but the pottery comprised 13th century decorated jugs. One of the kilns was responsible for the manufacture of encaustic tiles. Similar pottery was recorded as being found at Newgate Wood, now Thorpe's Wood (MES1010) to the east of the site and also from a little further north (MES844)
- 2.10** The first mention of a rectorial manor of St Leonards is in 1546, when a lease of the rectory and free chapel of St Leonard in Hollington was granted to John Kyme of Lewes¹¹. In 1548 the manor of St Leonards was bought from the Crown by John Kyme, and in the 17th century passed by marriage to the Colte family¹².
- 2.11** The early maps of Sussex (Speed (1610) and Morden (1695)) show Hollington, but not St. Leonards. Samuel Cant's map of Hastings dated to 1746/8¹³ does not show much detail between Hastings and Hollington. Yeakell & Gardner (1778-83)¹⁴ shows the area of the site to be woodland (Fig. 3). It is not until the maps of Moule (1837) and Dugdale (1840) that St Leonards is shown as a small settlement to the west of Hastings.
- 2.12** St Leonards was founded in 1828 by James Burton, and in 1831 the population of the Parish of St Leonards was 73 people. By 1834 it consisted of 'a neat line of upwards of a hundred buildings'. Hastings became a municipal borough under the Municipal Borough Act 1835, and under the Public Health Act of 1851 Hastings and St Leonards were divided into ten wards¹⁵. Early development along Gillsmans Hill is evidenced by the late 18th century Chievely Cottages (DES881) and the early 19th century Rose Cottage (DES772).

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

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

¹⁰ Mainwaring Baines, J. 1986 *Historic Hastings*, Cinque Port Press Ltd

¹¹ Salzman, L.F. 1973 *Victoria County History: Sussex* Vol. 9. Folkstone, Dawsons.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Hastings Museum and Art Gallery (2003.53.208)

¹⁴ http://www.envf.port.ac.uk/geo/research/historical/webmap/sussexmap/Yeakell_36.htm

¹⁵ Salzman, L.F. 1973 *Victoria County History: Sussex* Vol. 9. Folkstone, Dawsons.

- 2.13** The 1st Edition OS map (1873-80) shows the lodge building (MES21883) at the south end of the site, with the lane to Holly Bank, and immediately to the north of the lodge is an open rectangular area which may be a tennis court (Fig. 4). The site is unchanged at the time of the 2nd Edition OS map of 1899, although the rectangular ‘tennis court’ is no longer shown (Fig. 5). A possible ice house (MES21549) is situated a short distance to the north as is a greenhouse, although both of these are outside the site. This map also shows the increase in development along Sedlescombe Road, and to the south and east of the site.
- 2.14** The 3rd Edition OS map (1910) shows little change, as does the 4th Edition OS map (1929), although Holly Bank is now called Stone Court. The site remains unchanged through to the 1955 OS map, although this shows a large area of tennis courts to the north of the lodge house. Later OS maps of 1962/3 and 1967/9 still show the lodge building, but it has gone by the time the 1975/8 OS map was surveyed.
- 2.15** In addition to the sites mentioned above, there is evidence for possible iron working sites of unknown date in Hollington Park and short distance to the west of the site. (MES984, MES985 & MES995), and a Post Medieval mill (MES940) situated a short distance to the north of the site.

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).
- 3.2 Initial ground reduction began with reduction of the existing garden area along southern edge of the excavation area down to a depth of approximately 2m well into underlying natural using an 8 tonne machine with an 800mm wide ditching bucket.
- 3.3 The footings for the new dwellings, which were 800mm wide by 1.9m deep into the underlying natural, were unfortunately dug over the bank holiday weekend without any arrangements for archaeological monitoring in place. However, the footings were left open and were inspected at the first available opportunity.
- 3.4 The spoil from the excavations was inspected 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.
- 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 SCG13 has been allocated, and the archive will be deposited in Hastings Museum. An accession number HASMG 2014.27 has been allocated.



Plate 1: General site view showing ground reduction

4.0 Results

- 4.1** Context 1 was a soft, dark black-grey, loamy silt topsoil deposit. It was a sterile deposit with inclusions that amounted to bioturbation in the form of roots at 5%. The deposit was up to 260mm at its maximum depth, and was above Context 2.
- 4.2** Context 2 was a firm, clayey-silt subsoil deposit that sat above the natural (Context 3). It was dark brown in colour and was of a clayey silt composition with a moderate clay component. Its inclusions were small ceramic building material (CBM) and flecks of chalk pieces at <1%. At its maximum depth this context was 100mm deep.
- 4.3** Context 3 was the natural underlying Tunbridge Wells sand. It was a mid-yellow (buff) sandy silt with occasional orange patches and occasional sandstone pieces some <40mm in size, and at <1% and was 700mm in depth down to initial limit of excavation during the initial ground reduction.



Plate 2: Section through stratigraphy showing Contexts 1, 2 & 3

- 4.4** Context 4 was a modern deposit of type A1 road-stone in the site of the old tennis court, approximately 150mm in depth and sat immediately above the tarmac surface of the tennis court (Context 5).
- 4.5** Context 5 was the surviving tarmac surface of the tennis court under the road-stone deposit (Context 4). It was still firm, black in colour and 150mm in depth and sat immediately above a made-ground deposit of re-deposited natural.

- 4.6** Context **6** was a modern made ground deposit associated with the tennis court and appeared to be of re-deposited natural. It was a firm, sandy-silty-clay, light buff-yellow in colour and 250mm thick. It contained very occasional CBM at <30mm at <1% and sat above a deeper deposit of natural, Context **7**.
- 4.7** Context **7** was below Context **6** and was the natural, although at a deeper level than Context **3** it differed in being a compact, mid-orange, silty-clay with a very strong clay component, with no inclusions and was 500mm to the limit of excavation.
- 4.8** Context **8** was the natural underlying Tunbridge Wells sand similar to Context **3**. It was a mid-yellow (buff) sandy silt with occasional orange patches and occasional sandstone pieces some <40mm in size at <1%, and continued down to the limit of excavation in the footing trenches, where it became more like Context **7**.



Plate 3: Ground reduction showing Contexts 4 -7

- 4.9** There were no archaeological features and deposits noted during the watching brief.

5.0 Finds

5.01 A small assemblage of artefacts was recovered during the watching brief and is summarised below. All of the artefacts were found in Context 1. The assemblage is composed of recent material from a topsoil deposit. As such the assemblage is not recommended for long-term curation.

5.1 The Pottery by Luke Barber

5.1.1 The archaeological monitoring recovered a small assemblage of pottery from Context 1 that can all be placed within a c. 1875 to 1925 date range. The assemblage is characterised by large relatively unabraded sherds and the material has clearly not been subjected to any notable amount of reworking.

5.1.2 The assemblage is composed of coarsewares and there is a notable absence of more refined table and tea wares. There are three sherds (73g) from at least two different unglazed earthenware flower pots, both with flattened club rims, together with a complete unglazed earthenware dish (to hold a flower pot) of 135mm diameter (height 37mm, 304g). There is also a large (422g) fragment from a 400mm diameter glazed red earthenware bowl with club rim and external line of rouletting. Other sherds consist of the base of a refined white earthenware preserve jar (84g) and the rim from a lid-seated Nottingham stoneware jar (57g). The only other piece is in fact a complete salt-glazed English stoneware electrical insulator (528g) from an overhead power-line (diameter 84mm, thickness 51mm).

5.2 The Glass by Chris Butler

5.2.1 Two complete brown glass bottles were recovered from Context 1. The first is 295mm tall with a base diameter of 76mm, and weighs 595g. It has been machine made in a single piece mould and has a screw top. The base is embossed RBS&S/P. The second bottle is 256mm tall and has a base diameter of 76mm, and weighs 758g. It has been machine made in a two piece mould, with the upper neck and lip applied. It would have had a stopper top. The base is embossed F.G.C. for the 'Fairmount Glass Company'.

5.2.2 Both of these bottles date to the early to mid 20th century.

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1** The stratigraphy of the site was fairly straight forward, with a small assemblage of later post-medieval/modern material was recovered from the topsoil.
- 6.2** The garden area of the excavation appeared to be undisturbed with no sign of the lodge.
- 6.3** The tennis court area had clearly been reduced from the level of the garden area by just under two metres at its highest point, presumably when the tennis court was built sometime between 1969 and 1975 as suggested by the OS mapping.
- 6.4** As no sign of the Lodge was discovered during the watching brief and with the severe ground reduction for the tennis court, it assumed that the lodge must have stood on the footprint for the tennis court and was comprehensively removed when the tennis court was built. The only clue to the location of the Lodge came from a chance remark from one of the builders when they mentioned they found possible wall foundations when they widened the drive some time ago.
- 6.5** The methodology adopted for this investigation proved to be satisfactory, and the confidence rating should be considered to be reliable.

7.0 Acknowledgements

- 7.1** We would like to thank Neil Newstead of Oakfield Property for appointing us to undertake this project and the contractors for their co-operation throughout.
- 7.2** The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler. Luke Barber reported on the pottery. The project was monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter.

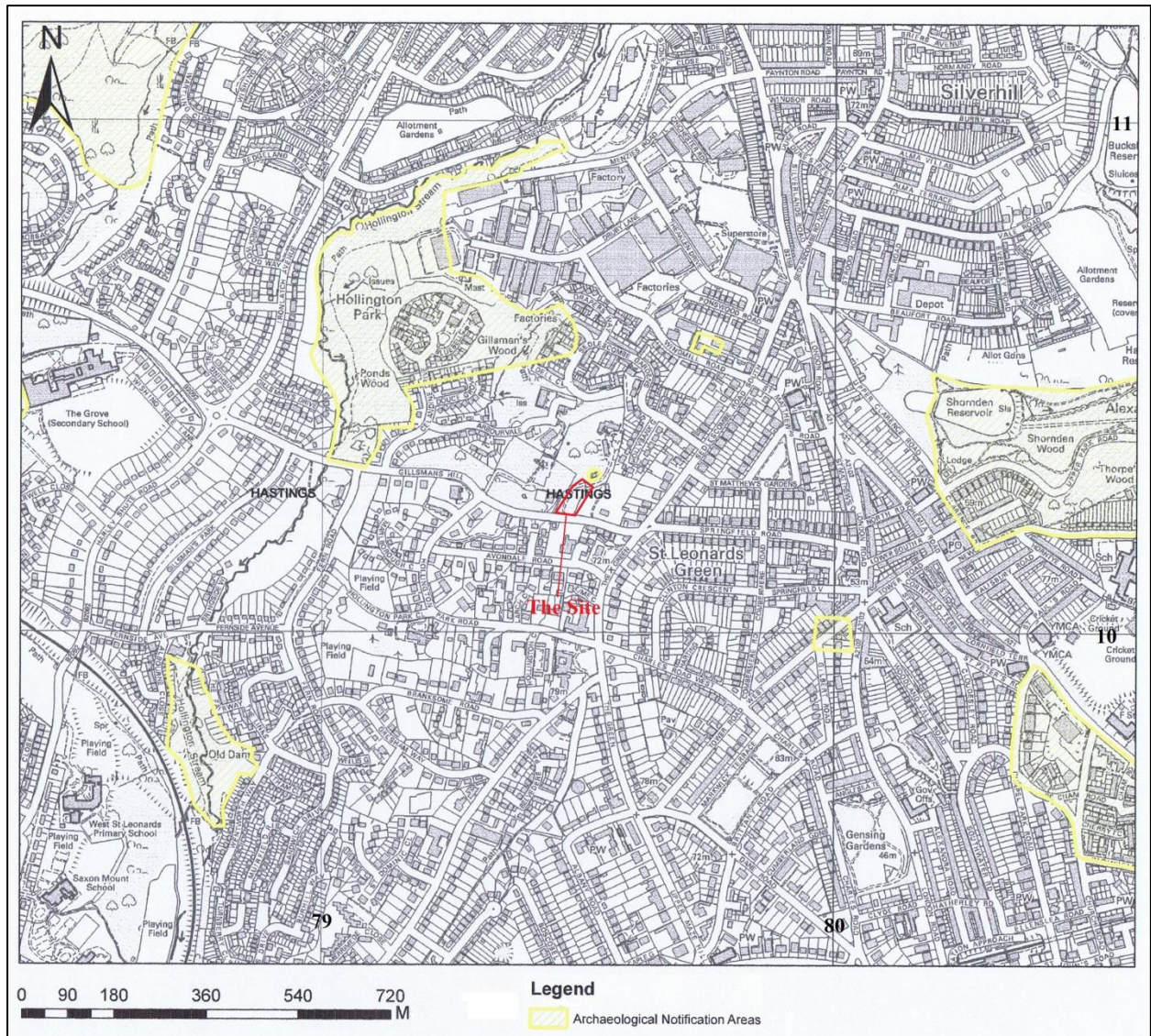


Fig. 1: Land south of Stone Court: Site Location Map and Archaeological Notification Areas
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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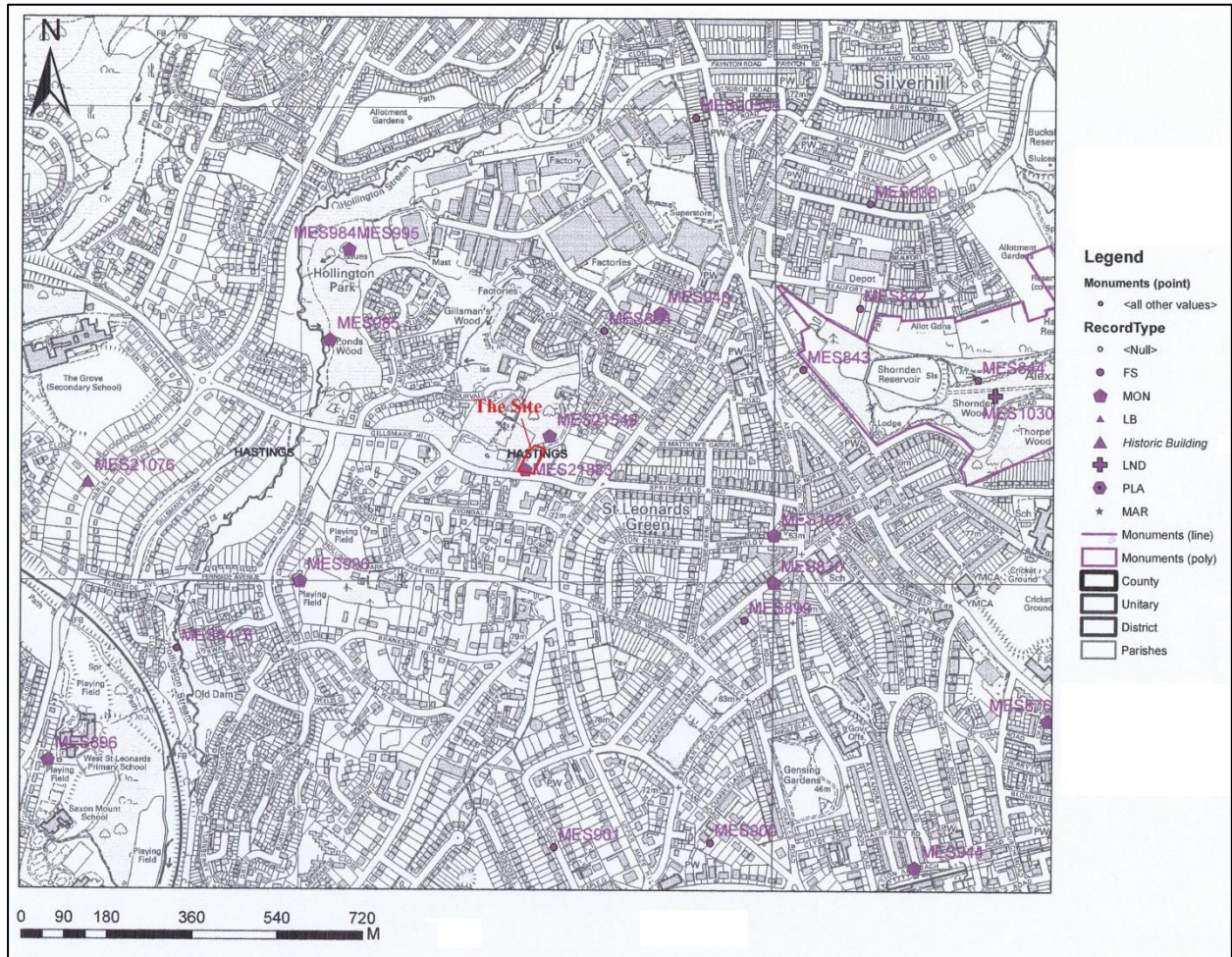


Fig. 2: Land South of Stone Court: Sites on the HER
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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Fig. 3: Land south of Stone Court: Yeakell & Gardner map 1778-83

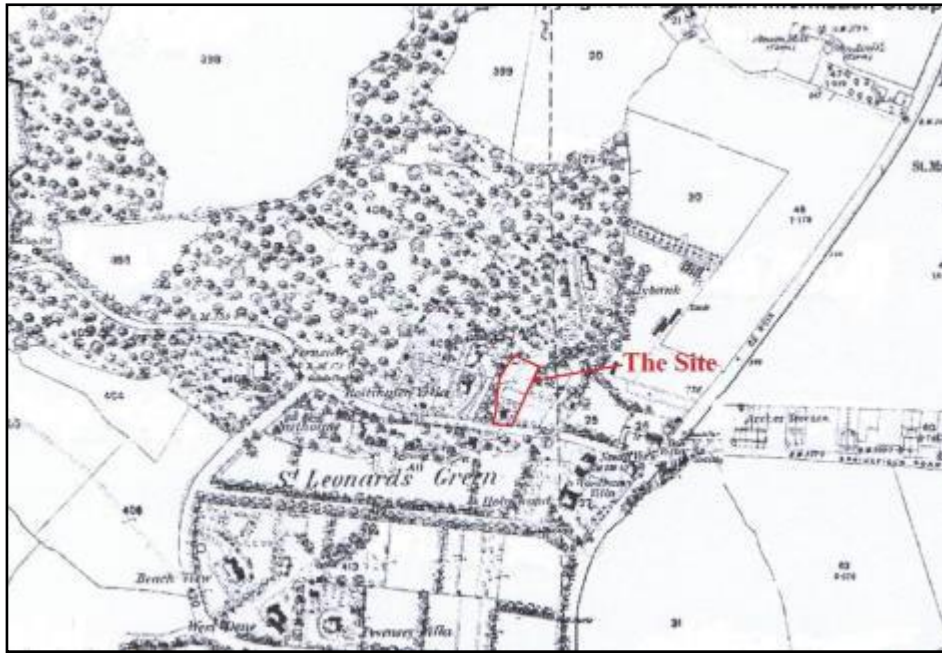


Fig. 4: Land south of Stone Court: 1st Edition OS Map 1873-80

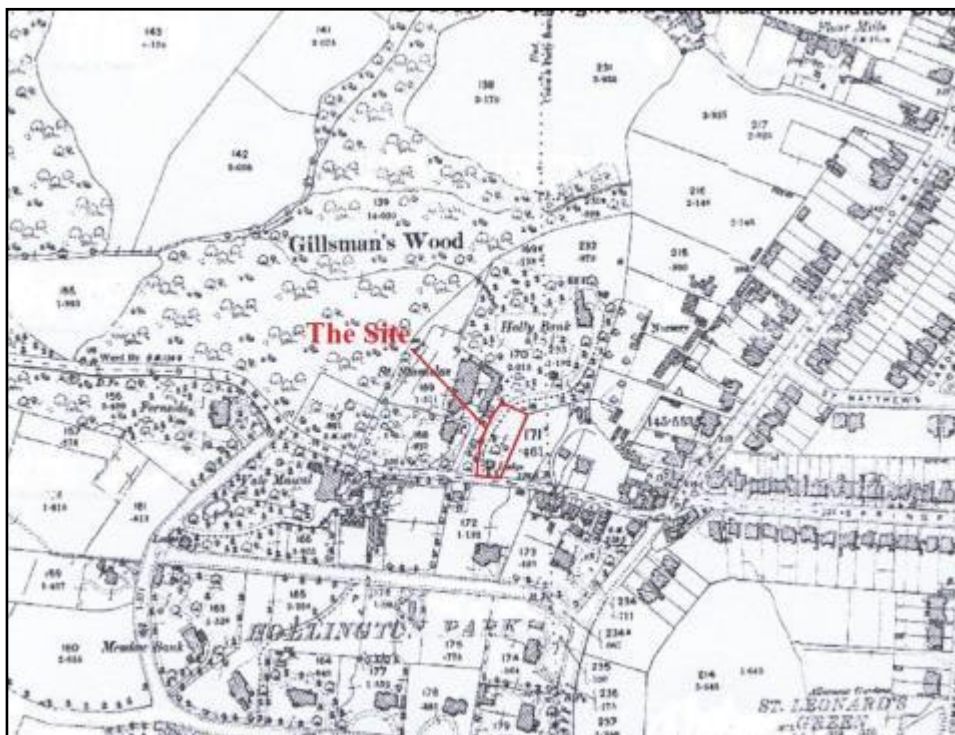


Fig. 5: Land south of Stone Court: 2nd Edition OS Map 1899

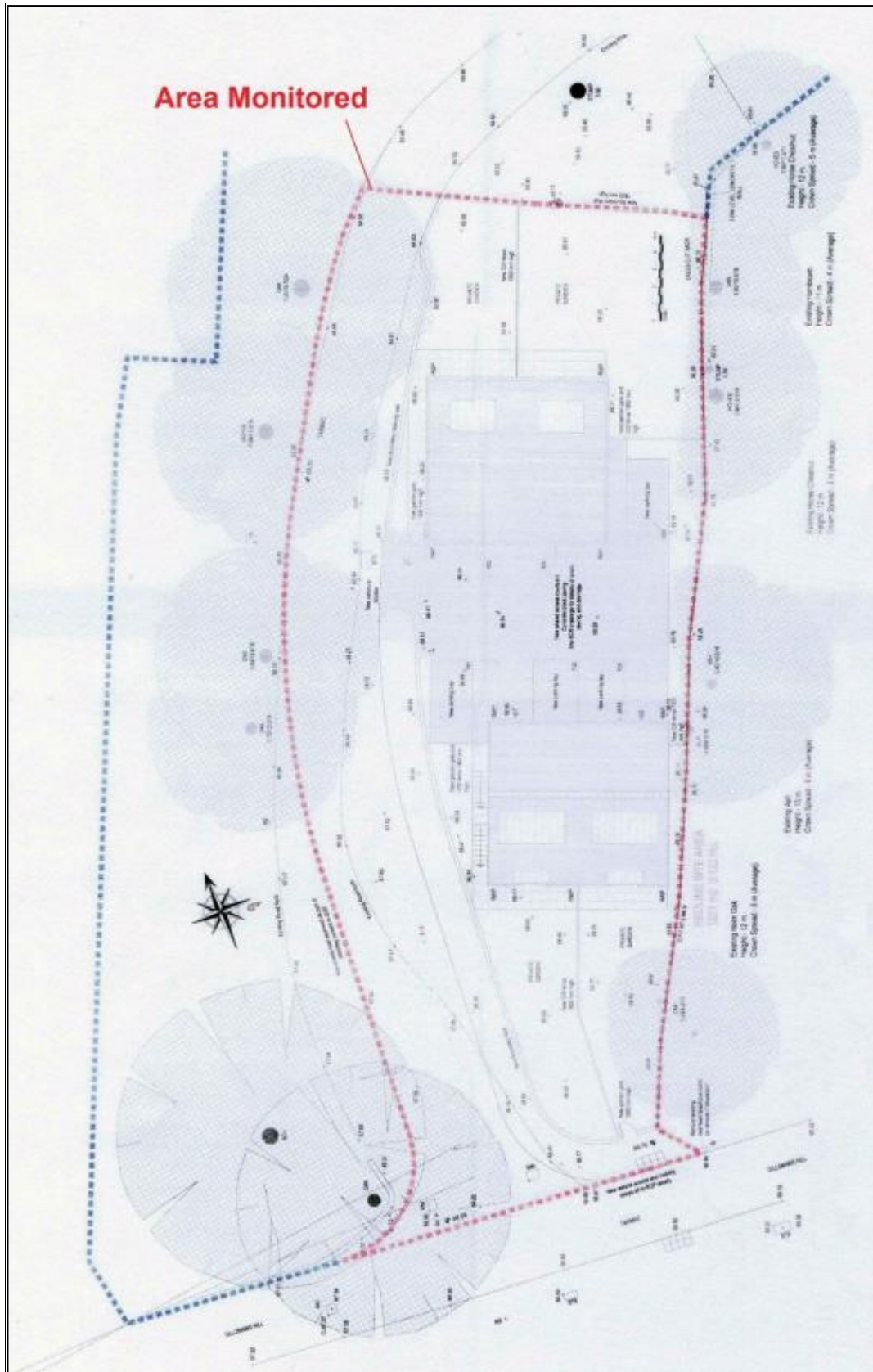


Fig. 6: Land south of Stone Court: Development Plan

Appendix 1 HER Summary Form

Site Code	SCG13					
Identification Name and Address	Land south of Stone Court, Gillsmans Hill, St Leonards, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Hastings Borough Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 7950 1027					
Geology	Tunbridge Wells Sand.					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief X	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban X	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 18.05.10- 25.11.10	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Oakfield Property.					
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>A watching brief was maintained during the ground-works associated with the construction of four three-bedroom houses on land South Court, Gillsman Hill, St. Leonards-on-Sea, east Sussex. Ground reduction and the excavation of foundation trenches was monitored, but aside from some late post-medieval/modern material, no finds or features of note were recorded during the watching brief, with no trace being found of the 19th century lodge that previously stood on the site. It is likely that past landscaping and the construction of the tennis court had removed any evidence for past archaeological activity.</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 Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. 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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