



**Chris Butler MfA
Archaeological Services Ltd**



**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
The Village Shop and Post Office,
The Street,
Sissinghurst, Kent.**

13/01097/FUL

Project No. CBAS0435

by
Keith Butler PIfA

August 2015

Summary

Three small trenches were excavated in the yard to the rear of the Village Shop and Post Office, The Street, Sissinghurst. No archaeological features were noted and only three artefacts were recovered. All the artefacts were of a 20th century date. The trenches only impacted on the ground to a depth of 500mm and revealed that the ground in the area of the trenches was heavily disturbed by the laying of the concrete surface to the yard and a number of drains. No evidence for the medieval or early Post medieval development of the site was found during the watching brief.

Chris Butler MCIfA Archaeological Services Ltd

**Unit 12, Mays Farm
Selmeston
Polegate
East Sussex
BN26 6TS**

Tel & fax: 01323 811785

e mail: chris@cbasltd.co.uk

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd (CBAS) was commissioned by Pritpal Mangat to undertake a watching brief at the rear of The Village Shop and Post Office, The Street, Sissinghurst, Kent TQ 7943 3750 (Fig. 1).

1.2 The property which consists of a combined Village Shop and Post Office is located on the southern side of The Street, in the centre of Sissinghurst. Part of the existing property (Virginia House) is a Grade II Listed Building (UID169111), and the Listing describes it as:

‘House. C16, clad in C19. Timber-framed with red brick ground floor and weather boarded first floor. Plain tiled roof, hipped to right with gablet. Tall brick end stack to left. Two storeys. Irregular 3-windows, glazing bar sashes on first floor. C19 flat-roofed octagonal bay ground floor to left. Large C20 shop extension to right on ground floor extending across into adjoining building, (not listed). Central half-glazed door with small pentice hood over.’

1.3 A planning application had been made to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for a single storey rear extension, internal alterations and redecoration of shop front (13/01097). A condition had been placed on the planning permission as follows:

(6) No development connected, in any way, with the single storey rear extension hereby approved shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a written programme and specification which has previously been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with the NPPF, Policy 4 of the Core Strategy and Policy EN10 of the Local Plan 2006.

1.4 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Specification provided by the Heritage Conservation Team at Kent County Council.

1.5 The archaeological watching brief was carried out by the author on the 7th November 2013. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler MCifA.

2.0 Archaeological Methodology

2.1 The archaeological watching brief was carried out on the groundworks which comprised the excavation of three shallow trenches, located to the south of the property in the small yard at the rear of the property (Fig. 2 & **Plate 1**). The concrete covered yard measured 4.25m north to south by 5.7m east to west. The boundaries of the yard were of wooden fencing.



Plate 1: The Site

2.2 On arrival at the site on the 7th November the three trenches had already been excavated by the contractor to take the foundations for the new extension. These consisted of three shallow trenches, each of these being given an individual identification letter (Fig. 2). Trench **A** was located in the north-eastern corner of the yard adjacent to the southern wall of the property and the northern end of the eastern boundary fence. Trench **A** measured 1m north-south by 500mm east-west and had a depth of 500mm at its deepest point.

2.3 Trench **B** was located 400mm to the south of Trench **A** and adjacent to the eastern boundary fence. This trench was square in plan and measured 600mm by 600mm, with a depth of 500mm.

2.4 Trench **C** was located adjacent to the south-western corner of the small projection of the building. This trench was also square in plan measuring 500mm by 500mm, and having a depth of 400mm. There was an existing circular manhole cover with associated drains directly to the north of this trench.

- 2.5** The excavated trenches were inspected for archaeological features. The spoil from the excavations had been piled up to the side of the trenches, and they were visually inspected for artefacts and scanned with a Precision Gold Metal detector.
- 2.6** All archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded according to accepted professional standards. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart
- 2.7** 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 VSS13 has been allocated.

3.0 Results

- 3.1** The surface of the yard was covered with a layer of dark grey concrete (Context 1) with a variable thickness up to 50mm. This layer covered all three of the trenches and below this on the western side of Trench A was an associated layer of hardcore appearing to be made up of pieces of sandstone up to 90mm in size, with this layer having a thickness of up to 100mm.
- 3.2** Below Context 1 in Trenches A and B (Plate 1) was a deposit of topsoil up to 250mm thick (Context 2). This was a very dark brown humic-rich silty clay loam with a loose consistence, with inclusions of CBM (<1%) and sandstone pieces up to 30mm (<1%). Artefacts recovered from this deposit comprised ceramic building material and glass, all of 20th century date.



Plate 2: Trenches A and B

- 3.3** Below Context 2 was Context 3, which was the subsoil. This deposit was apparent to the limit of excavation in both Trenches A and B and was a mid brown silty clay with a friable consistence. This deposit had inclusions of pieces of sandstone up to 10mm (<1%) and light rooting (<1%). No artefacts were recovered from this deposit.
- 3.4** Context 4 was the footing of the southern wall of the existing building which were located at the northern end of Trench A. These stepped out from the existing building by 400mm and were of a mid grey concrete, and extended to the limit of excavation.
- 3.5** Context 5 (Plate 3) was the only deposit apparent under the concrete layer of the yard surface in Trench C. This was a very mixed and disturbed deposit of a mid brown silty clay, with patches of orange sand, and extended to the full depth of the trench (400mm).

- 3.6** This deposit (Context 5) had inclusions of shingle (15%) and ceramic building material. The shingle in this deposit was associated with the laying of the ceramic drains which had been broken during the excavations. No artefacts were recovered from this deposit.



Plate 3: Trench C

- 3.7** No archaeological features were noted in any of the three trenches, and we were advised that this was to be the full extent of excavations for the new extension.

4.0 The Finds

- 4.1** Only three artefacts were recovered from the excavation of the three trenches, these were all from the topsoil (**Context 2**). A single piece of salt glazed ceramic drain pipe (20g) was recovered from the topsoil in Trench **A**.
- 4.2** From the topsoil in Trench **B** two artefacts were recovered. Firstly, a single fragment of clear glass weighing 10g, which appeared to be the base of a bottle or jar. Secondly, a piece of ceramic roofing tile. This was a dark reddish colour with a rough finish and weighing 15g. The fabric was well fired and had no inclusions.
- 4.3** All three artefacts recovered date from the 20th century, and have been discarded.

5.0 Discussion

- 5.1** The three small trenches excavated in the rear yard at the Village Store and Post Office, Sissinghurst produced only a small number of artefacts all dating to the 20th century and no archaeological features were noted.
- 5.2** The trenches only had a shallow impact on the ground having a maximum depth of 500mm. The ground had been previously disturbed by the laying of the concrete yard surface and the laying of drains. This was most notable in Trench C where below the concrete yard surface only a single deposit of made ground was evident, this was in association with the drain pipes which were running to the man hole to the north of this trench.
- 5.3** No evidence for the medieval or early Post medieval development of the site was found during the watching brief.

6.0 Acknowledgements

- 6.1** I would like to thank Pritpal Mangat for commissioning this archaeological watching brief.
- 6.2** The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler MCIFA, and was monitored for KCC by Wendy Rogers.

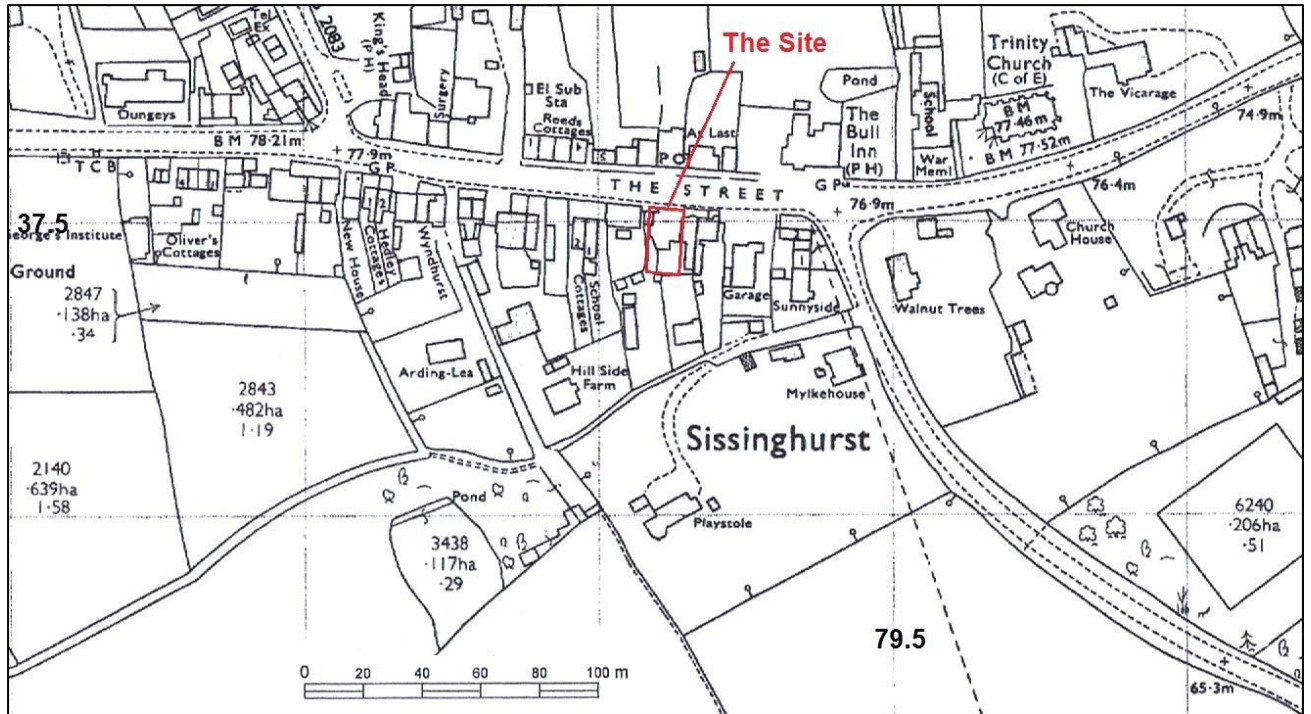


Fig. 1: Site Location Map
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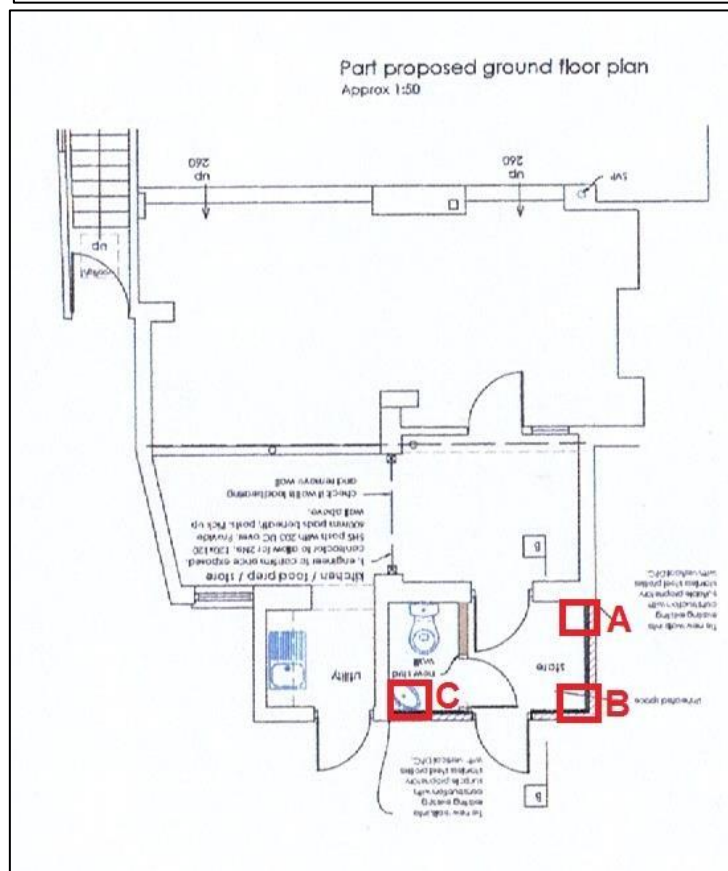
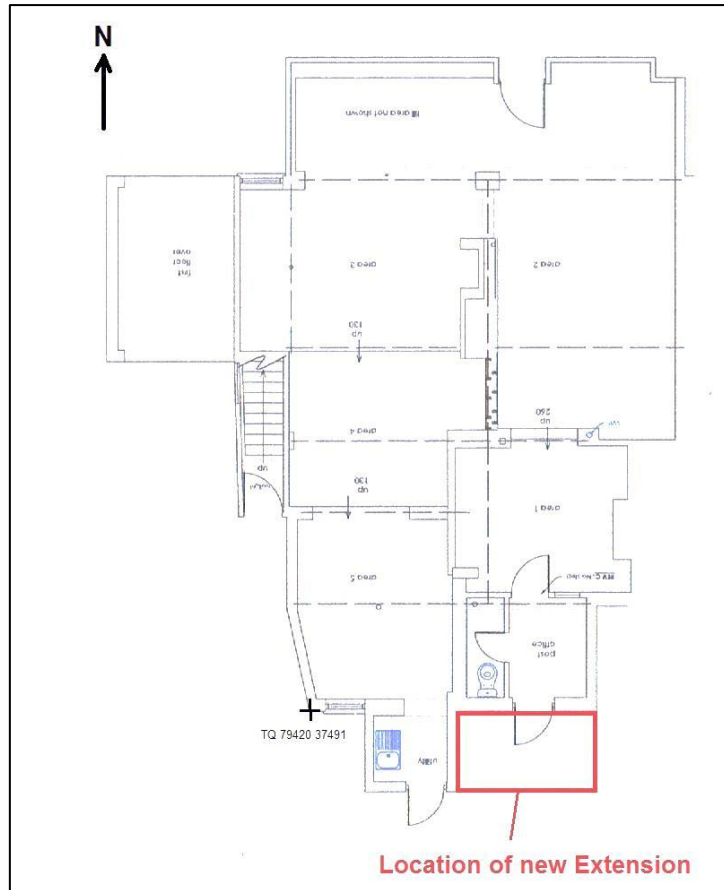


Fig. 2: Site Plan showing location of area monitored
Adapted from architects drawing

Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

Site Code	VSS 13					
Identification Name and Address	The Village Shop and Post Office, The Street, Sissinghurst, Kent.					
County, District &/or Borough	Kent County Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 7943 3750					
Geology						
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. 7.11.13	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Pritpal Mangat					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MCIfA					
Project Supervisor	Keith Butler PCIfA					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Three small trenches were excavated in the yard to the rear of the Village Shop and Post Office, The Street, Sissinghurst. No archaeological features were noted and only three artefacts were recovered. All the artefacts were of a 20th century date. The trenches only impacted on the ground to a depth of 500mm and revealed that the ground in the area of the trenches was heavily disturbed by the laying of the concrete surface to the yard and a number of drains.</i></p> <p><i>No evidence for the medieval or early Post medieval development of the site was found during the watching brief.</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 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. Chris was a part time lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sussex. He continues to run the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in his spare time.

Chris specialises in prehistoric flintwork analysis, but has directed excavations, landscape surveys and watching briefs, including the excavation of a Beaker Bowl Barrow, a Saxon cemetery and settlement, Roman pottery kilns, and a Mesolithic hunting camp.

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

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**Unit 12, Mays Farm
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Polegate
East Sussex
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Tel & fax: 01323 811785

e mail: chris@cbsltd.co.uk