



**Chris Butler MfA  
Archaeological Services Ltd**

**Heritage Statement  
for  
Feldings,  
Church Road,  
Rotherfield,  
East Sussex**

by  
Chris Butler

January 2014

### ***Summary***

*This Heritage Statement has been prepared for a site at Feldings, Church Road, Rotherfield. It has established that there is some evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity in the broader area of the site. Therefore, the likelihood of archaeological features from these periods being found on the site is generally low to medium, although it is low for the Saxon period and high for the Medieval and Post Medieval periods.*

*The proposed development is likely to have an impact on any below ground archaeology surviving, and therefore it is recommended that an archaeological watching brief take place to ensure that any remains revealed by the development are properly recorded.*

# **Chris Butler MfA Archaeological Services Ltd**

Rosedale  
Berwick, Polegate  
East Sussex  
BN26 6TB

Tel & fax: 01323 811785

e mail: [chris@cbsaltd.co.uk](mailto:chris@cbsaltd.co.uk)

Web site: [www.cbsaltd.co.uk](http://www.cbsaltd.co.uk)

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd has been commissioned by Mr D. J. Martin (The Client) to prepare a Heritage Statement for a site at Feldings, Church Road, Rotherfield, East Sussex (Fig. 1).
- 1.2** As a result of the site's location, and the archaeological potential of the area, the local planning authority have requested that a Heritage Statement is produced to support the application for planning approval to meet the requirements of Planning Policy Framework Section 128.
- 1.3** The site is centred on TQ 5540 2970 (Fig. 1) in Church Road, on the west side of Rotherfield, and is one of a number of properties arranged along the south side of Church Road that were built in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. The site is located at around 147m OD, with the existing house situated in the central part of a narrow north-south orientated property.
- 1.4** The site is within an Archaeological Notification Area (ANA) defining the Medieval and Post Medieval village of Rotherfield (Fig. 2), and is also adjacent to the Conservation Area for Rotherfield.
- 1.5** The geology of the site, according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 303), shows the site to be situated on Ashdown Beds, with Wadhurst Clay and outcrops of Tunbridge Wells Sand to the south.
- 1.6** This report initially covers the objectives and scope of the survey, the methodology used, and the archaeological and historical heritage of the area. Finally a conclusion assesses the past impacts and the potential impact of the proposed development.

## **2.0 Objectives & Scope of Report**

- 2.1** The objective of this Heritage Statement is to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource of the site and its immediate area. This will include information relating to the presence or absence of any archaeology, its character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation, and the relative quality of the potential archaeological resource. This report meets the requirements of Planning Policy Framework Section 128.
- 2.2** This information will allow an assessment of the merits of the archaeology in context to be made, leading to the formulation of a strategy for the recording, preservation and management of the resource or, where necessary, the formulation of a strategy for further investigation where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be defined.
- 2.3** The report will consider the archaeological resource within a radius of 0.5km around the site, whilst also taking into account sites further afield where these may be considered to have an impact on or relevance to the site in its landscape setting.
- 2.4** It should be noted that this report can only take into account the existing known archaeology, and by its nature cannot provide a complete record of the archaeological resource of the site. Its intention is to provide an overview of the known archaeology in the area of the site, from which judgements can be made about the potential archaeological resource of the site itself.

### **3.0 Methodology**

**3.1** This Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Policy Framework, the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (Institute for Archaeologists 2001), and the *Standards for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording and Post Excavation Work in East Sussex* (ESCC 2008).

**3.2** The research for this Heritage Statement has included an analysis of the following resources:

- ESCC Historic Environment Record (HER)
- Historic mapping
- British Geological Survey
- Personal library resources
- Online resources

**3.3** The following maps were used:

- 1839 Rotherfield Tithe Map
- 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map (1875)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS Map (1898)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition OS Map (1910)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS Map (1931)
- 1971 OS Map

Information gained from the map regression exercise is contained in the Post Medieval section below.

**3.4** The Archaeological Sites recorded on the HER are mentioned in the text where relevant, and are shown on Fig. 3, and historical and other sources are given as footnotes as appropriate.

## 4.0 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 4.1 There is a great deal of evidence for Mesolithic hunter-gatherer groups exploiting the resources of the High Weald woodland for hunting and gathering throughout the Mesolithic period. These include sites associated with rock outcrops, such as those at Eridge (TQ554358)<sup>1</sup>. These sites are thought to have been short-stay hunting camps, and are mainly associated with the Later Mesolithic<sup>2</sup>. A single piece of Mesolithic flintwork has been found at Rotherfield (MES4780) and there have been many discoveries in the wider landscape<sup>3</sup>.
- 4.2 Ironworking became a major industry during the Romano-British period, with large numbers of iron working sites across the Weald<sup>4</sup>. There are a number of Roman ironworking sites in the wider Rotherfield area, together with numerous undated bloomery sites which may be Roman in date<sup>5</sup>. A Roman ironworking site has recently been excavated at Little Furnace Wood (TQ 5910 2430) to the south of Mayfield, revealing two furnaces and an ore roasting pit<sup>6</sup>.
- 4.3 The name *Rotherfield* is recorded from the 8<sup>th</sup> century and is likely to relate to the area and to predate any nucleated settlement. The Old English form – *hrȳðera-feld* – means ‘open country of the cattle’<sup>7</sup>. The abbey of St Denis at Paris claimed to have established a *monasterium*, or alien priory, at Rotherfield c.790, although it is not certain whether this was actually the case. The later history of the putative priory is obscure, although it is referred to in a charter of 960 recording the restoration of property at Rotherfield to St Denis by King Edgar<sup>8</sup>.
- 4.4 In 1086 Rotherfield was held by King William from the holding of the Bishop of Bayeux. It had land for 26 ploughs, 14 villagers with 6 smallholders, woodland at 80 pigs and a park<sup>9</sup>. Rotherfield was situated within Rotherfield Hundred which was within the Rape of Pevensey. In 1093-1107, the church dedicated to St Denis at Rotherfield was given by Gilbert of Clare to the cathedral priory at Rochester. The Parish Church of St Denys is mainly 13<sup>th</sup> century, with some later features. It has wall paintings of 1300 circa, and is a good example of a medieval church; not much restored (MES4765).

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<sup>1</sup> Greatorex, C. & Seager-Thomas, M. 2000 ‘Rock Shelter Stratigraphy’ *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **138**, 49-56.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobi, R.M. & Tebbutt, C. F. 1981 ‘A late Mesolithic Rock-shelter site at High Hurstwood, Sussex’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **119**, 1-36.

<sup>3</sup> Tebbutt, C.F. 1974 ‘The Prehistoric Occupation of the Ashdown Forest area of the Weald’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **112**, 34-43.

<sup>4</sup> Cleere, H. et al. 1995 *The Iron Industry in the Weald*, Cardiff, Merton Priory Press.

<sup>5</sup> WIRG Iron Site database ([www.wirgdata.org/](http://www.wirgdata.org/))

<sup>6</sup> Butler & Hodgkinson forthcoming

<sup>7</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Morris, J. 1986 *Domesday Book: Sussex*, Chichester, Phillimore.

- 4.5** Evidence for Medieval iron working was found when the Wealden Iron Research Group excavated three bloomery sites close to the 16th century blast furnace at Maynards Gate (MES2959). They were dated to the Medieval period by pottery finds.
- 4.6** Rotherfield was granted a weekly Wednesday market in 1318, and an annual fair held on the feast of St Denis (9<sup>th</sup> October) is recorded in 1376, providing evidence for a growing settlement. Gardiner has suggested that there is evidence of a triangular-shaped open space, or former market place at Rotherfield, which runs west from South Street, High Street and the Square, forming a funnel shape measuring a maximum of 560m x 150m<sup>10</sup>.
- 4.7** The 1296 lay subsidy roll which lists 41 taxpayers, suggesting a population of perhaps around 205, similar to the 42 taxpayers of neighbouring Wadhurst. In the roll for 1327 there are 49 taxpayers and in that for 1332 there are 39 taxpayers. This suggests a population for the parish comparable with that found for other large Wealden parishes with small towns<sup>11</sup>.
- 4.8** The population of Rotherfield appears to have grown slowly at this time, with the average annual conception rate for 1621-1640 being 1.9, lower than many other market centres in the north-eastern Weald<sup>12</sup>. A map of 1597 shows that there was no substantial change in the plan of Rotherfield during this period, with the settlement clustered in the vicinity of the Square as it still was in the early 19th century. One possible change hinted at by the 1597 map is that the eastern part of the funnel-shaped area south of Church Street was infilled during this period<sup>13</sup>.
- 4.9** The largest industry of the area continued to be iron production. The industry expanded rapidly in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thereafter declining to the point of extinction by the end of the 18th century. There were 37 ironworks of this period within 10km of Rotherfield<sup>14</sup>. Maynards Gate furnace (MES2959), situated to the south-west of the site, was operating in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, whilst Hamsell furnace was casting guns in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This latter furnace was leased by John Baker in 1677, and the Baker family leased Birchden Forge by 1553 and then owned it from 1617 to 1737<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

<sup>11</sup> Hudson, W. H. (ed.), 'The three earliest subsidies for the County of Sussex in the years 1296, 1327, 1332', *SRS* 10 (1910), 31, 188-9, 300-1.

<sup>12</sup> Brent, C.E 1978 'Rural Employment and Population in Sussex between 1550 and 1640: Part 2', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **116**, 41-55.

<sup>13</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

<sup>14</sup> Cleere, H. & Crossley, D. 1995 *The Iron Industry of the Weald*, Merton Priory Press.

<sup>15</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey



- 4.10** The Tithe map of 1839 (Fig. 4) shows the location of the site to be situated at the eastern end of a field, but also extending into the field to the south of Church Street. The north-west corner of the property is within a small rectangular plot (3142), resembling an animal pound, which juts out into Church Street.
- 4.11** The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (1875) shows the site to be largely unchanged. The small enclosure jutting out into Church Street is still shown (Fig. 5). There is little change on the later OS maps of 1898 (Fig. 6) and 1910, although there is a small enclosed area in the south-east part of the northern field, which falls within the site. The graveyard for St Denys Church is shown extending up to the eastern boundary of the field, and the 1910 map shows two cottages having been built immediately to the east of the site to the north of the churchyard.
- 4.12** The 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS map (1931) shows a similar layout, although the enclosed area towards the south of the site is now shown smaller. The Sheiling has been built in the southern part of the adjacent site to the west (Fig. 7). Other properties have also been built to the west of the site long Church Street. By the 1971 OS map the eastern part of the field has been separated and Feldings has been built on this new plot.
- 4.13** An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the groundworks for a new house at The Sheiling, immediately to the west of the site in 2012<sup>16</sup>. No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief although a small assemblage of late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century material was recovered from the interface between the topsoil/subsoil deposits along with three sherds of mid-13<sup>th</sup> to mid-14<sup>th</sup> century medieval pottery, one of which was unstratified, with the other two coming from the subsoil. The pottery sherds were abraded, which suggests that they may be the result of manuring rather than indicating the presence of a building or settlement.

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<sup>16</sup> Atkin, D. 2012 *Archaeological Watching Brief at The Sheiling, Rotherfield, East Sussex*, CBAS0282

## 5.0 Impact of the Development

- 5.1 Although there is almost no evidence for early activity within the immediate vicinity of the site, the presence of prehistoric and Roman sites in the broader landscape would indicate that there is a possibility of remains of this date being found at the site. This would be especially true for both the Mesolithic and Roman periods. In the Mesolithic, sites in the Weald tended to occupy positions on higher ground, especially south-facing rock outcrops, such as is the case at this site. In the Roman period, the site may have been on a ridgeway that provided access to ironworking sites in the area.
- 5.2 The site is within an Archaeological Notification Area (ANA) defining the Medieval village of Rotherfield, and the presence of mid-13<sup>th</sup> to mid-14<sup>th</sup> century Medieval pottery during the groundworks for a new house at The Sheiling, immediately to the west of the site in 2012 confirms that there is medieval activity in the vicinity of the site. However, the pottery sherds were abraded, which suggests that they may be the result of manuring rather than indicating the presence of a building or settlement.
- 5.3 The map regression has shown that the site was open fields during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and although other properties have been built along Church Road in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first evidence for a building on the site was the current property which was shown on the 1971 OS map. Therefore apart from the current property there has been limited impact on the site by past development.
- 5.4 Given the evidence accumulated during this Heritage Statement, the probability of finding remains from each of the different archaeological periods is shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Probability</b>
Palaeolithic	Low
Mesolithic	Medium
Neolithic	Low
Bronze Age	Low
Iron Age	Low
Roman	Medium
Saxon	Low
Medieval	High
Post Medieval	High

- 5.5 The proposed development of a rear extension and 2-bay garage will have limited intrusive excavation. The foundations for the extension will be 1m deep footings and the garage will be built on a slab foundation. These do have the potential to impact on undisturbed archaeological remains at the site. There will be limited potential for palaeo-environmental remains or geo-archaeological investigations at this site.

## **6 Conclusions**

- 6.1** This Heritage Statement has established that there is some evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity in the broader area of the site. Therefore, the likelihood of archaeological features from these periods being found on the site is generally low, as with the Saxon period, although it is high for the Mesolithic and Roman periods.
- 6.2** The new extension and garage will have no detrimental effect on the Listed Buildings nearby as they are all out of line of sight of this new development. The garage replaces an existing garage on the same site, and the new extension is on the south side of the existing property away from the Church Lane frontage. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments nearby, and the development is outside the Conservation Area.
- 6.3** The presence, location and significance of any buried heritage assets within the Site cannot currently be confirmed on the basis of the available information. As such additional archaeological investigations may be required by the archaeological advisor to Wealden District Council.

## **7 Acknowledgements**

- 7.1** I would like to thank Mr Martin for commissioning this Heritage Statement.

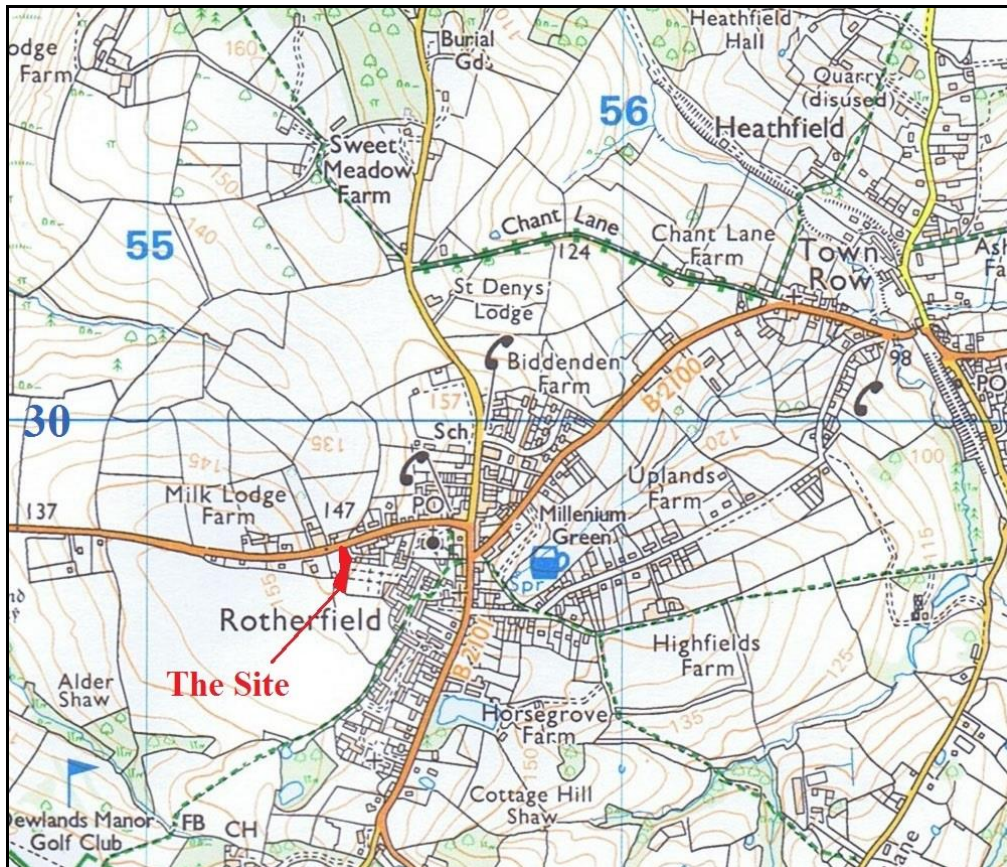


Fig. 1: Feldings, Rotherfield: Location of Site  
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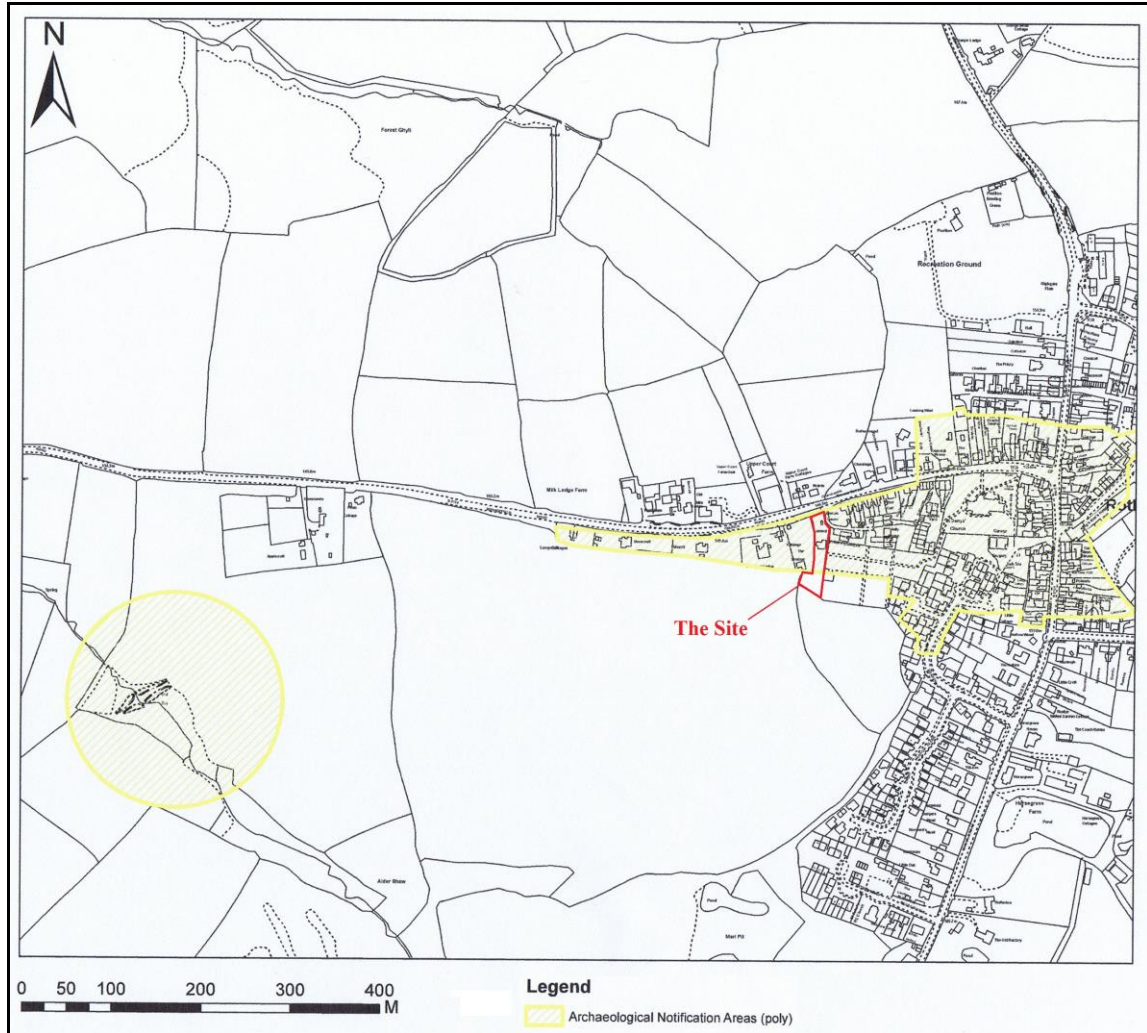


Fig. 2: Feldings, Rotherfield: Archaeological Notification Areas  
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)

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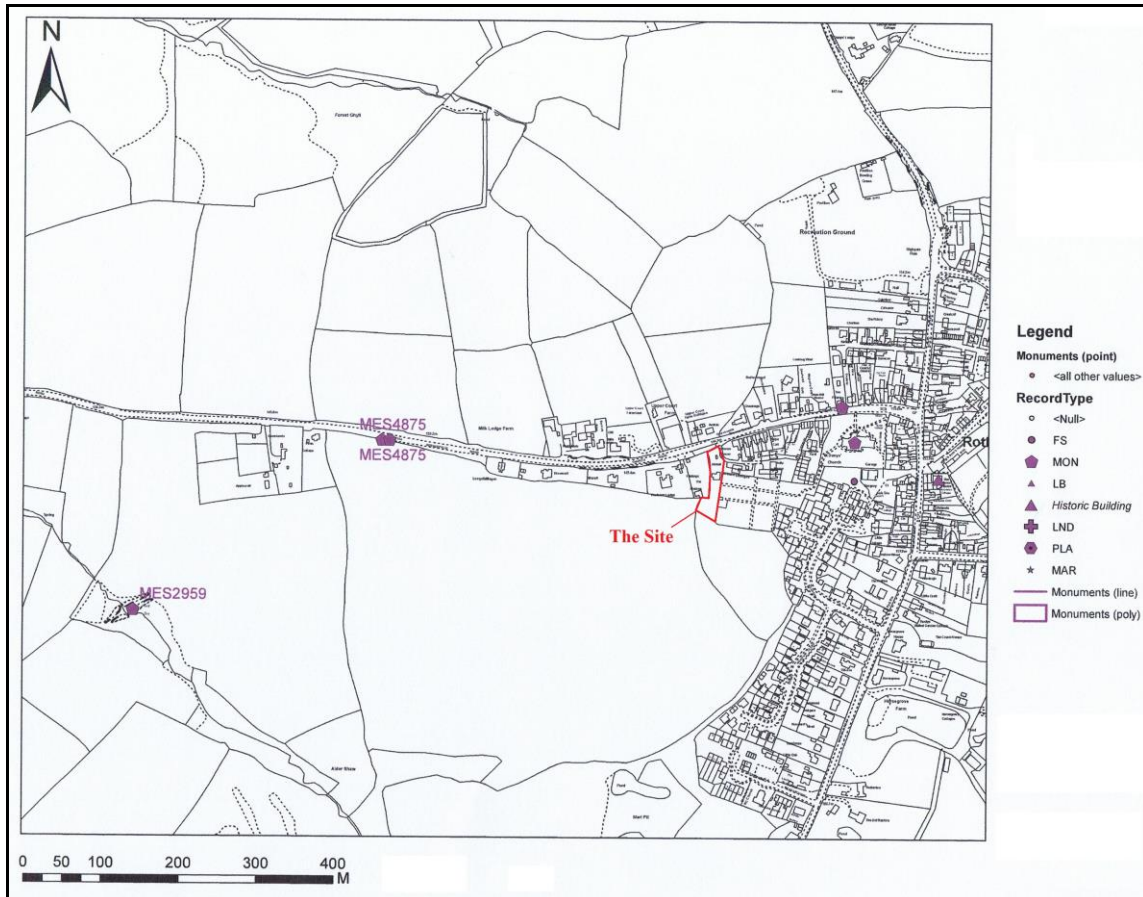


Fig. 3: Feldings, Rotherfield: Sites on the HER  
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)

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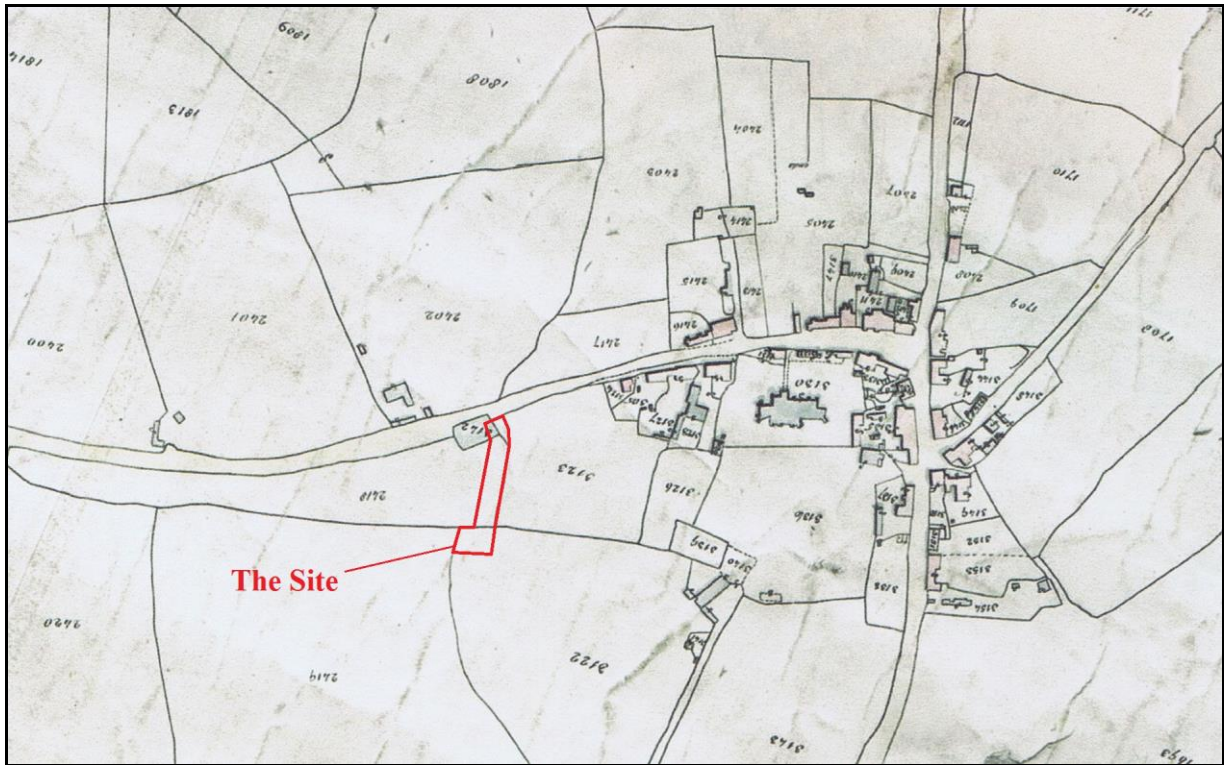


Fig. 4: Feldings, Rotherfield: Rotherfield Tithe Map 1839  
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)

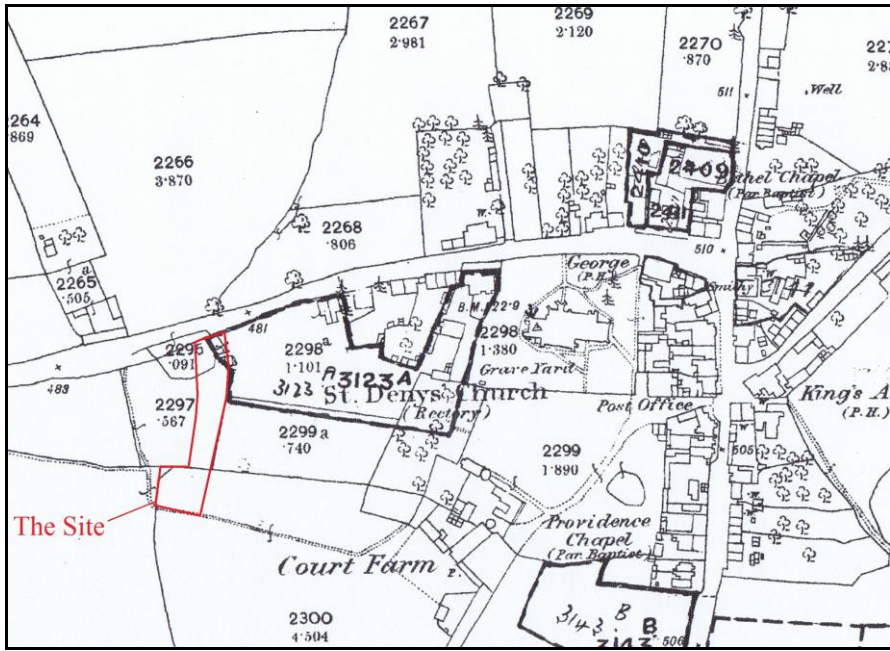


Fig. 5: Feldings, Rotherfield: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map (1875)

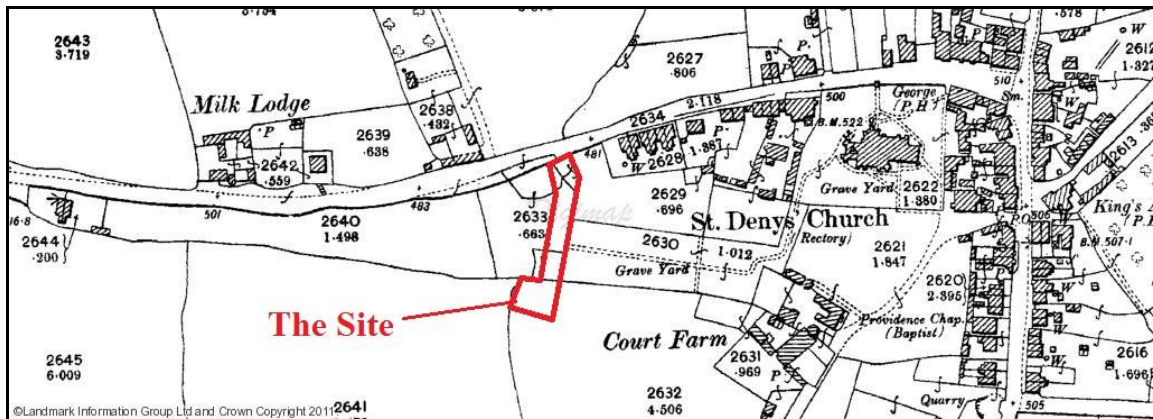


Fig. 6: Feldings, Rotherfield: 2nd Edition OS Map (1898)

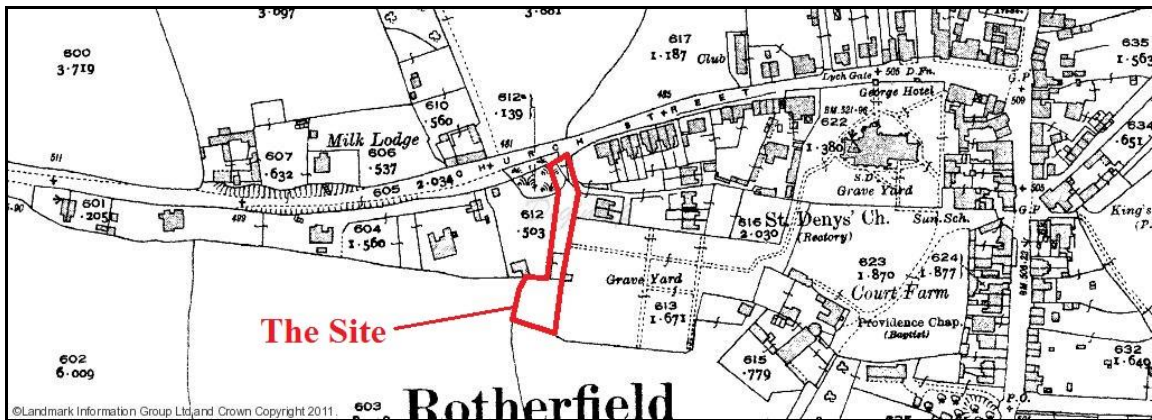
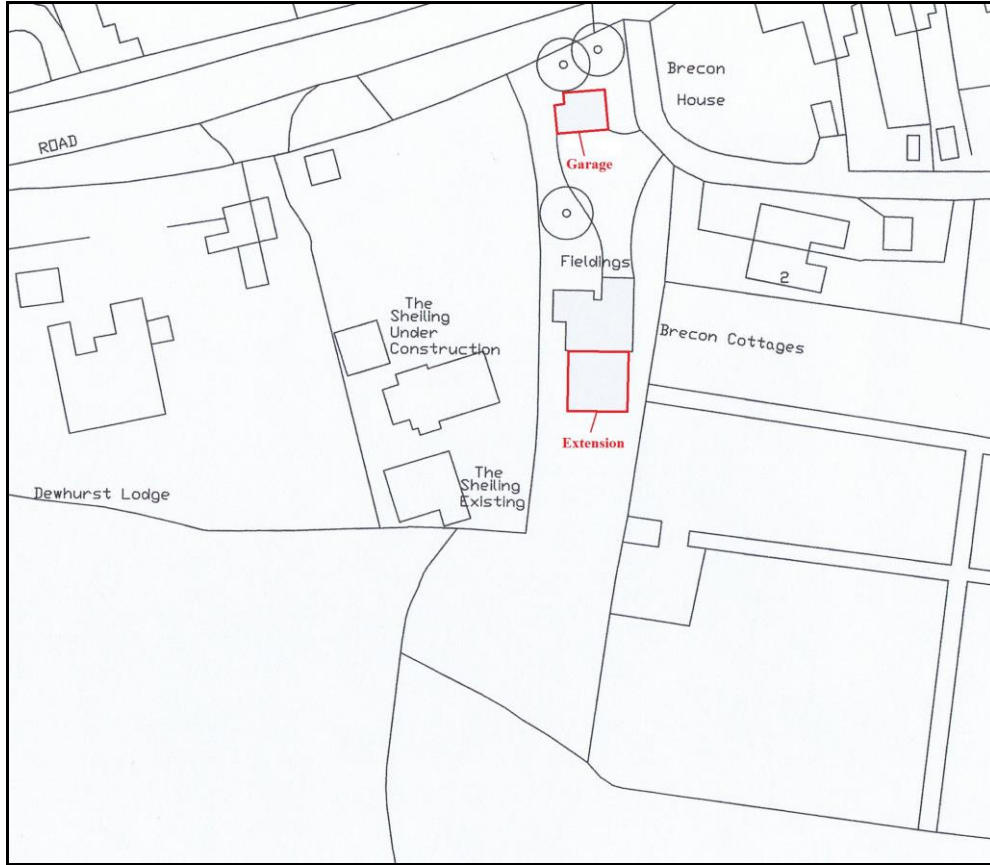


Fig. 7: Feldings, Rotherfield: 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS Map (1931)





**Fig. 8: Feldings, Rotherfield: Development Plan**  
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## **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 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 6<sup>th</sup> Form College.

Chris specialises in prehistoric flintwork analysis, but has directed excavations, landscape surveys, watching briefs and evaluations, including the excavation of a Beaker Bowl Barrow, a Saxon cemetery and settlement, Roman pottery kilns, and a Mesolithic hunting camp. Chris is Co-Director of the Barcomvbe Roman Villa excavations. He has also recently undertaken an archaeological survey of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren.

**Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd** is available for Flintwork Analysis, Project Management, Military Archaeology, Desktop Assessments, Field Evaluations, Excavation work, Watching Briefs, Fieldwalking, Landscape & Woodland surveys, 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@cbsaltd.co.uk](mailto:chris@cbsaltd.co.uk)