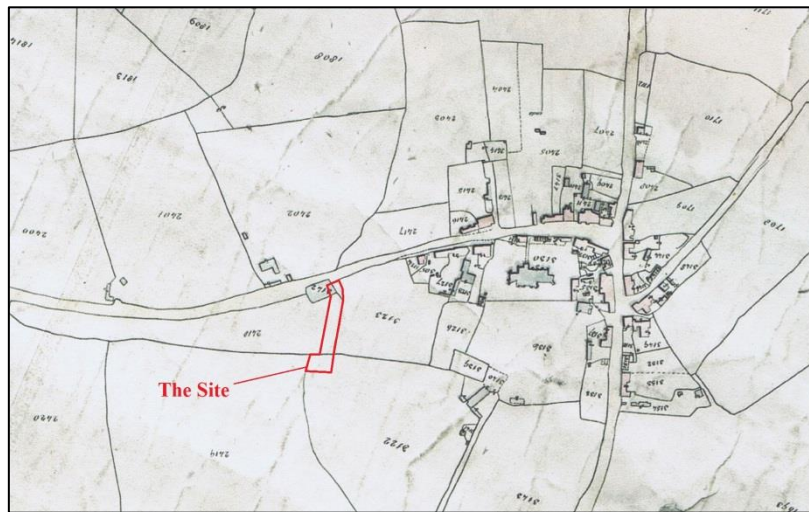




**Chris Butler MfA  
Archaeological Services Ltd**



**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
at The Feldings, Rotherfield,  
East Sussex**

WD/2013/2555

Project No. CBAS0445

by  
Steffan Klemenic

July 2014

### ***Summary***

*A watching brief was carried out at Feldings, Rotherfield during the construction of an extension and new garage. No archaeological features were found, and a small assemblage of artefacts recovered from the topsoil and subsoil all dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Mr D. J. Martin (The Client) to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks associated with the construction of a new rear extension and 2 bay garage 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 put a condition on the planning consent for the development (WD/2013/2555), requiring an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.3** 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.
- 1.4** The site is located at around 147m OD, with a north-south orientatation. 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.
- 1.5** The appropriate programme of archaeological work comprises an archaeological watching brief as specified in a brief issued by the Archaeology Team at East Sussex County Council a written scheme of investigation covering the watching brief, has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.6** The watching brief on the groundworks for the extension was carried out by the author on the 20th, and 21st of May 2014. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler MIFA.

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<sup>1</sup> Butler, C. 2014 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Feldings, Rotherfield, East Sussex*. CBAS

## 2.0 Historical & Archaeological Background (Fig. 3)

- 2.1 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>2</sup>. These sites are thought to have been short-stay hunting camps, and are mainly associated with the Later Mesolithic<sup>3</sup>. A single piece of Mesolithic flintwork has been found at Rotherfield (MES4780) and there have been many discoveries in the wider landscape<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.2 Ironworking became a major industry during the Romano-British period, with large numbers of iron working sites across the Weald<sup>5</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>6</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>7</sup>.
- 2.3 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>8</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>9</sup>.
- 2.4 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>10</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>2</sup> Greatorex, C. & Seager-Thomas, M. 2000 ‘Rock Shelter Stratigraphy’ *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **138**, 49-56.

<sup>3</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>4</sup> Tebbutt, C.F. 1974 ‘The Prehistoric Occupation of the Ashdown Forest area of the Weald’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **112**, 34-43.

<sup>5</sup> Cleere, H. et al. 1995 *The Iron Industry in the Weald*, Cardiff, Merton Priory Press.

<sup>6</sup> WIRG Iron Site database ([www.wirgdata.org/](http://www.wirgdata.org/))

<sup>7</sup> Butler & Hodgkinson forthcoming

<sup>8</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Morris, J. 1986 *Domesday Book: Sussex*, Chichester, Phillimore.

- 2.5** 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.
- 2.6** 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>11</sup>.
- 2.7** 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>12</sup>.
- 2.8** 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>13</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>14</sup>.
- 2.9** 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>15</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>16</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

<sup>12</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>13</sup> Brent, C.E 1978 'Rural Employment and Population in Sussex between 1550 and 1640: Part 2', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **116**, 41-55.

<sup>14</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

<sup>15</sup> Cleere, H. & Crossley, D. 1995 *The Iron Industry of the Weald*, Merton Priory Press.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, R.B. 2008 Rotherfield: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey

- 2.10** 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.
- 2.11** 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.
- 2.12** 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.
- 2.13** 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>17</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>17</sup> Atkin, D. 2012 *Archaeological Watching Brief at The Sheiling, Rotherfield, East Sussex*, CBAS0282

### **3.0 Archaeological Methodology**

- 3.1** On arrival at the site, a discussion with the client revealed that there would no longer be any excavation required for the extension of the garage (Fig. 8). This was following the advice of the groundworks contractor, who had observed that the footings for the existing portion of the garage were raised, and that removal of the turf was all that would be required for that part of the extension. Turf had already been removed from the site of the main portion of the extension, and no archaeology was visible in the topsoil below the turf.
- 3.2** The monitored excavation was undertaken with an 8 ton Kubota excavator using a flat bladed bucket, and proceeded to a depth of 0.55m below the existing floor surface of the house, that being the depth of the upper portion of the footings.
- 3.3** A small, silted up, brick-built drain was pulled down during the course of the excavation. The natural of Wadhurst clay was encountered across the site, and no archaeological features were encountered.
- 3.4** Given that the footings would be cut into the natural soil, and not disturbing any archaeology it was decided to end the archaeological observation of the ground work at this point.
- 3.5** The spoil was visually inspected and also scanned with a Garrett ACE 250 metal detector for the recovery of artefacts, before being removed from the site.
- 3.6** 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.
- 3.7** 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 FCR 14 has been allocated.



## 4.0 Results

**4.1** The topsoil was assigned as Context **1001**. This is a soft silty loam, mid red-brown in colour, with inclusions of less than 1% Ceramic Building Material (CBM). This context has a depth of 200mm in the East of the Site, and 400mm in the West of the site. This variation in depth is seen in the other contexts, and is interpreted as hill wash. The subsoil (Context **1002**) is a soft silty clay, yellow-brown in colour, with CBM and quartzite masonry inclusions. Context **1002** has a depth from 200mm to 0.6m in the east of the site, and from 400mm to 1.1m in the west of the site. Contexts **1001** & **1002** (Plate 1), contain the only finds from the site.



**Plate 1:** Contexts **1001** & **1002** South West corner.

**4.2** Context **1003** is the natural Wadhurst clay. It is firm and yellow-red in colour it has a depth from 0.6m to 1m in the East, (Context **1003**) is visible at the base of the excavation in the west, but its depth is unknown. Beneath (Context **1003**) is a very firm layer of natural (Context **1004**), this is yellow-grey in colour and is a roughly even mix of sandy clay and angular sandstone blocks the total depth of this context is unknown, however it is visible to a depth of 400mm in the East of the site. Contexts **1001-1004** can be seen in Plate 2, and the angle of the slope is highlighted in Plate 3.

**4.3** No archaeological features or deposits were noted during the watching brief.



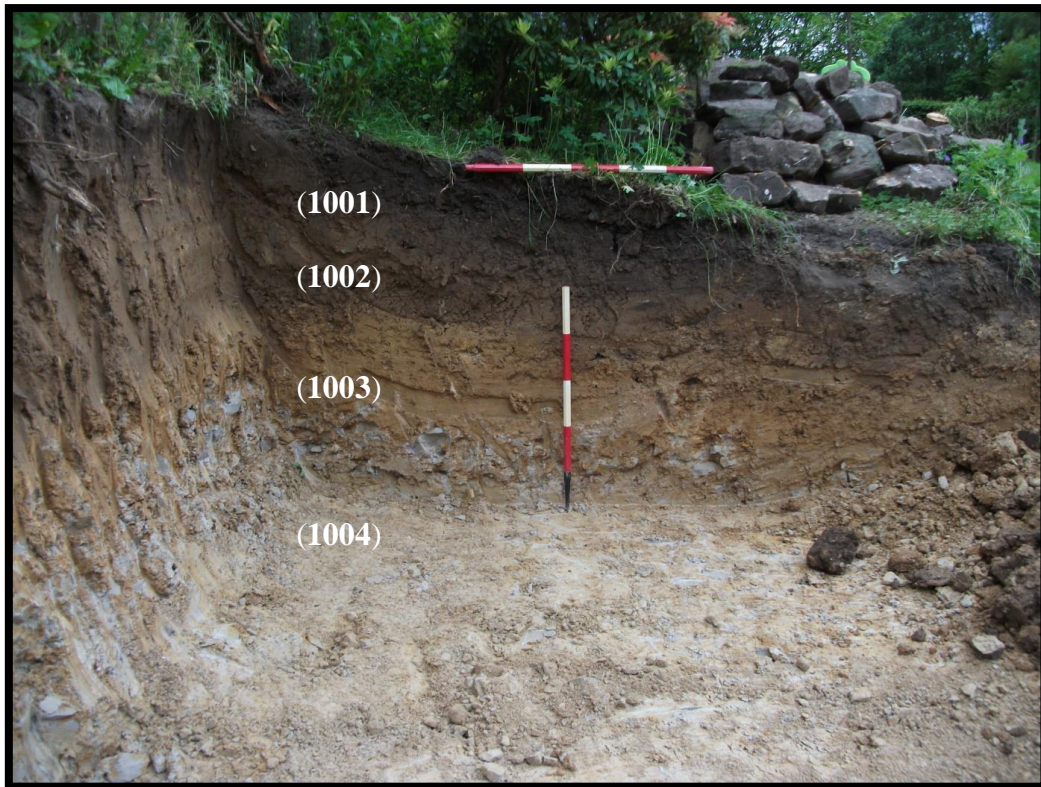


Plate 2: South East corner of excavation, showing Contexts **1001-1004**.

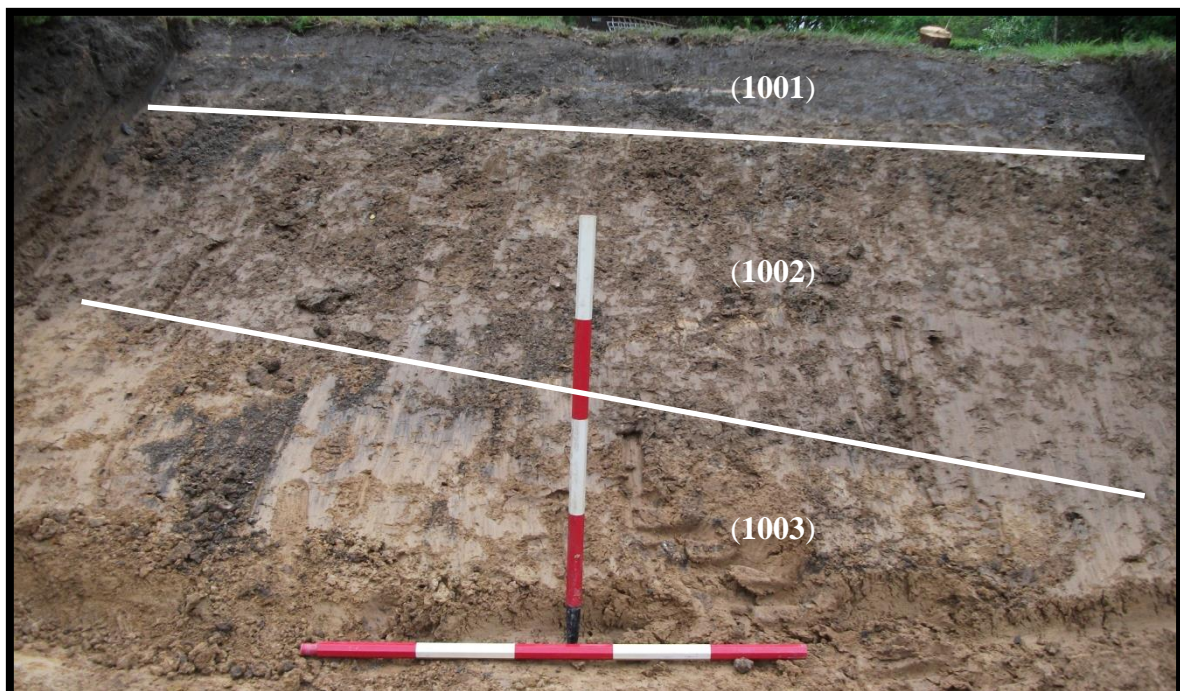


Plate 3: South edge of excavation highlighting the angle of the slope across the excavation.

## 5.0 The Finds.

5.0.1 A small assemblage of artefacts was recovered during the watching brief, and are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of artefacts

Context	Pottery	Glass	Other	Dating
1001	7/51g	2/52g	Bone 1/378g Metal 1/142g	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century
1002	5/161g	6/191g	CBM 1/119g Metal 3/35g	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century

5.0.2 The assemblage is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis and has been discarded.

### 5.1 *The Pottery* by Luke Barber

5.1.1 A small assemblage of pottery was recovered from Contexts **1001** and **1002** during the archaeological monitoring. The seven sherds from Context **1001** include glazed red earthenware (2/27g: uncertain form), blue transfer-printed whiteware (3/10g: a willow pattern plate and two cups), refined whiteware (1/9g: a scalloped plate) and English porcelain (1/5g: a saucer). The sherds are quite fresh and as a group suggest deposition between c. 1840 and 1920.

5.1.2 The five sherds from Context **1002** are also late, but of a little more interest. These consist of green transfer-printed whiteware (1/1g: with foliage decoration), English stoneware (1/41g: a preserve jar with tan top) and three quite fresh sherds of plain refined whiteware (3/119g: a hemispherical bowl, a plate and a probable saucer/side plate).

5.1.3 The latter has a green transfer-printed maker's mark on its base (Alfred Meakin. England, around a crown) suggesting a very late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century date. This maker is known to have supplied refined white earthenware to the military camps at Seaford during the Great War. In addition the camps at Seaford have produced identical utilitarian hemispherical bowls and plain plates as in the current assemblage and it is quite likely these vessels originated at the nearby Crowborough army camp.

## 5.2 *The Glass* by Chris Butler

5.2.1 A small number of glass fragments were recovered. Context **1001** produced two fragments from jars, and Context **1002** produced five clear glass fragments from bottles and a single base fragment from a paste jar with an embossed sun/flower design. All of the glass dates from the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 5.3 *The Ceramic Building Material* by Luke Barber

5.3.1 Context **1002** produced a 119g fragment from a well formed and fired combination peg/nib tile of late 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

## 5.4 *Other Finds* by Chris Butler

5.4.1 A builder's 5" pointing trowel with a wooden crimson coloured handle was found in Context **1001**, while Context **1002** produced two iron nail fragments, and a broken iron knife with a *xylo* (imitation wooden) 80mm long handle of late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

5.4.2 A large distal fragment from a cattle tibia bone was found in Context 1001. It had been cleanly sawn some 6" from the end, and was probably used to boil the bone marrow to produce a nutritious snack, common in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 6.0 Discussion

- 6.1 The watching brief did not produce any archaeological features, and the shallow uncomplicated stratigraphy confirmed the past use of this site as a field. 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<sup>18</sup>.
- 6.2 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<sup>19</sup>, however there was no similar evidence found during this watching brief.
- 6.3 The artefact assemblage all dates from the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is consistent with the date of the early development along Church Road.
- 6.4 The watching brief was successful, and achieved its aims.

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<sup>18</sup> Butler, C. 2014 *Heritage Statement for Feldings, Church Road, Rotherfield, East Sussex*. CBAS

<sup>19</sup> Atkin, D. 2012 *Archaeological Watching Brief at The Sheiling, Rotherfield, East Sussex*, CBAS0282

## **7.0 Acknowledgements**

**7.1** I would like to thank David Martin for commissioning this archaeological watching brief, and his on-site staff for their assistance and co-operation. I would also like to thank Luke Barber and Chris Butler for their reports on the artefacts.

**7.2** The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler MifA, and it was monitored by Greg Chuter for ESCC.





Fig. 1: Feldings, Rotherfield: Location of Site  
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100037471





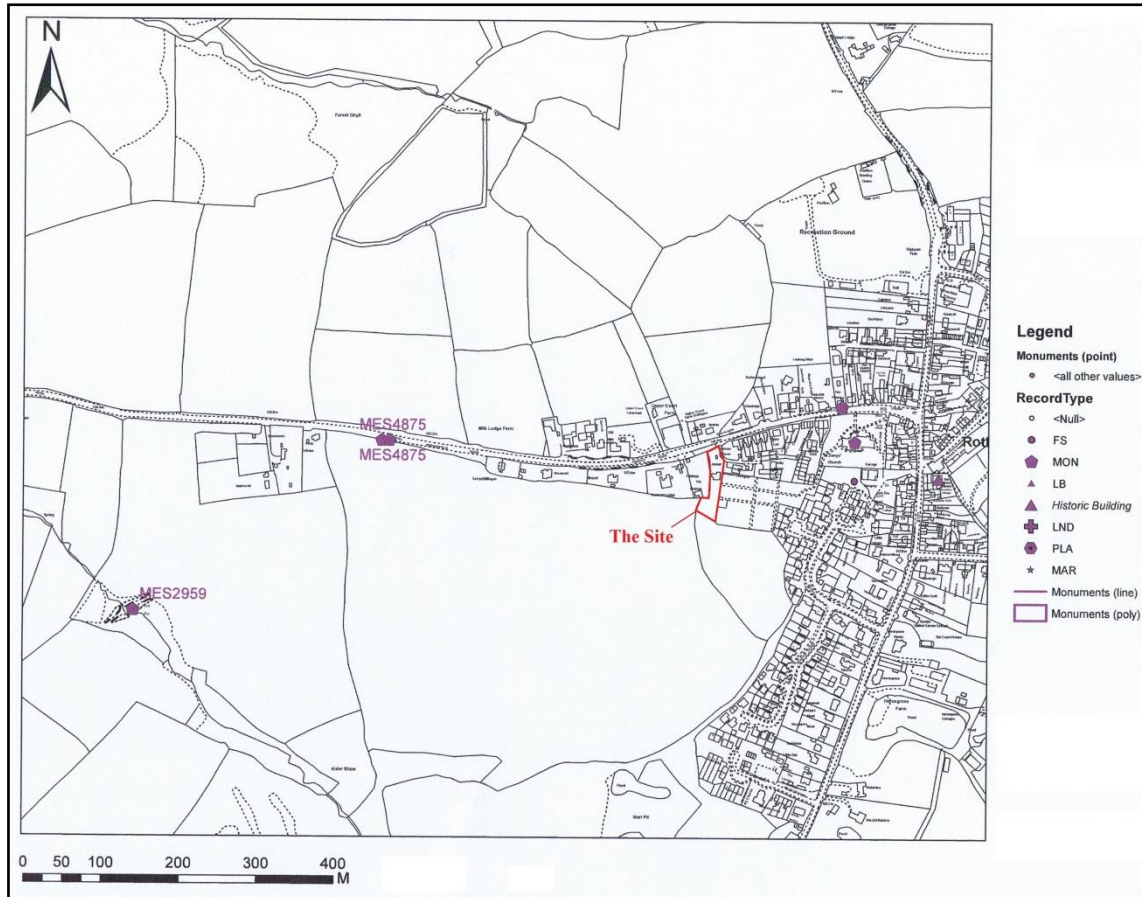


Fig. 3: Feldings, Rotherfield: Sites on the HER  
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)

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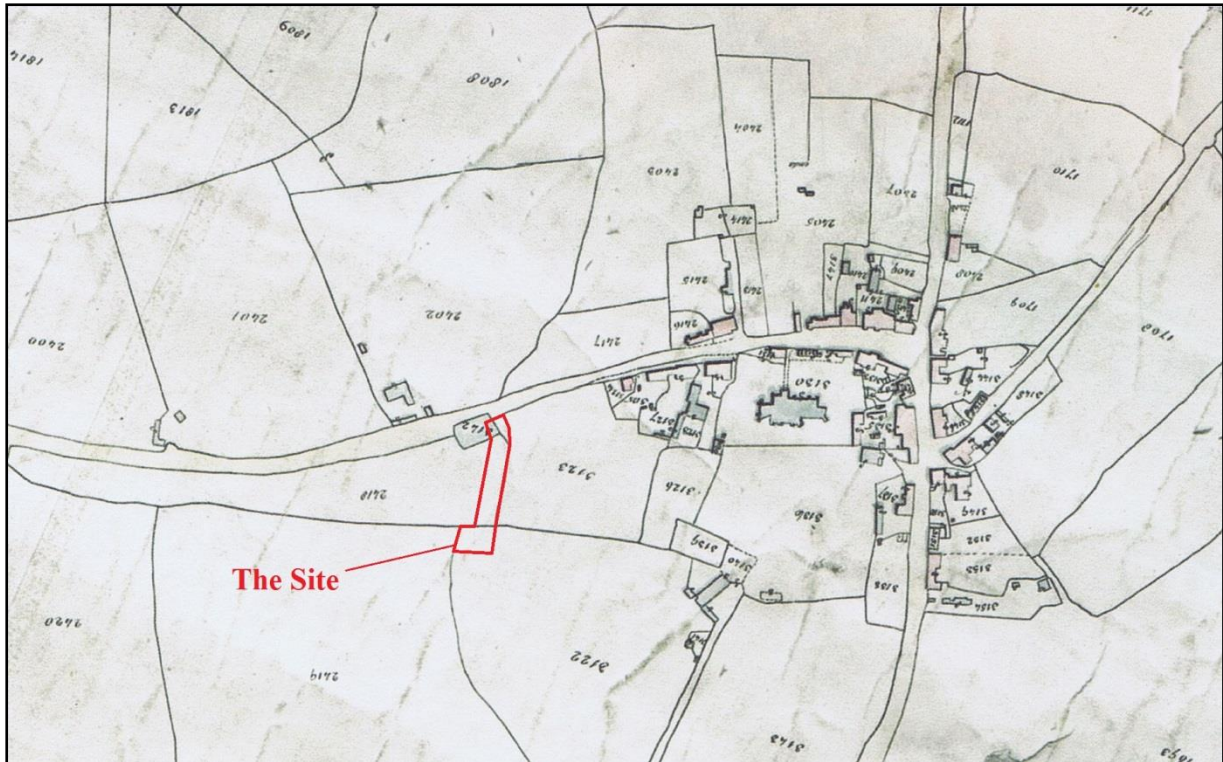


Fig. 4: Feldings, Rotherfield: Rotherfield Tithe Map 1839  
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)

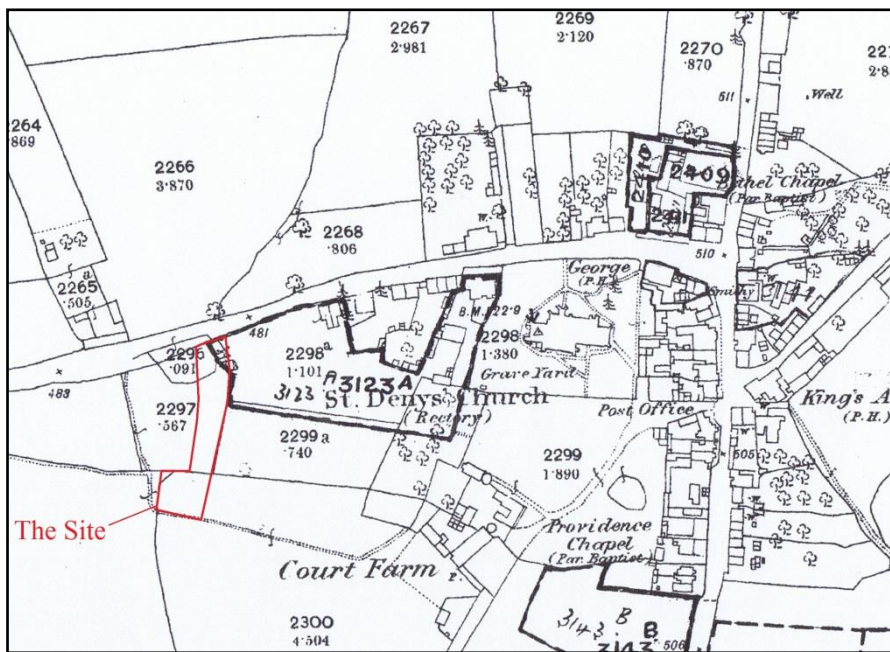


Fig. 5: Feldings, Rotherfield: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map (1875)



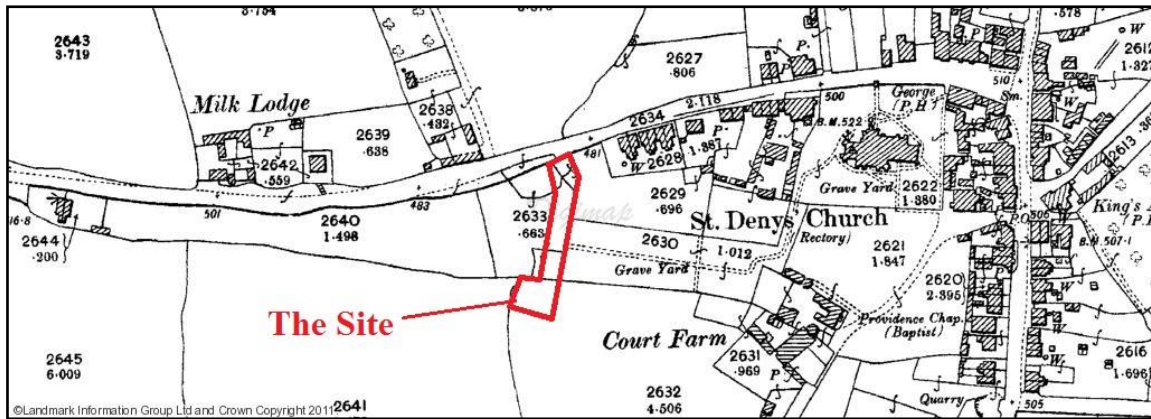


Fig. 6: Feldings, Rotherfield: 2nd Edition OS Map (1898)

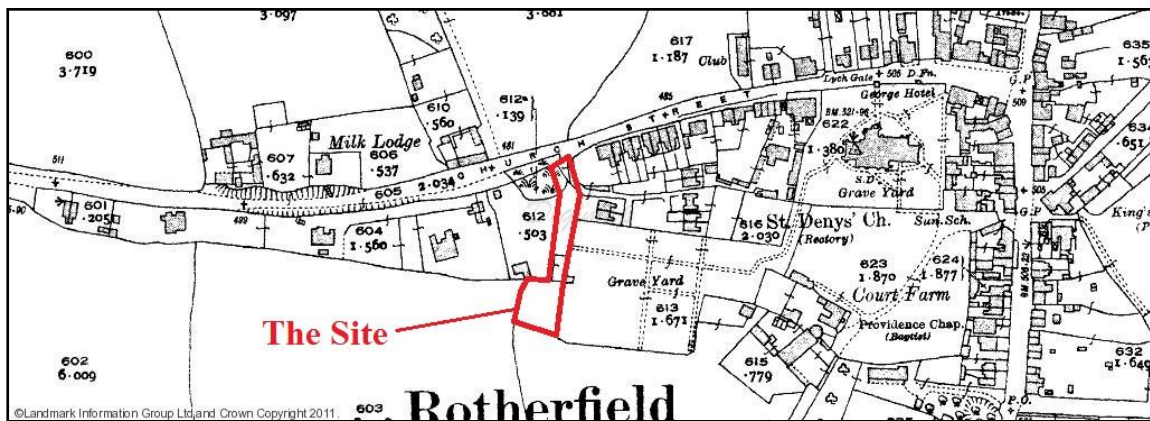


Fig. 7: Feldings, Rotherfield: 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS Map (1931)



Fig. 8: Feldings, Rotherfield: Development Plan showing areas monitored  
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### Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

Site Code	FCR14					
Identification Name and Address	Feldings, Rotherfield, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or	Wealden					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 5540 2970					
Geology	Ashdown Beds, with Wadhurst Clay and outcrops of Tunbridge Wells Sand to the South					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief <b>X</b>	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban <b>X</b>	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 20/5/14- 21/5/14	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Mr D. J. Martin					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MIfA					
Project Supervisor	Steffan Klemenic					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM <b>X</b>	Other		
<p>Summary</p> <p><i>A watching brief was carried out at Feldings, Rotherfield during the construction of an extension and new garage. No archaeological features were found, and a small assemblage of artefacts recovered from the topsoil and subsoil all dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.</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, a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and 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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