

**Orchard House, Plough Hill,  
Basted, near Borough Green, Kent**

**(NGR 560909 155609)**

**Planning Ref: TM/05/04208**

**Project no. 2465**

**by Greg Priestley-Bell AIFA**

**September 2006**

## Archaeology South-East

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*Archaeology South-East is a division of the Field Archaeology Unit, University College London, one of the largest groupings of academic archaeologists in the country. Consequently, Archaeology South-East has access to the conservation, computing and environmental backup of the college, as well as a range of other archaeological services.*

*The Field Archaeology Unit and South Eastern Archaeological Services (which became Archaeology South-East in 1996) were established in 1974 and 1991 respectively. Although field projects have been conducted world-wide, the Field Archaeology Unit retains a special interest in south-east England with the majority of our contract and consultancy work concentrated in Sussex, Kent, Greater London and Essex.*

*Based in the local community, the Field Archaeology Unit sees an important part of its work as explaining the results to the broader public. Public lectures, open days, training courses and liaison with local archaeological societies are aspects of its community-based approach.*

*Drawing on experience of the countryside and towns of the south east of England the Unit can give advice and carry out surveys at an early stage in the planning process. By working closely with developers and planning authorities it is possible to incorporate archaeological work into developments with little inconvenience.*

**Summary**

*In April 2006, Archaeology South-East maintained a watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a stable block and sand school on land at Orchard House, Plough Hill, Basted, near Borough Green, Kent. The work identified one significant archaeological feature. The base of a possible midden produced a large quantity of pottery dating predominantly to between mid/late 14<sup>th</sup> century and mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, but also containing sherds from a later 13<sup>th</sup>-century cooking pot. Although no associated features were identified, it was likely that further medieval remains lay nearby beyond the bounds of the application area.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

**1.1** In April 2006, Archaeology South-East (a division of the Field Archaeology Unit, University College London) was commissioned by Ms Sue Payne to maintain an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of stables, storage building and sand school at Orchard House, Plough Hill, Basted, Plaxtol, near Borough Green, Kent (NGR 560909 155609) (Fig.1).

**1.2** Orchard House lies in the parish of Plaxtol, on Plough Hill between Basted and Claygate Hill. The underlying geology according to the British Geological Survey consists of Hythe Beds.

**1.3** A planning application has been granted by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council for the erection of stables, storage building and new sand school including change of use of agricultural land to recreational purposes on land at Orchard House (Planning ref. TM/05/04208). The following condition has been placed on the consent:

*No development 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 been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

**1.4** Details of the techniques to be used during the watching brief were set out in a specification (henceforth the 'Brief') prepared by the Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council (Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's advisors in archaeological matters). This document provides background information re-used in this report with due acknowledgement. The Brief also stated that if significant remains were revealed during the watching brief, further archaeological measures might be required to secure mitigation on the site.

**1.5** The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the Brief, full details of which are contained within the archive. The work was carried out during two visits on the 14<sup>th</sup> April and 5<sup>th</sup> August 2006 by Greg Priestley-Bell (Senior Archaeologist).

## **2.0 Historical and Archaeological Background**

**2.1** Data held on the Kent Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) relating to archaeological remains recorded within a 500 metre radius of the current site is summarised in Table 1, and the locations indicated on Figure 1.

**Table 1: The SMR Data (Fig. 1)**

Site No. on Fig. 1	SMR No.	NGR (TQ)	Description
1	TQ65NW5	560870 156170	Site of Palaeolithic finds – Harrison collection of flint
2	TQ65NW8	560980 155560	Site of Palaeolithic finds – Harrison collection of flint
3	TQ65NW55	560840 156110	Site of Palaeolithic finds – Harrison collection of flint
4	TQ65NW56	560890 156050	Site of Palaeolithic finds – Harrison collection of flint
5	TQ65NW58	561450 155380	Site of Palaeolithic finds – Harrison collection of flint
6	TQ65NW83	560800 155900	Findspot for Neolithic flint axehead
7	TQ65NW7	561080 156120	Remains of Early Iron Age and/or medieval buildings in Haweswood
8	TQ65NW81	561250 155490	Clackers hall – probably built late 15 <sup>th</sup> - to early 16 <sup>th</sup> -century
9	TQ65NW50	561250 155490	15 <sup>th</sup> - to 16 <sup>th</sup> -century cottage – Grade II* Listed
10	TQ65NW97	560730 155940	Site of 17 <sup>th</sup> - to 20 <sup>th</sup> -century paper mill

**2.2** The precise locations of Harrison’s finds are only approximate. However, given the concentration of lithic material recorded in the surrounding countryside, it is considered possible that further finds may be exposed by the current groundworks.

### **3.0 Methodology**

**3.1** Groundworks were carried out in two phases in two areas (Fig.2):

- A** Topsoil strip and ground level reduction over the stables building footprint
- B** Topsoil strip and ground level reduction over the area of the proposed sand school

**3.2** A continuous watching brief was maintained throughout topsoil stripping while selected areas of subsoil/natural reduction were also monitored. Archaeological monitoring included an inspection of the excavated topsoil and other deposits in order to identify concentrations of artefacts or ecofacts, and an examination of exposed surfaces for archaeological remains.

**3.3** All significant archaeological remains identified were recorded to accepted professional standards and in accordance with *Standards*

*and Guidance: watching brief* of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Full details of the techniques used are contained within the archive.

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Area A (Stables)

**4.1.2** Topsoil (Context **1**) consisted of c. 200mm of mid/dark greyish brown sandy silt. Topsoil overlay deposit (**2**) of mid orangey brown sandy clay with 20% gravel. The underlying natural (**3**) was mid yellowish brown sandy clay.

**4.1.3** Although a small quantity of finds were recovered from the topsoil, no features were revealed during excavations within the building footprint.

### 4.2 Area B (Sand school)

**4.2.1** Topsoil (**1**) and underlying deposits (**2 & 3**) were as Area **A** above.

**4.2.2** A possible shallow cut or natural depression (**5**, Figs 2 & 3), measuring c. 2m X 3m and 100mm deep, contained a deposit (**4**) of mid orangey grey very silty clay. A large quantity of pottery dating between the later 13<sup>th</sup> century and mid 15<sup>th</sup> century was recovered, together with ceramic building material (CBM) bone, shell and an iron nail.

## 5.0 Finds by Luke Barber

**5.1** The watching brief recovered a moderately large assemblage of finds. These are quantified in Table 2.

Context	Pottery	CBM	Clay pipe	Worked flint	Bone	Shell	Fe
<b>1</b> Area A	1/18	4/88					
<b>1</b> Area B			1/4	1/6			
<b>4</b>	126/1598	8/268			4/4	4/22	3/14

**Table 2:** Finds quantification (No./weight in grams)

## 5.2 The Pottery

**5.2.2** The archaeological investigations recovered a relatively large assemblage of pottery, though this was recovered from only two contexts. A single base sherd of glazed red earthenware was recovered from Context 1 in Area A. This is slightly abraded and is likely to date from the later 17<sup>th</sup> to mid 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- 5.2.3** The remainder of the pottery was all recovered from Context 4. This material, although varying in sherd size from small to large (up to 100mm across), is all generally unabraded suggesting it has not been subjected to redeposition.
- 5.2.4** The earliest pottery consists of 13 unabraded sherds (214g) of sand and shell tempered cooking pot, probably all from the same later 13<sup>th</sup>-century cooking pot. The majority of the assemblage consists of medium/well-fired vessels tempered with medium sand. Both oxidised (orange) and reduced (grey) vessels are present.
- 5.2.5** The feature sherds present represent cooking pots, bowls and jugs. Decoration on the cooking pots is rare and, when it does exist, consists of simple combed incised lines. The jugs are notably plain, with no decoration and, where present at all, only spots of glaze. A few plain finer sand tempered vessels are also present though these are not diagnostic of form. Some 12 sherds of hard-fired fine/medium sand tempered vessels are also present. These, where discernable, are from pitchers with wide strap handles. All of these vessels are likely to be of local manufacture and could conceivably be late products from the Limpsfield industry.
- 5.2.6** Only three sherds of finer wares are present: sparse fine sandy off-white/buff wares with rare angular quartz inclusions. These are likely to be from the Surrey whiteware industry. Taken together it is probable this assemblage was deposited at some point between the mid/late 14<sup>th</sup> and mid 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **5.3 Ceramic Building Material (CBM)**

- 5.3.1** A small assemblage of ceramic building material was recovered. Context 4 produced 11 pieces of peg tile in medium/well-fired fine sand tempered fabrics with occasional grog/iron oxide inclusions to 1mm. The remains of two square peg holes are present. The tile is in keeping with the date of the pottery from this context. The only other tile was recovered from Context 1 in Area A. This material is in a similar fabric to that in Context 4 and is probably of a similar date.

### **5.4 Bone**

- 5.4.1** Four fragments of cattle size longbone were recovered during the excavation. The bulk sample produced an additional small bone assemblage including sheep metatarsal fragments, one cattle bone fragment and several small mammal bone elements. The bone is in a moderate state of preservation with no distinguishing features.

### **5.5 Miscellaneous Finds**

**5.5.1** The other finds recovered consist of a plain clay pipe stem of 17<sup>th</sup>-century date and one undiagnostic flint flake from Context 1, Area B, and 4 oyster shells and 3 iron nail fragments from Context 4.

**5.6** The finds from the site are considered to hold mixed potential for further study. Only the pottery from Context 4 is considered to hold any potential for further analysis as it is an uncontaminated group from a period often not represented well in the ceramic record. This material should be retained for long-term curation if it is not to be studied at the present time. The remainder of the finds can be discarded.

## **6.0 Environmental Sample** by Lucy Allott

**6.1** One bulk sample was taken from a possible midden (Context 4) during this watching brief to aid the recovery of finds and establish evidence for environmental remains.

**6.2** The sample was processed using tank flotation and the residue (heavy fraction) and flot (light fraction) were retained on 500µm and 250µm meshes respectively. The flot and residue were air dried and passed through graded sieves and further sorted into artefact categories.

**6.3** Archaeological remains include pottery (late 14<sup>th</sup> to mid 15<sup>th</sup> century), burnt clay or daub, CBM, bone fragments (described above) and charred botanical remains. The botanical remains consisted of one charred *Triticum* sp. (wheat) grain and charcoal fragments.

**6.4** The archaeological remains within this sample are consistent with the hand-collected finds. The environmental remains are limited and do not hold potential for further work.

## **7.0 Discussion**

**7.1** The single piece of worked flint recovered during the watching brief probably represents the 'background' level that might be expected in those areas between the concentrations identified by Harrison.

**7.2** Although the pottery-rich deposit (4) appeared to lie within a shallow cut (5), the character of the feature suggested that cut 5 was a natural depression or area of deep trample. It is possible that the feature represents the base of a midden, a general refuse heap of predominantly organic material that would ultimately have been spread onto the land to improve the soil. Such a feature would probably have been located close to a domestic dwelling, and the unabraded nature of the pottery certainly suggested that the material was not redeposited. In view of this, it is likely that further mid 14<sup>th</sup>- to mid 15<sup>th</sup>-century remains lie close to the application site, probably just to the east further up Plough Hill.

**8.0 Conclusions**

**8.1** The only significant archaeological remains revealed was the possible midden identified at the extreme eastern end of the application site. The feature indicated the strong possibility of nearby medieval domestic settlement beyond the application area. The lack of archaeological features and finds from the remainder of the site suggested only a low level of activity in that area during earlier periods and exclusively agricultural use in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

**8.2** In view of this, the current development is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the archaeological record.

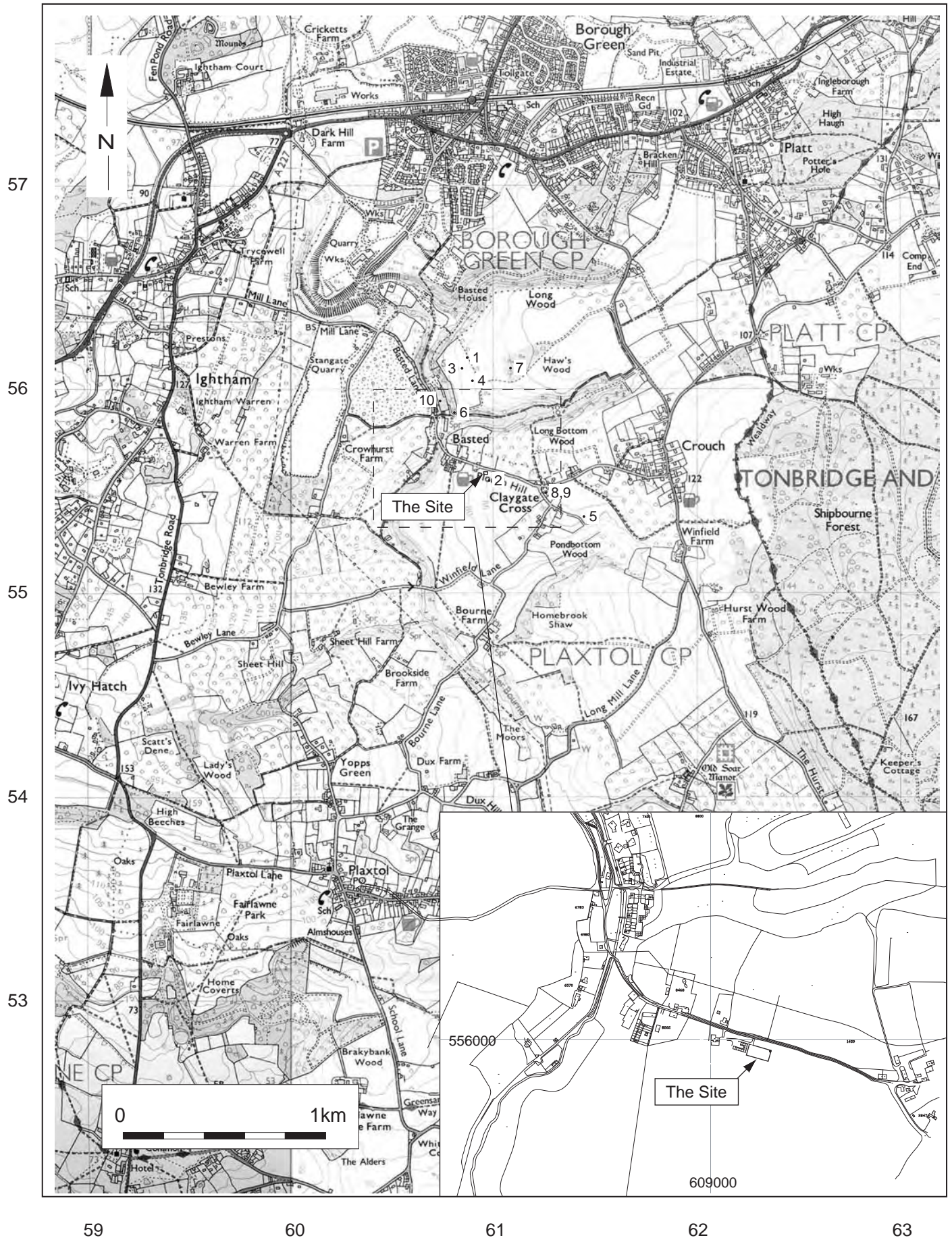
**9.0 Consideration of Methodology and Confidence Rating**

**9.1** A continuous watching brief ensures that all significant groundworks are fully monitored. In view of this, a confidence rating of 95% is given for the identification of remains within the area of investigation.

**Archaeology South-East**  
Orchard House, Basted, Kent

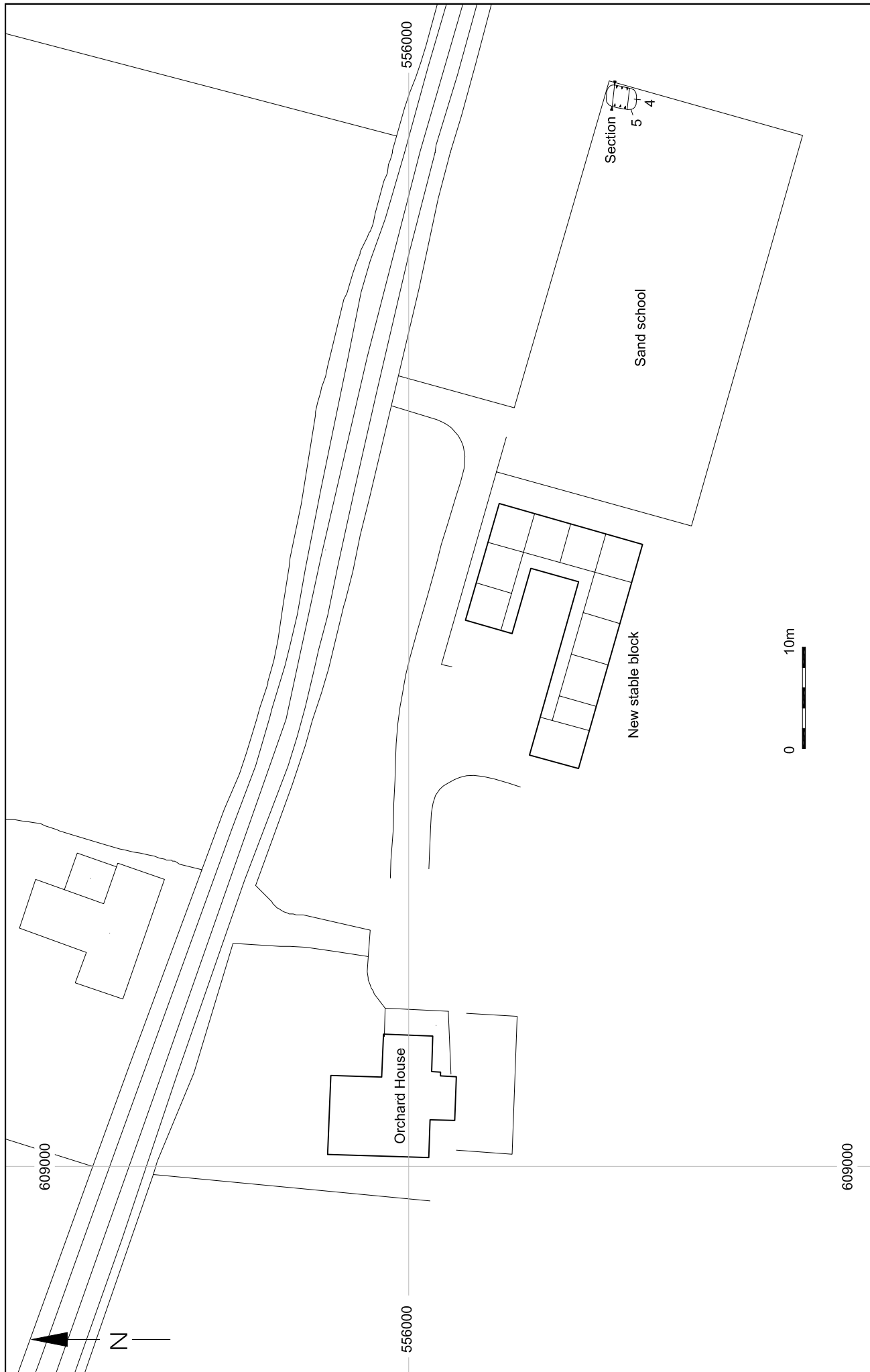
**SMR Summary Form**

Site Code	BBG 06					
Identification Name and Address	Orchard House, Plough Hill, Basted, Plaxtol, near Borough Green, Kent					
County, District &/or Borough	Kent County Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 560909 155609					
Geology	Hythe Beds					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2465					
****	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief X	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Farmyard		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 14/4/06 and 5/8/06	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Ms Sue Payne					
Project Manager(s)	Darryl Palmer					
Project Supervisor	Greg Priestley-Bell					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED X	PM	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.  <i>In April 2006, Archaeology South-East maintained a watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a stable block and sand school on land at Orchard House, Plough Hill, Basted, near Borough Green, Kent. The work identified one significant archaeological feature. The base of a possible midden produced a large quantity of pottery dating predominantly to between mid/late 14<sup>th</sup> century and mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, but also containing sherds from a later 13<sup>th</sup>-century cooking pot. Although no associated features were identified, it was likely that further medieval remains lay nearby beyond the bounds of the application area.</i></p>						



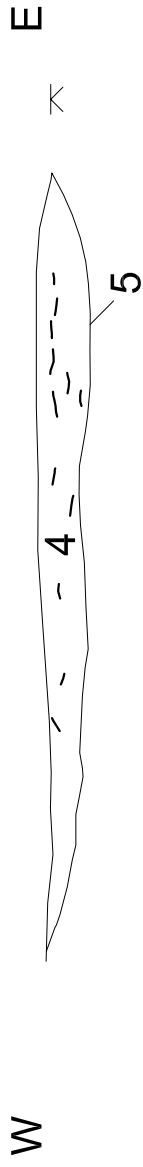
© ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH EAST			Orchard House, Basted, Kent	Fig. 1
Ref: 2465	Sept 2006	Drawn by: JLR	Site Location Plan	

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© <b>Archaeology South-East</b>		Orchard House, Basted, Kent		Fig. 2
Ref: 2465	Sept 2006	Drawn by: FEG	Site Plan	

Section 1



— Pottery



© Archaeology South-East		Orchard House, Basted, Kent		Fig. 3
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