

*Design for a field evaluation project  
at Bridge Farm, Wellingham, Ringmer, East Sussex  
for the Trench 7 excavations*



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**Director – Robert Wallace, PCIfA, MA, BA. Deputy Director – David Millum, MCIfA, MA, BA.**

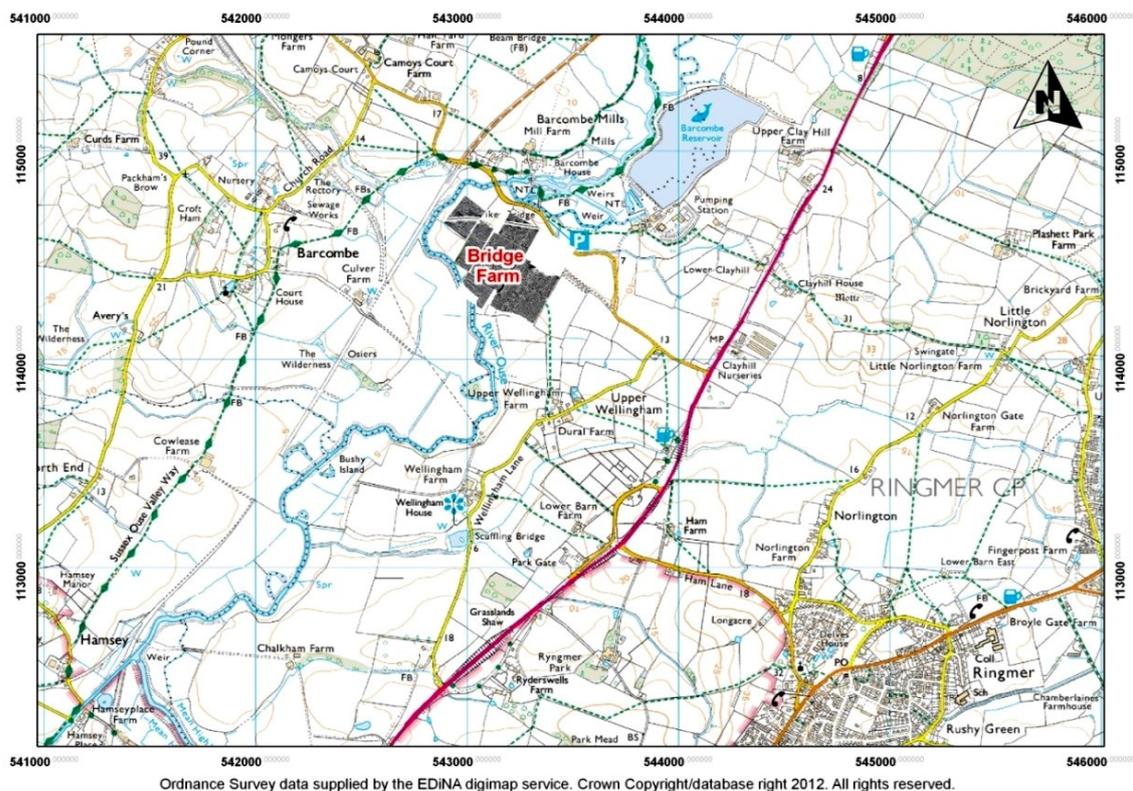
## ***Design for a field evaluation project for Trench 7 at Bridge Farm, Wellingham, Ringmer, East Sussex***

### **1. SUMMARY**

This project design sets out the aims and methodology for the continuation of the archaeological evaluation project at Bridge Farm, Wellingham, Ringmer, East Sussex. The project will seek to involve the local community, archaeological volunteers and university students in the investigation of the historic environment under the supervision of the directors of the Culver Archaeological Project.

### **2. SITE LOCATION**

The site comprises agricultural land situated in the bend of the River Ouse, the fields forming Bridge Farm, Wellingham, Nr. Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5BX, centred on National Grid Reference 543200 114400, map reference TQ432144 (**Figure 1**).



***Figure 1: Location map of the Bridge Farm project site***

### **3. PROJECT CONTEXT**

Trench 7 of the Bridge Farm Project will be undertaken by the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP), an independent research group which is investigating the historical environment of the alluvial plain of the Upper Ouse Valley in the parishes of Barcombe and Ringmer. Since its inception in 2005 CAP has consistently maintained a high standard of archaeological research whilst seeking to actively involve the local community in the discovery and interpretation of their landscape heritage and archaeological remains. CAP has also offered training and practical experience to archaeological students and this is formalised in 2015 with an agreement with Canterbury Christ Church University to offer an accredited training course for their undergraduates. This course is also be available to other students and volunteers.

The project will include geophysical surveying, magnetometer and/or resistivity, and supervised metal detecting, as well as open area excavation of targeted areas to include environmental sampling.

The preparatory geophysical surveys have indicated a substantial amount of below ground archaeology, with a magnetometer survey undertaken in 2011 showing a large double-ditched enclosure, seemingly interrupting a grid of road ditches. The initial interpretation as a potential Romano-British settlement site has been supported by the results from the 2013 excavations (Millum & Wallace 2013: Millum 2022b: Wallace 2014: Millum & Wallace 2017). The settlement site is situated on the projected junction of three major Roman roads, which met at a point on the River Ouse where it is tidal and potentially navigable; making it an attractive site for a trading and/or administrative centre. The evidence from the site and surrounding landscape suggests that the archaeology within this previously unknown settlement potentially dates from the early period of Roman occupation in the mid-late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD until the start of its collapse in the late 4<sup>th</sup>/early 5<sup>th</sup>.

This settlement forms an important part of a wider local Roman landscape, which includes a villa complex, detached bathhouse, industrial sites, roads and field systems, and which has yet to be fully investigated and interpreted. The evidence from Bridge Farm will aid understanding of the development of Roman activity in this area plus any activity in the pre and post-Roman periods. Within this single site, there is the potential for uncovering activity from the beginning to the end of the domestic Roman era in East Sussex and potentially gain valuable data on how this affected the native British community of the area.

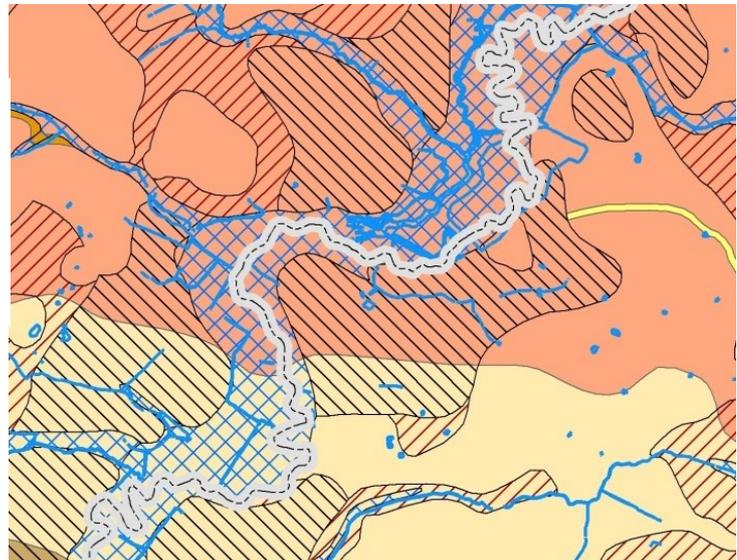
Part of the site comprises intensively farmed arable land subject to regular ploughing using soil compaction avoidance techniques. All the land is well below 10m AOD and within the River Ouse flood plain. Both these factors have the potential for damaging and/or altering the predominantly shallow archaeology and this, combined with a real danger of 'night-hawking', puts the archaeology on this site at risk. The potential risk to the archaeology and the regional, if not national, importance of the archaeology, especially if evidencing how British people lived under Roman authority, supports the use of the intrusive works defined within this design.

#### **4. GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND**

The underlying geological structure of the site is sedimentary with the Ouse valley cutting through east west bands of Lower Greensand and Weald Clay which are heavily mantled with Head and River Terrace deposits (**Figure 2**). The site lies on the eastern bank of the Ouse floodplain, north of Lewes, which comprises deep alluvium flanked by margins of first and second terrace valley gravels. The area supports gleyic argillic brown earths of the Waterstock Association soils on the floodplain, with pelo-alluvial gley Fladbury 3 Association soils adjacent to the river (Millum, 2011). Dr Mike Allen (Allen, 2013) reporting on the soil structure in 2013 highlighted the permissivity of the localised geology for rapid pedogenesis (soil generation) and also the effects that post depositional gleying and annual

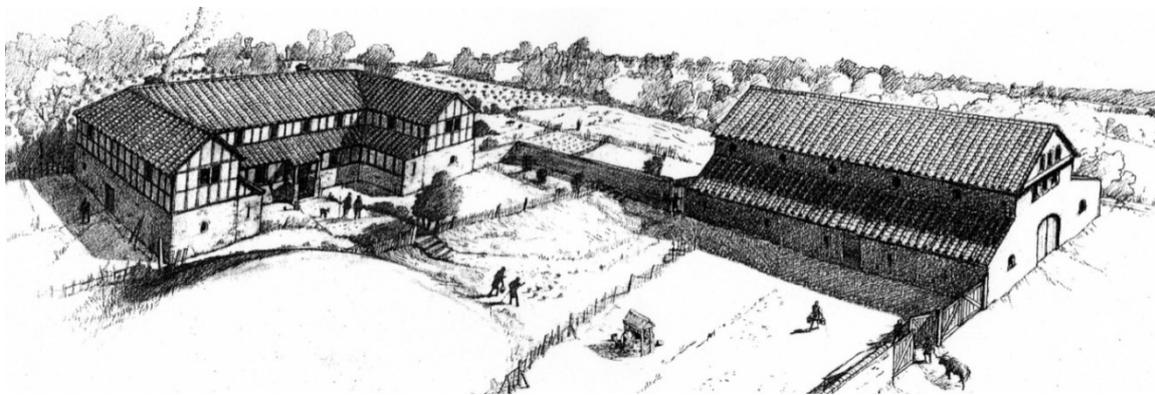
flooding are having on the archaeology. This has resulted in a loss of the upper levels of the archaeological record and a blurring of some of the more ephemeral deeper features. It was surprising to find in 2013 that features clear in the geophysics were often hard to trace in the ground and the conditions greatly restricted any COSMIC type analysis of historic agricultural practices although careful investigation and recording of the upper layers of any excavation area remain a priority.

**Figure 2:** Solid and drift geology of the site area (BGS 2010)



## 5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the late 1990s a wing corridor-type Romano-style building was discovered in Dunstalls Field on Culver Farm, Barcombe with other casual finds indicating much wider Romano period activity and possible settlement. This led to the discovery of an adjacent aisled building and a further T-shaped building forming a reasonably sized 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century villa complex (**Figure 3**) and subsequently a detached bathhouse of similar period in the adjacent field. Excavation of these buildings was undertaken by the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (UCL), the Mid Sussex Field Archaeology Team (MSFAT) and the Centre for Community



Engagement Department of the University of Sussex (CCE), under the joint directorship of David Rudling, MCIfA and Chris Butler, MCIfA.

**Figure 3:** A conjectural reconstruction of the villa complex by Andy Gammon

Concurrently, from 2005, the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP), under founding director Robert Wallace, was investigating the wider historical landscape around the villa complex; discovering a substantial Roman road and instigating an extensive programme of geophysical surveys, systematic field walking, evaluation trenching and open area excavation along the road's corridor, to the west of the River Ouse in Culver and Cowlease Farms, Barcombe (**Appendix 1a**). This work has identified several previously unknown sites of roadside activity (Millum & Wallace, 2012), including industrial

and potential ritual sites. Research by CAP has also revealed activity from the Mesolithic period onwards within the surrounding area, including several instances of Middle Bronze Age activity, one of which is suggested to be one of the earliest waterlogged sites discovered in Sussex (Allen, 2011).

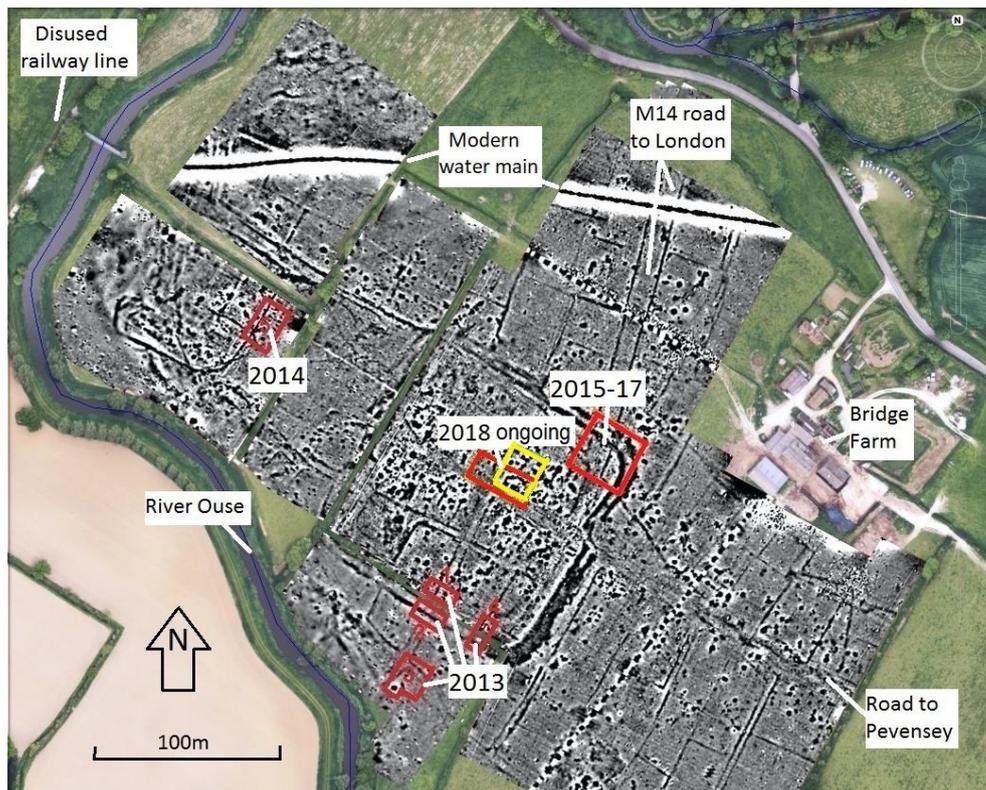
In 2011, CAP's investigations expanded to include land at Bridge Farm, Wellingham, on the eastern side of the river which led to the discovery of the Romano-British settlement now under investigation (**Figure 4**). This area was surveyed by David Staveley using a Bartington dual sensor magnetic field gradiometer assisted by CAP volunteers.

The settlement is located upon the junction of the Greensand Way from Chichester, a road eastwards to Pevensey and a road to London, RR14 (Margary, 1973), which ran through the Wealden iron producing area; a crucial aid to early Roman expansion. The site's location upon the River Ouse would have made it an ideal post to transfer heavy and bulky cargos from slow wagons onto river boats for transport to the coast. It is quite probable that a settlement in this situation would have included an administrative post to control such trade and even an official staging post such as a *mutatio*.

Coins and pottery dating from the first century through to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> have been found on the site. Results from the four open-area trenches excavated in 2013 confirmed that the bivalent enclosure truncated the original 1<sup>st</sup> century settlement roadside ditches. Analysis of the pottery taken from the ditch fills suggested that the enclosure took place during the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century when other settlements, with an official function, were also fortified (Millum 2022b).

## **6. AIMS OF FIELDWORK**

- 6.1** To establish the nature, date, purpose of selected buried features, interpreted from the geophysical survey images (**Figure 4**) by targeted open area excavation and evaluation trenching. Trench 7 will investigate the centre of the enclosed settlement around the central crossroads.
- 6.2** To assess the state of preservation of any archaeology uncovered with an objective evaluation being made of the quality of the archaeological survival and what can be learnt from it including any interpretational value.
- 6.3** To instigate an informed assessment of the archaeological potential of the various fields surrounding the core area and enhance the previous results of selected areas by further high resolution geophysical surveying.
- 6.4** To advance a better understanding of the site for formulating a programme of future investigation, site conservation and a land management strategy.
- 6.5** To encourage the involvement of the local community in investigating and understanding their historic environment.
- 6.6** To offer opportunities for local people, volunteers and students, of all levels, to gain practical experience of archaeological field practice on the site during the, surveying, excavation and post-excavation stages.
- 6.7** To accumulate sufficient data to produce an informed interpretation and report of the archaeology of the site for both archival and publication purposes.



**Figure 4:** Geophysical survey image with location of Trench 7 (2018 and 2022 onwards - yellow rectangle) and Trenches 1-4 (2013), Trench 5 (2014) and trench 6 (2015-17)

## 7. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

There are no Scheduled Archaeological Monuments, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, or areas subject to Higher Level Stewardship agreements, within the project area.

Any finds discovered that fall within the statutory definition of Treasure, as defined by the Treasures Act 1996, will be reported to the Finds Liaison Officer at Barbican House, Lewes for assessment and subsequent supervision of the mandatory procedures. Significant archaeological features will be reported to the County Archaeologist at the earliest opportunity.

In the event of human remains, either inhumations or cremations, being found work in that area will cease and the statutory provisions of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 will be followed with the County Archaeologist being informed immediately. The requisite licence from the Ministry of Justice will be sought prior to any further work being undertaken in the specific area of the remains.

## 8. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

### 8.1. Personnel and Standards

The fieldwork will be mainly undertaken by volunteers, students and members of the local community under the supervision of qualified field archaeologists in a logical and systematic programme to produce the greatest degree of information with the minimum disturbance to the site. Where less experienced personnel are involved, greater instruction will be given and novices will generally be paired with more experienced excavators. No fieldwork of any kind will be undertaken without the explicit instruction from the CAP Project Director and prior consent from the land owners. All fieldwork will be carried out in accordance with the CAP site manual, *To CAP it all* (Millum 2022a) and

comply to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance (2014)* and the *Sussex Archaeological Standards (2015)*.

## **8.2. Metal Detecting**

Any metal detecting undertaken will be by systematic survey of the site by members of established accredited metal detecting groups or archaeological volunteers under the supervision of CAP archaeologists in accordance with procedures as listed in the *CAP Design for Metal Detecting Surveys* (Millum, 2012) including the maximum depth of surface excavation of 200mm. This work will mitigate the consequences and/or deter any attempted 'night-hawking'. The metal detecting surveys will follow closely the recommendations outlined in *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Jones D. M., 2008). Metal detectors will also be used regularly by excavators to avoid loss of small metal objects.

## **8.3. Geophysical surveying**

Several fields in the immediate area of the interpreted features have still to be surveyed using geophysical equipment and areas that have been surveyed by magnetometer can still profitably be investigated by an earth resistance survey as the processes can often produce different anomalies. As some of the areas are under permanent grass a programme of geophysical surveys can continue throughout the project period, subject to extremes of weather, in order to produce a fuller and clearer picture of the buried features including any subsidiary roads heading away from the settlement area. The geophysical surveys will follow closely the recommendations outlined in *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Jones D. M., 2008)

## **8.4. Previously Excavation Trenches**

### **8.4.1. 2013 – Site Code: BRF13 Trenches 1-4**

During the spring and summer of 2013 four carefully located trenches (**Figure 4**) were excavated in selected locations in Little Park Brook and the southern edge of House Field based on interpretation of the 2011 geophysical results. This established the potential depth and condition of the archaeological features and also exposed targeted areas which assisted an initial interpretation of the site as well as defining several specific and interesting features, including the enclosure ditches, roadside ditches, possible kiln, pits and a riverside industrial area (See Millum & Wallace 2013; Millum 2014; Wallace 2014; Millum & Wallace 2017; Millum 2022b).

### **8.4.2. 2014 – Site Code: BRF14 (aka BF14) Trench 5**

In 2014 a single open area of approximately 30 x 20m was excavated. This trench was called Trench 5 (T5) to carry on the number sequence commenced in 2013 with context numbers starting at 5000 and was centred on NGR 542970 114560 (**TQ 42971456**) (**Figure 4**). This location was selected to investigate a post-built building and a waterlogged post bases of varying degradation were found in each of the 13 post-pits. A number of other post holes, 3 ditches, 2 hearths, and 2 possible sump wells were also excavated. The waterlogged nature of the lower fills offered great potential for the survival of organic artefacts and data. Several pieces of worked timber were extracted from beneath the post bases where they had been used as supporting pads, two being unique in Britain (See Millum 2014, 2021 & 2022b).

### **8.4.3. 2015-17 – Site Code: BF15-BF17 Trench 6**

In 2015 a single open area of approximately 40m x 40m was opened within which specific areas and features were investigated by careful excavation of both open areas and section slots. Several slots were dug across the inner and outer enclosure ditches to establish their uniformity and gain further dating evidence. A similar process was undertaken on various roadside ditches to both the London

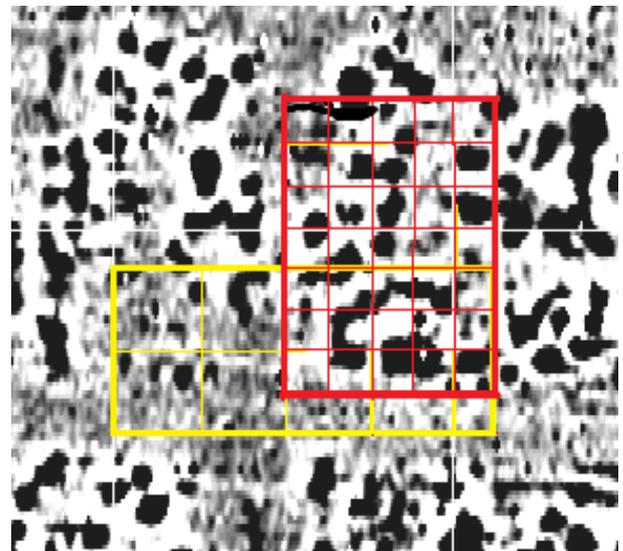
Road and a side road heading west along the north edge of the settlement. Coin evidence from the excavation suggests three possible peaks of activity in this area of the settlement occurring in the late-2<sup>nd</sup>, late-3<sup>rd</sup> and mid-4<sup>th</sup> centuries. The multi-phasing of this area proved complex and it was decided that two more years investigation in 2016 and 2017, using the knowledge gained in 2015, would be beneficial to the interpretation of this trench (Millum 2022b).

### 8.5. Opening of Trench 7 - Site Code: BF18/19/21/22 ongoing

Any mechanical digging required will take place at a time when no volunteers, students or other non-essential personnel are in the vicinity. It is anticipated that this will be restricted to the removal of the plough soil to approximately 300mm. Spoil from the excavations will be formed into stable soil heaps located at least 1m away from the trench edge. Spoil will be inspected to recover any artefacts with metal detectors being deployed regularly over both the spoil and the excavated surfaces. Given the possible ephemeral nature of the archaeology targeted and the knowledge gained in 2013-17 removal of any overburden will be undertaken most carefully and under the supervision of a qualified field archaeologist.

#### 8.5.1. 2018 - Trench 7

A new open area of 45m x 20m will be opened in 2018 being 900m<sup>2</sup> located at NGR 543210 114470 **(TQ43131445)**, within the arable field known as House Field for our summer excavations in 2018-21. We anticipate a great deal of valuable data will be gained from excavating in this location (yellow rectangle in **Figure 5**) over the centre of the enclosed settlement where the east - west 'Pevensey' road crosses the road running northeast from the 1st century grid layout excavated in 2013. At the end of the 2021 season the western 20m and southern 5m was backfilled and an area of 25m x 20m was opened to the north of the remaining trench to investigate further significant anomalies.



**Figure 5.** Location of Trench 7 2018 & 2022

### 8.6. Methodology established in 2013 - 15

The experience gained in excavating the site in 2013-17 will be put into practice. In particular it has been observed that the alluvial nature of the area has produced post depositional gleying within features which often have a hard pan sealing the lower contexts. This pan can run across the feature and into the surrounding 'natural' making the stratigraphy of the feature and its interface with the surrounding alluvium difficult to resolve. The experience over previous years allows us to interpret where this panning may conceal lower contexts and thereby excavate the complete feature correctly. The benefit of this panning is that it often seals a permanently moist to waterlogged environment that encourages the survival of organic artefacts and ecofacts. Any such area excavated is to be 100% sampled and environmental sampling will form an important part on a site likely to comprise mainly pits and ditches. It was observed in 2015 that the upper phases of the NE area appeared to be combined through alluvial and agricultural processes within certain important contexts and especial care will be given to trying to resolve the phasing of any similar areas discovered in trench 7.

## **8.7. Recording**

Single context recording methodology will be employed with the addition of designating 'Features' to group contexts where this will facilitate interpretation. All archaeological features encountered will be recorded in accordance with recommended standards (Millum 2022a) with a full written record being kept using standard context record sheets supported by a daily site diary and photographic record.

Plans at 1:20 scale and sections at 1:10 of all excavated areas and cuts will be drawn on plastic tracing film. All features recorded will be located on a site grid related to the GB National Grid and the general site and significant features will be referenced to Ordnance Datum.

## **9. TIMESCALE: May 2018 ongoing**

It is planned for geophysical surveying to continue at various periods during the project. The excavation of the specified areas is proposed for between six to eight weeks during the summer of each year between **June and August** (exact dates TBA annually) with a further period required for site closure, post excavation finds processing, data interpretation and report writing. This interpretation period will also determine the requirements for further investigation policy for subsequent years.

## **10. SITE ACCESS**

A general principle of access for official CAP projects has been arranged with the land owners, with specific periods of access to be arranged with the farm manager, Mark Stroude. The positive attitude of the owners towards the archaeological investigations by CAP on this farm is a major contributory factor to the continued success of the project.

## **11. ARTEFACT COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL STRATEGY**

### **11.1 General and Special Finds**

All general finds will be recorded by the context in which they were located with Special Finds given a unique identifying number and located to three dimensions. All artefacts will be dealt with in accordance with the CAP General Finds Collection Strategy as specified in the CAP site manual, '*To CAP it all*' (Millum 2022a), and comply with the procedures recommended in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson & Neal, 1998). After recording the artefacts will be archived or disposed of in accordance with CAP overall policy and the Artefact Specialist recommendations.

### **11.2. Ecofacts**

Soil samples will be taken from specified contexts and floated to locate environmental data. The resulting residues will be examined by the finds team but the flots will be sealed and sent for specialist analysis. Environmental sampling will be based on procedures outlined for field evaluation projects by English Heritage in *Environmental Archaeology* (Jones D. M., 2011) and recommendations received from CAPs appointed specialist, Dr M Allen of Allen Environmental Archaeology.

### **11.3. Ownership of artefacts**

It has been agreed with the land owners that all artefacts without great monetary value shall become the property of CAP on collection. Valuable items remain in the ownership of the landowners who have given permission for their post-excavation investigation, subject to any requirements under the Treasure Act (1996).

### **11.4. On-site artefact conservation**

Participants will be informed of those items, such as metal, glass and other susceptible objects, which should be reported to the designated finds supervisor who will undertake any necessary immediate on-site conservation in accordance with the procedures recommended in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson & Neal, 1998) and by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in *Conservation Advice Notes*

(Jones, Paterson, & Spriggs, 2005). Conservation of the general finds will be secured by storage of the assemblage in appropriate robust containers with suitable packing material used to restrict internal movement and create the requisite conditions for the specific artefact.

### **11.5. Post-Fieldwork Methodology for artefacts**

Those finds that are not susceptible to damage by water will be washed in clean water, using a soft brush and then marked with the site and context codes. Other items will be carefully dry brushed. In most cases cleaning is only needed to assist identification and to remove excess soil prior to weighing and recording and therefore care will be taken not to over-clean items. All items will be dried naturally, and out of direct sunlight, before re-bagging/boxing. The contents of each bag will be recorded on to the pro-forma sheet by number of items and weight under the designated type to form part of the paper record of the data collected. The paper record will be subsequently transcribed into a Microsoft Excel computer database to form a digital record and aid interpretation of the data. Procedures will follow those laid out in the project site manual (Millum 2022a).

## **12. REPORTING**

### **12.1. Preparation**

A combined report will be prepared for the Trench 7 fieldwork to include:

*Non-technical summary – Introductory statement – Aims and purpose of the evaluation – Methodology – An objective summary statement of the results – Conclusion – Data including table of basic quantification of finds – Any specialist reports initiated – Location of archive – References*

### **12.2. Publication and Dissemination Proposals**

The reports will be added to the CAP archive and sent to the Sussex Archaeological Society's library at Barbican House, Lewes. A digital copy will be posted on to the CAP website, [www.culvrerproject.co.uk](http://www.culvrerproject.co.uk), and sent to the East Sussex HER and added to the OASIS database.

### **12.3. Copyright**

CAP will hold the copyright for all data recorded and reports written from this fieldwork.

## **13. ARCHIVE DEPOSITION**

The archive is currently housed at the CAP headquarters building at Bridge Farm with negotiations ongoing for the long-term storage of that part of the archive deemed indispensable in a designated archaeological archive store at the end of the project.

## **14. HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

Health and safety of workers and the public will be a prime concern with the project conforming to the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 with the CAP Health & Safety Risk Control and Action Plan (Wallace, current year) being available to all personnel. All personnel will attend an induction meeting where risks and procedures will be explained and will be required to notify a director or site supervisor of any health issues relevant to their participation on site. Special care and attention will be taken whenever younger children are on site. A site-specific annual risk assessments and risk control and action plans have been produced for the Bridge Farm project (Wallace, current year). Accident recording procedures will be put in place prior to any works commencing. All members of CAP staff will carry a mobile phone and be aware of the contact details of the local emergency services. A list of qualified first aiders will be available.

## **15. MONITORING PROCEDURES**

Qualified archaeologists will undertake a monitoring role of the participants during the fieldwork. Results and adherence to practice will be monitored by the directors of the project. Summaries of the fieldwork will be submitted to the County Archaeologist.

## **OTHER CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS**

### **16.1. Insurance**

CAP is insured for public liability and professional indemnity.

### **16.2. Funding**

CAP is funded by the fees charged to volunteers and students and by any private donations or grants achieved.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

CAP would like to thank: Mark Stroude for his continued support in allowing access to his land.

**PROJECT DESIGN** written by **David H Millum MCIFA, MA, BA Hons**

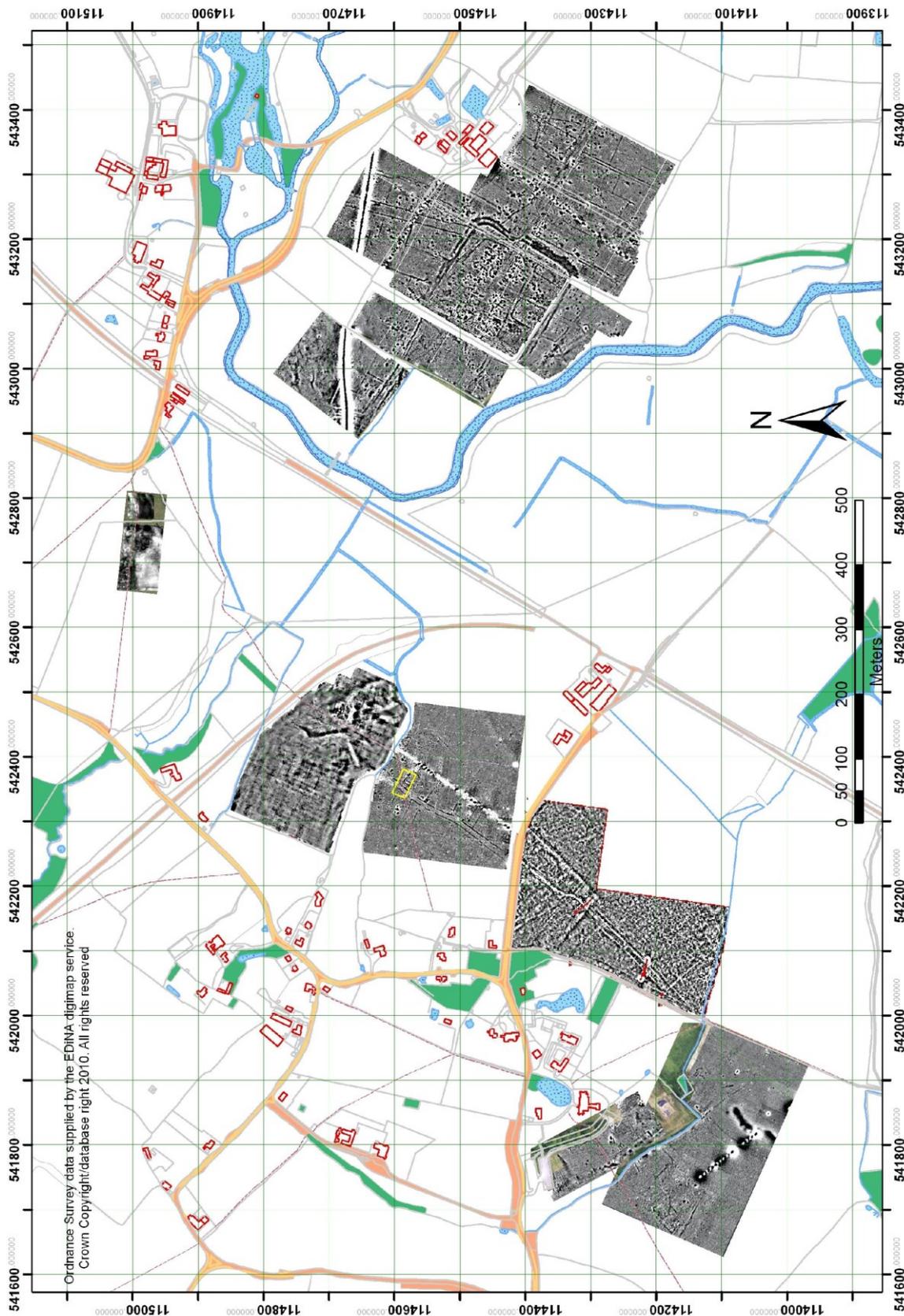
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Appendix 1a: Geophysical survey results in the CAP area 2008-2012



*Appendix 1b: Geophysical survey results in the Bridge Farm area 2011-2014*



**Appendix 2: CAP general policy for the retaining or disposal of artefacts**

TYPE	RECORD	LOCATE	CONSV	MARK	ANALY-SIS BY	ARCHIVE OR DISCARD
CBM – tile & brick	General & Tile	By context	Wash	Those kept	CAP and/or expert	Keep large representative selection plus any pieces of interest for expert analysis. Discard remainder in marked location after weighing.
Pottery	General & Pottery	By context	Wash unless fragile or whole.	Yes	Expert	Keep all for specialist analysis, selected drawing and selection for archive
Prehistoric worked flint	General & PH flint	By context	Wash	Yes	Expert	Keep all for specialist analysis, selected drawing and archive
Fire-cracked flint	General	By context	Wash	No	CAP only	Sort, weigh and discard, keeping representative selection
Charcoal	General	By context	Bag as found	No	Expert	Bag and send for analysis and carbon 14 dating.
Foreign stone	General	By context	Dry brush	Those kept	CAP and/or expert	Unworked – sort, quantify and discard Worked – sort weigh and keep
Slag	General	By context	Wash or brush	No	Expert	Keep large sample of all types for expert analysis, quantify and discard the rest.
Glass	Special Find	3D location	Wash. Box	No	Expert	Keep all for specialist analysis and archive. Roman glass can look modern.
Animal Bone	Special Find	3D location	Wash unless degraded	Yes	Expert	Keep all for expert analysis and archive
Human Bone	Skeleton	3D location & plan	Wash unless degraded	No	Expert	Alert requisite authorities – Keep all for expert analysis and potential reburial
Shell	General	By context	Rinse lightly	No	Expert	Keep all for specialist analysis and archive
Iron in obviously disturbed contexts	General	By context and/or 2D	Dry brush, prick bags, add silicone gel	No	CAP and/or Expert	Keep all. Likely to need expert conservation and analysis prior to archiving. On a Roman site iron nails can be fairly common.
In all other contexts	Special Find	3D location				
Gold, silver, coins & copper alloy	Special Find	3D location	Keep dry	No	Expert	Send for expert conservation and analysis prior to archiving
Wall plaster	Special Find	3D location	Damp surface	No	Expert	Pack in acid free tissue for expert analysis and archive
Wood & leather	Special Find	3D location	Keep as found	No	Expert	Keep in conditions as found with soil packed around it. Keep dark and cool for expert conservation and analysis prior to archive and possible carbon <sup>14</sup> dating
Grain & seeds	Special Find	3D location	Keep as found	No	Expert	Bag and send for analysis and potentially carbon <sup>14</sup> dating