

# The Almonry High Street Battle East Sussex



## Archaeological Evaluation



**Oxford Archaeology**

9th August 2002

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# The Almonry, High Street Battle, East Sussex

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## SUMMARY

*On the 1st August 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at the Almonry, High Street, Battle, Sussex on behalf of Anthony Sherwin for Battle Museum of Local History. The evaluation took place in advance of construction of an extension to the Museum. Two trial trenches were excavated adjacent to the rear of the Almonry. No significant archaeological features were revealed other than a modern pit. The stratigraphy consisted of made ground and garden soils of late 19th to 20th-century date, and the foundations for a modern greenhouse.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Conditional planning permission has been granted by Rother District Council for the construction of a single storey extension to the rear and the side of the existing building behind *The Almonry*, High Street, Battle, East Sussex (Planning Ref: RR/2002/107/P).
- 1.1.2 The site (Fig. 1) lies in the centre of historic Battle, close to the remains of Battle Abbey and has therefore been considered an area of high archaeological potential. To this end, a condition was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation prior to any development taking place on the site.
- 1.1.3 East Sussex's Deputy County Archaeologist, Martin Brown (CAO) prepared a brief for this work. OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2002).

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development area is situated at the rear of *The Almonry*, High Street, Battle, East Sussex (NGR TQ 7462 1608). The site occupies a narrow rectangular piece of land covering an area of c 100 m<sup>2</sup> on the west side of the High Street. The site is currently occupied by a garden and an existing building.
- 1.2.2 The site lies at c. 84 m above OD. The site is situated on Wadhurst Clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain) and a recent engineer's survey shows that the clay is overlain by topsoil.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2002) and is summarised below.
- 1.3.2 The development area is located within the historic core of the medieval market town of Battle. The town was focused around the Benedictine Abbey of St Martin, which lies just to the south and east of this development site. The abbey church was

dedicated in 1094, the high altar of which is reputed to lie on the site of King Harold's demise at the Battle of Hastings.

- 1.3.3 A number of non-ecclesiastical buildings were constructed on the site, initially for the builders of the abbey and latterly to support the abbey. These burgage plots, with associated features have been encountered during recent investigations at the Jenner and Simpson Mill to the east of the development site and at 33 High Street (next door but one to *The Almonry* on the south side).

#### 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA extends its thanks to George Stone (Hastings) Ltd. for arranging for a mechanical excavator and to the architect Anthony Sherwin for providing background information for the project.

### 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To elucidate the potential for the development site to contain archaeological features relating to either the medieval town, in the form of structures, boundary ditches, rubbish pits or evidence of light industry, or activity associated with the monastic precinct.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

#### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Two trial trenches were excavated by a mechanical mini excavator under close archaeological supervision (Fig. 2). The topsoil and overburden of the garden was removed, followed by hand cleaning of the garden soil and surface of the natural clay. Both trial trenches measured 2.5 m x 1.6 m.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Description of deposits

##### *Trench 1*

- 3.1.1 Natural clay was encountered at 1.1 m below ground level, overlain by a yellow-brown sandy clay subsoil (107). The subsoil was overlain by a silt loam layer (106) containing pottery of 19th century date. A small pit (105) in the north-west corner of

the trench cut layer 106. The pit was not fully exposed within the trench and contained a single fill of silt loam (104). The pit is of 19th century or later date. The fill of the pit was overlain by 0.4 m of deliberate ground make-up (103) of recent date and containing several concrete blocks (102), which acted as foundations for a modern greenhouse. The blocks were overlain by a thin horizon of coarse gravel (101) and topsoil (100).

## ***Trench 2***

- 3.1.2 Natural clay (203) was encountered 1 m below ground level. It was overlain by a yellow-brown sandy clay subsoil (202). A layer of deliberate ground raising material comprising mixed garden soil and brick and tile pieces (201) of modern date sealed the subsoil and was 0.4 m deep. This layer was sealed below a topsoil 0.1 m in thickness.

## **3.2 Finds**

- 3.2.1 Layer 106 produced two animal bones, a metal nail or bolt, a sherd of 18th/19th century Willow Pattern china and two sherds of un-diagnostic red-earthenware pottery. Layer 201 contained two sherds of a flower pot and two sherds of red earthenware.

## **3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental analysis were encountered during the evaluation.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The original proposal to locate a trench at the side of the Museum was abandoned for safety reasons, owing to the confines of space and practicality of removing and replacing spoil. Both trenches were nonetheless excavated within the footprint of the proposed extension.
- 4.1.2 No deposits or features were observed above the natural clay dating earlier than the 18th/19th century. It is possible that construction of buildings on the site removed earlier material.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
100	Layer	0.06 m	-	-	Topsoil	
101	Gravel	0.04 m	-	-	Gravel layer	
102	Layer	0.2 m	-	-	Concrete blocks for greenhouse	
103	Layer	0.46 m	-	-	19th/20th century material	
104	Fill	0.12 m	-	-	Pit fill	
105	Cut	0.16 m	0.38 m	-	Pit	
106	Layer	0.08 m	-	-	Soil layer	19th/20th century finds
107	Layer	0.15 m	-	-	Natural Clay subsoil	
108	Layer	-	-	-	Natural Clay subsoil	
200	Layer	0.15 m	-	-	Topsoil	
201	Layer	0.3 m	-	-	Modern soil layer	19th/20th century finds
202	Layer	0.1 m	-	-	Natural clay subsoil	
203	Layer	-	-	-	Natural clay subsoil	
204	deleted	-	-	-	----	

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, First Edition, August 1992)

OA 2002 *The Almonry, High Street, Battle, East Sussex*. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** The Almonry, High Street, Battle, East Sussex

**Site code:** BALM02

**Grid Reference:** NGR TQ 7462 1608

**Type of evaluation:** Two trial trenches

**Date and duration of project:** 1st August 2002

**Area of site:** 100 sq. m

**Summary of results:** Two trial trenches pits located to the rear of the Almonry 'garage' in small, disused garden area. Trial trench 1: Topsoil, made ground, garden soil and natural clay. One modern pit. Trial trench 2: Topsoil, made ground, natural clay. No archaeological features.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Battle Museum in due course, under the following accession number: BALM 02

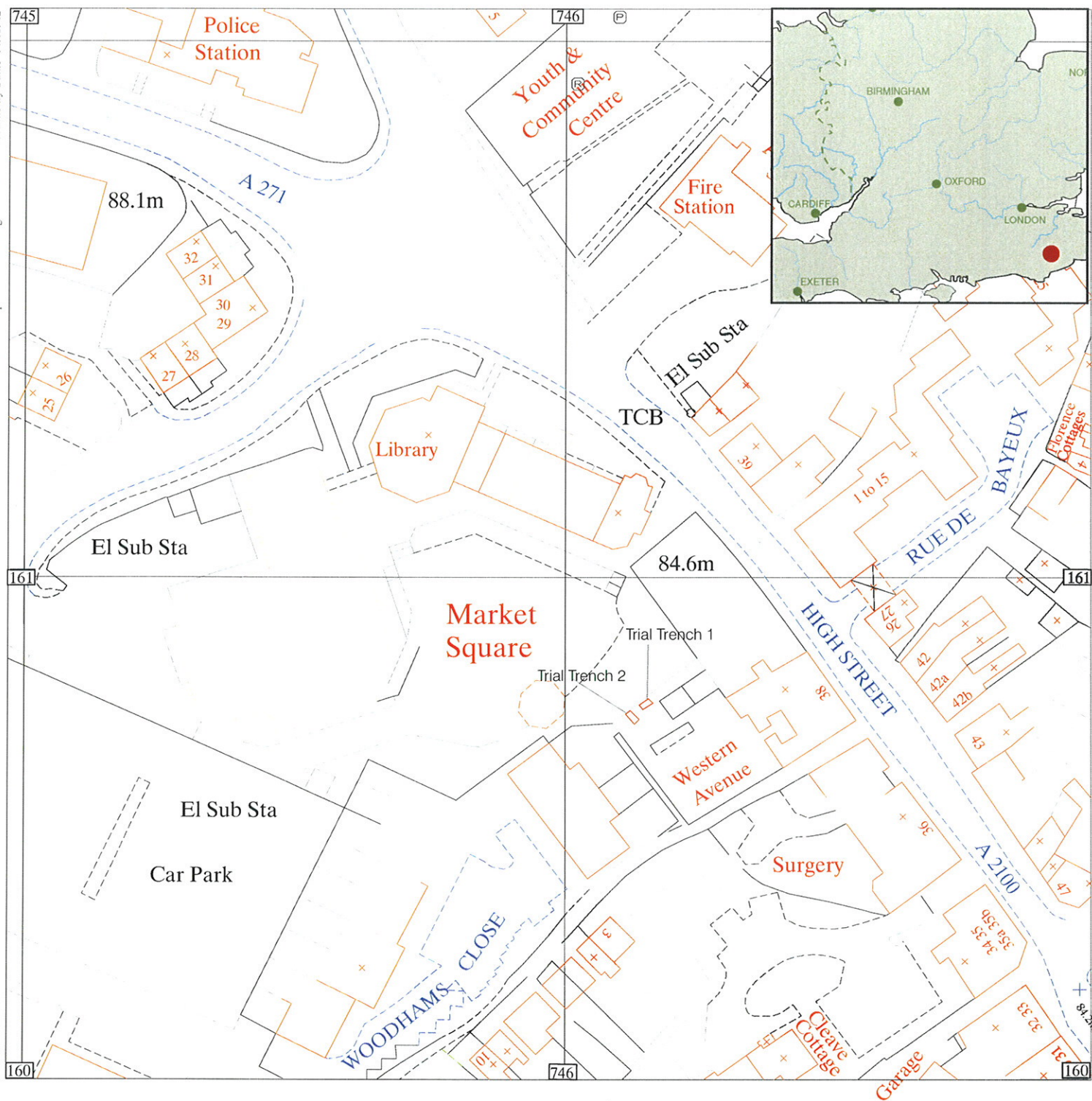


Figure 1. Location of Test pits



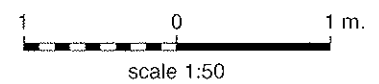
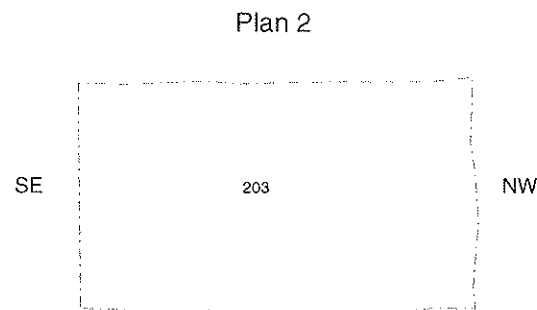
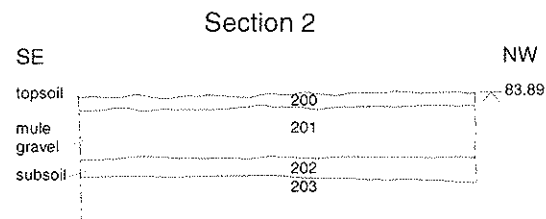
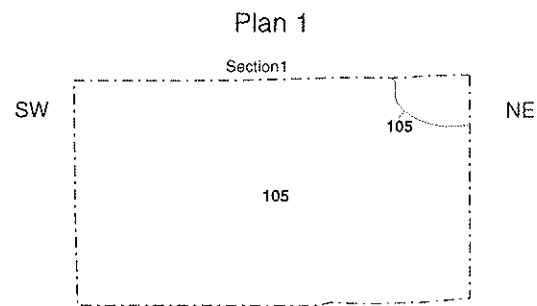
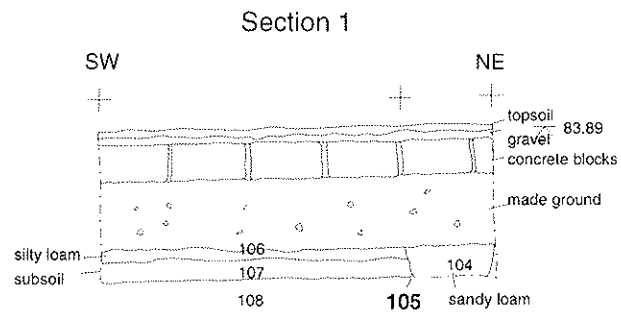


Figure 2 : Plans and Sections



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