

Archaeological Watching Brief at Old Rides Farm, Eastchurch, Sheppey, Kent

NGR 599784 169847

Site Code: RIDES/WB/13

Planning Application: SW/12/1448 Case 04678

Date: 26/09/2013



Report for Vogt Solar Ltd

SWAT. ARCHAEOLOGY

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Plate 1. Aerial view of site (Google Earth 2003)

Archaeological Watching Brief at Old Rides Farm, Eastchurch, Sheppey **Kent**

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SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Old Rides Farm, Leysdown Road, Eastchurch, Sheppey, Kent. A planning application (SW/12/1448) for the construction of a solar array park at Old Rides Farm (Fig. 1) whereby the Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken to observe and record any remains that may be impacted on by the proposed development.

The work was carried out in accordance with a specification written by KCC Heritage and submitted to the planning authority in accordance with the condition.

The archaeological investigation consisted of monitoring of the excavation of topsoil for temporary haul roads (Plate 2) excavation of foundation bases for inverter and transformer units (Plate 6), and of trenches for electric cabling (Plates 3-5) linking the ends of solar panel arrays and the main cable run between the site and the main electric grid.

A scan of the excavated spoil from the ground-works with a metal detector was also done.

The programme of archaeological works revealed no archaeology.

The Archaeological Watching Brief has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives set by the KCC Principal Archaeological Officer in an Archaeological Specification dated 4th April 2013.

INTRODUCTION

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned by Vogt Solar Ltd, St John's Innovation Centre, Cowley road, Cambridge Road, CB4 0WS to carry out an archaeological watching brief at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with consultation with the Principal Archaeological Officer, KCC, and the written archaeological specification. The watching brief was carried out from 24th June to 1st August 2013.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Site is located at Old Rides Farm, approximately 1.2 km to the southeast of Eastchurch and c. 600m to the south of the B2231 (Leysdown Road). It comprises a sub-rectangular plot of land of approximately 21.8ha, located within two agricultural fields (Fig. 1). The Site is bounded to the northeast by Old Rides Farm and to the north, east, south and west by farmland. The Site lies on gentle slopes facing towards the south and south-east at an elevation between 5m and 20m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology for the Site

is recorded as clay and silt London Clay Formation of the Palaeogene period. No superficial deposits are recorded (British Geological Survey).

PLANNING

The site has planning permission for the Solar Array from Swale Borough Council. The planning reference is SW/12/1448 case 04678 whereby following discussions between the KCC Principal Archaeological Officer and the applicant it was agreed, given the limited ground works involved and the potential of the site, that the archaeological mitigation could take the form of an archaeological watching brief. At the applicant's request a specification for the watching brief was issued by the KCC Principal Archaeological Officer.

The following Condition was attached to the planning permission.

(11). No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the District Planning Authority.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is in an area of archaeological potential relating to known discoveries. Sheppey is generally rich in archaeological remains and this site lies within an area of archaeological interest. The archaeological potential of the site is covered in a Desk-based Assessment: **Old Rides Farm, Isle of Sheppey, Kent: Heritage Statement (Wessex Archaeology October 2012 Ref: 86990.01)** and was consulted throughout the watching brief exercise. The Wessex Archaeology report says: *'There is a limited archaeological interest within the Site, defined as the potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains, likely relating to medieval and later agricultural and salt production activity'*. There are no visible mounds within the Site, the nearest are situated to the south of the Site and are likely to be medieval salt mounds using the proximity to the Swale for salt production (TQ 96 NE3). The site of an alleged Viking Camp could be situated within the Site (TR 07 SW 11) but no evidence of earthworks or ditches were encountered during the watching brief and a comprehensive sweep by metal detector failed to retrieve any artefacts to this period or indeed any period. No evidence of the beacon site shown as 'Rydes' on William Lambardes map of c.1570 was found. It is likely the site could be on top of Rydes Hill just to the north of the Site (TR 07 SW 7).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Principal Archaeological Officer has advised that the watching brief should be targeted at three aspects:

1. The stripping of ground deposits (topsoil and subsoil) to create foundation base for inverter housings. These excavations should be carried out with a flat bladed bucket under the direction of the supervising archaeologist and in a manner that would allow any archaeology present to be properly exposed, identified and investigated before subsequent disturbance by construction (Plate 1).
2. The stripping of ground deposits (topsoil and subsoil) to enable the construction of temporary access roads (Plate 2).

- Monitoring of the excavation of the trenches for electric cabling linking the ends of the solar panel arrays and main cable run between the site and the main electric grid (Plate 3).

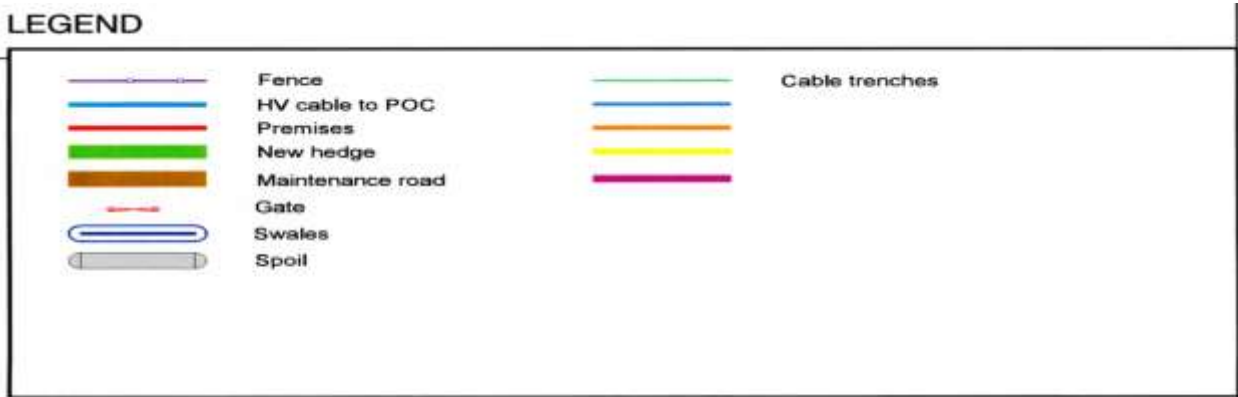
In addition the construction of the security fencing was watched but as the construction comprised piled steel uprights and chain link fencing it was likely to have little impact on the potential archaeological remains.

METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the ground works. Stripping for access roads, inverter bases and cable runs were watched (Plates 2-6) but were generally of insufficient depth to impact on the geology or buried archaeological features.



Fig. 2- above, shows all the phases of construction. The legend (below) explains the plan above.



All cable trenches were watched (Plate 4) and were of insufficient depth to impact on the subsoil. The fence construction (Plate 5) was watched but the build would have had little impact on buried archaeological remains. The HV cable was the deepest cut of all the cable runs (Plate 3) and again failed to reveal the subsoil. The maintenance road (Plate 2) excavation was of insufficient depth to expose the subsoil. The inverter bases (Plates 6 & 7) were of formed concrete which were raised above ground level and sat on the exposed subsoil. None of the topsoil strips for this phase revealed any archaeological remains.

The trenches were scanned for finds during and after excavation. Excavation was carried out using a 8 ton mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket for the cable runs and removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, or natural, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The trenches was subsequently inspected to identify any exposed features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features would have been excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. No archaeology was revealed in the cable runs or solar array area. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the KCC Archaeological Specification (2013).

MONITORING

No site visits by the Principal Archaeological Officer (KCC) were carried out.

RESULTS

The first activity on site was the construction of fencing and the temporary access road (Plate 2) followed by the piling of the solar array galvanised steel uprights by the ground contractors followed closely by the excavation of the cable runs (Plates 3-5). Work started on all phases of development whilst SWAT Archaeology was present on site.

The Archaeological Watching Brief continued for the rest of the groundwork's but no archaeology was revealed. Geology was revealed in the inverter bases and was constant across the site and comprised topsoil- a grey brown sandy clay loam of about 28cm thick overlaying a dark grey brown sandy stiff clay. A metal detector survey was carried out but the ferrous and non-ferrous material recovered was modern and mostly modern agricultural machinery items and fastenings discarded by the solar array contractors.

FINDS

No finds were retrieved

CONCLUSION

The archaeological Watching Brief has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil **(01)** overlying subsoil comprising a dark grey brown sandy stiff clay **(02)**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Vogt Solar Ltd for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Simon Mason, Principal Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council for his advice and assistance.

Paul Wilkinson supervised the fieldwork, assisted in the field by Mike Robson on metal detector. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This.

Dr Paul Wilkinson MIfA

26/09/2013



Plate 2. Access road construction with ditching bucket (looking south-east)



Plate 3. HV Cable runs to inverter housings (looking east)



Plate 4. Cable runs between solar panels – security fencing seen to the right (facing west)



Plate 5. Cable runs between solar panels (looking east)



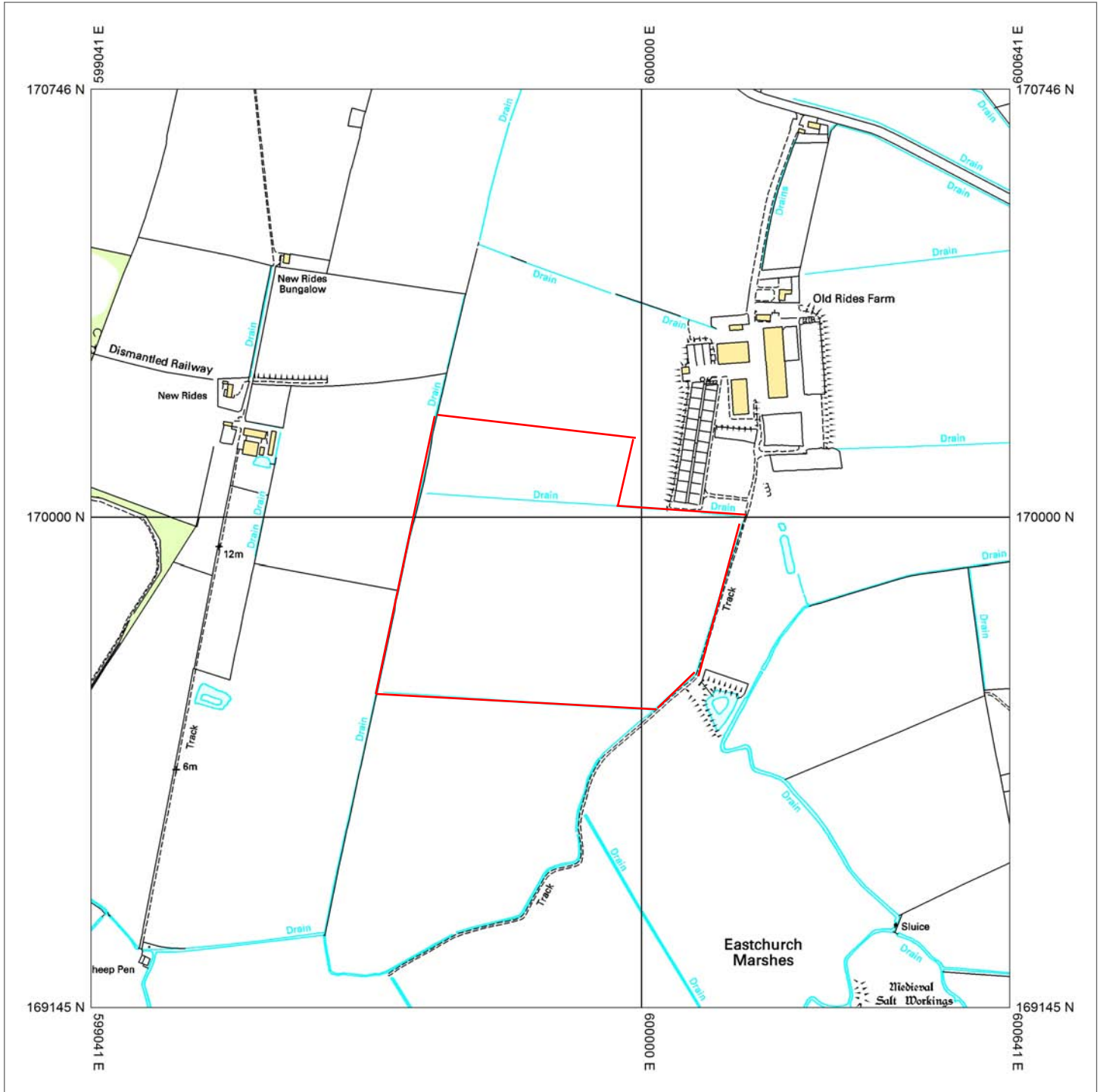
Plate 6. Cable runs to inverter bases (looking east)



Plate 7. Inverter bases completed (looking west)

APPENDIX 1 – Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: <i>Old Rides Farm, Eastchurch, Sheppey, Kent</i>	
SWAT Site Code: <i>RIDES/WB/13</i>	
Site Address: <i>As above</i>	
Summary: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at Old Rides Farm. A planning application for the construction of a new solar array at the above site was submitted to Swale Borough Council (SBC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Swale Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2013) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.</i> <i>The Archaeological Watching Brief consisted of watching various phases of solar farm construction none of which encountered archaeological features.</i>	
District/Unitary: <i>Sheppey</i>	Parish:
Period(s): Tentative:	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs): <i>NGR 599785 169847</i>	
Type of archaeological work (delete) <i>Watching Brief</i>	
Date of Recording: <i>June-August 2013</i>	
Unit undertaking recording: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)</i>	
Geology: <i>London Clay Formation- Clay and Silt</i>	
Title and author of accompanying report: <i>Wilkinson P. An Archaeological Watching Brief at Old Rides Farm, Eastchurch, Sheppey, Kent</i>	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) <i>As above</i> <p style="text-align: right;">(cont. on attached sheet)</p>	
Location of archive/finds: <i>SWAT</i>	
Contact at Unit: <i>Paul Wilkinson</i>	Date: <i>26/09/2013</i>



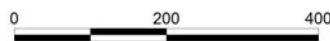
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The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.



Scale 1:10000

Supplied By: National Map Centre Kent

Serial number: 001114894

Plot Centre Coordinates: 599841, 169945

Geographical coordinates

Country: UK
Address: Old Rides Farm
Eastchurch
Sheerness
ME12 4BD
Latitude: 51°23'37"N
Longitude: 0°52'16"E
Altitude: 5.21 m

Areas:

Fenced area: 148,800 m²
Fence length: 1,500 m
maintenance roads: 6,000 m²



LEGEND

- Fence
- HV cable to POC
- Premises
- New hedge
- Maintenance road
- Gate
- Swales
- Spoil
- Cable trenches
- New hedge
- Spoil

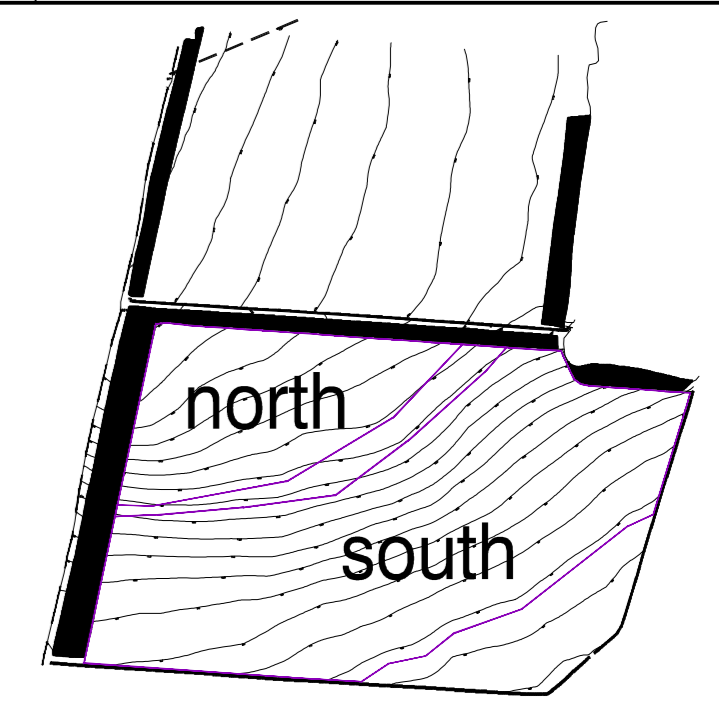
Used Xrefs of external planners in the current drawing

Rev.	Date	Xref(DWG)	File name / Planning expert

Please note that all drawing contents have to be checked on the contractor's own responsibility prior to construction start. Discrepancies have to be communicated to the contractual partner or to the responsible technical planners. Drawing numbers and index have to be observed. With release of new drawing, previous drawings lose their validity and will not be withdrawn.

Document: **2100.AP.010.0.0**

Rev.	Date	Des.	Chk.	Appr.	Revision Description
0	25 Sep 13	DWJ	LBA	GSA	Original drawing



Project Management / Engineering Design

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Supplier:

Version	Metric	European-Proc.	Page	Drawing Scale

Designed by: 25 Sep 2013 | Wuarne | Page: 1 | Drawing Scale: 1:750
 Checked by: 25 Sep 2013 | Sigbert | DT: 1 | Size: A0
 Approved by: 25 Sep 2013 | Sabrowski | 1 | Size: 110x84

File: **Old Rides** | 51°23'37" N | 0°52'16" E | 10 m

Archaeology Condition Plan

Planning Phase:	Status:
Approval Design	25 Sep 13

Document No.: **2100.AP.010.0.0** | Revision Index: **0**

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