

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at the
Allington Sluice Refurbishment, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent.**

ASE Project No. 4171

ASE Report No. 2010025

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Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracts division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology (UCLCAA) was contracted by Atkins Ltd. on behalf of their clients the Environment Agency (EA), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the Allington Sluice Refurbishment, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent (NGR 574850 158175) (Fig. 1).

A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2010) outlined the scope of the works, which consisted of the monitoring of excavations in the garden of No. 3 Lock Cottage, Lock Lane, Sandling, a Grade II listed building, and also provided a description of the structure itself, which was not directly affected by the works (*ibid.*).

The watching brief was undertaken as part of the Environment Agency's policy of best practice in archaeological matters (and as set out in the EAP) because the groundworks were taking place in the gardens of a listed building. The exact methodology for the watching brief was developed following on-site discussions between Simon Stevens, Senior Archaeologist, ASE and Alan Breck, Site Manager for Jacksons, the main contractor on-site. It was agreed that the mechanical excavation of a trench on the alignment of the proposed groundworks in the garden (for the laying of a new Larinier fish pass) would be completed under archaeological supervision. Given that previous work in the vicinity had shown the presence of made ground to c.2m (and that the excavations were planned for a depth of c.1.8m) below the modern ground surface, it was agreed that this offered an efficient methodology for establishing the presence/absence of archaeological deposits in the area of the garden to be impacted by the new fish pass.

A Takeuchi TB175 tracked excavator was used to excavate the trench, which measured 3.2m long, 600mm wide and 2.2m deep (Fig. 2). Two discernable contexts were observed. The upper deposit was context [01], a c.1m thick mid-greyish brown to mid-brown humic topsoil, which had been heavily disturbed by root action. This directly overlay context [02], which extended to the base of the trench. It was similar in colour and texture to context [01], but had far less rooting. Given the confines of the narrow trench, and the unsafe depth, detailed recording was impossible. The trench could not be extended owing to the presence of live services, including electricity. It was unclear whether the electricity services were directly related to the electrification of the sluice, but it does seem likely. No finds were recovered from either of the contexts despite visual scanning of all available spoil.

No archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered, and both deposits were clearly 'made ground', a pattern seen during other groundworks at the site (Alan Breck, Jacksons, *pers. comm.*). It is possible that much, or maybe all of this material had been imported onto the site during previous groundworks associated with the sluice, either during initial construction, or subsequent works. The complete absence of material culture supports this view, as arguably *in situ* garden soil close to a structure would have contained artefacts contemporary with its habitation.

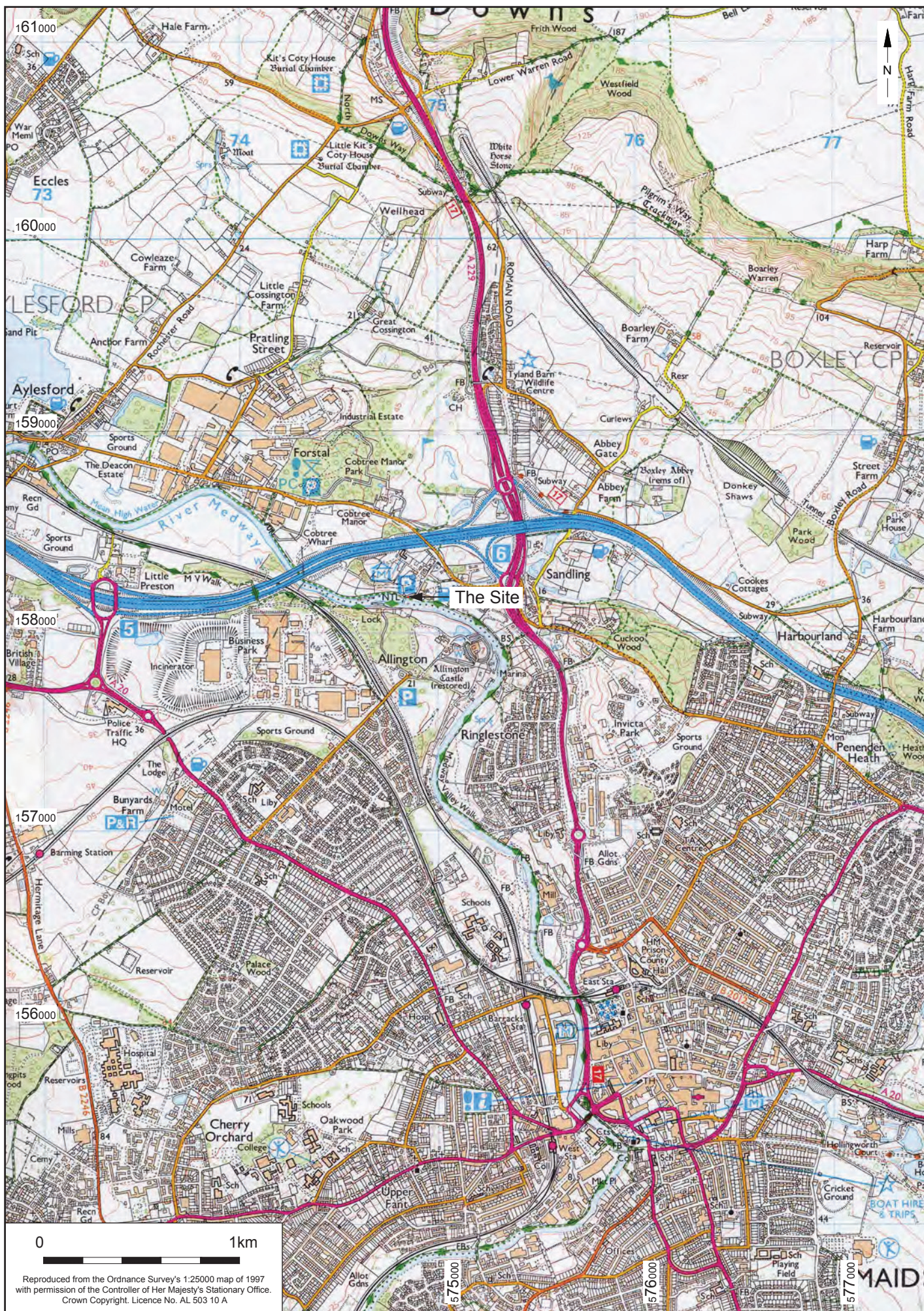
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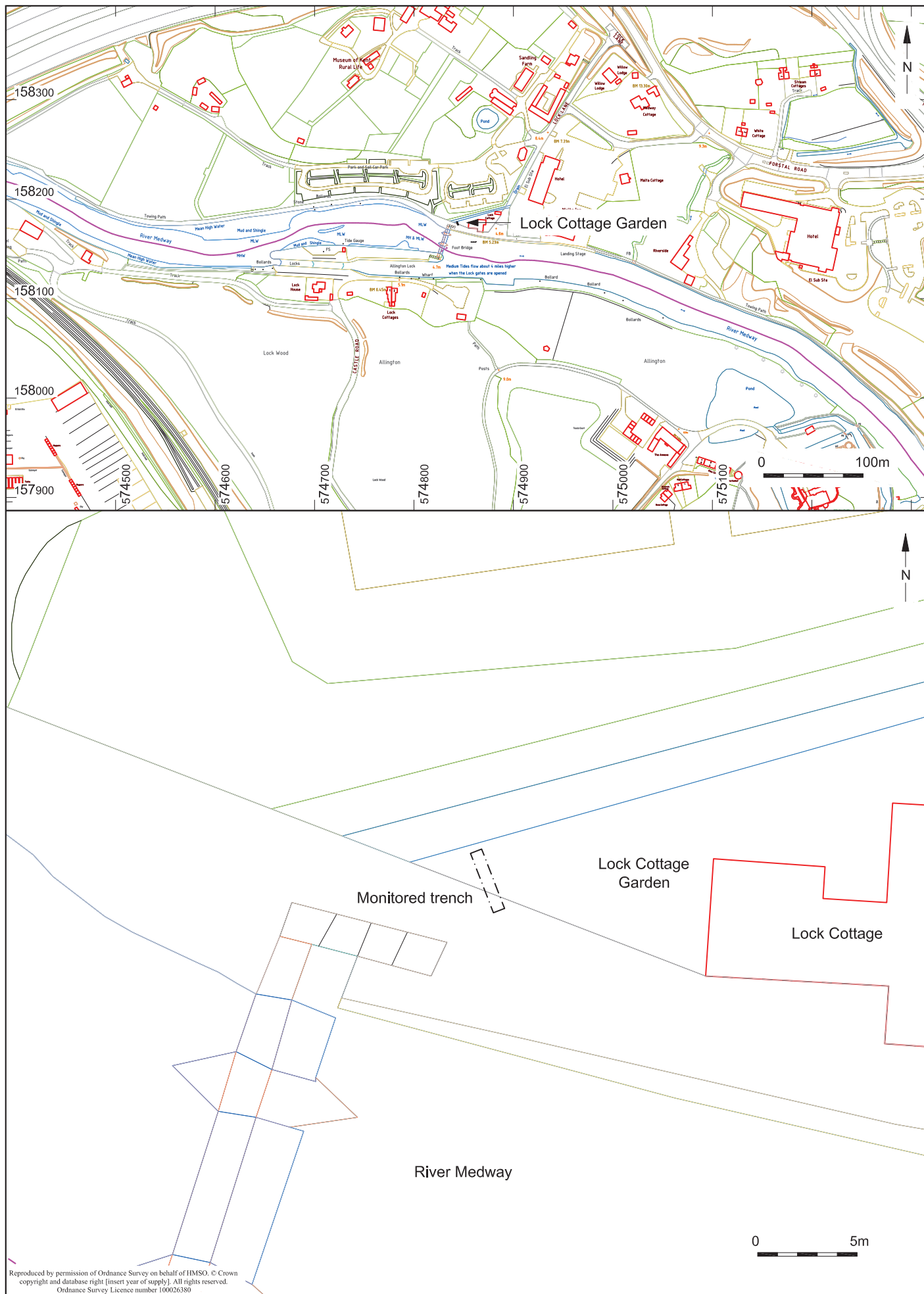
Therefore, given the presence of the deep made ground and the location of known service trenches, it seems unlikely, based on currently available evidence, that any significant archaeological remains will be disturbed during groundworks in the garden of No. 3 Lock Cottage, unless a depth of 2.2m is exceeded.

An on-line OASIS form has been completed (ref. archaeol6-75799).

Simon Stevens
Senior Archaeologist



© Archaeology South-East		Allington Sluice	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 4171	March 2010	Site location	
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© Archaeology South-East		Allington Sluice, Maidstone	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4171	March 2010	Plan of monitored area	
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