



**Report on a Programme of Archaeological Works at  
Naldretts Farm, Pookbourne Lane, Sayers Common,  
Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9HD**

April 2025

## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

*This document sets out the results from a programme of archaeological works carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd at Naldretts Farm, Pookbourne Lane, Sayers Common, Hassocks, West Sussex, associated with the creation of a polo field. Thirty-seven archaeological investigation trenches were excavated within the area to be impacted by the development. No archaeological artefacts or features were revealed, save for a series of post-medieval or modern ditches and a modern pit. It is likely that the area was not cleared for agriculture until the later post-medieval period.*

## BACKGROUND



**Figure 1** Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License no:AL100036068

1. Naldretts Farm lies between the town of Burgess Hill and the A23, in West Sussex, on the north-western slopes of an area of higher ground between the Pook Bourne stream to the north and a second stream to the south (Fig.1). Both streams are feeders for the head of the River Adur to the west. The site itself sits on the southern side of that area of higher ground, at 20m aOD and is centred at OS grid reference TQ 2788 1929. The underlying geology of the site is the Weald Clay Formation and the current land- use is pasture, with some limited cover crop for a pheasant shoot.
2. A full discussion of the archaeological and historical background can be found in the Heritage Statement submitted with the application (Anelay 2017). This concluded that the earliest known evidence for human activity in the vicinity of the site are the various surrounding farms of post-medieval or modern date, although it was considered possible that as yet undiscovered earlier buried remains might exist on or around the site.
3. Mr J Bunn has obtained planning permission (DM/18/1860) from Mid Sussex District Council for the change of use of grazing land to a polo pitch with associated works including the formation of a new lagoon, landscaping, and vehicular access. Condition 10 of that permission stated: “No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority”. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. was appointed by Mr. Bunn to draw up and submit such a written scheme of investigation (WSA 2024) and to carry out the resulting fieldwork. This report details the results from

that fieldwork. The WSI had proposed that thirty-seven trenches be excavated on the site, however No. 35 was positioned under a large spoil heap and, with the agreement of the Local Authority's Archaeological Advisor, was omitted.

4. The archaeological works were carried out from the 24<sup>th</sup> February – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025 by George Anelay and Harry Henslow of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. The project archive, which consists solely of paperwork and photographs, will be deposited with a publicly accessible repository suitable to its nature and size.

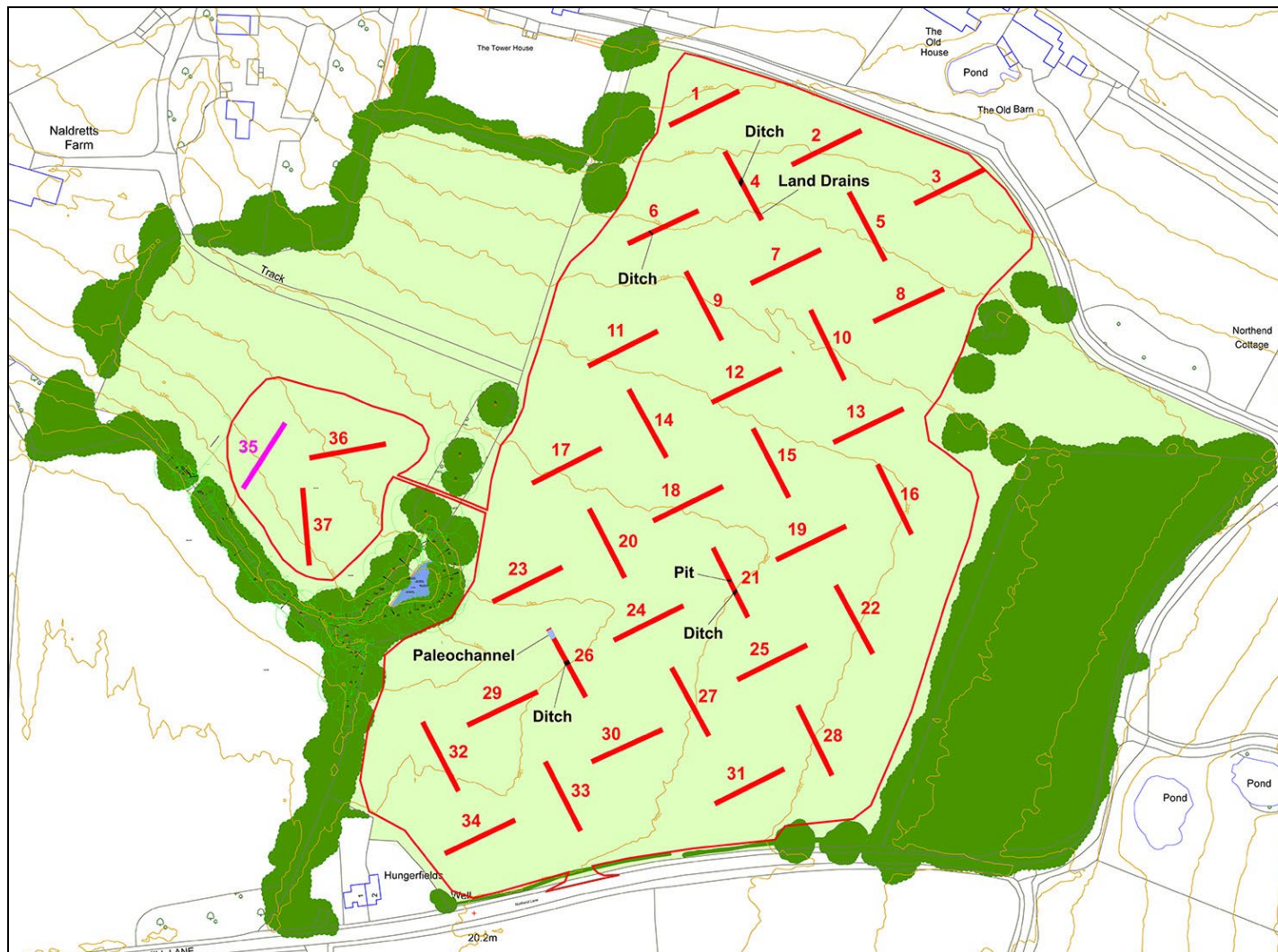
### RESULTS

1. Across the site the underlying geology was composed of a variegated clay, ranging in colour from orange/yellow to grey. Above the clay was a dark grey/brown clay silt ploughsoil, c.0.2m thick, above a mid-light grey/brown clay silt subsoil, c.0.2m thick. Their overall thickness was generally more uneven towards the north end of the field where prominent tussocks have taken over the smoother pasture. These soils were largely devoid of artefacts, save very occasional fragments of peg tile and brick. Metal detector finds from the spoil heaps included: an unidentifiable bronze coin of probable 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date; a half penny of Elizabeth II; a modern key; a copper alloy strip with Greek key decoration, probably 19<sup>th</sup> century; and an incomplete probable watch key, of copper alloy with glass paste gems, again probably 19<sup>th</sup> century in date.
2. The topography sloped generally from north to south, with an overall fall of c.5.m, although approximately half way down the eastern boundary of the site a dip in this slope ran south-westwards, falling towards a pond situated between Trenches 37 and 29. The presence of a paleochannel, c.4m wide and filled with grey-blue clay, at the northern end of Trench 26 indicates that this dip once contained a flowing stream emptying into the pond.



**Figure 1** The paleochannel in the end of Trench 26, looking north

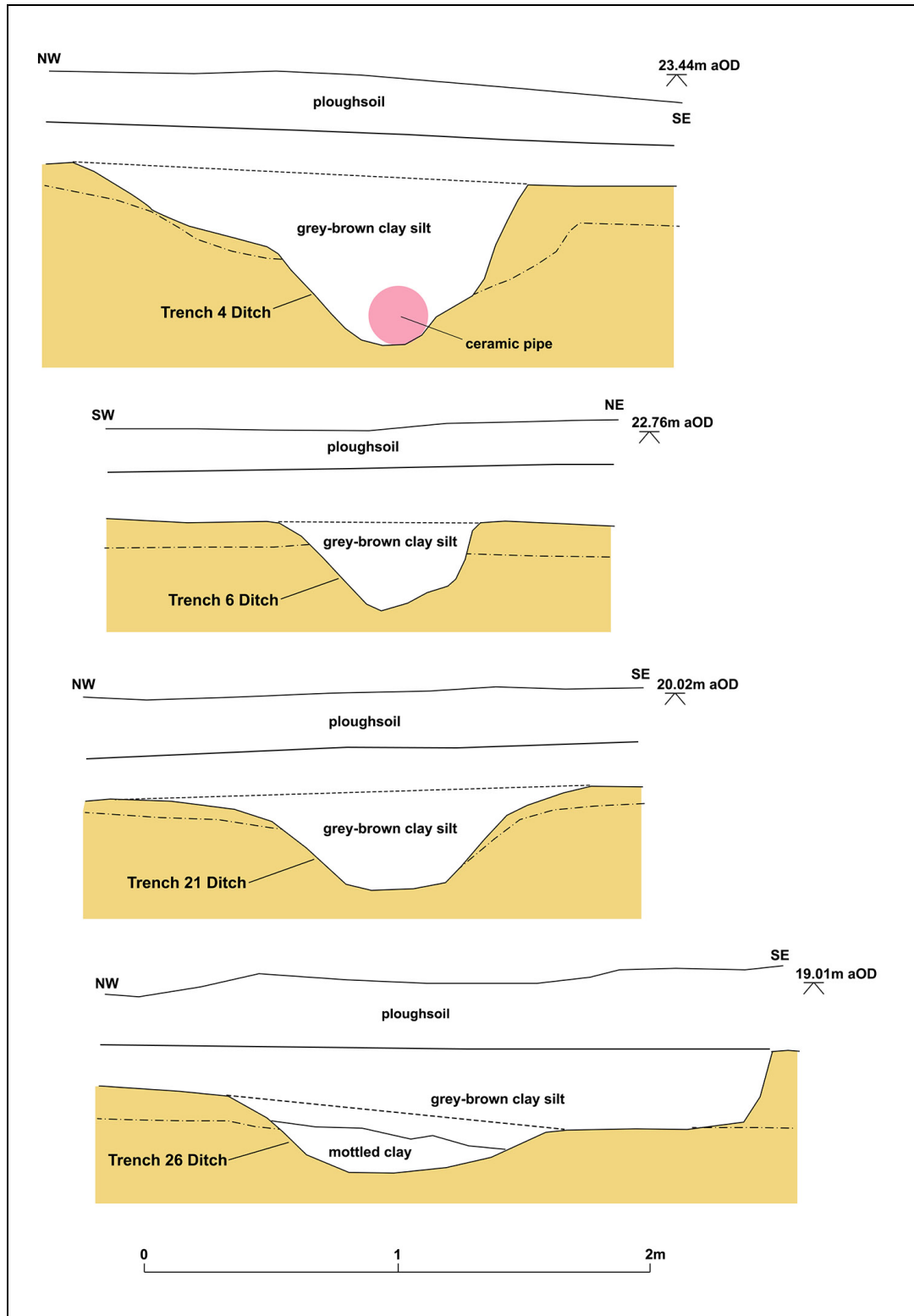
# WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY



**Figure 2** Plan of the excavated trenches

## WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

2. All the trenches were 30 long and 1.8m wide, with their locations as shown in Figure 2. Only four of the thirty-six trenches excavated contained features: Trenches 4, 6, 21 & 26 were crossed by ditches, with Trench 21 also containing the base of a shallow pit and Trench 26 a paleo-channel.



**Figure 3** Sections across the four ditches

3. The ditch in Trench 4 was the largest of those excavated, being c.1.8m wide at its lip and with its base c.1.05m below modern ground level. At its base was a large bore (6") ceramic land drain in 1ft sections, which remains clear and still flows with a significant quantity of water. The ditch was filled with material hard to distinguish from the subsoil above, with a single sherd of 19<sup>th</sup> century blue print ware found within it. At the southern end of the same trench were a pair of narrower bore ceramic land drains (2  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 2", and in 1ft sections), c.0.3m apart, which had been inserted into the surface of the natural clay. These may flow into the larger drain.



**Figure 4** Land drain in the base of the ditch in Trench 4, looking northeast



**Figure 5** Close up of the land drain in the ditch in Trench 4 (the moved section was replaced)



**Figure 6** The pair of parallel land drains in Trench 4, looking west

## WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

5. The ditch in Trench 6 was c.0.7m wide and c.0.7m deep to its base from the modern ground surface. It was filled with clay-silt similar to that forming the subsoil above. No artefacts were recovered from within it. The ditch in Trench 21 was c.1.2m wide and c.0.75m deep from the modern ground surface, and again filled with material similar to the subsoil above. No artefacts were recovered from its fill.



**Figure 7** The ditch in Trench 6, looking northwest



**Figure 8** The ditch in Trench 21, looking west

6. Approximately 5m to the south of the ditch in Trench 21, the base of a rectangular pit was revealed, c.1.8m x 0.9m in plan and c.0.5m deep from the modern ground surface. It was filled with a black-brown clay silt, containing fragments of burnt modern brick. Its original function is unknown.



**Figure 9** The lowest part of the pit in Trench 21 looking west

7. The ditch in Trench 26 was c.1.3m wide and c.0.75m to its base from the modern ground surface. It was filled with a grey orange/brown clay silt, similar to the subsoil above, but did not contain any artefacts.



**Figure 10** The ditch in Trench 26, looking north

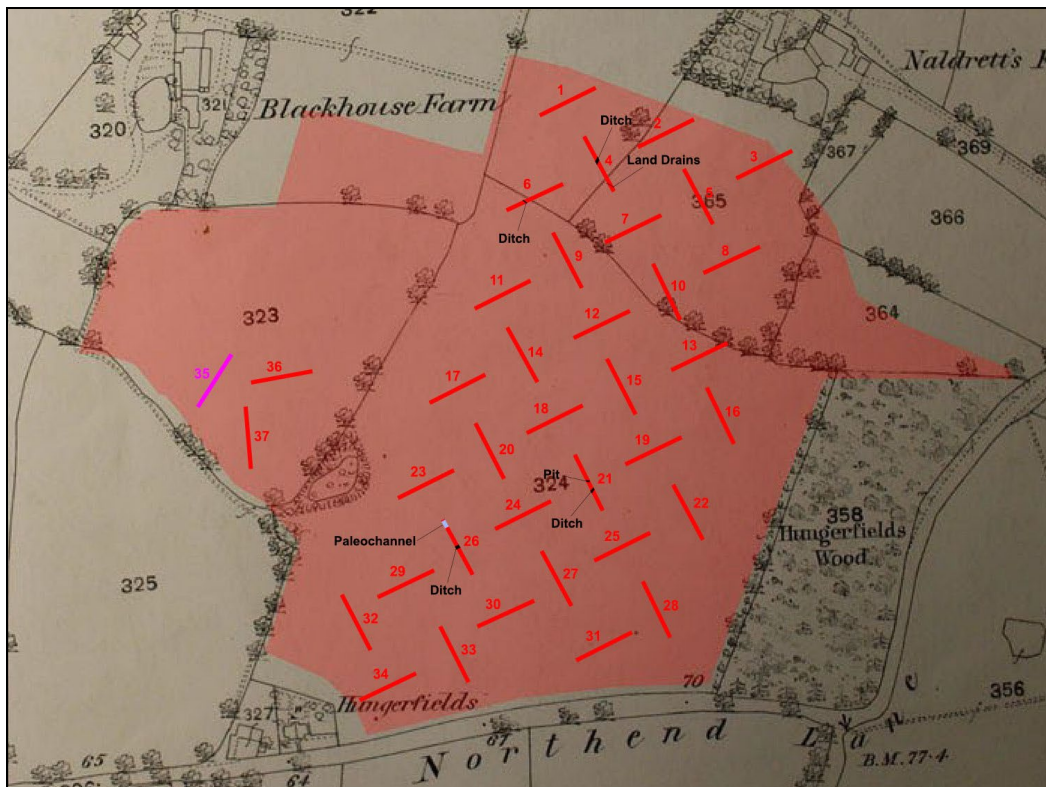
### CONCLUSION

1. The features that were revealed consisted solely of four ditches and a modern pit. The former align well with historic boundaries visible on 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping (see Figures 11 & 12), and are likely to be the associated drainage ditches. The larger ditch in Trench 4 may well have been re-dug to house the ceramic drain, of unusually wide bore, immediately before the field boundaries were removed when the area was landscaped to form the park attached to the newly built Naldretts House (see Figure 13).
2. The paucity of features and artefacts found across the trenches would suggest that the area has been occupied by fields since its first clearance. The date of the latter is unlikely to be before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, given the complete absence of artefacts from earlier periods.
3. The results from these archaeological works adds to the general picture of the Weald as an area of less dense settlement, probably due to the heavy clays, which only experienced increases in activity in times of population increase. This occurred initially during the Late Iron Age/early Roman period, but, after once again decreasing, re-started in the medieval period, but with many areas, such as here, not being affected until the later post-medieval or modern period.

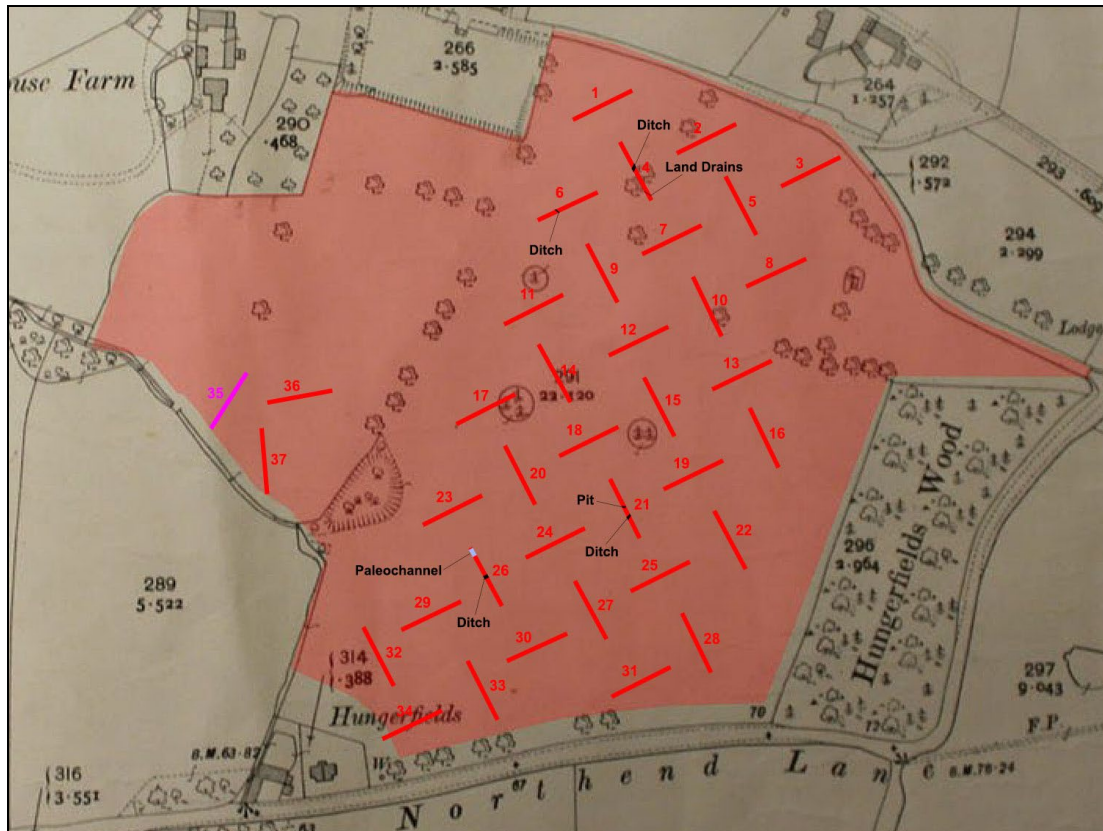
# WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY



**Figure 11** The trenches overlain on to the 1841 Tithe map showing the intersection with the various field boundaries. The ditches in Trenches 4, 21 & 26, allowing for distortion, can be seen to coincide with boundaries



**Figure 12** The trenches overlain on to the 1874 Ordnance Survey map showing the intersection with the various field boundaries. The ditches in Trenches 2 & 6, allowing for distortion, can be seen to coincide with boundaries



**Figure 13** The trenches overlain on to the 1910 Ordnance Survey map. The field boundaries have now all disappeared to make way for the park.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anelay, G. 2017 *Heritage Statement and Written Scheme of Investigation for Proposed Works at Naldretts Farm, Pookbourne Lane, Sayers Common, Hassocks, West Sussex* Unpublished

West Sussex Archaeology Ltd 2024 *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Works at Naldretts Farm, Pookbourne Lane, Sayers Common, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9HD*. Unpublished report.