



# Corfe Castle, Dorset

## Archaeological Observations and Recording during Formation of Beacon Bases and Other Minor Works



Report No. 53513/3/1

December 2018



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**Client:** The National Trust, National Trust, Purbeck Office, Currendon Farm, Currendon Hill, Swanage, BH19 3AA

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## Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
<b>OASIS Reference</b>	terraina1-336456 & terraina1-336458		
<b>Project Title</b>	New Beacon Bases and Minor Works, Corfe Castle		
<b>Short Description of Project</b>	Terrain Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological observations and recording during minor works at Corfe Castle, specifically during the construction of two new beacon platforms, erosion repairs around the stocks in the Outer Bailey and emergency electricity cable repairs at the edge of the Outer Bridge The works did not penetrate below modern deposits. No significant archaeology was exposed.		
<b>Project Dates</b>	Start: 03-12-2018	End: 03-12-2018	
<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	Yes/No		
<b>Project Code</b>	53513		
<b>Monument Type and Period</b>	None		
<b>Significant Finds</b>	None		
Project Location			
<b>County/District/Parish</b>	Dorset/ Purbeck/ Corfe Castle		
<b>Site Address</b>	Corfe Castle, The Square, Corfe Castle, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5EZ		
<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SY 9595 8220		
<b>Site Area</b>	c. 4 m <sup>2</sup>		
<b>Height OD</b>			
Project Creators			
<b>Organisation</b>	Terrain Archaeology		
<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Martin Papworth		
<b>Project Design Originator</b>	Terrain Archaeology		
<b>Project Supervisor</b>	Peter Bellamy		
<b>Project Manager</b>	Peter Bellamy		
<b>Sponsor or Funding Body</b>	The National Trust		
Project Archive			
Archive Type	Physical	Digital	Paper
<b>Location/Accession No</b>	National Trust	National Trust	National Trust
<b>Contents</b>	Copper Alloy	Photographs	Context sheets

# Corfe Castle, Dorset

## Archaeological Observations and Recording during Formation of Beacon Bases and Other Minor Works, December 2018

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Project introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by the National Trust, to undertake Archaeological Observations and Recording during the formation of two new beacon bases and some minor restoration and other works at Corfe Castle.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 3rd December 2018 by Peter Bellamy.

#### 1.2 Project Brief and Specification

No written brief was issued by or on behalf of the National Trust.

#### 1.3 Site Location

The site lies within Corfe Castle at the northern end of the town of Corfe Castle, centred on Ordnance Survey NGR SY 9595 8220. The castle lies on a steep-sided natural mound in a break in the Purbeck Hills, which rises up to a height of over 60 m aOD.

#### 1.4 Geology

Bedrock geology is mapped as Chalk, with no recorded superficial deposits (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

#### 1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

The remains of a possible pre-Conquest building were found in the west bailey during excavations in 1950-52. These are thought to represent either a '*hospitium*' belonging to Shaftesbury Abbey, a royal residence associated with King Edward, who was murdered at '*Corfegeat*' in AD978 or the '*domus*' of Queen Elfrida (RCHME 1960).

The Castle was built in the late 11th century during the reign of William I to guard a gap through the Purbeck Hills. The stone curtain wall of the inner ward was built in the late 11th century and there are the remains of a late 11th century hall in the West Bailey. The stone keep was built in the inner ward about 1105 and was used to imprison Robert Duke of Normandy during the reign of Henry I. The castle saw military action during the civil wars between Stephen and Matilda in 1138-9. Extensive building works were undertaken during the reign of King John, with the construction of the wall and towers around the West Bailey and the construction of the 'Gloriette' in the Inner Ward. The castle was used as a treasury, prison and royal residence. The Outer Bailey defences were completed during the reign of Edward I in the late 13th century. The castle was extensively repaired between 1356-77. Corfe Castle was sold by the Crown in 1572 and was acquired by the Bankes family in 1635 and was used as a high status noble residence until the Castle was captured and slighted in 1646 during the English Civil War. The castle was retained by the Bankes Estate as a romantic ruin and was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1982.

#### 1.6 Previous Archaeological fieldwork

There was some excavation in the castle in the late 19th century. The early hall building in the West Bailey was investigated by the Royal Commission in 1960 (RCHME 1960).

The National Trust carried out a series of excavations and observations in the West Bailey, Outer Gatehouse and Inner Ward between 1986-97 (Thackray and Papworth 1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; Grace and Papworth 1997; 1998).

In February 2018 Terrain Archaeology undertook a watching brief during erosion repairs adjacent to the Third, Fourth and North Towers (Bellamy 2018).

## 1.7 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Archaeological Observations and Recording was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

Its objectives were:

- To observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.

## 1.8 Groundworks

Two one-metre-square bases for two additional beacons on the second terrace in the Outer Bailey were constructed by removing the turf and forming an area of limestone gravel and dust. The existing area of limestone gravel and stone dust around the Stocks and the Information Board in the southern part of the Outer Bailey was extended to counteract further erosion between these two features. The turf was removed over an irregular area up to 5.7 m by 2.65 m to a depth of up to 0.2 m and a layer of terram covered with limestone gravel and stone dust, linking up with the footpath and existing stoned area.

Several stone cobbles and a stone slab on the south east corner of the Outer Bridge were removed in order to bury a new temporary electricity cable.

## 1.9 Methods

The observation and recording of the groundworks was undertaken to the standards of the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a), with an archaeologist in attendance during the groundworks.

All features and deposits were recorded using components of Terrain Archaeology's system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records, regardless of their perceived date and archaeological significance. A photographic record of the works was maintained in digital format, which includes aspects of their setting, conduct and technical detail.

## 1.10 Archive and Dissemination

### 1.10.1 Paper Archive

The project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and appropriate background documentation, has been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current guidelines (Brown 2011; CIfA 2014b) and the requirements of the receiving museum. It is currently stored by Terrain Archaeology under the project code 53513. In due course, the archive will be accessioned for long-term curation and storage by the National Trust.

### 1.10.2 Artefacts

No artefacts were retained from the fieldwork.

### 1.10.3 Report

A copy of this report will be lodged with the National Trust Sites and Monuments Record and with Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER is a publicly funded and accessible resource, and deposition of the report will place it, and the project results, in the public domain.



A digital summary of the archive will be placed with the OASIS project ([www.oasis.ac.uk](http://www.oasis.ac.uk)) under the reference code *terraina1-336456* and *terraina1-336458*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

## 2. Results

### 2.1 Introduction

The two new beacon platforms were numbered Trenches 1 and 2. The erosion repair around the Stocks was numbered Trench 3 and Trench 4 was the area of the temporary electricity cable installation on the Outer Bridge. The locations are shown on Figure 2 and the context descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.

### 2.2 Beacon Platforms

The two new beacon platforms were dug on the forward edge of the second of three terraces in the Outer Bailey of the Castle (Figure 2; Plates 1–3). Trench 1 (SZ 95965 82238) measured 1.06 m by 1.06 m across and 0.10 m deep. The base of the trench revealed a slightly stony layer of dark brown silty loam (101) below the dark brown silty loam turf and topsoil (100). The only find was a 1994 10 pence piece. Trench 2 (SZ 95954 82235) lay about 9.5 m to the west and measured 1.00 by 1.06 m across and 0.12 m deep. It exhibited the same stratigraphy as in Trench 1. The only find was a 2000 1p coin.

### 2.3 Erosion Repair around Stocks

Trench 3 (SZ 95981 82190) was an irregular area of turf removal around the Stocks and the adjacent Information Panel beside the footpath in the southern area of the Outer Bailey (Figure 2; Plates 4–6), in order to extend the gravelled area to combat the ongoing erosion of this area. The dark brown silty loam turf (120) was removed to depth of about 0.2 m revealing the dark brown silty loam topsoil (122) below. This topsoil included a some modern material including fragments of a plastic teaspoon. In the southern part of the trench was a thin layer of gravel (121) at a depth of 0.1m below the turf. This is likely to be part of a previous erosion repair.

### 2.4 Electricity Cable Repair Outer Bridge

As a result of a major electrical fault, a temporary electricity cable has been laid along the edge of the Outer Bridge. Two holes had been dug in the lane leading up to the castle by the electricity company to find the fault and patch in the emergency cable repair. The new cable needed to be buried below the surface in the pinch point between the boundary walls at the end of the Outer Bridge (Plates 7–8). This small slot was numbered Trench 4 (SZ 96018 82135) (Figure 2). A single paving slab and the minimum number angular stone cobbles were lifted to allow the cable to be inserted. The cobbles (130) were set in a bedding (131) of mortary sand over a cemented mortar layer (132). The short stretch of trench between the bridge and the end of the new cable repair was not observed, but the exposure in the sondage dug by the electricity company indicated disturbed deposits (Plate 9).

## 3. Finds

### 3.1 Finds Assemblage

A very small number of finds were noted from the observations. These were all clearly modern and were not collected or retained.

### 3.2 Coins

Two coins were recovered: a 10p coin dated 1994 (from context 100) and a 1p coin dated 2000 (from context 111). Neither coin was retained.

### 3.3 Metal Objects

A copper alloy object was recovered from the top of topsoil context 122 in Trench 3. It comprises of two pieces of thin copper alloy sheet rolled into a tapering, slightly flattened, cylinder with overlapping seams. It measures 32 mm

long, 6 mm by 5 mm across at the wide end and 4 mm diameter at the narrow end. The inner sheet projects 6 mm from the wide end. It resembles two crude lace tags rolled together. The date of this object is unclear.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

### 4.1 Discussion

The groundworks for the new beacon platforms (Trenches 1 and 2) and the erosion repair around the stocks (Trench 3) did not penetrate below the modern turf and topsoil. The works for the temporary electric cable repair (Trench 4) on the edge of the Outer Bridge did not penetrate below the modern structure of the bridge. No significant archaeology was exposed or disturbed.

### 4.2 Conclusions

No significant archaeology was revealed during this project.

## 5. References

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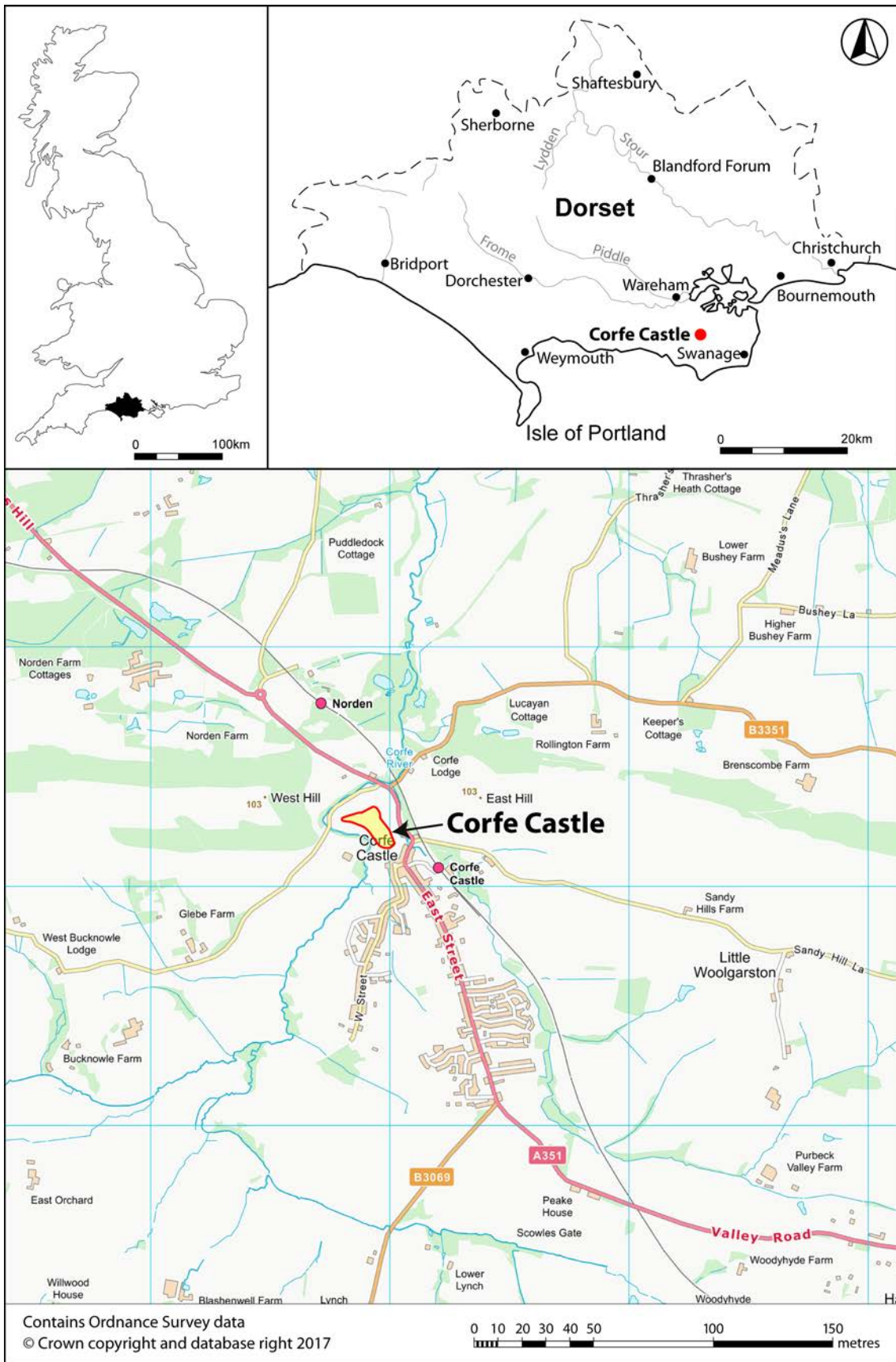


Figure 1: Site Location.

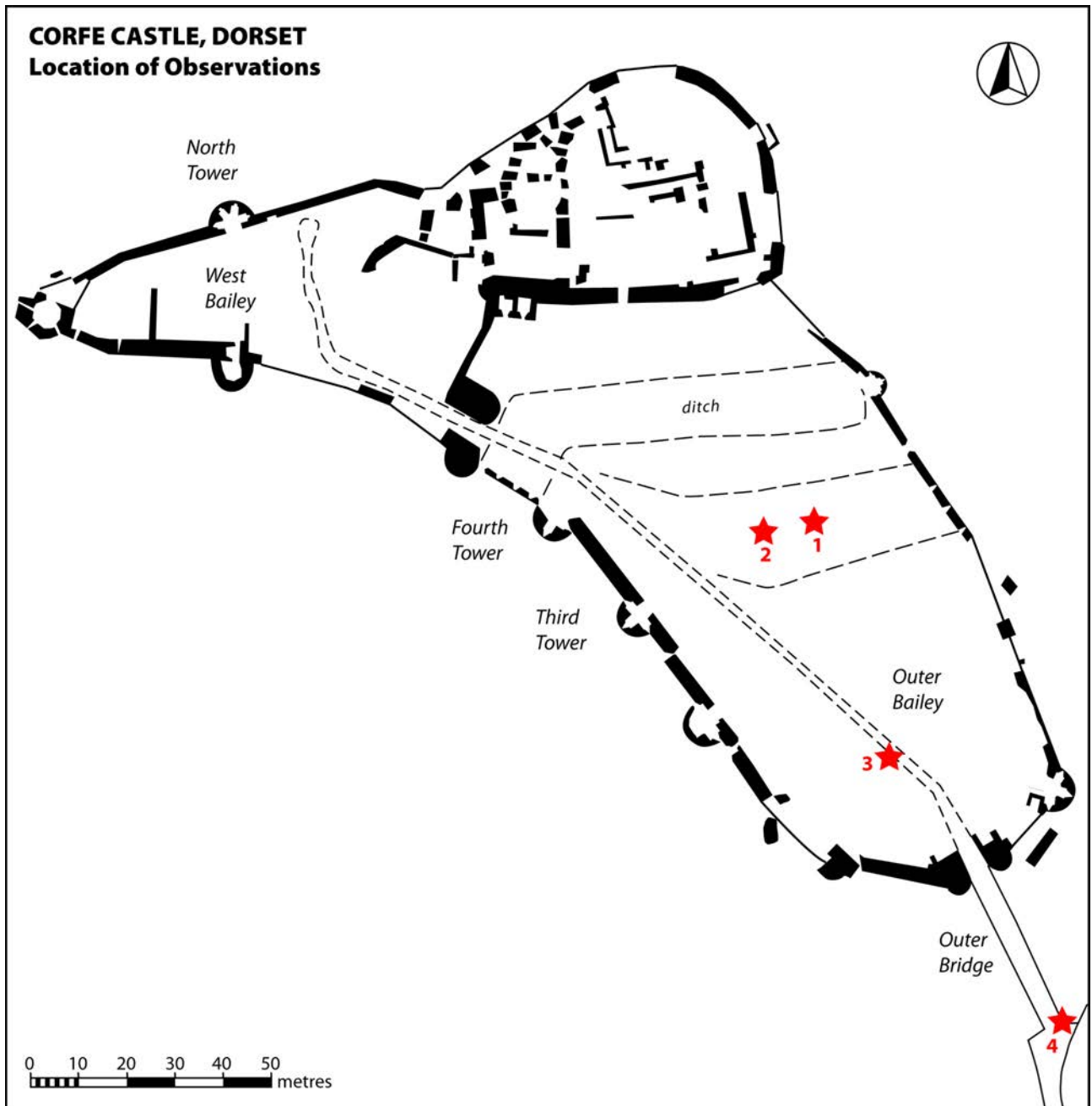


Figure 2: Plan of Observations





*Plate 1: General view of Trenches 1 and 2, looking ESE.*



*Plate 2: General view of Trenches 1 and 2 looking WSW.*



*Plate 3: Trench 1 fully excavated. View from north. 1m scale.*





Plate 4: General view of Trench 3, viewed from NE.



Plate 5: Trench 3 after excavation. View from northwest. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Trench 3 after excavation. View from southeast. 1m scale.





Plate 7: General view of location of Trench 4, looking north.



Plate 8: Trench 4 after excavation. View from west.

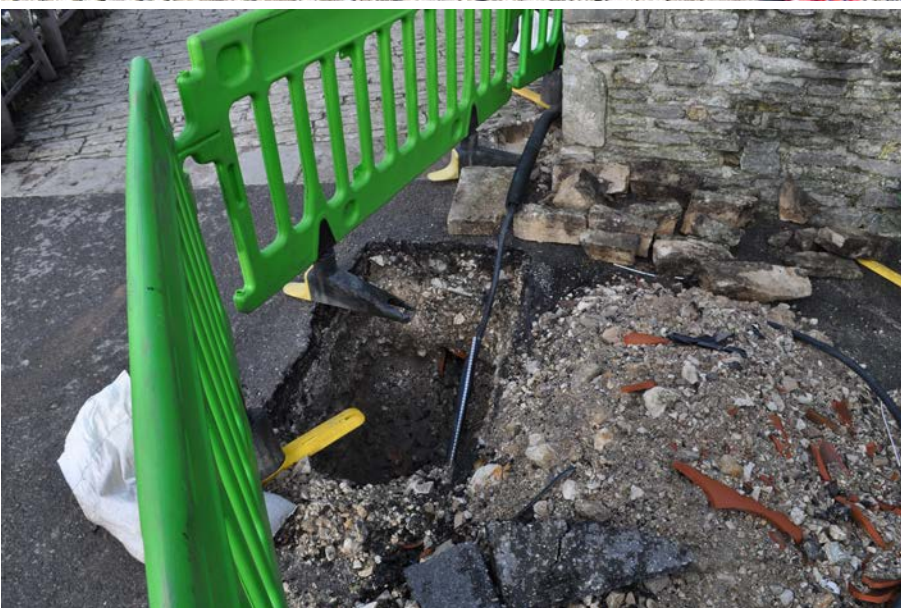


Plate 9: View of trench previously dug to repair electricity cable, showing deposits south of Outer Bridge. Looking NNW.



## Appendix 1: Context Summary

### Trench 1

Length: 1.06 m; Width 1.06 m; depth 0.10 m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
100	<b>Turf:</b> Dark brown silty loam and turf.	0.00 – 0.10m
101	<b>Base of Topsoil:</b> Dark brown silty loam with moderate small stone up to 100mm across.	0.10m+

### Trench 2

Length: 1.06 m; Width 1.0 m; depth 0.12m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
110	<b>Turf:</b> Dark brown silty loam and turf.	0.00 – 0.10m
111	<b>Base of Topsoil:</b> Dark brown silty loam with moderate small stone up to 130mm across.	0.10m+

### Trench 3

Maximum length: 5.7 m; Maximum width 2.6 m; maximum depth 0.2m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
120	<b>Turf:</b> Dark brown silty loam and turf.	0.00 – 0.20m
121	<b>Gravel:</b> Hard-packed small flint gravel below 120. Former erosion repair?	0.10m+
122	<b>Topsoil:</b> Dark brown silty loam.	0.20m+

### Trench 4

Maximum depth 0.2m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
130	<b>Bridge Surface:</b> Angular stone cobbles in yellowish-brown mortar.	0.00 – 0.15m
131	<b>Bedding Layer:</b> Yellowish-brown mortary sand.	0.15 – 0.20m
132	<b>Concrete:</b> Cemented layer beneath 131.	0.20m+