



NEW VEHICLE GATES, BRATTON CAMP, BRATTON, WILTSHIRE

Archaeological Observations and Recording



Report No. 53249/3/1

March 2007

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WILTSHIRE**

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology in March 2007 during the installation of new gates at either side of the Portway, at the southern entrance to Bratton Camp, Bratton, within the area of the Scheduled Monument. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during the installation of new gates at either side of the Portway at the southern entrance to Bratton Camp, Bratton, Wiltshire.

The proposed development comprised the excavation of five postholes for three gates. Two of the gates were situated immediately north of the inner rampart on the eastern side of the Portway and the third was situated at the end of the outer rampart on the western side of the Portway (Figure 3).

Archaeological Observations and Recording, also known as an archaeological watching brief, is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, within a specified area or site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.”

The site lies on flat ground at the southern entrance to Bratton Camp centred on NGR ST90155149 (Figures 1 and 2).

The site lies within Scheduled Monument No. 26708 “Bratton Camp Iron Age hillfort, the Westbury White Horse, barrows and trackways on Bratton Down”.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 21st March 2007 by Steven Tatler.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of Chris Bally (Regional Landscape Manager, English Heritage) during this project.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within Scheduled Monument No. 26708 comprising a Neolithic long barrow, Bronze Age round barrows, Bratton Camp Iron Age hillfort, sunken trackways and the 18th century Westbury White Horse. The following summary is taken from the scheduling description.

The Neolithic long barrow lies within the interior of the hillfort and has been partially excavated on at least three occasions, initially in the 18th century by Whitaker without recorded results. In the early 19th century two investigations by Cunnington revealed three skeletons, pottery, animal bone, and a bead. In the mid 19th century further investigations were carried out by Thurnham who found a primary cremation platform for one or two adults.

Two Bronze Age round barrows lay within the hillfort. One is situated between the inner rampart and the out-turned rampart to the east of the southern entrance of the hillfort. This was excavated

in 1802 but without any recorded results. The other round barrow (also excavated in 1802 without any recorded results) is no longer visible on the ground.

Bratton Camp is a multivallate Iron Age hillfort enclosing an area of approximately 9.3 ha with a single clearly defined entrance on the south side and another possibly original entrance at the northeast corner. The west and north sides occupy the crest of steep escarpment slopes whilst the south and east sides cross Bratton Down. Whitaker excavated the hillfort in the 18th century and produced some querns and some possible sling stones.

Abutting the western rampart of the hillfort is the Westbury White Horse created in the mid 18th century. Originally facing south it was destroyed and replaced by the present one in 1778. The horse was redefined using concrete in 1936.

A complex system of sunken trackways, lying parallel to the Portway to the northeast of the hillfort, are probably of a medieval date but could relate to an original hillfort entrance.

Recent investigations within the vicinity of the site (Bath Archaeological Trust 2004), during the installation of vehicle gates and kissing gates, revealed no features or deposits of archaeological interest.

Other investigations carried out during the repair of areas of scarring and the construction, repair or removal of a series of steps at Bratton Camp (Foundations Archaeology 2005) also revealed no features or deposits of archaeological interest.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

METHODS

The work was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Terrain Archaeology (Document No. 3244/1/1), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Code of Conduct and Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (1994, as revised).

All gate postholes were excavated by hand and the spoil investigated. The holes were all between 0.40 m and 0.90 m across and between 0.40 m and 0.75 m deep.

All features and deposits, exposed during the works, were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. Each gate posthole was given a unique number, with each context numbered as a suffix to the gate posthole number (e.g. 1.1, 1.2, etc).

The records, and any materials recovered, have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum.

RESULTS

A total of five postholes were excavated by hand. Postholes 1–3 were excavated for Gates 1 and 2 and postholes 4 and 5 for Gate 3 (Figures 2 and 3).

Posthole 1

This was situated at the northern end of Gate 1 and measured 0.4 m by 0.4 m across and 0.5 m deep. Compact chalk bedrock was observed immediately below the 0.25 m thick yellowish-brown silty loam topsoil.

Posthole 2

This was situated at the southern end of Gate 1 at the junction with Gate 2 and consisted of two postholes excavated together to create an L-shaped trench 0.9 m x 0.4 m across and 0.4 m deep. The sequence of deposits observed comprised compact chalk bedrock at a depth of 0.25 m, overlain by chalk rubble mixed with pale yellowish-brown silty loam, up to 0.15 m thick, probably the result of the consolidation of the entrance to the field. Overlying this was a yellowish-brown silty loam topsoil, up to 0.1 m thick.

Posthole 3

This was situated at the eastern end of Gate 2 and measured 0.4 m x 0.4 m across and 0.65 m deep. The sequence of deposits observed comprised compact chalk bedrock at a depth of 0.3 m, overlain by a mid brown silty loam, up to 0.3 m thick, containing frequent chalk rubble and roots. This deposit is probably the result of disturbance caused by the recent removal of an adjacent water trough.

Posthole 4

This was situated at the southern end of Gate 3 and measured 0.4m x 0.4m across and 0.45 m deep. The sequence of deposits comprised compact chalk bedrock at a depth of 0.25 m, overlain by a pale brown calcareous silty loam topsoil, up to 0.25 m thick.

Posthole 5

This was situated at the northern end of Gate 3 and measured 0.5 m x 0.4 m across and 0.75 m deep. The sequence of deposits comprised compact chalk bedrock containing bands of pale yellowish-brown silt at a depth of 0.35 m, overlain by a pale brown calcareous silty loam topsoil, up to 0.35 m thick. In the northern side of the posthole the remains of a wooden post with concrete base were observed.

Finds

No finds were recovered during this watching brief.

DISCUSSION

The small scale and character of the groundworks means the scope for undertaking more than a simple description of the findings is extremely limited. None of the postholes produced any recognisable evidence for *in situ* archaeological features or deposits.

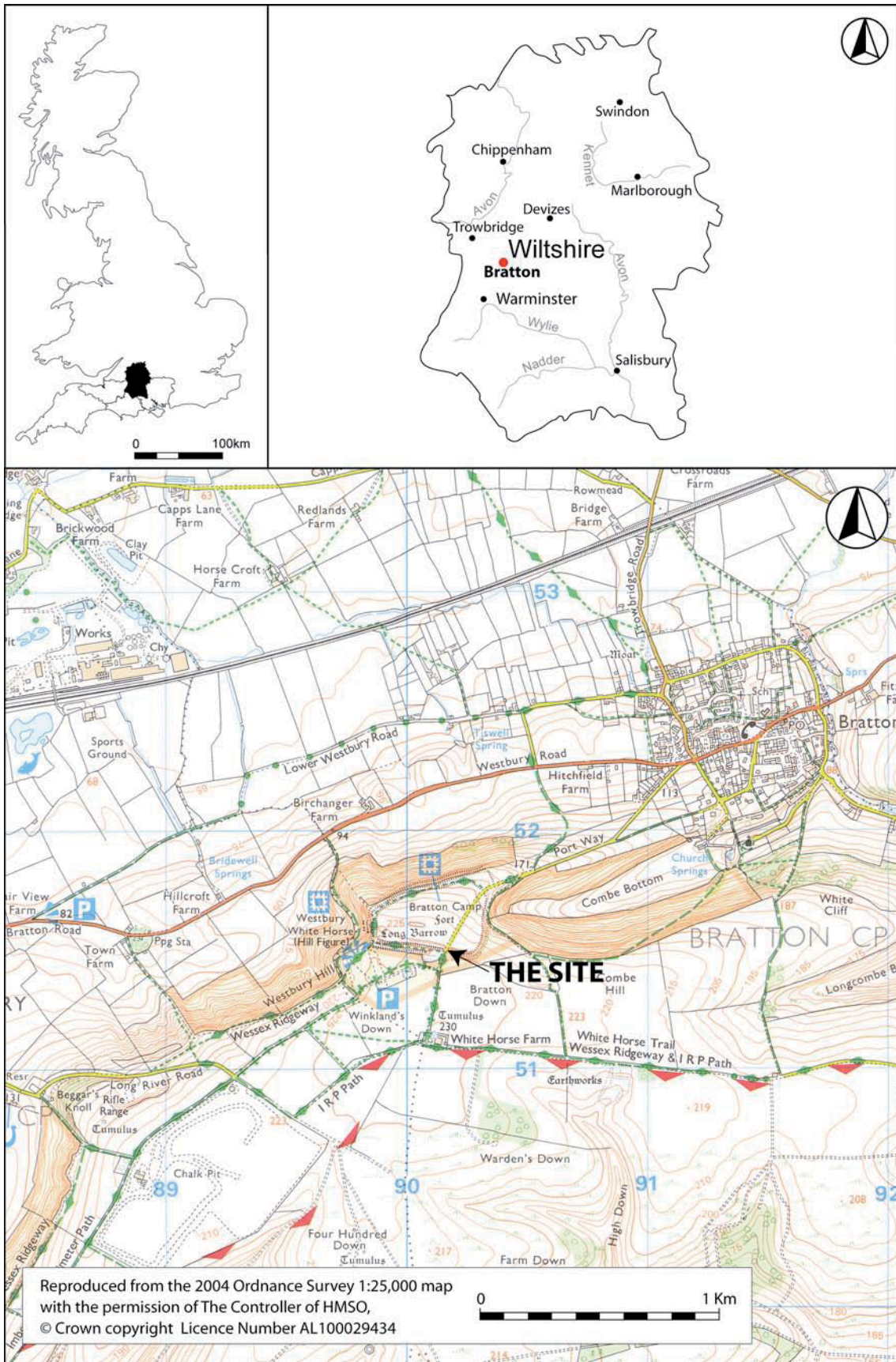


Figure 1: Site location map

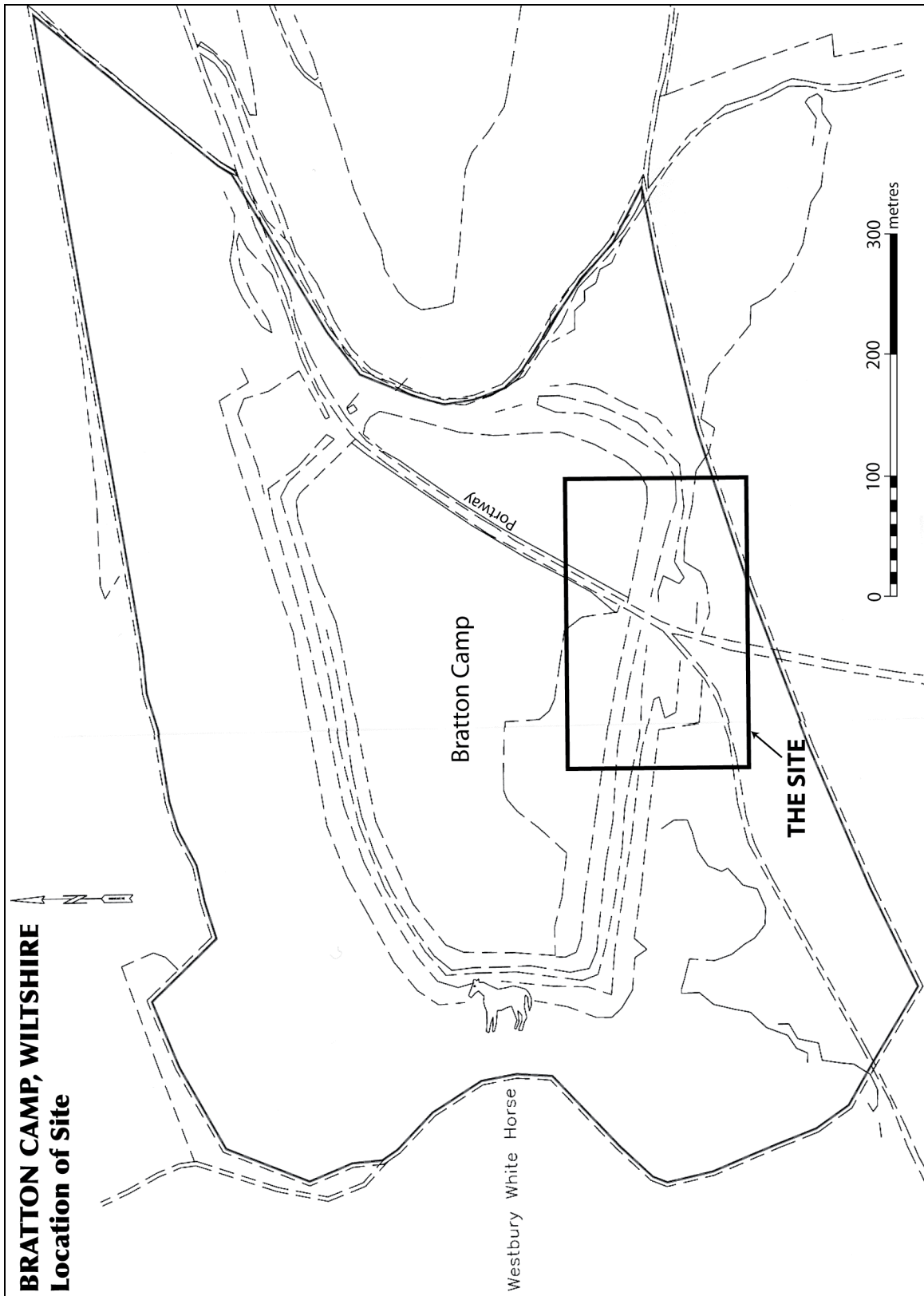


Figure 2: Plan showing location of site (based on a plan provided by the client)

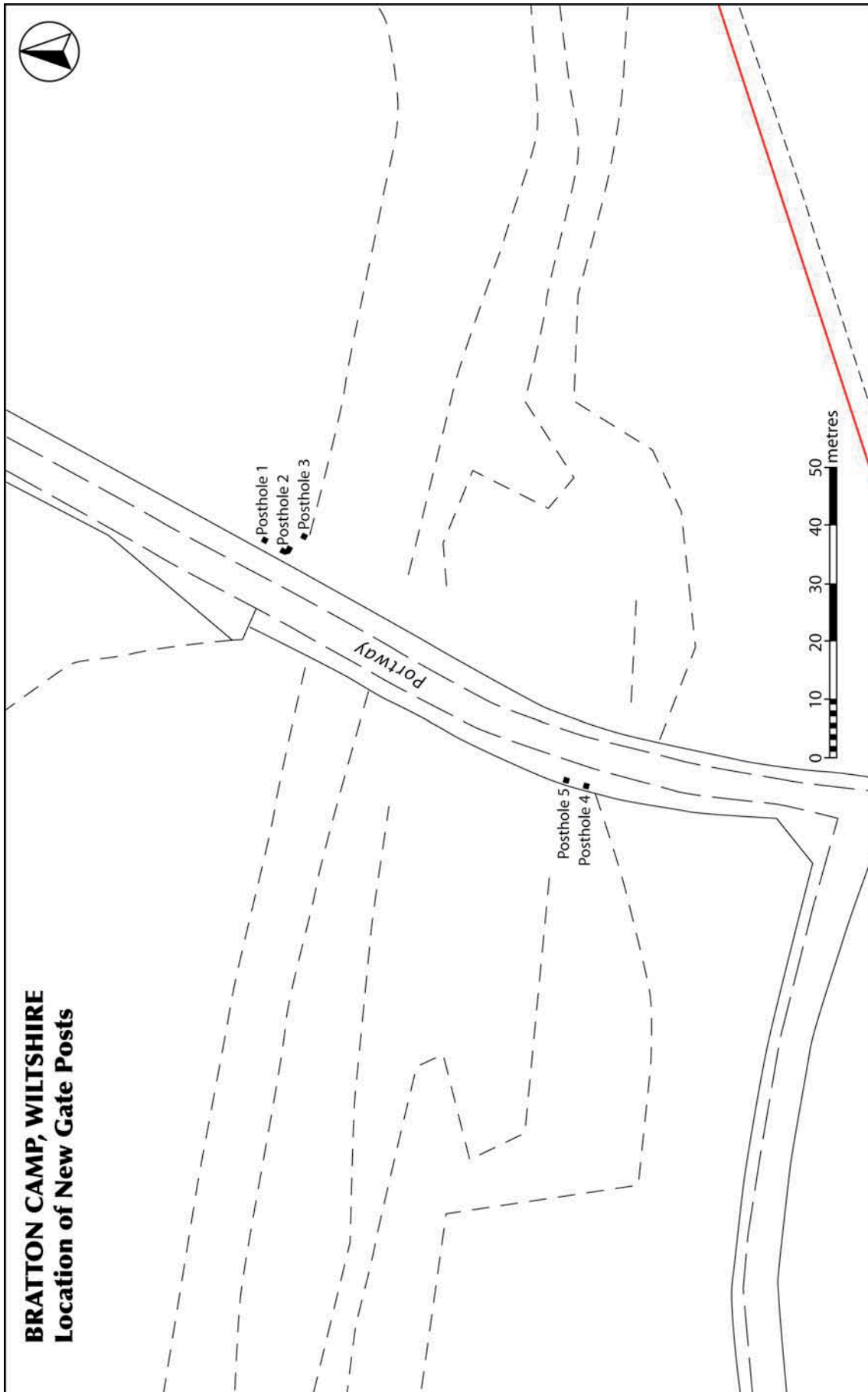


Figure 3: Plan showing location of postholes (based on a plan provided by the client)



Plate 1: View of postholes for gates 1 and 2.



Plate 2: Posthole 1.



Plate 3: Posthole 2.



Plate 4: Posthole 3.



Plate 5: View of postholes for gate 3.



Plate 6: Posthole 4.



Plate 7: Posthole 5.