

**REPLACEMENT WATER MAIN,
WINTERBORNE WHITECHURCH, DORSET
Archaeological Watching Brief**



Report No. 53121.1

August 2003

**Replacement Water Main,
Winterborne Whitechurch, Dorset
Archaeological Watching Brief, March 2003**

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Appendix 1: Written Scheme of Investigation

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the replacement of an existing water main to the southwest of the village of Winterborne Whitechurch, SY82089868 to SY83329966. No archaeological deposits or features were observed during the removal of topsoil along the pipeline easement.

INTRODUCTION

This project, comprising an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new replacement water main, was commissioned by Wessex Water following advice from Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council.

The site lies to the southwest of the village of Winterborne Whitechurch, along the southern side of the A354 Dorchester to Blandford road, at Ordnance Survey NGR SY82089868 to SY83329966 (Figure 1). The topography is typical undulating chalk downland: the southwest end of the water main lies about 80 m above Ordnance Datum, before rising up to nearly 100 m OD at Longthorns Wood. The ground then falls gradually down to West Park Farm at 90 m OD before dipping more steeply into a dry valley at about 75 m OD. To the northeast, the ground rises more steeply, reaching 105 m OD at the caravan park on the outskirts of the village.

The whole area of the pipeline was under arable cultivation.

The geology is mapped as Upper Chalk, with narrow strips of River Gravels along the river valleys to the north (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50,000 Sheet 328 *Dorchester* Solid and Drift 1981).

The site lies less than 1 km to the south of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Longthorns Wood, immediately to the north of the site, is designated a County Wildlife Site.

The groundworks comprised the stripping of the topsoil from an easement about 10 m wide, which ran along the south side of the A354. A continuous pipe trench about 0.9 m wide and 1.1 m deep was dug along the easement.

The fieldwork was carried out between 21st–26th March 2003 by Joanne Best.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the following for their help and cooperation during this project: Dave Jones (Wessex Water), Steve Wallis (Dorset County Council), and the groundwork contractors. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out by Joanne Best.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There are no archaeological sites or findspots recorded from within the boundaries of the site.

However, the site runs through an area containing a number of prehistoric monuments, including a group of six Bronze Age round barrows on Deverell Down (DCC SMR Monument 541 B/D). During the 19th century, excavations into a number of these barrows revealed a complex sequence of construction and internments. The forms of pottery recovered here and at a cremation cemetery at Rimbury, Weymouth, formed the basis of a pottery tradition that characterised Middle Bronze Age burials in Southern England.

Within the Deverell Barrow itself, a semicircle of non-local sandstone boulders had been erected over 16 cremation urns, set into the pre-barrow ground surface. Within this semicircle were five stone cists containing cremations. In the western part of the barrow, two flint cairns covered four more urns. A further 3 urns were sealed beneath isolated stones, and four more lay on the old ground surface. These remains form the best known cluster of single urns (Woodward 2000, 43).

The most obvious feature dating to the Iron Age and Roman period is the Combs Ditch, a dyke located 2.5 km to the northeast of Winterborne Whitechurch. The Roman road between Dorchester and Wimborne passes through Winterborne Kingston to the southeast.

Winterborne Whitechurch is mentioned in Domesday, held by the Abbey at Milton. The parish originally included three separate settlements, concentrated along the River Winterborne, with fields stretching up onto the chalk downland. Anglo Saxon finds have been recovered within the area, including an extremely rare hoard of 9th century coins at Lower Whatcombe (Keen, 1986, 185).

The remains of a deserted Medieval village (DCC SMR Monument 841B) and milling house (DCC SMR Monument 818B) are located c. 600 m to the east of the northern end of the pipeline. These formed part of the original settlement along the River Winterborne, before the village shifted its focus towards the Blandford to Dorchester road. This road became a Turnpike road in 1752, which presumably accelerated this change (RCHME 1970, 312).

PREVIOUS GROUND DISTURBANCE

Within the easement there were three existing service trenches: the water main, a gas pipeline and a telecommunications trench. The area of undisturbed ground between these services was relatively limited in places.

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

There was no Brief for this work, but following a verbal discussion with Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council, a specification was produced by Terrain Archaeology (Appendix 1).

The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct and *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*.

The topsoil was removed within the easement limits, by a 13 ton tracked excavator, equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The total length of the easement was 1.7 km. The pipe trench was then excavated using a toothed bucket 0.50 m wide, which resulted in an average width of 0.70 m and a depth of 1.10 m. As no archaeological features were observed during the stripping of the easement, the decision was made by Terrain Archaeology not to observe the digging of the pipe trench.

The records 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, Dorset County Museum.

RESULTS

The layers recorded in the observations are listed in Table 1.

Context	Description	Finds	Interpretation	Depth
1	Light greyish-brown silty clay loam with common chalk inclusions <3cm	Worked flint	Ploughsoil	0–0.30 m
2	Mid reddish-brown silty loam with common chalk inclusions <3cm	No finds	Subsoil	0.30 m+
3	Light reddish-brown silty loam with rare chalk inclusions <2cm	No finds	Colluvium	0.30m+
4	Chalk bedrock and sparse patches of dark reddish-brown clay-with-flints	No finds	Natural	0.30m+

Table 1: Details of all observed contexts

Natural deposits

The sequence of natural deposits varied little along the length of the easement. Solid chalk bedrock with sparse patches of clay-with-flints (4) was visible throughout the easement, especially on the higher ground to the northeast of West Park Farm. The density of clay-with-flints increased on the lower slopes of the easement, for example in the length of trenching between Longmead Cottages and West Park Farm.

A mid reddish brown silty loam with common fragments of chalk (2) was seen overlying the chalk bedrock in the section of trenching from Longmead Cottages to West Park Farm, and between the dry valley and the northern end of the trench.

A colluvial deposit of light reddish-brown silty loam (3) overlay the natural chalk in the dry valley to the northeast of Longthorns Wood.

Archaeological deposits

There were no archaeological deposits observed during the watching brief.

Ploughsoil

The ploughsoil was a 0.30 m thick layer of light greyish brown silty clay loam with common chalk fragments throughout (1). The deposit was deepest and darker in colour near the hedge-line along the southern side of the A354. Where the easement was excavated through hedges planted as field-boundaries it was observed that roots of the hedges had caused very little disturbance to the chalk bedrock, but had remained confined within the ploughsoil.

Finds

Artefacts were noted only in the ploughsoil (context 1).

Worked Flint: Sixteen pieces of worked flint were retained from the observations. This assemblage comprised 9 flakes, 3 broken flakes, 2 multiplatform flake cores and 2 scrapers. The flint was heavily rolled and the majority of pieces were patinated. All of this material would fit comfortably within an Early to Middle Bronze Age context and represents a 'background scatter' of flint artefacts, commonly found across the chalk downlands. No particular concentrations of flint were noted.

Pottery: A single sherd of 19th century Verwood earthenware pottery was recovered.

Glass: A single sherd of 20th century brown bottle glass was recovered.

CONCLUSIONS

The pipeline did not encounter any archaeological remains. This is partly a result of previous disturbance from services along the route of the water main, but it also reflects a lack of intensive settlement activity in this area. No prehistoric deposits were found despite the presence of Bronze Age monuments within the immediate vicinity of the site. Settlement is likely to have been concentrated in the river valleys, as reflected by the present settlement pattern.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53121) will be deposited with Dorset County Museum, which has agreed in principle to accept the archive, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

REFERENCES

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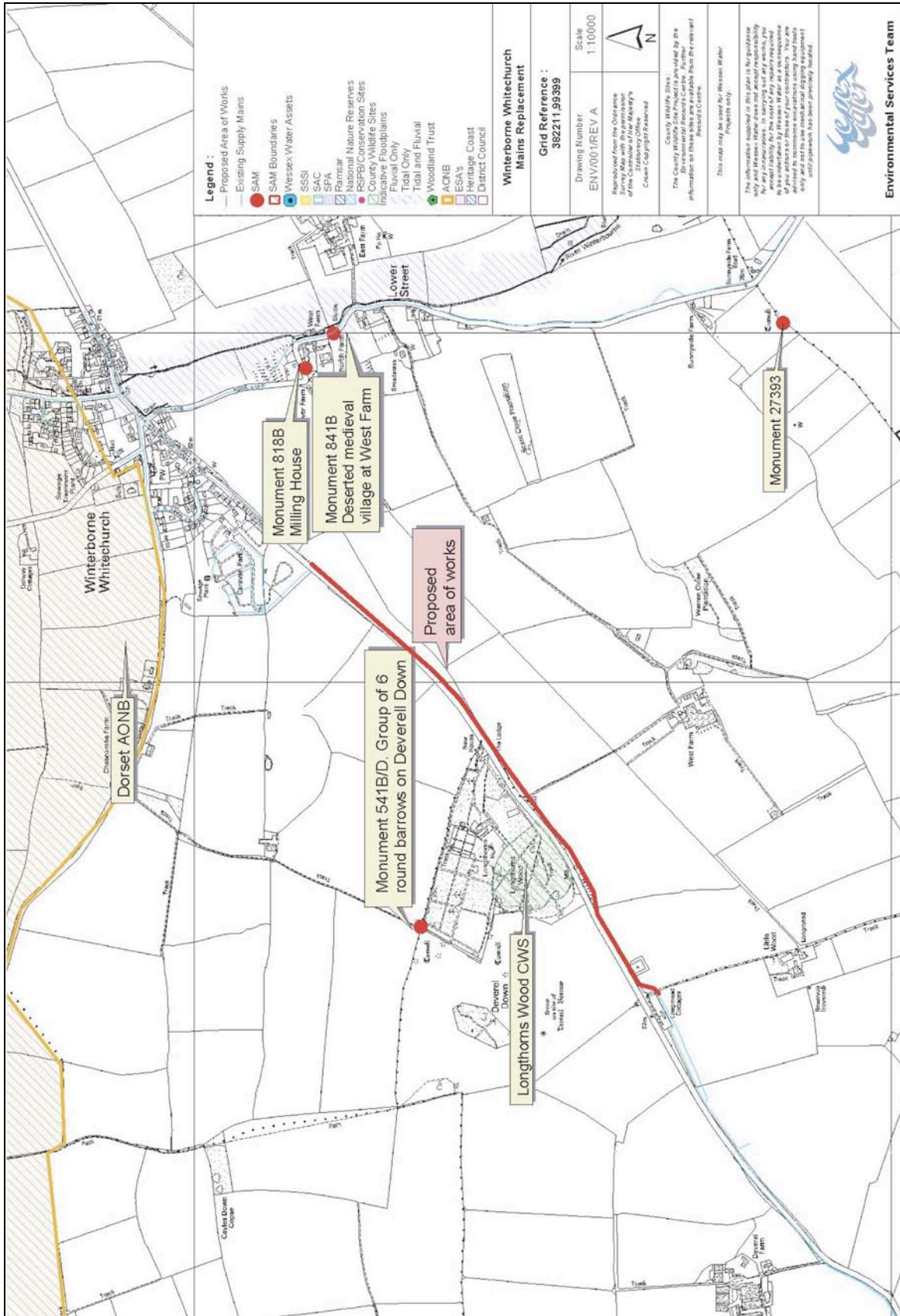


Figure 1: Location Map (from a plan provided by Wessex Water.)



Plate 1: View along easement looking southwest towards Longthorns Wood.



Plate 2: View along easement looking northeast at northern end of pipeline.

APPENDIX 1: WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION