

***A Watching Brief on
the Installation of New Path Furniture
along Offa's Dyke Path,
Shropshire, 2010***

by
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Archaeology Service



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A WATCHING BRIEF ON THE INSTALLATION OF NEW PATH
FURNITURE ALONG OFFA'S DYKE PATH, SHROPSHIRE, 2010

by
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A report for the
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SUMMARY

In 2010 the Archaeology Service carried out a watching brief on the installation of new path furniture at a number of sites along the Offa's Dyke Path in southwest Shropshire. In two of the locations (Middle Knuck B & C) the new footpath furniture was located on the line of the ditch component of the Dyke, and in both of these locations relatively shallow fills were recorded above the natural bedrock at the base of the ditch. Otherwise, no significant archaeological deposits were located in the excavations for the new furniture.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2010 a number of stiles and gates were replaced on the Offa's Dyke path at nine locations on the line of the dyke in southwest Shropshire. These locations lay within sections of the dyke which have been scheduled as ancient monuments as defined by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (*Kerry Ridgeway, Mainstone, SO 2602 8926, County Monument No. SA76; Nut Wood, Upper Edenhope, SO 2602 8915, County Monument No. SA76; Middle Knuck, Mainstone, SO 2620 8695, SO 2615 8679, & SO 2614 8678, National Monument No 32596; Middle Knuck, Mainstone, SO2607 8630, National Monument No 32597; Brynorgan, Llanfair Waterdine, SO 2666 7660 & SO 2675 7639, National Monument No 32605; and Brynorgan, Llanfair Waterdine, SO 2679 7629, National Monument No 32606*).

1.2 In accordance with the scheduled monument consent for this work, an archaeological watching brief was maintained by the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, on the excavation of post-holes for the new stiles, gates, and fingerposts. The excavations were all carried out by hand by the Shropshire Council Outdoor Recreation Service Countryside Access Team. No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the excavations, which were carried out with minimal disturbance to the ground.

1.3 Aims and objectives: The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the excavations for the new path furniture.

1.4 A schedule of work was prepared for the work on each of the sites and submitted to English Heritage with the application for scheduled monument consent, and a written scheme of investigation was prepared by the Archaeology Service for the watching brief (Hannaford, 2010).

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 Kerry Ridgeway: NGR: SO 2602 8926; SAM: SA76; Site Code: ODP10-KR

The site at Kerry Ridgeway lay 6km west of Bishops Castle in southwest Shropshire on a field boundary 340m south of the Kerry Ridgeway road. The work here involved the replacement of a stile with a new wicket gate 1m to the east of the tail of the surviving earthwork bank. The new gate posts were cut in approximately the same place as the post holes for the old stile. Two postholes 0.7m deep by 0.3m in diameter were excavated by hand. A 0.4m thick layer of topsoil (10) sat over a light brown sandy clay (11), probably disturbed natural subsoil.

2.2 Nut Wood SA76: NGR: SO 2602 8915; SAM: SA76; Site Code: ODP10-NW

The site at Nut Wood lay 6km west of Bishops Castle in southwest Shropshire on a field boundary 560m south of the Kerry Ridgeway road. The work here involved the replacement of a stile with a new kissing gate, sited between 1m and 2m to the east of the surviving earthwork bank. Six postholes were excavated by hand; two postholes 0.75m deep by 0.4m x 0.3m in plan for corner and strainer posts and four postholes 0.7m deep by 0.3m in diameter for the remaining posts.

The natural subsoil here comprised a light greyish brown to buff sandy clay (14) with angular stone fragments and was seen to lie 0.7m below the ground surface. It lay below 0.45m of a dark grayish brown sandy silty loam (13) with angular gravel and 0.25m of topsoil (12).

2.3 Brynorgan A: NGR: SO 2666 7660; SAM: 32605; Site Code: ODP10-Bn-A

The site at Brynorgan A lay 5km southwest of Clun in southwest Shropshire at the entrance to an access track to a yard adjacent to Brynorgan Cottage. The work here involved the replacement of a metal farm gate across the gateway with a new metal Bristol 2 in 1 gate. The gateway was set across the entrance to the track 5m to the east of the tail of the earthwork bank. The existing eastern gatepost was left in situ and re-used. The western post was removed and a new post inserted in the posthole. This post hole was seen to have cut through a deposit of brown sandy clay and gravel (27) which lay beneath 0.3m of a brown sandy clay loam with gravel and stone fragments (26).

2.4 Brynorgan B: NGR: SO 2675 7639; SAM: 32605; Site Code: ODP10-Bn-B

The site at Brynorgan B lay 5km southwest of Clun in southwest Shropshire. The work here involved the replacement of a stile and field gate on the north side of a yard west of Brynorgan cottage with a new metal Bristol 2 in 1 gate. The gate was sited on the edge of the farmyard 1m to the east of the surviving earthwork bank of the Dyke. Two postholes 1.1m deep by 0.4m in diameter were excavated by hand. The natural subsoil consisted of a grey silty clay (25) with gravel and was seen at a depth of 0.4m below the ground surface. This lay beneath up to 0.4m of a buried topsoil (24) of dark grey brown silty clay loam, which in turn lay beneath a yard surface (23) of pebbles and cobbles in grey silty loam.

2.5 Brynorgan C: NGR: SO 2679 7629; SAM: 32606; Site Code: ODP10-Bn-C

The site at Brynorgan C lay 5km southwest of Clun in southwest Shropshire. The work here involved the replacement of a stile and field gate on the south side of a yard west of Brynorgan cottage with a new metal Bristol 2 in 1 gate. The gate was sited on the edge of the farmyard 2.5m to the east of the ditch component of the dyke and on the line of the bank, which at this point no longer survived as an earthwork. Two postholes 1.1m deep by 0.4m in diameter were excavated by hand. The natural light brown silty clay (22) lay at a

depth of 0.7m below the ground surface, beneath a deposit 0.4m thick of a buried topsoil of grey brown silty clay loam (21). This was seen to have been cut by the post-hole (20) for the existing gate post. All these deposits lay beneath the yard surface of pebbles and cobbles (19) in a light brown silty clay.

2.6 Middle Knuck A: NGR: SO 2620 8695; SAM: 32596; Site Code: ODP10 MK-A
The site at Middle Knuck A lies about 6km west southwest of Bishop's Castle, on a field boundary 160m north of a lane running up to Knuck Bank. The work here involved replacing a stile with a kissing gate. The new kissing gate was located on the northwest edge of the ditch component of the Dyke. Six postholes were excavated by hand; two postholes 0.9m deep by 0.4m x 0.3m in plan for corner and strainer posts and four postholes 0.7m deep by 0.3m in diameter for the remaining posts. In the post-hole nearest the edge of the earthwork ditch 0.25m of topsoil (4) lay over a deposit over 0.6m thick of brown silty sand (5) with some angular gravel. Further away from the ditch edge the topsoil lay over brown silty sand (6) with a much higher proportion of angular gravel. Further to the south a distinct counterscarp is visible on the outer edge of the ditch and the deposit (5) seen in the easternmost posthole may have represented counterscarp material or possibly silting of the outer edge of the ditch.

2.7 Middle Knuck B: NGR: SO 2615 8679; SAM: 32596; Site Code: ODP10 MK-B
The site at Middle Knuck B lies about 6km west southwest of Bishop's Castle, on the north side of the lane running up to Knuck Bank. The work here involved replacing a stile with a kissing gate, sited over the ditch component of the dyke. Six postholes were excavated by hand; two postholes 0.8m deep by 0.4m x 0.3m in plan for corner and strainer posts and four postholes 0.7m deep by 0.3m in diameter for the remaining posts. The grey stone bedrock (3) lay 0.55m below the ground surface, beneath a layer of dark brown sandy loam (2) 0.3m thick, probably representing silting of the ditch, and a further 0.25m of topsoil (1).

2.8 Middle Knuck C: NGR: SO 2614 8678; SAM: 32596; Site Code: ODP10 MK-C
The site at Middle Knuck C lies about 6km west southwest of Bishop's Castle, on the south side of the lane running up to Knuck Bank. The work here involved installing a new kissing gate, sited over the ditch component of the dyke. Six postholes were excavated by hand; two postholes 0.8m deep by 0.4m x 0.3m in plan for corner and strainer posts and four postholes 0.8m deep by 0.3m in diameter for the remaining posts. A layer of brown sandy silt (9) with a high content of angular gravel and rock fragments was seen at a depth of between 0.35m and 0.7m below the ground surface; this deposit comprised the weathered and broken surface of the natural bedrock at the base of the ditch. It lay beneath a deposit of dark brown sandy loam with some angular gravel (8) representing silting of the ditch, and a topsoil layer (7) 0.2m thick.

2.9 Middle Knuck D: NGR: SO 2607 8630; SAM: 32597; Site Code: ODP10 MK-D
The site at Middle Knuck D lies about 6km west southwest of Bishop's Castle, some 90m south of Middle Knuck house on a terraced field boundary. The work here entailed the replacement of a stile with a new gate, located in the base of the ditch component of the Dyke. The postholes from the old stile posts were re-used, so that no new ground was broken. The western hole was seen to have been filled with a dark greyish brown sandy loam (15), and had been cut through a deep topsoil (17). The eastern posthole cut through chippings, mixed with some topsoil (18) which had been imported for steps installed some years earlier.

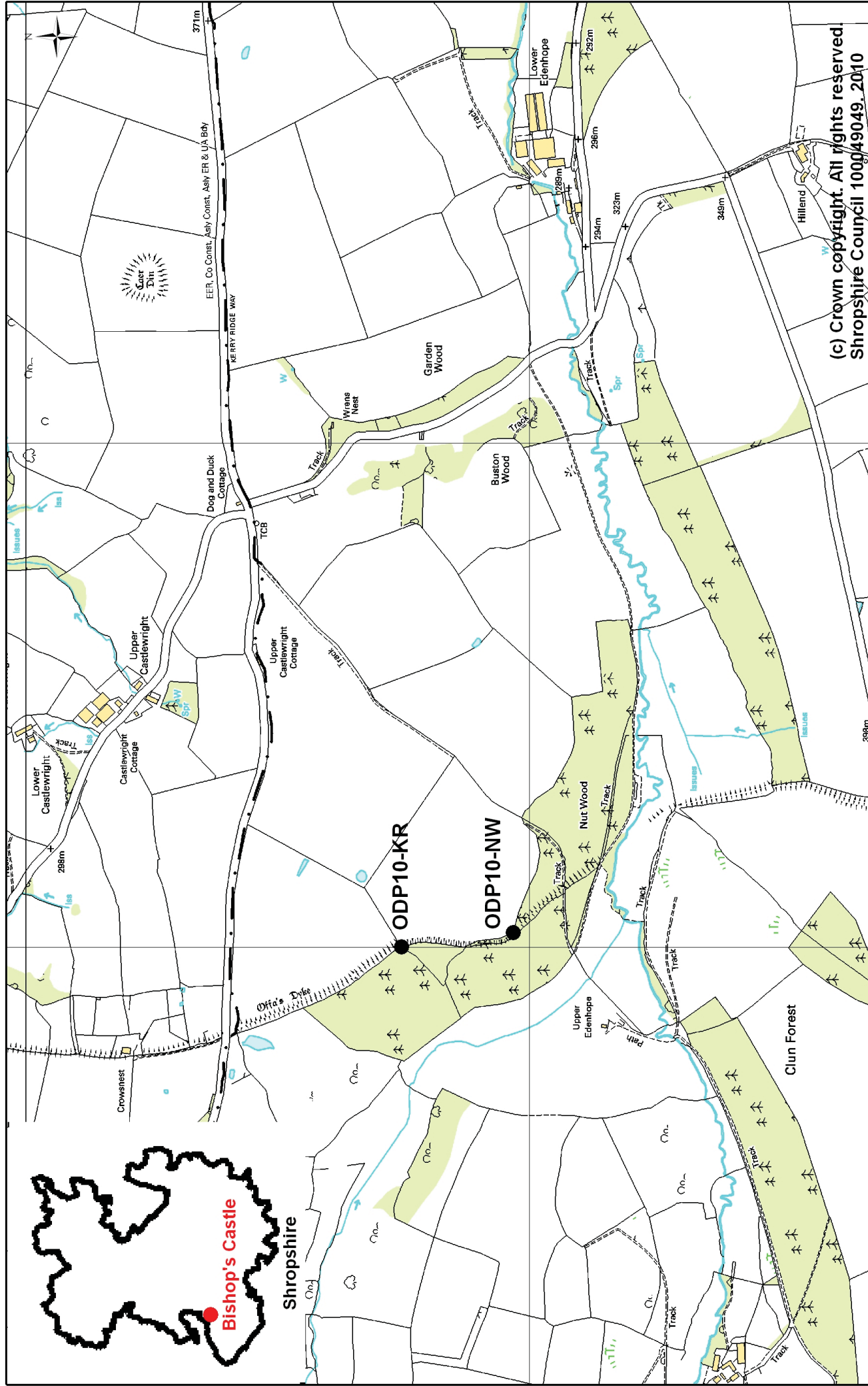
2.10 Discussion In two of the above locations (at Middle Knuck B and C) the new footpath furniture was located on the line of the ditch component of the Dyke. In both of these locations the ditch appeared to be relatively shallow, with the natural bedrock being encountered at about 0.5m below the ground surface. The ditch fill in these locations was also relatively shallow (between 0.2m and 0.3m in thickness). Otherwise, no other significant archaeological features or deposits were seen in the excavations at any of the nine sites monitored during these works.

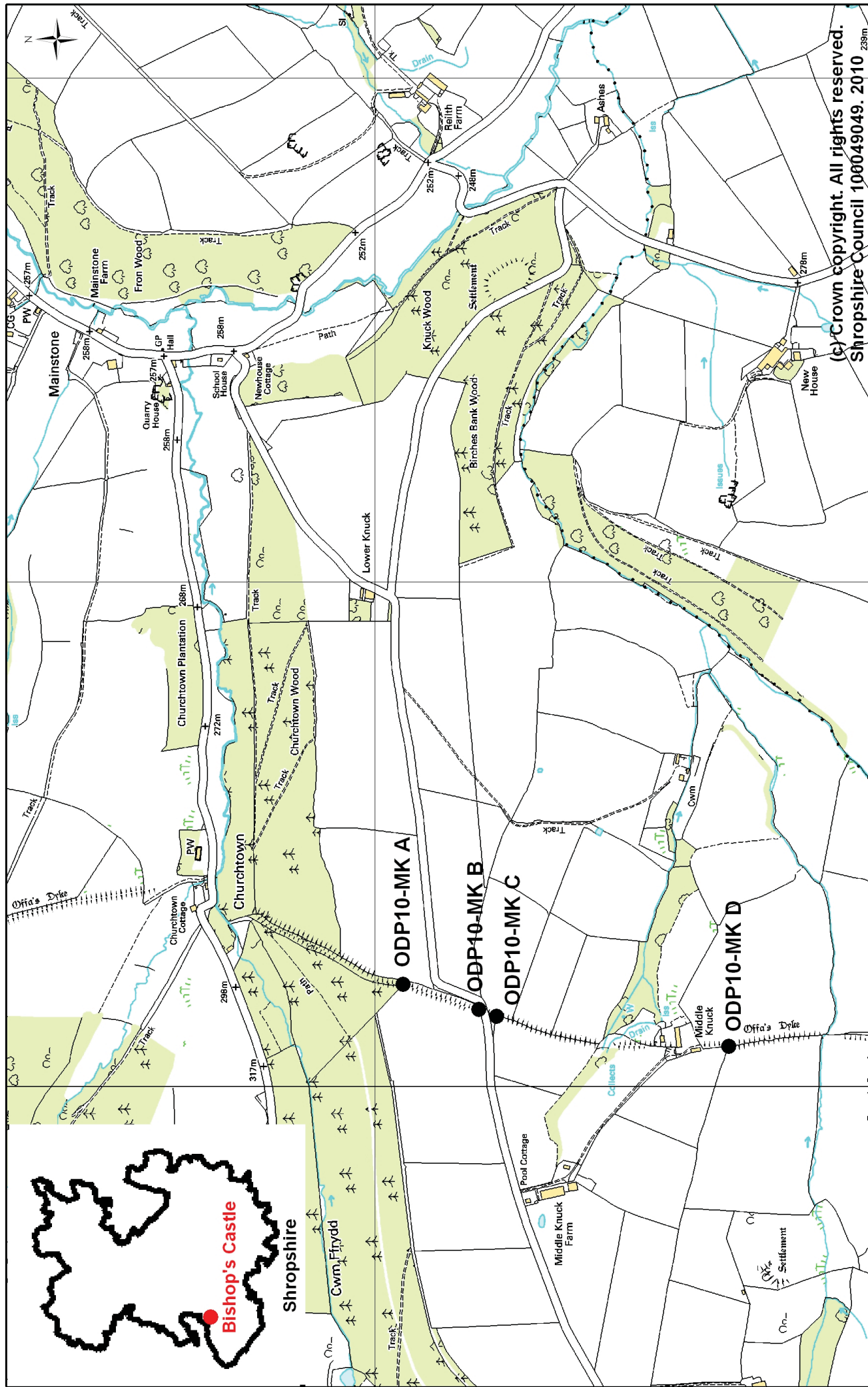
3 REFERENCES

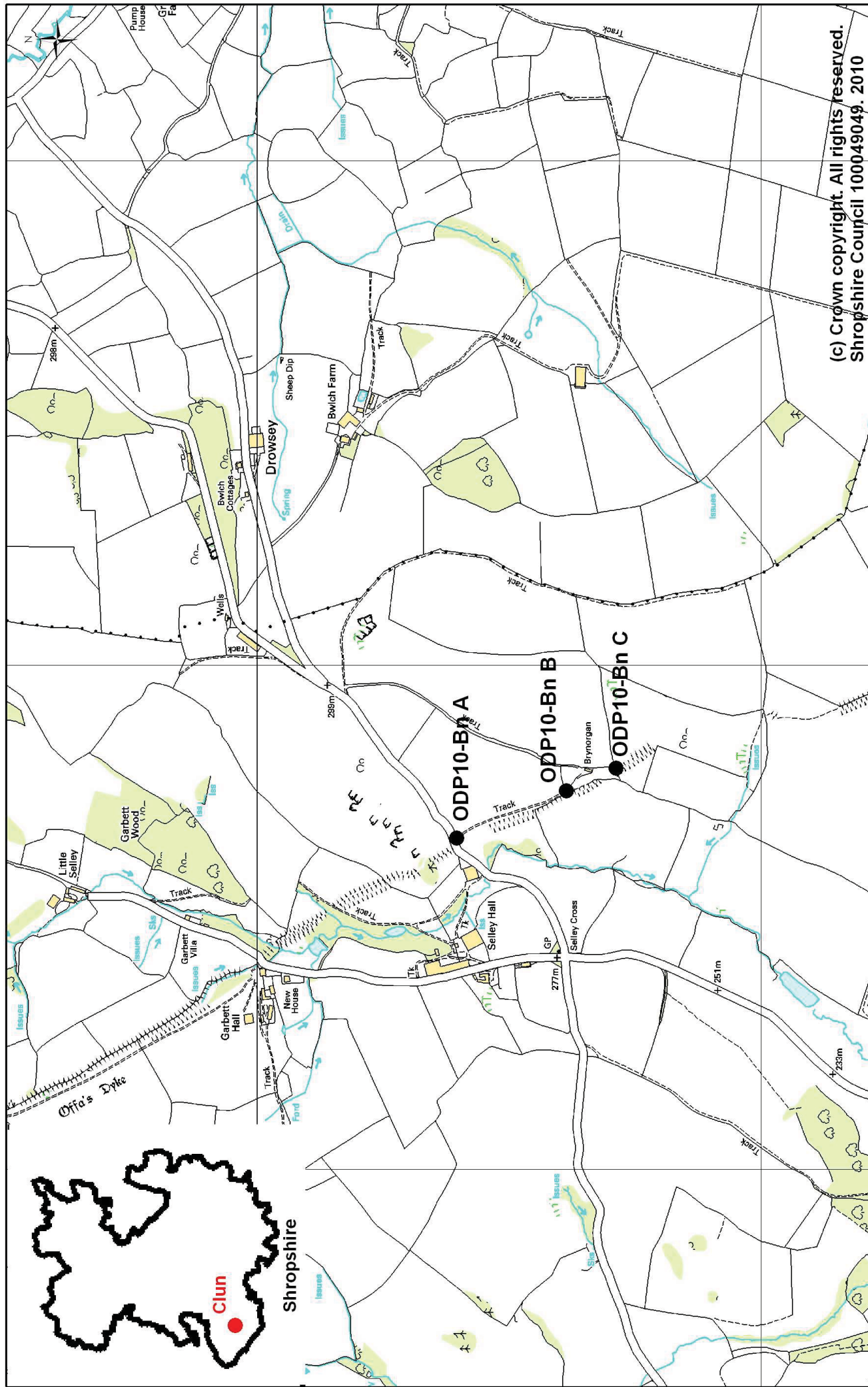
- Hannaford, H R, 2008:** *Offa's Dyke Path, Churchtown Wood, Middle Knuck, Nut Wood, and Rownal*, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service internal report
- Hannaford, H R, 2009:** *A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture along Offa's Dyke Path, Shropshire, 2009*, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service Report No 269
- Hannaford, H R, 2010:** *Scheme of investigation for an archaeological watching brief on footpath works to Offa's Dyke*, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service internal report

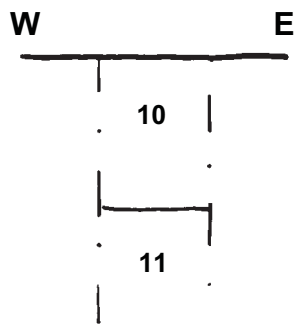
ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| CBA | Council for British Archaeology |
| HER | Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council |
| NGR | National Grid Reference |
| OS | Ordnance Survey |
| SAM | Scheduled Ancient Monument |
| TSAHS | Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society |

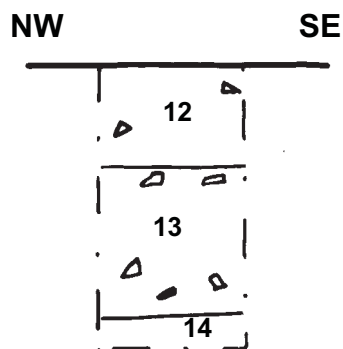




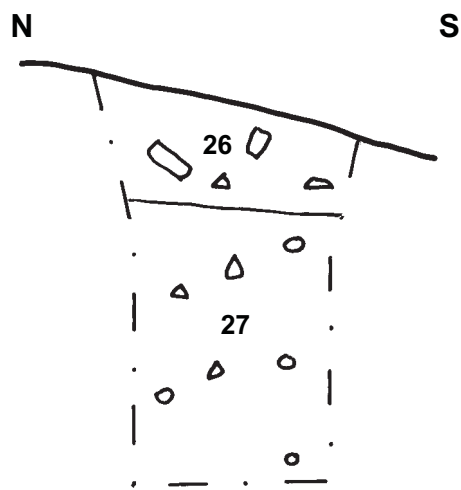




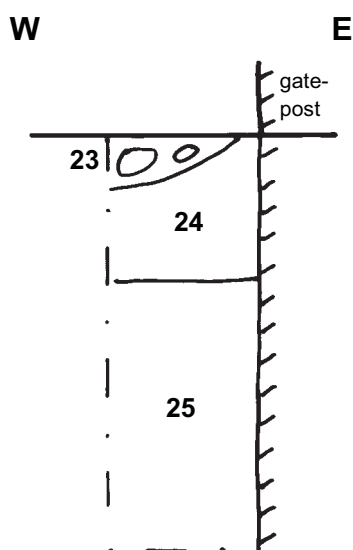
a) Kerry Ridgeway



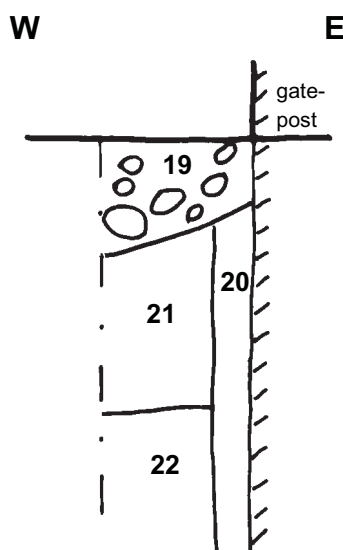
b) Nut Wood



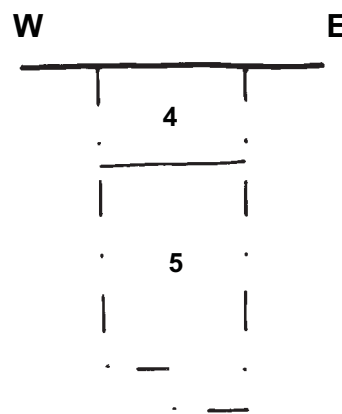
c) Brynorgan A



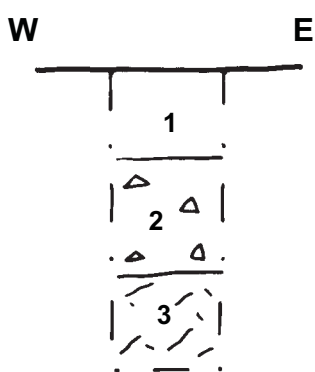
d) Brynorgan B



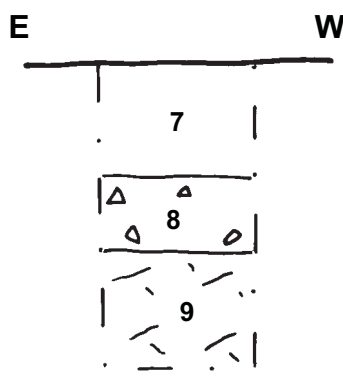
e) Brynorgan C



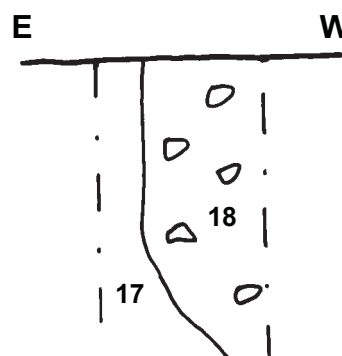
f) Middle Knuck A



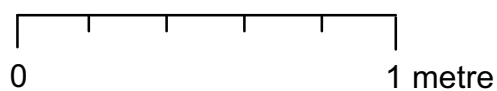
g) Middle Knuck B



h) Middle Knuck C



i) Middle Knuck D



OFFA'S DYKE PATH, SHROPSHIRE 2010
Figure 4: Sections through postholes; scale 1:20

A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture along Offa's Dyke Path, Shropshire, 2010



Photo 1: Kerry Ridgeway



Photo 2: Nut Wood



Photo 3: Brynorgan A



Photo 4: Brynorgan B



Photo 5: Middle Knuck A



Photo 6: Middle Knuck C & B

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