

**DR BROWN'S ROAD,  
MINCHINHAMPTON  
COMMON,  
MINCHINHAMPTON,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**



**WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**CP. No10334**

**20/12/2012**



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# WARDELL ARMSTRONG ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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**DOCUMENT TITLE:** Dr Brown's Road, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire  
**DOCUMENT TYPE:** Watching Brief Report  
**CLIENT:** Wardell Armstrong LLP  
**CP NUMBER:** 10334  
**SITE CODE:** BMG-A/12  
**OASIS REFERENCE:** wardella2-139794  
**PRINT DATE:** 20/12/2012  
**GRID REFERENCE:** SO 867 011

## *Quality Assurance*

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by WA Archaeology Ltd on the preparation of reports.

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## SUMMARY

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Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Wardell Armstrong LLP to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks relating to the replacement of a water main on Dr Brown's Road, Minchinhampton Common, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 867 011). The majority of the works are within the public highway and are considered to be Permitted Development Works; however a c.100m section along Dr Brown's Road crosses the Minchinhampton Common Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 1010433). Scheduled Monument Consent was obtained based on a methodology for archaeological monitoring submitted by Wardell Armstrong LLP. This identified Minchinhampton Common as containing a wide range of multi-period archaeology. These date from prehistoric to Second World War, but of principal note is the nationally important bank and ditch monument, known as The Bulwarks. Although only excavated once in 1937, the feature was dated as Late Iron Age by ceramics found under the bank.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over 12 days between the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012. The watching brief monitored c.65m of open cut trench, comprising the entire stretch along Dr Brown's Road that crosses the Common. A single archaeological feature was encountered, consisting of a large earth and stone filled ditch, corresponding exactly with the surface remains of The Bulwarks monument. No finds were identified within the fill of this feature.

As this archaeological watching brief was conducted as part of a recommendation to observe groundworks in association with the replacement works, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the high archaeological potential of the area, it is recommended that any future work be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Dave Hodgkinson, Technical Director for Wardell Armstrong LPP, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work.

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to Neil Clements (Foreman) and the rest of the Morgan Sindall team, for their help during this project, and perseverance in difficult, cramped conditions.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Dan Miller. The report was written by Dan Miller and the drawings were produced by Adrian Bailey. The project was managed and edited by Frank Giocco, Technical Director for Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In 2012, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd were invited by Wardell Armstrong LPP, on behalf of their clients, Morgan Sindall, to maintain an archaeological watching brief at Dr Brown's Road, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 867 011; Figure 1), during groundworks associated with the replacement of a water main. The proposed works, although on a public highway, cross the Minchinhampton Common Scheduled Ancient Monument, an area of extensive multi-period archaeology. In particular, the replacement works intersect the line of the nationally important Iron-Age bank and ditch known as The Bulwarks. In accordance with the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended); Section 2, the Secretary of State, in consultation with English Heritage, has determined that although the replacement works may be detrimental to the The Bulwarks Monument, reasonable safeguards (i.e. archaeological monitoring) have been put in place. As a result, it was requested that all ground reduction in a c.100m strip across Minchinhampton Common be subject to a program of archaeological observation and investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).
- 1.1.2 All groundworks associated with the mains replacement works had to be excavated under full archaeological supervision and all stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008), and were consistent with the specification provided by Wardell Armstrong LLP (Hodgkinson 2012) and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the monitoring works undertaken on-site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological works.

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## 2 METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Morgan Sindall, for an archaeological watching brief of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by the Secretary of State and English Heritage, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.2.1 The works involved a structured watching brief to observe, record and excavate any archaeological deposits from the development site. A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, on a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IfA 2008).

2.2.2 The aims and principal methodology of the watching brief can be summarised as follows:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record them;
- to carry out further excavation and recording work in adequate time, if intact archaeological remains are uncovered during the project;
- to accurately tie the area watched by the archaeologist into the National Grid at an appropriate scale, with any archaeological deposits and features adequately levelled;
- to sample environmental deposits encountered as required, in line with English Heritage (2002) guidelines;
- to produce a photographic record of all contexts using colour digital, and 35mm monochrome formats, each photograph including a graduated metric scale;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful of dating purposes;
- to produce a site archive in accordance with MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and MoRPHE standards (English Heritage 2006).



2.2.3 Archaeological monitoring of groundworks commenced on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012. A summary of the findings of the watching brief is included within this report.

### **2.3 THE ARCHIVE**

2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and in line with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage Guidelines (1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive will be deposited within an appropriate repository, with copies of the report sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Gloucester, where viewing will be made available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier WAA BMG-A/12, CP10334.

2.3.2 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd, and Gloucestershire County Council, support the **Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS)** project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Ltd, as a part of this national project.

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## 3 BACKGROUND

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### 3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 Minchinhampton sits at the south-east end of a c.1-2km wide Jurassic limestone plateau, extending c.4km to the north-west, with eroded scarp and river valleys defining three sides to the north, west and south. Minchinhampton Common covers an area to the north and west of Minchinhampton town, on the same undulating upland, and is joined to Rodborough Common at the narrow northern end of the prominence, overlooking the town of Stroud.
- 3.1.2 The Commons are still in use for grazing, as well as bridleways, recreation, and leisure. Near Dr Brown's road, the Common is used very much like an urban park, and is generally referred to as 'the Park'.

### 3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled from the Minchinhampton Common Scheduled Ancient monument description (SAM 1010433).
- 3.2.2 *Prehistoric:* various prehistoric land boundaries and sites are scattered across the Common. Of specific importance are The Bulwarks (Figure 2, Plates 1 & 7-10), defined as;
- "An Iron Age bank and ditch: the bank is 10m to 12m wide and c.1.5m high at its highest point. A ditch 10m wide and 1.2m deep runs parallel to the bank. A partial excavation in 1937 by Mrs Clifford demonstrated that the bank had a stone revetment on the side facing the ditch. Pottery from beneath the bank and in the primary fill of the ditch suggests a Late Iron Age date for its construction"* (SAM 1010433).
- 3.2.3 The Bulwarks have been variously interpreted as a land boundary, a defensive feature, a prestigious public monument, and even as a huge animal enclosure. A difficulty with interpretation is that the monument is 'inside-out', with the stone revetted face of the bank and the ditch being on the inside of the apparently incomplete circuit. This circuit extends to the west, north and east of Minchinhampton, with a series of near straight sections and distinct changes of alignment, one which is just to the west of Dr Brown's Road (Figure 2, Plate 1).
- 3.2.4 The positioning of the monument in relation to the local topography is also puzzling, with the 'inside-out' ditch and bank enclosing a seemingly illogical block of land on the plateau. For example it does not 'properly' enclose the more obvious prominence a couple of kilometers to the north-

west, and is backed-up quite close against the valley edge in the northern section i.e. with low ground behind it (Plate 10). The elusive function of the monument is one reason for its continuing archaeological and local significance.

- 3.2.5 *Roman*: No specific Roman sites are mentioned in the immediate vicinity.
- 3.2.6 *Medieval/Post-medieval*: A range of roads, hollow ways, turnpikes and quarries and warrens are indicated across the Scheduled area.
- 3.2.7 *Modern*: Second World War archaeological features are indicated within the Scheduled area. The present land use of the Common is as a mixture of open parkland, bridle-ways, and golf courses, with cattle still seasonally grazed.

### **3.3 PREVIOUS WORK**

- 3.3.1 No previous excavations have occurred in the immediate area where Dr Brown's road crosses Minchinhampton Common and The Bulwarks monument. More recent commercial projects in the area do not appear to have encountered the Iron Age bank and ditch, and therefore this seems to be only the second time any section of the Bulwarks has been excavated for 75 years.

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## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 The watching brief monitoring was undertaken in one phase, between 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012, covering open cut excavation of a 0.6m wide, 1.1m deep trench, in the northern part of Dr Brown's Road (Figures 2 & 3). On the 100m stretch of road subject to the monitoring, the replacement trench only extended for c.65m.
- 4.1.2 Dr Brown's Road is already lower than the surrounding common land, and has clearly been truncated and levelled in the past (Plate 2). The verges consist of stony earth mounds on each side, presumably upcast from levelling the roadway. Whether this originated as an earlier (e.g. medieval) hollow way is unclear. It is quite likely that all or most of the deposits now present originate from more recent phases of road construction.
- 4.1.3 The monitored area is just to the west of a distinct 'kink' in the alignment of The Bulwarks, with near straight sections extending to the east and north-west. Earthworks associated with The Bulwarks are easily indefinable to the west of Dr Brown's Road (Plate 7). Here there seems to be clear evidence of deliberate destruction and slighting of the monument - i.e. bank flattened and ditch filled (Plate 8). This seems to begin at the change in alignment just west of Dr Brown's Road (Figure 2). To the east of Dr Brown's road, only faint surface features and crop-marks indicate the position of The Bulwarks.
- 4.1.4 At the point of intersection with Dr Brown's Road, The Bulwarks seem to follow a slight topographic high (Plate 2), with the land sloping gently away to the north and south. Possibly this has significance in relation to the change in alignment of the monument in this area, if it was intended to followed this slight ridge.

### 4.2 RESULTS

- 4.2.1 Excavation of the replacement mains trench consisted of cutting/breaking tarmac, removal of thin a shallow layer of road make-up, and breaking of the truncated bedrock surface. A small 360 excavator was used, with a toothless bucket were possible, but also using a pecker when needed to break hard limestone. Spoil was removed from the site.
- 4.2.2 The replacement water main was sited to run immediately to the east of the existing water main, in the eastern half of Dr Brown's Road. Immediately to the west, running under the eastern banked road verge (i.e. western edge of the Common) was a live High-Voltage cable. At the far south end of the monitored area, just beyond the southern limits of the Common, the

- replacement trench was entirely within the footprint of a deeper gas main (Figure 3).
- 4.2.3 Approximately 62m of the trench encountered truncated bedrock at approximately 0.35m below the modern tarmac surface, truncated on either side by live services. Up to 0.15m of tarmac **(101)** was removed to reveal context **(102)**, an irregular layer of makeup, with crushed and 'puddled' limestone, variably mixed with hard lime stone fragments and orangey clay. Context **(102)** was up to 0.20m thick and extended up to the roadside turf verge. Except for where it was truncated by recent services, it seemed to persist along the whole length of Dr Brown's Road. The layer was undated, and in places was difficult to discern from the backfill of service trenches running parallel on either side of the replacement trench (Figure 4).
- 4.2.4 Context **(102)** immediately overlay context **(103)**, solid limestone bedrock. It is clear that Dr Brown's Road has been stripped to bedrock and levelled, prior to any phases of road makeup. The banked verges probably consist of up-cast from this activity. However, only the tip of the banks toe slope was visible during the trenching, and only in the southern half of the monitored area, where deviations in the course of pre-existing services caused the replacement trench to veer closer to the verge banks.
- 4.2.5 The edge of the verge banks consisted of context **(104)**, a layer of 0.10m thick modern turf and fine loam surface soil, overlying context **(105)**, a layer of mixed dark grey loam and limestone rubble, up to 0.25m thick. Context **(105)** lay immediately on the truncated surface of bedrock layer **(103)**, and appeared to be abutted by context **(102)** (road makeup layer). No artefacts were observed, and context **(105)** is undated. Additionally, disturbance from the HV cable trench running immediately parallel to the replacement trench (i.e. just behind the section face) was not always easy to distinguish from earlier phases of road building.
- 4.2.6 The only archaeological feature encountered was the ditch associated with The Bulwarks Scheduled Monument (Figures 3 & 4). All trace of the bank appears to have been removed when the bedrock was truncated by road building. The ditch, cut **[109]**, survived as a 4.8m wide feature, at its truncated top, and, at the maximum depth of the replacement trench (1.1m), ditch **[9]** is still 4.0m wide. This suggests significant additional depth, in-line with the 2.4m depth recorded in 1937 excavations.
- 4.2.7 Ditch **[109]** was cut in solid, flat-bedded limestone. It had a very steep southern side, and more stepped northern side. Although the loose stony fill and narrow trench made examination of the deposits difficult, five archaeological contexts were identified in the ditch sequence (Figure 4). The uppermost (truncated) deposit **(110)** was a mid orangey brown silty clay

loam, with abundant, poorly sorted limestone rubble. It survives up to 0.25m thick. The deposit was quite loose and unconsolidated in many places. No finds were present, despite careful observation of spoil and sections. No charcoal or bone was observed.

- 4.2.8 Context **(110)** overlay distinctly less stony context **(111)**, a mid orangey brown loam, with some convoluted, sub-horizontal, irregular fabric patterns suggestive of smearing and compaction. Context **(111)** was a lens-like deposit in the mid/upper portion of the ditch fill, only c.0.10m thick towards the centre. No finds were present, and no charcoal or bone was observed.
- 4.2.9 Context **(111)** provided the only means of separating context **(110)** and layer **(112)**, which are otherwise identical in composition (i.e. mid orange brown silty clay loam with abundant limestone rubble). Context **(112)** was at least 0.40m thick at maximum, and extends below the base of the replacement trench in the central part of the ditch. No finds or charcoal were observed.
- 4.2.10 Two distinct deposits were present at the north and south sides of the ditch, towards the base of the replacement trench. To the north, coarse limestone rubble **(113)** was slumped against the rock cut ditch sides, with steeply angled rubble extending below the base of the replacement trench. The rubble was up to 0.20m in size, poorly sorted, and with many open voids. All these factors suggest rapid, chaotic formation, and burial very soon afterwards.
- 4.2.11 On the south side of the ditch, deposit **(114)** consisted of a quite fine silty clay loam, with only occasional relatively small limestone inclusions. Deposit **(114)** seemed to have a fairly flat upper surface, curving gently to meet the southern side of the ditch. It was at least 0.10m thick, but continues below the depth of the replacement trench. It extended at least to the middle of the ditch, and has an undefined relationship with coarse rubble **(113)**. No artifacts or charcoal, or bone were observed in the small portion available.

### **4.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING**

- 4.3.1 No archaeological artefacts were encountered in any of the monitored deposits. Additionally, no deposits suitable for environmental samples were observed during the groundworks.



*Plate 1: Looking west across Dr Browns Road, down the length of The Bulwarks (bank and ditch)*



*Plate 2: Looking south down Dr Browns Road, showing north end of monitored replacement trench*





*Plate 3: Looking south down open cut replacement trench, showing tarmac (101), made ground (102), and truncated limestone bedrock (103)*



*Plate 4: Looking east at the hand cleaned northern side of The Bulwarks ditch [109] (Section 2)*





*Plate 5: Looking south from truncated northern side of ditch [109], to the hand cleaned southern side of [109], Section 2*



*Plate 6: Looking northeast at the fully truncated profile of ditch [9], with fresh aggregate in base of replacement trench*



*Plate 7: Looking east towards Dr Browns Road (obscured by trees) from the northern bank of The Bulwarks, with the deep ditch clearly visible on the southern side (right). Cirencester Road on (left)*



*Plate 8: Looking east towards Dr Browns Rd (white van), from within The Bulwarks ditch to the west of the monitored trench. This is the point from which the earthworks appear to have been deliberately levelled, becoming progressively harder to trace on the ground further east beyond Dr Browns Rd.*





*Plate 9: Looking west over the well preserved section of The Bulwarks on Minchinhampton Common, cut by the Cirencester Road*



*Plate 10: Looking north-east at the northern circuit of The Bulwarks, with 'internal' ditch to right, and narrow area in front of the northern scarp to the left*

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## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The watching brief has demonstrated that Dr Brown's Road has been laid over a significantly truncated surface, on levelled bedrock, and has removed all trace of The Bulwarks bank. The ditch of The Bulwarks still survived beneath the road, and the upper part of it was exposed by the replacement trench. Despite being truncated, only partially exposed, difficult to examine in detail, and devoid of finds, some useful excavation information was gained in regard of The Bulwarks ditch - possibly the first for 75 years.
- 5.1.2 Firstly it is clear that a significant portion of The Bulwarks has been levelled in the vicinity, with a major reduction in the prominence of the surviving earthworks starting just to the west of Dr Brown's Road (Plate 8). To the east of Dr Brown's Road, The Bulwarks are only traceable as very slight earthworks and possibly just cropmarks. Ditch fills **(110)**, **(111)**, and **(112)** all seem to be related to this, and suggest a single episode of poorly consolidated backfilling, rather than episodic events with intervening vegetated surfaces. The date of the backfilling, and how systematic in the vicinity it was, remains undetermined. However this clearly occurred before Dr Brown's Road attained its current 'sunken' form as a cutting into the levelled surface of the bedrock, with large banked verges of upcast.
- 5.1.3 Ditch fill **(114)** might indicate the upper part of more slowly formed and accumulated deposits (i.e. natural sedimentation and soil development over time, rather than deliberate backfilling). The finer, more consolidated loam and less frequent/smaller stone inclusions in ditch fill **(114)** are very suggestive, but as only a small portion of the deposit was exposed by the replacement trench no firm conclusions can be made.
- 5.1.4 The slightly stepped northern edge of the ditch and coarse rubble deposit **(113)** may relate to the revetted bank described in the 1937 excavations elsewhere on The Bulwarks. Although the limestone natural fractures into 'steps', these might also be employed as parts of support for a steep dry-stone revetment or wall. The coarse rubble seems most likely to result from this revetment being deliberately demolished and cast straight down into the ditch, probably immediately prior to backfills **(110)**, **(111)**, and **(112)**.

### 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.2.1 As this watching brief was conducted as a condition for ground-works relating to a water mains replacement on a public highway, no further archaeological work is deemed necessary. However, given the site's location

in relation to the Minchinhampton Common Scheduled Ancient monument, and specifically the Iron Age bank and ditch (The Bulwarks), it is recommended that any work conducted in the future be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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**APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE**

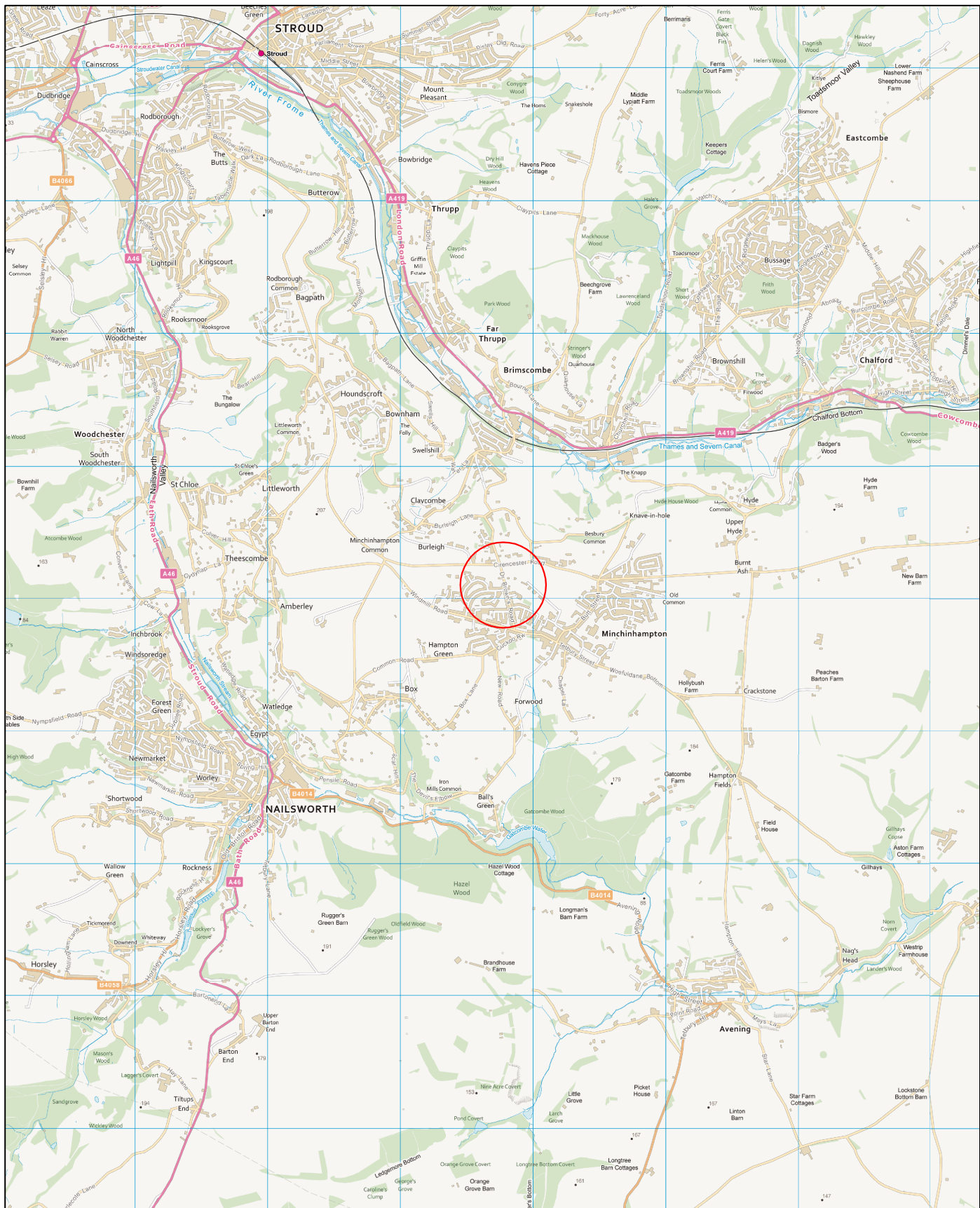

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<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Context Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
101	Layer	Tarmac
102	Layer	Limestone rubble and 'puddled' limestone, road make-up
103	Layer	Natural, solid, limestone bedrock.
104	Layer	Turf and modern top soil on road verge
105	Layer	Stony loam forming road side bank
106	Services	Concrete and Iron mains gas values (disused)
107	Services	Live gas mains
108	Services	Mixed sand/gravel aggregate backfilling gas mains trench.
109	Cut	Ditch of The Bulwarks
110	Fill	Uppermost fill of [9] – stony loam
111	Fill	Upper fill of [9] – loam
112	Fill	Mid fill of [9] – stony loam
113	Fill	Lower fill of [9] – coarse limestone rubble
114	Fill	Lower fill of [9] – fine loam

## APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

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WA Archaeology Ltd  
2012

PROJECT: Dr Brown's Road, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire  
 SCALE: 1:40,000 at A4  
 REPORT No: CP10334  
 CLIENT: Wardell Armstrong LLP  
 DRAWN BY: AB  
 DATE: December 2012  
 FIGURE: 1

KEY:

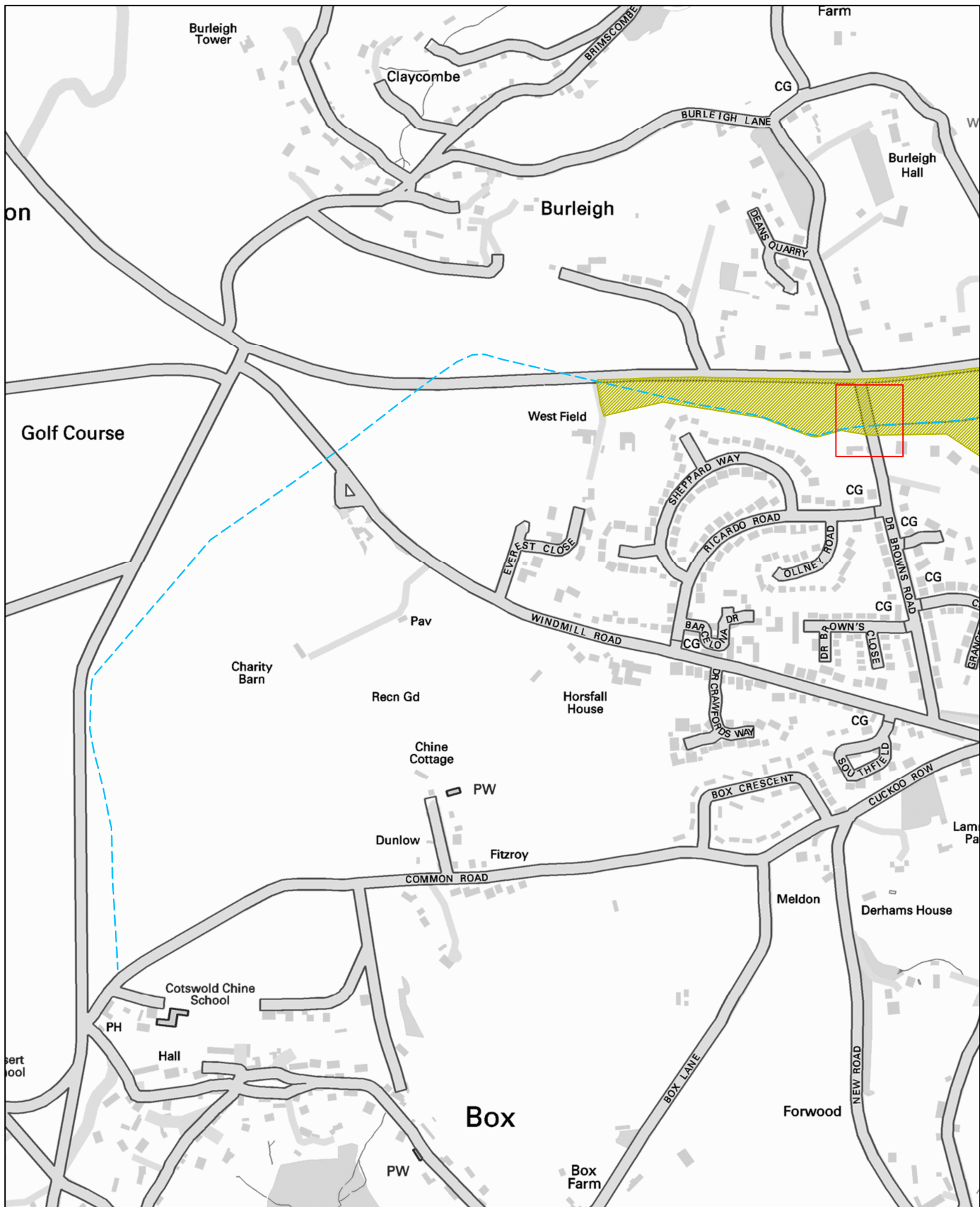


Site location



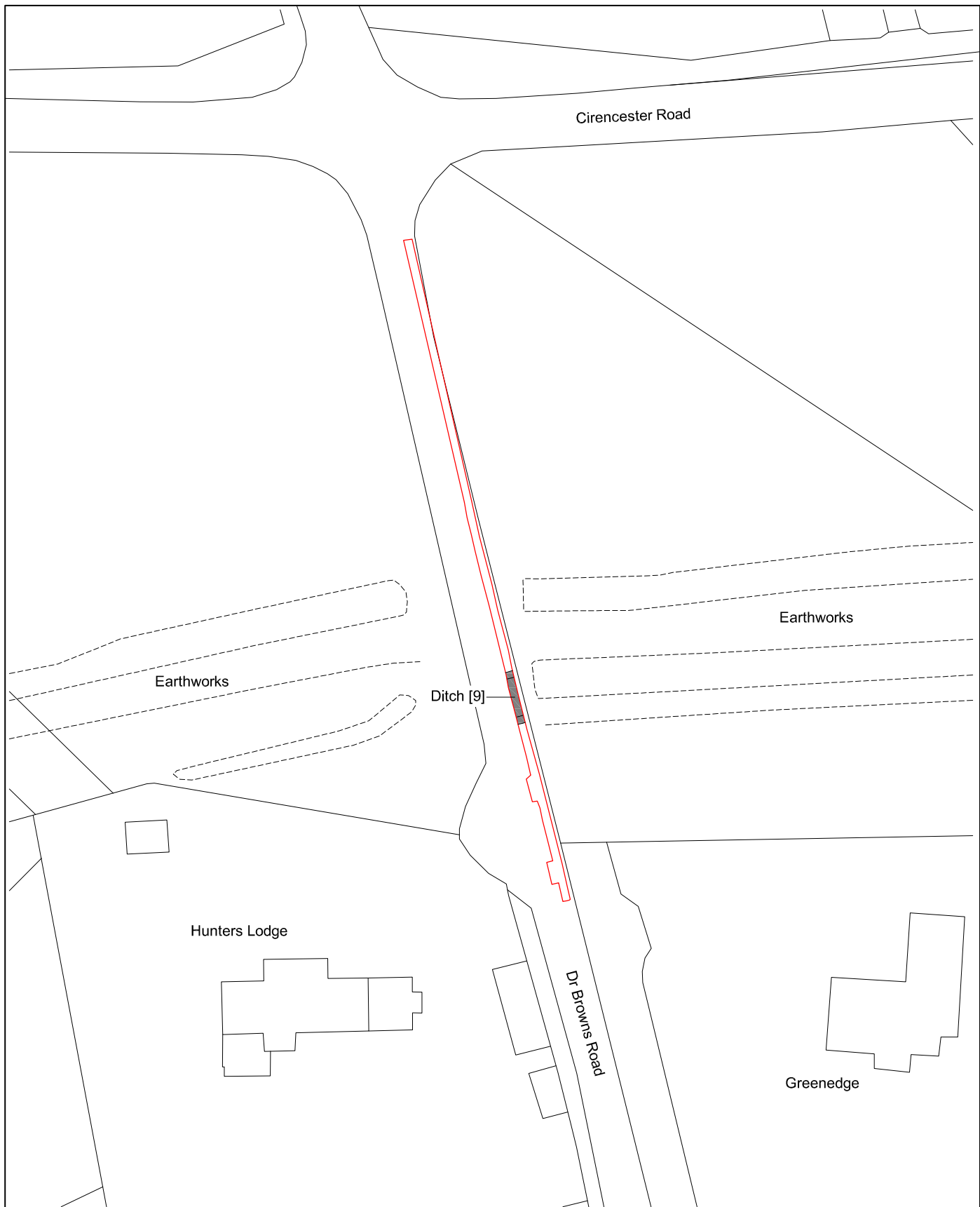
Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512

Figure 1: Site location.



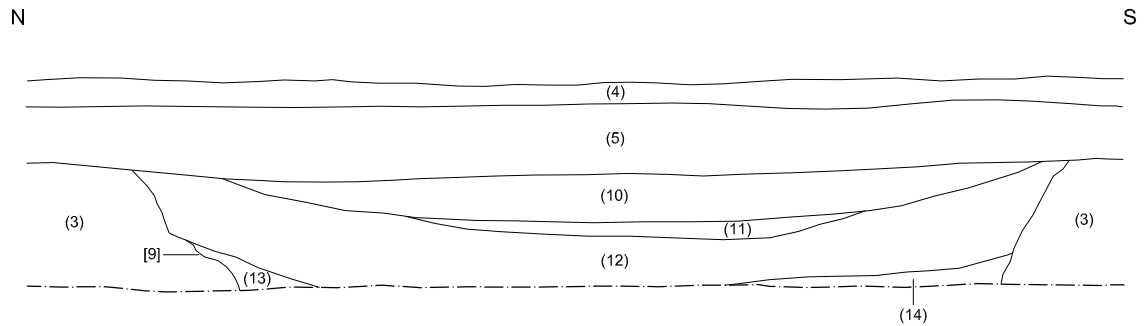
 <p>WA Archaeology Ltd 2012</p>	PROJECT:	Dr Brown's Road, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire	KEY:	 Location of trench
	SCALE:	1:7,500 at A4	 Scheduled Ancient Monument	
	REPORT No:	CP10334	 The Bulwarks	
	CLIENT:	Wardell Armstrong LLP		
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	DATE:	December 2012		
FIGURE:	2			

Figure 2: Detailed site location.

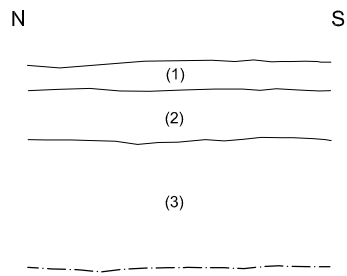


	<p>PROJECT: Dr Brown's Road, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire</p> <p>SCALE: 1:500 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP10334</p> <p>CLIENT: Wardell Armstrong LLP</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: December 2012</p> <p>FIGURE: 3</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <p> Service Trench</p> <p> Excavated portion of ditch</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512</p>
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Figure 3: Location of monitored trench showing position of Ditch [9].



West facing section showing Ditch [9].



West facing representative section of the majority of the service trench.



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2012

PROJECT: Dr Brown's Road, Minchinhampton,  
Gloucestershire  
SCALE: 1:40 at A4  
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DATE: December 2012  
FIGURE: 4

KEY:

(1) Context number

Figure 4: Sections of monitored trench.