

Woodbury Hill, Moccas Park, Data amalgamation to inform plans for site.



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Environment, Planning and Waste

Places and Communities Directorate Herefordshire Council



Woodbury Hill, Moccas Park, Data amalgamation to inform plans for site.

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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Historic Environment Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects.

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Summary:

This report has been produced at the request of Natural England in order to combine the results from two previous reports, with a commentary on the topography and recent works associated with the clear felling of areas within Woodbury Hill Wood (also known as Moccas Hill Wood) and Burnt Coppice.

The results from two archaeological walkover surveys have been amalgamated and presented within this document in a simplified form in order to inform participants who are taking part in a competition being run by Natural England to produce design ideas.

A series of maps have been produced in order to locate both natural and historic / archaeological features

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. National Grid References are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50 and 0.02m at 1:20m

Figures contained within this report contain material from the Ordnance Survey. The grid in this material is the National Grid taken from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (OS Licence 100024168). This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

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1. Introduction

This report contains the amalgamated data of two earlier reports and updated information concerning topography and recent clear felling works at Woodbury Hill Wood, (also known as Moccas Hill Wood but referred to as the former in this report), Herefordshire, (NGR SO 337 233). The data within this report is largely based upon the recognition of features recorded during two walk over surveys, one conducted in 2003 (*An Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey of Moccas Deer Park*, Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 67) and a second in 2006, (*Woodbury Hill Wood, Moccas, A Woodland Survey*, Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 236). Both surveys were undertaken when the area was largely under unbroken coniferous woodland.

Moccas Park is located on the north facing slopes of Dorstone Hill and is managed as a National Nature Reserve. The post-medieval park was enlarged to spread over the top of the hill (known as Woodbury Hill) and may have reached the Peterchurch to Dorstone road within the Golden Valley.

Woodbury Hill was planted as coniferous woodland in the mid 20th century and has been managed as a commercial woodland ever since. It has recently been purchased by the Woodland Trust and is gradually being returned to parkland. Over the last two years the conifer plantation has gradually been removed, the stumps ground off to ground level and the resulting mulch spread over the site.

2. Report Structure

This document has been laid out in such a way as to provide a sound introduction and general description of the site. It is divided into a series of sections, each dealing with different attributes, features and information.

Sections 1,2, and 3 deal with the general background to the site and the rationale behind the production of this report. Section 4 comprises a brief description of the site within the local area and describes land classification, solid geology and its relationship to Moccas Park.

Sections 5,6,7 and 8 deal with specific features including topography, retained planting, Archaeological and Historic features and finally a commentary concerning site boundaries and archaeological constraints. Each of these sections is followed by a relevant A4 map. These are the same maps that appear towards the end of the report as A3. The A3 maps are scaled to 1:3500 in order to facilitate basic quantification and measurements. The simplest way to measure from the A3 maps is to measure at 1:1000 and multiply by 3.5. Section 9 comprises a short discussion of the site from an archaeological / landscape history perspective.

At the end of the report (appendix 1) is a database of archaeological sites identified within the site. These sites / features are prefixed with a unique primary record number (HER) which refers to the Historic Environment Record.

3. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the works at Woodbury Hill Wood was to bring together basic information concerning the location and significance of known heritage assets together with information regarding recent clear felling works associated with the primary phase of returning the area to some form of parkland.

The objectives of the works were:

- The archaeological works will comprise the amalgamation of survey data produced within two separate reports into one report specific to the study area.
- Information regarding current vegetation cover and other topographic features will be mapped. The topographic features will include damp areas / standing water and current route-ways. This will be done using a hand held Global Positioning System and GIS data.
- All data, pre-existing and new will be presented in a short report. The report will be produced as part of the Herefordshire Archaeology Report Series and lodged within the Herefordshire Historic Environment Record.
- The report will contain lists of Heritage assets and relevant topographical features together with brief descriptions and HER numbers, (where appropriate). These will take the form of a series of data bases with grid references.
- The report will contain a series of scaled maps showing topography (using contour lines). These maps will be prepared using Herefordshire Council's GIS software and will show all known sites of archaeological / historical significance, topographic features and current vegetation cover.
- The report will be circulated as a pdf document.
- A series of four guided site tours will be undertaken in order to familiarise competition entrants with the details of the site. It is anticipated that these will take place in the late Autumn of 2014 and the Spring of 2015.

4. Location, Topography, Geology and Land-use

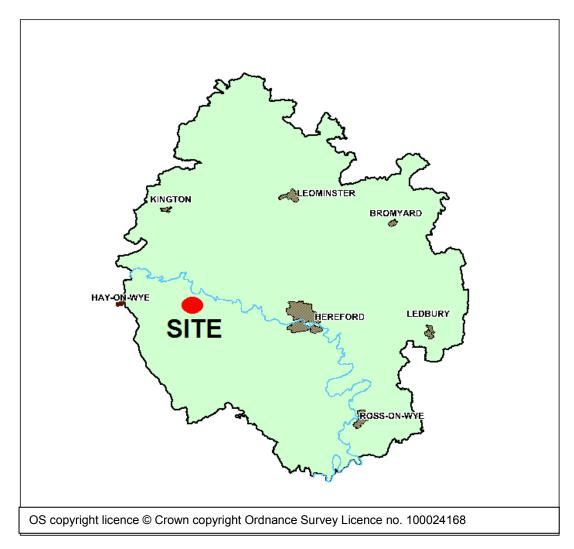


Figure 1: Location of the site within the County of Herefordshire

Moccas Park, Location and Setting

Moccas Park is located approximately 17km to the west of Hereford City. It has an area of over 139ha and covers much of the north east facing slope of Dorstone Hill and forms the "historic core" of the parkland. This area is managed as a National Nature Reserve. The post-medieval park continues over the top of Woodbury Hill.

The solid geology under Moccas Park comprises Old Red Sandstone of the Raglan Mudstone series. Overlying this is a variety of fluvio-glacial deposits associated with the late Devensian glaciation. Soils are typically slightly acidic reddish loams.(Harding and Wall, 2000, 22-4)

The Soil Survey Classification identifies the Lower Park and the Eastern Extension as being of Class 1, the lower slopes of the Upper Park and the Plateau as Class 3 and the steeper slopes in the Upper Park as Class 4g and Class 5. The park is grazed by sheep, cattle and

deer and is managed as a National Nature Reserve. The hill top (Woodbury Hill Wood / Moccas Hill Wood), is currently outside the boundary of the National Nature Reserve.

For further details concerning the paleo-environment, trees, flora, fauna (including invertebrates), estate management and natural environmental conservation, readers are referred to "Moccas: an English deer park", (edited by Harding and Wall., 2000).

The Historic Landscape Characterisation for Herefordshire lists the study area as a retained parkland.

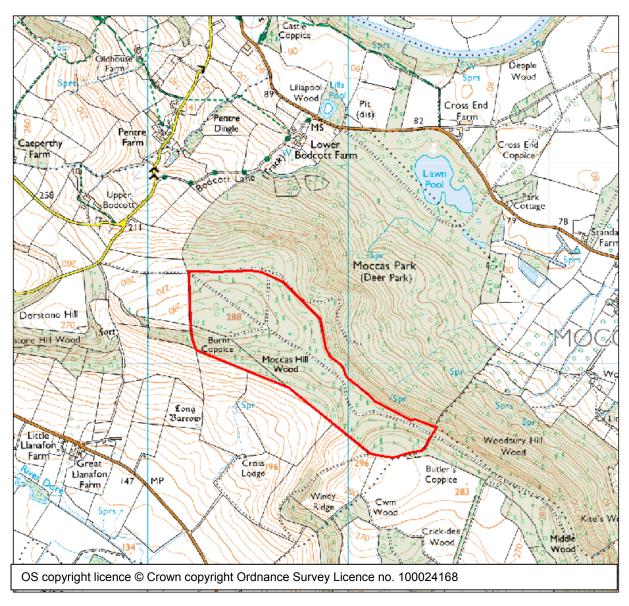


Figure 2: Site location and extent (site is outlined in red)

5. General topography (contours and high points)

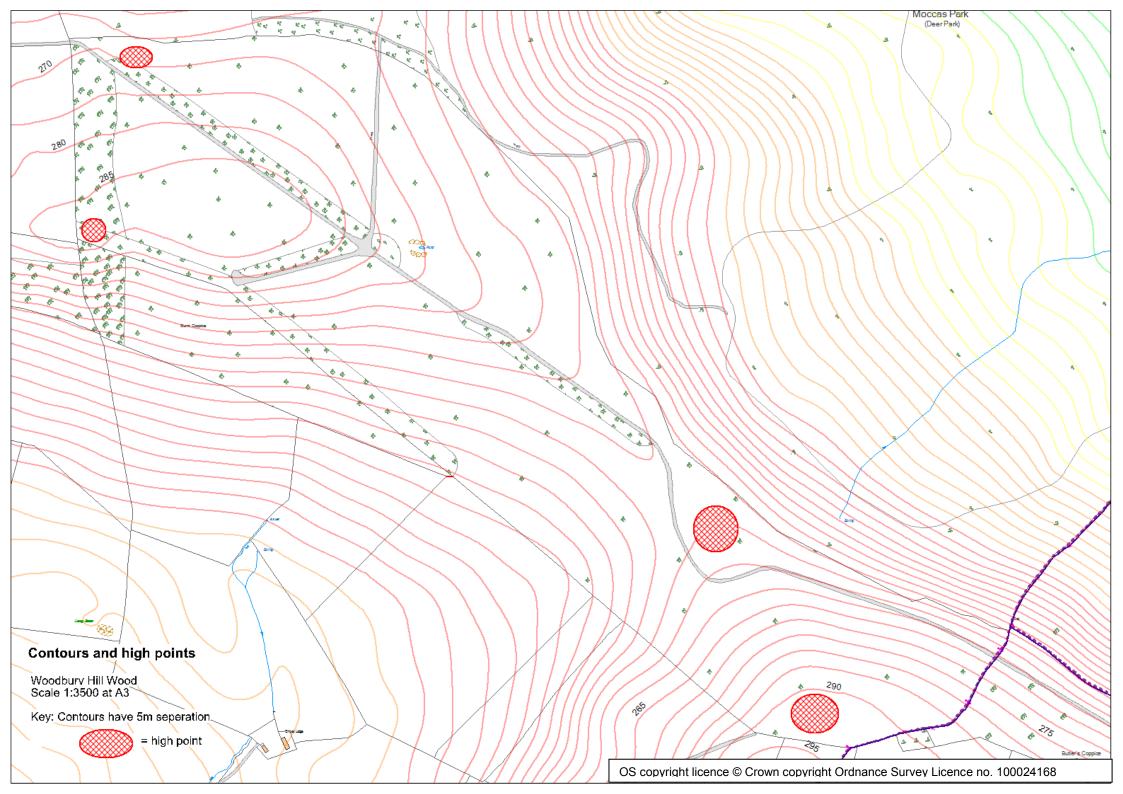
Woodbury Hill Wood covers the top southern side of part of Dorstone Hill. The site comprises two fairly flat topped summits (285m and 295m OD respectively); one at either end of the site, with a saddle (250m OD) between them. These provide very good visibility across the site. There are four noticeable "high points" within the site, two comprising these flat topped summits and two comprising localised knolls.

A pond or pool exists close to the centre of the site. It is close to the summit of the northern-most hill making it un-usual. It does not appear to be a dew pond however it is not known to have ever run completely dry, suggesting that it is spring fed. The age of the pool is not known, it is clearly marked on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1886. Evidence from an earthwork nearby suggests that it was being from used at least 17th century.

The site is accessible from a stoned track running from Pentre Lane (running from Bredwardine to Dorstone) into the woodland and continuing along the ridge for the complete length of the site. There are two spurs off the track within the woodland, one running north toward Moccas Park and one running to the south-west and terminating at a small quarry.

The site is currently accessible by pedestrians only, Vehicular access is only possible by arrangement. Access to Moccas Park is strictly controlled by arrangement only.

The site affords spectacular views to the south-west, across the Golden Valley and towards the Black Mountains and to the north-east over the Moccas Estate and the wider Wye Valley.



6. Extent of current planting

Over the last three years areas of conifer have been clear felled. At the time of writing this document, the planting which is left on the site, in the main comprises strips of trees designed either as shelter belts or wildlife corridors.

The western boundary of the site is planted with a wide strip of conifer and Beech as a wind break / shelter belt. An area of this has been clear felled over the location of a Bronze Age Barrow (burial mound) in order to mitigate damage by wind blow and to facilitate bracken control over the monument.

The remaining narrow belts comprise predominantly of Beech planting, some of which has been recently pollarded. The strips either side of the track which runs due north, from the Junction of the three tracks to Moccas Park comprise a single row of Larch. It is understood that this has been retained in order to form a flight corridor for bats.

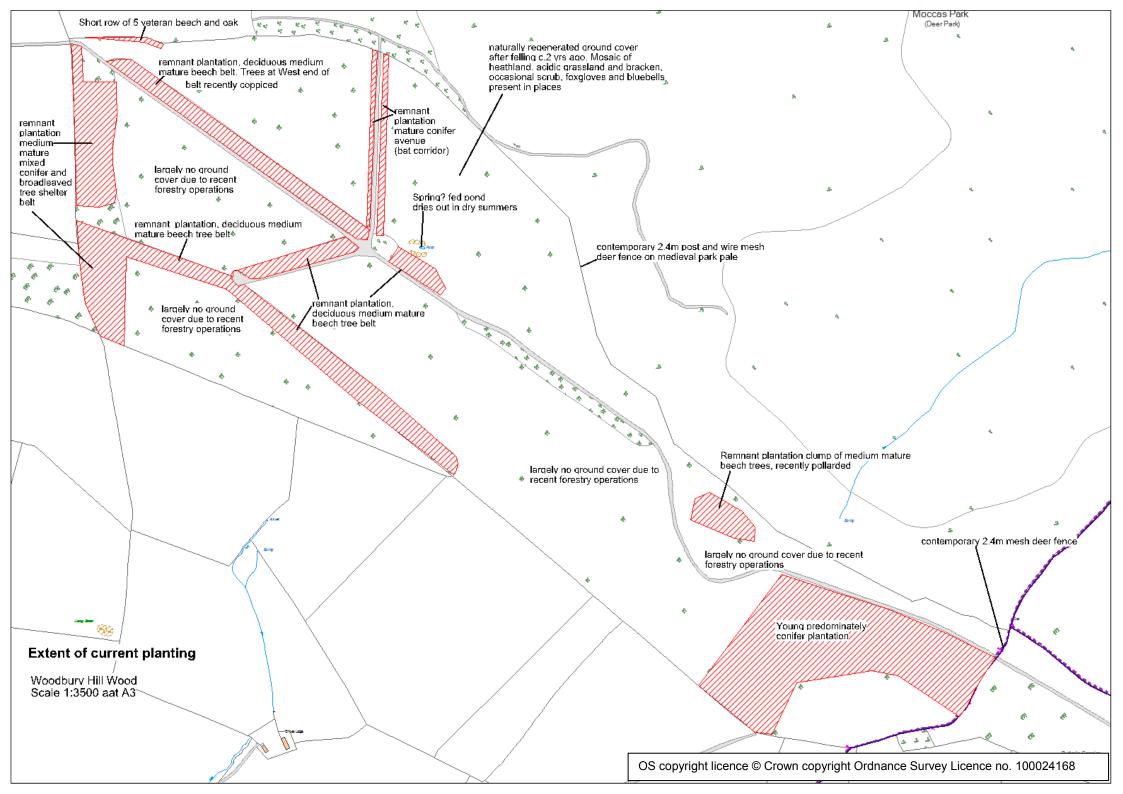
The large area of planting at the south-eastern end of the site was clear felled and re-planted in 2002/3. The re-planting comprises a mix of conifer and broadleaf trees.

A line of veteran oaks and beeches have been retained along approximately 50m of the northern boundary of the site (close to the access to the site).

A stand of beech has been retained upon a knoll within the southern portion of the site.

A stand of beech has been retained immediately to the south of the pond or pool.

Due to the recent forestry operations, much of the site has little ground cover at present. The area between the modern track and the medieval park pale boundary was clear felled during 2012 resulting in a naturally regenerated heathland mosaic containing acidic grassland, bracken and occasional scrub. Foxgloves and bluebells are apparent within localised areas.



7. Archaeological and Historic features

Prehistoric features.

During the 2003 survey a feature close to the western boundary of the site was tentatively recorded as a Round Barrow. This was looked at again during the 2007 survey and the initial identification can was confirmed. The feature comprises a 15m diameter mound up to 1.5m in height on the highest point of the crest of the ridge. This feature has been cut into by an antiquarian trench, aligned roughly on a north / south axis.

A second feature of similar diameter but only extending to 1m in height was recorded approximately 150m to the south-east, during the 2007 survey. Although less well defined than the first, its location and regular shape would suggest that this could be a second Round Barrow.

Round Barrows are funerary monuments dating from the Bronze Age (2000 – 750 BC).

Features relating to previous land-use.

The earthwork enclosure close to the pond or pool is thought to represent some form of stock enclosure dating from the late medieval or post medieval period. The fact that it appears to be associated with the only natural water supply within the site suggests that whatever its use there was a requirement for fresh water. The feature was evaluated by small scale excavation during 2013 but no dating evidence was forthcoming. No finds of any kind were recovered suggesting that the feature was not used for any industrial process or for domestic occupation. It would appear that this feature relates to a period when the area was open hill / rough grazing.

Parkland Features

A number of phases of Deer Park pale / wall were recorded during the surveys. These varied between well preserved (in general terms) long lengths, for example the western boundary wall, to long lengths of wall which survive to ground level only. It would appear that the latest Deer Park wall enclosed the western, south-western and southern boundaries of Woodbury Hill Wood together with the south-western boundary of Burnt Coppice (although there is little evidence for it due th the robbing / removal of stone). A more in depth description of the boundary walls can be found within the 2007 survey report. The entire length of the north eastern boundary of the site is marked by an earthwork park pale of Medieval origin.

The medieval park pale comprises an earthwork bank and ditch. The bank is approximately 2 to 2.5m wide and stands to an average height of 1.2m from the base of the ditch. The ditch is approximately 2m wide and is located on the northern (Moccas Park) side of the bank. The pale would originally have been higher and the ditch deeper, but these have eroded over time. The earthwork bank would have been topped by a wooden fence in order to render it impossible for the deer within Moccas Park to escape.

No other features which could be directly related to the parkland / designed landscape were recorded.

Industrial features

Features associated with what could be termed "industry" could cover a wide range of activities. However, for the purposes of this survey the term "industrial features" refers principally to either large scale but localised extraction, or, widespread but small scale quarrying. Such industrial activity would include deep, open cast quarrying, linear quarrying and areas of shallow delves, along with associated infrastructure e.g. access tracks, storage platforms, etc.

A total of fourteen quarries or areas of quarrying were identified during the survey.

These are predominantly linear in form and were almost certainly used to supply building stone used for the construction and upkeep of the Deer Park Wall. This can be seen particularly in quarry HSM 44703, (see appendix 1), in which quarried stones have been stacked on edge ready for removal. The uniform size and thinness may suggest that these were intended as capstones.

Associated with a number of these quarries were access tracks. These usually comprised a 2.5m wide track or holloway running from a quarry, or area of quarrying, diagonally across the slope at a constant angle. It would appear that the quarries are located in order to exploit a naturally occurring outcrop of rock apparent on either side of the ridge. Many of the tracks and hollow-ways appear to run diagonally, up-slope over the shoulder of the hill and onto the top of the ridge. Many of these interconnect suggesting that a number of these routes were in use at the same time. This suggests periods of heavy use, either seasonally, or for a more sustained period connected to specific events either directly associated with woodland management or connected to wider activities on the Moccas estate.

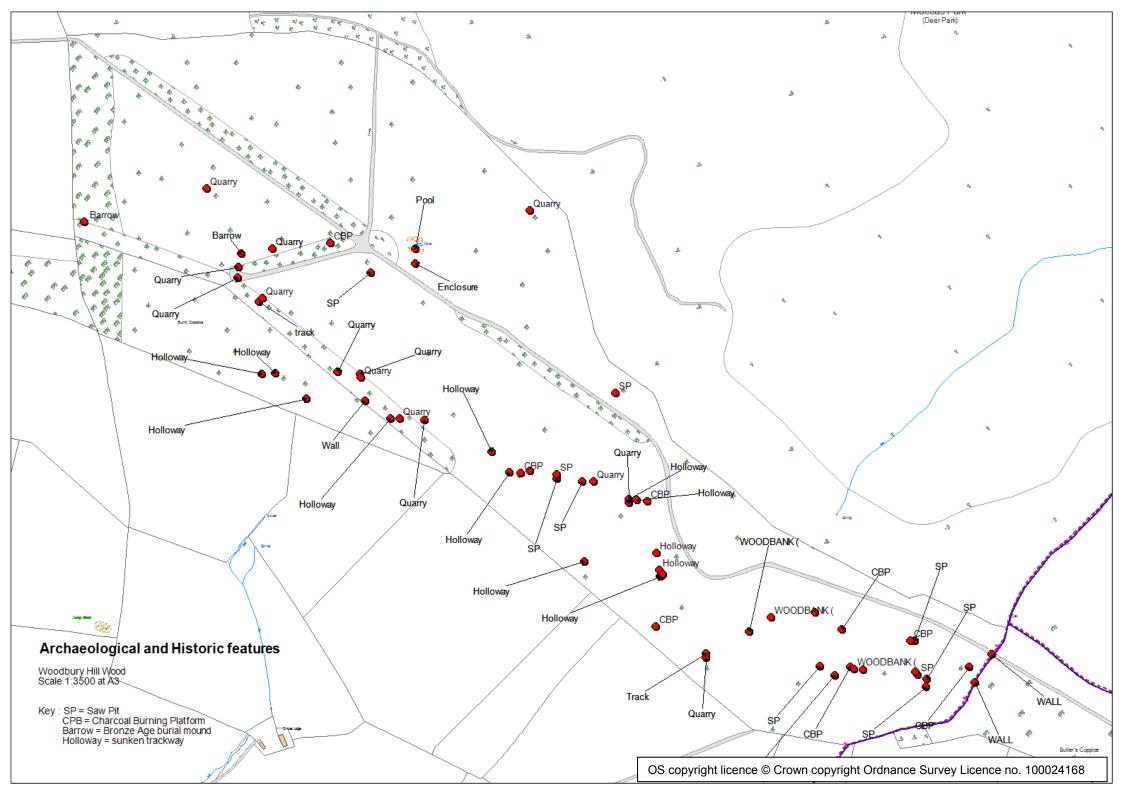
Woodland management features

Woodland management features are represented by two main types of earthwork –Charcoal burning platforms and saw pits.

Charcoal burning hearths usually comprise a circular, level platform between 5 and 10m in diameter. These were constructed in order to build a stack of dried cordwood which was turned into charcoal by slow burning and excluding oxygen. The surveys have shown that this class of monument are most prolific within the southern portion of the site. This coincides with the steepest slopes, making them more visible and therefore more likely to be recorded. It is therefore likely that the distribution of charcoal burning hearths is skewed in favour of these locations and that others exist on the flatter areas of the slope but were not visible during the surveys.

Saw pits comprise of a trench or depression between 5 and 12m in length with the spoil thrown up to form a bank on either side if on level ground or on the downslope side if on a slope. Lumber was placed either across or along these earthworks and either split or sawn. Again the majority of saw pits appear to lie in the southern portion of the site and this may indeed be an accurate reflection of their distribution. It may suggest that this area of the woodland was being managed in a different way to the rest of the site.

The woodland boundary bank located close to the southern boundary of the site may represent the boundary between the managed woodland and the gardens and orcharding associated with Parkgate Cottage.



8. Boundaries and principal archaeological constraints

The main boundaries have already been mentioned within the Parkland Features section. Whilst the tracing of these boundaries is not difficult, the state of preservation varies dramatically. Short sections of wall survive to their full height, however, the majority of the southern and south-western boundaries survive to little more than 0.7m over the majority of their length. It is suggested that the south-eastern boundary wall has not been repaired since at least the mid 20th century (if not earlier) and that over the decades large numbers of trees have fallen onto it resulting in not only localised gaps but also long lengths of collapse. It is entirely possible that quantities of stone (once collapsed and left un-repaired) were removed either by the estate or neighbouring land owners to be used for other purposes. The wall which at one time represented the boundary between Woodbury Hill and Burnt Coppice has been almost completely robbed, leaving only the occasional spread of small stone.

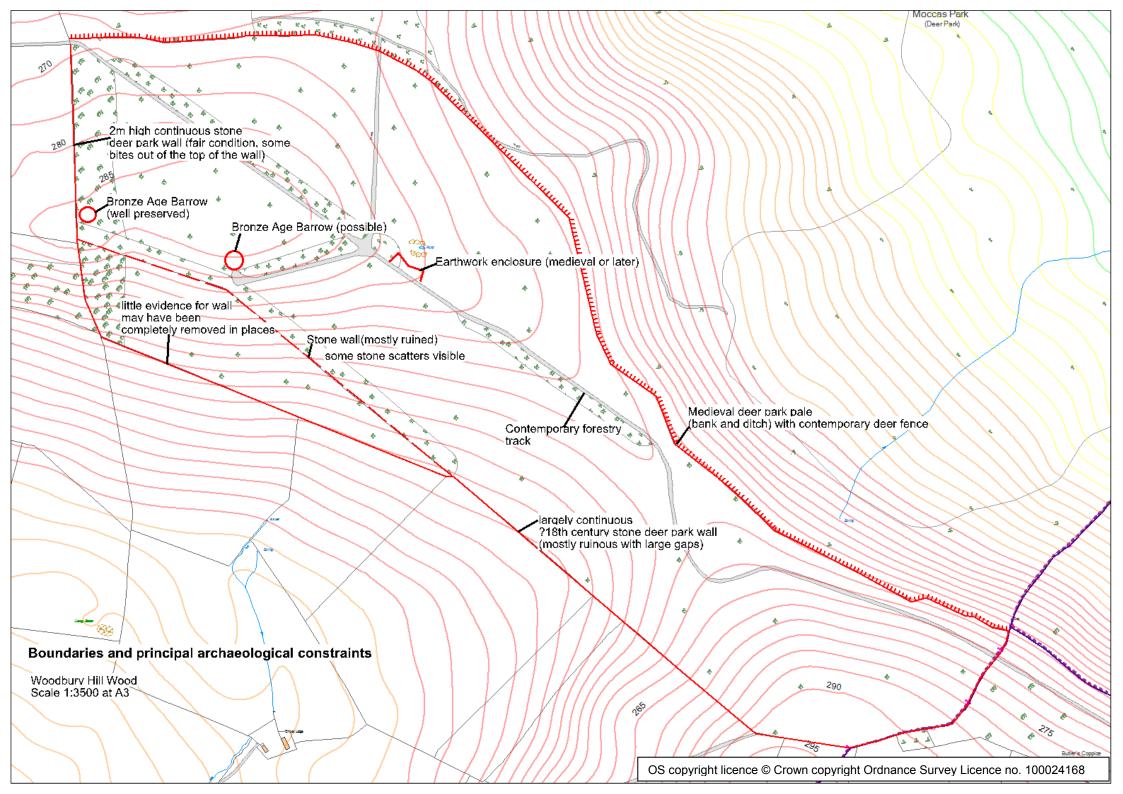
The western boundary wall has been subjected to small scale, remedial rebuilding within recent years and a number of localised holes and collapses have been patched. This is therefore the best preserved section of deer park wall and is approximately 2m high over most of its length.

The north-eastern boundary is marked by a generally well preserved earthwork pale. This marks the southern-most boundary of a succession of deer parks which took in the majority of the steepest slopes within Moccas Park.

The principal archaeological constraints (features which should be preserved and where further ground disturbance (including planting and poaching / erosion by animals or people)), are the sites of the two barrows, the earthwork enclosure close to the pond or pool. And the medieval park pale

These are of particular note as they are the last vestiges of features that relate to genuine historic (and prehistoric) land-use. As noted within the "Archaeological and historical features" section, the enclosure is thought to represent some form of stock enclosure used prior to the area becoming part of the park. The presence of at least one definite round barrow strongly suggests that the area was open, deforested land during the Bronze Age as these types of monuments were designed to be seen from long distances.

Clearly, the remainder of the earthworks and stone features recorded should be preserved where possible. Although not unique and not of the same age as the enclosure or the barrows, they do however represent a finite resource and each site adds to the story of historic land use for the site, helping to put it into context with the wider area.



9. Discussion

Dorstone Hill, on which Woodbury Hill Wood and Burnt Coppice sit, has only just begun to be understood and appreciated for its archaeology and history. It is becoming clear that the Neolithic long barrow known as Arthur's Stone, approximately 2.5 km to the north-west of Woodbury Hill Wood is part of a landscape of funerary monuments constructed between the 4th and 2nd millennium BC. Recent excavations undertaken by Manchester University and Herefordshire Archaeology approximately 0.5km to the west of Woodbury Hill, have uncovered a series of large scale, nationally important, funerary monuments dating from the Neolithic and Bronze Age. This, together with the barrow(s) within Woodbury Hill Wood suggest that the area was part of a prehistoric ritual landscape with similarities to better known and researched areas of Britain, such as the area surrounding Stonehenge.

Excavations within Moccas Park in 2013, located within 40m of the northern boundary of Woodbury Hill wood, have identified a Bronze Age clearance cairn indicating that the entire ridge top was cleared of trees and was being farmed.

There appears to be little evidence of intensive medieval cultivation on the ridge top suggesting that much of the Dorstone ridge was kept as rough pasture / open grazing. This would appear to fit the limited evidence recovered from the earthwork enclosure excavations at Woodbury Hill Wood.

The site currently known as Woodbury Hill Wood and Burnt Coppice appears to have been brought into the enclosed area of Moccas Park sometime during the late 18th or 19th century. Prior to it becoming part of the park, it appears to have been open grazing (as was much of the top of Dorstone Hill). Indeed some areas close to the site were being cleared of scrub as late as the 1950's.

The date of the establishment of managed woodland across the site is currently unknown, however the fact that there exists only one formal entrance onto Woodbury Hill from the rest of Moccas park may suggest that only the north-eastern slopes were used as part of the designed landscape and that much of the hill may have been emparked for the purpose of establishing additional woodland to supply the estate. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map indicates some areas of dense broadleaf woodland upon the western end and south-western slopes of Woodbury Hill Wood and shows Burnt Coppice as dense, mixed woodland, (see figure 3) rather than parkland.

Recent clear felling and the mulching of the brash and stump material has led to a general "smoothing" of the landscape arrived at by the spreading of mulch over much of the site. While this has helped protect many of the smaller features, (particularly charcoal burning platforms and saw pits) it has rendered them less visible.

The site currently affords a unique opportunity to create a landscape in which the landscape history and ecological / biological diversity can be brought together and presented to the public within an area already of national significance.

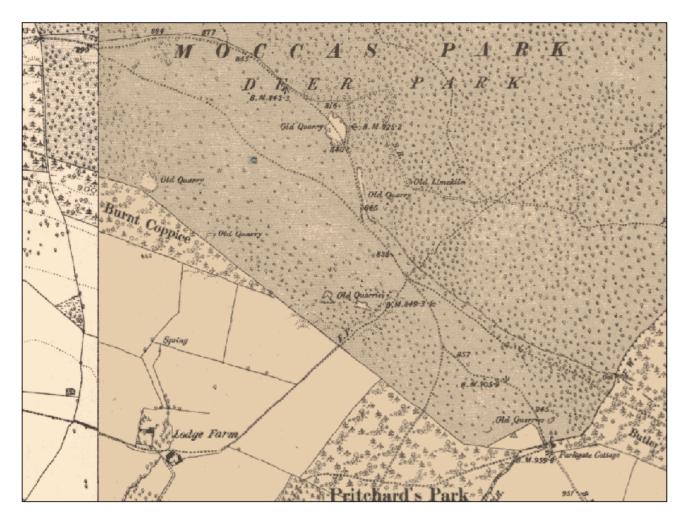
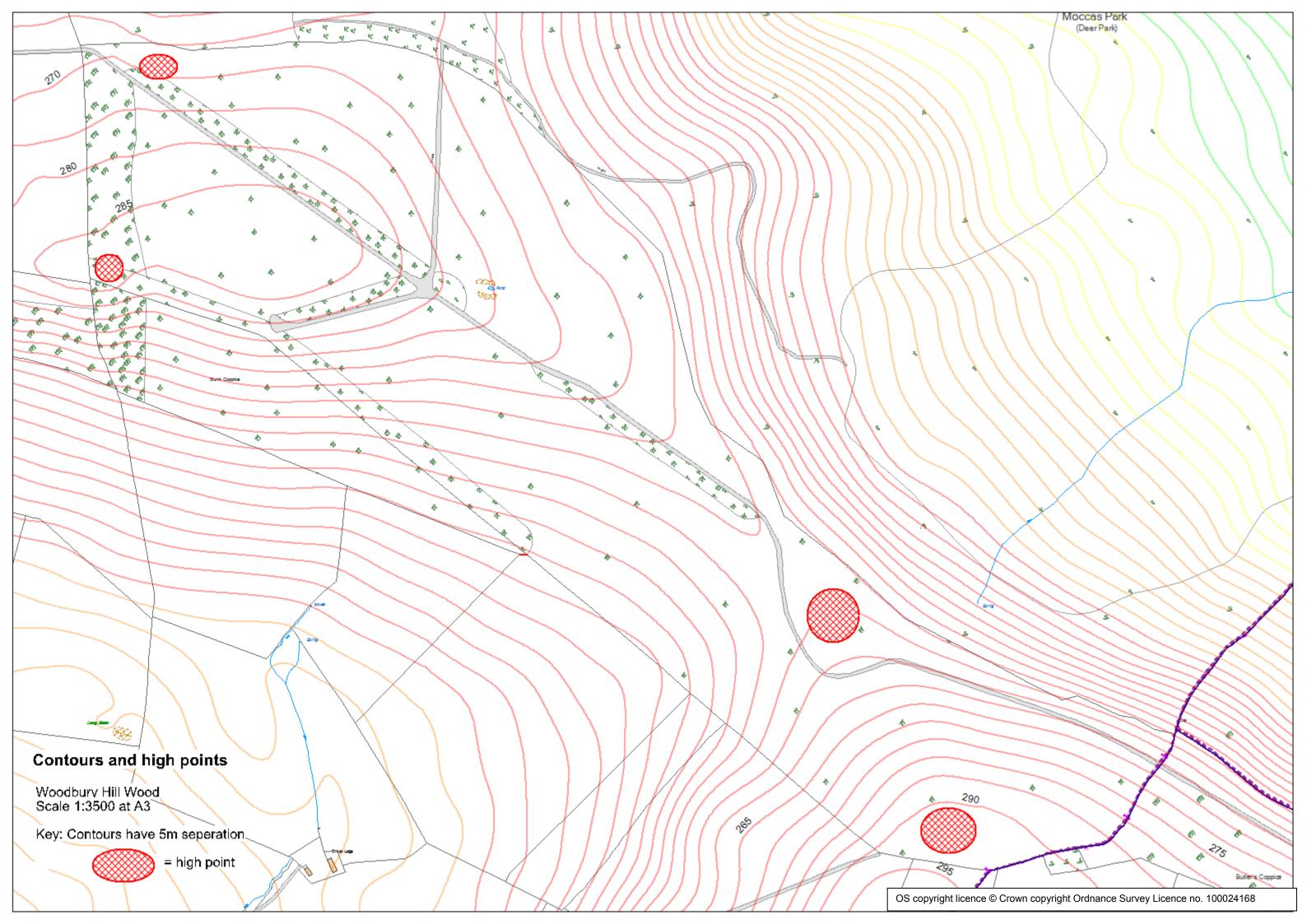
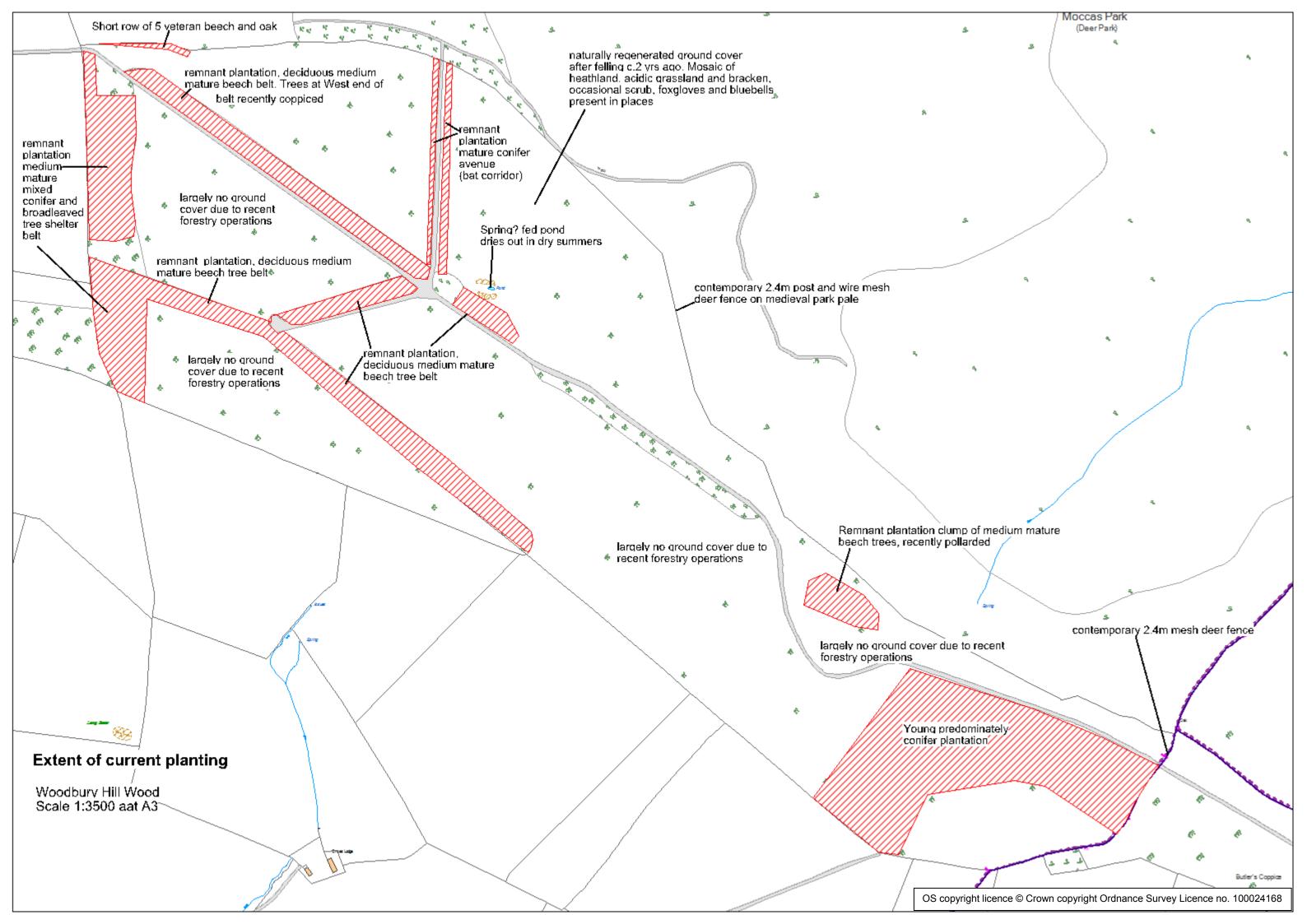
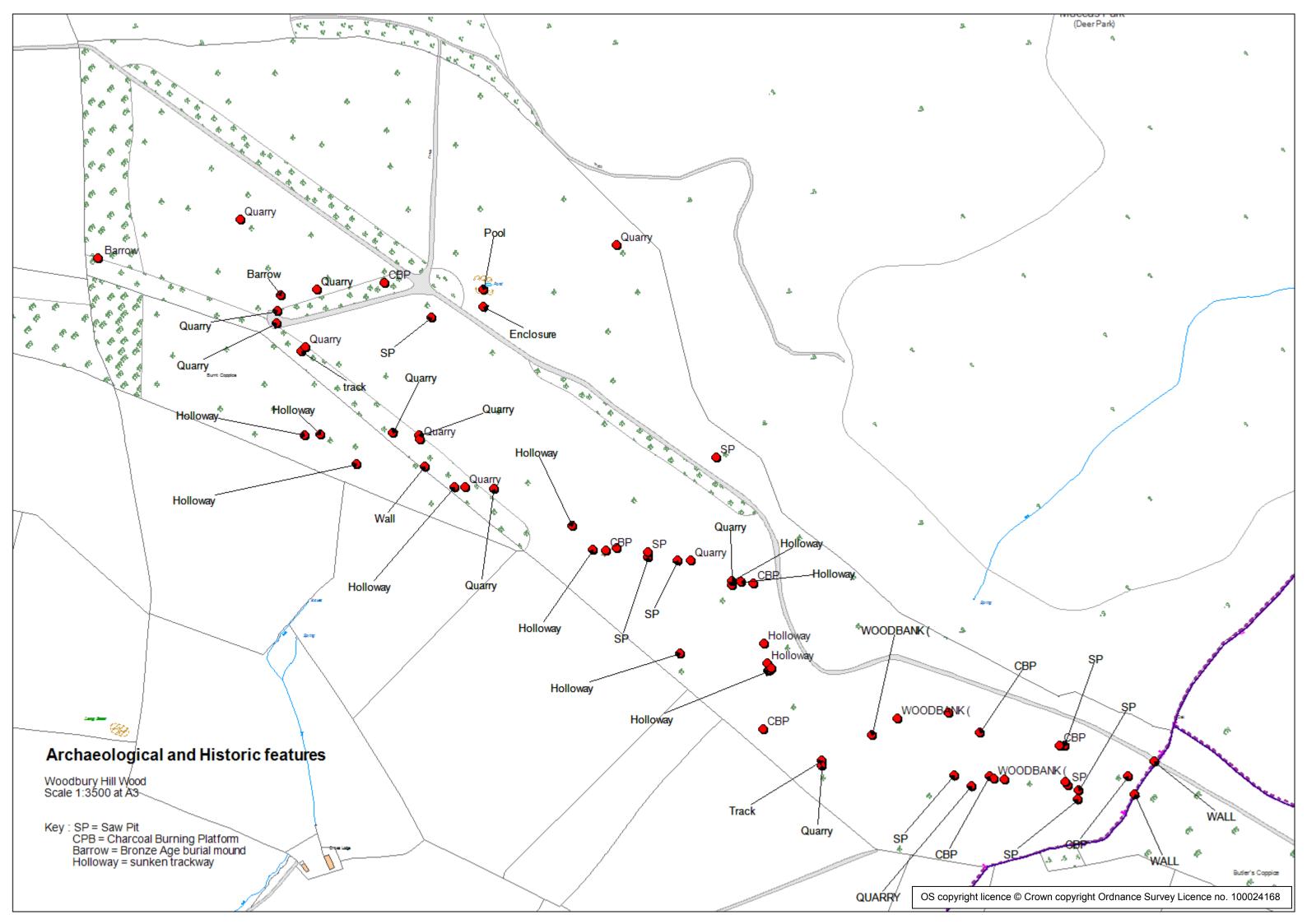
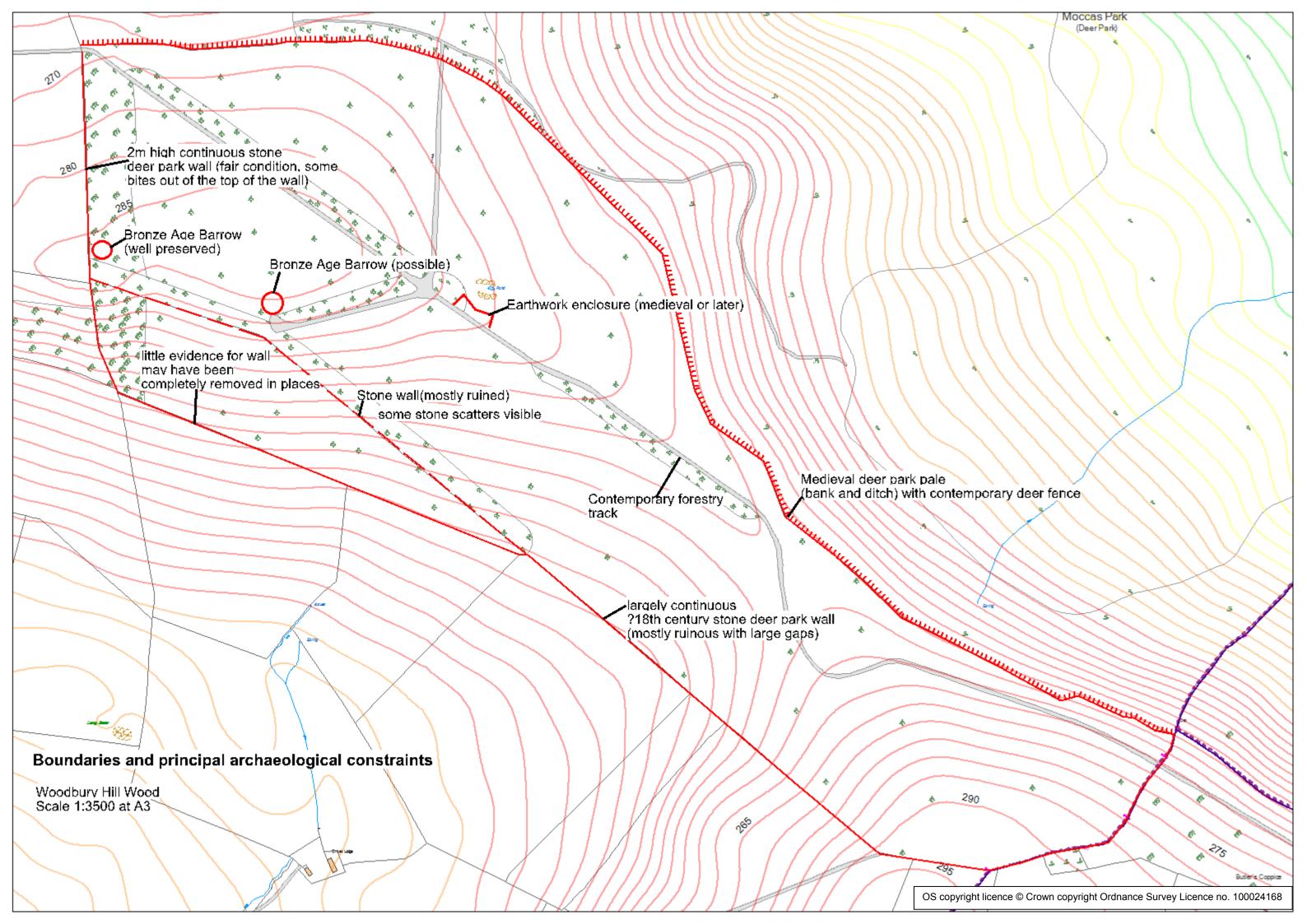


Figure 3: Extract from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1886









Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1. Survey Database

HER No.	Easting	Northing	Site type	Period
44691	333387	242259	Quarry	Post-medieval
32971	333226	242215	Barrow	Bronze Age
44692	333601	242148	SP	Post-medieval
44693	333549	242187	СВР	Post-medieval
44694	333428	242156	Quarry	Post-medieval
44695	333432	242173	Barrow	Bronze Age
44696	333473	242180	Wall	Post-medieval
44697	333427	242142	Quarry	Post-medieval
44698	333455	242110	track	Post-medieval
44699	333460	242115	Quarry	Post-medieval
44700	333459	242016	Holloway	Post-medieval
44701	333476	242017	Holloway	Post-medieval
44702	333517	241984	Holloway	Post-medieval
44703	333558	242019	Quarry	Post-medieval
44704	333587	242016	Quarry	Post-medieval
44705	333588	242011	Quarry	Post-medieval
44706	333594	241981	Wall	Post-medieval
44707	333627	241958	Holloway	Post-medieval
44708	333639	241958	Quarry	Post-medieval
44709	333672	241956	Quarry	Post-medieval

44710	333760	241914	Holloway	Post-medieval
44711	333783	241887	Holloway	Post-medieval
44712	333798	241886	СВР	Post-medieval
44713	333810	241889	Quarry	Post-medieval
44714	333845	241879	SP	Post-medieval
44715	333845	241885	SP	Post-medieval
44716	333878	241875	SP	Post-medieval
44717	333893	241875	Quarry	Post-medieval
44718	333939	241848	Quarry	Post-medieval
44719	333939	241852	Holloway	Post-medieval
44720	333949	241851	Holloway	Post-medieval
44721	333963	241849	CBP	Post-medieval
44722	333975		Holloway	Post-medieval
44723	333881	241771	Holloway	Post-medieval
44724	333979	241760	Holloway	Post-medieval
44725	333980	241751	Holloway	Post-medieval
44726	333982	241752	Holloway	Post-medieval
44727	333984	241754	Holloway	Post-medieval
44728	333974	241686	CBP	Post-medieval
44729	334040	241650	Track	Post-medieval
44730	334040	241645	Quarry	Post-medieval
44731	333922	241991	SP	Post-medieval
32942	334414	241649	WALL	Post-medieval
32943	334384	241633	CBP	Post-medieval
32944	334392	241612	WALL	Post-medieval
32945	334328	241607	SP	Post-medieval
32946	334329	241617	SP	Post-medieval
32947	334317	241623	SP	Post-medieval
32948	334314	241626	CBP	Post-medieval
32949	334313	241667	SP	Post-medieval
32950	334308	241667	CBP	Post-medieval
32951	334229	241633	CBP	Post-medieval
32952	334209	241622	QUARRY	Post-medieval
32953	334189	241634	SP	Post-medieval
32954	334097	241679	WOODBANK (WEST END)	Post-medieval

	334234	241630 WOODBANK (EAST END)	Post-medieval
32955	334246	241629 WOODBANK (WEST END)	Post-medieval
	334125	241698 WOODBANK (EAST END)	Post-medieval
32956	334218	241682 CBP	Post-medieval
32957	334183	241704 LYNCHET	Medieval / prehistoric
33012	333660	242180 Pool	Unknown
33014	333660	242160 Enclosure	Post-medieval
32948	333810	242230 Quarry	Post-medieval