

Bolingbroke Castle  
Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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## Archaeological Watching Brief

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1 Project Outline.....	3
1.2 Site Location and Description.....	3
1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	3
<b>2. Results</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 Bridge Footing and Signpost Excavations.....	6
2.2 Footpath Excavation.....	6
<b>3. Discussion</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>4. Sources</b> .....	<b>11</b>
4.1 Bibliography.....	11
<b>Appendix 1 - Methodology</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Aims of the Project.....	12
Archaeological Monitoring.....	12
Recording Methodology.....	12
Small Finds.....	12
Scientific and Palaeoenvironmental Sampling Strategy.....	13
Health and Safety.....	13
Small Finds Processing.....	13
Special Assessment and Analysis.....	13
Archiving.....	13
Chronology.....	13
Assumptions and Limitations.....	14
Copyright.....	14



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Site location.....	4
Figure 2 Location of areas of monitored excavations.....	5
Figure 3 Western bridge footing excavation facing west. The bedding deposit for the adjacent road can be seen at the base of the facing section. Scales = 1 m and 0.3 m.....	7
Figure 4 Eastern bridge footing excavation facing south-east. Scale = 1 m.....	7
Figure 5 Overall view of the footpath trench following excavation and insertion of the wooden boards. The angle of excavation shows the cut into the bank to the left of shot and the filled material to the right-hand side of the excavation. Scales = 1 m and 2 m.....	8
Figure 6 Plans and sections/soil profiles for all excavations monitored.....	9





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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*This report documents archaeological monitoring of groundworks in advance of the proposed installation of a footbridge, gate and steps at Bolingbroke Castle, Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire. The work was undertaken in order to fulfil a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) (ref. S00176180) for the proposed works, as required by Historic England. The proposed works were situated within the area of Bolingbroke Castle, a scheduled monument (NHLE 1008318) and Grade I listed building (NHLE 1309023), centred at NGR TF 34925 64931.*

*The monitored excavation works comprised two shallow bridge footings for a wooden footbridge on the western edge of the scheduled area, alongside a hole to accommodate a new signpost. In addition, an area of footpath on the earthwork bank to the north of the castle was excavated for the creation of a set of steps to prevent erosion and ease access.*

*The monitoring did not note any significant archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits or features. The bridge footings are on the periphery of the scheduled area, and it appears that had there been any archaeological features of note in this area, they will have been truncated by the drainage ditch and adjacent road. Within the area of the new path steps, the deposits forming the outer bank around the castle appear to be still intact. The excavations were shallow and only cut into the very upper part of this feature, and so there is little new information which the work can contribute to our understanding of its construction, repair or composition. Fragmentary crushed brick within the deposit suggests the potential for more invasive excavation work to recover datable evidence should the opportunity arise in the future.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT OUTLINE

This report documents archaeological monitoring of groundworks for the installation of a footbridge, gate and steps at Bolingbroke Castle, Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire (Figure 1). The work was undertaken in order to fulfil a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) (ref. S00176180) for the proposed works, as required by Historic England.

## 1.2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The monitored works were situated within the area of Bolingbroke Castle (NHLE 1309023), centred at grid reference NGR TF 34925 64931. The castle is a scheduled ancient monument (NHLE 1008318) and Grade I listed building (NHLE 1309023). Four separate excavations were monitored, split between two areas: the bridge and signpost excavations, and the footpath/stairs excavations (see Figure 2 below for location).

## 1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site of Bolingbroke Castle includes significant architectural remains and associated earthworks surviving in very good condition. Being principally of one build, the structure is a valuable illustration of castle design and layout in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, and our understanding of it has been enhanced by recent partial excavation and consolidation. Associated earthworks of both medieval and post-medieval date have survived intact in the southern part of the site, preserving the relationships between a diversity of activities. Waterlogging in the area of the moat indicates the likely survival of organic remains. The castle is both well documented historically and well known as the birthplace of Henry IV; as a monument open to the public it thus functions as an important educational and recreational resource.

Bolingbroke Castle was extensively investigated during consolidation works carried out in the 1960s and 1970s by the Ministry of Works. These archaeological investigations uncovered the site of the great hall, investigated the structural sequence of the curtain walls and identified different phases of works to the castle's towers, as well as tentatively identifying earlier timber buildings within the castle interior (Thompson 1966, 1969, 1974) (Drewett and Freke 1974). Some limited work was also undertaken to investigate a potentially earlier defended enclosure on Dewy Hill, to the north of the castle (Thompson 1966).



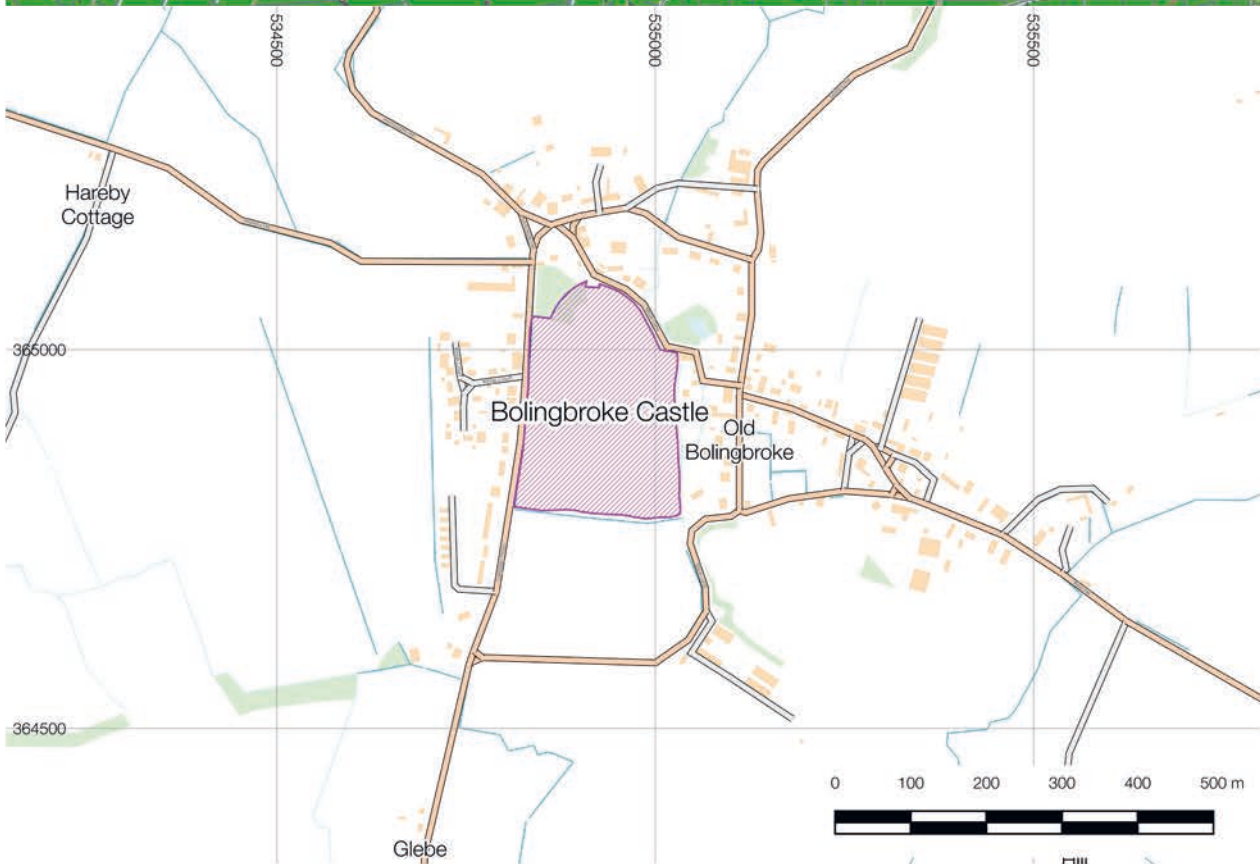
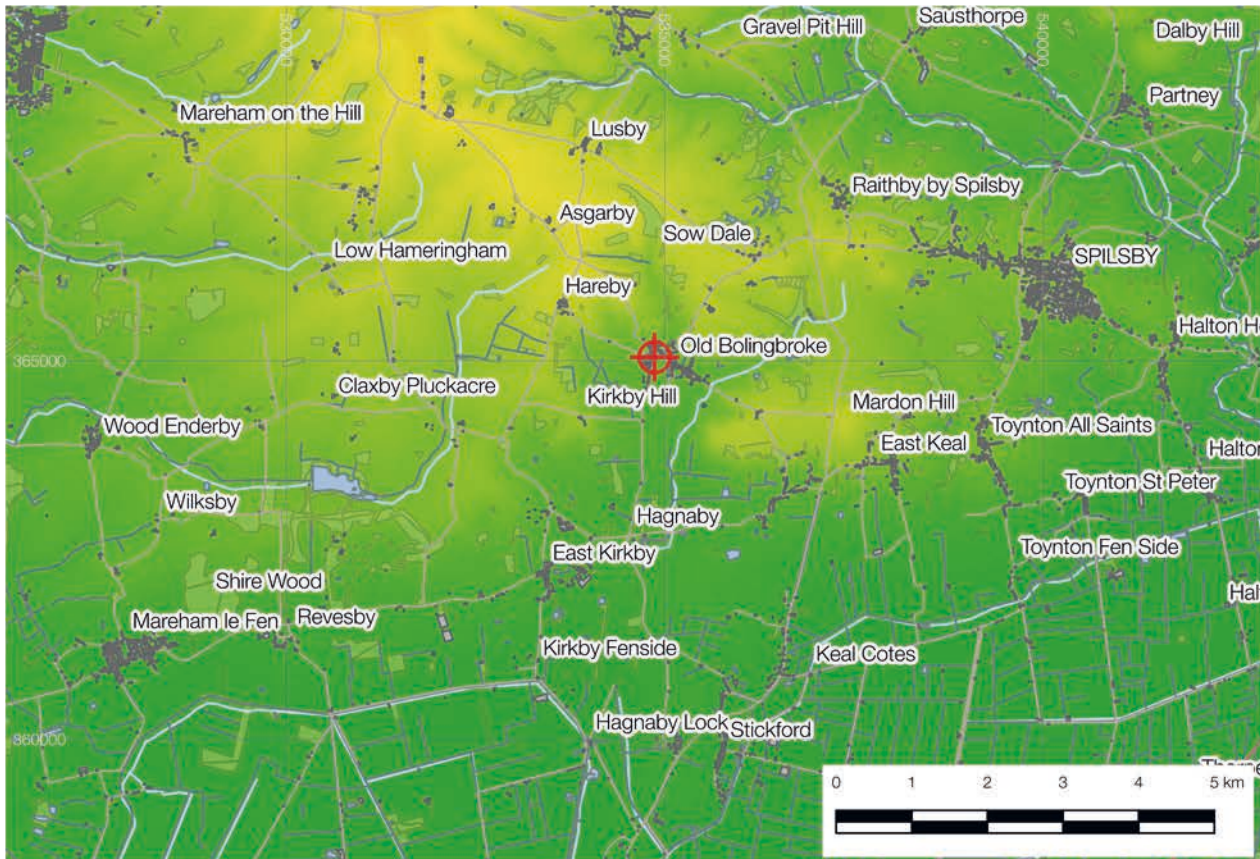


Figure 1 Site location







## 2. RESULTS

Monitoring of the excavations was carried out on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017 by Jim Brightman of Solstice Heritage LLP. All excavations were hand-dug under supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist. Following excavation, relevant areas were cleaned and recorded. A summary of the methodology is included as Appendix 2.

### 2.1 BRIDGE FOOTING AND SIGNPOST EXCAVATIONS

The excavations for the bridge footings comprised two separate rectangular cuttings, one on each side of the deeply incised north-south-aligned drainage ditch on the western boundary of the scheduled monument. Each cutting measured 1.5 m x 0.5 m in plan, with the roadside (western) excavation dug to a maximum 0.4 m in depth and the eastern excavation against the boundary fence dug to a maximum depth of only 0.25 m.

The eastern excavation was cut entirely into a loose sandy topsoil (001) with a considerable fraction of organic rotting leaf mould deriving from the adjacent sycamore plantation. The western footing cut through the same topsoil deposit (001), showing it to have a maximum thickness of 0.3 m. Beneath this, there was a mixed deposit of crushed brick, stone and flint nodules in a dense clay matrix (002) which continued to the base of the excavation at 0.4 m below ground level. This deposit most likely represents bedding or foundation spread for the adjacent road.

The excavation for the new footpath signpost was c. 0.3 m in diameter and 0.7 m in depth from the ground surface. It was located adjacent to the western bridge footing and displayed the same sequence of topsoil (001) and road bedding layer (002). At the very base of the excavation, the underlying clay-with-flint (presumed) substrate (005) was observed.

No archaeological or palaeoenvironmental features were observed in either of the cuttings, and the only artefacts recovered were a glass bottle base and a corroded metal saucepan, both of 20<sup>th</sup>-century date.

### 2.2 FOOTPATH EXCAVATION

The excavation for the new footpath steps comprised an irregular area in plan with a total length of 4.3 m and a maximum width (at the western end) of 0.9 m. It was cut at an angle to the adjacent earthwork bank (part of the outer works of the castle), meaning that only the northern side of the 'trench' required excavation. The removed material was then banked into the southern side of the 'trench' to create a level series of steps divided and edged by wooden boarding. The excavation revealed a thin silty topsoil of a maximum thickness of 0.25 m (003) overlying a compact clayey silt deposit with crushed brick inclusions (004). The angle of the excavation in plan meant that deposit (004) was only exposed in part of the trench, but it is considered likely that it represents the upper layer of the earthwork bank. There were no small finds recovered and the fragments of brick recovered were too small to be diagnostic, though the internal structure of one piece inspected suggested it was handmade.



Figure 3 Western bridge footing excavation facing west. The bedding deposit for the adjacent road can be seen at the base of the facing section. Scales = 1 m and 0.3 m

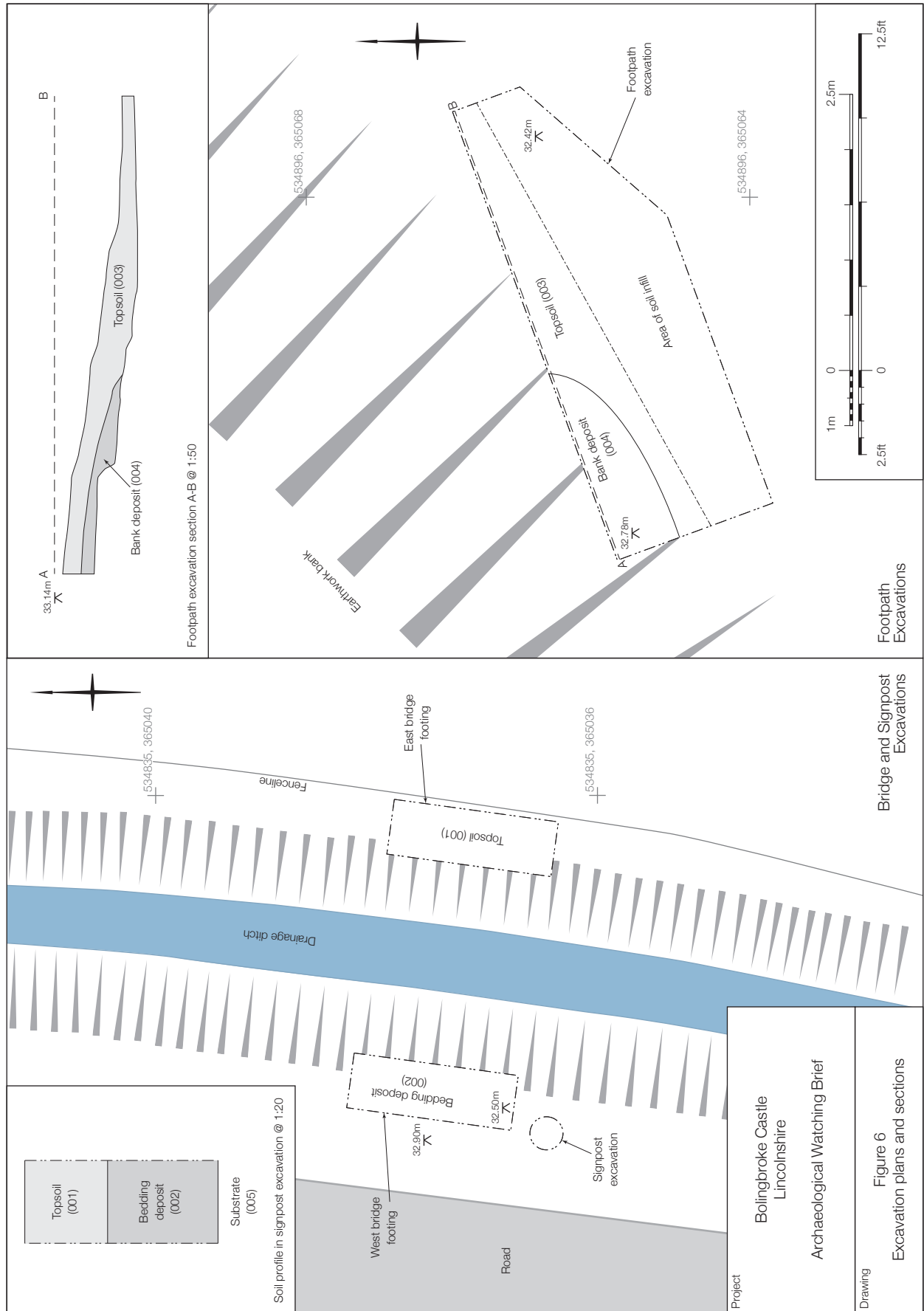


Figure 4 Eastern bridge footing excavation facing south-east. Scale = 1 m





Figure 5 Overall view of the footpath trench following excavation and insertion of the wooden boards. The angle of excavation shows the cut into the bank to the left of shot and the filled material to the right-hand side of the excavation. Scales = 1 m and 2 m



### 3. DISCUSSION

The monitoring did not note any significant archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits or features. The bridge footings are on the periphery of the scheduled area, and it appears that had there been any archaeological features of note in this area, they will have been truncated by the drainage ditch and adjacent road. Within the area of the new path steps, the deposits forming the outer bank around the castle appear to be still intact. The excavations were shallow and only cut into the very upper part of this feature, and so there is little new information which the work can contribute to our understanding of its construction, repair or composition. Fragmentary crushed brick within the deposit suggests the potential for more invasive excavation work to recover datable evidence should the opportunity arise in the future.

## 4. SOURCES

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## APPENDIX 1 - METHODOLOGY

### AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The overarching aim of the watching brief was:

- To ensure that significant archaeological remains were not destroyed without first being adequately recorded.

The objectives of the watching brief were:

- To record, excavate and environmentally sample any archaeological deposits of significance observed during the groundworks;
- To establish the date, character and significance of any archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits, including in relation to other similar features within the area;
- To ensure there is a permanent record of the work undertaken deposited with the local Historic Environment Record (HER) and made available online;
- To ensure all work is undertaken in compliance with the *Code of Conduct* of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CfA) (2014a) and the CfA *Standard and Guidance for Watching Briefs* (2014b);
- To ensure compliance with the required Scheduled Monument Consent and WSI.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Four separate excavations were monitored, split between two areas: the bridge and signpost excavations, and the footpath/stairs excavations. All excavations were hand-dug under supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist. Following excavation, relevant areas were cleaned and recorded. All works were undertaken by suitably qualified archaeologists, and final excavation and cleaning was undertaken by hand. All fieldwork and post-excitation reporting/archiving was undertaken in line with the agreed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) (Scott 2017).

### RECORDING METHODOLOGY

Where archaeological features and deposits were encountered, these were recorded to the standards outlined in the relevant CfA *Standard and Guidance*. All features and deposits were recorded on *pro forma* record sheets, drawn in plan and section at a suitable scale and photographed. In addition to any specific features or deposits, a general record of the trench stratigraphy was made on *pro forma* record sheets, a soil profile drawing for each of the excavations was made at a suitable scale and photography was completed. The photographic record of the monitoring was undertaken in high-resolution digital format. Survey control was established using a Leica Smartover survey-grade GPS with an accuracy of  $\pm 10$  mm. All field drawings were made in pencil on drawing film and form part of the overall project archive. There were no significant constraints on the fieldwork. It is not considered that any constraints have affected the value or diminished the accuracy of the results of the monitoring.

### SMALL FINDS

Given the relatively small size of the area to be monitored, all small finds were to be initially retained and bagged by context for assessment at the post-fieldwork stage. Should an unexpected quantity of material be uncovered that was deemed to be of little significance then this was to be noted but not retained, subject to the agreement of the project management team and relevant archaeological curator. Small finds were to be handled, packed and stored in accordance with the guidelines in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 1998).

In the event that finds of 'treasure' were uncovered then the local Coroner was to be informed and the correct procedures were to be followed as outlined under the Treasure Act 1996. In the event of human remains being uncovered, including evidence of cremations, these were to be initially left *in situ*, protected and covered from view. Should removal of the remains be deemed necessary then a licence was to be obtained from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) prior to excavation proceeding. Exhumation of human remains would then proceed in accordance with the MoJ licence and all health and safety regulations and guidance.

## SCIENTIFIC AND PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING STRATEGY

Given the uncertainty of the presence or level of archaeological remains likely to be encountered as part of the monitoring, the general aim of the scientific and palaeoenvironmental sampling strategy was: 'To provide information on the nature of human activity and the past environment in the immediate area, in relation to the archaeological deposits uncovered during the project'.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

All archaeological work was undertaken in a safe manner in compliance with the *Health and Safety at Work Act* 1974. A full risk assessment was undertaken in advance of the commencement of work, a copy of which was available on site for the duration of the fieldwork.

## SMALL FINDS PROCESSING

All finds were to be processed and catalogued in line with standard guidance documents including *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 1998) and the *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (ClfA 2014c).

## SPECIAL ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

After processing, artefacts and ecofacts were to be quantified and assessed to provide an overview of their potential to meet the aims and objectives of the project. This was to be undertaken by a relevant specialist as agreed in the WSI, and include a statement on the potential and requirement for further analysis. Where extensive analysis was recommended, and justified by the potential of the assemblage or sample, then this was to be undertaken after agreement with the project management team and relevant archaeological curator.

## ARCHIVING

The lack of material archive arising from the monitoring works means that this report is submitted as the primary record of the work undertaken. This report will also be made available as part of an OASIS record for the project.

## CHRONOLOGY

Where chronological and archaeological periods are referred to in the text, the relevant date ranges are broadly defined as follows:

- Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age): 1 million – 12,000 BP (Before present)
- Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age): 10000 – 4000 BC
- Neolithic (New Stone Age): 4000 – 2400 BC
- Chalcolithic/Beaker Period: (2400 – 2000 BC)
- Bronze Age: 2000 – 700 BC
- Iron Age: 700 BC – AD 43
- Roman/Romano-British: AD 43 – 410
- Early medieval/Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-Scandinavian: AD 410 – 1066
- Medieval: AD 1066 – 1540
- Post-medieval: AD 1540 – 1900
  - » Tudor: AD 1485 – 1603
  - » Stuart: AD 1603 – 1714
  - » Georgian: AD 1714 – 1837
- Industrial: 1750 – 1900
  - » Victorian: AD 1837 – 1901
- Modern: AD 1900 – Present



### **ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

Data and information obtained and consulted in the compilation of this report has been derived from a number of secondary sources. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of secondary information, its accuracy has been assumed in good faith. Any information accessed from external databases (e.g. NLHE, HERs) represents a record of known assets and their discovery and further investigation. Such information is not complete and does not preclude the future discovery of additional assets and the amendment of information about known assets which may affect their significance and/or sensitivity to development effects. All statements and opinions arising from the works undertaken are provided in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

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