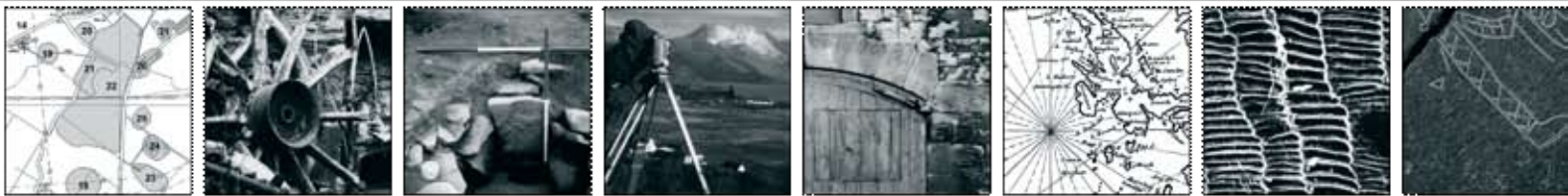


AWSS/01



# LAND ADJACENT TO THE A49, WISTANSTOW, SHROPSHIRE

*Archaeological Watching Brief*

*commissioned by Amey OW Ltd*

*May 2014*



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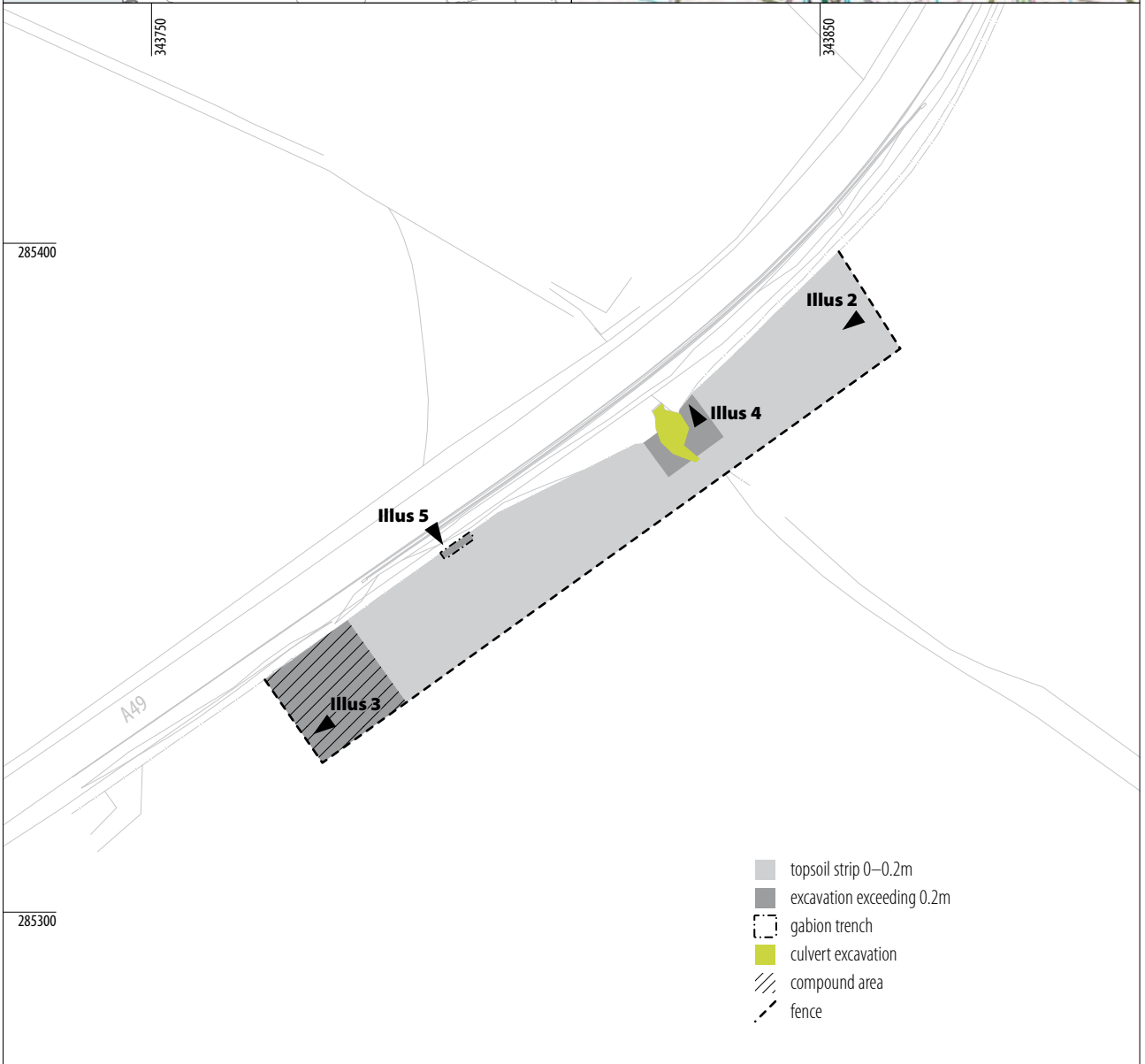
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land adjacent to  
the A49  
Wistanstow  
Shropshire



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## Illus 1

Site location



# LAND ADJACENT TO THE A49, WISTANSTOW, SHROPSHIRE

## *Archaeological Watching Brief*

*Headland Archaeology undertook monitoring works during the consolidation of a road embankment on the A49 east of Wistanstow. To enable the works, topsoil was stripped in an area adjacent to a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery. No archaeological features, finds or deposits were identified during the works.*

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Highways Agency submitted a proposal via its agent Amey to undertake repair works and drainage improvement to an embankment on the A49 near Wistanstow, Shropshire (**Illus 1**). The archaeological advisor to the planning authority (Mr Mick Krupa) determined that the location had the potential to contain archaeological remains that could be adversely affected by the proposed works. Mr Krupa requested the implementation of an archaeological watching brief so that any affected remains uncovered in the course of the work could be suitably recorded. The areas where archaeological monitoring was required were identified during a site meeting between representatives of Amey and the archaeological advisor. Amey contracted Headland Archaeology to undertake the required works. A Written Scheme of Investigation outlining the proposed methodology was submitted by Headland Archaeology (Kimber 2014) and agreed by the archaeological advisor.

Monitoring works were undertaken between the 5th and 18th March 2014.

### **2 SITE DESCRIPTION**

To enable the repair works to the embankment an adjacent area of arable land was used to provide access. An area measuring approximately 6900m<sup>2</sup> on the south-eastern side of the A49 was fenced off for the construction of a site compound and access track (NGR SO 43833 85377). This area was subject to archaeological monitoring (**Illus 2**).

The embankment was located to carry the A49 across a small valley. A small stream located at the base of the valley flowed through a culvert beneath the embankment.

The underlying geological deposits consisted of alluvium in the base of the valley, with Devensian-Diamicton till and Bromfield sand and gravel on the valley sides. The underlying bedrock consisted of Coalbrookdale mudstone (BGS 2014).

### **3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Analysis of aerial photographs identified the presence of a dispersed Bronze Age round barrow cemetery adjacent to the site. Subsequent field investigation of one of the barrows (Mon. No. 108946) in 1979 found no surface trace of a barrow in the identified location.

A small quarry pit (Mon. No. 1396050) believed to date to the medieval or post-medieval period has truncated the eastern half of one of the round barrows (Mon. No. 1396048).

The 1884 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows a quarry pit located to the north of the A49 and apparently truncated by it. The pit appears to be the same feature as the one identified to the south of the road (Mon. No. 1396050), and suggests that the quarrying activity predates the road.

The stream is also marked on the 1884 map. The area either side of the watercourse is marked as marsh.



2

## Illus 2

General view of site after topsoil strip, looking SW

## Illus 3

NE facing section through deposits in compound area

## 4 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project were:

- to ensure the excavation and recording of any archaeological remains that would be disturbed by the road improvement works;
- to produce and deposit a satisfactory archive and disseminate the results of the work via grey-literature reporting and publication as appropriate.



1001

150mm

1002

320mm

1003

230mm

## 5 METHOD

### 5.1 Ground monitoring

The monitored works comprised:

- topsoil strip of part of the temporary haul road either side of the existing culvert,
- works in relation to culvert construction,
- initial excavations relating to gabion construction.

All monitoring was undertaken by an archaeologist of IfA level experience. Excavation works were undertaken by the principal contractor using a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. The excavated areas were closely examined for any features and the spoil was re-examined in order to collect any artefacts. Sufficient time was afforded to the archaeologist to undertake recording of the exposed deposits.

### 5.2 Recording

All recording followed IfA Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (IfA 2008). A plan was made of areas of the site that were subject to the monitoring of ground works.

Excavated areas were photographed using 35mm black and white film and 35mm colour slide film. Digital photographs were taken for reference and reporting purposes but will not form part of the site archive.

**Illus 4**

*SE facing section through deposits in valley base*



**Illus 5**

*NW facing section through deposits in gabion trench*



## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Topsoil strip

The upper levels of topsoil were removed across the site. Across the majority of the site the depth of topsoil excavated did not exceed 0.2m, and was more commonly between 0.05m and 0.1m. The stripped surface was examined, but no deposits or finds of archaeological interest were identified. Across most of the area the soil strip had not removed the entirety of the topsoil and subsoil deposits were not visible.

In order to create a level surface for the site compound area in the south-west of the site, deeper excavations were undertaken to remove the south-west to north-east fall of the land. At the south-west boundary of the site deposits were removed to a depth of 0.7m. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were identified. The exposed north-east facing section (**Illus 3**) revealed a thin layer of topsoil [1001] overlying a light brown sandy clay subsoil with frequent rounded and sub-rounded stone inclusions [1002]. At a depth of 0.47m below ground level, a loosely compacted deposit of mid brown sand with frequent small stone inclusions [1003] was recorded.

### 6.2 Excavations relating to culvert construction

In order to consolidate the embankment it was necessary to repair the existing culvert pipe passing beneath the embanked road. To facilitate this repair, excavations were undertaken adjacent to the outflow of the culvert pipe in the base of the valley (**Illus 4**). The flow of water was diverted during this process.

Waterlogged alluvial clay deposits [3002] were excavated to a depth of 1m below ground level over an area measuring 35m x 14m. Excavation continued to a total depth of 1.5m below ground level. Fragmented mudstone deposits (natural geology) [3003] were encountered beneath the clays and continued down to excavation depth. No archaeological finds or features were identified.

### 6.3 Excavations relating to gabion construction

A continuous stepped foundation trench was excavated adjacent to the existing embankment for the installation of gabions.

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the excavation of the first 10m section of trench.

The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m. Topsoil [2000] and subsoil [2001/2002] deposits were recorded to a depth of 0.75m below ground level. Geological deposits of grey sand [2003] and orange, grey and black sand with degraded bedrock inclusions [2004] were present below this depth (**Illus 5**). No archaeological finds or features were identified.

## 7 DISCUSSION

Archaeological monitoring undertaken during the consolidation works did not identify any deposits or features of archaeological importance. The presence of a dispersed Bronze Age round barrow cemetery in the vicinity of the site suggested a potential for encountering archaeological remains. However, the fact that the barrows are no longer visible as topographical features

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suggests that agricultural practices may have removed much of the archaeological resource.

The archaeological monitoring recorded the presence of geological deposits as predicted by the British Geological Survey.

## **8 REFERENCES**

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### **8.1 Online sources**

British Geological Survey (BGS) Map Viewer [online], <<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>>, accessed 15th April 2014.

PastScape Heritage Gateway [online], <<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results.aspx>>, accessed 15th April 2014.

### **8.2 Bibliographic sources**

Kimber, M 2014 *A49 Wistanstow Highway Improvement Works: Written Scheme of Investigation for Watching Brief*, Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Site registers

#### Appendix 1.1 Context register

| Observation   | Context | Description  | Deposit depth (BGL) |
|---------------|---------|--|---------------------|
| Site Compound | 1001    | Mid brown sandy clay topsoil.  | 0–0.15m             |
|               | 1002    | Light brown sandy clay subsoil with frequent rounded and sub-rounded stone inclusions. | 0.15–0.47m          |
|               | 1003    | Mid brown sand with frequent small stone inclusions. Loosely compacted. Geological.    | 0.47–0.7m +         |

| Observation   | Context | Description  | Deposit depth (BGL) |
|---------------|---------|--|---------------------|
| Gabion Trench | 2000    | Mid-dark brown sandy clay topsoil.   | 0–0.15m             |
|               | 2001    | Mid brown sandy clay with orange hue subsoil with frequent rounded and sub-rounded stone inclusions. | 0.15–0.55m          |
|               | 2002    | Orange sandy clay. Subsoil.  | 0.55–0.75m          |
|               | 2003    | Grey sand with inclusions of degraded bedrock.   | 0.75–0.95m          |
|               | 2004    | Orange, grey and black with inclusions of degraded bedrock.  | 0.95–1.1m+          |

| Observation  | Context | Description  | Deposit depth (BGL) |
|--------------|---------|--|---------------------|
| Culvert Area | 3001    | Embankment deposits.   | 0–0.15m             |
|              | 3002    | Blue/grey clay alluvium. Decaying organic material within deposit. | 0.15–1m             |
|              | 3003    | Fragmented mudstone deposit. Geological.                           | 1–1.5m              |







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