

CHBS18



CASTLE HILL WALK, BRIDGNORTH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON CABLE INSTALLATION

commissioned by Western Power Distribution

April 2018

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PROJECT INFO:

HA Project Code **CHBS18** / HAS No. **1286** / NGR **SO 71723 92761** / Parish **Bridgnorth** / Local Authority **Shropshire** / OASIS Ref. **headland3-310666** / Archive Repository **Shropshire County Council Museum Service**

PROJECT TEAM:

Project Manager **Luke Craddock-Bennett** / Author **Harriet Bryant-Buck** / Fieldwork **Harriet Bryant-Buck** / Graphics **Rafael Maya-Torcelly**

Approved by **Luke Craddock-Bennett**



Headland Archaeology Midlands & West
Unit 1 | Clearview Court | Twyford Rd | Hereford HR2 6JR
t 01432 364 901
e midlandsandwest@headlandarchaeology.com
w www.headlandarchaeology.com



PROJECT SUMMARY

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook archaeological monitoring during the installation of an electricity supply cable along Castle Hill Walk, Bridgnorth, Shropshire. Part of the cable was installed within the scheduled monument of Bridgnorth Castle, via impact moling, with small trenches excavated along the Castle Hill walkway for access. Seven trenches were excavated along the tarmac pathway, with a further trench at the base of the hill, to disconnect an existing electricity supply. No archaeological deposits, finds or features were recorded during the works.

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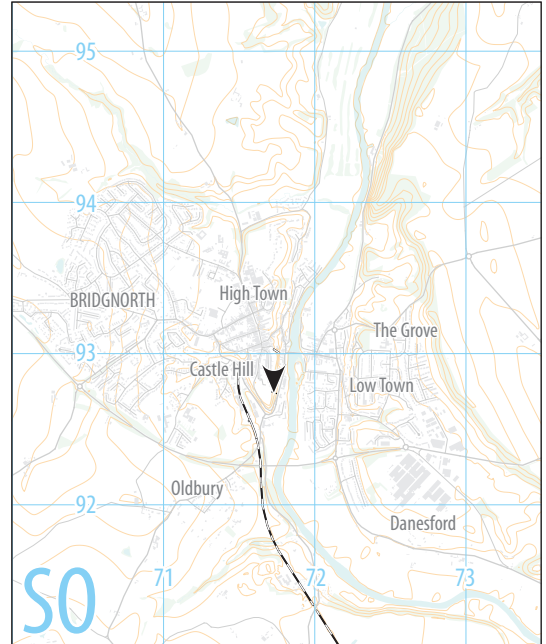
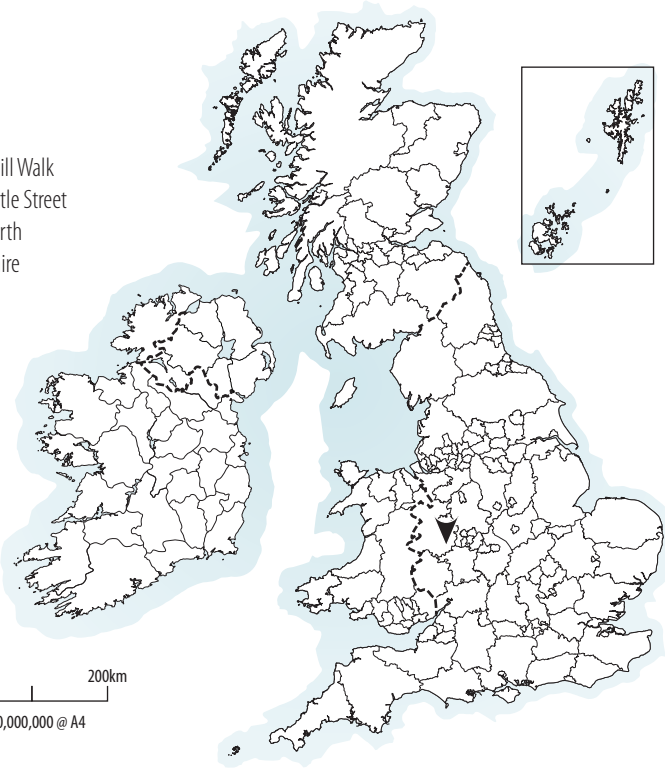
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Castle Hill Walk
 East Castle Street
 Bridgnorth
 Shropshire

0 200km
 1:10,000,000 @ A4



0 20m
 1:1,000 @ A4

□ trench location
 - - - scheduled monument area



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 w www.headlandarchaeology.com

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON CABLE INSTALLATION

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by Western Power Distribution to undertake a watching brief during the installation of an electricity supply for a house adjoining Castle Hill Walk. The associated trenches were located on a tarmac pathway on the southeast of the promontory surrounding Bridgnorth castle, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (NGR SO 71723 92761) (Illus 1). The archaeological monitoring took place between 26th and 28th February 2018.

Work took place within the scheduled area of Bridgnorth Castle (SM SA 22, HA 1004783), and Scheduled Monument Consent was applied for and granted (SMC Ref: S00183620). All archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Headland Archaeology (Bennett 2018) and agreed with Historic England and the Historic Environment Team at Shropshire Council.

1.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The cable route was located to the southeast of Bridgnorth Castle, with the southernmost trenches of the cable route located within the associated Scheduled Area (SM SA 22, HA 1004783), along a public tarmac pathway. The land around the trenches lies at approximately 57m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

The historic town of Bridgnorth lies in Shropshire, with the River Severn dividing the town into High Town and Low Town, with High Town on the right bank, and Low Town on the left. The Castle Hill walkway is on the southeast side of the promontory that holds the

ruins of Bridgnorth Castle; several houses are positioned along the path, with several well-used stairways and paths adjoining it.

The underlying geology covered by the service trenches consists of Bridgnorth Sandstone, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 272 to 299 million years ago in the Permian period, in an environment dominated by windblown deposits. No superficial deposits have been recorded across the site (NERC 2018).

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Bridgnorth Castle was probably built by Robert of Belleme about 1101–2 on the abandonment of Quatford and was situated, according to Florence of Worcester, on the site of a Saxon burh built by Ethelfleda in 912 AD. Belleme surrendered the castle to Henry I in 1102. It then fell into the hands of Hugh de Mortimer during Stephen's reign but was surrendered to Henry II in 1155.

In 1211–2 a barbican was added to protect the entrance, which apparently had no gatehouse. There is also documentary evidence for a tower and royal chapel. By Henry VIII's reign, the castle was in ruins, the keep surviving until 1646 when it was slighted by the Parliamentarians. The original church of St Mary Magdalene stood within the castle. The shattered walls of the tower keep built between 1105 and 1113, and a fragment of the curtain wall extending from the south wall remain.

A portion of the wall around the summit of Castle Hill is said to be extant in the yard of the White Lion in West Castle Street while remains of the wall of the Ward form the eastern boundary of gardens to modern properties on the east side of East Castle Street.



ILLUS 2 Trench 6, looking south-east **ILLUS 3** Trench 8, looking south-west

2 METHOD

The main contractor (Western Power Distribution) mechanically excavated deposits as necessary for the installation of the electricity supply. Machine excavation was carried out by a tracked 5t 360° excavator and then by hand to allow entry for the impact moling equipment. All excavation was constantly and directly monitored by a suitably experienced archaeologist. Cables and associated plastic tubing was installed via impact mole, between the excavated trenches.

The trenches and spoil were visually scanned for archaeological material; hand-collected finds, other than those that were evidently modern, were retained for examination. All recording followed ClfA Standards and Guidance. All deposits identified during the excavation were given a unique number, and recorded on pro forma record sheets, recording the level at which deposits were encountered below ground level (BGL). Where appropriate, digital and monochrome film photographs were taken of the trench and the general site location.

All site work was undertaken with respect to Health and Safety provision. Hard hats, safety gloves, high-visibility vests and safety boots were worn by all staff at all times. Work took place in cold, snowy conditions between 26th and 28th February 2018.

3 RESULTS

A full description of the sequence of deposits is provided in Appendix 1. The locations of the excavated trenches are recorded in Illus 1.

3.1 THE SERVICE TRENCHES

Seven rectangular trenches were excavated along the pathway, starting roughly 65m to the north of the junction between East Castle Street and the eastern side of Castle Walk, and continuing

south. Trenches 1-6 were rectangular trenches aligned northeast-southwest, and ranged from 1.10m–1.20m long, between 0.65–1.10m wide and were approximately 0.50m deep (Illus 2). Trenches 4-6 were within the scheduled area. Trench 7, the northernmost trench, was excavated to connect the new cable with the existing mains electricity supply. This trench was square in plan, with 1.20m sides and a depth of 0.60m.

The profile was regular throughout the trenches, and stratigraphy uniformly consisted of a thin tarmac path layer (c.0.10m thick), above a redeposited red-brown silty sand with frequent red-brick rubble inclusions (c. 0.50m+ thick). Trenches 3 and 5 each contained a single small fragment of clay tobacco pipe, which was recorded and discarded.

The trenches were excavated where it was apparent recent moling had already been conducted along the path, and trenches 1-6 all contained a modern yellow gas pipe, which was carefully excavated around by hand. Trenches 1, 5 and 6 also contained an old electricity supply for the lampposts along the walkway, whilst Trenches 5 and 6 contained an additional post-medieval ceramic land drain. All cables and drains were aligned northeast-southwest across the trenches.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified.

3.2 TRENCH 8

A single trench (1.10mL x 0.60mW x 0.60mD) was excavated near the base of Castle Hill, to the east of castle walk, and near to the western edge of Underhill Street, outside of the scheduled area (Illus 3). This trench was excavated in front of a utility pole, to disconnect the old electricity cables ready for the new electricity supply. The trench contained organic material and topsoil to its full depth, and the area was heavily overgrown with vegetation, with frequent rooting apparent. No deposits of archaeological significance were identified, though one small fragment of animal vertebrae (likely Bovine) was recovered and discarded.

4 CONCLUSION

Archaeological monitoring during the installation of a cable route on Castle Hill, Bridgnorth, revealed a relatively consistent soil profile of tarmac overlying re-deposited red-brown silty-sand with brick rubble inclusions. Two fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recorded and discarded. An eighth trench, excavated towards the base of the hill, adjacent to Underhill Street, revealed consistent topsoil to a depth of 0.60m. A single animal vertebra showing signs of butchery was recorded and discarded in this trench. No archaeological deposits were identified in any of the excavated trenches. All excavated trenches were relatively shallow, with deposits recorded in trenches 1–7 consisting largely of made-ground relating to the overlying tarmac path. Due to the limited scale of observations made during the works, it is not possible to entirely rule out the prospect of further archaeological material in the general vicinity.

The archaeological monitoring has succeeded in providing a record of the sequence of deposits disturbed by the excavation of the service trench. This record will aid the development of future strategies for the assessment of archaeological potential during nearby development.

5 REFERENCES

- Bennett I 2018 *Castle Hill Walk, Bridgnorth, Electricity Cable Installation – Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief* [unpublished client document] Headland Archaeology
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 2014a *Code of Conduct* (Reading) <http://http.www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CodesofConduct.pdf> accessed 14 September 2017
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 2014b *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (Reading) http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CifAS&GWatchingbrief_2.pdf accessed 14 September 2017
- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) 2017 *British Geological Survey* <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/> accessed 4 October 2018

6 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT REGISTER

DBGL = Depth below ground level

TR1		Dim L x W x D (m)
		1.20 0.90 c.0.50
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
101	Tarmac of path surface	0–0.10
102	Red-Brown redeposited natural, with frequent brick and rubble inclusions.	0.10–0.50
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. Modern Gas main running N-S in trench, alongside old electricity supply to lamp posts.		

TR2		Dim L x W x D (m)
		1.20 0.90 c.0.50
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
201	Tarmac of path surface	0–0.10
202	Red-Brown redeposited natural, with frequent brick and rubble inclusions.	0.10–0.50
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. Modern Gas main running N-S in trench.		

TR3		Dim L x W x D (m)
		1.20 0.60 c.0.50
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
301	Tarmac of path surface	0–0.10
302	Red-Brown redeposited natural, with frequent brick and rubble inclusions.	0.10–0.50
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. Small fragment of clay pipe stem recorded and discarded. Modern Gas main running N-S in trench.		

TR4		Dim L x W x D (m)
		1.20 0.70 c.0.50
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
401	Tarmac of path surface	0–0.10
402	Red-Brown redeposited natural, with frequent brick and rubble inclusions.	0.10–0.50
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. Modern Gas main running N-S in trench.		

TR5		Dim L x W x D (m)
		51.5 0.35 c.0.90
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
501	Tarmac of path surface	0–0.10
502	Red-Brown redeposited natural, with frequent brick and rubble inclusions.	0.10–0.50
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. Small clay pipe bowl fragment recorded and discarded. Modern Gas main running N-S in trench.		

TR6		Dim L x W x D (m)
		1.20 1.10 c.0.50
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
601	Tarmac of path surface	0–0.10
602	Red-Brown redeposited natural, with frequent brick and rubble inclusions.	0.10–0.50
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. Modern Gas main running N-S in trench, alongside old ceramic drain and old electricity supply to lamp posts. A hand-dug channel extending under the tarmac towards the eastern wall of the walkway was excavated in this trench to connect the new electricity supply to the adjoining property.		

TR8		Dim L x W x D (m)
		1.10 0.60 c.0.60
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
801	Topsoil: Deep brown loam topsoil, with frequent root-ing and vegetation	0–0.60
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. One fragment of animal (likely bovine) vertebra with signs of butchery recorded and discarded. It should be noted that the trench was very close to a butcher’s shop on Underhill Street.		

TR7		Dim L x W x D (m)
		1.30 1.30 c.0.60
Context	Description	DBGL (m)
701	Tarmac	0–0.10
702	Subsoil: mid Brown sandy silt with occasional sub-angular rocks (c. 8-15cm)	0.10–0.50
Summary: No archaeological deposits identified. Northernmost trench excavated along monitored route to connect new cable to mains electricity.		



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Headland Archaeology South & East
Building 68C | Wrest Park | Silsoe | Bedfordshire MK45 4HS
t 01525 861 578
e southandeast@headlandarchaeology.com

Headland Archaeology Midlands & West
Unit 1 | Clearview Court | Ivyford Rd | Hereford HR2 6JR
t 01432 364 901
e midlandsandwest@headlandarchaeology.com

Headland Archaeology North
Unit 16 | Hillside | Beeston Rd | Leeds LS11 8ND
t 0113 387 6430
e north@headlandarchaeology.com

Headland Archaeology Scotland
13 Jane Street | Edinburgh EH6 5HE
t 0131 467 7705
e scotland@headlandarchaeology.com

www.headlandarchaeology.com