



Oake to Staplegrove Pipeline, Taunton, Somerset

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Prepared for

Wales & West Utilities Ltd

Malago House
Bedminster Road
Bedminster
Bristol
BS99 5RS

By

Wessex Archaeology

Portway House
Old Sarum Park
SALISBURY
SP4 6EB

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Wales & West Utilities Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the stripping and cutting of the Oake to Staplegrove gas pipeline. The pipeline ran from the eastern edge of the village of Heathfield, National Grid Reference (NGR) 317000, 126590, running eastwards to Langford Bridge NGR 320679, 126327 in the east. The line of the eastern section of the pipeline skirted the outer edge of a Scheduled Monument, the Iron Age Hillfort, known as Norton Camp.

The archaeological fieldwork consisted of an archaeological walkover along the route of the western section, which was completed before the commencement of archaeological work. A constant watching brief was maintained during the stripping of the easement and trenching for the remainder of the Route.

The watching brief identified relatively few archaeological features. One undated gully was identified crossing the route of the pipeline, to the northwest of Norton Camp. Further to the east, terracing and two metalled tracks and one paved surface were identified within, and immediately adjacent, to the line of the pipeline. These features appear to be associated with a former Second World War Prisoner of War camp.

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Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was commissioned by Wales & West Utilities Ltd. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Christopher Soper, Contracts Operations Manager - Construction and Roy Reece, Site Manager, for their assistance during the course of the fieldwork. The fieldwork was monitored by Steven Membury, Development Control Archaeologist for Somerset County Council. His advice and comments provided during the course of the fieldwork is gratefully acknowledged.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andy Manning. The fieldwork and reporting was undertaken by Stephen George.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and Site Background

- 1.1.1 Wales & West Utilities Ltd. commissioned Wessex Archaeology to undertake an archaeological watching brief along the proposed route of a pipeline from Oake to Staplegrove in Somerset, hereafter referred to as 'the Route' (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The Route had been previously assessed in an Archaeological Appraisal (Wessex Archaeology 2005a), which identified some areas of archaeological potential within the eastern half of the Route. The Route was revised to avoid outlying elements of Norton Camp (a Scheduled Monument) before the commencement of work.
- 1.1.3 The proposed watching brief methodology was laid out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2005b), which was approved by Somerset County Council before the commencement of the fieldwork.
- 1.1.4 Before the commencement of the watching brief, the western half of the Route was stripped and the pipeline completed. In discussion with Somerset County Council, it was agreed to carry out a walkover across the completed section.
- 1.1.5 The watching brief and walkover was undertaken in October and early November 2005. This report details the results of the walkover and watching brief.

1.2 Location, Geology, Topography and Land-use

- 1.2.1 The pipeline was located to the west of the outskirts of Taunton, Somerset. The Route commenced just outside the eastern edge of the village of Heathfield, NGR 317000, 126590 and ran to Langford Bridge NGR 320679 126327, a distance of just over 4km.
- 1.2.2 The principal geology of the Route comprises the Mercia Mudstone Group, although the route crosses a band of estuarine alluvium, either side of the present railway line (British Geological Survey, 1984). In places the geology is overlain by colluvium, a deposit derived from the erosion of soils in post-glacial times, and has been demonstrated to have the potential to bury, seal and contain archaeological sites.
- 1.2.3 The majority of the Route lay within low-lying farmland at a height of between 38m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the western end of the route,

and approximately 34m above OD at the eastern end. Much of the route has been subject to regular ploughing in recent years.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Summary of recorded archaeology

2.1.1 A rapid Archaeological Appraisal was undertaken in early 2005 and identified a number of areas of archaeological potential within 1km of the line of the pipeline Route. The majority of the 35 identified sites were located in the eastern half of the Route (Wessex Archaeology 2005). These sites ranged in date from the prehistoric period to the Second World War.

2.1.2 The most significant of these sites likely to be either impacted by, or in close proximity to, the route, included (**Figure 2**);

- Norton Camp – Iron Age Hillfort (Scheduled Monument) (**WA 1**)
- A scatter of Romano-British pottery to the north-west of Norton Camp (**WA 8**).
- Undated linear cropmarks (**WA 33**)
- Widespread area of a Second World War Prisoner of War Camp (**WA 39**).
- In the same area as the POW Camp, an undated cropmarked area indicating a rectangular enclosure (**WA 36**).

2.1.3 Evidence for features associated with the Camp (**WA 39**) were uncovered during the course of the watching brief (*see results section*).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and Objectives

3.1.1 The archaeological fieldwork provided an opportunity to;

- Identify and preserve by record archaeological remains, where these would be directly impacted by groundworks associated with the Route.
- Identify potential areas of significant archaeological potential, where further archaeological mitigation may be appropriate.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Two main techniques were used, comprising;

- Archaeological Walkover
- Archaeological Watching Brief

Archaeological Walkover

- 3.2.2 A walkover was carried out along the completed western section of the Route. The purpose of the walkover was to identify evidence of artefact spreads or extant features. The line of the Route was also checked to verify that the revised line of pipeline easement avoided the boundaries of the Norton Camp Scheduled Monument.

Archaeological Watching Brief

- 3.2.3 Within the 15m wide easement, a 360° tracked excavator with a toothless bucket was used to strip the topsoil and other overburden under archaeological observation. Any exposed features were planned, excavated and recorded to determine their character.
- 3.2.4 Within areas of colluvial deposits, a programme of test-pitting was originally intended to ensure that any archaeological significant buried deposits were identified. During the course of the watching brief, it was noted that these colluvial deposits could not be adequately identified in plan. Consequently, the cutting of the pipe trench was monitored, with the drawing of a regular series of recorded sections (Recorded Sections 1 -11- **Appendix 1**) (**Figure 2**).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Recorded Sections 1 - 2 (**Figure 2**) cover the area of undated linear cropmarks (**WA 33**), Sections 3 – 4 lay within the area of the scatter of Romano-British pottery to the north-west of Norton Camp (**WA 8**). Further to the east, Sections 5 – 11 lay to the north of the Scheduled Monument or within the widespread area of a Second World War Prisoner of War Camp (**WA 39**) and in close proximity of an undated rectangular enclosure (**WA 36**).

Recorded Sections 1 to 2

- 4.1.2 No archaeological features were observed within this area known to contain cropmarks. The geology in this area consisted of alluvial silts and clays, overlain by natural gravels between 0.30 to 1.11m in depth.

Recorded Sections 3 to 4

- 4.1.3 The geology in this and subsequent areas consists of colluvial deposits 0.24m to 0.55m deep, overlying reddish brown clay, which comprises the Mercia Mudstone.
- 4.1.4 No evidence was found for the Romano-British pottery scatter (**WA 8**) previously identified. One undated gully **404**, 0.62m wide, 0.09m deep, was identified, running northwest to southeast (**Figure 2**). The gully was sealed by topsoil and cut into the top of the colluvium.

Recorded Sections 5 to 8

- 4.1.5 No significant archaeological features were observed within this area. A possible linear feature in Recorded Section 6 (**604**) running northeast to southwest was excavated, but on further investigation, was shown to be a natural layer of compact mudstone, underlying the colluvium.

Recorded Sections 9 to 11

- 4.1.6 This section of the watching brief crossed the site of a Second World War camp. The strip revealed two tarmac metalled surfaces and an area paved with concrete blocks. These lay immediately beneath a thin turf line over a thin band of rubble formed made ground. One of the tarmac paths could be seen continuing within a fenced compound to the south of the route and in the neighbouring field to the north.
- 4.1.7 Two modern terraces running northwest were visible during the initial walkover of the route. These terraces were approximately 1 metre in height and ran over 100 metres northwards, parallel to the metalled surfaces, into the neighbouring field.
- 4.1.8 The paved surface (**904**) consisted of a large number of concrete blocks 0.9m long by 0.1m wide, laid in a 'herringbone' pattern, forming a track that ran northeast into the neighbouring field. Although outside the easement, a concrete path approximately 1 metre wide could be seen running northeast alongside the existing fence boundary of the field.
- 4.1.9 Two further tarmac tracks (**1003**) and (**1104**) both ran parallel to the terraces and are continuation of present-day road surfaces to the south of the easement.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Watching Brief

- 5.1.1 The watching brief revealed relatively few archaeological sites and features. The greatest concentration was located at the eastern end of the route and consisted of landscaping and road surfaces associated with the Second World War camp. To judge by their alignment, the features associated with the military occupation of the site were laid out in a grid aligned approximately northwest to southeast.
- 6.1.2 The only other feature, a gully **404**, contained no datable evidence and is likely to comprise a former field boundary.
- 6.1.3 No evidence could be found for the majority of the cropmarks identified by the Archaeological Appraisal within the stripped easement. This suggests that these cropmarks within these areas may reflect material within the ploughsoil rather than subsurface features, or that they may have been removed by recent ploughing activity.

5.2 Walkover Survey

- 5.2.1 The archaeological walkover of the completed western half of the route did not identify any artefact scatters or extant features and after discussion with Somerset County Council, no further archaeological mitigation was required.

6 REFERENCES

British Geological Survey, 1984, *Taunton*, 1:50,000 Sheet 295 (solid and drift)

Wessex Archaeology, 2005a, *Oake to Staplegrove Pipeline, Taunton, Somerset: Rapid Archaeological Risk Appraisal*, Unpublished Client Report 58540.02, March 2005.

Wessex Archaeology, 2005b, *Oake to Staplegrove Pipeline, Taunton, Somerset: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Mitigation*, Unpublished Client Report 61310.01

APPENDIX 1: RECORDED SECTIONS

Recorded Section 1 (Features/deposits mentioned in the text are **in bold**)

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth m</i>
101	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Reddish brown clayey silt with frequent well rounded stones, well sorted	0 – 0.32m
102	GRAVELS. Reddish brown clayey silt with abundant gravels within the matrix well sorted	0.32 – 1.06
103	CLAY. Dark reddish brown clay with no inclusions	1.06 – 1.86
104	SILTS. Grey to light reddish brown no inclusions. Overlies (102) Rises with a moderate slope from 8m west of Recorded Section 1	0.14m

Recorded Section 2

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
201	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Reddish brown clayey silt with frequent well rounded stones, well sorted	0 – 0.30m
202	GRAVELS. Red-brown clayey silt with abundant gravels, well sorted	0.30 – 1.11m
203	CLAY. Dark reddish brown clay with no inclusions	1.11 – 1.80m

Recorded Section 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth m</i>
301	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Reddish brown clayey silt, occasional well rounded stones	0 – 0.32m
302	COLLUVIUM. Reddish brown clayey silt, occasional/rare stones well sorted	0.32 – 0.55m
303	CLAYS. Reddish brown with rare patches of light grey, silty clay, no inclusions	0.55 – 1.8m

Recorded Section 4

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
401	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Reddish brown clayey silt, occasional well rounded stones	0 – 0.24m
402	COLLUVIUM. Reddish brown clayey silt, occasional/rare stones well sorted	0.24 – 0.73m
403	NATURAL. Reddish brown clayey silt	0.73 – 1.50m
404	CUT OF GULLY. Linear, 0.62m wide x 0.09m deep. Cuts (502), filled with (505)	0.24 – 0.33m
405	FILL OF GULLY. Dark reddish brown clayey silt, occasional small stones. No recovered finds.	0.24 – 0.33m

Recorded Section 5

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
501	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Reddish brown clayey silt, occasional well rounded stones	0 – 0.24m
502	COLLUVIUM. Light reddish brown clayey silt, frequent well rounded stones well sorted. No buried soils or features	0.24 – 0.74m
503	NATURAL. Reddish brown silty clay	0.73 – 1.50m

Recorded Section 6

Context	Description	Depth
601	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Dark reddish brown silty clay, occasional rounded stones well sorted.	0 – 0.22m
602	COLLUVIUM. Reddish brown clayey silt, rare stones poorly sorted. No buried soils or features.	0.22 – 0.94m
603	Reddish brown clay with patches of light grey clay, no inclusions	0.94 – 1.80m
604	Reddish brown silty clay, occasional inclusions of stones,	0.22 – 0.50m
605	Light grey clay, frequent stones, well sorted and densely packed.	0.28 – 0.41m

Recorded Section 7

Context	Description	Depth
701	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Reddish brown silty clay, occasional sub-angular stones, well sorted.	0 – 0.22m
702	COLLUVIUM. Reddish brown clayey silt, rare stones. No buried soils or features	0.22 – 0.87m
703	Reddish brown clay, with patches of light grey clays	0.87 – 1.50m

Recorded Section 8

Context	Description	Depth
801	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Dark reddish brown clayey silt, occasional well rounded stones, well sorted	0 – 0.21m
802	COLLUVIUM. Reddish brown clayey silt, frequent stones moderately well sorted. No buried soils or features	0.21 – 0.65m
803	Dark reddish brown clay, frequent patches of light grey clay	0.65 – 1.50m

Recorded Section 9

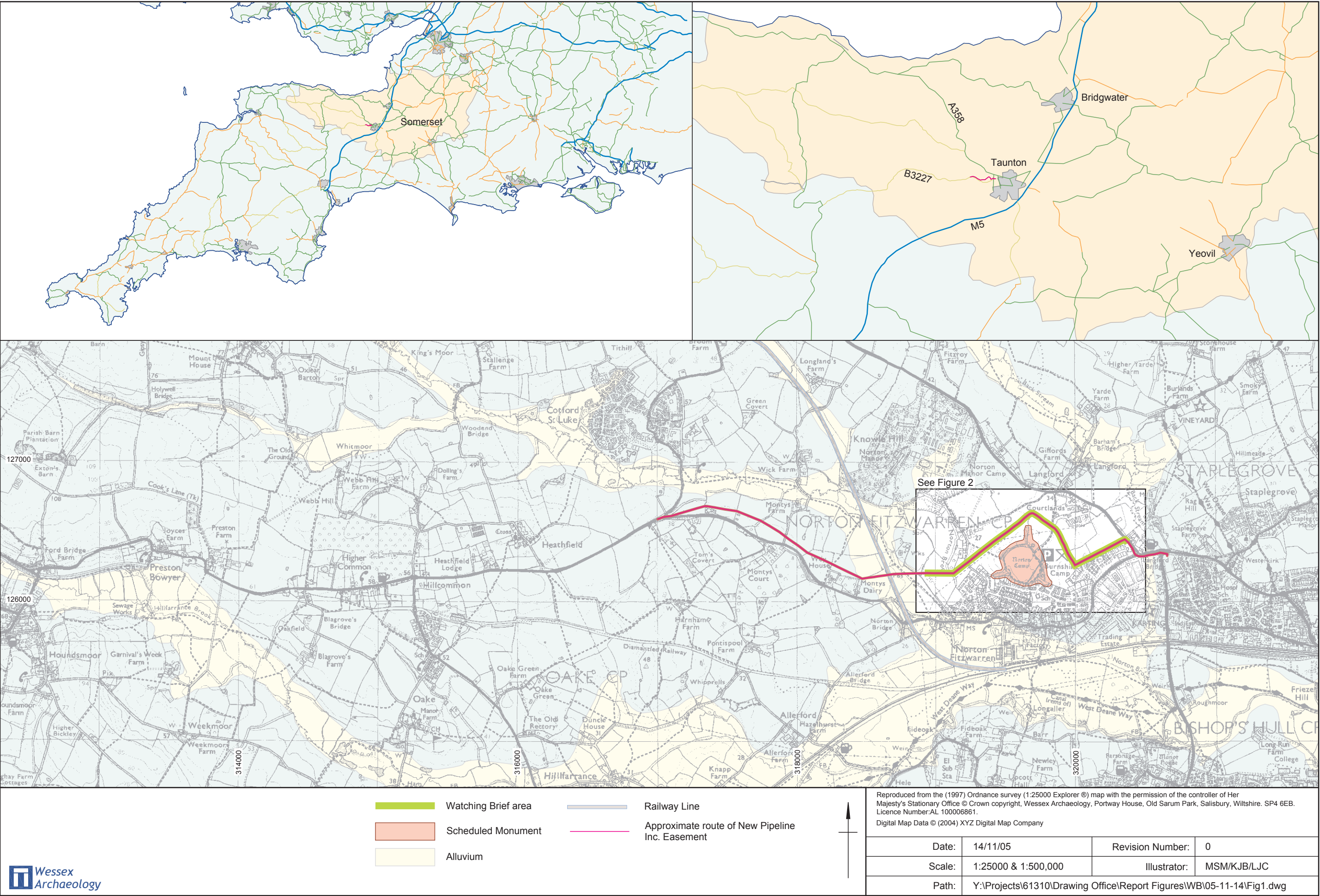
Context	Description	Depth
901	TOPSOIL. Current ploughsoil, Reddish brown clayey silt, occasional rounded stones, well sorted.	0 – 0.22m
902	COLLUVIUM. Light reddish brown silty clay, occasional rounded stones well sorted. No buried soils or features	0.22 – 0.34m
903	Reddish brown clay, differs from (902) only in texture – more compact.	0.34 – 1.80m
904	PAVED SURFACE. Concrete blocks 0.9 x 0.1m, laid in a 'herringbone pattern, runs northeast into neighbouring field	0.0 – 0.10m

Recorded Section 10

Context	Description	Depth
1001	MADE GROUND. Reddish brown with grey, rubble and hardcore deliberate fill. Contains fragments of tarmac	0 – 0.72m
1002	NATURAL. Reddish brown silty clay, occasional sub angular stones poorly sorted.	0.72 – 1.50m
1003	TARMAC SURFACE. 2.48m wide, partially grown over. Runs northwest into neighbouring field.	0 – 0.8

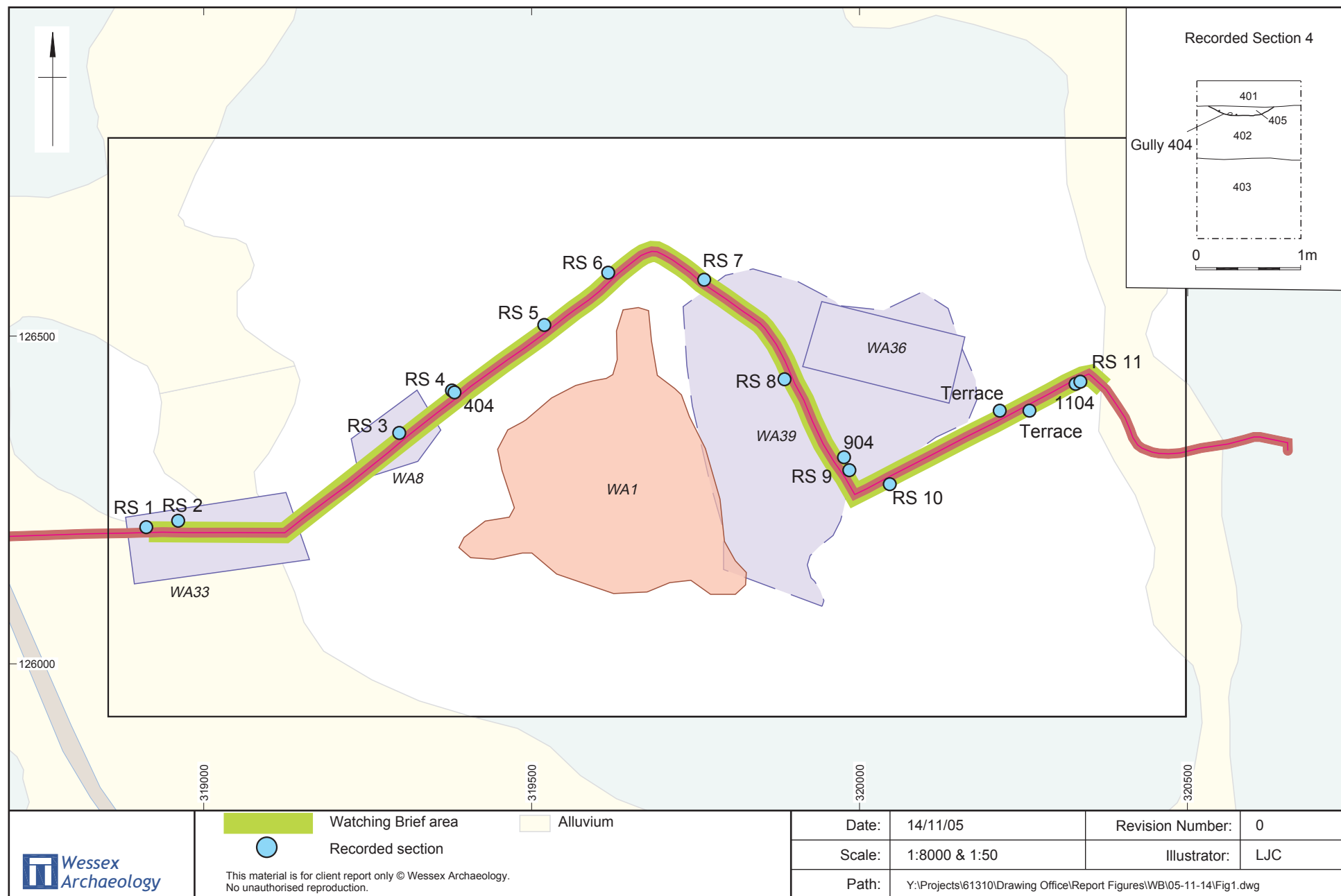
Recorded Section 11

Context	Description	Depth
1101	MADE GROUND. Dark grey silty loam, abundant hardcore and rubble, circa 50mm diameter, well sorted	0.08 – 0.21m
1102	NATURAL. Reddish brown silty clay, occasional sub-angular stones poorly sorted.	0.21 – 1.28m
1103	GRAVELS. Reddish brown silty clay, frequent sub angular and rounded stones, moderately well sorted.	1.28 – 1.40m
1104	TARMAC SURFACE. 2.5m wide, partially grown over. Runs northwest into neighbouring field.	0 – 0.08m



Site location

Figure 1



Location of recorded sections and typical Recorded Section; Recorded Section 4

Figure 2



WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

London Office: Unit 113, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7QY.

Tel: 020 7953 7494 Fax: 020 7953 7499 london-info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

