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Defence Training Estate: Salisbury Plain EIP – Delta Crossing to Vedette Post 11 (Lavington) Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Ref: 89830.01
April 2013



**Defence Training Estate: Salisbury Plain
EIP – Delta Crossing to Vedette Post 11 (Lavington)
Wiltshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

WYG Plc undertook an archaeological watching brief during the development of a new access track ('Delta East') between Delta Crossing and Vedette Post 11 to the east of West Lavington, Wiltshire, centred on NGR 401500 152500.

The groundwork comprised stripping of topsoil and subsoil along the 2.75km route of the new track. The County Archaeology Service at Wiltshire Council requested that an archaeological watching brief should be undertaken as part of the works due to the archaeological potential of the area.

Overall, very few archaeological remains were recorded. A small pit of possible prehistoric date and a shallow Romano-British ditch were the only features identified, and the finds were restricted to a few sherds of pottery, several pieces of worked flint and small quantity of animal bone, most from these two features.

The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken during February and March 2013.



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Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

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The fieldwork was undertaken by Martin Brown of WYG Plc and the post-excavation work by Wessex Archaeology. This report was written by Phil Andrews, based on information and records supplied by Martin Brown. The finds are described by Rachael Seager Smith, and the report illustrations prepared by Liz James. Sue Farr co-ordinated the post-excavation work and also edited the final report.



Defence Training Estate: Salisbury Plain EIP – Delta Crossing to Vedette Post 11 (Lavington) Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 WYG Plc was commissioned by Defence Infrastructure Organisation to undertake an archaeological watching brief in advance of the construction of a new access track ('Delta East') between Delta Crossing and Vedette Post 11 to the east of West Lavington, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 426250 149300 (**Figure 1**), hereafter referred to as 'the Site'.

1.1.2 Planning permission (E/09/1674/FUL) with conditions has been granted for the construction of a 2.75km-long track along the north-western edge of this part of the Defence Training Estate near West Lavington. The purpose of the track is to enhance the infrastructure of the training estate and to improve the connectivity of the training areas across Salisbury Plain.

1.1.3 Given the archaeological potential of the Site, partly based on an earlier geophysical survey undertaken for the Site (Wessex Archaeology 2011), the County Archaeological Service at Wiltshire Council requested an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during any groundwork associated with the development.

1.1.4 The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in February and March 2013.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

1.2.1 The Site is located within the Salisbury Plain Defence Training Estate (DTE), to the east of West Lavington. This section of the EIP (Eastern Infrastructure Project) access track runs predominantly through large arable fields, from Vedette Post 11 in the north (NGR 402400 153400), to Delta Crossing in the south (NGR 400900 151200) (**Figure 1**).

1.2.2 The British Geological Survey map for the area shows that the route of the access track lies on Cretaceous Middle Chalk (1975, Sheet 282). The surface topography of the Site comprises a ridgeline (the 'Ridge Way' on Ordnance Survey maps) rising from c. 125m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at Gore Cross Farm in the south-west to c. 195m aOD near Vedette 11 at the north-eastern extent of the route.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The Salisbury Plain Training Area is well known for its prehistoric archaeology including round and long barrows, field systems and enclosures and contains over 2,300 archaeological sites and monuments from all ages. The area has been in



military use for over 100 years and contains features associated with the development of warfare over this period.

- 2.1.2 A field evaluation was conducted by Wessex Archaeology at Delta Crossing, at the southern end of the Site, in 2002. Several trenches were targeted on a feature identified during an aerial photographic survey, and interpreted as a ploughed out barrow (SMR No. SU05SW644). Although the evaluation did not detect the ploughed out barrow, a ditch containing Iron Age pottery was identified (Wessex Archaeology 2002).
- 2.1.3 An archaeological desk-based assessment, walk-over survey and accompanying geophysical survey have also been conducted in the vicinity of the Site (Wessex Archaeology 2009a; 2009b). These studies were concentrated on the area surrounding Delta Crossing and the western part of the proposed track ('Delta West') from Delta Crossing to Vedette Post 3, to the south-west of the current Site.
- 2.1.4 The desk-based assessment, walk-over survey and geophysical survey determined that:
- There were no features with statutory or local heritage designations on either of the tracks (Delta West and Delta East);
 - The known archaeological record comprises archaeological sites, deposits and finds dating from the Bronze Age to the modern period;
 - The known archaeological record suggests a significant funerary landscape in the valley of Lavington Down;
 - The lack of other prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology may not be indicative of a lack of human activity during these periods but just as likely to be a product of the relative lack of archaeological investigation conducted within the vicinity;
 - The archaeological potential for other periods was considered to be low.
- 2.1.5 Areas around Delta Crossing were subsequently investigated as part of the Salisbury Plain Eastern Infrastructure Project (Wessex Archaeology 2012a). One Late Bronze Age pit and a Late Bronze Age ditch were identified, along with a large number of undated features, mostly comprising boundary ditches, but including two possible ring-ditches and a pit containing burnt or fire cracked flint, believed to be prehistoric funerary or ritual in function, rather than domestic or settlement related.
- 2.1.6 A strip, map and record excavation of a 900m-long area in advance of the construction of Delta Track West, south-west of Delta Crossing, beyond the southern end of the current Site, was undertaken in 2011 (Wessex Archaeology 2012b). This revealed evidence of Early Bronze Age activity overlain by Romano-British and post-Roman agricultural features and field systems that indicate occupation in the vicinity. In addition, an important Bronze Age funerary landscape, including a linear cremation cemetery, overlain by an undated field system, was recorded adjacent to Delta Crossing.
- 2.1.7 The geophysical survey of the Site carried out in 2011 demonstrated the presence of a small number of probable archaeological features, along with numerous



anomalies of possible archaeological interest (Wessex Archaeology 2011). Of particular note was a series of possible ditches with numerous pit-like anomalies nearby, perhaps indicating a focus of activity, in the central part of the proposed route.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The objective of the watching brief was to record the location, extent, date, nature, character and relationships of any surviving archaeological remains uncovered during the groundwork programme.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork methodology

- 4.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008).
- 4.1.2 The archaeological works consisted of a watching brief following removal of topsoil and subsoil down to the surface of the Middle Chalk natural geology along the 8m wide, 2.75km-long route of the new track (**Figure 1**).
- 4.1.3 All topsoil and subsoil stripping, using a 21 tonne 360° tracked excavator employing a 1.8m ditching bucket, was monitored by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 4.1.1 All archaeological deposits were hand-excavated and recorded with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Archaeological features and deposits were hand-drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate. The Site limits and individual archaeological features were located and referenced to OS mapping.
- 4.1.2 A full photographic record was compiled using digital images. The record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features and the Site as a whole.
- 4.1.3 A unique site code **89830** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The overburden, including remnants of the former track was generally of shallow depth, with topsoil (former ploughsoil) comprising dark greyish brown silty clay loam 0.2 – 0.5m thick, with common chalk and flint inclusions, overlaying natural Chalk.
- 5.1.2 Only two archaeological features were recorded, almost 2km apart; that to the south comprised an undated but possibly prehistoric pit, the other, to the north, consisted of a more certainly dated Romano-British linear feature (**Figure 1**).



5.2 Prehistoric?

- 5.2.1 Pit **001** was circular, steep-sided, 0.6m in diameter, 0.16m deep and had a flat bottom (**Figure 1**; see also **front cover**). The single fill (**002**) of grey-brown clayey silt with abundant chalk inclusions contained two undiagnostic pieces of struck flint.

5.3 Romano-British (AD 43 – 410)

- 5.3.1 Linear feature **003**, probably a ditch, ran east to west across the track at a slightly oblique angle, and was approximately 1m wide and 0.3m deep with steep sides and a flat bottom (**Figure 1**). It contained a sequence of four fills, comprising a primary fill of eroded chalk (**004**), chalk fragments (**005**), chalk fragments mixed with silty clay (**006**), and an upper fill of greyish brown silty clay with moderate flint fragments (**007**). All the finds from this feature, which included Roman pottery, animal bone and fired clay came from the upper fill (**007**).

6 FINDS

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Artefacts were recovered from the surface and two of the excavated contexts (**002** and **007**). The range of material types and quantities are summarised in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Finds totals by material type (number and weight (g) of pieces shown)

	Animal bone	Burnt flint	Worked flint	Pottery	Fired clay
Surface		2/23	3/49		
002			2/31		
007	13/71	1/32		10/88	1/23
Total	13/71	3/55	5/80	10/88	1/23

6.2 Worked flint

- 6.2.1 The five struck flint flakes are all cortical waste flakes with a white surface patination. They are not closely datable but, together with the burnt flint fragments, they provide some indication of generalised prehistoric activity in the vicinity.

6.3 Pottery

- 6.3.1 Two (4g) of the pottery sherds from context **007** are in a handmade, oolitic limestone-tempered fabric. Similar wares of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date have been found elsewhere on Salisbury Plain (Raymond 2005, 109, group 5a) and at Potterne (Morris 2000, 144-5, type OL); a source on the Jurassic Ridge, possibly in the Bradford-on-Avon/Budbury area, is considered likely (Raymond 2005, 111). All the other sherds are of Romano-British date, and comprise one piece from a Central Gaulish samian mortaria, three sherds of Savernake-type ware, three (including a small piece from a jar rim) of sandy greyware and one of oxidised sandy ware. All these fabrics form part of the standard range seen on Roman sites in the area (e.g. Seager Smith 2006, 114-20). The samian can be dated to the later 2nd to early 3rd century AD but none of the other pieces are closely dated.



6.4 Fired clay

- 6.4.1 The single fired clay fragment from context **007** probably derives from oven/hearth lining. Although featureless, it is almost completely vitrified and has clearly been subjected to intense heat.

6.5 Animal bone

- 6.5.1 The animal bone survives in poor condition. Seven of the pieces, including four freshly-broken joining fragments, derive from a cattle metatarsal; the other pieces are too eroded and fragmentary to assign to species or anatomical element.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 Overall, remarkably few archaeological remains were recorded within the stripped area. No features are certainly of prehistoric date, though pit **001** is most likely to belong to this period. The very small assemblage of worked flint is undiagnostic and can only be assigned a broad prehistoric date.
- 7.1.2 A small ditch (**003**) towards the northern end of the route is more certainly assigned to the Roman period, though the finds all came from the upper fill. Their presence suggests activity, possibly settlement in the vicinity in the mid-Roman period, perhaps in the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD.
- 7.1.3 The two archaeological features identified do not clearly correspond with any of the geophysical anomalies highlighted in the earlier survey as probably of archaeological origin (Wessex Archaeology 2011). All these anomalies must now be considered to be of geological origin, or at least not related to any identified archaeological features. In this respect, the general lack of clearly identified features from the geophysical survey can be seen to be reflected in the paucity of features recorded in the archaeological watching brief overall.

8 ARCHIVE

8.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 8.1.1 The complete project archive has been prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's *Guidelines for Archive Preparation* and in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage* (UKIC 1990). Details of the watching brief have also been entered into the online Oasis1 database maintained by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS). A copy of the OASIS entry is included below.

8.2 Archive

- 8.2.1 The strip, map and record project archive consists of:
- One A4 file containing the paper records
 - Digital data (site photographs, Word and pdf files).
- 8.2.2 The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury under the WA project code 89830. On completion of the project, the archive will be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum, 41 Long Street, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1NS.



8.3 Copyright

- 8.3.1 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

8.4 Security Copy

- 8.4.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (Swindon); a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at Wiltshire Heritage Museum (Devizes), and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

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Wessex Archaeology 2012b, Defence Training Estates: Salisbury Plain: Delta
Track West – Post Excavation Assessment Report unpublished client report
ref. 79420.03



APPENDIX 1: OASIS RECORD FORM

9.1 DTE: SP EIP Delta Crossing to VP 11 - Wessex Archaeology

OASIS ID - wessexar1-149236

Versions

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	Sue Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	29 April 2013

Completed sections in current version

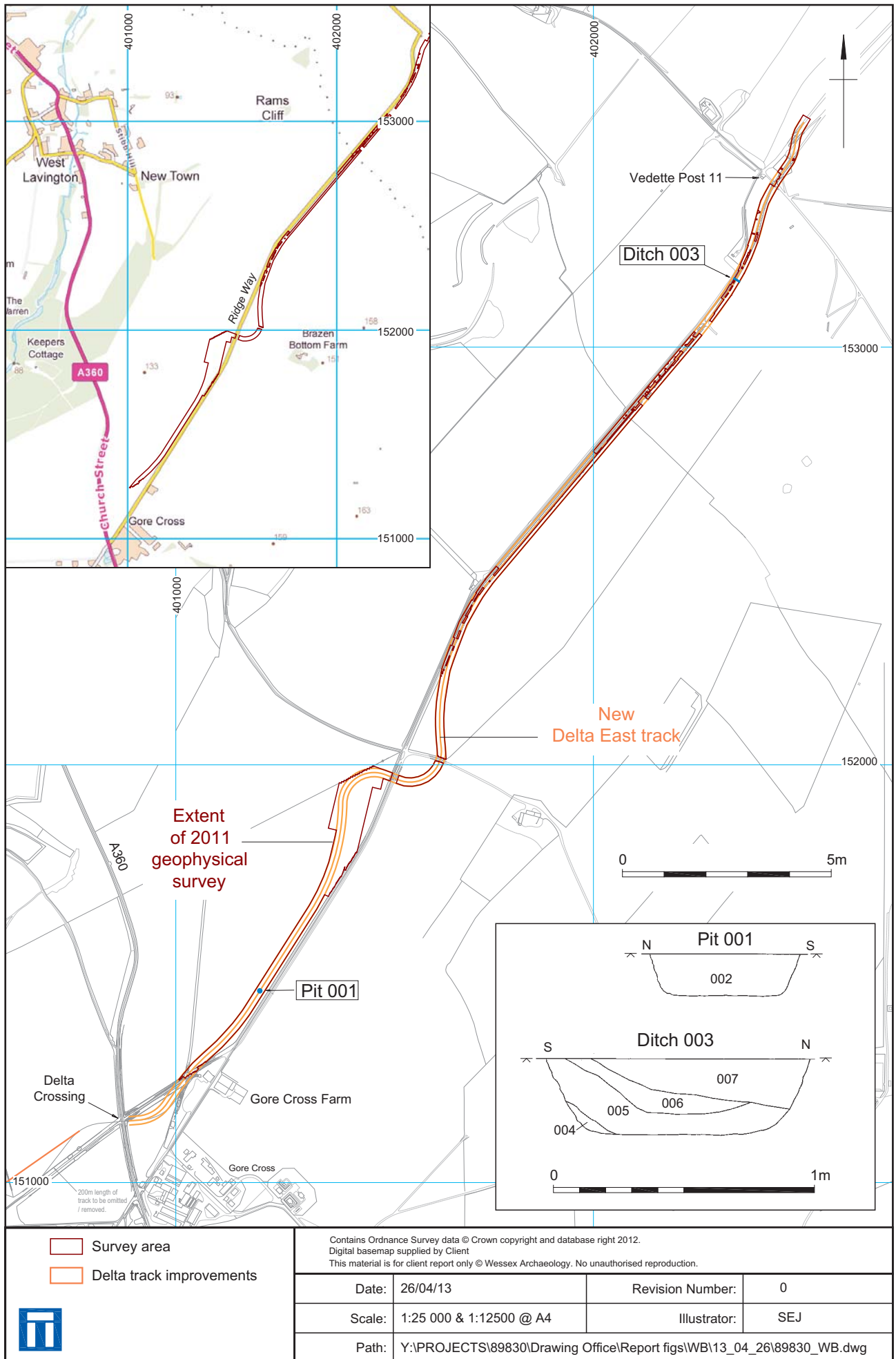
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No	No	No	No	0/1

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Grey literature report submitted?	No	Grey literature report filename/s	
Report release delay specified?	Yes	Release delay	Release into ADS library once signed off
Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s	
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Site location plan, with sections of excavated features

Figure 1



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