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Bignor Hill, Slindon West Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Museum Accession Code: CHCDM2014.7 Ref: 103320.02 April 2014

archaeology



Bignor Hill, Slindon West Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Bignor Hill, Slindon West Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Conter		
	ary	
Acknow	vledgements	IV
1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Project background	1
1.2	The Site	1
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	2
2.1	Introduction	
2.2	Designated sites	2
2.3	Undesignated sites	2
3	METHODOLOGY	2
3.1	Aims and objectives	
3.2	Fieldwork methodology	
3.3	Monitoring	
3.4	Recording	3
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS	3
4.1	Introduction	
4.2	Results	3
5	ARTEFACTUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE	5
5.1	Finds	
5.2	Environmental evidence	
^	DISCUSSION	_
6 6.1	DISCUSSION	
6.2	Summary	
0.2		0
7	STORAGE AND CURATION	6
7.1	Museum	6
7.2	The archive	
7.3	Discard policy	
7.4	Copyright	
7.5	Security copy	7

8	REFERENCES	7
8.1	Bibliography	
9	APPENDICES	9
9.1	Appendix 1: Context summery table	9
9.2	Appendix 2: OASIS form	
Bignor	⁻ Hill, Slindon, West Sussex - Wessex Archaeology	
U	OASIS ID - wessexar1-178051	

Tables

Table 1: Context Summery Table

Cover Photo: View of pipe trench through Slindon Estate, looking south to Gumber Farm and Stane Street

Figures

- Figure 1: Site Location and Trench Plan
- Figure 2: Ditches 104 and 107
- Figure 3: Photographs of Stane Street 111
- Figure 4: Section and photographs of Ice Wedge Cast 115
- Figure 5: Section, plan and photographs of Cross Dyke Ditch 1212

Bignor Hill, Slindon West Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bignor Farms to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of a water pipe within the Slindon Estate, on the edge of the South Downs National Park in West Sussex, running from National Grid Reference (NGR) 496131 111961 to 497197 112896.

The proposal formed part of a Higher Level Stewardship agreement to improve grazing on Bignor Hill, and required the excavation of a trench for the water pipe measuring 2km in length, 500mm wide and approximately 750mm deep. The National England Historic Environment Lead Advisor advised an archaeological watching brief should be maintained during excavation works for the pipe, and ensured an Historic and Archaeological Protection (HAP) grant was made available for the watching brief.

The route of the pipe crossed the Scheduled Monument of Stane Street, the Roman road running between Eartham and Bignor twice, as well as a Scheduled prehistoric linear boundary known as the Cross Dyke. It also passed just south of a Scheduled bowl barrow at Glatting Beacon and between two bowl barrows included in the Stane Street Scheduling boundary.

No finds were recovered during the watching brief, and all the features identified were confined to within the Scheduled areas. These consisted of two intercutting roadside ditches recorded along the southern edge of the Roman road of Stane Street located to the north of Gumber Farm, as well as the partially surviving central agger or chalk ridge which formed the build up for the military road. In contrast, at the eastern end of the route, no evidence of the Roman road was found within the Scheduled section. A further feature, identified as the Cross Dyke ditch, was also recorded, and although considered to be a prehistoric linear boundary, no dating evidence was recovered to confirm this.

Poor preservation outside of the Scheduled areas was likely due to erosion on the hillside coupled with the historic ploughing of the area, resulting in the absence of any discrete negative features which may have been present, whereas the larger positive and negative features which have been subject to Scheduling (resulting in a higher degree of protection) have predominantly been better preserved.

Bignor Hill, Slindon West Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by Bignor Farms and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Mr T Tupper in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Ann Clark, Historic Environment Lead Advisor for Natural England, Tom Dommett, National Trust Archaeologist, and James Kenny of Chichester District Council, for their assistance throughout the project.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Lisa McCaig who also researched and compiled this report. Illustrations were produced by Jo Condliffe. The project was managed by Sue Farr, who also edited this report.

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Bignor Farms (the Client), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during works associated with their Higher Level Stewardship agreement, and comprised the installation of a 2km water pipe from Gumber Farm to Glatting Beacon (**Figure 1**) within the Slindon Estate, West Sussex, running from National Grid Reference (NGR) 496131 111961 to 497197 112896 (hereafter 'the Site').
- 1.1.2 The proposal (AG00334568, Mr Tupper, Manor Farm, Bignor) formed an integral part of a Higher Level Stewardship agreement to improve grazing on Bignor Hill. The methodology was adjusted to allow archaeological recording of the impact, and comprised the open cut machine excavation of a water pipe trench, measuring approximately 500mm wide and 750mm deep.
- 1.1.3 A significant number of archaeological sites, ranging from the Palaeolithic to Second World War in date are recorded within the Slindon Estate. The pipe route itself crosses the Scheduled Monument of Stane Street, the Roman Road from Eartham to Bignor (List Entry 1016621). As part of the assessment undertaken for the HLS proposal, the Natural England Historic Environment Lead Advisor recommended an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the excavations to record anything of archaeological interest, and also ensured that the funding included an Historic and Archaeological Protection (HAP) grant. A brief was produced by the National Trust Archaeologist , with comments and advice provided by the Natural England Historic Environment Lead Advisor.
- 1.1.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; WA 2014) was prepared in advance of the watching brief being undertaken, and approved by the Archaeological Officer at Chichester District Council and National Trust Archaeologist.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site is located within the Slindon Estate, a 1,400 hectare area of woodland, downland, farmland and parkland (**Figure 1**) on the southern edge of the South Downs National Park in West Sussex.
- 1.2.2 The route of the water pipe was in the northeastern section of the National Trust holding, immediately north of Gumber Farm. The pipe heads north from Gumber Farm for approximately 560m before turning northeast, towards Glatting Beacon. From there the pipeline turned towards the southeast for a further 565m.
- 1.2.3 The geological sequence underlying the Site is undulating chalk downland, varying from 133m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at Gumber Farm, to 210m aOD to the northeast and lies on Upper Chalk Formation (British Geological Survey).



2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The archaeological background has been detailed in *the Brief for archaeological watching brief at Gumber and Bignor Hill, Slindon, West Sussex* (National Trust 2013) and has been summarised below.

2.2 Designated sites

- 2.2.1 The route of the pipeline crosses the Scheduled Monument of Stane Street (List Entry Number 1016621), a Roman Road running from Eartham to Bignor (**Figure 1**). The route crosses the monument in two places, coinciding with existing breaches through the monument.
- 2.2.2 In addition, the route passes in close proximity to a Scheduled barrow south of Burton Down (List Entry Number 1005832), and a Scheduled bowl barrow at Glatting Beacon (List Entry Number). A further prehistoric linear boundary (Cross Dyke) and two bowl barrows are positioned within the Scheduled Monument boundary for Stane Street.

2.3 Undesignated sites

- 2.3.1 In the western section of the pipeline route, north of Gumber Farm, there are a number of undesignated archaeological features, including elements of an Iron Age/Romano-British field system, and several Bronze Age barrows, all of which are visible on LIDAR data as upstanding monuments.
- 2.3.2 The northern and eastern sections of the pipeline pass in close proximity to an undesignated Bronze Age barrow, a holloway and a dew pond.
- 2.3.3 South of Stane Street, the pipeline runs in close proximity to three Second World War air raid shelters, part of a decoy airfield north of Gumber Farm.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

- 3.1.1 The key objective of the archaeological mitigation was to provide a better understanding of the archaeological features to inform further management of the Site. The watching brief also aimed to identify, excavate, record and analyse any archaeological remains disturbed by the development. The physical archaeological remains were replaced by a detailed record and a better understanding of the past activities that have taken place on the Site, thereby contributing to an increased knowledge of the Site's past, and providing a resource for future research and education.
- 3.1.2 Specific to this Site the aim of the watching brief was to ascertain the level of survival of the Scheduled Monument of Stane Street, and the prehistoric earthwork known as the Cross Dyke, where historic access routes have been created to Gumber Farm and Glatting Beacon, causing considerable damage to the upstanding features of these monuments.

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 The watching brief and the preparation of this report was undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out in the WSI (WA 2014) and carried out in compliance with the



standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008).

- 3.2.2 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundwork made beneath the present ground surface along the section of the pipe route deemed as containing significant archaeological potential. The pipe trench has been excavated in other areas of the Site and was subject to an archaeological watching brief maintained by Worthing Archaeological Society.
- 3.2.3 Areas under archaeological observation, and all features identified, were surveyed using a Total Station/GPS and tied in to the Ordnance Survey.

3.3 Monitoring

- 3.3.1 An archaeological presence was maintained throughout the groundwork. All machine excavation was carried out using a 13 tonne tracked 360° machine with a 0.45m wide toothless ditching bucket.
- 3.3.2 All archaeological features encountered during the excavation were cleaned, recorded and investigated, to retrieve dating evidence and ensure compliance with the WSI.

3.4 Recording

- 3.4.1 All deposits encountered during the watching brief were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system.
- 3.4.2 A representative section, not less than 1m in length, of deposits from ground surface to the top of the natural geology was recorded where appropriate.
- 3.4.3 All written, drawn and photographic records were compiled in accordance with the Wessex Archaeology Fieldwork Recording Manual.
- 3.4.4 Photographs were taken as appropriate, providing a record of exposed deposits and features along with images of the overall excavation and the Site as a whole. The photographic record comprises digital photography. A photographic register of all photographs taken is contained within the project archive.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Site was characterised by two areas; a lowland area immediately north of Gumber Farm on relatively level ground, and an area of higher ground to the north. The former comprised a sequence of topsoil, overlying a light yellow brown silty clay subsoil with common flint inclusions, beneath which clay with flint head deposits were encountered. As the pipeline route headed north onto the higher ground, the stratigraphic sequence changed, with a very fine band of subsoil surviving beneath the topsoil in isolated areas, although predominantly topsoil was recorded immediately overlying the natural chalk geology.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Monitoring of the excavation works started at the southern end of the pipeline, immediately north of Gumber Farm, and west of a large WWII air raid shelter (SHINE WS8117). Approximately 9m to the south of Stane Street, two intercutting features were identified running parallel with the Roman Road (**Figure 2**). Feature **104** was 1.3m wide

and 0.46m+ deep with a steep convex profile, and contained two fills. Feature **107** was located immediately to the south on the same alignment, and was partially cut by **104** on its northern edge. It measured approximately 1m wide and 0.46m+ deep, and exhibited similar steep convex sides and two fills. No dating evidence was recovered from either feature. The base of both features extended beyond the depth of the pipe trench, which reached a depth of between 0.8-0.9m BGL in this area. Due to the narrow width of the pipe trench it was not possible to confirm the exact profile or shape in plan of these features

- 4.2.2 As the pipeline headed north, the trench crossed a 6-7m wide breach through Stane Street Scheduled Monument (List entry 1016621). It was noted the surviving agger (a consolidated embanked and cambered core of earth, chalk or stones forming the base of the Roman road) had been damaged over time as part of an access route to the farm, and probably during works on the decoy airfield in the field to the north during WWII. No flanking ditches were visible at this section on the surface. The raised cambered agger measured approximately 6m wide and 1.4m high, and survived either side of the pipe route. A moderate camber was still noticeable but far less substantial than the surviving deposits either side.
- 4.2.3 Excavation of the trench through the partially disturbed section of Stane Street revealed a man-made chalk ridge **111** immediately below the topsoil, representing the ridgeway for the central agger (see **Figure 3**). No evidence of the metalled road surface apparently recorded in other sections of Stane Street could be identified, and it is likely the original upper surface of the road had been displaced by ploughing and erosion. The natural geology in the immediate vicinity consisted of clay with flint, and the chalk ridge was built immediately on top of this and consisted of compacted chalk fragments, probably sourced locally, forming a shallow gently cambered ridge, 6.45m wide, with a depth 0.28m recorded at the thickest, central point.
- 4.2.4 The field to the north of Stane Street rose steeply and contained the remains of two possible barrows in very poor condition (SHINE WS8160 & WS8161). Mostly ploughed out, they are now barely visible in the landscape. The route of the pipeline passed to the northwest of these, and no evidence of external ditches or any associated features were visible on the surface or identified within the excavated trench.
- 4.2.5 The trench continued northeast to Glatting Beacon passing 15m to the south of a bowl barrow (List entry 1011597). Approximately 27m to the southwest of the barrow, feature **115** was identified and measured 2.24m wide and 0.75m+ deep (see **Figure 4** for section drawing and photos). During excavation the feature revealed a stepped profile at the southernmost end, with steep straight cut sides on the east and western slopes. The eastern slope was of particular interest as it contained a dark, silty fill, **116**, similar to the topsoil in the area, and initially considered to be the result of a modern intrusion. At the base of the excavated pipe trench the feature took on a sub-rectangular shape in plan, containing the same dark silty fill, but overlain by a mixed silty clay with flint deposit, typical of the periglacial scarring seen frequently along the route of the pipeline.
- 4.2.6 From Glatting Beacon the trench was due to head south through the access road where the existing breach in Stane Street Scheduled Monument occurred. In consultation with the National Trust Archaeologist, Archaeological Officer at Chichester District Council and the Natural England Advisor the route was amended to minimise disruption to the public and vehicular access through the area, while avoiding further damage to the Scheduled area. The revised route followed the field boundary until it was within 10m of the Scheduled area, before turning out onto the access road which cut through the Cross Dyke, and forms part of the Stane Street Scheduling. The list entry records the Cross

Dyke as a prehistoric linear boundary, with two barrows located either side of the modern trackway.

- 4.2.7 Either side of the trackway the Cross Dyke was clearly visible as two parallel linear banks flanking a central ditch; the construction of the trackway had levelled the banks completely but during the excavation of the trench, the central ditch **121** was recorded. Ditch **121** was 2.6m wide and 0.57m+ deep with shallow concave sloping sides (Figure 5). The ditch contained two fills, the lower fill, **122**, was likely formed through secondary deposition, with the upper fill **123**, the result of backfilling/ground levelling to form the existing trackway. The Cross Dyke is thought to be dated to the Bronze Age, but no finds were recovered during the excavation to substantiate this.
- 4.2.8 The pipe trench continued south through the modern trackway for a further 50m before cutting back into the field once beyond the Scheduled area. This involved the pipe trench passing between barrows set some 11.5m apart, either side of the track to the northeast and southwest. The barrow to the southwest measured 15m in diameter, and was partially surrounded by a very shallow ditch visible on the south side, but truncated by the trackway construction along the northeast edge. The trench ran approximately 3.5m from the northeast edge of the barrow, but no evidence of a surrounding ditch could be seen or any other features between the two barrows. The barrow to the northeast measured approximately 17m in diameter with the outer ring ditch visibly surviving outside of the truncation from the trackway construction.
- 4.2.9 Towards the southeastern end of the pipe route, the trench again crossed Stane Street, following the route of the modern trackway (**Figure 6**). In this area of the Site, the central agger survived well either side of the trackway to the northeast and southwest, but had suffered extensive damage during construction of the trackway, with no surviving positive features visible. Excavation of the trench confirmed the trackway overlay natural chalk with no evidence on either side of roadside ditches, concluding that this section of Stane Street has been completely destroyed by the modern access route.
- 4.2.10 The route of the pipe turned south off the trackway and continued into an area of scrubland outside of the Scheduled area for a further 50m before terminating to the east of Bignor Hill. No further features were identified.

5 ARTEFACTUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Finds

5.1.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief from archaeological features or deposits. The route of the pipe crossed through land used for grazing and no surface finds were visible.

5.2 Environmental evidence

5.2.1 No features or deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 The two features identified to the south of Stane Street **104** and **107**, have been interpreted as probable roadside ditches, relating to the construction and use of the Roman road. The narrow width of the pipe trench makes it difficult to confirm the precise



shape of these features in plan, however given the similarities in alignment and form, it is likely that **104** represents a later recut of ditch **107**, which given the feature's proximity to the base of a steep sloping valley, had silted up rapidly.

- 6.1.2 Feature **111** can be confidently interpreted as the partial remains of Stane Street, the Roman road between Eartham and Bignor. Unfortunately the metalled road surface has been completely removed by human and natural erosion, and what survives of the ridge or embankment has been substantially reduced.
- 6.1.3 After discussions on Site with the Archaeological Officer for Chichester District Council, feature **115** was interpreted as the result of a probable ice wedge of periglacial origin, with secondary fracturing resulting in the unusual deposit model identified.
- 6.1.4 The results of the intervention through the Cross Dyke at the northern end of the pipe trench confirmed the survival of the ditch below the road formation; a feature that was previously thought to be completely truncated has been shown to survive 0.2m BGL.

6.2 Conclusions

- 6.2.1 Overall the watching brief identified four features of archaeological significance which will contribute to the existing knowledge of Stane Street and the surrounding prehistoric monuments. Moreover, the fieldwork was able to document the current condition of the Scheduled Monuments along the route, as well as provide detail on the level of preservation of the surviving features below ground.
- 6.2.2 The watching brief has confirmed the poor condition of surviving positive features at the Site along the route of the water pipe; however it has also identified the fair condition of surviving negative features in the Scheduled areas of the Site.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

7.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with the local museum. The museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project[, under the accession code CHCDM 2014.7].

7.2 The archive

- 7.2.1 The complete Site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the local museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 7.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the site and accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises the following:
- 7.2.3 The contents of the project archive, comprises one A4 ring binder file containing the following:
 - 2 Trench Record Sheets
 - 9 Context Sheets including 1 Structure sheet and 1 group record sheet



- 10 Photographic Record Sheets
- 5 A4 Permatrace drawing sheets and 1 drawing register
- A copy of the WSI
- A copy of this Watching Brief Report
- 7.2.4 The project paper archive including plans, photographs and written records is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's Rochester Office under the site code **103320**.
- 7.2.5 Details of the Site, including a copy of this report, will be submitted online to the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations) database.

7.3 Discard policy

- 7.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 7.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2002).

7.4 Copyright

- 7.4.1 The Trust for Wessex Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any report under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. Excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the specification. Any document produced to meet planning requirements may be copied for planning purposes by the Local Planning Authority.
- 7.4.2 A licence will also be granted to English Heritage, for the use of all documents arising from this project in all matters relating directly to the project, as well as for *bona fide* research purposes.

7.5 Security copy

7.5.1 In line with current best practice (Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of a PDF/A file; PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

8 **REFERENCES**

8.1 Bibliography

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Bignor Hill, Slindon, West Sussex Archaeological Watching Brief Report

9 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix 1:Context summery table

Context Number	Type	Description	Interpretation	Fill of/with	Plan	Sec	ы	Date
101	Layer	Former ploughsoil now grazing. Dark grey-brown sitty clay with occasional inclusions of flint and chalk fragments.	Topsoil			-	ΓW	17/3/14
102	Layer	Light yellow-brown silty clay with common flint and chalk fragments.	Subsoil	ı	ı	I	ΓW	17/3/14
103	Layer	Mid orange-brown silty clay with common to frequent flint nodules.	Natural	1	·	I	ΓW	17/3/14
104	Cut	Steep sloped broadly E-W roadside ditch? cuts earlier [107]. Full extent of base not visible in trench. 1.3m wide and 0.46m+ deep	Ditch/Pit	F.W. (105) (106)	1B	1A	ΓW	17/3/14
105	Eii	Light yellow-grey silty clay. Small inclusions of sub- rounded chalk. Sealed by 106	Primary fill	F.O. [104]	1B	1A	ΓW	17/3/14
106	Fill	Light brownish-grey silty clay with small sub- rounded common chalk and occasional flint.	Secondary Fill	F.O. [104]	1B	1A	ΓW	17/3/14
107	Cut	Steep sloped roadside ditch? running E-W, cut by later ditch [104]. Full extents of base not visible in trench. 1m wide and 0.46m+ deep	Ditch/Pit	F.W. [108] [109]	1B	1A	ΓW	17/3/14
108	Fill	Mid yellow-grey sitty clay. Occasional small inclusions of sub-rounded chalk, sealed by 109	Secondary Fill	F.O. [107]	1B	1A	ΓW	17/3/14
109	Fill	Mid brownish-grey silty clay with occasional small sub-rounded common chalk and occasional flint.	Secondary Fill	F.O. [107]	1B	1A	ΓW	17/3/14
110	Layer	Dark orange-brown silty clay with abundant flint nodules.	Natural	1		ı	LM	17/3/14
111	Foundation	Man-made ridge 6.45m wide consisting of re-deposited chalk to create 'Stane Street'. No surviving road surface evident. Roadside ditches [104] and [107] still exist.	Ridgeway/ Agger		1	2A	ΓW	18/3/14
112	Layer	Natural to the north. Solid chalk with creamy-white silt inclusion.	Natural	·	ı		ΓW	18/3/14

103320.02

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Bignor Hill, Slindon, West Sussex Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Context Number	Type	Description	Interpretation	Fill of/with	Plan	Sec	in	Date
113	Layer	Periglacial dirty yellow chalk deposits.	Natural	,	1	1	LM	18/3/14
114	Geology 'cuť' & 'fill'	Periglacial scars. CUT: Uneven irregular linear/curvelinear FILL: sterile mid orange-brown silty clay. Common across landscape cutting into chalk.	Glacial Scarring	1	1	1	RM	18/3/14
115	Cut	Geological feature of unknown origin. Feature had steep straight sides and stepped end which terminated within trench, shape in plan unknown 2.24m wide 0.75m deep	Ice Wedge/ geological anomoly	F.W. (116) (117) (118) (119) (120)	I	3A + 3B	RM	22/03/14
116	Fill	Deposit down eastern side and base only. Dark grey-brown silty clay with common large – medium sub-ovoid flint nodules. Likely degraded topsoil deposited after secondary fracture.	Natural Deposition	F.O. [115]	I	3B	ΓW	22/03/14
117	Fill	Dark reddish-brown silty clay with common medium sub-angular and sub-rounded flints.	Natural Deposition	F.O. [115]	I	3A	ΓW	22/03/14
118	Fill	Main deposit, Mid brownish-red silty clay – dirty natural. Common medium – large	Natural Deposition	F.O. [115]	I	3A	ΓW	22/03/14
119	Fill	Mid yellow-orange sandy clay with lenses throughout (118)	Natural Deposition	F.O. [115]	I	3A	ΓW	22/03/14
120	Fill	Mid brownish-orange sitty clay. Occasional flint inclusions.	Tertiary Deposit	F.O. [115]	I	3A	ΓW	22/03/14
121	Cut	Ditch. Linear feature broadly NE-SW, associated banks not surviving (visible elsewhere) Full extents of base not visible in trench.	'Cross Dyke' Ditch	F.W. [122] [123]	I	4	ΓW	24/03/14
122	Fill	Pale creamy yellowish brown chalky-silty-clay mix. Abundant chalk inclusions with very rare charcoal flecks.	Secondary Fill	F.O. [121]	I	4	ΓW	24/03/14
123	Fill	Light brownish-yellow chalky-silty-clay mix. Abundant chalk inclusions with occasional small – medium sub-rounded flints.	Possible Backfill	F.O. [121]	I	4	ΓW	24/03/14
124	Layer	Mixed chalk modern backfilling for track construction.	Modern layer	I		4	ΓW	24/03/14

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10

9.2 Appendix 2:OASIS form

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OASIS ID - wessexar1-178051

Versions						
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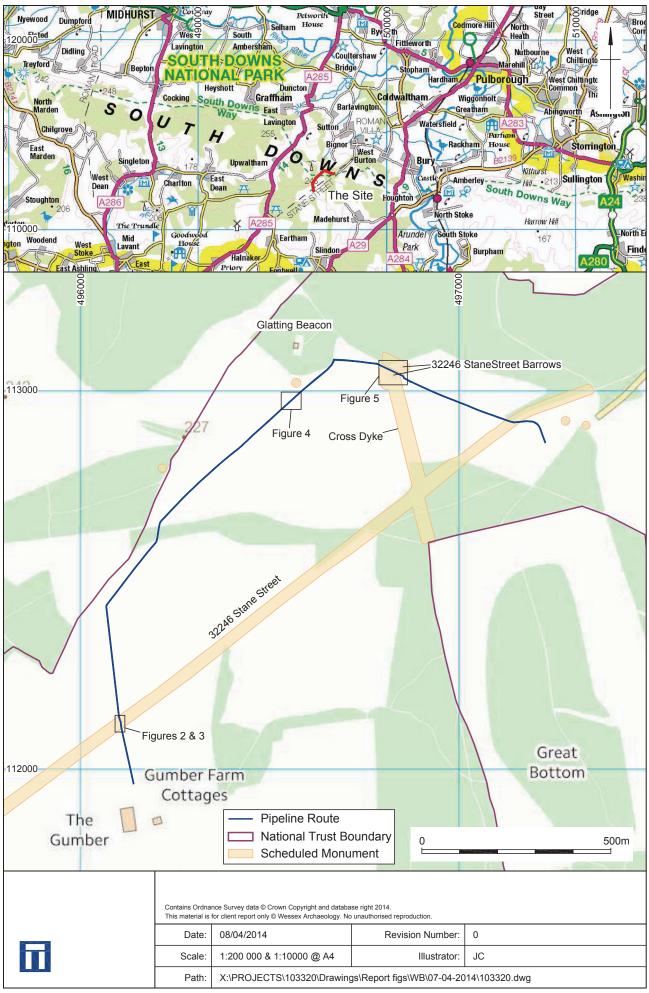




Figure 2

Photographs of Stane Street 111



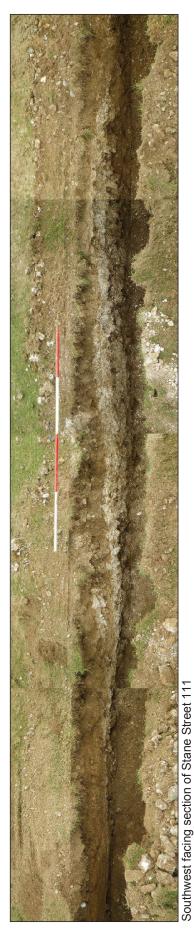


Figure 3

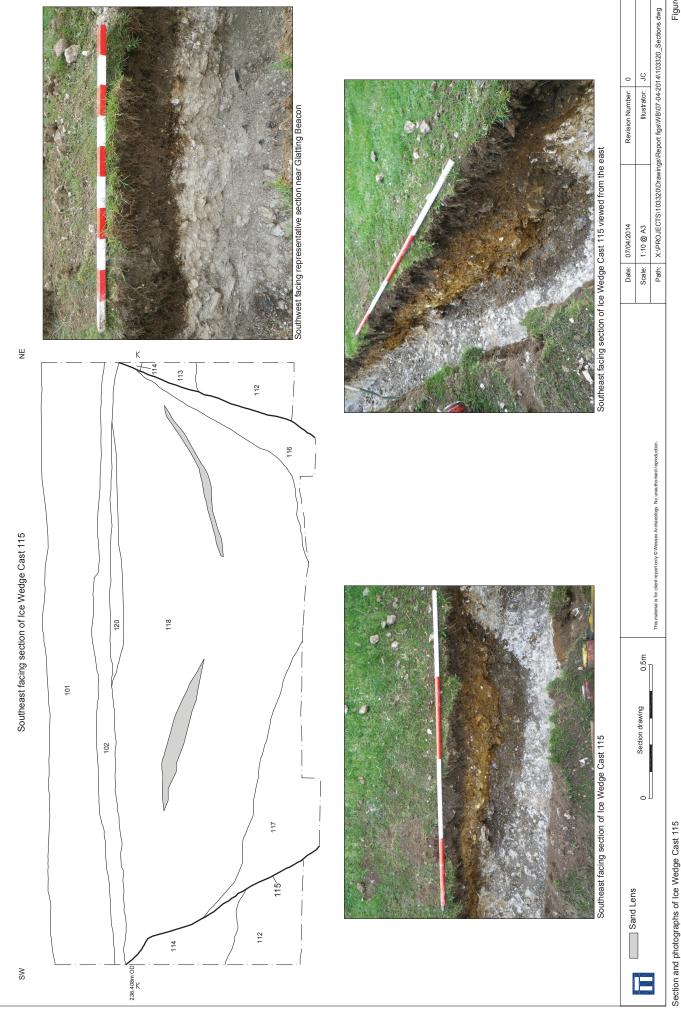
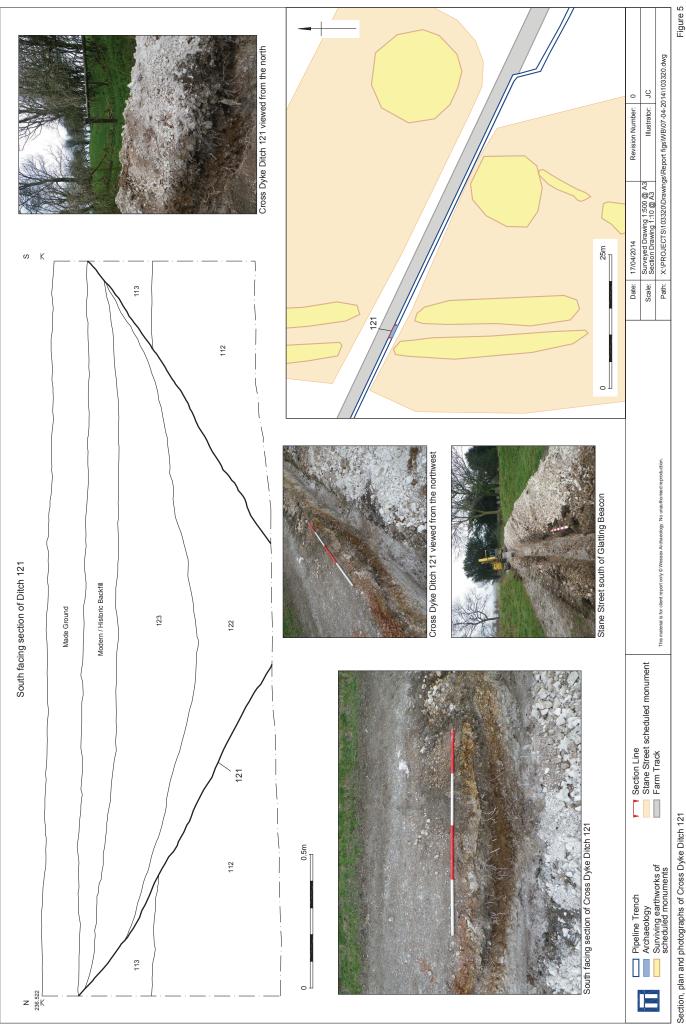


Figure 4







salisbury rochester sheffield edinburgh

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