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Land at Knitts Farm 132 Stockhill Road Chilcompton, Somerset

Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief



Mendip District Council Planning Application Ref: 2014/2614/FUL
Museum of Somerset Accession Ref: TTNCM 58/2015
Somerset Historic Environment Record No: 32908
Ref: 109870.01
October 2015



**Land at Knitts Farm
132 Stockhill Road
Chilcompton, Somerset**

Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief

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Quality Assurance

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Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief

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Land at Knitts Farm 132 Stockhill Road Chilcompton, Somerset

Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Victre Limited to undertake an archaeological strip, map and record excavation and watching brief during groundworks associated with the installation of a wind turbine at Knitts Farm, 132 Stockhill Road, Chilcompton, Somerset (Planning Application 2014/2614/FUL), centred on National Grid reference (NGR) 363835 150464.

The archaeological excavation and monitoring was undertaken between the 8th of July and the 13th of October 2015. Apart from a probable natural swallet, which was infilled with soil that contained a single piece of post-medieval ceramic building material, no archaeological finds, features, or deposits were uncovered during the course of the archaeological work.



Land at Knitts Farm 132 Stockhill Road Chilcompton, Somerset

Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Victre Limited for commissioning and funding the archaeological work. We would particularly like to thank Helen Butcher (Victre Limited) and Steven Membery (Senior Historic Environment Officer, SCC) for their assistance throughout the project.

The excavation was undertaken by Sam Fairhead and Lynn Hume, the watching brief was attended by Frances Ward. This report was compiled by Cai Mason. The illustrations were produced by Rob Goller. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andy King.



Land at Knitts Farm 132 Stockhill Road Chilcompton, Somerset

Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Victre Limited to undertake an archaeological strip, map and record excavation and a watching brief, prior to and during, groundworks associated with the installation of a wind turbine at Knitts Farm, 132 Stockhill Road, Chilcompton, Somerset (Planning Application 2014/2614/FUL) hereafter referred to as the 'Site' (**Figure 1**), centred on National Grid reference (NGR) 363835 150464.
- 1.1.2 The aim of the archaeological work, which was undertaken between the 8th of July and the 13th of August 2015, was to identify and record any archaeological remains within the turbine footprint and along the route of the associated cable trench.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site comprises two fields on the north side of Blacker's Hill, immediately to the west of Knitts Farm, in the Downside area of Chilcompton, Somerset. The solid geology is recorded as Triassic mudstone and halite-stone of the Mercia Mudstone Group (BGS 2015). The ground slopes downhill gently from the turbine footprint location at a height of approximately 217 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to Knitts Farm at approximately 210 m aOD.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The known archaeological and historical background to the Site is drawn from a previous *Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment* (Life Long Energy 2015), Historic England's National Heritage List for England (NHLE) (HE 2015a) and the Somerset Historic Environment Record (SHER 2015).
- 2.1.2 There have been no previous archaeological investigations on the Site and there are no known archaeological remains in its immediate vicinity.

2.2 Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 There are a number of known prehistoric remains in the wider area, the closest being a Bronze Age bowl barrow (SHER 23291), which is located 200 m to the south of the Site. There is a further group of four barrows (SHER 23293, 23294, 23295 and 23296), 0.7 km to the west. The Site is also situated 380 m to the north of an Iron Age promontory fort on Blacker's Hill (SHER 23292; NHLE 1015493).

2.3 Romano-British

- 2.3.1 There are no known Romano-British remains in the immediate vicinity of the Site.



2.4 Saxon and medieval

- 2.4.1 The historic core of Chilcompton lies 2 km to the north-east of the Site. Chilcompton (*Comtuna*) is recorded in two entries in the Domesday Book (AD 1086): the first describes a settlement of 16 households, 2 slaves and a mill, which was formerly held by Alward, then passed to Walter Tirrell after the Norman Conquest (AD 1066); the second describes a settlement of 15 households and a mill, formerly held by Alric and Alwaker (father of Aelfric), then passed to Ralph after the Conquest (Open Domesday 2015).
- 2.4.2 Chilcompton's church, which is dedicated to St John (SHER 23290), is first mentioned in 1188, when the lord of the Manor, Gilbert de Percy, presented it to Wells Cathedral. The church was remodelled in the 13th, 15th, 16th and 18th centuries.
- 2.4.3 Chilcompton is likely to have been continually occupied throughout the medieval period. The origins of Downside remain obscure, and it is unclear if this settlement was present in the medieval period.

2.5 Post-medieval and modern

- 2.5.1 Knitts Farmhouse (SHER 21662; NHLE 1058732), which was constructed in the 16th or 17th century, is the oldest building in Downside. The settlement's namesake, Downside Farm, certainly existed by the 19th century, but it is unclear when the farm was established. By the late 19th century, Downside had developed into a small settlement with an Anglican Church (SHER 21659; NHLE 1175589) and school (SHER14541).
- 2.5.2 In 1873, a Benedictine monastery, commonly known as Downside Abbey, was founded in Stratton-on-the-Fosse, 1.3 km to the north-west of the Site (HE 2015b).
- 2.5.3 During the 19th century, Chilcompton gradually expanded southwards. This expansion was largely driven by the development of the local coal mining industry and the construction of Chilcompton Railway Station in 1874 (New S&D 2015). Further expansion during the 20th century, eventually linked Downside and Chilcompton together as a contiguous settlement.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 With due regard to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation (CIfA 2014a)* and *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (CIfA 2014b)*, the aims of the archaeological work were to establish the presence/absence of any archaeological remains on the Site, and to record them prior to their destruction.
- 3.1.2 Prior to the commencement of works, a *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)* was prepared by WA (2015). This document set out the agreed aims of the archaeological work and the methods by which these aims would be achieved.
- 3.1.3 The overall objectives of the archaeological work were to:
- *to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and should remains be present, to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;*
 - *to confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;*
 - *to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;*



- to determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains;
- to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present; and
- to prepare a report on the results of the archaeological work.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were carried out in accordance with the WSI (WA 2015), the *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014a) and the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014b).

4.2 Excavation

4.2.1 The excavation area comprised a single 7m by 7m trench corresponding to the site of the wind turbine footprint. The trench was mechanically excavated using a machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under the direction of a WA archaeologist. Machine excavation proceeded to the top of undisturbed geology, which was exposed at a depth of 0.4 m below ground level.

4.3 Watching Brief

4.3.1 The watching brief comprised monitoring the excavation of a 0.3 m wide, 1 m deep and 285 m long electric cable trench between a junction box at Knitts Farm to the turbine site. The trench was excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothed bucket. All spoil was scanned for artefacts.

4.4 Recording

4.4.1 Recording of exposed deposits and features was undertaken using WA's *pro forma* recording sheets, with all features and deposits being assigned a unique context number.

4.4.2 A full photographic record of the fieldwork was made using a Pentax K50 digital camera with a 16 megapixel image sensor. The photographic record illustrated the general context of construction works, exposed features and deposits and general views of the Site as a whole. The digital images will be subject to managed quality control and curation processes which will embed appropriate metadata within the image and ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.4.3 Site survey was carried out using a Leica Viva series GNSS unit using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30 mm or below. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Grid coordinate system.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1.1 The location of the excavation trench and the monitored cable trench is shown in **Figure 1**. The deposit sequence is outlined below. Contexts are highlighted in bold.

5.1.2 The deposit sequence comprised natural mid brownish-red sandy clay recorded as **103**, **203** and **204**, with occasional rounded gravel inclusions, overlain by a 0.16-0.25 m deep layer of pale brownish-red silty clay subsoil **102** and **202**, which was in turn sealed by a 0.15-0.22 m thick layer of pale grey sandy silt topsoil **101** and **201**.



5.1.3 To the north-east of Knitts Farm a 13 m wide by over 1 m deep feature, **205**, was exposed within the 0.3 m wide cable trench. Feature **205** was filled with a deposit of mid to pale reddish brown clayey silt **206** that contained occasional angular sandstone inclusions and a single piece of post-medieval ceramic building material (CBM). Fill **206** was overlain by subsoil **202**.

5.1.4 No other archaeological finds, features, or deposits were uncovered during the course of the archaeological work.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1.1 A 13 m wide possible cut feature was uncovered to the north-west of Knitts Farm; this feature contained a single piece of post-medieval CBM. There are a number of known rock fissures and caves in this area (MCRA 2015), and it probable that this feature was an infilled natural swallet. No other archaeological finds, features, or deposits were uncovered during the course of the archaeological work.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

7.1.1 With the full agreement of the landowner the project archive will be deposited for long-term storage with Somerset Museum Service under Accession Code TTNCM 58/2015. Prior to deposition, the archive will be temporarily stored at Wessex Archaeology's Salisbury office under Site Code 109870.

7.2 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 Somerset Museum Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

7.3 OASIS

7.3.1 An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> has been initiated for the work and key fields in regard of the evaluation has been entered under OASIS ID wessexar1-216161. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the Somerset Historic Environment Record. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive).

7.4 Discard policy

7.4.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (SMA 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.

7.5 Copyright

7.5.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003*.



7.6 Security Copy

- 7.6.1 In line with current best practice (Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital 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.

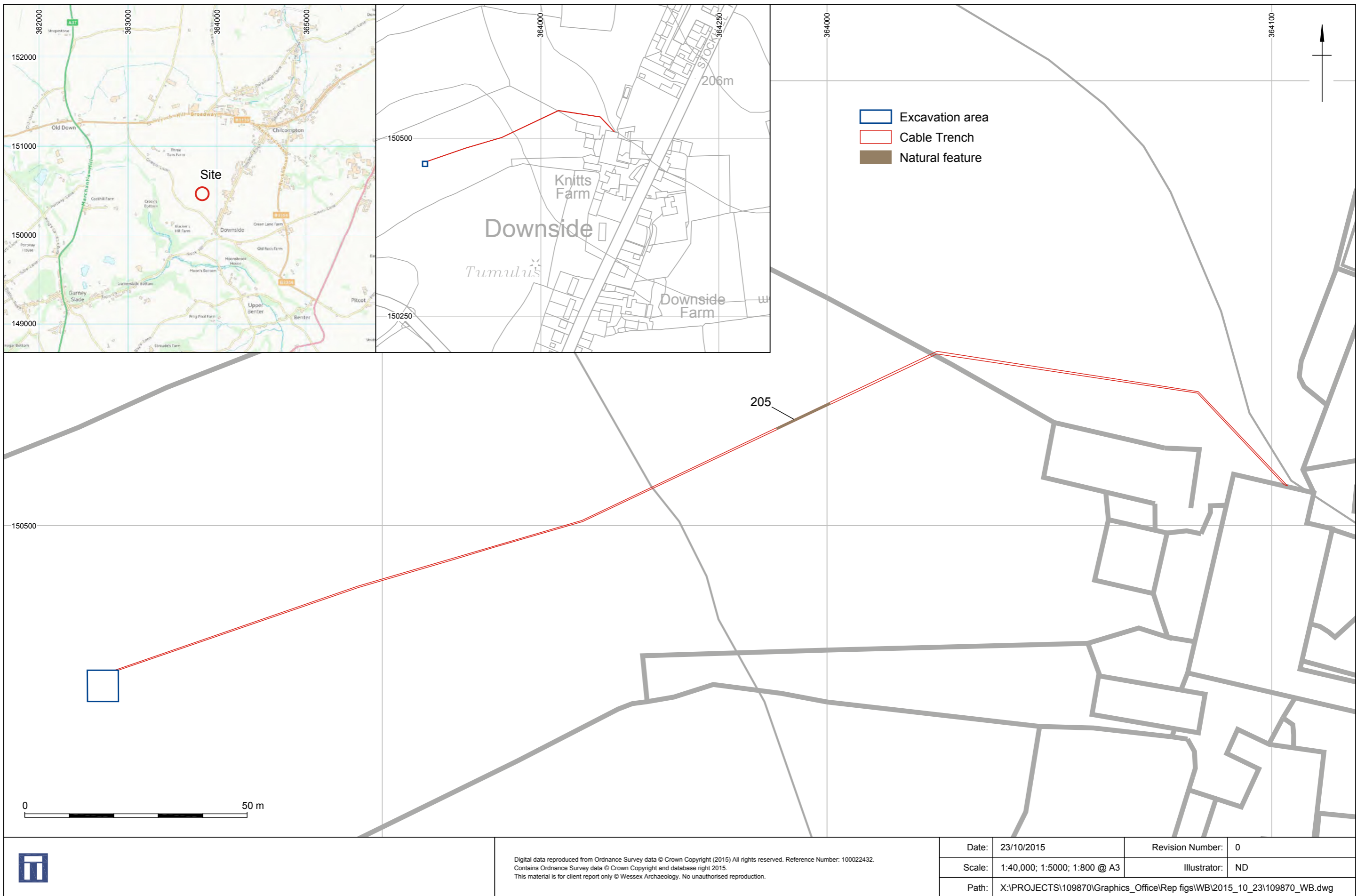
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- Excavation area
- Cable Trench
- Natural feature

0 50 m



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Site location plan showing excavation and watching brief area

Figure 1



Plate 1: Excavation area, looking west



Plate 2: Cable trench to the north of Knitts Farm, looking south-east



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Plate 3: Typical deposit sequence, looking west

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