making sense of heritage

Stonehills Mine, Avalanche Road, Southwell, Portland, Dorset

Archaeological Programme of Works

Ref: 109620
October 2015

wessex archaeology

Stonehills Mine
Avalanche Road, Southwell
Portland, Dorset

Archaeological Programme of Works

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Quality Assurance

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Planning Application Ref.	WP/13/00782/DCC	**Ordnance Survey (OS) national grid reference (NGR)**	SY 6829 7089		

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* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

Stonehills Mine
Avalanche Road, Southwell
Portland, Dorset

Archaeological Programme of Works

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Joshua Eiles-Clarke of Woodmace Ltd to undertake an archaeological programme of works, comprising a strip, map and record excavation and watching brief, during groundworks associated with the creation of a new mine entrance (portal) on land at Avalanche Road, Southwell, Portland, Dorset. The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SY 6829 7089. The fieldwork was undertaken between the 10th of June and 26th of August 2015

Topsoil striping in and around the western end of a new mine portal revealed the remains a Romano-British trackway, an undated ditch probably associated with the trackway, three undated pits, and an assemblage of unstratified prehistoric struck chert.

The relative paucity of archaeological remains within the strip, map and record, and watching brief areas, demonstrates that the archaeological remains on the Site are largely restricted to the known Romano-British occupation sites (Stonehills North and Stonehills South) that were identified during previous archaeological investigations (TA 2000, 2014b and GeoFlo 2014)

In order to protect the known Romano-British occupation sites from damage during mine establishment works and any future restoration works, the known extents of the settlements were demarcated with temporary fencing, prior to being buried (with the topsoil left in-situ) beneath a 1 m thick layer of pale clay. The use of pale clay, which contrasts with the dark topsoil, will allow the interface between the two layers to be easily recognised and help to avoid any inadvertent damage to the underlying archaeological remains during any future landscaping works.

Stonehills Mine
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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Joshua Eiles-Clarke of Woodmace Ltd for commissioning the work and Albion Stone plc for funding it. We would also like to thank Steve Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council (DCC) for the advice and assistance during the project.

The fileldwork was directed by Mike Dinwiddy with the assistance of Tom Blencowe. This report was written by Mike Dinwiddy and Cai Mason. The finds were assessed by Lorrain Mepham (pottery) and Matt Leivers (chert), and the illustrations were prepared by Rob Goller. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Bruce Eaton.

Stonehills Mine
Avalanche Road, Southwell
Portland, Dorset

Archaeological Programme of Works

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Joshua Eiles-Clarke of Woodmace Ltd ('the Client'), acting on behalf of Albion Stone plc, to undertake an archaeological programme of works during groundworks associated with the excavation of a new mine portal (entrance) on land at Avalanche Road, Southwell, Portland, hereafter 'the Site', centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SY 6829 7089 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 Previous archaeological investigations by Terrain Archaeology (TA) (2000 and 2014b) and GeoFlo (2014) identified two Romano-British settlements within the Site. As a condition of planning permission for the new mine (Planning Application ref. PL\1589\13 (WP/13/00782/DCC): Condition 4), the Senior Archaeologist, acting on behalf of Dorset County Council (DCC), requested that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by TA (2014a). The WSI stated that the areas of known Romano-British settlement should be demarcated by fencing and protected from damage by burying them beneath a 1 m deep bund of pale-coloured clay. The WSI also stipulated that the area of the new mine portal should be archaeologically investigated by strip, map and record excavation and that the topsoil strip on the remaining portion of the Site should be monitored by means of an archaeological watching brief (TA 2014a, 6-8).

1.1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken between the 10th of June and the 26th of August 2015.

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 The Site is an irregular 8.9 ha plot of open land on the Isle of Portland, situated between the settlements of Weston and Southwell, and bonded by Avalanche Road to the east, fields to the north and south and a sea cliff to the west.

1.2.2 The land slopes slightly from approximately 74 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north-west to 65 m aOD in the east (**Figure 1**).The geology is Cretaceous/Jurassic limestone of the Lulworth Formation (BGS 2015)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The archaeological background to the Site is drawn from the WSI (TA 2014a).

2.2 Archaeological background

Prehistoric

2.2.1 The earliest evidence of human activity on the Site comprises a scatter of worked flint and chert of probable Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date, which were recovered from the topsoil during an earlier evaluation of the Site (TA 2000; 2014).

Romano-British

2.2.2 Two Roman farmsteads (Stonehills North and Stonehills South) were discovered during a geophysical survey and evaluation of the Site (GeoFlo 2014; TA 2014). The single trench dug through the Stonehills South site revealed part of a stone built round house, other stone features, occupation layers and a limpet shell midden. The pottery from this settlement, suggests that it was occupied during the late 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The two trenches dug in the Stonehills North site revealed at least seven different ditches, a pit, a possible trackway, remnants of a shell midden and occupation material; this site appears to have been occupied until the 3rd or 4th century. There are a number of other Late Iron Age or Romano-British sites on Portland, the closest of which comprise a spread of Roman pottery to the south of Stonehills and findspots of Iron Age staters to the north of the Site. There are larger Late Iron Age/Romano-British sites with numerous burials in Southwell (RCHME 1970, 607-8, Putnam 1970) and at Weston Road/Royal Manor School (Palmer and Reilly 2009; Laidlaw et al. 2005).

Medieval

2.2.3 The Site is likely to have been under cultivation since at least the medieval period, when it probably formed part of an open strip field system. Barleycrates Lane, which runs along the northern edge of the Site, probably defines a former headland between blocks of 'lawnsheds', a unique local form of strip fields separated by low stone walls (DCC 2011, 2). A path marking the southern boundary of the Site also follows a former headland, as can clearly be seen on the 1902 Ordnance Survey (OS) plan. The 1864 OS plan shows a series of narrow linear fields running parallel to Weston Road, immediately north-east of the Site. These probably represent a series of lawnsheds that were destroyed by Weston or Grangecroft Quarry by the 1920s. There are also likely to have been lawnsheds within the Site; the morphology of the surrounding fields suggests that they are likely to have been north/south aligned.

Modern

2.2.4 A 'megalithic' stone wall, which follows the edge of Barleycrates Lane, is recorded as an undesignated heritage asset on the Dorset County Council Historic Environment Record (Monument No. MDO19682). Analysis of the historic map evidence suggests that the wall was constructed during the early 20th century, probably after Weston Quarry started operating, using waste stone from that quarry. This stone wall may have originally continued east of Barleycrates Lane along the northern end of the Site, but this was destroyed by the later extension of the quarry.

2.3 Previous Archaeological Fieldwork

2.3.1 An archaeological evaluation undertaken by TA in 2000 along the line of the new mine access road for the proposed Stonehills Mine, recorded no archaeological features, but did uncover an assemblage of worked flint and chert from the topsoil (TA 2000; **Figure 2**).

2.3.2 A geophysical survey of the Site undertaken by GeoFlo in 2014, revealed two concentrations of geophysical anomalies to the north and south of the site, and a number of other linear anomalies in the north-eastern and central part of the site (GeoFlo 2014).

2.3.3 A subsequent evaluation broadly confirmed the results of the geophysical survey and identified two areas of Romano-British occupation, probably farmsteads, in the north and south of the Site (see **Section 2.2.2** above). These settlements were named in the report as 'Stonehills North' and 'Stonehills South' (TA 2014b).

3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

3.1.1 The aim of the archaeological programme of works was to mitigate the impact of the proposed mine workings on any heritage assets within the Site.

3.1.2 The general objectives of the archaeological programme of works were to:

- Clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be impacted the proposed mine workings;
- To monitor the Topsoil Protection Areas to ensure the archaeological stratigraphy is protected in situ;
- To observe the area of topsoil stripping and record or protect any archaeological features exposed;
- Produce a report which will present the results of the watching brief to the appropriate standard.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were carried out in accordance with the WSI (TA 2014a) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* and *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014a-b).

4.1.2 The previous evaluation report included an assessment of the significance of the heritage assets on the Site and the potential impact of the proposed development on these assets. The Romano-British settlement remains were considered to be of sufficient significance to warrant *in-situ* preservation, where possible. The archaeological evaluation and geophysical survey identified two areas of concentrated archaeological activity. Stonehills South lies within the area of proposed topsoil stripping and overburden storage. Stonehills North is largely within the area of proposed topsoil stripping and overburden storage, but the eastern end lies within the area that would be removed as part of the mine portal construction (TA 2014b, fig. 2).

4.1.3 The site was divided into three areas defined by its archaeology and the impact of the proposed development, each needing its own form of mitigation.

- **Romano-British settlement areas**: the two areas of concentrated Roman settlement evidence in the north and south parts of the site.
- **Mine portal area**: The area of the mine portal entrance, where all traces of any potential archaeology will be removed by the formation of the portal.
- **Topsoil strip area**: The remaining area of topsoil stripping and overburden storage, where no archaeological features have been identified to date.

4.1.4 A proposed methodology to mitigate the impact of the Establishment Phase works on the archaeology was devised by Land and Mineral Management Ltd, on behalf of Albion Stone plc (TA 2014b, Appendix 1).

4.2 Roman Settlement Areas

4.2.1 The two Romano-British settlement sites were assessed as having medium heritage asset significance (TA 2014b), which was sufficient to warrant preservation *in-situ.* The following mitigation strategy was designed to minimise potential for accidental damage during the Establishment Phase and during any subsequent Restoration Phase. The archaeological stratigraphy in the two areas of Roman settlement survives immediately below the topsoil, which renders it vulnerable to accidental damage in the Establishment Phase by over-machining during topsoil removal and by the tracking of heavy plant across the area. Where the overburden material has been stored on top of these two sites, the archaeology may be vulnerable to accidental damage during the Restoration Phase by over-machining the overburden to remove it for backfilling the portal area, should that be required.

4.2.2 To ensure that the archaeology of the two Roman settlement areas was protected *in-situ*, the topsoil was not stripped from these areas, but left in place to form Topsoil Protected Areas (TPA). The limits of these TPAs (**Figure 1**) were demarcated by fencing prior to the commencement of topsoil stripping operations. After the completion of the topsoil stripping, the lightest colour overburden was spread over the topsoil in the TPAs by machine, ensuring that the heavy plant does not run directly over the topsoil, but on the placed overburden. This work was undertaken under archaeological supervision. By leaving the topsoil in place and using the TPAs to store the lightest colour overburden, the dark topsoil will provide a protective barrier and a clear visual marker of the base of stored overburden, thus minimising the possibility of the disturbance of the archaeology during the Restoration Phase.

4.3 Mine Portal Area

4.3.1 The mine portal area was investigated using a ‘strip, map, and record’ methodology. The topsoil was removed to the top of the archaeological levels using a machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. The area was stripped in such a way that no machinery ran across the stripped surface until it was checked for archaeology by a suitably qualified archaeologist. The stripped surface was subject to selective cleaning by hand to expose any archaeological features. All archaeological features were excavated and recorded.

4.4 Topsoil Strip Area

4.4.1 The remaining area of the site was subject to topsoil stripping that was monitored by means of an archaeological watching brief. All topsoil stripping was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision, so that any archaeological features could be dealt with in an appropriate manner, either by protecting them from further stripping or dumping operations, or investigating and recording them. The topsoil strip removed a maximum of 0.2 m of topsoil using a bulldozer. The soil stripping commenced in the mine portal area and progressed outwards from there. The topsoil was transferred into soil bunds in locations agreed with the Local Planning Authority, using designated routes which were scanned for any archaeological features or deposits prior to use. No archaeological features were found along the designated routes.

4.4.2 Fieldwork Methodology

Mine portal area

4.4.3 In the mine portal area, the topsoil was stripped by a machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket down on to the top of the underlying deposits, either natural or archaeological. The topsoil stripping was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision by an experienced WA archaeologist. No plant or machinery were allowed onto the stripped area until it had been mapped and recorded archaeologically. If large numbers of small discrete features, such as postholes or stakeholes ,were encountered, at least 50% of each of these features would have been excavated, unless they clearly formed part of a structure, in which case, they would have been completely excavated (no discrete features were identified in this part of the Site). A suitable sample of all linear features (10% minimum sample size) was excavated.

4.4.4 All archaeological features exposed during the works were cleaned by hand, planned, excavated and recorded. Any discrete features would have been fully excavated (none were found). All linear features were investigated and a minimum 10% sample excavated by hand.

4.4.5 All finds from archaeological contexts were be retained and processed according to the CIfA's *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (CIfA 2014d).

Topsoil strip area

4.4.6 Archaeological features within the topsoil strip area were investigated by archaeological excavation in the same manner as the Mine portal area.

Observations of overburden placement on the topsoil protected areas

4.4.7 WA archaeologists monitored the placement of spoil over the TPA areas to ensure that a sufficient depth of overburden was placed over the areas containing archaeological remains.

4.5 Recording

4.5.1 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. Representative soil profile sections were drawn to appropriate scales (sections at 1:10; plans at 1:20) and located on the site plan.

4.5.2 A full photographic record of the fieldwork was be 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.

4.5.3 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 30mm or below. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Gris coordinate system.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1.1 The following section presents a summary of the results of the archaeological programme of works. The results are presented by archaeological period and feature type; archaeological features are shown in **Figure 1**. Excavated contexts are given in bold.

5.2 Stratigraphic sequence

5.2.1 The geology of the Site (**101**) comprised pale yellowish brown silty clay with bedded limestone in some areas. Natural deposits were overlain by a 0.2-0.3 m thick layer of brown silty clay topsoil (**100**) with occasional angular limestone inclusions.

5.3 Prehistoric

5.3.1 The evidence for prehistoric activity comprises a small assemblage of worked chert that was recovered from the topsoil in the mine portal area.

5.4 Romano-British

5.4.1 The Romano-British remains comprised a north-west/south-east aligned rubble-surfaced trackway, **102**, which measured 6.4 m wide and 0.3 m deep, and extended for over 32 m. The limestone surfacing, which was locally quarried, comprised 30-100mm gravel within the central 3.4 m of the track, with larger 100-400 mm wide blocks of stone along the edge. A few sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the trackway surfacing and a dump of limpet shells was noted within a linear depression along the southern edge of the track.

5.5 Undated

5.5.1 Trackway **102** overlay an earlier north-west/south-east aligned ditch, **104**, which was 0.7 m wide and 0.25 m deep. The ditch was filled with pale brown clay and angular limestone rubble (**105**). No finds were recovered from the ditch, but it seems probable that it is also Romano-British and may have been a drainage feature associated with the trackway.

5.5.2 Three pits (**106**, **107** and **109**) were recorded to the west of trackway **102**. Pits **107** and **109** were half sectioned; pit **106** was not excavated due to severe weather and flooding of the Site. The pits were all approximately 1 m in diameter and 0.20 m deep. The single dumped fills (**108** and **110**) were almost entirely made up of compact angular limestone rubble, within a matrix of brown silty clay. No finds were recovered from the pits and their date and function remains unknown.

6 FINDS

6.1.1 Very few finds were recovered during the watching brief. They comprise 23 pieces of worked flint, eight sherds of pottery, and one small iron object; **Appendix 1** gives the breakdown of the assemblage by context.

6.2 Pottery

6.2.1 All eight sherds are Romano-British. One of the unstratified sherds is Central Gaulish samian, and belongs to a form 18/31 platter (2nd century AD). The other seven are south-east Dorset Black Burnished ware (BB1), which has a lengthy currency from the Late Iron Age through the Romano-British period; these sherds are undiagnostic and cannot be dated more closely within that date range.

6.3 Worked chert

6.3.1 A small assemblage of flakes, flake fragments, blades, core fragments and a core were recovered from topsoil **100**. With the exception of a single small flake of grey cherty flint, all of the pieces are on dark grey Portland Chert. Fifteen are flakes and flake fragments (some removed from blade cores); two are broken blades. Four pieces are core fragments; there is one small mutli-platform core which has been worked to exhaustion.

6.3.2 Condition of some of the pieces varies, and it may not be a single assemblage. If it is, then it is no later than the Early Bronze Age.

6.4 Iron

6.4.1 The iron object comprises a small, thin rectangular-sectioned bar with a short right-angled return at one end; it is clearly part of a larger object, but its original form and function is unknown. It is undated, but was associated with Romano-British pottery sherds in context **102**.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1.1 Topsoil striping in and around the western end of a new mine portal revealed the remains a Romano-British trackway, an undated ditch, three undated pits, and an assemblage of unstratified prehistoric struck chert.

7.1.2 The relative paucity of archaeological remains within the strip, map and record, and watching brief areas, demonstrates that the archaeological remains on the Site are largely restricted to the known Romano-British occupation sites (Stonehills North and Stonehills South) that were identified during previous archaeological investigations (TA 2000, 2014b and GeoFlo 2014)

7.1.3 In order to protect the known Romano-British occupation sites from damage during mine establishment works and any future restoration works, the known extents of the settlements were demarcated with temporary fencing, prior to being buried (with the topsoil left in-situ) beneath a 1 m thick layer of pale clay. The use of pale clay, which contrasts with the dark topsoil, will allow the interface between the two layers to be easily recognised and help to avoid any inadvertent damage to the underlying archaeological remains during any future landscaping works.

8 STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

8.1.1 With the full agreement of the landowner the project archive will be deposited for long-term storage with Dorset County Museum. Prior to deposition the archive will be temporarily stored at Wessex Archaeology's offices in Salisbury under Site Code 109620.

8.2 Archive

8.2.1 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 Dorset County Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; CIfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

8.3 OASIS

8.3.1 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 wessexar1-225731. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the Dorset Historic Environment Record. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive).

8.4 Discard policy

8.4.1 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.

8.5 Copyright

8.5.1 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.

8.6 Security Copy

8.6.1 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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10 APPENDIX

10.1 Appendix 1: Finds quantified by context

Context	Flint (No.)	Iron (No.)	Pottery (No./Wt (g))
100	23		
102		1	5/31
unstratified			3/22
Total	**23**	**1**	**8/53**

10.2 OASIS form

OASIS ID: wessexar1-225731

Project details

Project name	Archaeological Programme of Works at Stonehill Mine, Avalanche Road, Southwell, Portland, Dorset
Short description of the project	Protection of known Romano-British assets, strip, map and record of mine portal and watching brief on all stripped areas. A continuation of a Romano-British trackway was recorded and an assemblage of prehistoric worked chert recovered.
Project dates	Start: 10-06-2015 End: 26-08-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	109700 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 5 - Mineral extraction
Monument type	TRACKWAY Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Significant Finds	CHERT Uncertain
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	DORSET WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND PORTLAND Stonehills Mine, Avalanche Road, Southwell
Postcode	DT5 2DN
Study area	8.9 Hectares
Site coordinates	SY 6829 7089 50.536327281319 -2.447503880514 50 32 10 N 002 26 51 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology

Project brief originator	Dorset County Council's Senior Archaeologist
Project design originator	Terrain Archaeology
Project director/manager	Bruce Eaton
Project supervisor	Mike Dinwiddy
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Albion Stone plc

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Dorset County Museum
Digital Archive recipient	Dorset County Museum
Paper Archive recipient	Dorset County Museum

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Stonehills Mine, Avalanche Road, Southwall, Portland, Dorset: Archaeological Programme of Works
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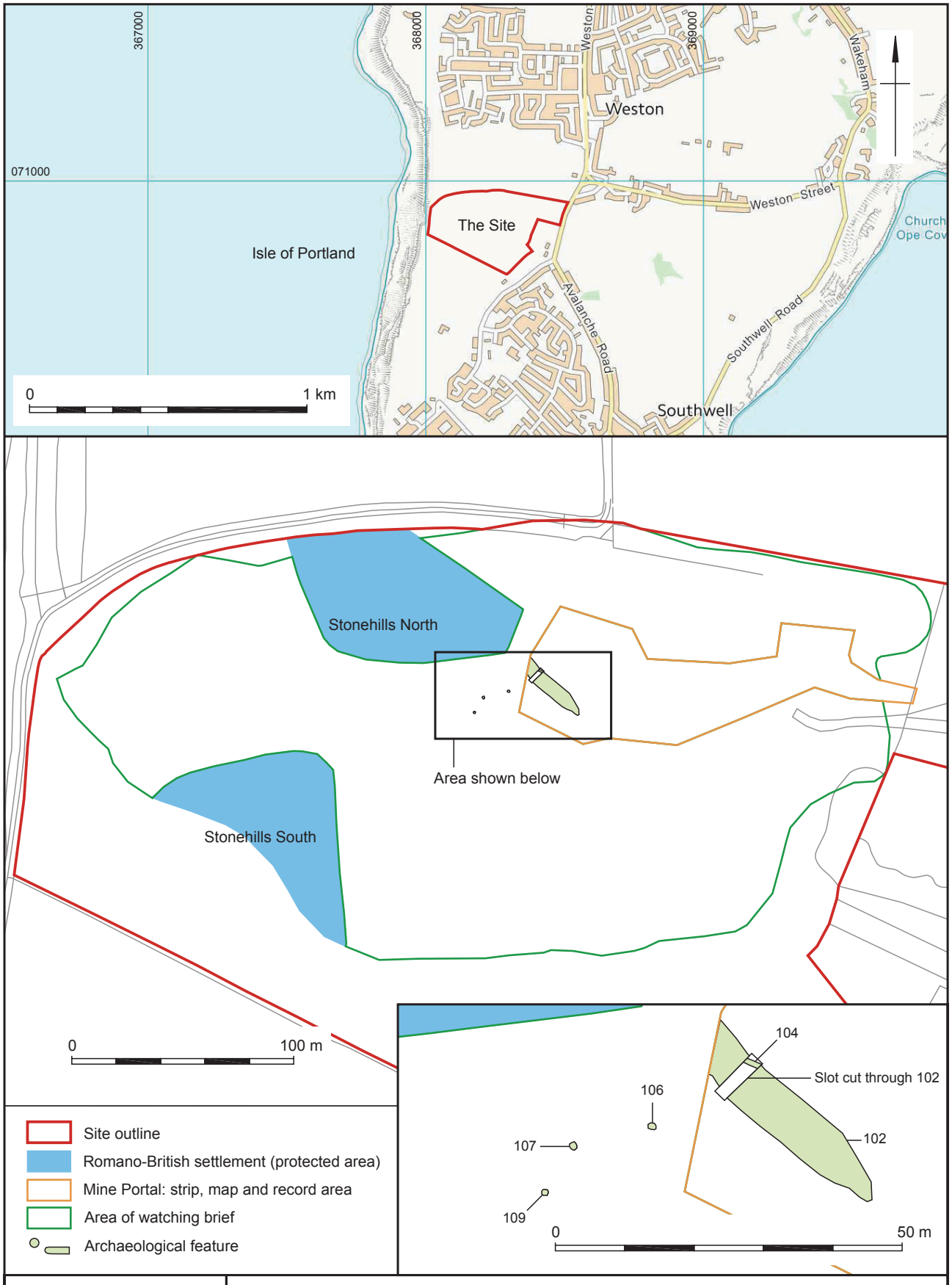
Entered on	7 October 2015



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Site plan: strip, map and record excavation, watching brief and protected areas, and archaeological features Figure 1

Plate 1: Trackway 102, looking north-west

Plate 2: Trackway 102, showing ditch 104, looking west

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