



# National Grid Substation Improvement North-East of Lears Copse Kenn, South Devon

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Fieldwork directed by Ray Holt and Roy Krakowicz

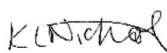
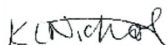
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## Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Infrastructure UK, on behalf of National Grid to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground works associated with improvements at a substation on the south side of the Old Dawlish Road, north-east of Lears Copse, 760 m east of the village of Kennford, South Devon. The site covered an area of approximately 0.75 ha centred on NGR 292350, 86456.

The watching brief comprised the observation of all mechanical excavations within the development area.

One of the excavated areas contained archaeological features and deposits (Area 11), comprising three small undated pits. A sheep burial, relating to recent agricultural activity was also identified and left in-situ.

## Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Kier Infrastructure UK, on behalf of National Grid, for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, in particular Darren Davis. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of Stephen Reed, the Senior Historic Environment Officer, who monitored the project on behalf of Teignbridge District Council, and to Kier Infrastructure UK for their cooperation and help on site.

The fieldwork was directed by Ray Holt and Roy Krakowicz. This report was written by Ray Holt, with specialist finds identification by Phil Harding and Lorraine Mephram, and illustrations by Jennie Anderson. The report was edited by Kirsty Nichol, who also managed the project on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.



# National Grid Substation, Kenn South, Devon

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Infrastructure UK, on behalf of National Grid, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during National Grid substation improvements. The monitored works covered approximately 0.75 ha, centred on NGR 292350 86456, at South Kenn National Grid Substation, north-east of Lears Copse, Kenn, South Devon (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The improvement works are classified as Permitted Development, the Senior Historic Environment Officer advising Teignbridge District Council, stated that the watching brief should be in accordance with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team's specification for archaeological monitoring and recording.
- 1.1.3 This watching brief is part of a programme of archaeological works, which to date has included a Heritage Appraisal (Wessex Archaeology 2017).
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed (Wessex Archaeology 2018). The Senior Historic Environment Officer approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to fieldwork commencing. The watching brief was undertaken between 27 November 2018 and 16 January 2019.

#### 1.2 Scope of the report

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

#### 1.3 Location, topography and geology

- 1.3.1 The site of the watching brief was located on the south side of the Old Dawlish Road as it traverses a ridge of high ground above the settlements of Kenn and Kennford to the south-west and Exminster to the north-east. A small plantation of trees known as Lears Copse abuts the site to the north-west.
- 1.3.2 Existing ground levels are at an elevation of approximately 99 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) dropping gently down both to the north and south.
- 1.3.3 The underlying geology is mapped as Heavitree Breccia Formation with no superficial deposits recorded (British Geological Survey online viewer).



## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was assessed in a prior Heritage Appraisal (Wessex Archaeology 2017), which considered the recorded historic environment resource within a 500 m radius of the development. Evidence gathered from the HER indicated that the Site lay within a later prehistoric to Romano-British landscape. On this basis the Senior Historic Environment Officer requested a watching brief to monitor intrusive groundworks as an appropriate mitigation strategy.
- 2.1.2 A summary of the results is presented below, with relevant entry numbers from the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) included. Additional sources of information are referenced, as appropriate.

### **2.2 Archaeological and historical context**

- 2.2.1 There is substantial evidence for prehistoric activity in the surrounding fields, indicated by sub-surface features visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. A concentration of these is located approximately 370 m north-west of the Site and comprise a possible rectilinear enclosure surrounding two ring ditches and other features (MDV17715); a ring ditch within a rectilinear enclosure thought to be Bronze Age in date (MDV112744); a ring ditch of possible prehistoric or Romano-British date (MDV112745); and a double curvilinear enclosure ditch of later prehistoric or Romano-British date (MDV112746).
- 2.2.2 Other cropmarks relate to a possible rectilinear enclosure tentatively interpreted as relating to an infilled enclosure ditch of later prehistoric or Romano-British origin (MDV112743), located approximately 400 m west of the Site; a complex enclosure with a probable entranceway on its west side of probably later prehistoric to Romano-British origin (MDV17719), located approximately 420 m south-west of the Site; a probable later prehistoric or Romano-British single ditched enclosure (MDV23199), located approximately 500m south of the Site; and a multiple-ditched rectilinear enclosure (MDV17717) located approximately 450 m north-east of the Site.
- 2.2.3 Former medieval field boundaries are also recorded by the HER, located approximately 410 m south of the Site (MDV112912) and approximately 500 m south-east of the Site (MDV112906). Historic mapping indicates the Site remained rural in character situated within a single field until the late 20th century when the National Grid substation was constructed.



### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Aims**

3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018) and as defined in the ClfA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), were:

- To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;
- To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and
- To guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

#### **3.2 Objectives**

3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the watching brief, also defined in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018), were:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;
- To record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);
- To place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- To make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results of the watching brief.

### **4 METHODS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methodology set out within the approved WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

#### **4.2 Fieldwork methods**

##### *General*

4.2.1 The watching brief monitored groundworks associated with the construction of a temporary haul road to the east of the substation (Area 1), a temporary compound to the south of the substation (Area 11), a bog mat crossing on the northern edge of the compound (Area 10) and the excavation of test pits around the perimeter of the substation (Test pits 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) and the haul road (Test pits 2 and 9).





- 4.2.2 The watching archaeologist monitored all mechanical excavations within the specified areas. Where necessary, the surface of uncovered archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand. A sample of archaeological features and deposits identified was hand-excavated, sufficient to address the aims of the watching brief.
- 4.2.3 Spoil derived from both machine stripping and hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. Where found, artefacts were collected and bagged by context. All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, although those from features of modern date (19th century or later) were recorded on site and not retained.

#### *Recording*

- 4.2.4 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete drawn record of excavated features and deposits was made including both plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections), and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD: Newlyn) heights of all principal features were calculated, and levels added to plans and section drawings.
- 4.2.5 A Leica GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service surveyed the location of archaeological features. All survey data is recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSGM15 and OSTN15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.
- 4.2.6 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

### **4.3 Artefactual and environmental strategies**

- 4.3.1 Appropriate strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of artefacts and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b) and *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011).

### **4.4 Monitoring**

- 4.4.1 The Senior Historic Environment Officer, advising the LPA, monitored progress of the watching brief. Any variations to the WSI, if required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with both the client and the Senior Historic Environment Officer.

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 Only one of the areas of groundwork contained archaeological features and deposits (Area 11, **Figure 1**).
- 5.1.2 The uncovered features comprised three pits, which contained no datable artefacts. A modern sheep burial was also recorded in Area 11 and unstratified finds were recovered from the topsoil.
- 5.1.3 The following section presents the results of the watching brief.



## 5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits

- 5.2.1 The natural substrate consisting of dark reddish-brown sandy gravel (102, 1001 and 1101) was revealed in Areas 1, 10 and 11 at a depth of between 0.25 m and 0.35 m below present ground level (BPGL).
- 5.2.2 Redeposited natural substrate (103, 201, 301, 401, 501, 691, 701, 801 and 901) was revealed in Area 1 and test pits 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 at a depth of between 0.1 m and 0.25 m BPGL and indicates extensive disturbance from the original construction and continued maintenance of the substation.
- 5.2.3 The natural substrate was overlain along the northern edge of Area 1 by an isolated deposit of dark reddish-brown silty-sand subsoil 101 measuring 0.2 m in thickness and extending approximately 5 m from the southern edge of Old Dawlish Road. No subsoil was encountered elsewhere within the development area.
- 5.2.4 Dark brown sandy loam topsoil overlay the natural substrate in Areas 10 and 11 (deposits 1000 and 1100 respectively), the subsoil in Area 1 (deposit 100), and redeposited natural in test pits 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (deposits 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800 and 900 respectively). Measuring between 0.1 m and 0.35 m in thickness, the topsoil contained 21 pieces of worked flint of probable Mesolithic date, seven sherds of post-medieval pottery, in addition to numerous sherds of modern pottery (not recovered).

## 5.3 Undated pits

- 5.3.1 A cluster of three pits 1102, 1104 and 1106 were revealed towards the southern end of the temporary compound (Area 11) cut into the natural substrate 1101 (**Figure 1**).
- 5.3.2 Pit 1102 was sub-circular in plan, measured 0.8 m in diameter, 0.19 m in depth, with steep sloping sides to a flat base. The single dark brownish-grey silt fill (1103) contained abundant gravel sized stones and a smaller number of cobble and boulder sized stones including two unworked boulder sized flint nodules (**Figure 2, Plate 1**).
- 5.3.3 Pit 1104 was sub-circular in plan, had steep sloping sides to a slightly concave base, measured 0.6 m in diameter and 0.19 m in depth. The dark brownish-grey silt fill (1105) contained abundant gravel sized stones and a smaller number of cobble and boulder sized stones (**Figure 2, Plate 2**).
- 5.3.4 Pit 1106 was sub-circular in plan, measured 0.75 m in diameter, 0.19 m in depth with moderate sloping concave sides to a flat sloping base (**Figure 2, Plate 3**). The single dark brownish grey silt fill (1107) contained only abundant gravel sized stones, no boulder sized stone being present as was the case in pits 1102 and 1104.
- 5.3.5 Although the pits remain artefactually undated their spatial relationship, forming a semi-circular arc in an otherwise barren landscape and their similarity of form would suggest they are broadly contemporary. The unworked flint nodules within fill 1103, being the raw material for flint tools, tentatively suggests a prehistoric date.

## 5.4 Modern

- 5.4.1 A sheep burial 1108 was recorded at the western edge of the temporary compound (Area 11), close to and parallel with the current field boundary (**Figure 1**). Investigation ascertained the burial was very recent in date and the skeleton was left in-situ.



## **6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE**

6.1.1 The only finds recovered from the site comprise 21 pieces of worked flint, and seven sherds of post-medieval pottery from topsoil 1100 in Area 11.

### **6.2 Flint by Phil Harding**

6.2.1 The flint assemblage contains a flake core, a broken blade, four flakes, five broken flakes, six chips, two pieces of debitage (miscellaneous debris- of which one is burnt), a retouched flake and a microlith. Some of the larger areas of cortex are heavily battered indicating that the flint was obtained from a gravel source. Despite the battered nature of the raw material the flint quality is generally good and provided adequate material for flaking. Most pieces have undergone post-depositional edge damage, which limits the certainty with which retouched material can be identified.

6.2.2 In terms of date, the nature of recovery from an unstratified context indicates that material of more than one period may be present. However, the presence of a microlith indicates that some of the activity, at least, is of Mesolithic date. Localised scatters of Mesolithic material are well represented in this part of Britain and it is very probable, indeed quite likely, that the entire collection is derived from a dispersed Mesolithic assemblage.

### **6.3 Pottery by Lorraine Mephram**

6.3.1 The pottery sherds include one of Staffordshire-/Bristol-type yellow slipware. The other sherds are all coarse redwares; one of which can be identified as North Devon gravel-tempered ware, and one is slip-decorated. Apart from the gravel-tempered ware, these wares cannot be confidently attributed to any specific source, but all could have originated from production centres within the county, such as Barnstaple or Bideford. The yellow slipware can be dated as late 17th or 18th century, and the slipware is also of 17th to 18th-century date; the remainder are only broadly dated as post-medieval. All seven sherds are abraded, a condition consistent with their topsoil provenance.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Summary**

7.1.1 The evaluation identified a limited number of archaeological features within the site, revealed in one of the eleven monitored areas of groundwork. Where the archaeological features were encountered they were observed to cut through the natural substrate and consisted of three of pits of unknown function and date.

7.1.2 Artefacts recovered from the topsoil are likely to have originated partly through manuring of agricultural fields, with the flint tools originating from a dispersed Mesolithic assemblage. The presence of prehistoric settlement is known in the surrounding fields, indicated by sub-surface features visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs and discussed in section 2.2 above.

### **7.2 Discussion**

7.2.1 The evaluation has established that there is a reasonably high potential for archaeology to survive in the surrounding area, albeit of uncertain function and date.

7.2.2 However, the test pits and other areas excavated in the immediate vicinity of the substation revealed a very high level, if not complete, disturbance of the underlying natural substrate. This suggests the site has been comprehensively reworked during its installation, with little if any potential for archaeology to survive within the substation itself.



## 8 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

### 8.1 Museum

8.1.1 The project archive resulting from the evaluation is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's Salisbury office under the project code 118921. A reference number has been issued by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter (**RAMM: 18/58**).

### 8.2 Preparation of the archive

8.2.1 The complete project archive comprises two elements, the physical (artefacts and paper records) and digital. The latter will include born-digital data (images, databases, survey data) and digital copies of all site records, both written and drawn. Both elements will be dealt with following the requirements of the Devon County Historic Environment Team (HET) and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

#### *Physical archive*

8.2.2 Given the extremely small quantity of finds recovered, their topsoil provenance and absence of any items of intrinsic interest, it is considered unlikely that the Museum will wish to acquire the finds under their current accession/collection policies. Specialist opinion offered during assessment of the finds indicates that they have little or no further research potential.

8.2.3 If the museum confirms that they do not require any of the artefacts, items may be retained as a teaching resource by Wessex Archaeology, or offered to the landowner, or to a third-party organisation for public use or as a teaching resource.

8.2.4 The Museum will also be consulted as to whether they wish to retain the hardcopy archive. If this is accepted, the documentary archive will be prepared following the Museum's standard guidelines (*Archaeological Archives Deposition*, latest version 2016).

8.2.5 The physical archive currently comprises the following:

- 1 cardboard box of artefacts;
- 1 file/document case of paper records and A3/A4 graphics;

#### *Digital archive*

8.2.6 The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), and will be compiled in accordance with the standards and requirements of the ADS, as set out on the ADS website (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/advice/guidelinesForDepositors>).

### 8.3 OASIS

8.3.1 An OASIS online record (<http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main>) has been initiated (**wessexar1-332798**), with key fields and a .pdf version of the final report submitted. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local (Devon HER) and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service ArchSearch catalogue.



## **9 COPYRIGHT**

### **9.1 Archive and report copyright**

- 9.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. 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 conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*. In some instances, certain regional museums may require absolute transfer of copyright, rather than a licence; this should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- 9.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

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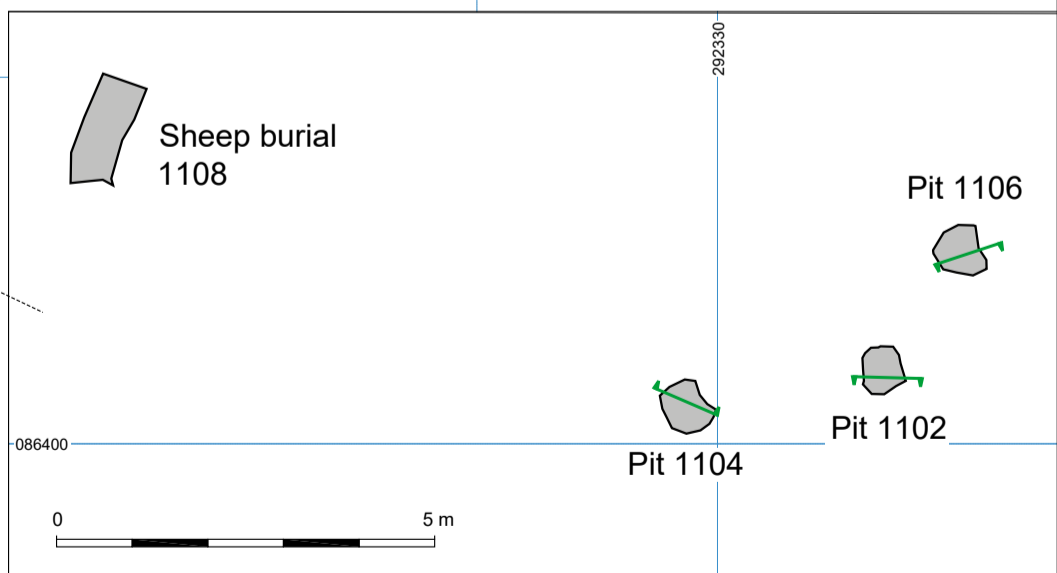
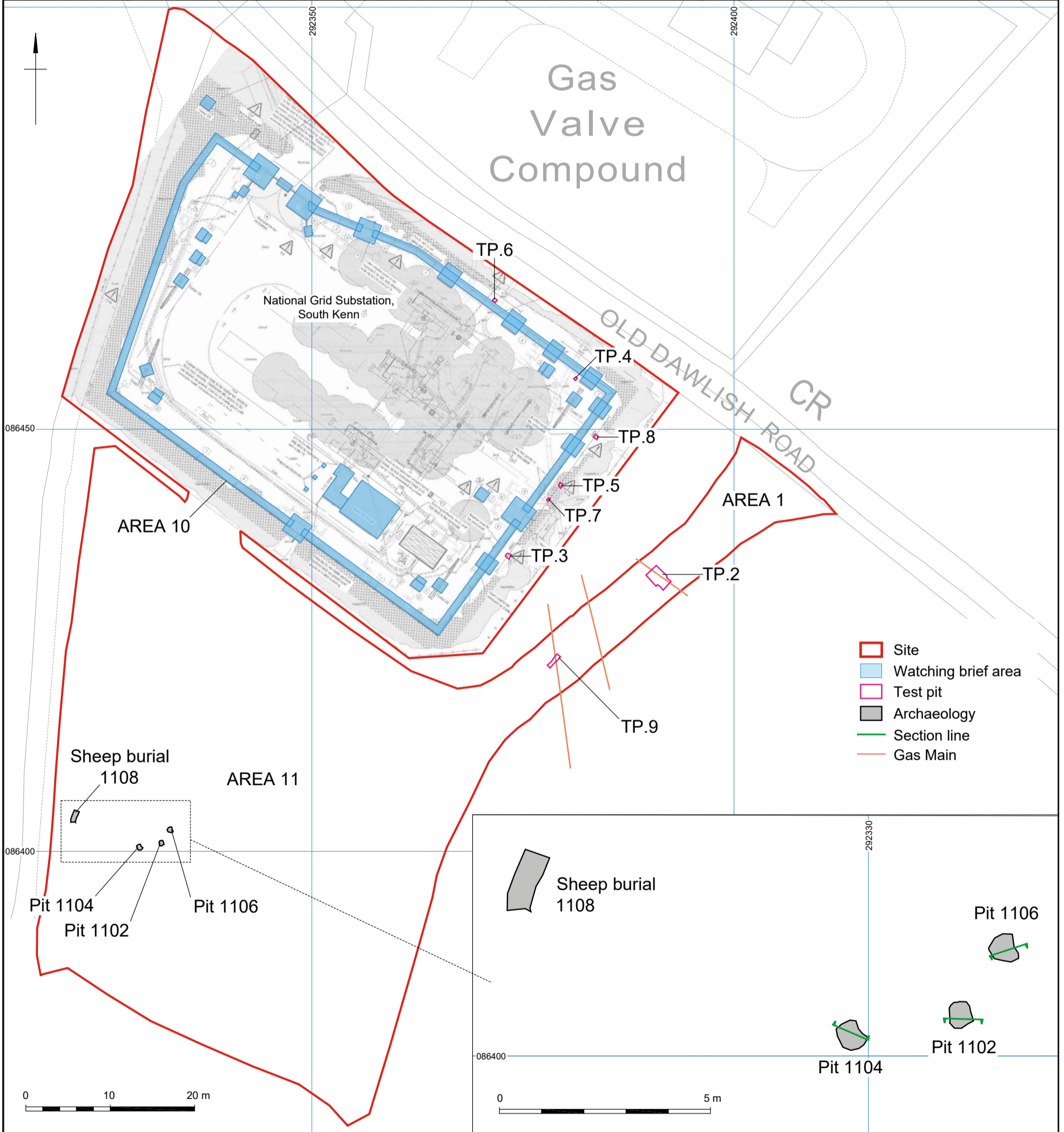
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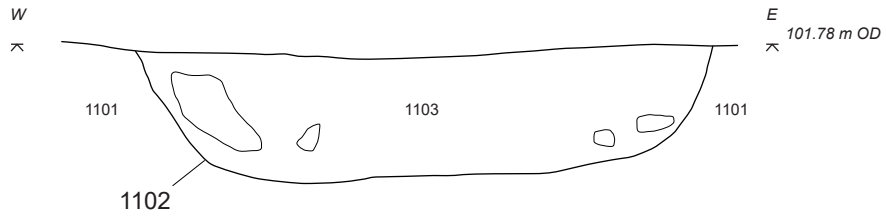


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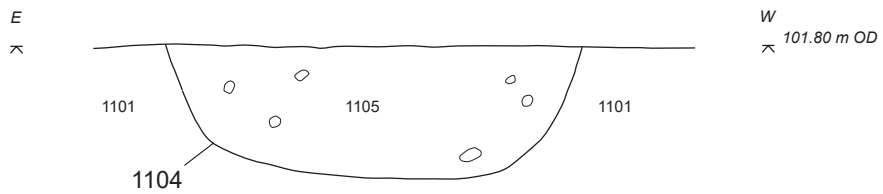
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Site location showing watching brief areas

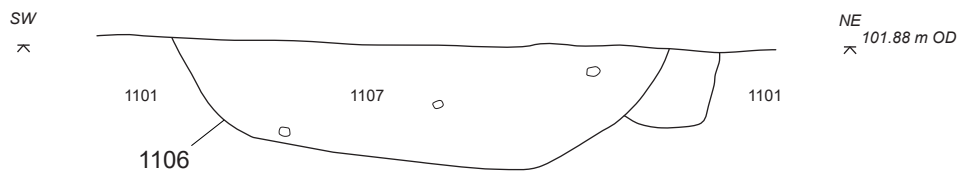
Figure 1



South-facing section of pit 1102, scale 1:10.



North-facing section of pit 1104, scale 1:10.



South-east facing section of pit 1106, scale 1:10.



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Illustrator: JLA

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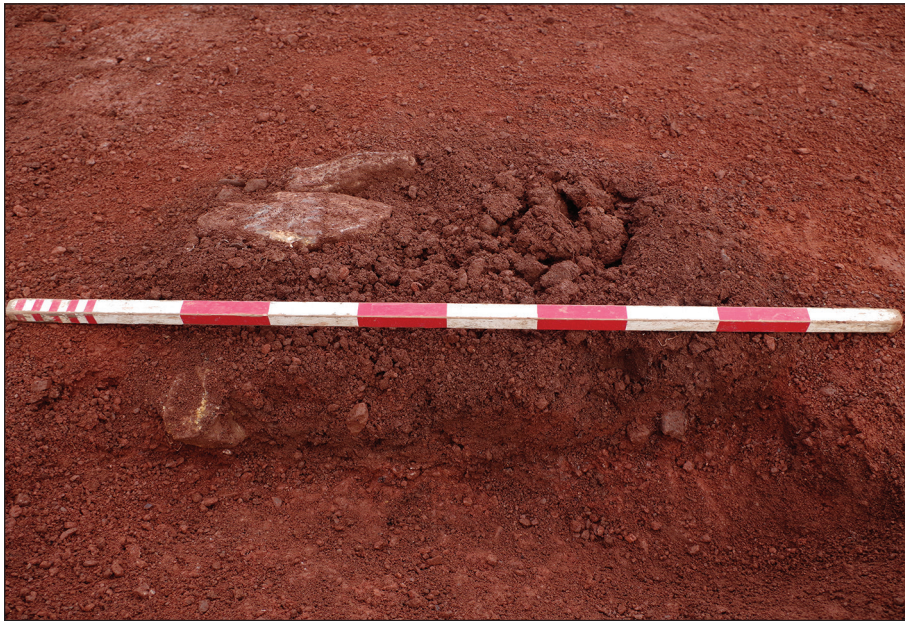


Plate 1: Pit 1102, looking north, scale 1 m.



Plate 2: Pit 1104, looking south, scale 1 m.



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Plate 3: Pit 1106, looking north-west, scale 1 m.

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	Scale:	Not to scale	Illustrator:	JLA
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