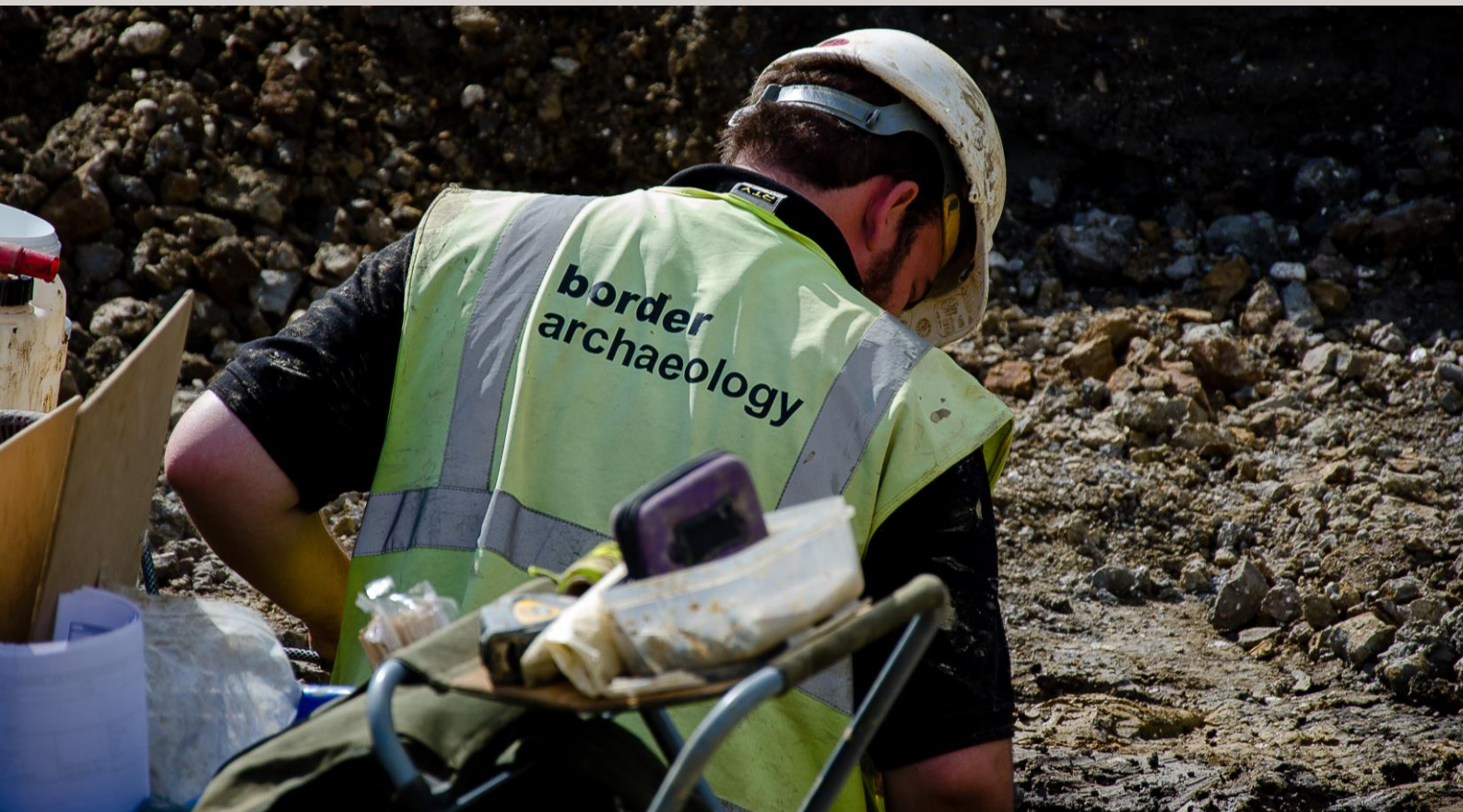


border archaeology

archaeology & built heritage



Archaeological Observation

On behalf of

Southern Planning Practice Ltd

Concerning

Reinstatement & Restoration of

'Parish Ditch'

Brackenwood

Telegraph Hill

Midhurst

West Sussex GU29 0BN

June 2017

borderarchaeology.com

ISO 9001 | ISO 14001 | OHSAS 18001



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Report Ref:

BA1712BSM- 01

Grid Reference:

NGR: SU 8710 2630

OS Licence No:

100055758

Date:

12th June 2017

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1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Ian Ellis Esq. of Southern Planning Practice Ltd to carry out Archaeological Observation in connection with an Appeal Decision to allow, subject to Conditions, a planning application for change of use of land to mixed agricultural and equestrian (dressage) use, retention of barn in reconfigured form, retention of horse-walker etc. at Brackenwood Telegraph Hill Midhurst West Sussex GU29 0BN (NGR: SU 8710 2630).

The archaeological work related specifically to a c.50m section of 'ancient parish boundary ditch' that had been infilled with spoil resulting from construction activity associated with the adjacent American barn.

Archaeological Observation was carried out in compliance with Condition 2 of the Appeal Decision, which required the removal of all modern spoil and the reinstatement and restoration of the ditch 'in order to benefit the appearance of the development and to maintain or enhance the environment around the site'.

Spoil removal was carried out using a tracked excavator and toothless bucket operating under continuous archaeological supervision to reveal the original ditch profile. This report provides details of the work undertaken and confirms reinstatement of the ditch.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Ian Ellis Esq. of Southern Planning Practice Ltd to carry out Archaeological Observation in connection with an Appeal Decision (Ref. APP/Y9507/W/15/3136216) to allow, subject to Conditions, a planning application (Ref. SDNP/15/01024/FUL) dated May 13th 2015 for change of use of land to mixed agricultural and equestrian (dressage) use, retention of barn in reconfigured form, retention of horse-walker etc. at Brackenwood Telegraph Hill Midhurst West Sussex GU29 0BN (NGR: SU 8710 2630) (*figs. 1 & 2*).

The archaeological work related specifically to a Condition (Condition 2 i) c) of the Appeal Decision (November 14th 2016, 14) affecting a c.50m section of an 'ancient parish boundary ditch' that had been infilled with modern material resulting from construction of an adjacent timber-clad American barn. The Condition required reinstatement and restoration of the ditch adjacent to the barn and reflects the opinion of James Kenny BA MCIfA Archaeological Officer Chichester District Council (AOCDC) dated August 8th 2013 which states:

Part of the boundary ditch adjacent to the large modern timber-clad barn has been infilled, presumably as a result of the construction of the building. In my opinion, this is unacceptable and the feature should be restored to its former condition.

This Report details the results of the Archaeological Observation of reinstatement and restoration works.

3 Site Description

The AOCDL describes the ditch as being 3m-4m wide and 1.5m deep, with the spoil from its construction forming a small bank along the W, sloping side surmounted by very mature beech trees. The opposite, eastern side is near vertical in places and is revetted with a drystone wall of medium sized sub-rectangular lower greensand blocks. The survival of the revetment varies considerably along the boundary (and a very well-preserved section adjacent to the S end of the property where a small quarry interrupts the line may be relatively recent. However, the indications are that it was once continuous (Kenny 2013).

A site-visit previously carried out by BA to inspect the ditch prior to reinstatement works found it to be heavily covered with leaf mulch (*Plates 1 & 2*). The approximate maximum width of the ditch measured 3.5m and clearly tapered towards the bottom (there was evidently a void beneath the leaf mulch and spoil filling the exposed section of the ditch and some stones from the revetment wall had collapsed into it).

The outer (SW) side of the ditch was marked by a substantial tree-lined earth bank, about 3.5-4m wide in places. A large beech tree was noted within the ditch itself (*Plates 1 & 5*).

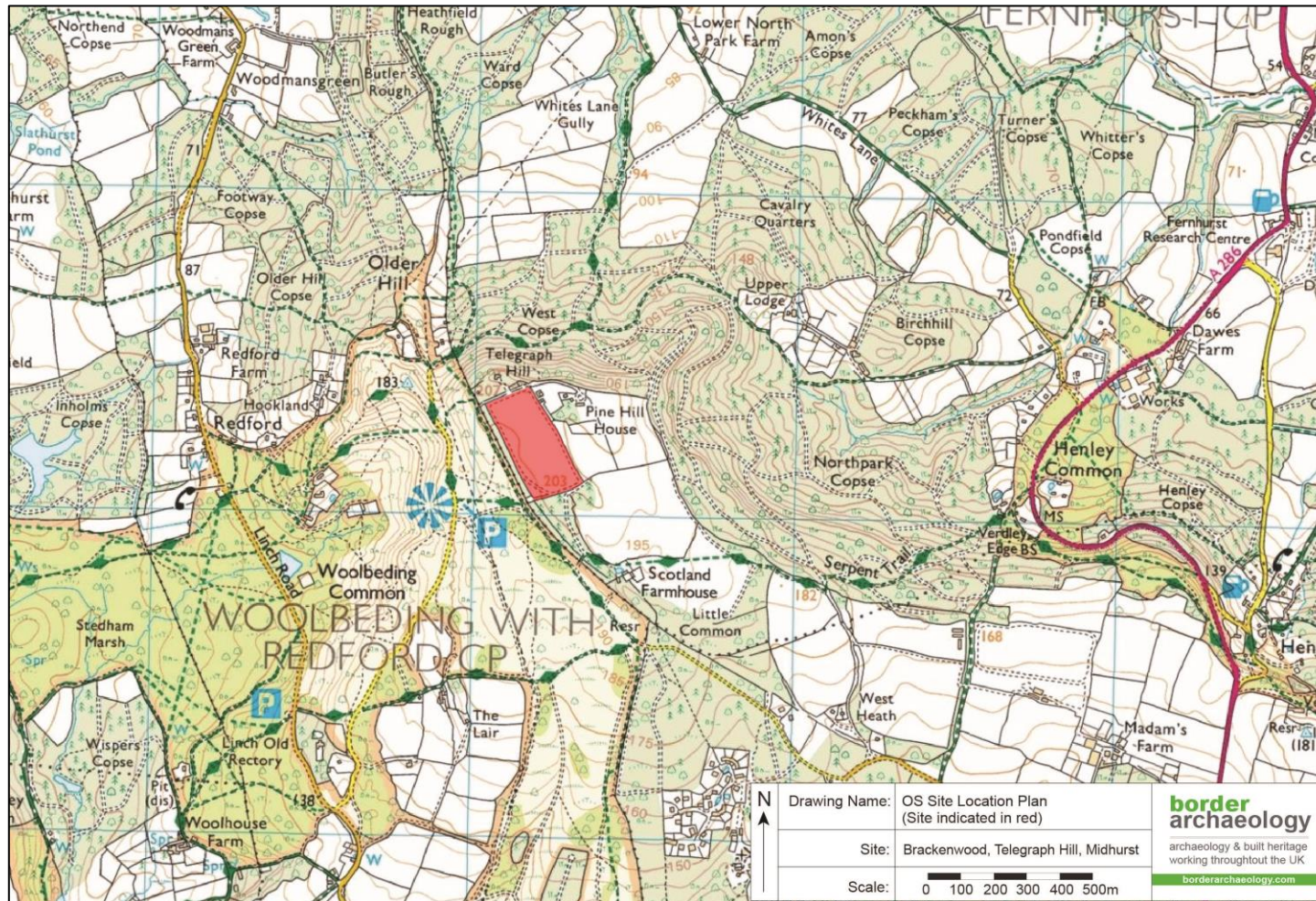


Fig. 1: Site location (shown in red)



Fig. 2: Plan showing location of Archaeological Observation



Plate 1: View looking roughly SE along the infilled section of the ditch immediately behind the new barn (note outer bank of ditch to right of picture)



Plate 2: View SE along well-preserved section of revetment wall and ditch located about 200m SE of the site

4 Aim

The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to observe the removal of modern redeposited soils and to confirm 'the reinstatement and restoration of the ancient parish ditch in order to benefit the appearance of the development and to maintain or enhance the environment around the site', in compliance with Condition 2 of the Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision (November 14th 2016).

5 Methodology

A Method Statement (MS) for the programme of archaeological work was previously compiled by BA (BA Feb. 2017) and approved by the AOCD on February 10th 2017. Archaeological Observation was carried out in accordance with the MS and with practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014). BA adheres to the ClfA Code of conduct (2014).

5.1 Scheme of works

A site-visit was undertaken by BA on February 7th 2017 and an inspection made of the ditch feature, together with a photographic record of its condition at that time (*Plates 1 & 2*). The results of the site-visit were included in BA's MS (BA Feb. 2017).

Excavation to reinstate the original ditch profile was subsequently undertaken on June 8th 2017 using a tracked mini-digger and toothless bucket operating under continuous archaeological supervision, with provision made for manual excavation, as appropriate. Only the modern material deposited within the ditch as a result of construction works was subject to removal; underlying deposition remained undisturbed.

Initial work determined the interface level between the modern infill material and the level of the ditch as existing prior to construction works thereby establishing an approximate working depth.

No artefactual material was revealed during the course of the works, other than that of very recent date.

5.2 Recording

A record was made, as appropriate, in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2017). This comprised a written description and photographic record, together with measured sketches. The photographic record was made using a high-resolution digital camera.

6 Results

Work commenced from the NW end of the infilled ditch section, immediately NW of a large, established beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) (Plate 5), and progressed in a SE direction. An absence of obstructions in the form of trees and associated rooting at this point enabled the profile of the ditch to be determined. This revealed that the ditch lay closer to the bank and was narrower than both ground surface indications and comparison with other sections of the extant ditch would suggest. Root intrusion was considerable in the area around the beech tree.

The profile revealed an original humic ditch fill overlying natural. The humic layer, at this point, was c.0.2-0.4m thick and was overlaid by modern infill material to a depth of approximately 0.5m. A modern food wrapper of probable 1990s date found on the horizon of the humic layer provided the only piece of dating evidence identified during the course of the excavations, with no other 'finds' noted apart from a scattering of roofing screws and wooden boards (relating to construction of the barn) lying on the ground surface.

Having thus defined a clear excavation horizon, the modern infill was removed under continuous archaeological supervision, its depth varying along the ditch between approximately 0.4m and 0.9m. The fact that this infill material was clean throughout, with no inclusions of refuse or other clearance debris, suggests it was composed entirely of redeposited soil resulting from the digging-out of barn foundations or other concurrent excavations.



Plate 3: NW/SE longitudinal profile, looking SW

A short length of masonry revealed on the NE side of the ditch, close to the large beech tree previously noted (*Plate 5*), represented an isolated section of revetment wall, reflecting the discontinuous nature of this feature along the length of the ditch. It was also noted that the ditch was likely to have been somewhat overgrown prior to backfilling, as suggested by the presence of a holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) growing in the middle of the ditch, the callus wood on its lower trunk suggesting it predates the barn construction activity.

In the process of tracing the route of the ditch, a significant deviation of c.0.5m from linear alignment was noted and this was followed/respected in the reinstatement works. The deviation was especially apparent in the mid-section of the area behind the barn, where it narrowed/deviated towards the SW. There is a possibility that this deviation/narrowing may represent a section of ditch that has been less subject to the effects of slumping/weathering over the centuries since construction. It is possible that the ditch was originally fairly irregular along much of its length and that the more regular alignment noted elsewhere can be attributed to a combination of slumping/weathering activity and the 'softening' effect of vegetation.



Plate 4: View looking SE showing remains of revetment feature, as revealed



Plate 5: View NW showing reinstated ditch and its somewhat irregular alignment. The large beech tree referred to in the text is also shown.

7 Conclusion

The interface between modern backfill material and an underlying humic deposit representing the ditch profile as it existed prior to the construction groundworks was clearly identified. An excavation horizon was established on this basis and reinstatement proceeded in a NW-SE direction. Between 0.4m and 0.9m of backfill was removed, this being composed of soil presumably removed during the excavation of foundations. No evidence of construction debris was noted. Care was taken to avoid damage to pre-existing trees and the surviving section of revetment wall.

8 Copyright

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Report Title		Report Ref	
Archaeological Observation of Reinstatement & Restoration of Parish Ditch at Brackenwood Telegraph Hill Midhurst West Sussex GU29 0BN		BA1712BSM/01	
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Editing	George Children MA MCI fA		
Issue No.	Status	Date	Final Edit & Approval
1	Final	June 2017	Neil Shurety Dip. M G M Inst M