



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological watching brief of groundworks at  
Clifton Observatory, Bristol  
October 2011



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY  
DECEMBER 2011

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF OF GROUNDWORKS AT  
CLIFTON OBSERVATORY, BRISTOL  
OCTOBER 2011  
ACCESSION NUMBER 2011/51

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**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by			
Verified by			
Approved by			

## CLIFTON OBSERVATORY, BRISTOL

**OASIS: 114191**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Clifton Observatory	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of the foundations for a replacement wall around the north-eastern side of Clifton Observatory. The foundations were excavated by hand using a pick and shovel and then rapidly cleaned to identify any cut features. For almost the entire length the natural limestone lay at only 10-20mm below the current surface. Dateable objects were recovered from a single area of disturbance including pieces of recent bottle glass and a 1971 2 pence piece.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Watching brief	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	SAM BS29; HER Event no. 25073	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)		
Current Land use	Area of former wall which is being reinstated on the same line	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval observatory sited within Iron Age promontory/hillfort	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Bristol	
Site address (including postcode)	Clifton Observatory, Clifton Down, Bristol	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	c 30m	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	ST 5657 7325	
Height OD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	N/A	
Project Design originator	Ian Meadows	
Director/Supervisor	Ian Meadows	
Project Manager	Ian Meadows	
Sponsor or funding body	John Michallat	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	25th September 2011	
End date	25th September 2011	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical	None	None
Paper	2011/51	
Digital	2011/51	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title	Archaeological watching brief on groundworks at Clifton Observatory, Bristol, October 2011	
Serial title & volume	11/266	
Author(s)	Ian Meadows	
Page numbers		
Date		

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Front cover: Clifton Observatory, Bristol

Fig 1: Site location

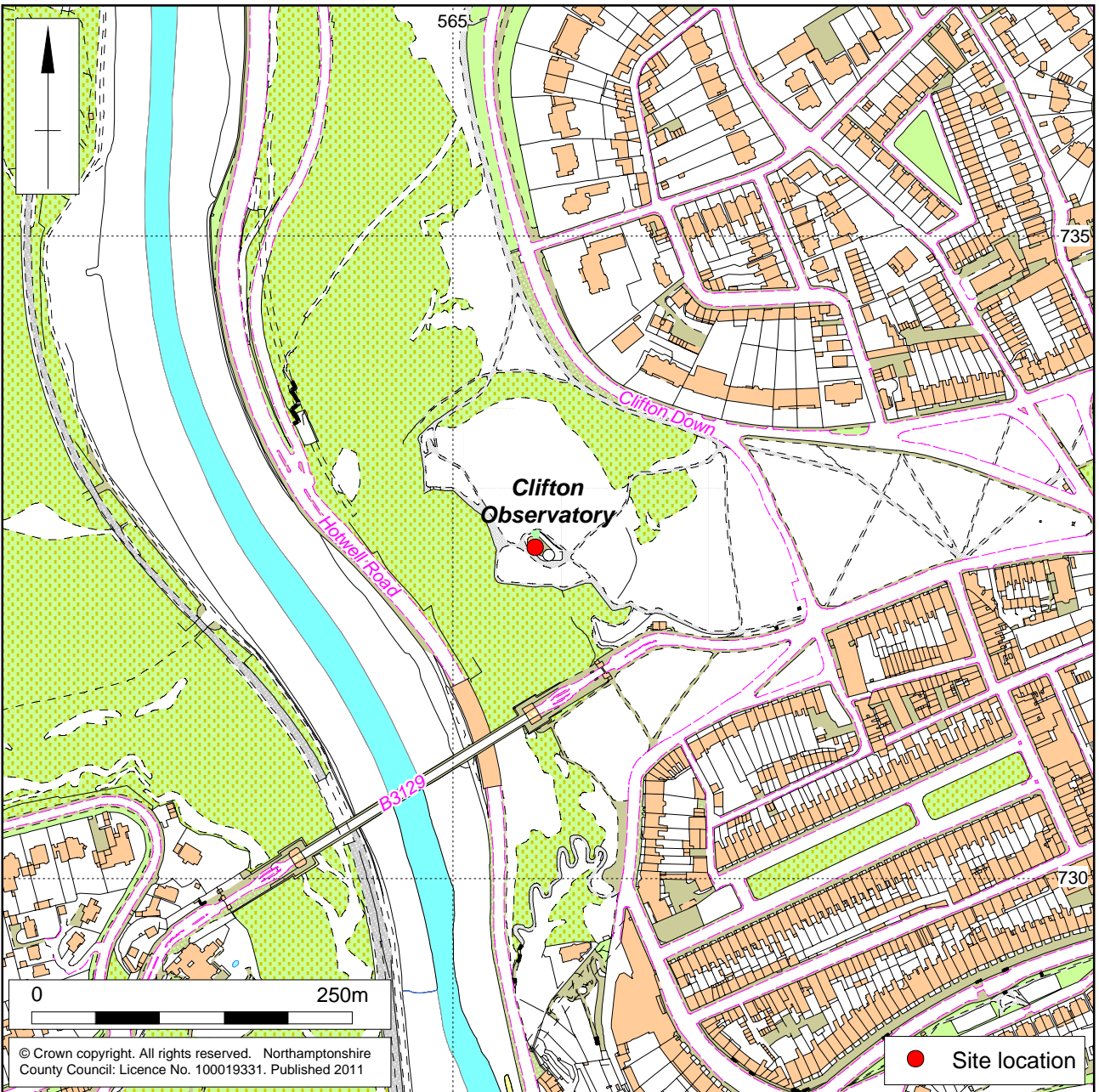
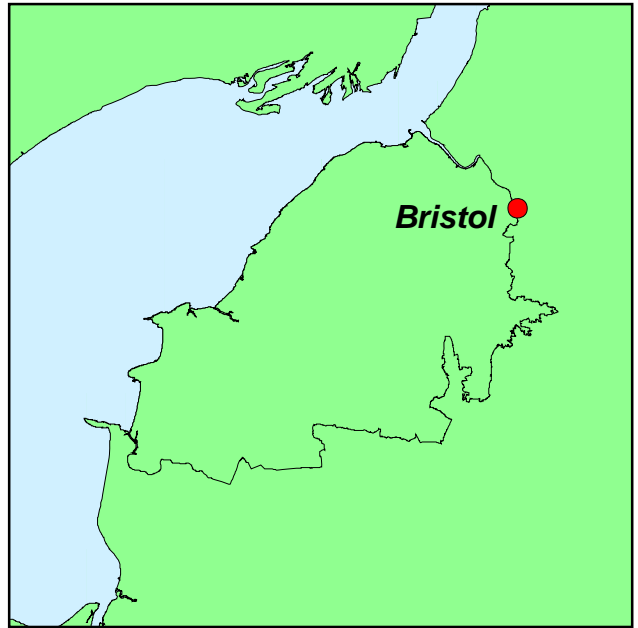
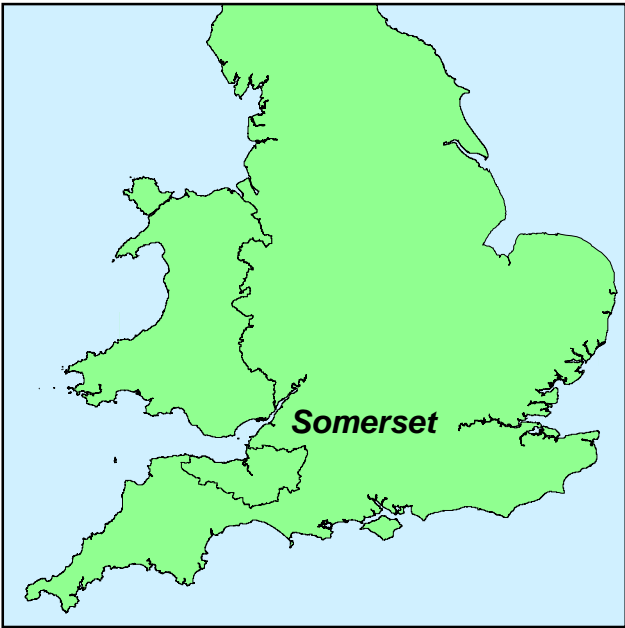
Fig 2: Observed foundations

Fig 3: General view of site

Fig 4: Service trench

Fig 5: Area of disturbance

Back cover: Clifton Suspension Bridge



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON GROUNDWORKS AT  
CLIFTON OBSERVATORY, BRISTOL  
OCTOBER 2011**

*Abstract*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of the foundations for a replacement wall around the north-eastern side of Clifton Observatory. The foundations were excavated by hand using a pick and shovel and then rapidly cleaned to identify any cut features. For almost the entire length the natural limestone lay at only 10-20mm below the current surface. Datable objects were recovered from a single area of disturbance including pieces of recent bottle glass and a 1971 2 pence piece.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Paul Warren-Cox of Logic CPS Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Clifton Observatory, Bristol (NGR ST 5657 7325; Fig 1). The site lies within an Iron Age promontory/hillfort (Scheduled Ancient Monument BS29) and therefore the site is considered to be an area of High Archaeological Potential and the watching brief was required by the Bristol Archaeological advisor as mitigation to record any surviving archaeological levels. A written scheme of investigation was prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology and submitted to him for approval before works began (Mason 2011).

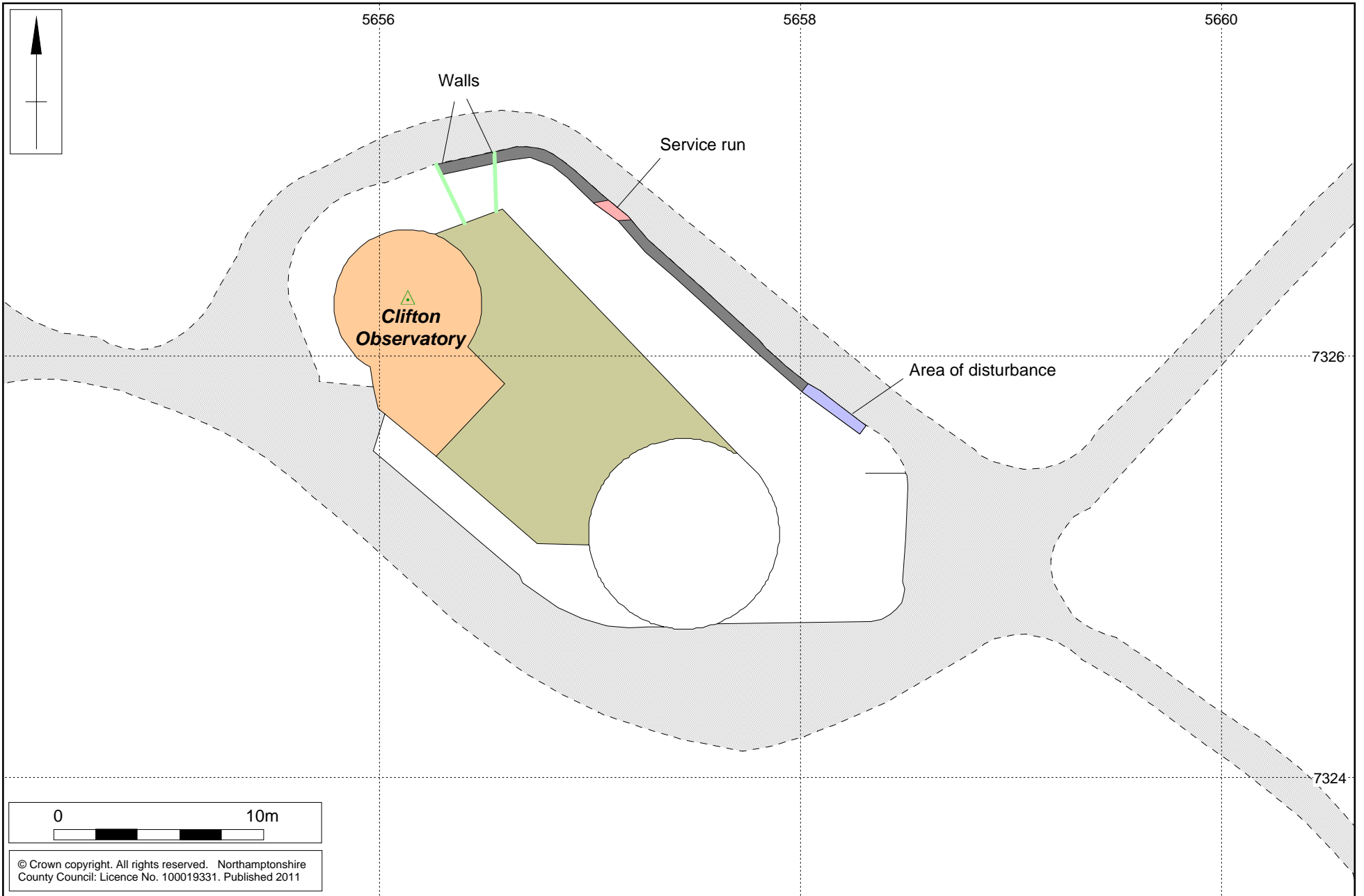
**2 METHODOLOGY**

The proposed works comprised the rebuilding of a wall around the north-eastern side of the Observatory beside the tarmac path (Figs 2 and 3). A previous wall had been demolished on this line and some of the stones from its construction were still present on site. At several points along the line of the proposed wall the natural rock protruded. At the time of observation a thin spread of stony clay loam soil and other material overlay the line of the previous wall which was therefore redefined by removing the generally disturbed upper soil under archaeological supervision to a depth of 10-20mm (Fig 2). The exposed surface was roughly cleaned by trowel to facilitate observation.

Scale 1:250

Area of archaeological observation

Fig 2







General view of site Fig 3

### 3 OBSERVATIONS

Observation of the line of the 0.5m wide wall foundation footprint revealed that for most of the line the removal of the thin soil exposed undisturbed natural limestone that ranged from massive to fragmented and clayey. Two features were observed cut into this horizon. One comprised an oblique area running approximately east from the observatory that represented an infilled service trench and the other an irregular area, possibly where a tree had been removed.



Service trench Fig 4

The service trench infill (Fig 4) comprised a thin spread of orange mortar that overlay a dark brown clay loam with stones and also fragments of brown plastic piping. Because the trench lay oblique to the line of the wall foundation it was not possible to identify its true width but it occupied about 1.4m of the observed length.

The probable tree pit (Fig 5) lay within an area of significant root activity, its infill of dark brown clay loam incorporated coal ash, recent bottle glass and wire along with a 1971 2 pence piece (none of which were retained).



Area of disturbance Fig 5

With the exception of the above two areas no other features were observed along the entire length of the footprint for the walls foundation trench.

The area of the proposed bin store was also examined. The store was to comprise the re-building of a wall on a surviving wall stub and the area between this wall and the current access path was then to be raised with no ground intrusion. Examination of the area showed it too was clear of archaeological features with presence of substantial projecting natural limestone.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Although the study area was within an Iron Age promontory/hillfort and the building known as Clifton Observatory has undergone many different uses since its original construction as a windmill, no pre modern cut features were observed. The intended building works were confined to areas where previously there had been walls, of which little or no trace survived. The narrow exposure along the line of the former wall ensured that only earth cut feature would be observed and both of those identified were demonstrably recent.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mason, P, 2011 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological investigation and watching brief at Clifton Observatory, Clifton Down, Bristol*, Northamptonshire Archaeology



Northamptonshire County Council

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