



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
DEVILS DYKE
WHEATHAMPSTEAD
HERTFORDSHIRE**

NGR: TL 1827 1338

on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council



J Richards BA PIFA

May 2008

ASC: 1057/WDD/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	HDD	<i>Project no:</i>	1057
<i>OASIS ref:</i>		<i>Accession no:</i>	DDW 08
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Wheathampstead		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Wheathampstead		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 1827 1338		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c. 1.6ha		
<i>Present use:</i>	Scheduled Ancient Monument		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of improved access ramp and steps		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	unknown		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	St Albans District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	3 rd – 7 th April 2008		
<i>Commissioned by:</i>	Hertfordshire County Council (Rights of Way) County Hall Hertford SG13 8DN		
<i>Client:</i>	As above		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Julian Thornton		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	J Richards BA PIFA	<i>Date:</i>	1 st May 2008
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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Figure 1: General location (Scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In April 2008 ASC Ltd carried out a watching brief during the construction of an improved access ramp and stepped access to the Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire. The ramp and steps had been designed to minimize the level of ground disturbance. In total 10 posts were needed in order to support the steps and associated handrail. The postholes for these were dug using hand tools under archaeological supervision. No archaeological finds were observed and the impact of this scheme of works on the monument was kept to a minimum.

1. Introduction

1.1 In April 2008 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by *Hertfordshire County Council*, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Barclay and Fell 2008) and approved by *English Heritage* (EH).

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief was required as a condition of *Scheduled Monument Consent* by EH and the *Historic Environment Unit* (HEU) of *Hertfordshire County Council*.

1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (ASC) is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *Management*

The assessment was managed by **Karin Semmelmann** BA MA AIFA, and was carried out under the overall direction of **Bob Zeepvat** BA MIFA.

1.5 *The Site*

1.5.1 *Location & Description*

The site is located in Wheathampstead, in the administrative district of St Albans, Hertfordshire (Figure 1). It is situated on the east side of the village and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference TL 1827 1338 (Figure 2).

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The soils of the region comprise the *Hornbeam 3 Association* namely, deep loamy soils (Soil Survey 1983; 582d) over middle chalk (BGS, 239). It lies at an approximate elevation of c.110m OD.

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The proposal is for the construction of a flight of steps to improve access to the site. An indicative development scheme is shown in Figure 3.

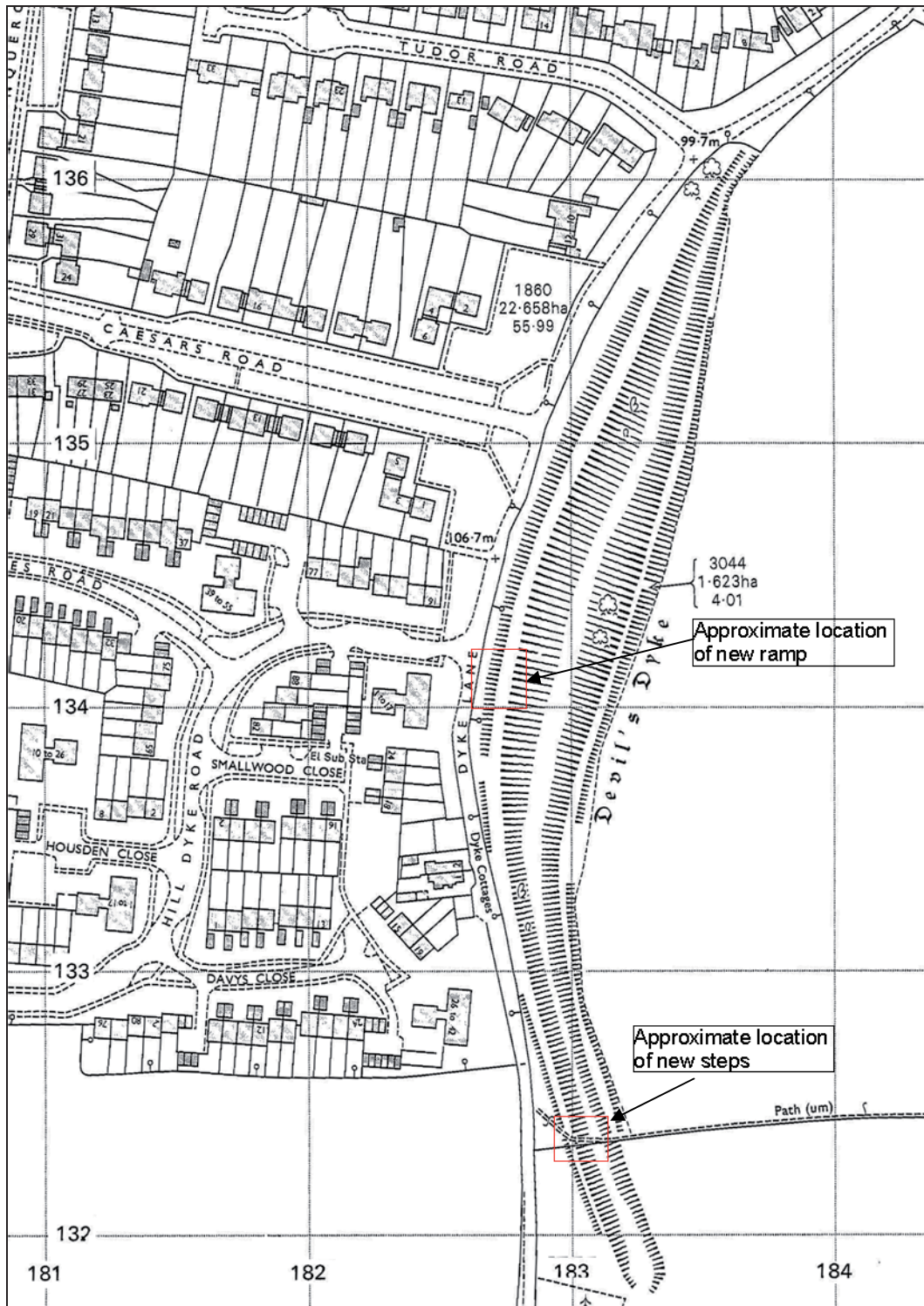


Figure 2: Site plan (Scale 1:2500)

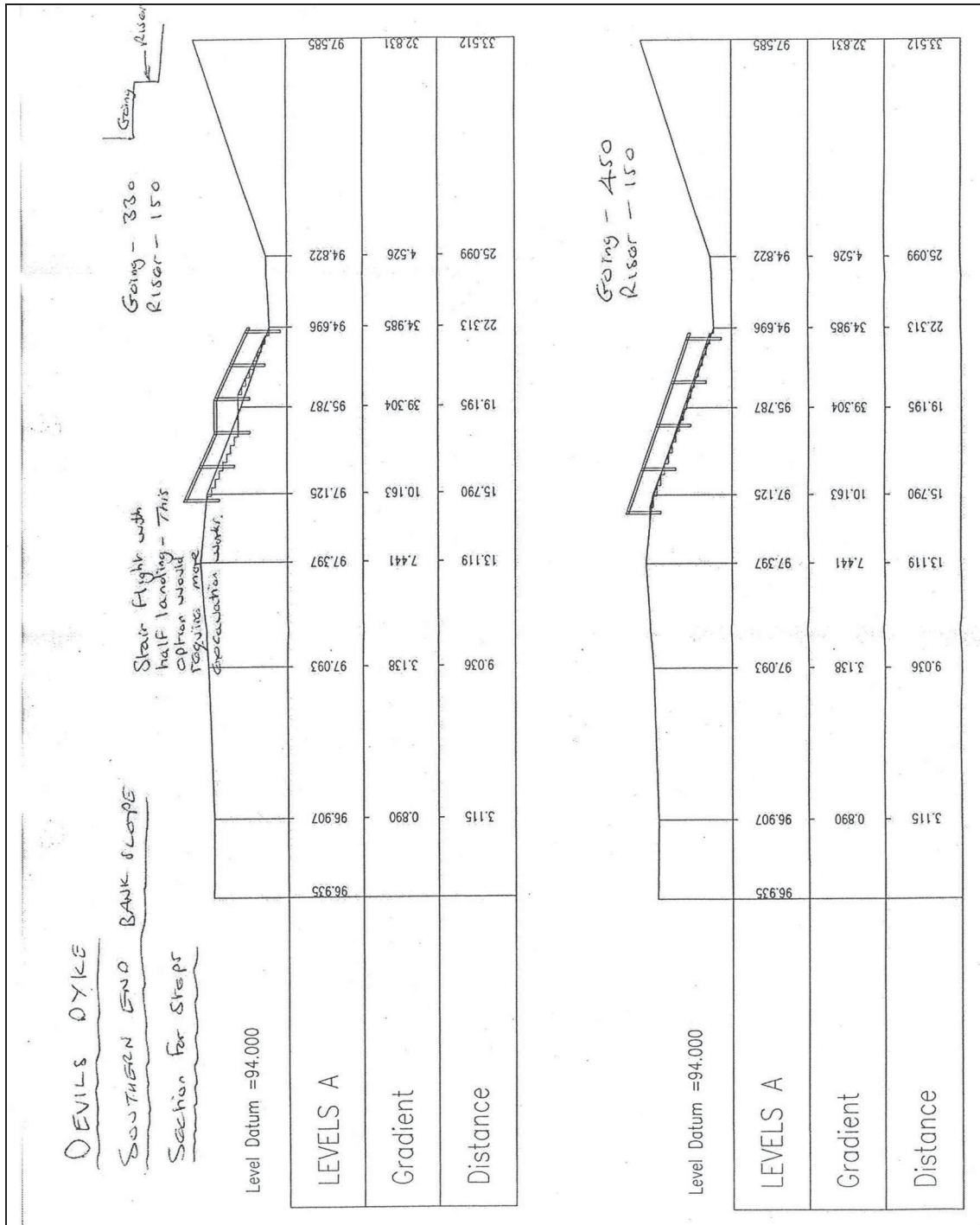


Figure 3: Sections through Devil's Dyke showing indicative proposals (Scale = 1: 2,000)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As agreed with the HEU, the aims of the watching brief were:

- To ensure any archaeological features are fully recorded and interpreted
- To ensure any significant evidence is recorded and analysed to appropriate standards

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the project design (Barclay and Fell 2008), which required:

- A watching brief, to be maintained on all groundworks associated with the development

3. Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 The following section provides a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs. The site lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods.

This section has been compiled with information from the project design (Barclay and Fell 2008).

3.2 Wheathampstead is an area of considerable archaeological and historical interest (Page 1971), and this has recently been defined in the *Wheathampstead and Harpenden Extensive Urban Survey* (Thompson 2002). The site has the potential to reveal evidence from a range of periods, although the main focus of interest is likely to lie in the late Iron Age period (Hunn 1992; Thompson 1979; Saunders & Havercroft 1982).

3.3 The site comprises a small area on the west side of a major linear earthwork known as the *Devils Dyke*. The monument was partially excavated in the 1930s (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936) and has been interpreted as a Belgic *oppidum* (defended enclosure).

3.4 A major Roman road, linking *Verulamium* (St Albans) with the small town at Welwyn, lies 1km southeast of the site (OS 1979). It has been suggested that Wheathampstead may have been the site of the final battle between *Julius Caesar* and *Cassivellaunus* (Niblett 1995, 14).

4. Results

- 4.1 Three visits were made between 3rd April and 7th April 2008 to monitor the groundworks for the new ramp and steps. The ramp is located on the western side of the monument approximately opposite Hill Dyke Road and the steps are located *circa* 175m south of the ramp on the eastern slope of the western bank of the monument.
- 4.2 The ramp access was formed by driving 20cm tall, 6cm squared, wooden stakes 10cm into the ground at 2m intervals, in two parallel rows, and nailing strips of wood to these to form the edging of the path. Wood chippings were then spread across the ground surface in between this wooden edging. This did not cause any disturbance below the level of the topsoil (Plates 1 and 2).
- 4.3 At the area where the steps were to be constructed, it was noted that the bank of the monument had begun to erode. There was a distinct concave profile to the slope and the topsoil had eroded completely at the top of the slope, exposing the orange gravelly clay which formed the structure of the bank (Plate 3).
- 4.4 The steps were formed of flat timbers fixed to parallel wooden beams, which in turn were attached to upright posts set into the ground. The gradient of the slope meant that the beams had to be set into the ground by 8cm at the bottom of the slope and by 5cm at the top of the slope. At the base of the slope this was within the topsoil, at the top of the slope the monument structure was impacted upon by up to 4cm (Fig. 4, Plates 5 and 7).
- 4.5 The wooden upright posts were 0.08x0.15m in size and were set 1.80m apart. The holes were dug using hand tools and were sub-circular or ovoid in plan *c.* 0.20m by 0.30m (Fig. 4, Plate 4). The two lines of posts were set 1.40m apart (Fig. 4).
- 4.6 The southern line of posts were to support a handrail as well as the steps and therefore had to be sunk 0.60m into the ground. The northern posts were only to support the steps and therefore only the post at the top of the step was 0.60m deep, the other four were 0.45m deep. All these postholes were dug under archaeological supervision.
- 4.7 The dark blackish brown silty clay topsoil, where present, overlay mid orange silty clay with frequent inclusions of flint gravel and pebbles and occasional large flint nodules. This was very compacted and formed the bank of the monument. Several large trees were noted to be growing on the monument and their roots were observed within the orange silty clay when the postholes were dug.



Plate 1: Construction of the ramp access



Plate 2: Location of new steps, erosion of monument is clearly visible



Plate 3: Typical post hole



Plate 4: Post hole at base of slope showing topsoil thickness

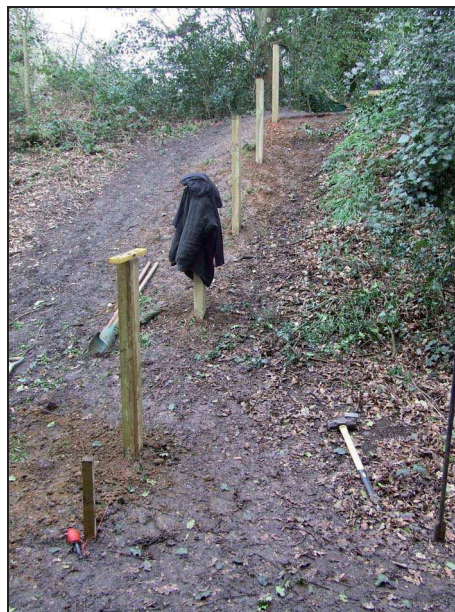


Plate 5: Southern line of posts



Plate 6: Southern beam at base of slope showing level of ground disturbance

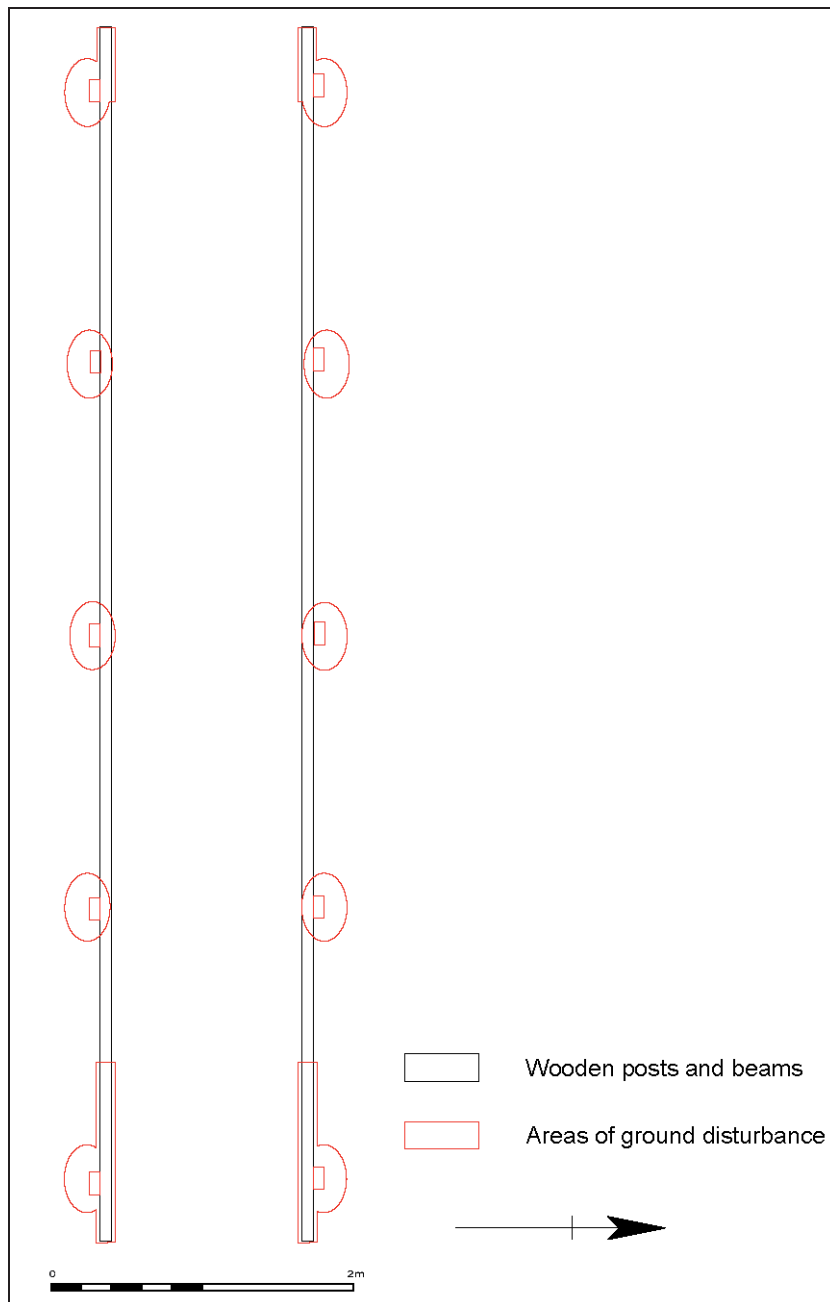


Figure 4: Plan of areas of ground disturbance (*Scale 1:50*)

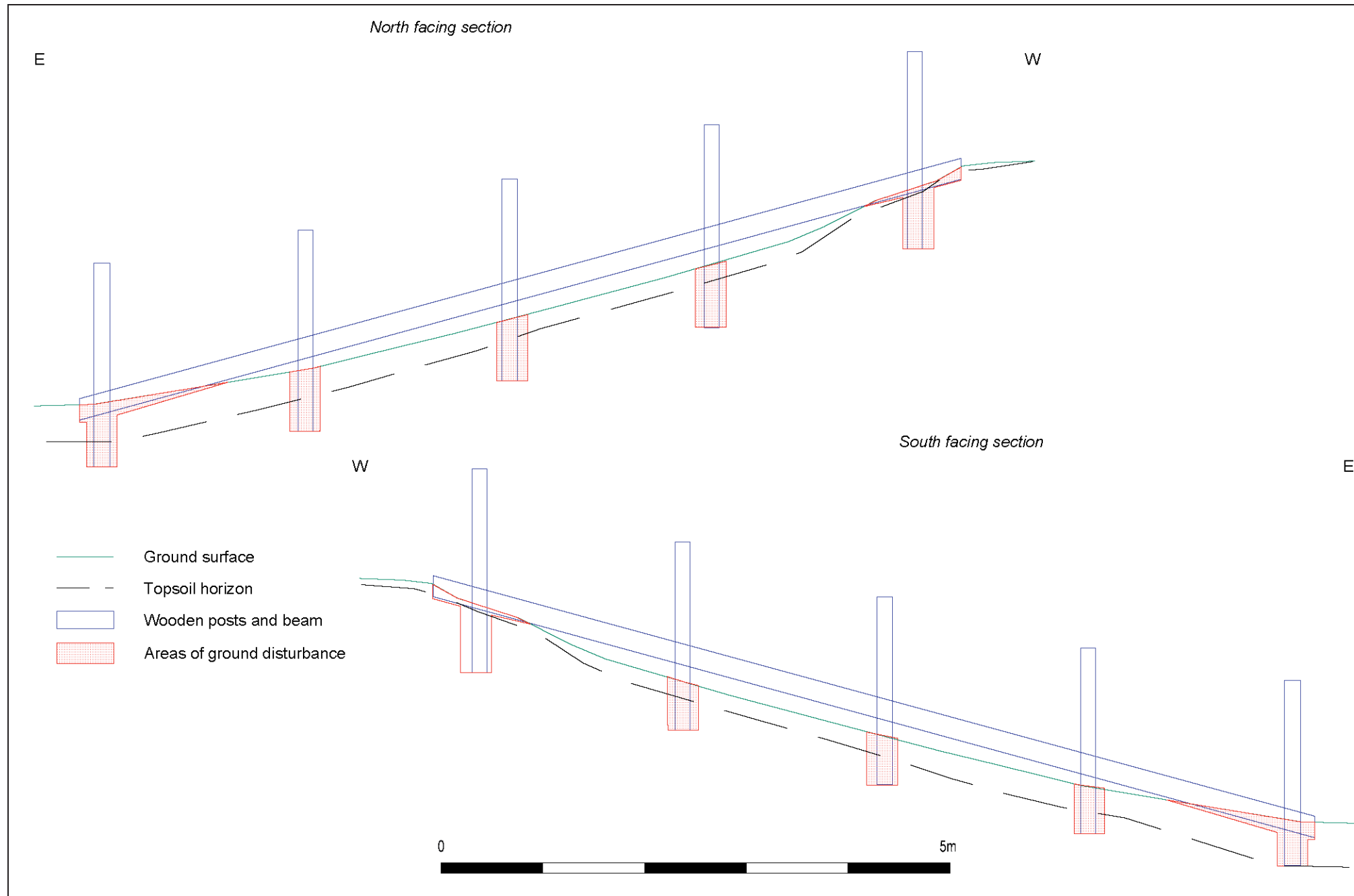


Figure 5: Sections (Scale 1:50)

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 In total 10 postholes were dug into the monument to support the steps. These were c. 0.25m in diameter and up to 0.60m in depth. The north-easternmost posthole did not extend below the topsoil, the other postholes extended up to 0.40m below the base of the topsoil into the monument.
- 5.2 The beams to support the steps impacted on the monument by up to 10cm in depth and 12cm in width at the top of the slope. They were also set into the ground by a similar amount at the base of the slope, but this was within the topsoil.
- 5.3 No archaeological finds were observed during the watching brief. The new steps will help to reduce the erosion of the monument, which was observed in this area. Apart from this erosion and some root disturbance, no previous ground disturbance was observed.
- 5.4 *Confidence Rating*
The watching brief took place during fine weather and full co-operation was received from the groundworkers. All groundworks were monitored and the impact of this development on the monument was minimized as much as possible without affecting the stability and safety of the new steps.

6. Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by *Hertfordshire County Council*. The writer is grateful to Julian Thornton for his assistance. The project was monitored by Debbie Priddy on behalf of *English Heritage*, Kate Batt for Hertfordshire County Council and Simon West for St Albans District Council. Thanks are also due to Steven Stacy and Tom Williams of *Maydencroft Environmental Contractors* for their assistance.

The project was managed for ASC by Karin Semmelmann BA MA AIFA. Fieldwork was carried out by Jenny Richards BA PIFA. The report was prepared by Jenny Richards and edited by Bob Zeepvat MA MIFA.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site Monitoring Sheets
6. Site record drawings
7. List of photographs
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with *St Albans District Museum*.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- Barclay, C. and Fell, D. 2008 *Project Design for Watching Brief at Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire* (ASC Ltd)
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

Secondary Sources

- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Hunn J R, 1992 'The Verulamium Oppidum and its Landscape in the Late Iron Age' *Archaeological Journal*, **149**, 39-68
- Niblett R 1995 *Roman Hertfordshire* Dovecote Press Dorset
- OS 1979, *Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain*. Ordnance Survey. Southampton
- Page W (ed.) 1971 *Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire 2*
- Saunders A & Havercroft A, 1982 'Excavations on the line of the Wheathampstead Bypass, 1974-1977 with some thoughts on the oppida at Wheathampstead and Verulamium' *Hertfordshire Archaeology* **8**, 11-39
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Thompson I 1979, 'Wheathampstead revisited' *Bulletin of the University of London Institute of Archaeology*, **6**, 159-85
- Thompson I, 2002 *Wheathampstead & Harpenden: Extensive Urban Survey Project Assessment Report* Hertfordshire County Council
- Wheeler R E M and Wheeler T V, 1937 *Verulamium: A Belgic and two Roman cities*. Society of Antiquaries Research Report **11**

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD			
Project: DEVILS DYKE, WHEATHAMPSTEAD		Project No/Code: 1057/WDD.		Sheet: of	
		Date of visit: 3/4/08.			
Client/Developer					
Contact: Tom Williams				Phone: 0798 1569364	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 8:00.		Finish: 10:30.	
Completed by: TR.					
Development Type:					
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines
					Other (specify): FOOTPATH + STEPS.
Site & weather conditions: DRY, SUNNY, RURAL.					
Observations: RAMP OFF DYKE LANE BEING CONSTRUCTED. TOOK PHOTOS OF WORK IN PROGRESS AND OF AREA OF NEW STEPS (DIGI ONLY). NEW STEPS ON OTHER SIDE OF BANK WILL BE WOODEN, SIT ON TOP OF SURFACE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, SUPPORTED BY POSTS SET INTO HOLES 150x70mm x 300mm DEEP. WILL START TOMORROW. 450mm WIDE STEPS WILL BE SCREWED INTO SUPPORTING POSTS. HANDRAIL POSTS 50mm DEEP. LOCAL COUNCILLOR PASSED AND DISCUSSED THE IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT. HAS NOT BEEN INFORMED PREVIOUSLY. STEVEN INFORMED HER THAT THE SCHEME HAS BEEN FUNDED BY HERTS CC AND THAT THE PERSON TO CONTACT IS JULIAN AT THE RIGHTS OF WAY SECTION.					
Comments: FURTHER VISITS NEEDED.					

For sketch plan, use separate sheet

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: DEVILS DYKE, WHEATHAMPSTEAD		Project No/Code: 1057 1 WDD.		Sheet: of	
		Date of visit: 4/4/08.			
Client/Developer HERTS CC.					
Contact: Tom Williams.			Phone: 07989569364.		
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 10:46		Finish:	
Completed by: OR					
Development Type:					
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines
					Other (specify): NEW STEPS
Site & weather conditions: DRY, SUNNY; RURAL <u>SAM</u>					
Observations: NEW RAMP COMPLETED WITH WOODCHIP PATH.					
<p>BEAR POST HOLES TO SUPPORT NEW STEPS AND HANDRAIL</p> <p>55mm OF BLACK SILTY CLAY TOPSOIL (WHERE PRESENT) OVERLIES MID ORANGE CLAY WITH 90% SMALL SUBROUNDED PEBBLES AND GRAVEL WHICH FORMS THE BANK. PEBBLES COMPRISE FLINT + CHERT. BOTH NATURALLY ROUNDED AND BROKEN.</p> <p>"DEPOSIT RETURN" BOTTLE CAP NOTED ON SURFACE AT THE BASE OF SLOPE.</p> <p>SUPPORTING BEAM FOR HANDRAIL + STEPS INVOLVED LEVELLING BEHIND 50mm BELOW EXISTING GROUND SURFACE.</p> <p>POSTS IN HOLES 0.60m DEEP, 1.80m APART. PHOTOGRAPHED (RAW) POSTS 2, 3.</p>					
Comments: VISIT BY TOM WILLIAMS.					
WORK ON POSTS FOR OTHER SIDE WILL BE ON MONDAY; FURTHER VISITS NEEDED.					

For sketch plan, use separate sheet

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A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: DEVILS DYKE, WHEATHAMPSTEAD		Project No/Code: 1057 1 WDD.		Sheet: of	
		Date of visit: 7/4/08.			
Client/Developer HERTS CC.					
Contact: TOM WILLIAMS				Phone: 07989569364.	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 8:10.		Finish:	
Completed by: JR					
Development Type:					
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines
					Other (specify): NEW STEPS
Site & weather conditions: DRY, SUNNY, RAINY SPELLS WITH HAIL.					
Observations: BOTTOM MOST POST FOR HANDRAIL. TREE/SHRUB ROOTS THROUGHOUT. SOIL IS STONIER DEEPER DOWN THAN AT SURFACE (LARGER FLINT NODULES). DIGITAL PHOTO OF POST HOLE; DIGITAL ^{AND} B/W OF LINE OF POSTS. RAIL FOR STEPS AGAINST POSTS CAUSED SOME GROUND DISTURBANCE (^{MAX} 5cm DEEP, 10cm ^{5cm} WIDE (POST IS 10) AND 150cm LONG) DUE TO GRADIENT. PHOTOGRAPHED WITH POST BEAM IN PLACE. TOPSOIL THICKNESS (COUNTING POSTS FROM TOP OF SLOPE) IN CM. 1 5 3 2 5 5 3 20 10 4 25 10 5 40 20 L side R. side					
Comments:					

For sketch plan, use separate sheet

©ASC 2007

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead			SITE NO/CODE: 1057/WDD
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	✓	✓	New ramp access
2	✓	✓	Area of new steps
3	✓	✓	Cut for beam support
4	✓	✓	Posthole 1
5	✓	✓	Posthole 2
6	✓	✓	Line of posts
7	✓	✓	Southern beam at base of slope
8		✓	Northern posthole showing thickness of topsoil at base of slope
9		✓	Posthole
10		✓	Southern line of posts

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead		
Short Description:	In April 2008 ASC Ltd carried out a watching brief during the construction of an improved access ramp and stepped access to the Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire. The ramp and steps had been designed to minimize the level of ground disturbance. In total 10 posts were needed in order to support the steps and associated handrail. The postholes for these were dug using hand tools under archaeological supervision. No archaeological finds were observed and the impact of this scheme of works on the monument was kept to a minimum.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	SAM	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	None
Current land use:	SAM, footpath	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	Unknown
Monument type:	Oppida	Monument period:	Iron Age
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 1827 1338
District:	St Albans	Parish:	Wheathampstead
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Devil's Dyke, Dyke Lane, Wheathampstead		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	c. 1.6ha	Height OD: (metres)	c. 110
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	N/a	Project design originator:	C. Barclay and D. Fell
Project Manager:	K. Semmelmann	Director/Supervisor:	J. Richards
Sponsor / funding body:	Hertfordshire County Council (Rights of Way)		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	3 rd April 2008	End date:	7 th April 2008
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	N/a	None	
Paper:	St Albans Museum	Site records, Report, B&W photos and negatives	
Digital:	St Albans Museum	CDROM with copies of all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1057/WDD/2		
Author(s):	J Richards BA PIFA		
Page nos	22	Date:	1 st May 2008