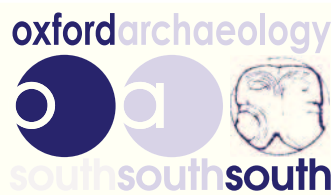


Electric Cable Burial
North-west of Brown's Farm
Marlborough
Wiltshire



Archaeological
Watching Brief Report



April 2012

Client: Scottish and Southern Energy


OA Job No: 4970

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Electric Cable Burial, North-west of Brown's Farm, Marlborough, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Table of Contents

Summary.....	2
1 Introduction.....	2
1.1 Project background and scope of work.....	2
1.2 Location, geology and topography.....	2
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	2
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	3
2.1 Aims.....	3
2.2 Methodology.....	3
3 Results.....	3
3.1 Results summary.....	3
3.2 Description of deposits.....	3
3.3 Finds.....	4
3.4 Environmental remains.....	4
4 Discussion and conclusions.....	5
Appendix A. Archaeological Context Inventory.....	6
Appendix B. Summary of Site Details.....	7

List of Figures

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Cable trench location plan

Fig. 3 Sections

Plate 1 Feature 4 before excavation



Summary

In January and February 2011 Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief along the route of a new underground electrical cable on land to the south of Marlborough, Wiltshire. The only archaeological feature encountered was an existing earthwork that defined a former hollow way with probable medieval origins associated with a settlement at Pantawick recorded as Ponter Wyke in AD 1490. The eastern side of the hollow way had a substantial bank along it that defines part of the historical and existing parish boundary between Marlborough and Savernake.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background and scope of work

- 1.1.1 The scheme comprised the replacement of existing overhead power lines and associated poles with underground power cables. This required the excavation of approximately 850 m of linear trench to install the cables, pits at jointing points along the cable and small trenches to facilitate the removal of the existing poles.
- 1.1.2 A detailed formal brief was not issued by the Local Planning Authority. However, the scheme and likely impacts were discussed with David Vaughan, Assistant County Archaeologist for Wiltshire, which established the requirement for an archaeological watching brief to accompany all intrusive works.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies, specifically Planning Policy Statement 5.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located approximately 0.9 km to the south of Marlborough, Wiltshire (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The underlying solid geology along the trench comprises chalk (Lewes nodular chalk formation, Seaford chalk formation, Newhaven chalk formation (undifferentiated)) (BGS website 2012).
- 1.2.3 The route crosses arable and pasture farmland that slopes from approximately 160 m aOD at the southern end of the trench to 150 m aOD along the north-eastern alignment that runs along the eastern side of a railway (dismantled) embankment.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The area of the proposed route is one rich in archaeology. The Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) highlights a number of important features and finds; including prehistoric linear ditches, buried ring ditches (usually the remains of a ploughed-out round barrow), and a possible buried settlement within the locality. No buried remains were known to exist along the route of the cable trench prior to the fieldwork.



2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The watching brief aims were to:

- (i) Preserve by record any archaeological deposits encountered during the course of ground intrusions;
- (ii) Seek to establish the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits encountered within the scope of the intrusions;
- (iii) To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- (iv) To disseminate results through the production of a grey literature report.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The main trench was excavated by a cable trenching/laying machine that excavates the trench, lays the cable and backfills in a continuous motion. This was excavated as 850 m of continuous trench with a single side spur approximately 50 m in length off to the west to connect to the existing overhead power line. The trench excavation was generally 1 m deep and 0.3 m wide. Due to the machinery and method employed, it was only possible to investigate the resulting spoil and the uppermost exposed levels of the trench section for archaeological features and artefacts. Where the cable required jointing, small pits were excavated measuring approximately 1.2 m wide and 3 m long using a mechanical digger fitted with a toothless bucket. These were excavated under archaeological supervision. Trenches were also machine excavated alongside the poles that were removed to allow these to be topped.
- 2.2.2 Where required, the excavation of archaeological features was undertaken to fulfil the aims outlined above. All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with the established OA Field Manual. Black-and-white negative and colour digital photographs were taken of general works and archaeological features.
- 2.2.3 In the absence of archaeological features within the main part of the trench (see below), detailed site plans were not required. Section positions were recorded on the cable trench location plan supplied by SSE (see Fig. 2). Section drawings were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Results summary

- 3.1.1 No archaeological remains were encountered within any of the jointing pits or trenches excavated to topple the existing poles. Similarly no deposits or features were visible along the route of the cable trench with the exception of where this crossed an existing earthwork labelled as 'path' on the current OS map. The range of deposits and the character of this feature are described in detail below.

3.2 Description of deposits

- 3.2.1 A similar stratigraphic sequence was observed for the majority of the cable trench, jointing pits and pole removal trenches, where these were within the open fields. This



comprised the chalk geology (2) encountered at a depth of between 0.4 m and 0.5 m below the existing ground level overlain by a layer of reddish orange-brown silty clay subsoil (3) up to 0.2 m in depth containing small subangular chalk fragments (Fig. 3, Section 1). It is likely that the subsoil deposit has a colluvial origin. The present day ploughsoil (1) completed the sequence and was up to 0.3 m in depth comprising a dark grey-brown silty clay.

- 3.2.2 At approximately SU 18760 68054 the trench crossed a public path and bridleway (Fig. 2). This feature was defined by two parallel banks 5 m apart, each with hedges planted on top and a sunken and overgrown path running between (Plate 1). The path was aligned roughly south-east to north-west with its course broken by the railway embankment of a dismantled railway. The path clearly predates the construction of the railway embankment.
- 3.2.3 Where the cable trench crossed the path, this was excavated by a mechanical excavator fitted with a narrow trenching bucket. This allowed full access to and visibility of the trench and section. The exposed section was hand cleaned to facilitate detailed recording (Fig. 3, Section 2).
- 3.2.4 The natural chalk (2) was encountered at a depth of 0.2 m below ground level on the western side of the feature, tipping down to 0.6 m below ground level on the eastern side. This depth difference reflects the underlying slope of the natural topography and the subsequent mounding of earth to create the bank along the eastern side of the path. The earliest profile of the path was defined by a hollow with sloped sides and a flat base approximately 4 m wide and up to 0.6 m deep (4). Running along the edges of the features were the remnants of two primary banks (5) and (6). These were formed with light brown silty clay deposits and measured up to 1 m wide and 0.18 m deep.
- 3.2.5 Overlying the primary bank deposit (6) on the eastern side of the hollow was a 0.65 m thick layer of orange brown silty clay (7). This deposit was relatively even in depth and appears to have been a purposefully constructed and well defined bank to distinguish the hollow from the field margin. This bank deposit also significantly encroached upon the width of primary hollow. A 0.17 m deep layer of brown silty clay soil and leaf litter (8) had accumulated over this deposit, slumping over the ploughsoil (1) on the eastern side.
- 3.2.6 Along the western side of the hollow the primary bank material (5) appears to have been the origin of a silting deposit (10) that was present along the internal slope edge. This and the primary bank material were sealed by an orange-brown silty clay deposit (11) that had also partly eroded into the hollow.
- 3.2.7 The larger part of the hollow void was infilled to a depth of 0.7 m with a dark grey-brown silty clay deposit (9) that included leaf litter.

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 No dating evidence was encountered during the course of the watching brief.

3.4 Environmental remains

- 3.4.1 No suitable deposits were encountered for environmental sampling.



4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The majority of the cable trench proved difficult to view within the excavation method utilised. However, it was possible to observe a typical stratigraphy reflecting the arable use of the fields with ploughsoil or topsoil and turf (1) overlying the geology of natural chalk (2) and colluvium (3).
- 4.1.2 The only feature of significance encountered was an existing earthwork (4) labelled as a path on the current and past edition OS maps. The now overgrown route clearly predates the construction of the railway (1864 Great Western Railway Savernake to Marlborough terminus station) which was built directly over it. The cartographic evidence shows it to extend both to the NW and the SE linking in to a more extensive pattern of tracks and paths also depicted on the historic and current maps crossing the surrounding landscape. These form a distinct NW to SE and E to W pattern connecting various fields and probable settlements. The parish boundary also partly follows this specific path suggesting that it has been a long standing and significant landscape feature.
- 4.1.3 The profile of the feature prior to the creation of the larger bank along the eastern side appears to be that of a hollow way. There is no evidence for the chalk displaced by the cut (4) into the geology being cast up to the sides and it is probable that this material was slowly eroded away through persistent and longevity of use rather than the deliberate excavation of the feature. Such features are often associated with medieval settlements and main routes where the frequency and type of traffic that used these created the hollows, particularly upon topographical slopes. A similar date origin is also likely here as a medieval settlement is recorded at Pantawick approximately 220 m to the south of the excavated section and upon the hollow way route. This is shown as a series of earthworks enclosed within a now wooded area labelled as 'British Settlement' on the 1900 OS map and is located at the junction of similar routes extending out to the NNW, NE, SSE and SW. The Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (web site) identifies this as 'A settlement area with Medieval origins.... known as Ponter Wyke AD1490.' based upon place name evidence.
- 4.1.4 The presence of a substantial bank along the eastern side of the hollow way that also partly infilled the route, coupled with the lack of a corresponding bank on the western side may relate to the continued importance of the feature as a Parish boundary. The creation of the larger bank is likely to have a construction date after the hollow way ceased to act as a main route, either through the abandonment of the settlement or possibly once the railway embankment was constructed in the mid 19th century. This defines, in part, the existing boundary between the parishes of Marlborough and Savernake.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	Up to 0.3 m	-	Present day topsoil including ploughsoil and turf	-	-
2	Layer	> 0.3 m	-	Natural chalk	-	-
3	Layer	0.2 m – 0.3 m	-	Subsoil, probable colluvium	-	-
4	Cut	0.6 m	4 m	Possible sunken trackway or hollow way	-	-
5	Layer	0.15 m	0.7 m	Ridge of material associated with 4, possibly part of the original topsoil horizon	-	-
6	Layer	0.15 m	1 m	Ridge of material associated with 4, possibly part of the original topsoil horizon	-	-
7	Layer	0.62 m	5 m	Bank	-	-
8	Layer	0.17 m	2.4 m	Accumulated topsoil	-	-
9	Fill	0.66 m	2.2 m	Silting fill of hollow way	-	-
10	Fill	0.18 m	0.7 m	Slumping/silting within hollow way	-	-
11	Fill	0.28 m	1.8 m	Slumping/silting within hollow way	-	-



APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Electric Cable Burial, North-west of Brown's Farm, Marlborough, Wiltshire
Site code:	MAPOWR 11
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SU 189 680
Type of watching brief:	Machine excavation of cable trench
Date and duration of project:	18th to 20th January 2011 and 1st to 3rd February 2011
Area of site:	Approximately 4200 m ²
Summary of results:	In January and February 2011 Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief along the route of a new underground electrical cable on land to the south of Marlborough, Wiltshire. The only archaeological feature encountered was an existing earthwork that defined a former hollow way with probable medieval origins associated with a settlement at Pantawick recorded as Ponter Wyke in AD 1490. The eastern side of the hollow way had a substantial bank along it that defines part of the historical and existing parish boundary between Marlborough and Savernake.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum in due course. The museum has not issued an accession number for this project.

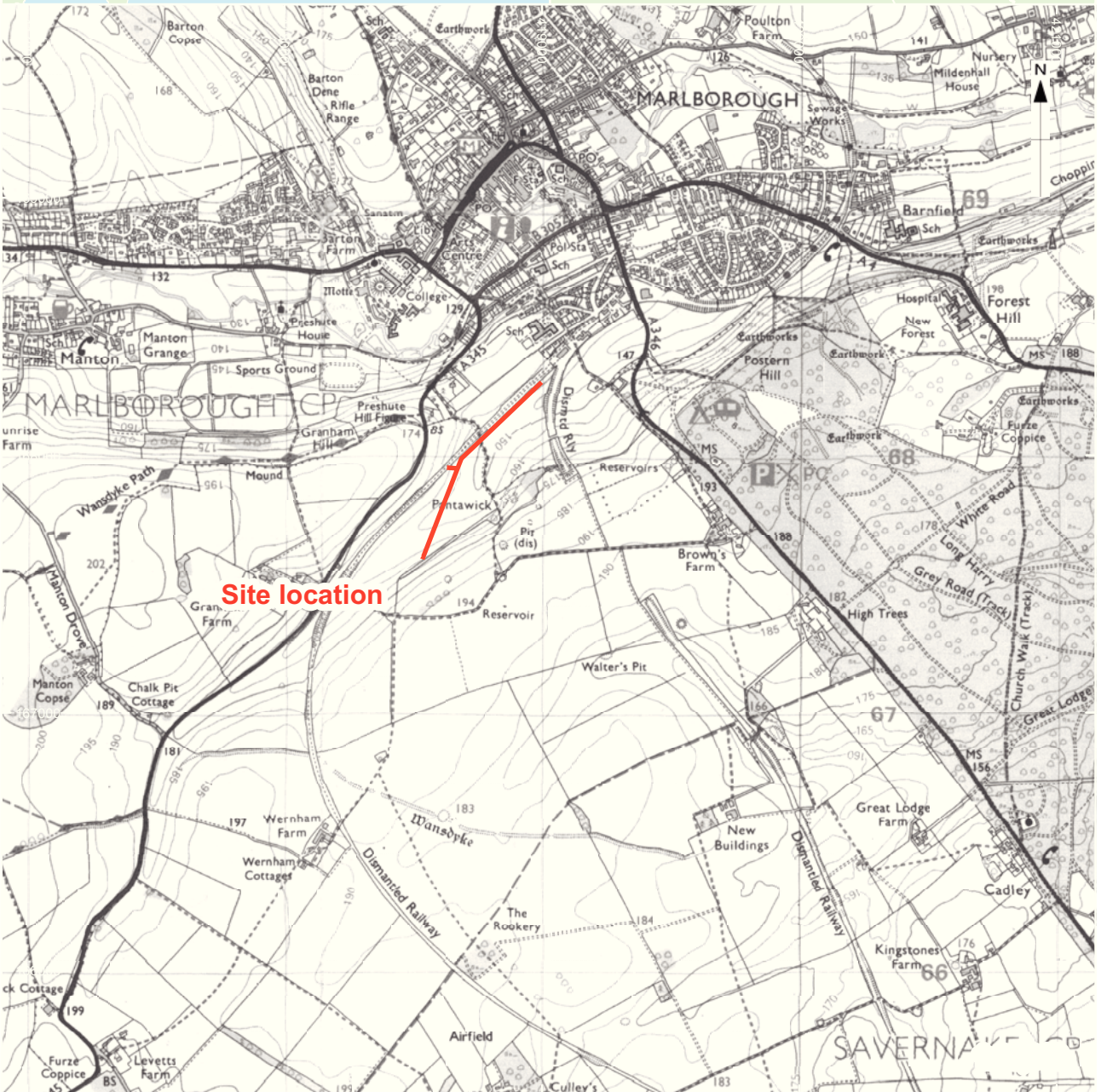
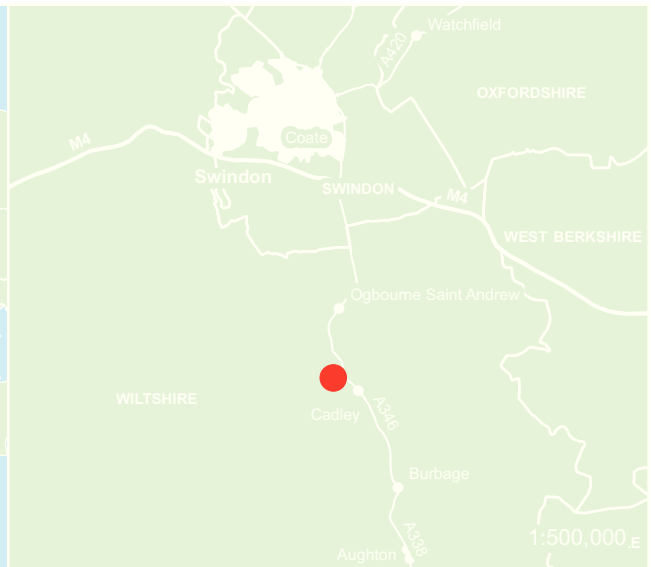
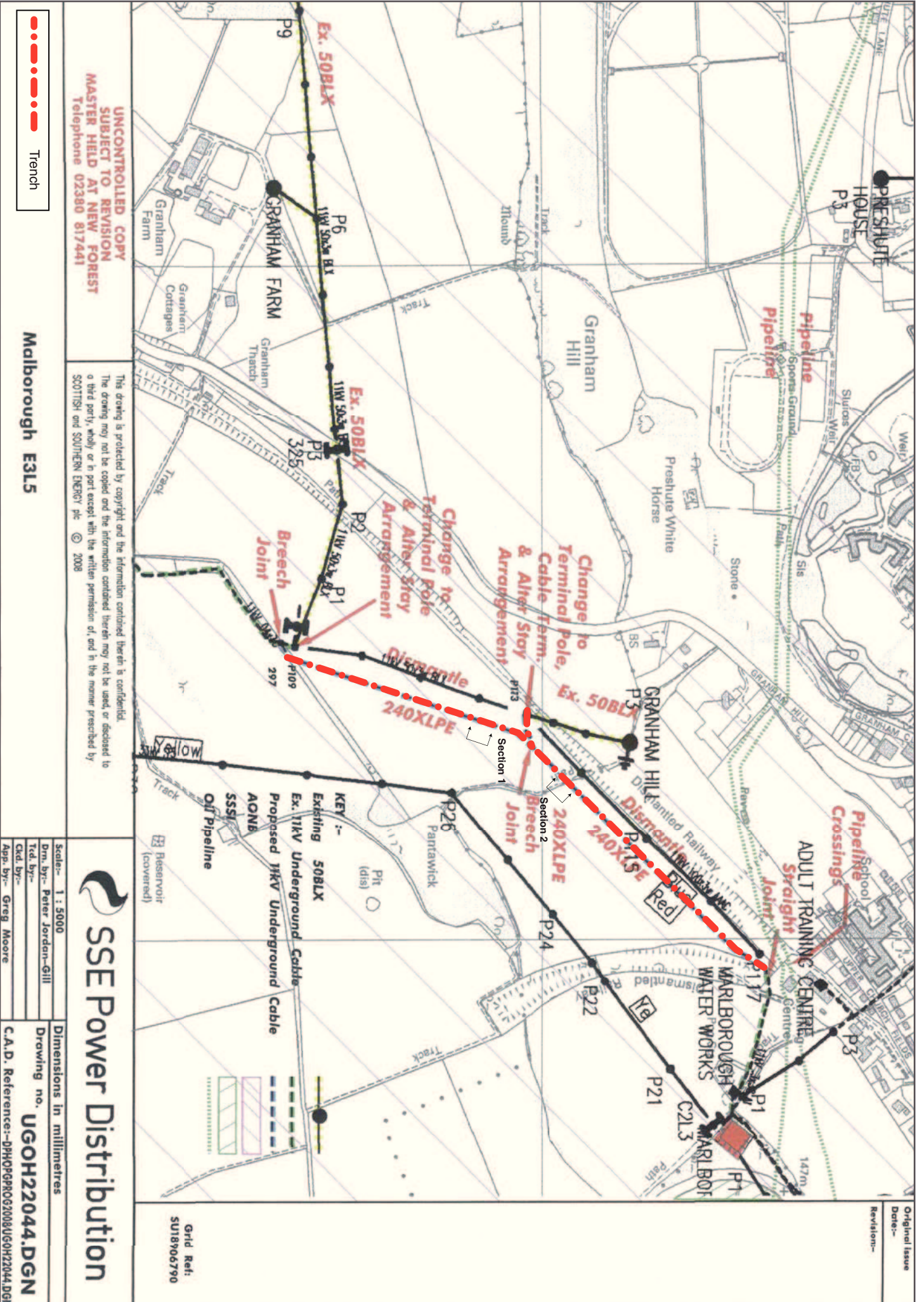


Figure 1. Site location



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SSE Power Distribution

Malborough E3L5

Scale:- 1 : 5000
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Ted. by:-
Chd. by:-
App. by:- Greg Moore

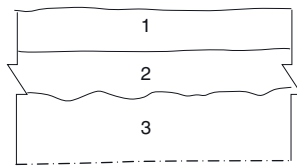
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Original Issue
 Date:-
 Revision:-

Figure 2: Cable trench location plan

Section 1



E Section 2 W

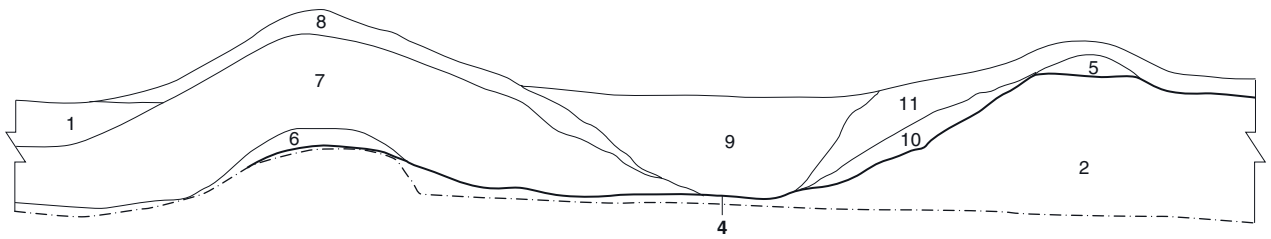


Figure 3: Sections



Plate 1 : Feature 4 before excavation



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