

BV032 Cleeve Abbey, Abbey Road, Washford, Watchet, Somerset

An Archaeological Watching Brief



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For

Wessex Water Plc

By



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Non-technical Summary

Context One Archaeological Services Ltd undertook an archaeological watching brief during groundworks relating to a proposed new water main at Cleeve Abbey, Abbey Road, Washford, Watchet, Somerset (centred on NGR ST 04759 40582). The work was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc and took place over four days from December 2011 to September 2012.

The archaeological investigation was requested by Mr Steve Membery (Senior Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council) following a consultation request from Ms Katie Smith (Senior Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc). The work was required as part of the water pipeline ran through the grounds of Cleeve Abbey, a site designated by English Heritage as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument No. 1014824).

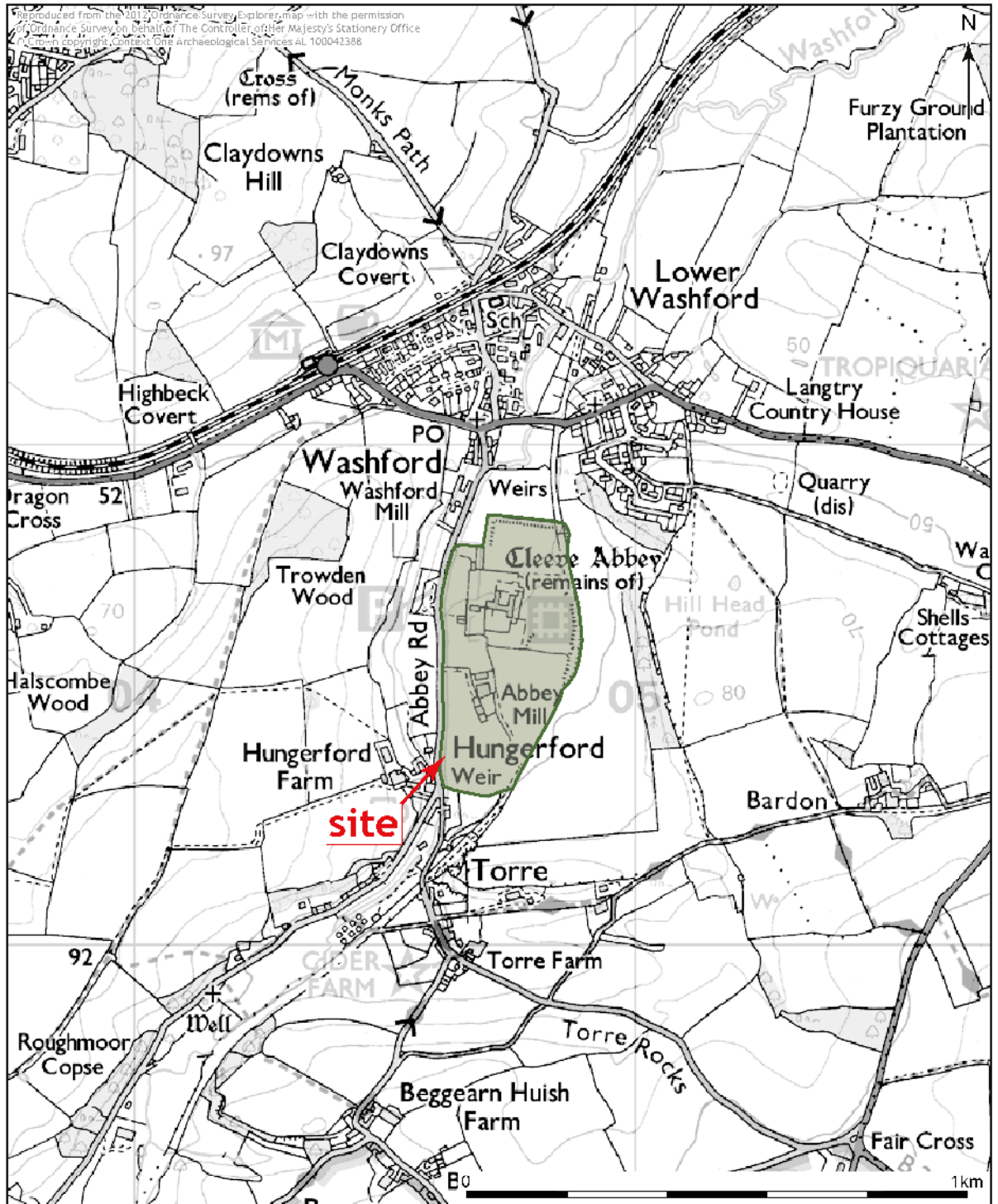
The work showed that within the past four centuries deep soils have formed over water meadow deposits. No other archaeologically significant deposits were identified and a single piece of medieval pottery was the only find. It is unlikely that the test pits and the re-excavation of the mains trench will have encountered or damaged any significant archaeological remains.

1. Introduction

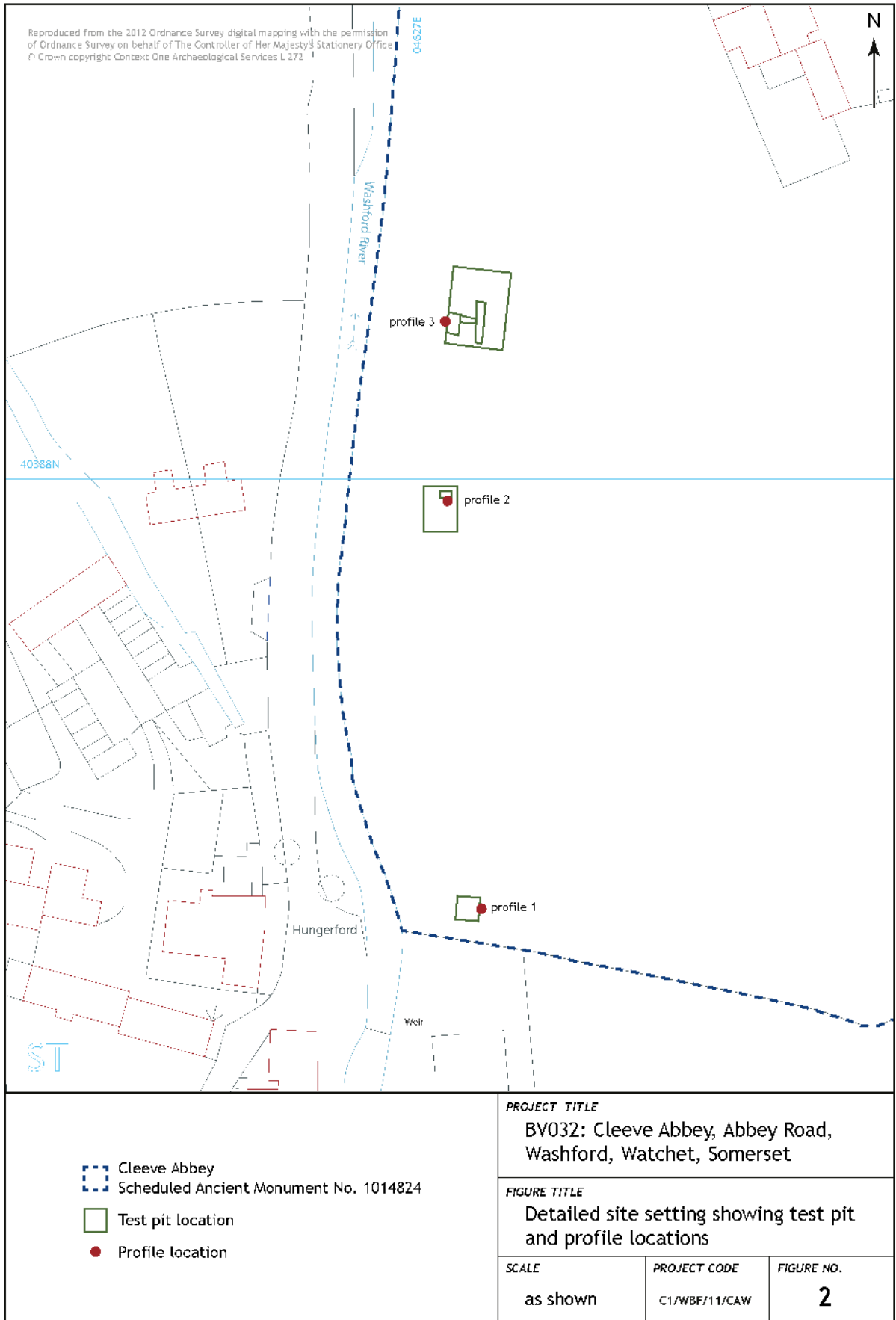
- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) undertook an archaeological watching brief during groundworks relating to a proposed new water main at Cleeve Abbey, Abbey Road, Washford, Watchet, Somerset (centred on NGR ST 04759 40582; hereafter referred to as the Site). The programme of works was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc under a Term Agreement contract with COAS and took place over four days from 21st December 2011 to 21st September 2012.
- 1.2 The archaeological works were requested by Mr Steve Membery (Senior Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council) following a consultation request from Ms Katie Smith (Senior Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc). The investigation was required as part of the water pipeline ran through the grounds of Cleeve Abbey, a site designated by English Heritage as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument No. 1014824). The Abbey is part of a Cistercian monastery complex founded in the late 12th century (EH 2012a).
- 1.3 Given the recorded archaeological and historical data for the environs, it was considered that archaeological features/deposits could be present on the Site, and that these could be damaged or destroyed by development. However, as the nature or presence of such features/deposits has not been proven on the basis of currently available information, it was determined that a reasonable archaeological response would be to carry out a Watching Brief during all ground disturbance associated with the development. Ms Smith completed a form AM112 Application for Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent for trial, launch and reception pits to locate the existing water main which was granted. This was submitted to and approved by Mr Philip McMahon (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage) and Mr Membery prior to the commencement of the watching brief.
- 1.4 The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in *Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2010) and the *Somerset County Council: Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook* (Membery et al. 2011) COAS issued a *Written Scheme of Investigation for An Archaeological Watching Brief* (COAS 2012), which provided a strategy for the archaeological works. This was submitted to and approved by Mr Philip McMahon (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage) and Mr Membery prior to the commencement of the watching brief. COAS ensured that the latter officers were fully informed throughout the duration of the project and both attended meetings on the Site.

2. Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1 Cleeve Abbey stands on a low rise in the valley of the River Washford, c. 3.4km south-west of the coastal town of Watchet and c. 3.1km west-south-west of Williton, Somerset. The Site is c. 80m south of the Abbey's east range and c. 120m north-north-east of the Abbey Mill house at c. 46.60m over Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 2.2 The Site is set on Quaternary Alluvium of clay, silt, sand and gravel over solid Mercia Mudstone Formation Triassic sedimentary Siltstone (BGS 2012). The soils are free-draining, slightly acid, loams of fairly low fertility (NSRI 2012).



<p>SOMERSET</p>	<p>Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 1014824</p>	<p>PROJECT TITLE BV032: Cleeve Abbey, Abbey Road, Washford, Watchet, Somerset</p>		
		<p>FIGURE TITLE Site setting</p>		
<p>SCALE as shown</p>		<p>PROJECT CODE C1/WBF/11/CAW</p>	<p>FIGURE NO. 1</p>	



3. Methodology

Construction Methodology

- 3.1 The construction work was in three phases and was designed to identify the location of the existing water main (**cover photograph**). It comprised the excavation of three test pits to find the mains pipe trench, followed by re-excavation of the pipe trench. The excavation was carried out by a 360 degree tracked vehicle fitted with a 1.20m wide toothless grading bucket.

Archaeological Methodology

- 3.2 The archaeological work comprised observation of groundworks and recording. In the absence of archaeology, the sequence of layers was recorded using standard COAS *pro forma* profile recording sheets. The sheets include descriptions of the character and graduated sketches representing the depth of each layer in its relative position with corresponding photographic reference numbers and a summary indication of the presence or absence of artefacts and whether or not they were retained. Modern finds are discarded except where they are relevant to the specific investigation.
- 3.3 A camera recorded digital photographic images of the areas investigated, showing the layers as well as working shots to illustrate the Site setting and the nature of the archaeological operation. A photographic record comprised digital images of the Site setting, the construction work and the areas exposed by it, including profiles representative of the soil sequence and identified features. Two adjoining representative sections from a single test pit were recorded in a 1:20 scaled section drawing.
- 3.4 The location, extent and altitude of the archaeological work, features and deposits were mapped relative to the National Grid and Ordnance Datum using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System receiving real-time calibrations to produce accuracies of 1-2cm.
- 3.5 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with guidelines set out by Somerset County Council (Member 2011) and according to the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, rev. 2010; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.

4. Results

- 4.1 The deposits encountered during fieldwork are listed and described in **Appendix 1**. In the text, context numbers for deposits are shown in standard brackets, e.g. (102).

Soil sequence and features

- 4.2 Gravelly inclusions within the red brown, friable, silty sand topsoil (100), (300) and (500) of a depth varying from 0.20 to 0.25m reflected on-going alluviation in the valley. The topsoil sealed a further layer of similar alluvium (101), (301) and (501) of up to 0.65m thickness. Typically, it sealed successive bands of alluviated colluvium, (502) and (503) and (302) (**Plates 1 and 2**).
- 4.3 In test pit 1 successive lenses of dark grey to black subangular and subrounded gravel, (102) and (103), with a total thickness of up to 0.46m, were sealed between alluvial layer (101) and alluviated colluvium (104) (**Plate 3**). Such gravels are characteristic of water meadows which have a typical date range from around AD 1600 to AD 1800.

5. Finds

- 5.1 A medieval pottery sherd (44g) was recovered from the spoil of test pit 3. Traces of green glaze survived on all surfaces of part of a strap handle attached to a simple flattened rim.



Plate 1. Profile 2, (500) to (503) (from W; 0.50m scale)



Plate 2. Profile 3, (300) to (302) (from S; 0.50m scale)



Plate 3. Profile 1, (100) to (107) (from E; 0.50m scale)

6. Discussion

- 6.1 The test pits show that new deposits of soil are continuing to form and to raise the level of the valley bottom. Although no finds were recovered, the presence of probable water meadow deposits offer indirect evidence that up to 1.20m of alluvium and alluviated colluvium have formed within the last four centuries.
- 6.2 No other archaeologically significant deposits were identified and the fragment of medieval pottery merely provides a *terminus post quem* earlier than that indicated more reliably by the water meadows deposits. It is unlikely that the test pits and the re-excavation of the mains trench will have encountered or damaged any significant archaeological remains within the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

7. Archive

- 7.1 The Site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of 39 digital images in .jpg format, six context sheets, two profile sheets, two scaled section drawings, a site sketch plan, three day record sheets, a drawing and two photographic registers. The archive will be prepared to comply with guidelines and standards set out by the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC 1984; Walker 1991), the Museum and Galleries Commission (Paine 1992) and English Heritage (Andrews 1991). Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with Somerset County Museums Service within 12 months following the submission of this report.
- 7.2 Copies of the Watching Brief report will be deposited with:

Wessex Water plc	Somerset Historic Environment Service	English Heritage
Claverton Down	Somerset Heritage Centre	South West Region
Bath	Brunel Way	29 Queen Square
BA2 7WW	Norton Fitzwarren	Bristol
	Taunton	BS3 2NZ
	Somerset	
	TA2 6SF	

8. COAS Acknowledgements

- 8.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank Mr Mark Lewis (Wessex Construction) for his help on the Site during the course of the project. We are also grateful to Mr Phil McMahon (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage) and Mr Steve Membery (Senior Historic Environment Officer, Somerset Historic Environment Service) for advice concerning the Site.

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Appendix 1. Context Summary

CONTEXT NO.	PERIOD	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EARLIER THAN	CONTEMP. WITH	LATER THAN	LENGTH	WIDTH/ DIAMETER	THICKNESS/ DEPTH
100	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/6), friable, silty sand including subangular and subrounded mudstone and gravel			101, 102			0.31m
101		Layer	Subsoil. Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/6) compacted silty sandy clay including subangular and subrounded river gravels	101		102			0.36m
102		Layer	Waterbourne deposit. Very dark grey (5YR 3/1) subangular and subrounded gravel (<0.02m)	101		103			0.21m
103		Layer	Waterbourne deposit. Very dark grey (5YR 3/1) subangular and subrounded gravel (<0.02m)	102		104			0.14m
104	Geology	Layer	Alluviated colluvium . River gravel	103					>1.10m
105	Modern	Cut	Pipe trench cut.	107, 107		100			
106	Modern	Fill	Pipe trench fill [105].			105			
107	Modern	Fill	Pipe trench fill [105].			105			
300	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Yellowey red (5YR 5/6), friable, silty sand including sparse subrounded gravelly limestones (<0.05m)			301			>0.21m
301		Layer	Alluviated colluvium. Yellow red (%YR 5/8) sandy clay sand including moderate gravelly limestones	300		302			>0.99m
302		Layer	Alluvial deposit. Dark yellowy orange (5YR 3/4) coarse subrounded gravelly limestones	301					>0.50m
500	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Reddish brown (2.5YR 5/6) sandy silt including frequent subangular and subrounded platy mudstone and gravel			501			<0.20m
501	Geology	Layer	Alluviated colluvium. Slightly yellowish light grey (2.5YR 7/1) sandy clay, frequent flecked with manganese and including fine clay gley	500		502			<0.32m
502	Geology	Layer	Alluviated colluvium. Banded lenses of gravel set in yellow grey (2.5YR 7/1) sandy, silty clay	501		503			<0.15m

CONTEXT NO.	PERIOD	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EARLIER THAN	CONTEMP. WITH	LATER THAN	LENGTH	WIDTH/ DIAMETER	THICKNESS/ DEPTH
503	Geology	Layer	All Alluviated colluvium. Banded lenses of gravel set in brownish red (2.5YR 5/6) sandy, silty clay	502					>0.35m