

132KV Melksham, Wiltshire, to Radstock, Somerset (Y) and Radstock to Frome (YA), Somerset, Overhead Line Dismantlement and Refurbishment

An Archaeological Watching Brief



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for

Wardell Armstrong LLP

by



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Non-technical Summary

Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an archaeological watching brief over the bases of nine towers between Frome and west of Trowbridge (from NGR ST 80861 50986 to ST 84274 60856) during groundworks associated with the refurbishment or removal of an overhead line from Melksham, Wiltshire to Radstock, Somerset and from Radstock to Frome, Somerset. The work was carried out over three days during April 2012 and was commissioned by and funded by Wardell Armstrong LLP on behalf of Scottish & Southern Energy.

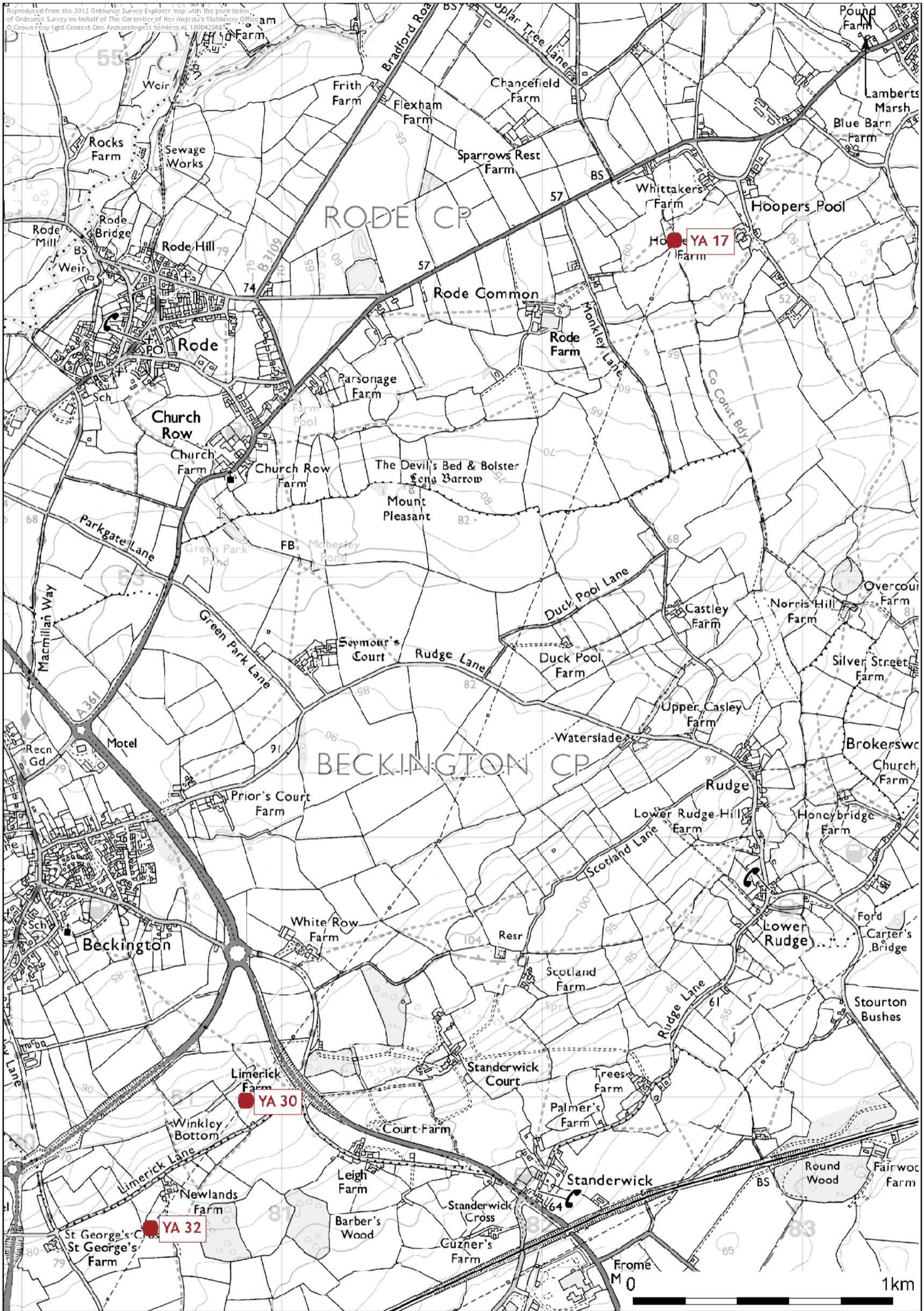
No archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified during the monitoring. This should not in any way be regarded as an indicator of the archaeological potential at any point along the overhead line route as the refurbishment work was focused on the area around each tower base, where the ground had been disturbed previously during construction of the towers in the 1960s.

1. Introduction

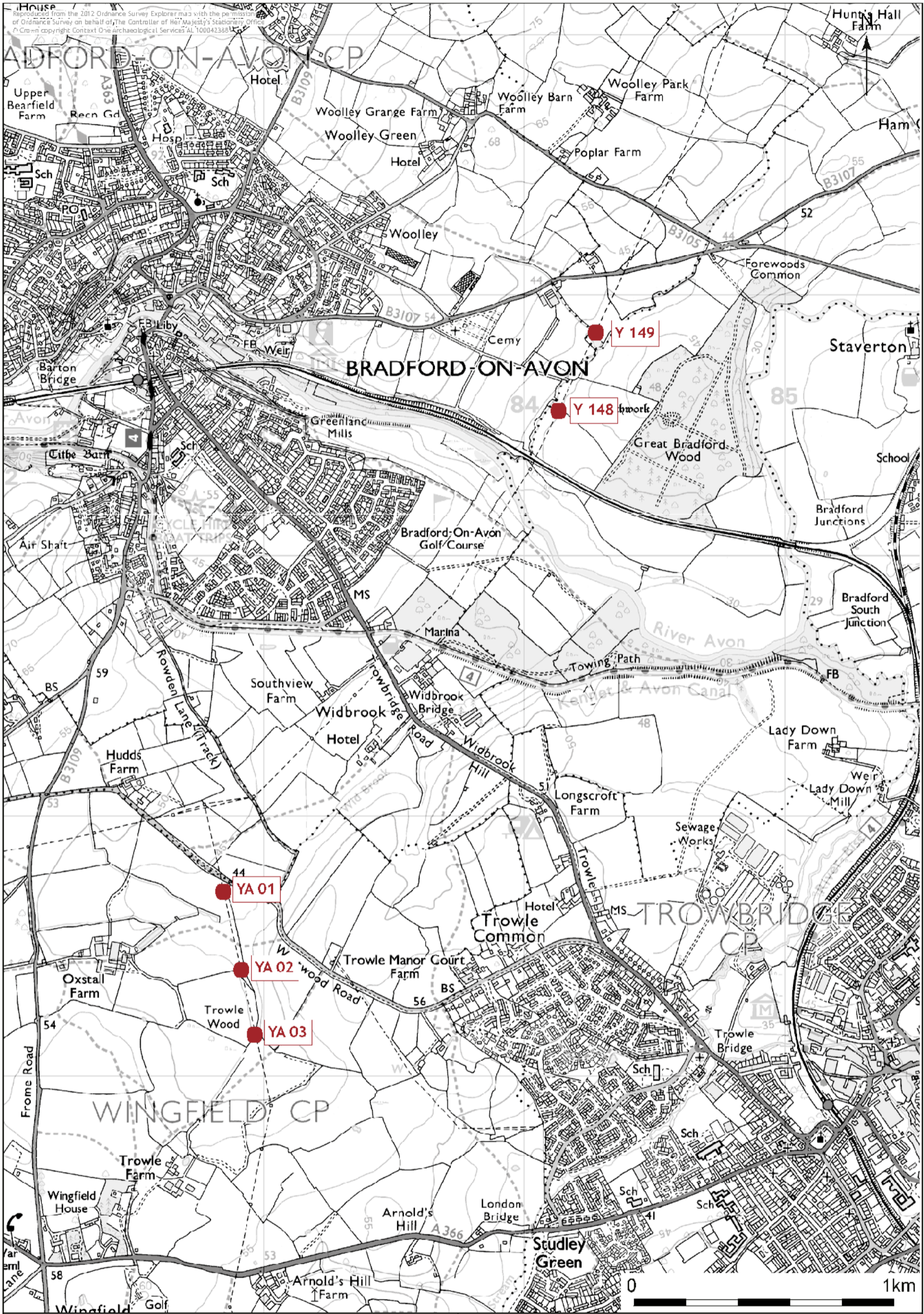
- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an archaeological watching brief over the bases of nine towers between Frome and west of Trowbridge (from NGR ST 80861 50986 to ST 84274 60856; hereafter referred to as the Site) during groundworks associated with the refurbishment or removal of an overhead line from Melksham, Wiltshire to Radstock, Somerset and from Radstock to Frome, Somerset. The work was carried out over three days from 18th to 24th April 2012. The project was commissioned and funded by Wardell Armstrong LLP on behalf of Scottish & Southern Energy.
- 1.2 The request for the watching brief was made by Ms Charlotte Dawson (Senior Archaeologist, Wardell Armstrong LLP) following consultations with Mr Steve Membery (Senior Historic Environment Officer, Somerset Historic Environment Service) and David Vaughn (Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council). A *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief* was prepared by Wardell Armstrong LLP (Dawson 2012) and in an email dated 17th April 2012, Ms Dawson identified nine towers which should be the objects of a watching brief.
- 1.3 The identification of the particular towers was based on flint scatters, early agricultural boundary features in the Beckington area and undated earthworks and cropmarks identified along the entire north part of the tower route. In addition Roman activity, represented by “two villas and a possible defended settlement”, was identified east of Bradford-on-Avon, a “possible camp near Beckington” and a “possible settlement” west of Trowbridge. Medieval settlements and farmsteads were identified at various points along the route (Dawson 2012, 2).
- 1.4 Messrs Membery and Vaughn were kept fully informed during the project but site visits for monitoring were not deemed necessary.
- 1.5 The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as formerly set out in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010).

2. Site Location, Topography and Geology

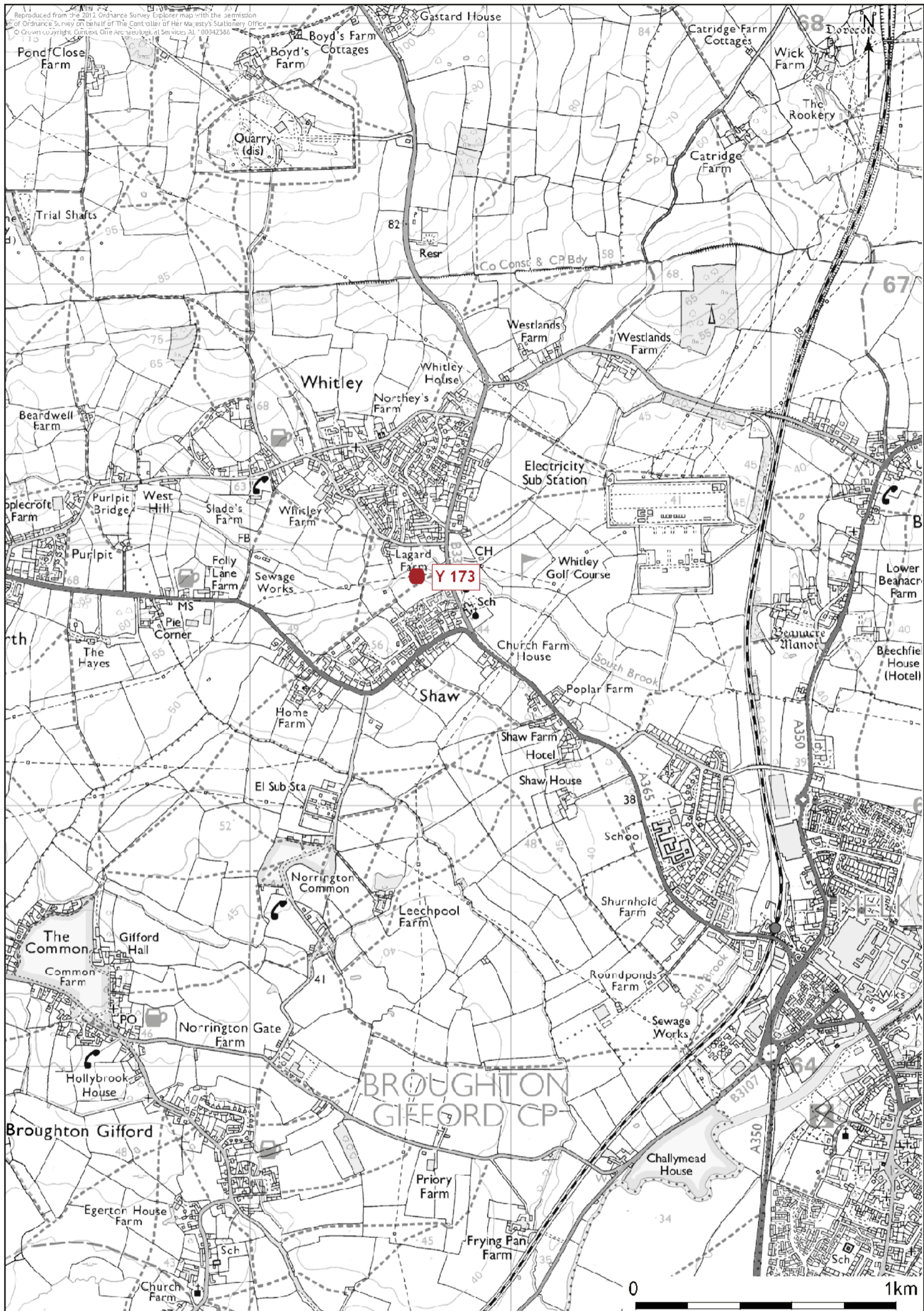
- 2.1 The Site comprises a south south west to north north east route of approximately 12km from Limerick Farm (YA30; ST 80861 50986; **Figure 1**), ca. 4.7km north east of Frome town centre, to South View Farm, ca. 1.5km east of Bradford-on-Avon town centre (Y149; ST 84274 60856; **Figure 2**). In a generally undulating landscape, the overall topographic trend is for the ground level to fall from ca. 97m above ordnance datum (aOD) in the south south west to ca. 32m aOD in the north north west.
- 2.2 At its southern end (YA30, YA32; **Figure 1**) the Site lies on Forest Marble Formation Jurassic Sedimentary Mudstone (BGS 2012), parenting lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage but high fertility (NSRI 2012). The remaining tower bases were set on Kellaways Formation Jurassic Sedimentary Sandy Mudstone (BGS 2012) underlying slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid, base-rich, moderately fertile, loamy and clayey soils (YA17; **Figure 1**; YA01, YA02 and YA03, **Figure 2**; Y173, **Figure 3**) or, where there were superficial deposits of Quaternary alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel in the north east to south west valley of a tributary to the River Avon (Y148 and Y149, **Figure 2**) shallow, moderately fertile, lime-rich soils (NSRI 2012).



<p>PROJECT TITLE 132KV Melksham to Radstock (Y) and Radstock to Frome (YA) Overhead Line Dismantlement and Refurbishment</p>		
<p>FIGURE TITLE Site setting showing locations of pylons YA32, YA30 and YA17</p>		
<p>SCALE as shown</p>	<p>PROJECT CODE C1/WBF/12/MTR</p>	<p>FIGURE NO. 1</p>



<p>PROJECT TITLE 132KV Melksham to Radstock (Y) and Radstock to Frome (YA) Overhead Line Dismantlement and Refurbishment</p>		
<p>FIGURE TITLE Site setting showing locations of towers YA03, YA02, YA01, Y148 and Y149</p>		
<p>SCALE as shown</p>	<p>PROJECT CODE C1/AWBF/12/MTR</p>	<p>FIGURE NO. 2</p>



<p>PROJECT TITLE 132KV Melksham to Radstock (Y) and Radstock to Frome (YA) Overhead Line Dismantlement and Refurbishment</p>		
<p>FIGURE TITLE Site setting showing locations of tower Y173</p>		
SCALE	PROJECT CODE	FIGURE NO.
as shown	C1/NBF/12/MTR	3

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 A desk-based assessment of the archaeological background for the Site was carried out by Wardell Armstrong LLP (Dawson 2012). This drew on all Somerset and Wiltshire Historic Environment Records within 500m either side of the entire route of the overhead line (Dawson 2012, 1) and informed a summary account of the archaeological background (Dawson 2012, 4-7). Only information pertinent to this watching brief has been included in the text below, with the appropriate Somerset (PRN) or Wiltshire (SMR or ST) record references.
- 3.2 A Romano-British field system has been recorded *ca.* 50m south west of YA30 (PRN 23131; ST 807 509; **Figure 1**) and there is evidence for a possible settlement of that or medieval date in the vicinity of YA01 and YA02 (Wiltshire ST85NW619; ST 82900 58500; **Figure 2**). A park at Wooley Green (ST86SW533; ST 83900 61400), *ca.* 370m west of Y149, is Post-medieval. Undated features include a linear cropmark (ST85SW614; ST 82560 54360; **Figure 1**) adjacent to YA17 and earthworks (SMR 34203; ST 84560 60520; **Figure 2**) *ca.* 410m east of Y148 and Y149, designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

4. Methodology

Construction Methodology

- 4.1 The work comprised the excavation and grubbing out of foundations of the concrete bases of six towers by a 360 degree tracked machine fitted with a *ca.* 0.40m wide bucket and an hydraulic breaker (**Plate 1**). The removal of all overburden and bases was carried out under the direct supervision of archaeological staff.

Archaeological Methodology

- 4.2 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out by Somerset (SCC 2009) and Wiltshire (WCC 1995) County Councils and with the codes, standards and guidelines issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, rev. 2010; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008) at all times during the course of the investigation. Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.
- 4.3 A suitably experienced and qualified archaeologist was on site to monitor all groundworks for the purpose of identifying and recording any archaeological remains, features and deposits present. Provision was made to allow extra time for the excavation and recording of any significant deposits or features revealed as a result of development groundworks. The spoil was examined for archaeological artefacts.
- 4.4 Where the tower bases broke through the topsoil all layers were recorded using standard COAS *pro forma* recording sheets. Stratigraphic relationships were recorded using a 'Harris-Winchester matrix' diagram. A photographic record of the work entirely comprised digital images.
- 4.5 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.

5. Results

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

Soil sequence

5.2 At the bases of three towers (YA03, YA32 and Y173) the groundworks did not fully penetrate the topsoil, which had formed since the original construction of the towers. These were visited, noted on a day record sheet and photographed but no further record was made.

5.3 Elsewhere, despite the distance covered, the nature of the deposits were broadly similar, as was to be expected since the pits for the tower bases had been excavated and backfilled at the time of construction in the 1960s. In four instances (YA01, YA02, YA17 and YA30) a topsoil (101), (201), (171) and (301) of between 0.10m and 0.15m had formed over a similar depth of subsoil (102), (202), (172) and (302) which sealed the re-deposited natural backfill (103), (203), (173) and (303) butting the concrete tower bases (100), (200), (170) and (300) (**Plates 2 and 3**). In one case (Y148) topsoil (1481) lay directly over a mixed backfill of re-deposited subsoil and natural whilst in one case (Y149) only the uppermost part of the base required work so even the topsoil (1491) was not fully excavated (**Plate 4**).

5.4 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified during the work.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The lack of archaeological features, deposits or finds encountered during the monitoring should not in any way be regarded as an indicator of the archaeological potential at any point along the overhead line route. The refurbishment work was focused on the area around each tower base, where the ground had previously been disturbed during construction of the towers in the 1960s.

7. Archive

7.1 The Site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of 36 digital images in .jpg format, six profile sheets, two day record sheets and a photographic register. There were no scaled drawings due to the lack of archaeological features. The archive will be prepared to comply with guidelines set out by the Museum and Galleries Commission (Longworth 1992). Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with Somerset County Museum and Trowbridge Museum and Art Gallery within 12 months following the submission of this report.

7.2 Copies of the Watching Brief report will be deposited with:

Wardell Armstrong LLP
Sir Henry Doulton House
Forge Lane
Etruria
Stoke-on-Trent
ST1 5BD

Somerset Historic Environment Service
Somerset Heritage Centre
Brunel Way
Norton Fitzwarren
Taunton
Somerset
TA2 6SF

Wiltshire County Historic Environment Record
Wiltshire Archaeology Service
The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre
Cocklebury Road
Chippenham
SN15 3QN



Plate 1: Tower YA30 after excavation of the bases (1m scale)



Plate 2: Tower YA30, one of the excavated bases (1m scale)



Plate 3: Tower YA17, one of the excavated bases (1m scale)



Plate 4: Tower Y149, an unexcavated base (1m scale)

8. COAS Acknowledgements

- 8.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank Ms Charlotte Dawson (Senior Archaeologist, Wardell Armstrong LLP), Mr Steve Membery (Senior Historic Environment Record Officer, Somerset Historic Environment Service) and Mr David Vaughn (Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council) for advice and assistance regarding the project.

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Wiltshire County Council Libraries, Museums and Arts |

Appendix 1. Context Summary

Context no.	Period	Type	Description	Earlier than	Contemp. with	Later than	Length	Width/ Diameter	Thickness / Depth
Tower YA01									
100	Modern	Structure	Tower base. Light grey concrete	103					>0.70m
101	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Dark brown, soft, silty clay including rare stones			102			0.10m
102	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Light grey, firm, silty clay including rare stones	101		103			0.10m
103	Modern	Fill	Backfill. Light orange-grey compacted clay. Redeposited natural packing for tower base	102		100			>0.50m
Tower YA02									
200	Modern	Structure	Tower base. Light grey concrete	203					>0.50m
201	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Darkish brown, soft, silty clay including rare stones			202			0.10m
202	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Light grey brown, firm, silty clay	201		203			0.15m
203	Modern	Fill	Backfill. Mid orange-grey compacted silty clay. Redeposited natural packing for tower base	202		200			>0.25m
Tower YA30									
300	Modern	Structure	Tower base. Light grey concrete	303					>0.60m
301	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Dark brown, soft, silty clay including rare stones			302			0.15m
302	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Light grey brown, firm, silty clay including	301		303			0.11m

			rare subangular and subrounded stones						
303	Modern	Fill	Backfill. Light grey with yellow lenses compacted silty clay. Redeposited natural packing for tower base	302		300			>0.32m
Tower YA17									
170	Modern	Structure	Tower base. Light grey concrete	173					>0.50m
171	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Dark brown, soft, silty clay including rare stones			172			0.15m
172	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Light grey brown, firm, silty clay including rare stones	171		173			0.11m
173	Modern	Fill	Backfill. Light grey with yellow lenses compacted silty clay. Redeposited natural packing for tower base	172		170			>0.25m
Tower Y148									
1480	Modern	Structure	Tower base. Light grey concrete	1482					>0.78m
1481	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Dark brown, soft, silty clay including rare stones			1482			0.15m
1482	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Light grey brown, firm, silty clay including rare stones	1481					>0.63m
Tower Y149									
1490	Modern	Structure	Tower base. Light grey concrete	1491					>0.05m
1491	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Dark brown, soft, silty clay			1490			>0.30m