Dowlish Ford, Ilminster, Somerset

A programme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

context one
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD

Dowlish Ford, Ilminster, Somerset

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for

Wessex Water plc

by

Brickfield Offices, Maperton, Wincanton, Somerset. BA9 8EG.
T: 01963 824696
E: mail@contextone.co.uk
W: www.contextone.co.uk

COAS reference: C1/AMR/14/DWS and C1/AMR/15/DFS
National Grid Reference: centred on ST 35263 12556 to ST 35920 13244
Wessex Water plc scheme reference: B0412
Museum of Somerset Accession Number: TTNCM 104/2014
OASIS reference: contexto1-211802
HER event no: 32604

COAS project team:
Project Director: Richard McConnell
Fieldwork Manager: Stuart Milby
Post-excavation Manager: Dr Cheryl Green
Fieldwork: Sam Worrall, Matt Long, Jonny Hunter
Report: Dr Clare Randall
Illustration: Tara Fairclough

October 2015

Front cover image: General Inspection Pit Two (facing East)

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Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during general inspection pit investigations and subsequent groundworks relating to the Dowlish Ford Pipeline Scheme near Ilminster, Somerset (the 'Site'), over 6 days between 22 September 2014 and 4 August 2015. The project was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc under a term agreement with COAS.

The monitoring programme was advised by Ms Tanya James (Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council) following a consultation request from Mr Ollie Williams (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water PLC). The proposed pipeline lay in an area of some archaeological potential therefore it was considered that archaeological features/deposits could be present on the Site, and that these could be damaged or destroyed by potential future development.

Despite this, no visible archaeological features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered during the monitoring works and no finds were collected. The deposit sequence consisted of sandy silt clay topsoil over sandy clay and gravel subsoils on grey clay natural.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during general inspection pit investigations and subsequent groundworks relating to the Dowlish Ford Pipeline Scheme near Ilminster, Somerset (the 'Site'), over a total of 6 days between 22 September 2014 and 4 August 2015. The project was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc under a Term Agreement with COAS.

1.2 The monitoring programme was advised by Ms Tanya James (Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council) following a consultation request from Mr Ollie Williams (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water PLC) on the potential archaeological impact of the scheme. The proposed pipeline lay in an area of some archaeological potential therefore it was considered that archaeological features/deposits could be present on the Site, and that these could be damaged or destroyed by potential future development.

1.3 The requirement followed advice by Central Government as set out in paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and the South Somerset Local Plan (2015).

1.4 The programme of archaeological works comprised five elements: the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for each phase of works which set out the project strategy; monitoring and recording during trial hole investigations (COAS code C1/AMR/14/DWS); monitoring and recording during subsequent easement stripping and pipe trenching (COAS code C1/AMR/15/DFS); post-excavation and report production; and archive deposition. The WSI for the trial pit monitoring was approved by Ms James on 18 September 2014 and the WSI for the easement stripping and pipe trenching was approved by Ms James on 20 May 2015.

2. Site location and topography

2.1 The Site (running between NGR ST 35263 12556 to ST 35920 13244) covered a strip roughly 1.1km in length which crossed six fields near Newhouse Farm, at Greenway, *c*. 1km south of Ilminster (**Figure 1**). At the time of the monitoring and recording, the Site was in agricultural use, down to grass. The Site is largely situated on level ground or gently sloping ground, the north-east end of the route commencing at an average height of *c*. 53m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), increasing to a maximum of 64m aOD before descending to 54m aOD at the western end.

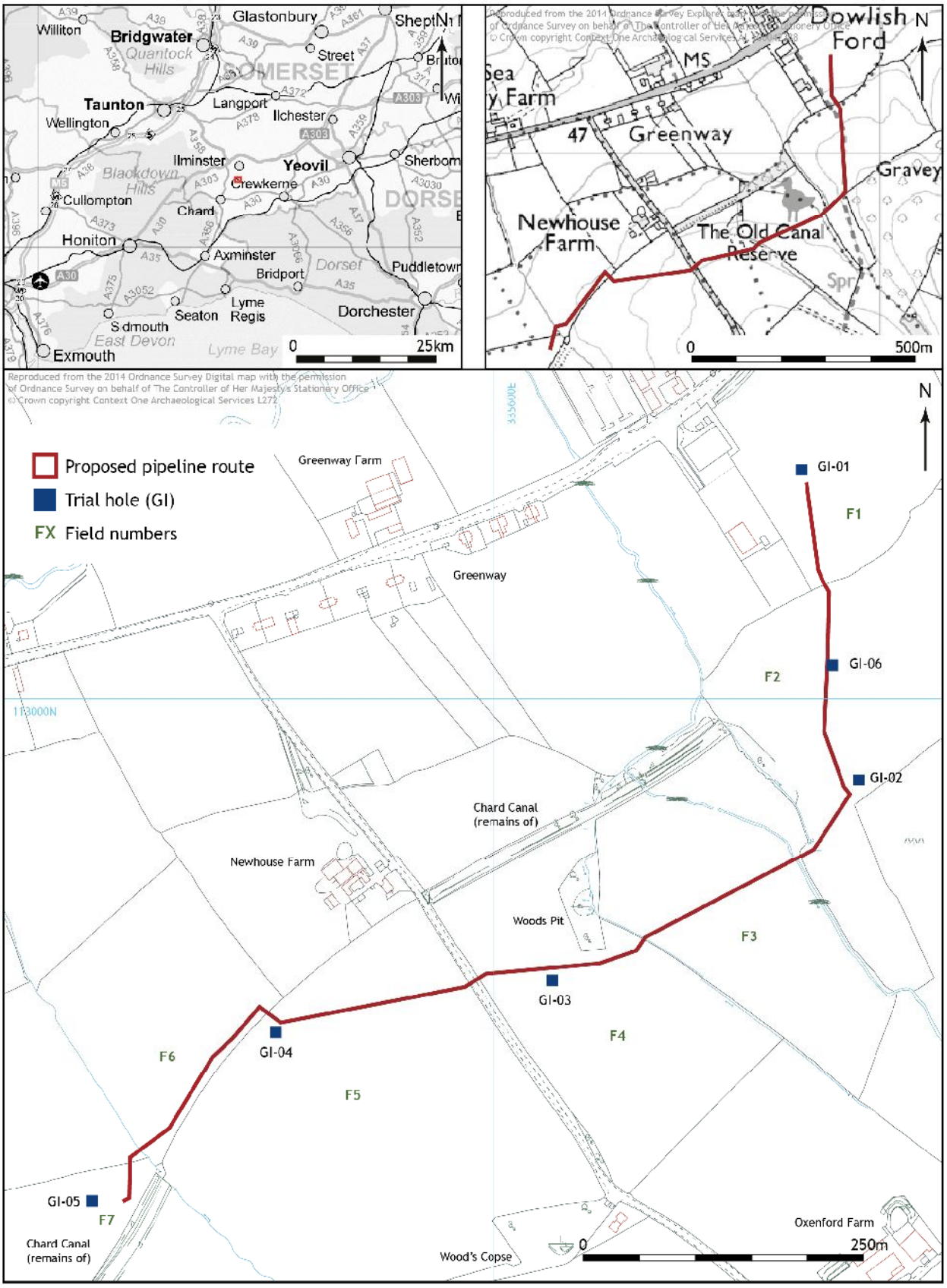

Figure 1. Site setting

3. Methodology

Wessex Water methodology

3.1 In advance of the linear scheme, investigations were carried out involving the machine excavation of a series of general inspection (GI) pits (see F**igure 1**) located along the route of the proposed scheme. Six were planned, although only five were ultimately excavated as GI-03 was abandoned. Following this, stripping of a 12m wide easement was carried out (**Figure 1**) prior to the excavation of open cut trenching for the new pipeline.

3.2 A 360 degree tracked machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket was used to excavate all GI pits. Machine excavation continued to the depth of formation or *in situ* sub-soil/natural geology, whichever was encountered first.

3.3 A 360 degree tracked machine fitted with a toothed bucket was used to remove topsoil from an easement strip in advance of open cut trenching for the pipeline.

Archaeological methodology

3.4 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), formerly the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) (IfA 1985, rev. 2012; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.

3.5 In the absence of archaeological remains, profile sections of the deposit sequence across the Site were recorded using standard COAS *pro forma* profile sheets to illustrate the soil morphology. A profile of each trial hole and the pipe trench profile was recorded as a graphical representation accompanied by a brief description. A photograph was also taken and the location recorded. Any dateable material found within a deposit was also noted.

3.6 All deposits were recorded as individual contexts and ascribed a unique number. Contexts referenced in this report are presented in standard terms, e.g. (100), (203).

3.7 A photographic record of the fieldwork comprised digital images in .jpg format. As a minimum, the record included photographs of each profile section and trial hole in plan.

4. Results

4.1 No visible features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered during the monitoring programme.

4.2 The five general inspection pits demonstrated a similar deposit sequence across the whole Site. This comprised 0.3-0.4m of yellowish brown clay silt topsoil (100) overlying up to 1.1m of orange-brown silty sandy clay subsoil with gravels (101). This covered blue-grey clay natural (102). This clay deposit was observed in the GI pits down to a depth of *c*. 3.5m (**Plates 1** & **2**).

4.3 This sequence was similar to that observed along the length of the easement strip, with a similar depth of topsoil (100) (**Plate 3**). Within the pipe trench, this was seen to overly up to *c*. 0.60m of mid yellowish-brown silty sandy subsoil (101), above a dark orange-brown silty clay natural deposit with frequent small stones (102) measuring *c*. 60m thick, covering the blue-grey clay natural (103) (**Plate 4**). Land drains were observed in Field 1 and a spread of modern rubbish was exposed towards the western end of Field 2 (**Plate 5**)

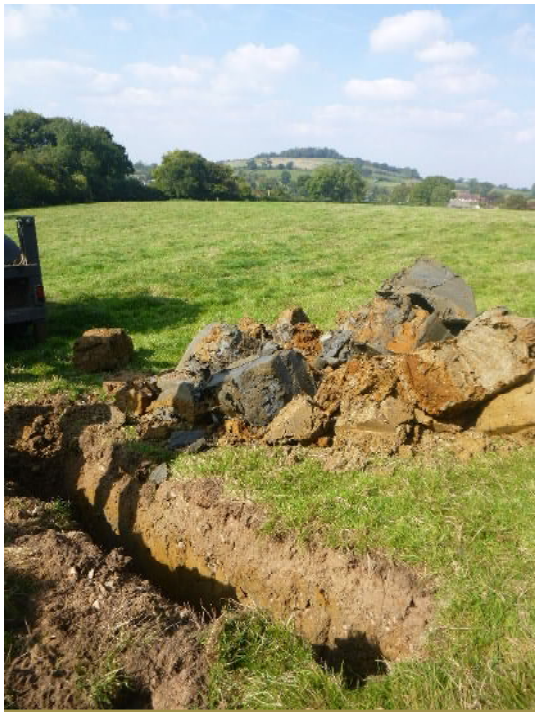

Plate 1. General view across GI-02 (from E)

Plate 2. General inspection pit GI-01 (from NW)

Plate 3. General view of easement strip

Plate 4. Field 1, typical profile (from W; 1m scale)

Plate 5. Spread of modern material in Field 2 (from N; 1m scale)

5. The finds

5.1 No finds were collected during the archaeological programme of works. Some post-medieval and modern pottery was observed un-stratified in Field 1 but was not collected.

6. Discussion

6.1 Despite the fact that the pipeline runs through an area of some archaeological potential, monitoring of the inspection pits, easement strip and pipe trenching did not reveal any archaeological evidence. The deposit sequence and observed modern finds reveals that the area affected by the pipeline construction comprises undisturbed natural deposits with recent activity only affecting parts of the plough zone.

7. Archive

7.1 An ordered and integrated site archive has been prepared to comply with *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992) / *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991).

7.2 The project archive is currently held by COAS and consists of the following:

Item	Number	Format
C1/AMR/14/DWS - General inspection pits		
Profile record sheets	2	Paper
Fieldwork notes	1	Paper
Photographic register	1	Paper
Digital images	12	.JPG
C1/AMR/15/DFS – easement stripping		
Profile record sheets	1	Paper
Fieldwork notes	5	Paper

Context sheets	4	Paper
Photographic register	3	Paper
Digital images	22	.JPG

7.3 The paper archive has been scanned as five files in .PDF format and will form part of the Site archive to be deposited with South West Heritage Trust.

7.4 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Somerset Historic Environment Record as well as being deposited as part of the physical archive at South West Heritage Trust.

8. COAS acknowledgements

8.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

Tanya James, Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council
Ollie Williams, Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc

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