

Maiden Castle
Dorchester
Dorset

Archaeological Monitoring and
Recording Report

March 2017



**Maiden Castle
Dorchester
Dorset**

for

C1 project code: C1/AMR/17/MCD

English Heritage

WSI

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Summary

Context One Heritage and Archaeology Ltd (C1) carried out archaeological monitoring and recording during the replacement and repair of a gate post and fencing in the western entrance of Maiden Castle, Dorset (the 'Site'). The project was commissioned by English Heritage.

The works were required as a condition of Scheduled Monument consent for the works. This involved the excavation of a modern post-hole associated with the timber fencing and gates across the gateway at the inner western hillfort entrance, to facilitate the insertion of a replacement gate post. Desk-based research had indicated that this area had not previously been subject to archaeological investigation.

In the event, no archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed. There is no evidence that archaeological deposits associated with the original gateway of the Iron Age hillfort are preserved in this location. Neither was there any evidence for the edge of the rampart bank to the south, extending to this point. It is likely that archaeological deposits have been removed in this area by past erosion.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Heritage and Archaeology Ltd (C1) carried out archaeological monitoring and recording during the replacement and repair of a gate post and fencing in the western entrance of Maiden Castle, Dorchester, Dorset (the 'Site'), in March 2017. The project was commissioned by English Heritage.
- 1.2 The monitoring and recording was required by English Heritage as a condition of carrying out these works to the Scheduled Monument (SM). Mr Hugh Beamish (Inspector of Ancient Monuments) issued SM Consent on 8 March 2017.
- 1.3 The programme of archaeological works comprised four elements: the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which sets out the project strategy; archaeological monitoring and recording; post-excavation and report production (this document); and archive preparation and deposition.
- 1.4 The requirement follows advice by Central Government as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) (DCLG 2012).

2. The Site

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR SY 66562 88534) covered c. 1 square metre in the western gateway through the inner rampart of Maiden Castle. Maiden Castle is an Iron Age hillfort located c. 2km to the south-west of Dorchester (**Figure 1**). The Site sits within an open agricultural landscape, and is itself covered in grazed grassland, whilst being fully open to public access. The area of intervention is restricted to the immediate area of a gate post within the western gateway. The location of the Site is on a slight slope as the entryway reaches the more level interior of the hillfort, at a height of c. 124m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The recorded geology for the Site is Seaford Chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation (undifferentiated) (BGS 2017), with shallow lime rich soils (CSAIS). Whilst Maiden Castle has been subject to extensive research, survey and excavation in the past (Wheeler 1943; Sharples 1991), desk-based assessment indicated that the area concerned had not previously been subject to archaeological intervention (Milby 2017).

3. Archaeological aims and research objectives

- 3.1 The principal aims of the archaeological monitoring were to:
 - identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during groundworks;
 - determine the character of the archaeological remains, where present;
 - recover environmental information, which may provide further information relating to the local historic environment of the area;
 - provide sufficient information to enable further mitigation strategies to be determined, where appropriate
- 3.2 The research objectives were to:
 - To ascertain whether there has been any erosion within the gateway area
 - To establish whether the rampart originally extended as far as the gateway
 - To determine whether this area has been subject to any previous unrecorded archaeological interventions

4. Methodology

Groundwork methodology

- 4.1 Groundworks involved the excavation of a modern post-hole associated with the timber fencing and gates across the gateway at the inner western hillfort entrance (**Plate 1**) to facilitate the insertion of a replacement gate post. An area measuring c. 0.50 x 0.50m was excavated.
- 4.2 All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) (December 2014). C1 adhered to the *Code of Conduct* of the CIfA (1985, rev. 2000, 2014), and *Regulations for Professional Conduct* (CIfA, 2014, rev. 2015) at all times. The fieldwork methodology is summarised below.
- 4.3 Prior to the commencement of Site works, the excavation methodology was agreed between those responsible for carrying out the groundworks and C1 to ensure that all parties are aware of the monitoring requirements.
- 4.4 An archaeologist was on Site to monitor all specified groundworks with the aim of identifying and recording any archaeological features/deposits present.
- 4.5 By default, core details of the deposit sequence Site were recorded on C1 *pro-forma* profile forms in digital format using iPad mini tablets. Spoil was examined for the retrieval of artefacts.
- 4.6 A photographic record of the monitoring and recording was carried out, and involved the sole use of digital images. Contexts are referred to in standard terms e.g. (7-100), with the prefix relating to the identity of the recorder.

5. Results

- 5.1 Observations revealed that the modern post-hole had been dug into the modern footpath surface. This comprised a cemented grey (7.5YR 5/1) flint gravel with frequent angular flint fragments (7-100) to a depth of 0.50m (**Plate 2**). This layer was directly situated above the underlying solid white (7.5YR 8/1) chalk natural (7-101) of the hilltop. This had been cut into by the post-hole to a depth of a further 0.50m. No archaeological features or deposits were observed, and a new timber gate post was inserted (**Plate 3**).

6. The finds

- 6.1 No archaeological finds were noted or collected.

7. Discussion and conclusion

- 7.1 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed in the process of clearing out the modern gatepost. However, this work has demonstrated that the modern surface, which is subject to a high degree of foot traffic (as this is the main entry point into the monument for the general public), is situated directly onto the natural geology of the hill (see . There is no evidence that archaeological deposits associated with the original gateway of the Iron Age hillfort are preserved in this location. Neither was there any evidence for the edge of the rampart bank to the south, extending to this point. It is likely that archaeological deposits have been removed in this area by past erosion.

8. Archive

- 8.1 The NPPF requires that an archaeological archive arising from development works is made publicly accessible (para. 141). The archive comprises two parts: the paper/digital archive including site records and images; and the artefact/ecofact assemblage. In this case there is no artefact/ecofact assemblage.

- 8.2 As no archaeological evidence was encountered, all relevant data has been incorporated into this report and the paper/digital archive will be stored on the C1 cloud storage server or discarded.
- 8.3 A copy of this report will be provided to the client and to the local Historic Environment Service so that it can be included as part of the county Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations – <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>).

9. Bibliography

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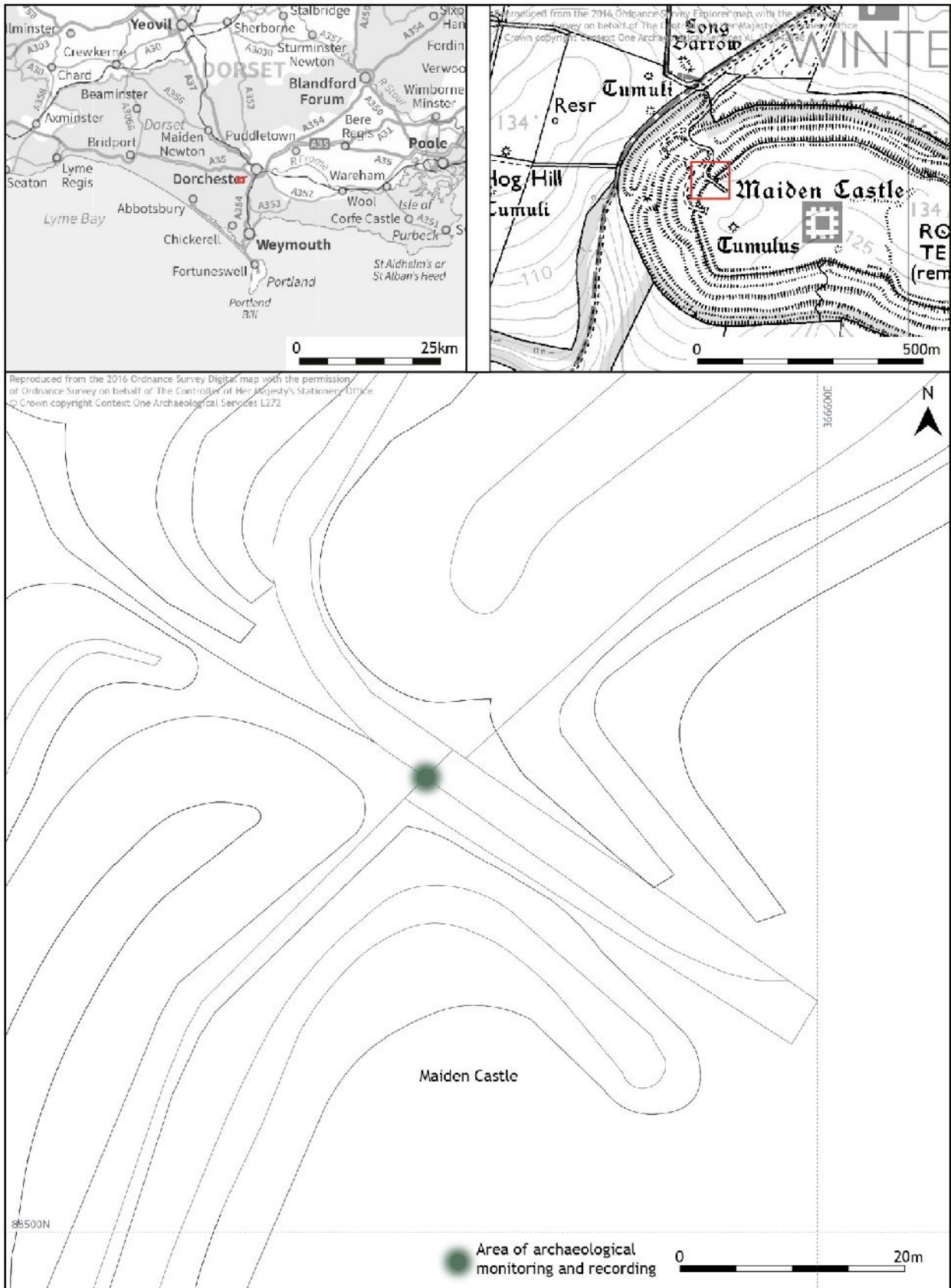


Figure 1. Site setting and location of area of archaeological monitoring and recording.



Plate 1. Gateway before work commenced (facing W)



Plate 2. Profile of post-hole (facing S; 0.5m scale)



Plate 3. Gateway with new post (facing E)

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