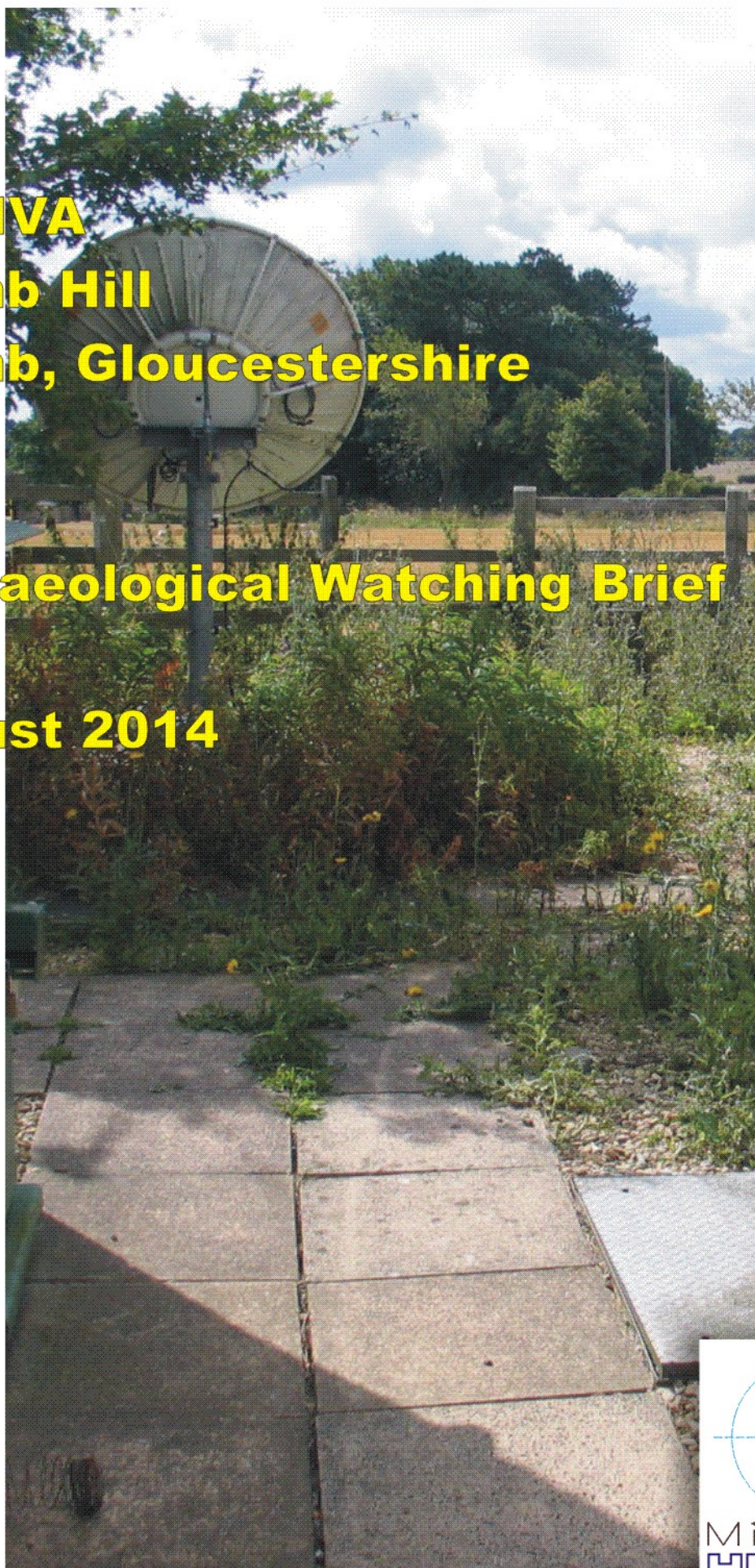


**ARQIVA
Icomb Hill
Icomb, Gloucestershire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

August 2014



SUMMARY

Arqiva, Icomb Hill, Icomb, Gloucestershire.

NGR: 420200 / 222900

SM No.: GC 181. EH Ref.: S00081566

Archaeological monitoring

August 2014

Excavation of a 2m x 2m pad footing for a DAB dish transmitter within the Icomb Hill scheduled monument near Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire, revealed wholly undisturbed natural subsoils beneath a shallow humic topsoil of recent formation. The report concludes that the construction works have not affected archaeological remains, but the limited extent of the excavations preclude meaningful extrapolation of the results beyond the immediate confines of the work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Figure 1. The site, its situation and principal observations

**Arqiva Mast Site
ICOMB HILL
Icomb, Gloucestershire**

**Archaeological Monitoring
August 2014**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Project

- 1.1.1 This document presents the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring, recording and investigation (hereinafter 'the work') undertaken during groundworks occasioned by installation of an additional DAB dish transmitter at Icomb Hill near Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire during August 2014. The work has been commissioned by the site owners, Arqiva Plc, (the 'Employer') in accordance with a condition of scheduled monument consent granted by *English Heritage*.
- 1.1.2 The work has been undertaken by Michael Heaton MIFA IHBC in accordance with written schemes of investigations (Ref. 3660-1WSI) submitted to and approved by *English Heritage*. That document presents an assessment of the site's archaeological potential, specifications for the archaeological works applied and the contractual arrangements under which the works are done, which are repeated here in summary only.
- 1.1.3 The following texts and supporting illustrations define the site and its situation and summarise its history and archaeological potential; describe the methods employed; describe the results with reference to a plan drawing and selected digital photographs reproduced as Figure 1; and concludes with an archaeological interpretation of the results and an assessment of their significance.

1.2 Methods

- 1.2.1 Form of work. The work complies with 'Archaeological Watching Brief' as defined by the *Institute for Archaeologists*, thus:
- "...a formal programme of observation and investigation carried out during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive."* (IfA 2008)
- 1.2.2 Background research. The Gloucestershire County Council Historic Environment Record was consulted for relevant previously recorded archaeological data, a synthesis of which was presented in the WSI.
- 1.2.3 Site operations. Upon notification by the Employer, the author attended groundworks on the 14th August, during which period all construction groundworks were completed. All excavations were inspected fully open and were cleaned manually, where necessary, to afford detailed inspection. Recording comprised annotations on copies of the contractor's layout drawings and digital photographs. Artefact recovery was restricted to typologically distinct datable objects from stratified deposits, of which none were identified. No soil samples were retained.
- 1.2.4 Analysis and Report preparation. The results are described in the following text passages (Section 3), grouped by site-specific criteria and cross-referenced to

reproductions of the plan drawings and selection of digital photographs on Figure 1. The conclusions are based on received histories of this area of Gloucestershire and a comparison of the results with those from comparable sites.

- 1.2.5 Archive. The archive comprises this report, the one annotated A3 site layout drawing, one written site record sheet and one CD of colour digital photographs. In view of the minimal results, the archive will not be deposited publicly.

1.3 Caveats

- 1.3.1 This report and the work on which it is based have been undertaken with reasonable skill and care, following the guidances of the professional bodies cited above and based on information publicly available at the time of writing. Archaeological or historical discoveries made in the area after the date of writing, or changes in research strategies affecting the perceived significance of such discoveries, may affect the currency of the report.
- 1.3.2 No person other than the Client named in paragraph 1.1.1 to whom this report is addressed shall rely on it in any respect and no duty of care will be owed by the author to any such third party.
- 1.3.3 The executive summary and conclusions contain overviews of the key findings and conclusions. However, no reliance should be placed on any part of the executive summary until the whole of the report has been read: other sections of the report, particularly the methodological statements contain information that may affect interpretation of the executive summary.

2 THE SITE

2.1 Situation and definition

Figure 1

- 2.1.1 Icomb Hill forms the northern end of a ridge of the Cotswold Hills between the catchments of the Rivers Windrush and Evenlode, c. 4km south of Stow-on-the-Wold in central Gloucestershire. It is an intensely dissected landscape of limestone plateaux and steep-sided river valleys, with the application site lying at a level of c. 240m OD. The underlying geological bedrock is Jurassic limestone, which supports shallow argillaceous soils typically less than 300mm thick except where colluviated.
- 2.1.2 The application site is an established radio mast facility on the summit of Icomb Hill, comprising a roughly triangular fenced compound enclosing a mast and several ancillary buildings, comprising c. 1,015 square metres centred on NGR: 420200 / 222900.
- 2.1.3 Affective construction works comprised excavation of a c. 2m x 2m x 0.80m deep footing for a reinforced concrete pad foundation immediately adjacent to existing buildings and mast/dish structures .

2.2 Archaeological and historical context

- 2.2.1 The Cotswold Hills is an area of outstanding archaeological survival, with the material remains of prehistoric, Roman, medieval, Post-medieval and early Modern activities surviving in conditions and densities almost unequalled in Britain. Within the immediate vicinity of the application site are prehistoric enclosures and linear earthworks, such as at

Maugsbury Hill; a probable Gallo-Roman temple at Weasel Coppice and spreads of Romano-British pottery at The Grove; the deserted medieval settlement and Post-medieval parkland of Icomb; and numerous Post-medieval stone quarries.

- 2.2.2 Icomb Hill is itself the site of an Iron Age 'hillfort' that occupies almost the entirety of the summit above 240mOD, identified in the early 20th century from aerial photographs but no longer visible as an earthwork monument. Nonetheless, traces of linear earthworks survive along its western flank close to the application site, as well as a 'cross-dyke' across the south end of the promontory. However, through finds of prehistoric worked flint were made within the interior of the 'fort' in 1975, successive investigations undertaken during initial construction and expansion of the radio mast between 1989 and 1994 failed to identify archaeological remains.
- 2.2.3 Nonetheless, as settlement and other contemporaneous activity patterns within Iron Age hillforts are not understood – mainly because so few have been subject to extensive investigation – the presence of archaeological remains within the application site cannot be discounted. If such remains did exist, they would be manifest as 'cut' features such as postholes or storage pits cut into the limestone bedrock, containing and sealed by culturally enhanced soils. Such remains would survive only below the base of the 'B' horizon subsoil, in this case likely to be a yellowish brown silty clay loam.

2.3 Status

- 2.3.1 The site is within the Icomb Hill Scheduled Monument. As such, it is protected from unlicensed physical disturbance by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Activities such as construction require the written Scheduled Monument Consent of the Secretary of State, as advised by English Heritage, and works for which SMC have been granted must be conducted in accordance with the conditions thereof.
- 2.3.2 The site is owned by the Employer.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Stratigraphic data

See Figure 1

- 3.1.1 Excavation revealed a simple stratigraphic sequence:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 0.00 - 0.10m | Topsoil. Dark greyish brown, loose humic topsoil mixed with Cerney shingle scalplings (i.e. imported) and late 20 th century detritus |
| 0.10 - 0.600m | Subsoil. Dark yellowish brown silty clay loam 'B' horizon subsoil containing increasingly common small rounded limestone pieces with depth. Upper c. 100mm almost stone-free. |
| 0.06 - | Bedrock. Weathered limestone rubble in pale yellow silty clay matrix, becoming more compact and dense with depth. Excavation halted at 0.8m |

- 3.1.2 No archaeological remains were revealed.

3.2 Artefactual data

- 3.2.1 No pre-20th century artefacts were recovered.

3.3 Palaeoenvironmental data

- 3.3.1 No deposits of demonstrable palaeoenvironmental potential were revealed and no soil samples were retained.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Archaeological interpretation

- 4.1.1 The topsoil is not the natural 'A' horizon soil that would be expected at this site, which should be of a heavier argillaceous texture and yellowish brown colouration. The dark humic soil revealed here has formed from leaf mould within a layer of Cerney shingle laid down during initial construction of the mast site, during when, presumably, the pre-existing topsoil was taken off-site.
- 4.1.2 The subsoil and the limestone bedrock, however, are the lower two horizons of the natural soil sequence that would be expected at this site. Neither displayed any evidence of cultural activity and it is certain that these are wholly undisturbed natural deposits.
- 4.1.3 Excavation revealed no archaeological remains or evidence of archaeological remains within the immediate vicinity.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 The results of observations made under non-archaeological conditions have to be treated with caution, especially where – as here – the affective excavation has been of very limited extent. Whilst it is clear that construction has not affected archaeological remains, it cannot be assumed that no such remains exist within the site. Hey and Lacey's methodological analysis of archaeological investigation strategies¹ concludes that a 2% sample of a site is serviceable, but that an 8% is the optimum. In this case the results are derived from a 0.5% sample of the site area and are not, therefore, a reliable indicator of archaeological survival within the site.
- 4.2.2 The work has been undertaken by a qualified archaeologist with personal experience of the archaeology and pedology of this area of Gloucestershire, in accordance with written schemes of investigations approved by *English Heritage* and in accordance with the professional guidelines of the *Institute for Archaeologists*.

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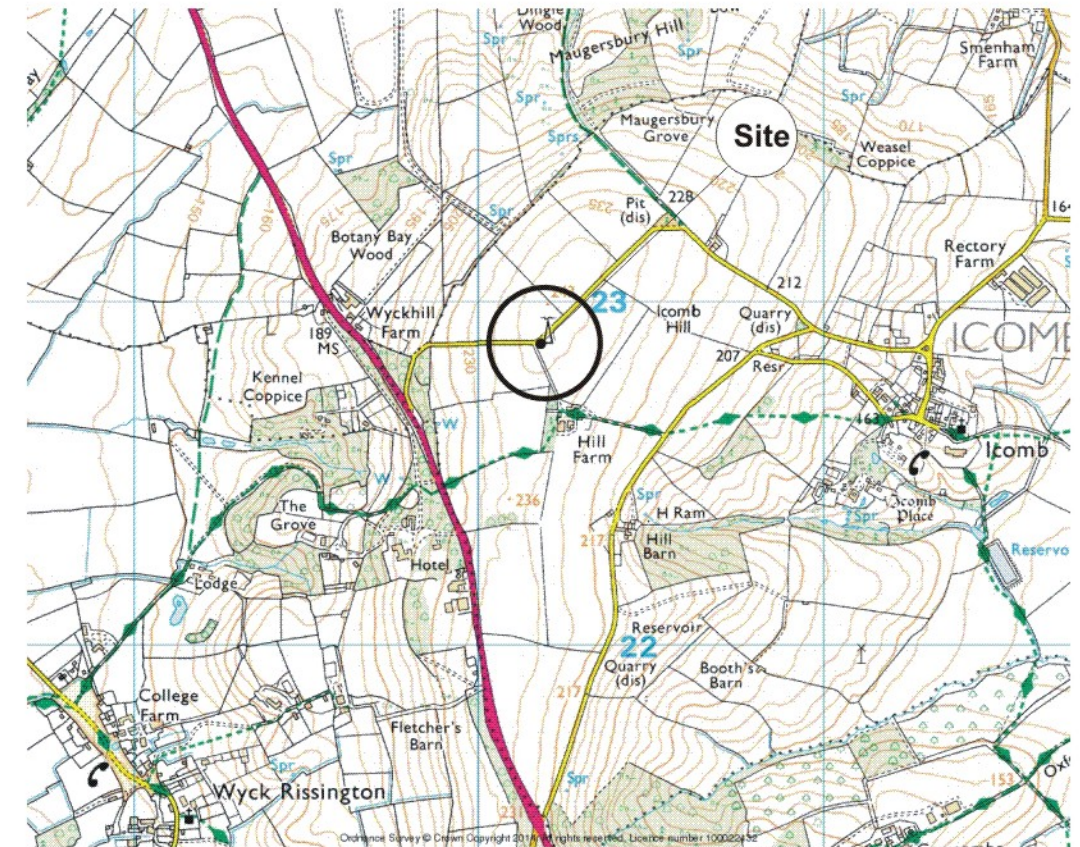
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¹ Hey and Lacey, 2001

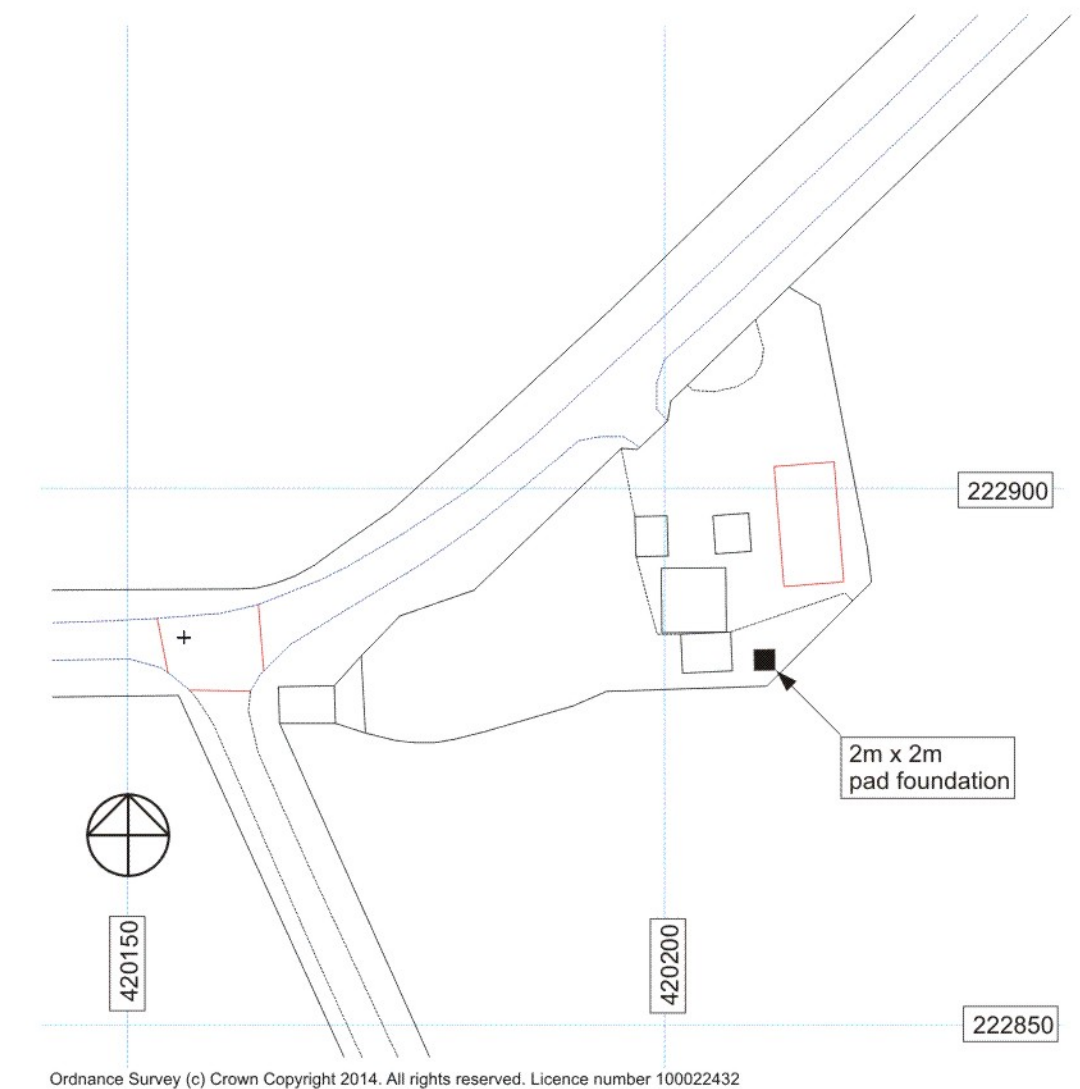
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The site prior to commencement, viewed from the north



Foundation excavation at completion, viewed from the west (1m scale)



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