

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
GREAT BOTLEY COPSE, BOTLEY DOWN,
OXENWOOD**

NGR SU 2952 5989 TO SU 2997 6009

On behalf of
DNO Consulting Limited

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief during excavation for new electricity cables.

A further stretch of the undated earthwork linear feature, which is double ditched in parts (Historic Environment Record No. SU26SE626), on the west side of the wood was found in the eastern part of the copse.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site was at Great Botley Copse, northwest of Oxenwood, within the parish of Shalbourne. The high voltage cable started at (SU 2997 6009) and ran to the west to a point (SU 2972 6001) at which point a low voltage cable was also laid. Both cables then continued to a substation (SU 2952 5989) where the high voltage cable terminated. The low voltage cable then continued north to an Airwaves-Cell (SU 2944 6024). The geology was Upper Chalk Formation.

1.2 Planning Background

DNO Consulting Limited were advised by the Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre that Archaeological Monitoring should take place during laying of electricity cables at Great Botley Copse. This was due to the potential of the proposed development site to contain archaeological remains. Libraries and Heritage, Wiltshire County Council prepared an Archaeological Brief for the work. The work was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Wiltshire County Council.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The cable route ran through an area of archaeological interest. To the north of the development area is a bowl barrow (SU26SE600) that is scheduled by English Heritage. It is of probable Bronze Age date as an excavation in 1910 located a cremation burial in a biconical urn as well as a later, though undated, intrusive inhumation (SU26SE551). It forms one of several prehistoric earthworks surviving in and immediately surrounding Great Botley Copse. Within the copse a long barrow (SU25NE100) is recorded and a further scheduled Bronze Age round barrow (SU26SE601) is present on the edge of the woodland. A later Saxon burial with a spearhead and buckle was found within the barrow (SU26SE401).

To the south of the copse Bronze Age and Beaker pottery sherds (SU25NE150) and Iron Age pottery sherds, a spindle whirl and pot-boilers (SU25NE201) have been recorded. A Roman coin of Trajan is noted from the area (SU25NEU02). Furthermore to the north and south fragments of earlier field systems (SU25NE625 and SU25NE631) have been noted from aerial photographs. On the west edge of Great Botley Copse is an undated linear feature, which is double ditched in parts (SU26SE626). Potential for further buried features in the area was considered to be high.

The OS map of 1887 shows the area as very similar to its present state.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record any evidence of sub-surface remains relating to the known prehistoric activity in the area.
- The final aim of the work was to make public the results through appropriate publication.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Wiltshire County Council. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

In the field to the east of Great Botley Wood the excavation from SU 2964060062 to SU 2996260123 was monitored (Fig. 1). Due to the lack of features and artefacts and the topography sloping down north-westwards the remaining stretch to SU 2975560077 was not monitored. Within Great Botley Copse the stretch from SU 2975260066 to SU 2953059905 was excavated and backfilled over a weekend by the contractor. The client and archaeologist were not given advance notice of this. An open stretch of an offshoot of the cable trench was examined between SU 2972159925 to SU 2973359925. The rest of the trench from SU 2953059905 to SU 2944 6024 was monitored. The trench was approximately 450mm wide and 1m deep in the field east of the copse and approximately 700mm deep in the wood.

The recording of the bank, and two associated ditches, was not helped by the contractors partly burying the cable before the section had been drawn when the archaeologist was fetching equipment. Parts had to be re-excavated by hand.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and

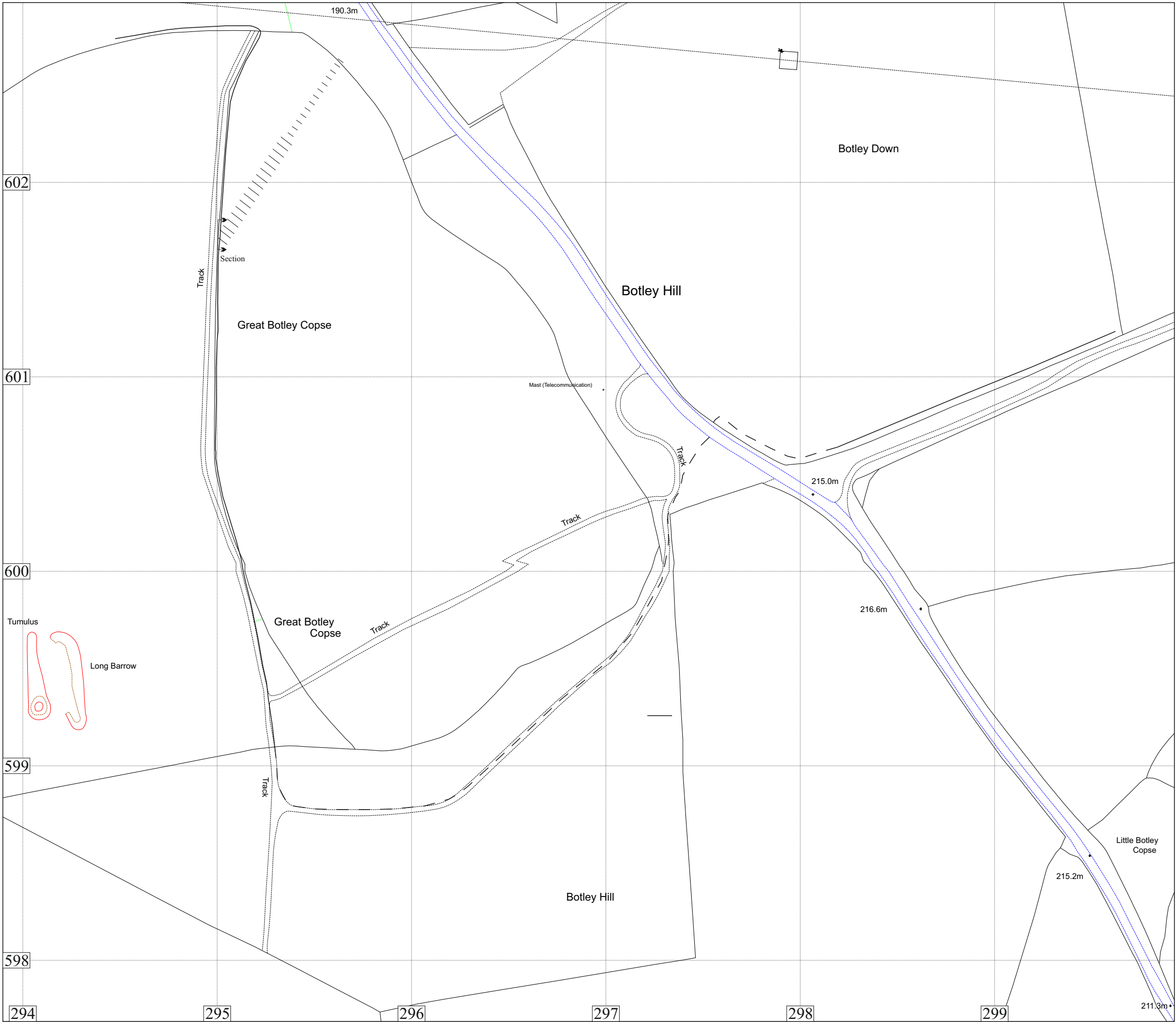


Figure 1. Site Plan

- Monitored
- - - Not Monitored
- /// Earthworks

0 100 m

section drawings compiled where appropriate.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Results

All features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () indicate feature fills or deposits of material.

In the field east of Great Botley Copse the Upper Chalk Formation was seen in the west half of the field where the upper 300-400mm comprised angular lumps over compact chalk (3). Overlying the chalk was a natural deposit of orange-brown clay with 15 % flint (2). This was up to 750mm thick in the east half of the field thinning out westwards where it was absent in the next quarter of the field before being present closer to the road. The overlying 250mm thick ploughsoil was grey-brown clayey silt with 10% small flint and chalk content (1).

Within Great Botley Copse the chalk (3) was overlaid by a natural deposit of orange-brown clay with 15 % flint (4), the same as (2). The depth varied from 150mm – 200mm between SU 2951060020 and SU 2953059905 and was not bottomed in places, exceeding 350mm in thickness. Overlying the natural subsoil was a deposit of compact orange-brown (in places more grey-brown) slightly silty clay with 30% flint (6). This was either weathered natural deposit (4) or a ploughsoil and was 100-200mm thick. The 200mm thick topsoil was a loose mid grey-brown very slightly clayey silt with 5% small chalk and flint pieces (5).

A further stretch of the undated earthwork linear feature, which is double ditched in parts (Historic Environment Record No. SU26SE626), on the west side of the wood was found in the eastern part of the copse. It only exists east of the north/south footpath through the wood. It survives from *c.* SU 2950360173 as a bank with a larger ditch on the north side and a smaller ditch on the south side. The monument heads NNE from the track down slope to a point at *c.* SU 2953660221 where the smaller south ditch and bank is no longer visible and where the north ditch becomes small. The north ditch is no longer discernible (washed out) from *c.* SU 2956360261 (Fig. 1). The monument is aligned on the head of a coomb that exists on the east side of the road to Oxenwood.

Within the copse the earthwork bank is *c.* 2.5m wide at the top, with the larger north ditch *c.* 5.5m wide and *c.* 1.0-1.2m deep, while the smaller south ditch is *c.* 2.5m wide and *c.* 300mm deep.

The cable trench clipped the end of the earthworks where a section was recorded. The section was not at right angles to the line of the monument. Remains of the bank material, 60-120mm high, comprising medium sized chalk fragments (7) survived laid on deposit (6). The depth of deposit 6 (at least 360mm) suggests that some of this was bank material as well but the difference between *in situ* (6) and redeposited (6) was not discernible. The topsoil (5) was thicker over the top of the bank where it was up to 460mm high (Fig. 2).

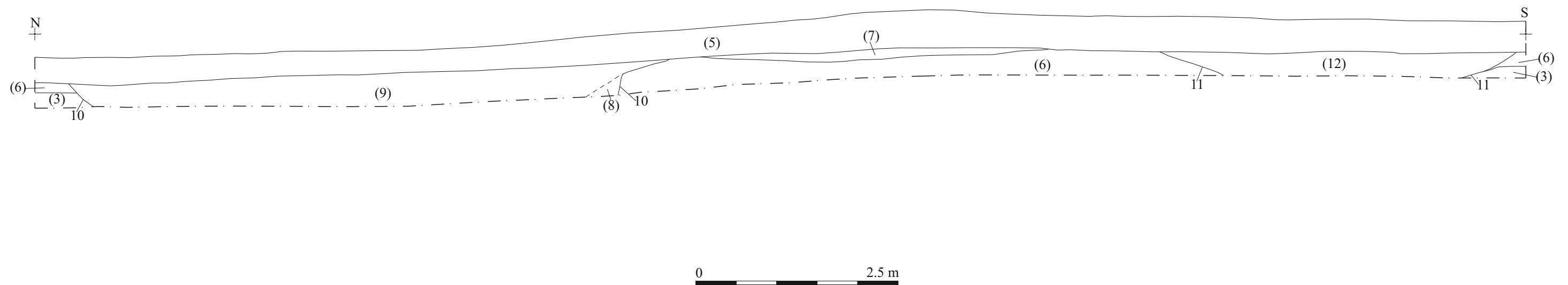


Figure 2. Section through bank and ditches

On the north side ditch 10 was partially exposed. At the top the ditch was 7.40m wide (exaggerated due to the angle it was cut at by the cable trench). The top of the north side was at 45° while the top of the south side was at c. 80°. On the south side of the ditch was fill material (8) consisting of material similar to (6), presumably material eroding from the bank. The uppermost fill of the ditch as seen was orange-brown slightly silty clay with 5-10% small and medium sized chalk fragments (9). The smaller ditch 11 was 4.30m wide at the top with sides at 30°. It was filled with orange-brown slightly silty clay with 5-10% small chalk fragments (12). Within the confines of the narrow trench the south side of the ditch appeared more north/south as opposed to the general NNE/SSW direction, suggesting that the ditch was terminating at this point.

In the field to the north of the copse the 250mm thick topsoil directly overlaid the Upper Chalk Formation.

Within the copse there are several small woodbanks with associated ditches. One is just to the east of part of the north/south track through the copse and is visible crossing the bank and two ditches described above. Its associated ditch lies between the bank and track.

5 FINDS

No finds were present.

6 DISCUSSION

The undated linear earthwork consisting of a bank and two ditches known on the west side of Great Botley Copse was found to continue in the east part of the wood. From the limited observations made in the cable trench it would appear that the smaller ditch to the south of the bank is terminating at the east edge of the north/south track through the centre of the wood. It seems possible that this ditch was the original ditch that silted up with bank material eroding into it. The bank perhaps was then enlarged with the excavation of the north ditch that perhaps extends slightly further westwards than the south ditch. The creation of the track through the wood has resulted in the ends of the bank and ditches being slighted. There is no sign of the bank and ditches through the west part of the wood and it would appear that the monument was not continuous. This stretch is the top of a ridge. The woodbank and its ditch to the east of the track cut across the earlier bank and two ditches.

The earthworks in the east part of the wood would benefit from proper survey.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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