

Electricity Pole Renewal Grovely Hill Near Wilton Wiltshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



November 2009

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Electricity Pole Renewal, Grovely Hill, near Wilton, Wiltshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Front Cover: Excavation of the trench

SUMMARY

On 27th October 2009, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at Grovely Hill, near Wilton, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 0860 3284). The work was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy to observe the replacement of an overhead power cable pole located adjacent to the earthwork known as Grim's Ditch. This revealed the chalk geology beneath the modern pasture. No deposits or features associated with Grim's Ditch were encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On 27th October 2009, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook an archaeological watching brief at Grovely Hill, near Wilton, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 0860 3284). The work was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy to observe and record the excavation of a foundation trench for the replacement of an overhead power cable double pole arrangement (Pole number 43) located adjacent to the eastern end of Grim's Ditch scheduled monument (SM456).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 Pole 43 is located approximately 1.5 km NNW of the town of Wilton and 4 km NW of Salisbury (Fig. 1). This was positioned on steeply sloping ground facing to the east overlooking the Wylde Valley and at approximately 100 m above ordnance datum level. The ground is currently utilised as pasture.

1.2.2 Grim's Ditch runs downhill from Heath Wood on the crest of the hill, forming the northern edge of the field before turning southwards, immediately east of the old pole, and roughly following the 95 m contour across the slope of the field. Within the locale of the Pole 43, Grim's Ditch measured 6.5 m wide and 0.6 m deep. No evidence of any associated bank(s) could be observed at this point. During the walkover of the site a similar ditch running parallel to Grim's Ditch was observed located approximately upon the 110 m contour line.

1.2.3 The underlying geology is Upper Chalk (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no 298).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following description is taken from Pevsner (1963):

Also known as Grim's Dyke, a linear boundary dyke follows the top of the ridge for nearly 9 miles westwards from Grovely Hill, north-west of Wilton. It comprises a low bank with a ditch along the N side and is clearly earlier than the Roman road which cuts it (SU 0625 3380, near the A354 Blandford Road).

It appears to be an Iron Age boundary associated with the settlements which lie on either side of it.

A section of the ditch follows the parish boundary between Downton and Breamore and crosses fields towards the Great Yews area.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were to identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains at the location affected by the positioning of the new pole. The archaeological attendance was also aimed at ensuring that the new location for the replacement Pole 43 did not encroach upon nor affect any visible remains of the Grim's Ditch earthwork and to establish if any associated ditch or bank deposits were present within the foundation trench.

2.1.2 Should any archaeological deposits have been encountered, the watching brief also aimed to preserve these by record and make available the results through this report or any other suitable publication.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A single foundation trench, 3.8 m in length, 0.6 m in width and 1.8 m deep, was excavated mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a 0.6 m wide bucket. This was sited 11.8 m west of the existing poles (Fig. 2) avoiding the visible surface remains of Grim's Ditch. The trench was excavated in controlled spits until the required depth was achieved.

2.2.2 A plan was maintained showing the extent of any intrusive works at a scale of 1:100 and the section was drawn at a scale of 1:20. The excavation and sections were photographed using digital photography, colour transparencies and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (Wilkinson 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The surface of the underlying solid chalk geology (4) was encountered at a depth of 1.1 m below ground level (Fig. 3, section 1). This was overlaid by a 0.6 m thick layer of off-white fractured and weathered chalk geology (3). Overlying this was a 0.25 m thick layer of yellow-brown clay silt (2) which was sealed by a 0.2 m thick layer of grey-brown silt topsoil and turf (1).

3.2 Finds and palaeo-environmental remains

3.2.1 No dating evidence or deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Layers 3 and 4 represent the underlying chalk geology with 3 being the weathered surface contact layer. Deposit 2 may have a colluvial origin, although it could also be possible that this derives from the eroded remains of a bank associated with Grim's Ditch. However, the foundation trench was positioned approximately 15 m west of the ditch specifically so that it would be unlikely that such remains could be encountered. Also the absence of sizeable chalk fragments within the deposit suggests that it did not derive from the ditch upcast as would be expected with an accompanying bank.
- 4.1.2 No clear evidence was encountered during the course of the watching brief for any deposits or features that could be associated with Grim's Ditch.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth</i> | <i>Comments</i> | <i>Finds</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Layer | 0.2 m | Present day topsoil and turf | - | - |
| 2 | Layer | 0.2 m – 0.25 m | Probable colluvial deposit | - | - |
| 3 | Layer | 0.6 m | Weathered and fractured chalk | - | - |
| 4 | Layer | > 0.7 m | Solid chalk | - | - |

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Pevsner, N, 1963 *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (Revised by Bridget Cherry, 1975)

Wilkinson, D (ed.), 1992 *Field Manual, Oxford Archaeological Unit*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Electricity Pole Renewal, Grovely Hill, near Wilton, Wiltshire

Site code: SALTEF 09

Grid reference: SU 0860 3284

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of a foundation trench for a new electricity pole.

Date and duration of project: 27th October 2009 (single site visit)

Area of site: 2.28 m²

Summary of results:

On 27th October 2009, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at Grovely Hill near Wilton, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 0860 3284). The work was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy to observe the replacement of an overhead power cable pole located adjacent to the earthwork known as Grim's Ditch. This revealed the chalk geology beneath the modern pasture. No deposits or features associated with Grim's Ditch were encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

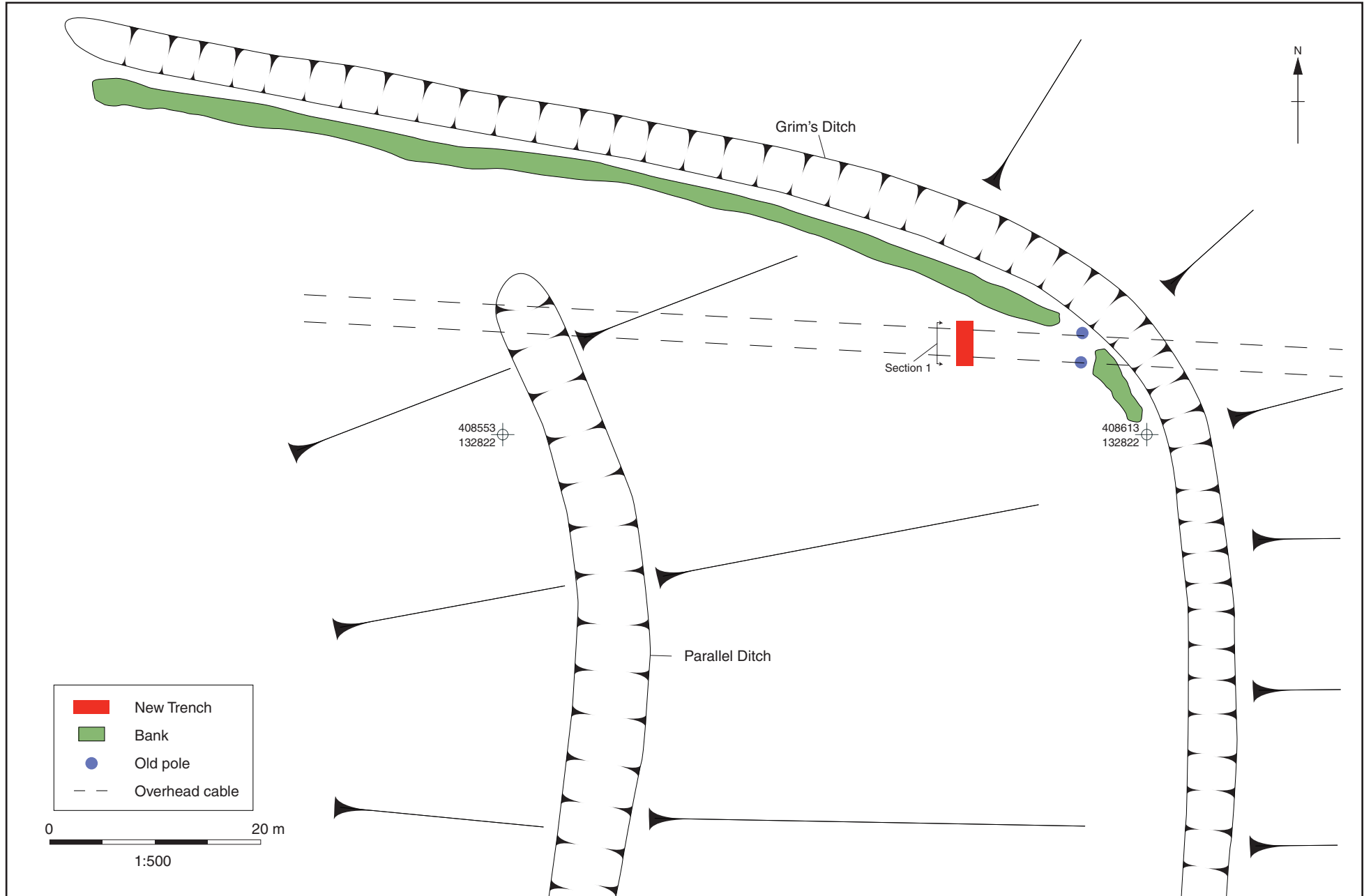


Figure 2: Site plan

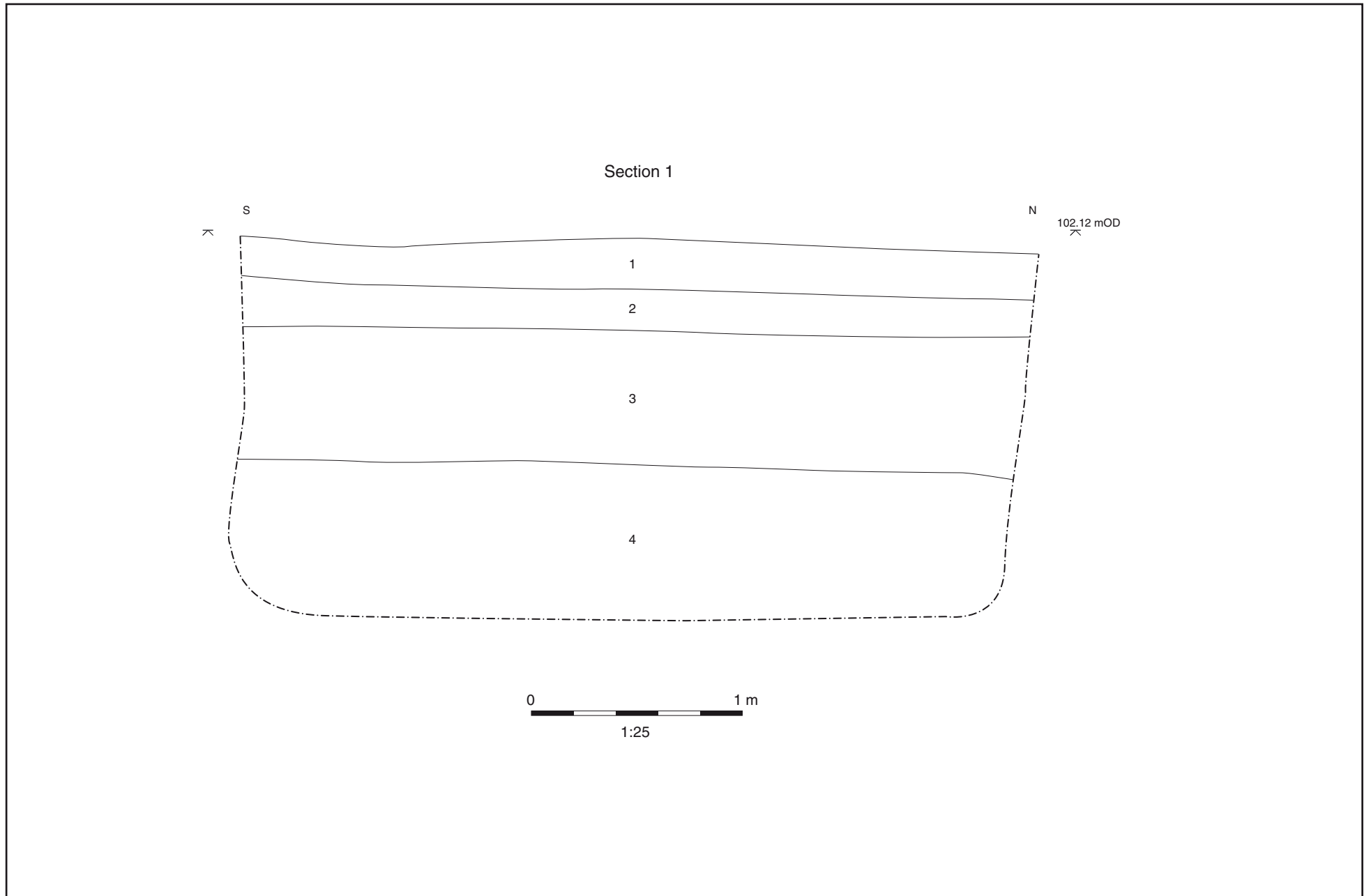


Figure 3: Section 1



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