Archaeological Watching Brief

Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure, Linwood, New Forest, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

oxfordarchaeology south

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Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure, Linwood, The New Forest, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Vix Hughes

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) was commissioned by The Forestry Commission to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure, Linwood, in the New Forest (centred on SU 20041 11189). The work was carried out as part of the planning application for the Wetlands Restoration Project. The work was undertaken over two days on the 1st and 8th June 2015.

*During the restoration of meanders through the Inclosure the works slightly impacted upon three sites, two old ford / stream crossings **OA 13** and **OA 24**, and the Inclosure bank itself **OA 12**.*

The works revealed the nature of the Inclosure bank and ditch arrangement. The bank was created by the excavation and extraction of the material from the ditch. The material was dumped on the internal, southern side of the ditch.

The digging of the ditch and the dumping meant that the deposits were buried in reverse order. There is evidence of the original ground surface being left in place and the soils and subsoils were then dug and dumped to form the deposits of the bank. The bank was probably left at that point. Subsequent time has allowed the formation of thin soil and turf over the bank. The organic matter at the base of the bank has also had time to decompose in-situ.

The resulting ditch and bank, with any associated vegetational growth or additional fencing has formed an effective boundary within the landscape.

The mounds of the old stream crossing points were constructed of accumulated material of a nature identical to the subsoils.

During the works no previously unknown archaeological sites and finds were encountered, nor were any identified that might have been exposed by works incorporating the wider scheme.

INTRODUCTION

Scope of work

Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Land Use Consultants (LUC) on behalf of the Forestry Commission to produce a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the proposed Wetland Restoration Project at Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure.

An application for planning consent for the wetland restoration works was submitted to the New Forest National Park Authority and the DBA and WSI were prepared to accompany the application (OA 2014a and b). The DBA identified a mitigation strategy to ensure the protection of archaeological assets. This report outlines how OA implemented the mitigation strategy in accordance with the submitted WSI.

All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

Location, geology and topography

The Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure SSSI units lie on the north side of the A31 between Ringwood and Cadnam. The centre point lies at SU 20041 11189.

Broomy Inclosure is located approximately 1.5km north-east of Linwood, and runs parallel to the minor public road that crosses Broomy Plain less than 1km to the south. The High Corner Inn 0.5km away is a popular destination for the public, as is the Red Shoot Inn and Camping Park 2.5km to the south-west. A waymarked cycle route runs from the High Corner Inn, following the gravel tracks through Broomy Inclosure and out across Broomy Plain.

Amberslade is a small mire catchment on the Open Forest, which drains northwards into Broomy Inclosure. The watercourse runs northwards through Broomy Inclosure, emerging onto the Open Forest again just before it joins the Dockens Water.

The Site lies in the base of a comparatively broad and shallow valley that follows the course of a stream draining the valley from Broomy Walk to the south, through Amberslade Bottom to join Dockens Water to the north.

The stream channel begins to the south as boggy ground at the base of the valley, the channel then swiftly becomes a broad cut and eroded channel around the foot bridge to the south of Broomy Inclosure. Within the Inclosure itself, the channel continues northwards as a broad regular channel, meandering in places, and at the time of the site visit, largely dry. In this section, to the east of the main stream channel, are a number of small drainage channels or leats feeding the main stream. The channel narrows considerably in the northern end of the Inclosure to form a deep gulley. To the north of the Inclosure and up to Dockens Water, the channel is again a narrow gulley bounded by banks. There is evidence of very old coppicing at the joint with Dockens Water.

The bedrock consists mainly of the Bracklesham Group And Barton Group deposits consisting of Sand, Silt and Clay (BGS Website: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html). There are some superficial deposits of sand and gravel associated with the watercourse.

The site varied in height between 50m aOD (above Ordnance Datum) at the northern end to 100m aOD towards the southern end of the site.

Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in the DBA (OA 2014a). The site has lain within the New Forest since the 11th century. During the post-medieval period the use of the Forest including the site moved away from hunting to wood production and quarrying. Broomy Inclosure was planted with oak in 1809. Key details are summarised below. Figure 3 illustrates the archaeological features identified in the DBA.

The potential archaeological remains within the site included a number of identified features . These comprise:-

- **OA 23**. Bronze Age potential of an area straddling the stream has been investigated as a possible Burnt Mound site, but no archaeological evidence such as burnt flint has been identified during recent surveys.
- **OA 12:** Medieval to post-medieval Inclosure boundary bank varying in height and width, but in the area of the stream channel, *c*.0.6m in height x *c.* 0.75m in width.
- **OA 13:** Medieval to post-medieval old ford / crossing of the stream channel marked by a sloping track *c.* 3m in width, and bounded both north and south by low banks (banked rather than sunken). The crossing is more pronounced on the eastern bank, but is still very clear on the western side. A clear track runs north-westwards from the crossing cutting slightly into the north facing slope. The crossing appears to pre-date the cutting of the regular channel as, on its eastern side, the crossing drops to a level that is then cut by the later cutting.
- **OA 17:** Bank and ditch earthwork.

- **OA 21:** Medieval to post-medieval bank and ditch to the east of the stream, running parallel to it and then making a right-angled turn to the south-west.
- **OA 22:** A short length of a slight lynchet aligned approximately north-west – south east. The lynchet is up to 2m wide and 0.2m high.
- **OA 24:** Medieval to post-medieval old ford / crossing of the stream channel marked by a sloping track *c*. 3m in width, and bounded both north and south by low banks (banked rather than sunken), which continue to both north and south bounding the stream. The bed of the ford has been slightly raised and is seemingly in current use.
- **OA 25:** Medieval to post-medieval Inclosure boundary bank varying in height and width, but in the area of the stream channel it is substantial measuring *c*. 1.7m in height x c. 1.2m in width.

The work may provide opportunities to add to the general understanding of how the New Forest was exploited over time (HCC 2012, 71). Other than this there is no identified potential for this Site to contribute to the regional or local research agendas identified in the Solent Thames Research Framework (2014)

PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

Aims

The aim of the overall project is to restore the wetland mire habitat in Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure by replacing later drainage channels with restored natural meanders and raising the level of eroded beds within existing channels. This will reinstate the seasonal inundations of the lawns that are required to maintain the wetland habitat, The wooden vehicle bridge in the Open Forest will be replaced with a vented causeway and a new gravel stock crossing created at the northern end of the site.

The aim of the archaeological aspects of the work was to record any deposits encountered that may add to the archaeological record and facilitate the better understanding of the archaeology of the New Forest.

Specific aims and objectives

The specific aims and objectives of the project were:

- To record known archaeological features where they were exposed by the proposed works.
- To examine the specified aspects of the proposed works for unknown archaeological sites and finds.
- To be vigilant for the potential identification of archaeological deposits that might be exposed by works incorporating the wider scheme.

Methodology

The nature of the proposed works was laid out in the document *SSSI Restoration Plan 2014* (see Appendix A of the Construction Environment Management Plan LUC 2014a submitted with the application). In summary the proposal to restore the wetlands (see Figure 2) was to involve several main areas of work. These are summarised below, with reference to their potential archaeological impacts as relevant:

- **Item 1**: Raising bed level and narrow channel to create a meandering channel within the existing channel. Raise bed level to grade into meander bed level

downstream. These works took place in the vicinity of an Inclosure boundary bank (**OA 25**).

- **Item 2**: Replacement of wooden bridge with a gravel vehicle ford. These works caused no significant ground disturbance to potential archaeological deposits.
- **Item 3**: Restore meanders through Inclosure. Infill drain following meander restoration. These works took place in the vicinity of the location of an old ford / stream crossing (**OA 24**).
- **Item 4**: Raise Bed level. These works did not cause significant ground disturbance to potential archaeological deposits.
- **Item 5**: Replace culvert pipe with a vehicle gravel ford. These works will have no effect upon the archaeological resource.
- **Item 6**: Infill drain following restoration of meander; restore meanders on the Open Forest; relocate gravel pedestrian ford across restored meander route. These works took place in the location of the old ford / stream crossing (**OA 13**).

Construction Traffic Management Plan (Appendix 3 LUC 2014a) states that the Site work was to be undertaken by 13 tonne excavators, 8 tonne tracked dumpers and 7 tonne excavators.

Designated compound and stockpile areas were identified from areas already used for existing forestry operations (see Figure 2). Access routes for plant to deliver materials between the existing forest tracks and the restoration locations on the watercourse were identified within the site. The identified access routes within the site ran close to or across a number of earthwork features, probably of post-medieval date (**OA 12, 13, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25**). It was possible to demarcate most of these to ensure they were avoided. Site traffic had the potential to change such features, possibly removing surface features and causing compression damage to below-ground archaeological deposits. Any site clearance, with potential impact was subject of an archaeological watching brief, although this was found to not be the case.

Site specific methodology

A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A of the WSI (OA 2014b). Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found below (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

The lead archaeologist retained the right to stop groundwork on Site in the event of the discovery of significant deposits, and the groundwork contractor allowed sufficient time for those deposits to be fully archaeologically recorded.

It was recommended that the works outlined in Items 1, 3 and 6 should be the subject of an archaeological watching brief, where these works required the removal of bank or stream bed deposits in the vicinity of known archaeological sites. Sites potentially affected included:

- **OA 12**: Inclosure boundary bank. Feature was marked up with barrier tape and any unavoidable intrusion into it was subject to a Watching Brief.
- **OA 13**: Ford across stream channel (still in use). Feature was relocated during works and any intrusion into the site of the old ford was subject to a Watching Brief.
- **OA 17**: Bank and ditch earthwork. Feature was marked up with barrier tape and was not subject to any intrusive work and therefore did not require a Watching Brief.
- **OA 21**: Bank and ditch to the east of the stream, running parallel to it and then making a right-angled turn to the south-west. The feature was marked up with barrier tape and was

avoided where possible. Unavoidable damage (through necessary plant movements etc) was mitigated through the use of bog mats and minimised journeys.

- **OA 24:** Old ford/stream crossing. Feature was marked up but potential damaged by meander restoration and bed raising meant works in this vicinity were subject to a Watching Brief.
- **OA 25**: Inclosure boundary bank. Feature was marked up with barrier tape and was not subject to any intrusive work and therefore did not require a Watching Brief.

Prior to the commencement of work known features were to be fenced to prevent accidental damage by plant.

RESULTS

Marking out

The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) required within the specific methodology known archaeological features to be demarcated with road pins and barrier tape. Initial site discussion between the contractors and the Forestry Commission revealed that the only feature to be affected by the works directly or by associated access tracks was **OA 21**.

Site results

Site OA 12 – Item 3

The Inclosure bank was aligned east-west and formed the northern boundary of the Inclosure. The Inclosure bank was gradually reduced to ground level, producing a gap 3.6m wide. The bank, at this point, was 2.3m wide at the base and narrowed to 0.8m at the top. The bank stood 0.65m high.

The sequence of deposits showed that the earliest visible deposit was a dark brownish black silty clay that contained decomposed humic material (1), (Plate 1). This was overlain by a firm mid reddish brown clayey silt with approximately 25% rounded gravel and 20% of sub-angular flint pebbles (3), (redeposited natural upcast). Above this was a friable dark greyish brown silty clay with 10% rounded gravel inclusions (2). This layer was the present turf and topsoil. The adjacent ditch was 1.3m wide but was mostly infilled leaving a slight depression rather than a void.

Site OA 13 – Item 6

The ford across stream channel was relocated. The works monitored the infilling (Plate 2).

Site OA 21 – Item 3

The bank and ditch east of, and parallel to, the stream, site was in the same location as the works item 3. Prior to vehicles passing over the bank the area was marked up with barrier tape (Plate 3) and was examined. Only two journeys were carried out and given the equipment used this caused no damage to the bank.

Site OA 24 – Item 3

This old ford/stream crossing site was in the same location as the works item 3. The meander in the area of **OA 24** was observed and the slight intrusion into to underlying deposits did not encounter any archaeological remains (Plate 4). The deposits comprised 0.2m of pale-mid reddish brown clayey silt with rounded gravel 20% of sub-angular flint pebbles (4) overlain by 0.05m of leaf mould, O horizon (5).

The work on the meander also required the reduction of the low banks which were elements of the old crossing (Plate 5). The two mounds were 0.68m high and approximately 2.95 wide. The deposit sequence consisted of a firm mid reddish brown clayey silt with rounded gravel and sub-

angular flint pebbles (6), overlain by a friable dark greyish brown silty clay with rounded gravel inclusions (7).

Finds and Environmental remains

No deposits contained any artefactual material. No sediments with environmental potential were encountered during the watching brief.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

During the restoration of meanders through the Inclosure, the works slightly impacted upon three sites, two old ford / stream crossings **OA 13** and **OA 24**, and the Inclosure bank itself **OA12**.

The works revealed the nature of the Inclosure bank and ditch arrangement. The bank was created by the excavation and extraction of the material from the ditch. The material was dumped on the internal, southern side of the ditch.

The digging of the ditch and the dumping meant that the deposits were buried in reverse order. There is evidence of the original ground surface being left in place and the soils and subsoils were then dug and dumped to form the deposits of the bank. The bank was probably left at that point. Subsequent time has allowed the formation of thin soil and turf over the bank. The organic matter at the base of the bank has also had time to decompose *in-situ.*

The resulting ditch and bank, with any associated vegetational growth or additional fencing has formed an effective boundary within the landscape.

The mounds of the old stream crossing points were constructed of accumulated material of a nature identical to the subsoils.

The archaeological watching brief was able to record deposits in the area of known archaeological features, where they were exposed by the works.

During the works no previously unknown archaeological sites and finds were encountered, nor were any identified that might have been exposed by works incorporating the wider scheme.

pendix A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Site	Comments	Finds
1	Deposit	0.12	2.3	12	Old ground surface	-
2	Deposit	0.54	2.3	12	Turf and topsoil, O horizon	-
3	Deposit	0.15	2.3	12	Bank material, redeposited natural	-
4	Deposit	0.2	-	24	Subsoil	-
5	Deposit	0.05	-	24	Turf and topsoil, O horizon	-
6	Deposit	0.52	2.95	24	Bank material, redeposited natural	-
7	Deposit	0.14	2.95	24	Turf and topsoil, O horizon	-

ppendix B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

General

Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013 *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

English Heritage, 2008 *Conservation Principles*

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Project Specific

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ppendix C. LUC, January 2015, *Construction Environment Management Plan*

OA, January 2015 *Amberslade and Broomy Inclosure, Linwood, The New Forest, Desk based Assessment for the Forestry Commission*

OA, January 2015 *Amberslade and Broomy Inclosure, Linwood, The New Forest, Written Scheme of Investigation for the Forestry Commission*

endix D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure, Linwood, The New Forest, Hampshire
Site code:	A2015.24
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SU 20041 11189
Type of watching brief:	Intermittent. Short term
Date and duration of project:	2-3 days, May-June 2015
Area of site:	1-5ha
Summary of results:	Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) was commissioned by The Forestry Commission to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Amberslade Bottom and Broomy Inclosure, Linwood, in the New Forest (centred on SU 20041 11189). The work was carried out as part of the planning application for the Wetlands Restoration Project. The work was undertaken over two days on the 1st and 8th June 2015. During the restoration of meanders through the Inclosure. The works slightly impacted upon three sites, two old ford / stream crossings **OA13** and **OA24**, and the Inclosure bank itself **OA12**. The works revealed the nature of the Inclosure bank and ditch arrangement. The bank was created by the excavation and extraction of the material from the ditch. The material was dumped on the internal, southern side of the ditch. The digging of the ditch and the dumping meant that the deposits were buried in reverse order. There is evidence of the original ground surface being left in place and the soils and subsoils were then dug and dumped to form the deposits of the bank. The bank was probably left at that point. Subsequent time has allowed the formation of thin soil and turf over the bank. The organic matter at the base of the bank has also had time to decompose in-situ. The resulting ditch and bank, with any associated vegetational growth or additional fencing has formed an effective boundary within the landscape. The mounds of the old stream crossing points were constructed of accumulated material of a nature identical to the subsoils. During the works no previously unknown archaeological sites and finds were encountered, nor were any identified that might have been exposed by works incorporating the wider scheme.
Location of archive:	Deposition being arranged. Archive is currently held at OA's offices, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford and will be deposited with the Hampshire County Museum Service following completion of the project under the accession number: xxx

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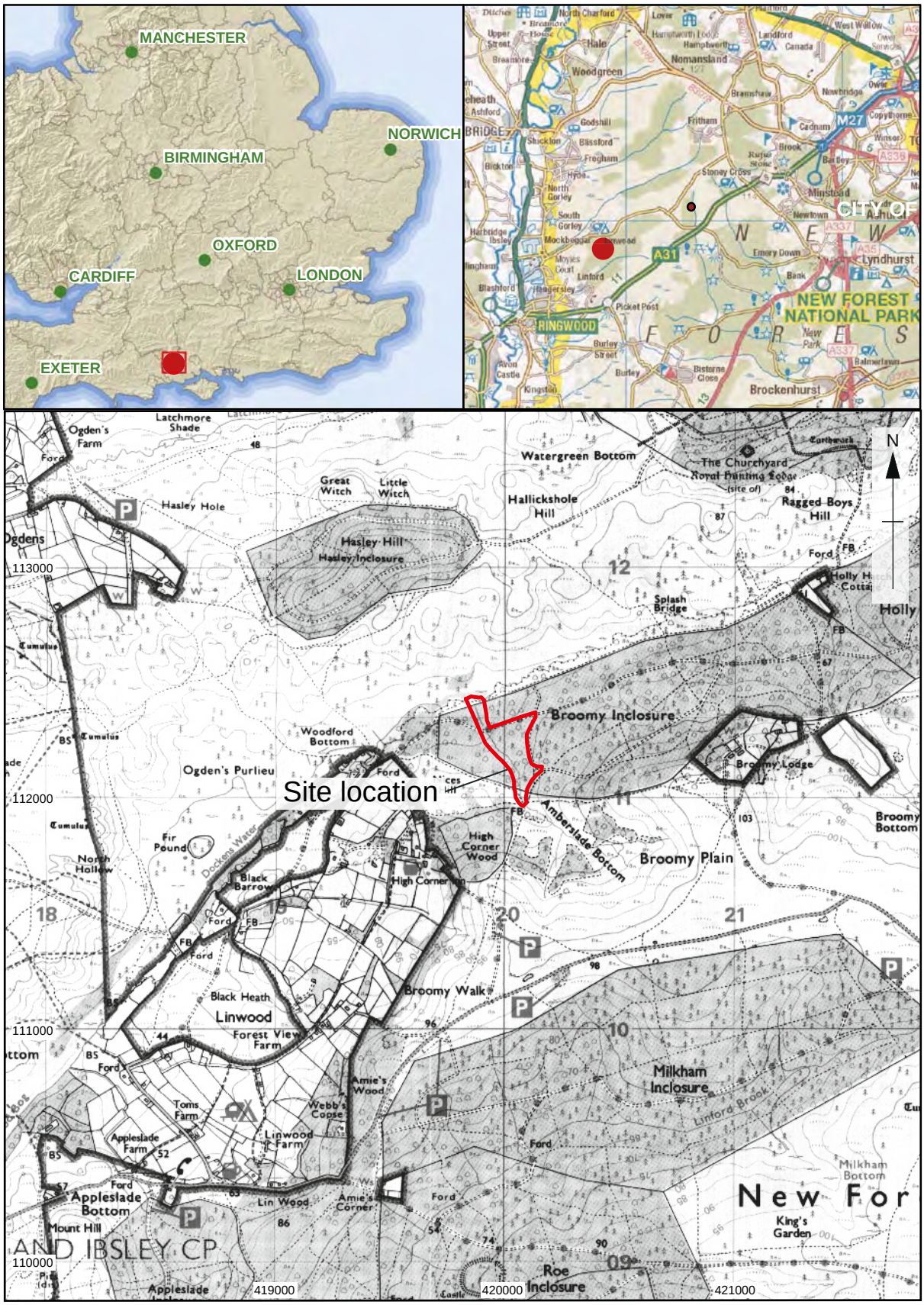
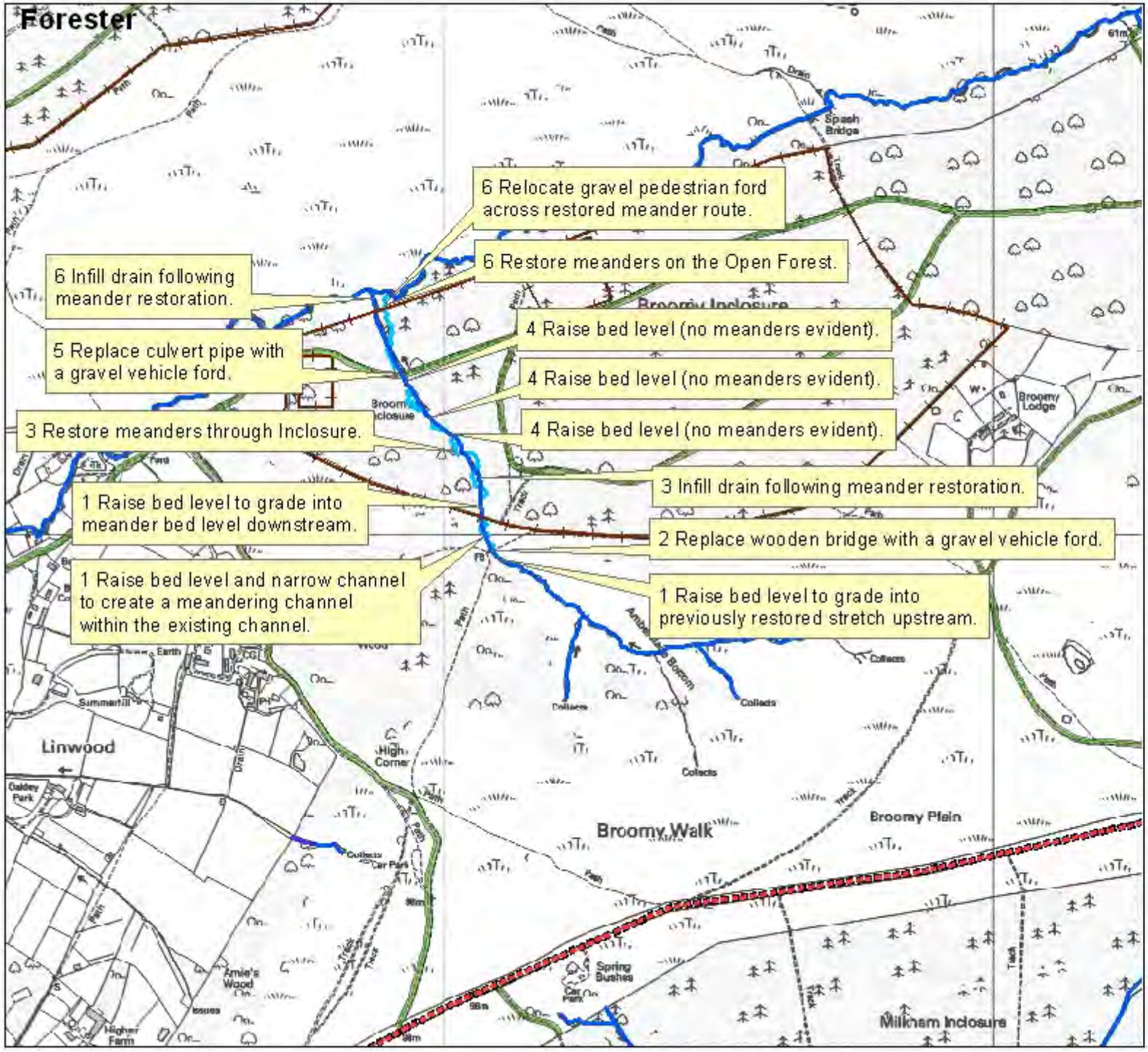


Figure 1: Site location



Forestry Commission England

AMBERSLADE & BROOMY INCLOSURE Restoration Plan Map December 2014

Legend

- Fenceline
- Existing watercourse
- Proposed watercourse route
- Forest roads
- Public roads

0 100 200 400 Meters

Figure 2: Proposed site plan (courtesy of Forestry Commission)

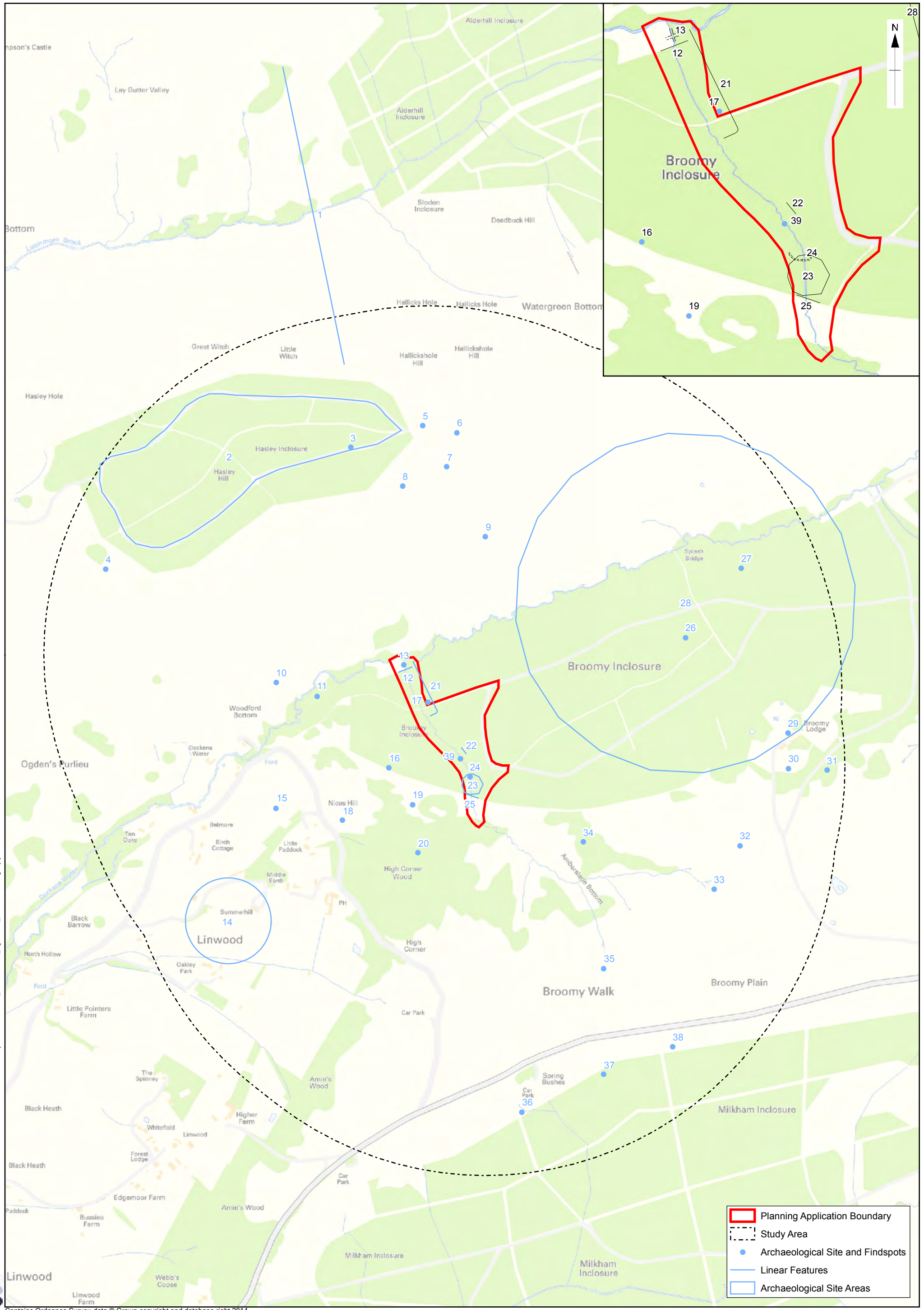


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Figure 3: Archaeological Features within the Study Area

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Plate 1: OA 12, section through bank looking east

Plate 2: OA 13, working shot, looking south

Plate 3: OA 21 General view of the demarcation

Plate 4: OA 24, looking south

Plate 5: OA 24, section through bank, looking west

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