

## Construction of a Kick Wall, Moot Lane Recreation Ground, Downton, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report







**Construction of a Kick Wall  
Moot Lane Recreation Ground  
Downton  
Wiltshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

Prepared for:

Downton Parish Council

By:  
**Wessex Archaeology**  
Portway House,  
Old Sarum Park,  
Salisbury,  
Wilts  
SP4 6EB

**Report reference: 72120.01**

July 2009

# **Construction of Kick Wall at Moot Lane Recreation Ground Downton Wiltshire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief**

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Cover: Excavated trench showing made ground and topsoil  
Back: Working shot showing the surface of the made ground

## **Construction of Kick Wall at Moot Lane Recreation Ground Downton Wiltshire**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

#### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Downton Parish Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a Kick wall at Moot lane, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 418043,121218.

The site lies within the Scheduled Monument of the Moot, Downton. English Heritage requested that a watching brief be maintained during groundworks for its construction. The watching brief was undertaken on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

The Site lies on a gentle west-facing slope within a recreation ground in the village of Downton, Wiltshire between the River Avon and Moot Lane. The Site lies at approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum (OD) and the underlying bedrock is mapped as Upper Chalk overlain by Valley Gravels (BGS 1976).

The proposed kickwall is a relatively small structure requiring a construction trench 5m long, 2m wide and 0.60m deep at the western end of the current recreation ground, on the eastern side of Moot Lane. The principal aim of the watching brief was to provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains and to investigate and record these within the new development.

Neither the natural Upper Chalk nor the overlying Valley Gravels were encountered during the watching brief. The earliest deposit encountered comprised re-deposited chalk in a pale grey sandy loam matrix from which frogged bricks, wood fragments and four rubber motorcycle tyres were recovered. This was clearly a made ground deposit of 20<sup>th</sup> century date, possibly a positive terrace or landscaping deposit. The depth of this deposit was not established as the formation level was only 0.30m below its surface. The made ground deposit was directly overlain by a 0.30m thick mid greyish brown friable sandy loam topsoil with common flint and chalk inclusions; a few modern brick fragments were also recovered.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered and the assemblage of modern materials recovered was not retained. No environmental samples were taken.

# **Construction of Kick Wall at Moot Lane Recreation Ground Downton Wiltshire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief**

### **Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Downton Parish Council and thanks are due to Bev Cornish of Downton Parish Council. Thanks are also due to the building contractors for their help, patience and interest during the course of the watching brief.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Vaughan Birbeck, who also compiled this report. The illustration was prepared by Liz James and the project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Mark Williams.

# Construction of Kick Wall at Moot Lane Recreation Ground Downton Wiltshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Downton Parish Council (hereafter “the Client”) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a Kick wall at Moot Lane (hereafter ‘The Site’), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 418043,121218.

1.1.2 The Site lies within the Scheduled Monument of the Moot, Downton (SM 21905). English Heritage have requested that a watching brief be maintained during groundworks for its construction. The watching brief was undertaken on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

#### 1.2 Site location, description, topography and geology.

1.2.1 The Site lies on a gentle west-facing slope within a recreation ground in the village of Downton, Wiltshire between the River Avon and Moot Lane. The Site lies at approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum (a OD) and the underlying bedrock is mapped as Upper Chalk overlain by Valley Gravels (BGS 1976). A sharp break of slope some 15m to the west of the Site which creates a steep slope down to a post-medieval mill race may indicate that some landscaping or terracing of the natural slope may have taken place.

1.2.2 The proposed kick wall is a relatively small structure requiring a construction trench 5m long, 2m wide and 0.60m deep at the western end of the current recreation ground, on the eastern side of Moot Lane (**Figure 1**).

#### 1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 The Wiltshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) records several sites and findspots of Palaeolithic (500,000-10,000 BC), Mesolithic (8,500-4,000 BC) date within 1km of the Site. It also records the excavation of a Roman Villa, discovered in 1953 and excavated in 1955-56, at Moot Close, approximately 250m to the south-east of the Site. The Site lies within an area of archaeological potential; within the area of the Scheduled Monument of the Moot, Downton. The Moot consists of a complex of earthworks forming one of the largest ringwork and bailey castles in England. This castle was probably built in 1137 by Henry de Blois, Bishop of Winchester, probably to guard the crossing of a main road over the marshy river at Downton Ford. Plundered in 1147 (Haslam 1976, 21), it was probably destroyed in 1155 (Howlett 1889, 186). The remains of the medieval earthwork castle were modified into a landscaped garden in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and this is now included on English Heritage’s ‘Register of Parks and Gardens.

- 1.3.2 Archaeological excavations in 1957 (Rahtz 1964, 124) have revealed evidence for gravel quarrying in the Saxon period in Moot Close, to the south-east of the Site and domestic refuse of this period, presumably from a nearby settlement. Immediately to the west of the Site, in a field named 'Old Court', separated from the Site by a post-medieval mill race, masonry and a carved capital of 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century date were found during dredging operations in 1962 (Musty 1966, 98-9) suggest the presence of a substantial medieval building in the near vicinity.

## 2 AIMS

- 2 The principal aim of the watching brief was provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains and to investigate and record these within the new development.

## 3 METHOD

- 3.1 An archaeological presence was maintained during all groundwork on the Site. The groundworks comprised a 5m long, 2m wide and 0.60m deep machine dug trench for the footings of the kick wall which was dug between 9.00am and 11.30am on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009.
- 3.2 All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system, supported by a photographic record. A sufficient sample of each feature type/deposit will be examined in order to establish the date, nature, extent and condition of the archaeological remains.

## 4 RESULTS

- 4.1 A tabularised summary of the results, giving brief soil descriptions, dimensions and finds information can be found in **Appendix 1**. More detailed descriptions are available in the archive. All groundworks, comprising the de-turfing, topsoil stripping and excavation to formation level of the 5m long, 2m wide and 0.60m deep footing trench were monitored by a suitably experienced archaeologist.
- 4.2 Neither the natural Upper Chalk nor the overlying Valley Gravels were encountered during the watching brief. The earliest deposit encountered comprised re-deposited chalk in a pale grey sandy loam matrix from which frogged bricks, wood fragments and four rubber motorcycle tyres were recovered. This was clearly a made ground deposit of 20<sup>th</sup> century date, possibly a positive terrace or landscaping deposit. The depth of this deposit was not established as the formation level was only 0.30m below its surface. The made ground deposit was directly overlain by a 0.30m thick mid greyish brown friable sandy loam topsoil with common flint and chalk inclusions; a few modern brick fragments were also recovered.
- 4.3 No features or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered and the assemblage of modern materials recovered was not retained. No environmental samples were taken.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 No features or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered, only a recent made ground deposit and modern topsoil. This is probably a landscaping or terracing deposit, possibly used to level out a west facing slope when the recreation ground, with its football pitches and other amenities, was constructed.
- 5.2 Although it is possible that archaeological features and deposits may survive on the Site, they would be sealed below the modern made ground deposit. The depth of the footing trench did not reach the base of the made ground deposit and any features or deposits that may survive below it are undamaged by the walls construction.



## 6 REFERENCES

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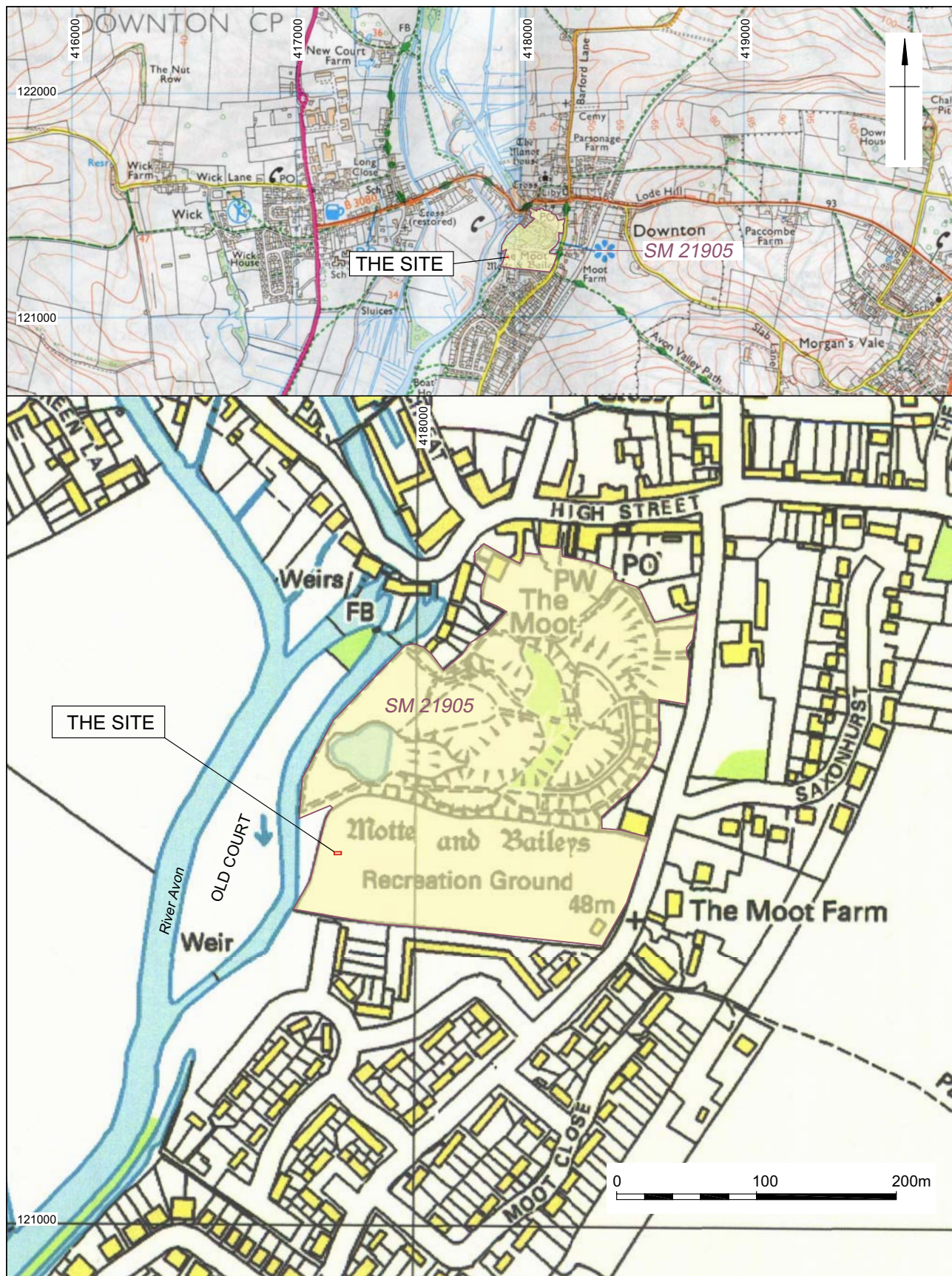
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**Appendix 1: Catalogue of Trench Descriptions**

| <b>Trench 1</b>    |   | <b>Dimensions</b> 5m X 2m X 0.60m |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Context No.</b> | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Depth</b>                      |
| 101                | Mid greyish brown friable sandy clay loam topsoil with common chalk and flint inclusions. Modern brick fragments noted but not retained                         | 0-0.30M                           |
| 102                | Made ground deposit. Re-deposited chalk in pale grey sandy loam matrix. Frogged bricks, wood fragments and four rubber motorcycle tyres noted but not retained. |                                   |



|   |   |   |                  |
|---|---|---|------------------|
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|   | Date:   | 13/07/09  | Revision Number: |
|   | Scale:  | 1:25000 & 1:4000  | Illustrator:     |
|   | Path:   | Y:\PROJECTS\72120\Drawing Office\Report Figs\WB\09_07_13\72120 sitebase.dwg |                  |

Site location

Figure 1





**WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.**

**Registered Head Office:** Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 [info@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:info@wessexarch.co.uk) [www.wessexarch.co.uk](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk)

**Maidstone Office:** The Malthouse, The Oast, Weaving Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5JN.

Tel: 01622 739381 [info@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:info@wessexarch.co.uk) [www.wessexarch.co.uk](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk)

