



**Holnest,
Nr Sherborne,
Dorset**

Desk based assessment of a proposed landfill site

by

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HOLNEST, DORSET

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This survey and appraisal was carried out in August 1991 for Messrs Frank Graham Consulting Engineers ('the client'), to determine whether archaeological sites or features are recorded, inferred or may be suspected at or adjacent to a proposed landfill site at Holnest in Dorset. This is a preliminary examination of the site, involving the use of archival or printed sources only. The site was not examined in the field.

1 The site comprises 2 discrete fields and parts of 2 others, near the SE boundary of Holnest parish, where it marches with the parish of Glanvilles Wootton or Wootton Glanville. The total area covered is just over 24 acres or about 9.8 hectares. The underlying subsoil is Oxford Clay, and this is likely to have given the site a heavy soil and a tendency to waterlogging.

The fields are identified on Fig 1, which is based on a plan of the site supplied by the client. Field 1 centres on ST664095; the relevant part of Field 2 centres on ST664093; the small relevant part of Field 3 centres on ST663092; and Field 4 centres on ST665092.

These fields, and their immediate neighbours, were examined, using cartographic, archival and printed sources. These sources are referred to in context below.

2 General landscape history

2.1 Prehistoric, Roman and early medieval land use and settlement in this area cannot be described for lack of evidence. It is likely, however, that these claylands were in use by late prehistoric times if not earlier, probably as grazing land rather than arable because of its heavy, poorly-drained soils. Substantial woodland and wood-pasture may have long persisted here for this reason.

2.2 In the medieval period a small village was established at Holnest, around the site of the present parish church of St. Mary (ST656098). Holnest is not mentioned in the Domesday survey (Pugh ed 1968) but is likely to have been included in the large estate centred on Sherborne. The earliest historical reference to Holnest (as Holeherst, a name associated with woodland clearance) is in the late 12th century (Fagersten 1933, 216). The village was later deserted; the date range of this desertion process is not known, but EMA shows that the church stood alone by 1800. The earthwork remains of the former village are still clearly visible on the ground, around the parish church.

2.3 Around the medieval village were substantial arable fields, which were enclosed by 1800 (EMA). This process probably took place by agreement in the 16th or 17th centuries.

2.4 An irregular ring of unenclosed common land, used mainly for rough grazing and the gathering of fuel, surrounded the arable fields of Holnest in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The extent of this old common land is indicated in 1880 by EMA, which records its division and enclosure. At this point the broad essentials of the present field system in the area of the appraised site took shape.

2.5 Fig 2 (based on the Ordnance Survey 1:10560 survey of 1886-87) shows the division between the old enclosures and the common land in this area immediately before the enclosure of 1800.

2.6 The prime mover and principal beneficiary of these enclosures was Mark Davis, a gentleman who owned most of the land in Holnest parish. Davis invested substantially at Holnest, rebuilding the manor house in Holnest Park and enclosing, draining and manuring common land in this parish and in Longburton. His name is perpetuated in Davis's Plantation (ST665098), which seems to have been established around the time of enclosure in 1800. (EMA). A few small

landowners acquired newly-enclosed lands, and an example in the study area was one Charles Dunning, whose holding was named Dunning Common by 1846, when TM was compiled.

2.7 Within this developing pattern of land division and land use a distinctive pattern of settlement evolved. Characteristic of medieval and post-medieval settlement in this N. Dorset clayland is the development of a few villages with their arable land, meadow, pasture and woodland, and the proliferation of dispersed settlements. Many of these were farms and hamlets, and survivors of these small medieval (or earlier) settlements, are often betrayed by personal or topographical names. Examples close to the study area are Dyer's Farm (ST660093) and Osehill Green (ST668092). In the latter case slight traces of ?ploughed-out settlement earthworks are visible around ST668090 on the aerial photographs supplied by the client.

2.8 Between these farms and hamlets a number of cottages were scattered. Holnest parish contained a number of these by the mid-17th century, as the Hearth Tax lists for 1662-64 imply (Meekings ed 1951). A number of these were probably on or around the common lands; an example close to the study area is a cottage at ST661100, occupied in 1880 by a person named Loder, a tenant of Mark Davis. This cottage site was deserted by 1846 (TM). While its origins remain unclear, it represents a type of settlement which must have been fairly frequent around these clayland commons.

3 Specific history and archaeology of the site: sources examined

A number of sources were examined in the site appraisal process:

3.1 *Early maps*

3.1.1 The OS 2nd edn 1 : 10560 and 1 : 2500 maps were consulted.

3.1.2 The Tithe Map and Apportionment (TM) was examined, and field names were recorded.

3.1.3 The Enclosure Map and Award (EMA) was also examined. Data from this source is referred to in the foregoing section.

3.2 *The Dorset Sites and Monuments Record* (DSMR), located in the County Planning Department, was consulted. This is perhaps the most comprehensive and important record of archaeological sites in the county, and is indispensable in any survey of this kind.

3.3 The survey of Dorset archaeology carried out by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) is published in a multi-volume set. Volume 1, which covers this area, was consulted (RCHME 1952, 124-125).

3.4 *Aerial photographs*

3.4.1 A set of vertical aerial photographs taken by the RAF in 1945-47 are an important source of archaeological data. They have been scanned by the compilers of DSMR, and the results of this scan are represented in that archive.

3.4.2 A set of aerial photographs at a scale of 1 : 3250 was supplied by the client, and were examined. They are appended to this report.

3.5 *Printed sources* Several standard printed sources were consulted. They are referred to in this report and listed in the Bibliography (6).

4 Specific history and archaeology of the site: results of investigations

4.1 No archaeological features in these fields, or their immediate neighbours, are recorded by DSMR and RCHME.

4.2 No archaeological features from the RAF air survey are noted in DSMR.

4.3 An irregular pattern of short straight lines is shown in Field 1 in the 1:3250 aerial photographs. This pattern is typical of ceramic field drains installed from the late-18th century onwards. This drainage is understandable in view of the prevalent clay soils; it may have been laid down when the field was enclosed in 1800, in view of the encloser's land improvement activities (2.6). A plan of the field drain pattern is given in Fig 3, which is plotted by direct tracing from the aerial photographs. Dark shadow marks are visible in Field 4 on photograph 316, but not on 317. They are interpreted as cloud shadows, the 30-second delay between the exposures would allow for this. No other archaeological features are visible to us in these photographs.

4.4 Field names may indicate archaeological sites or early land division and land use patterns, and TM represents an outstanding record of these names. In many places it is the earliest record of field names available. TM field names in the study area are as in the following table. Field numbers refer to Figs 1 and 4. Fig 4 is based on the Ordnance Survey 1:10560 survey of 1886-87.

Field number (Figs 1 and 4)	Field number (TM)	Field name
1*	364	Meadow by the Plantation
	365	Great Mead by Lower Common
2	367	Mead by Common Grounds
3	379	Common Ground
4	385	Black Common
5	385A	Part of Black Common
6	336	Bows Ground and Lower Neales
7	386	Dunning Common
8	358	Great Plantation
9	357	Great Pithays
10	359	Bows Ground by Pithays
11*	363	Little Mead by the Plantation
	362	Mead by Bow Ground
	366	Mead by Bow Ground
12	384	Farthing Gate Piece (East)

* present field divided into 2 or 3 smaller fields in TM

Most of the field names recorded here are explicable in terms of the landscape history outlined above. Nevertheless the name Black Common (Field 4; 9.69 acres or 3.92 hectares) deserves more attention. The *Black* field name element has been found elsewhere to indicate the presence of black soils or soil patches enriched by the remains of former settlement (eg Fowler P J 1972, 31). However the name might also be explained in other ways - it might derive from a personal name, or from folklore - and corroborative evidence should be adduced before any archaeological significance is attached to it.

5 Summary and recommendations

5.1 No clearly defined archaeological sites have been traced at this site, or in its immediate vicinity.

5.2 In historic landscape terms the site is part of a medieval or earlier common land fringe around the arable fields of Holnest. The present field pattern was established when these common lands were enclosed in 1800.

5.3 Field 4 is named Black Common in 1846. This might possibly indicate the presence of black

soils enriched by the remains of former settlement, but should be treated with caution. While this is an insufficient basis on which to recommend a field assessment, we urge that earthmoving operations in this field should be archaeologically monitored if and when the proposed development takes place.

6 Bibliography

Fagersten A	1933	The Place-Names of Dorset
Fowler E (ed)	1972	<i>Field Survey in British Archaeology</i>
Fowler P J	1972	'Field archaeology on the M5 motorway, 1969-71: some provisional results, analyses and implications' in Fowler E (ed) 1972
Hutchins J	1861	<i>History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset</i> Vol IV (3rd edn)
Meekings C A F (ed)	1951	<i>The Dorset Hearth Tax of 1662-64</i>
Pugh R B (ed)	1968	<i>The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Dorset</i> Vol III
RCHME	1952	<i>An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset</i> Vol 1: West Dorset

7 Other source references

Enclosure Map and Award, 1800 (DCRO, D/SHC 2768A)

Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1846 (DCRO, T/HON)

Dorset Sites and Monuments Record (DSMR), Dorset County Planning Office

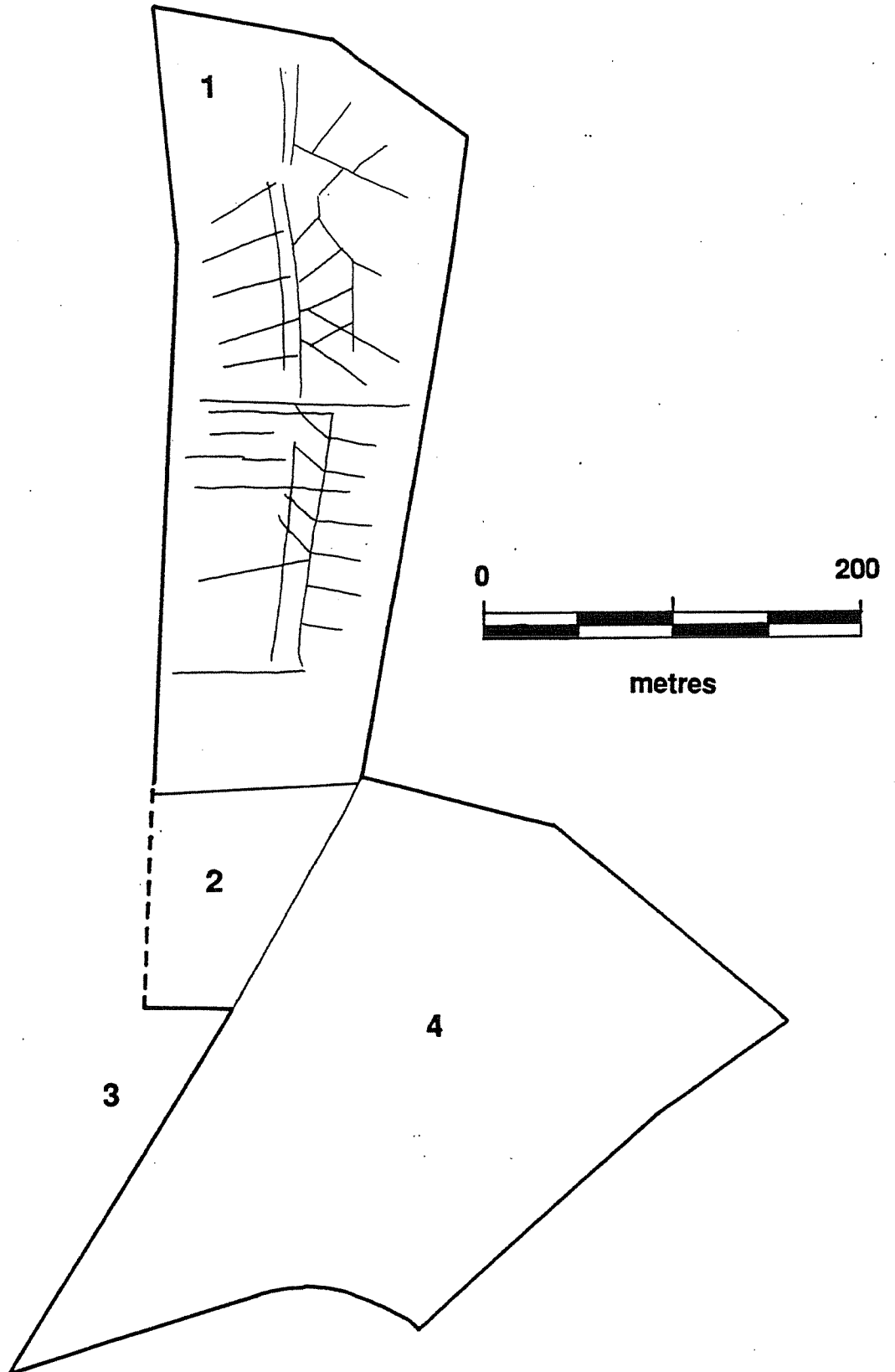
8 Acknowledgments

The clients, Frank Graham Consulting Engineers, supplied maps and aerial photographs which were of great value in carrying out this appraisal. Clare Pinder, of the Dorset County Planning Department, provided access to DSMR, and discussed the site with me. Sarah Bridges of the Dorset County Record Office kindly checked some references for me. My colleague John Gale examined and reported on the aerial photographs and drew Fig 3. Mark Brisbane read and commented on this report. I am very grateful to them all.

HOLNEST, DORSET

Fig 3

Scale 1:3250



HOLNEST, DORSET

Fig 4

Scale 1:10560

