RPS Planning, Transport and Environment

INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
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Contractor Exeter Archaeology.	
County Devon.	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS OF DCC TRIAL PITS AT A30 WOODLEIGH JUNCTION CHERITON BISHOP

by

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Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. Method 1

3. Results 1
   3.1 Table of results from trial pits 1
   3.2 Trial pit 9702: ditch 2

4. Conclusion 2
   4.1 Further investigations 2

Acknowledgements 2

Sources consulted 2

List of illustrations

Fig. 1 Location map.

Fig. 2 Trial pit locations.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a watching brief undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) during the excavation of geological trial pits at the site of a proposed redevelopment at the A30 Woodleigh Junction (centred at SS 782933). The work was commissioned by Devon County Council (DCC) following the preparation of an Environmental Statement by WSP Environmental Ltd, which included an assessment of the archaeological potential of the site by EA (section 6), and the results of a geophysical survey (Johnson 1997) which identified features of archaeological potential to the south of the road. The trial pits were excavated by Frederick Sherrell Ltd, on behalf of DCC, during April 1998.

2. METHOD

The trial pits were located using a Total Station (EDM) and excavated to a depth of around 4m using a wheeled mechanical digger. The archaeological observations were recorded to standard EA specifications: details of physical features were reproduced in writing, and drawings of the exposed pits were made at a scale of 1:20 where appropriate. A photographic record, comprising colour transparencies and black and white prints, was made. The geological details of each pit are not reproduced in the following results.

3. RESULTS

3.1 **Table of results from trial pits**

Trial pit No.	***Dimensions***	***Alignment (long axis)***	***Stratigraphic information***	***Features/deposits***
9701	1 x 2.5 x *c.* 4m	NNW/SSE	0.2m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9702	See below (section 3.2)			
9703	1 x 2 x *c.* 4m	NNW/SSE	0.2m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9704	1 x 2 x *c.* 4m	NNW/SSE	0.25m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9705	1 x 2 x *c.* 4m	N/S	0.25m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9706	1 x 2 x *c.* 4m	N/S	0.25m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9707	Not excavated			
9708	1 x 1.8 x *c.* 4m	N/S	0.2m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9709	1 x 3 x *c.* 4m	N/S	0.2m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9710	1 x 3 x *c.* 4m	N/S	0.2m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9711	1 x 3.5 x *c.* 4m	N/S	0.2m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features.
9712	1 x 3.6 x *c.* 4m	N/S	0.2m topsoil above mottled clay subsoil	No archaeological features. Two service trenches at northern end of trench, parallel with, and 1.6m and 2.2m from, the hedgebank.

3.2 **Trial pit 9702: ditch**

Trial pit 9702 was aligned north/south and measured 1m x 5m in plan. It was excavated across the major (southern) linear feature identified by the geophysical survey. Between 0.4m and 0.5m of topsoil were seen to overlay the fills of a large steep-sided ditch which cut cleanly into the Culm mudstones and sandstones. The observed width of the ditch was 4.5m, but the trial pit may have cut through at a slightly oblique angle, thus exaggerating its dimensions. When fully exposed, the ditch was seen to be some 2.8m deep, with a flat base, although observations were obscured by the rapid intrusion of groundwater.

Due to the instability of the trench sides, only the upper ditch fills could be closely examined. Charcoal was present in pockets of humic matter. Observed from the surface, the fills displayed a layering associated with gradual silting over some time. Darker, more humic material was visible towards the base. A waterworn pebble, used as a hammer-stone, came from the middle to lower fills. No other archaeological material was recovered.

4. CONCLUSION

The only archaeological feature located was the ditch in trial pit 9702. This was of such a scale that it is unlikely to be a mere field boundary ditch; it probably represents either part of a major land division or an enclosure. The geophysical survey indicated that the ditch, the linear feature to its north, and an area of disturbance to its south were all aligned east-west. Since this presents a completely different alignment to the known field pattern, it is likely that the features are of pre-medieval date. The geophysical survey also indicated that the ditch was of an 'interrupted' nature. This type of ditch is often associated with Neolithic causewayed enclosures: prehistoric sites which date predominantly to the period between 3000 and 2500 BC. Such enclosures are uncommon in the South West. Hammer-stones, such as that recovered from the middle/lower fill of the ditch, continued to be used throughout the prehistoric period.

4.1 **Further investigations**

The ditch undoubtedly represents part of a site of archaeological significance and further archaeological fieldwork is required to determine its nature and date. The work should include the following:

(i) additional geophysical survey work (in advance of the commencement of construction work) to identify the location and scale of the remainder of the ditch and associated features; this survey would also assist in clarifying the requirements of any further archaeological investigation;

(ii) evaluation excavations to identify the levels of preservation, function and date of the archaeological remains;

(iii) notwithstanding the tasks listed in (i) and (ii), archaeological monitoring (a watching brief) should be undertaken at any stage of the project which involves ground disturbance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Devon County Council (DCC) and administered by D. Carter (DCC) and P.J. Weddell (EA). The fieldwork was undertaken by T.H. Gent and M.J. Dyer.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Johnson, A.E. 1997 *A30 Woodleigh Junction, Devon. Topsoil Magnetic Susceptibility and Gradiometer Survey* (Oxford Archaeotechnics Ltd Ref: 1331197/WOD/WSP).

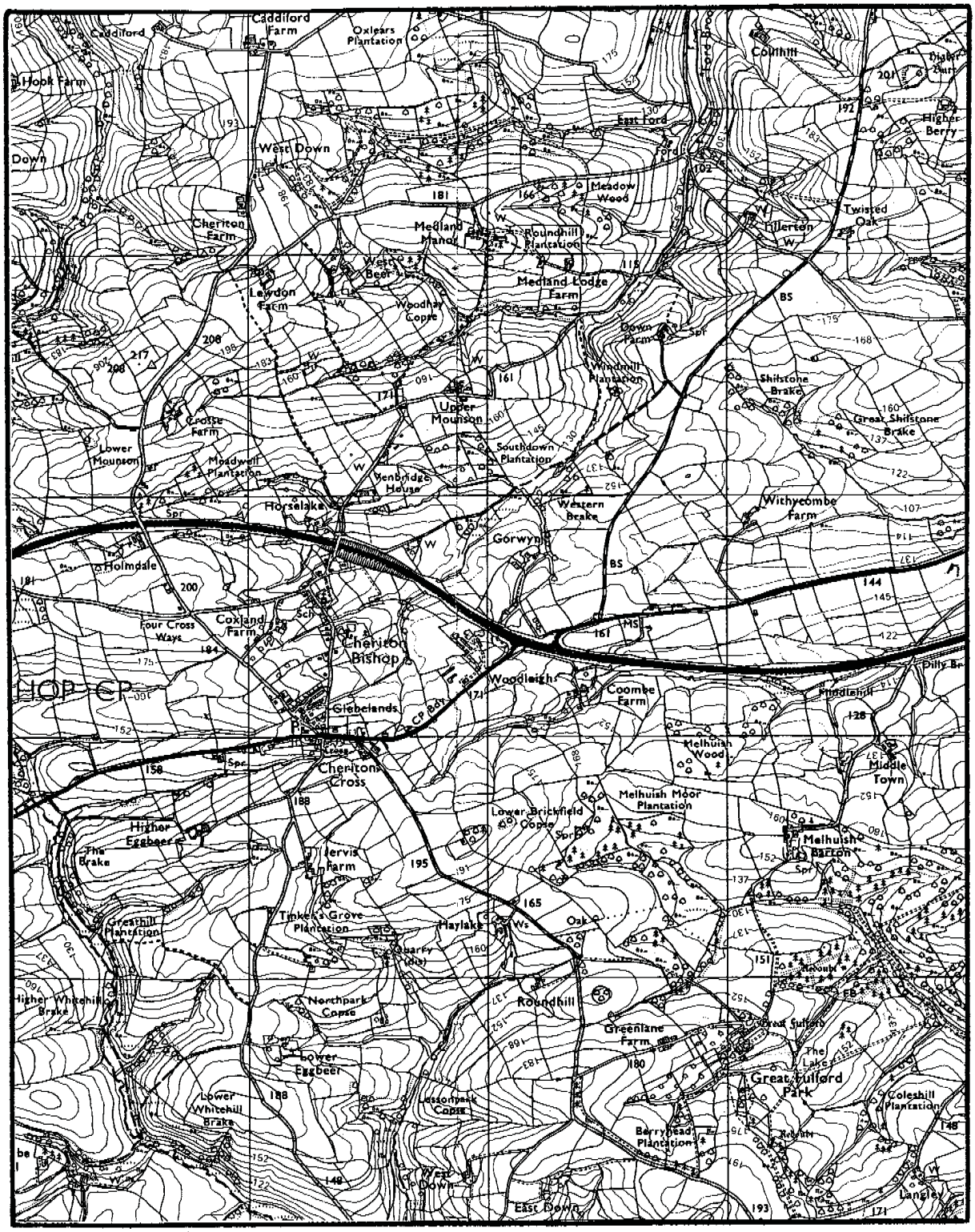

Fig. 1 Location map

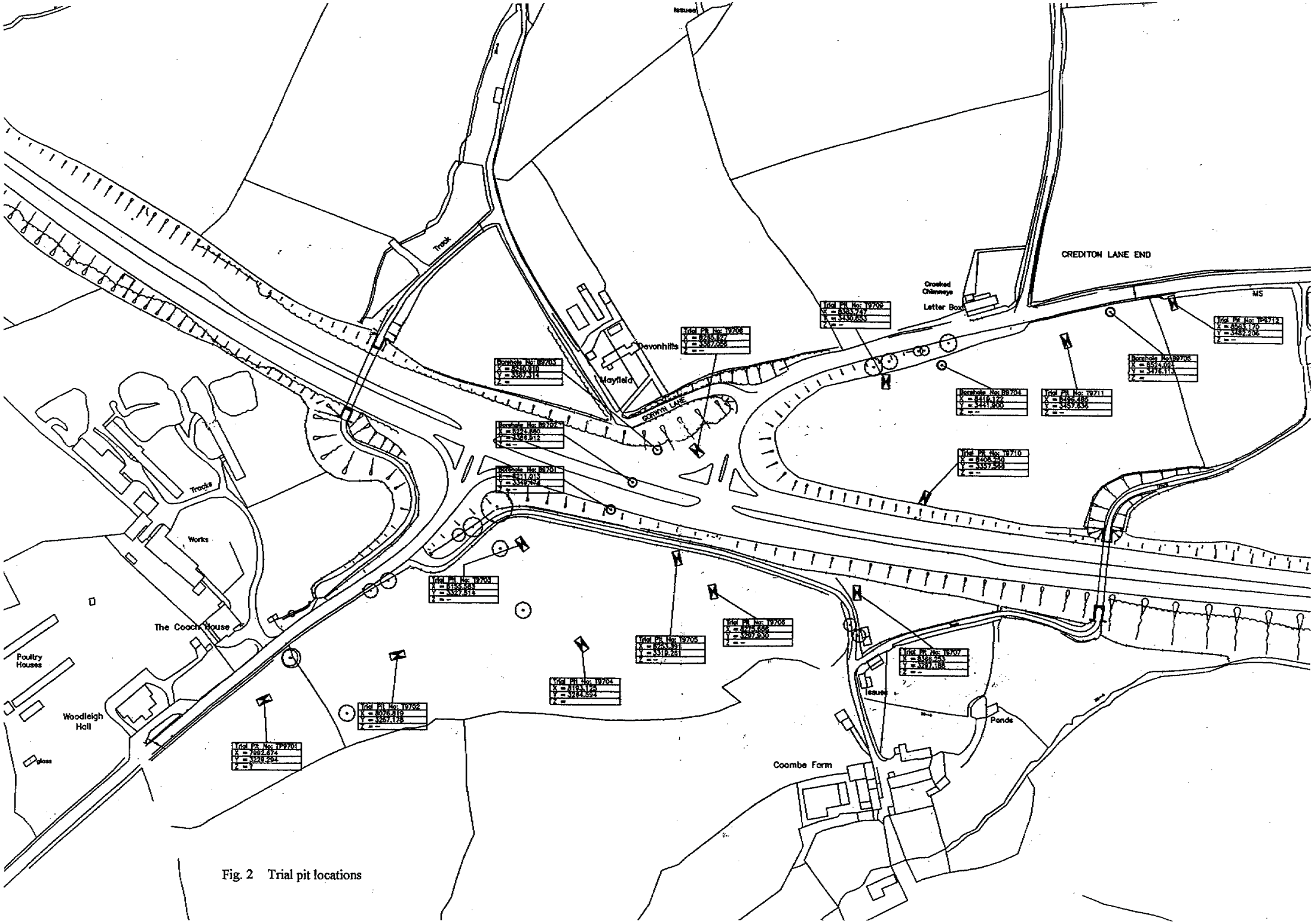

Fig. 2 Trial pit locations