

Higher Polsue Way, Tresillian, Cornwall

Archaeological Watching Brief



Historic Environment Projects

Higher Polsue Way, Tresillian, Cornwall

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report author(s)	C. M. Thorpe
Checked by	Andy Jones
Approved by	Peter Rose

Historic Environment, Cornwall Council Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3AY tel (01872) 323603 fax (01872) 323811 E-mail hes@cornwall.gov.uk www.cornwall.gov.uk

Acknowledgements

This study was commissioned by Paul Nicholls of Mansell and carried out by Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council.

The Project Manager was Andy Jones.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of Historic Environment Projects and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

Freedom of Information Act

As Cornwall Council is a public authority it is subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into effect from 1st January 2005.



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Cover illustration

Site looking to the north-east. Ranging rod marks location of pit [01]

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Abbreviations

- CRO Cornwall County Record Office
- EH English Heritage
- HER Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
- HE Historic Environment, Cornwall Council
- NGR National Grid Reference
- OS Ordnance Survey
- PRN Primary Record Number in Cornwall HER
- RIC Royal Institution of Cornwall

1 Summary

HE Projects, Cornwall Council, was commissioned by Mansell to undertake archaeological monitoring during groundwork in advance of the construction of affordable dwellings at Higher Polsue Way, Tresillian (centred at SW 86492 46423).

Prior to the archaeological fieldwork commencing, a geophysical survey of the area had been carried out (Stratascan 2010), which identified a small number of linear anomalies and pit-type responses, some of which may have been of an archaeological nature.

The fieldwork succeeded in locating most of the geophysical anomalies. One linear feature was identified as a couple of parallel ditches the character of which suggests that they were originally associated with a field boundary or hedge, the bank element having been removed.

No archaeological dating evidence was obtained from these ditches. This boundary does not appear on either the 1840s tithe map or the 1880 OS map but it is probably of earlier post-medieval origin perhaps associated with the farm at Polsue Manor.

The large pit-type anomalies observed on the geophysical survey were found to be of geological origin, being natural hollows formed by the weathering of softer bands of clay and shillet within solid slate bedrock.

Two isolated shallow pits filled with charcoal that had not been identified by the geophysics were also recorded but again these were undated.

No other features of archaeological interest were recorded over the area of the site and the development had very little or no impact on any significant buried remains.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project background

HE Projects, Cornwall Council was commissioned by Mr Paul Nicholls of Mansell to undertake a programme of archaeological recording ahead of the construction of affordable dwellings at Higher Polsue Way, Tresillian (Fig 1). The development is situated within an area of approximately 1 HA.

The development was the subject of a planning condition, condition (PA29/1869/09/M). This states that:

'The works hereby approved shall not be commenced until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority'.

Dan Ratcliffe (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council) was consulted over the requirements for the archaeological recording. A written scheme of investigation, outlining the methodology for archaeological recording was produced (04/10/10) by Andy Jones, Senior Archaeologist, HE Projects (Appendix 1).

This report presents the results of the archaeological fieldwork.

2.2 Aims

The purposes of the watching brief were:

- 1. To establish the absence/presence of buried archaeological remains.
- 2. To identify and record, any archaeological features that become affected by the scheme.
- 3. To recover and record artefacts uncovered by the works.
- 4. Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.
- 5. To establish the nature of the activity on the site.
- 6. To recover and assess the potential for further analysis of any environmental evidence or industrial residues from archaeological features.
- 7. To deposit the archive (including any finds) with the relevant museum and disseminate the results of discoveries as a concise archive report and, if merited, wider publication.

2.3 Methods

The archaeological work was undertaken between the 7th and 11th of February 2011 as an 'archaeological watching brief', with the soil strip being done under archaeological supervision using a machine fitted with a toothless bucket. The soil was stripped cleanly to a level at which archaeological features or layers were revealed (ie, the top of the first archaeologically significant horizon or the natural, whichever was highest). Machines did not run over the stripped area until the archaeological works were completed.

The area uncovered was then inspected by an archaeologist and any archaeological features or layers exposed were investigated being carefully excavated by hand and recorded by written description, plan and section and photographic record as appropriate.

Features were plotted onto a site plan at a scale of 1:500 based on an Ordnance Survey map of the same scale, being measured in from fixed locatable points on the

ground marked on the map, and more detailed plans and sections were made of individual features where necessary at a scale of 1:20. Sample sections (nature of soil depth, layers present, etc) were also noted across the field (Fig 4).

3 Location and setting

The development area was situated within a large field to the north of the village of Tresillian within the parish of St Erme (Figs 1 and 3) It is centred at SW 86492 46423. It is on the northern side of the valley of the Tresillian River, a tributary of the rivers Truro and Fal that flow into the sea at Falmouth. This sub-rectangular field slopes steeply from 42m OD to 25m OD towards the east. The field was previously in use as pasture.

The soils are well drained fine loamy or fine silty soils over rock. The underlying geology consists of interbedded argillaceous rocks (shales) and sandstones of the Porthscatho Formation belonging to the Devonian Period.

4 Site history

The development area is situated within an area which has been classified as being "Anciently Enclosed Land" (Cornwall County Council 1996). "Anciently Enclosed Land" frequently contains buried archaeological remains dating to medieval and earlier periods.

The development was sited 250m south west of a round or prehistoric enclosure (MCO8742). The settlement of Tresillian (MCO17705) which lies to the south of the development area is of earlier medieval date and it was first recorded as 'Tresulien' in AD 1201 (Gover 1948). The place-name is Cornish and it includes the element *tre* meaning 'farmstead' and a personal name (Padel 1985). A potential mound was identified in the southern part of the field from the air (MCO32111) which was thought to be of possible prehistoric origin although its position towards the bottom of a steep slope, suggested that it was unlikely to be a barrow (Fig 3). This mound was not visible at the commencement of the project.

The site has been subject to a geophysical survey (Stratascan 2010), which identified a small number of anomalies, including a probable removed boundary and pit-type responses, some of which may be of an archaeological nature.

In addition there was also potential for unidentified buried archaeological sites to survive within the project area and there was the scope for the survival of previously unrecorded archaeological remains and artefacts of all periods.

5 Archaeological results

Ground conditions

The project was carried out under severe weather conditions resulting in very muddy and wet ground surfaces that may have obscured smaller features. The area stripped was an irregular sub trapezoidal shape between 50m and 70m wide and 75m to 80m long, and reached a maximum depth of 0.5m.

Several sections (Fig 4) were recorded across the area, full descriptions of which can be found in the site archive. The basic profile observed consisted of 0.05m of grass, roots and topsoil overlying 0.15m of grey-brown clay loam, and 0.15m of light grey-brown clay. This in turn lay on top of pale yellow, grey-brown clay and shillet (the decayed natural) that was recorded at the base of the profile.

The thickness of this profile varied from 0.10m to 0.50m the greatest depth being down slope at the eastern end of the site with the thinnest at the top (west) end of the field.

The thickness of the soil profile observed in the south western side of the field seemed to be very thin, even allowing for this area being at the top of the hill slope, averaging some 0.20m, and in most places being 0.10m or less. No plough marks were observed scoring the surface of the underlying natural which is what may have been expected to have been seen with this thickness of topsoil, suggesting a possibility that some of the topsoil may have been removed from this part of the field at sometime in the past. This could explain the mound (MCO32111) that was observed in the aerial photograph taken in 1950. No evidence for this mound was found in the current project as the field was found to be flat prior to this work commencing. This mound may just have been the remnant stockpile of topsoil prior to its removal from the site. However, it is possible that it has been ploughed out. What is certain is that the uphill part of the site had suffered from heavy truncation as evidenced by the limited survival of ditches [05] and [06] (see later).

Modern White Glazed stoneware (china) and post-Medieval Glazed Red Earthenware was found in both the plough-soil and lower subsoil dating from the 19^{th} or 20^{th} centuries (not retained)

Post-medieval field boundary

The main feature uncovered on the site was a line of paired ditches, ditches [05] and [06]. These had originally been identified by the geophysical survey (Fig 4) as a paired linear feature running from west to east, roughly perpendicular to the current field boundary (Fig 4).

These two ditches were set approximately 1.8m apart and ran for a visible length of circa 20m. They had been heavily truncated and had been ploughed out and removed at either end.

The northernmost of this pair of ditches was ditch [05]. This was on average 0.50m wide and reached a maximum depth of 0.15m. It was shallow, 'U' shaped in profile, and filled with a dark grey-brown clay loam with a few shillet fragments (Fig 9). The southern ditch, ditch [06] was on average 0.5m wide, and a maximum depth of 0.15m was recorded. This ditch had a very shallow 'U' shaped profile and was filled with a dark grey-brown clay loam with a few shillet fragments. No dating evidence for either ditch was obtained.

These ditches are typical of remnants of a removed field boundary hedge. This does not appear on either the 1840s tithe map or the 1880 OS map (Fig 2). However it was probably of earlier post-medieval origin perhaps associated with the farm at Polsue Manor.

Pits

A couple of pit type features were recorded. These did not appear to have been identified by the geophysical survey.

The first, pit [01] was located at the southern end of the field (Figs 4, 5, and 6). It had been heavily truncated. Sub oval in shape it measured $0.70m \times 0.50m$ with the long axis running from west to east. It reached a maximum depth of 0.05m. The profile was that of a flat bottomed elongated 'U' shape. The feature had been cut into the decayed natural bedrock and was filled by dark grey-brown silty clay with large pieces of charcoal, some of which were up to 0.02m in size, context (02). No dating evidence in the way of artefacts was obtained. This pit did not seem to be associated with any other features.

The second, pit [03] lay on the east side of the area investigated (Figs 4, 7, and 8). Sub circular in shape it had a diameter of 0.90m. It reached a maximum depth of 0.15m. The profile was that of a flat bottomed 'U' shape. The feature had been cut into the decayed natural bedrock and was filled by a charcoal rich dark grey-brown clay loam, some of the pieces of charcoal being up to 0.02m in size, context (04). There were numerous fragments of burnt white vein quartz stones up to 0.10m in size. No

dating evidence in the way of artefacts was obtained. This pit again did not seem to be associated with any other features.

Finally it was found that the line of large irregular shaped positive (but feint) responses shown on the geophysical survey running roughly from north to south across the centre of the field were in fact geological in origin marking patches of softer, more decayed clays within the shillet bedrock.

6 Conclusions/discussion

Aside from the features reported on above no other features of archaeological interest were seen over the area of the site and it was observed that the development had very little or no impact on any significant buried remains. No finds were retained from the site.

7 References

7.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, *c*1880. *25 Inch Map* First Edition (licensed digital copy at HE) Ordnance Survey, *c*1907. *25 Inch Map* Second Edition (licensed digital copy at HE) Ordnance Survey, 2007. *Mastermap Digital Mapping* Tithe Map and Apportionment, *c*1840. *Parish of St Erme* (microfiche copy at HE)

SCO12993 - Cornwall Photo Record: RAF. 1950. 58/472/5167. ABP.

7.2 Publications

- Cornwall County Council, 1996. *Cornwall: A Landscape Assessment 1994* report produced by Landscape Design Associates in association with Cornwall Archaeological Unit
- Gover, JEB, 1948. Place-Names of Cornwall (manuscript at RCM, Truro)
- Padel, OJ, 1985. Cornish Place-Name Elements, English Place-name Society, Nottingham
- Stowe, S and Mossop, M. 2010. *Geophysical survey report: Higher Polsue way, Tresillian, Cornwall.* Stratascan.

8 **Project archive**

The HE project number is 2010115

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is currently housed at the offices of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

- 1. Projects file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration (2010115).
- Field plans and annotated notes stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE736/1-2).
- 3. Digital photographs stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.Q-T\Tresillian,Higher Polsue Road, WB 2010115
- This report text is held in digital form as: G:\Historic Environment (Documents)\HE Projects\Sites\Sites T\Tresillian, Higher Polsue Way, WB 2010115\Report.doc
- 5. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: OASIS ID cornwall2-97388

No artefacts were recovered during the course of this project.

9 Appendix 1. Written Scheme of investigation for archaeological mitigation at Higher Polsue, Tresillian

Introduction

Background

Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council have been requested by Mr Steve Tall of ROK to provide a project design and estimate for a programme of archaeological recording ahead of the construction of 16 affordable dwellings at Higher Polsue Way, Tresillian. The development is situated within an area of approximately 1 HA. These investigations are required as part of planning condition (PA29/1869/09/M). This states that:

'The works hereby approved shall not be commenced until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority'.

The site has been subject to a geophysical survey (Stratascan 2010), which identified a small number of anomalies, including a probable removed boundary and pit-type responses, some of which may be of an archaeological nature.

Dan Ratcliffe (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council) has been consulted in the preparation of this project design and his requirements for archaeological recording have guided this project design and estimate.

Historical background

The development area is situated within an area which has been classified as being "Anciently Enclosed Land". "Anciently Enclosed Land" frequently contains buried archaeological remains dating to medieval and earlier periods. The settlement of Tresillian is of earlier medieval date and it was first recorded as "Tresulien' in AD 1201. The place-name is Cornish and it includes the element *tre* meaning 'farmstead' and a personal name.

A number of sites have been identified in the vicinity of the development from the Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record (HBSMR). They include:

- A round or prehistoric enclosure lies to the north of the development area (MCO8742).
- A potential mound has been identified in the southern part of the field from the air (MCO32111).
- The medieval settlement of Tresillian which was first recorded in AD 1201 lies to the south of the development area (MCO17705).

Potential sites

There is potential for buried archaeological sites to survive within the project area and there is the scope for the survival of previously unrecorded archaeological remains and artefacts of all periods.

Aims and objectives

- To ensure that the site works are carried out in such a way as to allow recording as set out in this Written Scheme of Investigation.
- To record archaeological features and deposits affected by the scheme
- To recover and record artefacts uncovered by the works.

- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To establish the nature of the activity on the site.
- To recover and assess the potential for further analysis of any environmental evidence or industrial residues from archaeological features.
- To deposit the archive (including any finds) with the relevant museum and disseminate the results of discoveries as a concise archive report and, if merited, wider publication.

Methodology

The archaeological programme will follow five stages: fieldwork; archiving; assessment; analysis; final publication.

Fieldwork

Archaeological Recording

The soil strip should be carried out under archaeological supervision using a machine fitted with a toothless bucket. The soil will be stripped cleanly to a level at which archaeological features or layers can be expected to be revealed (ie, the top of the first archaeologically significant horizon or the natural, whichever is highest). Machines will not run over the stripped area until the archaeological works are complete. The area will then be inspected by an archaeologist and any archaeological features or layers exposed in the stripped area will be carefully excavated by hand and archaeologically recorded by written description, plan and section and photographic record as appropriate by an HE Projects archaeologist.

During the archaeological recording the archaeologist will:

• Identify and record any archaeological features that are revealed in the stripped area; the level of recording will be appropriate to the character/importance of the archaeological remains.

If complex and/or significant archaeological deposits are encountered then the archaeological requirements should be reviewed by the client, the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer and HE Projects. **In the event that remains cannot be preserved** *in situ* **then full-scale excavation may be required**. A contingency should be allowed to record any significant archaeological remains which are uncovered during the stripping. The significance of the remains should be agreed between the client, the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer and HE Projects.

Where necessary the detailed archaeological recording may include:

- Excavation of archaeological features exposed in the stripped area and plotting them onto a base map.

- Production of plans and section drawings of the excavated features and recording of features using a continuous numbering system.

- Retrieval of artefacts.

Recording - general

• Site drawings (plans, sections, locations of finds) will be made by pencil (4H) on drafting film; all plans will be linked to the Ordnance Survey Landline (electronic) map; all drawings will include standard information: site details, personnel, date, scale, north-point.

• All features and finds will be accurately located at an appropriate scale. Sections will normally be drawn at 1:10 and plans at 1:20.

• All archaeological contexts will be described to a standard format linked to a continuous numbering sequence.

• Photography: scaled monochrome photography will be used as the main record medium, with colour digital images used more selectively and for illustrative purposes. This will include both general and site specific photographs. Photographs should have a scale and detailed ones should include a north arrow.

• Drawings and photographs will be recorded in a register giving details of feature number and location.

• Sealed/undisturbed archaeological contexts in the form of buried soils, layers or deposits within significant archaeological features (ditches and pits, etc) will be sampled for environmental evidence and dating material. In the event that significant organic remains are encountered, advice may be needed from Vanessa Straker (Regional Advisor for Archaeological Science).

• If human remains are discovered on the site the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer and the Ministry of Justice will be informed. All recording will conform to best practice and legal requirements.

• If human remains are uncovered, which require excavation, they will be will be excavated with due reverence. The site will be adequately screened from public view. Once excavated, human remains must not be exposed to public view.

• If human remains are not to be removed their physical security will be ensured, by back filling as soon as possible after recording.

Treatment of finds

The archaeological fieldwork may produce artefactual material.

• All finds in significant stratified contexts predating 1800 AD (eg, settlement features) should be collected by context and described. Post-medieval or modern finds may be disposed of at the cataloguing stage. This process will be reviewed ahead of its implementation.

• All finds will be collected in sealable plastic bags which will be labelled immediately with the context number or other identifier.

Archiving

Following review with the HE Project Manager the results from the fieldwork will be collated as an archive. This will involve washing and cataloguing of finds, the indexing and crossreferencing of photographs, drawings and context records.

All finds, etc will be stored in a proper manner (being clearly labelled and marked and stored according to HE guidelines).

• All records (context sheets, photographs, etc) will be ordered, catalogued and stored in an appropriate manner (according to HE guidelines).

• The site archive and finds will initially be stored at HE premises and transferred to the Royal Cornwall Museum and the RCM conditions for archives will be followed. The RCM will be notified of the commencement of the project and included in discussions for sampling and disposal as appropriate.

• In the event that there are no finds or they are retained by the owner, the documentary archive in due course shall be deposited with the Cornwall Record Office, but in the medium term will be stored at Pound and Co. All digital records will be filed on the Cornwall Council network.

Archive report

The results from the fieldwork will be presented in a concise report. Copies of the report will be distributed to the Client, the County Archaeologist and the local and main archaeological record libraries. A PDF copy of the report will be produced.

This will involve:

- producing a descriptive text;
- producing maps and line drawings;
- selecting photographs;
- report design;
- report editing;
- dissemination of the finished report
- deposition of archive and finds in the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro.

The report will have the following contents:

- Summary Concise non-technical summary.
- Introduction Background, objectives, aims and methods.
- Results Factual description of the results of the various aspects of the project, with separate sections as necessary for discussion/interpretation and potential for further analysis.
- Discussion Discussion of the interpretation of the results, highlighting information gained on a chronological or thematic basis

Recommendations for further analysis and publication.

- Archive A brief summary and index to the project archive.
- Appendix A copy of the project brief.
 - A copy of the WSI
- Illustrations General location plan.
 - Detailed location plans to link fieldwork results to OS map.
 - Selected plans and section drawings (as appropriate).
 - Finds drawings (if appropriate).
 - Photographs (if appropriate).

An English Heritage/ADS online access to the index of archaeological investigations (OASIS) record will be made.

Assessment/analysis

The structural and stratigraphic data and artefactual material will be assessed to establish whether further analyses and reporting is appropriate. The outline of the final report, and the work required to produce it will be determined in an updated project design.

In the event of significant remains being recovered (eg, prehistoric or medieval artefacts) it may be appropriate to:

• Consult with the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer over the requirements for assessment, analysis and reporting.

• Liaise with specialists (eg, artefacts) to arrange for assessment of the potential for further analysis and reporting.

• Arrange for specialist analyses, where appropriate.

Final publication

In the event of significant remains being recorded the scope and final form of the report will be reviewed; for example in addition to an archive report the results should be published in an academic journal (eg, *Cornish Archaeology*).

Monitoring

 $\bullet\,$ This written scheme of investigation will need to be approved by the Planning authority.

• The recording exercise will be monitored. The Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer should be informed 1 week in advance of the intention to start the recording.

• HE Projects will liaise with the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer to advise on the programme and progress of work, and agree site meetings as required.

• A summary of the results will be presented to the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer within 1 month of the completion of the fieldwork.

• In the event that significant remains are encountered an updated project design will be agreed with the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer.

Project Staff

An experienced archaeologist employed by HE will carry out the archaeological fieldwork.

The report will be compiled by experienced archaeologist(s) employed by HE.

Relevant experienced and qualified specialists will be employed to undertake appropriate tasks during the assessment and analysis stages of the project.

The project will be managed by a manager who is a Member of the Institute for Archaeologists, who will:

• Take responsibility for the overall direction of the project.

• Discuss and agree the objectives and programme of each stage of the project with project staff, including arrangements for Health and Safety.

- Monitor progress and results for each stage.
- Edit the project report.

Timetable

The archiving and archive report will be completed within 12 months of the ending of the excavations. The timetable for further stages of assessment, analyses and publication will be agreed with Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer in the light of the results of the excavations.

Health and safety during the fieldwork

Health and safety statement

Historic Environment is within the Environment, Planning and Economy Directorate of Cornwall Council. The HE projects team follows Cornwall Council's Statement of Safety Policy. For more specific policy and guidelines the Unit uses the manual Health and Safety in Field Archaeology (2002) endorsed by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers.

Prior to carrying out any excavations HE will carry out a risk assessment

Insurance

As part of Cornwall Council, HE is covered by Public Liability and Employers Liability Insurance.

Standards

The HE follows the Institute For Archaeologists' Standards and Code of Conduct and is a Registered Archaeological Organization.

As part of Environment, Planning and Economy Directorate of Cornwall Council, the HE projects team has certification in BS9001 (Quality Management), BS14001 (Environmental Management), OHSAS18001 (Health, Safety and Welfare), Investors in People and Charter Mark.

Copyright

Copyright of all material gathered as a result of the project will be reserved to the Environment, Planning and Economy Directorate of Cornwall Council. Existing copyrights of external sources will be acknowledged where required.

This project design and estimate is the copyright of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council.

Use of the material will be granted to the client.

Freedom of Information

All information gathered during the implementation of the project will be subject to the rules and regulations of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Notes

- It is assumed that the client will supply the mechanical excavator. The cost is not included in the attached estimate.
- The client will be responsible for the Health and Safety arrangements onsite (including fencing, etc), and it is assumed that welfare facilities will be made available.
- In the event that human remains are uncovered the client will ensure that appropriate screening is put in place.
- The post excavation programme (assessment, analysis and reporting) will need to be reviewed in the light of the fieldwork.



Fig 1 Location map



Fig 2 First Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, c1880



Fig 3 Ordnance Survey digital mapping showing the site and its environs (2009)



Fig 4 Site Plan showing features encountered and location of recorded sections (red)



Fig 5 Pit [01] prior to excavation. Looking north.



Fig 6 Pit [01] post excavation. Looking north



Fig 7 Pit [03] prior to excavation. Looking north



Fig 8 Pit [03] Post excavation. Looking north



Fig 9 Ditch [05] looking east.