

**SOLAR SECURITIES** 

WINNARDS PERCH, ST. COLUMB, CORNWALL

**WATCHING BRIEF REPORT** 

March 2015



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**MARCH 2015** 

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DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY
TOPOGRAPHIC AND LANDSCAPE SURVEY
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
EIA AND HERITAGE CONSULTANCY



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#### **SUMMARY**

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by Solar Securities, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Winnards Perch, St. Columb Major, Cornwall, (NGR SW 9236 6669). This work follows a planning application (Planning Application No. PA12/05258) for the construction of a solar farm. Cornwall Council granted planning consent for the development, on the condition an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during any topsoil stripping, ground reduction or excavations associated with cable runs, substations and access tracks.

The site lies close to known prehistoric funerary monuments at Denzell Downs, St. Breock Downs and Prince's Parc, which identified the site to be of archaeological interest. Previous archaeological work has also identified activity on the site of prehistoric date in the form of a ring gully and several linear ditches. Although these features did not produce any dateable material, a small assemblage of lithic artefacts was also recovered during this previous work, which contained both Mesolithic and Early Neolithic components.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over 36 days between the 19/11/2014 and 8/1/2015. The watching brief monitored topsoil stripping, all ground reduction and excavations associated with cable runs, substations and access tracks. Over thirty areas of trenching were excavated and within these, several potential linear features were noted, although most of the features identified during the watching brief could not be associated with any known features or activity. There was however, substantial evidence that some of these features relate to the prehistoric activity previously identified to the south of the site. It is likely that the remaining features identified relate to former field boundaries or agricultural activity.



#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology thanks Simon Allen of Wardell Armstrong LLP, acting on behalf of Solar Securities for commissioning the project and for all assistance throughout the work. Wardell Armstrong Archaeology also thanks Dan Ratcliffe, Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, for assistance throughout the project.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Chris Timmins and Ed Johnson. The report was written by Ed Johnson and Chris Timmins and the drawings were produced by Adrian Bailey. The project was managed by Nick Daffern, Senior Project Manager for WAA. The report was edited by Richard Newman, Post-excavation Manager for WAA.



### 1 INTROUDUCTION

## 1.1 Circumstances of the Project

- 1.1.1 In April 2013, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was invited by Wardell Armstrong LLP, on behalf of their clients, Solar Securities, to maintain an archaeological watching brief at Winnard's Perch, St. Columb Major, Cornwall (NGR SW 9236 6669; Figure 1), during groundworks associated with the development of a solar farm. The proposed works lie within the immediate vicinity of the known prehistoric funerary monuments on Denzell Downs and more closely to those at Prince's Parc.
- 1.1.2 A previous desk-based assessment, produced by Western Archaeology (YEAR), identified a number of historic structures and features within the development area that were likely to be impacted upon by the proposed development. As a result, Dan Ratcliffe, Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer requested that all ground reduction be subject to a programme of archaeological observation and investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).
- 1.1.3 All groundwork associated with the development of the solar farm was excavated under full archaeological supervision and all stages of the archaeological work was undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (CIfA 2014), and were consistent with the Written Scheme of Investigation provided by WAA (Giecco, 2013) and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.4 This report outlines the monitoring works undertaken on-site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological work.



### 2 METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)

2.1.1 A WSI was submitted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in response to a request by Wardell Armstrong LLP on behalf of Solar Securities, for an archaeological watching brief of the proposed development site. Following acceptance of the WSI by Dan Ratcliffe, Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer for Cornwall, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The WSI was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).

## 2.2 The Watching Brief

- 2.2.1 The archaeological work involved a structured watching brief to observe, record and excavate any archaeological deposits from the development site. A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, on a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (CIfA 2014).
- 2.2.2 The aims and principal methodology of the watching brief can be summarised as follows:
  - to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record them;
  - to carry out further excavation and recording work in adequate time, if intact archaeological remains are uncovered during the project;
  - to accurately tie the area watched by the archaeologist into the National Grid at an appropriate scale, with any archaeological deposits and features adequately levelled;
  - to sample environmental deposits encountered as required, in line with English Heritage (2002) guidelines;
  - to produce a photographic record of all contexts using colour digital, 35mm colour slide and monochrome formats, each photograph including a graduated metric scale;
  - to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
  - to produce a site archive in accordance with MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) standards.



2.2.3 An area of approximately 8.5ha was stripped of soil (topsoil and subsoil), which were stored in storage area for later restoration purposes. A series of trenches ran parallel to the solar panels and around the field boundaries of the solar farm site (Figure 2). Archaeological monitoring and supervision of groundwork associated with the stripping commenced on 19/11/14. A summary of the findings of the watching brief is included within this report.

#### 2.3 The Archive

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the WSI, and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive will be deposited within an appropriate repository, with copies of the report sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Truro, Cornwall, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier WAA15, WNP-C, CP 11188/15.
- 2.3.2 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology and Cornwall Council, support the Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology as a part of this national project under the unique project code wardella1-206590.



## 3 BACKGROUND

## 3.1 Location and Geological Context

- 3.1.1 Winnards Perch lies within the undulating farmland of Cornwall south west of Wadebridge, south of Padstow and north-east of Newquay. The site lies at a height of approximately 150.00m AOD and has a natural spring on its western boundary. The site is situated within a small valley that extends to the south west of the site with a tributary of the River Menalhyl further to the south. The land in the proposed development area is within an area characterized as open arable land.
- 3.1.2 The underlying geology is formed of Staddon Formation Bedrock consisting of sandstone, siltstone and mudstone. The overlying drift geology is formed from subangular mixed-lithology (including quartz and quartzite) in a variable mix of clay and silt sediment (BGS 2014). The overlying soils are formed of highly acidic loamy upland soils with peaty surfaces to the north and east (SSEW 2014).

#### 3.2 Historical Context

- 3.2.1 Introduction: this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area. References to the County Historic Environment Record (HER) are included where known.
- 3.2.2 *Prehistoric:* the earliest evidence of activity in the area is shown by the extensive Downlands which characterize the area. This process started with the deterioration of the upland soils due to deforestation in the prehistoric period. A number of possible Bronze Age funerary sites are located within 1 km of the site and Cornwall has a relatively high number of these site-types across the county.
- 3.2.3 *Romano-British:* No features or finds dating from the Roman period have been found in the area however the presence or the Romans undertaking mineral extraction is noted in Cornwall.
- 3.2.4 *Medieval:* Nearby are the villages at Rosedinnick and Retallack both of which existed in the medieval period.
- 3.2.5 *Post-medieval and Modern:* the site appears on the 1840 Tithe map as six fields with three of the fields labelled "Gluvian Moor". The second edition Ordnance Survey map shows that land improvement and enclosure of the fields had occurred and sometime after 1907 the fields were amalgamated with two arable fields. The field-



scape appears to have been created as a result of post-medieval enclosure and improvement of moorland.

#### 3.3 **Previous Work**

- 3.3.1 Western Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a desk-based study of the site. This work revealed that important prehistoric remains are known to exist at Denzell Downs to the northwest of the site and at St. Breock Downs to the northeast. In addition Bronze Age funerary monuments are still extant immediately adjacent to the site at Prince's Parc. It was also discovered from map regression that the proposed site of the solar farm is situated on enclosed moorland and it is a possibility that ploughed out prehistoric funerary remains lie within the site boundaries.
- 3.3.2 A detailed magnetic survey was carried out by ArchaeoPhysica Ltd (Roseveare and Roseveare 2011) on behalf of Wardell Armstrong International. The survey found a number of undated linear anomalies and an oval shaped feature. Some of the linear features are likely to represent modern disturbance though others are undoubtedly of archaeological significance.
- 3.3.3 Following the geophysics, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation in late 2012 (Miller 2012) which consisted of 28 trenches, totalling 2640m2 of excavation and comprising a c.3% sample of the development area. Archaeological remains were identified in 13 trenches. Two pairs of undated ditches closely matched known post-medieval field boundaries in Trench 21 and Trench 25.
- 3.3.4 Seven other probable field boundaries in Trenches 5, 16, 18, and 19 did not match known historic boundaries. A further seven shallow, roughly parallel, northwest to southeast aligned linear features, were located in Trenches 6, 22, 24, 26 and 28. Each had a distinct layer of stone along the base, and could be interpreted as prehistoric trackways. In the southern field, potential prehistoric gullies and a ring gully were also located in Trench 23. It was suggested that the latter may represent the remains of a round house which would be of medium (regional) significance.
- 3.3.5 A small but significant Mesolithic/Neolithic flint scatter was also present in the ploughsoil around Trench 23, including a bladelet and pebble-core and waste. However, the unstratified nature of the flint scatter precluded any definite association being made between the scatter and the excavated features.



- 3.3.6 In the northern field, Trench 3 contained an unusual feature consisting of an area of coarse quartzite-rich stone 'cobbles', overlain by fine, silty soil, very distinct from the current ploughsoil. Although no artefacts were recovered from this feature, it is considered likely to be prehistoric.
- 3.3.7 A smaller number of flints, also possibly Mesolithic and Neolithic, were found in ploughsoil in the northern field, including a complete Neolithic blade near Trench 3. There were no lithics identified as being diagnostically Bronze Age, and no ceramic material was found.
- 3.3.8 Following the significant results obtained in 2012, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a further investigation in 2013 which included two small open areas of excavation targeting both the area of coarse quartzite rich stone cobbles and clay, and the potential prehistoric activity identified during the preceding evaluation.
- 3.3.9 This excavation quickly identified the stones and clay within the northern part of the area as being natural, but succeeded in uncovering the entire extent of the ring-gully identified during the 2012 evaluation and several linear features of probable prehistoric date. Although no dateable evidence was recovered from the prehistoric features during the investigation, the work highlighted three phases of activity, indicating a prolonged use of the area (McIntyre 2013).



#### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

#### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in one phase, beginning on the 19/11/2014 and ending on the 6/1/2015 and was carried out on topsoil stripping, all ground reduction and excavations associated with cable runs, substations and access tracks for the solar farm.
- 4.1.2 The excavations were undertaken using a number of different machines including a JCB 3cx with toothless trenching bucket and a Bobcat with chain excavator attached.

#### 4.2 Results

- 4.2.1 Over thirty areas of trenching were excavated and within these, several potential linear features were noted. The site was broken up into four main areas (Areas A-D; Figure 2), with archaeological features being located in areas B, C and D. No archaeological features were identified within Area A.
- 4.2.2 **Area B.** In area B a shallow linear ditch, running north to south was recorded 12m from the eastern end of the cable trench. This ditch [**502**] measured 0.3m deep by 1.7m in width with a dark red brown silty fill (**503**) similar to the topsoil found across the site (Figure 3). This feature was wider than plough furrows in the vicinity and naturally dry unlike field drains in the area.
- 4.2.3 Another small possible ditch was located in a geotechnical pit excavated to the north of Area B. The ditch [3102] was not seen in plan during excavation. It was visible in section, however, with a dark orange brown silty clay fill (3103) containing lenses of dark grey clay (Plate 1).





Plate 1: Northwest facing section of feature [3102]

4.2.4 **Area C.** Two linear ditches were excavated and recorded during the excavation of a trench which extended across the entirety of the field. The first feature recorded was a steep sided linear running east to west [2002] with a mottled orange brown to red brown clay silt fill (2003), possibly showing signs of backfilling (Figure 3; Plate 2). The second linear recorded was another narrow steep-sided ditch [2004] running northeast to southwest, with orangey brown clayey silt fill (2005, Figure 3; Plate 3).

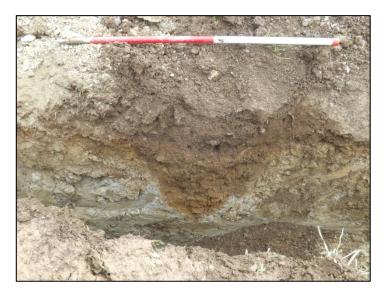


Plate 2: West facing section of feature [2002]





Plate 3: West facing section of feature [2004]

- 4.2.5 Another possible linear feature was recorded in this trench. With only 0.4m visible however, it can only be assumed to be a linear feature. The possible linear feature [2006] contained a light orange brown clayey silt fill (2007) similar in colour to the subsoil (Figure 3).
- 4.2.6 Two more possible linear features were recorded in a trench at the north of Area C. The first was a narrow linear [2502] running north to south with orange brown clay silt fill (2503) (Figure 3; Plate 4). The second feature was more unclear with only a 0.4m stretch of the feature visible after excavation. The feature [2504] could have been linear or circular and retained a depth of 1m and a width of 2.5m (Figure 3). Its fill consisted of dark brown grey clayey silt (2505) and was unlike any other deposits visible on site.



Plate 4: South facing section of feature [2502]



- 4.2.7 **Area D.** The excavations for trenches around the substation within Area D recorded several other features. Another linear feature was visible within the trench running along the central aisle of the solar farm. This linear feature [1702] was similar to other features recorded on site and contained an orange brown to red brown fill (1703) (Figure 3; Plate 5).
- 4.2.8 Another linear was recorded to the south of the substation and was truncated by a cable trench. The steep sided feature [1902] was aligned northwest to southeast and was possibly the same as [1702], [2002] and [2802] (Figure 2). Its fill was a dark orange brown silty clay (1903) (Figure 3; Plate 6).



Plate 5: West facing section of feature [1702]



Plate 6: South facing section of feature [1902]



4.2.9 The substation base in Area D, which was formed of six 1m square pits, located more possible linear features, although these were only visible in section. The first [2802], possibly aligned with [1902], [1702] and [2002] (Figure 2), contained a mottling of light orange brown and red brown clay silt fill (2803) (Figure 3; Plate 7). The second feature [2902] was possibly curvilinear or circular in shape with a light orange brown clay silt fill (2903, Figure 3; Plate 8).



Plate 7: West facing section of feature [2802]



Plate 8: South facing section of feature [2902]



- 4.2.10 Although it is difficult to interpret the features identified during the archaeological monitoring because of the limited area of excavation, it is probable that some of the features were associated with the prehistoric activity identified at the southern end of the site during a preceding excavation (Area A; Figure 2). This was particularly true of features [1902], [2802], [1702] and [2002] within Areas C and D, which were all on the same alignment.
- 4.2.11 Taken together, these features probably represented sections of the same northwest to southeast aligned ditch, which was almost certainly a continuation of one of several ditches identified during the earlier archaeological investigation. Although features [2004] and [2902] within Areas C and D could not be directly associated with any other features, their close proximity to the known prehistoric activity on site strongly suggests that they are associated with this activity.
- 4.2.12 The remaining features identified during the monitoring could not be directly associated with any other features or known activity. However, it may be of note that post-medieval agricultural activity and known field boundaries were identified within close proximity to these features during a previous archaeological investigation.

### 4.3 Archaeological Finds and Environmental Sampling

4.3.1 No archaeological finds of note were recovered, and no environmental samples were retained during the groundwork.



### 5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over 36 days between the 19/11/2014 and 8/1/2015. The watching brief monitored topsoil stripping, all ground reduction and excavations associated with cable runs, substations and access tracks.
- 5.1.2 Over thirty areas of trenching were excavated and within these several potential linear features were noted, although most of the features identified during the watching brief could not be associated with any known features or activity. There was however, substantial evidence that some of these features relate to the prehistoric activity previously identified to the south of the site. It is likely that the remaining features identified relate to former field boundaries or agricultural activity.



## **6 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## 6.1 **Secondary Sources**

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## **APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE**

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Deposit	Subsoil
102	Deposit	Natural
502	Cut	Cut of Linear Ditch
503	Deposit	Fill of Linear Ditch
1702	Cut	Cut of Linear Ditch
1703	Deposit	Fill of Linear Ditch
1902	Cut	Cut of Linear Ditch
1903	Deposit	Fill of Linear Ditch
2002	Cut	Cut of Linear Ditch?
2003	Deposit	Fill of Linear Ditch
2004	Cut	Cut of Linear Ditch
2005	Deposit	Fill of Linear Ditch
2006	Cut	Cut of Linear Ditch
2007	Deposit	Fill of Linear Ditch
2502	Cut	Cut of Linear Ditch
2503	Deposit	Fill of Linear Ditch
2504	Cut	Cut of Pit/Linear?
2505	Deposit	Fill of Pit/Linear?
2802	Cut	Cut of Linear
2803	Deposit	Fill of Linear
2902	Cut	Cut of possible Linear/Pit
2903	Deposit	Fill of possible Linear/Pit
3102	Cut	Cut of possible Linear
3103	Deposit	Fill of possible Linear

Table 4: List of Contexts issued during Watching Brief



# **APPENDIX 2: FIGURES**

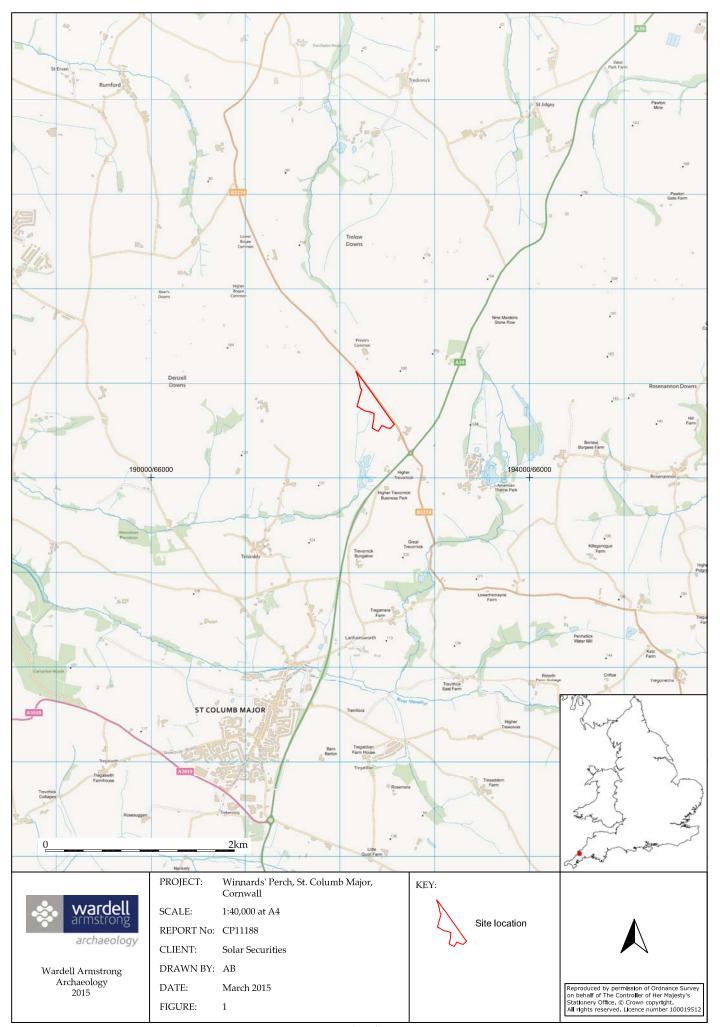


Figure 1: Site location.

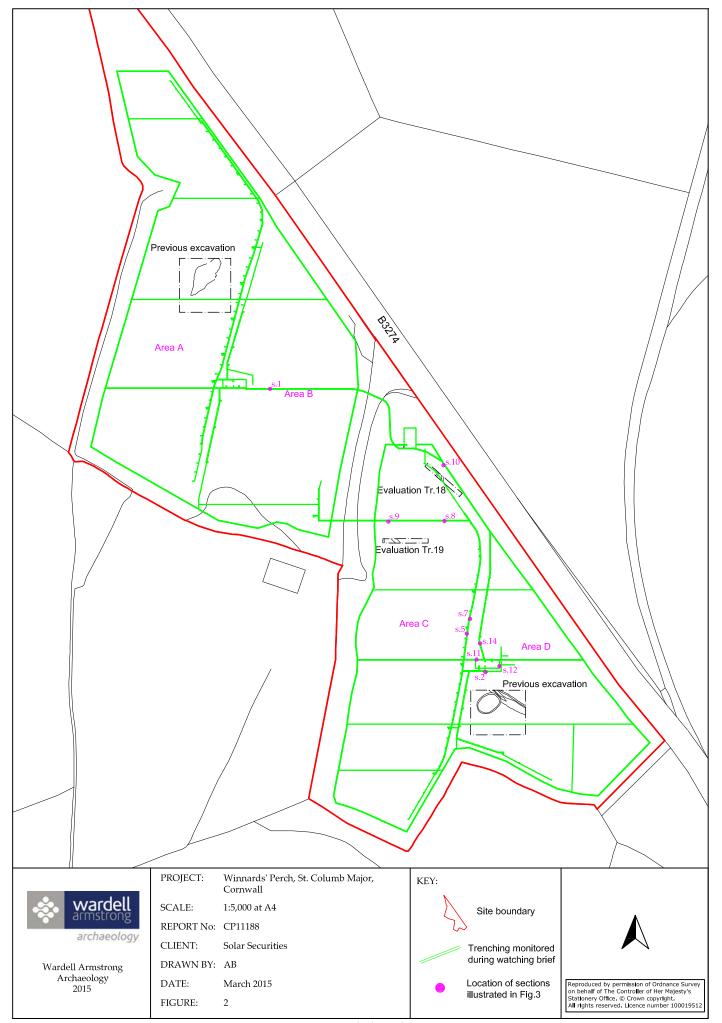


Figure 2: Detailed site location.

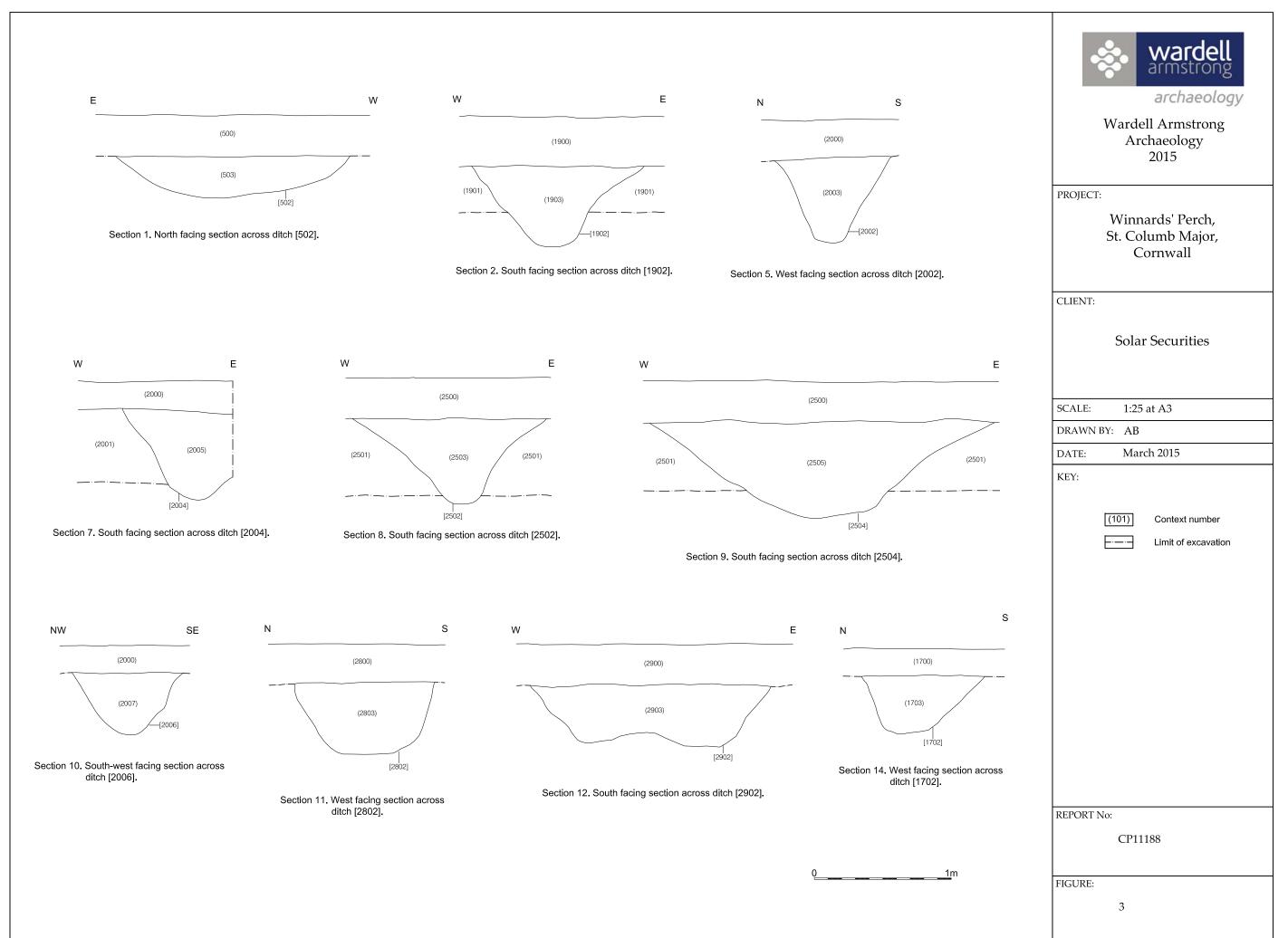


Figure 3: Sections of features encountered during watching brief.

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