

**An archaeological desk-based
assessment of The Underfleet,
Seaton, Devon**

NGR: SY 2463 9015

**by
Christopher K Currie
BA (Hons), MPhil, MIFM, MIFA
CKC Archaeology**

Report to Emlor Homes Ltd

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Summary statement

Emlor Homes Ltd have applied for planning consent to develop an area of about 0.6 hectare at The Underfleet in Seaton, Devon (NGR: SY 2463 9015). This is near the eastern perimeter of the town behind the houses on the east side of Fore Street. The south part of the site is presently a small overflow car park, with a horse's field on the north side. Ann Marie Dick of the Archaeology Section of Devon County Council has requested an archaeological desk-based assessment as a pre-condition of determination of the proposal. It was considered that the implementation of a Project Design for this work issued by CKC Archaeology, and approved by Devon County Council, would meet the concerns raised. The work was carried out by C K Currie for CKC Archaeology in December 2000.

The present town of Seaton can be shown to be a site of considerable historical and archaeological interest. There is plentiful evidence for human activity from the Palaeolithic period to the present. The period of greatest interest appears to be the Roman period, when the Axe estuary may have acted as a small harbour for ships and coastal trade. To date no direct evidence has been found for this harbour, but an important Roman site at Honeyditches, to the NW of the town, and possibly a military fort at nearby Couchill, have been identified. Iron Age hillforts on either side of the estuary at Seaton Down and Hawkesdown Hill, plus pre-roman evidence at Honeyditches, have suggested that the Romans may have taken over some sites of previous Iron Age activity in the area.

Seaton is mentioned in a Saxon charter of AD 1005. A reasonably substantial settlement is recorded in Domesday Book, which includes eleven salterns. The salt working industry is mentioned again in a Papal Bull of 1146, but disappears from the record thereafter until the early 18th century. Its revival by the Trevelyan family after 1704 was ultimately unsuccessful, and this study suggests that the reasons may be related to those that caused the industry to disappear after *c.* 1200. This may be related to changing circumstances in the estuary that resulted in a dilution of the salt content of the estuarine waters.

Antiquarian tradition credits Seaton with being a town and important port. However, it is felt that this idea needs to be examined more critically. Although Sherborne Abbey is reputed to have obtained a market grant for Seaton in 1276, there is little definite evidence that the settlement achieved true town status. By the later medieval period even the port facilities had declined drastically through the silting up of the estuary. Early post-medieval antiquarians all describe Seaton as a poor fishing village that once had greater status, but, as there is no concrete evidence that such status really existed, these sources should be treated with caution.

Within the historic period the proposed development site seems to have been used as fields. Being on the western side of the Underfleet stream, it remained just outside of the area of reclaimed salt marsh. From the later 18th century settlement spread southwards towards the sea to form the present seaside town. However, this development was slow, and never achieved the type of development seen in seaside towns elsewhere in Devon. After about 1930 development increased more rapidly, and the proposed development site became gradually surrounded by housing and holiday camps. Nevertheless, it seems to have

remained an open area of fields throughout the historic period, part of it being eventually requisitioned as an overflow car park for the town centre.

The evidence recovered by this desk-based survey continues to suggest that Seaton is a place of great archaeological interest. The possibility of finding Roman remains associated with small port facilities will need to be considered for any development along the Underfleet or on the Marshes. Although this report has suggested doubts about Seaton's medieval town status, there can be no question that it was a sizeable village at least. This seems to have extended south from the church, and may have reached down as far as the development site by the later Middle Ages.

On the strength of the information gathered together here it is considered that an archaeological evaluation will be required on the proposed development site. Whether this needs to be pre- or post-planning consent should be left to the authorities to decide. In deciding this they should bear in mind that all the most recent evidence suggests the proposed development site may have been outside of the known areas of historic activity, although it may contain archaeology from earlier undocumented periods.

An archaeological desk-based assessment of The Underfleet, Seaton, Devon

This report has been written based on the format suggested by the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessments*. (Birmingham, 1994). The ordering of information follows the guidelines given in this document, although alterations may have been made to fit in with the particular requirements of the work. All work is carried out according to the *Code of Conduct* and By-laws of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, of which CKC Archaeology is a IFA-registered archaeological organisation (reference: RAO no. 1).

1.0 Introduction (Figs. 1, 3)

Emlor Homes Ltd have applied for planning consent to develop an area of about 0.6 hectare at The Underfleet in Seaton, Devon (NGR: SY 2463 9015) for sheltered housing. This is near the eastern perimeter of the town behind the houses on the east side of Fore Street. The south part of the site is presently a small overflow car park, with a horse's field on the north side. Ann Marie Dick of the Archaeology Section of Devon County Council has requested an archaeological desk-based assessment as a pre-condition of determination of the proposal. It was considered that the implementation of a Project Design for this work issued by CKC Archaeology, and approved by Devon County Council, would meet the concerns raised (Currie 2000a). The work was carried out by C K Currie for CKC Archaeology in December 2000.

2.0 Historical background

The proposed development site lies in an area of former curved plots, which runs between Fore Street, Seaton's main street, and the edge of Seaton Marshes at a height of about 9m AOD. Saltworking was known to have been carried out at Seaton during Saxon times until at least the 12th century, with a revival of working taking place from the early 18th century (Griffith 1988, 53). The salt working probably took place to the east in Seaton Marshes, but it is possible that features associated with the industry spilled over into the study area. The Underfleet itself may have been associated with an early trackway.

Seaton was reputed to have been a medieval town situated on the west side of the Axe estuary. An estate is mentioned under this name in a Saxon charter of 1005 (Sawyer 1968, no 910). The name derives from the 'tun' or settlement by the sea (Ekwall 1960, 410). Its location, sheltered by Beer Head, made it a favourable position for a small medieval port (Hoskins 1954, 141, 201). The original port or harbour in the tidal estuary had become silted up by the 16th century, although it continued to maintain a small fishing fleet until seaside development sifted the focus of settlement southwards towards the sea in the later 19th century (Hoskins 1954, 473) There is also plentiful evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity in the area (Silvester 1981; Holbrook 1987).

3.0 Strategy

The strategy for this work is given in the Project Design (Currie 2000a) to which the reader is referred for further details. This is based on the implementation of guidelines given in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessments*. (Birmingham, 1994).

Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) information was collected from an approximate area centred on NGR SY 2463 9015, giving a coverage of about 0.5 kilometre around the centre of the development site (that is the whole of grid squares SY29SW and SY28NW, and that part of SY29SE west of the old line of the railway embankment on the west bank of the Rive Axe. This was supplemented by information taken from the local Listed Buildings List (Department of the Environment) and a selection of aerial photographs held by Devon County Council.

Documentary research covered relevant secondary sources, plus a selection of primary and cartographic sources in the Devon Record Office. This included the tithe map for the parish and early large-scale Ordnance Survey plans. A preliminary search was made of primary documentary material in the Devon Record Office in an attempt to trace the earlier unpublished history of the site. A site visit was made on Wednesday 6th December 2000.

4.0 Results (Figs. 2-9)

Note: a summary of all the archaeological sites known in the study area is given in Appendix 1 and on Fig. 2..

4.1 The prehistoric and Roman periods (Fig. 2)

A number of sites in the study area have produced prehistoric material. In general, these were mainly isolated finds or flint scatters, but a number of finds of Palaeolithic date suggest the possibility of early hominid activity in the area. By the late prehistoric period, the mouth of the Axe valley was clearly important as there are three Iron Age fortified sites overlooking the estuary. These include Seaton Down Camp (SY 234 918), Hawkesdown Hill (SY 263 914) and Musbury Castle (SY 281 940). Although all three are outside of the study area, the two former sites are less than one kilometre from its boundary. The proximity of these sites suggest that they were probably defending an intensely settled landscape in the valleys below these hills.

Work on the Roman site at Honeyditches (SY 237 908) in 1978 produced Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age material, suggesting some sort of activity in the area throughout the later prehistoric periods. Silvester (1981, 37) deduced from this that the Romans had taken over an existing Iron Age farmstead in the 1st century AD, and maintained a presence here right through to the 4th century AD. Further evidence of Iron Age presence in the area is suggested by the find of a gold coin of c. 30 BC from near Seaton beach (SMR site no. SY28NW/111; SY 2490 8985).

The most interesting recent archaeological work in the Seaton area has revolved around speculation concerning the nature of this Roman occupation. Antiquarian writers, such as Risdon (1811, 31), have equated it with the Roman station of *Moridunum*, although it is now considered that Woodbury, near Axminster is the more likely site of this place (Dixon & Turton 1995, 4). In 1724 the antiquarian, William Stukeley, suggested that there was a Roman 'city' that was lost in the sea at Seaton (Pulman 1875, 839). It was also suggested that Seaton lay at the terminus of the Fosse Way on the strength of a stamped tile of the *Legio II Augusta* being found there in the 19th century. However, more recent work has shown that such tiles are not early, as originally thought, but can date from the 2nd or 3rd century AD. Despite more recent reinterpretations of the evidence, it is still considered that Seaton possessed a definite Roman presence of some importance, although the exact nature of their activity there is still open to much debate (Maxfield 1986, 4).

The site at Honeyditches has been known since the 18th century. For many years this was considered to be a villa, particularly following the discovery of a fine tessellated pavement in 1921, but more recently Holbrook (1987, 59) has suggested that the site represents a *mansio* or inn. The idea of a more extensive Roman centre has been revived recently by Holbrook (*ibid*), following the identification of a rectangular area to the west of the town at Couchill as a possible military fort.

Many writers have been tempted to suggest that the Axe estuary formed an important Roman harbour (Griffith 1988, 53), and there is very good circumstantial evidence to support the idea that it lay somewhere under the now the reclaimed Seaton Marshes. However, Holbrook (1987, 82) points out that the existence of the harbour is currently mere speculation. Despite much activity to the north and west of the present town, evidence from the town and the Marshes is scanty. Holbrook points out that 'modern developments in the fields to the east [of the more intensive area of Roman activity] have failed to reveal any structural evidence' (*ibid*). To date evidence of Roman presence in the town or on Seaton Marshes is restricted to two stay coin finds: one from near the parish church (SMR no SY29SW/205; SY 2455 9058), and the other from near the beach in 1865 (SMR no SY28NW/17; SY 2452 8995).

On the east side of the Axe estuary, there also appears to have been some Roman activity. Hoskins (1954, 36) has suggested that a minor Roman road may have branched off from the Fosse Way along the east side of the Axe, possibly as far as Axmouth, where he suggests there was a small harbour. Coxhead (1971-3, *passim*) also suggests activity on the Axmouth side of the river, arguing that the conjectured 'harbour' was not necessarily at one side or the other, but was a collective venture comprising activity on both shores. There appears to have been at least a small Saxon port at Axmouth at a later date (Holbrook 1987, 82), although more recent opinion tends to support the Seaton side of the river for the main Roman harbour. There has been a discovery of Roman lead sling-shot near the Hawkesdown Hill hillfort overlooking Axmouth, although to argue this represents evidence for a Roman assault on a native fortified place may be presumptuous (Holbrook 1989, 117-8). Earlier, in 1946, the discovery of an *aureus* of Nero c. AD 59-60 suggested early Roman activity on the east bank of the estuary (*ibid*).

4.2 The Saxon and medieval periods (Fig. 2)

Seaton seems to have continued to be a site of some importance during the Saxon period. A charter of King Ethelred of AD 1005 indicates that it had been part of the royal demesne. He granted this estate to Eadsige 'his minister'. The boundary description seems to incorporate part of the adjoining parish of Beer in the estate. The boundary runs anti-clockwise from the sea near Beer, extending round the north side of the old parish of Seaton, before running back down the west bank of the Axe estuary (Hooke 1994, 190-3).

By the time of Domesday Book (1086) Seaton had been granted to the church of Horton in East Dorset (Thorn & Thorn 1985, i, 7.3). This monastery had a chequered existence. It was originally founded as a nunnery *c.* 961 by one Ordgar and his son Ordwulf. Possibly Danish attacks during the reign of Ethelred had destroyed this earlier foundation because *c.* 1050 it was refounded as an abbey for monks (*ibid.*, ii, no 7n). It is not known when it came into possession of Seaton, but this could well have been part of the refoundation endowment. The new foundation was never wealthy or important, and it became a dependency of the greater monastery of Sherborne, also in Dorset. By 1122 Seaton was considered to be a possession of Sherborne (Davidson 1885, 196).

The core of the settlement described by the Domesday survey is thought to have been sited half a mile inland from the present seaside town. The church of St. Gregory was probably the centre of this settlement. Although it had land for six ploughs, it was given the favourable tax assessment of only half a hide, suggesting some privilege. There was a single plough in lordship, two slaves with half a virgate. The heads of households in Seaton were represented by six villeins and 19 smallholders, who had three ploughs and three and a half virgates. There was eight acres of meadow, and a pasture five furlongs long by the same wide. There were also eleven salt houses (*salinae*) paying 11d a year. Finally one cob, two cattle and 46 sheep are recorded, making the total value 40 shillings (Thorn & Thorn 1985, i, 7.3).

Both the estate of AD 1005 and the Domesday entry refer to Seaton under the name of 'Fleet' (*Fleote, Fluta*). The name Seaton first appears in a Papal Bull of 1146 (Davidson 1885, 198), and again in 1238 as *Seton juxta Coliford* (Gover *et al* 1931, ii, 629). This shows clearly that the place took its earliest name from a tidal estuary or inlet (known as a 'fleet' in many parts of England; *cf.* The Fleet at Abbotsbury behind Chesil Beach in West Dorset), rather than the 'sea' as suggested by the later name ('Sea tun' – settlement by the sea). The importance of these sheltered tidal waters is further recognised in the Domesday survey by the large number of salt houses in existence in the late 11th century. Another point of interest is the number of ploughs in relation to the number of ploughlands. There are only four sets of ploughs yet there is land to accommodate six (*ibid.*). Higham (1990) has suggested that where ploughs and ploughlands do not correspond, the settlement under considered was not under a strong centralised authority. This might suggest that late 11th century Seaton was still a largely dispersed settlement under a weak lordship. The eleven salt houses might be seen in this light as a collection of individual enterprises rather than an organised industry.

The salt industry is mentioned again in a Papal Bull of 1146 confirming Sherborne Abbey's possession. This refers to the 'towns' of *Fleote*, Bere and Seaton with their salt pits and

fisheries (Davidson 1885, 198). Sherborne waited until 1276 before they managed to obtain a grant of a weekly market at Seaton on Wednesdays, with a fair for three days on the feast of St. Gregory (Pulman 1875, 850).

Seaton was never a great port in the medieval period, and there are some questions that need answering concerning its alleged status as a 'town'. It was the joint smallest contributor in the county to the Calais Roll of 1346. This was a obligation enforced by the crown to supply ships and men to support the war with France. Seaton was only called upon to supply two ships and 25 men (Hoskins 1954, 201). By this time the estuary may have begun to silt up. In the 15th century efforts are recorded to try to deal with the effects of the shingle bar that was growing across the estuary, but this ultimately failed (Griffith 1988, 53). In 1450 Bishop Lacy granted a 40 day indulgence to all who contributed to the repair of the haven (Burnham 1912, 22).

In the few original documents that survive from this time, only one has been seen that refers to Seaton as a 'town', and this is a reputed late 13th-century Grant with warranty between John de Medilton and Adam, son of Richard del Halle. This refers to land at 'Hesilhesd' in the 'town of Seaton' (DRO 123M/TB254). Numerous other deeds of the 14th and 15th centuries in the Petre collection refer to Seaton alongside a number of other local towns and villages. All are referred to as 'townships', a common medieval term for a village or even quite scattered settlements. Turton and Weddell (1995, 5) report having seen the place referred to specifically as a 'town' in a deed of 1380, but the exact document is not clearly referenced, although it would appear that they mean it was found in the Petre collection. It is notable that no documents refer to burgesses, the normal test of town status. Even amongst the numerous antiquarian writers, who are the earliest writers to claim the status of town for Seaton, there are no claims to burghal tenure.

By the 16th century, the harbour in the estuary was virtually useless to commercial shipping, although fishing boats continued to operate. In 1535 Seaton was still required to pay £4-10s a year in fish tithes (Hoskins 1954, 212). Following the Dissolution, Seaton temporarily passed to the crown, before being granted to John Fry in 1546. At this time the revenues of the manor comprised £13-16-3 1/2d in free and customary rents, 28-9 1/2d in a rent called 'Larder money' payable in alternate years, and court profits and heriots etc worth less 31/4d. This made a total of £16-2-0 1/2d, less the bailiff's fee of 13/4d (Young 1955, 85).

4.3 The post-medieval and modern periods (Figs. 2, 5-9)

If Seaton had been a town in the medieval period, it is difficult to sustain that belief during the 16th-18th centuries. Only the name 'Merchant's Road' north of the church reminds us of what might have been. In the mid 16th century John Leland recorded the declined state of the place:

'ther hath beene a very notable haven at Seaton, but now... the Ryver of Axe is dryven to the very Est Point of the Haven, caullid Whit Clif, and there at a very smaull Gut goith into the Se; and her cum small fisher Boates for socour' (quoted in Dixon and Turton 1995, 6).

He further wrote that 'The Town of Seton is now but a meane Thing, inhabited by Fischar men, but it hath bene far larger when the Haven was good' (quoted in Parkinson 1985, 60).

In 1557 John Willoughby bought the manor of Seaton from John Fry. On the other side of the haven Thomas Erle of Bindon began to make plans to restore the haven for the benefit of the decayed port of Axmouth. He failed, but was succeeded by a son, Sir Walter Erle, who had similar ideas. Their relation, Sir William Pole (died 1635), the antiquary wrote:

'It should appear that in ancient times, that their bine a haven and shelter for shippes in this place, for besides that it is a faire bay, defended with high hills on both sides, Seaton reacheth home into this mouth of Ax, and ancors and other relicts of shippage, hath bin found a good space higher upp in the land, and tradition holdeth yeat the memorie thereof' (quoted in Coxhead 1971-3, 99).

At the beginning of the 17th century Tristram Risdon visited the area. He also described the Axe estuary as once being a haven of some importance 'of which work there remaineth no monument, only a remembrance of such a place among strangers that know not where it stands, and is at this day a poor fishing village' (Risdon 1811, 31)

Around 1640 another John Willoughby decided to reclaim the Marsh. At the time the area was used as common grazing by the tenants of the manor. An agreement was reached with them to enclose the Marsh and build a bank around it. However, plans were temporarily stopped when the crown granted the Marsh to a royalist sympathiser, a Mr Wyndham. The scheme was not started up again until around 1659, when the Willoughby regained possession of the land. The first phase of this reclamation was completed in the early 1660s (Parkinson 1985, 29-32). Further work was carried out later in the century, creating the sea bank around an estimated 300 acres of reclaimed land.

In 1682 when John Willoughby died, his estates passed to his daughter, who had married George Trevelyan. About 1704 the Trevelyans sought to revive the salt industry in the area. Parkinson considers the view that salt making had continued uninterrupted in the estuary since the 12th century to be incorrect. She argues that the Trevelyans started it anew. A lease of 1704 states that saltworks had been set up 'where nothing of that kind had been before' (ibid, 42). This new venture was not entirely a success. In 1706 the tenants of the saltworks were forced to petition for relief:

'Having about 2 yeares since projected a saltworks in Seaton (where nothing of that kind had been before) and layn out near 1000£ thereon and thereby bought it to that Performance that the Duty thereof... rose sometymes to 40 sometymes to 50 and sometymes to 60£ a moneth. Had the Misfortune of Late to have all his Salt House burnt down, his Salt wasted and consumed. However your petitioner, finding his saltworks would turn to Account, made a Shift to rebuild his houses and repayre his works with intention to carry on the same and hoped ye Government would... have favoured him therein.' (op cit, 42)

The petitioner, Edward Drayton, complained of the local Salt Officer's severity. One of these officers, Abraham Sydenham, has a memorial in the parish church, dated 12th November 1748, stating that he was Parish Salt Officer for 40 years (pers obs).

William Stukeley was the next antiquarian to make comment on Seaton. It has been seen above how he recorded the tradition of the Roman town, but he also made comment on the saltworks in the Marsh:

'More inwards, towards the land beyond the great bank of beach, is a marsh which the sea has made, landing its self up when its free flux was hindered. This is full of salt pans, into which they take the sea water at high tide. When they dig these places they find innumerable keels and pieces of vessels... because it was formerly part of the haven' (Parkinson 1985, 44).

Stukeley draws three salt pans in the Marsh in an illustration of the location from Beer Head (Turton & Weddell 1993, figs). This is probably that part known as the Lower Work or Little Saltwork, situated on a tithe map plot called 'Salt Plot' in 1840 (see Appendix 2; Fig. 6). A lease of 1733 describes the salterns as two salthouses with four pans. Two of these pans were on the Lower Work, the others were on the Upper or Whitecross Work in Church Plot by the parish church (Parkinson 1985, 45-6).

The saltworks continued to encounter problems, and the Trevelyans often had difficulty selling the lease. After 1768 they had become moribund, and by 1785 the Marsh had been incorporated into Seaton Farm as pasture. Between 1851-53 the Trevelyans undertook extensive drainage works in the Marsh, breaking up the old plots, and destroying much of the evidence for the existence of the salt industry. In recent wet weather, two rectangular hollows in the Marsh immediately above the children's play area filled with water. This suggests these may have been on the site of the silted up salt ponds. A rectangular raised platform, some 10m by 5m, to the north of the hollows might represent the site of the salthouse.

Although Hoskins (1954, 7) argues that it was only during the later 19th century that the old settlement centre of Seaton around the parish church began to expand towards the sea, there is some evidence to contradict this. Benjamin Donn's map of 1765 shows a single street flanked by buildings extending from the church about two thirds of the way to the shore (DRO Donn's map). It is possible that the idea of Seaton as a minor sea resort started in a small way in the later 18th century. In 1794 Swete described the place as a small village of a single street which 'open'd on the beach', and that already some were coming to Seaton for the 'retirement'. Skinner, writing in 1797, states that visitors were beginning to come there for sea bathing who thought 'Lyme and Sidmouth too public' (Dixon & Turton 1995, 6).

In 1838, Stirling (1838, 2) described a much expanded place, set around a triangle of three principal streets. At this time there are three inns in the developing 'town', the Poles Arms, the Kings Arms and the Golden Lion. Some middle-class villas appear to have already been erected. It is reported that a Captain Proby RN had built The Ryalls in 1834 (ibid, 3).

Nevertheless, the town developed late as a seaside resort in comparison with some other coastal towns in Devon. Hoskins (1954, 473) states that in the 1850s there was still barely 800 people living there, with fishing being the chief occupation. At the end of the 19th century he claims that the town still only had a population of around 1300. However, Pulman (1875, 836) contradicts this, putting the 1851 figure at a little over 2000. This is supported by Munford (1890, 6), who claims the parish had a population of over 2,300 'at the last census', although only 1,221 lived in the area governed by the Local Board, set up to govern the new town in 1878. A branch line of the London and South Western Railway did not reach the town from Seaton Junction until 1868, and this may have helped increase its popularity (again Hoskins contradicts this and say it had little effect). The present town displays much 'commonplace' late Victorian and Edwardian architecture from this period, and contrasts markedly with Sidmouth (Hoskins 1954, 473). The greatest surge in population has occurred after 1931 (ibid, 295). In 1934 Lady Alice Trevelyan sold part of the Marsh to the Holiday Camp Company, and a holiday camp was set up (Parkinson 1985, 57). This probably had a great affect on commercialising the tourist industry in the town, and may have been largely responsible for the greater growth after this date.

Large-scale Ordnance Survey mapping shows that the proposed development site still comprised fields between the town and the Underfleet stream in 1889 (OS 25" map, 1st ed; Fig. 7). Both these, and adjoining fields, show a consistent curving shape, and may be suggestive of strip fields that may have existed to the south of the original settlement centre. These would have stopped at the Underfleet stream, which probably acted as a boundary between land capable of permanent arable cultivation, and the reclaimed salt marshes to the east. There was no change in this situation between 1889 and 1904 (OS 25" map, 2nd ed; Fig. 8), with only relatively minor development in the town to the west.

Marsh Road had been created by 1933, and the curving field to the north had been laid out as a series of houses along the new road. No development is shown at this time on the proposed development site (OS 25" map, 1933 edition; Fig. 9). By this time the holiday camp had been built on the former marshes about 200m to the east. In the 1970s the gap between had formed a similar development called Bluewater Park, with a car park adjoining on the west side. Recently the south part of the proposed development site was built up for use as an overflow car park serving the town centre and beach area.

4.4 The results of the geotechnical report on the site (Figs. 3-4)

A geotechnical report on the site has been carried out for the developer by Integrale Consulting of Bristol, *Proposed sheltered housing. The Underfleet, Seaton, Devon. Geotechnical and preliminary contamination report*, (November 2000). This included the excavation of seven test pits and four bore holes (Fig. 3). The northern area (currently a horse's field) comprised topsoil to a depth of about 0.4m below present ground level. This overlay valley gravels (loose to medium dense dark brown clayey silty sand with sub-rounded flint gravel) to depths of up to one metre. It was followed by further valley gravels (loose to medium dense fine to coarse angular to sub-rounded flint gravel) to a depth of up to two metres. From hereon down to between 6 and 7.5m the soil was highly weathered Mercia Mudstone.

In the southern part of the site (now the overflow car park) the topsoil layer was replaced by made ground described as 'comprising loosely dark brown/red brown silty clay with bricks, concrete, topsoil pockets, wood, glass, pottery, typical slight organic odour'. This extended from ground level to a depth of between 0.3m and 3.0m depending on the location, the depth of made ground being greater in the south and east part of this area. On the western part of this area this overlay valley gravels, followed by clay with flints. In the eastern and southern part of this area the made ground overlay a buried topsoil at a depth of between 1.5m and 2m.

The results seemed to suggest that the south and eastern part of the site was largely made ground over buried topsoils, sometimes to depths of over 1.5m. There was some provisional evidence of minor contamination of the soils in this area, with Zinc and Polyaromatic Hydrocarbons being slightly higher than threshold trigger levels for domestic gardens and allotments. Only in the northern part of the site did topsoil apparently overlay largely undisturbed soil. There were no indications that the underlying sub-soil was cut through by archaeological features.

5.0 Discussion

Seaton has proved to be a settlement of great interest to the archaeologist and historian alike. There is a long tradition that it was an important Roman settlement, a medieval town, and a place where there was a thriving salt industry. Yet if the researcher ignores the writings of antiquarians before 1850, and consider the remaining evidence objectively some of these traditions appear to be in serious need of questioning. Recently two important archaeological desk-based assessments were carried out on the behalf of East Devon District Council to try to resolve the nature of the settlement at Seaton. These studies included one on the local salt industry (Turton and Weddell 1993), and the other assessing the archaeology of the town (Dixon and Turton 1995). Both studies strongly urged that archaeological work should be undertaken on developments in the town and on Seaton Marsh to try to resolve the problems on interpretation that have arisen in recent years.

The Axe estuary appears to have been a place of some activity during the Roman period. This is one antiquarian tradition that may have been built on some truthful elements. Although it is now generally accepted that Seaton is probably not *Moridunum*, there was clearly a contemporary presence in the area. This is evidenced by the quantity of Roman finds mainly to the north and west of the present town. In the 1980s the exact purpose of the Honeyditches site was questioned, throwing open a debate as to whether the remains uncovered there represented a villa (Silvester 1984) or a *mansio* (Holbrook 1987). A recent synthesis of the evidence by Dixon and Turton (1995, 4) indicates that both possibilities are still considered valid. Whatever the solution, the buildings there appear to have been of some importance, and may have been associated with the conjecture Roman fort at Couchill (ibid).

To date, evidence for contemporary activity to the east of the Honeyditches site has been largely lacking. Although the existence of a Roman harbour somewhere in the estuary remains a good possibility, its location has yet to be recovered. The most likely site would be

somewhere to the east of Honeyditches, or in the vicinity of the medieval settlement, about half a mile inland from the sea. Further Roman material has been found on the other side of the estuary at Axmouth (Holbrook 1989). The hillfort on Hawkesdown Hill suggests a late prehistoric presence of some significance on this side of the estuary, and it is possible that the Romans continued to use the moorings here that may have existed to serve the hillfort.

The question of Roman activity near Seaton is not questioned, but to date the evidence for a Roman harbour has not been forthcoming. It is possible that moorings here were largely informal. It need not necessarily follow that the presence of Roman sites nearby required there to be a large formal harbour in the Axe. The trouble with antiquarian traditions is they are difficult to discard entirely, and although this report considers that the harbour tradition may be founded on some truth, it does suggest that the nature of that harbour might need to be reconsidered. However, it is considered that the question of the medieval 'town' of Seaton needs to be examined in a far more critical fashion than has occurred to date.

At present, the view seems to be that, in spite of a lack of serious evidence, there was a medieval town at Seaton. This report would like to consider the possibility that a medieval town may not have existed at Seaton by the accepted definition.

Firstly, the majority of our evidence is based on antiquarian writings of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. There have been many examples, throughout the UK, where such writings have been found to be unreliable. Their most common fault is exaggeration. Evidence for Roman villas become Roman cities, lesser medieval settlements become towns, monastic granges become full-scale monasteries. It is not necessary to give a list of where antiquarian writings have proved false because they are known to be numerous. Suffice to quote the example of the reputed medieval canal or navigation to Winchester and Alresford in Hampshire. Edward Roberts (1983) recently undertook a study to show that the idea was 'invented' by an antiquarian, and then passed on from author to author. This left even reputable scholars like Maurice Beresford accepting the tradition, and quoting the myth as if it was a well-documented fact.

At Seaton there is little evidence that there was a proper town at Seaton in the medieval period. Most medieval documents refer to it, alongside Beer and other places that are clearly no more than villages, as 'townships'. This should not be mistaken for a town. A 'township' is an accepted medieval word for a village, hamlet or even a scatter of dispersed, but associated, farmsteads. Richardson (1974, 44) defines it as:

'A vague term denoting a group of houses which formed a unit of local administration. Generally the term was superseded, after the Conquest, by Vill'.

There are few known primary documents where Seaton is referred to as a 'town'. The Papal Bull of 1146 can be disregarded as it also calls Beer a 'town', and it is well known that Papal documents frequently call the smallest of settlements a 'town'. Thus in Hampshire, a dispute between the hamlet of Hook and the small town of Titchfield was referred to the Papacy. The resultant Bull referred to Hook as an *oppidum* and its inhabitants burgesses. The reality was Hook was a tiny hamlet on a tidal creek where a few fishing boats moored (Watts 1983, 130-

2). It is as well that a serious historian studied this site or it would be on the list of numerous spurious medieval 'towns' that can be found in antiquarian literature throughout the UK.

Usually the test of 'town' status is burghal rights. To date there is no reference to such rights or burgesses at Seaton. This is a major omission that does not seem to have been considered in earlier studies. In a thorough study of the medieval evidence for a town at Seaton Dixon and Turton (1995, 5) found only one primary document referring to it as a 'town'. Likewise this study also found only one such reference. Even Dixon and Turton (*ibid*) had to concede that references 'to there being a 'notable haven' at Seaton, and Axmouth's reputation as a 'great port' are based largely on much-quoted reports of [antiquarians]..., and on what Pulman called the 'voice of tradition'. In the face of this scarcity of evidence, it is surprising that no one has questioned the existence of a town more critically. The evidence that is put forward, the 'Merchants' Road' north of the church, the Papal Bull, and the two ships contributed to the Calais Roll of 1346 could all be explained if the settlement was no more than a largish village that had access to port-like facilities.

One could argue that the market granted in 1276 was a sign of town status. However, there are many examples in England of large abbeys like Sherborne obtaining market grants for larger villages. The great Benedictine house of Chertsey in Surrey obtained a weekly market plus a fair for its manor of Great Bookham in 1243, and although this large village had some of the attributes of a small town, it was clearly a village (Currie 2000b).

It is possible that Sherborne would have hoped the market at Seaton would thrive, and turn the vill there into a town because this would increase their revenue from the market tolls. They may have obtained the grant with that aim in view, but there is no evidence that it was successful, nor is there any evidence that they tried to lay the settlement out in town form. Had they done so one would expect the inhabitants to be referred to as burgesses.

The above arguments are not put forward as a categorical statement that there was no town at Seaton, but it is felt that it is required to put the evidence in its true perspective. It is possible that the scarcity of evidence merely reflects the lack of serious study, and with more detailed research of primary documents the required evidence may be forthcoming. Nevertheless, at present, there is no concrete evidence to support the existence of a medieval town in the true sense. Rather than try to make excuses for this absence, it is suggested that the alternative ought to be considered. This is that no convincing evidence has been found because there may not be any. This argument in no way discredits the need to undertake archaeological work in Seaton. If anything, it reinforces the need because it may be that the problem will only be finally resolved by archaeological discoveries.

The other matter that may require reinterpretation is the extent of the salt industry at Seaton. Parkinson (1985, 40) considers that it did not exist between the 12th century and c. 1704. Turton and Weddell (1993, 9) acknowledge the lack of evidence in this interim, but seem to have found it hard to accept. However, this author has noticed that there were salterns noted in Domesday along the coast of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and again in the 18th century, but there is seldom much mention in between (Currie 2000c). We can not ignore this frequent absence of records for this industry during this 500-year period as being merely

poor recording or lost documentation because it occurs too frequently. In the face of such occurrences, we should be asking why the records are lacking, and this means considering every possibility. This includes that the idea that there was frequent local decline in the industry between 1200 and 1700. There have been suggestions that imported salt from France contributed to this decline after the 14th century (Turton & Weddell 1993, 5). However, until a serious study is undertaken of the salt industry in this period, we are left with what amounts to special pleading to account for its survival. Such is the case at Seaton.

The early 18th century documentation makes a very pointed statement that the Trevelyan salterns were erected on a spot 'where nothing of that kind had been before' (op cit). When one reads the documents of the 1704-68 period, an impression is given that the revived industry was not very successful. In the end it was abandoned as a failure after a relatively short time span. Perhaps this helps to explain why the industry at Seaton disappeared in the previous centuries? The conditions in the estuary may not have been so good for salt working once the shingle bar began to block the estuary. This may have reduced the salt content of the estuary's water. The gap through which the river flows is very narrow, and this might prevent sufficient quantities of salt water getting into the estuary, especially when one considers that a high volume of freshwater may have diluted it from upstream. Is it therefore a coincidence that the industry seems to disappear at some time after 1200, and shortly after this time we hear of the harbour mouth being blocked? It is at least a possibility that a decline in the quality of the water in the estuary for salt making was a contributing factor for the industry's abandonment. Such a suggestion, if proved true, would also suggest that the estuary was already silting by 1200, not in the 15th century as previously considered.

Early maps seem to show the salt pans still in existence in the early 19th century (OS 3" surveyor's draft, 1806-7; DRO Tithe survey for Seaton and Beer; Figs. 5 & 6), but this may not mean they were still being operated. The tithe map shows a series of curving plots between the houses on the east side of Fore Street and the edge of the Marsh. Dixon and Turton (1993) suggest that they demonstrate that they were laid out after Fore Street was created. However, the existence of the road could date back to prehistoric times, and this should not be taken as evidence for town planning. The curving strip-like nature, plus the frequent one acre size shown on the tithe map, could equally suggest that they were part of an early common field system, which the settlement later expanded over. They generally follow the contour around the hill, suggesting that they were created with ploughing in mind. Such a situation might be considered unnecessary if they merely originated as the back plots to tenements. The existence of houses of possible 16th and 17th-century date on parts of Fore Street suggest that settlement had spread some way down this road by this time, if not during the medieval period itself. It is quite possible that Donn's map of 1765 reflects a situation in existence by the late medieval period, with the field plots existing by that time, if not earlier.

Virtually everything known about Seaton is based on antiquarian conjecture and supposition hanging from very few reliable facts. This discussion suggests that it is possible that there is a need to reconsider what has happened in the Axe estuary in the last 2000 years. Too much of what are considered facts are no more than suppositions derived from notoriously unreliable sources. By being frequently repeated some of these ideas have gained a credibility far beyond what they deserve. It is suggested that there may be a need to

reconsider the evidence concerning Seaton, and to base our ideas on the facts before us, rather than uncorroborated traditions.

6.0 Conclusions

The present town of Seaton can be shown to be a site of considerable historical and archaeological interest. There is plentiful evidence for human activity from the Palaeolithic period to the present. The period of greatest interest appears to be the Roman period, when the Axe estuary may have acted as a small harbour for ships and coastal trade. To date no direct evidence has been found for this harbour, but an important Roman site at Honeyditches, to the NW of the town, and possibly a military fort at nearby Couchill, have been identified. Iron Age hillforts on either side of the estuary at Seaton Down and Hawkesdown Hill, plus pre-roman evidence at Honeyditches, have suggested that the Romans may have taken over some sites of previous Iron Age activity in the area.

Seaton is mentioned in a Saxon charter of AD 1005. A reasonably substantial settlement is recorded in Domesday Book, which includes eleven salterns. The salt working industry is mentioned again in a Papal Bull of 1146, but disappears from the record thereafter until the early 18th century. Its revival by the Trevelyan family after 1704 was ultimately unsuccessful, and this study suggests that the reasons may be related to those that caused the industry to disappear after *c.* 1200. This may be related to changing circumstances in the estuary that resulted in a dilution of the salt content of the estuarine waters.

Antiquarian tradition credits Seaton with being a town and important port. However, it is felt that this idea needs to be examined more critically. Although Sherborne Abbey is reputed to have obtained a market grant for Seaton in 1276, there is little definite evidence that the settlement achieved true town status. By the later medieval period even the port facilities had declined drastically through the silting up of the estuary. Early post-medieval antiquarians all describe Seaton as a poor fishing village that once had greater status, but, as there is no concrete evidence that such status really existed, these sources should be treated with caution.

Within the historic period the proposed development site seems to have been used as fields. Being on the western side of the Underfleet stream, it remained just outside of the area of reclaimed salt marsh. From the later 18th century settlement spread southwards towards the sea to form the present seaside town. However, this development was slow, and never achieved the type of development seen in seaside towns elsewhere in Devon. After about 1930 development increased more rapidly, and the proposed development site became gradually surrounded by housing and holiday camps. Nevertheless, it seems to have remained an open area of fields throughout the historic period, part of it being eventually requisitioned as an overflow car park for the town centre.

The evidence recovered by this desk-based survey continues to suggest that Seaton is a place of great archaeological interest. The possibility of finding Roman remains associated with small port facilities will need to be considered for any development along the Underfleet or on the Marshes. Although this report has suggested doubts about Seaton's medieval town

status, there can be no question that it was a sizeable village at least. This seems to have extended south from the church, and may have reached down as far as the development site by the later Middle Ages.

On the strength of the information gathered together here it is considered that an archaeological evaluation will be required on the proposed development site. Whether this needs to be pre- or post-planning consent should be left to the authorities to decide. In deciding this they should bear in mind that all the most recent evidence suggests the proposed development site may have been outside of the known areas of historic activity, although it may contain archaeology from earlier undocumented periods.

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8.0 Archive

Copies of the report were lodged with the client, the Devon County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), County Hall, Exeter, Devon, and the National Monuments Record in Swindon, Wiltshire.

9.0 Acknowledgements

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10.0 References

10.1 Original sources

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DRO Tithe map & award for Seaton (reproduced in this report as Fig. 6)
DRO 123M Petre family collections

In the Devon Local Studies Library (DLSL):

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OS 25" map, 1889 ed (1st ed, sheet 83.11; reproduced in this report as Fig. 7)
OS 25" map, 1904 ed (2nd ed, sheet 83.11; reproduced in this report as Fig. 8)
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Selected air photographs at County Hall, Exeter, Devon (in particular CPE/UK/1974, dated 11th April 1947)

Appendix 1: catalogue of archaeological sites in the study area

All sites listed here were taken from the Devon County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) at County Hall, Exeter.

SMR number	Grid reference	Description
SY29SW/108	SY 247 906	Prehistoric worked flint tool; possibly a scraper
SY29SW/109	SY 2464 9006	Ancient trackway called 'The Underfleet'
SY29SW/143	SY 2471 9057	Seaton parish church; medieval and later; plus 143/01 two 18 th C memorials to Salt Officers & 143/2 gravestone mentioning Salt Officer, 1745
SY29SW/144	SY 24 90	Site of saltworks (144/1 Salt Plot; 144/2 Church Plot)
SY29SW/147	SY 241 906	Eyewell, site of chalybeate well
SY29SW/147/1	SY 2414 9066	Prehistoric flint tool; possibly a burin
SY29SW/148	SY 247 907	Tudor Cottage, cruck-framed building
SY29SW/152	SY 2424 9013	Mesolithic worked flints, including core
SY29SW/171	SY 24 90	Prehistoric chert hammer
SY29SW/171/1	SY 24 90	Neolithic or Early Bronze Age perforated axe
SY29SW/185	SY 2449 9020	Jasmine Cottage, 32 Fore Street, cruck framed building
SY29SW/201	SY 24 90	Flete Well; historic well
SY29SW/203	SY 24 90	Neolithic Greenstone axe
SY29SW/205	SY 2455 9058	Roman coin
SY29SW/244	SY 2490 9000	Site of World War II army infantry barracks
SY29SW/245	SY 245 905	Palaeolithic handaxe
SY29SW/248	SY 247 901	Bowling Green; lease of 1709 refers to local bowling green
SY29SW/249	SY 24 90	Site of Roman and/or medieval harbour
SY29SW/251	SY 24 90	Drainage works on Seaton Marsh, 1851-3, includes sluice gates
SY29SW/252	SY 2495 9079	Flood bank built 1980; earlier banks recorded in 17 th Century
SY29SW/274	SY 2455 9038	Manor Cottage; post-medieval house much extended
SY29SW/275	SY 2460 9035	Building shown on 1889 OS map, now redeveloped
SY29SW/276	SY 245 903	Clapps Lane; ancient road formerly Marsh Lane
SY29SW/277	SY 2455 9029	Marsh Lane; ancient road now footpath
SY29SW/278	SY 246 902	Field system; characterised by curving boundaries to east of Fore Street
SY29SW/280	SY 2414 9026	Ryalls Court, built 1834 on earlier site?
SY29SW/280/1	SY 2416 9027	Ryalls Court, 19 th -century fruit garden
SY29SW/280/2	SY 2410 9034	Ryalls Court, 19 th -century walled garden
SY29SW/281	SY 2405 9030	Quarry
SY29SW/282	SY 2445 9013	Non-conformist chapel, built 1893-4
SY29SW/283	SY 2451 9018	Pole Arms Hotel; post-medieval inn
SY29SW/284	SY 2424 9017	House; 17 th -century or earlier
SY29SW/285	SY 2450 9010	Fore Street; ancient road
SY29SW/286	SY 246 901	Field system; duplicate of SMR no SY29SW/278
SY29SW/289	SY 2400 9080	Butts Lane/Homer Lane; ancient road to Beer
SY29SW/291	SY 2418 9038	Palaeolithic handaxe
SY28NW/8	SY 2464 8990	Site of gun battery; bulwarks referred to in 1627
SY28NW/17	SY 2452 8995	Roman coin of Valens? found 1865
SY28NW/18	SY 24 89	Alleged Roman town now under the sea
SY28NW/22	SY 2481 8995	Road, on site of raised causeway noted in 1785
SY28NW/26	SY 244 899	Seaton, medieval settlement
SY28NW/68	SY 2432 8987	World War II pillbox
SY28NW/69	SY 2428 8984	20 th -century coastal battery

SY28NW/85	SY 249 899	Earthwork bank; post-medieval? For stock control?
SY28NW/86	SY 247 899	Mansion House; summer residence of Willoughby and Trevelyan families from 17 th to 19 th centuries
SY28NW/87	SY 246 889	House; house shown on The Barrow (SY28NW/8) in 1840
SY28NW/88	SY 245 899	Post-medieval coalyard shown on 1840 tithe map
SY28NW/94	SY 2495 8996	Site of World War II army infantry barracks; repeats SY29SW/244
SY28NW/109	SY 24 89	Wreck; Scarborough vessel stranded at Seaton in 1812
SY28NW/111	SY 2490 8985	Late Iron Age gold coin, c. 30BC
SY29SE/55	SY 25 90	Roman and/or medieval harbour site; repeats SY29SW/249
SY29SE/63	SY 2507 8995	Causeway; continuation of SY28NW/22
SY29SE/178	SY 2508 8990	Gravel pit
SY29SE/187	SY 251 899	Earthwork bank; continuation of SY28NW/85
SY29SE/190	SY 251 899	Drainage features, 1851-3; continuation of SY29SW/251
SY29SE/245	SY 2500 9020	Site of World War II army infantry barracks; repeats SY29SW/244 and SY28NW/94

Listed Buildings with views looking out over proposed development site:

Pole Arms Hotel	Grade II	Listing number Seaton 1/5	early 19 th -century
33 Fore Street	Grade II	Listing number Seaton 1/6	18 th -century

Appendix 2: Key to tithe map field numbers

Taken from the tithe map and award for Seaton, 1840 in the Devon Record Office (DRO):

Abbreviations: P-pasture; O-orchard; M-meadow

Tithe map Number	Field name or description	Land use	Acres in acres, rods & perches
Rev Frederick Holmes owns & occupies			
347	House, offices, stables & garden	-	0-2-9
347	Meadow	M	1-1-0
David Raddon owns & occupies			
347a	House	-	0-0-2
Thomas Cann owns & occupies			
349	House, garden & field	P	1-1-15
Mary Tout owns & occupies			
351	House & garden	-	0-0-13
John Akerman owns, James White occupies			
352	House & garden	-	0-0-5
Thomas Steward owns, Thomas Froome occupies			
356	Steward's Plot	P	0-2-33
William Brown owns, John Holmyard occupies			
357	Poles Inn garden & stable	Garden	1-0-0
357a	Meadow	P	1-0-25
Thomas Froome owns & occupies			
358	House, barn, linkays, curtilege, garden, meadow & orchard	P & O	1-2-25
Sir John Trevelyan owns, Thomas Cann occupies			
361	Manor Plot	P	0-3-20
362	Marsh Garden	-	0-0-31
Sir John Trevelyan owns, William Skinner occupies as part of Seaton Farm			
654	Church Plot	P	9-0-35
656	Salt Plot	P	14-0-13

Sir John Trevelyan owns, Joseph Thorn occupies

657	Sea Marsh	P	6-2-29
658	Town Marsh	P	5-2-7

Sir John Trevelyan owns, Rhoda Flaxbin occupies

659	part of Fourteen Acres	P	5-1-35
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Appendix 3: glossary of archaeological terms

Archaeology: the study of man's past by means of the material relics he has left behind him. By material relics, this means both materials buried within the soil (artefacts and remains of structures), and those surviving above the surface such as buildings, structures (e.g. stone circles) and earthworks (e.g. hillforts, old field boundaries etc.). Even the study of old tree or shrub alignments, where they have been artificially planted in the past, can give vital information on past activity.

Artefacts: any object made by man that finds itself discarded (usually as a broken object) or lost in the soil. The most common finds are usually pottery sherds, or waste flint flakes from prehistoric stone tool making. Metal finds are generally rare except in specialist areas such as the site of an old forge. The absence of finds from the activity of metal detectorists is not usually given much credibility by archaeologists as a means of defining if archaeology is present

Baulk: an area of unexcavated soil on an archaeological site. It usually refers to the sides of the archaeological trench.

Burnt flint: in prehistoric times, before metal containers were available, water was often boiled in pottery or wooden containers by dropping stones/flints heated in a fire into the container. The process of suddenly cooling hot stone, particularly flint, causes the stone to crack, and form distinctive crazed markings all over its surface. Finds of large quantities of such stone are usually taken as a preliminary indication of past human presence nearby.

Context: a number given to a unit of archaeological recording. This can include a layer, a cut, a fill of a cut, a surface or a structure.

Desk-based assessment: an assessment of a known or potential archaeological resource within a specific land unit or area, consisting of a collation of existing written or graphic information, to identify the likely character, extent and relative quality of the actual or potential resource.

Earthwork: bank of earth, hollow, or other earthen feature created by human activity.

Environmental evidence: evidence of the potential effect of environmental considerations on man's past activity. This can range from the remains of wood giving an insight into the type of trees available for building materials etc, through to evidence of crops grown, and food eaten, locally.

Evaluation: a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork (mainly test-trenching) which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified land unit or area. If they are present, this will define their character, extent, and relative quality, and allow an assessment of their worth in local, regional and national terms.

Hedgebanks: banks of earth, usually with a ditch, that have been set up in the past on which is planted a stock-proof line of shrubs. There is written evidence that they were made from at least Roman times, but they are suspected as existing in prehistoric times.

Lynchets: bank of earth that accumulates on the downhill side of an ancient ploughed field as the disturbed soil moves down the slope under the action of gravity.

Period: time periods within British chronology are usually defined as Prehistoric (comprising the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age), Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-medieval. Although exact definitions are often challenged, the general date ranges are as given below.

Prehistoric c. 100,000 BC - AD 43. This is usually defined as the time before man began making written records of his activities.

Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age 100,000 - 8300 BC

Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age 8300 - 4000 BC

Neolithic or New Stone Age 4000 - 2500 BC

Bronze Age 2500 - 700 BC

Iron Age 700 BC - AD 43

Roman AD 43-410

Saxon AD 410-1066

Medieval AD 1066-1540

Post-medieval AD 1540-present

Pottery sherds: small pieces of broken baked clay vessels that find their way into ancient soils. These can be common in all periods from the Neolithic onwards. They often find their way into the soil by being dumped on the settlement rubbish tip, when broken, and subsequently taken out and scattered in fields with farmyard manure.

Project Design: a written statement on the project's objectives, methods, timetable and resources set out in sufficient detail to be quantifiable, implemented and monitored.

Settlement: usually defined as a site where human habitation in the form of permanent or temporary buildings or shelters in wood, stone, brick or any other building material has existed in the past.

Site: usually defined as an area where human activity has taken place in the past. It does not require the remains of buildings to be present. A scatter of prehistoric flint-working debris can be defined as a 'site', with or without evidence for permanent or temporary habitation.

Stratigraphy: sequence of man-made soils overlying undisturbed soils; the lowest layers generally represent the oldest periods of man's past, with successive layers reaching forwards to the present. It is within these soils that archaeological information is obtained.

Worked flint or stone: usually taken to mean pieces of chipped stone or flint used to make prehistoric stone tools. A worked flint can comprise the tools themselves (arrowheads, blades etc.), or the waste material produced in their making (often called flint flakes, cores etc.).

Appendix 4: Results of geotechnical test pit survey

Taken from geotechnical report by Integrale Consulting (2000, Appendix C). See references to main report for further details. For location of pits see Fig. 3.
