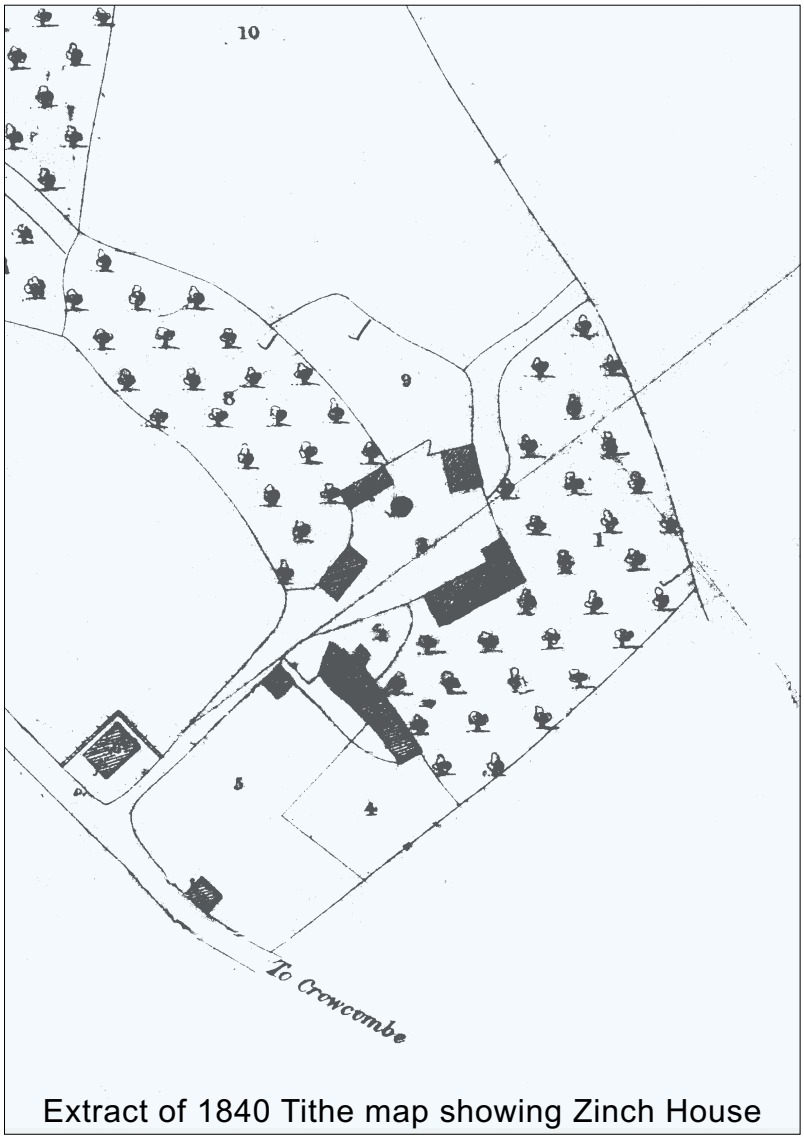
Wessex Archaeology

Zinch House, Station Road, Stogumber, Somerset

Archaeological Evaluation
and Assessment of the Results



Extract of 1840 Tithe map showing Zinch House

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October 2003

ZINCH HOUSE, STATION ROAD, STOGUMBER, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

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October 2003

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

Contents

Cover: Extract from 1840 Tithe Map showing Zinch House

ZINCH HOUSE, STATION ROAD, STOGUMBER, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

Summary

Wildfire Television Limited, commissioned by Channel 4, undertook the excavation of two test pits within and adjacent to Zinch House, Stogumber, Taunton, Somerset (NGR 31001 13714) as part of the Time Team Big Dig television programme. Zinch House is of 15th or 16th century origin and lies in the south of the village of Stogumber, Somerset, which is of at least medieval origin. One test pit was targeted to relocate the remains of an outbuilding to Zinch House shown on a Tithe map of 1840. The second test pit aimed to examine land to the north-west of Zinch House to test for settlement remains associated with the medieval village of Stogumber, for which there was no previous archaeological record. The test pits revealed that over one metre of hill wash, containing a fragment of Iron Age loom weight and considerable quantities of medieval pottery, covered the site.

This test pit work was followed by a more extensive archaeological evaluation of the area involving geophysical survey, machine dug trenches and hand excavation. The four machine-dug evaluation trenches and two small area excavations, partly dug by hand, demonstrated that medieval agricultural and settlement activity was represented at the site. The evaluation indicated that the hill wash probably accumulated from the medieval period onwards and it sealed a series of medieval features, including two slots and three small shallow pits. Finds from these features included two whetstones, large unabraded sherds of 11th-14th century AD medieval pottery and food remains, including oats, rye, hazelnuts and peas or beans.

A series of post-medieval deposits was also recorded and included a building with a cobbled floor. None of these deposits appeared to match the location of the building recorded on the Tithe map of 1840 but all could represent remnants of outbuildings and yard surfaces associated with Zinch House.

ZINCH HOUSE, STATION ROAD, STOGUMBER, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

Acknowledgements

The excavation was commissioned and funded by Wildfire Television Limited. The unstinting cooperation and enthusiasm of the landowner, Celia Vardy is particularly acknowledged.

The geophysical survey was undertaken by John Gater with staff from GSB Prospection, and survey by Duncan Lees (Museum of London Archaeology Service). Excavation strategy was led by Francis Pryor (Archaeological Consultant, Time Team) and Bob Croft (Somerset County Archaeologist) who also assisted and monitored the work.

Site recording was co-ordinated by Phil Harding (Wessex Archaeology) assisted by Nick Best (Wessex Archaeology) and Alan Graham. The excavations were further assisted by a team of A-level archaeology students volunteering from Richard Huish College in Taunton and supervised by Dan Dodds (Time Team /Oxford Archaeology).

The post-excavation programme was managed by Roland Smith for Wessex Archaeology. Finds analysis and assessment was provided by Lorraine Mepham and environmental analysis undertaken by Chris Stevens. This report was compiled by Phil Harding and Nick Best and the illustrations produced by Kitty Brandon.

ZINCH HOUSE, STATION ROAD, STOGUMBER, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Site

1.1.1 In June 2003 Wildfire Television Limited, commissioned by Channel 4, undertook an archaeological evaluation in two stages within and adjacent to Zinch House, Stogumber, Taunton, Somerset, as part of the Time Team Big Dig television programme. This report sets out the results of the evaluation and has been produced by Wessex Archaeology, who has been commissioned by Wildfire Television to undertake the post-excavation work for this project.

1.1.2 Zinch House is located at NGR 31001 13714 in the south-east of Stogumber, a village which lies at the east end of the Brendon Hills (Figure 1). The core of the village, including the church, dates back to the medieval period and lies on the crest of a north facing spur, at 75 m OD. The village lies at the confluence of a small stream that flows north into a larger tributary of the Doniford Stream. Zinch House lies in the base of the valley near the source of the stream.

1.1.3 The geology is mapped as Wiveliscombe Sandstone of Permian and Triassic age (BGS Sheet 295 – Taunton), which weathers to an undulating landscape with relatively steeply incised valleys. The evaluation area comprised a paddock (Figure 2) that was covered with coarse grass that lay on the lower slopes of the valley on the west bank of the stream. It also included the well-maintained lawn of Zinch House, which lay to the south-east of the paddock (Figure 2). In total the area covered approximately 2,775 sq m.

1.1.4 Zinch House is a timber-framed structure with documentary evidence dating it to the 15th century, although the Sites and Monuments Record suggests that the present structure dates from the 16th century. Substantial earthwork features, consisting of banks and ditches, surround it. The house formerly held three barns and was a fairly wealthy building for its time. However documents refer to it being within the manor of Vexford(?) and therefore imply it was not itself a manorial centre.

1.1.5 The Tithe Map of 1840 (see Cover) shows there was an earlier building, possibly a barn, now demolished, under the lawn (Figure 2).

1.2 Previous Archaeological Work

1.2.1 Although no previous archaeological work had taken place at Zinch House, a large amount of pottery had been noted in the flowerbeds and a fragment of Iron Age loom weight had been discovered ‘at the bottom of the garden’ (Celia Vardy pers.

comm.). A substantial amount of iron working slag was also reported to have been recovered from the adjacent paddock (Celia Vardy pers. comm.).

1.2.2 On this basis, Wildfire Television chose to excavate two test pits in the vicinity of Zinch House on 24th June 2003 as part of Time Team's Big Dig. One test pit was sited in the garden to locate the site of the possible barn marked on the 1840 Tithe map, the other to establish the context of finds recovered by the landowner in the neighbouring paddock (Figure 2).

1.2.3 The test pit in the lawn revealed a path, possibly associated with a former building, but no evidence of the building itself. The paddock test pit was sited near the find spot of an Iron Age loom weight. It yielded 12th century pottery, but no further evidence of Iron Age activity. It also demonstrated the accumulation of a considerable volume of hill wash (colluvium), observed at a depth exceeding one metre below topsoil.

1.2.4 As a result of the test pits, Time Team decided that the lawn and paddock of Zinch House were to be subject to further evaluation as part of The Big Dig live television programme broadcast over the weekend of 28th and 29th June 2003.

2 METHODS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A project design for the further evaluation work was compiled and provided by Wildfire Television Limited (Wildfire Television Limited 2003). This document is in the site archive but the contents are summarised here.

2.2 Aims and Objectives

2.2.1 The results of the test pits indicated that the base of the valley contained deeply stratified, and potentially significant, deposits of colluvium, over 1 m deep. These deposits could provide evidence of the earliest activity at the site including the possibility of Iron Age occupation. However most of the material comprised medieval pottery, which suggested that the medieval settlement of the village was accompanied by extensive and intensive agricultural activity. The fact that many of the medieval sherds were large and un-abraded suggested that the colluvium may have sealed and preserved stratified archaeological surfaces and features. A more detailed evaluation would help to identify such horizons and to recover a larger assemblage of pottery, which would provide a chronological sequence for the development of land use and the expansion or contraction of the village before the construction of Zinch House.

2.2.2 The opportunity to study medieval pottery from stratified contexts in Somerset villages that have been continuously occupied is rare. The recovery of a large provenanced assemblage would therefore be of considerable importance to the interpretation of the medieval settlement of Stogumber and to West Somerset in general. The results would also indicate the extent, condition and status of any archaeological structures and deposits.

2.2.3 It was also considered important to relocate the site of the former building under the lawn of Zinch House, as shown on the 1840 Tithe map, which had first attracted the landowner's interest in the site.

2.3 Fieldwork Methods

2.3.1 The fieldwork strategy was undertaken using a combination of an extensive magnetometer and resistivity geophysical survey across the site and a series of targeted evaluation trenches.

2.3.2 A total of six trenches of varying dimensions was dug after consultation with the on-site director, Francis Pryor, and associated specialists. The precise location of individual trenches was determined in relation to topographic and cartographic features, geophysical anomalies, and previous find spots in order to answer the specific aims and objectives of the project design.

2.3.3 Topsoil and subsoil stripping in trenches 1 and 2, which were located in the lawn of Zinch House, was undertaken using a tracked mini-digger fitted with a toothless bucket. Trenches 3 – 6 were excavated in the paddock using a wheeled JCB mechanical excavator and back-hoe fitted with a toothless ditching bucket 1.8 m wide. All machine work was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision and ceased either with the identification of significant archaeological deposits, or where natural geological deposits were encountered. When machine excavation had ceased all trenches were cleaned by hand and archaeological deposits were excavated.

2.3.4 Deposits and features of recent date were cleaned and recorded before they were removed by machine. Colluvium was excavated to *in situ* datable horizons with identifiable archaeological features or to the natural geology, whichever was encountered first.

2.3.5 A sufficient sample of all deposits was examined to allow the resolution of the principal questions outlined in the aims and objectives above.

2.3.6 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Trenches were located using a Trimble Real Time Differential GPS survey system and related to Ordnance Datum. All archaeological features and deposits were planned at 1:20 or 1:50 and sections drawn at 1:10 or 1:20, whichever was appropriate for the circumstances and a photographic record maintained.

2.3.7 A comprehensive sample of spoil from trench 1 was sieved under professional archaeological supervision to monitor artefact retrieval.

2.3.8 At the completion of the work all trenches were reinstated using the excavated spoil. All artefacts were transported to the offices of Wessex Archaeology where they were processed and assessed for this report.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Geophysical Survey

3.1.1 Surveys were undertaken over two areas. Area 2, within the area of the former building shown on the 1840 Tithe map, was surveyed using resistance while Area 1, in the paddock, was examined using resistance and magnetic survey (Figures 1 and 2). The techniques and results of the survey are described in a detailed report (GSB 2003), which is held in archive. The results are summarised here.

Area 1

3.1.2 A survey area in the paddock produced disappointing results. Modern activity caused the data to be magnetically disturbed, masking any archaeological features, whilst the earth resistance survey was dominated by geological responses. Two anomalies were singled out as potentially archaeological due to their proximity to a suspected pond, although this interpretation is conjectural.

Area 2

3.1.3 The lawn produced both high and low resistance anomalies likely to relate to the former building known to have stood in front of Zinch House. A high resistance anomaly was detected which correlated with a coarse cobbled floor of the building that was confirmed by excavation (see trench 2 below). Elsewhere relatively modern garden features including an ornamental pond, culverts and channels were detected, both in the evaluation area and, by extrapolation, in the garden beyond.

3.2 Evaluation

3.2.1 Details of individual excavated contexts and features are retained in the project archive. Archaeological deposits were overlain by mid-dark brown well-sorted sandy-silt topsoil, derived from the local natural geological deposits that averaged c.0.1-0.2m thick. Topsoil in trenches 1 and 2, within the garden of Zinch House, was shallower and more obviously disturbed by garden landscaping. Topsoil in trenches 3-6, in the paddock, showed a thicker well sorted soil profile associated with well-established unploughed pasture.

3.2.2 With the exception of trench 2, the natural geological deposits were overlain by colluvium up to 1.2m in depth in which a limited number of archaeological features were identified.

3.3 Trench 1

3.3.1 Trench 1 measured 4 x 4 m and was targeted to investigate a poorly defined anomaly detected by geophysics.

3.3.2 The excavation revealed that the topsoil (101) overlay 0.30 – 0.35 m of re-deposited red brown sandy silt colluvium (113) that had been used to landscape the garden in the late 19th / early 20th century. This layer of made-up ground sealed a series of former garden features comprising stone and mortar surfaces (102), (103), (104) and (105) (Figure 3).

3.3.3 A slightly curving kerb of undressed stones (102) ran approximately north-east to south-west from the south-western limits of the trench. It comprised a single layer of undressed stones that was loosely bonded with mortar but showed no clear foundation trench.

3.3.4 A rough cobbled surface (103), approximately 1.2 m wide, consisted of undressed flint cobbles that extended 2.5 m from the east section of the trench and tapered to a blunt point. It was laid on a thin gravel foundation. The south edge was composed of large un-mortared stone slabs, some of which were set more deeply on edge to form a deliberate kerb. An undressed mortared stone kerb to the north was in turn butted by a firm, rough mortar surface (104), which occupied much of the central area of the trench. A more friable mortar surface (105) observed along the north edge of trench 1 was almost certainly associated with deposits (102) and (103). A fragment of post-medieval salt-glazed stoneware was pressed into the surface of the cobbled surface (103).

3.3.5 The underlying colluvium (106) comprised a homogeneous deposit of red brown sandy loam that was excavated by machine to a depth of approximately 0.9 m below the present ground surface. The colluvium contained four sherds of medieval pottery and one post-medieval sherd. Two features (110 and 112) were identified at a depth of 0.9m and were cut within the colluvium. The trench was cleaned by hand at this level (108), producing 33 sherds of medieval pottery, two small sherds (6g) of post-medieval pottery, which may be intrusive, and one worked flint flake.

3.3.6 Feature (110) comprised a slot aligned approximately east-west. The slot, which extended 1 m from the east edge of the trench to a rounded terminus, measured 0.4 m wide and 0.3 m deep with steep sloping sides with a flat to slightly rounded base (Figure 3). The slot was filled with red brown sand (109) that was less compact but similar to the surrounding colluvium. It is uncertain whether the feature represents a construction slot for a timber structure or an open gully. No timber stains or post positions were apparent, nor were there any indications of a corner or entrance. The slot contained 29 sherds of unabraded medieval pottery, principally hand-made cooking pots, suggesting that the feature lay within close proximity of settlement. A quantity of charcoal, including carbonised oats, rye and wheat with traces of hazelnut, pea, bean and elder, was also recovered.

3.3.7 Feature (112) was observed in the west of the trench, approximately two metres from the western terminal of the slot. It comprised a small ovoid pit or ‘scoop’ approximately 0.5 x 0.3 m and 0.12 m deep with a rounded base (Figure 3). The extent of the feature was apparent by a single charcoal-rich deposit (107) that formed the only fill. The surrounding colluvium was unmodified by heat suggesting that the deposit was not burnt *in situ*. The charcoal fragments were principally derived from twigs or branches, however a cereal grain and three probable weed seeds were also recovered. No finds were recovered, however the feature was stratigraphically similar to slot (110) and is likely to be contemporary.

3.3.8 Twenty-two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the colluvium (111) through which features (110) and (112) had been cut. Two small sherds (5g) of post-medieval pottery and one piece (2g) of ceramic building material were also recovered and may be intrusive. No further excavation of the basal colluvium was

undertaken below these archaeological features and the natural geology was not reached in this trench.

3.4 Trench 2

3.4.1 Trench 2, which initially measured 4 m by 4 m, was located to establish the site of the building featured on the 1840 Tithe map. The results of geophysical survey were inconclusive due to modern services and field drains and the position of the trench was determined from measurements calculated from the 1840 Tithe map and surveyed to other buildings shown on the Tithe map that are extant. The landowner confirmed that irregular parch-marks were often visible on this part of the lawn during dry months of the year.

3.4.2 The removal of the topsoil and thin subsoil (201) revealed the upper surface of a large rubble spread (202) aligned north-south and cut by a modern 'field'-type drain (204). The rubble material (202) was probably demolition rubble and it contained 19th and 20th century material. It overlay fragmentary foundations of a mortared stone wall (208) that formed the west-side of a building that was terraced into natural sand or colluvium. The wall had been heavily robbed (206) and backfilled with coarse sandy clay (207).

3.4.3 Trench 2 was therefore extended to the south in an area 3 m by 5 m to investigate a larger area inside the building represented by wall (208) and also to investigate an approximately circular parch mark.

3.4.4 The trench extension indicated that the demolition rubble (202) was restricted almost entirely to the east of wall (208). It also revealed an area of large, unworked cobbles (203) in a soil matrix that formed the internal floor of the building. The parch mark could be readily attributed to a modern circular concrete ornamental pond foundation (205), which had wholly truncated any trace of wall (208) in the south of the trench.

3.4.5 Trench 2 was located to cut across the presumed position of the building recorded on the 1840 Tithe map (Figure 2). No trace of this building was recorded in the anticipated location in trench 2, although the alignment of wall (208) was close to that of the east and west walls of the building on the Tithe map. Otherwise the modern circular ornamental pond, which was presumably responsible for the approximately circular parch mark in the lawn, marks the position of a similar feature recorded on the 1840 Tithe map (see report cover).

3.5 Trench 3

3.5.1 Trench 3 measured 9 m long and 1.6 m wide and was aligned north-east to south-west across the base of the slope in the paddock to establish the soil profile and evaluate the potential for buried archaeological deposits.

3.5.2 The evaluation revealed that approximately 0.2 m of humic sandy topsoil (301) overlay a homogeneous dark red-brown loamy sand colluvium (302), which thickened from 0.60 m to a maximum depth of 1.2 m at the base of the slope. The colluvium overlay a series of laminated coarse red sands and fine sandy gravel

(303), which are likely to date from the Last Glaciation (Devensian). Two sand filled hollows (305, 307) that cut into the top of these basal deposits were thought to be natural in origin.

3.5.3 Hollow (305) was observed in section and comprised a small scoop, approximately 0.8 m wide and 0.3 m deep, with moderate sloping sides and a flat base. The other hollow (307) extended into the trench approximately 0.80 m, was 1.4 m wide in the section and survived to a maximum depth of 0.4 m.

3.5.4 No other archaeological features were observed.

3.6 Trench 4

3.6.1 This machine dug trench, which measured 5 m long and 2 m wide, was aligned parallel to the slope in the paddock immediately north-west of the garden boundary of Zinch House and close to the test pit that had produced medieval pottery.

3.6.2 It produced a similar sequence to that seen in trench 3 dominated by an undifferentiated deposit of red brown sandy loam colluvium. Additional fragments of medieval pottery and two small sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered although no archaeological features were observed.

3.7 Trench 5

3.7.1 This trench measured 9 m long and 1.6 m wide and was excavated by machine obliquely across the valley slope at the west end of the paddock.

3.7.2 The trench section showed that below topsoil (500), a pale grey-brown deposit of sandy colluvium (501) up to 1.1 m thick sealed a series of archaeological features (Figure 3). Two fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from the lower levels of the colluvium.

3.7.3 Most of the archaeological features were filled with grey brown loamy sand, which made it difficult to establish precise stratigraphic relationships. The earliest feature was a small, steep sided, sub-circular pit (506), which measured 0.44 m across, 0.12 m deep and was cut into the underlying natural sands (509). The fills (504 and 505) of the pit included flecks of charcoal and two complete whetstones, probably of medieval date.

3.7.4 The pit was sealed by a broad irregular gully (503) that was filled with fine loamy sand (502) containing a small quantity of burnt clay and burnt sand. The feature measured almost 2 m across, with a steep, well-defined east edge, up to 0.30 m deep, and a less precise west edge. The gully was cut into the underlying natural sands. It comprised two parallel channels, which suggested that it might have been recut. The western channel terminated in an oval, steep sided pit (508) 0.20 m deep. The composition of the pit fill (507) was indistinguishable from the gully fill in plan and appeared to represent a terminus, however the section suggested that the pit was a separate feature that post-dated the gully. There were no finds to resolve this although the pit contained a fragment of a whetstone similar to those from pit (506).

3.8 Trench 6

3.8.1 Trench 6 was 3.5 m long and 1.8 m wide and was dug by machine parallel to and 7 m north-east of trench 4. The section comprised an identical sequence of topsoil and homogeneous colluvium as seen in all other trenches. No archaeological features were recorded.

4 FINDS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The evaluation produced a small quantity of finds, which were recovered from four of the six trenches excavated; no finds were recovered from trenches 3 or 6, and trenches 4 and 5 produced only small quantities of material. All finds have been quantified by material type within each context. Quantified data form the primary finds archive for the site, and these data are summarised by trench in Table 1. The increased artefact recovery from trench 1 is probably related to the use of hand excavation and the associated large scale sieving programme.

4.1.2 Subsequent to quantification, all finds have been at least visually scanned in order to gain an overall idea of the range of types present, their condition, and their potential date range. Spot dates have been recorded for selected material types as appropriate. All finds data are currently held on an Excel spreadsheet. Subsequent to quantification and scanning, most of the material, being of obviously modern date, or undiagnostic, was discarded.

4.1.3 This section presents an overview of the finds assemblage, on which is based an assessment of the potential of this assemblage to contribute to an understanding of the site in its local and regional context. The assemblage is almost entirely of medieval to post-medieval date, with a single flint flake attesting to prehistoric activity in the vicinity.

Table 1: All finds by trench (number / weight in grammes)

Material Type	**Tr. 1**	**Tr. 2**	**Tr. 4**	**Tr. 5**	**TOTAL**
Ceramic Building Material	21/1107	74/2398	-	5/298	100/3803
Clay Pipe	-	4/6	-	3/6	7/12
Glass	5/224	6/44	-	1/11	12/279
Pottery	134/1122	71/628	15/97	43/503	263/2350
Medieval pottery	*97/834*	*18/147*	*13/92*	*21/268*	*149/1341*
Post-medieval pottery	*37/288*	*53/481*	*2/5*	*22/235*	*114/1009*
Slag	-	1/29	-	-	1/29
Stone	5/907	14/555	-	3/1643	22/3105
Worked flint	1/1	-	-	-	1/1
Metal	16	62	-	1	79
Copper alloy	-	-	-	*1*	*1*
Lead	-	*1*	-	-	*1*
Iron	*16*	*61*	-	-	*77*
Animal Bone	13/28	18/414	-	-	31/442
Shell	-	8/18	-	-	8/18

4.2 Pottery

4.2.1 Pottery provides the primary dating for the site. The assemblage ranges in date from medieval to post-medieval. Scanning of the assemblage has involved the quantification of the medieval assemblage by broad ware group (e.g. quartz/chert-tempered wares; quartz-tempered wares with rock inclusions, etc). More detailed fabric analysis was not felt to be warranted.

4.2.2 The medieval wares were concentrated in trench 1, where they occurred in some quantity throughout the colluvial deposits (106, 108, 111), although all three deposits also produced small quantities of post-medieval wares. The initial scan has revealed the presence of several different coarseware fabric types, all of which are likely to be at least relatively locally produced. There are no glazed wares amongst the assemblage.

4.2.3 The ceramic sequence appears to echo that outlined for North Devon (Allan 1994), and parallels for some of the wares seen here can be found within the medieval assemblage from Cleeve Abbey, about 6 km to the north-west of Stogumber (Allan 1999), and also in Taunton (Pearson 1984; Burrow 1988). A small quantity of coarse, chert-tempered wares, made in east Devon or south Somerset, indicate an earliest date for the assemblage in the 11th or 12th century (Allan 1994, 142). These are mixed with coarsewares containing quartz and limestone inclusions (largely leached out), and quartz and miscellaneous rock inclusions; the latter are likely to include types defined as 'North Devon medieval coarseware', dating from the 13th and possibly early 14th century, and possibly made, for example, in Barnstaple (*ibid.*, 141-2). Vessel types seen here comprise mainly jars and one or two bowls. A few finer, glazed, sandy wares, all apparently from jugs, may be Bristol types.

4.2.4 The post-medieval pottery consists largely of relatively modern wares ('industrial' wares and stonewares of the 19th and 20th centuries). Coarse redwares, including slipwares and sgraffito wares are also present and at least some of these are of earlier post-medieval date (17th/18th century); the primary source for these wares is likely to have been the nearby production centre at Nether Stowey (10km to the east), although wasters have also been found at Crowcombe, less than 5 km to the east (Allan 1999, 47).

4.3 Ceramic Building Material

4.3.1 This includes fragments of bricks, flat peg tiles, curved, glazed tiles, pantiles, and field drains. These are all likely to be of relatively modern date, although three glazed fragments, potentially deriving from ridge tiles, could be slightly earlier post-medieval date.

4.4 Worked Flint

4.4.1 One small, prehistoric waste flake, in a rolled condition, was a residual find in trench 1.

4.5 Stone

4.5.1 One broken and two complete whetstones were recovered. The two complete examples, both from feature 506, are medieval and made from the local micaceous sandstone from the Hangman Grits series.

4.5.2 Other stone recovered comprised two slate pencils and 17 fragments of building material (slate and sandstone roof tiles).

4.6 Other Finds

4.6.1 Other finds are not discussed in detail here; basic identification and spot-dating is recorded in the archive. All are of post-medieval date, and comprise marine shell; clay pipe (plain stems); glass (bottle/jar and window); slag (one tiny, undiagnostic piece); animal bone (the main domestic species) and metalwork (iron nails and other structural items, lead window came, brass ?toy gun).

5 PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Two bulk soil samples of 20 litres were taken; one from slot (110), the other from pit (112). The slot was dated to the medieval period and the pit was probably broadly contemporary. The samples were processed by standard flotation methods for the recovery and assessment of charred plant remains and charcoals.

5.2 Slot 110 produced a fair quantity of wood charcoal. Most seemed relatively uniform in composition consisting mainly of large square or sub-rectangular pieces of oak, with no rounded fragments. About 20+ fragments were larger than 5.6 mm. In addition cereal remains were quite conspicuous, with around thirty grains of oats (*Avena* sp.), twenty of rye (*Secale cereale*) and two of probable wheat grains (*Triticum* sp.) being recovered. Only one fragment of chaff, that of a rye rachis, was recorded. In addition other food remains were also found two fragments of hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*), two fragments of pea or bean (*Pisum sativum*/*Vicia faba*) and a seed of elder (S*ambucus nigra*). Only three weed seeds were present of chrysanthemum (*Chrysantheum segetum*), black bindweed (*Fallopia convovolus*), and curled-leaved dock (*Rumex* cf. *crispus*).

5.3 Slot 110 might contain hearth waste, although it contained no visible remains of branches or twigs, unlike that from pit 112. It did though contain reasonable quantities of remains of cereal grains and weeds. Identifying oats as cultivated or wild type in the absence of floret bases is always a matter of speculation. Larger sized grains, as generally seen in the sample, can be indicative of the crop rather than being of wild oats, the weed. A few smaller seeds of oats were present and the species is a common weed of rye so that the possibility that the samples represent the final cleanings of rye cannot be dismissed. The rye had certainly been threshed and winnowed before it was charred, as rachis fragments along with small weed seeds are almost entirely absent.

5.4 The fragments of hazelnut and elder represent plants collected from the wild for food, although elder may have become incorporated into the crop as elder branches were sometimes stored with crops to protect them from insect attack.

5.5 The three weed seeds are of common arable weeds. They are larger in size and of the type that are difficult to clean from the grain, sometimes even being removed by hand. Only one of these is associated with specific soil conditions and that is chrysanthemum that grows on dry sandier soils. The same sort of poorer soils that rye and oats grow well on.

5.6 Excavations at Taunton Priory also produced evidence for carbonised grains of rye, and oats, as well as large number of seeds of chrysanthemum from medieval deposits (Greig and Osborne 1984). The samples compare well to this evidence. The samples demonstrate the crops utilised in Taunton during the medieval period by non-high status individuals. That both rye and oats grow on poorer soils may be indicative of the land available to such individuals.

5.7 Pit 112 contained many large fragments of charcoal in the flots, with a mixture of both sub-rectangular and rounded pieces from branches and twigs. Again oak would seem to be present although other species might also be represented. Only one cereal grain of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum sensu lato*) was found along with two to three seeds of probable weeds, black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvuslus*), a woundwort type (*Stachyis*/*Galeoptris/ Ballota* sp.) and one unidentified.

5.8 The sample contained relatively little material, a few larger weed seeds and a grain of free-threshing wheat. It is probable that the assemblage represents a few waste products from the final cleanings of free-threshing wheat stored in a relatively clean condition.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The evaluation at Zinch House, Stogumber, has produced a sequence of deposits and finds dating from the medieval period up to the present day. Material pre-dating the medieval period was limited to one flint flake recovered from the evaluation and the fragment of Iron Age loom weight recovered by the landowner. Both were unstratified finds, but both at least hint at prehistoric use of the area.

6.2 Otherwise the earliest datable material from the evaluation was pottery of 11th or 12th century date, although this was invariably mixed with material of 13th or 14th century date. This material was recovered from throughout a deep deposit of colluvium or hill wash, sealed below and within which were features that also contained medieval material of a similar date. The features below and within the colluvium were poorly defined but appear to comprise two gullies or slots and three small, shallow pits. Finds from these features included two whetstones, large unabraded sherds of medieval pottery and food remains, including oats, rye, hazelnuts and peas or beans. This material indicates that these features represent the remnants of medieval settlement, presumably part of the medieval village of Stogumber.

6.3 The medieval features were recorded below and within a deep deposit of colluvium, recorded up to 1.2 m deep in trench 3. The colluvium also contained medieval pottery but also small fragments of post-medieval pottery throughout the sequence, which is likely to be intrusive. The colluvium attests to intensive arable agriculture throughout the medieval period and significant erosion of soils from adjacent slopes.

6.4 A series of post-medieval deposits was also recorded above the colluvium and included a building with a cobbled floor in trench 2 and cobbled and mortar surfaces in trench 1. None of these deposits appeared to match the location of the building recorded on the Tithe map of 1840 but all could represent remnants of outbuildings and yard surfaces associated with Zinch House.

6.5 Perhaps surprisingly the post-medieval material recovered from the evaluation spans the 17th-20th centuries and there is therefore no material present that corresponds to the presumed date of construction of Zinch House in the 15th and 16th century.

6.6 The evaluation has therefore produced the first excavated archaeological evidence for part of the medieval settlement of Stogumber. Further analysis and publication of the data is not proposed, however, as it is unlikely to produce any significant new information above and beyond that undertaken for this assessment. The finds assemblage is small and although the medieval pottery provides valuable dating evidence, it is a mixed assemblage, occurring with post-medieval pottery within colluvial deposits. The environmental samples have provided some useful information on the crops and foodstuffs utilised within the medieval settlement, the presence of rye is particularly noteworthy for comparison with other sites regionally, although no further work upon these samples is proposed.

6.7 The results therefore merit a note in the Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society. A copy of this evaluation and assessment report will also be deposited with the Somerset County Sites and Monuments Record in due course so as to be available to future researchers. The project archive, including all the finds, subject to the wishes of the landowner, will be deposited with the Somerset County Museums Service.

7 THE ARCHIVE

7.1 The archive, which includes all artefacts and written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken, is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury under the code 52568 (ZH 03). It is intended that the archive along with the finds, subject to the wishes of the landowner, will be deposited with Somerset County Museums Service under the accession number TTNCM\137\2003. The finds are listed in Table 1 and the paper archive is as follows:

8 REFERENCES

Allan, J, 1994, 'Medieval pottery and the dating of deserted settlements on Dartmoor', *Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc.* 52 (1994), 141-7

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Greig, J R A and Osborne P J, 1984, 'Plant and insect remains at Taunton Priory' 160-5, in Leach P (ed.). *The archaeology of Taunton: excavations and fieldwork to 1980* Western Archaeological Trust Excavation Monograph 8

GSB Prospection, 2003, 'Stogumber, Somerset' Unpublished Client Report 2003/50.

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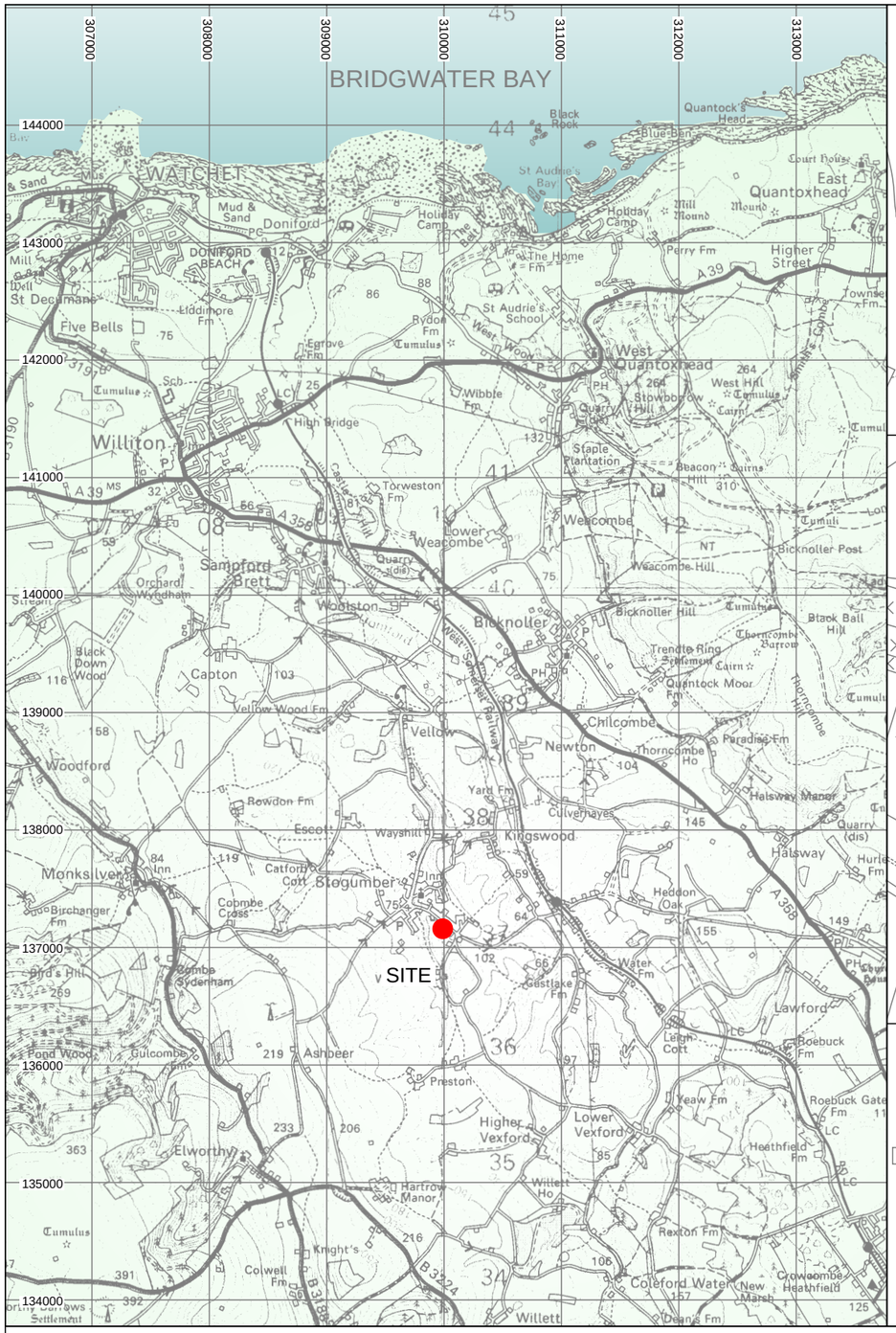
Wildfire Television Limited 2003 'Proposed archaeological evaluation at Zinch House, Station Road, Stogumber, Taunton, Somerset (ST 101 372)' unpublished project design



Gradiometer Survey

Resistance Survey

Wessex Archaeology

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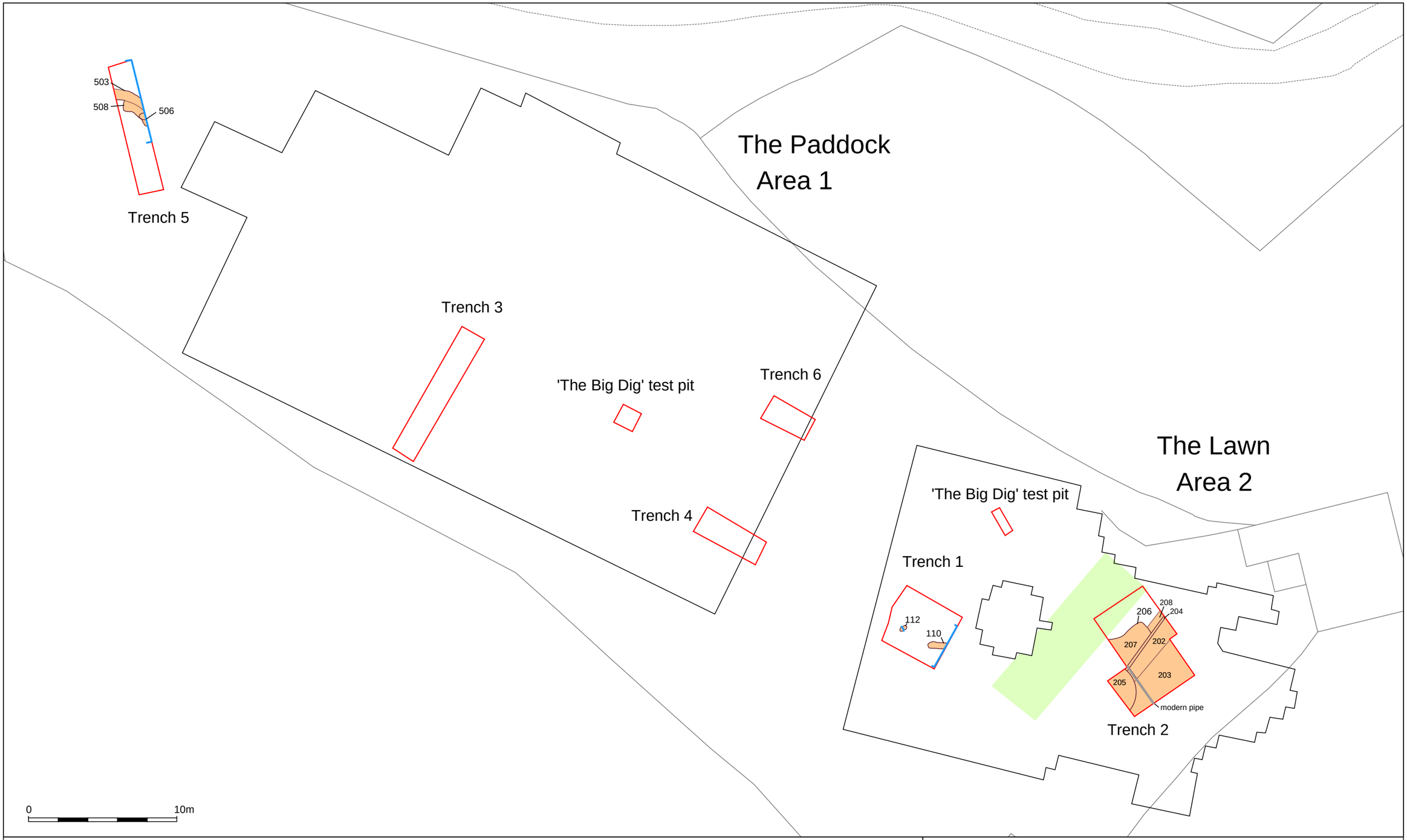
Site and trench location

Figure 1



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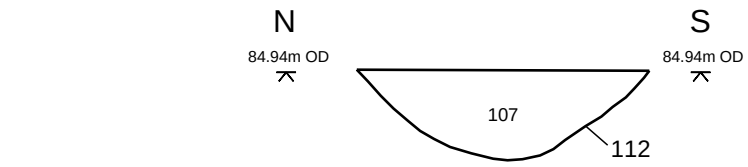
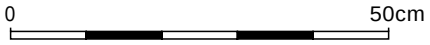
Trench plan with features

Figure 2

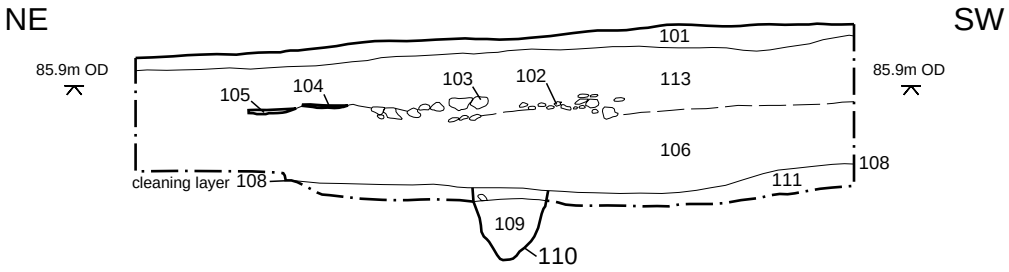
a. West facing section through feature 112, Trench 1



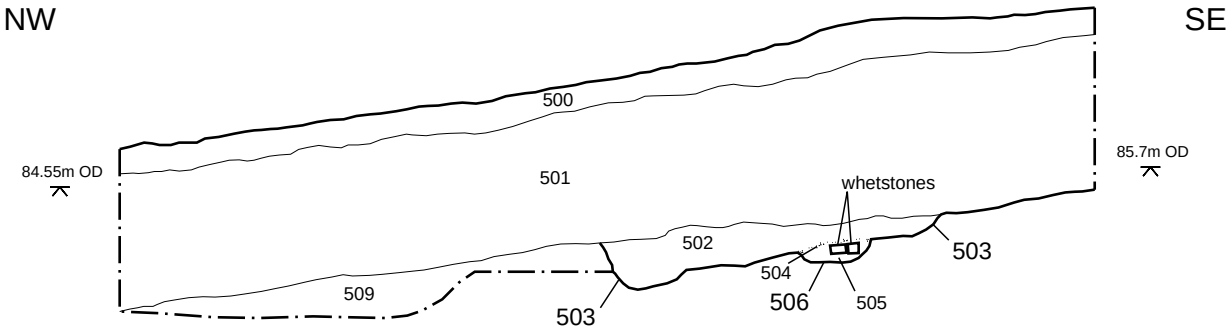


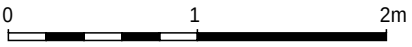
Scale for section a only

b. North-east facing section through Trench 1



c. South-west facing section through Trench 5





Scale for section b and c

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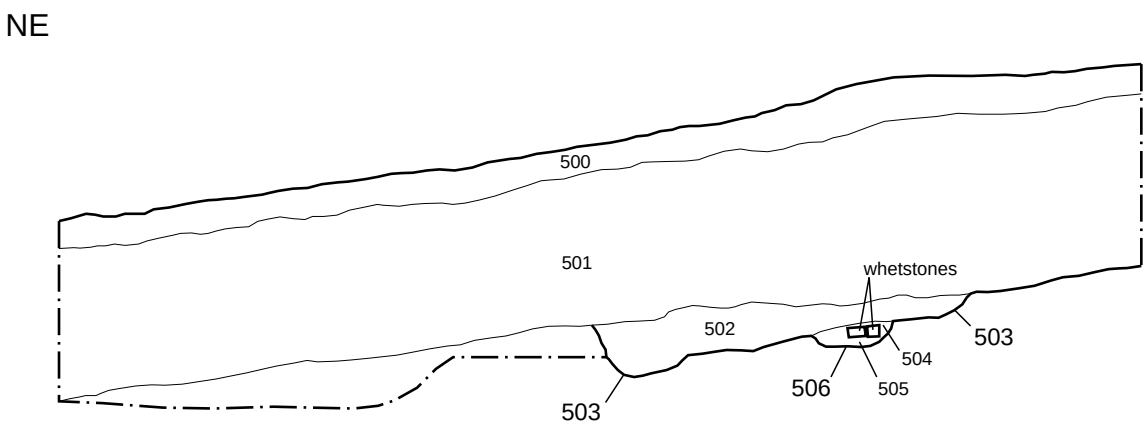
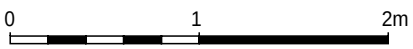
Sections

Figure 3





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North-west facing section through Trench 5

Figure 4

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