

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Germansweek, West Devon	National Grid Reference: SX 4390 9420	Number:
Subject: Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to the Old School House, Germansweek, Beaworthy, Devon		Photo attached: N
Planning Application no: 12226/2008/OKE	Recipient museum: Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery	
OASIS ID: exeterar1-57924	Museum Accession no: AR.2009.4	
Contractor's reference number/code: EA6588	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 07/04/09 & 10/11/09	
<p>Description of works: The site (Fig. 1) lies within the historic core of Germansweek, immediately to the north of the Parish church of St Germanus. The development site is located in an area marked on the 1885 OS map as the site of a 'manor house'. This may be the manor house of Week (Wyke) Langford, which is documented as the Domesday manor of Wica, and is again mentioned as a tenancy under <i>Manor of Wyk</i> in the 13th century. While no buildings are depicted on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps, it was thought that a raised area noted during a site visit in 1974 may represent archaeological remains associated with the manor house.</p> <p>An evaluation was carried out prior to the start of groundworks. Two trenches, measuring 30m in total, were excavated (Fig. 2), covering the footprint of the proposed housing. These revealed a sequence of natural soils extending across the whole of the northwestern half of the site. The remaining half of the site (hatched on attached plan) was largely built up as part of the development and therefore not subject to archaeological investigation.</p> <p>Evaluation results: The layer sequence revealed by the trenching typically consisted of the following: 0-0.3m Modern made ground 0.3-0.6m Buried topsoil 0.6-0.8m Subsoil 0.8+ Natural subsoil</p> <p>A further site visit was made on the 10-11-2009 to monitor removal of a c. 3m wide section of hedgebank central to the frontage of the new properties in order to provide vehicle access to the development.</p> <p>The 1.2m high and 2.4m wide bank (Fig. 3) currently supports sycamore and occasional small beech amongst bramble and nettle scrub. The northwestern side lies some 4m from the edge of the current road. The southeastern side, adjacent to the development, has historically been terraced into and partially cut away. The breached section showed that the natural slately mudstone bedrock has been preserved beneath the bank as an upstanding ridge, having been preserved from the effects of erosion or terracing that have apparently resulted in the lowering of the upper surface of the natural bedrock to either side of the bank.</p> <p>Immediately on top of the bedrock beneath the centre of the bank was a 1.3m wide and 0.19m thick preserved soil horizon predating the banks construction (304). Due to heavy root disturbance no soil samples were taken. On the surface of this buried soil was a 1m wide and 0.20m thick dump of clean redeposited slate (303) which appears to be the original core of the bank. The body of the bank above this material was composed of a homogenous dump of soil containing frequent small slate fragments (302), revetted on the northwestern side by a dry stone wall of dark grey pitched mudstone (305). This had been much disturbed historically, and survived only intermittently. It was partially covered by a</p>		

deposit of core material that had eroded from higher up the northwestern side of the bank (301).

It appeared from the limited exposure available for investigation that the wall may have been footed in the original ditch at the foot of the bank, although this could not be established with certainty.

The strip between the northwestern side of the bank and the edge of the current road surface showed a continuation of the modern topsoil and leafmould that covered the bank, and no earlier road surfaces nor the outer edge of the ditch were seen.

Conclusion:

No features, deposits or dating evidence were found to indicate archaeological activity within the area of the development. The raised area, as identified during a site visit in 1974, was a portion of surviving land, terraced by buildings to the north-east and south-east and an access road to Nightingale Cottage to the south-west.

The bank appeared to be of simple construction and had clearly not been subject to extensive alteration or remodelling; although no finds were recovered, it is felt by this recorder that construction of the bank is very unlikely to predate the medieval layout of the village.

Recorder:
MFR Steinmetzer & P. Pearce (Exeter Archaeology)

Date sent to HER:



Fig. 1 Location of trenches. Scale 1:1250.

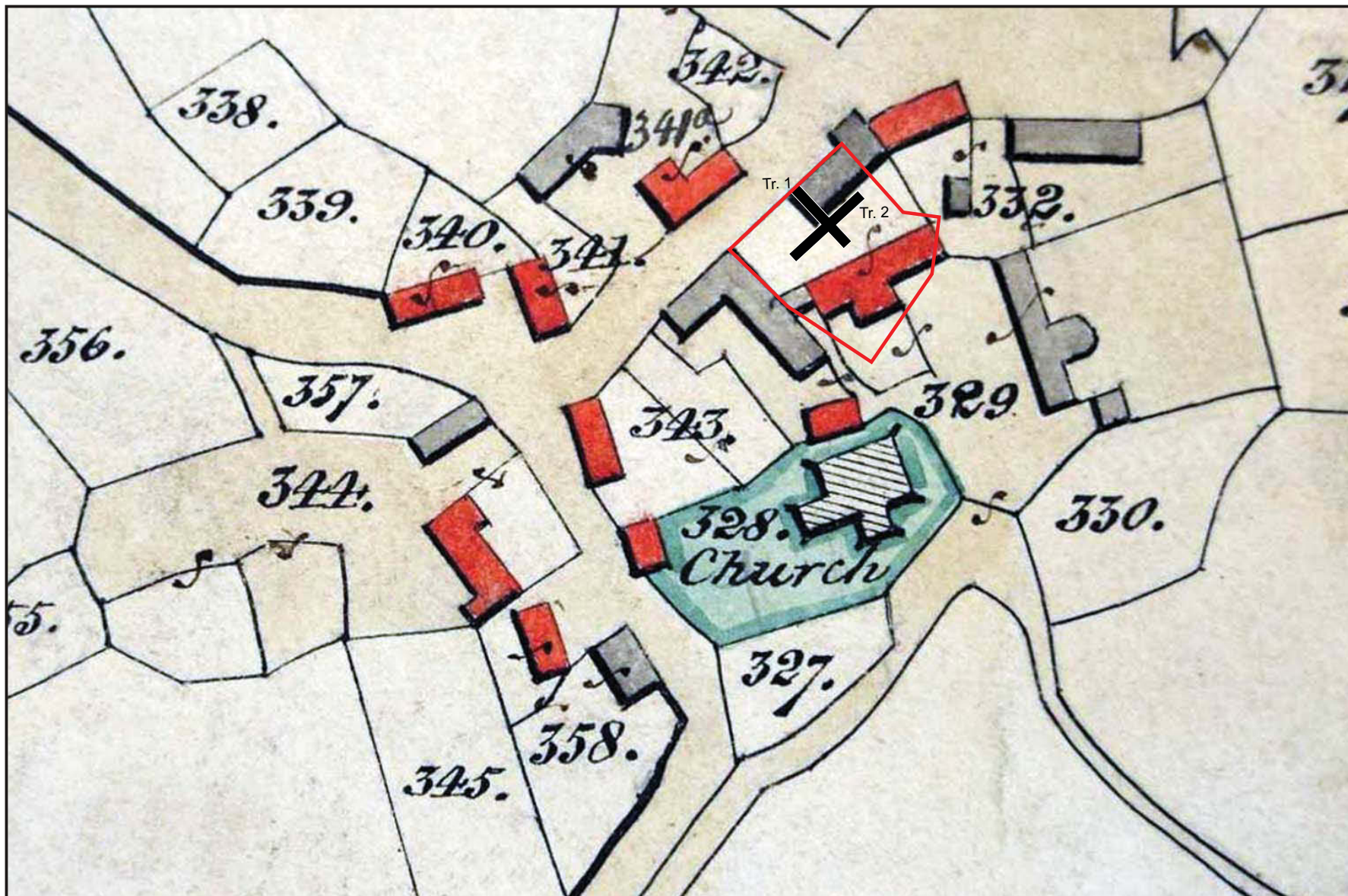


Fig. 2 The area in 1842. Germansweek parish tithe map, enlarged to 1:1000.

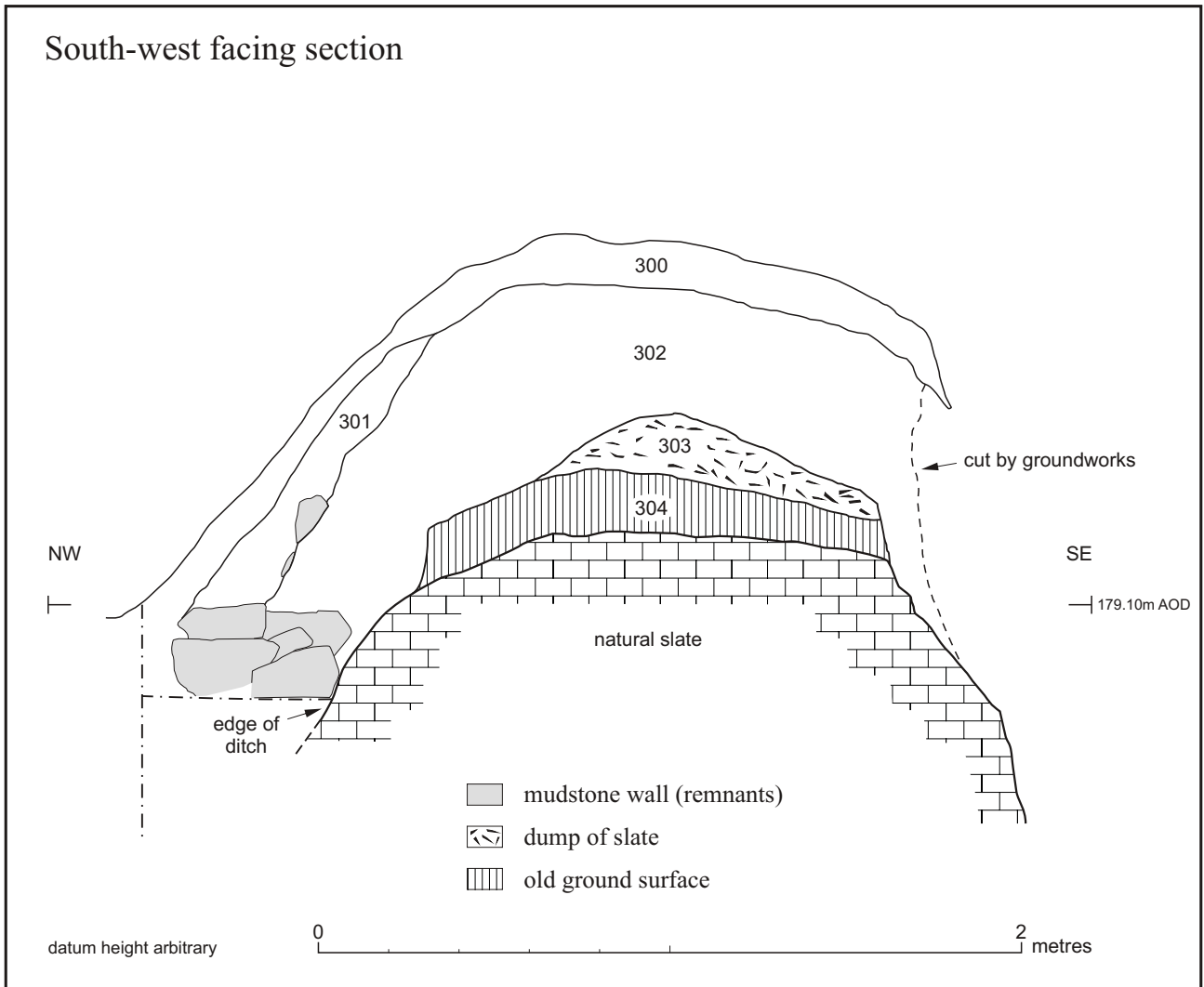


Fig. 3 South-west facing section through hedgebank.