

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING  
AT PRIORY COTTAGE, SNAPPER,  
BARNSTAPLE, DEVON**

**Prepared on behalf of  
Mr Shaun Osborne**

by  
M.F.R. Steinmetzer

**Exeter Archaeology**

**Report No. 09.64**

**Project No. 6282**

**May 2009**

*In February 2008 Exeter Archaeology carried out archaeological monitoring when a new house was built at Priory Cottage, Snapper, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 5873 3416). The cottage lies beside a site preserving considerable earthworks, sometimes claimed to be the remains of a former monastery but was in fact of secular character; its partially demolished stone gatehouse, dating to between the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century, still stands. The earthworks probably mark the remains of a demolished manor house.*

*The remains of one of the earthworks, disturbed by the construction of the new house, were recorded; it was probably of early post-medieval date. A walkover survey of the field immediately to the west was also carried out. A single fragment of 15<sup>th</sup>-, 16<sup>th</sup>- or 17<sup>th</sup>-century earthenware tile from the ridge of a slate roof was the only find.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Archaeological monitoring was carried out by Exeter Archaeology (EA) at Priory Cottage, Snapper, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 5873 3416), in February 2008. The work was required by North Devon District Council as part of a condition attached to the grant of planning permission (planning ref. 45478).

### 1.1 The site

The site lies to the west of Goodleigh (Fig. 1), on high ground between 40m and 56m AOD overlooking the River Yeo. The geology of the area is natural bedrock of yellow-grey shale, mudstone and siltstone of the Denhigh 1 series.

### 1.2 Archaeological and historical background

The site lies immediately to the east of a now demolished manor house (Yeotown House), mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086. A linear earthwork bank extends eastwards from the former manor house and has been truncated by existing groundworks associated with the development.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tithe Map (c. 1840) shows Priory Cottage and another structure, possibly a stable block.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The project was undertaken in accordance with a method statement prepared by Exeter Archaeology (2008), submitted to and approved by the Devon County Historic Environment Service prior to commencement on site. This is included as Appendix 1.

Most of the groundworks associated with the development had previously been undertaken, so the work comprised the cleaning and recording of exposed sections, which included a partial section through the earthwork. All features and deposits were recorded using the standard EA recording system, comprising context record sheets, sections and plans drawn at 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50, detailed black and white prints, and colour digital photographic records. Registers were maintained for photographs, drawings and context sheets on *pro forma* sheets. Finds and samples were labelled and bagged on site and taken to the EA offices for processing and cataloguing.

A walkover survey of the earthworks in the field to the west of the development was also undertaken. All visible earthworks within the site were identified and recorded on EA *pro forma* survey sheets. Features were allocated a survey number, measured and described. The features were plotted onto a base map at a scale of 1:1000.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 The watching brief (Fig. 2)

Two areas, shown on the relevant detailed plan and included as Fig. 2, had been stripped prior to archaeological attendance on site. Area 1 was located immediately to the east of the cottage and was approximately 12 x 10m, while Area 2 was located behind the old stable block and measured 13 x 4m. Detailed context descriptions are given in Appendix 2.

Inspection of the area to the east of the demolished Priory Cottage showed no evidence of archaeological features. This exposed a 0.8m thick layer of modern made ground. This was overlying a generally uniform layer sequence of topsoil and colluviated subsoil onto weathered natural subsoil. No finds were recovered from the modern infill.

The area behind the converted outbuilding was excavated to the site boundary, and would have involved the removal of some archaeological remains related to the earthwork in the next field. A section was recorded through the earthwork bank, which survived to a height of 3.1m. This consisted of material removed during the construction of the building terrace to form an artificial southeastern boundary. No finds were recovered from the fills.

#### 3.2 The walk-over survey (Fig. 2)

A small number of earthworks were observed in the field adjacent to the development. These included two earth banks; terracing and revetting; the remains of a stone gatehouse and road leading away to the west; several possible tracks and a probable quarry to the immediate south.

##### 1. *Building terrace*

This large terrace was cut into the hillside; it covered a semi-circular area c. 112m long and 60m wide. This was revetted along the north edge by a stone wall with buttresses at regular intervals, and which survived in places to a maximum height of 1.2m. The sides were heavily weathered along the southwest and southern edges, with the southeast edge consisting of an earthwork bank (2). The base of the terrace showed signs of erosion leading away from the centre to the northeast. The main access would presumably have been via a gatehouse (6) located at the northwest edge, with a road (7) leading away to the west and which was traced for approximately 200m. Two smaller trackways (4) and (5) may have provided access to the southeast and southwest. A smaller, secondary, building terrace may have been located in the southern corner near track (5).

##### 2. *Linear bank*

This linear bank extended 20m southwest from the edge of the site. This was completely removed by the current development within the construction area. The bank was up to 11m wide with a maximum height of 3.1m. It had a gradual northwest

face and sloped away very gently at the back. The bank appeared to merge with earthwork (3).

### **3. *Linear bank***

This linear bank extended 10m northwest from the edge of the site. This was not visible as an earthwork in the development site. The bank was 4m wide with a maximum height of 0.7m. It had a relatively gentle southwest and northeast face. The bank appeared to merge with earthwork (2).

### **4. *Track***

Remains of a possible trackway leading towards the southeast corner of the building platform. This is approximately 2m wide, and was not visible as an earthwork in the development side.

### **5. *Track***

Remains of a possible trackway leading towards the southwest corner of the building terrace. This is approximately 4m wide and may be a continuation of an existing track.

### **6. *Gatehouse***

This consisted of the remnants of a four-centred archway and the possible remains of a flanking tower. The remains consisted of one jamb of a four-centred arch, and although overgrown with vegetation, the remains of a parapet. The stonework was of good quality and was bonded with lime mortar. This type of arch was in use between the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century; a gateway of this size would not have been used for a farm and indicates the presence of a fairly affluent country house on the site. The pile of rubble to the north of the surviving upright is unlikely to be the return of the arch, as it is considered to be too far away, but could possibly be the remains of a flanking tower or stair turret.

### **7. *Road***

The road leading away to the west from the gatehouse has been terraced into the hillside. It is *c.* 8m wide and was traced for *c.* 200m.

### **8. *Quarry***

This was a square depression 32m long, 30m wide and up to 3.5m deep. The feature had been cut into the hillside, had no obvious function, and appeared to be a hollow left by slate quarrying.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

It is likely from observations made during the survey that the majority of the earthworks and surviving structures are associated with a manor, part of which was built between the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Although no archaeological deposits or artefacts were found in Area 1, it is likely that groundworks removed at least part of the earthwork bank located immediately to the west of the outbuilding in Area 2.

## SITE ARCHIVE

The site records have been compiled into a fully integrated site archive which is currently held at Exeter Archaeology's offices under project number 6282, pending deposition at Barnstaple Museum (NDDMS 2007.80). Details of the monitoring, including a pdf copy of this report have been submitted to the on-line archaeological database OASIS (exeterar1-58773).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was commissioned by Shaun Osborne. We would like to thank Steve Reed (DCHES) his help and assistance during the work. The project was administered by John Allan (EA) and the fieldwork carried out by Marc Steinmetzer. The illustrations for the report were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore.

METHOD STATEMENT FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RECORDING AT PRIORY COTTAGE, SNAPPER,  
BARNSTAPLE, DEVON

*Prepared by Exeter Archaeology  
for  
Mr Shaun Osborne*

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 This document has been produced by Exeter Archaeology (EA) for Mr Shaun Osborne, to describe the methodology to be used for archaeological recording at Priory Cottage, Snapper, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 5873 3416). This document represents the 'Written Scheme of Investigation' for archaeological work required under condition 6 attached to the grant of planning permission (planning ref: 43808) for the construction of a single dwelling. The work is required by the local planning authority (North Devon District Council), as advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES).

1.2 The site of the development lies to the east of a now demolished manor house (Yeotown House), mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. A linear earthwork bank extends eastwards from the former manor house and has been cut by groundworks associated with the development.

2. AIM

2.1 The principal aim of the work will be to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits surviving on the site, present in exposed sections and those that may be revealed during any future groundworks.

3. METHOD

3.1 The work will be undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by DCHES (Reed 2007).

3.2 Most of the groundworks associated with the development have been previously undertaken, so the work will mainly comprise cleaning, recording and investigating all currently exposed section faces. This will be with particular reference to the linear earthwork cut by previous groundworks. If a section of this earthwork is exposed, then its alignment and extent will be plotted in the fields to the west of the site at a scale of 1:1000.

3.3 Any outstanding groundworks associated with the development will also be undertaken with an EA archaeologist in attendance. If further machining is to be carried out then this will be done using a 360° tracked excavator (or equivalent wheeled mechanical excavator) equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Machining will cease if intact archaeological deposits are exposed. If no such deposits are present then, once natural subsoil has been confirmed, or the formation level reached, across the whole of the development area, archaeological monitoring will be terminated. Similarly, if it can be demonstrated that there has been significant modern truncation, then archaeological monitoring will be terminated in these areas.

3.4 Any exposed features or deposits present will be cleaned and investigated by EA staff to determine their extent and character. If archaeological features are present, then hand-excavation will normally comprise:

- The full excavation of small discrete features;
- half-sectioning (50% excavation) of larger discrete features; and,

- long linear features will be excavated to sample 10-20% of their length - with hand-investigations distributed along the exposed length of any such features, specifically targeting any intersections, terminals or overlaps.

#### *General project methods*

- 3.5 The project will be organised so that specialist consultants who might be required to conserve artefacts or report on other aspects of the investigations can be called upon (see below).
- 3.6 Health and Safety requirements will be observed at all times by any archaeological staff working on site, particularly when machinery is operating nearby. As a minimum, reflective jacket, safety helmets and protective footwear will be worn.
- 3.7 As appropriate, the Exeter Archaeology Scientific Officer will assess deposits on site to determine the possible yield (if any) of environmental or microfaunal evidence, and its potential for radiocarbon dating. If deposits of potential survive, then these would be sampled using the EH Guidelines for Environmental Archaeology (EH CfA Guidelines no. 2002/1).
- 3.8 Initial cleaning, conservation, packaging and any stabilisation or longer term conservation measures will be undertaken in accordance with relevant professional guidance (including *Conservation guidelines No 1* (UKIC, 2001) and *First Aid for Finds* (UKIC & RESCUE, 1997).
- 3.9 Any human burial remains or cremations will initially be left *in situ*. If their removal is unavoidable, then these will then be fully excavated and taken from the site subject to compliance with the relevant Ministry of Justice regulations. Any remains will be excavated in accordance with *Institute of Field Archaeologist Technical Paper No. 13* (McKinley and Roberts 1993). Where appropriate bulk samples will be collected.
- 3.10 Should gold or silver artefacts be exposed, these will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act 1996. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft.
- 3.11 The project will be monitored by DCHES, who will be given reasonable notice of commencement of the fieldwork and will be informed of the progress of the work and may wish to inspect the excavations.

#### 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

- 4.1 Standard Exeter Archaeology recording and sampling procedures will be employed, consisting of:
- Standardised single context record sheets; survey drawings, plans and sections at scales of 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate;
  - black and white print and colour digital photography;
  - survey and location of finds, deposits or archaeological features, using EDM surveying equipment and software where appropriate; and,
  - labelling and bagging of finds on site from all excavated levels; post-1800 unstratified pottery may be discarded on site with a small sample retained for dating evidence as required.

#### 5. REPORTING AND ARCHIVING

- 5.1 A report setting out the results of the work will be prepared on completion. The requirements will be confirmed with the DCHES, but in the event that little or no archaeological remains are exposed, only minimal reporting would be required, in the form of a short entry to the Devon County Historic Environment Record (HER), sent to the DCHES. If more significant archaeological deposits or remains are exposed during the course of the watching brief, then more detailed reporting would be required, in the form of an illustrated summary report and, if merited, wider publication.

- 5.2 Should a summary report be required it will contain the following elements as appropriate:
- a location plan;
  - a written description of the exposed remains and a discussion and interpretation of their character and significance in the context of any locally available historical evidence;
  - plans and sections at appropriate scales showing the exact location of exposed archaeological deposits; and,
  - specialist reports as appropriate.
- 5.3 Copies of the report will be produced for distribution to the Client and the local planning authority, and will also be deposited with the site archive. Hard copies and a digital copy of the report will be supplied to the DCHES. The condition placed upon this development will not be regarded as discharged until the report has been produced and submitted to the LPA.
- 5.4 A fully integrated site archive will be prepared with reference to *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991 2nd edition) upon completion of the project. This will be incorporated with the archive generated by any subsequent mitigation work and deposited with the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon in consultation with the Curator of Antiquities, in accordance with a timescale agreed with the Curator and with DCHES. The museum accession number for the work is NDDMS 2007.80.
- 5.5 Details of the project will be submitted to the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological investigationS) database.
- 5.6 Should particularly significant remains, finds and/or deposits be encountered, then these, because of their importance, are likely to merit wider publication in line with government planning guidance. If such remains are encountered, the publication requirements – including any further analysis that may be necessary – will be confirmed with the DCHES, in consultation with the client. On behalf of the client, Exeter Archaeology will then implement publication in accordance with a timescale agreed with the above parties.
6. PROJECT ORGANISATION
- 6.1 The project will be undertaken by a suitably experienced and qualified EA archaeologist. It will be co-ordinated by John Valentin BSc MIFA, EA Project Manager.
- Health & Safety*
- 6.2 Exeter Archaeology operations are subject to Health and Safety policies prepared by Exeter City Council which include all aspects of work covered by the *Health and Safety at Work Act* (1974). All monitoring works within this scheme will be carried out in accordance with current *Safe Working Practices*.
7. SPECIALIST CONTRIBUTORS AND ADVISORS
- The expertise of the following specialists can be called upon if required:
- Dating techniques* Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre; Alex Bayliss (EH);  
*Environmental data*: Vanessa Straker (English Heritage) University of Bristol;  
*Faunal remains*: L. Higbee (Taunton);  
*Finds conservation*: Alison Hopper-Bishop (Exeter Museums);  
*Human remains*: Louise Loe (Oxford Archaeology);  
*Medieval and post-medieval finds*: John Allan (Exeter Archaeology) and sub-consultants;  
*Metallurgy*: Ancient Monuments Laboratory (English Heritage), Gill Juleff (Exeter University);  
*Molluscan analysis*: Marine-Janice Light (Godalming); Terrestrial- Dr. M. Allen (AEA, Wiltshire);  
*Numismatics*: Norman Shiel (Exeter);  
*Petrology/geology*: Dr R. Scrivener (British Geological Survey);  
*Plant remains*: Julie Jones (Bristol);  
*Pollen*: Dr R. Scaife (University of Southampton);  
*Prehistoric pottery*: Henrietta Quinnell (Exeter);



*Radiocarbon dating:* University of Waikato, New Zealand: Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre, East Kilbride

*Roman finds:* Paul Bidwell & associates (Arbeia Roman Fort, South Shields)' Dr Mark Corney (freelance).

*Soil Science:* Dr. M. Allen (AEA, Wiltshire).

8. REFERENCES

Reed, S., 2007, *Brief for archaeological recording: Priory Cottage, Snapper, Barnstaple*. Unpublished DCHES document.

APPENDIX 2:  
CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Depth (b.g.s.)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
100	0.3-0.8m	Modern made ground	Modern made ground
101	0-0.3m	Mid to dark brown loamy clay Shale frags (5%)	Topsoil
102	0.8-1.1m	Mid red brown silty clay Shale frags (5%)	Subsoil
103	1.1-1.4m	Light to mid yellow brown silty clay Shale frags (5%)	Colluvium
104	1.4/2.5+	Shale bedrock	Natural subsoil
105	1.7-2.5m	Light red brown silty clay shale frags (30-35%)	Bank material
106	1.2-1.8m	Light yellow brown silty clay Shale frags (15-20%)	Bank material
107	0.9-1.3m	Light to mid yellow brown silty clay Shale frags (35-40%)	Bank material
108	0.3-0.9m	Mid red brown silty clay Shale frags (15-20%)	Bank material
109	1.8-2.6m	Mid red brown silty clay Shale frags (15-20%)	Bank material
110	1.2-1.9m	Light yellow brown silty clay Shale frags (60-65%)	Bank material
111	0.3-1.1m	Light to mid brown red silty clay Shale frags (55-60%)	Bank material
112	0.3-1.3m	Mid red brown silty clay Shale frags (25-30%)	Bank material

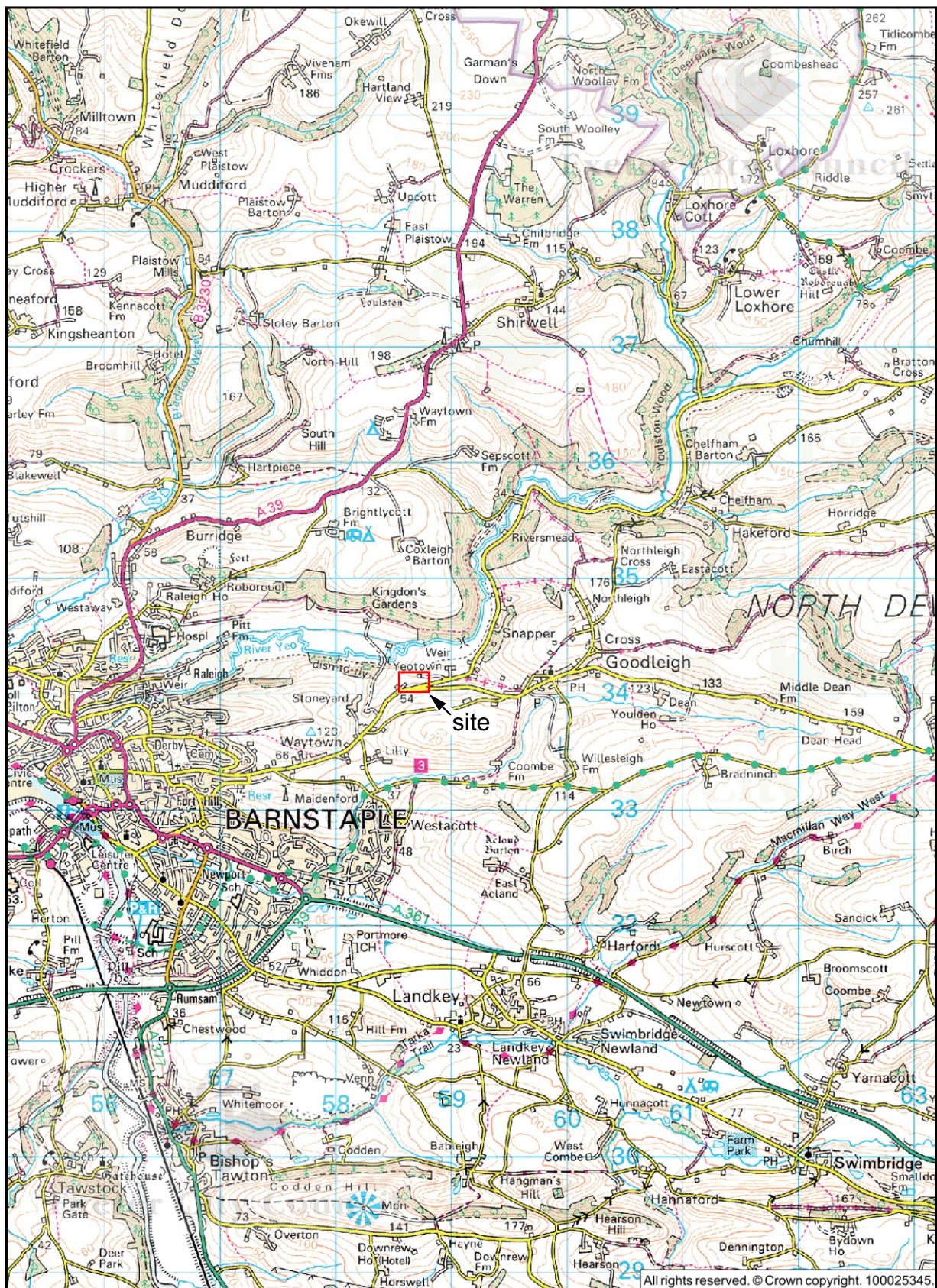


Fig. 1 Location of site.

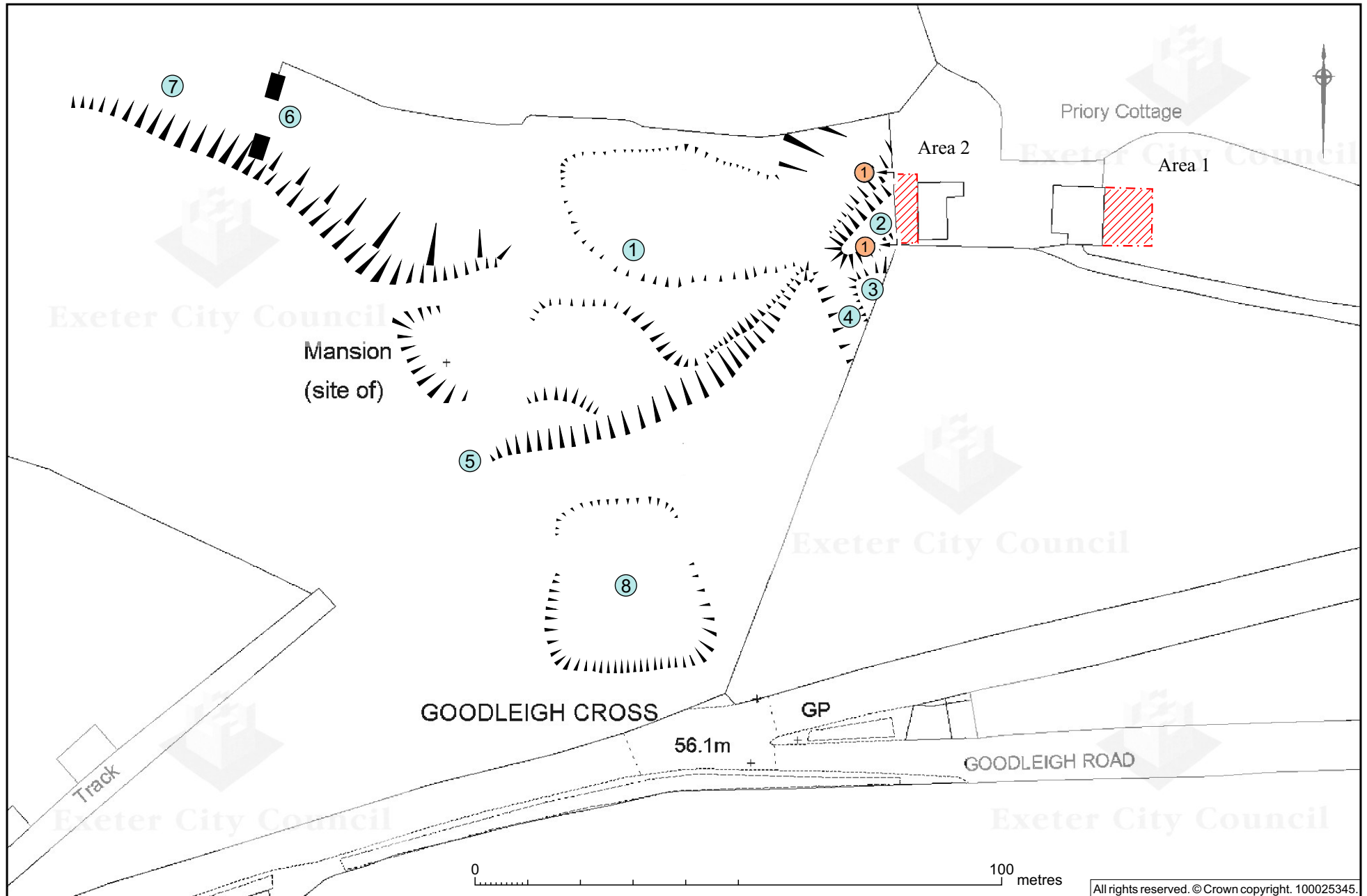


Fig. 2 Location of archaeological observation (shaded) and earthwork walk-over survey.

Section

1

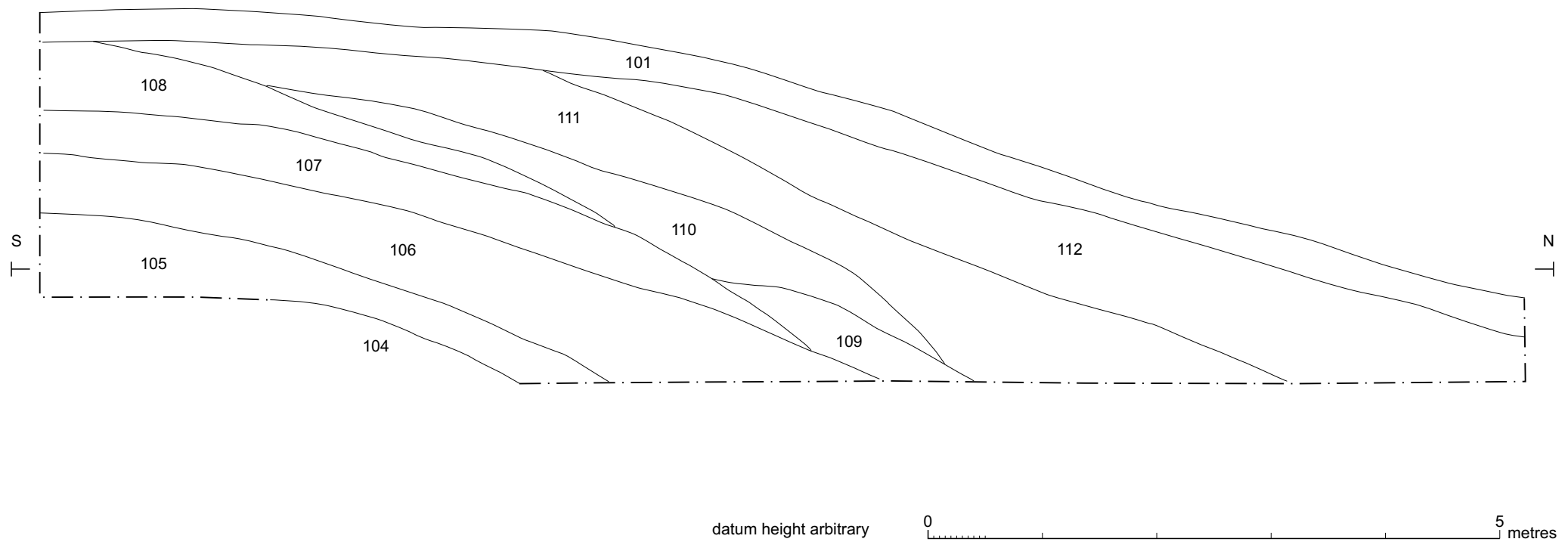
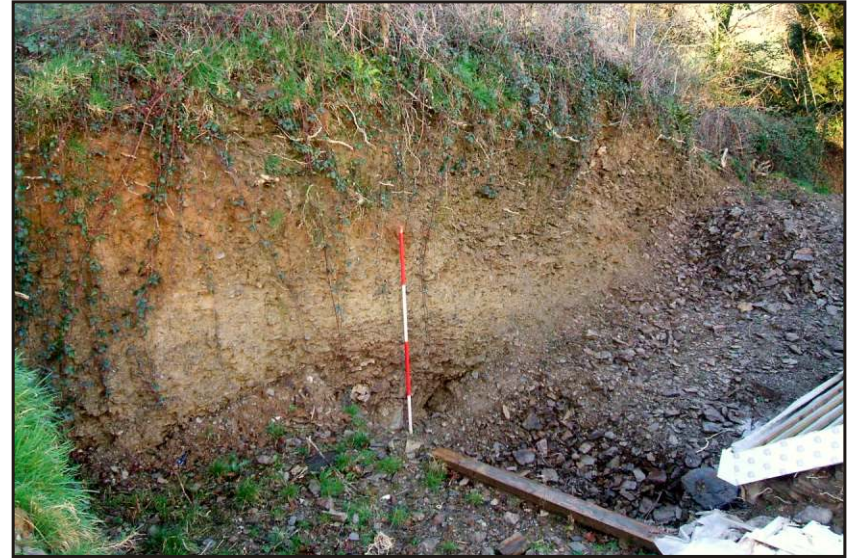


Fig. 3 Section through earthwork bank. Scale 1:50.



Pl.1 General view of earthwork. Looking north-east.



Pl. 2 Section through earth bank. Looking north-west. Scale 2m.



Pl. 3 General view of gatehouse remains. Looking north-west.



Pl. 4 General view of remains of gatehouse front. Looking south-east.



Pl. 5 Close-up of inside of four-centred arch. Looking north-west.



Pl. 6 General view of stone retaining wall at the front of building terrace. Looking north-west.