

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF AT BRIONY,  
BRATTON CLOVELLY, DEVON**

**by  
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**Exeter Archaeology**

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## SUMMARY

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a new house at Briony, Bratton Clovelly, Devon (NGR SX 4644 9181) in May and June 2007.*

*The monitoring identified only later post-medieval activity on the site. This was represented by the infilling of a natural gulley possibly contemporary with the construction of a house in the 17th or 18th century of which some elements of the foundations were recorded. Cartographic evidence has demonstrated that this house was demolished between 1845 and 1885. Further remains of this house were reported on in an earlier watching brief of an adjacent area to the south (see Passmore 2007 EA 07.03).*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by M. Claydon and presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) during groundworks associated with the construction of a new house at Briony, Bratton Clovelly, Devon (NGR SX 4644 9181) in May and June 2007. The work was required by West Devon Borough Council as a condition of planning permission (ref. 9782/2006/OKE), as advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES). An OASIS entry Ref No. 61631 was created

### 1.1 The site (Fig. 1)

Bratton Clovelly is situated to the west of Okehampton on a hilltop location at a height of approximately 175m AOD. To the east of the village the land drops away steeply to a tributary of the River Thrushel. The geology of the area is carboniferous shale of the Crackington Formation (Institute of Geological Sciences 1974), overlain by typical brown earths of the Frilsham association (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

The site is located in the centre of the village, 90m to the north-east of the church. It is bounded to the north by a house and garden, and to the west by a road. A new development is being constructed immediately to the south. An archaeological evaluation carried out on the plot, 'The Garden', identified the remains of a post-medieval building (Passmore 2007).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The parish of Bratton Clovelly is large and has a Saxon charter dating to *c.* AD 1050. Within the parish there is at least one Domesday manor, and the church has a Norman font. The church itself is of 14th-century date (Hoskins 1972, 345).

In 1845, when the parish tithe map and apportionment were prepared, the site was primarily a garden. A house, aligned at right angles to the road through the village, just encroached on the development area on the southern side (Fig. 4). The plots were owned by Thomas Shopland, and the house and garden were occupied by William Gay and Humphrey Small. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (Fig. 5) shows that this house had been demolished and replaced by a new structure. Part of the eastern walls to the earlier building may have been retained as boundary features around a small garden plot. A small structure had been constructed to the east of this plot. These buildings had been demolished by 1905.

Archaeological monitoring during groundworks for the construction of a new house on land adjoining the site to the south (see Fig. 2) exposed the remains of a building of probable 17th- or 18th-century date (Passmore 2007). This had been built with within a deliberately cut terrace.

## 3. METHOD

The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits within the area affected by the development. The work was undertaken in accordance with a method statement prepared by EA (Valentin 2006) and approved by DCHES prior to commencement on site. Monitoring was carried out during excavation of the foundation trenches.

The standard EA recording procedures were employed, including the preparation of a site plan at 1:100, accompanied by daily watching brief record sheets and standardised single context sheets. These were

supplemented by a photographic record comprising black and white prints and digital media. Pre-1800 finds were collected, with a sample of later pottery retained for the dating of selected contexts.

The foundation trenches were excavated by a mechanical digger. The soft deposits encountered within the northern half of the site meant that the trenches were up to 2.4m deep. Recording within this area was therefore limited due to health and safety considerations.

#### 4. RESULTS

Bedrock (natural) comprised fractured shale with occasional bands of yellow clay. The topsoil (100) had been removed prior to monitoring.

A large east-west aligned gully (104) extended across the northern half of the site (Figs 2, 3). This was up to 2.4m deep, at least 10.3m long, 5m wide, with a gently sloping southern edge. The northern edge of the feature was outside the limits of excavation. The lower fill was a clean yellowish-brown clays (118). The upper fills (103) were bands of more mixed mid yellowish brown silty clays, sometimes with frequent shale; this material produced 11 sherds of post-medieval pottery (see section 5 below). A posthole (102) had been dug through fill 103 at the north-west end of the site (Fig.2). This was 0.5m deep and 0.2m wide. No dating material was recovered from the fill (101).

Two sections of wall (115, 117) and a probable drain (116) were exposed, close to the southern edge of feature 104 (Fig. 2; Plate 2). Wall 115 was aligned NE-SW and constructed using faced limestone blocks and a rubble core, bonded with soft lime mortar. At the south-west end it appeared to have been demolished, leaving only a 1.7m surviving length. The northern end was faced, and appeared to form the southern edge to drain 116. Drain 116 was lined with slate, measured 0.4m in width, and appeared to be contemporary with walls 115 and 117. Wall 117 was aligned NW-SE and formed the north-eastern edge of drain 116. It was bonded with hard lime mortar, with a facework of rectangular limestone blocks and a rubble core.

Several features were exposed on what would have been the former line of wall 115. The earliest was a steep-sided, U-shaped feature (113), 0.4m wide and 0.25m deep, which had been dug through the shale bedrock. It was filled with a pale brownish grey silty clay (112) containing no datable finds. A mid yellowish brown silty clay (110), containing demolition debris including lime mortar, was exposed to the south-west of the remains of wall 115 (Plates 3, 4). This directly overlay both the shale bedrock and feature 113, and is thought to represent the backfill of the construction trench (119) for wall 115. Layer 110 had been cut by a broad feature with a gently sloping eastern edge (120). This contained a mid greyish brown silty clay (114: Plate 4). Two pieces of slate (111) at the base of 120 may represent the remains of a slate surface. To the north-west, a small area of lime mortar and yellow clay (109) also overlay 110, and may represent the remnants of a makeup level for a surface.

A NE-SW aligned stone-lined culvert (106: Plate 3) cut through layers 109 and 110, hence post-dating wall 115. A layer of dark brown silty clay garden soil or levelling deposit (105) sealed deposits across the site.

## 5. FINDS

The following lists the finds, all pottery sherds, from the watching brief. All weights given are in grams (to the nearest 2 grams).

| Context | Ceramic type                                | Date              | No. of sherds | No. of vessels |
|---------|---|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 103     | South Somerset trailed slipware             | Late 17th-century | 1             | 1              |
|         | North Devon gravel-tempered ware            | 16th-19th-century | 8             | 3              |
|         | North Devon gravel-free ware                | post-medieval     | 1             | 1              |
|         | North Devon coarseware                      | post-medieval     | 1             | 1              |
| 105     | North Devon calcareous                      | post-medieval     | 1             | 1              |
|         | North Devon gravel-tempered ware<br>pot rim | 16th-19th-century | 1             | 1              |
|         | North Devon gravel-free ware                | post-medieval     | 6             | 1              |
| 108     | North Devon gravel-tempered ware            | post-medieval)    | 2             | 1              |
| 110     | North Devon gravel-tempered ware            | post-medieval     | 1             | 1              |

Total number of sherds: 22

Minimum number of vessels: 12

## 6. DISCUSSION

It is likely that walls 115 and 117 formed the north-eastern corner of the building marked on the 1845 tithe map, and found during the watching brief of the adjacent plot (Figs. 2 and 5). Wall 115 was demolished to ground level or completely removed, probably in the few decades after 1845, as a map of 1885 shows a garden/yard in this area. Culvert 106 post-dates the demolished building, and probably served the new building to the west, built by 1885.

Feature 113 was only observed in section, and probably represented a small pit of unknown date.

Feature 104 was almost certainly a gully or open ditch. Following some initial silting (layer 118), this gully appears to have been purposefully infilled with material (103) containing post-medieval pottery sherds, this infill possibly deriving from the cutting of a terrace in advance of the construction of the building to the south.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The monitoring identified only later post-medieval activity on the site. This was represented by the infilling of a natural gully this exercise possibly contemporary with the construction of a house in the 17th or 18th century of which some elements of the foundations were recorded. Cartographic evidence has demonstrated that this house was demolished between 1845 and 1885. Further remains of this house were reported on in an earlier watching brief of an adjacent area to the south (see Passmore 2007 EA 07.03).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Mr. M. Claydon, and administered for EA by J. Valentin. The fieldwork was undertaken by the author, who also produced the illustration. The finds were processed by J. Wheeler and J. Allan.

## SOURCES CONSULTED

***Devon Record Office***

Bratton Clovelly Tithe map (1845) and apportionment (1845)

***Printed Sources***

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1:2500 map sheet 75.15, surveyed 1883, published 1885

1:2500 map sheet 75.15, surveyed 1883, revised 1905, published 1906

Passmore, A. 2007. *An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Garden, Bratton Clovelly, Devon* (Exeter Archaeology Report **07.03**)

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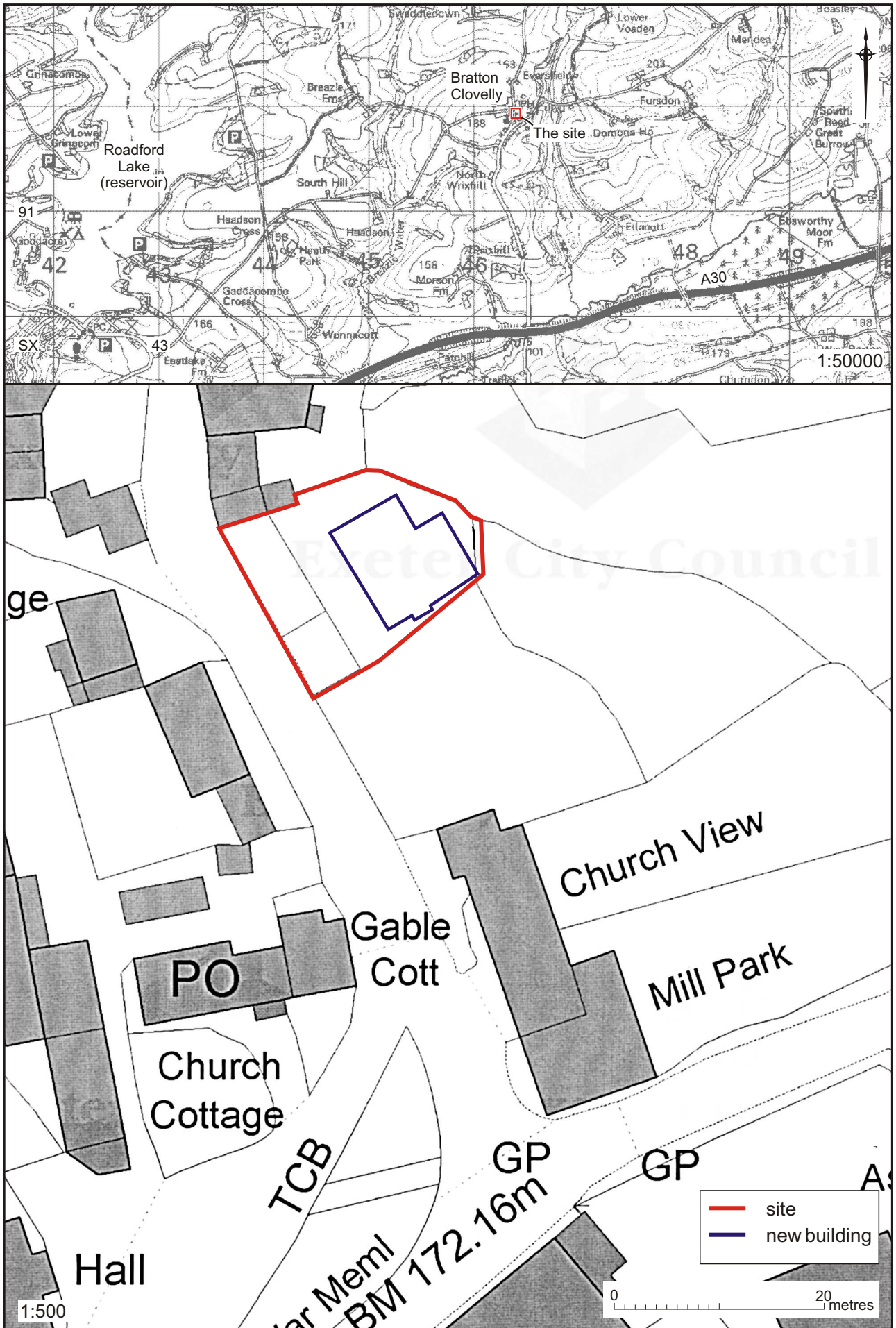


Fig. 1 Location plan. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Exeter City Council 100025458.



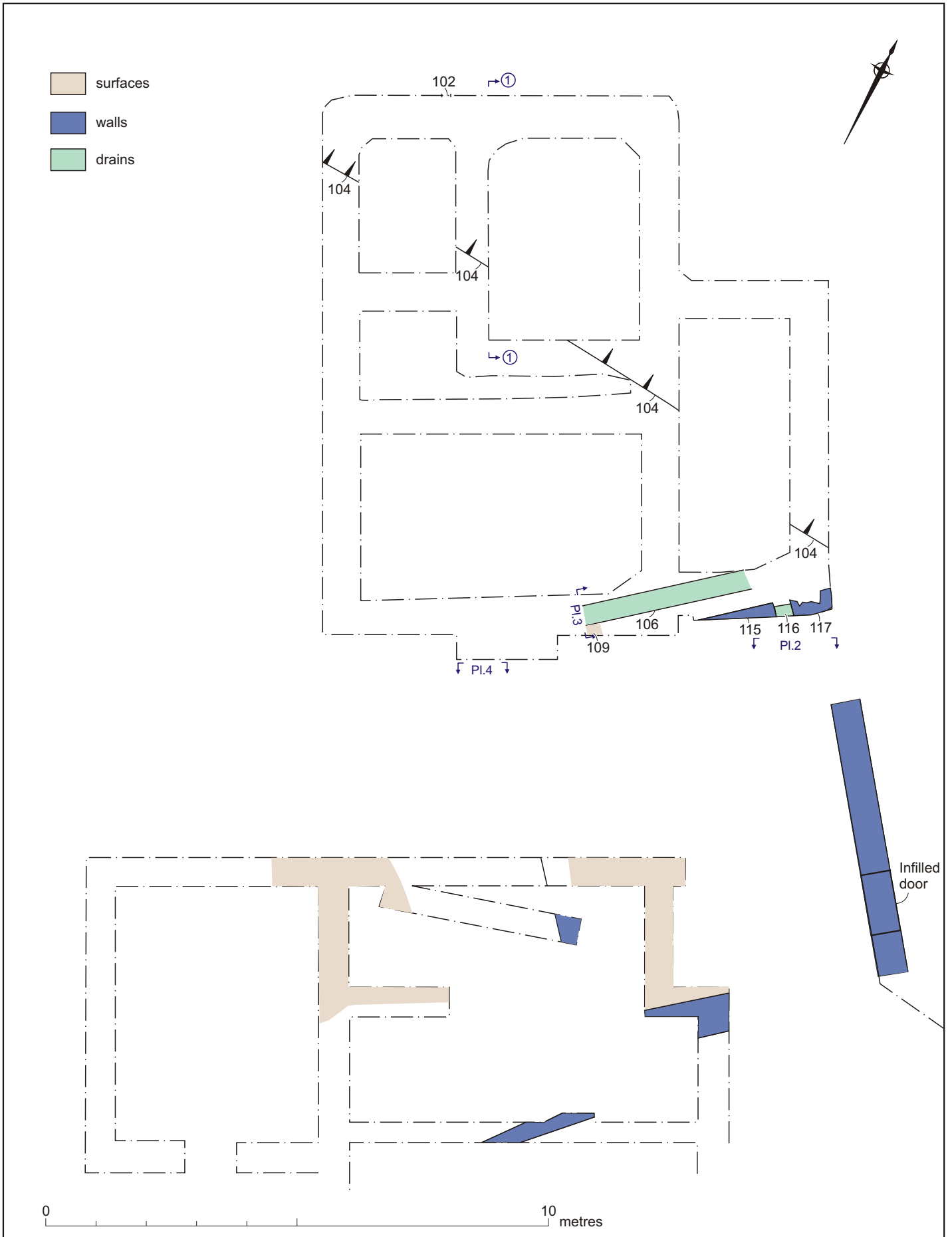
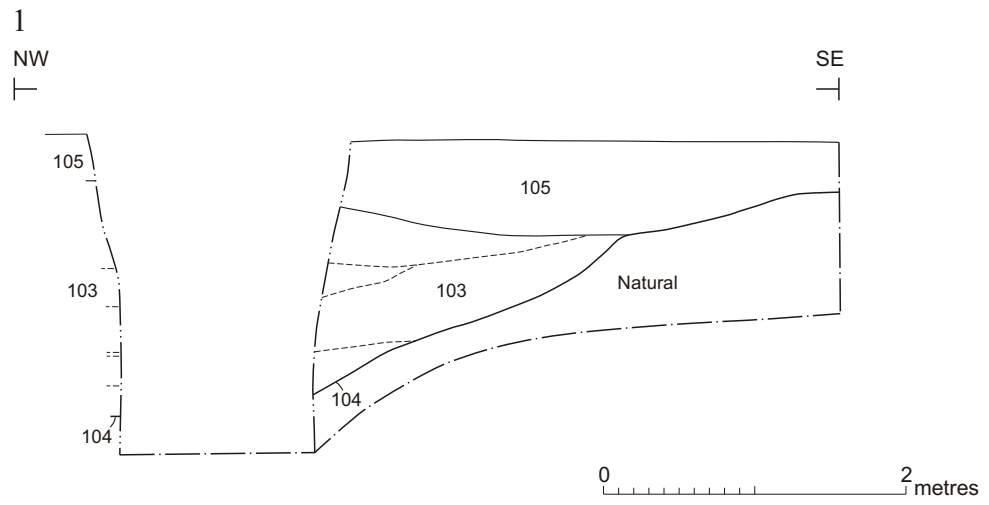


Fig. 2 Trench plan showing features from the watching brief at Briony (top), in relation to the results from the watching brief at The Gardens (Passmore 2007). Scale 1:100.

Section



Pl. 1 Working shot looking northeast. The clayey fills of feature 104 can be seen in the deep foundation trench to the left. Blue line indicates location of Section 1.

Fig. 3 Section 1 (1:50) and Pl.1

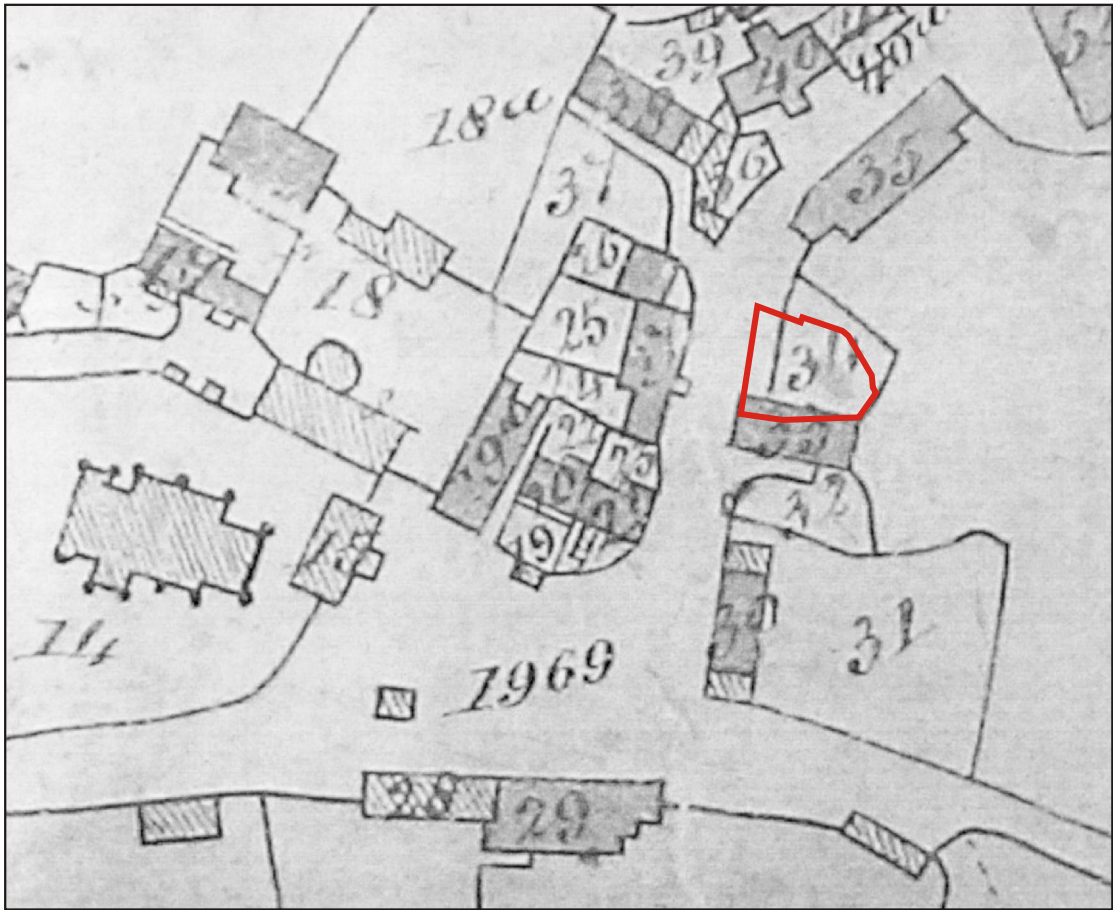


Fig. 4 The site in 1845 (extract from Bratton Clovelly tithe map). Not to scale.

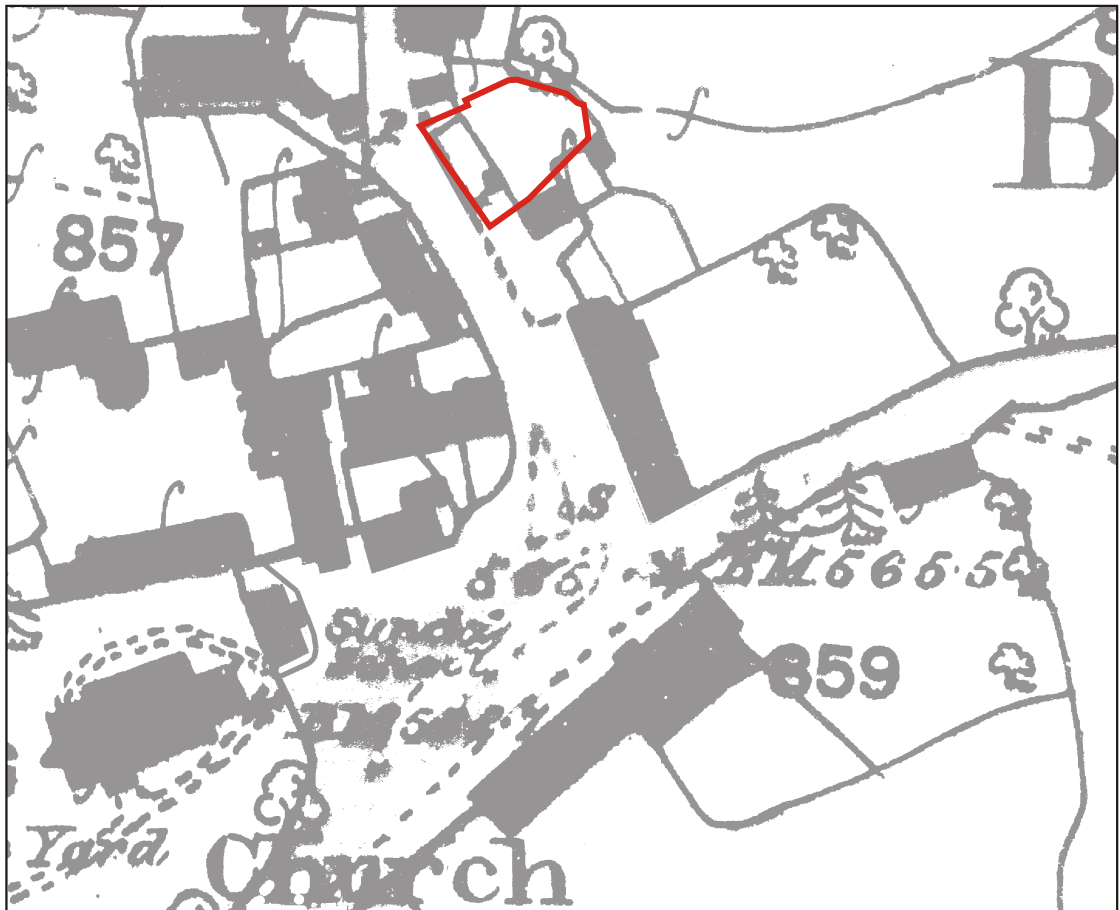


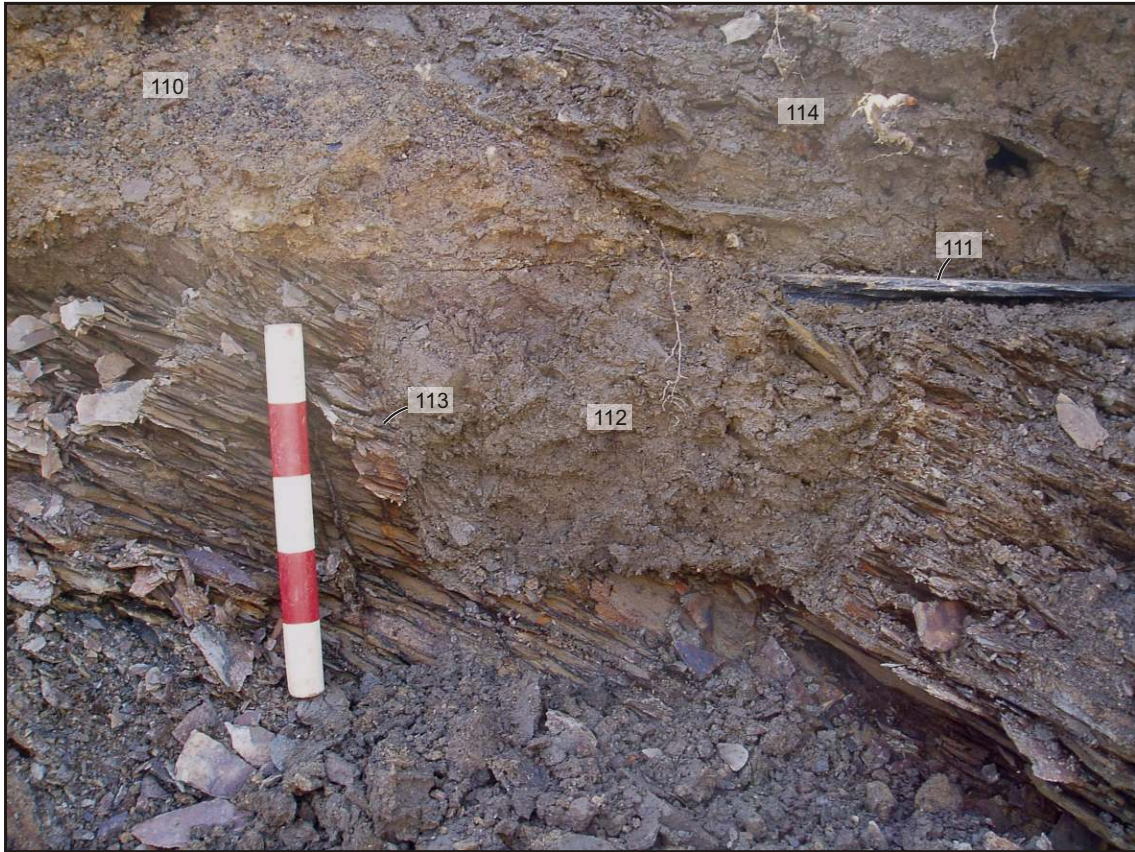
Fig. 5 The site in 1885 (extract from OS sheet 75.15). Not to scale.



Pl. 2 Walls 115 and 117 and possible drain 116 looking southeast (0.5m scale)



Pl. 3 Drain 106 and layer 110 looking northeast (0.5m scale)



Pl. 4 Feature 113, layers 110 and 114 and slate 111, looking southeast (0.5m scale)