

Dartmoor National Park Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Lydford, West Devon	National Grid Reference SX 50911 84776	Number:
Subject: Archaeological recording during provision of a new power supply at Lydford Castle, Lydford, Devon		Photo attached? N
Planning Application no: N/A	Recipient museum: N/A: archive with The National Trust	
OASIS ID: exeterar1-74190	Museum Accession no: N/A	
Contractor's reference number/code: EA 6939 and EA6974	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 9 September 2009 and 08 February 2010 to 12 February 2010	
<p>Description of works.</p> <p>Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during the re-excavation of an existing service trench at Lydford Castle, which was carried out to install new electric and communications cables. This work was preceded by the monitoring of a test pit to locate the existing electric cable. The medieval castle is a Scheduled Monument and most of the service trench lay within the boundary of the monument. The work therefore required Scheduled Monument Consent, which was granted by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, as advised by English Heritage.</p> <p>The trench, with measured 500mm wide by 400m - 500mm deep, was located in a field to the south of the castle keep and connects existing services in the road adjacent to the castle entrance to the water treatment works located in the side of the river valley to the NW of the castle. The SE part of trench was located over the projected course of the (infilled) ditch or moat around the 13th-century castle keep, whilst to the NW the trench skirted the SW edge of the earthwork ditch around the bailey (See Fig. 1).</p> <p>The existing service trench had been backfilled with dark greyish brown soft silty loam (2) containing abundant fragments of natural slate, as well as 20th-century brick, tile and glass, a clay pipe stem and a nail. In the centre of the site, where a footpath crosses the infilled ditch, the service trench had been backfilled with stone rubble. This was overlain by topsoil and turf (1) forming the surface of the field, with the topsoil comprising dark reddish-brown soft silty loam. In the NW half of the trench this topsoil contained abundant gravel, representing the edge of a modern track to the sewage works.</p> <p>In the SE part of the site the existing trench had cut through a layer of mid greyish brown silty loam (3) with abundant small fragments of naturally derived slate, and rare white lime mortar and charcoal flecks. With depth, the density and size of stones increased. At the entrance to the site the top of a layer of flat angular stones set in grey clayey silt (5) was exposed. These stones form part of either a surface associated with a nearby small structure first depicted on the 1884 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (sheet 88.13) or perhaps levelling to consolidate the ground within the entrance to the field. In the NE part of the site the existing trench had been excavated through a layer of light brown silty loam, with abundant small, and rarer larger natural slate fragments (4). The trench and connection pit in the road were excavated through the backfill of existing service trenches, which were exposed below the present road surface and its make-up.</p> <p> Finds were recovered from context 2 – the backfill of the existing service trench, although it is possible that some of these finds may have derived from earlier, stratified contexts (3 and 4) where the new wider trench had cut through these deposits. A total of 24 sherds of pottery were recovered from context 2. A single sherd was from a medieval North Devon coarseware vessel, with the remaining sherds being of 19th- and early 20th-century date.</p> <p>In summary, no early archaeological features were exposed, and only a single sherd of pre-19th-century pottery recovered. The lack of early deposits and finds from within the infilled castle ditch is not surprising given the shallow depth of the trench, and the results of Andrew Saunder's excavation of the ditch on the southeast side of the castle that demonstrated that the ditch was finally levelled in the early 19th century (Saunders, A.D. 1980 Lydford Castle, Devon, Medieval Archaeology 24, 123-186).</p>		
Recorder: A.J. Passmore (Exeter Archaeology)		Date sent to HER:

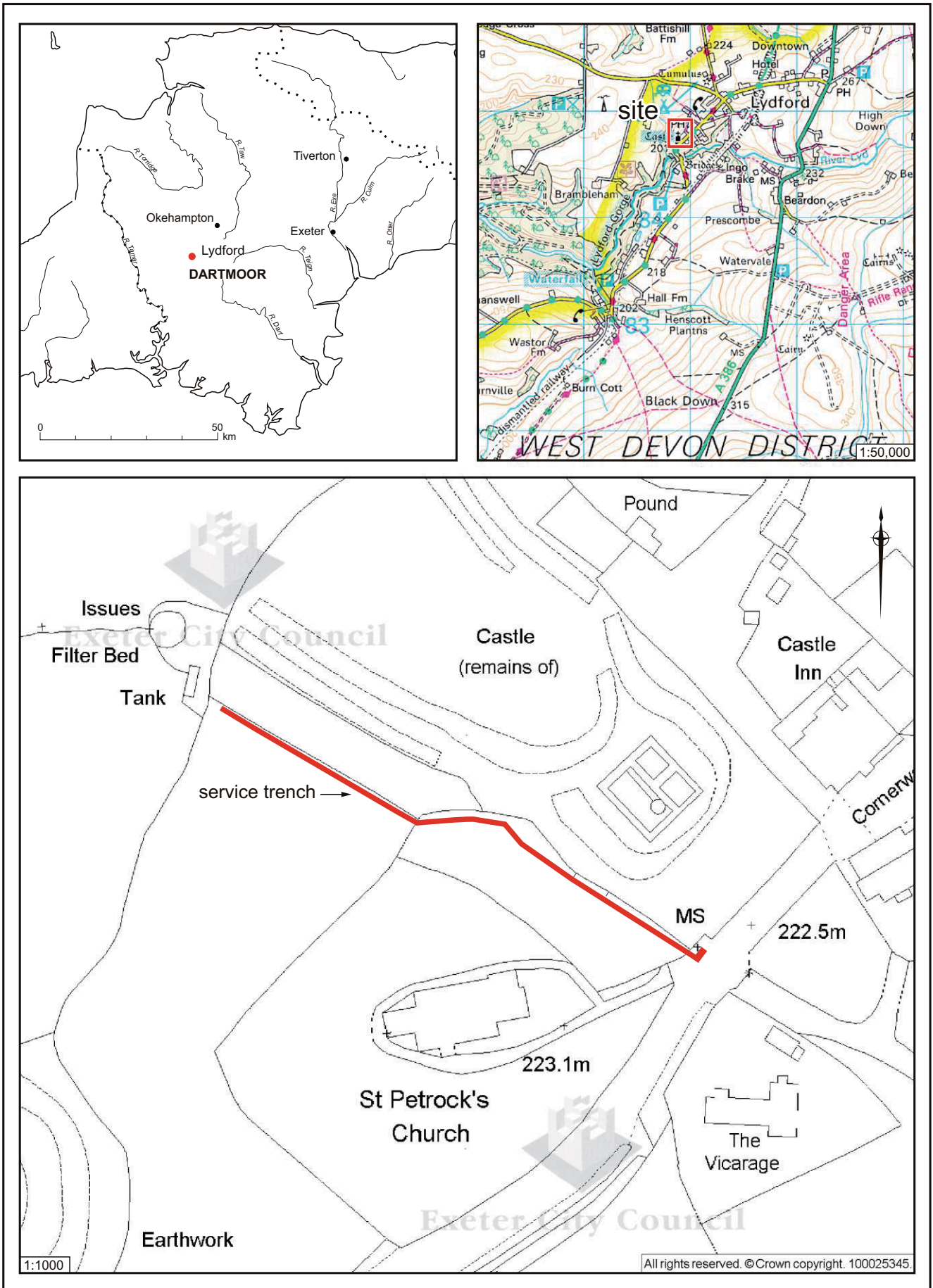


Fig. 1 Trench location plan.