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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

S O U T H W E S T

**Straitgate Farm,  
Ottery St Mary, Devon**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andy Weale**

**Site Code: ST12/190**

**(SY 0684 9585)**

# **Straitgate Farm, Ottery St Mary, Devon**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief For Aggregate Industries**

by Andrew Weale  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code ST012/190

**December 2012**

## Summary

**Site name:** Straitgate Farm, Ottery St Mary, Devon

**Grid reference:** SY 0684 9585

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 26<sup>th</sup> to 27th November 2012

**Project manager:** Andrew Weale

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** STO12/190

**Summary of results:** No archaeological features were encountered nor artefacts recovered.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Devon in due course, with accession code RAMM: 12/91.

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# **Straitgate Farm, Ottery St Mary, Devon An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Andrew Weale

**Report 12/190**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Straitgate Farm, Ottery St Mary EX11 1LG (NGR SY 0684 9585) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Sarah Wiltshire, Estates Surveyor for Aggregate Industries UK Ltd, Marston House, Marston Bigot, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5DU. The site is currently being considered as a preferred site for the extraction of sand and gravel, going forward into the next Devon Mineral Plan. Devon County Council considered it necessary for an archaeologist to be in attendance during the excavation of geotechnical trial holes to monitor and record any exposed archaeological features and recover any artefacts.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the County Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Stephen Reed, Archaeologist of Devon County Councils Historic Environment Team. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale on the 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 and the site code is STO12/190.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton and will be deposited at The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Devon in due course, with accession code RAMM: 12/91.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located to the west of the River Otter and Ottery St Mary and to the south west of the village of Whimble, the western part of the site is adjoining the modern A30. The site consisted of a pasture bounded to the north and east by hedges with fields beyond, to the west by a hedge and the A30 and a tree barrier to the south with a road beyond. The site sloped down from the west towards the Otter valley to the east and lies at c. 160m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is Triassic Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds Formation (BGS 1969). A mixture of sand and gravel with clay patches were observed within each of the test pits.

## **Archaeological background**

The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential with a range of sites and finds within the vicinity. A small collection of unstratified lithics was recovered during a watching brief in advance to the extension of Rockbeare Quarry at Marshbroadmoor Plantation. Excavation undertaken just west of the proposal site revealed Iron Age features including ring gully and post-built structures of middle-late Iron Age in date. The excavation also revealed a pit to the west of the B3180 containing early Neolithic pottery, flaked stone and charred cereals. A ring ditch with an adjacent circular enclosure is located to the east of the site. Elsewhere six Bronze Age rapiers were found near Larkbeare House, Talaton and an earthwork dyke within Castle Copse is possibly associated with an Iron Age fort. Finally, the section of Roman road which runs between Exeter to Honiton passes 80m to the north-west of the site.

An archaeological risk appraisal desk-top assessment (SLR 2011) has noted that the area under consideration contains evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of find spots of flint tools as well as an undated, although thought to be prehistoric, the boundary which extends for 6km through the landscape (SLR 2011). Straitgate Farm a grade II list building is located within the site. The name of this farm is significant, as *-gate* is thought to mean *gap*, and *straight-* is thought to mean *straet* the name for a metalled (Roman) road in Anglo-Saxon English (SLR 2011).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. The potential and significance of any such deposits located was to be assessed according to the research priorities such as set out in *English Heritage Research Agenda* (English Heritage 2005) or any more local or thematic research priorities such as identified in the *South West Archaeology Research Framework* (Webster 2007).

Topsoil, and any other overburden was to be removed by a 360<sup>0</sup> tracked machine. A toothless ditching bucket was used to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains were exposed, the site archaeologist was to investigate, record and sample such deposits. A metal detector was to be used to enhance the recovery of metal finds and stripped areas and a sample of spoilheaps were to be scanned for the retrieval of artefacts

## Results

Eight test pits were excavated in total.

### Test pit 1 (Fig. 2)

Test pit 1 was 4.10m long, 2.84m wide and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.30m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.18m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.

### Test pit 2 (Fig. 2 )

Test pit 2 was 4.00m long, 3.15m wide and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.28m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.17m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded..

### Test pit 3 (Fig. 2; Pl. 1)

Test pit 3 was 4.86m long, 3.15m wide and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.24m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.11m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.

### Test pit 4 (Fig. 2; Pl. 2)

Test pit 4 was 4.00m long, 3.10m wide and 0.36m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.20m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.16m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded. Test pit 4 showed a modern wheel rut running along it.

### Test pit 5 (Fig. 2; Pl. 3)

Test pit 1 was 4.20m long, 2.85m wide and 0.42m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.22m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.20m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.

### Test pit 6 (Fig. 2)

Test pit 1 was 4.10m long, 3.05m wide and 0.41m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.22m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.19m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel with patches of yellow clay. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded..

#### Test pit 7 (Fig. 2; Pl. 4)

Test pit 1 was 4.00m long, 3.25m wide and 0.44m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.20m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.21m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel with patches of yellow clay. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.

#### Test pit 8 (Fig. 2)

Test pit 1 was 4.15m long, 3.05m wide and 0.44m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil up to 0.22m thick, beneath which was subsoil up to 0.21m thick, beneath which was natural brown yellow sand and gravel with patches of yellow clay. No archaeological features or artefacts were recorded. Test pit 8 was heavily disturbed by modern wheel ruts

### **Conclusion**

No deposits nor artefacts of archaeological interest were recorded during monitoring of the test pit digging.

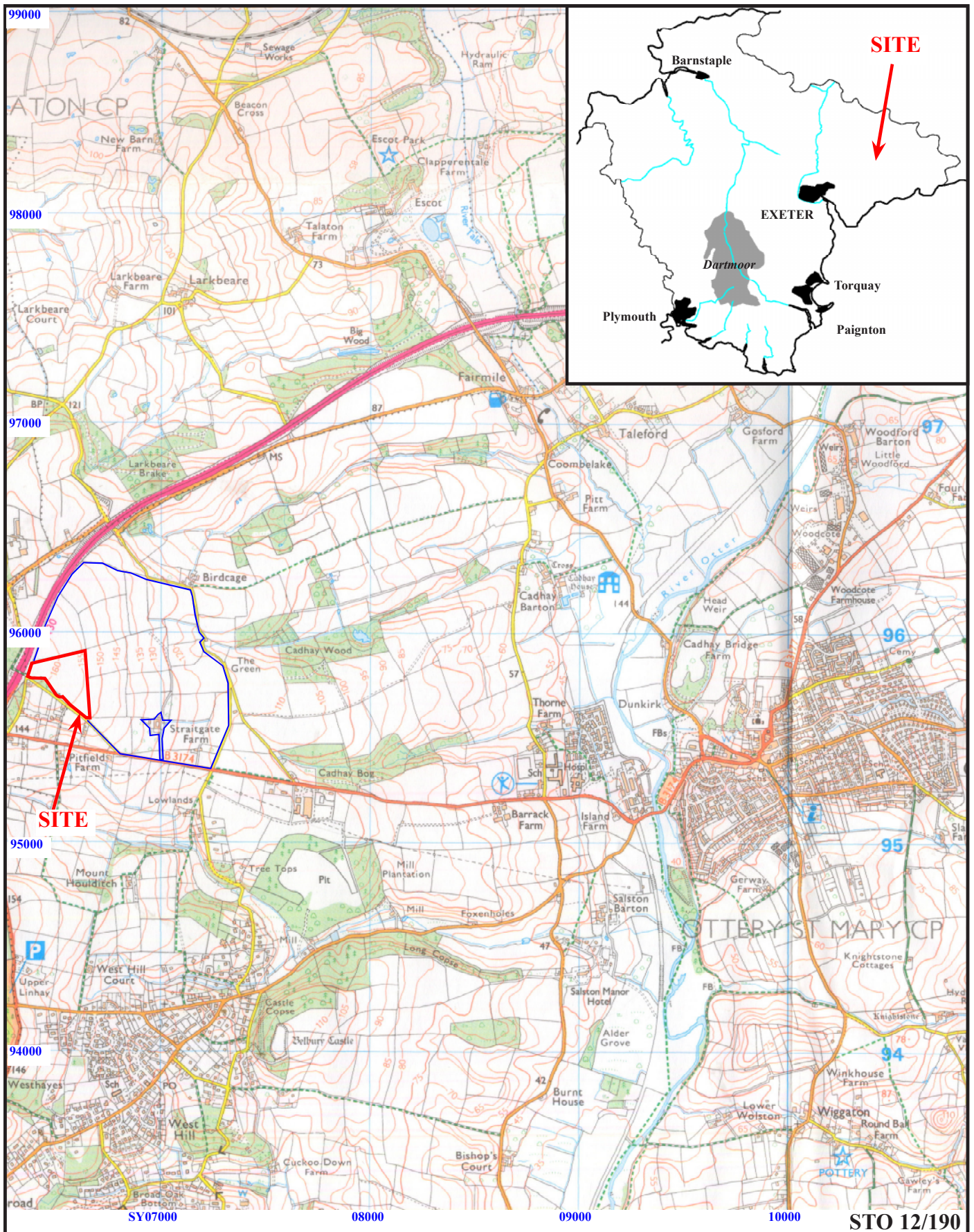
### **References**

- BGS, 1969, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 324, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth  
NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)  
SLR, 2011, Straitgate Farm - Devon Minerals Core Strategy: Sites for New Strategic Aggregate Mineral Resources, Archaeological Risk Appraisal, SLR Consulting Ltd report no. 403.00275.00141, Edinburgh

**APPENDIX 1: Test Pit Details**

Test Pit	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	4.10	2.84	0.43	0–0.30m Topsoil; 0.30-0.43 Subsoil; 0.43m+ brown yellow sand and gravel natural geology
2	4.00	3.05	0.45	0–0.28m Topsoil; 0.28-0.45 Subsoil; 0.45m+ brown yellow sand and gravel natural geology
3	4.86	3.15	0.35	0–0.24m Topsoil; 0.24-0.35 Subsoil; 0.35m+ brown yellow sand and gravel natural geology. <b>[PI. 1]</b>
4	4.00	3.10	0.36	0–0.20m Topsoil; 0.20-0.36 Subsoil; 0.36m+ brown yellow sand and gravel natural geology. <b>[PI. 2]</b>
5	4.20	2.85	0.42	0–0.22m Topsoil; 0.22-0.42 Subsoil; 0.42m+ brown yellow sand and gravel natural geology. <b>[PI. 3]</b>
6	4.10	3.05	0.41	0–0.22m Topsoil; 0.22-0.41 Subsoil; 0.41m+ brown yellow sand and gravel with patches of yellow clay natural geology
7	4.00	3.25	0.44	0–0.22m Topsoil; 0.22-0.41 Subsoil; 0.41m+ brown yellow sand and gravel natural geology. <b>[PI. 4]</b>
8	4.15	3.05	0.44	0–0.22m Topsoil; 0.22-0.43 Subsoil; 0.43m+ brown yellow sand and gravel natural geology

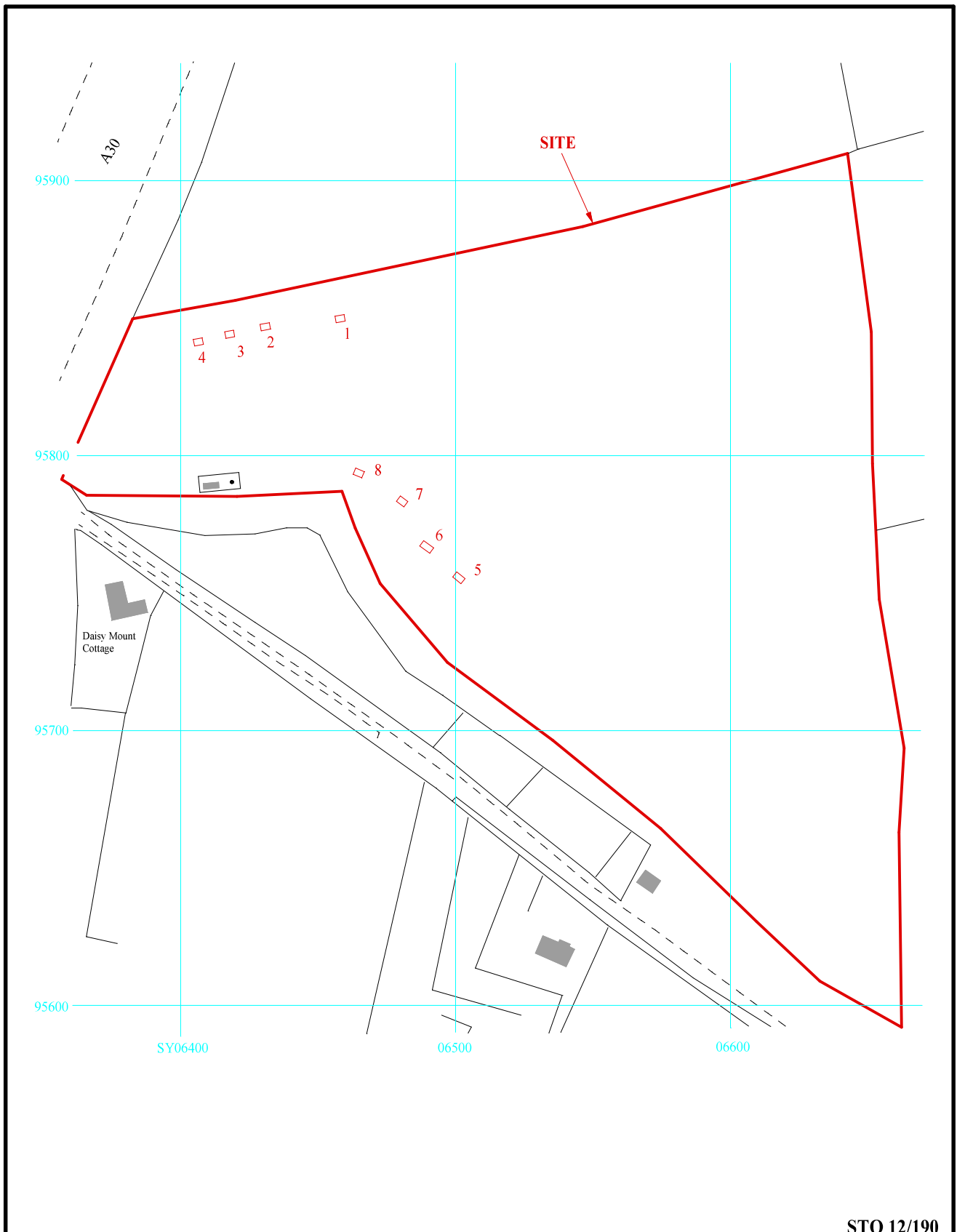




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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Ottery St Mary and within Devon.

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Figure 2. Location of test pits.



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Plate 1. TP 3 looking west, Scales: 1m.



Plate 2. TP 4 looking west, Scales: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. TP 5 looking north west, Scales: 1m.



Plate 4. TP 7 looking north west, Scales: 1m.

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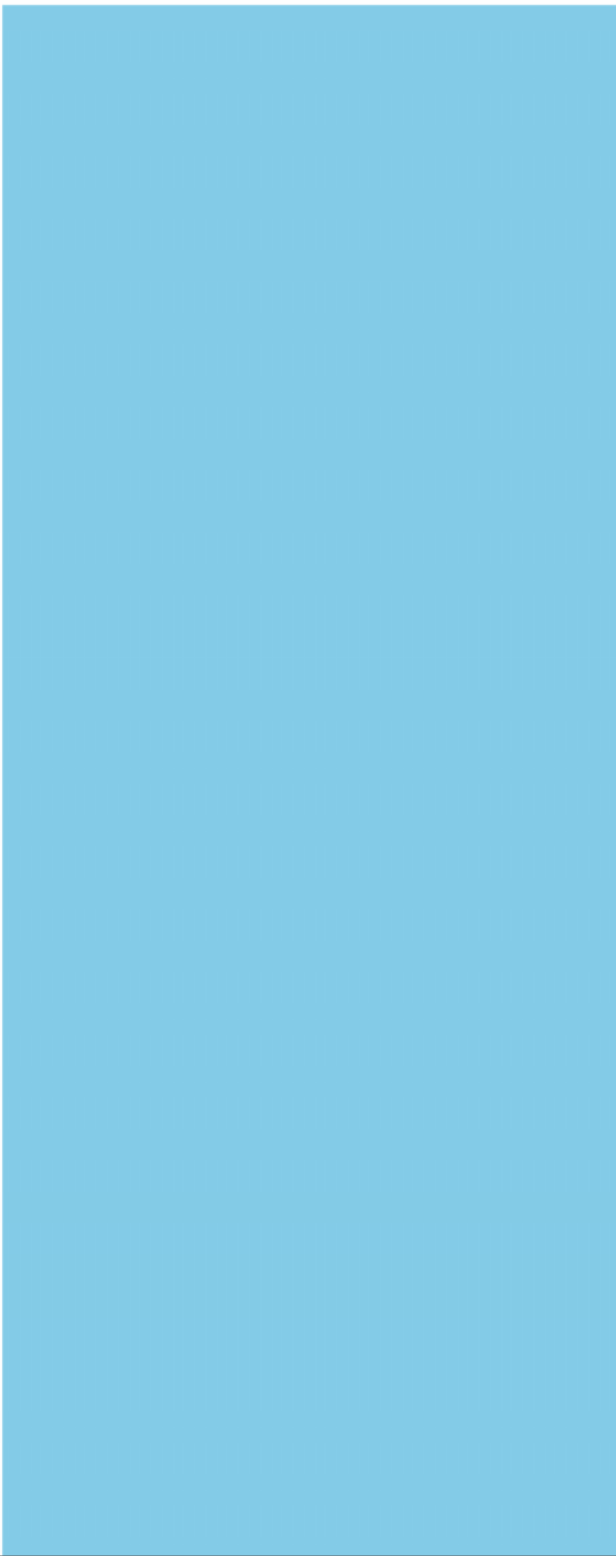
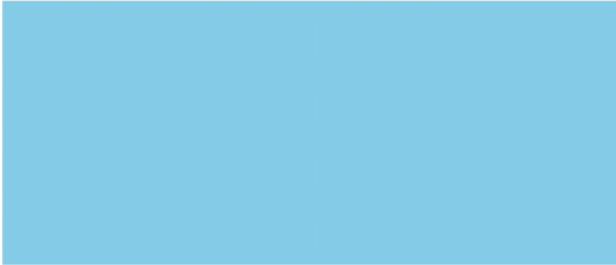
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Plates 3 and 4.

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## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC
↓	↓



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