THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

SOUTH WEST

Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Richard Tabor and Andy Weale

Site Code: LFM13/138

(ST 2576 0645)

Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Joe Arend

by Richard Tabor and Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

(South West) Ltd

Site Code LFM13/130

October 2013

Summary

Site name: Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon

Grid reference: ST 2576 0645

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 23rd-25th September 2013

Project manager: Andrew Weale

Site supervisor: Richard Tabor

Site code: LFM13/130

Area of site: *c.* 612 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeological features were encountered. Only modern artefacts were recovered from the topsoil.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services (South West), Taunton and will be deposited at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in due course, with accession code RAMM13/41.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 09.10.13
	Steve Preston✓ 09.10.13

TVAS (South West),Unit 21, Apple Business Centre, Frobisher Way, Taunton TA2 6BB
Tel. (01823) 288 284; Fax (01823) 272 462; email: southwest@tvas.co.uk; website : www.tvas.co.uk

Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon
An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Richard Tabor and Andrew Weale

Report 13/130

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon (NGR ST 2576 0645) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Joe Arend, of Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon, EX13 7TZ.

Planning permission has been granted by East Devon District Council (12/166/FUL) for the construction of an agricultural storage barn and provision of access track at Luggs Farm. The consent was subject to a condition relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological work. Mr Steven Reed (Archaeology Officer, Devon County Historic Environment Team) indicated that this was to take the form of a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Reed. The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Tabor on the 23rd–25th September 2013 and the site code is LFM13/130. A monitoring visit was made by Mr Reed on 25th September 2013.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton, and will be deposited at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in due course, with accession code RAMM13/41.

Location, topography and geology

Luggs Farm is located 11.3km north-east of Honiton, Devon, 2.2km south-east of Yarcombe (Fig. 1) and 3km north-north-west of Membury, on the steep west-facing slope of the valley overlooking the southwards-draining River Yarty. The access track comprised a c. 140m long, 3m wide strip extending westwards from the access to a road at its east end, leading to an expanded, roughly 15m by 14m area in front of the location of the barn at the west end. The barn itself was to be set on raised ground (Fig. 2) The c. 55m section nearest the road was in a field under pasture c.10m south of a hedge and ditch separating it from a partially enclosed area of Luggs Farm house and grounds (Fig. 2). A pronounced terrace was noted c. 30m west of the access (Pl. 1). The route turned northwards across a ditch and through a gateway at the south-west corner of a large stone-built shed (Pl. 2) after

which it turned towards the west, passing through a landscaped garden (Pl. 3). Over the length of the driveway the site declined from east to west from 98.75m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to 83.80m aOD. Geological mapping shows that the lower valley occupied by the western half of the site lies on superficial mixed Quaternary sand and gravel deposits (diamicton) over Triassic Branscombe Formation sedimentary mudstone (BGS 2013). The superficial deposits are not marked on the higher ground to the east, where only the mudstone is shown. The soils on the higher ground are described as very acid upland-type loam with wet peaty surfaces of very low fertility, giving way downslope to slightly acid loams and clays with impeded drainage but moderate to high fertility (NSRI 2013).

Archaeological background

The name Membury is thought to derive from the Saxon *burh* ('fortified place') with an uncertain first element possibly from the Celtic for 'stone' or the Saxon for 'common' (Mills 1998). It may refer to the Iron Age hillfort of Membury Castle. Risdon (1811) believed the casualties of a battle in the 10th century between King Althestan and the Danes near Axminster were transported to the hillfort. Membury is mentioned twice in Domesday Book. It was held by Warin from William Chevre and had been held by Ealdhild in the time of King Edward. Within it, the king's land at Deneworthy, held by Aethelic in the time of King Edward, was transferred to the manor of Axminster. There were lands for one and a half ploughs and a population of just three heads of household (Williams and Martin 2002).

Luggs Farm house is a grade II* listed, two-storey, rubble-built house dating from the 16th century. An out building to the southwest is included in the listing. The stone rubble barn and stable range are a grade II listed building group of 17th or 18th century date. Neighbouring late 17th or early 18th century North Grays Farm house, is also a grade II listed building.

Findspots of flint tools within the field to the south of the site indicate nearby prehistoric activity.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to identify, excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved examination of the intrusive groundworks along the route of the proposed drive and of the excavation of a trench where it was necessary to divert a stream.

Topsoil, and any other overburden were removed to a depth of 0.20m by a 360^0 tracked machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Due to the very stony character of the

diamicton deposits a toothed ditching bucket excavated to a depth of *c*. 1m a *c*. 15m long, 0.60m to 1.5m wide, trench where it was necessary to divert the existing ditch. The watching brief did not include the area of the agricultural storage barn which was to be built on raised ground.

No archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains were exposed, but written, drawn and photographic records were made of the topsoil and Quaternary deposits. The nature of the operation was described and illustrated with photographs.

Results

The topsoil (50) throughout the site was restricted to the depth of the dense turf root mass (0.08m - 0.10m). In the south field it lay directly over small to large angular fragments of yellowish orange chert set in yellow sand and grit, rarely streaked with slightly reddish yellow gritty sand (0.08m - 0.20m+) which was interpreted as a Quaternary diamicton deposit (51) (Fig. 3: section 1; Pl. 4). Its surface included pockets, which became more frequent further downslope, in which the chert was less abundant.

In the gate area the ground had been disturbed (Fig. 2, 'disturbed area') to a depth of up to 0.48m (52) in recent times by the introduction of a pipe to carry the ditch water and by rutting caused by large vehicles (Fig. 3: section 2). The trench cut to insert a new pipe to divert the watercourse was parallel to and exposed the southern side of the former silted ditch and pipe (Pl. 5). The diamicton deposit (51) was exposed below the disturbance (52). At *c*. 0.85m below the ground surface the diamicton deposit (51) sealed a 0.50m wide, east-to-west oriented linear deposit of pinkish red clayey silt including sparse to moderate large angular and subrounded chert fragments (53) which was interpreted as a palaeochannel. Approximately 3m of the channel was exposed running parallel to the section, hence not occurring within it (Pl. 5).

Below the topsoil (50) in the west area a colluvial subsoil (54) of yellowish brown sandy silt including moderate gritty to gravelly chert had formed over the diamicton deposit (55) (Fig. 3: section 3). The depth of the subsoil increased from *c*. 0.05m when first observed to *c*. 0.10m further downslope. The ratio of yellow sand in the diamicton deposit increased in proportion to the chert as the deposit took on an increasingly colluvial character (Pl. 6).

A single glazed pottery sherd and a fragment of bottle glass were observed at the interface of the turf and diamicton deposit from 2m south of the gate between the south and north areas. Both were modern. No finds or environmental samples were retained.

Conclusion

The route of the drive passes very close to a listed farm building and worked flint has been collected from nearby. However, no archaeological features or deposits were identified along its course during the watching brief and both of the artefacts observed were modern. The topsoil proved to be very shallow, lying directly over undisturbed natural deposits which showed no signs of cultivation, possibly a reflection of the stoniness of the ground.

References

BGS, 2013, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000. http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html (accessed: 19th September 2013).

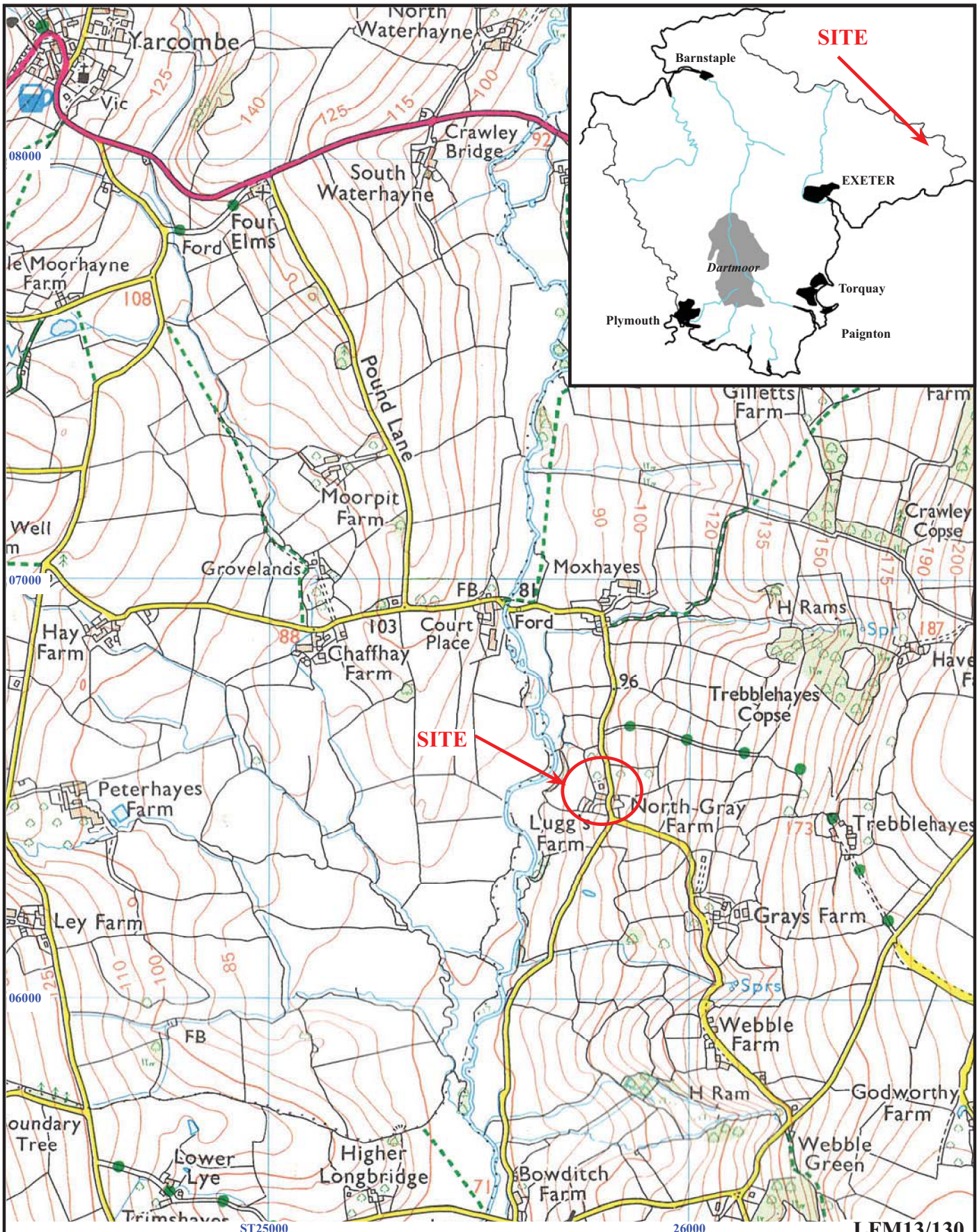
Mills, A D, 1998, *Dictionary of English Place-Names*, Oxford

NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework,* Dept Communities and Local Govt, TSO, Norwich

NSRI, 2013, 'Soilscapes', https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/ National Soils Research Institute (accessed: 7th October 2013).

Risdon, T, 1811, *The chorographical description or survey of the county of Devon: Printed from a genuine copy of the original manuscript, with considerable additions*, Plymouth.

Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation,* London.

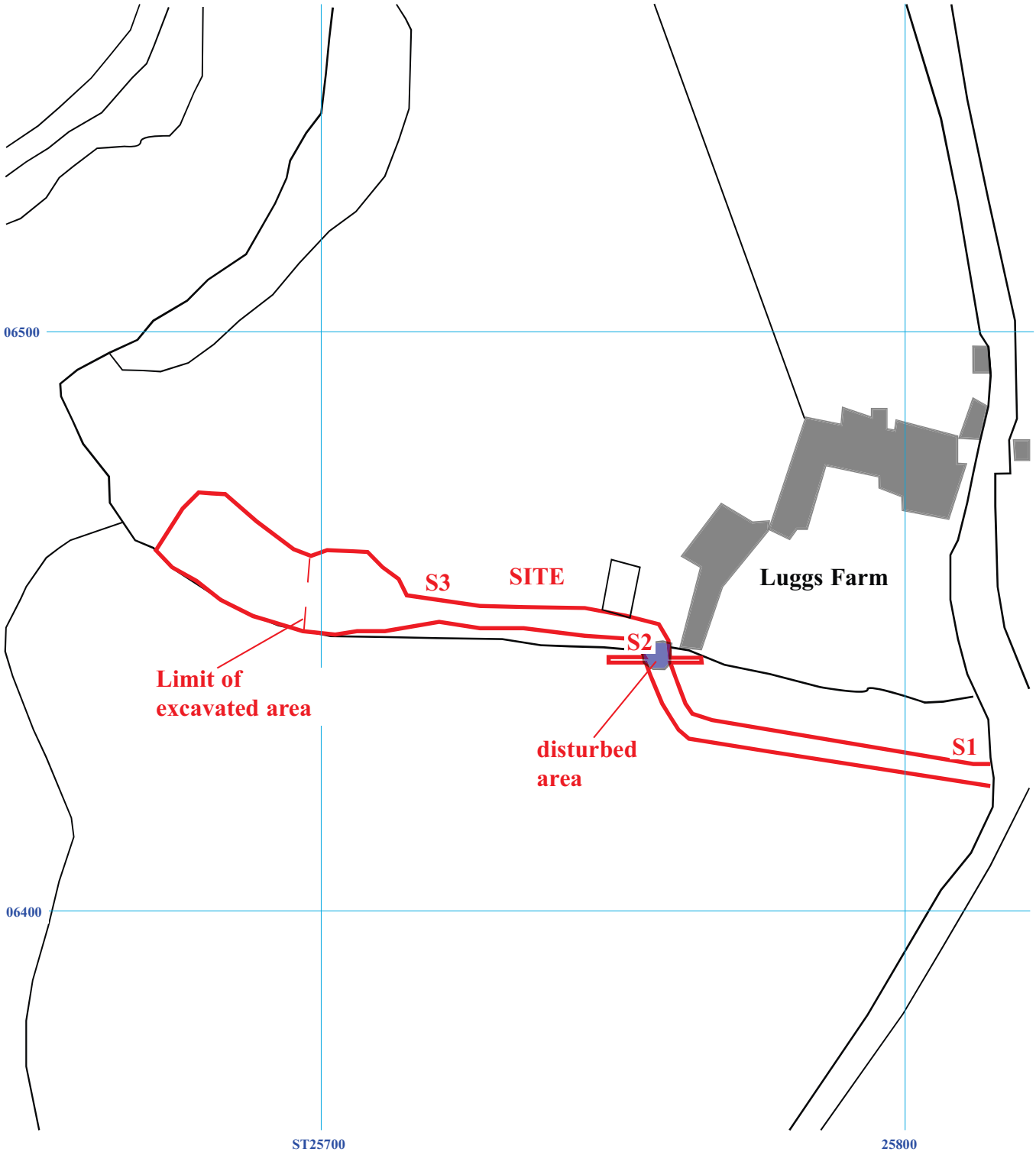


LFM13/130

Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon
An Archaeological watching brief

Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Yarcombe and within Devon.

THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES SOUTH WEST



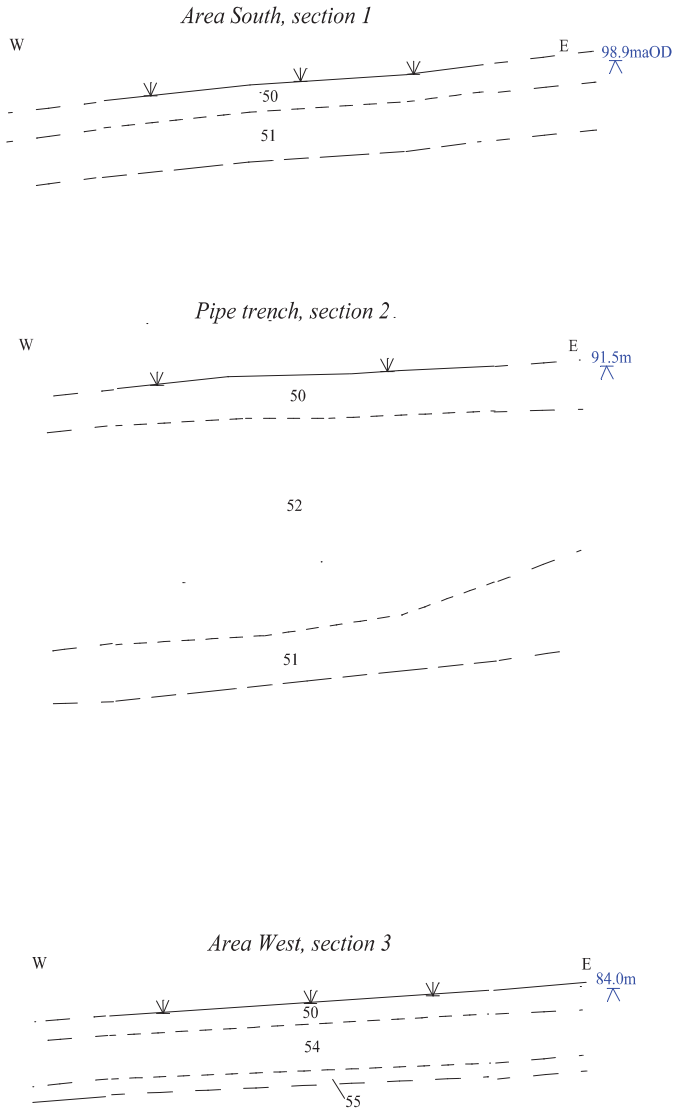
LFM 13/130

Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon, 2013
An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 2. Location of development showing sample sections.

0 50m

THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES SOUTH WEST



LFM 13/130

Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon, 2013
An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 3. Sections 1 - 3

0 1m

THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES SOUTH WEST

Plate 1. South area, looking north-east.

Plate 2. South area, approaching the ditch crossing, looking north (Scale: 2m).

LFM 13/130

Luggs Farm, Membury, Axminster, Devon, 2013
An Archaeological Watching Brief

Plates 1 - 2.

THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES SOUTH WEST

Plate 3. West area, looking east (Scale: 2m).

Plate 4. South area, S1, looking north-east (Scale: 2m).

Plate 5. South area ditch trench, S2, looking north-east (Scale: partial 2m).

Plate 6. West area, S3, looking north (Scale: part 2m).

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

TVAS (South West),
Unit 21 Apple Business Centre,
Frobisher Way, Taunton,
Somerset, TA2 6BB

Tel: 01823 288 284
Fax: 01823 272 462
Email: southwest@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk