

# Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry, Uffculme, Devon

Phase 6

**Archaeological Excavation** 

by Andrew Weale

Site Code: HQU16/46

(ST 0578 1351)

# Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry, Uffculme, Devon, Phase 6

### **Archaeological Excavation**

for Aggregate Industries UK Ltd

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

(South West) Ltd

Site Code HQU 16/46

December 2019

#### **Summary**

Site name: Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry, Uffculme, Devon

Grid reference: ST 0578 1351

Site activity: Archaeological excavation

**Date and duration of project:** 14th August to 23rd September 2019

Project manager: Agata Socha-Paskiewicz

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: HQU 16/46

**Area of site:** c. 9.9ha

**Summary of results:** The fieldwork has revealed a modest volume of cut features with a number of ditches and gullies recorded along with several pits. Few of the features are well dated, but some are clearly of Post-medieval date. A few struck lithics are of prehistoric date, but are probably residual finds. One pit, however contained prehistoric pottery but it was unclear if this was of Neolithic or possibly later Iron Age date.

**Location of Archive:** The archive and artefacts will be deposited with Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter with accession code RAM:19/21 in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 20.12.19

Steve Preston ✓ 20.12.19

# Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry, Uffculme, Devon, Phase 6 Archaeological Excavation

by Andrew Weale

Report 16/46b

#### Introduction

This report documents the results of the archaeological excavation within Phase 6 of Hillhead Quarry located to the north west of Uffculme in Devon (centred on NGR ST 0578 1351; Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Mr Clive Tompkins of Aggregate Industries UK Ltd, Stoneycombe Quarry, Bickley Road, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 5LL.

Permission for the western extension of Hillhead Quarry in the area around Houndaller Farm was granted in 1990 and is restated in Devon County Minerals Local Plan (DCC 2004). Under the provisions of the Review of Old Mineral Permissions (ROMP), the Mineral Planning Authority (Devon County Council) required an Environmental Impact Assessment in order to update conditions for these old consents. Permission to extend the existing quarry to the west by an area of c. 12.3ha (Phases 6, 7 and 8) has been approved by Devon County Council (DCC/3655/2014). The consent includes a condition (12) relating to archaeology as guided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) and the Development Plan, specifically Devon Minerals Plan Policy M19.

#### Site description, location and geology

The site is located north-west of Uffculme, a village in Devon on the south west fringe of the Blackdown Hills, which straddle the border with Somerset (Fig. 1). The nearest small towns are Cullompton, 7km to the south west of the village and Tiverton, 6km to the west. The site comprises an L-shaped arrangement of three contiguous, broadly rectangular, south to north oriented fields. They form part of New Houndaller Farm and are within the civil parish of Burlescombe, although the core village of that name is 3km to the north east. The eastern boundary of Area 6 is the western of the limit of the current quarrying operation. In general the site falls over a distance of 500m from c. 126m above Ordnance Datum (oAD) in the north-east of Area 5 to c. 107m aOD in the south west corner of Area 6. The steady gradient is interrupted in Area 6 by a dry combe cutting across the contours in a north-easterly direction from midway along the field's western boundary. Phase 6 is centred on

NGR ST 0578 1351. The site is set on sedimentary deposits of Triassic conglomerate Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds Formation (Chester Formation) (BGS 2012).

#### Archaeological background

Several previous phases of archaeological investigation have taken place on the site and adjacent areas, comprising a desk-based assessment (Tabor 2016) and a geophysical survey (Beaverstock 2016). The former concluded the site to be of moderate archaeological potential with some potential features visible from aerial photography and LiDAR. Results of the later revealed several anomalies, some of which may represent buried archaeological features, and a limited quantity of historical agricultural features. These appear to be particularly concentrated of features in the southern field, where several strong and weak linear anomalies indicate the presence of archaeological derived ditches.

#### **Original Objectives**

The general objectives of the project are to:

excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas affected by the proposed development as identified in the stripped areas;

produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site.;

establish the character of these deposits in an attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc.; and to

produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

Specific objectives

The excavation and post-excavation project will:

Set out the archaeological background to the site, drawing together the results of previous archaeological work in the vicinity of the site.

Complete a site archive of all project records, artefacts, ecofacts, any other sample residues and summaries of the context, artefact and environmental records.

Complete an assessment report on the site archive and its potential to answer the research questions and for further analysis.

Specific research objectives for the area were to answer the following questions:

When was the site first occupied?

When was the site abandoned?

What activities were taking place on the site?

The potential and significance of any such deposits located will be assessed according to the research priorities such as set out in eg. James and Millet (2001); Historic England Research Agendas (HE, 2017) or the overview of the archaeology of South West England (Webster 2007).

#### **Results**

The site was stripped of topsoil and any subsoil by a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under archaeological supervision. Any features deemed to be of archaeological origin were then cleaned by hand and planned and sectioned as a minimum objective. A range of discrete and linear features were observed and investigated.

#### Ditch 1000 (Figs 2 and 3; Pls 7 and 8)

Ditch 1000 was linear in plan, slightly curving from south-east to north-west, 40m long, between 0.88m and 1.60m wide and 0.27–0.96m deep. Ditch 1000 was excavated in two slots (41 and 42) and a terminal (40). The stratigraphy within each slot was different. Terminal 40 contained only one deposit (94) a light yellow grey to red brown silty sand with occasional pebbles and cobbles. Slot 41 contained four deposits and the stratigraphy within the slot was a light to mid brown silty clay (98) with occasional pebbles, cobbles and charcoal up to 0.13m thick above deposit 97, a light to mid red mixed with dark brown to black clay mixed with burning and charcoal up to 0.13m. Beneath 97 was deposit 96, a dark brown silty sand with occasional pebbles stones and very occasional charcoal up to 0.53m thick. The basal fill (95) was a light brown silty sand with occasional pebbles and cobbles up to 0.23m thick. None of the deposits within slot 41 contained any datable artefacts. Slot 42 contained three deposits the upper of which was a mid grey brown sandy clay (99) up to 0.23m thick. Beneath deposit 99 was a dark brown silty sand (150) with occasional pebbles, stones and very occasional charcoal up to 0.16m thick. Beneath 150 was deposit 151, a light brown silty sand with occasional pebbles and frequent cobbles up to 0.21m thick. Like the deposits in slot 41, the deposits within slot 42 contained no datable artefacts. Deposit (97) within slot 41 may have been burnt *in situ*. Ditch 1000 appears to be in a similar position and orientation to an anomaly that appears on the geophysical survey.

#### Gullies

#### Gully 1001 (Fig. 2 and Pls 4)

Gully 1001 was aligned north-east to south-west, 38m long, between 0.33–0.55m wide and 0.27–0.96m deep. Gully 1001 was excavated in two slots (17 and 18) and both terminals (15 and 20). All four slots had a similar single fill deposit (67, 69, 70 and 72) a brown silty sand with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. None of these deposits contained any datable artefacts.

#### Gully 1002 (Figs 2 and 3)

Gully 1002 was linear in plan, aligned north east to south west 32m long, between 0.45 and 1.08m wide and 0.20m and 0.32m deep. Gully 1002 was excavated in two slots (25 and 32) and a terminal end (24). All three slots had a similar deposit (78, 79, and 86) a red brown mottled with yellow silty sand with occasional pebbles. None of these deposits contained any datable artefacts. The northern end of the Gully faded out to just a stain within the underlying natural and no terminal end was seen. Gully 1002 appears to be in a similar position and orientation as an anomaly that appears on the geophysical survey.

#### Gully 1003 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl 6)

Gully 1003 was linear in plan, aligned east to west 108m long, between 0.25 and 0.60m wide and 0.04m and 0.11m deep. Gully 1003 was excavated in five slots (27, 28, 29, 30 and 31) and a terminal end (33). All six slots had a similar deposit (81, 82, 83, 84, 85 and 87) a light to mid brown grey occasional mottled yellow grey silty sand with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. None of these deposits contained any datable artefacts. Gully 1003 cut pit 34. Gully 1003 appears to be in a similar position and orientation as an anomaly that appears on the geophysical survey.

#### Ditch 1004 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl 5)

Ditch 1003 was linear in plan, aligned east to west 112m long, between 0.51 and 0.96m wide and 0.03m and 0.141m deep. Ditch 1004 was excavated in five slots (26, 35, 36, 37 and 38) and a terminal end (39). All six slots had a similar deposit (80, 89, 90, 91, 92 and 93) a mid brown grey occasional mottled yellow grey silty sand with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. None of these deposits contained any datable artefacts. Ditch 1004 appears to be in a similar position and orientation as an anomaly that appears on the geophysical survey.

#### Gully 1005 (Figs 2 and 3)

Gully 1005 was curvilinear in plan, aligned approximately west- east, 7m long, between 0.62 and 0.80m wide and 0.20m and 0.25m. Gully 1005 was excavated in one slots 13 and a relationship 10. Both slots had a similar deposit (62 and 65) a mid silty sand with occasional pebbles (4-6%). None of these deposits contained any datable artefacts.

#### Quarry Pits

In the north western corner of the site were a series of large-quarry type pits that formed a rough line from the south west towards the north east of the site, on the northern slope of the dry combe valley. These consisted of three large pits [1, 2 and 4] and a large intercutting ditch complex 1006 [8, 9, 21 and 21). This line of quarry pits appears to follow the course and alignment of a linear anomaly seen on the geophysical survey.

#### Pit 1 (Figs 2 and 3)

Pit 1 was oval in plan 3.90 long, 1.95m wide and up to 0.32m deep. Pit 1 was filled with a single deposit (52) a dark brown sand with moderate gravel. Deposit (52) contained a single piece of slag.

#### Pit 2 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl 1)

Pit 2 was roughly circular in plan approximately 5.8m in diameter and up to 0.60m deep. Pit 1 was excavated in a single quadrant 2.9m long and 2.6m wide and was filled with a single deposit (53) a dark grey brown sand with occasional gravel.

#### Pit 4 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl 10)

Pit 4 was oval in plan oval in plan 5.40 long, 3.50m wide and up to 0.36m deep. Pit 4 was excavated in a single quadrant 1.80m long and 1.50m wide and was filled with a single deposit (55) a dark grey brown sand with occasional gravel. Deposit (53) contained a single piece of slag.

#### Pit Complex 1006 (Figs 2 and; Pls 2 and 3)

Pit complex 1006 was an area of four intercutting pits approximately 9m by 8m, that was excavated in 2 slots accounting for more that 50% of the overall complex. The western of the two slots was 6.9m long, 2.05m wide, and up to 0.75m deep. The top most pit [21] within this slot was roughly oval in plan, 5.77m wide, 0.75m deep however the length of the pit was unseen. Pit 21 was filled with (75) a firm grey brown silty sand with less than 3% gravel up to 0.20m deep which however contained no datable artefacts Beneath (75) was (74) a soft dark brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks and less than 3% gravel up to 0.50m deep also with no datable artefacts. Beneath (74) was (73) a soft mid brown silty sand with less than 5% gravel up to 0.20m deep. Deposit (73) also contained no datable artefacts. Pit 21 cut Pit 22 which was oval in plan 5.77m long over 1.50m wide and 0.34m deep. Pit 22 was filled with (76) a firm grey brown silty sand with less than 2% gravel up to 0.34m deep which however contained no datable artefacts. The eastern slot was 5.08m long 3.10m wide and up to 0.51m deep. The upper most pit within this slot was [8] which was oval in plan 3.90m long, 3.10m wide and up to 0.60m deep. Pit 8 was filled with (59) a firm grey brown silty sand with approximately 5% gravel up to 0.60m deep which contained two pieces of worked chert which may be dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods

but may be residual. Pit 8 cut Pit 9. Pit 9 was roughly oval in plan, 3.10m wide over 3.0m long and 0.58m deep. Pit 9 was filled with 2 deposits the topmost of which was (60) a firm grey brown silty sand with Approximately 5 % gravel up to 0.20m deep which however contained no datable artefacts. Beneath (60) was (61) a firm grey sand up to 0.22m thick with approximately 10% gravel but no datable artefacts. Pit 9 cut Gully 1005.

Pit 34 was oval in plan 1.12m long over 1.13m wide and up to 0.16m deep. Pit 34 was filled with (88) a firm mid brown grey silty sand which contained a leather boot heel complete with copper alloy tacks. Pit 34 was cut by Gully 1003.

#### Other Pits

In the northern part of the site were nine pits. Only two of these contained any datable artefacts, Pits 3 and 11 Pit 3 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl 9)

Pit 3 was oval in plan 1.25m long, 1.15m wide and up to 0.20m deep. Pit 3 was filled (54) with a soft dark brown silty sand with frequent gravel and occasional charcoal flecks. The fill contained 11 sherds of pottery that could be dated to the Neolithic but equally would not look out of place in the middle to late Iron Age periods.

#### Pit 11 (Fig. 2; Pls 1 and 2)

Pit 11 was circular in plan 0.69m in diameter and up to 0.23m deep. Pit 11 was filled with (63) a loose mid red grey silty sand with approximately 15% gravel and moderate charcoal. Deposit (63) contained modern green bottle glass.

#### Pits 5, 6, 14, 19 12 and 7 (Fig. 2)

Pits 5, 6, 14, 16 and 19 were all oval in plan between 0.43m and 1.20m long, 0.31 and 1.10m wide and 0.1'7m to 0.73m deep. But contained no datable artefacts. Pit 12 was circular in plan 1.10m in diameter and 0.35m deep which contained no datable artefacts. Pit 7 was elongated in plan 2m long 0.86m wide and up to 0.67m deep which contained no datable artefacts.

#### **Finds**

#### Pottery By Richard Tabor

Twelve sherds weighing 27g were recovered, all from pit 3. The sherds were allocated to two fabric groups based on the material, size and sorting of the principal inclusions in accordance with guidelines for the recording and analysis of prehistoric pottery (PCRG 2010). Eleven sherds (26.5g) were in a sandy fabric, feQ1 and a single sherd (0.5g) lacking surviving surfaces was in grog fabric GQ1.

**GQ1** (medium) Moderately soft, grey fabric including moderate medium (<2mm) grog, sparse fine (<0.5) to rare medium (<1mm) sub-rounded quartz, rare coarse (<6mm) sub-angular quartz crystals, and sparse fine to medium (<2m) iron oxides.

**feQ1** (medium) Moderately hard, grey sandy fabric with oxidised buff red to brownish grey surfaces includes abundant very fine (<0.25mm), sparse fine and rare to sparse fine/medium (<1mm) and rare coarse (<2mm) sub-rounded quartz, sparse very fine (<0.5mm) angular flint and rare to sparse fine to medium (<2m) iron

oxides. Occasional linear striations on the surfaces are due to loss of organic matter.

By virtue of the fabric alone the grog-tempered sherd is unlikely to post-date the early Bronze Age and it would

not look out of place in the Neolithic. The remaining sherds probably derive from either one or two vessels as

the wall thickness varies from 5mm to 8mm. The thicker wall sherd joins a fairly rounded base sherd with a

thickness of 12.5mm. The fabric would not look out of place in a middle to late Iron age assemblage but the

thickness and apparent roundness of the base would imply a Neolithic date. However, no firm conclusions can

be drawn.

Struck lithics by Steve Ford

Two lithic pieces were recovered from Pit 8 (59) in Pit Complex 1006. One is a flake and the other, a denticulate

scraper. Both pieces are made from coarse grained reddish brown chert. They are not closely datable but are of

Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

Slag By Andrew Weale

A single fragment (15g) of what appeared to be slag was recovered from Pit 8 (59) within pit complex 10006.

Leather boot heel By Andrew Weale

A single leather item was recovered from Pit 34 (88) weighing 11g and in a very friable state. It consisted of 5

layers of leather approximately 75mm long, 65mm wide and 11mm thick. The leather was fastened together with

copper alloy tacks up to 3mm in length. On the outside of the heel was part of an iron "U" shaped "horseshoe"

heel plate. This heel appears to be post medieval or modern date.

Macrobotanical plant material and charcoal by Joanna Pine

Eight soil samples were taken from a range of features across the site for the recovery charred plant remains and

artefacts (Appendix 2). Some 16L of each sample was floated and wet sieved using a 0.25mm mesh. Charcoal

was rare and all pieces too small to permit the fracturing required for species identification.

7

#### Conclusion

The fieldwork has revealed a number of deposits certainly or probably of archaeological interest. The linear deposits identified correspond well with those shown on the geophysical survey with all but one of the positive anomalies shown on the report present. The only one absent is the anomaly at the northern end of the field which corresponded to an area of a colluvium-like material on the western slope of the combe. The discontinuous weak positive anomaly in the north-western corner of the field appears to correspond to a line of large pits or quarry pits and carries on to the north. Some of the weak positive anomalies (10-13) shown on the geophysical survey (Beaverstock 2016) in the southern part of Phase 6 were areas where beds of 'sand rock' high in iron minerals came to the surface of the natural geology and are not of archaeological origin.

Datable finds were few. The best dating evidence came from pit 11 with its modern bottle glass, pit 34 with its late post-medieval or modern shoe, and linear features 1003 and 1004 that can be seen on modern mapping.

The quarry pits remain undated and may be therefore be of any period, and be for either the recovery of sand or for the recovery of "sand rock" a large bed of which could be seen in the underlying natural in that area heading in the same direction as the geophysical anomaly picked up the survey and the line of quarry pits observed. What use this material would be for is questionable as no evidence of its use as an iron ore has so far been noted in South West England in prehistory, where the iron ore resource is thought to be the Great Perran Iron Lode (Newman 2016), Forest of Dean limonite or bog ore in the Roman, Medieval or Post Medieval periods. Local Roman iron production is known from the Blackdown Hills from Hemyock near Upottery (Newman 2016) but this appears to be targeting of specific geological sources of iron.

To prehistorians, the only items of interest were a few residual lithic items and a single pit (3). The pit is clearly prehistoric but the very fragmentary pottery is not closely datable with either a Neolithic or middle to late Iron Age date being possible.

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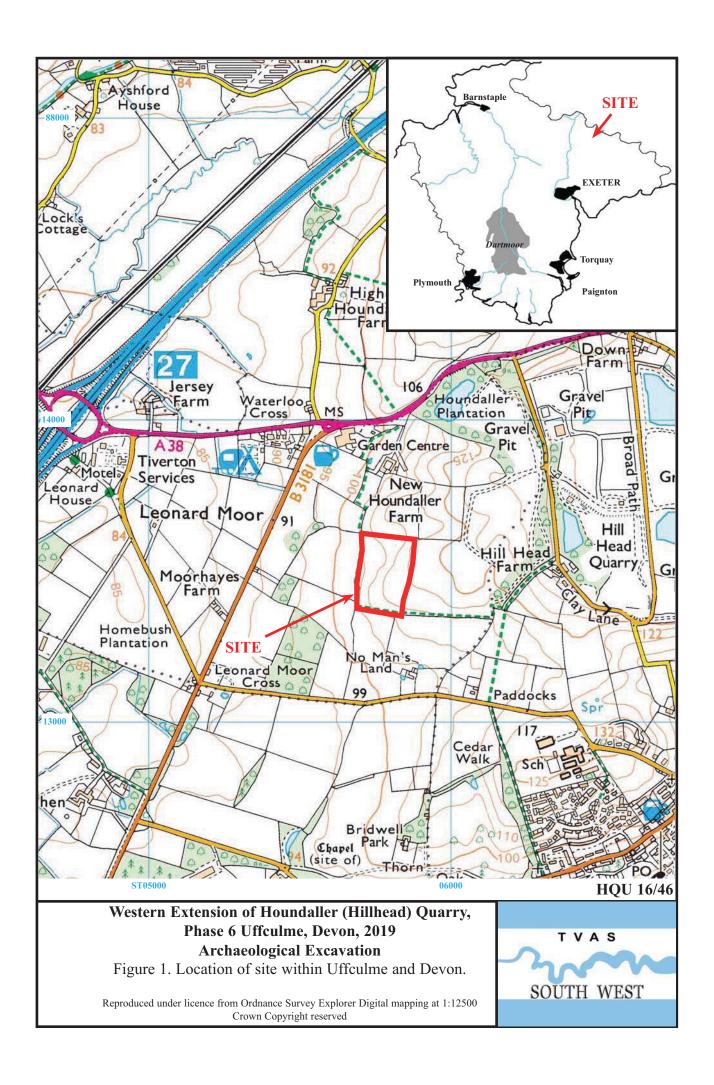
**APPENDIX 1**: Feature details

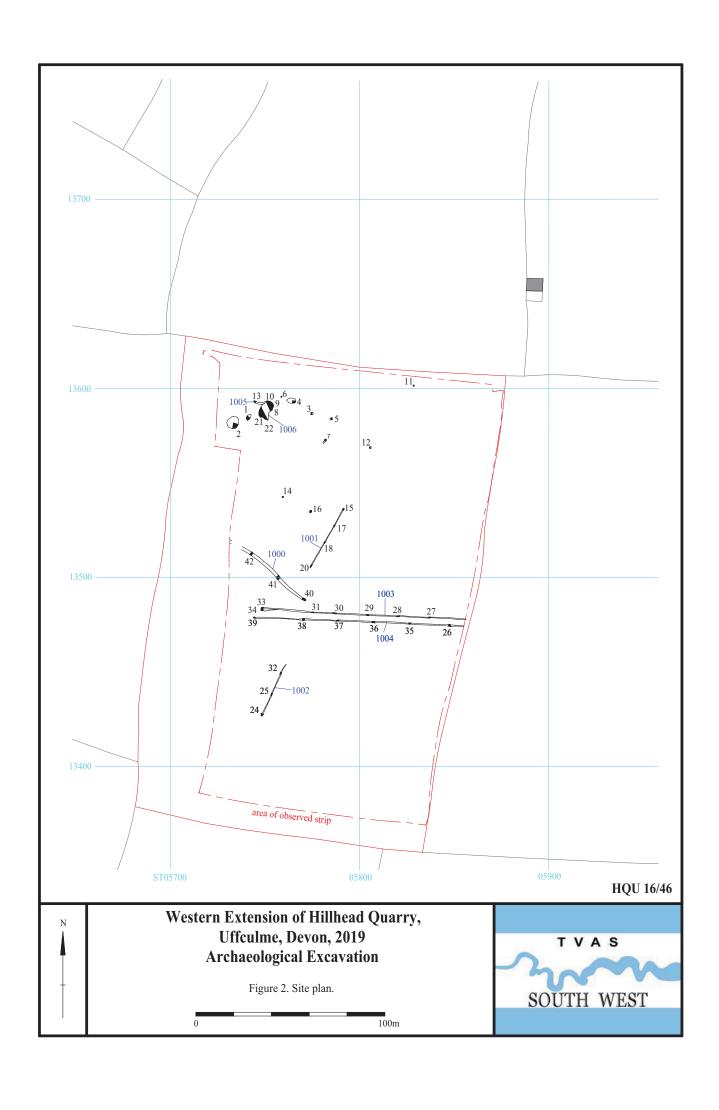
Cut	Fill	Group	Туре	Date	Dating Evidence
1	52		Quarry Pit		
2	53		Quarry Pit		
3	54		Pit	Neolithic or Iron Age	Pottery
4	55		Quarry Pit	Iron Age or later	Slag
5	56		Pit		
6	57		Pit		
7	58		Pit		
8	59	1006	Quarry Pit		Struck Chert
9	60-1	1006	Quarry Pit		
10	62	1005	Gully		
11	63		Pit	Modern	Bottle Glass
12	64		Pit		
13	65	1005	Ditch		
14	66		Pit		
15	67	1001	Ditch Terminus		
16	68		Pit		
17	69	1001	Gully		
18	70	1001	Gully		
19	71		Pit		
20	72	1001	Gully Terminus		
21	73-5	1006	Quarry Pit		Stratigraphy
22	76	1006	Quarry Pit		Stratigraphy
24	78	1002	Ditch Terminus		
25	79	1002	Ditch		
26	80	1004	Ditch	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape
27	81	1003	Gully	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape,
28	82	1003	Gully	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape, Stratigraphy
29	83	1003	Gully	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape, Stratigraphy
30	84	1003	Gully	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape, Stratigraphy
31	85	1003	Gully	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape, Stratigraphy
32	86	1002	Ditch		
33	87	1003	Ditch Terminus	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape, Stratigraphy
34	88		Pit	Post Medieval	Leather boot heel
35	89	1004	Ditch	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape
36	90	1004	Ditch	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape
37	91	1004	Ditch	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape
38	92	1004	Ditch	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape
39	93	1004	Ditch	Post Medieval	Cartography, Landscape
40	94	1000	Ditch		
41	95-8	1000	Ditch		
42	99, 150-1	1000	Ditch		

# **Appendix 2:** Charcoal

Cut	Fill	Sample	Charcoal
3	54	1	xx
15	67	2	X
20	72	3	-
24	78	4	xx
33	87	5	X
39	93	6	-
40	94	7	X

Charcoal: x- rare; xx- some; xxx- much





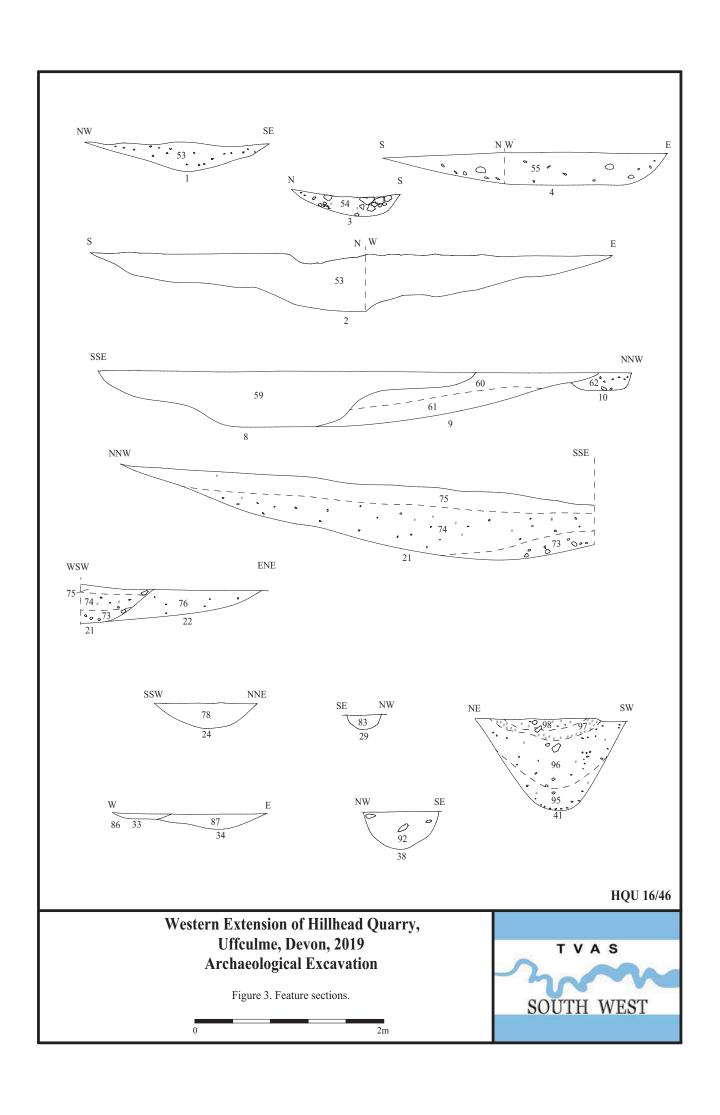




Plate 1. Pit 2, Looking North West, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m



Plate 2. Pit complex 1006, Pits 8 and 9 Gully 10, Looking West, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m

Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry
Uffculme, Devon 2019
Archaeological Excavation
Plates 1 and 2.

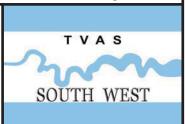




Plate 3. Pit Complex 1006 Pits 21 and 22, Looking North West, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m



Plate 4. Gully 1001 Cut 20, Looking North East, Scales: 2m and 1m

Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry
Uffculme, Devon 2019
Archaeological Excavation
Plates 3 and 4.

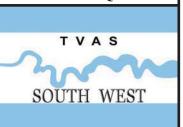




Plate 5. Ditch 1004 cut 35 with Gully 1003 to North, Looking South West, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m



Plate 6. Gully 1003 Cut 28 with Ditch 1004 to South, Looking West, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m

Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry
Uffculme, Devon 2019
Archaeological Excavation
Plates 5 and 6.

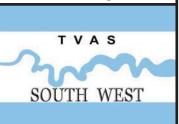




Plate 7. Ditch 1000 Cut 41, Looking East, Scales: 2m and 1m



Plate 8. Ditch 1000 Cut 42, Looking East, Scales: 2m and 1m

Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry
Uffculme, Devon 2019
Archaeological Excavation
Plates 7 and 8.

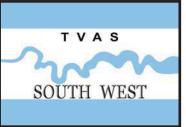




Plate 9. Pit 3, Looking East, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m

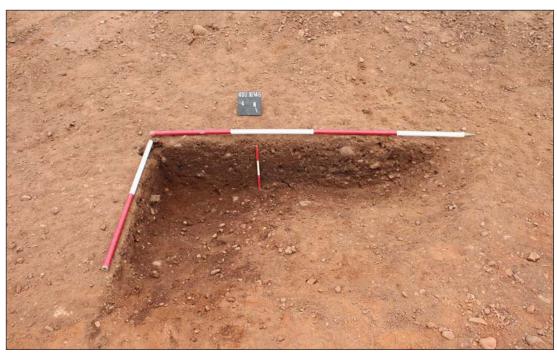
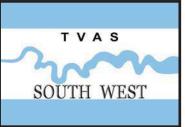


Plate 10. Pit 4, Looking North, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m

Western Extension of Hillhead Quarry
Uffculme, Devon 2019
Archaeological Excavation
Plates 9 and 10.



# **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	AD 0 BC 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
<b>↓</b>	<b>\</b>



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