

Land to the North of Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon

Archaeological Field Evaluation (Summary report – Trench 8)



(Photo courtesy of Churchwood Construction)

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For:

ISCA Project: **P01-00004**

ISCA Report: **R01-00004-2**

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name:	Land to the North of Berry Hill
Location:	Branscombe, Devon
Type:	Evaluation and excavation
National grid reference (NGR):	SY 1874 8886
Planning authority:	East Devon District Council
Date of fieldwork:	9 - 20 August 2021
Site Code:	BHB21
Location of Archive:	Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Devon
Report number:	R01-00004-2
Report written by:	Simon Sworn, ACIfA
Produced by ISCA for:	Avalon Planning and Heritage Ltd
On behalf of:	Churchwood Construction
OASIS number:	TBC

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by ISCA Archaeology in August 2021 at Land to the North of Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon. A single 20m trench was excavated to provide additional information as part of an on-going archaeological excavation being undertaken directly to the north-east.

No archaeological features were noted within this single trench.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document sets out a report of an archaeological evaluation carried out by ISCA Archaeology between 9 - 20 August 2021 as an addition to concurrent archaeological excavation and trenching at Land Adjacent to the Fountain Head Inn, Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') centred at NGR: SY 1874 8886 (Fig 1). The evaluation was commissioned by Avalon Planning and Heritage Ltd, on behalf of Churchwood Construction. The work was undertaken to provide additional information in support of a forthcoming planning application to extend the proposed area of a consented development (for 10 residential dwellings) located on the Site. This additional trench (Trench 8) lies to the immediate south-west of the main excavation area. This report sets out the background, methodology and the results of the evaluation of Trench 8.

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced prior to commencement (Avalon 2021) and drawn up in consultation with Devon District Council Historic Environment Team (DCC HET) The evaluation was also carried out in line with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2020).

1.3 This report for the single evaluation trench (Trench 8) is provided as a summary and will be fully amalgamated into the final report for the evaluation and excavation at the Site (ISCA Archaeology 2021).

The Site

1.4 The proposed application Site is within an area totalling approximately 0.3 hectares, which is presently in use as pastoral land and is located on the western edge of the village of Street, to the west of Branscombe. The Site is a triangular plot of land sloping steeply between 103m aOD at its southern end and 82m aOD at its northern end. It is bounded by Branscombe Lane to the north, Berry Hill to the south and the Fountain Head Inn to the east (Figs. 1 and 2).

1.5 The underlying geology is mudstone of the Branscombe Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial Head deposits in the valley base (British Geological Survey 2021). Soils across the site comprise coarse loamy sands of the Bromsgrove Association.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Site has been the subject of previous archaeological evaluation (AC Archaeology 2015) and a WSI (Avalon 2021). The following sections utilise information contained in those documents, which should be referred to for full archaeological details.
- 2.2 Branscombe village lies c. 0.8km to the east of the Site. The village was already established during the Saxon period, with a church dedicated to Saint Winifred suggesting a date after AD 650. The present church of Saint Winifred is of Norman construction.
- 2.3 There are no historic environment records within the Site itself, however several medieval and post medieval quarries are located close by.
- 2.4 The Tithe Map of 1840 (Fig 4) shows the plot of land divided into two parts, to the south-east is an area of pasture, and to the north-west, an orchard on the higher, steeper ground. The Fountain Head Inn had not yet been founded and the site is occupied by a small cottage and associated garden plot. By the later 1st Edition Ordnance Map of 1889, the Site is shown as a single plot of land, with the orchard still depicted, along with The Fountain Head Inn having been established (Fig 5).
- 2.5 An archaeological evaluation of the Site was carried out in 2015 (AC Archaeology 2015) in relation to the application for outline planning permission. The results of this work demonstrated the presence of a group of linear ditch-like features within the southern part of the Site. These were broadly dated due to the recovery of datable ceramic artefacts to the 11th - 15th centuries. This evaluation also produced a small number of residual prehistoric flints but did not suggest the presence of significant prehistoric remains on the site.
- 2.6 No environmental samples were recovered during the evaluation to assess the paleoenvironmental potential of deposits on the Site.
- 2.7 These features predate the earliest surviving elements of Street and have been interpreted as possible infield land divisions relating to a former medieval farmstead in the near vicinity. It has been noted that no evidence has been recovered to suggest settlement or structural remains are present within the Site.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The overarching aims of the evaluation were to:

- Establish whether any further remains related to medieval activity identified in the on-going excavation area to the immediate east extend into the lower portion of the application site.
- To assess the nature and extent of any previous impacts to archaeological remains on the Site.
- Provide information on the significance and survival of archaeological deposits to assist in the formation of a mitigation strategy if required.

3.2 Specific project objectives were to:

- To assess the character, date, depth, location, and preservation of any archaeological deposits on the site.
- To prepare a summary report on the findings to include a comment on the quality and significance of any remains.

Research Aims

3.3 All archaeological work was undertaken with the aim of furthering research into the archaeological resource and our understanding of human history and development. The currently understood state of archaeological knowledge in the area is contained in the document 'South West Archaeological Research Framework' (Southwest Heritage Trust 2012).

3.4 Investigation of the Site had some potential to contribute to the following regional research aims:

- **Research Aim 33:** Widen our understanding of the origins of villages

4. METHODOLOGY: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

4.1 The definition of an archaeological field evaluation is:

‘a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts and their research potential, within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, reports on them and enables an assessment of their significance in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.’ (CIfA, 2020)

4.2 The purpose of an archaeological field evaluation is to:

‘gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:

- a. The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- b. The formulation of a strategy to mitigate a threat to the archaeological resource
- c. The formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research’. (CIfA 2020)

4.3 The fieldwork evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trench (Trench 8) in the location shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). Trench 8 was 20m long and 1.85m wide providing a total area of 37m. Trench 8 was located to the south-west of the existing development site, within the valley bottom. The topography of the rest of the proposed extended development area was extremely steep and prohibited any further evaluation trenching.

4.4 The trench was slightly adjusted from its original intended location due to the proximity of a buried service, and its final location is shown in Fig 2.

GENERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

4.5 The trench was set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using a Leica GPS and scanned for live services by trained ISCA Archaeology staff using CAT and Genny equipment in accordance with the ISCA Safe System of Work for avoiding underground services.

4.6 The trench was excavated by a tracked mechanical excavator (360°) equipped with a toothless grading bucket, and machining was conducted under constant archaeological supervision, ceasing when the first archaeological horizon or natural substrate was revealed. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately.

4.7 Following machining, no archaeological features were revealed. A single modern feature (borehole) was observed and recorded. The exposed trench was planned and recorded on a pro-forma context trench sheet by written and measured description. Excavation of the trench was carried out in accordance with the *Code of Approved Practice* as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and recorded according to CIfA guidelines and best practice. The trench was located using a site grid, which in-turn was surveyed using a Leica GPS with aOD levels. Deposits were also assessed for their paleoenvironmental potential, and none were deemed suitable for sampling.

4.8 An adequate digital photographic record of all the works was compiled. The excavated trench was photographed to illustrate the general nature of the works. A photographic scale and north arrow were included in detailed photographs.

4.9 The subsequent spoil heaps associated with the removed topsoil and subsoil was scanned with a metal detector for artefact retrieval.

4.10 Upon completion of the evaluation, the trench was backfilled by mechanical excavator in reverse order, with topsoil and subsoil backfilled separately.

4.11 ISCA will make arrangements with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Exeter, Devon for the deposition of the Site archive. A digital archive (comprising digital photographs

and other relevant digital data) will be submitted to the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) under the reference number RAMM: 21/18.

4.12 A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix 2, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS. 2-3)

5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix 1. Residual pottery was recovered from the trench and will be discussed in the forthcoming report (ISCA Archaeology 2021: **Report R01-00004-1**).

Trench 8

5.2 This trench was located within the lower reaches of the valley, c. 5 - 6m to the north of Berry Hill and extended from the higher ground (96.38m aOD) to the south-west, to lower ground (92.41m aOD) to the north-east.

5.3 The natural geology consisted of a varied yellow-brown silty clay with frequent sub-angular quartz stones and sub-rounded gravels. It was exposed at a depth of 0.45m – 0.63m below the present ground surface. It was sealed by a yellow-brown sandy silt subsoil (801), between 0.18m – 0.3m thick. This was in turn covered by 0.16m – 0.25m of topsoil (800).

5.4 A single feature [804] was observed towards the higher, south-west end of the trench. Upon initial machining of the trench this feature appeared as a circular cut resembling a posthole. Once excavated this feature was clearly shown to be a modern borehole, most likely as part of a geological survey. The borehole measured 0.3m diameter and initially 0.43m deep but with an unfilled borehole shaft, 0.1m diameter and extending 2.6m below the natural substrate. A few sherds of pottery were recovered from the top of the borehole (802) which were clearly residual and would have derived from the infilling of the borehole with the overlying topsoil/subsoil material. The pottery is yet to be assessed, but the results will be amalgamated into the combined final evaluation and excavation report (ISCA Archaeology 2021).

6. ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1 No deposits within this trench were suitable for paleoenvironmental sampling.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation trench was located close to Berry Hill, but no evidence of any field systems or settlement activity, such as structural remains, were noted. It is likely that any settlement was located elsewhere.

8. ISCA PROJECT TEAM

8.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Sworn, with assistance by Tim Brown and Parris Stubbings. This report was written by Simon Sworn. The illustrations compiled by Tim Brown. The project was managed for ISCA by Simon Sworn and Parris Stubbings.

9. REFERENCES

AC Archaeology 2015. *Land Adjacent to The Fountain Head Inn, Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon: Archaeological Trench Evaluation*. Report **ACD1258/1/0**

Avalon Planning and Heritage Ltd 2021. *Land to the North of Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon. Archaeological Field Evaluation: Witten Scheme of Investigation*. Project Number **A2227**

British Geological Survey (BGS) 2021 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_viewer_google/googleviewer.html (accessed 24 August 2021)

CIfA, 2020. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

Department of Communities and Local Government 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*

ISCA Archaeology 2021 (forthcoming). *Land Adjacent to The Fountain Head Inn, Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon: Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation*. Report **RO1-00004-1**

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DISCRIPTIONS

Trench 8				Length – 20m	Width – 1.9m	Depth – 0.6m	Orientation – NE/SW	
Context No.	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Spot-date
800	Layer		Plough soil	Dark brown friable silty clay, with small sub-angular flints.	>20	>1.9	0.3	
801	Layer		Subsoil	Light yellow-brown firm silty clay, with occasional sub-angular flints.	>20	>1.9	0.18	
802	Fill	803	Bore Hole	Mid-dark brown friable silty clay with occasional sub-angular stones.	0.43	0.43	2.6	
803	Cut		Bore Hole	Cut of bore hole, circular in plan, with steep vertical sides and a gentle concave base with a steep sides vertical cut in the centre.	0.43	0.43	2.6	
804	Layer		Natural	Light yellow-brown firm silty clay, frequent small sub-angular stones	>20	>1.9	-	

APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: TBC

Project Name	Land to the North of Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon
Project Type	Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	<p>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by ISCA Archaeology in August 2021 at Land to the North of Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon. A single 20m trench was excavated was to provide additional information as part of an on-going archaeological excavation being undertaken directly to the north-east at Land adjacent to the Fountain Head Inn, Berry Hill, Branscombe.</p> <p>No archaeological features were noted within this single trench.</p>
Project dates	9 – 20 August 2021
Previous work	Archaeological Evaluation – AC Archaeology 2015
Future work	Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation – ISCA Archaeology 2021
Associated project reference codes	Site code: BHB21 Planning application: 15/1291/MOUT
Type of project	Field evaluation and excavation
Site status	None
Reason for Investigation	National Planning Policy Framework
Position in planning process	Application
Current land use	Pasture
Monument type	None
Significant finds	None
Methods and techniques	Targeted trench
Development type	Housing

PROJECT LOCATION

Site location	Land to the North of Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon
Study area (size)	0.3ha
Site coordinates	SY 1874 8886
Height (aOD)	103m (max), 82m (min)

PROJECT CREATORS

Name of Organisation	ISCA Archaeology
Project Manager	Parris
Project Supervisor	Simon Sworn

ISCA Archaeology 2021 Land to the North of Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon: Archaeological Field Evaluation (Summary Report)

Type of sponsor/
funding body Developer

PROJECT ARCHIVES

Physical Pottery

Digital Photographs, survey, report

Paper Trench sheets, Photograph sheets, drawings

Archive destination Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Devon

PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

ISCA Archaeology 2021 *Land adjacent to The Fountain Head Inn, Berry Hill, Branscombe, Devon: Archaeological Evaluation. ISCA typescript report R01-00004-2*








Trench 8 Post-Excavation. Facing southwest. 2x1m scales



Trench 8 Post-Excavation. Facing northeast. 2x1m scales

 Fig. 3
Trench 8 Photographs

