

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Clawton, Torridge	National Grid Reference SX34949929	Number:
Subject: The Barn at Old Churchtown, Clawton: Conversion of a barn to form a dwelling, with extension		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: 1/0121/2011/FUL	Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon	
OASIS ID: southwes1-104650	Museum Accession no: NDMS2011.29	
Contractor's reference number/code: COC11	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 11 th and 19 th October 2011	

Description of works

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of Mrs Maria Bailey (the Agent) on behalf of Mr George Axford (the Client), at the site of The Barn at Old Churchtown, Clawton, ahead of its conversion into a dwelling (Figure 1). This work was undertaken by Dr S. Walls; a subsequent site visit to monitor the removal of internal floors was carried out by E. Wapshott.

The proposed development site comprised an L-shaped barn complex approximately 75m east of the parish church of St. Leonard, Clawton. A desk-based assessment and archaeological building survey was carried out by SWARCH in 2008; this uncovered documentary and physical evidence to suggest that a medieval or post-medieval manor house or barton may have existed at this location. Elements within the barn complex subject to this development may therefore represent the sole standing remnant of this former settlement.

Area Strip

An area approximately 35×55m across was stripped of topsoil under strict archaeological supervision by a tracked mechanical excavator using a 1.8m wide toothless grading bucket. The topsoil was comprised of a dark greyish-brown silt-clay with common sub-angular (shillet) stones (40-80mm). The topsoil extended to a depth of 0.1-0.22m and overlay the natural subsoil, a compact greyish-yellow clay with frequent distinct bands of shillet orientated approximately east-west.

A number of archeological features were identified in the area stripped under archaeological supervision (see Figure 1). Those features recorded to the south and east of the barn primarily related to modern services and changes to the structure made within the memory of the current owner, including: two water pipes (south-west corner), two other service trenches and a large 2×5m sub-rectangular pit with a recent dark greyish-brown fill which related to the recent agricultural use of the barn (G. Axford *pers. comm.*). An area of rubble that included common fragments of brick and concrete extended from the southern end of the current yard and truncated one of the water pipes and the large pit.

The most striking feature seen on the eastern side of the barn was an area of rough cobbling, constructed from a mix of sub-rounded to sub-angular stones (up to 100mm dia.) and slate/shillet laid on end and bonded with a very gritty greyish-yellow silt-clay. This area of cobbling seemed in its extent to correspond closely with the surviving yard of the barn (to its immediate east), which could suggest that the yard to the barn had formerly been larger, although this is not evident in the cartographic sources. Equally, it is possible that this area of cobbling may relate to a 'house and yard' shown in this approximate location (depicted slightly further south) on the 1844 tithe map for Clawton but demolished by the time of the 1st Edition OS map of 1889. However, no traces of walls or other features survived to support this suggestion and no datable material was recovered from within or beneath the surface, which was removed by machine under archaeological supervision.

The area to the west of the barn had a greater number of archaeological features, although most of these were again of a relatively recent date and related to the use of the barn (see Figure 2). The most southerly feature was a linear spread of gritty greyish-brown silt-clay (105) containing common sub-angular stones (up to 120mm) and roots. This material (105) survived to a depth of 0.03m and related to the remnant hedgebank (constructed between 1844 and 1889) which had formerly abutted the south-west corner of the barn. The fact that there was no evidence of any flanking ditches suggests that the material used in the construction of the hedgebank was probably derived from the demolition of several other boundaries (and buildings) at this time (see SWARCH 2008). This is perhaps supported by the single find recovered from deposit (105), a small (3g) residual sherd of badly abraded 12-13th century North Devon gravel-tempered pottery. Otherwise, the bank material may have come from a possible quarry pit lying between the church and the development area.

Three approximately parallel linear features, [107], [109] and [122], orientated east-west, lay to the west of the barn. Linear [107] was 2.25m wide with a surviving length of c.8.5m. It cut the foundation trench for the wall of the barn and must therefore postdate 1844. Feature [107] was filled by a dark brown clay-silt (106) that contained common sub-angular stones and produced a single find, part of an iron hinge (106g) of probable 19th century date. To the north of this feature lay linear [112]. This was c.3m wide with a surviving length of c.10.5m. It was filled by (111) a dark brown clay-silt that contained common sub-angular stones (identical to (106)) and clearly cut the surviving wall cut for the barn. Four sherds (39g) of pottery (×2 white refined earthenware, ×2 North Devon wares) were recovered from (111), which suggests an 18th-19th century date at the earliest for these features. Given the late date of these features, they were not fully excavated.

Between [107] and [112] lay linear [109]. This feature was c.2m wide and up to c.13m long. A section excavated through this feature at the western end (where it petered out) demonstrated it had a shallow U-shaped profile up to c.0.07m deep. Linear [109] was filled with a soft greyish-brown silt-clay (110) which contained considerably less stone than the fills of linears [112] and [107], which suggests a slightly different use, origin and perhaps earlier date, although no finds were recovered from the feature to support this suggestion. Linear [109] was presumably still visible or in use when [112] and [107] were created, as they respect the orientation and spacing of linear [109]. Linear [109] probably corresponds to a field boundary shown on the tithe map of 1844.

The edge of a further feature [115], probably a linear, was observed at the western edge of excavation. It was at least 8m long with an observed width of 0.1m+. The limited sample meant that the full profile of feature [115] was not possible to ascertain, but it appeared to be only 0.12m deep and have a gentle curving profile. Feature [115] was filled by a gritty grey silt-clay and contained abundant (60%) small sub-angular stones (up to 75mm dia.). The small proportion of this feature that could be excavated nonetheless produced a large quantity of 12-13th century North Devon gravel-tempered pottery (×23 sherds weighing 230g) and a single slate fragment (42g). Feature [115] lay outside the area of the proposed development and should not be affected by associated groundworks, but offers a tantalizing hint at the existence of medieval activity further to the west.

There were two other spreads of material that survived pushed into the top of the natural. A sub-ovoid spread of dark grey-black gritty silt-clay (113) with common charcoal fragments appears to have been the remnants of a bonfire and was also visible within the topsoil so is probably of recent date. More interesting was the truncated remains of a spread of burnt clay and charcoal (116) which had seemingly been pushed up against the northern hedgebank. This truncated spread of heated material (116) had either been deposited whilst it was still hot as the natural had been oxidized in its immediate vicinity, or it was the *in-situ* base of a truncated high-intensity heating event. Spread (116) produced ×4 fragments of iron slag (941g, including half a smithing hearth base).

Hedgebank

As part of the proposed development the existing driveway splay was to be enlarged and the hedgebank cut back. This was supervised by S. Walls and the resulting sections recorded (Figure 3). The east-facing section revealed that below the extremely clean and soft dark greyish-brown silt-loam topsoil (200) was a layer of redeposited natural subsoil 0.25m thick (201). Below (201) was a deposit of greyish-brown silt-clay (202) containing common roots and occasional stones, which appears to represent an accumulation of topsoil that occurred within a dip in the bank (see Figure 3). Deposit (202) overlay a loose greyish-yellow clay-silt deposit of mixed redeposited subsoil and topsoil (203), which in turn overlay another of redeposited subsoil, which was only differentiated by its slightly firmer consistency (204). These two deposits probably relate to the soil stripped during the construction of the concrete yard to the north of the barns (immediately south of the hedge), pushed up and over the original hedgebank, which itself was comprised of two distinct deposits. An upper 0.4m thick layer of mixed and loose grey silt-clay (205) containing rare stones and charcoal smears, over a core of compact gritty silt-clay (206) containing common sub-angular stones. Deposit (206) lay directly on the natural subsoil, which suggests that the field may have been partially stripped, perhaps during the cutting of the road [207] to the north.

The west-facing section (Figure 3) was far simpler in its composition, being comprised of only three deposits: the modern topsoil (200), the historic topsoil (205), and the original core of re-deposited natural (206).

No finds were recovered from the excavated portion of the hedgebank.

Floors

Three small areas were excavated by a machine with a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision within the barns themselves. These revealed that no floor surfaces were evident, with only a deposit of greyish-yellow clay-silt with occasional slate fragments occurring above the clean yellow natural subsoil.

No finds were recovered from the areas of excavation within the barns.

Topsoil finds

The finds recovered from the topsoil comprised a ceramic assemblage that includes ×1 sherd (5g) of Saxo-Norman North Devon Ware (this is possibly prehistoric?); ×15 sherds (69g) 14th-15th century North Devon gravel-tempered wares; ×12 sherds (74g) 12th-13th century North Devon gravel-tempered wares; ×4 sherds (32g) post-medieval North Devon gravel-tempered wares; ×6 sherds (16g) white refined earthenware; ×1 sherd (5g) 18th

century Chinese porcelain; ×1 sherd (3g) late 18th century Scratch Blue stoneware; ×1 sherd (1g) Bristol/Staffordshire yellow slipware; ×1 sherd (6g) yellow and brown polychrome slipware.

The non-ceramic finds from the topsoil include ×4 shards (140g) of 18th century bottle glass; ×3 fragments (164g) clinker, and ×1 Iron nail (18g).

Bibliography

South West Archaeology 2008: *The Barn East of St. Leonards Church, Clawton, Devon: Results of a Desk-Based Assessment and Archaeological Building Survey*. Report no: 081015

A plan as well as any other relevant drawings must be attached showing the location and extent of site, areas investigated and features exposed.

Recorder: S. Walls

Date sent to HER: 5.1.2012

Please email completed form to: archaeol@devon.gov.uk or post to County Archaeology Service, Environment Directorate, Matford Lane Offices, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QW. Information recorded on this form will be added to the Historic Environment Record, and made available to all researchers.

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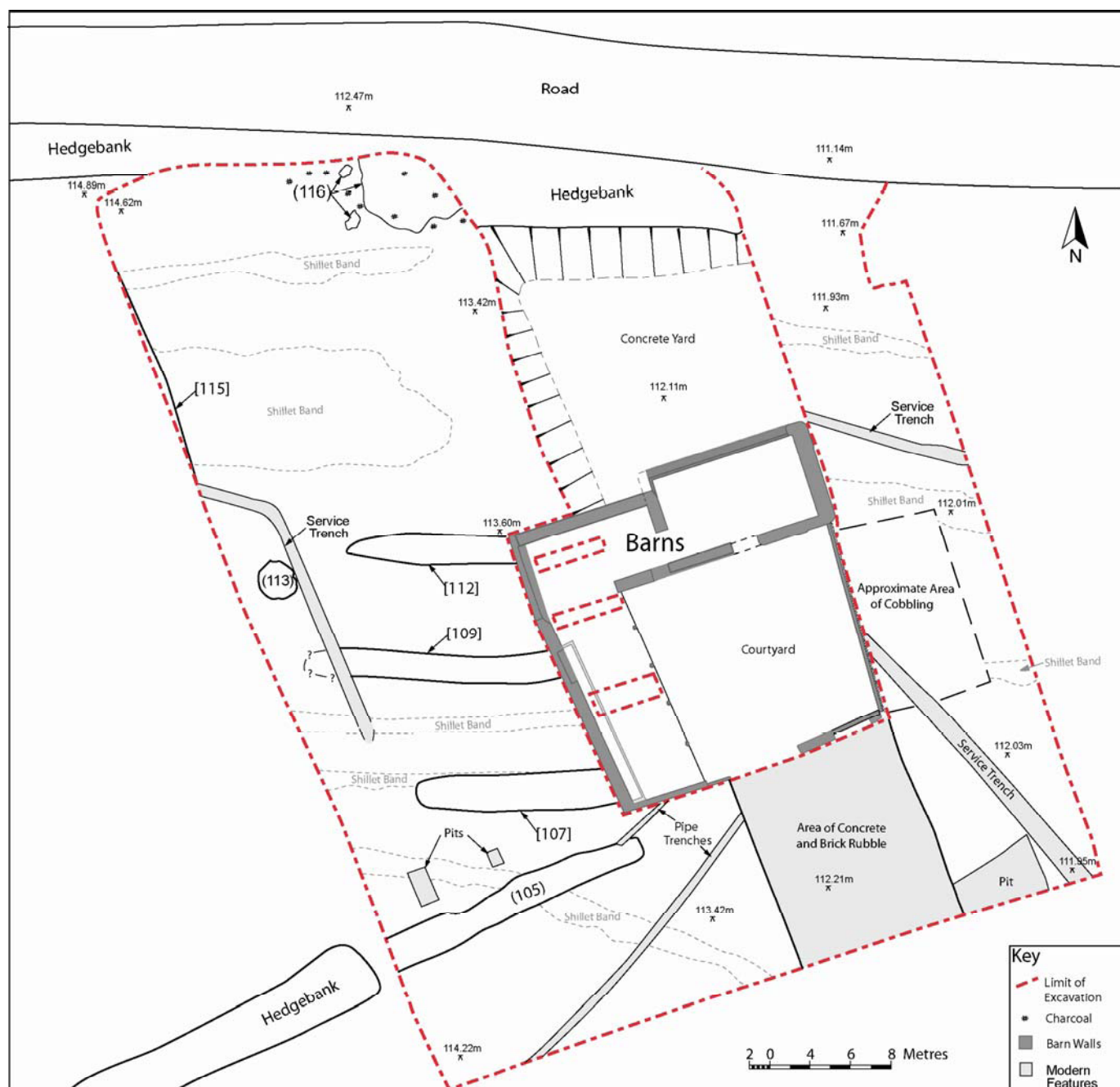


Figure 1: Plan of the excavated area.



Figure 2: Area of excavation with the barns in the background, viewed from the west (scale 2m).

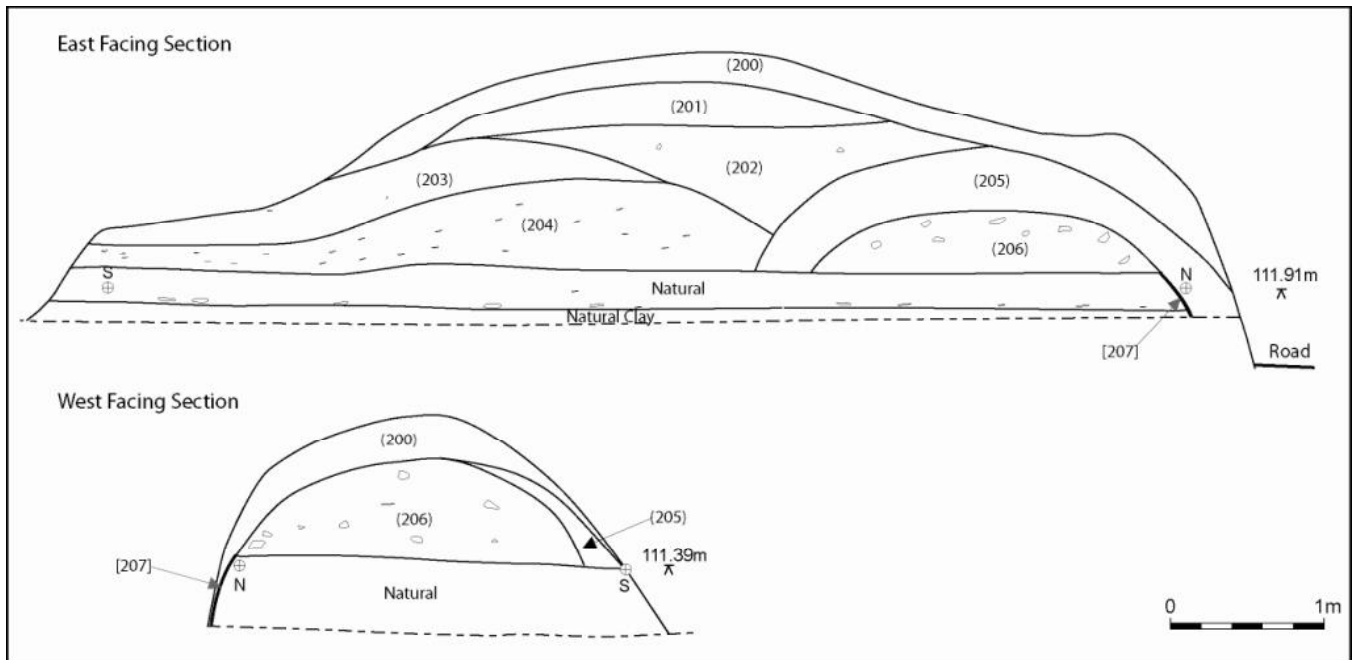


Figure 3: Sections through the hedgebank.