

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Bittadon, North Devon	National Grid Reference 254271,142355	Number:
Subject: Erection of a 17.8 meter high wind turbine at The Old Rectory, Bittadon		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: 53177	Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon	
OASIS ID: southwes1-118729	Museum Accession no: NDDMS 2012.4	
Contractor's reference number/code: BOR12	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 15 th October 2012	

Description of works.

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of Mrs Angela McGarry (the Client) during the groundworks associated with the proposed erection of a wind turbine at The Old Rectory, Bittadon, North Devon (Figure 1). The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation drawn up by SWARCH in response to a Brief supplied by Stephen Reed of Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET). The work was undertaken by Dr. S. Walls.

The development site lies within an area of archaeological potential, with, located approximately 250m to the north of the site, a group of prehistoric funerary monuments that are subject to statutory protection as Scheduled Monuments (monument refs: 2174 & 34252). There are no archaeological sites recorded within the proposed site of the turbine and cable trench route, although it was possible that archaeological deposits or artefacts associated with the known prehistoric activity in this area may have survived in the areas affected by the construction works.

The 1840 tithe map and apportionment for Bittadon indicates that the development site sits within two arable fields, named *Long Field* (no. 141) and *South Field* (no. 186), which are listed as Glebe lands occupied at the time by Reverend Arthur Dene (see Figure 2). The reverend resided in Parsonage House to the south-west of the proposed development, now known as Centery Farm. The house now known as the Old Rectory and located to the south of the turbine was constructed as a new parsonage in the 1850s, although Parsonage House remained within the vicar's land holdings.

The field slopes gently from north-east to south-west, becoming slightly steeper towards its southern boundary. The field is bounded by earth and stone hedgebanks c.1.5m high, with a fence forming its southern boundary. The western boundary is flanked by the sunken Centery Lane, which is likely to have been part of an historic droveway leading to the higher ground of Berry Down. The site was under short cropped grass when attended by the site archaeologist although there were no visible earthworks noted.

The Excavation

The areas of the turbine base and cable trench were excavated by a machine fitted with toothless grading buckets (1.6m and 0.6m wide) under archaeological supervision. The excavations first removed the topsoil to allow any necessary archaeological recording to be carried out. The excavations subsequently proceeded to formation level without archaeological supervision being required.

The topsoil (100) consisted of a c.0.3m thick slightly reddish-brown slightly clayey silt containing occasional small sub-angular shillet and quartz fragments (>40mm). The lower part (c.0.15m) of this topsoil deposit was slightly greyer and drier in consistency, contained slightly more frequent stones and is likely to be indicative of a plough soil horizon. Below this topsoil deposit was a 0.12m thick subsoil deposit (101) of gritty greyish-brown clay-silt with common sub-angular shillet and quartz fragments (>70mm). Rare flecks of charcoal were also noted within deposit (101). Deposit (101) directly overlay the natural (102) which consisted of a yellow-ginger clay with bands of greyish-cream clay and common shillet fragments (>70mm). In the area of the turbine base three large blocky stones (c.0.35x0.3x0.3m) that projected into the subsoil from the natural, were torn out by the machine. No similar stones were seen elsewhere within the limited area of excavation, but there was no evidence of them having formed a feature or having been cut into the natural.

Only two archaeological features were noted [103] and [105]. These were both located within the narrow cut of the cable trench, and were excavated by hand. Feature [103] was the more substantial of the two features, and appears to have been a north-east by south-west orientated linear ditch. Feature [103] was 1.8m wide and

survived to a depth of 0.32m; it had a gentle v-shaped profile and a slightly curved base. It contained a single fill (104) of soft dark reddish-brown slightly clayey-silt with small rare sub-angular shillet and quartz. Feature [105] was located 1.9m to the south of [103], and consisted of a shallow linear ditch following the same orientation and profile as [103]. Feature [105] was a 1.1m wide feature which survived to a depth of 0.14m and contained a single dark greyish-brown slightly clayey-silt with rare stones. Both features [103] and [105] were sealed by the topsoil (100) and cut the subsoil deposit (101).

Features [103] and [105] are probably the remnants of ditches which had flanked a former hedge bank which is likely to correspond with a boundary shown on the 1840 tithe map. However, no trace of a bank was visible in the examined area. A single pottery sherd, found in the fill (104) of ditch [103], suggests that this boundary and perhaps much of the surrounding field system dates to the 17th century. The Historic Landscape Characterisation suggests that these fields represent later medieval enclosure of former open strip-fields and it is possible that the enclosure of this area relates to the same phase as the establishment of the parsonage (Centery Farm) to the south-west.

Finds

A single find was recovered from the fill (104) of linear [103]. This was a sherd of 17th century yellow slipware (6g).

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: 16.10.2012

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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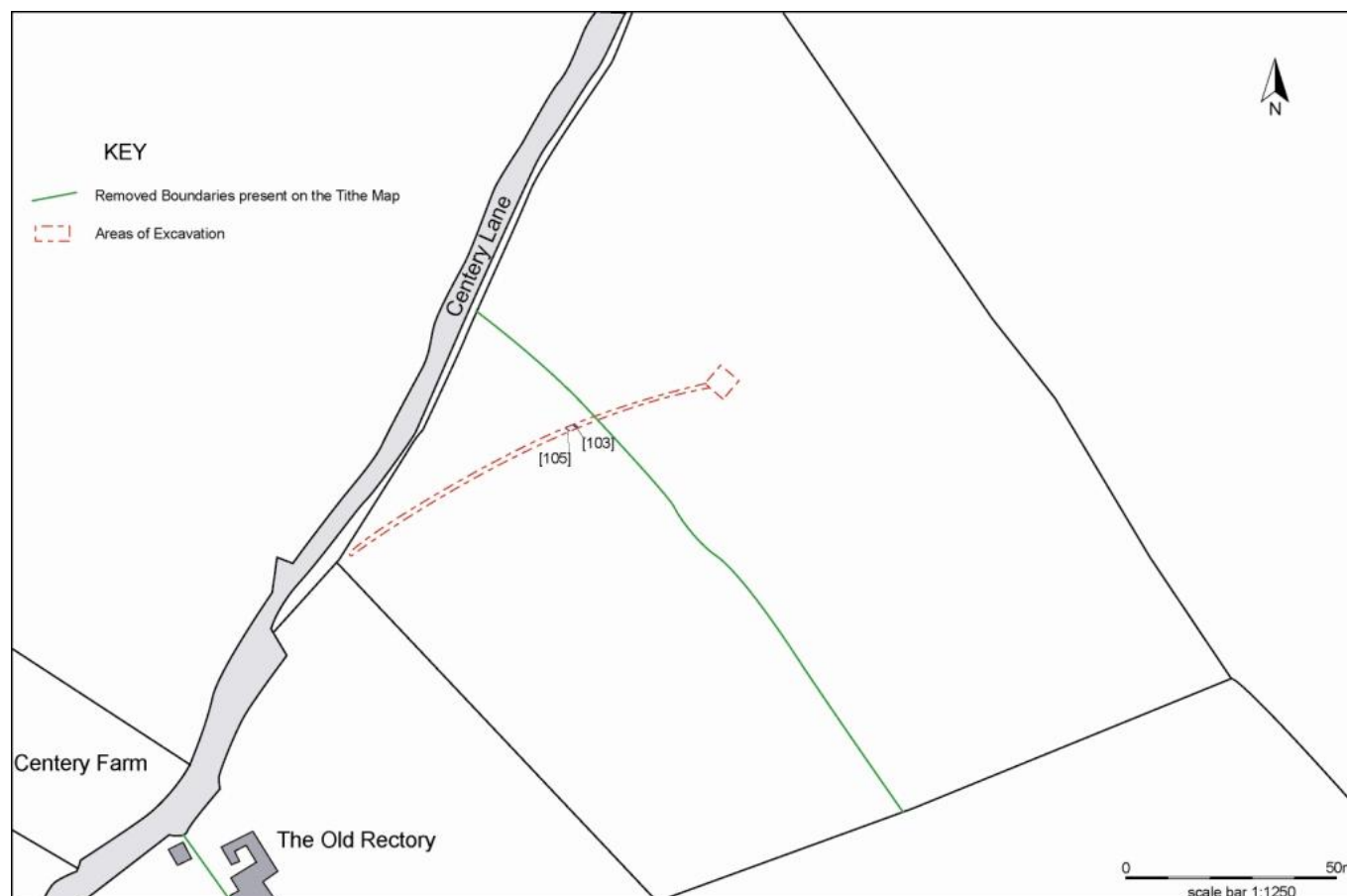


Figure 1: Site plan showing the location of the excavations.



Figure 2: Extract from the 1840 Bittadon Tithe Map. The approximate area of the field in which the development is situated is bounded in red.



Figure 3: Above – Area of the turbine base following the strip, the scale is located adjacent to one of the grubbed up stone locations (2m scale). Below – South-east facing section through ditch [103] (2m scale).