

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: South Molton, North Devon	National Grid Reference SS 6930 2638	Number:
Subject: Erection of 4 poultry breeder units, 12 feed bins & service building, 1 general purpose agricultural building, water retention pond & associated landscaping at Hill Farm, Hill Village, South Molton		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: 55106	Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon	
OASIS ID: southwes1-141195	Museum Accession no: NDDMS:2013.5	
Contractor's reference number/code: SMH13	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 14 th -17 th and 22-24 th May 2013	
<p>Description of Works:</p> <p>Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of Graham Smaldon of DJ Smaldon & Son/Kingsland Farm Partnership (the Client) prior to the construction of a range of existing Agricultural Buildings and associated landscaping at Hill Farm, Hill village, South Molton, North Devon (Figure 1). The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI Ref: SWARCH: SMH13/2) drawn up in accordance to a brief supplied by Stephen Reed (ref: 31.01.2013) of Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET). This work was undertaken over several days in May 2013 by Dr. Bryn Morris, Emily Wapshott and Dr. Samuel Walls.</p> <p>The development lay c.160m to the northeast of a possible prehistoric settlement site identified by aerial photography (MDV16065), the HER also lists a small assemblage of medieval pottery as having been recovered from within this enclosure (MDV43866). The groundworks for the proposed development had the potential to expose and destroy archaeological deposits as well as artefactual material associated with this known prehistoric and medieval activity.</p> <p>The proposed development took place within the northern part of a large sub-rectangular field, which on the 1844 tithe map for South Molton is shown as two separate enclosures. The field to the east, known as <i>Cow Cleve</i>, and that to the west, <i>Second Field</i>, were part of the holdings of <i>South Hill</i> which was owned by <i>Earl Fortescue</i> and leased to a <i>Robert Hancock</i> at the time of the accompanying (1839) apportionment. The Historic Landscape Characterisation suggests that the field is based upon medieval enclosure originating as strip fields and that the fields to the north, through which the access road will run are modern enclosures of rough (presumably marshy) ground.</p> <p>The topsoil strip was undertaken by a 13 tonne tracked swing-shovel fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless grading bucket. After monitoring the initial topsoil strip it was decided in consultation with Ann-Marie Dick and Stephen Reed (DCHET) that given that the formation level was still within the topsoil layers that a series of trenches could be opened in order to establish the nature of any surviving archaeological features or deposits. The remainder of the topsoil strip proceeded without archaeological monitoring. Four trenches were excavated within the stripped area to the west of the development to the depth of the natural subsoil (see Figure 1). In addition to the four trenches the field to the north of the development was stripped to the depth of natural subsoil in preparation for the access route. This additional stripping occurred whilst the archaeologist was present on site. An inspection of the stripped area for the access revealed no archaeological features.</p> <p>The topsoil (100) consisted of an upper 0.15-0.25m thick ploughsoil of buff/grey-brown slightly mottled friable silt-clay, which overlay a lower topsoil deposit (0.2m-0.25m thick) of very compact grey silt-clay with slight orange and yellow mottling (101).</p> <p>There were a small number of features revealed cutting into the natural subsoil within the four evaluative trenches (Figures 1-3), these were investigated by hand. The features included a network of post medieval field-drains (features [102], [118], [120], [126] and an ephemeral remnant [110]) which were broadly orientated northwest-southeast. All of these five lengths of exposed drain measured 0.3-0.4m wide and were filled with loose dark grey-brown silt-clays, containing common to frequent sub-angular stones (>150mm diameter). These features were cleaned and a small number of post-medieval finds recovered (see below), but given the nature and date of these features they were not excavated.</p> <p>There were also two small undated pits [128] and [130] identified at the junction of Trenches 2 and 4 (see Figure 1-2). Pit [128] was sub-oval in plan and measured some 0.93m x 0.82m and was typically 0.15m deep with a gentle sloping profile and flat to slightly concave base. Along the western edge of the cut was a deeper (c.0.26m) and</p>		

steeper profiled element to the pit, which perhaps suggests that this feature represent two phases with a smaller pit/posthole re-cut by a larger and shallower feature. There was however no obvious differentiation within the fill (129), which was a dark-orange clay-silt with common charcoal inclusions and frequent burnt sub-angular stones (>80mm dia). Pit [130] was located 1.8m to the north-northeast of pit [128] and was also sub-oval in plan measuring 0.5m x 0.3m, but with a projecting 0.2m diameter curving element centrally positioned on its northern edge. Pit [130] survived to a depth of 0.13m and had a gentle sloping profile and flat base, with a deeper (0.18m) and steeper profiled element to the north, which had a concave base, which appears, as with pit [128], to represent an earlier pit/post-hole which had been re-cut by a shallower pit. The fill (131) of pit [130] was identical in nature to that of pit [128].

The final archaeological feature identified was a ditch [122] which enclosed an elliptical space measuring 4m x 1.8m (Figures 2-3). Ditch [122] itself was 0.33m wide and had a steep sloping profile to a concave base surviving on average to a depth of 0.17m. Ditch [122] was filled by (123) a firm reddish-yellow clay-silt with rare charcoal smears. Morphologically this feature was initially believed to be a likely tree-throw given its shape in plan, however on excavation the profile of the feature was very consistent and the 'natural' on both sides of the feature was seemingly identical (see Figure 3).

A small assemblage of finds were recovered from the topsoil stripping these consisted of 9x sherds of white refined earthenware (36g), 3x fragments of modern ceramic drain (78g), 1x brick fragment (17g). The stratified finds were all recovered from the fills of land drains. Those from (103) consisted of 1x clay pipe stem (4g) and 2x sherds of post-medieval North Devon wares (63g); from (119) 1x clay pipe stem (5g); and from (121), 1x post-medieval North Devon wares (3g). All of these finds were subsequently discarded.

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: Dr. S. Walls, South West Archaeology Ltd

Date sent to HER: 07/08/2013

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: a) Regional location. b) Site plan showing the proposed development overlain with the extent of the topsoil strip and the locations of the evaluative trenches, the area in pink was the area of 'cut' with the area to the northeast an area of 'fill'.
c) Site location map showing the development area highlighted in red.

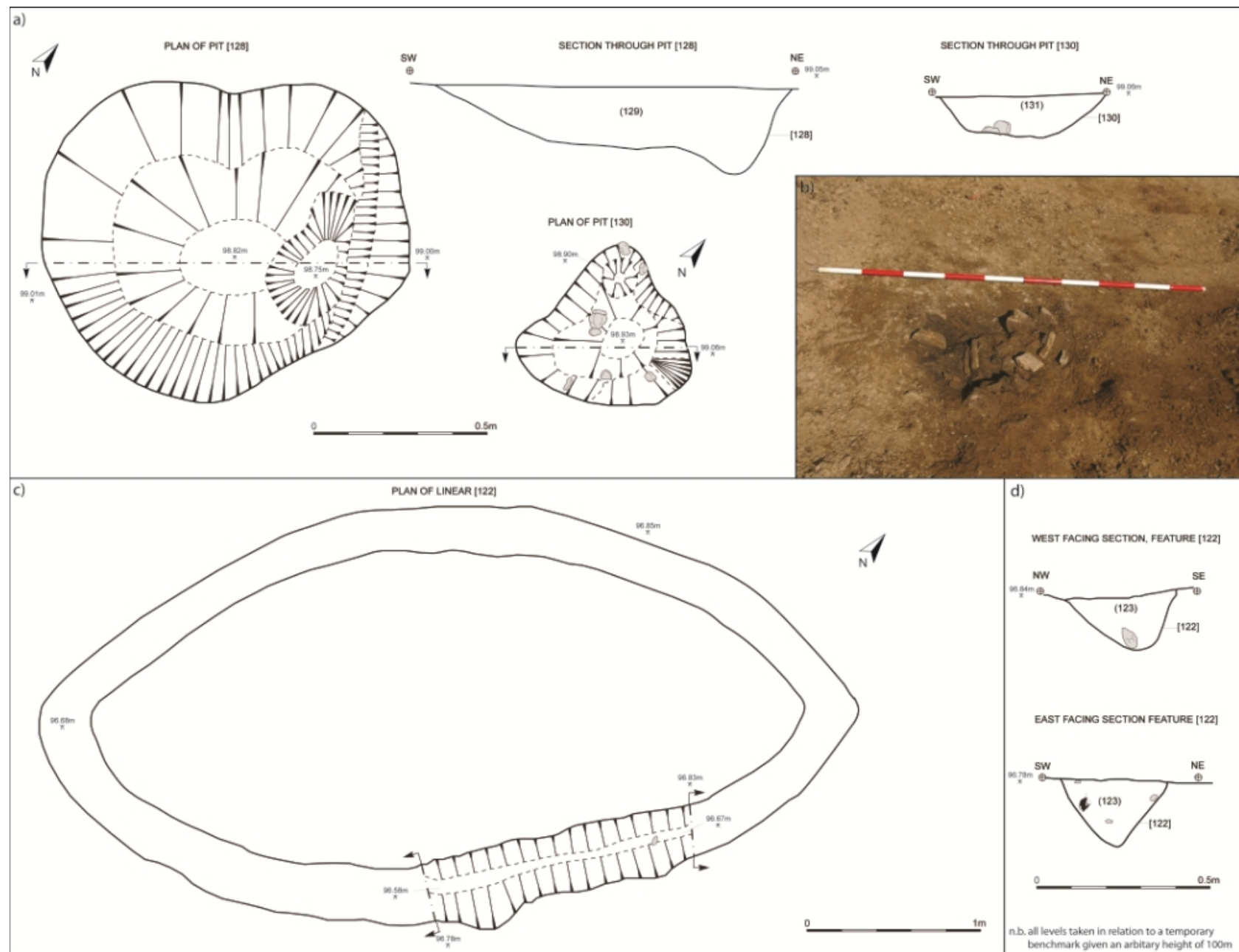


Figure 2: a) Detailed plans and sections of pits [128] and [130]. b) Pre-ex shot of pit [130], from the northwest (2m scale). c) Plan of feature [122], d) Sections through [122].



Figure 3: Left – Pre-ex shot of Feature [122], marked with red pegs, viewed from the northeast (2m scale). Right – Excavated portion of linear [122], viewed from the northeast (1m scale).