

**LAND AT EAST STOWFORD BARTON
BERRYNARBOR
NORTH DEVON
DEVON**

Results of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 300418



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Land at East Stowford Barton, Berrynarbor, North Devon, Devon Results of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

By S. Walls
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Work undertaken by SWARCH for Mr. W. Rice of Stowford Farm Meadows

SUMMARY

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned to undertake archaeological monitoring and recording during the creation of fourteen static-caravan pitches and associated access road and services. This phase of work builds upon a previous desk-based appraisal, geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation. A further 21 static-caravan plots remain to be developed across the southern half of the field.

The monitoring validated the results of the earlier work, with many of the observed features identified in the geophysical survey or archaeological evaluation. Eight features (seven ditches and one posthole) were investigated. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the upper fill of a deep V-shaped ditch, which the evaluation tentatively interpreted as part of a Prehistoric/Romano-British hill-slope enclosure. This would suggest it forms part of a medieval strip field system. The only other artefacts recovered – a small assemblage of post-medieval and modern finds – came from the topsoil.



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CONTENTS

<i>SUMMARY</i>	2
<i>CONTENTS</i>	3
<i>LIST OF FIGURES</i>	4
<i>LIST OF APPENDICES</i>	4
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	4
<i>PROJECT CREDITS</i>	4
1.0 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND	5
1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	5
1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	5
1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	5
1.5 METHODOLOGY	6
2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING	7
2.1 INTRODUCTION	7
2.2 RESULTS	7
3.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	14
3.1 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	14
4.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY	15

LIST OF FIGURES

COVER PLATE: SHOT OF PLOT C MID-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (NO SCALE).

FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION.	6
FIGURE 2: DETAIL OF THE EXCAVATED AREAS, WITH RESULTS OF THE GEOPHYSICS AND EVALUATION TRENCHING.	8
FIGURE 3: SOUTH-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [022].	10
FIGURE 4: EAST-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [015].	10
FIGURE 5: POST-EX PLANS OF PLOTS A, C AND D AND CORRESPONDING SECTIONS.	11
FIGURE 6: POST-EX PLANS OF PLOTS E, G AND H AND CORRESPONDING SECTIONS.	12
FIGURE 7: POST-EX PLANS OF PLOTS L AND N, AND CORRESPONDING SECTIONS.	13

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST	16
APPENDIX 2: FINDS CONCORDANCE	17
APPENDIX 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE	18

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION:	LAND AT EAST STOWFORD BARTON
PARISH:	BERRYNARBOR
DISTRICT:	NORTH DEVON
COUNTY:	DEVON
NGR:	SS55804288

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) on land at East Stowford Barton, Berrynarbor, Devon (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Mr. W. Rice (the Client) in order to record any buried archaeology that might be affected by the development of fourteen of 46 proposed static-caravan pitches and the associated infrastructure.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

East Stowford Barton lies approximately 4km south of the settlement of Berrynarbor and 5km south-east of Ilfracombe, close to the edge of Exmoor. The site comprises a single sub-rectangular field c.1ha in extent, located in an elevated position on a south-south-west facing slope at an altitude of c.220m AOD. It lies within an area of rolling hills perched above the Colam Stream. The soils of this area are the well-drained fine loamy soils of the Denbigh 1 Association (SSEW 1983), overlying the slates of the Morte Slates Formation (BGS 2018).

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1840 East Stowford was owned by Joseph Davie Bassett, the owner-occupier of Watermouth Castle at Ilfracombe and scion of the Bassetts of Orleigh Court. The Bassetts acquired the Manor of Berrynarbor in 1712 by order of the Court of Chancery from the Berry family. Lysons (1822) also notes that Bassett held the Manor of East Haggington and Woolscott (purchased from the Rev. John Pine Coffin) “and the barton of East Stowford”. East Stowford appears as parcel of the Manor of Berrynarbor in 1712, but was first documented in 1332 (EA 2002).

1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Devon HLC characterises the fields around East Stowford Barton as *Barton Fields*, large semi-regular fields enclosed 1500-1800 but incorporating earlier elements. The archaeological potential of the area was assessed by Exeter Archaeology in 2002, and geophysical surveys (Substrata 2004; 2014b) across the eastern part of the farm identified a deserted medieval hamlet and a concentration of geophysical anomalies and earthworks that might belong to a manorial settlement. The deserted hamlet was evaluated prior to the development of static-caravans pitches (SWARCH 2005).

This development site has also been the subject of a geophysical (gradiometer) survey (Substrata 2014a), which identified a series of linear and other discrete geophysical anomalies. Evaluation of these anomalies revealed a relatively dense concentration of archaeological features of unknown date, assumed to be Prehistoric or early medieval; this included a deep narrow linear feature interpreted as an enclosure ditch (SWARCH 2015).

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out in a staged manner between June and December 2017, in accordance with a Project Design (Boyd 2017) drawn up in consultation with Stephen Reed of DCHET and in accordance to ClfA guidelines (ClfA 2014; 2015).



FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION (THE SITE IS INDICATED).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A total of 14 static-caravan pitches, some service trenches and c.30% of the access road were excavated under archaeological supervision (see Figure 2). The rest of the service trenches and the access road were subject to intermittent monitoring due to the limited impact of these works. The trenches were opened by a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide and 0.5m wide toothless grading buckets. The topsoil across the site was a firm mid greyish-brown slightly clayey silt loam; this overlay a soft reddish-yellow brown clayey silt subsoil which varied in thickness and extent across the site. This in turn overlaid the natural, a variable/banded blue-grey shillet. Eight archaeological features were encountered: seven ditches and one posthole. A small number of natural and geological features were also encountered, as well as the old evaluation trenches and a modern (trenchless) water pipe. North-south orientated plough scars were observed in Plot C. What follows is a summary of the main points; a detailed context list can be found in Appendix 1; finds list in Appendix 2, and the photographic archive in Appendix 3.

2.2 RESULTS

2.2.1 ASSESSMENT OF METHODOLOGY

The excavation of the 14 individual static-caravan pitches proved the most worthwhile. Each plot was c.13.5m long by c.7m wide (long axis orientated north-east to south-west), but as these plots were terraced into the hillside to create a level platform the natural was only exposed across the north-eastern part of each plot. As a result, only c.6% of the total area of the field was exposed. During the monitoring works the weather was, for the most part, fairly benign, and the features that cut the natural were readily apparent. The intermittent monitoring confirmed the service trenches and access road remained within the topsoil (001) or provided minimal additional information. Plots B, F, I, J, K and M revealed no archaeological features or deposits. Plots D and E exposed geological variations in the shillet, although both appeared to correspond with geophysical anomalies. The results for the other plots are detailed below.

2.2.2 PLOT A

Plot A exposed the western end of Evaluation Trench 1, which appeared to cut a very slight feature [003] against the western section of the excavated Plot (see Figure 5). Feature [003] was c.1.1m wide in the exposed section and up to 0.15m deep, with a gently sloping and undulating profile. It was filled with (004), a clean reddish-brown silt-clay with rare shillet fragments, and was cut by Evaluation Trench 1. This feature could represent the edge of the north-south orientated ditch [022] observed in Plot N, and ditch [107] in the evaluation (SWARCH 2015). A tree-throw and/or root disturbance was also noted and investigated west of the evaluation trench. Monitoring of the service trench that served Plot A identified in section feature [007], c.2m wide and 0.5m deep with an irregular base. The profile and re-deposited natural fill (108) of feature [007] would indicate this is likely to be another tree-throw.

2.2.3 PLOT C

Plot C was the only one with clear plough scars (Figure 5). These were orientated approximately north-south across the western part of the stripped area. An area of modern tree rooting/animal disturbance was also apparent. The base of a shallow ditch [005], 0.3m wide and up to 0.2m deep with a V-shaped profile, was exposed on the western side of Plot C. This feature was orientated roughly north-south and contained a single fill (006), a compact grey-yellow silt-clay with occasional small stones, shillet and quartz. Very rare charcoal flecks (two) were noted at the base of the fill.

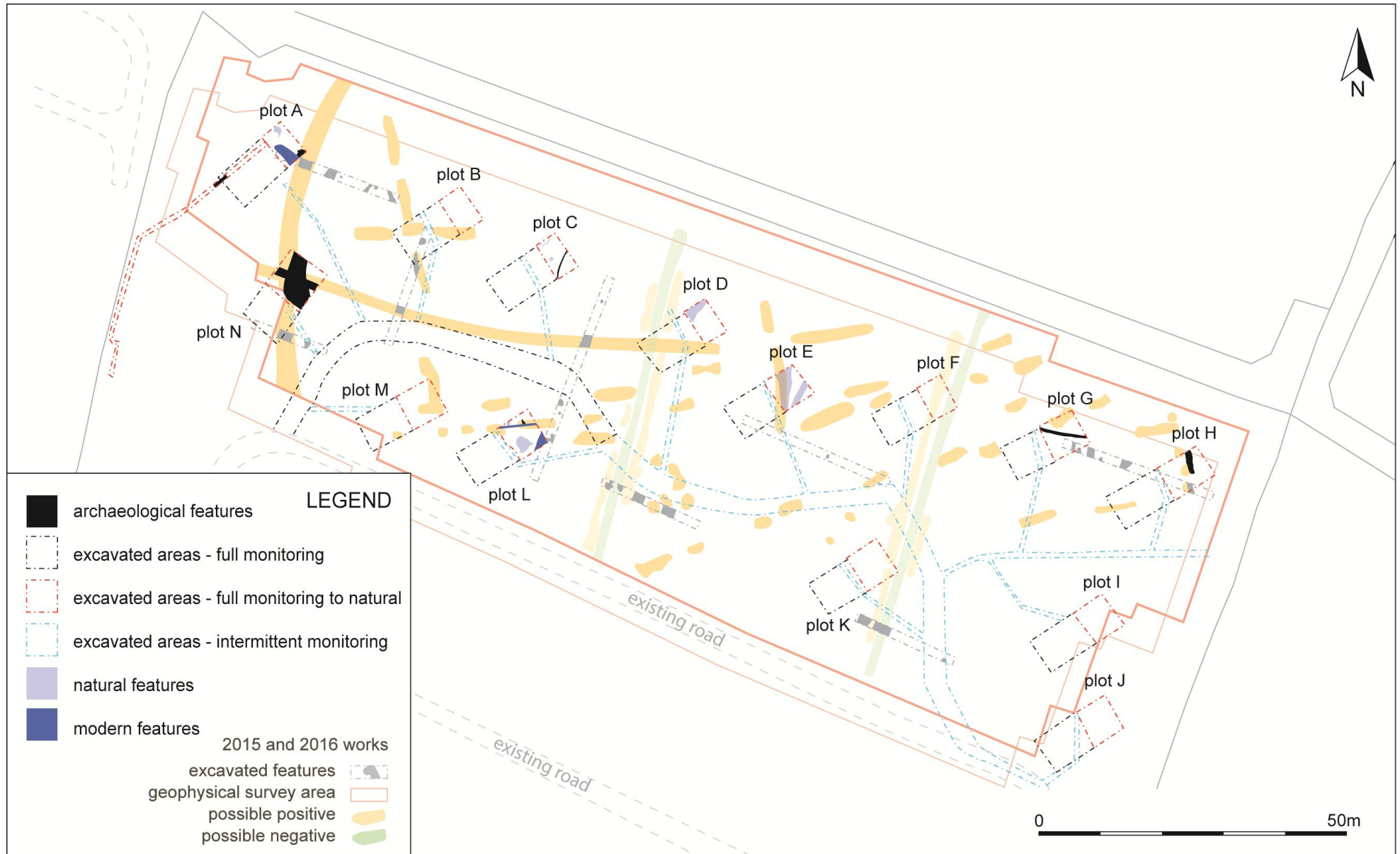


FIGURE 2: DETAIL OF THE EXCAVATED AREAS, OVERLAIN ON THE RESULTS OF THE GEOPHYSICS (AFTER SUBSTRATA 2014) AND EVALUATION TRENCHING (AFTER SWARCH 2015).

2.2.4 PLOT G

Monitoring at Plot G recorded a very shallow (>0.05m) ditch [011] (Figure 6). This was 0.55m wide with a flat base and slightly sloping sides, orientated east-west. It was filled by (012), a soft very clean greyish-brown silt-clay, with rare small sub-angular shillet fragments. The feature may be fairly recent in date, although it did not appear to cut the subsoil. It was located very close to Evaluation Trench 8.

2.2.5 PLOT H

A single ditch was exposed in Plot H (Figure 6). Ditch [010] was orientated north-west to south-east and appeared to terminate at its south-east end. Its observed length was 3.6m and it was 1.2m wide and 0.2m deep; it had moderate sloping sides and a wide flat but slightly irregular base. The single fill (011) was a clean reddish-yellow slightly clayey-silt with rare shillet fragments and occasional large irregular sub-angular stones, including quartz. Evaluation Trench 8, which should have bisected this plot, was not apparent; this would suggest it passed through the part of the plot still covered with topsoil.

2.2.6 PLOT L

Plot L exposed part of Evaluation Trench 4 and a plastic water pipe orientated north-west to south-east (Figure 7). The water pipe appears to have been inserted by mole, which may account for some of the intermittent anomalies picked up by the geophysical survey. Directly above the water pipe was a very irregular sub-circular pit [013]; this was 0.55m in diameter and contained a single fill (014) of soft grey-brown silt, with rare stone and occasional shillet fragments. This feature was visible in the topsoil and probably relates to the insertion of the water pipe.

2.2.7 PLOT N

Plot N proved to be the most interesting; located by happy coincidence at the intersection of two linear features [015] and [022] (Figure 7). Ditch [015] was orientated broadly east-west, c.1.4m wide and c.1m deep (Figure 4). It had steep sloping sides, with a slightly steeper southern face, and a steep and sharply concave base. There were multiple fills, most of which appeared to have slumped into the feature from the south, thereby perhaps representing a collapsed/removed bank on this side. The upper fill contained a single sherd (16g) of 13th-15th century North Devon medieval coarseware (NDMC).

Ditch [015] cut the fills of Ditch [022]; this was orientated north-south, 3-3.5m wide but only 0.35m deep with very gently-sloping sides and a broad slightly concave base (Figure 4). It contained multiple very clean fills. It is possible this feature may form part of a relict fieldsystem of Prehistoric date, but without secure dating evidence or additional geophysical survey it would be very difficult to be conclusive.



FIGURE 3: SOUTH-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [022]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



FIGURE 4: EAST-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [015]; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).

2.2.8 FINDS

The stratified assemblage consisted of a single sherd (16g) of 13th-15th century North Devon medieval coarseware (NDMC), from Ditch Fill (016) probably manufactured in Barnstaple. The finds from the topsoil (001) included a NDMC handle (71g), 3 sherds (78g) NDGT and 1 sherd (2g) NDGF post-medieval ware, 1 sherd (1g) of white refined earthenware (post 1720), and 1 fragment (39g) of C19 green bottle glass.

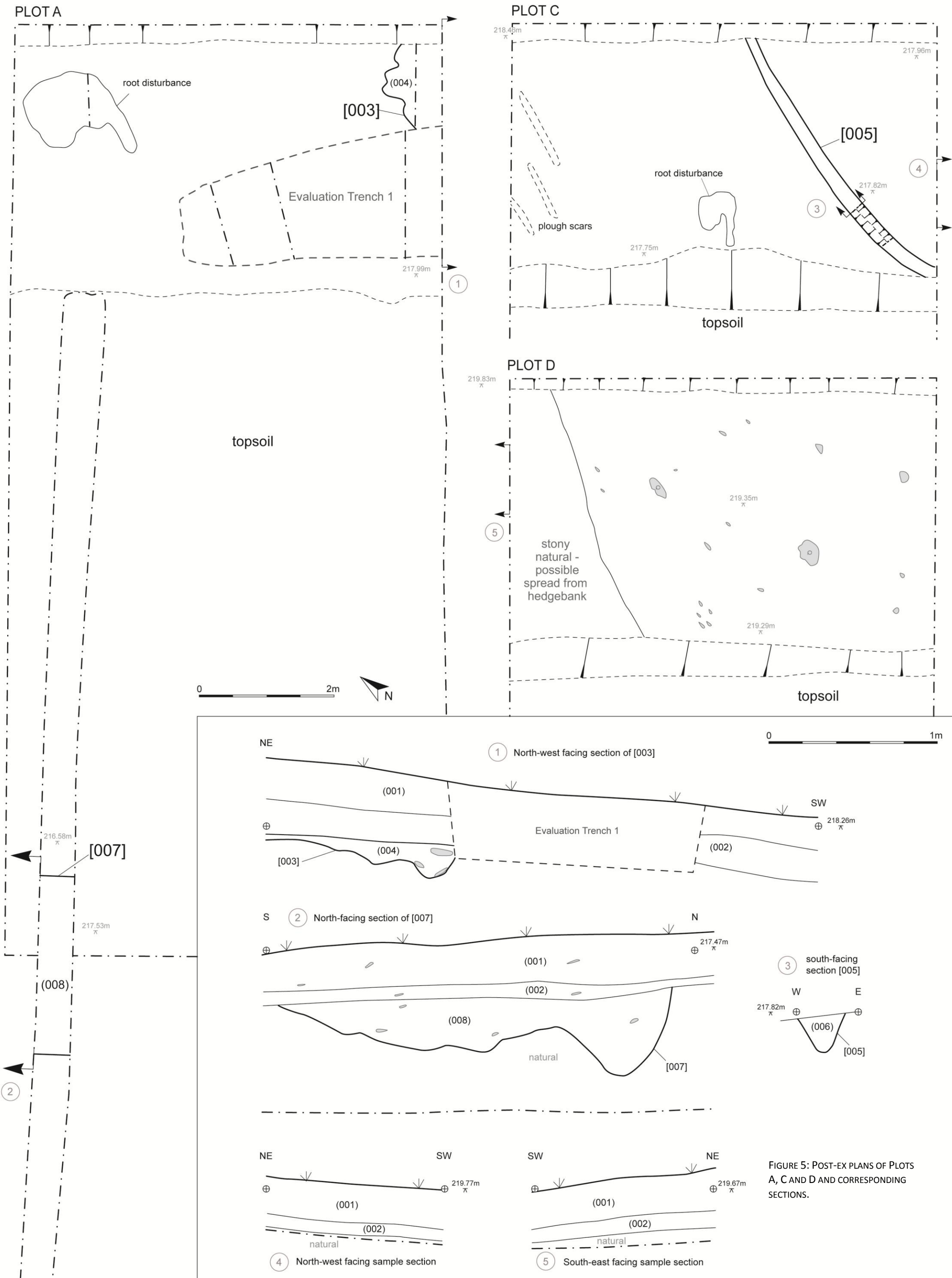


FIGURE 5: POST-EX PLANS OF PLOTS A, C AND D AND CORRESPONDING SECTIONS.

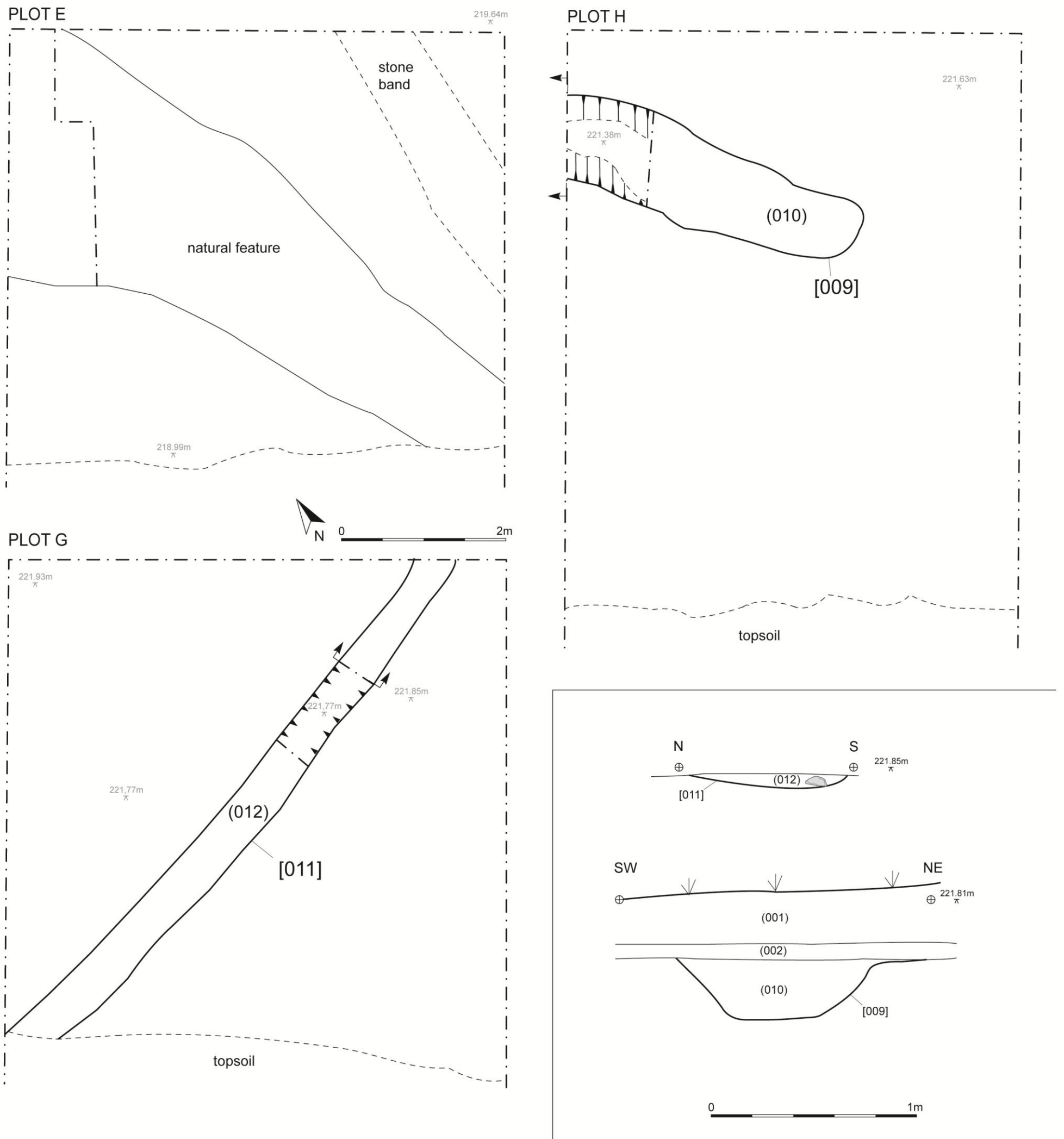


FIGURE 6: POST-EX PLANS OF PLOTS E, G AND H AND CORRESPONDING SECTIONS.

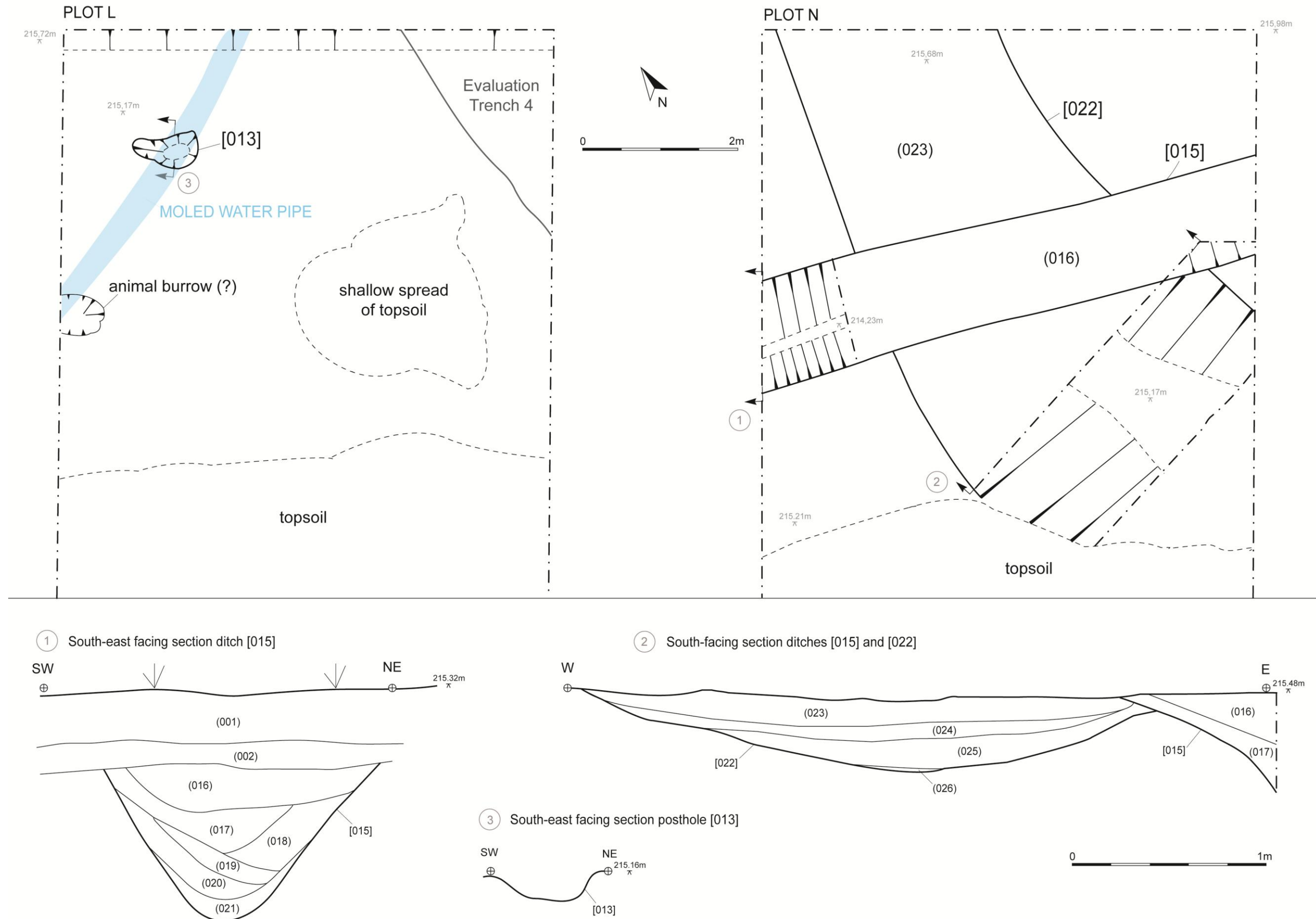


FIGURE 7: POST-EX PLANS OF PLOTS L AND N, AND CORRESPONDING SECTIONS.

3.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

3.1 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The 14 static-caravan pitches monitored cover less than 6% of the total area of the field, and thus the conclusions of the work are necessarily partial and tentative. However, the dating of ditch [015] to the medieval period, and a general absence of material culture, would argue against the existence of a Prehistoric or Romano-British enclosure. The long gentle arc of ditch [015] can instead be interpreted as a medieval strip-field boundary, rather like those that survive around West Down c.3.5km to the west-south-west. Ditch [015] does cut an earlier feature, ditch [022], and this may well be Prehistoric in origin; however, further survey work would be required to confirm this.

3.1.1 FUTURE MITIGATION

The southern half of the field has not been surveyed or trenched as it remains a functioning part of the caravan park. This area should be subject to monitoring and/or evaluation trenching prior to redevelopment.

DRAFT

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

Context	Type	Description	Relationships	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot date
(001)	Layer	TOPSOIL – a firm to soft mid brown, slightly clayey-silt. Very clean and homogenous, with a slight horizon apparent at base of the active turf layer.	Overlies (002)	0.3m-0.4m	
(002)	Layer	SUBSOIL – reddish-yellow slightly clayey-silt with occasional to common shillet fragments.	Overlain by (001)	0.1m to north 0.2m to south	
[003]	Cut	A cut c.1.1m wide exposed on the edge of Plot A; gently sloping and undulating profile.	Filled by (004)	c.0.1m	
(004)	Fill	A soft friable reddish-brown silt-clay, rare shillet fragments.	Fill of [003]; overlain by (002)	0.15m	
[005]	Cut	Cut of slightly-curving linear, orientated approx. N-S, 0.3m wide with a V-shaped profile.	Filled by (006)	0.2m	
(006)	Fill	Fill of [005]; a compact grey-yellow silt-clay with occasional small stones, shillet and quartz. Very rare charcoal flecks noted at base of fill.	Fill of [005]; overlain by (002)	c.0.25m	
[007]	Cut	2.3m wide irregular ditch/large pit; very irregular but curving profile.	Filled by (008)	0.47m	
(008)	Fill	Fill of [007]; a reddish-yellow slightly sandy silt.	Fill of [007]; overlain by (002)	0.47m	
[009]	Cut	Cut of ditch terminus, 1.2m wide with E-W orientation. Moderate sloping sides to a wide flat slightly irregular base.	Filled by (010)	0.3m	
(010)	Fill	Fill of [009]; a clean reddish-yellow slightly clayey silt, with rare shillet frags and occasional large silt and stones, including quartz.	Fill of [009]; overlain by (002)	0.3m	
[011]	Cut	Cut of shallow linear 0.55m wide, with flat base and slightly sloping sides.	Filled by (012); possibly cuts (002)	0.06m	
(012)	Fill	A soft greyish-brown silt-clay, very clean, rare stones.	Fill of [011]; possibly overlain by (001)	0.06m	
[013]	Cut	Cut of possible posthole; flat base with sloping sides 0.55 diameter.	Filled by (014)	0.15m	
(014)	Fill	Fill of [103]; a soft grey-brown silt, with rare stone and occasional shillet fragments.	Fill of [013]; overlain by (001)	0.15m	
[015]	Cut	Cut of deep linear with asymmetric profile; steep/near vertical on the south side, steep sloping to the north, almost V-shaped base, 1.14m wide.	Cuts (023); filled by (016)(017)(018)(019)(020)(021)	0.85m	Medieval?
(016)	Fill	Fill of [105]; upper fill, a yellow-grey silt-clay 0.2m thick, homogenous and relatively clean.	Fill of [015]; overlies (017)	0.2m	
(017)	Fill	Fill of [105]; very stony reddish-grey silt-clay only fill with large stones, abundant shillet.	Fill of [015]; overlies (018); overlain by (016)	0.2m	
(018)	Fill	Fill of [105]; homogenous very clean, yellowish-red silt-clay, rare shillet fragments.	Fill of [015]; overlies (019); overlain by (017)	0.25m	
(019)	Fill	Fill of [105]; reddish-grey silt-clay, common well-sorted platy shillet fragments.	Fill of [015]; overlies (020); overlain by (018)	0.1m	
(020)	Fill	Fill of [105]; homogenous reddish-yellow silt-clay.	Fill of [015]; overlies (021); overlain by (019)	0.15m	
(021)	Fill	Fill of [105]; basal fill, moist grey clay-silt with abundant shillet.	Fill of [015]; overlain by (020)	0.1m	
[022]	Cut	Cut of 3m wide linear feature, very gentle concave profile, orientated N-S but curving slightly.	Filled by (023)(024)(025)(026)	0.36m	Prehistoric?
(023)	Fill	Fill of [022], upper fill, a reddish-brown silt-clay, rare shillet fragments.	Fill of [022]; overlies (024); cut by [015]	0.15m	
(024)	Fill	Fill of [022], A reddish-brown silt-clay, occasional to common shillet fragments and occasional quartz.	Fill of [022]; overlain by (023); overlies (025)	0.1m	
(025)	Fill	Fill of [022], a yellowish-grey silt-clay with occasional to rare shillet fragments.	Fill of [022]; overlain by (024); overlies (026)	0.18m	
(026)	Fill	Fill of [022], basal fill, a light grey sandy-clay, fairly compact with rare stones.	Fill of [022]; overlain by (025)	0.02m	

APPENDIX 2: FINDS CONCORDANCE

Context	Notes	POTTERY			OTHER			DATE
		Sherds	Wgt. (g)	Notes	Frgs.	Wgt. (g)	Notes	
(001)	topsoil	1	71	North Devon medieval coarseware, handle				C13-C15
		3	78	North Devon gravel-tempered ware				Post-med
		1	2	North Devon gravel-free ware				Post-med
		1	1	White refined earthenware	1	39	Green vessel glass	After 1720
(016)		1	16	North Devon medieval coarseware				C13-C15

APPENDIX 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

14TH JUNE 2017



1. PLOT A MID-STRIP; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (NO SCALE).



2. EVALUATION TRENCH 1, AS NOTED IN AREA A; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (0.5M SCALE).



3. NORTH-WEST FACING SECTION OF PLOT A, SHOWING THE SONDAGE EXCAVATED THROUGH EVALUATION TRENCH 1; FROM THE NORTH-WEST (0.5M SCALE).



4. POST-EX SHOT OF PLOT A; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (0.5M SCALE).



5. POST-EX SHOT OF THE NORTH-EASTERN PART OF PLOT B; FROM THE NORTH-WEST (0.5M SCALE).



6. NORTH-EAST FACING SAMPLE SECTION OF PLOT B; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (0.5M SCALE).



7. POST-EX SHOT OF PLOT C; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (0.5M SCALE).



8. SOUTH-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [105]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (0.5M SCALE).



9. POST-EX SHOT OF SONDAGE THROUGH DITCH [105]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (0.5M SCALE).



10. NORTH-EAST FACING SAMPLE SECTION OF PLOT C; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (0.5M SCALE).



11. POST-EX SHOT OF PLOT D; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (0.5M SCALE).



12. NORTH-EAST FACING SAMPLE SECTION OF PLOT D; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (0.5M SCALE).

5TH JULY 2017



13. SOUTH-EAST FACING SECTION OF DITCH [007], NOTED IN THE SERVICE TRENCH FOR PLOT A; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



14. LEFT: POST-EX OF NORTHERN END OF SERVICE TRENCH FOR PLOT A; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (NO SCALE).

15. RIGHT: POST-EX OF SERVICE TRENCH FOR PLOT A, ALONG WESTERN FIELD BOUNDARY; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (NO SCALE).

13TH-15TH AND 21ST NOVEMBER 2017



16. PLOTS A-D, DURING NOVEMBER VISITS; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (NO SCALE).



17. POST-EX SHOT OF PLOT E, SHOWING THE VARIATIONS IN THE NATURAL; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



18. SOUTH-EAST FACING SECTION OF NATURAL FEATURE ON PLOT E; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



19. POST-EX SHOT OF PLOT F; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



20. EAST-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [011]; VIEWED FROM THE EAST.



21. LEFT: POST-EX SHOT OF PLOT G AND DITCH [011]; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



22. RIGHT: PRE-EX OF DITCH [009]; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).



23. PLOT H, DURING EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



24. POST-EX OF DITCH [009]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



25. SOUTH-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [009; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



26. POST-EX OF PLOT I; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



27. POST-EX OF PLOT J; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



28. POST-EX OF PLOT K; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



29. POST-EX OF PLOT L; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



30. POST-EX OF PLOT M; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



31. SOUTH-FACING SECTION OF DITCH [022]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



32. AS ABOVE.



33. AS ABOVE; DETAIL OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH DITCH [015]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



34. POST-EX SHOT OF DITCH [015]; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



35. THE WESTERN PART OF THE ACCESS ROAD; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



36. THE SITE, POST-SERVICE TRENCHING, FROM SOUTH OF PLOT J; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (NO SCALE).



37. AS ABOVE, FROM SOUTH OF PLOT J; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (NO SCALE).



38. AS ABOVE, FROM SOUTH-WEST OF PLOT M; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (NO SCALE).



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