

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Northam, Devon	National Grid Reference SS 43551 29469	Number:
Subject: Archaeological evaluation trenching on land at Pebbleridge Road, Westward Ho!, Northam, Devon prior to the proposed erection of dwellings and associated works		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: 1/0982/2014/FULM	Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon	
OASIS ID: southwes1-184003	Museum Accession no: N/A	
Contractor's reference number/code: WWP14	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 3 rd -5 th December 2014	
<p>Description of works.</p> <p>Archaeological evaluation trenching was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of Chris Beaver of Planning Sphere Limited (the Agent) on behalf of RST1 South West Group Ltd (the Client) prior to groundworks associated with the construction of new dwellings on land at Pebbleridge Road, Westward Ho!, Northam, Devon. The opening of eight trenches was monitored by J. Watling and P. Webb between 3rd and 5th December 2014, with a further two trenches opened on 6th January 2015. This work was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design drawn up in consultation with Ann Marie Dick of the Devon County Historic Environment Team.</p> <p>The proposed site lies in an area where little previous archaeological investigation has taken place, but where evidence for Prehistoric activity is known in the area, including an extensive and important area of Mesolithic deposits at the southern end of Westward Ho! beach. These deposits are of particular significance as they are the only surviving remnant of a wetland occupation site dating to the 6th millennium BC in South West England. It is listed in the English Heritage inventory of <i>Exceptional Waterlogged Heritage</i> (2013), which describes it as of national importance. There is potential for these deposits to extend inland as far as the application site. The site is located on the northern limit of the settlement of Westward Ho! close to the current coastline, at a height of c.5m AOD (Figure 1). The soils of the area are the well-drained fine loamy or fine silty soils of the Manod Association (SSEW 1983), with superficial deposits of alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel immediately to the north which in turn overlie the mudstones and siltstones of the Ashton Mudstone Member & Crackington Formation (BGS 2014).</p> <p>A total of ten trenches, totalling 300m × 1.6m wide, were excavated by machine using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision to the depth of between 0.5m-1.2m, this being the depth of archaeological layers or natural deposits. The stratigraphy of the site comprised firm yellow natural clay with occasional stones, overlain by mixed loose-soft clay and sand deposits c.0.1-0.3m thick. This was in turn overlain by loose mid brown sandy deposits c.0.3-0.5m thick and a modern friable dark brown clay-silt-loam topsoil c.0.15-0.3m thick. The eastern side of the site, in Trenches #1 ([102], [104]), #3 ([302], [304], [306], [308], [310], [312], [314]), #4 ([402], [404], [406], [408], [410], [412], [414]) and #5 ([502], [504]), a series of north-south stone-lined land-drains were revealed orientated roughly north-south; these had been truncated by the construction of a more recent drain on an east-west alignment, and which appeared in Trenches #2, #6 and #7. The finds from these drains included medieval and post-medieval pottery. Another modern ceramic drain was identified running between Trenches #6 and #8. A significant area of recent disturbance was identified running across the centre of the site. No features of archaeological interest were identified within the evaluation trenches, though a small number of sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil layers. The topsoil in the two trenches located adjacent to the former Ventown Farm was rather shallower (c.0.2-0.3m thick), and these trenches produced no finds and contained only a single land drain.</p> <p>The Finds</p> <p>A small assemblage of finds was recovered. The stratified finds from the land drains were: ×1 sherd (40g) C15 North Devon gravel-free jar rim from (405); ×1 sherd (5g) C16 North Devon gravel-free from (303); ×1 sherd (6g) WRE from (307); ×2 fragments (184g) modern CBM from (409). From subsoil layer (101): ×1 sherd (15g) C15 North Devon calcareous jar rim; ×1 sherd (1g) C16 North Devon gravel free; ×1 fragment (3g) CBM. From subsoil layer (401): ×1 sherd (2g) WRE; ×1 sherd (29g) C16/C17 North Devon gravel tempered; ×1 basal sherd (88g) C15 North Devon gravel free bowl; ×2 scraps (6g) North Devon medieval coarseware. These finds all come from later features or subsoil layers, but represent a relatively interesting – if small – assemblage of early post-medieval material. It should be derived from manuring, but as some of the sherds are unabraded, that might suggest a contemporary site located nearby.</p>		

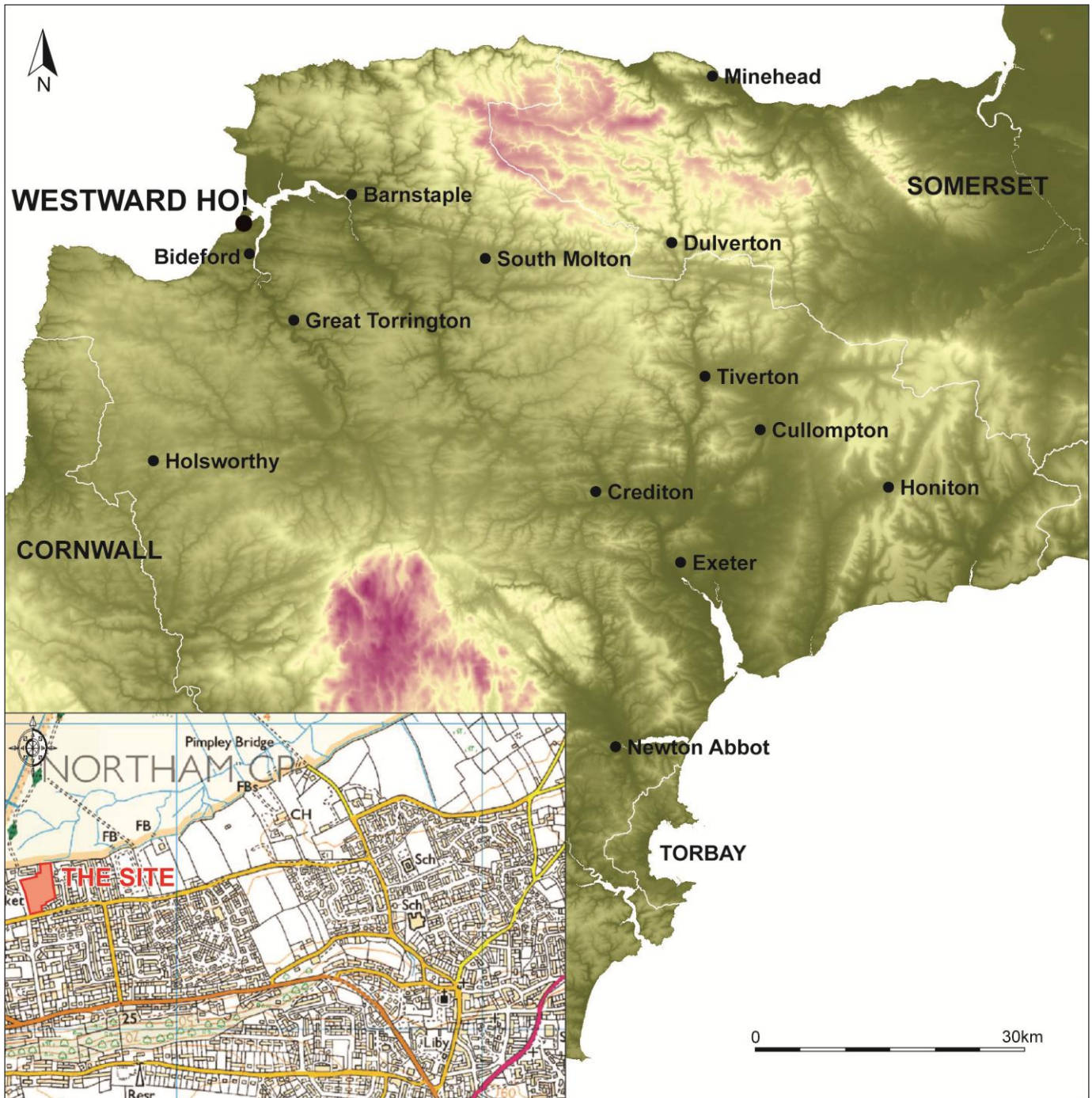


Figure 1: Site location

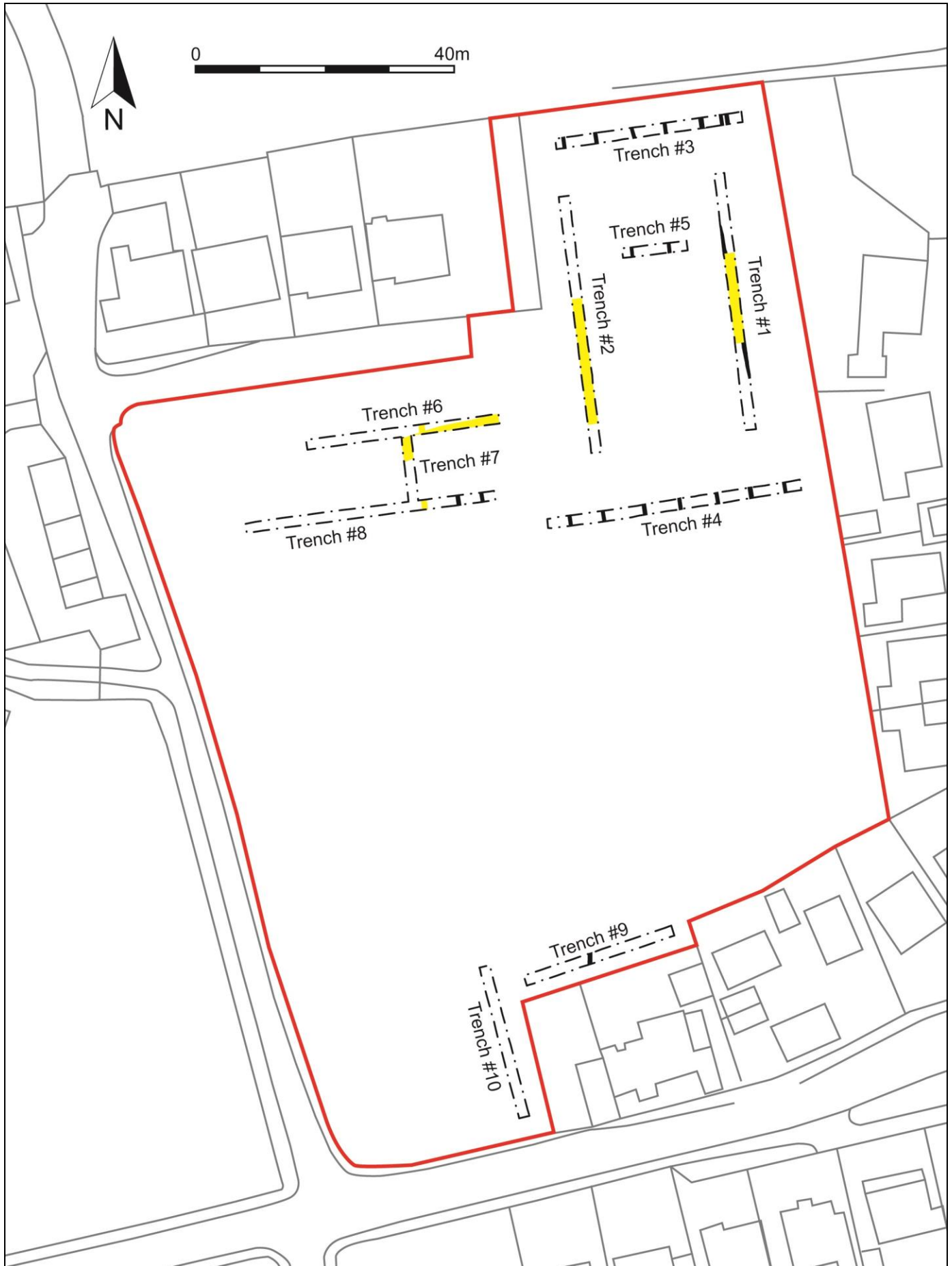


Figure 2: Site plan showing trench layout with modern disturbance (shown in yellow) and post-medieval land drains (shown in black).



Figure 3: Plan view of Trench #2 showing natural clay with land drain [102] in the background; viewed from the north (scale 1m and 2m).



Figure 4: Land drain [102], showing the modern cut at the far left with re-deposited natural fill; viewed from the east (scale 2m).



Figure 4: Representative section of Trench #2 showing the stratigraphy; viewed from the west (scale 1m).



Figure 5: Representative section of Trench #8 showing the stratigraphy, viewed from the north (scale 1m).