

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

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| Civil Parish & District: Ashwater, Devon | National Grid Reference SX 38470 98297 | Number: |
| Subject: Archaeological monitoring and recording on land at Swingdon Farm, Ashwater, Devon | | Photo attached? YES |
| Application no: 1/0655/2013/FUL; appeal ref App/W1145/A/14/2220508 | Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon | |
| OASIS ID: southwes1-184003 | Museum Accession no: N/A | |
| Contractor's reference number/code: ASF13 | Dates fieldwork undertaken: 30 th June, 1 st -2 nd October & 5 th -6 th October | |

Description of works.

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of Lucy Bolton of Mosscliff Environmental (the Client) during groundworks associated with the construction of a single wind turbine and accompanying works on land at Swingdon Farm, Ashwater, Devon. The monitoring was carried out by P. Webb on the 30th June 2015 and S. Walls in October 2015. This work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation drawn up in consultation with Ann Marie Dick of the Devon County Historic Environment Team.

The site lies in an area classified as *medieval enclosures based on strip fields*, and *post-medieval enclosures* on the Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation. Limited archaeological fieldwork has taken place in this area, though Swingdon Farm is located just off the summit of a broad hill, in close proximity to a dispersed group of ten Bronze Age barrows. Walkover and geophysical surveys (Richardson 2013) carried out at Swingdon Farm by SWARCH in 2013, along the route of the previous proposed cable route, failed to identify any features of archaeological interest within the development footprint.

The site is located approximately four kilometres north of the village of Ashwater, on a broad hillside at a height of c.158m AOD (Figure 1). The site lies on the boundary of well drained fine loamy soils of the Neath Association and slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils of the Hallsworth 1 Association (SSEW 1983) overlying mudstone and siltstone of the Crackington Formation (BGS 2015).

In June 2015 an area for the turbine base measuring 8.8m² on a north-east to south-west orientation was excavated to the north-west of the crane base and access track (excavated and stoned prior to archaeological monitoring taking place) to a depth of c.0.15m through topsoil (100); brown silt-clay 0.09m thick, and subsoil (101); brown silt 0.07m thick onto natural clay and had been heavily plough scored. No features of archaeological interest were identified.

In October 2015 the service trenches were excavated across the revised cable route, which bisected five fields (see Figure 1). The pipe trenches were excavated with a 0.6m wide bucket, largely under strict archaeological supervision to the top of the subsoil, small sections of the cable run (largely across extant boundaries and drainage ditches) were to be done at a later stage by moling, and were not monitored. The pipe trenches were excavated to the top of the natural subsoil typically at a depth of 0.3m, and then subsequently excavated to a depth of c.1m without archaeological supervision. The fully exposed sections were re-visited by the site archaeologist and any additional features noted.

In Field 1; the field in which the turbine is to be located, a c.221m length of trenching was excavated, with the main run orientated north-west to south-east, with two short spurs (c.3m long) extending to the south-west into the area of the extant crane and turbine bases. Below the topsoil two ditches were noted, both appearing to be orientated north-west to south-east. That to the south, Ditch [106] was a c.1.2m wide and c.0.85m deep feature with steep curving sides and base. It contained two fills, an upper fill (107) of grey-yellow clay-silt with occasional sub-angular stones (i.e. re-deposited natural), and a lower fill (108) of homogenous and clean fine brown silt-clay (i.e. buried topsoil). This ditch was only noted and recorded in section, but given the nature of the lower fill it is unlikely to be of any great antiquity. It is however very different in form to the other noted features (see Figure 2).

Ditch [103] was located c.55m to the north-east of [106], and consisted of a 1.7m wide and 0.28m deep feature with a gentle sloping profile with a steeper north-east face and slightly concaved base. Ditch [103] contained two

fills; an upper fill of dark grey silt-clay (104), with occasional sub-angular to sub-rounded stones (up to 70mm diameter), and a basal fill of reddish-grey silt-clay (105) with occasional sub-angular stones (up to 70mm diameter) and iron-pan staining. The fill (104) appeared to have a high organic content, i.e. was formerly very boggy.

In Field 2 a c.42m length of north-west to south-east orientated trench was monitored through an area of wet woodland. A number of small trees and scrub were grubbed up prior to the excavation. No features were obvious, but the area was quite badly disturbed by roots.

In Field 3, two lengths of trench were excavated, The western portion was c.150m long and ran south-west to north-east and exposed a large number of field-drains (at least 8 noted). Most of these drains contained narrow and silted-up ceramic pipes, although three contained no surviving pipes, but were of the same dimensions and contained identical fills to those with surviving ceramic pipes. These field drains were barely below, and often within the topsoil. The topsoil to the north-east in this trench was notably deeper (up to 0.45m), and was generally very dark black-grey and organic rich (i.e. formerly boggy).

There was a short (6.6m wide gap) before the eastern portion of c.180m of trenching in Field 3, which continued running north-east before turning to the south-east. This length exposed a double ditch c.35m from its western end. The two ditches were c.1.2m wide with gently sloping profiles, but with steeper internal sides (i.e. where a hedge bank once stood between). They had gently concaved bases, although the ditch to the east [304] appears to have been a re-cut to an earlier ditch [307] with a steeper concaved profile. The fills of the two ditches were virtually identical with upper fills (302) and (305) of homogenous clean greyish-brown silt-clay, with some rare organic (i.e. blackish-grey) inclusions. The lower fills (303) and (306) were mixed reddish-yellow and grey-brown silt-clays with rare sub-angular small stones (up to 50mm diameter). The narrow primary cut to the east [307] contained a single fill (308) of firm grey-brown silt-clay and rare small sub-angular stones (up to 50mm diameter).

In Field 4, a trench of c. 25m in length along a broadly east-west alignment was excavated, no features were noted.

In Field 5, a north-west to south-east orientated trench of c.163m in length was excavated, with a small area c.2mx3m excavated for a filtration pit at its north-east end. No features were noted during the initial topsoil strip, although there were two locations at which it had appeared that there were slight terraces, with the topsoil deepening slightly (c.0.1m). Following the excavation to the required depth, it was clear that these areas of deeper topsoil were in fact the remains of ditches, which had been obliquely cut by the trench. Ditch [501] was located c.60m from the north-western end of the trench, and was c.1.3m wide with a gently concaved base and gently sloping sides with a slightly steeper north-west side. It was filled by (502) a grey-brown homogenous silt-clay. Ditch [503] was flat based with a concaved north-west side, and very gently sloping south-east side, it was filled by (504) a grey-brown homogenous silt-clay.

Discussion and Finds

Some of the exposed feature (i.e. the features in Field 5) can be tied in with field boundaries, shown on the cartographic record into the 20th century. The similar nature of the majority of the other features and their locations suggests that they also represent removed historic field-boundaries (see Figure 2).

A small assemblage of finds was recovered from the topsoil within Field 5, but no finds were noted elsewhere. The finds consisted of 4x sherds of white refined earthenware, an 'old style' fairy liquid bottle, 2x fragments of red brick, 1x unworked flint flake, 1x sherd of 18th-19th century N. Devon ware. The finds were subsequently discarded.

Bibliography

Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983: *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales*.

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Wapshott, E. & Morris, B. 2013: *Land at Swingdon Farm, Ashwater, Devon: Results of a Desk-Based Assessment, Walkover Survey & Visual Impact Assessment*. SWARCH report: 131213

Websites:

British Geological Survey 2014: *Geology of Britain Viewer*.

http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html [accessed 30.06.2015].

Recorder: P. Webb and S. Walls

Date sent to HER: 09.10.15

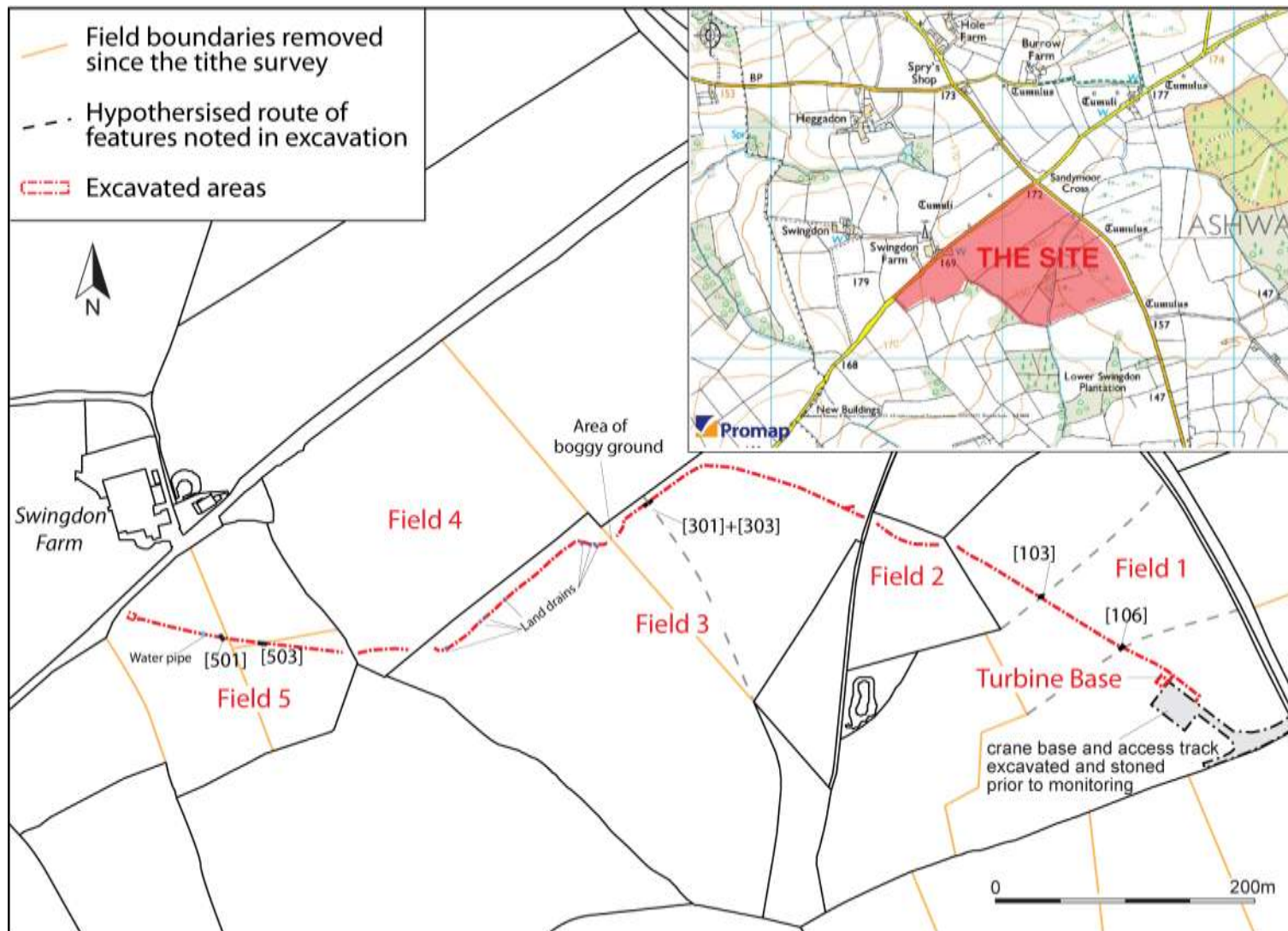


Figure 1: Site plan showing location of excavated areas and archaeological features.

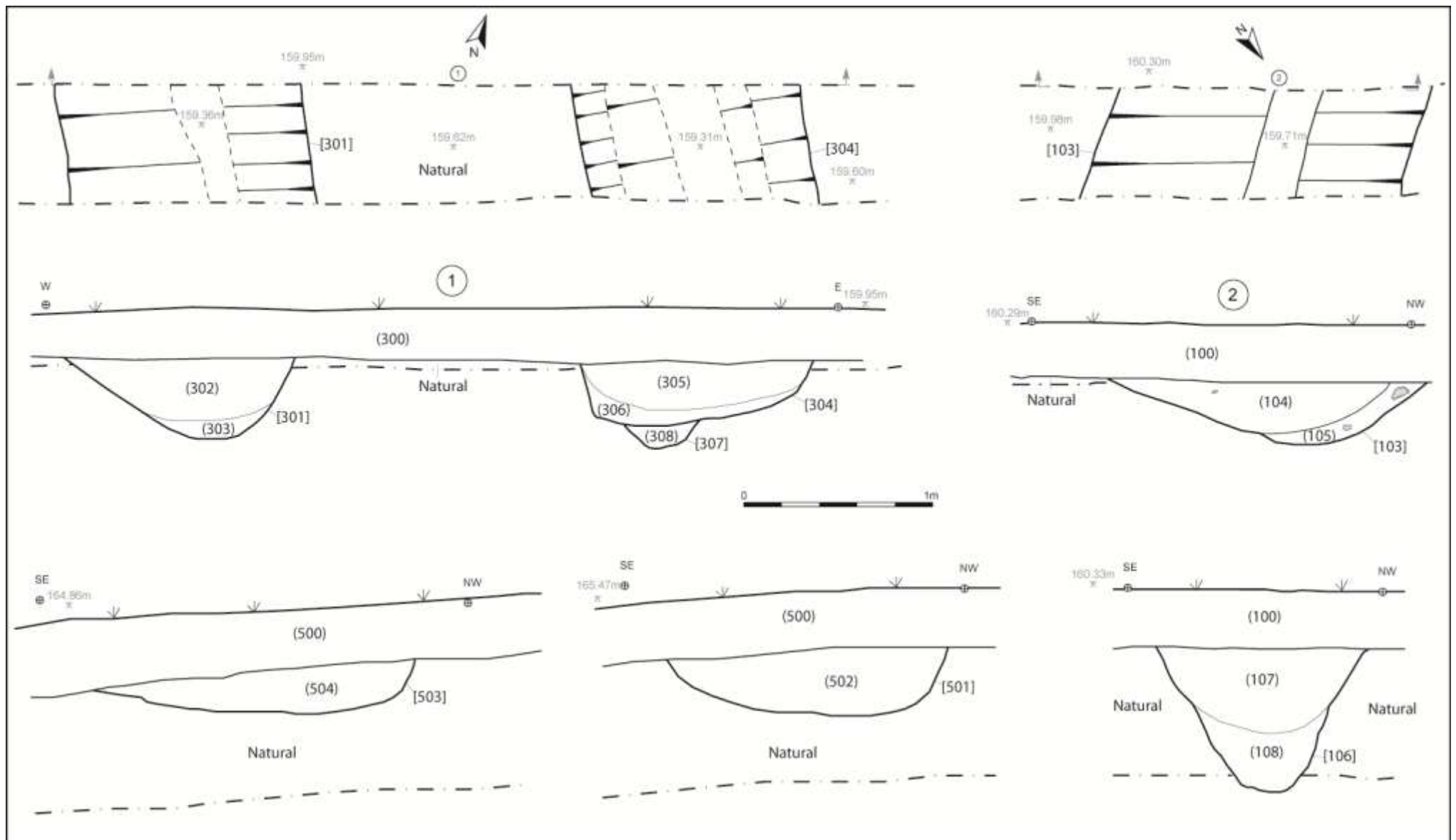


Figure 2: Detailed plans and sections.



Figure 3: Shot of the cable trench in Field 3, the turbine base and transformer are visible in the centre of the photo, viewed from the south-east (2m scale).