

LAND AT TOWN FARM HIGH BICKINGTON TORRIDGE DEVON

Results of a Geophysical Survey and Evaluation Trenching



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 170815



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Land at Town Farm, High Bickington, Torridge, Devon

Results of a Desk-Based Appraisal & Geophysical Survey

By P. Bonvoisin & S. Walls

Report Version: FINAL

7th September 2017

Work undertaken by SWARCH for
John Woodward of Woodward-Smith Architects (the Agent)

Summary

This report presents the results of a geophysical survey and evaluation trenching carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) on land at Town Farm, High Bickington, Torridge, Devon.

The geophysical survey identified five groups of probable or possible anomalies that relate to archaeological activity. The majority of the anomalies appear to relate to historic agricultural activity, although there was a single discrete feature of unknown archaeological origin or date.

A series of three evaluation trenches were excavated to target these geophysical anomalies, validate the results of the geophysical survey and obtain further detail on form, date and state of preservation of any archaeological features. The evaluation encountered three linear archaeological features relating to field drainage and historic field boundaries and a stony variation in the natural.

Based on the results of the geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation, further archaeological works on this site are unlikely to add significant additional detail to the archaeological record.



September 2017

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION:	LAND AT TOWN FARM
PARISH:	HIGH BICKINGTON
DISTRICT:	TORRIDGE
COUNTY:	DEVON
NGR:	SS 59896 20620
PLANNING NO.	1/0552/2017/OUT
ALTERNATIVE NO.	PP-06127998
DCHET REF.	ARCH/DM/TO/31113A
SWARCH REF.	HBT17

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by John Woodward of Woodward-Smith Architects (the Agent) to undertake a geophysical survey and evaluation trenching for Land at Town Farm, High Bickington, Devon, in advance of a proposed residential development. This work was undertaken in accordance with best practice and ClfA guidelines. The evaluation trenching followed a Project Design and Trench Plan drawn up in consultation with Stephen Reed of Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET).

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located c.0.1km north of St. Mary's Church at High Bickington, with the B3217 to the immediate north-east of part of the site, the remaining sides of the site border onto residential areas and Town Farm. The underlying geology of the site comprises of sandstone from the Bude Formation; the overlying soils of the site are the slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, clayey, fine loamy and fine silty soils of the Hallsworth 2 Association (SSEW 1983). There is little variation in height across the site, the lowest point being 163m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the western corner of the site, rising to 166m AOD in the eastern corner of the site.

1.3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The parish of High Bickington is a sub-district of the district of Torrington, Devon and belonged to the North Tawton with Winkleigh Hundred. It lies on the western side of the River Taw. Although the parish is thought to have originated in the Early Medieval period (around 650 AD) the manor is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as 'Bichentone'. At this time it was a royal manor until it was later given to Robert Fitzhamon. By 1150, the manor of High Bickington was under the ownership of Lady Joan Champernowne of Umberleigh and was passed by successive female heirs to the Willington, Beaumont and Basset families. By the early 19th century the manor was the property of Joseph Davie Basset, Esq. of Watermouth (Lysons 1822).

The Devon Historic Environment Record currently holds no information on Town Farm, which is located to the south of the site. However, it appears to be depicted on the Tithe Map and may therefore be contemporary with other post-medieval buildings in the vicinity, which are believed to be of probable mid-17th century date. Much of the rest of the surrounding housing is 20th century in origin.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This work was undertaken in accordance with best practice. The gradiometer survey follows the general guidance as outlined in: *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation* (English Heritage 2008) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey* (CIfA 2014b).

The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with a Project Design (Balmond 2017) and Trench Plan drawn up in consultation with Stephen Reed of Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET); and in line with best practice and CIfA Guidelines (2014).

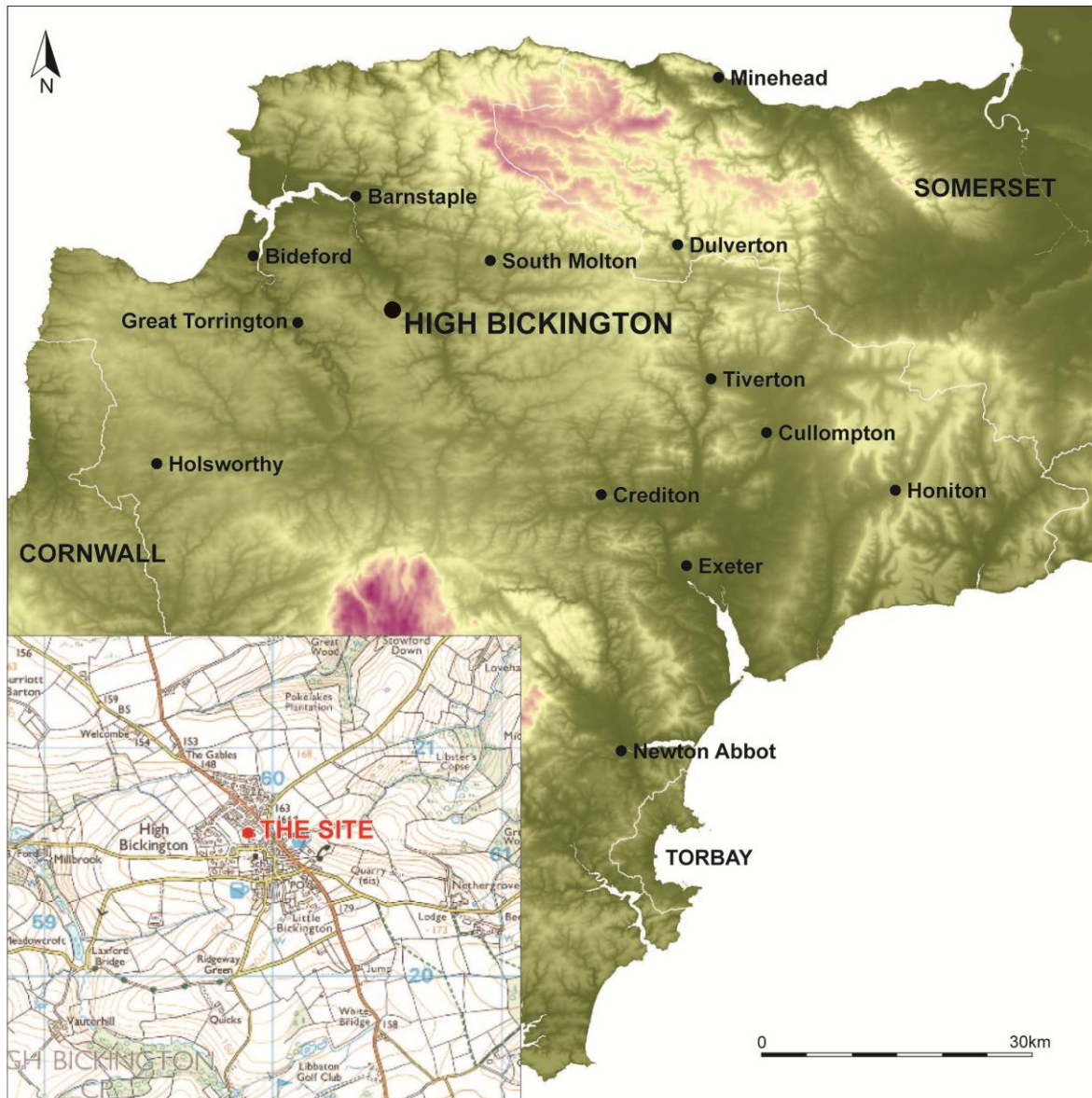


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION (THE SITE IS INDICATED).

2.0 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

An area of c.0.5ha was the subject of a magnetometry (gradiometer) survey. The purpose of this survey was to identify and record magnetic anomalies within the proposed site. While identified anomalies may relate to archaeological deposits and structures, the dimensions of recorded anomalies may not correspond directly with any associated features. The following discussion attempts to clarify and characterise the identified anomalies. The survey was undertaken on the 8th of July 2017 by P. Bonvoisin; the survey data was processed by P. Bonvoisin.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

The gradiometer survey follows the general guidance as outlined in: *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation* (English Heritage 2008) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey* (ClfA 2014b).

The survey was carried out using a twin-sensor fluxgate gradiometer (Bartington Grad601). These machines are sensitive to depths of up to 1.50m. The survey parameters were: sample intervals of 0.25m, traverse intervals of 1m, a zigzag traverse pattern, traverse orientation was circumstantial, grid squares of 30×30m. The gradiometer was adjusted ('zeroed') every 0.5-1ha. The survey grid was tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The data was downloaded onto *Grad601 Version 3.16* and processed using *TerraSurveyor Version 3.0.25.0*. The primary data plots and analytical tools used in this analysis were *Shade* and *Metadata*. The details of the data processing are as follows:

Processes: Clip +/- 3SD; DeStripe all traverses, median. DeStagger of particular grids.

Details: 0.4911ha surveyed; Max. 98.72nT, Min. -100.00nT; Standard Deviation 12.96nT, mean -3.45nT, median -1.95nT.

2.3 SITE INSPECTION

The site is comprised of a single field of pasture. Before topping, much of the field was covered in reeds. The majority of the site is bounded by modern fencing, with developed residential areas on all sides of the site; a short section (less than 15m) of the north-east of the site bounds onto the B3217 road. Some sections of the site along the north-west and north-east boundaries consist of hedges grown over the modern boundaries. The majority of the southern boundary is also overgrown. A full complement of site photographs can be found in Appendix 4.

2.4 RESULTS

Table 1 with the accompanying Figures 2 and 3 show the analyses and interpretation of the geophysical survey data. Additional graphic images of the survey data and numbered grid locations can be found in Appendix 1.

Anomaly Group	Class and Certainty	Form	Archaeological Characterisation	Comments
1	Low positive, possible	Fragmented linear	Possible ditch	Indicative of a ditch or linear discrete cut features, likely related to group 2. Responses of
2	Low positive, possible	Fragmented linear	Possible ditch	Indicative of a ditch or linear discrete cut feature, likely related to group 1. Responses of
3	Low positive, possible	Amorphous ovoid	Possible pit	Indicative of a pit or ovoid discrete cut feature. Responses of
4	Low to moderate positive, probable	Linear	Probable historic field boundary	Indicative of a ditch or linear discrete cut features, likely related to group 5. Responses of
5	Low to moderate positive, probable	Linear	Probable historic field boundary	Indicative of a ditch or linear discrete cut features, likely related to group 4. Responses of

TABLE 1: INTERPRETATION OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA.

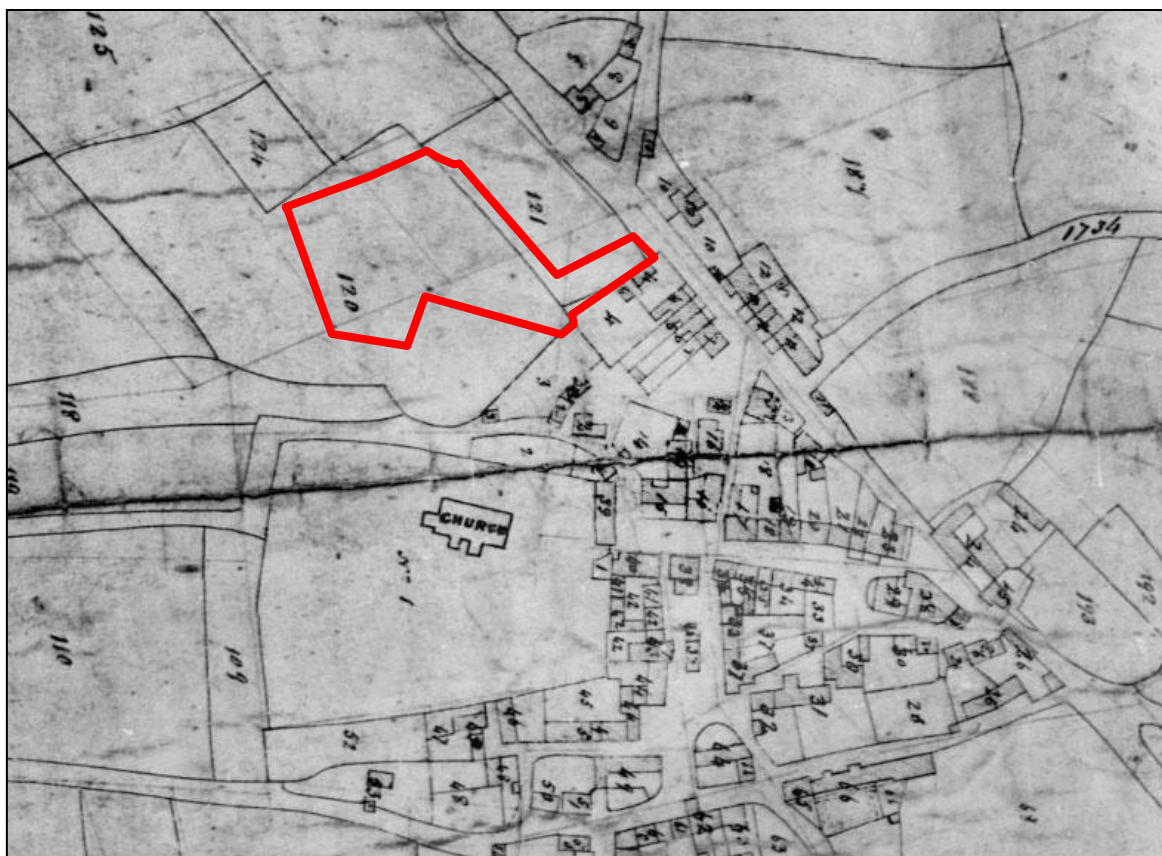


FIGURE 2: EXTRACT FROM THE HIGH BICKINGTON TITHE MAP, 1840. THE APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE IS INDICATED.

2.5 DISCUSSION

The survey identified five groups of anomalies; these were predominately linear anomalies, some likely associated with historic boundaries, as seen on the Tithe Map (Figure 2).

Groups 1 (+0.72nT to +7.7nT) and 2 (+2.53nT to +5.69nT) are low positive fragmented linears. Both groups follow the same axis and are probably related, or form part of the same original feature. The anomalies are indicative of ditches or discrete cut features, possibly representative of a previous boundary.

Group 3 (+1.27nT to +5.13nT) is a low positive amorphous ovoid feature, indicative of a possible pit or discrete cut. The irregular shape of this feature might indicate that it has no archaeological origin, such as a tree-throw or geological response.

Groups 4 (+2.88nT to +12.66nT) and 5 (+2.65nT to +12.27nT) are low to moderate positive linears, indicative of ditches or field boundaries. The anomalies align approximately with a boundary on the historic mapping, crossing the proposal site. The field boundary is still depicted on the 1st and 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Maps of 1888 and 1905, indicating that this boundary was removed in the 20th century, perhaps during the construction of the housing plots to the immediate north-east of the site.

Di-Polar anomalies and magnetic disturbance are located across the site and likely represent modern or ferrous disturbance. The soil of the site is partially disturbed, due to the waterlogged and soft nature of the group. This may have caused the fragmented nature of the features identified in the survey.

LAND AT TOWN FARM, HIGH BICKINGTON, TORRIDGE, DEVON



FIGURE 3: SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; MINIMAL PROCESSING.

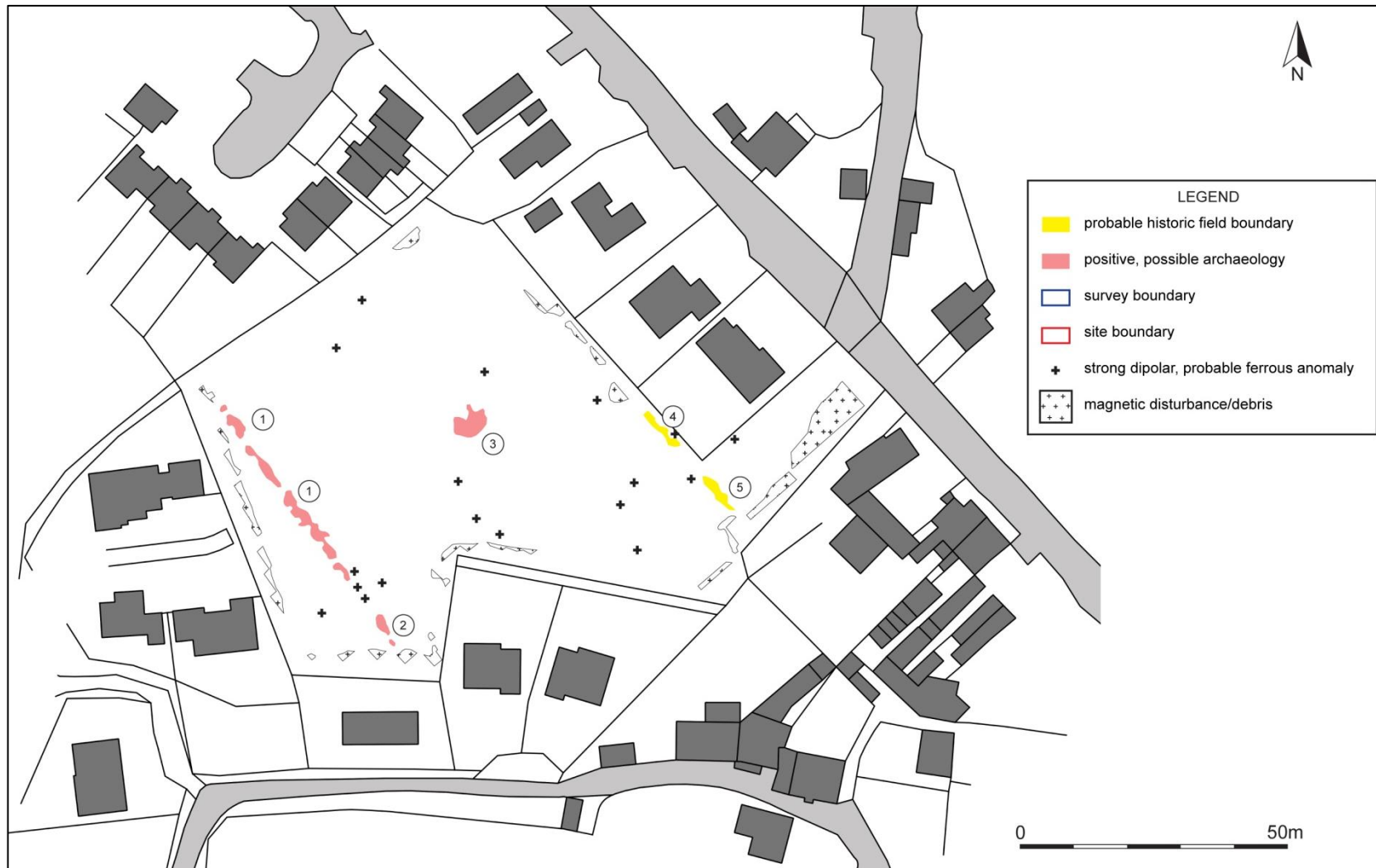


FIGURE 4: INTERPRETATION OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION TRENCHING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this evaluation was to investigate geophysical anomalies identified in the gradiometer survey and inform on the archaeological potential and condition of the site. The geophysical data can be seen in Appendix 1.

The archaeological evaluation took place on the 29th August 2017. Three evaluation trenches, each 1.6m wide and between 25m and 26.6m in length, totalling 76.9m, were laid out by tapes and opened by a tracked mechanical excavator to the depth of *in situ* weathered natural using a toothless grading bucket. These trenches targeted geophysical anomalies (Figure 4). Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand and in accordance with the Project Design, CIFA guidelines and DCHET specifications.

A total of three features were identified, all ditches. Geological variation was noted in an area of shillet within Trench 2. What follows is a full trench-by-trench account of the results of the evaluation. See Figure 5 for a whole site plan, showing the excavated features in relation to the geophysical survey results. Full context records can be found in Appendix 2; a full finds concordance in Appendix 3; and a complete set of supporting photographs can be seen in Appendix 4. All finds were subsequently discarded.

3.2 DEPOSIT MODEL

A consistent stratigraphy was identified across the site: topsoil, a soft mid-brown silt-clay; overlying lower topsoil, a mid brown silt-clay with occasional small stones; and the natural, pale yellow clay-silt. The depths of the deposits were consistent over the whole site, c.0.40m.

3.3 TRENCH 1

Trench 1, measuring 25.3m x 1.6m on an approximate north-east to south-west alignment was located towards the western edge of the site, targeting a linear geophysical response.

It contained a stratigraphic sequence of: topsoil (100), a soft mid-brown silt-clay c.0.15m thick. This overlay a lower topsoil layer (101), a mid-brown clay-silt with occasional small sub-angular stones (>40mm dia.) c.0.25m thick; and the natural (104), a pale yellow clay-silt.

One feature, Ditch [102] a linear ditch centrally located in the trench, aligned approximately north-west by south-east, measuring 2.50m wide and 0.52m deep with moderate sloping sides and a flat base. It contained two fills: an upper fill (103) of clean yellowy-grey clay-silt; and a basal fill (104) of grey-blue clay-silt with occasional to common medium sized sub-angular to sub-rounded stones (>80mm dia.) towards the base of the fill. It contained no finds.

The finds from Trench 1 came from the topsoil (100) and included 3 sherds of industrial wares (14g), 1 sherd of North Devon Gravel-Free (20g), 1 sherd of North Devon Gravel Tempered (7g) and 2 sherds of medieval coarseware with a yellow/brown slip (20g).

3.4 TRENCH 2

Trench 2, measuring 25m x 1.6m on an approximate north-west to south-east alignment was located centrally to the site, targeting a amorphous ovoid geophysical response.

There was an identical stratigraphic sequence to Trench 1; topsoil (200) overlaying a lower topsoil (201), which directly overlay the natural. A stony variation within the natural appears to correspond with the location of the geophysical anomaly. Finds from this trench all came from the topsoil (200) and consisted of 3 sherds of white refined earthenware (22g) and 3 sherds of North Devon Gravel Tempered, 2 likely to be from the same vessel.

No archaeological features were encountered within this trench.

3.5 TRENCH 3

Trench 3, measuring 26.6m x 1.6m on an approximate north to south alignment was located in the eastern part of the site targeting a linear geophysical response.

There was an identical stratigraphic sequence to Trench 1; topsoil (300) overlaying a lower topsoil (301), which directly overlay the natural.

Two archaeological features were encountered, ditches [302] and [304]. Ditch [302] located at the northern end of the trench, aligned approximately north-west by south-east, measuring +1.3m wide and 0.36m deep, with moderate sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (303); a clean yellowy-grey clay-silt with occasional small sub-angular stones (>40mm dia.). It contained 2 co-joining sherds of a short stoneware jar (235g). Ditch [304] located 4.5m south of Ditch [302], and aligned parallel to it on an approximately north-west by south-east alignment, measuring 0.5m wide and 0.04m deep with slightly sloping sides and very slightly concaved base. Ditch [304] contained a single fill (305); a clean yellow clay-silt. It contained no finds.

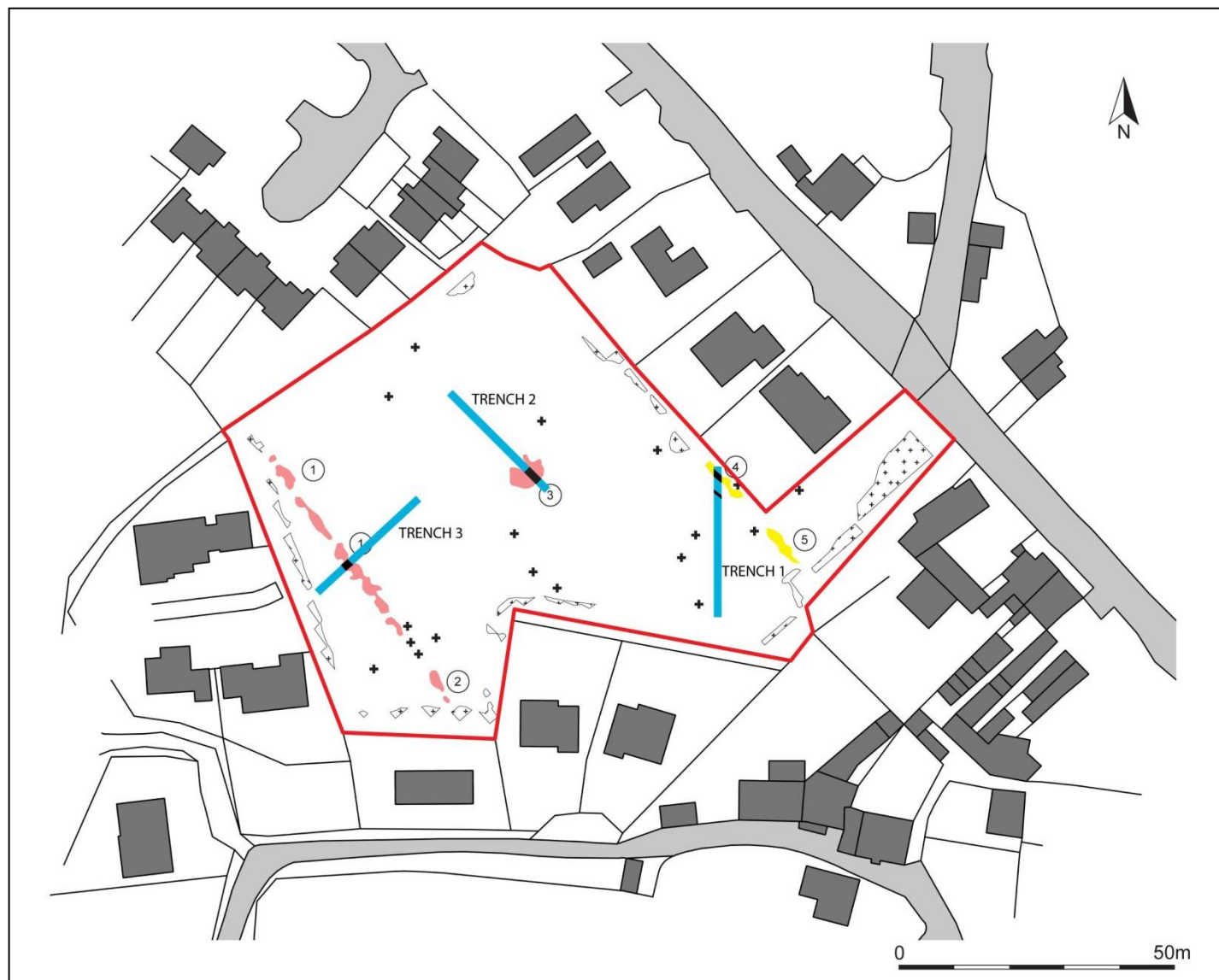


FIGURE 5: TRENCH LOCATION PLAN AND APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF FEATURES.

LAND AT TOWN FARM, HIGH BICKINGTON, TORRIDGE, DEVON

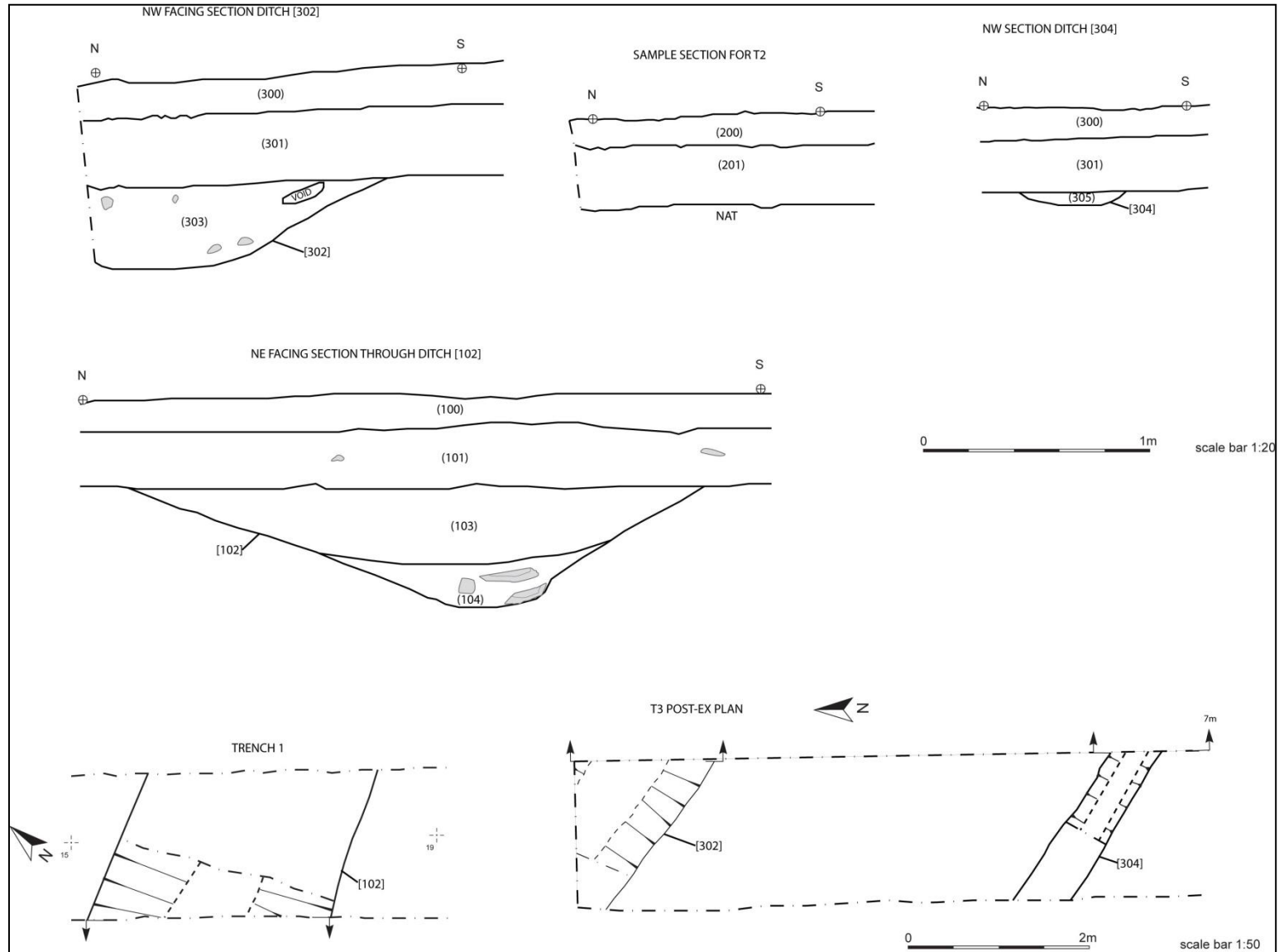


FIGURE 6: EVALUATION PLANS AND SECTIONS.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The site is located close to the centre of the village of High Bickington, a short distance north of the parish church and within the former land holding of Town Farm. The site is within an area of archaeological potential.

The geophysical survey and evaluation trenching identified a few archaeological features, with a probable historic field boundary being identified in the eastern part of the site and a possible drainage ditch in the western part of the site; both follow the same axis, and as such may be similarly dated to the post-medieval period, perhaps as late as the 19th century given the finds from within Ditch [302].

The results of the geophysical survey and evaluation trenching would suggest that the archaeological potential of the site is *low*.

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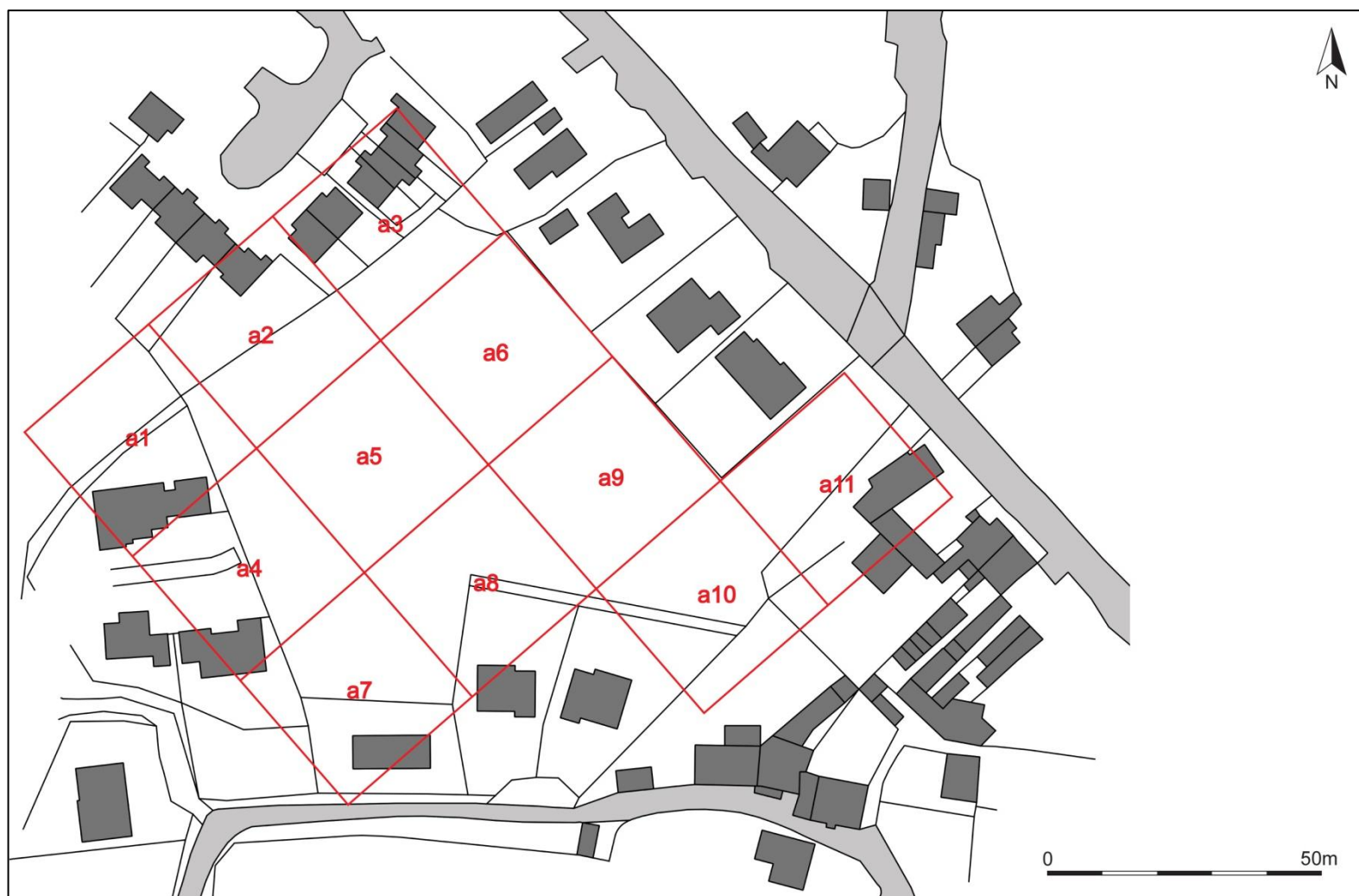
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APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL GRAPHICAL IMAGES OF THE GRADIOMETER SURVEY



Geophysical survey grid location and numbering.

LAND AT TOWN FARM, HIGH BICKINGTON, TORRIDGE, DEVON

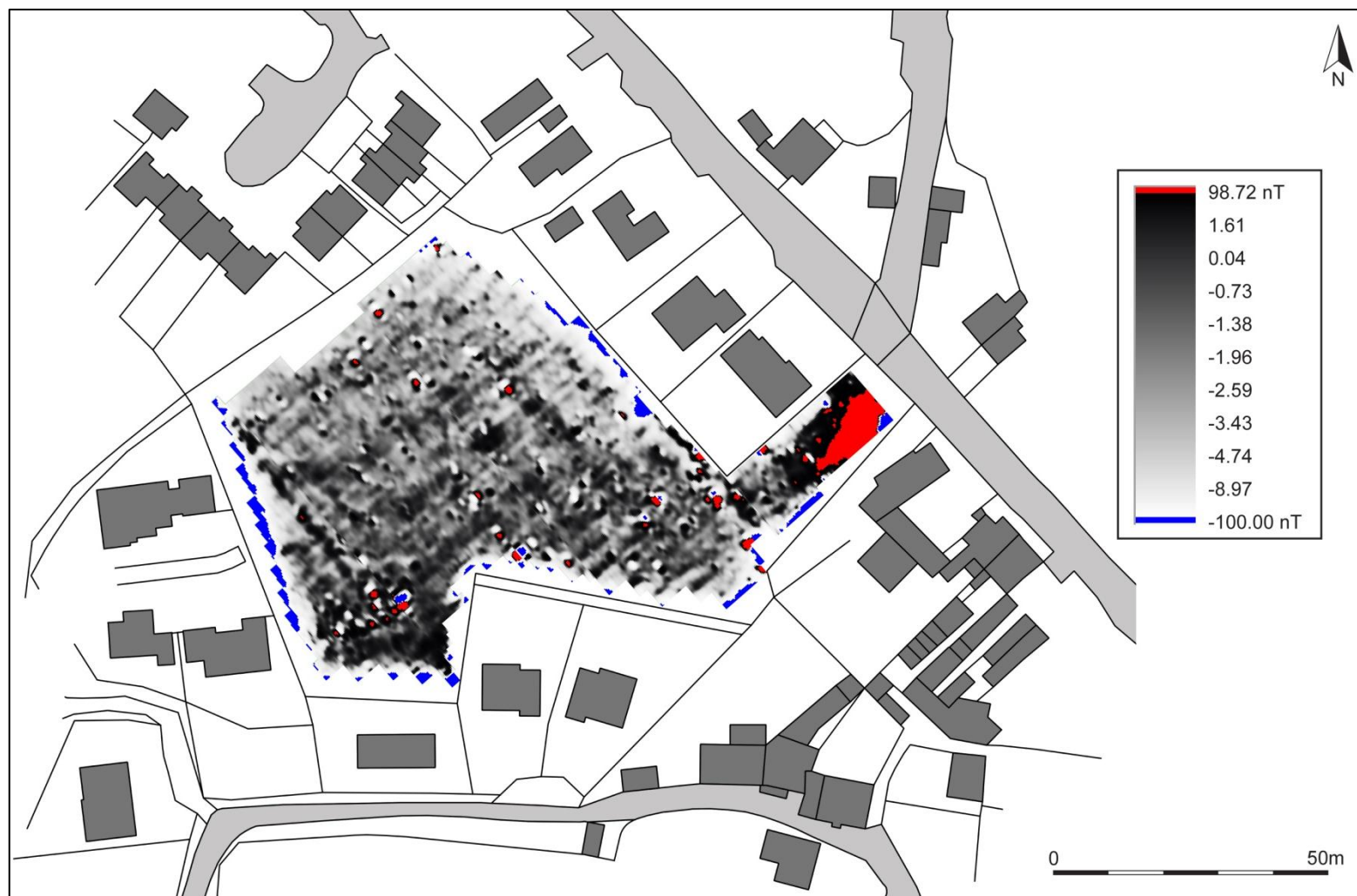


SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; GRADIATED SHADING.

LAND AT TOWN FARM, HIGH BICKINGTON, TORRIDGE, DEVON

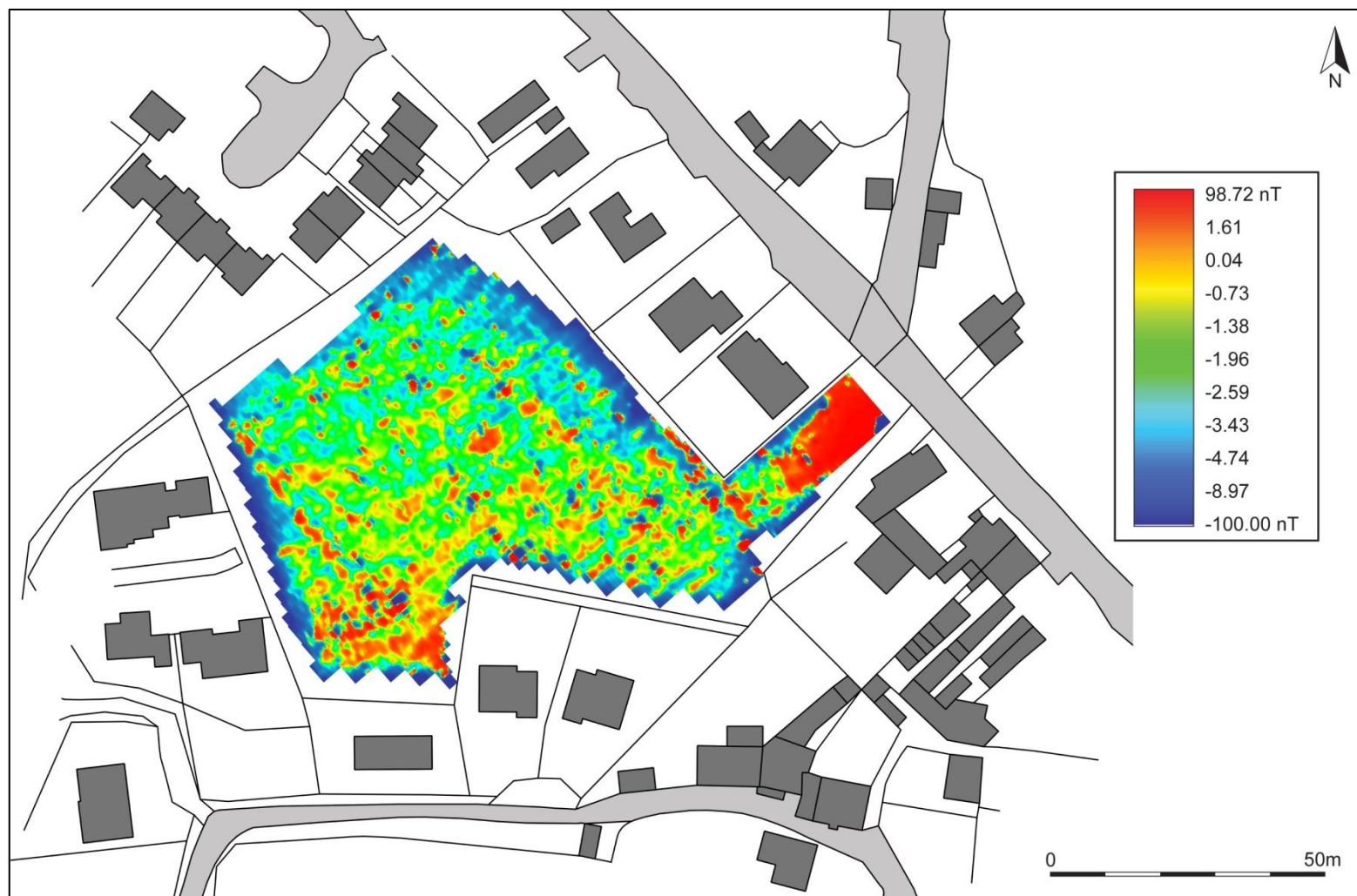


RED GREYSCALE BLUE SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; GRADIATED SHADING.



RED GREYSCALE BLUE SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; BAND WEIGHT EQUALISED; GRADIATED SHADING.

LAND AT TOWN FARM, HIGH BICKINGTON, TORRIDGE, DEVON



RED-BLUE-GREEN(2) SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; BAND WEIGHT EQUALISED; GRADIATED SHADING.

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT LIST

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION		RELATIONSHIPS	DEPTH/ THICKNESS	SPOT DATE
Trench 1					
(100)	Topsoil	Mid brown soft silt-clay.	Overlies (101)	0.15m	Modern
(101)	Lower topsoil	Mid brown soft silt-clay with occasional small sub-angular stones >50mm dia.	Overlain by (100); Overlies Natural	0.25m	Modern
[102]	Cut	Ditch orientated north-west to south-east. Measures 2.5m wide × 0.52m deep with moderate sloping sides and flat base.	Cuts Natural	0.4m	Post-medieval
(103)	Fill	Upper fill of ditch [102]. A homogenous firm yellow-grey clay-silt, with occasional small sub-angular stones >50mm dia.	Upper fill of [102], overlies (104)	0.32m	Post-medieval
(104)	Fill	Basal fill of ditch [102]. Firm to compact grey-blue clay-silt with common angular to sub-angular stone <80mm dia, particularly towards the base.	Fill of [103]; Overlies (119); Overlain by (101)	0.20m	Post-medieval
Trench 2					
(200)	Topsoil	As (100)	Overlies (201)	0.15m	Modern
(201)	Lower topsoil	As (101)	Overlain by (200); Overlies Natural	0.25m	Modern
Trench 3					
(300)	Fill	As (100)	Overlies (301)	0.15m	Modern
(301)	Fill	As (101)	Overlain by (300); Overlies Natural	0.25m	Modern
[302]	Cut	Ditch orientated north-west to south-east. Measures +1.3m wide × 0.34m deep with moderate sloping side and flat base.	Cuts Natural	0.34m	Post-medieval
(303)	Fill	Fill of Ditch [302]. A firm yellow-grey clay-silt with occasional small sub-angular stones >50mm dia.	Fill of [302]	0.34m	Post-medieval
[304]	Cut	Ditch orientated north-west to south-east. Measures 0.5m wide × 0.04m deep with gently sloping sides and slightly concaved base.	Cuts Natural	0.04m	Post-medieval
(305)	Fill	Fill of Ditch [304]. A soft and clean yellow clay-silt	Fill of [304]	0.04m	Post-medieval

APPENDIX 3: FINDS CONCORDANCE

POTTERY					BONE			CBM			CLAY PIPE			OTHER			DATE
Context	Notes	Sherds	Weight (g)	Notes	Frgs.	Weight (g)	Notes	Frgs.	Weight (g)	Notes	Frgs.	Weight (g)	Notes	Frgs.	Weight (g)	Notes	
100		3 1 1 2	14 20 7 20	Industrials NDGF NDGT Med coarseware? Yellow/Brown slip										1	34	Light green/blue vessel glass	Post-medieval to modern
200		3	22	WRE													Post-medieval to modern
		3	157	Late NDGT, 2 poss from same vessel													Post-medieval to modern
303		2	235	Co-joining sherds, short stoneware jar													Post-medieval to modern

APPENDIX 4: SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS

SITE INSPECTION

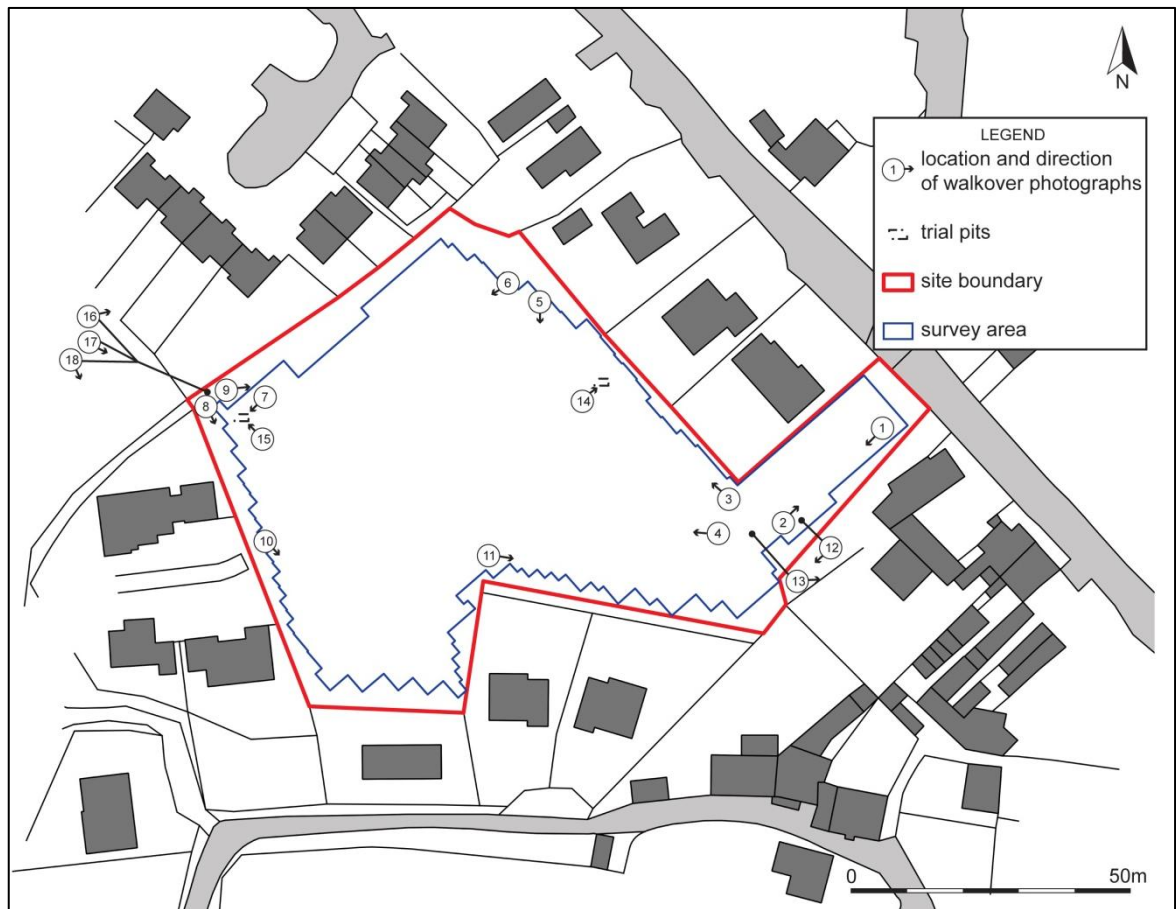


FIGURE 7: SITE INSPECTION.



1. VIEW INTO THE SITE FROM THE NORTH-EAST, BY THE CURRENT ACCESS.



2. VIEW OF THE SHORT NORTH-EAST SITE BOUNDARY FLANKING THE ROAD, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.



3. VIEW ALONG THE LONG LENGTH OF THE NORTH-EAST BOUNDARY, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.



4. VIEW ACROSS THE SITE, FROM THE EAST.



5. VIEW ACROSS THE CENTRE OF THE SITE, FROM THE NORTH.



6. VIEW WEST-SOUTH-WEST FROM THE NORTHERN CORNER OF THE SITE, FROM THE EAST-NORTH-EAST.



7. RECENT GEO-TECHNICAL TEST PIT IN THE NORTH-WEST CORNER OF THE SITE, VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST.



8. VIEW ALONG THE WESTERN BOUNDARY, FROM THE NORTH-WEST.



9. VIEW EAST ACROSS THE SITE FROM THE NORTH-WEST CORNER OF THE SITE.



10. VIEW SOUTH-EAST ACROSS THE SITE FROM THE WESTERN BOUNDARY.



11. VIEW ALONG THE SOUTHERN BOUNDARY, FROM THE WEST.



12. VIEW SOUTH-WEST ACROSS SITE FOLLOWING MOWING (1M SCALE).



13. VIEW OF SOUTH-WEST BOUNDARY, FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).



14. GEO-TECHNICAL PIT, LOCATED CENTRALLY ALONG LONG NORTH-EAST BOUNDARY, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



15. GEO-TECHNICAL PIT IN NORTH-WEST CONER, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



16. GENERAL SHOT OF THE SITE LOOKING EAST FROM THE NORTH-WEST CORNER OF THE SITE.



17. GENERAL SHOT OF THE SITE LOOKING SOUTH-EAST FROM THE NORTH-WEST CORNER OF THE SITE.



18. GENERAL SHOT OF THE SITE LOOKING SOUTH FROM THE NORTH-WEST CORNER OF THE SITE.

EVALUATION TRENCHING



LEFT: GENERAL SHOT OF TRENCH 1, POST-EX, FROM THE NORTH-EAST (1M SCALE).
RIGHT: GENERAL SHOT OF TRENCH 2, POST-EX, FROM THE NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



NORTH-EAST FACING SECTION OF DITCH [102], VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



DITCH [102] IN PLAN, VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



LEFT: GENERAL SHOT OF TRENCH 3, POST-EX, FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).

RIGHT: POST-EX SHOT OF DITCH [304], FROM THE NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



NORTH-EAST FACING SECTION OF DITCH [304] (1M SCALE).



NORTH-EAST FACING SECTION OF DITCH [302] (1M SCALE).



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