

LAND AT OLD STABLES MILTON DAMEREL TORRIDGE DEVON

Results of Archaeological Monitoring



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 180823



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Land at the Old Stables, Milton Damerel, Torridge, Devon

Results of Archaeological Monitoring

By P. Webb
Report Version: Final
Draft 23rd August 2018
Finalised 14th September 2018

Work undertaken by SWARCH for
a Private Client

Summary

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. for land at the Old Stables, Milton Damerel, Torridge, Devon. The site is located in an area of archaeological potential, at the north-western edge of the historic core of the settlement, in proximity to a putative shrunken settlement.

The archaeological monitoring at the Old Stables, Milton Damerel identified five archaeological features, a combination of linear gullies and possible pit/ditch terminus features which may relate to historic land-use on the site, including drainage and field boundaries reflecting the layout of the historic field-system. Whilst only one of the features produced dating evidence to indicate activity, it is possible that the other features were of a similar date; though post-medieval finds recovered from the site could equally suggest a later date.



August 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION:	OLD STABLES, MILTON DAMEREL
PARISH:	MILTON DAMEREL
DISTRICT:	TORRIDGE
COUNTY:	DEVON
NGR:	SS 38040 10916
PLANNING NO.	1/1037/2017/FUL
HE OFFICER REF.	ARCH/DM/TO/31875A
MUSEUM ACCESSION No.	NDDMS 8.2018A
OASIS No.	SOUTHWES1-311070
SWARCH REF.	NDL16

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by a Private Client to undertake archaeological monitoring during groundworks associated with the agricultural development of land at the Old Stables, Milton Damerel, Torridge, Devon. This work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Balmond 2018) drawn up in consultation with Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET) and in line with best practice and ClfA guidelines.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The hamlet of Milton Damerel is located approximately 7km north-east of Holsworthy, North Devon and is situated on a minor road which joins the A388 between Holsworthy Beacon and Stibb Cross. The development site comprises a rectangular plot at the northern end of a field located approximately 175m to the north-west of the Holy Trinity church at a height of c.145m AOD (see Figure 1). The soils of this area are the well drained, fine loamy soils over rock of the Neath Association (SSEW 1983). These overlie the sandstone of the Bude Formation, part of the Holsworthy Group (BGS 2018).

1.3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Milton Damerel, in the parish of the same name, is located in the hundred of Black Torrington and deanery of Holsworthy. The manor pre-dates Domesday and is recorded as *Midletone*, ('middle farm') (Gover *et al* 1932) held by Wulfeva or Wulwena. Following the Conquest the manor was granted to Robert de Albemarle from whom the Damerel element of the name was derived (with the French *de* prefixed) (Thorn and Thorn 1985). It was held by the Albemarle or Damerel family until purchased by Hugh Courtenay, Earl of Devon in the reign of Edward II (1284-1327). Held under the Courtenays by the Stapledons, Hankfords, and in the 19th century by Earl Stanhope, the manor remained Courtenay property until recent times (Lysons 1822).

The site is located to the north-west of the Holy Trinity parish church of Milton Damerel within an area considered to be part of the medieval core of the settlement. Earthworks have been noted surrounding the church suggestive of a shrunken settlement. The Milton Damerel tithe map indicates the site to be within a single plot, *Higher Town Park* owned by Earl Stanhope and occupied by John Braund.

There is evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site, a barrow located to the south-east (MDV11663) which is commemorated in the tithe field name *Burrows Close* (plot no. 942); and cropmark evidence suggesting a series of ring-ditches located to the north-east (MDV64597).

The medieval settlement of Milton Damerel is believed to have been centred around the church, though now a shrunken settlement (MDV11672, 11673). Ordnance Survey mapping records earthworks to the north and south-east of the church: to the south-east they include evidence of a hollow-way together with crofts and building platforms, though archaeological fieldwork carried out to the immediate south and south-east of the church by SWARCH (Walls 2011) and AC Archaeology (Farnell 2014) have not identified any significant archaeological deposits/features. To the north the earthworks comprise four rectangular platforms and a low bank, traditionally thought to be the site of the manor house. Evidence of fishponds (MDV11672, 11673) to the north-east of this group of earthworks may bear this out.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The archaeological monitoring was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Balmond 2018) drawn up in consultation with Susan Watts (DCHET) and in line with best practice. A rectangular area orientated approximately east to west and measuring c.13m×7m was stripped of topsoil by tracked machine using a toothless grading bucket. Foundation trenches totalling c.30m and measuring 0.50m wide were subsequently excavated, rectangular post-holes, each measuring c.1m×0.70m excavated at the corners and mid-way along. Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand and in accordance with the WSI and ClfA guidelines.

The monitoring was carried out to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any *in situ* archaeological deposits. The archaeological monitoring took place on 21st August 2018.

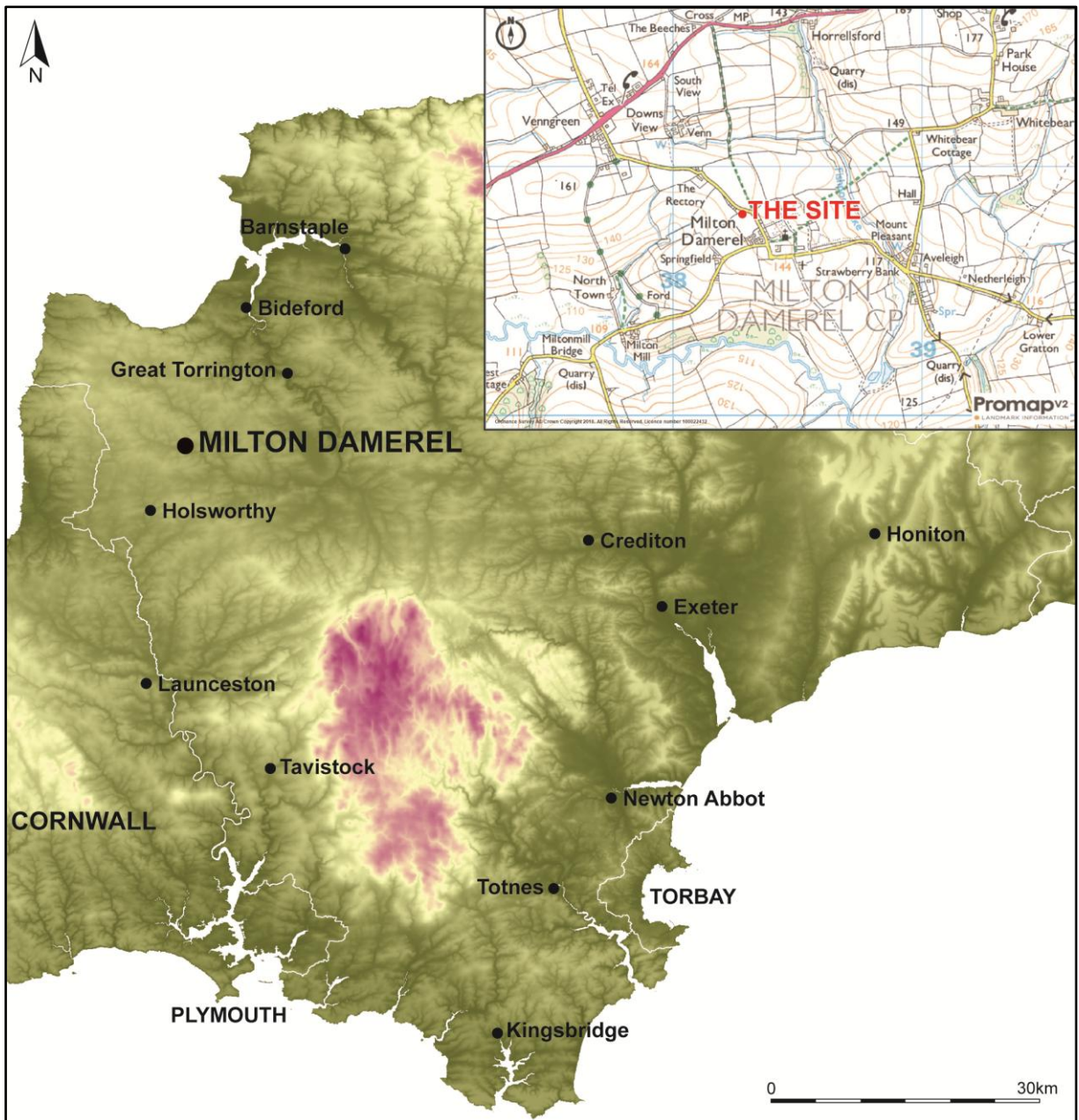


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION (THE SITE IS INDICATED).

2.0 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The archaeological monitoring was carried out on 21st August and comprised an initial topsoil strip of a rectangular area covering the footprint of the development area. The area measured c.13m×7m and was stripped by tracked machine to the base of topsoil using a toothless grading bucket. Foundation trenches totalling c.30m and measuring 0.50m wide were subsequently excavated, rectangular post-holes, each measuring c.1m×0.70m excavated at the corners and mid-way along. Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand and in accordance with the WSI and ClfA guidelines.

A total of five features were identified across the site, including three gullies and two possible pits (Figure 2). What follows is a summary of the excavations with finds noted where they occur; see Appendix 1 for detailed context descriptions; Appendix 2 for full finds concordance; and Appendix 3 for a set of baseline photographs.

2.2 DEPOSIT MODEL

There was little variation in the site stratigraphy, much of the site comprising: friable mid grey clay-silt-loam turf (100) overlying a mid grey friable silt-clay-loam topsoil (101). This sealed firm-hard light-mid yellow silt-clay weathered natural (103). Across the eastern half of the site an additional layer of mid yellow-brown firm clay-silt subsoil (102)/(104) was present. The thickness of these soils was largely consistent across the site, the turf and topsoil c.0.22m thick, and subsoil c.0.20m thick (see Figure 2).

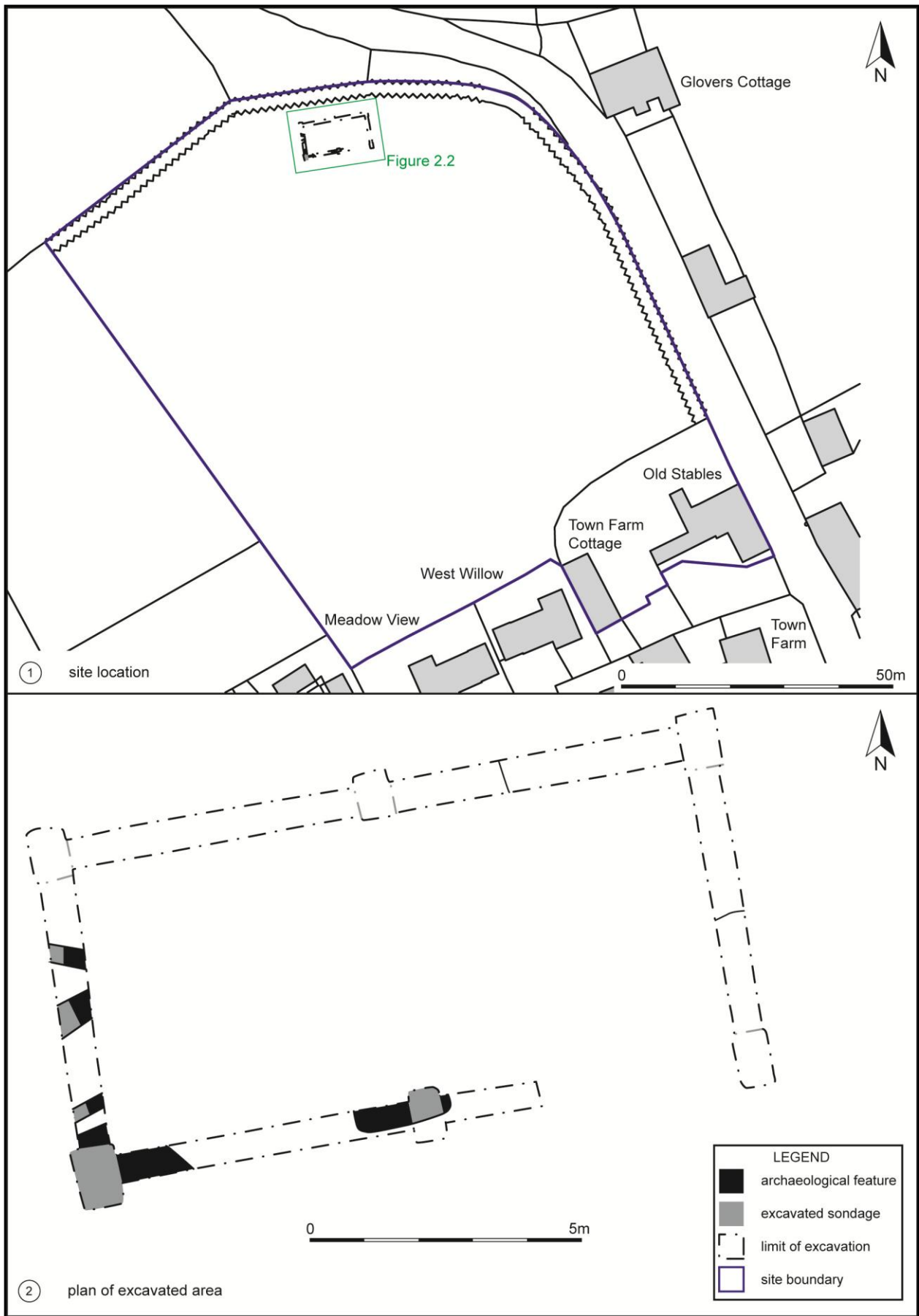


FIGURE 2: SITE PLAN SHOWING LOCATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES.

2.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Possible pit [107] was only partially exposed, appearing as the southern end of a sub-rectangular feature orientated approximately east to west. It measured 1.80m×0.80+m and was 0.58m deep with a steep southern side and flat base (Figures 3-4). It contained two fills: (108), and (109), mid grey-brown soft-firm clay-silts with common stone inclusions.

Approximately 3.50m to the west possible pit [112] was similarly only partially exposed, appearing as the northern end of a sub-rectangular feature (Figure 4). It was orientated approximately north-west to south-east and measured 2.20+m×1.20+m and 0.42m deep. It contained two fills: (110), mid grey-brown friable clay-silt-loam with occasional stone inclusions; and (111), light brown-grey soft clay-silt with a humic lense at the base. Finds recovered from this feature included two sherds (25g) of medieval pottery from upper fill (110).

Gully [113] was a linear feature located towards the western edge of the site. It was orientated approximately north-east to south-west and measured 0.40m wide and 0.08m deep with moderate sloping sides and slightly concave base (Figure 4). It contained a single fill: (114), mid grey soft-firm clay-silt with occasional stone inclusions. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Approximately 1.50m to the north gully [115] followed the same north-east to south-west alignment and measured 0.64m wide and 0.06m deep with shallow sloping sides and slightly concave base (Figure 4). It contained a single fill: (116), mid grey soft-firm clay-silt with occasional stone inclusions. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Gully [117] was located just to the north of [115] on an approximate north-west to south-east alignment. It measured 0.38m wide and 0.04m deep with shallow sloping sides and slightly concave base (Figure 4). It contained a single fill: (118), mid grey soft-firm clay-silt with occasional stone inclusions. No finds were recovered from this feature.



FIGURE 3: FEATURE [107], EAST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).

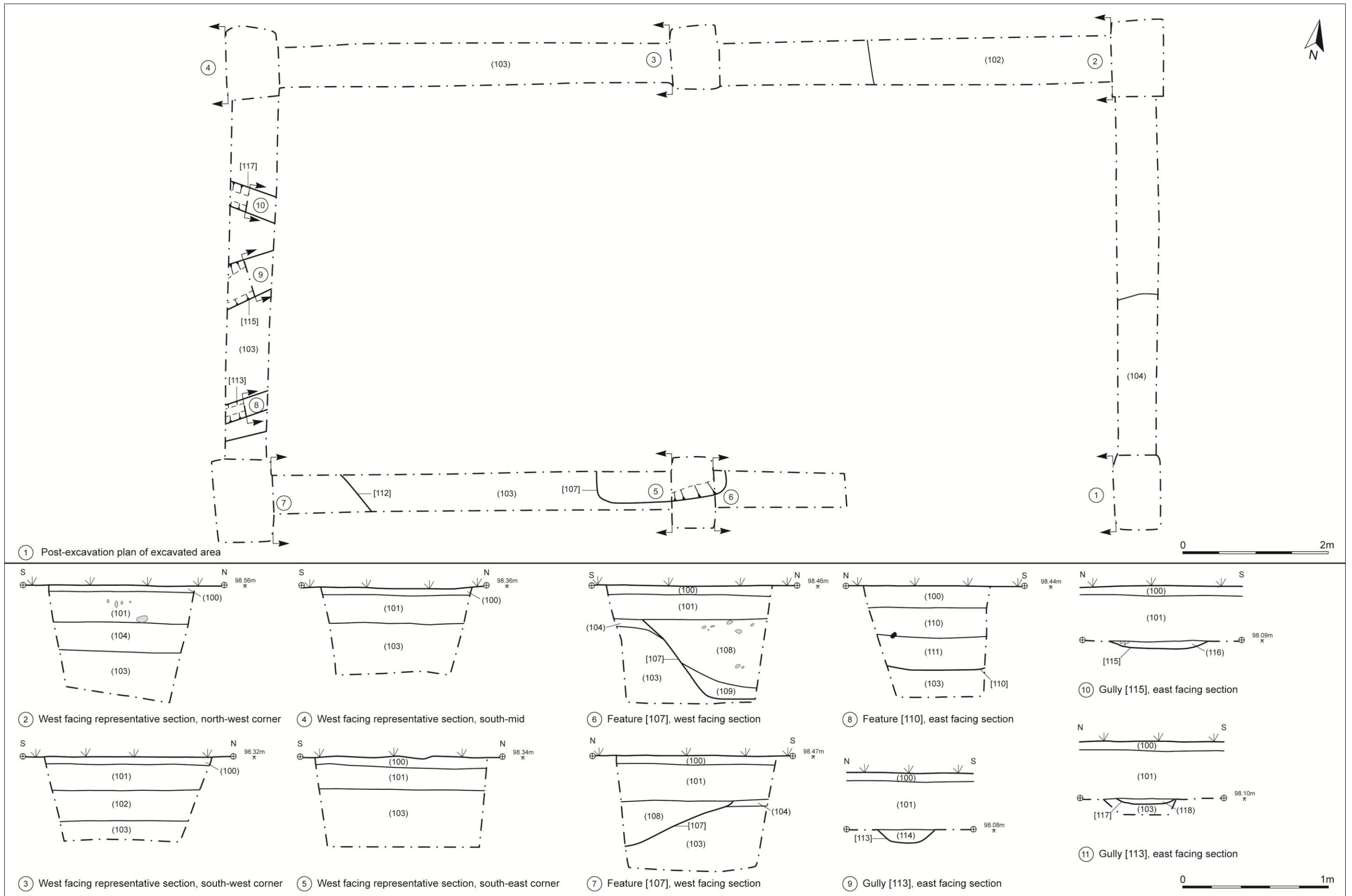


FIGURE 4: SITE PLANS AND SECTIONS. HEIGHTS BASED ON AN ARBITRARY BENCH MARK OF 100M AOD.

2.4 FINDS

Only a small number of finds were recovered during the excavation, from a mix of topsoils and feature fills. They comprised medieval and post-medieval pottery, and metalwork.

Of the 4 sherds of pottery recovered from the site, ×1 sherd (20g) of medieval North Devon gravel tempered coarseware; and ×1 sherd (5g) of medieval green glazed red earthenware from feature fill (110); and ×2 sherds (14g) of post-medieval white refined earthenware from topsoil (100). A single iron object (144g) was recovered from an unstratified context.

The range of finds recovered from the site demonstrates limited mixed medieval and post-medieval domestic activity reflecting the site's position near the historic core of the settlement; though the paucity of finds perhaps suggests limited use of the site and that it may have been on the fringes of the settlement.

2.5 DISCUSSION

The archaeological monitoring at the Old Stables identified five archaeological features: three gullies and two possible pits/ditch termini. Of these, finds recovered from one of the pit features indicates medieval activity; the remainder being undated.

The limited scale and nature of the excavations, with only small sections of the features being identified makes interpretation of the site difficult. The majority of the features were relatively insubstantial, being only shallow gullies, and may reflect undated historic drainage of the field; or possible short-term strip-field divisions.

The pit features are more ambiguous, the finds recovered from the fill of pit [112] indicates medieval activity, though their function remains unclear. It is possible, given the limited extents identified, that the pits may in fact represent sections of linear ditches, particularly [109] which could form a ditch terminus, part of a historic boundary suggested by LiDAR data (Figure 5) and perhaps indicating a gateway between fields.

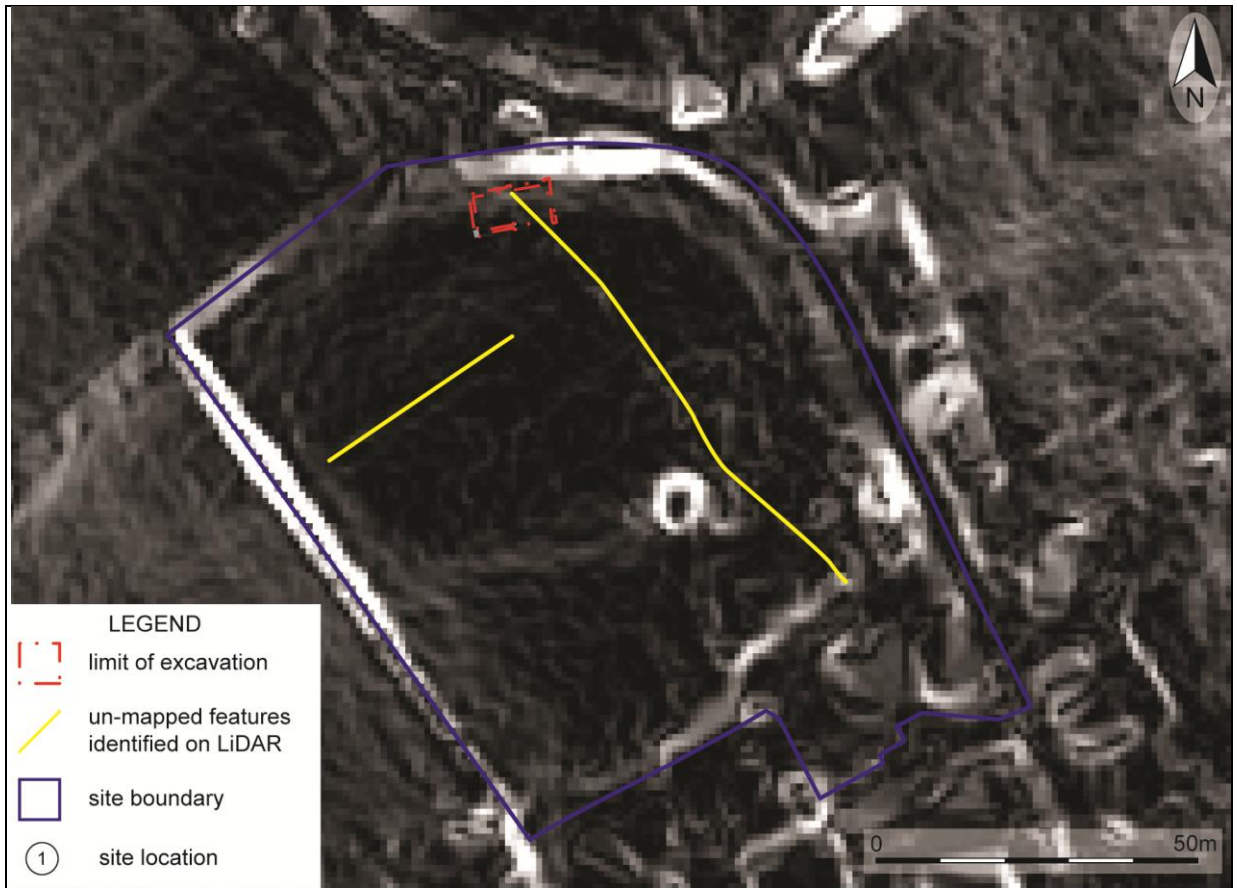


FIGURE 5: IMAGE DERIVED FROM LIDAR DATA, SHOWING UN-MAPPED HISTORIC FEATURES IN RELATION TO EXCAVATION AREA (PROCESSED USING QGIS VER2.18.4, TERRAIN ANALYSIS/SLOPE, VERTICAL EXAGGERATION 3.0). DATA: CONTAINS FREELY AVAILABLE DATA SUPPLIED BY ENVIRONMENT AGENCY 2017.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The archaeological monitoring at the Old Stables, Milton Damerel identified five archaeological features, a combination of linear gullies and possible pit/ditch terminus features which may relate to historic land-use on the site, including drainage and field boundaries reflecting the layout of the historic field-system. Whilst only one of the features produced dating evidence to indicate medieval activity, it is possible that the other features were of a similar date; though post-medieval finds recovered from the site could equally suggest a later date.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Description	Relationships	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot date
Area 01					
(100)	Layer	Turf – mid grey friable clay-silt-loam. Very rooty.	Overlies (101)	0.06-0.10m	Modern
(101)	Layer	Topsoil – mid grey friable clay-silt-loam with common sub-angular to sub-rounded stone.	Overlain by (100); overlies (102), (108), (110)	0.20-0.25m thick	Post-medieval – modern
(102)	Layer	Subsoil – mid yellow-brown firm clay-silt with common sub-angular stone. Only present across eastern side of site.	Overlain by (101); overlies (103)	Up to 0.20m thick	-
(103)	Natural	Natural – light-mid yellow firm-hard silt-clay with red-yellow mottling and trending to pale grey as it gets deeper. Intermittent bands of almost stoneless to frequent sub-angular stone.	Overlain by (102); cut by [112], [113], [115], [117]	-	-
(104)	Layer	Subsoil – mid yellow-brown firm-friable clay-silt with common sub-angular stone. Present towards south-east corner of site.	Cut by [107]; overlies (103)	Up to 0.20m thick	-
105	Void	Void	Void	Void	Void
106	Void	Void	Void	Void	Void
[107]	Cut	Possible pit feature only partially exposed. Appears sub-rectangular in plan orientated approximately east to west. Measures 1.80m×0.80m and 0.58m deep with moderate to steep sloping sides and flat base.	Filled by (108), (109); cuts (104)	0.58m deep	-
(108)	Fill	Upper fill of [107] – mid grey-brown soft-firm clay-silt with common small sub-angular and sub-rounded stone inclusions.	Overlain by (101); overlies (109); fill of [107]	Up to 0.45m thick	-
(109)	Fill	Lower fill of [107] – mid grey-brown firm silt-clay with common small sub-angular and sub-rounded stone inclusions.	Overlain by (108); fill of [107]	Up to 0.13m thick	-
(110)	Fill	Upper fill of [112] – mid grey-brown friable clay-silt-loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions.	Overlain by (101); overlies (111); fill of [112]	0.20m thick	Medieval?
(111)	Fill	Lower fill of [112] – light brown-grey friable clay-silt with band of moist black humic sediment.	Overlain by (110); fill of [112]	0.20m thick	Medieval?
[112]	Cut	Possible pit feature only partially exposed. Edges not identified. Appear sub-rectangular in plan orientated approximately north-west to south-east. Measures 2.20+m×1.20+m and 0.42m deep with slightly concave base.	Filled by (110), (111); cuts (103)	0.42m deep	-
[113]	Cut	Linear gully orientated approximately north-east to south-west. Measures 0.40m wide and 0.08m deep with moderate sloping sides and slightly concave	Filled by (114); cuts (103)	0.08m deep	-

LAND AT THE OLD STABLES, MILTON DAMEREL, TORRIDGE, DEVON

		base.			
(114)	Fill	Fill of gully [113] – mid grey soft-firm clay-silt with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions.	Overlain by (101); fill of [113]	0.08m thick	-
[115]	Cut	Linear gully orientated approximately north-east to south-west. Measures 0.64m wide and 0.06m deep with shallow sloping sides and slightly concave base.	Fill by (116); cuts (103)	0.06m deep	-
(116)	Fill	Fill of gully [115] – mid grey soft-firm clay-silt with occasional sub-angular small stone inclusions.	Overlain by (101); fill of [115]	0.06m thick	-
[117]	Cut	Linear gully orientated approximately north-west to south-east. Measures 0.38m wide and 0.04m deep with shallow sloping sides and slightly concave base.	Filled by (118); cuts (103)	0.04m deep	-
(118)	Fill	Fill of gully [117] – mid grey soft-firm clay-silt with occasional sub-angular small stone inclusions.	Overlain by (101); fill of [117]	0.04m thick	-

APPENDIX 2: FINDS CONCORDANCE

Context	POTTERY			OTHER			DATE
	Sherds	Wgt. (g)	Notes	Frgs.	Wgt. (g)	Notes	
(100)	1 1	2 12	White refined earthenware with blue transfer print. Rim sherd. White refined earthenware. Base sherd				Post-medieval
(110)	1 1	20 5	North Devon gravel tempered coarseware. Rim sherd with green internal glaze. Red earthenware. Body sherd with green internal and external glaze.				Medieval
U/S				1	144	Metal – heavily corroded iron object, broken strap(?)	-
TOTALS	4	39		1	144		

APPENDIX 3: SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS



1. (LEFT) POST-EXCAVATION VIEW ALONG NORTHERN FOUNDATION TRENCH; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).
2. (MIDDLE) POST-EXCAVATION VIEW ALONG NORTHERN FOUNDATION TRENCH; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).
3. (RIGHT) POST-EXCAVATION VIEW ALONG EASTERN FOUNDATION TRENCH; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).



4. POST-EXCAVATION VIEW ALONG SOUTHERN FOUNDATION TRENCH; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



5. EAST FACING REPRESENTATIVE SECTION, NORTH-WEST CORNER; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



6. EAST FACING REPRESENTATIVE SECTION, SOUTH-MID; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



7. EAST FACING REPRESENTATIVE SECTION, NORTH-EAST CORNER; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



8. EAST FACING REPRESENTATIVE SECTION, SOUTH-EAST CORNER; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



9. FEATURE [107], EAST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



10. FEATURE [107], WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).



11. POST-EXCAVATION VIEW OF FEATURE [107]; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



12. FEATURE [112], WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).



13. (LEFT) VIEW ALONG WESTERN FOUNDATION TRENCH, SHOWING FEATURES [113], [115], AND [117]; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).



14. (MIDDLE) VIEW ALONG WESTERN FOUNDATION TRENCH SHOWING FEATURES [112], [113], [115] AND [117]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



15. (RIGHT) POST-EXCAVATION VIEW ALONG SOUTHERN FOUNDATION TRENCH, SHOWING FEATURE [112]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



16. GULLY [113], WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (PART 1M SCALE).



17. GULLY [115], WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (PART 1M SCALE).



18. GULLY [117], WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (PART 1M SCALE).



19. POST-EXCAVATION VIEW OF WESTERN FOUNDATION TRENCH, SHOWING FEATURES [113], [115], AND [117]; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).

20. GENERAL POST-EXCAVATION SITE VIEW; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (NO SCALE).



21. GENERAL POST-EXCAVATION SITE VIEW; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (NO SCALE).



22. GENERAL POST-EXCAVATION SITE VIEW; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (NO SCALE).



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