NORRINGTON YARD SOUTH MOLTON DEVON

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 180118



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Norrington Yard, South Molton, Devon Results of an Archaeological Evaluation

By J. Bampton Report Version: FINAL 18th January 2018

Work undertaken by SWARCH for Simon Grant of Spirebourne Ltd. (the Client)

SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) for a site at Norrington Yard, South Molton, Devon, to inform the future use of the site. This work was preceded by a desk-based assessment, walkover survey and heritage impact assessment by SWARCH (2017).

Six trenches were excavated across the site targeting areas of higher archaeological potential: the footprint of lost historic buildings; the lines of burgage plot boundaries; and less disturbed areas. However, Norrington Yard has been thoroughly landscaped. The ground has been levelled and made up, on more than one occasion across parts of the site, during the 20th century. Extensive services including electric cables and drains criss-cross the site and follow the line of earlier boundaries, including the posited medieval burgage plot boundaries. Apart from sporadic debris within made-ground deposits, there does not appear to be any surviving below-ground remains of the buildings depicted on historic mapping across the western part of the site. The dating evidence recovered from this debris was post-medieval to modern in date. It is likely that any archaeological deposits present across the central part of the site have been truncated by 20th century activity.

The survival of a subsoil in the grassy south-east corner of the site, and a land-drain in the northern part of the site, may indicate the potential for the survival of archaeological remains or deposits in these areas. However, even here is seems unlikely given the archaeological deposits, finds or features in these trenches. No significant archaeological remains or deposits were identified in the evaluation. The high-potential areas identified by the desk-based assessment (SWARCH 2017) were found to be very disturbed, truncated or rendered inaccessible by standing structures or modern services. On the basis of this investigation the archaeological potential of the central part of the site is assessed as low to negligible; the archaeological potential of the northern and southern parts of the site is assessed as low.



January 2018

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1.0 Introduction

Location: Norrington Yard, South Street

Parish: South Molton

County: Devon

NGR: SS 71445 25657

SWARCH ref: SNY17

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at Norrington Yard, South Molton, Devon (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Simon Grant of Spirebourne Ltd. (the Client) in support of a planning application. This work was carried out in line with CIFA guidelines and best practice. A desk-based assessment and walkover survey was carried out in 2017 by SWARCH (2017) and this facilitated the targeting of trenches across the possible remains of demolished structures and former burgage plot boundaries.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Norrington Yard is located between South Street and the main South Molton car park, in the base of a shallow valley that drops very gradually to the east, at a height of c.130m AOD. The soils of the area are the well-drained fine loamy soils of the Denbigh 2 Association (SSEW 1983), which overlie the mudstones and siltstones of the Bude Formation (BGS 2017).

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

South Molton (*sudmoltone* in 1086) was the head of a Hundred and a royal manor with a collegiate church. By the late 11th century South Molton had been granted to the Barony of Gloucester, and in the 12th century Gilbert de Turberville obtained a charter for the town in c.1150. The wealth of the town in the medieval and post-medieval period was largely derived from animal husbandry and specifically wool. In the late 18th and 19th century a series of important civic buildings were constructed, e.g. the Guildhall (1743 and 1773) and Market House (1863). The town declined in the later 19th century due to increasing competition in the woollen trade and the construction of the railways which impacted on local and regional trade.

1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A number of archaeological investigations have been undertaken in South Molton, but the results of this work have not added much to our understanding of the origins and development of this settlement. HER records for the town are dominated by the built environment – Listed buildings and other standing structures – and are clearly incomplete. The South Molton EUS report (CAU 2013) simply reflects the current state of knowledge. Only four sites in South Molton have produced significant results: the fieldwork undertaken in advance of the new South Molton Rugby Club pitch next to the Community College (EDV6719); two small evaluations in the centre of South Molton, one to the rear of the Old Coaching Inn on Queen Street (EDV7097) and one to the rear of 27 Broad Street (not listed in the HER); and the extensive works at Gunswell Lane to the north (EDV6168). A desk-based assessment, walkover survey and heritage impact assessment by SWARCH (2017) identified the potential for remains relating to demolished structures on the western side of the site, and the line of burgage plots across the site.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

This work was undertaken in consultation with Stephen Reed, Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET) and ClfA guidelines. The desk-based assessment aspect of the report follows the guidance as outlined in: *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (ClfA 2014). The archaeological evaluation follows the guidance as outlined in: *Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2015a) and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (ClfA 2015b). The results of this work will provide information on the presence or absence, character, extent and in some cases, apparent relative phasing of the buried archaeology leading to the formulation of a strategy to mitigate risk to any archaeological resource.

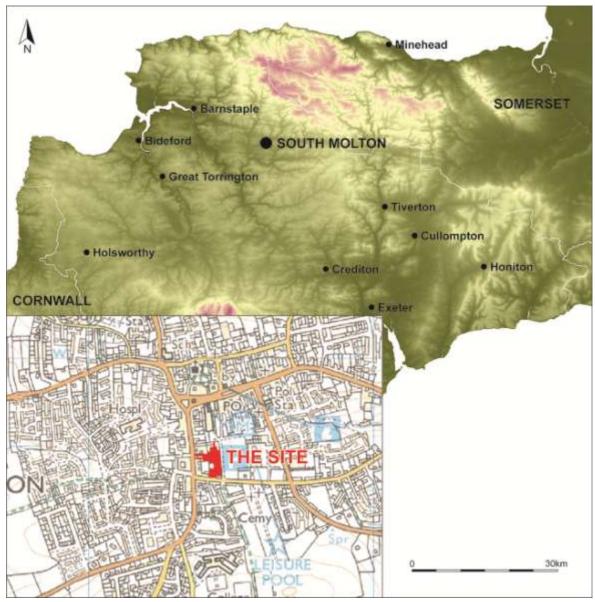


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

2.1 Introduction

Six evaluation trenches – four 1m wide and two 1.6m wide, and with a combined length of 93.3m – were excavated across the site by a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision (see Figure 2). These trenches were located to target feature identified during the desk-based assessment and walkover (SWARCH 2017). Trench 1 targeted the footprint of demolished historic structures; Trenches 2 and 4 targeted medieval burgage plot boundaries; Trench 3 targeted an area at the northern end of the site shown as orchards on the historic map sources and separate from the larger yard area; Trenches 5 and 6 targeted a grassy area that, during the walkover survey of the site, did not appear to have heavily disturbed. Modern services and fuel tanks constrained the areas that could be trenched, and were coincidentally contiguous with the line of the burgage plot boundaries, making them impossible to investigate (see Figure 2).

2.2 DEPOSIT MODEL

Most of the site consisted of a concrete (100), (200), (300), (400), or gravel yard surface, (403) that overlaid hardcore/rubble made-ground (101), or a blue-grey stony gravel and rubble hardcore bedding layer, (201), (301), (401), (404).

In Trench 1 made-ground (101) overlaid a hard concrete floor layer (102), which extended across the footprint of known demolished buildings and overlaid made-ground (103), which in-turn partly overlaid a demolition layer (104) of dark black-grey, compact clay rubble, which overlaid the natural (105).

In Trenches 2, 3 and the east end of Trench 4 the bedding layers overlaid two made-ground layers; firstly (202), (302) and (405), which were dark black-grey compact silt-clays with modern debris; these overlaid (203), (303) and (406), mid-light grey, compact clays that overlaid the natural (204), (304) and (407), which consisted of a light grey and brown compact shillet. The west end of Trench 4 was similar to the south end of Trench 1, layer (402) equating to (104).

Trenches 5 and 6 contained a topsoil, consisting of a mid brown-grey, friable sandy-silt turf (500), (600) that overlaid a light grey-blue, loose gravel (600), (601) that overlaid an upper subsoil, a mid reddish-yellow, friable clay-silt with frequent stones (502), (602) that in turn overlaid a lower subsoil, a mid brown-yellow, friable clay-silt (503), (603) over the natural shillet (504) and (604).

2.3 RESULTS

The evaluation identified a single land-drain and modern disturbed layers comprised of madeground and modern demolished structures. The demolished structures targeted in Trench 1 survive only as debris within demolition and made-ground layers. The walls and floors of these structures did not survive (Figure 2). In Trench 2 some fuel contamination may have occurred in the ground adjacent to a redundant fuel tank. A ceramic land-drain and the base of a parallel field drain were identified in Trench 3. Trench 4 contained the concrete footings with block walling and machine-made brick rubble associated with an extant concrete building platform. Trench 5 contained the remains of a demolished modern brick structure. Trench 6 contained a 19th-20th century salt-glazed sewer pipe. A complete context list can be found in Appendix 1; supporting photographs, in trench order, can be found in Appendix 2.

No significant archaeological remains or deposits were identified in the evaluation.

2.3.1 TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was located to target the footprint of structures depicted on historic mapping from the mid 18th century up into the 1970s. It was aligned approximately north-south and measured 22m long, 1m wide and 0.75-0.85m deep. It revealed no significant archaeological features (Figure 2). The trench contained made-ground and demolition layers that probably included the remnants of the demolished historic structures. It revealed buried concrete surfaces that are likely to be associated with historic structures, but no corresponding walls or foundation trenches. Finds recovered from this trench include a single sherd (7g) of North Devon post-medieval pottery and a single possible 17th century clay pipe bowl (5g) from demolition layer (104).

2.3.2 TRENCH 2

Trench 2 was located to target a possible burgage plot boundary. The trench was aligned approximately north-south and measured 4.80m long, 1m wide and 0.40m deep. It revealed no significant archaeological features or deposits (Figure 2). The trench was not fully excavated for the following reasons: electric cables ran across the northern and southern ends of the proposed trench and along the line of the posited burgage plot boundary at the southern end of the trench; furthermore, the middle of the trench contained the edge of a redundant fuel tank that had recently been filled with cement.

2.3.3 TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was located to target an area identified as fields on historic mapping. It was aligned approximately north-east by south-west and measured 13m long, 1m wide and 0.53-0.73m deep. It revealed no significant archaeological features or deposits (Figure 2). The trench contained a ceramic field drain aligned north-west by south-east and the ephemeral stony base of a parallel field drain.

2.3.4 TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was located to target a possible burgage plot boundary. The trench was aligned approximately east-west and measured 28m long, 1m wide and 0.60-1m deep. It revealed no significant archaeological features (Figure 2). The trench contained made-ground and demolition layers and it revealed concrete footings that extended into the natural, with concrete block walling and machine-made brick rubble associated with an extant concrete building platform.

2.3.5 TRENCH 5

Trench 5 was located within the less obviously disturbed part of the site. The trench was aligned approximately north-south and measured 14.50m long, 1.60m wide and 0.78m deep. It revealed no significant archaeological features (Figure 2). The trench contained gravelly made-ground and a modern (*London Brick Company*) and breeze block structure, *c*.1.40m×0.70+m. This structure was directly overlaid by topsoil/turf (500).

2.3.6 Trench 6

Trench 6 was located within the less obviously disturbed part of the site. It was aligned approximately north-west by south-east and measured 11m long, 1.60m wide and 0.47m deep. It revealed no significant archaeological features (Figure 2). The trench contained gravelly madeground and a 19th-20th century 9" sewer pipe aligned approximately north-west by south-east, parallel with a modern foul-water drain.

2.3.7 FINDS

The made-ground and demolition layers generally produced modern finds which were not retained. The subsoil in Trenches 5 and 6 contained White Refined Earthenware (WRE). A single sherd (7g) of North Devon post-medieval pottery and a single possible 17th century clay pipe bowl (5g) were recovered from demolition layer (104) and subsequently discarded.

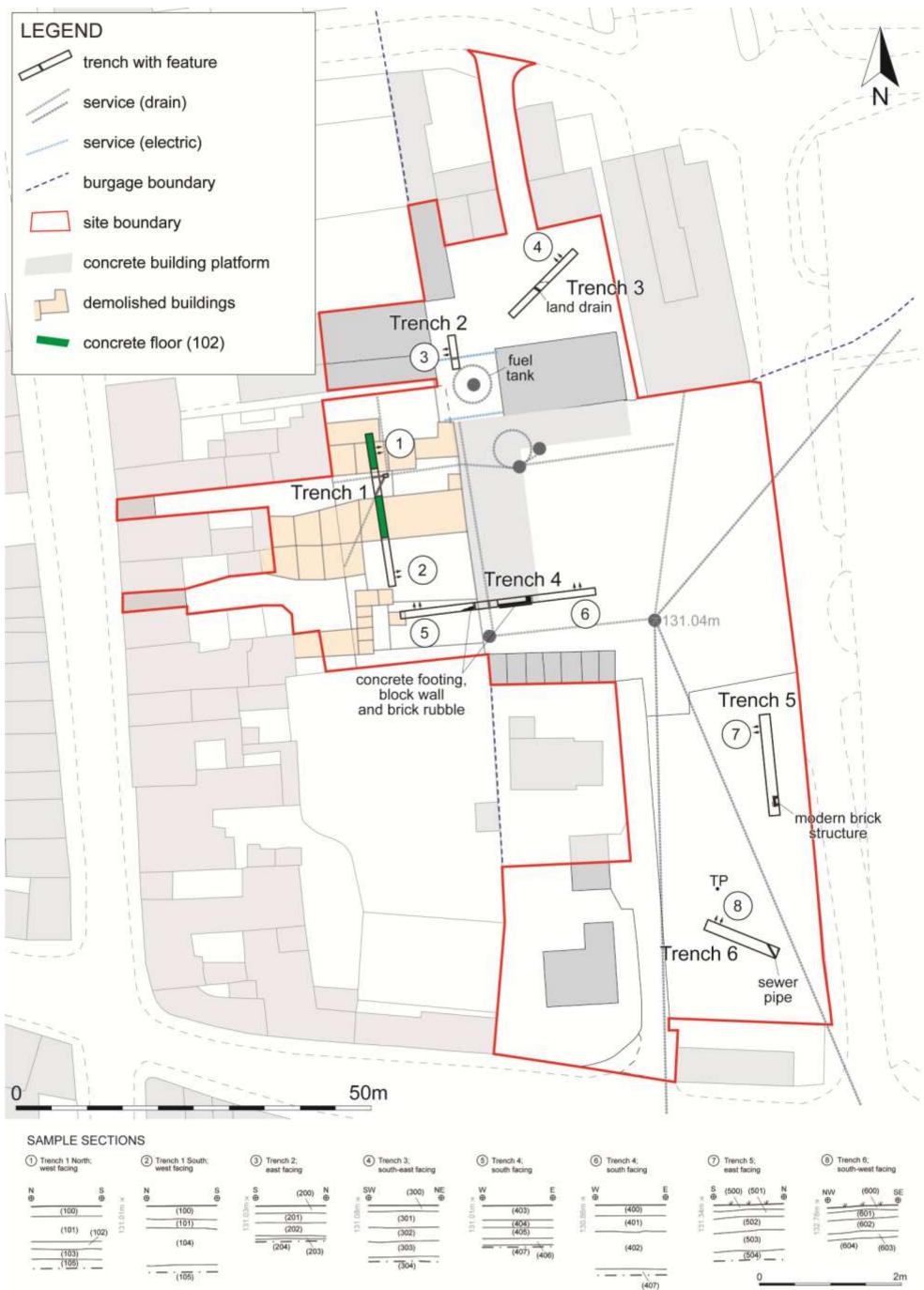


FIGURE 2: SITE PLAN AND SAMPLE SECTION DRAWINGS SHOWING TRENCH LOCATIONS, SECTION LOCATIONS AND FEATURES OVERLAYING SERVICE PLANS AND PLANS OF DEMOLISHED BUILDINGS.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Norrington Yard has been thoroughly landscaped. The ground has been levelled and made up, on more than one occasion across parts of the site, during the 20th century. Extensive services including electric cables and drains criss-cross the site and follow the line of earlier boundaries, including the posited medieval burgage plot boundaries identified by the desk-based assessment (SWARCH 2017). Apart from sporadic debris within made-ground deposits, there does not appear to be any surviving below-ground remains of the buildings depicted on historic mapping across the western part of the site. The dating evidence recovered from this debris was post-medieval to modern in date. It is likely that any archaeological deposits present across the central part of the site have been truncated by 20th century activity.

The survival of a subsoil in the grassy south-east corner of the site, and a land-drain in the northern part of the site, may indicate the potential for the survival of archaeological remains or deposits in these areas. However, even here is seems unlikely given the archaeological deposits, finds or features in these trenches.

No significant archaeological remains or deposits were identified in the evaluation. The high-potential areas identified by the desk-based assessment (SWARCH 2017) were found to be very disturbed, truncated or rendered inaccessible by standing structures or modern services. On the basis of this investigation the archaeological potential of the central part of the site is assessed as *low* to *negligible*; the archaeological potential of the northern and southern parts of the site is assessed as *low*.

4.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY & REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

(100) Yard Surface Extant concrete.	Late C20 th
(101) Made-ground Hardcore/rubble. Concrete floor surface, very hard concrete with occasional stony mix that extended 15m from the northern end of the trench.	Late C20 th C20 th C20 th C20 th C20 th Late C20 th Late C20 th
Floor Surface Concrete floor surface, very hard concrete with occasional stony mix that extended 15m from the northern end of the trench. Overlaid (103); Overlain by (101) 0.10m	C20 th C20 th C20 th C20 th 85m - Late C20 th Late C20 th
northern end of the trench. (103) Made-ground Light-mid grey, clay and gravel levelling and bedding layer for concrete floor (102). Overlaid (105); Overlain by (102) < 0.15m	C20 th C20 th 85m - Late C20 th Late C20 th
Made-ground Oark black-grey, compact clay and rubble with frequent machine-made brick inclusions and occasional wood fragments; also had slight contamination (hydro-carbon/diesel?); finds = post-medieval pottery and clay pipe bowl. Overlain by (103)(104) Below 0.75-0	.85m - Late C20 th Late C20 th
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(200) Yard Surface Concrete. Overlaid (201) 0.10m (201) Made-ground Bedding layer - light blue-grey gravel and stone and rubble hardcore. Overlaid (202); Overlain by (200) 0.13m (202) Made-ground Dark black-grey, compact silt-clay with moderate modern debris inclusions. Overlaid (203); Overlain by (201) 0.18m (203) Made-ground Disturbed ground - mid-light blackish-grey, compact clay with slight contamination (fuel). Overlaid (204); Overlain by (202) 0.04m (204) Natural Compact yellow clay. Trench 3 Trench 3 (300) Yard Surface As 200. Overlaid (301) Overlaid (301) 0.88-0.16m (301) Made-ground As 201. Overlaid (302); Overlain by (300) 0.19-0.22m (302) Made-ground As 203. Overlaid (303); Overlain by (301) c.0.18m (303) Made-ground As 203. Overlaid (304); Overlain by (302) 0.07-0.22m (304) Natural As 204. Overlaid (304); Overlain by (302) 0.07-0.22m (304) Natural As 204. Overlaid (304); Overlain by (302) 0.07-0.22m (304) Natural As 205. Overlaid (306) Overlaid (307) Overlain by (307) 0.14m (400) Made-ground Levelling layer - dark mottled grey- and blackish-brown, compact clay. Overlaid (401) Overlaid (407); Overlain by (400) 0.23m (402) Made-ground Bedding layer - as (201). Overlaid (404) Overlaid (405); Overlain by (403) 0.10m (405) Made-ground As (202).	Late C20 th
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(405) Made-ground As (202). Overlaid (406); Overlain by (404) 0.16m	C20 th
	C20 th
(405) A4-d (407) 0 (405) 0 000	C20 th
(406) Made-ground As (203). Overlain by (405) 0.09m	C20 th
(407) Natural Light yellow and blue-grey, compact shillet with clay. Overlain by (402)(406) Below 0.57-0	.92m -
Trench 5	
(500) Topsoil Turf in a mid brown-grey, friable sandy-silt. Overlaid (501) c.0.08m	Late C20 th
(501) Floor surface Light grey-blue, loose gravel, former floor surface. Overlaid (502); Overlain by (500) 0.10m	C20 th
(502) Subsoil Mid orange-brown, friable clay-silt with frequent small fragments of angular stone; finds = Overlaid (503); Overlain by (501) 0.15m anthracite and White Refined Earthen ware (WRE).	C19 th -20 th
(503) 2 nd Subsoil Mid brownish yellow-red, friable clay-silt; finds = WRE. Overlaid (504); Overlain by (502) 0.29m	C19 -20
(504) Natural Light grey and brown, compact shillet and occasional mid red-yellow clay. Overlain by (503) Below 0.66m	C19 th -20 th
Trench 6	
(600) Topsoil As (500) - overlaid demolished modern brick and block structure. Overlaid (601) 0.06m	

NORRINGTON YARD, SOUTH MOLTON, DEVON

(601)	Floor surface	As (501).	Overlaid (602); Overlain by (600)	0.11m	C20 th
(602)	Subsoil	As (502).	Overlaid (603); Overlain by (601)	0.18m	C19 th -20 th
(603)	2 nd Subsoil	As (503).	Overlaid (604); Overlain by (602)	0.10m	C19 th -20 th
(604)	Natural	As (504).	Overlain by (603)	Below 0.45m	_

APPENDIX 2: SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS

Trench 1



TRENCH1, POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (2M SCALE).



Sample section at the north end of Trench 1; viewed from the west (1m scale).

TRENCH 2



TRENCH 2, BLUE TAPE VISIBLE OVER ELECTRIC CABLE (INDICATED), SEALED FUEL TANK AT FAR EDGE; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST (2M SCALE).



Trench 2 proposed location, sprayed lines indicate services, central man-hole over a cement-filled tank; viewed from the south (2m scale).

TRENCH 3



CERAMIC LAND DRAIN IN TRENCH 3; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (NO SCALE).



Sample section at the south-west end of Trench 3; viewed from the south-east (1m scale).

TRENCH 4



TRENCH 4, POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (2M SCALE).



Sample section at the east end of Trench 4; viewed from the south (1m scale).

TRENCH 5



MODERN BRICK AND BLOCK STRUCTURE IN TRENCH 5, IT DID NOT EXTEND INTO THE NORTH END OF THE TRENCH; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).



MODERN BRICK AND BLOCK STRUCTURE IN TRENCH 5; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).



Sample section at the north end of Trench 5; viewed from the west (1m scale).



Trench 5, post-excavation; viewed from the south (2m scale).

TRENCH 6



Sample section at the north-west end of Trench 6; viewed from the south-west (1m scale).



Trench 6, Post-excavation, sewer pipe in foreground; viewed from the south-east (2m scale).

GENERAL SITE SHOTS



TRENCH 3 AREA, SHOWING PANNIER MARKET IN BACKGROUND, TRENCH 3 TO THE RIGHT IN SHADOW; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (NO SCALE).



Grassy area with Trench 5 to the left; viewed from the north (no scale).



MAIN YARD AREA FROM THE SITE ENTRANCE AT THE NORTH END OF THE GRASSY AREA; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (NO SCALE).



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