

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Petrockstowe, Torridge	National Grid Reference SS 51527 10605	Number:
Subject: Archaeological evaluation trenching at the Old Station Yard, Petrockstowe		Photo attached? Yes
Planning Application no: 1/0616/2019/FULM	Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon (MBND)	
OASIS ID: southwes1-368875	Museum Accession no: 16.2019A	
Contractor's reference number/code: POSY19	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 11 th October 2019	
<p>Description of works.</p> <p>Archaeological evaluation trenching was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of a private client (the Client) as part of archaeological monitoring during groundworks associated with the construction of an agricultural storage building on land at the Old Station Yard, Petrockstowe, Torridge, Devon. This work was carried out by P. Webb on 11th October 2019 in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Boyd 2019) having been agreed during consultation with Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCHET).</p> <p>The site is located c.1km north-east of the village of Petrockstowe, and c.1.7km south-west of Merton and west-south-west of Huish; the development to be situated on 'scrub' land forming part of a former railway station yard; with agricultural fields to the west and tree plantations to the east. The land slopes gently to the south and east at a height of c.66m AOD. The soils here are the slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy soils over clay of the Wickham 2 Association (SSEW 1983); which overlie superficial gravel, sand and silt deposits of the Petrockstowe River Terrace; and the sand, silt, and clay of the Bovey Formation (BGS 2019).</p> <p>The site lies in an area of archaeological potential, c.130m west-north-west of a scheduled bowl barrow (MDV307) in Heathermoor Plantation, though within the yard associated with the Petrockstow (<i>sic</i>) Railway Station which served the former passenger railway line (now Tarka Trail cycle path) between 1925 and 1965.</p> <p>A total of three evaluation trenches (Trenches 01-03), each 1.80m wide and measuring between 37m and 60m in length; were excavated by mechanical excavator to the depth of <i>in situ</i> weathered natural using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision. Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand in accordance with the WSI and CifA guidelines. Further monitoring of the groundworks was not deemed necessary due to heavy disturbance across the site (see below). The stratigraphy of the site comprised topsoil (100), dark brown-grey friable-soft silt-clay 0.08m-0.32m thick; overlying subsoil (101), mid-dark grey-brown friable-soft silt-clay up to 0.40m thick; and the natural (102), a mid-yellow firm-soft clay.</p> <p>Two features were identified during the works, one 'terrace' cut, and one ditch. Terrace cut [103] covered much of the site, measuring 40+m north-south (extending beyond the northern limits of excavation) and 32.50m east-west (extending from the terrace platform of the existing storage barn to the north-east) with steep sides, clear break of slope and undulating base. It contained three fills: (104) re-deposited natural clay 0.18m thick; (105), mixed topsoil and re-deposited natural clay 0.30m thick; (106), mid-dark black-grey friable-soft silt-clay 0.10m-0.23m thick. This feature cut layer (107), mid brown-yellow soft clay up to 0.20m thick, and which may be disturbed natural clay as the former ground surface created when the terrace level was cut. Fills (104) and (105) also extend beyond the edge of the terrace cut indicating a secondary levelling/infilling episode across the site, possibly using spoil from groundworks associated with the construction of the existing yard buildings to the north-east. Finds identified from this feature included plastic sacking within lower terrace fill (106); and it is likely that this feature was associated with the clearance of the station yard after its closure in the late 20th century.</p> <p>In the north-west corner of the site ditch [108] was orientated north to south and measured 1.20m wide and 0.48m deep with moderate sloping sides, clear break of slope and slightly concave base. It contained three fills: (109), mid grey soft clay up to 0.48m thick; and natural slump deposits (110) and (111), mid yellow-grey and grey soft sand-clays up to 0.15m thick. Terrace cut [103] appeared to respect ditch [108] suggesting that it may have been open and in use as a field boundary/drain during the 20th century, though no finds were recovered from the feature or overlying subsoil to confirm this. Across the southern end of the site, where terrace cut [103] did not extend, tightly spaced wheel ruts cut into the natural and likely fully disturb/truncate any archaeological features or deposits that may have once been present in this area.</p> <p>Conclusions</p> <p>A total of two features were identified during the excavations, a possible post-medieval/modern field boundary/drain, and a modern terrace cut with later infilling layers which covers much of the site and which is likely to have destroyed any archaeological features or deposits. The results of the archaeological trenching indicated that there was no value to continue to full monitoring, the vast majority of the site having been disturbed by modern terracing and wheel rutting.</p> <p>Bibliography</p> <p>Boyd, N. 2019: <i>Land at the Old Station Yard, Petrockstowe, Devon: Written Scheme of Investigation</i>. SWARCH report no. POSY19.</p> <p>British Geological Survey 2018: <i>Geology of Britain Viewer</i>. http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html</p> <p>Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983: <i>Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales</i>.</p>		
Recorder: P. Webb	Date sent to HER: 18.10.19	

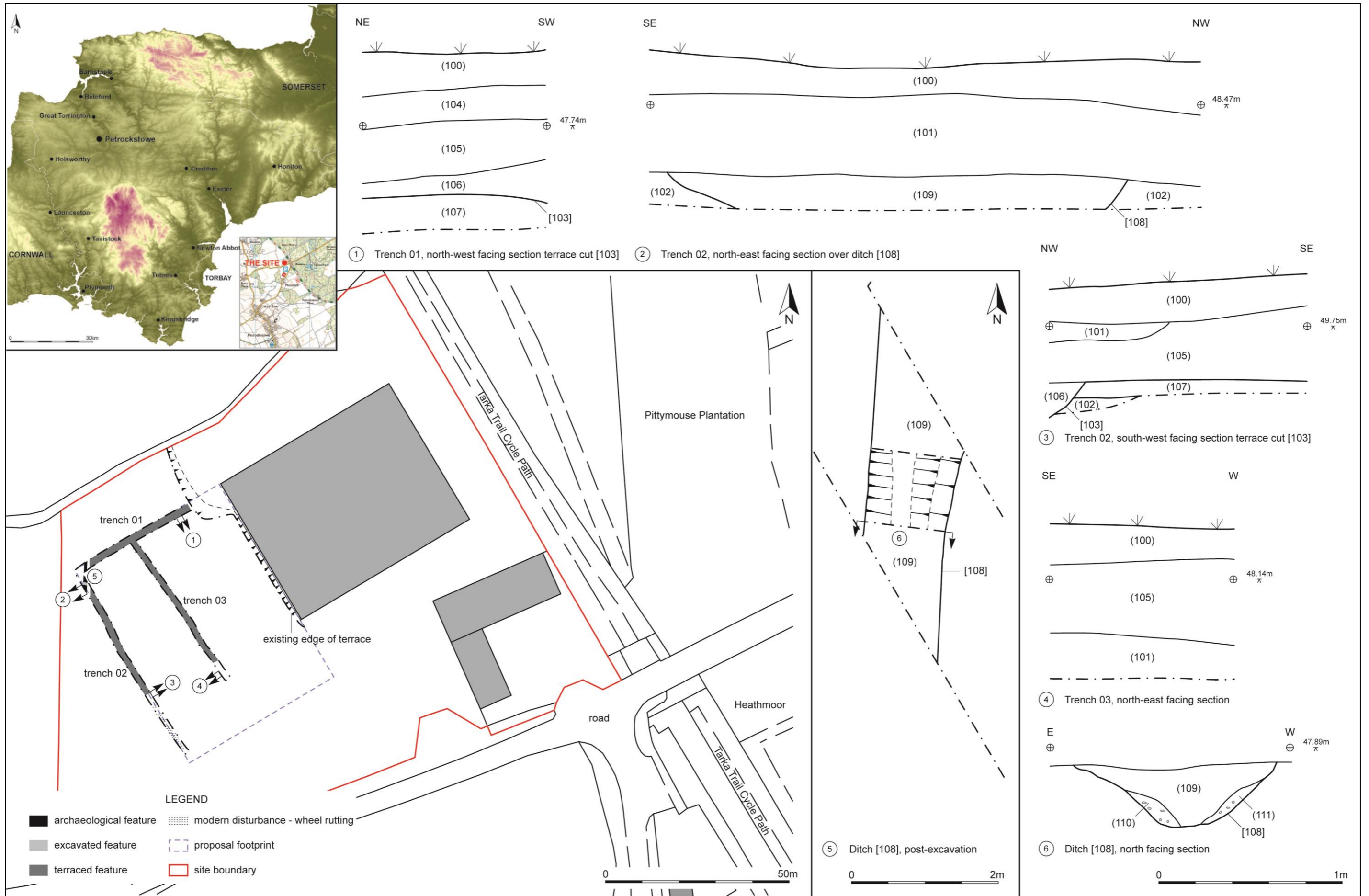


FIGURE 1: SITE PLAN SHOWING LOCATION OF EXCAVATED AREAS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES. HEIGHTS AT AN ARBITRARY TBM OF 50M AOD.



FIGURE 2: DITCH [108]; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).



FIGURE 3: TRENCH 02, POST-EXCAVATION SHOWING WHEEL RUTTING TO THE SOUTH OF TERRACE [103]; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M & 2M SCALES).