

COCKINGTON COTTAGE

ABBOTSHAM

BIDEFORD

DEVON

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

Work undertaken by SWARCH for a private client
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SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken on land at Cockington Cottage, Abbotsham, Bideford, Devon. A series of trench footings were opened and several cobbled surfaces and associated terrace cut were revealed. The cobbles were cleaned and recorded and sections recorded showing stratigraphic layers and relationships. Further recording work is unnecessary.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION**1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of a Private Client as part of archaeological work before building works associated with ground works for a single house plot at Cockington Cottage, Abbotsham, Bideford, Devon. This work was carried out by P. Webb on 14th May 2020 and by S. Stevens on 15th December 2022 in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Boyd 2020) having been agreed during consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCHET).

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies just east of the coastline on a relatively level area, just to the north-east of a stream valley and south of the slope down to another stream valley which leads to the cliffs. The site lies at a height of approximately 99m AOD. The soils of the site are the well-drained fine loamy soils over rock of the Neath Association (SSEW 1983) which overlie the sedimentary mudstone and siltstone of the Crackington Formation (BGS 2020).

1.3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within the parish of Abbotsham in the historic hundred of Shebbear and the deanery of Hartland (Lysons 1822). The manor and church belonged to the abbey of Tavistock, the church

appropriated to the abbey in 1193, but the name of the donor is not recorded. In 1621, the manor belonged to the Coffin family, before passing to the Willett family, in whose hands it lay for many generations.

The comments from DCHET read:

Cockington is first recorded as a settlement in the mid-13th century and the mid-19th century tithe map shows a large house on the footprint of, and extending south from, the extant buildings here. The age of this building is unknown but it could be associated with the early settlement here at Cockington. As such, groundworks for the construction of the proposed development have the potential to expose and destroy archaeological and artefactual deposits associated with the early settlement. The buildings to be demolished are described as a “typical 1970s building”. However, the 2nd edition OS map and the 1940s aerial photographs show the building to have the same alignment and roof plan as that surviving today and it is possible that this building is of some antiquity.

A site visit by SWARCH on 14th May 2020 determined that the building described in the DCHET comments has been demolished and all trace removed. In consultation with DCHET, works therefore consisted solely of the archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks on site associated with the construction of the new dwelling and the hedgebank breach.

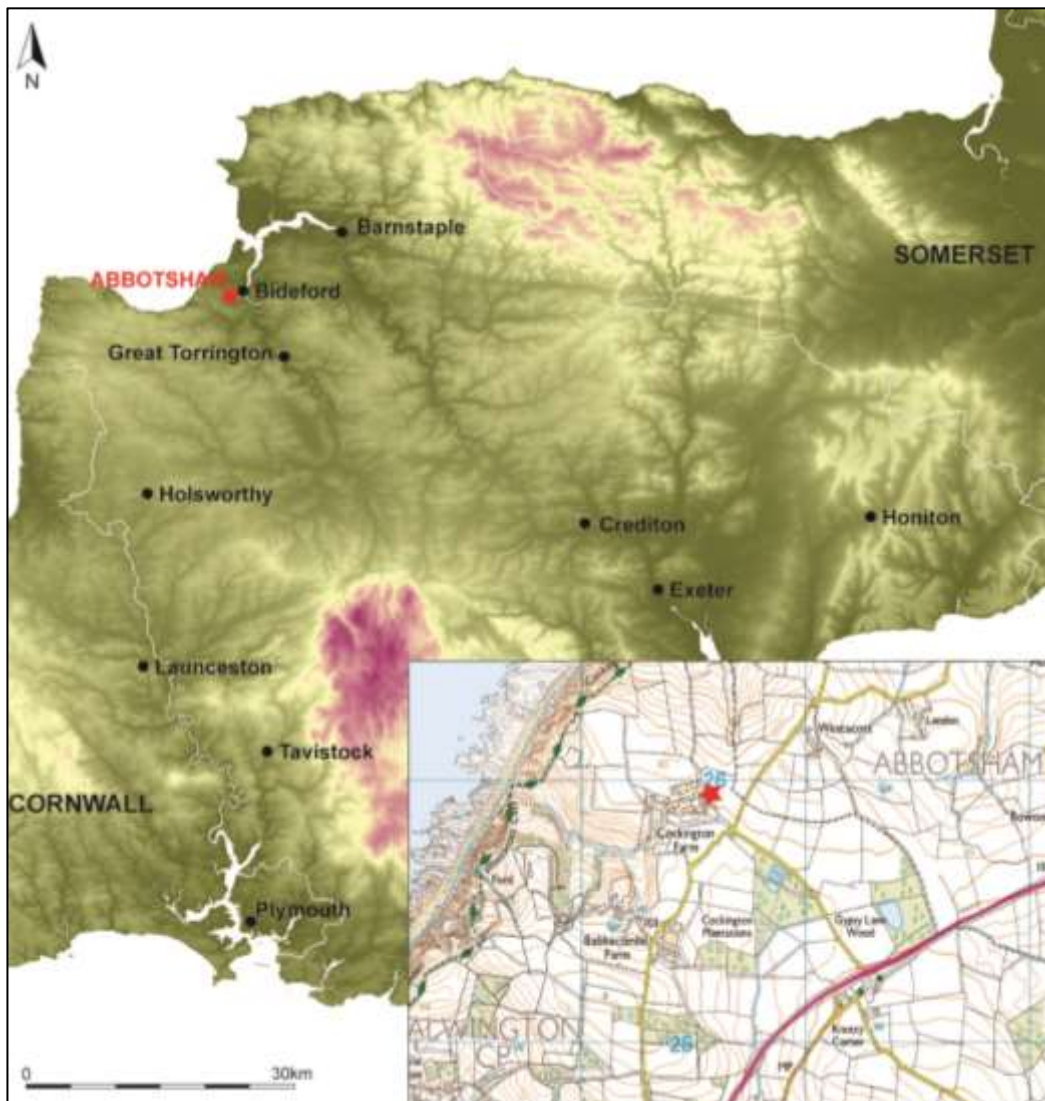


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION.

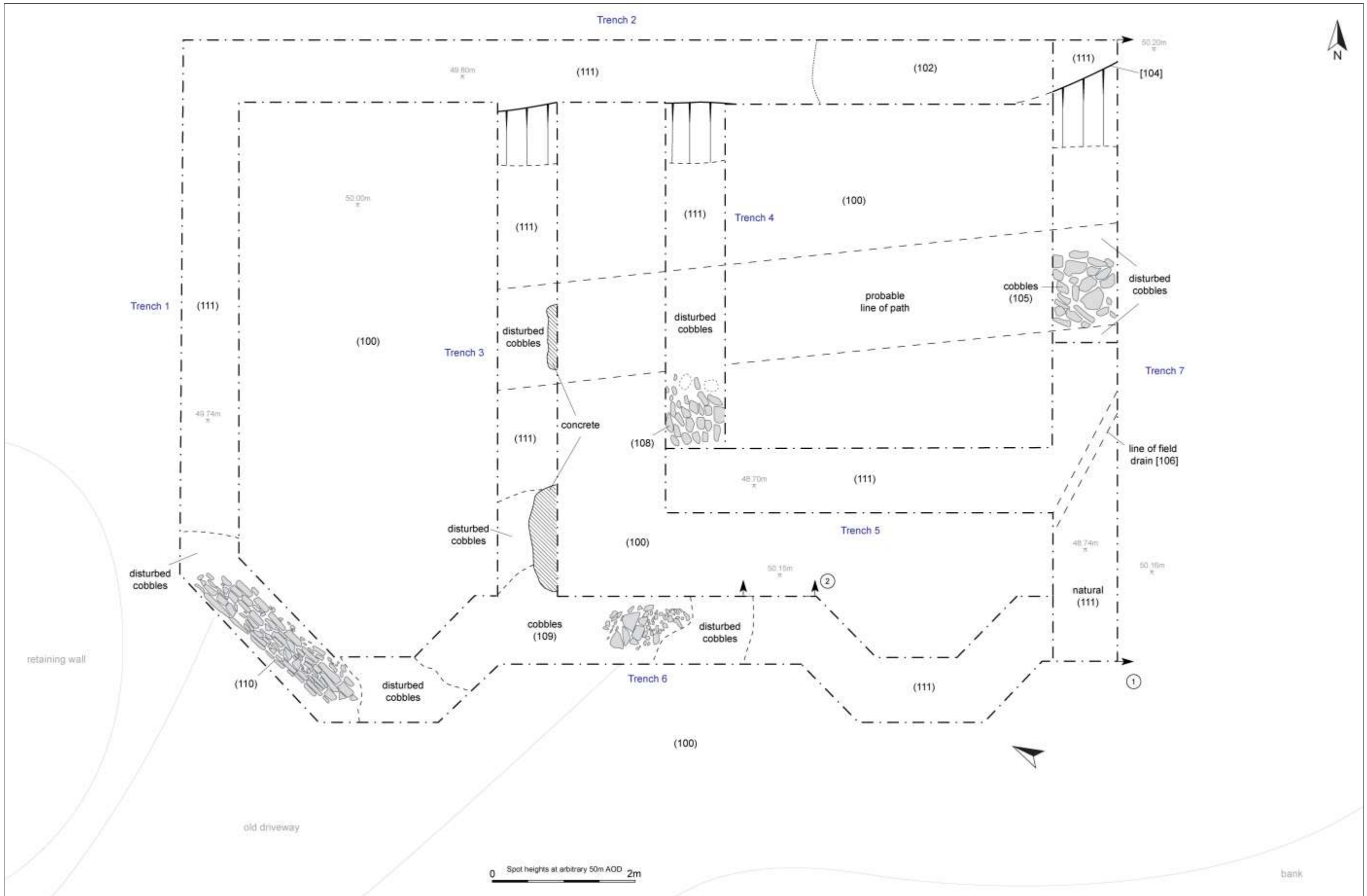


FIGURE 2: SITE PLAN SHOWING FOOTPRINT OF PROPOSED HOUSE AND FEATURES

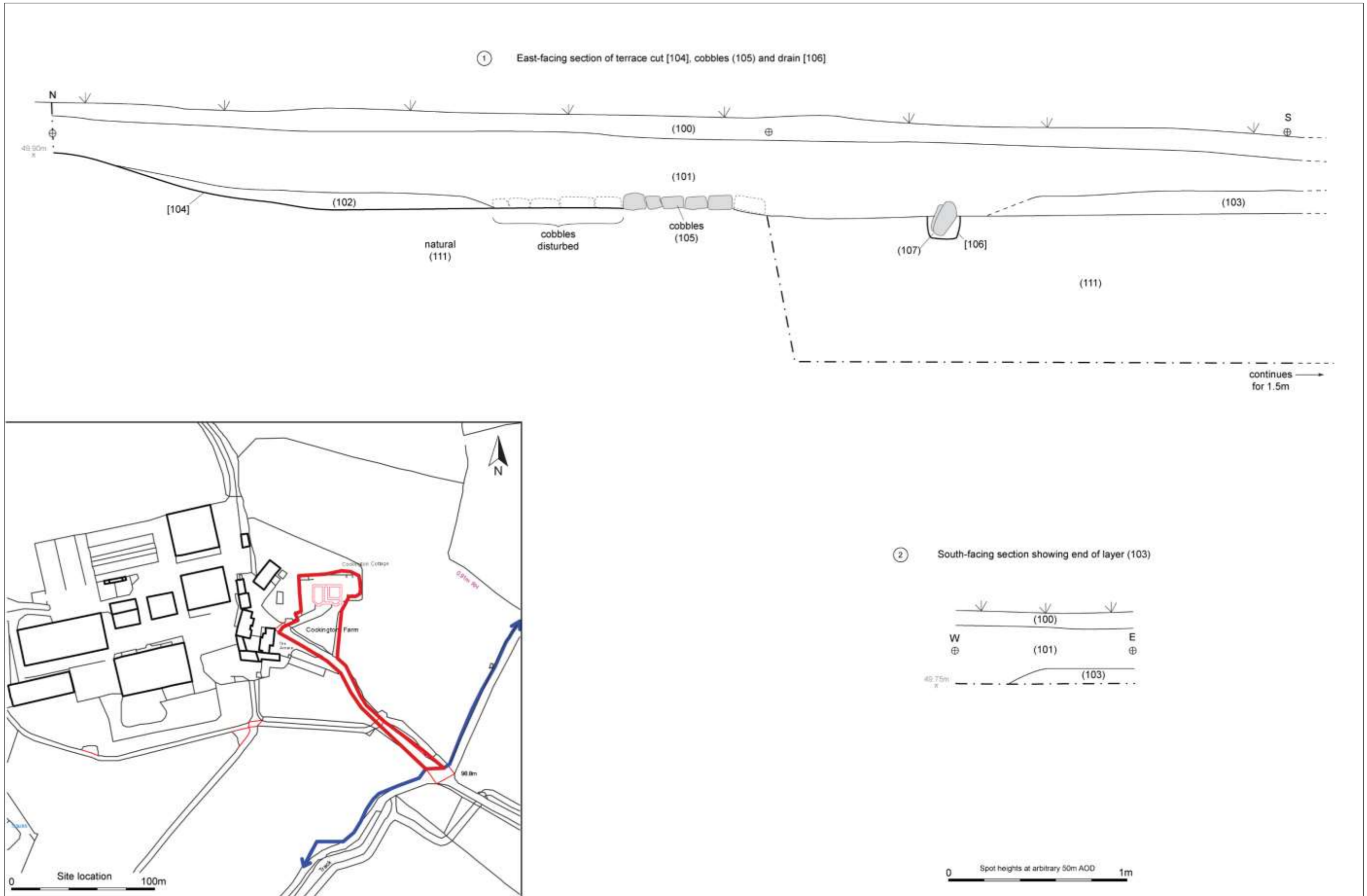


FIGURE 3: SITE LOCATION AND SECTIONS

2.0 RESULTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

An interconnecting series of trench footings were excavated by machine, with a toothless grading bucket, under archaeological supervision for the proposed single house plot at Cockington Cottage. The trenches exposed a series of cobbled surfaces throughout, including a probable pathway, running east-west and the probable remains of a building across the southern edge of the site. Also exposed was a terrace cut, that began at the northern edge of the site and cut the natural, lowering the level throughout most of the south and east portion of the site, but ending somewhere towards the west-end, as the western most trench (Trench 1) did not show a continuation.

2.2 DEPOSIT MODEL

The stratigraphy of the site consisted of topsoil (100), a mid grey-brown loose sandy-silt c.0.13m thick; overlying demolition layer (101), a mid grey-brown loose-friable sand-silt, with frequent medium and large sub-angular stones up to c.0.45m thick and deeper within terrace cut (104); overlying layer (103), a mid grey sand, with abundant shell c.0.15m thick, which covered much of the south-east corner of the site, from Trench 7, present c.3.5m from the south-end of the trench and extending west c.5.5m, ending within Trench 6. Demolition (101) also overlay (102), a very stony yellow re-deposited natural, present in the north-east corner of the site and a basal layer within terrace cut [104]; overlying natural (111), a firm-soft mid yellow clay.

2.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

The excavations began with the eastern most Trench 7, that extended c.8.75m north-south and was excavated to natural level, c.0.30m deep at the north end of the trench and c.0.55m deep at the base of terrace cut [104]. A cobbled surface (105) was revealed c.3m from the north end of Trench 7 at a depth of c.0.40m, which were largely disturbed, with tightly packed cobbles and would have measured approximately 1.8m wide. The cobbles appeared to be a pathway, as they matched with another set of disturbed cobbles (108) in Trench 4 and another patch in Trench 3, the apparent line of which was orientated east-north-east to west-south-west. Cobbles (108) in Trench 4 appeared to be part of another surface, likely abutting/adjoining cobbled path (105).

A sondage was created down to the client's required depth, c.1.35m to allow for water drainage, which started approximately halfway along the trench, as a working field drain [106] was exposed c.3.5m from the south end of the trench. The sondage depth was continued in Trench 5. Drain [106] measured c.0.20m wide x c.0.15m deep, with steep sides into a flat base and filled by (107), a loose dark grey-brown gravel, with occasional shell and abundant medium pebbles (20cm across), running north-east to south-west (Figure 2 and 3).

Trench 2 was located at the northern most edge of the site, extending c.13m east-west and was the shallowest, exposing the highest point of natural, unaffected by terrace cut [104], but containing no other features. Following this was Trench 1, which exposed cobbles (110) at the south-end; and west-end of Trench 6. The cobbles were tightly packed and orientated north-west to south-east, a different alignment to (105), appearing to be part of a larger cobbled surface that covered the south part of the site and most likely would have equated to the former footprint of a building, as within Trench 3 some concrete repair was seen amongst disturbed cobbles (Figure 2).

Trench 3 contained a heavily disturbed patch of cobbles c.3m from the north end of the trench, with a fragment of concrete repair, which were in line with (105), with natural either side (Figure 2), separated from the south end of Trench 3 where another larger fragment of concrete repair amongst cobbles (109) was revealed, which were spread over Trenches 3 and 9 and made up of much smaller cobbles than (110) and (105). Cobbles (109) within the east-end of Trench 6 appeared to have a drain built in, made up of larger stones than those surrounding it; aligned north-east to south-west.

2.4 FINDS

A single sherd of 18th-19th century industrial slipware with yellow glaze was recovered from the site within demolition layer (101), located in the north-east corner of the site above cobbles (105).

3.0 CONCLUSION

The site presented evidence of post-medieval occupation, with demolition layer (101) overlying a series of cobbled surfaces, the contents of which presumably made up of a mix between the original post-medieval building that existed on the south edge of the site and the modern building demolished in 2020. The cobbles showed some patch repair work seen with Trench 3 and likely had a path that ran from the building to the east-north-east for field access or similar. Some areas of the cobbles appeared to have survived well, due to their densely packed nature, such as with (105), (109) and (110).

Drain [106] was still functioning efficiently, as Trench 7 rapidly filled with water, with a shell packed layer (103) directly adjacent and c.0.20m higher to the south; this could suggest (103) was deposited to aid drainage.

It is very likely that more cobbled remains are present to the west, with path (105) and south and possibly south-west with cobbles (109) and (110), however given the nature of the site, it is unlikely these will be disturbed unless future works to the house plot are planned.

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FIGURE 4: SECTION SHOWING TERRACE CUT [104] AND COBBLES (105), OBLIQUE; FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (2M SCALE).



FIGURE 5: PLAN OF COBBLES (105); FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).



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