

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Axminster, East Devon	National Grid Reference SY 29720 98534	Number:
Subject: Archaeological test pitting in the rear garden of NatWest Bank, Axminster, Devon as part of a condition for a residential redevelopment		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: 20/0753/FUL	Recipient museum: Royal Albert Memorial Museum	
OASIS ID: southwes1-396676	Museum Accession no: N/A, finds discarded	
Contractor's reference number/code: AVP20	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 2 nd July 2020	
<p>Description of works.</p> <p>Archaeological test pitting was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of a private client, in association with a residential redevelopment on land to the rear of the NatWest Bank, Lyme Street, Axminster, Devon (Figure 1). This work was undertaken on 2nd July 2020 in accordance with a WSI (Boyd 2020) drawn up in consultation with the Devon County Historic Environment Team.</p> <p>The site lies in the historic core of Axminster, less than 80m north-east of the Grade II* Listed, 13th century and later, Church of St Mary, at the north-west end of Lyme Street. It is in a garden to the rear of the former NatWest bank, beside an NCP car park. The site lies at a height of approximately 40m AOD. The soils of the site are the deep permeable mainly fine loamy soils variably affected by groundwater of the Waterstock Formation, which overlie the sedimentary mudstone of the Branscombe Formation. Axminster has a history beginning with the construction of the small town of <i>Mondunum</i> in the Roman period. The origins of the present town are considered to be a Saxon settlement, sometime after 660. A minster was founded in the town in the early 8th century and was certainly extant when Cynehead the Atheling was buried at <i>Axanmynster</i> in 755. Axminster is an ancient market town; the market was confirmed c.1204. Axminster had a long association with the manufacture of carpets, from the establishment of the industry in the town by the Whitty family in 1755.</p> <p>The site lies within the conservation area (CA/AXMIN), designated in 1973 and made up of the majority of the 19th century and earlier development, centred on Trinity Square and St. Mary's Parish church. Historic mapping shows a property on the site in 1838. This property is labelled as a bank on the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1st edition, 1888. OS mapping shows the vault, which protrudes into the garden area, rear of the main bank, was extended sometime in the 1980's to its current layout. The plot immediately east of the site is labelled as a garage from at least 1960. Neighbours commented on site indicate that it had formerly been a roofed market.</p> <p>Two test pits, 0.80mx4m and 1.50mx2m were excavated across the most accessible areas of the proposed development (Figure 3). No significant archaeological features or deposits were present.</p> <p>The test pit south of the terraced area of the existing building revealed; modern made-ground, buried subsoil, and evidence of root disturbance, but no archaeological features (Figures 2 & 5). The test pit west of the vault indicated the ground had been cut-away to the depth of the natural during post-medieval/modern developments: it contained a 21st century soak-away, post-medieval made-ground, a post-medieval trench line and modern (probable 1980's) made-ground (Figures 2 & 4).</p> <p>Topsoil (100) was a dark blackish-grey, friable sandy-silt (0.38m thick). It overlaid Made-ground (101), a light-mid yellow-brown, loose silty-sand with modern building debris (0.10m thick). Made-ground (101) was cut by Soak-away pit [107] and overlaid Made-ground (102), which was a mixture of redeposited top- and subsoil (0.26m-0.42m thick). Made-ground (102) overlaid Fill (105), a dark blackish-grey, friable sandy-silt loam with loosely packed angular/squared stones that filled Cut [104] and contained modern finds. Cut [104] (>0.36m deep) cut Subsoil (103), a mid-light brown-grey, friable sandy silt with occasional stone inclusions. Subsoil contained a relatively frequent amount of post-medieval finds and overlaid Natural (106), a light brown-yellow, compact clay-sand and gravel stone. Soak-away pit [107] cut beyond the depth of Natural (106). It contained: backfill (108), a redeposited natural; backfill (109), a redeposited mixture of soils; backfill (110), a clean stone; and a plastic crate wrapped in a geofabric membrane.</p> <p>Topsoil (200) (0.29m thick) was the same as (100). It overlaid an almost identical layer of subsoil/buried topsoil, (201) (0.19m thick). (201) overlaid made-ground (202), a mixture of 20th century debris (including foil) and soils (0.21m thick). It overlaid a very clean buried subsoil, (203), a very light brown-grey, friable-compact sandy-silt (0.39m thick) with occasional stone and a diffuse horizon to the natural. It overlaid Natural (204) (below 1.08m), which was the same as (106), but with obvious root disturbance.</p> <p>Unless stated, all finds recovered from the site were subsequently discarded. Finds from the topsoil and made-ground layers were: x3 sherds (7g) of 20th century White Refined Earthenware (WRE) from (100); x1 animal bone fragment (238g), x1 shard (14g) of possible 19th century green bottle glass, x2 fragments (19g) of 20th century mortar/cement, x4 sherds (118g) of 18th-19th century South Somerset wares from (102); x1 fragment (26g) of roof slate with sandy mortar, x1 sherd (2g) of WRE, x1 sherd (10g) of</p>		

flowerpot from (200); x1 brick fragment (459g) similar to local buildings, x1 sherd (151g) of 20th century flowerpot, x1 sherd (63g) of probable 19th century South Somerset ware from (202). Finds from Fill (105) included: x1 fragment (20g) of hard 19th-20th century mortar, x1 brick fragment (8g), and x3 sherds (48g) of 19th-20th century industrial redwares. The subsoil finds included: x7 fragments (542g) of animal bone, including sawn bone, cow and possibly pig and sheep, x1 Fe nail (5g), x1 clay pipe stem (2g), x1 fragment (2g) of 19th century panel glass, x6 sherds (132g) of industrial redwares, x4 sherds (74g) of 18th century South Somerset wares, x1 sherd (2g) of 18th-19th century stoneware, x1 sherd (3g) of 17th-18th century cream glazed South Somerset ware from (103); and x2 sherds (24g) of 18th-20th century industrial redwares from (203).

A large portion (c.50%) of the site has ostensibly been truncated. The quantity of sawn bone and post-medieval pottery in Test Pit 1 alludes to a former shop rear, adjacent to a possible market. The depth of clean subsoil in Test Pit 2 may be indicative of a former orchard garden, which is not uncommon and for which examples are evident on historic mapping to the west and north of the site. Based on the test pitting it seems unlikely significant archaeological features or deposits will be encountered across the development area. No further archaeological works are recommended.

Bibliography

- Axminster Interim Conservation Area Review: <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/555858/axminstercaa.pdf>.
 Boyd, N. 2020: *The rear garden of NatWest Bank, Axminster, East Devon, Devon: Written Scheme of Investigation*. SWARCH WSI no. AVP20WSlv1.1.
 British Geological Survey 2020: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>.
 Devon Record Office: 1838 Axminster tithe map; 19th and 20th century Ordnance Survey mapping.
 Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983: Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales.

Recorder: J. Bampton	Date sent to HER: 06/07/2020
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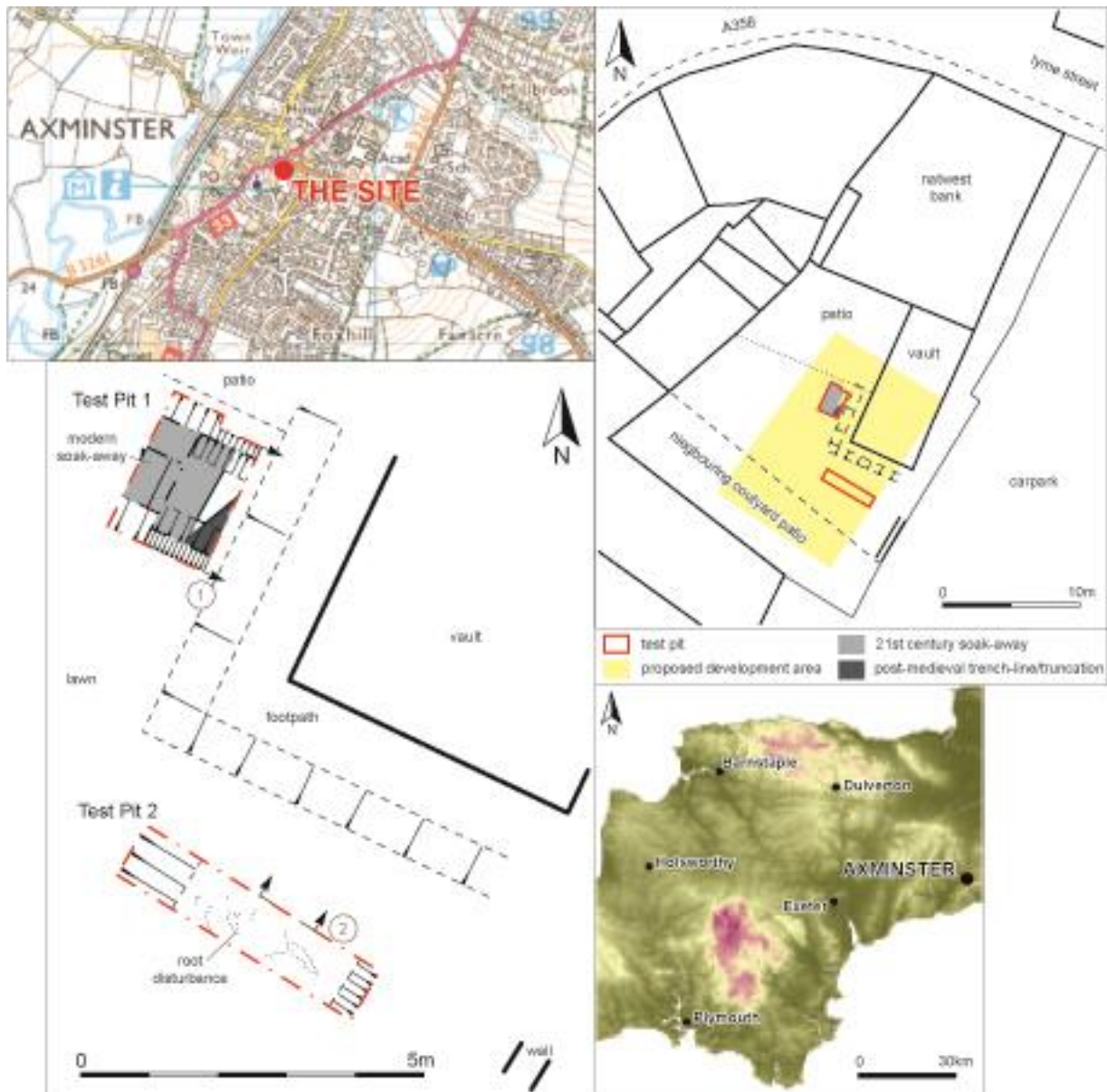


FIGURE 1: SITE PLAN AND LOCATION.

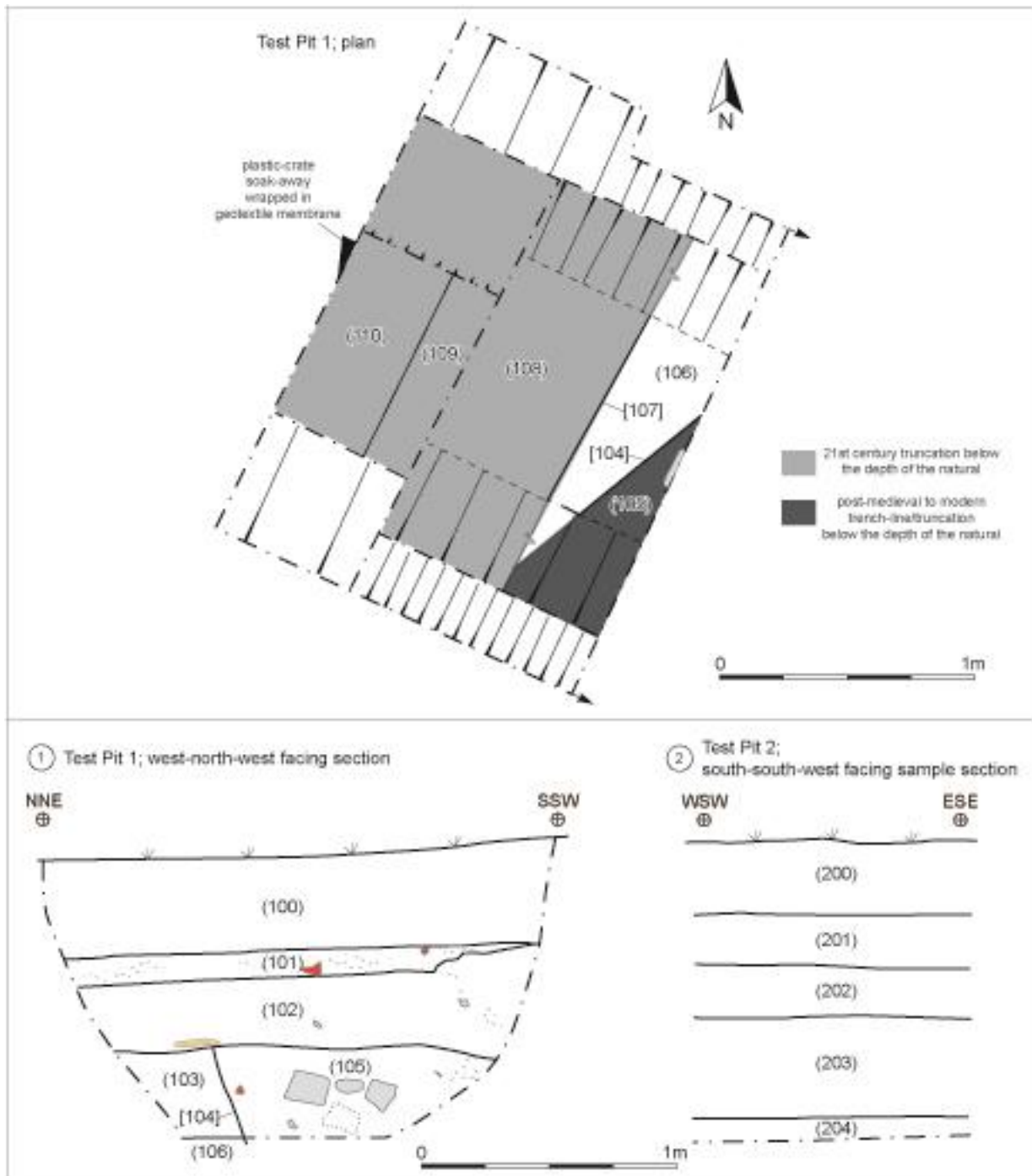


FIGURE 2: PLAN OF TEST PIT 2 AND SECTION DRAWINGS FOR TEST PITS 1 AND 2.



FIGURE 3: SITE SHOT, POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST-SOUTH-WEST (NO SCALE).



FIGURE 4: TEST PIT 1; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



FIGURE 5: TEST PIT 2; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).