

THE SLIPWAY WESTWARD HO! TORRIDGE DEVON

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation



South West Archaeology Ltd. Report no.200919



www.swarch.net

Tel. 01769 573555
01872 223164

The Slipway, Westward Ho, Torridge, Devon

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation

By Peter Webb
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Work undertaken by SWARCH for
Torridge District Council (the client)

SUMMARY

South West Archaeology Ltd. was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation on The Slipway, Westward Ho!, Torridge, Devon as part of works to extend the slipway. The work was undertaken in line with a Written Scheme of Investigation drawn up in consultation with Devon County Council Historic Environment Team and Historic England.

The evaluation reached depths of up to c.2m. This was below the depth at which groundworks were proposed to occur; the maximum depth at which it was safe to excavate and at which deposits were visible before complete inundation with water and sand 'wash-out' of deposits occurred. No archaeological features or deposits were identified, although the prevailing ground conditions meant that detailed examination of deposits was not possible.



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TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL
DEVON COUNTY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TEAM
THE CONTRACTORS

PROJECT CREDITS

PROJECT DIRECTOR: DR SAMUEL WALLS, MCIFA
PROJECT OFFICER: PETER WEBB
FIELDWORK: PETER WEBB
REPORT: PETER WEBB
EDITING: DR SAMUEL WALLS, MCIFA
GRAPHICS: PETER WEBB

1.0 INTRODUCTION

SITE NAME:	THE SLIPWAY, WESTWARD HO!
PARISH:	NORTHAM
DISTRICT:	TORRIDGE
COUNTY:	DEVON
NGR:	SS 43282 29440
SWARCH REF:	WHS20
PLANNING APPLICATION NO:	N/A
OASIS NUMBER:	SOUTHWES1-398084
MUSEUM REFERENCE NUMBER:	PENDING

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. was commissioned by Torrington District Council (the Client) to undertake an archaeological evaluation of works to extend The Slipway, Westward Ho!, Torrington, Devon. The work took place in line with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Boyd 2020) drawn up in consultation with Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCHET) and Historic England (HE).



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

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is made up of the slipway and surrounding area, running down onto the beach. The sites lie at a height of c.6m AOD. The soils of the site are the slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey, fine loamy and fine silty soils of the Hallsworth 2 Association¹, which overlie the sedimentary sandstone of the Bude Formation².

1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Westward Ho! is named after Charles Kingsley's bestselling novel of the same name³, which was set in Bideford and was seen as a way for entrepreneurs to develop tourism along this part of the coast in the mid-19th century. Despite the late development of this area, the Devon HER records activity in this area dating back to the prehistoric periods and archaeological investigations in the village and on the beach have revealed evidence of prehistoric activity. Westward Ho! lies in the parish of Northam, at the southern end of Northam Burrows, a stretch of sand with a pebble bank which Lysons likened to the Chesil-bank. Lysons noted that the manor of Northam was given by William the Conqueror to St. Stephens in Caen and was confirmed in 1252 to the priory of Frampton, in Dorsetshire (a cell to St. Stephens). It was seized as part of the possessions of an alien monastery and given to the college of St. Mary Ottery. In 1564 it was granted by Queen Elizabeth I to the dean and chapter of Windsor from whom it was held by the Melhuish family.⁴

The Devon HER records two event points less than 100m to the north-west of the slipway; EDV4758 which is a Neolithic pottery find and EDV6709 which was radiocarbon sampling of prehistoric features. To the east of the site an archaeological survey was carried out on Northam Burrows (EDV6518) and evaluation trenching was carried out a short distance to the south at Pebbleridge Road (EDV7571) and the Tennis Courts (EDV7639). The HER records a scatter of findspots across the beach including prehistoric pottery, whalebones and flints; multiple middens, records of a submerged forest, peat deposits, stake alignments and shipwrecks (two of which are in close proximity to the site and are scheduled, 1432418 and 1432949, but will be unaffected by the proposed works). There is the potential within this area for encountering stray and in-situ prehistoric artefacts and a continuation of the peat deposits, along with potential survival of waterlogged finds (e.g. timber) from within these deposits.

The beach also has a number of finds and records relating to the Second World War, with the potential for previously unidentified military equipment or unexploded ordnance to be located in and around this area.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Boyd 2020); the WSI was drawn up in consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCHET) and Historic England (HE) and in line with ClfA guidelines (2020). The archaeological evaluation comprised the intended excavation of a single trench, though battering and trench collapse resulted in the works comprising a site strip across the area of groundworks for the proposed slipway extension, totalling 12m in length × 6m wide (Figure 2) by tracked mechanical excavator to a depth of up to c.2m using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision. This was below the depth at which groundworks are proposed to occur and the maximum depth at which it was safe to excavate and at which deposits were visible

¹ Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983: *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (a brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*.

² British Geological Survey 2020: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>.

³ <http://www.westwardhohistory.co.uk/>

⁴ Lysons 1822: *Magna Britannia Volume 6 Devonshire*. London: Cadell and Davies

before complete inundation with water and sand 'wash-out' of deposits. The evaluation took place on 9th July 2020, this followed on from an initial evaluation on 7th July 2020.

1.4.1 EVALUATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

The work was undertaken over the course of two separate days in July. Battering and trench collapse resulted in the works comprising a site strip across the area of groundworks for the proposed slipway extension, totalling 12m in length × 6m wide rather than the single trench intended in the WSI. The excavation exceeded the proposed depth and reached c.2m, the maximum depth at which it was safe to excavate and at which deposits were visible before complete inundation with water and sand 'wash-out' of deposits occurred. These conditions made identifying features more difficult and meant that detailed examination of deposits was not possible.

2.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The archaeological evaluation comprised the intended excavation of a single trench, though battering and trench collapse resulted in the works comprising a site strip across the area of groundworks for the proposed slipway extension, totalling 12m in length x 6m wide (Figure 2) by tracked mechanical excavator to a depth of up to c.2m using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision. This was below the depth at which groundworks are proposed to occur and the maximum depth at which it was safe to excavate and at which deposits were visible before complete inundation with water and sand 'wash-out' of deposits occurred.

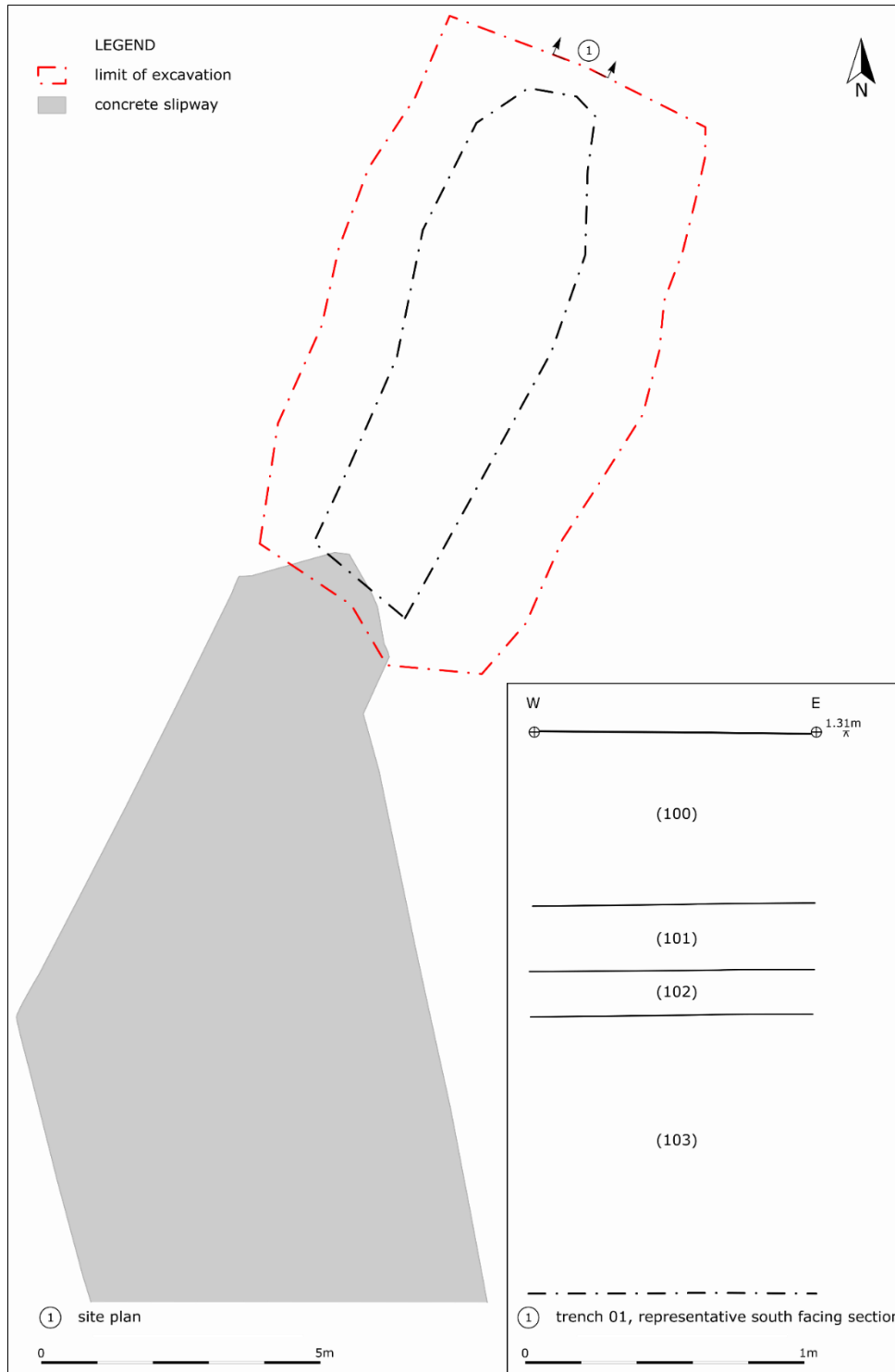


FIGURE 2: SITE PLAN AND SECTIONS. HEIGHTS AT ORDNANCE DATUM

2.2 RESULTS

2.2.1 TRENCH 01

Trench 01 was located at the northern end of the slipway, measuring 11.20m long on an approximate north-north-east to south-south-west alignment. The stratigraphy comprised beach sand deposits (100), layered mid slightly brown-yellow and yellow coarse sands c.0.60m thick; overlying (101), mid slightly brown-yellow coarse sand with common large rounded pebbles c.0.20m thick; (102), mid brown-yellow coarse sand with abundant sub-angular to rounded stone/gravel inclusions; and (103), mid red-yellow (orange) soft clay-sand 1+m thick.

3.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 CONCLUSION

The evaluation reached depths of up to c.2m using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision. This was below the depth at which groundworks were proposed to occur; the maximum depth at which it was safe to excavate and at which deposits were visible before complete inundation with water and sand 'wash-out' of deposits occurred. No archaeological features or deposits were identified, although the prevailing ground conditions meant that detailed examination of deposits was not possible.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

No further works are recommended at this site.

4.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

PUBLISHED SOURCES:

CIfA 2020: *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation.*

Lysons, D. & Lysons, S. 1822: *Magna Britannia vol.6 Devonshire.* London.

Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983: *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales.*

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES:

Boyd, N. 2020: *The Slipway, Westward Ho!, Torridge, Devon: Written Scheme of Investigation.* WHS20WSlv2.

WEBSITES:

Archaeological Data Service (ADS) 2020: *Archsearch & Grey Literature*

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk>

British Geological Survey 2020: *Geology of Britain Viewer.*

http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html

Devon County Council Environment Viewer (HER and HLC) 2020: *dccViewer*

<http://map.devon.gov.uk>


Westward Ho! History 2020: *Home* <http://www.westwardhohistory.co.uk/>

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

Context	Type	Description	Relationships	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot date
Trench 01					
(100)	Layer	'Beach' – layered deposits of mid slightly brown yellow and yellow sand.	Overlies (101)	0.60m thick	
(101)	Layer	Mid slightly brown yellow sand with common large rounded beach pebbles.	Overlain by (100); overlies (102)	c.0.20m thick	-
(102)	Layer	Mid brown yellow sand with abundant sub-angular to sub-sub round stone/gravel	Overlain by (101); overlies (103)	c.0.05m thick	-
(103)	Layer	Mid red-yellow (orange) soft clay-sand. Becomes more gravelly lower down, including large sub-angular stone inclusions.	Overlain by (102)	1+m	

[100] feature/layer described in report

(100) feature not described in report

 Archaeological feature – cut

APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS



1. TRENCH 01, WORKING SHOT DEMONSTRATING THE LEVEL OF WATER INUNDATION AND SAND 'WASH-OUT' AND COLLAPSE; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH.



2. TRENCH 01, SOUTH FACING SECTION PRIOR TO WATER INUNDATION AND SAND 'WASH-OUT'; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH (1M SCALE).



THE OLD DAIRY
HACCHE LANE BUSINESS PARK
PATHFIELDS BUSINESS PARK
SOUTH MOLTON
DEVON
EX36 3LH

01769 573555

01872 223164

MAIL@SWARCH.NET