

**LAND AT PRESINGOLL  
PENWINNICK ROAD  
ST AGNES  
CORNWALL**

Results of Evaluation Trenching



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 230917

# Land at Presingoll, Penwinnick Road, St Agnes, Cornwall

## Results of a Geophysical Survey

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By S.H. Walls  
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Work undertaken by SWARCH for Classic Builders (The Client)

### SUMMARY

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*This report presents the results of archaeological evaluation trenching carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) on land east of Penwinnick Road, St Agnes, Cornwall, as part of a planning submission for residential development of the land. The site comprises parts of two fields located between Penwinnick and Presingoll Farms. It sits on relatively flat land covering an area of c.1.7ha located to the south of the historic settlement of St Agnes.*

*The evaluation trenching targeted the results of a geophysical survey (SWARCH 2022) and identified a total of 5 features. The results broadly validated the results of the geophysical survey, identifying a removed boundary, a modern service, a boundary wall and a single ditch, other anomalies proved to be geological. Most of the features produced dating evidence, with a small assemblage of Post-Medieval and Modern artefacts recovered from all but one of the features and composing the entire assemblage from topsoil contexts.*

*The results of the evaluation trenching have determined that the results of the geophysical survey are very reliable; and that there is a low archaeological potential for the site. It is thought that in this instance further archaeological mitigation will not be required as part of any planning conditions.*

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September 2023

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CLASSIC BUILDERS (THE CLIENT)  
 THE LANDOWNER (FOR ACCESS)  
 THE TENANT (FOR ACCESS)  
 ACLAND PLANT (MACHINE HIRE)

## PROJECT CREDITS

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PROJECT DIRECTOR: DR. SAMUEL WALLS, MCIFA  
 PROJECT MANAGER: DR. SAMUEL WALLS, MCIFA  
 FIELDWORK: DR. SAMUEL WALLS, MCIFA  
 REPORT: DR. SAMUEL WALLS, MCIFA  
 GRAPHICS: AL NOCK  
 EDITING: NATALIE BOYD

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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<b>LOCATION:</b>	LAND AT PRESINGOLL, PENWINNICK ROAD
<b>PARISH:</b>	ST AGNES
<b>COUNTY:</b>	CORNWALL
<b>CENTROID NGR:</b>	SW 72125 49600
<b>PLANNING REF:</b>	PA22/08358
<b>SWARCH REF:</b>	APRP23
<b>OASIS REF:</b>	SOUTHWES1-519191

### 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Classic Builders (The Client) to undertake archaeological evaluation trenching on Land at Presingoll, Penwinnick Road, St Agnes, Cornwall as part of a planning submission for a proposed residential development of the land. This work was undertaken in accordance with best practice and ClfA guidance in order to assess the potential archaeological impact of the development. The trench plan was drawn up in consultation with the Historic Environment and Planning Advice Officer (HEP (Arch)) at Cornwall Council to target anomalies identified by a geophysical survey (SWARCH 2022).

### 1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located to the south of St Agnes, adjacent to Presingoll House off Penwinnick Road, approximately 11km north-west of Truro. It sits on gently sloping (down to the north) land at a height of between c.110m and c.115m AOD (Figure 1). The soils of this area are the well-drained fine loamy or fine silty soils over rock of the Manod Association (SSEW1983) which overlie the mudstones and sandstones of the Porthtowan Formation (BGS 2023).

### 1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies in the parish of St Agnes, in the historic hundred and deanery of Pydar (Lysons 1814). Historically St Agnes was known as Bryanick. It is likely that it may have formed part of the large pre-Domesday manor of Tywarnhayle, held by Algar from the Canons of St Petroc Bodmin and subsequently Robert, Count of Mortain. The site lies to the south of Penwinnick Farm (from the Cornish *pen* meaning 'head/promontory; dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, though settlement is first recorded in 1286) and to the north of Presingoll Farm (from the Cornish *prys* meaning 'copse/thicket' and *coll* meaning 'hazel trees'; dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century) (Padel 1985). Penwinnick, the holding of which abuts Presingoll on the Tithe map on its northern side, is documented by Lysons as a tenement in the manor of Tywarnhayle which was divided in the reign of Henry VIII between Thomas Kemyell, Sir John Chamond and Urinus Nicholl. The parts held by Kemyell and Chamond were sold to the Tonkin family of Trevaunance; by the 19<sup>th</sup> century the whole tenement was held by John James Esq. who resided on his estate at Rosemundy.

The Tithe apportionment shows the site as being on land in the ownership of Charlotte Hayes and Mary Nettle in 1842. There are few documentary references to Presingoll held within the Kresen Kernow collections; an account roll of the 15<sup>th</sup> century references waste in Presencoll [Presingoll] (AR/2/719/5) and a lease dated 1716 between Henry Hawkins, gent of St Austell, Thomas Tonkin of Trevaunance and Francis Bassett of Tehidy includes Presingoll (T/1). The only more recent information about the site relates to the former use of Presingoll Barns as a factory outlet attraction in the 1990s.

The Cornwall and Scilly HER records a number of archaeological sites within 1km of the proposed development site, with a significant number of Prehistoric sites located in the surrounding landscape; including: a Bronze Age barrow cemetery at Hurlingbarrow and the Scheduled Iron Age to Early Medieval Bolster Bank to the south-east. A large number of sites of Post-Medieval date are recorded in the landscape, many relating to the expansion of St Agnes and the surrounding settlements as a result of population expansion resulting from the mineral exploitation which took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A mine shaft and engine house are documented close to the northern boundary of the site. The extant courses of the Chacewater and Newquay GWR branch line lies just to the south-east of the proposal site boundary.

Limited archaeological fieldwork has been carried out in the near vicinity of the site: a geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation to the north encountered possible Bronze Age features (SWARCH 2016; 2017); a heritage impact assessment at Penwinnick Close (CAU 2017) seemingly confirming the Medieval origins of the historic field pattern and a possible continuation of the Bolster Bank to the east of the site; whilst an assessment for a proposed multi-use trail included the eastern portion of the site (CAU 2020). The site has been subject to a desk-based assessment (SWARCH 2021) and a geophysical survey (SWARCH 2022).

The Cornwall Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) records the northern field of the site as *farmland: medieval; the agricultural heartland, with farming settlements documented before the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD and whose field patterns are morphologically distinct from the generally straight-sided fields of later enclosure*. The southern field is classified as *post-medieval enclosed land: land enclosed in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, usually from land that was previously upland rough ground and often medieval commons*. There are 50 Listed Buildings (all Grade II), two Scheduled Monuments, one Conservation Area and one World Heritage Site area within 1km of the site.

#### 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with a trench plan drawn up in consultation with the HEP (Arch) and in line with ClfA guidelines and best practice. A total of five trenches, each 1.60m wide and totalling c.161m in length, were laid out using a Leica GPS and opened by wheeled mechanical excavator to the depth of archaeological deposits or *in situ* weathered natural using a toothless grading bucket. Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand and in accordance with the WSI and ClfA guidelines.

The evaluation was designed to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any *in situ* archaeological deposits; the trenches being located to target anomalies identified by the geophysical survey; and to inform any further planning decisions. The evaluation took place in August 2023.

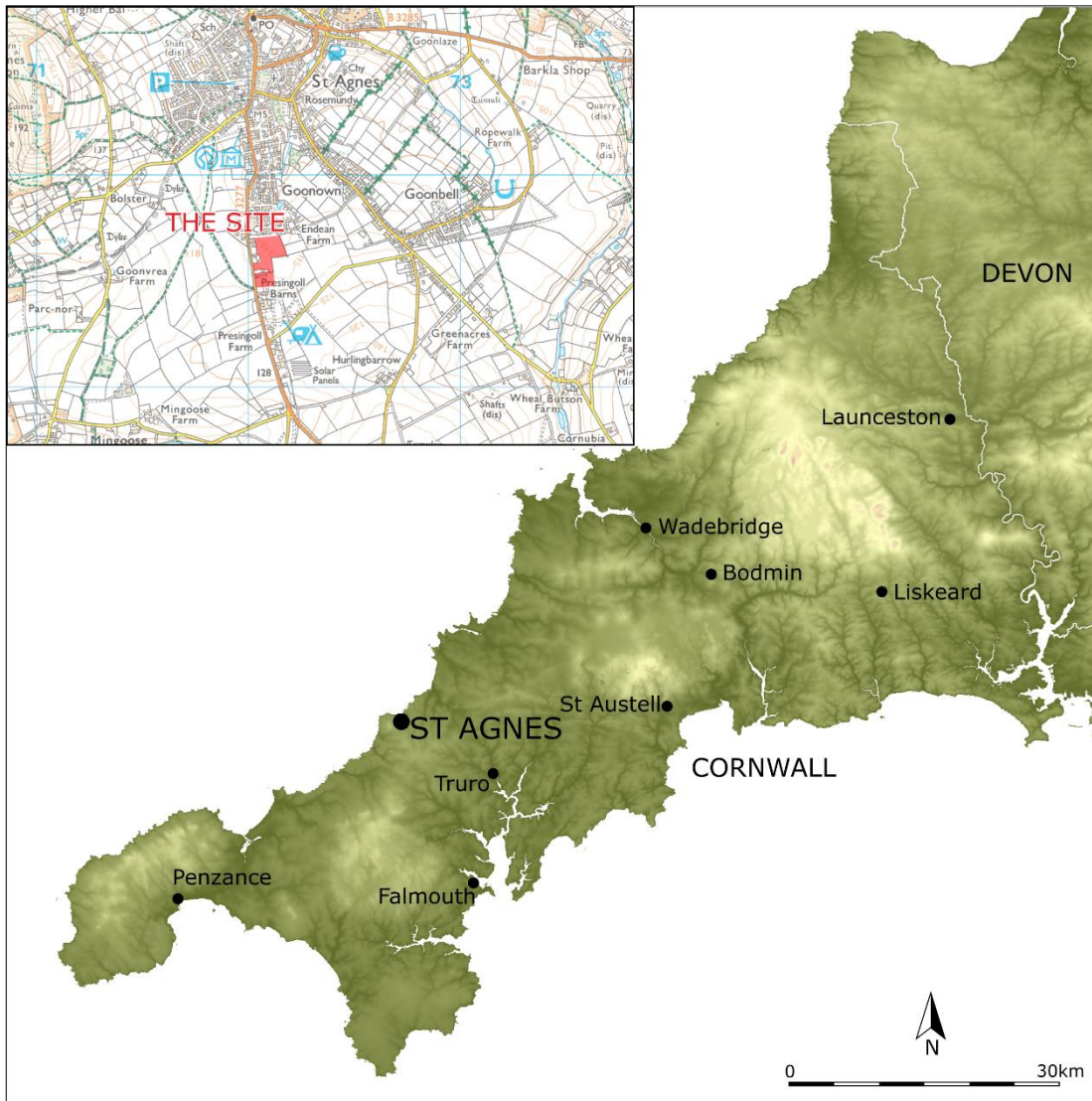


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION (THE SITE IS INDICATED). CONTAINS ORDNANCE SURVEY DATA © CROWN COPYRIGHT AND DATABASE RIGHT 2023. LICENCE NUMBER 100022432.

LAND AT PRESINGOLL, PENWINNICK ROAD, ST AGNES, CORNWALL: EVALUATION TRENCHING

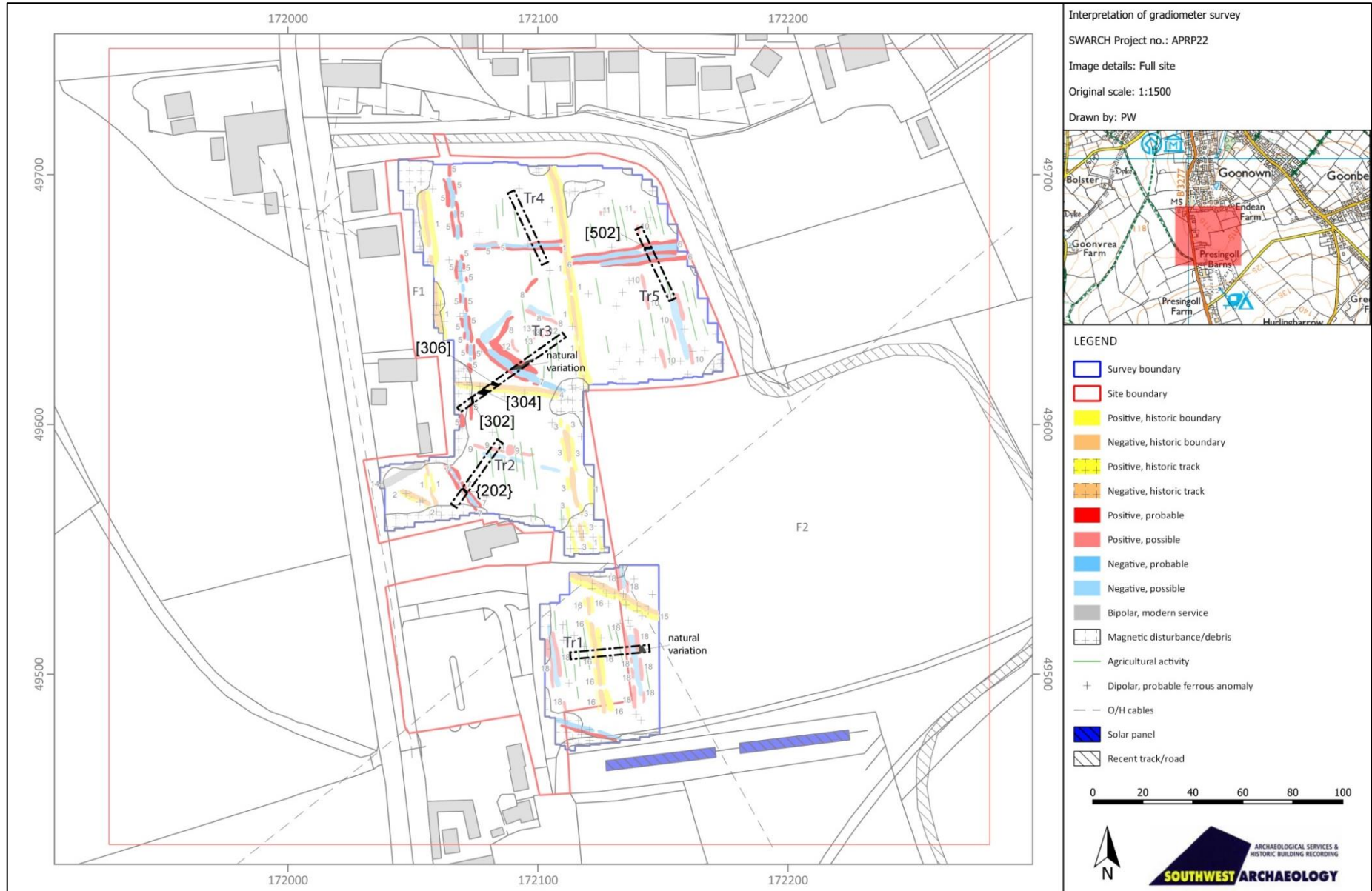


FIGURE 2: PLAN OF THE EXCAVATED TRENCHES, OVERLAID ON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS.

## 2.0 RESULTS OF EVALUATION TRENCHING

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the evaluation was to investigate a series of anomalies identified by the preceding geophysical survey (SWARCH 2022) to establish the presence or absence, condition, date and significance of any archaeological features present; in order to inform and guide the need, nature and extent of any further archaeological mitigation.

The archaeological evaluation was carried out by Dr. S.H. Walls, MCIfA on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023; and comprised the excavation of five trenches, each 1.60m wide and totalling 161m in length by wheeled mechanical excavator to the depth of archaeological deposits or weathered natural using a toothless grading bucket. Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand and in accordance with CIfA guidelines.

A total of 5 archaeological features were identified in the five evaluation trenches, including: three ditches; one modern service trench; and one boundary wall (Figure 2). What follows is a summary of each trench with finds noted where they occur; see Appendix 1 for a set of baseline photographs.

### 2.2 DEPOSIT MODEL

The stratigraphy of the site was largely consistent across the evaluated area, although within Trench 1 (Field 2) the topsoil was shallower and more homogenous, presumably reflecting that it had been more recently subject to ploughing or had been more frequently ploughed. The topsoil comprised: a friable mid grey-yellow-brown silt-clay topsoil, 0.32-0.45m thick, in Field 1, there was a c.0.15m deep active topsoil, which overlay a slightly greyer lower topsoil. Topsoil deposits directly overlay the natural, a reddish-yellow gritty clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stones (>0.08m dia.). There were some silty and stoney bands that occurred within the natural, these variations were generally north to south or north-west to south-east orientated.

#### 2.2.1 TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was 28m long and 0.32m deep. The trench was positioned to investigate a series of north-south orientated linear anomalies identified in the geophysical survey data. No archaeological features were encountered within the trench, although c.2m from the eastern end was a c.1.5m wide slightly stoner north-south band of natural, which may account for one of the geophysical anomalies.

#### 2.2.2 TRENCH 2

Trench 2 was 27.5m long and with 0.4m deep. The trench was positioned to investigate a north-west to south-east linear anomaly and an east to west orientated linear anomaly identified in the geophysical survey data. A single archaeological feature, the remains of slate stone boundary wall {202} corresponding with the north-west to south-east linear anomaly were excavated. The wall was 0.5m wide and survived to 0.2m high, it had been built of platey shillet/slatestone with an earth bond. Wall {202} was overlain and abutted by topsoil and was only 0.15m below the surface. The wall is located in the approximate position of a track shown on 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping, and is presumably broadly contemporary with Presingoll House (i.e. 19<sup>th</sup> century in date).





FIGURE 3: REMAINS OF BOUNDARY WALL IN TRENCH 02, VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE). PRESINGOLL HOUSE IN BACKGROUND.

### 2.2.3 TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was 48m long and 0.4m deep. The trench was positioned to investigate a series of linear anomalies and a removed historic field boundary. A modern service trench [302] was located towards the western end of the trench, visible as a slight north-south orientated earthwork. Service Trench [302] was c.0.7m wide and filled with redeposited natural to the surface, cutting through the topsoil deposits.

Two ditches [304] and [307], representing the remains of the removed historic field boundary were also identified to the western end of the trench. The boundary (removed post-1906) would have been c.4m wide in total. Most western ditch [304] was c.2m wide and 0.24m deep with a gentle concaved

base and moderate to gentle sloping sides. It contained two fills an upper soft grey-brown silt loam (305) with iron/steel rod (discarded on site) and a lower stonier and firmer yellow-grey clay-silt (306).

The eastern Ditch [307] was c.1.1m wide and up to 0.18m deep with moderate sloping west face and a flat base, petering out to the east. The ground having presumably been ploughed away more to the east of this boundary historically. There is a clear hump of natural where the bank would have once sat between these two ditches, again suggesting/demonstrating that the fields have formerly been ploughed. Trench 3 was the only trench in which clear plough scars in the natural were noted, with two north-south orientated scars noted to centre of trench (i.e. east of the removed historic boundary).

Natural changes seem to account for some of the other geophysical anomalies. There was a natural stoney band, which curved slightly across the trench, but was broadly orientated north-west to south-east before turning slightly to the north at its western end. This was associated with a similarly orientated band of clean, soft yellow-grey silt, seems natural in a fault in the geology and it abutted and overlay the stoney band.



FIGURE 4: DITCHES [304] (WITH SCALE) AND [307], VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).

#### 2.2.4 TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was 30m long and 0.42m deep. The trench was positioned to investigate an east-west orientated linear anomaly identified in the geophysical survey data. No features or variations were noted.

#### 2.2.5 TRENCH 5

Trench 5 was 27.5m long and 0.4m deep. The trench was positioned to investigate an east-west orientated linear anomaly identified in the geophysical survey data. A single 0.6m wide and 0.04m deep east-west orientated Ditch [502], it had a gentle concave profile, and contained a clean yellow-red gritty

silt-loam fill. No finds. No other features, but a single mole plough scar ran east-west to the south of Ditch [502], which may account for the strength of the geophysical anomaly, given the small surviving size of Ditch [502].



FIGURE 5: DITCH [502], VIEWED FROM THE NORTH (1M SCALE).

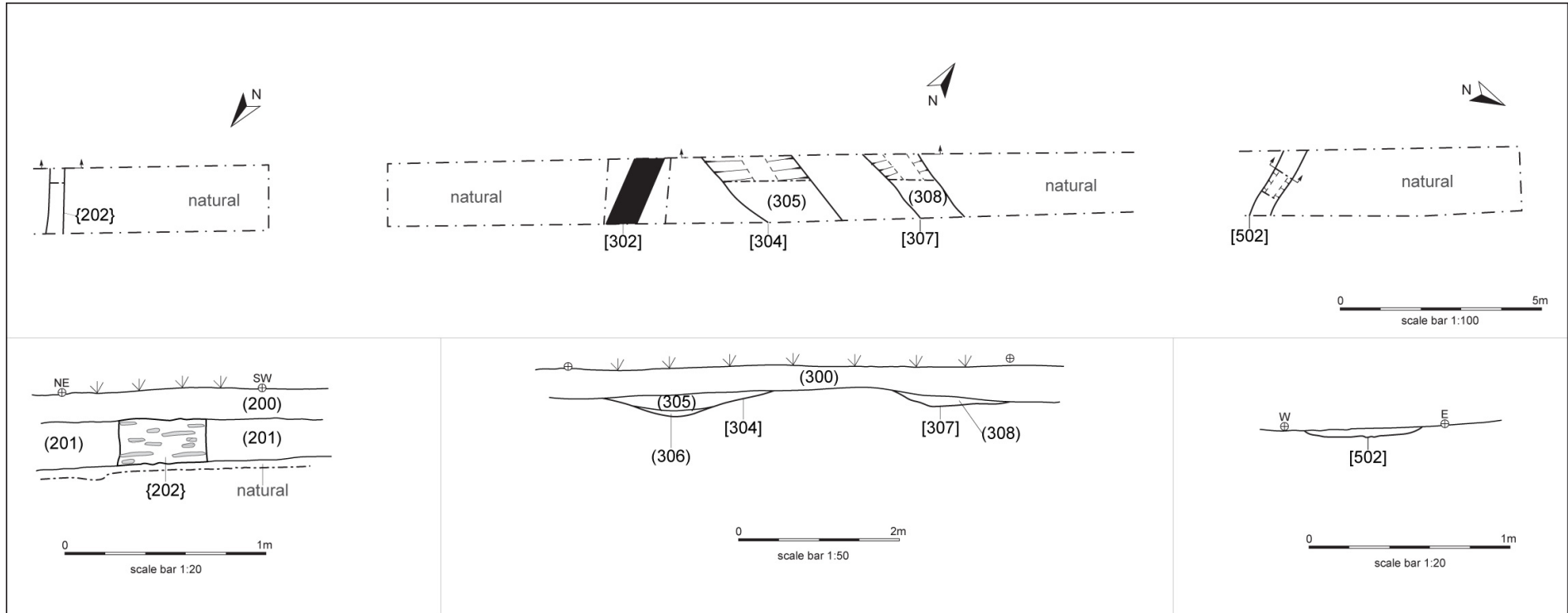


FIGURE 6: PLANS AND SECTIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES IDENTIFIED IN THE EVALUATION TRENCHING.

### 2.3 FINDS ASSEMBLAGE

A small finds assemblage was recovered from the site, stratified finds were recovered from fill (305), 2× sherds (10g) of white refined earthenwares (WRE), 1 iron strap fragment (5g) and a large iron bar (discarded on site). From fill (307); 3 × sherds (7g) of WRE; and 5× sherds (28g) of an 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century North Devon gravel-free coarseware bowl.

The finds assemblage recovered from topsoil deposits included:

(100) = 3× sherds (7g) of white refined earthenwares (WRE), 1× Clay pipe stem (1g);

(200) = 1× 2p coin (very worn), 1× Clay pipe stem (6g); 1× sherd of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Bristol/Staffordshire yellow slipware with marble trails (2g); 2× WRE (2g); 1× Clear glass bottle of Vitalls Tippens Diffusible Stimulant (138g). The 2p coin and Vitalls bottle were both found near/against Wall {202}.

(400) = 1× WRE (3g); 1x 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century local coarseware rim (12g)

The assemblage is entirely Post-Medieval to Modern and of low research value/potential and will therefore be discarded.

### 2.4 DISCUSSION

The evaluation trenching confirmed the validity of the geophysical survey, and it is clear that the majority of identified anomalies relate to Post-Medieval boundaries and agricultural activity. The majority of excavated archaeological features can be related to features shown on historic mapping, with the wall located on the line of a track shown from 1840 until after 1906, and the removed boundary, depicted as a field boundary for the same duration.

The artefactual evidence recovered from features and topsoil contexts was entirely Post-Medieval and Modern in date, and suggests that activity on the site has been primarily from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

A small number of the geophysical anomalies appear to relate to geological variations, with many of the weaker anomalies, such as the tentatively identified enclosure (Anomalies 8 and 12) relating to stony variations in the geology.

Overall, the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low, and no further archaeological mitigation is recommended in this instance.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

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The site comprises parts of two fields (F1 and F2) to the east of Penwinnick Road. It sits on relatively flat ground to the south of the settlement of St Agnes, in parish of the same name. The site is situated as part of the pre-Domesday manor of Tywarnhayle, held by Algar from the Canons of St Petroc Bodmin and given by William the Conqueror to Robert, Count of Mortain. The nearby farms of Penwinnick and Presingoll both date to the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, though settlement is first recorded at Penwinnick in 1286.

The proposal site lies within an area recorded on the HLC as *medieval farmland: with farming settlements documented before the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD and whose field patterns are morphologically distinct from the generally straight-sided fields of later enclosure (F1) and post-medieval enclosed land: land enclosed in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (F2)*.

The geophysical survey identified 18 groups of anomalies across the two fields. These were predominantly linear ditch and/or bank boundary features associated phases of the existing and historic field-system. The evaluation trenching largely validated the results of the geophysical survey (SWARCH 2022) and identified a total of 5 linear archaeological features, including a removed historic field boundary, a modern service trench, a boundary wall and a single undated ditch, other anomalies proved to be geological. Most of the features produced dating evidence, with a small assemblage of post-medieval and modern artefacts recovered from all but one of the features and composing the entire assemblage from the topsoil contexts.

The results of the evaluation trenching have determined that the results of the geophysical survey are reliable; and that there is a low archaeological potential for the site. It is thought that in this instance further archaeological mitigation will not be required as part of any planning conditions.

## 4.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY & REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1: SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS



1. TRENCH 1, VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



2. TRENCH 2 VIEW ACROSS THE FIELD; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (1M SCALE).





3. TRENCH 3; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



4. DITCH [304], VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



5. DITCH [307], VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



6. TRENCH 4, VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



7. TRENCH 5, 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](mailto:MAIL@SWARCH.NET)