

# ROBOROUGH DOWN YELVERTON DEVON

Results of Archaeological  
Monitoring and Recording



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## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to:  
Morrisons for their assistance on site.  
Andy Crabb of Dartmoor National Park Authority.

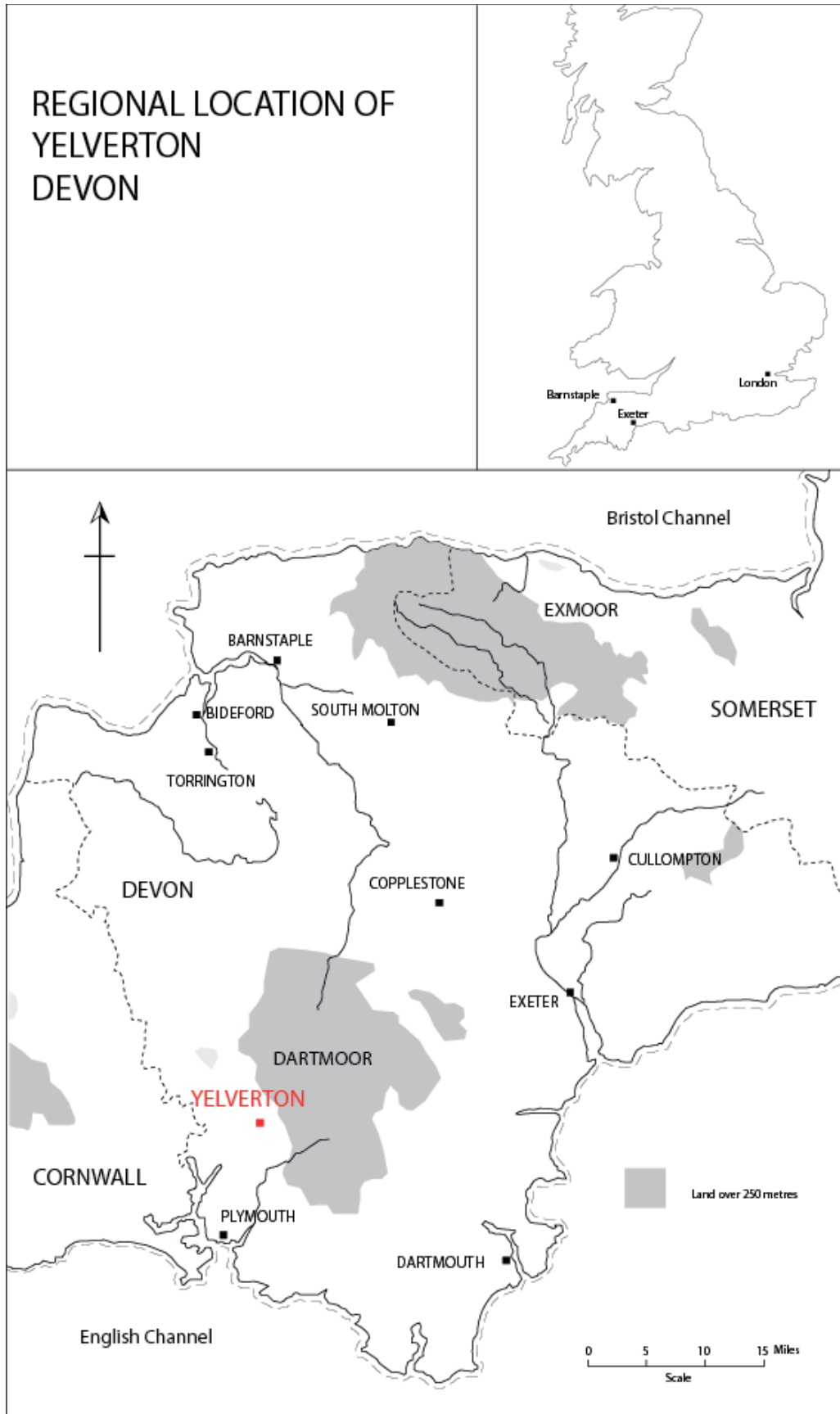


Fig. 1: Regional location.



## 1.0 Introduction

**Location:** Roborough Down  
**Parish:** Yelverton  
**District:** Dartmoor Forest  
**County:** Devon  
**NGR:** Start and end coordinates: E251533, N066878 and E250741, N068852  
**Proposal:** Replacement of gas main  
**Oasis ID:** southwest 1-65548  
**OS Map copying licence no.:** 100044808

### 1.1 Background

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was asked by Mr. Martyn Hall of Wales & West Utilities (the Client) to conduct archaeological monitoring and recording at Roborough Down, Yelverton, Devon. This work was commissioned in order to comply with a specified precondition for planning consent issued by Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) and was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Appendix 1).

An archaeological assessment carried out in August 2009 for Wales and West Utilities concluded that:

*'Within the study area the earliest recorded remains, a possible long barrow and findspot, relate to the Neolithic occupation of the area. The sites of three Bronze Age barrows also lie within the study area, and a potential fourth barrow lies to the north-east of the route. There is little evidence for the occupation of the area in the Iron Age, Romano-British and Saxon periods and the medieval settlement and arable agriculture recorded appears to be largely confined to the western slopes of the Meavy Valley. Post-medieval remains around the perimeter of the common testify to the industrial exploitation of local resources during this period, however, the study area is dominated by the extensive remains of the World War II airfield of RAF Harrowbeer' (Worley Parsons 2009, 37).*

### 1.2 Methodology

Trench cutting began from the northern end of the study area on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and concluded on the 21<sup>st</sup> November (see Fig. 3 & 4). The archaeological watching brief was undertaken and directed by M Tingle in accordance with IfA guidelines, and the WSI drawn up in consultation with DNPA (see Appendix 1).



Fig. 2: Site location.

## 2.0 Results of the Archaeological Monitoring

### 2.1 The Trench

The first section of the trench (Fig. 4, A–B) extended along an extant road, and was excavated by a specialist pipe-trenching machine, and could not, due to health and safety considerations, be subject to continuous archaeological monitoring. Thereafter, where the pipeline crossed open grassland (Fig. 4, B–C), trenching was carried out by a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.5m



wide toothless grading bucket under strict archaeological supervision. The final section of the trench (Fig. 4, C–D), which cut through a second existing road surface, was also monitored.

The trench was *c.*2000m in length, approximately 0.5m wide and was cut to a depth of approximately 1.50m. All trenching was carried out under the supervision and control of the site archaeologist and the spoil heaps were regularly inspected for finds. Once the turf had been removed, the topsoil and subsoil – where it survived – was generally less than 0.2m deep and overlay hornfelsed slates of the Tavy formation that varied from orange-yellow to grey-green. This was occasionally overlain by patches of grey-brown silty clay between 0.4-0.6m thick.

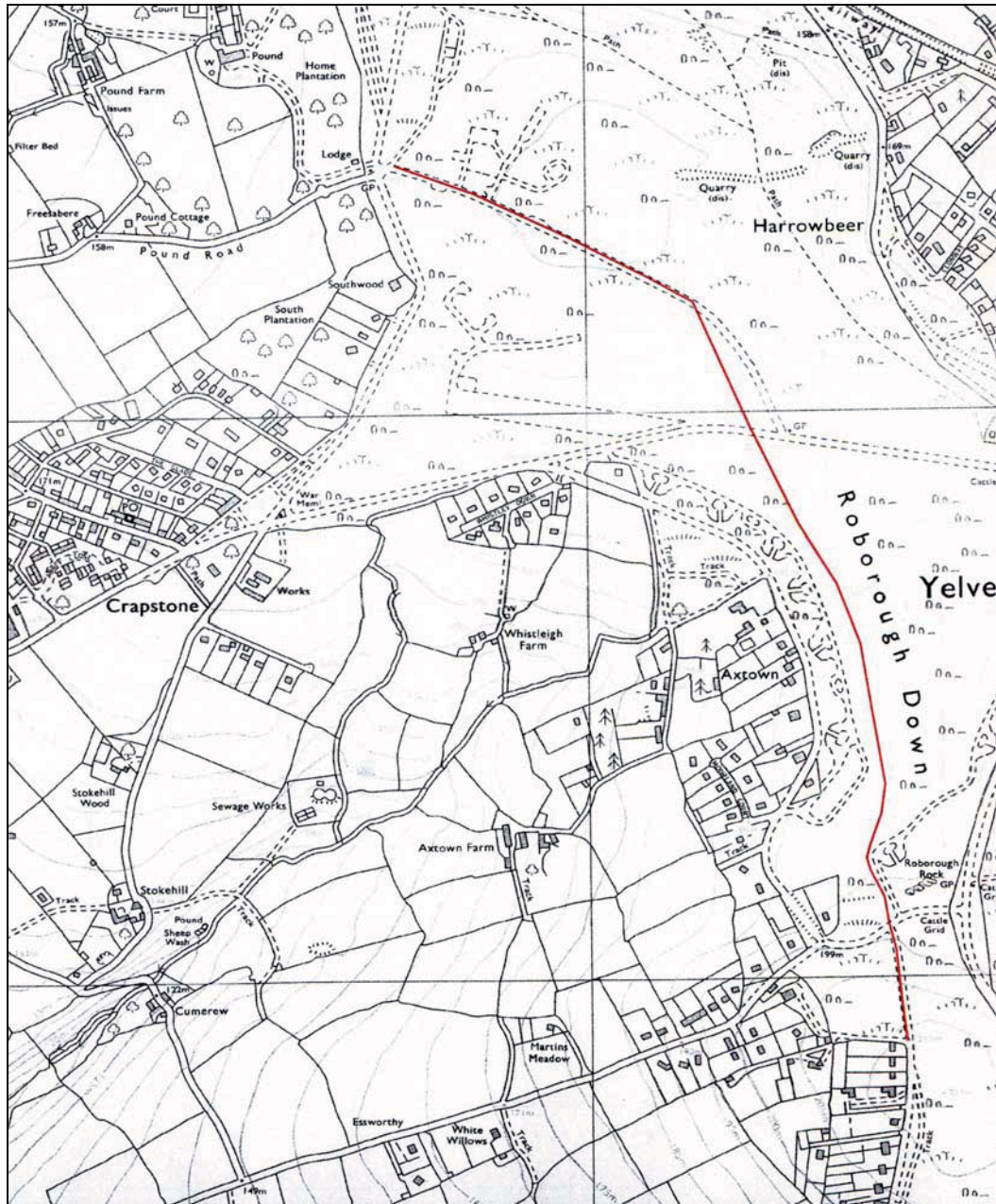


Fig. 3: The route of the pipeline.





Fig. 4: The pipeline route superimposed on a plan of the airfield.

## 2.2 Finds and Features

No archaeological features or finds pre-dating the 20<sup>th</sup> century were recovered. There was however, extensive evidence of the wartime airfield RAF Harrowbeer, in the form of numerous brick structures, surfaces, pipes and cables. It is probable that the construction of the runways and the ancillary structures would have required the stripping of any surface deposits, thus removing any archaeological deposits which may have previously existed at the site.





Fig. 5: Crushed brick and burnt stone forming hardcore (Fig 4, location A).



Fig. 6: Brick surface (Fig. 4, location B).



In the course of the trenching, sections along the route of Runway 2 were exposed, revealing hardcore composed of broken bricks and burnt building stone (Fig. 5 and Fig. 4, location A), together with brick surfaces (Fig. 6 and Fig. 4, location B). More substantial structural remains were also revealed associated with pipe works (Fig. 7 and Fig. 4, location C). Modern finds included the fragmentary remains of non-local building stone (Fig. 8) and decorative tiles (Fig. 9). These may well have been derived from the clearance of debris from Plymouth following the intensive bomb damage of March and April 1941, which led to the upgrading of facilities at RAF Harrowbeer by the construction of solid runways (Worley Parsons 2009, 34).



Fig. 7: Brick structure with associated pipework (Fig. 4, location C).





Fig. 8: Non local building stone.



Fig. 9: Decorative tiles.



### 3.0 Conclusions

No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the course of this programme of monitoring other than those various features associated with RAF Harrowbeer. The history and development of this airbase is well documented in contemporary sources, to which archaeological recording such as this can add little.



Fig. 10: Metal object: a shackle possibly associated with the airfield.

### 4.0 Bibliography and References

#### Published Sources:

- Institute of Field Archaeologists.** 1995 (Revised 2008): *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation.*  
**Institute of Field Archaeologists.** 2001: *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief.*

#### Unpublished Sources:

- Worley Parsons (Bristol)** 2009: *Ecological and Archaeological Assessment, Yelverton, Devon.*

Websites: [www.rafharrowbeer.co.uk/history](http://www.rafharrowbeer.co.uk/history)



## Appendix 1

# WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING ON ROBOROUGH DOWNS, YELVERTON, DEVON.

**Location:** Roborough Downs  
**Parish:** Yelverton  
**District:** Dartmoor Forest  
**County:** Devon  
**NGR:** Start and end coordinates: E251533, N066878 and E250741, N068852.  
**Proposal:** Replacement of gas main

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document forms a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been produced by South West Archaeology (SWARCH) at the request of Martyn Hall of Wales & West Utilities (the Client). It sets out the methodology for archaeological monitoring and recording to be undertaken during groundworks associated with the replacement of the gas mains over the common at Roborough Downs and for related off site analysis and reporting. The WSI and the schedule of work it proposes was devised in consultation with Andy Crabb of Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) and is commissioned in line with PPG16 (1990) Archaeology and Planning Policy, and the Local Development Framework Policy on archaeology.
- 1.2 The programme of work to be carried out by SWARCH and covered by this WSI consists of the archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks and trenching in areas subject to the works; during the removal of the existing surfaces, turf and topsoil and the reduction of ground levels.

## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An archaeological assessment carried out in August 2009 for Wales and West Utilities concluded that:  
*'Within the study area the earliest recorded remains, a possible long barrow and findspot, relate to the Neolithic occupation of the area. The sites of three Bronze Age barrows also lie within the study area, and a potential fourth barrow lies to the north-east of the route. There is little evidence for the occupation of the area in the Iron Age, Romano-British and Saxon periods and the medieval settlement and arable agriculture recorded appears to be largely confined to the western slopes of the Meavy Valley. Post-medieval remains around the perimeter of the common testify to the industrial exploitation of local resources during this period, however, the study area is dominated by the extensive remains of the World War II airfield of RAF Harrowbeer.'*

## 3.0 AIMS

- 3.1 The principal objectives of the work will be to:
- 3.1.1 To observe, investigate, excavate and record any surviving below-ground archaeological artefacts and deposits uncovered by the groundworks;
- 3.1.2 Analyse and report on the results of the project as appropriate.

## 4.0 METHOD

- 4.1 The Client will provide SWARCH with details of the location of existing services and of proposed groundworks within the site area, and of the proposed construction programme.
- 4.2 Health and Safety requirements will be observed at all times by any archaeological staff working on site, particularly when working with machinery. As a minimum: high-visibility jackets, safety helmets and protective footwear will be worn.
- 4.2.1 Appropriate PPE will be employed at all times.
- 4.2.2 The site archaeologist will undertake any site safety induction course provided by the Client.
- 4.2.3 If the depth of trenching exceeds 1.2 metres the trench sides will need to be shored or stepped to enable the archaeologist to examine and if appropriate

record the section of the trench. The provision of such measures will be the responsibility of the client.

4.3 All groundworks including service trenching and topsoil stripping will be carried out by machine, fitted with a toothless grading bucket, under the supervision and control of the site archaeologist, to the depth of formation, the surface of *in situ* subsoil/weathered natural or archaeological deposits whichever is highest in the stratigraphic sequence. Should archaeological deposits be exposed machining will cease in that area to allow the site archaeologist to investigate the exposed deposits which will be excavated by the site archaeologist by hand.

4.3.1 The archaeological work will be carried out in accordance with the *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief 1994 (revised 2001 & 2008) and Standard and Guidance for: an Archaeological Excavation (revised 2001)*.

4.3.2 Spoil will be examined for the recovery of artefacts.

4.3.3 Once the level of the archaeology has been reached all archaeological material will be excavated by hand down to the depth of the archaeology.

4.3.4 All excavation of exposed archaeological features shall be carried out by hand, stratigraphically, and fully recorded by context to IfA guidelines.

4.3.5 If archaeological features are exposed, then as a *minimum*:

- i) small discrete features will be fully excavated;
- ii) larger discrete features will be half-sectioned (50% excavated);
- iii) long linear features will be excavated to sample 20% of their length - with investigative excavations distributed along the exposed length of any such feature.

Whether any further excavation is required will be confirmed with DNPA. Should the above excavation not yield sufficient information to allow the form and function of archaeological features/deposits to be determined, full excavation of such features/deposits may be required.

4.3.6 In exceptional circumstances where materials of a particularly compact nature are encountered, these may be removed with a toothed bucket, subject to agreement with archaeological staff on site.

4.3.7 Should archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains be exposed, the site archaeologist will investigate, record and sample such deposits.

4.3.8 Human remains must be left *in-situ*, covered and protected. Removal can only take place under appropriate Ministry of Justice and environmental health regulations. Such removal must be in compliance with the relevant primary legislation.

4.3.9 Any finds identified as treasure or potential treasure, including precious metals, groups of coins or prehistoric metalwork, must be dealt with according to the Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (2nd Revision) (Dept for Culture Media and Sport). Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery, suitable security measures must be taken to protect the finds from theft.

4.3.10 In the event of particularly significant discoveries, the HES will be informed and a site meeting between the consultant, the HES and the client/applicant to determine the appropriate mitigation.

4.4 SWARCH will agree monitoring arrangements with DNPA who will be informed of the start of the fieldwork, will monitor the project throughout and may wish to inspect the works in progress.

## 5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

5.1 This will be based on IFA guidelines and those advised by DNPA and will consist of:

5.1.1 Standardised single context recording sheets, survey drawings in plan, section and profile at 1:10, 1:20, 1: 50 and 1:100 as appropriate and digital photography.

5.1.2 Survey and location of features.

5.1.3 Labelling and bagging of finds on site, post-1800 unstratified pottery may be discarded on site after a representative sample has been retained.

Any variation of the above shall be agreed in consultation with the DPNA.

- 5.2 Should suitable deposits be exposed (e.g. palaeoenvironmental) then scientific assessment/analysis/dating techniques will be applied to further understand their nature/date and to establish appropriate sampling procedures. The project will be organised so that specialist consultants who might be required to conserve or report on other aspects of the investigations can be called upon.

## **6.0 ARCHIVE AND REPORT**

- 6.1 An ordered and integrated site archive will be prepared in accordance with *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991 2nd edition) upon completion of the entire project. This will include relevant correspondence together with context sheets, field drawings, and environmental, artefactual and photographic records. The archive and finds will be deposited with the Plymouth City Museum under accession number AR.2009.20. The museum's guidelines for the deposition of archives for long-term storage will be adhered to.
- 6.2 Archaeological finds resulting from the investigation (which are the property of the landowner), will also be deposited with the above museum (under the accession number above) in a format to be agreed with the museum, and within a timetable to be agreed with the HES. The museum's guidelines for the deposition of archives for long-term storage will be adhered to and any sampling procedures will be carried out prior to deposition and in consultation with the museum. If ownership of all or any of the finds is to remain with the landowner, provision and agreement must be made for the time-limited retention of the material and its full analysis and recording, by appropriate specialists.
- 6.3 An illustrated summary report will be produced as soon as possible following completion of fieldwork, specialist reports allowing. A draft report will be submitted to the DNPA for comment prior to its formal submission to the Local Planning Authority. Copies of the report will also be provided the DNPA as well as the Client. If few or no archaeological deposits are exposed then, with advance agreement with the DNPA, the submission of a short HER entry will be acceptable.
- 6.4 If a report is produced, this will include the following elements:
- 6.4.1 A report number, the date of report production (dd/mm/yyyy) and version number (if subject to revision) and the OASIS record number;
  - 6.4.2 A copy of this WSI;
  - 6.4.3 A location plan and overall site plan;
  - 6.4.4 Plans and sections of significant features or deposits at a relevant scale;
  - 6.4.5 A description of any remains and deposits identified including an interpretation of their character and significance;
  - 6.4.6 An assessment of significant artefacts, historical and/or architectural features, environmental and scientific samples together with recommendations for further analysis;
  - 6.4.7 Any specialist reports commissioned;
  - 6.4.8 Discussion of the archaeological deposits encountered and their context.
- 6.5 DNPA will receive the report within three months of completion of fieldwork, dependant on the provision of specialist reports, radiocarbon dating results etc, the production of which may exceed this period. If a substantial delay is anticipated then an interim report will be produced.
- 6.6 Should particularly significant features, below-ground remains or finds be encountered, then these, because of their importance, are likely to merit wider publication in line with government planning guidance. If such remains are encountered, the publication requirements –including any further analysis that may be necessary – will be confirmed with the DNPA.
- 6.7 A copy of the report detailing the results of these investigations will be submitted to the OASIS (*Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS*) database under OASIS record number southwes1-65548.

## **7.0 PERSONNEL**

The project will be managed by Colin Humphreys; the excavation work will be undertaken by SWARCH personnel. Relevant staff of DNPA will be consulted as appropriate. Where necessary appropriate specialist advice will be sought, (see list of consultant specialists in Appendix 1 below).

## **Appendix 1 – List of specialists**

### **Building recording**

Robert Waterhouse  
13 Mill Meadow, Ashburton TQ13 7RN Tel: 01364 652963  
Richard Parker  
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exeter.arch@exeter.gov.uk

### **Conservation**

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### **Curatorial**

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Royal Albert Memorial Museum  
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### **Metallurgy**

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### **Palaeoenvironmental/Organic**

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Dana Challinor (wood identification)  
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Julie Jones (plant macro-fossils)  
juliedjones@blueyonder.co.uk  
Heather Tinsley (pollen analysis)  
heathertinsley@aol.com  
Ralph Fyffe (pollen analysis) University of Plymouth

### **Pottery**

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Henrietta Quinell  
9 Thornton Hill, Exeter EX4 4NN Tel: 01392 433214

### **Timber Conservation**

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