

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Iddesleigh, West Devon	National Grid Reference SS57560623	Number:
Subject: Archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken during the construction of a tennis court, new gates and piers at Ash House, Iddesleigh.		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: 13572/2009/OKE	Recipient museum: Plymouth City Museum	
OASIS ID: southwes1-73075	Museum Accession no: AR2010.6	
Contractor's reference number/code: IAH10	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 08 & 15 March 2010 03-05 August 2010	
<p>Description of works.</p> <p>A programme archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology (SWARCH) at the request of Mr Antoine Khayat prior to the construction of a tennis court and new entrance at Ash House, Iddesleigh. The archaeological monitoring was also to include works during the construction of a swimming pool, but these have been delayed until 2012 at the earliest. The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by DCHES.</p> <p>The initial phase of observation (in March 2010) was of the tennis court, an area of c. 40m by 21m, totalling 841m², was stripped by a mechanical excavator using a 1.5m toothless grading bucket (Fig. 1b). In the northern half of this area and along its western edge the formation level of the construction did not reach the subsoil so it was decided, in consultation with DCHES, that monitoring in this area was not necessary. Accordingly, monitoring was undertaken in the south and east of the area, where excavation reached the surface of the subsoil and in a single trench along its northern edge. Deeper trenches, with a width of 0.5m, were also dug around the circumference of the tennis court area in order to prevent future root disturbance and to divert services around its southern edge. These trenches penetrated the natural subsoil and were also monitored. The area has been extensively disturbed, down to the level of the subsoil and bedrock, by recent earth moving. No archaeological features were noted within this area and only two irregularly shaped natural features, probably tree throws, were revealed.</p> <p>The second phase of archaeological monitoring and recording occurred along those parts of the new driveway that deviated from the course of the old route (Figs. 1a-b). Accordingly, an irregularly shaped area measuring approximately 20m by 6m was stripped at the northern end of the driveway route, approximately 15m to the southeast of Ash House.</p> <p>A series of six cut features were identified within a small area at the southern end of the stripped area, adjacent to the course of the old driveway (Fig. 1a). These consisted of five linears, [101], [103], [105], [107] and [111] (Fig. 1c) and a roughly rectilinear pit, [109], each of which is described below.</p> <p>Linears [101] and [111] were linear cuts orientated north-east to south-west with a width of c. 0.5m and a maximum depth of 0.1m. Approximately 2-2.5m of the length was visible, their southern ends being concealed under the construction of the driveway. In profile, the cuts were slightly asymmetric, with a smooth sloping southern side and an irregular northern edge (Fig. 1c).</p> <p>The fill of [101] consisted of a homogenous, red clay-silt (102) containing occasional sub-rounded stone inclusions of up to 15mm in size and rare fragments of slate, probably derived from roofing material. A single sherd of 18th century glass and one sherd of 17th-18th century North Devon sgraffito ware were recovered from (102). The fill of [111] was almost identical and produced a sherd of North Devon ware dating to the 18th century and another of a white stone ware, also 18th century in date.</p> <p>Linears [103], [105] and [107] were shallow features orientated north to south with a width of c. 0.3m and a maximum depth of 50-60mm. They extended for 1.2-2.0m in length, with poorly defined northern ends, while their southern ends had been truncated by an area of modern disturbance.</p> <p>The fill (104) of linear [103] consisted of a homogenous, red clay-silt containing occasional inclusions of sub-rounded to sub-angular stone and flecks of charcoal and rare fragments of slate probably derived from roofing material. Finds from this context consisted of 2 sherds of salt-glazed sewage pipe, a sherd of transfer-printed refined white earthenware, a single sherd of industrial slipware and a flowerpot sherd. These suggest that a <i>terminus post quem</i> in the mid to late 19th century would be appropriate. The fill of [105] was a homogenous red</p>		

clay-silt (106) identical in character to (104). It yielded a fragment of salt-glazed sewage pipe, a sherd of tile and a single sherd of English bone china, suggesting a *terminus post quem* in the 19th century. The fill of [107] was (108), a homogenous, red clay-silt with an identical character to (104) and (106). No finds were recovered from (106).

Feature [109] was a roughly rectangular cut, measuring c. 2.0m by 1.5m with its long axis orientated north to south. Excavation showed it to be shallow with a maximum depth of c. 0.2m while its sides were fairly irregular, those to the west and east being relatively steep, while that to the north being very shallow. The unexcavated side to the south may have suffered disruption by the adjacent area of modern disturbance. The fill of [109] was (110), a highly heterogeneous, indurate, mid-brown silt-clay containing abundant sub-rounded to sub-angular stone inclusions of up to 80mm in size. Also present were frequent fragments of roofing slate, including one almost whole example, and rare inclusions of cinder, coal, brick and mortar. Finds included 6 sherds of white refined earthenwares, 3 sherds of glass, 3 pieces of bone and 2 fragments of corroded iron, all of which suggest a *terminus post quem* in the 19th century.

The limited area of excavation and the degree of truncation of the features identified makes their interpretation difficult. The 18th century features [101] and [111] may represent the bottoms of drainage ditches running along the northern side of a track leading to the entrance to the house, a precursor to the 19th century driveway. Alternatively, they may be garden features, perhaps bedding trenches for ornamental plants in a formal garden. Either explanation would be appropriate as during this period the rising fortunes of the Mallet family, who owned the property, had enabled Ash House to be rebuilt as a high status brick dwelling and subsequently to remodel the property at least once over the course of the century (Dingley 2008). The presence of fragments of roofing slate in the fills of [101] and [111] may attest to this process. The 19th century features [103], [105], [107] and [109] may also be the remains of a subsequent phase of garden features.

A variety of finds were recovered from the topsoil on the site during stripping and cleaning. These were dominated by pottery dating to the post medieval period (30 sherds) including white refined earthenwares, North Devon ware, English porcelain and Westerwald stoneware, all of which dated to the 17th century and later. However a single sherd of North Devon ware was recovered which was of probable medieval date (AD 1200 to 1450) and, as such, is the earliest find so far recovered from Ash House. Fragments of clay pipe stem (3), a large portion of roofing slate and 7 sherds of glass, including the top and base of an 18th century wine bottle, were also recovered.

The insertion of a new entranceway as part of the construction of the driveway was also carefully monitored and recorded as the original gate piers and parts of the adjoining hedgebanks on either side were removed. No significant archaeological features or deposits were found. The former entrance (Fig. 1d) was through a pair of wooden gates across a 3.03m gap between a pair of granite piers with thin adjoining ashlar walls that extended 2.75m to the north and south of the entrance to large pillars cut into the hedgebank (discussed above). The two granite piers are 1.75m high, 0.31m square in plan and capped by a square (0.38m) and 0.15m high granite top. The ashlar walls which adjoin the piers are 0.22m thick and 0.8m high, with sandstone toppers (0.09m high and 0.24m wide) which overhung on the outer side. The outer pillars which cut into the hedgebank are coursed ashlar masonry topped with a flat granite slab, they are 1.65m high and 0.58m square in plan. The wooden gates are replacements hung on strap hinges; the southern pier has rust marks which suggest a resetting of the hinge, while the northern pier has a filled socket 0.10m above the current hinge.

The hedgebank (Fig. 1e) was of simple construction, consisting of a single dump of material; a fairly compact, yellowish, light brown clay-silt containing occasional, poorly sorted stone inclusions, some of which reached c. 100mm in size, though most were less than 50mm. The western face of the bank had then been cut vertically [203] and an unmortared facing wall constructed of coursed, regularly sized blocks of stone measuring c. 100mm by 100mm by 50mm on average. A layer of humic soil covered the top of the bank with a maximum depth of c. 0.3m. No finds were recovered from the gateway.

Bibliography

Dingley, D. 2008: *Ash: A History of the Estate in Iddesleigh, Devon*. Dowland: Dave Dingley.

A plan as well as any other relevant drawings must be attached showing the location and extent of site, areas investigated and features exposed.

Recorder: S.H. Walls

Date sent to HER: 08.03.11

Please email completed form to: archaeol@devon.gov.uk or post to County Archaeology Service, Environment Directorate, Matford Lane Offices, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QW. Information recorded on this form will be added to the Historic Environment Record, and made available to all researchers.

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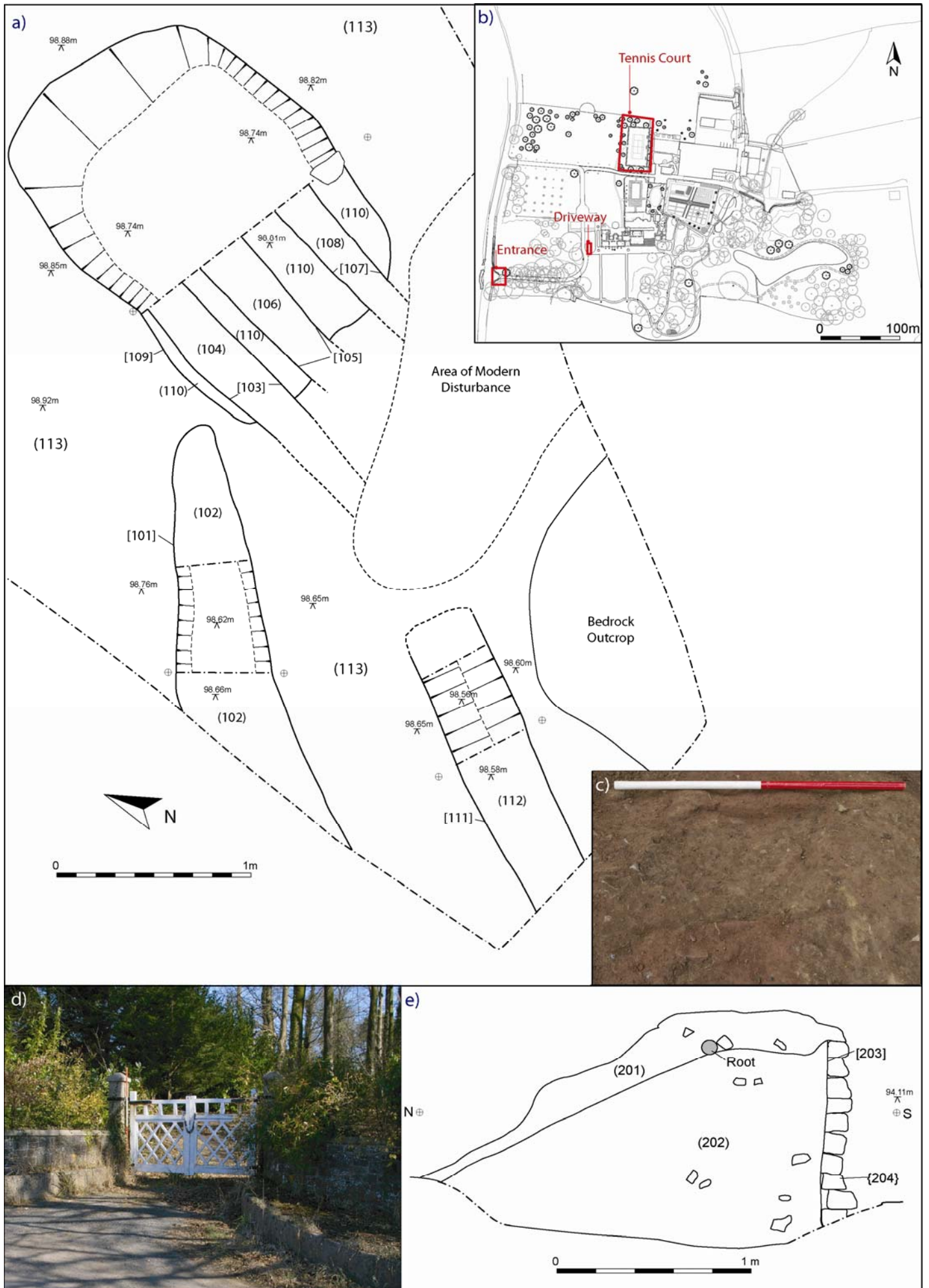


Figure 1: a) Plan of features excavated along driveway. b) Plan of the three areas of monitoring. c) Shot of east facing section of linear [111] (1m scale). d) Shot of entrance from the east (2m scale). e) Section through the hedge bank.