

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Frithelstock, Torridge	National Grid Reference SS 4636 1945	Number:
Subject: archaeological monitoring in advance of the construction of an extension to a bungalow, with associated access.		Photos attached? YES
Planning Application no: 1/1103/2010/FUL	Recipient museum: Barnstaple and North Devon Museum	
OASIS ID: Southwes1-95829	Museum Accession no: NDDMS 2011.3	
Contractor's reference number/code: FCA11	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 15-16 th & 22 nd February 2011	

DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of Mr Pete Bracken (the Client), prior to the construction of an extension to a bungalow and related access and services (Figures 1 & 2). This work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by DCHES, and was carried out by B. Morris on 15-16th and 22nd February 2011.

The site lies within a walled garden, formerly attached to the Clinton Arms public house. The walls of this garden are Listed (mon.no.1477900), and the northern wall was demolished to facilitate the construction of a visibility splay. The site was partially developed earlier in the 2000s, when the foundations of a bungalow were dug and poured concrete laid down. These earlier groundworks were monitored by Exeter Archaeology.

An area approximately 90m² in extent (see Figures 2 & 3) was stripped by a mechanical excavator using a 1.6m wide toothless grading bucket under strict archaeological supervision. This area was comprised of two pits approximately 1.6×2m (dug for a septic tank and soakaway, see below), and a more extensive area for a new garage and driveway. Following the discovery of feature [305] (see below), and in consultation with DCHES, that feature was sectioned twice by mechanical excavator using a 0.4m wide toothless bucket under strict archaeological supervision. These sections were cleaned and the culvert {309} investigated by hand.

The subsoil was observed to be a stiff yellow to greyish-yellow silt-clay, very stony in places. The Soil Survey lists the soils of this area as well-drained fine loamy soils of the Neath Association (Soil Survey 1983). The underlying bedrock is comprised of the sandstones of the Bude formation (BGS 1980).

PITS

The two pits were located on the western edge of the site. No features were observed cutting the subsoil in either pit, but the topsoil was up to 1.0m deep and contained four layers. The uppermost topsoil layer (101) was a mid greyish-brown clay-silt loam/garden soil 0.3-0.4m thick. This contained surprisingly little artefactual material given that it should be a Victorian garden soil. Below (100) was a thin spread of platy angular stone debris 0.1m thick (101), probably related to the relatively recent rebuilding of the garden wall immediately adjacent. Below this was a layer of gritty mid-brown sandy-silt (102) 0.2m thick. Just above the natural was a layer of stiff mottled yellowish-grey clay-silt containing frequent angular stones <60mm in size (103). This layer produced 2 sherds (38g) of 18th century North Devon ware.

AREA STRIP

The other area was more extensive, and exposed a number of archaeological features (Figure 3). One edge of a very large feature [305] was exposed, possibly a tank or pond; this was at least 4×11m in extent and up to 0.4m deep (Figure 5). The profile appeared to be growing shallower at its southern end, suggesting the southern edge might be located just beyond the baulk. This feature contained a single fill (306), a homogeneous light grey silt-clay containing very few stones of any size and occasional charcoal flecks. 2 small fragments of medieval North Devon pottery (15g) were recovered from the fill.

Feature [305] was cut by a [307], a linear 1.3-1.5m wide orientated approximately north-south and parallel to the western edge of [305]. This cut had a steep-sided profile c.0.75m deep with a flat base c.0.8m across and had been dug to carry a stone-built culvert {309}. The culvert was a carefully-built structure composed of angular quarried stones 150-300m across and 100-150mm thick (Figures 4 & 6). The internal diameter of the culvert was only c.0.2m square and was offset to the east; the western wall was approximately double the thickness of the eastern wall. The culvert was capped with a line of flat, platy stones up to 350mm across and 50mm thick. The culvert was almost wholly filled with a deposit of clean, stiff blue-grey clay (310), and the steady flow of water in the

feature passed through the stone of the build as much as it did the culvert (Figures 4 & 6). Following the construction of the culvert, the linear feature had been backfilled with (308), redeposited material from (306) and frequent platy angular stone fragments up to 200mm across, presumably from the excavation of [307]. Examination of both the culvert and fill (308) demonstrated extensive manganese mineralisation had occurred.

Both features were sealed by a layer of soil (304), a mid reddish-brown clay-silt containing common small sub-rounded stones <30mm in diameter and occasional small charcoal fragments. This layer also produced 5 sherds of pottery (117g), 1 sherd of medieval North Devon ware, and 4 sherds of post-medieval North Devon ware. At the south end of the site, this layer sealed [305] and [307], and overlay the natural subsoil to the west as well.

Features [305] and [307], and layer (304), were truncated on their northern side by [311], an apparent cut orientated parallel to the road and measuring at least 5m east-west. Only one edge of this cut was exposed. To the north of cut [311], and presumably contained within it, was deposit (312) (Figure 7). This was a massive heterogeneous dump of material, a mid brown firm clay silt containing common mortar and coal fragments. This deposit became darker and more humic in nature as it neared the road, and became increasingly stony as well.

FINDS

Relatively few finds were discovered: 33 sherds of pottery (675g), 3 clay pipe stems (23g), 1 oyster shell (15g), 1 fragment of animal bone (35g). 24 of the 33 sherds of pottery, and the 3 clay pipe stems, were recovered during the topsoil strip. The spoil heaps were also examined after stripping.

INTERPRETATION

The sheer size of feature [305], and the fact that only one edge was exposed, makes it difficult to determine what it actually represents. It seems most likely that it is the truncated remains of a pond of some sort, and one that probably silted-up relatively quickly given the absence of humic material in the fill. The very small amount of medieval pottery (15g) recovered could suggest a monastic connection (?fishpond), but equally, those sherds could be residual.

This feature had fallen out of use and silted up before the stone-built culvert {309} was constructed. This appears to have carried water to the church/Priory/post-Dissolution farmhouse, and given the quality of its construction, and the small amount of medieval pottery recovered (4g), may also have a monastic connection. While it cuts ?pond [305], the ditch dug to carry the culvert runs parallel to the western edge of [305], implying the latter survived as a visible earthwork at that time.

Both features were cut by [311] / (312). As the walls of the garden project into the roadside, and as the current level of the road is below that of the garden, it seems likely that when the walled garden was laid out it took in an area of roadside waste. This garden appears on the 1st Edition OS maps, but as we lack earlier cartographic resources (this area was not tithe-liable), it was impossible to determine precisely when it was built. The walls of the garden are for the most part narrow and bonded with lime mortar, which would indicate a relatively late date for their construction (late 18th-19th century). Part of the wall on the western side is built of cob, and a single sherd (9g) of post-medieval North Devon pottery was recovered from the build of this wall.

The small number of finds recovered is surprising in the light of its location – immediately adjacent to a medieval Priory and a 19-20th century public house – but is not, perhaps, uncharacteristic of north Devon.

SITE IN CONTEXT

The Priory was founded c.1220 by Robert de Beauchamp as a daughter house of Hartland Abbey. In 1537 the Priory and the barton were sold to Viscount Lisle (Arthur Plantagenet), and descended via the Rolle family to the Earl of Orford and Lord Clinton. The Priory itself became a farm, in the tenancy of the Gay family 1602-1873.

The documentary history of the Priory has been laid out in Chope (1929; 1930) and Reichel (1938), and what would pass as an archaeological evaluation at the Priory was carried out by Raleigh-Radford in 1929 (Chope 1930). With the exception of the Listing work undertaken, and monitoring by Exeter Archaeology (see above), no further work has been carried out in or around Frithelstock.

The development site lies at the heart of medieval Frithelstock, immediately adjacent to the churchyard and the Clinton Arms. The tithe map (1838) for Frithelstock shows a substantial part of the parish, centred on the Priory, was not liable for tithes, suggesting that the whole area was owned by the Priory, and that we should expect a grange or home farm to be located in the immediate area.

It is clear from the amount of stone piled in the corner of the churchyard extension that grave digging is encountering masonry structures, and the field immediately to the east of the Priory contains clear and well-defined earthworks. The fields to the south and south-east of the Clinton Arms also appear to contain platforms and other earthworks. The ?pond and culvert encountered during the monitoring works demonstrate that the modern settlement at Frithelstock sits within a larger deserted medieval settlement, only a fraction of which has been examined or recognised.

REFERENCES

British Geological Survey 1980: Map Sheet no.E307-8 *Bude* 1:50,000 scale.

Chope, R.P. 1929: 'Frithelstock Priory'. *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* vol.61, 167-91.

Chope, R.P. c.1930: *The Augustinian Priory of Frithelstock*.

Exeter Archaeology *unpublished*

Hearn, M. *Frithelstock: Past and Present*.

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

Reichel, O.J. 1938: *The Hundred of Shebbear in early times*. *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*.

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)*.

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: B.W.Morris

Date sent to HER: 18/03/2011

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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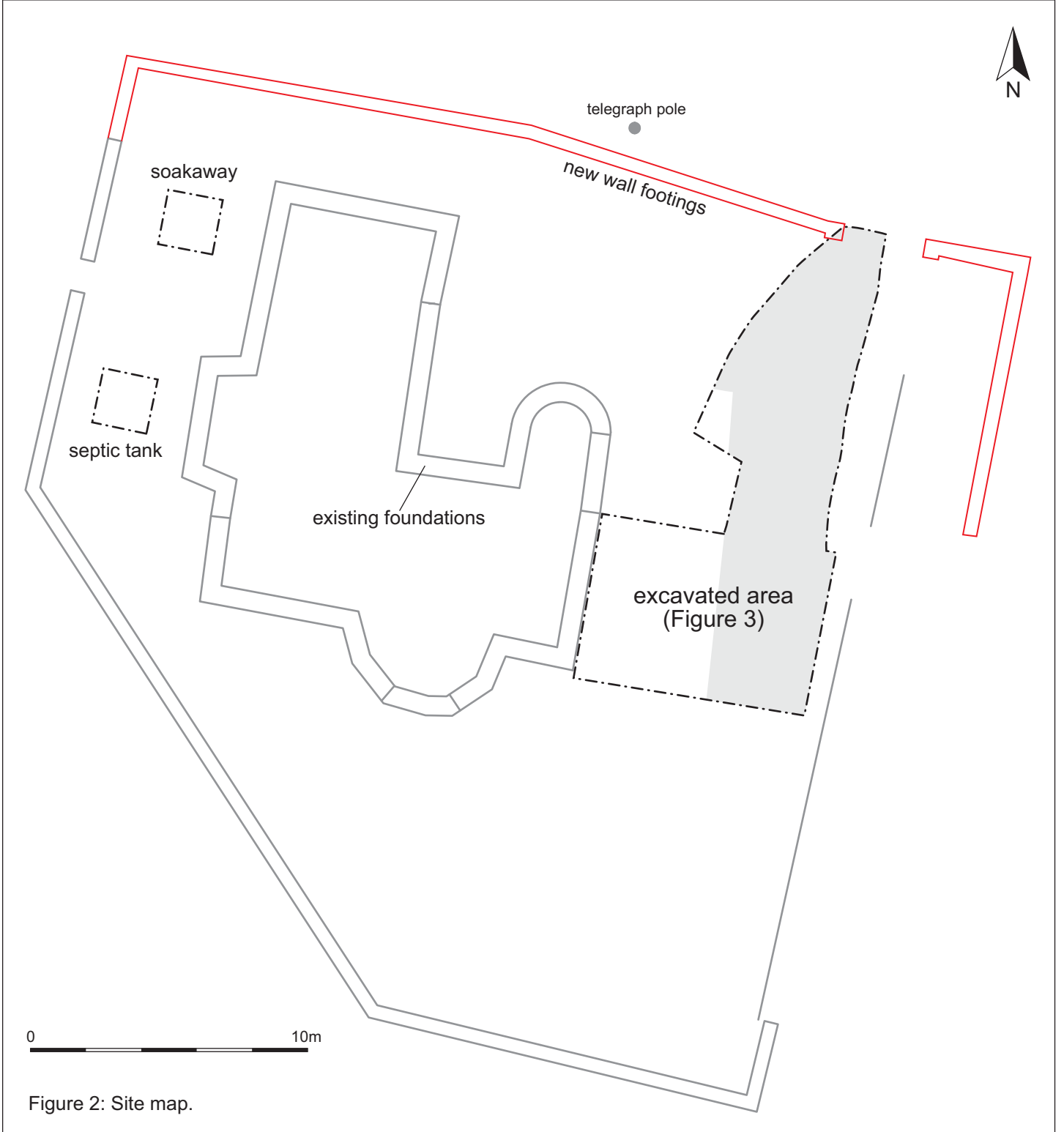
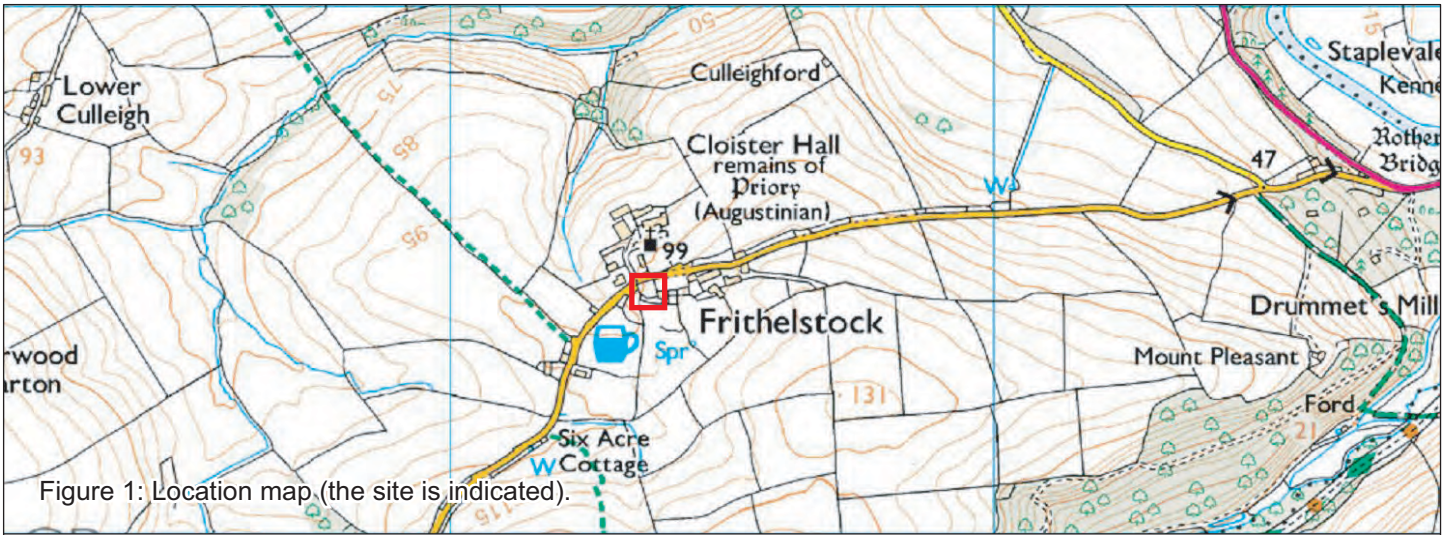


Figure 3: Excavated area.

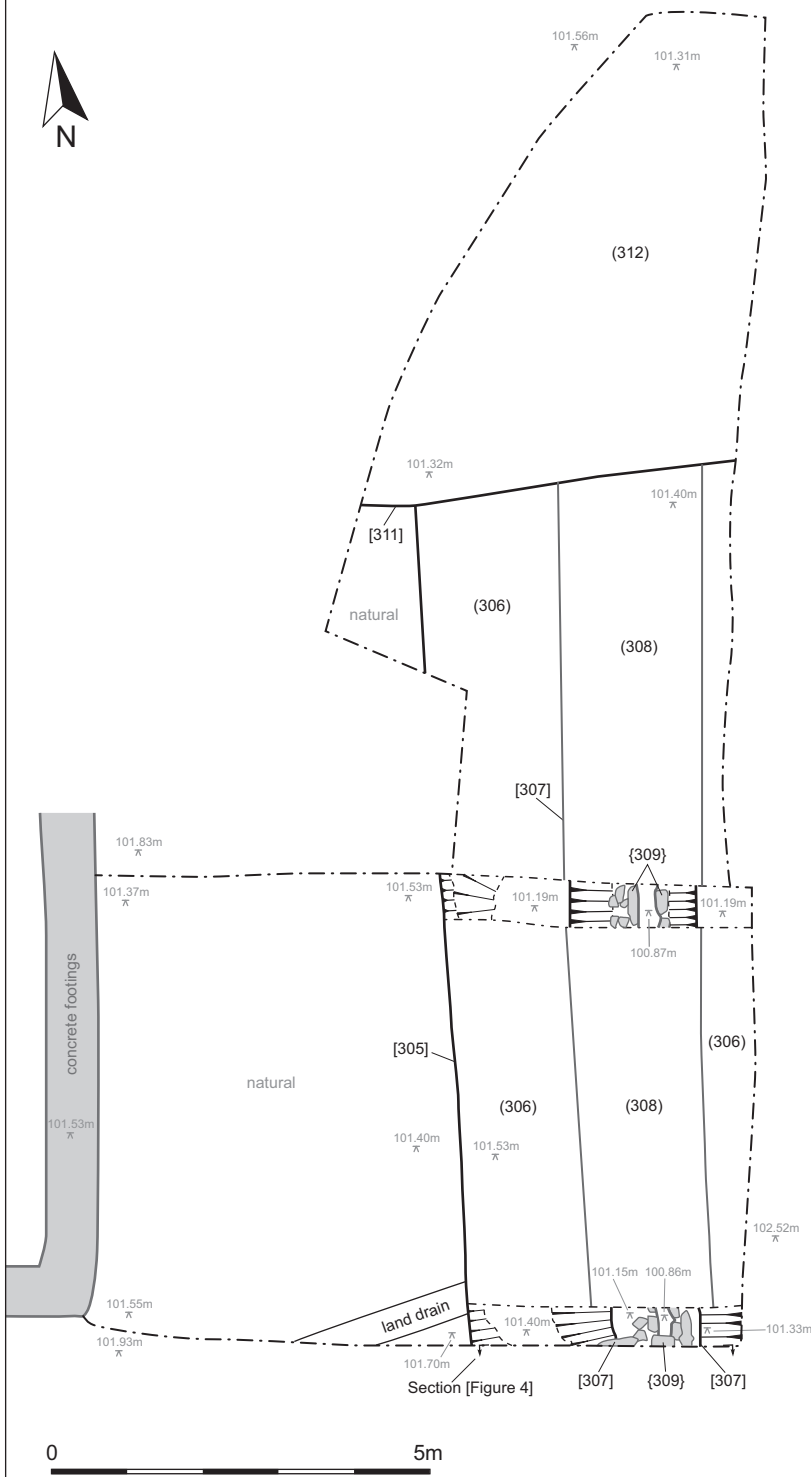


Figure 5: Feature [305] and linear [307] (scales 2m & 1m).



Figure 6: South-facing section of feature [305] and linear [307] (scales 2m & 1m).



Figure 7: Feature [305] and linear [307] truncated by (312) (scales 2m & 1m).

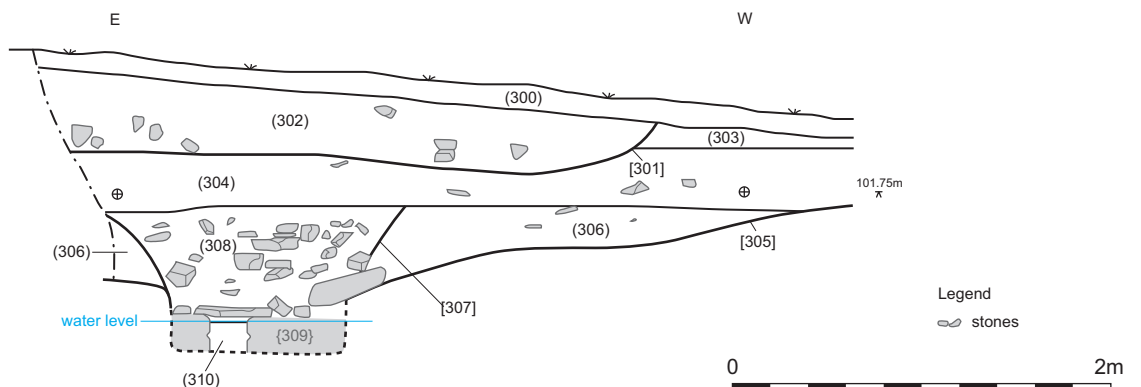


Figure 4: South-facing section through ?pond [305] and linear [307]