Land at Barton Close Farm ,Georgeham, Braunton, Devon

Scheme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

NGR:	SS 47913 41545
Planning Authority:	North Devon Council
Planning ref.:	APP/X1118/A/13/2199207
PCAS Job No.:	1232
Site code:	BCFM 14
OASIS ref:	preconst3-241934

Report prepared for

Pineapple Rural Consultancy

by

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Contents

Figures

Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out during the groundworks for the installation of a new solar array on the site at Barton Close Farm, Georgeham, in North Devon.

The site lies in a landscape of varied archaeological remains, including a scatter of over 300 Neolithic – Bronze Age flints, less than 200m to the north, and undated earthwork and cropmark features to the east and west. Post-medieval iron ore mines lie to the south, and the majority of the site itself was part of a WWII training camp.

An agreed scheme of archaeological mitigation required a combination of excavation and monitoring. However, the monitoring of cable trenches yielded negative results, and based on these results the proposed excavation was considered unnecessary.

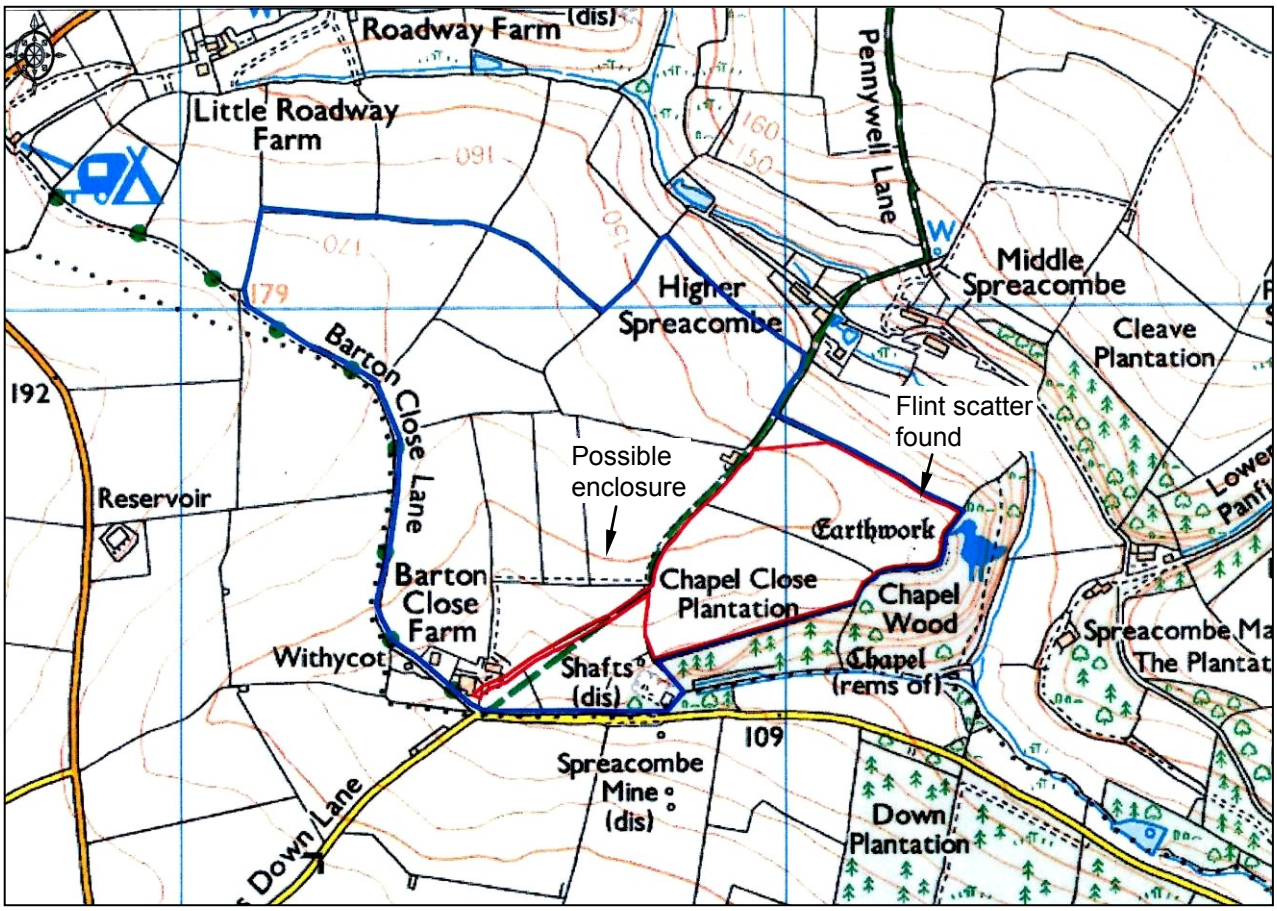

Figure 1: Site location plan at scale 1:12,500. The site is outlined in red and the boundaries of Barton Close Farm in blue. The locations of sites, monuments or findspots recorded in the area by the Devon and Dartmoor HER have been added where these did not already appear on the original mapping. OS mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. PCAS Licence No. 100049278.

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd. (PCAS) was commissioned by Pineapple Rural Consultancy to undertake a scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording on land at Barton Close Farm, near Georgeham in North Devon, to fulfil a planning condition incumbent on the construction of a solar farm for electricity generation.

Prehistoric artefacts and undated earthworks and cropmarks are recorded in the area around the site, although the archaeological potential of the site itself was unknown.

This document details the results of monitoring and recording undertaken during the excavation of service trenches across the site.

2.0 Site location and description (Figure 1)

Barton Close Farm is situated on the west coast of Devon, approximately 3.5km to the south-east of Woolacombe and 4.7km north-east of Croyde, near the village of North Buckland. The proposed solar arrays will be constructed on fields to the east of the farmstead, occupying an area of slightly less than 11 hectares (PRC, 2012).

The site is located within an organic farm in the district of North Devon, surrounded by grazed fields, and consists of two fields used for pasture and agriculture. Its southern and eastern boundaries adjoin Chapel Wood and a recently felled plantation, with an area of overgrown earthworks on the eastern boundary adjacent to Chapel Wood (MWA, 2012).

The approximate central NGR of the site is given as SS 47913 41545.

3.0 Geology and topography

The site lies within a sparsely populated area of open countryside, dominated by farmland and woodland plantations. The terrain is gently undulating; the majority of the site occupies a gently south-facing slope (PRC, 2012). Directly to the north and east of the site is the valley of a brook or small river, joined by a tributary to the south; the ground falls away on all three sides, sloping particularly steeply through Chapel Wood, so that the earthworks occupy a promontory above the valley.

The British Geological Survey records no drift geology in the vicinity of the proposed development, with the exception of a narrow band of alluvium following the course of the brook which passes the east side of Chapel Wood. The exposed solid geology consists of Devonian Pickwell Down Sandstones Formation (BGS).

4.0 Planning background (Figure 3)

Planning permission for the installation of a solar farm, comprising solar arrays, equipment housing, fencing, security, access tracks and ancillary development, was granted on 15th April 2014, following an appeal (planning decision ref. APP/X1118/A/13/2199207). This permission was granted subject to conditions, including the implementation of a scheme of archaeological mitigation.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological mitigation was produced by Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd., and approved by the Archaeologist for the Devon County Council Historic Environment Service.

KEY

PROBABLE ARCHAEOLOGY	
	Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - probable cut feature of archaeological origin
	Negative anomaly / weak negative anomaly - probable bank or earthwork of archaeological origin
	Moderate strength discrete anomaly - probable thermoremanent feature
	Widely spaced curving parallel linear anomalies - probably related to ridge-and-furrow
POSSIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY	
	Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - possible cut feature of archaeological origin
	Negative anomaly / weak negative anomaly - possible bank or earthwork of archaeological origin
	Linear anomaly possibly associated with former field boundary
	Magnetic spike - probable ferrous object
OTHER ANOMALIES	
	Closely spaced parallel linear anomalies - probably related to agricultural activity such as ploughing
	Linear anomaly - probably related to pipe, cable or other modern service
	Linear anomaly - possibly related to land drain
	Magnetic disturbance associated with nearby metal object such as service or field boundary
	Strong magnetic debris - possible disturbed or made ground
	Scattered magnetic debris
	Area of linear magnetic variation - probable natural (e.g. geological or pedological) origin

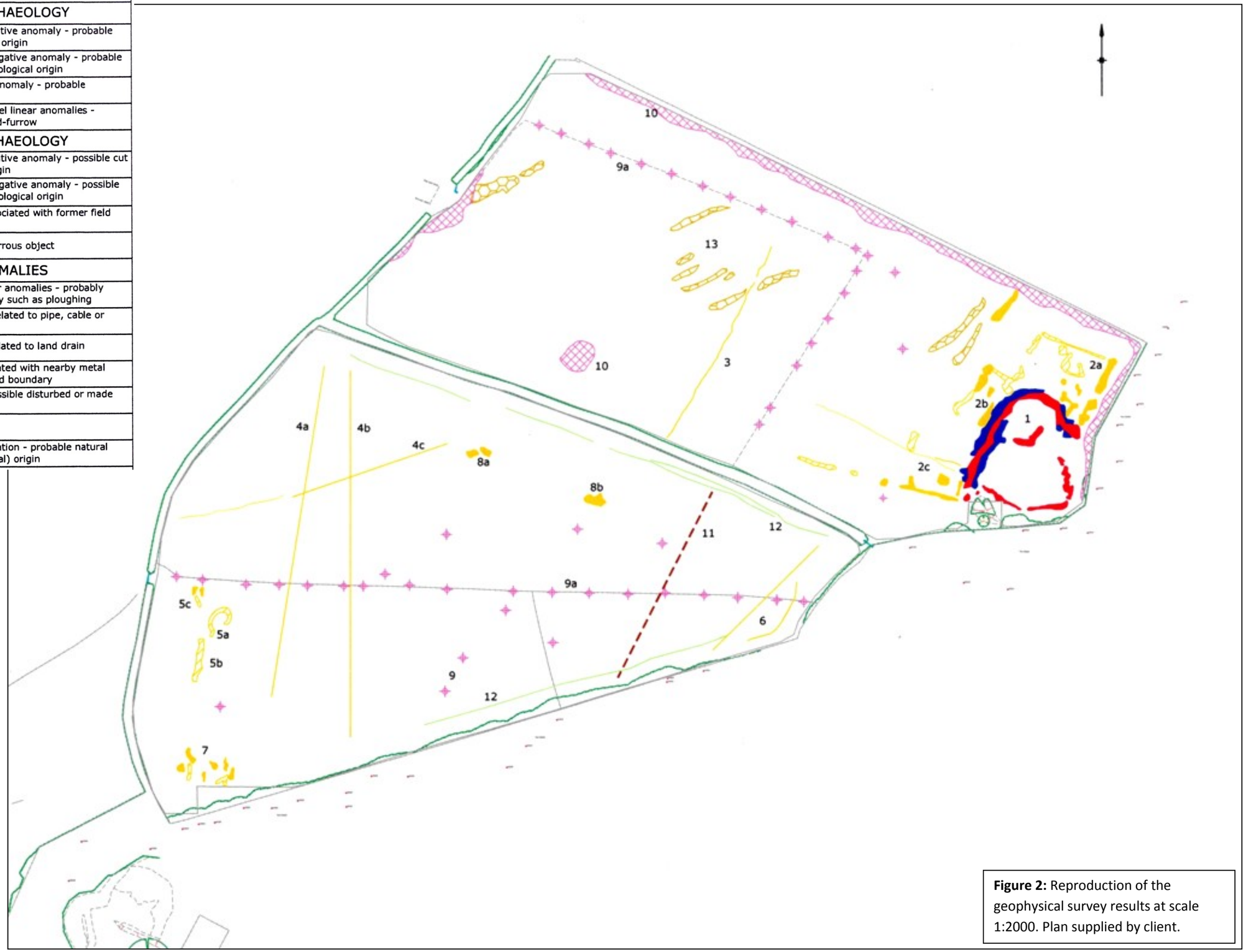

Figure 2: Reproduction of the geophysical survey results at scale 1:2000. Plan supplied by client.

5.0 Archaeological and historical background

The Devon and Dartmoor Historic Environment Record (HER) records a scatter of over 300 Neolithic to Bronze Age flint tools and struck flints, including arrow heads, scrapers, awls and an axe head, in association with some Mesolithic material, found on the northern edge of the proposed development site at NGR SS 482 417 (HER ref. MDV 11917).

At the north-eastern corner of the proposed development site, above the river valley, is a site recorded by the Devon and Dartmoor HER as *'an irregular circular earthwork situated on eastern end of a ridge… Its fairly weak situation is matched by weak defences which consist of a ditch to east and south, where land falls away, and of a ditch with inner bank across north and west where the land is almost level. The south and east portion which falls in a wood is fairly well preserved while the remainder which lies in pasture land, has been under plough and is partly ploughed out. In NE and SW the ditch ends abruptly as though filled in. No definite trace of an entrance nor of hut circles in interior'* (HER ref. MDV 11907). This site, marked as 'Earthwork' on current OS mapping (Fig. 1), has been interpreted as an Iron Age promontory fort, although English Heritage records it as an 'enclosed settlement', noting that a site visit in 1969 observed that in the wood on the south-east side of the monument, the rampart stood about six feet above the ditch, while the north-west side, in arable land, displayed a stone-built rampart with a possible entrance on the north side (PastScape ref. 33410). A recent geophysical survey (Fig. 2) identified the encircling bank and ditch with a possible interior division, and a complex of less strongly marked linear features outside the bank and ditch that may have formed part of an associated field system; the area coloured blue on Figure 2 may represent the ploughed-out remains of the stone rampart seen in 1969.

The HER also records another possible later prehistoric or Roman enclosure to the north-east of Barton Close Farm at SS 477 416, visible as a very indistinct dark cropmark on aerial photographs, but notes that 'The limited evidence makes definite interpretation impossible and more work would be needed to confirm whether any buried archaeological remains are present here' (HER ref. MDV 103341). This site lies some 100m to the west of the proposed development site.

The historic chapel after which Chapel Wood is named was a secular chantry chapel, built *c.* 1250 and dedicated to St. John and St. Martin, with an adjoining priest's house, adjacent to a holy well. The ruins of the chapel, on the south side of the wood some 500m from the proposed development site, are now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (HER ref. MDV 244; SAM 1003853).

A mine shaft, shown on historic OS mapping from 1905 onwards, is recorded by the HER at SS 477 414. It is thought to be associated with the Spreacombe Iron Mine, worked in the late 19th century, which lies to the south of Barton Close Farm (HER ref. MDV 31694). Both the former mine and the isolated shaft are marked on the current Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 1).

6.0 Methodology

The approved mitigation strategy required the excavation of an area designated for tree planting as a buffer on the eastern edge of the site, with archaeological monitoring of all other groundworks associated with the installation of the array. Initially, archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with the construction timetable, which identified no deposits of archaeological significance. Based on these results, and confirmation that the tree planting would be limited, the requirement for excavation was removed.

Monitored excavations comprised the service trenches connecting the solar panels to the energy grid. Excavation of the trenches was undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a narrow, smooth bladed bucket. Trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.45m below existing ground level; however the majority of the trenches were less than 1m

Plate 1: Trench 2 looking N

Plate 2: Looking NE along access road.

Plate 3: Trench 7 sample section looking W.

Plate 4: Trench 13 looking S.

Figure 3: Plan of monitored groundworks based on layout plan. 1:2500 @ A3.

deep. Average trench width was 0.50m. Different lengths of trench were allocated different numbers as shown in Figure 3.

All features and deposits seen were recorded on standard PCAS context sheets and the progress of the groundworks noted on a standard PCAS site diary sheets. Sample sections were drawn at intervals at a scale of 1:20, and plotted on a base plan traced from a development plan onsite. A digital photographic record was maintained, a selection of which is reproduced within this report.

The monitored groundworks were completed intermittently over eight days between the 27/05/2015 and 23/06/2015. The archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by Richard Coe.

7.0 Results (Figure 3 & 4)

Archaeological monitoring of the cable trenches identified no archaeological remains or deposits. Topsoil, described as dark to light grey sillty clay with frequent angular stone inclusions, was recorded as being c. 0.30m thick. It lay directly over pinkish red sandstone bedrock. These two contexts were recorded across the site.

Based on these results, further archaeological investigation and recording was considered unnecessary.

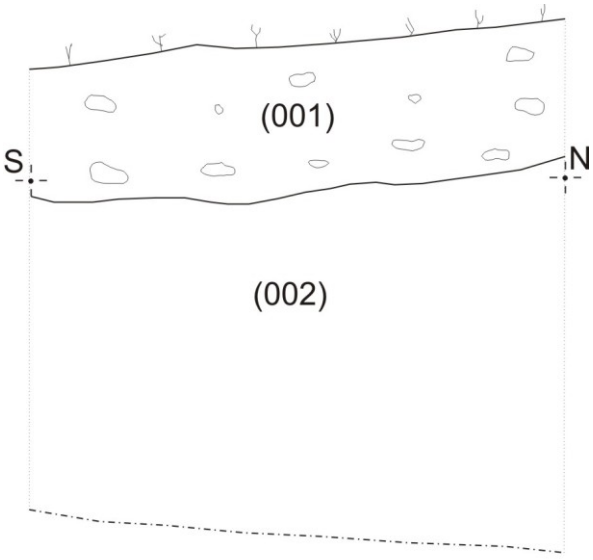

Figure 4: Sample section. 1:20 @ A4
Left: Associated plate

0 1m

1:20 Scale

8.0 Discussion & Conclusion

The monitored trenches extended across the majority of the site, with no features being identified. The evidence suggests the site is devoid of any archaeological remains indicative of past historic activity.

Despite the scatter of Neolithic and Bronze Age flints found just to the north of the site, no artefacts or features were encountered during the monitoring: topsoil directly overlay bedrock geology. No evidence of the activities of the US WWII training camp were identified either.

9.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology employed during this project achieved its primary objective, ensuring that any archaeological remains may have been encountered were identified and recorded. The monitoring and recording achieved its objectives in allowing the attending archaeologist to observe the groundworks, while causing the minimum of disruption to the construction process. The negative results of the first phase of the works enabled the requirement for all remaining archaeological investigations to be reviewed and removed.

10.0 Acknowledgements

PCAS Ltd would like to thank Pineapple Rural Consultancy for this commission.

11.0 Site Archive

The project archive consists of the paper record only; no artefacts were recovered during the course of the fieldwork. Section 9.2.4 of the Devon HET archive deposition guidelines states *There is no requirement for the archaeological contractor to prepare an archive for fieldwork projects that do not expose deposits of archaeological interest and yield little or no artefactual material. The results of the fieldwork will be held by the HER in the form of the report submitted by the archaeological contractor and the creation of an OASIS entry and uploading of the report.* A copy of the approved report will be submitted to the HER, and uploaded to OASIS to fulfil this requirement.

12.0 Bibliography

Devon and Dartmoor Historic Environment Record consulted 20-05-2014 at http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway

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Pineapple Rural Consultancy (PRC), 2012, *Design and Access Statement, Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Farm, Barton Close Farm, Georgeham, Devon EX33 1HX*. Unpublished client report.

Savage, R. D., 2014, *Land at Barton Close Farm, Georgeham, Braunton, Devon: Specification for a scheme of Archaeological Mitigation. PCAS document ref. 1232*

Websites:

http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/

www.heritagegateway.org.uk

http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html

Appendix 1: Context summary:

Trench	Context	Description
1-4	001	Topsoil. Dark to light grey silty clay, loose, with frequent very angular poorly sorted small to medium sized sandstone inclusions. Average depth 0.30m.
1-4	001	Natural geology. Pinkish red sandstone bedrock. Devonian Pickwell Down Sandstones
5	003	Same as 001
5	004	Same as 002
6	005	Same as 001
6	006	Same as 002
7	007	Same as 001
7	008	Same as 002
8	009	Same as 001
8	010	Same as 002
9	011	Same as 001
9	012	Same as 002
10	013	Same as 001
10	014	Same as 002
11	015	Same as 001
11	016	Same as 002
12	017	Same as 001
12	018	Same as 002
13	019	Same as 001
13	020	Same as 002
14	021	Same as 001
14	022	Same as 002

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

Monitoring at Barton Close Farm, Georgeham, Braunton Devon - Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd

OASIS ID - preconst3-241934

Versions

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	Alison Lane	alison@pre-construct.co.uk	8 February 2016
View 2	2	Alison Lane	alison@pre-construct.co.uk	12 February 2016
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