Cotswold Archaeology

Bommerton Farm
Molland
Devon

Archaeological Watching Brief

for
Martifer Solar Limited
on behalf of
Orta Solar

CA Project: 880058
CA Report: 160012

May 2016

Andover Cirencester Exeter Milton Keynes

Bommerton Farm
Molland
Devon

Archaeological Watching Brief

CA Project: 880058
CA Report: 160012

Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	27 April 2016	Jonathan Orellana	Laurent Coleman	Internal review		Laurent Coleman
B	25 May 2016	Jonathan Orellana	Laurent Coleman	External review	Client comments	Laurent Coleman

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SUMMARY

Project Name:	Bommerton Farm
Location:	Molland, Devon
NGR:	SS 8214 2565
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	5 October-16 December 2015
Planning Reference:	Devon County Council Application ref: 54402; PP/X1118/A/14/2211328
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon
Accession Number:	NDDMS 2013.29
Site Code:	BOM 15

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the development of a solar farm at Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon.

Features were identified in the central part of the site, and comprised four ditches and two postholes. A broken flint blade of Early Neolithic date was recovered from one of the ditches.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Between October and December 2015 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Martifer Solar on behalf of Orta Solar Limited at Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon (centred on NGR: SS 8214 2565; Fig. 1). The application (ref. 54402), for temporary use as solar farm, with static arrays of photovoltaic panels and ancillary plant, fencing and electrical equipment was refused by notice on 29 October 2014. The subsequent appeal (ref. APP/X1118/A/14/2211328; Decision date: 5 August 2014) was allowed and planning permission was granted with an appended condition (9) requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (watching brief). The condition also stated that the scheme shall include measures for the protection or avoidance of any archaeological remains during the construction and decommissioning periods.

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2014) and approved by Stephen Reed, Archaeologist, Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCCHET), the archaeological advisor to North Devon Council (NDC). Mr Reed specified (in a letter dated 31 January 2014) that areas of archaeological sensitivity (as identified by the geophysical survey) should be excluded from the development. The fieldwork also followed S*tandard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014).

The site

1.3 The site encloses an area of approximately 15.7ha, and comprises a total of five fields located on the intersection of two minor roads at Bommerton Cross. The eastern part comprises one field (Area 2), located on the south-eastern side of Bommerton Cross, bounded by minor roads to the north and west, a small stream to the south and a hedgerow to the east. The remainder of the site comprises four fields (Area 1), located to the north-west of Bommerton Cross, which are divided by embanked hedges, with the exception of the southern boundary which is bounded by a hedgerow and modern post and wire fence and a minor road beyond. The site lies on an area of high and sloping land, at 175m to 180m AOD.

1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as mudstones and siltstones of the Carboniferous Crackington Formation (BGS 2013). No superficial deposits are recorded within the proposed development site. Natural clay and mudstone were identified across the site.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A Heritage desk-based assessment was undertaken by CA (2012) to identify the nature and extent of the known and potential heritage resource within and in proximity of the site. Whilst it is not intended to fully repeat the information here, a summary of the findings is presented below.

2.2 A small sub-squared enclosure has been identified *c*. 140m to the south of the site on the slopes of a spur of land overlooking a tributary to the River Yeo. The enclosure, shown on aerial photographs as a crop mark, measuring *c*. 45m by 50m, defined by banks, is thought to date to the late prehistoric period.

2.3 The site sits within a landscape containing hill-slope enclosures of probable prehistoric date. The site itself incorporates a spur of land with a hill-slope and is located near the confluence of two streams in a very similar location to the nearby probable prehistoric enclosure, however no crop marks or earthworks, indicative of such activity, are recorded within the site.

2.4 The site appears to have been in agricultural use from at least the medieval period, and is likely to have formed part of the agricultural hinterland of the Molland estate, connected with the Bommer Farms. Therefore there is considered to be limited potential for medieval settlement remains within the site, although there is some potential for buried agricultural remains, such as infilled-ditches of former field boundaries with associated artefacts.

2.5 A geophysical survey carried out by Stratascan (2012) revealed at least four possible penannular ditches (Anomalies 8 to 11) measuring over 20m in diameter which may be characteristic of prehistoric ring ditches. Several linear anomalies identified in the south-eastern field (Anomalies 31 to 37) may relate to prehistoric or Romano-British field systems. Other linear anomalies of possible archaeological origin were identified in southern part of the north-western fields (Anomalies 12 to 15 and 17). Previous post-medieval field divisions (Anomalies 1 to 6) and agricultural activity (Anomalies 7 and 60) were also identified.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:

- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;

- at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2014). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising excavation for access roads, site compounds and service trenches. The areas where probable archaeological remains were identified by the geophysical survey were surveyed by CA and fenced with Heras panels prior to the start of construction works (Fig. 2).

4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.

4.3 The archive and artefacts from the watching brief are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon under accession number NDDMS 2013.29, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)

5.1 The natural substrate was identified at a depth of 0.25m below present ground level (bpgl) in all the observed groundworks and comprised yellow clay with occasional

outcrops of mudstone. The natural was directly sealed by ploughsoil. Archaeological features cut the natural substrate and were sealed by ploughsoil.

5.2 A north-west/south-east aligned ditch and a posthole were identified in the south-western part of Area 2 (Fig. 2, inset 1). Ditch 202/208 had a concave base and was 0.8m in width and 0.18m in depth (Fig 3, section BB). It contained a single fill, 203/207, and a proximal fragment from a broken flint blade (dating from the Mesolithic to Early Neolithic periods) was recovered from fill 203. The flint blade is probably residual within the fill of a later feature. The ditch did not correspond to any anomaly from the geophysical survey. Posthole 204, identified near the edge of Ditch 202/208, had steeply sloping sides, a concave base (Fig. 3, section AA) and was *c*. 0.25m in diameter and 0.11m in depth.

5.3 A series of three shallow parallel east/west aligned ditches, 908, 910 and 913, was identified in the south-eastern part of Area 1. Ditches 908, 910 (Fig. 3, section CC) and 913 had similar concave-based profiles. The three ditches contained single fills, 907, 909 and 912, from which no dating evidence was recovered. Ditch fill 912 was cut by posthole 906. Ditch 908 corresponded to a curvilinear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey.

6. THE FINDS

6.1 Artefactual material from the watching brief was hand-recovered from five deposits (a ditch fill and topsoil). The recovered material dates to the prehistoric and post-medieval periods. Quantities of the artefact types recorded are given in Appendix B. The pottery has been recorded according to sherd count/weight per fabric.

Pottery: Post-medieval

6.2 A total of three bodysherds was recorded. The average sherd weight of 19g is low for a site of this period and condition is poor to moderate, in terms of edge abrasion and surface preservation.

6.3 A sherd of North Devon Gravel-tempered ware was retrieved from topsoil 400 and a sherd of North Devon Gravel-free from topsoil 900. These ware types were manufactured in the Barnstable area and, when found within Devon, date to the mid 16th to late 18th centuries (Allan 1984, 129–31).

Lithics

6.4 Three worked flints were recovered. The only stratified flint is a proximal fragment from a broken blade from the fill, 203, of ditch 202. This type of debitage is typical of the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic periods, however, a single lithic item is not considered sufficient for secure dating of the deposit. Topsoil finds comprise a flake and an end-and-side scraper. The scraper has been made on a thick flake and features steep, irregular retouch across the dorsal distal edge and the distal half of the right distal edge, forming almost a near right angle. The flake cannot be dated more precisely than to the prehistoric period, however, a date in the Bronze Age is tentatively suggested for the scraper.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The archaeological features encountered during the works comprised the remains of four ditches and two postholes identified close to the south-eastern and south-western corners of Area 1 and Area 2 respectively. One of the located features had been identified by the geophysical survey.

7.2 Given its limited exposure, coupled with the paucity of artefactual material, little further comment can be made on this activity.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Orellana, Mary Lutescu-Jones, Christina Tapply, Martin Gillard, George Gandham, Paolo Guarino and Jerry Austin. The report was written by Jonathan Orellana. The finds report was written by Jacky Sommerville. The illustrations were prepared by Leo Heatley. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Jessica Cook. The project was managed for CA by Laurent Coleman.

9. REFERENCES

Allan, J. P. 1984 *Medieval & Post-medieval Finds from Exeter 1971-1980.* Exeter Archaeological Reports: **3**. Exeter. Exeter City Council and The University of Exeter

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2013 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology viewer_google/googleviewer.html. Accessed 25 June 2013

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014 *Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon: Heritage Desk-Based Assessment*, CA Typescript report No. **12161**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014 *Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Stratascan 2012 *Geophysical Survey Report: Bommerton Farm, Molland.* Typescript report: **J3236**

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth /thickness (m)	Spot date
1	100	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.3	
1	101	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
2	200	Layer		ploughsoil	Light greyish brown silty clay			0.25	
2	201	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
2	202	Cut		ditch	NW/SE aligned, shallow irregular sides, flat base	>0.85	>0.55	0.24	
2	203	Fill	202	fill of ditch	Mid grey silty clay	>0.85	>0.55	0.24	Med-ENeo
2	204	Cut		posthole	Circular plan, U-shaped profile and concave base	0.26	0.24	0.11	
2	205	Fill	204	fill of posthole	Dark greyish brown silty clay	0.26	0.24	0.11	
2	206	Context void							
2	207	Fill	208	fill of ditch	Mid greyish brown silty clay	>1	1.1	0.15	
2	208	Cut		ditch	NW/SE aligned, shallow irregular sides, flat base	>1	1.1	0.15	
2	209	Fill	210	fill of treethrow	Mid greyish brown silty clay	>2	>0.8	0.15	
2	210	Cut		treethrow	Irregular plan and profile	>2	>0.8	0.15	
3	300	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.25	
3	301	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
4	400	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.36	MC16-C18
4	401	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
5	500	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay				
5	501	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
5	502	Context void							
5	503	Fill	504	fill of ditch	Mid greyish brown silty clay	>0.4	1.2	0.3	MC16-C18
5	504	Cut		ditch	N/S aligned, moderate sloping sides, concave base	>0.4	1.2	0.3	
5	505	Fill	506	fill of ditch	Mid greyish brown silty clay	>0.4	1	0.2	
5	506	Cut		ditch	E/W aligned, moderate sloping sides, concave base	>0.4	1	0.2	
6	600	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.25	
6	601	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
7	700	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.3	
7	701	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
8	800	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.35	
8	801	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
9	900	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay				MC16-C18
9	901	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
9	902	Context void							
9	903	Context void							
9	904	Fill	905	fill of posthole	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.4	0.2	0.15	
9	905	Fill	905	fill of posthole	Light yellowish grey silty clay	0.3	0.1	0.05	
9	906	Cut		posthole	Circular plan, U-shaped profile, concave base	0.45	0.3	0.2	

9	907	Fill	908	fill of ditch	Mid greyish brown silty clay	>0.4	1.55	0.25	
9	908	Ditch		ditch	E/W aligned, shallow, flat base	>0.4	1.55	0.25	
9	909	Fill	910	fill of ditch	Mid greyish brown silty clay	>0.4	1.4	0.3	
9	910	Ditch		ditch	E/W aligned, shallow, flat base	>0.4	1.4	0.3	
9	911	Context void							
9	912	Fill	913	fill of ditch	Light greyish brown silty clay	>0.4	1	0.1	
9	913	Ditch		ditch	E/W aligned, shallow, flat base	>0.4	1	0.2	
9	914	Fill	913	fill of ditch	Dark grey silty clay	>0.4	0.6	0.1	
10	1000	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.35	
10	1001	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
11	1100	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.3	
11	1101	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
12	1200	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.25	
12	1201	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				
13	1300	Layer		ploughsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay			0.3	
13	1301	Layer		natural substrate	Light yellow clay with occasional outcrops of mudstone				

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Context	Category	Description	Fabric Code	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
203	Worked flint	Blade		1	0.6	Meso – Early Neo
400	Post-medieval pottery Worked flint	North Devon Gravel-tempered ware Flake	NDGT	1 1	19 4	MC16-C18
503	Post-medieval pottery	Glazed earthenware	GLEW	1	8	MC16-C18
900	Post-medieval pottery	North Devon Gravel-free	NDGF	1	29	MC16-C18
1600	Worked flint	End-and-side scraper		1	27	-

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the development of a temporary solar farm at Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon. Features were identified in the central part of the site, and comprised four ditches and two postholes. A broken flint blade of Early Neolithic date was recovered from one of the ditches.	
Project dates	5 October-16 December 2015	
Project type	Archaeological Watching Brief	
Previous work	Desk based Assessment CA 2012 Geophysical Survey Stratascan 2012	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon	
Study area (M^2/ha)	15.7ha	
Site co-ordinates	SS 8214 2565	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	N/A	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Laurent Coleman	
Project Supervisor	Jonathan Orellana	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon NDDMS 2013.29	Ceramics, flint
Paper	Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon NDDMS 2013.29	Trench forms, context sheets, section drawings
Digital	Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon NDDMS 2013.29	Survey data, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 *Bommerton Farm, Molland, Devon: Archaeological Watching Brief.* CA typescript report **16012**		

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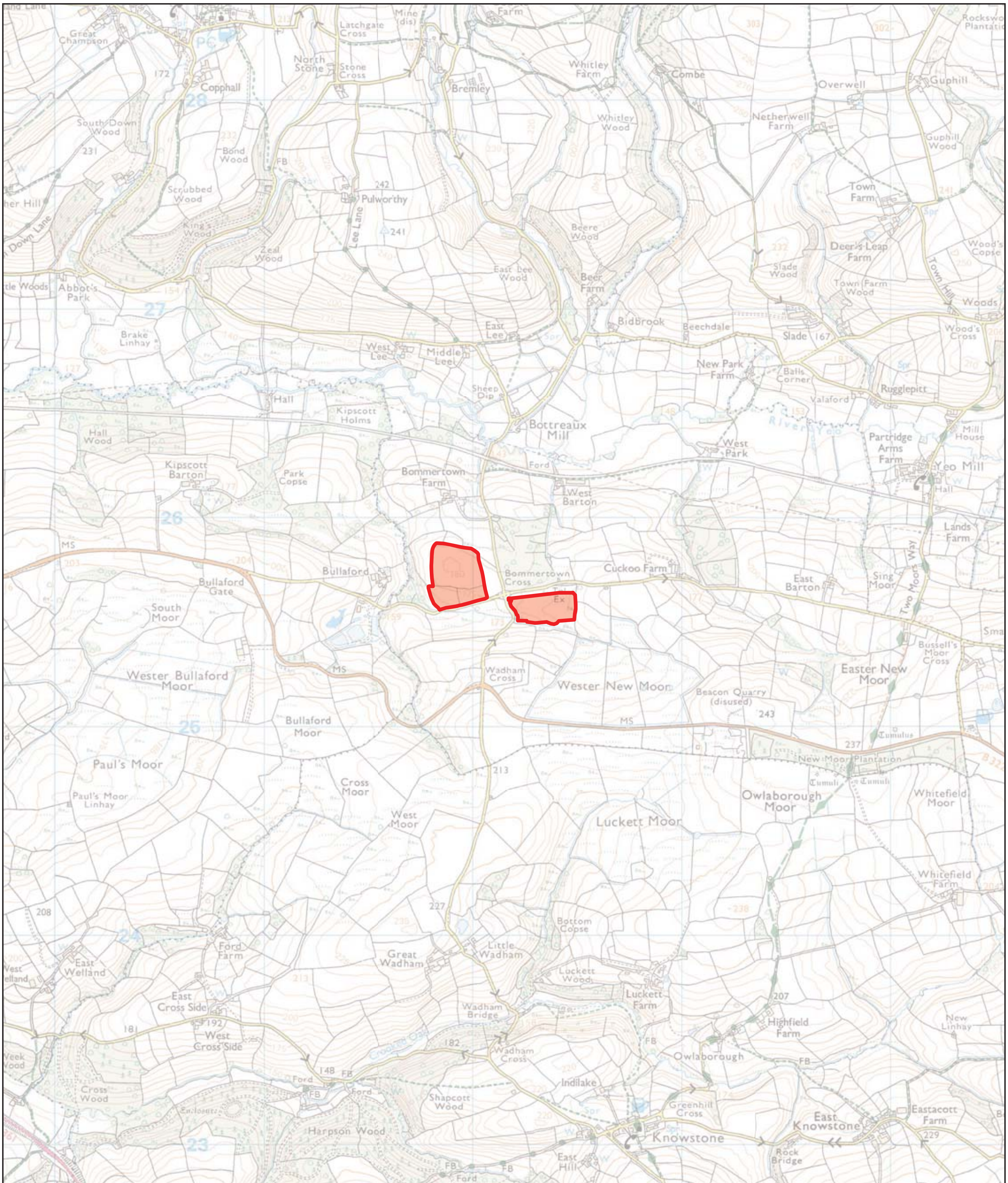

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PROJECT TITLE
Bommerton, Molland, Devon

FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan

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818 820 822 824

260

258

256

SS

AREA 1

Area 1
8

Area 2
9

Area 3
10

Area 4
12
13

Area 5
11
11b
11c

Area 6
31
32

Area 7
36

AREA 2

Inset 1

Inset 2

Bommerton Cross

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56

Inset 2

posthole 906

ditch 913

ditch 908

ditch 910

0 1:250 5m

Inset 1

ditch 202

posthole 204

ditch 208

treethrow 210

0 1:200 10m

N

site boundary

observed groundworks

fenced archaeological area

archaeological feature

archaeological intervention

field drain

treethrow

Geophysical Survey Results (Stratascan 2012)

Probable Archaeology

Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - probable cut feature of archaeological origin

Possible Archaeology

Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - possible cut feature of archaeological origin

0 100m

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PROJECT TITLE

Bommerton, Molland, Devon

FIGURE TITLE

The site, showing location of observed groundworks, archaeological features and geophysical survey results

				FIGURE NO.
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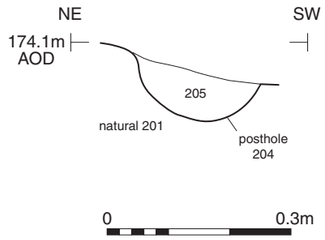
Section AA



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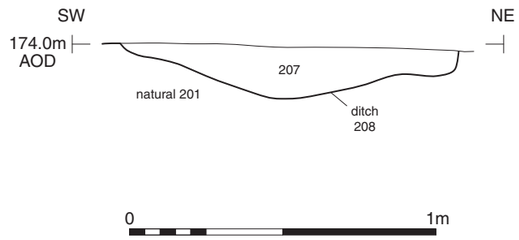

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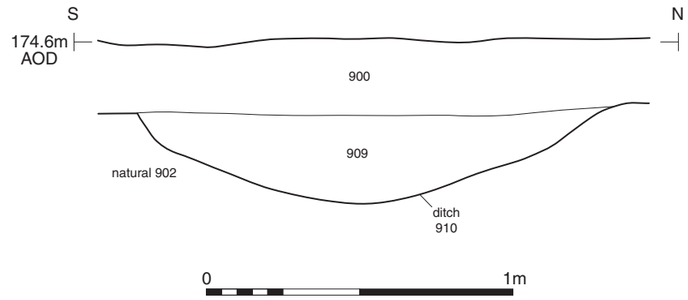

Ditch 202 and posthole 204, looking west (1m scale)

Ditch 208, looking north-west (1m scale)

Ditch 910, looking west (1m scale)

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PROJECT TITLE

Bommerton, Molland, Devon

FIGURE TITLE

Sections and photographs

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