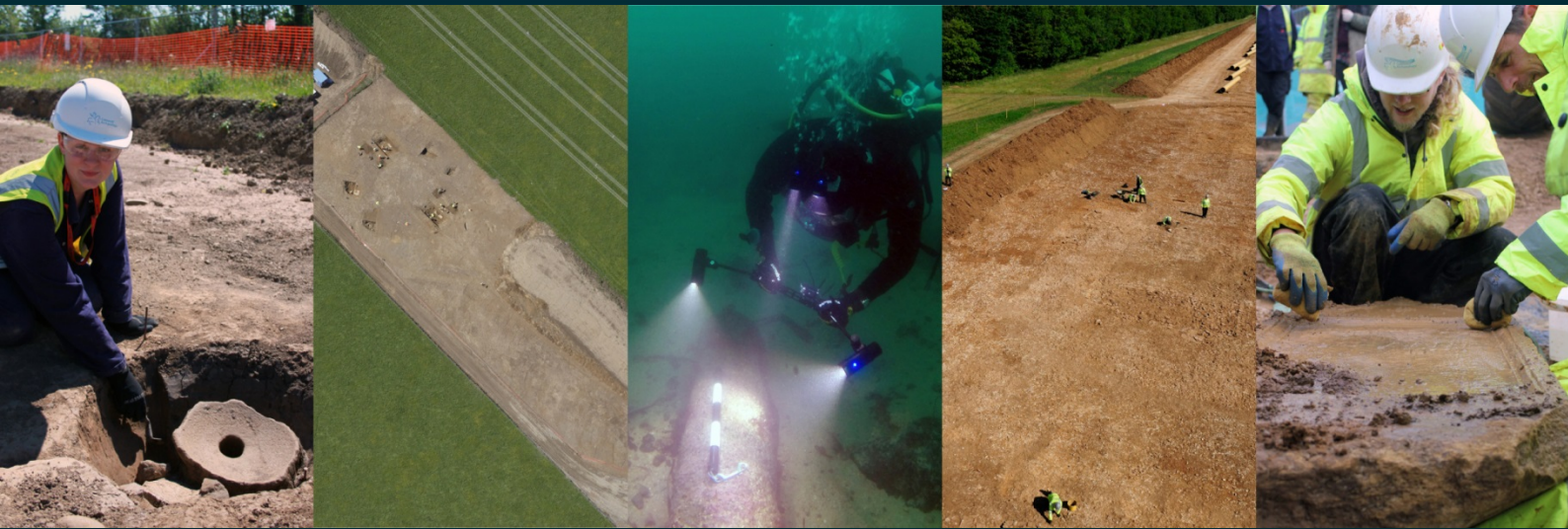


Topsham Library Nelson Close Exeter

Archaeological Evaluation



for
Kirkham Board

on behalf of
The Estuary League of
Friends

CA Project: 880115
CA Report: 16278

July 2016



Topsham Library
Nelson Close
Exeter

Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: 880115
CA Report: 16278



Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	4 July 2016	Jonathan Orellana	Derek Evans	Internal review	–	Laurent Coleman
B	15 July 2016	Jonathan Orellana	Derek Evans	Curator review	Revisions to Sections 2 and 7 and creation of Fig. 5 in line with Curator comments	Laurent Coleman

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Topsham Library
Location:	Nelson Close, Exeter
NGR:	SX 9639 8838
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	23–24 May 2016
Planning Reference:	Exeter City Council 14/0290/03
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, and the Archaeological Data Service (ADS)
Accession Number:	RAMM: 16/16
Site Code:	TLE 16

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in May 2016 within the grounds of Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter. A total of five trenches was excavated.

The evaluation recorded two Roman ditches, a potential well of probable Roman date, and a post-medieval ditch.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2016, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation within the grounds of Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter (centred on NGR: SX 9639 8838; Fig. 1). This evaluation was commissioned by Kirkham Board, acting on behalf of the Estuary League of Friends.

1.2 Exeter City Council have granted planning permission (ref: 14/0290/03) for the demolition of the existing library building and the erection of a new community hub facilities building. Condition 5 of this planning permission states that:

No development related works shall take place within the site until a written scheme of archaeological work has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall include on-site work, and off-site work such as the analysis, publication, and archiving of the results, together with a timetable for completion of each element. All works shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved scheme, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

1.3 The scope of the evaluation was developed in discussions with Andrew Pye, the Exeter City Council Principal Project Manager (Heritage) (ECCPPMH). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a subsequent detailed Written Scheme of Archaeological Work (WSAW) produced by CA (2016) and approved by the ECCPPMH. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014). It was monitored by the ECCPPMH, including a site visit on 24 May 2016.

The site

1.4 The proposed development site encloses c. 0.1 ha and is currently occupied by the later 20th-century library building and surrounding areas of hardstanding (access road and car parking) and grassland/soft landscaping. The site is bordered by Orchard Way to the south-west, Nelson Close to the south-east, and on all other sides by residential plots fronting onto Orchard Way and Topsham High Street.

- 1.5 The solid geology of the site is recorded as Dawlish Formation sandstone of the Permian Period, overlain by River Terrace sands and gravels (BGS 2016). These River Terrace deposits were encountered in all of the evaluation trenches.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The following section is based on advice given by the ECCPPMH, supplemented by a search of the Devon and Dartmoor Historic Environment Record (HER). Codes given in parentheses are HER references.

- 2.2 Archaeological remains of Roman date have been recorded previously in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site, including a small fort and later cemetery investigated on the site of the Topsham School and believed to have extended north-westwards of the school site (MDV67998; to the south-west of the library site; Fig. 5) and a corn drying kiln and other Roman remains at Orchard Way, to the west of the library (MDV65498; Fig. 5). No Roman remains were found under the recent Peel Close development (north-west of the library site), indicating that the library may lie at the margin of the Roman activity.

- 2.3 Thomas Budgen's map of Exeter (dated 1801) shows a series of plots to the rear of the buildings fronting Topsham High Street. It is possible that these plots had medieval antecedents. The rear boundary of these plots is on the approximate line of modern-day Orchard Way; the library site is therefore within the rear end of one of the plots.

- 2.4 The tithe map for Topsham (c. 1842) and the late 19th/early 20th century Ordnance Survey mapping of the area show long, thin plots running from the rear of the buildings fronting Topsham High Street. Rather than stopping on the future line of Orchard Way, however, these plots run all the way down to the river floodplain (the approximate line of modern-day Ferry Road).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The aim of this evaluation was to provide more information about the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and significance. This data will be used

to determine the necessity for, and nature of, any further archaeological works which may be required at the site in fulfilment of the planning condition. The decision on any further works will be made in consultation with the ECCPPMH.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of five trenches in the locations shown on Figure 2. The trenches varied in length from 3m to 10m; all trenches were 2m wide. The trenches were situated to provide a representative sample of that area of the site which is external to the current library footprint and areas of hardstanding. The locations of Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5 were adjusted slightly from those specified in the WSAW (CA 2016) in order to avoid buried services.
- 4.2 All trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 4: Survey Manual*. All trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate. Where archaeological deposits were encountered, they were excavated by hand in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. No deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.4 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, the artefacts will be deposited with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, under accession number reference RAMM: 16/16. Any artefacts that the RAMM do not wish to retain will be offered to the landowner; if not claimed by the landowner, they will be discarded or added to teaching/reference collections.

- 4.5 The digital archive and scanned images of the primary site archive will be submitted to the appropriate Trusted Digital Repository (the Archaeological Data Service (ADS)).
- 4.6 A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in Appendix A. A detailed account of the artefactual material recovered from the site is given in Section 6 and Appendix B. Figure 2 shows the recorded archaeological features in plan; Figure 3 shows the recorded archaeological features in relation to the proposed development.

General stratigraphy

- 5.2 The natural substrate was identified in all trenches at a depth of 0.85m–1.15m below the present ground level, and comprised sand with occasional patches of gravel. The natural substrate was sealed in all trenches by 0.25m–0.52m of silty sand subsoil; this was generally covered by 0.3m–0.5m of silty sand made ground, which was sealed in turn by 0.1m–0.3m of modern topsoil.
- 5.3 Archaeological features were recorded in Trenches 1, 3 and 5. These features were all cut into the natural substrate and sealed by the subsoil.

Trench 1

- 5.4 North-east/south-west-aligned ditch 106 (Fig. 4, Sec. BB) was 0.65m wide and 0.33m deep. It contained a single silty sand fill, 107, from which two sherds of Roman pottery were recovered.
- 5.5 North-east/south-west-aligned ditch 104 (Fig. 4, Sec. AA) terminated within the trench. It measured 0.3m in width and 0.05m in depth. Two sherds of medieval pottery and a fragment of post-medieval glass were recovered from its single fill, 105.

Trench 3

- 5.6 North-west/south-east-aligned ditch 304 (Fig. 4, Sec. CC) was 0.42m wide and 0.2m deep. It contained a single silty sand fill, 305, which yielded two prehistoric worked flints and a sherd of Roman pottery.

Trench 5

- 5.7 Circular feature 505 (Fig. 4, Sec. DD) was partially exposed within the western end of the trench. This feature was not fully excavated due to the depth of the trench, but was at least 0.51m deep, with steep sides. Its silty sand upper fill, 506, contained four sherds of Roman pottery, one sherd of medieval pottery and an iron nail. The shape, depth and steep sides of this feature suggest that it is a well.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 Artefactual material was recovered from five deposits. The recovered material dates to the prehistoric, Roman, medieval 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. Roman fabric codes are, where possible, equated to the type series for Exeter as defined by Holbrook and Bidwell (1991); where applicable, National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes are also given (Tomber and Dore 1998). Medieval fabric codes correspond to the type series for Exeter defined by Allan (1984).

Pottery: Roman

- 6.2 A total of seven sherds (70g) of Roman pottery was recovered from three deposits. A moderate degree of fragmentation is suggested by the average sherd weight (10g). In terms of edge abrasion and surface preservation, condition ranges from poor (in ditch fill 305) to good (in well fill 506).
- 6.3 South-East Dorset black-burnished ware (F31) is represented by a base sherd from fill 506 of well 505 and a heavily abraded bodysherd from fill 305 of ditch 304. A rimsherd from a plain rim dish in South-West Dorset black-burnished ware was also recovered from well fill 506. This fabric/form combination is dateable to the late 2nd

to 3rd centuries AD (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 99). Well fill 506 also produced a bodysherd from an indented beaker in New Forest colour-coated ware (NFO CC), which was manufactured at a number of kilns in the New Forest during the late 3rd to 4th centuries AD (Fulford 1975).

- 6.4 A sherd of white-slipped flagon fabric (F451), dateable to the mid 1st to early 2nd centuries AD (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, 143), was retrieved from fill 107 of ditch 106. Single bodysherds recovered in fine (OXF) and sandy (OXS) oxidised fabrics are broadly dateable to the Roman period.

Pottery: medieval

- 6.5 Three sherds (7g) of medieval pottery were recovered. This material is highly fragmented, with an average sherd weight of 2g, and is in a moderately-abraded condition. The sherd from well fill 506 has also been burnt.
- 6.6 The two unfeatured bodysherds from fill 105 of ditch 104 appear to be residual, occurring with vessel glass of post-medieval type. They are identifiable as chert-tempered ware (F20) which is commonly found across Devon and south Somerset. The sherds are oxidised, a possible indication of dating in the 11th/12th century range (Allan 1984, 4). A bodysherd in a fine, micaceous, sandy fabric with external glaze was recovered from fill 506 of well 505. The fabric accords most closely with Allan's F45, which is a fine, sandy jug fabric in use during the 13th century (ibid., 7).

Pottery: post-medieval

- 6.7 Three sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from subsoil 102. The degree of fragmentation is low (average sherd weight 32g) and condition is otherwise good to very good.
- 6.8 North Devon gravel-free ware (NDF), which dates to the 16th to 18th centuries in Exeter (ibid.), is represented by a bodysherd, with handle attached, possibly from a crock or chamber pot. A rimsherd from a bowl in North Devon gravel-tempered ware (NDG), is dateable to the mid 16th to 18th centuries (ibid., 131). The same dating applies to a bodysherd of glazed earthenware (GRE).

Lithics

- 6.9 Two worked flints, in edge-damaged condition, were retrieved from fill 305 of ditch 304. They comprise a lateral fragment from a broken flake and a fragment of a multi-platform core which had been used to produce flakes. Both are broadly prehistoric in date.

Metal objects

- 6.10 Single, moderately-corroded iron nails of uncertain date were recovered from subsoil 102 and fill 506 of well 505.

Glass

- 6.11 Subsoil 102 and fill 105 of ditch 104 each produced single green-coloured glass fragments from post-medieval wine/spirits bottles.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 Two prehistoric worked flints were recovered as residual artefacts in Roman ditch 304 (T3). These artefacts provide evidence for low-level prehistoric activity at the site.
- 7.2 The evaluation identified two Roman ditches: ditch 106 (T1) and ditch 304 (T2). Probable well 505 (T5) is also likely to be Roman in date. While the well contained a sherd of medieval pottery (and may therefore represent activity within the rear of the presumed medieval tenements fronting Topsham High Street), the single abraded medieval sherd was recovered from high up within the fill of the feature; this fill also contained four sherds of Roman pottery lower down. It is therefore considered probable that the medieval material is intrusive and the well is Roman in date, although a medieval date for this feature cannot be discounted entirely.
- 7.3 The known Roman fort at the site of the Topsham School (HER ref: MDV67998; to the immediate south-west of the library site) was active in the early Roman period only (1st century AD). Where closely dateable, the Roman pottery recovered during the evaluation ranged in date from mid-1st/early 2nd century AD to late 3rd/4th

century AD. The Roman remains at the evaluation site therefore largely post-date the fort and are presumably part of later civilian activity along the line of the Roman precursor to Exeter Road.

- 7.4 A post-medieval ditch (104; T1) was also recorded. This shallow ditch does not correspond clearly with any boundaries or features shown on 19th/early 20th-century cartographic sources.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Orellana, assisted by Victoria Parsons. This report was written by Jonathan Orellana. The finds report was written by Jacky Sommerville. The report illustrations were prepared by Sam O'Leary. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Jessica Cook. The project was managed for CA by Derek Evans.

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) 2016 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>
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Fulford, M. G. 1975 *New Forest Roman Pottery: Manufacture and distribution, with a corpus of the pottery types* BAR British Series **17**

Holbrook, N. and Bidwell, P. T. 1991 *Roman Finds from Exeter* Exeter Archaeological Reports **4**. Exeter: Exeter City Council and the University of Exeter

Tomber R. and Dore J. 1998 *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: A Handbook* MOLaS Monograph **2**

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

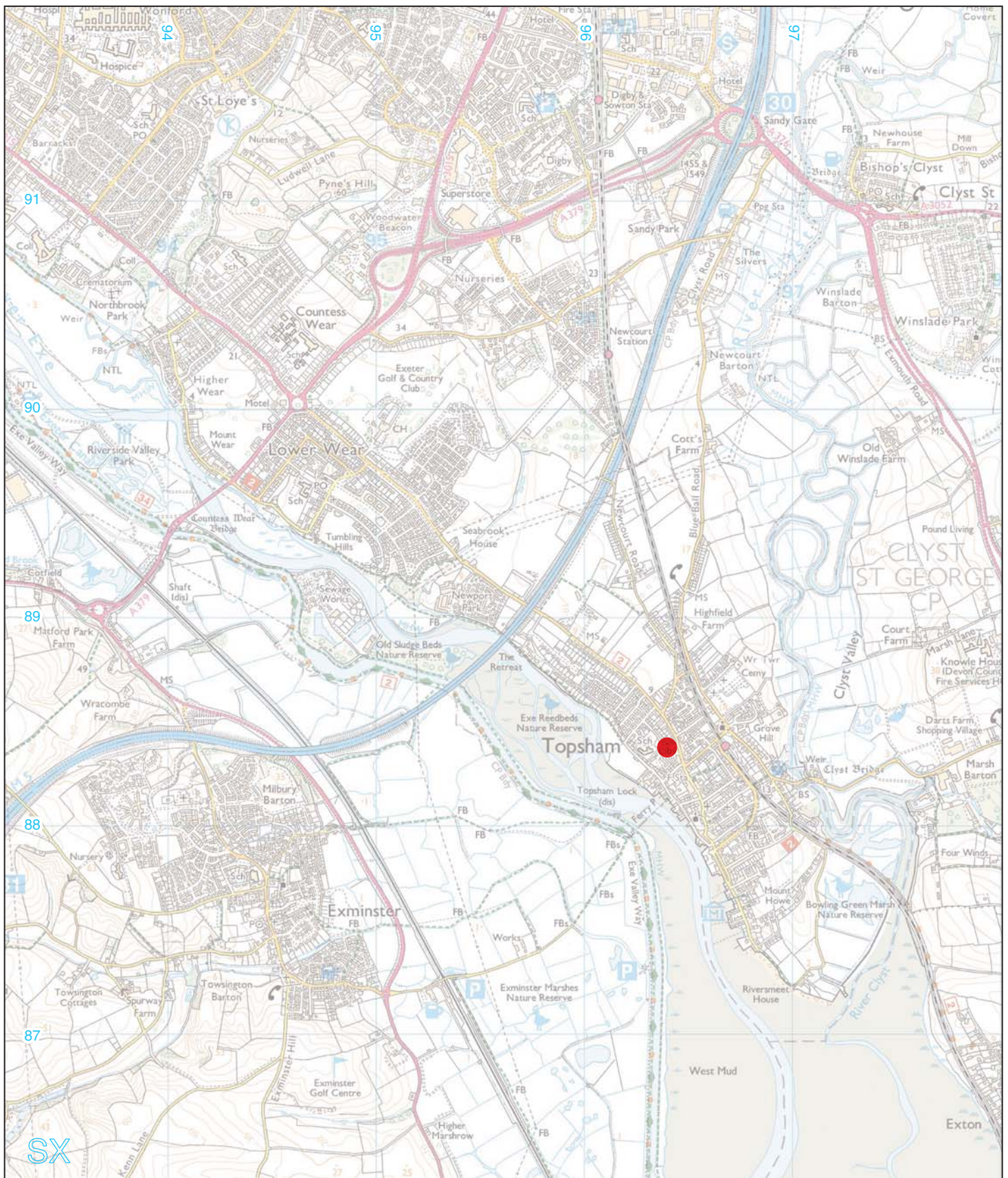
Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		topsoil	mid brownish grey sandy silt			0.3	
1	101	Layer		made ground	dark greyish brown silty sand			0.3	
1	102	Layer		subsoil	light reddish brown silty sand			0.4	C17-C18
1	103	Layer		natural substrate	light pinkish orange sand with patches of gravel				
1	104	Cut		gully	NE/SW aligned, moderate sloping sides and flat base	>0.86	0.3	0.05	
1	105	Fill	104	fill of gully	light brownish red silty sand		0.3	0.05	Post-med
1	106	Cut		ditch	NE/SW aligned, step sides and concave base	>1	0.65	0.33	
1	107	Fill	106	fill of ditch	mid greyish brown silty sand		0.65	0.33	Roman
2	200	Layer		topsoil	light greyish brown sandy silt			0.2	
2	201	Layer		made ground	dark brown sandy clay with modern material			0.3	
2	202	Layer		buried topsoil	light brown sandy clay			0.1	
2	203	Layer		subsoil	light pinkish brown sandy clay			0.25	
2	204	Layer		natural substrate	gravel within a pinkish sand matrix				
3	300	Layer		topsoil	mid greyish brown sandy silt			0.25	
3	301	Layer		made ground	mid orangey sand and gravel			0.35	
3	302	Layer		subsoil	light pinkish brown sandy clay			0.4	
3	303	Layer		natural substrate	light pinkish orange sand with patches of gravel				
3	304	Cut		gully	NW/SE aligned, moderate sloping sides and concave base	>0.8	0.42	0.2	
3	305	Fill	304	fill of gully	Light pinkish brown silty sand		0.42	0.2	Roman
4	400	Layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown sandy silt			0.15	
4	401	Layer		made ground	orangey gravel			0.2	
4	402	Layer		made ground	dark greyish brown sandy clay			0.3	
4	403	Layer		subsoil	mid orangey brown sandy clay		>2	0.5	
4	404	Layer		natural substrate	light pinkish orange sand with patches of gravel				
5	500	Layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown sandy silt			0.1	
5	501	Layer		made ground	orangey red gravel			0.15	
5	502	Layer		made ground	dark brown silty clay			0.25	
5	503	Layer		subsoil	light reddish brown silty sand			0.52	
5	504	Layer		natural substrate	light pinkish orange sand				
5	505	Cut		?well	circular in plan, steep sides, base not reached	>0.7	>0.65	>0.51	
5	506	Fill	505	fill of ?well	mid greyish brown silty sand		>0.65	>0.51	?Roman/ ?C13

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Context	Category	Description	Fabric Code/ NRFRC*	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
102	Post-medieval pottery	North Devon gravel-tempered ware	NDG	1	42	C17-C18
	Post-medieval pottery	North Devon gravel-free ware	NDF	1	52	
	Post-medieval pottery	Glazed earthenware	GRE	1	1	
	Post-medieval glass Iron	Bottle Nail		1 1	17 71	
105	Medieval pottery	Chert-tempered ware	20	2	4	Post-medieval
	Post-medieval glass	Bottle		1	11	
107	Roman pottery	White-slipped flagon fabric	451	1	4	RB
	Roman pottery	Fine oxidised fabric	OXF	1	<1	
305	Roman pottery	South-East Dorset Black-burnished ware	31	1	1	RB
	Worked flint	Flake, core fragment		2	8	
	Industrial waste			2	3	
506	Roman pottery	South-East Dorset Black-burnished ware	31	1	6	C13
	Roman pottery	South-West Dorset Black-burnished ware	40	1	16	
	Roman pottery	New Forest Colour-coated ware	NFO CC	1	1	
	Roman pottery	Sandy oxidised fabric	OX5	1	42	
	Medieval pottery	Jug fabric	45	1	3	
	Iron	Nail		1	14	

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter	
Short description	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in May 2016 within the grounds of Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter. Five trenches were excavated. The evaluation recorded two Roman ditches, a potential well of probable Roman date, and a post-medieval ditch.	
Project dates	23–24 May 2016	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter	
Study area (M ² /ha)	c. 0.1 ha	
Site co-ordinates	SX 9639 8838	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Exeter City Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Derek Evans	
Project Supervisor	Jonathan Orellana	
MONUMENT TYPE		
	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	Royal Albert Memorial Museum RAMM: 16/16	Ceramics, glass, flint
Paper	Royal Albert Memorial Museum RAMM: 16/16	Site recording forms
Digital	Archaeology Data Service (ADS)	Survey data, digital photos, scanned images of site archive
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2016 <i>Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter: Archaeological Evaluation</i> CA typescript report 16278		



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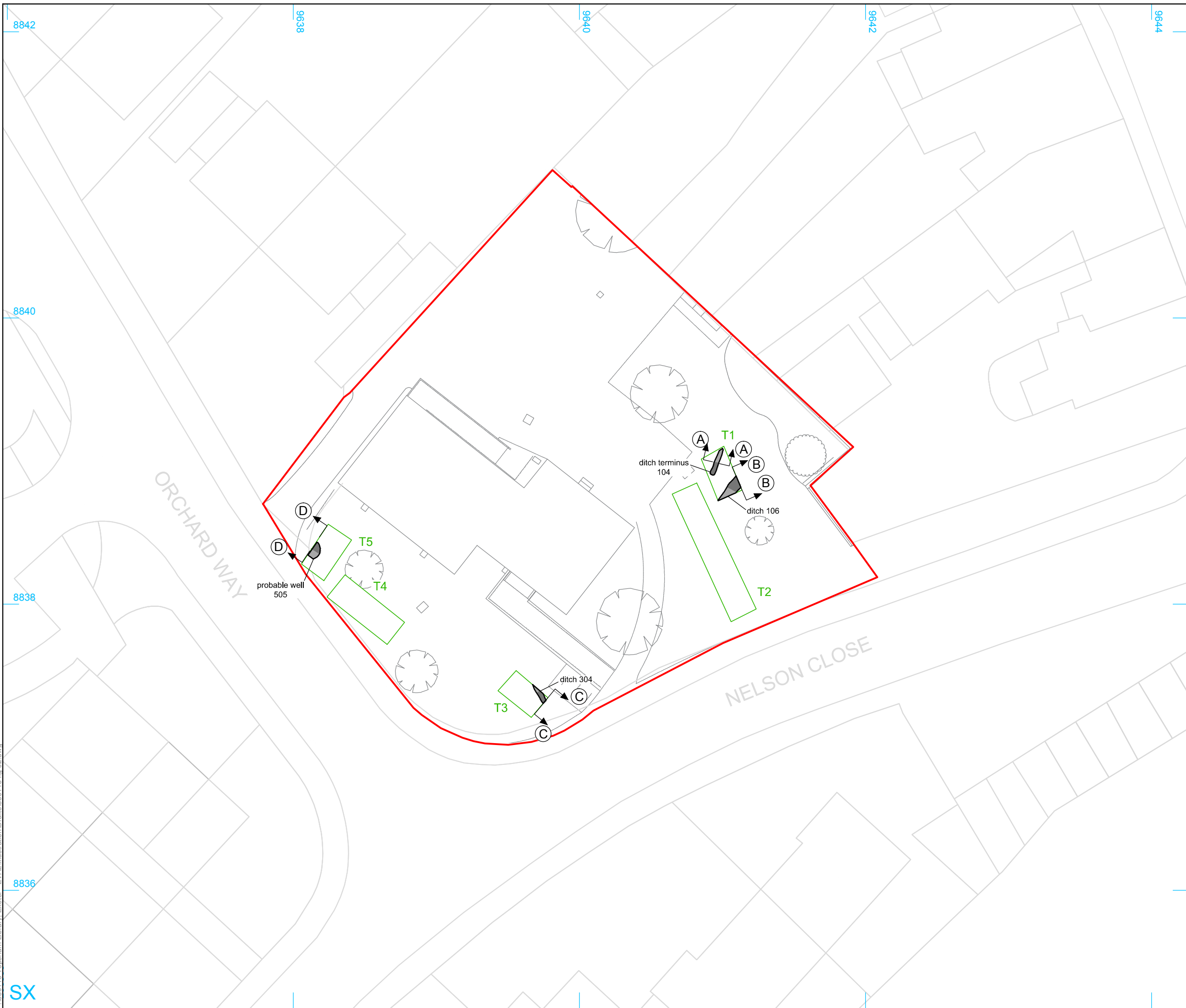
PROJECT TITLE
 Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

0 1km

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CHECKED BY	LM	DATE	01/06/2016		
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A4	1:25,000		



- ▭ site boundary
- ▭ evaluation trench
- archaeological feature
- excavated interventions
- A B section location



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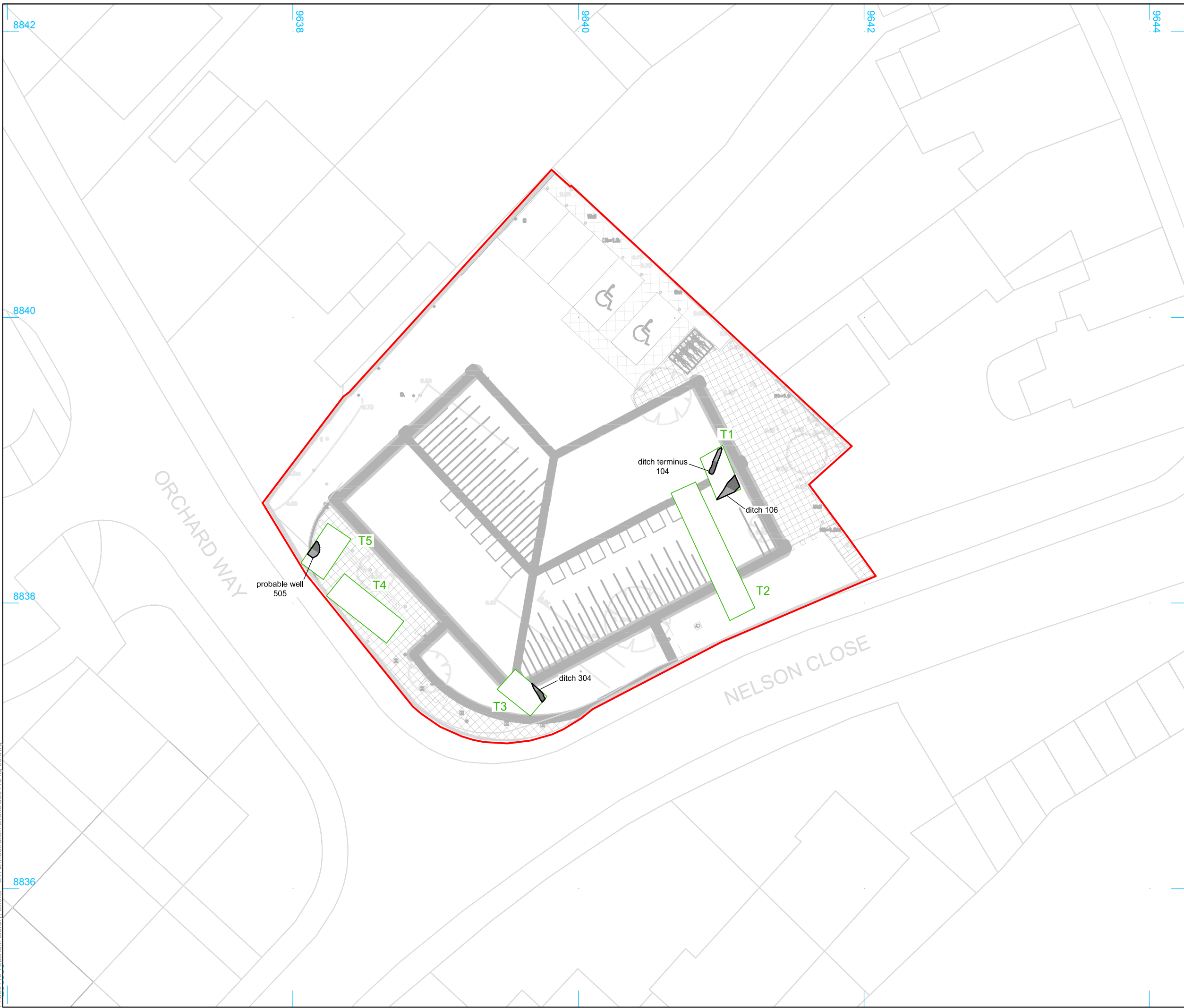
PROJECT TITLE
 Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter

FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan, showing archaeological features

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CHECKED BY	LM	DATE	01/06/2016	2
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A3	1:250	

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SX



- ▭ site boundary
- ▭ evaluation trench
- ▭ archaeological feature
- ▭ excavated interventions
- ▭ proposed development



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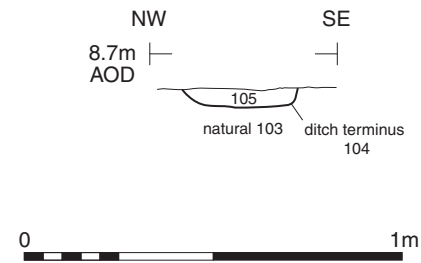
PROJECT TITLE
 Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter

FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan, showing archaeological features and proposed development

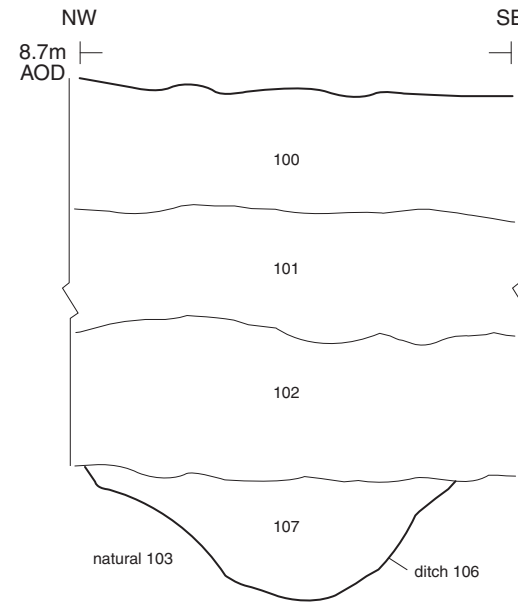
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APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A3	1:250	

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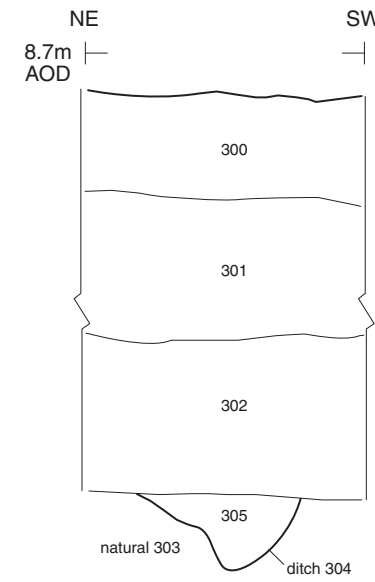
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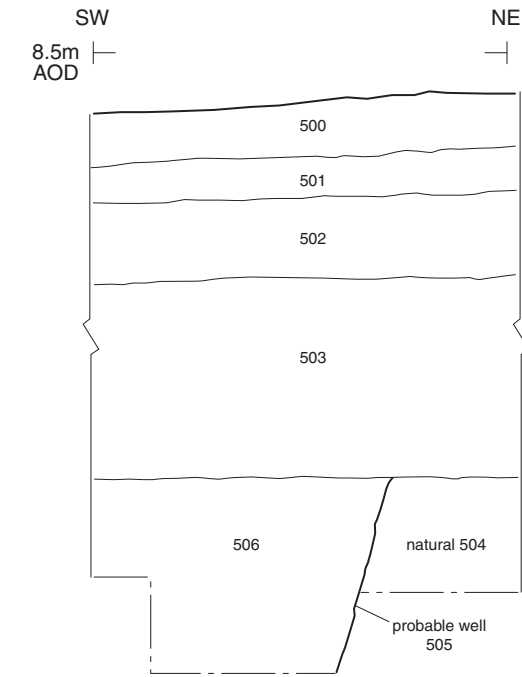
Section BB



Section CC



Section DD



Ditch terminus 104 looking north-east (0.2m scale)



Ditch 106 looking south-west (0.4m scale)



Ditch 304 looking south-east (0.3m scale)



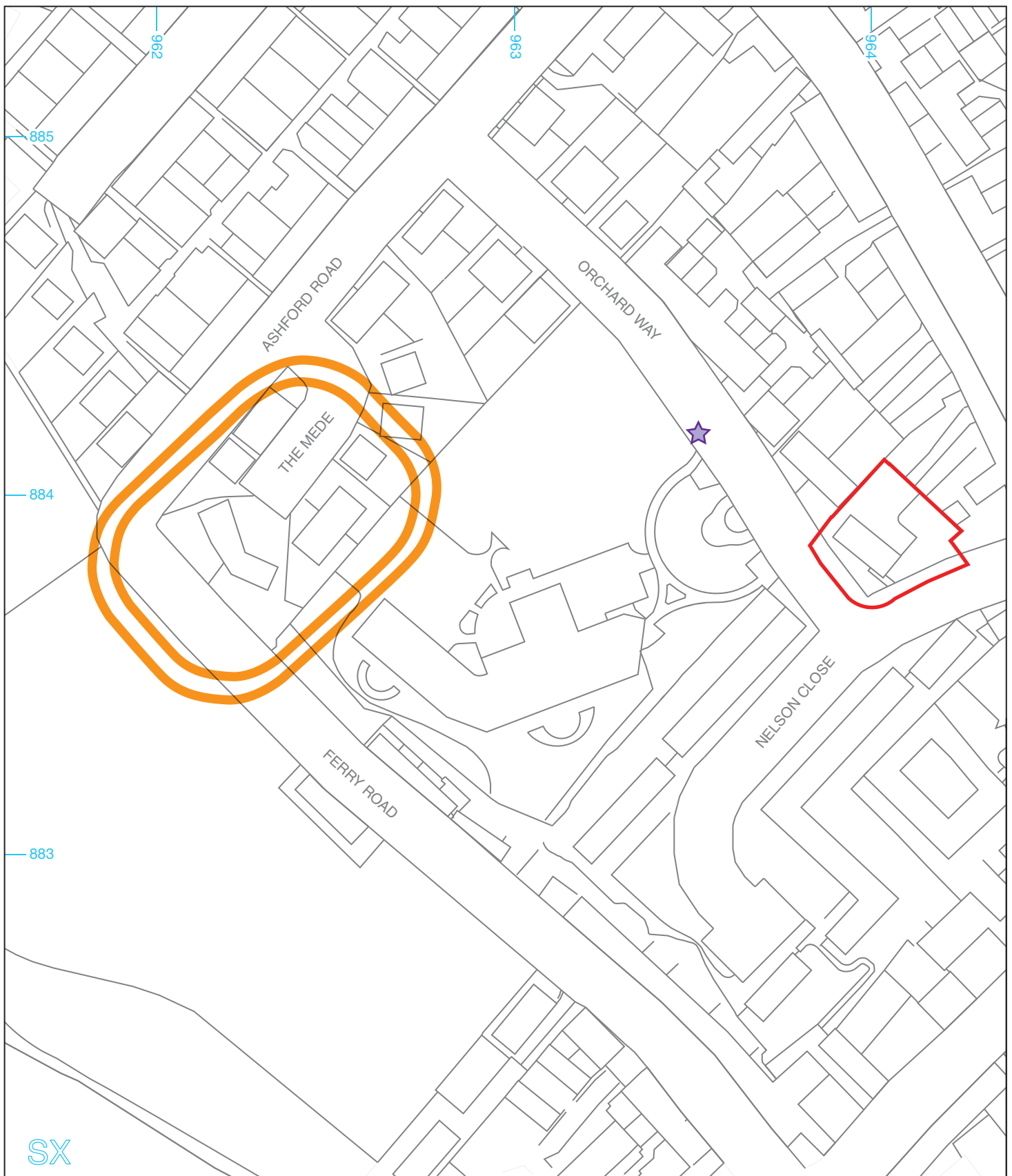
Probable well 505 looking north-west (1m scale)





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PROJECT TITLE
 Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter

FIGURE TITLE
Trenches 1, 3 and 5: sections and photographs

DRAWN BY	SO	PROJECT NO.	880115	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	LM	DATE	01/06/2016	4
APPROVED BY	DE	SCALE@A3	1:20	



-  Site boundary
-  Roman corn-drier site
-  Approximate / projected location of Roman fort



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PROJECT TITLE

Topsham Library, Nelson Close, Exeter

FIGURE TITLE

Roman heritage assets in the vicinity of Topsham Library



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