

# Lower Farm, Hilton, Dorset:

Results of an earthwork survey and archaeological trench evaluation

NGR 378401 102897

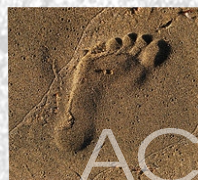
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Prepared by:  
Dan Carter

On behalf of:  
Mr E. Hiscock

Document No: ACW1091/2/0

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AC archaeology

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## SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation, consisting of an earthwork survey, followed by two machine-excavated trenches, was undertaken by AC archaeology on land at Lower Farm, Hilton, Dorset (NGR: 378401 102897) during March 2018. The investigations were undertaken in support of a planning application for the construction of a new farmhouse and garage on the site. The site lies on an area described by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments as containing earthworks, possibly associated with deserted (or shrunken) medieval settlement at Hilton. The survey revealed no evidence for earthworks surviving anywhere in the vicinity. Similarly, no archaeological features were revealed in either of the two trenches. Sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from overburden.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an earthwork survey and archaeological trench evaluation on land at Lower Farm, Hilton, Dorset (NGR: 378401 102897). The evaluation was commissioned by Mr. E Hiscock, in support of a planning application following consultation by the local planning authority with the Dorset County Council Senior Archaeologist (DCCSA).
- 1.2 The proposed development is located on the eastern side of the village of Hilton and is immediately to the west of an extensive complex of modern farm buildings, including a dairy unit, barns and a workshop. The new farmhouse will be tied to these farm buildings. The main part of the village of Hilton is situated immediately to the west. The development area itself is currently under pasture.
- 1.3 The solid geology across the site consists of the Zig Zag Chalk Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 94 to 101 million years ago (BGS online). There are no recorded details regarding superficial deposits.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that the application area may lie within an area of earthworks that could represent an abandoned part of the medieval village of Hilton. There is reference in the HER to settlement remains covering 7 acres on the south-east side of Hilton. The remains are described (RCHM 1970, 113) as within an area that is bounded to the north-east and south-east by a bank 2-3ft high and 20ft wide. The earthworks within this area consist of 'closes' of various sizes and shapes, and within them are platforms of probable houses. While recent Lidar data confirms the presence of

earthworks, it remains unclear if the proposed development area is within this area of medieval settlement.

- 2.2 Approximately 200m to the north-east of the application area are a series of lynchets that are present on the slopes on the rising land to the rear of the current farm buildings. The area is known as Thomas's Hill and the lynchets are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (list entry number 1002407). These extensive earthworks are of probable medieval, or possibly prehistoric date, and if of a later date, could relate to the nearby settlement in Hilton.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The evaluation was undertaken to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present on the site, as dictated by current best practice.

### 4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The investigation was undertaken in advance of the determination of a planning application, following advice from the DCCSA, and in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Clark 2018). The written scheme was approved, prior to commencement, by the DCCSA.
- 4.2 The investigations comprised a first phase of earthworks survey by Mark Corney and Dan Carter; followed by the excavation of two trenches, totalling 30m in length, each 15m in length and 1.8m wide. The trenches were positioned broadly on the footprint of the proposed farmhouse and garage (Fig. 1). All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.
- 4.3 All soil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. Topsoil was removed by a tracked 13t excavator, using a wide toothless bucket, and stored alongside each trench, separated from any subsoil as necessary. Mechanical excavation ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural geology was exposed.
- 4.4 All trenches were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.5 The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW1091 and is currently stored at the offices of AC archaeology (Wiltshire).

### 5. RESULTS

#### Earthwork survey

- 5.1 A walkover of the field identified no surface evidence for earthworks, although a slightly domed area might indicate that dumping has occurred since the 1970 survey by the RCHM.

## Trial trenches

### Trench 1 (plates 1 & 2)

- 5.2 This trench was aligned approximately north-east to south-west and was positioned on ground sloping down to the south and south-west. A maximum depth of 600mm was excavated through topsoil and subsoil before revealing natural substratum. No archaeological deposits were observed in this trench. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Trench 1 general depositional sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
100	0 – 250mm	Dark grey-blackish brown silty clay. Soft and friable with occasional chalk flecks / balls	Turf and topsoil
101	250 – 450mm	Light grey-brown silty clay. Soft with occasional chalk flecks	Subsoil
102	450mm +	Off white weathered chalk	Natural geology

### Trench 2 (plates 1, 3 & 4)

- 5.3 This trench was aligned north-east to south-west and was positioned on ground sloping down to the south-west. A maximum depth of 700mm was excavated through topsoil before revealing natural substratum. No archaeological deposits were observed in this trench. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Trench 2 general depositional sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
200	0 – 500mm	Mid greyish black silty clay. Soft and friable with sparse sub-rounded chalk (<40mm) and sub-angular flint (<50mm). Darker in top 200mm probably a result of moisture and / or the result of ploughing	Turf and topsoil
201	500 – 600mm	Mid yellow-brown silty clay. Friable with rare sub-angular flint (<40mm). Located in north-east extent of trench ( for c. 4-5m)	Colluvium (hillwash)
202	500 - 600mm +	Off white weathered chalk and calcareous clay	Natural geology

## 6. FINDS by Dan Carter with a contribution by Angi Britten

### Summary

- 6.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the investigations, including a small group of medieval domestic pottery recovered from various soil horizons. The sherds are relatively abraded and have likely been affected by past ploughing. The increased concentration of pottery, alongside other find types, is noticeably higher from trench 1, than of trench 2.



## Introduction and methodology

- 6.2** All finds recovered on site have been retained and cleaned. Finds have been marked and packaged using the relevant AC archaeology Ltd. site code. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context and all data entered into a digital spreadsheet. The finds comprise ceramics and shell and summarised by context in Table 3.
- 6.3** The assemblage was scanned by material type and by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. Spot dates have been recorded for dateable material such as pottery, where applicable.

### Medieval pottery

- 6.4** Four coarseware sherds, derived from wheel-thrown vessels, were recovered from context 100. One of these possess a lead glaze on the exterior surface, another is part of rim from a jar of probable 14-15th century date. An additional sherd, bringing the total pottery sherds recovered from this context to five, derives from a hand-made vessel and is probably 13-14th century. All sherds have a sandy fabric with quartz inclusions.
- 6.5** Two pottery sherds in a hand-made coarseware, with flint and quartz inclusions, were recovered from context 101; these are probably 12th-14th century in date.
- 6.6** Finally, three coarseware sherds with quartz inclusions were recovered from context 200. An additional sherd, possibly deriving from a fineware vessel, possess a yellow/green lead glaze on the external surface, and occurs in a pale-fired fabric. Such pottery is known to originate across a wide geographical area running from Wareham and Poole in South East Dorset, up to Laverstock, Wiltshire, in the north. As such, this small fragment, with its quartz and ferruginous inclusions, has potential to be a product of one of the elusive East Dorset medieval pottery kilns. The sherds, from this context are thought to range in date from the 13th- 15th century.

Context	Material	Count	Weight
100	Oyster Shell	2	21
100	Medieval Pottery	5	24
100	Fired clay/CBM?	2	18
100	Slate	1	2
101	Medieval Pottery	2	25
200	Medieval Pottery	4	13

**Table 3: Quantification of all finds**

### **Fired clay/ceramic building material**

- 6.7** Two fragments of worn and highly friable ceramic were recovered from context 100. Collectively, these weigh 19g, and contain common small sub angular quartz inclusions, these could derive from a poorly fired ceramic object such as a medieval tile and are relatively amorphous in shape.

### **Oyster shell by Angi Britten**

- 6.8** Two fragments of oyster shell were recovered from the investigations, these comprise one relatively unabraded left hand valve, weighing 14 grams and one well-worn right-hand valve fragment.

## **7. COMMENT**

- 7.1** The absence of any medieval earthworks in the field is best explained by the effects of modern agricultural practices over the past 48 years since the publication of the Royal Commission survey in 1970.
- 7.2** The absence of subsoil features in the trenches indicates that there is no evidence for medieval settlement remains in the vicinity of the proposed development.

## **8. REFERENCES**

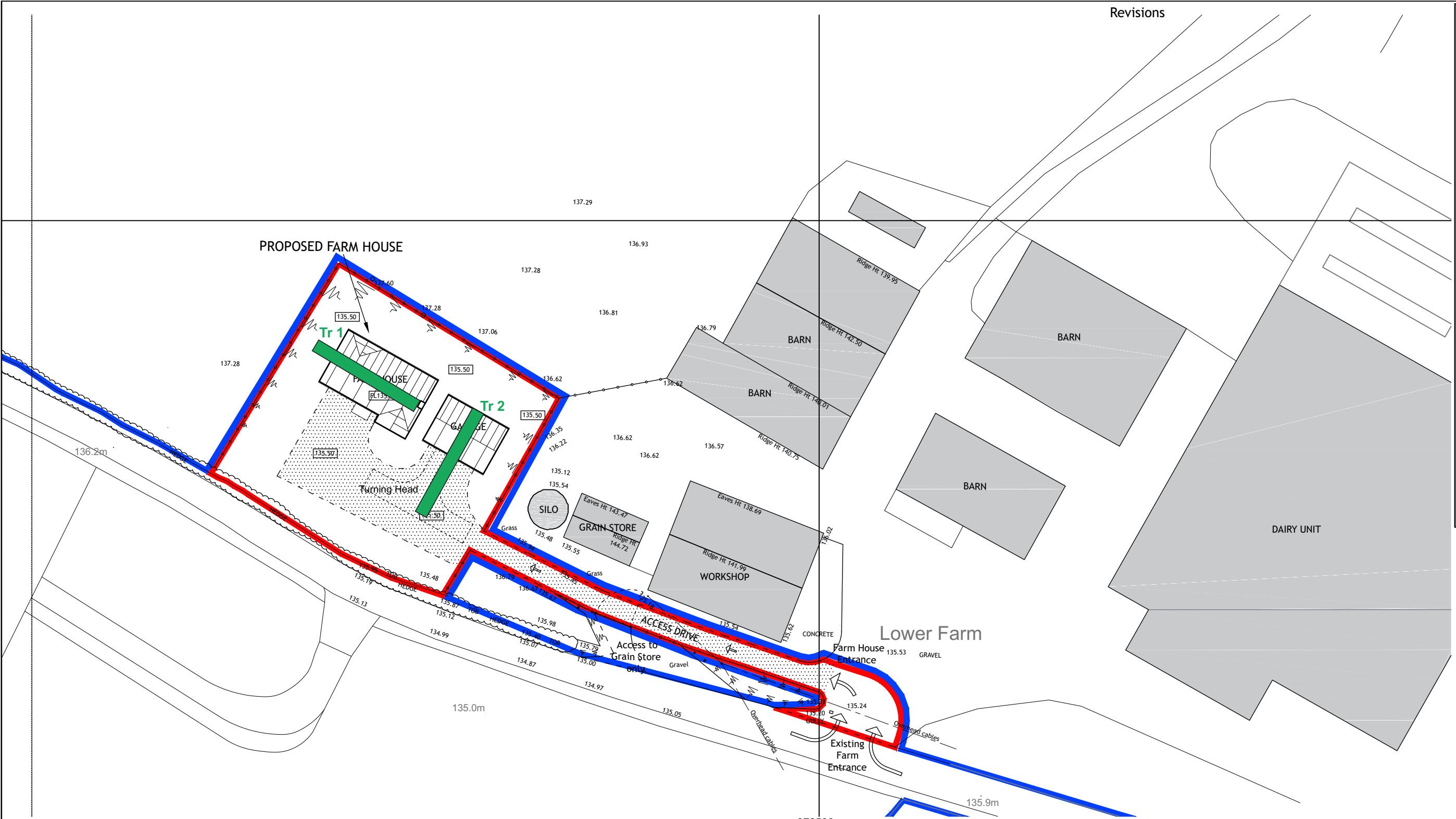
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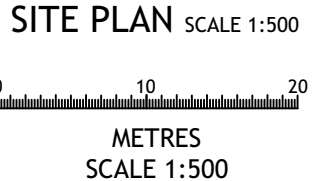
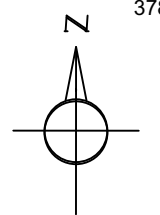
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Revisions



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PROJECT Lower Farm, Hilton

TITLE

Fig. 1: Trench location plan



**Photographic Plates**



**Plate 1: View of excavated trenches and site setting. View from the south-east. Scale 1m**



**Plate 2: Oblique view of Trench 1. View from the west, scale 1m. Note increase of topsoil in the foreground**





**Plate 3: General view of Trench 2. View from the south-west, scale 1m**



**Plate 4: Oblique view of colluvium in section, Trench 2. View from the north-west. Scale 1m**

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