Land at East Codford Down, Codford, Warminster, Wiltshire:

Results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching

NGR: 399170, 141635

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Document No: ACW808/3/0

Date: March 2016

AC archaeology

LAND AT EAST CODFORD DOWN, CODFORD, WARMINSTER, WILTSHIRE

NGR 399170 141635

Results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching

SUMMARY

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology Ltd. in March 2016 in support of a planning application for the construction of greenhouses. The application area covers approximately 3 hectares and is located about 3km northwest of Codford and 2.2km south of Chitterne (centred on NGR 399170 141635). The application area is surrounded by arable farmland, with a recently constructed solar farm located to the immediate east and north of the site.

The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of seven trenches, each 1.6m wide and c. 35m in length totalling c. 392m^2 of trenching. The trenches were positioned based upon the results of a geophysical survey and the transcriptions of aerial photographs. None of the trenches contained archaeological deposits, although a number of natural features were recorded, one of which contained pottery dated to the Bronze Age.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological site investigation on land at East Codford Down, Codford, Warminster, Wiltshire. The site location is shown on Fig. 1.

1.2 The investigation was undertaken by AC archaeology Ltd. in March 2016. It was commissioned by J. M. Stratton & Co. in support of a planning application (ref. 5/11066/FUL), following consultation with the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist (WCACA).

1.3 The application area covers some 3 hectares of land to the north of East Farm and is located *c.* 3km northwest of Codford and 2.2km south of Chitterne. The application area stands on a broad ridge oriented northeast by southwest at around 165m to 170m OD, with the land falling away to the east and west.

1.4 The bedrock geology comprises Seaford Chalk Formation, laid down during the Cretaceous period, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS 2016).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The baseline archaeological resource has been documented in a Historic Environment Assessment (Cottam 2010) and a Heritage Setting Assessment (Cottam 2016) considered the potential impacts of this proposed development on designated assets. These are summarised here for reference.

2.2 There are no designated heritage assets within 500m of the application area, although eight undesignated assets and one event lie within 500m. There is evidence for later prehistoric activity in the wider landscape, including Bronze Age barrows 1km to the east and 1.7km northwest of the site. A series of extensive field systems, possibly dating from the Iron Age or Romano-British period, has been identified covering Clay Pit Hill to the north of the site, part of which falls within the application area; no related settlement has been discovered in close association with the field system, but the Iron Age site of Codford Circle lies *c*. 1km to the southwest and a D-shaped enclosure lies some 500m to the north. A Romano-British corn drier has also been discovered some 700m to the east of the site.

2.3 Two geophysical surveys have been conducted, one targeted upon the proposed development (Substrata 2015) and one relating to the neighbouring solar farm (Stratascan 2013). The most recent survey (2015) reveals the presence of a large number of pit-like anomalies and linear trends throughout the survey area, more densely concentrated in the northern portion of the site. The southern extent, close to the farm buildings, is dominated by strong magnetic disturbance, probably associated with modern spreads of demolition material or similar. The earlier geophysical survey (2013) demonstrates the presence of further pit-like responses, particularly at the western extent near the current site, with linear anomalies consistent with elements of the field systems thought to exist in the vicinity. However, these show poor correlation with the transcriptions from aerial photography. Strong ploughing trends oriented parallel with the probable former field systems are likely to pre-date the modern ploughing strategy. A modern service can be seen oriented northeast by southwest near the western extent of the earlier survey, with a number of discrete ferrous anomalies probably marking fence lines.

3. AIMS

3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the significance, presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site. The results of the work as set out in this document will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent archaeological mitigation.

4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design, prepared by AC archaeology Ltd. (Urmston 2016), which was submitted to and approved by the WCACA, prior to commencement.

4.2 The investigation comprised the machine excavation of seven trenches (a total of 392m^2 in area) with each trench being 1.6m wide and 35m in length. Each of the trenches were positioned based upon the results of the geophysical survey and the transcriptions from aerial photography. Trenches were positioned on the ground using a survey grade GNSS instrument with a horizontal precision of c. 20mm (Fig. 1). A number of the trenches (Tr. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7) were either split or moved so as to prevent disturbance to a series of cable trenches that were evident throughout the site.

5. RESULTS

5.1 None of the trenches excavated contained archaeological features. All the descriptions of 'negative' trenches, devoid of any archaeological deposit, are summarised in Table 1 within Appendix I. General photographs are included as Plates 1 & 2.

5.2 Several irregular features were observed, noticeably in Trench 1 and Trench 3. A pit-like feature in Trench 1 was filled with a calcareous, chalky, silty clay and contained a number of fragments of Bronze Age pottery. The feature had very indistinct edges and is thought to be a tree throw or a natural feature.

5.3 An irregular sub-annular feature recorded in Trench 3 was also filled with a calcareous, chalky, silty clay and contained some animal bone; this was thought to be an abandoned modern animal burrow. This feature is coincident with a relatively strong anomaly seen in the geophysical survey, although there was no suggestion that this was archaeological in origin.

5.4 Other anomalies were investigated (e.g. F601) and were found to be of natural or geological origin. The region of increased magnetic response was targeted by Trench 5, which proved to be a modern dump of ash and other debris.

5.5 No trace of the faint geophysical anomalies coincident with Trench 7 was noted, nor did the pit-like anomalies targeted by Trenches 1, 2 & 6 resolve into archaeological features; it is likely that these were ephemeral subsoil or geological features.

6. FINDS

6.1 Three plain sherds (6g) of flint tempered Bronze Age pottery were recovered from Trench 1, within natural feature F102. The fabric is a fine sandy clay with moderate sparse, poorly sorted calcined flint. Little further can be said of these sherds as they are very small and undiagnostic.

6.2 In addition, a small quantity of animal bone was recovered from Trench 3, within F301.

7. COMMENT

7.1 Aside from a dump of modern material (501) noted at the southern end of Trench 5, a consistent deposit sequence of topsoil overlying natural was encountered throughout the remaining evaluation trenches. No discernible archaeological features or deposits were present in the trenches. The only features present relate to a series of probable geological features or those having an arboreal origin.

7.2 The results of the evaluation, taken in conjunction with the results of the previous geophysical surveys, indicate that there has been little archaeological activity within the application area. The heavily abraded Bronze Age pottery is likely to have been redeposited, although there is little indication of its original provenance.

8. REFERENCES

British Geological Survey Online Viewer. http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html. Accessed 29/03/2016

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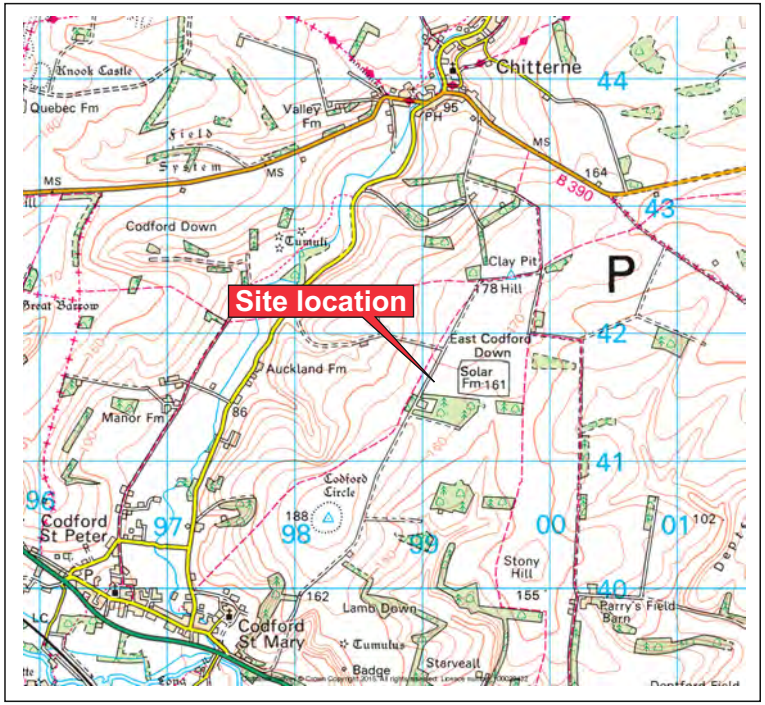
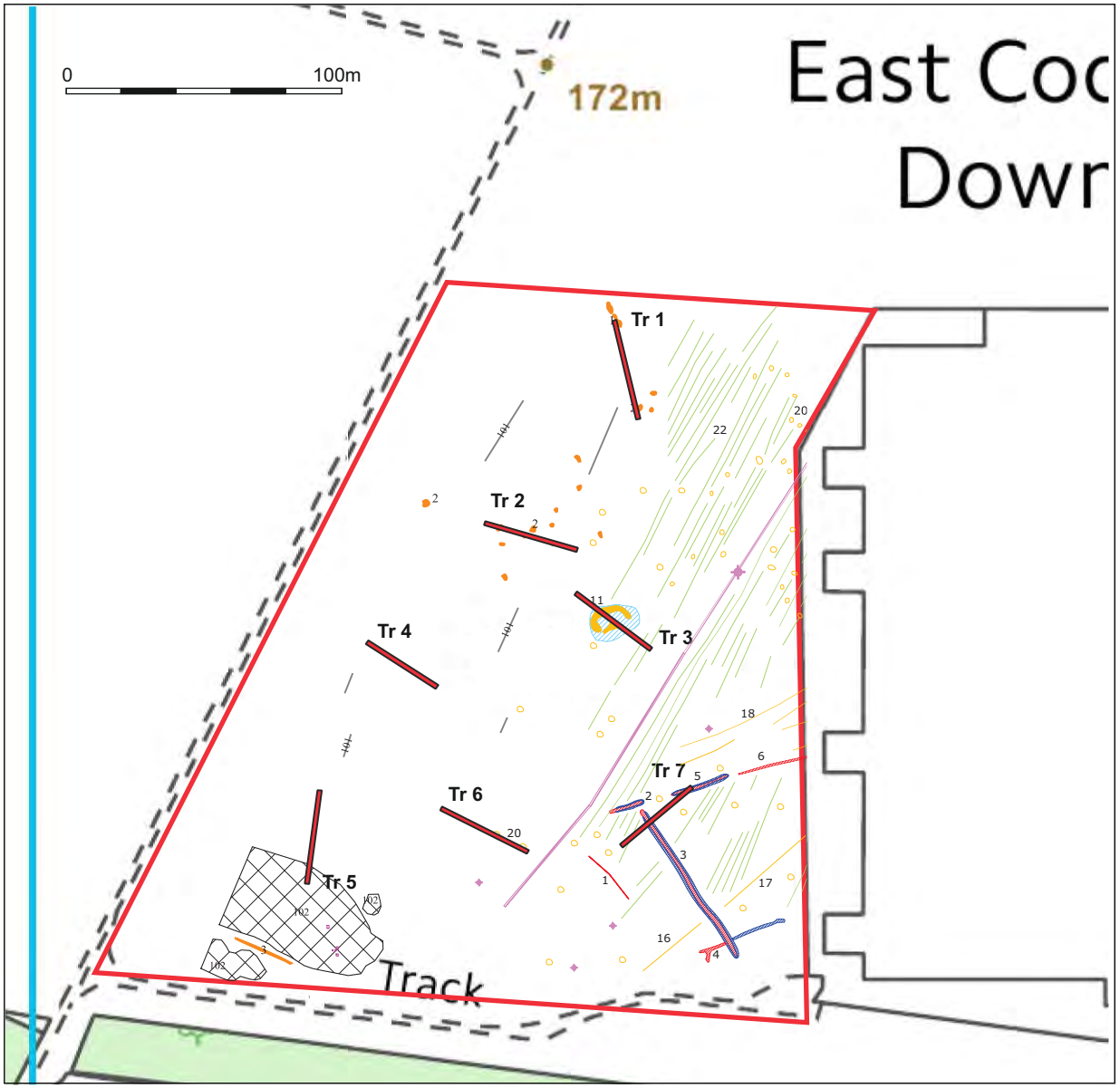
Substrata. 2015. *Land at East Codford Down, Codford, Wiltshire: An archaeological gradiometer survey*. Client report 150724

Urmston, B. 2016, *Land at East Codford Down, Codford, Warminster, Wiltshire. Project Design for an archaeological evaluation*. AC archaeology Doc. Ref. ACW808/2/0





PROJECT

Land at East Codford Down

TITLE

Fig.1: Site and trench location

Plate 1: Trench 6. General view from the northwest. Scale 1m

Plate 2: General view of site with excavated trenches. View from the northeast

Appendix I - Negative Trenches

Trench 1			Alignment N – S
Context	**Description**	**Depth (mm)**	**Interpretation**
100	Mid grey-brown silty clay. Soft with frequent chalk flecks and occasional flints	0 -200	Topsoil
101	Off-white chalk with patches of brown silty clay	+200	Natural Subsoil
F102	Irregular shaped pit-like feature filled with chalky, mid brown silty clay	200-440	Probable tree throw
Trench 2			**Alignment** NW - SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth (mm)**	**Interpretation**
200	Mid brown silty clay. Soft with abundant chalk flecks and occasional flints	0-240	Topsoil
201	Off-white chalk, with patches of brown silty clay	+240	Natural Subsoil
Trench 3			**Alignment** NW - SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth (mm)**	**Interpretation**
300	Dark grey-brown silty clay loam	0-250	Topsoil
F301	Sub-annular feature with irregular edges and uneven base	250-550	Animal burrow?
302	Off-white chalk	+250	Natural Subsoil
Trench 4			**Alignment** NW - SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth (mm)**	**Interpretation**
400	Mid grey-brown silty clay. Soft with abundant chalk flecks and occasional flints	0-200	Topsoil
401	Off-white chalk, with patches of mid brown silty clay	+200	Natural Subsoil
Trench 5			**Alignment** N - S
Context	**Description**	**Depth (mm)**	**Interpretation**
500	Mid grey-brown silty clay. Soft with abundant chalk flecks	200-340	Topsoil
501	Mid brown silty clay. Layer of dumped 'ashy' material at south end of tr. (>8m)	0-200	Dumped material
502	Off-white chalk with patches of brown clay	+340	Natural Subsoil
Trench 6			**Alignment** NW - SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth (mm)**	**Interpretation**
600	Light greyish brown, loose, silty loam,	0-200	Topsoil
F601	Poorly defined, sub-circular feature; naturally formed	200-500	Natural feature
602	Off-white weathered chalk with patches of disturbance	+200	Natural Subsoil
Trench 7			**Alignment** NW - SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth (mm)**	**Interpretation**
700	Dark grey-brown silty clay loam. Soft with common chalk frags and flints	0-250	Topsoil
701	Off-white chalk with patches of light brown silty chalk (esp. to the south)	+250	Natural subsoil

Table 1: Negative Trench Summary
(All depths from ground surface)

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