Crownhill Down barrow cemetery and Emmets Post round barrow, Sparkwell and Shaugh Moor Parishes, Devon

NGR SX 5716 5993 and SX 5678 6320

Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

Scheduled Monument Numbers SMDV759 and SM34876

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On behalf of
Sibelco UK

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation within two scheduled monuments at Crownhill Down barrow cemetery, Sparkwell parish (SMDV759; SX57165993) and Emmets Post, Shaugh Prior parish, Devon (SM34876; SX5678463202), was carried out by AC archaeology during May 2011. The sites lie adjacent to quarries and in areas where there are existing planning permissions for china clay extraction. Only the very southeast corner of Crownhill Down would be affected, whereas Emmet's Post barrow would be completely removed by these works. The Crownhill Down barrow cemetery comprises a linear arrangement consisting of six possible barrows, while Emmet's Post consists of a single probable bowl barrow measuring 12m in diameter.

The evaluation comprised the excavation of two trenches, one in each of the scheduled areas. Work at Crownhill Down consisted of a single machine-excavated trench measuring 100m long and 1.5m wide, which revealed wholly negative results. At Emmets Post a single 8m long and 1m wide trench was hand-excavated, extending from the centre of the mound to beyond the edge of the monument.

The trench excavated into Emmet's Post barrow exposed an earth mound formed from a series of deposits arranged in a ring form, with stone kerbing positioned on the internal and external breaks of slope. No finds were recovered, but the deliberate and careful nature of construction indicates it is a prehistoric barrow, rather than being associated with later mining or quarrying activity. A small linear feature recorded adjacent to the monument was not considered to be a ring ditch for a barrow, based on its size and orientation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation, carried out to inform the level of further archaeological mitigation work prior to further china clay extraction within two scheduled monuments at Crownhill Down barrow cemetery, Sparkwell parish (SMDV759; SX 5716 5993) and Emmets Post, Shaugh Prior parish, Devon (SM34876; SX 56784 63202), was carried out by AC archaeology during May 2011. The work was commissioned by Andrew Josephs Ltd on behalf of Sibelco UK.

1.2 For each of the two sites there are existing planning permissions for china clay extraction. Emmets Post barrow would be completely removed by these works, whereas only the very southeast corner of Crownhill Down cemetery scheduled area would be affected.

1.3 Both the scheduled sites are situated within an area containing extensive china clay workings. The Crownhill Down cemetery is situated near the summit of a prominent ridge which slopes down to the west at around 200m OD, while Emmets Post is situated at around 290m OD and is located on a slight northeast facing slope overlooking the valley of Blackabrook, a tributary of the River Plym. The underlying solid geology of the area comprises Upper Devonian Slate. The locations of the two sites are shown on Fig. 1.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Crownhill Down barrow cemetery comprises a north to south linear arrangement consisting of six possible barrows. The monuments are positioned along the contour near the summit of Crownhill Down, with the group comprising both round barrows and ring cairns. There is no evidence that any of the barrows have been previously disturbed. There are no recorded features or monuments in the part of the scheduled area where china clay extraction is proposed.

2.2 Emmets Post consists of a probable bowl barrow measuring 12m in diameter located on a level hilltop above the Upper Plym Valley. There is a deep oval depression in the centre, thought to possibly represent the result of antiquarian investigations. However, the presence of extensive mining and quarrying activity in the vicinity has meant that its classification as an ancient barrow was not certain, and it was considered that it could be a mining related feature such as a spoil mound.

2.3 A 19th century boundary stone, known as Emmets Post, is set into the monument with inscribed lettering on both sides demarcating the limits of Lee Moor and Shaugh Moor china clay setts (or boundaries).

3. AIMS

3.1 The main aim of the scheme of trial trenching was to provide sufficient information to English Heritage in order that a decision on the granting of Scheduled Monument Consent can be made for the removal of all or part of the monuments and for the scope of any mitigation to be determined.

3.2 The works were undertaken in order to investigate the presence or absence, extent, condition character, quality, date and provisional importance of any archaeological, ecofactual, environmental and organic remains within the two scheduled monuments.

3.3 More specifically, works at Emmets Post were undertaken to confirm the function of the monument either as an ancient barrow or whether it related to more recent mining activity.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The trial trenching was carried out in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2010) approved by English Heritage prior to commencement. It comprised the excavation of two trenches, one in each of the scheduled areas (Fig. 1). Work at Crownhill Down consisted of a single machine-excavated trench measuring 100m long and 1.5m wide, located towards the southeast corner of the scheduled area. Work at Emmets Post barrow comprised the hand-excavation of an 8m long and 1m wide trench extending from the centre of the mound to beyond the edge of the monument.

4.2 All deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1.* Detailed sections or plans were produced at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate and all site levels relate to Ordinance Datum. All spoil heaps were scanned for displaced finds.

5. RESULTS

5.1 **Trench 1: Crownhill Down barrow cemetery** (Plate 1)
This trench was 100m long, 1.5m wide and positioned on slightly undulating ground sloping gradually down to the south. Natural subsoil (101), which comprised a mid grey sandy-clay with dense concentrations of sub-angular stone gravels, was exposed at a maximum depth of 0.2m below ground level. This was beneath a dark brownish-grey topsoil and turf (100). The trench contained no archaeological features or deposits and no finds were recovered.

5.2 **Trench 2: Emmets Post barrow** (Plan Fig. 2, sections 3a-b; Plates 2-4)
This trench was 8m long, 1m wide and positioned on a northwest to southeast alignment, extending from the centre point of the 0.9m high monument. Natural subsoil (210), which

comprised a mid brownish-grey sandy-clay with abundant weathered granite gravels and grit, was encountered at the southeast end of the trench, beyond the edge of the monument, at a depth of 0.09m below current levels.

Excavations into the mound itself exposed a series of layers and deposits forming the upstanding monument. The natural subsoil was overlain to the southeast of the mound by a layer of dark brownish-grey sandy-silt peat-like material (207). Within the core of the mound the lowest-exposed deposit (205) comprised a similar, perhaps equivalent, homogenous peat-like deposit with few inclusions. Overlying layers 205 and 207 was an arrangement of granite pieces (206), positioned as a single course around the base of the outer break of slope to the mound.

Layer 205 was also sealed by a lens of dark brownish-grey sandy-silt re-deposited natural subsoil (204), containing frequent inclusions of poorly sorted sub-angular granite gravel. Layer 204 was overlain to the northwest by a further arrangement of granite stone rubble (202), comprising up to four loose courses positioned along the inner break of slope. Overlying 202 and sealing layer 204 was a final layer of mound material consisting of a root-disturbed dark brownish-grey sandy-silt (203), with a single large stone positioned on top of this deposit. Stone rubble layer202 was overlain in the internal area of the mound (northwest part of trench) by an accumulation deposit (201), comprising a dark brownish-grey sandy-silt with common granite rubble inclusions. No finds were recovered from the various layers and deposits forming the mound.

To the southeast of the monument and cut into the natural subsoil was an east to west aligned linear feature (F209). This probable ditch was 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a dark brownish-grey sandy-clay fill (208), containing common small sub-angular granite inclusions. No finds were recovered. The fill of linear feature F209 (208) and accumulation deposit 201 were overlain by turf and topsoil (200) that extended throughout the trench.

6. SOIL SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

6.1 A single 10l bulk sample from context 205 at Emmets Post has been processed using standard flotation methods, where flots and residues were retained on 0.5mm mesh and the flots fully sorted. The >5.6mm and >4mm residue fractions were sorted, weighed and discarded. The sorted flot elements and material from the coarse residues were examined. The aims of the assessment were to determine the presence/absence, quantity, quality and diversity of any palaeo-environmental remains present, principally plant macrofossils charcoal and insects, as well as any artefacts that might be present.

6.2 There was a complete absence of plant macrofossils, charcoal, insects and artefacts within the sorted sample. However, the mound was not examined for pollen and, based on other investigations nearby (Allen 2010), preservation of this is likely to be good.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The results from the trench excavated within the southeast part of the scheduled area at Crownhill Down recorded negative results. There were no further barrows exposed and no evidence for associated features, such as burial pits, post holes, ring ditches etc.

7.2 The trench excavated across the mound at Emmets Post has confirmed that it is a man-made feature, with the series of layers and deposits present indicating that it is a barrow. Excavation has established how the mound was constructed. This consists of at least three sandy-silt soil layers, with the earthwork enhanced with loosely positioned stone kerbing (contexts 202 and

206) arranged around the inner and outer breaks of slope and on top of the lowest-exposed homogenous soil deposits (205 and 207). The stone kerbs were loosely positioned, although the inner arrangement appears to have been deliberately coursed. Granite stone pieces within the internal accumulation deposit (201) may represent modern disturbance, although this was not established and they could equally represent collapsed stone work. The presence of a large stone on top of upper mound deposit 203, as well as the location of potential stone tumble within deposit 201, could suggest that the stone kerbing was originally more extensive and perhaps had a capping.

7.3 The shallow depth, rounded profile and orientation of linear feature F209 indicate that it is unlikely to be a ring ditch surrounding the barrow. It is more probable that the feature represents a separate undated phase of archaeological activity adjacent to the monument.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Based on the results from Trench 1, the area of the scheduled monument at Crownhill Down with permission for china clay extraction is unlikely to contain any buried remains of former barrows or associated features.

8.2 The trial trench excavated into the scheduled monument at Emmets Post did not establish a full profile, although the results indicate that the mound is largely earth constructed, contains stone kerbing and potentially stone capping. There were no internal features present at the excavated depth, although these could survive beneath the mound material.

8.3 It is therefore probable that the monument is likely to be a prehistoric barrow, although no artefacts were recovered to confirm this. The mound has clearly been carefully and deliberately constructed, which would be unlikely for more recent mining-related features such as spoil tips. The results from the trench indicate that the monument is generally well preserved.

8.4 Based on the examination of one bulk sample, there does not appear to be much evidence for palaeoenvironmental remains, although analysis of pollen has not been undertaken for the purposes of this phase of work. Elsewhere nearby, for example at SM DV1027 (Allen 2010), a good surviving sequence was identified.

8.5 Assuming that the monument will be 'preserved by record' prior to china clay extraction, further excavation has the potential to address the following aims:

- To gain a fuller understanding of the construction method of the monument via more extensive exposure
- To establish the presence/absence of any associated internal features, as well as any artefacts or ecofacts
- To identify evidence of phasing, such as earlier features/land surfaces, as well as subsequent re-modelling
- To use any palaeoenvironmental evidence for landscape reconstruction and aspects of ancient economy; for example the upstanding nature of the monument increases the potential for the survival of buried soils
- To assess the potential for scientific dating to contribute towards an understanding of the development of the site
- The potential to widen our understanding of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practice and monumentality, including individual identity and social status
- To compare the results with those from the broader area, including investigations for the adjacent Shaugh Moor project, as well as forthcoming work on the Hemerdon tungsten mine.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

9.1 The paper and digital archive are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be deposited at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth under the accession number AR.2011.23, along with any archive generated by subsequent work on the site.

9.2 The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) numbers for this project are 102750 for Emmet's Post barrow and 102754 for Crownhill Down barrow cemetery.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Andrew Josephs Ltd on behalf of Sibelco UK. The site trial trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes, Fiona Pink and Elisabeth Patkoi. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Cain Hegarty. The advice and collaboration of Phil Mcmahon, English Heritage Inspector, and Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officer, are duly acknowledged.

11. SOURCES CONSULTED

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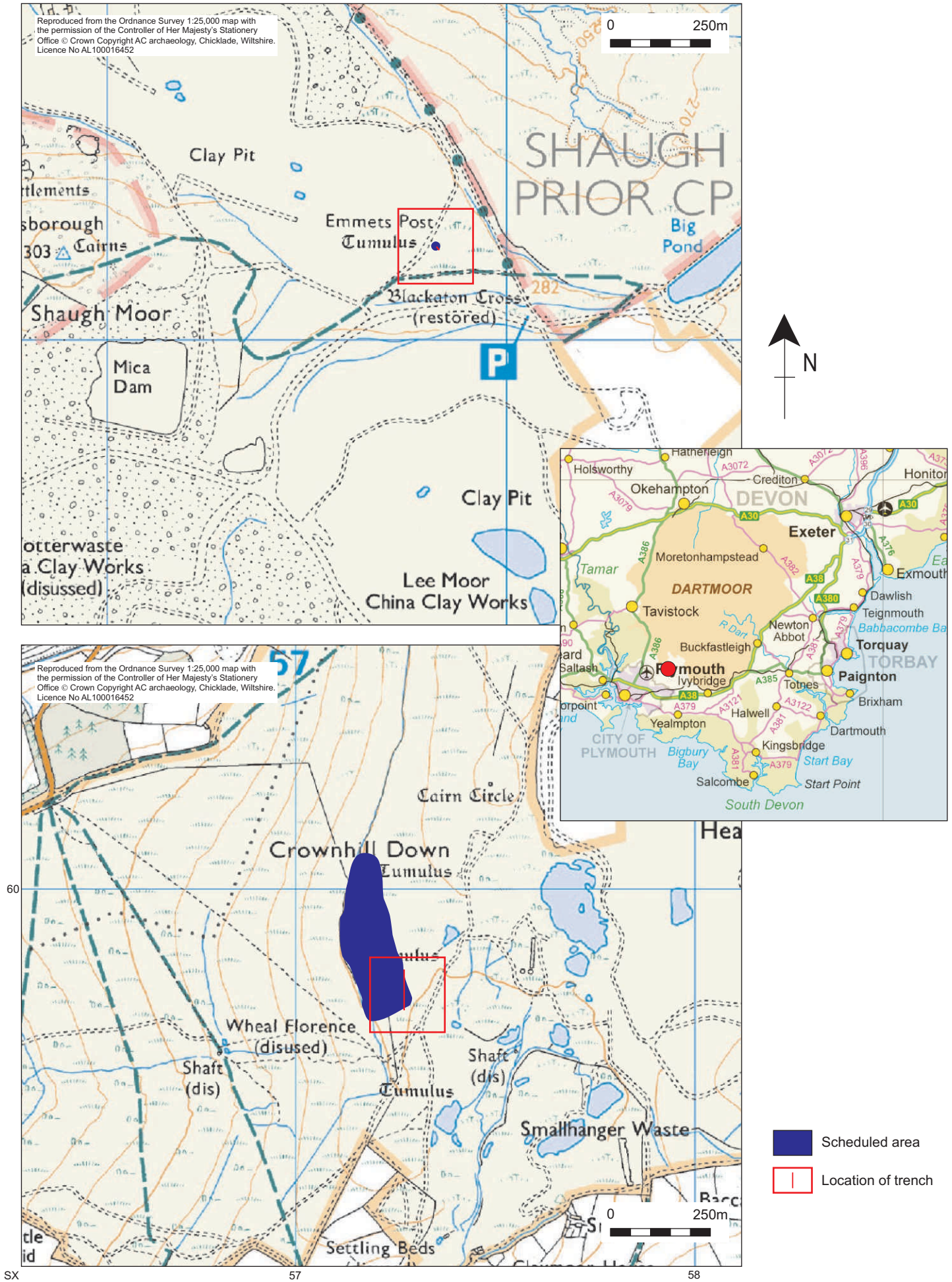

PROJECT

Crownhill Down and Emmets Post scheduled monuments

TITLE

Fig.1: Location of sites

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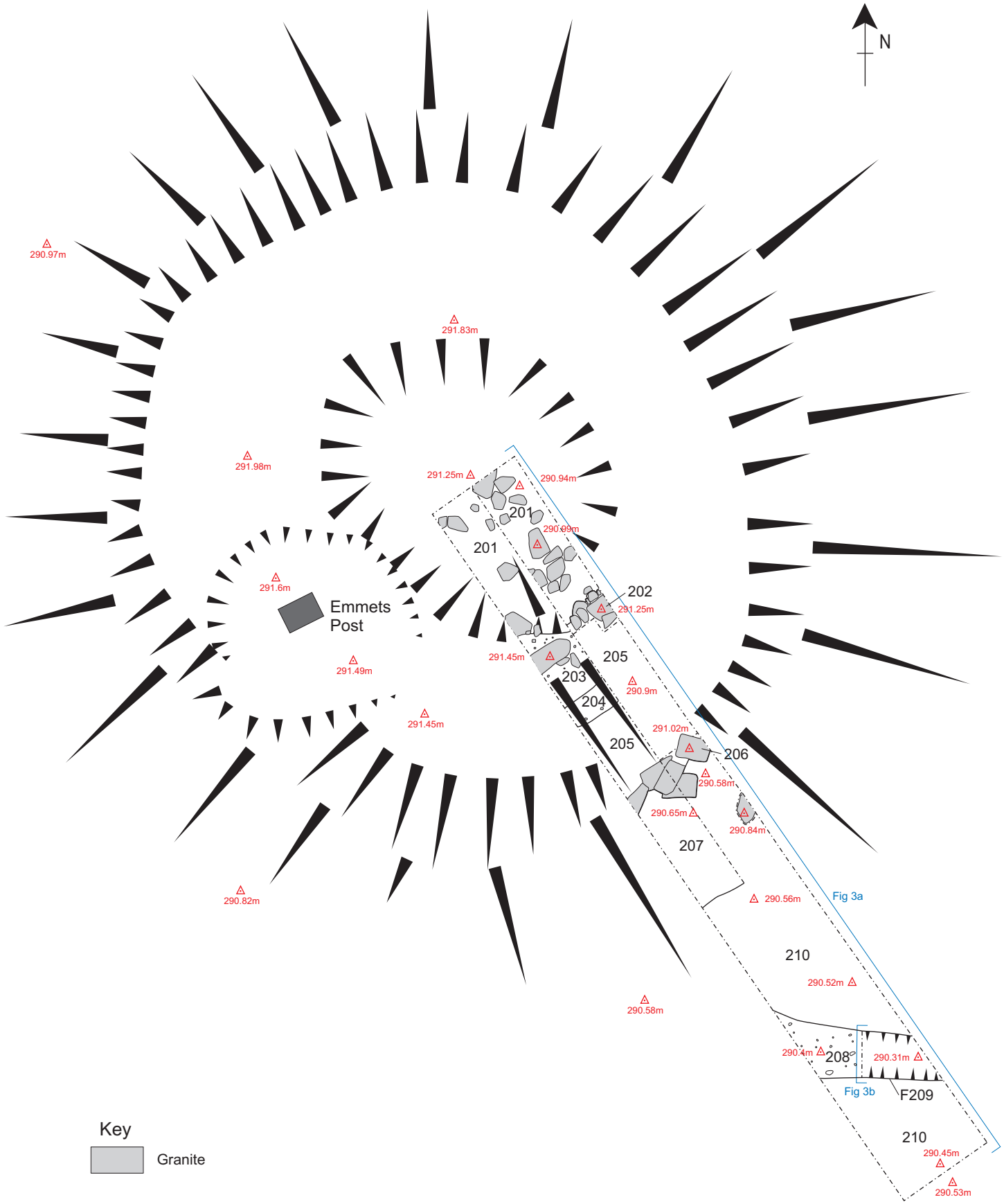

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Fig.2: Plan of Emmets Post round barrow

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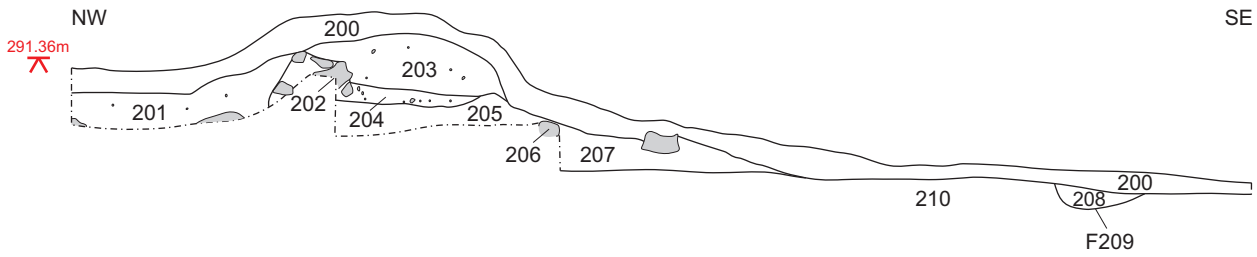
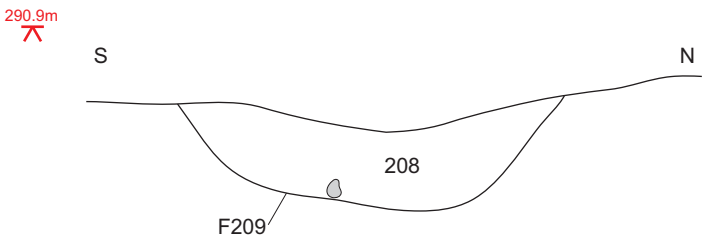
a) Section 1



b) Section 2



PROJECT

Crownhill Down and Emmets Post scheduled monuments

TITLE

Fig.3: Sections through Emmets Post round barrow and ditch F209

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Plate 1. General view of Crownhill Down and Trench 1, looking southwest

Plate 2. General view of Emmets Post barrow and Trench 2, looking north

Plate 3. Emmets Post, Trench 2, view to the northwest (scale 1m)

Plate 4. Emmets Post, Trench 2, southwest facing section (scale 1m))

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