

The Old Village Hall Site, Fore Street, Silverton, Devon

NGR SS 95600 02932

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

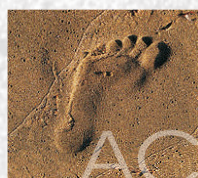
Planning ref. Mid Devon District Council 10/00201/FULL

Prepared by
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On behalf of
Mr Tim Powell

Document No: ACD340/2/0

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archaeology

THE OLD VILLAGE HALL SITE, FORE STREET, SILVERTON, DEVON

(NGR SS 95600 02932)

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology during July 2011 on land at the Old Village Hall site, Fore Street, Silverton, Devon (NGR SS 95600 02932). The site occupies an area of around 450m² on the east side of Fore Street and within the historic core of the village.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches with a combined length of 32m, with these located in areas to be affected by proposed development. On the street frontage the remains of stone footings associated with a mid to late 19th century building were recorded, as well as an undated post hole thought to be of a similar date. To the rear of the site, two probable rubbish pits were exposed that were dated to the late 18th/early 19th century and the 20th century.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation, carried out as the first stage in a programme of archaeological works in association with a residential development on land at the Old Village Hall site, Fore Street, Silverton, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2011. The work was commissioned by the site owner Mr Tim Powell and was required by Mid Devon District Council as a condition (8) of planning consent, as advised by Devon County Historic Environment Service (hereafter DCHES).
- 1.2 The site is situated on level ground on the east side of Fore Street (Fig. 1). It occupies an area of around 450m² and is currently derelict land, partly covered with hardstanding and partly with soil and vegetation (Plate 1). The site lies at around 83m OD and the underlying soil geology comprises Permian interbedded sandstone and conglomerates.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A settlement at Silverton is first recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, when it was known as *Sulfretona* or *Suffertona* (Gover *et al* 1931, 569). The name is likely to mean farm by the miry ford (syle-ford-ton). The site is located within the historic core of the village, with houses to both the north and south alongside Fore Street having medieval origins (Devon County Historic Environment Record refs 73163-73169, 29093).
- 2.2 The Silverton parish tithe map of 1842 depicts the site as one of a number of probable medieval burgage plots on the east side of Fore Street. There are no buildings shown at this time and the site is named as 'Qairy Orchard', which was owned by Mrs Mary Barker and occupied by John Ward.
- 2.3 By 1888, the Ordnance Survey first-edition 25-inch map shows a building occupying the street frontage part of the site, which is still the case in 1904.

3. AIMS OF THE WORK

- 3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the 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 report will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation as a second stage.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2011) and approved by DCHES prior to commencement of work. It comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches totalling 32m in length, with each trench 1.2m wide. The trenches were positioned in areas to be affected by the proposed development (Fig. 2). Each trench was excavated using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket and working under constant archaeological supervision.
- 4.2** All deposits and features 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*.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1 (Plan Fig. 3a, sections 3b-d; Plates 2 and 3)

This trench was positioned towards the street frontage and was excavated onto natural subsoil which was present at a depth of 0.42m below current levels and consisted of mid red sand with abundant gravels and pea grit (108). The natural subsoil was overlain by a levelling layer of mixed re-deposited natural subsoil (103), which was cut by a northeast to southwest aligned construction cut (F106) containing stone footings (107). The footings were 0.8m wide and constructed of roughly faced limestone in a lime mortar bond.

To the northwest of footings 107 was a single possible posthole (F104), which was 0.3m wide and 0.2m deep, with steeply sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a mid brown silty-sand fill (105) with occasional lime mortar fragment inclusions. No finds were recovered.

On the southeast side of wall footing 107 and sealing layer 103 was a hardcore layer of mixed 19th and 20th century brick rubble base (101) for an overlying concrete surface (100), as shown on Fig. 3c. The northwest side of wall footing 107 and layer 103 (Fig. 3d) were sealed by topsoil and turf (102).

5.2 Trench 2

This trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (202), which was present at a depth of 0.3m below a levelling layer of mixed re-deposited natural subsoil with stone rubble (201). This was in turn sealed by topsoil and turf (200). Trench 2 contained no archaeological features, deposits or finds.

5.3 Trench 3 (Plan Fig. 4a, section Fig 4b; Plate 4)

This trench was located towards the east side of the site. It was excavated onto natural subsoil (302), which was present at a depth of 0.32m below a dark brown silty-clay buried topsoil (301) and a levelling layer of re-deposited natural subsoil and stone rubble (300). The trench contained two probable pit features (F303 and F305) present under layer 301.

F303 was exposed for a width of 2.4m and was 0.37m deep with gradual sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a dark brown silty-clay fill (304) similar to the overlying buried topsoil layer 301. Two sherds of 18th to 19th century South Somerset courseware pottery, 18th-19th century tobacco pipe bowl fragments, a bottle glass base and shards of window glass were recovered.

Partially exposed probable pit F305 contained a dark grey clayey-silt fill (306) that contained 20th century brick fragments, window glass shards and fragments of sheet iron. This feature was not excavated and the finds were not retained.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 All finds retained from the site have been quantified according to material type within each context, then the assemblage was scanned to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information is briefly discussed below, with quantifications included in Table 1.

Table 1- Finds quantification. Weight is in grams (g)

Context	Description	Post-medieval pottery		Glass		Clay tobacco pipe	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
304	Fill of pit F303	2	56	9	386	2	7
Totals		2	56	9	386	2	7

- 6.2 The small assemblage of finds recovered from pit F303 date from the late 18th century to the early 19th century. The clay tobacco pipe fragments are from of the same bowl dated c. mid 18th-century, with other finds including a 18th century bottle glass base, fragments of window glass and pottery sherds from South Somerset coarseware vessels, including a piece from a sgraffito dish.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The trial trenches exposed a small number of archaeological features dating to the later post-medieval and modern periods. The wall footing exposed in Trench 1 corresponds with the former building that fronted Fore Street, which is depicted on the 1888 and 1904 Ordnance Survey maps, but not on the earlier 1842 tithe map.
- 7.2 Across much of the site there was a generally shallow overlying levelling layer of re-deposited natural subsoil or stone and brick above the natural subsoil, suggesting that the site had been broadly stripped and levelled prior to the construction of the house in the second half of the 19th century and the village hall in the 20th century. Layers of stone and mortar rubble (eg layer 300, Trench 3, 201, Trench 2 etc) are likely to represent demolished remnants of these former structures.
- 7.3 Towards the east of the site a thin surviving buried garden soil was recorded under mixed demolition material, with the latter sealing pits F303 and F305, Trench 3. These features are likely to be rubbish pit dating to the late 18th and 20th centuries respectively. The likely posthole (F104) recorded in Trench 1 was undated but inclusions of lime mortar fragments and the dark nature of its fill suggest an associated with the adjacent 19th century wall footing, which was bonded with the same lime mortar.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The evaluation has identified structural remains with associated levelling layers and subsequent demolition deposits that relate to the two phases of relatively modern development of the site. Other features comprised late 18th and 20th century probable rubbish pits and an undated posthole, also likely to be of late post-medieval/modern date.
- 8.2 There were no early archaeological features, deposits or finds present, with historic maps indicating that the site remained undeveloped until at least the second half of the 19th century.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 9.1** The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will ultimately be deposited under the relevant accession number at RAMM, Exeter, at the earliest in 2013 when the current museum non-acceptance policy will be reviewed. A temporary reference number has been obtained from the museum, which is RAMM: 11/28.
- 9.2** The OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 106186.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Tim Powell. The site trial trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes, Kerry Tyler and Frances Ward, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Cain Hegarty. The advice and collaboration of Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officer, are duly acknowledged.

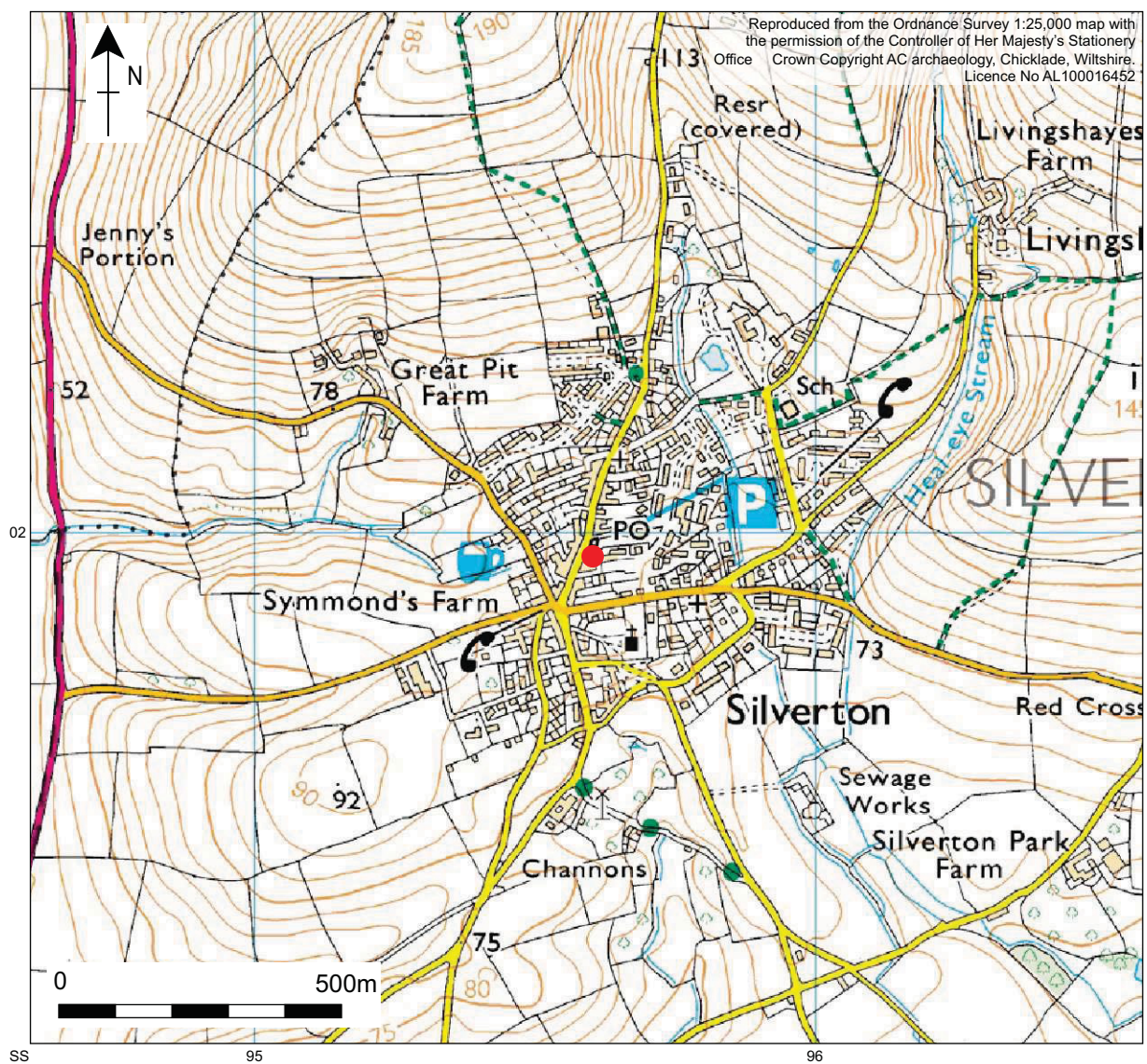
11. SOURCES CONSULTED

Devon Record Office, Silverton parish tithe map and apportionment, 1842

Gover, J.E.B., Mawer, A. and Stenton, F.M., 1931, *The place-names of Devon Parts 1 and 2*. English place-name society, vol. 9

Ordnance Survey 25-inch Devonshire sheet 56.15, surveyed 1888, published 1890, revised 1904, published 1905

Valentin, J., 2011, *The Old Village Hall site, Fore Street, Silverton, Devon: Project design for a staged programme of archaeological works*. Unpublished AC archaeology document for client, ref. ACD340/1/0

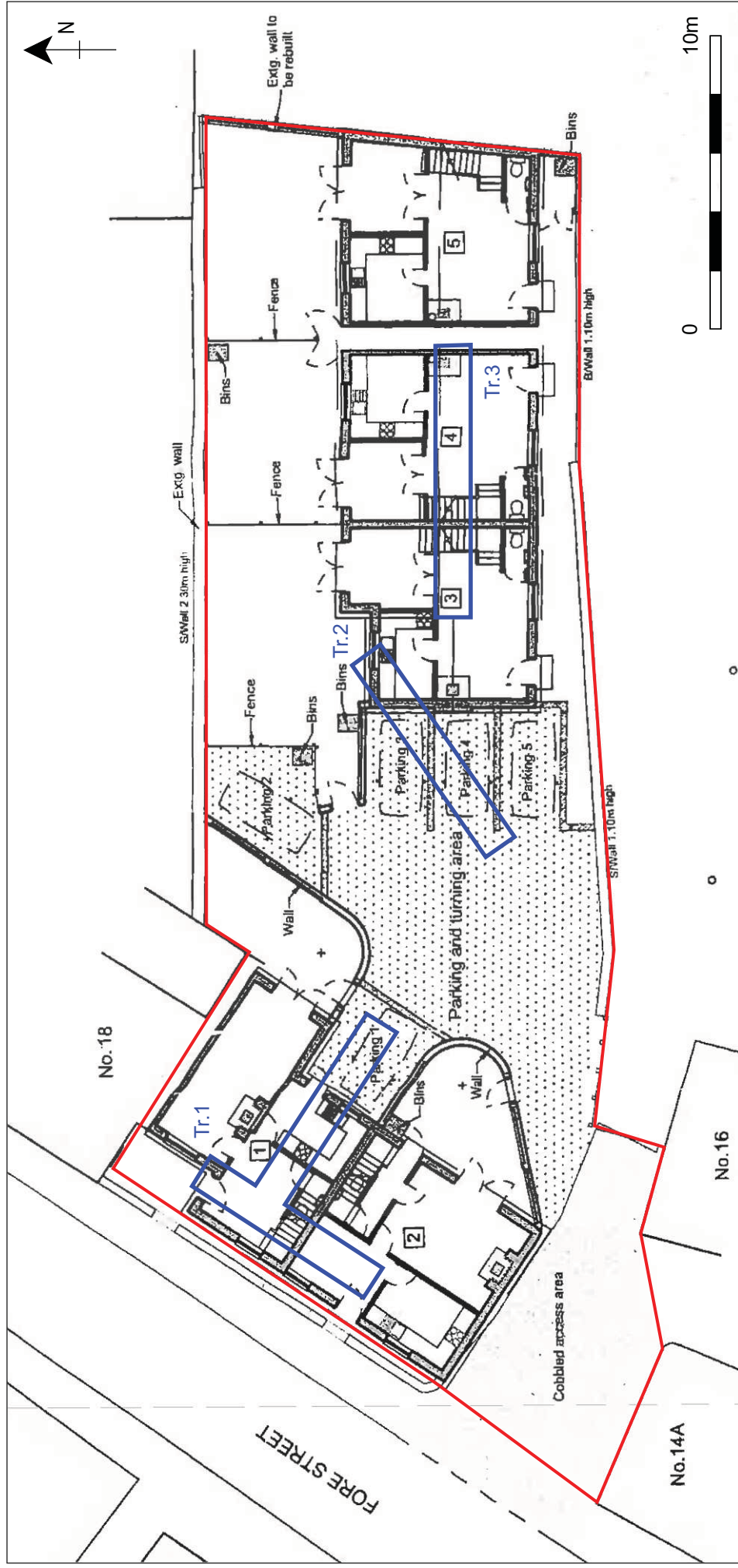


PROJECT

The Old Village Hall site, Silverton, Devon

TITLE

Fig.1: Location of site



Application area

Evaluation trenches

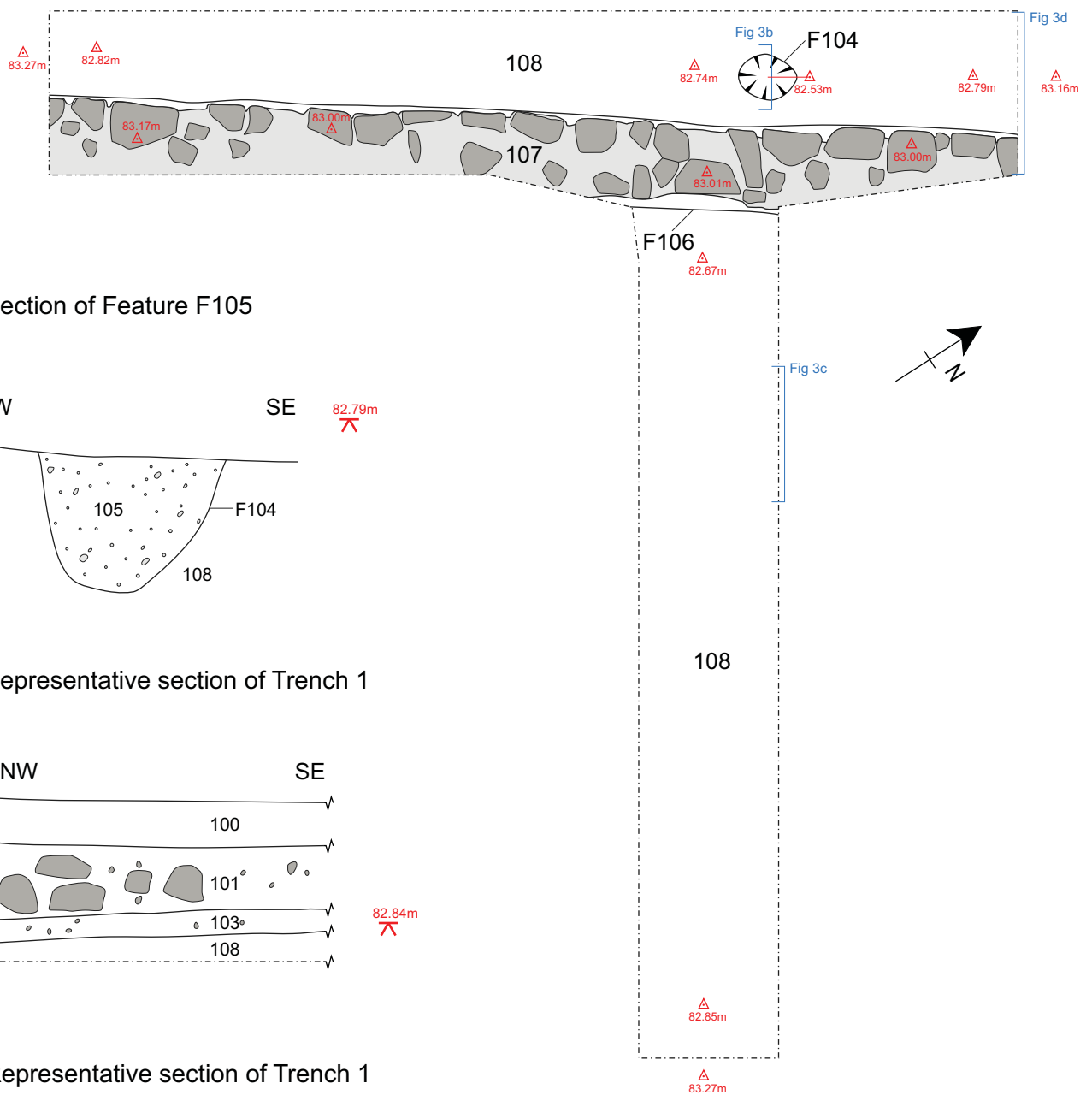
PROJECT

The Old Village Hall, Fore Street, Silverton

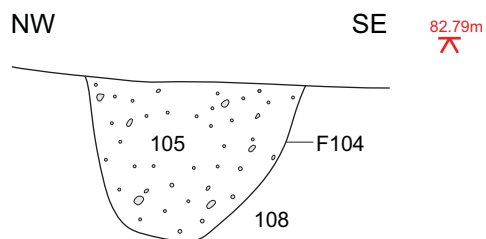
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Fig.2: Trench locations in relation to development layout

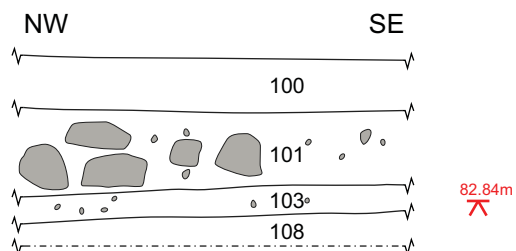
a) Plan of Trench 1



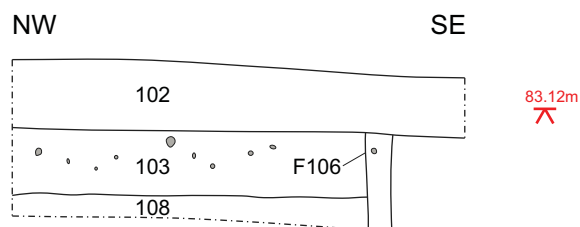
b) Section of Feature F105



c) Representative section of Trench 1



d) Representative section of Trench 1



Legend



0 Sections 0.5m

0 Plan 3m

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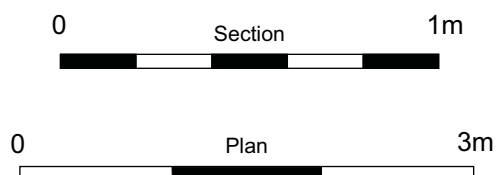
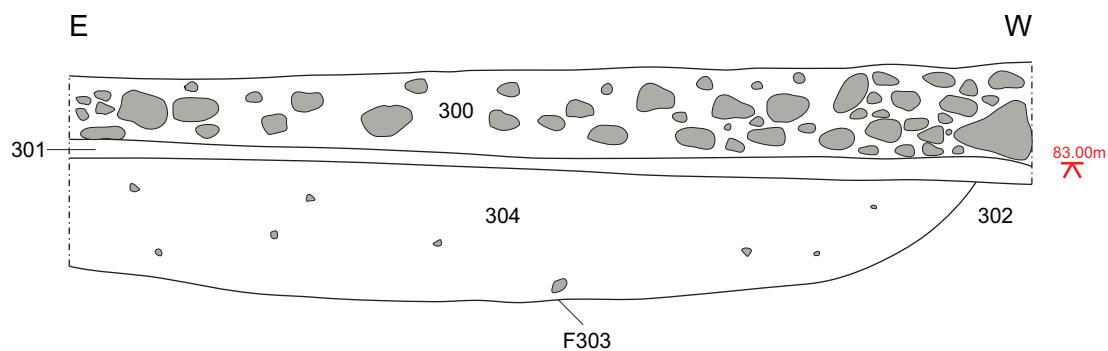
Fig.3: Plan and sections,
Trench 1



a) Plan of Trench 3



b) Section of feature F304



PROJECT

The Old Village Hall site, Silverton, Devon

TITLE

Fig.4: Plan and section, Trench 3



Plate 1. General view of site, looking west



Plate 2. General view of site from Trench 1, looking east



Plate 3. Trench 1, Posthole F104, southwest facing section, view to northeast (scale 0.3m)



Plate 4. Trench 3, Pit F303, north facing section, view to south (scale 1m)

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