

Land at North Barton, West Buckland, near Barnstaple,
Devon

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

NGR SS 65780 31292

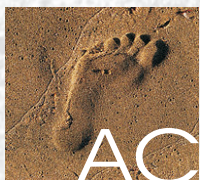
Planning ref. North Devon District Council: 52442

Prepared by
Kerry Tyler

On behalf of
Pearce Construction (Barnstaple) Ltd

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AC archaeology

LAND AT NORTH BARTON, WEST BUCKLAND, NEAR BARNSTAPLE, DEVON

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology during August 2011 on land at North Barton, West Buckland, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 65780 31292). The site is located immediately to east of the main historic core of the village, with a settlement at West Buckland recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, indicating pre-conquest origins.

The evaluation comprised two machine excavated trenches totalling 24m in length and each 1.6m wide, as well as a single hand-dug 1m² trench. The investigations, although limited, did not identify any evidence for pre-modern archaeological activity, with only a small quantity of 19th century artefacts recovered. There has clearly been ground disturbance due to the use of the site as a working farmyard, although the presence and quality of survival of any archaeological remains beneath the existing concrete yard surface is not known.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation carried out in support of a planning application for the construction of nine houses and associated works on land at North Barton, West Buckland, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during August 2011. The work was commissioned by Pearce Construction (Barnstaple) Ltd, following consultation with Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES). The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2 The proposed development site is situated on the east side of the village, in an area currently occupied by farm outbuildings, concrete hardstanding and some small areas of overgrown land. It lies at around 190m OD, and the underlying solid geology comprises Upper Devonian Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A settlement at West Buckland is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, indicating pre-conquest origins. At this time it was called *Bochelant* (Gover *et al* 1931:34), with the name meaning land given by charter. There are few archaeological records held by Devon County Council's Historic Environment Record (DCHER) within the vicinity of the site except the previously mentioned Domesday settlement, two post-medieval/modern forges, and a well of similar date.
- 2.2 The West Buckland parish tithe map of 1841 depicts the site as mainly agricultural land on the east side of the village. The current North Barton complex is not present at this time, and the majority of the site is part of a large field called 'Hill', with the land-use described as pasture. On the west side of the site, adjacent to the road, there are two small plots, both described in the parish apportionment as gardens, with one glebe (church) land.
- 2.3 Immediately to the west of the site the tithe map depicts West Buckland village, with its main historic core located within a series of roads seemingly forming a sub-rectangular enclosure. Within the area enclosed by the roads are the churchyard (the church is not depicted on the map), what appears to be a large possible manor house, courtyard, outbuildings on the north side and an orchard to the west. While it is possible that the roads fossilise the position of a former defended settlement, the absence of other domestic buildings within the enclosure might suggest that it could be encircling the area of the church and demesne complex, and that West Buckland represents the site of an early ecclesiastical centre. There is no evidence within St Peter's Church

for fabric pre-dating the 15th century, however, as with the exception of parts of the tower much of the church was rebuilt in the second half of the 19th century.

- 2.4** The 1888 Ordnance Survey first-edition 25-inch maps show few changes to the layout of the site from the tithe map, although adjacent to the road on the west side a smithy and post office are depicted in what were formerly the garden areas. Within the main part of the village, the churchyard had been extended westwards and the house on the north side is named as 'Home Barton'. There are no changes on the 1903 second edition map.

3. AIMS

- 3.1** The aim of the trench 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 will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation, either further investigation or re-design, as a condition of planning permission, if granted.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design (Valentin 2011) submitted to and approved by Devon County Historic Environment Service prior to commencement on site. The initial aim was to excavate two trenches totally 40m. However, due to site constraints and areas of hardstanding it was only possible to machine-excavate two trenches totalling 24m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide, as well as a hand dug 1m² trench (Fig. 2).
- 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* (Revised April 2005).

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3 and Plate 1)

This trench was 5m long and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. The recorded layer sequence comprised 0.15m of dark brown almost black organic silty clay topsoil (100), overlying 0.15m of brownish-grey redeposited clay shillet (101). This in turn overlay 0.2m of mid brown silty clay subsoil (102), which was above brownish-grey clay shillet natural subsoil (103). Other than a modern rubbish pit (plastic, glass, etc were present) located in the southeast corner of the trench, no archaeological features or deposits were present and no finds recovered.

5.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 3 and Plates 2-3)

This trench was 19m long in total and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m. The machine excavation of the trench exposed a lot of modern disturbance particularly in the western part of the trench where a large modern rubbish pit was located (again, plastic, glass, brick etc were present). The general layer sequence of deposits comprised 0.2m of dark brown organic silty clay topsoil (200), 0.2-0.4m of yellowish-grey stony clay material which contained a lot of modern rubbish, including bits of plastic plumbing pipe (201). This overlay 0.2m of reddish-brown silty clay material (202), containing frequent roots and which has been interpreted as a buried former topsoil. This was directly above natural subsoil (203). Apart from the modern pit in the western part of the trench, no archaeological features or deposits were present and no finds recovered.

5.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 3 and Plate 4)

This hand dug trench measuring 1m² was excavated east of Trench 1 adjacent to the street frontage (see Fig. 2). The sequence of deposits comprised 0.2m of modern made up ground of mid to dark grey brown silt with frequent stones and modern debris (300), directly overlying natural subsoil (301) of light yellow brown clay shillet. No archaeological features or deposits were present, although a small quantity of 19th century artefacts were recovered from layer 300.

6. THE FINDS

6.1 All finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate, then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage has been scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented, with this information briefly discussed below. Finds totals by material type are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Finds quantification (weight in grams)

Context	Post-medieval pottery		Clay tobacco pipe	
	No	Wt	No	Wt
300	3	133	1	3

6.2 Pottery

Three sherds of probable 19th century lead-glazed earthenware pottery were recovered representing three vessels, including one shallow bowl. These consist of two fragments of North Devon coarseware and one piece of South Somerset type coarseware.

6.3 Clay tobacco pipe

One fragment of plain clay tobacco pipe stem was recovered.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Although the evaluation was limited in extent due to the presence of concrete hardstanding and the use of the site as a working farmyard, it did not identify any *in situ* evidence for archaeological activity, other than two very modern pits. The variable layer sequences recorded over a relatively small area indicates that there are limited areas of surviving original soil profiles, with both Trenches 1 and 2 containing imported material.

7.2 It is not known if the laying of the existing concrete yard surface involved any initial soil removal to create a firm base, so the survival of any archaeological features or deposits beneath this is not known. However, even if present, there is clearly a lot of modern disturbance that has taken place in the yard, so only localised remains might be expected.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

8.1 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 be deposited at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon under the accession code NDDMS 2011.36.

8.2 The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 108688.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Paul Knox of Pearce Construction (Barnstaple) Ltd. The site trial trenching was carried out by Richard Sims and Kerry Tyler, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Cain Hegarty. Thanks are due to Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officer, for his advice and collaboration.

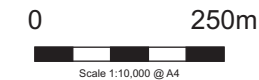
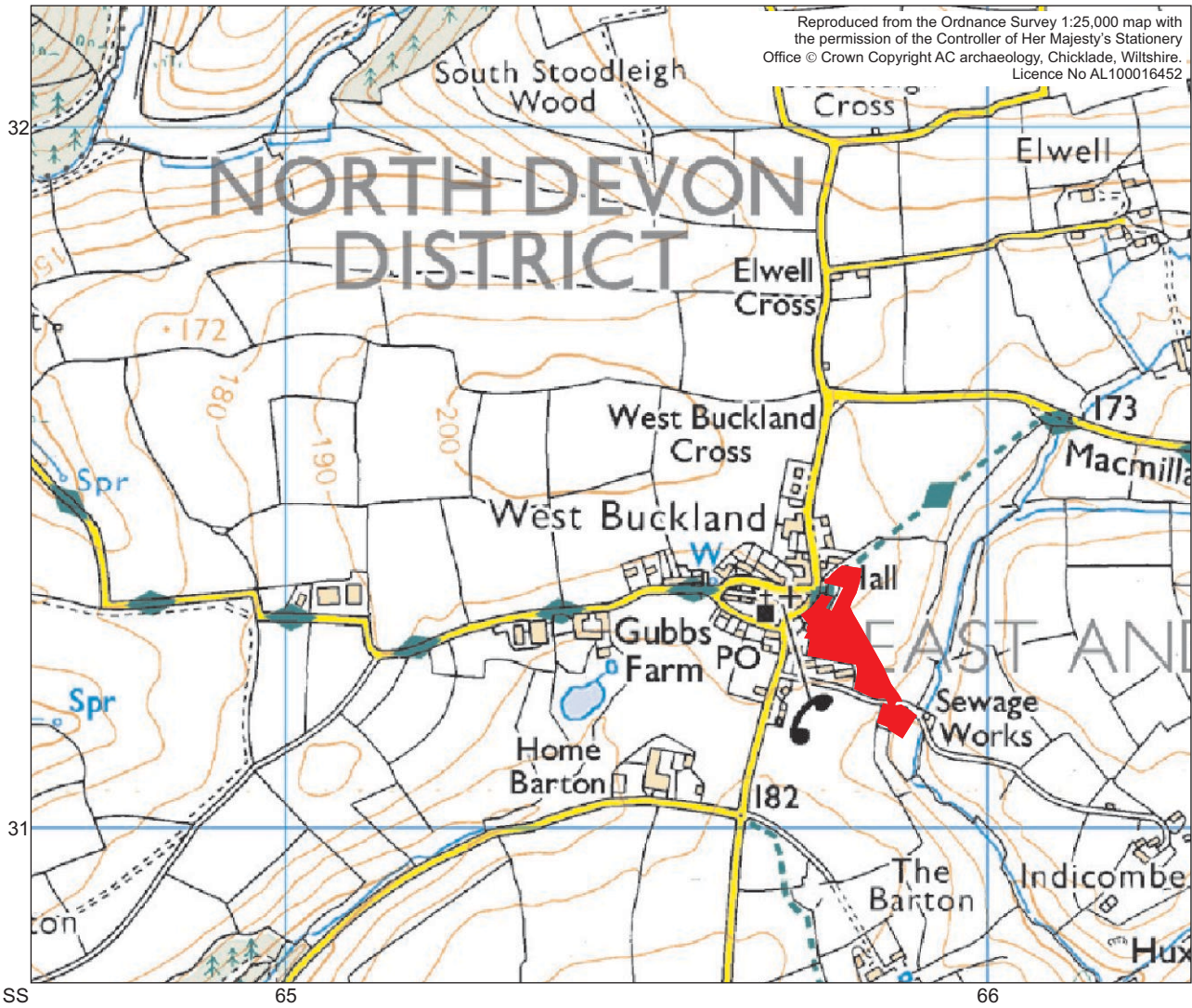
10. SOURCES CONSULTED

Devon Record Office, West Buckland parish tithe map, 1841 and apportionment 1839

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 map sheets 14.7 and 14.11, surveyed 1888, published 1889, revised 1903, published 1904

Valentin, J., 2011, *Land at North Barton, West Buckland, near Barnstaple, Devon: Project Design for an archaeological trench evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology document for client, ref. ACD359/1/0



Application area

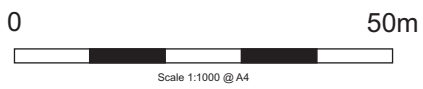
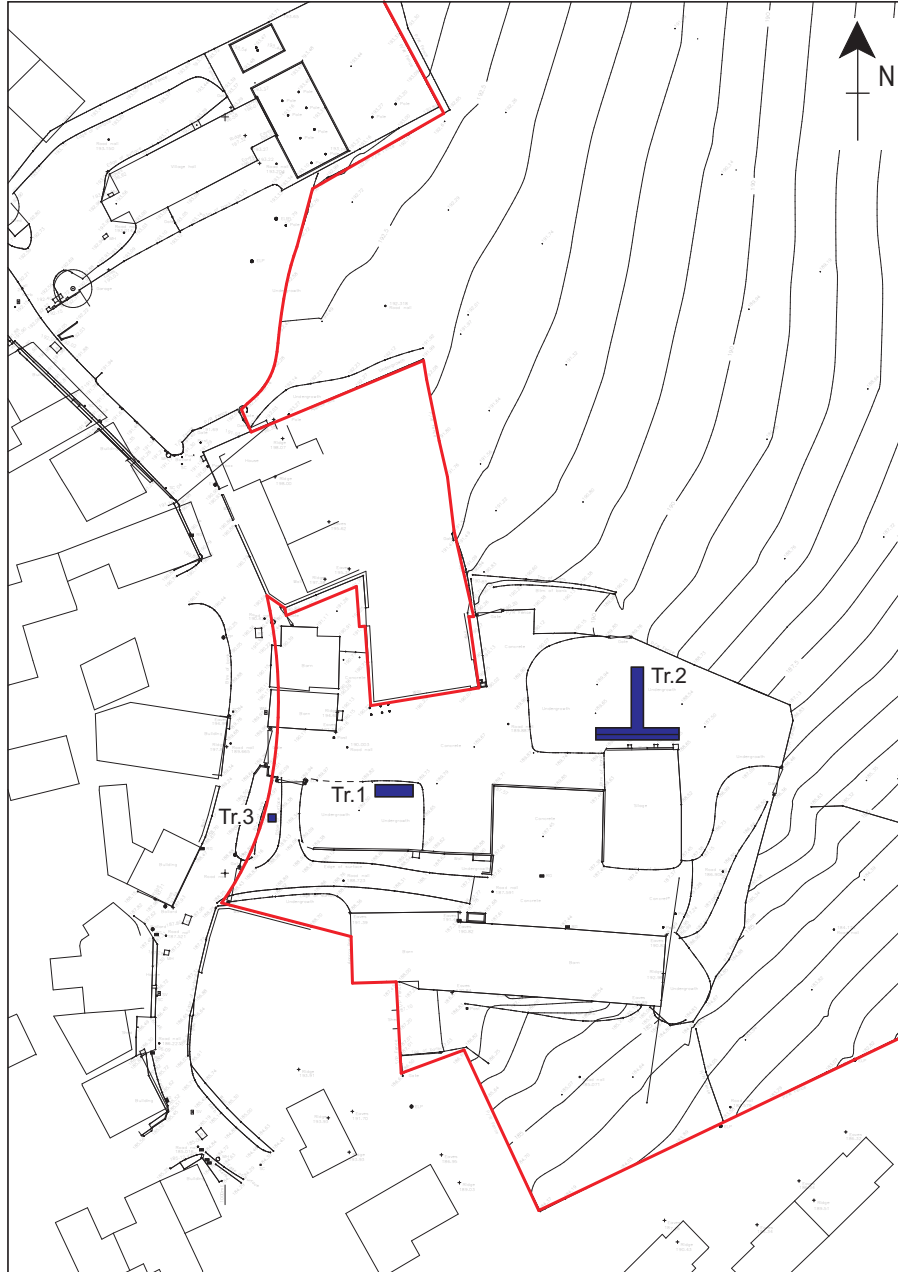
PROJECT

North Barton, West Buckland, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site





-  Application area
-  Modified Trench location

PROJECT

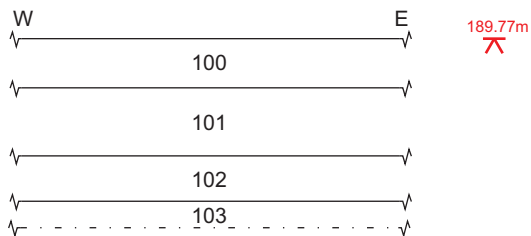
North Barton, West Buckland, Devon

TITLE

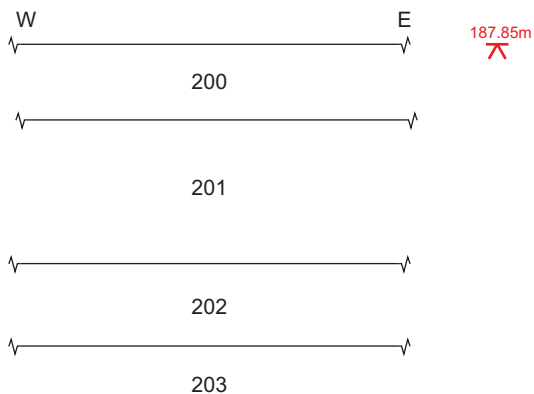
Fig.2: Location of evaluation trenches



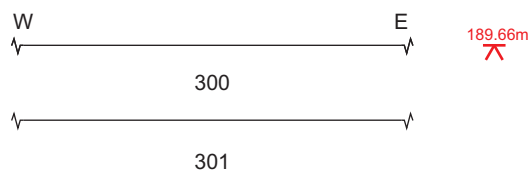
Representative section, Trench 1



Representative section, Trench 2



Representative section, Trench 3



PROJECT

North Barton, West Buckland, Devon

TITLE

Fig.3: Representative sections





Plate 1: General view of Trench 1, looking to the west (Scale 1m)



Plate 2: General view of north-south part of Trench 2, looking to the south (Scale 1m)



Plate 3: South facing representative section of east-west part of Trench 2 (Scale 1m)



Plate 4: General view of Trench 3, looking to the north (Scale 1m)

Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops
Bradninch
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
Nr Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581
Fax: 01747 820440

www.acarchaeology.co.uk