

North Prospect, Plymouth

NGR SX 41635 57130

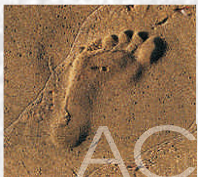
Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Prepared by
Andrew Passmore

On behalf of
Barratt Homes Exeter

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archaeology

NORTH PROSPECT, PLYMOUTH

(NGR SX 41635 57130)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning refs Plymouth City Council: 10/02026/FUL and
10/0265/OUT

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology during October 2011 at the Phase 1A area of the North Prospect regeneration site, Plymouth (NGR SX 46135 57130). The evaluation was undertaken to establish the presence or absence, depth and quality of survival of the Devonport Leat – a late 18th-century water supply to the naval dockyard and adjacent town.

The evaluation comprised three machine-excavated trenches targeting the known course of the leat. No evidence for the leat was uncovered, and it is clear that the whole site had been heavily landscaped during construction of the council estate in the 1920s and 1930s.

1. INTRODUCTION (Figure 1)

1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation was carried out during the construction of new residential accommodation at the Phase 1A area of the North Prospect regeneration site, Plymouth. The work was commissioned by Barratt Homes Exeter, and was undertaken as a condition attached to the grant of planning permission for the regeneration of the area. The work was carried out by AC archaeology on 3 October 2011 after the demolition of the existing houses and whilst construction was underway. The location of the site is shown on Figure 1.

1.2 The Phase 1A area is located in the north-east corner of the North Prospect estate, and is centred on (SX 46135 57130). The topography slopes gently downhill from east to west, although prior to demolition the houses, gardens and Woodhey Road had been terraced into this hillside. The solid geology comprises Upper Devonian Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone.

2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The main archaeological interest in the site is the housing estate, and the course of the Devonport leat that ran through the area prior to the construction of the estate (Passmore and Manning 2011, which provides a full archaeological assessment of the site). The North Prospect estate was built in the late 1920s and 1930s, and is recognised as an early example of post-World War One housing constructed as 'homes for heroes' provided for by the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act. North Prospect was the first council estate to be constructed in Plymouth by the local authority.

The Devonport Leat was constructed between 1793 and 1797 to supply fresh water from Dartmoor to the Naval dockyard and surrounding town. The leat survives as an earthwork on the open moor and is also visible in places within Plymouth.

2.2 The evaluation forms part of a wider scheme of archaeological mitigation associated with the redevelopment; the other elements comprise historic building recording. Prior to their demolition a record of the council houses in the Phase 1A area was prepared by Exeter Archaeology (Passmore and Young 2011).

3. AIM

3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, depth and quality of survival of the Devonport Leat, and if survival is good to ensure that an adequate record of its structure is made prior to its removal by the development.

4. METHODOLOGY (Figure 2)

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design previously prepared by Exeter Archaeology (Stead 2011) that covers all archaeological investigations on the site. Due to site constraints the proposed number of trenches was reduced from four to three and the position of one trench moved to provide better coverage in the middle of the site.
- 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 (Figure 3, Plates 1-2)

5.1 Trench 1

This trench was located in the north-east corner of the site, and due to the presence of services (see below) was excavated in two 4m long sections, each 2.20m wide. Natural bedrock was exposed at a depth of 0.20m from the surface (between 54.85 and 54.95m aOD, and was overlain by garden soil. The natural ground was heavily disturbed by trenches for sewerage, electric and telecommunications services. No archaeological features were exposed.

5.2 Trench 2 (Plate 1)

This trench was located within the former gardens of properties on the north side of Woodhey Road, and measured 11.5m long by 2.20m wide. Natural bedrock was exposed at a depth of 0.45m below the surface (between 54.04 and 54.28m aOD), and was overlaid by modern demolition rubble. No archaeological features were exposed.

5.3 Trench 3 (Plate 2)

This trench was located across the eastern arm of Woodhey Road and the former garden of a property on the east side of the road, and measured 12m long by 2.20m wide. Natural bedrock was exposed at a depth of 0.44m below the surface (between 53.94 and 55.27m aOD) and was overlaid by modern demolition rubble. The western part of the trench contained a flat terrace associated with the construction of Woodhey Road. No archaeological features were exposed.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1** No archaeological features were exposed and no finds recovered during the evaluation. It is clear from the exposures of unweathered solid natural bedrock within both the evaluation trenches and newly-excavated foundation trenches adjacent to North Prospect Road that the site was heavily landscaped in the 1920s and 1930s when the estate was constructed. Woodhey Road was laid onto a flat terrace and house plots across the Phase 1A were also constructed on terraces. Further levelling of front gardens for car parking took place in the later 20th-century as car ownership increased.
- 6.2** Excavations along the line of the Devonport Leat elsewhere in Plymouth have demonstrated that where it passed through agricultural land it was constructed through the topsoil and into weathered natural deposits. Neither historic topsoil nor weathered natural survived on site and it is highly unlikely that the leat survives within the development area.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

- 7.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. The archive will be deposited under the accession number AR.2011.38 at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.
- 7.2** The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) entry has been completed with the unique identifier 111774.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Barratt Homes Exeter, and managed for them by Matthew Hollands and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The evaluation was carried out by Paul Jones and Naomi Hughes, with the report illustrations prepared by Cain Hegarty. Thanks are due to the staff of Barratt Homes and Steve Hoskins Construction for their assistance on site and for providing and machine and driver.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Passmore, A.J., and Manning, P., 2011, *Archaeological Assessment of proposed Redevelopment at North Prospect (Phases 1A and 1B), Plymouth*. Exeter Archaeology Report Number **11.11**.

Passmore, A.J., and Young, G., *Historic Building Recording of Council Houses at North Prospect Phase 1A Development Area, Plymouth*. Exeter Archaeology Report Number **11.38**.

Stead, P.M., 2011, *Project Design for Archaeological Recording and Trench Evaluation at North Prospect (Phases 1A and 1B), Plymouth*. Exeter Archaeology project number 7487.



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PROJECT

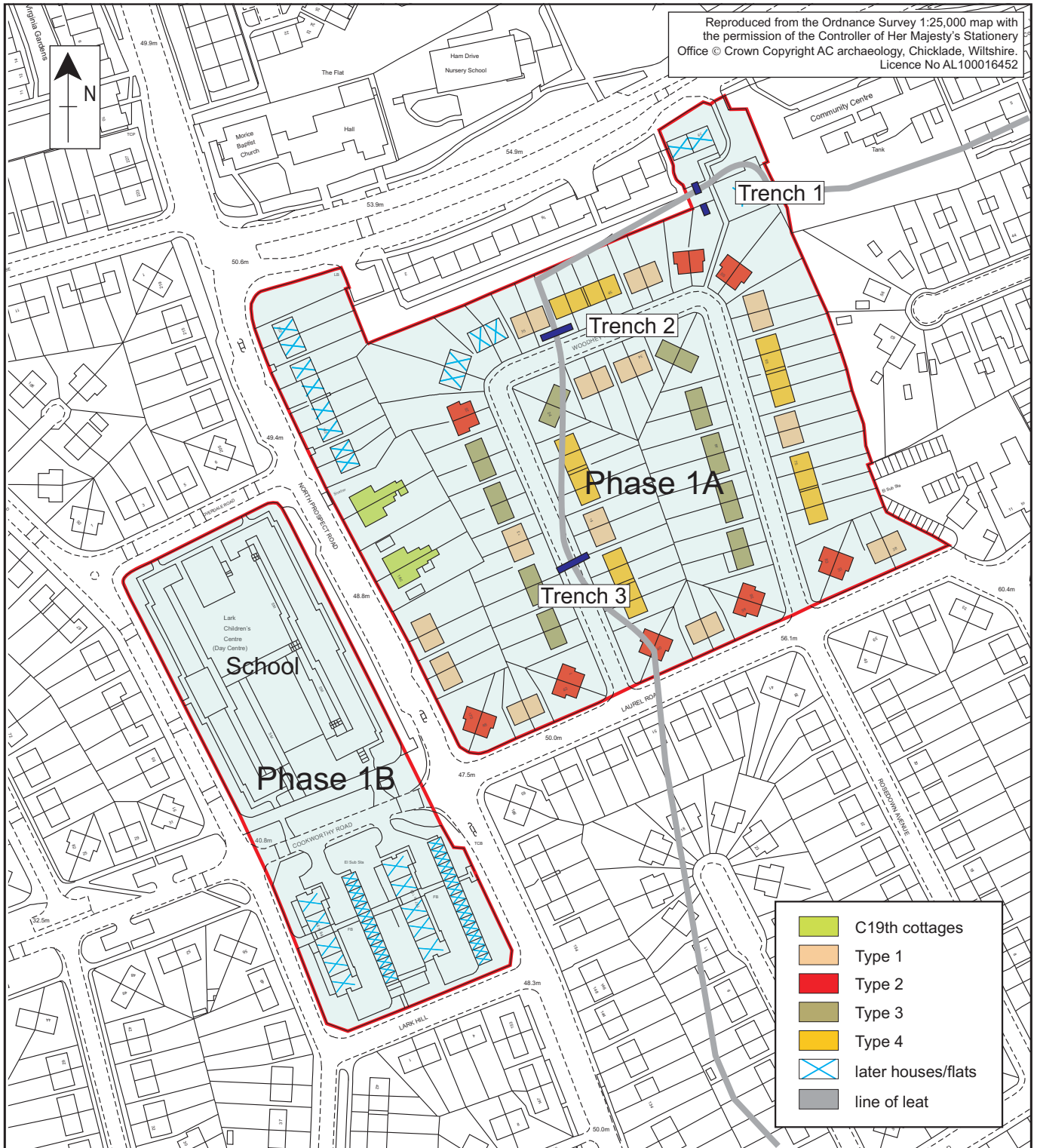
North Prospect, Plymouth

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site



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0 100m
Scale 1:2000@A4

■ Trench Location

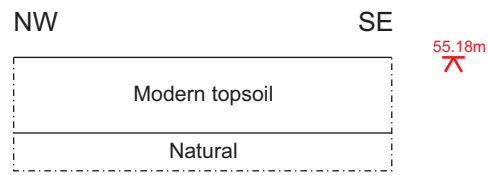
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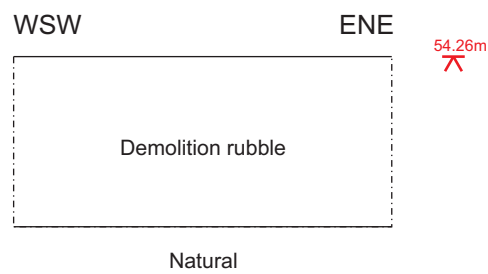
Fig. 2: Location of trenches



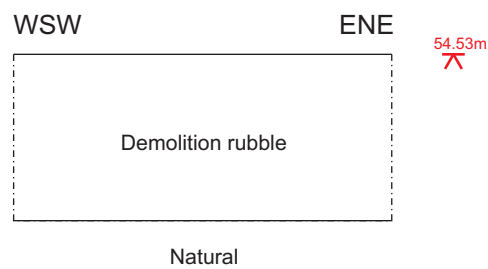
a) Representative section of Trench 1



b) Representative section of Trench 2



c) Representative section of Trench 3



PROJECT

North Prospect, Plymouth

TITLE

Fig. 3: Representative sections



Plate 1: Trench 2, viewed from the west-southwest. Scale 1m



Plate 2: Trench 3 showing terrace for Woodhey Road in the foreground, viewed from the west-southwest. Scale 1m

Wiltshire Office

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

Telephone: 01747 820581
Fax: 01747 820440

Devon Office

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

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

www.acarchaeology.co.uk