

Oakdown Touring and Holiday Caravan Park, Branscombe, Devon (NGR SX 9210 9218)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning reference: East Devon District Council 11/0157/COU

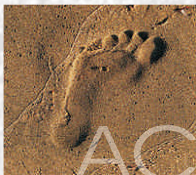
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On behalf of Mrs Franks

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archaeology

OAKDOWN TOURING AND HOLIDAY CARAVAN PARK, BRANSCOMBE, DEVON

(NGR SY 16949 90151)

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology in November 2011 on land at Oakdown Touring and Holiday Caravan Park, Branscombe, Devon (NGR SY 16949 90151). The work was undertaken as a condition of the grant of planning consent for the change of use from agricultural land to use for siting of 59 static caravans.

A total of six trenches was excavated, and two postholes were exposed. Neither can be confidently dated, although one is likely to be associated with the use of the land as an RAF radar station during the Second World War. A small assemblage of probable Bronze Age flints was recovered from the topsoil.

The formation depth of the new development (pads for the caravans, paths and access drive) is significantly shallower than the depth of topsoil and subsoil and therefore will not impact on any buried archaeological deposits.

1. INTRODUCTION (Figure 1)

- 1.1** An archaeological trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology in November 2011 on land at the Oakdown Touring and Holiday Caravan Park, Branscombe, Devon (NGR SY 16949 90151; Figure 1) as a first phase of archaeological works. The archaeological works were commissioned by Mrs Franks, and are required under condition 6 of the grant of planning permission (East Devon District Council application number 11/0157/COU) for the change of use of agricultural land to use for siting of 59 static caravans.
- 1.2** The caravan park lies adjacent to the A3052, and is situated 2.5km northwest of the village of Branscombe. The development area is located in the southeast corner of the Caravan Park, and the land is currently used as pasture. The area is generally flat, and is situated at a height of 162m aOD. Solid geology comprises sandstone of the upper greensand formation overlain by clay with flints.
- 1.3** The development will comprise the siting of 59 new static caravans on concrete pads, along with associated infrastructure including an access drive, car parking bays, pathways and the installation of services.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The site lies within an area of known prehistoric activity, demonstrated by a concentration of findspots of flint tools in the surrounding landscape (Devon Historic Environment Record entries 24144-24159, 24153-24160, and 59703). The groundworks associated with the change of use of the site have the potential to expose and destroy archaeological features and artefacts associated with the known prehistoric activity in the area.
- 2.2** The area has historically been used for agriculture, although during the Second World War the land now occupied by the Caravan Park along with the fields to the east and to the north of the A3052 were taken over by the Air Ministry, and occupied by RAF

Branscombe, a chain home air-defence radar station (Passmore and Passmore 2008). Contemporary German aerial photographs and post-war RAF aerial photographs depict a number of buildings within the present development site, including one structure associated with the intermediate phase of the Radar Station – a traverse around a similar building survives immediately to the west of the site. After the war these structures were demolished and the field returned to agricultural use.

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 have been reviewed by the Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES) and in view of the largely negative results have recommended that no further archaeological monitoring or excavation is required.

4. METHODOLOGY (Figure 2; Plate 1)

- 4.1** The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of six 1.60m wide trenches totalling 120m in length, which were situated along the line of the new drive (Figure 2; Plate 1). The work was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2011) and approved by DCHES prior to commencement on site.
- 4.2** The removal of soil overburden was carried out under the control and direction of the site archaeologist. Topsoil and subsoil were removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket, and excavation ceased at either the level at which archaeological deposits were exposed, or natural subsoil was encountered.
- 4.3** All archaeological deposits were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro-forma* recording system, comprising a written, drawn and photographic record, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*. 'Negative' trenches were recorded using trench record forms; 'positive' trenches were recorded using the full standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system. Detailed sections and plans were produced at a scale of 1:10, 1:20, 1:50 and 1:100. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.
- 4.4** Following excavation of the trenches spoilheaps were scanned for displaced artefacts. This was undertaken with assistance from members of the Branscombe Archive.

5. RESULTS (Figure 3; Plates 2-4)

5.1 Introduction

All of the trenches contained a mid orangey-brown slightly sandy silty-clay topsoil, with a dark orangey-brown silty-clay cultivation subsoil directly overlying a natural subsoil of mottled mid grey and mid orange clay containing occasional natural flints. Of the six trenches excavated, two contained archaeological features. No finds were recovered from either of these features. Flints were recovered from the overlying soils in all trenches with the exception of Trench 6. Trenches deemed to be 'Negative' (i.e. not containing archaeological features), are summarised in table form only.

5.2 Positive trenches

Trench 4

This trench was aligned northeast-southwest, measured 30m long and was located at the southeastern end of the field. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.52m. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.43m. A small circular posthole [404] was exposed at the north-eastern end of the trench.

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
400	0-0.18m	Mid orangey-brown slightly sandy silty clay	Turf and topsoil
401	0.18m-0.43m	Dark orangey-brown silty clay with abundant small stone inclusions	Agricultural subsoil
402	0.43m+	Mottled pale yellowish-grey clay and mid orange clay	Natural subsoil

Feature F404

A circular posthole measuring 0.42m diameter by 0.07m deep with fairly steep sides and a moderate break of slope at base into a flat base. It contained a single fill (403) of mid greyish-brown silty clay with rare flecks of charcoal.

Trench 6

This trench was aligned northwest-southeast, measured 15m long was located near the western boundary of the field. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.55m. Natural subsoil was encountered from a depth of 0.49m. A small oval-shaped posthole [603] was exposed at the south-east end of the trench.

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
600	0-0.32m	Mid orangey-brown slightly sandy silty clay	Turf and topsoil
601	0.32-0.49m	Dark orangey-brown silty clay with abundant small stone inclusions	Agricultural subsoil
604	0.49m+	Mid orange clay with occasional small sub-angular stones	Natural subsoil

Feature F603

An oval-shaped posthole measuring 0.57m diameter by 0.13m deep, with steep sides and a sharp break of slope at base into a flat base. It contained a single fill (602) of mid greyish-brown silty-clay with orange mottling.

5.3 Negative Trenches

Trench	Context Number	Depth below ground level	Description
Trench 1	30m long - located at the north end of the field		
	100	0-0.28m	Turf and topsoil
	101	0.28-0.42m	Agricultural subsoil
	102	0.42m+	Natural subsoil
Trench 2	15m long - located at the northeast end of the field		
	200	0-0.10m	Turf and topsoil
	201	0.10-0.22m	Redeposited natural
	202	0.22-0.52m	Agricultural subsoil
	203	0.52m+	Natural subsoil
Trench 3	15m long - located at the southeast end of the field		
	300	0-0.29m	Turf and topsoil
	301	0.29-0.43m	Agricultural subsoil
	302	0.43m+	Natural subsoil
Trench 5	15m long - located at the southwest end of the field		
	500	0-0.25m	Turf and topsoil
	501	0.25-0.50m	Agricultural subsoil
	502	0.50m+	Natural subsoil

6. THE FINDS, by J. Valentin

6.1 A small lithic assemblage was recovered from the evaluation. These are listed in the table below.

Context	Worked Flint/Chert		Burnt Flint/Chert	
	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.
100	1	23		
200	5	60	1	27
300	1	8		
301	1	5		
400	7	140		
500	2	117		
Totals	17	353	1	27

6.2 Catalogue of worked flint/chert

Context 100:

Broken waste flake in Beer flint

Context 200:

Burnt waste flake in flint, waste flake in chert, waste flake in flint, broken waste flake in flint, small tertiary flake in flint, broken waste flake in flint

Context 300:

Broken waste flake in flint

Context 301:

Broken waste flake in flint

Context 400:

Single platform flake core in chert, waste flake in flinty chert, waste flake in flint, broken waste flake in flinty chert, broken waste flake in flint, broken waste flake in flint, retouched flake in flint – ?side scraper

Context 500:

Large primary flake in flint, retouched probable end scraper on flake in flinty chert

6.3 Comment

This small (18 pieces, 380 grams) wholly residual assemblage mainly comprises locally-derived material of Beer flint or gravel chert. It is dominated by waste flakes, although one end scraper on flake and one retouched flake, probably a scraper-type implement, are also present. The assemblage is mostly undiagnostic, but based on a flake technology. It is more likely to be later prehistoric, probably Bronze Age in date. The absence of any associated features and small size of the assemblage, indicates that the material is more of a general background scatter rather than indicative of *in situ* occupation.

7. COMMENTS

- 7.1** The evaluation has identified limited evidence for archaeological activity within the site. Two postholes were exposed, both cut into the natural. Neither contained any finds and cannot be positively dated. Although of a similar size and shape to 404, posthole 603 contained a darker mottled greyish-brown fill of fairly loose compaction, which appeared to have been to have been deliberately backfilled. Given its location within the northwest corner of the field it is certainly possible that this feature relates to the nearby buildings associated with the Second World War radar station. A small collection of lithics was recovered, mostly from the topsoil. These are likely to date from the Bronze Age.

The deep layer of redeposited natural clay encountered beneath the topsoil, but overlying the agricultural subsoil, in trench 2 is likely to relate to landscaping after the Second World War. The deep sequence of topsoil and subsoil may also reflect this landscaping.

The majority of the development will involve excavations to a maximum depth of 0.25m from the surface. The evaluation has demonstrated that where archaeological features are present they are located at a depth of at least 0.43m below the surface, and will therefore will not be affected by construction works.

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. The archive will ultimately be deposited under the relevant accession number at the RAMM, Exeter, at the earliest in 2013 when the current museum non-acceptance policy will be reviewed.
- 8.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 114090, and includes a digital copy of this report.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Mrs Franks. The evaluation was carried out by Richard Sims and Fiona Pink, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Cain Hegarty. The finds were quantified by Kerry Kerr-Peterson and identified by John Valentin. Thanks are due to Stephen Reed from the DCHES, for his advice and collaboration, to Alistair Franks for providing and driving the machine, and Barbara Bender, Barbara Farquharson, John Torrance, Sue Dymond, Trev Dymond and Dave Seward – members of the Branscombe Archive – for their assistance during the fieldwork.

10. REFERENCES

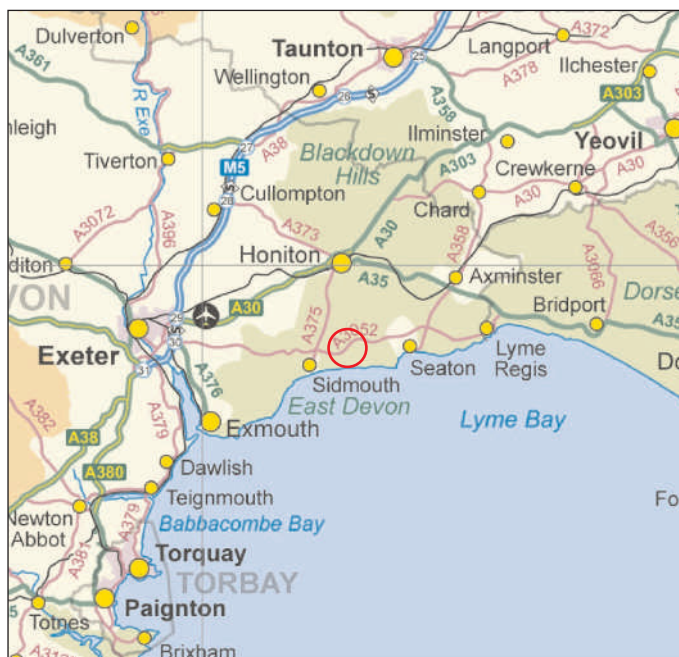
Devon Historic Environment Record

Entries 24144-24159, 24153-24160, and 59703

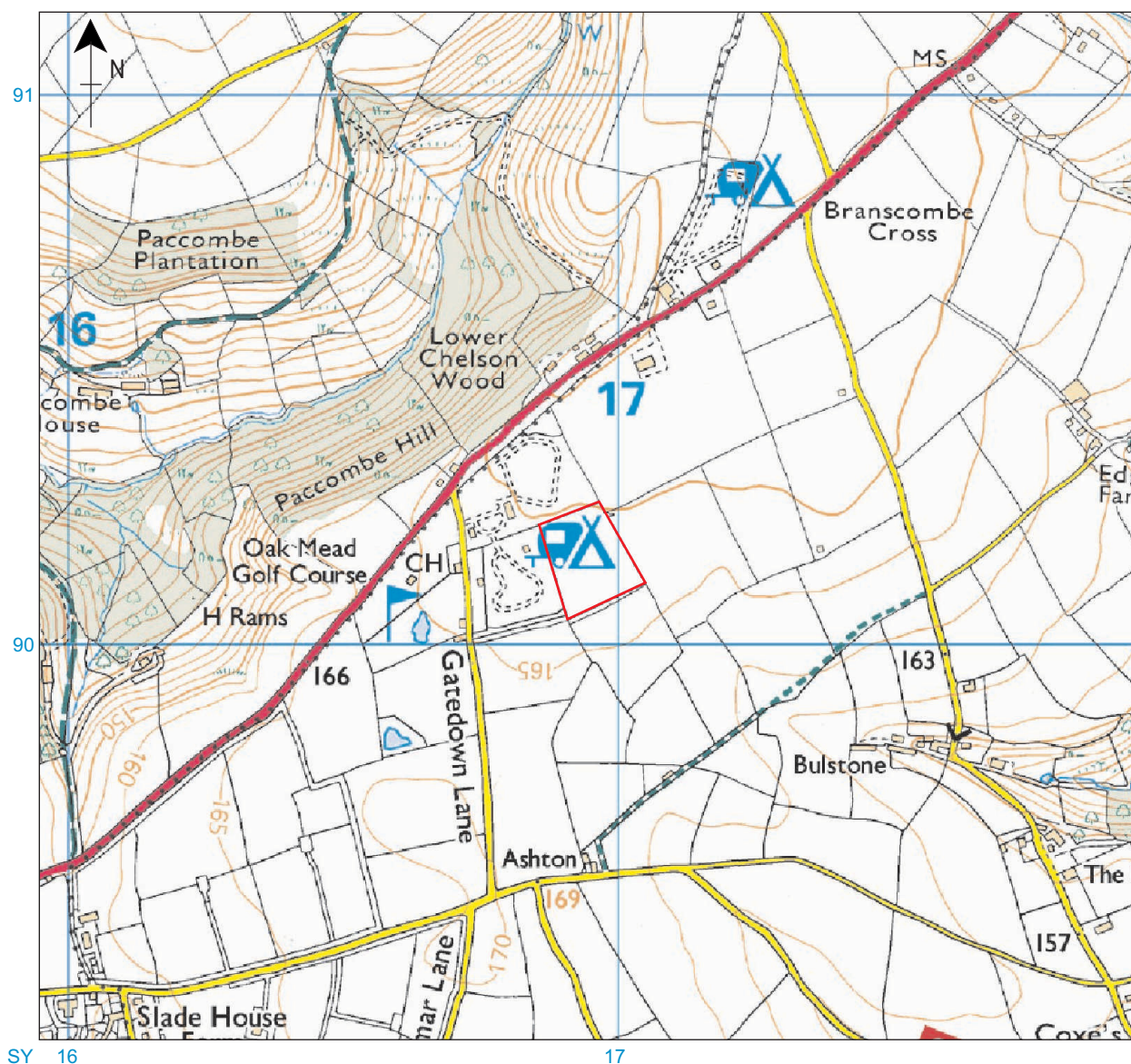
Published Sources

Passmore, M. and Passmore, A., 2008, *RAF Air-Defence Radar Stations in Devon: the Second World War and beyond*.

Passmore, A. 2011. *Oakdown Touring and Holiday Caravan Park, Branscombe, Devon NGR SY 16949 90151 Project design for an archaeological trench evaluation and watching brief*. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref ACD389/1/1



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PROJECT

Oakdown Touring and Holiday Caravan Park

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site

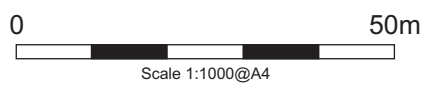


- KEY**
- Proposed New Caravan Plot
50 plots at 4.3 x 12.8 metres
unless otherwise stated
 - Proposed New Drive
4.0 metre wide tarmac Concrete
 - Proposed Footpaths
1.0 metre wide concrete slabs
 - Proposed Parking Bays
each bay 2.6 m wide x 4.8m long
5 bays for every 4 caravans
Surface: Gravel
 - Proposed Refuse Storage Area
(encloses fire point)
900mm high close board fencing
around concrete base
 - Proposed Lighting Bollards
(refer to detail sheets)
 - Proposed Hedging
(bush or scalloped)
1200mm high
 - Proposed Light Standard Trees
(6-8cm girth)
 - Proposed Native Shrub Areas
 - Amenity Grass

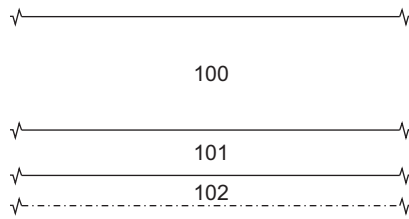
Note:
Caravans are minimum 5.0 metres distance apart
Swales and Wetland Habitat Areas form surface
water management arrangements and have been
taken from Arbris Flood Risk Assessment and
Surface Water Management Plan



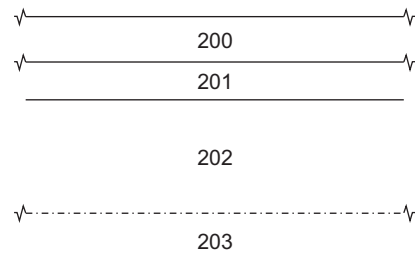
trenches



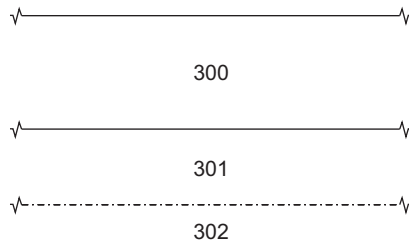
a) Representative section of Trench 1



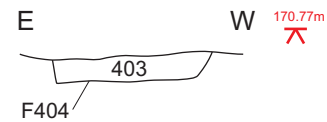
b) Representative section of Trench 2



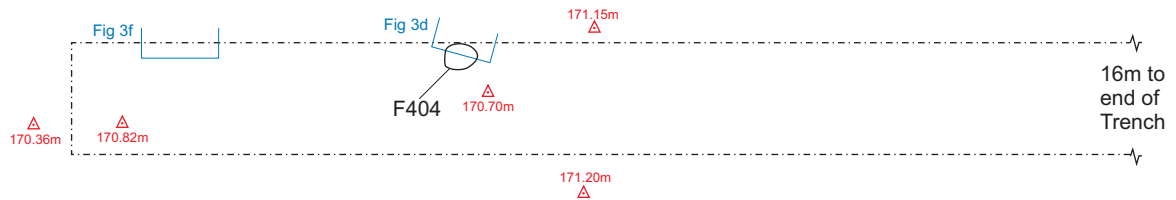
c) Representative section of Trench 3



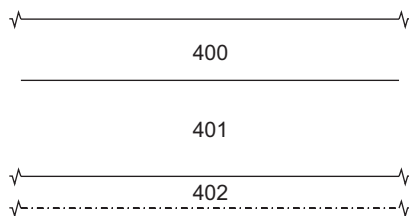
d) Section of posthole F404



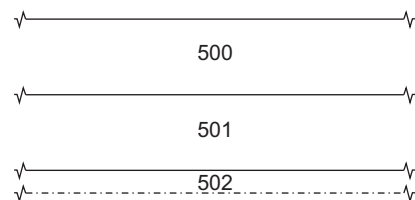
e) Plan of Trench 4



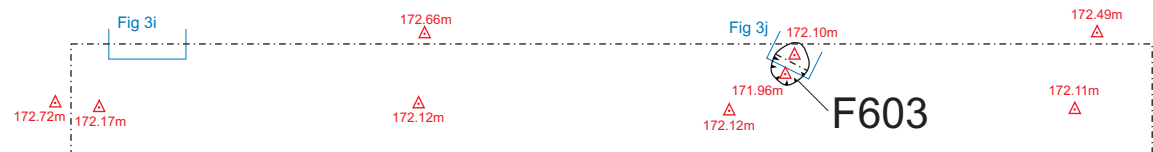
f) Representative section of Trench 4



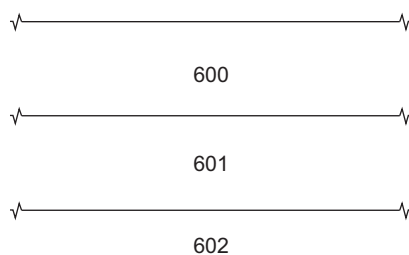
g) Representative section of Trench 5



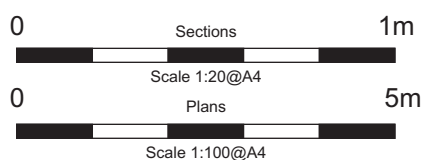
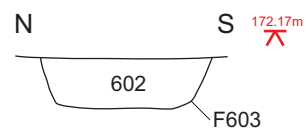
e) Plan of Trench 6



i) Representative section of Trench 3



j) Section of posthole F404



PROJECT

Oakdown Touring and Holiday Caravan Park

TITLE

Fig. 3: Plans and sections





Plate 1: General view of site, view from southeast



Plate 2: Posthole F404, view from the north. (Scale 0.3m)



Plate 3: Posthole F603, view from the west. (scale 0.3m)



Plate 4: Representative section, Trench 4. (Scale 1m)

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