Phase 2 land adjacent to Court Farm, Collumpton, Devon
NGR (centred on) ST 02231 07841

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning ref. Mid Devon District Council 09/01115/MFUL

Prepared by
Simon Hughes

With contributions from:
Michael J. Allen, Alan Clapham,
Kerry Kerr-Peterson and Rob Scaife

On behalf of
Persimmon Homes (South West).

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during December 2010 on land forming the Phase 2 development at Court Farm, Cullompton, Devon (NGR ST 02231 07841). The site occupies an area of approximately 2.8 hectares on agricultural land, bisected by a small tributary of the River Culm, on the northern outskirts of Cullompton. There were no known archaeological sites present on the site itself, but it is located in a general area where evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British activity has been previously recorded.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches totalling 375m in length and with each trench 2m wide. A series of wetland deposits was exposed close to the stream on low-lying ground. These comprised peat deposits interspersed with sandy-loam and humic silts overlain by colluvial deposits. Palaeo-environmental analyses of samples taken from these layers indicates that they were naturally formed in wet and standing water conditions, with scrub vegetation and pasture cover. Two radiocarbon dates from the layers indicate arable farming in the near vicinity during the Romano-British period. There was no indication of actual prehistoric or Romano-British settlement on the site; with only a piece of iron slag and a prehistoric chert waste flake recovered from the mid sequence of the deposits. Other worked flint/chert and one sherd of probable late Iron Age pottery came from residual contexts.

Elsewhere on the site remains of part of a 19th-century tannery complex was exposed as a series of brick footings. Other features included a post-medieval field boundary ditch exposed in two trenches and a probable pit of similar date.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land forming the Phase 2 development area at Court Farm, Cullompton, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during December 2010. The work was commissioned by Persimmon Homes (South West) Ltd and was required by Mid Devon District Council as a condition (8) of planning consent for the erection of 86 dwellings, as well as associated works, as advised by Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (hereafter DCHES).

1.2 The site occupies an area of approximately 2.8 hectares and is located on the northern outskirts of Cullompton on what is currently agricultural land (Fig. 1). The ground slopes gently down from the north and southwest sides into a small tributary stream of the River Culm which bisects the site (Plate 1). The underlying solid geology comprises Permian Breccia.

1.3 This report presents the results of the archaeological trench evaluation, which was largely negative, but also includes the results of a subsequent programme of palaeo-environmental analyses of sampled waterlogged and peaty/humic deposits. These analyses were supported by a pair of radiocarbon dates, which showed the preserved deposits were laid down in the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A settlement at Cullompton is recorded as early as AD 880, when it was known as ‘Columntune’. Throughout most of the medieval period it was a royal holding. The present parish church dates to the 15th century, but is probably on the site of an earlier minster complex dating to the late Saxon period.

2.2 The site is located to the north of the historic core of Cullompton in an area where recent investigations have identified evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British settlement. To the southwest of the site at Shortlands Lane, excavations have identified evidence for extensive Romano-British remains, including a complete Black-Burnished Ware jar with associated shale gaming board. West of the site, on St. Andrew's Hill, two successive Roman forts have been identified (Simpson and Griffith 1993). Further to the north, on Willand Road, later prehistoric remains and a Romano-British rural settlement have been identified in excavation (Hood 2010).

2.3 The Cullompton parish tithe map of 1842 depicts the site as an open field bisected by a stream. By 1888 the first edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map shows a complex of buildings annotated 'Court Tannery' in the east part of the site. These continue to occupy this part of the site in subsequent years.

3. AIMS

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.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2010), submitted to and approved by the DCHES Archaeology Officer prior to commencement on site.

4.2 The work comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches totalling 375m in length and with each trench 2m wide. Trenches were positioned throughout the site to provide representative coverage in areas to be affected by development and, in particular, to record any palaeoenvironmental remains adjacent to the stream (see Fig. 2). Overburden removal ceased at the level at which natural subsoil or archaeological deposits were exposed.

4.3 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. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS

5.1 **Trench 1** *(Detailed section Fig. 3a; Plate 2)*
This T-shaped trench was positioned northwest to southeast along the gradient, with the northeast to southwest portion extending downslope towards the stream. It had a total length of 75m. Natural subsoil (context 112), which comprised a yellowish-red to red clay, was exposed within three machine-excavated sondages at a depth of around 1.4m.

The natural subsoil was overlain towards the northeast by a mid grey sandy-clay alluvial layer (111) with abundant water-worn gravel inclusions. Sealing alluvial layer 111 were three dark grey peat layers (110, 107 and 105), divided by two mid grey sand and clayey-silt multi-laminated alluvial layers (108 and 106). Alluvial clay layer 111 was also overlain to the southwest by a light reddish-grey silty-sand layer (109), which contained abundant gravel inclusions. This was below peat layer 107. One piece of undiagnostic iron slag was recovered from layer 109.

Sealing uppermost peat layer 105 was a mid grey silty-clay possible buried soil layer (104), which was overlain to the southwest by a light grey silty-clay colluvial deposit (102) and to the

northeast by a thick mid reddish-brown clayey-silt dumped soil deposit (103). Layer 103 also sealed a 0.3m thick dark grey/black layer of modern clinker and crushed stone (114).

Layer 102 was overlain by a light red silty-clay colluvial subsoil (101), which was sealed by a further modern dumped soil layer 113. Layer 113 also overlay 103 and comprised a mid brown clayey-silt. This was below topsoil.

5.2 Trench 2 *(Detailed sections Figs 3b-c)*

This trench was 50m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (214) within a machine-excavated sondage. The natural subsoil comprised a mid red sandy-clay with moderate gravel inclusions and was present at a depth of 0.97m. This was overlain by a mid yellowish-grey alluvial clay (206) containing abundant gravel inclusions. The alluvial layer was overlain by a series of deposits which included dark grey peaty-clay (207), mid greyish-brown and dark reddish-brown silty-clay alluvial/colluvial deposits (205 and 208) and a mid reddish-brown silty-clay alluvium (204).

Layer 204 was overlain by a mid reddish-brown silty-clay colluvial layer (203) towards the southwest and was cut by a linear feature (F209) towards the northeast end of the trench. Probable ditch F209 was northwest to southeast aligned, 2.75m wide and 0.5m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a series of four fills which comprised mid reddish-brown to mid greyish-brown silty clays (213, 212, 211 and 210). Upper fill 210 contained frequent sub-angular stones and a fragment of 18th or 19th century brick.

Layer 203 and upper fill 210 were overlain by agricultural subsoil (201) and topsoil (200).

5.3 Trench 3 *(Detailed section Fig. 4; Plate 3)*

This trench was 50m long and positioned along the slope down towards the stream. Natural subsoil (309), which comprised a light red clay, was exposed within three machine-excavated sondages at a depth of between 1.05m and 1.4m below ground level. This was overlain in all sondages by a mid yellowish-grey alluvial clay (308) with frequent water-worn gravel inclusions.

At the northeast end of the trench, alluvial layer 308 was overlain by a dark grey peaty-clay (307) and a light brownish-grey multi laminated alluvium (306). Towards the centre of the trench layer 308 was overlain by an alluvial mid brownish-grey clay layer (305) with frequent water-worn gravel inclusions. Layers 307 and 305 were sealed by a mid to dark grey clayey-silt buried soil (304), which was in turn below a light grey silty-clay alluvium (310). This was under a light brownish-red silty-clay colluvial layer (303).

Layer 303 was overlain by a 0.7m thick layer of modern dumped mid brown clayey-silt (302), which was sealed by the current topsoil and turf (300). At the southwest end of the trench, on the higher ground, an agricultural subsoil was present (301).

One worked flint waste flake was recovered from layer 305.

5.4 Trench 4

This trench was 20m long and excavated onto natural subsoil, which comprised a mid red silty-clay with common gravel inclusions (402). This was present at a depth of 0.53m and was below an agricultural subsoil (401), then topsoil (400). No archaeological features or deposits were present and no finds were recovered.

5.5 Trench 5 *(Plan Fig. 5a, detailed sections Figs 5b-c)*

This trench was 50m long and excavated into an alluvial mid yellowish-brown sandy-clay (504) that was exposed at a depth of 1.1m below ground level within two machine-excavated

sondages. Layer 504 was overlain by a colluvial light brown sandy-clay (503), which was below a mid reddish-brown silty-clay colluvial layer (502).

At the southwest end of the trench layer 502 was overlain by a modern spread of mid grey silty-clay containing concrete block and stone rubble and machine-made brick fragments (501). This was under a light grey sandy-clay agricultural subsoil layer (505), then topsoil (500).

Towards the centre of the trench layer 502 was cut by a northwest-southeast aligned linear feature (F508). This was 2.16m wide and 0.41m deep, with moderately-steep sloping sides and a flattish base. This probable ditch contained a basal fill of mid brown sandy-clay (507) containing common sub-rounded gravel inclusions, which was below an upper fill of mid reddish-brown sandy-clay (506).

One prehistoric worked flint flake and a bodysherd of late Iron Age pottery was recovered from fill 507 and a worked flint flake was recovered from layer 501.

5.6 Trench 6

This trench was 50m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (602), which comprised a light reddish-brown silty-clay containing common gravel inclusions. This was present at a depth of 0.98m and was below colluvial subsoil (601) and topsoil (600). No archaeological features or deposits were present and no finds recovered.

5.7 Trench 7 *(Plan Fig. 6c, detailed section 6a)*

This trench was 40m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.84m below ground level into a colluvial mid reddish-brown silty-clay (702). Towards the northeast end of the trench layer 702 was overlain by a dark grey peaty layer (707), present at a depth of 0.32m below ground level. No further investigation was possible at the northeast end of the trench due to the high water table.

Layer 702 was overlain towards the southwest by a dark reddish-brown colluvial silty-clay layer (701), which was cut by a partially exposed possible pit (F706). F706 was 1.21m wide and 0.58m deep, with steep sides and a flat base. It contained a dark grey silty-clay basal fill (705) containing common charcoal inclusions. This was below mid greyish-brown and mid reddish-brown silty-clay fills (704 and 703). No finds were recovered.

5.8 Trench 8

This trench was 10m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (803), which comprised a mid red silty-clay present at a depth of 2.35m. This was overlain by a 1.55m thick dumped deposit of late 19th to early 20th century domestic refuse (802), containing brick, tile, glass, cans etc. This in turn was sealed by a 0.6m thick layer of light brown silty-clay imported soil (801) and topsoil (800). No archaeological features or deposits were present and no finds were recovered.

5.9 Trench 9 *(Plan Fig. 6d, detailed section Fig. 6b; Plate 4)*

This trench was 30m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (904) within a machine-excavated sondage at the southeast end of the trench. This comprised a mid red silty-clay present at a depth of 0.8m and below a dark grey silty-clay colluvium (903/905). The northwest end of the trench was excavated to a depth of 0.63m onto the top of a series of brick footings (907 and 908). The footings were between 0.25m and 0.5m wide and were constructed of 19th century hand-made bricks bonded with a lime mortar. Between each of the footings the voids were in-filled with a demolition deposit of loose brick rubble and mortar fragments (906). This was overlain by a levelling layer of similar crushed demolition material (901), which also sealed layer 903 and was directly below topsoil (901).

6. THE FINDS

By Kerry Kerr-Peterson

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

Table 1: Finds summary (weight in grams)

Context No.	Description	Late Iron pottery		Prehistoric worked flint/chert		Ceramic building material		Fe Slag	
		No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.
109	Alluvial layer, Trench 1							1	6
204	Colluvial layer, Trench 2			3	29				
210	Fill of ditch F209					1	45		
305	Alluvial layer, Trench 3			1	69				
502	Colluvial subsoil, Trench 5			1	27				
507	Basal fill of ditch F508	1	9	1	1				
601	Subsoil, Trench 6			2	1				
Totals		1	9	8	127	1	45	1	6

6.2 The small assemblage of finds recovered from the evaluation includes a single body sherd from an undiagnostic late Iron Age pottery vessel and a small number of prehistoric worked flint and chert waste flakes. A single fragment from a hand-made brick from linear feature F209, fill 210 is of 18th to 19th-century date. The piece of iron slag recovered from layer 109 is undiagnostic.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

By Michael J. Allen, with contributions from Rob Scaife and Alan Clapham

7.1 Introduction

A series of trenches was excavated through deposits on low-lying ground of a floodplain, either side of a small tributary stream of the River Culm. This is mapped as typical alluvial gleyed soils of the Hollington Association, with typical brown earths of the Eardiston Association on the higher, drier surrounding ground (Findlay *et al.* 1984). The trenching revealed shallow, relatively consistent sequences of humic silts and peats. The deposits were locally complex but showed broadly similar sequences of gravels overlain by several humic phases, interspersed with overbank alluvium and sealed by colluvial and alluvial deposits.

A number of samples were taken, including monoliths of three sedimentary sequences and accompanying bulk samples from the sequence of layers, especially of waterlogged and peaty/humic deposits.

These sequences have the potential to provide information about past land-use, the nature of this small valley, and the impact of human activity in the immediate vicinity. Prehistoric and Romano-British activity within the general catchment, and a Roman fort within the wider landscape (but outside the site hydrological catchment) may be reflected in the geoarchaeological and archaeological record. All sequences sampled in monoliths (Trenches 1, 2 and 3) were fully described (Appendix 1). The sequence in Trench 1 was radiocarbon dated and investigated in detail, with sub-samples removed for pollen assessment and the

column of five samples processed and assessed for charred and waterlogged plant remains and insects.

7.2 Geoarchaeology

The surfaces of undisturbed sediments sampled in the monoliths of the main sequences in Trenches 1, 2 and 3 (Figs 3a, 3b and 4), were carefully cleaned to expose the deposits, and then described using standard notation. The descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.

The sequences all reveal basal sandy gravels (eg. contexts 111 and 206), probably of late glacial or early Holocene date (Appendix 1; and Figs 3a, 3b and 4), which have probably been reworked in earlier Holocene times at least. Fining of the gravels has occurred in the sand matrix within the later glacial or early Holocene periods.

The sediment sequences suggest the presence of damp wet conditions locally in the floodplain and peat growth. Inputs of sandy loam and humic silts are probably episodes of overbank flooding. The upper profiles indicate drying conditions (humic silts) and finally colluvium/alluvium indicating increased anthropogenic activity in the catchment leading to local small scale colluviation and flooding events.

7.3 Pollen assessment *By Rob Scaife*

A series of 11 samples was removed from the monolith (Trench 1) and six of these were selected for assessment. They were sampled at 24cm (context 105), 40cm (context 106), 56cm (context 107), 64cm (context 108), 80cm and 88cm (context 110). Samples from the non-humic upper deposits (context 101 and 102) were not assessed. Samples were examined after standard extraction procedures. Numbers of pollen present in these samples is variable depending on sediment type. Enough pollen was, however, available to enable preliminary counts and production of a pollen diagram (Appendix 2).

Overall, the pollen assemblages are dominated by herbs with only a few trees and shrubs.

Trees: Only *Alnus* attains any reasonable values (20% at *c.* 80-90cm, base of 110) with traces of *Betula, Quercus,* and *Corylus avellana* type. A single grain of very badly degraded *Tilia* was recorded but is probably reworked.

Herbs: Dominated by *Poaceae* (60-70%), with cereal pollen most abundant in the upper level (12% at 24cm, context 105). *Plantago lanceolata* is present throughout with peaks at 40cm and 64cm. *Chenopodiaceae* are constant. There is a peak of *Filipendula* (19%) at 56cm. Asteraceae types include *Lactucoideae* (to 9%), and a range of other taxa occurring at lower abundance.

Marsh: Dominated by *Cyperaceae* (peak to 28%).

Spores: These are abundant, especially in the lower half of the diagram. These include monolete (*Dryopteris* type) forms, *Polypodium* and *Pteridium*. There are some derived pre-Quaternary spores below *c.* 45cm (context 106).

7.4 Bulk samples - processing

The samples were from a single stratigraphic sequence in Trench 1. One litre sub-samples of the five bulk samples were processed by M.J. Allen by laboratory wash-over flotation and sieving, with the flots being fractionated into 4mm, 2mm, 1mm, 0.5mm and 300μm fractions. Sample 8 from context 105 was not waterlogged and flot from the 1 litre sample contained no charred remains. The waterlogged samples (see Table 2) were supplied to Dr A.J. Clapham as wet flots for assessment of waterlogged plant remains, insects and any charred elements.

Table 2. List of sample volumes processed and indication of waterlogging or charred remains in flots

Context	Sample	Vol	Waterlogged	Charred flot
105	8	1L	Not waterlogged	No charred flot
107	9	1 L	✓	×
107	10	1 L	✓	×
110	11	1 L	✓	×
110	12	1 L	✓	×

7.5 Waterlogged plants *By Alan Clapham*

Four samples from two contexts were selected for assessment. The samples originate from a deposit of waterlogged organic material and associated alluvium and colluvium. The samples were taken from a single stratigraphic sequence from Trench 1. Samples 9 and 10 were from context 107, with sample 9 being from the top of the deposit and 10 from the bottom. Samples 11 and 12 were the top and bottom of context 110, which was the lowest waterlogged organic layer within the sequence. All four samples contained waterlogged plant material and were dominated by the remains of monocotyledonous roots. The results are presented in Tables 3 & 4.

Table 3. Waterlogged plant remains

Latin name	Common name	Habitat	107	107	110	110
Sample no			9	10	11	12
Waterlogged						
Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus	buttercup	CD	+		+	+
Ranunculus flammula	lesser spearwort	E				+
Urtica dioica	common nettle	ABCD			++	+
Corylus avellana shell fragment	hazelnut	C			+	
Chenopodium album	fat hen	AB		+	+	
Stellaria palustris	marsh stitchwort	E			++	
Lychnis flos-cuculi	ragged-robin	ABE			++	+
Persicaria maculosa (fragment)	redshank	AB			+	
Rumex sp.	dock	ABCD		+	+	
Hypericum sp.	St Johns's wort	CD		+	++	+
Viola sp.	violet	DF				+
Filipendula ulmaria	meadowsweet	E			++	
Rubus idaeus	raspberry	CD			+++	+++
Rubus sect Glandulosus	bramble	CD	+	+	++++	++++
Rubus sect Glandulosus (fragment)	bramble	CD	+		+++	++
Potentilla sp.	cinquefoil	BCDE	+			
Apium nodiflorum	Fool's watercress	E			+++	++
Mentha aquatica	water mint	E		+	+	+
Veronica beccabunga	brooklime	E			+	
Sambucus nigra	elderberry	BC			+	
Carduus/Cirsium sp.	thistle	ABDE	+		++	+
Juncus sp.	rush	DE		+	++++	+
Scirpus sylvaticus	wood club-rush	CE			+	
Isolepis setacea	bristle club-rush	E			+	
Carex spp (2-sided)	sedge	CDE	+	+	++++	+++
Carex spp (3-sided)	sedge	CDE			+	
Glyceria sp.	sweet grasses	E			++	
Poaceae sp. indet grain (small)	grass	AF			+	+
unidentified thorn					+	

Table 4. Other environmental remains recorded

Context	Sample	Roundwood/wood	Insect remains	Worm cocoons
107	9	+++	+	++
107	10	+++	none	+
110	11	+++ (1 piece of charcoal)	++	++
110	12	+++ (1 piece of charcoal)	+	+

Key to tables 3 and 4

Habitat	Quantity
A= cultivated ground	+ = 1 - 10
B= disturbed ground	++ = 11- 50
C= woodlands, hedgerows, scrub etc	+++ = 51 -100
D = grasslands, meadows and heathland	++++ = 101+
E = aquatic/wet habitats	
F = cultivar	

Aims

The aims of the assessment were to determine the state of preservation, type, the quantity of environmental remains recovered, and the palaeo-environmental potential of the samples and information provided.

Fieldwork and sampling policy

Samples were taken by the excavator from deposits considered to be of high potential for the recovery of environmental remains. A total of four samples was taken from the site from two waterlogged layers within the stratigraphic sequence from the following contexts:

- Sample 9, context 107, top of waterlogged organic layer
- Sample 10, context 107, bottom of waterlogged organic layer
- Sample 11, context 110, top of lowermost waterlogged organic layer
- Sample 12, context 110, bottom of lowermost waterlogged organic layer

Processing and analysis

The samples were provided already processed (see above). The flots were supplied wet.

Waterlogged plant remains

Sample 8, context 105 – upper humic layer

Not waterlogged and therefore not assessed for waterlogged remains.

Sample 9, context 107 – top of peaty silt

This sample was from the top of context 107 and, like all of the following samples, this was dominated by monocotyledonous root fragments and a large number of roundwood fragments were also recorded (see Table 4).

Waterlogged plant remains were scarce both in terms of quantity and diversity. Taxa recorded included buttercup (*Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus*), bramble (*Rubus* sect *Glandulosus*), cinquefoil (*Potentilla* sp.), thistle (*Carduus/Cirsium* sp.), and sedges.

Sample 10, context 107 – bottom of silty peat

This sample was from the bottom of context 107 and consisted of a similar range of taxa and in similar quantities. Additional species include fat hen (*Chenopodium album*), docks (*Rumex* sp.), St John's wort (*Hypericum* sp.), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and rushes (J*uncus* sp.).

Roundwood was recorded in reasonable quantities, with the majority of it being identifiable.

No insect remains were recorded from this context and few worm cocoons were noted.

Sample 11, context 110 – top of lower humified peaty silt
This sample was from the top of context 110, the lowermost waterlogged layer of the sequence. It was also the richest in terms of numbers of seeds and diversity of taxa. The dominant remains were seeds of bramble, sedges and rushes, with reasonable numbers of raspberry (*Rubus ideaus*) and fool's watercress (*Apium nodiflorum*). Other species noted include buttercup, common nettle (*Urtica dioca*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), fat hen, marsh stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*), ragged-robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), redshank (*Persicaria maculosa*), dock, St John's wort, meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), water mint, brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), thistle, wood club-rush (*Scirpus sylvaticus*), bristle club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*), Sweet grass (*Glyceria* sp.), and small grasses.

Other remains include a reasonable number of roundwood pieces.

Sample 12, context 110 – bottom of lower humified peaty silt
This sample was from the bottom of context 110 and contained a similar range of species as Sample 11, but not as diverse. Other species are present and include lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), and violet (*Viola* sp.).

Roundwood was recorded in some numbers as were other fragments of wood.

7.6 Insect remains *By A.J. Clapham and Michael J. Allen*
The samples processed for waterlogged plant remains and assessed by Dr Clapham (see above), were also assessed for the presence of insect remains (Table 4). As the assessment below showed a lack of insect remains (elytra, pronotum (throrax) or head fragments), paraffin flotation was not warranted for more detailed examination.

Sample 8, context 105 – upper humic layer
No insect remains present.

Sample 9, context 107 – top of peaty silt
Insect remains were poorly represented and worm cocoons were recorded in some quantity.

Sample 10, context 107 – bottom of silty peat
This sample was from the bottom of context 107 and contained no insect remains but a few worm cocoons were noted.

Sample 11, context 110 – top of lower humified peaty silt
Insect remains from this sample from the lowermost waterlogged layer of the sequence were more numerous than previous samples and included caddis fly larval case fragments. Earthworm cocoons were also quite common.

Sample 12, context 110 – bottom of lower humified peaty silt
Insect remains from the bottom of context 110 were not as common as in sample 11, as was the case with earthworm cocoons

7.7 Charred plant and charcoal remains *By Michael J. Allen and Alan Clapham*
No charred plant remains were present in any of the samples. A single piece of unidentifiable charcoal (<2mm) was recorded from both samples in context 110 (samples 11 and 12; see Table 4). In view of the absence and exceptionally sparse nature of any charred remains, the remaining sample elements (*c.* 4-5L of each sample) was not processed for charred remains.

7.8 Radiocarbon dating

Radiocarbon determinations were sought to date the top of the bottom of the humic peaty sequence (i.e. top of context 107 and base of context 110), and the point in the sequence where cereal pollen is recorded to enter the pollen sequence; i.e. within the humic silty peat at 56cm.

Identifiable or recognisable horizontal plant matter was selected from the monolith (see samples and descriptions below). The presence of suitable and identifiable material for radiocarbon dating was sparse, and the base of the humic silt/humic sands (context 110) contained no surviving suitable organic material. However, the base of the lower humified peaty silt (constituting the upper part of context 110), contained a small roundwood twig (<5 years) very near its base at 84cm depth. The upper part of the humic silty peat (context 107) was dated by a piece of small roundwood (<5 years) twig at 51cm, and is the latest point datable by precisely located material in the monolith sequence, and also broadly coincides with the appearance of cereal pollen (see Appendix 1).

Samples

The undisturbed sediment in the monoliths was examined under illuminated magnifying lens, and under stereo-binocular microscope at magnifications of x10 to x20 for the recovery of suitable material. Material was very sparse, but two small roundwood twigs, both of <5 years, were recovered from the near the top of context 107 (@ 51 cm) and near the base of the lower humified silt (upper part of context 110, @ 84cm). Both fragments were horizontal and formed part of the contemporaneous waterlogged assemblage, but both were too small for species identification (Clapham pers. comm.).

Radiocarbon results

The two samples were submitted for AMS radiocarbon dating and the results are given in Table 5 and are quoted in accordance with the international standard known as the Trondheim convention (Stuiver & Kra 1986). They are conventional radiocarbon ages (Stuiver & Polach 1977), and were calibrated (see below).

Calibration of the results has been performed using the data set published by Reimer *et al.* (2004) and using the program OxCal v4.05 (www.flaha.ox.ac.uk/). Details of the algorithms employed by this program are available from the on-line manual or in Bronk Ramsey (1995; 1998; 2001). The calibrated date ranges cited in text are those with 95% confidence and have been rounded out to the nearest 10 years (Mook 1986).

The humic silts started to form prior to the Middle Iron Age; 370-190 cal BC (NZA-51904, 2192±18 BP). The result from the top of the sequence (at 51cm) gives a Romano-British date. The twig from 51cm in the upper part of the extant humic silt (107) gave a date of cal AD 60-220 (NZA-51903, 1885±19 BP), but the probability distribution indicates that the result is more likely to be around the end of the 1st century AD. We cannot be sure if the upper silty peat (context 107) was truncated as the boundary with the overlying minerogenic silt (context 106) was marked with a stone, so any indication of gradation, or abruptness between these two contexts could not be recorded.

Table 5. Radiocarbon results.

Depth	***Con-text***	***Descriptions***	***Material***	***Lab no.***	***Results BP***	***δC^{13} (%)***	***Calibrated date***
51cm	107	Near top of humic silty peat	Twig <5 yrs	NZA-51903	1885±19	-29.0	AD 60-220
84cm	110	Base of lower humified silt within 110 and above humic silty sand	Twig <5 yrs	NZA-51904	2192±18	-27.6	370-190 BC

7.9 Significance

Geoarchaeology
The sediment record (Appendix 1) provides an outline history of drying and floodplain sediment accumulation, with hints of increased anthropogenic activity in the catchment, if not on the floodplain itself.

Pollen
The environment
Clearly, the local environment was open with no immediate tree growth. Higher values of alder in the basal levels may indicate occasional trees along the wetland or more substantial (carr) growth at distance. Given the high pollen productivity of alder and consequent over representation in pollen spectra, numbers here are not regarded as of great significance. Oak and hazel are probably from more regional sources.

The on-site environment depositional habitat was a wet grass and sedge fen with surrounding wet pasture taxa such as meadowsweet, marsh pennywort and possibly hemlock water dropwort.

Throughout most of the profile, grasses and other herbs of grassland habitat suggest that the local environment was possibly pasture. The upper levels show an increase in cereal pollen and it is possible that arable cultivation started in the vicinity.

The age of the sequence
It appears that these organic sediments accumulated after prehistoric woodland clearance had taken place. The local environment was open and used for pastoral and arable agriculture and appears contemporary with nearby Romano-British occupation.

Waterlogged plant remains
The waterlogged plant remains indicate the presence of two local habitats, scrub and wet. The presence of large numbers of bramble and raspberry indicate a scrubby element to the assemblages. The presence of large numbers of roundwood fragments may indicate trees in the locality, unless they have been deposited after the stream overflowed its banks.

The waterlogged element is indicated by the presence of species such as lesser spearwort, ragged-robin, marsh stitchwort, meadowsweet, fool's watercress, brooklime, rushes and sedges.

The presence of lesser spearwort, meadowsweet, fool's watercress, brooklime and sweet grass indicate that there was standing water in the area. This may have been the stream channel or in a depression away from the course of the stream.

The upper context 107, contained fewer waterlogged plant remains than the lower context 110. There were also fewer indicators of a damp habitat in these samples. It is possible that this shows that the deposits were drying out, permitting the spread of scrub over the area.

Significance
The limited evidence for anthropogenic activities within this sequence suggests that these deposits are entirely natural and indicate that a wetland and scrubby element of the natural vegetation existed around the water channel. The species present within the samples are typical of these types of environment and therefore of little significance.

Insect remains
With the exception of worm cocoons and caddis fly larval cases, there were virtually no insect remains and the assemblages were far too small to consider for further palaeo-ecological analyses.

Charred plant remains
The total lack of charred plant remains and the very sparse nature of charcoal (2 small pieces) indicate the paucity of anthropogenic activity within the vicinity of the sampling location. This concurs with the sparse nature of archaeological features and artefacts.

7.10 Environmental discussion

Pollen assessment shows pollen survival in all humic and peaty contexts. The assemblages are herb-dominated, showing an open environment and possible pasture. Waterlogged plant remains are present but indicate no anthropogenic activity on the floodplain. Charred plant remains and charcoal typical of human activity are sparse to non-existent, again suggesting that there is no major activity on the floodplain itself.

The vegetation records indicate a pre-existing open habitat, as we might expect in post mid Bronze Age periods, based on the *assumption* of a complete post-glacial woodland cover (but see French *et al.* 2003; 2005; 2007; Allen & Gardiner 2009; Allen & Scaife 2007). There is no evidence of this former woodland, or more importantly of its clearance here in the pollen or plant record. The presence of cereal pollen (especially in the upper non waterlogged portion above 0.45m, context 106 and top of 107) does indicate human activity, but this is probably not local but extra-local and been carried downstream and flooded onto the floodplain, especially as there seems to be no change in the local ecology waterlogged flora nor indeed direct evidence in this flora of agriculture. Pollen increases up the profile and is most abundant in the waterlain sandy silts (floodplain alluvium) and deposit above this.

Waterlogged plant remains are only present in the lower more humic portion of the sequence.

The shallow sequences exposed in the floodplain indicate peat formation and very local overbank flood deposits and possibly enhanced by colluviation. Some of these episodes may have been accelerated or increased by anthropogenic activity within the catchment, but there is no evidence from the palaeo-environmental data of prolonged human activity in the immediate vicinity.

7.11 Palaeo-environmental results

The occurrence of cereal pollen at 56cm only 5cm below the date of cal AD 60-220 indicates local cereal growth or local cereal processing during the Romano-British period. Nevertheless, cereal pollen only occurs in this one sample, and is not present in the inorganic silt (106 and 105) above, nor in the inwash layer (108) or the lower humified peaty silt dated to the Middle Iron Age (370-190 cal BC). The apparent appearance of cereal pollen above and below this point is a product of the graphic representation, and also of the relatively crude sampling undertaken for assessment purposes.

The dated peat sequence, however, indicated that a locally open pasture environment with wetland and substantial carr growth at a further distance dates to at least the Middle Iron Age (and before) to beyond the mid Romano-British period (cal AD 60-220). Local peaty silt formation, however, probably ceased prior to the end of the Romano-British period. The lack of anthropogenic indicators in the waterlogged plant remains and of changes in the pollen sequence commensurate with the cereal pollen, may suggest that although cereal cultivation and processing may occur locally (cereal pollen does not travel more than *c.* 30m) that this pollen may have been floated in from further afield. If arable activity or

settlement were immediately local, we might expect more indication in both the pollen and waterlogged plant remains records, and both authors (Clapham and Scaife), specifically note the lack of local anthropogenic activity. The area was, however, clearly available for grazing and pasture.

8. DISCUSSION

By Simon Hughes and Michael J. Allen

8.1 The archaeological evaluation identified a small number of archaeological features dispersed across the site, as well as a sequence of wetland deposits exposed towards the stream. The sequence of deposits recorded in Trenches 1, 2 and 3 represents the principal archaeological interest in the site.

8.2 The recorded overlying layer sequences in Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were broadly consistent. These were above natural gravel deposits that sealed the more general natural subsoil of red clay. The overlying sequence comprised peat formation growth, which on the southwest side of the stream in Trenches 1 and 3, included well-defined interspersed deposits of sandy loam and humic silts suggesting sporadic influx of material.

8.3 The Holocene record indicates locally high groundwater table and local peat growth on the floodplain with brambles, sedges and rushes. Subsequent sandy alluvium indicates local overbank flooding episodes which need not be related to, or caused by, human activity but may represent such within the catchment area. This phase of activity ceased or declined allowing re-growth of peat but with drier elements (brambles) and round wood. The latter may be twigs which have floated in downstream. The fact this deposit is highly humified indicates dropping local groundwater tables and drying out. Subsequent sandy silts indicate a second phase of local flooding alluviation – probably seasonal shallow winter flooding and the deposits of fine-grained silts, before its cessation and the re-establishment of wetter conditions. The final phase of humic silt formation clearly indicates that the floodplain was drying and groundwater tables were dropping, but there is no direct evidence of human occupation on the floodplain, but some may have used it for stock grazing. Final deposits of alluvium and colluvium over the whole site represent the last phase of sedimentation below the current soil profiles, which may relate to intensification of activity within the catchment.

8.4 These fluctuating cyclical floodplain and alluviation phases may have been enhanced by human activity. The paucity, however, of charcoal and charred plant remains, combined with pollen and waterlogged plant remains and vegetation records, indicate only limited local human activity. Very little anthropogenic impact on the local floodplain environment is indicated, other than the creation of the open habitats, presumably in earlier prehistory.

8.5 The pollen analysis from Trench 1 samples, which presented the best example of the layer sequence, provides an overview of the land-use which comprised open ground pasture with little tree-cover and with a suggestion of later arable use of the land. Radiocarbon dating of the sequence showed that these layers formed in the late prehistoric to Romano-British periods. There is a peak in cereal pollen indicates arable agriculture in the Romano-British period.

8.6 The primary layer sequence is overlain by colluvial deposits and topsoil. In Trenches 1 and 3 there was evidence of an equivalent dumped soil layer including 103, which sealed clinker and stone layer 114 in Trench 1 and layer 302 in Trench 3, which formed a made ground terrace along the southwest side in this part of the site.

8.7 Linear features F210 in Trench 2 and F508 in Trench 5 are likely to be part of the same ditch. Both features were on the same alignment and were cut through equivalent layers with similar profiles. The feature is likely to be a former agricultural boundary dating to the post-medieval

period, based on stratigraphic positioning and finds from F209. Prehistoric finds from F508 are therefore likely to be residual. Pit F706 was undated but was also recorded as cutting from below the topsoil and is therefore probably of a similar date.

8.8 The series of 19th century brick footings recorded in Trench 9 are likely to relate to part of the former tannery that was present on the site from the 19th century.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The evaluation has demonstrated only limited evidence for *in situ* archaeological activity, with the main interest being the palaeo-environmental remains adjacent to the stream. The series of colluvial, alluvial and peat deposits present indicate initial open ground pasture with little tree-cover, with a suggestion of later arable use of the land. The radiocarbon dates indicate a late prehistoric to Romano-British date for the deposits and, as such, the cereal pollen provides proxy indicator for the known settlement of the local area in the Romano-British period.

10. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

10.1 The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be offered to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter under the accession number 189/2010.

10.2 An online (OASIS Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 115824, which will include a digital copy of this report.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Richard Williams of Persimmon Homes (South West) Ltd. The site trial trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes, Naomi Hughes, Chris Caine, Steve Robinson and Dan Carter. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Cain Hegarty. The advice and collaboration of Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

The waterlogged remains were assessed by Dr Alan Clapham of the Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service. Dr Alan Clapham and the Worcester County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service would like to thank Allen Environmental Archaeology for their assistance in the conclusion of this project.

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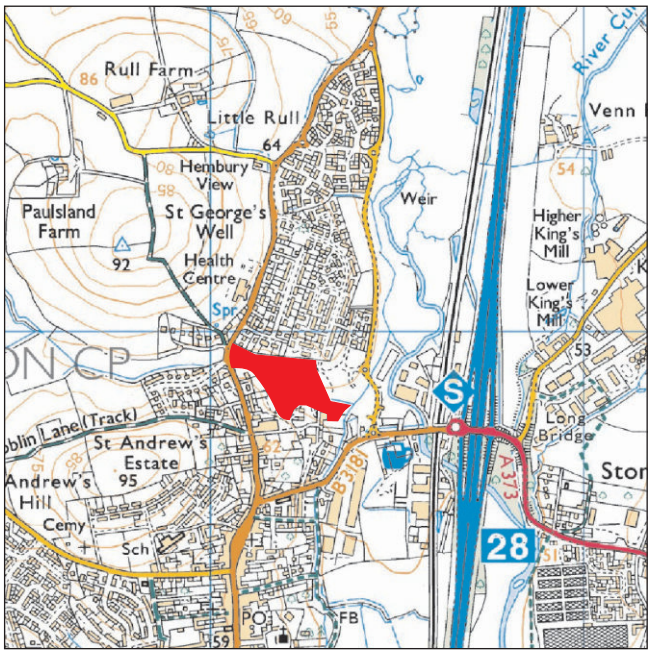

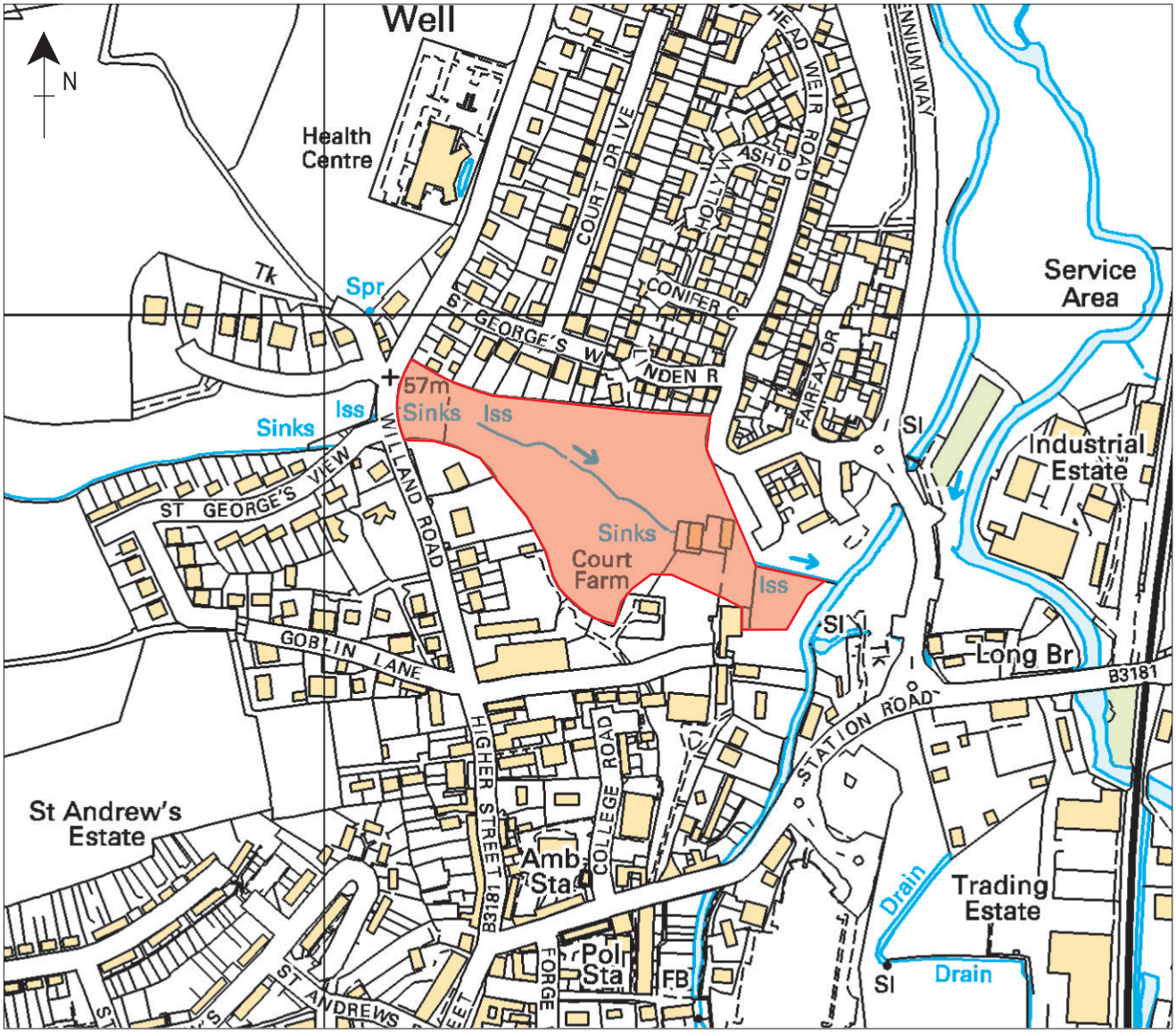

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Court Farm, Cullompton (Phase 2)

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site

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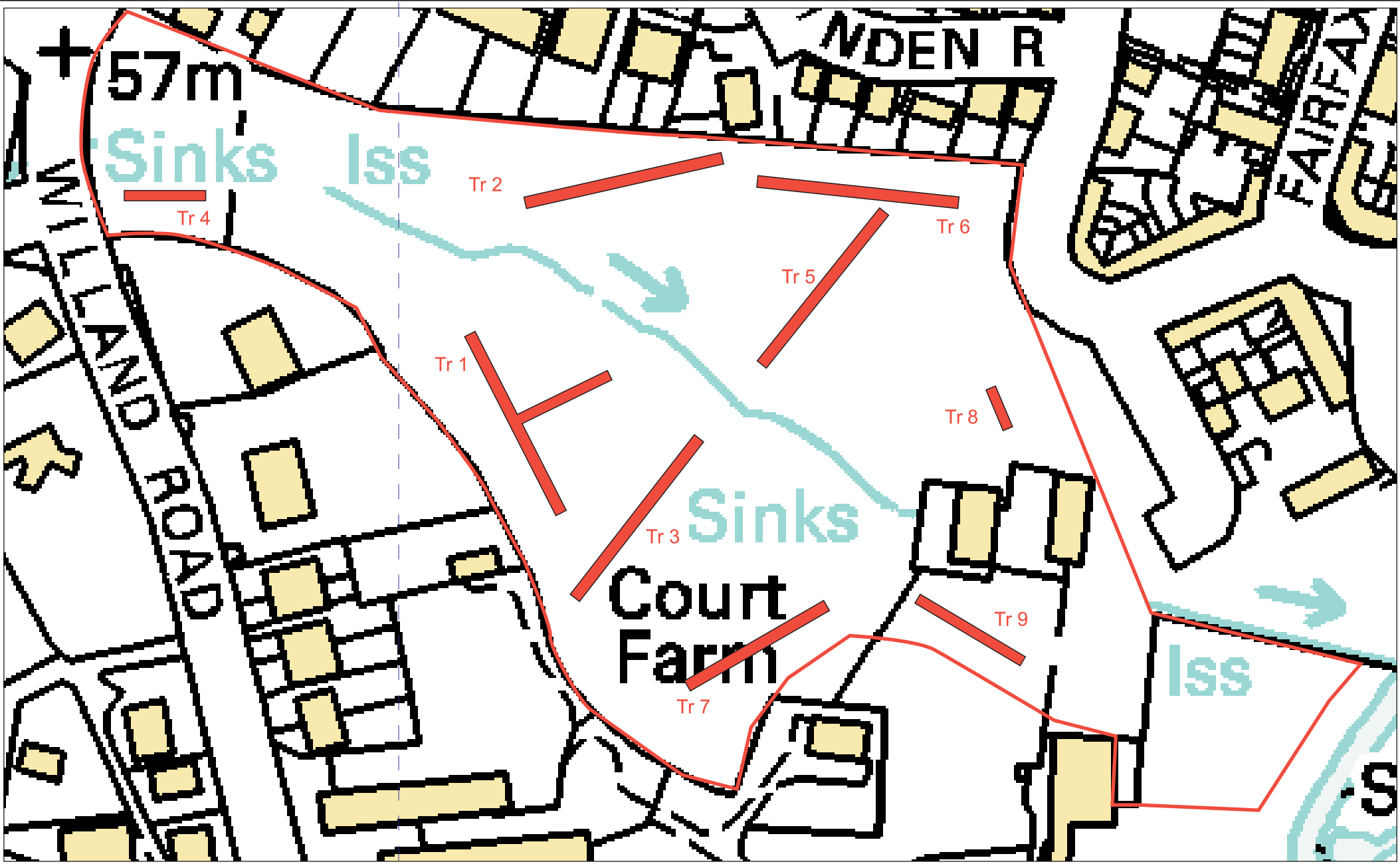

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Fig. 2: Trench locations

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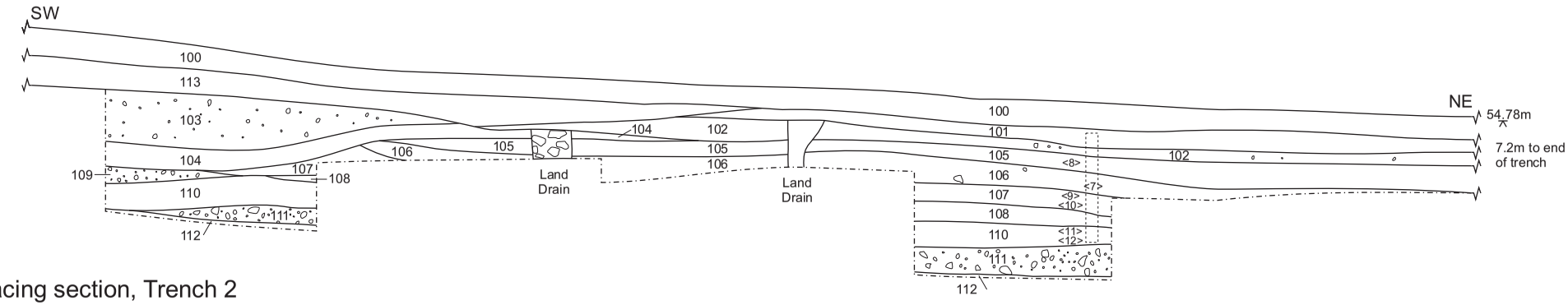
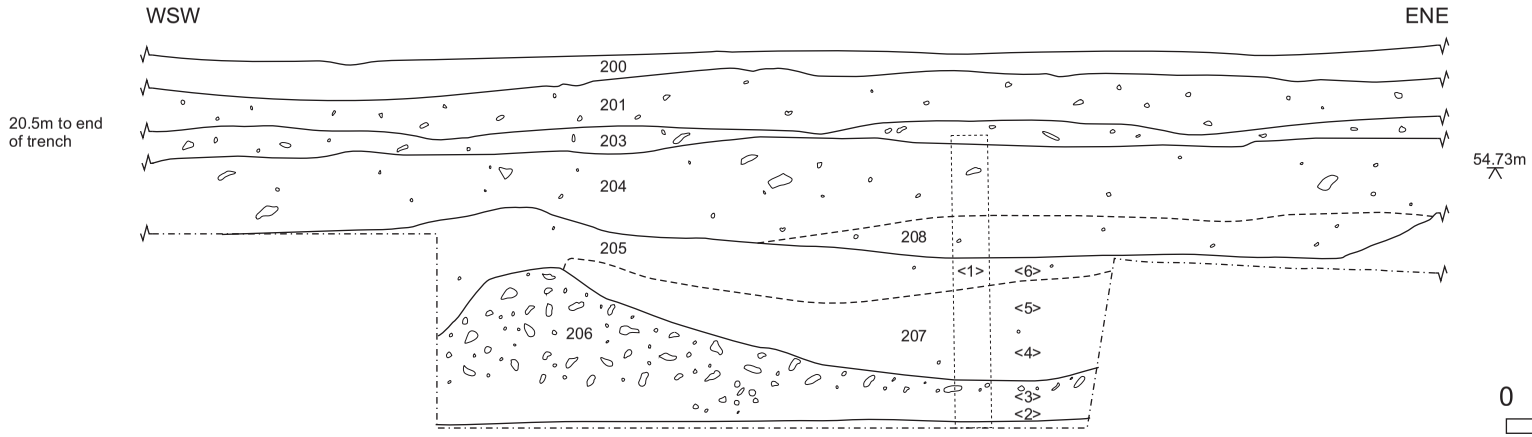
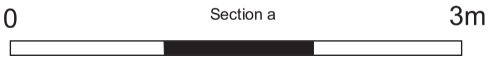
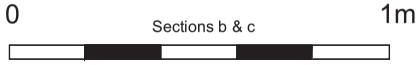
a) Southeast facing section, Trench 1



b) South facing section, Trench 2







c) North facing section, ditch F213, Trench 2

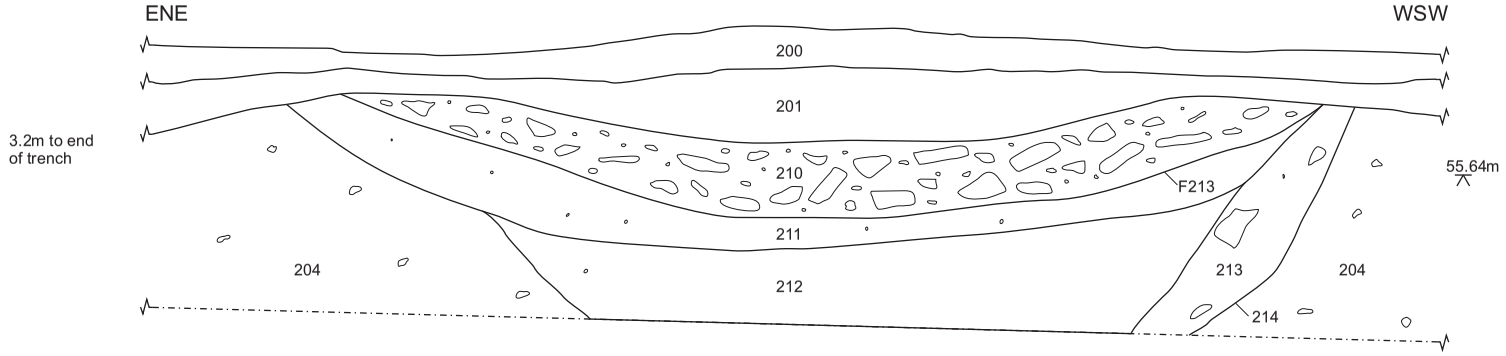


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Fig. 3: Sections, Trenches 1 and 2

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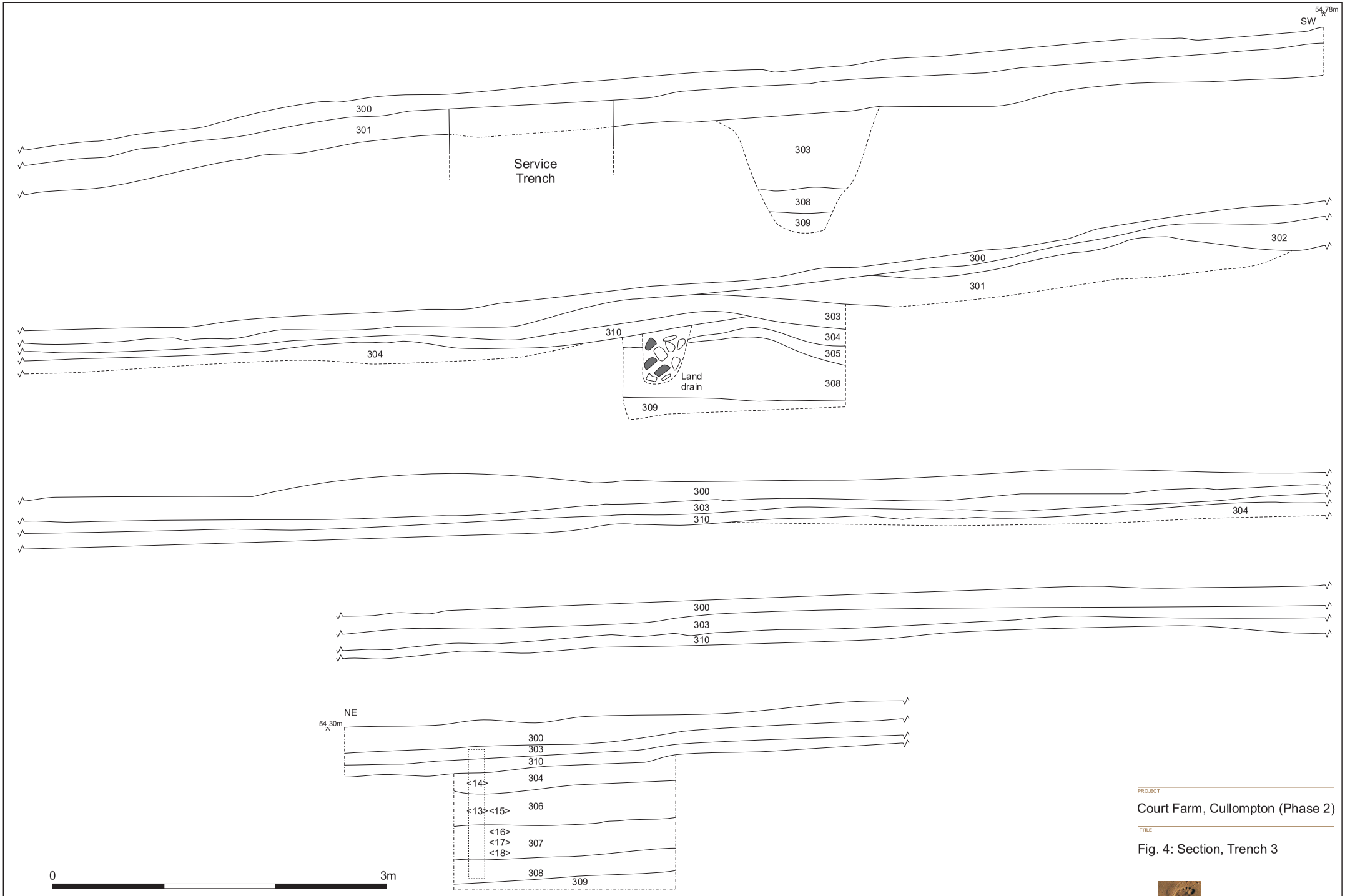

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Fig. 4: Section, Trench 3

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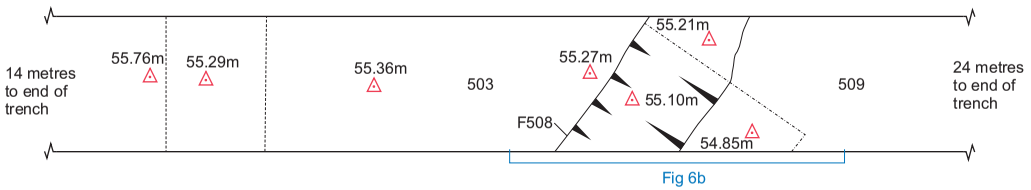
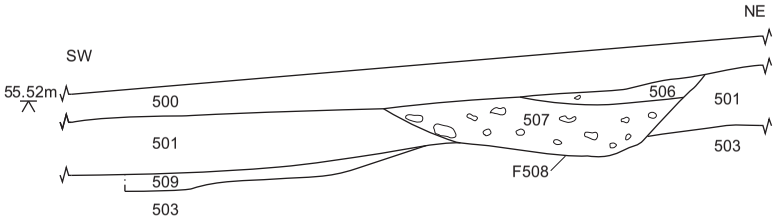
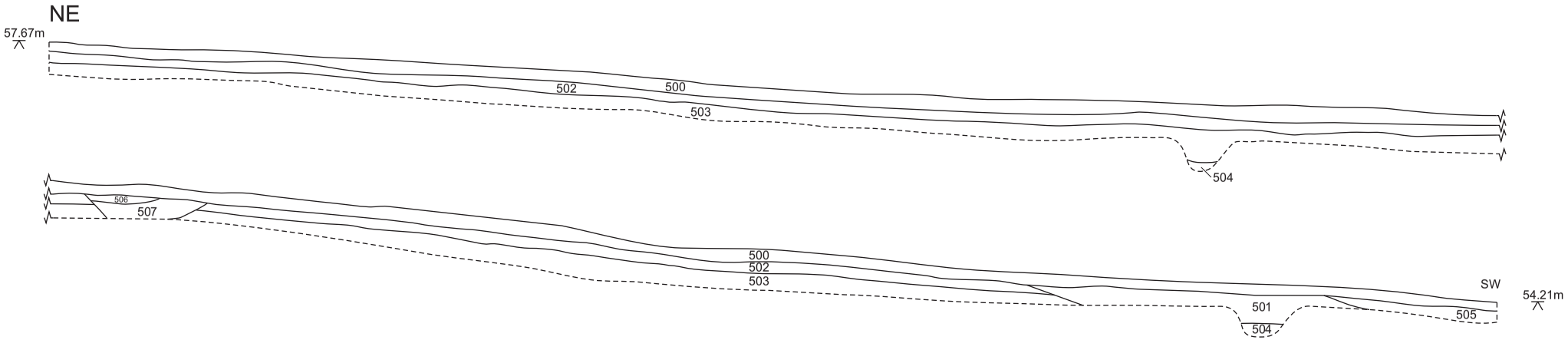
a) Plan of Trench 5

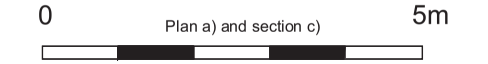


b) Section of ditch F507, Trench 5



c) Northwest facing section of Trench 5





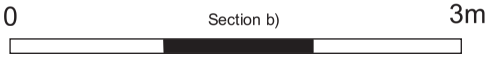


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Fig. 5: Plan and sections, Trench 5

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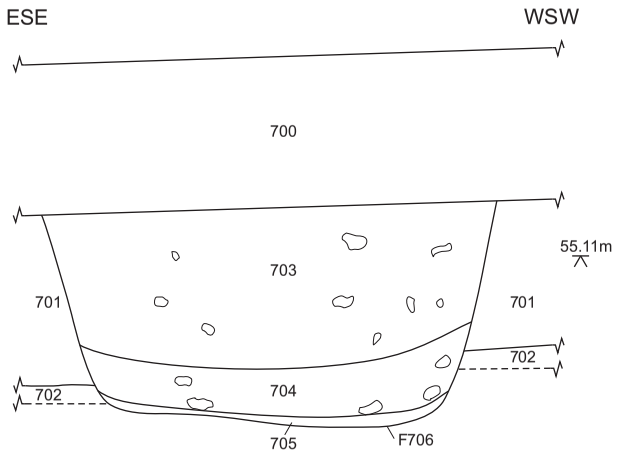
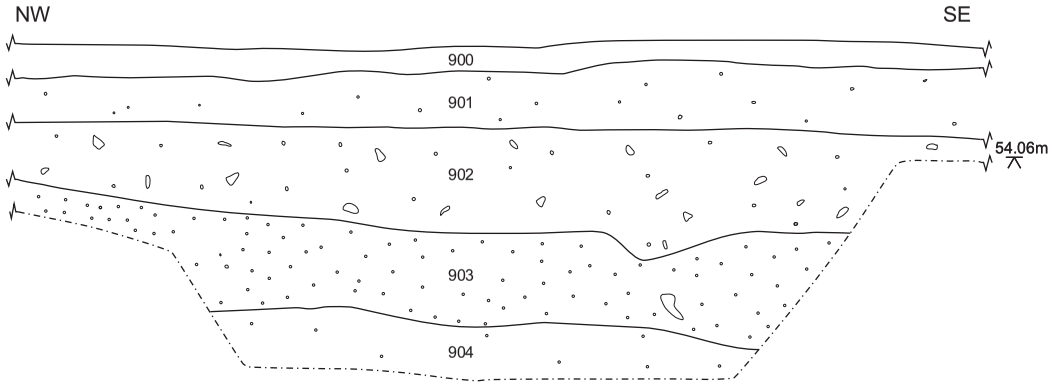
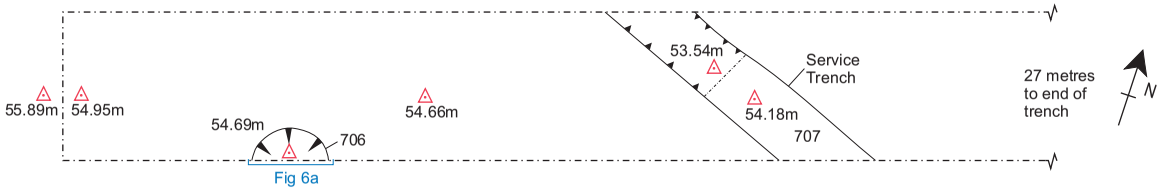
a) North facing section of F706, Trench 7



b) Southwest facing section, Trench 9



c) Plan of Trench 7



d) Plan of Trench 9

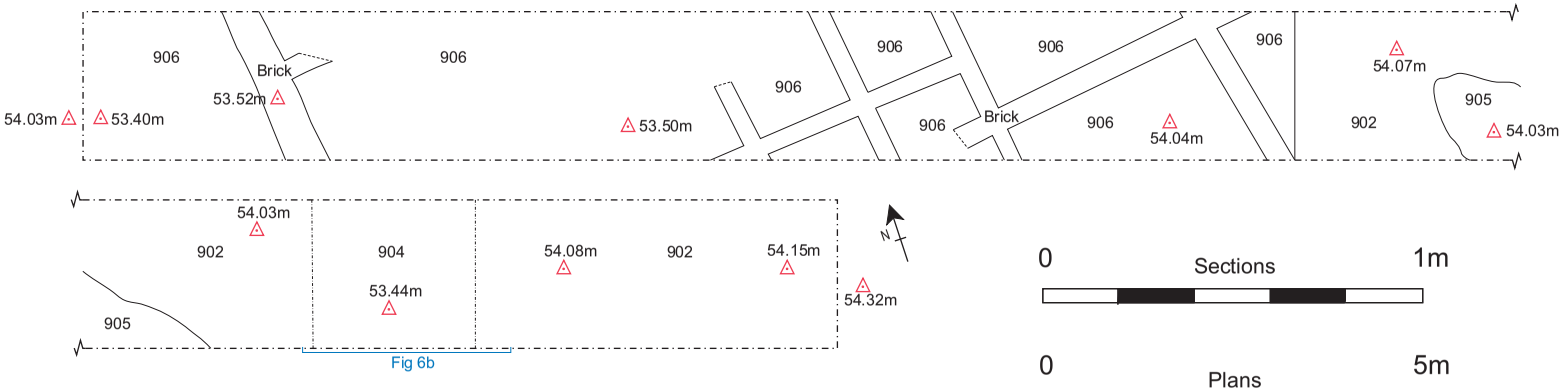


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Fig. 6: Plans and sections, Trenches 7 and 9

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Plate 1: General view of site from Trench 5, looking southwest

Plate 2: Trench 1, sondage, southeast facing section, (scales 2m and 1m)

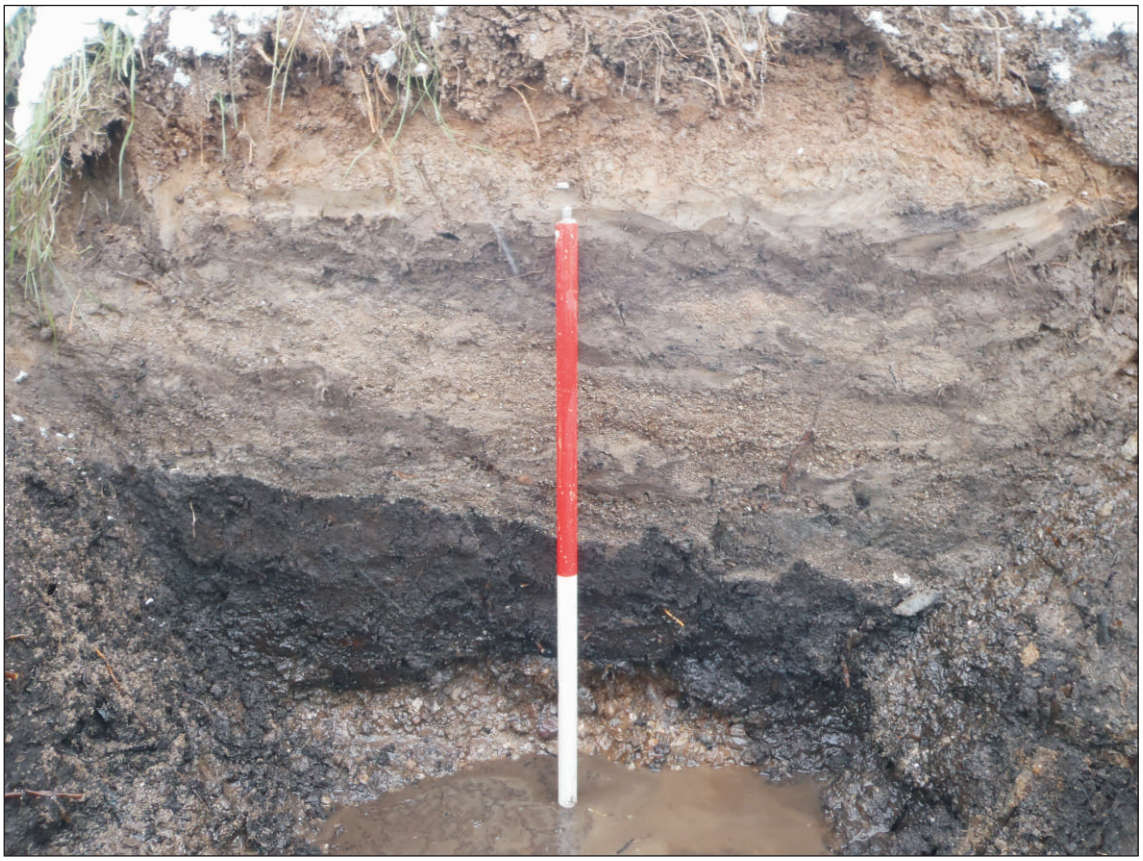


Plate 3: Trench 3, sondage, northeast facing section (scale 1m)

Plate 4: Modern brick footings in Trench 9, view to the northwest (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Soil/sediment descriptions

Trench 1

context	*depth (cm)**	*unit*		*description*
100				
101	0-8		8cm	Reddish brown (5YR 4/4) sand loam, essentially stone-free, few fine fleshy vertical roots, abrupt boundary Minerogenic hillwash
102	8-17		16cm	Brown to greyish brown (10YR 5/3-2) silty clay loam with weak fine diffuse mottles of strong brown (7.5YR 5/6), few fine fleshy vertical roots, clear boundary Minerogenic colluvium/alluvium
105	17-39		**24cm** 32cm	Very dark brown (10YR 3/2) highly humified humic silt, no plant macrofossils evident, clear-abrupt boundary Upper humic layer – humic silt
106	39-41		**40cm**	Pale brown to brown (10YR 6/3 – 5/3) fine sand to coarse silt band with very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) humic silty bands to 2cm – becoming sandier and lighter in colour with depth, abrupt boundary Water lain sandy silt
	41-49		48cm	Very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) humic silt, with a medium flint stone at lower boundary Humic silt
107	49-64		**56cm**	[C14 @ 51cm twig; AD 60-220; NZA-51903, 1885±19BP] Very dark brown (10YR 2/2) humified silty peat with rare fine woody fragments, rare coarse woody plant macrofossils, ?*Phragmites* roots – becoming lighter in colour and siltier with depth, clear boundary **Humic silty peat**
108	64-74		**64cm** 72cm	Dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) moist sand loam, broad bands, abrupt boundary Water lain sand loam
110	74-85		**80cm**	Black (10YR 2/1) to very dark brown (10YR 2/2) humified humic peaty silt with rare small and medium stones (derived from gravel below), rare fine woody plant macrofossils becoming sandier with depth clear boundary [C14 @ 84cm twig; 370-190BC; NZA-51904, 2192±18BP] **Lower humified peaty silt**
	85-94		**88cm**	Very dark brown (10YR 2/2) humic coarse silt becoming sandier with depth, no plant macrofosslis evident, clear-abrupt boundary **Humic silt – sand**
111	93-97+		96cm	Yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) loose moist gravels and sand Gravel

* = depth in monolith. (Samples in bold and underlined were assessed for pollen)

Trench 2

context	*depth (cm)*	*unit*	*description*
200			
201			
203	0-5		Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/4) massive sandy loam to sandy silty loam, essentially stone-free, few very fine fleshy vertical roots, clear boundary Minerogenic hillwash/colluvium
204	5-18		Dark brown (7.5YR 3/3) massive humic silty clay, rare small stones, clear indurated boundary with clear root and biotic mixing Humic deposit
208	18-30		Very dark brown (10YR 3/1) homogenous humic silt, no woody or fleshy macrofossils observed, clear to abrupt boundary Humic silt
205	30-46		Black to very dark brown (10YR 2/1-2), stone-free homogeneous highly humified humic silt, clear to gradual boundary Humic silt
207	46-65		Black to very dark brown (10YR 2/1-2), moist humified silt with some small to medium rounded stones. Humified peat silt
207	65-75		Black (10YR 2/1) humified stone-free silt with some fine fleshy macrofossils present – peaty, abrupt boundary **Peaty silt**
206	73-75+		Very dark grey to dark grey (10YR 3/1 to 4/1) silty loam with medium gravels Silty gravel

* = depth in monolith

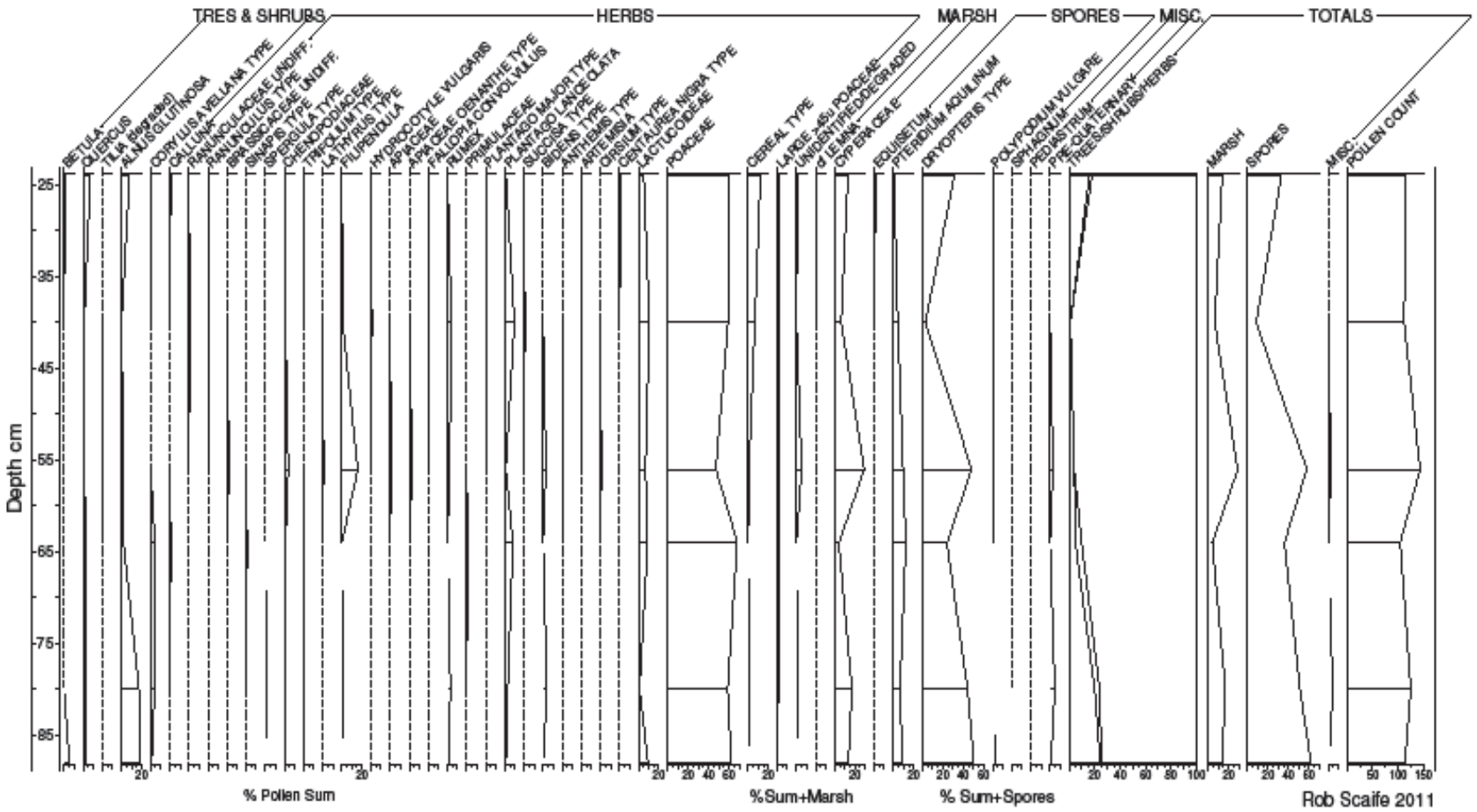
Trench 3

context	***depth (cm)****	***unit***	***description***
300			
303	0-7		Brown (7.5YR 4/4) coarse silty sand loam, stone-free with many clear medium sandy mottles of reddish brown (5Y 4/4), few fine fleshy roots, abrupt boundary Base of soil (B horizon) - colluvial
310	7-15		Greyish brown (2.5Yr 5/2) plastic silty clay, stone-free with weak small blocky structure, weak diffuse strong brown (7.5YR 5/6) mottles, abrupt to sharp boundary. ?Alluvial
304	15-30		Very dark grey (10YR 3/1) massive homogenous humic silt, common fine to medium fibrous roots, rare very small stones, abrupt boundary Humic ?soil
306	30-58		Banded well sorted coarse sand and fine gravels in a coarse silt matrix, sharp boundary Waterlain
307	58-89+		Very dark brown to black (10YR 4-3/1) homogenous humified humic peaty silts, many medium vertical fibrous roots (?modern), but , some fine fleshy macrofossils also present, rare very small stones **Humified peat**
308			- Not represented in monolith
309			- Not represented in monolith

* = depth in monolith

Appendix 2

Pollen diagram


Court Farm
Cullompton
TRES & SHRUBS
HERBS
MARSH
SPORES
MISC.
TOTALS
BETULA
QUERCUS
TILIA (degraded)
ALNUS GLUTINOSA
CORYLUS AVELLANA TYPE
CALLUNA
RANUNCULACEAE UNDIFF.
BRASSICACEAE UNDIFF.
SINAPIS TYPE
SPERGULA TYPE
CHENOPODIACEAE
TRIFOLIUM TYPE
LATHYRUS TYPE
FILIPENDULA
HYDROCOTYLE VULGARIS
APIACEAE
APIACEAE GENANTHE TYPE
FALLOPIA CONVOLVULUS
RUMEX
PRIMULACEAE
PLANTAGO MAJOR TYPE
PLANTAGO LANCEOLATA
SUCCISA TYPE
BIDENS TYPE
ANTHEMIS TYPE
ARTEMISIA
CIRSIUM TYPE
CENTAUREA NIGRA TYPE
LACTUCOIDEAE
POACEAE
CEREAL TYPE
LARGE >45µ POACEAE
UNIDENTIFIED/DEGRADED
CYPERACEAE
EQUISETUM
PTERIDIUM AQUILINUM
DRYOPTERIS TYPE
POLYPODIUM VULGARE
SPHAGNUM
PEDIASTRUM
PTE-COUTE-TERNARY
TREES/SHRUBS/HERBS
MARSH
SPORES
MISC.
POLLEN COUNT
Depth cm
25
35
45
55
65
75
85
% Pollen Sum
%Sum+Marsh
% Sum+Spores
Rob Scaife 2011

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