

Proposed Racehorse Training Establishment, Church Farm, Okeford Fitzpaine, Dorset

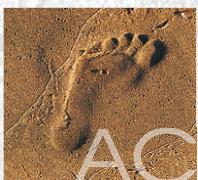
NGR ST809105

Results of archaeological evaluation

Prepared by:
Stephen Robinson

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archaeology

PROPOSED RACEHORSE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT, CHURCH FARM, OKEFORD FITZPAINE, DORSET (NGR ST809105):

Results of Archaeological Evaluation

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation consisting of four machine-excavated trenches was undertaken by AC archaeology on land at Church Farm, Okeford Fitzpaine, Dorset, in December 2011. The work was undertaken in support of a planning application for the construction of a new dwelling and racehorse training facilities. The trenches established that the proposed site contains relatively deep soils representing colluvial deposits (hillwash), most notably in the most low-lying area of the site to the east where a depth of up to 1.75m was recorded above the chalk bediorck. No archeological features or finds were present.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation on land at Church Farm, Okeford Fitzpaine, Dorset (ST809105). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Alner, the site owners.
- 1.2** The evaluation was undertaken in order to provide supporting information for a planning application (ref 2/2011/1265/PLNG) to construct a new dwelling and stables etc on the site, and requested by North Dorset District Council, following consultation with the Dorset County Council Senior Archaeologist. It was considered that heritage assets may be affected by the development proposals and that further information is required to enable an informed planning decision to be made. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.3** The proposed development will cover an area of c. 1 hectare and is situated on an east-facing slope to the south of Church Farm. The site is currently occupied by land used as pasture and lies between 93m and 100mOD. The underlying geology comprises chalk.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** A largely desk-based assessment of the historic environment of the landholding has been undertaken (Cox 2010). The principal designated assets in the vicinity of the proposed training establishment comprise four scheduled monuments on the spur of Okeford Hill, approximately 300m southeast of the proposed application site. These survive as earthworks, comprising two pillow mounds, one round barrow and a cross dyke. There is no evidence for significant heritage assets on the site of the proposed new facilities.
- 2.2** An archaeological evaluation of a previously proposed site for the new facilities, situated to the south, failed to reveal the presence of any archaeological deposits (Robinson 2010).

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The evaluation was undertaken to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present on the site, as dictated by current best practice.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The location of the trenches was agreed, prior to commencement of site works, with the Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council and set out in the approved project design (Robinson 2011). The investigations comprised the machine-excavation of four trenches, each measuring 30m in length and 1.6m in width and positioned within the footprint of the proposed new facilities (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 The trenches were recorded using the full range of the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.3 The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW392.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 3)

- 5.1 Each of the trenches revealed similar results, comprising colluvial deposits overlying natural chalk. The deepest of the trenches located in the most low-lying area of the site (Trench 4) recorded a depth of up to 1.75m at its northernmost extent. The remainder of this trench was only excavated to a nominal depth of 900mm. No archaeological features or artefacts were present in any of the trenches.
- 5.2 The recorded layer sequence for each trench is summarised in table form below.

Table 1: Depositional sequence Trench 1

Context	Depth below g.s.	Description	Interpretation
100	0 – 300mm	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam.	Present surface – topsoil and grass.
101	300 – 550mm	Light brown silty clay containing moderate small angular/rounded flint gravels and chalk flecks.	Subsoil – colluvial in nature.
102	550mm+	Light grey/white weathered chalk .	Natural weathered chalk.



Plate 1: Trench 1; View from the south

Table 2: Depositional sequence Trench 2

Context	Depth below g.s.	Description	Interpretation
200	0 – 200mm	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam.	Present surface – topsoil and grass.
201	200 – 600mm	Light brown silty clay containing moderate small angular/rounded flint gravels and chalk flecks.	Subsoil – colluvial in nature.
202	600 - 850mm	Mid- brown silty clay containing frequent small angular/rounded flint gravels and occasional chalk flecks.	Subsoil – colluvial in nature.
203	850mm+	Light grey/white – dark orange-brown weathered chalk/clay.	Natural weathered chalk containing periglacial disturbance.

Table 3: Depositional sequence Trench 3

Context	Depth below g.s.	Description	Interpretation
300	0 – 400mm	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam.	Present surface – topsoil and grass.
301	400 – 600mm	Light brown silty clay containing moderate small angular/rounded flint gravels and chalk flecks.	Subsoil – colluvial in nature.
302	600mm+	Light grey/white – dark orange-brown weathered chalk/clay.	Natural weathered chalk containing periglacial disturbance.



Plate 2: Trench 2; view from the west



Plate 3: Trench 3; view from the west

Table 4: Depositional sequence Trench 4

Context	Depth below g.s.	Description	Interpretation
400	0 – 300mm	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam.	Present surface – topsoil and grass.
401	300 – 900mm	Light brown silty clay containing moderate small angular/rounded flint gravels and chalk flecks.	Subsoil – colluvial in nature.
403	1.15 – 1.75m	Dark brown silty clay containing occasional small flint gravels.	Subsoil or periglacial disturbance ?
404	1.75m+	Calcareous clay with flints	Natural



Plate 4: Trench 4; north end of west-facing section. Scale 2m

6. COMMENT

- 6.1 There is no evidence that the site contains any archaeological deposits of significance. The presence of deep colluvial soils is of note, as such deposits in Dorset are likely to have originated in the prehistoric period, following a period of intense agricultural exploitation of the chalk uplands during the Bronze Age. The deposit may seal pre-existing early prehistoric land surfaces.

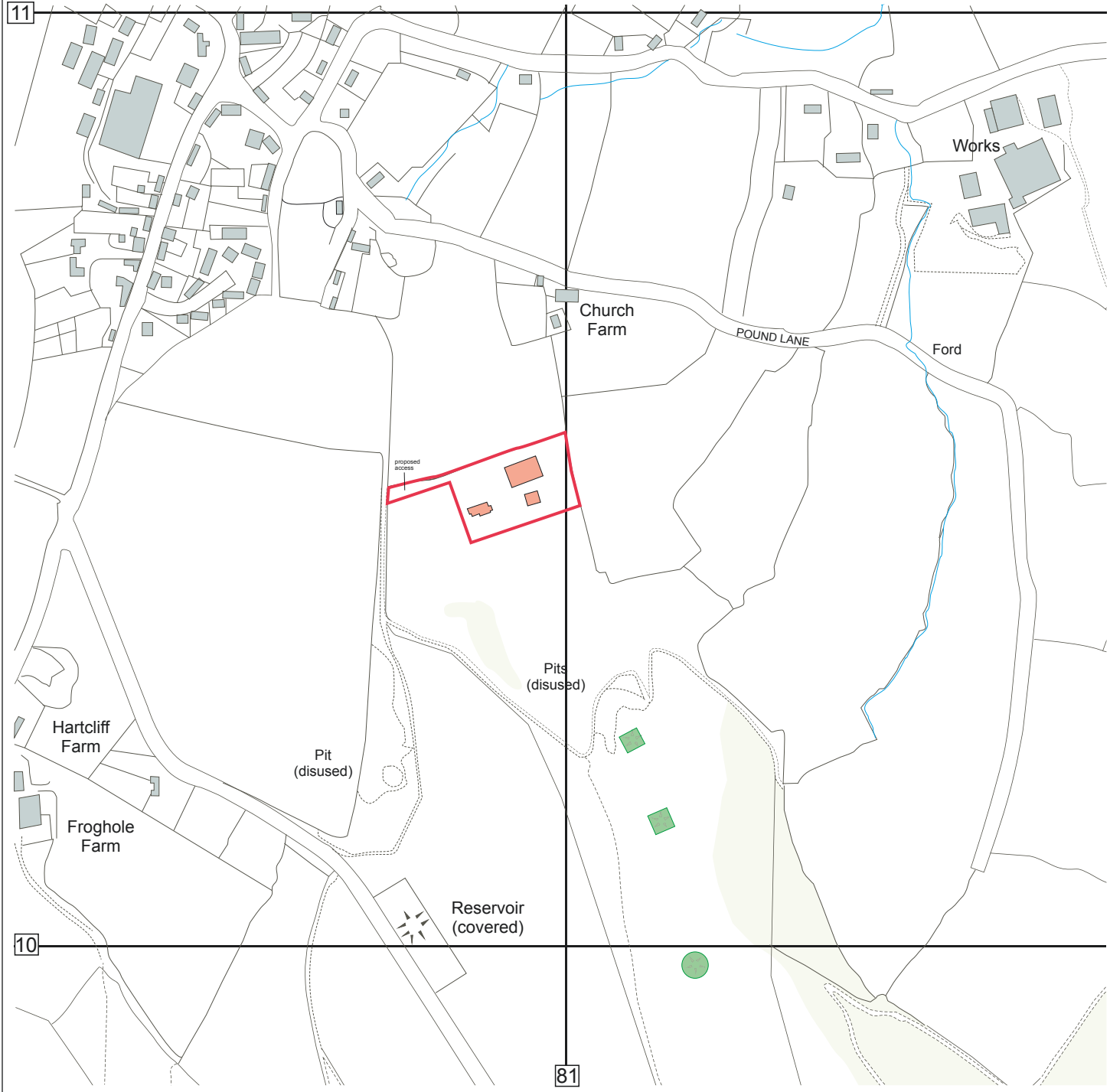
- 6.2** The date of the colluvial deposit on the site is uncertain, as no dating evidence was recovered.

7. REFERENCES

Cox, P. W., 2010 *'Proposed Racehorse Training Establishment, Okeford Hill, Okeford Fitzpaine, Dorset Centred on NGR ST81011022): Historic Environment Assessment*. Unpublished client report by AC archaeology. ref ACW163/2/0. June 2010

Robinson, S., 2010 *'Proposed Racehorse Training Establishment, Okeford Hill, Okeford Fitzpaine, Dorset (NGR ST81011022): Results of archaeological evaluation*. Unpublished document, ref ACW321/2/0. December 2010

Robinson, S., 2011 *'Proposed Racehorse Training Establishment, Church Farm, Okeford Fitzpaine, Dorset (NGR ST809105): Project Design for archaeological evaluation*. Unpublished document, ref ACW392/1/0. September 2011



PROJECT

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Fig.1: Location of proposed training establishment



PROJECT

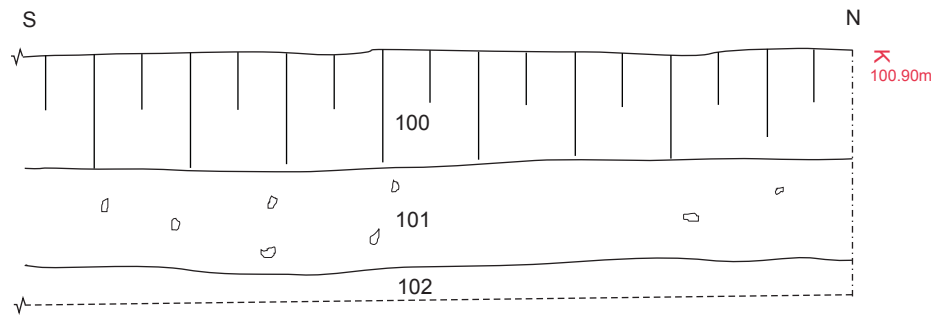
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Fig.2: Location of proposed trenches

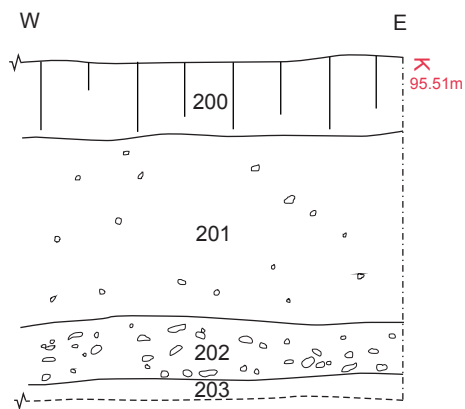
Trench 1

a) Representative section



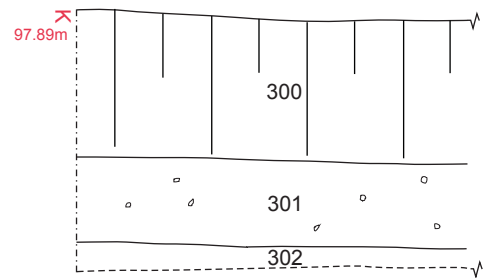
Trench 2

b) Representative section



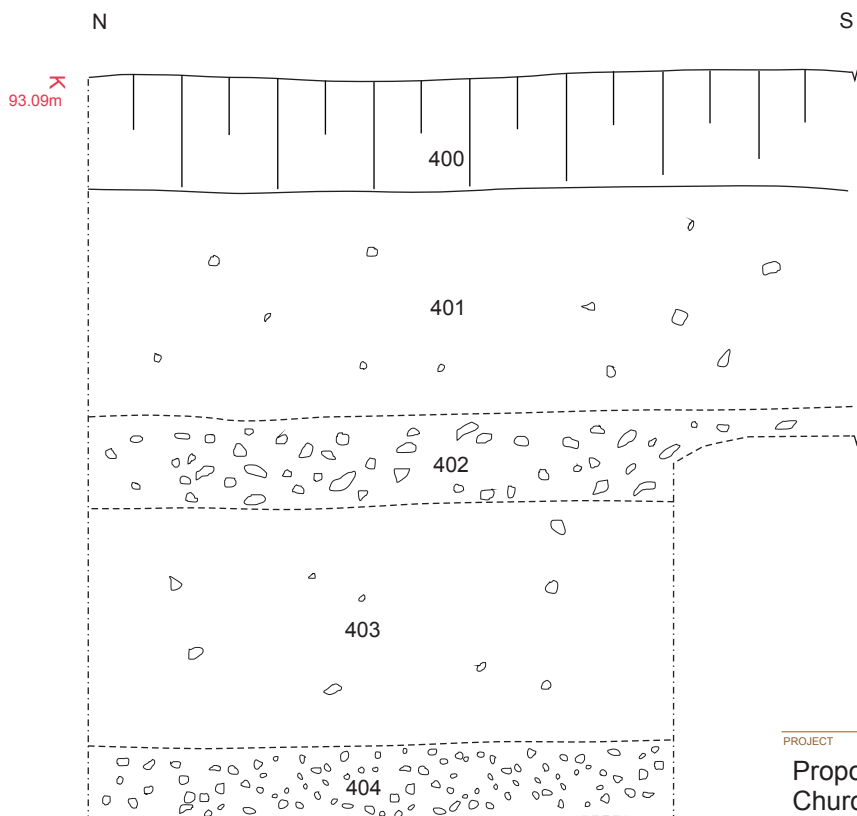
Trench 3

c) Representative section



Trench 4

d) Representative section



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Fig. 3: Representative sections, Trenches 1-4

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