

LAND ADJACENT TO LOUVIGNY CLOSE, STATION ROAD, FENITON, DEVON

NGR SY 100 992

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

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archaeology

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(NGR SY 100 992)

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Planning refs East Devon District Council 11/2481/MFUL and 12/00017/REF

CONTENTS

Summary

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Archaeological background	1
3.	Aims of the work	2
4.	Methodology	2
5.	Results	2
6.	The finds	4
7.	Discussion	5
8.	Conclusion	6
8.	Archive and OASIS	6
9.	Acknowledgements	6
10.	References	7

List of figures

- Fig. 1: Site location
- Fig. 2: Trench locations in relation to geophysics results, with features identified added
- Fig. 3: Plans and sections, Trenches 1-3
- Fig. 4: Plans and sections, Trenches 4 & 5
- Fig. 5: Plan and sections, Trench 6

List of plates

- Plate 1: General view of Trench 3, looking south
- Plate 2: General view of Trench 4, looking southeast
- Plate 3: Trench 4, linear feature F406 view to northeast
- Plate 4: General view of Trench 5, looking north
- Plate 5: Trench 5, excavating ditch terminal F508, view to northeast
- Plate 6: Trench 5, F508 view of *in situ* pottery, looking southeast

Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on land adjacent to Louvigny Close, Station Road, Feniton, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2012. The site is located on the eastern outskirts of Feniton, close to where previous investigations had identified evidence for prehistoric settlement and field systems. A geophysical survey carried out on the site itself had identified a number of linear and discrete anomalies that could potentially relate to buried archaeological remains.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of six trenches totalling 210m in length, with each trench 2m wide. Trenches were positioned to target some of the anomalies identified during the geophysical survey. The investigation revealed a series linear features probably relating to two phases of former land division. The earliest phase is likely to be Early Bronze Age in date, represented by a series of northwest-southeast and northeast-southwest aligned ditches. Within a ditch terminal on the east side of the site seemingly deliberately deposited sherds of Early Bronze Age Beaker period pottery were recovered. The later field boundaries are likely to be on a more north-south and east-west alignment, and as shown on 19th century maps.

Some of the linear features identified on the site are likely to represent part of a wider prehistoric field system, with alignments present similar to those identified at Castle Hill to the south, which was excavated as part of improvements to the A30 Trunk Road. There was no evidence from the trial trenching to indicate that associated in situ settlement is present on the site, although the recovery of domestic Beaker period pottery suggests that such activity must be close by.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation carried out in support of an appeal against the refusal of a planning application for residential development on land adjacent to Louvigny Close, Station Road, Feniton, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2012. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Wainhomes (South West) Holdings Ltd, and was required by East Devon District Council, as advised by Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (hereafter DCHES).
- 1.2 The site is situated on the eastern outskirts of Feniton (Fig. 1) on what is currently agricultural land containing a maize crop. It lies on generally level ground at around 85m aOD, with the underlying solid geology comprising sandstone of the Otter Formation.
- 1.3 The proposed development would comprise the erection of 50 dwellings, together with associated roads, sewers, landscaping, parking and garages, as well as the provision of allotments, play space and a community building.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is situated in an area containing evidence for prehistoric settlement and funerary activity, including a Bronze Age barrow c. 200m southwest of the site which was excavated in 1920. A probable ring ditch has been identified by geophysical survey c. 200m to the southeast, along with a number of linear features thought to be part of an early field system. Excavations in advance of the construction of the present A30 at Castle Hill identified quantities of prehistoric worked flint and chert, as well as the remains of two Neolithic segmented enclosures, a Bronze Age settlement, and a co-axial field system (Fitzpatrick *et al* 1999).

- 2.2 An archaeological evaluation on land approximately 500m to the south identified the site of a possible Bronze Age settlement enclosure with internal features, with this seemingly delineated by a large curvilinear ditch (Hughes 2011). Elsewhere on the site more localised archaeological features were present, although two ditches located towards the southeast corner may be part of a Bronze Age field system identified during excavations on the line of the present A30.
- 2.3 A geophysical survey of the site itself (Archaeological Surveys 2011) has identified a number of linear and discrete anomalies that could potentially relate to buried archaeological remains (Fig. 1).

3. AIMS OF THE WORK

- 3.1 The aim of the trial trench evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site. The results of the work will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2012), submitted to and approved by DCHES prior to commencement on site. The work comprised the machine-excavation of six trenches (Fig. 2) totalling 210m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide. Trenches were positioned to target anomalies identified during the initial geophysical survey and were located using a Topcon GMS2 GPS, with sub-metre accuracy.
- 4.2 The site was recorded in accordance with the *AC archaeology pro forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and with reference to AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1 (Detailed plan Fig. 3a, section Fig. 3b)

This trench was 20m long and positioned to target a northwest to southeast aligned linear anomaly and a curvilinear anomaly interpreted from the geophysical survey. It was excavated onto natural subsoil (context 102), which comprised a light brownish-red clayey-sand with areas of dense gravels, present at a depth of 0.5m, which was below a 0.2m thick mid brown sandy loam agricultural subsoil layer (101) and a 0.3m thick dark brown sandy loam ploughsoil (100). The trench contained a single linear feature (F104), which corresponded with the location of the targeted straight linear anomaly but was on a slightly different (WNW to ESE) alignment. The targeted curvilinear anomaly was not encountered.

Linear feature F104 was 1.36m wide and 0.16m deep, with gradual sloping sides and a narrow concave base. It had a mid yellowish-brown silty-sand fill (103), containing occasional sub-angular small stone inclusions. One piece of iron slag was recovered.

5.2 Trench 2 (Detailed plan Fig. 3c, section Fig. 3d)

This trench was 15m long and positioned to target a north to south aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the geophysical survey. It was excavated onto natural subsoil (202), which was present at a depth of 0.56m below a combined 0.2m thick mid brown and mid reddish-brown sandy loam agricultural subsoil layers (201 and 207) and a 0.36m thick ploughsoil (200). The trench contained a north to south aligned linear feature (F203) and a parallel possible linear feature (F205).

Probable ditch F203 was 1.97m wide and 0.23m deep, with gradual to moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It had a mid reddish-brown sandy-silt fill (204), containing moderately common sub-rounded and sub-angular medium gravel inclusions. One piece of prehistoric worked flint was recovered its fill.

Possible linear feature F205 was 3.12m wide and 0.14m deep, with gradual sloping sides and an uneven flattish base that, in parts, had a diffuse edge with the natural subsoil. It had a mid reddish-brown sandy-silt fill (206), containing occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular medium gravel inclusions and rare charcoal flecks. One piece of prehistoric worked flint was recovered.

5.3 Trench 3 (Detailed plan Fig. 3e, sections Fig. 3f-g; Plate 1)

This trench was 30m long and positioned to target two curvilinear anomalies interpreted from the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (307) was present at a depth of 0.4m, below a 0.15m thick agricultural subsoil layer (301) and a 0.25m thick ploughsoil (300). The trench contained two linear features (F303 and F306) which corresponded with the locations of the targeted anomalies.

Probable ditch F303 was 1.52m wide and 0.36m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It contained two fills of light greyish-brown and light yellowish-brown sandy-silt (304 and 302). No finds were recovered.

Probable ditch F306 was 1.94m wide and 0.29m deep, with gradual sloping sides and a concave base. It had a mid yellowish-brown sandy-silt fill (305), containing occasional medium to large sub-angular stone inclusions. One piece of prehistoric worked flint was recovered.

5.4 Trench 4 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a, sections Fig. 4b-c; Plates 2-3)

This trench had a total length of 65m and was positioned to target two linear anomalies identified from the geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (402), which was present at a depth of 0.4m below a 0.15m thick agricultural subsoil layer (401) and a 0.25m thick ploughsoil (400). The trench contained two linear features (F404 and F406), both of which corresponded with the locations of the targeted linear anomalies, as well as an irregular natural feature (407).

Probable ditch F404 was 1.09m wide and 0.25m deep with moderately steep sloping sides and a flattish base. It had a mid brown silty-sand fill (403), containing common small to large sub-angular stone inclusions. No finds were recovered.

Probable ditch F406 was 1.38m wide and 0.44m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base that cut through diffuse natural feature 407. It had a mid brown silty-sand fill (405), containing common medium sub-angular stone inclusions. Two pieces of worked flint were recovered.

The irregularity of feature 407 suggests it is naturally formed and is probably a tree throw. No finds were recovered.

5.5 Trench 5 (Detailed plan Fig. 4d, sections Fig. 4e-h; Plates 4-6)

This trench was 30m long and positioned to investigate three linear anomalies interpreted from the geophysical survey. It was excavated onto natural subsoil (502), which was present at a depth of 0.5m below a 0.15m thick agricultural subsoil layer (501) and a 0.35m thick ploughsoil (500). The trench contained two linear features (F503 and F505) and a probable linear terminal (F508), all of which corresponded with the targeted anomalies.

Probable ditch F503 was 1.38m wide and 0.28m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It had a dark brown sandy-silt fill (504), containing occasional medium sub-angular stone and rare charcoal inclusions. No finds were recovered.

Probable ditch F505 was 1.35m wide and 0.27m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It had a mid brown sandy-loam fill (506), containing moderately common sub-angular medium stone inclusions. No finds were recovered.

Probable rounded ditch terminal F508 was 0.68m wide and 0.2m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It had a mixed mid yellowish-brown sandy-silt possibly dumped fill (507), which contained patches of re-deposited natural subsoil and moderately common small to large sub-angular stone inclusions. A total of 56 sherds of Early Bronze Age pottery was recovered as a concentrated dump at the base of the feature (Plate 6).

5.6 Trench 6 (Detailed plan Fig. 5a, sections Fig. 5b-c)

This trench was 50m long and positioned to target two linear anomalies interpreted from the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (602) was exposed at a depth of between 0.74m in the south and 0.22m in the north. The natural subsoil was overlain towards the south of the trench only by a 0.15m thick mid brownish-yellow colluvial subsoil (601), which was sealed by an agricultural subsoil (603) and ploughsoil (600). The trench contained two parallel northeast to southwest aligned linear features (F605 and F607), as well as an east to west aligned linear feature (F609). The locations of these features corresponded with the positions of the targeted anomalies.

Probable ditch F605 was 1.5m wide and 0.25m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a flat base, whereas F607 was 1.46m wide and 0.35m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. Both features cut through colluvial subsoil (601) and contained similar dark reddish-brown silty sand fills (604 and 606). No finds were recovered.

Probable ditch F609 was 1.25m wide and 0.16m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a mid brown silty-sand fill and no finds were recovered.

6. THE FINDS

by Henrietta Quinnell and Kerry Kerr-Peterson

6.1 Introduction

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

Table 1: Finds quantification (weight is in grams)

Trench	Context	Context type	Prehistoric pottery		Medieval pottery		Fe slag		Worked flint	
			No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
1	100	Ploughsoil							2	14
	103	Ditch fill F104					1	17		
2	200	Ploughsoil							2	27
	204	Ditch fill F203							1	5
	206	Ditch fill F205							1	1
3	300	Ploughsoil			1	15				
	305	Ditch fill F306							1	19
4	405	Ditch fill F406						2	36	
5	500	Ploughsoil			1	5				
	507	Ditch fill F508	56	358						
6	600	Ploughsoil							1	1
TOTALS			56	358	2	20	1	17	10	103

6.2 Lithics

Ten pieces were recovered: (context 100) two; (200) two; (204) one; (206) one; (305) one; (405) two; (600) one. These appear to represent a hard hammer Later Neolithic flake industry. The pieces from features are notable for their freshness, suggesting some contemporaneity with the contexts from which they come. There are four tools – an end scraper from (200), a side scraper and piercer (405) and a chisel arrowhead (206). Most of the assemblage could be contemporary with the Beaker ceramics from context 507 (see below), but the chisel arrowhead belongs to the preceding Later Neolithic. Arrowheads such as this appear from the end of the 3rd millennium BC and onwards through the Later Neolithic. Its presence suggests that some or all of the lithics may be of Later Neolithic date, and that there could be activity here contemporary with the Peterborough ceramics from the oval ditched enclosure at nearby Castle Hill.

6.3 Early Bronze Age Beaker pottery

Three or possibly four vessels are represented by some 56 sherds from F508 (context 507). One vessel, with five conjoining sherds from the rim and upper part, is large and thick and has a cordon below the rim. It is decorated with horizontal lines of finger nail impressions: no body sherds survive. The remaining two/three vessels are represented by rim sherds with a simple out-curving profile and are decorated with coarse horizontal lines of comb impressions: some body sherds indicate that the decoration on at least one vessel consists of alternating plain and decorated zones. All the sherds have some degree of bioturbation abrasion. The fabric has sparse small inclusions which appear to consist of grog and chert.

These vessels all belong to the 'domestic' variant of Beaker pottery – without the elaboration of decoration found on many vessels in burial/ritual contexts. A small amount of Beaker pottery was published in the report on Castle Hill (Fitzpatrick *et al* 1999), but a review of the ceramics from the site (Quinnell 2003) showed that the assemblage there was more extensive than originally recognised, with most of the additional material consisting of domestic Beaker. The Castle Hill domestic Beaker includes vessels with cordons and with finger nail decoration and appears to be of broadly comparable fabrics to those from the present site.

Recent work from Cornwall indicates that domestic Beaker is current from an early stage in the use of Beaker ceramics in South West England, quite possibly from the 24th century BC onwards (Quinnell forthcoming). The later end of the date range is likely to lie somewhere around 2000 cal BC. Currently most radiocarbon dates for Beaker material in South West England come from Cornish sites – there is a remarkable scarcity in Devon.

6.4 Medieval pottery

Two body sherds of abraded green-glazed earthenware were recovered from the ploughsoil of Trenches 3 and 5.

6.5 Fe slag

A small piece of smithing slag was recovered from linear feature F104 (context 103), Trench 1.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has established that the geophysical survey was broadly accurate, with the majority of targeted anomalies present as sub-surface features. It can therefore be assumed that the survey results are a reliable indicator for the presence of archaeological features on the site.

7.2 All the exposed features are likely to be ditches representing the presence of former field system boundaries, with no discrete features (pits, postholes etc) recorded to indicate associated settlement. Ditch F404 in Trench 4 and ditch F505 are likely to be part of the same

linear feature, with this also the case for ditch F406 in Trench 4 and probable ditch terminal F508 in Trench 5. It is likely that two distinct phases of fields are present; historic maps show a general field pattern of broadly north-south and east-west boundaries, with earlier ditches likely to be represented by a northwest-southeast and northeast-southwest trend. The first edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of 1888 shows a north-south aligned boundary in the approximate position of parallel ditches F203 and F205, Trench 2, although both features each contained a single piece of prehistoric worked flint. These features could represent parallel ditches once located either side of a former hedgebank, with the flint recovered probably residual.

- 7.3 The Early Bronze Age (Beaker) pottery recovered from probable ditch terminal F508 is likely to be a reliable indicator in terms of a date for the northwest-southeast and northeast-southwest ditches excavated on the site, as well as potentially the linear geophysical anomalies also following the same alignment. The pottery appears to represent a deliberate dump of sherds from different vessels associated with a rapidly infilled deposit, and there are currently no Beaker associations for such contexts in South West England, or indeed more generally in Britain (H. Quinnell pers comm.).
- 7.4 The co-axial prehistoric field system identified at Castle Hill (Fitzpatrick 1999) was also on a general northwest-southeast and northeast-southwest alignment, although this was dated by limited radiocarbon method to the Middle Bronze Age period. However, a review of the pottery assemblage from the site (Quinnell 2003) indicated that some of the pottery was mis-diagnosed and is Beaker period in date.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Some of the linear features identified on the site are likely to represent part of a wider prehistoric field system, with alignments present similar to those identified at Castle Hill to the south. There was no evidence from the trial trenching to indicate that associated *in situ* settlement features are present on the site, although the recovery of domestic Beaker period pottery suggests that such activity must be close by.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 The archive will continue to be stored under controlled conditions at the offices of AC archaeology in Bradninch, but will ultimately be deposited under the relevant accession number at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, at the earliest in 2013 when the current museum non-acceptance policy will be reviewed. A temporary reference number has been obtained from the museum, which is RAMM: 12/54.
- 9.3 The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 131388.

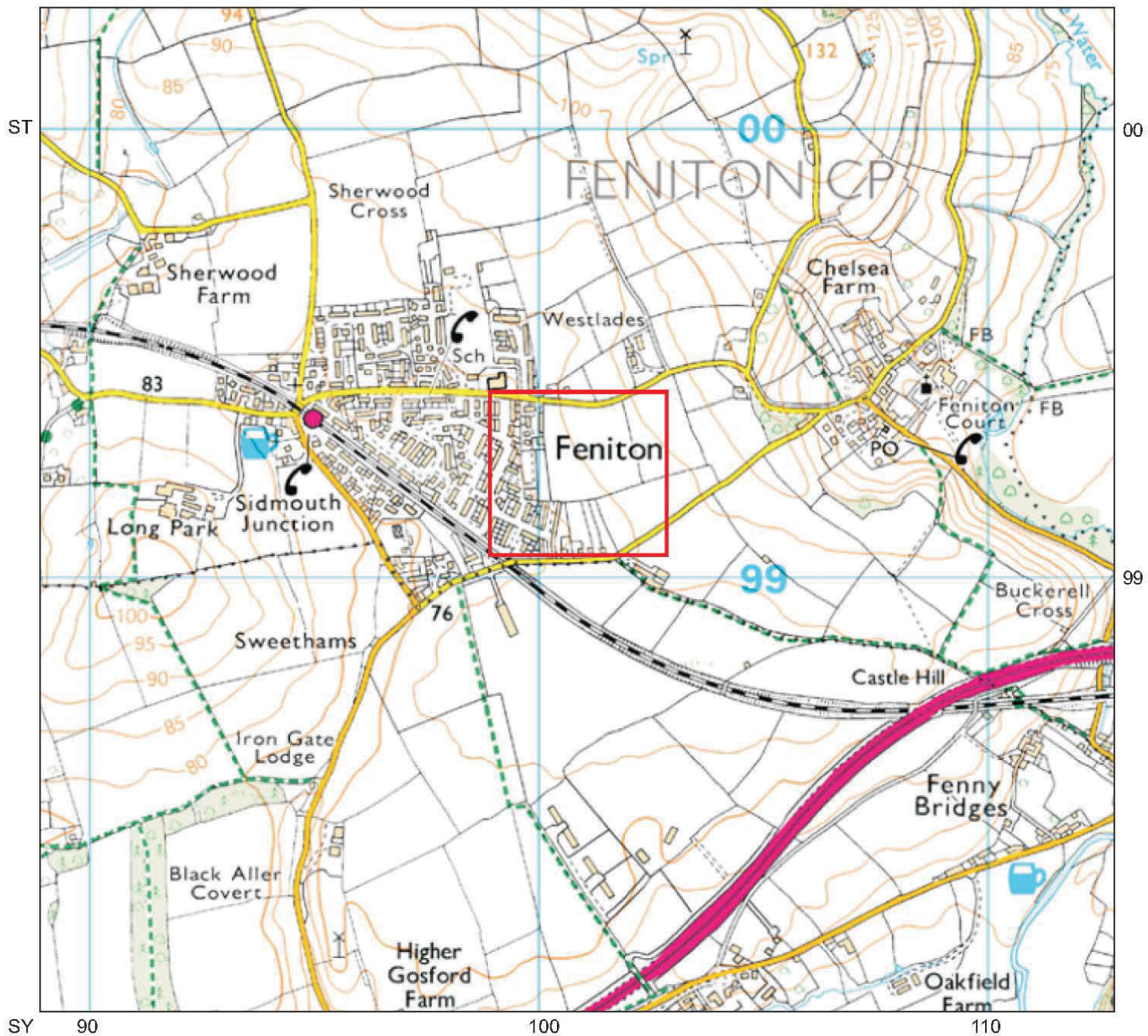
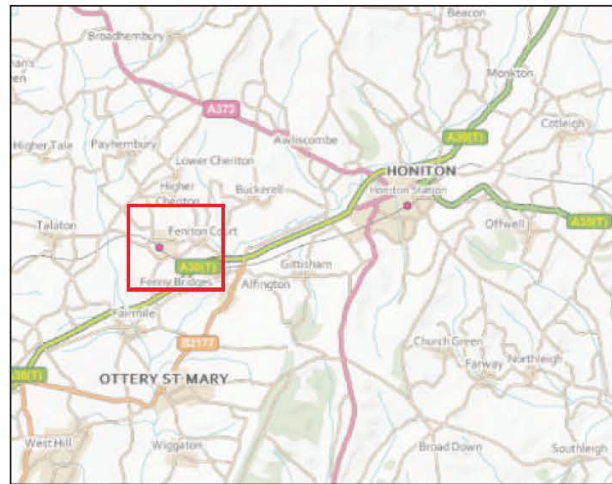
10. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Rob Bourn of CgMs Consulting and access to site was arranged by Simon Cater of Wainhomes. The site trial trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes, Chris Caine and Richard Sims, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The helpful advice of Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

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Site Location

PROJECT

Land adjacent to Louvigny Close, Feniton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



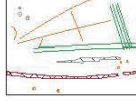
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Key

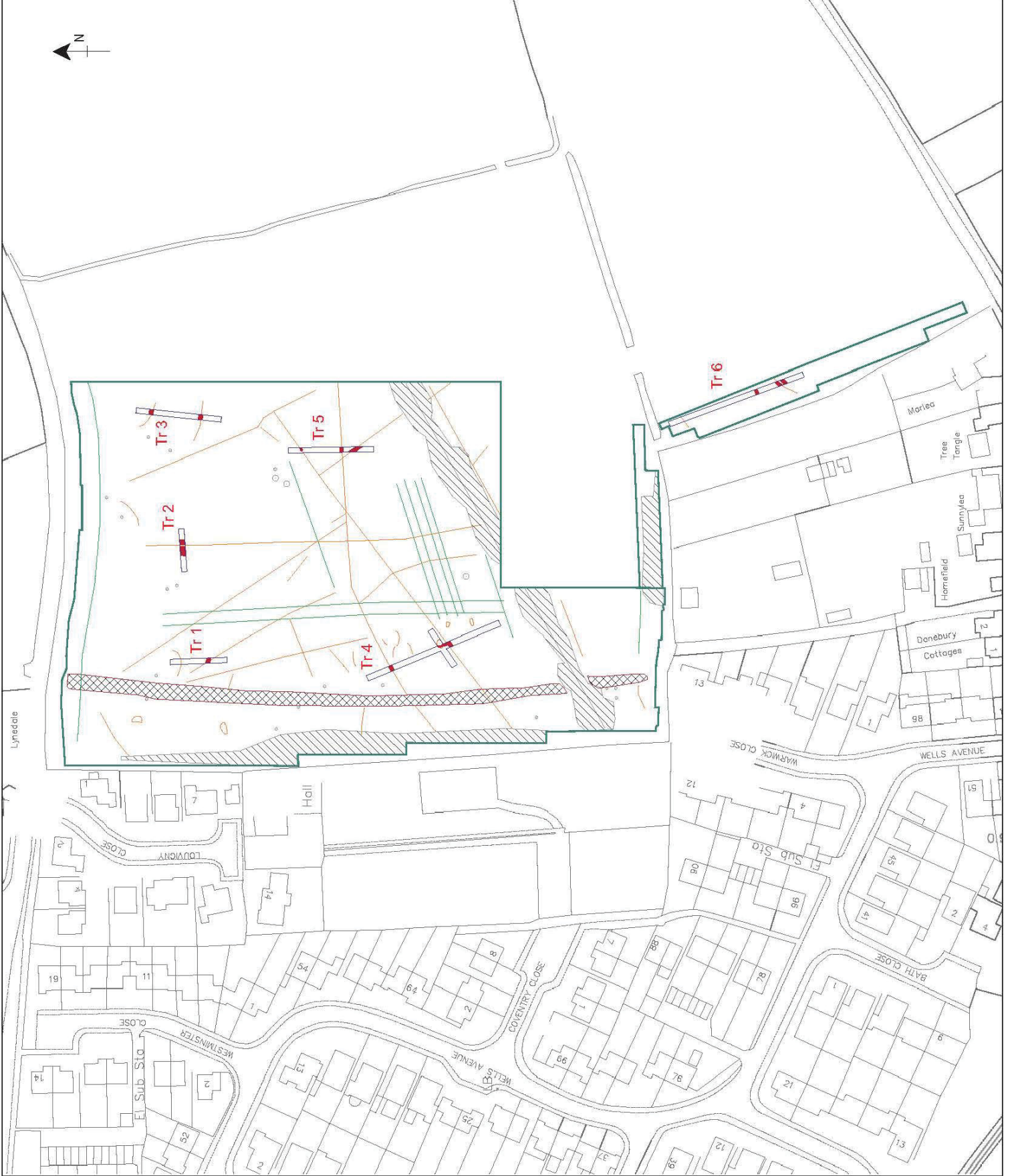
Geophysical survey areas

Trenches

Archaeological features identified



Geophysical anomalies

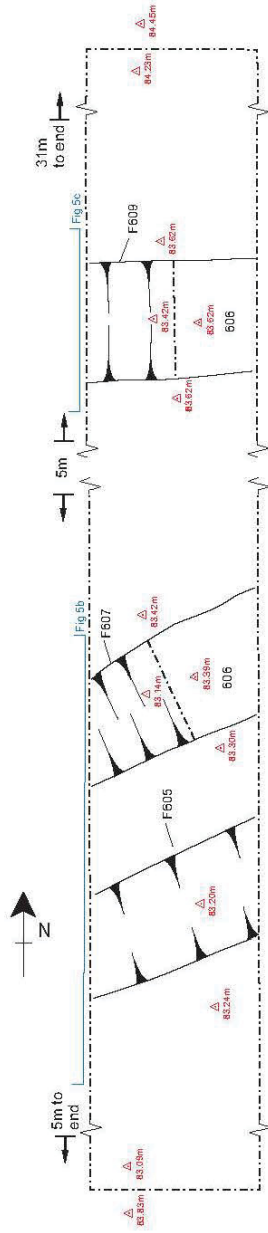


PROJECT
Land adjacent to Louvigny Close,
Feniton, Devon

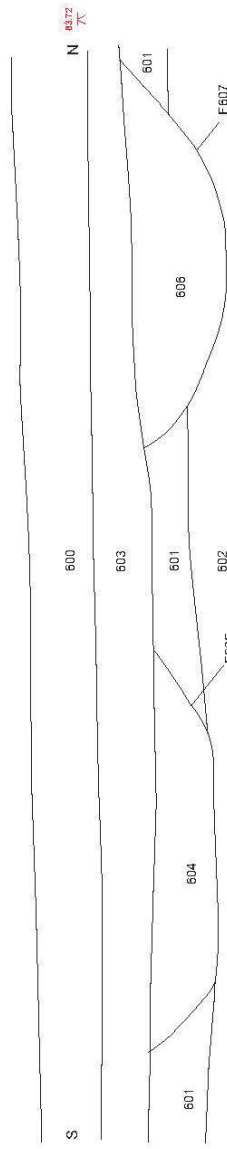
TITLE
Fig. 2: Trench locations in relation to
geophysics results, with features
identified added



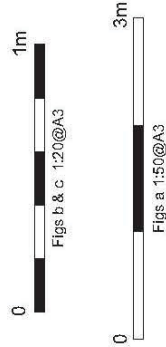
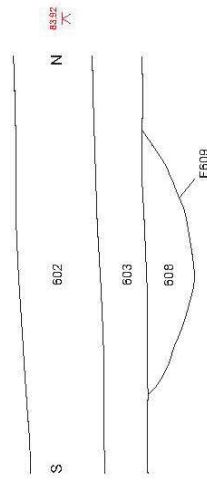
a) Trench 6: Plan



b) Trench 6: Sections F605 and F607



c) Trench 6: Section F609



PROJECT

Station Road, Feniton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 5: Plan and sections, Trench 6



AC archaeology



Plate 1: General view of Trench 3, looking south (scale 1m)



Plate 2: General view of Trench 4, looking southeast



Plate 3: Trench 4, linear feature F406, view to northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 4: General view of Trench 5, looking north



Plate 5: Trench 5, excavating ditch terminal F508, view to northeast



Plate 6: Trench 5, F508 view of *in situ* pottery, looking southeast (scale 0.2m)

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