

Land at Millbrook, Axminster, Devon

Results of a phase 2 strip, map and sample investigation

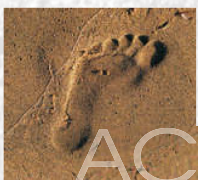
East Devon District Council planning reference 07/1635/MRES

Prepared by:
Clive Meaton MA

On behalf of:
CgMs

Document No: ACD464/1/0

Date: October 2012



AC archaeology

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Civil Parish & District: Axminster, East Devon | National Grid Reference SY 30350 98780 | Number: |
| Subject: Land at Millbrook, Axminster, Devon: Results of a phase 2 strip, map and sample investigation | | Photo attached: Yes |
| Planning Application no: 07/1635/MRES | Recipient museum: Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter | |
| OASIS ID: 136001 | Museum Accession no: Temporary Reference no. 282/2008 | |
| Contractor's reference number/code: ACD464 | Dates fieldwork undertaken: 19/3/12-22/3/12 and 17/5/12 | |

Introduction

An archaeological strip, map and sample excavation was undertaken by AC archaeology on land at Millbrook, Axminster, Devon. It formed the second phase in a programme of archaeological mitigation required by East Devon District Council as a condition of planning consent (07/1635/MRES). It was commissioned by CgMs on behalf of Wainhomes and carried out during groundwork associated with residential development.

The site is situated to the northeast of Axminster on land to the east of Chard (Fig.1). It is located at around 40m OD on a gently south-facing slope, with the drift geology comprising alluvial clays laid down during the Quaternary period. Recent archaeological work in the area highlighted the potential for prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval deposits to be present across the site (Exeter Archaeology 2005; Hughes 2008). Furthermore, the present north to south section of Chard Road, immediately to the west of the site, is thought to represent the alignment of the Fosse Way.

Aim

The aim of the strip, map and sample was to preserve, by record, any archaeological features or deposits exposed during ground reduction associated with the residential development.

Methodology

Two areas were included in the phase II strip, map and sample (Fig. 1). These were Areas 3A-1 and 3A-3. Ground reduction was undertaken using a mechanical tracked excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All artefacts or deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro-forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and digital photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*.

Results

Area 3A-1

Large parts of this area comprised up to 1.5m of modern made ground (108) directly overlying the mixed alluvial natural (102). Evidence for possible wheel rutting was noted in the exposed natural.

Elsewhere, the surviving general stratigraphic profile comprised a medium brown silty clay top soil (100), measuring up to 200mm thick, containing frequent chert inclusions, and a medium orange brown silty clay subsoil (101), which measured up to 200mm thick, and also contained frequent chert. The subsoil (101) overlay the natural substrate (103) – mixed alluvial clays and gravels.

Within Area 3A-1, one linear feature was identified (Fig. 2; Plate 1). This was a northwest to southeast aligned ditch (F107) that was exposed for a distance of c.22m; it continued beyond the northern limits of the excavation. Two one-metre wide slots were excavated through it. They were recorded as cuts [104] and [106], which both revealed a shallow profile with moderately sloping edges and a flat base. Their respective fills, (103) and (105), were medium grey-brown silty clays containing frequent gravels (Fig.2). Cut [104] measured 900mm wide and 200mm in depth, whilst cut [106] was 900mm wide and 90mm deep (Plates 2 and 3). Two pieces of struck flint and one sherd of medieval pottery were recovered from fill (103).

Area 3A-3

Up to 2m depth of modern overburden was present in Area 3A-3 (Plate 4). It was recorded as (108) and contained concrete blocks, red brick and tarmac. There was no surviving topsoil or subsoil, and the made ground was recorded directly over the natural, which formed mixed gravels and alluvium (102). No archaeological features were identified in Area 3A-3.

Comment

Clearly both Areas 3A-1 and 3A-3 have been subject to recent modern disturbance, and this is confirmed by inspection of on-line aerial photographs that show both areas were formed part of the adjacent residential construction site; Area 3A-3 was used as a compound during the final phases of development. Given the general lack of both topsoil and subsoil deposits, combined with the fact that the modern overburden (108) directly overlies the natural alluvium it is not unreasonable to assume that ground reduction had already been undertaken across much of the area. If so, any surviving archaeological deposits may have been significantly, if not potentially entirely, truncated.

Therefore, it seems likely that the shallow linear feature (107) survived only with its basal fill intact but may once have been a more substantive ditch or landscape feature. However, with only two chert flakes and a single small sherd of medieval pottery recovered from fill (103) its date remains unclear. It is unlikely to be prehistoric, and its position, away from the hedge to the north, indicates that it is not a drainage ditch associated with the present field boundary (retained within the residential developments). It is therefore likely to represent an earlier, medieval field division.

References

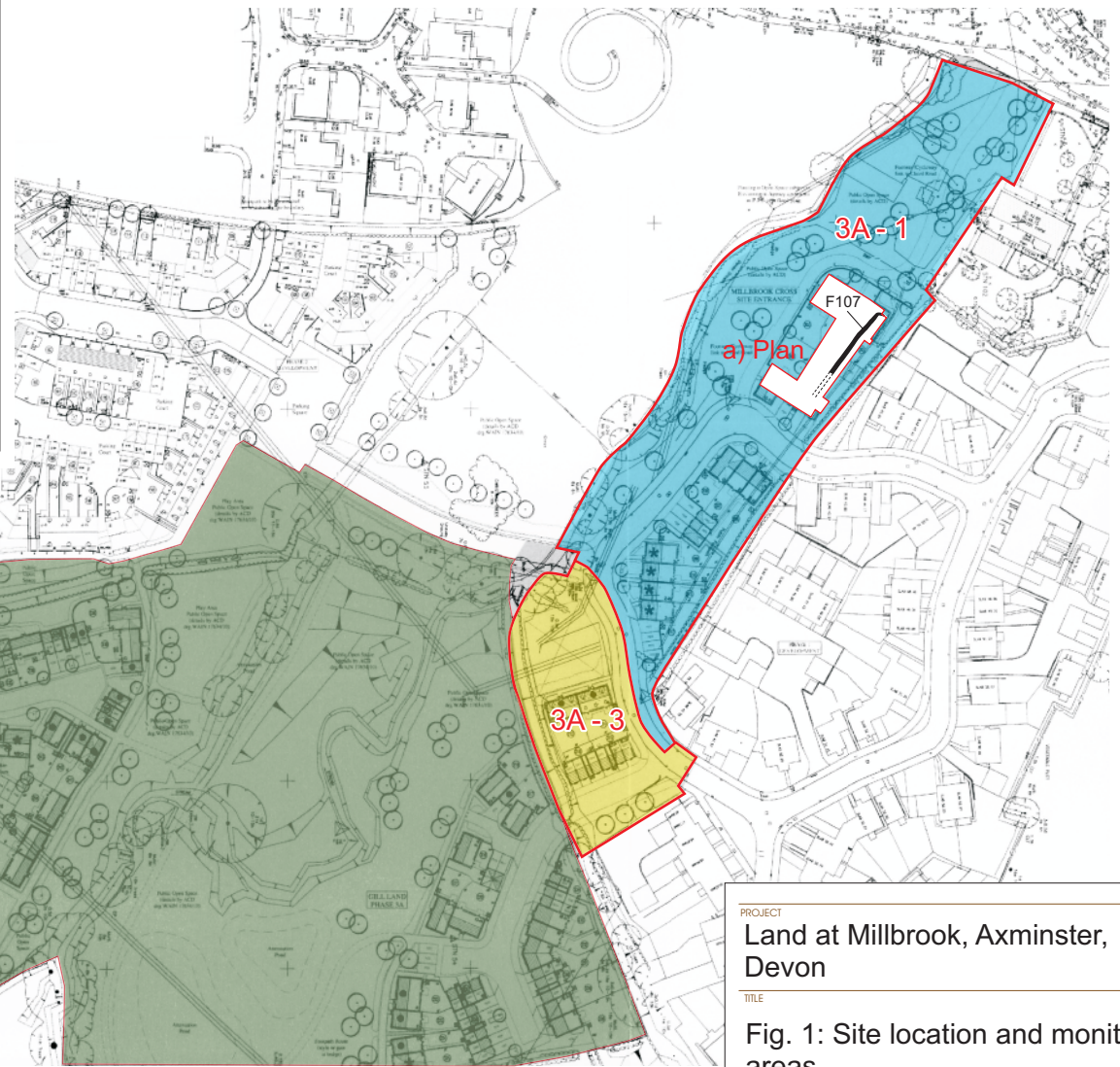
Exeter Archaeology, 2005, *Archaeological assessment of a proposed new development at Millbrook, Chard Road, Axminster*, Exeter Archaeology report no.03.66.

Hughes, S., 2008, *Results of a Stage 1 Archaeological Evaluation on land at Millbrook, Axminster, Devon*, AC Archaeology document no. ACD09/2/0

Recorder:

Clive Meaton, AC archaeology

Date sent to HER:



- Area stripped
- Phase I: areas monitored
- Phase II

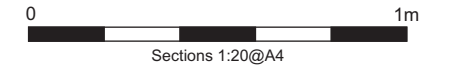
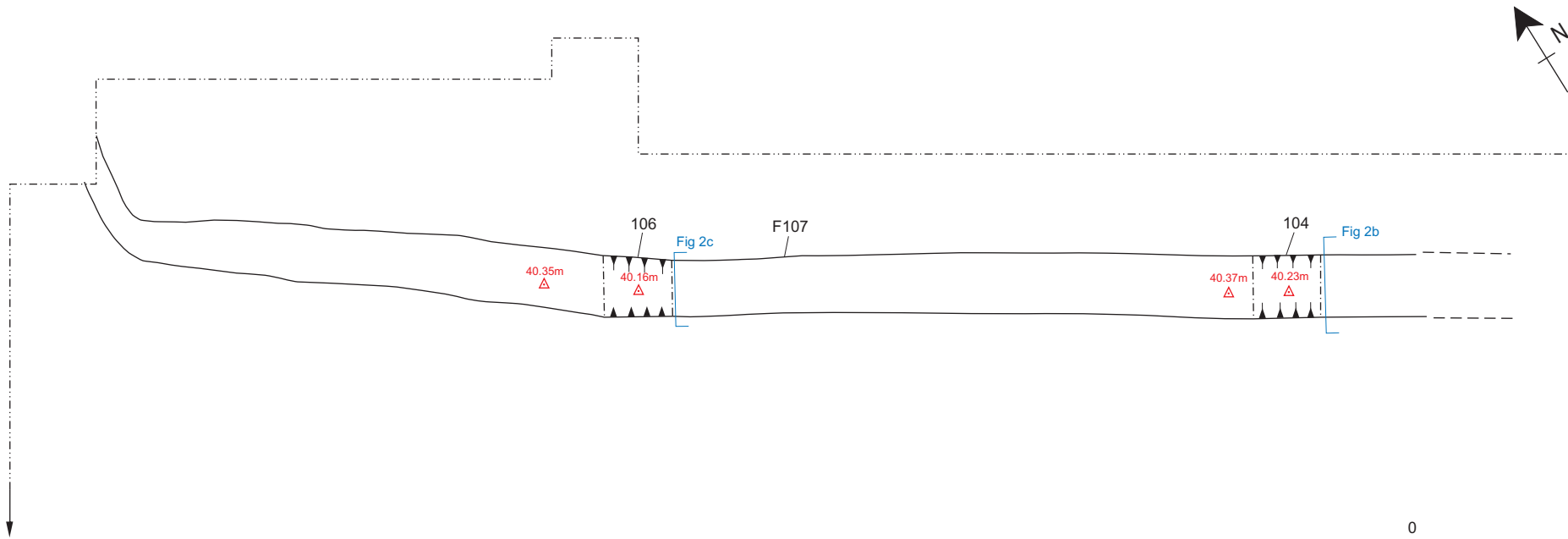


PROJECT
**Land at Millbrook, Axminster,
 Devon**

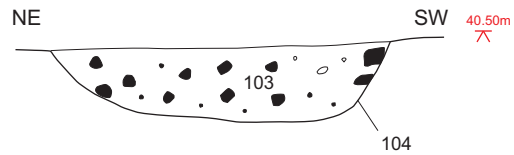
TITLE
**Fig. 1: Site location and monitored
 areas**



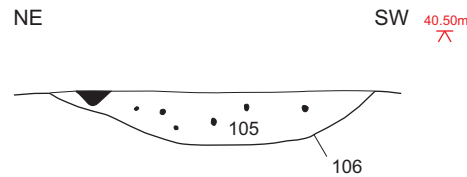
a) Plan




b) Section through ditch slot [104]



c) Section through ditch slot [106]



 Chert or flint

PROJECT
Land at Millbrook, Axminster,
Devon

TITLE
Fig. 2: Plan of feature [107], and
associated cuts [104] and [106]



Plate 1: Feature [107] looking northwest. Scale 1m



Plate 2: Cut [104] northwest facing section. Scale 1m



Plate 3: Cut [106] northwest facing section. Scale 1m



Plate 4: Area 3A-3 section showing overburden looking north. Scale 1m

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