

# NEW ALDI RETAIL STORE, EXETER ROAD, HONITON, DEVON

NGR ST 1500 0021

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning ref: East Devon District Council 10/0312/MFUL

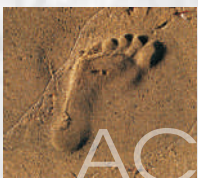
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Prepared by:  
Ben Pears

On behalf of:  
ALDI Stores Ltd

Report No: ACD631/2/0

Date: February 2013



AC archaeology

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## Summary

*An archaeological trench evaluation on land between Exeter Road and the A30 at Turks Head Corner, Honiton, Devon (NGR ST 1500 0021), was undertaken by AC archaeology during February 2013. The site occupies approximately 0.5 hectares of land to the west of Honiton adjacent to the alignment of the former Roman road between Dorchester and Exeter, which was formerly the site of the Turks Head Inn and more recently Slades Countrywise Stores.*

*The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of six trenches totalling 60m in length, with each trench 1.80m wide. Each trench was positioned in an area of reduced modern disturbance and avoiding modern services.*

*The work identified a number of highly truncated deposits possibly associated with part of the Turks Head public house adjacent to the Exeter Road, an extension of a tenement boundary ditch to the north of the development area and widespread distribution of urban horizons possibly created when the area was utilised as open farmland. A single sherd of medieval green glazed pottery was recovered from the boundary feature, but overall the pottery was 19th to 20th century in date.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land between Exeter Road and the A30 at Turks Head Corner, Honiton, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during February 2013. The work was commissioned by Turley Associates on behalf of ALDI Stores Ltd and was required by East Devon District Council as a condition of planning permission for the construction of a new ALDI retail store and associated works, as advised by Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (hereafter DCCHEs).

1.2 The site occupies an area approximately 0.5 hectares of the former Slades Countrywise Store adjacent to Exeter Road, which contained the demolished store building, car park and hardstanding areas, as well as other associated ancillary buildings. It is situated to the west of the historic core of the town on sloping ground between c. 84 to 91m aOD. The underlying solid geology of the area comprises Triassic red, brown and grey coloured interlaminated sandstones, mudstones and siltstones of the Triassic, Sidmouth Mudstone Formation (c. 247 – 201Ma) (British Geological Survey online 2011). The soils of the development area are freely draining, slightly acidic loams which support arable and grassland landcover alongside deciduous woodland and bracken and gorse upland areas (LandIS Soilscape online 2013).

### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The main archaeological interest in the site is its proximity to Exeter Road, which is aligned upon a Roman road between Dorchester and Exeter and previous excavations within the proximity of other Roman roads in the local landscape have indicated high potential for roadside settlement and funerary activity (see Salvatore and Knight, 1991, Weddell *et al.* 1993 and Weddell and Reed, 1997). A Saxon charter dating to AD1061 records a street between Exeter and Honiton, suggesting that the Roman road potentially survived to at least this date, while in 1754 a record was created illustrating paving on the road 4 miles west of Honiton. Evidence of medieval occupation close to the site can be determined from documents dating to 1374. These sources illustrate that almshouses belonging to St Margaret's Hospital, were being used as a leper hospital are marked on historic mapping

approximately 100m to the east of the site. On the site itself the former Turks Head Inn is shown on the Honiton Tithe map of 1843 (Appendix 1: Map 1), and also on the first-edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1888 as a group of buildings in the proximity of the Roman road (Appendix 1: Map 2). When the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map was surveyed in 1903, however, the Inn had gone and the site was not redeveloped until the mid 20th century (Appendix 2: Map 3).

### **3. AIMS OF THE WORK**

**3.1** The principal 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 development area. The results as set out in this report will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation as a second stage of archaeological works.

### **4. METHODOLOGY (Fig. 2)**

**4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2013), submitted to and approved by DCCHEs prior to commencement on site. The work comprises the machine-excavation of six trenches totalling 60m in length, with each trench 1.80m wide. The presence of a large number of services including a high voltage mains electrical cable, storm drains and communications services meant that Trenches 2, 4 and 5 were positioned in slightly different locations to the original plan and in the south west of the site Trench 6 was not excavated at all.

**4.2** The six trenches were located in positions away from the demolished garden centre buildings in order to give the best coverage of the development site. These were concentrated to the south and east, adjacent to the Exeter Road and the A35 and a single trench in the northwest corner.

**4.3** Areas of modern hardstanding and underlying modern deposits were removed using a tracked machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket. Machine excavation ceased at the point at which either archaeologically significant deposits or natural subsoil was reached. The sides and base of the trenches were then cleaned and investigated by hand.

**4.4** 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 2*.

**4.5** The majority of finds on site were clearly 19th and 20th century date and therefore their presence only was recorded and the majority not retained. A small quantity was kept to confirm dating.

### **5. RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Context descriptions for all trenches are provided in tabulated form in Appendix 2, with those containing archaeological features or deposits also described in further detail below. Relevant detailed plans and sections are included as Figs 3 and 4, and photographs as plates 1-10.

#### **5.2 Trench 1 (representative section Fig 4a, Plates 1 and 2)**

This trench was positioned across the former entrance to the Slades Countrywide store. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.35m into an alluvial layer (108), comprising light greenish grey silty sand. Overlying this natural deposit were a series of garden soils

(hortisols), associated with the localised cultivation of the area prior to development. Three distinctive hortisol contexts were found. At the bottom of the sequence was a compact deposit (107) consisting of a dark black to very dark brown loam with very well preserved organic material including grasses and hay, but no artefacts present. Immediately overlying this, was a thicker (240-260mm) dark brown to black silty clay (106) with a large number of modern ceramics, animal bone, brick/tile, glass and charcoal. An upper hortisol layer was also uncovered (105), with a lower organic component but equally as rich in artefacts and probably representing the gradual change from a rural to an industrial land-use. Overlying the hortisol layers was a distinctive hard grey to dark grey brown silty clay (104) which contained a range of rounded stones and modern pottery, brick/tile and glass. This was in turn overlain followed by contexts 103, 102 and 101, which represent activity on the site in recent years.

### **5.3 Trenches 2 and 3** (representative sections Fig 4b and 4c, Plates 3 and 4)

These trenches were orientated in an 'L' shape along the northeast of the site adjacent to the A35, midway between Trenches 1 and 4. Both trenches were excavated down to the clean, dark blue to blue/grey mottled silty clay alluvium (204 and 304) to a depth of 0.9m. In both trenches the alluvium was overlain by between 370 – 450mm of a continuation of the hortisols found in Trench 1 (203 and 303), which consisted of dark grey to black silty clay loam with numerous inclusions of modern ceramics, animal bone, brick/tile, glass and charcoal. Unlike Trench 1 however, multiple hortisol horizons were not encountered suggesting a wider variation of deposition across the site. In both trenches above the hortisol horizon were modern deposits (201-2, 301-2) related to the development of the site in recent years.

### **5.4 Trench 4** (representative sections Fig 4d)

Trench 4 was located in the eastern corner of the site in order to try and identify any buried remains associated with the occupation of the hinterland of the area between the Exeter Road and the A35. Natural mudstone subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.5m and this was typically hard, light grey to yellowish grey sandy clay with common rounded pebbles. No evidence for archaeological activity was found within this trench despite the historic maps showing the position of the Turks Head Inn. This is likely to be as a result of extensive disturbance from numerous services and modern redevelopment.

### **5.5 Trench 5** (detailed plan and sections Fig 3a-e, Plates 5-8)

Trench 5 was also located adjacent to the Exeter Road and natural subsoil (mudstone) was found at a depth of between 1m and 1.2m. This deposit was cut by several features including a possible foundation trench (F504), a small pit (F506) and a small posthole (F509).

Located within the southeast section of the trench F504 was aligned northeast to southwest, measured 300mm wide by 300mm deep, had a vertical side in the northwest section and a flat base. It contained a single fill (505) composed of mid to light grey brown sandy clay with occasional small stone inclusions. No finds were recovered.

Cutting this linear feature at the northeast end were two further features, F506 and F509. Feature 506 had a sub-circular shape in plan (450mm in diameter and 390mm deep) with steep, straight sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (507), composed of mid-reddish brown silty clay with common stone inclusions and occasional charcoal, but no dateable finds. Feature F509 was smaller and measured 300mm in diameter by 270mm deep. It was circular in shape with steep, straight sides and a flat base. Within this feature were two fills. The primary fill (511) was friable, dark grey brown silty clay with the remnants of a large wooden post partly in-situ. The secondary fill (510) consisted of light grey brown silty clay

with occasional stones and some rare charcoal. No finds were recovered from the fills of either F506 or F509.

Both features cut from the level of layer 512; a mid grey brown to light grey brown fine grained silty sand containing rare wood, brick/tile and charcoal inclusions. Overlying this was a sequence of clay based containing 19th century pottery (508, 501), which were overlain by deposits associated with the modern redevelopment of the site (501, 500).

#### **5.6 Trench 7** (detailed plan and sections Figs 3f-g. Plates 9-10)

This trench was located in the west of the development area and was excavated to a depth of 1.1m into an alluvial layer (704), comprising light green to mottled grey silty sand with small stone inclusions and laminated sand deposits. Cutting the natural alluvium was a single archaeological feature (F705) which was aligned northwest to southeast, measured 900mm wide and 100mm deep and had concave, moderate edges and a flat base. It contained a single fill (706) which consisted of light reddish brown silty clay with occasional stone inclusions and several sherds of modern pottery, as well as a single residual medieval piece (see section 6 below). It is likely that this feature would have been more distinctive in the past, however considerable truncation appears to have occurred alongside the deposition of modern construction horizons 701-3.

### **6. THE FINDS**

- 6.1** All finds brought back from site were initially retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context. All the pottery found was dated to the 19th and 20th century, with the exception of a single residual sherd of medieval green glaze ware from the fill (706) of ditch F705, most likely 14th century in date.

### **7. DISCUSSION**

- 7.1** The evaluation has recorded the presence of a range of limited archaeological remains across the site, including potential occupation activity in the south east of the site around Trench 5, possibly associated with part of the old Turks Head Inn group of buildings. In the central area of the site (Trenches 1 to 3) organic rich horizons were uncovered, while in the west of the development area (Trench 7) a heavily truncated ditch was found which might be an extension of a possibly medieval or post medieval tenement plot boundary.
- 7.2** The shallow ditch exposed in Trench 7 is likely to represent evidence for an early land division across the site possibly associated with one of the tenement field boundaries that are aligned northwest to southeast. The presence of mainly 19th century pottery within its fill indicates relatively late infilling and the recorded maximum depth of the feature suggests that considerable truncation has occurred in later periods by modern development on the site.
- 7.3** In Trench 5 some archaeological evidence was found for a modern structure adjacent to Exeter Road. The presence of a rectilinear foundation cut, post hole, pit and distinctive organic horizons may correspond with part of the Turks Head Inn, but the archaeological evidence found did not aid the interpretation of the structure and therefore may represent small timber framed outbuildings. As established in Trench 7 though, major truncation has occurred with the development of the area in modern times and this might account for the drastic loss of evidence.
- 7.4** By far the clearest evidence for past land use on the site was recorded in Trenches 1, 2 and 3 in the central area of the site. The Honiton Tithe map dated to 1843 (Appendix 1: Map 1) with apportionment in 1842 indicates that the area behind the Turks Head Inn was utilised

for a 'homestead and garden' and this is mirrored in the archaeological evidence which revealed distinctively dark, organic rich hortisol horizons. Trench 1 contained the deepest stratigraphy of these soils illustrating a substantial build up through the cultivation of the land. The large amounts of 19th and 20th century ceramics, brick/tile, and bone may originate from the deliberate dumping of household waste from the Inn or other occupation sites in the local vicinity. However, it is clear from existing allotment activity to the south of the site that these soils continue over a considerably wider area than the development site.

- 7.5** Based upon the results of the work and the intensive level of modern truncation, there is low archaeological interest across most of the site. Only at the southeast end of Trench 5, the southwest end of Trench 7 were settlement or boundary features recorded, alongside deep horizons of garden soils in the central area of the site. It is possible that features of similar character and date will be located in other areas of the site but the intensity and nature of modern activity in recent years, including the location of Slades Countrywide Stores and the presence of frequent water, drainage, electrical and telecommunication services, means that even more intensive truncation is likely to have occurred.

## **8 ARCHIVE AND OASIS**

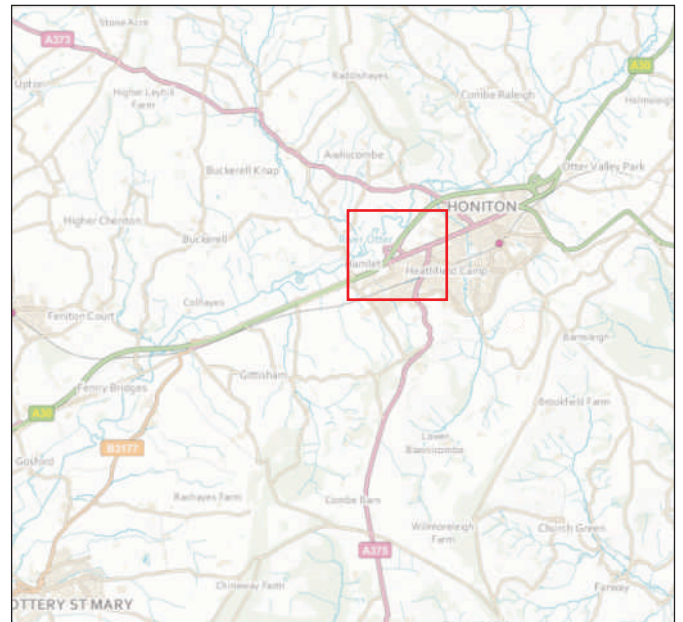
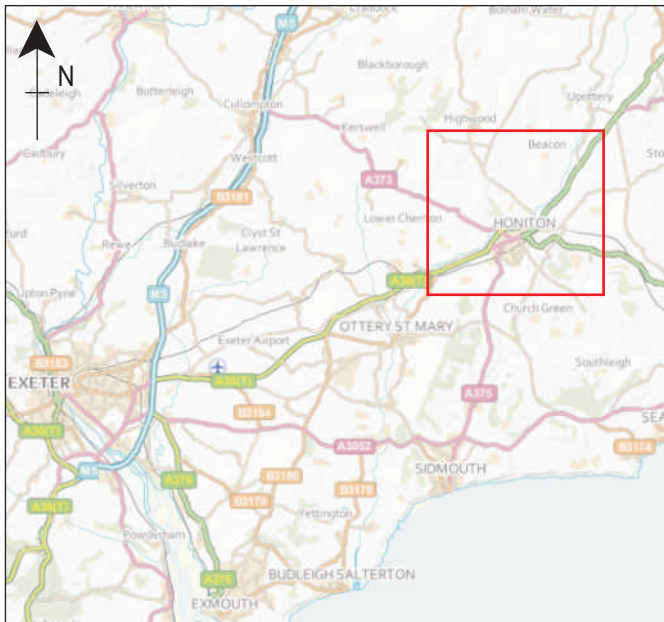
- 8.1** The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ, prior to deposition under a museum-allocated accession number at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter
- 8.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 144398, which includes a digital copy of this report.

## **9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

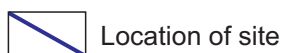
The evaluation was commissioned by Turley Associates on behalf of ALDI Stores Ltd. The site trial trenching was carried out by Ben Pears and Gareth Holes, with illustrations for the report prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

## **10. SOURCES CONSULTED**

British Geological Survey online 2011 [www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience)  
Devon Heritage Centre, Honiton tithe map, 1843 and apportionment, 1842  
LandIS Soilscape online 2013 [www.landis.org.uk/services/soilscales.cfm](http://www.landis.org.uk/services/soilscales.cfm)  
Ordnance Survey first edition 25-inch map, Sheet 70:3, surveyed 1888, published 1889  
Ordnance Survey second edition 25-inch map, Sheet 70:3, surveyed 1888, revised 1903, published 1905  
Salvatore, J. and Knight, M. 1991 'Sections through the Roman road from Exeter to North Tawton' *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* 49: 99-107  
Valentin, J. 2013 *A New ALDI Retail Store, Exeter Road, Honiton, Devon*. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. ACD631/1/0  
Weddell, P. and Reed, S. 1997 'Excavations at Sourton Down Okehampton 1986-1991: Roman road, deserted hamlet and other landscape features' *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* 55: 39-147  
Weddell, P., Reed, S. and Simpson, S. 1993 'Excavation of the Exeter-Dorchester Roman road at the river Yarty, and the Roman fort ditch and settlement site at Woodbury, near Axminster' *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* 51: 33-155



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PROJECT

Exeter Road, Honiton

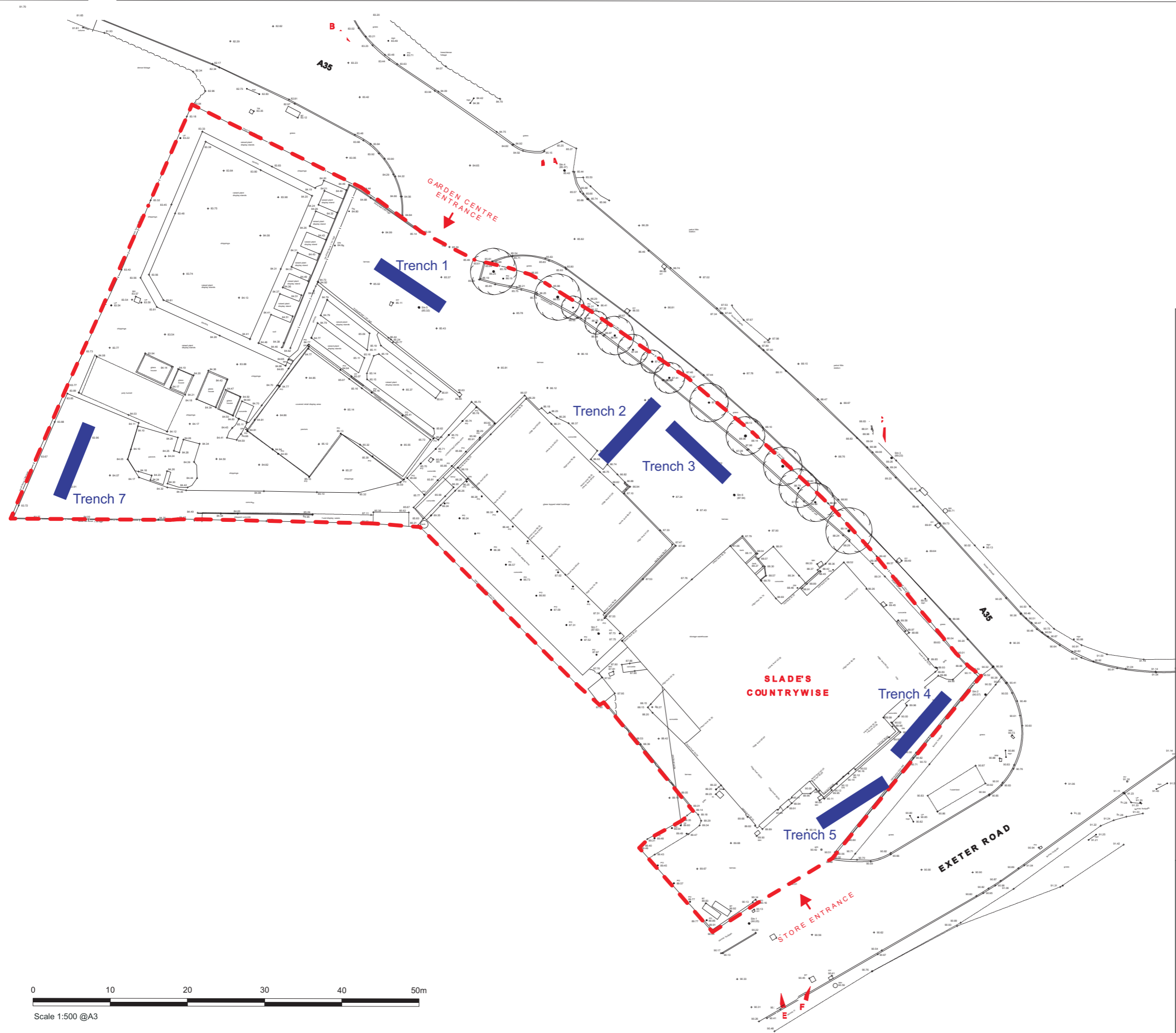
TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location





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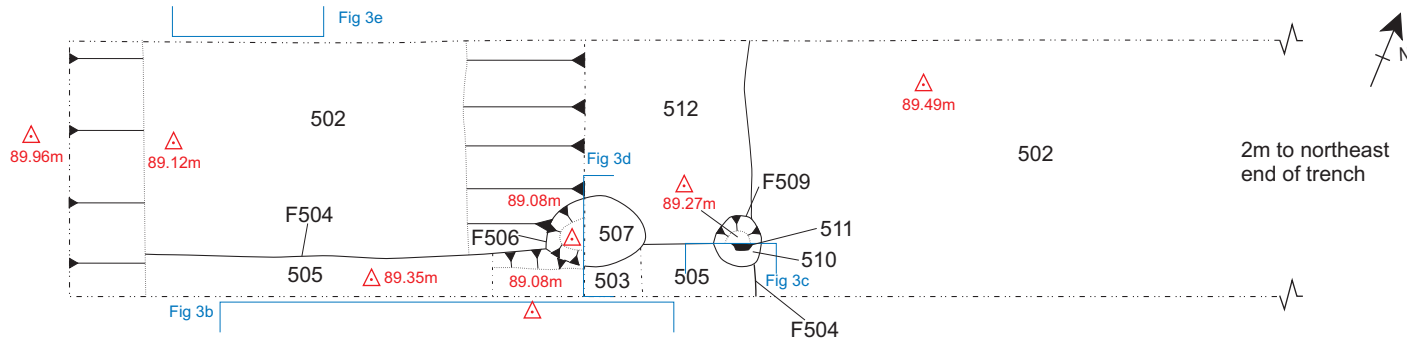
- Trench 1
- Trenches excavated
- Site boundary

PROJECT  
**Exeter Road, Honiton**

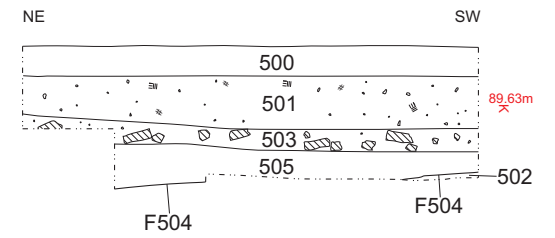
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**Fig. 2: Trench location plan**



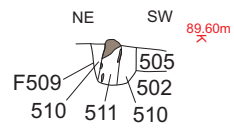
a) Trench 5, plan



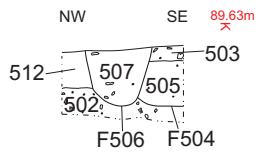
b) Section of F504



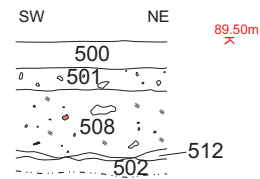
c) Section of F509



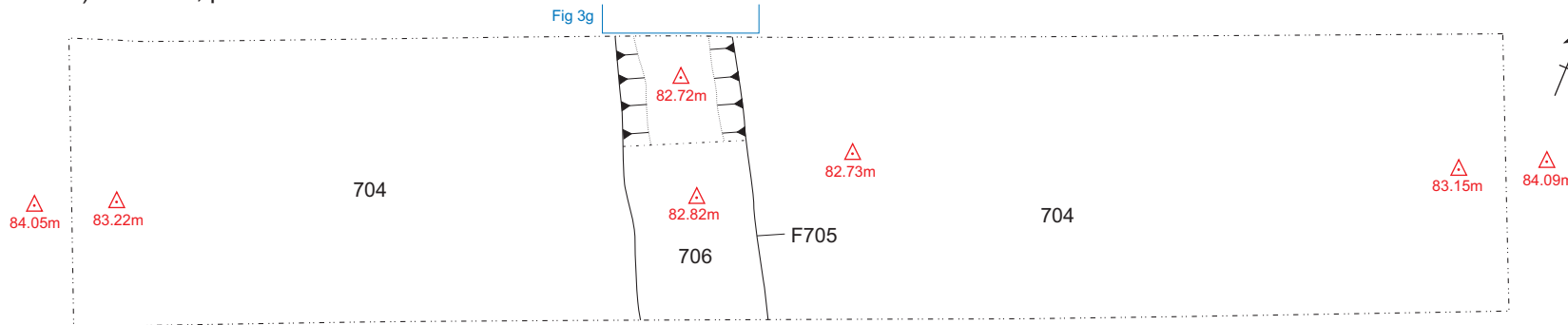
d) Section of F506



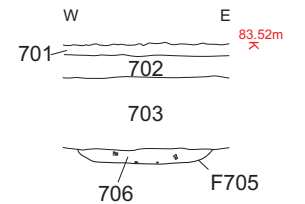
e) Representative section



f) Trench 7, plan



g) Section of F705



Key to all figures

- |      |          |         |      |       |
|------|----------|---------|------|-------|
| Wood | Charcoal | Pottery | Sand | Stone |
| Clay | Brick    | Bone    | CBM  |       |

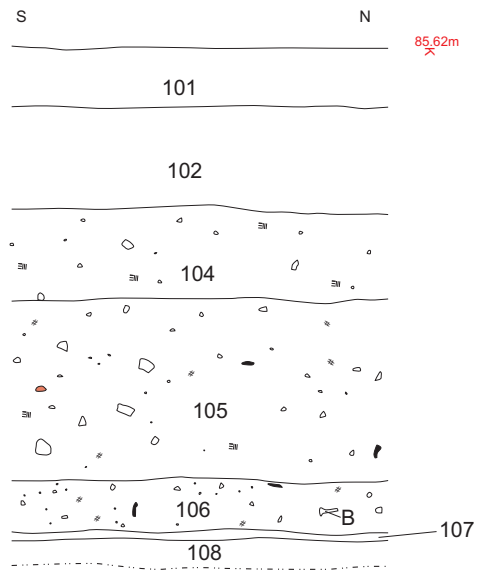


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Exeter Road, Honiton

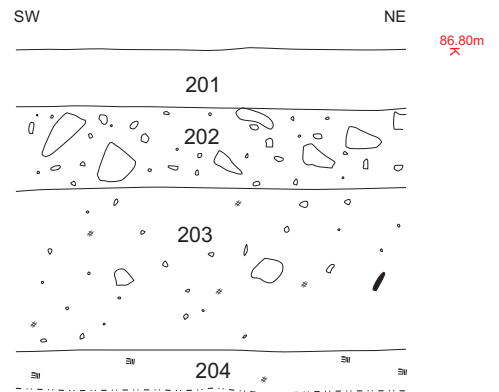
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Fig. 3: Plans and sections of trenches with archaeological features, Trenches 5 and 7



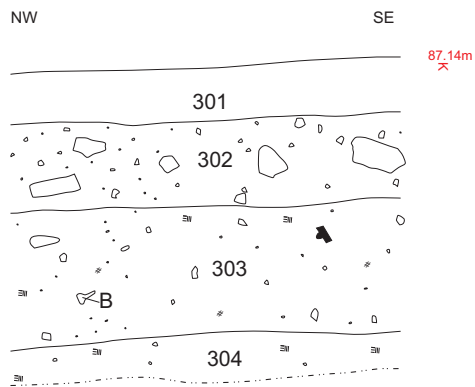
a) Trench 1, representative section



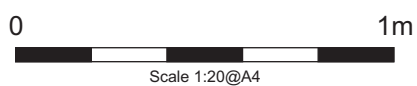
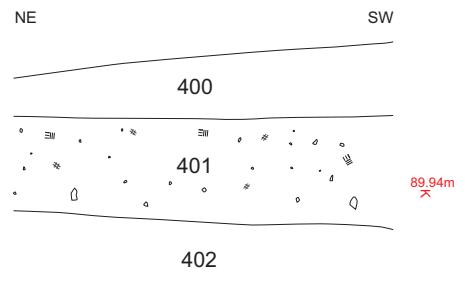
b) Trench 2, representative section



c) Trench 3, representative section



d) Trench 4, representative section



PROJECT

Exeter Road, Honiton

TITLE

Fig. 4: Representative sections of Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4, with no archaeological features





Plate 1: General view of Trench 1, looking northwest (scale 2x1m)



Plate 2: Trench 1, representative section, looking southwest (scale 1m)



Plate 3: General view of Trench 2, looking northeast (scale 2x1m)



Plate 4: Trench 2 representative section, looking northwest (scale 1m)



Plate 5: General view of Trench 5, looking north-east (scale 2x1m)



Plate 6: Trench 5, section of pit feature F506, looking southwest (scale 0.30m)



Plate 7: Trench 5, section of linear feature F504, looking southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 8: Trench 5, section of posthole F509, looking northwest (scale 0.30m)



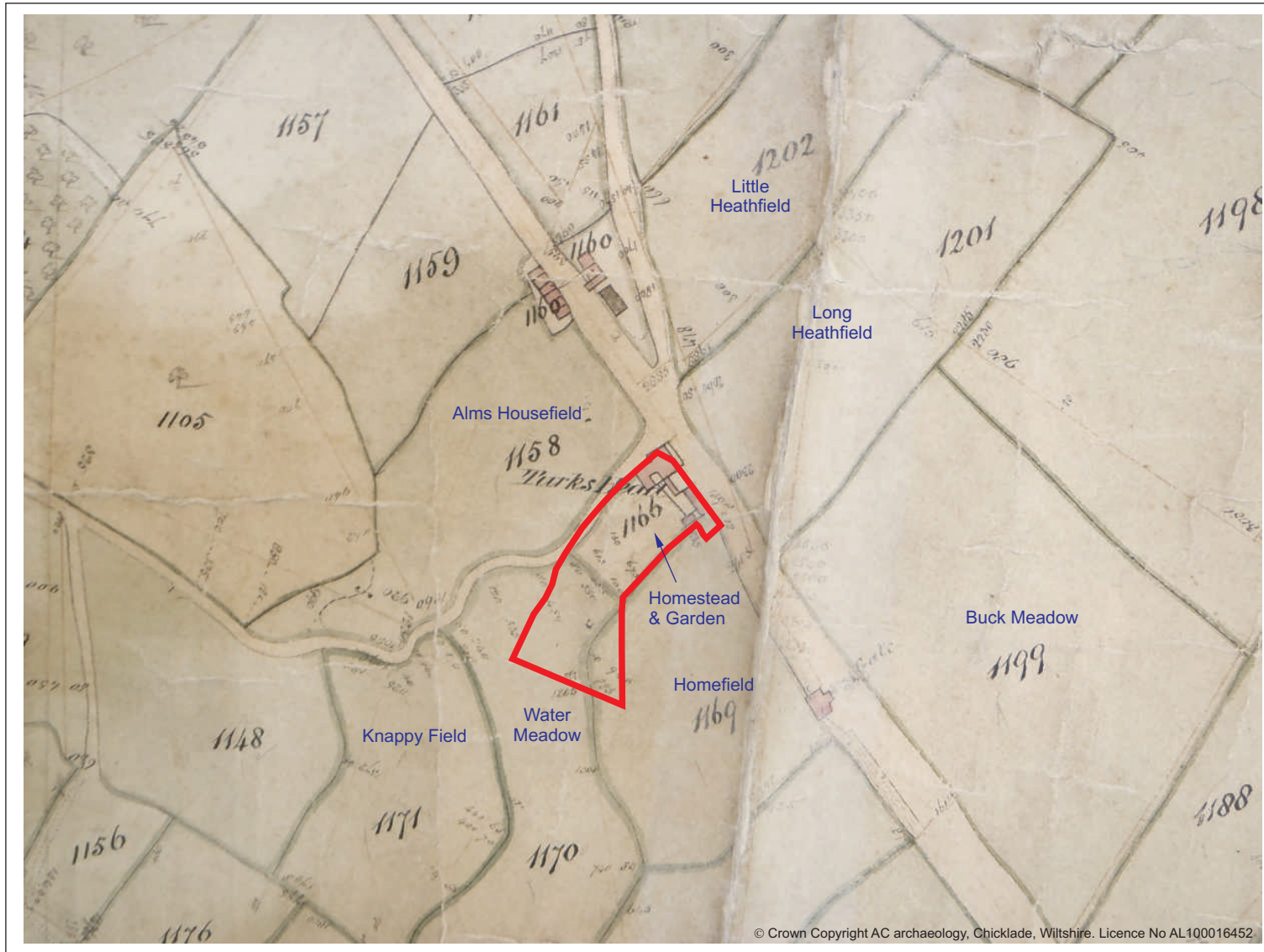
Plate 9: General view of Trench 7, looking north-east (scale 1m)




Plate 10: Trench 7, section of linear feature F705, looking northwest (scale 1m)

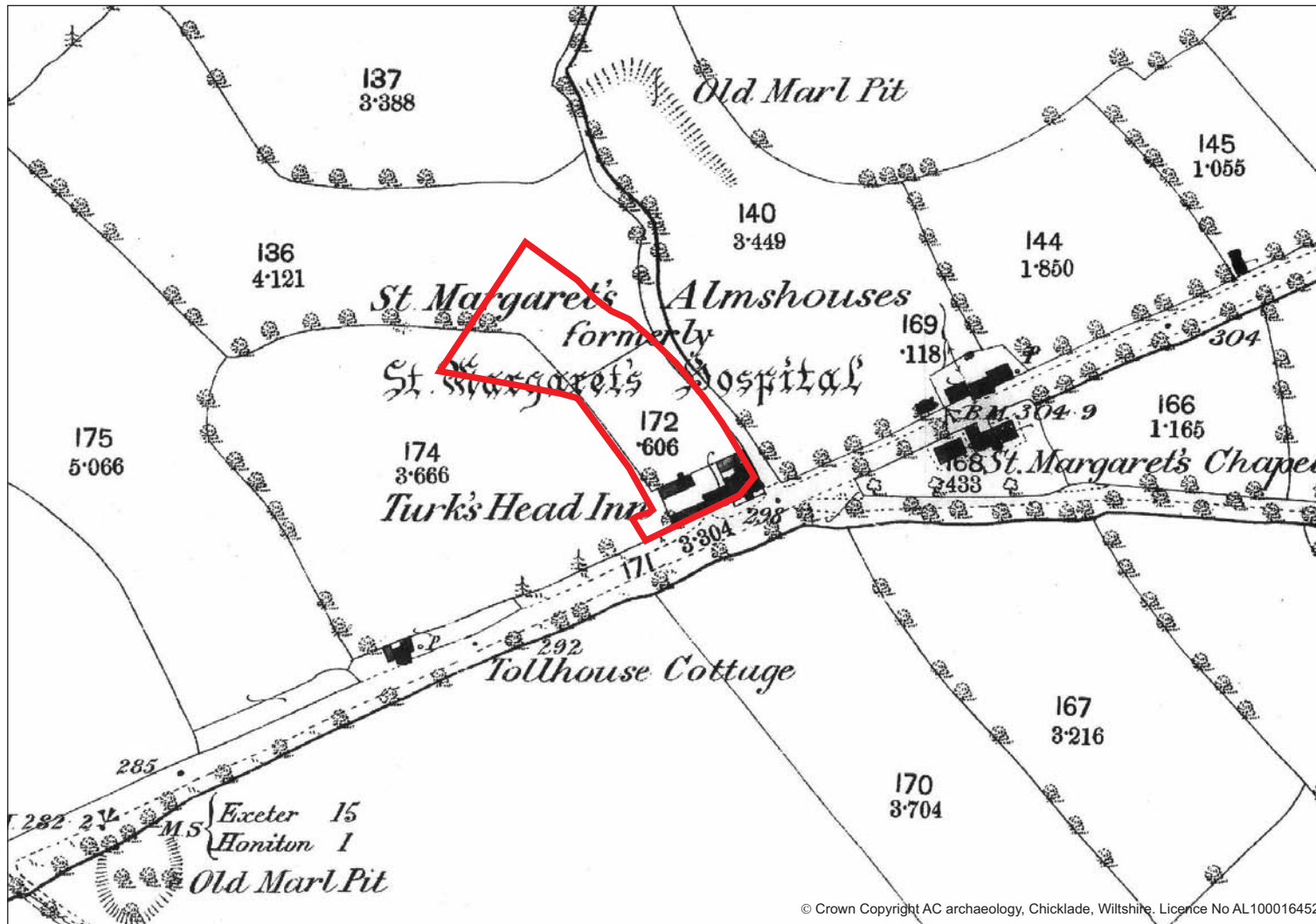
# Appendix 1

Historic map extracts




Map 1: Extract from the Honiton Parish tithe map, 1843, with field names added from the apportionment, 1842

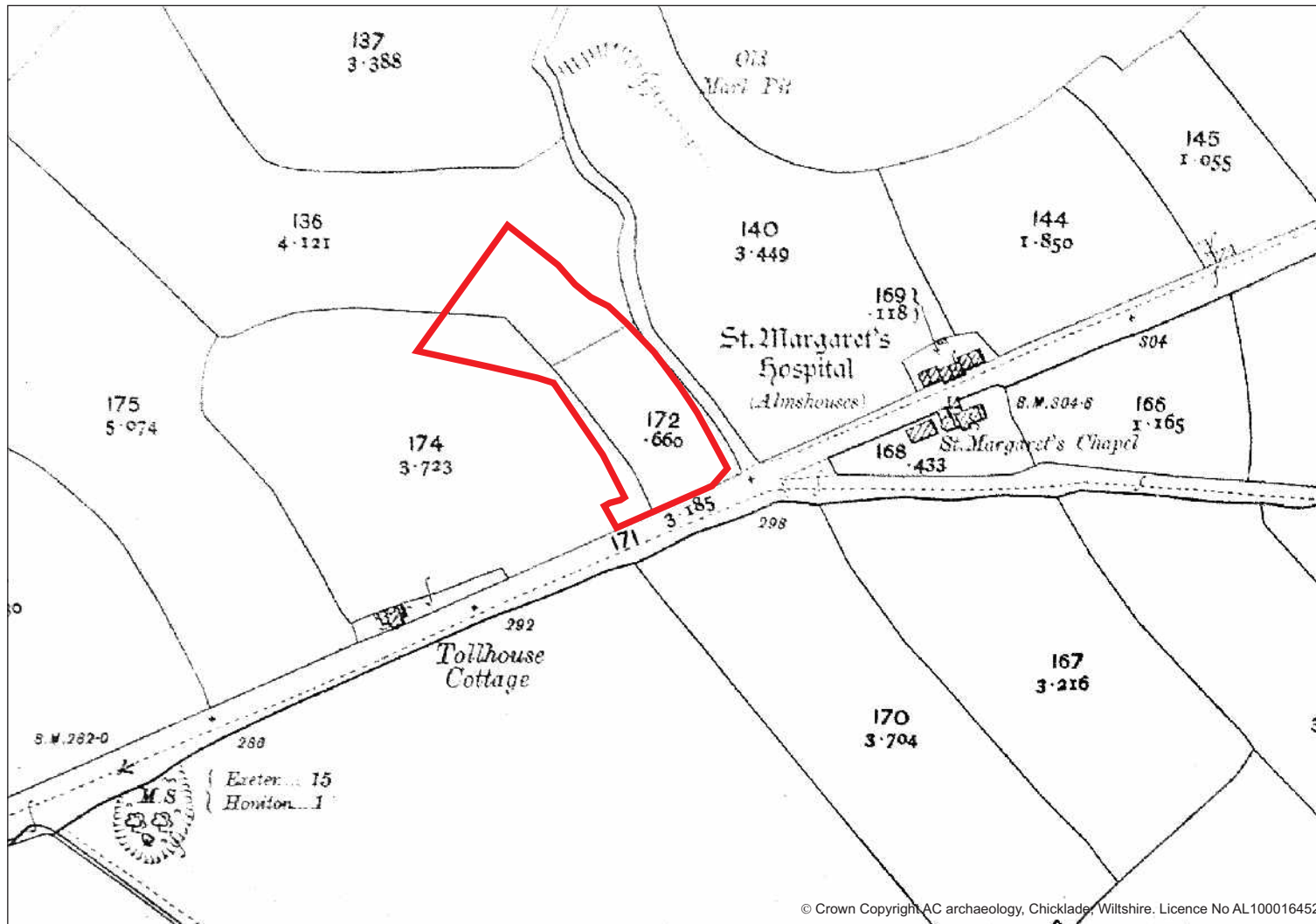
 Approximate location of application area




Map 2: Extract from the Ordnance Survey first-edition 25-inch map, 1888

 Approximate location of application area





Map 3: Extract from the Ordnance Survey second-edition 25-inch map, 1903

 Approximate location of application area

# Appendix 2

Contexts descriptions by trench

## APPENDIX 2 – CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1			Length: 10m	Width: 1.80m	Alignment: NW-SE
Context	Thickness (mm)	Description	Interpretation		
101	250	Light pink to orange sand/gravel with large asphalt fragments and stones (c.20mm)	Modern car park rubble and asphalt		
102	300	Loose light pink/yellow and orange gravel hardcore for modern building	Modern gravel deposit		
103	290 – 320	Compacted red/orange sand with numerous fragmented bricks	Modern surface or hardcore layer		
104	210 – 231	Dark grey to dark grey and brown silty clay (40-60%), hard consistency with small rounded stones, mainly flint and sandstone alongside Fe nodules c.15-30mm in size. Pottery, CBM, glass present in small numbers.	Compacted levelling deposit		
105	320 – 360	Dark grey to dark bluish grey silty clay (50-50%). A hard consistency with a large number of ceramics, bone, glass, CBM c.30-50mm in size +20% occurrence.	Upper garden hortisol		
106	240 – 260	Dark brown to black silty clay (50-50%). Firm consistency with very large number of ceramics, bone, glass, CBM around 25-45mm at +30% occurrence. Also highly organic.	Middle garden hortisol		
107	80 – 100	Dark black to very dark brown organic loam with a soft consistency and no inorganic inclusions but does contain well preserved organics including grasses, hay and plant residue	Lower garden hortisol		
108	+60	Light green/grey to mottled grey silty sand. No inclusions	Natural alluvium		

Trench 2			Length: 10m	Width: 1.80m	Alignment: NE-SW
Context	Thickness (mm)	Description	Interpretation		
201	150 – 180	Light orange, pink coloured sandy gravel and asphalt (c.20mm)	Modern car park rubble and asphalt		
202	210 – 230	Light grey silty clay and whole brick fragments.	Modern surface or hardcore layer		
203	430 – 450	Dark grey to black hard silty clay loam (30-30-40%). Inclusions of numerous ceramics, bone, CBM, glass all c.10-20mm at 10-20% occurrence. Also sub-rounded to rounded stones	Garden hortisol		
204	+100	Dark blue to blue/grey mottled silty clay with no inclusions or organic material	Natural alluvium		

## APPENDIX 2 – CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 3			Length: 10m	Width: 1.80m	Alignment: NW-SE
Context	Thickness (mm)	Description	Interpretation		
301	150 – 200	Light yellow/orange sand/gravel with large asphalt material and stones (c.30mm)	Modern car park rubble and asphalt		
302	300	Loose, orange/grey silty clay with whole bricks and frequent CBM	Modern surface or hardcore layer		
303	370 – 390	Firm to hard, dark grey to black silty clay loam (30-30-40%) with numerous inclusions of pottery, bone, CBM, glass c.10-30mm at 5-15% occurrence. Also sub-rounded to rounded stones	Garden hortisol		
304	+140	Dark grey to greyish blue mottled silty clay with no inclusions or organic material	Natural alluvium		

Trench 4			Length: 10m	Width: 1.80m	Alignment: NE-SW
Context	Thickness (mm)	Description	Interpretation		
400	180 – 200	Very dark grey to mid brown crushed asphalt and rubble (c.30mm)	Modern car park rubble and asphalt		
401	300	Stiff, dark grey/brown silty clay (40-60%) with inclusions of CBM and copper staining	Remnant occupation material		
402	200	Hard, light grey to brown sandy clay with no inclusions	Remnant occupation material		
403	+200	Light grey to yellowish grey sandy clay with common rounded pebbles	Natural Sidmouth Mudstone		

## APPENDIX 2 – CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 5			Length: 10m	Width: 1.80m	Alignment: NE-SW
Context	Thickness (mm)	Description	Interpretation		
500	200	Very dark grey to mid brown crushed asphalt and rubble (c.30mm)	Modern car park rubble and asphalt		
501	200	Stiff, mid grey brown silty clay (40-60%) with inclusions of sub angular stones and CBM.	Remnant occupation material		
502	+100	Light grey to yellowish grey sandy clay with common rounded pebbles	Natural Sidmouth Mudstone		
503	150	Loose, dark grey brown silty clay (40-60%) with abundant charcoal, CBM and rubble material c.40-100mm	Remnant brick floor layer		
504	300	NE to SW aligned small gully/foundation trench. Sub vertical sides on NW edge and a flat base	Cut of gully/foundation trench feature		
505	300	Friable, mid light grey brown sandy clay (40-60%) with very occasional stones <10mm	Fill of foundation trench feature		
506	400	Sub circular, steep sided feature with flat base	Cut of small pit		
507	400	Friable, mid reddish brown coloured silty clay (40-60%) with common stone inclusions c.10mm and occasional charcoal material	Fill of small pit [506]		
508	375 – 400	Stiff, mid blue to dark grey coloured silty clay with frequent stone fragments 10-30mm, CBM and pottery alongside smaller sand lenses	Remnant occupation material		
509	270	Circular, steep sided feature with a flat base and two fills	Cut of small post hole		
510	270	Friable, light grey to brown silty clay (40-60%) with occasional stone inclusions c.5mm and some charcoal.	Secondary fill of small post hole F509		
511	270	Friable, dark grey to brown silty clay (40-60%) with inclusions of in situ round wooden post c.260x120mm	Primary fill of small post hole F509		
512	120 – 150	Friable, mid grey brown to green and bands of light grey brown (40-60%) with inclusions of occasional stone, CBM <5mm and very rare charcoal <5mm	Remnant occupation material		

**Trench 6 not excavated due to presence of modern services**

## APPENDIX 2 – CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 7			Length: 10m	Width: 1.80m	Alignment: NE-SW
Context	Thickness (mm)	Description	Interpretation		
701	100 – 180	Light yellow, orange to pink gravel demolition deposit and hardcore material	Building demolition rubble		
702	160 – 180	Dark grey and light orange asphalt and gravel	Modern car park rubble and asphalt		
703	480 – 540	Dark grey to brown silty clay (60-40%) with numerous brick, pottery c.30-40%	Modern demolition material		
704	+160	Light green to grey and mottled grey silty sand (40-60%). Few inclusions except small sand lenses	Natural alluvium		
705	100	NW to SE aligned small ditch with a concave shape, smooth, moderates sides and a flat base. Contains one fill (706). Heavily truncated by later action and deposition of context (704).	Cut of linear feature		
706	100	Fill of small ditch. Friable, light reddish brown silty clay (40-60%) with few inclusions save occasional stone <10mm.	Fill of linear feature F705		

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