

Land at 39 Fore Street, Seaton, Devon

Centred on SY 24584 90221

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning reference: East Devon District Council  
12/0492/MOUT (Condition 8)

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archaeology

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## Summary

*An archaeological trench evaluation carried out on land at 39 Fore Street, Seaton, East Devon (centred on SY 24584 90221) was undertaken by AC archaeology during August and September 2013. The development area occupies approximately 0.26 hectares of gardens to the rear of 30 Fore Street and extending eastwards to The Underfleet. The site is situated within the medieval core of the town.*

*The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of 7 trenches totalling 70m in length, with each trench measuring 1.30m wide. These were positioned to target the areas where future development may have the greatest impact on archaeological remains.*

*A small assemblage of residual late Neolithic or Bronze Age lithics was recovered. A single medieval pit, dating to the 13th or 14th century was uncovered, along with two further modern garden features.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation required under condition 8 of the grant of outline planning permission for residential development of 13 dwellings on land at 39 Fore Street, Seaton, East Devon (centred on SY 24584 90221). It reports on the archaeological works required by East Devon Council as advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCHET).
- 1.2 The archaeological works were commissioned by Cavanna Homes and carried out by AC archaeology between 30 August and 2 September 2013.
- 1.3 The proposed application area forms an irregular block of gently sloping land with a total area of approximately 0.26 hectares. The area currently comprises gardens to the rear of 39 Fore Street extending eastwards to The Underfleet at approximately 10m aOD. The underlying geology comprises Triassic mudstone of the Saltash Formation of the Branscombe Mudstone Formation.

### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A rapid desk-based appraisal has been carried out, based on data and maps held by the Devon Historic Environment Record and the Devon Heritage Centre.
- 2.2 The placename Seaton is first recorded in AD1146; before this it was known as Fleet or *Fleote*. Fleet is named in a Saxon charter of AD1005 and the Domesday Book records *Flute* as being held by the Church and having 11 salt-pans (MDV19029). It has been proposed that this original settlement relates to earthworks at Flete Meadows (MDV14046), some 1.4km north of the development site, and if correct would presumably illustrate the settlement moving southwards towards the coast during the medieval period.
- 2.3 The site is within an area characteristic of medieval field boundaries (MDV55375) that are clearly depicted on the Seaton and Beer tithe map of 1840 and later historic Ordnance Survey maps. These curving boundaries do not continue west across Fore Street which indicates that Fore Street probably existed when the medieval boundaries were created. Although the line of Fore Street probably dates back to medieval times the majority of the buildings date to the 19th century (MDV59275) with a few exceptions; for example, 33 Fore Street is an 18th-century cob and thatch cottage (MDV79570). Within a 100m to the north of the site, within the block of medieval boundaries, nine sherds of medieval pottery (post-dating AD1200) were collected from the garden of the property known as Majowa (MDV55376). Also in this collection was one

sherd tentatively dated as Roman. The site of Majowa, adjacent to the north of Ashley House, was marked as 'Mowbarton and Marsh Lane Orchard' in the 1840 tithe map. Marsh Lane is probably retained in the line of a drive adjacent to Ashley House and is perhaps of medieval origin (MDV55374). To the west of Fore Street, at 18 Cross Street, 12 sherds of medieval pottery, some with glaze and dating to the 13th or 14th centuries have been collected during building works (MDV74099).

- 2.4 At the east end of the site is The Underfleet, which historically was a track that marks the line of an earlier stream on the boundary with a former saltmarsh at the mouth of the River Axe. The valley of the saltmarsh was the location of a harbour in medieval and possibly Roman times (MDV42590 and MDV42591). It was also the site of salt-making in the 18th century, at Domesday and possibly in prehistory (MDV14040). The saltmarsh was drained in the mid-19th century (MDV42593).
- 2.5 Within Seaton town prehistoric worked flint dating from the Palaeolithic through to the Bronze Age has been recovered in several places (MDV80982, MDV14051, MDV62916, MDV14049). A Bronze Age settlement site was located in excavation at South Court Lane (MDV80954). Together these finds indicate extensive use of the area in prehistory. The Iron Age and Romano-British periods are less well represented, but an Iron Age coin was found on the beach (MDV61824) and two Roman coins have been found (MDV37220, MDV11111).
- 2.6 In 1840, the development site formed part of a larger holding, also comprising the buildings to the east fronting Fore Street, and two further fields to the south. The tenement was called Burnards, owned and occupied by Thomas Froome and was described as "House, barn, lnhays and courtlage, garden, meadow and orchard". The Ordnance Survey maps depict the site as two or three fields with the eastern field/s being orchards.

### 3. AIMS

- 3.1 The main aim of the trial trench evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of the archaeological features, deposits or finds within the area of the proposed development.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of 7 trenches totalling 70m in length, with each trench measuring 1.30m wide (Fig. 2). Trenches were positioned to avoid existing garden features such as trees and to target the areas where future development may have the greatest impact on archaeological remains. The removal of soil overburden was undertaken under the control and direction of the site archaeologist.
- 4.2 All features and 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 2* (revised August 2012). Detailed sections or plans were produced at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

### 5. RESULTS (Figs 2-3; Plates 1-2; Appendix 1)

#### 5.1 Introduction

Trenches 2, 5 and 7 which revealed archaeological features are described in detail below. All of the trenches and contexts are summarised in tabulated form in Appendix 1. The relevant plan and section is included as Fig. 3.

## 5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 10m in length and was aligned NW-SE. A wall (F204) and its foundation trench (F205) were revealed in the SW face of the trench towards its eastern end.

Wall F204 was built of cement bonded flint nodules and was 0.25m wide and 0.39m high. It was constructed in a foundation trench (F205) which contained three fills (206-8). Basal fills (206 and 207) appeared to represent deliberate backfill of the trench and the upper fill appears to be gravel for a path or ornamental border. Post-medieval and modern pottery was recovered from the fills but not retained.

## 5.3 Trench 5 (See Fig. 2)

This trench was aligned N-S and measured 10m in length. A single linear feature (F503) was recorded in this trench.

Ditch F503 was oriented NW-SE and measured 0.65m wide and 0.72m deep. It had almost vertical sides and a flat base. It contained a sequence of three fills (504-6) although the boundaries between the fills were diffuse. Modern glass and pottery were recovered. This may have been a trench for a drain or wall foundation.

## 5.4 Trench 7 (See plan Fig. 3a, section Fig. 3b)

This trench measured 10m long and was aligned E-W. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.50m below ground level onto the natural (702). A single pit was recorded (F703).

Pit F703 was sub-circular in shape, but not completely revealed in the trench, and had an approximate diameter of 2.40m and was 0.65m deep. It contained two fills (704-5). The primary fill (704) consisted of mid to dark greyish brown moderately compact silty sandy clay with frequent sub-angular stones up to 0.10m long. It contained medieval pottery and prehistoric flint, with the latter being regarded as residual. The upper fill (705) did not contain any finds and consisted of a mottled mid orangey brown compact sandy clay that may be re-deposited natural.

## 6. THE FINDS by 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.

The majority of the pottery is medieval in date, specifically 13th – 14th century, the large proportion of which came from the basal fill of pit F703, context 704. This is indicative of medieval domestic settlement close to the site. The assemblage also contains several pieces of worked flint, including a scraper and a bifacial core. This represents a background level of prehistoric activity within the vicinity, consistent with previously recorded finds (see section 2.5 above). Finds totals by material type are given in Table 1.



Context	Medieval Pottery		Post-medieval Pottery		Worked Flint		Utilised stone		Glass		Copper Alloy	
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
102			2	191								
207	1	9										
400											1	22
401					1	19						
402					1	5						
501					1	18						
504							1	30	1	3		
506			2	26								
704	11	81			3	19						
<b>Totals</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>

Table 1: Finds from 39 Fore Street, Seaton, quantified by context and category.

## 6.2 The Pottery

The pottery assemblage contains a total of 16 sherds, weighing 307 grams. The majority, twelve of the sherds, weighing 90 grams, are medieval in date. These include one body sherd of upper greensand-derived pottery which derived from a hand-made cooking or storage jar from context 207 that dates to the c. 13th-14th century. Context 704 produced ten sherds of medieval pottery including four pieces of a strap handle with stabbed decoration which is likely to have originated from a handled jar or jug. The fabric has a reduced core and an oxidised exterior and has a predominantly well-rounded quartz temper with angular chert or flint fragments and sparse clay pellets. This fabric is likely to belong to Membury type variant B, a hand-made type of the upper greensand-derived pottery. These fragments are likely to be 13th or 14th century in date (cf Allan and Langman 2002). Context 704 also produced a mixture of four hand-made and wheel thrown, body sherds of Exeter fabrics including fabrics 42, 43 and 45. These sherds originate from cooking or storage vessels and include one lead-glazed jug body sherd of Exeter Fabric 42. All of these pieces date broadly to the 13th or 14th century.

Four of the sherds within the assemblage are post-medieval in date. These consist of two pieces of from context 102 including a sherd of a South Somerset lead-glazed earthenware chamber pot with a strap handle and trailed slip decoration on the rim, dating to the mid-18th century. A further piece of lead glazed earthenware from context 102 which has a very dark reduced core, a dark green glaze and a sandy temper. Two pieces of South Somerset lead-glazed earthenware were recorded from context 506, which are broadly the same date.

## 6.3 Worked Flint

The assemblage contains a total of six pieces of worked flint, weighing 61 grams. All but one of these fragments is derived from a dark grey mottled flint which is likely to have originated in the Seaton or Beer area. Three of the pieces are primary waste flakes with remnant buff yellow cortex, and two of them are secondary waste flakes. Several of the waste flakes from context 501 and 704 appear to have a small amount of flaking along some of the edges. The piece from context 402 appears to have been flaked along one edge to be used as a scraper. The most interesting piece is a small bifacial core made from a dark brown, cherty flint from context 704. This has multiple sized flaking scars across the entire circumference. These pieces are likely to be later Neolithic or Bronze Age in date.

## 6.4 The Other finds

The other finds within the assemblage consist of a fragment of slate from context 504, weighing 30 grams. This is a piece of slate roof tile and has the partial remains of a small

circular nail hole. A sherd of plain window glass was also recovered from context 504, weighing 3 grams, which is likely to be fairly modern in date.

A double sided copper alloy clothes or belt fitting or mount was recovered from context 400, weighing 22 grams and with a diameter of 450mm. This has a circumferential pattern of vertical, parallel incised lines on both sides. It has four small iron rivets on one side and three small rivet holes on the other. It has a central, circular recess on one side which may be for a mounting and a possible incised design or stamp. This object is likely to be post-medieval in date.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

- 7.1** The evaluation has produced no evidence for pre-medieval activity on the site; the small assemblage of late Neolithic or Bronze Age lithics was residual.
- 7.2** A single medieval feature, a rubbish pit (F703) of 13th- or 14th-century date was exposed. It was located at the eastern end of the site, in close proximity to the former medieval harbour, which could indicate shore-side activity related to the nearby port or alternatively, its position may have been deliberately sited at the furthest point within the holding from the house on Fore Street.
- 7.3** The two features in Trenches 2 and 5 are interpreted as modern garden features, and the lack of other post-medieval and modern features ties in with the agricultural use of the development plot as indicated on historic maps.
- 7.4** In summary, the development site contains no significant archaeological deposits, and the potential for development to impact on below-ground archaeological deposits is low.

## **8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY**

- 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 158382, which includes a digital copy of this report.

## **9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 9.1** The evaluation was commissioned by Cavanna Homes and managed for them by Simon Longthorpe, and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore and John Valentin. The site work was undertaken by Ben Pears, Naomi Hughes and Stella de-Villiers. The report was written by Paul Rainbird with the illustrations prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

## **10. SOURCES CONSULTED**

### **Devon heritage Centre**

Seaton and Beer tithe map 1840 and apportionment 1839

Ordnance Survey 25-inch map sheet Devon 83:11, surveyed 1888, published 1889

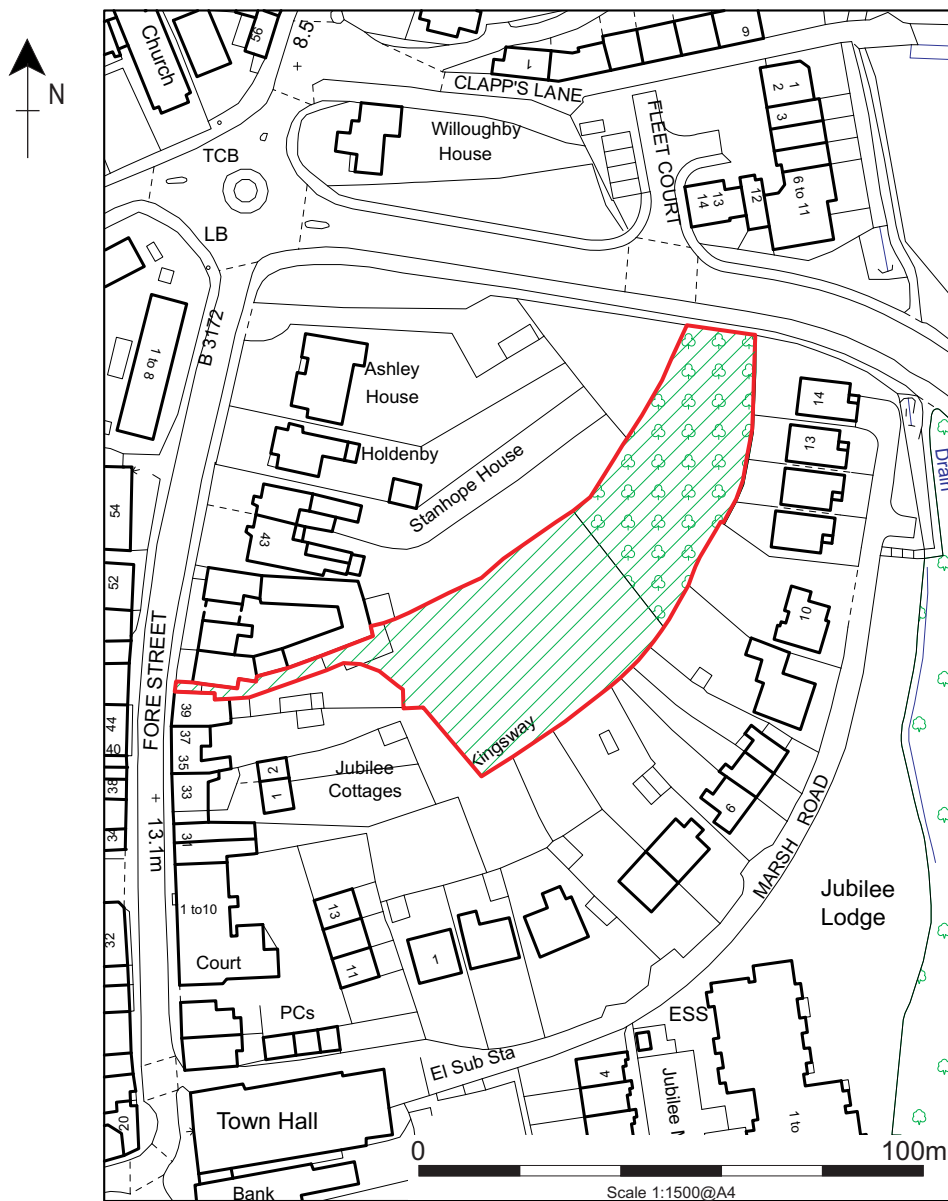
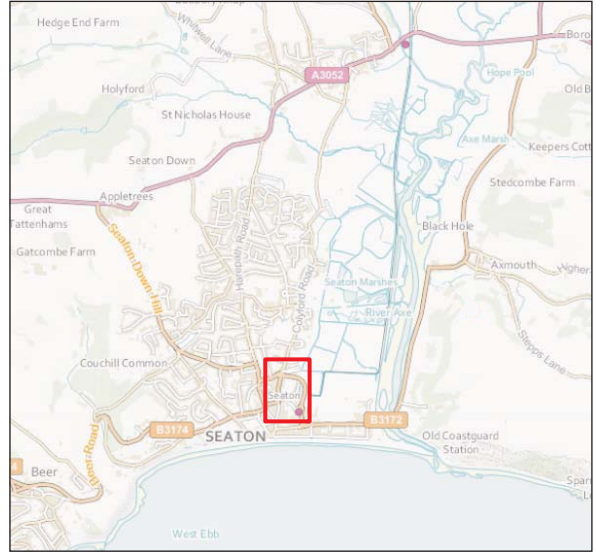
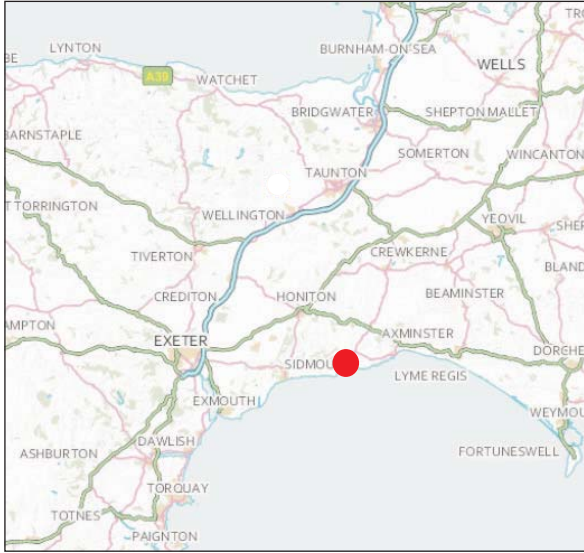
Ordnance Survey 25-inch map sheet Devon 83:11, surveyed 1887, revised 1903, published 1889

Ordnance Survey 25-inch map sheet Devon 83:11, surveyed 1887, published 1933

Allan, J., and Langman, G., 2002, "A group of medieval pottery from Haycroft Farm, Membury", *Proc. Devon. Archaeol. Soc.*, **60** 59-73.

Passmore, A., 2013, *Land at 39 Fore Street, Seaton: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Trench Evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology report ref. ACD748/1/2.





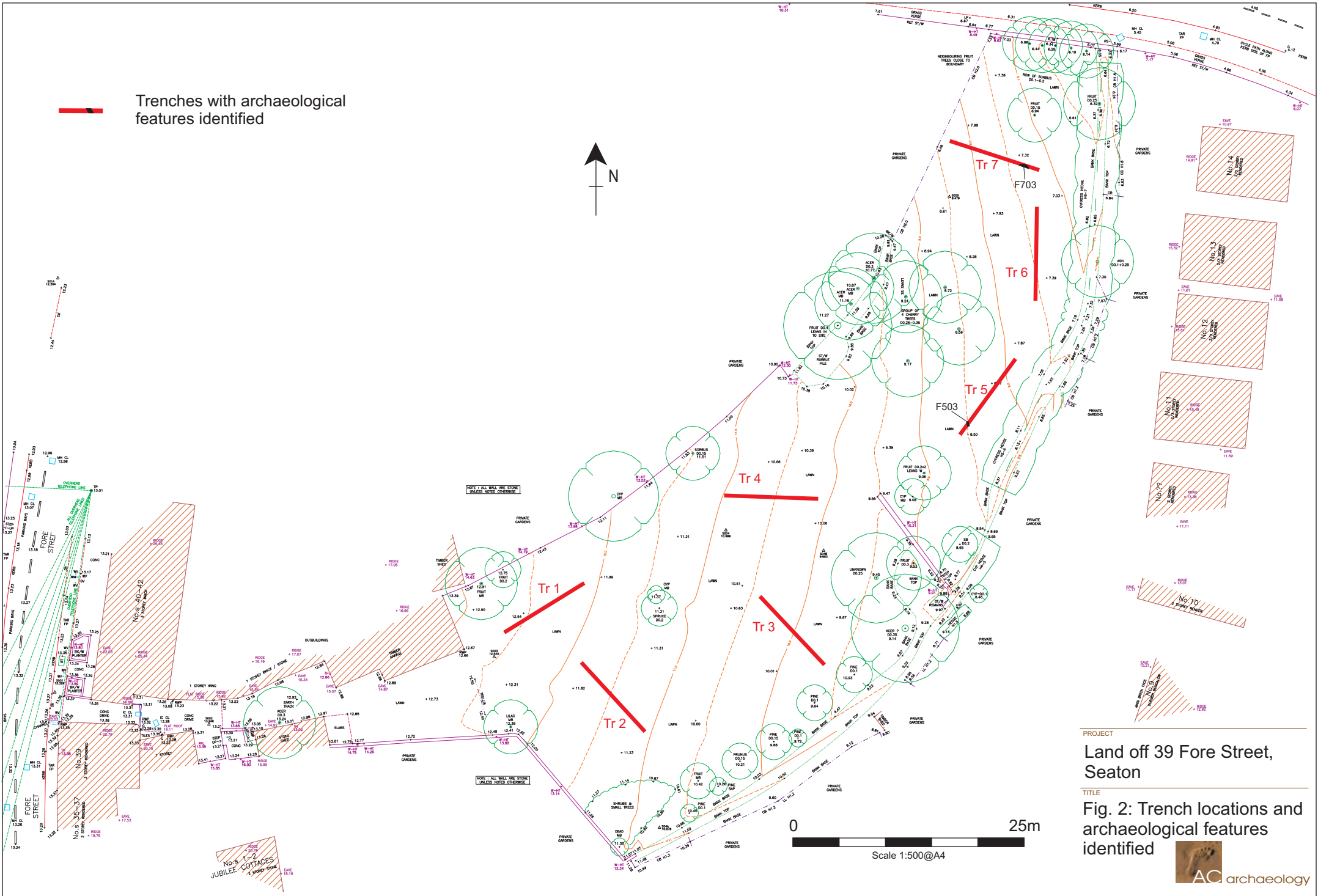
 Site location

PROJECT  
Land off 39 Fore Street, Seaton

TITLE  
Fig. 1: Location of site



Trenches with archaeological features identified

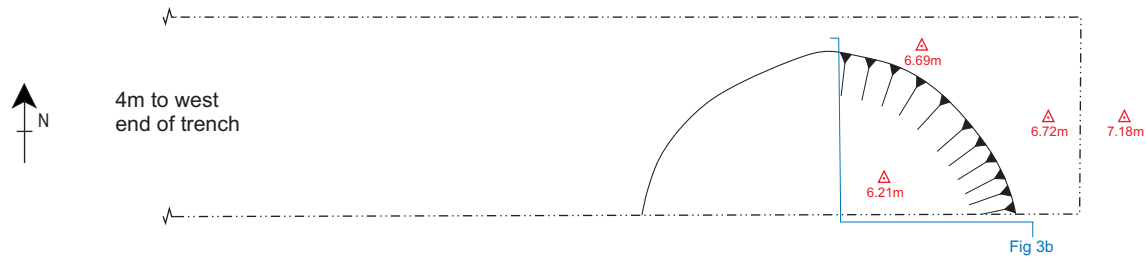


PROJECT  
Land off 39 Fore Street,  
Seaton

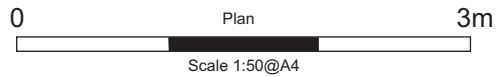
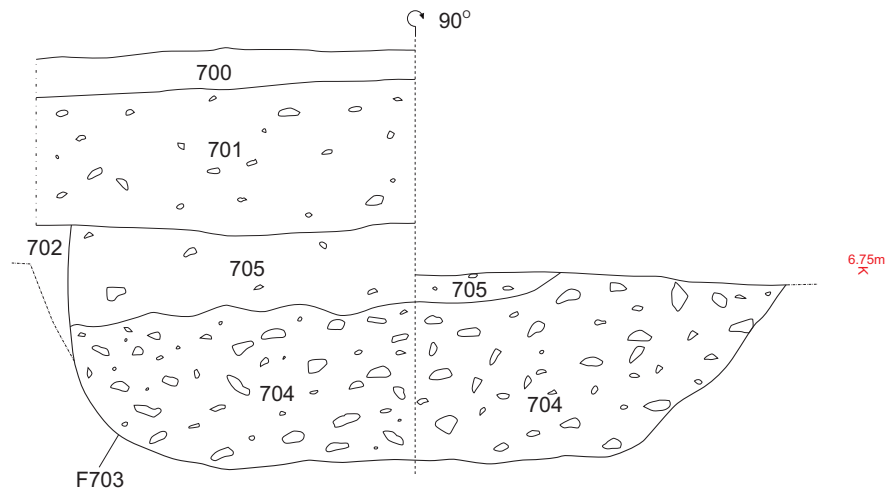
TITLE  
Fig. 2: Trench locations and  
archaeological features  
identified



a) Trench 7, plan



b) Section of F703



PROJECT

Land off 39 Fore Street, Seaton

TITLE

Fig. 3: Trench 7, plan and section



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Plate 1: General view from area of Trench 7, looking southwest



Plate 2: Pit F703 looking south. Scale 0.40m



# Appendix 1

Trench and context descriptions

Trench 1			Length 10m	Width 1.30m	Alignment ENE-WSW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
100		0-0.10m	Topsoil		
101	Mid grey brown loose sandy clay with very frequent stones (<0.05m)	0.10-0.40m	Subsoil		
102	Mixed gravel pieces in a thin sandy soil matrix.	0.40-0.68m+	Subsoil		
103	Flint gravels	0.68m+	Natural		

Trench 2			Length 10m	Width 1.30m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
200		0-0.12m	Topsoil		
201	Dark brown loose silty clay with frequent stones (<0.05m).	0.12-0.36m	Subsoil		
202	Light grey brown silty sandy and gravel	0.36-0.57m	Subsoil		
203	Gravel	0.57+m	Natural		
204	Masonry wall	0.36-0.75m	Garden wall		
205	Cut of Linear	0.36-0.76m	Foundation trench for wall F204		
206	Dark brown to dark reddish orange loose/friable silty clay	0.61-0.76m	Primary fill of F205		
207	Dark grey to dark brown grey compact silty sand and clay	0.51-0.61m	Intermediate fill of F205		
208	Light grey and white compact gravelly sand	0.39-0.51m	Upper fill of F205		

Trench 3			Length 10m	Width 1.3m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
300		0-0.13m	Topsoil		
301	Mid grey brown to dark grey sandy silt, with frequent stones (<0.05m)	0.13-0.44m	Subsoil		
302	Light grey to grey brown sand gravel and silty sand	0.44-0.64m	Subsoil		
303	Flint gravel	0.64m+	Natural		

Trench 4			Length 10m	Width 1.3m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
400		0-0.14m	Topsoil		
401	Mid grey to dark grey sandy silt loam, with frequent stones (<0.05m)	0.14-0.34m	Subsoil		
402	Light grey silty sand and gravel	0.34-0.43m	Subsoil		
403	Flint gravel	0.43m+	Natural		



Trench 5			Length 10m	Width 1.3m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
500		0-0.15m	Topsoil		
501	Mid grey brown moderately compact silty clay, with frequent stones (<0.06m)	0.15-0.55	Subsoil		
502	Mid reddish brown compact clay with common sub-angular stone (<0.08m)	0.55m+	Natural		
503	Cut of linear	0.55-1.27m	Drain		
504	Mid brown grey moderately compact silty sand, with very common sub-angular pebbles (<0.08m)	1.02-1.27m	Primary fill of drain F503		
505	Mixed mid brownish orange/mid yellowish brown moderately compact silty clay	0.86-1.02m	Intermediate fill of drain F503		
506	Mid brown grey moderately compact silty clay with common sub-angular stone (<0.04m)	0.46-0.86m	Upper fill of drain F503		

Trench 6			Length 10m	Width 1.3m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
600		0-0.12m	Topsoil		
601	Light grey to dark grey silty sand, with common flint nodules and modern ceramics and CBM	0.10-0.52m	Subsoil		
602	Dark orange/ reddish orange silty clay, with very common flint nodules	0.52m+	Natural		

Trench 7			Length 10m	Width 1.3m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
700		0-0.25m	Topsoil		
701	Mid grey brown moderately compact silty clay, with common sub-angular stone (<0.06m)	0.25-0.55m	Subsoil		
702	Mid brownish red compact clay	0.55m+	Natural		
703	Cut of pit	0.55-1.20m	Large medieval pit		
704	Mid to dark grey brown silty sandy clay, with frequent sub-angular stones (<0.10m)	0.80-1.20m	Primary fill of pit F703		
705	Mottled mid orange brown compact silty sandy clay	0.60-0.80m	Upper fill of pit F703		

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