

LAND ADJACENT TO CUMBERLAND WAY, MONKERTON, EXETER, DEVON

NGR SX 9606 9364

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

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NPS South West Ltd

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AC archaeology

LAND ADJACENT TO CUMBERLAND WAY, MONKERTON, EXETER, DEVON

(NGR SX 9606 9364)

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CONTENTS

	<i>Summary</i>	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Archaeological background	1
3.	Aims	1
4.	Methodology	2
5.	Results	2
6.	The finds	3
7.	Discussion	4
8.	Conclusions	5
9.	Archive and OASIS	5
10.	Acknowledgements	5
11.	Sources consulted	5

List of figures

- Fig. 1: Site location
Fig. 2: Location of trenches in relation to geophysics results
Fig. 3: Trench 1, plan and sections
Fig. 4: Trench 2, plan and sections

List of plates

- Plate 1: General view of the site looking northeast
Plate 2: West-facing section of ditch F103
Plate 3: East-facing section of post-slot F110
Plate 4: South-facing section of possible post-slot terminal F108
Plate 5: East-facing section of ditch F203
Plate 6: South-facing section of ditch F207

Appendix 1: Tabulated trench descriptions

Summary

A limited archaeological trench evaluation, carried out in support of forthcoming planning applications for residential development on land adjacent to Cumberland Way, Monkerton, Exeter, was undertaken by AC archaeology during September 2013. The site occupies approximately 12 hectares of pasture to the south and west of Monkerton. It has been subject to previous geophysical survey which identified mainly linear anomalies, although a small sub-square enclosure feature was also recorded.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of two trenches totalling 54.2m in length, with each trench 1.80m wide. These were positioned to target and characterise the small enclosure and two linear features as identified by the geophysical survey.

The targeted anomalies were confirmed to be present within the trenches, with the enclosure probably late Iron Age or early Romano-British date. Within this was a possible roundhouse, not identified by the geophysics. The two linear features targeted were undated, although their differing alignments to the existing field pattern indicate that they relate to early, probably prehistoric or Romano-British land division.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation on land adjacent to Cumberland Way, Monkerton, Exeter, Devon (centred on NGR SX 9606 9364; Fig. 1) undertaken by AC archaeology between 4-6th September 2013. This work was undertaken in support of future planning applications for residential development. It was commissioned by NPS South West Ltd. Guidance on the scope of works was provided by Exeter City Council's Archaeology Officer (ECCAO).
- 1.2 The total site covers an area of approximately 12 hectares and is located mainly on the southern and western outskirts of Monkerton on what are currently mixed pasture and arable fields either side of Cumberland Way (Plate 1). The site lies at between c. 35m and 48m aOD on ground with a general trend of gently sloping down to the north. The underlying solid geology comprises sandstone of the Monkerton Formation.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is situated in an area with a general potential for the presence of prehistoric settlement, funerary and agricultural activity. Recent archaeological trench evaluation to the east and south of Monkerton (Cotswold Archaeology 2012), has identified former field systems, a ring ditch and a possible roundhouse.
- 2.2 A full geophysical survey of the entirety of the site (Dean 2013) identified a number of linear features and a small sub-square enclosure that potentially related to buried archaeological remains (Fig. 2). The majority of the linear features appear to be former ditches associated with the extant field pattern, but a few are on a different alignment and of probable earlier date.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the trench evaluation were to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site. As the initial geophysical survey identified mainly linear features, the evaluation was very much a targeted approach on the potential sub-square enclosure and early ditches. The results of the work as set out in this report will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation and whether or not their significance and state of survival is great enough to influence the layout of the proposed development should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Archaeological work (Valentin 2013), submitted to and approved by the ECCAO prior to commencement on site. It comprised the machine excavation of two L-shaped trenches totalling 54.2m in length, with each trench measuring 1.80m wide. Trenches were positioned to target the enclosure and possible early field system boundaries identified as anomalies in the geophysical survey, and were positioned using a Topcon GMS2 GPS, with sub-metre accuracy. 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 a temporary benchmark allocated a nominal value of 50m.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Two L-shaped trenches were excavated with a total length of 54.2m. Archaeological features were present in both trenches and are discussed below. The trenches are summarised in tabulated form in Appendix 1. Relevant plans and sections are included as Figs. 3-4, and photographs as Plates 1-6.

5.2 Trench 1 (Detailed plan Fig. 3a and sections Figs 3b-f; Plates 2-4)

This trench measured a total of 23.2m long with a N-S arm measuring 11.8m long and an E-W section 11.4m long. It was placed to target the enclosure-like geophysical anomaly. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.38m below ground level onto the natural subsoil consisting of degraded breccia (context 102). The overlying layer sequence comprised 0.23m of light brown to light reddish brown silty sandy loam topsoil (100), over 0.13m of light yellow to orange brown silty sand agricultural subsoil (101). Three linear or curvilinear ditch features were recorded (F103, F105 and F110) as well as a possible posthole or ditch terminal (F108).

Ditch F103 was recorded at the northern-arm of the trench. It was 1.15m wide and 0.48m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a single fill (104), which contained two sherds of prehistoric pottery.

Ditch F105 was located in the eastern arm of the trench and its dimensions were 0.87m wide and 0.27m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a flattish base. It contained two fills (106 and 107). The primary fill (106) contained two conjoining sherds of pottery from a vessel of late Iron Age or early Romano-British date.

Curvilinear ditch F110 was a post-slot containing three post/stake holes, all containing identical fills. It was recorded in the northern arm of the trench and south of ditch F103. It was 0.30m wide with an undulating base of between 0.20m and 0.40m deep. It contained a single uniform fill (111) and no finds.

Possible posthole or ditch terminal F108 was only partially revealed in the eastern arm of the trench very close to its junction with the northern section. It had a maximum width of 0.28m and maximum depth of 0.20m. It had a single fill (109) which contained two very small pieces of iron working slag.

5.3 Trench 2 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a and sections Figs 4b-e; Plates 5-6)

This trench measured 31m in length with a N-S arm 16m long and an E-W section 15m. It was located in order to target two possible early field system ditches identified by the geophysical survey. The trench was excavated to a depth of between 0.35m and 0.55m onto the natural subsoil of degraded breccia (202). The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.24m of light brownish grey to reddish-orange silty sand loam topsoil (200) over 0.13m of light yellow silty sand subsoil (201). Two linear features (F203 and F207) were recorded in this trench.

Ditch F203 was located in the northern arm of the trench. It was 1m wide and 0.5m deep, with steep sloping sides and an irregular base. It contained three fills (204, 205 and 206) and no finds.

Ditch F207 was recorded in the eastern arm of the trench and was 1.0m wide by 0.48m deep, with steep sloping sides and irregular base. It contained a three fills (208, 209 and 210) and no finds.

6. THE FINDS by Naomi Payne

6.1 Introduction and methodology

All finds recovered on site during the evaluation have retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. A small group of finds was recovered from features in Trench 1, which comprise a few sherds of highly abraded pottery and a very small quantity of slag. The finds are tabulated below in Table 1.

Context	Context Description	Prehistoric pottery		Late Iron Age/ Romano-British pottery		Slag	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
104	Fill of ditch F103	2	2				
106	Fill of ditch F105			2	4		
109	Fill of post-slot F108					2	0.2
Totals		2	2	2	4	2	0.2

Table 1: Summary of finds by context (weights in grams)

6.2 Prehistoric pottery

Two very small abraded sherds of probable prehistoric pottery were recovered from context 104, which are both small and abraded body sherds. The larger sherd is a reduced dark grey, with the exception of the internal surface which is a more oxidised reddish brown. The fabric contains sparse angular quartz and sub-rounded ironstone inclusions up to 1.5mm in size. It is probably Bronze Age in date. The other sherd is very small, fine walled and fully oxidised, and can only be classified as probably prehistoric.

6.3 Late Iron Age/Romano-British pottery

Two sherds (4g) of late Iron Age or early Romano-British pottery were recovered from context 106. The smaller sherd has broken away from the larger sherd, which is a South East Dorset Black Burnished 1 rim. The rim is flat-topped with a slight external bead. The body of the pot is set at a 45 degree angle. The sherd is very small so it is difficult to be certain, but the sherds are possibly from a Type 35 bowl (Bidwell 1991, p. 108, fig. 107).

6.4 Slag

Two very small pieces (0.2g) of probable ironworking slag were recovered from context 109.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has confirmed the presence of archaeological features in this portion of the site, as identified by the preceding geophysical survey. These comprised linear ditches and a small sub-square enclosure. There were other archaeological features present not identified by the initial survey, comprising a probable a roundhouse post-slot within the sub-square enclosure.

7.2 The enclosure and internal roundhouse

The possible prehistoric enclosure appears to be sub-square in plan and was excavated in two places (F103 and F105). The primary fills contained a possible Bronze Age pottery sherd and a late Iron Age or early Romano-British sherd, which would indicate that the former piece might be residual. The enclosure ditch was heavily truncated in the east. Based on the evidence from the geophysical survey and the evaluation the enclosure is small, with dimensions of approximately 10m x 10m.

A probable roundhouse was present within the enclosure, represented by curvilinear gully F110. This had an irregular base resulting from the presence of three post or stake holes in its base. This appears to have been a post-slot (it could also be termed a bedding trench) for a roundhouse, which may have continued to a terminal at F108 indicating that a door might be present close to this location. No internal features were identified and the structure would have been of very small diameter within the enclosure.

In Devon, roundhouses of similar post-slot construction have been recorded on the eastern edge of Dartmoor and near Newton Abbot. On Dartmoor, at Gold Park, Gibson (1992) partially excavated post-slots for four roundhouses, and despite having no direct dating evidence, he argued for a late Iron Age date in association with a fully excavated and dated roundhouse of different architectural style. At Berry Down, Newton Abbot, the post-slot of a roundhouse within the hillfort was rock-cut and also appeared to be of late Iron Age date (Gallant and Silvester 1985). Butler (1997) notes of the extant stone-built roundhouses on Dartmoor diameters range from 1.5m to over 10m, and in his view those under 2m in diameter are unlikely to be dwellings.

If the roundhouse and enclosure are contemporary then the house entrance would have faced directly towards the ditch 2m away, a distance which may have been reduced by an internal bank or fence (for which there was no evidence found). However, the northern enclosure boundary is only 1m from the roundhouse, and that the entrance has a 2m gap with the boundary may indicate a deliberate placing of the house approximately 1m to the north and west of the enclosure and in doing so providing greater space to the east and south and suggesting that the enclosure could have formed a small yard.

7.3 Pre-modern field boundaries

Many of the features picked up on the geophysical survey and recorded in this evaluation (F203 and F207) relate to the boundaries of a pre-modern landscape. These were on a distinctive NW-SE orientation which was different to the generally N-S orientation of the extant field pattern. No finds were directly associated with the segments of ditch excavated, but a later prehistoric or Romano-British date, as identified for the adjacent features, would not be inconsistent.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The geophysical survey across the total site area has identified a number of linear features, mainly aligned with the existing field pattern. A few examples, however, deviate from this general alignment, two of which were excavated as part of the evaluation and clearly relate to early, although undated, land division. The evaluation has also confirmed the presence of the small enclosure, which appears to be of late Iron Age or Romano-British date. Within this was a small probable roundhouse, which was not identified by geophysical survey.
- 8.2 Based on the limited trenching it can be suggested that geophysical survey has been an effective technique and has identified the principal buried archaeological features on the site. Less substantial or more ephemeral buried archaeological remains, such as the roundhouse gully, however, might not have been picked up by this method.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

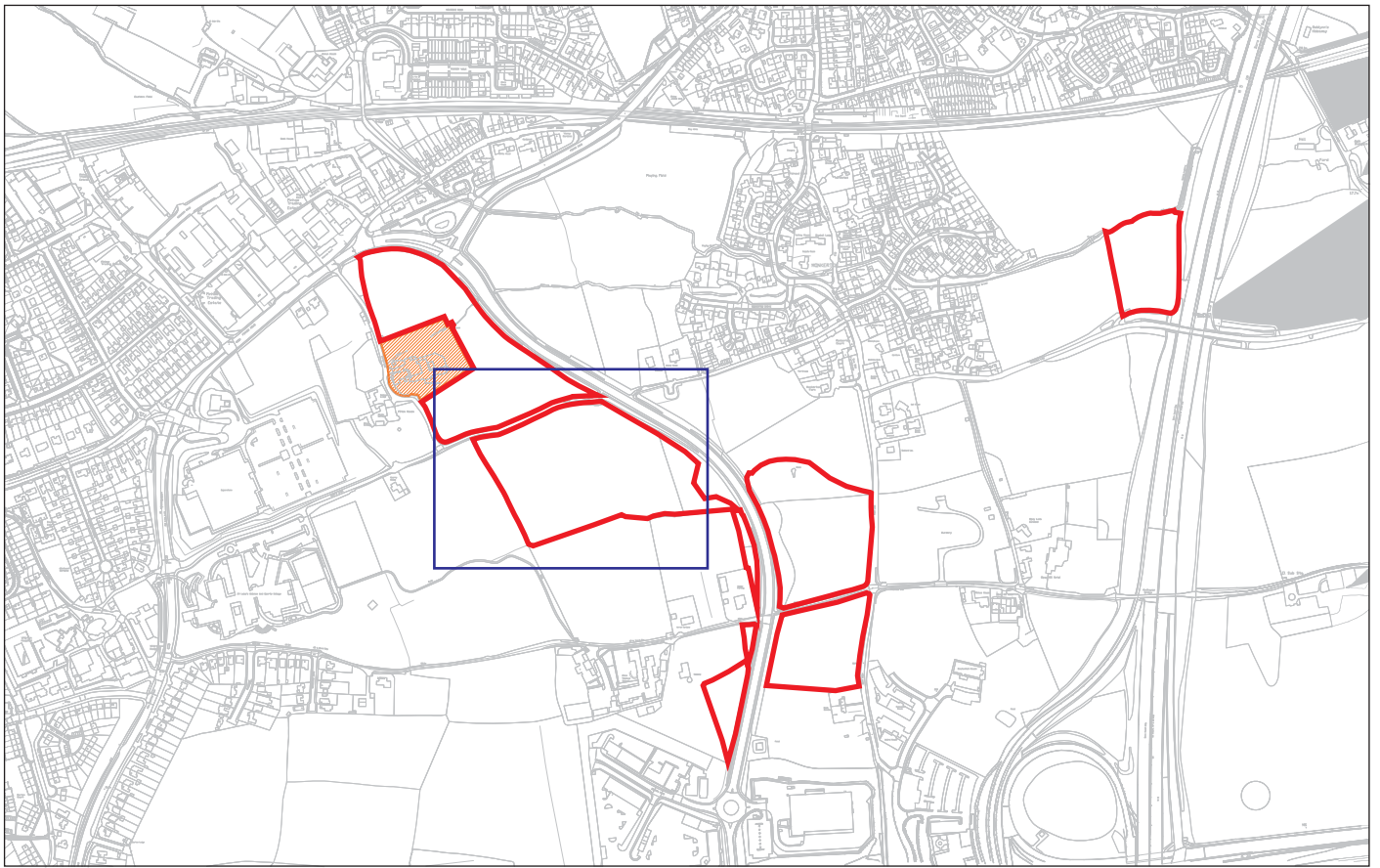
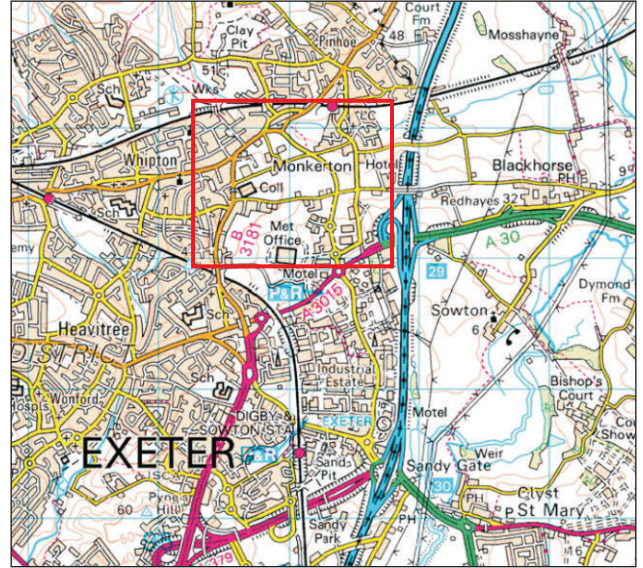
- 9.1 The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ, prior to deposition under a museum-allocated accession number at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.
- 9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 159262, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by NPS South West Ltd. The site work was undertaken by Ben Pears, Naomi Hughes and Will Smith, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. The collaborative role of Andrew Pye, Exeter City Council Archaeology Officer is duly acknowledged.

11. SOURCES CONSULTED

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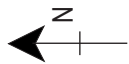
- Application area
- Inset - Fig. 2

PROJECT
Land adjacent to Cumberland Way, Monkerton, Exeter, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location





Trench locations

0 100m



Scale 1:2000@A4

PROJECT

Land adjacent to
Cumberland Way, Monkerton

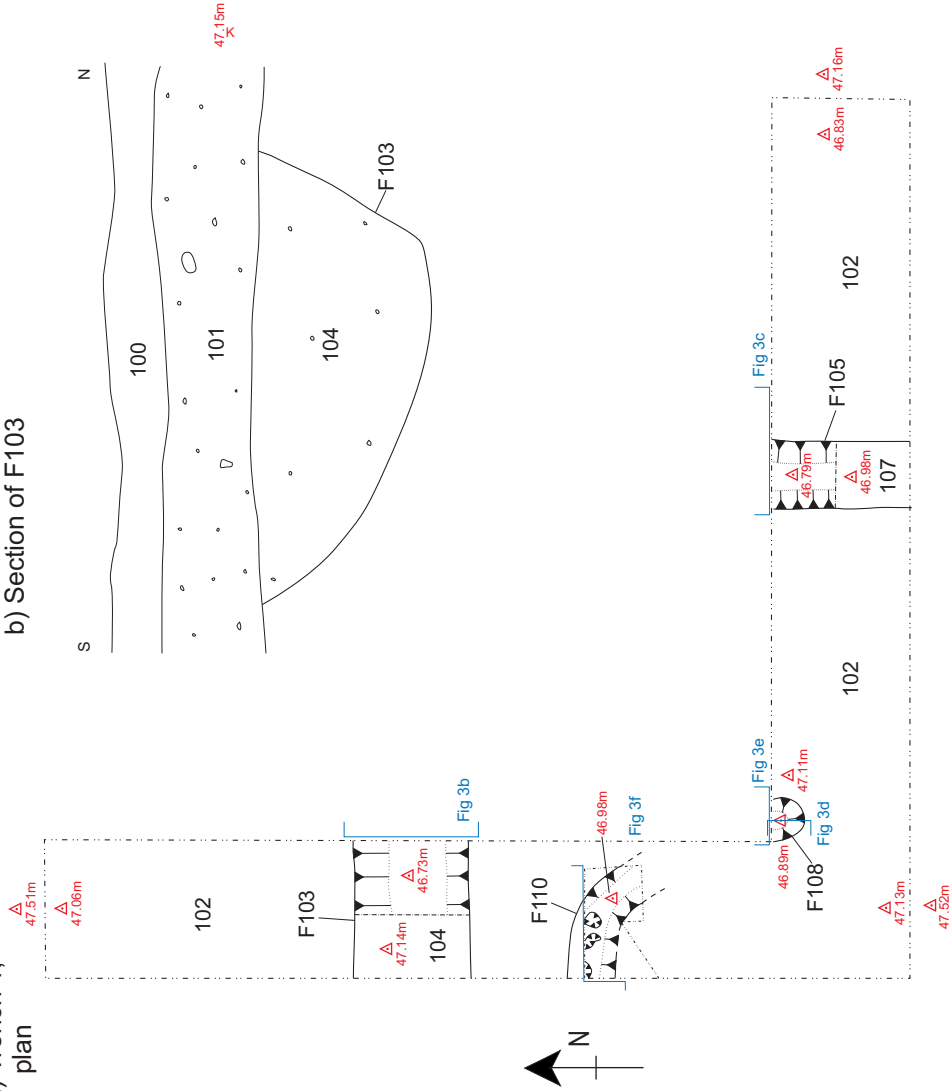
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Fig. 2: Location of trenches
in relation to geophysics
results

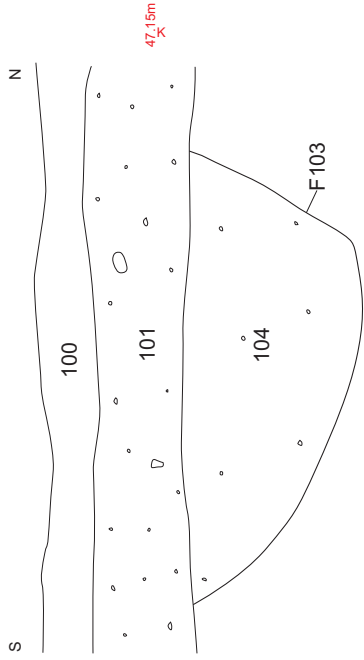


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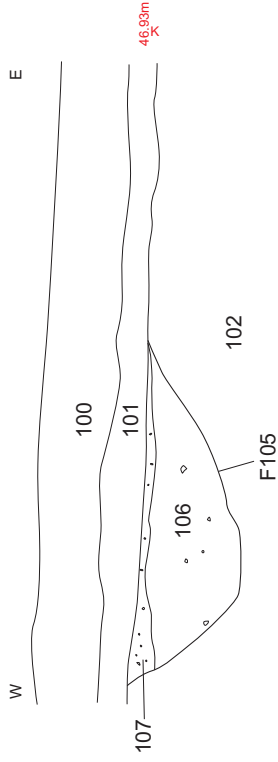
a) Trench 1, plan



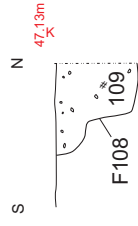
b) Section of F103



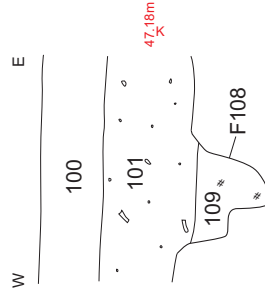
c) Section of F105



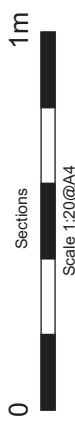
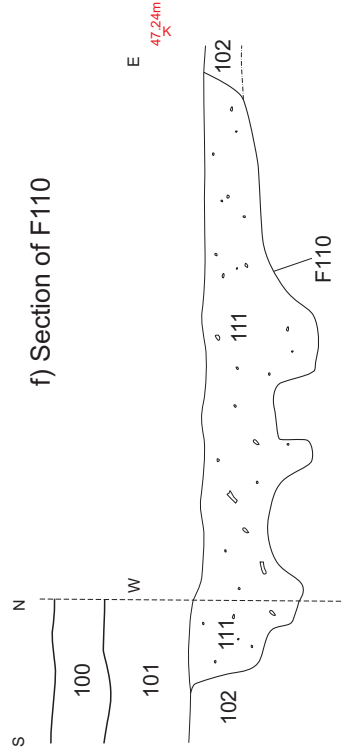
d) Section of F108



e) Section of F108



f) Section of F110



PROJECT

Land adjacent to
Cumberland Way,
Monkerton, Exeter, Devon

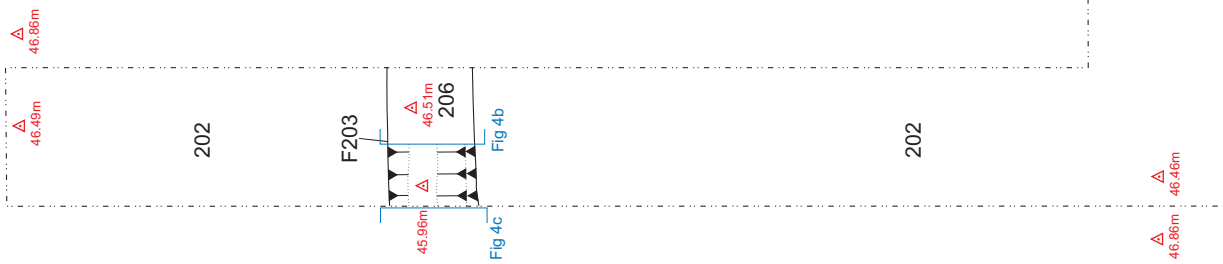
TITLE

Fig. 3: Trench 1, plan
and sections

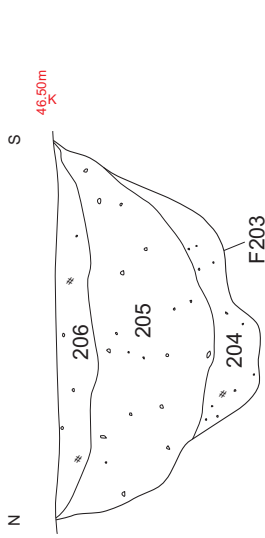


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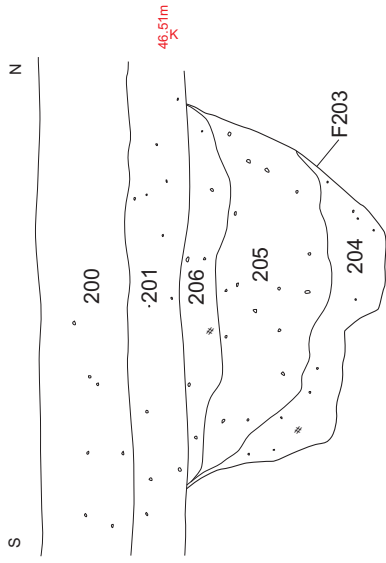
a) Trench 2, plan



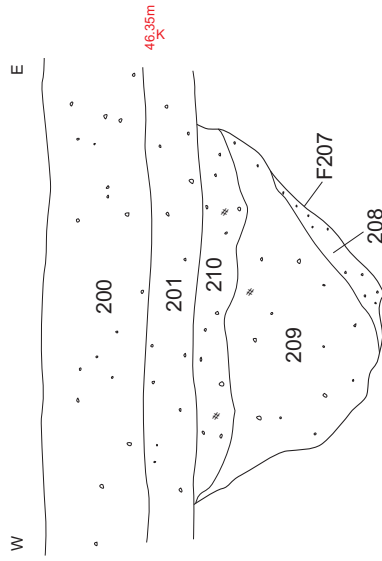
b) West facing section of F203



c) East facing section of F203



d) South facing section of F207



e) North facing section of F207

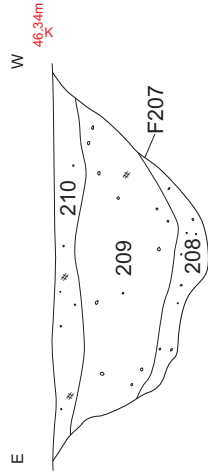


Fig 4d



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Land adjacent to Cumberland Way, Monkerton, Exeter, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 4: Trench 2, plan and sections





Plate 1: General view of the site looking northeast



Plate 2: West-facing section of ditch F103 (scale 1m)



Plate 3: East-facing section of post-slot F110 (scale 1m)



Plate 4: South-facing section of possible post-slot terminal F108 (scale 0.30m)



Plate 5: East-facing section of ditch F203 (scale 1m)



Plate 6: South-facing section of ditch F207 (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated trench descriptions

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1			Length 23.2m	Width 1.80m	Alignment N-S, E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
100	Light brown to light reddish brown silty sandy loam	0-0.23m	Topsoil		
101	Light yellow to orange brown silty sand	0.23-0.36m	Subsoil		
102	dark reddish pink and orange degraded breccia	0.36m+	Natural		
103	Cut of linear	0.36-0.84m	Enclosure ditch		
104	Mid red brown firm sandy silt	0.36-0.84m	Fill of F103		
105	Cut of linear	0.36-0.63m	Enclosure ditch		
106	Reddish brown compact sandy silt	0.44-0.61m	Primary fill of F105		
107	Light reddish brown compact sandy silt	0.36-0.44m	Upper fill of F105		
108	Cut	0.36-0.56m	Posthole or post-slot terminal		
109	Mid red-brown compact sandy silt	0.36-0.56m	Fill of F108		
110	Cut of linear	0.36-0.76m	Post-slot of roundhouse		
111	Dark red brown compact sandy silt	0.36-0.76	Fill of F110		

Trench 2			Length 31m	Width 1.80m	Alignment N-S, E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
200	Light brownish grey to reddish orange silty sandy loam	0-0.24m	Topsoil		
201	Light yellow silty sand	0.24-0.37m	Subsoil		
202	Dark reddish, pink and orange breccia	0.37m+	Natural		
203	Cut of Linear	0.37-0.97mm	Field boundary ditch		
204	Light orangey grey brown silty sand	0.86-0.97m	Primary fill of F203		
205	Dark brownish/reddish orange compact silty clay sand	0.46-0.86m	Secondary fill of F203		
206	Dark reddish brown compact silty sand	0.37-0.46m	Upper fill of F203		
207	Cut of Linear	0.37-0.85m	Field boundary ditch		
208	Light yellow/orange silty sand	0.74-0.85m	Primary fill of F207		
209	Dark brownish reddish orange compact silty sand	0.49-0.74m	Secondary fill of F207		
210	Dark reddish brown and dark grey compact silty sand	0.37-0.49m	Upper fill of F203		

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