

LAND OFF ROWAN DRIVE, SEATON, DEVON

Centred on NGR SY 2413 9168

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Planning Ref. East Devon District Council 13/1091/MOUT

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
Fosseway Developments Ltd

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archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation carried out on land off Rowan Drive, Seaton, East Devon (centred on SY 2413 9168) was undertaken by AC archaeology during September 2013. The proposed development area occupies 1.716 hectares of grass pasture on sloping ground at between approximately 35-55m aOD.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of seven trenches totalling 135m in length, with each trench measuring 1.80m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey and to sample other areas within the proposed development.

Only a single feature of possible archaeological interest was recorded during the evaluation, which consisted of a shallow gully with no associated finds. A small quantity of prehistoric worked flint and a single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from an agricultural subsoil layer.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation undertaken in support of an application for outline planning permission for residential development of up to 48 dwellings on land off Rowan Drive, Seaton, East Devon (centred on SY 2413 9168). It reports on the archaeological works required by East Devon Council, as advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET).
- 1.2 The archaeological works were commissioned by Fosseyway Developments Ltd and carried out by AC archaeology on the 10th and 11th September 2013.
- 1.3 The investigation area comprises a single field sloping from the east-north-east to west-south-west with a total area of 1.716 hectares. The site currently comprises grass pasture and lies at between approximately 35-55m aOD. The underlying geology is of the Branscombe Mudstone Formation, which comprises mudstone and siltstone.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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 (Devon County Historic Environment Record ref: MDV19029). It has been proposed that this original settlement relates to earthworks at Flete Meadows (MDV14046), some 0.65km east of the site, and if correct would presumably illustrate the settlement moving southwards towards the coast during the medieval period.
- 2.2 The site is within an area characteristic of post-medieval field boundaries. To the north is Harepath Hill a road which is believed to follow the line of the Roman Fosse Way (MDV18575). Trench evaluation in the field northeast of the site uncovered a network of ditches and gullies of various size and orientation of unknown date, a probable prehistoric ring-ditch and a small collection of prehistoric flint (Robinson and Valentin 2008). To the east of this, investigation of a block of land revealed extensive evidence of Romano-British settlement (Valentin and Sims 2012). The well-known Honeyditches site of a Roman villa or mansio is approximately 0.8km to the southwest (MDV14057).
- 2.3 A geophysical survey of the site identified three magnetic anomalies consisting of two linear features and one possible sub-circular anomaly group (Dean 2012).

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. 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 the significance and state of survival of any archaeological remains on the site is great enough to influence the layout of the proposed development should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of seven trenches totalling 135m in length, with each trench measuring 1.80m wide (Fig. 2). Trenches were positioned to target areas where anomalies were indicated by the geophysical survey and to provide sample coverage of areas where no anomalies had been identified. 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 1:20 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

The evaluation revealed generally low level results and few finds, with only Trench 6 containing a feature of possible archaeological interest. This is described below. The overlying layer sequence was generally consistent across the site, comprising between 0.10-0.25m of topsoil, above between 0.10-0.25m of agricultural subsoil, which in turn was above a weathered natural subsoil of clay with flints. A naturally formed hollow was recorded in Trench 6, while a modern stone-filled field drain was in Trench 5. All of the trenches and contexts are summarised in tabulated form in Appendix 1. The relevant plan and section of Trench 6 is included as Fig. 3.

Finds recovered from the evaluation trenches were limited to 12 pieces of prehistoric worked flint and a single sherd of medieval pottery, all from overlying contexts.

5.2 Trench 6

Trench 6 measured 20m in length and was aligned N-S. A linear feature (F604) was revealed towards the northern end of the trench.

Linear gully F604 was northwest to southeast aligned and 0.50m wide by 0.19m deep. It had a U-shaped profile and was very shallow. It contained a single fill (603) consisting of a compacted silt. There were no finds and there remains the possibility that this was a natural feature.

6. THE FINDS

6.1 Introduction and methodology

Small quantities of finds were recovered from an agricultural subsoil layer in five of the seven evaluation trenches. All finds have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. The finds comprise a small assemblage of worked flint and a single sherd of medieval pottery. They are summarised in Table 1, below.

Context	Context Description	Medieval pottery		Worked flint/chert	
		No	Wt	No	Wt
301	Trench 3 subsoil	1	4	2	22
401	Trench 4 subsoil			2	36
501	Trench 5 subsoil			5	157
601	Trench 6 subsoil			2	46
701	Trench 7 subsoil			1	42
Totals		1	4	12	303

Table 1. Summary of finds recovered (weights in grams)

6.2 Worked flint

In total, 12 pieces of worked flint (303g) was recovered, all from subsoil contexts. Most of the flint is good quality dark flint, probably sourced from nearby Beer Head. The material includes a multi-platform flake core, a core fragment, four flakes, three retouched flakes including a notched flake and two scrapers. The working is coarse and the range in sizes of the material suggests a Bronze Age date.

6.3 Medieval pottery

A single sherd (4g) of medieval pottery was recovered from the subsoil layer in Trench 3. This is a body sherd from a South Somerset type jug dating from c. AD1250-1450.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The evaluation has identified the presence of a single feature of possible archaeological interest on the site. The linear feature (F604) in Trench 6 may be regarded as of doubtful archaeological origin, but is similar to some of the features identified in previous archaeological work in the field to the northeast of the proposed development. Here, a network of ditches and gullies regarded as field drainage and boundary features of prehistoric to post-medieval date were recorded (Robinson and Valentin 2008).
- 7.2 The small scatter of prehistoric worked flint is consistent with that known from elsewhere in Seaton parish where artefacts dating from the Palaeolithic through to the Bronze Age have been recovered in several places (MDV80982, MDV14051, MDV62916, MDV14049).
- 7.3 None of the features identified in the geophysical survey were located in evaluation trenches. This may reflect a poor environment for magnetometer surveying: a similar result was found from the neighbouring investigation (Robinson and Valentin 2008), although in that case many more features were identified than had been indicated by the geophysical survey results.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1** This evaluation has identified the presence of a single possible archaeological feature of unknown date, but this may be associated with the pattern of field drainage and boundary features of prehistoric to post-medieval date recorded in the adjacent field to the northeast. A general scatter of flint artefacts also indicates a background of general prehistoric activity. The finds match the known archaeology of the area.
- 8.2** This evaluation has established a general paucity of archaeological features and finds in the area of the proposed development.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 9.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. As the results were largely negative and assuming the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter will not accept the archive, then it will be discarded.
- 9.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 159495, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

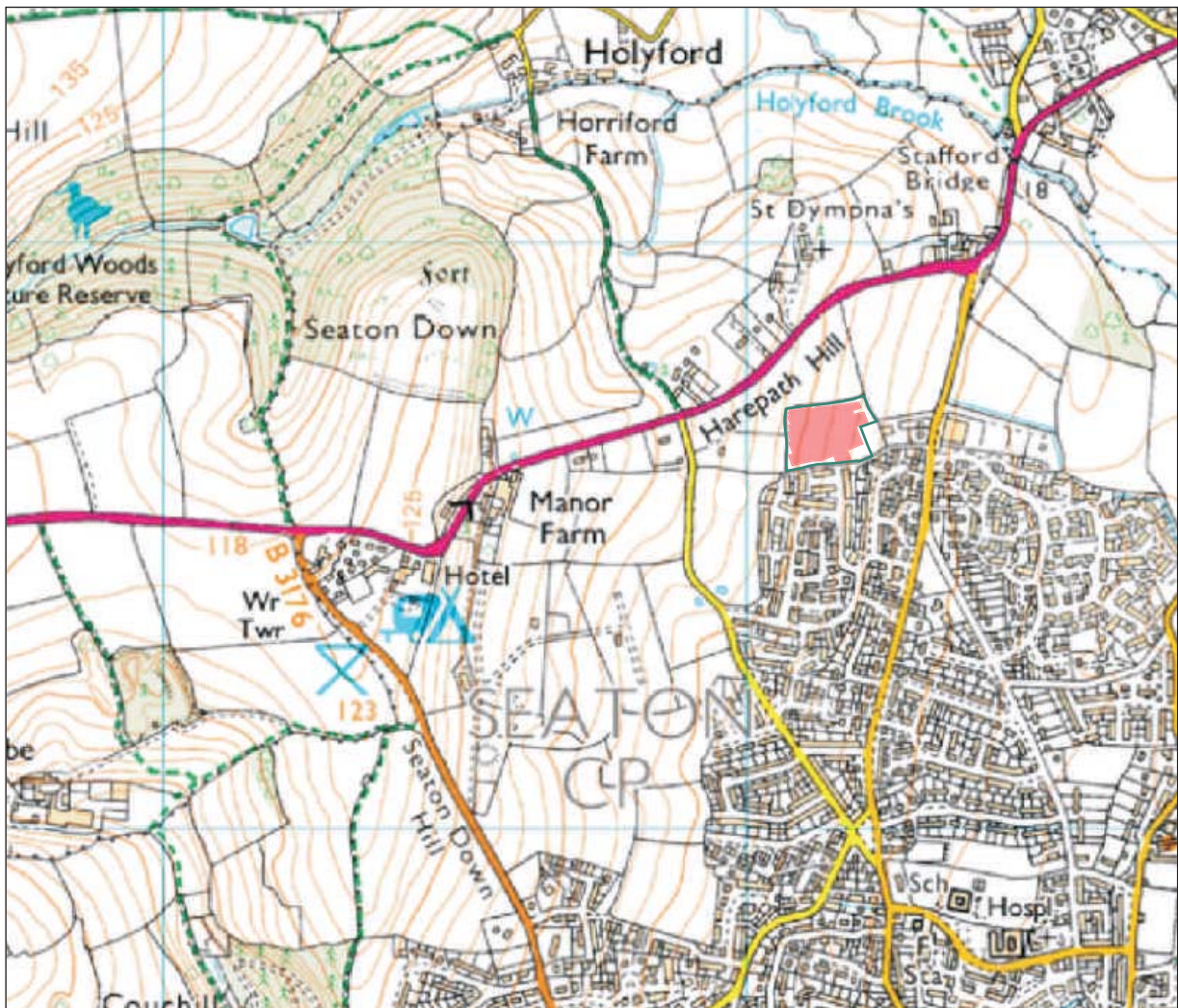
- 10.1** The evaluation was commissioned by Michael Gardiner of Fosseway Development Ltd. The site work was undertaken by Alex Farnell and Jon Hall, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The collaborative role of Stephen Reed, DCCHEAT Archaeology Officer is duly acknowledged.

11. REFERENCES

- Robinson, S. and, Valentin, J., 2008, *A Proposed Development at Harepath Hill, Seaton, Devon: Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology report ref. ACD06/3/0.
- Dean, R., 2012, *Land off Rowan Drive, Seaton, Devon: An Archaeological Gradiometer Survey*. Unpublished client report ref. 130906.
- Valentin, J. and Sims, R., 2012, *Land Between Harepath Road and Colyford Road, Seaton, Devon: Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology report ref. ACD548/1/0.



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92

91

SY

23

24

- Geophysical survey area
- Application boundary

PROJECT

Land off Rowan Drive, Seaton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site





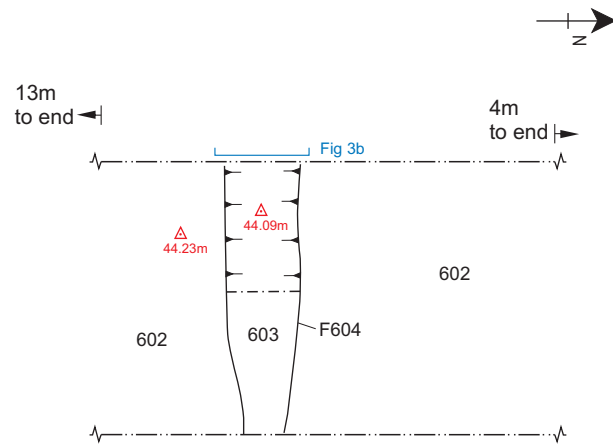
- Trial Trenches 1-7
- Archaeological feature F604
- Application boundary

PROJECT
 Land off Rowan Drive, Seaton, Devon

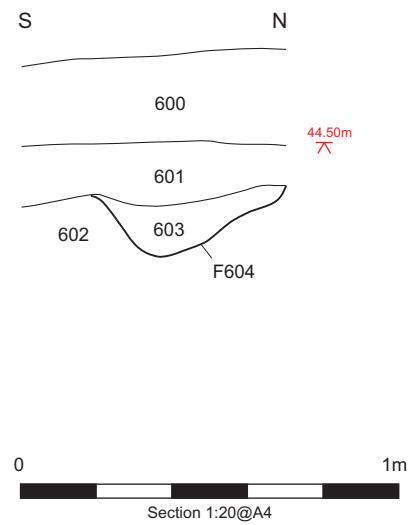
TITLE
 Fig. 2: Location of trenches and archaeological features identified



a) Plan, trench 6



b) Section



PROJECT

Land off Rowan Drive, Seaton,
Devon

TITLE

Fig. 3: Trench 6, plan and section



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Plate 1: General view of Trench 6, looking southeast



Plate 2: East-facing section of ditch F604. Scale 1m

Appendix 1

Tabulated trench descriptions

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1			Length 10m	Width 1.80m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
100	Grey brown loose sandy silt	0-0.15m	Topsoil		
101	Pale yellow brown compact silt with common flint gravel	0.15-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil		
102	Yellow clay/chalk	0.35m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 2			Length 20m	Width 1.80m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
200	Grey brown loose sandy silt	0-0.10m	Topsoil		
201	Pale yellow brown compact silt with common flint gravel	0.10-0.26m	Agricultural subsoil		
202	Yellow to red silt clay with abundant flint gravel	0.26m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 3			Length 20m	Width 1.80m	Alignment E-W, N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
300	Grey brown loose sandy silt	0-0.10m	Topsoil		
301	Pale yellow brown compact silt with common flint gravel	0.10-0.30m	Agricultural subsoil		
302	Yellow to red silt clay with abundant flint gravel	0.30m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 4			Length 20m	Width 1.80m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
400	Grey brown loose sandy silt	0-0.10m	Topsoil		
401	Pale yellow brown compact silt with common flint gravel	0.10-0.30m	Agricultural subsoil		
402	Yellow to red silt clay with abundant flint gravel	0.30m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 5			Length 25m	Width 1.80m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
500	Grey brown loose sandy silt	0-0.15m	Topsoil		
501	Pale yellow brown compact silt with common flint gravel	0.15-0.40m	Agricultural subsoil		
502	Yellow to red silt clay with abundant flint gravel	0.40m+	Natural subsoil		
503	Yellow clay and stone	0.40-0.85m	Fill of field drain F504		
504	Cut of linear	0.40-0.85m	Cut of field drain		
505	Fill (unexcavated)	0.40m+	Fill of field drain F506		
506	Cut of linear	0.40m+	Cut of field drain		

Trench 6			Length 20m	Width 1.80m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
600	Grey brown loose sandy silt	0-0.15m	Topsoil		
601	Pale yellow brown compact silt with common flint gravel	0.15-0.40m	Agricultural subsoil		
602	Boulder clay with common flint nodules	0.40m+	Natural subsoil		
603	Yellow grey brown compact silt	0.40-0.59m	Fill of F604		
604	Cut of linear	0.40-0.59m	Gully		
605	Pale (leached) yellow grey compact silt	0.40-0.55m	Fill of F606		
606	Sub-circular hollow	0.40-0.55m	Natural hollow		

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 7			Length 20m	Width 1.80m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
700	Grey brown loose sandy silt	0-0.25m	Topsoil		
701	Pale yellow brown compact silt with common flint gravel	0.25-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil		
702	Yellow to red silt clay with abundant flint gravel	0.35m+	Natural subsoil		

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