

LAND AT OTTER FARM, CHURCH ROAD, COLATON RALEIGH, DEVON

NGR SY 0823 8685

Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief and
Proposals for Further Analysis

East Devon District Council Planning Reference:
12/2660/MFUL

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On behalf of:
The Clinton Devon Estate

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AC archaeology

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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	4
7.	Discussion	6
8.	Conclusion	7
9.	Potential and proposals for further analysis	7
10.	Archive and OASIS	7
11.	Acknowledgements	8
12.	References	8

List of figures

Fig. 1: Site location

Fig. 2: Location of archaeological features in relation to the geophysics interpretation

Fig. 3: Plans of features identified from excavation of the cable trench

Fig. 4: Sections of relevant features

List of plates

Plate 1: Ditch F161 partially excavated within cable trench, view from the south

Plate 2: Middle Bronze Age pottery sherds within ditch fill 163

Plate 3: Ditch F161, full excavated, view from the northwest

Plate 4: Ditch F166 partially excavated within cable trench, view from the north

Plate 5: Feature F174 within cable trench, view from the south

Plate 6: Linear features F176 and F178 within cable trench, view from the north

Plate 7: Area strip for new stock building, view from the west

Summary

An archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a new stock building and excavations for an electricity cable trench and new farm access track on land at Otter Farm, Church Road, Colaton Raleigh, Sidmouth, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during September and October 2013. A previous geophysical survey of the site had identified a substantial D-shaped enclosure immediately to the west of the main area reduction for the new stock building. Other weak linear and discrete anomalies were also identified.

Works comprised the removal of overburden to expose natural subsoil within the area of the new stock building, excavation of a service trench to the west and southwest of the new stock building and removal of topsoil along the route of a new farm access track through fields approximately 0.5km to the north of Colaton Raleigh.

Parts of the D-shaped enclosure, identified by geophysical survey, was exposed in a service trench to the west of the main area and recorded as a substantial ditch c. 3.5m wide and 2m deep, possibly dated to the Middle Bronze Age by pottery recovered from the fill. Three internal features were also exposed and recorded. A series of small discrete features were also identified during ground reduction for the new stock building, with many of these naturally formed.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of new stock building, new farm access track and the excavation of a cable trench on land at Otter Farm, Church Road, Colaton Raleigh, near Sidmouth, Devon (SY 0823 8685). The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology between 16th September and 08 October 2013 and was commissioned by Michael Goff, Agricultural Planning, Design & Project Management, on behalf of the Clinton Devon Estate.
- 1.3 The site comprises agricultural fields to the south and southeast of the Otter Farm complex. It is situated on an east facing hill slope at between c. 15m and 20m aOD, with the underlying solid geology comprising Sandstone of the Otter Formation, overlain in places by alluvial clays, silt, sands and gravel.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The main archaeological interest in the site is that an earlier geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys Ltd 2012) identified what appeared to be a substantial later prehistoric or Romano-British D-shaped enclosure located immediately to the west of the new stock building. Linear and possible discrete anomalies were also identified, including a possible ditch extending south from the site of the enclosure and into the area where spoil was to be stored. Within the broader vicinity there have been a number of recorded finds of prehistoric and Romano-British date.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological remains which were disturbed by the development works.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCCHET; Reed 2013) and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2013). All groundworks were undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket, working under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features and deposits were exposed they were cleaned, examined and recorded. Where these were to be removed by the development they were hand excavated to at least the depth of the anticipated disturbance and recorded in accordance with the WSI. Where further characterisation of deep ditches was required, this was carried out by machine. Ditch profiles were recorded from the trench edge and the spoil thoroughly examined for artefacts.
- 4.2 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* (revised August 2012). All levels relate to a temporary bench mark allocated a nominal value of 100m.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Groundworks consisted of a bulk reduction for the new farm building encompassing an area c. 120m x 50m, occupying a steep east and northeast facing slope immediately to the west of the existing farm complex. A new electricity cable trench measuring 600mm wide and around 200m long was located c.20m west of the main bulk reduction area. A consistent soil profile exposed across the site comprised natural subsoil, overlain by c. 200mm of pale grey brown silty sand subsoil (context 101), sealed by up to 150mm of dark reddish brown silty sand topsoil (100). Numerous pieces of prehistoric worked flint was recovered from subsoil layer 101, in addition to a small quantity of pottery sherds dated to the medieval and post-medieval periods. At the base of slope along the northern and eastern extents of site, natural subsoil was overlain by up to 600mm of colluvial soil (160 & 159). Six pieces of prehistoric worked flint were recovered from this colluvium. Stripping for the access road removed topsoil only leaving subsoil undisturbed. No archaeological features or deposits were therefore exposed.

5.2 Prehistoric features (Plans Figs 2 & 3a-c, sections Fig. 4a-c; Plates 1-5)

Two substantial linear features (F161 & F166) were exposed in the cable trench. They represent the southeast corner and northeast side, respectively, of a large D-shaped enclosure identified by geophysical survey. A linear termination or sub-circular pit (F174) located approximately 10m south of ditch F166 was also partially exposed. Its location, within the D-shaped enclosure, its character and two worked flints recovered from the upper fill (175) strongly suggest a prehistoric date. These features are described in detail below.

F161 was aligned approximately NE–SW, measured 3.5m wide, 2m deep and was exposed for a length of 600mm. In profile, it exhibited steeply sloping, broadly straight sides and a narrow V-shaped base. It contained four exposed fills; the lower part of the ditch was machine-excavated due to safety concerns. Primary fill 162 was mid-reddish brown, sand, resulting from initial weathering of the surrounding natural. Secondary fill 163 consisted of mid-grey brown silty sand with frequent sub-rounded pebbles and cobbles. Up to 1.6m deep and relatively homogenous. This represents the principal fill of the ditch and is likely to be the result of deliberate infilling. A total of 120 sherds of possible Middle Bronze Age pottery was recovered from this context. Fill 164 was mid-reddish brown, compact, silty clay with common sub-rounded pebble inclusions. It sealed both the primary fill (162) and secondary fill (163) and is possibly an attempt to consolidate the relatively soft fills below. Upper fill 165 was composed of mid-grey brown silty sand with rare sub-angular pebble inclusions. Fill 165 was overlain by pale grey brown silty sand subsoil (101).

F166 was aligned NW–SE, measured approximately 4m wide and was exposed for a length of 600mm. Excavation depth was limited to 1.3m due to the instability of the surrounding trench edges. Its exposed profile exhibited steeply sloping straight sides; the base remained unexcavated. The lower 800mm of F166 was excavated by machine and recorded from the trench side. Due to these limitations only the main profile was recorded. The fill of this portion of the ditch was given an overall number (173) and is an amalgam of several similar fills including those described below. Five worked flint flakes were recovered from this context. The upper 500mm of F166 contained a series of five steeply tipping fills. On the NW side, mid-reddish brown silty sand with rare small – medium sub-rounded pebble inclusions (167) overlay natural subsoil and was in turn overlain by mid-greyish brown silty sand with occasional small to medium sub-rounded pebbles (169). On the SE side, natural subsoil was overlain by mid-reddish brown silty sand with occasional small – medium sub-rounded pebble inclusions (168), which was in turn overlain by mid-greyish brown silty sand with occasional small to medium sub-rounded pebbles (170). Contexts 169 and 170 were both overlain by mid-greyish brown, moderately compact, silty clay with common sub-rounded pebbles and cobbles (171). Four worked flints were recovered from this fill. A final fill consisting of mid grey brown, soft, silty clay with rare sub-rounded pebble inclusions (172) overlay fill 167 on the north side of the cut. It appeared to be the result of later post-depositional disturbance. Fills 167-172 were sealed by up to 500mm of subsoil (101).

F174 was an apparent NE–SW aligned ditch, terminating to the southwest within the cable trench and continuing beyond the limit of excavation to the northeast. It measured 1.3m wide, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.15m in a limited sondage and was exposed for a length of 1m. In profile, it exhibited a sharp break of slope at the top and very steep almost vertical sides. The full profile was not excavated due to depth and the instability of the trench sides. It contained three fills. Steeply tipping fill 180 on the southern side of the cut consisted of dark reddish brown, soft, slightly loamy sand with frequent small to large sub-rounded pebbles. Steeply tipping fill 181 on the north side of the cut consisted of dark yellowish brown, soft, sand with rare small rounded pebbles. Upper fill 175 comprised dark brown, soft, slightly loamy sand with frequent poorly sorted small to large rounded pebbles and cobbles and rare charcoal flecks. Two worked flints were recovered from this fill.

5.3 Undated linear features (Plans Figs 2 & 3d, section Fig. 4d, Plate 6)

Two parallel linear features (F176 & F178), located within the D-shaped enclosure identified by geophysical survey, were exposed by the excavation of the service trench. F176 was a NW-SE aligned gully measuring 960mm wide and 300mm deep with a wide U-shaped profile. It contained a single fill (177) of mid-brown, slightly loamy sand with frequent small to medium sub-rounded pebbles.

F178 was an approximately NW – SE aligned gully measuring 600mm wide and 220mm deep with a wide U-shaped profile. It contained a single fill (179) of mid-brown, soft, slightly loamy sand with frequent small to medium sub-rounded pebbles

5.4 Possible discrete features (Plan Fig. 2, sections Fig. 4e-k; Plate 7)

A total of 25 poorly defined possible circular and sub-circular features was recorded. The majority of these are likely to be naturally formed small hollows, possibly formed as a result of root disturbance, with those more likely to represent 'archaeological features' shown on Fig. 2 and illustrated on Fig. 4 (F108, F110, F120, F136, F140, F150 and F154). These were exposed during the bulk reduction for the new stock building, with each measuring between 550mm and 1.2m in diameter and 80mm to 450mm deep, with wide, shallow and irregular profiles. Each contained a single fill of reddish brown, soft, sandy silt with occasional small rounded stone inclusions. A single sherd of mid – late AD 2nd century date was recovered from fill 107 (F108) and worked flints were recovered from six others (F110, F120, F136, F140, F150 & F154). Flint finds were also common in the overlying subsoil layer.

6. THE FINDS by Naomi Payne and Henrietta Quinnell

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the watching brief have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They have been quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage scanned to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This is discussed briefly below. The most significant finds were collections of Bronze Age pottery and worked flint. Small quantities of later pottery, ironwork and clay tobacco-pipe were also recovered. The finds are tabulated below in Table 1.

Context	Context Description	Prehistoric pottery		Roman pottery		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Iron		Worked flint/chert		Clay tobacco-pipe	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
U/S	Topsoil finds							15	323	1	8	7	76		
101	Subsoil	5	13			6	32	20	158	1	7	47	329	1	3
107	Fill of pit F108			1	5										
109	Fill of pit F110											1	0.1		
119	Fill of pit F120											1	1		
135	Fill of pit F136											2	6		
139	Fill of pit F140											1	5		
149	Fill of pit F150											3	120		
153	Fill of pit F154											1	0.6		
160	Colluvial layer											6	45		
163	2nd fill (of four) of enclosure ditch F161	120	2865												
171	4th fill (of six) of enclosure ditch F166											4	5		
173	6th fill (of six) of enclosure ditch F166											5	67		
175	Third fill (of three) of enclosure ditch terminus F174											2	44		
Totals		125	2878	1	5	6	32	35	481	2	15	80	698.7	1	3

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

6.2 Prehistoric pottery by Henrietta Quinnell

A total of 125 sherds weighing 2,875 grams was recovered. Of these, 120 sherds weighing 2,865 grams came from context 163, fill of enclosure ditch F161 and five sherds weighing 10 grams came from subsoil layer 101.

The sherds from context 163 are recorded as being from part of a vessel crushed *in situ*. Preliminary analysis shows that there are several conjoins among the numerous rim sherds. The rim is flat-topped and slightly expanded, a form typical of Trevisker ceramics in East Devon. One small elongated lug is present, set on the apparent maximum girth of a slightly biconical-shaped vessel. Adjacent to the lug are two fingertip impressions, apparently forming part of a horizontal line: several other sherds have similar paired impressions. It is probable, though not certain, that the line of finger-tip impressions were continuous around the girth. There are numerous body sherds, but nothing from base angle or base. The breaks on all sherds are fresh.

The fabric of the vessel contains inclusions, some of which appear to be of igneous rock and possibly from Permian deposits in the Exeter area. Numerous sherds hold internal residue.

The sherds from subsoil layer 101 appear to be of a similar fabric to that of the vessel in context 163, but are thinner and so from one or more additional vessels: one is a rim sherd.

The vessel from context 163 probably belongs to the Middle Bronze Age, the period to which most Trevisker-style material in Devon belongs (Quinnell 2012) but no exact parallel is known. The vessel recently published from Old Rydon Lane, Exeter, for example, has finger-tip decoration set all around a continuous girth cordon (Gilbert 2012, Fig. 9). Imperforate lugs are generally found on otherwise undecorated vessels.

It should however be noted with regard to dating that sherds of Trevisker type from pits at Town Farm Quarry, Burlescombe (Farnell and Quinnell 2012) and at Patteson's Cross on the line of the A30 (Fitzpatrick *et al* 1999, 73) have now been dated by radiocarbon method to the early part of the Early Bronze Age.

6.3 Worked flint

A total of 80 pieces of worked flint (698.7g) was recovered. These include seven pieces that were unstratified and a further 47 pieces from the subsoil layer. The flint is tabulated below in Table 2.

Context	Cores			Flakes			Blades			Burnt wkd	Tools		Comment	Total
	Fl	Bl	Frag	Wh	Br	Ret	Wh	Br	Ret		Scraper	Other		
U/S				4	2	1								7
101				24	10	8				1	4		Burnt scraper	47
109					1									1
119				1										1
135					2									2
139					1									1
149				2							1			3
153					1									1
160				1	5									6
171				1	2				1					4
173				4	1									5
175	1			1										2
Total	1	0	0	38	25	9	0	1	0	1	5	0		80

Table 2. Summary of worked flint by context (abbreviations: Fl = flake, Bl = blade, Wh = whole, Br = broken, Ret = retouched, Wkd = worked)

Most of the flintwork is made from good quality dark flint, although there are a handful of chert flakes and a few pieces in mottled grey or brown flint. The majority of the flints are flakes (38 whole, 25 broken, nine retouched) although there is a single blade fragment. There are six scrapers, one of which has been burnt. There are no diagnostic pieces, but the range of flake size and variation in the quality of the material suggests a Bronze Age date. Much of the material is residual but there were 11 pieces recovered from the enclosure ditch.

6.4 Romano-British pottery

A single Romano-British rim sherd (5g) was recovered from context 107, fill of post-hole or pit F108. This is from a South West Black-Burnished 1 Type 56 flat-rimmed bowl, which dates from the mid to late 2nd century AD (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991, pp. 128-9).

6.5 Medieval pottery

Six sherds (32g) of medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil. All are body sherds; two from cooking pots and four from jugs. The two cooking pot sherds have a similar vesicular fabric, which contains moderate rounded quartz inclusions up to 1mm and sparse chert and white mica. One sherd contains sparse red mudstone. The fabric appears to be similar to material excavated at Haycroft Farm, Membury, which dated from c. 1250-1350 (Allan and Langman 2002). The four jug sherds are sandy and micaceous and are probably South Somerset products.

6.6 Post-medieval pottery

A total of 35 sherds (481g) of post-medieval pottery were recovered. Most were from the subsoil but there were also 15 unstratified sherds. The group from subsoil consists mostly of South Somerset type wares, but includes a small quantity of 17th/18th century North Devon Gravel Free ware, as well as a base sherd of tin-glazed earthenware of a similar date. Amongst the subsoil group discernible forms include two conjoining rim sherds from a 16th century South Somerset Type 1C bowl with internal glaze and external sooting, a 16th century South Somerset jug handle and a rim sherd from an 18th century South Somerset Type 2B cup with internal slip and copper green speckled glaze.

6.7 Metalwork

Two iron nails (15g) were recovered, one from subsoil and one unstratified. Both are likely to be modern in date.

6.8 Clay tobacco-pipe

A single stem fragment of clay tobacco-pipe fragment (3g) was recovered from the subsoil. This is post-medieval but is not more closely datable.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1** The principal feature of archaeological interest was a large D-shaped enclosure occupying the hill top approximately 55m to the west of the existing Otter Farm building complex. The ditch of this enclosure was exposed and recorded in two places as a substantial V-profiled feature at least 2m deep (possibly up to 2.7m deep on its northeast side) and up to 4m wide. A significant quantity (120 sherds) of probable Middle Bronze Age pottery was recovered from a context (163) positioned centrally in ditch section F161, which are likely to be part of the same Trevisker-type biconical vessel. It seems likely that the enclosure was both in use and subsequently slighted and abandoned during the Bronze Age. While there was no direct evidence for an associated bank, however, the relatively clean, homogenous and steeply tipping nature of the fills of F161 and F166 suggest deliberate infilling with mixed re-deposited natural sand and gravel. This material potentially derived from a bank now completely removed by later ploughing.
- 7.2** Three possible internal features were recorded comprising two linear gullies (F176 & F178) and a deep vertical sided feature (F174). The full character of F174 was impossible to establish within the limitations of the excavation but may be an oval pit or linear termination. A reasonably large assemblage of worked flint (80 pieces), recovered largely from the subsoil (101), is Bronze Age in character and likely to reflect activity in and around the main enclosure.
- 7.3** While Dartmoor provides examples of enclosed settlement during the Bronze Age, there is comparatively little evidence of Bronze Age settlement activity in lowland areas. Of potential interest to this site are the discovery of a hoard of Bronze Age gold bracelets from Colaton Raleigh Common not far to the northwest of the present site (Taylor 1999). These are thought to be later Bronze Age in date, but could conceivably be earlier.
- 7.4** There was no evidence for later prehistoric activity on the site and evidence of Romano-British activity was limited to a single sherd of AD 2nd century date. A small assemblage of medieval and post medieval finds was recovered principally from the subsoil (101) and is typical of the area, reflecting agricultural activity and proximity to the village of Colaton Raleigh.
- 7.5** The majority of the small discrete features exposed during ground reduction for the new stock building are likely to have been naturally formed, while others potentially indicate settlement evidence, albeit limited, external and to the east of the main D-shaped enclosure exposed during excavation of the cable trench and by the geophysical survey.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Groundworks associated with the new access road and the new stock building exposed little of archaeological significance. The excavation of the cable trench to the west of the new stock building resulted in limited disturbance of a probable Bronze Age enclosure and associated internal cut features. The impact of this disturbance was mitigated by on site archaeological monitoring, preservation by record of the exposed features and deposits and by the recovery of artefacts.

9. POTENTIAL AND PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

9.1 Groundworks for the development resulted in the limited exposure of sections of the ditch of a D-shaped enclosure of probable Middle Bronze Age date. It was not possible within the limited confines of the cable trench to safely get a full record of the fill sequences within the ditch, although its profile was able to be established by controlled machine-excavation. It is therefore considered that more detailed analysis of the site stratigraphy is not worthwhile.

9.2 However, the pottery specialist (see Henrietta Quinnell report above) considers that the context of the sherds may be significant. Recent finds of Trevisker material in the Exeter area, from Old Rydon Lane (Gilbert 2012) and from the Royal Naval Stores Depot (Pearce *et al* 2011), appear to represent structured deposition in ditches, and the material from context 163 could also have been so deposited in the enclosure. The fresh condition of the sherds would be consistent with a deliberate covering of soil, as occurred on the Exeter sites.

9.3 The Trevisker vessel also appears to be a little different to those already known and published. There is still uncertainty as to whether the vessel dates to the Middle or Early part of the Bronze Age period and, as numerous sherds hold internal residue, these would be more than adequate for a radiocarbon date to establish this.

9.4 On the basis of the above it has been recommended by the pottery specialist that the vessel from the ditch merits publication with a drawn illustration as a 'shorter contribution' in *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society*, to comprise the following:

- A summary of the context of the discovery with a relevant plan and section.
- Further work on conjoins to provide more detail on the decoration and drawing of the vessel.
- Microscopic examination of the fabric by Dr Roger Taylor to establish the nature of inclusions.
- A radiocarbon determination to be obtained on the residue of one of the sherds from the vessel.
- Further consideration of possible parallels for the vessel, and the significance of its date.
- Publication text amounting to no more than five pages.
- Digitisation of the site archive and uploading onto Archaeology Data Service.

10. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

10.1 The paper and digital archive are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ.

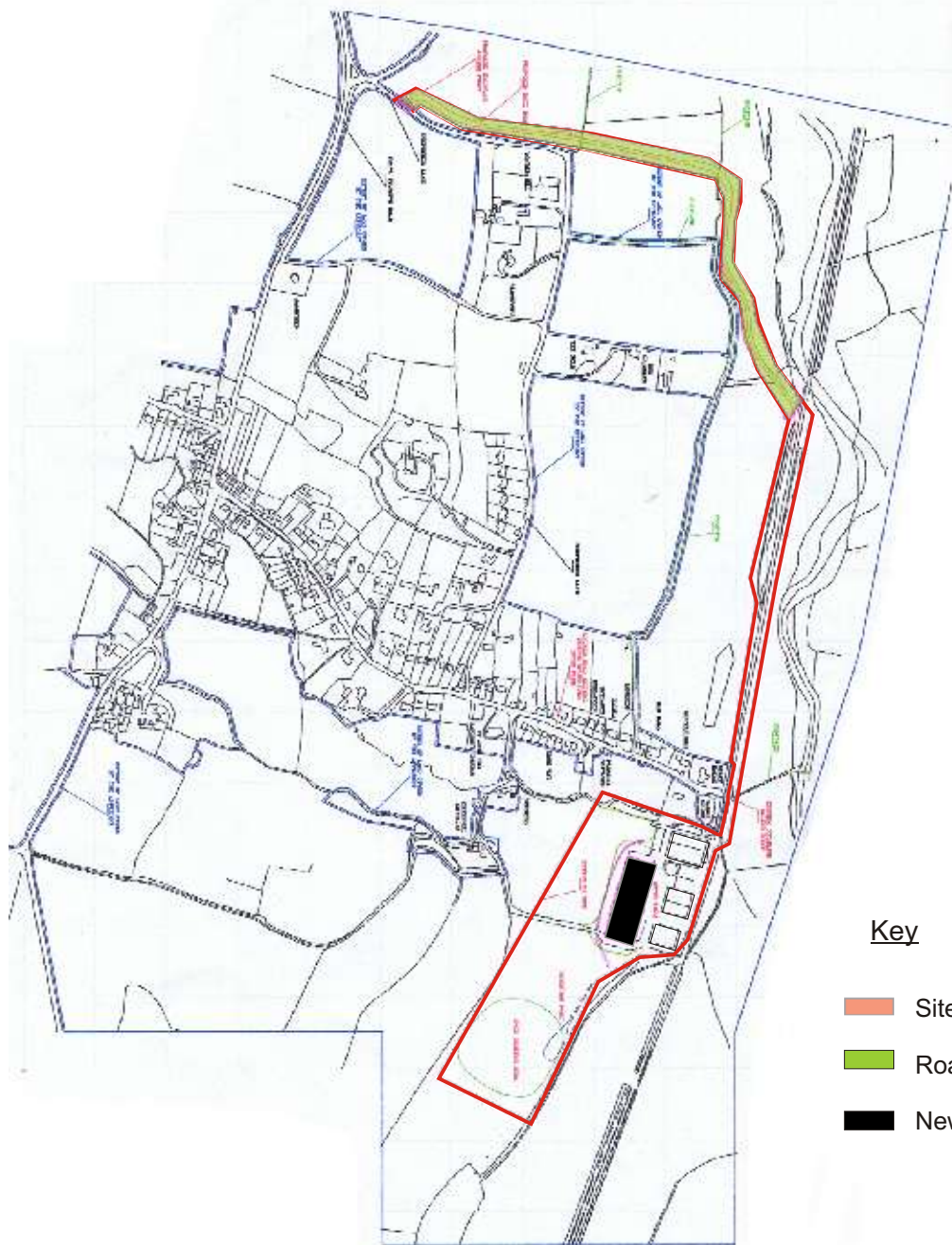
10.2 The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 164277.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 11.1 The watching brief was commissioned by Michael Goff on behalf of Clinton Devon Estates. The fieldwork was undertaken by Alex Farnell, with assistance from Jon Hall and Stella DeVilliers. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The collaborative role of Stephen Reed, DCCHET Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

12. REFERENCES

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Key

- Site area
- Road strip
- New stock building

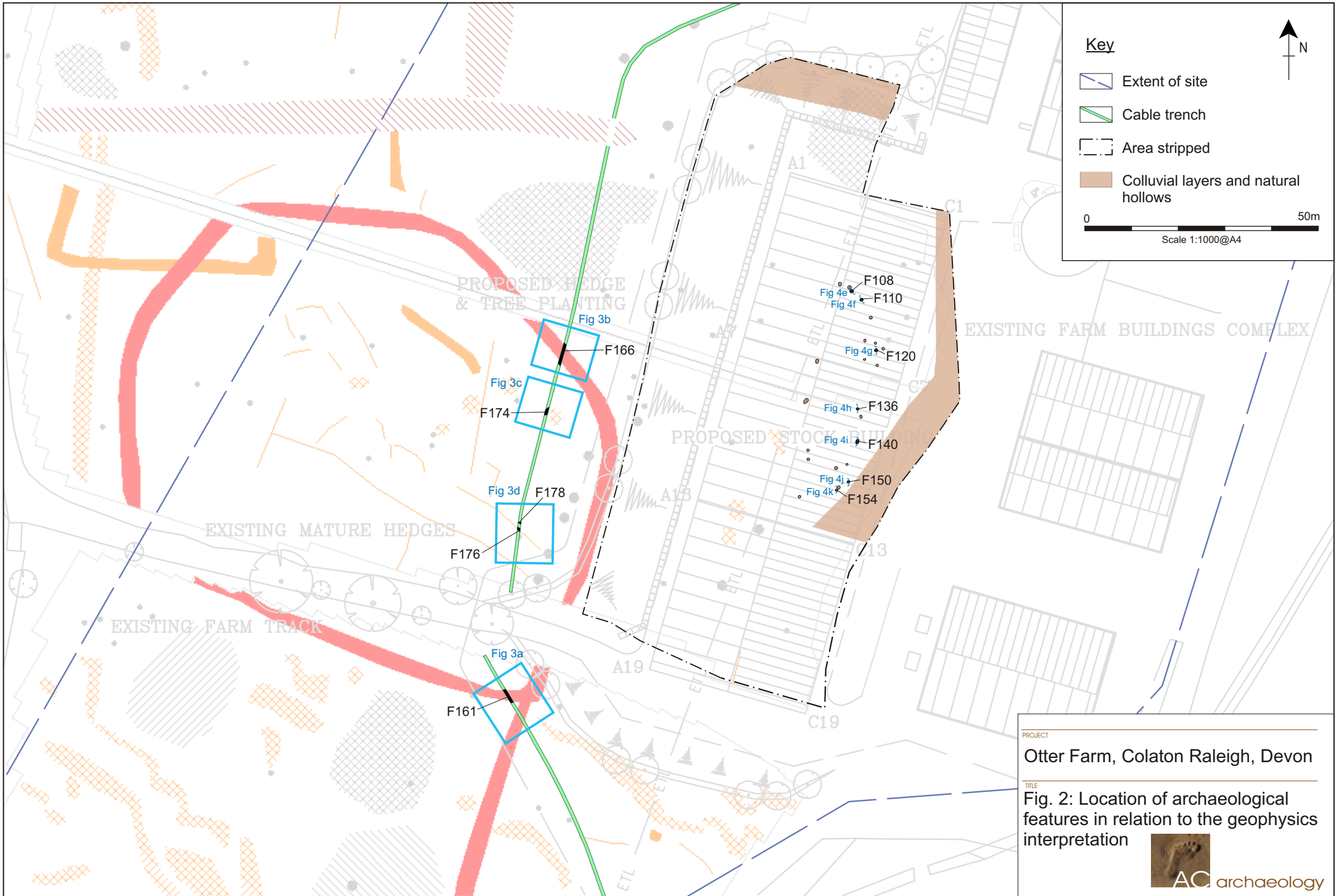


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Otter Farm, Colaton Raleigh, Devon





TITLE
Fig. 1: Site location



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Key

-  Extent of site
-  Cable trench
-  Area stripped
-  Colluvial layers and natural hollows

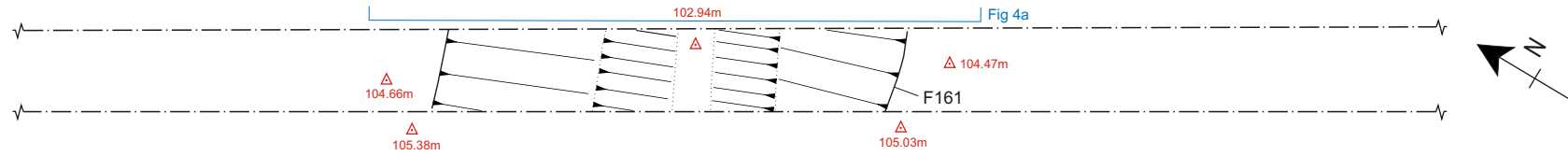
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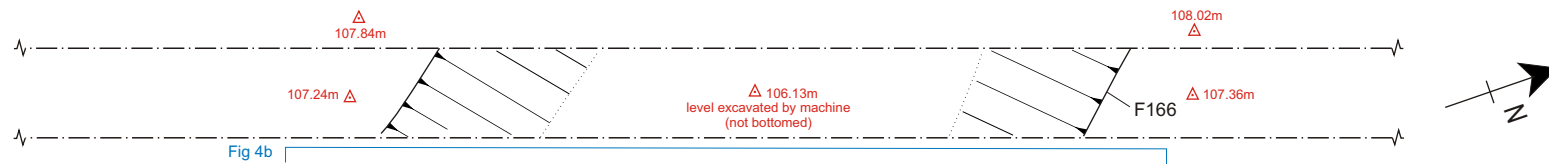
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Fig. 2: Location of archaeological features in relation to the geophysics interpretation



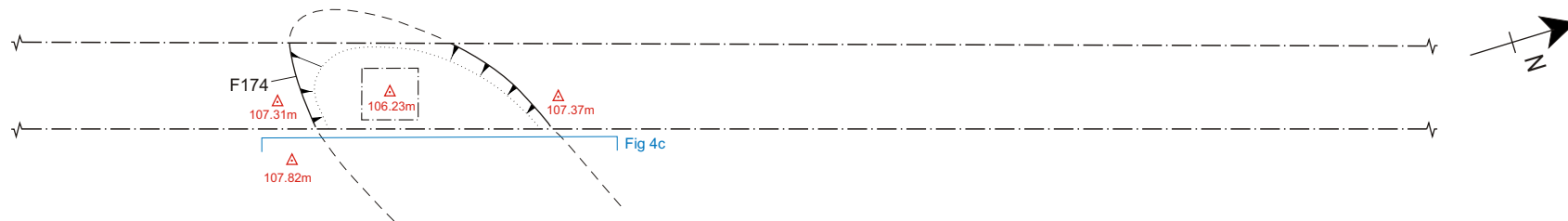
a) Plan of F161



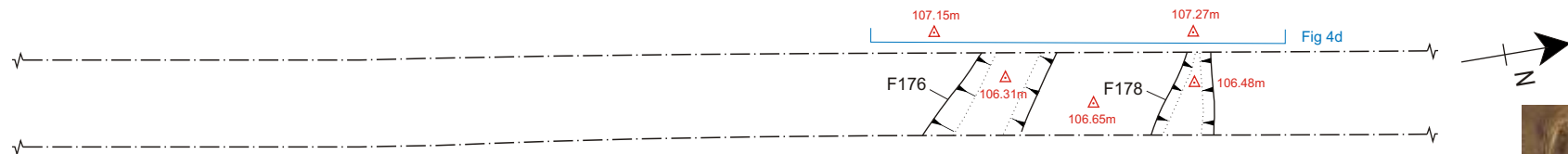
b) Plan of F166



c) Plan of F174



d) Plan of F176 and F178



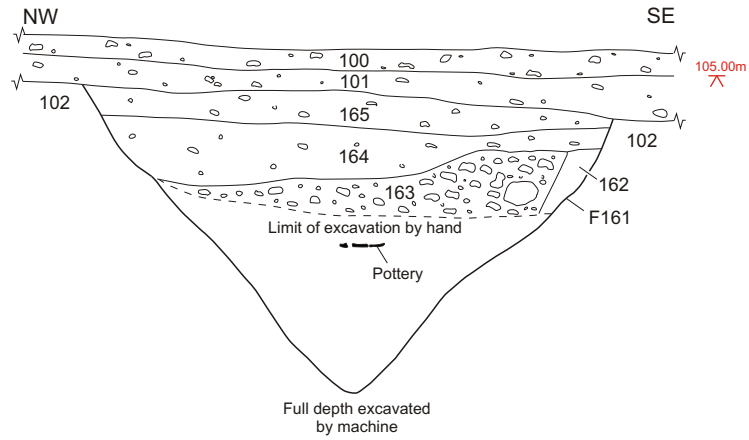
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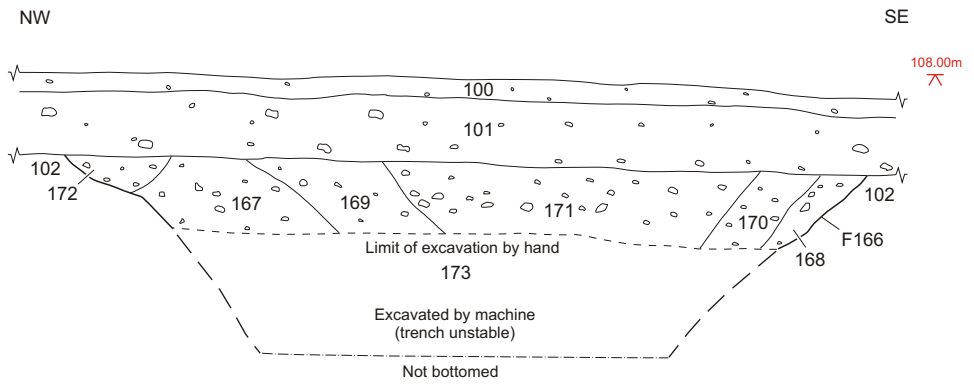
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Fig. 3: Plans of features identified from excavation of the cable trench

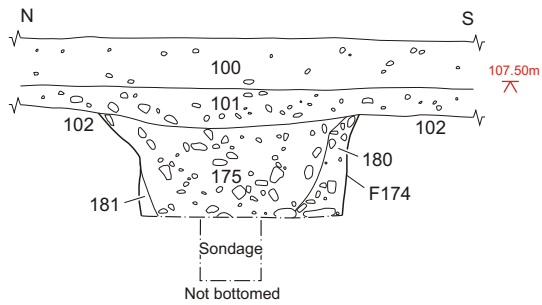
a) Section of F161



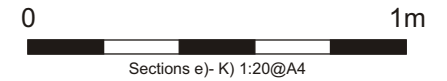
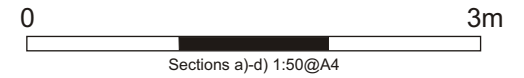
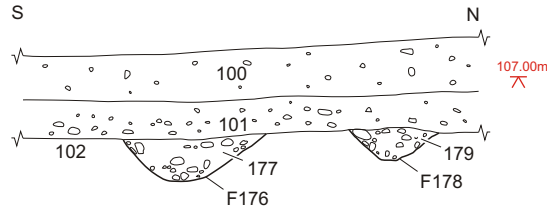
b) Section of F166



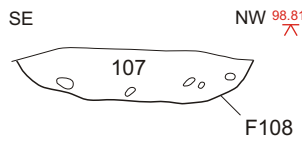
c) Section of F174



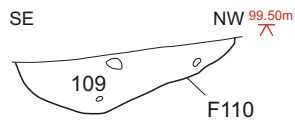
d) Section of F176 and F178



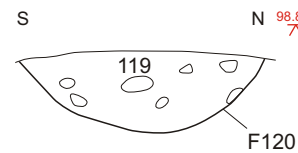
e) Section of F108



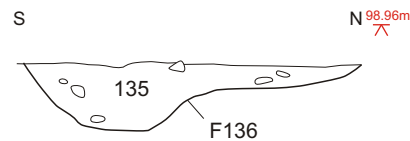
f) Section of F110



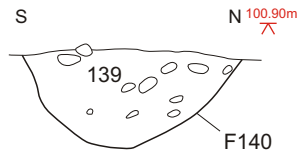
g) Section of F120



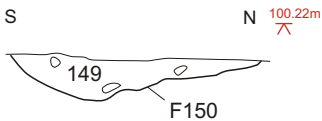
h) Section of F136



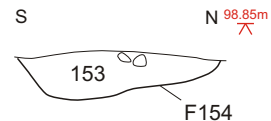
i) Section of F140



j) Section of F150



k) Section of F154



PROJECT

Otter Farm, Colaton Raleigh, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 4: Sections of relevant features



AC archaeology



Plate 1: Ditch F161 partially excavated within cable trench, view from the south. Scale 1m



Plate 2: Middle Bronze Age pottery sherds within ditch fill 163. Scale 0.3m



Plate 3: Ditch F161, fully excavated, view from the northwest. Scale 2m



Plate 4: Ditch F166 partially excavated within cable trench, view from the north. Scale 1m



Plate 5: Feature F174 within cable trench, view from the south. Scale 0.3m



Plate 6: Linear features F176 and F178 within cable trench view from the north. Scale 0.3m



Plate 7: Area strip for new stock building, view from the west